

Chill out dudes, it's just a cartoon

It's Bartmania.

Everywhere you look, you see some product inspired by the Fox network's television show, *The Simpsons*. Shirts, buttons, stuffed Bart dolls; all are symptoms of yet another American fad.

It started out so innocently. *The Simpsons* was first a comedy short seen occasionally on *The Tracey Ullman Show*. It attracted such a following, it soon got its own half-hour slot.

A Butterfinger commercial later, *The Simpsons* have become another version of the American television family. What the Nelsons, the Bradys and the Keatons were to their generations, the Simpsons are to the '90s.

There have been other cartoons on prime time television. *The Jetsons* and the *The Flintstones* are just two. But none of them have achieved the same sort of stardom — or garnered the same controversy — as *The Simpsons*.

Matt Groening, the show's creator, surely didn't think *The Simpsons* would become as popular as it has. Lately, the mania has heightened. Recently, at Stanford University and UCLA, Bart Simpson actually got votes in student elections. When the schools' administrators removed his name from the ballot (he wasn't enrolled as a student), a wave of protests resulted. Due out sometime soon is a Nintendo game as well as other forms of Simpson memorabilia.

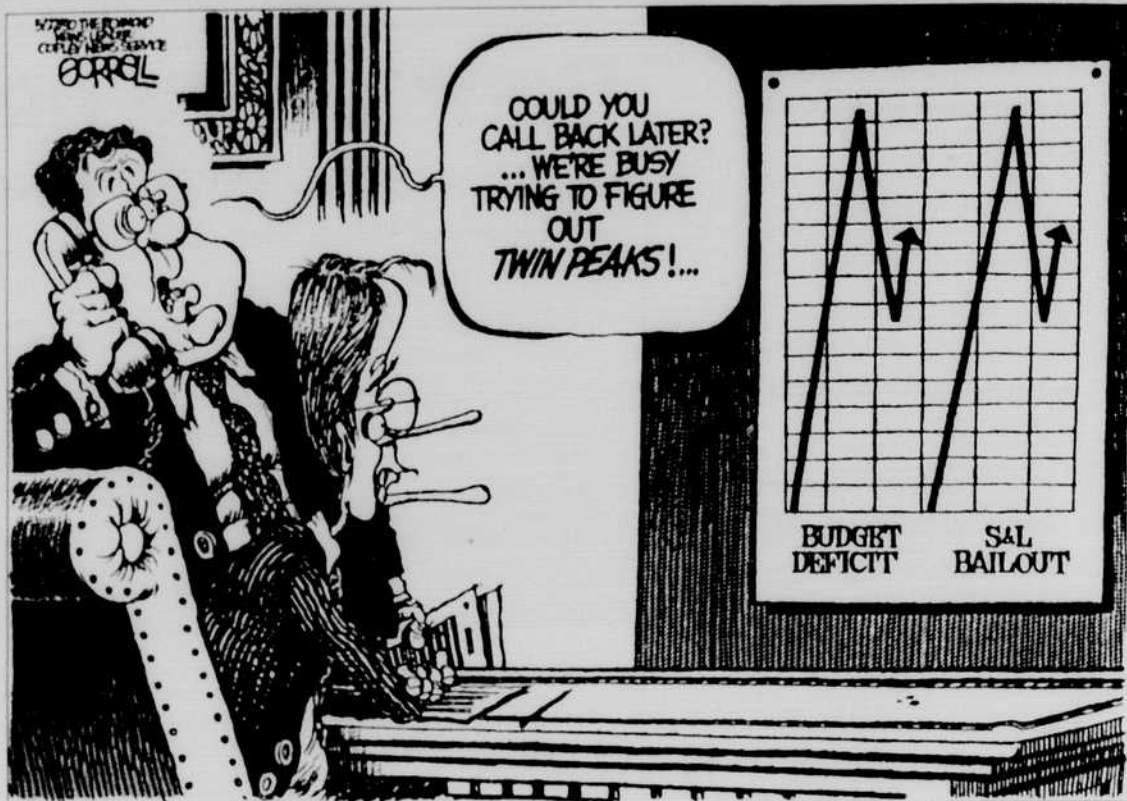
Incredible. And causing problems.

The controversy over the show is centered on the family violence and Bart's cocky attitude. Child psychologists and grade school teachers have criticized both, saying the show sets a "bad example." It has received a lot of negative publicity, even some through the Letters section of this newspaper.

The Simpsons is a satirical stab at the modern-day nuclear family. It is a cartoon: It is not real life, and it is not meant to be. Because it is a cartoon, there are exaggerations. We can all relate to the Simpson family arguments. They are warped just enough to make them funny. The heavy-handed satire is part of the show's humor, as well as its charm.

The incorrigible Bart says and does things we've always wanted to say and try. He is not Beaver Cleaver, but our society and our families are not composed of Junes and Wards. We argue, fight and criticize each other. Lashing out at a show with the same characteristics as our own families ignores the main problem and the point *The Simpsons* is trying to make. We are not perfect, and we shouldn't expect our children to be.

But if parents still feel Bart Simpson is a bad role model, they should do the simple thing and turn off the television set. Parents have that power, and should know what their kids are watching.



Bush continues to lose face over China

George Bush wants to commemorate the anniversary of the massacre of Chinese student protesters in an odd way — by extending China's most-favored nation trade status.

Almost one year after the slaughter at Tiananmen Square, Bush is ready to return to business as usual with Beijing. Extending the most-favored trade status will keep tariffs low on Chinese goods and products, keep Chinese markets open for American goods and services, and further one more continuing disaster of American foreign policy.

Little has changed in China since last June. Repression and human rights violations are still the order of the day, and dissident scientist Fang Lizhi remains a virtual prisoner in the U.S. Embassy. It's supposedly official policy that the U.S. is pro-democracy and doesn't deal with terrorist governments; China's leadership somehow gets exempted.

This inconsistency of U.S. foreign policy is furthered when one remembers that Bush dickered over extending most-favored trade status to the Soviet Union when it dealt a stiff — but mostly non-violent — crackdown to Lithuania. What's the thinking here?

The official reasoning is that Chinese

leaders, with their mysterious Eastern personalities, are unwilling to 'lose face' over the massacre. They will not respond to tough stances like trade sanctions or granting visa extensions to visiting students. Therefore, U.S. policy must be soft and sympathetic, not hard and firm. Appeasement, out of fashion since 1939, is the new U.S. line.

It's been commented before that Bush, former U.S. Ambassador to China, has a soft spot in his heart for the Chinese. Because he spent 18 enjoyable months riding bicycles and playing ping pong with Deng Xiaoping, he seems to feel it's OK to take nobody's advice but his own on the pressing question of what to do with the Chinese. Bush has always come off as a patsy to the Chinese leadership and a stooge to American business interests desiring lucrative Pacific Rim trade markets; this latest act only furthers that image.

While the Chinese leadership holds face, we wonder if it isn't secretly laughing at our fawning, obsequious president and how he caters to China's every whim, daring not to chide them. That would be ironic: While Bush loses face in China, he continues to display two faces to the American public at home.

The bad

This is in response to Tom Ribe's May 17 letter. In it, he stated he saw sorority women dancing on their lawns, and fraternity "men" cruising by in their little imported hot rods.

First of all, the only imported cars I know fraternity men to own are Toyotas and Nissans. Believe it or not, we Greeks are just as poor as you are. As for the comment about Greeks not being around when important issues are presented, I think you had better check your facts more carefully.

Where were you for University Day? The Greek system incorporated it into their annual Greek Week festivities. Maybe that doesn't strike you as important. Did you offer to donate bone marrow to Kathy Guard to potentially save her life? The Greeks had numerous people

donate. They also presented over \$2,000 to Guard to help her financially. Did you donate any money to her?

Every fraternity and sorority also has their own philanthropy that they give money to each year. Philanthropies such as cancer research and aid to the blind. They also participate in other worthy events to help others.

People are always so quick to notice the bad in others that they fail to notice the good that also exists. In the future, Ribe, I suggest you look for the good before you get so quick to point out the bad and stick your foot in your mouth.

Becky Dixon
Student

Coverage

As a dance major here at the

University, I am extremely disappointed with the story "Student dance concert opens tonight" (*ODE*, May 18), covering the Spring Student Dance Concert.

We in the dance department felt there was a minimal amount of care and effort spent in presenting this story. Along with numerous grammatical errors, there were several factual errors as well. Writer Layne Lakefish displayed a sadly minimal understanding of the concert and of dance in general.

We feel that this poor presentation not only was a bad reflection on Lakefish, but on the dancers involved with this production as well. We work hard in this program to educate ourselves and become diverse, articulate individuals, and this story presented us quite inadequately.

Considering the minimal coverage the dance department

receives as it is, we would hope that, in the future, the *Emerald* would take far more care in not only gathering information but also presenting that information in an acceptable manner for a college publication.

Joan Donnelly
Dance

Backward steps

I see the University had decided to keep up with today's bureaucratic bull. To have one of the best American Studies programs in the nation and decide to drop it isn't showing much intelligence.

The fact that the University can build a brand new spectrum of science buildings and annually increase the student fees, while counterbalancing it by decreasing programs such as American Studies is not in the

students' best interests.

Dropping the American Studies program not only shows hypocrisy on behalf of the administration, but the foundation on which the University has been established — the University stresses the education of liberal arts. American Studies blends psychology, sociology, women's studies, and the study of minorities. How more liberal can you get?

I feel by dropping this program we are taking steps back instead of trying to broaden our curriculum at the University.

Brett Johnson
Psychology

Never mind

"Hey, just kidding about that Leviticus jazz." (Proverbs 2:24)

John Shenon
Student