

Washington State Senate passes explicit lyrics law

Some claim it protects youth; others charge that it infringes upon the freedom of expression

OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — The constitutional right to free expression has been abused by some recording artists, say lawmakers who pushed through the Senate on Tuesday a measure banning the sale of sexually explicit tapes and CDs to minors.

"It's rather evident that we have permitted the First Amendment on expression to be carried to an extreme," said Senate Judiciary Chairman Gary Nelson, R-Edmonds, in debate on the bill. "It's having a negative effect on the young people in the state of Washington."

The measure, HB2554, was inspired by the complaints of an Everett mother whose young son demonstrated a precocious grasp of obscene language. The bill's sponsor, Rep. Dick King, D-Everett, said the boy learned the bad language from a sound recording of the rap group 2 Live Crew that he had bought at a local record store.

The Senate approved the measure 35-9, two weeks after it earned near-unanimous passage in the House.

It now goes to Gov. Booth Gardner for final approval.

The bill would make purchases such as those by the boy illegal by expanding the existing erotic materials law to cover sound recordings.

Nelson said such recordings "are very harmful to our society, because they describe actions and assaults against women."

But Sen. Phil Talmadge, D-Seattle criticized the bill as "silly."

"My conservative colleagues are always saying that government should get off the backs of the commercial sector," Talmadge said. "But here we have government being the parent."

Talmadge said prosecutors would be pressed into the role of public censors, and he wondered if the bill's broad definition would apply to Rolling Stones and Johnny Mathis records.

"This is the 200th anniversary of the Bill of Rights," Talmadge said. "And the Legislature in many pieces of legislation chips away at the First Amendment."

Sen. Leo Thorsness, R-Seattle, countered that "Rights are important, but we have had a systematic degradation of our nation, morally and ethically."

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Quoting the English historian Arnold Toynbee, Thorsness said, "Great nations commit suicide ... they die from internal excess."

"Reasonableness is needed from all sides," Thorsness said.

Current law bans sales to minors of erotic printed materials, photographs, pictures or motion pictures.

Erotic material is presently defined as material whose dominant theme "appeals to the prurient interest of minors in sex," and "is utterly without redeeming social value."

'Humungous' offers oversimplification, pathetic lyrics



Fungo Mungo
Humungous
Island Records

• —friskee material, •• —nothing special,
••• —worth a listen, •••• —quality music

The cover of *Humungous*, a zany depiction of a rampaging, purple-skinned ape ridden by a busty blonde, should effectively screen out most self-respecting music fans.

For those who feel compelled to venture past the cover, however, a vast wasteland awaits.

Fungo Mungo manages to belt out some excellent bass lines, but these are quickly overshadowed by pathetic lyrics and an utterly uninteresting attitude.

Most of the songs are loaded with dim-witted social commentaries. The painfully obvious message in "Sex Sells" and the futile one in "Hype is Stupid," show not only a lack of originality but a tendency to oversimplify the already sim-

ple. "Do You Believe In God," tries to attack television evangelists with a preacher-like voice saying, "So keep your money in God's Bank, children, because no one robs or steals in heaven." It is almost amusing but sounds forced and is ultimately uninteresting.

To the band's credit, Fungo Mungo succeeds in escaping definition. They incorporate rap as much as they do metal, and the horn section on some of the tracks is rather novel.

Although they try very hard, Fungo Mungo accomplishes incredibly little.



Blur
Leisure
SBK Records

• —friskee material, •• —nothing special,
••• —worth a listen, •••• —quality music

A band that lives by the hook often dies by the hook. Blur does both.

Blur relies on danceable beats and standard pop formula-

las blended with a decidedly English flavor. For the first half of *Leisure* this works well. The second half, however, shows the limitations of this format.

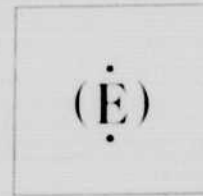
The energetic "There's No Other Way" is Blur at its best. It is simple and only occasionally inventive but completely irresistible.

"Bang," a whimsical look at passivity and the daily grind, works in the same way. "When all is said and all is done what was said was never done," sings Damon Albarn in his nearly emotionless voice.

On many of the tracks his vocals, with their delivery bordering on deadpan, contrast nicely with the buoyant music. This and the catchy hooks can only hold interest for the first few songs though.

The second half of the album proves the fallibility of formula pop and the dangers of relying on refrains to carry entire songs. The steady diet of risk-free tunes is like empty calories and in the end it is dull.

Leisure leaves no doubt that Blur can write some great songs. Hopefully, next time they will take a few more chances.



E
A Man Called (E)
Polydor Records

★ ★ 1/2
• —friskee material, •• —nothing special,
••• —worth a listen, •••• —quality music

Acts such as Sting, Prince and Madonna get by with a single name. E takes the idea a bit further. Autographs will be easy, he might be thinking, and no one is likely to misspell it.

E sounds like a veteran of the smoke-filled coffee house circuit. Although this is his first album, the introspective and often compelling lyrics make him sound almost weathered.

The opening track and first single, "Hello Cruel World," gets *A Man Called (E)* off to a pleasant start. The sense of calm resignation in the face of futility is refreshing. "Norman Rockwell colors fade/All my favorite things have changed/But what the hell, hello cruel world," E sings.

Most of the lyrics are strangely optimistic. The pain that inspires many of the songs becomes nearly transparent as E searches for value in agony. In "Fitting in With the Misfits," he seems happy to have at least found someplace where he feels accepted.

It is unfortunate that many of the tracks suffer under heavy

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studio work. The keyboards sometimes slip into an annoying organ-like sound, and occasionally the vocals are conspicuously layered. This album lacks the energy that would come from a bit of spontaneity, but it does capture the potential of E.

By Eron Witzel
Emerald Contributor

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