

It's my CD, and I'll buy it used if I want

Record companies and country singer Garth Brooks have declared war on used Compact Discs.

Four of the six largest record companies have come out in support of a policy that any store selling used CDs along with new CDs will not be given any advertising support. The rotund Brooks has declared that he will not sell future albums in any such stores. Record companies and Brooks, who said recently in a Barbara Walters interview that he has more money than his children's grandchildren can spend, are alarmed that consumers are now buying their CDs secondhand.

Record companies and recording artists like Brooks are grouching that they don't receive a penny from used CDs. So what. That's how the free market works.

When a person owns a product that he or she no longer wants, he or she sells it to someone who isn't willing or able to buy the product new. Thousands of University students drive to and from campus in used cars, but Ford and Honda don't receive a dime from used car sales. Pocket Books doesn't profit from used book sales. Architects and contractors don't get a cut when homes are sold to a new family. There's no reason why used CDs should be held sacred when no other product is.

The only thing setting used CDs apart from other used products is that they are almost always as good used as when they were brand new. Except for the cardboard or plastic packaging that is ripped apart and thrown away, there is no difference between a new and used CD. Why would consumers pay \$17 or \$18 for a CD that they can purchase for \$8 or \$9?

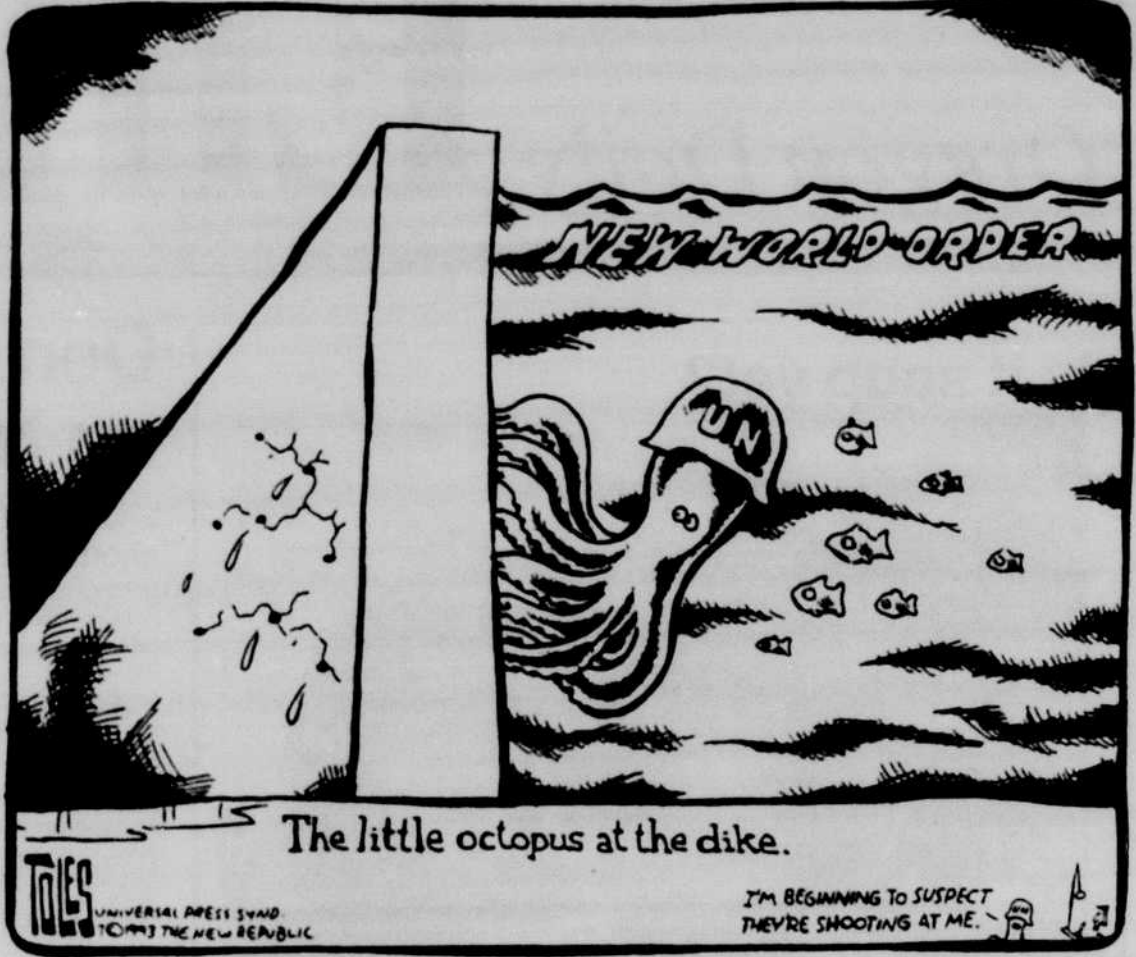
Some people are willing to pay the premium for a new CD because they want the CD immediately, they are risk-averse and want guaranteed high-quality sound, or they are just too stupid. Still, if these people have to buy new CDs, they should go to Target where new discs range from \$12 to \$15.

Record companies are under no obligation to provide advertising support to record stores and are free to withhold it if they feel it's in their best interests.

Cutting off advertising support to record stores won't work and probably will backfire. This move will not eliminate the used CD market or even significantly slow its growth. It will reduce the sales of new CDs because presumably that's the reason why the free advertising was provided in the first place, and the publicity resulting from this policy may encourage more people to switch to used CDs.

Buyers will purchase a good at the lowest price possible and sellers will undercut the competition to gain a larger share of the market or simply to stay in business. Consumers wanted cheaper CDs and record stores realized that they make a profit at almost half the price. Record companies can't fight elementary economics and Adam Smith's invisible hand. If they want consumers to stop buying used CDs, they'll have to respond to the competition by — gasp — cutting prices on new discs.

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The little octopus at the dike.

OPINION

Name calling at the Country Fair



"Idealism is what precedes experience; cynicism is what follows."
— David T. Wolf

The Oregon Country Fair. A bastion of love, happiness and friendship — unless you mess with its profit margin.

The hypocritical behavior on the part of certain fair staffers has come to light recently following a July 13 article by Lia Salciccia in which she describes remaining at the fair after closing — without permission (gasp!).

Because of this, and moreso because she had the audacity to write about it, she has received threatening letters, harassing phone calls and been labeled a "parasite."

For the few years I have been in Eugene, I have suspected events like the fair to be nothing more than money-making schemes that play off the illusion that the 1960s are somehow alive and well.

Events like the fair believe they are contributing to world peace and human harmony by charging people \$10 a pop to experience a lie. However, I have not been able to substantiate my belief — until now.

The self-righteous, childish behavior being demonstrated by these particular fair staffers at Salciccia's revelations is ample evidence of the event's overall rotten core and slimy underbelly.

To understand what is going on in the (alleged) minds of those who are complaining loudest, let us examine a sequence of events.

We begin at 8 p.m. as the fair is closing. In her article, Salciccia recounts how about 50 so-called "volunteers" join hands

and sing as they purge the fair of unwanted guests, a tactic no doubt learned from the powerful Iranian army, which used to chain children together who would then walk in front of the troops to sweep for land mines.

Salciccia is vague about how she avoided "The Sweep," but says she did not "sneak in by hiding in a tent for two hours." Clearly, the blueprint of a genius criminal mastermind is coming to light here.

Before going any further, I should clarify that, at least as I understand it, the *Emerald* does not condone sneaking. It does, however, have a tendency to print stories by freelancers who have sneaked (such as the University tunnels story a few months back).

So far, it would seem the fair's biggest problem is lax security. Staffers should be grateful to Salciccia for pointing out a flaw in what was clearly inept enforcement of fair rules. So inept, in fact, that "The Sweep" failed to put Salciccia in the dustbin of day-goers two nights in a row.

Anyhow, Salciccia managed to remain after the fair ended and proceeded to witness the evening entertainment. This, of course, was her great sin. She had penetrated the inner sanctum and viewed what only the ordained elite are permitted to see — a guy in a pool blowing six-foot bubbles.

In a letter to the editor (*ODE*, July 22), Norma Sax, evidently a fair staffer, accused Salciccia of lacking "maturity, courtesy or common sense." Unfortunately, her accusation aptly describes nearly everybody who attends the fair and puts those attributes aside for a short time. It also describes the behavior of those who are harassing Salciccia.

In fact, Sax's mean-spirited, vitriolic letter is really nothing more than a complaint that she had to work to experience what Salciccia experienced for free. Don't let anyone accuse fair staffers of being altruistic.

Sax also claims Salciccia used about \$40 in services during her two nights at the fair. Forty bucks for what? The privilege of seeing supposedly mature adults behave like morons?

She claims the "volunteers" are permitted to stay in the evenings as a reward for all their hard work during the day, and that Salciccia's presence doubtlessly caused many of these devotees their place down in front during the evening festivities.

Oddly, I find myself completely devoid of sympathy for these alleged "volunteers." Real volunteers give their time and effort without any expectation of reward except for their own personal satisfaction.

Not at the Oregon Country Fair. There, "volunteers" are given special treatment for their work; in effect, they are being compensated for their time. Thus, they are not true volunteers but rather parasites who work only for their own benefit.

Perhaps Sax and others are upset because Salciccia suggested the evening entertainment is reliant on illegal drug use for its joyous atmosphere. Afraid at having been caught with their hands in the cookie jar, Salciccia's critics have no recourse but to try and make enough noise that no one looks any closer at their own cozy little operation.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about this whole set of events is the sheer hypocrisy being displayed. This "anti-establishment" crowd, who in the 1960s participated in sit-ins in public offices, marched down public streets blocking traffic and who destroyed public property in the name of peace and justice, are now bent out of shape because a college student didn't ask their permission before watching grown, naked men juggle torches.

What a joke.

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