

# Perhaps adults can learn something from 'Barney'

In millions of American homes each morning, young children gather around the television for another half hour with Barney, a lovable purple and green dinosaur.

And, in these same homes, many more people, inevitably more than 10 years old, fight off an urge to destroy their televisions in an effort to eliminate the obnoxious beast forever.

Why is there controversy surrounding a simple character in a PBS children's show? After all, Barney is only an imaginary character, right?

However, it seems that people, usually teens or adults, are giving Barney a hard time for trying to entertain little kids. For some, it seems that he is just as bad as Satan. Consider these examples of misdirected Barney opposition:

- Four boys beat up a man in a Barney costume outside of a K-Mart in Galveston, Texas. Three of them were fined \$200 each and a fourth was sent to juvenile detention. Even worse, it turns out that the dinosaur in question was not the genuine Barney, but a purple and green impostor. A judge ordered the boys to stop hanging around with each other.
- A man in Florida created the



ROBBIE REEVES

"I Hate Barney Secret Society," in which, for a \$1 membership charge, members can receive a newsletter about the negative aspects of Barney. (His daughter watches the show.)

• Prompted by Barney's theme song — "I love you, you love me" — children, as well as some of their parents, are creating alternative lyrics to some of Barney's hits. One of the tamer versions begins "I hate you, you hate me, let's stick Barney up a tree ..." Others deal with shooting the dinosaur and of Barney spreading HIV.

What is it about Barney that seems to bring out the worst in people? Big Bird and Mister Rogers have done all right during the past 20 years. They both have steady jobs.

Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that Barney is a symbol of the current youth of America, those

children that are now in preschool and kindergarten. This is not unlike the fact that *Mister Rogers Neighborhood* and *Sesame Street* have become fixtures in American households for the past 20 years. Attitudes change, and maybe *Mister Rogers* and *Sesame Street* are giving way to Barney.

Maybe a prepubescent-sounding dinosaur relates better to the kindergarten set than does a big feathered yellow bird or a man in a cardigan sweater.

Most of Barney's detractors don't seem to realize that Barney was meant for children under, say, 10. This brings up a good question. Why are the teens and adults of America watching Barney? Have they nothing better to do?

There is no question that Barney was designed for young children. With the constant singing and dancing (not to mention Barney's voice all by itself), Barney naturally attracts very young children. Other children's shows, including *Sesame Street* and *Mister Rogers* (remember all of the cheesy songs that he sang?), have lots of activity in them.

Unfortunately, it is often these things that make Barney a target for the critics. Does it surprise

anyone that Barney hasn't been moved to prime-time television, or that his songs aren't on the Top-40 list yet? Of course not. He wasn't meant for adults. His sole purpose is to educate and entertain young children.

(It seems that some of Barney's enemies are acting like young children, and that may explain why they have been watching the show recently.)

Does this mean that adults shouldn't have some occasional fun at the expense of Barney? Sure they should. But Barney-related violence? Isn't that stooping to an early childhood mentality, the same age group that this dinosaur is attempting to reach? Maybe some adults would learn something from Barney.

However, before one decides to make fun of Barney (or beat him up at a K-Mart, hang him in a tree, etc.), one should consider what they disagree with the poor reptile about. Barney teaches young children such values as respecting one another and getting along, as well as such skills as counting and speaking in Spanish. *Sesame Street* and *Mister Rogers* taught people (including many current University students) the same things.

It seems that people disagree

more with the messenger (the character of Barney) than the message that he is trying to propagate.

Parents of the children watching Barney often get stuck in the middle of the Barney problem. While wanting to provide a good influence for their children (like Barney is, as most would agree), they soon tire of the artificially high voice of a singing and dancing dinosaur.

Maybe they could alleviate the stress of watching Barney by finding something constructive to do for themselves and letting their children view the show. Barney wasn't meant for parents, either.

The quantity of Barney merchandise (including tapes, videos, and a doll that says dozens of the same phrases that Barney does on his show) makes escaping Barney a difficult task for the parents of young children. But has this been any different for any other parent for the past several decades?

Give the poor dinosaur (and his millions of fans) a break. After all, Barney is the most popular dinosaur around these days.

*Robbie Reeves is a columnist for the Emerald.*

## LETTERS

### Worn welcome

As a native Oregonian, a University alumnus and avid Duck football fan, I would like to begin by thanking Rich Brooks for the strides he has taken to help make the University football program what it is. He has taken a consistently terrible team, year in and year out, and made it into a consistently mediocre team, year in and year out.

His accomplishments are worthy, but it is no longer enough. I used to be impressed with the ability to win more than two games a season and beat the Beavers on a regular basis. However, the novelty has now worn thin.

I have spent the last five years out of Oregon, living in the San Francisco Bay Area and now in Phoenix, Ariz. It is painfully obvious that the Ducks get little or no respect within the Pacific-10 Conference once you are outside of the comfortable confines of the state's boundaries.

Looking a bit more objectively now that I'm out of the area, I can see the program is not advancing and that Brooks would not be heading it if his record had to speak for itself at any other Pac-10 school outside of Oregon.

It is my belief, based on Brooks' past performance, that the following things will continue to happen as long as he is coach:

- The Ducks will be ravaged by injuries.
- The Ducks will embarrass themselves on television.
- The Ducks will not be a nationally-ranked team.
- The Ducks will not improve over the course of the season.

I thank you for your contributions, coach Brooks, but I respectfully ask that you step aside and let someone else help the team turn the corner.

**Keith Towne**  
Scottsdale, Ariz.

### Bad ads

Generally speaking, I really like the city of Eugene. It's so diverse and there seems to be so much to do around here. But I do have one major complaint.

In my apartment, I occasionally watch television and I have only one thing to say about the local business commercials. You've got to be kidding! I have never seen such stupid ads in my life, especially the car dealerships — they are so dumb. I think that as a project, some students in journalism need to help them out. They sure need it!

Just so you know what I'm talking about, consider this

recent car dealership ad. The slogan was, "Feel the no money down." Feel the no money down? This is just one of the many annoying ads on television every day. Will somebody please help these people out?

**Kim Jellum**  
Psychology

### KWVA gone bad

I was once a listener of KWVA. When it first came on the air (and even before, in the Fishbowl), the motive for having a college radio station was clear: "To give an alternative to the Eugene area." At first, this was

executed in a fashion pleasing everyone.

Now, however, the staff has apparently decided that "alternative" means one certain type of music. I disagree with the individual claiming a listenership of only 14 individuals, not all human. However, the mixture of music used for the afternoon shows is targeted for a rather small portion of the campus, and indeed the community as a whole.

In Eugene, we have: Top 40, classic rock, country/western, classical and pop metal. That is all. KWVA was created to fill the gaps and represent the student

interests.

I understand that there are special-interest shows, but the KWVA of last spring and the summer didn't regulate student interests to just one two- to three-hour time slot per week. All the music was available and played during the mixed shows. Now, the afternoon is no longer a mix of different styles, but simply a longer version of something that fits my skateboard really well.

I don't own a skateboard, and I don't believe the majority of students, the ones for whom the station was created, do either.

**Michael W. Cartmell**  
Physics

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