

EDITORIAL

Springfield earns poor reputation

The Grinch Who Stole Christmas, Mr. Scrooge, Vampire Lestat — what do all of these evil characters have in common? It seems that they could all find a home on the Springfield City Council.

On Monday evening the Council voted 4-2 not to help fund a camping location for the homeless known as the Centennial Car Camp. Two weeks ago the Eugene City Council voted to give \$38,700 to help finance the car camp, more than the \$15,000 that proponents of the camp requested. The total cost of running the camp is estimated at \$89,600.

Springfield officials have said repeatedly that they are interested in improving the tarnished image of their city. In recent years the city and the council have pursued a course of discrimination and intolerance, as evidenced by the city's anti-gay rights ordinance and another ordinance last year which made panhandling illegal. In keeping with this image, the council decided not to put up their city's share of the camp's costs — a measly \$5,000.

The most vocal opponents of the camp were Council President Stu Burge and council member Larry Schanz. According to *The Register-Guard*, Burge said, "This is nonsense. I am not taking money from hardworking, responsible people to give to people who are living what I perceive to be a lifestyle choice. I won't support it for any amount of money."

We are awe-struck at the ignorance and audacity of this statement. A lifestyle choice? Who would choose to live outside in Oregon, in the winter? Who would choose to live a life of insecurity and fear if they could live in comfort and relative safety?

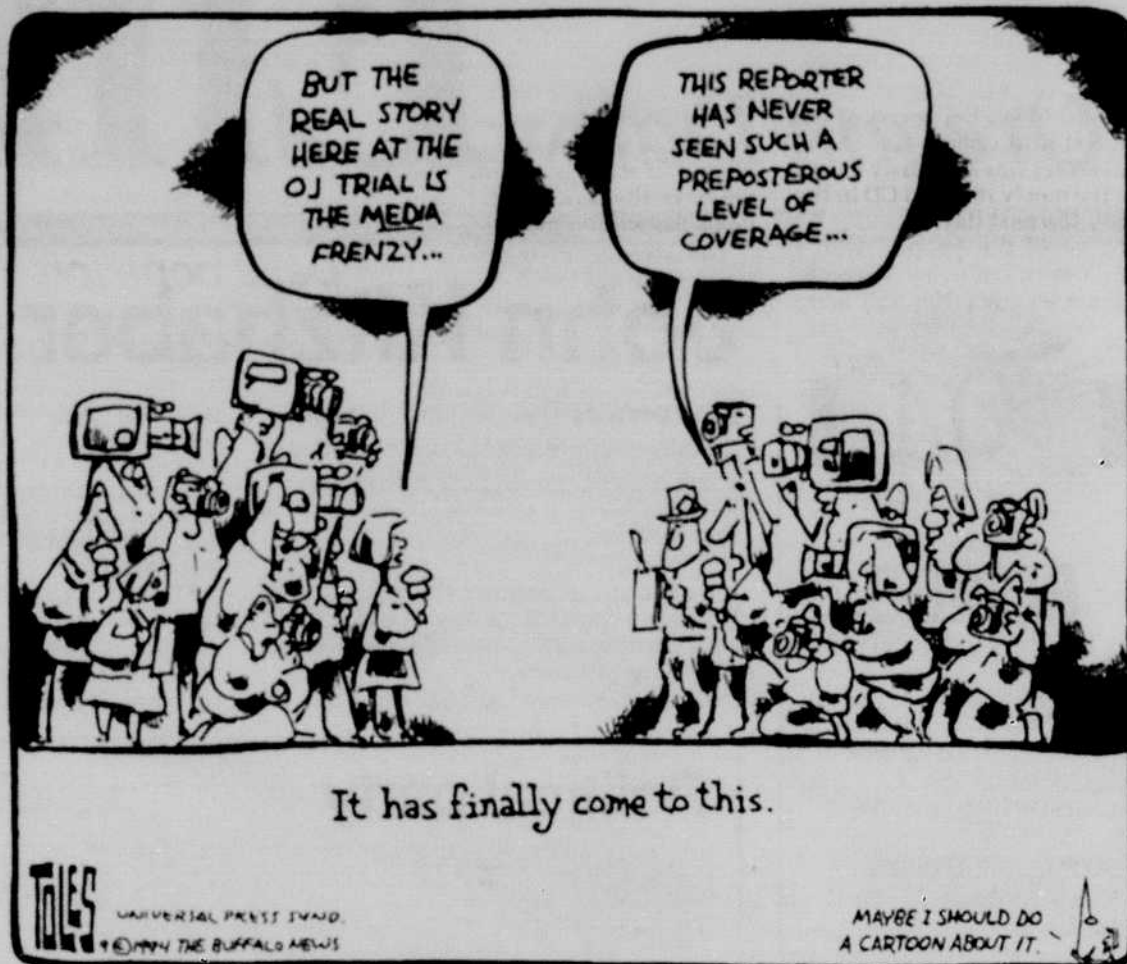
Well, in case there are more of you like Stu out there who didn't listen the first 100,000 times we and every other source except Rush Limbaugh told you, homelessness is not always a choice. Sometimes it just happens. It happens to drug addicts, to criminals, to the insane. But it also happens to students, parents, grandmothers, grandfathers, professionals, children, secretaries, businesspeople, lawyers and doctors. It may not happen as often, but it does happen.

The Eugene City Council has cut many programs to bare bones, yet they have come up with the funding for this project because it is so important. It is not only important because of what it does, but it is also important because of what it says. By agreeing to the car camp for a third year, the Eugene City Council said it would not close the door on charity and humanity. The Springfield City Council not only slammed the door on charity and humanity, but it also slammed the door in the face of the Eugene City Council.

This amount of money is essentially a token gesture. It's a gesture that probably would not have undone Springfield's negative image, but which would have been gracious just the same.

We are angry and disgusted by this decision. It leaves the city of Eugene to foot the bill for the majority of this project, financially and spiritually.

And Springfield's image just isn't getting any better.



■ OPINION

Pop music stifled by media



PAUL VAN SICKLE

What is it with popular music these days? Michael Bolton sells a million records, classic rock stations think we really want to remember Boston and Barbara Streisand sells out shows at \$150 a seat.

Popular music used to be popular because it was good. The Beatles weren't popular just because they were good-looking. They were popular because they had a strong talent for songwriting and performing. The Rolling Stones are musicians, as well as rich men. No parallel seems to exist today. Instead, we are inundated with mediocrity.

As the music business exists today, anyone with a drum machine and a Macintosh computer can release a record. I would hate to think that we have been led to believe M.C. Hammer really was good at what he did. What about Vanilla Ice? One of them switched over to gangster rap so he could continue make money, the other released two albums, then started a rumor that he was dead so we would all leave him alone with his money.

Unfortunately, there are people in the business who are in it only for the money. It is this kind of musician that has polluted the industry and made it the stagnant, uninteresting market it is today.

If the recording industry didn't hold the monetary appeal it did, fewer non-talents would enter it for that reason, and it would be more open to those who actually possessed talent and originality.

It's no wonder that so many bands have been branded "sell-

out" just because a lot of people bought their record. Consider their company: Boyz II Men, Michael Bolton, Garth Brooks, Paula Abdul... all multi-millionaires, all attractive, media-friendly people, and all have been singing the same variation on a song as long as they have been in the business.

On the other hand, consider the positive side of pop music. Nirvana's *Nevermind* sold nine million copies world-wide, and Smashing Pumpkins' *Siamese Dream* is working on its third platinum record. Few would dispute either of these bands' integrity or intelligence, yet both have been called sell-outs because of their success.

It would seem that just because a band is popular, its members have compromised themselves for the sake of money, when actually they bring a freshness and originality to an industry overly boring in its repetition.

We have that kind of elitist mentality to blame for the quality of popular music today. There exists an entire culture obsessed with finding bands on "indie" or independent record labels because some believe those bands are better only because they are unknown.

This attitude keeps musicians who otherwise might be great out of the popular music market. They fear entering this market would brand them. New bands don't enter the market, and popular music is prevented from advancement.

This attitude is a spin-off of the punk culture of the late 60s and early 70s. A member of the Clash once said about Led Zeppelin, "I don't have to listen to their music. Just looking at one of their album covers makes me want to vomit..."

I can only assume he was disgusted because Led Zeppelin happened to be making a lot of money while at the same time, making music. They must have sold out.

The punk culture resisted the

mainstream at any cost. They hated the conformist attitudes they saw in popular music and society, and attempted to live on the fringe.

Punk music wasn't exactly musically interesting or original. Rather, it was the extension of the musicians' rebellious attitudes

If MTV had never existed, a lot of bands would never have been considered popular.

toward bands like Led Zeppelin and the Rolling Stones, whom they saw as flawed because of their popularity.

I wonder what that member of the Clash would think of our "alternative" culture and punk-like bands such as Nirvana and Green Day, which have become pop-music staples.

It turns out popular music is largely influenced by the media. If MTV had never existed, a lot of bands would never have been considered popular.

Music magazines tell us we should all go out and buy the new Boyz II Men album, or Garth Brooks' new one. We are told it is good music, and we believe it. Music consumers have lost, through the media, their perception of what comprises interesting music.

Bottom line: Money runs the music business. For this reason, it has become sadly mediocre. The public is buying into media-generated corporate money-makers, and are being kept from music that might be interesting or innovative because it doesn't make money.

The only solution I see is to eliminate the economic aspect from the music industry so those who want to make music are left to make music, and the consumer is left to make up his or her own mind.

Paul Van Sickle is a columnist for the Emerald.

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