

PERSPECTIVES

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Stone rolls too far

Rolling Stone feature teeters on kiddie porn

Rolling Stone's year of the woman was 1998. That is, if you consider four cover photos of women in bras or negligees, one topless and another completely naked a progressively stellar year.

Women like Mariah Carey and Sarah Michelle Gellar, for better or worse, decided to dress in clothes (or a lack of clothes) that they felt were in their best interest.

Great.

Both of these women are lucid adults who have the maturity, at least legally, to pose for any picture any way they please.

Crap? Maybe, but the U.S. Constitution protects their freedom to present themselves in this fashion. Don't like it? Don't buy it.

The laws of the United States also protect minors, persons under the age of 18 for most legal purposes, from being presented in such a sexual fashion.

Rolling Stone has done just this.

The latest issue of Rolling Stone contains photos and an article on pop singer Britney Spears. Britney is 17, and the photos, as well as the article, are extremely sexual. This is illegal.

One photo by Davis LaChapelle shows Spears in her room posing for the camera with the oh-so-familiar "come hither" look. Surrounded by dolls and stuffed animals, Spears is wearing hot pants, a bra and an open sweater. The sweater is spread by what author Steve Daly calls Spear's "ample chest."

And it get worse from there.

In another photo, Spears is wearing hot pants with "baby" printed on the back. She is holding a pink child's bicycle, complete with a little pink and white basket.

All of the photos give the impression that this is a little girl just waiting for an older man to teach her a thing or two. The problem with that is, if I, or most guys on this campus, were that older man, we could be thrown in jail for statutory rape.

Opinion



Jason George

sexual fashion?

I don't think they can.

The U.S. Postal Service defines child pornography as materials featuring minors that "appeal to a prurient interest in sex." Webster's defines prurient interests as "appealing to unusual sexual desire." Therefore, anyone mailing anything in the United States that would appeal to adults in an unusual sexual way is breaking the law. And I am under the opinion that adults fantasizing about this girl's body is a prurient act.

You may be asking yourself if this is stretching the law to make a point; this law concerns only obscene porn, right?

Wrong.

According to the law, "the item does not even have to be

obscene to be non-mailable," it must appeal to an unnatural desire. Consider this parallel example: If I created my own newsletter with the title "Inside the Heart, Mind and Bedroom of a Teenage Dream," spoke of this minor's "honeyed thighs," and printed pictures of her in push-up bras, what would people think of me?

They would consider me a propagator of child pornography, and I would most likely find myself receiving three hits and a cot, courtesy of the nearest federal prison.

The only difference is that Rolling Stone is considered a reputable publication, and I am just an everyday citizen.

Has Rolling Stone seen its folly? I noticed on Rolling Stone's on-line edition, the text on the magazine cover had been changed from referring to Spears as a "Teenage Dream" to a "Pop Queen."

Perhaps they wanted to tone down the overt sexual exploitation. I called Rolling Stone and spoke with someone in the publicity department who said I needed to talk to someone who had just walked in.

I was transferred to voice mail. Typical.

Lastly, if you are wondering if Britney Spears has any responsibility, the answer is no. Her parents carry the responsibility. The simple reasoning is children have a lot to learn before they grow up.

So does Rolling Stone.

Jason George is a student activities reporter for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.

ODE examines social obligation

The past 10 days have been difficult for readers, Emerald staff members and columnist Vince Medeiros.

Reaction to Medeiros' column "Short and Sweet" on April 2, was swift and strongly worded. Anger. Depression. Frustration. Disappointment.

All were adjectives used by concerned readers in phone calls, meetings and letters to the editor. This reaction resulted in a story in The Register-Guard and a meeting among about 25 readers and three Emerald editors, including myself, last Friday.

For The Register-Guard story, the Emerald issued a statement that was also sent to the Women's Center. Medeiros also issued a statement that was read aloud at the meeting.

It is embarrassing for the Emerald to admit, but parts of the column were fiction. We do not allow alcohol or pornography in the newsroom, and we have a written policy against either one being in the office.

The Emerald and Medeiros did not intend to offend anyone with the column. Nor was the intent to perpetuate ideas of sexual crimes, sexism or racism. The Emerald is very concerned about rape and sex crimes. We have made every effort, and will continue to do so, to talk with readers about the column. Medeiros has also met with Kyla Schuller from the Women's Center and is planning to meet with representatives from MEChA.

In two constructive meetings last week, readers suggested Emerald policy changes. We discussed the Emerald's social responsibility to its readers and its First Amendment rights. We talked about short-term and long-term changes. And we talked about journalistic standards.

All those suggestions provided us with ideas for the future. I am committed to turning this issue into something positive. Discussion among editors of exactly what that something is will take place over the next two weeks. After two weeks, we hope to know where to go from here.

Let me also establish steps the Emerald will not take. Some people have suggested that the Emerald should eliminate certain language for its columnists. But to do so would start the Emerald down a dangerous path of censorship, which is something we can all agree is not a positive result.

Let me also send my thanks to those people who attended the meeting last Friday and others who have met with Emerald editors.

As Medeiros wrote in his statement, "at least this event has served to enrich the democratic process on this campus. And that, I suppose, is a good thing."

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Opinion



Ryan Frank

