

opinions

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The Daily Collegian
Friday, Nov. 8, 1985

editorial opinion

Responsible but unrestricted

A press in chains reflects a people in chains.
—CBS News anchorman Dan Rather in a telegram sent to South African President P.W. Botha.

On Nov. 2, the South African government introduced sweeping restrictions on news coverage of political and social unrest within the country.

By government edict, journalists will not be allowed to cover "unrest" including stone-throwing, school boycotts and work stoppages. Journalists focusing their cameras on the police can also be censured.

Under the new sanctions, a journalist could be ordered out of the area if the police determine that his or her presence could turn the situation into one of violence.

For foreign journalists, including television crews, radio reporters and photographers, the announcement was a severe blow.

The Foreign Correspondents' Association condemned the action saying the ban was "the beginning of the slippery slide toward a totally controlled press in South Africa."

The government-controlled South African press opposes the exploitation of South African violence. The South African press has accused television teams of paying Blacks to burn books or repeat incidents of stone-throwing so

they could film them. Further, the papers have also said journalists sometimes knew beforehand when and where violence would occur.

The bottom line is that the foreign press has been accused of inciting violence and presenting an unfair picture of events, in an effort to stir protests and economic sanctions from abroad.

South African officials claim the restrictions should not be viewed as a move against a free press, but as a move to reduce violence that has rocked that country for more than a year.

But cutting of the world's right to information isn't the way to reduce violence in South Africa.

One charge made by the Botha government is that journalists, particularly foreign television crews, have encouraged violence in an effort to portray the dramatic and desperate situation of oppressed South African Blacks.

Foreign journalists have vehemently denied charges that they manufactured or twisted the news.

But neither the media nor the South African government are innocent.

During hostage crises in Iran and Lebanon, journalists were criticized for putting terrorist organizations in the television spotlight, thus adding fuel to the growing inferno.

As a result, leading journalists re-

considered the way they cover terrorist activities. No such questions have been raised thus far in the coverage of South African unrest.

Both combatants have their hands soiled with newspapers' ink, but the answer is not clamping the lid on information leaving the country.

Black South Africans have a right to bring their opinions to the world. And at this time, the only channel is through the foreign press. Likewise, citizens of the world have a right to an unfiltered look at the South African unrest.

The loss of either right will cause the open wounds of oppression to fester, poisoning all of South Africa — both Black and White.

The answer: responsible, but unrestricted journalism.

The media must reaffirm that the priority in South Africa is not to inflame the current unrest for the sake of high ratings in the United States. Journalists must also reexamine their role in the conflict, focusing on the need to impartially present the facts of the conflict while relegating opinions and social activism to the opinion pages.

At the same time, the media cannot allow itself to be held hostage by a government like South Africa's — one seeking to camouflage its own injustices.

For the South African government, the watchdogs will be waiting whether or not the cameras are running.

Op/ed: executions

As Nov. 19 draws near, the State Correctional Institution at Rockview will become the focus of a great deal of controversy.

For the first time in 23 years, two sentenced criminals — John Lesko, 26, of Pittsburgh and Michael Travaglia, 26, of Washington Township — are scheduled to die in the electric chair on that day.

And since Gov. Dick Thornburgh authorized these executions in August, the citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania have rekindled the debate surrounding the death penalty.

Opinion Editor Doug Popovich

wants to know what you think about the use of the death penalty. On Wednesday, Nov. 13, The Daily Collegian will publish an op/ed page with your views on this topic. If you have an opinion you'd like to share, present it in the form of a letter-to-the-editor (one typed page, double spaced) or forum (no more than three typed pages, double spaced) by Tuesday, Nov. 12, at 1 p.m. in the Collegian office, 128 Carnegie Building. Letters and forums must be presented by the author in person with some form of identification and must include semester standing and major.

the Collegian

Friday, Nov. 8, 1985
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Gall L. Johnson Business Manager
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Letters Policy: The Daily Collegian encourages comments on news coverage, editorial policy and University affairs. Letters should be typewritten, double-spaced, signed by no more than two people and not more than 30 lines. Students' letters should include semester standing, major and campus of the writer. Letters from alumni should include the major and year of graduation of the writer. All writers should provide their address and phone number for verification of the letter. The Collegian reserves the right to edit letters for length and to reject letters if they are libelous or do not conform to standards of good taste. Because of the number of letters received, the Collegian cannot guarantee publication of all the letters it receives. All letters received become the property of Collegian Inc. Names will be withheld on request. Letters may also be selected for publication in The Weekly Collegian.

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What do you think?

Although half of Fall Semester is over, many interesting issues facing students in Happy Valley remain unresolved — what's your opinion?

The Daily Collegian's Board of Opinion would like to know your thoughts concerning:

- Possible changes in Penn State's general education requirements.
- The results of the student disinvestment poll and whether or not it should be presented to the University Board of Trustees.
- The proposed change from a 15-week to a 14-week semester.
- The University alcohol crackdown and proposed policies of the Alcohol Task Force aimed at taming Nittany Lion fans.

Authors should submit letters-to-the-editor (one typed page, double-spaced) or forums (up to three typed pages, double-spaced) in person at the Collegian office in 128 Carnegie.

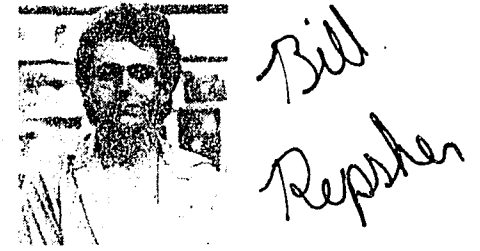
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What if: Forever torn between Joan Collins leaving Dynasty and the end of the world

History is like a bad burrito — it keeps coming back on you. The rocky road of ice cream, I mean fate, leads one to ponder over the road not taken. What if Hitler would have won World War II? What if I had eaten only one Big Mac rather than two? Late at night, great questions like these assault my tired mind.

What if?



Bill Repsher

lanes of yore. We may even hully-gully through the future.

What if Moslems had been the first group to settle America?

Imagine that. I guess these crazy Christians would be riding a rail straight to hell for not accepting Mohammed as their personal savior. And just look at them nuts in Ireland killing each other! Why, a few good missionaries could show them the Light.

Come on gramps, The Old Time Mecca Hour is on! I would have a glow-in-the-dark Allah on my dashboard. And of course, the wealth of this great nation would be a sign from God that we Moslems must be right in our beliefs.

What if The Beatles had never broken up? When someone or something dies before its time, it attains mythological proportions. If someone were to shoot me, I'd be considered a great writer. (Please, this is not an invitation — being a hack has its rewards.)

If The Beatles had never broken up, they would be considered a mediocre band that was great in the '60s. The way everyone but John Lennon went after the split, the group may very well have given Barry Manilow a run for his estrogen.

What if toilets were still nothing more than holes in the ground?

Laugh all you want, then try going to the bathroom in a bedpan. Let's face it — civilization would crumble without the toilet. Were it never invented, we'd be a nation, may a world, of litterboxes and poop-scoopers. We'd have to curb ourselves.

Take away a man's toilet, and you've stripped away his dignity. When was the last time you hugged your sister (and not to maintain regurgital balance)?

What if Joe Dimaggio had been a lousy baseball player?

It would be a sad day for the manufacturers of coffee makers, and Simon and Garfunkel would have to whistle or go "wo-wo-wo" for that line in "Mrs. Robinson."

What if my surname were "King"? I'd have a son and name him Wiener.

What if The Original Sin were not the emergence of sexual desire? That's easy, just choose the next heinous moral sin in line. We all know that rubbing balloons on your hair and sticking them to walls is a shameful act of immorality. Don't tell anyone, but I have explicit photos of Meryl Streep rubbing balloons on her hair before she became famous.

What if television had never been invented? Considering all the warped garbage on it,

I could easily say that mankind would be advanced to levels of purity and compassion surpassing even *Hee Haw* and *The Brady Bunch*. But then again, it has also been an incredible form of mass communication. I can tell you in total confidence that it's 70 degrees in Honolulu with partly cloudy skies, although I've never been there.

I want to pursue this question, but *Cheers* just started.

The future is like — oh, screw all these metaphors. If you want to know what the future is like, get a high school yearbook and look up the class saying. As for me, I shall hully-gully through my time warp.

What if I become a famous writer? That would indicate a serious lapse in taste on the part of millions. Hey, the more I think about it, the more optimistic the previous statement becomes. I've already had a slight taste of fame. Like diet soda, it goes down nice but leaves a terrible aftertaste. It makes me belch and leaves me feeling empty. Fame has nothing to do with talent; I've a long way to go before I can respect myself in the morning.

But if I ever make it, look me up, babies. We'll do some donuts and get a perm. Maybe even catch *The Love Boat* on VCR. I love your nails. See — I'm already a gnatly socialite.

William S. Repsher is a senior majoring in English and a columnist for The Daily Collegian. His column appears every Friday — unless the world ends.

What if Joan Collins leaves Dynasty? I will positively die! And this next question will surely happen.

What if the world ends? Death is as natural as a granola bar. What's all the hullybaloo about? I'm wearing clean underwear — I'm ready. If mankind smells end zone, he's going to bull his way in and spike the mother. The survivalists can tear down the goal posts afterwards.

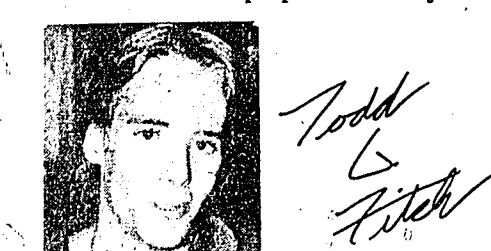
I prefer to die of old age in a shimmering meadow on a summer night listening to Springsteen singing "Thunder Road" on a transistor radio while butterflies and blue jays soar through the soft darkness scented by lilacs and the static freshness of rushing water. My beautiful, grey-haired wife of 50 years will hold my hand and gently kiss my lips before my blue eyes flutter and gaze into her blessed, tear-filled eyes for the last time.

My second choice is to go out the way Nelson Rockefeller did.

opinions

Rating rock albums: Lyrical lunacy in the land of legislation

The Moral Majority is Neither — a bumper sticker on a '62 Falcon. Follow that car. Occasionally, while formulating my usual array of sarcasms, riddles, and generally light-hearted comments on the human being as a social animal, something not so fluffy makes me wonder. Often I wonder things like "What's with these people? Is this a joke?"



Doug Popovich

I'd like to put one item like this in perspective. Let's just say I view this fiasco in the same light as people who walk into the local McDonald's and play "If Rambo wanted something to drink with his five burgers, Rambo would have asked for it!" and then proceed with an experiment entitled "The Effects of Shotgun Pellets on Small Children Eating Cookies Shaped like Grimace."

Analogies aside, is everyone ready for this joke? Here you go: album rating.

Yes, isn't that a good one? I thought so. Don't laugh too long though, because it's a reality.

Recently, there has been actual Senate hearings debating "objectionable" music. But don't worry, both sides of the issue have been represented, mind you.

On one side, the Freedom-of-expression-how-could-anyone-take-this-seriously-if-they-don't-like-it-they-don't-have-to-buy-it faction was represented by a number of rock-and-roll musicians including Dee Snyder of the group Twisted Sister and quasi-intellectual madman/philosopher/satirist Frank Zappa.

The other side, typified by a you're-all-going-to-hell-if-we-can't-censor-books-we'll-censor-music-no-we-don't-know-where-to-draw-our-arbitrary-lines attitude, was spoken for by members of a group called the Parents' Music Resource Center. (Sounds like where you might find members of an alumni marching band, doesn't it?)

Of course the focal point of these hearings is lyrics in some songs which are sexually explicit or "satanic." One rating-monger lady from the PMRC held up albums during the hearing as examples of these dreadful portents of evil.

Commenting on the *Pyromania* album from the British rock group Def Leppard, this preordained passer of judgement and authority on all things moral said mockingly "Yes, *Pyromania*. Yes, burn, burn the building down!"

Oh please, lady. I know every time I look at that album cover I get this strange feeling inside me that doesn't go away until I destroy something with fire. I bet it's the same way

with lots of people out there. Right, for sure, yep-yep.

"Sexually explicit." One suggestion to potential album raters: before continuing your ridiculous quest, find a knowledgeable literary authority who can interpret some of the word games in a Shakespeare play of your choice. Then try to find the relevance of your statements on today's music. Not that I value the lyrics as I do the plays, but relatively speaking they are no more righteous.

"Satanic." What a wonderfully evil word. A good eye-catcher as well, especially when capitalized. I'll bet those heavy metal bands research dark tomes so they can trick young listeners into granting their souls to Satan just by singing along with the lyrics. Uh-huh, every day, don't you know it?

Ok, so *Whitesnake's* "Slide it in" is more than subtly suggestive. In fact I think it's rather tasteless. But big deal, who am I?

That's my opinion and by God I've got a right to express it. But, I have no right to force my opinion on other people as truth-in-law, and neither does anyone else, even if that opinion is more right-spited than mine. Lighten up, that's what I say. Such lyrics don't really bother me. The way I see it, anyone who can walk around singing "Slide it in" has got to have a sense of humor.

I don't wish to imply that the PMRC attacks specifically heavy metal bands and that all HM bands are evil, or anything of the sort. It is important to realize that while some bands attempt to write songs that fit the

heavy metal genre, most bands today are more interested in their own "sound" and don't like to be generalized as "New Wave," "Garage Rock," "Progressive" or "Heavy Metal."

Even within the bounds of accepted heavy metal bands there are redeeming features. Many songs focus on the more realistic aspects of male/female relations; not all these songs depict Love as something that takes about fifteen minutes. A friend of mine at home is a dedicated "Headbanger" and I've listened to many albums I never want to hear again, but the music is powerful (though that is not always a compliment).

Also, one band — Britain's *Iron Maiden* — draws from classical literature, mythology, and history to form some wonderfully intelligent lyrics. If you must pass judgment, at least be sure you aren't generalizing.

The major audience for this kind of music consists of males in the junior to senior high school age group. This group is living in a world of extreme social pressures. Listening to strange lyrics might set one into a "group of individuals" if you will. While they may not be nerds, they likely are insecure.

Imagine it as a giant, leather-coated pill taken to relieve a temporary case of identity crisis. This usually goes away once a student discovers dating or a group of friends who accept him as himself. Explanation? Possibly. Justification? Definitely not. Oversimplification? Of course. Alterable by little stickers or anything else? No way.

Even when implemented, album rating is a joke. Afflicted albums will bear stickers warning potential buyers that purchase of the album might forfeit any hope of a bright future.

I, as a rock singer whose album was just rated, am merely going to surround the warning sticker with stickers of my own that make a satirical farce of the whole affair, right?

The truth is there is a definite division between reality and the odd humor of these "objectionable" lyrics. I would guess at least 99 percent of the young listeners see this division. If the PMRC cannot see this separation, then perhaps they could use their admirable faith to trust that it exists, because it does. At least 99 percent of these young listeners can see it. The 1 percent or less who can't had problems long before sick lyrics entered their lives.

This dedication to a cause is in itself admirable. It would be useful if this energy could be changed from a destructive to a creative force. A number of unsaved whales or what-have-you might actually benefit from the PMRC's commitment, zeal, and media coverage.

But when it comes right down to it, while saving helps whales, album rating doesn't really help anyone.

Todd G. Fitch is a sophomore majoring in community information systems and a columnist for The Daily Collegian. His column appears every other Friday.

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