

The unifying force of Springer

Jerry Springer.

The name breeds contempt, anger, rage — and ratings. Whether you like him or not, you've gotta admit he's popular.

The talk show host recently released a feature film entitled *Ringmaster*, and through the cheese and crud he's famous for, all audiences are treated to is gratuitous T&A and a blatant attempt to justify the existence of his raunchy program. He tries to answer his critics. He wants us to believe that what he does on TV everyday is right and in the public interest. The problem is, he doesn't need to.

You see, it isn't all that hard to take shots at a man who gives "Shunned Lesbian Lovers" a soapbox to air their grief, dab their tears and kick the shit out of their former partners on television. Springer strips away the veneer and bares the souls of his guests for all to see — he peers into their troubled, pathetic and, well, normal lives and discovers portraits of Americana. And because of this realism — because he exposes society at its most degrading — it's easy for the family-values set to shirk their responsibility for the situation and shout epithets and rhetoric at a man who doesn't take a swing unless the target lies below the belt. They blame him. But they all forget one thing — we love it.

We — meaning all of us — can't get enough, and that's the greatness of Springer. Here is a man, as vile as he may seem, that unites us all in a subtly and overtly segregated world. He is a paragon of base humanity. His methods are awful, but he shows that behind all facades of class, dignity, ethnicity, power and fashion, all people are

the same: weak, sensational, vulnerable, pitiful, sad, angry, jealous, inferior, unsure, hurtful, protective and insecure. We like joy. We like pain.

In a word, we're human.

We're animals, all of us. We could say the trailer park hick complaining because "My Brother's a Cross-dresser" and wearing a John Deere hat

Editorial

and a 1983 ZZ Top World Tour muscle-shirt is more fucked up than the rest of us, but who are we kidding? Have you ever been dumped? Have you ever been screwed over by a friend? Have you ever failed a test you were sure you



had aced? Have you ever pined after someone you couldn't have? How did you feel?

In the shallow, crass and materialistic world we live in, you felt like ZZ Top-boy looks. It may not appear the same, but it is the same, and it hurts equally, and we all know it.

Our flaws may be different,

but they are there. Through caricatures and stereotypes, all Springer does is give the insecurities of the average person physical equivalents — the morbidly obese, the sex-crazed, the freakish, "Teenagers Who Got Multiple Piercings Behind Mom's Back", the clearly stupid and the just plain ignorant. His show gives us a chance to mock those less fortunate, to express our disgusting, cold-hearted evil sides — it lets us, if only for a brief hour, escape the careful correctness of our world and be the ravenous dogs we are. And we thank him for it by tuning in the next day.

But not only that, he also gives us a chance to feel compassion. When all a lonely, overwhelmed 15-year-old girl can do is cry on his stage, the situation forces us to drop the voyeurism, lose our smug, "glad it ain't me" grins and feel genuine (albeit fleeting) concern. When we have to be, people are pretty good.

Kernels of truth are found in strange places. *Ringmaster* held few, but Springer's show holds plenty. Never has one person, in such a succinct way, revealed what human beings are like at the lowest common denominator. He's a modern-day Thomas Hobbes — he shows that underneath everything we are all scared, self-interested little freaks searching for safety and some sort of affirmation that we aren't worse off than the person next to us. Frailties, faults and problems exist inside all of us. Who knows, maybe yours are bizarre enough to land you on his show.

But until then, realize you're human. That in itself will bond you with the rest of us. It's just too bad Springer had to make a poor movie to prove this point.

GREG MCFARLANE

Letters

Talent at Dalhousie

To the editor,

Last Wednesday night I attended a variety show for the first time since I've been at Dalhousie. *For The Health Of It '98* was put on by the Schools of Physiotherapy, Human Communication Disorders, Occupational Therapy, Nursing, and the College of Pharmacy. I was honoured to be asked to be one of the five judges of this event, but had little idea of what to expect. However, I had been told by many people that a lot of work went into each act.

I sat in total amazement as I watched the first skit. A group of about 40 Occupational Therapy students were giving a phenomenal performance, with dance numbers and songs thrown in. I then realized how difficult it was going to be to judge each entry. I sat through five absolutely unforgettable performances. I couldn't believe how much time must have been spent constructing the props, learning the songs, choreographing each dance move, and practicing as a group.

In between each school's act were 'fillers' — individuals who would sing a solo or duet. These students were also incredibly talented. All in all, it was probably the most enjoyable event I've attended at Dal this year. I'm amazed at how many talented students we have walking around our campus. I hope everyone realizes that we have a lot of great events featuring Dal students throughout the year, and I hope everyone makes an effort to experience one of these events, whether it be a varsity game, a theatre or music department production, or even Open Mic Night at the Grawood. It will make your year much more enjoyable!

Dean Naugler
DSU VP Community Affairs

Playboy and Pepsi — why not?

To the editor,

I have to express my concern, and even dismay, with some of the recent events here at Dalhousie.

I have been a student here for five years. I have been through a lot at Dal and my frustrations have finally reached a point where I have to comment.

The source of my frustration is the recent grumblings over the presence of *Playboy* and Pepsi on campus. I admit that I am not as informed on the intricacies of these issues as I perhaps should be. However, I feel I have to say something.

At the end of the last school year we at Dal experienced a strike. Articles were published and demonstrations were held with the intention of speaking out against tuition hikes and failure by the university to pay the professors. What people failed to realize is that the money simply wasn't there!

Now we have large corporations interested in spending money at Dal and again the campus windbags are out in full force to

oppose these subsidies. I see it as a harmless way for the university to supplement its budget. Those who oppose tuition hikes must face that the money must come from somewhere. It is either going to come from these companies or it is going to come from students.

If Pepsi wants to come here and spend money, let them. Students must realize they can't have their cake and eat it too.

On the issue of *Playboy*, I think this is another case of the local windbags making a mountain out of a mole hill. Let's take this for what it really is. It's a couple of young guys throwing parties for students. These parties don't include strippers or go-go dancers. In fact, they are quite tame. They certainly are nothing compared to a Sunday night at the Palace!

As far as having the university associated with *Playboy*, why not? This is not the trashy magazine it has been made out to be. I understand the argument that it objectifies women in some cases, but as one person has pointed out, it has also done a lot to promote feminist causes over the years. It also, and this may be cliché, has published articles from some of the most respected authors and journalists of the past 30 years.

This issue has been blown way out of proportion and it is my feeling that there are a select few who would propose to speak for the Dalhousie community. They should think twice before making that assumption.

Devin Maxwell

How Sohrab got his groove back

To the editor,

I got game. Or at least that is what at least one Gazette reader seems to think. As a malevolent misanthrope disguised as jubilant journalist, somehow I must have pulled the wool over her eyes and convinced her I have something to say.

Articles written by this attention-seeking, affection-starved, pseudo-quasi-intellectual are done mostly for self-gratification and out of self-indulgence, audience be damned. And, to boot, I am usually busier than a cigar vendor at the White House. Never thought my articles, appearing with the infrequency they do, were actually being read. Hence, my sentiment at this point is similar to that of Jesse "The Governor" Ventura's — what to do now?

Maybe I could answer the questions that plague all our minds, like "where do the guys who hang out at the SUB all day go at night?", "why are there so many kids from Ontario here?", "Is Bret "the Hitman" Hart going to run for political office?" and of course, "What kind of trouble will Monica Lewinsky's big mouth get her in next time?"

The evolution of love may be loving to hate, but a cynic with an audience can be a dangerous thing.

Sohrab Farid

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98