

Letters

Don't lose sight on Playboy

To the editor,
I'm writing to add my voice to the discussion over *Playboy* magazine's presence on campus. While I respect the opinions expressed on all sides, I feel compelled to reiterate the broader issue underlying the discourse. It seems to have been lost on some of my peers.

This is not about censorship, nor freedom of expression, and it's not about repression of nudity and sexuality. It's not just about the magazine itself, or a couple of guys throwing some parties. It's about legitimate concerns and fears which stem from the images of women

promoted by magazines like this one.

The photos themselves may not appear to be misogynistic but the underlying images and messages are. The message conveyed is: women are objects of play whose worth is determined by male-based and artificial standards of beauty. It belittles adult women and drives young women to eating disorders and other mental illnesses. It contributes to male violence against women.

I'm not saying that *Playboy* makes women suicidal or turns men into predators.

But unhealthy, negative images and ideas about women are constantly reinforced by magazines (yes, including women's magazines), movies,

advertisements, television, and the rest of media culture that bombards us everyday. To deny that those images and ideas have an impact flies in the face of the multi-billion dollar logic that fuels the entire advertising industry.

Subliminal messages exert enormous influence on the opinions we hold and the choices we make — whether products to buy or politicians to vote for. When the message suggests degradation and violence, it's wrong to condone.

Playboy has the right to advertise on campus and Dalhousie students have the freedom to buy the magazine and attend *Playboy*-sponsored events. We shouldn't, however, lose sight of what's really being sold.

Erin Skinner

Opinions

Just admit you like naked women

Once again, I find myself involved in a discussion that many are tired of hearing about. This week it is *Playboy*, and this is in response to a piece written by Matthew Eisses in last week's Gazette.

First of all, Mr. Eisses says, "the first thing we have to get over is nudity". Well, Mr. Eisses, the problem that many people have with pornography has nothing to do with nudity. I myself, though opposed to pornography, believe that nudity can be beautiful. This is only in certain forms, such as when portrayed with taste in a film, or in certain forms of erotica. Even nudity in *Playboy* can be beautiful, such as the Katarina Witt feature that was recently published.

The problem with pornography, for those who have a problem with it, tends to be that pornography portrays women as passive sex objects.

With *Playboy*, for example, the woman is on display, whether naked or near-naked, simply for man's enjoyment. It is this objectification that many are opposed to.

Mr. Eisses also mentions pornographic magazines that feature men. Just because these magazines have not often been a subject of recent discussions on pornography, doesn't mean that many people aren't opposed to them as well.

The fact of the matter is there aren't any representatives from these magazines here, on my university campus. And if there were, I'd be opposed to them as well.

It is evident from Mr. Eisses' contribution that he did not personally attend the forum on pornography, because he misinterprets comments made by Dr. Marjorie Stone.

Mr. Eisses claims that *Playboy* does not promote violence towards women or children. It is likely that *Playboy* hasn't featured images or ideas promoting violence; well, not directly. Had you been at the forum, Mr. Eisses, you would have heard Dr. Stone's argument that displayed the correlation between soft-core porn (such as *Playboy*), and hard-core porn, which often focuses on violence towards women and children.

Playboy displays women as passive objects, and when women are passive objects, they are not equal persons and can therefore be dominated.

On a more personal note, I'd like to comment on Mr. Eisses' response to the woman who said, "stamp a barcode on my ass and I'm a *Playboy* model

too." I am that woman. I believe you've misinterpreted my point. When I spoke at the forum, I expressed my feeling that when I look at the women on display in *Playboy*, I see bodies that are like mine (in at least some respects), and that these bodies are essentially being sold as products. My feeling on this was that if these women are available for purchase, then I feel that I, too, am a marketable product (hence the barcode on my ass).

With regards to the comments on the inflation of tits and the shaving of pubic hair, I was not

saying that I feel these are necessary means to make my body more beautiful. Enlarged breasts and that neat little line of pubic hair are not beautiful to me. It disgusts me when you claim that these are necessary means for competing in the business. These "beauty" standards are ones set by magazines such as *Playboy*, and if you ask most men, they'd probably prefer that their own girlfriends weren't shaved in pretty designs and pumped with silicone.

Finally, Mr. Eisses, your claim that *Playboy* to you, means "beauty, love, and freedom" sounds as pathetic as Bruce Yip's revelation while watching a biography on Hugh Hefner. *Playboy* is not a social movement, folks. Can you just admit you like to look at naked women and stop giving me all this bullshit?

Also, for those of you who tell me that *Playboy* is "not as bad" as many other forms of pornography, this doesn't mean it's okay. It's true that you have a right to read *Playboy*. But when I walk into a building like the A&A, here at the academic institution which I am paying to attend, I feel it is a violation of my right to feel secure when I am bombarded by images of that fucking little bunny head.

I can't put an end to pornography, but I shouldn't have to deal with it on my university campus.

This, Mr. Eisses, is truly the debate. And I didn't appreciate your derogatory "Well, miss", either. That's MS. Granter to you.

GINA GRANTER

Takin' us for a ride

Anyone who came to Dalhousie this year as a result of *Maclean's* magazine's "Guide to Universities" must have been disappointed when they stepped into the Grawood.

According to *Maclean's*, the Grawood had "metamorphosed into one of the most popular bars in Halifax" last year.

Honestly. The Grawood. I'm not kidding.

But hold on a second. So our naive *Maclean's*-led frosh were let down there. But if they wanted to get back on track, all they had to do was venture off campus to one of the

"Hottest Hangouts" around — Robie Street.

In last year's guide, *Robie Street* was listed as one of the coolest places in the city — every last kilometre of it.

Point Pleasant Park is also a supposed hotbed of student activity. We all chill down there, don't we? I don't, but maybe I should, because *Maclean's* has good information that the park is where it's at. So, for the past three years, I've missed out.

Where has Canada's national magazine gone wrong? How does a publication with a solid reputation end up printing not only falsehoods, but tripe?

Every year high school and university students pick up this supposedly-comprehensive guide and make "informed" choices about where they ought to go to school the following year. They use it as an integral tool in their decision-making process.

And this is the trash they get.

I have to wonder if the coordinators of the university guide have ever stepped out of their offices and on to a campus. Were they even educated on one?

You can tell they've never been to Halifax. Any of us here can attest that, as much as we dig the Grawood for a late-afternoon beer or something to eat between classes, that hardly elevates it to the status of "one of the most popular bars in Halifax".

And as far as Point Pleasant Park is concerned, unless you're a serial rapist, hiding in the bushes isn't the best way to win friends and influence others, especially on a Friday night.

And, if that isn't bad enough, *Maclean's* still, in 1998, chose to label Halifax with that "Seattle of the East" stigma.

Note to Bob Lewis, editor of *Maclean's*: Kurt Cobain is dead, Courtney Love's gone glam, Eddie Vedder's stopped fighting and

started singing again and Soundgarden doesn't exist anymore. It's over. Move on. We are not Seattle, and our musicians aren't even half as good, so just let it go, y'dig? We know how you young kids like to listen to your "rock n' roll" and all that "weird stuff", but I think it's time you grew up.

So how does *Maclean's* get this information anyhow? What obviously-flawed process do they go through that enables them to mislead students so well?

I wanted to know and, by a twist of luck, I found out.

Last Wednesday Russell, a

Editorial

Toronto-based *Maclean's* representative, called me at the Gazette office. He wanted me to tell him what was hip at Dal. I was pensive. I mean, I don't hang out at Point Pleasant Park. So, obviously, I'm not exactly down with the "in" crowd.

It turns out last year's informant was "international and economics student" Chris Adams. *Maclean's* didn't feel it necessary to state Adams was the president of the DSU. Perhaps editors of the magazine feared readers would detect the foul stench of self-promotion — most things labelled "hot" at Dal fell under the DSU banner. Perhaps they feared readers would recognize half-assed research methods.

Rule number one, Russ, if you want to get a taste of a location and its people — go there!

Go. Go, go, go. You have no idea what people are truly like over the phone or fax machine. I mean, when I fill out this form and let you know that the Lighthouse is the hottest hangout around, Gatsby's is an amazing dance bar on Wednesdays and *Playboy* is the magazine of choice for Dalhousie feminists, well, you might think I'm lying. My unflinching sincerity may go undetected and instead be misread as a collegial panty raid-esque prank.

Then, because your education editors are such critical thinkers, they would leave my worthwhile, honest contributions out of the mix. And that would be a huge disservice to anyone looking for the real deal on Dal.

And Russ, if *Maclean's* really wants my services, a little coin would be nice. It's the least you can do if you want to get taken for a ride. I mean, we pay for your magazine.

GREG MCFARLANE

THE DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

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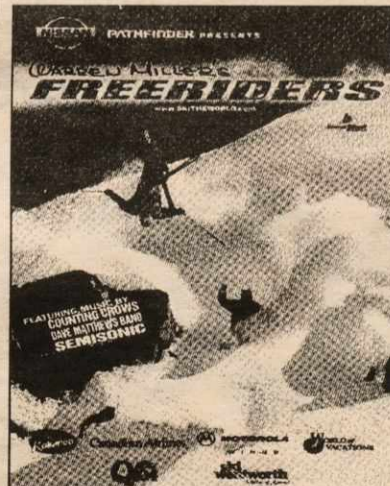
contributors

Jen Cleary • Katherine Hebb • Andrew Cook • Sohrab Farid • Luke Dobek • Old Saint Nick • Twelve intoxicated reindeer • one funky-ass bunch of elves bringin' you joy throughout the season

Student Union Building, Dalhousie University, 6136 University Ave, rm 312, Halifax, NS, B3H 4J2.
editorial tel. 902 494-2507, facsimile 902 494-8890. e-mail. GAZETTE@is2.dal.ca
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