

MUGWUMP JOURNAL

By Melanie and Jayde

Well, We're going to jump right into the complaining this week and waste no time about it.

Wayne Carson and Gary Clarke both got hair cuts. Or, maybe Gary got a hair cut and Wayne grew ears. Ever notice how big those ears of his are?

Speaking of Wayne, maybe we hadn't better mention the time he kicked in a residence window. Oops, too late. Or what about his abuse to news reporters - hitting them with large manila envelopes, not once, but twice. And then there was that incident with the door. He was sooo sorry, but not to worry, she's still cute (and he's not at all sexist!).

We want to take this opportunity to congratulate this years Student Union for being the most boring council in a long time - no scandals, no protests, no nothing. Of course there was that little faux pas by Wayne, when he practically sat in Dr. Downey's lap at the Student Union Banquet (not once saying "Boo' to Dean Austin). Definitely poor head table etiquette; tsk, tsk.

Well, we must not forget to thank the SU for the couch they have given to us (and all the dirt and bugs that came with it).

Enough of that. Next . . .

I'm sure many of you were so lucky to have encountered a wonderful session of pre-registration this week. Those blasted business courses. Limits on class sizes for practically every course. And the line-up . . . 4 hours wait for the most part. Apparently, the computing software the faculty was going to use failed at the last minute. Just typical. And even more annoying - no priority given to graduating students (like every other year). That was the dumbest decision of all!

Shall I also complain about the last minute decision by many profs to quickly sneak in JUST ONE MORE ASSIGNMENT before classes finish. That makes 3 assignments and 2 tests next week. No, maybe I won't bother.

What about the way people park in the SUB parking lot? No one ever parks within the lines; people park 3 cars deep so the middle guy can't get out and the spaces between cars are only big enough for *Austin Mini's* to get through. What if you drive a Caprie Classic (otherwise known as a '77 boat). Some sort of action should be taken.

One thing that really bothers me is the new liquor advertising laws. Great, we're allowed to sell liquor ads. But not full page ads. So, advertisers wants 2 facing half-page ads (that's why you never see a Social Club ad on the back page anymore). Do you know how difficult that makes designing the paper's layout? Guess you'd have to do it to appreciate my complaint. It really makes me wonder if we are any better off.

Anyway, we're going to sign off for now. And remember, don't give up now, only 2 weeks left!

OPINION...

Music and Video: Is seeing believing?

by Carman LeBel

The debate over what is good and what is bad in music is apparently endless. And despite the fact that those who listen to music probably spend much of their time arguing about it, I believe that real music enthusiasts recognize, in their quieter moments, that the real value of even their most heated arguments lies in the liberating dynamics of debate itself rather than in the conclusions of individuals. The point is that the ceaseless discussions about synthesizers, about saxophones in classical music, about the cultural paradox of white blues singers, about the legitimacy of rock 'n' roll itself, have been fueled by people who are concerned about music. They love music. They want to see it grow and develop. They believe in it.

When I say that someone believes in music, I mean that they believe in the inherent value of music, in the value of the experience of listening to music. Though the best of us grasp for the words to help us accurately describe structured musical sound and our responses to it, most of us can find some basic reason for why we enjoy music, for why we, in an often inarticulate sense, believe in its worth. When in 1971 Mac Davis so tritely but truthfully wrote "I believe in music," I think he was expressing, in its most basic terms, the self-assured but ultimately indefinable credo that has guided the responses of listeners, critics and musicians since Og played the first rimshot on this head.

I fear, however, that for increasingly large numbers of people, especially those who are the children of pop culture right now, "I believe in music" is not the operable motto. It has been unceremoniously usurped by a phrase which perhaps best describes the current, cynical, omniscient, mass-media generation: "seeing is believing." This is most clearly and ubiquitously evident in the music video revolution which has been underway since the start of the 80s and which continues to gain momentum. I am sure the average teen has trouble recalling a popular song that didn't have a video.

What's wrong with all this? you ask. I see several alarming consequences. Most obviously, I think many people are offended by the fact that the music video is something of an oxymoron. It is in essence a marketing tool. It is an album cover that moves. It is difficult to distinguish a music video from most contemporary commercials. In truth, they are the same: product packaging. This is particularly distressing because the equation has become: pop music = video. You have virtually no chance of charting a song without a video; however, I have seen a good many rock videos that have charted without a song.

It is indeed frightening to think that so powerful an entity as pop music has become a tool of corporate hucksters. But even more frightening to me is the dissociative visual techniques that the majority of these videos make use of, because the uninvolved aloofness that they engender in the viewer/listener seem antithetical to what music at its best can be. A piece of music exerts the greatest power and produces the greatest effect upon the listener--it doesn't matter what the effect is; it will of course be subjective--when the listener becomes involved in it, intellectually or emotionally, or both. Video, with its split second, strobe light editing, moving from one random image to another, actively discourages any such involvement. One is encouraged, rather, to bob to the beat and to stay tuned for more lights, colors and pretty people to follow. The listener/viewer is ultimately alienated from the music by a dazzling but enervating visual fix, which all too often serves to obscure yet another assembly line hit single.

It is this assault on the concept of music listening itself that most offends me. Of course, there are excellent videos being produced. But I might suggest that an excellent video is cinema, not music. And, certainly, pop music has never been a particularly fertile spawning ground for great music anyway. Perhaps I'm knocking down straw men. But at least pop music in the past has had some scope. How many impressionable young listeners must have turned an ear toward Bob Marley from hearing the Police, toward classical music from hearing the Beatles or the Moody Blues, or toward the great bluesmen from hearing Eric Clapton or the Rolling Stones. The view of music one gets from today's popmusicvideo blitz is increasingly telescopic: big but without breadth.

There will always be classical scholars. There will always be an avant-garde elite. But for the average Joe, music is moving in the same direction as literature. Both are being usurped by T.V. Next week, same time, same channel. In order to believe, you must trust. In order to believe in music--to believe without seeing--you must trust the music, the music makers, and above all, yourself and your capacity to be moved.

Let's get involved. Let's be engaged. Let's close our eyes and produce our own videos.

Carman LeBel

