

Get up for the downstroke

Get up for the downstroke. Everybody get up.

Everyone should be gettin' up for the downstroke. But instead, most of us sit, waiting at the proverbial trough — of television, radio, and the printed word — for the next beat, because we know it'll come.

This ain't about bootsy, baby. The beats I'm talking about are the shiny,

pre-packaged, ready-for-the-masses products the media churns out on an almost daily basis. These products can be as international as the Spice Girls, or as local as the crash of Swissair 111.

If the hype is about the Spice Girls, or the millions of Hanson and Backstreet Boys duplicates, I barely turn my head. Pop stars are so 'fraid to say it, flavour of the week, their troubles barely elicit a flinch.

But, when a valid and serious cause played up by the international media is ridiculed because it's no longer 'cool', I get angry.

The fate of many issues and people picked up and targeted by the media is sad and predictable. Popularity rises, parallel to fan clubs, movies, fast-food gimmicks, and lunch boxes. Then, whatever it is the media's been plugging peaks, dives, and becomes popular to dislike. It's the boon of consumer culture, one thing pushes out another.

"Sale, aisle seven — Pocahontas dolls."

Those that avoid this cycle have either floated in Casey Casem's top ten for the last half a century or have been realized by a wide enough audience as talented or genuinely worthy of attention.

Though we know this cycle's sad, it's just one part of the green monster — name that monster, people — that puts action figures on our shelves and movies in theatres.

I recently had a conversation with a friend about how the work of Students for a Free Tibet was absurd. Why are we striving to

retain the cultural heritage of Tibet? Why are we striving to conserve and protect a culture most of us will never visit and know the language of?

Students for a Free Tibet, like the Spice Girls, has been subject to the fate of the media machine. Just

listen, or pick up the story.

Every day on almost every front page there is a picture of torment or pain. Readers identify with the human spirit, kindly or maliciously. We look at all the world's strife as it is laid out in our living rooms, on our television sets and on our coffee tables.

Our task is to separate the facts from the story.

In front of the backdrops, beside the extras, underneath the microphones, startled by the news anchors are the people whose issues are real. When the media leaves the issue doesn't follow.

It's easy to sit and wait for the next headline to come to your front door. Every movie and fad coincides with a season, and we can depend on a summer blockbuster or a pop star with a pet cause to replace the last one. But, behind those flashy lights and McHappy meal tie-ins lie real issues and people. We have to look beyond the perpetual cycle of the media machine, and see the issues as they are. Real. You need to decide for yourself what's cool and uncool.

Now, get up for the downstroke, because you know this ain't no game.

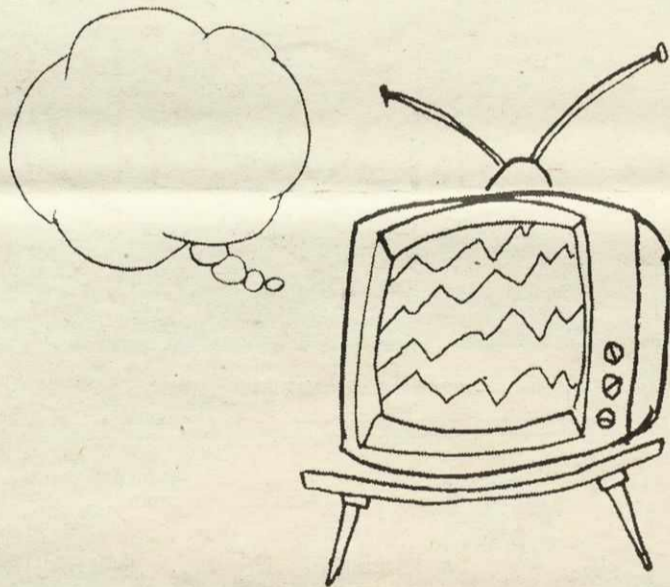
AVI LAMBERT

EDITORIAL

last year, both of these issues were on the tip of everyone's tongue. Spice Girl gum, *Kundun*; *Spice World*; *Seven Years in Tibet*; *The Book of Spice*, and the Concert for a Free Tibet.

To say the cause of students for a free Tibet is absurd, is obtuse. It's not just about culture and heritage. Beneath those things that make us monkeys social animals are our basic human rights and freedoms. Anywhere human rights are denied on this earth deserves attention. To say one or another cause is more or less important is a selfish delay.

A famous Canadian journalist, Gwynne Dyer, once said, "If it bleeds, it leads". Translation: if there's some hint of violence, people are either going to watch,



LETTERS

Responding to ignorance

To The Editor,

I am writing in response to Mark Rabin and Ryan Campbell's letter in the Mar. 11 edition of the Gazette.

I would like to point out that differences between people of the same sex or race are greater than those between females and males. I too found the pictures on the back of the Gazette amusing, as did your female friends who posed for them; though I am sure that there are males on campus who would disagree.

In regard to *Playboy*, my problem is not with the magazine itself but with Hugh Hefner. In the 70s Hefner wrote a journalist who had been assigned to write an article on the women's movement and expressed his own opinion on the subject. In this letter, which later became public, Hefner stated that "these chicks are our natural enemies... I want a personal demolition job on the subject, not something well-balanced and logical". "These chicks" that he referred to are the same as "these people" the two of you referred to — feminists.

Contrary to what the two of you think, feminists are not anti-male or women who want to be men (the two of you are perfect examples why). Feminists are people (male or female) who advocate the equality and full humanity of women and men.

As I recall, the two of you said that feminists "go out and pick useless fights... have no sense of humour and don't know how to let loose and have a good time."

Based on that, are you suggesting that we tell Canadian women who earn 59-66 cents for every male dollar to stop complaining? Should we tell the 88 percent of Canadian women who have experienced sexual harassment on the job to get a sense of humour? Perhaps we should tell Canadian women, who have a 60 percent chance of being poor in old age, to just accept it?

While we're at it, why don't we tell the 150,000 American women who are diagnosed each year with anorexia to lighten up. What about the 1 in 6 North American women who have been raped, and the 44 percent who have suffered attempted rape?

Well I'm sure the answer is clear for you, they have to loosen up! And the 1 in 8 Canadian women who will be assaulted by her male partner this year, maybe we should be telling them to let loose and have a good time. Why don't we tell the single Nova Scotia woman who is brave enough to leave her abusive husband this year that living off the \$319 dollars per month given to her by social services will be easy? And so what if in 1989 the Worldwatch Institute revealed that violence against women is the most common crime worldwide, "there are many other issues that need attention around this campus rather than wasting time and paper on how men are supposedly always degrading women". Those were your words weren't they?

You are right about one thing though, women do have choices. But if the choice is between staying in an abusive situation where she'll

be beaten to death, and leaving only to starve to death, the choices aren't exactly easy, are they?

Perhaps you should spend a day at one of the local women's shelters or try living off \$319 this month as many women in Halifax must. After that, if you still feel these issues "don't effect any aspect of our exciting lives", please accept my condolences on the pitiful, ignorant lives you lead.

On behalf of myself and the other women you rudely directed to the Women's Studies Department, I would like to apologize, for you are mistaken, it is the two of you who have one-tenth of a brain, not us.

Erin Findley

Aquaculture perils on the coasts of Nova Scotia

To the editor,

There are no undisturbed areas in Nova Scotia, no land where humans have not left their imprint, no wilderness. I would like to avoid the same fate for our coastal environment.

Facing the possibility of an aquaculture site where I kayak every summer in Caribou Harbour, I went to the website for the NS Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture. I found out a number of interesting facts.

As of Dec. 1997, there were 369 aquaculture sites in NS (both finfish and shellfish), and 11 percent of the production was blue mussels and American oysters. The government is committed to develop the aquaculture industry, and they aim for a 10-15 fold increase in aquaculture production over the next 15 years. The government also provides a lot of assistance to the industry, in terms of research, field extension agents, veterinary help, education, etc. As well, the NS government "will undertake a public awareness program, fostering a positive image of aquaculture..." — spending our money to place ads in newspapers.

It is interesting to note that the government aquaculture site does not carry information about possible negative effects of aquaculture on the environment — about illnesses associated with aquaculture products (be it in fish-farming operations, or from consumption of contaminated shellfish). It's all positive PR.

One important issue is the question of the privatization of the Commons — a public area becomes private domain where corporate interests have exclusive rights, an industrial site where neither people nor wildlife have access as before. The coastal environment, which attracts many people to Nova Scotia, and is the common heritage of all, is being partitioned off for a few special interest groups.

The aquaculture industry feeds us PR and half-truths.

In order to protect our coastal areas, we need to create some kind of "Coastal Protective Association" which will look after both human and environmental concerns. There is an Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia to look after the interests of the industry. Who is looking after our interests?

Helga Hoffman

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