

# SPECTRUM

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## METANOIA

By John Valk (Campus Ministry)

Perhaps it has become clear to CHSR that some of the music it airs leaves a rather bad taste in the mouth of some listeners. Perhaps also it did not anticipate reaction from that particular corner. Now that the matter has been drawn to its attention, the ball is back in CHSR's court. The striking of a committee to interpret standards and set guidelines is certainly a step in the right direction.

The setting of standards and guidelines for any broadcasting media, television included, is often rather relative. Most media is commercially oriented and as a result the economic bottom line enters quite decisively. What is acceptable is generally what sells, even if it means catering to the lowest common denominator. Giving customers what they want, or think they may want, is not necessarily a helpful guide in determining what is of value, meaning or benefit, in the long run. Think, for example, of arms manufacturing or the ivory trade. Who benefits and who suffers?

Standards of acceptability may not be sufficient. Perhaps it is as important for any entertainment media to develop a *raison d'être*, a sort of "mission" statement as it were. What is the purpose for an organization's existence, what makes its "product" meaningful, and in what way does it benefit humanity?

These concerns ought to take us beyond mere commercial interests. They also, believe it or not, have to do with spirituality. We are not used to thinking in these terms. But when one speaks of purpose and meaning, in any ultimate sense, one enters into the realm of the religious.

Unfortunately, when we think of religion or spirituality it is mostly in terms of some organized religious institution, eg., a church. Even if we do broach the subject outside an ecclesiastical context, it is frequently reserved for those rare and brief moments of our existence when we are overwhelmed or awed, for example, by nature's beauty, or when we are in a "life and death" pinch. For the rest its life as usual: business is business and music is music.

We would be fooling ourselves, however, if we indeed believed that, though unfortunately many do. There is a religious or spiritual dimension that touches all areas of life. One may

suppress it, even be ignorant about it, but that does not negate it or make it disappear.

There is, therefore, a religious dimension to our music. That to which we listen or become absorbed in has an underlying message. That message, as in poetry or prose, has a formative impact on our lives. Its shaping or molding can be powerful, and rock music is but one example. A case can be made that the influence of this form of music, whether good or bad, is nothing short of religious. The musicians become the

prophets (of whatever cause, fad or persuasion), the music the gospel, the concert the ritual or ceremony, and the concert hall the "church". Think about it.

We are here speaking in rather broad terms. But the point is that music is not neutral. Nor is the statement "I'm not religious" true. Oh, one may not go to a regular church, but that does not make one not religious. Maybe we need to stretch our imagination a little to make the connection. What sort of spirituality or meaning and purpose in life is

advocated in some of our modern "churches"; our sports facilities which many "religiously" frequent on a weekly basis, Sunday most notably? What sort of spirituality surfaces in our shopping, where we are shaped in the image of a consumer god by catering to wants rather than needs? What careers, places of work or business do not absorb people, mind, body and soul?

Our gods then become not that of the Christian, Jewish or Muslim tradition, but of fame, money, power, even of greed. To these we "religiously"

devote, even sacrifice, our lives. And, it ought to surprise no one that the "gods"

One can suppress discussions of spirituality, and that is frequently done. But we eventually pay the price. We lose sight of a proper guide or measuring stick. Witness, for example, our present political predicament. Perhaps the time has come to reassess our spirituality. It might shock us to know how offensive we are even to ourselves.

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## GAY FORUM

By Terry Richards

### Coming out of the closet

Ed: When the only people who know you're gay are the one's you're gay with, that's called in the closet.

Arnold: You may enjoy broadcasting your sexual preference, but I happen, but I happen to believe that who I sleep with is my business and not the world's.

(From Harvey Fierstein's "Widows and Orphan's First In Torch Song Trilogy")

I remember being 12 years old and knowing I was different from the rest of my peers. Sure I knew I was attracted to guys, but I wasn't really sure of the reasons behind my feelings.

My family is Italian and being from such a strong, moral family my parents instilled very conservative values in me at an early age. I was told very young that gays were sick people with unhappy lives who never stood a chance in this heterosexual world. Not to mention my family is Catholic and I was simply told being gay was sinful. Up until the time I was 15 I tried to change, hoping I would wake up one day the adjusted heterosexual male. I remember crying myself to sleep at nights after praying to God to change me and my feelings. Nothing worked.

It was at 15 that I began expressing my sexuality with other guys. It was at this stage, also, that I realized what being gay was all about. In reality I learned on my own who I was and that being gay wasn't as bad as everyone had said.

For the following 10 years, I lived my life in the closet because I felt I had to because of society's standards. Everyone (other than partners) was under the impression that I was heterosexual. However, throughout my high school years there was talk that "I might be gay" as I was the one guy who didn't have a girlfriend. I had lots of opportunity to date but I wouldn't have used a girl to form a mask of heterosexuality for myself. If someone asked why I wasn't dating I would say I was just too busy.

Probably the hardest part about being in the closet for me was that extreme feeling of loneliness, that no one else was like me. Sure I knew that one in ten of my peers were gay, but that gave me no sense of assurance. I longed to have gay friends to talk about what I was feeling and who the cute guys were. I had the frequent sexual encounter with guys, but being gay (like heterosexuality) is more than just sex. I wanted a social

life and thus I pursued one.

The summer of 1989 was when I came to a crossroads. I knew I was never going to change and I realized I no longer wanted to hide who I was. Not to mention I was tired of the constant questions from my family and friends. I also wanted that social life that I longed so much for. It was in October of last year that I was fortunate enough to meet someone on campus who was gay and who was open and comfortable with who he was. I will say this to my dying day, that he changed my life. He gave me the opportunity to meet more gay people (last year was the first time I ever met a lesbian) and to truly fight for my rights as a human being. Last year was also the first time I ever had a boyfriend.

Eventually by the end of that month I realized it was as good a time as ever to finally come out. With my secret I can sit her and say it was easy, but it wasn't. I had tears in my eyes when I told my parents, not because I was ashamed, but in a sense I had lied to them for ten years. There was also that tragic fear of rejection. Coming out was the hardest thing I've ever done, yet it was the smartest thing I've ever done. No amount of money would make me go back in.

I guess I'm one of the more fortunate ones because my family and friend know that I'm still the same person: the only difference now is they know that I am gay. I'm proud to say I'm happier and healthier than I've ever been because I no longer have anything to hide or feel nervous about.

October is "Coming Out Month" in North America. If you are not as fortunate as I was to have someone there to help in coming out assistance is available for you in the Fredericton area. UNB offers GALA (the Gay and Lesbian Alliance) which is a support group for gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. We can be reached through the Student Union Bldg. Rm. 126. Counselling Services offers peer counselling and you can visit them at the Alumni Memorial Bldg. or by phoning 453-4820. Finally, Fredericton has its own gay counselling hotline called FLAG (Fredericton's Lesbian and Gays) at 457-2156 and is open from Tues. - Thurs. from 8 p.m. - 10 p.m. Remember, you are not alone.

This article is dedicated to my friend James Christopher Gill.