

## Censorship a bigger problem than music lyrics themselves

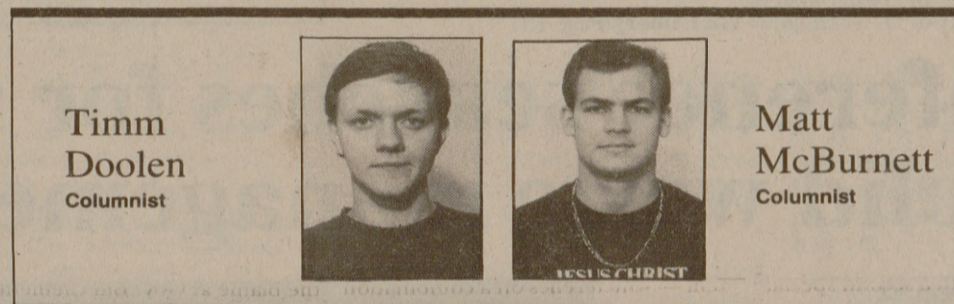
Censorship of rock and rap music is the rage across much of the nation. Conservative parent groups are worried that rock and rap lyrics are corrupting America's youth. Currently, 18 states have or are working on labeling laws. The most recent incident of music censorship was in Florida, where a statewide ban on several rap albums was instigated because of their explicit lyrics.

The Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC), a conservative group of Washington politicians' wives, is calling for more and broader labeling of records. The PMRC began its berating of rock music back in 1985 and continues to gain political power. The PMRC's goals include, among other things, rating songs and putting appropriate stickers on albums with "dirty lyrics." The Recording Industry Association of America compromised with the PMRC and agreed to have the record companies (not the PMRC) put warning labels on albums which the record companies determined to have objectionable lyrics. But the PMRC wants more.

The music-listening public should not stand for rating or labeling, whether it comes from the PMRC or the state legislatures. There are several reasons why rock music and rap music should not be rated or labeled.

**Albums can not be rated like movies, because there are too many songs.** There are over 25,000 songs released each year on major labels, as opposed to about 325 movies per year. Most of the really bad songs are released on obscure labels in limited markets. Finding and rating all the songs would be an almost impossible task (even for a full-time panel).

**Labeling is a form of censorship, which goes against the spirit of the First Amendment.** If the PMRC were talking about labeling books instead of albums, Americans wouldn't stand for it. Also, many books and movies are more explicit than the majority of released music. For a song to be successful it must receive radio airplay,



and the FCC has guidelines that are much more stringent for songs than any guidelines that exist for books or movies.

**Labeling attracts children to the labeled records (forbidden fruit is the most tempting).** Labeling attracts special attention to an album. Curious children will most likely want to hear what is on those labeled albums. Some music retailing chains have decided to counter this by not selling labeled albums to anyone under 18. This brings up more First Amendment questions and also questions of whose responsibility it is to monitor what music children buy.

**Youngsters don't read as much into the song lyrics as the PMRC thinks they do.** In a study done at California State University at Fullerton, researchers concluded rock 'n' roll music is not corrupting the moral fiber of American youth. The researchers said the songs were interpreted literally and the descriptions of the songs were simplistic and superficial.

**Labeling makes children search for meanings they may not have noticed otherwise.** The same Californian researchers concluded that labeling albums may actually encourage children to look for meanings they were previously unaware of.

**Labeling is an attempt by a select few to make the industry or government do the job of the parent.** If the parents would do a proper job of parenting, we wouldn't need labels at all. Labeling and

rating are just attempts by a select group to impose its morality on others. The effect of labeling is to place responsibility on the record industry, instead of parents, for making sure children don't listen to what the PMRC doesn't want them to.

Much of the recent flap about censorship has been centered around rap music. Any rap fan knows some songs contain lyrics which express violent views and off-color language. Most of these songs are not heard on the radio, though, because the FCC will not allow it.

The option to purchase these items should still be given to the public, because to do otherwise is censorship. What about children? Well, censorship by parents is certainly not discouraged. Parents should be allowed to monitor the environment in which their children grow up.

But we draw the line when states or conservative groups want to put their opinions on the outside of albums in the form of labels (or if they want to prevent albums from being sold or opinions from being expressed).

Does labeling prevent freedom of expression? As Jello Biafra of the Dead Kennedys said, "Any time artists have to do so much as think twice about what they say in their songs out of fear of legal or career consequences, that's censorship in its ugliest form: muzzling of the mind."

*Timm Doolen is a junior computer science major and Matt McBurnett is a junior electrical engineering major.*

## Mail Call

### Offensive remarks inevitable

EDITOR:

My hat is off to Michael Lee for his response to the highly publicized remark made by Clayton Williams. Mr. Williams' remark was indeed offensive, however, Michael Lee has pointed out that Mr. Williams made a public apology.

Michael Lee has provided a strong defense for Clayton Williams when others have jumped at the opportunity to cast aspersions upon him. When an individual has been made a public figure and every form of the mass media is watching him or her, it is inevitable that they will offend somebody.

Frank Velasco III '92

### Religion not 'battle'

EDITOR:

I would like to thank the people who feel strongly enough in their faith to share it. My life has been radically changed by a friend of mine who shared the Gospel of Jesus with me. The last thing Christians want to do is harass people. We just ask that people think about where they stand with God and help in strengthening their relationship with him.

I apologize to those who have felt Christianity has been "shoved down their throat." It is not that Christians have all the answers or are perfect, it's that we know the one who is perfect and has all the answers. Religion should not be a battle of any type. It should be people showing with their speech and more importantly with their lives how great the Lord is.

Jesus will change your life if you let him, but he has left the choice up to you. I'm just asking you to be honest with yourself about your relationship with God.

Gregg Matte '92

### Joke sheds insight into Williams' character

EDITOR:

In response to Timm Doolen's column on Clayton Williams' "off-color joke:"

Doolen states that "The campaign issues are too boring." It seems Doolen doesn't understand that rape is a very big issue. The fact that Williams would joke about it only shows that he doesn't give the subject the respect it deserves. It doesn't matter if it was a joke or not, it shows his feelings. Of course the fact that Williams made a public apology means nothing — it would have been political suicide not to.

As far as Ann Richards' past drug use, it's just that: in the past. Williams' views are here and now. I think his "joke" sheds some insight into his actual personality, a type of personality I personally would be embarrassed to have represent our state.

Ritchy Menson '91

### Sexist statements have no place in Batt

EDITOR:

John Righter's article, "AggieCon XXI" (The Battalion — April 2) causes one to wonder if Aggie men have a habit of putting their sexist feet in their mouths. Whether or not the event warranted two pages of copy is another question. In his first day's diary he writes, "Woman gags and binds herself for monster (I just love cooperative women.)"

Such a statement should forever ban Righter from publishing in The Battalion again. At the very least he should apologize to all women (and us men who tire of this good ol' boy mentality.) Such statements that continue to perpetuate such attitudes have no place in such a cosmopolitan campus newspaper as The Battalion. Perhaps he and Ron Garza ("Tex" — The Battalion, April 3) should run on the same ticket for the governorship.

Larry Coker  
Graduate student

### Williams an embarrassment to A&M, GOP

EDITOR:

This is in response to Michael L. Lee's opinion printed on April 3. Michael, *hell yes* Clayton Williams deserves to be attacked for being politically stupid, sexist and grossly insensitive, as do the other parties you mentioned. The latter group are free to be as redneck as they please (they're answerable to God, I guess), but Williams is rather ambitiously running for public office. He deserves everything that's coming to him, including condemnation of that part of his character. Michael, you also appear pretty ignorant for being a senior political science major. The governorship of Texas is not a "managerial position" nor is it even a position with substantial executive veto. Aside from making some appointments, calling special sessions and having veto power, the governor's major role is that of a moral leader. Ol' Claytie's business background and his sense of humor give me little comfort about his qualifications for the job. He is an embarrassment to A&M and the Republican party.

John Robinson '83

### Have an opinion? Express it!

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