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AGGIELIFE

Wednesday • October 9, 1997

Women musicians face critics

There she goes again, guitar in hand, dancing across the stage and gracing the television screen with her presence.

No, she is not a relic of the past, but a formidable persona of this decade.

The talk is about the image women musicians have acquired in recent years.

It seems the rise of women in music is never without some sort of inherent controversy.

Whether they sing about love gone wrong or social issues, women entertainers face the backlash of the public.

Alanis Morissette has become a household name, and her position on Billboard's Top 10 for the past 15 months proves her popularity.

But a myriad of individuals exist to apply the title "Male-Bashing Songstress" to her fame.

Her U.S. release of "You Oughta Know" sparked the Morissette craze and started many minds thinking about male-hate lyrics.

But if one recalls from, say a day or so ago, any Nine Inch Nails song, people would realize men have been female-bashing for far longer.

With a song like "Closer" and Trent Reznor screaming "I wanna f-k you like an animal," disenchantment with the female gender is obvious.

The problem is, now that women in music have reached a high point, it is easier to accuse them of having vengeance-filled lyrics.

So another woman entertainer writes about social issues — poverty, domestic violence and drug usage.

The Cranberries, led by Do-

Staff Writer



James Francis
Sophomore business major

lores O'Riordan, croon about the ills of their homeland, Ireland.

The band's music discusses ongoing wars, orphans and broader subjects, such as the death of John Lennon.

The group stands by these issues, but there are those who still find fault in their words because the band makes a profit from its political statements.

Many critics who praised the group's second album turned their heads away from the political topics addressed on their latest release.

They claim no one wants to listen about the ills of the world, especially from a group that was not heavily political from its start.

O'Riordan wrote what she felt, and instead of getting good marks for recognizing problems, she and her band suffered from harsh critiques.

What is a woman in today's music industry supposed to do, sing about cooking her husband's favorite dish as he comes home from a hard day of work?

That is unlikely. Take Gwen Stefani, for example, the lead singer for the band No Doubt.

Her popular single "Just A Girl" goes on about the way men picture women in the massive scope of life — something pretty to look at, but not someone talk to or think of as an equal.

In the song, however, Stefani clears up the confusion of female stereotyping by saying, "I've had it up to here."

With groups like No Doubt that are privileged to have a skilled woman as the lead singer, the rise of women in music will increase, and women will continue to voice opinions accompanied by guitar strums and drum beats.

Although Morissette, O'Riordan and Stefani represent a range of women in the alternative rock field, women in music go beyond musical genres.

For years, Salt-N-Pepa and other female rappers such as Queen Latifah and MC Lyte have shown the public a positive image of women and the struggles they have overcome.

In the country genre, legends such as Dolly Parton and The Judds have paved the way for

Whether they sing about love gone wrong or social problems, women entertainers face the backlash of the public.

Shania Twain and 14-year-old LeAnn Rimes.

With so many female accomplishments, in many fields of music, it is obvious that women musicians are doing something great.

The formula they have found for making music and speaking out on the way the lives of women have changed is not complete, but is closer now than it ever was.

As far as male bashing and male bashing in music, no such entity exists.

There is only the misunderstanding between the sexes, and that barrier is keeping communication lines closed.

Women make music and they express their feelings through the lyrical word, no man or woman, has the right to judge them by what they decide to say.

NATARAJAN

Continued from Page 3

man experience. I still keep in touch with a lot of my fish."

But Natarajan reached beyond clubs and organizations in extending his Aggie circle of friends. Before long, he began popping up at parties, too.

It's not a party unless Ranjan is there, regular Aggie partygoers began to say.

"I don't know how that happened," he said. "I guess it stems from the fact that I love to socialize, and if someone invites me, I'm going to make a point to at least show up. As more and more people kept inviting me, I kept showing up at more places and people were saying, 'Gosh, this guy's everywhere.'"

There was just one thing people could not figure out: Natarajan does not have a car. How could he get so many places without one?

"Almost everybody tells me to write a book on how I got around without a car for seven years at A&M," Natarajan said.

Hayes said she has pictures of every night she went out with Natarajan — but they never brought a camera.

"Ranjan would ask people he saw with a camera to take pictures of us, and then he would give them his phone number so he could get the negatives," she said.

Natarajan's love for Aggie traditions grew with his circle of friends, he said. "Howdy," the word that has built bridges between Natarajan and so many others, is one of his favorites.

"I wish more people would say it now," he said.

And in 1994, Natarajan experienced Aggie tradition and spirit in a special and unique way.

A group of his friends noticed that Natarajan, who had contributed so much to the University, did

not have an Aggie ring. They secretly pitched in to buy him one in appreciation for his service to A&M.

Natarajan said the surprise further showed the love and togetherness the Aggie family shares. "I was so excited, but it was a humbling experience," he said. "It makes me wonder, have I thanked them enough?"

But his friends say Natarajan deserves this. Sallee said Natarajan is an exceptional person and a terrific Aggie.

"He's an Aggie by all definitions," Sallee said. "I never heard him say a bad thing about anybody."

Today Natarajan is flying from Easterwood to California to work and to finish his doctorate research. He said the time has come to "move on and find new challenges."

Natarajan hopes to meld his electrical and cultural engineering experiences in San Jose, which is nestled in the Silicon Valley, the home of companies famous for computer and technological innovations.

Natarajan said he wants to come back to A&M some point to see the friends and the campus he loves. He said he might even like to be vice president of Student Affairs someday.

But this depends on where life takes him, he said. These final days in Aggieland have been a little bit of a bittersweet experience.

But Natarajan's friends say they will not forget him. Sallee said he will always recall how Natarajan loved to go out of his way to meet and help others.

"I'll remember how many Aggies' lives he touched," Sallee said.

Natarajan said he will never forget the Aggies he has met, and offered a parting invitation to the Aggie family:

"If you ever need anything in San Jose, look me up," he said.

Editor's Note — In talking with Ranjan Natarajan about what makes his experience at A&M unique, Sallee said that he was the first Indian that many of his friends had ever met. He said he knew what it was like getting into at A&M, but that if even 10 percent of the people here would talk to him, he'd have 4,000 friends. No one has ever actually counted, but it is probably safe to say that Ranjan will be missed at A&M by more than 4,000 students, faculty and staff.

TOP TEN Reasons To Live in Aggieland

10. Elephant Walk
9. Hangin' with friends at the Tap
8. Karaoke at Bullwinkles
7. Because it's not Austin
6. Midnight Yell
5. Dunkin' at the Chicken
4. Aggies Rule!
3. A&M victory over t.u.
2. Fightin' Texas Aggie Bonfire

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