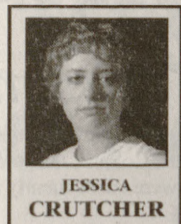


Double standard in a bottle, baby

What a girl wants is for critics to judge entertainers the same, regardless of sex



JESSICA CRUTCHER

It seems that everywhere one looks, American society is obsessed with female habits — how they dress, speak and portray themselves in public situations. Entertainers such as Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera seem to take the brunt of the criticism. They are constantly accused of setting a bad example for their teenage followers because of skin-baring costumes and suggestive lyrics. In a recent interview with People magazine, Britney Spears defended accusations of being "too sexy, too soon."

But Spears should never have had to defend her image in the first place. The real question is why female artists should be expected to provide wholesome examples for teenage girls, while it is perfectly acceptable for male artists such as Ricky Martin to gyrate their hips in motions that would make Elvis blush.

Critics should either complain about the bad influence of both genders of entertainers equally or leave them alone to do their jobs.

It is understood that female entertainers are held to a higher standard than their male counterparts. An excerpt from a recent letter to the editor in Rolling Stone magazine stated "I know [Jewel] doesn't want to be a role model and never sought it out, but she is one ... I resent Jewel's seemingly flippant and unnerveingly cavalier resolutions to 'start smoking and exercise less' ... her words will have teenagers lighting up ..."

It is disturbing that a female entertainer should be criticized for joking about smoking cigarettes, while Kid Rock — a much more high-profile entertainer — sings about drugs and flashes obscene gestures at the camera with

relatively little comment from anyone. Presumably, people recognize that he is an entertainer, a job requirement which he seems to be meeting quite well. Female entertainers should be granted the same respect of being left alone to do their job in relative peace.

Female entertainers undeniably help mold society's idea of what the "perfect" female should look like. However, Spears' bare midriff and Aguilera's semi-suggestive dance moves do more to mirror contemporary teen culture than to change it.

Some people argue that it is excusable to hold female entertainers to a higher standard because teenage girls are more easily influenced than teenage boys. This would be a logical argument if female entertainers influenced only teenage girls and male entertainers influenced only teenage boys. But people of both genders listen to, and perform, pop music. Male entertainers have just as great an influence on teenage girls as do females.

Ever since Elvis, male entertainers have been known for the obsessive effects they have had on teenage girls. One only has to look at the many "biographies" (which happen to be filled with color photos) of male groups such as 'N Sync and the Backstreet Boys to realize the fascination teenage girls have with male music groups.

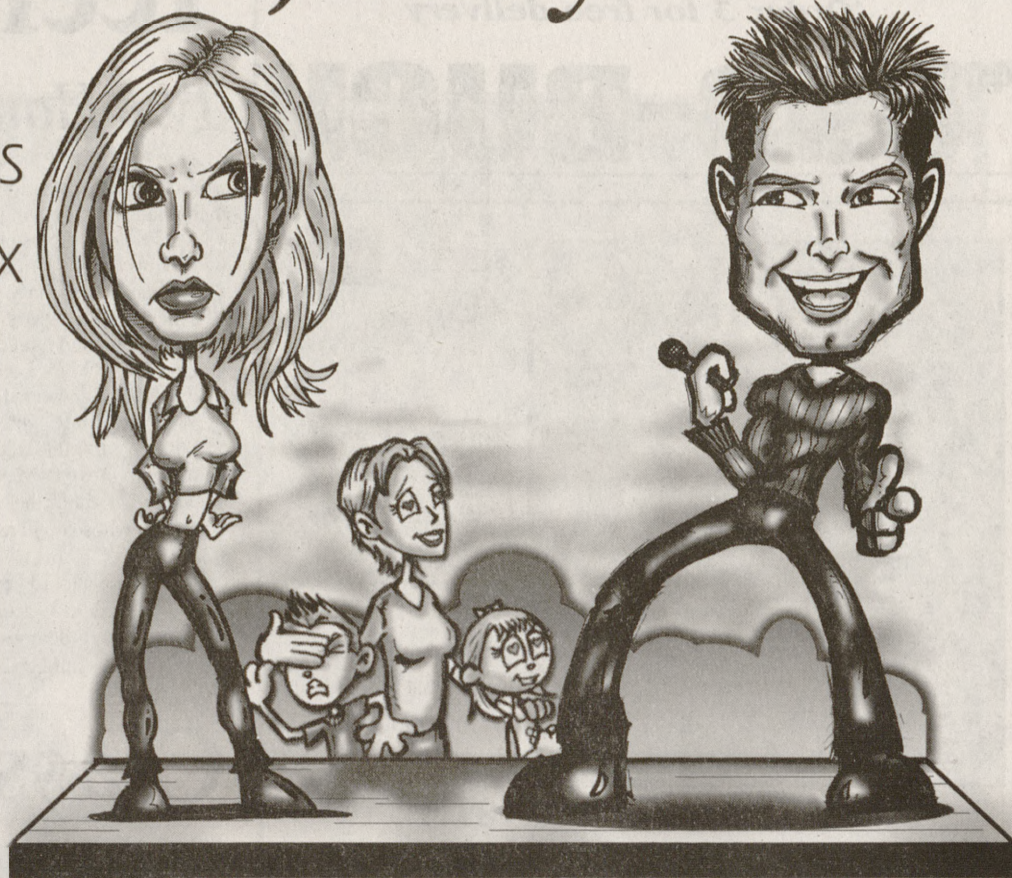
It is impossible to acknowledge this fascination and simultaneously say that males are not equally capable of being just as negative role models as females.

Ricky Martin sings a song called "Shake Your Bon Bon." Imagine the furor if a female artist produced a song dedicated solely to shaking a certain body part.

And on the subject of making girls feel they must fit a certain ideal, look at the appearances of the girls that boy groups "date" in their videos. Showing a regular guy with a gorgeous woman has more power to make a teenage girl feel inadequate than the thinnest super model ever dreamed of having.

One example is the song "Summer Girls" by the group LFO. The song, sung by an undeniably attractive group of men, includes the lyrics "I like girls that wear Abercrombie and Fitch ..."

At least Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera stop at promoting a certain image and do not go on to lyrically recommend a certain brand of



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

clothing be worn in order to gain acceptance.

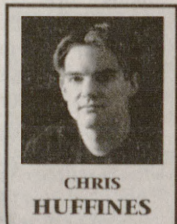
Female entertainers may not promote the image every mother wants for her teenage daughter, but they are no more deserving of criticism than their male counterparts.

plain about both genders of performers equally or leave the entertainers alone and let them do their job.

Critics of teenage culture should either com-

Jessica Crutcher is a sophomore journalism major.

School drug tests violate students' rights



CHRIS HUFFINES

Every so often, small-town residents get the crazy idea that something is seriously wrong with their town and they go to extreme lengths in the futile attempt to fix it.

Look at Salem and witches. In response to a perceived drug problem the school board of Lockney, Texas has begun requiring drug testing at the beginning of the school year for all students and random monthly testing throughout the rest of the term. This policy came about because a couple of years ago 13 residents who were not even students, were indicted for distributing and using cocaine and marijuana in the town of 2,243.

Brady Tannahill, a 12-year-old student, is the only one of 339 students refusing to take the drug test, and he is now being punished as if he had taken the test and it came back positive. What the school board of Lockney is doing is not only unconstitutional, it rips at the fabric of the educational system.

This policy is unconstitutional for two distinct reasons. The first is that this procedure violates the students' right to privacy. The school has no probable cause to force the students to be tested for drug use.

In addition, the students have no choice but to take the tests. Enrollment in school is mandatory, and short of attending private or being home schooled (both expensive, difficult options), students are basically required by the government to take drug tests. This is illegal. Mandatory drug tests are a

requirement of some jobs and extracurricular activities, but no one forces an individual to accept a particular job or to participate in a particular activity.

Employment and extra-curricular activities are optional, and the drug test is an unfortunate consequence of choosing to take advantage of the option. School is not an option, and requiring students to take drug tests is forcing the students to give up their right to privacy.

Furthermore, this policy is unconstitutional because it assumes guilt. The Constitution guarantees all suspects are innocent until proven guilty. However, Tannahill is being punished as if he had tested positive for drugs. Tannahill refused to submit to a humiliating, illegal procedure, and is being punished as if he is some washed-up dopehead. Ain't Lockney justice grand?

While police officers arrest and punish suspects who refuse to take a breathalyzer test, officers do not pull over everyone on the highway and request a test. They wait until they have probable cause to believe a suspect is drunk before they even think about testing.

Many parents, and many conservatives for that matter, would say that students in school do not have significant rights, and should be quiet and enjoy the free education. It is true that the Supreme Court has found students do

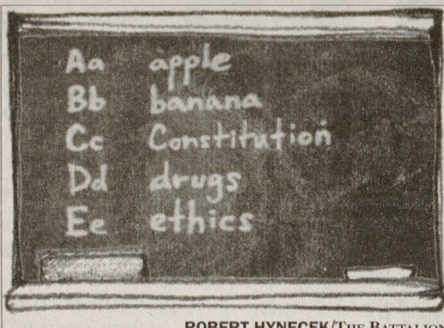
leave certain rights, most notably free speech, at the schoolhouse gate. However, these rights are only abridged if doing so is in the interests of education. Student newspapers (in high school, not at a university) can be prevented from criticizing the school if the principal believes the censorship is in the interest of education.

Is testing students for drugs in the best interests of education? Is forcing every student in grades six through 12 to urinate into a little plastic cup, just because some people got caught with drugs a few years ago, in the best interests of education? Is punishing a 12-year-old student

for standing up for himself in the best interests of education? Lockney residents cite the arrests and the increasing use of drugs in small-town America as ample justification for their policy.

This same logic states that, because 35 students were scholastically dishonest last year, and scholastic dishonesty as a whole is on the rise in the country, every student at Texas A&M should receive a strip search immediately before each exam because somebody might have hidden crib notes. Such a program would be beyond absurd, just like Lockney's drug tests.

What is perhaps worse is the hypocrisy displayed by the school board



ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

MAIL CALL

Aggie Christians more tolerant than stereotype

In response to Julia Recindus' Feb. 11 article.

The article entitled "Testing the Waters of Faith" contains well-developed points about how minority religious groups are oppressed by others. I would not argue with these points. However, the article crosses the line into stereotyping all Christians at Texas A&M.

It seems the article failed to recognize that there are campus religious organizations who are committed to religious tolerance and religious rights on the A&M campus.

For example, the Campus Ministers Association includes approximately 15 A&M religious organizations who choose to adhere to its "code of ethics."

Among other values, these organizations are committed to respecting "the values of all people regardless of religious background (and) the right of every person to retain his/her own belief system ... and to make their own decision in freedom."

These groups are committed to religious rights, namely "the right of religious groups to speak freely about their beliefs and faith in a manner consistent with the solicitation policies of TAMU and CMA Code of Ethics."

I would encourage editors of The Battalion

to include viewpoints from organizations associated with the Campus Ministers Association in order to embrace the diversity of religious perspectives on the Texas A&M campus.

Rev. Kyle M. Walker
campus minister

Mock wedding immoral, offensive to Christians

In response to Brooke Hodges Feb. 15 article.

Valentine's Day will never be the same. A day that normally instills feelings of love and laughter now brings to mind images that are not only obtrusive and offensive, but they violate the very laws of nature and our God.

The mock weddings that took place on Monday brought not only indignation and degeneracy to the tradition of Valentine's Day but to the entire Texas A&M campus. I am astonished that such blatant disregard for both God's laws and the feelings of many students was demonstrated and am disappointed with administrators who allowed this show on campus.

Marriage is a sacred institution designed by God to unite a man and a woman as one flesh. In 1 Corinthians, the Lord gave us instructions on how to conduct ourselves in marriage. They were given to husbands and wives. There is an

obvious abhorrence for all sexual immorality, including homosexuality. The Lord does not condone same-sex relations, nor does he condone a false prophet like the "reverend" who performed these "mock ceremonies," blaspheming his name for all to see. It is not for me to judge, but it is for the Lord. For when the roll is called, you will be separated from the flock as the left is separated from the right.

Jessica Andrews
Class of '00

Accompanied by 4 signatures

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

The Battalion - Mail Call
013 Reed McDonald
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX
77843-1111

Campus Mail: 1111
Fax: (409) 845-2647
E-mail: battletters@hotmail.com

Debate on wedding counterproductive

When singing the "Spirit of Aggie Land," Aggies tell outsiders



MELISSA BEDSOLE

Texas A&M is a university where all students are unified.

A&M is known for events such as Big Event, Muster and Bonfire, for the sole purpose that we work, remember, and desire together as a family.

But despite these ideals, A&M students stand divided over the issue of discrimination against the gay and lesbian students on this campus.

On Monday, two female students, Natalie Wilson and Amy Hinz, participated in a mock wedding ceremony at Rudder Fountain. There were two types of people at the event: Aggies with smiles and Aggies with frowns.

As two students pledged their mock vows to each other, students representing the "Aggies for Life" organization passed out chastity ribbons and pamphlets discussing how "God made the woman's body to fit perfectly with the man's."

So, those watching without a strong opinion of the marriage of gay and lesbian couples, suddenly were faced with a decision. Either clap and whoop for the couple boldly taking a stand for their life choices or put on a ribbon and follow the advice of "Aggie for Life" and "just pray for them."

The question of whether it was right or wrong that this event has occurred on our campus can be argued over and over, with great points on each side. But the problem at Rudder Fountain on Monday was the division that this issue has caused on our campus.

There should not be sides working only for themselves and against the other simply because everyone on this campus does not share the same opinion. It has been forgotten that Aggies are supposed to all be on the same team.

Yes, at the turn of the century it is time that the world accepted different choices of sexual orientation and the students at A&M acknowledged these choices on our campus.

But, at the same time, Texas A&M is a school known for its conservatism and to host this event contradicts many of the beliefs from the student body.

The problem is not that the wedding occurred, it is that this group of people feels so under represented and neglected that it was necessary to take these drastic measures to be heard. How can a school that claims to be one of the friendliest campuses

in the nation be shunning some of its own family?

Not everyone has to take a stand on this issue, but do not let it continue to divide the campus. There is no need to stage a heterosexual wedding because there is an understanding and acceptance that they exist.

This does not mean that all the students on this campus promote and agree with heterosexuality or that they are "right" or "wrong" in their beliefs, it just means that Aggies understand it. The students participating felt the need to host this wedding due to a lack of understanding or acceptance that they feel from this campus.

There will always be students that desire to be at A&M for its conservative atmosphere, as surely as others desire to attend the University of Texas because of its liberal attitude.

But, equally, there will always be exceptions to the stereotypes, and those people should be accepted just the same. Vision 2020, an attempt to make our campus one of the top ten universities in the United States, aims at creating an all-accepting environment in which every Aggie can live and go to school.

It also explains the hopes that Texas A&M University will not be a place where people leave because of discrimination issues. The ideals have been written to make this school one of the best. Now it is up to the students to let go of the unnecessary hostility undermining these problems, and put Vision 2020 into action.

No one will ever be right or wrong here, but until Aggies can have an open mind, both sides of the battle will have lost to this issue.

Texas A&M, although known for its conservatism, is also known for having graduates that are described as lacking in their knowledge of diversity. Here is the chance to change that. It is time to prove these studies wrong and show the world that Texas A&M is accepting environment for all different kinds of Aggies.

If the gay and lesbian students felt accepted by this campus, there would have been no need for this exploitation of their sexual orientation. But there is a need for accepting the choices of each Aggie on this campus.

A need for understanding that all students are not the same here at Texas A&M. Most of all a need for the realization that this issue is dividing a campus that could easily be unified. It is time to be "true to each other" and realize that when standing unified as one, Aggies are at their strongest.

Melissa Bedsole is a sophomore general studies major.