

## Get payed to pray

### Pastor shows true compassion by paying congregation

A few years ago, a Florida preacher started using an innovative marketing technique: He offered people \$5 each to attend his church. Rev. Rick Sebastian is now pastor of New Life In Christ, a small non-denominational church in Bryan. Sebastian combs the streets of Bryan every Sunday morning in a bus with this message: "We will pay you \$10 to come to church." Although he is often turned down, many people do accept his offer.



JESSICA CRUTCHER

Many of the people attracted by Sebastian's offer rarely attend church on their own, and his offer gets them through the door.

Sebastian says he feels strongly about his cause because "it gets them into church, and if we can get them into church where they can hear the word of God, their lives can be changed."

In addition, many of the people Sebastian ministers to need help, both financial and spiritual. Although \$10 may not sound like much to college students paying thousands of dollars in tuition, it is a lot of money to the less fortunate.

Sebastian's gift works to make his message much more convincing than those of hyped-up televangelists who show more concern for incoming donations than for their congregation's well-being. Sebastian's method of recruiting church members is a huge improvement over most religious trends of the past few years.

With some religions in-fighting over official doctrine and other groups proselytizing messages of hate, Sebastian should be praised for finding a fresh new way to attract a congregation and for the spirit of humanitarianism that runs through his idea. Too many evangelists lose sight of the individuals in their following because they are too concerned about recruiting the masses. Sebastian shows concern and compassion on a one-on-one basis. That is what makes his message so touching — and convincing.

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KELSEY ROBERTS/THE BATTALION

## PG, PG-13 films better for Hollywood

In a recent paper on the study of movies rated PG, PG-13 and R, Texas A&M University research fellow Arthur De Vany argued that Hollywood produces too many R-rated movies. In his opinion, this overproduction is not a moral issue but an economic one. Society's fascination with the R rating has gotten completely out of hand.



SUNNYE OWENS

De Vany's research proves otherwise. Of the 30 top grossing movies in Hollywood's history, only one of them is R-rated.

In 1992 Michael Medved did a study on Hollywood's eagerness to produce R-rated movies. In it he states that R-rated films were less than half as likely as PG releases to make \$25 million in domestic box-office revenues.

PG and PG-13 movies do so well at the box offices because they reach a much broader audience. Adults with children are much more likely to be comfortable going to see a PG-rated movie than an R-rated film. Most people see movies because they think the trailers are interesting or they heard good things about the movies from other people. They do not see movies simply because they are rated R. Hollywood needs to lessen its faith in the effectiveness of R ratings.

Motion pictures are some of the riskiest products. Movie producers are never sure how well a film will do at the box office. R-rated movies have a much greater chance of flopping at the box office than PG and PG-13 movies.

Movie producers risk R-rated films because of star quality. Film producers know that it helps to have a

cast of well-known actors and actresses. De Vany's evidence shows, that stars appear more often in R-rated movies than in PG and PG-13 releases. Stars are present in 45 percent of R-rated movies, but in only 23 percent of PG movies.

Film producers think that, without big names like Harrison Ford and Julia Roberts, their films are more likely to flop. Most PG and PG-13 movies do not appeal to big-name actors because they do not think the movies will earn much money.

But De Vany's report indicates the opposite is true. PG-13 and PG movies are more likely to be successful at the box office, and if stars were more inclined to appearing in PG and PG-13 movies, the films could take in even more money.

The success rate for R-rated movies is 6 percent, compared to 13 percent for PG-rated movies. The box-office success rate for all non-R-rated movies is twice the rate for R-rated movies. Hollywood needs to note these statistics and reduce the number of R-rated movies produced. Hollywood should support the films that a broader audience can enjoy.

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## Obscene mainstream rappers ruin genre for other artists

Jay-Z is "big pimpin'." Eminem is under fire for his gay-bashing lyricism, and the Cash Money Millionaires have dropped ungodly amounts of money on mansions, Italian sports cars and diamond-encrusted platinum teeth.

True enough, the vast majority of rap acts that hold a spot on "Total Request Live" tend to be the epitome of why people who hate rap hate rap. Objectification of women and love of money have become the general formula for becoming a multi-platinum rap artist.

In truth, today's hottest rappers constitute a very small minority of the thousands of rap artists who exist, but the glitz, glamour and "bling-bling" tends to blind the eyes of the general public to the talents of the majority.

While people focus on vulgar and violent lyrics, they miss the quick-witted, well-worded lyricism of lesser-known rappers.

In turn, they fail to see that rap is one of the most socially conscious, intelligent art forms in existence.

Being quick to dismiss rap as being anything close to socially conscious is understandable, because, truthfully, socially conscious rap is almost never heard.

Most people will never hear rap lyrics that educate the mind or promote positivity, and it is not because they are underground or do not exist. It is an unfortunate consequence that having something intelligent to say in raps tends to constitute not having songs played on mainstream radio and selling fewer records.

While a few groups, such as The Roots, A Tribe Called Quest and De La Soul, have somewhat freed themselves from this fate, most will remain known and understood only by the most avid of

rap connoisseurs.

Take, for instance, Common. His most recent single, "The Light," has hit urban radio airwaves. Past songs by Common have addressed religion and racism, while "Retrospect For Life," a duet with Lauryn Hill, takes on the issue of abortion. Too bad such a talented poet had to wait until the release of his fourth album for just one of his songs to get any mainstream airplay.

**There is another side to rap most casual listeners probably have not heard — one that might actually appeal to them.**

Mos Def achieved gold status with his debut solo album, "Black On Both Sides," a major feat for an independent label rapper. His song "New World Water" confronts water conservation from a sociological perspective and does it in a tight flow that few emcees could imitate. The only song off his album with the ability to grab general public attention was "Ms. Fat-Booty," which was just as good a song, but with hardly the same social responsibility.

Even big-name rappers have made attempts at producing songs that address social issues and all have received minimal attention for it.

Wu-Tang Clan, father group of Method Man and Ol' Dirty Bastard, addressed HIV in the black community with "A.I.D.S. (America Is Dying Slowly)."

Unfortunately, the song received very little attention other than being included on an AIDS

benefit compilation album.

Rap artists have a difficult decision; to make and sell records, or stay true to the issues that they feel are important. Those rappers who choose to have something significant to say rather than selling out to the "money, cash, hoes" philosophy should be commended.

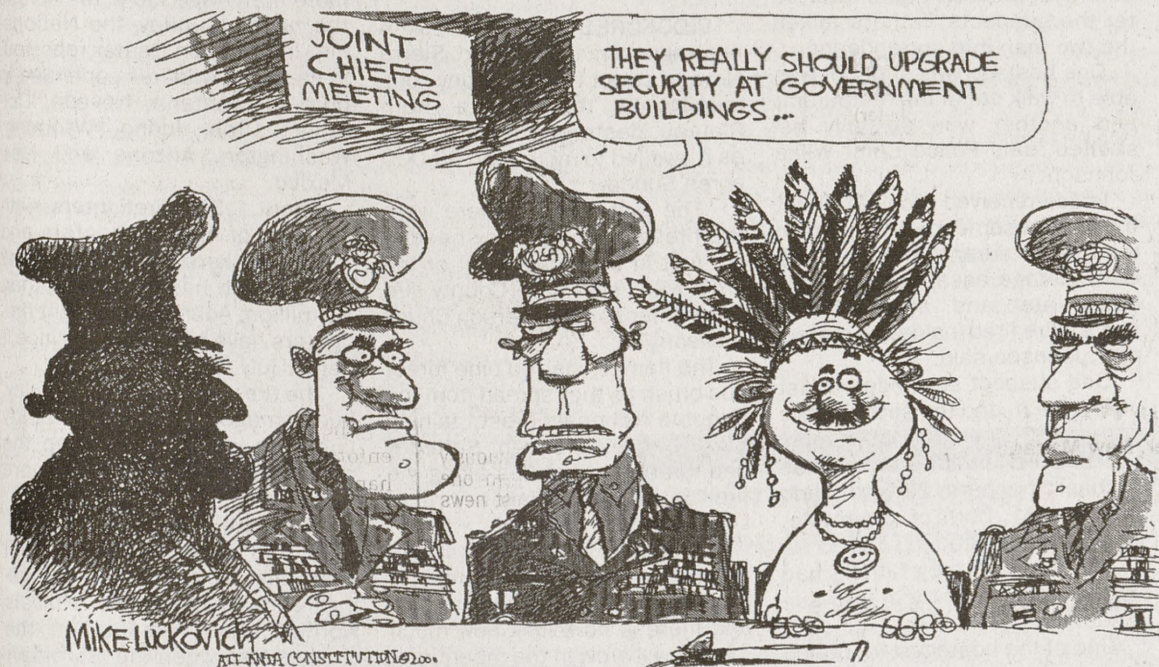
That is not to say that mainstream rap does not have its place. For instance it is especially enjoyable when going out with friends to have fun. But mainstream rap should be regarded just as that — fun. The premise of such songs is very superficial, and they contain barely any substance, making it difficult to analyze the impact that the lyrics will have on society. No Limit, Cash Money and other labels make songs that have pure shock value or include big guns, fast cars and loose women because they know they will sell more records, not because they are trying to send any sort of message to rap's audiences.

Even Eminem has said many times in interviews that he does not really believe in the things he says in his albums. He intentionally does it to make people angry.

Fans of other types of music are often put off by rap that they see on MTV or hear in a bar. But there is another side to rap most casual listeners probably have not heard — one that might actually appeal to them.

Listeners should not dismiss rap as being less than music. An entire music genre cannot necessarily be judged by what is popular at the moment, or what generates the most money. After all, that would be like saying the Backstreet Boys and 'NSync represent the finest that pop music has to offer.

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