

Democracy gets drowned out by anti-Coke antics

WEEKS BEFORE THE STUDENTS' UNION ELECTIONS officially kick off, the SU Chief Returning Officer Rachel Woynorowski has dealt a potentially crippling blow to both the No side of the Coke plebiscite, and to students' ability to vote in an informed way.

The SU's contract with Coke is up for renewal, which has opened the old floodgates about corporate irresponsibility, about whether the SU should be accepting funds from multinational companies with questionable ethics, and even whether it's right to limit students' consumer choices in the first place.

But even before the majority of students were able to consider these weighty ethical issues, culture-jamming on the part of some more radical anti-Coke students has ensured that a balanced debate will be impossible. Flooding campus with their sometimes-alarmist anti-Coke paraphernalia—which showed Colombians floating dead, face-down in an oversized pint of Coke and included such witty phrases as "Dasani is Daphony" and "Killer Coke: The Drink That Represses!"—students have pushed home a sensational message at the expense of respectability.

The biggest problem with SAKCoke's campaign style is that it seems to confuse the actual issue at hand. Not content to argue the pros and cons of the SU's deal with Coke—or whether such a deal is in the interests of students both ethically and fiscally—the group has taken a much harsher and more ideological approach: they want Coke products removed from campus altogether, and see the upcoming plebiscite as a way to garner attention for their cause.

Not only is this political suicide, as the immature and emotional Killer Coke campaign does little to convince undecided students of the validity of their arguments—it's also a disservice to students, as it dissolves the real issue within a wider anti-Coke, anti-corporate mandate. Students seeking to become informed about the root issues surrounding the plebiscite will have little hope of sifting through the rhetoric on both sides, and little chance of casting an informed ballot as a result.

The issues surrounding this debate can hardly be cast in black and white. Anti-corporate activism has a place; it's important to raise awareness of unethical practices and draw the public's attention to the inner-workings of corporate structures. But culture-jamming has no place within the formal democratic process of SU elections, no matter how tenuous that democracy might be. By ignoring the rules set out to ensure fair and open debate, SAKCoke's actions are a disservice to students. Let's hope that, despite the CRO's fair ruling, someone with a bit of common sense and respect can take up the No side of the Coke plebiscite.

MATT FREHNER
Editor-in-Chief

For the sake of science

JAPANESE RESEARCHERS HAVE BEGUN TO USE STEM cells and fat to produce softer, more realistic breast implants. The cells and fat, taken from a stomach or thigh, are put together in a "soup" or "slurry" that is mixed with regular fat cells, and can increase a woman's bust by up to two cup sizes.

It's great to see that instead of using stem cells to cure cancer or Parkinson's or leukemia—which is just another form of cancer, I know, but I really wanted to get this point across—the Japanese are using them to enhance the sexual appeal of the ladies. Moreover, you have to wonder: if stem-cell research weren't so restricted in Canada, maybe U of A scientists would have come up with this sort of thing years ago, and everywhere you look, large, jiggly mammaries would be wagging in your face.

Sure it's frivolous to waste time and money on developing a more realistic breast enhancer, but at least the Japanese are attempting to improve humanity using the technology available, instead of allowing things like ethics to stand in the way of science.

PAUL OWEN
Sports Editor

LETTERS

Don't be too negative about SO4

(Re: *Not Saying* not Juno material," 8 February). Full disclosure: Nik Kozub produced my album, I've smashed cans of energy drink/malt liquor with Lyle Bell, and Snarf recently lent me the last season of *Lost*. They are my friends, but they are also my colleagues.

With all that talk about bias, Amanda Ash's criticism of Shout Out Out Out (SO4)'s Juno nomination seems like more of a personal attack than a constructive analysis of the Edmonton scene's herd mentality. Why fault a band for people liking them? Why blame them for succeeding under the all-encompassing influence of Toronto? It makes me wonder if something went awry at the New Year's Eve show for the author. Maybe Gravy didn't say hi or something...

I'll agree that there are a lot of people in Edmonton who only listen to Shout Out Out Out because they happen to be "the cool thing" right now. But there are also people who only listen to TV on the Radio because Pitchfork says they should. People who only listen to Sufjan Stevens because one of his songs was on *The OC*. People who only listen to Bloc Party because Vice is standing behind them. You can't blame the band for their fans.

Maybe the Edmonton bands that are so much better than SO4 aren't recording albums, promoting themselves, sending albums to college radio, courting labels, getting in the fucking van or simply working as hard. Yes, SO4 tours across Canada, plays shows internationally (ie not just around town) and have recorded, practiced and grinded their way to where they are. They are successful because they put in the time necessary. Whatever bands you think are more deserving aren't putting themselves out there. Because to get noticed in this country, it takes serious drive.

But hey, certainly that couldn't be the case. Maybe those other bands just don't have the haircuts to make it in this town.

ROLLIE PEMBERTON
AKA "Cadence Weapon"

Personal attack attacked personally

I want to start off by congratulating Amanda Ash on making an absolute mockery out of both herself and what should have been a music critique. Her complete lack of musical knowledge and use of personal bias in her article on Shout Out Out Out's Juno nomination was an unnecessary stab at the local band.

Calling the guys bottom-feeders and accusing them of riding on the coat-tails of their Edmonton "hipster" popularity all the way to the Junos is a long-winded notion, with absolutely no relevancy to her position concerning their music. It would have been refreshing to see the wanna-be journalist's article consisting of valid arguments and musical review, but instead I wasted my time reading the juvenile ranting of a girl who appears to have an individual bone to pick with the band. And



MATTHEW BARRETT

come on, if Edmontonian hipsters really had that much control over the decisions made by [the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences] then why haven't they put that much effort into a band before, I mean it was just so easy wasn't it?

I am disgusted by the lack of respect Amanda showed not only SO4 but also her entire craft. Using the *Gateway* to publicly attack a person vs critique an artist is shallow and irresponsible of both the editor and the paper as a whole.

Furthermore I feel that she used a typically helpful tool, the art critique, and bastardized its strength. As an artist I spent four years in school perfecting and understanding the benefits of a critique, and I still use it everyday in what I do. It is so irritating to me that Amanda took this means of learning and growth and turned it into a way for her to validate her self-righteous article. An article that calls out a group of hard-working people for everything from their hair to their attitude.

Amanda, your mother once said everyone gets what they deserve, and I hope you understand it works both ways—because after this unreasonable display of poor judgment you have a lot coming to you. And they can't be all that bad, you seemed like you really enjoyed yourself at [SO4's] New Year's Eve show. And just as you should, I mean you didn't have to pay for your alcohol all night, yours was provided (or should I say stolen) from the band's rider all evening.

JENNIFER KOWTON
Via e-mail

Shut up up up, Ash

Congratulations on making your complete lack of musical knowledge evident in your (completely unnecessary) article on SO4's Juno

nomination.

Untalented? Try coordinating two drummers. Unoriginal? Try finding electro music with more interesting lyrics. Saying that ridiculously clichéd "bands" like City and Colour have more original music, as well as talking about their "emo hair" just further proves my point that you have absolutely no idea what you're talking about.

It's not SO4's fault they are nominated for a Juno, so perhaps you should back off a little bit. Whether you like their style of music or not, you cannot refute the fact that they are talented musicians who work harder than 99 per cent of any other band [sic] from Edmonton.

While you're on your little road to being a journalist, maybe you should learn to include a little less personal bias and a little more knowledge of your subject before you decide to bash a group of people who are actually doing something useful with their time.

ANDREA JUNIOR
Via e-mail

Turns out, transit costs do add up

As she explained in explicit detail, Miranda Sayer will be getting a bad deal from the U-Pass (re: "Transit costs don't add up," 8 February). The reason why is that subsidized programs such as the U-Pass, by their very nature, pick winners and losers. Not everyone can receive the subsidy since someone has to pay the subsidy. Aside from a small increase in transit ridership and the resulting slight economy of scale, the U-Pass will do nothing to make the transit system cheaper. The buses will still burn the same amount of gas and the drivers will still get paid.

What it does do is change who is paying for it. Most of the share of the cost that is presently paid in fares by people who use the transit system will be redistributed to other people who do not. This includes local land owners, since the U-Pass is subsidized by the cities; U of A students who walk, bicycle, or drive to school, since they will pay \$150 per year for a U-Pass but will not use it enough to get their money's worth; and people who park at the University since parking rates will be increased so that the University can afford its portion of the subsidy.

By saying that the U-Pass is a "fabulous idea," Ms Sayer admits that she likes the idea of forcing someone else to subsidize her transportation costs. Unfortunately you reap what you sow, and it looks like this time Sayer is going to be the one doing the subsidizing for other students.

PAUL KIRVAN
Engineering V

Who's really paying for the U-Pass?

I have not seen the most recent numbers for the costs [of] the proposed U-Pass, but I feel that students are not being made aware of who will actually be paying for students to receive a U-Pass if it goes through. Most students with monthly transit passes are paying [approximately] \$220 a semester. The most recent U-Pass proposal I read about sits at a cost of \$75 for every student, whether or not they have or will ever set foot on transit, with the university kicking in an additional \$15 and the city \$30.

Where does the majority of the funding come from? The students who don't use transit passes will make up the other \$100.

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