

An Open Letter to Johnny Cash

Dear Johnny Cash,

We heard your new song yesterday, and we had to write to you. We hope you don't mind our doing it in such a public way, but the song really bowled us over, and we have to find some way of saying how we feel.

We're part of the generation that's "speaking in the city square." We could be with that "young man of 17 in Sunday School," or that long-haired kid on some "witness stand." We could have a little three-year-old brother who's asking all these embarrassing questions.

You're singing about us in your song, and we want to thank you for that. A friend of ours said the song is just a trite, commonplace version of something that's being said a lot today. Creedence Clearwater Revival, the Guess Who and a lot of other groups are the real spokesmen for the young people, our friend said, and you should keep your nose in your country barrel of songs.

Well, he certainly was plain enough about his feelings. But we think it's a little more complicated than that. OK, what you say has been said before, maybe better, by a lot of young groups. But despite

your admiration for young kids, you'll have to admit it's fairly easy for us to come out for the truth. We have little to lose and much to gain.

That doesn't mean we're less honest about our search for truth. It just means that because we're starting out with less, it's a little easier for us than it is for a guy like you, who could lose a lot by saying what you've said.

Maybe our own prejudice is coming out when we say something like that. We bet that when you sang your song "What Is Truth?" instead of "Welfare Cadillac," when you entertained President Nixon and his party, or on your TV show, you probably get a greater amount of hate mail than a lot of other shows would, because a lot of the people who watch your show—to put it as simply as possible—are rednecks.

We're too young to know how the original meaning of redneck came about, but we think a redneck is a guy who gets angry-red about anything he can't understand—which is a lot. We associate your kind of audience with the idea of redneck, so we think you're a pretty brave man to sing your song to them.

A friend of ours told of the time he was driving

and got stuck behind a slow-moving car with an American-flag decal on the rear window and on the rear bumper an "America: Love It or Leave It" sticker.

With nothing to do but keep up the snail-like pace of the car in front, our friend had these thoughts: "I'm still pretty young. I'm interested in doing what's right, but I'm still not sure what's the best way to do things in America."

"I'm not part of any left-wing or right-wing groups. But even though I can't accept a lot of the things the so-called 'revolutionaries' say, still I go almost insane when I see such a stupid, cruel bumper sticker like that."

"I feel like saying that if that's what America is all about, if this is what truth is, then forget it. I don't want it."

That's not the way to react. We know it; our friend knows it; but sometimes we're so discouraged we feel there's no other way. And that's why we feel so grateful to you, Mr. Cash, for your song. You had to be brave to sing it. You give us courage when we hear it.

The Mission Singers —

COURIER / Entertainment

As I See It

Last Gasp For Cigarettes

By Pat Costa



Is it only my imagination or have the people responsible for the cigarette commercials on television stepped up their efforts to produce more glamorous, more eye-catching and more provocative works of art (if art it is)?

On a recent Sunday I found myself mesmerized by a couple of ads, one, if memory serves me right, following close upon the heels of the other.

The first was Salem which obviously will continue to work its winning jingle (you can take Salem out of the country) into the minds and skulls of viewers right up until the approaching time when all cigarette ads will be banned on television.

The particular ad used an English garden as its setting with the puerile plot revolving around a Victorian tea party.

The gorgeous leading lady, the character actors, the magnificent costumes, the beauty of the natural scene — all worthy of Hollywood's most ambitious spectacular, rather than a Madison Avenue ploy.

The second commercial, selling Winstons, had a whole platoon of song and dance men dressed in tuxedos masquerading as board members of the ad agency responsible for the ungrammatical slogan devised years ago "like a cigarette should."

The finale sees all of the members agreeing that the matter of grammar is infinitesimally small when compared to the fact that the message about their cigarette is being properly communicated. To celebrate, the whole crew breaks into a routine fit for any musical stage.

What's going on? The remaining months until the TV cigarette ban goes into effect will be spent convincing as many people as possible that smoking is an experience on a par with the most captivating and satisfying that life has to offer.

Creative Drive? Big business? Or just dirty pool?

A splurge on movies (three in one week) after a long drought for our particular family, has led me to the conclusion that the theater screen has little more to offer than the colored television screen other than size.

Each of the three films won Academy Award nominations. Two of them had received top accolades in the balloting.

Other than some nudity scenes and some four-letter words, the entertainment was comparable to that offered by TV and where one has no financial commitment to remain with lackluster fare.

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Kids TV Commercials ... Are They Necessary?

(Catholic Press Feature)

Washington — A women's group proposal that commercials be barred from children's TV programs has given the Federal Communications Commission plenty of arguments to consider — from parents, candy and toy manufacturers, and the TV industry.

The proposal, presented to the FCC by a mothers' organization called "Action for Children's Television" (ACT), has urged comments from any and all interested parties.

Letters in support of the proposal are mostly from parents who resent children's TV programs being used to sell goods to their youngsters. Testimony against the proposal has consisted mostly of arguments that quality children's programs would be impossible to produce without financial backing of the sponsors.

A representative parents' letter was from Mr. and Mrs. Albert E. Holliday of Camp Hill, Pa., who said they supported the ACT proposal "because we feel the current level of children's programming in commercial television broadcasting is tied too closely with commercial products and services."

A statement from the Na-

tional Association of Broadcasters, representing the TV industry, maintained that the absence of sponsors and their commercials would greatly diminish the quality of the children's programs because they are so expensive to produce.

The NAB argued, in addition, that it would be difficult to draw the line in defining a "children's program," with the effect that most TV programming could suffer from an FCC ruling in favor of the ACT proposal. If a children's program is one defined as "preferred" by children, the NAB complained, then TV shows which are not strictly for children — but nevertheless liked by them — such as "Beverly Hillsbillies," "Bewitched," "The Lucy Show" and others might be jeopardized.

Attorneys for three candy companies labeled the ACT idea as emotional rather than rational, and argued for a change in the content of children's programs rather than a ban on advertising.

To prohibit advertising on children's programs, argued lawyers for the Peanut Butter Manufacturers & Nut Salters Association, the National

Candy Wholesalers Association and the National Confectioners Association, would deprive the TV industry of a "proper opportunity to earn revenue," would deprive "suppliers of children's products of the opportunity to show them to children" and would deprive the public of a "portion of the basis for television financing."

The statement did concede, however, that "certain of the advertising may be inappropriate and other advertising possibly should be modified." But it called the Act approach a "panic button" response.

This season, the NAB noted, "Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color" is costing \$215,000 per episode, and local children's programs average \$35,000 per year to put on. High-quality local children's shows can run as high as \$165,000 a year, the cost cited for the "Woodrow the Woodsman" show put on by WJBK-TV in Detroit.

"Sesame Street," which is funded by grants from foundations and the government, cost \$8 million to produce during the first year, and \$6 million will be needed for the coming year. The show costs \$30,000 each day.

Catholic Book Awards

New York — (NC) — Awards to the best book in each of nine categories were presented by the Catholic Press Association at a dinner here.

"The Church and Colonialism: The Betrayal of the Third World" by Archbishop Heider Camara of Olinda and Recife, Brazil, published by Dimension Books, was chosen in the Church-at-large category.

"Contemplative Prayer" by the late Thomas Merton, published by Herder and Herder, won in the religious life category.

"Democracy, Dissent and Disorder" by Father Robert F. Drinan, S.J., published by The

Seabury Press, topped the lay life category.

"The Experimental Liturgy Book" by Robert F. Hoey, published by Herder and Herder, received the award in the liturgy category.

"Flannery O'Connor: Mystery and Manners" by Sally and Robert Fitzgerald, published by

Farrar, Straus & Giroux, was chosen in the fine arts category.

"The Foundations of Belief" by Leslie Dewart, published by Herder and Herder, topped the theology category.

"The Bible Reader: An Interfaith Interpretation" by Father Walter M. Abbot, S.J., Rabbi Arthur Gilbert, Dr. Rolfe Lanier Hunt, and Rev. J. Carter Swain, published by The Bruce Publishing Company, won in the Scripture category.

"The Roman Catholic Church" by Father John L. McKenzie, S.J., published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, was considered best in the Church history and biography category.

"A New Catechism: Catholic Faith for Adults" (New Authorized Version with Imprimatur), published by Herder and Herder, was chosen in the religious education and catechetics category.

The judges decided no fiction or poetry awards would be given this year.

King's Prep Production



Donna Schultheis, Mike Pierce in Feiffer play.

The drama club of King's Preparatory High School, under the direction of Louis Giannante, will present its spring play, "Losing Is Just the Other Side of Winning" — or "A Mixed - Media View of Jules Feiffer," on Friday and Satur-

day, May 8 and 9 at 8:15 p.m. in the school auditorium.

The presentation combines film and drama in an experiment in adapting several short Feiffer cartoons for the stage. Admission is \$1.

Wednesday, May 6, 1970