

Senator's wives don't realize what comes around . . .

by babs goldberg

staff writer

Much controversy has resulted from the Senator's wives initial gathering a few years ago to rate the lyrics of rock albums in an effort to censor or place warning labels on ones they felt contained messages about sex, drugs, or violence.

Some, who agree with their theory that these albums are corrupting children, have rationalized that their children's drug addictions, violent acts, and suicides are a direct consequence of their exposure to rock lyrics.

Others feel these children were previously disturbed and the albums are being used by their parents as a "scapegoat" for the real problems.

The committee, formed by these wives, is complaining that Madonna's *Papa Don't Preach* wrongly pro-

motes single-parenting and Cyndi Lauper's *She Bop* is full of subliminal sexual messages.

They have decided that many hard rock bands are directing children to worship the Devil or do drugs, and that Billy Joel's song against suicide is actually promoting it.

The committee members have failed to recognize that the music they were enjoying in high school contains mentions of sex, drugs and violence. These songs were hits then, fans appreciated them, and no influence on children was ever mentioned.

In 1956 the Senator's wives probably enjoyed Little Richard's, *Good Golly Miss Molly*, in which the lyrics contain, "...you sure like to ball..." The same year these wives helped to make his song *Long Tall Sally* a hit with the lyrics, "Long tall Sally, she's built

to please. She's got everything that Uncle John needs."

Little Richard, in the early seventies, was also one of the first performers to "partially disrobe" on stage and "cast his garments into a sea of outstretched hands."

Shirley Ellis didn't strip, but she sang *Stagger Lee* in 1964, about a gambler who must "pay a debt" by killing a man to whom he owed money. He went to the bar and said, "Nobody move-and he pulled his .44...Gotta take care of business for my three kids and wife...bullet came through Billy and broke the bartender's glass..."

In 1959 Barrett Strong's song, *Money*, became a hit with lyrics against love: "Your love can be such a thrill, but your love don't pay my bills...Money don't get everything, that's true, but what it don't get, I can't

use."

Whatever violent rock songs the Senator's wives are complaining about, they should first consider Carole King's *Smackwater Jack*, about "...a man with a shotgun in his hand...He didn't think about the noose. He couldn't take no more abuse, so he shot down the congregation..."

In addition to violence, the committee has complained about the drug-related messages in today's rock songs. A song by "Peppermint" Harris, popular when these women were in school, was *I Got Loaded*. The song includes the lyrics, "Every time I

tried to leave [the bar], I fell down on the floor. I got loaded. Oh, I sure got high...Made me feel so happy while it was going down..."

The Senator's wives generation helped Paul Anka's fame, but probably didn't realize that he outdid Madonna's *Papa Don't Preach* with messages of unscrupulous behavior when he recorded (*You're Having My Baby*).

His song also mentions the choice of abortion and single-parenting: "You didn't have to keep it. Wouldn't put you through it. You could have swept it

from your life, but you wouldn't do it..."

Many old songs condoned by the Senator's wives, are full of the same type of subliminal messages that the committee is now, thirty years later, trying to warn the public of in new albums.

Their committee should realize that children are not listening to songs to blindly follow their lyrics—just like in the fifties when the Senator's wives were children.

Like the music business in the past, our first amendment rights should still be enforced to keep the judging up to music buyers and not committee members.

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rhythmically adventurous and slightly left-of-center (*Caroline, Big Love*); and Christine's, by her own description, is more *down to center* (*Everywhere, Little Lies*). Yet *Tango In The Night* isn't a showcase for three solo artists—it's the work of a band.

"Christine has her emotional stance—how she wants to play the scene, so to speak—pretty much set, and it stays within that framework," Buckingham adds. "Working with her songs is a matter of structure, of architecture. With Stevie, the things that will work best don't necessarily follow any structural rules. You also have to be

careful not to upset the emotional tone she might be going for, because Stevie's acutely aware of the particular way she wants to express a song."

Tango In The Night offers a balance not only of musical styles, but of technology and feel. "I think there has been some worry about the machines taking over," says Fleetwood. "People are getting tired of music that's bloody perfect. There's no air in it all, and there's no emotion. In my mind, anything that doesn't emote will not last. If it's a painting, a piece of writing, music, anything—if it does not af-

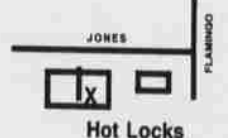
fect someone emotionally, its life span is drastically reduced."

Fleetwood Mac preserved emotional content by putting the technology in the service of the music, instead of the other way around. "We certainly didn't embrace the more cliched aspects of current recording technique—gating, sequencing, all of that," notes Buckingham. "The production applications that we did use are not the same four or five moves you hear every time you turn on the radio. We developed our own moves." The result? An album of "fresh ideas," as Christine puts it.



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