

BOYCOTT ALL RECORD STORES WHO RESTRICT YOUR ACCESS TO MUSIC!

In Issue #14 of THE ROC we, along with Parents For Rock & Rap, The Washington Music Industry Coalition and Tom Morello of Rage Against The Machine issued the call for a boycott of not only MUSICLAND, but all record chains who implement "18 To Purchase" policies.

As a result of that article, we received a copy of an article titled, "Going On The Record" which appeared in the ROCKBEAT column in the Village Voice. The article was authored by Neil Strauss, who besides writing for the "Voice", also writes for Rolling Stone Magazine. After speaking with Neil on the phone I obtained his permission to share this article with readers of THE ROC. Thanks Neil! In the meantime, I urge all our readers to: Keep the heat on Musicland! Do not patronize their stores anywhere! Support the Boycott! --John Woods

GOING ON THE RECORD

by Neil Strauss

In May of 1990, the Recording Industry Association of America, threatened by proposals in 19 states for mandatory album warning stickers, introduced the now commonplace black-and-white parental advisory label--"voluntarily"--affixed to albums with explicit lyrics or graphic graphics. Every major label and many indies complied, ostensibly to protect their artists' First Amendment rights, certainly to ensure that anti-obscenity legislation would progress no further. Though over 1000 retailers instantly implemented 18-to-purchase policies on stickered product, leading surprisingly few people to question the compromise--their watchfulness waned as controversy died down.

Today, with protest against gangsta rap coming from the right and the left, controversy is escalating again. On one side, you have the usual suspects--The National Review--decrying the menace, on the other, there's Illinois Democrat Carol Mosely-Braun requesting congressional hearings on explicit rap lyrics and the National Political Congress of Black Women staging protest at Sam Goody and Wiz stores in Washington, D.C., and Tower in Philadelphia. So far, only the Wiz has met with the group, though an NPCBW spokesperson tells ROCKBEAT that other stores have "slowed down" their orders for gangsta product.

An article appearing in the January 15 Billboard summed up the situation: "In general, retailers resent their stores being made a battlefield for the issue, and privately say organizations that have a problem with explicit lyrics should take their beef directly to the labels." That's in private. Publicly, as long as protesters use stores as a backdrop for the evening news, access to explicit products, from Onyx to Liz Phair, will continue to erode. A ROCKBEAT inquiry into the policies of some of the country's largest music chains and distributors produced responses ranging from Tower's let-the-parents-decide to Camelot's no comment, perhaps more disturbing than those

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Written by Westside ID200

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who own up to outright bans.

* **BEST BUY**, 151-store Minneapolis-based electronics chain. Restrictions to minors: list of roughly 35 releases for all stores. Bans: yes. Jeff Abrams, merchandise manager: "There's one album with a cover that has some guy riding a huge penis, but I saw the artwork and said nuh-uh. We don't have the ability to keep it behind the counter somewhere."

* **TOWER RECORDS**, 81-store Sacramento based chain. Restrictions to minors: at the discretion of individual store managers. Bans: none. Stan Gorman, spokesperson: "The question came up when they started stickering the product. We're stuck between parents saying don't sell that to their kids, and the press and freedom of speech. It's really the parents' job."

* **TRANS WORLD MUSIC CORP.**, Albany-based distributor for 600 music stores. Restrictions to minors: list of roughly 20 titles for the 50 stores where state or local ordinances apply (though for a year after the 1990 2 Live Crew flap, some stickered records were not sold to minors chainwide). Bans: one, Body Count, with and without "Cop Killer." Paul Cardinal, legal counsel: "Some of the sound recordings are just pushing the limits with what local ordinances would allow, and we make up our own list. They are the ones that we wouldn't want to take a risk on."

* **WHEREHOUSE ENTERTAINMENT**, southern California-based 350-store chain, Restrictions to minors: at the discretion of individual store managers. Bans: none. Bob Bell, new-release buyer: "Our position has always been that we're not censors and we leave that choice to the customers. Restrictions we generally leave up to the managers of each store...What's right for Bakersfield may not be what's right for South Central, Los Angeles."

* **MUSICLAND**, Minneapolis-based 1100-store chain. Restrictions to minors: in obedience with local ordinances. Bans: last "major" one was 2 Live Crew . vague on others. Marcia Appel, spokesperson: "We don't have a firm or general policy to state to the world. We operate within the law. Occasionally an album will create interest or concern, and Snoop Dog (which they carry) might be the example...If we pulled a product that everybody wanted us to pull, the next day we'd hear from everyone from freedom-of-speech advocates to parents who disapproved of the record but wanted to be allowed to make that decision for themselves."

* **WAL-MART**, Arkansas-based 2013-outlet discount store. Restrictions to minors: no releases deemed offensive to minors. Bans: no stickered albums; implemented "banned and restricted" list in 1990. Trey Baker, spokesperson: "If our customers tell us that they find something inappropriate or offensive, we take that item under consideration. There's only so much space available, and we tend to sell what we think our customers will buy."

* **CAMELOT MUSIC**, 364-store Ohio-based chain. Restrictions to minors: in obedience with local ordinances. Bans: no comment, though they did pull Body Count in 1992. Fred Miller, store operations: "In certain areas, we advise the stores about explicit lyrics. But as far as out-and-bans, we tend to keep vague on that issue."

Editor's Comment: Well there you have it folks. In my phone conversation with Neil Strauss, he

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indicated that he felt Musicland outright lied with their statement, and we should keep a very close eye on Camelot. Being "vague" was only putting it mildly. If any of our readers have further information on various stores policies, send "em in. THE ROC again thanks Neil Strauss for allowing us to share this information with you. - John Woods -

[Source](#)