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Two great bands and one wonderful short film and my personal experiences which lead me to the question: Don't you ever get tired of paying attention to the Negative-Pushers?

I've been accused of doing a thinly disguised promo for a short film I mentioned in the last review. The person writing this untrue statement made it clear that they were an expert and absolutely positive of their facts. Must be nice to be sure you're always right. (If you can't tell, I'm being very sarcastic. I've never had the luxury of being sure of myself, and I doubt that the person censuring me really feels that way either. That person was simply basing their criticism on, in my opinion, a more common tendency these days to rush to judgement of others and assume the worst.) The fact is that no, I don't do thinly disguised promos, as this person was so certain of... unless you consider even TALKING about another's work as a promo. Heaven forbid that we talk about the work of others and how we like it. Obviously, we are in someone's pocket if we say something nice about someone else. (Yes, more sarcasm for the sarcastic-impaired.)

One of their criticisms (and why they were so sure it was an obvious promo) was the fact that I only did a general take on the site, just a few "vague" lines about it being pretty cool and worth a look. I didn't write about it at length, tell them the plot, talk about its merits and demerits—in other words, do a full critical critique. One or two lines didn't make it a review but a shameless promo, at least in their book. They were assuming that the whole review article would be about this movie, and apparently didn't bother to read anything else—or even check out the site in question (or they would have known, as I'd already said, that I hadn't seen the movie. They didn't actually read what I said apparently

that closely either.) I do often do short acknowledgments of other works. I don't always do long, detailed reviews—especially if there isn't a lot to work with. But does that mean that it's just thinly disguised promotion—i.e. something *bad* since THAT really was this person's intent?

It got me to thinking about how people now perceive that just saying something positive with a pointer to help someone out is considered “bad,” while tearing someone apart with criticism, even to the point these days of cruel attacks, is considered acceptable or even “good.”

Is my stand against doing negative reviews considered “bad?” It seems I get more people telling me (and flaming me) saying that..... than I get people telling me that they want to read more positive pointers and quick reviews. Does it somehow lack credibility if you don't tear people apart to show that you were really doing an honest critique? What exactly is an honest critique? How honest are those guys on TV or the magazines/newspapers? They're trying to sell newspapers and get ratings. Which sells more? Being controversial and mean or being positive and supportive? Which does the public respond to more—and why therefore, would anyone consider what they are saying an “honest” critique?

Critique at its base is opinion and nothing more. The only honest critique you can really give is to give your honest opinion—and not expect much of anything in return, though even then, you expect something, else you wouldn't be bothering with the workload of listening to hundreds of bands via their pages and looking at hundreds of sites over the course of a month (my average is about 30-60 a week—bands, artists, sites all mixed up together.)

(Another reason it's so frustrating to me that my MySpace ability to send messages or make friend requests is still broken—there are so many bands and groups and people out there that I'd like to send a message to or request as a friend. And I can't... I can only hope that they find me. The wonders and perils of technology, I guess. It let's me find you but doesn't let me talk to you.)

I've always tried to emphasize that it's just my opinion and nothing more when you get down to brass tacks. You need to be true to yourself and not let me or anyone else tell you what to think or what to like.

Yet why do so many (and I do mean MANY) persist in listening only to the negative, while ignoring all the positive messages? I do the same thing. I get much more upset than I should at a negative message—even when I received twenty positive ones. Down deep, I know it shouldn't get to me. I know I should ignore it. I know that not everyone will like what I have to say and I know that some people just like to tear others down to make themselves feel better, more superior—and that this is just self-delusion since it only proves how little they are when they need to belittle others. Yet, I still get upset and focus on the negative. Why?

It's sad and maddening that this is the world we now find ourselves living in—a world where the negative comments we hear around us are the ones we pay attention to, so much so that we are afraid of saying something against the negativity. We have created a culture where being mean and negative is worshipped rather than condemned. Look at how negative political campaigns have become. I was watching the results in my own state and the press was interviewing the loser in a race. He was saying how “at least he ran a clean, positive campaign about the issues” and other such rot. I saw his commercials. He was slinging mud and innuendo and even arrogant, ugly Americanisms in every one. Does he really believe that he ran a clean, positive issue driven campaign? Is that how skewed his perspectives have become that that is what he thinks of as clean? Or positive?

Or is he so arrogant that he thinks that the public will buy it as clean and positive?

Maybe he's right. Perhaps too many people are buying that kind of unabashed, base, vile self-serving promotion as the “norm” and “natural” way now. Look at how often we trash people that are nice and glorify even worship people who are saying and acting like horrible scum. Look at the incredibly mean-spirited things that American Idol Judge Simon Cowell says (and no, he doesn't always say horrible cruel things, but he certainly doesn't try to think about others feelings either.) What happened when the show premiered? Lots of people hated him but look how many suddenly LOVED him and

WORSHIPPED him and wanted to have him as their boyfriend. They justified their and his actions by saying that he was just being truthful, and he was telling it like it was.

No, he wasn't. He was being cruel and vindictive and whether he's really like that in real life or not doesn't matter—he does it to get attention and expects (knows) that people will listen to the negative, foul-spewing commentators over the ones that try to be intelligent and thoughtful and kind. He knows it sells and people will listen to him if he says nasty things about others. Howard Stern knows that, too—he doesn't just say four-letter words and spew hate to cause shock, he also spews cruelty. (And then he tries to say “but I'm really a nice person in real life...that's my public persona.” I say “tough,” this is your real personality. This is what you show us. It must come from somewhere real within you or you wouldn't be able to show this public side so easily or so convincingly. You like debasing people to make yourself feel better.) People like that know it will get them attention and that it really is them inside, else they wouldn't do it. Else, they wouldn't be able to hurt other people, other careers, other's hopes like that. It sells and foolishly we watch and give them the ratings and the attention they crave.

The network knows it, too, and probably encourages it. Every other network tries to copy it—look at all the mean spirited shows on television now and in the movies. They are there because we put up with them, just as we put up with mudslinging, selfish, corrupt politicians. We created this monster.

So, no, I don't do thinly disguised promos—implying that I'm trying to pull something off on the public. I see a group or a person and I like their work. I publish that. My agenda is that I want them noticed, just as I hope people will notice me—and not because I'm being cruel or mean-spirited. Not because my self-esteem is so low that I need to hurt and condemn others so that everyone will think I'm superior.

I've met way too many people like that—not just in the arts but in every walk of life, especially in tech positions and especially on the Internet. Politicians and Media still reign supreme as the place where the most insecure and afraid (and therefore willing to do anything to be seen as superior) still reside, but it's always the same across the board with these types.

They tend to be arrogant and come off as know-it-alls and they also tend to put down other people at every opportunity, laughing and acting like they are being funny by being condescending and mean. Then they will look at you, looking at them aghast, and claim that you are the freak, if you “take it too seriously” or “c’mon, it’s just a joke...don’t make any big issue of it.” Or “where’s your sense of humor...everybody does it.”

Maybe that’s the problem—too many people have bought into that and join in now. I don’t want a world where everybody does it. I also don’t want a world where the people that disagree with these lowlife losers are too afraid to speak up and tell them to shut up. They’re afraid because they think that “everybody does it” and that they’ll be the one to be attacked next because they just “take it too seriously.” It’s too easy to attack other people, either in the comfort of anonymous cyberspace or in your office or even your home. Do you have supportive friends and family and coworkers? Or have you chosen to surround yourself with leaches and losers and hatemongers?

My biggest wish is that people start speaking up against this type of behavior and tell these negative-pushers to be quiet—that their “bullying, I’m superior” tactics aren’t going to work anymore. I wish it for cyberspace and I wish it for real life. I want people to seek out and find new things and people to talk positively about—and not just people on PBS! I want people to be Reviewers rather than Critics (as in criticizers, thinking that’s what Critics do...the best don’t criticize, at least not destructively, they review and make you think. But do they get attention these days? Perhaps not.)

For all of you out there that agree with me, that you want there to be less bullying and negative tactics and flaming, please try to be brave and stand up and start talking. I know it’s scary and tough to put yourself out there—but I’m hoping and believing that there are more of us out there than them—speaking up and out is the only way to fight these people. They’re bullies, plain and simple. If we don’t want being a bully to become the norm forever, as it’s been gradually becoming, then we have to start shouting back. Shouting to the bullies and the bully-promoters. Telling them, that we don’t want them spewing their hate messages around us anymore, nor on the television, nor on film, nor in politics (as much as that’s possible...but it used be the case...or at least in better check than it is today.)

So think about that when you read about the groups and people that I write about. Think about how brave they are for putting themselves and their work out there, knowing that there are too TOO many bullies out here just waiting to say nasty things about them and try to tear down any inner confidence they have. Are you countering that negativity at all? Are you sending out positive messages to them and to me or even to your friends? What kind of message are you sending out? And I don't care what your profession is or whether you think it matters what you think. **I care about what you think.** So do others. You don't have to be an artist or a musician or a publisher or an agent or a record company. You don't have to be a Network BigWig or a Politician. You don't have to be an Internet God or even an Internet Troll. Your age doesn't matter, nor does your skin color, nor your sex, nor your ethnic background, nor your income—you and just you matter, what and who you are inside. What you THINK and FEEL matters here—nothing else. Stop letting others try to change that—make you feel bad about yourself or tell you how you should look, be, think and what should you like, hate and do. Or are YOU the one trying to make others feel bad about themselves? Even unconsciously?

What you SAY matters. Your message matters and affects so many other people, including people you will never meet. You can hurt or you can help—that choice is always up to you, just as how you choose to react when someone tries to hurt you is also up to you, as well.

So what kind of message are you sending? What kind of effect are you having on the world? And what are you going to do about it?

Which brings me to some stand-up artists that do risk censure by putting themselves out there. This first group even emailed me and asked me to come to their show. They deprecated their message by symbolically shrugging and calling it a little “shameless self-promotion.” I responded positively. It wasn't arrogant, it wasn't condescending. They weren't demanding that I see them or saying that they would deign to let me interview them. (I rarely do interviews by the way. It takes a special case for me to do that.) They simply recognized that they needed to self promote themselves and were asking if I would look them over.

They were taking a huge risk. What if I were one of those types that likes to tear people apart as a way to show that I'm a worthy critic? Luckily, I'm not. If I don't like a group, I simply assume that the group is not to my taste. I don't assume that they are bad and as a result I don't write about them. That's what I mean about not doing negative reviews. If I do write about you, then I like you. More than that, it means I heard or saw something in you that touched me, sometimes compelled me, to write about you and your work.

In **The Evergreen Effect's** case, I had no qualms about reviewing them. Unfortunately, I missed their recent show this past weekend at Pyramid Brewery (Seattle, WA, USA) but I do mean "unfortunately." The weather here has been unnerving and I was just too tired to fight my way through the hydroplaning and the winds to get there. (I've slid off an embankment before in bad weather, so my paranoia tends to be a bit high in bad weather. And so no, I'm not that brave in bad weather, especially when you add city traffic, crazy drivers who don't know enough to be cautious and blacker than black night on top of it.)

So I missed the show and I do admit I have a soft spot for local area bands, the Pacific Northwest and the Western Territories (since I include Canada always!) There is a lot of raw talent up here among the evergreens! So I regret that I missed my chance to see them this time round, especially since there are so many bands that aren't local that I would dearly love to see in person but know how unlikely it will be. Still, if you're local, they have other gigs coming up as well. Hopefully, the weather won't scare you as much as it does me!

Happily, they have four tracks on their MySpace site, four fun tracks, I might add. I'm not exactly sure how to classify them. They list themselves as acoustic, funk and rock. I'd almost put them into the folk rock category, myself, but in a totally positive way, yet at other times, I can hear traces of funk and definite rock vibes throughout their music. The lyrics are simple yet honest and sometimes hint at deeper emotional and human relationship depths. The musicality is right on target and blends perfectly with the lyrics and Chase's wonderful tonality and rawness (at times.) He has a great voice, and knows how to use it to best effect—and he knows how to feel the music and deliver the lyrics in an honest, compelling manner. The emotional impact is there but always with a bit of humor and lightness—fun, if you will—to the overall effect, especially in the lyrics. It's

an acoustic sound but yet, it also seems to feel like a rock band, full of the power and demanding beats that you'd expect to find in a bigger, louder orchestration.

My favorites of the four offerings was **Young and Stupid**. I loved the playful lyrics and was totally taken by surprise by the mid-song twist, followed by a building power that completely enraptures you and holds you until the finish. The introspective yet powerful **Cold Flame** and the almost folk-like **On the Right Track** were close seconds. This group says one of its influences was **Creedence Clearwater**, one of my all time favorite bands. I can feel it in them. They do have a vintage rock feel but with a driving energy and enthusiasm that feels very young and upbeat. I think they are a band to watch and some intrepid label should sign them up fast before the bigger players discover them.

Yet down in LA, **The Cheat** has already been discovered by many and has an Indie label to prove it. This alternative/rock band may give **Panic at the Disco** some competition to worry about. The lyrics are disturbingly funny and eerie. They make you think and look over your shoulder at the same time. The lead vocals are powerful and strong, compelling and demanding. You have to listen. The musicality is complex and almost overwhelming at times. There is depth upon depth and layer hidden behind layer. Questions are asked and probed within the lyrics and within the composition with a juxtaposition between singer and song, beat and counter beat. Their range is impressive as are the many flavors of the vocals. In most cases, the harmonies are just that, harmonies. Only in the biting social commentary-focused **Sooner or Later** did those harmonies have a truly uncomfortable jarring feeling—perhaps that was intentional, especially since even with that, I loved **Sooner or Later**, but it was hard to pick a favorite given the three choices. The chaotic, cheeky, mocking **Diet Coke at the Gap** and the heart-wrenching vocals and lyrics of **Not So Bad** were just as compelling, each with its own distinctive features yet still fitting together perfectly as a compilation should. No Cheat here—well, worth a visit and a listen.

Finally, a quick nod to another movie and with the risk of me being told I'm doing a thinly veiled promotion once more. **Perceptions** is a film out of Canada that I have seen., I think. I've seen the short version posted on the film's Myspace site--which may be the entire film, I'm not sure--it seems complete. It's dance oriented, which I like. I like dance movies—from **The Company** to **Center Stage** to **Step It Up** and even **High**

School Musical. So in this case, I just give the film's particulars—shamelessly copied from their site.

Synopsis: A woman is thrust into an alternative reality during a drug induced high where she is dancing in a world of her own. The woman's perceptions are shaken as her two realities collide. As the intensity heightens and her confusion escalates, she is forced to choose between her two loves.

Written, Directed & Produced by Karen Nielsen

Starring Heather Dotto, Joel Sturrock, Stephen Agisilaou

Choreographer Josh Beamish (Move: The Company)

Director of Photography Tony Mirza

Editor Jim Norman

Original Music 'Steel to Sky' Kubilay Uner

Vote for Perceptions (Audience Choice Award) Now by emailing vote@cinematiccd.com with the subject Perceptions (and nothing else) or visit

<http://www.cinematiccd.com/voteperceptions/> to vote! (Before November 26 to count!)

There, how's that for shameless promotion, just not self-promotion, since I don't have anything to do with the movie? If you want to see the 5 minute short and have the bandwidth to view films over the Internet, then you can go to their myspace site. In all honesty, the film is a beautiful piece of work (and short enough so it is possible to view it as a download.) The evocative, fluid, sometimes disturbing contemporary dance sequence is the counterpoint to the harsh reality of a young woman's ugly and ultimately tragic drug overdose. The music is haunting and evocative as well—images of opium dens dance in your head even as the lithe bodies of the dancers pay homage to a torn and dying young woman's final moments and heartbreaking choices.

Worth seeing—even if I do get accused again of a thinly disguised promotion because of my liking it.

The Evergreen Effect can be found at <http://www.myspace.com/laddehlinger> and <http://www.evergreeneffect.com/>

The Cheat can be found at www.myspace.com/thecheatband

Perceptions, (The Movie) can be found at www.myspace.com/perceptionsthemovie

Check them out. If you liked the review, you'll probably love the bands or movie. If you hated the review, then who knows, maybe you still will anyway. Point being—check them out and make up your own mind.

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CG Anderson is a 10 year new media provocateur involved in media, art, technology and the online world. Also a writer, blogger and novelist. CG's comments are personal and opinionated and solely the responsibility of the author, so there. Don't like the opinions, disagree, agree, don't know? Great, make a comment—clean ones will be allowed, netiquette-challenged ones will be ignored!

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