

POP GOES THE WEASEL

Blog Post – Richard Gill

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It's time to stand up and let the world know, at least in Australia, that if we are to be a truly creative nation then we need to nurture creativity from the start of a child's life and we need to do it properly.

Music education, the prime mover in nurturing children's creativity, is often maltreated by people, let's call them teachers, who think that children should have a diet of only popular music, because, AND WAIT FOR THIS...THE CHILDREN LIKE IT!

What fabulous reasoning; children tend to like sugar: should they therefore have only a diet of sugar?

By giving children ONLY popular music you say to them in an oblique but very forceful way: 'Children, you are too dumb to understand any music other than popular music.

Your brains will never understand Jazz; you will never get any European folk music or world music or fusion or crossover jazz/classical/ethnic music because you are not capable of listening to anything other than pop music.

'So children', says the music teacher of limited imagination, and even more limited ability, 'let's play the latest pop song and see how it's just like every other pop song.'

The real tragedy is that there is some crackerjack pop music out there which, in conjunction with a wide range of all sorts of other music, could really have a profound impact on children's musical development. Comparing, contrasting, examining a broad range of styles and genres is the life-blood of a music program. Music education is not about entertainment.

Would History be taught with the view that we will only study Australian history from 1900 -1905? That could be fun and entertaining!

Would Geography be taught with the view that we will only study mountains in Victoria? We love mountains and hate seas and plains and valleys!

Would arithmetic be taught with the view that we only really need to do addition up to ten? My children don't like any numbers above ten!

If this Federal Government is really serious about creative Australia, really serious about education and genuinely interested in literacy and numeracy then it would put its money where its mouth was and fund music and arts education as a priority, taught properly by teachers who know something about music, teachers who are serious about music as a subject and not disc jockeys.

Parents need to know that children, who receive only pop music and nothing else, are being short-changed in a significant way.

How is it that in Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Argentina, for example, where music is studied and taught sequentially as a serious subject that there has been no deleterious impact on the literacy and numeracy results of students? In fact just the opposite: these countries excel in all fields of educational endeavour precisely because of their arts and music programs, in which pop music, by the way, plays a very minor role

Wake up Australia; we are behind the eight ball big time-but we can change it; you can change it-you can show concern-you can write to education ministers and politicians, even when they seem not to be understanding the problem they still need to hear that there is a problem and it can be fixed. Watch this space.