

STUDENT ESSAY: PERSUASION

Beyond the Paycheck

By Jessica Richard

In today's music it is becoming very hard to find a musician or group who has not "sold out" yet. It is much too common to see stars in commercials or advertisements endorsing just about any product that you can think of, from soft drinks to make-up. Neil Young is one artist who has kept true to his music and not done this. He is one of the few artists who only creates music for himself and his fans, not for the sole purpose of making money.

Today, many would argue that endorsing products and making television commercials is essential, that without this stars would have no popularity. This has happened as a result of our society. It used to be a rarity to see as many celebrities on television as we do today. Now it has become something so popular that musicians are considered "nothings" if they not have their name on a brand or even their own brand. Neil Young has done neither of these things. As a protest to his peer's actions, he wrote and released the song called "This Note's For You" on the *Lucky Thirteen* album in 1988. In the first verse of the song a listener can grasp his idea right away.

I ain't singin' for Pepsi

I ain't singin' for Coke

I don't sing for nobody

Makes me look like a joke

This note's for you.

The rest of the lyrics of this song go on to explain he won't sing for beer, politicians, or endorsement money because he's "got the real thing, baby." His lyrics for this song prove that he does have the real thing, the act of relying solely on the music to popularize himself, and this is how it should be. A musician should not become well known because we have seen his or her face plastered over billboards everywhere. They should become well known and respected because their music evokes an emotion in people and makes them want to listen to it more.

With Neil Young's album, *Trans*, released in 1983, he proved again that he loves his music and not only the money he makes from it. Throughout the whole album he distorted his voice with vocoders, octave dividers, and synthesizers. The music of this album was also very computerized and employed the use of drum machines. Young made this album to relay his attempts to communicate with his son Ben, who has cerebral palsy. At the time, Ben was going through a therapy program to enable him to communicate better and it was a tough and rigorous process. The whole album was an expression of the frustration of a handicap. Even though Young was highly degraded and just about every critic out there basically trashed his album, he took it with a grain of salt. Even though the album did not sell many copies and was not successful in the least, he treasured it because it meant something to him other than a paycheck.

Neil Young is a musician who should be idolized and looked up to by all, but unfortunately will never be because of the abundance of greedy, money-loving hounds in the music industry today. Today musicians are too materialistic, they don't care about their songs evoking emotions, but instead about how big their houses are and how fast their cars go. One could argue that the money that comes from advertising and promotions is part of

their income, but if you are a musician shouldn't your income result from performing and selling you music, instead of endorsing a drink or face cream?