

EDWIN STARR, SINGER OF 1970'S #1 PROTEST ANTHEM "WAR," IS DEAD. By contrast, war remains alive, in Iraq and around the world. So an undeniably correct answer to Starr's famous musical question, "War—what is it good for?" would be, "**It's good for outliving Edwin Starr.**"

Blotted off the front page by ongoing stories of bombs snowing on Baghdad, Edwin "War" Starr passed quietly into the Giant K-Hole in the Sky on April 3, 2003, at his home in Nottingham, England. He hadn't recorded a major hit since "War," although there have been several major wars since then.

In the final analysis, even Edwin Starr, bless his freshly interred heart, would admit that **war is good for at least one platinum record.**

Every element of his trademark song...every throat-shredding vocal inflection, every lung-bursting horn solo, every brain-bashing drum-beat...is delivered with a rare level of intestinal fury, making it one of the all-time greatest songs to facilitate a bowel movement. WAR! HUNH! GOOD GOD, Y'AWL...[*sound of feces plopping into toilet*]

Because of those overwrought, horse-flappin'-his-gums vocals, I always pictured Edwin Starr as a hairy white hippie trying to sound black. Turns out he was a black gent with a fairly impressive soul-music pedigree. But he still sounded like a white guy trying to be black, rather than what he really was, which was a black guy who sounded like a white guy trying to be black.

The song's surprisingly market-friendly appeal helped usher in a paisley flood of 70s antiwar chic, culminating in horrible TV shows such as *M*A*S*H*, shameful fashion trends such as peace-sign necklaces carved from hamster bones, and expensive black-velvet posters that said, in pathetic scribbled lower-case letters, "war is not good for children and other living things."

But, mercifully, *M*A*S*H* was canceled long ago. And, like I told you, Edwin Starr is dead. And, lest I be forced to remind you, war lives on.

THE WARM, MUSTY SMELL of rotted yams and intestinal bacteria rises from the humble, worker-owned coffee shop where I used to get my twelve-times-daily coffee fix. The scruffy, dreadlocked Caucasians who work here are dead-set against the current war in Iraq. They help organize "peace marches" downtown where American flags are burned, where shrieks of anarchist outrage ring through the streets, and where, if you're halfway savvy and say the right things, it's easy to bag a hippie chick or two. For the past two months, as they've sat in circles, rubber-cementing peace slogans to colored construction paper, their thoughts have been consumed by this war and how "evil" it supposedly is. Therefore, I must conclude that **war is good for people who hate war.** It gives them a firm sense of purpose and helps fill the endless void that exists where a personality should be.

Yet as I stand in line waiting for my cup o' commie coffee, I grow weary of their tempeh-tinged smarminess. As the clerk yabbers endlessly with a likeminded Peace Worm about some community-building earth-friendly pottery workshop they're planning to attend, my patience reaches its end. I've waited five minutes for service, and yet these pro-worker workers are some of the laziest workers I've ever encountered! Karl Marx would be ashamed at the idea of uplifting these walking flea circuses. I firmly believe that you can judge a person's morality by how well they serve you coffee. If they can't run a simple coffee shop, what do they know about world affairs? What qualifies them to judge?

These despicable White Rastas, running scared from the trust funds dangled before them their whole lives, forever lost the support of REAL working-class people when their antiwar protests fucked up the bus schedules. Coffeeless, I leave the coffeeshop, having learned that **war is good for people who hate people who hate war,** because I am temporarily able to allieviate my considerable inner turmoil by feeling superior to someone else.

AS THE RIOT POLICE form a solid black wall and sweep the protesters off Burnside, an all-girl band from Japan called Megababe launches into "Communication Breakdown" in an almost-empty club. I stand in the open doorway, one eye on the cops, one eye on the band, and during this moment of funky synchronicity, I realize that **war is good for people who can't communicate.** And then I wonder to myself why it is that we, as human beings, can't live together and solve our problems without resorting to savagery. Why can't we all introduce ourselves, hug the person to our left, and work on building a better, more beautiful planet? And after a brief pause, I remember that most people are stupid fucking bricks controlled by blunt rodent instincts. Most people ENJOY war. They dig it, at least if they're winning.

As the sixty-one-year-old war veteran kicks my ass up and down the block because I said bad things about our president, it occurs to me that **war is good for violent people,** because it provides them with a righteous excuse to express their otherwise unrighteous drives to kill, maim, and destroy. As the crusty (but surprisingly muscular) bastard grinds my cheeks into the pavement and calls me a series of questionably accurate names, he enjoys the lusty gusto of being a living, breathing, violent human being. He knows that since he's a good person, he hurts other people for good causes, unlike the bad people, who hurt people in the name of bad causes.

The bodies pile up, up, and further up, picked at by crows under the withering desert sun. It seems that every time you go to war, you wind up with dead bodies all over the place. **War is good for killin'.** It's GREAT for killin'. Nothin' better for killin' than some war. If Edwin Starr had personally asked me, "Hey, Jim—what is war good for?" I would have rolled my eyes and said, "It's good for *killin'*, ya jackasaurus! *Duh!*"

Whether one considers the fact that fertility rates skyrocket when a country is victorious in war, or the documented evidence that women enjoy masturbating to the sound of marching troops, it would be hard to deny that **war is good for the sex drive.** During wartime, everyone's a creamy martial milkshake frothing over with lust. All the guys want to shoot bullets, and I don't mean blanks. All the gals are horny like polecats, their genital regions pink, moist, and inviting.

I have to tell you—when I first saw the bombs dropping on Baghdad, it was like watching a rape I was powerless to stop. I felt disgusted. The government never asked me whether I thought we should invade Iraq. I had no say in it. Historically, war has been bloodshed-for-profit, mainly perpetrated for the benefit of a few and at the expense of many. War is not moral. It is rarely noble. But it seems inevitable. Trying to end war is like trying to eradicate natural human emotions such as hatred—stamp it out here, it pops up over there. We will always have war, just as we will always have assholes.

So my suggestion is to kick back, swallow a handful of chill pills, and learn to enjoy the war as much as I do. You don't want to get all upset and wind up like Edwin Starr.



WAR

WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR? PLENTY.