

## The Reactor

# Music at the Pier?



by Paul Azevedo

About once a year I stop in at Sarah Glew's Manor Music, exchange a pleasant hello with Sarah, and look over the list of the "top 40" in popular music.

This gives me an opportunity to shake my head at rock and roll music, as it continues its endless search for the ever-more absurd and ever-more sensational.

I normally recognize the name of one piece of music, and vaguely recall that I have heard the names of two, perhaps three, of the musical groups represented.

WHEN I FIRST heard the name Elvis Presley, about 22 or 23 years ago, I was grateful that his kind of music was obviously a fad, quickly to pass into oblivion.

The staying power of Presley and of rock and roll has both surprised and amazed me. There are large numbers of voting adults who were not yet born when Presley came on the scene. A large city, Pacifica, has come of age while he remained popular.

I am grateful to live in the Bay Area, where I can indulge my taste in music and ignore Presley, his imitators, followers, and those who make him seem like a conservative musically.

POPULAR music has come a long way since the days of "Buttermilk Skies" or even "How High the Moon."

The Bay Area is big enough, and sophisticated enough, to make room for KKHI and KFRC, top symphonies...and top 40's. Each is a commercial product, competing for an audience.

In other parts of the country, there is no choice. The only radio stations crank out rock, rhythm and blues, or Karo syrup a la KABL.

KKHI, KIBE-KDFC, KQED-FM have stuck it out over the years sometimes at the cost of subsidies from long-suffering owners.

I WONDER how well a classical music show would go over on the local cable channel? Candidly I doubt if the opportunity will ever arise, but if it should, the classic disc jockey would probably find himself very lonely.

After all, he would be dealing with a minority of a minority of a minority, those classically minded Pacificans who chose to listen to music on cable TV at the time he chose to be on the air. That's splitting the hair pretty fine.

Paradoxically, though, while popular music has been riding ever deeper on a treadmill to mediocrity, (in my opinion) there has never been a time when there were more kinds of music, more interest in music, more amateur musicianship, or more opportunity to choose the music that fits your pleasure.

EVEN IN low wealth Pacifica the musical program in the schools has been excellent. Doug Morgan's Vallemar Voices of past years, music teacher Margaret Graham's fine work, the Emde's presentations, "Music at the Gallery," all show what can be done.

Perhaps someday we will have "music at the pier," with singers and orchestras competing with the music of gulls and waves and fisherman's conversations.

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