

DRY BONES

Down With Disco

by Jamie Buckingham



After seeing (and hearing) five children into their teens, I have been exposed to every imaginable type of music.

Fortunately, we all love good Gospel music.

Andre Crouch, The Hawaiians, and Jimmy Swaggart have done very well selling to the Buckingham clan. It's when we come to the rest of the music world that we go separate ways.

Our house is filled with radios, tape decks, stereo sets and other listening devices. In one corner of the living room is a huge stack of records. It's mine. Nobody ever listens to that stack because they say Mario Lanza shouts, ragtime piano is "tinny" and they can't understand Chopin, Beethoven and Rachmaninov.

My wife, on the other hand, is an "easy listening" fan — with a leaning toward Perry Como. Our two college age daughters are Broadway musical types, who will spend half their college vacation time at the piano with "Fiddler on the Roof."

Our son, Tim, however, is tuned different. He thinks the sun rises in Johnny Cash and sets in Jerry Clower. He's even got me tappin' my foot when it comes to blue grass and mountain cloggin' music.

But the scene shifts when it comes to our oldest son. Brice is really turned on to "Gospel rock," which to me is but one step removed from jungle rot. Any music which leads with the beat — even if it has Gospel words — has a smell of the pit about it.

Last year at a big Jesus festival I had to speak following a seven-minute drum solo by a kid who worked not only himself, but a crowd of 10,000 into an absolute frenzy. I have a hard time relating that to the blood of martyrs and the soft voice of an angel at the open tomb.

Our big problem, however, is not with Gospel rock. At least it's half Christian. The problem comes with our youngest daughter who is a disco fan. As a result I've had to set what at least two of my kids call an "impossible rule" around the house. If I can't understand the words or whistle the tune,

we don't listen. As I told them the other day, I'm not at war with them — just with that gang of people who would starve if the word "Baaaaaaby" was eliminated from the vocabulary.

Plus the fact I refuse to listen to music (?) played (?) by people of doubtful gender. Nor will I be victimized by freaks who dress like dragons, wear bones in their ears, smash guitars on the stage or stick electric wires up their noses — all in the good name of music.

not be as excited about John Phillip Sousa or George Gershwin as I am. But there is no way to equate much of what is coming over the air waves — or, sadly, much of what is being passed off as Gospel music — as true music. It is sheer noise — and not very good noise at that.

The other evening we got in the car and my daughter had left the radio on at the local rock and rattle station. When I turned the key the radio began screaming at me.

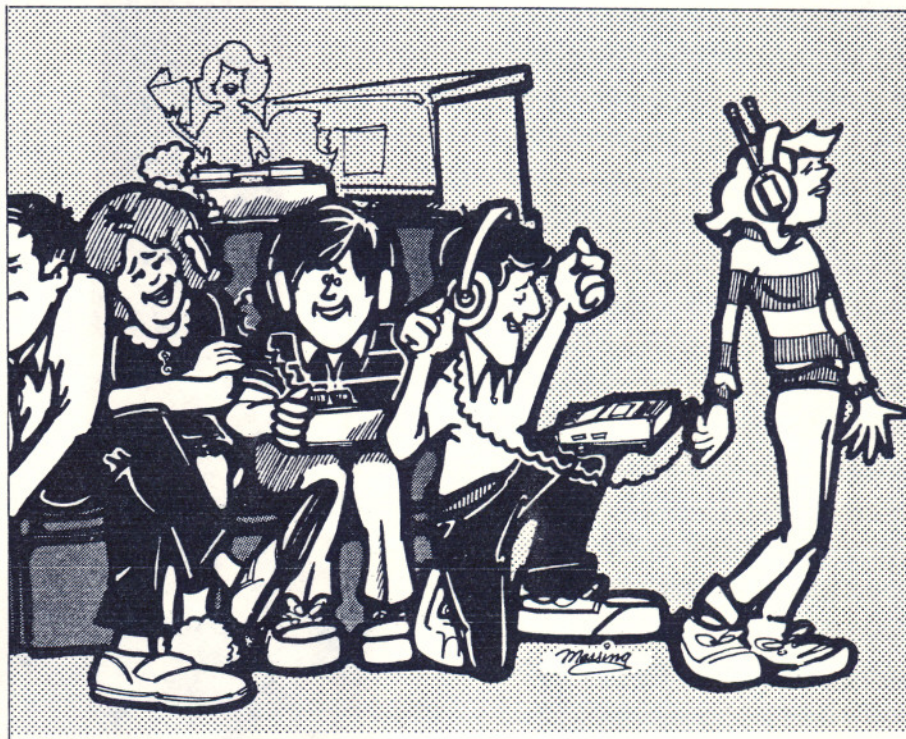


Illustration by David Messing

We have enough trouble with evil spirits in our air conditioning system without inviting them in through the TV or record player. That means Alice Cooper, the Rolling Stones, that group of devil worshipers called KISS, and a hundred other groups — including some who sing Gospel lyrics with the devil's rhythm — are not welcome in our house.

Coming through Boston recently I stopped and stared at a disco parlor where everyone on the dance floor gave the impression they had just eaten something which was now eating them, or they had a good case of jock itch. I realize musical styles change and the new generation may

"Sounds like a woman being attacked by a troop of male baboons," I commented.

"Don't you know," my daughter said — this time a bit embarrassed, "That's the big disco hit of the nation. 'Shake Your Groove Thing.'"

"Shake my what?"

Not only did I shut off the radio, but I turned off the engine and we had a long fatherly talk, which is still going on, by the way. In the meantime, I am supporting an organization in Atlanta called SUD (Shut Up Disco). They have a motto. "Shake your groove thing at me, Hustle Head, and I'll break your nose."

Now, that's something I can whistle.