

An Interview with Sunburst Director Frank Grow

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Rock-and-roll, jazz, folk music, country and western and all their variations are basically folk music -- music which comes from the people. It springs up from the very soil of America, an expression of the culture of America. Negro spirituals had a lot to do with the birth of folk music; on the other side were English and Irish ballads.

Rock-and-roll, the blues, and jazz got their origins here because America is the place where all different cultures came to build. It is pure in its origin because it comes from man's expression of the need to be free and to seek God. In the past few years it has increasingly reflected the culture -- a deteriorating culture. Since we are restoring the world and its social mores, it is also necessary to restore the expression of the culture, which is folk art. That's our goal -- to bring it back to its pure motivation. It will never be back in its pure form because its pure form is the Negro spiritual. Our goal is to restore music and in the course of that to bring people to God. It's a good tool, a very important

tool.

Music's Influence

We've all witnessed the hippie movement. Whatever happened to this country in the late sixties and early seventies was a mass change of attitude -- it went hand in hand with a breakthrough in rock-and-roll. A lot of people equate rock-and-roll with Communism, rebellion, and the New Left. Because of that we can see the importance of music. America is very fickle. People are influenced by television, by radio, by the newspapers -- even more than by the churches or the values that are being handed to them by their families. The media sets so many values in this country. Modern music is an important tool to use in witnessing to the masses.

People immediately relate to a song that has all the elements they like. If you can make a base with the people through music through expressing your heart sincerely, then they will be inclined to listen to where you are coming from. The New Left used music to an incredible degree of success.

The Beatles or Bob Dylan did not set out to have any kind of social comment, but somehow they did; they caused great stirs. If you have a number-one hit, your single gets played at least ten times a day on every AM radio station in this country worth its salt. Imagine the exposure!

Our Effect

Words and music do affect the people who are buying it. So we take special care in our words because if for instance, "Flower" or "Love, Love, Love" or "Pass it On" ever become top-forty material, then we'd have hundreds of thousands of kids going around the country singing, "Love, love, love is the reason." If there's another hit and another hit and they keep on coming, it could set a base for people to be more willing to listen to things that our Church has to say about society, themselves, and God.

Also there's the star syndrome. Everyone hears about young women throwing themselves at the feet of Frank Sinatra -- what if young people threw themselves at the feet of someone who is throwing himself at the feet of God? If one of us were to become a star, thousands of people would say: "Wow! I want to be like him! I want to act like she does. I want to think like she does. How come they're so neat?" Heavenly Father is the reason. We can point in those ways. These are long term goals, but I feel that they are valid because our Church is going to grow in the next few years and we are going to have to come into mass media.

Image

This is just one more area in which we can effectively change cultural attitudes towards purity, towards innocence, towards patriotism, towards God. In one sense we don't want to be too traditionally Christian. But on the other hand we don't want to be too way-out. We're trying to strike a good balance between purity and innocence and also a worldliness.

We're not going to compromise. We are not going to bend so much to the public. We want to bring our

ideals to them. So we feel that we have to take a stand on things. No one's taking a stand or anything. I really feel that young people are looking for someone to take the lead. So we can do that. Also we have to be exciting. We have to offer life, freshness, vitality.

We must also offer not a superficial kind of joy, but the deep joy that comes with the knowledge of God. We have to project God's feeling through our music. When people come to hear a rock band, they're accustomed to old-world ways. We don't want to give them what they're accustomed to. We want to give them something new.

We have to show them that we understand their suffering and even that we've been there but we haven't let it get us down. In fact, we've taken that suffering and put it towards good me to build our character. We've got to tell them the truth about what we are. We have to do it in a very sensitive way. We want to show them that we have fun and that we love life, and that we love to be in this Church.

We project a family atmosphere. They're used to stars being alcoholics or divorced 25 times. In Sunburst they see something that is different but also has depth of art. We have to give them good music; solid music, something that they can respect. They have to respect our professionalism. We have to be able to play their kind of music better than they do and then take them to our kind of music -- making their music into Heavenly Father's music.

Our image is youth, vitality, joy of life, a seriousness and a direction that can reach the spirit of people and inspire them to think about the world. We want to express that we have a clear direction, not only for us but for them, and then involve them in our music, involve them in our heart so that we can involve them in Heavenly Father's heart. Our image is very interesting. It is important that we don't come across "unreal."

Sometimes people get the feeling that if you're always smiling or always happy, it's not a real feeling. We must show them Heavenly Father's heart through our music. So that means even restoring things like the blues, because Heavenly Father, I'm sure, at times has sung the blues -- not a self-indulgent kind. He has more of a suffering heart than anyone. You have to convey to them that kind of depth -- that we are aware that things aren't as they should be. We feel their pain and offer them a true hope and a true feeling so that they experience something real and sincere.



Working Together

Our band is not the best band in the world, and we're not all the best musicians in the world. But there is a certain unity that has to come together before a band can operate. The musicians may all be playing, but power comes with people playing with each other and to each other rather than along with each other. There is a definite cycle of energy. When we play together, more and more we realize the truth of the Principle. The Principle says that there are two aspects of the four position foundation; one is identity maintaining, the other is identity-expanding. A child is always changing, but still he's Frank Grow, or whoever. Musicians have to be that way. You have to assert your individuality and your personality through your instrument to play it the right way, but still you have to always maintain a strong sense of where you fit in the group, never trying to push your ego into areas where there are already things taking place.

We also have to assert our individuality or else there would be just a blob. I consider Sunburst a living organism when it is performing the right way. Each part has to complement the others. Although we might not be the best musicians, we're always trying to reach the ideal of giving ourselves up for the whole while maintaining our own integrity as people.

On a selling team you're trying to bring your mind and body together, trying to overcome yourself to give yourself to Heavenly Father. Some people might think that it's easy to be in Sunburst -- all you have to do is sit around and play music all day. But music is emotional. If someone really tries to sing and gives everything and still it's wrong and I have to tell them that, they have to be able to overcome feelings on a very internal level.

We have to always have the spirit, always project confidence and unity because we are in the public eye and because we are on the stage; the stage magnifies everything -- your good qualities and bad qualities. If some night we're not together, if some night two or three people are really uptight and just don't feel like playing, you can see it. You can feel that the energy flow is cut and God can't work because God has to work through everyone. It's like a car with wheels. If you have; a car that needs to run on twelve wheels and one wheel is gone, then it means that the other wheels don't work so well together.

It's tremendously rewarding but sometimes tremendously frustrating. When we come up against each other, we sometimes say to ourselves, "Well, I'm trying to be objective." But music is subjective to begin with. When we come to these points where the wall breaks, that's when we think of the whole. Then it's very easy to overcome our Cain natures and make ourselves pure offerings all the time.

Prospects

In the sixties, the superstars like the Beatles and Janis Joplin skyrocketed. It seemed like they would never stop, there was no end. I really feel that these people were writing their music for a larger cause than themselves.

They were still young and innocent enough to believe that the world could be a better place and that people could love each other. They didn't realize that they didn't have the truth and they didn't have God's word behind them so that it would actually end in confusion and despair.

Woodstock could not have happened without a true spirit of brotherhood. Popular music, especially rock, was really trying to work for something higher. But when these stars got to a certain point, they found out that there was nothing there, nothing to sustain them, no place to go.

First of all, they were disillusioned because they didn't know God, they didn't even know they were looking for God. Second, they realized that they were separated from everyone else. Somehow, somewhere, they stopped playing their music for a higher purpose but for themselves, just to keep themselves where they were until they could find a better road. As soon as they started writing music for themselves, then the music fell. Then there was no way to keep the groups together, no way to keep the spirit of brotherhood together because there was no place to go. Two years after Woodstock, there was all of a sudden a rash of overdoses among the top stars and the music industry has never recovered.

If your purpose is bringing people to God, all your success is a pure offering to God. If you offer all your successes to Heavenly Father, He can bless these successes. It might take longer to become famous, but it has substance.

I feel that our music has no bounds, that it can continue to grow and grow, as long as we are connected with the God. I see Sunburst caking off in the' future, moving people, bringing even masses to Heavenly Father.