



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

Rocking at the Roxy

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Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Tonight, Reporterette and your Reporter took to the streets of Hollywood and paid a visit to the Roxy nightclub on Sunset Boulevard.

Oh Yesterday Came Suddenly¹

In tune with the times, the Roxy features rock bands that play earsplitting music. Along with beer, booze, and bands, the Roxy sells ear plugs. I bought two pair for Holly and myself. I am writing this report from our hotel room but my ear drums are vibrating from the night's entertainment---three hours after visiting the Roxy. But then, I've old tinny ears.

Opps...AARP and Oprah counsel the public about using the word *old* to describe a person who is actually *old*. Our feel-good pundits have pushed malarkey into our vocabularies: *Seniors' ears*. *Gray panther ears*. My favorite Oprah-like utterance is *golden years' ears*.

Whatever they are supposed to be called when they are attached to *OLD* people's heads, mine have a weakened ability to actually hear. For one, they can't handle loud sounds.



Maybe it is not my ears; perhaps it is my frontal cortex. On the other hand, maybe it is the aural technology at the Roxy. Take a look at one set of several speakers used for tonight's entertainment (Figure 1). Try standing or sitting in front of these audio behemoths for a couple hours. You will appreciate the Roxy sales idea:

"Get'um while they last folks!"

Roxy is referring to ear plugs *and* ear drums.

Figure 1. Splitting hairs over splitting ear drums.

After my purchase, I wondered if Roxy's earplug market was targeted for old people. I looked around the club. I encountered no one with gray hair, except myself (see Figure 2). A few men were bald but their bare heads appeared to be a life style choice, not one of aging. I could not find one old person in the room, except myself.

¹ A line from "Yesterday," by John Lennon and Paul McCartney.



Figure 2. Young blood.

It was not always like this. Where have the years gone? I'm reminded of a verse from the Beatle's song, "Yesterday":

*Suddenly, I'm half the man I used to be.
There's a shadow hanging over me.
Oh yesterday came suddenly.*

To my younger readers, it might come as a revelation for you to learn I was once your age. And someday, if you are lucky---and watch your consumption of rum buns and rum smoothies---you will be my age. And I am dead certain you will also say, "It wasn't always like this. Where have the years gone?" Perhaps I should use a word other than "dead," but I trust you get my point: *Your time will come.* On that happy note, back to the Roxy.

Holly and I knew we would not be entertained by the Modern Jazz Quartet's soft xylophone chords. We didn't care. Our son Tommy was performing at the Roxy!

As a member of the Palo Alto Band, Tommy signed a deal with a major record company. *Rolling Stone* gave their album a positive write-up. I purchased their CD and spent an evening listening to the songs. I'm not a fan of today's rock music but I thought the album was good. Tommy was the bass player for the compositions. With two other musicians and a vocalist, the four men created a fine piece of work.

Warming-Up. Awesome is as Awesome Does.

For tonight, Tommy was playing with the Golden State Band. Reporterette and I arrived at the Roxy to see Golden State on the marquee (see Figure 3) and placed ourselves in the back of a queue. A line had begun to snake-out from the entrance. People were waiting to see our son perform! OK, maybe a few people were waiting to see other sons perform, but I prefer my own take on the matter.

We were not certain Tommy could leave his sound check to escort us into the club. So we stayed in the line and chatted with our fellow nightclubbers. We discovered many of the fans were waiting to see two other bands perform. The *discerning* fans were in-line for Golden State but the queue person in front of us was an ardent admirer of the Ringside Band.



Figure 3. Marquee billing.

- Queue Person, "They're awesome!"

I asked her if she had heard of Golden State. Nope. How about Palo Alto? Yes, she knew of Palo Alto and liked them.

I offered, "Some of the Golden State players also play with Palo Alto."

She responded, "Awesome!"

Tommy found time to rescue us from the proletariats' queue of wannabe groupies.

He came out to greet us, "Hi Dad. Hi Holly. Come on in. Just follow me."

Queue Person, "Lucky you. ...Wow, your son has awesome hair!"

Later, after Golden State had finished their show, Queue Person found Holly and me in our...ahem...reserved seats, and said the Golden State band was awesome. Cool, so I had her jot a note in my notebook, which I showed to Tommy:

"I'm at (email address). Your band is awesome! Best Wishes, Kristin."

Tommy was nonchalant about it all. Such is the life of a rock star. But the rock star's dad was impressed. I thought it was awesome.

The Performance

Tommy and Golden State played fine music and the crowd was enthusiastic about their performance. During their gig, I snapped many photos of Tommy but not one of them captured his face. All captured his hair. I was not in the best position to snap a frontal shot but the fans were jam-packed and I could not move through the crowd. Thus, I had to content myself with side shots, two of which are shown in Figure 4. No question, awesome hair.



Figure 4. Awesome.

Tommy's Work

In addition to playing, Tommy also composes music and lyrics. His knowledge of music related software and hardware allows him to be a one man band. I'm well versed in computers and software, yet I remain amazed by the power and features of these systems---as well as my son's skill in using them for his music. But I should not be surprised. Some years ago, when I was lecturing on computer networks, Tommy created extraordinary musical animations which I used for my "gig" on a PBS show.

Jarring Music

As I stated in a previous report, I think Tommy's work is more melodious and easier to listen-to than much of the popular music I hear on the radio. For one thing, it's not *jarring*. And here, I acknowledge I part company with many music listeners. One of my nephews advises me rock music is *supposed* to be jarring. He tells me jarring is one of its basic features. He also uses the word *rebellious* to describe rock music.

No question, it's jarring and I think until a couple decades ago, he was on target about the rebellious aspect of rock. Nowadays, rock music is anything but rebellious. It's smack in the middle of the mainstream of our culture. In the past, to play or listen to rock music was to be a nonconformist. Today, to play or listen to Beethoven is to be a nonconformist.

But Can You Dance To It?

From my perspective, the most important aspect of evaluating a song is: *Can you dance to it?* Can you ever dance to the Beatles! They almost command you to look for a partner or if one is not available, just dance by yourself. On the other hand, have you ever tried to boogie to Beethoven's 5th? I like Ludwig, especially his fixation on repetition---the forerunner to Rap. But it's the Beatles if you want to dance.

I don't think I could dance to most of the music played tonight at the Roxy. I could jump up and down, as did the audience. I could hold my hands up high and do a wave, as did the audience. But the tunes were probably not meant for dancing. The lead singer had a fine voice but the lyrics were about angst, protest, lost love, missed opportunities, and pissed-off people. Not much was played to encourage the audience to lose themselves in a jitterbug or a two-step.

Tonight, after returning from the Roxy, I played five of Tommy's songs. Holly and I gave it a go on a make-shift dance floor. Our findings may make Tommy happy or they may send him into a deep funk. Results: Three of the five songs were fine dance numbers. They were slow songs, for easy smooth dances. Two of them...are you ready Tommy? ...*were perfect tunes for waltzes*. Rocking to: Dip, One, Two...Dip, One, Two...Dip, One, Two. For a while, we thought we were back in Vienna where, many years ago, we waltzed the night away to the music of Strauss.

It was a fine evening. We were thrilled to watch our son doing what he loves to do.

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