



Lezy Rowe's NOTEBOOK

By ALAN FREED

(The WINS deejay who speaks for himself)

The Big Beat

NEW YORK CITY—"The Big Beat" has arrived! "The Big Beat in American Music," which has surely become the great new "swing" and dance era for today's teenage generation, as well as for their parents, has finally burst loose on the popular music horizon. However, it has not arrived unheralded. Just as has always happened with the emergence of any other great era in music, literature and the arts through the ages of history it has not been spared the caustic criticism and "whispering campaigns" of those who don't like it, don't understand it, and who do not appreciate it.

If you will check the magazines of the "early twenties" you will find certain authors and critics who "panned" and "knocked" the efforts of such great musicians as Paul Whiteman, Earl Fuller, Fletcher Henderson, Benny Moton and others, who worked so diligently to establish our own American dance music. In the 1930's, certain other misguided writers and critics severely rapped the birth of the great "swing" era which was founded by such outstanding artists as Benny Goodman and Count Basie, and which eventually brought about the music of the immortal Glenn Miller.

So, with the ever-increasing popularity of "Rock 'n' Roll" music among people of all ages, races and creeds from coast to coast in America, it was inevitable that those who neither understand nor appreciate this great contribution to American music would wage a malicious campaign against it.

The opening blast in this campaign against "Rock 'n' Roll" music was an editorial by Abel Green, editor of *Variety*, in a recent edition of his show business publication entitled "A Warning to the Music Business." The second shot was a front page article in the *New York World-Telegram* under the heading, "Variety Fires Blast at Rock 'n' Roll" Leer-ics, in which Mr. Green's *Variety* editorial was quoted at great length. Mr. Green followed with two more blasts in his editions of March 2 and 9 under the titles, "Leer-ics, Part II" and "Leer-ics Part III."

So that you may have a better picture of this concerted attack against "Rock 'n' Roll" music, permit us to quote in part from Abel Green's first editorial in *Variety*: "We're talking about 'Rock 'n' Roll,' about 'hug and squeeze' and kindred euphemisms which are attempting a total breakdown of all reticences about sex. In the past such material was common enough but restricted to special places and out-and-out barrelhouses. Today 'leer-ics' are offered as standard popular music for general consumption by teenagers. Our teen-agers are already setting something of a record in delinquency without this raw musical idiom to smell up the environment still more."

Immediately following the printing of the attack in the *New York World-Telegram*, we were literally swamped with letters from our listeners, from high school principals and music teachers, high school and college students, civic workers, officials of P-TA organizations and others protesting the "attack."

Many of our listeners have pointed out in their letters that Mr. Green stresses that the "leer-ics" of "Rock 'n' Roll" music are generally supposed to be suggestive and offensive. Yet, they claim they have never heard an "off-color" or double entendre lyric on any of the WINS "Rock 'n' Roll" radio shows!

Parents and school officials have stated in their letters that the "Rock 'n' Roll" programs heard nightly, Monday through Saturday, over WINS have done a great deal to take the kids off the streets. One Long Island mother, a member of the P-TA, wrote: "Contrary to the article in the *New York World-Telegram*, the parents in our neighborhood have a great deal of respect for "Rock 'n' Roll" music. The kids get together in one another's homes, turn on Alan Freed's WINS program, and let the place start jumping. It's the first time in years that we have heard so much "music with a beat." Their feet start tapping and they want to learn how to dance."

A Brooklyn civic worker points out in her letter that *Variety's* "Top Talent and Tunes" column lists the following hits from the "Rock 'n' Roll" branch: "Sincerely"; "Hearts of Stone"; "Rock Love"; "Tweedle Dee"; "Earth Angel"; "Ko Ko Mo" and "It May Sound Silly." In listening carefully to the lyrics of these "Rock 'n' Rollers," she states she could find nothing objectionable nor offensive in any manner, and suggests that Mr. Green likewise listen to them very carefully!

Song writer Al Stillman writes in the March 9 edition of Abel Green's own Variety: "What, unless you're innocent-minded, could be dirtier than such song titles and lyrics from the so-called popular field as "You Took Advantage of Me"; "Heat Wave"; "All of Me"; "Let's Do It"; "Body and Soul"; "Love For Sale"; "I Said No"; "Everything I Have is Yours"; "Smiling Face"; and "Baby It's Cold Outside" ~~to Mr. Stillman's list, we should add such que-~~ able titles and lyrics from the "pop" library as "I Kick Out of You"; "If I Could Be With You"; "The Is a Tramp" and "Sweet Violets."

You will readily realize that the songs mentioned in above paragraph by Mr. Stillman and myself have been around quite awhile. Not one of them is from the "Rock 'n' Roll" field. Most of them have been licensed by ASCAP, and not one old timer in the music business, with whom we've talked, can recall any criticism that was ever directed against these suggestive and offensive "leerics" and titles by Abel Green, Nick Kenny, Bob Haymes, or any of the other bitter critics of "Rock 'n' Rolls."

Could it be that these doubtful and double entendre tunes were written by the "right" composers, published by the "right" music publishing companies and licensed by the "right" licensing society with special sanction from certain of those who wish to criticize other music? Or, as some of our listeners have written us, "Could there be an ulterior motive behind this campaign?"

Whether an ulterior motive exists or not, we do wish to go on record as being in favor of a screening or self-policing of all lyrics and titles at each level of the music business. The publishers, the A and R men, of the recording companies, the disc jockeys and program directors of radio and TV stations have a definite responsibility to the American public and especially to the youth of America, and all should insist that offensive, suggestive and double entendre leerics from each and every segment of the music industry should be kept off the air. We at WINS audition each and every record companies. If either Bob Smith, program director record companies. If either Bob Smith, program director of WINS, or I feel that the title or the lyrics of a song are even in the least bit doubtful and in bad taste, then that record is cast aside and is never heard on a "WINS Rock 'n' Roll" program.

To me, this campaign against "Rock 'n' Roll" smells of discrimination of the worst kind against the great and accomplished Negro song writers, musicians and singers who are responsible for this outstanding contribution to American music. It is American! And, people throughout our nation can look forward to the day when they will be able to see on their TV screens and eventually in person, the famous Negro artists, who have brought us the "off-spring" of the only basic American musical heritage we can call our own. It has been nurtured and has grown through oppressions, prejudices, narrow-minded bigotry and through such critic inflicted terminologies as "Race Music" and "Honkey Tonk Rhythm and Blues."

Even its most caustic critics must soon learn that the young people of America, as well as their parents, want "music with a beat," that will set their feet tapping. Those "prophets of doom," who are constantly harping about juvenile delinquency, yet have never been known to do anything to materially assist young people, should do themselves a favor by awakening to the realization that the wholesome kids of America are not interested in "dirty leerics." They want to dance. They want to "let off steam" in a happy American way at well supervised events!

"The Big Beat in America" was here a 100 years ago! It will be here a 1,000 years after we're gone! It's great! It's wonderful! It's exciting! It's American! Anud, I am proud to have helped expose the Big Beat, instead of suppressing it! So, let's "Rock 'n' Roll"!