

What happened to the music?

BY L.E. KALIKOW



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Kalikow is the author of "Sex, No Drugs & Rock 'N' Roll (Memoirs of a Music Junkie.)"

To cope with internet overload, we allow algorithms to sift through and feed us bits and pieces to match our tastes or cosmetically enhanced anchormen (and anchorwomen) to spoon up headlines to the tune of tone-deaf sponsors.

All this through a multi-tasking world, where a generation pays half attention to work while constantly checking their Facebook pages and tweeting when they go to the bathroom.

How does this affect the arts... and, more specifically, music?

Let's go back a bit...

As a struggling recording artist in the 1960s and 70s, my ultimate goal was to release an album. Not just a collection of songs, but a unified creation with a theme and purpose.

In those years I'd turn out the lights, turn up the amplifier, and sit in the dark for hours, listening to full albums by The Beatles, The Stones, Billy Joel, Elton John, Led Zeppelin and Jethro Tull (to name only a few). Each had a distinctive voice and sound and cuts carefully sequenced to take me on a journey, from beginning to end.

We needed radio to sell albums, so often edited down to three minutes, the "lead single" had to have a "hook;" a repeated melodic line or lyric to entice the teenage album buyer.

As technology moved vinyl to tape to CD, the album remained, but underwent significant changes. The disco explosion of the 1970s replaced lyrics and melodies with beats and production, as artists became interchangeable tools of celebrity producers and DJs.

To capitalize on this trend, major record companies began to hire multiple "name" producers to work on a single album, and the "concept album" gave way to a collection of often disjointed productions, lacking continuity or artistic integrity.

Analog vs. digital

There was also a subliminal change taking place. When listening to a vinyl album or taped music, you're actually listening to analog sound waves being produced. With a CD, the sound waves are digitized, or broken up into pieces that your brain then puts together, much like looking at a bunch of colored dots up close, then standing back until you discover they make a picture.

Friends like producer/engineer Rob Fraboni (Dylan, The Band, The Stones, Clapton, etc.) also contend that digital music has an adverse effect on the human body as opposed to analog. Like the difference you feel under the warmth of an incandescent light bulb as opposed to a flickering fluorescent. Perhaps this explains why I can't sit and listen to a CD

like I once did a vinyl album.

Napster, the beginning of the end...

When record companies began suing their own customers for peer-to-peer downloading, the graffiti was on the wall.

Like the industrial revolution before, the digital age wiped out the multi-billion dollar record business we once thought recession-proof and timeless.

But the music didn't die, it simply morphed into another dimension as the infrastructure built to filter, foster, package, market and sell it disappeared.

Now music exists in an unfiltered internet ocean requiring navigational tools like Spotify and Pandora. And the vestiges of past record companies, co-opted into entertainment conglomerates, now create brands instead of artists, with commercials, soundtracks and albums produced, not for the music, but to sell the brand.

Reaction vs. emotion

And lead singles are also still being created. However, no longer three-minute radio songs, but often just a string of re-

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Oswego Health recognizes volunteers, auxiliaries at luncheon

SUBMITTED BY MARION CICIARELLI

Oswego Health honored its volunteers and auxiliaries at a special luncheon held during National Volunteer Week at Springside at Seneca Hill.

More than 60 volunteers and auxiliaries attended the event that thanks those who donate their time and talents to help ensure that exceptional healthcare is available locally.

Oswego Health President and CEO Chuck Gijanto told the volunteers and auxiliaries the work they do is very much appreciated by the health system.

"You make the equation complete," he said. "We can't do what we do every day without you folks. You touch virtually everything that goes on in our organization."

He had special recognition for Emma Corradino, who has been volunteering her time at Oswego Hospital for 30 years.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Seated from left are Terri Smith, 25 years; Emma Corradino, 30 years; and Gladys Little, 15 years. Standing from left are Wanda Watkins, 10 years; Don White, five years; Orlando Testi, who has volunteered 630 hours, the second most of any volunteer; Maurice "Mo" Laws, who volunteered the most hours this year, with 1,600; Arlene Townsend, 10 years; and Dawn Smith, Oswego Health volunteer/clinical support coordinator.

"That is a career, and from the bottom of our hearts we thank you, as well as all the other volunteers, for all that you do."

The volunteers who celebrated milestone years and those who donated the most hours this past year were honored at the lun-

cheon. Residents interested in volunteering at Oswego Health, can call Smith at 349-5566.

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peating hooks designed to catch the attention of the multi-tasking millennial, epitomized by Pharrell's "Happy." As the art of songwriting becomes less important, so do the songs. This is not to say that some "brand artists" like Adelle, Ed Sheeran or Taylor Swift, aren't fine songwriters. It's just that, based on the current system, the odds are probably against developing such equally talented songwriter/artists in the future.

So, what's next?

In the 1980s, with the bestseller "Megatrends," later reprinted in the 1990s with "High Tech/High Touch," author John Naisbitt theorized that in a world of high tech, people would begin to long for personal, human contact. And, at a recent music business convention, I couldn't help but notice everyone so intent on their mobile phones that no one made eye contact. (No wonder "The Walking Dead" is so popular on TV). Could there be a reaction to this high tech alienation? A few trends indicate maybe so.

First, the amazing increase in vinyl record sales. And it's not just to Baby Boomers.

According to NME.com' Luke Morgan Britton, last year Millennials pushed vinyl sales to a 26 year high. Perhaps, along with the novelty factor, some of these kids might actually start to hear (and feel) the difference.

And, secondly, sales figures for

acoustic guitars last year increased for the fifth consecutive year, topping 1.2 million units sold, according to "17 Fascinating Guitar Sales Statistics" by Brandon Gaille.

This is not to suggest mobile devices will be discarded by a new generation of hippies. But we may well see a push-back against corporate branding to more organically grown artists, perhaps even producing analog music in favor of digital downloads.

And don't be surprised at a proliferation of small local venues where musicians gather to perform and where the audience actually turns off their phones. And if one pops up in my neighborhood, you can bet I'll be sitting in the front row, or maybe I'll be up there playing my Martin D28.

For over 35 years, L.E. Kalikow served as president of Music Business Reference Inc., as well as a singer/songwriter under production agreements with Chess Records in Chicago and both Capitol and Columbia Records in New York, and as a staff writer for Beechwood Music at 1650 Broadway. He performed as the opening act for artists such as Richie Havens, Eric Anderson, Van Morrison and Jefferson Airplane, among others. He is the author of "Sex, No Drugs & Rock 'N' Roll (Memoirs of a Music Junkie.)" which is available for purchase on Amazon and other online retailers. The companion Soundtrack Album is also available on iTunes.

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