



concert

By COLLIN CANRIGHT
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Rock and roll today is a morass of different sounds and styles from different periods. "If you had to define rock today it would be very difficult, other than it's the popular form of American music," Murray Allen, manager of Universal Recording Corp in Chicago, said.

"Right at any given point in rock, you can find just about any form of rock music during its entire growth," he said.

"In other words, there's some group that is like some other group in history. It's (rock) become generic in itself," he said. "Rock is a generic term for popular music today."

Because the '60s generation has grown up, the average age of the rock audience has risen. And those that were rock fans then, probably still are.

"So, rock music today fills the same void that what we used to call Mickey Mouse music filled in the '30s and '40s," Allen said. "Mickey Mouse music was highly commercial music (played by such bands as Guy Lombardo and Lawrence Welk). These were bands that played the music people wanted to hear."

The profusion of styles and sounds — heavy-metal; southern-rock; new wave pop dance rock; jazz-rock; classical-rock; rock-a-billy, blues-rock — has confused record companies and musicians alike.

"The musicians are very confused right now as to how to start on their way," according to Peter Leonardy, a recording engineer and guitarist in Chicago.

Corky Siegel, a Chicago blues musician, agrees. "It's hard for me to figure out what's going on for myself," he said. "I am confused. I'm absolutely confused about what to do to promote my career."

The same confusion reigns in the record companies. "Record companies aren't sure what they're looking for, to be very frank with you," Allen said.

And Mike Franklin, manager of Futuresound, said he drew one conclusion from the recent Mid-America Music Convention in Chicago: "Nobody out there really

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knows what's going on."

Because of the decline in the recording industry, companies are being more careful in signing acts.

The result, critics say, is 'sameness' and 'blandness' in today's music.

"Many acts sound a great deal alike: there's no two ways about that," Allen said. "There are some very top-notch bands that in a blindfold test, if you didn't know the songs, you couldn't tell

who they were. "Rarely is a song performed by more than one group. There are fewer standard songs (like Stardust) being written."

Lou Simon, former marketing director/senior vice president for several large record companies, takes a different view.

"The music is reflecting what is happening in the culture," he said.

If there is a lack of vibrancy in rock music today, he said, it is because there is a lack of vibrancy in society.

Simon said bands are mellowing — like society — with nicer harmonies and melodies, good lyrics and more dynamics.

And video and cable television seem to be the future purveyors of rock music, according to Franklin and Peter Leonardy, a Chicago recording engineer.

"The very medium of music is being changed," Franklin said.

"Video and music are being combined," Leonardy said, and rock musicians are writing songs with video potential in mind.

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