

The Pop Life

John Rockwell

Quilapayun, Spanish, Indian and all-Chilean.

ANGLO-AMERICAN rock and pop are hardly all there is to the world of popular music. Admittedly, English-language, electronically amplified music has a greater impact worldwide than any other kind. But there are also the fluffier, folk-inspired sounds of Euro-pop to consider, and at least sometimes that music lapses over into the Anglo-American market—Abba from Sweden, for instance. And sometimes a particular regional music will erupt into our music with its own force—Caribbean reggae, for instance, which may be technically in English but with a patois so thick that it seems like a foreign language.

But there are still other kinds of popular music, popular in the sense that they appeal to musically unsophisticated people even if they don't sell millions of albums. Such is the music that springs from the indigenous folk traditions of countries around the globe. And an especially interesting example is the music made by Quilapayun, a seven-member Chilean ensemble that will be at Carnegie Hall next Monday night.

The group's name, which means "three bearded men" in a Chilean Indian language, reflected the membership and hirsuteness of the three founding members in 1965. Today, only Eduardo Carrasco is left of the founders, but five of the current seven date back to 1967, and all seven have been together since 1973.

Quilapayun is a leading exponent of the Chilean "new song" movement, which seeks through the use of Indian and Spanish folk-music traditions and overtly political texts to mobilize the Chilean masses in a revolutionary—or at least progressive—direction.

Naturally, such sentiments were more in favor under the regime of the late Salvador Allende Gossens, the country's former president, than under the present military junta, which replaced him in 1973. In fact, since 1973 the members of Quilapayun have been exiles, based in Paris.

"Before 1965, our hit parade was full of American rock," said Guillermo Oddo, who sings and plays guitar and percussion in the group. "A large part of our youth tried to identify with that reality, which was completely wrong. It's important here, but not for our youth."

"There is popular music in the sense of being part of the people," added Rodolfo Parada, a baritone and guitarist and player of a variety of Andean Indian percussion instruments. "Our music always lived; but in an underground way, without the means of being exposed. It lived on in the houses of the poorer people."

What Quilapayun has done is blend Indian folk music with Spanish and European overlays in a way that reflects the ethnic diversity of the Chilean people themselves, and then it has tried in more extended pieces to build those idioms into larger forms. An example of that is a cantata by Luis Advis called "The Siege of Santa Maria de Iquique," about a strike of nitrate miners in northern Chile in 1907. The text shifts between ballad and straight narration, which in other cities has

been read by such actors as Jane Fonda and Jean-Louis Barrault and which will be handled in New York next Monday by Rip Torn.

Monday's performance is part of an 18-concert North American tour; the group's American debut came in a slightly shorter tour two years ago.

Mr. Oddo and Mr. Parada say that in general their concerts attract both people who want to reinforce their solidarity with the Chilean left and people who want simply to be entertained. The group hopes to build a worldwide network of support for Chilean revolutionaries, at the moment defined in terms of a broad popular front of Christian Democrats and those farther to the left.

"We want to make known the experience of the Chilean song movement, to thank people for their solidarity and to call on them to help us still further," Mr. Oddo said.

Neil Young, whose three-disk career retrospective, "Decade," is just out, is still identified in the public mind with Los Angeles country rock. But he has, in fact, avoided that city in recent years. He owns a house in Malibu, but his base is on a ranch south of San Francisco, he is making a record now in Nashville, and he travels continuously between Florida (where he's building a boat), Tennessee and California.

For all his fame, Mr. Young did a tour of obscure northern California clubs a couple of years ago, and one of his principal complaints about the Los Angeles scene is the peculiar immobility of many of its most famous names.

"Everybody in Los Angeles is a huge superstar and out of work," he said the other day in Nashville. "They could play anywhere they wanted to, but they think there's something wrong with it. Something stops them from gigging, and their energy gets spent in drugs and fast cars and socializing."

"You see a band like the Who—Keith Moon is one of the greatest drummers in rock-and-roll history, and he's not doing anything. These bands get so big, and their managers and agents tell them there's a time to go out and a time not to go out, and they kill the band. I can't believe it."

"I love those people—Moon is just an example. But everybody in Los Angeles needs the reassurance that they are who they think they are. I go down there, and everything seems real nervous, and then I start feeling like I'm doing it to them, and they're nervous because I'm there. So everybody does a lot of drugs, and all of a sudden it's just madness. I don't want my kid seeing me living like that. I'd rather be out on the road, seeing different people and moving. I want to drop off that California stigma. I'm much more proud of being a Canadian than I am of being a Californian."

Mickey Gilley's is a story to thrill any believer in the virtues of all-American perseverance. A cousin of Jerry Lee Lewis, Mr. Gilley spent nearly 20 years trying to become a star. He struggled and he slipped; he quit at times; he played lounges for years. By the early 1970's his own club in Texas was a thriving success, but he was no more than a local favorite.

Since 1974, however, he's blossomed into a real star—so much so that he was the Academy of Country Music's entertainer of the year last year, as well as its best male singer and artist with the album of the year.

In his New York debut last week at the Lone Star Cafe, Mr. Gilley moved through a fairly wide range of material, from ballads to novelty numbers to Western swing to hell-raising rockabilly with feverish right-hand boogie figurations (he not only sings with a hard-edge baritone but also plays a mean electric piano).

In a sense, his success may derive

from the winds of fashion shifting back to a style Mr. Gilley's never really abandoned, or at least never forgotten how to do. Country music is giving every sign these days of reverting to a folkier, simpler style, after years of singing strings and other concessions to the middle of the road; in a curious sense it's an exactly parallel phenomenon to rock's reversion to punk basics. Mr. Gilley, who looks like an insurance adjuster when he isn't smiling and a jolly insurance adjuster when he is, purveys tough, authentic Texas country music with enough subtlety of style and adult conventionality of looks to capture an older audience that might be threatened by the hairier "outlaws."

"The North American Rock Radio Awards" is a new show with nominees

chosen by 258 FM program directors around the country and winners selected by popular vote, on ballots made available by the rock press and participating stations. There were 132,000 voters for this year's awards, which will be presented in nationwide broadcasts Thanksgiving evening, with Grace Slick as host.

Winners this year were Peter Frampton, male singer; Linda Ronstadt, female singer; Fleetwood Mac, group; Stevie Wonder, singer-songwriter; "Rumours," album; Boston, debut album; "Dreams," song and single. In addition, the show's board of directors (mostly record and radio executives) chose Scott Muni of WNEW-FM in New York as recipient of the Tom Donahue Memorial Award for contributions to FM radio.



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