

Answer: Teach It To Your Grandkids!

Question: How To Keep Doo-Wop Alive?

Bonnie D. Graham (www.BonnieTV.com)

Let's see if you can out-buzz Jeopardy superstar Ken Jennings on a friendly game of Doo-Wop Jeopardy!

Answer #1: Doo-wop.

Question #1: What distinctly American musical form is sung by groups comprised of a bass, baritone, tenor (or first and second tenor) plus lead, and features three-, four- or five-part harmonies, easy-to-understand vocals, nonsensical syllables, a dynamic bass, heavy backbeats, and themes about love and searching for "the one?"

Answer #2: A typical nonsensical phrase that made perfect sense to teenage boys hanging out on 1950's Bronx and Brooklyn street corners, and in high school boys' bathrooms and subway stations where the echo was more valuable than the stalls or trains.

Question #2: What is Shoo-bop-da-bop?

Answer #3: Birds, cars and fabrics.

Question #3: Where did many doo-wop groups get their names?

To further expand your appreciation for 1950's music, we asked ten veteran acappella aficionados from the groups Somewhere In Time and The Encounters, about the early days of doo-wop, why they love this music and its future.

Somewhere In Time (www.sit-oldies.com) has shared the stage with The Platters, Joey Dee & The Starliners, Dion & The Belmonts, The Cadillacs, Johnny Maestro, and The Prince of Rock 'N' Roll, Mickey B. They entertain at charity events, enjoy providing an "acappella lift" for cancer patients, and have sung back-up for "Elvis" at Westbury Music Fair.

Dennis Colichio (a construction supervisor) first sang with The Tremonts, a group formed at a 1985 oldies show. "In the men's room, a few guys started singing parts of favorite songs...the men's room had great echo qualities."

Starting at 19, Lenny Cocco first appeared in the group, Happy Daze, with George Dematteis (a

butcher) and went on to perform at Radio City Music Hall with "all of the most popular oldies groups. My idols became my colleagues that night...my true fifteen minutes of fame," he says. He credits today's Backstreet Boys, Boyz II Men and *NSYNC with "reintroducing acappella sounds for the current generation and generations to come."



Somewhere In Time on Cable 20 TV show "Something To Talk About" with producer/host Bonnie D. Graham (center) and Mickey B. the Prince of Rock 'N' Roll (top, 2nd l.)



Members of The Encounters on Cable 20 TV show "Something To Talk About" with producer/host Bonnie D. Graham (4th l.) and Mickey B. the Prince of Rock 'N' Roll (2nd l.)

When he first sang acappella in the South Bronx, Dougie "Doo-Wop" Rodriguez (retired from the Port Authority police squad) emulated the black R&B groups that started the five-part harmony sounds, including such pioneers as Frankie Lymon & The Teenagers, The Platters and others.

Lou Valentino (highway department foreman) and his pals earned "pocket change" singing doo-wop in the subways on weekends. For Doug Wells (retired from a parks department), who sang 50 years ago with The Valtones, "the oldies will never die."

The Encounters (www.theencounters.com) have recorded five CD's, appeared at Atlantic City's Tropicana, Sands and Claridge hotels, performed for former NYC Mayor Giuliani, and won the 2000 Sonny Til Memorial Award for Best Acappella Group Of The Year. For Peter (Bolo) DeBenedetto

(Verizon retiree), "Acappella is the purest style of singing rock 'n' roll."

Ten-time Emmy award-winning TV cameraman Roy "Hutch" Hutchings remembers "five guys singing harmony together on the corner. One called me over and said, 'OK, kid, you know the song, 'Just Two Kinds of People.' Do the baritone part, hit it!'"

He is optimistic about doo-wop's future: "T.J. Lubinsky, producer of Public Television's doo-wop series, has announced he is looking for 'newer' doo-wop groups for his next TV special. We could be next!"

According to Mike "The Penguin" Levy (brokerage credit department director), "to go out on stage without any musical accompaniment, leaving no

room for error, is tantamount to walking a tightrope without a net, but when it's right, it makes it all worthwhile." His doo-wop outlook "is not a rosy one...the game is demographics, and I'm afraid we're fighting a losing battle."

For Peter "Silver Fox" Milazzo (manager of a financial services personnel agency and a courier firm), "when you can bring an audience to its feet with only your

voices, you know you've connected." He warns, "Unless younger people get into this music soon, I'm afraid it will die along with our generation. But it's been a great ride."

Charlie "Tequila" DiComo (TV commercial executive producer), who first sang harmony in a Brooklyn church choir, is hopeful doo-wop will be around for many more years "if I can help it, by exposing my children and grandchildren to the music. My three-year-old grandson knows all the words to 'Ankle Bracelet' by The Pyramids." -J

BUCKWHEAT ZYDECO

Inter-Media Arts Center, Huntington

Buckwheat, a seven-piece band that recently played the Inter-Media Arts Center, is the current reigning king of Zydeco, the rousing black Cajun party music that mixes blues, French folk tunes, country, New Orleans R&B, and rock & roll. It opened the festivities with an instrumental that demonstrated why it holds the crown.

Stanley Dural, a.k.a. Buckwheat, come out from stage right, took off his jacket, strapped on his accordion and

got busy, full tilt and full of funk. "Fire It Up, Burn It Down" was segued into the late Clifton Chenier's "Hot Tamale Baby" (Buckwheat played with his mentor Chenier for two years). Up next was an unusual interpretation of Hank William's classic, "Hey Good Lookin'." This foot stompin' dance rendition had the entire audience on their feet jumpin', pumpin' and clappin'. The boys continued with B.B. King's blues-laced standard "The Thrill Is Gone,"

and followed up with the upbeat title song of their 1985 recording, "Waiting For My Ya Ya."

What makes Zydeco so different is that the music is sung in English and Creole French, accompanied by accordion and a frottoir, or rub-board. A rub-board is a piece of corrugated steel played with beer-can openers or spoons, like a washboard. For the past few years, Buckwheat's son



has held down that honor. Buckwheat's repertoire integrates covers such as The Rolling Stones' "Beast of Burden," Bob Dylan's "On A Night Like This," and The Blasters' "Marie, Marie," each endowed

with a good jolt of the swamp-swing thing alongside his rapid, stutted speech and his machine gun delivery. -J

-The Bluest Of Blue Low Marjorie