

An interview with Frank Grow and Patsy Johnson [Casino] of Sunburst

Vicki Tatz
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Frank Grow: Music groups from outside of our church are brought together for a variety of reasons-co make money, through common musical taste or a common musical vision. But the people in Sunburst have come together because of the Church. We come from completely different musical backgrounds. The only thing that holds us together sometimes is God. It is definitely not our musical tastes. As we gain unity as a band, our unity with God deepens. We are only as good as our relationship with God at any given time. At any performance, all the members have to be spiritually connected with God or else there's no energy. Sunburst is a unique band in that we came together through God.

In one sense, our music is undefinable. When people ask us what kind of music we play, a new term is emerging. I call it "God rock." It's not folk, it's not country, it's not gospel, it's not jazz, it's a combination of everything and it's centered on God.

Sunburst is a musical microcosm of our Church. We have white, black and yellow. We have all different backgrounds. The only reason we were brought together is because of the Church, because we're all trying to build an ideal world.

It's very difficult to sit down and try to write a song with a selfless motivation, or get into an instrumental jam with a selfless motivation, of trying to complement the whole. Art has usually been one man or a group of people trying to express their own view of life, even in great art.

Patsy Johnson: God has been wanting to express Himself through music and the arts for a long, long time. Through experience, I've seen that when I go out to an audience and think in a selfish way-"Will the audience like me?" I don't move the audience. But when I'm centered on God, even if musically or technically it isn't so good, God's spirit moves the audience.

Once we performed at a high school. I was thinking, "When I go out to these kids I just really want to lay it to them. These kids have done so many wrong things. I really have to be strong with them, and just tell them what to do and be firm." I thought that because I was singing and putting out a lot of energy, it would be enough to move them. But my heart wasn't there and they didn't respond so much. So I repented to God and asked Him, "Heavenly Father, what is it?" He told me, "You're not loving the people the way I want you to love them." So the next time I went out with this feeling of wanting to love the people and even though I did everything the same, the second group of high school students gave a whole different response.

Frank Grow: Traditionally, artists have had a bad reputation for being selfish people, emotionally distraught. But if you just apply the Principle you understand that art is actually a healing agent, especially now, because people are so depressed. A happy song, or even a sad song in which you cry along with them, heals them. That's where you have to begin, with what the people want. There are so many kinds of people in this country, and so many kinds of music. How are you going to pick one? The only way, I'm finding, is if you truly try to serve the people and try to get a message across. One way to purify your music is to understand your purpose. You have to realize why we are playing this song, why we are playing jazz, why we are playing rock.

An artist becomes his art and his art is an expression of him. So as we grow as individuals, our music grows. As we purify our hearts and as we are more able to offer our music to God, then God centered music comes through. There is no formula because we are pioneering. It's like being at sea. As more and more sun shines through the clouds, we can see our goal, our purpose. Then we can chart our course and go forward.

I am praying for a deep unity in Sunburst at this time so that when we perform at Washington Monument we can give witness to God and to Reverend Moon.

Our challenge is to get to people, to cut through the apathy that most people live in. How can we excite young people, and old people, not just to have a good evening and listen to some nice songs and see some nice kids, but how can we give them a high spiritual experience where they're really excited about the unity of heart that they find to the extent that they're willing to investigate further, willing to get up out of their seats, to leave their houses, to skip a Thursday night of bowling or a Friday night poker game to see exactly what we're saying. What can we do to relate to the guy who is only interested in his girlfriend or whether he's going to get fired next week?

Patsy Johnson: When I pray about this, God keeps telling me over and over again, the people are looking for sincerity. They want to be guided. They really want to believe that the world can change. But too many things have happened in their lives. The only way is to win their trust through sincerity. So we have to learn to deepen our hearts. If we're not sincere, they feel it.

Frank Grow: But we also have to stimulate them to do something.