

Opinion

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OUR VIEW

THE ISSUE:
Beatles invade America

WE SAY:
They changed the country socially and musically.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?
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America celebrates 50 years of the Beatles

The Beatles' arrival on U.S. soil, and their debut on the "Ed Sullivan Show" a few nights later, 50 years ago has been giving Americans something fun to remember and appreciate.

With golden anniversaries often commemorating some sort of tragic event, going light with the mop tops has been a welcome diversion lately.

The Beatles, no matter most people's age or experience with their body of work, cannot be denied their proper place in history as one of the greatest bands of all time, and the music does all the talking.

Both harmonically sophisticated and deceptively simple at the same time, whether they were singing about wanting to hold your hand in the early days, or constructing the forerunners of the multi-tracked modern orchestral maneuvers of "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," The Beatles changed music and inspired musicians and music fans like none before.

Something not mentioned enough in articles and pieces on The Beatles' cultural importance is the way they inspired young men and women to take up instruments and begin to compose their own music, something that was not

commonplace by a long shot until the British Invasion really instilled the "do-it-yourself" ethos in popular music, spawning garage bands all over Europe and America.

It wasn't simply enough anymore to play and sing well; one had to play and sing and be seen as a credible creator of their own sound and experience.

It's important to note those things as much of the discussion around The Beatles in the last few weeks has really revolved around their place in society as a force of good and cheer at a time when America was recovering from the recently assassinated President John F. Kennedy.

Artistically, though, America was also at a weird crossroads, where the progenitors of rock 'n' roll in the country that gave birth to its rise were on a serious downward slide. Jerry Lee Lewis had his public troubles with a teen bride; Chuck Berry was convicted for similar offenses with a 14-year-old across state lines; and "The King" Elvis Presley had lost some of his rebel edge when he enlisted in the military and then opted for a movie career.

Flying the Union Jack in all its glory, The Beatles and the Brits

that would follow took the American model of music and kicked it up a notch by putting it back in the hands of the Everyman.

Aside from the music, they also came on the scene at a pivotal time in history where they did an incredible job of being both a mirror and a guidepost of the changing time in society.

Their look, their musical interests and directions, their emerging distinct personalities from the Beatles, or the Fab Four, into a cultural hydra of "John," "Paul," "George" and "Ringo" completely meshed with the aesthetic of the times — what started out as a singular unit, already pushing the boundaries of the standard rock formula, ended up a loose band of individuals experimenting socially (euphemistic for drugs and sex) and sonically.

It's cute to watch the old videos of the screaming girls chasing The Beatles through city streets and airports, crying their heads off on "Ed Sullivan," but it's also gratifying to understand that The Beatles work on more levels and for more people than how they are generally portrayed in newspapers and on network TV.

MY VIEW

Shooting for the stars



RICHARD RYAN

VIEWPOINT

There are future astronomers and astronauts among us. They attend the stargazing events at the Imperial Valley Desert Museum and look through telescopes with the awe of explorers. They are girls and boys in their young teens, and all they require of us is encouragement.

On Jan. 25, we attended another of IVDM's now famous stargazing parties. My family and I are lucky to operate a friend's telescope while she greets visitors at the front desk. We just bring the step stool so the younger children can climb up and peer into the eyepiece. People ask, "Which constellation or star are you looking at?" I often don't know and respond, "bright stars." I'm not being a wise guy. I truly don't know, having been trained in social science and not something practical like space travel. Looking through the telescope we have mistaken the Ocotillo Chevron sign for the rising moon. Each is exceptionally bright as seen over the ridge to the east of the museum. In January we did view Jupiter and could easily see four of the planet's 62 moons. The moons were arrayed on an axis that crossed Jupiter like a straightened sparkling diamond bracelet. Yes, it is that spectacular. Sometimes when I'm repositioning the telescope to sight on a planet, I get diverted by the star clusters that the telescope sweeps across on a clear desert night. I'm not an amateur astronomer, though I'm always astounded at the constellations and how the telescopes bring us closer to them.

The stargazing events are advertised in this newspaper. Local astronomers show up with their rigs and set up, often unannounced. I was invited to look through a large, sophisticated tracking telescope at a distant galaxy that recently experienced an exploding supernova. It was a small, not-so-bright dot in the eyepiece so incredibly far away. It appeared cold and lonely to me, and I felt as if I had been transported into that alien world. Astronomical distances measured in light years boggle the mind and infuse me with a strong dose of humility. Earth itself isn't even very significant among planetary objects. One thousand Earths could fit inside of Jupiter, the big boy of our solar system.

The IVDM stargazing events include a talk by an astronomer. These PowerPoint presentations give us an appreciation of what we are going to be viewing and a sense of the unearthly distances involved in looking at planets and stars. In January, Steve Benton, who is on the board of the IVDM and the moving force behind these events, spoke about NASA's Voyager I and Voyager II. Both of these space exploration vehicles were launched in 1977, so many of the scientists and engineers currently monitoring them weren't even born yet. This led me to think about the boys and girls we assist looking through the telescopes. How some of them must dream of traveling to planets, or, at the very least, studying planets and stars as astronomers?

Study your math and science. Read Jules Verne novels. Watch George Lucas' movies and "The Big Bang Theory." One day you'll be working for NASA and returning to Imperial Valley to tell us about your studies and the "billions and billions of stars" as Carl Sagan would say. Parents, teachers and school administrators can assist by insuring there are sufficient Advanced Placement math and science classes Valleywide. Let's get those children launched in the direction of scientific careers.

Around the time of the last stargazing event, I learned of a new documentary film showing at the Sundance Film Festival. It's titled, "Sepideh — Reaching for the Stars." A clip can be viewed at http://filmguide.sundance.org/film/13874/sepidehreaching_for_the_stars

"In a rural village far from Tehran, the night sky glows brilliantly, unimpeded by light pollution, and a teenage girl named Sepideh dreams of becoming a renowned astronomer. Lugging a telescope as tall as herself, Sepideh spends her nights stargazing, inspired by Anousheh Ansari, the first Iranian in space."

Perhaps IVDM could show this film in the future. Also, it may be available through Netflix soon.

The next Imperial Valley Desert Museum stargazing event will be held at the museum in Ocotillo on June 14 at 7 p.m. The guest speaker will be Borrego Springs astronomer Dennis Mammana, and his talk is titled, "The Flying Blue Marble."

See you there, earthlings.

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VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

Imperial Valley should be proud

I am very proud of the Calipatria cadets. My daughter was a cadet when Mr. Derma was at the junior high and she thrived; she graduated in the top 10 of her class.

I love and appreciate the effort that Mr. Derma puts into our youth. One of my nephews is a cadet and I know he is working very hard to have a career and future in the military because of it.

Good job, Mr. Derma and cadets; looking forward to seeing what God has in store for all you. Discipline and responsibility are very important in everyday life and these kids are learning and acquiring these tools.
STEPHANIE SPENCE
 Calipatria

ANOTHER VIEW



MY VIEW

Be all you can be

It was the last run of the giant slalom at the Grenoble Winter Olympics in 1968. Jean-Claud Killy was on his last run below me. I was the only one left. It was now or never, the challenge of a lifetime, the opportunity that would never come again.

When the clock hit zero I broke the plane of the timer and began the mile and a half controlled fall that downhill skiing is at the highest levels of competition. The first gate was easy and I turned to the right and tucked my body in tight to cut down on wind resistance. The second gate brushed my shoulder, as close as I could get without running the risk of missing the gate. The pattern continued, first left and then right, with speed picking up to 60 miles per hour and beyond. Finally, the last hill and the feeling of gravity lost as it threw me up into the air a dozen feet and I struggled to land on both skis. Then the finish line and turning the skis so that I stopped short of the barriers throwing snow up on the faithful who had braved the elements to watch this historic event.

Where was the timer? How did I place? Did Killy win this one, too? I heard the crowd cheer and someone handed me an American flag. I loosened the skis and began walking into the crowd with hands patting me on the back. Yes, this happened ... in my dreams.

Unfortunately, God doesn't bless all of us with Olympic-level ability. It is easy to hide behind the rationalization that in the ability department we were not so blessed. Oh, but we are. As the kindergartner said, "I know I'm good because God don't make no junk." We all have talents and abilities. The first



MARK L. HOPKINS

VIEWPOINT

secret to success in life is to get our talents and abilities identified so we know what they are.

Unfortunately, that is just step one. Once we know "what?" then we have to deal with "how?" Downhill skiers aren't born with the ability to fly down snow covered hills at 60 mph, nor stockbrokers with the ability to pick a "winning" stock. Parents are not born with the ability to be a great mother or father. In every case you have to study and think, and then work at it with dedication and commitment. Perseverance becomes the last key piece of the puzzle. You must hang in there. Talent without dedication, commitment and perseverance is talent wasted.

Consider this a challenge. As you watch the Olympics over the next couple of weeks, think of all the key ingredients that must come together to make an Olympic athlete. Then look at your own possibilities to succeed in your job, your family, in life. Ask yourself this question, "Am I all that I can be?" Yes, we all have work to do.

Dr. Mark L. Hopkins writes for More Content Now and Scripps Newspapers. He is past president of colleges and universities in four states and currently serves as executive director of a higher education consulting service. Contact him at presnet@presnet.net

LETTERS POLICY

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■ Letters must be signed and include an address and telephone number for verification.

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