

'Spirit': Great Honesty in Dealing with Life

THE MUSIC BAG

It's probably just a coincidence that "Spirit in the Sky," written and recorded by Norman Greenbaum, is published by "Great Honesty Music, Inc." But then again, maybe not.

We were in New England recently for several singing concerts, and while we were there we visited a family we know. The father of the family started to talk about the good, the bad, and the ugly of pop music, but mostly about the bad and the ugly.

He felt modern music could define its purpose more, and should present a more positive, clearer picture. For example, he said, he simply could not decide whether "Spirit in the Sky" was for real, or was just a cruel satire on some important religious beliefs.

He was expounding on his confusion when he 14-year-old son grabbed the spirit of the song right out of the sky and captured it in one sentence: "Aw, come on, Dad; it's an honest song; it's too happy to be anything else."

"Too happy to be anything else." That 14-year-old knows what it's all about. "Spirit in the Sky" is a song about some

'SPIRIT IN THE SKY'

When I die and they lay me to rest,
Gonna go to the place that's the best,
When I lay down to die
Goin' up to the Spirit in the Sky,
Goin' up to the Spirit in the Sky.
That's where I'm gonna go when I die.

When I die and they lay me to rest,
Gonna go to the place that's the best.
Prepare yourself, you know it's a must.

Gotta have a friend in Jesus,
So you know that when you die
He's gonna recommend you to
The Spirit in the Sky.

That's where you're gonna go when you die,
When you die and they lay you to rest,
You're gonna go to the place that's the best.

Never been a sinner, I never sinned;
I got a friend in Jesus,
So you know that when I die
He's gonna set me up with the Spirit in the Sky,
Oh, set me up with the Spirit in the Sky.

(Published by Great Honesty Music, Inc.)

important religious beliefs, but it treats them with "great honesty." It's a happy song, and it seems to say that if religion is anything at all, it is a joyful attitude towards life.

Someone once described happiness as "one of those things that suddenly appears as a kind of piercing joy or a steady glow of good feeling when one is most himself — most alive with one's possibilities."

"Spirit in the Sky" gets high on happiness: "When you die and they lay you to rest, you're gonna go to the place that's the best."

It's a simple song, both in the words and the music. But that's what being happy does to you: it makes life simple. If a person is in an especially good mood, small problems that pop up can't get him away from the belief that he can solve any difficulty.

Norman Greenbaum gives the reason why he can "climb every mountain, ford every stream": "I got a friend in Jesus, so you know that when I die He's gonna set me up with the Spirit in the Sky."

Today people are taking more kindly to religion than they did

a few years ago when reaction against religion was pretty bitter. But now people are coming to realize that, whatever religion's past faults, the waters of Christianity still run deep and they can be pretty refreshing.

That's part of the reason why "Spirit in the Sky" is a big hit now. Secondly, people are beginning to realize they have to have something to be happy about. In the past few years we've concentrated so much on problems — problems that are still with us — but there's nothing wrong with trying to find something to be happy about while we face those problems.

A few years ago, Ray Stevens wrote "Mr. Businessman," an angry, bitter song against hypocrisy. Now he has a song that is strangely different: "Everything's Beautiful." Perhaps it's true that if we don't find some beauty in life, well all be neurotic.

(Catholic Press Features)

Balancing the Books Simenon Turns To Psychological Novel

By Father John S. Kennedy

Georges Simenon, the author of innumerable novels featuring a detective named Maigret, gives that eminent solver of mysteries a rest by writing other novels the mystery in which is sheerly psychological. The latest of his books to be translated from the French belongs in the latter category. The English version is called "The Man on the Bench in the Barn" (Harcourt, Brace and World, 757 Third Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10017, \$5.95). The French title, "The Hand," was better.

Simenon lived for some years in Lakeville, Conn., and it is in the nearby countryside that this story is laid. Its narrator is Donald Dodd, a 45-year-old lawyer, married for 17 years to the admirable Isabel, and the father of two teen-age daughters.

The man whom Dodd regards as his best friend, Ray Sanders, brings his wife Mona for a visit to the Dodds. Sanders, a college classmate, is a partner in a highly successful New York firm, and his wife, a former actress, is a glamorous creature.

The Dodds take the Sanders to a party being given by a neighbor. A snowstorm is beginning. During the party it turns into a blizzard. Heading home, Dodds' foursome has to abandon their car and try to make the rest of the way on foot. When they reach the Dodd house, they find that Ray is not with them.

The two women go into the house, and Dodd undertakes to go searching for Ray. But instead of plunging back into the blizzard, he goes into the barn, sits there on a bench for some time, smoking a number of cigarettes, then returns to the house to announce that his search has been futile.

During the interval in the barn, he has been thinking of his attitude toward Ray, and has come to the realization that actually he hates his old friend and has wished him dead, the reason being that Ray has lived the kind of life that Dodd would like to have led.

While the storm lasts, Dodd, his wife, and Mona are confined to the house, and during this time of waiting their relationships one to another begin to change. When Ray's body is found, Dodd takes charge of

funeral arrangements and afterwards begins to manage Mona's business affairs. An affair of another sort evolves.

Lawrence Sanders' "The Anderson Tapes" (Putnam, 200 Madison Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10016, \$5.95) is a tough, often foul-mouthed thriller with overtones of Krafft-Ebing. It deals with an attempted robbery of sensational proportions. Its planner, an ex-convict named Anderson, aims at nothing less than cleaning out a luxury apartment building on Manhattan's East Side.

He enlists several unsavory types as assistants, and even brings in the Mafia.

There is a large element of improbability in the form of the book; namely, such extensive bugging. And the approach to the climax is devious, with much back-tracking. But when finally the heist itself begins, the book becomes taut, compelling, and even tormenting.

The sidelight on the Mafia is intriguing. Why should that organization get involved in a job conceived by an outsider and a loner? For two reasons:

One is that, having gone largely into respectable businesses, the Mafiosi still want the occasional thrill of bold outlawry. The other is that, by advertising their connection with a job featuring violence, they will intensify an atmosphere of fear.

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TORN LIVES...

THE HOLY FATHER'S MISSION AID TO THE ORIENTAL CHURCH

Ripped apart by war in the Holy Land. Most are children. Others are sickly, aged, handicapped. The rest are farmers without land, workmen without work. All cling to the shreds of dignity. Each seeks a chance to begin anew. A hot meal, a blanket, a tent, a few tools for the breadwinners, schooling for the children—any of these can start whole families toward piecing their shattered lives together again.

GIVEN A
CHANCE
HOLY LAND
REFUGEES
HAVE SHOWN
THEY CAN
REPAIR THEIR
SHATTERED
LIVES.
WILL YOU
GIVE THEM
THAT
CHANCE?

There are now more than 1,500,000 refugees from the continuing fighting in the Holy Land—and the number increases daily. Some have already worked their way out of poverty. Someone cared enough to train them for new jobs, or help school their children, or piece together scattered families. But most are still huddled in open camps, or town slums, or crowded in with relatives equally poor. The refugee colonies teem with destitution and a poisonous sense of futility.

Through the Holy Father's Pontifical Mission for Palestine, the Catholic Near East Welfare Association has already mended tens of thousands of refugee families through education, new jobs, new housing, medical and orphan care, food, clothing. Any kind of helping hand is eagerly grasped by those eager to help themselves.

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