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## The recording maestro says rock-'n'-roll is beginning to play second fiddle



Miller leads "singalong," a revival of old-time songfest.

# Good Music Is Back

A FEW YEARS ago, when the rock-'n'-roll eruption seemed capable of turning America into a nation of apoplectic music haters, I tried to soothe my friends with the words of Justice Harlan Stone.

"One can always depend on the sober second thoughts of the American people," I assured them. "Good music will certainly rise again!"

In the days that followed, only my beard gave me the mark of the prophet. Radio and television saturated the airways with the dreadful, monotonous dirge. Rock-'n'-roll idols developed overnight.

Indeed, the second thoughts were a long time coming, but now America is answering back. Millions have banded together in a beautiful, tuneful uprising that has sent the perpetrators of the rock-'n'-roll scourge running for cover. Yes, America has returned to the music of the good old days; what's more, it's embracing these old favorites the same way Dad and Granddad did—by locking arms and blending voices in group singing.

There is a slight, modern variation to the old songfest. Where once the family, or party, gathered around the player piano or Junior's ukulele, now the hi-fi set is the focal point and "sing along" is the byword. A stack of LPs is put in motion, a circle of tapping toes picks up the beat and the harmonious song session is on—good, simple, singable music that stirs memories, like "Down by the Old Mill Stream," "Put on Your Old Gray Bonnet," or "By the Light of the Silvery Moon."

The happy return of good music, however, has not been limited to the swelling chorus of old favorites. Every variety

## to quality entertainment in which everyone takes part

of music is enjoying a rebirth. Folk music, for instance, is soaring in popularity, and much of the credit for this belongs to the wide appeal of young vocal groups like the Kingston Trio and the Limelighters. The blues, as featured by Ray Charles and Ray Price, has made a tremendous comeback, and with Erroll Garner, Jonah Jones, and Dave Brubeck showing the way, good jazz is enjoying a bigger vogue than ever.

Unlike the hectic days of rock-'n'-roll, when most record makers simply looked for sideburns on a monotonous guitar plunker, the emphasis has returned to the important ingredients of musical entertainment—the performer, the material, and the production. All must be high caliber. Percy Faith's "Theme from a Summer Place" and Roger Williams' "Autumn Leaves" are classic examples of this selectivity. Records by such top-quality artists as Billy Vaughn, Johnny Mathis, the Brothers Four, and Ray Coniff point this up—as does the demand for Nat King Cole and Frank Sinatra.

But the group-singing boom has caused the most excitement in the music business.

I like to think that it all started one afternoon during a meeting at our record-company office, when an associate said: "I wish someone would record an album of songs

we used to sing in the Army. The kind that listeners can participate in informally."

It was a fine idea, and I jumped at it. I took a male chorus of 25, and backed them up with good "folk" instruments. I kept the vocal arrangements simple, and used the tried-and-true songs. The results, if I do say so myself, were marvelous. And the "Sing Along with Mitch" albums were born.

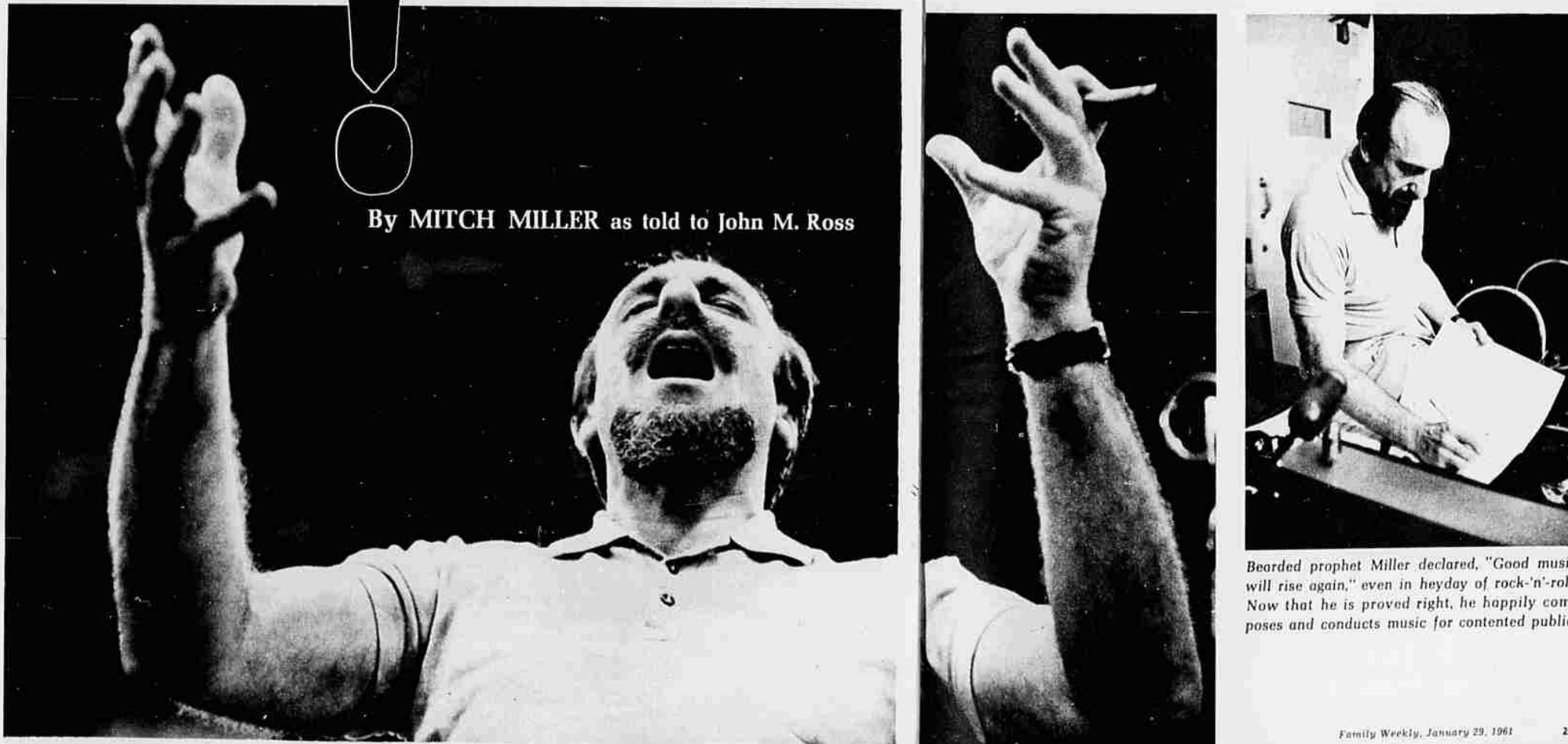
Needless to say, I don't subscribe to the theory that the return to good music means the complete extinction of rock-'n'-roll. But now I think it will be aired in proper proportion to the percentage of the population to which it appeals. Basically, this is something for the sub-teens. It got its start because they wanted music of their own.

The amazing aspect of the whole rock-'n'-roll movement was that its devotees represented only 12 percent of our population and directly accounted for only 10 percent of the sales of the record business.

Now, surveys tell us, even the youngsters are joining their elders in reaching for the old songs—even though most of these tunes were written half-a-century or more before they were born.

For one who has refused to believe that our young people had such bad musical taste, this is most gratifying.

By MITCH MILLER as told to John M. Ross



Bearded prophet Miller declared, "Good music will rise again," even in heyday of rock-'n'-roll. Now that he is proved right, he happily composes and conducts music for contented public.

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