

Oganing is good for ya

HORATIO

There's nothing like an old fashioned Revival Meeting to cleanse one's soul.

But for the folks who can't take them hell-fire sermons of sure-fire damnation, there's an alternative--The Oganookie.

The Oganookie is a mountain music group that uses music instead of words to re-new the soul. Folks leave an Oganookie concert feelin' good!

This is in no way knocking a church revival meeting. They make lot's more sense, to me, than most of the sedate, sophisticated sermons I've heard of late:

Folks let their hair down at a revival meeting. Whether it's the Spirit of the good Lord at work, or just a venting of emotion, makes no difference.

Folks leave feeling better. And that's the way the good Lord intended it--I hope.

Anyway, Oganookie has a "language" all its own when it comes to music. It's loud--electrified. It's fast--faster than you can imagine. And it's played by master musicians.

Anyone who can sit through the group's rendition of "Orange Blossom Special" with a "silent toe"--just has to be dead.

People, young and old, who would never think of getting up and dancing (maybe the word should be "foot-stomping"), find themselves doing just that.

It's not just a catchy tune that does it. It's "that something" that folks experience at a Revival Meeting. Hell, who really knows what it is?

It's an experience that tingles the spine and makes you feel good you're alive.

The Oganookie has been playing the Santa Cruz scene for almost two years, and for the past year the Central Coast area and San Francisco Bay area. It is in the process of cutting a record. And from there?



Oganookie is more than a band. It's a mountain community--a way of living, if you prefer.

The five young musicians--all East Coast College graduates--have taken over a larger two-story house in the mountains for communal living.

After graduation, they took themselves out of the 9-to-5 job market, which their college training had directed them toward.

What they did, they say, was to take hold of their lives, and steer it out of the channeled rut that appeared ahead.

They don't have to wear ties--but they've got to hoe the garden, which provides them with quite a bit of the food they eat.

They don't have to fight the Fifth Avenue traffic rush--but it's quite a job to load up the van with heavy sound equipment and sometimes travel hundreds of miles for a one-night stand.

But they aren't apt to change their way of living.

"It's far out," said banjo picker George Stavis, 26.

"It's a fun and joy trip," said Jack Bowers, 27, mandolin-piano player who writes the group's original songs.

It all started at Haverford College in Philadelphia when fiddle player Robert Stern, 23, walked into his dormitory room to find his new roommate (Stavis) seated on his (Stern's) bed picking a banjo.

"Far out--- a fiddler," said Stavis.

Stern, then well on his way to becoming a concert violinist, says he "cringed a bit" but after a while "got to liking what I heard."

Soon drummer Tim Ackerman, 25, and guitar-lead singer Bruce Frye, 25, joined the group. Later Peter Troxell, 26, took over as band manager.

The five musicians had studied music for years, but, as Stern says, "We didn't find out what it was really all about until we started playing together."