

## MIXOLOGY

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## Da Doo Ron Ron

**P**AY-TO-PLAY MAY RULE ON THE SUNSET STRIP, BUT WOULD-BE ROCKERS WILL BE glad to hear that there's still one Hollywood hotspot where the gigs are free, easy to book, and where an enthusiastic crowd is guaranteed. Sound like a rock & roll heaven on earth? Actually, it's the Scientology Celebrity Center (5930 Franklin Ave.), where every Sunday night at 7:30 you can find an open-mike talent show that ain't fooling when it boasts "Everybody Is Welcome." Whether you're an Operating Thetan or just a pre-clear wanna-be with some excess charge and a song in your heart, Scientology Talent Night may be the gig you've been looking for. The only connections you need to get on the bill are the kind that get measured on an E-meter, and heck, everybody's got those.

The two of us went to Scientology Talent Night last weekend, curious to see whether this showcase might finally break us out of our negativity. (We only know three guitar chords; neither of us can sing.) And we're happy to report that, a minor case of stage fright aside, it rocks. You can't imagine a more non-judgmental crowd, one about 40-strong and dressed down for the occasion (no big hair or Melrosewear to speak of). No matter what you do, the smiles on the faces of both the audience and the regular performers (a lot of them do this every week) let you know that *they're just glad you're here*.

It's a good thing we didn't have to follow the 5-year-old who sang "My Favorite Things" a cappella; our two-song acoustic set had a few rough spots. We opened with "Walking in the Rain," a heart-rending original written just for the occasion and sprinkled liberally with words like "lonely," "out of place" and "sad and blue," feelings we hoped would alert the staff to our particularly receptive state of mind. It worked. By the time we reached the middle of our cover of "Purple Rain," we had the audience, new friends all, waving their hands sympathetically back and forth over their heads.

Oddly, it wasn't until after we'd finished our less-than-sparkling set — the audience seemed disappointed that we never delivered a punchline — that a cheery fella named Greg approached to ask if we were familiar with the center's activities. Nope, came our starry-eyed, eager-to-be-stroked reply. Greg, noting that we were clearly "creative" people, explained that one of the main purposes of the Scientology Celebrity Center is to "help artists" such as ourselves. He even offered to administer a test to see whether we might be in a position to benefit from . . .

Had to go, you know? Still buzzing from our moment of musical glory (where's an E-meter when you need one?), we ducked out with promises to come back next week when we'd have more time to take that quiz. Might even do it, too. Where else are you going to find such unquestioning approval and such endlessly forgiving smiles? How else might we hear again the generous applause that followed our horrifying crescendo of squeaky "ooh-ooh-ooh-oohs" at the finish of our acoustic Prince cover? Think they'd be so nice at the Whisky?

If live performance is not your style, you can enjoy the sounds of scientology from the safety of your own stereo. the current issue of *the bridge*, one of several Scientology periodicals available at the center, contains a list of cassettes that can assist in your understanding of the applied religious philosophy's finer points. Titles include "Man the Unfathomable Music," "The Auditor's Code Music" and "How the E-Meter Works Music." Perhaps most interesting is "The Road to Freedom Music," a "dazzling collection of rock songs" written by L. Ron himself (before his untimely alleged death a few years ago) and performed by Frank Stallone, John Travolta, Karen Black, Chick Corea and others. According to the catalog, these tapes will assist the aspirant on his or her trip across "the Bridge," which is "a broad and fast highway" leading to "a higher state of existence" and "total freedom." From the commanding heights of this Bridge, we assume, both the Stairway to Heaven and the Highway to Hell look like mere side streets.