

# Rock & Roll Dope

John Sinclair

1968

This is my first column for the *Fifth Estate* in a long time and I'll probably be a little rusty, so please bear with me, OK? and I'll try to do something useful here.

I stopped writing for the *Fifth Estate* in January mainly for two reasons: I was tired of hassling the editors to get my columns printed intact, and I was even more tired of coming on like some kind of public personality and/or race-track tout in this space, and that was the context that'd been developed over a two-year period of writing a column almost every issue. I'd like to start over again now, if that's possible, and do something different if I can get away with it.

For the past nine months or so I've been working full time as the MC5's personal manager and as a part-time advisor to Russ Gibb of the Grande Ballroom, and I've gained a lot of inside experience in the rock and roll industry. I've learned a lot of things about the way music is presented, who controls the music industry, what advances are being made by musicians and producers, who's trying to hold them back, where the audiences are at and why, how the mass media is used and abused by people in every aspect of the industry, and what these things have to do with you, the people who support the music, go to concerts and dances, buy records, read magazines, listen to the radio, and are generally on the consuming end of the stick.

The easiest thing I can say is that there's much that goes on behind the scenes that you should know about—and I don't mean who fucked what star last weekend, or what a nice cat so-and-so in such-and-such supergroup is. and the regular stuff like that you get from the quasi-rock and roll publications. I'll try to keep my comments factual and to the point, that is: just who is manipulating your consciousness, how are they doing it and why.

Starting with the next issue of the *Fifth Estate* I'll be editing and compiling and writing a rock and roll section for each issue, which will try to keep you informed on what's going on in the Detroit-Ann Arbor area as well as around the USA and the world in the music scene. I'll try to reprint interesting interviews and reviews from the Underground Press newspapers and news from the rock magazines, press releases, and raps with musicians themselves, so you can know what's going on.

And now, a short advertisement, to let you know where I'm at with this music: "Rock and roll music is the great liberating force of our time. Its most beautiful aspect is that it gets to millions of people every day, telling them that they can dance and sing and holler and scream and FEEL GOOD even when they have to listen to all those jive commercials and death news reports all around the music, everything's gonna be all right as soon as EVERYBODY GIVES IT UP!

Rock and roll—and we mean John Coltrane and Pharaoh Sanders and Archie Shepp and Albert Ayler and Sun Ra and all those people as much as the Beatles and Jimi and the MC5 and Canned Heat and the Cream and the Grateful Dead and Big Brother & the Holding Company—rock and roll is the music of RIGHT NOW, every minute, pounding and screaming at your head, twisting inside your belly, pulling you up off your ass to GIVE IT UP and let energy flow through your cells and into the air so you can be FREE again. Wave your freak flag high! HIGH! YAAAA! STONE FREE—Do what you wanna!" (From the *Sun* No. 5

\* \* \*

I heard on the radio last weekend that WKNR-FM has gone, or is in the process of going, to a good music (pure rock am roll) format, which is very interesting. I was trying to tell them about that a year ago in this paper and in the *Sun*, but WABX had to go out on the limb first before they would see the sense in it.

Now with two of them in it together maybe the competition will sharpen both stations up a little—it seems that the only way straight people ever get it together is through competition.

WKNR-FM went to Russ Gibb after the Doors' concert last month (where the (WKNR disc jockeys were booed by the audience) and asked him what they should do to reach the audience that obviously existed for the new music, Russ being the only totally successful rock entrepreneur in the area, and a former deejay and talk-radio personality himself.

Russ told them what to do, all right, and they hired him to do a six-hour show on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, with complete license to play whatever he wants (they have to hear the records themselves before they go on the air, but that'll probably do them some good.)

Now Russ is a terrible deejay, as you've probably heard if you listened last weekend, but his heart is in the right place exactly and he plays the music we want to hear—and he's open to new forms of expression, which makes for very interesting possibilities indeed. Listen this weekend for the first Coltrane, Pharaoh Sanders, and Sun Ra jams that you'll hear on a pop rock show. He'll also feature interviews with musicians working in town, otherwise, and hopefully he'll be able to broadcast live tapes of the MC5, the Stooges, UP, Jaggededge, Rationals, and other homepeople.

The weekday jocks on WKNR are not so hip yet, but I've noticed that the WABX people have gotten hipper and more intelligent with every week they're exposed to the music—most of them at least. The WKNR jocks seem to be AM radio refugees and talk in terms of polls, number ones, stars, etc. The music doesn't have anything to do with that shit, and the people who listen to it aren't juveniles with their parents' supermarket mentalities, and I'm sure those dudes will find that out soon enough anyway. If they don't, call up and complain.

Call up anyway, all the time, and let them know where you're at and what you want to hear. The radio stations are our public servants, but we have to tell them what to do until they find out and do it themselves. The call number at WABX is 963-8888; at WKNR-FM, 846-5666.

# fifth Estate

John Sinclair  
Rock & Roll Dope  
1968

<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/55-june-4-18-1968/rock-roll-dope>  
Fifth Estate #55, June 4-18, 1968

**[fiftheestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://www.fiftheestate.org)**