



"Cross Connection"

Radio Ministry of Hope Wesleyan Church and Wells of Salvation Ministries
Ultimate Oldies Radio – FM 97.7 and 101.5, Huber Heights, Ohio



Series: Christian Messages In Secular Music

06/26/08

Program 40 "Brother Love's Traveling Salvation Show" © Neil Diamond

Neil Diamond obviously tapped into the flavor and ambience of America's legendary traveling medicine shows in writing this hit, which charted at #22. While I couldn't find any evidence of traveling "salvation" shows per se in my research, it is clear that, from the late 1700s to the mid-1900s, crowds flocked to traveling medicine shows that all too often featured "quacks" who pushed a wide variety of touted elixirs, including the infamous "snake oil", to gullible customers.



"Traveling medicine shows provided theater, music, and the sale of cure-all potions that would heal everything from arthritis to gout... Who were these quacks of old? As well as being salespeople, quacks were often entertainers, providing variety shows and using the same style of speech as evangelical preachers, often quoting Biblical text as a part of their shows. Many had no medical experience at all."¹

Even rock legend and evangelist Little Richard "...learned to mix ministerial qualities with theatrics by watching the traveling medicine shows that rolled through his native Macon."² Some of you may be reminded of these line from pop performer Cher's "Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves" –

I was born in the wagon of a travelin' show
My mama used to dance for the money they'd throw
Papa would do whatever he could --
Preach a little gospel, sell a couple bottles of "Doctor Good"³

As we look into the lyrics of "Brother Love's Traveling Salvation Show", let's not only note how the Gospel may have been exploited for personal gain, but let's renew our focus on what the essence of our Christian faith truly is – a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

The Artist – Neil Diamond⁴ –

- One of pop music's most enduring and successful singer-songwriters, born in 1941
 - Had sold 120 million records worldwide as of May 2005
- Inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1984
- Born 1941 into Jewish Russian-Polish family in Brooklyn, son of a dry-goods merchant
- Sang in the school choir with Barbra Streisand
- His senior year a music publishing company offered him \$50 a week to write songs
- Early success -- wrote "I'm a Believer", "A Little Bit Me, A Little Bit You," "Look Out (Here Comes Tomorrow)," and Love to Love, recorded by The Monkees
- "Solitary Man" was his first hit, soon followed by "Cherry, Cherry", "Kentucky Woman" and a myriad of other mega-hits throughout his long, distinguished and successful career
- Still tours, performs, acts, and raises funds for charities

¹ <http://www.medhunters.com/articles/goodForWhatAilsYou.html>

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Richard

³ From "Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves", © 1971 Bob Stone

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neil_Diamond

Hot August night and the leaves hangin' down
And the grass on the ground smellin' - sweet
Move up the road to the outside o' town
And the sound o' that good gospel beat

Sits a ragged tent, where there ain't no trees
And that gospel group, tellin' you and me

It's Love, Brother Love
Say Brother Love's Travellin' Salvation Show-ow (halle-halle)
Pack up the babies and grab the old ladies
And everyone goes, 'cause everyone knows, Brother Love's show

Room gets suddenly still and when you'd almost bet
You could hear yourself sweat - he walks in
Eyes black as coal and when he lifts his face
Every ear in the place is on him
Startin' soft and slow, like a small earthquake
And when he lets go-o, half the valley shakes

(Chorus Repeats)

(Sermon):

Brothers (halle-hallelujah), I said Brothers (hallelujah)
Now you got yourself two good hands (halle-hallelujah)
And when your brother is troubled
You got to reach out your one hand for him (hallelujah)
'Cause that's what it's there for (halle, hallelujah)
And when your heart is troubled
You got to reach out your other hand (hallelujah)
Reach it out to the man up there
'Cause that's what he's there for (halle-hallelujah)

Take my hand in yours, walk with me this day
In my heart I know, I will never stray

Halle-halle-halle-halle-halle-halle-halle-halle

(Chorus Repeats)

Final thoughts:

Over the years, there have been many who have pursued personal gain at the expense of, or under the pretext of serving God. My initial thought was, "There must be a special place in the underworld for such people!" But the attitude of the Apostle Paul on this count may surprise you.

"...some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition... But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached..." – Philippians 1:15-18

The Lord will examine our hearts and motives, but His Word will not return void! (Isaiah 55:11)

Have you ever been to an old-time camp meeting?
What were some of the things that you noticed?
E.g. – large tent, old wooden frame building,
wooden benches, altar, tissues, mourner's bench,
preaching style, old hymns, etc.

Do you think this song describes true ministry, or some kind of entertainment? Maybe both?

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" – Romans 10:14, NIV

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart ... soul and... mind... [and]... Love your neighbor as yourself." -- Matthew 22:37-40

"Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" – James 2:15-17

"...call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me" – Psalm 50:15