

The Pop Life

On Doing the Encore Number

By JOHN ROCKWELL

Continuing our discussion of the peculiar tribal mores at rock concerts, we come to the question of encores.

All rock bands are expected to give an encore. If they didn't things can get downright ugly—witness the thrown bottles after the first Who concert at Madison Square Garden last June.

It doesn't seem to matter at all how well or how long a group has played. A band that performs superbly for two hours and then doesn't feel like coming back onstage is booed; a band that performs perfunctorily for an hour and then lopes back after a pro forma wait of two minutes is cheered.

Promoters have begun to incorporate the ritual of the expected encore into their shows. The lights, on full and criss-crossing the audience to stimulate excitement during the final number of the regular show, are brought down again so that everybody can light matches (or, more recently, matchbooks, cigarette lighters with foot-high flames and burning popcorn containers). Finally, at the first shadowy sight of a roadie peeping out from behind an amplifier, the crescendo of cheers begins to build, until finally the band itself jogs back on stage.

Ideally, one would like to see encores as something special. Bands should come back only when the performance has been really superior and the amplitude of the applause indicates that fact. And they shouldn't automatically be expected to come back.

But in the end, it's like tips: What started as a reward for special service has become part of the everyday routine.

Beginning Tuesday, Barry Stuart's N.F.E. Theater is

planning to hold audition nights for bands that want to perform as opening acts on regular shows. Bands that would like to be considered should submit tapes, bios and pictures to the theater at 105 Second Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10003, or call 212-777-5372 for additional information.

Tangerine Dream, the German avant-garde band, and Nico, the German-international pop-avant-garde chanteuse, joined for a concert last month in France, and by all reports it was an extraordinary occasion, with only one of the highlights being Nico's decision not to sing "Deutschland Uber Alles," a normal part of her repertory.

But the real item here is that the concert took place in Reims Cathedral, the 13th-century Gothic edifice in which the kings of France were crowned (one good reason for Nico's forgoing her anthem, no doubt).

Certain parishioners of the cathedral, according to Reuters, the news agency, grew upset at what they called the "litter" and "hashish smoking" of the crowd, and demanded a "purification ceremony."

In response, the Rev. Bernard Goureau, cultural attaché for the archdiocese, said: "It is true that certain youths smoked pot to communicate more with the sound and the show. It is also true that some others, because of the cold that prevailed in the cathedral, went to urinate against its pillars.

"It is true that some couples were seen folded in each other's arms and kissing. But it is also true that some 5,000 youths, staying three hours in the dark stretched out on the cold

floor, could have caused more serious damage and behaved in a more disgraceful way."

Reims Cathedral is hardly the first place that conservatives have claimed has been desecrated by the rock hordes. But at least nobody in New York has yet demanded a purification ceremony for Carnegie or Avery Fisher Halls.

The Bottom Line isn't the only club in this country at which the notable and the famous appear for surprise jams. On Christmas Eve at the Troubadour in Los Angeles a group of carolers came onstage for a few seasonal numbers. The group included Carly Simon, James Taylor, Linda Ronstadt and Joni Mitchell.