

MODERN MUSIC DANGERS

Some accoustical engineers in the United States believe that the sound produced by teenage pop bands is actually damaging to human ears; and one in particular, Mr. Robert Larabell, of Phoenix, Arizona, believes that young people are deafening themselves in large numbers. Morton Hochstein, speaking in "Today," gave readings of some common sound levels as follows:

A home at night with the TV turned off and everyone asleep, no one snoring, will produce about 40 decibels; a private office 60 decibels; a general office 75. Someone shouting at you from a distance of three feet might produce 80 decibels. People can't communicate very well at above 85 decibels, and the most avid television or radio listener will not turn his volume past 90.

The United States Air Force advises that exposure to sound above 90 decibels for more than fifteen minutes can be harmful. The thresh-

hold of immediate pain for most humans is about 120 decibels, but permanent physical damage can occur at noise levels far below. Industrial hygienists recommend that human ears should be protected from sound levels above 85 decibels, and in the United States workers in sand-blasting, riveting, drop forging, and automotive assembly are required to wear guards against the noise.

With this in mind, what is the sound output of the usual teenage band? At twenty feet from the band Mr. Larabell's equipment registered 90 to 95 decibels — the area of potential harm. At times the meter soared to an alarming 105 decibels. The danger, Mr. Larabell stresses, is that the young people face a rapidly accelerated deterioration in hearing — so rapid that some teenagers may require hearing aids by the time they reach maturity.

Instinctively some American teenage musicians have

begun to protect themselves from their own product. Strictly under cover they are known to wear swimmers' ear plugs, and under the flowing tresses of John Fitzgerald,

a singer in the Phoenix group known as The Caravelles, John hides a secret — he wears ear muffs. — *By Morton Hochstein in The Listener, February, 1967.*

STUNTED

"This wine is fifty years old," said the host, offering a visitor a small glassful of it.

The visitor took the glass carefully between two fingers and said, "Stunted growth, eh?"