

Spot Checking

Food ★ Fun ★ Frolic
By Bill Whitman



Long Live the King's X

Not only his X... but his present as well and from the looks of things activity-wise and food-wise, **The King's X Restaurant** will outlive many and many another spot, sad to say. It's already lived to a ripe old age as it is.

Tom Whalley's the man at the helm here and he knows which way to swing that boom, too, depending on the weather and the trend of the tide. His fine dinner house there at 6853 La Tijera (near Centinela) has been surviving for more years than most of us care to admit to. Been there as long as this department can remember, anyway. And still going strong.

Talked with nite barman Vince O'Toole in there one nite last week and as a testimonial as to the type spot it is, he was saying that The Lakers are regular customers at the King's X and 'tis said, these guys like to eat good, so you take it from there. By the way, ever watch Vince's partner at the bar? One of the jumping bar tenders we've seen around. (that's "jumping" not "jumpiest") His name's Raymon. Only been with the King's X a short time but has proven himself invaluable to Tom and his operation. Ray came from another one of our dinner houses in the area, y'know.

Have you ever sat up in the Penthouse Lounge of the International Hotel—particularly at nite—and watched the pan shot of the streets and freeways below? Quite a fascinating sight, really. Reminds one of those miniature

auto layouts. You can also notice what a bunch of sloppy drivers there are. Line-straddlers, lane-jumpers, corner-cutters, the works. Still an interesting panorama, though.

Enjoyed a most sumptuous repast up there one nite recently and at the same time became re-acquainted with one who's got to be one of the best in the business of serving the public. He's "Reggie" the Captain in the Penthouse, a well educated, highly polished gentleman of the dining room and a credit to his craft. Here's a man that never forgets anything in the way of needs of the patron and when your food arrives at your table it's attractively displayed for a more enjoyable dinner. Believe it, this is important in the restaurant business.

We later retired to the Lounge for a small after-dinner nip and to listen to some of the most hearable and danceable music we've heard in some time. It's the Charles Amato Trio playing there nite-ly and although Charlie himself is no longer with us, having passed on a few weeks ago, they're retaining the name of the Trio as is for the time being. Surely missed Charlie but Dick Stricklin, Buz Overbeck, and Bob Williams truly play up a beautiful bunch of music. Very talented, these lads.

Can't let this go without first mentioning a guy you seldom see in our fine dineries. This one's Ruben Lindsay, a man that knows his business. How many gents room attendants have you met that didn't have his hand stuck out as you leave. Well Ruben doesn't. He even acts as though he didn't care whether you left a tip or not. That's the sign of a true artist. People like this sort of thing. And the man gives you good service. Well say, just how much service can one get in a men's room!

Lalo's doing a masterful job of barkeeping for Bill Freeman at **The Matador Restaurant** on West Pico while Kiki's on his vacation.

Had a long chat with Kiki before he left and he said "I'm going to fight the biggest bull of my life during my vacation." Now although Kiki is a former Matador himself, highly suspect the bull he'll be fighting during his 2-3 week jaunt in Mexico will be the brand all his many friends, acquaintances and relatives will be putting out down there south of the border.

Meanwhile, back at the restaurant, Bill Fremont says that beginning in March sometime, there's to be a new policy at **The Matador**. Then, in place of the six-day operation

they'll be open seven days. At present they are closed on Mondays, as many of you have no doubt discovered to your chargin.

So that's good news for you lovers of the true Spanish food. This'll probably come about when they get the new addition open just to the East of the existing building on the corner. Easy to find, **The Matador**. Just a block and a half east of the San Diego Freeway. Most accessible from just about any part of Los Angeles. And once you get there, it's well worth the trip.

Suppose it's understandable why they always call him "Mr. George" when you take into consideration his name is George Swertfager but when you just spell it out like that it doesn't seem too difficult. Anyway, George is manager of **Mario Castagnola's Lobster House** in Redondo Beach and a highly capable gent he is, too. Spent a couple of enjoyable hours down there one day last week for lunch and some conversation while watching the "harbor rise and fall" from the beautiful view-bar at this delightful beach dinner house.

As you must know, it's a 7-day a week operation at the **Lobster House** where the fabulous **Rontal Brothers Trio** is featured every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nite. And they've recently inaugurated a new policy here—that of the **Marina Cocktail Hour**. This is a daily feature from 4 'til 7 p.m. Sunday thru Friday complete with hors d'oeuvres.

Then there's "Topside" dinner dancing on Saturday nites upstairs in the beautiful **Harbor Room** which overlooks the Marina.

There's no cover charge or no minimum charge at the **Lobster House** at any time and the food is superb as is the service. And don't let the address of 665 No. Harbor Drive, King Harbor Marina lull you into a "I'll never find it" mood. It's easy to get there. Simply head down toward the Marina as though you were going boating then turn right at Harbor Drive and Byrle Ave. and you can't



AL APODACA

miss it. Looms up big and impressive on the left.

If reservations make you feel more secure, just 'phone them at 376-0983 and they'll handle everything for you.

There's a private club hereabouts known as the **Polynesian Society** and the president was at the **Tea House** one nite recently. He's Joe Keawe who hits that fine high falsetto tone you wouldn't believe. He performed there at the **Tea House** that nite with **The Stimulating Havaikis**. Hey, bet he could do a whale of a job on some of those Swiss yodeling numbers! **Ralph and Chico** joined in but believe it—they were no help! Good guys, tho! **Harry Baty** carried the bass.

This club that Joe belongs to, you may know, is quite well known for its fabulous luau and all stuff like that there. Matter of fact, seems to come to mind that **Ronnie** used him recently for one of his Hawaiian bashes.

But speaking of Luau, it's always almost a Luau any time you have dinner at **Rose and Louis Song's** attractive **Tea House**. It's Cantonese cuisine at its very best and ample portions, too.

Then for either before or after (or both if you prefer)

dinner, the cocktails **Ronnie** whips up at the intimate little cocktail bar in the rear leave nothing to be desired. Knows his business, this cat! Prices for both food and drink are right, too.

Have you checked **Sam Falla** out lately? Well now, in place of only one sax he boasts two saxes (two different sexes, however!) at his **San Franciscan Restaurant and Cocktail Lounge**.

Of course it's **Ivy "Sex on the Sax"** Black and now augmenting to the musical group of **Johnny Hoover** and the **Henchmen** is **Al Apodaca** who is no stranger to the Southland when it comes to sax tootling.

Incidentally, just how well the trip to the races went over at the **San Franciscan**, have no way of knowing at the present "hunting and pecking" as it's still Sunday and the trip was this weekend. Will find out tomorrow, however and if it was a success, **Sam'll** probably have more in the near future. Will keep you posted.

Had a call from **Jerry Babich** one day last week and he says he's got a new swingin' group in his **Zebra Room**. At least, they're new for this time around although they played here before.

They call themselves **The New Two** and they're certainly anything but new to you followers of versatile groups. It's **Ron Perry** on piano and **Jesse Jasper** on bass. Both go with the symbols.

Actually it was a "popular demand" thing that got them back after a year and a half of absence from the area and they'll be on hand Tuesday through Saturday from 9 'til 2.

The **New Two** can play just about anything you wish to hear and about any type music you want. They go with the crowd and at times have a bigger sound than a trio. Really great music.

Something else you should

not miss at the **Zebra Room** and that's those huge sandwiches. Felt slight hunger pangs one day in there so ordered a pastrami. But **WOW!** Comes out submarine style and a feast for six bits! And it's not only the Pastrami but they also feature the **Torpedo**, the regular **Submarine**, the **Sausage and the Dago Dip** and the **Barbeque Beef**, all at 75c. There's a **Meat Ball sandwich** for 70c, in case you're counting pennies!

There's a new little spot for you to try out in the **Wilmington** area first chance you get. It's **La Fonda** at 803 **Figurea** and they feature both **American** and **Mexican** dishes with specials sprinkled in throughout.

Owners **Inez** and **Arnold Mazon** opened their interesting 75-seat spot last Tuesday (that's a week ago yesterday) and even without any advertising, are amazed at the response.

Well, for one thing, it's in a fine location; as you come across town on **Anaheim** and pass under the overpass to reach the **Harbor Freeway** going downtown, there it sits, big as life and with lots of parking on the far side.

Then, after you get inside and partake of some of the cuisine, you're even more impressed. Breakfasts here have been fantastic over the past week and the luncheon trade is picking up all the time. Now let's go after that dinner trade.

While talking with **Inez** and **Arnold**, made inquiry as to just all what was in a "Menu-do" and they told us. Well, that's not quite our cup of tea but know from past experience it's a very popular dish and consists of beef tripe and hominy. Comes on the menu as a **Saturday** and **Sunday** special.

La Fonda Cafe is open daily for breakfast, luncheon, and dinner for 6 in the ayem 'til 10 at nite. Then on **Friday** and **Saturday**, they go the 24-hour route.

Via the able hands of **Chef Chico Chavez**, they can put out such specials as that combination plate at one sixty. There are nine of 'em at that price with a dime extra if you wish beef enchiladas. Then of course there's such goodies as the **grilled Spencer Steak** at three bucks all marinated with special sauce, or the regular **Spencer** at twenty-five cents less.

There's all manner of fine dining at **La Fonda** and if you wish to 'phone before you go, dial 830-4058. Or, simply stop by and fill up!



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