

# Be a Rebel

**I**F I was advising youngsters how to "get ahead" or "become a success", I could put it in just three words—"Be a rebel!"

A rebel—to my way of thinking—is someone who has the courage to voice his convictions and ideas, even though they go against the so-called accepted ideas of others.

There's a word in our vocabulary which seems to surround us, and darn near strangle us, and that word is "Conformity".

Conformity puts over the line that making a success of almost anything can best be achieved by sticking slavishly to the rules, not stepping out of line, and doing as others do.

Well I did as others did when I first stepped into show business, and I didn't do too well. As far as most of the public was concerned, I was just another pop singer. It was my manager, Larry Parnes, and my recording adviser, Dick Rowe, of Decca, who came up with the right answer, the same one I've just given you—"Be a rebel!"

My rebellion was to switch my vocal style, switch my style of song and musical backing, and switch my appearance—including my haircut and clothes.

Well, as you know, it worked, so, as far as I'm concerned, it's—"Up the rebels!" Only when you have

writes *Billy Fury*

reached your goal, can you afford to become a little more "respectable", a little more in accordance with "Conformity".

Lots of books have been written about conformity, in the past few years, and quite a few films have used it as their theme, but, while the books and films may have become commercial successes, I'm for our younger generation, if they are persuaded to toe the line too much, and so lose the spirit of adventure.

When they keep hearing that completely following in the footsteps of their elders is proof of their "loyalty", they are in danger of believing it so much that they are likely to destroy their individuality and creativeness.

Maybe a lot of people have got to the top by patiently plodding the well-worn pathways, but take a backward look at history and you'll find that those who really distinguished themselves did so by daring to be individualists and rebels.

Mind you, when I say "rebel" I'm not talking about slovenly dressed beatniks who think that long beards, exhibitionism, walking about barefoot and just plain defiance and vulgarity, is all that's needed to be "Different". That kind of "difference" they can keep.

There are, of course, the wrong kind of rebels—I was one of these myself once upon a time, and I'm not proud of the fact. That kind of rebellion can turn a boy into a juvenile delinquent or a criminal. That brand of rebellion is for fools who end up destroying themselves and bringing heartbreak to their families.

**B**UT "rebel" doesn't have to be a dirty word. In the world of pop music and records, the artist who "goes against the grain" is more often the one who succeeds.

Glenn Miller was just another orchestra leader struggling to make the grade until, dissatisfied with the run-of-the-mill sounds of other orchestras, he struggled until he achieved the fabulous Miller sound that brought his name and his kind of music, immortality.

George Shearing was a pianist playing with Cyril Stapleton's Orchestra in London's West End, until he went to America and created the Shearing musical trademark by synchronising a vibraphone with his piano, and adding rhythm.

Bill Haley and his Comets kicked off the whole



Billy signs an autograph for an admirer during location filming for "Play it Cool"



rock 'n' roll revolution; Duane Eddy did the same for guitar music; Errol Garner made his piano perform the way no piano had performed before; Ella Fitzgerald did things no one had ever done.

And, what about the stage musical revolution brought about by Rodgers and Hammerstein and their show "Oklahoma"? And what's a new dance craze such as Rock, Cha Cha, or the Twist, but a successful rebellion?

So it pays to be a little different. My manager Larry Parnes, has always impressed on me that the only valuable development, is development as an individual, and Mr. Parnes should know what he's talking about, having also established such individual performers as Tommy Steele, and Marty Wilde.

Mr. Parnes says that if you try to change an individual too much, you risk losing his personality, and are liable to destroy the most important thing about a human being, which is his essential difference from anyone else.

**A**NYONE who tries to make someone over too much and force him into an image of what we think he *should* be, rather than encourage him to develop along his own lines, is doing a dangerous thing.

Sooner or later, a person will rebel if he is poured into a mould into which he doesn't really fit.

The best way to help someone develop is to let them do it themselves, at the same time trying to show them the things they need by demonstration.

The biggest danger for any artist, or anyone, is the loss of individuality, or of becoming a rubber-stamp thinker or performer. There is no such thing as real success "the easy way".

Dick Rowe, the man who supervises my recording sessions at Decca, says its tough to be different, and it

High-kicking with the Vernon Girls who appear in Billy's new musical film





Billy Fury in action on the set for his film "Play it Cool"



is also often, a lonely thing. But, says Mr. Rowe, it is better than not being an individual, which is to be nobody at all.

Mr. Rowe was certain that if we created an individual style I would eventually come through.

For a year or two my records were much the same as any other teen-age singer's records—loud guitars and little else. Then, when Dick Rowe took over as my recording manager, he dreamed up the format which has proved so successful. The secret of his format was simply this—He said—

"Why should a beat singer always be backed by just guitars?—why not a symphony orchestra *and* guitars?"

Well, if you listen to some of my hit discs you will find that's exactly what is there—violins, violas, cello, French horns—the lot. Dick often says they remind him of the records they used to make with David Whitfield, which, you must admit, is quite a switch with a voice like mine!

Dick Rowe always used to say to me—"This is your life Billy, not someone else's. Sooner or later you are bound to discover that you cannot please all of the people. You'd better learn quick that you cannot expect *everyone* to understand what you say, sing, or do.

"The hardest thing in the world to learn to accept is the fact that many people *never* will like you, no matter how hard you try to win their admiration."

**T**HAT'S good sense from a man who has recorded dozens of the biggest recording names in the business, and has made thousands and thousands of discs, so they are words well worth remembering. I'm not likely to forget them, ever.

So, even if the going is tough, try being a bit of a rebel, that way you are more likely to succeed.

Certainly you can find some sort of general security by mimicking others and following established patterns. But, I know that both you and I can achieve far greater success, and, perhaps more importantly, self-respect, by shunning what is "usual", and having the courage to be an individualist and a rebel in deeds as well as in mind.