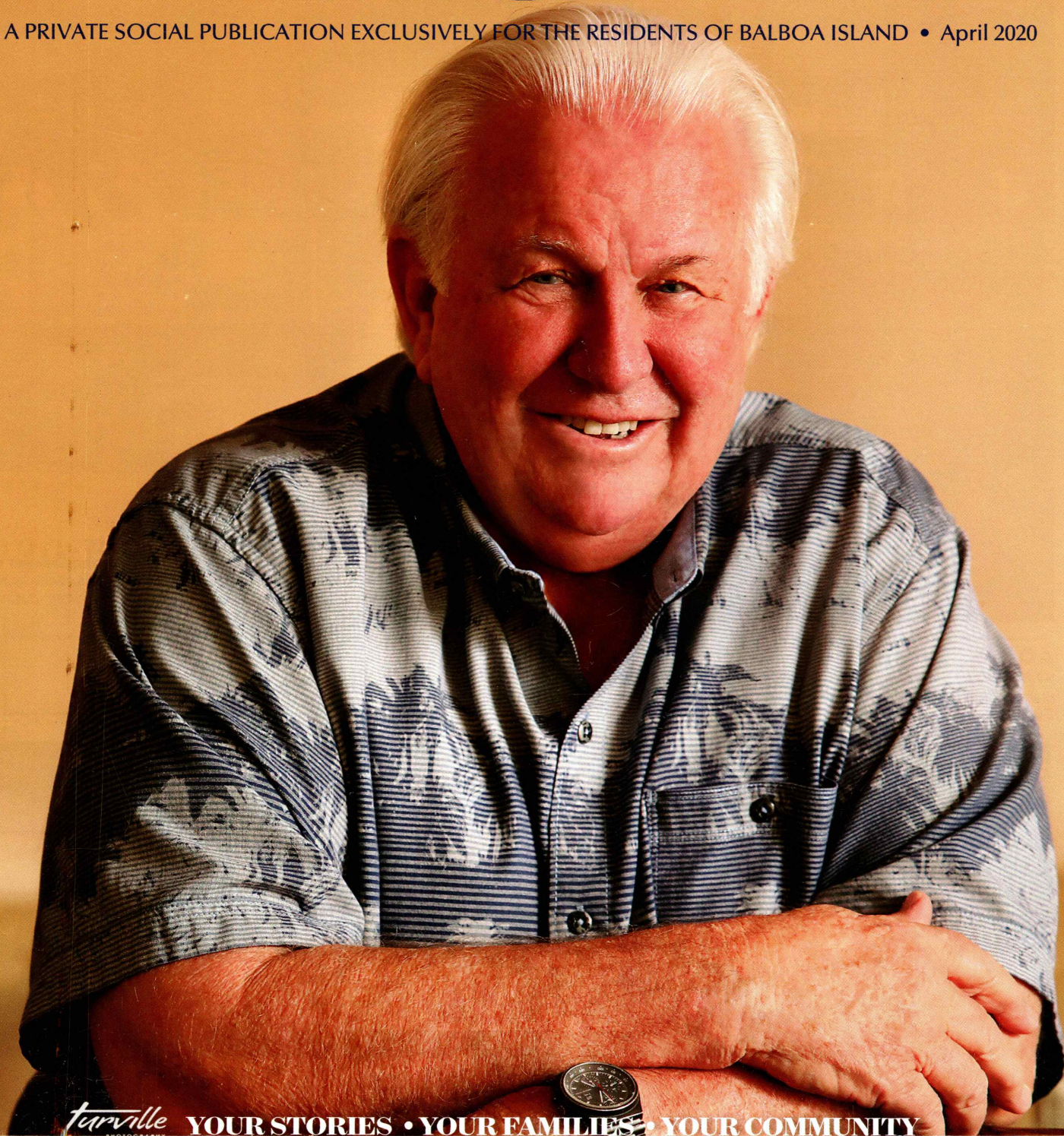


BALBOA



ISLAND
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Photograph from Michael Ochs Archives / Getty



DICK DALE AT DANCE — Dick Dale, called “The Pied Piper of Balboa,” will bring his Del-Tones to the KCHU-TV—Channel 18 Saturday Night Bandstand Dance at San Bernardino Municipal Auditorium this Saturday. Dance is third of the series.

The San Bernardino County Sun, 12 Dec 1963, pg 17



Dick Dale

The Pied Piper of Balboa



history

By Shirley Pepys - President of Balboa Island Museum - Resident Contributor

*Listen to the king of the surf guitar
Listen to the king of the surf guitar
Listen, listen to the king*

*Oh how he can pluck those strings
Oh how he makes you sing
Listen, listen to the king*

*From Balboa to Anaheim
San Bernardino to Riverside
All the kids in all L.A.
Come to hear Dick Dale play*

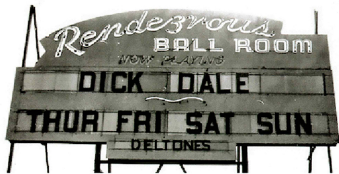
*-Dick Dale,
King of the Surf Guitar*

It was far from a sell-out crowd when Dick Dale first took the stage at the

Rendezvous Ballroom--it is reported that only 17 surfers were in the audience and that they were friends of the band. Various sources cite different dates for this maiden concert of Dale and the Del-Tones--sometime between 1957 and 1961--but there is no question about what was to become a driving force in the music of a generation. Dale, who would come to be known as the King of the Surf Guitar and pioneer of the surf music sound, would soon be playing to sell-out crowds at the renowned Balboa dance hall, breaking attendance records when up to 4,000 fans would crowd the Rendezvous every weekend. In a 1963 article published in the San Ber-

nardino County Sun, Dale was dubbed the “Pied Piper of Balboa.”

From the time it opened until fire closed its doors forever, the Rendezvous Ballroom, celebrated as one of the great dance halls of the era, was the place to gather. The Rendezvous presented the most popular music of the time, from the Big Band sounds of Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey and Stan Kenton in the ‘30s, ‘40s and ‘50s, to the surf music of the ‘60s with Dick Dale and the Del-Tones and the Beach Boys, to the unique sound of the Righteous Brothers. Orange County high school and college students packed the Rendezvous every weekend to dance



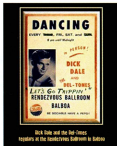
Courtesy of stunewsnewport.com



John Blair, Images of America: Southern California Surf Music, 1960-1966, pg 20



Dancers pack the Rendezvous Ballroom



the swing, the jitterbug, the Balboa Hop and the Surfer's Stomp. During Bal Week (Easter vacation) when vacationing students from all over Southern California came to Balboa Island to party, many frequented the Rendezvous to dance the night away.

In the early 1960s, surf music presented an entirely new sound. Dick Dale had a unique style, blending Lebanese folk songs he listened to as a child with the swing rhythm of the big bands and the twang of country music. He was already a seasoned musician before moving from the East Coast to Southern California, where he fell in love with surfing and the thunderous sound of ocean waves crashing against the shoreline. He developed a method of playing the guitar based on that sensation, pounding the strings rather than plucking them, with unprecedented volume. This sound, which became known as Southern California Surf Music, 1960-1966, surf rock, was primarily instrumental and heavily amplified, with a fast beat and reverberation effect. In a Los Angeles Times article on February 1, 1981, Dale said, "Part of the Dick Dale sound was the sheer volume at which we played. We had to. Our amps weren't miked so we had to blast to fill up that monstrous room."

Dale drew enormous crowds at the Rendezvous by night, while continuing to surf all day long whenever he had the chance. His surfing buddies gave him the title "King of the Surf Guitar." The story goes that at times the high tide came so close to the Ballroom that the shoes of dancers got wet, thus creating the perfect setting

for Dale's shows, which were called "stomps" and where the dance the "Surfer's Stomp" was born. His song "Miserlou" (1962) became a surf music standard. Other surf bands also graced the stage at the Rendezvous Ballroom, including the Bel-Airs ("Mr. Moto," 1961), the Surfaris ("Wipe-Out," 1962), the Chantays ("Pipeline," 1963), the Chancellors and the Lively Ones ("Surf Rider," 1963).

The Surf Rock genre, so popular in the first half of the 1960s, began to diminish in 1964, when the new sound of the British Invasion and bands like the Beatles and the Rolling Stones became an overnight sensation. Coupled with the destruction by fire of the Rendezvous Ballroom in 1966, the music that had rocked Balboa and surrounding communities took a back seat to the emerging genres of the time, including British rock bands, folk-rock songs and psychedelic music.

Historical Marker #35, placed by the Orange County Board of Supervisors on the Balboa Peninsula in 1986, reads as follows: ***Built near this site in 1928, the Rendezvous became a showcase for Big Bands, especially during "Bal Week." For 38 years, the sounds of dance music echoed from this block-long ballroom, which was destroyed by fire in 1966. The music and dancing have ended, but the memories linger on.***

Be sure to visit the Balboa Island Music and learn more about the history of Surf Music.