

For those who can't get enough of the '70s...



TELEVISION
Ray Richmond

Like a long-dormant social disease, the 1970s are back in all of their tacky glory: bell-bottoms, leotards, smiley faces... and (gasp) disco. Indeed, the incessant drone that passed for most music in the '70s

(excluding the Eagles and Bruce Springsteen and a few others) is inexplicably trendy and — go figure — red hot. It's so hot that NBC is making tonight's two-hour ode to yesterday "A '70s Celebration: The Beat Is Back" a sweepstake extravaganza.

Airing at 8 tonight, "The Beat Is Back" is a gloriously campy overview of all that was kitschy about 1970s pop culture — with a special emphasis on the sound, of course.

This two hours is proof positive that everything eventually returns and gets glorified simply by virtue of it being old. Somehow, there is a respect for nostalgia that tran-

sends actual logic.

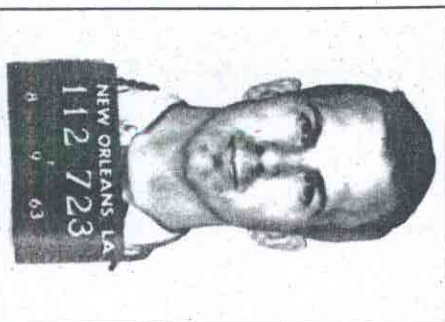
That isn't to say that tonight's special isn't a heck of a lot of fun. Baby boomers in particular will have a swell time remembering what these 1970s icons were like way back when and comparing them to what they have become (generally older, plumper and a little bit on the pathetic side).

There's KC and the Sunshine Band (remember them?), with a bloated-looking KC wearing a cap to obscure his no doubt balding pate and looking out at a TelePrompTer that's flashing "Get down tonight! Get down tonight... baby!"

Having a TelePrompTer out there is more than a little bit amusing. But considering that most of these tunes were hot 18 and 20 years ago, heck, who can blame an aging pop sensation for a little selective memory loss?

We get the Bee Gees, still remarkably tanned and trim, crooning "Jive Talkin'"; Gloria Gaynor vowing "I Will Survive"; Donna Summer still screaming about "Hot Stuff" (and still sounding good); one-hit wonder Vicki Sue Robinson doing an excited, peppy version of her smash "Turn the Beat Around," the resurgent Meat Loaf basking in nostalgic glory.

When it's all done — and "The Beat Is Back" is at least 30 minutes too long — you're grateful to be living in the 1990s. The '70s are a semi-entertaining place to visit, but you wouldn't want to live there again.



Lee Harvey Oswald
Profiled on PBS special

The Oswald enigma: So now the prevailing wisdom has shifted, and the cool people in the know tend to believe that John F. Kennedy wasn't assassinated via a conspiracy after all, but indeed was killed by Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone.

There. Isn't that a relief? It only took 30 years to get it straight.

But now that Oswald again has been fingered as the real culprit and nobody's simple patsy as we approach Monday's 30th anniversary of the assassination, the speculation renews as to just who this man was.

Which is where PBS comes in. Via its outstanding "Frontline" documentary series, it airs a fascinating (and very long) look at the

THE FACTS

- The show: "A '70s Celebration: The Beat Is Back."
- When: 8 tonight.
- Channel: KNBC (Channel 4).
- Starring: The Bee Gees, Donna Summer, Gloria Gaynor, Meat Loaf, Martin Mull, Rod Stewart, Sonny Bono, Sister Sledge, the Stylistics and Olivia Newton-John.
- Our rating: ★★
- The show: "Frontline: Who Was Lee Harvey Oswald?"
- When: 9 tonight.
- Channel: KCET (Channel 28).
- Our rating: ★★½

complex and troubled man who was Oswald.

Running a cool three hours on KCET (Channel 28), "Who Was Lee Harvey Oswald?" at 9 tonight documents Oswald's New Orleans childhood, his Marine Corps service, his controversial interest in Marxism and defection to the Soviet Union as well as why he was motivated to kill a president.

What emerges is a vivid picture of a supremely misguided, troubled and well-connected young man. Most intriguing is the knowledge that Oswald could have been acting for any of a number of clandestine political organizations in assassinating JFK or doing it strictly on his own.

The bottom line is that Oswald was a sick puppy. Perhaps that knowledge alone should be enough.