



Nixon Camelot Lot-o-Camp; Glory Wispy, But Not Music

WASHINGTON — The Nixons would like to recapture the Camelot aura that the Kennedys brought to the White House a decade ago. As a touch of King Arthur, the Nixons have added pomp and flourish to White House affairs. Yet they always manage to look, somehow, like squares at the round table. When President Kennedy outfitted the Marine band in brilliant red coats, people oohed and aahed. But when President Nixon dressed up his White House police in gaudy, Gilbert-and-Sullivan uniforms, people snickered.

The Kennedys introduced theater in the royal tradition to the White House. Their dinners were de rigueur, their soirees sparkling.

The Nixons have also tried to provide the pageantry of the royal courts at their formal parties. But their interpretation of Camelot is more like a high school production of "The Student Prince."

Just as a king of old used to enter his throne room, President Nixon's entry into the East Room for the state dinner is heralded by the blast of trumpets. The Marine buglers, with banners draped from their elongated trumpets, play a fanfare.

Regal Procession

At this signal, the President descends the grand staircase, with the First Lady on his arm, while the Marine band plays him down with processional music.

Mr. Nixon takes deliberate, measured steps, beaming benevolently in the manner of monarchs. He is a bit stiff and awkward, however, not having had as much practice as most monarchs.

As he enters the East Room, the band snaps into "Ruffles and Flourishes," followed by the traditional "Hail to the Chief."

The music, good but earsplittingly loud, fills the room. Later, when the Nixons pass from the East Room into the state dining room, crewcut military aides bedecked with medals and braids stand starchily at attention in two rows.

Dinner Guests Surrounded

Dinner guests are surrounded all evening by an impressive swirl of military uniforms. In addition to the dashing military aides, as many as half a dozen military musical units may be pressed into service to serenade the guests.

Jacqueline Kennedy started the tradition of continuous music. The Nixons also keep the music going, with no more than a few seconds between numbers, until the last guest leaves. The Drum and Bugle Corps, dressed in revolutionary costume, may tootle for awhile. They will be relieved by such groups as the Army Strolling Strings, Sea Chanters, Marine Fanfare Group, Air Force Strolling Strings, Army Chorus and Airmen of Note.

When President Nixon entertained the astronauts in Los Angeles last summer, the musicians alone filled two huge Air Force transport planes.

'While Rome Burns'

"Sometimes," one of the musicians told

this column, "I feel as if I am fiddling while Rome burns." He referred to the Pomp and Circumstance inside the White House, as contrasted with the trouble and turmoil outside.

Agreed another White House intimate: "The white-gloved Negro waiters, the garishly uniformed military aides, the red-coated orchestra in the foyer, all give a feeling of isolation from NOW."

For the Nixons, entertaining seems to be more a duty than a pleasure. Said an insider: "I have never seen the President rub elbows or mingle with his guests in an informal way. He will either sit down at a dinner table or stand in a reception line. When he gave a reception for U.N. diplomats at the Waldorf in New York City, he took up his position in the reception line as soon as he arrived. He shook hands for two hours until all the guests had passed. Then he left."

At the White House, too, the Nixons often retire early while their guests are still milling around. The President and his Lady arrive to the accompaniment of the Marine Band, which plays them up the stairs with an attention-getting march.

Mr. Nixon has done away with most of the traditional White House receptions. He has preference for formal dinners. "I think I know the reason," said one aide. "The President loves to make after-dinner speeches." The speeches are mostly of the Rotarian, mutual-admiration variety.

Despite the trumpets and the fanfare, most White House guests probably would agree that Richard Nixon's Camelot is still more Middle America than Middle England.

TURTLE SOUP LOBBY

The Green Sea Turtle has been dropped from the Interior Department's list of endangered species. This opens the way for it to be beaten into extinction by gluttons greedy for a soup tureen of the dying delicacy.

In April, Secretary Walter posed that the sea turtle and thereby banned from the list was