

INSOMNIAC HAVEN FOR 'ARTNIKS'



LOS FLAMENCOS Theodore and Maria Morea perform the Spanish dance, "Flamenco," every Tuesday and Wednesday night at the Insomniac Coffee House in Hermosa Beach. —Press Photo by Pete Michaels

Coffee House Entertains With Stage Show, Films

By Mike Callas Jr.

In 17th and 18th century England, men of letters such as Shakespeare, Swift, and Addison usually frequented coffee houses in London to discuss topics of mutual concern. They talked for hours over strong cups of brew and many times their conversations were recorded for history. Today, in 20th century Hermosa Beach, a coffee house exists that is patterned after those in London. The visitors and steady customers of the "Insomniac" are not referred to by the multitude as "men of letters" but by a common noun-adjective—"beatniks."

Having never visited an establishment of this sort, a Press photographer and myself decided to see for ourselves what a "beatnik" haven was like and to evaluate the human commodity labeled "beatnik."

As we entered the "Insomniac" we noticed original paintings and Danish posters adorning the walls of the dimly lit coffee house. As our eyes scanned the room and the faces hunched over cups of Espresso we viewed an old Charlie Chaplin film playing to the public on a screen hung over the snack-bar type coffee-making room.

After Chaplin had made us laugh with the comedy that had made him famous all over the world, we signaled for the waitress to order our blend of coffee. Leotards the Uniform As Vivian St. Denis approached us for our orders, the genial host of the "Insomniac" joined us. After the introductions we learned that Vivian's dress was called a leotard and according to Bob Hare all his waitresses wore these costumes.

of coffee; the bean having just been ground to a fine powder. For several minutes your coffee has received the steam treatment so that all the aroma cannot escape.

"Artniks" Not "Beatniks" Puffing away on a Turkish cigarette which we purchased at a tobacco counter featuring cigarettes imported from every corner of the globe, we drank our Espresso slowly and resumed our interview of owner Bob Hare.

In just two minutes we learned that we were not visitors to a "beatnik" haven but rather one preferring to call themselves "artniks." A term reserved only for customers of the "Insomniac." This, Hare explained, "means that we are of the active sort, coming from the profession-

al ranks usually and devotees of the arts." Not knowing any better we decided to accept Hare's explanation.

Before we could get any further with our introduction to "artniks," the lights were turned out and a spotlight over the snack bar on a make-shift stage told us that the show was about to begin. The old silent films shown earlier in the evening would be resumed after the flamenco dance.

As we watched the group calling themselves, "Los Flamencos," we knew instantly that we had seen them perform on Dinah Shore's "Chevy Show" before Christmas. Theodore and Maria Morea, along with guitarist Antonio Brandt, put on a forty-five minute show for the "artniks"

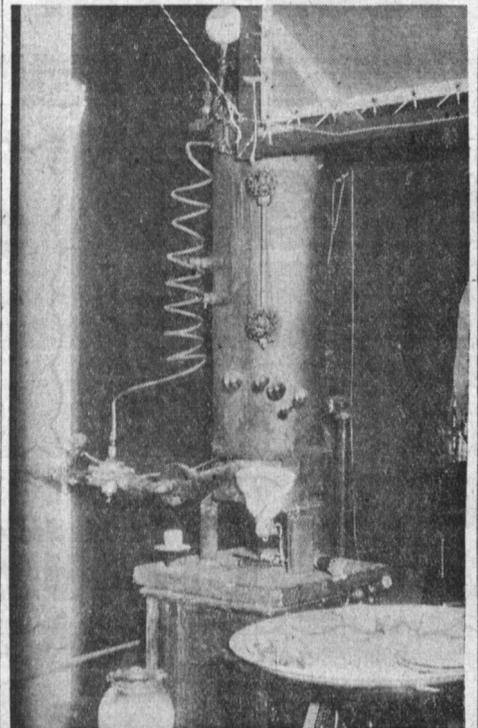
about them that had us all gasping with braves. Even Las Vegas would be proud to bill a show as great as the "Los Flamencos." So great was their interpretation of the Spanish Dance. Guitar solo's by Brandt also proved successful to the large Tuesday audience.

"How do you manage to get an act as good as this one," we queried Hare.

Our host smiled and explained that the group was billed at the "Insomniac" every Tuesday and Wednesday and was keeping with his coffee house's custom to bring in unusual as well as good talent to perform regardless of the cost.

Sneaking in a bit of envy we asked Bob how he could afford such talent. "Believe it or not we grossed, along with the book store next door, over \$100,000 in our first year of operation," Hare replied.

The book store referred to by Bob is also owned by the 29 year old owner of the "Insomniac" and according to Hare is successful because of its large selection — over 9,000 titles — and the hours of its operation. "We keep the store open from 7 p.m. to 4 a.m., the same as the coffee house and we find people who read seldom get a chance to select a choice from book stores usually open for business during conventional hours," Hare stated. (Continued on Page C-5)



OLD-FASHIONED BOILER is used by the Insomniac to produce steaming hot water used to make up individual orders of Espresso coffee. Contraption was installed by owner Bob Hare. —Press Photo by Pete Michaels



LEOTARD DRESSED waitresses, left to right, Sandy Loughbom and Vivian St. Denis serve "artniks" with their choice of coffee at the Insomniac every night but Monday.

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