

Superstar

by BRIAN LOCKHART

She had a beautiful three-octave contralto voice that was easily recognizable and well-suited to the style of music she performed.

Karen Carpenter was the female half of the '70s pop duo, The Carpenters, who, along with her brother Richard, charted several top hits of that era.

Richard was the genius behind the music. He wrote and arranged the tunes they recorded and performed.

Karen thought of herself as a drummer first, unusual for a woman at the time, but she was talented with the sticks and played drums on all of their albums.

When she tried singing, it was apparent to everyone who heard her that she had a natural ability to sing and had a beautiful voice. She was encouraged to take a step out from behind the drums to be the main focus of the band.

The Carpenters became Karen and the 'other guy.'

The Carpenters had a squeaky-clean image, and their manager and those around them promoted this image of the all-American, fresh-faced, pop duo.

Their music was hard to define. In an era of metal bands, glam bands, and Alice Cooper, The Carpenters performed ballads with sappy themes and an instrumental background.

I had a friend who came from a rather strict religious family. No pop music, especially rock music, was allowed in the home.

However, my friend's parents allowed her to have The Carpenters' albums and their easy listening sound.

That's how goody two-shoes their image was.

The thing about The Carpenters during that era was that no one would admit they liked The Carpenters. No one would admit they owned a Carpenters album.

The pop duo sold millions of records to a fan base that would not admit they were fans.

There was a rumour that a McDonald's restaurant was going to be built near where I live. At first, a lot of people seemed happy about that.

However, when a person posted a query on the town's Facebook page asking when the restaurant was supposed to arrive, there were nothing but negative comments.

Everything from 'I would never eat there,' to 'we don't need that kind of restaurant here,' was posted in reply.

Did you ever notice that no one admits they like going to McDonald's?

Yet it's probably the largest restaurant chain in the world and still expanding, so someone is buying Big Macs and Quarter Pounders.

Prior to having a Walmart nearby, I was at a dinner with a local business group when the topic of Walmart coming to town was

brought up.

One woman in particular expressed her dismay at having a Walmart in town.

'I would never go to a Walmart,' she said, opining that she just couldn't visit that type of store.

A few months after the store opened, I visited and passed an aisle, where, sure enough, I saw that same woman perusing the shelves.

I thought of going up to her to say 'hello', but decided not to embarrass her when she was shopping incognito in a store she doesn't like.

No one ever admitted they bought their clothes at K-Mart. Even though that retailer is long gone, it was at one time a huge business.

But no one would ever admit to shopping there.

You never heard anyone say, 'Hey Bob, nice shirt,' with the reply, 'Thanks, I got it at K-Mart!'

I was at a private dinner one holiday, and as we sat down to eat, the host's mother mentioned the place settings. She then mentioned loudly that her daughter had bought all the dishes at Dollarama.

The host was mortified that her guests knew they were using plates that cost \$1. Although they looked nice, there was nothing wrong with them.

No one ever admits they bought anything at a Dollarama, or any other dollar store, yet every time I'm there, the store is busy.

I'm not sure why many people are reluctant to admit they like a certain food or shop at a particular store. Are they trying to impress others by implying they bought that new sofa at a high-end furniture store when they actually purchased it on layaway at a 'Furniture is Us' discount store?

I freely admit I like both a Quarter Pounder and a Big Mac.

I just bought a big screen TV from Walmart, and I'm a regular shopper at Dollarama.

And yes, I do have one old Carpenters album.

You can't beat Karen singing Superstar.