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## LAPD Concert Band

BY MICHAEL ELLINGTON

What do "Perry Mason," "Mr. Spock," and "Adam-12" have in common? Stay tuned.

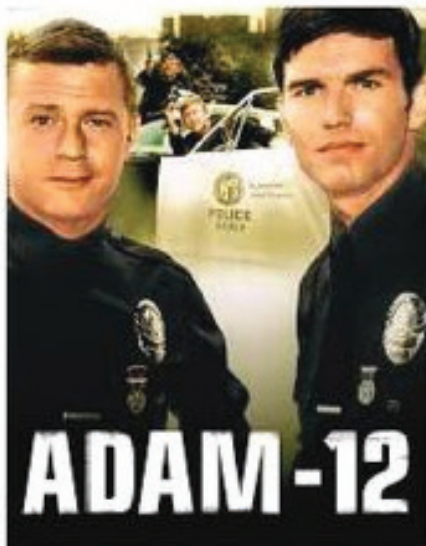
In 1914, the city of Los Angeles formed the Los Angeles Police Concert Band as the official band of L.A.

In its original incarnation, the Band was composed of full-time L.A. police officers. That would change, but first a

bit more history. This Band has undeniable roots in Hollywood entertainment. "Perry Mason," starring Raymond Burr, was a very popular television series. The attorney/detective not only solved cases, but was known, as IMDB puts it, "for defending the indefensible." Back in the early '50s, the Los Angeles Police Concert Band's leader was none other than Raymond's younger brother, James Edmond Burr. Their

mother, Minerva, had been a pianist and music teacher.

Today, the Band's executive director is retired LAPD Sergeant Jim Starr. His involvement with the Band came at the direction of former LAPD Chief Ed Davis. The Chief was concerned that the Department have as positive and accurate an image as possible. To that end, when the TV show "Adam-12" was created, he served as technical advisor. In addition, the Chief all but created the persona of "the Singing Cop" for Starr. Starr's



"Singing Cop" duties included community relations with local schools—taking his guitar and singing to show another side of a police officer. Starr remembers: "I was approached by the conductor of the LAPD Concert Band in 1973 to perform at the Hollywood Bowl for the 'Cops and Pops' concert. The Band was all sworn officers, and because Chief Davis appointed me 'the Singing Cop,' it was a natural fit. I had also been doing some TV work for Chief Davis."

Now here's a bit of trivia and a connection not many know. Gene Roddenberry, creator of "Star Trek," followed in his father's footsteps and became an LAPD officer. He moonlighted as a television writer. He cut his teeth writing for a variety of TV series including "Have Gun Will Travel" and "Highway Patrol," creating "The Lieutenant," and finally, hosting a "Trek"-themed series. Roddenberry's writing brought him to the attention of then-Chief William Parker. Because the Chief liked Roddenberry's way with words, Roddenberry shortly became Chief Parker's speechwriter. What isn't widely known is that the "Star Trek" character Mr. Spock

is modeled on Parker. Roddenberry admired the Chief's progressive ideas, intellectual curiosity and innovative approach to modern policing. He imbued his half-human, half-Vulcan character with some of those same qualities.

In 1978, Proposition 13 sent ripples through the Band. Police officers who had been heavily involved with rehearsals and a full performance schedule had to devote their time to patrol duties and return to the streets. As a result, the Concert Band was disbanded. Through a series of events, the Band was reorganized as an all-volunteer group. Gene Roddenberry and theater owner Bob Ahmanson spearheaded that effort. Sgt. Jim Starr, teaching at



Raymond Burr and his younger brother, James.



the Police Academy at the time, was deemed the perfect choice to oversee the Band, and it became part of his responsibilities, which it remains to this day.

Starr is looking forward to resuming the Band's active performance schedule. Even in retirement, he enjoys "the privilege of being around the most talented musicians in the world, while representing the greatest police department, as well."

For more information about the Band, see our website at [www.lasown.com](http://www.lasown.com) and contact Jim Starr, executive director: [snccop@aol.com](mailto:snccop@aol.com). For greatly appreciated donations, please go to [www.lapolicefoundation.org](http://www.lapolicefoundation.org), and in the "Comments" box, put "for the Band." ♦



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