

Fans Protest Soul Singer's Anthem Version

DETROIT, Oct. 7 (AP)—A blind Puerto Rican soul-music singer now living in Newport Beach, Calif., started a storm of protests when he sang the National Anthem before the fifth game of the World Series between the St. Louis Cardinals and the Detroit Tigers today.

Twenty-three-year-old José Feliciano, whose rendition of the anthem differed greatly from its usual formal strains, was booed by many in the crowd of 53,634.

His rendition was done in a slower beat, similar to a blend between soul and folk singing styles. He accompanied himself on the guitar.

The performance caused consternation and criticism among television viewers throughout the nation. Newspapers and radio and television stations were flooded with calls. A newspaper in St. Petersburg, Fla., said it was overwhelmed by calls from persons protesting vehemently about the singing.

A spokesman for the National Broadcasting Company in New York, which televised the game, said that both New York and Hollywood, Calif., network stations also received a rash of calls from irate viewers. The New York office received 400 calls.

N.B.C. noted that Feliciano was hired by the Detroit Tigers and a spokesman for the network added, "We just covered it, that's all."

Although Feliciano declined to label his version of the National Anthem, he said it reflected, "the way I feel."

"I just do my thing—what I feel," said Feliciano, seated behind first base with his seeing-eye dog, Trudy, and his wife, Hilda.

"I was a little scared when I was asked to sing the anthem," Feliciano said. "I was afraid people would misconstrue it and say I'm making fun of it. But I'm not. It's the way I feel."

Feliciano has been singing for six years. He was invited to sing the anthem by Ernie Harwell, the Tigers' play-by-play broadcaster who also writes music.

"I picked him because he's



Associated Press
 José Feliciano, blind Puerto Rican singer, singing his version of National Anthem in Detroit yesterday. The rendition was part of ceremonies that preceded fifth Series game.

one of the outstanding singers in America today," Harwell said. "I had heard from people in music whose opinion I respect that he had an interesting version of the National Anthem."

Explaining how he devised his version of the anthem, Feliciano, blind since birth, said:

"America is young now, and I thought maybe the anthem could be revived now. This country has given me many opportunities. I owe everything I have to this country. I wanted to contribute something to this country, express my gratification for what it has done for me."

Feliciano has recorded such popular hits as "Light My Fire" and "High Heeled Sneakers." He left in the fifth inning to return to Las Vegas, Nev., where he is currently appearing.

Tony Kubek, a television broadcaster and former shortstop with the New York Yankees, said he liked Feliciano's rendition.

"I think he did one heckuva job," said Kubek. "I've seen him before and he's one of the top folk guitarists in the country. I feel the youth of America has to be served and this is the type of music they want."

Many others in Tiger

Stadium did not like the rendition.

"I thought he was very good," said Michael Jordan, a fan from Boston. "It's hard to say why you like it, but it seems to bring out a little more than the regular versions."

"I'm young enough to understand it, but I think it stunk," said Joe Oyler of Marion, Ind., the brother of Ray Oyler, a Tiger infielder. "It was nonpatriotic."

"It was a disgrace, an insult," said Mrs. Arlene Raicevich of Detroit. "I'm going to write to my Senator about it."