The Cash Box, Music

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The Rise of Syd Nathan and King Records Delineated in Revere Copper House Organ As It Tells the Part Copper Plays in the Manufacture of Records

A recent copy of the "Revere Patriot", house organ of the Revere Copper and Brass Inc., contained an article on the manufacture of records, and the use of copper therein. Because the problems that arise and the plants that develop are of interest to all in the music field, we are reprinting the story as it appeared in the "Revere Patriot".

Once upon a time there were no disc-jockeys and regular radio stations really lived in the hills and the blues had not yet been born. Music came from the reed-organ in the sodden opened parlor or from Uncle Charlie's mouth. Those who sought more wicked sounds could put a nickel in the pianola (automatic piano to the newer generation) down at the drugstore or soda fountain. The in the latter part of the last century, came talking machines, gramophones or graphaphones, whichever you want to call them. As has been the case with almost every invention in history, the coming of these machines opened up new jobs and even new industries. The development of the phonograph and the records have helped to provide more employment for Revere people.

As phonographs and records became a part of the American way of life; and as a newer development, radio, began to make use of them, certain picturesque slang expressions began to be applied to them. "Juke boxes" replaced the old automatic player piano and records became "dies", "sides", and "platters". And from the use of Revere copper in the making of the dies, or "stampers", used in making records comes the title of our story.

A dozen years or so ago, there lived in Revere a man who had a name for good business and appreciation of the American system of free competitive enterprise. He had established himself in his own business of wholesaling small radios. His name was, and still is, Sidney Nathan, but he is no longer in the wholesale radio business. It is the president of another business he founded, King Records, Inc., a company which uses Revere Copper in a most interesting way, Royal Plastics Manufacturing Division of King Records, Inc., under the direction of President Howard Kessel, makes recordings and stamp records for phonographs and juke boxes. A vital part of the process involves a plating operation centering around Revere anode copper.

Before the records can actually be stamped, there are dozens of problems that must be met and solved. We, sometimes think the copper, brass and aluminum business is complicated, but it's nothing compared to the record business. One of the major reasons that this is true is because we know our customers are going to buy what we make pretty largely be-fore we make it. But when a new rec-ord is made nobody knows whether the public will buy it or not; or if they do

buoy it how many will be sold. It seems that there is a difference in songs. Some sound good and people will listen as long as it's free but wouldn't spend a nickel to have it in their homes. Other songs seem to grow on people and are still selling after many pressings.

Though it's a bit aside from our story, the sources of recorded music is quite interesting. Before the public heard a song it has to be written and published. To be sure of a source of new music, King Records has its own publishing houses, and has an interest in several others all over the country, and are always looking for original songs by amateur and professional writers. The cream of the crop of these publishing houses is then com-

performers. Only an engineer could understand a more complete descrip-

tion of the equipment so we'll pass that.

However, it isn't always practical to transport the musicians or singers desiring from wherever they may be to Cincinnati. In cases where a local name band for instance, is wanted, but is on tour, arrangements are made to hire the facilities of the nearest rec-

ording studio.

It is the practice at King Records to record the actual "sessions" on tape, rather than on a master record. It is possible to edit a tape and take out any "fou" spots or other undesirable sections of the session. When this has been done, the song is transferred to the master record, then Royal Plastics

pound section has been preparing the "biscuits" from which the records are made. These biscuits, pictured elsewhere alongside a press, may be either plastic or shellac base material. They are pre-heated, folded up and placed in the press until they are close, it carries a heat of about 300 degrees. The biscuit flows in the die to the size and shape of the record and after a proper interval, the press closes completely forming the grooves on the record.

A cooling process starts immediately and as the temperature of the die falls to about 180 degrees the operation is complete and the record can be removed. The pressing cycle takes about 30 seconds, which allows each press to produce about 800 records a day. Royal Plastics has some forty presses in operation at any one time.

Some of the details have been left out of course, but we will give you the feel of a hurry to get back to Sidney Na-

than and more news of King Records... including how Nathan made the jump from wholesaling radios to pro-

ducing records.

It seems he knew a juke box oper-

ator who owed him $6. Unable to re-
pay Nathan, the operator offered him 300 used records, Nathan, put a sign in his store window offering the rec-

ords for sale at 10c ea. The first after-

noon he sold 180 records and from then on he was in the record business.

Records were hard to get during the last war, Nathan conceived the idea of getting some hillbilly singers to-

gether, cutting some records and get-
ing someone to press them for him. Material shortages were a terrific handicap and the whole process of hir-

ing the pressing done so costly, that he finally decided to set up a little plant of his own with one or two presses. From that start grew King a capacity to rank among the top ten record producers in the country.

But the record is not yet ready to be shipped. Samples have been taken at factory and test, run and played in sound-proofed test-

ing booths to make sure that the stampers have stayed in good condi-

tion and not broken down anywhere that would impair the sound in the grooves. Then there is a final visual inspection and wiping before the rec-

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