

The Rise of Syd Nathan and King Records Detailed 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 Company, contained an article on the manufacture of records, and the use of copper therein. Because the problems that arise and the planning that goes into making a record are of interest to all in the music field, we are reprinting the story as it appeared in the "Revere Patriot".

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Once upon a time there were no disc jockeys and no juke boxes. Hillbillies really lived in the hills and the blues had not yet been born. Music came from the reed-organ in the seldom opened parlor or from Uncle Charlie's mandolin. Those bolder ones who sought more wicked sounds could put a nickel in the pianola (automatic piano to the newer generation) down at the village soda fountain. Then, 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 its accessories has even made 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 "discs," "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 Cincinnati, Ohio, a man who understood and appreciated 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. He 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, make 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 simple as ABC 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 before we make it. But when a new record is made nobody knows whether the public will buy it or not; or if they do

buy 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 hears 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 both amateur and professional writers. The cream of the crop of these publishing houses is then con-

performers. Only an engineer could understand a more complete description of the equipment so we'll pass that.

However, it isn't always practical to transport the musicians or singers desired from wherever they may be to Cincinnati. In cases where a big name band for instance, is wanted, but is on tour, arrangements are made to hire the facilities of the nearest recording 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 "sour" 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 heated dies. As the die partially closes, 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 which gives them a capacity to rank among the top ten record producers in the country.

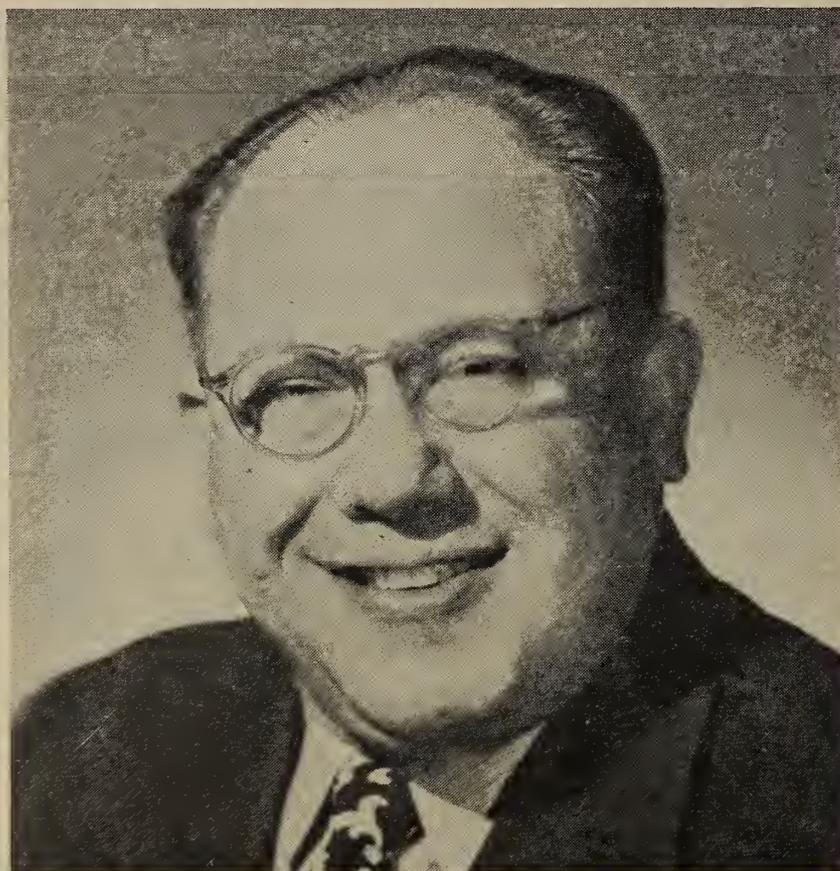
But the record is not yet ready to be shipped. Samples have been taken at frequent intervals throughout the run and played in sound-proofed testing booths to make sure that the stampers have stayed in good condition and not broken down anywhere that would cause imperfections in the grooves. Then there is a final visual inspection and wiping before the records are packed for shipment.

Some of the details have been left out of course, but we are in somewhat of a hurry to get back to Sidney Nathan and more news of King Records . . . including how Nathan made the jump from wholesaling radios to producing records.

It seems he knew a juke box operator who owed him \$6. Unable to repay Nathan, the operator offered him 300 used records. Nathan, put a sign in his store window offering the records for sale at 10c ea. The first afternoon 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 together, cutting some records and getting someone to press them for him. Material shortages were a terrific handicap and the whole process of hiring 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 Records Inc., and its Royal Plastics Manufacturing Division, now among the top ten producers of records in America.

Royal Plastics under President Howard Kessel, has been a loyal Revere customer. By furnishing them good material and doing our best to keep our delivery promises, we can show our appreciation of that loyalty which helps to furnish added employment for Revere people.



SYDNEY NATHAN

sidered for recording purposes. And of course there are times when it seems profitable to revive old songs and to remake some of the old "standards". In any event, when a song has been decided upon, the question of the talent to be used, and the place where the recording "session" is to take place arises.

King Records has its own scientifically designed and beautifully arranged studios right at its plant in Cincinnati. The control room is completely equipped with the finest and most modern devices and is staffed with competent recording engineers with many years of experience. The control panel handles the output from five microphones and such other effects as filter, echo and so forth. Direct talk-back communication between studio and control room coordinates the efforts of producers, engineers and

Manufacturing Division is ready to take over. And Revere is about ready to step into the picture a bit.

The so-called master record is first sprayed with a silver solution to improve the plating operation by protecting the record. It is then put in a plating tank charged with Revere copper anodes. The copper platter that results from this operation receives a suitable dressing and is then used to make the "mother" platter. From the "mother" are made the "stampers" or dies from which the records are actually pressed. Plating plays a big part all through the process, and the quality of our anodes must be good to insure the best possible records.

The stampers are then set up in the book-type dies, placed in the press in a manner which permits the pressing of both sides of the record at once. In the meantime, Royal Plastics com-