

Sid Nathan's Open Letter To Trade

NEW YORK — Sydney Nathan, president of King Records, Cincinnati, last week sent a letter to the trade in which he expounded his views on 'why the soft singles market.' Reprinted below is Nathan's letter.

"Let's all let our hair down, if not on everything, at least on one thing—the record business today is in a precarious position. Records any company brings out today, which to me are far superior to those of two or three years ago, are not selling. Sales are off—way off. Some of the larger one-stops tell me they find their sales off as much as 70%!

"Has anyone ever stopped to think why the record business has fallen to such depths? Believe me, the whole thing has boomeranged. The house has fallen in. Why . . . because the dealers, the one-stops, the manufacturers, have all gone hog wild on LPs. It is wonderful and fine to make a lot of LPs and we admit that we make our share, too, as we have some 270 LPs on the market today.

"However, the single record business is the backbone of our entire record business and the larger dealers, who, we have long known from experience, account for 80% of the record sales, no longer display any 45s, any singles. They have some and probably have a good stock of the hits and near-hits, but you cannot find them. A customer has to walk in and ask for them.

"This reminds me of a simile that I have used many times wherein I say that if I make a beautiful Cadillac (regardless of the price) and hide it, then make a Chevrolet and promote and display it, I will sell only the Chevrolet and very, very few Cadillacs. However, if I were to make Chevrolets and also Cadillacs and display and promote both of them, then I would sell my share of each.

"The dealer is doing himself a grave injustice (which was caused by the manufacturer) and may find himself in a position where eventually, he will have to go out of the record business, if he does not realize and if the record business does not make him see that he must promote and sell and push singles. He must do it with the same enthusiasm that he has in selling LPs. Too many dealers figure 'Why sell a single on which I make 35¢ to 50¢ when, at the same time, I could sell an LP and make \$1.00 or \$1.50 or more?'

"Well, you and I know this is not true, that there is a definite market for singles, providing someone will realize it in time. There is just as much market for singles as for the Rambler automobile. If you will read the June issue of 'Readers' Digest,' you will find that the Rambler has zoomed from 1.2 sales to approximately 6.3 sales. This is the reason why the Big Three are going to make small cars. They are hurting and hurting bad.

"We in the record business are also hurting and hurting bad, for the reason that the manufacturer and the dealer are doing nothing to promote and sell and push 45s. Woe be the day that they will have to reckon with themselves and say, 'I wish I had been alerted to the importance of the little 45s', which are, and I say it again, the backbone of the record business and without it we shall perish.

"This is a sickness, and unless it is quickly changed, it will destroy the entire record industry. The people who are responsible for the newness

and the crudeness in the record business today cannot live with 45s being promoted as little as they are now.

"Singles built the record business, singles keep the record business going. Singles are the long profit.

"Without singles, the record industry cannot sustain itself . . . because, it is from the singles that we create the excitement and the new stars that make it possible to produce and market package merchandise.

"It is the rare exception, where a new star has been born or a lot of excitement has been created from an album. Sure, there have been several cases—but at that, not too many—where an artist has been released first on albums and then released on singles when one particular track in the album starts to take and makes a little noise. However, in almost every case where this has been true, the artist did not get hot, nor did the album really get big until the single, which had been lifted from the album, started to move and got big. For example, look at Julie London and 'Cry Me A River' and most recently, Martin Denny with 'Quiet Village'.

"It is our contention that we in the record business cannot afford to lose sight of the primary aspect of all show business—and the record business is show business—you must create new talent and new stars. Without the new stars coming up we cannot hope to sustain our current growth pattern. Nor can we continue to make record buyers out of the youngsters at a lower and lower age. It is the up and coming new artists, who in their own right become the stars of tomorrow, which is the future of the business. Most all the biggest and consistent sellers in albums must have singles to get the needed exposure and the push and keep looking for a 'big one', for only in this way will they continue to sell albums.

"We, too, feel that the big single brings people into the stores and once they come in to buy 'the' single, they will be subject to all the merchandising, promotion, impact and impulse selling that we can throw at them. But—until the buyer walks into the store or into the record department we have no chance to even expose him to our merchandise. It has been our experience over the years that when there is not at least one really big record single going, the entire business falls off, and the only thing that seems to bring business up fast is to get one or more 'hot' singles moving. Dealer after dealer after dealer tells us this. Yet, they say, 'We need singles to get the people into the stores', but they do not merchandise singles or even stock most of them until many sales are lost because of no product on the shelves. Most dealers hide their singles off in a corner or in the back of the store and make the customer look for them. If a record company sends out streamers and promotion material on singles or a new artist, it hits the trash can instead of hitting the windows. This is the reason most of the companies today have cut way back on 'point of sale' merchandising aids for singles.

"We say the only way we can really get excitement and create new stars for our industry is to bring out new and good singles and get proper store exposure, and you, the dealer, must also do his part," concluded Nathan.



London Lowdown and England's

Top 30 Records

"The Battle of New Orleans" is on, and it looks as though Lonnie Donegan's recording is winning hands down, having jumped in from nowhere to No. 7 slot this week. Anthony Newley and Lloyd Price are still fighting the "Personality" battle, both doing very very well with the edge slightly to Mr. Newley.

Although rumours have it that Eddie Fisher may record whilst in Britain nothing definite has been settled, not even final dates for Television appearances.

Most of the TV summer replacements are now on and the last of the Como shows bowed off the BBC screens last Friday with the promise of a return in the fall.

Possibility of Sammy Davis starring in the musical "Free and Easy" in London in January.

Comedian Benny Hill stars with Shani Wallis in a revue called "Fine Fettle" opening August 6th at London's Palace Theatre.

A new capture on the English Philips label, Joanne Scoon, has cut her first title "Constantly".

French music business very sad at the passing of writer/composer Boris Vien who has written some of the most successful songs of recent years, including the translation of "Gigi". He was about to be commissioned by Lerner and Loewe to translate "My Fair Lady."

Josephine Baker now starring at the Olympia Theatre, Paris, has a hit on her hands, with S.R.O. notices every night. RCA in France have cut an album with Josephine for release very shortly.

Belgian seaside resorts featuring U.S. talent during July and August including Paul Anka, Delta Rhythm Boys, Deep River Boys: also Edith Piaf recently returned from the United States with new heart throb artist, Doug Davies.

Louis Armstrong recovering in Italy after a serious bout of pneumonia.

At recent luncheon in Paris given by the Decca and RCA group, were Renata Tebaldi, Van Cliburn, Josephine Baker, as well as several ministers and notabilities.

Petula Clark shortly to record more titles in French. Gal proving very popular over there.

Printers Strike now hitting several Recording Companies forcing delay on delivery of albums due to jackets being unobtainable.

Stereo singles slowly creeping into European markets with the introduction of Stereo Juke Boxes.

"New Musical Express" Best Selling Records in Britain (Week ending Saturday, June 27th, 1959)

Last Week	This Week	Record Title	Label
2	1	Dream Lover—Bobby Darin (London)	London
1	2	Roulette—Russ Conway (Columbia)	Columbia
4	3	A Teenager In Love—Marty Wilde (Philips)	Philips
7	4	Battle Of New Orleans—Lonnie Donegan (Pye)	Pye
3	5	A Fool Such As I/I Need Your Love Tonight—Elvis Presley (RCA)	RCA
13	6	Personality—Anthony Newley (Decca)	Decca
5	7	I've Waited So Long—Anthony Newley (Decca)	Decca
6	8	Side Saddle—Russ Conway (Columbia)	Columbia
9	9	It's Late—Ricky Nelson (London)	London
10	10	Personality—Lloyd Price (HMV)	HMV
12	11	May You Always—Joan Regan (HMV)	HMV
8	12	It Doesn't Matter Anymore—Buddy Holly (Coral)	Coral
19	13	I Go Ape—Neil Sedaka (RCA)	RCA
11	14	Peter Gunn—Duane Eddy (London)	London
14	14	Goodbye, Jimmy, Goodbye—Ruby Murray (Columbia)	Columbia
21	16	Poor Jenny—Everly Brothers (London)	London
15	17	Guitar Boogie Shuffle—Bert Weedon (Top Rank)	Top Rank
23	18	Battle Of New Orleans—Johnny Horton (Philips)	Philips
29	19	For A Penny—Pat Boone (London)	London
20	20	Three Stars—Ruby Wright (Parlophone)	Parlophone
16	21	A Teenager In Love—Craig Douglas (Top Rank)	Top Rank
17	22	Never Be Anyone Else But You—Ricky Nelson (London)	London
22	22	Petite Fleur—Chris Barber (Pye)	Pye
30	24	Donna—Marty Wilde (Philips)	Philips
24	25	May You Always—McGuire Sisters (Coral)	Coral
27	26	Kansas City—Little Richard (London)	London
—	27	Take A Message To Mary—Everly Brothers (London)	London
—	28	Lipstick On Your Collar—Connie Francis (MGM)	MGM
18	28	Mean Streak—Cliff Richard (Columbia)	Columbia
25	30	A Teenager In Love—Dion and the Belmonts (London)	London

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