

# Great Britain - 1969 In Review

1969 has been a year of two definite but not yet overwhelming trends in British pop music. One is the progressive, underground or heavy movement, and the other is reggae, formerly known as blue beat and ska, with Caribbean antecedence.

The previous year was amorphous in terms of trends and the British industry has welcomed the two newcomers with some formidable activity. Specialist underground labels like Harvest, Vertigo, Threshold and Straight have come into being, and there is a considerable amount of progressive repertoire being recorded or picked up on leasing deals for established labels virtually everywhere. Reggae has proved profitable for smaller outfits like Island and its associates, and cornered enough chart action to encourage a giant like EMI to move into the same market at the time of writing. Its most obvious appeal is exerted in the West Indian immigrant locations, but records by artistes like Desmond Dekker, Max Romeo, and the Upsetters have sold in quantities that prove this essentially dancing music with simplified beat and melody is reaching a wider and receptive audience. The Beatles remain the legendary moneyspinners they have been for the past five years, and their "Abbey Road" album sales proved their continued potency, unaffected by John Lennon's eccentricities and lurid rumors alleging that Paul McCartney has been a zombie for years. The Rolling Stones have been equally effective during the year if less active. Otherwise the group scene spotlight has swung appreciably from the teenybopper and bubblegum variety to the progressive outfits, which cover a broad range of activity from the highly articulate Moody Blues to the solo and group performers in the contemporary folk field. The 25th anniversary of Glenn Miller's demise re-

vealed a large latent interest in his music and 1970 could see the big band return to prominence in some form or other, particularly as the progressive groups are increasingly augmenting their line-up for their recording.

The paucity of exposure for records and new artists remains a thorny problem for the music business. The present administration is firmly set against any commercial radio being introduced, and appears to be collaborating with the BBC in pre-empting the prospects of such stations by hurriedly increasing the number of local radio stations operated on public money by the BBC. Roman O'Rahilly's projected airborne Caroline TV pirate still has a question mark over it in the shape of the Marine Broadcasting (Offences) Act.

Warner-Reprise chief Ian Ralfini expressed satisfaction with the year from that company's point of view and the market generally. "Everybody is much more aggressive in their promotion and marketing methods nowadays" he told Cash Box. "The concentration is on LPs, and that concentration will become even stronger in 1970". Warner-Reprise realises the difficulty of obtaining exposure as much as any company and intends combating it by bringing over hit artists from the States as often as possible and promoting concerts and fixing TV dates to support their record repertoire.

From the publishing point of view, Southern Music's Bob Kingston reflected that sector's consensus of opinion by rating 1969 as "an average sort of year". "It's been neither down nor up. The hit parade has had a much more varied content, and is wide open these days. Anything can go it's good enough, although the problems of exposure haven't got any better. There's been a further growth

and development of the smaller recording companies, and we at Southern are very pleased we launched Spark Records when we did."

Statistics indicate that the single disk continues its steady decline, and the LP soars upward in sales, particularly the budget productions costing less than £1. 1970 should see a continuation of the slow but sure expansion in the tape cartridge and music-cassette market.

Now for a look at the year's events month by month as they happened.

## JANUARY

John Lennon and Yoko Ono's "Two Virgins" album suffers stormy passage. EMI refuse to distribute the Apple album not only because of the couple's nude photographs but also because of content. World Record Club re-organised into three divisions and Colin Hadley of EMI takes over control. Radio Luxembourg begins 'live' policy from 19.30 to midnight each evening. Morgan Records launch Blue-Town series. EMI intensify efforts to secure control of Associated British Picture Corporation. Douglas Muggerridge named controller of BBC's Radio 2 programmes in succession to Robin Scott — man responsible for the 'new look' in BBC radio. Jimmy Jenner of Southern Music U.S.A. in U.K. for talks with British Managing Director Bob Kingston. Northern Songs acquired the Lawrence Wright Music catalogue for £812,500 in the face of heavy American competition. ATV's Managing Director Lew Grade knighted. Barbra Streisand in town for "Funny Girl" premiere. Sergio Mendes and Brasil '68 at Pye's 10th Anniversary celebrations. Lady Lewis, wife of Sir Edward, Chairman of Decca, died. KPM Managing Director Jimmy Phillips celebrated 50 years in publishing with

luncheon at Savoy Hotel. EMI launch Tama Motown promotion campaign. The third MIDEM took place with the accent on publishing.

## FEBRUARY

Sonet Records sign deal with American blues label Takoma and negotiate publishing and L.P. deal with Udo Jurgens. Musicians Union and BBC at loggerheads over foreign musicians working in this country. MD/Arranger Les Reed turns vocalist with "Baby Turn Me Down". Pye Records to distribute DJM label formed by Dick James' son Stephen. Star talent lined up for the "This Is Tom Jones" Tvers also shown in States. Liberty/United Artists President Al Bennett in London en route home from MIDEM signed deal with Fred Marks of Festival to handle product in Australia. EMI's third offer for ABPC rejected. Alain Boublil forms Taboo label distributed by Pye. The amalgamation of Liberty and United Artists operation officially sealed by President Al Bennett. Pye Records publishing subsidiary Welbeck Music becomes separate entity with Les Cocks as General Manager. Previously Welbeck was handled by Leeds Music. Re-activating his publishing interests Chris Blackwell, Island chief, names Lionel Conway General Manager of Island Music and Blue Mountain Music. United Nations charity album "World Star Festival" distributed by Philips launched at House of Commons reception by Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan. EMI triumphant in acquiring controlling interest in ABPC. Nick Massey takes over as Press Officer for Philips Records.

## MARCH

Decca to release all classical product in stereo in line with all other (Con't on Page 8)

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