

The Soul

You can't assess the success of Henry Stone and the T.K. family without acknowledging the talent of his partner, Steve Alaimo. Alaimo represents one of the classic success stories of the music business and one of its greatest ironies. As a performer, he recorded for a number of labels and was once awarded the dubious distinction of having nine records make the charts without a single one going top 40. "Every Day I Have To Cry" was his 'biggest' hit as a performer, but his career as a producer has brought his genius for hearing hits into proper perspective.

Way Of Doing Things

The success of the T.K. family (there are many different labels under the T.K. aegis) came into the public

Steve in the mid-sixties, when he was pursuing a career as a recording artist.



eye when KC and the Sunshine Band scored back to back #1 chart records (totaling five weeks at the top) with "Get Down Tonight" and "That's The Way I Like It" in the late summer and fall of last year. There was a lot of talk on the street about the domination of the T.K. sound. Alaimo put that talk in perspective saying, "There is no T.K. sound per se so much as there is a T.K. way of doing things. The Philadelphia sound is distinguished by its use of strings. If I had to classify the difference, I'd say that the Miami sound is built primarily on the rhythm section with sweetening done later. We don't over-produce any of our records. You can kill a record by overproducing it, never by underproducing it."

Beginnings

The question of production is the one that gives Alaimo pause for reminiscence and brings the irony of his career into sharper focus. "Dick Clark is the reason for everything," Alaimo said with a smile. "I go back with him to 1961 in Miami. I did him a favor. He had one of his tours in town and when it came time for the show, he suddenly found himself without a backup band. I backed up his singers. Soon after that, Clark put me on "American Bandstand" with "Every Day I Have To Cry." Next time I ran into him, he told me, 'You're going to be the male singer on 'Where The Action Is.' He could've gotten anyone to do that show, but he picked me. When I played the Copacabana in 1969 he flew in to see me. He's an incredible man."

For The Best

With support from people like Clark and several others whom he met in his formative days, why didn't Alaimo ascend to the top of the pop performing ranks? "I needed just one big hit to sustain my performing career," he said. "I knew I was excellent on stage, but I couldn't find that one perfect song. My wife's name is Candida, and one of the producers I worked with was Toni Wine who wrote the three million plus seller of the same name that Tony Orlando and Dawn cut. If I'd met my wife before I started working with Toni, or even during that time, I would have recorded that tune. But that's the way fate works and I wouldn't change it if I could."

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Steve Alaimo, TK's vice president, referred to by many as the eyes and ears of TK Productions.



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