Portrait Of Al Hirt: From Carnegie To Gleason Sub

BY DAVE FINKLE

NEW YORK - NEW ORLEANS - Since the night of Tuesday, April 13, was Grammy night, it seemed like a nice idea to talk to a relatively relaxed Grammy winner from last year in the short hours before the award-giving ceremony.

Record World chose to phone RCA Victor's Al Hirt at his club in New Orleans far away from the sites of the impending festivities. Although Hirt had been asked to participate in this year's award doings and was also a nominee in the Best Instrumental Performance, Non-Jazz category for his gold-disked "Cotton Candy," he was forced to stay home because of a previous contracted engagement.

"I'm sorry I can't be there, but it came up in such a hurry this year. Too late for me to change my plans," Hirt said.

At Carnegie April 22-24

But, he reminded, he will be arriving in New York Monday, April 19, to begin rehearsing for a rather exciting pair of playdates at Carnegie Hall April 22 and April 24. "We'll begin working on Tuesday," he infoned. "I haven't even seen the arrangements. Gerald Wilson is doing them and I know they'll be good. I'll be working with a big band for half of the program and using my second horn in the second half for some doing some singing. We'll have about 20 instruments and it'll be a swing band.

Certainly an exciting prospect for concert ticket holders. But, the Hirt shebang is also an exciting prospect for record buyers since it's going to be recorded by RCA probably for summer release, making it a candidate for next year's Grammy and probably for another Hirt gold disk. (Al was recently awarded two R. L. A. plaques at one sitting—the first was for the above-mentioned "Cotton Candy" and the second was for "Sugar Lips," "Cotton Candy." Incidentally, was a Record World "album pick of the week" as was his recent "That Honey Horn Sound" package.)

Replacing Gleason

Also coming up on the Hirt schedule is a 13-week summer TV series slotted in the Jackie Gleason Saturday night hour. "We're looking for the format right now," Hirt said of the show that will be produced in New York by Ed Sullivan in his first producing venture away from his own show. "Hirt for a variety show and we're thinking of featuring younger acts in the first half and acts with an older appeal in the second half. I won't be involved in every act, but I want to be involved in a number of things." This undoubtedly means singing à la Hirt's recent TV appearance with Eydie Gormé and Dean Martin when he laid down his trumpet for some soloing, dueling and trioling. It could also mean some classical forays à la Hirt's recent RCA package in cahoots with Arthur Fiedler.

"I want the show to be real, to be true," Hirt said.

The stakes are high since CBS has an option to pick up the hour for 39 more if it is successful. In that case, Hirt is hoping he'll be able to have it emanate from New Orleans. "It's a natural for a TV show it emanate from New Orleans. And that shouldn't be a problem, I hope it works out well.

Two-Timer - Trumpet king Al Hirt holds a pair of precious plaques representing total sales of two million dollars worth of RCA Victor albums. The R.I.A.A. gold record awards, each signifying more than a million dollars in sales, were presented to Hirt for "Cotton Candy" and "Sugar Lips" at the recent opening of Victor's new Nashville recording facility. Left-to-right: Chuck Atkins, who produced the LPs, Chuck Seitz, engineer on the dates, and Archie Campbell, master of ceremonies at the studio opening.

Rodriguez in Film

Tito Rodriguez broke all attendance records during his South American tour last month. He has been signed to make three motion pictures in Argentina. The first: "Inolvidable" (Unforgettable) also the title of his record.