

King Records 25th Anniversary

Nathan Crowned King of King At Surprise Birthday Party

CINCINNATI — Late last month, employees and friends of King Records, Inc., and its President Sydney Nathan gave a surprise party for Nathan on the occasion of the diskery's 25th anniversary.

Originally intended as a private affair, things got somewhat out of hand and when Nathan arrived home from work, there were about 75 there to greet him.

According to Jerry Blair, who came to work for Nathan a quarter of a century ago as a porter and remained to take charge of the pressing machinery, "He's a grand man. He tells the truth. He hates a liar and a rogue."

Also queried, Max Frank, 69, who once had Frank's Radio here, said, "I gave Syd a job in 1932 and he started rolling from there. He always had a special genius. He could look ahead and tell you how business would be a year away."

Didn't Come Easily

Nevertheless, Syd's success didn't come easily. He was a high school dropout (with poor eyesight, he couldn't see the books) and he tried lots of things — pawn shop, jewelry salesman, a park concession, shooting gallery, promoting wrestling matches. What he really wanted to be was the drummer in a big dance band, but he wasn't quite good enough for that either.

A \$6 debt changed his life. Nathan had a little record shop on West Fifth in 1938 and a juke box operator owed the \$6. The man offered to pay off with 300 used country, western and Negro records. He figured Syd could sell enough at a dime each to get his \$6 back. Syd made \$18 the first afternoon, and he became intensely interested in what has been called "the music of the little people."

This is still Nathan's forte.

"I was talking to a band leader, Elliot Lawrence, about 4 a.m. in a downtown hotel and told him he wrote good music

but it wasn't commercial enough," remembers Syd. "So he gave me an old Jewish tune —and in four minutes I wrote new words and a title, 'The Hope of a Broken Heart.' The late Cowboy Copas recorded it and it sold 70,000 copies."

Also Songwriter

Nathan also wrote a song for his wife. "'Lucky Dreamer' is the title," he related. "It's easily the best song ever written—it sold six copies."

What is the King Records secret for getting a hit record?

Colman Lowry, King salesman, said "sometimes it's just a new sound. Once I was in some tiny place south of Strawberry Plains, Tenn., and heard a guitar player who sounded unusual. I brought him to Cincinnati and his first record was a hit, but he never could repeat. I guess he's back south of Strawberry Plains."

Running such a business requires shrewd bargaining powers. Forest Bradford, who once had a big dance band and who has known Syd 40 years,

told how Nathan trained himself.

"He would go into a pawn shop and pretend interest in some item," said Forest. "He had no intention of buying it. He just wanted to pit his skill against that of the pawnbroker to see how good a price he could get."

'Had the Right People'

Syd was crowned "King of King" with a cardboard and purple velvet crown, and he took the cigar out of his mouth long enough to level those thick glasses on the faces around the room, and he said, "I've had the right people with me."

Hal Neely, an old friend and record executive from Nashville, then put in a claim to being the unsung hero of the surprise party. It had been Hal's job to keep Syd at the plant late.

"I made him sit there and listen to records he didn't want to hear," said Hal. Nathan was laughing—King had shipped 100,000 copies of James Brown's "Cold Sweat" that day. When you've got a song that hot, you can afford to listen to some others that aren't.

Fortunately for King Records and R&B, there have been plenty of hot records; and the next 25 years will no doubt see many more.

On TVer



Last week Valise Records' Frank Dell (above, left) climaxed a successful promo trip to Baltimore, Md. He was guest artist on "The Kirby Scott TV Show." He also sang his recording, "Baby You've Got It," at hops for Al Jefferson, WWIN, Les Alexander, WCAO, and Hot Rod of WWIN.

Hope Praised For JET Work

Bob Hope was singled out for praise last week by Dr. Allan H. Bush, Executive Director of the Buffalo (N. Y.) Opportunities Development Corporation, for his work in promoting Project JET.

"Mr. Hope took time out from a busy tour of the South to tape TV promos and cut radio spots for Project JET," Dr. Bush said. "His intense personal appeal makes him an ideal person to reach a large number of people with a message that may change their lives—and the lives of the generations that follow them."

Purpose of Project JET, a plan originated by the Opportunities Development Corporation, is to provide jobs—education—training for unemployed heads of households. The trainee receives tutoring in basic educational requirements while he's on the job, earning a paycheck. The employer is reimbursed by the federal government for up to \$30 per week per trainee.

Aim of the program is to take people off the public assistance rolls and make them tax-paying citizens.

Buffalo's Opportunities Development Corporation is acting a consultant capacity nationally for the program.

Hope filmed and cut the public service announcements while in Montgomery, Ala., using the facilities of station WCOV-TV.

In preparing them, he said, "I'm very pleased to do my part to encourage those who missed out on their education and job training to take the necessary steps to catch up. I think the Project JET idea is a great one and I'm glad to see it catching on all over the country."

The spots will be mailed to stations throughout the country within the next two weeks.

Booker Awarded



Bandleaders Count Basie (left) and Carmen Cavallaro (right) look on as Max Arons, President of Local 802 of the American Federation of Musicians, presents a plaque to veteran band booker Willard Alexander for his efforts in presenting live music through name bands at the Riverboat in New York.