The Record Year

Columbia's 33 1/3, 45-minute disk developments stir fancy on "revolutionary" probabilities; Kidisk era in 1948; Capitol's streak of hits.

What's New

Laced by Columbia Records' new 45-minute record and 33 1/3 r.p.m. innovation (to be announced at Columbia's own dealer convention in Atlantic City, June 21), new processes and technical improvements are beginning to pop in the wax industry, and may ultimately affect all recorders.

Columbia's 45-minute record involves a vinylite, micro-grooved disk which spins at 33 1/3 revolutions per minute. To main the wax has been an arrangement with Phonosyu & Televison Corporation to design a special adapter unit with a unique pickup arm and a 33 1/3 groove (to be marketed at $25.95) which can plug into the average home radio or phonograph.

The micro-grooved disks will be sold at $4.85 for the 12-inch and $3.85 for the 10-inch item.

Trend Opening

Disclosure of the Columbia development opened up information about a small West Coast disk firm, Tempo, which has perfected a stronger into the West Coast industry and micro-grooved platter. Tempo was believed to be having worked with the Admiral Radio & Phonograph firm for the development of the, special, platter.

There has been much trade debate in the past few weeks about what effect the Columbia micro-grooved disk could have on the industry. Some feel that the new development is being marketed at a bad time to be able to make the impact that could establish the idea. On the other hand many opinion that the consumer is ready for such a change simply because the new disk can eliminate the home storage problem and secondly because of the convenience and economy of the micro-platter.

Can the Kidisk Standard Disk?

Meanwhile, regular wax improvements may be forthcoming. A cheap unbreakable record may be in the offing. Cost of shellac has risen to the point where diskers think it may soon be as practical to use an unbreakable compound. A number of the smaller manufacturers have been working on cheap plastic discs for some time.

Another development still in the experimental stage is the hydraulic press and the multiple press. Glenn L. Martin has been perfecting a hydraulic press for almost two years but still hasn't offered it for sale. This machine is said to be able to turn out 5,000 disks per hour. A multiple press has been reported in development but the inventors and the recorders have been kept top secret. Press reportedly could finish 5 to 10 disks in a single operation.

Kidisk Crowd

Another important development is the advent of new types of merchandising. Rocking Horse produces a Peter Pan label which is sold directly to coin and variety stores without using distributors. Similar set-up was tried with the 99-cent unbreakables of Paul Fumer's Allegro Records but the system proved it was going to market with the diskery is now fishing for distrubes for the line. Popularity of the children's stuff led to the organization of direct mail diskers such as the Young People's Record Club which operates its biz in a similar fashion to the Book of the Month Club operation.

Estimates on the approximate sales of kidisks since last June come to a rough 50,000 which would make this field accountable for about 14 per cent of the entire industry's sales. During Christmas season, lot stuff gobbling about 35 per cent of the biz.

Most consistent categories were the race and hillbilly fields. These kidisks and other specialized lines of wax are designed for a use the wax in this supplement.

(Continued from preceding page)

King's Solid

Cincinnati was put on the record industry map with the vast development of King Records into the race field with Bull, Moore Jackson's 1 Love You Yes I Do and All My Love Belongs To You, Lonnie Johnson's Tomorrow Night and Wynonne Harris' Good Rockin' Tonight ticketing the past six months after the firm had firmly established itself as an important hillbilly and race diskery.

Musicraft in the East and Four Star on the Coast have enjoyed a comeback year. Musicraft, a year ago virtually bogged in debuts, has struggled back under prexy Jack Meyerson. A series of refinancing plans have succeeded in wiping out back debts while cutting costs. Meanwhile, the firm slowly has built its popular artists, chieftain Sarah Vaughn, Mel Torme and Shep Fields, to a consistent sales level.

Four Star, which Bill McCall took over with many unpaid bills, came back with a sleeper hit in Deck of Cards, has since concentrated on Western wax and is now operating in the black according the diskery owner.

Other West Coast diskers, after several months of uncertainty, have begun to show some positive signs of life in the past month. This after the diskers spent several months building up satisfactory distribution systems. In addition the problems of material and manpower shortages, which had plagued the Coast firms for several years, have faded. Production costs began to stabilize allowing the diskers to shape over-all operational economies. With raw materials and know-how closer to hand, the waxes were able to turn out a disk equal in quality to that produced by major firms. And as the American market began to lighten, the more aggressive Coast outfits turned to foreign export markets for new sources of interest.

But most important the Coast firms, with the disk his tightening began to specialize rather than attempt to compete in fields which are dominated by the majors. Aladdin, Specialty and Modern are concentrating on race and commercial jazz. Imperial and Pan-American are specializing in Latin American wax. Four Star is strongest in the Western field.

Tempo, with a growing hit in When the Apple Blossoms Fall, is planning to expand into the classical field with the firm scheduled to open an office in Florence, Italy, where it will cut its longsides. Expansion plans are also being mulled by Exclusive Records, with that firm figuring to go into the classical, specialty fields.

Columbia Records, which formerly concentrated on Western and Latin stuff, debated in the pop field with a roster of new artists just prior to the ban.

London Records

Debut Swing Band


London made its first major American market debut with Greacie Fields' New Is The Hour, which hit an estimated 500,000 sales. It showed its influence in the market with the original ditions of Swing Low Sweet Clarinet, Fiddle Faddie and A Tree in The Meadow. The firm has no Petullo problem, recording in England and using full musical renditions of American sleepers. Finest example is its version of You Can't Be True, Dear which, also second best to the Rondo Ken Griffin-Jerry Wayne original, still looks good in the sales reports.

Of growing importance to the industry in view of the Petullo ban, has been the Electric Musical Industries group (His Master's Voice, Columbia, Parlophone, Regal Zonophone, MGB) in Britain. With the ban a half-year gone and with the major labels united on a number of tunes the American trade has begun to look to England for hit courage via British made wax. Victor, Columbia and MGB already have issued EMI-produced wax while other companies are either set or implementing new processes to obtain foreign masters. Mercury waxed musical backgrounds in Europe and dubbed in vocals by American artists on some current hit songs. Signature has having some side-tread in France. Continental has a deal for Swiss masters. Standard made a 10-year reciprocal arrangement with Diskers of Belgium, keyote pact which which has been used.

Wynonie the Gold Lede

Categorically, the boom of the year must be attributed to the children's record hit. Kidisks zoomed for the major diskers and introduced a good many newcomers to the industry. But most important was the development of a cheap unbreakable record, which the currently used exclusively in the kid market may eventually become a stock medium for regular pop waxings. Also important were the tremen-