

The Billboard

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Industry Winds Up An Exciting Year

From ASCAP Hassling to Payola; '59 Offered Few If Any Dull Moments

By BOB ROLONTZ

NEW YORK — The year 1959 will go down in music business history as the year in which payola leaped out of the back rooms and into the newspaper headlines from coast to coast. It was the year of the controversial ASCAP consent decree, NARAS, the Diners' Club Record Club, good album business and so-so singles business, the formation of a new disk jockey organization, the formation of dozens of dealer organizations including a national society — SORD, new manufacturer, distributor and dealer woes including transshipping, counterfeiting, and discounting, more jazz festivals, a seven inch 33, "Peter Gunn," more moves on the part of a.&r. men, new labels with big money and new labels with little loot, and plans for a new very slow speed tape cartridge by Minnesota Mining to buck the slow speed tape cartridge introduced by RCA Victor.

Quiet Start

The year started quietly enough with a new wax pact between the American Federation of Musicians and the diskeries. By the end of the year the National Labor Relations Board had ruled for collective bargaining in the disk business, allowing West Coast musicians of 12 record firms to vote for either the AFM or the newly formed MGA (Musicians Guild of America).

At the start of the year Hugo and Luigi anked Roulette for a "fabulous" deal at RCA Victor, and at the end of the year had come up with one of the smashes of the year with Della Reese's "Don't You Know." The Hugo and Luigi shift presaged moves on the part of many a.&r. men in 1959. Bobby

Shad left Mercury to set up Time, Shad, and Brent; Marv Hotlzman left Decca to join newly formed Strand; Paul Cohen left Decca to form Todd; Morty Craft left M-G-M to form Warwick and UT, and Bob Thiele anked Dot to start Hanover-Signature with Steve Allen. Mitch Miller considered leaving Columbia to join Jack Wrather if the latter bought Mills Music, but Wrather didn't and so Mitch didn't. John Hammond returned to Columbia's jazz department; LeRoy Holmes left M-G-M for Everest. Canadian money came into the disk business via Jack Cook's loot behind Strand and there was Canadian money behind Warwick and Canadian-American. British coin from the Rank film interests backed Top Rank Records here, a firm that Norm Weinstroer joined as general manager after leaving Coral.

Top Names Pass

The year also saw the passing of many of the top names in the music record business. The jazz world lost the great Billie Holiday, the equally great Lester Young, and the great Sidney Bichet. The world of classical music lost Wanda Landowska, and Mario Lanza, conductor Artur Rodzinski, composers Heiter Villa-Lobos and Ernest Bloch. Publishers Jack Robbins and Loring Buzzell passed away in 1959.

The Diners' Club started its own record club, getting material from

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HANK SNOW INKS 10-YEAR PACT WITH VICTOR

NEW YORK—Hank Snow, who started to record country songs for RCA Victor in 1936, has been signed to a new 10-year contract that will keep him on the label until 1970. The new contract, according to Victor pop chief Steve Sholes, adds up to one of the longest artist-label associations in the recording business. The new pact was described by Sholes as "an expression of faith by RCA Victor in Hank Snow as a performer and a friend."

Snow was signed to Victor by Hugh Joseph, a.&r. man in Victor's Canadian affiliate in Montreal, almost 25 years ago. Up to then he had held many jobs, from lumberjack to Fuller Brush Man, and was then appearing on his first commercial radio show as "The Singing Ranger," on the Canadian Farm Hour. Snow came to the U. S. in 1944 and made his first American tour in 1948. In 1950 he signed a seven year contract with Station WSM in Nashville.

Snow became one of the first country artists to sell a million records with his hit waxing in 1954 of "I'm Movin' On." He has also written many hit tunes, including "I'm Movin' On," "The Golden Rocket," "The Rumba Boogie" and "Music Makin' Momma From Memphis." Snow's current Victor waxing is called "The Last Ride."

Madison Ave. May Be in Air Payola Frauds' 'Hot Seat'

Ad Men to Be Early on Carpet At Upcoming FCC Hearings

By MILDRED HALL

WASHINGTON — Will Madison Avenue become the target of strongest blame for broadcast payola and program fraud, when the FCC hearings on program standards resume January 5 — with ad spokesmen early on the week's agenda? Speculation here is that broadcasters feel heaviest cloud may have passed over, especially since Justice Department gave its blessing to self-regulation by the industry thru NAB code, in a recent letter to Federal Communications Commission Chairman Doerfer.

FCC's witness list for resumed hearings reportedly puts advertiser spokesmen fairly early in the week, to be followed by music interests, individual broadcasters, with NAB and networks last. Listed in the original FCC hearings list of November 27, were: Association of National Advertisers (the sponsors); American Association of Advertising Agencies (the Madison Avenue group), and Advertising Federation of America, representing local ad-club people, plus Mr. Philip Corney, of Coty, Inc., who has a bone to pick with rival cosmetics sponsors of the fraudulent TV quiz shows.

The exchange of amenities between FCC Chairman Doerfer and

Attorney General Wm. P. Rogers, in letters read at the final day's hearing (December 18, too late for Billboard deadline), indicated a strong mutual desire to see the industry police itself via a tightened code. Justice pointed out that broadcasters need not worry about antitrust laws in coming to agreements on correcting programming abuses, and could seek Justice's advice whenever in doubt.

A strong bid to get broadcasters — and the FCC — off the program regulation hook was made by code chief, Donald McGannon, who spoke dismissively of quiz fraud and payola issues as a "new" type transgression which the code could not have foreseen, during its eight years of supervision of the industry. McGannon said the code administrators would know how to deal with these in the future, and cited recent anti-payola amendments in the code, which specifically prohibited payola for "selection of music," among other types.

FTC Congratulates

In similar vein, Federal Trade Commission Chairman Earl Kintner, at earlier "informal conference" with network and NAB and code officials (December 7), congratulated broadcasters on their self-regulatory history, thus far, and exhorted them in kindly fashion to do still better in the future — presumably under self policing.

Real crackdowns by both agencies moved in directions which did not attach total blame on the broadcast industry as a whole. The Federal Communications Commission's intensive payola questionnaire to individual licensees escaped the limelight at the FCC hearings. The FTC crackdown on

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NEWS OF THE WEEK

Broadcasters Seeking Chantes; Station Disk-Lists Seen Fading . . .

Radio stations across the country are in the throes of change — partially prompted by the payola scare, but also strongly motivated by the increasingly competitive nature of local radio. Some broadcasters are urgently seeking out new programming formats; while others are discarding old promotion techniques including the heretofore successful local top-disk lists. . . . Page 2

88 Labels Hit "Top 50" in '59; Victor, Mercury, Col. Top List . . .

A total of 88 different labels landed one or more single records in the top 50 slots of The Billboard's "Hot 100" during the year 1959, as compared to 72 labels in 1958. The indies dominated the chart, but RCA Victor had the most chart-disks—18; followed by Mercury with 17 and Columbia with 16. . . . Page 3

Hi-Fi Mfr. Institute Cancels Capital Show . . .

Plans for a High-Fidelity Show to be held in Washington, D. C., in March, 1960, have been canceled by the Institute of High Fidelity Manufacturers. High cost of complying with District of Columbia's strict safety code forced the cancellation, according to an IHFM spokesman. . . . Page 11

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Charts Keyed Disk Variety

NEW YORK — One of the interesting aspects of the music record business in 1959 was the great variety of records that made the pop charts. Hits were made by a duo called "The Nutty Squirrels," on the Hanover-Signature label, singing a song that has no words, called "Uh! Oh!" The Mormon Tabernacle Choir, backed by the Philadelphia Orchestra, had a smash hit with "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," on Columbia. And Martin Denny came up with a big one featuring jungle sounds on his Liberty waxing titled "The Quiet Village." Bobby Darin, once considered strictly a rock and roll singer, made it bigtime with his waxing of Kurt Weill's "Mack the Knife," from the almost classical styled work, "The Threepenny Opera."

Gagging Up 'The Taste'

NEW YORK — The payola stories have sparked thousands of gags and cartoons in newspapers and magazines. Latest and some say funniest — appears in The New Yorker mag this week. Two aristocratic dowagers are attending a classical concert. Caption reads "Heavens Loretta! Just because you don't care for Hindemith doesn't mean there's payola involved!"

Also spoofing payola during the holidays was King Records prexy Syd Nathan, one of the first label execs to state that he had paid disk jockeys to play his disks. Nathan's Christmas card this year featured a picture of Santa Claus playing the piano and bearing the message "Play-ola Greetings."