

# Lengthy Flip Sides Perplex Operators

By Nat Freedland

One of the most perplexing problems facing the jukebox industry this year is the proliferation of long singles, especially long "B"sides on hits. No unified industry plan to overcome this problem has been arrived at. But the fact that jukebox operators are speaking out more and more against long singles has itself been a major early step in getting the major record companies to recognize that their lucrative jukebox market has its own special product needs.

Billboard played a major role in airing this whole problem in July when it obtained and publicized a letter by Bill Bush, programmer for the Les Montooth Phonograph Service of Peoria, Ill., which complained to ABC/Dunhill sales manager Denis Lavinthal that it was impossible to "cover" the then-current Steppenwolf single "Ride With Me" because of its 8:42 flipside, "For Madmen Only."

Bush's letter stated, "If we were to place 'Ride With Me' on our 400 machines and a customer

played both sides of this record for a quarter as we did 30 years ago. By way of economics, I'm sure you would agree, even ABC could not exist on the selling prices of 30 years ago. Our only recourse is not to buy these records that adversely affect our industry."

When informed of the jukebox operator's stand, Reb Foster Associates, the managers of Steppenwolf, promptly met with the group and won their enthusiastic agreement to promptly release a special jukebox pressing of "Ride With Me" backed with a 3:30 "B"side. This was really a precedent-making move, even though the record involved never really climbed the charts after its promising start.

Because of the time limit on how many plays a jukebox can make per hour, most operators greatly prefer singles that don't go much over three minutes. With the rise of progressive rock in the late '60s, longer records for artistic reasons became far more prevalent. To some extent, the

trend is back towards shorter "A"sides. But most 1972 Hot 100 chart weeks will still include a share of lengthy hits on the roster.

Also, opinion within the industry is divided as to the worth of programming extended play 45's which give bonus songs for each coin. Other occasional experiments with singles format changes keep popping up to give juke operators headaches too. This spring, Warner Bros. put out a T. Rex single, "Hot Love," with a 4:50 "A"side and two songs running just under a total time of five minutes on the "B"side. The Rolling Stones are among the English groups which have tried this with "maxi-singles." The U.K. release of "Brown Sugar" had two songs on the flipside. And in 1970, Ten

Years After put out a single with a 33-1/3 r.p.m. flipside.

The most recent possible threat to standardization of under three-minute 45 r.p.m. singles comes from the experimental "miniature albums" being released by United Artists Records. UA feels there may be a customer market for 33-1/3 r.p.m. disks with an average of nine minutes of music per side, packaged in well-designed jackets with foldout pages that can hold as much liner information as a 12-inch album jacket. UA has prepared two miniature albums, shortened from recent LPs by the English groups, Groundhogs and Cochise, which only sold mildly in standard format. The first pressings are now being sent to radio stations and "head shops" to test reaction.

The solution to jukebox operators' woes over long singles has always been apparent: If the record companies find it good business to make special pressings for radio stations—releasing either one-sided singles or singles carrying the same "A"side in stereo and mono mixes—then it ought to be even better business to make special jukebox pressings with short "B"sides and the "A"sides as short as artistically feasible.

The problem isn't finding the solution, it's in implementing the solution. And the jukebox operators won't be able to get the record labels to issue special jukebox pressings until the industry as a whole decides exactly what it wants and unites in demanding it.

## Some One-Stops Cite 'Oldies' As Consistent Business Item

By John Sippel

Oldies singles represent but a top of 10 percent and normally around five percent of the total singles business done by one-stops with operators, a survey of California one-stops discloses. But the one-stops stock the oldies because "it's the most consistent of our business and it's the really big service part of our inventory."

Being able to include a wide range of golden oldies is the equivalent of readily filling the special order in a record retail shop, Buddy Robinson, co-owner of Music Operators' Service, Anaheim, Calif., says Robinson is unique in this area, in that his is the only Southern California one-stop in the hinterlands. Because of his out-of-the-way location, Robinson and his partner, Marion Pesotsky, realized they'd have to depend on mail-order business to bolster the hinterland operator business near their store. Robinson does business with over 900 operators in a 12-state area. He finds that oldies constitute about seven percent of his total business in singles. Like most West Coast one-stops, he

prints his own title strips on blank cards, using an addressograph machine with plates to do the job. Like all one-stops, he charges a similar price for oldies and the current hits.

Breaking down the total oldies business, one-stop owners here feel that pop singles represent 75 percent of the oldies total, while country takes 15 percent and soul the remaining 10 percent. Soul is constantly eroding, because one-stops here report that locations in black neighborhoods are diminishing. Independent record firms, which consistently provide the black hits, are not following up in the main in establishing special oldies series, coupling back-to-back hit singles, they point out.

One-stop operators also lament the demise of the record company financed or printed special mailer, which used to be sent gratis by the hundreds to one-stops, who in turn used them as stuffers in their statement mailings and in record shipping boxes. All said that this promotional ave-

nue has almost dried up and that at less than 10 percent, they cannot amortize doing the oldies mailing and paying for it all by themselves.

Norm Morgan, Star Title Strip, Pittsburgh, confirms the consistency of his lavender edged All-Time Hit title strip cards. Morgan notes he stocks about 1,500 different strips, representing the available oldies inventories of 30 different record companies. He says that some record companies neglect to notify his company and their operator customers of the availability of new or cut out oldies singles. He cites Columbia, RCA and Epic as examples of consistently keeping in touch with operators to promote oldies inventories.

Sterling Title Strip, Newark, N.J., offers a magenta-colored oldies strip for the collective oldies catalogs of 41 different companies. Sterling has a printed breakdown of the individual companies and the numbering system and name of each firm's oldies' singles series.

## Jukebox Features Involve Patrons

Dramatic design changes are bringing about more participation by the jukebox patron, who is being lured over, cajoled electronically and even thanked when he presses a button. This trend will be apparent in the 1972 models on display at MOA as will the emphasis on servicing ease and improved stereo sound. There are no fundamental departures for programmers, since the trend to dual speed and predominant 160-selections continues. However, the slight trend away from album feature is apparent in Seeburg's Firestar (album play an option for the first time) and Wurlitzer will again have models with or without LP feature. Rock-Ola's new Model 448 and Rowe's four models under the name Line of Superstars are dual speed. The four domestic manufacturers will along with importer ACA Sales (the NSM brand) will all show the latest models at MOA and from all indications prices are about in line with 1970.

Seeburg, which has tradition-

ally led with many innovations, switched to what it calls new "sun colors" and is utilizing three-dimensional panels front and side to create the illusion of moving color. The combination of rich orange and black predominates with the silver are carrying the design theme from top to bottom. Unseen, but significant to programmer-service personnel, is the elimination of 118 switches and contacts through improvements in Seeburg's earlier innovation of micro component packs.

There is a growing trend away from the traditional letter and number combination patrons punch to activate jukeboxes. Seeburg last year went with digital selection (10 buttons as with push button telephones) and this year Rock-Ola's 160-selection model features digital selection.

Rock-Ola is also changing cabinet design in its 448 (update of the model 444) and may show an advance version of its, 100-selection compact. The 446 furniture

style model, a deluxe console, will be unchanged until possible mid-year.

Rowe's MM6 line features improved sound with the addition of two tweeter speakers—six in all now, with more bass boost added too. The four models are Bourbon Street, Monterey, Lavendar Ladies and Silver Sage (Rowe has six different exterior designs last year in its MM5 line). Again, 100, 160 and 200-selection is available and the amplification is a hybridization of tubes and is circuitry carrying a five-year guarantee.

Wurlitzer's new Super Star Model 3600 is another example of dramatic design change. Through a development between Wurlitzer and the 3M Company, a special light control film covers the area where title strips are displayed. The effect is that from two or more feet away the whole panel is black when the patron moves the selections become visible.

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