

Jukebox programming

5 YOUNG BROTHERS

W. Va. Boxes Avg. \$40 Week; Shop Nationally for Records

By RAY BRACK

CLARKSBURG, W. Va.—One of the biggest, brightest brother acts in the business is averaging \$40 a week from jukeboxes, impressively above national averages. A big part of the formula is imaginative programming and aggressive record buying, sometimes as far away as Lieberman's One-Stop, Omaha.

As impressive as the average revenue is, some will be even more impressed to learn that these brothers range down in age from a grand old 33 to a 19-year-old high school senior, and they've been in business only five years.

Sons of a West Virginia coal miner, the Shaffer brothers—Joe, 33; Jim, 31; Mike, 27 and sometimes 21-year-old Martin and high schooler Donnie—are building American Vending Corp. here into a showcase music, games and marginal vending (cigarettes, soft drinks, candy) operation.

Expansion is constant, the brothers modestly report, and diversification into other vending areas is imminent. (Even as Jim took time out of a busy day for an interview two of his brothers were attending a vending school in St. Louis.)

As with most of these new-look operations—and they're beginning to dominate the industry through numbers and influence—American Vending's total effectiveness can be traced to careful attention from the beginning to the jukebox side of the ledger. It's the jukebox, the brothers feel, that gives you entry to the traditional location, and it's imaginative programming and diligent service which keeps you there with all your other equipment.

Decisions bearing on this successful formula result from easy-going fraternal discussion between Joe, company president; vice-president Jim and route salesman Mike. Martin, who has worked summers in the business, is now at West Virginia University deciding whether he wants to be a lawyer or accountant, either of which professions he might one day put to good use in the business. Donnie works part-time on the routes. And, Jim adds, "There are five sisters who have a lot of suggestions for us."

Jim speaks with particular satisfaction of how the Shaffer team has had great success "following other operators into a location and tripling the jukebox take." He cites as typical a local joint that had a nickel jukebox for years. The Shaffers went in, after taking some pains to sell a skeptical proprietor, on three-for-a-quarter play, switched to two-for-a-quarter (with dollar-bill validator) in six months and along the way brought the location up from \$30 to \$90 a month in music.

Integral to that and scores of other healthy case histories on the American Vending books, Jim and his brothers point out, is the fact that they were the first in their market to make the two-for-a-quarter breakthrough. New to the business, they just ignored or were oblivious to the adverse arguments. They started three years ago, making the switch every time they put in a new machine. Today they have 75 percent of their music spots on two-for-25 cents. I haven't changed anyone back to three-for-a-quarter and haven't lost any locations," Jim says. "They're all on 50-50 (commission split)."

While the new machine generally paved the way for the switch, the brothers often had to sell hell out of the idea. Jim explained: "We were going two-for-a-quarter, five-for-a-half, so we would point out to the reluctant location that this was ten cents a song anyway. But sometimes to cinch it we'd take in past performance records from locations we'd changed over and prove it to them in black and white."

With two-for-a-quarter reaching route saturation, the Shaffers are ready to take a crack at contracts. Currently they have none. "We'll have to have something to offer to get them to accept contracts," the vice president admits. "We'll do it with improved service. We're planning to add another serviceman for the express purpose of having a strong service sales point."

Programming

Jim adds that in switching pricing the brothers adopted a programming feature that has delighted locations: addressed, postage-

(Continued on page 43)

45's in Stores Program Key

MT. PLEASANT, Mich.—Watching what the discount stores and record shops are moving is one of the jukebox programming practices Dale L. Meier of Bill Taylor & Sons Dolphin Coin Co. here uses to good advantage. He needs the extra class reference because he programs as many as 15 new records per change.

This doesn't mean that Meier, 28, buys that many new records for each stop each week. Another of his practices is to watch take-offs very closely. When he sees some new release coming back too soon, he will merely put it out again in a location that hasn't had the record.

Thus, considering the way he switches records around until they finally catch on, his average number of new releases per change runs around six. "There's no reason not to put on 15 new records if it's a good stop," he said.

At least 35 percent of the route here is checked every week and the route is about 75 percent two-for-a-quarter play.

Meier said the firm decided that one person should take care of the record programming. "We tried it with several doing the buying and it didn't work out." He said he would like to have all disks on every location logged but that there just wasn't that much time in a day.

Oldies have really revived in the area. He said he had the original "Lion Sleeps Tonight" by the Tokens on his own jukebox in his basement but when he tried to buy it for the route he couldn't. He has had to look far and wide for certain oldies.

No Albums

Jukebox albums don't pan out. "We tried some years ago and found they are basically good for just easy listening spots. Usually, there is just one or maybe two good songs on a whole album."

He may have to consider albums, however, because so many groups that are popular with college students in the area make few singles. Moody Blues is one example. The group's LP's are very popular in the local stores but only two singles have been available since last July, according to Star Title Strip Co. lists. However, there's no Moody Blues jukebox LP either.

Urge Look At Long 45's

By EARL PAIGE

CHICAGO—One of the leading critics of long singles has called for wider attention to the problem. Noting that singles are still averaging over 3 minutes, Wayne Hesch, Rolling Meadows, Ill. operator, said: "The jukebox manufacturers, one-stops and more operators have to look at this."

Hesch, a director of Music Operators of America (MOA), has long complained that lengthy singles consume too much prime playing time in the locations. MOA has promised to poll its members on the subject. At a recent board meeting, MOA president John Trucano said: "We are by no means resigned to long singles."

The current top ten on the "Hot 100" averages 3:08 with Roberta Flack's big hit the longest at 4:15. A year ago, Carol King's "It's Too Late" (3:42) and "Brown Sugar" by the Rolling Stones (3:39) paced the 3:05 minute average of the top ten.

Five years ago, the longest record was "Rainy Day Woman #12 and 35" by Bob Dylan at 4:25. But there were three under 2 minutes holding the average to 2:42. A group of bullet singles moving into the top ten now average 3:25 paced by Elton John's "Rocket Man" (4:35), and Bill Withers' "Lean on Me" (3:45).

Coin Machine World

ILL. ASSN

A cocktail reception Friday, June 16 and a business seminar revolving around commission payment formulas Saturday are some of the events planned by the Illinois Coin Machine Operators Association in East Peoria at Holiday Inn East.

WURLITZER SCHOOLS

At Albany, N. Y. (Hank Peteet instructor): David Nicholson, Playtime Dist.; Bill Ogden, Albany Amusement; Glen Crowningshield, Valley Vending, Lewis; John Dutcher, Dutcher's Amusement, Colliersville; John Peek, Bud's Music, Schenectady (Greenville, S. C. with instructor Harry Gregg); Wayne Scott, Ray Rankin, Rickey Farmer, James Parent, Bob Harkins, Bruce Campbell, William Stokes, Burney Crowson, Barry Addison, Bill Morris, Bruce Sheppard, Collins Music; Nelson L. Leslie, Witt Music; Dan Bright, Nick's Music; Dean Kirby, Kirby Vending, Hendersonville, N. C.; E. B. Trammell, Trammell Music; Kim Dodgens, Anderson Amusement, Anderson, S. C.; Carlton Patterson, Fred Alexander Jr. Seneca, S. C.; Jim Lindsey, Qwik Serv Music & Amusement, Asheville, S. C.; (Southern Music, Ltd., Calgary, Canada with instructor Robert Harding) Ray Dufresne, Central Alberta Music Systems, Red Deer; Peter M. Picklyk, Alberta Shuffleboard Edmonton, Ltd., Edmonton; Ralph Harrison, Ken Standell, Dale

McMillan, Dennis Schmick, Elbert Erickson, Wayne Johnson, Walter R. Robertson, Alex C. Sinclair, James O. Gallagher, John K. Muriison, Don Rathy, Harry W. Drader, Mel J. Bowe, Victor Lawrick, Tony Fisher, William F. Boyd, Bruce Montgomery, J. H. Stokes, Southern Music; David G. Anderson, Bob Anseeuw, Inter-City Leisure Ltd., Winnipeg; A. Jack Pardue, Central Alberta Music System; Frank Manzara, Manzara Music, (Continued on page 40)

Singer, Jukebox Operator Team

BUCHANON, Mich.—One way to crack the jukebox singles market is to team up with an operator as your producer. This is exactly what veteran performer/songwriter Gary Edwards and well-known local businessman Frank Fabiano have done.

Edwards, now in nearby Niles, Mich., was on the road for 12 years with the Koachmen and the act Gary Edwards & the Abominable Snowmen. He also produced records with Tommy James and Bob King.

Fabiano, an innovative jukebox programmer, as well as an industry leader, said he enjoys "indulging in the creative side of the record business." The pair's newest release on Paul Glass' and Sy Gold's Chicago-based U. S. A. Records is "Your Lovin' Comes Easy/Hanky Panky Daddy's Gonna Spanky."

Miami FM Stations Research Includes Jukebox Poll

• Continued from page 3

riodic check on all research areas, we couldn't have come up with a formula for success, Wittberger claimed. "We constantly research; we need up-to-date data to isolate or pinpoint our audience and try to zero in on specific groups. We've found our methods or research, when coupled with current market information, to be a valuable tool in determining what our audience wants to hear."

Using as many mediae as there are available—request lines, jukeboxes, record stores, record sales, trade charts—Wittberger contends he has put together a quality research program and has covered the market with proper research techniques. He may be right since the year-old station is the top FM station in the area, in reaching more rock listeners than any of the others, according to the March-April Hooper Radio Audience Index. And, as indicated by the latest ARB rating, WMYQ was tied in popularity with WQAM, Miami's No. 1 Top 40 station.

"Jukebox surveillance plays only a 20 to 25 percent in our research procedures, but though the percentage is a small one, it is

a vital part in the overall picture," Wittberger said.

"We get a good indication from our request lines (which operate 24 hours a day with a Dade County and Broward County line) what the young audience wants. But we go directly to our jukebox people to find out what the older, over 35 age group is listening to."

To be really objective, the majority of requests come from 10-16 year olds and particularly girls. "They seem to be more prone to picking up the phone and calling in," said Johnny Dark, music research department chief, "so we have to adjust that in our thinking. We find the majority of housewives are too busy to pick up the phone to call in a request. This is why, we contact Mar-Tab and Mellow Music, who service a variety of jukeboxes in this area, and find out which singles they are putting on the boxes."

Radio-Boxes

Dark explained that while the trade charts reflect what's happening on a national scale, WMYQ is more interested in what's happening in South Florida.

"A record could be a national hit, yet bomb here in Miami,"

he said. "We do get an indication of the record's progress by watching the charts. If it is No. 10 with a bullet, for instance, we track it very carefully."

Mar-Tab and Mellow Music programmers work closely with WMYQ's research team, exchanging lists of records being played on jukeboxes and those used by the station.

"It works out advantageously for all of us," Dark continued. "They report which tunes they are using and we give them our advance list of what we're going to be using."

WMYQ does not lead the field in playing the newest records. Quite the opposite. When a record is added to their playlist, it is already showing in sales; is a fairly heavily request item; and is virtually on every trade chart.

"We've found in conversations with jukebox people that they want records which will be hits and ones which have staying power—not the ones some people think will be potential hits," said Dark.

Reaction

"If we find an extremely hot item on the boxes that we're not playing, it could be because it's on

the border line and wouldn't appeal to our audiences. If the record's had a moderate amount of requests, yet shows little in sales, we're inclined to think it only has teen appeal. On the other hand if a very heavy report comes in from the jukebox people, on a certain record, we'll put it on—unless it is way out of line for our station. One of our key lines is—it's not what you don't play that's so important, it's what you do play. We played 'Jungle Fever' after other stations dropped it, but we got phone calls from mothers complaining about it—saying it was a dirty record, 'an orgasm set to music.' I made a management decision and said that if we pulled that record our listeners would not call the station saying we're not going to listen because you're not playing 'Jungle Fever.' Again, our ideology is that it's not what we don't play that's important, it's what we do play that has an effect. The audience isn't aware of what we don't play, but they are very much aware of what we do play. That's the reason we pulled 'Jungle Fever'—it definitely was offensive to a certain small percentage of our listeners." Because WMYQ plays only

established hits, Wittberger contends his station acts as a barometer for other Miami stations.

"If we add a record, other stations usually follow with it because we don't take chances on what might be a hit," he said. "Jukebox people benefit from this too. When we give them the list of records we're adding—four, five, six or even 10 per week—they know if they haven't scheduled at least three of these on their boxes, they're really way off-base. On the other hand, if they're playing a lot of new records we're not using, they're probably too far ahead and can't expect the play they want until the record becomes established. Best sellers are around a long time. Al Green's 'Let's Stay Together' for instance, is still on the boxes—or at least it should be. We'll use a song no matter how old it is and play it in heavy rotation so long as it is one with which our audience can relate. We feel it's much better to play one like this than jump on a hot new record because the new one is still an unknown factor."

Next week: Wittberger's views on popularity meters and jukebox data.