

LOS ANGELES—A funny thing happened to Gene Norman while he was this city's most popular disk jockey who was also appearing on television two hours a day and presenting concerts and operating a nightclub at night. He started a jazz label.

That was 21 years ago this month. Today, his GNP-Crescendo catalog remains essentially jazz but he has extended his music coverage to include the recorded talents of performers like Rusty Warren, Les Baxter, Arthur Lyman, Dick Haymes and even Liberace.

"Our active catalog," says Norman, "now comprises about 170 LPs and most are jazz. We propose to issue all types of music in the future but the fun part of the business will always be, to me personally, jazz performances."

Norman teed his baby label in 1954 with a "Charlie Ventura In Concert" album featuring the Philadelphia tenor saxist and Jackie Cain, Roy Kral, Conte Condoli and Benny Green.

"In those days there was a raw, urgent jazz spirit prevalent everywhere," he says. "Then for a time jazz went into decline. Today it is surging again."

Norman, who attended state universities at Michigan and Wisconsin although he is a native of New York

21 Years For Norman Jazz Label Recession? Business Improves For GNP-Crescendo

By DAVE DEXTER JR.

City, launched his label because he was presenting jazz concerts throughout Southern California and recording each event for his own kicks.

"At first I leased by concert masters out to Decca, Columbia and Capitol and they included some truly historic live performances by Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie and other giants," he recalls. "But then I got the bug to own my own label. I still have that bug."

He digs the old things, like the memorable Jack Hylton and Ambrose orchestras of London, the trail-blazing Django Reinhardt of Paris and titans like Earl Hines, Teddy Wilson, Roy Eldridge, Willie "The Lion" Smith and Sidney Bechet. But his catalog also contains excellent contemporary masters by Thelonious Monk, Milt Jackson, Albert Ayler, Wayne Shorter and Gillespie.

For all his emphasis on jazz, however, Norman admits that the biggest selling albums he's issued are by the Moms and Dads, Joe and Eddie and Seeds, a rock group.

Norman recently made a pure

jazz LP with Kay Starr singing celebrated standards backed by a group that included pianist Jimmy Rowles with Red Norvo on vibes. "She's an extraordinary talent," Norman says. "I think she can make it with 1975 jazz buffs. She hasn't been given the opportunity in 20 years."

The average sale of a GNP-Crescendo LP is 10,000 and it takes about 5,000, on the average, for Norman to recoup his production overhead. He has 30 distributors in the

50 states and 16 in foreign countries. At least once a year he visits each one personally, sometimes picking up unusual masters which he brings home to issue in the U.S.

His most popular jazz LP?

"The Best Of Max Roach And Clifford Brown In Concert" holds that distinction, with a couple of entries by Dizzy Gillespie crowding it.

"America's youngsters are becoming satiated with three-chord tunes and the conventional rock instru-

mentation," says Norman. "That's why jazz is coming back. It's a big step up from the banalities of rock. I figure GNP-Crescendo will wind up the current year with at least a 5 to 10 percent increase in sales, and next year with the economy almost certain to improve, it could amount to substantially more."

Norman's name will be around for a long time to come. His 22-year-old son Neil, a film major at UCLA, plays guitar, the Moog synthesizer and drums, leads a rock band and has recorded several singles.

"But Neil appreciates good jazz, too," says his dad. "It's his generation that will help to make jazz bigger in mass appeal than ever."

Forum Draws Major Names

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stellar clients like Chicago and the Beach Boys.

The Talent Forum will be the first international gathering of buyers and sellers in all fields of contemporary musical and comedy live entertainment. Typical of the in-depth examination of nuts-and-bolts entertainment issues set for the forum is the "What Do The Colleges Want?" panel which will have three student buyers from different parts of the U.S. and different-sized schools, including the president pro tem of the nationwide student entertainment organization NEC, Mary Jo Mertens of the Univ. of Kentucky.

Rounding out the campus panel are Lane Harrison of Salem (Mass.) State Univ.; Steve Jensen of Univ. of California at Davis; ICM agent Chuck Ramsey, a widely-respected college booker; A&M college promotion supervisor Andy Meyer, a former campus rep for the label at Rutgers, and Chet Hanson, whose Athena agency became the first nationally important Denver-based booker largely on the basis of college success.

The Talent Forum artist showcases continue to attract wide industry attention. In effect, every major label and important smaller label is seeking to present one of its newer or underexposed acts at the forum.

Latest showcase confirmations are Capitol's Bob Seger, the Midwest "heavy metal" pioneer who has rarely received the national recognition due him; RCA's well-received first album writer-singer and blues guitar virtuoso, Rory Block; and the public performance debut of Randy Edelman, who had two Hot 100 singles from his first 20th Century album.

The fast-growing Canadian delegation to the forum is bringing two acts representing their nation; folk-rockers A Foot In Coldwater who are distributed in the U.S. by Elektra/Asylum and the new comedy duo McLean & McLean, produced by Guess Who's Burton Cummings.

Japan is also bringing a delegation of entertainment business leaders here, giving Billboard's pioneering live music meeting an even more international scope.

'Chocolate' In Jukeboxes

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available on the consumer level for no single will be released commercially from the album," says Neil Bogart, president of Casablanca.

The single will feature "Chocolate City" on both sides, with a full version and a tight 3-minute edited version for discos.

"We are using jukebox operators because we have found they sell a lot of records," says Bogart.

"The record represents a total feeling of unity by using the political power available," Bogart explains about the record's message.

Cecil Holmes, vice president, general manager of r&b operations for Casablanca, heads the radio and retail record outlet promotional campaign.

"Under the 'Chocolate City' banner we are also promoting additional new albums by Greg Perry, and James and Bobby Purify, because they can shirthead on the excite-

ment created by the Parliaments new album," says Holmes.

Holmes is packaging a nationwide radio contest to be launched May 5, and is currently being tested on KGFJ here.

KGFJ listeners are requested to draw a picture of what they feel "Chocolate City" looks like and what it represents with the winner receiving a \$100 record buying spree.

The retail contest involves store personnel delivering the most attractive displays. T-shirts are given to store personnel. If a member of the Casablanca organization enters the store, the wearer of the T-shirt receives a cash prize.

Retail stores are encouraged to play the three albums and will win cash if they are playing one of the albums when a member of Casablanca enters the store.

The jukebox, retail and radio merchandising program will run for one month.

Inside Track

High readership due at CBS because of the May 1 issue of Forbes Magazine. A feature story has CBS Inc. president Arthur Taylor speculating on changes at CBS Records with Goddard Lieberson close to mandatory retirement. "By the end of this year, there'll be a new structure there," Taylor is quoted. Forbes writer advances a potential candidate for label head... "Warner Communications' disgruntled whiz kid, 31-year-old David Geffen," but has Geffen responding, "I can't comment on that."

Columbia is reissuing Lauro Nyro's "Gonna Take A Miracle" LP. The set of Ms. Nyro handling oldies was released several years ago, and features LaBelle as the backup group. Cover will be the same, since LaBelle received billing on the jacket at the time of the initial release.

Warner Bros. is going ahead with production of its Watergate Tapes documentary package to be narrated by George C. Scott and will appeal in District of Columbia federal court the April 4 tape release ban by Judge Sirica.

Stax-Volt reportedly buying Rimrock Mfg., Concord, Ark., pressing plant owned by Wayne Raney, the one-time King Recording act... Norm Weiser to be honored at a forthcoming New York City Israel bond dinner... Columbia Records will hold its convention in Toronto, Canada this summer... Approximately 420 people are expected at the J.L. Marsh/Musicland stores' managers' meeting slated July 27-31 at Arrowhead Lodge, Alexandria, Minn. The number of Musicland store managers who will attend has increased from 130 to 160 in the past year.

Chess Records chose Muddy Waters' 60th birthday (April 4) as the release date of the new Waters LP "The Woodstock Album" with Levon Helm, Garth Hudson, Paul Butterfield and Fred Carter, and produced by Henry Glover.

The Assn. for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) in Chicago celebrates its tenth anniversary with a four-day festival at Transitions East. Artists performing include Chico Freeman & Unity Mind, and Muhai Richard Abrams Big Band next Thursday (8); Joseph Jarman Return From Exile and Amina & Company, Friday (9); Fred Anderson Sextet and Muhai Richard Abrams Sextet, Saturday (10); and Rasul Siddik Black Artist Group and the AACM Big Band, Sunday (11).

Tony Martell Jr., son of ABC Records Tony Martell, died of leukemia on April 21 at Mount Sinai Hospital, New York. Donations may be made to Dept. of Neoplastic Research, c/o the hospital's school of medicine... Overseas Music Services has relocated to 30 Rock-

efeller Plaza, New York. John Nathan, head of OMS, is U.S. agent for MIDEM... John Lennon on "Tomorrow," NBC-TV, Tuesday (29).

Professional Music Men hold annual get-together and golf tourney at Kutsher's Country Club, Monticello, N.Y., June 11-12. Contact Hy Ross at Robbins Music... Richard Rodgers to be honored on 50th anniversary of "Garrick Gaieties," his first hit show, by Lenox Hill Hospital, New York. Date is Tuesday (8) at Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Proceeds go to building a patient care medical unit.

It's a girl for Carl and Barbara Strubes. Born April 13, she's been named Amy Lynn. Couple own Boston indie promotion firm... Word Books published "Just Mahalia, Baby," biography of gospel singer Mahalia Jackson. Author is Lauren Goreau... Sidney Seidenberg has consolidated his California office with his main headquarters in New York. Office, in New York, will be beefed up with Robin Weiss. Danny Kessler exits SAS... John Cavacas to compose score for "Except For Me and Thee." ITP two-hour movie special for ABC-TV, starring Richard Kiley and Shirley Knight.

Jimmy Robinson is no longer the manager for Pleasure. Marlon McClain is handling business for the band... Mercury bowed a record with a zany title, "Paul McCartney, Stevie Wonder, Alice Cooper and Elton John." Song features Clive Baldwin performing in Al Jolson style... Faralla, Woltag & Mundo opened an East Coast office in New York... Billy Gaff, manager of Rod Stewart and The Faces says that Ron Wood is not—repeat, not—leaving Faces for Rolling Stones.

Zulema and Weldon Irvine were featured in RCA's second artist showcase at Town Hall following a successful December presentation of Gil Evans and Rachel Faro. Tickets were scaled \$4.50-\$5.50... WEA Musik managing director Siegfried Loch in from Germany for meetings in New York and Los Angeles.

The Country Music Assn.'s fourth annual talent buyers seminar will be held at the Nashville Hyatt Regency Oct. 10-13. Contact CMA's Betty Young.

McCabe's sold out their second Fox Venice concert, with Mose Allison and the Great American Music Band... David Cassidy co-producing his new RCA album with Equinox Records' Bruce Johnston... Torrance Holiday Inn's Nero's gives \$1 rebates for each Tuesday dinner show.

Pitschel Players Cabaret at former site of the Los Angeles Ash Grove is now presenting music acts again, with dates booked for Eric Anderson, Chango and Charles Lloyd... A&M's comedy-rock act, the Tubes, entered the Palomino's weekly amateur night contest billed as Heifer's Dream and won.

Tax Triggers 187-Page Piracy Appeal

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fense witnesses appeared in a single day. And that full day and an early evening session presented a problem to the defense. The appeal states that the judge was at times impatient with defense witnesses and tended to sway the jury by his attitude against the defense.

Tax's sixth amendment rights were violated by admission of co-defendants statements, who never appeared to testify at the trial.

Miller argues that the court's special instruction on infringement misled the jury. He contends it was in error to instruct the jury that copyright certificates are prima facie evidence of the date of fixation. Miller during the trial had argued that the present certificate form lacks necessary

trustworthiness to be used as evidence.

The court ruling that Richard Tax pay costs of prosecution violates his rights under the fifth, sixth and eighth amendments.

The appeal asks the court to enter a judgment of acquittal and to vacate the order requiring Tax to pay

cost of prosecution. In the event the appeals court does not hand down an acquittal, but reverses Tax's judgment of conviction and remands the case to district court, the appeal asks that further proceedings be heard before a district court different from the court which presided over the trial action.

Sinatra Firm In Nashville?

NASHVILLE—Frank Sinatra is in the process of setting up a publishing operation here, which may be expanded into other facets of his enterprises, according to Billy Strange.

Strange, who long has been associated with Sinatra in his many activities, has been in the process of finding both space and personnel to

handle the operation. He suggested that the move will bring in leading singers in the MOR field to work in Nashville.

A scheduled country session by Sinatra, involving the flying of Nashville-based musicians to Hollywood, was postponed at the last minute due to the death of a close friend of Sinatra's, Richard Conti.