

NASHVILLE!

• Continued from page N-35

heard in all 48 continental states—as a mail-in contest proved a few years ago.

And then, along came jazz.

In the late '50s, the music scene drew a very young Gary Burton to Nashville from Indiana, and he impressed no less an expert than Chet Atkins, who won the Playboy Jazz Poll guitarist award for nearly a decade.

Monday night jam sessions were held for years in Printer's Alley at the Carousel Club—an off night when the country musicians would sit in and play jazz. The leading picker was always Hank Garland, but the rest of the jazz lovers were on hand—and they included Gary Burton.

The first jazz LP to be cut in modern Nashville probably was the "Tennessee Firebird" album that Brad McCuen produced with Burton for RCA. "We used Burton's quartet and a large number of local pickers," recalls McCuen. "The men had a good time and this experience led to the formation of the band Area Code 615 which cut several commercially successful albums in the late '60s and early '70s."

Nashville is the home of the statewide Tennessee Jazz and

Blues Society, an organization that for the past seven years has held a Jazz Festival that has brought to Nashville such attractions as Duke Ellington, Stan Kenton, Dizzy Gillespie, Thad Jones-Mel Lewis, Stan Getz and their groups.

McCuen and Bruce Davidson have a National Public Radio network show on jazz that originates from the studios of WPLN-FM, Nashville, and is syndicated.

Jazz is still being recorded in Nashville. Some of the LPs that have been cut here in the last few years include "Earwitness" by George Tidwell and Dennis Solee, "S'Wonderful" by Joe Venuti/Curley Chalker/Jethro Burns/Eldon Shamblin, "Nashville Jam" with Vassar Clements, Doug Jernigan and Buddy Spicher, "Minors Aloud" by Buddy Emmons and Lenny Breau, "Me And My Heroes" by Buddy Spicher, "Bits Or Percussion & Jazz" by Farrell Morris/Stan Getz/Ron Carter, "Yesterday & Today" by Buddy Spicher & Friends, and the most recent, a direct-to-disk recording by Dave Brubeck.

Almost a decade ago, Mega Records, a Nashville label, released jazz LPs by Larry Coryell, Bernard Purdie, Benny Goodman, Eddie 'Cleanhead' Vinson and Leon Thomas.

Some early pop product emerged from Nashville with Snooky Lanson in the '40s. Woody Herman's orchestra also cut a session at the Ryman Auditorium in those days. Bullet cut many pop sessions in the '40s, including Dean Hudson's band. The major studio then was Castle Sound in the old Tulane Hotel, used by Decca, Columbia and others. Later, RCA

set up its own studio in a large garage on Broadway before moving to its new studio on 17th Avenue South.

Gospel music in Nashville also dates back to the mid-'40s. The first gospel group to record in Nashville was Wally Fowler and the Oak Ridge Quartet. In 1945, Fowler formed a record label known as Wally Fowler's All Night Sing Record Club, and recorded the Happy Goodman Family.

Fowler, a well-known entrepreneur of country and gospel music, formed Bullet Records with Jim Bulliett, one of the early recorders of gospel music in Nashville. Fowler brought the Goodmans to the label, and later became exclusively involved in gospel. In 1946 he produced recordings for Columbia Records in the studio located in the Tulane Hotel.

The same year, the Speer Family began a radio program of gospel music on WSIX-AM five days a week. On one 60-second spot they drew an unprecedented 38,000 pieces of mail. The Speers also began a daily morning television show over WLAC-TV.

In 1948, Fowler began the original First Friday Night gospel singing each month at the Ryman, broadcast over WSM.

Nashboro became a pioneer in the black gospel music realm, instituting the sale of gospel records through mail via radio, utilizing WLAC radio. Shannon Williams has reigned as chief producer for Nashboro.

Later, Hoyt Sullivan started another Nashville-based company dealing with black gospel. The company, H.S.E., has recently been purchased by a group of investors.

In the '60s, Skylite Recording Company began its label, selecting Brock Speer to produce most of its product in Nashville studios. RCA was active in gospel music in the '50s and '60s with the Blackwood Brothers, the Statesmen, the Speer Family, George Beverly Shea and Wendy Bagwell and the Sunliters.

Columbia, from the '40s to '60s, contracted the Chuck Wagon Gang and recorded the group in Nashville.

The Benson Co. was involved in the printing and publishing of gospel music from the '40s under the stewardship of John T. Benson Jr., and in the '60s, formed Heartwarming Records, later launching such labels as Greentree, Impact and Cross-Country.

Calvary Records and Supreme Record Co. are two other exclusive labels headquartered in Nashville, a town that has become a mecca for gospel artists, writers, publishing firms, talent agencies, management firms and related industries. It's also the home of the Gospel Music Assn. GMA's president is W.F. Myers of SESAC and the organizations' executive director is Don Butler.

The GMA promotes gospel music internationally with functions ranging from Congressional Breakfasts in Washington to the annual Dove Awards.

Nashville management, led by Joe Sullivan of Sound 70, has moved from the Dark Ages in dealing with pop acts to a new plateau. A few years ago, Dolly Parton left Top Billing while expanding her career. The table turned recently, though, when Bobby Bare left Bill Graham of San Francisco and ICM of L.A. to come to Top Billing and Sound 70 which are mapping a pop/country career slant for the veteran entertainer.

Nashville. You can't tell what's going to happen next. George Burns comes to town in his 80s, and records a country hit that spills over to adult contemporary and pop. Under the guidance of former Phonogram/Mercury vice president Charlie Fach, Burns is due back in Nashville soon for more recording and a tv special. Fach, head of Musiverse, moved to Nashville from Chicago a year ago, and beams, "I've never had as much fun in the record business as I did with the George Burns thing."

His next project is an album with Moses Dillard and Jesse Boyce, who have been scoring disco and pop success with their own productions out of Nashville.

There's Russ Miller and his lushly orchestrated productions for National Geographic Records, live entertainment venues from the remarkable facilities at Opryland to the Exit/In, Roy Christiansen and his classical label, one of the nation's premiere rock'n'roll events, the annual Charlie Daniels Volunteer Jam, and reams of talented musicians who, contrary to the Nashville play-it-by-the-ears stereotype, DO read music.

From Richard Nixon's visit to the "Grand Ole Opry" stage to the recent trip to Nashville of the Chinese Ambassador at the invitation of the CMA, the unusual becomes the usual in this city with no city limits.

The town is in ferment—and that brings problems as well as potentialities. The following articles deal specifically with some of the highlights. But even an issue this large can't begin to touch all areas and all of the creative people who are contributing to the total Nashville scene.

How about the organizations, producers, labels, studios, motion picture and tv productions, publishers, writers, commercials and jingles, technical facilities, retail outlets and radio stations? Not to mention such educational institutions as Belmont College—the first U.S. university to offer a four-year degree program in music industry management—and Middle Tennessee State Univ., Vanderbilt Univ. and Fisk where the Jubilee sound is still jubilant. What's believed to be the nation's only recording studio for high school students has been opened at Nashville's Hillsboro High School.

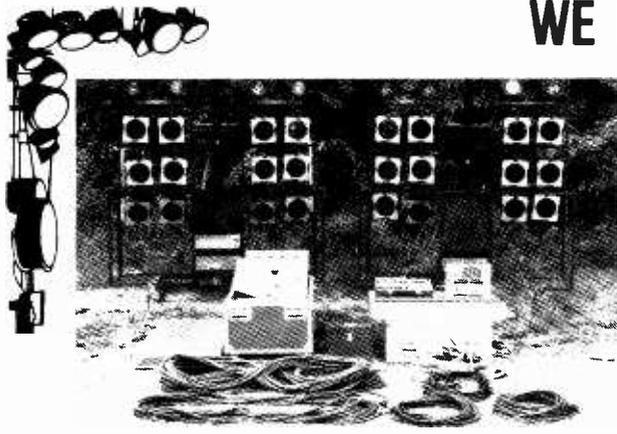
This week, Nashville is celebrating its 200th anniversary. The Century III parade will feature . . . what else? . . . eight musical attractions, ranging from rock to the Tennessee State Univ. Band.

The Nashville spectrum of sound is splayed across the broad sweep of musical and human colors, tastes and abilities. This Grand Central Station of creativity is nearing rush hour.

There are fast trains arriving and departing. And, for once, all are on time.

Billboard

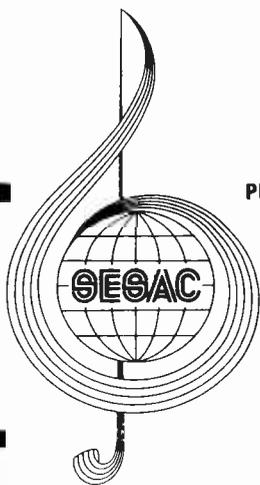
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