

The Man Who Scored With Ava Gardner, Debbie Reynolds, Lena Horne, Leslie Caron, Ann Blythe, Jane Powell, Ginger Rogers, Connie Francis, Betty Hutton, June Allyson, Kathryn Grayson, Cyd Charisse, Monica Lewis and Many Others

by HARVEY GELLER

In October of 1927 he exploded with a burst of Roman candle incandescence in Warners' lachrymose landmark talkie, *The Jazz Singer*. Nineteen years after, at the age of 62, Al (Asa Yoelson) Jolson, Hollywood's first singing sensation, the self-proclaimed "World's Greatest Entertainer," lay outmoded in an oxygen tent expiring in near obscurity at Cedars of Lebanon, while the Associated Press circulated his obituary and George Jessel rehearsed a eulogy.

A pilgarlic echo from that vanished universe of flappers, "flaming youth," Scott Fitzgerald, Sacco, Vanzetti and the silky swoosh of the old soft shoe, Jolson was visited by a former song plugger, Columbia Pictures tycoon Harry Cohen. An hour later, puffing a panatella, Cohen—who had been planning a nostalgic film based on the entertainer's life—staggered from the hospital room blubbing, "The guy's gonna die, he's gonna die."

But three months later, the "ghost" was walking, strutting, singing with more assurance than he had in 20 years. Cohen commissioned Jonie Taps, professional manager for Shapiro Bernstein Music, to peddle an album of

songs from the now-completed film featuring Jolson. Columbia, Victor and Decca President Jack Kapp respectfully declined. Kapp, who recalled that "Swanee" b/w "April Showers," the performer's only disc in 12 years, was a Decca disaster, told Taps, "I got Sophie Tucker, Harry Richman and Ted Lewis under contract—and I can't give them away. Crosby is the only singer making money for me now."

Even after seeing a preview of the film, Victor Prexy Eli Oberstein remained convinced: a Jolson album would never sell. Taps prevailed upon Kapp to see the film. He reportedly left the screening room in a rapturous daze. "You make the pictures," he advised Cohen, "and I'll make the records."

The Jolson Story was the most spectacular album seller in Decca history. "Astronomical," exulted label Exec VP Len Schneider in a March, '47 issue of *Billboard*. In eight weeks the five-pocket 78-rpm package and a single of "The Anniversary Song" had topped three million records. Jolson's first royalty check arrived while the film was still flourishing at NY's Radio City Music Hall. He had earned \$400,000.

"You make the pictures and I'll make the records," Kapp had said. Like Jolson, he died as the 50s were born. But both had survived to acknowledge *The Jolson Story* as the thunderous prelude that had inspired the introduction of original sound track albums.

It's astonishing that celluloid and shellac didn't merge 20 years sooner. Certainly the gods and goddesses who performed in those early musical spectacles—Ruth Etting, Rudy Vallee, Morton Downey, the Duncan Sisters, Fannie Brice, Kate Smith, Eddie Cantor, George Jessel, Ethel Waters etc., lured from radio and Broadway to Hollywood with extravagant offers—were already empyreal recording stars. Obviously it just didn't occur to anyone at the time that exact versions of screen songs might be more marketable than studio recreations. Consequently many of those who appeared in those lavish, absurd, enchanting, superficial musicals of the 30s and 40s—Janet Gaynor, Charles Farrell, Marion Davies, Ruby Keeler, Joan Blondell, John Payne, June Haver, Joan Leslie, Nancy Carroll etc.—were not, until recently, heard on records.

Jesse Kaye, a shy, reticent,

obscure talent booker, was chosen to produce the world's first original sound track album. In the 27 years since then, he has transferred virtually every M-G-M score. "They may not be the most imperishable moments ever put on film," Kaye allows, "but they are actually very valuable documents of a very special kind, bringing into our homes memorable performances by stars who were actors and dancers first, singers second. Without those albums we'd probably never get the chance to hear people like Peter Lawford, Gene Kelly, Esther Williams, Ann Miller, Marge and Gower Champion, Mickey Rooney . . .

"Also, it's nice to receive an occasional thank-you note from Mel Ferrar for royalty checks on his work in *Lili*. Or to hear, back in 1950, the young Debbie Reynolds say, 'I paid off the mortgage on my folks' home with the first royalty check from 'Aba Daba Honeymoon.'"

"Louis Jordan's contract for *Gigi* didn't include sound track rights. When I told him that M-G-M wanted him in an album, he was surprised. He argued that he was an actor—not a singer. But he finally agreed—and has since re-

Pioneering the Original Sound Track Album

ceived much more in album royalties than he got as salary for starring in the film."

Amiably philosophic in his anonymity, Kaye was born in Mt. Vernon, N.Y., and spent his early years with the Fox Theater chain. Kaye remembers, "It was the tail-end of the vaudeville era—when stage shows were in vogue." By the time he was in his late 20s, Kaye was booking talent for all the Fox Theaters throughout the US, including New York's palatial Roxy. The Roxy's rotunda included huge green marble columns, 20-foot chandeliers, a gilded catafalque and a 2½-ton oval rug, the largest in the world. A celebrated *New Yorker* cartoon, published in the 30s, depicted a child asking her mother as they entered the Roxy, "Does God live here?"



By '42 Kaye had joined the Loew's chain, selecting the headliners and big bands for NY's Capitol and Loew's State, as well as the Capitol Theater in Washington, D.C.

"Leo the Lion found his voice in '29," Kaye retrospects, "but it took 18 years before he made it to

the phonograph... In 1946 M-G-M decided they wanted to get into the phonograph business—to help publicize their films—and they hired Frank Walker who, I believe, was with Victor at the time. One day I got a call saying someone had suggested I go to the West Coast for the label. During an early discussion an executive in New York—no one remembers who—mentioned that an album of music from the sound track of a film might be a good idea. Less than a month later I was on the West Coast, recording such diverse talents as Lauritz Melchior, Bob Wills, Billy Eckstine and Art Lund. But I remembered the sound track suggestion and started looking for the right production."

The film, produced in late '46, was *Till the Clouds Roll By*, a glossy biography of Jerome Kern with an all-star cast including June Allyson, Judy Garland, Lena Horne, Tony Martin and Frank Sinatra. "At the time none of us realized that we were creating a new form of entertainment."

"Transferring was a complicated process, vastly different from going into a recording studio with singers and musicians and walking out, three hours later, with three or four completed sides. In '47 we were still using the breakable 78-rpm shellac records, requiring frequent changes of needles. Those 10-inch discs could contain only three minutes and 14 seconds of sound per side—and many of the great film musical numbers ran eight minutes or more. Above all, remember that it was before the days of tape recording.



"We had to go back to the film, originally recorded on multiple tracks, and re-mix the orchestra and voices, anticipating the present-day use of four, eight and 16 tracks on tape. In addition, we monitored the sound for the phonograph. What sounds sensational in the theater is not necessarily great in a living room. We had to add highs and lows to spread the sound. We added a bit of echo and came up with a brighter recording that gave the vocalist more presence.

"With the aid of film, studio engineers and editors we were able to do in the recording studio what film studios had been doing for years: edit songs and music from multiple film tracks, make them shorter or longer and remix the ingredients to get what we wanted—none of which could be done with other recordings until tape arrived some years later."

Kaye not only spearheaded MGM's* Coast A&R activities but for nearly 20 years he was sales, promotion, artist relations and pressing plant manager. Along the way he produced Art Lund's

"Mam'selle," Sheb Wooley's "Purple People Eater," Billy Eckstine's "I Apologize," David Rose's "The Stripper" and a couple of hundred other chart titles. From *Clouds* in '47 to *Kazablanca* in '74, the world's first and official score-keeper has never kept score. "People ask how many albums I've done. I don't know. Maybe 1,000—maybe 2,000—I have no idea."

Dr. Zhivago sold over two million discs. *Good News* and *American in Paris* between four and five hundred thousand each. "There was a time, in *Billboard*, Kaye recalls, "when three of the top five albums were M-G-M sound tracks and another was a George Shearing album I produced.

"But there were other, more personal rewards... Convincing Leslie Caron that her lovely, simple and utterly charming performance of 'Hi-Lili, Hi-Lo' on the sound track would be more successful than a new arrangement with a larger orchestra. It became an enormous hit. Or helping Ava Gardner accomplish a genuinely unique achievement.

"While she was shooting the 1951 version of *Showboat*, Miss Gardner, hardly a trained singer, preferred to concentrate on the dramatic demands of the role and accepted a voice 'double.' But after the film was completed she came to me and asked if it would be possible to sing on the sound track album. We spent an afternoon together on M-G-M's huge musical stage while she put her voice to tracks of 'Bill' and 'Can't Help Lovin' That Man.' So when

*Those interested in corporate hyphenation know that the studio always retained hyphens between its initials—M-G-M—while its record division began with hyphens, then dropped them to become MGM.

you see *Showboat* you are hearing someone else. Only on the album can you hear Gardner.

"Working with Lionel Barrymore on *A Christmas Carol* was an inspiration. The man was extraordinary, always right on the button—except once. I tried to be diplomatic, correcting that one slight slip, but how does one criticize a Barrymore? I hemmed and hawed until he finally interrupted, 'What's the use of talkin'?'—Whether one button on the fly is open, or two buttons, the God-damned fly is open! Let's try it again.' "

When Richard Rodgers viewed *Words and Music*, a pot-boiler musical based on his life, he told Kaye, "The only good thing about that picture is that they had Janet Leigh playing my wife. That I found *highly* acceptable."

To a nostalgia-washed world, yearning to mingle with the old time throng, such recently released packages as Warner Brothers' original motion picture recordings of the scores, scenes,

Kaye produced) *M-G-M Musicals* are towering events, auricular reruns of Fred Astaire, with twirling tails, and Ginger Rogers, in a snow-storm of feathers, dancing cheek to cheek . . . Gene Kelly, tapping through puddles, whirling an umbrella, singing in the rain . . . Dick Powell crooning "I Only Have Eyes for You" to a Busby Berkeley created collage of Ruby Keelers . . . Jeannette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy, face to face, forsaking kisses for cadenzas . . .

The Bijou, the Band Box, the scattered pictures of the smiles we left behind, are perpetuated in polyvinyl and shrink-wrapped in 12¼-inch jackets . . .

20th Century Records markets *Remember Marilyn* (Monroe), *Remember Tommy* (Dorsey), *Remember Glenn* (Miller), *Remember Shirley* (Temple) . . . RCA's *Stars of the Silver Screen* Vintage Series offers Sophie Tucker, George Jessel, Ginger Rogers, Bebe Daniels, MacDonald and Eddy . . . Monmouth's *Nostalgia's Greatest Hits* reintroduces Gloria Swanson, Ramon Navarro, Walter Pidgeon . . . Coral's *Hollywood Sings* revives Eddie Cantor, Walter Huston, Tony Martin . . . MCA reprises W.C. Fields and the Marx Bros. . . . EMI's *Great Movie Stars of the 30s* rekindles Frances Langford, Adolph Menjou, Lilli Palmer . . . Star-Tone reclaims Orson Welles, Will Rogers, Humphrey Bogart . . . Columbia's Hall of Fame and Masterwork series redeems Dick Powell, Mae West, Ethel Merman and Fred Astaire . . .

Kaye maintains that the golden era of original movie musicals

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Debbie Reynolds and Jesse Kaye

succumbed in the mid-50s, silenced by inflation and an expanding world market, supplanted by pale paraphrases of Broadway shows and low-budget features starring Elvis Presley, Frankie Avalon, Annette Funicello and Connie Stevens.

"From a financial standpoint, musicals are dangerous. They were never terribly successful outside of the US. Those rotating stages and platforms, those 1,500 dancers and singers in a single scene, they'd be monstrously expensive to duplicate today."

The once-glorious M-G-M monolith has decimated its music department and is selling off its Culver City back-lots while the unglorified, unGrammyed sire of the sound track, no longer employed by the studio and label he pioneered, sustains as a free-lance music coordinator/album producer.

"My future?" Kaye appropriates a line from an ancient Richard

Whiting copyright . . . "Just passed."

"Music is a young man's business. My only function, perhaps, is to guide, if that's possible. But there are rewards: the albums themselves. And the films. Who doesn't remember them with pleasure and affection?"

"Some of it was junk," says Harry Warren, who composed dozens of Warners' early film scores. "But damn it, the songs go on. They sort of have a life of their own, bringing back all kinds of crazy memories."

Tunesmith Harold Arlen concurs. The era of those light-hearted, elegant films was "a sensational period—Kern, Warren, Gershwin, Dorothy Fields, Jimmy McHugh, Oscar Hammerstein—all of us writing pictures. It's sometimes impossible to remember what the pictures actually were. But the scores remain rich. It's the songs that survive."



stars and songs of the past 50 years and MGM's limited edition reissues of *Those Glorious* (all

Casablanca (the Legend) Lives Again as Casablanca (the Record Label) Hatches in Style

Gamblers Reveled, Eaters Gorged, Drinkers Imbided and Dancers Shimmied.

All this and more went on during the "party of the year," celebrating Casablanca's union with WB. It took place Monday, Feb. 18, the holiday celebrating George Washington's non-birthday. General motif was, of course, Rick's Room in Morocco, and the atmospheric details, my dears, almost surpassed perfection. A hired Humphrey Bogart look-alike was on hand at the door to greet guests. The classic film *Casablanca* flickered silently behind the merriment as gaming table fanatics tumbled the dice. A steaming table buffeted to the left, bars flowed to the right and Casablanca's new group Kiss was stuck in the middle doing a half-hour live set. Their visuals, the likes of flame-swallowing, dry ice, Kabuki Lion make-up and levitation, helped add excitement to an already sweatily-ecstatic ballroom. A bit loud for the Century Plaza Hotel, it's no wonder the party was held in the basement. VIPs, most garbed in 40s gear, included Alice Cooper, Rodney Bingenheimer, Shep Gordon, Herb Cohen, Tony Outeda, Channel 7's Eyewitness News, Carmen Miranda, Sidney Greenstreet (bedecked as a Bedouin), David Janssen, Iggy Pop, Bobby Goldsboro, Burt Cummings and Dick Clark.

Melody Maker Is a Fascinating Magazine. "Teenager" (and derivatives thereof) is a word that's been Top 10 for enough years to be a teenager. And it's, if you'll pardon me, actually a touch passé. Currently, however, there's

a crop of 45s popping up in local diskeries whose titles not only include this term, but whose lyrics repeat it and repeat it and repeat it. For reasons known only to the staff, *Melody Maker* (famed English fanzine) asked their teen-age readers to write in saying what they thought of the whole thing. Particular emphasis was put on Marc Bolan's latest, "Teenage Dream." Mentioned too were Alice Cooper's "Teenage Lament '74" and Sweet's "Teenage Rampage." Here are a few of the most unusual replies. From Dominica Webster, age 14, Sussex: "All of a sudden all of the records have 'teenager' in the titles. I don't know why, really. I think Sweet and Marc Bolan might be aiming at a particular market, but I don't think Alice Cooper is. I wouldn't think about anything concerning 'Teenage Dream,' as I don't play Marc Bolan anyway. I just dream of meeting Alice Cooper. I like his

music, him and his band. I like his antics, too. I'd like to meet him. . . . I haven't been to any concerts yet. Sometimes I tried to go, but I couldn't get hold of the tickets. I'd go to see Alice but this MP—Leo Abse—tried to get him banned. So he decided to do an American tour instead. Alice Cooper doesn't chop up chickens. Beheading babies? I think that's fun! You don't take it seriously." From Mark Champ, age 16, Cardiff: "I don't often think of myself as a teenager, but being called one doesn't bother me—it won't last forever. You can keep Marc Bolan—I'm too old for dreams." Another winner from Cardiff, Stephen Davis, age 16: "I don't go to concerts. There's too much noise to enjoy them." Eileen Cassidy, age 14, a Renfrewshire, writes: "When you get to 13, it's good to think that you are a teenager. When you're 12 you're considered a child. It's good to be 13 and better to be 14. 'Teenage

Dream' means freedom; being allowed to do what you want. Freedom. Oh, and David Cassidy." Karen Bagshawe, age 18, Derbys: "My impression of Marc Bolan's 'Teenage Dream' conjures up a picture of silly girls slapping on make-up in front of a mirror." And, finally, we come to Julia Percy's letter. She's 17 and from Liverpool: "I don't know 'Teenage Dream' by Marc Bolan, although I vaguely remember hearing it on the radio. It sounds to me as if he is reminiscing about his own teenage years."

Our Man in New York Reports on Another Fete.

Valentine's Day saw Larry Graham's Central Station honored at a gala luncheon in WB's New York townhouse. According to Mr. Man in Big Apple, "The party was a raving success with much eggplant parmigiana and herb bread consumed while the press played 'getting to know you' with WB's latest soul sensation. As time wore on and spirits soared, feet started tapping. Suddenly, after the last piece of baklava was downed, the joint erupted into a full-fledged dance party with GCS members, working press and WB staffers all joining in. (New York, as all should know, is the dance capital of the universe—home of 'the bump'—the only dance step *never* seen on Soul Train). Everyone, including caterers, joined in the fun. Seen cutting up the rug was WB Publicity Director Billie Wallington with none other than GCS organist 'Butch' Sam. Larry Graham and Lady Patrice 'Chocolate' Banks started doing their own thing together, but wound up with a variety of partners—Larry met his



Life-size stuffed camel (door prize), Humphrey Bogart look-alike (hired hand) and Neil Bogart (president of Casablanca Records) watch the party spin on.

match in the person of *Ebony's* Phyl Garland (author of the *Sound of Soul*—so she should know), while many of WB's staff, from mail clerks to department heads, got down. The record that this fun crowd found irresistible to their funky feet was none other than Graham Central Station's own hit Reprise debut deck." All I can add is it's too bad we don't have pix of that one.

Ruby's Run-Ons

◆ As long as you're reading *Circular*, you might well be checking into *Compendium*. It's **A&M Records'** classy and witty house organ. For subscriptions write to: **Ms. Dorene Lauer** (a WB alumna), Managing Editor, *Compendium*, A&M Records, 1416 N. LaBrea, Hollywood, Calif. 90028. The wit's from **Bud Scoppa**, editor-in-chief; the good-looking layout comes from the eyes of **Junie Osaki** and the excellent advice and consent's from **Publicity Director and Ruby Monday Favorite Andy Meyer**. ◆ By the way, since this *Compendium* stole one from me, I'm copping an item from them: **Tass** (official USSR newspaper) recently reported that pop music has replaced religion in the United States. Let's hope *Tass* is right. ◆ **Randy Newman** soon to appear on Don Kirshner's Rock Concert. He'll add his unique talents to a **Jim Croce** tribute which'll also feature **Loggins and Messina, Carpenters and Cashman and West**. Watch for this segment, because **Don Kirshner** himself will make his acting debut emceeding the affair. ◆ Latest **Beach Boys'** news is they're cur-

rently cutting background vocals for **Elton John's** forthcoming LP. The BBs are working in Santa Monica, Calif., in their newest 24-track studio, custom-designed by **Steve Moffitt**, who's their long-time chief engineer. ◆ Congratulations, best wishes, good vibes and whatever out to **Terry Melcher** and bride, **Melissa Whitaker**, married recently in Rancho Santa Fe. Matron of honor was, of course, **Doris Day**. ◆ Capricorn Records reports they've just signed **Ms. Kitty Wells**, queen of country & western music. Her sound just might be changing in the near future, however. First single out for Capricorn/WB will be a rendition of **Bob Dylan's** "Forever Young." Well, we'll all just wait and see.

◆ **Black Sabbath**, with a little help from **Bedlam** (opening act), just crashed the house record at Pittsburgh's Civic Arena. They garnered over \$76,000 in a one-nighter, according to promotion outfit **Pacific Presentations**. ◆ **Dianne Warwicke** coming in with raves from her recent stint at Las Vegas' Riviera Hotel. "Ms. Warwicke never looked or sounded better than she did here on opening night," gushed *The Daily Variety*, among others. ◆ While I'm quoting complimentary reviews, new WB act **Quacky Duck and His Barnyard Friends** (expect the album out in March) got a goodie from *Record World*. "They had a marvelously good time on stage and their mirth was gloriously contagious. Highlights of the evening included . . . flute expertise and a unique countrified version of 'Satisfaction.' The evening ended with a rock & rolling ditty, 'The Barnyard Song,' which left the audience with a good-time



Local gendarme, Carmen Miranda and Sidney Greenstreet hang around at Rick's place.

feeling that the band had bestowed upon them." These raves from the pen of **Roberto Skopp**.

◆ It seems **Frank Sinatra** is out of retirement forever. Now he's off on a 10-city, 12-concert tour, kicking off at NYC's Carnegie Hall April 8. It's **Blue Eyes'** first appearance at the Hall. ◆ Much merchandising hysteria sparked by **Foghat's** newest LP, *Energized*. There'll be stickers, posters and tee-shirts, all of which glow in the dark. Electric signs are in progress, plus full color mobiles. A Sunset Strip billboard can be seen for miles and miles, thanks to green neon tubing. There's a 60-second TV spot you can catch if you watch enough TV and a 25-minute film of the group performing live, which should show up in local theaters and on the tube. ◆ What is **avian-guano?** ◆ Interesting jots from England include info that most recording studios have to use portable generators to record LPs while the nation chugs along on a three-day work week. This, of course, affects **Chrysalis acts Jethro Tull and Procol Harum**.

◆ **Kiss**, Casablanca's own and mentioned at this column's open-

ing, will shortly embark on a US concert tour with **Argent** and **Savoy Brown**. P.S. **Kiss**, the LP, was a recent *Record World* FM Sleeper of the Week Pick.

◆ **Chick Churchill's** just installed a completely-outfitted weather station on his roof in England. ◆ I've been neglecting birthdays for months now, so here go some Happy Natalty wishes to **George Harrison, Emmitt Rhodes and Enrico Caruso** Feb. 25; **Fats Domino, Johnny Cash, Jackie Gleason and Bob Hite** Feb. 26; **Joe South and Alex Taylor** Feb. 28; **Roger Daltry, Dinah Shore, Harry Belafonte and Ralph Gleason** March 1; **John Cowsill, Willie Chambers, Jay Osmond, Karen Carpenter and Lou Reed** March 2; **Chris Stainton** March 3; **Chris Squire and Chastity Bono** March 4; **Rex Harrison** March 5; **David Gilmore, Sylvia Robinson, Mary Wilson and Hugh Grundy** March 6; **Matthew Fisher and Chris Taylor-White** March 7; **Mickey Dolenz and Randy Meisner** March 8; and **Alan Jardine, Robin Trower, Lloyd Price, Keely Smith and Mark Lindsay** March 9. Enough is definitely plenty in that category. ◆

Montrose Meets Moira at the Big Apple



LONDON—I'm a bit strapped for news this week as my principal informant, Dave-the-Rave Walters is on holiday in the Canaries, sorting through invites to nude sun-bathing parties (to paraphrase his postcard). Moira Bellas will have to take her fun where she finds it on her imminent working visit to the States. First she's escorting British journalist Caroline Boucher to LA to immortalize the Beach Boys for the *Observer's* Sunday color magazine. Then the mobile Miss B will re-employ—this time on behalf of Montrose—the tactic that

so successfully initiated the British press to the Doobies, (who, by the way, are now in the charts here with "Listen to the Music"). That is, she'll airlift some adroit Anglo scribes to the Big Apple for a preliminary glimmer of the hefty quartet, so that when Montrose reaches these shores they will come not as strangers. Monster, the *bete noir* of the Greek Street press office, will do his bit in Moira's absence to instill Montrose mania in any receptive breast. Monster is the band's biggest fan here. A rumor is that Warner's

general manager demolished a perfectly good pair of speakers by playing Montrose through them.

Prelude's Gold Rush. On the basis of a couple of strong singles, one could argue a case for making records without instruments (especially as the M.U. is itchy to raise session fees again). Over Christmas, Steeleye Span distinguished themselves with the unaccompanied gem, "Gaudete." Now a group called Prelude, on an obscure English label, are doing brisk business with a most heavenly a cappella arrangement of Neil Young's "After the Goldrush" (easily the boy's finest hour, or, at any rate, three or four minutes, I will always think). I hope you'll ultimately get to hear this little beauty, but as of this writing, Prelude doesn't seem to have a deal in the States.

Excessive Baggage. Speaking, however loosely, of deals, Fairport Convention recently got a raw one from their now ex-manager. During the group's last world tour he put all the gear on the plane from Tokyo to Christchurch, N.Z., as excess baggage, rather than freight, to the painful tune of some \$7500—very nearly a week's drinking budget for the bibulous band.

Turkeys Drink, Gobble, Gig. Speaking, however loosely, of drinking, I saw Wild Turkey (named for the popular spirit) at the venerable (accepted euphemism for squalid) Marquee club the other night. They've got a new drummer called Kevin Curry, alumnus of Supertramp. The group've been gigging feverishly lately and consequently have im-

proved beyond recognition. A welcome diversion from the ubiquitous election blabbering.

Carrot Juice O.D. I think the election's even driving the papers crazy. My beloved *Times*, than which no rag is more straight up, was driven to reporting—as if to escape the boring major issues—the death of a man due to carrot juice addiction and a suggestion from a social worker that prostitutes should be available on the national health service.

—SHELLEY BENOIT

Top Ten

Warner Bros. Sales Figures for Week of February 11-17

1. Deep Purple/*Burn* (W/L8W/L5W 2766)
2. Seals & Crofts/*Unborn Child* (W/L8W/L5W 2761)
3. Marshall Tucker/*A New Life* (CP/M8/M5 0124)
4. Grateful Dead—*The Best Of (Skeletons From the Closet)* (W/L8W/L5W 2764)
5. Todd Rundgren/*Todd* (2BR/K8/K5 6952)
6. Badfinger (BS/M8/M5 2762)
7. Black Sabbath/*Sabbath, Bloody Sabbath* (BS/M8/M5 2695)
8. Malo/*Acención* (BS/M8/M5 2769)
9. Slade/*Stomp Your Hands, Clap Your Feet* (BS/M8/M5 2770)
10. Gregg Allman/*Laid Back* (CP/M8/M5 0116)

Horror at Hollywood Wax Museum



The story as reported in Los Angeles newspapers and on radio and television was odd enough.

It seems that there's this fellow at the Hollywood Wax Museum specifically employed to scare the pants off of touristy customers. Dark and mysterious

looking, he poses in one of the exhibits. Passing gawkers take him to be one of the wax figures (he must stand *very still*) until he leaps out of the shadows at them, raising blood pressure, causing a good scream or two and similar merriment.

Boo Bust

On a recent Saturday night, the fellow was doing his job as usual until one of the scarees, taking him to be a Hollywood lunatic rather than a certified employee reported the commotion to the local constabulary. Meanwhile, our friend the actor, not realizing that this had been done, reposed in wait for the next group of customers.

Two of Los Angeles' finest, answering a robbery-in-progress call, dashed into the Hollywood Wax Museum, searching for the culprits. Not seeing the uniforms as they came around the dark corner, and figuring the footsteps to be those of scarable customers, the actor leaped from the shadows. Not liking to be leapt at, especially when investigating a reported robbery-in-progress, the police came out fighting. Fortunately, though, nobody was hurt and everybody got a good laugh.

The End? Not quite.

The actor, it seems, is named Kuldip Singh. Ring a bell?

If not, cast your mind back to 1956. Groucho Marx, on his comedy quiz show *You Bet Your Life*, was impressed by a handsome young beturbanned Indian premed student from UCLA.

Cool Dip

Kuldip appeared on *You Bet Your Life* on November 15, 1956. A week before, RCA had released his first single: two sides of romantic balladry recorded in Hollywood under the direction of Henri Rene: Cy Coben's "Love You Don't Give Me a Thing," backed

with "Don't Take My Heart," by Ben Raleigh and Georges Lecocque.

Kuldip was a sensation. Young, handsome, carrying the flavor of the Exotic East—and he could sing.

Not enough of a sensation, apparently. The single was, as they say so poetically down at the warehouse, a stiff. Kuldip ("listening to him is like taking a cool dip of water" was the slogan, in fact) disappeared from public memory.

Until Saturday night, Feb. 9, at the Hollywood Wax Museum.

— TODD EVERETT

Vinyl Statistics

Circular is pleased to present a running account of newborn Warner Family Records, everything from 7 to 12 inches in diameter, a list stripped of adjectives, avoidable nouns and even verbs. The past week has given birth to five singles, no known albums.

SINGLES (February 20)

- "Sign of the Lion"—
Tony Joe White—Warner
Bros. single WB 7780
- "Green Monkey"—America—
Warner Bros. single
WB 7785
- "Love Hurts"—
Gram Parsons—
Reprise single REP 1192
- "Tell Me Why"—Life—
Reprise single REP 1185
- "Bail Out"—Maxayn—
Capricorn single CPR 0041

High in 1934



When did "high fidelity" begin? It's all highly relative, of course—a 1911 disc has higher fidelity than a 1901 cylinder. If you ask at what point the term "high fidelity" made its deepest imprint upon the public consciousness, ranking right up there with Madison Avenue by-words like "hexachlorophene" and "halitosis," you'd have to say the mid-1950s.

By the time Eisenhower got re-elected, your highbrow friends could safely display a component

system (even one with all the tubes exposed) in their living room without being feared as mad scientists, while your lowbrow neighbors had begun referring to practically any reasonably new disc-playing apparatus (regardless of its sonic performance) as "hifi." (It's worth noting parenthetically that Warner Bros. Records, upon its entrance in 1958, prided itself above all as being a maker of sonically superior records: the jacket liners even bore a photograph of a studio mixing console).

Hertz Increase

Most people, then, would think of the "high fidelity" phenomenon as being roughly contemporaneous with the ducktail. In truth, however, the magic phrase became famous (albeit only among a rather select audience) a number of years before even Eisenhower became any kind of household word. In his excellent history of the medium, *The Fabulous Phonograph*, Roland Gelatt specifies 1934 as the date at which the phrase came into general use in phonograph and record advertisements.

It being the depression and all, high fidelity didn't exactly become a billion-dollar industry overnight. But for those who could afford them, the records and phonographs of 1934 could boast of substantial improvements over those of 1929—a frequency range of some 30 to 8,000 hertz vs. the earlier range of 50 to 6,000, plus quieter surfaces and increased dynamic range.

"The surging and excitement of a first-class orchestra have been captured for the first time," read

one ad.

After a few years the "high fidelity" idea gradually disappeared from use, to lie fallow until its revival in the 1950s. But in its 1934 glory the magic phrase (actually coined in 1926, as far as can be determined, by one Harold A. Hartley) was of great assistance in resurrecting the record business, which had come perilously close to expiring altogether in the early 1930s.

Question for Next Week

Enjoying the crash of cymbals and the boom of tympani as I do, I think I'll stay on this high fidelity kick for another week. Despite the prevalence of "high fidelity" in 1930s advertising, the magic

phrase had to wait until 1954 to be regularly used on the labels of a major record company's new disc releases, and then only as part of a longer and even more grandiloquent slogan. What was the major label involved (one of the top 10 in American sales), and what was the complete slogan?

The magic answer to all three questions of Demento's 2/4 quiz is "Ambrose," given correctly and first by Rod Weller of Tampa, Fla. (Confidential to Rod: it never got readied or even pressed.)

Each week the good doctor poses a music lore question whose answer is the focus of his subsequent column. The earliest reply to his question (mailed to Dr. Demento, c/o Circular, Warner Bros. Records, 3701 Warner Blvd., Burbank, Ca. 91505) wins any single Warner/Reprise catalog album. (Please specify choice.) Answers will be geographically pro-rated; ties will be judged on the basis of penmanship, wit and lucidity.

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