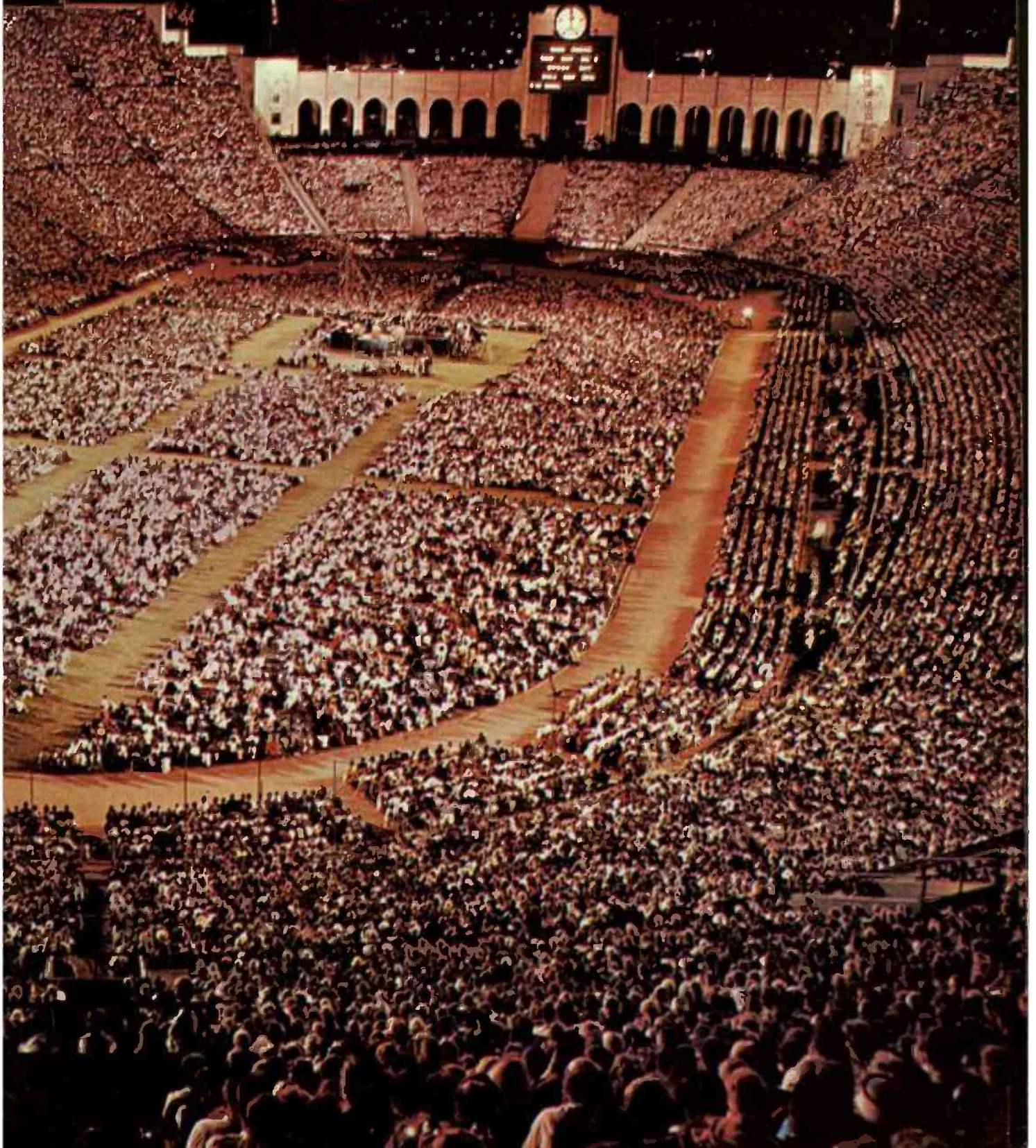


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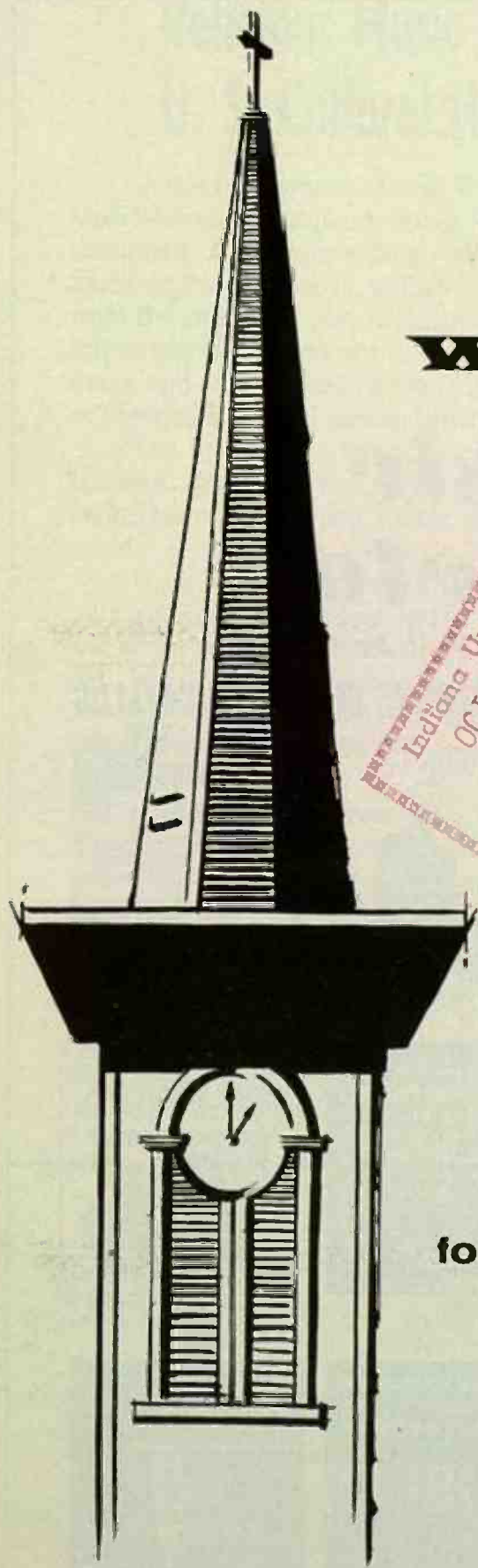
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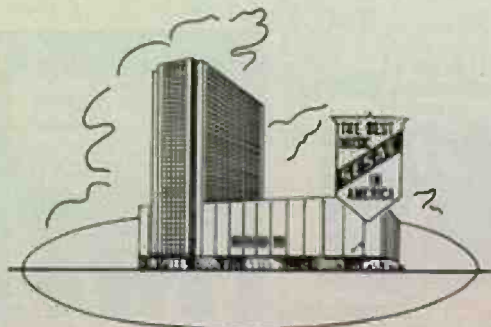
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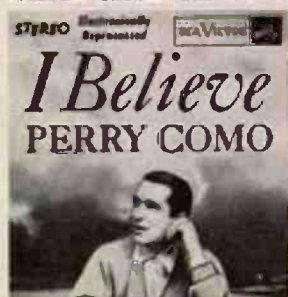
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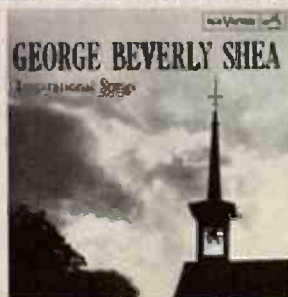
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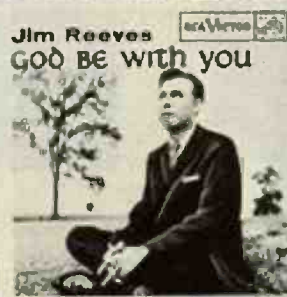
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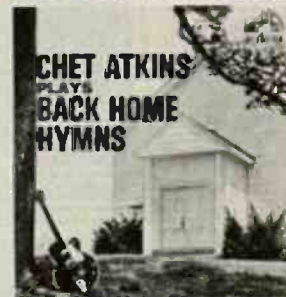
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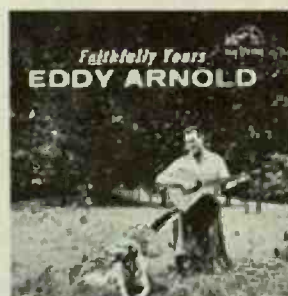
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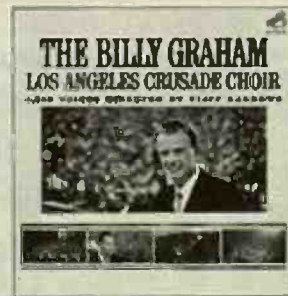
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Religious Music Part of U. S. Cultural Heritage

In this first annual issue of The World of Religious Music—and in future annuals—Billboard seeks to document the all-pervading influence of religious music in the total music industry. As will be apparent from the many articles, religious music in its various forms represents one of the cultural highlights of the music and record industries; and it is part of the fabric of America's cultural and spiritual heritage.

Too, its influence has spilled over from the purely religious sphere, so that it is a dominant force in the mainstream of the pop music of America and the world.

These various aspects of the total religious field will be amplified and illustrated by the many articles by and about such personalities as Darol Rice, Tim Spencer, Jerry Wexler, the many gospel quartets, Mahalia Jackson, The Staple Singers, Zenas Sears and the literally dozens of names who are incorporated in this issue.

It is impossible, in one issue, to present the entire story and the entire scene. That is why this issue is Volume I. We feel that Volume I will give the reader a good idea of the scope, importance and flavor of the field; of its part in the history Musical Americana. Future issues of this annual will add to this lore.

Meanwhile, we thank the many people in the religious field—artists, record executives, producers, radio personalities and the many others who have helped us make this first issue a success.

Billboard

Published Weekly by

(The Billboard Publishing Company
2160 Patterson St., Cincinnati, Ohio 45214
Tel.: 381-6450

Publisher

Hal B. Cook New York Office

Editorial Office

165 W. 46th St., New York, N. Y. 10036
Area Code 212, PL 7-2800
Cable: BILLBOARD NEWYORK

Editor-in-Chief Lee Zhito

Editors Paul Ackerman, Aaron Sternfeld

U. S. Editorial Offices

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Chicago, Midwest Editor Ray Brack
Washington Bureau Chief Mildred Hall
Nashville News Editor Elton Whisenhunt
Hollywood, W. Coast News Elliot Tiegol
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Subscription Fulfillment

Send Form 3579 to
2160 Patterson St., Cincinnati, Ohio 45214
Fulfillment Manager Joseph Pace

U. S. Branch Offices

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Vol. 77

No. 44

THE WORLD OF RELIGIOUS MUSIC

Contents

Gospel Quartets on Bus	10
All Night Sing	20
National Quartet Convention	26
Gospel Breakthrough	32
Fathers of Modern Gospel	34
Spreading the Word	38
Gospel Combines	42
Statesmen Skyrocket	48
Oak Ridge Boys	50
Gospel and Politics	52
The LeFevres	54
Happy Goodmans	56
Blackwood Brothers	58
Gospel Music Association	66
Negro Gospel	71
"We Shall Overcome"	74
Staple Singers	75
TV Show	76
Herman Lubinsky	78
Zenas Sears	79
Gospel Nightclubs	80
Mahalia Jackson	82
Peacock Records	82
Religious Networks	83
Darol Rice	84
Country and Gospel	86
Red Foley and Ernie Ford	88
West Coast Gospel	90

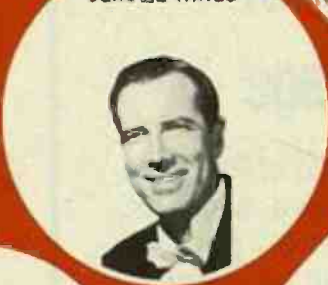
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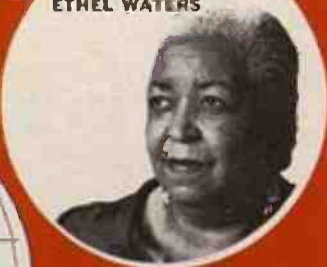
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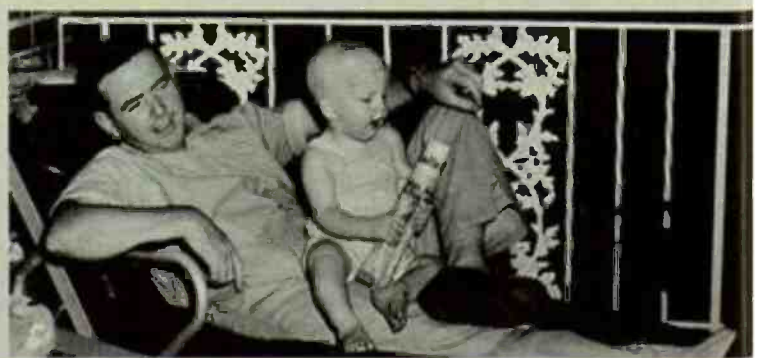
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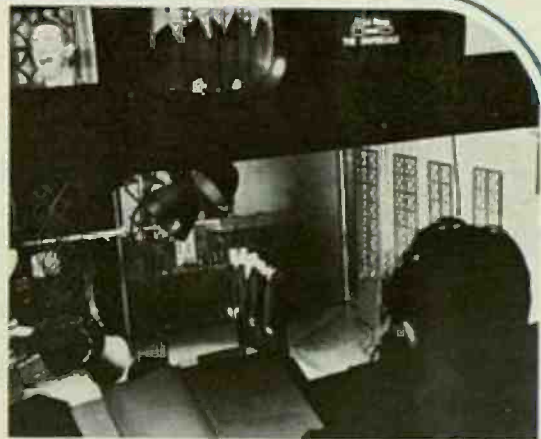




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The above things are some of the things that occupy the days of Imperials Quartet and help to make them tops in the field of gospel music. Some of these things may not seem worth mentioning to you, but the Imperials feel that everything they do affects their singing and their oneness as a group. Yes, with the Imperials, singing is the thing! And everything else only complements this. The Imperials feel (and it's very obvious to their fans) that to produce the sound that they are forever striving to produce, and to accomplish the things that they are trying to accomplish, every minute of every day must be dedicated to a single purpose.

And with Jake Hess, Armond Morales, Gary McSpadden, Sherrill Nielson, and Henry Slaughter, the single purpose is to produce a better sound with each coming day, and to reach more and more people with the Gospel in music. And when you listen to these five gentlemen performing, you can rest assured that these are possibly the happiest people around because they truly live to sing.

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From Model T to Highway Pullman...

GOSPEL QUARTETS

The pioneering gospel quartets of four decades ago traveled the dusty back roads of their area in chugging Model T's to sing to small groups in country churches. Their radius of operation was not more than 75 miles from their home city.

Today, the top performing groups travel from coast-to-coast in modern, air-conditioned, custom-made buses which cost \$52,500 and have every comfort and convenience. They travel super highways instead of rutted farm roads and sing before large crowds in air-conditioned churches, schools, auditoriums, in stadiums and at county fairs. In the beginning the quartets worked for little or nothing. Today the financial rewards for the top groups are handsome.

The evolution in personal appearances of gospel quartets over the years parallels the improvements in our mode of travel. Among the early traveling pioneer groups were the Stamps Quartet of Dallas, formed in 1924 by the late Frank H. Stamps, and the Blackwood Brothers, who lived in a farm house near Ackerman, Miss.

The Blackwoods started out in 1934, driving a 1929 Chevrolet with primitive loudspeakers mounted on top, traveling the dirt roads of the Mississippi hill country inviting people to come hear them at the neighborhood church or the little country school house.



DOUBLE-DECKER type buses were bought by Statesmen Quartet and Blackwood Brothers at same time in 1962. Empty buses cost \$40,000 each. It

In those days, the few professional quartets lived a rigorous, soul-trying and often hungry existence. Many a time they missed a meal. They frequently had to depend on the thoughtfulness and hospitality of host groups for meals and lodging. Most appearances were in churches where a free will offering was taken. When a concert performance was arranged, admission was 10 cents for children and 15 cents for adults. No one got rich on those prices. Moreover, it took

a man dedicated to singing and promoting gospel music to remain with a quartet.

In those embryo times the gospel music publishing companies sponsored quartets to promote the company's gospel song books. Leading gospel book publishers were the Vaughan Music Co., V. O. Stamps Music Publishing Co., J. M. Henson Music Co. and A. J. Showalter Music Publishing Co. The Stamps company later became the Stamps-Baxter Music Co. until Mr. Stamps'

From Gravel Roads to Superhighways

TAKE TO THE ROAD



Look another \$12,500 each to get the inside customized for traveling comfort, which includes everything from sleeping quarters to an intercom system.

death in 1941. Stamps' brother, Frank H. Stamps, bought the company and in 1945 it became Stamps Quartet Music Co.

The sponsored quartet members were paid \$12 to \$15 a week. They would attend various gospel sing conventions, sing from the books of their publishing company and by this good will promote the company and create a market for sale of the company's song books.

Live performing gospel quartets were restricted in their travels to

their own general region until the latter 1930s, when better cars and roads permitted more extended travel. The performing radius was extended to about 200 miles. These tours were of limited days and the quartet usually were guests in homes overnight.

A professional quartet had to have a radio program to become successful. The quartets were not paid by the radio station. The quartet got the air time free, announced

where it would be singing and invited listeners to write in if they wanted the quartet to sing at their church or convention.

Radio exposure led to bookings which, in time, were farther and farther away. In the 1940s the leading quartets began using seven-seat limousines for travel. These were big, heavy cars, ideal for highway driving, and were standard among quartets for a number of years.

The biggest gospel music area in those days was Dallas. The two men most responsible were the late Virgil O. Stamps, founder of the V. O. Stamps Music Co. in 1924 at Jacksonville, Texas, which was moved to Dallas in 1929, and Frank H. Stamps, his brother.

The Stamps Quartet was famous for its broadcasts on KRLD in Dallas. All professional quartets visited Dallas whenever possible and appeared on the Stamps Quartet weekly 11 p.m. to midnight broadcasts. The Stamps Quartet also broadcast three daily programs. The broadcasts were credited with increasing KRLD from a 10,000-watt to a 50,000-watt station.

In July, 1938, V. O. Stamps promoted the first all-night radio broadcast before a live audience. He got the idea when a woman told him after a concert one evening, "Mr. Stamps, I could listen to your singing all night." Numerous quartets took part in this big broadcast and it was a notable success.



SCRIPT CONFERENCE—The Statesmen, Blackwood Brothers and four other gospel quartets spend two days in Charlotte, N. C., every two months and turn out from eight to 10 one-hour "Singin' Time In Dixie" TV shows, which are now seen on 53 TV stations around the U. S. Seated at desk, from left: Don McDaniel, assistant director, Bob McCollum, director. Around desk, from left: Don Butler, producer; Hovie Lister, James Blackwood.

The first all-night sing was also originated by V. O. Stamps. He staged this gigantic event in 1940 at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas. The top quartets of the day were featured and 30,000 fans turned out. Since then "all-night" sings have been highly popular with fans. Most do not really last all night, however, but end at from midnight to 2 a.m.

In 1948, Wally Fowler, gospel music promoter, began staging "all-night" sings at Ryman Auditorium in Nashville. Name quartets were featured and the house was always packed. Fowler made the sings a monthly affair. J. G. Whitfield took over producing the shows in 1960 and several years ago they ended when radio Station WSM at Nashville bought the auditorium and began holding Friday night "Grand Ole Opry" programs there.

While there are still numerous "all-night" sings around the country, there are only two annual ones which really last all night. They are at Waycross, Ga., and Bonifay, Fla., in stadiums. The sing at Bonifay is held on the Saturday night nearest

July 4. The Waycross sing was Aug. 28 this year. Both annually feature about a dozen top quartets and draw thousands of fervent fans.

At such sings, the quartets take turns performing for a two-hour period. Then a half-hour recess is taken, followed by another two hours of singing, then a half-hour recess. This goes on until sunrise, when the program is closed. The performers during the night take rest backstage on cots or on the bunks in their buses. As the evening wears on, the crowd dwindles. But most stick it out all night.

After World War II, gospel music blossomed. New professional groups sprouted and became successful. With faster cars and better highways, several dozen full-time professional quartets criss-crossed the country on personal performing concert tours. The groups stayed overnight in motels or hotels.

Radio was no longer a paramount part of personal appearance tours and Dallas was no longer the center of the industry. It had spread. There were other centers also, in Memphis, Nashville, Atlanta.

The next significant development in gospel music performing was determined by an ironic tragedy. Popularity of the music had spread broadly and there was demand for the top quartets for appearances farther and farther away from their home base. The Blackwood Brothers had the lead role in the tragedy. To fulfill the demands for them, they bought a plane in 1952. R. W. Blackwood, member of the quartet, took flying lessons for a year. He piloted the group to engagements. About a year after the Blackwoods began flying one other group, The LeFevres, took to the air in a plane.

R. W. Blackwood and Bill Lyles, bass singer, were returning home from a business trip June 30, 1954. The twin engine Beechcraft crashed as Blackwood attempted to land at Clanton, Ala. Both were killed. The other Blackwoods gave up flying, as did the LeFevres. J. D. Sumner, a new bass singer for the Blackwoods, suggested to James Blackwood, the leader, that they buy a bus. The group bought a used Continental Trailways coach in the spring of 1955, the first gospel quartet to use



OAK RIDGE BOYS are among the many successful gospel quartets who travel by bus in order to fill a demanding personal appearance schedule. The bus has every possible comfort, with sleeping compartments, air conditioning, radio and TV. Clockwise from lower left: Herman Harper, Willie Wynn, Tommy Fairchild, Jim Hamil, Smitty Gatlin.



TOMMY FAIRCHILD, pianist for the Oak Ridge Boys of Nashville, checks the map during a lunch stop on one of the group's personal performance tours. Fairchild, at the wheel of their bus, sometimes relieves the driver.

a bus. They remodeled the inside, had reclining chairs, bunk beds and a desk.

Two years later they bought a diesel bus of the type the Greyhound company uses. The inside was outfitted to provide traveling comfort. But the real luxury in traveling didn't come till the Blackwoods bought their third bus in 1962. This time they got a new bus from the factory with the inside stripped out. It cost \$40,000.

Sumner designed the interior, based on the Blackwoods experiences from the other buses. A mobile home company in Memphis

customized the inside. Cost: \$12,500. At the time the Blackwoods got their bus, the Statesmen got one also, as did the Stamps Quartet, and all were outfitted inside as was the Blackwood bus, which has these features:

Soundproof walls, six sleeping compartments similar to a Pullman sleeper, individual air conditioning in each sleeping compartment; intercom radio from each compartment to the driver, two-way radio, mobile telephone, rest room, lavatory, refrigerated box for cold drinks, private clothes closets, television and radio.

And with all this, the Blackwoods play chess while traveling! The other groups do various things, including resting, composing, rehearsing, reading, making phone calls. Most top groups with buses have full-time drivers.

That's the way the big gospel quartets travel these days. About 30 groups have the streamlined buses. Quite a change from the Model T days.

As James Blackwood put it, a standing joke in the old days for a quartet starting out was for all "to get suits alike—now the first thing is to buy a bus."



BLACKWOOD BROTHERS aboard their bus. They were the first gospel music quartet to begin using bus. They bought their first in 1955 and decided never to fly again after tragic death of two quartet members in private plane crash in 1954. From left: Bill Shaw, Whitey Gleason, Cecil Blackwood, James Blackwood, J. D. Sumner.



TRAVELING was in seven-seat sedans for a number of years. The Blackwood Brothers used this type road car in 1947, when they headquartered at Shenandoah, Iowa. From left: R. W. Blackwood, James Blackwood, Doyle Blackwood, Bill Lyles, pianist Hilton Griswald and Roy Blackwood. Doyle Blackwood did not sing regularly with the group then.

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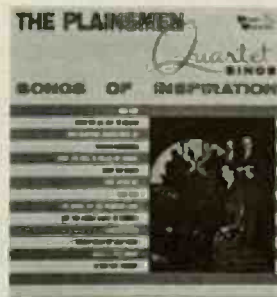
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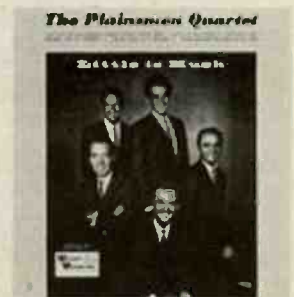
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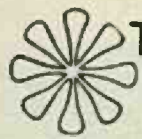
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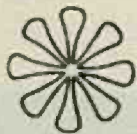




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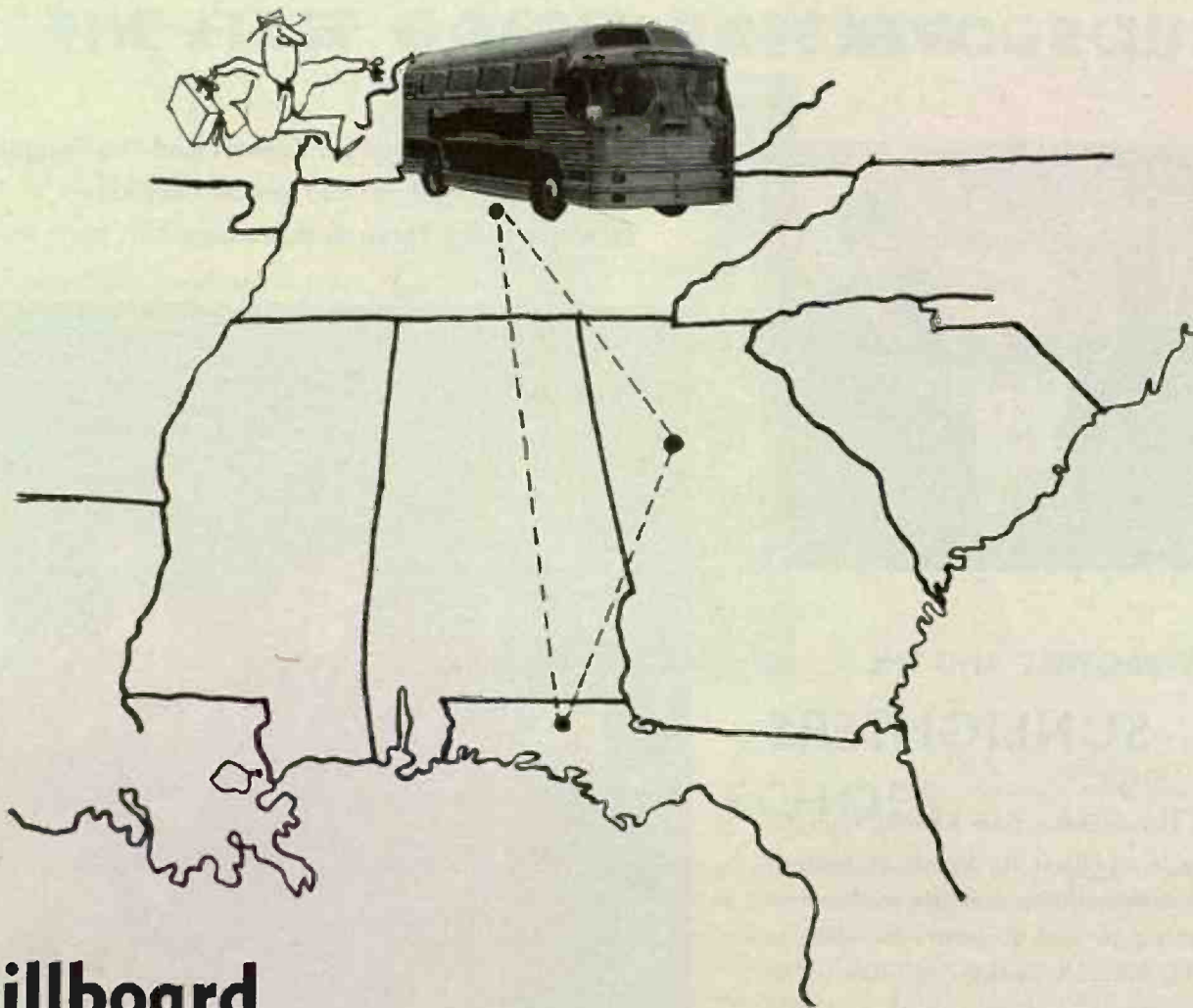


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Billboard Goes To An All Night Sing

By ELTON WHISENHUNT

Hovie Lister, the friendly, ebullient pianist and manager for the Statesmen Quartet, was on the phone:

"We'll be in Nashville Thursday night to record. We'll play a concert there Friday night and leave Saturday morning for the all-night sing at Bonifay, Fla. I want you to go down on the bus with us. This will give you a good opportunity to find out about gospel music, the people in it, the all-night sing."

The Bonifay sing is one of two which really last all night. (The usual "all-night" sings end at about 2 a.m.) The other is at Waycross, Ga., which Lister founded in 1955 as "the original sundown to sunup sing." The Bonifay sing is held annually on the Saturday night nearest July 4. This year it was July 3.

I boarded the Statesmen's modern bus at the Noel Hotel, where the group stays when in Nashville, with Lister at about 8 a.m. Suddenly his usually smiling face clouded.

"Who put that guitar on?" he asked, motioning to a guitar case which took up some precious space. Turned out it was one the Speer Family usually carried on their bus for use on the "Singin' Time in Dixie" filmed TV show. "Now we'll have to haul it around till August," said Lister. There were a few laughs developed from this incident as we pulled out.

It had rained most of the night and was still raining lightly when we left. There were 12 persons on this trip, more than usual. Lister had brought the Goss Brothers of Atlanta, three fine musicians, to Nashville to back up the Statesmen at the recording session. The 12 aboard:

The Statesmen, Hovie Lister, Doy Ott, Jack Toney, R. D. (Rosie) Rozell and James S. Wetherington; Mrs. Cheryl Toney, 18, beautiful bride of Toney; the Goss Brothers, James, Ronnie and Lari; Joe Ott, 10, son of Doy Ott; the driver, Charles Smith, and myself.

The trip would be a long one, about 450 miles. But the bus had comfortable accommodations: six sleeping bunks for the Statesmen and the driver; six reclining chairs up front, mobile phone, two-way radio, cold drink box, a table for writing. Also, the bus was air-conditioned.

We rolled through the verdant green Tennessee countryside. Traveling as the gospel quartets do is a hard life, I soon found. They sometimes have to miss meals, sometimes grab a sandwich on the run, miss sleep. Rozell and Wetherington, exhausted from several days of the grind on the road, slept in their bunks all day long. All the others slept several hours each at varying times during the day.

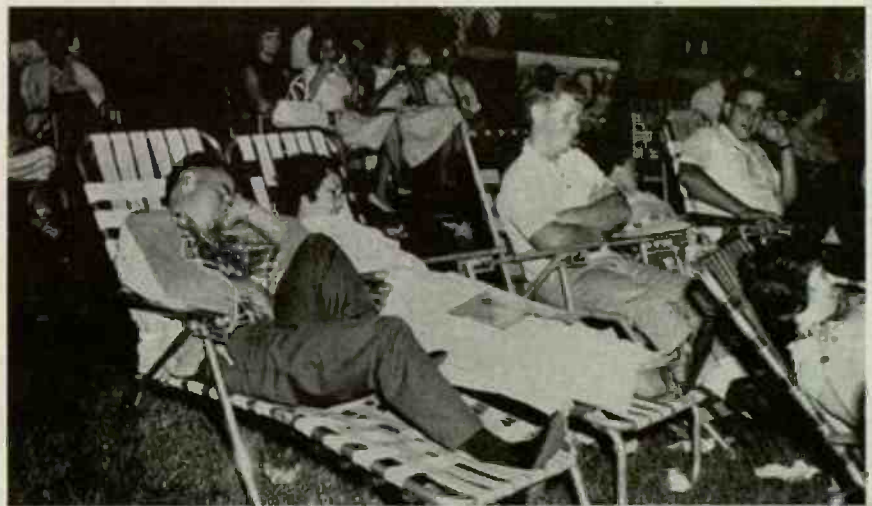
The Blackwood Brothers and the Statesmen travel together when they are going to the same engagement. They work as a team and usually play most concerts together. The Blackwood bus was ahead of us. At 9:35 a.m. the Blackwood driver,



Hovie Lister of The Statesmen, a top showman, while on stage asked "somebody to save me a chicken leg." Later, he got more chicken than he could eat.



JIMMIE DAVIS, a big favorite with the crowd, sang his most popular gospel song, "Someone to Care" and several others he composed. He was backed up by the Plainsmen Quartet.



GOSPEL FANS stay the night at the Bonifay, Fla., songfest.

Bundy Brewster, told the Statesmen driver on the two-way radio to watch out for "No. 1 on the right." In their code, this meant a policeman was parked on the right waiting to catch a speeder.

During the morning I had a long, interesting, delightful and enlightening interview with Hovie Lister, already a legend in gospel music. Everyone I have talked to agrees he is the most outstanding showman and performer in the business. At 1:30, after a refueling and lunch stop, everyone on the bus was asleep except Jack Toney, his wife, James Goss, the driver and myself. Toney and Goss did some "pickin'" with a mandolin and guitar on country music.

The rain continued all day, lightly most of the time. At 3, Toney invited me to rest in his bunk. I was weary from seven hours of sitting and accepted. The bunk was roomy and had a comfortable mattress. I read till 4:30, then joined the group up front again. Within an hour all the

sleepers began to waken. By 6 p.m. all were up. We were nearing our destination.

We pulled into Bonifay at 7 and immediately found ourselves in a traffic jam. Turned out all the cars were going to the big all-night sing! We edged along in traffic to the Memorial Field football stadium and soon policemen got us parked.

The Statesmen hurriedly shaved and dressed. Cars were parked everywhere in sight. People were pouring into the stadium. The sing was promoted by J. G. Whitfield, of Pensacola, Fla., and sponsored by the local Kiwanis Club, which would receive a percentage of the proceeds. Tickets were \$1.50 for adults and 50 cents for children.

The rain, luckily, had stopped about 40 miles short of Bonifay and the weather was perfect for the outdoor sing. One of Whitfield's employees went around to the quartet buses as they arrived handing out mimeographed sheets giving order of appear-

ances for the quartets and time for each. Here it is:

First round:

Minutes:

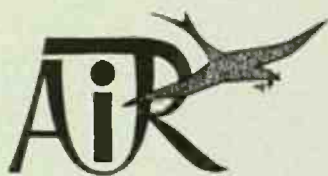
1. Blue and Gray Quartet . 15
2. Pathfinders Quartet . 15
3. Blackwood Brothers . 20
4. Commanders Quartet . 15
5. Plainsmen Quartet . 20
6. Messengers Quartet . 15
7. Jimmie Davis . 20
8. Conn Trio . 15
9. Statesmen Quartet . 20
10. Melody Men Quartet . 20
11. Couriers Quartet . 20
12. Florida Boys . 20
13. Dixie Echoes . 20
14. Happy Goodman . 20
- Family . 20
15. Jubilee Group . (No time listed)

"Use this line-up for the second round. Mr. Whitfield will tell you when you go on the second time how long to stay.

"All managers have your group ready to go on: ON TIME."

Hovie and I entered the stadium.
(Continued on page 22)

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ALL NIGHT SING

(Continued from page 21)

Excitement filled the air, as if one was about to witness a compelling drama. People were everywhere. There was a piquant flavor of a carnival-like atmosphere. People milled around stands selling hamburgers, Cokes, ice cream. The quartets set up their racks to sell albums, sheet music and song-books.

Hovie was stopped by old friends from time to time to chat. Soon the seating stands on both sides of the stadium were packed full. The entire football field was filled with people who had brought lawn chairs to sit on. Some brought cots for small children to sleep on. Most brought picnic-type lunches — fried chicken, sandwiches, watermelon, cake, thermos bottles. Many, I learned, had driven hundreds of miles to attend. I checked several, including gate keepers, on size of the crowd and was told 12,000 persons were there!

The sing had started about 7:15. The sound system from the portable stage at the far end of the field carried the harmonizing voices loud and clear out over the stands and field. Sometimes the emcee for a quartet would give a stirring and sincere testimony to Christianity.

Jimmie Davis, the former country music star and two-time governor of Louisiana, was a big crowd pleaser as he stood in a relaxed and detached manner in his brown business suit and sang some of his gospel songs with feeling and depth. The popular Blackwood Brothers got tremendous applause. The Happy Goodman Family drew tumultuous response. And some of the other groups got strong applause, but the Statesmen really "brought the house down."

I learned that a gospel music fan identifies with a favorite quartet. That happened to me as I stood nearby and watched the Statesmen bounce onto the platform and burst into a rousing gospel song. Their delivery was exciting and dynamic. They worked harder on stage, as emcee J. G. Whitfield said in introducing them, than any quartet in the business. A tingling sensation raced through me. Here were the guys I had been riding and talking with during the day. Their electrifying performance captivated me along with the audience.

Hovie Lister kept the crowd fascinated with a monolog that ranged from funny stories to an exhortation that they live a Christian life. The thunderous ovation for the Statesmen brought them back for encore after

(Continued on page 64)

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Tim Spencer

I'm
Eb
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KING OF
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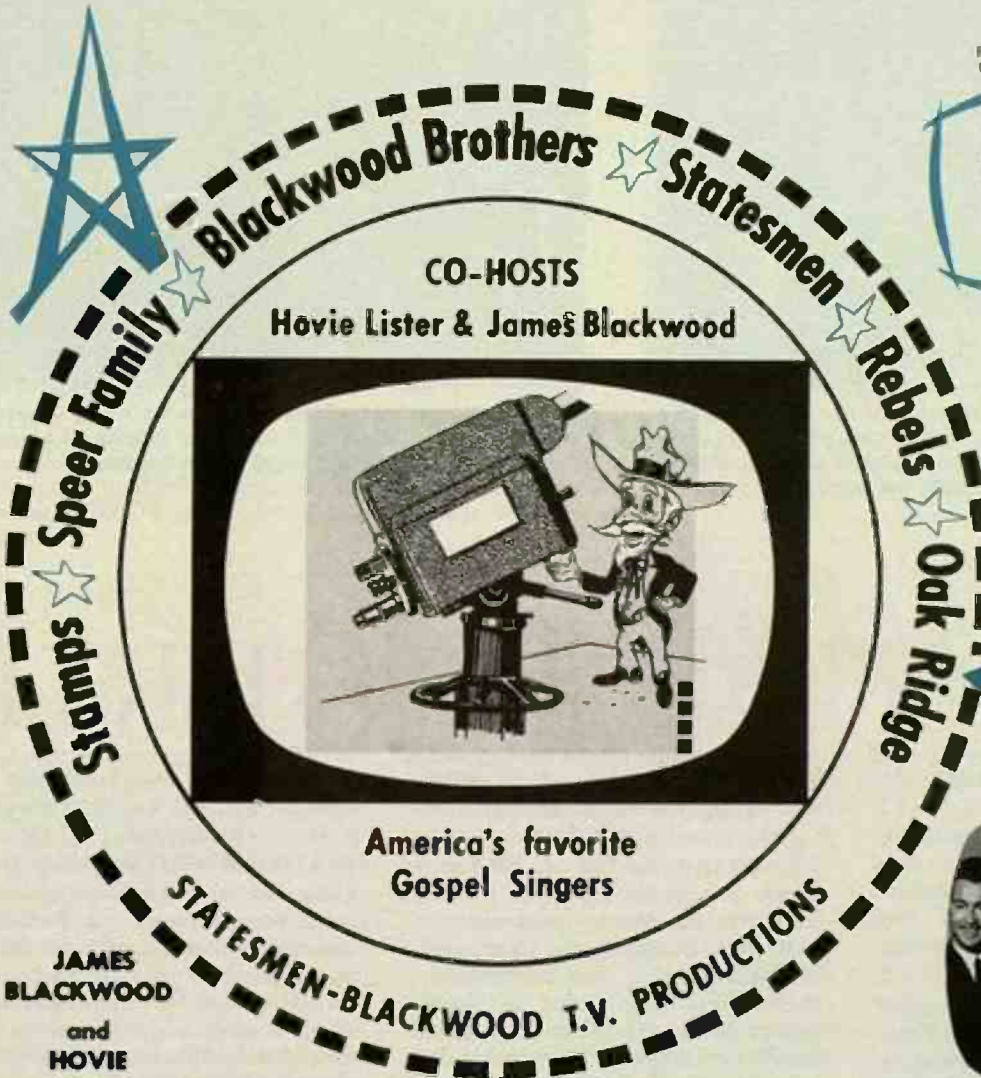
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LOBBY DISPLAYS—All professional quartets set up displays in the lobby of the Auditorium in Memphis when they arrive to perform at the annual National Quartet Convention. Albums, sheet music and song books are sold.



FULL HOUSE—Shorty Bradford sings as Leroy Abernathy plays at National Quartet Convention (1964) in Memphis. Abernathy is well known gospel music teacher.

THE WORLD SERIES

By **ELTON WHISENHUNT**

The National Quartet Convention, the biggest event in gospel music featuring more gospel singing talent than any other event of the year, was staged Oct. 14-17 at Ellis Auditorium in Memphis.

This is the 10th annual convention and fans in increasing numbers flock to it each year. The first convention drew 10,000. By last year it had doubled. This year 25,000 crowded into the Auditorium in downtown Memphis near the river bluffs from which can be seen the majestic sweep of the mighty Mississippi River.

More than 50 professional quartets were on hand to inspire, uplift and move the fans. Many new groups participated in the annual amateur contest, from whose ranks the professionals of future years come. Besides the artists and fans, the convention draws representatives from all facets of the industry: composers, promoters, publishers, record company officials. They are there to enjoy and be a part of the wonderful, inspiring major gathering of the year for gospel music, make contacts, transact business and plan for a bigger and better future for gospel music.

At the 1964 convention, a National Quartet Association was formed with an 18-member board of directors as the governing body. Of those, 13 have been able to serve throughout the year and attend the quarterly meetings. They are: Don Light, Billboard, chairman; James Myers, SESAC, secretary; James Blackwood, J. D. Sumner, Hovie Lister, Urias LeFevre, Meurice

LeFevre, Don Baldwin, J. G. Whitfield, W. B. Nowlin, Bill Hefner, John T. Benson and Brock Speer.

On the first night of the 1965 convention a selected group of the top quartets in the nation performed: the Blackwood Brothers, the Statesmen, the Speer Family, the Stamps Quartet, the Oak Ridge Boys, the Rebels Quartet and the fast-climbing Junior Blackwood Brothers. The next day more of gospel music's top groups were presented in concert: the LeFevres, the Blue Ridge Quartet, the Prophets, the Johnson Sisters, the Couriers Quartet, the Happy Goodman Family.

The amateur contest was held Saturday. Groups from all over the nation, many aspiring to be professionals, sung their hearts out to receptive audience and a panel of judges.

Guiding hand behind the convention is James Blackwood, 45, tenor of the Blackwood Brothers Quartet and only remaining member of the original group which began near Ackerman, Miss., in 1934. He is a quiet, kindly, dedicated person with the perseverance, dignity and patience it takes to promote the cause of gospel music. Under his guidance the convention has been accepted by all professional quartets, the fans, leaders in the industry and is on the threshold of a tremendous future.

Idea for the convention came from J. D. Sumner, bass singer with the Blackwoods. He has been singing with different groups since age 19, is now 40, and had for years thought such a gathering would be good, much along the line of church camp conventions.

he had attended as a youth. He suggested a national quartet convention to James Blackwood in 1955. The Blackwood Brothers decided to risk it.

The risk was whether they would take in enough money to pay expenses. Renting the Auditorium from the city for three days, for example, cost more than \$4,000. The Blackwoods talked to other major quartets. They were interested and willing to cooperate. This was necessary to make the venture a success. It was agreed the first convention would be in October 1956 in Memphis.

That first convention was advertised and promoted a year in advance by the top quartets by announcements at their performances. Word also went out in mailing lists and in gospel music newsletters. Fifteen professional quartets gathered for the first convention and entertained some 10,000 fans during the three-day session. Tickets were \$1.50 each day for adults, \$1 for children. These prices continued each year until 1964.

Of the first convention, James Blackwood said, "We were pleased with the response. We broke even."

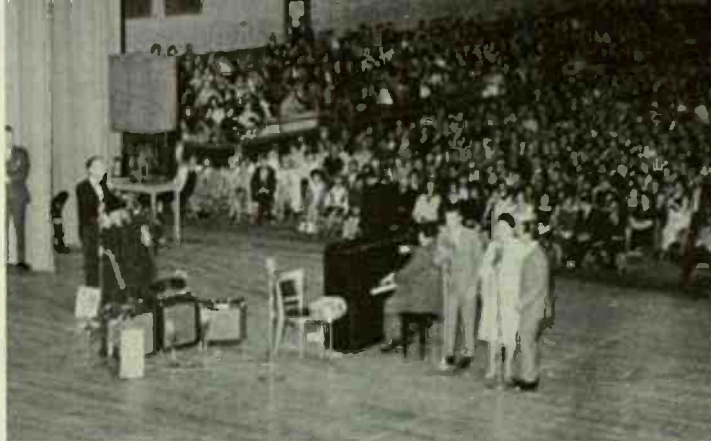
Cost to stage it was \$15,000. This was to grow in future years, with an increasing number of quartets to pay, but so were the crowds. But it was not until 1961 that the convention was a financial success, said Blackwood. That year all performing groups were paid regular fees (before they had been paid less than their regular fee) and the convention had \$2,000 left over in the bank to promote the next year's convention.

The convention was held in Mem-



★ ★ 1965 ★ ★ NATIONAL QUARTET CONVENTION

WORSHIP SERVICE—A worship service is always observed on last day (Sunday) of National Quartet Convention. Rev. Hovie Lister (above) has preached at every service since the convention was founded in 1956. The banner in front tells the crowd the 1965 convention will again be in Memphis and dates are Oct. 14-17, one day more than any previous convention.



POPULAR—The Happy Goodman Family, performing at the 1964 National Quartet Convention, are increasingly popular, sell a great many albums. A factor is the sharp wit of Mr. Goodman (at piano) and Mrs. Goodman (at mike) who keep fans chuckling with their good natured humor.

OF GOSPEL SINGING

phs every year except two. Blackwood said the group decided to try moving to different cities to help increase interest in gospel music. But it didn't work out too well, he said. The convention was held in Birmingham in 1959, where attendance was down to 9,000 for the three days because the auditorium seated only 4,500 and it was held in July, a bad month to get crowds.

The convention moved to Atlanta in October 1960 and total attendance was 11,000 for the three days in an auditorium which seats 5,000. Back in Memphis in 1961, the crowd jumped to 13,000 and by now 30 professional quartets were taking part, with several dozen amateur groups entered in the contest.

A new feature in 1962 was a recording contract for winner of the amateur contest. First place went to the Sons of Harmony of Flint, Mich. Skylite Recording Co., owned jointly by the Blackwood Brothers and the Statesmen, signed them, and the group has since become a success. They have recorded three LP's, have a half hour TV show in Flint and make tours in the Midwest.

Convention attendance grew to 14,000 in 1962 and to 15,000 in 1963. Between the 1963 and 1964 conventions, gospel music increased greatly in popularity. It spread over into the pop, folk and country music fields. One of the factors is believed to have been a popular New York night club where the waiters and waitresses sang gospel music as they worked. Top pop and country stars recorded gospel music and the public responded.

It was this increased interest in

gospel music which made the 1964 convention the smashing success it was with attendance of more than 20,000. Tickets that year, which went on sale a year in advance, were \$2 each.

The increasing crowds, growing interest, more and more quartets participating, resulted in the decision to extend the convention to four days this year. A ticket for all four days cost \$12. These seats are on the first floor. A first balcony seat for the four days is \$10, second balcony \$8. Day to day tickets are \$2.50 in the first balcony, \$2 in the second. If other halls have to be opened, as happened last year, these day to day seats will be \$2.50.

The crowds feel a rapport with the singers. It is not uncommon during a slow, mournful number for tears to well in the eyes of listeners. Or, during a spritely, cheery number, to see the crescendo of clapping hands join the beat of the singers, with cries of "Amen!"

The crowd does not tire of the voices singing praise, in varying words and music, to God. A unique distinction of the audience and the performer is that all believe in God and wish to honor Him in song. The performers consider themselves to be musical messengers of God spreading His gospel.

It is in this genial Christian spirit that the entire convention is conducted. After the more than 50 groups sing on Saturday night, an evening to remember for any fan, the crowd leaves with a warm glow for a highlight the last day. That is the 10 a.m. Sunday worship service which has

been preached at every convention by Hovie Lister of the Statesmen. Lister is an ordained Minister of the Gospel in the Baptist Church. For the first hour outstanding singers present a special program of music. After the sermon, Reverend Lister is assisted in counseling by Rev. Carl Hatch, chaplain of the National Quartet Convention.

Emcee for the convention is a popular, talented man who knows the business inside and out, Don Butler, of Dallas. He is director of the Stamps Conservatory of Music, business manager of the Stamps Quartet, recording producer, composer. He is also a talented singer and arranger and has recorded many gospel tunes. He has a fine baritone voice and in 1958 was named "Mr. Gospel Singer of America."

Butler will be emceeing his third convention and all who have heard him regard him as tops. Said J. D. Sumner: "I think he is the greatest emcee for such an occasion I have ever known. He is a tireless worker, is fair to each group and builds them to the highest point a human voice can."

This sense of fairness is only one element of what makes the convention a refreshing, soul-lifting experience for all who attend. Each performer strives to achieve in his voice a deep feeling of communion with the God he worships. It shines in his face, his voice, his personality. He seeks to impart it to the listener. The fan sits enthralled, a smile on his lips, a specter of wonder in his eyes, gladness in his heart. He has been entertained and felt an inner glow he could get nowhere else on earth.

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FIRST MILITARY TOUR—The first tour of overseas bases by a gospel group was made by the Gospel Echoes, saying good-bye to gospel promoter Ken Duncan, right. It took Duncan three years to get the Defense Department to send a gospel group on a tour of military bases. The Gospel Echoes are, from left: Buck Rambo, Joe Hatfield and Dotti Rambo, Buck's wife.

COLLEGIANS, OVERSEAS TROOPS HEAR THE WORD

Gospel music made two important breakthroughs in 1965. Three gospel groups were sent overseas by the Defense Department to entertain U. S. troops, and Jake Hess and the Imperials played an important date at the University of Alabama.

The significance of both is that they were pioneering performances. Sponsored gospel groups on college campuses were unheard of before, and the Defense Department had never before sent a gospel group overseas to entertain troops.

Now the Imperials are making numerous college appearances and are devoting a major share of their time to them after opening up a whole new avenue for gospel music.

The two overseas trips were the first of what will be many in the future. Already plans are in the making to send gospel groups to entertain U. S. servicemen all over the world—but it took gospel promoter Ken Duncan of Marion, Ill., three years to get the Defense Department interested.

The first overseas tour began May 16 this year when the Gospel Echoes of Dawson Springs, Ky., played at Thule Air Force Base at Greenland.

They did two to five shows a day, sometimes to only 12 to 15 men at isolated spots. The Gospel Echoes, composed of Buck Rambo, rhythm guitar; his wife, Dotti, electric guitar, and Joe Hatfield, accordion and piano, cheerfully bore up in the bone-chilling cold making performances in Greenland, Newfoundland and Labrador.

The group gave up five weeks of bookings to make the trip and said when they returned, they "wouldn't

take anything for the experience. It was the highlight of our singing career. We look forward to another such tour. It inspired us to do a greater job for our fellow man."

At one base 4,000 turned out to hear them sing. Said Rambo: "You don't realize how little a thing it is for us to do for 4,000 lonely men who have to be there a year, whether they want to or not."

The Gospel Echoes, all three of whom are ordained ministers in the United Pentecostal Church, left a good impression wherever they appeared. Raymond R. Close, officers' Christian Union representative at the naval base at Newfoundland, wrote:

"It was our privilege to be entertained by the Gospel Echoes during the past week. It was my pleasure to find that they are not only gospel singers but truly born again Christian people. Through the singing of God's word, it is hoped that the personnel at these remote stations might have a closer walk with God."

Major Charles H. Wilkens, chaplain at the base at Greenland, wrote:

"Just a brief letter to let you know how much we appreciated the Gospel Echoes. They conducted themselves very properly and we enjoyed them very much. We had a wonderful Christian fellowship with them and, believe me, this is greatly appreciated here. They would be most welcome any time they return."

The other tour of gospel singers was composed of the Rangers of Nashville, and Windy Bagwell and the Sunlighters of Atlanta. The Rangers are composed of Ronnie Page, baritone and drums; David Reece, lead and piano,

THE IMPERIALS—(Right) They made a major breakthrough to college campus audiences in 1965, now play to college students all over the country. From left: Armond Morales, bass; Henry Slaughter, pianist; Gary McSpadden, baritone; Jake Hess, lead, and Sherrill Nielsen, tenor.



COLLEGE CONCERT—(Below) The Imperials and the Sons of Song close out their concert at the University of Alabama May 10, 1965, an engagement which opened up a new performance area for gospel music.



and Darrell Johnson, tenor and guitar. In Bagwell's group are singers Jerri Morrison, lead, and Jan Buckner, alto. Bill Byrd, well-known Nashville guitarist, accompanied the troupe. Bagwell also plays guitar and Jan plays bass.

These groups left McGuire Air Force Base June 1 for a nine-week tour of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Morocco, Navy ships in the area, Libya, Greece, Turkey, Iran, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and some Mediterranean islands.

"The response was fantastic," the groups told Ken Duncan when they returned. "We had the red carpet treatment all the way. The audiences of servicemen under 21 were especially very enthusiastic."

Duncan said these two trips "opened up a vista for gospel music not open before. These groups were top ambassadors of the U. S., not only to our men overseas but to the peoples of the countries they visited.

"Next year the demand for gospel groups to entertain overseas will be so great we won't be able to supply it all. The tours this year have also sparked an interest from the peoples of European countries. I am receiving inquiries about tours for European audiences."

When Jake Hess and the Imperials played their first college-sponsored concert May 10 at the University of Alabama, about 1,000 students turned out. A leading factor, no doubt, was Steve Sloan, a star back on the football team. He was president of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, which sponsored the concert.

"The audience response was amazing to us," Hess said later. He said he didn't know what to expect from a college crowd who liked rock singers and entertainment of that scope.

"We expected heckling," said Hess, "but the students gave us a very enthusiastic acceptance. Even our hymns were received better than on the concert circuit. Not a single student left the concert. They are stayed till it was over and were very enthusiastic."

Playing the date with the Imperials were the Sons of Song, composed of Lee Kitches, Calvin Newton and Bob Robinson. The Imperials are made up of Hess, the leader, who sings lead; Gary McSpadden, baritone; Sherrill Nielsen, tenor, and Armond Morales, bass. Their accompanist is Henry Slaughter. For that college concert, two Nashville studio musicians, a drummer and bass fiddle player, backed up the two groups.

Since that first campus concert, the Imperials have played a number of college dates, including Texas Christian University at Fort Worth, and the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Ark. Word has got around and they are in demand.

Beginning in October, the Imperials have begun devoting most of their time to playing concerts at church-endowed colleges and filming their syndicated TV show. They have cut down some on regular concert dates.

"We have found college students hungry for this type of music," Hess said. "Our programs are received as well as any taken to colleges, and better than most."

Thus, 1965 opened up two vast new horizons for gospel music: college campuses and overseas military bases. The military tour, while requiring financial and personal sacrifice, offers great spiritual reward and can lay the groundwork for building popularity among returning servicemen in later years.

The Fathers of Modern Gospel Music

By ELTON WHISENHUNT

No two men have had more impact on gospel music than the late Virgil O. Stamps, who died in 1940 at age 48, and his brother, Frank H. Stamps, who died April 12, 1965, at age 68.

They had such tremendous and lasting influence on the industry that leading quartets of today, publishers and composers, still speak of them almost reverently. They are legendary and, without doubt, the fathers of modern gospel music. Just to list their imposing accomplishments would be a staggering task. A simple way to understand their gigantic contributions to the field is to think of them as pioneers in gospel music and all its facets as we know it today.

Both played leadership roles. The total work they left behind is so rich, and of such vast influence, to the culture and tradition of the industry that if a Gospel Music Hall of Fame were established, they would probably be the first elected to it.

The two brothers worked separately in the early years while getting established and it is difficult to separate some of their innovations, but these are some of their major contributions:

1) Founded the first professional gospel quartet.

2) Were first to use piano to accompany the quartet, which is now standard. (Before then banjos, guitars, mandolins were used.)

3) Were first to begin regular gospel quartet singing on radio.

4) Were first to use a theme song on radio.

5) Founded what is now the largest gospel music school in the U. S. to teach gospel music singing, shaped notes used in gospel music and other related subjects to young people.

6) Staged the first all-night gospel radio broadcast in 1936 over Station KRLD, Dallas.

7) Originated the first all-night sing, which became standard programming for gospel music quartets. (V. O. got the idea when a woman told him, "Mr. Stamps, I could listen to your singing all night.")

8) Was the first quartet to record for a major record company (RCA Victor).

Besides all these major achievements, both men were talented and prolific composers and left behind many dozens of gospel songs for fu-

ture generations. Both men sang bass and, in their time, were the top bass gospel singers in the nation.

The author remembers as a child, in Tyler, Tex., hearing the famous Stamps Quartet on radio. Radio was big in the 1930's and stations all over the U. S. played transcribed programs cut by the quartet at KRLD in Dallas.

I still remember the vibrant, rich voices singing the song they made famous as their theme and which millions of persons hummed and sung for years, "Give the World a Smile." This is the chorus, not counting the background voice part, which millions of Americans could probably recite verbatim today:

"Give the world a smile each day

"Helping someone on life's way,

"From the paths of sin

"Bring the wanderers in

"To the Master's fold to stay.

"Help to cheer the lone and sad,

"Help to make some pilgrim glad.

"Let your life so be

"That all the world may see

"The joy of serving Jesus with a smile."

They made the song so popular—the lyric and melody are excellent and the tempo is a bouncy upbeat—that it became a standard in the field. A record of it sold almost a million copies (a million sale of a gospel music record is unheard of today). Every quartet that came along for years afterwards had to sing the song as part of their program at request of the audience.

Because the song was so closely identified with the Stamps Quartet, people generally thought the Stamps wrote it. However, it was composed by Otis Deaton and M. L. Yandell, copyrighted in 1925 and is now in the public domain. Besides the millions who heard it on radio and in concert in the early years, millions of our day have heard it on TV and records and sung live.

Virgil O. Stamps and Frank H. Stamps were two of six sons of William Oscar Stamps and Florence Rosser Stamps, who settled in a sawmill community in Upshur County, Texas, about 10 miles east of Gilmer, when the area was little more than wilderness. V. O. was born in 1892 and Frank in 1896.

When V. O. was 15 and Frank 11, they attended a singing school at Stamps Schoolhouse. The community

and school took its name after the Stamps family, who were outstanding pioneer settlers of the community. The community brought in R. M. Morgan, one of the best gospel teachers of the time, to conduct the school. It was during the school and in the months to follow, while V. O. and Frank were in their formative, impressionable years, that they were deeply moved and inspired by gospel music. Both decided to dedicate their lives to it.

During their growing-up years they sang at every opportunity. Both were blessed with good voices and soon had achieved, through the apprenticeship of practice and performance, a polished singing voice second to none. They also knew the words of hundreds of gospel songs. As young men, they branched out in the field, teaching with the embryo singing schools of the day, singing at country churches.

It was in 1920 that Frank formed the first Stamps Quartet. It was a rural church group during struggling times and names of its members are lost to history. In 1924, however, V. O., after working for Trio Music Co., Quartet Music Co., James D. Vaughan and Samuel W. Beasley, organized V. O. Stamps Music Co. at Jacksonville, Tex.

In 1926, J. R. Baxter Jr. became a partner and when the firm was moved to Dallas in 1929 it became the Stamps-Baxter Music and Printing Co. It is operated today by Baxter's widow, Mrs. J. R. Baxter.

The young company started out publishing songbooks, and later sheet music, to sell to singing conventions. Conventions are groups of persons who like gospel singing. Sometimes the convention is associated with a church, but not always. A convention held big sings, at least one annually. In those days it was an "all-day singing with dinner on the grounds."

V. O. used his Stamps Quartet to travel around and sing at these conventions, promoting the publishing company's songbooks. He traveled some himself in the early years, later limited it. There was competition from several other gospel music publishing companies, as there is today, and a quartet appearing at conventions was the means used to advertise and promote sales of songbooks.

Frank Stamps, meanwhile, had his own quartet, performing on records, radio, conventions and at concerts. He

had several headquarters in those years, the longest at Chattanooga, Tenn.

V. O.'s publishing operation flourished and Frank worked with him on many enterprises. In 1936, V. O. went to radio Station KRLD at Dallas during the Texas State Fair and sold them on carrying daily gospel music quartet singing. The program was so popular it drew a remarkable amount of mail. The fabulous popularity of the Stamps Quartet in the next few years was credited with increasing the station's growth from a 10,000 to a 50,000-watt station.

The programs, for many years three times each day, continued for 30 years. They ended earlier this year because TV is now the mass medium of gospel quartets.

V. O. organized the first "All-Night Singing and Broadcast" in 1938. It became an annual event and from it stemmed the "All-Night Sing." V. O. sang bass right along with his quartet on radio. (Another bass singer traveled for concert appearances.) V. O. was a masterful emcee, perceptive promoter and prudent businessman. He was at his peak of popularity when he was suddenly stricken in 1940 and died.

Frank stepped in immediately to take V. O.'s place in the famous Stamps Quartet (his own was Frank Stamps Quartet and later Stamps All-Stars Quartet) and the work of the publishing company. In 1945, Frank organized a new publishing company, Stamps Quartet Music Co., and the Stamps Quartet School of Music. Both grew extremely fast because of the famous Stamps name. For the next 25 years, he made history in his radio work, in frequent concerts, in composing, in the publishing industry and in operating the Stamps' school.

As Frank neared retirement age a few years ago, he looked around for a quartet organization to carry on the Stamps' operations. He chose the Blackwood Brothers, and in 1962 sold the Stamps operation to them. Frank remained to do any work he wished, along with his charming wife, Sally, who is still an official in the company. The Blackwoods sent talented Don Butler, well-known gospel singer, producer and leader in the industry, to be director of the operation. Name of the school was changed to Stamps Conservatory of Music.

Frank died April 12, 1965, and condolences came from all over the U. S. The Texas Legislature adopted a special resolution of eulogy. Fans all over the country mourned him. Leaders in the industry praised his classic contributions to the field. Typical was this from a letter written to Stamps



STAMPS QUARTET TODAY—They "keep on keeping on" in the Stamps tradition. Top, left to right: Charles Ramsey, pianist; Mylon LeFevre, baritone. Bottom, left to right: Roger McDuff, second tenor; James Hill, first tenor; John Hall, bass.



STAMPS AND BLACKWOODS—The two quartets both have modern buses for travel. They play concerts all over the U. S. and in Canada. The Blackwoods bought the Stamps organization in 1962, put a new young Stamps quartet on the road.

headquarters by J. E. Wheeler of Porterville, Calif., who sang in Frank Stamps' quartet in the early years:

"I doubt that anyone can ever lift the banner of gospel music as high as the late Virgil and Frank Stamps."

Both V. O. and Frank were humble and devoutly religious men. Both used the expression that they couldn't have done anything "without the good Lord and a million friends." Both used the encouraging expression "keeping on." It is well known in the industry and today the Stamps organization, under different men, is "keeping on."

When the Blackwoods bought the Stamps organization in 1962, the Stamps quartet was mostly Dallas men who had daytime jobs and couldn't travel except on weekends. They main-

ly carried on the radio broadcasts. They voluntarily stepped aside for the Blackwoods to organize a new Stamps Quartet. The quartet of today are all young men, fine singers and developing as good composers, who travel some 125,000 miles a year in a modern bus singing concerts and carrying the Stamps banner.

The members are James Hill, first tenor, from Portsmouth, Ohio, the group's manager; Roger McDuff, second tenor, from Baytown, Tex., emcee; Mylon LeFevre, 19, of the famous LeFevre family of Atlanta, baritone; John Hall, bass, from Fort Worth. Charles Ramsey of Akron, Ohio, is pianist.

They "keep on keeping on" in the Stamps tradition.

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Jarrell McCracken Spreads the Word



WORD OFFICIALS—Jarrell F. McCracken, right, president of Word Records, Inc., holds one of the company's top selling albums. McCracken and Marvin Norcross, left, vice-president, built the company from scratch into the largest of its type in the world.

By **DON LIGHT**

Jarrell F. McCracken was studying to be a minister of the gospel at Baylor University in Waco, Tex., when he was invited to speak to a young people's group at a church one night in 1950. He was a good public speaker, active in church work and often called on to speak. He was a sportscaster for a local radio station, using that job to work his way through college.

His speech that night 15 years ago was titled "The Game of Life." It dealt with the forces of good versus evil and the meeting ground was a football field. The good forces were represented by the average Christian and the coach was Jesus. The evil forces were coached by Satan. A Christian would have the ball first down and 10 to go and would make an end run. With Bible study and church attendance running interference he would gain seven yards. But then he would be downed by pride and criticism.

When the evil forces got the ball, they would try to score also with their

rampant sins on the earth and the Christians fought to prevent a touch-down. The two teams battled back and forth across the field and finally the forces of good scored to win the game.

The dynamic effect this remarkable speech had on the audience was the beginning of history in the religious record field. Soon so many requests were coming in for copies that a friend suggested to McCracken he record it and go into the record business.

McCracken decided to try it. He recorded the speech with background crowd effects to heighten drama at the Baylor University radio station and borrowed \$75 to get 100 records pressed. Those sold and another 100 were pressed, then a third 100.

That was the start of what is today a fabulous, far-flung, diverse operation which is the largest of its kind in the world. Word Records, Inc., of Waco, Tex., after a humble beginning with little money, untold hardships and nothing but faith in a goal, was built into an enterprise which last year grossed more than \$2 million.

The company has a new, modern

office building and plant at Waco, a building in New Zealand, distributes records all over the U. S., New Zealand, Australia, Canada and parts of the world. Word records such top people in the religious world as Ethel Waters, Billy Graham, Metropolitan Opera star Jerome Hines, Jim Roberts, vocalist for Lawrence Welk; Frank Boggs, Word's first singer and still one of their top artists, and Burl Ives.

The company records and markets virtually every type of religious recording: spoken word, solos, choirs, choruses and gospel quartets. Its albums also range from piano solos to performances by orchestras of more than 100 pieces.

Word's purpose since its conception has been to "communicate the Christian message," said McCracken. His faith that there were people who wanted religious music and messages on record was the only thing that kept McCracken going in those incredibly difficult first years when there was failure after failure. One of lesser faith would have given up in despair.

Seeing the highly successful opera-

tion of Word Records today, with its big plant, top recording stars, 90 employees, one would find the hardship years difficult to believe.

When he first started in 1951 with that first record, "The Game of Life," McCracken got two friends to invest \$500 each. Neither McCracken nor his friends knew anything about the record business. In May 1952 McCracken induced a friend of one of the investors to join the fledgling company to head the business end of it. This man, Marvin Norcross, an accountant, then 23, was to play a lead role with McCracken in developing the company.

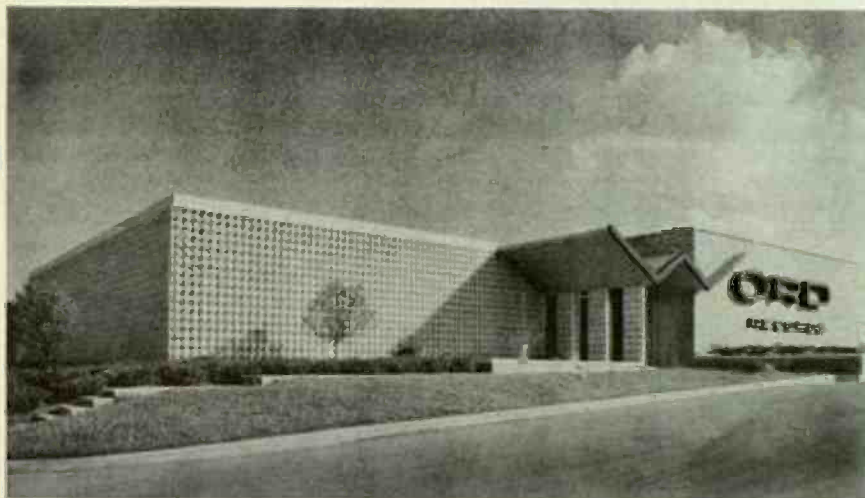
In the beginning there was not enough income from the sale of "The Game of Life" to pay any salaries so McCracken returned to Baylor to get his MA in religion.

The company recorded as its first artist Frank Boggs, a fine bass singer then a student at Baylor. They next tried hiring a salesman. But nobody had heard of Word Records and nobody seemed to want to buy them. Sales the first month with a salesman totaled \$753, hardly enough to pay the salesman and his expenses.

Norcross returned to his previous job in Fort Worth and worked for Word on the road on weekends, carrying their entire product in the trunk of his car. McCracken and Norcross next decided to save costs by buying used record pressing equipment and doing their own pressing.

This was almost disastrous. Neither knew how to operate the equipment. They worked night and day learning, pressing records, taking only a few hours for sleep. They had many equipment breakdowns, often worked all night. Once Norcross narrowly escaped serious injury.

One night McCracken worked all night to get 50 records pressed. Then



WORD RECORDS, INC., Waco, Texas, started on a shoestring in 1950, built this attractive \$260,000 office-warehouse building in 1960, had to build a \$20,000 addition this year.

when Norcross came on duty and began edging them, something went wrong and all but a few of the records were ruined. The two decided after that they could no longer press their own. They got the Tanner company in Texas to press for them. Tanner gave them six months of credit, unheard of in the record business for a company with no assets. McCracken and Norcross then incorporated and McCracken raised \$15,000 by selling stock.

They kept going on a minor scale for two years and realized their big problem was lack of distribution. In 1954 they formed Word Record Distributing Co. and took on, along with their product, more than 20 independent labels. They operated in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and Arkansas and after a time the new company began to make a profit.

In 1957 the company introduced a Word Audio Library Program, a \$189 package of records. It was sold in person-to-person meetings using in-

stallment plan payments. McCracken or a salesman, for example, would meet with a minister, show the product, get names of prospects, call and say: "Our mutual friend Reverend Smith told me to call you. I have something that might interest you. Will you be free at 8 tonight?" This type of selling started slow but proved to be in time highly successful.

In May 1958 the company began the Family Record Club, the first such religious record club. This was successful and now the company was selling by three methods: the club plan by mail, the library in person-to-person meetings and through record dealers and distributors. All continued to grow.

In 1960 the company erected its beautiful building, which has 13,000 square feet. Half is used for offices and half for warehouse space. Total employees of Word Records, Inc., and Word Record Distributing Co., Inc., is now 90.

The two \$500 early investors had,

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in the meantime, sold out. McCracken and Norcross, who built the company, are major stockholders. Their work remained the same from the beginning: McCracken handled artists, sales and operation, is president. Norcross, vice-president and secretary-treasurer, handled accounting and business management.

Last year the company decided to begin recording gospel quartets and now have under contract the Florida Boys, Dixie Echoes, Couriers Quartet, Harvesters Quartet and are continuing to add more.

The company has grown so tremendously that in July this year it installed electronic computer equipment to handle its orders. There are 50,000 record club members in the U. S. There are 2,000 in New Zealand, extremely high for a country with a population of two million, and thousands more in Canada, Australia and other parts of the world. This fabulous religious record operation was built on McCracken's belief there was a need for it.

"When we started there was not much circulation of religious records," he said. "And of the records available there was not much quality. I believed there were many millions of people

who were interested in their churches, in religion, had a love for good religious recordings and wanted them in their homes.

"The problem was how to reach them. Most were not in the habit of going to record shops and book stores. And most record shops then didn't think there was any market for such records."

But Word Records, Inc., proved there was a market for religious records — a big market. The company now is entering the printed word field and will publish books of a religious nature. Its first, released this year, was "Don't Miss It If You Can," by Jess Moody, president of the pastors conference of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Jarrell McCracken today is a busy young man of 36 who not only directs the ever-growing Word enterprises in Waco but flies about the country on business in his own plane. He is a civic leader in Waco and active in the Baylor University alumni association.

Fittingly enough, he is a big recruiter for Baylor's football team, flying players in, entertaining them. Perhaps he remembers with affection what that first allegorical football game did to spread the word of Christianity on Word records.

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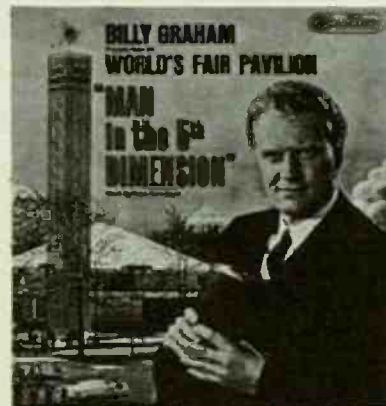
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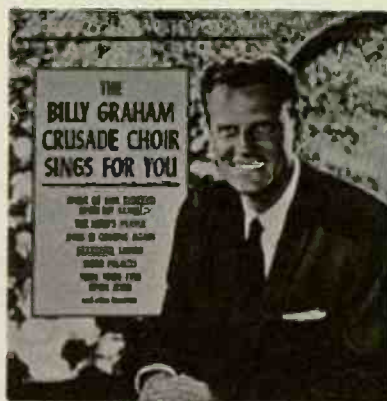
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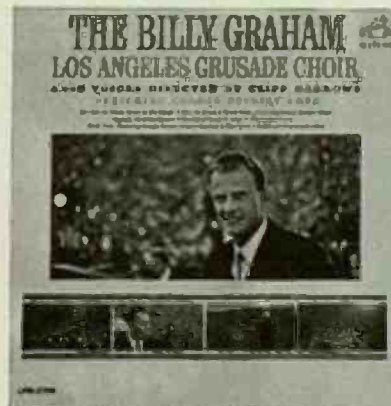
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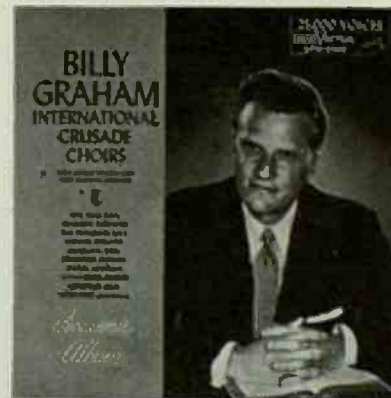
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Cliff Barrows directs the Crusade Choir



COMBINE MEMBER—The Singing Speer Family belongs to the Statesmen-Blackwood combine. G. T. (Dad) Speer is in center. Men, from left: Brock Speer, Ben Speer and Charles Yates. The ladies, from left: Faye Speer, wife of Brock; Ann Sanders and Mom Speer.



LEADING INDEPENDENT—The Chuck Wagon Gang of Fort Worth has recorded for Columbia for 29 years. Front row, from left: Rose Karnes and Anna Gordon. Back row, from left: James Wesson, Roy Carter and Howard Gordon.

Gospel Groups Pool Resources

Gone are the days when all gospel quartets worked separately. More than a dozen of the top ones are mingled now into three different combines for live performances, TV shows and recordings. It works out better for all concerned that way.

For example, the Singing Speer Family is assured of certain good bookings as a member of a combine. Also, is it economically advantageous to record for a company operated by a gospel combine—a quartet can buy its albums for less for retail sale and also it gets exposure on a syndicated TV show.

The Speer Family of Nashville is a member of the Statesmen-Blackwood Brothers combine. But it works the same way for other quartets who are members of a combine.

The Statesmen-Blackwood group is the largest. In addition to the Statesmen, Blackwood Brothers and Speer Family, these quartets are also members: Oak Ridge Quartet of Nashville, Rebels Quartet of Tampa, Fla., and the Stamps Quartet, formerly of Dallas and now of Memphis.

The main link that holds these groups into a merger is that all record for Skylite Recording Company, jointly owned by the Statesmen and Blackwood Brothers. Which recording com-

pany a quartet goes with is developed through association of the quartets over a period of time as they perform together at sings all over the country.

While all members of the Statesmen-Blackwood combine do not always appear at live performances together, they are frequently booked together. And when the Statesmen-Blackwood group began producing their one-hour syndicated TV show last year, "Singin' Time in Dixie," it was natural that they bring onto the show quartets who record for Skylite—for TV exposure increases record sales, an economic benefit to both Statesmen-Blackwood and the quartet selling an album.

In addition to Skylite and the TV show, Statesmen-Blackwood in recent years entered other related fields. They jointly own James D. Vaughan Music Co., Lawrenceburg, Tenn., one of the oldest publishers of gospel songbooks and sheet music.

The Blackwoods bought the Stamps Quartet Music Co., publisher, and the Stamps Conservatory of Music in 1962.

The Statesmen in recent years formed Faith Music, Inc., and acquired the following publishing companies: Lee Roy Abernathy Publishing Co., J. M. Henson Music Co. and Vep Ellis Songs.

Both Statesmen and Blackwoods

own many publishing copyrights on gospel songs.

Second largest of the combines is headed by the LeFevres of Atlanta, veterans of more than 40 years in gospel music. Members of this combine are: the Lefevres, Blue Ridge Quartet, Spartanburg, S. C., The Prophets Quartet, Knoxville, Tenn., and the Johnson Sisters, Birmingham, Ala. The four groups frequently book as a unit as the "Gospel Caravan."

The LeFevres own Sing Recording Co. at Atlanta and have their own studio. Other groups besides the quartets in the combine record on the Sing label.

In addition, the LeFevres produce a one-hour syndicated TV show. Mrs. Eva Mae LeFevre emcees this show. Her husband, Urias LeFevre, heads the LeFevre organization. Other members of the quartet, in addition to Eva Mae and Urias, are Alphas LeFevre, brother of Urias; Pierce LeFevre, son of Eva Mae and Urias; Jimmy Jones and Rex Nelson.

The LeFevres also own a publishing company and copyrights on many gospel songs.

The third combine is operated by J. G. Whitfield of Pensacola, Fla., veteran gospel singer and in recent

(Continued on page 44)

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Continued from page 42
 years, a large promoter of gospel sings. He sang with various quartets in his beginning years and in 1947 organized the Florida Boys Quartet. He sang bass with the group until a few years ago and then began promoting sings in the South and Southeast. In 1963 he formed the Dixie Echoes Quartet as part of the combine.

Whitfield, in co-operation with Noble-Dury & Associates, Inc., Nashville advertising agency, produces a one-hour syndicated TV show which is a little different from the other gospel TV shows in that it has one sponsor, Stanback, for all markets. The other TV shows are sold to markets which secure sponsors.

Whitfield emcees the show, which features the Florida Boys, Dixie Echoes and the Happy Goodman Family of Madisonville, Ky., who are considered a part of the combine working relationship. Guest quartets frequently appear on the show. Whitfield does not operate a gospel record label, but devotes most of his efforts in promotion of sings.

He has regular monthly sings at Nashville, Atlanta and Birmingham,

with other sings periodically at other cities. He is promoter of the big all-night sing at Bonifay, Fla., held each year on the Saturday night nearest July 4. The sing this year drew some 12,000.

Whitfield had five sings going during the July 4 weekend this year: Nashville, and Jacksonville, Fla., on Friday night; Huntsville, Ala.; Bonifay, Fla., and Tupelo, Miss., on Saturday night.

While most of the major groups work in a unit, there are several top independent quartets. The major independents are:

Jake Hess and the Imperials, Nashville; Chuck Wagon Gang, Fort Worth; Harvesters Quartet, Charlotte, N. C.; the Plainsmen, Baton Rouge, La.; Gospel Echoes, Dawson City, Ky.

Oldest of these groups is the Chuck Wagon Gang, which has been recording for Columbia for 29 years. Newest is The Imperials, formed in 1963 and which is meeting with success because Hess is a veteran in the field. Hess, one of the most popular lead singers in the country, is surrounded by top singers. The Imperials record

for Heart Warming, a Nashville label. The Plainsmen and Gospel Echoes also record for Heart Warming and the Harvesters for Canaan Records.

The Harvesters and Plainsmen do a syndicated gospel TV show for Bob Poole Productions of Greenville, S. C. They have various groups on the show from time to time as guests.

Other independent groups which are hovering near the top echelon of quartets are: Kludt Indian Family, Sego Brothers & Naomi, the Weatherford Quartet and the Rangers.

The combines started in 1952 when the Statesmen and Blackwood Brothers, appearing at a sing, realized they were a top drawing card together. Because at least several quartets perform at a sing, the Statesmen and Blackwoods decided to team up because they would draw top crowds together and it would be beneficial to both.

They were right. They were successful together, became the top draw in the business and from there grew and expanded to the present enterprises they now own and operate.

It appears that combines will be a continuing trend in gospel music.

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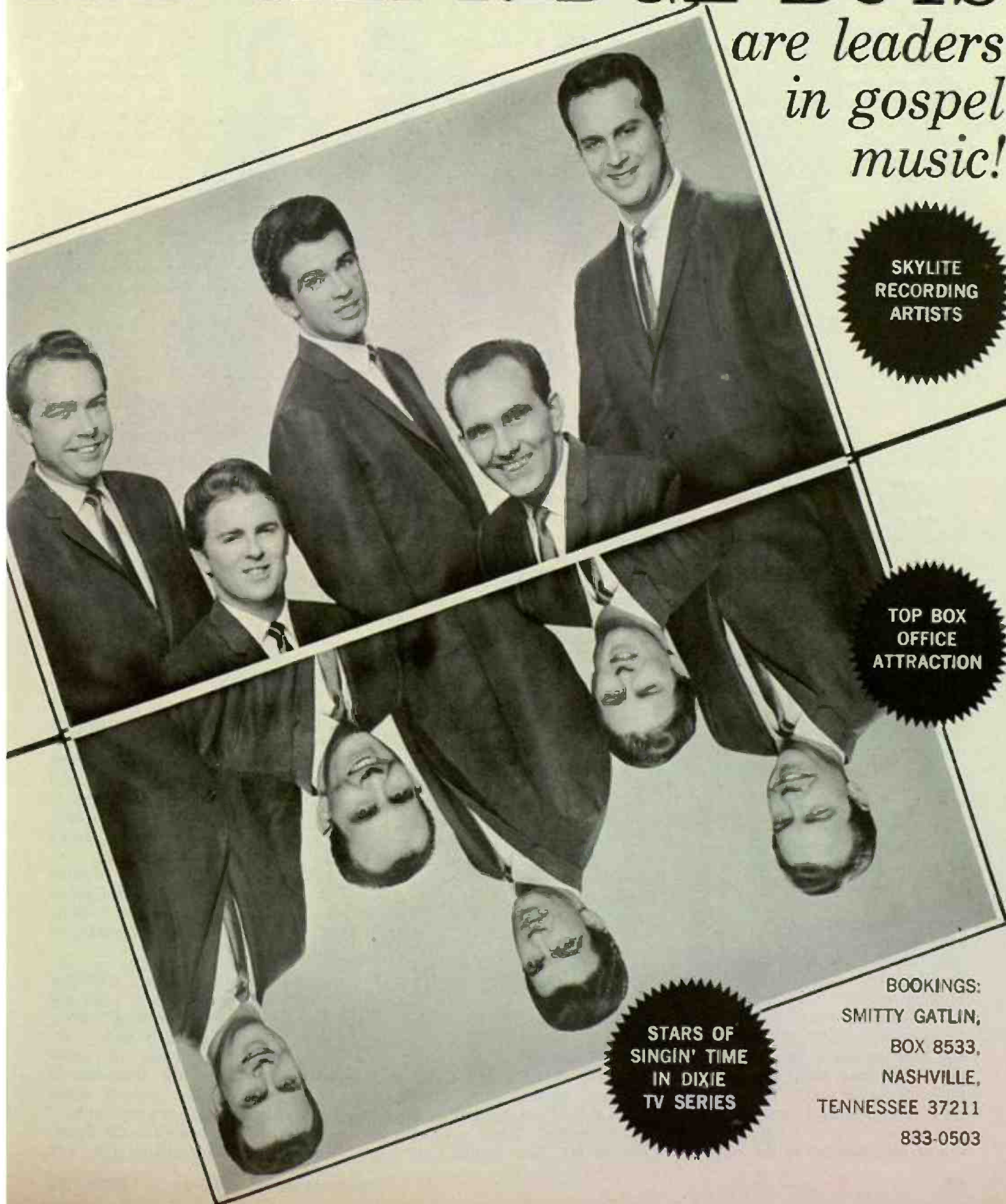
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STATESMEN SKYROCKET ON SHOWMANSHIP



THE STATESMEN—They sing with an exuberance which gospel music fans have accepted as an important new element in modern gospel singing.

The most remarkable success story in modern gospel singing is without doubt the Statesmen Quartet, a group of lively singers headed by Hovie Lister who have added showmanship to gospel singing. This unique departure from standard, traditional quartet singing — adding exuberant singing, arm waving, hand clapping and energetic delivery—met with immediate and almost phenomenal success.

Whether this showmanship was the sole feature which skyrocketed the Statesmen to such popularity after they began in 1940 cannot be ascertained, but it is generally accepted as the reason in the industry. It can be stated with certainty that the Statesmen gained popularity, prominence and financial success more quickly than any other quartet in the history of gospel music.

The Statesmen are the most successful of all post-World War II quartets and their popularity has continued to climb. The group bills itself as America's "top gospel quartet" and "America's favorite gospel quartet." This may or may not be a liberty, but it can be said they are at the very top

rung and only one other quartet is regarded as being of equal rank. That group is the Blackwood Brothers, which teamed up with the Statesmen in 1952, and together the two groups have made gospel music history.

All members of the Statesmen are talented singers, composers and soloists. But the man who has done more than anyone else in catapulting the Statesmen to the top of the gospel music world is Hovie Lister. Lister, 38, is a dynamic, versatile man of many talents. He is pianist for the group, also sings, is manager, spokesman, composer of gospel songs, arranger, emcee and is also a minister of the gospel. For 11 years he pastored a small country church in Marietta, Ga., while touring the country during the week with the Statesmen. He is an ordained minister of the Southern Baptist Convention.

He was born and reared in Greenville, S. C., where both his grandfathers preached in country churches and led song fests with devotion and vigor. He decided that was the kind of life he wanted. While a young minister at Mt. Zion Baptist Church at

Marietta, he traveled the area singing at church meetings and realized the tremendous potential of gospel music crowds. Here was an opportunity to reach many thousands with the gospel in song.

In 1948 he organized a quartet to sing on an Atlanta radio station. He got together tenor Denver Crumpler, of the Rangers Quartet, who had been active with other quartets and had once sung with a Stamps group in Texas; tenor Jake Hess, of Athens, Ga., son of a gospel songwriter; James S. Wetherington, from Ty Ty, Ga., bass singer, and Doy Ott, of McAlester, Okla., who had stayed in Georgia after receiving a degree in business administration from the University of Georgia.

Jake Hess and Denver Crumpler left the group in the early years and were replaced by Rosie Rozell, tenor, whose voice has been widely acclaimed, and Jack Toney, lead tenor who is billed by the Statesmen as having "one of the greatest voices ever to be dedicated to gospel music."

First radio sponsor for the Statesmen was National Biscuit Co. The

show was such a hit with listeners it was expanded into a syndicated radio show for nationwide distribution, the first such show by a gospel quartet. After the advent of television, the Statesmen produced a syndicated TV show with National Biscuit also the sponsor.

The rise to fame and fortune came fast. They played to crowds of 1,500 to 2,500, which later grew to 5,000 as gospel music spread from the South into all sections of the country. At week-long revivals it was not uncommon for 10,000 to hear the Statesmen. Last year at the annual all-night sing at Waycross, Ga., which the Statesmen founded several years ago, 11,000 fans turned out.

People outside the gospel music field sat up and took notice. Said Lister, "Anytime a group of entertainers can draw audiences up to 10,000 and will average 1,500 to 2,500 in concerts, this is something of national interest." He was right. The Statesmen, by the early 1950's, were very big. RCA Victor began recording them and, to this writing, have released 30 albums by the Statesmen. The group was called to appear on the Arthur Godfrey and Tennessee Ernie Ford TV shows. Articles about them appeared in *Life*, *Time*, *Look* and *The Saturday Evening Post*.

As the money poured in, the Statesmen bought four gospel music publishing companies: Faith Music Co., Abernathy Music Co., J. M. Henson Music Co. and Ellis Music Co. In these companies and other related interests — recording company, syndi-

cated TV shows and general promotion of gospel music—the Statesmen say they have invested more than \$1,000,000.

Perhaps the most important move the Statesmen made was to join forces with the Blackwood Brothers, with whom they now operate several successful joint enterprises. The two quartets were on a program together one night in 1952. Such a mob turned out to hear them, both realized they were the top drawing card in the business. Because all gospel music concerts feature two or more quartets, they decided to become partners because both would benefit from it. Since then most of their bookings have been together.

Over the years their fields broadened. The combined company, known as Blackwood-Statesmen Enterprises, with offices in Memphis, where the Blackwoods live, and Atlanta, where the Statesmen live, own Skylite Recording Co. They record themselves and other leading gospel quartets on this label. In 1962 the two quartets jointly bought on James D. Vaughan Music Co. at Lawrenceburg, Tenn., one of the oldest gospel music songbook and sheet music publishers in the business.

In 1964 the Statesmen and Blackwoods went into TV production with a one-hour "Singin' Time in Dixie" program, which is syndicated and now shown on 53 TV stations around the country, including such sophisticated cities as San Francisco. Filming is at Charlotte, N. C., on video tape. The two quartets meet there every two

months and film eight to 10 shows in a two-day period. They start at 2 p.m. on a Monday, work till 10:30 p.m., start at 9 a.m. Tuesday and go till 10:30 p.m. The Statesmen and Blackwoods star and regulars on the show are the Speer Family, Oak Ridge Boys, Stamps Quartet and the Rebels.

The Statesmen travel, as do the Blackwoods, in an ultramodern Greyhound-type bus with the inside custom built with sleeping quarters, rest room, two-way radio, TV, mobile phone and other comforts and conveniences. The Statesmen travel right along with the Blackwood bus on the highway when they are filling engagements together. The Statesmen worked 287 one-nighters in 1964, a few more than the Blackwoods, which attests to the enormous demand for the Statesmen at concerts.

Lister, star of the group, is perhaps the most versatile man in the gospel music business. He never overlooks a chance to make the most of an opportunity. When the National Quartet Convention was founded in 1956, it was decided to have a worship service on Sunday morning. Lister asked he be allowed to preach. He was so effective, he has been asked to preach at every convention since.

Lister said the Statesmen have received "enticing offers" from various agencies to go into other forms of the entertainment business "where the monetary rewards are greater and the work less strenuous. But the Statesmen have never given any consideration to such a move. Our future is in gospel music.



CO-HOSTS—Hovie Lister (right) of The Statesmen and James Blackwood both emcee the "Singin' Time in Dixie" syndicated TV show, which stars the Statesmen and Blackwood Brothers and features four other gospel quartets.

GOSPEL MUSIC'S MISSIONARY TO THE MASSES

By CLAUDE HALL

While gospel music fans are one of the most loyal and steadfast groups in the world, their numbers are small when measured beside jazz fans or the people who enjoy classical, country or popular music. Smitty Gatlin wants his music to appeal to everybody. With his Oak Ridge Boys, Gatlin, in the opinion of many, has probably done more than any other single man to popularize gospel music; he brought the currently successful commercial "Nashville Sound" to his quartet's recordings.

Gatlin uses many instruments — drums, country-type guitars, harmonica, banjo, violins, 16 pieces in all.

"Everybody worried that the died-in-the-wool fans wanted only piano accompaniment. But we came on like gangbusters. Anyone who didn't like the record, we apologized, but those people were few and the records kept selling," he explained.

Gatlin has even gone so far as to use saxophonist Boots Randolph as instrumentalist on his records. "The fans don't object because it's a happy sound, especially in songs of victory. Our songs are 'uplifting.' They express a happy experience. I make no bones about telling about how I feel. I'm doing what I love to do."

Smitty formed the present Oak Ridge Boys in 1957; in the first year he grossed only about \$1,500 for himself. He then took a job in a flour

factory and worked two years on weekends with the group . . . "mostly trying to create a demand for our group. We played anywhere we could get exposure, every church meeting and singing event we could find."

Then, in April 1961, the group went full time again. Since that time it has recorded 15 albums for labels such as Cadence, Checker, Warner Bros., Starday and Skylite.

Most of the records sold by the group are at personal appearances. The Oak Ridge Boys travel by a bus which has been converted to contain beds for each member. About 15,000 records are carried beneath the bunks. Once \$500 worth of records were confiscated by Canadian border authorities.

Without the bus the Oak Ridge Boys could never keep up the strenuous pace of one-night performances their job demands. Their concert tours take them an estimated 75,000 miles a year. Most of their shows are booked each October during the annual national convention in Memphis. Some of the big shows they play each year are an all-night sing in Charlotte, N. C., the night before Easter; Waycross, Ga.; Bonifay, Fla.; Louisville; Greenville, S. C. The quartet performs an average of five nights a week; last May it was booked for 27 shows. Only July and August are the slow months . . . mostly because

the group wants it that way. They also appear on TV, one show being "Singin' Time in Dixie," a syndicated Statesmen-Blackwood Production.

"Gospel music is just now beginning to hit its professional stride," Gatlin said, ". . . just now becoming recognized as a field. Before it was almost limited to church meetings. The reason the field was so limited is that nobody has taken the time to let people know it was a big business. We didn't bother to worry about other people. We played our dates and worked our set audiences and that was it. I think the gospel field, however, is now expanding. We can go into a city and find more consistent crowds than any other entertainers you can find. For instance, in Fort Worth we have gone every other month and the crowds are bigger than they've ever been—now about 5,000 per show.

"Gospel music has great potential. We attract not only an audience, but manage to sell records, too. Our fans either like you or they don't like you. Some people even insist upon the same seat show after show. We see them. Mingling with the audience is a big part of our success. You've got to get down and mix with people, shake their hands; they'll rally to your side and come to see you month after month. We have no false image.



THE OAK RIDGE BOYS: "We have no false image. We try to be the same on the stage as off."

We try to be the same on the stage as off."

Singing gospel music is just like any other form of music. "You've got to go out on stage and throw the ball," Gatlin said. "Unless you really get with it, you'll lose the crowd. You can't let that enthusiasm of theirs drop.

"We got them going and couldn't stop them in Spartanburg, S. C. It was sort of embarrassing after a while because there was another group waiting to come on stage, but the audience wouldn't let us leave." One of the things the group does that's a crowd-pleaser is a skit in which they imitate other groups. "The audience never gets enough."

The songs that the Oak Ridge Boys sing are usually "our older works . . . the ones that have become standard with us. 'At the Roll Call,' a song six years old, is our most requested number. Too, we generally sing some of the songs that are on our latest album. When one of the other members said he was getting bored with singing the same old song over and over, I pointed out to him that the people in the audience haven't heard it more than once or twice, perhaps not at all. I feel that after you get to know a song well, that's when you can work on it and do your best."

Gatlin was always a gospel singer. He admits to loving country music,

"but I'm strictly a gospel singer."

The business operations of a gospel group are complex. First, there's songwriting. A heavy portion of the material recorded by most gospel groups is original—usually written by a member of the group. Gatlin, a BMI writer for several years, a few months ago organized the Cross and Crown Publishing Co.

In those areas where their records are not available, they sell them to the audience. The first time the Oak Ridge Boys performed at Long Beach, Calif., they sold \$1,100 in records before the concert and another \$600 worth during intermission.

The group also supplements its income by selling song books and picture books of the group during their concerts. Gatlin said this probably accounted for about 20-25 per cent of their gross income.

Uniquely, because so many of their concerts are at fairgrounds or in churches and ball parks, there is little overhead most performances. Transportation, of course, is an expense. The group has a full-time bus driver who's also a mechanic.

Once, en route from a Sacramento, Calif., performance, the bus suffered a burned-out wheel bearing in Lordsburg, N. M. As a result, the group missed a show in Jackson, Miss., the next day. But with a mechanic for a bus driver, breakdowns seldom slow

them down more than two to five hours.

They also carry spare parts on the bus. In the approximately eight years the group has been in existence, they've missed only three shows—two because of bus failure and one because they couldn't find the auditorium in Phoenix, where they were to perform.

Gospel groups, such as the Oak Ridge Boys, do most of their own booking of show dates. However, Gatlin said two of the biggest gospel show promoters, Lloyd Orrell and W. B. Nowlin, also set up many of their shows. Orrell promotes Northern dates—Chicago, Akron, Detroit, Indianapolis, Flint, Dayton. Nowlin arranges gospel music shows in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana.

About the largest audience the Oak Ridge Boys have ever played to is the 20,000 at the famous Waycross, Ga., in which many gospel groups participate.

As for gospel music fans, Gatlin considers them all "good people and sincere in their convictions." Acclaimed the best quartet of 1964 by the World Youth Council in a poll of radio and TV stations, churches, professional people, and gospel music fans, the Oak Ridge Boys are one of the most popular gospel groups in the field today. Headquartered in Nashville, the group consists of Ron Page, Herman Harper, Tommy Fairchild, Willie Wynn and Gatlin.



JIMMIE DAVIS, left, met old friend Hovie Lister at the all-night sing at Bonifay, Fla., this year, stopped to chat with him.

GOSPEL and POLITICS

They Mix for Jimmie Davis

Jimmie Davis, who has been a top country music artist, two-time governor of Louisiana and composer of many hits, is in his 10th year of composing and performing gospel music. He has found it more rewarding than anything he has done.

"Singing gospel music has given me more pleasure than anything I've ever done," he said. "I enjoyed my two terms as governor. It was a great challenge. But I've enjoyed gospel music best."

Davis is a leading example of a person who has successfully combined music and politics. After receiving his BA degree from Louisiana College, Pineville, La., and his masters degree from Louisiana State University in psychological education, he was pro-

fessor of psychology at a girls' college in 1931. But he liked singing better and his college professor career lasted only a year.

He made a big name for himself in country music. Then he was bitten by the political bug, ran for police commissioner at Shreveport, La., in 1938 and was elected. He served four years, was next elected in 1942 to a six-year term on the Louisiana Public Service Commission. He served two years and resigned to run for governor. He was elected and served till 1948. He was elected again in 1960 and served through 1964. In Louisiana, a governor cannot succeed himself.

Over the years Davis kept recording and performing, except that he didn't perform while he was governor.

("I felt my obligation was to the people who elected me.") His biggest all-time hit was "You Are My Sunshine," which became a standard and made him a fortune. It has been recorded dozens of times by various artists, country and pop, and sold millions of copies. Last year it reportedly reaped Davis \$16,000 in royalties, 25 years after he composed and first recorded it. It has been so continuously popular he has had to record it three different times for Decca himself. (At a big sing earlier this year, the crowd, shouting and applauding wildly, wouldn't let him leave the stage until he had sung it.)

Last year, just before he left the governor's office, Decca signed Davis to a new lifetime contract and has

been recording him heavily since (a lot is in the can for future release). "When you're 100, we'll give you a better contract," they told him.

Ten years ago Davis felt an inner need to write and perform gospel music. He wrote "Someone to Care" and recorded it. It was a hit. "I had so many beautiful letters on it, it moved me deeply," he said. "It was an inspiring thing." As a result, he switched from country to gospel music.

Since then he has recorded many gospel songs and has composed almost 50. "I feel that in gospel music I can render a service," he said. "That is why I prefer it."

Davis appeared at gospel sings around the country for several years before he was elected governor in 1960. While governor he sang and frequently preached at churches, spoke at civic clubs. ("I never overlooked an

opportunity to sing a sacred song for them.") Early this year he resumed his performing appearances at gospel sings and is now in great demand at them.

In his last year in the governor's mansion, his many friends gave him a testimonial dinner at which more than \$100,000 was pledged to build a church to be named for him. The church, "Jimmie Davis Tabernacle," which Davis describes as "perhaps the most beautiful country church anywhere in the world," was finished last spring and dedicated May 16.

A non-denominational church, it cost more than \$500,000 (all contributed by friends of Jimmie Davis), has all modern features, including central air conditioning and heating systems, the best sound equipment, 14-acre parking lot and is beautifully landscaped.

Davis likes to tell those not familiar with where the church is that it is located "on Peckerwood Hill, between Quitman and Jonesboro, La." It is on the site of the old home place where Davis was born and grew up. Davis frequently sings and preaches at the new church.

Davis lives with his wife and son in Baton Rouge, has a public relations business there, also owns a nearby farm where he raises cattle and horses. (His son, Jimmie Jr., 20, manages the farm.) Davis also owns four music publishing companies, Jimmie Davis Music, Inc.; Vern Music, Inc.; Gospeltone Music Publications, Inc., and Zest Music, Inc.

He is a warm, friendly, sincere person who never fails to draw tremendous applause when he performs at a gospel sing. He deeply feels the songs he sings.



JIMMIE DAVIS performing at a gospel sing. He is in great demand at them, is a big favorite with audiences.

The LeFevres —

Jacks of All Gospel Trades

GOSPEL PIONEERS — From humble beginnings 40 years ago, The LeFevres are now one of the top groups in the nation in performing, recording and TV production. Eva Mae LeFevre, wife of Urias LeFevre, is in center. Clockwise from lower left: Pierce LeFevre, Jimmy Jones, Urias LeFevre, Alphus LeFevre and Rex Nelson.



The LeFevres, one of the oldest and most respected quartets in gospel music, is also one of the most outstanding groups today in live performing, gospel TV production, recording and publishing.

They are the center of a vast gospel music operation at Atlanta where their Sing Recording Co., in a new modern building with the very best sound equipment, records many top gospel groups. The Sing label maintains, besides its own recording studio, complete printing services, operational offices, warehouse and shipping departments and is one of the largest all-gospel producers of records and sheet music in the world.

The group, founded more than 40 years ago in the hills of Middle Tennessee, has grown into one of the leading operations in gospel music. The LeFevres started as a trio at Smithville, Tenn., with Urias, Alphus and Maude LeFevre, all teen-agers, billed as the LeFevre Trio.

They sang at country churches and were in constant demand. Maude got married and another sister replaced her for a time. In 1934, Urias, who heads the LeFevre operation, married the former Eva Mae Whittington of Mc-

Call, S. C. They met when both were students at Lee College in Cleveland, Tenn. Eva Mae, an accomplished pianist and poised public speaker, proved to be one of the most valuable members of the group.

Personnel of the LeFevres has, of course, changed over the years, but the mainstays have been Urias, Alphus and Eva Mae. The early group lived through the 1929 stock market crash, the depression and, in 1939, moved their headquarters to Atlanta. Eva Mae kept the LeFevres going during World War II, with Urias and Alphus away in service. Many times when she had no singing group she carried on with radio shows playing gospel records.

After the war the LeFevres began their fabulous expansion. One enterprise after another came. Their immense popularity spread and there was such demand for them at long distances from their home base that they bought a private plane. But because bad weather hampered flying so much they gave it up and now travel in a modern customized bus.

The LeFevres, who have pioneered in gospel music, have seen times of joy, despair, prosperity, happiness. But

always they have maintained their faith in God and a dedicated devotion to gospel music.

Their concert appearances are one of the biggest audience draws in gospel music today. Billed as "America's most versatile singers and musicians," the LeFevres probably use more musical instruments in accompaniment than any other gospel group. They use piano, accordion, rhythm guitar, trumpet and bass guitar. Alphus is one of the most versatile musicians in gospel music. He plays almost every instrument. You name it and if he can't play it it won't take him long to learn.

This highly talented group is really more than a quartet—they've been a sextet since Pierce LeFevre, oldest son of Urias and Eva Mae, joined them in 1959. He sings baritone, also plays trumpet, is called "The Pat Boone of gospel music."

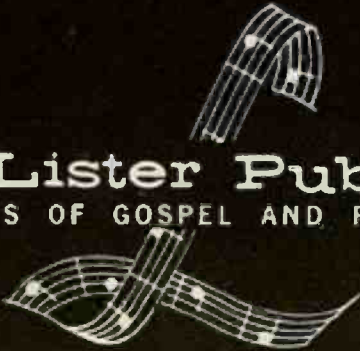
Urias sings lead, plays guitar; Eva Mae plays piano (she used to sing with the group, sometimes still does); Alphus sings tenor and plays different instruments; Jimmy Jones sings baritone and plays bass, and Rex Nelson sings bass and plays rhythm guitar. Nelson and Jones joined the LeFevres in 1957.

There are other members of the famous LeFevre family. Meurice LeFevre, son of Urias and Eva Mae, heads the Sing Record studio and operation.

And Mylon LeFevre, 19, son of Urias and Eva Mae, joined the Stamps Quartet last year as their baritone singer. He is also a talented composer, following in the footsteps of many in the LeFevre family. But the future will probably find Mylon back in Atlanta carrying on the outstanding tradition of the LeFevres. His time with the Stamps Quartet will serve him well as a training period.

The LeFevres travel more than 100,000 miles a year in 42 States for concerts and have a fan club with more than 3,000 members. In addition, they produce the popular one-hour syndicated TV show, "Gospel Singing Caravan," which Eva Mae emcees.

The LeFevres have helped, in their four decades in gospel music, to make it one of the most popular grass-roots form of music in America today. This popularity continues to grow and it is deeply satisfying to the LeFevres to have had a lead role in it.



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THE HAPPY GOODMAN FAMILY, which made a sensational climb to the top of the professional gospel world in 1965, are, from left: Sam Goodman, Vestel Goodman, Charles Goodman and Howard (Happy) Goodman. Vestel is the wife of Howard.

HOTTEST GOSPEL GROUP OF THE YEAR

The Happy Goodman Family is the hottest gospel quartet on the sing circuit this year.

Their albums sold to gospel fans in increasingly greater numbers—many times more than they had ever sold before. Fans were seeking booklets about them, buying their sheet music. At sings, their popularity at times would ring the applause meter louder than any group.

The compelling appeal of the Goodman family lies in three areas, all separate and yet, paradoxically, related.

First, they are a quartet of three men, all brothers, and an outstanding woman singer. The woman is Vestel Goodman, wife of Howard (Happy) Goodman, leader of the group who sings lead and baritone.

Vestel sings a high soprano in a way to delight and thrill the listener. Her clear, pure voice rings through above the male voices and yet blends with them to produce an exciting, distinctive harmony and sound. It is perhaps this unique departure from the usual four men in a quartet that so delighted the fans in 1965. It is true that Vestel is regarded by all in the gospel field as the star of the group, and the three Goodman males

agree. Vestel was selected Miss Gospel Singer of the U. S. A. in 1964.

The second area in which the Goodmans have an especial appeal is in their sense of humor. The crowds love it. They always manage to keep the audience laughing. The outstanding member of the group who excels in this is Sam Goodman.

The third facet of the group's popularity is their deep sincerity. They are humble, devoted Christians, all active in church work in Madisonville, Ky. When one of the Goodmans make an expression relating to Christianity, the audience can tell from the way it is delivered that it comes from the heart and the speaker feels and means what he says. The Goodmans deeply feel they are missionaries performing a work for God.

The original Goodman family quartet had its beginning in 1933. Founder was Howard (Happy) Goodman. As he was growing up he taught himself to play piano. He had a fine singing voice and was active in church sings. He taught his younger brothers and sisters to sing with him. Soon the group was singing in churches and at singing conventions.

They gained prominence, began re-

cording and making concert appearances as professionals. The original group consisted of six family members. During their travels, Happy met Vestel Freeman of Fyffe, Ala. They were married and Vestel became a part of the Happy Goodman Family.

World War II broke up the group. Sam Goodman, Charles (Rusty) Goodman and Bobby Goodman went into service. During those years, Happy and Vestel carried on, doing mostly revival and church work. They were called to pastor Life Temple at Madisonville, Ky., and still do when not on the road for concert performances.

The group remained split up after the war. Rusty, the bass singer, spent a year working for Martha Carson and five and a half years with the Plainsmen Quartet before moving to Madisonville to become once again a part of the Happy Goodman Family.

Sam Goodman after the war joined Happy and Vestel in Madisonville and worked with them. He became choir director at Life Temple, made concert and revival appearances with Happy and Vestel. Sam sings both baritone and first tenor.

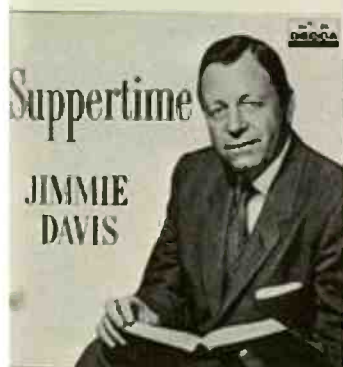
Rusty is a noted gospel song composer. Perhaps his best is "I Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now," which is becoming a standard in the field. A number of quartets have recorded it since Rusty wrote it three years ago. He also composed "Touch the Hand of the Lord." Before dedicating himself completely to gospel music, Rusty was co-writer of some pop songs. Besides composing, he is organist for the Life Temple choir, which people come from many States to hear.

It was these four—Happy, Vestel, Rusty and Sam—who reorganized the Happy Goodman Family two years ago and made it into the top group it is today. Recently another Goodman joined the group—Bobby—who had sung with the original Goodman Family in the beginning years before the war. Bobby now backs up the group with bass guitar and also sings specials.

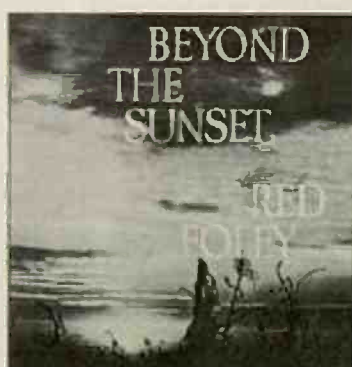
The Happy Goodman Family appears regularly on the syndicated gospel music TV show "Gospel Singing Jubilee" and have recorded several albums on the Sims label since their reorganization. During the summer of 1965 their new success enabled them to buy a new \$50,000 customized bus with built-in sleeping bunks and other traveling conveniences for the many road tours they are now called on to make.

The peak of success the Happy Goodman Family is enjoying today as one of the top gospel groups in the nation couldn't have happened to nicer folks.

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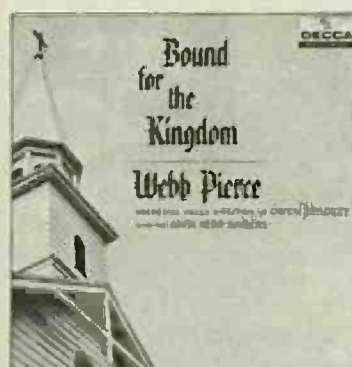
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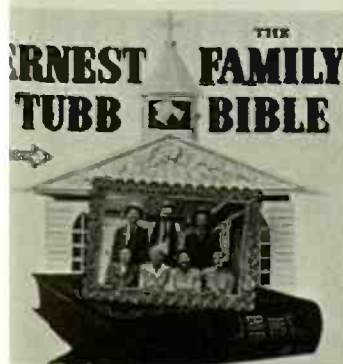
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BLACKWOOD BROTHERS

GOSPEL EMPIRE BUILDERS

By CLAUDE HALL

Sitting in on a Blackwood Brothers recording session is quite an experience. It was an experience I enjoyed a couple of months ago in RCA Victor's Nashville offices. Here's the way it happened:

I walked into the studio, and behind a waist-high partition wearing earphones was an engineer fiddling with some complicated instruments. Behind soundproof windows in another part of the room the Blackwood Brothers quartet stood facing two to a microphone. Before the quartet was Whitey Gleason playing on a piano. Scattered about and playing were Pete Wade on guitar; Ben Speer of the Speer Family gospel group on bass; and Doy Ott, who sings with the Statesmen Quartet, pumping an accordion.

Then I noticed Darol Rice intently listening to the music over the loudspeaker. He's one of the most prominent a&r men in the field and had flown in from California for this recording session.

The studio was RCA Victor's old building, the record company had newer and fancier studios next door, but this room the Blackwood Brothers were recording in could literally be called the room of hits — many singers in both the popular and country music fields had recorded some of their greatest hits here.

You sort of wondered why or how as you looked through the soundproof window. Unused instruments laid scattered about. Cables snaked across the floor, turning the room into an obstacle course. Ben Speer was visible only from the waist up; the rest of him was hidden behind a wall

of baffle boards that gave his bass fiddle a stronger sound.

The Blackwood Brothers live in Memphis, considered by many to be the gospel capital of the world. The reason is largely because it's the headquarters of the Blackwood Brothers, the greatest gospel music empire ever created.

It all started in 1934. The four original members were Roy, Doyle and James (brothers) and R. W. Blackwood (a son of Roy). They sang in those early days anywhere they could find an audience around their hometown of Ackerman, Miss. The audience became larger when they lined up a radio program over WHEF-Radio, Kosciusko, Miss.

They had the key to success—a key now used by all major gospel groups—they sang with conviction. In 1937, they moved to Jackson, Miss., with daily broadcasts on WJDX-Radio. Two years later, they moved to Shreveport, La., to broadcast daily on radio Station KWKH. In 1940, the group moved to Shenandoah, Ia., for daily radio broadcasts over KMA-Radio.

With the outbreak of World War II, the group combined singing with working in San Diego, Calif., defense plants. Doyle Blackwood left the group about this time because of ill health, returning to Tennessee:

After the war, the Blackwood Brothers took up gospel singing on a full-time basis, again on radio Station KMA in Shenandoah. Their popularity was so great they had to broadcast three radio shows a day and were estimated to have had a million listeners. At this time, the organization had two quartets per-

forming. They drew mail from 27 States and Canada.

It was in 1950 that the group moved to Memphis, where they've been based ever since. They had a daily program on radio Station WMPS. Success became even greater in Memphis. They'd been recording on their own label, but in 1951 the group signed with RCA Victor Records.

Today, they were recording their 20th album for RCA Victor. All of their records are still active in the company's catalog.

In 1954, they appeared on the "Arthur Godfrey Talent Scout" show on CBS-TV . . . and won it. The song they sang on the show, "The Man Upstairs," became a hit.

Then tragedy virtually destroyed the Blackwood Brothers. They were in such demand for personal appearances that the only way they could fulfill obligations was to fly. At this time, the quartet consisted of James and R. W. Blackwood, Bill Lyles, Bill Shaw and pianist Jack Marshall. On June 30, 1954, just three weeks after winning the Arthur Godfrey show, R. W. Blackwood and Bill Lyles were killed in a private plane crash.

A nephew of James Blackwood, Cecil Blackwood, was enlisted, and J. D. Sumner joined to sing bass. The reorganized Blackwood Brothers again captured the Arthur Godfrey talent show in 1956. After pianist Jack Marshall left the group, Wally Varner was with them five years. Then Whitey Gleason took over the piano and the group has been the same since. All of them have made a name for themselves as singers,

(Continued on page 60)

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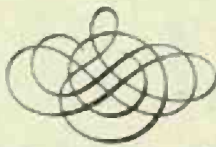
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GOSPEL EMPIRE BUILDERS

(Continued from page 58)

composers, arrangers and musicians. Gleason plays 24 instruments.

Just recently, J. D. Sumner left the Blackwood Brothers Quartet to sing bass for the Stamps Quartet. John Hall, bass singer with the Stamps Quartet, took over Sumner's place with the Blackwood Brothers.

All are married, have families and live in Memphis. With their own bus—which contains everything from sleeping compartments to a telephone—they travel about 100,000 miles a year. Last year, they gave 175 one-night concerts.

But the Blackwood Brothers are involved in more than just personal appearances and records. The man behind all of the business activities, a man who has done more than any living being to bring gospel music to the world, is James Blackwood. The only original member of the quartet that is still active with the group, James owns and operates a religious record distributing company in Memphis that distributes more than 20 labels throughout the South. His brother Doyle manages the firm. Together with Doyle, James also has a retail religious record store in Memphis.

James is also president of the Na-

tional Gospel Quartet Convention, which the Blackwood Brothers organized and promoted in 1956. The convention is held each year in October in Memphis. Last year, the event attracted more than 50 professional gospel quartets and 100 amateur and semi-professional groups, plus about 20,000 spectators.

James Blackwood is also on the board of directors of the Gospel Music Association, organized in 1964 to promote and improve the status of gospel music.

The Blackwood Brothers own and operate the Stamps Quartet Music Co., Inc., of Dallas, one of the largest gospel music publishing companies in the world. The company owns its own printing plant and publishes several books of religious songs each year in addition to church hymnals and sheet music. The Blackwood Brothers also own the Gospel Quartet Music Co., Inc., Memphis. Together with the Statesmen Quartet of Atlanta, the Blackwood Brothers own the James D. Vaughan Music Co., Lawrenceburg, Tenn.

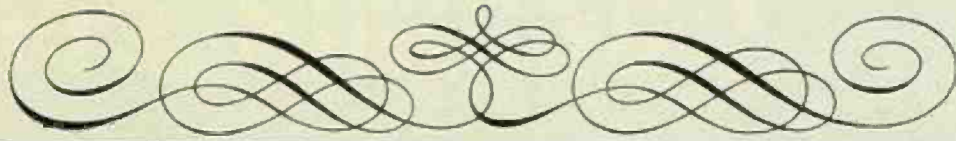
With the Statesmen, the Blackwoods own and operate Skylite Records, one of the largest gospel record firms in existence. Some of the gospel groups that record on the Sky-

(Continued on page 62)

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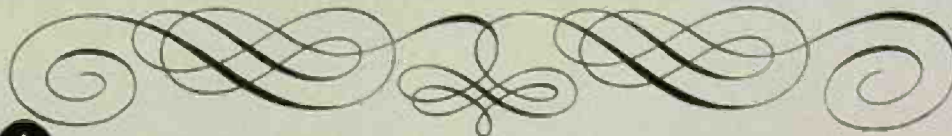
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(Continued from page 60)



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lite label are the Speer Family, the Oak Ridge Boys, the Stamps Quartet, the Rebel Quartet and the Junior Blackwood Brothers. These same quartets also start on an hour-long syndicated Statesmen-Blackwood TV Productions show currently seen on more than 50 TV stations.

There's also a Ron Blackwood Quartet, managed by the oldest son of the late R. W. Blackwood. They record on the Temple Records label. Then Doyle Blackwood manages the Memphians Quartet which features the lead voice of Doyle's son, Terry Blackwood. The Memphians record for Zondervan Records.

The Stamps Quartet is also operated by the Blackwood organization.

Besides all this, the Blackwood organization conducts gospel music schools in many cities each year, teaching young people to sing gospel music.

Blackwood - Statesmen enterprises also publish a monthly magazine devoted to gospel music—Gospel Music Hi-Lites.

As the Blackwood Brothers finished singing the song, Darol Rice went through the door to explain something. He wanted J. D. Sumner

closer to the microphone during the chorus of the song.

So they started the song again. This time, James Blackwood was giving the song that extra effort the quartet is noted for. His voice broke. The others erupted in nervous laughter. Rice had them start back half way through the song. As they finished, he said, "That'll do it. Are we ready for the next song?" They were; they intended to record the entire album in two days.

Most gospel groups sell their own albums at their personal appearances. So do the Blackwoods. When they first started recording for RCA Victor, the label was responsible for only about 25 per cent of their sales; they sold the rest themselves. But now RCA Victor accounts for about 75 per cent of their total sales. On a night's concert in Canada, they sold \$1,910 in albums; a 28-day tour grossed about \$20,000, but expenses are high.

Their most requested song at personal appearances is "The Old Country Church."

In addition to singing in some of the largest auditoriums in the nation, the Blackwood Brothers have worked with some of the great evangelists, including Billy Graham.

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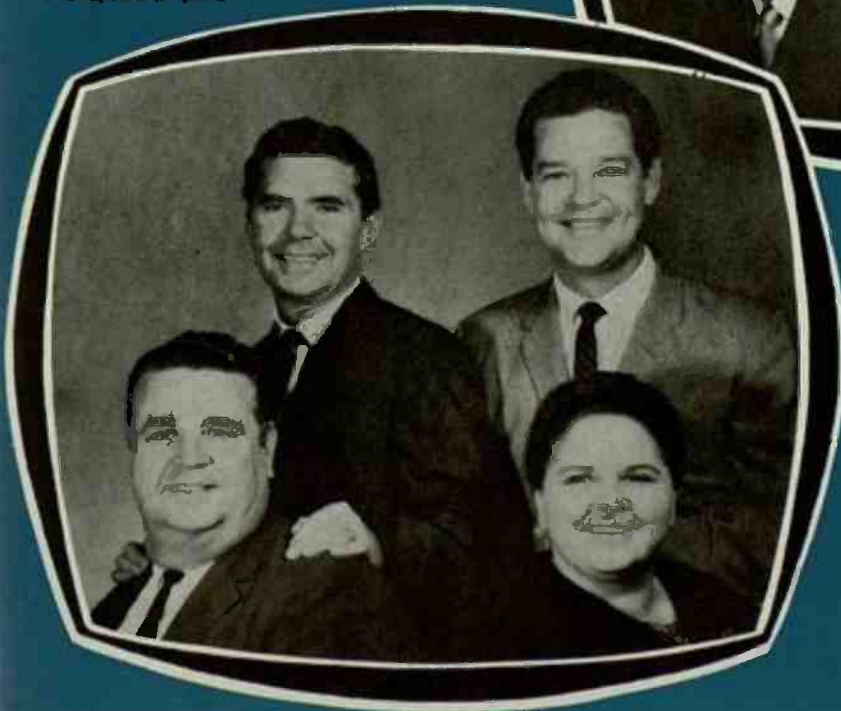
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ALL NIGHT SING (Continued from page 22)

encore. They went far over their 20-minute limit. When they finally finished, they were drenched in perspiration.

The exciting evening moved on. Weary, I slept in Hovie's bunk on the bus from about midnight to 3 a.m. By the time the sing ended, most of the crowd was gone. But they'd be back for next year's sing!

The bus headed for Atlanta, home base of the Statesmen, 256 miles away. Rosie Rozell, who usually drives at night while the driver gets some sleep, was at the wheel. At Atlanta I boarded a plane for Nashville. When I reached Nashville I had on the same suit I had left in. I had taken an overnight bag with me but had had no opportunity to use anything in it except my toothbrush. I had traveled almost 1,000 miles in 26 hours, most of it by bus. I needed a shave, a bath and some food (we had missed breakfast).

But it was a rewarding experience I'll never forget. And I learned that gospel quartets, though the touring life is hard, love performing before a live audience just as much as do actors on Broadway. They wouldn't think of giving it up!

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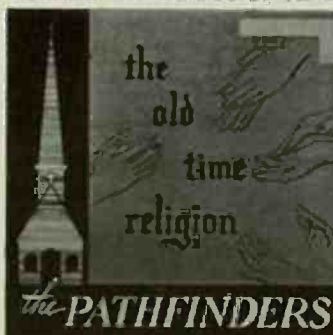
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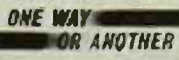
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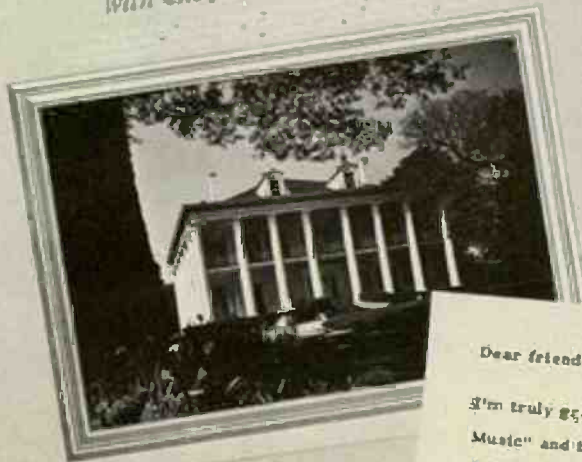
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GOSPEL MUSIC ASSOCIATION COMPLETES FIRST YEAR



GMA BOARD—First board of the Gospel Music Association was elected at the 1964 National Quartet Convention in Memphis to serve until the 1965 convention. First row, from left: Larry Scott, James Blackwood, Brock Speer, Meurice LeFevre, J. G. Whitfield, Don Light (chairman). Back row, from left: J. D. Sumner, Urias LeFevre, Hovle Lister, W. B. Nowlin, Bill Hefner, John T. Benson Jr., James S. Wetherington. Not in photo: Warren Roberts, Don Baldwin, Charles Lamb, W. F. Myers.

The Gospel Music Association, which was organized at the 1964 National Quartet Convention at Memphis, was founded by leaders in the gospel music industry to foster and promote gospel music.

In the one year it has been in existence, it has made significant accomplishments. The most important has been to get all various divisions of gospel music — publishers, promoters, record companies, performers — co-operating to achieve an association which will be good for the entire industry.

The problem the GMA hopes to solve, briefly, is this:

Gospel music has for a long time been an entity unto itself. Quartets own their own publishing companies, their own record companies and sell their own records. The leading quartets or combines of quartets distribute small monthly house organ publications giving fans news of gospel quartets. Because of this over-all self-containment, there has been relatively very little airplay of gospel records.

GMA eventually hopes to correct this by having in its membership a substantial number of disk jockeys.

GMA believes the disk jockeys, by identifying with GMA, knowing the people in gospel music and being a part of GMA, will play more gospel records. This, besides adding to public exposure, would increase royalties for gospel publishing companies and performers and strengthen the industry.

Although gospel music has grown tremendously since its beginnings as a facet of the music industry some 50 years ago, it is still, in a way, just beginning to grow big. GMA sees the potential and hopes to promote gospel music on a major scale much as the Country Music Association successfully promotes country music.

At the GMA directors meeting Aug. 16 in Nashville, the board voted to immediately set in motion an organizational membership drive. Dues for each holding company will be \$100 per year. For each subsidiary of the holding company, dues will be \$50 per year.

With money from these dues and other sources, GMA hopes to set up an office in Nashville within the next 12 months (by August 1966) and employ an executive secretary. Don Light, of Billboard's Nashville office,

who has been acting chairman of the board the past year, will direct the drive.

At present there are 150 individual members of GMA. These members pay dues of \$10 a year. GMA concentrated in the past year in getting top industry leaders as members and has been successful, Light said.

After the National Quartet Convention in Memphis Oct. 14-17 this year, GMA will initiate a life membership drive. Dues will be \$100 per person. Here again, important members of the industry in publishing companies, radio and TV, gospel quartets and promotions will be sought as members. After an office is established, the membership drive will broaden to fans.

Officers and directors for GMA will be elected at the National Quartet Convention in Memphis. Directors, who will serve two year terms, will be sought who will work at building GMA and who will attend quarterly meetings.

"If GMA is successful, the bulk of its membership will have to be made up of disk jockeys," Light said. "We hope to achieve this and have a major trade association."

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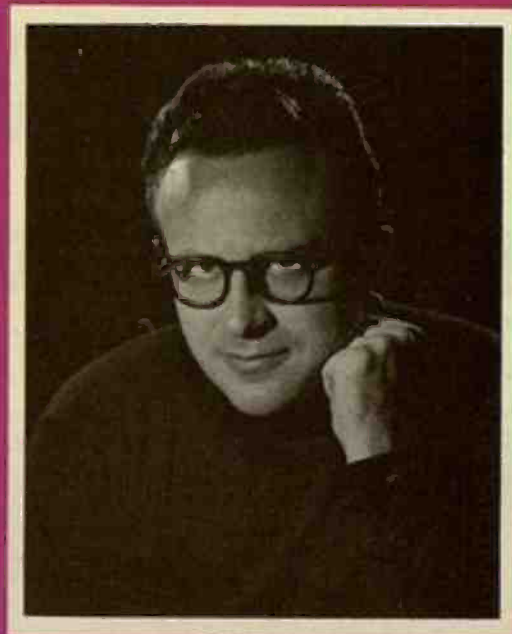
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


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NEGRO GOSPEL

No Other Musical Form Is Quite Like It



JOE BOSTIC

"It stands as a unique musical contribution."

By CLAUDE HALL

When Joe Bostic launched his own Negro gospel show in the early 1940's on WCNW, predecessor to the present WLIB radio station in New York, he played only two types of standards. Present-day gospel music had not yet appeared on the scene, Bostic said. "There were classics like "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Deep River" and "Nobody Knows the Troubles I Feel"—the sorrowful songs created during the days of slavery when the Negro saw little hope for himself in this world and pleaded for the solace of a better life in the next. And there was jubilee music too, which, in essence, is the first-born child of the spirituals.

Of the two types of gospel then around, jubilee songs were the larger part of the broadcasting log because they more closely filled the spiritual needs of the day. Born in the 1890's, jubilee music coincided with the beginnings of a promise of a better life. Church-inspired (most Negro colleges were church schools in those days), every higher institution of learning had its jubilee choir. Some, like the Fisk Jubilee Singers, Nashville, became world famous and many of the great American classics in this form were written to fit these choirs. These were no longer songs of sorrow, but those of hope, joy and enthusiasm. Their tempos were livelier. Songs, such as "When the Saints Go Marching In," "Sorrow Valley" and "Ezekial Saw the Wheel."

This type of music, Bostic said, was the standard fare on all gospel programs up to the 1940's.

With the 1940's, however, came a change—not so much of tempo, but of subject matter. Gospels, originally a kind of hymn to man's relationship with his Maker, took a more pragmatic turn. Little by little, God became exemplified as more of a living human being—someone the singer could talk to man-to-man. In these new compositions, Jesus was often referred to as "The Man" and his words

were referred to as "The Man says."

Bostic, a recognized authority in the gospel field, said that two "great talents wrote perhaps 70 per cent of all the gospel music of that period—Roberta Martin and Willam Dorsey. It was that era that produced such great singing stars as Myrtle and Mahalia Jackson and Robert Bradley."

Still another change came in the 1950's, he said, and this change is still going on today—the emphasis on harmonics and gimmicks rather than on the spiritual. Showmanship is being substituted for purity of expression.

The result, while not Negro gospel as our progenitors heard it perhaps, is a stimulating experience of its own. It has produced its own school of great composers and artists. Men like James Cleveland, Alex Bradford, Raymond Razzberry, Leon Lumpkin and Jessie Dickson. All have their own gospel groups or choirs and their creativity and versatility is enormous.

Where is Negro gospel going? "It has enormous appeal to its own community," he said, "but somehow it has never really made it with the general

public." The reason, he feels, is that the songs are created by Negroes for Negroes. They are written in the Negro idiom. As such, the songs lose a lot of their universal appeal. The music gets through, but the subject matter doesn't.

"The key to gospel," he said, "is the humanization of religion and man's personal relationship with Christ. Perhaps the Negro sees religion a little bit differently. I don't know."

What about white gospel? Bostic feels this genre is cousin to country music. Some great white choirs sing the music, he adds.

More than 400 radio stations now program to the Negro community at least part of the broadcast day, Bostic said. Nearly 100 program to the Negro market exclusively. Bostic, who has been with WLIB since he started in the 1940's, said that programming to the Negro community has come a long way in the past 30 years, but Negro music has remained a staple. It is part of their heritage which the Negro takes to his bosom with pride. "No other musical form is quite like it. It stands as a unique contribution."

Church Music Plays Key Role in Pop Sound

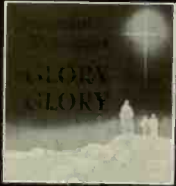
By JERRY WEXLER
Vice-President, Atlantic Records

"The influence of Negro church music upon the American pop music scene has been so great, so all pervasive, that it is almost impossible to measure. A great majority of our Negro singers in the pop field heard their first music in church and started their singing careers as members of local church choirs. They brought with them to the field of popular music the vocal styles, the rhythms and the sheer pleasure of singing that they learned in church.

Many of our most popular singers, like the late Sam Cooke and Atlantic's own Solomon Burke, started their professional careers as spiritual singers. Ray Charles fused the music of the church and the blues to found a powerful trend in the field of pop music. Gospel music and the blues together have molded a major part of our current popular music and have played a key role in creating today's pop sound.

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"WE SHALL OVERCOME"

Carries Religious Message



—Wide World Photo

FREEDOM SINGERS: Selma, Ala., youngsters lock hands and sing freedom songs based on old hymns and spirituals as police surround them in front of the Dallas County courthouse.

Words and music arrangement for "We Shall Overcome" are by Zilphia Horton, Frank Hamilton, Guy Corawan and Pete Seeger. Copyright is held by Ludlow Music, Inc., New York. Royalties derived from this composition are contributed to the Freedom Movement under the trusteeship of the writers.

By **ELIOT TIEGEL**

Religious music has often had its roots in contemporary problems. During the days of slavery, the wail of the bondsman was refined, put into written music, and found its way into the treasury of Negro spirituals.

"We Shall Overcome" is the religious music of the '60's. Though its message is delivered in biblical overtones, it deals with the great social revolution of the day.

If "Onward Christian Soldiers" has given solace and strength to people down through the years because of its bright religious message and sprightly feeling, then "We Shall Overcome" is a song of the '60's tied inexorably to religion through its moralistic tone and concern for human dignity.

So significant has the phrase, "We Shall Overcome" become, that President Johnson dramatically utilized it in a nationwide television appearance to explain his determination in getting his voting rights bill passed.

Professional entertainers in the folk music field have been the flag wavers for the song, with their young, energetic, urban followers picking up its message of courage. These artists have all been associated with the fight for human dignity and include Pete Seeger,

Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, plus Mahalia Jackson; Peter, Paul and Mary, and Theo Bikel.

Two Pete Seeger albums on Columbia feature "Overcome," with one bearing that title for a Carnegie Hall concert.

While "Overcome" has been strictly identified as the civil rights' theme song, folklore predates it to the early part of the century when it appeared in an old Baptist hymnal, "I'll Overcome Someday."

When Negroes and whites alike made their 1963 march on Washington, "Overcome" was chanted by both young and old. When the dramatic Selma-to-Montgomery, Ala., march was held last spring, thousands of people flocked to join, including an impressive array of ministers of all faiths. Again "Overcome" united them.

Several other moralistic songs reflecting on the "movement," include "Freedom Highway" and "Made Up My Mind I Won't Turn Around," sung by the Staple Singers, an established gospel group, and "Mississippi God Damn," sung in an album by Nina Simone, a jazz pianist.

As the civil rights movement has spread around the country, young people have composed freedom songs based on old hymns and spiritual to reflect these varying situations. There are songs for sit-ins, freedom rides, and voters registration.

The titles are explicit in their description: "We Are Soldiers," "I'm Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table," "They Go Wild Over Me," "Every-

body Sing Freedom," "We Shall Not Be Moved," "Moving On," "Ballad of the Student Sit-In," "Which Side Are You On?" "Freedom's Comin' and It Won't Be Long," "Get Your Rights Jack," "Buses Are A-Comin', Oh Yes," "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around," "Sing Till the Power of the Lord Comes Down," "I'm on My Way to the Freedom Land," "Woke Up This Morning With My Mind on Freedom," "Fighting for My Rights," "Been Down Into The South," "We'll Never Back," "Guide My Feet While I Run This Race," "Hard Travelin'," "Bull Connor's Jail" and Keep Your Eyes On the Prize."

It has become axiomatic for folk singers to include "Overcome" in performances. Pickets and protesters have been seen on TV and heard on radio emotionally uttering its lyrics as they are carted away by police or face a confrontation before stern-faced police. This exposure has given the song an almost standard quality.

Its lyrics, in part, sum up man's nonviolent faith in tomorrow:

*We shall overcome,
We shall overcome,
We shall overcome someday.
Oh deep in my heart,
I do believe,
We shall overcome someday.
We'll walk hand in hand,
We'll walk hand in hand.
We'll walk hand in hand someday.
Oh deep in my heart,
I do believe,
We shall overcome someday.*



Purvis, Cleo and Maris take their cue from Pop Staples at an Epic recording session.

“We Bring the Lord’s Message Wherever We Can”

The Staple Singers, the eminent Chicago-based family group, led by Mississippi-born Roebuck (Pop) Staples, have performed at Carnegie Hall, at the International Jazz Festival in Washington, and on numerous television shows, college campuses and auditoriums. Wherever they go, they are greeted with enthusiasm, and their contribution to the gospel field is increasingly recognized.

The group also plays theaters, and at this writing (late August), the group is booked into the Apollo Theater, New York, whence it travels to the Howard Theater, Washington; the Uptown Theater, Philadelphia, and then on to a series of concerts.

Roebuck Staples, in describing this heavy schedule of activity to Sol Rabinowitz, Epic Records' director of merchandising, for whom the Staples record, said: "We bring the Lord's message wherever we can."

The Staple Singers, Rabinowitz recalls, were a smash hit at the Epic Records convention at the Hotel

Americana, Miami Beach, July 13. Len Levy, Epic Records chief, and Rabinowitz plan to increase Epic's activity in the gospel field in view of its increasing importance in the general music scene. Rabinowitz pointed out:

"Negro gospel has two aspects—one for the Negro and one for the white, and the music is now being accepted at the folk level; in conjunction with the latter thought, it can be definitely stated that gospel is very big in colleges."

Rabinowitz continued: "The church is the center of the Negro community and this is truer today than ever, and the music is more important than ever."

The Staple Singers include, in addition to Roebuck, his daughters Cleo and Mavis, and his son, Pervis. Their recordings on Epic, such as the album, "Amen," have enjoyed broad success.

Pop Staples, whose bluesy guitar is prominent in the musical background of the singing, was born and raised

on a farm near Drew, Miss. One of 14 children of a family in the Delta country, he absorbed generations of musical history. He says: "I taught myself the guitar by listening closely to others."

In 1933, he married Oceola Ware, of Drew, and after Cleo and Pervis were born, the family moved to Chicago. Life was difficult in those mid-Depression years in Chicago, and Roebuck worked in the stockyards and sought relief from worry in the evenings by singing spirituals. Happily, Oceola and the children shared this musical feeling.

Before long, neighbors were impressed and the family received invitations to sing at churches. Mavis, who was born in 1939, ultimately became a member of the singing group too. By 1948, two years after they had joined the Mount Eagle Baptist Church in 1946, they had become so well known among church congregations that they decided to devote themselves to gospel singing full-time.



THE CHOIR of the Pleasant Green Baptist Church, Memphis, appears on "TV Gospel Time."

TELEVISION SPREADS THE WORD

"TV Gospel Time" is the first nationwide program to use an all-Negro cast, from soloists to choirs to announcers to commercial models. It has provided many opportunities for these often neglected performers to receive national exposure for the first time. Typical of these is WCBS-TV's top New York newscaster, Pat Connell, who first appeared as a commercial voice on "TV Gospel Time."

The half-hour program's format consists of gospel soloists, groups and choirs. It pointedly has no preacher nor does it display religious symbols. The program is viewed as entertainment in the most positive sense.

The music is based on the natural harmony of folk singers and is usually sung by groups of four and five, almost always of one sex.

In 1963, "TV Gospel Time" appeared on six stations. Today, less than four years later, it is currently seen in 50 markets across the country.

According to recent Pulse reports, four out of every five television sets



CHICAGO'S BARRETT SISTERS, Savoy Records artists, will soon be featured on "TV Gospel Time."



THE LOVING SISTERS of Little Rock are big favorites on "TV Gospel Time."

owned by American Negroes are tuned to the show in those cities in which it is telecast.

Public recognition has not stopped at America's boundaries. The program received wide acclaim throughout Europe following its participation in Gian Carlo Menotti's Festival of Two Worlds (the Spoleto Festival). For the first time in history a Negro gospel program was broadcast throughout Europe through the facilities of RAI, the Italian television network. Before leaving for Spoleto, "TV Gospel Time" was given a Bon Voyage award and wished godspeed by the National Council of Negro Women, the largest Negro women's organization in the world.

"TV Gospel Time" has taped programs in Cleveland, Washington, Chicago, Memphis, Jacksonville, Richmond and Newark. Thus, while being seen throughout the country, it has also given opportunity to the best gospel groups across the country a chance to participate and for some a chance to become better known nationally and internationally. Among the leading gospel groups that have

participated on the program are the Roberta Martin Singers, The Rev. Cleophus Robinson, Mme. Ernestine Washington, the Barrett Sisters, Francis Cole and The Rev. Alex Bradford.

Among the participants on "TV Gospel Time" is Francis Cole, a diminutive lass of 25, not quite 4 feet 11 inches tall. Francis is scheduled to receive the Doctor of Philosophy degree from Columbia University in music education at the end of the month. Born of a poor family in Cleveland, she has worked her way up by her own bootstraps. Working as a domestic to pay her way through college, she began teaching school when she received the bachelor's degree and complemented her income by playing in uptown bars through the early hours. She has now been recognized as one of the country's leading harpsichordists. Miss Cole has combined her fantastic knowledge of the harpsichord with her deep feeling for gospel music and perhaps for the first time in history "TV Gospel Time" has introduced gospel singing accompanied by the harpsichord.

Music director of "TV Gospel

Time" is The Rev. Alfred Miller, widely recognized as one of the world's most accomplished gospel musicians. He is Minister of Music at Brooklyn's famous Church of God in Christ, Washington Temple, Brooklyn.

The program's director is Peter Brysac, formerly production manager at CBS where he handled shows such as "The Armstrong Theater." He is currently head of operations at New York's leading UHF station.

"TV Gospel Time" is distributed both nationally and internationally by Integrated Communications Systems (ICS), a corporation headed by Len Sait, specializing in market consultation and programming for ethnic markets.

Howard A. Schwartz produces the program.

"TV Gospel Time" has shown that both the nation's sleeping and viewing habits can be changed by presenting a program that combines serious folk music in a professionally entertaining format and that the broad mass of Americans, both Negro and white, can appreciate each other's cultural heritage and contributions.

Negro Gospel Music Makes Cultural Heritage Contribution

Herman Lubinsky, pioneer record executive and president of Savoy Records and its affiliated labels, Sharp and Regent, and Savoy vice-president and a&r executive Fred Mendelsohn, were reminiscing about the world of Negro gospel music and its importance as a cultural heritage.

Said Lubinsky: "Our records sell to gospel buyers all over the world, and especially to the man with the dinner pail and the woman who works in the kitchen and over the washtub. They are loyal followers of the gospel field and you cannot fool them with inferior records. These people want the best; they want the honest material and a sincere performance, and the record must project this feeling as soon as the needle is in the groove."

Savoy, of course, is a vital name in the field, for its catalog is a veritable "who's who" of gospel and spiritual music, with product by such names as James Cleveland, Davis Sisters, Roberta Martin and Gospel Clefs.

Mendelsohn, who handles the a&r work for the Savoy operation, said: "The Negro spiritual is the great heritage of American music; from it comes blues, which is the mother of rhythm and blues, and from it eventually comes jazz, much of which derives from the blues, and, of course, the roots of blues and its offshoots are everywhere in rock 'n' roll and in the general pop and folk fields.

Mendelsohn continued: "The early

spirituals used to be a capella—without instruments—because many of the Negro churches were too poor to purchase instruments . . . so they created rhythms by stamping their feet and clapping their hands. And when the churches prospered, they added drums, piano, guitar and other instruments, even bass fiddles. And from the spiritual, developed the jubilee—the type of Negro music often associated with such groups as the Delta Rhythm Boys, Golden Gate Quartet and others . . . and from this came the gospel, which had a beat and a happier sound; and a more advanced arrangement.

"In the old days," continued Mendelsohn, "many Negroes could not read . . . so a church would hire a 'reader' to read the songs. The congregation would repeat the lines and sing it back to the reader . . . there were no musicians . . . just this chant and response pattern (so important in traditional jazz) and the clapping and stomping of the congregation. This is the genuine spiritual."

Lubinsky added that Savoy product is sold overseas through leasing arrangements, and that important markets are England, France, Scandinavia, Liberia and South Africa. He added that good gospel packages are catalog product and sell consistently for years. Cleveland's "Peace Be Still" has racked up over 300,000 sales after three years and is still going strong. "But," warned Lubinsky, "a gospel

artist cannot defect; he cannot go pop and hope to maintain his sales in the gospel field.

Mendelsohn added: "There is no such thing as a pseudo gospel, or hybrid gospel. It must be honest. And the instrumentation can be almost anything—but not what you don't hear in churches."

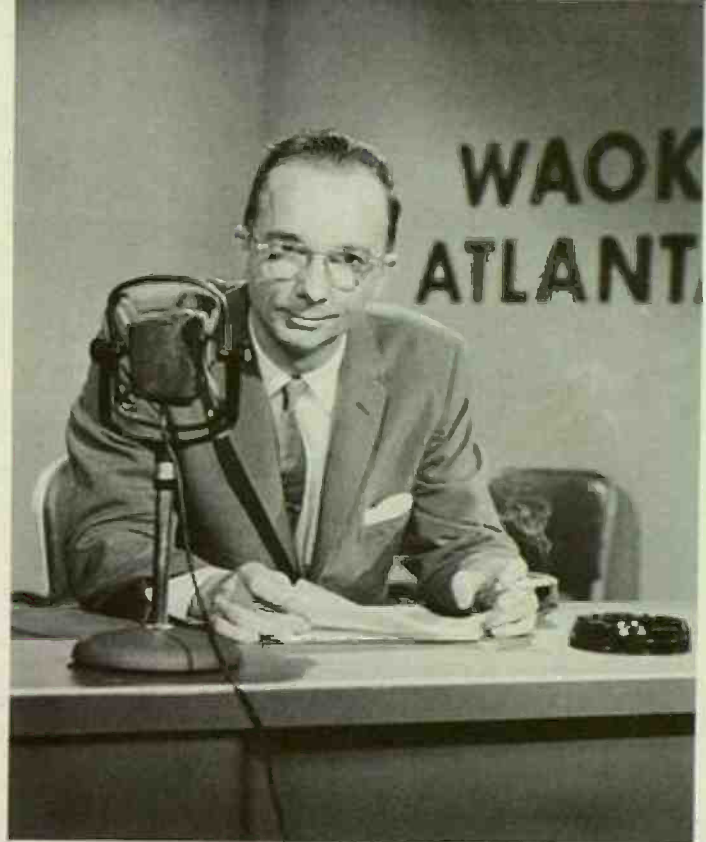
He continued: "The artists at recording sessions know what they want, and therefore the a&r function is aimed at achieving what the artists want to project."

Said Lubinsky: "We put into the groove what the artists do in church. Much of our recordings are done on location—live, in church—and we do this in order to get the true emotional feeling. In this kind of recording work, there are no 'takes.' Technically, a record may be a great record, but if it has no soul, no honest emotion, it is worthless."

As for the future of Negro gospel music, Mendelsohn said: "The future is indicated in the fact that this music is now being accepted by white listeners as a form of folk music, and by jazz and blues devotees; it is being exposed in colleges and on television. Too, such noted acts as Clara Ward play locations in Las Vegas and tour the world, scoring success in Europe, Japan and other areas. This music will continue as a vital cultural entity, and as an influence upon the broad stream of American music."

BASIS OF NEGRO GOSPEL MUSIC

Simple Human Emotions



Zenas Sears

By ZENAS SEARS

Radio Station WAOK, Atlanta

When *Billboard* asked me to write an article on Negro gospel music in radio, I felt at first that it should be written by someone close to the scene. But then, I have been watching the progress and evolution of this type religious expression for a lot of years.

As a youngster I remember the Tuskegee and Hampton Institute groups on tour to raise funds for the colleges, and wondered why Negroes had to go to separate colleges. When I was 10 years old, my father took me to the funeral of a friend in a Negro church in Baltimore. I was so disturbed and moved by the music that I had to be removed from the church.

When I took my job in radio in Atlanta in 1941, my duty was to introduce the "Reliable Jubilee Four" on the Mutual Network. The lead singer was Preston York, who remained a valued friend and adviser until he died in 1962. Our station, WAOK, has programmed eight hours of gospel music Monday through Friday for the past 12 years. In Atlanta a boom city with a prosperous and sophisticated Negro community, our gospel programs have not yet lost their popularity. According to our latest pulse rating, Harrison Smith's 8 p.m. to 10 show, "Glory Road," is Atlanta's most popular radio program for the entire two hours.

It has been 20 years since I started our hour-long gospel program of the

deejay type. I was told then that only "old fashioned" people listened to gospel, and we still hear the same prediction that we will have to change soon because of a lack of audience. I think this is not true because music based on simple human emotions, usually remains popular.

It has always been a problem with radio programmers to decide how to classify a deejay show featuring gospel music. The combination of religiously inspired music on records, commercials, and deejay shows, cannot be classified as "religion" under the FCC definition. How can it be considered purely entertainment since those who listen receive some degree of spiritual aid? Our four gospel deejays at WAOK and WRMA (Montgomery, Ala.), Harrison Smith, Esmond Patterson, Benny Tolbert and Ralph Featherstone, are chosen because of their knowledge of the music they introduce, their ability to project a warm personality on the air, and a willingness to make personal appearances.

We do not encourage a gospel disk jockey to pose as a minister, but to build an image of "the respected layman." All of our deejays are in daily demand as emcees of musical programs, men's day speakers, Sunday school guests and honored platform visitors. A popular gospel disk jockey will build more station good will in a week than most pop disk jockeys in a month.

Of course there are many areas of

gospel programming on radio that are discussed pro and con, over and over. Some stations mix gospel and pop records together on the same show and feel it has been accepted and profitable. We do not. Our own surveys show that listeners who enjoy both popular and gospel music would rather have them in separate segments. And then there are the criticisms of the music itself. I agree that most gospel music played on our stations has little relationship to the great liturgical compositions of Bach and Handel, as performed, say, by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. But we are trying to serve people who just don't understand Bach or react to Handel.

There is another radio station playing classical music in Atlanta, and in a 26-station (AM and FM) city there are certainly enough radio hours to allow time for any type of music with a large following. The gospel composition itself has always seemed to me to be a time enough of the American folk song, written and preserved among the common people.

The individual groups and choirs performing the music, even the most proficient, seldom have had formal training but rather spring from the small church choir or congregation. The expression of deep emotions encourages originality rather than a formal pattern as found in more sophisticated musical forms, and no one can deny the tremendous influence of gospel music in the field of jazz.

FROM PRAYER HOUSE TO PLUSH NIGHTCLUB

Gospel Music Spreads the Word

By ELIOT TIEGEL

Negro gospel music has barely "crossed over the line" to appeal to mass audiences. Yet the music is heard in such non-religious spots as Disneyland and Las Vegas where it is an accepted entertainment form.

The basic outlet for gospel music is the "circuit" of churches and halls which run through the Carolinas, Tennessee, Georgia, Louisiana, Florida and reach up into Washington, New Jersey, New York and Chicago. To Robert (Bumps) Blackwell, associated with gospel music 15 years through record company associations and now as president of Westwood

Artists, a key gospel booking agency, this is the current state of the art.

When Blackwell says that gospel music hasn't "crossed over the line," he means the majority of professional, hard-working gospel performers have not gained acceptance by white audiences. Mahalia Jackson ("she's the queen") and Clara Ward, are the only two exceptions, Blackwell says.

Such long-established acts as the Original Alabama Blind Boys, Caravans, Mississippi Blind Boys and Harmonizing Four, are unknown outside the Negro circuit.

Blackwell says this circuit both ex-

pands and pulls itself in periodically. It is currently in a withdrawn state with most professional gospel groups not working all year.

Gospel is greatly associated with free-wheeling Sunday meetings in which the congregation gets emotionally involved with the performers. But there are several groups which have challenged this strict church association to bring the joy of gospel music into such locations as gambling casinos, nightclubs and theaters. Bessie Griffin and the Gospel Peals were the first group to play nightclubs, claims Blackwell, who handled much of the West



GOSPEL AT DISNEYLAND: Clara Ward, center, and her singers, provide foot-stomping rhythms on the stage of the Golden Horseshoe Theater at the Southern California amusement park. At right is her mother, Mrs. Gertrude Ward, who founded the group.



GOSPEL AT DISNEYLAND: Clara Ward and singers entertain with foot-stomping rhythms from the stage of the Golden Horseshoe Theater.

Coast's Specialty Records gospel LP's in the early '50's.

A gospel show, "Portraits In Bronze," featuring Bessie, was presented in Los Angeles at several nightclubs to overflow audiences and ran for one year. "Portraits" was then recorded by Liberty Records. Blackwell claims the recent "Black Nativity" which played in New York and was a sensation recently in Europe, was inspired by "Portraits."

Gospel music wasn't heard in nightclubs before 1959, he notes. "Psychologically gospel singers have shied away from breaking away from the church," Blackwell said. "But being a singer and singing in different places doesn't change what's in their heart. When Bessie sang at the Renaissance and Macambo, both in Los Angeles, we felt she was reaching more people on the street who needed to hear the message than needed it in church. As long as they'd sit and listen, she'd sing."

Since Miss Griffin paved the way, such other acts as Clara Ward and her singers, including a group headed by her mother Gertrude, Helen Grandison and her singers, the Staple Singers and Hightower Brothers have all appeared in non-church locations.

There have been furors about singing gospel in clubs but it has never publicly involved these artists. The biggest huff was exploded by Mahalia Jackson when the "pop gospel" movement was unleashed in New York in 1963.

A nightclub euphemistically called the "Sweet Chariot" opened in which hastily put together groups sang songs avoiding references to God or Jesus. Waitresses were dressed as angels and drinks were served on tambourines. Mahalia publicly spoke out against what she called a blasphemy against God. Religious groups protested to Columbia Records which was releasing exclusive Sweet Chariot albums. The furor went unnoticed by the public, but pop gospel albums were ordered off the market.

One year before the pop-gospel trend was born, Clara Ward appeared at both Disneyland and the New Frontier Hotel in Las Vegas. The group was booked into Las Vegas for two weeks with three four-week options. The talent buyer for the hotel picked up all three options after hearing the group opening night. Her Las Vegas stay extended in 1964 for a total of 90 weeks. This long stand forced Miss Ward to send out another group to fulfill their previously booked engagements.

Miss Ward says she's never received any criticism for singing in Las Vegas. She claims ministers have



THE TWO SIDES OF BESSIE: Performing as a soloist before a packed audience at the Zion Hill Baptist Church in Los Angeles (photo 1) and with the Gospel Peals before collegians of the University of Arizona during the nationally televised "Hootenanny" show (photo 2). Miss Griffin was among the first gospel artists to perform outside the church.



come to hear her sing there. She has also sung the gospel at the Newport Jazz Festival (1957 and 1962) on Broadway in "Tambourines to Glory," at Melodyland, (across from Disneyland), the Apollo Theater (New York), Jazz Workshop (Boston) and in churches all over the U. S.

"We've never been criticized for playing in nightclubs," she claims. "This association has never stopped us from getting one job." Miss Ward believes there's nothing wrong with exposing gospel to nightclub audiences. "There should be no restrictions where we can sing," she explains. Naturally the Ward Singers earn good money by playing night spots. Philosophically she notes: "Places we go keep us so long that we don't have to worry about other bookings."

The gospel market is still an un-

tapped, virgin area because there are many authentic acts unknown outside the circuit. Colleges and theaters could be lucrative areas if talent agencies would see the potential, Blackwell feels.

There are some acts which haven't played outside the church for reasons including moral beliefs or just never being pushed that way. These groups include the Swan Silvertones, Harmonizing Four, Original Alabama Blind Boys, Those Mighty Clouds of Joy and the Dixie Hummingbirds.

Blackwell estimates that Miss Griffin as a single draws about \$2,000 a week and the Alabama Blind Boys' estimated potential income is \$150,000 a year before expense deductions. The Blind Boys are the top name, the promoter says, followed by the Dixie.

(Continued on page 94)

Mahalia Jackson Back in Business



Mahalia Jackson

As we go to press, the devotees of religious music are enraptured by the fact that Mahalia Jackson, the world-famous gospel artist, is singing again. Mahalia, who suffered a heart attack about one year ago, has been convalescing. In mid-August, Irving Townsend, vice-president of Columbia Records' West Coast operations, confirmed that he had traveled to Chicago to cut some sides with Mahalia early in August. The site of the recording session was the New Salem Baptist Church.

Townsend, who has recorded Mahalia for Columbia for 10 years, said: "She is back in business; she is still a little weak but is regaining strength, and she is singing well."

Townsend added that Mahalia was now accepting engagements for TV shows. "She is almost ready," he said, "to resume her normal work."

Speaking of the importance of Negro gospel music—of which Mahalia is such a great symbol—Townsend noted the influence of this music in the pop and jazz fields. "Many artists," he added, "have come to the attention of the pop and jazz fans via the gospel route. Some examples are Ray Charles, the late Sam Cooke, Sarah Vaughan and Dinah Washington. And even among the newer crop of young artists," Townsend pointed out, "their mothers and fathers were strongly influenced by gospel music and they imparted this to their children."

Townsend feels one of the most important aspects of Mahalia's influence was the fact that she did not go pop.

"She feels her religion very strongly

and is conscious of her position among Negroes. She wishes to be an inspiration to them, and because of this she will not let down the church. . . . She wants to remain a pure symbol."

At the same time, Townsend pointed out, Mahalia knows she is a figure in jazz; she is aware of the kinship between gospel and other musical forms, and she loves such artists as Ray Charles. But she is adamant in that she wants to sing religious material.

Mahalia, says Townsend, feels that she serves three audiences: 1) The old church Negro; 2) the educated, sophisticated Negro audience (whom Mahalia would call the northern Negro), and 3) the white audience (aside from jazz fans). For the last, Mahalia records product with ar-

rangements by such talents as Marty Paitch and Percy Faith. "Mahalia," says Townsend, "won't shy away from a non-religious song, but she will not do a romantic Tin Pan Alley ballad."

Sales of Mahalia's recordings have come up greatly, both in the United States and overseas, Townsend concluded.

Mahalia, as a child, was influenced by the artistry of such early great blues singers as Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith and Ida Cox—all of whom she heard on records. But she said years later "that a blues singer has a broken spirit and is burdened. . . . He sings out of ignorance of the divine power which lifts men up." Therefore, she has devoted all her talents to gospel songs. She regards this work as her life's mission.

Peacock Has That Old-Time Religion

When someone is in the mood for that old-time religion, he knows he can feel the spirit immediately by listening to recordings on the Peacock label. Peacock, and its subsidiary Songbird, assuredly have one of the strongest rosters of Negro spiritual artists in the industry.

Among them are such names as the Dixie Hummingbirds, The Reverend Cleophus Robinson, the Pilgrim Jubilees, the Highway Q.C.'s, the Sensational Nightingales, the Gospelaires, the Five Blind Boys of Alabama, the Loving Sisters, The Reverend Ballinger, the Sunset Travelers

and Inez Andrews and the Andrewettes.

Don Robey, who heads up the Peacock operation, has been recording Negro spiritual and gospel music since 1947. Robey says that personal appearance tours are an important factor in the religious field; that they enhance the sale of an artist's recordings.

The volume of sales, Robey asserted, is increasing throughout the world. Overseas markets which are of importance include England, France, Germany, Sweden, Denmark and parts of Asia, particularly Japan.

AIR Spreads the Word

Two religious radio networks operating from the West Coast broadcast gospel music to domestic and international audiences. The domestic service is America's Inspiradio Network (AIR), a new programming service of the Family Stations service in Los Angeles. The international operation is Far East Broadcasting, headquartered in Whittier, Calif.

The AIR Network is owned by Dick Palmquist and has been in operation since last January. His company provides stations with complete sacred programming in three and one-half hour taped blocks. The service is an outgrowth of the San Francisco-based Family Stations operation which programs sacred music on KEAR, San Francisco; KEBR, Sacramento; KECR, San Diego; WFME, Newark, N.J., and KHCB, Houston.

AIR's first outlet is KRKD in Los Angeles which airs its programs from midnight-6 a.m. Palmquist says he uses music from 30 record com-

panies and has 1,000 stereo LP's in his library. AIR avoids gospel—Nashville sounds; spirituals—Negro music, playing "what's left."

Each program is produced and announced by AIR staffers. Barton Buhtz handles "Music to Live By," Harold Hall handles "Morning Clock," Wally Drotts handles "After Glow," Bryce Bressler handles "Profile," Norvel Slater handles "Evening Song" and John Arthur handles a half-hour children's program, "Big John and Sparkie," during the "Music to Live By" program.

AIR provides its programming to listeners who buy the time from the station at \$15 per half hour. The station gets \$5 of the \$15. Palmquist says this totals about \$7,000 a month for a station. Sponsors are usually businessmen who want to build a solid reputation within their community, so they sponsor Christmas programs.

Palmquist sees the FM market as the next step for his sacred program-

ing. When the government's ruling that AM-FM stations must not duplicate more than 50 per cent of their programming, FM owners will be looking for material, he says. Sacred music in prerecorded tapes up to three hours could be one answer, according to Palmquist.

While AIR is concerned with lightening the load of people's minds in the U.S., the Far East Broadcasting Co. is concerned with spreading the gospel in the undeveloped countries. Its slogan is "Christianity to the World by Radio." The company began in 1945 and has grown to where it has one transmitter beaming to China from Okinawa, two smaller stations on Okinawa; 12 stations in Manila and the Philippines and a station on San Francisco Bay beaming into Latin America. President of the company is Robert Bowman. FEBC's first transmitter went on the air in 1948 in Manila.

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QUARTET SOUND DOMINATES IN RELIGIOUS MUSIC

The trend toward gospel quartets is gaining momentum, according to RCA Victor's chief religious producer Darol Rice, who headquarters in Hollywood but does the brunt of his work in Nashville.

Hollywood, he explains, is his home; Nashville, his creative office. The emergence of the quartet sound as the dominant one in white religious music is attributable to two factors, Rice says. First, many of the quartets have formed their own record companies and second, sundry religious companies have begun signing quartets for their rosters.

There is also a move on for amateur quartets to form and go the professional route. These groups are usually formed by members of church choirs.

Rice said he hoped to expand his quartet roster in line with this growing emphasis and interest. He will be at the National Gospel Quartet Convention in Memphis, in October to "talent scout." The producer said he plans actively listening to new quartets with the hope that several outstanding voices may blossom forth.

The effect of the quartet growth is a sharper feeling of competition among religious record companies. Rice also feels that a flood of new compositions breathes a freshness into the religious field. It appears that at least two members of many gospel groups are songwriters and actively creating new songs.

Rice is adding additional instruments on some of his dates. "We're trying to be modern," he explained, "but large orchestras aren't really necessary because this is message music we're dealing with."

What Rice does do is "upgrade the excitement and harmonies of the arrangements." He claims people have come to accept a more modern sound on religious products and this acceptance has prompted artists to extend their talents by attempting new things.

Of all the artists Rice records, George Beverly Shea has the most LP's (22) in the Victor catalog. Rice's roster also includes the Blackwood Brothers, Statesmen Quartet, Tony Fontaine, Jack Holcomb, Solomon King, Doris Akers and the Cliff Barrows Choir. This last-named group is new to the label, and Rice has just recorded a special LP with the leader of the Billy Graham choir.

The market for religious product is "tremendous," Rice feels, but he adds that the music is not reaching as many people as possible. He cites the total involvement with popular music products which regular music stores must maintain as the reason religious records are not found on too many shelves.

While there is a move on to create new songs, Rice says that recording the old hymns is "not a liability" since most churches stick with the established songs.

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GOSPEL and COUNTRY

HAVE COMMON ROOTS

By **DON PIERCE**

President of Starday Records

Our forefathers, the pioneers who settled the 13 original States, and who later migrated ever westward, found strength, courage, and togetherness from singing gospel and sacred songs accompanied by stringed instruments.

The hardships endured by the pioneers were made more bearable by the songs of inspiration and their faith in the teachings of Christianity. This faith was expressed by preachers and the congregations in small rural churches throughout the land.

Where churches were not available, traveling preachers carried the gospel into the backwoods and hills. Calls to worship nearly always meant joining together in singing the gospel. Musical accompaniment was generally quite simple, consisting of the fiddle, the banjo, and, when available, guitars and piano. The instruments were almost identical to those used in American country music so it was only natural that country music artists learned these songs during their "growin' up time" and included a large amount of gospel and sacred music as a part of their regular entertainment programs.

Many of the songs have been handed down from one generation to another by ear, father to son, mother to daughter. Untrained voices, hand-made instruments, and learning to pick and sing by ear is a heritage common to both country music and gospel music. The American Negro who sang spirituals in the fields as he worked also made a large contribution to this music source, and many of these old spirituals were adapted by the settlers, and later by country music entertainers, and are



DON PIERCE, left, and **Wayne Raney** listen to Raney's broadcast from a Mexican radio station.

a part of gospel music today.

As country music became a prominent part of the American musical scene, an increasing amount of sacred and gospel music was included in the repertoire. The "Grand Ole Opry" and other country music shows developed, and through radio, and later television, added emphasis and popularity to the movement. Now, personal appearances by country artists always include gospel songs and in recent years we have witnessed the development of a highly specialized form of sacred and gospel music expression in the form of gospel quartet singing.

The close harmony of the gospel quartets, featuring many fine voices and soloists, constitutes a refinement of the old-time group sacred singing. Drums and electrical amplification were added to provide a modern sound. However, the glorious roots in the form of the old-time songs handed down by our forefathers remain an important part. It has been said, and it is true, that no matter who sings a country song, the result is still country music because the song is inviolable. The same applies to gospel and sacred songs.

Starday Records, a label specializing in country music, was quick to recognize the need for gospel music in long-play album form. A substantial catalog of albums in colorful jackets featuring performances by some of the gospel music field's most notable stars, including the Sunshine Boys, the Lewis Family, Wally Fowler, the Masters Family, Carl Story and the Oak Ridge Boys, was highly successful, and record dealers learned that gospel and sacred music was a highly salable commodity.

A particularly unusual and favorite sound of many is the mountain bluegrass songs sung with high pitched harmony, with five-string banjo accompaniment.

Many songwriters, publishers, bookers, and promoters of talent recognize that gospel and sacred music is in heavy demand and have specialized in the presentation of good, clean family entertainment with gospel and sacred music on the stage, on radio, on television, and on records.

Notable among Starday's success in merchandising gospel and sacred albums are its radio mail-order offers through the Wayne Raney agency in Concord, Ark., with shows on radio. In an effort to cover all portions of the public market, Starday pioneered the concept of economy or budget-priced sacred albums and currently has the largest catalog of country gospel and sacred recordings.



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Gospel and sacred music is a large part of Starday's day to day function and the entire staff has worked to spread the popularity of recorded gospel and sacred music — country style — on an international basis. The Ember label of England has issued five sacred albums from the Starday catalog. In Japan, bluegrass sacred albums have proved to be very popular despite the language barriers and lack of knowledge of Christianity

among the masses of the Japanese people.

Custom manufacturing for artists, choirs, gospel quartet groups, preachers, and others, represents another important facet of Starday's activities in the sacred music field. The Starday music catalog has hundreds of prominent and often recorded sacred songs that produce an important part of the company's publishing revenue.

At Starday, it is felt that sacred music is a part of the natural heritage of American country music and our plans are for continued expansion of our sacred catalog and creation of new merchandising ideas so that sacred and gospel music can better achieve its rightful share of the record market. We are proud to be a part of Gospel Americana,

COUNTRY ARTISTS CLOSE TO THE CHURCH



Red Foley



Tennessee Ernie Ford

By CLAUDE HALL

Country music artists, as a rule, are close to the Church. They sing religious music in almost every personal appearance, whether it is on the stage of some small auditorium in a rural town or on a network TV show before millions of people. They sing these hymns and spirituals, not because it's expected of them—though it often is—but because it's part of their heritage, the music they grew up with and love.

Many country music artists write religious songs now and then along with all of the other kinds of songs they write. And many of the records they make contain either one religious number or several.

Probably two of the greatest are Red Foley and Tennessee Ernie Ford. When a man sells a million records of a spiritual, he's got to be one of the outstanding vocalists of our time. Red Foley has had many million-selling records, among them such Decca Records favorites as "Peace in the Valley" and "Just a Closer Walk With Thee." A native of Blue Lick, Ky., Clyde Julian Foley began his career

on the "National Barn Dance," a Chicago network radio show. He was later one of the big stars of Nashville's "Grand Ole Opry" for seven years before moving on to host ABC-TV's "Jubilee U.S.A." for six years. In 1962, he turned to acting and co-starred with Fess Parker in ABC-TV's "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" series.

Tennessee Ernie Ford, a native of Bristol, Tenn., studied music at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music before turning disk jockey and working at radio stations in Atlanta and Knoxville. After World War II, he was working as a disk jockey for KXLA, Pasadena, Calif., when he was signed to a recording contract by Capitol Records. His earlier hits were for the popular field. "Sixteen Tons" sold more than 3,000,000 records. But the past few years he has also become one of the world's most successful singers of religious music; an outgrowth of closing each of his TV shows with a hymn. By 1962 he had won a total of five gold records signifying \$1,000,000 in sales for five different albums of religious music.

Tennessee Ernie Ford

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RELIGIOUS MUSIC BIG ON WEST COAST



George Beverly Shea is featured singer for the Billy Graham Crusade.

By ELIOT TIEGEL

Religious music is becoming a major entertainment form on the West Coast. Artists, booking agents and record distributors all express enthusiasm for the future. The present is in great shape.

"There is a great deal of opportunity to expand the gospel circuit," according to Polly Grimes, president of Gospel Concerts, a leading booker of religious talent in the West. "The entire Pacific Northwest region is virtually untapped," she said. The gospel circuit as developed by her company now comprises the following California cities: Long Beach, Oakland, Bakersfield, San Jose, Sacramento and Fresno, and Las Vegas, Nev.

Polly's tours go out bimonthly and usually feature three groups. All concerts are played in auditoriums with large capacities. Polly's gospel concerts differ from those presented in the South in that the number of acts is small, while in the South the shows are all-night sings and use many people.

Polly says her audiences resent more than three acts. Her concerts run from 8 p.m. to midnight and are "fast-moving programs, produced professionally." Among the acts she books are the Blackwood Brothers, Statesmen Quartet, Imperials, Harvesters, Couriers, Golden State Quartet, Speer Family and Chuckwagon Gang.

People from all walks of life attend the religious concerts. "Teen-agers like them because the songs are jivey," she explains. "Adults enjoy them because there is a lot of showmanship. The concerts are not meant to be church services, but we do try to be spiritual in nature."

Miss Grimes has been a gospel promoter since 1960. During that time she has built up a mailing list of 30,000 names, which regularly receive notice of her forthcoming shows.

For Bob Jones Jr. of Singtime En-
(Continued on page 92)

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• Continued from page 90

terprises, the market for gospel quartets seems to be growing.

Such quartets as the Songfellows, Christian Troubadours and Gold State Quartet work concerts actively from the Canadian border and through California, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Arizona and Oklahoma. Less active are the Jubilaires and Gospelaires.

The Southern California region is as good a place for quartets as any other spot with its population in the country, Jones says. Most groups work year-round, including national tours.

The major portion of the business is conducted in churches on Sundays. Old hymns and standard gospel songs comprise the repertoire. Concerts outside the church are usually held Friday and Saturday nights.

The major event which attracts quartets is the California Gospel Quartet Concert and Convention, held three times a year. The first gathering was in San Diego last June. The second is set for October in Los Angeles, with the third meeting next February in Fresno.

The Songfellows Quartet, Jones' own group, also works revival services and camp meetings, providing special music. These jobs are secured through recommendations. The group is featured on station KFI in Los Angeles Sunday evenings from 10:30-11.

Jones believes the Christian college field is an untapped market. Pasadena Nazarene and Southern California College in Costa Mesa are among the 50 schools, which could develop into a new, major circuit. Since many of these schools aren't allowed to book regular entertainment packages, Jones' organization—Singtime Enterprises—is putting together a show featuring a seven-piece band, a girls trio plus the Songfellows Quartet to sell for \$500.

From the standpoint of religious record distributor Tim Spencer, who handles RCA Victor product exclusively, the market is constantly growing. Years ago the religious field was strictly in the South. Now it's growing strong in the West, he says.

Gospel concerts were unknown in California five years ago, but today 5,000 persons pack the Long Beach Auditorium for a religious show. Concert appearances stimulate record business through book-Bible stores.

Spencer's own Manna music company has published the song "How Great Thou Art," which he claims is the biggest selling gospel tune. The song is used as the theme for the Billy Graham Crusade featuring George Beverly Shea as featured vocalist.

Spencer compares his hit song (1,000,000 sheet music copies reported sold) to that of a popular record hit in that it stimulates other kinds of similar music.

Spencer claims that when Bev Shea began singing with the Graham Crusade over 10 years ago, the exposure helped boost religious music sales. Spencer has handled RCA products eight years.

He claims the number of book-Bible stores across the country has increased 100 per cent. He has 150 accounts in the Western States alone, and these stores are prime outlets for religious records.

Spencer cites Billy Graham's radio show, "Hour of Decision," as being a great influence on the world of religious music. The show has been on the air more than 10 years.

"The gospel capital still lies in the South," Spencer said in his Hollywood office, "but the West Coast is growing all the time."

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RAY ROBLES (LP-Album)	Christian Faith Recordings
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DICK KALEMAN	Decca
RAY ROBLES (LP-Album)	Christian Faith Recordings
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(Continued from page 81)

Hummingbirds, Swan Silvertones, Clouds Of Joy, Soul Stirrers, Caravans, Gospel Harmonettes and the Davis Sisters.

Other respected gospel groups are the Highway CQ's, Patterson Singers, Marion Williams and the Stars Of Faith, Princess Stewart and Prof. Alex Bradford and the Bradford Singers.

Initially, when Miss Griffin was playing clubs, Blackwell says he appeared before a Los Angeles Council of Churches to ask that ministers sanction their congregations attending gospel shows outside the church. This was necessary in order for the artists to appear one night in a club and the next return to a church environment. Blackwell says many ministers around the country are allowing their congregations to enjoy gospel music outside the church.

The promoter points to Ray Charles as the first major gospel-oriented artist to break into popular music and become a major draw. Charles has retained his churchy soulful feel in all his music. In transferring gospel music to the popular field, artists have "dropped the word Jesus and substituted baby and love," Blackwell explains.

Thus Etta James' version of "Something's Got a Hold on Me, It Must Be the Lord," came out "Something's Got a Hold on Me, It Must Be Love" and Sam Cooke's gospel version of "Stand By Me Jesus" was Ben E. King's big hit "Stand By Me."

Gospel music is actually the third step or modern interpretation of Negro music, Blackwell notes. Before Lincoln freed the slaves in 1864, field hands sang spirituals which were cries of mercy: "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" and "Red Eyed Captain." After the Emancipation there was no reason for anyone to write spirituals, Blackwell says, so jubilee songs were introduced. They described the scriptures: "Swing Low Sweet Chariot," "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho" and "Jezebel." The Original Gospelairs and Golden Gate Quartet were among the original jubilee exponents.

Gospel music was the third advancement and is only about 25 years old, says Blackwell. These songs are personal prayers: "He's Alive Today," "One Baptism" and "Great Joy." Among the first gospel acts were the Original Blind Boys of Alabama, Brother Joe May and organist Maceo Woods.

There are also modifications of soft and hard gospel. The soft kind is a ballad like "I Believe," the hard, often rocking, penetrating kind are "Move Along" and "Travelin' Shoes."

INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

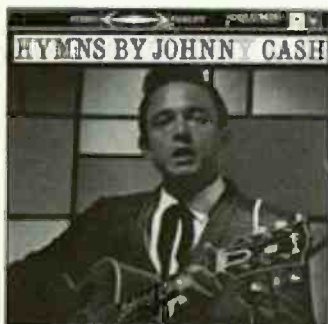
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Listed Alphabetically

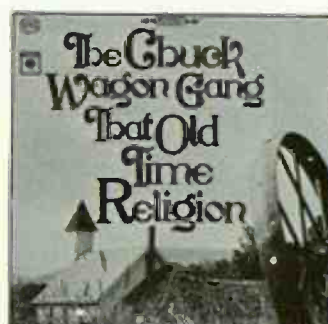
Advertiser	Page	Advertiser	Page
M. M. AIKEN PUBLISHING	83	MAHALIA JACKSON	70
DICK ANTHONY PUBLISHING	88	JUBILAIRES	43
JERRY BARNES & SWANEE RIVER BOYS	59	LEFEVRE ENTERPRISES	29
BLACKWOOD BROTHERS	68, 69	LESTER FAMILY	16
MARTHA BRANHAM	90	MOSIE LISTER PUBLISHING	55
ALBERT BRUMLEY & SONS	90	MUSICAL HART FAMILY	64
BULL'S EYE MUSIC	93	OAK RIDGE QUARTET	47
RALPH CARMICHAEL	40	OLD FASHIONED AIRS QUARTET	62
COLUMBIA RECORDS	95 (THIRD COVER)	PALMQUIST AIR NETWORK	22
CRUSADE ENTERPRISES	84	PATHAY	28
DECCA RECORDS	57	MARCY PIGNER	89
WILLA DORSEY	70	PLAINSMEN QUARTET	17
DOUBLE F ENTERPRISES	92	PROGRAMMING INC.	62
DUKE-PEACOCK RECORDS	72, 73	RCA VICTOR RECORDS	4
KEN DUNCAN	18, 19	SATURDAY NIGHT SING	64
ELMER & JIM	17	SEGO BROTHERS	61
T. FONTAINE	96 (BACK COVER)	SESAC	3
TENNESSEE ERNIE FORD	88	GEORGE BEVERLY SHEA	65
D. FRIESEN/MARY JANE	67	BOB SHEPARD CORRAL	91
GOLDEN STATE QUARTET	43	SINGING TIME IN DIXIE	25
GOODMAN FAMILY	36, 37	SKYLITE RECORDS	24
GOSPEL SING TIME ARTISTS	64	SONGFELLOWS	44
GOSPEL SING TIME RECORDS	93	SPEER FAMILY	45
GOSPEL SINGING CARAVAN	30, 31	TIM SPENCER	23
GOSPEL SINGING JUBILEE	63	STAMPS QUARTET	46
BILLY GRAHAM	41	STARDAY RECORDS	2
BESSIE GRIFFIN	83	SUPREME RECORDS	85
POLLY GRIMES	43	TRI STATE	60
HEARTWARMING RECORDS	14, 15	CLARA WARD SINGERS	83
JAKE HESS & IMPERIALS	8, 9	WHITNEY RECORDING STUDIO	40
		WORD RECORDS	6, 7
		WORLD WIDE RECORDS	60



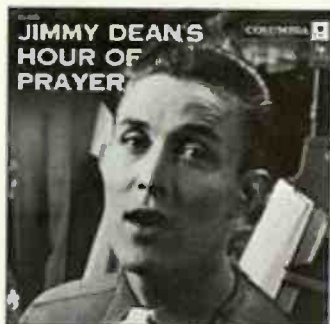
CL 1767/CS 8567*



CL 1284/CS 8125*



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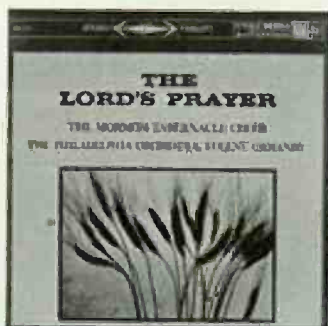


CL 1424/CS 8221*



CL 1549/CS 8349*

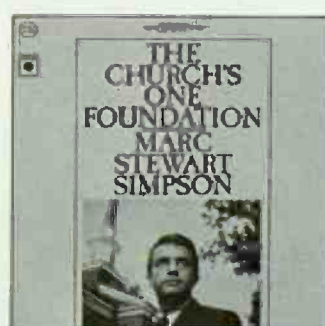
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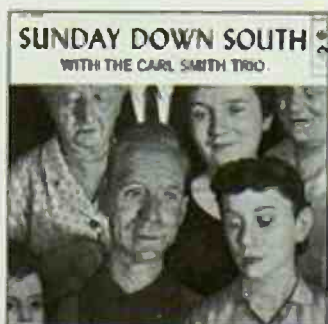
ML 5386/MS 6068*



CL 1494/CS 8285*



CL 2238/CS 9038*



CL 959



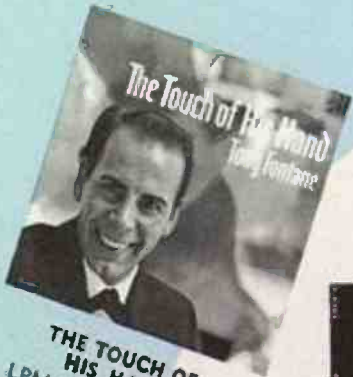
CL 1376/CS 8174*



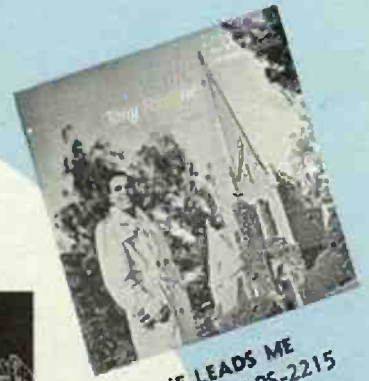
CL 1769/CS 8569*

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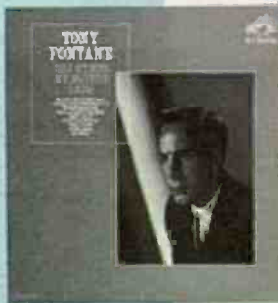
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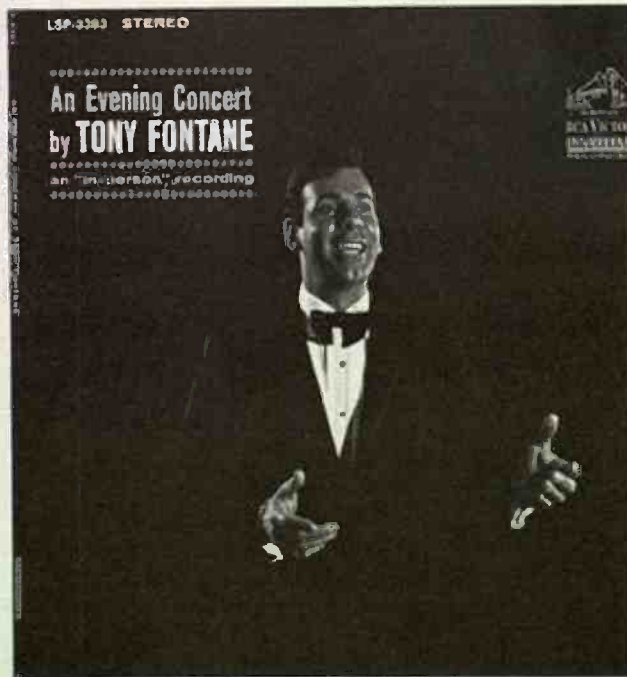
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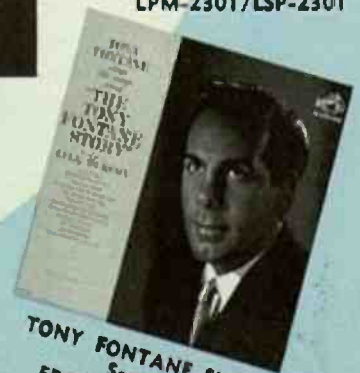
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