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*The St. Louis Labels***PLAYBACK**

Whole No. 20

**HARMOGRAPH  
and HERWIN**

By JOHN RANDOLPH

**P**honograph record companies have al-  
ways fallen into three major categories—the originators, the borrowers,  
and the cannibalizers.

The "originators" would be those, like Victor and Okeh, which cut their own masters and pressed their own records from them.

The "borrowers" would be those, like American Parlophone, which bought or rented masters from Okeh and others; or, like many of the Gennett subsidiaries, which simply had Gennett press for them and paste on the borrower's label. As John Davis and G. F. Gray Clarke state in their comprehensive history of the Gennett Company (*Jazz Forum*, No. 5), "Anybody could buy Gennett records in quantities and have his own special label affixed for the modest sum of a cent a label per side." Some 75 companies took advantage of these terms.

And finally the "cannibalizers" would be those companies which purchased unsold stocks of other companies and pasted their own labels over the old ones. An example would be LaBelle, which in the early 1920's bought up numbers of the old blue-label Columbias and pasted on its own blue label, usually altering the name of the recording artist or band but changing little else. A specific example of this sort of activity would be LeBelle AL 5078, which couples Mystery—a Medley Fox-trot by "Jazz Band" with Sewanee—a Medley One-Step. When the superimposed labels are steamed off "Mystery" is seen to be on Columbia A2905, by the Happy Six (78971), and "Sewanee" to be by the Columbia Dance Orchestra (78947). All the LaBelles I have examined have likewise been Columbia's originally. The Cleartone, Lakeside, and Climax companies likewise engaged at least occasionally in this practice.

Few companies, to be sure, would be

simon-pure examples of any of these three categories, and most have done a little borrowing from time to time. Decca, for example, although it has always cut most of its own masters, relied heavily on Champion masters for the early items in its 7000 race series. Indeed, the second category, that of the borrowers, would seem to comprise by far the largest of the three groups; and the two early St. Louis record concerns with which this article deals fall into that class.

The earlier of the two concerns was the Harmograph Record Company, a trade-name copyrighted in the fall of 1921 by the Shapleigh Hardware Company, St. Louis' largest wholesale hardware dealers. According to T. Frank Wood, assistant secretary of the company, Shapleigh operated Harmograph as one of its subsidiaries from about 1922 until 1925, when Shapleigh went out of the record business. From 1916 to 1922 Shapleigh also manufactured phonographs, and a "Harmograph Talking Machine Company" was maintained at 108 Pine Street. The Pine Street company was not independent, however, and mail received there was brought to Shapleigh's for disposition.

Albert E. Hoeger, whom Shapleigh's placed in charge of the Harmograph sales, states that the company did not press its own records, but simply ordered them, complete with Harmograph label, from a wholesale dealer in masters named Earl W. Jones, who operated "Standard Records" in New York City. The Standard Agency distributed records pressed from Cameo masters. Jones sent out each month about 35 or 40 test pressings of records to be issued the following month. Subscribers to his service could order as

many or as few as they wished. Hoeger usually, he says, chose about 10 to 15 records to be pressed for Harmograph each month.

After about a year, Shapleigh's discontinued its contract with Standard, and began to purchase its records from a Chicago wholesaler named Foerster, who seems to have dealt first in Paramount and then with Pathe-Perfect masters. Thus, Harmograph records were derived in succession from originals on Cameo, Paramount, and Pathe-Perfect, with occasional borrowings from Regal and others. Presumably the Harmograph serial numbers started with 700 or 701, but the earliest Harmograph I have so far located is Harmograph 729, Hussar's Claridge Hotel Orchestra: Georgia (144A)/Lane and Dale's Marimba Band: Don't Leave Me, Mammy (174C). This record appeared originally on Cameo 216, in 1922, according to Stilwell's "Record Dating Chart."

What makes the Harmograph company important to jazz collectors, of course, is its reissuance of Paramount race items, often with masters different from those used on the originals. The first positive Paramount item is Harmo 775, Original Memphis Five: Four O'clock Blues (1265)/Haunting Blues (1266), which was borrowed from Para 20192. The last I can clearly identify is Harmo 920, Elkins-Payne Jubilee Singers: Down By the Riverside (1561-2)/Wiseman Sextette with Orchestra: Hush Somebody's Calling My Name (6050), derived, in part at least, from Paramount masters. Between 775 and 920 Harmograph presumably reissued many of the Paramount 12000's and 12-100's and some of the Paramount 20200's, a space which involves many early Olivers, Mortons, Hendersons, Bradfords, etc., as well as a host of blues singers such as Ida Cox and Ma Rainey.

An interesting sidelight on the comparative value placed by Paramount upon their orchestral versus their blues masters is shown by the fact that Paramount insisted that their blues singers be reissued only under pseudonyms, while permitting their bands to be re-pressed without concealment. Oliver, Morton, Bernie Young and others appeared under their real names. Only Ollie Powers was disguised as "Clarence Young's Harmony Syncopators," perhaps because the "Jazzbo Jenkins" side contains a long vocal. Albert Hoeger relates with amusement how he and his wife manufactured pseudonyms for the blues singers, combining the names of other singers, lifting some names out of newspaper stories, or simply taking the first name that came to mind.

And Hoeger recalls once, when an Ida Cox slipped through without change on Harmo 847, he received a sharp note from Paramount threatening denial of subscriber privileges should the offense be repeated. And so Ida Cox became "Julia Powers;" Alberta Hunter, "May Alix;" Ethel Waters, "Martha Pryor;" and Ma Rainey, "Anne Smith." (Surely the "Anne Smith" version of Southern Blues/Moonshine Blues on Harmo 897 must be the rarest of all the Ma Rainey items.)

Confirmation of the argument that the blues singers were regarded by Paramount as a far more valuable property than the hot bands so eagerly sought by collectors today can be found on the envelopes in which Paramount issued its earliest 12000 series records. A St. Louis collector whom I know still owns the original envelope in which he bought Oliver's Para 12088 back in the early 1920's. No mention is made of Oliver, Morton, or any other band. Instead, special pictures and write-ups are given to Ida Cox, "uncrowned queen of the blues;" Alberta Hunter, "brightest star of the race;" the Norfolk Jazz Quartet; Madam "Ma" Rainey, "mother of the blues;" and Edmonia Henderson, "melodious blues singer." Lovie Austin is also featured, it is true, but only because she is the accompanist "for all the above singers."

By the time Harmo 940 was issued, Harmograph's Chicago dealer seems to have ended his connections with Paramount, and masters from that time on are from Pathe-Perfect, except for one or two that came from Regal, apparently. The last item I have seen is Harmo 1083, Lanin's Arcadians: Paddin' Madelin' Home from Pathe 36316. Starting early in 1922, then, Harmograph seems to have used Cameo-Muse masters for about a year, to have employed Paramount masters from 1923 to 1924, and to have continued for the last year of its existence with Pathe-Perfect masters.

In addition to its main series which ran, presumably, from 700 to 1083, Harmograph printed also a 300 series of light classical items; a 4000 "international music;" and a 2500 series, chiefly religious and operatic except for two Gladys Bryant items which seem to have been included by mistake. Except for the Bryant items, these last three series are of no interest to jazz collectors. In general, they seem to use masters from the same three major sources.

By way of contrast, the Herwin Record Company seems to have purchased its records exclusively from the Starr Piano

—(Continued on Page 6)

## HARMOGRAPH—

(Continued from Page 4)—

Company, and to have been a full-fledged member of the Gennett pool. Like Harmograph, though, Herwin was a subsidiary enterprise, in this case of the Artophone Corporation, wholesale dealers, electrical appliances of all kinds. The trade name of "Herwin" was compounded from the given names of Herbert and Edwin Schiele, two brothers who are top chief officers of the Artophone Corporation.

According to Herbert Schiele, Herwin records were sold from 1924 to 1930, which time Herwin was purchased by the Wisconsin Share Company, with the intent of utilizing its assets for the benefit of Paramount records, already staggering under the impact of the great depression of '29. Mr. Schiele states that some of Herwin's masters had been purchased from Gennett and were pressed locally. These masters, along with the "good will" of Herwin's customers, went to Paramount. By 1930, Gennett had folded as the competition of the radio had forced all but the hardiest record companies into receivership; hence Artophone must have thought it sound business to withdraw from its record enterprises. Earlier, however, Herwin records were a remarkably successful activity. Again according to Mr. Schiele, the enterprise did a gross sales of between six and seven hundred thousand in its best years.

Despite this large sales volume, Herwin records have always been extremely difficult for collectors to find; however, the reason for this scarcity becomes clear when Artophone's sales methods are explained. Herwin records were sold entirely on a mail order basis, and only to rural areas in the Midwest and the South. No catalogues were even issued, but advertisements were carried in various farm journals and circulars announcing records coming up for sale were sent out with each shipment of records.

In conclusion, I should like to offer my thanks, not only to Mr. Al Hoeger and Mr. Herbert Schiele for their cooperation, but also to the following St. Louis collectors who were kind enough to open their collection to me for reference: Oliver Johnson, Dr. "Shucks" Pruett, Ed Crowder, Wylie Todd, John Phillips, and "Slim."

(Editor's Note: Mr. Randolph has prepared a discography of Harmograph and Herwin records which will be published in a later issue.)