AN ANALYSIS OF METHODS OF PROMOTING COUNTRY MUSIC RECORDS IN THE ATLANTA, GEORGIA AREA

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Betty Cruikshank Fogel, B.A.
Denton, Texas

May, 1986

CM 201--Tracking

C & W Airplay Status

Record # _____ Title _____ Artist _____

NEW YORK
New York WHN
Missola WYNK
Hartford WPAT

BOSTON
Boston WCOP
Providence WHJY
Fitchburg WYNF-FM

PHILADELPHIA
Phila. WBCP
Ephrata WLOY-FM
Scranton WGBI
York WNOW

BALT. WASH.
Wheaton WHSH
Danville WDVA
Harr'burg WKCK
WSVA-FM
Lynchburg WBRG
Newpt. News WTID
Norfolk WCMS
Peter'bg WPVA
Portsmouth WWOC
Richmond WLEE
WTVR
Roanoke WSLC
Warrenton WKCW

BUFF. CLEVE. PITTS.
Buffalo WKBW
Akron WSLR
Pittsburgh WEZZ

ROCHESTER
Rochester WNYR
Syracuse WSEN

COL. CINCY. IND
Columbus WCOL
Cincinn. WSAI
Indianap. WIRE
Ashland WTCR
Charleston WCAW
WRDS

DETROIT
Detroit WDEE
WEXL
Gr. Rapids WCUZ
Lansing WILX
Muskegon WKUS
Toledo WTOD

CHICAGO/MIL.
Chicago WJJD
Madison WHAD
Peoria WMCL

MINN./ST. PAUL
Minneap. KTCR
KRSI
Duluth KAOH
Eau Claire WAXX
Fargo KFGO
Jamestown KSJB

ST. LOUIS
St. Louis WIL
KSTL
Kan. City KCKN
KCMO
Omaha KOOO
Topeka WIBW
Ft. Dodge KMGT
Evansville WROZ
Springfield KTTS

MEMPHIS
Memphis WMC
WHQM
Knoxville WIVK
Little Rk. KXLR
KLRA
Meridian WOKK
Murfrees. WMTS
Nashville WKDA
WSIX-FM
WENO
(country) WSM
Shreveport KRMD
KJOG

NEW ORLEANS
New Orlea. WSHO
(country) WWL
Alexandria KALB
Baton Rou. WYNK
Biloxi WVMI
Jackson WJQS
WJXN
Lafayette KXKW
Lake Chas. KLCL
Mobile WUNI
Monroe KREB-FM
KUZN

ATLANTA
Atlanta WPLO
Albany WJAZ
Athens WDOL
Augusta WCUS
Birmingham WYDE
Carrollton WLBB
Chattan. WDOD
Columbus WPNX
Dothan WAGF
WKYY-FM
Huntsville WBHP
Macon WDEN
Montgomery WRAH
Savannah WEAS
WBYG
WQQT
Valdosta WJEM
Waycross WACL

CHARLOTTE
Charlotte WAME
WSOC-FM
Asheville WSKY
WWNC
Cayce WCAY
Charleston WQSN
WEZL-FM
Columb. WCOS-FM
Greensboro WBIG
Greenville WESC
Raleigh WYRA
Wilmington WKLM
Fayetteville WFAI

MIAMI
Miami WWOK
WQBA
Daytona WELE
Jax'ville WQIK
WYOJ
Orlando WHOO
Tampa WYOU

HOUSTON
Houston KENR
KNUZ
Pasadena KIKK
Austin KVET
KOKE
San Anton. KEYX
KBUC
KJBR
Pt. Arthur KCAH

DALLAS/FT. WORTH
Dallas KBOX
Ft. Worth WBAP
KBUT
Amarillo KPUR
El Paso KHEY
Lubbock KLLL

OKLAHOMA CITY
Okla. City KLPR
Tulsa KVOO
Wichita KFDI

DENVER
Denver KLAK
Albuquer. KRZY
Flagstaff KAFF
Las Cru. KGRO-FM
Phoenix KHUT
KJJJ
Tucson KHOS
KCUB

SAN FRANCISCO
San Fran. KSAY
Fresno KNAK
Sacramento KRAK
San Jose KEEN

L.A./SAN DIEGO
L. A. KLAC
San Diego KSON
Bakersfld. KUZZ
Long Beach KFOX
San Bern. KCKC

SEATTLE/SPOKANE
Seattle KAYO
Spokane KGA
KSPO
Belling. KAFW
Billings KOYN
Gresham KRDR
Portland KPOK
KWJJ

jars)

TITLE _____ NO _____

WEEK BEGINNING
BILLBOARD
CASHBOX
RECORD WORLD
WPLO, ATLANTA
WPNX, COLUMBUS
WDEN, MACON
WQQT, SAV.
WYDE, B'HAM.
WZZK, B'HAM.
WBAM, MONT.
WLWI-FM., MONT.
WKSJ, MOBILE
WCBX, EDEN
WFAI, FAYETT.
WWNC, ASH.N.C
WPCM, BURL.N.C.
WTQR, WS.N.C
WBXB, EDEN
WCOS, COL.
WESC, GREEN.
WDOD, CHATT.
WDXB, CHATT.
WIVK, KNOX.
WKDA, NASH.
WSM, NASH.
WSIX-FM, NASH.
WDXE, LAW.TN.
WCMS, N. VA.
WLSC, RON.VA.
WXBQ-FM, BRISTOL
WSOC, CHARLOTTE
FLORIDA
WIRK-FM, W. PALM
WHOO, ORLANDO
WGTO, CYP.GDS.
WSUN, ST.PETE
WQYK, ST.PETE
WVOJ, JAX.
WQIK, JAX .

RAZZY BAILEY

RCA Records
30 Music Square West
Nashville, TN 37203
Telephone (615) 244-9880

RAZZY BAILEY

RAZZY'S a bona fide country star now. With eight straight top-ten smashes behind him; television exposure on shows ranging from Austin City Limits to Hee Haw, Record World and Cash Box magazine awards as country music's best new male performer an Academy of Country Music nomination, and success as a hit songwriter, the curly-haired crooner is riding high and proud these days. He's capable of delivering tender, yearning ballads like "I Keep Coming Back," "If Love Had a Face," "Tonight She's Gonna Love Me (Like There Was No Tomorrow)," and "I Can't Get Enough." Yet toe-tappers as memorable as "Lovin' Up a Storm" and "What Time Do You Have To Be Back To Heaven" fit his style as well. One of his successes was even a novelty song--"True Life Country Music." Best of all, he's introduced great songs like "Too Old To Play Cowboy" and "I Ain't Got No Business Doin' Business Today," both of which have become perennial disc jockey favorites.

To know the man is to love him. With his shy, country-boy smile, his good-time energy, his charm, his genuine warmth, and his Deep South humility, RAZZY BAILEY can win over any audience in performance. In short, he's a true headliner. He seems to be the perfect picture of country music success, and his high-flying career shows no signs of slowing down with the release of Makin' Friends, his third and finest RCA album.

It hasn't always been champagne and roses for RAZZY BAILEY, however. Despite all the vitality and enthusiasm of his stardom today, his life has been far from sunny. There is, indeed, a darker side of fame. He has known the bitter taste of failure and smelled defeat. He's been kicked in the teeth so often it's a wonder he can smile at all. Perhaps more than any of his fellow country stars, RAZZY BAILEY knows the value of dogged determination to succeed against all odds. He's a survivor, because he's one wiry-tough ol' boy.

Life didn't deal him the most winning hand of cards to start with. Born on Valentine's Day and christened "Rasie" (after his father's real first name Erastus), the boy grew up in poverty as his folks struggled on small farms in Alabama, New Mexico, and Texas. He was raised on honest manual labor, on his Daddy's poems and songs and stories, and on the string band music of rural picnics and house parties.

RAZZY'S first paying job was at just such a homey square dance; and by the time he was 15 he had his own band. But lacking any know-how about the music business, it was to be many years before he was anything but a local favorite. He played night after night for 15 solid years in the honky-tonks and nightclubs of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. These years took their toll. He slowly built himself up to a $40-50,000 a year income as a club act, but felt his career was essentially going nowhere. "Besides, it caused me a musical identity problem," he reflects, "Club work destroys your identity because you always play everybody else's material."

RAZZY'S frustration and dissatisfaction began to spill over into his personal life. His band wanted to quit. He and his wife drifted close to divorce, and they began seeing a psychiatrist. He'd developed a weakness for gambling and an alcohol problem. His children were troubled. These factors, and a three-year legal battle over label and management contract mistakes he'd made, drove the singer to the edge of despair in the mid-1970's. He felt his life crumbling and he completely bottomed-out psychologically.

He'd tried other jobs--selling insurance, driving an R.C. Cola truck route, working at a furniture store, cutting meat for a butcher--but always felt the only real trade he knew was music. And there he was in mid-career, feeling like it was one big Dead End.

His experiences with recording up to that time had not exactly been encouraging, either. RAZZY first recorded at age 10 for B&K Records, run by a 5-and-dime store owner from Alabama. Nothing. "Then I got into a pay-for-your-own-record deal up in Atlanta on the Peach label," he smiles sadly. Nothing nothing. Publisher Bill Lowery recorded his fine song "9,999,999 Tears" for his label around 1966. Nothing nothing nothing. Then Freddy Weller produced a single called "Stolen Moments" for him on ABC. Nothing. Next he tried producing himself on Capitol's 1-2-3 label. Nothing again.

Still undaunted, he formed a label called Aquarian and made a single called "I Hate Hate" that impressed MGM enough to buy and release it. Nothing once more. Things looked up when he teamed with producer Bob Montgomery on Capricorn Records. Alas, still nothing. Once more he sank his own money into a label--Erastus Records. Big expensive nothing.

By the mid-1970's BAILEY'S career on records seemed to be practically over. He felt like a complete loser, and national stardom was little more than a faded dream. A Florida psychic told him his fortunes were about to rise, but he had little reason to believe her dramatic predictions, no matter how much he wanted to.

But as if by a wave of that psychic's magic wand, they all began coming true. First, Dickey Lee recorded "9,999,999 Tears," RAZZY'S 10 year-old Atlanta song, and it hit Number One for RCA in 1976. Some of his old supporters from MGM were now with RCA in Nashville. Also, his old friend Bob Montgomery had become a powerful Music Row publisher/producer, and this, too, helped him get an RCA contract. All at once, all that struggling paid off. After years of striking out, RAZZY BAILEY began hitting one home run after another. He's one of the hottest acts in the business now but look beyond that jaunty winner's smile. The hurt of all those little defeats over all those years of trying is still there in his eyes.

How did he find the strength to keep trying? At least part of it came from his teenage bride who stayed with him over the rockiest roads, his wife Sandra. Hard times and poverty weren't strangers to either of them, and they both knew they could take life's hardest knocks. Another source of strength was the continual support and encouragement of his beloved Daddy who'd given him the gift of music in the first place. The 69 year-old elder Bailey is enjoying RAZZY'S success almost as much as he is. Especially so since

two of the numbers on Makin' Friends are co-written by the father and son, surely the most unique songwriting team in country music.

The rest of the songs on RAZZY BAILEY'S new LP are evenly divided between the urban-country sounds that brought him current fame, and some beer-drinkin' hard country tunes that move him back to his roots a bit. Makin' Friends thus brings together RAZZY'S hard luck past and the bright promise of his future.

# # #

042381

Fogel, Betty Cruikshank, An Analysis of Methods of Promoting Country Music Records in the Atlanta, Georgia Area. Master of Arts (Journalism), May, 1986, 66 pp., 7 appendices, bibliography, 33 titles.

This study examined promoting recorded country music from Atlanta, Georgia, and explored why Atlanta is important in this field.

It was learned, through interviews, that promoters wanted radio airplay and top trade publication chart ratings. Radio station program directors decided upon playlists from reading trade publications, efforts by record promoters, listener requests and focus groups, and from reported sales. Stores used album and poster displays, charts, and played music for promotion.

The business is one of personalities and experience, as much as product promoted. Large conglomerates are fast changing it.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter | Page

I. INTRODUCTION..... 1

- Statement of Problem
- Purpose
- Review of Literature
- Justification
- Definition of Terms
- Methodology
- Organization

II. INTERVIEWS..... 16

- Record Manufacturer Country Music Promoters
- Independent Country Music Promoters
- Radio Station Program Directors
- Record Retailers

III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION..... 41

APPENDIX..... 57

BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 64

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The music business--the art, profession, and business of music--is big business. By the early 1980's, it grossed more than ten billion dollars worldwide, four billion dollars in the United States, and the annual sales of records, with radio as the prime delivery medium, exceeded the gross national product of eighty countries in the United Nations.[1]

Music is marketed and sold within this industry in different categories, including classical, jazz, popular, soul, rock, Latin, specialty, disco, adult contemporary, middle of the road, gospel, and country.

This study will deal with the recorded country music category. Although at first uncommercialized and purely folk, it had its commercial founding in the 1920's, when entertainment entrepreneurs learned that a cash market existed for it.

Country music developed out of the folk culture of the rural South. It was most prominent in the Southern Appalachian Mountains, and moved west as Southerners moved west.[2]

---

[1]David Baskerville, Ph.D., Music Business Handbook (Denver, 1979), pp. 4-5.

[2]Bill C. Malone, Country Music U.S.A., A 50-Year History (Austin, 1975), pp. viii-ix.

Although, through the years, country music has absorbed songs, styles, instruments, and influences from other musical sources, it has always reflected the social and economic culture in which it was found.

It has been created and communicated mainly by rural dwellers in the mainstream of the white, protestant Anglo-Celtic tradition. Rural isolation, religious conservatism, and ethnic homogeneity produced a people who made up a relatively distinct social group who performed a common type of music. This music gave a feeling of security, for it symbolized the place where a person was born, the earliest childhood satisfactions, the religious experience, the pleasures within the community, the courtship, the work; the music could describe any or all of these personality-shaping experiences.[3] Because the music has been so deeply interwoven into the security feeling of the community, the musical style has remained intact.

Rural influences have remained the distinguishing focus of country music, even though it moved to the cities, beginning in the 1920's. It merely adapted itself to changed conditions.

The majority of its performers today are Southerners who come from farms or small towns or who are only one generation away from that background. The old attitudes,

---

[3] Ibid., p. 2.

customs, and social responses that are entrenched in country music still exist in the urbanized South.[4]

Folk and rural humor continue as vital parts of country music. Lyrics are the most important part of the song, set to simple melodies and rhythms.

Songs are created from personal experiences, with the manner of performance, both vocally and instrumentally, handed down. After first singing solo, singers added dulcimers, then fiddles, banjos, guitars, and mandolins. Traveling medicine shows were the early commercial outlet for country musicians.[5]

The urban oriented styles of country music as western swing and honky-tonk developed when Southerners moved to Oklahoma and Texas and adapted rural and mountain music to new developments and surroundings. The music that thrives in a honky-tonk atmosphere or tells of problems in an urban existence, can be defined as country, since it sprang from a rural origin.

Country music may be defined as what was once called hillbilly, mountain music, country and western, country swing, blue grass, Nashville country, Los Angeles country, pop country, and popular songs with a country-type rhythm. Singing styles range from straight Nashville, down-home, nasal tones to popular song styles. However, many experts agree that the ambiguity of trying to categorize country

---

[4] Ibid., p. viii.

[5] Ibid., p. 2.

music continues to be a problem.[6]

Probably the first radio station in the United States to feature country music was WSB in Atlanta, Georgia, thus early establishing Atlanta as a "breakout" market. This station first went on the air March 16, 1922, with a 100-watt transmitter that was increased to 500 watts on June 13. Within a few months, Fiddlin' John Carson and the Rev. Andrew Jenkins became popular as country singers in the central Georgia region.

Atlanta, with its wealth of folk talent, was given top priority by Okeh Records for recording artists. The company had set up recording studios in Asheville, North Carolina; Atlanta; Bristol and Johnson City, Tennessee; St. Louis; and Dallas, Texas. The birth of the country music industry in Atlanta came in 1923, when Polk Brockman, the largest regional distributor of Okeh Records in the United States, and agent Ralph Peer made a trip to Atlanta to record John Carson. The two men had thought of Carson after seeing a popular fiddlers' contest on Times Square in New York.[7]

The two men recorded Carson in Atlanta, choosing "The Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane" and "The Old Hen Cackled and the Rooster's Going To Crow." Brockman gave the record national publicity. As sales increased, Carson recorded twelve more songs and signed a recording contract with Okeh Records. Carson was the first country performer to have his

---

[6]Baskerville, op. cit., p. 298.

[7]Malone, op. cit., p. 2.

selections recorded and marketed on a commercial basis,[8] making it the real beginning of the country music industry and making Atlanta early associated with country music.

With WSB leading the way, radio stations all over the South and Midwest began featuring country talent in the early 1920's. WBAP radio station in Fort Worth, Texas, continued the country trend with the first barn dance, broadcast January 4, 1923, with M. J. Bonner's string band, and later the Peacock Fiddle Band from Cleburne, Texas. Several years later, Grand Ole Opry was broadcast on WSM radio in Nashville, Tennessee.

Radio broadcasting executives at WBAP, WSB, WLS, and WSM were the first to devote airplay to musical interests of Americans who liked country music.

Many small and low-powered radio stations appeared across the South and, by the end of 1922, eighty-nine of the more than 500 stations were in the South.[9]

Radio became the craze of the 1920's, and the music industry used this medium, phonographs, sheet music, and live entertainment to market commercial music.

The city of Atlanta continues in the forefront in commercial music and, since the early 1980's, has been attempting to locate a Grammy Hall of Fame in downtown Atlanta, to honor recording artists.

---

[8] Ibid., p. 36.

[9] Ibid., p. 35.

Who listens to country music? The main listening and record buying age group is assessed at age twenty-five to forty-five, with slightly younger and older fringes and a widening socio-economic span.[10]

Statement of Problem

This study examined the organization, role, function, and scope of the activities involved in promoting country music from Atlanta, Georgia.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to learn why Atlanta is important in the promotion of recorded country music.

Review of Literature

A search through Journalism Abstracts revealed no studies on promotion of country recorded music, or even promotion in general.

However, a 1979 published study, The Development of the Country Music Radio Format by Richard P. Stockdell at Kansas State University, provides historical background of country music on the radio, and explains use of the radio as a promotional tool.[11]

---

[10]Interview, Mary Ray, Southeast Region Secondary Promotions, RCA Records, December 22, 1981.

[11]Richard P. Stockdell, The Development of the Country Music Radio Format (Manhattan, Kansas, 1979).

Although not specifically on record promotion, two other studies provide insight into general promotion and advertising techniques. James D. Dillard's 1977 study of "A Psychological Approach to Persuasive Advertising" at East Texas State University, found that key elements for success are knowing the product well and knowing the potential customer. He said that, when selling a product, certain psychological motives--need for comfort, physical and financial security and especially social approval and acceptance and ability to attract opposite sex--may be emphasized through advertising.[12] These general tips have use in record promotion, too.

Barbara Jo Rivers' 1978 study, "A Study of Promotion Techniques for Local News Shows Among Selected TV Stations in Georgia" at University of Georgia, found that, of seven promotional techniques used by the television stations, only the frequency of advertising and the greater number of people reached gave positive promotional results as measured by Arbitron ratings. Community involvement and special event sponsorship by a station helped in the promotional efforts.[13]

Most insights come from such trade publications and periodicals as Billboard, Cash Box, Radio and Records, and

---

[12]James D. Dillard, "A Psychological Approach to Persuasive Advertising," unpublished master's thesis, East Texas State University, Commerce, Texas, 1977.

[13]Barbara Jo Rivers, "A Study of Promotion Techniques for Local News Shows Among Selected TV Stations in Georgia," unpublished master's thesis, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, 1978.

Music Retailer and such tip sheets as The Gavin Report and Kal Rudman's Friday Morning Quarterback.

Justification

This study of promotion of country music should add to the general body of knowledge about promotion and public relations as a recognized, specialized professional field within the music industry.

Not only is promoting commercial music a specialized public relations field, but each category of music, because country, requires different promotional emphasis, strategy, treatment, and method.

Since "Public Relations in the Music Industry" has become a course offering within Georgia State University's commercial music course, several instructors there, who are professionals in the recorded music business, have expressed the need for information describing the functions and activities involved in record promotion.

Geoff Parker, assistant professor of commercial music-recording at GSU, said there is definite need for this written information for a course curriculum, because little has been written on it and little research has been done.

Only since the mid-1970's have colleges and universities started to recognize commercial music as a specific major field. Since the University of Miami, Florida, began its four-year program leading to a Bachelor of Music in Music Merchandising

in the 1970's, eleven colleges and universities in the United States followed suit with two- and four-year programs. Nearly all of these programs include a course on public relations or promotion.[14]

Even though this study is specifically on country music promotion, many generalities of the tools, techniques, and types of activities involved could be adapted to promoting other types of recorded music.

Definition of Terms

Add--An addition to the radio station playlist or to the chart in the trade publication.

Airplay--Playing a song on the radio.

Album, gold record--One-half million records sold within ninety days of release date and when the record hits the marketplace.

Album, platinum record--One million records sold within ninety days of release date and must be in the marketplace that long.

Album, double-platinum--Two million records sold within ninety days of release date and must be in marketplace that long.

---

[14]Joseph Csida, The Music/Record Career Handbook (New York, 1975), p. 235.

Album, triple-platinum--Three million records sold within ninety days of release date and must be in marketplace that long.

ARBITRON Ratings--American Research Bureau, an independent national research company that can be used to compare the performance of stations in a given market.

Breakout market--Getting a record first played on a radio station; break or introduce to a market.

Chart--A list, by music category, in such trade publications as Billboard that shows rankings of records.

Crossover--A song in one music category that is requested on radio stations with different formats, thus the song "crosses over" to another category for wider marketing appeal.

Federal Anti-Bribery Act--Outlaws kick-backs or payola; aimed at disc jockeys.

Gavin Report--A professional newsletter of the recording industry; it is news highly valued by radio decision makers; also known as a "tip sheet."

Hit--A record that gets repeated radio airplay, is listed in the record trade publication charts with a ranking, and has strong sales.

Hype--Any illegitimate means employed by record companies or their agents to induce airplay of a record.

LPM--Local Promotion Manager employed by a record manufacturer who gets radio airplay.

NARAS--National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences.

Playlists--Lists of records played daily on the radio.

Publicity--Information usually channeled through the news media designed to promote a person, people, products, events or ideas.

R and R--Radio and Records, a widely read radio advisory publication valuable to radio stations; tagged their Bible by some industry people.

Release--A new record or album, just entering the marketplace.

Reporting station--Radio station that reports a record's progress to record manufacturers, independent promoters and trade publications; certain designated retailers report sales to radio stations and to trade publications.

RIAA--The Recording Industry Association of America, a trade association of record companies that does market research.

Rudman--Publication by Kal Rudman, a widely read radio advisory service or "tip sheet" called Friday Morning Quarterback.

Singles, gold records--One million records sold within ninely days of release date and becoming available for sale in the marketplace.

Singles, platinum records--Two million records sold within ninety days of release date and becoming available for sale in the marketplace.

Tracking--Process of following the rise and fall of an individual record in the marketplace.

Station rating--Number in radio listening audience as determined by market research services.

Limitation of Study

This study covers functions and activities of promoting recorded country music in the Atlanta area.

It defines and explores some of the main promotional tools and methods used in relation to radio stations, major record company manufacturers, distributors, and retailers.

It does not attempt to judge which activities are effective or ineffective; it describes what is done, how country music is promoted, and what entities and inter-related functions are involved.

The study does not cover songwriting, publishing copyrighting, licensing, contracts, production techniques, studios, engineering, or video discs or compact laser discs used by radio stations.

Methodology

Since little has been written about this field, in books or scholarly research, most data gathering came from personal interviews.

The interview subjects were selected from recommendations of active Atlanta members of NARAS (National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences) and from instructors in the music business program at Georgia State University. Not only were these subjects selected for their job titles, but because most had extensive experience in many areas of the commercial recording business.

Data were gathered through interviews with radio station personnel, record company executives, marketing and sales personnel and others associated with this industry, and from promotional materials, trade publications, and books.

As an overview for understanding promotion, an instructor was interviewed who is assistant professor of Georgia State University's commercial music-recording program. An interview guide (see Appendix A) was used to obtain general information.

For specific information about country promotion from Atlanta, two regional country promotion managers from RCA and CBS records were interviewed. These two companies were selected based upon the quantity and quality of their country product.

RCA, the oldest label for country artists, was unanimously named "Label of the Year" in 1981 by the three main trade publications, Billboard, Cash Box, and Record World. CBS has a large and well-promoted group of country artists; eighty people work in CBS promotion nationwide, twelve in the Atlanta area.

When interviewing these two subjects, an interview guide (see Appendix B) was used. The guide was formulated to elicit responses that describe the organization, function, and scope of activities in promoting country music from Atlanta.

For further information about country music promotion from Atlanta, three independent promoters were interviewed. The same interview guide, modified slightly (see Appendix C), was used.

They were selected for their expertise and longevity in the field. One promoter has been in promotion since 1965. Another, the first woman in promotion, has been in it since 1956. She was at the forefront when Warner Brothers started its Country Artist Division in 1976, has worked in all phases of the record business, and is one of two associate national promotion directors for Warner Brothers country product in the United States. She is based in Atlanta. The third has been a record promoter in Atlanta since the early 1950's.

Since the main goal of promotion is to get radio airplay, the next interviews involved three radio station program directors, the officers who decide upon the selection of music that make up daily programming. These three were selected because they are associated with the three major country music stations in Atlanta. For these interviews, another interview guide (see Appendix D) was used.

To learn about promotion as it sifts to the retail level, two retail music people were interviewed to see how promotion affects actual sales of the recording. For contrast, a large and small operation were selected. These were

selected because both had had extensive experience working in different areas of the industry and were knowledgeable in the Atlanta music community.

An informal interview guide (see Appendix E) was used for these interviews. Through the information gathered, the link between promotion and sales that makes Atlanta a major breakout market for country music can be better understood.

Because of the exploratory nature of this entire study, statistical analysis is inappropriate. The goal was to get detailed descriptions of the processes, functions, and activities involved to understand why Atlanta is a major breakout and selling market for recorded country music.

Organization of the Study

This study is divided into three chapters: Chapter I is the introduction; Chapter II, the interviews; and Chapter III, the summary and conclusions.

CHAPTER II

INTERVIEWS

To give background in promotion of recorded music as a recognized professional field, Geoff Parker, assistant professor of commercial music at Georgia State University (GSU), was interviewed September 1, 1981. An informal guide (see Appendix A) was used.

A former music critic and promoter, Parker has been associated as a college instructor with the commercial music and recording program at GSU since it started in 1974 as a two-year Associate of Science program in cooperation with National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS). In the early 1980's, the program added a Bachelor of Science. Now, both programs are available.

From the start, the program had the support of the music industry, with scholarships offered from NARAS, National Association of Record Merchandisers, Inc. (NARM), American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), and Bill Lowery Music, a multifaceted publishing and recording company. The GSU program has an overseeing advisory board of members from the recorded music industry for advice and consultation.

By the early 1980's, GSU's commercial music degree program was among about twelve such programs taught in colleges and universities in the United States.

Among some of the other schools offering commercial recorded music degrees are University of Miami in Florida, University of Colorado, Syracuse University, New York University, University of the City of Los Angeles, Belmont College in Nashville, and Middle Tennessee State.

Within GSU's commercial music program curriculum, the promotion courses offered are Basic Marketing, Media Marketing in the Music Industry, Promotion of Recorded Music, Marketing and Merchandising of Recorded Music, Public Relations in the Music Industry, Public Relations, and Projects in Public Relations. These courses add to the recognition and validity of music promotion as a specialized area.

Parker discussed some of the tools of promotion within this specialized field as airplay reports, tracking sheets, trade tip sheets, the Gavin Report, and Friday Morning Quarterback. Not only was he familiar with these because of his current position, but also because he had worked in the industry, serving as a music critic for the Boston Globe, Boston After Dark, and Rolling Stone magazine. In addition, he taught music copyright courses at Berkeley College of Music in Boston, worked for ASCAP, promoted concerts, did public relations for an agency, managed songwriters, promoted

talent, and worked in other areas of the music industry.

Regarding commercial music promotion in Atlanta, Georgia, Parker said that Atlanta is a major breakout market for new recordings, with radio as the main vehicle, because so many regional recording company executives, independent promoters and national music promotion and sales executives work out of Atlanta.[15]

Record Manufacturer Country Music Promoters (See Appendix B) was used for interviews with regional country music promotion managers from RCA and CBS Records.

Subject interviewee Mary Ray of RCA Records is in charge of country music for secondary promotions in the Southeast, which is one of five regions designated by RCA.

Regional country marketing manager Tim Pritchett has been with CBS Records for more than ten years and is responsible for eleven people in marketing, from Baltimore, Maryland, to Miami, Florida, to Memphis, Tennessee. He continually contacts thirty radio stations regionwide that report directly to Billboard magazine, the main record trade publication, and promotes and tracks CBS country records.

Ray's goals are to try to get certain RCA country records to number one in Billboard and other trade magazines by radio airplay. Since radio stations and wholesale and

---

[15]Interview, Geoff Parker, assistant professor, Georgia State University, Atlanta, September 1, 1981.

retail record buyers play and purchase records based on ratings in the trade magazines, this is most important.

Likewise, Pritchett's promotion goal is to get radio airplay for CBS country music. He explained this is done on a direct basis through Local Promotion Managers (LPM's) employed by CBS.

Fitting in the overall promotion organization of the company, Ray's job primarily deals with promoting RCA country product in twenty-six radio markets throughout the Southeast. A second regional executive, who was traveling, deals with about the same number of major Southeast markets.

The company's national country promotion headquarters are in Nashville, headed by a divisional vice president. This Nashville position comprises a staff of three who coordinate marketing and promotion activities with the regions. Promotion direction is provided from Nashville, but RCA regions may add their own promotion ideas.

She said that people in a wide socio-economic group, ages twenty-five to forty-five, with younger and older fringes, make up the main country music-buying age group. She added that country fans are more loyal to the artist, so, once a country artist or group has been promoted by the company and has had several hits, fans will keep buying the artist's records.

The following is an example of Ray's promotion activities in relation to a new release or song. New RCA country releases are sent to the region on Mondays from

Nashville, together with a preview sheet of the artist's new song. With artists who are not yet familiar to the public, comes biographical information and photos of the artist. These are provided partly by an RCA public relations staff and by RCA-contracted outside public relations agencies. The promotional information is sent to radio stations and the news media.

The record is mailed or taken personally to radio stations on Monday and, by Tuesday of the next week, Ray starts tracking it. To do so, she telephones the twenty-six radio stations once a week to learn how much it is being played over the radio; its airplay activity is reported to tip sheets as the Gavin Report or to trade publications. The national RCA mailing list is from 2,000 to 3,000 radio stations.

Ray gave tracking examples of several RCA country artists and groups. She tracked "Alabama" as a new group, and when its first single was released, she helped promote it from number forty-nine to number two at radio station WBAM in Montgomery, Alabama, within nine weeks. "Alabama" has continued to be among the top-selling RCA country groups.

With the company's artist, "Sylvia," her first three single records made it only to the number thirty and forty ratings in the trade magazines, but with a slight style

change by the artist, suggested by RCA, her next single became number one in Billboard.

Georgia artist Razzy Bailey was a little-known RCA artist who was tracked and promoted by Ray initially.

If the artist is new, he, along with the Regional Promotion Manager, taking promotional giveaways, may visit selected radio stations to meet program and music directors. The artist may occasionally do on-air interviews with the radio disc jockey. For further promotion, the record manufacturer buys advertising spots on the radio for the new product and coordinates it with the local retail record stores.

For the Total promotional effort, the record manufacturer promotion or sales staff places in-store displays of the artist and album cover to further retail sales.

CBS Records ships promotional records to radio stations three days before they are shipped to retail markets. The record company then starts promoting them to the radio station by person-to-person visits and by telephone contact, through Billboard chart standings, through tracking the airplay at other radio stations for comparison purposes, through using sales figures in different regional and local markets where the record is selling to promote it to another geographical area, and through album giveaways, T-shirts,

and free concert tickets for a live artist performance.

A record's progress is monitored weekly by CBS, based on listener requests from radio stations and local sales reported by retail stores to radio stations.

Pritchett supervises the LPM's, which, in turn, have direct and continual contact with radio station program directors, however, he does meet with them during special promotions and company-sponsored promotional events.

A record may be an instant add to a radio playlist if it is by a known artist. But if the artist is unknown, the smaller secondary markets will try it first, and, based on that airplay activity reported to the Gavin Report and picked up in the trades as Billboard, Cash Box, and Record World, it will be added to the major market radio stations.

Radio stations determine record airplay from listener requests, record trade magazine ratings and record store polls of sales.

Record manufacturers get a week's prior Billboard ratings to help stimulate radio airplay. Airplay is further stimulated by on-air promotion as free albums to listeners, T-shirts of the artist or record cover, and other give-aways.

Additional promotional efforts are directed toward radio station music and/or program directors and wholesale and retail store buyers or distributors. This group may be

invited to a private party given by the manufacturer to meet the artist, with the artist sometimes providing a free show. Some of these efforts may be classified as "intangible" promotion activities.

Record sales figures from retail record stroes are further used to promote more sales and to promote radio airplay.

Ray considers Atlanta as the major Southern breakout market for country product, with Dallas, second, and Los Angeles, third. If a country single breaks out and is played first and sold first in Atlanta, the fact that is is successful in this major market can be used to promote it in other markets.

If, however, after three weeks, a record does not get a numbered rating in Billboard, or a certain amount of airplay as reported through telephone tracking, sales and requests, the record is dropped. This is a fast, visible way of measuring promotional efforts, said Ray.[16]

Using radio play lists, Pritchett tracks extensively the weekly progress of CBS country releases at thirty radio stations regionwide, from Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. to know what and where promotional efforts

---

[16]Interview, Mary Ray, country music promoter, RCA Records, Atlanta, Georgia, December 22, 1981.

should be made based on listener requests and local sales. Retail record stores report sales and requests to radio stations.

If his regional market area is selling well, those sales figures can be used to promote and sell another region or market.

Reports from record store sales are used by CBS Records to promote the product, to determine the success of the product, to determine if the money budgeted for promotion should be continued, expanded, or dropped. Radio stations poll record stores on their sales to determine how much airplay to give a record. The cycle is a continuing, intricate circle of promotion, airplay, sales, and airplay.

Sales and airplay of records in the Atlanta market are polled by the leading trade publications and become part of the total rankings in Billboard and Cash Box magazines.

Pritchett did not put a demographic label on the potential consumer of country music within the Southeast region and sees his main competition as other manufacturers of country product.

He defines a country hit as ranking in the Billboard top ten, up in sales, getting repeated airplay, and high acceptance by the consumer. Records, both singles and albums, may sell enough to become "gold" or "platinum" based on sales of album or single.

Pritchett said the promotional tools and techniques used to accomplish his job include tracking the records, and personal and telephone visits to radio stations, wholesale and retail record buyers, distributors, and stores; entertaining customers and the news media; "goodwill," and giveaways. Artist appearances, press releases and paid advertising are included in the total promotional effort. He said little advertising is done on single records, since there is little profit; they are used as vehicles to sell albums.

Within the promotion activities, Pritchett listed "tangibles" as radio advertising budgeted on a per-album basis, according to whether the artist is new or developing; print media and trade publication ads in Billboard, Record World, Cash Box, and Radio and Records magazines. As "intangibles," he listed public relations, goodwill, business and sales techniques, dinners and entertainment.

His promotion efforts are measured by rankings of records in the trade publication charts and sales figures. He explained that there is a wide variance in the break-even costs on records sold, since each album costs the manufacturer from $35,000 to $500,000 to produce. The wide cost range is due to artists' costs or contracts with the company, and manufacturer's cost to develop and promote an artist.

If sales figures meet projections, his promotional efforts have been successful.[17]

Independent Country Music Promoters

To interview independent country music promoters, (see Appendix C) was used as a guide.

Independent country music promoter Ann Tant, a former member of the NARAS Board of Governors, and one of the first women in record promotion, has been in her field since 1956, working in nearly all areas of promotion.

She represents Warner Brothers as Associate National Promotion Director for Country Music, traveling to the East Coast, Northeast, and Midwest, and occasionally the West Coast to promote twenty to twenty-five country artists. Her job involves 50 per cent travel.

Tant's main goals are to be sure the radio stations know about the product, have the product, and will give the product airplay.

She helps introduce new artists and builds them, as Warner Brothers has about half new and half established country artists. She is concerned with total career development, rather than just airplay. However, she promotes about eleven records weekly.

"Promotion has a lot to do with an artist's success," she said. "It's the excitement you can create. But they

---

[17]Interview, Tim Pritchett, regional country marketing manager, CBS Records, Atlanta, Georgia, December 10, 1981.

have to be good, too. Credibility is the key."[18] She would like to see more promoters in the industry use an honest approach and less hype.

The functions and responsibilities of her job include many areas of record promotion. She is concerned with artist promotion, showcasing new artists, and appreciation shows, sets up artist interviews with the media, and works with in-store artist promotion and artist concert appearances.

During the famous spring Fan Fair Week in Nashville, when fans and industry personnel can meet the country music artists in a trade show atmosphere, she works a booth representing the company and artists and hosts a Hospitality Suite for the music industry. She does the same for a similar Country Music Association fall event in Nashville, attended by radio disc jockeys.

The effect of the Atlanta area market does not concern her particularly, since she deals with a broader national scope in country product.

She believes that country music promotion is easier to deal with. There are no payola and drug problems for the most part. Country people are like a family.

Tant promotes about eleven records a week, tracking their progress on the fifty radio stations within her territory. These stations report to the trade publications

---

[18]Interview, Ann Tant, independent country music promoter, Atlanta, Georgia, August 1, 1982.

for chart rankings.

When tracking by telephone, on the first call, she asks the radio station if it received the new product, has listened to it and whether it has been added to the playlist. At the week's end, she gets the chart positions only. For new product, she concentrates on smaller stations in lesser markets that have larger playlists, which allow new product to get a faster start.

In larger market areas, major radio stations have shorter playlists, making it harder to get airplay. She said that most new records are played first in the smaller markets and then move to the major ones, such as Atlanta, Dallas, Los Angeles, and New York. From her tracking and record of sales figures, she can use the successes in one market to promote the product in another.

She describes the "tangibles" as tracking procedures and budget costs of promotion activities; and the "intangibles" as goodwill, the personal touch, getting along with the artist, radio stations, retail record stores, media, customers, and knowledge of product. In her efforts, promotional items as posters, T-shirts, free albums, concert tickets, artist memorabilia, and giveaways are used.

Her promotion efforts are measured by chart rankings and sales figures of product.

Larry King became an independent promoter after being in marketing and promotion with Southland Records since 1965. King is a specialist at getting radio airplay. He represents small record labels that cannot afford their own promotion personnel. His clientele change week to week; he may represent two records from two different record companies one week, and five other records or companies the next. King averages working for four companies at once.

King works on a weekly retainer basis, flat rate fee, if radio station adds the record to the playlist, or combination of retainer plus bonus, depending on the company and project. He promotes a record a minimum of four weeks. Among his clients are Atlantic and Polygram Record Companies.

To get airplay, he tracks forty-two radio stations in the Southeast. He gets sales information from the record company involved, uses Radio and Records for information on the record, checks the charts in the trade publications, and calls the designated radio stations twice a week. When calling, he checks to see if they have the record and have played it, checks the chart ranking, gets sales reported from retail stores, and requests the progress of the record. He gives the stations additional information on the product and calls later in the week to see if it is added to the playlist. He again checks its progress. With a new release, he checks to see that is is mailed to major accounts.

Since at the time of the interview, he had traveled only eight times in the previous five months, most of his contact is by telephone rather than in person. He is in daily contact by telephone with the record companies he represents and with major retail record stores in the Southeast for progress of sales. He promotes half new artists and half established artists, as does Tant.

King uses mostly tracking procedures, personal contact over the telephone with radio stations, record companies and retailers, sales figures, and trade publication chart rankings as marketing tools.

He said, "Bad promotion can kill a hit record and good promotion cannot make a hit from a bad record." In other words, "no amount of promotion is going to make a hit if it's not."[19] He has rejected artists and records because he did not believe they would sell. A hit he defines as getting airplay and selling to the consumer.

"Tangibles" he lists as sales figures, tracking, and other data; "intangibles" he lists as his reputation, knowledge in the field, long-time personal contacts in the business, and occasional entertainment of clients or potential clients.

His promotion efforts are measured by airplay of record, as he is paid according to this.

---

[19]Interview, Larry King, independent record promoter, Atlanta, Georgia, July 9, 1982.

The third independent promoter interviewed was Wade Pepper of Wade Pepper Promotions, Inc. He has been an independent country music promoter for eleven years and was in promotion for Capitol Records twenty-three years prior to that, starting in 1951.

Pepper's office is located in the offices of Bill Lowery Music Group, Inc. Lowery is known as "Mr. Music" in Atlanta, as a music publisher and promoter since the 1940's. Pepper handles country promotion for Bill Lowery and other small record companies nationwide.

Pepper's promotion goals are to "take a record to the number one country record in Billboard and Record World and establish an artist."[20]

His job functions and responsibilities are for publishers like Bill Lowery, artists directly, or small record companies. He contacts up to 200 country radio stations nationwide by telephone to get record airplay, to learn the record's number on the Billboard chart, to find out if it is being charted, and to learn audience response.

"If I don't get airplay," he said, "I'm not performing a service. I talk directly with the program and music directors who make up the playlists."[21]

As to keeping data, "I use informal handwritten notes from one human talking to another human."[22] He added that

---

[20]Interview, Wade Pepper, independent record promoter, Wade Pepper Promotions, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia, August 26, 1985.

[21]Ibid. Pepper interview.

[22]Ibid. Pepper interview.

some promoters use computers, but he does not.

For tracking sheets, he records every call on a legal pad tracking sheet weekly and sends it to his clients. He charts artist, number of record on trade publication chart, and result of call to radio station. Pepper telephones the radio station music or program directors personally on a one-to-one basis once a week, for a minimum of seventy-five total calls weekly. He makes sure that secondary markets get copies of the record. He said reports of airplay from stations tracked from Atlanta do have input into the national rankings in the trade publications.

Pepper defines a hit in country music as one doing well on the charts, in the top ten, and selling well. For a beginning country artist, he estimates a single doing well at 125,000 to 150,000 copies; an album at 75,000 to 100,000 copies. For an established artist like Willie Nelson or group like Alabama, that would mean a platinum album or one million copies sold.

Pepper's promotional tools are mainly personal contact over the telephone using the "intangibles" of friendship and credibility built from years of doing business. He does not use sales reports of records extensively to promote a record, or does he use promotional items or giveaways.

His promotion efforts are measured by the airplay and chart rankings in the trade publications of the records he promotes, similar to the ways Tant and King's efforts are measured.

Radio Station Program Directors

To interview the country music radio station program directors, (see Appendix D) was used as a guide.

Jim Morrison, program director for WQXI AM-FM, said the station reaches homes within an eighty-mile radius of Atlanta. It has a 70,000-person audience each weekday during morning drivetime hours, based on ARBITRON ratings. The daily format features a mix of country and contemporary music for a listening audience of adults eighteen to forty-nine.

Morrison said new record releases are mailed a week before the record company promotion representatives visit the station on Mondays, the day set aside for vendors. He sees twenty to twenty-five vendors that day, each with five new releases.

He said, "Often I have a gut feeling about the releases, however the station has our own 'board of directors' of fifteen people who regularly listen to the new releases and give us their opinions. We also read the trade publications on the product."[23]

About ten selections a week are added to the playlist. If there is good reaction to a record, it gets ten weeks of airplay and stays about sixteen weeks on the charts. If there is bad reaction, it may not last more than two weeks on the playlist.

---

[23]Interview, Jim Morrison, program director for WQXI radio station, Atlanta, Georgia, January 12, 1982.

He considers WQXI a major breakout stations for new record artists in Atlanta, and one of the main markets for giving new releases a chance.

The station uses cash giveaways, T-shirts, albums, concert tickets, and numerous promotional gimmicks, including trips, to promote albums, concerts, and listening to the station. The station continues to be one of the two most-listened-to stations in Atlanta, Monday-Friday, according to ARBITRON ratings and Morrison.

Country music radio station WPLO in Atlanta, is the sixteenth radio market in America, reaching 190,000 people a week. The main focus of the station is Billboard's top fifty country records.

WPLO music director Lynn Anthony receives by mail 300 records a week, plus hand-carried records by promotion people.

He said vendors from record companies may visit the station from 10 a.m. to noon, Monday and Tuesday, which is usually after he has received the records. He gets at least fifty phone calls a week from record promoters.

Prior information on the new releases he gets from reading the Gavin Report, music tip sheets, Billboard, Radio and Record World. To make final decisions about adding new releases to the playlist, the station polls an undisclosed focus group of people weekly on their opinions and gets information on local sales of the releases from retail record stores. This decision-method is similar to practices at WQXI.

He said five to ten new releases are added to the playlist each week. If reaction is good, a record may stay on the air eight to ten weeks; if bad, it will be dropped within three weeks.

Anthony said, "Atlanta is the biggest country market in America. We sell more country product in Atlanta than New York and Los Angeles combined."[24]

He credits WPLO with introducing country artists Janie Fricke, Ronnie McDowell, Charly McClain, Diane Pfeifer, T.G. Sheppard, Stephanie Winslow, Terry Gregory, and The Oak Ridge Boys.

The station uses such promotional gimmicks as free albums, concert tickets, and giveaways to promote records and listening to the station, but not to the extent as WQXI.

WKHX-FM is a 100,000-watt Atlanta station that is a leader in the country market, with a weekly listening audience of 193,500 adults ages twenty-five to fifty-four, according to the ARBITRON Radio Report.

Program director Jim Stacker is mailed new country releases by record companies and sees record company vendors in person, although he did not give a specific visitation schedule. Like the other radio program and music directors interviewed, he reads the current trade publications, such as Billboard and CashBox, to keep up with the record rankings.

---

[24]Interview, Lynn Anthony, music director for WPLO radio station, Atlanta, Georgia, January 15, 1982.

Stacker adds ten new record releases a week. If the record does not get positive audience and sales response from the station's polls, the record may be dropped in two weeks. With positive response, a record usually takes about ten weeks of airplay to peak on the radio, but sixteen weeks in the trade publication ratings. He did not tout his station as a major breakout market for new country artists.[25]

The station does not use many promotional gimmicks, mainly because of its uncluttered FM format, with less emphasis on disc jockey talk. The format is three country hits, two commercials, and three more country hits, which does not leave much time for promotions.

Record Retailers

An interview guide (see Appendix E) was used for two music retailers in large and small companies, to get an idea of how promotion affects sales of the recording, and how sales affects the promotion of recordings.

Wayne Franklin, chief of the Record Distribution Activity, Army-Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES), said this operation is the largest single-point retail record distribution rack merchandiser in the world, handling 62.5 million dollars in retail sales for 1980. Of that sales volume, 20 per cent or 12.5 million dollars was in country album and tape products, plus some crossover. His ten-year experience includes three

---

[25]Interview, Jim Stacker, program director for WKHX-FM radio, Atlanta, Georgia, January 17, 1982.

years as a distribution/retail sales specialist and six years as a record buyer, purchasing from sixty-one major record manufacturers.

Country music is promoted, along with other music categories, in the record-tape departments of the 635 military exchanges worldwide.

Country music is promoted in the stores by using displays at the ends of store aisles, point-of-purchase displays, printed flyers of "AAFES Specials" advertising a 10 per cent price reduction on ten to seventy albums per month, and a large "Christmas Special" flyer on discounted albums. The flyers are available in the store record departments and check-out counters.

During the past several years, country artists have gone to military exchanges to do in-store promotions, such as signing their albums and meeting the customers. To promote these artist visits, the event is promoted in advance in the base newspapers and by signs in the exchanges.

For example, Franklin arranged for Barbara Mandrell to visit Randolph Air Force Base, Charley Pride to Fort Sam Houston, and Mel Tillis to Lackland Air Force Base, all in Texas; Glen Campbell and Loretta Lynn at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; and Donna Fargo and Charlie Daniels at bases in Washington, D.C.

The functions of this retail operation, that also warehouses the records, include buying records and tapes, receiving the product, pricing, stocking, packing, and shipping to military exhange stores worldwide.

The facility does not report sales to major manufacturers or radio stations. However, AAFES has been awarded gold albums for selling a million each of country albums by Kenny Rogers, Dolly Parton, and Ronnie Milsap. The actual sales figures affect what and how much product is purchased or reordered. Franklin said they purchase albums by known artists instead of little-known or breaking artists, and do not purchase singles.

Record-buying decisions, to sell at the exchanges, are based on record trade publications, sales figures, and sales histories of established artists.

The exchange distribution activity cooperates with record manufacturers and its own retail sales and supervising personnel in promoting country music. The facility gets letters and telephone input from retail customers, requesting certain records. As an agency of the government, the exchange cannot advertise to the general public on radio or television.

"Overall, after dealing with different facets of the record business," said Franklin, "there seems to be no set rules in the record industry; it is very much a business of specific personalities, personal power and dealings, with

very loosely fragmented management."[26]

Harry Clark of Clark Music Store, Decatur, Georgia, an Atlanta suburb, manages and partly owns a thirty-six-year-old music store originally owned by his parents.

He has more than ten years experience in the record business, as a salesman with London Records, as sales manager for Together Records that were distributors of A & M and Motown Records, and as branch manager of RCA Records.

As a small store manager/owner, he said he checks the top 100 single list in Billboard and buys all top fifty country singles. He buys other major artists in the top 100 who have had previous number one records. He said this buying procedure is different from a larger chain store that will only buy the top twenty-five or thirty country records and will not have as much variety as a smaller store. In the store, he posts a new Billboard chart each week, showing the hit rankings.

An example of in-store country promotions is one the store did on Dolly Parton, and her "9 to 5" album. Clark played the record in the store, had album displays, a window display, a drawing for a "9 to 5" clock radio, and gave away "9 to 5" coffee mugs. His store rarely has artists in person to do in-store promotions, as the AAFES exchanges do.

Every week by telephone, Clark reports top-selling

---

[26]Interview, Wayne Franklin, chief, Record Distribution Activity, Army-Air Force Exchange Service, Atlanta, Georgia, January 4, 1981.

records to the radio stations in the Atlanta area. He was the first person to tell WQXI about a record selling at his store that helped to break it on the air to the Atlanta market. He said he helped a John Denver record get airplay, reporting from his requests and sales.[27]

Clark said the record promotion people from the manufacturers know which stores talk with the radio stations and make sure that their salesmen stock these stores. The manufacturers occasionally give free records for extra promotion.

Having a retail store, Clark cooperates with the record salesmen from the manufacturers, record distributors, with record promotion people, with radio stations music and program directors in the telephone reporting process, and with independent promoters, among others. Even though he has a small store, Clark believes he interacts with a wide cross-section of the record industry, similar to larger chains and stores.

---

[27]Interview, Harry Clark, manager-owner, Clark Music Store, Decatur, Georgia, December 31, 1981.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study, through detailed description and interviews, has examined the organization, role, function and scope of activities involved in promoting country music from Atlanta, Georgia, and gives insight into why Atlanta is important in this area. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, statistical analysis was inappropriate.

Based on a statement from Geoff Parker, assistant professor at Georgia State University, that Atlanta is a major market for introducing new recordings, and a major area for record promotion, further data from interviews were gathered to learn more about this. Different interview guides were used for different categories of subjects.

Summary

Record Manufacturers

Through interviews with regional promotion managers from RCA and Columbia Records, two major record companies specializing in country records, it was learned that their goals of getting airplay and top trade publication chart ratings for their music are the same.

To accomplish these goals, each record company's internal organizational structure and regional boundaries are different, but the procedures for reaching their goal are similar.

Both extensively use the tracking procedure to monitor the progress of recordings within smaller markets in their designated regional areas. Not only does this process involve constant weekly data gathering, but much personal contact, familiarity and interaction that builds continuing relationships and credibility between reporting markets and promotion executives.

The promotion executives in both companies used the tracking procedure as a valuable tool that strongly influences chart rankings in major trade publications such as Billboard and Cash Box. The amount of radio airplay and ultimately successful sales of the recordings are largely determined from these chart rankings. Top chart rankings are the goals of both executives. Both use outward charted success of a country record in one market to promote it to another geographical market.

The promotion departments of both companies use similar methods of delivering new country releases to radio stations and provide biographical and recording background news releases for artists, created from their own or outside public relations departments. This promotion technique

is especially used for new or unfamiliar artists.

Promotion departments of both companies followed-up the delivery of new record releases with contact by telephone or in person. Local Promotion Managers, supervised by the regional promotion manager, are involved in this direct contact on a continuing basis in the Columbia Records internal organizational structure.

Once the radio station's program director receives a new record, both companies use the same method of promotion using on-air interviews, giveaways, and advertising. Airplay activity-reports from listener requests, chart ratings and store sales are continuously monitored by both companies' promotion departments.

Other promotional efforts by the companies are made largely through entertaining or supplying product knowledge to radio station program directors who determine record airplay, to wholesale and retail store record buyers and record distributors. These efforts may include arranging artist visits, appearances and live concerts, parties to meet the artist, and dinners.

The promotion executives with both manufacturing companies rate Atlanta as a major breakout market for country recordings, whereby what is played and introduced on the radio in this major market, has hit or top record chart capabilities that can definitely influence success in other markets.

The Columbia Record Company promotion executive explained the following intricate promotion circle. The amount and kind of initial promotion given a country recording determines radio airplay, which,in turn, affects sales, when reported to radio stations and trade publications, determines further airplay, which, in turn, affects the amount of continued promotion that the record company will give a release. The RCA executive concluded that if there are no positive results in trade publication rankings or airplay within three weeks, the record is dropped.

As to how successful the companies' promotional efforts have been, both executives agreed they are measured by sales and rankings in the trade publication charts or a certain amount of radio airplay as reported through telephone tracking, sales, and requests. The Columbia executive said that if sales figures of the record have met the company's projections, he determines the promotion department's efforts a success. The projections are based on whether the artist or group is new, has had some previous hits or is a well-known major artist.

Independent Promoters

Summarizing from the interview guide used for independent country music promoters, these promoters used similar techniques to record manufacturing company promoters.

For instance, like the two record company promotion executives interviewed, the goal of the three independents

is to get radio airplay. Likewise, they use tracking sheets, polling a set number of radio stations to record the progress of the record. These stations also get feedback from audience requests, retail record store sales, and are influenced by trade publication chart ratings.

The geographical area of responsibility for the independent promoters is wider than for the large manufacturers. Independent promoters Wade Pepper and Larry King used the success of a record in one geographical location to promote it to another, whereas independent promoter Ann Tant said this was not an important promotional tool in her efforts.

Tant seemed to get more personally involved in all aspects of promotion than her two counterparts who were more concerned with just the tracking function. She was concerned with total career development of the artist, not just airplay. To promote the country record, she sets up artist interviews with the media, appearances and events to showcase the artist, works with retail in-store artist promotion and works several country music trade shows, representing country artists and the Country Music Association.

Tant tracks the progress of recordings, by telephone, on up to fifty radio stations within her national territory; promoter King tracks forty-two stations in the Southeast; and country promoter Pepper contacts a minimum

seventy-five stations weekly and up to two hundred at times.

Tant was more inclined to use promotional items and giveaways in her efforts than King, who rarely uses them. King did occasionally entertain clients who were involved in buying, selling or playing the records on the radio.

All three promoters were concerned with reading the trade publications and constantly check the rankings of their clients' records.

Important promotional tools that seemed to be common denominators with all three independent promoters was their number of years in the business and their long-time building of contacts and friendships within the industry that gave them credibility and made their efforts successful. With all three, it seemed as if promotional success was due to the promoters' personalities themselves, as much as to just the country record being promoted.

Since there is much flexibility of organizational structure and scope of promotional activities by the independents, these factors create an even greater emphasis on the personality, reputation and credibility of the promoter.

The promotional efforts of the independent promoters are measured much like their record manufacturer counterparts. Tant's efforts are measured by sales figures and chart rankings of the country record; King is paid by his clients according to airplay of a record; and Pepper's success is measured by amount of airplay and chart rankings.

Radio Station Program Directors

Three Atlanta radio stations stand out in reaching the country market in Atlanta: WQXI AM-FM, WPLO, and WKHX-FM.

Among these, WQXI reaches 70,000 listeners each weekday morning in peak drive-time hours or 350,000 listeners Monday through Friday mornings within an eighty-mile radius of Atlanta. This is the most listened-to radio station in Atlanta. WPLO reaches 190,000 country listeners a week and WKHX has nearly 194,000 listeners weekly.

WQXI's format covers country and contemporary selections, reaching adults ages eighteen to forty-nine, whereas the other two stations are purely country, reaching audiences ages mid-twenties to mid-fifties. WPLO plays the top fifty country records, and may add new, untried records to their playlist, whereas WKHX-FM plays top ranked and previously tested country hits.

As the top radio station in Atlanta, with the highest advertising rates, WQXI adds about ten new releases a week. These are selected from several hundred available, and are added after they are received through the mail or personally, from record companies or independent promoters. Mondays are set aside for the program director to talk with these vendors.

The records are played by the directors, reviewed by a focus group of fifteen listeners, and researched for their rankings and potential in trade publications as Billboard and Cash Box.

If the record gets favorable listener and sales response, WQXI usually gives it about ten weeks of airplay; if there is bad or no reaction, it is dropped from the program playlist within two weeks.

The WQXI program director considers the station a major breakout station in Atlanta for new record artists and one of the major market stations that first gives new artists a chance.

Likewise, Atlanta radio station WPLO is a breakout station in the major market area that gives new artists a chance to be added to the playlist. The WPLO program director rates Atlanta as the biggest country market in America, out-selling New York and Los Angeles combined.

WPLO's playlist additions are handled similarly to WQXI's. From more than three hundred new record releases a week received by mail or in person from record promoters, the station adds from five to ten. Each of these selections may stay on the playlist eight to ten weeks, but is dropped within three weeks if bad or no reaction.

Vendors from record companies and independent record promoters also have specific appointment times to visit the

program director, after he has received the country record. The program director gets about fifty telephone calls per week from record promoters promoting their new release. To finalize playlist selections, the WPLO program director also reads the Gavin Report tip sheet, music trade publications, gets information from retail record stores on sales and checks weekly opinion polls from listeners selected by the station.

Atlanta country radio station WKHX-FM adds about ten new releases per week to its playlist, decided on by a similar procedure to the other two stations. However, WKHX-FM is less apt to add selections by new artists or little-known country recordings than the other two. WKHX-FM sticks with country hits or emerging hits in its format. Each record that is added usually gets about ten weeks of airplay, unless it gets no positive response. Then it is dropped within two weeks.

WQXI and WPLO use many promotional gimmicks to promote records and their stations whereas WKHX-FM limits promotion. WQXI and WPLO use T-shirts, albums, concert tickets, dinners, trips, cash, and various giveaways as promotional tools. WKHX-FM has less disc jockey talk and an uncluttered, more music format, with less on-air promotion. WKHX-FM does use television and cash giveaways to promote its station.

Record Retailers

Using an interview guide for promotion activities within retail record merchandising, large and small retailers were interviewed to learn the wide range of possible promotion efforts involved in selling records.

In the large Army-Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) retail organization, which sells to Army and Air Force personnel and their dependents worldwide, country music is promoted using in-store poster displays, album displays, and point-of-purchase displays at the cash registers. These are the same techniques used in the small one-location independently owned record store in Atlanta. The small store also uses window displays and some giveaways.

The large AAFES retail operation has in-store promotions by the record artists in-person so that customers may get autographs and meet the artists, whereas the smaller independent store does not.

The large operation uses printed flyers within the store and at check-out counters to promote the records, signs within the exchanges, and articles in the Army and Air Force base newspapers to promote upcoming artist visits to the stores. By law, AAFES cannot advertise to the general public, but must limit its promotion internally to its target market. The small Atlanta retail store uses some newspaper advertising in community newspapers.

The large AAFES operation specializes in record albums by known artists; whereas the small store sells albums and singles, stocking the top fifty country singles.

Both operations have Billboard charts available to their customers to show ratings of records, which further boost sales. Both use trade publications to help with purchasing and promotion decisions. However, the actual record sales figures determine how much record product is purchased or re-ordered by AAFES.

As a store polled by radio stations, the small Atlanta store regularly reports its top selling records to WQXI, WPLO and WKHS-FM. The larger operation does not report its sales to radio stations or major record manufacturers.

AAFES does use letters and telephone requests from its retail customers as input for stocking and promoting certain albums.

Both the large and small record merchandisers have contact with record salesmen and manufacturers, record distributors, and independent and record manufacturer promotion personnel. The small, independent store also has interaction with radio stations, contrary to the larger, specialized operation.

Both merchandisers attend promotional parties or product-knowledge sessions sponsored by the record manufacturers and distributors.

Conclusion

It was learned, through this study, that Atlanta is important in the promotion of recorded country music by exploring many of the activities actually performed by personnel involved in promotion. Not only do these activities vary according to the role of the organization or individual in the overall promotion picture, but they vary according to personality and style of promoters. There seem to be no set rules, only workable methods of promotion that have grown from practical experience learned by personnel within different entities of promotion. They have learned, through the years, what is successful and works for them and their company, radio station or store.

The subjects interviewed, regardless of their promotion connection, all relied heavily on the charts, articles, and advertising in Billboard, Cash Box, and Record World magazines for background in making decisions. By using the same information, opinions tend to polarize toward certain artists, groups and music and makes promotion efforts easier by the large record companies with big advertising and promotion budgets. Given the pervasive influence these publications have on decision-making within the record industry, it seems there is real and increasing danger of a manipulated industry of a few controlling corporate giants with large budgets creating their own successful recording artists. This is a continuing threat to the industry and may potentially deprive the public of the opportunity to hear and buy a

wider variety of music.

Small record companies with small promotion budgets which might introduce innovative new music or artists may increasingly go out of business, as they do not have the huge financial resources to promotionally compete with these corporate giants. This will be a detriment to the music-buying and listening public, providing many fewer choices. With a less fragmented market, and fewer choices produced by a handful of large, major conglomerates, there is more danger of collusive price setting and control of the market.

On the positive side, reading the trade publications tends to make the music industry more close-knit and communicative within it. This can be an advantage, rather than a disadvantage, because it creates more interaction and understanding for working together.

Even though the reading habits of the American public are changing, with younger generations reading less and depending more on the broadcast television/radio media, it does not seem this phenomenon will greatly affect the direction of the music industry. This is because the decision-makers of wholesale and retail record buying, radio programmers, and television video programmers will continue to read the main music trade publications to help

decide what to buy and what to play for the American public.

Having the charts from the trade publications visibly available for promotional purposes in retail record stores merely reinforces the decision-makers' choices, while providing a simple visual guide for record/tape customers.

Since the advertising revenue from major record companies and allied industry-servicing companies keeps these trade publications in business, and these major companies are becoming stronger rather than weaker conglomerates, with even larger promotional and advertising resources, there seems to be no danger of these trade publications going defunct. They provide a very valuable advertising vehicle that these giants are not about to give up, especially since they are so pervasively influencial among decision-makers.

An example of the increasing conglomerate mergers is RCA, which is now part of the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), which has recently been purchased by General Electric (GE). Among others, Warner Brothers Records has combined with Elektra Records and Atlantic Records, to become Warner-Elektra-Atlantic in many of its production and distribution dealings.

The main recourse by the buying public if they do not like the music choices available from this largely self-regulated industry, is not to buy.

Another that has recently come to the forefront from parents, is a public outcry to the companies and through congressmen, and through lobbying parent-teacher organizations, to change and omit lewd or suggestive drug-sexual language in the recorded music lyrics and provide more tasteful record/tape graphic covers and music videos that will not have undesirable influences on young retail customers. There is talk of a rating system on records, similar to the movies. This issue will make self-regulation in the music industry even more important, because unless they do so, the government may begin to do it for them.

These changes do not affect the country music segment as much as some other areas, but it can have an overall affect on the recorded music industry as a whole, what will be available to the music consumer, and how it is packaged.

Promotion within this industry seems to be more uniquely interdependent and tied together, as an interlocking puzzle which is part of a clearly defined and understood whole result, than promotion in other fields. It combines many varied functions, each with necessary and important contributions toward the overall end goal of selling, and combines many activities, methods of execution, and knowledge related only to this industry.

The one fact that seems paramount, after extensive interviews with the subjects in this study, is that the record promotion business is very personal. It is based largely on individual personalities, personal style, contacts within the industry, credibility, and experience of the promoter, as much as actual quality of records promoted.

Suggestions For Further Study

As topics for further study, the increasing effect on promotion and sales by fewer companies combining into larger record company conglomerates, and the progress of self-regulation of products promoted and sold to the consumer could be explored.

Since the industry is changing, and television videos of records and compact laser discs are becoming part of the market, promotion techniques should be adapting and changing to meet these new needs and products. More promotion people may be needed to pursue the television video market, which could be pursued similar to the radio programming market. Further studies might be done in these areas.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR UNIVERSITY COMMERCIAL MUSIC PROFESSOR

1. What is the background of the commercial music/business degree program at Georgia State University?

   A. How did it start?

   B. What are its goals?

2. What are some of the courses and information taught?

3. What is the relationship with the university's commercial music/business program and the recorded music industry in the Atlanta, Georgia community?

4. From knowledge and experience in this industry and as a teacher in this area, discuss Atlanta as a center for promoting recorded country music.

5. Name some of the main promotion vehicles, methods and tools of promotion used.

6. What and who are some of the best music industry sources in the Atlanta area that are the most knowledgeable about recorded music promotion, expecially country music?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COUNTRY MUSIC PROMOTION EXECUTIVES WITH MAJOR RECORD LABELS

1. What are your promotion goals?
2. How does your job fit into the organization of your company to carry out these goals?
3. What are the functions and responsibilities of your job?
4. In your job, how are you concerned with:
   - A. The record
     1. Airplay
     2. Data keeping
     3. Tracking and using sales figures to promote
     4. Using promotional items and giveaways
   - B. The program director and radio station
   - C. Your market and the competition
     1. Defining a hit in country music
     2. How does your market affect other markets and vice versa?
     3. What about record store and sales reports?
     4. How does the Atlanta area affect the recording industry trade magazines and charts?
5. What promotional techniques and tools do you use to accomplish your job?
6. What are the tangibles and intangibles within your promotion activities?
7. How are your promotion efforts measured?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COUNTRY MUSIC PROMOTION EXECUTIVES WHO ARE INDEPENDENTS

1. What are your promotion goals?
2. What are the functions and responsibilities of your job?
3. In your job, how are you concerned with:
   - A. The record
     1. Airplay
     2. Tracking and using sales figures to promote
     3. Using promotional items and giveaways
   - B. The program director and radio station
4. Define a hit in country music.
5. How does the Atlanta area affect the recording industry trade magazines and charts?
6. What promotional techniques and tools do you use to accomplish your job?
7. What are the tangibles and intangibles within your promotion activities?
8. How are your promotion efforts measured?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR RADIO STATION PROGRAM DIRECTORS

1. What is the station market area?
2. What is the main focus of the station?
3. What is the procedure for getting airplay for releases by new artists? By established artists?
4. What information do you have on new releases from charts, special reports, sheets, trade publications or other sources?
5. How and when do you receive new releases, by mail or personal visit?
6. Is there a specific schedule to see record salesmen?
7. How many new releases of how many possibilities are added a week to the playlist?
8. Is there other feedback and information, from the audience, retail store or other personal surveys or reports or meetings that influence final airplay decisions?
9. What is the average length of time of exposed airplay for a release with good listener and retail reaction?
10. With bad reaction or no reaction?
11. Has your station been first to play some artists?
12. How would you rate Atlanta as a breakout market for new releases?
13. What are some of the additional promotional gimmicks at the radio station?
14. How are they used?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR RETAIL RECORD STORES/DISTRIBUTORS

1. How does your job deal with promotion of country music?
2. Are you concerned with
   A. In-store promotion and display
   B. Using artist for promotion
3. How do sales figures affect promotion?
4. Are these figures reported to record companies and radio stations?
5. What are the procedure for reporting these figures to:
   A. Record companies
   B. Radio stations
6. How do the actual sales figures affect additional sales?
7. What other areas of the record business do you have to cooperate with the most, promotionally in country music?
8. In what ways?
9. Are there promotional tools, techniques or gimmicks you use in your job in relation to promoting country music that have not been previously discussed?

APPENDIX F

COPY OF PHOTO AND NEWS RELEASE ON RAZZY BAILEY FOR PROMOTION BY RCA

APPENDIX G

TWO EXAMPLES OF TRACKING SHEETS USED IN COUNTRY MUSIC PROMOTION

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Baskerville, David, Music Business Handbook, Denver, The Sherwood Company, 1979.

Csida, Joseph, The Music/Record Career Handbook, New York, Billboard Publications, Inc., 1975.

Farrar, Lucien and Harris, Herby, How To Make Money In Music, New York, Arco Publishing Company, Inc., 1978.

Malone, Bill C., Country Music U.S.A., A 50-Year History, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1975.

Sadler, Barry, Everything You Want To Know About The Record Industry, Nashville, Aurora Publishers, Inc., 1978.

Sigman, Mike, editor, Record World Dialogues, New York, Record World Publishing Co., Inc. reprinted by The Recording Institute Of America, Inc., 1974.

Articles

"Alabama," Cash Box, XLII (February 21, 1981), cover, 8.

Cawthon, Frances, "Nashville: Music and More," The Atlanta Journal/The Atlanta Constitution, (June 1, 1980, 1E,20E.

"CMA Week Proclaimed At Atlanta Meeting," Cash Box, XLII (February 21, 1981), 24.

Fogel, Betty C., "Music Man Enthusiastic About Upcoming Projects," DeKalb Neighbor, XVI (July 17, 1985), 1, 3A.

King, Bill, "Stacking Up The Price Of Records," The Atlanta Constitution/The Atlanta Journal, (April 19, 1980), 1B.

Kirby, Kip, "Fan Fair: Exhilarating, Crazy and Deeply Sincere," Billboard, XCIII (June 27, 1981), 55.

Pirtle, Caleb III, "Their Home's in Alabama," Atlanta Weekly of The Atlanta Journal/The Atlanta Constitution (March 27, 1983), cover, 6-7, 9-13.

"Razzy Bailey," Cash Box, XLII (October 11, 1980), 8.

Sippel, John, "Military PX Sales Thriving," Billboard, XCII (September 20, 1980), cover, 61.

Wells, Robyn, "Cities' Pop Jukeboxes Reflect Rise Of Country," Billboard, XCIII (February 21, 1981), 52.

Wells, Robyn, "Fan Fair Attracts 15,000 To Nashville," Billboard, XCIII (June 27, 1981), 55.

Reports

Stockdell, Richard P., The Development of the Country Music Radio Format, Manhattan, Kansas, Kansas State University, 1979.

Interviews

Anthony, Lynn, Atlanta, January 15, 1982.

Clark, Harry, Decatur, December 31, 1981.

Franklin, Wayne, Atlanta, January 4, 1981.

King, Larry, Atlanta, July 9, 1982.

Morrison, Jim, Atlanta, January 12, 1982.

Parker, Geoff, Atlanta, September 1, 1981.

Pepper, Wade, Atlanta, August 26, 1985.

Pritchett, Tim, Atlanta, December 10, 1981.

Ray, Mary, Atlanta, December 22, 1981.

Stacker, Jim, Atlanta, January 17, 1982.

Tant, Ann, Atlanta, August 1, 1982.

Unpublished Materials

Dillard, James D., "A Psychological Approach to Persuasive Advertising," unpublished master's thesis, East Texas State University, Commerce, Texas, 1977.

Rivers, Barbara Jo, "A Study of Promotion Techniques for Local News Shows Among Selected TV Stations in Georgia," unpublished master's thesis, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, 1978.

Newspapers

NARM Sounding Board, September, 1981.

Nipper News, RCA Records, The Year In Review, 1981.