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Letters

Here are some more figures for the record companies to worry about.

Massachusetts public high school graduates, 1975 to 1995:

1975	78,408
1980	77,644
1985	66,270
1990	52,487
1995	45,889

Roger W. Harris
Lincoln, Massachusetts

Re: Steve Allen on bass and drum solos.

Perhaps the most difficult part of hearing (or playing) bass (or drum) solos is that no other soloist in the jazz band does his thing without the bass player and/or drummer supporting him (or her). Even the rhythmless breaks by a "solo" instrument have the tacit support of an attentive rhythm section.

Is there a bass fiddle hit other than *Big Noise from Winnetka*?

Harry Babasin
Los Angeles, California

Pavilion in the Rain II

Aside from the yearning for lost youth that doubtless comes to everyone but the most convinced reincarnationist, the lament for the big-band era carries an assumption that there was something inevitable about it, ordained by deity or at least guaranteed by some little-known clause of the Constitution. Alas, it was not so.

The bands were born and flourished in a certain confluence of social conditions and dwindled out when those conditions changed.

Most of what has been written about the period is so steeped in nostalgia and personal reminiscence that it is difficult to gain perspective on it. It is probably easier to learn what led to the Mannheim school than to find out what caused the spore-burst of brilliant music that we think of as the big-band era.

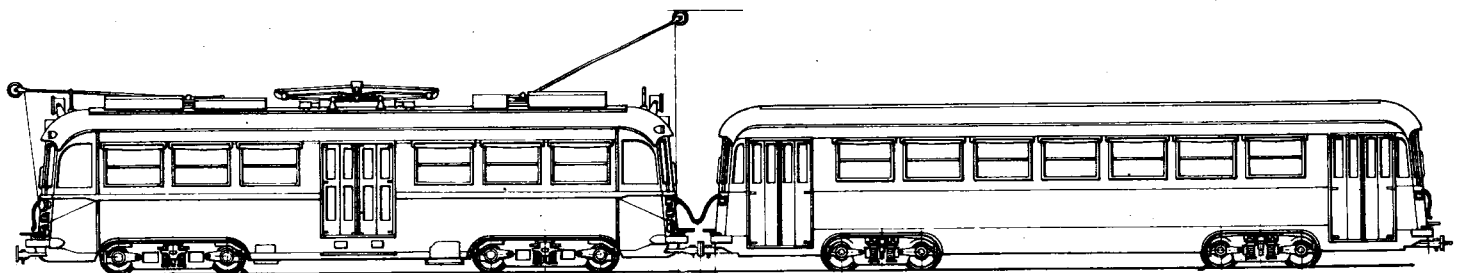
One author of the era was Irving Berlin, whose name we seldom encounter in jazz histories except perhaps in a cavil that *Alexander's Ragtime Band* was not a rag. And so it wasn't. But it was important to the development of what we came to call jazz in that, first, the song, published in 1911, initiated the fascination with the duple meter that became known as the fox trot, and second, it freed American music from thrall to Viennese

operetta (whether imported or domestic) on the one hand and ersatz Irish balladry (such as *When Irish Eyes Are Smiling*, *Mother Machree*, and *Ireland Is Ireland to Me*, all by the Cleveland-born Ernest R. Ball) on the other. After Berlin's rise to success, American popular music took on its own character and color, which of course he in part determined.

Two more names one will not encounter in conventional jazz histories are Vernon and Irene Castle, the popular dance team whose example set off a craze for ballroom dancing in the United States. Between 1912 and 1914, the Castles campaigned to refine the barn dance, cakewalk, two-step, Boston, and turkey trot. One consequence was the Castle Walk, a new style that utilized a naturalistic walking motion as its foundation and made it possible for every left-footed clunk in the country to make at least a pass at dancing. The early fox trot also evolved from their experiments, and its popularity influenced the character of the emerging American music. By 1927 the Lindy hop, named for the new hero Charles Lindbergh, had arrived. And the Lindy of course led to the phenomenon of so-called jitterbugging — whose better practitioners took dancing to virtuosic levels of acrobatic ingenuity — that permitted bands to play fast instrumentals. Dancers provided the foundation of employment for the bands. This fact is central to any understanding of the era.

Finally, there were the Toonerville trolleys. *The Toonerville Trolley* was the name of a syndicated newspaper cartoon panel, a sort of nostalgia even then for a more bucolic America. All over the United States and Canada, electric railways linked cities to smaller surrounding communities that often were the loci of amusement parks in which almost invariably there were dance pavilions. Robert Offergeld, the classical music critic and historian, who grew up in eastern Michigan, recalls the line that linked Saginaw, Bay City, and Traverse City. "They were wonderful," he said of the big old trolley cars. "You could hear the whine of them coming well in advance. They used to do about sixty miles an hour, rocking along the tracks, and they'd scare you half to death. And they took you to those little places by the shore, and girls wore boaters. I learned to dance after a ride on one of those trolleys. There was always a cotton candy vendor, and a pavilion, and it was all rather sweet and innocent."

"The biggest system of them all, of course," said David Raksin, who teaches both composition and urban affairs at the University of Southern California, "was in Los Angeles — the Big Red Cars. They linked Hollywood to Santa Monica and Chatsworth. In fact, they ran all the way out to Mount Lowe." It was indeed the biggest. The Big Red Cars, the popular name for a system owned by the Southern Pacific Railroad, along with a smaller system known as the Yellow Cars (the Los Angeles Railway Company),



covered a thousand miles of track. Together they constituted possibly the finest public transit system in the United States.

The amusement parks with their dance pavilions would not have come into being without the urban and interurban railways — and the pavilions formed a series of links in the chain of locations along which the big bands traveled. They also provided employment for countless musicians in the local or regional groups known as territory bands.

These factors, a taste for a more American music initiated by Berlin, a penchant for dancing inspired by the Castles and a style of dancing which was appropriate to fast instrumentals and therefore encouraged their composition, and a chain of dance pavilions and ballrooms grown up along the urban and interurban railways, were all there when in the early 1920s a final, critical, catalytic ingredient was added to the mix: radio, and most importantly, network radio.

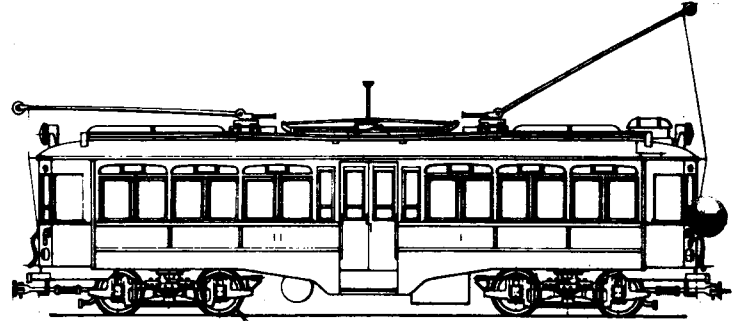
The record companies, which were thriving when the new medium came along, were fearful that "free" music would cut into their sales, and they would not allow their product to be played "on the air". Record labels bore the motto *Not licensed for radio broadcast*. The broadcasters ignored it. A number of artists, including Fred Waring, Walter O'Keefe, Donald Voorhees, Lawrence Tibbett, and Paul Whiteman, sued various broadcasting corporations to halt the playing of their records on radio. Finally, in 1940, the U.S. Supreme Court ended these actions by refusing to review a decision against Whiteman and his record label, RCA Victor, by the Second Circuit Court of Appeals in a suit Whiteman had brought against WBO Broadcasting Company, owners of WNEW. Judge Learned Hand had written the decision, which has had extended and deleterious esthetic and social repercussions. This is in spite of the fact that he was an opponent of "judge-made law". Revealing ignorance of the essential nature of artistic copyright, Hand wrote, "Copyright in any form, whether statutory or in common law, is a monopoly. It consists only in the power to prevent others from reproducing the copyright work. WBO Broadcasting has never invaded any such right." The premise is doubtful, the deductions wrong. To play a record on the radio is in and of itself to reproduce the music, and in most cases for profit.

American copyright law has on the whole been weak. There is a historical reason for this. Until the Twentieth Century, the United States was a net importer of music. And business interests wanted then, as they do now, to get everything they could for as little as possible, the ultimate of which is of course nothing. This resulted, for example, in the theft — in effect — of the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas by American producers, who presented them without paying the authors. Gilbert, himself a lawyer and former magistrate, and Sullivan had no recourse in American courts, which did not recognize foreign copyright claims. This is why in 1885 they premiered *The Mikado* simultaneously in London and New York. It was a way to establish American protection for the work.

The American courts — and legislators — continue to treat the artist's rights casually. Hand's ruling was in keeping with that tradition. Unable to bar records from the air, the record industry reversed its attitude and strove to get them exposed on radio. In fact the industry came in time to solicit airplay to the extent of the institutionalized corruption of disc jockeys and program directors and music librarians with payola ranging in form from cash to drugs to airline tickets to romantic places.

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Probably ninety-five percent of the program content of American radio is recorded music. But in the early days, and before Judge Hand established the curious legal principle that one industry had the right to live off another, radio had to generate a good deal of its own material, partly due to pressures from the American Federation of Musicians. Even small stations in small towns employed musicians and singers. Radio drew into service artists from other fields, from *Grand Ol' Opry* and Grand Opera (making household names of such singers as John Charles Thomas, Vivian della Chiesa, Helen Jepson and Lawrence Tibbett), as well as from the nation's symphony orchestras



(making Arturo Toscanini, Howard Barlow, and Leopold Stokowski known to laymen everywhere). That public taste is not inherently as bad as the apologists for the record and broadcasting industries would have you believe is illuminated by the fact of who and what did become popular when a wide range of artists were given exposure.

The twenty years between 1928 and 1948 were a golden age in America not only for big bands but for movies and theater — both dramatic and musical — and, for that matter, the novel. Is this coincidence? It seems unlikely.

It was the dawn of the new communications, communications beyond print — the phonograph record, radio, and talking pictures in those first days. The conglomerates had not yet taken them over and debased them. The industry's pioneers, particularly William S. Paley of CBS and David Sarnoff of NBC, presented material of a high order along with more obviously popular entertainment. Whether they did this out of a kind of groping inchoate morality or because they and their lieutenants had not yet come to believe in the profitability of dreck remains unknown. For whatever reason, broadcasting in its early days offered a cultural education that all the schools and universities of America combined could not equal. It not only made "culture" available, it made it attractive. The result was a ferment, a leavening of the American populace that no system of imposed formal education could achieve. Radio caused an epidemic of excellence in America.

Artists, like politicians, need to be known if they are to prosper. It is possible in many vocations to be at the apex with a name known only to others in one's field, but the artist, occasionally excepting a painter or sculptor, cannot have the luxury of a limited professional esteem. He must be famous.

The swing era is by custom dated from the sudden fame of the Benny Goodman band in 1935. Goodman did nothing first. The style and instrumentation had been defined by the experiments of Don Redman, Benny Carter, and Fletcher Henderson. Indeed, some of the best material in Goodman's library derived from that of the defeated Henderson band. Steve Brown with Paul Whiteman had pioneered the use of pizzicato string bass in the rhythm section. Some jazzmen were working in the dance bands. Whiteman had in fact popularized the *idea* of the big jazz band, whether or not his band achieved anything approaching swing. Everything was in place when Goodman's band, on the verge of

failure, arrived at the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles in August, 1935. It made a series of "coast-to-coast" broadcasts from the Palomar, and the "swing era" began. Goodman went on to play for eight straight months at the Congress Hotel in Chicago, his home town, broadcasting the while for Elgin watches. And soon the booking agencies were signing up every leader in sight who could front a band that purported to swing.

It was not lost on the advertising agencies and their clients that the young people had a new fad. A great deal can be learned by considering who sponsored what in the next few years. In the 1980s, the tobacco companies have denied that they are trying to addict the young. But that is what they — demonstrably — did in the 1930s and '40s.

Kool cigarettes presented Tommy Dorsey on radio. Artie Shaw was presented by Old Golds. Chesterfield sponsored Glenn Miller. *The Camel Caravan* featured Benny Goodman. (The master of ceremonies on *Camel Caravan* was Johnny Mercer, who each night would improvise blues lyrics from the newspaper headlines. Clifton Fadiman and Robert Benchley were regulars on the show. Perhaps the measure of network radio compared to network television can be taken in the fact that Benchley, Fadiman, Oscar Levant, Franklin P. Adams, and Goodman Ace, among others, were radio stars.) And of course Lucky Strike sponsored *Your Hit Parade*, as well as Kay Kyser's *Kollege of Musical Knowledge*, a quiz show built around what was perhaps the most intelligent of the Mickey Mouse bands. In fact, the campaign to turn young people into smokers through music dates back to 1928 when George Washington Hill, president of the American Tobacco Company, decided to sponsor the Lucky Strike Dance Orchestra under the leadership of B.A. Rolfe.

Support for a thesis that the tobacco companies and their ad agencies consciously sought out the impressionable young is found in the character of the few other products that sponsored the bands. They were all "youth" products. Wildroot Cream Oil presented Woody Herman, Fitch's Dandruff Remover Shampoo *The Fitch Bandwagon*, and Coca-Cola *Spotlight Bands*. Products whose consumption was primarily by adults presented more sedate music, mostly what is called light classical, Strauss and

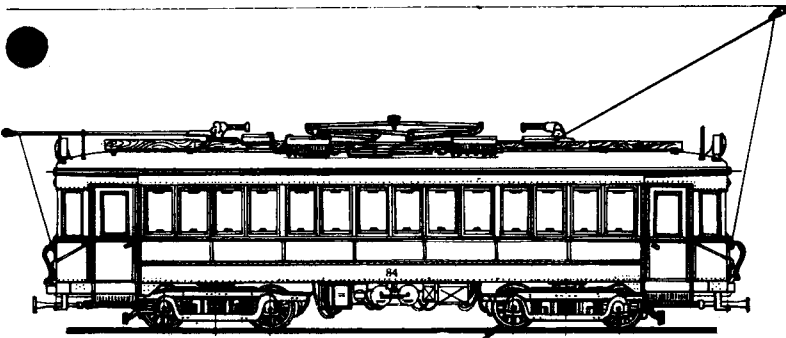
Kraft Music Hall, then was replaced by an orchestra led by John Scott Trotter. Paul Lavalie led *The Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street* on a show with Dinah Shore. Bob Hope's program featured the Skinnay Ennis orchestra, whose members included Claude Thornhill and Gil Evans, making the band, to an extent impossible to imagine at the time, of more than passing significance to the evolution of jazz. Ennis was later replaced by Les Brown. *Fibber McGee and Molly* had the Billy Mills Orchestra, Jack Benny had a band led by Phil Harris, and Red Skelton had Ozzie Nelson.

In addition, and more important to the building of new bands, were the "remote" broadcasts from hotels, ballrooms, and pavilions. The four networks, NBC's Red and Blue networks, CBS, and Mutual — all did them, and did them every night. We would be remiss if we overlooked an interesting aspect of those broadcasts. The networks did not pay for them. The musicians were paid by the ballroom or hotel or pavilion where the band was appearing. What is more, the ballroom operator sometimes paid for the network's engineer and sometimes even for the installation of the line. The network's attitude was that the operator would make back his money through the increased attendance this "free" publicity would generate. Radio, then, was already manifesting the extortionist philosophy that remains one of the distinguishing characteristics of American commercial broadcasting. It continued into the age of television. Guests on the Johnny Carson *Tonight Show* are paid poorly on the grounds that the publicity of an appearance will bring about bigger nightclub salaries, larger sales of one's book, whatever. This outlook caused a famous confrontation between Frank Sinatra and the late Ed Sullivan. When the film *Can Can* was about to be released, Sullivan wanted to present clips from the picture framed in walk-on appearances by its stars, including Sinatra. Sinatra refused to appear on Sullivan's show on grounds that the latter would be getting expensive entertainment for almost nothing. Sullivan denounced him, but Sinatra was in the right. The attitude that the publicity of broadcast exposure is far more valuable than the entertainment the artist provides — and that someone else unspecified has the onus of paying the artist — is the key to American broadcasting.

In any event, there was then, in the late 1930s and early '40s, an extraordinary amount of broadcasting devoted to the big bands. And these were live, not recorded, performances. The bands were not dependent on records for exposure; they achieved it directly through radio, and record sales were a secondary source of revenue for them. And so much a part of American life did the bands become that probably no one noticed that their very existence hung on the whims of the broadcasters.

During this period the Broadway musical was evolving and expanding in terms of both dramatic content and musical worth. Broadway had attracted such composers as Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Frank Loesser, Vincent Youmans, Richard Rodgers (notorious among musicians for his poor harmonic grasp but an effective composer for the stage), Jerome Kern, Harold Arlen, and Arthur Schwartz, and such lyricists as Dorothy Fields, P.G. Wodehouse, Johnny Mercer, E.Y. Harburg, Howard Dietz, Lorenz Hart, Ira Gershwin, and Oscar Hammerstein II, as well as Porter, Loesser and Berlin. These were the people who produced the Broadway scores that became the mother lode for the hit parade of the day. The bandleaders in large measure determined what songs would be exposed on the radio, and they had a taste for the better material. With that era's young people absorbing and memorizing well-made songs, it is little wonder that they are today so often more literate than their children and grandchildren.

With a superb musical theater as a source of popular music, with other excellent songs, such as those of Harry Warren, coming out of the movies, and with other writers like Richard Whiting



Waldteufel waltzes, the *Oberon* overture, Massenet's *Elegy*, Smetana's *The Moldau*, some Greig, Tchaikovsky's *None But the Lonely Heart*, that sort of thing. The Federal Communications Commission had not yet forbidden the use of product names in program titles, and these shows included *The Bell Telephone Hour*, *The Firestone Hour*, *The Carnation Contented Hour* (with its bizarre advertising pitch about milk from contented cows), *The Cities Service Hour* (Cities Service was a brand of gasoline), *The Ford Sunday Evening Hour*, *General Motors Concert*, and *American Album of Familiar Music*. Incidentally, NBC, CBS and ABC maintained their own symphony orchestras.

But these sponsored programs in which the bands were the stars was not the extent of their exposure through radio. Jimmy Dorsey's band performed for two years with Bing Crosby on *The*

and Hoagy Carmichael and Matt Dennis adding to the flow of material, American popular music attained a stature it had not had before and almost certainly will never have again. It was a time, as I have said elsewhere, when popular music was good and good music was popular.

And then the music business suffered a series of blows.

One of these, Gerry Mulligan points out, was the World War II twenty percent entertainment tax. And of course a large part of the audience for the music, the young men who used Wildroot and Fitch's, was overseas in military service, along with some of the best musicians and bandleaders.

Another blow, according to one theory, was the formation in 1941 of BMI. The American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers had demanded a substantial increase in the fees radio paid for the use of songs by ASCAP composers. The stations at first refused to pay it. For a time ASCAP forbade the radio performance of its music — the entire modern American repertoire. The stations had to play music that was in the public domain, which meant — under the copyright law of the time — music more than fifty-six years old. And that is how, briefly in 1941, *Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair* made the hit parade. The radio stations set up their own performing rights society, Broadcast Music Incorporated, to build a pool of non-ASCAP music. ASCAP, which had an exclusionary attitude, had manifested little interest in hillbilly music. BMI went after it. BMI's critics have subsequently argued that this led to the decline of American popular music, but that theory is as credible as the contention that bebop killed the big bands. It did indeed build a large pool of musical flotsam, but no radio station had to play it, and in any case BMI also proved cordial to jazz and movie composers. (ASCAP at one time would not admit film-score composers to membership.) More complex and compelling forces caused the end of the big-band era. If a demon be needed, James Caesar Petrillo was type-cast for the part. It is not that his cause was unjust but that his strategy was suicidal.

A self-important, obstreperous, tyrannical little man, Petrillo was president of the American Federation of Musicians, and perhaps the best-known labor leader in America after John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers. Petrillo commissioned Ben Selvin to determine if the play of records on radio and juke boxes was in fact costing musicians jobs. Selvin was a bandleader who had conducted recording orchestras under innumerable pseudonyms. He had been a recording executive and had worked for the radio networks. Selvin read his report to the AFM convention of 1941. He said that the record industry made work for musicians and was paying them millions of dollars. He said it would be "unwise, if at all possible, to curtail the industry when such large amounts are spent on musicians. There are remedies for the unemployment caused by this mechanization of music, but a knockout blow, which could not be delivered, is not the answer."

The delegates gave Selvin a standing ovation. The membership, including all the major bandleaders, agreed with him.

Petrillo ignored them, along with Learned Hand's ruling. He demanded that the record companies refuse to allow records to be played on radio stations and juke boxes. In an astounding act of willfulness, he ordered musicians to stop recording. They did so on August 1, 1942. But the singers did not.

Singers were not required to be members of the AFM and indeed were not accepted as members, no doubt in reflection of the instrumentalist's condescension toward them. And so young vocalists who for the most part had been trained in bands began recording with choral groups. These soupy loo-loo-looing accompaniments were triumphs of banality, but the records helped thrust into fame such singers as Dick Haymes, Perry Como, and Nat Cole — and most significantly, Frank Sinatra.

Twenty years earlier, audiences had been wary of singers with

bands. One of the first band singers was Morton Downey. Paul Whiteman signed him to a contract in 1921 but was so doubtful about featuring him with his band that he put him with farm-team orchestras for two years, finally presenting him with his main band in 1923, and then only infrequently. And Whiteman thought it necessary to put an instrument in Downey's hands to justify his presence on the bandstand, at first a saxophone and later, for whatever odd reason, a French horn, neither of which Downey could play. But Downey made several successful records with Whiteman and then, portentously enough, left to become successful on his own. Later, Bing Crosby left Whiteman and repeated the pattern.

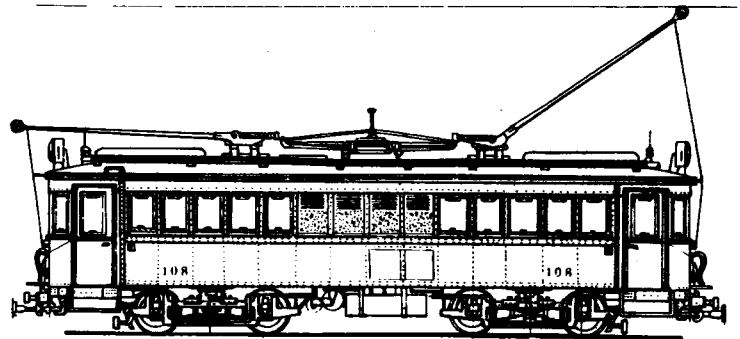
The singers held secondary positions in the bands, sometimes barely suffered by the musicians and leaders. The pattern of recording usually entailed an instrumental chorus followed by a vocal chorus and perhaps a half chorus of instrumental going out. But then some of the leaders, including Tommy Dorsey and Harry James, began to build up the role of the singers. "With myself and Frank and the Pipers and Connie Haines," Jo Stafford says, "Tommy really created what amounted to production numbers."

When I asked Paul Weston — who was one of Dorsey's arrangers and who of course married Jo — what killed the big bands, he said unhesitatingly, "The singers." Later I asked Alvino Rey the same question and got the same answer.

The seeds of the bands' destruction, then, had been within them since Whiteman hired Downey. Vocal records — by Crosby, Downey, Buddy Clark, Lanny Ross, Gene Austin, Kate Smith, Russ Colombo, and others — had existed side by side with band records, a popular music for listening as opposed to the music for dancing of the bands. Petrillo's recording ban did the same thing to the singers that radiation does to the creatures in cheap sci-fi movies. It made them grow big.

The ban continued through 1943, despite efforts of the War Labor Board and finally a direct appeal from President Franklin D. Roosevelt to end it. Petrillo scorned them all. The first company to come to terms was Decca, which signed a contract with the AFM in September, 1943. The fledgling Capitol label followed a month later. But Columbia and RCA Victor didn't sign until November, 1944.

What Petrillo got out of the strike was a form of tax on record dates, paid by the record companies, which went into a trust fund to pay for free concerts throughout America. In effect, the work of the best professional musicians was taxed to subsidize the



mediocre. This was resented by many professionals, among them the late Stan Kenton, who tried in vain a few years later to establish an exclusively professional musicians' union. Ultimately Petrillo destroyed thousands of jobs for musicians. Having engineered a disaster, he behaved like the true politician in proclaiming it "the greatest victory for labor in the history of the labor movement."

By the early 1940s, the audience was becoming divided into two factions, those who came to dance and those who came to listen. Wherever one of the jazz-flavored bands appeared, one group of

years of the incipient proliferation of television, both baseball and movie attendance had declined drastically, the latter to the point where the National Association of Theater Owners was concerned whether "hardtop" theaters, as they were known in the trade — those with roofs on them — could survive. The drive-ins were doing well as the campaign to force people into cars succeeded and young people acquired jalopies and hot rods. The drive-ins were, besides, great places to grope a girl, eliminating the preliminary fol-de-rol of dancing that went with big bands. Ministers of the gospel rallied against these "passion pits" and were mocked for doing so, but in fact the drive-ins did contribute to the loosening of restrictions and inhibitions and that led in due course to our present age of casual and perfunctory encounter. Many hard-top theaters went out of business and their premises were converted to other uses. Suddenly one viewed the curious spectacle of supermarkets with marquees, on which were emblazoned not the names of movie stars but the price of lamb chops.

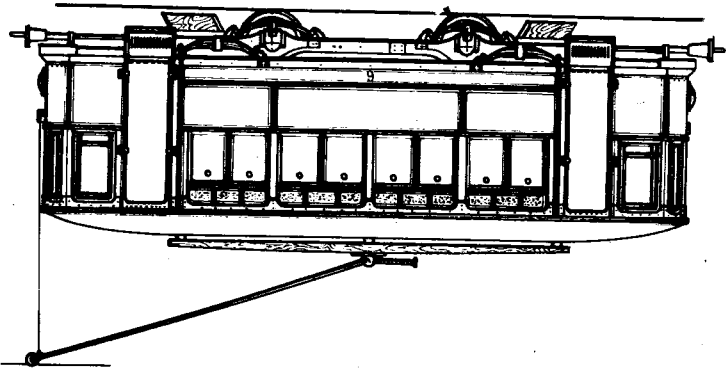
The peak business year for movies in the U.S. was 1946, when box office grosses reached \$1,692,000,000. That was the year the got under way in 1947 — and motion picture grosses dropped immediately by a hundred million dollars. From there on, attendance at the movies and other out-of-home entertainments declined steadily. Not until 1974 did the movie industry exceed the 1946 box-office take, and when it did so it was of course in watered dollars. As a matter of fact, in 1946, ninety million movie tickets were sold per week in the United States; the figure today is twenty million a week, although the population has nearly doubled.

The tendency of the public to stay home and watch the glass box was not the end of television's mischief. Caught up in the profitability of TV, which revealed an astonishing capacity to move merchandise, the networks let national radio fall into desuetude. Gone were *The Fitch Bandwagon* and all the rest. Gone were the remotes from the Palomar, the Trianon, and Frank Daley's Meadowbrook. And local stations, no longer able to depend on high-quality programs piped from New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, perforce relied more and more on records. In turn the music industry, unable to look to network radio for exposure, and largely ignored by television on the grounds that music wasn't "visual" enough, became dependent on the airplay of records by local stations. The disc jockey became crucial in the sales chain of the music business.

Some of the disc jockeys, including Dave Garroway in Chicago, Fred Robbins, Symphony Sid Torrin, and Martin Block in New York, Ed (Jack the Bellboy) Mackenzie in Detroit, Jimmy Lyons and Al (Jazzbeau) Collins in San Francisco, Al Jarvis and Gene Norman in Los Angeles, Sid Mark in Philadelphia, Felix Grant in Washington, Dick Martin in New Orleans, and Phil McKellar in Windsor, Ontario (whose clear-channel station reached much of North America), fought a rear-guard action for good music, jazz in particular. But station management wasn't interested in music. It was interested in cost-per-thousand. This is the advertiser's cost of reaching a thousand persons.

To a commercial radio station, it is of priority importance to reach the widest possible audience, for the sake of higher advertising rates. To do that, American stations in the early 1950s began emphasizing music in polychrome sunsets. This was the early phase of the musical decline, characterized by *Music Music Music*, *You You You*, *Wanted*, *The Wheel of Fortune*, *The Tennessee Waltz*, and the like, which led down to Bill Haley and the Comets, Elvis Presley, and the dark at the bottom of the stairs. The decline began in the late 1940s, accelerated in the '50s, and took the great plunge when Todd Storz dreamed up his "jukebox of the air".

Storz, of the New Orleans-based Storz broadcasting stations,



Johnny Mercer described. They're gone.

It is unavailing to search for the shuttered-down pavilions will find the rails themselves, rusting among the wildflowers.

remembered by creosoted wooden ties. Sometimes, though, you the most part vanished, long since torn up and melted for scrap, grass and milkweed and Queen Anne's lace. The steel rails are for sentried by maples or cottonwoods or sycamores, grown deep in memories of the Toonerville trolley, level straight strips of land Red Cars. Elsewhere in America, you will find odd lyrical to the San Diego Freeway, where it trails out. It is a vestige of the area of Los Angeles County and on through Beverly Hills almost Boulevard from the Hollywood line through an unincorporated Chandelers forced on it. A stretch of rail runs beside Santa Monica freeways and all too visible air that GM and Standard and the the North American continent, along with the coagulated Los Angeles has the worst public transport of any major city on music.

tax, which lingered on into the 1950s, still harming American forgotten functionary who thought up the wartime entertainment the Rockefeller), and the Mack truck company, as well as a B.F. Phillips, Standard of California (and that means heirs and minions, and the heads of General Motors, Firestone, Petrillo, Todd Storz, Learned Hand, Harry Chandler and all his can be made for a group of people that includes James Caesar was to find its fulfillment a little too late. But a pretty good case fact among the casualties, and Dizzy's dream of his own big band Who killed the big bands? Barks and Bird? Hardly. They were in Reagan Administration plans to abolish the FCC.)

Communications Commission. (This may cease in two years. The the recorded on-the-hour news required by the Federal the computer, which also sets off the play of commercials and even others are "back-announced", all according to commands from "golden oldies". Some songs are described as they begin to pl spool may contain current "hot" tunes, another a collection of antiseptic silence. Then it will stop and another will start. One over the air, although in the station itself there may be only an machine will start up, triggered by a computer, and play a song Banks of tapes on large machines sit there, still. Suddenly one Chenault. A visit to such a station is an unsettling experience. existence — stations programmed by companies like Drake-

By 1970, computerized "jukeboxes of the air" had come into stations tightened the playlist to fifteen.)

days a week. Thus Top Forty radio was born. (In later years, some music from lists limited to forty songs, around the clock, seven emulated by stations throughout the United States. They played *Billboard*. The Storz format proved successful and soon was by such supposedly objective indicators as the charts published but to a strict commercial criterion — popularity, as determined would not be according to such vague standards as esthetic value to a restricted list of hit songs constantly repeated. Their selection jukeboxes. He theorized that the radio public would similarly take observed that the same songs were played over and over on

Harry Chandler, owner of the Los Angeles *Times* and of vast real estate holdings in and around the city, was on the local board of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. He had interests in road construction companies and substantial investments in the Southern California Rock and Gravel Company and destroyed pavilions, was falling apart — or rather was being systematically system, so important to the outlying amusement parks and dance people was a smaller one. Meanwhile, the public transportation birth-rate fell during the Depression, the next generation of young appealing to people with baby-sitter problems. And since the else, namely breeding and feeding Beatles fans. TV would prove natural support for the bands were preoccupied with something military service, the young men with their girls who were the A change was also occurring in the audience. Returning from public adoration.

unemployment while the "trad" groups continued on, a wash in inaccessible, the boppers should have slipped away into a seemingly No one forced bebop on the world. And if it was all that Herman, all embraced or at least accepted the practices of bebop. bands that outlived the era, Kenton, Basie, Ellington, and has had a big band through to the present. Indeed, the four road except for a short period in the early 1960s when he led a septet, hired boppers from the beginning was Woody Herman who was one of those that went out of business. And one leader who bodman, whose band, except for occasional pickup revivals, One leader who was never hospitable to bebop was Benny musicality of the bands."

has one. "If anything, bebop came along and revived the bebop killed the big bands," says Gerry Mulligan, who once again Neither man mentioned bebop. "It's ridiculous to say that broadcasts did."

problem. Records couldn't build a band the way all those live "And then, once the radio remotes went off the air, we had a real was one of the worst offenders, because I loved all that stuff."

"The bands became mere accompaniment to the singers," said Alvin Karp, who still has a band and spends much of his time playing classical guitar with symphony orchestras. "And then there was the Kenton phenomenon. Stan Kenton's was not a dance band, except in the early days. When we tried to be more like it, people said, 'Why aren't you like your old self.'"

By the end of the era, Alvino was carrying a huge brass section. "The bands became too symphonic," he said. "Too many chords. I like it, people said, 'Why aren't you like your old self.'"

for dancing." "The bands became mere accompaniment to the singers," said Alvino Karp, who still has a band and spends much of his time playing classical guitar with symphony orchestras. "And then there was the Kenton phenomenon. Stan Kenton's was not a dance band, except in the early days. When we tried to be more like it, people said, 'Why aren't you like your old self.'"

moment when the era died, that may be it. In retrospect, Paul Weston sees the beginning of the end in a shift of tempos. Earlier arrangements had been designed for dancing, with even the ballads moving along on a comparatively ask one-and-three beat. "Then the ballads became slower to accommodate the singers," he said, "and the instrumentals became faster to show off the soloists. Neither one was designed for dancing."

young people would be seen dancing at the rear of the floor while another pressed close to the bandstand and stood in rapt attention, preoccupied with the skills of the players. To the latter, every side man, Ray Nance, Tricky Sam Nanton, Joe Thomas, Arnett Cobb, Cat Anderson, Mel Powell, Charlie Kennedy, Charlie Christian, Buck Clayton, Lester Young, Ziggy Elman, Corky Corcoran, Willie Smith, Buddy Rich, Bill Harris — was a star. That crowd at the front was the constituency for jazz as a concert music, and some bands came more and more to cater to it. The instrumentalists wanted the music to move in that direction, and so did some of the leaders, particularly Stan Kenton. Musicians repeated with glee a story about a Kenton trombonist who, asked by someone from the audience, "When are you going to play something we can dance to?" replied, "When are you going to dance something we can dance to?" If you want to point to a moment when the era died, that may be it.

In the 1940s, few young people had automobiles or the immediate hope of owning them, which is why Ford, Cities Service, Texaco, and General Motors slanted their radio programs toward those older people who did. The young were largely dependent, except for occasions when it was possible to borrow the family car, on tramways to get them to the pavilions and ballrooms. It is impossible, then, to estimate the effect on the band business of the dismantling of the urban and interurban railroads, and in any case it cannot be extricated from the other major changes that were occurring.

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The *Times* continued its assault on street railroads and rapid transit systems, saying that municipal ownership was bad, ignoring of course the superb publicly-owned transportation systems of other countries. In 1963, the last of the Big Red Cars was taken out of service. By then the *Times* had taken up the cause

agents in the Public Utilities Commission. The railway unions fought to impede this wrecking process, backed, interestingly enough, by the Hearst-owned *Herald-Express*, which had a large working-class readership. Finally, in 1947, after ten years and when the damage had been done, the United States Justice Department brought an antitrust suit against National City Lines and its owners, whose executives were convicted. They were fined one dollar.

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