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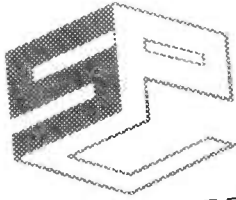
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# Quality Records 30 years later. . . .

*Researched by J.J. Linden*

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Quality Records, Canada's largest independent record company, is celebrating its 30th birthday this year. Through good and bad times, from being one of the first and only powerhouses in the Canadian record business owned by Canadians, one of the first and only companies in Canada, and still one of the few, to press their own records and others, and the first to duplicate tapes, one of the early distributors of many of the now major labels, plus a wide assortment of independent labels from Canada, the U.S. and abroad, Quality Records has withstood the test of time, boldly hanging on as the only wholly Canadian major distributor in a sea of U.S. and multinational branch offices and Canadian divisions. They have continued to thrive despite competition from multi-million and even billion dollar conglomerates, and have generated their fair share of hits in the marketplace through their A&R and marketing expertise, notably in the field of disco, where their rapid diagnosis of market growth and their quickness in exploiting that market have placed them near the top of the field.

Labels come and go, artists get hot and cool off. Though sometimes overshadowed by larger companies with huge, expensive release lists, Quality has never failed to come up with a chart topper, a gold or platinum record and a line of steady sellers. From the early days, when Quality dominated the charts as one of Canada's only distributors, to modern era hitmakers like Tommy James & The Shondells, the Stampeders, the Lovin' Spoonful, Harmonium, Wednesday, Gladys Knight and Sha Na Na to such recent artist breakthroughs as Meco, Andrea True, Walter Murphy, Blondie, David Soul, Gino Soccio and Amii Stewart, the company has continuously maintained its position of prestige on the marketplace and as a source of inspiration to other independent record companies in Canada.

And with the stabilizing force of the large manufacturing plant, taking them comfortably through the up and down fluctuations in roster size, of label gains and losses and industry growth and stagnation, Quality will continue to thrive and grow as the company and the world enter another decade.

Quality Records was formed in October of 1949. At the time, they joined the select group of Victor, Compo and London Records among the only record companies with Canadian bases. They were, in fact, the only Canadian formed distributor, and remain the only one with their own plant.

In a situation rare in Canada, Quality was founded with the pressing plant as part of the original operation, and now that RCA and Compo have given up their plants, Quality's is the longest surviving pressing operation in the country. In this case, though, oldest certainly doesn't mean oldest equipment. Within the past few years, the plant has been changed over from an all-manual operation to a fully automatic one.

Quality was founded by a group of western Canadians, headed by Harold E. Carson. Carson was also a partner in Taylor Pearson & Carson (TPC), then an automotive distribution company, later western

distributors for Quality Records until recently, and still in a varied distribution operation which no longer includes records.

Carson acted as President and Chairman of the Board for the fledgling operation, but didn't actually run the company. It was run by a series of general managers. Most responsible for bringing Quality to major independent status was George L. Keane, who served as GM from the early days until his retirement in the early seventies. Keane still lives in Scarborough not too far from the business he ran for two decades.

Upon his retirement, Keane was replaced by George R. Bays, long-time Quality executive who moved to Vice President and General Manager from a position as Senior Finance Officer. Then five years ago, George Struth took over the reins, becoming the first person at Quality to head the company with the title of President. ("The responsibilities haven't changed,"

Struth points out, "but I'm the first person working under the title of President. In the past, the president had always been the Chairman of the Board.") Struth took over the presidency from Robert E. Day.

## **A history of distributing top international product.**

As an independent Canadian record company, Quality has always had a history of distributing the product of other companies in Canada. Struth remembers such long-defunct labels as Cameo, Parkway, Vee Jay and Swan Records. The company's first major label was MGM Records, a very long-standing relationship which lasted until MGM became internationally aligned with the PolyGram group. Struth recalls, "That's where we really got started, although the company wasn't started because of MGM. Quality was formed by Canadians, and when they formed the company, they went out looking to get product." Another early success was with Dot Records.

In fact, few and far between are the international labels who have not at one time or another been associated with Quality for Canadian manufacturing and distribution. Struth notes, "We've been associated with A&M over a prolonged time. We represented Atlantic at one time, Mercury, Philips, - one big label we had was Larry Uttal's Bell Records, which is now Arista. We've just about touched everyone in the business in one way or another, either through manufacturing or licensing." In many cases, Quality helped labels grow in Canada so well that, like in A&M's case, they were able to open their own national offices. In other cases, the company lost the label through head office mergers or agreements with, or takeovers by, other labels internationally.

"One of the problems facing an independent label is that you pick up a line, you're partly responsible for developing a line, and as it grows, eventually it looks to the Canadian marketplace and decides to go independent. A&M were the first independent label of any stature that decided the Canadian market was large enough to go independent. A&M was the first independent. The Tijuana Brass. They were hitting good six-figure sales back then with us, when gold was 25,000 units." In fact, behind the U.S., Canada was A&M's second largest

market worldwide, and their early success through Quality in Canada may have contributed to their continuing exceptional track record as a national distributor.

One label which proved very successful for Quality was Casablanca. During their years with the U.S. label, Quality was instrumental in the Canadian breakthrough of such then-new artists as Kiss and Donna Summer.

But apart from their considerable success with international product in Canada, Quality has an excellent history of support for Canadian talent. The company was certainly one of the first to become involved in the production of Canadian artists.

Struth, who joined the company in 1957, remembers one of its earliest Canon productions, the still-popular Myrna Lorrie, then in her early teens, who had a series of hits back then. Other Canadians recording for Quality in the early days, most of them no longer in the business, include Ontario country artist Jack Kingston (Springhill Mine Disaster) and early rock & rollers the Beau Marks (Clap Your Hands). There were early Carlton Showband releases, and the company discovered a group of musicians from the West, named them the Guess Who and watched them grow to international prominence.

Of more recent vintage are a full complement of contemporary Canadian artists and recordings, including most of the highly successful product of the Stampeders, early albums from Quebec supergroup Harmonium, R&B/funk band Sweet Blindness, rock groups Wednesday and Madcats and the current roster, which features a wide range of rock, disco and country acts.

## Quality Records - a fully operative record manufacturer and distributor

Quality Records Limited is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Selkirk Holdings Ltd. Selkirk, a large, all-Canadian concern dealing with media, includes a number of radio stations in B.C. and Alberta, major television stations in Calgary, Lethbridge and Hamilton, other broadcast and cable television interests in Canada, the U.S. and Britain, as well as some radio equipment and security system operations.

Quality, the company's only record industry property, was founded in Toronto in 1949 and has been for about five years headed by President George Struth. Struth oversees a fully operative major record manufacturing and distribution company, encompassing over 300 employees and including a large record and tape manufacturing plant, a national distribution network and full marketing, artist & repertoire and publishing capacities.

The company's record operations are divided into four basic areas: manufacturing, distribution (including marketing and promotion), publishing and A&R, with some overlap of people. The staff is broken down into manufacturing, marketing, administration and publishing/A&R.

### Where the people are.

The largest number of people employed are in manufacturing, at last count 245, headed by Ron Gardiner, Vice President of Manufacturing, and ranging down to press officers quality control staff and jacket stuffers. Quality produces both discs and tapes in its factory.

The marketing department, which also includes the distribution network, accounts for roughly 28 people, not including independents. Quality product is distributed by its own firm, Metrodisc, in Toronto (Ontario) and Montreal (Quebec and the Maritimes), and by Dee Jays in B.C., Saskatchewan and Alberta. Through a brand new agreement, the Winnipeg-based Laurel Records distribute Quality product in Manitoba and the Lakehead.

The area of administration includes about 33 staffers, from the head of finance to the office and secretarial staff. A&R and publishing jointly include eight people. The two areas overlap in terms of acquisition of both artists and material, and many of the artists compose their own material, much of which is published by Quality Music. The head of publishing, Bill Kearns, also acts as head of Quality's domestic country music labels, Broadland and Grand Slam.

### House labels, domestic and international deals

The scope of Quality product is quite large, in terms of both catalogue and labels. Topping the list of labels are Quality and Celebration. Struth notes, "They are our house labels, which we utilize for domestic productions and for international productions we pick up on a record-by-record basis from smaller labels."

Broadland and Grand Slam are also owned by Quality. Struth distinguishes between the two: "Grand Slam is part of the publishing company. It's an offshoot label of Broadland. It was generated through the publishing company. On Broadland, the artists are signed to the record company, Quality Records. With Grand Slam, they're signed to Quality Music. It's a means of exploring new talent." In fact, Grand Slam boasts on its roster Larry Mattson, chosen Best New Artist at the Big Country Awards this year.

Quality has also made and maintained a number of international label licensing agreements, as well as handling Canadian distribution for other Canadian independents. Two international labels that have been very hot of late are Ariola and Prelude. The Ariola label features the international breakout artist Amii Stewart, who topped pop and disco charts earlier this year with her single and album, Knock On Wood. The label has also experienced gains in Canada with such artists as Herman Brood & His Wild Romance and Japan. On Prelude, Quality achieved Canadian gold and platinum not long ago with In The Bush by Musique.

Of Ariola, Struth comments, "We have access to the product generated by the label in the U.K., Germany, France, Belgium and Holland, as well as the U.S. The product goes out on the Ariola label, but it doesn't necessarily mean that it's being released Stateside. We pick up product that we feel may be suitable for this market."

Other international labels which have shown steady Canadian sales through Quality are the U.S. label AVI, ranging from disco to Liberace, and Buddah Records, a long-standing association which has



A little get together over some schnapps back in 1966 (l to r) George Struth, George Keane, Neshui Ertegen (Atlantic Records), Lee Farley and Reg Ayres.



produced numerous hits through the years. Quality also continues to carry product from Playboy Records which is issued in the States by CBS/Epic. This includes hit product from country artists Mickey Gilley and Bobby Borchers, still available on the Playboy label in Canada.

### Retaining artists despite losing labels

Quality still maintains the rights to such successful artists as Cissy Houston and the Michael Zager Band on Private Stock, which has gone out of business as a label to become a production house full-time in the U.S. Quality will continue to use the Private Stock label in Canada, and will continue to release the product the artists produce, regardless of the label affiliation in the U.S. and other countries. Other product continuing to be released in Canada by Quality includes Casablanca-originated recordings on the Millennium label, retained despite the company's loss of Casablanca two years ago. Among the artists involved are Meco, Joey Travolta and Brooklyn Dreams. Struth explains, "Millennium itself changed houses. It went from Casablanca to RCA as the Millennium label. We retained the acts that we acquired originally under our Casablanca/Millennium association. We release them on Quality now."

Quality has also picked up a lot of international product, notably from Europe, via lease deals. Struth notes, "It's been a good disco source for us." Last year, Quality completed a label deal with Hansa Records in Germany, a major European label which is the original label for Amii Stewart. Hansa also has offices in London, and Quality is particularly excited about one of its acts, Charlie Fawn, signed to Atlantic for the U.S.

Domestically, the company's distribution system, Metrodisc, has attained distribution agreements with a number of other independent Canadian firms. Among them is the Edmonton-based Vera Cruz Records, whose acts include country rock group One Horse Blue and singer-songwriter Mavis McCauley. Vancouver's Dyna West label is also distributed by Metrodisc, as is Track Records. Those are distribution-only arrangements whereby Metrodisc services the stations and stocks the stores, but Quality is not involved in the marketing.

### Skyline Records - special part of Quality's family.

One label with which Quality is very much involved is Skyline Records. Skyline was formed several years ago by producer John Driscoll as an outlet for his projects, licensed by Quality. Since that time, Driscoll has joined the Quality staff as head of A&R and staff producer, and his label is blossoming as a major part of the Quality family. Among the artists with current or upcoming product on Skyline are disco singer Karen Silver, disco group Star City and rock band Vehicle.

Struth notes additional distribution and licensing agreements are under negotiation with a number of companies, and that Quality is always ready to pursue new label deals.

## George Struth - the supreme gentleman

George Struth's first and only stop in the music industry has been with Quality Records, which he joined in 1957 following a background in printing and advertising. Struth started out in inventory control, matching the stock supply to the market demand. "I came in when Mr. Keane was running the company, and he taught me the record business. I'm probably very fortunate that I worked with someone I consider to be one of the best professionals in the Canadian scene. The job evolved into a lot more than that." Struth's responsibilities came to entail speeding up the process of getting the record out quickly, while it was still hot. He worked closely with the U.S. labels to get the masters up to Canada as early as possible to maximize sales potential ("Back then it was hard - they treated Canada like a foreign

country.'). Struth's background was further developed when he was sent in to investigate and solve problems in every part of the company.

From his first title, as Manager of Production Co-ordination, Struth was named assistant to the managing director. He then became Vice President, handling product acquisition, label liaison and overseeing marketing, and five years ago became president of Quality.

"A record company needs a lot of people," Struth emphasizes. "You can't give any one individual, in my opinion, total credit for anything that particularly broke or happened or developed for you. I think this past year, we've been extremely successful in our A&R department, and the creative input there is from a combination of six people.



George Struth - President of Quality Records Limited - 1979

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### Producing and promoting the artists at Quality.

"We start with a selection of the repertoire which we feel is most suited to the artist. I think we're more involved now ourselves. We try to tailor it, be it original or someone else's material. It's a combination of these ingredients: It's more than one person in the studio. It's specialized arrangements. You have to become involved from an emotional point of view as well, because you've got to be able to relate to the track. You've got to have something that you're going to 'hook' as your promotional kick-off.

"It's a communications system too. A record is a perishable item, and you can lose sales if you're not abreast of what's happening nationally. It's a big country geographically. It's like a ticker tape - you've got to have that flow of information and exchange of ideas daily. It's a time-consuming job. You're searching, you're exploring. When you release a record, you just don't know. You may be able to relate to it personally, but you don't know if you'll be able to expose it to the public.

"Radio is the predominant medium, and television has become important. Discos are exposing the public to records that they didn't hear on the radio or necessarily see on TV. There's just so much involved. It's not the kind of business it used to be, because at one time, you had an opportunity at every station to talk to every jock, and he could program to his personal taste. It's become more sophisticated. Playlists have become tighter. They're trying to eliminate some of the risks in playing an 'unknown quantity'. They're not selling records - they're selling space, and to sell space, they want to be number one on the marketplace." Of course, the record industry has had to become more sophisticated too. With so many new records out every week, it is harder to convince the stations to make a particular record one of only 30 or 40 on a chart.

### Regaining credibility on the international front.

One problem Quality and all Canadian companies have faced is regaining international credibility. Struth notes, "The CRTC came in with the regulations, and if you sit back and analyze it, they've probably made Canadians in the entertainment field a lot more visible. But during that period of time, they caused a lot of problems, too. I think our credibility was diminished somewhat through legislated programming. I know at one time, back with the Beau Marks and the Guess Who, the groups we were able to license internationally and get sales on, we got the sales on the basis of what they were able to achieve on the marketplace in Canada. That was influential on what was happening in the States, and the amount of effort the American label was willing to put into your product. We lost that when it became legislated programming.

"Now we've changed our pattern of thought. We don't like to release a piece of product in Canada now prior to lining up international commitments, because we



The year was 1965 and the best selling movie Soundtrack was Doctor Zhivago. Quality General Manager George Keane, Assistant to Managing Director George Struth and National Promotion Manager Lee Farley congratulate each other on success of the Soundtrack album.



One of Quality's early friends, Larry Uttal and family, meet in Toronto in 1969 (l to r) Uttal, W.R. Bays, Bev Weinstein, George Struth, Pamela Uttal, George Keane and Larry's daughter Jody. Larry was founder and president of the successful Bell Records.

want the recording to be judged purely on its merits versus any activity in this marketplace." Struth attributed his company's A&R success at placing product internationally on this policy.

"The product has improved tremendously, too," Struth is quick to add. "I'm not taking anything away from that. I think the creativity in Canada has developed considerably. The studios are far improved, and I think that's one of the things the regulations may have been responsible for implementing - the investments in studios. I think we've gone a long way in that respect."

Struth notes, "We've always developed Canadian talent. We've done extremely well in the last ten months in developing Canadian talent. We've done extremely well in the disco field, both domestically

and internationally. We've been into disco for almost four years.

### Breaking into disco in a big way internationally.

"The first big disco record per se would be the Van McCoy recording The Hustle, on H&L Records. It actually broke in Montreal. We sort of stayed on that route, because a lot of independent entrepreneurs that were not trying to take the majors head on were exploring the disco field. I think that's contributed to our growth too, the fact that we were involved in it and aware of it, especially in Quebec.

"Quebec is a more volatile market for that, because it wasn't influenced by U.S. trades or what was being programmed by the rest of Canada. It didn't necessarily require radio, and it was a dance-oriented market.

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THE GREAT WORK !!



"Now they say disco is dying. I don't think it is. Some of the items are still moving extremely well. I think it just may be molding into another form of contemporary music. I think, if you listen to some of our productions, we try to be a little bit more creative and bring them a little closer to rock, and rock fans can relate to them."

**Keeping calm in the face of a difficult period**

Running a record company in these days of recession fears in the U.S. and a minor case of nerves in Canada can be tricky business, but it is to Quality's complete benefit that as an independent company with a lower bulk volume than that of the majors, their substantial pressing plant can always be counted on, even in hard times, to add to Quality's business. Struth notes, "Manufacturing has always been, I think, the key to our stability. We are self-contained, which is a benefit. We've been affiliated with most of the record companies in the industry at one time or another."

Struth also feels the fear of record industry recession in Canada is exaggerated. "The market growth has been just remarkable in the last five years. I can see it leveling off, but I can't see it declining. The growth factor has been at about a 15% basis. I see it coming down to about ten. The volumes are good, the backlogs are there, but costs are increasing as well, tremendously. Resin alone went up over 25% this year. Natural gas - in the last 24 months I'll bet we had a 175% increase. And they're going to continue to go up. How that'll affect retail prices I don't know. I think that now, as a manufacturer people have got to get their productivity up, they've got to increase their efficiency, because you can't just keep going up with spiraling prices."

As a marketing operation, similar changes will have to be made, similar care will have to be taken. "We don't tend to overship," Struth states. "We hold back. We don't look for certification on our top sellers until we've done at least ten percent more than the figures that are required. And our return factor is not too bad, I feel, because we do keep a tight rein on what we put out. We don't have a large warehouse, and that's intentional. When you don't have the room, you've got to keep an eye on the stock at all times. It costs money to grind up vinyl and use it again. The system works. It's been beneficial. It keeps us under tight control."

Struth maintains a level-headed attitude towards people and companies he's dealt with in the past. He feels it's good business sense. "The doors are always open. You never close the door on any opportunity to explore new talent. One of the nice things is that with everyone we've dealt with over the years, there's been a nice rapport. There's integrity, credibility and friendship. There've been a lot of deals done on friendship, including one case where the paperwork took a year and a half, and we had the product on the marketplace during that time. There's been no animosity with any of the departures."



The year 1967 was a big year for Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass on the A&M label distributed by Quality Records. Alpert above with Quality General Manager George Keane, Assistant to Managing Director George Struth and Gil Freisen.



While visiting Canada in 1967, Herb Alpert was given the red carpet treatment by Quality Records and receives a personal note of thanks from Quality's GM George Keane.



Attending the Herb Alpert reception in 1967 were Hal Waggoner of Hamilton's Melody Lane (r) and Quality's National Promotion Manager Ed Lawson beside Gil Freisen.

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Canada's 100th birthday (1967) was a big year for Bobby Gimby and his Canada single (l to r) George Struth, Gimby, George Keane and W.R. Bays. The single was the biggest selling record in the history of the Canadian record business - 250,000 singles were sold.



Danny Kaye gets a singalong going with (l to r) Dan Bass, Muriel and George Struth and Roy Bishop. The year was 1962 and the group were dubbed the 5 Pennies.



A 1970 reception for Shirley Jones, then of the Partridge Family was held in Toronto and Shirley was squired by George Struth and Howard Hayman.

Part of this feeling comes from being an independent, being able to take the time and spend the energy on the artists and labels. And Struth is confident the independents will continue to survive the growth of the majors and thrive at their own level. "I still think the independent will be around. There may not be as many of them as there were two years ago. I think you'll find them coming back, because you can't stifle individual creative talent."

**Steady growth and a fair share of the hits**

And Quality does maintain its fair share of hits, through an aggressive marketing team which gets the product on the street while the sales are still there. And heading into the eighties, Struth feels the company's success will continue. "The company continues to change and continues to grow. If you looked at Quality back just five years, the plant was a totally manual operation, which we've changed to a fully automatic one. We've extended our property three times - we're sitting in slightly less than 82,000 square feet on three acres of land. We're in the process right now of rearranging some of the departments so that we can acquire additional space from within. We're into a further expansion right now of our manufacturing facility, with then new 12" automatic presses, in addition to the 22 presently on the floor, and two new 7" double cavity presses in addition to the six we already have. We hope to have the new presses operational by January. We're also looking at an upgrading of the tape facility - we were the first in Canada to manufacture tapes.

"We've increased our personal recording budgets, and not totally Cancon - we have two or three producers producing for us in the U.K. and France. We're changing direction, partly. We're allocating more funds for investment in production versus investment in licensing, both because there is a shortage of available labels, and because it's more meaningful to us to be involved worldwide. Our horizons are a lot different now."

**Quality's Marketing and A&R teams**

For any record company, the backbone of any success comes from their A&R and marketing efforts. The A&R staff have to find the artists and the product that the public will want to buy, and the marketing team has to get that product out on the street and on the radio stations, interest the public and the record stores, and make sure that interest is translated into sales at the public level.

Quality has an aggressive marketing team, who achieve sales by any avenues possible, finding the right market for their records and getting the product out on the marketplace as quickly as possible. For example, Quality recently promoted a Liberace album using an insert in boxes of chocolates, in-



cluding a coupon for mailing orders direct to Quality. The campaign was launched shortly before Mother's Day last year, and sold a lot of records.

As a result, Quality has had, especially over the last year, a very high proportion of hits and a very respectable percentage of sales on individual records compared to other world markets. The company achieved platinum and gold on the Prelude label with Musique, and achieved world firsts by earning gold on Gino Soccio and Platinum on Amii Stewart.

Quality's A&R department has been equally strong, especially over the last year. On the domestic front, the company has signed a wide variety of major Canadian artists and established the vast majority of them on the marketplace in Canada, also securing international agreements for most of them in other markets. The A&R department has also had numerous successes achieving Canadian rights to international product, notably the prestigious Ariola label, and a vast assortment of individual masters for leasing in Canada. In fact, both marketing and A&R continue to grow at Quality.

**Barry J. Stafford  
Director of Marketing**

Heading up the marketing department at Quality Records is Barry J. Stafford, a sales-oriented Director of Marketing and a respected veteran of a decade in the Canadian music industry. Under his guidance, Quality

**“ . . . On a scale from zero to ten, the enthusiasm level has gone from 2 to 9½. . . ”**

has broken out of a somewhat lean period, both for its international labels and the Canadian artists.

Stafford's appearance at Quality following a lengthy stint at Capitol-EMI coincides very closely with the company's recent upswing. But Stafford is quick to note that the slow period was not long-term. "Over the years, Quality has had some of the most talented people that have ever worked in the record industry. Some of them now head up other record companies.

"I came to Quality a year ago. It's somewhat different coming from a very large multinational company to a very successful independent record company. There's a lot of difference, because we were relying a lot on what's happening in the United States. That's not so true here. Sometimes here you've got to break your own acts, and that's much more difficult, much more of a challenge."

Disco has been one of Quality's strengths throughout their current surge. "When I came here," Stafford recalls, "they'd already started with *In The Bush* by Magique. Then came the success stories of Amii Stewart, along with Gino Soccio and so on."

One of the keynotes to the success, the changes at Quality since Stafford joined the company, is a very intensive sales-gear attitude, inspired by Stafford, an aggressive salesman himself. "They've nicknamed me 'Boxcar Barry', because I do sell it like it's meant to be sold!" Stafford jokes. Stafford doesn't feel the industry is necessarily heading into troubled times. "I go out in the street and make things happen. I excite people. I was hired specifically to



Barry J. Stafford - Director of Marketing, Quality Records Limited - 1979



Gary W. Kouri  
Metrodisc Quebec Branch Manager

do a job - to take Quality and make things happen again. We can't compete with the multinationals, so what we're attempting to do in the marketing department is to bust some of our own hits."

Working at Quality, Stafford notes, is challenging, fun, but sometimes frustrating. "We can't lure the finest people in the record industry, so we have to utilize all the facets of our business and all the people to the fullest of their ability. Sometimes you wear more than one hat."

**“ . . . We can't afford the luxury of having a lot of people. . . ”**

Stafford describes his function and the structure of the marketing department at Quality. "Marketing is a broad spectrum. Marketing is a term that's used so very loosely in the recording industry. It involves sales, promotion, press and publicity, merchandising. We have branches in Montreal and Toronto, distributors in Winnipeg and Calgary. They all report to me." Montreal services Quebec and the Maritimes, Toronto handles Ontario. Laurel Records in Winnipeg services Manitoba and the Lakehead, and Dee Jays in Cal-



gary handles B.C. Alberta and Saskatchewan. Montreal includes a branch manager, two salesmen and a promotion manager, Gaston Gravel. Toronto branch staffs two sales people, who report directly to



Angelo Bomba  
Financial Controller

Stafford, plus the national and Ontario promotion, press and publicity. Also reporting to Stafford is National Promotion Manager Larry Macrae, who in turn has his own staff. Another person reporting to Stafford is his Executive Assistant, Harold Winslow, whose span with Quality covers 28 of the company's 30 years. Reporting to Winslow is the product coordination function. "We can't afford the luxury of having a lot of people," notes Stafford. "Therefore, we must all pitch in and do many things."

One of the things lending itself to Quality's recent growth in market prominence is the enthusiasm Stafford has generated, both within the company and throughout the industry. "I would say, on a scale from zero to ten, the enthusiasm level has gone from two to 9½. We have a very positive approach." Quality has been one of



Bruce Carney  
Ontario Promotion representative

only six or seven distributors in the country to chart a number one hit in the past year or two, and Stafford confidently enthuses, "We'll see to it that it happens again. We'll make it happen!"

Stafford is rare in the industry in that he is more concerned with how the record sells than how it sounds. In fact, his office is one of the few in the industry totally

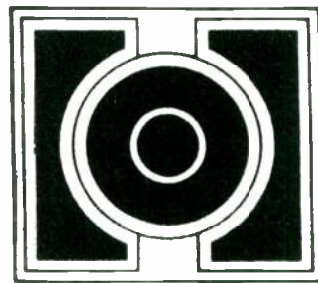
*We have worked together now  
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without sound equipment. "We have A&R people, promotion people - they have the ears," he explains. "They have better ears than I have, and I recognize that. So we pay them to listen to the product. I don't spend



Claude Caplan  
Metrodisc Quebec Sales representative

a lot of time listening to the product at all. I sell numbers. That's where I come from." By his attitude, Stafford maintains objectivity on the marketplace, and through the years, he has gained the solid respect of the sales side of the industry for that objectivity.

**"... I don't believe in preaching gloom. There is no recession and I'm out on the streets myself making sure there won't be a recession. . ."**

In short, Stafford isn't sure of exactly what is turning the company into a more viable



Harold Winslow  
Executive Assistant

industry force. "I only know there's more enthusiasm. I think generally speaking, we have a younger group of people involved. They care. It's a great place to work. The president is without a doubt, in my 23 years of working, the finest gentleman that I've ever worked for. George Struth is respected all over the world. And the sales and profits have both increased in the past year. We're well in the black."

Asked about the doombeaters predicting a recession in the industry, Stafford shot back: "Recession? What recession? I don't believe in preaching gloom. You know the old saying, 'When the going gets tough - the tough get going' and that's us baby. Our presses are going gangbusters and we're booked into next year and we've got a list of releases that'll make your head



Art Pappone  
Ontario Sales representative

spin. How's that for a recession? Besides I'm out on the streets myself making sure there won't be a recession."

### Larry Macrae National Promotion Manager

One of the bright new young faces at Quality Records is Larry Macrae, who in a matter of months since being hired by the company for Ontario Promotion has risen to become National Promotion Mana-

**"... I think we're setting our goals a lot higher now. . ."**

ger. Macrae oversees a staff which includes Promotion Coordinator Margaret Lavoie, and the newly-hired Bruce Carney at Ontario promotion and Cameron Carpenter at press and publicity.

As head of national promotion, Macrae



A youthful looking Guess Who were guided to international recording stardom in the early sixties with releases on the Quality label, notably, Shakin' All Over.



Larry Macrae  
National Promotion Manager

is in charge of all radio markets and all major press across the country. He also oversees regional promo from Margo Fraser of Dee Jays in Calgary and Laurel's regional promo force in Winnipeg, as Carney, who doubles in Ontario as a customer service rep. In addition, Macrae is in regular contact



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with Quebec promo manager Gaston Gravell. Due to the uniqueness of the Quebec market and Gravell's expertise there, the Montrealer looks after press and radio promotion there with a free hand, coordinating his efforts there with Macrae's in the rest of the country.

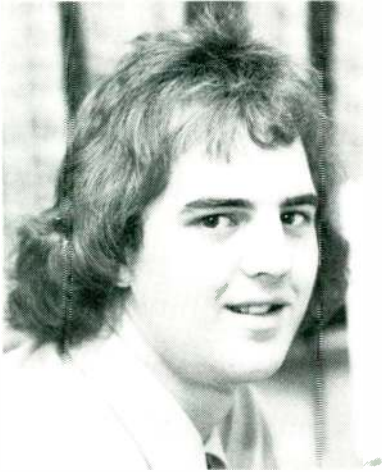
Macrae notes, "Since I am in charge of promotion, I think my first commitment to the company is to work on the profile of the company and the acts, to portray a positive image for the company at both an industry level and to the general public, as far as what Quality is doing for its acts, and also to the press. I guess the best

way to attain those goals is to make ourselves more credible in the eyes of radio, the press and the public. And I think that can be accomplished through setting high goals for the promotion department. Some of the goals I've had over the last eight months with the company have been to bring home a gold record in Canada before any other territory in the world." This was accomplished with Gino Soccio, and Macrae would like to repeat the occasion, possibly with British group Japan on Ariola. "Japan is a sort of pet project. I would like us to be the first country in the world to sell gold on their third album, because I believe

in it and I know they believe in it.

One of Macrae's goals is to strengthen the independent identity of the company. "A lot of people seem to forget that we are Canada's largest independent company. They see us as a distributor of international product. I think we can do this through our own domestic roster, giving it strength and credibility." Macrae will be making the Canadian acts priority projects.

Macrae notes Quality will be strengthening its promotion of country artists and records. "There is a trend now to cut down on the number of country releases, to promote each of them more solidly, and to



Cam Carpenter  
Press & Publicity representative



Clement Dufresne  
Metrodisc Quebec Sales representative



Sharon Madden  
A&R and Int'l Coordinator

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start selling the product. It's something that has been overlooked. There's obviously a country market right across the country.

"I also feel that we have a pretty healthy catalogue, and that it should be reviewed every once in a while to see if there's anything there that can be promoted as a special product. There should be some awareness of the catalogue."

Overall, that is what Macrae's job is all about. "You cannot underrate the importance of any sort of publicity at all. It's getting a message across to the general public. As National Promotion Manager, it's my job to make both our own artists and our international artists household names. That's my function.

"I think we're setting our goals a lot higher now. I think it's been proven that gold status can be attained in Canada through the right promotion and marketing campaign, through proper exposure of the act and radio play. I am totally committed to the company. I'm excited about the company and its independent status, and I'm very excited about the amount of freedom I have at Quality Records."

John Driscoll  
Director of A&R

John Driscoll, veteran record producer who doubles as Quality's Director of A&R, was part of the team that brought the company several major international and domes-



John Driscoll  
Director of A&R

tic successes with their artists and records. And indeed, Quality has been very busy of late, signing up new domestic and international acts, producing the Canadians,

"... We're always interested in acquiring new acts, but we're also selective ..."

establishing international significance for them while succeeding with much of the licensed and leased product from outside the country.

Driscoll himself has been spending a large portion of his energy in the production end of late, completing albums with disco singer Karen Silver and studio group



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Barry Stafford presents Quality gold to Quebec Branch personnel Danielle Gagnon and Claude Gadbois for their efforts in 1978 in breaking Musique's In The Bush.

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Andrea True gets More, More, More and an award from George Struth.



In the 60's and early 70's outstanding sales were recognized by RPM Gold and Platinum awards. Here the Stampeders receive their Sweet City Woman Gold from George Struth.



A highlight of the 1971 opening of the now famous Ontario Place was a gold presentation to Tourism Minister Allan Grossman by George Struth, then Assistant to the Managing Director.



During Frankie Valli's heyday he visited Toronto and here meets Muriel and George Struth and Mrs. Betty Gardner. The year was 1976.



Ray Caviano, Warner/RFC Pres, receives Canadian gold for Gino Soccio's *Dancer* single from George Struth.



Bruce Murray's recording career was given a boost in 1975 when he signed with Quality Records.



It was in 1979 when Quality Records honoured Marvin Schlacter, here receiving awards from Quality's Nadine Langlois and George Struth.



the Poppers, and working on a project with Silver's former band Star City. "We've been doing a lot of producing lately. That's taking up most of our time, day and night, with 18-hour days in the studio."

In keeping with Quality's new-found success formula of securing international commitments prior to releasing product, almost all of the company's domestic roster have been placed in the U.S. and internationally. Although it is not necessarily true that international success is needed to have a hit in Canada, Quality has been having trouble establishing its domestic artists in competition against acts with international chart hits.

**By the time Quality started pushing the Soccio album, Outline, the artist's Dancer single had hit number one in the U.S.**

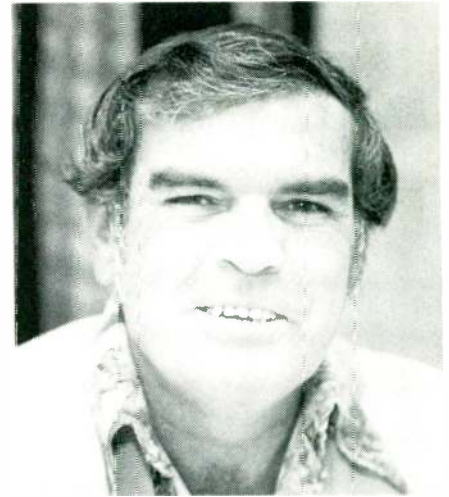
The company's first major victory on the international front under this policy was Gino Soccio, Montreal-based singer/composer/producer/multi-instrumentalist. Quality negotiated a major deal with the new Warner Bros. disco label, RFC. By the time Quality started pushing the Soccio album, Outline, the artist's Dancer single had hit number one on the U.S. disco charts. This success was translated to genuine Canadian success by Quality, who ultimately outsold the U.S. by percentage, presenting Soccio with gold on both the album and the single.

Driscoll discusses Quality's current roster

of Canadian artists, beginning with Soccio. "I guess you could call him progressive disco - it's more than disco. We have a new single from Gino, Les Visiteurs. It's been redone, as far as vocals are concerned. The RFC people tell us that the Warner Bros. people in the pop department are very excited. Gino's finishing a 12" of the same song, for the discos." Soccio is also working on a follow-up album, for release around the beginning of next year.

**Quality has released Sway, the Mighty Pope's first crack at the disco market.**

Another major hopeful for Quality in the disco field is veteran R&B singer the Mighty Pope. Quality has released Sway, the artist's first album on the label, and also the Mighty Pope's first crack at the disco market. As with Soccio, the album was picked up before completion by an excited Warner/RFC. True to his roots, the artist has recorded such cuts as rock classic In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida and Bruce Springsteen's Because The Night. The initial impact single, though, was Sweet Blindness, written and popularized a number of years ago by the Toronto funk group of the same name. But Driscoll notes, "The U.S. DJ's are trying to tell us something. The cut they want to go with is Sway, and that will probably be the next single. I think in the beginning in the U.S., they tried to get more of an R&B market with Sweet Blindness, and it's working. But I think for the masses, Sway is probably the song."



Bill Gale  
Traffic Manager

**Toronto's Karen Silver has suddenly become established in Canada and the U.S.**

Still in the disco field, Toronto's Karen Silver has suddenly become established in Canada and the U.S. in a big way with her single Hold On I'm Coming. Her debut album has just been released as well, on Skyline in Canada and through Arista internationally. But it is the single, a very solid seller in Canada and charted quickly in the U.S. as well, for which the singer is becoming known.

Driscoll recalls how Silver accidentally

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drew attention from Arista. "We did a song in Montreal called Make Me Feel Alright. We felt it had some potential, so we put it out on a 12" to generate interest in the artist. A few pieces got into the United States, and it was played in a few discos. Bob Feiden of Arista called me one day, not knowing anything about it, and asked



Mike DeRosier  
Ontario Sales representative

me what I was doing. I told him I was working with Karen, and he could probably save time hearing her by picking up the single in a local store. He called me back about an hour later and said, 'I listened to it and I think it's great! When can we sit down and talk?'

Driscoll flew to New York with unfinished product from both Silver and his new group, the Poppers, and Arista picked up both acts. Debut product from the Poppers, a studio group, is also being released currently.

**Star City - a disco act formerly fronted by Karen Silver**

Another disco project forthcoming from Quality is a second album from Star City. Formerly fronted by Silver, the group gained success with their first single, a cover of Spencer Davis' I'm A Man, both in Canada on Skyline and on TK in the U.S.



Sidney Lambersky  
Vice President, Finance

The debut LP also met with success. Driscoll notes, "I'm A Man did very well in the major markets like New York. We were also very successful with Star City at last year's MIDEM. I think they're placed now in a lot of territories all over the world. A lot of these territories are looking for a new album, which we are doing now. Star City was our second venture, after Gino, in the disco vein, which proved very successful for us."

**Lynx have completed their third album**

Quality have not, for all their success in disco, forgotten their long-term commitment to Canadian rock music. Lynx have completed their third album. The Toronto-based band now boasts only keyboard player Tony Caputo of their original members. The new album, We Are The People, was recorded in Los Angeles, and Driscoll reports, "We've listened to some of the cuts and we're very excited. The sound is very good. The first and second albums did well for them, and we hope this album will bring them over." The LP is being slated for release before the end of the year, likely a simultaneous issue with AVI in the U.S.

**Vehicle's second set is expected before the end of the year**

Also coming out with a follow-up album is Vehicle, with their second set expected before the end of the year. "I haven't played the album for anyone yet," notes Driscoll, "but we'll be going down to the

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States soon with it." The group's self-titled debut was a collection of high energy pop tunes, including Canadian chart hit Mr. Love. Driscoll feels the new LP is quite different. "There's more variety on the album. There are also some membership changes."

**Songwriter Martin Wall writing material for new wave album**

Driscoll continues. "We're also working on a project which will be our first sort of new wave album. One of our writers is writing the songs for it right now, Martin Wall, who used to be with Vehicle. It's going to be a songwriter album, but with various artists, sort of like a Parsons Project, but not in that vein. If we need a particular artist for a particular song, we'll bring that artist in for that session."

**". . . The A&R department is always looking for material from different countries. . . "**

The Quality A&R department is also in a constant search for good product internationally. "The A&R department is always looking for material from different countries. Not being a multinational company, that's part of our bread and butter. We have labels, but there's still a lot of product that we have to run out and get. A lot of the time, we acquire a label because we go after a particular product that we feel is strong, we take that product, do well with it, and it sort of opens the door to acquiring the whole line. Then, if we go after a single, for example, and it becomes a hit, we'll go after the album, etc. That's how we build up our catalogue." Quality's catalogue, domestic and inter-

national, is quite large, ranging from major international labels like Ariola and Prelude to the company's own mainstream and country labels, to the large Birchmount budget line. And the catalogue is growing, with Quality people around the country looking for product that will sell.

Driscoll explains the attitude of the Quality A&R department. "I think we're always interested in acquiring new acts,



Howard Hayman  
Divisional Controller

but we're also very selective. There are certain acts out there we would like to sign, but if we feel the material is just not right, then sometimes we're hesitant. There are other acts who are upcoming stars, but if they didn't want some of our A&R input, then we're hesitant. The business out there today is very tough, so we have to be selective. But the doors are always open to up and coming acts. There's nothing better than to hear a new act that you think is great.

"We never limit the roster. If there's something outstanding, we can always find room for it, because we're in business to make money."

**Gaston Gravell  
Artist and Product  
Development**

One of the people with the longest titles at Quality Records is Gaston Gravell. He is based out of the Montreal branch, is Quebec/Eastern Canada Promotion Manager, as well as serving the entire country as National Manager of Artist and Product Development.

A Quality staffer for almost three years, Gravell has been the spark which lit many of the company's flames, particularly in the disco field in which he is considered nationally as an expert. Gravell began in the music industry with the CRTC as a radio/TV program analyst, and later moved to Quality, starting as a sales rep despite a background in public relations. Shortly after, he became a promotion rep, where his talents in establishing Quality product in the burgeoning Quebec disco scene were quickly dis-

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covered. His credits now include some studio experience, as well as his national and regional responsibilities.

Quality had discovered the potential of disco as early as four years ago, when the late Van McCoy's *The Hustle* became a



Gaston Gravell  
Metrodisc Quebec Artist Development

very major hit for the company. This was later reinforced by chart toppers with disco singles from Meco and Walter Murphy. But it was largely Gravell who inspired Quality with the confidence that their own disco production of Canadian artists could also be successful.

As the company became more and more talented at finding and producing disco material, Gravell also became instrumental in selling the product internationally. He works very closely with A&R Director John Driscoll, and has often been along on the trio to the U.S. which resulted in a major deal on an artist or piece of product. Gravell also helps scout for new lines and product from international sources to further boost Quality's strength, again particularly in disco.

Gravell is especially excited about Quality's latest label acquisition, a new wave/disco label from France called Ze Records. "It's got some disco/rock and it's got some new wave productions. It's all English language. The guy who started it is from France, but to date, the acts that we have coming out on the Ze label are all from New York." Those acts include James White & The Black, The Contortions, the Aural Exciters and Don Armando's Second Avenue Rhumba Band.

"I think that as far as the direction that disco music is taking, that label will be a leader. All its people have a full background either in rock or in disco. Most of them are studio people and people who have worked on big projects."

Gravell is very excited about the new directions in which disco seems to be moving, and very happy that Quality is getting into the act early. He describes what he calls "the creative disco music," whereby in order for disco to survive, "It'll have to either be more pop or more creative - the bass drum days are gone." It will no longer be necessary to know the correct steps, Gravell predicts, and it will be more relaxed, with more listening - anyone will be able to dance to it. Gravell, in-

centidentally, is especially happy with this trend, because despite being a recognized disco expert for five years, he wasn't comfortable about visiting clubs because he didn't know the latest steps. "Now I feel comfortable going into the discos again!"

### Nadine Langlois Manager of Business Affairs

One of the people who most ties in the various publishing, marketing and A&R functions at Quality is Nadine Langlois, Manager of Business Affairs. Joining Quality after school 11 years ago, Langlois spent

**". . . I'd say we're definitely very strong internationally. . ."**

six years in promotion and three as assistant to President George Struth before being named to her present title two years ago.

As Manager of Business Affairs, Langlois is heavily involved with Quality's international affairs. She maintains the contacts with licensees and sub-publishers around the world, as well as licensors and the people whose songs Quality sub-publishes in Canada. She handles the bulk of the administration of these functions. "The international department is made up of myself, John Driscoll, Gaston Gravell, Sharon Madden (A&R and International Coordinator), and of course, George Struth."

Langlois is also involved in product meetings and the administration of A&R functions on domestic acts.

Langlois describes her responsibilities. "I coordinate on an international basis with the companies that we pick up product from." She provides a liaison between Quality and the heads of both licensed labels and those from which product has been leased. "I find out basically what's coming up, what their plans are. They call

me if they have a problem with product coming up, or any complaints or things like that. I act as an administration liaison."



Quality has been very successful of late with its international product. "Ariola has been very successful. We have a new single from Amii Stewart and we're looking for a






Nadine Langlois  
Business Affairs Manager

new album. Prelude has also been successful, and there's a new Musique album we've just released and are anxious to start working. We have high hopes for this one." Germany's Hansa is another very promising label.

"Then there are the small international labels that we've picked up individual masters from. When disco was just starting, we picked up a lot of masters from companies in Germany and France on a one-time basis, and were very successful doing that. You have to coordinate, because you're dealing with an individual company for one piece of product, rather than an Ariola for maybe 50 acts. You have to let them know how the record's doing, make sure they have samples, and so on. We picked up a master from Africa by D.D. Sound titled Cafe. We did extremely well on it, even though it wasn't released in the States."

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Langlois continues, "The job also includes following up with the international companies that have put out our product, like RFC/Warner, who put out Gino Soccio and the Mighty Pope. I coordinate all countries, what countries have put the product out around the world, getting samples, following up, getting promotion information from all around the world and filtering it back in so that our people are aware of it."

Quality have been very successful this year with their domestic roster in terms of international releases, sales and publishing. Soccio has been particularly strong beyond Canada, on Warner Bros./RFC label, especially in the U.S. and Italy. "We were successful with the publishing part of Gino Soccio as well," Langlois observes. "We dealt individually by country, which we feel was a plus for us, because the

countries have really worked the product." An assortment of deals were struck for the songs on Soccio's Outline album, giving Quality and the artist the added advantage of having both a publisher and a label working the record. Soccio's songs are sub-published in 24 countries.

Langlois is personally involved in the acquisition of new labels and master product for Canada. "Internationally, we're looking for masters all the time from around the world. We've really built up contacts in the last year and a half. That's our key right now - all the contacts that we have built up. We may have centred our attention on the U.S. for a long period of time, but now we've really expanded in the European market. Internationally, Quality has expanded its horizons, and I'd say we're definitely very strong. We're in a very good position."

## Ron Gardner Vice President, Manufacturing

Ron Gardner, Vice President of Manufacturing at Quality Records, is one of the company's true veterans. He has been with Quality's manufacturing division for 27 years, since the company was only three years old. When Gardner began, the Quality pressing plant contained six ten-inch presses, basically for 78's plus two seven-inch presses for 45's. Gardner recalls, "It was a fairly small, one-shift operation." Still, at that time, it was enough for a sizable share of the Canadian market, predating the album, stereo, mass production and promotion, and most of the other surviving record companies and all other surviving plants.

Then, inevitably, "We continued to grow through the first ten years of this company's history, both as a distributor and as a label. We pressed back then for CBS Records, and we did some small off-the-street things." CBS actually had its offices for a while in the back of Quality's warehouse. "Another thing we used to have," Gardner remembers, "was a transcription press, and we pressed the 20" discs for radio - the Red Skelton Shows, and so on. We did that pressing here on a special press. We did that for quite a few years, and they weren't what you'd call large quantity runs like you'd turn out for a pop record. It was strictly a matter of doing 50 or 100 of each particular show to send to the radio stations. That was a special press set up on its own. It goes back to '52 or '54. It lasted for three or four years and then faded out, I think because of the increase in quality of magnetic tape, and probably major changes in the radio stations' formats, tape duplicating, cartridges and so on - the cartridge was well into radio stations before it hit the consumer."

**". . . back in the fifties a run of 78's would be on the presses for weeks at a time. . . ."**

The industry, the market and technology grew. Gardner recalls the early days, and the way record manufacturing differed. "I remember back in the fifties, you'd get a run on 78's and it would be on the presses for weeks at a time. The charts would carry a hit record for week after week. It would chart at number one for months. Nowadays, of course, because of the mass marketing and all the other changes, you're lucky to have it up there for a week before it starts to fall off again. But then again, we mass produce the product that much faster now. We achieve 100,000 in a time period which now is probably only one-tenth of what we used to. It's a hit today, you turn it out tomorrow and get on to something else the next day."

As the entire record industry changed and grew, and as technology became more and more exacting in the search for accurate sound reproduction, the Quality plant was quick to change to keep up with the latest improvements. "From monaural," Gardner notes, "we went into stereo in the late fifties. That meant a change, equipment-



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wise, in formulas, compound, matrixes." In stereo, a heavy press must squeeze into the same groove twice as much signal, with at least as much accuracy to make it worthwhile. "We didn't have to change the presses themselves, but the most important thing on the press is the die that's producing the record. That had to be developed and changed - it's still being developed today, as a matter of fact.

"The stereo groove, being the type that it is, goes in four different directions rather than one. It's much more difficult to mould. That was a teething problem too. There was a phase-out of what they called high fidelity recordings. We ran right into the sixties with the jacket reading 'Playable on monaural or stereo.' Originally, the stereo groove was half the width of the monaural needle, and the needle would wear out or distort the groove. Then they widened the groove, and the hardware manufacturers started to comply by bringing out a needle that would play either way.

**"We have expanded our plant facilities here since we opened about five times."**

Since those early days, Quality has continued to increase its plant on a regular basis. "We have expanded our plant facilities here since we opened about five times," Gardner notes. "When Columbia was at the back, it was an addition to the plant which goes back into the early fifties. Then we expanded off to the side in about the early sixties, to add warehousing and office space. By this time, we had expanded the press department and started to run a second shift, which later became three. The last major expansions we had were one for our tape duplicating facility, around 1967 - the tapes started out very small, and in 1972, we put on an addition of 10,000 square feet for our tape division." Quality

was the first company in Canada to duplicate tapes itself rather than import, a fact which gave them a near total market share for over two years. "Then in 1976," Gardner continues, "We put on another 10,000 square feet for our finishing or packaging department for records. In the interim, we had swung over the last five years from a manual operation to a completely automated system in records. We have kept up with the industry and the new technologies."

Quality began manufacturing four-track cartridges, the predecessor to eight-track, and then later moved into eight-track and cassette. The company purchases empty cartridges, or C-O's, from Hardman Industries, and injects the prerecorded tapes into them. The program is recorded on a large hub of tape, end to end, and then cut and inserted. Each hub carries 20-30 cassettes or cartridges worth of tape. Quality also manufactured reel-to-reel prerecorded tapes for a time, but both they and the four-tracks were phased out when the other configurations took over the market.

**Capacity over 100,000 units per day after rejects**

Of course, as the company has added and changed equipment, its new machinery has been state of the art, making the Quality plant a fully modern facility. "So even though we're old, we've kept up with the times, and we feel we have one of the most efficient plants in North America."

Quality's plant currently includes 22 12" presses and eight double cavity (two discs at once) seven-inch machines. The company's total capacity is about 22 million disc units per year, with an additional three to four million tapes. This translated to 52,000 albums, 35,000 singles and ten to 15,000 eight-tracks and cassettes, for

over 100,000 units per day, not including rejects. In addition, Quality is about to install ten new 12" and two new double cavity seven-inch presses. "We're expanding," Gardner states, "and I know others are doing the same thing, because of the big demand in manufacturing over the last two years. We try to keep up, and of course, when you increase press capacity, it also means warehousing, matrix, boiler room and so on. The whole area has to expand."

**"We are taking the ultimate and trying to reach that."**

And Quality is constantly trying to improve its operation. "We're experimenting, we're researching, we're taking a look at materials every day. In fact, we've tied in with two or three sources of materials, so that we have the option of going with the very best, whichever the best may be. We look at everyone else's technology as well. We've been supplied with our compound for the last 29 years by B.F. Goodrich. At first, it was just resin, and we made our plastic from the resin. Now they supply our plastic in pellet form, complete. But we're also dealing with other companies in the U.S. that are researching for better materials." Quality also experiments with temperatures, pressures, cycle times, dies and weight of the disc in an effort to improve its product.

"We're working with our matrix (metal parts) department right on through. It's all based first on the quality of the source. If it's an excellent tape you're getting in the beginning to work from, then you should have an excellent acetate. Then when you process that acetate, you should have exactly the same result on your mould." Quality don't yet master their own lacquers, using such sources as the Acme Recording Service. They hope to establish their own cutting facility within a matter of months.

"As long as the source is good," Gardner emphasizes, "we try to make a record as good as the source. You have to allow for certain built-in contingencies, such as compounds and press cycles, but all things being equal, you should come up with a good record. We are taking the ultimate and trying to reach that."

**Quality control - keeping pressings out of scratch**

One thing all pressing plants dislike is to send out product which is not equal to its capability, and Quality is certainly no exception. Gardner discusses the stringent quality control system his plant uses. "This will separate a good pressing plant from a bad plant. I think there's more quality control in this business than in many others, because the record may look good, and it may be packaged nicely, but when you put it on a player and listen to it, it may be a whole different story.

"We take every mold (first positive metal step) that we produce from our master and we play it right through. We establish a history card from that point. That is also checked against the cutting report from the engineer who has cut from the tape itself. If there are any defects or problems on the tape, they are recorded by the engineer. It's on the tape, so you're not going to cut any better than what's there. We also check



Platinum and gold presentation from Quality Records to Amii Stewart (l to r) Simon May (co-writer), Trudy Meisel (Int'l Director Hansa), Amii Stewart, Peter Meisel (President, Hansa) and Barry Leng, producer/writer. The year was 1979

the mold for level, to make sure that the cutting engineer has kept the level on the tape at where it should be.

"Once the audio control people determine that the metal mold is as good as the tape, they okay it and it goes back for the processing to the stampers, from which we in turn make the record.

"So if the metal part is okay to run, it goes to the press department. We have six sound booths which are manned by individual audio and visual testers controlled by a supervisor. It's their responsibility that every different record that goes into the press has taken an audio right through. They also have the same history card that was started in the matrix area.

"We'll take every record that's on the press and play it right through. It's those

people's responsibility to take and look and play that record every 20 minutes. They check it visually, checking to make sure that it's centred, checking for label and for flatness, taking it back to the booth and spot-checking any visuals they may see. If they don't see anything, they play what we call a skim-check. That's continued through the whole run.

"Our quality control on the floor is very tight. We have the audio testers looking at their responsibilities. We have a floater making sure everything's alright. We have the operators responsible for quality control. From that point, once it's put on spindles and sent into our finishing room, we inspect every album visually before it goes into the sleeve." In fact, before packaging the record, another precaution is taken.

The records are 'cured' - left on the spindles to cool and harden to minimize the chances of warpage from the shrink wrap.

**Fighting rising oil costs**

One problem Quality shares with all other pressing plants in Canada is that of rising costs. In a field where price is based most largely on materials and where the product itself is made of petroleum, the fastest rising cost of all, there is little the plant can do to keep from passing on the increases ultimately to the consumer. One could cut down the weight of the pressing, but at some degree of detriment to the results (Quality presses albums at a healthy 115 grams). One could speed up the operation or automate more, but Quality, like most of its competitors, has been opting in that direction for several years. "There's very little a manufacturer can do these days other than to pass it on," Gardner notes. "At one time, we had a 1/4 cent per pound increase in compound once a year, and we used to fight like hell with the suppliers. Now we seem to have three to four cent per pound increases month after month. As soon as oil goes up the compound goes up. That has to be passed on. In fact, manufacturers in the record industry are having it very difficult right now, because they haven't been able to pass it on, and they've been trying to hold onto it, to absorb some of the increases. It's hurt." It means the record companies have had to cut back somewhere else, such as signing fewer acts and cutting other budgets.

But as for the fruits of Gardner's labours he's very pleased with its growth. "you have to be realistic as to what you're producing. It's like General Motors, producing a car every minute. They have to do that to keep the price of a car within everybody's reach. They could put out a perfect car, but it would take an hour or two. In mass production, we have to look at it the same way too, unfortunately. A lot of people

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compare us to European pressings, but their approach to it is completely different. They pay a lot more for records over there. But because of our technology, and even though we have to produce it faster, we're getting close, and we hope someday here to be able to produce the same quality as they're doing in Europe."

### Acme Recording Services - supplying the majority of Quality's lacquers

One of the very few aspects of record manufacturing and distribution not handled by Quality Records is the cutting of lacquers, or acetates, from which the disc is made. One of the companies handling lacquer production on a large scale with Quality is Acme Recording Service, based in Toronto. Acme exec Doug Moncrieff is quick to point out that Acme was the first independent lacquering channel in Canada. "We were the first that wasn't owned by an existing record company."

In this respect, Acme's history very much parallels Quality's own, and the two companies have enjoyed a very good working relationship over the long term between. Acme began 28 years ago, in 1951, when Quality was but two years old. Three years later, Acme began supplying lacquers to Quality. "In the 50's," notes Moncrieff, "we supplied Quality with singles, which were done at both 45 and 78. We started into mono LPs around 1954."

And as technology brought changes, Acme's improvements marked the state of Quality's records. "The first stereo records appeared around 1959, but nobody in Canada could cut them at that time. The molds were always imported. In 1962, we added Neumann stereo cutting facilities. Meanwhile, the 78 died around 1960." Acme is noteworthy in having the first helium gas cooled system in the world. Helium cooling has since become the standard.

Although neither Acme nor Quality operates totally independent upon the other, Acme provides the vast bulk of Quality's lacquers and Quality is one of Acme's biggest clients. "We continue to this day providing the majority of Quality's lacquers, including the pressing they do for other people. We've been doing business with Quality since before George Struth started there. We've known the people at Quality for all these years."

### Hardman Industries - licensing and supplying eight-tracks and cassettes

Quality's tape manufacturing plant produces millions of eight-track and cassette tapes each year. The tapes are made by inserting the magnetic tape and spool into a blank casing. The casings are supplied by the Toronto firm of Hardman Industries.

Hardman is a substantial firm, headed by

Eric Hardman Sr., which produces by function plumbing fixtures and tape casings. In fact, Hardman licenses the Canadian patent to the eight-track recording system from Lear Jet Stereo, a division of the Gates Rubber Co. The late William Lear invented the eight-track system and patented it. Now eight-track can only be produced and sold under license, and with royalties paid to his company. Hardman Industries, as Prime Licensee, has the right to license all eight-track manufacturing in the territory of Canada.

Hardman's relationship with Quality Records began on what might have been a very sour note but for the honourable nature of Quality. Back in 1972, before Hardman discovered the Lear Jet patent and gained licensing rights on it, nobody in

Canada knew that a license was necessary. Eric Hardman Sr. recalls. "When our company was appointed Prime Licensee for the manufacture and licensing of eight-track cartridges, we approached Quality Records to advise them that, in common with the entire Canadian industry, they were purchasing and using cartridges without a license."

Quality, once informed, were only too happy to oblige. "In talking to Quality," Hardman continues, "I found them, as I find them now, extremely ethical, broad-minded business people. Within hours of approaching them, I had received an order for approximately one-half million dollars worth of merchandise, about the fastest culmination of an order that we'd ever had in our business experience. Since then,

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and to this very day, we've found them just A-1 to work with. As users and as individuals, they're fine examples of Canadian business people."

Hardman was also surprised to find the Chairman of the Board at Quality was Robert Day, with whom he had done business at the Bulova Watch Co. several decades previously. "That was a very nice, warm renewal of the business that I did in the 30's! So really, our association with Quality has been one from strangers to warm friendship."

To this day, Hardman continues to supply Quality with not only eight-tracks, but also cassettes. Quality became a steady customer of Hardman for cassettes from the day the latter began to manufacture them in volume.

Hardman are still Prime Licensee for eight-track in Canada. They now license a number of other firms, under their agreement with Lear Jet, to produce cartridges and share in a multi-billion dollar industry. Hardman earned their license by being the first to seek it. "We realized there was an opportunity to turn around a large import situation into a 'made in Canada' situation." Then they discovered a patent about to be issued. "By being honest people in approaching Lear Jet to find out if we did need permission, they appointed us Prime Licensee for Canada." Hardman notes.

Hardman Industries is now the largest manufacturer of eight-tracks and cassette blanks in Canada. They have also successfully turned the country from a tape importer into a tape manufacturer.



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**Bill Kearns  
General Manager  
Quality Music Publishing**

Quality Records' music publishing operation, Quality Music, has grown out of near nothingness to become one of the largest music publishers in Canada in record time. The operation includes several in-house labels plus a number of co-publishing and co-ownership agreements with Canadian writers and publishers, among them Gino Soccio's Sons Celeste, and a variety of international sub-publishing agreements, including the AVI/Equinox catalogue.



Bill Kearns  
General Manager, Quality Music Publishing

As a publisher, General Manager Bill Kearns has a wide variety of options when dealing with publishing agreements. He can pick up an entire catalogue from an individual writer or another publishing company, or any number of specific songs from a writer or publisher, either domestically or internationally. "Depending on the situation," Kearns explains, "if there's a song we think we can get recorded, we'll make an individual contract for the song. If there's a writer who we believe has longevity, we may make a deal with that writer for his entire output over a period of years." There are any number of different types of deals in between.

**The art of publishing**

Kearns describes the nature of the publisher. "Basically what you do is manage songs. You try to get them work by having people record them. You cast your bread on the water. You just send them out and send them out, and finally somebody likes a song, and then it seems you get them in bunches. There's no great mystery to it. It's a matter of listening to the music and figuring out if it's any good and what you can do with it.

"We have to look at what we can do with the song. We have to feel we can get it recorded or exposed in some way. Otherwise, it's no value to the writer - his material's tied up and nothing's happening - or to us. Often, writers will come in and play me their songs, and I'll say I can't use it. But that doesn't mean nothing can be done. There may be another publisher who says it's exactly what he's looking for.

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And we have contacts around the world, so listening to songs, we have to consider if it's something we can use here or something we can place somewhere in the world."

Quality Music is an active publisher. "We're active in the sense that we're not a caretaker. We're not just sitting here collecting writers' money. We send songs all over. I get two publications which tells me who's recording, who's producing and what they're looking for. If we feel we have something that's right for an artist, we'll send it. Or often, we'll get a song and we'll think it's great for a particular artist, and we'll send that song to that artist, whether we know he's recording or not." Kearns is in constant contact with writers, artists, producers and other publishers around the world, maintaining open lines on a network in which any connection could spell a major success.

**Gene Watson's Paper Rosie, a number one U.S. hit, actually came out of Big Country**

The company has achieved a few major successes at getting hit covers for its songs. Certainly, Quality Music played a role in achieving hit covers by U.S. country artist Gene Watson on Dallas Harms' tunes, including Paper Rosie, a number one U.S. hit. "That actually came out of Big Country, and of course, nothing succeeds like success. You have one artist who's got a hit with you, and then you get a lot of calls asking if you have anything else. Porter Wagoner has cut an Artie MacLaren song. Watson's cut a few of our songs, Connie Cato, on Capitol, has recorded material of ours from a writer in Vancouver, and a group in Germany are cutting a few of our songs over there."

"... when we started we had 38 songs. . ."

Kearns joined Quality Music five years ago, specifically to establish a meaningful publishing identity for the company. A veteran publisher, formerly head of publishing and A&R at CBS Records for five years, and at Kanata Records, where he ran the company, his purpose in coming to Quality was to establish and operate Quality Music Publishing. "The publishing in this company is really only five years old," notes Kearns, "and when we started out we had 38 songs. They'd been involved in publishing for a few years, but it was as a convenience. Somebody came in with an original song that wasn't published, and Quality would publish the song as a convenience to the writer. But as an active publisher, looking for material and getting that material out to recording artists and producers, it's really only been in the last five years."

The starting process was slow. "First of all, we had to have something to expose," Kearns recalls, "so the first step was to make a company - to acquire enough songs of varying kinds that we could go and say yes, we do have material, we have writers - if we don't have a song for you, maybe we can write one. So the business of getting covers and all has really only happened in the last couple of years."

In those five years, Quality Music has

shown dramatic growth, so much so that the company now boasts the largest number of Canadian copyrights of any publisher. "We have about 6,000 Canadian-written songs," Kearns estimates. Quality, of course, also co-publishes and sub-publishes a vast quantity of international material through external agreements. "We just picked up a new catalogue called Slow Dancing Music, and it has songs that the Beatles and Elvis did. We're just starting to really look at that catalogue to see what we can do with it. The AVI/Equinox catalogue has a lot of disco in it, and there are some things that we get from France.

"The problem is that you get a catalogue, and it may have 1,500 songs. It takes a lot of time to properly listen to any of them and see what you can do with

them. We have meetings. We sit down with them and go through things. What we're listening to are songs, and we discuss who we think particular songs are good for. We work on it a little bit at a time."

"... If you've got a good song, it's always a good song. . ."

Kearns looks for exposure beyond the standard recording medium. Quality published all the music for the film Goldenrod, and Dallas Harms' Cowboys Don't Get Lucky, a song by Watson, appeared in the film Convoy. Kearns keeps an eye open for upcoming TV shows in hopes of landing a theme song. For the film Bear Island, the producer was looking for a song for a particular scene. The scene was described to Quality, and Tommy Ambrose and Jackie



Rae wrote the song. It wasn't used. "When they edited the film, they had shortened the scene and changed the action, and the song they had written became inappropriate. So we didn't get it into the film, but I have since had a record on it. It's still a great song - it just didn't get in that movie. One of the great things about all the films being made in Canada is that it does give us a chance."

All in all, Quality Music has established itself throughout Canada and is beginning to gain international attention as a publishing force. The keynote, Kearns reiterates, is the song. "If you've got a good song, it's always a good song. We have songs that are 30 years old that are still active. We have those, and then we look for new writers and new songs."

### Broadland and Grand Slam - Quality's country labels

Under a series of circumstances and coincidences, Quality's two in-house country music labels, Broadland and Grand Slam, have fallen under the administration of Quality Music Publishing, where they too are managed by Bill Kearns.

Kearns notes, "Broadland Records started back in 1975, and we announced it at Big Country. It was Gary Buck's, and he came with a proposal to Quality Records about putting out product. As a publisher,

we would share in the publishing. Then, when Quality acquired the company, we just continued on.

"The purpose was to release records by good Canadian country artists, to activate singers and copyrights. Our first year was just an incredible success. At the next Big Country, we won all kinds of awards, including Best Record Company. We also had a nomination for a Juno with Darlene Madill. But believe it or not, it's only been around for four years. And this year at Big Country, we had 13 nominations."

In fact, the young label quickly grew so big that a secondary label, an offshoot called Grand Slam, was started only two years later. "We started Grand Slam Records," explains Kearns, "because we found there was just too much product on one label for Broadland. We also used Grand Slam to put out things we leased.

"That's really how they began, and the publishing company's kind of inherited looking after it. We actually produce the recordings, here and in Nashville, we get the jackets designed - we actually function as a small record company, on top of being the publisher. We do the promotion, we even contact the distributors on it.

"It's been very successful. We always have something on the RPM Country 75, and we've had success in the States with some of our acts, and so on." And it's easy to see why, looking at the roster. Broadland is led by Dallas Harms, multiple award winner, renowned songwriter, producer and artist; Eastwind, one of Canada's most in-demand house bands; veteran performers Orval Prophet and Artie MacLaren; and younger up-and-coming artists including Oon Cochrane, Neville Wells and Alex Fraser. Grand Slam, now being used largely for breakout artists, includes this year's Best New Artist, Larry Mattson.

Kearns looks very favourably on Canadian country music from an artistic viewpoint, but admits, "It hasn't sold a lot of records unless it's crossed over into MOR and into pop. If it stays strictly country, the airplay is very good, but sales are very limited. But by the same token, they don't in the States either.

"The talent is very good, though. We produce a ton of talent in this country, and that includes country music. There aren't as many numbers, but country music as a recording entity has only been big here for the last four or five years, since the advent of Big Country. And when the product gets out and well promoted, these artists will become well-known as well. There's a tremendous amount of talent here, both writers and performers, and more coming along all the time. They're out there waiting to be discovered.

"So that's the story," Kearns concludes. "Broadland/Grand Slam Records is a small record company run by the publishing company, and our distribution happens to be Quality Records. That's the way we function. We have a distribution agreement with Quality, the same way as any other label has. We do the productions and the jackets, and get the product out to our distributors. And then, like any other record label," Kearns smiles, "we bug Quality because we want them to sell more!"

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