

WHAT MAKES THE MUSIC GO 'ROUND?

D. j. delegates to pop music convention tell what influences choices

The best seller list of recording hits and the disc jockey's own personal taste are the dominant influences in the selection of d.j. music. That was borne out last week in a special BROADCASTING survey conducted at the first annual Pop Music Disc Jockey Convention in Kansas City.

Asked to specify the two most important factors in picking the platters, 54.7% of the disc jockey delegates said that the top 20, top 30, etc., record listings serve as guideposts. The d.j.'s personal music taste was the criterion listed by 50.5%. Next highest influence was the recording artist's name, according to 34.7% of the poll participants.

Promotional efforts by the record makers evidently have little effect on the disc jockey: only 3.2% said they were swayed by personal calls from representatives of publishers, recording artists, writers, record companies, etc., and just 1.1% paid heed to the promotional literature received through the mail.

Station management directive was listed by 21.1% of the disc jockeys as affecting their music selection. Forecasts of new hits was listed as a prime consideration by 17.9% of the d.j. delegates, and 16.8% said listener requests served as an influence.

Practically all the disc jockeys said it made no difference to them whether the selected music is licensed by ASCAP or BMI. Only 4.5% expressed a preference for ASCAP or BMI music, the other 95.5% claiming impartiality to either of the music licensing organizations.

One disc jockey commented "I don't usually know whose music it is. There's no way to know."

Of the 4.5% minority to whom it did make a difference, 75% expressed a preference for BMI over ASCAP music.

Approximately 1,000 disc jockeys, sizable contingents from the major recording companies, a smaller number of station management executives and representatives from allied groups jammed Kansas City's Muehlebach Hotel March 7-9 for the convention and program seminar.

The final registration of 2,210 far exceeded expectations and prompted an announcement by Todd Storz, president of the Storz Stations, sponsor of the event, that the convention would be an annual function with the 1959 sessions again to be in Kansas City next March 6-8. Former President Harry S. Truman, in a message to the disc jockeys, expressed regrets that last minute business prevented his attendance, but said he could be listed as the first "delegate" to the 1959 convention.

The convention served as convincing proof that the disc jockey of yesterday, regarded as a secondary adjunct to station operation, has emerged as the big business factor in today's new concept of radio. Most of the panels and forums reflected the desire of the

disc jockeys for greater programming freedom. The top 40 type of operation and formula radio came under particular attack at several sessions.

While rock and roll was generally defended, Columbia Records' Mitch Miller delivered the most controversial blast when he charged that disc jockeys, station management and media buyers had abdicated their hard-earned gains in radio's resurgence by catering to the tastes of the 8-to-14-year-old set (text, page 94).

In his message to the convention, Mr. Storz traced the evolution of the disc jockey to his present high status as a "professional man" in radio. He said:

"For some time, independents, though more numerous, still did not achieve importance or influence in radio's overall picture. Then came the revolution! Television entered the picture and panicked the network concept. Am stations, as previously conceived and operated, lost ground steadily as tv took over the living room and orthodox network programming.

"Enter here the new era of radio—paced by the heretofore lowly independent stations and their disc jockeys. These stations whose faith in radio's future held firm, provided the American public with entertainment unavailable on tv, popular music, latest news and local service features, both desirable and necessary to the communities served by the stations.

"The first successful years were rewarding for the d.j. in his new-found glory and for the stations, too. But with more importance came more responsibility, greater competi-

tion and an increased obligation on the part of disc jockeys to listeners, advertisers and stations."

The one factor that sets the disc jockey apart in today's radio is his "professional approach," Mr. Storz said.

Bill Stewart, national program director for the Storz stations and convention coordinator, emphasized that the Kansas City sessions were not an attempt to organize the disc jockeys but rather to formulate ideas concerning the work and the success of disc jockeys, radio stations and the music industry.

"Only by bringing this great array of talent together in a free exchange of ideas and objectives can we grow as an industry," he declared. "The disc jockeys of America will be richer in creative ideas, which is the backbone of radio."

Mr. Stewart served as moderator at all the panels with the exception of those on the morning of the last day when Mr. Storz presided.

SATURDAY BREAKFAST

Martin Block, WABC New York, who pioneered disc jockeying more than 25 years ago, told the Saturday breakfast session that despite his experience, he found the challenges and problems of present day programming more difficult than ever to meet. He said the best way to cater to listeners' music tastes is to first ask the people themselves about likes and dislikes.

Mr. Block described his own "Operation 60,000," a method of personally sampling a segment of the WABC audience. "If you ever get out and talk to the people, you'll be amazed," he told the disc jockeys, citing the varied music tastes throughout his audience.

SATURDAY MORNING

At the first panel session of the convention, three research executives agreed that today's rating services are not obsolete for radio. Participants were Frank Stisser, president of C. E. Hooper Inc.; Dr. Sydney Roslow, president of Pulse Inc., and Robert B. Rogers, executive vice president of Trendex Inc.

Mr. Stisser, noting the changed complexion of radio today, said that new factors such as the "where" of listening have become important to ratings. He compared rating services in former days, when the four networks' programming dominated and created a "static situation," with the more complex situation today which involves more stations, more sets in and out of the home, and a totally revised concept of programming. He stressed that the Hooper telephone co-incidental method provides "an up-to-date" reflection of today's radio audience.

Dr. Roslow underscored his declaration that ratings continue to serve a vital role



RADIO'S bright future is extolled to the Kansas City convention by Gordon McLendon, president of the McLendon Stations. At right is Todd Storz, president of the Storz Stations, which sponsored the three-day session.