

Freed's attorney, gets 10 per cent of all Freed makes over \$75,000 from all sources.

And Thomas Vastola, who is Freed's manager, gets the usual 10 per cent, too.

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FREED LIVES IN A 50-YEAR-OLD, 16-ROOM stucco mansion overlooking Long Island Sound on exclusive Wallach's Point, Stamford. The estate, which consists of two grassy acres, a main house and a small guest house, cost \$75,000.

The Freeds put down \$35,000 in cash and are carrying the balance in mortgages, which leads Freed to quip: "That's what we got to show for last year's work—a house with two mortgages."

In the little time Freed is at home, he tries to live the life of a country squire, but the unlisted telephone is ringing constantly with business calls, even on his Mondays off.

About the only time he gets any rest is when he's commuting between Stamford and Grand Central. On the train, he generally reads the New Yorker magazine, current Book-of-the-Month selections and whodunits.

The past summer, this respite was denied him, however. He had one room of his guest house soundproofed and set up as a studio, so he was able to make his nightly broadcasts from there.

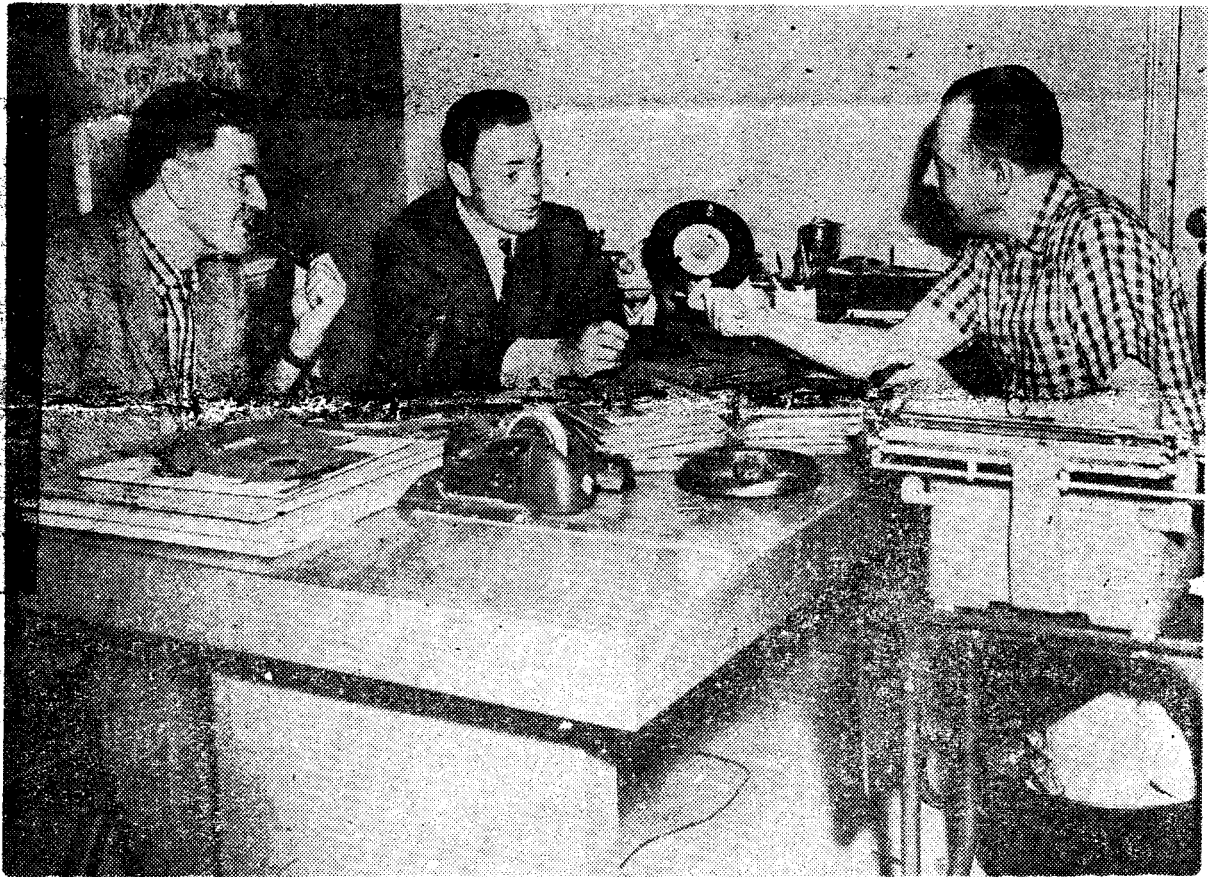
When the weather is fair, Freed lolls around in shorts and plays with his children. Freed has no desire to putter around in the do-it-yourself manner of modern suburbanites, and he even gave away a speedboat because he didn't have the patience to tinker with it.

"It's not that I'm lazy," he said. "It's just that my thumbs get in the way. I always wind up with an injury."

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AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, SNOOTY WALLACH'S

Point has not easily taken Freed and his family to its veddy social bosom.



Freed (center) listens to some disks brought in by independent record makers John Halonka (l.) and Bob Pare.

In one of the first contacts with a neighbor, shortly after Alan and Jackie bought the place, they were informed, icily, that this had been the first time that any Wallach's Point land owner had sold property without first getting the rest of the land owners' approval of the prospective buyer.

"It was practically the same thing as saying they didn't want Jews living on the Point," Freed said, angrily.

Another point of friction developed last fall when a well-coiffured matron asked them to help distribute some campaign literature.

"What kind of literature?" Jackie asked.

"Why, Republican, of course," said the matron, amazed that there should be any other kind on Wallach's Point.

"We are both lifelong Democrats," Jackie said, with finality.

Freed, relating this colloquy recently, said that he and Jackie "really flipped" over Adlai Stevenson in 1952, to the extent that Freed, who was broadcasting in Cleveland then, bought an hour of his own time and plugged for the Democratic candidate between Rock and Roll numbers.

"After the show," he added, "Jackie and I went to the Stevenson headquarters and stuffed envelopes for the rest of the night."

Almost in spite of themselves, however, the Freeds are slowly gaining acceptance, despite their Midwest accents and their lack of preoccupation with coupon-clipping.

Several months ago, they began to feel that they were really arriving, because they got an invitation to a cocktail party at the home of the suburbanite colony's ~~most~~ ^{most} prominent—a Rockefeller kin, no less.

The day after the party had ~~overfully~~ ^{overfully}

invited us? These people got kids who listen to my show every night and flip over Rock and Roll. The kids kept at them until they finally had to invite us."

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THIS AMAZEMENT ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF

Rock and Roll is shared with happiness by record makers, distributors and pluggers—sober business men for whom Rock and Roll is played on the cash register.

Unfortunately from their point of view, they don't know what will be a hit and what will be a bomb. This confusion extends all the way through the music business, and nobody knows whether or not he's got a second Elvis Presley or a dud under contract.

Partly because Freed influences a large audience of potential buyers, and partly because he has a fairly good ear for picking hits, many record industry people come to him for previews of their records.

Freed, however, is modest about his batting average when it comes to picking hits. "If I were 100 per cent right, I'd set myself up in the clouds on top of the Empire State Bldg. and charge \$1,000 a minute to listen to new records," he says with a laugh. "I'd get rich."

Despite Freed's disclaimer, his judgment on new records is valued highly, so once a week he holds what he calls, with grisly humor, a session of "sudden death"—an audition in which he hears the newest records.

On a recent Thursday night, Bob Pare and John Halonka, representing two distributing firms that handle the bulk of the independent record makers' output, brought their latest offerings to the WINS studio for Freed's decision.

The small group gathered in a conference room equipped with record turntables. Pare and Halonka each carried a small bundle of new records. Halonka lit a cigar. Pare lit a cigaret. Freed fiddled with the

turntable. There was a pronounced air of deference in the attitude of Pare and Halonka toward Freed.

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FOR THESE TWO, FREED'S PRONOUNCEMENT ON

and record is not the life or death matter that it is to the individual record firms. The distributors' point in coming to Freed is to find out which records Freed will play, in other words to create a market for, and then to order accordingly from the manufacturers.

"All right. Who's first?" Freed said, when the machine was warmed up. Halonka motioned to Pare, who handed the first record to Freed. Freed put it on the machine and stepped back to listen, his head bowed and his eyes searching the floor.

It was a slow blues, sung by Nappy Brown. Freed listened through the first part of the vocal and on into the tenor sax solo that is a usual part of a rock and roll record.

Freed, at a familiar phrase in the sax solo, shook his head and lifted the record from the turntable. "That's riff No. 3," he said, turning to Pare. "That record should go very well in the South."

Pare smiled affably. "You son of a gun," he said. "That's comment No. 4."

"The other side is a little faster," Pare said hopefully. Freed flipped the record and listened to it half-way through. "That's a happy thing—that is more of what the kids like," he said. "It's gimmicked up."

Freed played several more records, chatting in between with the distributors, who agreed with everything he said and accepted his decisions without argument.

There was a knock on the door and Sunny Gale, the singer, and her manager, Joe Gulkin, entered. Miss Gale was looking for some tunes to record. A record ~~date for four sides was scheduled and she wanted to~~

After the flurry of conversation, Miss Gale sat on an overstuffed chair and her face went blank. Freed started playing more records. The room was getting foggy from smoke.

"Too bluesy," Freed said after hearing part of one record. "Too rough," he said of another. On others he commented: "Just a blues." "Honky-tonky." "It like 1933."

As he put one record on the discard pile, he shook his head sadly. "You know, I feel sorry for those guys. They're nice guys."

Pare handed the last record to Freed, a number by the John Sisters. Freed listened to it approvingly. "That's a happy record," he said, as he put it on the smaller pile of records that he had liked.

"That's why I brought it for you, Alan," Pare said. "I thought you'd like it."

"The kids will go for it," Freed said.

Now it was Halonka's turn.

He handed a record to Freed, who listened to it briefly. "This guy is drawing blanks," he said, dropping it onto the discard pile. "Twenty years ago—that's what it sounds like."

He put the next record on the turntable. The singer began: "Put your cards on the table, baby . . ."

"Oh, my God almighty," Freed cried, yanking the record off the machine.

"It's just about a card game," Pare said innocently, his eyes glinting with laughter.

"Man. I go for that record," said Freed's producer, John Brantley.

Freed shook his head, and dropped another record on the spindle. Out of the loudspeaker came the sound of violins. "Fiddles," Freed said, shocked. "What was THAT doing in here." He got rid of the record quickly and played a few more from Halonka's pile.

They produced neither surprises nor prospects of gold.

"It was a light night tonight," Freed said, riffling through another stack of records—ones that had been brought in earlier in the week by publishers, pluggers and runners.

He listened to both sides of one record and hurled it into the wastebasket. "These are two pieces of nothing," he said. Nobody disagreed.

"I want you to hear this one," he said, putting a large test record on the big turntable. "It was just sent to me from the Coast." He played the record all the way through.

Miss Gale came out of her lethargy as the record was playing. The rest listened intently.

"This could be a big thing," Freed said, when the record was finished. "You got to think in terms of kids."

"Good story line," Pare said.

"This is adorable," said Miss Gale, with animation.

Her manager, who had been waving his hands from side to side to the music, took the cigar from his mouth and brushed ashes from his coat. "This is a good song—very good," he said, judicially.

Freed nodded and put another record on the turntable. This one was a lively jump tune called: "One Night Only." Miss Gale, growing still more animated, said: "I like good songs."

The group discussed a few more tunes that Miss Gale might record, until Freed pulled out a New Haven RR timetable and found that he could just make a late local to Stamford. The session broke up quickly.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Freed," Miss Gale said. Gulkin escorted her out of the room.

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THE GREAT POWER OF FREED IN THE ROCK AND

roll field, and for that matter the power of all leading jockeys in the popular music field, has led to serious charges that under-the-table payoffs from publishers, record companies and song pluggers are common.

Freed is not reticent about discussing the "payola," as it is called in the trade.

"Since the beginning of time there has been some sort of payoff," he said the other day. "I'll tell you frankly—I've gotten gifts. There's no law against it."

"I'd be an idiot to say that if anyone gave me something for my home I'd refuse it. But I won't take anything for a favor in the future."

"The way I feel about it, you can't stuff down the throats of your listeners things they don't want to hear. If a guy comes up and says, 'Here's \$100 to play my record,' I'll tell him to keep the money and then I'll tell him to let me hear his record."

"If I like it, I'll play it on the air."

"It's the same way with my tunes. I wrote 'Sweet Sixteen' with Buck Ram and played it four or five times on my show. Nothing happened so I stopped playing it."

"Buck called up and said, 'Man, what are you doing—that's your own song.' I told him, 'I'm not going to play it if it doesn't go.'"

"And that was that."

Freed, in action, is a lot less tolerant about payola than he sounds.

Juggy Gayle, a music publisher, recalls that when Freed was spinning records out in Cleveland, a record company agent—who, incidentally is now the pops artist and repertoire man for one of the larger record companies—walked into the studio with a record under his arm and confronted Freed.

The record agent pulled from his pocket a wad of bills, which appeared to be all \$100s, and said: "How much do you want to plug this record?" Freed, Gayle said, had the agent thrown out of the studio.