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**MARY MARTIN'S
WEDDING SCENE IN
NEW MUSICAL HIT**

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

NOVEMBER 23, 1959
CIRCULATION MORE THAN 6,400,000 WEEKLY



NEW YORK DISK JOCKEY WILLIAM B. WILLIAMS SHOWS WHAT SPURS THE PAYOLA—THE HOT COMPETITION OF THE 8,000 RECORDS A DEEJAY RECEIVES EACH YEAR

Gimme, Gimme, Gimme on the old PAYOLA

As probers turn from TV to radio, clear evidence of disk jockey bribery crops up

With the facts of TV-quiz corruption firmly fixed, evidence has begun to turn up of wholesale corruption in radio—among the entertainers who dominate that field today, the disk jockeys. The U.S. was becoming familiar with a new word, "payola," trade jargon for bribes to promote certain records over the air. The Harris subcommittee in Washington considered public hearings on payola in December. Preliminary investigation indicated that there was plenty for the probers to dig up—and so does the lively slang prevalent among the disk jockeys themselves (*right*).

The climate for deejay corruption is created by the enormous output of popular records. Many more are produced than can be played

over the air—and moreover, as New York's William B. Williams (*above*) says, "If a disk jockey had to listen to all these records, he'd go to the kookie house."

Bribes in cash or goods are paid by music publishers to plug a song in all its recorded versions, by record companies to boost their own disks and by record distributors to promote the makes they handle. Besides the deejays, others in a radio station who can influence music selection are paid.

Many disk jockeys like Williams, who makes \$65,000 a year, do not have to rely on payola. But on the following pages LIFE shows how payola does work, in stories by a disk jockey (*pp. 46, 47*) and a record executive (*p. 48*).

DEEJAY SLANG GLOSSARY

- Dead Presidents**—\$20 bills with Andrew Jackson portrait, \$50s with Ulysses Grant portrait, etc. used in payoffs
- Bread**—the cash involved in payola
- Schlockmeister**—a master at accumulating the *schlock*, or loot
- Freebie**—plug for a record given without payola
- Charts**—hit record lists in music trade magazines
- Happening**—a record making the charts
- Breaking**—a record moving up on charts
- Ride**—to play a record repeatedly
- Hyping a platter**—overselling a record
- Bomb**—a terrible record



AUTHOR ED MCKENZIE has honesty vouched for by a salesman who says, "He took a record of mine once and broke it right in front of me and said, 'Play that damned thing? It's lousy and you know it.'"

A DEEJAY'S EXPOSE—AND VIEWS

Edmond T. McKenzie, 48, has worked in broadcasting in Detroit since 1937. His career, income and popularity had gone steadily upward until he quit bigtime radio in disgust some eight months ago. Here he tells what made him want to leave.

by **ED MCKENZIE**

Eight months ago I quit a \$60,000-a-year disk jockey job on Detroit Station WXYZ. I could not stand present-day "formula radio"—its bad music, its incessant commercials in bad taste, its subservience to ratings and its pressures of payola. Because of the charts that are put together by numbers of music trade publications that rate the popularity of records, I had to play music on my program that I would never have played otherwise. And the charts are phony because of the most disgusting part of the radio industry—payola.

Payola really got started about 10 years ago. Until then the record business was controlled by the big companies like Decca, Columbia, RCA-Victor and Capitol. When the obscure little record companies started up and began turning out offbeat records by unknown artists, they looked for a way to get their product distributed and played. The answer was payola: offering disk jockeys cash to play records they wouldn't ordinarily play.

I never took payola because to me it was completely dishonest, but I was often approached by small companies who were having a tough time getting their stuff on the air. They would say, "Well, how much do you want to ride this record for the next three weeks?" They might offer \$100 for a one-week ride, which would have meant playing the record several times a day to make it popular.

Many disk jockeys are on the weekly payroll of five to 10 record companies, which can mean a side income of \$25,000 to \$50,000 a year. The payment is by cash in an envelope. Phil Chess, co-owner of Chess, Checker and Argo Records, told me that when he called on certain disk jockeys to promote his records, the first question some jockeys asked was,

"How many dead presidents are there for me?" Dead presidents means the presidents on bills (see glossary, p. 45). A \$20 bill is a "Jackson."

The small company knows that if it can score in a key record-selling city—Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland or Pittsburgh—it will score nationally. If an unknown artist on an obscure label makes a noise in one of these cities, the record sales are promptly published in the trade papers—*Billboard*, *Cash Box*, *Variety*. Other jockeys around the country see these listings, and a chain reaction is set off. The offbeat record becomes a money-making hit, all through payola.

Another way to rig the key cities is to fix the best-seller charts. I know many record production men who take out a girl who works on the local chart. They give her a big time, wine her and dine her, buy her gifts, become very friendly. Then they get her to list their record, even if it isn't a big seller.

It's even worse in the bigtime. Many music publishers tell me that to get a song played on one popular teen-age program, they have to give the star 50% of the song. He wants either half the song or a half-interest in the recording artist before he will put it on his program. He rejects many songs because he can't get a piece of the record.

"Slicing up" an artist in this way often involves a jockey. A few years ago we had a case like this in Detroit when a New York song plugger, a nightclub owner and a local disk jockey sliced up Johnnie Ray early in his career. They pushed and plugged him in Detroit until he became popular, but they never got their cut of Ray's subsequent big earnings. Johnnie Ray didn't dare come back to sing in Detroit until he bought back the club owner's share of his contract.

Payola usually begins when a song plugger or publisher comes to town and takes the jockey out for dinner. The sky's the limit on entertainment—drinks, girls, everything. There is always a big follow-up at Christmas. They flood you with liquor, TV sets, hi-fi sets, expensive luggage, big baskets of food, watches,



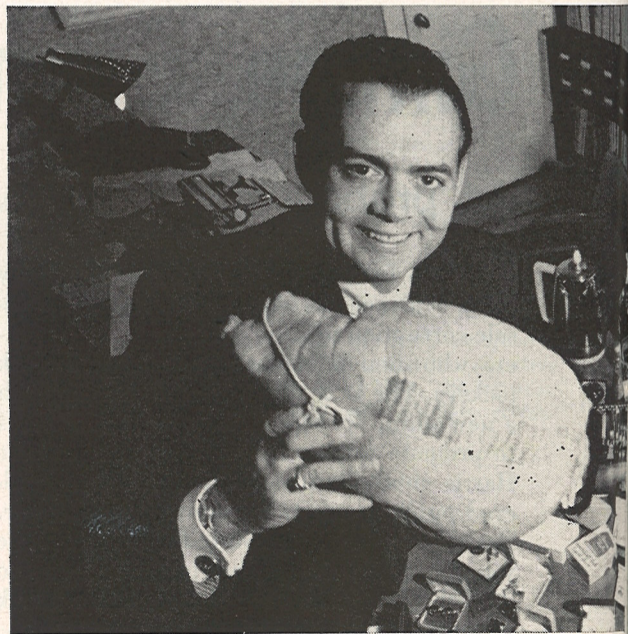
IN LOS ANGELES Disk Jockey Dick Whittinghill makes \$30,000, says he takes no payola. He is suspicious of his colleagues who loudly proclaim their innocence and thinks "they protest too much."



IN BOSTON Bob Clayton says that no one has tried to bribe him for three years. He feels that payola has little effect because "the public decides what record is going to be a hit—not a disk jockey."



IN WASHINGTON Milt Grant says that he has no knowledge of any payola. He says, "I can't believe that any disk jockey would reduce the quality of his program just to make a dollar and impair his future."



CHRISTMAS LOOT that has been showered on Chicago Disk Jockey Jim Mills in last three years includes ham he is holding, jewelry, cutlery, clocks, liquor, etc. He also received small amounts of cash.

OF THE TRADE

silk shirts, imported sweaters. The flow doesn't stop after the holiday season. A record plugger once offered to install a bar in my basement. When one Detroit jockey moved into a new home, his property was landscaped with hundreds of dollars worth of evergreens and flowering shrubs and trees.

Once when I had tried to squelch a song plugger who was after me to play a certain tune, he mailed me a \$100 government bond in my name. I was the only person who could cash it. I did cash it for \$75, added \$25 of my own in interest and mailed a \$100 check to Leader Dogs for the Blind. I mailed the donation receipt to the song plugger and said, "This is where your money went." I never played his record.

Radio station managers are aware of all the bad practices of payola, but I guess they take the attitude that "the kid isn't making much salary here, so if he can make a little on the side, God bless him."

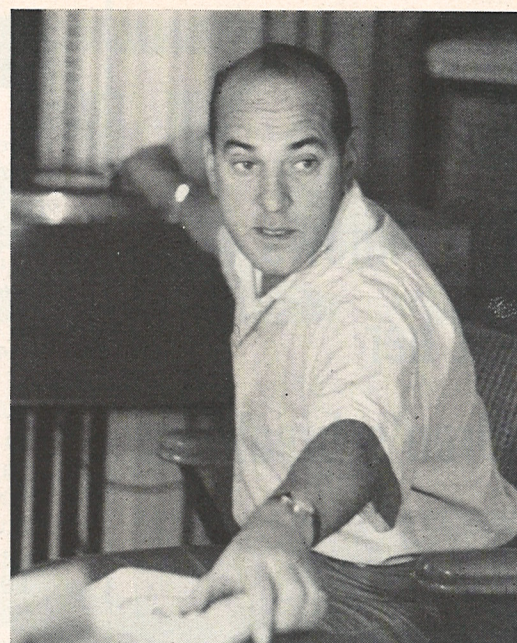
Bad as payola is, it isn't the only thing an honest disk jockey has to fight. Between each record you are required to give two, three or four commercials. Even though I was paid a commission for each commercial I gave at WXYZ it bothered my conscience terribly. I knew that I was driving any intelligent listener away from radio with this drivel.

How could anybody bear to listen to this sort of thing? One answer was given by Leonard Goldenson, president of American Broadcasting-Paramount Theatres. He said the ABC network was after one listener, the housewife just out of her teens. That is why you hear this so-called teen-age rock 'n' roll junk.

All of this—payola, ratings, the bad music, the obnoxious commercials—was more than I could take, so last spring I quit formula radio. I have since joined a group of other radio mavericks at WQTE, a small daytime station in Detroit-Monroe. On this station I feel I can honestly entertain people without excessive commercialism, and I don't have to play any music unless I think it's good. The station is only 500 watts—but it's honest.



IN BALTIMORE Buddy Deane says that he is clean but wisecracks, "The radio disk jockey who is expressly forbidden to take payoffs knows it's because the station manager wants to keep it for himself."



IN CHICAGO Howard Miller says he turned down many deals. He contends that payola alone can't make a hit because "if you paid off enough guys to make a hit record, you'd have no money left."

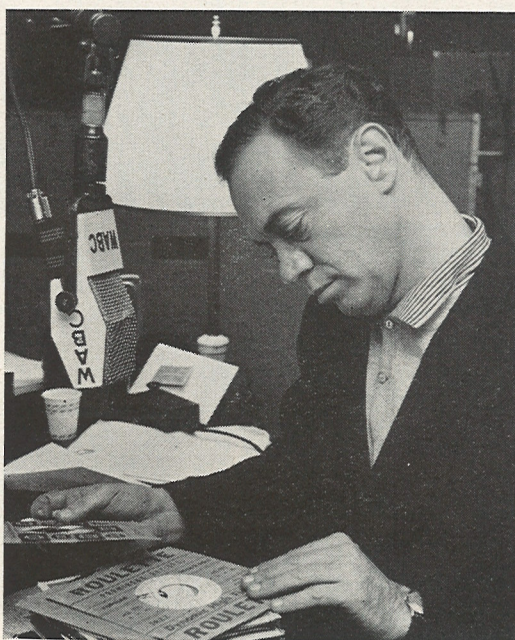


PITCH TO DEEJAY is made by Salesman Gunter Hauer of Universal Record Distributing Corporation (right), who wants Dick Clark to play a new record on his show, as Producer Tony Mammarella

listens. Clark heard record, said "weird sound," did not commit himself. Clark owns a record-pressing plant and music house. As for payola, Clark says, "I've never taken advantage of the position I have."



Mills considers these trinkets something of a nuisance. He points out that he plays the records of established stars who need no payola, says that bribes are mostly used to promote rock 'n' roll.



IN NEW YORK rock 'n' roller Alan Freed also has some interests in music publishing houses, has received Christmas gifts. He says that he has rejected bribes but accuses record makers of racketeering.



IN CLEVELAND Bill Randle thinks payola is "typical of business morality—it stinks." He says, "I've had it," and plans to get a Ph.D. in American Culture, leave the radio field and become a teacher.

RECORD MAKER DESCRIBES PAYOFF

Three months ago, on his program over a Chicago radio station, Broadcaster Phil Lind got from a local record company executive a completely candid account of how the disk jockeys work the payola. The explosive interview drew practically no public reaction at the time. Here LIFE prints excerpts from the interview and reveals who the executive is: Dirk Summers, president of Roslyn Records, a small new company.

SUMMERS: They have a policy here in Chicago. To get a record played, well, to be very blunt, you have to pay so much.

LIND: To whom?

SUMMERS: Well, this can be to the program director, to the disk jockeys themselves. It depends.

LIND: Do they stipulate certain prices?

SUMMERS: I was told how much—by a very famous disk jockey. I was told how much it would cost me per week to have the record played four times a day on his station.

LIND: How much would that cost?

SUMMERS: It would cost me \$200 a week for this one deejay.

LIND: You signed deals with him?

SUMMERS: Oh, no, we never signed deals. They wouldn't sign anything. You have to pay them in cash. Always in cash.

LIND: What was the smallest deal offered you?

SUMMERS: A hundred dollars a week.

LIND: And what would he do for one hundred dollars?

SUMMERS: He would play it two times a day on his morning program.

LIND: How could he play it two times a day on one morning program?

SUMMERS: Well, he would play two selections from the album. There are four in the album.

LIND: He would speak about it in glowing terms?

SUMMERS: I don't know whether he would do that or not. He didn't promise that.

LIND: Have you made a deal with anyone in Chicago?

SUMMERS: I have been approached for at least 20 deals in Chicago. I have not accepted any.

LIND: Are you talking of major stations? And major disk jockeys?

SUMMERS: I'm speaking of major stations and very major disk jockeys. I'm just one record company. There are something like 127 record companies in the country. Now if you figure that they are getting \$200 just from me, and say they just take 10 other companies. There, in itself, you have \$2,000 a week.

LIND: What about the owners of the station or the big boys in charge of the station?

SUMMERS: Well, I think if they know, they're not interested because, they say, disk jockey Mr. X is getting \$700 a week and that head of the station knows that if the jock goes to another station he'll get \$1,500 a week. He understands that the deejay has to supplement his income somewhere. So I think they turn, sort of turn their faces to it, or their backs, and let him get what he can get.

LIND: How many will it take of these hundred dollar bills before a record becomes popular?

SUMMERS: I figure, if I would put, oh, \$22,000 in promotion, we'll call it in Chicago, this disk would become popular.

LIND: Then you do believe the disk jockey has the power to make this record popular?

SUMMERS: Oh, very definitely. I was told by this one deejay that he could either make this record or no one would ever hear it. The choice is mine.

LIND: What was the highest fee that you came across?

SUMMERS: Two per cent interest in my recording company which at the stock face value would be about \$3,000. He wanted to become a stockholder in my company.

LIND: For how long a period?

SUMMERS: Well, he said that he would help me with any future releases.

LIND: This is permanent?

SUMMERS: This is permanent!



THE EXPOSER, Phil Lind (left) interviews Comedienne Dody Goodman (center) with Auto Dealer Marte Eritt in car

showroom. In foreground are detectives who guarded Lind after he was threatened because of his payoff revelations.