

A DESCRIPTION OF THE SOUND RECORDINGS ARCHIVES

AT BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

by

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The Audio Center, as Bowling Green State University Library's Sound Recordings Archives was originally labelled, was conceived in the mid-1960's, when plans for a new campus library were being formulated. When the new main library was opened for service in 1967, one half of the third floor had been allocated to the Center for housing its record collection and listening services.

The Library administration's original intent was that the Audio Center would furnish sound recordings and listening facilities to those campus areas that heretofore had not enjoyed such services. A language lab, School of Music Listening Lab, and instructional media center already existed; however, students and faculty members who wanted access to recorded plays, poetry, and prose readings, folk music, and the like had nowhere to turn. The Audio Center was expected to fill these needs.

The Audio Center opened for service in early 1968 with a handful of records, newly installed listening equipment and booths, and subscriptions to Billboard and Schwann. At this same time, popular culture as an academic discipline was being promoted by Dr. Ray B. Browne, who had recently joined the Bowling Green faculty as a professor in the Department of English. This program began to mature and has developed into the internationally recognized and respected Center for the Study of Popular Culture, a separate Department of Popular Culture, the Popular Press, and the Popular Culture Library. These four areas of study were simultaneously being touted through the expanded selection policies within the Audio Center.

Since music plays such a key role in the study of popular culture, restructuring the Center's selection policy to include primary source recorded material and the acquisition of such material began in earnest. Local radio stations in Bowling Green and Toledo were contacted for regular donations of both duplicate and unneeded records. This resource system, after thirteen years of existence, has proven to be most fruitful. The Audio Center has acquired not only 45-rpm singles, but also new albums, public service announcements, radio-station-only discs, syndicated shows, and backfiles of older records no longer needed. In

exchange for these donations, radio stations use our collection as resources for station taping.

In addition to those traditionally recorded subjects included in the collection and noted earlier, the Archives' holdings also include all forms of popular music (rock, r & b, soul, reggae, new wave, country, rockabilly, jazz and blues), gospel and sermons, Broadway musicals and motion picture soundtracks, comedy and documentary, big band, juvenile, radio and television recordings, and much more. All conventional (and some unconventional) sizes and speeds are included, the holdings numbering approximately 200,000 disc recordings, and about 900 cylinders. The open reel tape holdings include over 2000 hours of old-time radio shows, and the B.G.S.U. Living Archives. The Living Archives, which began as a series of oral interviews of popular authors, has been expanded to include interviews with figures in the public eye, air-shots from radio and television, and collected commercial and transcription recordings of early country performers.

The formidable support collection of reference tools includes all major discographies, most biographical directories, many trade-oriented publications (such as catalogs and dealer indexes), and monographic histories and biographies. The periodical collection is a particularly valuable portion of the Archives because of the immediacy of such trade publications as Billboard, Cashbox, and Record World and the publication of discographies and biographical articles in journals such as the JEMF Quarterly, Record Exchanger and of course the ARSC Journal. The magazines also serve as an excellent source for auction lists and advertisements for peripheral and obscure recordings. New York Rocker, Contemporary Christian Music, Sixteen, New Kommotion, Down Beat, Blues Unlimited, Country Song Roundup, Goldmine, Op, Blitz, and Trouser Press, are part of the 80-plus magazine titles on current subscription, with backfiles of such defunct magazines as Beetle, Zoo World, Different Drummer, Bim Bam Boom and Muleskinner News.

Over 95 percent of all the record cataloging in the Archives area is original, with most LP copy being sent to the Library of Congress to be included in its publication, Music, Books on Music, and Sound Recordings. The Archives has been one of the nine contributors to this series since 1972. As might be expected, a great percentage of the total record collection has yet to be cataloged. Access to these materials is facilitated through discographies, manufacturer and dealer catalogs, hand lists, and trade indexes. Those titles which are listed in the monumental card catalog include not only album and single titles, but also all major artists, and each song title included on every LP album. A separate subject card catalog is also part of the indexing system.

As a support mechanism for the record, book, and periodical collection, the Archives also maintain extensive files of dealer, manufacturer, and auction catalogs, a biography and portrait file, record release notices (a gift from BMI), posters, and illustrated LP inner sleeves and 45 and 78 rpm sleeves. A collection of 5000 pieces of popular sheet

music and song folios dating from the mid-1800's to the present is systematically being processed, although is not currently available to the public.

Another unique facet of the Bowling Green collection is the accumulation of record promotional gimmicks which are generally distributed only to retail record outlets and radio stations. Included in this resource area are such oddities as a British Armed Forces survival kit for the original cast album, Salvation, a railroad spike and rail tie for the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band LP, Uncle Charlie and his dog, Teddy and a My Fair Lady soundtrack LP ashtray.

The use of the Archives extends far beyond the local University community. Scholars and students throughout this nation and in Western Europe correspond with and visit the archives to engage in serious musical studies. In addition, commercial record companies have on occasion made use of original and rare recordings for either reissue or reference endeavors.

Richard Perry, the celebrated record producer, recently requested a tape of the original The Speak Up Mambo by the Al Castellanos orchestra, so that Manhattan Transfer could listen and study it before reviving the tune on their Atlantic album, Coming Out. For a reissue of some early Molly O'Day songs, John Morris obtained tapes of selected Columbia sides which were subsequently released on his Old Homestead label out of Brighton, Michigan. And most recently, the Muse Foundation, in conjunction with Rounder Records, requested a series of songs related to the atom bomb to be used for the reissue LP entitled Atomic Cafe.

The collection's listening and reference facilities are open to the general public, although appropriate identification is required. During the regular school hours service is offered Monday through Thursday, 8:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M., Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M., Saturday, 11:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. and Sunday 1:00 to 10:00 P.M. The recordings and selected reference tools and periodicals are housed in closed stacks; a request slip or card with proper I.D. is required to secure specific items. Reference printed materials must be used on site, with copying machines available in other parts of the Library. Taping of recordings is done for in-class use by students and instructors, and for reserve assigned listening. No personal taping is permitted.

Letters and telephone inquiries are invited and encouraged. The address of the Sound Recordings Archives is: University Library, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio 43403. To telephone, please call (419) 372-2307.

ADDITIONAL READING:

John S. Brecher, "Is Clyde McCoy a Piece of History? Maybe So, But Maybe Not," Wall Street Journal, CLXXX (September 12, 1972), pp. 1,36.

B. Lee Cooper and William L. Schurk, "Audio Center Director--A Close Encounter with a Librarian of a Different Kind," In Fred C. H. Schroeder (ed.), Twentieth-Century Popular Culture in Museums and Libraries (Bowling Green, Ohio: Popular Press, 1981), pp. 210-225.

Bruce Dudley, "Comic Books and Rock 'N' Roll: The Artifacts of Our Society," At Bowling Green: News for Alumni, VIII (February 1978), pp. 3-7.

Edward Morris, "America's Biggest Jukebox," The Press, III (January, 1978), pp. 1, 4.

Edward Morris, "Bowling Green U.'s Keen Audio Center," Billboard, LXXXVII (December 20, 1975), p. 27.

Edward Morris, "University's Pop Archives Proving Industry Benefit," Billboard, LIXIII (March 14, 1981), p. 20.

Glenn Waggoner, "Pop Music Lover Plays All Day in Job as BGSU Audio Center Head," The (Toledo, Ohio) Blade, (August 19, 1971), n.p.