

THE STRUCTURE OF THE POPULAR MUSIC INDUSTRY

An Examination of the Filtering Process by Which
Records are Preselected for Public Consumption

Paul Hirsch
Department of Sociology
The University of Michigan

This paper is part of an ongoing study of the popular music industry and its audience now being conducted by the Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research at The University of Michigan under the direction of Dr. Stephen B. Withey. It originated in a graduate seminar in sociology at The University of Michigan. Dr. John Lofland provided helpful guidance and assistance during the time in which interviews were carried out. I am also greatly indebted to the many members of the popular music industry who gave of their time so graciously to be interviewed at length.

Funds for this project were generously supplied by the Department of Sociology, The University of Michigan, under NIMH Training Grant #5-T01-MH10244, and later by NIMH Grant #1-RO-1-MH 17064-01. A study of "Teenage Response to Rock and Roll Protest Songs" is also available through the Institute for Social Research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction.	1
 <u>Part I</u>	
Preselection System: The Ordering of Potential Chaos. . . .	4
The Top 40 Music Industry.	10
The Creation and Marketing of Top 40 Music as a Preselection System	17
Note on Scope and Method	19
 <u>Part II</u>	
Introduction to Field Report	24
Input: The Creative Sector.	25
The Filter, Phase II: The Record Industry	31
The Filter, Phase III: Regional Promotion and Distribution.	43
Decision-Making by Top 40 Programmers: The Gatekeepers. . .	51
The Filter, Phase IV: Top 40 Radio.	60
The People's Choice.	65
 Conclusion/Epilogue	 71
 <u>Tables and Charts</u>	
An Overview of Roles Played in the Top 40 Industry	18
The Organization of the Pop Music Industry	20

INTRODUCTION

As each new technologically advanced mass medium appears it tends to take over the functions served by an earlier medium, forcing the latter to redefine its role. This is essentially what happened to radio with the advent of television. The resultant competition which developed between them threatened radio's existence to such an extent that it had to seek new and different markets which could complement those of television. It has long been observed that mass media serve to complement one another rather than to compete. Radio formats have been undergoing rapid changes in an attempt to maintain an audience in the face of television's better capacity to provide better "mass entertainment."

That Americans listen to one of the four radios in their homes for an average of 17 hours a week suggests that radio's programmers have met with some success.¹ Whereas its programs used to be directed at the lowest common denominator, much as television's are today, radio has developed the strategy of "subcultural programming."² Consequently, the mass market has been divided into a growing number of segments, and radio formats are designed to appeal strictly to limited audiences.

"Top 40" radio is an illustration of this strategy. As one of radio's first innovations during the early 1950's, in response to television's competition, the Top 40 format broadcasted a repetitive selection of the 40 best-selling records of any given week. At first it was

¹Shemel, S. and Krasilovsky, M. W. This Business of Music. New York: Billboard Publishing Co., 1964, p. xv.

²The concept of "subcultural programming" was first suggested, in another context, by Herbert Gans in "Pluralist Aesthetics and Subcultural Programming: A Proposal for Cultural Democracy in the Mass Media," Studies in Public Communication, 3, 1961, pp. 28-35.

not limited to "rock and roll," but combined all types of popular music, such as country and western, and show tunes. Since then, radio airplay of music has become further subdivided: most music stations now specialize by type, featuring country and western only, for example. There is, however, some overlap. Specialization has

led to the development of all manner of limited-appeal programs. Stations . . . are beginning to take on the characteristics of a single, 24-hour program, narrowly addressed to a distinct slice of the population. Such broadcast parochialism is now revolutionizing the industry.³

Top 40 music is a new kind of popular music. Its identity and growth are largely a function of the selection of records for airplay by programmers of Top 40 stations. Some artists, such as the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, were first heard over Top 40 stations, and are directly associated with the category "rock and roll." Other performers, on the other hand, are "co-opted" into the Top 40 format but were first heard by other audiences over other types of radio stations. Examples of this second type would be Barbara Streisand, first heard over "good music" stations, or James Brown, borrowed from "rhythm and blues" stations. All records selected by Top 40 station program directors are thereby conferred the status of "Top 40" records, although the "music" cannot be defined independently of the radio stations over which it is heard.

The audience for Top 40 programming consists predominantly of teenagers, who spend an average of three to four hours a day listening to

³Honan, W. H. "The New Sound of Radio," New York Times Magazine, December 3, 1967, p. 56.

radio.⁴ The continuous play of "rock and roll" music over Top 40 stations accounts in large part for today's "generation gap" in musical preferences and for variations in the record purchase patterns of Americans over and under 30 years old.

The access of teenagers to rock and roll is dependent on Top 40 radio. Of sociological significance is the fact that any social "effects" of the music and/or lyrics upon the attitudes and behavior of young people are thus "caused" indirectly by the adaptation of an important communications medium to economic and technological constraints. Having lost the mass audience to television, the radio medium has successfully sought new and lucrative, though smaller, markets.

In Part One we shall attempt to place the system formed by the Top 40 record and radio industries into a larger conceptual framework, that of the "preselection system." Part Two will inquire into specifically what factors influence the selection of records for airplay and consumption by Top 40 programmers, and into the larger question of through what channels a performing artist must pass between the time he is "discovered" by a record producer and the time his name becomes a byword to teenagers.

⁴The Radio Advertising Bureau has sponsored a commercial whose announcer reads: "Ninety percent of all teeny-boppers listen to the radio for four hours a day." No definition of "teeny-bopper" is provided, though I assume the term refers to teenagers. The results of a survey of Detroit high school students just conducted by Dr. John Robinson (Survey Research Center, The University of Michigan) and myself suggest, however, that their average listening time is closer to one hour a day than to four hours.

PART I

0

PRESELECTION SYSTEMS: THE ORDERING OF POTENTIAL CHAOS

The preselection of goods for potential consumption is a feature common to all industries. There are always more goods available for possible production and marketing than there are actually manufactured, promoted and consumed. In some industries, where test-marketing and surveys can be used to estimate the probable amount of demand mobilizable for a new product, preselection takes place at an early stage of the product's development. If pretests suggest that demand will be slight, the product is not manufactured and made available. There are a number of industries, however, for which pretests are either unfeasible, or can be utilized only at a later state, i.e., after the goods have already been produced. Preselection systems have developed in those industries for which conventional market research procedures are unreliable and advanced planning is difficult.

Industries of the first type comprise what Galbraith refers to as the "technostructure."⁵ Their characteristics include: few companies in competition; the requirement of large capital investments; a vested interest in research and development; and the feasible utilization of standard techniques for managing consumer demand for specific products, e.g., patent drugs or a new mouthwash. Items for which demand is already anticipated are generally promoted heavily through direct advertising campaigns, and are available for purchase through retail outlets readily accessible to consumers. Public awareness of the product's existence and the access of its producer to the potential consumer is relatively nonproblematic.

⁵Galbraith, J. K. The New Industrial State. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1967.

The second class of industries must operate in a setting where the above conditions do not exist. Many of its members are involved in the production and marketing of what are broadly defined as "cultural" items. Popular records are an instance of this class. Although the boundary between "material" and "nonmaterial" goods has never been made very clear, "cultural items" all share the characteristic of appealing to popular taste--to the consumer's esthetic preferences. They are "non-material" in the sense that they serve a less obvious utilitarian purpose than do such goods as foods and detergents. "Culture" industries typically exhibit more companies in competition than those of class one. Less capital investment per item is required, demand for specific items is less manageable, and fads in consumption patterns are commonplace. The distribution and marketing of their products are less controllable; hence, more problematic. The selection and promotion of many political candidates meets these conditions, as do the clothing and book publishing industries, the legitimate theater, and the movie and music industries.

In all such "culture" industries, the number of already available goods (or candidates) far exceeds the number that can be successfully marketed. More goods are produced and available than actually reach the consumer. Subsequent to their production, these are processed by a selection system which filters the available products, insuring that only a sample of the available "universe" is ever brought to the attention of the general public. The actual filtering, in large part, does not take place within the companies or industries wherein the goods are produced.

None of the industries in this class is able to predict accurately which of the items produced will pass successfully through each stage of the complex filter. Yet economic constraints dictate that in order

for any of the competing companies to realize a profitable return on its investments, the oversupply of goods must be reduced before ever reaching the consumption stage. For example, not all political candidates, i.e., readily available products, can receive their party's nomination. Nor can all books and plays already written be successfully published or produced, and marketed. Only a fraction of all records produced and manufactured ever appear on the shelves of even the largest record stores. The markets for these industries are not sufficiently predictable to allow for the production and promotion of only those items likely to succeed.

In short, none of these industries or their members are able to effectively control those elements in their environments which determine the fate of their products. Viewing politics as an industry, for example, no political candidate seeking party nomination is able to predict or control, at the time he "throws his hat into the ring," the number of delegates that will vote for him at the party's nominating convention. Similarly, no clothing manufacturer is able to predict how many orders a new design will receive until after his facilities are already committed to its production. In all cases where there are numerous companies in competition and more products available than can be successfully marketed, the products are filtered by environmental forces which select from among them a minority for presentation to the public. The role of the consumer is to select from and rank order those candidates which have been preselected for him.

Preselection systems are characterized by a marked division of labor and differentiation of functions. Preliminary analysis suggests a common set of roles, each of which operates on the boundary between two subdivision, or stages, of the "filter." They are comprised of six

roles and stages:

1. The "Artist"--provides the creative input. He is in constant demand because of the rapid turnover of product. The novelist, the politician, the playwright, and the clothing designer all exemplify the "artist."
2. The "Agent"--in service of a "producer." Agents operate in the field, linking the artist and producer. They serve as talent scouts for the book publisher, as political clubs in service of a party, as scouts for the Broadway producer, and for the clothing manufacturer.
3. The "Producer"--in the form of an entrepreneur or a corporation supplies the capital and organization required to manufacture and/or promote the artist's product, e.g., the book publisher, political party influentials, the Broadway producer, the clothing manufacturer.
4. The "Promoters"--within the industry, are employed by the producer to create, plan for, and manage anticipated demand. Not all products at this level can be promoted with equal success. Promoters would: arrange for the book publisher's promotional parties, for the nomination of a candidate by party delegates, for the theater producer's "angels," and for fashion trade paper endorsements.
5. The "Gatekeepers"--linked by promoter to producer, they mediate between an industry and its consumers. Gatekeepers perform the crucial final filtering function of screening and selectively choosing from among the available products those which are to be publicized. The gatekeepers are mass media, e.g., book reviews, election editorials, theater reviews, coverage of new styles by fashion magazines.
6. The Public--votes upon and rank orders those candidates who have successfully passed through all the previous stages of the filter, having thereby been preselected for the consumer to choose.

This model is "value added" in the sense that no product can get to the sixth stage without having been processed favorably at each of the preceding stages, respectively. One possible exception might be the case of the political candidates "drafted" by party influentials, who would then move from stage one to stage three directly, skipping over stage two. The added "value" is simply the increased probability of a successful outcome as the product is favorably processed at each stage. The product itself does not undergo change as it flows through the system.

In any preselection system the artist must successfully link up with an agent of a producer in order to come to the latter's attention. Upon receipt of a favorable response from a producer, and his agreement to market the product, the success or failure of the artist's creation is from then on determined by forces beyond his control. It must be processed through the appropriate filter wherein promoters, if successful, are able to steer the product to the attention of the public through the facilities of the gatekeepers.

The occupant of each boundary role mediates between a lesser and a greater power. It is the response of the role occupants at each stage to those messages directed at them which decides the final fate of the product. The operation of parts of a preselection system is described in a somewhat less analytical way by Barnett, in Innovation: The Basis of Cultural Change.

Nowadays most professional inventors relinquish their advocacy to professional surrogates. This applies to literary and other artistic creations as well as to technological inventions . . . Professional innovators cannot depend upon a stroke of luck for general acceptance of their ideas. (Some) employ an agent or attorney to represent them and to promote their interests for a consideration. Alternatively, they may try to find a collaborator or an investor with the necessary funds to support . . . and to successfully market their (product). Failing that, many sell their ideas outright or work at a fixed salary for an industrial organization (whose) business is to promote . . . and sell . . . Sponsorship has become so commercialized that it requires a considerable amount of planning and organization . . . Consequently, whether an innovator continues to be identified with his ideas or not, his personal advocacy of them counts for very little. The promotion of their acceptance is turned over to an impersonal organization that uses highly specialized techniques to reach and influence the public. Even though the innovator's name continues to be associated with his impersonally sponsored product . . . he is at some remove from its actual presentation to potential acceptors.

Professional advocates . . . support the popular fancy that inventions are prompted because people need them. In by far the majority of cases only the inventor needs what he invents . . . When organized advocacy by specialists and vested

interests is called for, it can scarcely be maintained that necessity is the mother of invention . . . Those who undertake their sponsorship, especially if this is their business, contrive to stimulate an atmosphere of acceptance. They actually create wants for the thing they have to sell.⁶

The subsystems of the preselection process outlined include separate but interdependent industries. Each production sector, while active as a filter in its own right insofar as many artists fail to achieve sponsorship for their creations, must rely on franchised promoters and the mass media for the selection and favorable presentation of its goods to the public.

The advertising of any cultural product consists predominantly in coverage by the mass media, as news items more so than in purchased advertisements. The manner in which the political candidate is treated by the media, for example, is a significant variable in his success or failure, as is the manner in which fashion editors and book or theater reviewers treat a newly produced creation. The fact of radio airplay for a new record is almost always prerequisite for its sale. The coverage afforded a cultural product by "gatekeepers" is largely responsible for its success or failure.

The relationships between industries at the boundaries where their component subsystems must interact are important elements in any preselection system. The internal operations of each industry are of interest here only insofar as they affect the outcomes of the transactions that take place at the boundaries where their component subsystems are linked.

Along these lines, James Thompson's discussion of "Organizations and Output Transactions" is instructive. He is concerned with boundary-

⁶ McGraw-Hill Co., 1953, pp. 296-299.

spanning roles that link an organization and its environment through "output transactions" between an organization member and its potential clients, i.e., customers for the finished product. The article, however, is limited to transactions at the final stage of the "filter," and takes for granted the process by which the product came to be presentable to the organization's clients, i.e., consumers.⁷ Here we are interested in the earlier stages in which preselection takes place, in the intra-industry boundary roles and relationships that filter available products by regulating their flow through the structure of the preselection system.

THE TOP 40 MUSIC INDUSTRY

The record and radio industries have grown up together and live in a symbiotic relationship. Each plays an important role in the dissemination and popularization of culture; both have affected its form and its direction. Though mutually dependent organizations, their goals vary, and oftentimes conflict.

Since World War II the record industry has experienced enormous growth. A total of 99 million dollars was expended on records in 1945; by 1964, the sale of "singles" records alone amounted to \$138 million.⁸ Between 1955 and 1966, while consumer expenditures for all goods and services rose by 81 percent, record sales jumped 224 percent. By 1970 sales are projected to gross over \$1 billion.

⁷ American Journal of Sociology, 68, 1962, pp. 309-324.

⁸ Figures courtesy of the Record Industry Association of America. See also "Disks Today: New Sounds and Technology Spin Long-Playing Record of Prosperity," The New York Times, 8/28/67, p. 35.

The biggest share of the gain has come from pop records . . . Today's rock-and-roll has more relevance for adolescents than any popular music of the past, and with this affluent group enlarged by a growing number of adults, rock-and-roll seems here to stay as long as any currently salable cultural commodity.⁹

Rock-and-roll records are generally issued as 45 r.p.m. "singles" and are broadcast upon their release by Top 40 stations. A "hit" record is any single listed in the music industry trade papers as one of the hundred largest-selling records in any one week. Billboard is generally considered the most reputable of these papers, followed by Cashbox and Record World. Each magazine conducts a national survey of radio stations, record stores and jukebox operators to determine the most popular records for that time period. With the advent of the long-play record, most adults stopped buying singles, thus leaving the rank ordering of these records' popularity almost entirely in the hands of young consumers.

The sale of singles accounts for approximately one-fourth of the record industry's total income. Long-play albums classified as "teen-beat" by the Record Industry Association of America contribute another 10 percent to this total. The sale of albums classified as "popular music" contributes 45 percent. These include songs which are "softened" versions of many records first popularized as teen-beat singles, e.g., "Lawrence Welk Plays The Top Ten."¹⁰ Close to 70 percent of all records purchased by Americans are intimately related to the selection process whereby Top 40 hits records are determined. Thus many of the records purchased by a small minority of adolescents contain the songs that the majority of Americans come to hear and like, shortly afterwards.

⁹Brown, S. H.: "The Motown Sound of Money," Fortune, September 1967, p. 103.

¹⁰"Radio and Records," Record Industry Association of America (pamphlet), 1964.

Yesterday's eardrum assault is today's most significant cultural phenomenon. Rock-and-roll, the music that emerged in the early 1950's with a booming beat, clanging guitars, honking saxophone, and simple if idiotic lyrics, has gone respectable. Once regarded by the adult world as another exasperating and unfathomable aberration of adolescence, it has now become the darling of intellectuals and a communication link between the generations . . . Its popularity among adults reflects the enormous changes that the music has undergone during the past decade and a half. Originally a 'white' version of Negro rhythm-and-blues or 'soul music,' it has since incorporated strains from country-and-western music, Elizabethan folk songs, jazz, and the classics. It is being altered by electronic and accoustical manipulation, influenced by the effect of hallucinogenic drugs on thought and perception, and has developed into so many new overlapping styles that rock-and-roll is too restrictive a label. The new music is better called contemporary or just plain pop. These changes have made much of the music softer, blander, and more appealing to square, adult audiences who used to hate the coarser early variety that blasted up from basement playrooms.¹¹

The issue of Top 40 songs' communication of "deviant attitudes" has provoked considerable strain, from time to time, between broadcasters and the record industry. Unlike news magazine or television coverage of youth subcultures, song lyrics are a direct expression of ideas. They are not mediated by the usual narrative which restores "perspective" or "objectivity" and counter-arguments to the ideas expressed.

Some figures in (and critics of) the music industry fear that it contributes directly to rioting by ghetto Negroes, and serves to corrupt the morals of teenagers. Del Shields, of the Rhythm and Blues Disk Jockeys' Association, believes that

the average deejay is more effective to reach the Negro than the minister or the self-appointed leader.¹²

Several members of the music industry have established a foundation which, in the summer months, provides radio stations with records sung by famous Negro performers, urging brotherhood.

¹¹Brown, S. H., op. cit.

¹²"NARA Meet Seen Shaping Up as Fight on Many Fronts," Billboard, 8/5/67.

Recently the owner of a large chain of radio stations, with the support of the Georgia State Legislature, several rural-based broadcasters' associations, the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church, and several citizens' groups instituted a panel of "prostitutes, ex-prostitutes, junkies, and ex-addicts to assist in weeding out suggestive records . . . in his campaign against 'filth' in the record industry." He stated,

'We've had all we can stand of the record industry's glorifying marijuana, LSD, and sexual activity. The newest Beatles record has a line of 40,000 purple hearts in one arm. Is that what you want your children to listen to?' . . . One of the songs mentioned in his speech was 'Try It,' by the Standells . . . He called for a 'rather updated version of the Boston Tea Party . . . I suppose we might call it the Wax Party--one in which all the distasteful records that deal with sex, sin, and drugs (would be purged from the air).'¹³

Top 40 programmers argue that popular songs have always contained messages in opposition to traditional morality, e.g., "Let's Do It," and they cite the strong sales of "deviant" records as evidence of their continued popularity. Record companies, which provide radio with 80 percent of its overall programming, anticipate a growing demand for the new and the unconventional. Thus,

Psychedelia '67 is the theme of the mid-year MGM Records distributors meeting . . . Warner Brothers Records has Turn-On, Sell-In Most . . . (and) London Records' National Sales Director called the product 'as up to date as the mini skirt.'¹⁴

Tower Records, a subsidiary of Capitol, has developed print and visual promotional aids for promoting 'love-ins' in conjunction with the debut of newly signed Kim Fowley's first LP, 'Love is Alive and Well.'¹⁵

¹³"Anti-Smut McClendon to Set up Fringe Panel," Billboard, 5/20/67.

¹⁴Billboard, 8/5/67, Sales Meetings section.

¹⁵Ibid.

And in a Billboard article entitled "Split-Level Lyrics Beat Censors,"

Top 40 record buyers are reported as no longer

interested in ditties. While many groups are recording songs which seem overtly to contain trite lyrics . . . much of (their) content has to be studied . . . (for) the lyrics are not obscure. Said Rothchild: 'We're more than an entertainment medium. We're now a vital communications channel for a group that doesn't control communications.'¹⁶

These controversies over the "effects" of Top 40 lyrics upon their consumers have yet to be clarified by systematic social research. The possibility of a "causal" relationship between song lyrics and the attitudes of teenagers, for example, has yet to be studied. Such a project would be most difficult to design, for to succeed in isolating lyrics as a possible socializing or change agent, one would have to be able to control for the simultaneous influence of peers, parents, and the other mass media. Beyond such demographic factors as the age and sex of pop record buyers, there is very little known about the composition of the Top 40 consumer population. Such questions as the following still remain unanswered: Which type(s) of song lyrics appeals to a particular segment of the Top 40 radio listening audience?; Are all Top 40 records purchased by the same population, regardless of their lyrics?; and, Are records containing "deviant" messages purchased for the content of their lyrics or is it the "sound" and "beat" of the rendition that appeals to its buyers?¹⁷ It is a fact, however, that Top 40 radio does serve to disseminate unconventional messages to a large listening audience.

Top 40 music has been observed to exert some influence upon four areas related to consumers' behavior. First, advertising agencies have

¹⁶Billboard, 6/24/67.

¹⁷Dr. John Robinson and I have surveyed high school students in Grand Rapids and Detroit, Michigan, to obtain preliminary answers to these questions. The data are presently being analyzed.

found that the association of Top 40 stars with a client's product results in increased sales.¹⁸ Second, progressively larger audiences are exposed to successful Top 40 artists, as the other mass media increasingly rely on these performers for hosting television shows or playing movie roles.¹⁹ Third, the content of Top 40 records influences the sales patterns of musical instruments. Figures released by the American Musical Conference suggest that

The correlation between sales patterns and pop musical modes is obvious . . . Only the pop-music-associated instruments have shown striking growth . . . The golden-growth instrument has, of course, been the guitar. While there were more pianos sold in 1909 than in 1966, guitar sales went from 2.6 million units in 1956 to 10 million in 1966 . . . About \$9 million worth of drums were sold in 1958; the figure was \$60 million last year . . . Just in the last couple of years Bob Dylan began using a harmonica, or blues harp, in many of his albums . . . Harmonicas hit \$3 million in sales last year. Such pop-associated instruments as the autoharp, electric piano, harmonica and recorder showed up healthily in 1966 under the 'miscellaneous instrument' category.

While the sale of traditional band and orchestral instruments has remained static over the past decade, the paraphernalia of pop has brought the music industry out of the doldrums in dramatic fashion . . . The Beatles could give the accordion and uke a break by somehow working them into their next album.²⁰

Finally, of greater interest, though less strongly documented, is the possible contribution of broadcast Top 40 music to the homogenization

¹⁸"Acts Go Better with Coke as More Names Gain Exposure" and "Jingles Make Stars Pockets Jangle," in Billboard, 7/8/67. See also "(Top 40) Radio Copy-Testing Brings Out the Sweet Smell of Success," Broadcasting, 7/17/67, p. 26.

¹⁹"The rewards of a hit record may include lucrative television appearances . . . even movie contracts begin to roll in," in "Disks Today: New Sounds and Technology . . ." Op. cit. See also "Film Colony Shooting for Top 40 Artists and Writers," Billboard, 5/6/67.

²⁰"The Switched-On Market," Billboard, 7/1/67, p. 47. See also: "The Impact of Recordings," "Sales Statistics Tell the Exciting Story," and "Sitar Sales Soar in Folios, Instruments," in Billboard, 7/1/67, 7/22/67, and 8/5/67, respectively.

of college students' musical taste preferences. Record distributors in Detroit have noted that more Top 40 items are now selling in college towns in Michigan (particularly in Ann Arbor) than were purchased in previous years, and that folk and jazz groups' recordings are less in demand.²¹ The results of a recent "Music on Campus" survey, in which the record sales figures from 250 college and university bookstores were analyzed, evidence support for this observation. It was found that

the growing number of chart acts indicates that within ivy-thatched communities, young people's tastes correspond to those acts gaining the strongest radio exposure. The market for esoteric performers seems to be dwindling.²²

The Top 40 selections featured by radio stations in one area of the country contain many of the same records broadcast, within a week or two, by similar stations in other areas. In view of Top 40 radio's hold on teenagers, national uniformity in musical choices can be expected to increase. At present, the San Francisco area's Top 40 stations are the main exception to most stations' "bandwagon" policy of selecting records for airplay--only after they have proven to be popular "somewhere else."

This survey of Top 40 music's actual or purported relation to a wide range of social phenomena has pointed up a number of areas, seldom studied, into which research exploration could be both interesting and fruitful. It is some time since Katz and Lazarsfeld pointed out that

the way in which people influence each other is not only affected by the primary groups within which they live; it is also co-determined by the broad institutional setting of the American scene . . . The beauty parlor, the disk jockey,

²¹Promoters and other industry personnel were interviewed. See below, pp. 18 and 21.

²²Tiegal, Eliot, "Jazz Beat," Billboard, 5/6/67.

the department store, while intended as means of selling commodities become, derivatively, agencies which affect the styles of life and ways of thinking of those whom they influence.²³

Our study of the Top 40 music industry is a small step in the direction of the larger question: In what ways are organizational and institutional structures linked to the groups and individuals whose lives they may affect? In the remaining sections of Parts 1 and 2, the concept of the preselection system should enable us to better analyze the structure of the Top 40 industry, its internal workings and component roles, and their interaction in relation to themselves and to the public.

THE CREATION AND MARKETING OF TOP 40 MUSIC AS A PRESELECTION SYSTEM

In the Top 40 preselection system the roles common to all filtering structures are institutionalized at each of the six stages outlined. The "universe" of possible recording artists is filtered by record company field agents known as "record producers," who select from it those artists and songs which are recorded. The product of their joint effort is submitted to "record company policymakers," who select from the total output of this "creative" subsystem those records which are released each week.

Regional promoters are shipped the policymaker's output and they are franchised to promote new releases at radio stations and to obtain airplay for as many as possible. It is significant to note that of the approximately three hundred new releases made available each week, only five or six are selected by each Top 40 station program director for

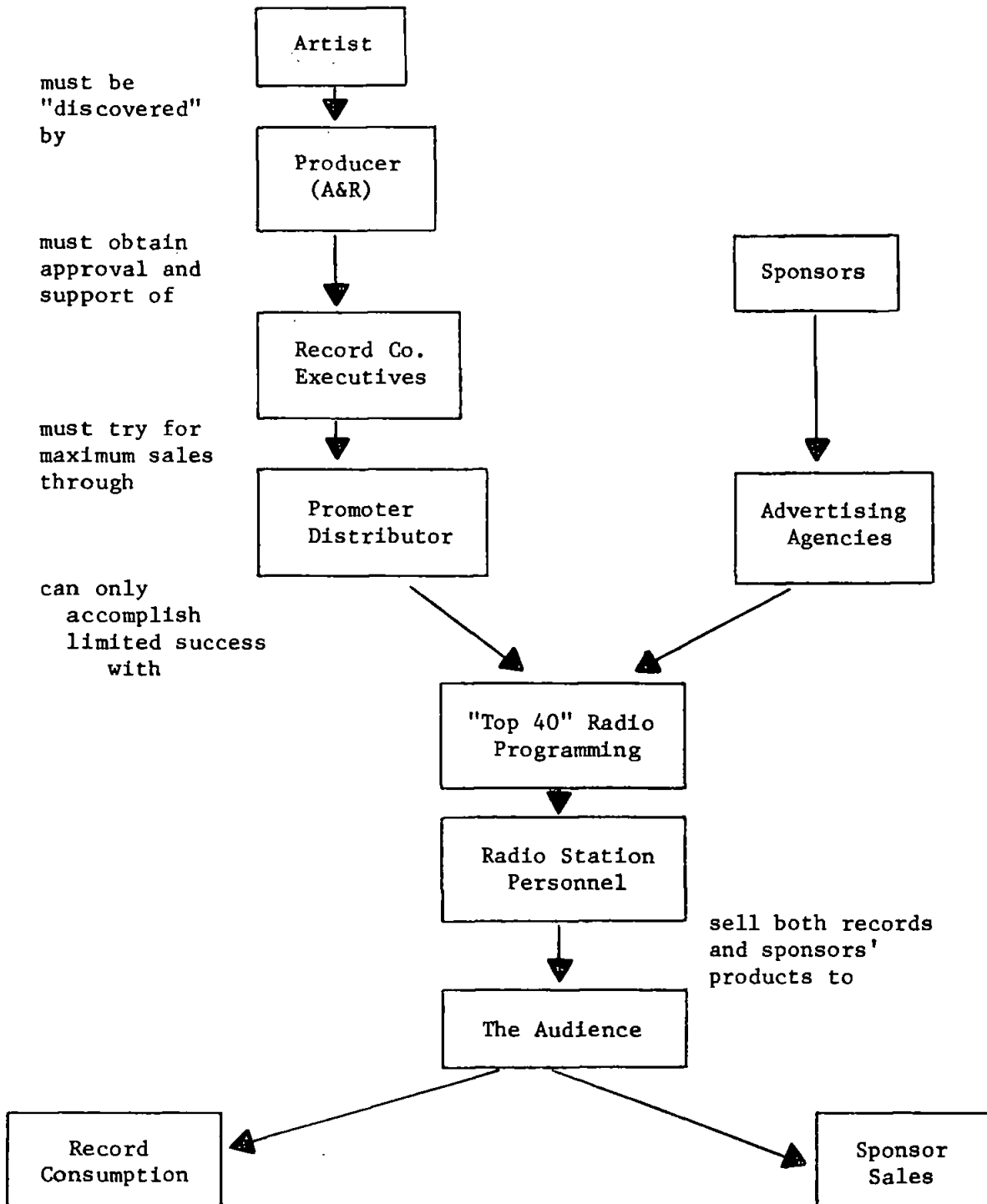
²³Katz, E. and Lazarsfeld, P. Personal Influence. New York: The Free Press, 1955, pp. 9 and 10.

ERRATA TO:

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE POP MUSIC INDUSTRY

Insert the attached Chart "The Organization of the Pop Music Industry" as a page following page 17.

The Organization of the Pop Music Industry



inclusion on the list of records to receive airplay that week. New releases are differentially promoted by both record companies' national sales offices as well as by their regional promoters.

A great amount of filtering takes place at each of the stages of the preselection system. In terms of the general model:

<u>Top 40 System</u>		<u>Preselection System</u>	
1. Recording artist	- Corresponds to -	"Artist" role	
2. "Record Producer," employed by company	" "	"Agent" in service of a "Producer"	
3. Record company: "Policymakers"	" "	"Producer"	
4. Record Promoter	" "	"Promoter within the industry"	
5. Top 40 radio stations	" "	Mass media "Gatekeepers"	
6. Top 40 station listeners and record consumers	" "	The Public	

The Top 40 system is comprised of many sectors and subsystems which are all linked by intra-industry trade papers. Billboard, for example, features certain news items of particular interest to jukebox operators, and to musical instrument and tape cartridge dealers, while of only nominal interest to artists, recording industry and the radio station personnel. These latter are kept informed of developments in their sectors by different sections of the magazine. All share the common characteristic of being a part of the Top 40 system.

The role of the Top 40 audience is to select from and rank order those new records that have successfully passed through the preselection filter. When a record receives airplay and achieves strong sales in cities across the country, it becomes a "national hit." The common goal of all members of the Top 40 system is to be instrumental in the creation and marketing of a national hit.

The competition on all levels is severe. The initial investment required to produce and manufacture a Top 40 single is \$2500. At the

wholesale price of 50 cents a record, it takes only 5000 sales to break even. Whenever a record sells substantially more copies than that--and some sell well over a million, those involved in its creation stand to make an enormous profit.

A summary of the roles in this preselection system and their relation to one another is presented in Table I.

A NOTE ON SCOPE AND METHOD

The data on which this study is based were collected between February and September, 1967. These consist of primary source materials gathered through interviews with personnel at most stages of the Top 40 system, e.g., record promoters and producers, and radio station program directors. Secondary sources were also consulted. An additional source of primary and secondary printed information was supplied by respondents, who provided (1) articles which they had collected concerning their activities, e.g., The Radio Advertising Bureau Library has files of newspaper and magazine articles as well as private studies concerning the operation of Top 40 stations, formats, audiences, etc.; and (2) private inter-office and intra-subsystem communications, such as memos from the National Sales Office of a record company to its franchised regional promoters.

Sixteen respondents were interviewed for an average length of two hours each. By maintaining repeatedly that prior knowledge of the needs and goals of other sectors is necessary to understand the nature of the activities at the stage in which they are engaged, virtually all respondents suggested that systems theory and the concept of the filter are the proper frameworks in which to place the subject matter. Five program directors, three record promoters, two "policy-makers," one record

TABLE I

<u>Member Role</u>	<u>Service Rendered</u> (Function)	<u>Control Over Course</u> <u>of Events</u>
Recording Artist	Provides the raw material which must be processed, packaged, and marketed.	For new artists, none: for established artists, negotiable.
Record Producer	Talent scout: selects both the artists and selections that are recorded; processes artists, and serves as link between artist and company. (Boundary role)	Great control over artists: little control over company policy-makers.
Record Company Policymakers	Select items from producer's output for packaging, promotion, and distribution. Set up and budget promotional priorities; provide the capital for these and for recording costs.	Control the <u>internal</u> operations of the companies: exert partial control over regional promoters, little to no control over Top 40 radio program directors.
Regional Promoter	Processes companies' weekly output, supplies broadcasters with and selectively promotes new releases. Receives many more records than can be successfully promoted or distributed.	Little control over either company policy-makers or major market area program directors.

(continued)

TABLE I (continued)

<u>Member Role</u>	<u>Service Rendered</u> (Function)	<u>Control Over Course</u> <u>of Events</u>
Inter-Industry Trade Papers	Provide communications link for all sectors of the preselection system. Survey major markets to ascertain best-selling records; serve as promotional vehicles for policy-makers and independent publishers.	Indirectly control individual outcomes by publishing the "charts," and by selecting from the available new releases a minority for "spotlights" and for favorable reviews. Influence the selection of records by station program directors.
Top 40 Radio Station Program Directors	Link record companies to the public by providing airplay (free advertising) for the companies' product. Serve as the final filter. Provide continuous, repetitive play for those items selected.	Control the outcomes of every new release by selecting from all those available those few to which the public is exposed. Only those records played are available in retail outlets or familiar to the consuming public.
The Public	Selects from among and rank orders (only) those records that have been favorably processed (i.e., preselected for it) in the preceding stages. In buying records, it provides the capital necessary to keep the system operative.	Exerts partial control over the entire system by providing differential feedback on those records preselected for it. All records are recorded, processed, and airplayed with an eye toward public response. Unpopular records are taken off the air and not initiated by other record companies.

producer, one staff member from Billboard, Broadcast Music, Inc. (a music publishers' association), the Radio Advertising Bureau, and the Record Industry Association of America, respectively, and one disk jockey were interviewed. The study was conducted in Ann Arbor, Detroit and New York City.

Letters to the Editor in the trade papers and interviews with station program directors in Ann Arbor point to variations in the nature of the relationship between the broadcasting personnel, and the record companies and their promoters. These variations depend on the city in which a radio station is based. The markets served by large metropolitan area stations are of far greater consequence to the record industry than those served by stations in smaller areas. For example, more records are purchased in Detroit alone than in all other Michigan cities combined. Detroit and Philadelphia each account for five percent of total domestic records sales, while New York City accounts for ten percent. The Top 40 stations referred to in Part 2, and the relation of program directors to promoters described, are those in major metropolitan areas, unless otherwise stated.

There is a surprising amount of occupational mobility within the music industry itself, both "downward" and "upward." While the roles played are constant, the role occupants are variable and subject to rapid change. No one is firmly settled in any one place until he has put a good deal of time into the trade. Disk jockeys and record producers frequently become (or have already been) recording artists, program directors, and/or record company executives. Record promoters, in many cases, have performed one or more other roles in the Top 40 system, or may do so at a later time.

Few formal credentials are required of the role occupants at each stage. Many members of each subsystem are personally acquainted with, or at least personally aware of, their counterparts in other sectors, as well as in their own. Geographical mobility is an occupational requirement. Disk jockeys move from one city to the next, often changing the names by which they are recognized by listeners. Program directors move from station to station; record producers, from company to company; recording artists are frequently on tour. Many decisions are (probably) influenced by informal as well as by formal criteria: the two often shade into one another.

PART II

The Top 40 industry exhibits many of the characteristics of a small social system. Input consists of the records created by recording artists and record "producers." These are processed in the two "throughput" sectors wherein decisions are made regarding the release and promotion of each record respectively. The number of records is substantially reduced as it flows through, or is blocked, in each of these sectors. The output of the two sectors is further filtered by the programming selection decisions at Top 40 stations. The records broadcasted by these stations and heard by listeners comprise a small sample of the original population of records produced by the creative subsystem. Strictly speaking, it is the flow of information about new records that is severely limited. The material goods follow in the train of advance publicity and promotion. In any one city, only Top 40 records that have received airplay are available in retail stores for purchase.

In Part 2, the Top 40 preselection system will be described according to this sequence of stages. In terms of the six roles outlined earlier, we shall consider first the artists and talent scouts who produce the recorded input. Then we will describe the differential handling of new records by record company policymakers; the politics of regional promotion and distribution; and the "final filtering" of the remaining records by Top 40 programmers. Finally, we will conclude with a brief discussion of the audience for the Top 40 format and the consumers of the Top 40 records preselected for them in this manner.

In the following sections, the day-to-day operations and problems of the Top 40 industry are described largely from the perspective of its members. Although each sector participates in a preselection process, it will become increasingly apparent that a common fear exists throughout that the ultimate consumer will exercise his prerogative of not purchasing all of the records that have been preselected for him.

INPUT: THE CREATIVE SECTOR

The success of every performing artist is closely tied to the number of his records that come to the attention of and are purchased by the public. Records are the means by which an artist gains or enlarges his popular following. It is impossible to estimate how many potential artists or groups there are waiting to be "discovered." That there are thousands is certain: in the Summer of 1967 at least two nationwide contests were held for aspiring "rock and roll" groups; 13,000 groups were entered in one such contest, 2,000 in the other.²⁴ For the artist in search of an audience, the immediate goal is to gain the attention and interest of a record producer and to obtain a recording contract. Insofar as he himself has no means of placing his goods on the market, the artist must rely on the economic and promotional facilities of the record company to publicize his talent.

Each year there are about 300 companies actively releasing singles for the Top 40 market.²⁵ The survival of a record company is contingent on its success in marketing records by artists in whom it has an interest. Because the life of a "hit" record is only from 60 to 120 days, each company is in constant search for new material for future releases. Replacements are needed for those items currently on the "charts." The unknown artist and the companies each share a vital interest in his discovery and success, for the hit record industry is based on the fads of the moment. The styles in vogue change rapidly and unpredictably.

²⁴"Band Battles Trigger Spurts on Instruments," Billboard, 7/1/67, p.1.

²⁵This is an estimate given by Mr. Henry Brief, Executive Secretary of the Record Industry Association of America, during the course of an interview.

The combined efforts of artists and record company agents constitute the creative sector, or subsystem, of the popular music industry. It is at the input stage--where the producer in the field seeks out new talent and singles with its early fans and advance audience, that the industry is in direct contact with both performers and the public. There is a great deal of feedback for the industry at this level. It is not insignificant that as the age of hit record buyers has decreased--creating an almost exclusively teenage market--so has the age level of company talent scouts.²⁶ Both "A&R men" and "independent producers" must be in tune with the record-buying public in order to locate and create artists to its liking.

Each company employs a number of men to go into the field and to discover new talent. These "artist and repertoire (A&R) men" link the companies to the artist population. They are located on the boundary between the two, directing some artists toward the recording studio and closing its doors to others. As company talent scouts, they constitute the first strategic checkpoint in the preselection process. As agents for competing companies they bid against each other for the services of those artists in whom they see some potential. Each tries to be the first industry representative on the scene, in the hope of "beating out" his competitors and signing the artist to a contract advantageous to his company. Access to, and a favorable response from a "producer" is crucial to the career of the artist.

The intensely competitive quest for new pop music groups starts with the professional connoisseurs, who make their rounds of club, coffee house and campus with the fidelity of postmen and the discriminating eye of diamond merchants.

²⁶"Record Industry Turning to Younger Producers," The New York Times, 9/13/67, p. 38.

One man's miss may be the next man's fortune. Armed with intuition, empathy, and durable eardrums, record company artist and repertoire agents--the A&R men--and independent producers constantly candle the pop eggs incubating at the electrical outlets of the nation's night spots.

The scramble is for new sounds, new faces, new concepts. Except for such hardy perennials as the Beatles, groups often blossom and wither within two years, leaving a gap in catalogue and a demand for a new smash.²⁷

A&R men frequently supervise the recording sessions of the artist whom they have contracted. In this capacity they are known in the trade as "producers." They are empowered to select the songs which are to be recorded as well as the style of performance. If an artist disagrees with his producer over these matters he is nonetheless legally bound to accede to his producer's decisions. Oftimes the producer suggests a song or arrangement to an artist who records it reluctantly, only to become identified with it by the public if the record is a hit.²⁸

The inclusion of the producer's name on every record label is the industry's acknowledgment of his creative role. It is the producer who is usually credited with the success or failure of a record and its performer(s). The producers of the Beatles and the Mamas and the Papas, George Martin and Lou Adler, respectively, are known throughout the industry as "the fifth Beatle" and "the fifth Mama."

The judgments of its A&R men are of critical importance to each record company. The records they produce ideally constitute the pool from which each company's "policymakers" select the material to be

²⁷ Shepard, R. F. "Hunt for Talent for Pop Disks Goes On," The New York Times, 1/30/68, p. 30.

²⁸ Vocalist Petula Clark has stated in several interviews that she agreed to record her hit version of "This is my Song" only after she was pressured by her manager and record producer. She herself had reservations about the song.

released each week. If record companies depended solely upon their A&R staffs for new material, their success or failure would rest largely in the possibly fallible judgments of a small and select group of about 600 men.²⁹ Particularly because the life of each record is so short and because styles change so rapidly, a successful A&R man can "lose his touch," misjudge the ever-changing moods of consumers and Top 40 radio programmers, and consequently pass up potential "hit" material. The role of the independent producer serves to alleviate and minimize the specter of this dilemma.

Approximately 300 independent record producers compete with company A&R men in the searching out of new talent and the supervision of artists' recording sessions. Unlike his salaried counterpart, the independent producer is in business for himself. He contracts with artists to serve as their A&R man and negotiates with a major company on their behalf in the sale of the rights to manufacture and/or market the records so produced.

Both types of producer supervise and underwrite the costs of recording sessions for the artists with whom they hold contracts. Recording costs are deducted "off the top" from any royalties received by the artist from the sale of his record(s). The producer "underwrites" recording costs insofar as he supplies the capital required in advance. This is in the form of a loan to the artist. His outlay is an advance payment, with the expectation that the record will sell and the loan will be

²⁹ I have estimated the number of A&R men and independent record producers on the basis of state-by-state listings for the United States in the Music Industry's International Buyer's Guide, 1967-68 edition. Cincinnati, Ohio: Billboard Publishing Co., 1964, pp. 16-60.

repaid from the royalties. The standard recording contract requires in addition that in the event of a "hit" the artist must repay the costs of all recording sessions held prior to the one from which the "hit" arose.³⁰

Independent producers and A&R men are financed by different sources. The A&R man is financed by his company, while the independent producer must personally expend his own capital.

It costs . . . an average of \$2,500 to produce a record and get it out into the field. This does not include the promotional, merchandising, and selling expenses that are ultimately incurred. It does include the cost of musicians, copying, arranging, recording, editing, mastering, manufacturing, mailing, and handling.³¹

The independent producer serves to broaden the base of the industry's talent-hunting operations and to enlarge the available recorded input from which company policymakers select. Most companies will purchase a master from an independent producer if it sounds to its policymakers as though it will be a hit. In so doing, they go over the heads of their own A&R staff. This is most likely to be done when policymakers feel that records produced by the company's A&R men do not measure up to the independent producer's.

True and accurate information as to 'hot masters' is sought by the larger record companies, which hope to purchase the masters and distribute records made from them. If several companies receive the same information which is not unusual, a spirited competition for rights to the master may ensue. Prices as high as 10 to 15 thousand dollars have been paid for such rights.³²

³⁰The standard contract form between artist and producer and/or artist and record company may be found in Shemel and Krasilovsky, This Business of Music. Cincinnati, Ohio: Billboard Publishing Co., 1964, pp. 401-403, 407.

³¹"Radio and Records" (pamphlet), a presentation of the Record Industry Association of America before the 1964 Regional Conferences of the National Association of Broadcasters, pp. 5, 6. Available from Record Industry Association of America, 1 East 57th Street, New York, N.Y.

³²Shemel and Krasilovsky. This Business of Music, op. cit., p. 32.

Such payments are frequently accompanied by an agreement stipulating that the company will pay a percentage of the record's sales, i.e., a royalty to the artist and producer involved.

The independent producer is a free-lance A&R man, a record producer without any formal or lasting ties to one major record company. Unlike the affiliated A&R man, he has no direct access to the nationwide network of promoters and distributors franchised by the companies. In order to overcome his difficulties in those areas, he must obtain the services of a major company. To do so he either sells the "master" of his record outright or manufactures it himself (on his own label), contracting with a major company to provide for its promotion and distribution.

Successful independent producers often set up large-scale operations which rival the established companies in every way except promotion and distribution. Two recent news items illustrate the rewards available to those writer-artist-production teams which succeed independently of the major companies in producing "hits."

One of the most successful of the independents is the New York firm of Koppelman and Rubin. Charles Koppelman is 27 and his partner, Don Rubin, is 28. Mr. Koppelman stumbled across the Lovin' Spoonful quartet in a Greenwich Village club in 1965, and that started the firm on its way. After only two years, Mr. Koppelman is able to say 'We've had a \$2.5 million offer from a couple of big companies that want to buy them out.'³³/Sic/

(Independent producer) Bob and Dan Crewe concluded a multi-million dollar deal with Dot records and Paramount Pictures for their Crewe Group of companies last week. The deal calls for Bob Crewe's services as a record producer for his DynoVoice label, with exclusive distribution by Dot Records . . . The Crewe Group of companies, of which Bob Crewe is Chairman of the Board and his brother, Dan Crewe,

³³"Record Industry Turning to Younger Producers," The New York Times, op. cit.

is President, include: DynoVoice and New Voice Records /small/ recording companies; Saturday Music, Tomorrow's Tunes, Genius Music Corp. (publishing houses); Genius, Inc. (production of recordings); S.C.C. Management Corp. (talent); and Crewe Video Productions.³⁴

The most successful independent production companies are either co-opted by the major record companies (as was the Crewe Group) or themselves grow into major companies with their own distribution network (as did Dot Records). For independents who have not so proven themselves the going is a good deal rougher. Established record companies employ A&R men to produce the majority of their releases. It is often an admission of failure for a company to have to take on and promote records produced by outsiders. Few companies go out of their way to do so. Artists contracted directly to independent producers, as a general rule, are less likely to have their records exposed to the public than those who are contracted directly to a major record company through its A&R staff.³⁵

When all other things are equal, company officials prefer to release the input of their own A&R men: profits are higher, contracts are simpler, less complications are likely to arise.

We prefer the A&R man to work for us . . . (This has) to do, from the company point of view, (with) the close nexus that

³⁴"Crewe Group and Dot-Paramount Enter Multi-Million Deal," Billboard, 7/17/67, p. 3.

³⁵This proposition is based on impressionistic evidence and on preliminary observation of the "Hot 100" listing of hit tunes published by Billboard weekly. The best way to test the "general rule" systematically would be to examine the "Hot 100" list over a period of weeks and distinguish which labels with hit records are owned by major companies, i.e., record companies which have their own promotion and distribution network and do not subcontract these functions to other (larger) companies. The "rule" would be supported if it were determined that the majority of hit records are on labels fully owned by the major record companies, as seems to be the case.

the A&R men will have with the company, with the distributors with whom he'll work, permanent relations with the artist, and the advertising end of it . . . But, we certainly have a number of records that are produced on the outside.³⁶

An independently produced hit is preferable to none at all.

The creative sector of the pop music industry, comprised of performing artists and record producers, contributes the raw material which must pass through several processing stages in order to reach the consumer. Just as A&R men and independent producers filter the artist population, the recorded output of the creative sector is filtered by company policy-makers, regional promoters, and Top 40 programmers. Once the record has been "cut" its fate rests with these "strictly business" sectors of the industry. We turn now from the production of Top 40 records to a consideration of the practices surrounding their promotion and distribution.

THE FILTER, PHASE II: THE RECORD INDUSTRY

Record company "pölicymakers" constitute the second strategic checkpoint in the Top 40 preselection system. Their task is to select from the output of the creative subsystem the records which are to be released, the date on which each record is to be sent out, and the form in which it is to appear, e.g., as a single, or as part of an album. Each record company has a pool of potential releases larger than the number that are released. Structural constraints external to the record industry place a celing on the number of singles that can be released in any given week. Because more records are released than are in demand,

³⁶Clive Davis, President of CBS Records, interviewed by Richard Doan on "The Truth About Radio: A WNEW Inquiry," WNEW News, New York, New York. Broadcast January 15, 1967, p. 5 transcript (mimeo).

policymakers must also set priorities as to which of a company's releases are to be more heavily promoted than others.

The release of a record by company policymakers is itself of little value for predicting whether or not the record will become a "hit." At this early stage of the filter, it simply distinguishes the record released from those held back "in the can." The record, released, is merely a potential hit. Of approximately 300 records released weekly, fewer than 70 are brought to the attention of the Top 40 listening audience.

According to a Billboard survey of 1963 . . . only 23.7 percent of the singles (received) were played more than once, and a full 61.6 percent were never played at all . . . (by) the average station.³⁷

Of the 70 which receive radio airplay anywhere, a much smaller percentage receives airplay nationally.

"Airplay is the lifeline of a company."³⁸ The radio medium is the major link between record companies and Top 40 record consumers. Its needs and dictates are primary constraints upon record company policymakers. To be selected for airplay, for example, a Top 40 single must not be over three minutes in duration. Records are edited to meet this requirement so that they can be spaced between commercials by the disk jockey. The "full length" version is available only on long-play albums.

Records are not sold as other products are . . . It involves the introduction of many new artists to the public. You cannot expose their performance because it's just on grooves and the public will not know what they sound like; today the day of the listening booth is long since past, with the advent of . . . modern merchandising methods. Record companies are dependent on radio . . . to introduce new artists as well as to introduce new records of all artists and to get them exposed to the public.

³⁷ Shemel and Krasilovsky, op. cit., p. xviii.

³⁸ Norman Winter, Publicity Director of Liberty Records, quoted in "Reviewing Reviewers," Billboard, 4/29/67.

Q.--Would it be fair to say that radio accounts for 75, or 90 percent of the promotion of new releases?

A.--I think your figures are probably accurate, yes.³⁹

Policymakers have the foreknowledge that only a few of the records released each week can be fitted onto Top 40 radio stations' tightly structured playlists, and thereby receive the exposure prerequisite to their public's awareness of and demand for particular records. A large problem consists of not knowing in advance which ones will receive air-play. Each release is passed on by the Top 40 programmers of the radio industry. For it is they who filter the companies' output for public consumption.

While the decision to release a record is theirs, policymakers have little control over the media, little power to insure the exposure of particular release, i.e., no direct access to record consumers. Record companies' promotion of some artists at the expense of others (all under contract to them) is in large part an attempt to structure the ambiguity of this situation.

In past N.A.B. meetings we have frequently been confronted with questions about why the industry puts out as many records in relation to the number that actually sell well. The answer is simple: the record industry is not unlike . . . other industries whose business is selling art. There are a large number of companies in our industry employing a large number of talented performers and creative producers who combine their talents, their ingenuity and their creativity to produce a record that each is sure will captivate the American public. The fact that only a small proportion of the output achieves hit status is not only true of our industry . . . There are no formulas for producing a hit record . . . just as there are no pat answers for producing hit plays, or sell-out movies or best-selling books. We have made records that appeared to have all the necessary ingredients--artist, song, arrangements, promotion, etc.--to guarantee they wind up as best sellers, Yet they fell flat on

³⁹ Clive Davis. "The Truth About Radio: A WNEW Inquiry," op. cit.

their faces. On the other hand we have produced records for which only a modest success was anticipated that became runaway best sellers.⁴⁰

Each record company has an "Office of National Sales and Promotion" wherein its policymakers are lodged. Releases are scheduled and selected for promotion in this office. Personal appearance tours are arranged for certain of the company's artists. The best indicator of a record's potential for becoming a hit at this stage is the amount of promotion it is allocated by company policymakers. Records are released (1) with no advance publicity, (2) with minimal fanfare, or (3) only after a large-scale advance promotional campaign. The extent of a record's promotion informs the policymakers' immediate audience of regional promoters and Top 40 programmers of their expectations for, and evaluation of, their product. In this way the company rank orders its own material.

The differential promotion of records serves to sensitize Top 40 programmers to the names of certain songs and artists. Heavily promoted records are publicized long before their release through full-page advertisements in industry trade papers, special mailings, and personal appearances by the recordings' artists. The program director is made familiar with the record long before he receives it. It is "expected" to be a hit. In this way, though radio stations receive records gratis, anticipation and "demand" for selected releases are created. Many members of the record industry believe advance promotion to be a necessary, if not sufficient, filtering mechanism. Recent examples of records whose airplay and sales were preceded by the successful employment of these techniques are those by the Monkees, the Cowsills, and Jimi Hendrix.

⁴⁰"Radio and Records," op. cit.

A group called the Moby Grape was recently selected by policymakers at Columbia Records for heavy promotion. Though relatively unsuccessful, the campaign was typical in terms of the mechanisms employed.

Columbia Records is devoting prime promotion time to the buildup of a new rock 'n' roll group from San Francisco called the Moby Grape. The campaign got under way last week with the unprecedented simultaneous release of five singles and one album. The group was introduced to key West Coast press and radio representatives by Columbia executives from both coasts at a special party and concert at the Avalon Ballroom, showcase for San Francisco's rock 'n' roll talent. More than 1500 attended the event, with other coast groups joining in.

According to Columbia, the unusual step of simultaneously releasing five singles and an album by a previously unrecorded group is the label's way of displaying confidence in the group's appeal and of underscoring the range of the Moby Grape's repertoire. The five singles will each be released in specially colored sleeves, which are part of a complete art concept created for the campaign by the Columbia art department. Color photos of the group are used on the front and back of the album, which also includes a color poster as a free bonus . . . The poster will be available in bulk quantity to dealers for in-store display use. Advance dealers orders of the LP are reported to have exceeded 100,000 copies.

As part of the Moby Grape promotion, a special logo (insignia) was designed and will be used prominently on all merchandising, promotion and publicity material, as well as on the product itself. All correspondence and news releases concerning the group will be printed on special paper with the logo as a letterhead. The advertising campaign . . . will feature full-page ads in all trade publications and in key teen magazines and newspapers.

A Moby Grape manual, containing information about the group, as well as sales tips, was prepared and sent to all Columbia sales and promotion personnel in the field. The manual also includes a complete guide to the merchandising tools developed for the promotion. In addition to the manual, Columbia has created special Moby Grape issues of "Insight," the label's sales magazine, and "Buyways," its product information handbook.⁴¹

⁴¹"Columbia Gives Moby Grape A Whale of a Buildup," Billboard, 6/17/67.

The strategy of massive promotion is employed by policymakers in an attempt to influence the coverage of their product by media over which they exert little control. They must rely on independently owned trade papers to bring new records to the attention of radio programmers and disk jockeys, and upon radio airplay and journalists to reach the consumer market. For this reason, selected artists are sent to visit key radio stations, and parties are arranged in cities throughout the country to bring together the artist and this advanced audience. It seems likely that if record companies controlled airplay, fewer records would be released weekly: that if policymakers could better predict exposure for particular releases, then fewer would be recorded.

The importance of promotion to the recording artist provides policymakers with a good deal of leverage. For the decisions as to which artists will be promoted and which will not are made within each record company. Over this area, policymakers exert full control, and strive to maximize profits for their employers by utilizing the uncertainties of the market. Artists and records are not chosen randomly for promotion.

Contracts between artists and companies provide for payments to the artist on the basis of royalties from the sale of his records. If the record does not sell, the artist receives no royalties. If the company does not promote the record it is very unlikely that it will sell. The artist is at the mercy of the company in this regard. He is in the "buyer's market" dependent on the favor of the company for the marketing and promotion of his records.

There are at least two types of inducements that unknown artists, particularly, are encouraged to provide the company in order to promote their records. The first and most important of these is the agreement of the artist to assign the copyrights of any songs he composes to a

music publishing firm designated by the company. The second is the artist's willingness to sign for a low royalty percentage. A third inducement can only be provided by artists who are currently known to the public through television or movie exposure.

Every record company owns at least one publishing firm.

Virtually everyone in the music industry--artist, promoter, booker, etc.--owns or has an interest in at least one publishing company. This is an area in which the silence is sometimes deafening. Others are quite open about their affiliations.⁴²

If a firm owned by the record company publishes a song composed and/or performed by one of the company's artists, the royalties paid to its publisher then go to one of its subsidiaries. When an artist assigns the copyright to a song he has written to the publishing arm of the company for which he records, the company pays far less in (real) royalties and accrues greater profits in the event that the record becomes a "hit." One internal factor weighed by policymakers in deciding which records to release and promote is: who owns the copyright?

Several news items bear interesting testimony to this finding:

(1) A&M's publishing companies have formed a disk production unit--a record company within a record company--to help introduce its copyrights . . . The publishing operation works on several levels: supplying material to the mother company, A&M records, and to outside interests . . . Fifty percent of the company's copyrights are credited to its own artists.⁴³

(2) An artist who has already had many hit record successes: Bobby Goldsboro's new contract with United Artists Records allows him for the first time to operate his own publishing firm, as well as a production company.⁴⁴

⁴²"There's More Than One Business Like Show Business," Billboard, 4/15/67.

⁴³"A&M Publisher's Disk Production Unit," Billboard, 9/9/67.

⁴⁴"UA Contract Gives Goldsboro 'go' on Pub., Production Firms," Billboard, 8/19/67. Emphasis mine.

(3) A complaint filed in Cook County Circuit on behalf of a recording group called the Mob alleges that under their contract with Capitol Records . . . 'the purported consideration for their services, as composers, was illusory in that it provided for future, contingent payment of royalties' . . . and that Capitol . . . 'was under no obligations to do anything for plaintiff's services as composers.' . . . According to the suit, the publishing clause of the group's contract with Capitol Records reads: 'I grant Capitol the right to each and every composition and I agree that at Capitol's request I will execute an assignment of each composition I record hereunder to a publisher designated by Capitol . . . Publisher agrees to pay writer 50 per cent of all net income . . . derived from the exploitation of the composition. 'Net income' means publisher's gross income from exploitation of the composition less . . . 15 per cent of such gross income as an allowance for overhead . . .' This is reportedly the first time the publishing clause in an artist's recording contract has been challenged in court on 'considerations.'⁴⁵

Before a song can be recorded by a performer, the company for which he records must obtain a license from its publisher granting permission to record the song. The license is granted on a royalty basis of two cents to the publisher for every copy of the record sold. The license is not exclusive, i.e., any company can apply for and receive one for any song; the publisher's goal is to have as many companies record a song as possible. Oftimes the royalties to the publisher exceed those to the artist from the sale of his recording of the song.

Unknown artists are generally contracted to record on a royalty basis of two to three percent of their records' sales. Established artists' contracts provide for higher royalties and a guaranteed minimum payment. Publishers' royalties from the record sales of a hit song generally exceed those from the sales of any one artist's recorded rendition. A best-selling record on the Top 40 charts will appear in numerous other versions recorded by other performers, e.g., instrumental versions of vocal hits for the same market, "softened" versions (for laundromats, restaurants, non-Top 40 radio music programming, jazz versions).

⁴⁵"Mob Wants Out . . . in Action vs. Capitol," Billboard, 6/3/67.

When a record company owns the publishing firm which is assigned the copyright to a song, it receives royalties, as publisher, from all sales of other companies' recorded "cover" versions of the hit song.

'Windy,' The Association's recent blockbuster single, is among the top Almo copyrights. There have been twelve covers on the song as of two weeks ago.⁴⁶

The Almo music publishing company is owned by A&M Records, and receives royalties on all 13 versions of the song mentioned.

(Last year) the top publisher-award winner (was) Jobete Music, with 13 awards . . . The BMI awards are presented annually to songs which reached Top 10 positions in trade paper polls . . . reflecting record and sheet music sales, radio and TV performances and other factors measured in those polls.⁴⁷

(N.B. Jobete Publishing is owned by the Motown Record Company.)

In addition to preferring artists who assign copyrights of their songs to company-designated publishers, policymakers are also likely to consider the royalty percentage for which the artist is working in deciding whether to release and promote his records. Given two equally unknown artists, for example, sales of the one with a lower royalty in his contract are likely to be preferred. The second means of inducing a company to promote an artist, then, is for the artist to sign at a low royalty percentage. The Monkees, for instance, in return for a heavy promotion, signed to record at the low royalty rate of 1.25 percent.⁴⁸

A third, and important consideration of policymakers in estimating the potential return from the release of a record is its "spin-off"

⁴⁶"A&M Publishers' Disk Production Unit," op. cit.

⁴⁷"BMI Cites 32 Writers," Billboard, 5/6/67.

⁴⁸"The Great Revolt of '67," TV Guide, 9/23/67, p. 7. See also "The Monkees," The Saturday Evening Post, 1/28/67, for an in-depth account of how the group's early hits were produced.

possibilities, that is, releases are often timed to coincide with artists' exposure on other media besides radio. Many companies are affiliated with or owned outright by movie and/or television production companies--furthering the possibility of coordination and timing. MGM and Warner Brothers Records, for example, are owned by the movie production companies of the same name. RCA Victor, Columbia, and ABC Paramount Records are each affiliated with one of the three major television networks. Each of these record companies, in turn, owns at least three additional record companies and/or label lines. MGM owns Verve and Folkways Records, and Warner Brothers owns Reprise and Atlantic Records, for example.

Exposure of an artist by any of the mass media increases his worth to the others. Consequently, there is a high rate of performer interchange between recording, television, and movie production studios. RCA Victor Records invested very heavily in a promotional campaign for The Monkees with the expectation that their exposure on television would bring a high return on the investment. Both The Monkees and Sally Field (star of "The Flying Nun" TV series) were selected for promotion only after the television shows on which they appear had been added to network schedules. Coincidentally, The Monkees appear on NBC's network, which in turn owns RCA Victor Records. Several years ago, the parent company of Decca Records, M.C.A., Inc., was divested of a talent agency subsidiary after the Justice Department demonstrated that Decca Records and other M.C.A. subdivisions drew disproportionately from the pool of artists sponsored by the talent agency.

Spin-offs in the form of additional artist exposure increase the sales of his records and argue strongly that policymakers not only

release but also heavily promote artists with spin-off potential. Large-scale promotional campaigns cost a minimum of \$50,000.⁴⁹

When a company policymaker releases one record and withholds another, much of his decision is based on an estimate of how it will be received at that point in time by Top 40 programmers and their audience. He utilizes promotion in the hope of insuring the fulfillment of his prophecy. He must consider such questions as: How much longer is a particular style likely to remain popular or receive exposure? If a style is on the way out should he rush out releases in that genre, in which the company has an investment? (this was done when the "twist" was going out of style); or is it more advisable to go along with a newer style? This question is faced by policymakers in every record company who are currently confronted by groups singing "psychedelic" music.

Success or failure is also affected by the material released in any given week by one's competitors. Because of the large number of companies competing, there is little opportunity for coordination of the timing of releases, or for the dividing up of the market. Each company releases records with little or no intelligence available about what records its competitors are about to place on the market in the same week. For example, in a week in which many records by established artists are released, the number of airplay slots available to releases by "unknowns" will be unusually limited. Similarly, if a ballad happens to be released in a week in which other companies also issue a large

⁴⁹ Company officials interviewed considered \$50,000 the "absolute minimum" necessary to "do the job." Accounts of promotional campaigns in the trade papers confirm that the amount spent is often greater than this. As the amount decreases, so, too does certainty in the hit potential of the record.

number of ballads, the probability that any one of them will receive airplay is diminished. Radio station programmers adhere to a balanced format. In a week characterized by a large number of ballads, a "rocker" stands a better chance of gaining exposure (exclusive of its "intrinsic" merits). Such structural factors inhibit the ability of any one company to confidently predict the potential success of its releases.

Policymakers must weigh both internal and external forces in selecting the records which their companies will release and promote. If the copyright to a song is owned by a publishing subsidiary of their company, but the song is not expected to be selected by radio programmers for airplay, internal considerations are likely to give way. Release and promotion may then be allocated to a selection which has a copyright owned by outside interests. If an independent producer offers to sell the company a master which appears to its policymakers to have more sales potential than the records available from the output of the company's own A&R staff, internal considerations, again, are likely to be overruled.

Ideally a company maximizes profits by mobilizing its promotional forces in support of high volume sales of those records which cost it the least in outlays for artist and publisher royalties. Feedback from, and innovation within, the artist community are channeled through the creative (input) sector of the filtering system. The policymaking (throughput) sector is far more sensitive to feedback from sales and to the airplay selection decisions of station program directors.

THE FILTER, PHASE III: REGIONAL PROMOTION AND DISTRIBUTION

Regional promoters constitute the third strategic checkpoint through which recorded material must pass in its transmission from artist to consumer. Records favorably processed by policymakers are shipped to a nationwide network of regional promoters whose formal task is to obtain airplay and sales in their areas for all the records sent them each week.

Let's be realistic . . . You cannot hope or be expected to put every single release into your one-stops and major dealers. But we do expect you to put out the records that get (air-) play . . . It's pretty clear that we need Pop format radio. And I think you will all agree that getting play at these stations is never an easy task.⁵⁰

Promoters and distributors in every major city collectively receive the output of the policymakers. It is hoped by the backers of each release that their record will be added to the play-lists of Top 40 stations. By the very nature of the play-list format, the stations will select only a few of the new releases for inclusion on their lists. The records he receives must be differentially handled by the promoter; he is perpetually oversupplied with more records than can be promoted at one time. In order to process the records he receives, the promoter sets up priorities. He serves as arbitrator for the several sectors and competing interests whose product has reached this stage of the preselection system. Promoters operate on the vital boundary between the recording and broadcasting industries.

There are far more record companies than there are record promoters in any region in the country. In Detroit, for example, there are 13

⁵⁰ John Rosica, National Sales and Promotion Manager, RCA Victor Records, in "Patterns in Promotion," a speech before RCA Victor regional distributors, April 27, 1967 (mimeo).

record promoters,⁵¹ whose job it is to handle the output of more than 300 companies. Some of them (four in Detroit) work exclusively for one record company, are salaried by that company, are "part of the team." Others are independent, free-lance, franchised by many companies to promote and distribute products on their labels. Because he has so many more records to handle the task of the independent promoter/distributor is somewhat more complex. But the role of each type of promoter is essentially the same: to supply radio stations with (free) records, to seek airplay for (some of) them, and to service retail dealers and sub-distributors with stock.

Although the promoter "drops off" every release he receives at the radio stations he visits, a few are selected every week for preferential treatment--a special "pitch." The records so preferred often correspond to those that the Office of National Sales and Promotion in each company has singled out in advance as priority items. At the local promotional

⁵¹Promotion and distribution functions are basically undifferentiated in the record industry. Franchised distributors must promote the companies' records in their region; in order to facilitate their distribution he must help to create demand for them. Industry parlance does not distinguish "exclusive" from "independent" promoter/distributors as I have done. The industry refers to record promoters as "independent" only when they work for no record company at all, i.e., when they are hired by the artist, publisher, or producer to promote in competition with the franchised record promoter. In this paper "independent" promoters are intended to mean record promoters who are franchised by more than one record company, while "exclusive" promoters are those promoters who work directly for one record company and no other.

All established distributors are also record promoters. Top 40 program directors most frequently see them, as they are the direct representatives of the companies supplying records free of charge. One tactic of the unaffiliated, free-lance promoter is to attempt to "fix" the rank order priorities of the franchised promoter.

In the example of Detroit there are 13 promotion operations active in the Top 40 area; more than 13 persons are involved. For simplicity of presentation, the term "promoter" in the text will refer only to franchised promotion-distribution operations.

level, however, the company's preferences become just one of the several elements (albeit a large factor) in the politics of regional promotion. Policymaker's priorities are subject to change by the hour, depending upon broadcasters' response to new releases. The promoter cannot wholly rely on them in setting up his priorities, for their potential lack of consistency. He is approached, at the same time, by several other, possibly conflicting interests: those of the recording artist, the record producer, and the song publisher. Every record released represents, in varying degrees, each of these interests.

The boundary position of the promoter is thus a pressure-ridden one. Policymakers demand that certain company releases receive airplay in his region. Competition from other promoters, under the same pressures from their companies, is fierce. Promoters have little power over radio program directors in major cities, and can scarcely control their selection of records for airplay. For the number of priority-designated items far outstrips the programmer's demand. A typical memo from a large record company's National Sales Office to its regional promotion staff reads:

The aforementioned records are not going to keep selling forever. You have got to establish their replacements now--not next week or next month, but now . . . There are four records out in the field right now that are all receiving some play and some acceptance . . . Any one or all of these is a potential top 10 record--but they must be worked and worked hard to accomplish this aim . . . For the next week, every man should lead on every call with these four records--at radio, dealer, sub-distributor--everywhere. When you walk into an account, talk singles first.⁵²

Tension exists between many record companies and their promoters over the issue of the latter's success in delivering airplay and sales

⁵²"Weekly Sales Wrap-Up," Capitol Records Distributing Corporation, week of August 21, 1967 (mimeo.).

to their employers. It is exacerbated, particularly if a promoter works for more than one company, when company policymakers feel there is reason to believe that their priorities as to which singles are to be "talked first" are not being executed at the local level.

Music publishers have a large stake in the selection of songs for Top 40 airplay because of the substantial potential royalties involved from the sales of the "hit" version and of the derivative "cover" versions that follow every hit. (An example of a cover version of a Top 40 hit would be any other version of a song made popular by the Beatles, as recorded by Lawrence Welk, The Living Strings, or Andy Williams.) Independent publishing firms try to bring about the success of recorded versions of songs to which they hold the copyright by utilizing the same promotional techniques as the record companies employ. Where the record company has allocated priority to releases in whose copyrights its own publishing subsidiaries have an interest, the promotional efforts of the independent publisher and the record company are likely to conflict. By virtue of their mutual independence they may even vary inversely: publishers, like artists, are generally encouraged to provide the company inducements, e.g., accept reduced royalty payments, in return for the company's promotional favors.

This type of conflict surfaces at the local level--when each competing interest converges on the regional promoter, and pressures him to make a "special pitch" to the radio programmer on behalf of the merits of his record. Insofar as the promoter acts in the interest of the independent publisher--at the expense of the record company--he violates his franchise from the company. "Payola" at this stage is not proscribed by law. Two records may be on the same label, but the company expects priority to be given to the records in which it has the

greatest stake. The independent publisher's interest is usually promoted by the company, only after airplay for priority singles has been refused by local radio stations.

Since the artist and the record producer also have a large stake in the success of their recorded product, the promoter may be pressured by each of them to work on his behalf. As in the case of the independent publisher, their individual priorities may conflict with the policymakers' rank ordering of the company's releases. The record producer receives credit, recognition within the industry, and possible wage increase and/or promotion when records produced under his supervision hit the charts. A&R men and independent producer alike may bypass the National Office by appealing to the regional promoter to arrange his priorities in their favor.

Each week any number of these forces converge on the promotion man as he selects from the companies' output those records for which he will make a special pitch to the broadcaster. Radio programmers generally select from among the records "pitched" by the regional promoter, whose usefulness to the programmer will be detailed in a later section. If 12 hypothetical promoters are each shipped 25 new releases and each selects only two of them for preferential treatment, the program director, with four or five openings on his list, is confronted with 24 "musts" from the regional promoters. In this situation records for which no special appeal is made are seldom selected for airplay.

Hence, the competition for the promoters' favors among the various interest groups within the record industry. At this stage of the filter there is much mutual distrust. Company policymakers are always subject to the possibility that their regional promotion men will "sell out" their priorities to the interests of the artist, producer, song publisher--

or worse, in the case of independent promoters, to those of a competing company's policymaker. One policymaker interviewed stated:

. . . the only way to insure that your promoter will push a given release is to buy him (i.e., provide him with an added inducement, over and above his regular salary, for doing his job).⁵³

It is not surprising that record companies, like other industries, offer generous prizes in "salesman of the year" contests, to distributor/promoters with the best sales and airplay records. The "sellout" appears to be more feared than practiced. For insofar as the promoter is a paid arm of the company he has his franchise to protect.

Policymakers and regional promoters are linked by a very close communications network. Telegrams fly hourly and long distance telephone "WATS" lines are commonplace. Tight coordination is crucial to the creation of a national hit: as soon as a record "breaks" in one or two cities promoters in other regions are informed instantly. They, in turn, try again to assure the broadcaster in their district that radio listeners will like the record and stay tuned.

Promoters at the local level are simultaneously involved in the creation of both current and future hits. They participate in the large-scale, advance promotional buildups scheduled by company policymakers for selected artists. When the national office places his area on the itinerary of a tour for a new performer, the regional promoter must arrange for meetings with local entertainment influentials, appearances at radio stations, cocktail parties and their guest list. He must publicize the artist's appearance, and is relied upon for his knowledge of the area and his contacts with its more important figures. Regional promoters are thus engaged in two types of promotional activity.

⁵³ (Personal communication.)

If the regional promoter in St. Louis obtains airplay for a new release by his company and it sells, and the record is then selected by a Kansas (or any other) City station and sells, it is the task of promotion men in other regions to see that the chain continues in their areas. The hope for every record is that it will become a national hit. Even if the record was not expected to "take off" by the policy-makers who released it, the pressure is on to keep the presses rolling and get that record played and sold in other cities, once it has proven itself in several major areas.

As far as breaking a record on a national basis, it's a very, very difficult thing (to do). There are literally hundreds of releases that radio stations get, and for them to decide which records to play is a very selective process . . . to get the whole nation behind a record . . . takes a tremendous amount of promotion, of coordinated activity, to make sure that everyone in other areas of the country are aware that in a particular city this record broke out, and therefore it's worthy of being picked up . . . It's a worldwide process today. The records that are popular in America are popular almost in very comparable proportions in Great Britain, in Scotland, in Scandinavia, in Hong Kong. It's fantastic when you look at the charts.⁵⁴

The small ratio of promoters to established record companies explains why it is so difficult for a new and unknown company (or independent producer) to obtain the services of a promoter for its records' and artists' promotion and distribution. Regional promoters are ever confronted with an oversupply of records and artists to promote and by an excess of demands for airplay. Unless a major company will vouch for the minor, i.e., ~~itself~~ contract to distribute it, they are seldom willing to undertake the additional task of promoting its records.

⁵⁴Clive Davis, President, CBS Records, in "The Truth About Radio: A WNEW Inquiry," op. cit., pp. 4,5.

At any point in time there are individual stations in various cities recognized in the music trade as good "breakout" areas. Their reputations are the result of having program directors more willing to air new material than are most other broadcasters, and/or being located in a market whose listeners are considered representative of most other areas.

Breakout areas do not remain in the same locations for very long. Many of them are associated with a particular style when it is new, e.g., Detroit was a leader in "breaking" "rhythm and blues" records when this style first crossed over into the Top 40 format, and until the "Motown sound" was adopted by artists and companies in other areas. East Lansing is considered an excellent testing ground because the tastes of its university population correspond closely to the general public's. Records successfully tested there are likely to be "picked up" by programmers in larger cities. New York City, once considered a leader in "breaking" new records, is felt to now "occupy a position in rock radio something like that of the Church in the Middle Ages--powerful, ultra-conservative, and arbitrary."⁵⁵ A recent news item served to inform the industry that a station in San Francisco is to be watched for "breaking" new releases:

By reflecting 'an atmosphere of new things happening,' KFRC has become a happening radio station--especially for singles records. The latest Billboard Radio Response Survey of the market shows the station as clearly the leading influence on singles records sales . . . Said program director Tom Rounds, 'in general, the people here are more in tune with what's going on--the new things. I think our station reflects this.' . . . (The survey indicates that the station commands) not only a vast audience of teens and young adults, but an ability to sway them to buy product.⁵⁶

⁵⁵Dietz, L. "New York Radio's Rock Gap," The New York Herald Tribune, 1/9/66, p. 81.

⁵⁶"KFRC Singles Influence Champ," Billboard, 5/6/67.

Promoters and the industry trade papers are quick to inform the majority of more cautious broadcasters about the success of new records aired for the first time in "breakout" areas. The industry pays close attention to test outcomes. Once a record is successfully broken in a major city--any major city, its probability of being selected for airplay in other cities is enhanced, and may extend across the country. Diffusion of airplay provides a record with a high potential of becoming a national hit. It is a necessary prerequisite.

DECISION-MAKING BY TOP 40 PROGRAMMERS: THE GATEKEEPERS

Programming the Top 40 format consists of throwing together selections in various musical forms and styles, and encouraging their amalgamation. Directed at the widest possible audience, Top 40 music draws upon, and in turn changes the more distinct musical forms. In most large cities there are radio stations beamed to the select audiences for relatively "purist" musical forms, e.g., folk music, country and western. It is of primary significance that the same set of promoters service all of the radio stations in any city. It is equally important to note that Top 40 station programmers seldom add a record to their playlists until its sales performance has already established its popularity elsewhere. To this effect, the promoter comes to the Top 40 program director with sales figures in hand to demonstrate his records' popularity with either out-of-town and/or the minority "test" audiences in the same city. The record may be "tested" in "breakout" cities or it may "cross over" if enough members of the select audiences for smaller stations purchase it.

Record promoters are well aware of the "cross over" potential of a record onto Top 40 stations once it has demonstrated its popularity elsewhere. Some records, such as those by Peter, Paul and Mary, are placed

on Top 40 playlists as a result of their sales among college students. The more common case is that of the record crossing over to Top 40 station playlists after it has been successfully "broken" by stations adhering to a different type of format.

Approximately 30 percent of the records heard over Top 40 stations are selected from "down home" blues programming of the Negro-oriented stations found in most major cities, which program strictly "rhythm and blues" material. When a record achieves high popularity among listeners of "rhythm and blues" stations, it is likely to be co-opted by the Top 40 programmers and exposed to their wider audience. The Negro audience thus serves as a test market for many of the selections that reach the Top 40 stations. Records having strong sales in the ghetto record stores as a result of airplay over R&B stations will soon be heard by Top 40 listeners. Some popular "Top 40" records first tested over R&B stations are those by Lou Rawls, Otis Redding, Nancy Wilson and Arethra Franklin.

As an example of R&B's move-in on the pop market, Ertegun (of Atlantic Records) cited Wilson Pickett. 'Just a few years ago,' he said, 'a good-selling Pickett album sold between 15,000 and 25,000 copies. Now our Pickett albums sell about 250,000 copies.'⁵⁷

Similarly, when "easy listening" format stations succeed in popularizing a movie theme or an "easy listening" artist to the point of increased record sales, the record is quite likely to be introduced onto the Top 40 stations' playlist. Barbara Streisand's records crossed

⁵⁷ N. Ertegun, Vice President of Atlantic Records, quoted in "LP Perils Single in Bowing Acts," Billboard, 8/19/67, p. 1. An interesting history of the crossover of "soul music" onto the predominantly white-oriented Top 40 stations--and a discussion of the development of "Top 40 music" in general--is provided by Charles Gillett in "Just Let Me Hear Some of That Rock and Roll Music," The Urban Review, December 1966, pp. 11-14.

over to Top 40 stations from "easy listening" format stations, as did the theme songs from "To Sir With Love" and "Born Free." A smaller number of records are selected from "jazz" releases having a separate market of their own, which can be danced to or easily sung. Top 40 programmers have also drawn upon the recordings of "folk" musicians and even baroque instrumentalists, and, by exposing them, transformed them into national hits.

Another form of crossover takes place between nations. American Top 40 stations exchange their hits for those most popular in other western nations and heard over their Top 40 format stations. A number of American pop recording artists have risen to the top of the charts in this country only after receiving popular acclaim in other parts of the world. The most recent example is singer Jimi Hendrix. The flow of material is reciprocated. The Monkees have sold millions of records throughout the world (from Hong Kong and the Philippines to France). A few years ago, England's Beatles broke all sales records in this country.

Motown Records will launch an Italian language 'Motown sound in Italy and may do the same for Spain . . . Motown product has been highly successful in Italy . . . Sales were fantastic . . . a hit record in English released for the Italian market have hit as high as 200,000 in sales . . . Italian versions are expected to do much better . . . Motown Records has become established in nearly all foreign countries . . . The sound has caught on there the same as it did here. We've had Top 10 records in almost every major country, including Argentina, Israel, England and Spain.⁵⁸

Because the largest number of crossovers onto Top 40 station playlists are records first aired over R&B stations, the competition among promoters for R&B airplay involves far more than simply the prospect

⁵⁸"Motown Sound Goes Italiana," Billboard, 5/6/67.

of record sales to Negro consumers. Prior success in the rhythm and blues market is of crucial importance to the promoters of such potential Top 40 material. It is widely believed throughout the music industry that R&B stations are one of the last markets where payola is still the way of life.

Crossovers from other radio markets and from other media are much less predictable in the regularity of their occurrence. They often come as a surprise to both promoter and Top 40 programmer, and are consequently difficult to plan for or promote in advance. A record called "Society's Child" recently received Top 40 station exposure only after Leonard Bernstein "broke" it on a television special. That the wider exposure of the record was unexpected is suggested by the reaction of its distributor, Verve/Forecast Records, whose president commented:

It was only through TV's 'Inside Pop, the Rock Revolution' that Bernstein broke (the record) through to national attention. But that's an unusual situation. How many times could you get that kind of exposure?⁵⁹

Payola channeled through markets with less regularized flow of product than there is between R&B and Top 40 stations would yield less payoff. This supports respondents' contentions that it is not worth the promoter's trouble to attempt fixing the record selections of easy listening and other small market stations' program directors. For the crossover of records to Top 40 from these markets is too irregular. If a record has sold, however, as a result of airplay on television or over small "specialty audience" radio stations, its promoters will argue on those grounds for its inclusion on the Top 40 station playlist.

The changes in the Top 40 industry wrought by the payola scandals several years ago will be discussed in greater detail in the following

⁵⁹"MGM Mulling the Campus Road," Billboard, 7/22/67.

section. One important effect of the Federal Bribery Act of 1960 has been to direct payola more specifically to promoters and away from program directors. Top 40 radio has been "cleaned up" significantly as a result of the legislation. The extent to which it is presently "clean," however, is difficult to gauge with confidence. Respondents in the industry had an obvious interest in minimizing its extensiveness.

The complexities of the crossover process, along with some clarifications, are set forth in a sales memo to regional promoters from the Manager of National Sales and Promotion at RCA Victor Records:

At the present time, radio might be categorized into five areas: (1) Country and Western, (2) Conservative--good music, (3) Rhythm and Blues, (4) Middle of the Road--easy listening, (5) Top 40 . . . The Conservative stations are fine for exposing our album product but little repeat play on any particular record doesn't help much in the sale . . . Rhythm and Blues radio is responsible for perhaps 30% of the Pop best-selling singles and 25% of the . . . albums. Obviously we need their help on our r&b product . . . Because of their heavy commitments and short playlists we can only get (played) about one new record at a time . . . Middle of the road stations (are) an offshoot of Conservative and Top 40 radio. They are playing a softer sound than Top 40, although some Top 40 groups and records are now being played . . . Their importance is on the increase for two reasons: (1) Influx of the softer sounds (onto Top 40) charts and (these) stations' ability to force Top 40 to play (some of) these records; (2) Their use of (hit Top 40 records.) . . . The Top 40 stations--or whatever you want to call them--really sell more records than all others combined. Often a country record with pop potential sells volume when through significant sales the Top 40's start to play it. Initial sales may be Country--but crossing into the Pop area makes the difference. It's basically the same with Rhythm and Blues: we need r&b play initially, in order to force Pop stations to play (our R&B releases). Five to ten R&B stations can do it for us. Thanks to the Middle of the Road stations who started the Ed Ames (release) for us--the Top 40's played (it), and we have a hit on our hands . . . Top 40 radio demands at least 60% of the promotion of effort; the rest can be spread out among the other categories.⁶⁰

⁶⁰Rosica, John, op. cit.

The record promoter today must operate within the context of the station programmer's quest for certainty. The program director is constantly on the lookout for advance intelligence regarding the "hit" potential of every record he selects for airplay. As part of his everyday environment, the pressures upon the broadcaster are carefully considered by the record promoter, in his attempts to aid as well as to exploit him. The promoter, besides supplying new releases free of charge, is helpful to the program director in:

1. Keeping him informed about developments in the music world. If a record is selling well in other cities (usually one in which he has an interest) he will make sure that the program director is aware of its success.
2. Introducing him to the recording artists, thereby presenting him the opportunity to judge the showmanship and potential of the artist in person. (The artist(s) may also be provided "free of charge" to entertain at dances emceed by the station's disk jockeys, usually for nonprofit organizations.) The program director is provided an advance screening of new artists.
3. Providing him with an "exclusive." Occasionally a promoter will deliver a much desired new release to one station's program director before giving it to his area competitors. If the record is by a "name" group, the station thereby scores a "coup," and may temporarily raise its ratings.

The thing which a program director dreams of is a hot exclusive--a record which no other station in the area has. Exclusives by popular artists are played and played and played, and when they reach the Top 10, are broadcast with the boast that that station was the first to bring the record to an area.⁶¹

4. Granting the programmer interviews or "spots" with famous artists, for broadcast.

Two news items elaborate on those aspects of the promoter-programmer relationship:

⁶¹Dietz, L., op.cit.

Today's promotion man, unlike the hypester of a decade ago, doesn't rely solely on his persuasive powers, and station visits are only a part of the independent promotion man's chores. For example . . . promotion man Morty Wax provides trivia which can be used at the appropriate moment . . . Wax, who represents recording artists, Broadway shows, record companies, and publishing firms on the promotional level, keeps up a constant mailing barrage . . . And while much of the material is a direct plug for the client, a good deal of it is information calculated to assist . . . with . . . between-records patter.⁶²

'Promotion men are tremendously important to radio stations,' said . . . (the) music director of . . . Canada's most influential pop music station . . . He said a station likes a promotion man to be aware of his product; to tell the station when its missing a record; to keep it informed on record sales; to pitch the station on promotions, even though some may be rejected . . . 'Another thing we like . . . is information sheets . . . We know some of the stuff is a hype, but we can sort out the wheat from the chaff . . . Most stations now have tight playlists, and when it's made up, that's it. Management resents it when a promotion man pitches individual deejays and librarians. Do it through the proper channels' . . . Referring to promotion men with distributors rather than those with record companies, McAdorey said, 'We don't like a man whining and moaning that the company may lose a label if the station doesn't play a particular record. Your label deals just aren't our problem.'⁶³

The line between cooperation with and exploitation of radio programmers is a thin one for the promoter. "Label deals" may be a very real problem to him, if not to the program director. In all his dealings with radio programmers, the promoter's ultimate goal is to obtain airplay. For the help he provides the programmer, he expects him to reciprocate with airplay. This expectation need not be made explicit every time a favor is performed. Its power is widely acknowledged, however, by all parties concerned, in terms of "good will," "staying

⁶²"Wax's Museum Filled with Live Action Promo Pieces," Billboard, 4/22/67.

⁶³"McAdorey Counsels Promo Men," Billboard, 9/2/67.

clean," "honesty," "fair-dealing," and so forth. The program director can maintain his independence only by treating all promoters equally, by not incurring any special debts. Most programmers, for example, categorically denounce the practice of accepting an "exclusive" from a promoter (while doing so, nonetheless) on the grounds that acceptance entails an implicit obligation to play another record at a later date which might not have been otherwise selected.

The game of the promoter is to get you obligated, be it through exclusives, dinners, theater tickets, or what have you.⁶⁴

One method used by some program directors to "stay clean" is to spread around selections for airplay to all the promoters in the region. For example, if five of the records on the playlist happen to be on the Columbia label, no other Columbia records will be aired until one or more of those already on the list is taken off. Many promoters have come to rely on the institution of the "hype" in their effort to force the airplay of records.

"Hype" is a term used in all sectors of the preselection system to refer to any illegitimate means employed by record companies or their agents to induce the airplay of a record. According to Ruth Meyer, program director at WMCA in New York, the term "hype" derives from the slang word "hypo," an abbreviation for the hypodermic needle used by the drug user to artificially boost his spirits. By analogy, the "hype" serves to artificially boost a record's sales. Whenever false information about a record's sales performance is injected into the broadcasting sector, a hype has taken place. Underhanded deals such as the exclusive are hypes. While condemned by all, its practice is widespread.

⁶⁴This statement, made by one of the program directors interviewed, was repeated almost verbatim by each of the others as well.

A record has the greatest likelihood of being hyped when the program director calls retail record outlets to ascertain the rank order in which records are selling. The store manager names a record as top seller which, in fact, is not selling well at all. For this, he has received free records from the named record's promoter. If the program director is not aware that the record has been hyped, he is very likely to place or maintain it on the station's playlist, in the mistaken belief that the public has demonstrated a preference for the record. Since the record's promoter is also usually its distributor, an operation of this type is easily coordinated.

Most program directors in major markets take elaborate precautions to "spot the hypes." They seldom sample the same record stores from week to week, and weight the data received in terms of the trustworthiness of the source. Some stations go so far as to place, or recruit, "spies" among the stores' personnel for the purpose of gathering intelligence on the hypes versus genuine sales.

Another method of hyping a record is reported to be the practice by record companies and their promoters of seeking to "fix" the "dedications" and "audience response" encouraged by most Top 40 stations as part of their format. Programmers suspect that when their disk jockeys invite listeners to make known their favorite new records of the week, they may be called by individuals hired to request the latest releases of the companies for which they are working. These are some of the means developed by the record industry to secure coveted airplay for their releases in an era in which access to airplay has become increasingly problematic.

Although they consider the hype an illegitimate and immoral tactic, program directors distinguish its use on a moderate scale from the greater

evil of its widespread employment. "Too much hyping is self-defeating, for only a moderate amount can escape detection."⁶⁵

Once detected, excessive hyping by a promoter is likely to anger the program director, and result in less airplay for all the records that particular promoter is "pushing." That the hype is used at all indicates that legitimate channels are overloaded. Since this is so often the case, the hype has become institutionalized.

THE FILTER, PHASE IV: TOP 40 RADIO

Gordon McClendon, "inventor" of the Top 40 format, was recently asked whether he objected to its identification as "rock and roll" programming. And he responded,

I object to it for a reason that might be a bit surprising. I've never been able to get anyone to tell me what a rock 'n' roll number is . . . I would rather say Top 40. That's a more accurate description, because at the start of this format, when we instituted it back in the early '50's, we did play only the Top 40 records in the rating charts, some of which were rock 'n' roll, I suppose, or whatever that is, and some of which were on a considerably note . . . It seems to me that almost any station which programs contemporary music, even . . . programming diets of Sinatra and Peggy Lee . . . is called a rock 'n' roll station, and I don't know what a rock 'n' roll number is.⁶⁶

Insofar as "rock and roll" is defined by the records selected for Top 40 radio exposure, this music cannot be said to exist as a musical form. Top 40 program directors have a clearer idea of what rock and is not than of what it is. One reason why so few "easy listening"

⁶⁵Miss Ruth Meyer, program director at WMCA (New York), in response to a question on the extent to which records are presently being hyped.

⁶⁶Gordon McClendon, interviewed on "The Truth About Radio: A WNEW Inquiry," 5/14/67, p. 3 (mimeo).

records cross over is that the Top 40 station must maintain its separate identity. This accounts for the low proportion of records by such artists as Andy Williams, Tony Bennett and Lawrence Welk played over these stations, even though their long-play records sell in large numbers.

Radio operates as a transmission belt linking the record industry to the record consumer. The program content of Top 40 stations--their vehicle for obtaining listeners and sponsors--constitutes free advertising for the records selected for airplay.

We are in the advertising business. Delivering audiences to sponsors is the important thing. We're not in the record business. Selling records is incidental to what we do.⁶⁷

Top 40 station managements demand high audience ratings, for the rates charged advertising sponsors, i.e., the station's income, is based solely on the number of listeners the station can "deliver." Advertising agencies place ads with radio stations according to the "cost per thousand" listeners. The fierce competition between Top 40 stations (there are at least two in every major city) requires that the program director successfully select a group of records that will appeal to the widest possible audience.

We use the entertainment part of our programming, which is music, essentially, to attract the largest possible audience so that what else we have to say . . . in terms of advertising message . . . (is) exposed to the largest number of people possible--and the way to get the largest number of people to tune in is to play the kind of music they like . . . so that you have a mass audience at the other end.

Q.--Do you play this music because it is the most popular?

A.--Exactly for that reason.

Q.--If, let's say that by some freak of nature, a year from now the most popular music was chamber music, would you be playing that?

A.--Absolutely . . . And the year after that, if it's Chinese madrigals, we will be playing them . . .

⁶⁷Paul Cannon, program director of WKNR, a Detroit Top 40 station (personal communication).

Q.--Well, then, it seems to me that you're saying that you're governed in your programming by the ratings, is that true?

A.--No, I think I'd say it a little differently. We are very interested in having a large audience. The only way we can measure that audience is by ratings, with all of their inadequacies that we know.⁶⁸

The operation of the Top 40 station necessitates that it program music for the masses. Program directors live in constant fear that listeners will switch to another Top 40 station whenever a record of which they disapprove is played. Contests are run for the purpose of inducing listeners to stay tuned. Low ratings for a program director often mean the loss of his job.

In many sectors of the record industry it is felt that the tension level has risen as a consequence of the federal legislation which resulted from a Congressional inquiry in 1960 into the operation of the preselection system.

In those days you paid your money and got your hit. Today nobody can predict what will get played on the air.⁶⁹

Before the payola scandals, there was less uncertainty in the music industry than there is today. The Federal Bribery Act of 1960 declares the secret, unannounced payment of funds to broadcasting personnel in return for airplay to be a criminal offense punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or one year imprisonment. Before that time, payola was tax deductible; companies could pay by check.

The outlawing of this mode of preselection brought about a number of changes in the structure of Top 40 broadcasting operations. Salaries

⁶⁸R. Peter Strauss, President, Strauss Broadcasting Group, interviewed on "The Truth About Radio: A WNEW Inquiry," 8/21/66, p. 3 (mimeo).

⁶⁹A Detroit promoter respondent's statement, reflecting back on the "good old days."

were raised in order to compensate for the loss of what had been, until then, a perfectly acceptable practice of supplementing one's income. Disk jockeys lost the prerogative of selecting the records that they play on the air; and "music committees" and the office of program director were created or expanded. The Top 40 format came to mean a rigid playlist of records selected by an individual or small group whose decisions are implemented by disk jockeys who do not participate in the selection process.

The net result of these changes has been to concentrate in the hands of one man the responsibility of selecting all of the records heard over the Top 40 station. Promoter pressure, which had been diffusely applied to all disk jockeys, came to be directed solely at one individual. The roles of promoter and program director were, as a result, much more strictly defined. For a single programmer can see fewer promoters in one day than can a staff of disk jockeys. The station programmer today meets only with legitimate franchised promoters. Access of other interest groups and of amateurs to the new center of power is restricted.

The program director today is held solely responsible for the success or failure of his station's music policy. In the eyes of his employers his salary is high enough to preclude the acceptance of secret inducements to add a record to the playlist. Under the law, station managements are criminally liable for their employees acceptance of payola. With money as a less salient medium of exchange, promoters have had to develop other means of persuasion.

With less influence over broadcasting personnel the record industry now finds it more difficult to predict which of its releases will receive airplay. As the locus of power has shifted from the record industry to

the broadcaster, the response of program directors to promoters "pitching" a record has changed from: "How much money will you offer?" to "What are its sales figures?" As the bribe has become less feasible, the hype has come into being.

In a system where one sector's goals are of little concern to those of a closely related subsystem's, there is a potential for conflict. Robin Williams, Jr. and Wilbert Moore have suggested that the minimum conditions for conflict are:

visibility, contact, and competition. Differences of values enhance the probability of conflict, and may lead to the further categorizing and stereotyping of visible differences. Conflict is facilitated by an increase in numbers, greater differentiation, the prevalence of tensions, and a high level of unfocused aggression deriving from decreased predictability.⁷⁰

These conditions are all present in the Top 40 system. Uncertainty in the record industry is ensured by the short life of the hit record and the resultant competition. The elusive nature of the "fickle" radio audience results in anxiety over ratings among program directors. Visibility, contact, and competition are endemic at all levels of the system. The conflicting goals of component subsystems foster unfocused aggression and at every level engender stereotyping the characteristics of other subsystems.

Public scandals are seldom brought about by the editors of an industry's own trade paper, as is reported to have been the case with the payola revelations. It is of interest, then, that this system coheres as well as it does. Despite the prevalence of tensions throughout, its component industries are held together by the symbiotic nature

⁷⁰ Adapted from Wilbert Moore. Social Change. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963, p. 65.

of their relationship. The profit motive is the only value shared throughout the system. The radio industry depends on record companies for 80 percent of its programming.⁷¹ And the record industry must rely on radio stations for the exposure of their product.

THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

Does the Top 40 audience hear the records it "wants" to hear? Since untried records "lose out" to others whose popularity is demonstrated elsewhere, one may conclude that the Top 40 audience hears the records it has the greatest probability of liking. In this respect feedback is ever present. Broadcasters tend to select records for which the public is expressing or has expressed its preference.

It makes it a lot easier if a song is done by a group with a proven track record . . . The station is more likely to play a new record by the Byrds or the Beatles than by an unknown.⁷²

Whenever a new style appears it is imitated and repeated until still newer ones receive airplay. And record companies require from their producers releases which meet the current potential for exposure. In this way record purchase patterns feed back to both industries.

It might be argued, on the other hand, that the audience in fact does not know what it wants to hear, and that it simply chooses from among the records exposed by the Top 40 stations. Record buyers seldom have alternative means of familiarizing themselves with the other singles available.

⁷¹"Radio and Records," op. cit.

⁷²S. Garrett, head A&R man, Dot Records, quoted in "Dot's Garrett Gives Top Billing to Song," Billboard, 4/22/67.

Most people do not think very much about what they want or what they think is good, but are content to make choices from what is offered them . . . Programmers have drawn conclusions about audience preferences from the box office or from ratings. Even when such indices are statistically reliable, they do not provide any indication of what people think is good, but only what they have chosen from available alternatives.⁷³

Only the records that receive airplay in a particular region are stocked by the record stores in that area. Selections not included on local Top 40 station playlists are not available.

Since there is about a ten percent variance between markets, there are always more records popular elsewhere than there are spaces for them to fill (on the playlists of any region). This leads to situations much like the one . . . when WABC had three spaces opening on its charts, and five records which had "proved" themselves. Three of the five were duly chosen, and the other two were never played (in New York City); because, of course, the next week there were even newer records to fill the available spaces.⁷⁴

Many people have posed the question of which comes first: the airplay or the sales. Is public demand a function of airplay or are the records played chosen as a result of public demand? This study has suggested a preselection system with built-in feedback mechanisms. While feedback is indeed everpresent, it would be difficult to argue that the Top 40 preselection system is the competition to determine which records are the most fit artistically to survive. We have stressed the business considerations present at every level of the system. Thus the answer lies between the two poles.

The audience for Top 40 radio stations, for our purposes, can be divided into two classes: listeners and record purchasers. "Listeners" constitute that segment of the audience which does not buy the records

⁷³Gans, H., "Pluralist Aesthetics and Subcultural Programming: A Proposal for Cultural Democracy in the Mass Media," Studies in Public Communication, 3, 1961, p. 30.

⁷⁴Gans, H., op. cit.

played by the station: record purchasers both buy and listen. The heavy record purchaser and the complete abstainer form two ideal types at each end of a possible continuum. Because record sales figures tell nothing about which members of the audience bought what records, it is difficult to estimate the amount of overlap between listeners and record buyers.

This distinction is important because it is the feedback from the record-buying sector of the total audience which determines the rank ordering of records on the Top 40 station's playlist. Whether a new record receives continued exposure after its first several days of air-play depends on the strength of its sales performance during those first few days.⁷⁵ In Detroit, the stations know within a week which of their "pick hits" have sold the most copies; in New York City it takes six weeks to gather this information. If the record sells noticeably during its initial exposure as a "pick hit," it is added to the station's regular Top 40 playlist. The content of the regular Top 40 playlist, then,

⁷⁵ Sales can be affected by such factors as the frequency of a record's airplay by the Top 40 station. See Jacobivits, L., "Record Purchasing Patterns and Satiation Theory," (title approximate) Psychological Reports, 1966. This is but one of several ways in which the station program director can influence his compilation of the "Top 40's" rank order. Since the number of records sold is often quite close, the ranking of two records, e.g., as numbers 10 and 15 in popularity, is quite arbitrary. The sampling procedures for ascertaining the number of records sold is frequently haphazard; the numbers reported are often subject to hyping; and in the larger cities the information on the number of copies a record has sold is often so late in arriving that it can serve to only confirm or disconfirm the program director's initial "hunch" about the record's potential popularity. This is one of the circumstances that gives rise to the question of the radio station's creating a record's popularity rather than simply reflecting it, as Top 40 stations claim to do.

is a product of the favorable response by record buyers to certain of the choices preselected for them by the station's program director.

Those records with insufficient preliminary drawing power are eliminated from the competition. The "pick hit" serves the record-buying electorate in much the same fashion as the political primary serves voters: it is their first opportunity to provide promoters and programmers with direct feedback about the candidates preselected for them. Further voting upon the items on the station playlist decides in which order the records are to be ranked. The selection that sells the largest number of copies becomes number one. In standing aloof from these early runoff contests, the "listener" sector of the audience loses its potential role in the determination of which records are placed on the Top 40 every week, and in what order.⁷⁶

There is a strong correlation between age and the purchase of Top 40 material. Sixty percent of all 45 r.p.m. singles are purchased by teenagers, 80 percent by persons under 25. These two age groups constitute the bulk of the record-buying sector of the total Top 40 radio audience.⁷⁷ There are at the same time many young "listeners" and an increasing number of adults listening to (but not purchasing) Top 40 programming.

The plus factors of radio 1967, we have found, are an audience larger than is obvious on the surface . . . Strangely enough, much of our success can be attributed to campaigns

⁷⁶Listeners telephoned requests are also taken as an indicator of early response to the new release. They carry much less weight than sales, however. If the listener response was hired, a hype has taken place. In the rare event that listeners request a record that is not selling--and has not been hyped--promoters will try to get the record taken off the station's playlist; it is referred to, in this case, as a "turntable hit."

⁷⁷These figures were researched and released by the Record Industry Association of America; in "Radio and Records," op. cit.

on rock 'n' roll stations . . . There is hidden away a far greater and more affluent . . . audience than the more vocal and obvious teenage group . . . (our) products are of interest to the woman of the house and the male do-it-yourself addict . . . Our (nationwide) campaign was extremely successful . . . Since there is still no adequate rating service available to grade accurately the demographics that make up this fantastic audience, results are the best yardstick--and they have been exceptional.⁷⁸

Young record buyers are the selectors at whom all the decisions made in the preselection system we have described are directed. In selecting much of the material on the Top 40, they also determine the songs performed in "cover" versions for the softer sounds of other types of radio programming, i.e., songs purchased by the record-buying markets which those stations serve. Leonard Bernstein sees this as a process of

young people having gotten control of a mass medium--the phonograph record . . . which (now voices) the thinking of millions of our young people . . . The music on these records, with its noise and its cool message may make us uneasy, but we must take it seriously.⁷⁹

The teen market amounted to an estimated ten billion dollars in 1959 and is expected to reach twice that amount by 1970 . . . The existence of this great leisure class with so much buying power . . . has had profound repercussions on the relationship between teenagers and the adult world . . . (Teenagers) have the money to call the tune; they are 'patrons of the arts' and must, therefore, be catered to.⁸⁰

Popular music in America is thus, to a large extent, the product of teenagers rank ordering, for the entire country, records chosen by the pop music industry's preselection system. Record-buying teenagers are the "opinion-leaders" for the nation's pop music tastes. Most of

⁷⁸Report of the Cayton Advertising Agency on adult listeners to Top 40 stations, reported in "Radio Copy-Testing Brings Out the Sweet Smell of Success," Broadcasting, 7/17/67, p. 26.

⁷⁹"Inside Pop--The Rock Revolution," CBS Television Network, broadcast April 25, 1967.

⁸⁰Bernard, Jesse. "Teenage Culture," The Annals, 338 (1961).

American entertainment is tied to Top 40 artists and material. Motown artists play at the nation's top night clubs to enthusiastic adult audiences; Top 40 artists entertain in exclusive adult discotheques.

The input sector of the preselection system--its composers, artists and A&R men--are young people. The throughput sector, consisting of record company policymakers, promoters and Top 40 programmers, filters the material. It is comprised of older personnel. The influentials of the audience, as we have just seen, are the young record buyers.

CONCLUSION/EPILOGUE

The creation and diffusion of Top 40 music in America comprise two of the most competitive professions in the country. Because it is such a large enterprise, involving several hundred record companies and independently-owned radio stations, the exposure and merchandising of this form of popular culture are strikingly commercial in all of their characteristics. In this sense the free enterprise system, encompassing the many profit-oriented characteristics of this preselection system appears in stark contrast and opposition to purely artistic considerations. Any conception of Top 40, i.e., "rock and roll" music as a growing art form must consider the obstacles to its "development" posed by the structural characteristics of the media which disseminate it to the public.

This study of the Top 40 music industries has given rise to the concept of a preselection process, set forth in Part I of this monograph. Subsequent to its application to these industries, several students interested in the diffusion of innovations have applied it to other areas. It has been found useful, for example, in an analysis of the processing of new car designs through the various corporate levels of the Chrysler Motor Company.⁸¹

In this study, we have followed the "filtering" of potential Top 40 material from the time of the artist's "discovery," through the politics of recording contracts, company policymaking, copyright law, regional promotion, Top 40 station selection, to the final goal of airplay, exposure--and popular acclaim.

⁸¹Miller, W. H. "The Preselection System at Chrysler" (unpublished).

It is my hope that the organizing constructs of filtration and preselection can be further refined and fruitfully applied to other areas in the future.