Hollywood Sapphire Group

ROBERT J. CALLEN*

ONE OF THE outstanding advancements of sound-on-disc recording is not, as one might suspect, another electronic gadget but is, in the opinion of the writer, the formation of the "Sapphire Group," a social organization comprised of one hundred members in New York and fifty in Hollywood, all associated with sound recording. These two groups meet and dine together monthly and in this friendly, congenial environment discuss the technical problems common to all sound recordists.

The early producers of disc and cylinder phonograph records were extremely keen competitors in this new and unique art. This may help to account for the fact that these men were usually personal enemies. I don't know whether Emile Berliner and Tom Edison were as well acquainted with each other as they were with the man who read the gas meter in their studios. It was, however, a common ruse for a recordist to assume the disguise of a meter reader and thus gain admittance to his competitors studio to learn of his advancement in the recording art. In such an environment, a social organization such as our Sapphire Group obviously would have been inconceivable.

However, since the advent of radio broadcasting, the electrical recording and reproduction of sound has continued to improve so that today information about this art is generally considered common knowledge. It seemed inevitable, therefore, that a group of men engaged in various phases of the sound recording should assemble to discuss their common problems.

*100 S. Edinburgh Ave., Los Angeles, Calif.

New York City Group

As early as 1942, the Sapphire Group became a reality in New York City with regularly scheduled meetings, a group pin, and a printed membership list. Prior to that time, it had been customary for W. H. Rose of Frank L. Capps and Co., Inc., to have lunch occasionally with G. E. Stewart of N.B.C. Recording Division and V. Liebler of Columbia Recording Corporation. As the size of this group increased and their discussion became more prolonged, there was no alternative but then to meet regularly for dinner when the discussion need not be curtailed by the necessity of returning to the office. The New York Sapphire Group continues to meet on the third Wednesday of each month in one of the dining rooms of the New York Athletic Club. As the group expanded, it became necessary to limit the membership to one hundred men all engaged in one of the many phases of sound recording.

By the end of 1945, the New York Sapphire Group membership included at least eight members from Hollywood. Some effort was made at that time to organize a Hollywood Sapphire Group, chiefly by Chester Boggs of Columbia Recording Corporation and the writer. However, it was not until Chuck Phillips of OWI in New York visited Hollywood in February, 1946, that the first meeting was held at Brittingham's Restaurant in Columbia Square on February 13, 1946. Seventeen of the 30 sound recordists invited attended the initial dinner and meeting. (*See photo*). Chester Boggs served as chairman. The eighteenth and vacant chair in the foreground of the picture was intended for Roy La Violette, CBS, who was called to cover a program before dinner was served.

After the dinner was served, a talk by each member present was recorded and the 16-inch disc forwarded to the parent group in New York City. The Hollywood Group has continued to meet regularly on the second Wednesday of each month except July. The membership increased so rapidly that it soon became necessary to decide either to limit the membership of the group or to transfer the meeting place to a larger dining room. As a result, a membership committee was elected to decide this and several other problems. The membership committee comprised six charter members: Chester Boggs, Harry Bryant, Bob Callen, Les Culley, Art Felthausen and Ernie Knight. At its first meeting, the committee decided that the group should be restricted to fifty active members, all

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Initial Meeting of Hollywood Sapphire Group, February 13, 1947

Seated at table from left to right are: Harry Bryant, Radio Recorders; Russ Hansen, Sam Goldwyn Studios; Bert Gottschalk, Electro-Vox; Ernie Knight, Diacoustic Lab.; Charlie Douglas, CBS; Chuck Phillips, OWI; Jay Eiseman, CRC; Ludwig Sepmeyer, USN; Chester Boggs, CRC; Garry Harris, RCAV; Bob Callen, NBC; Burton Boatright, Langevin Co.; F. H. (Shang) Winter, Radio Recorders; Les Culley, NBC; Victor Quan, C. P. MacGregor, Darrell Minkler, Radio Recorders; Art Felthausen, C. P. MacGregor.

Sapphire Group

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engaged in the engineering or executive phases of sound recording. No one organization would be allowed a preponderance of membership, but instead attempts would be made to offer all recording organizations representation.

The writer believes that the Hollywood Sapphire Group is a most unique and democratic organization. It has no regular permanent officers. The chairman of the current meeting chooses his successor who then serves as treasurer at that meeting and chairman at the next meeting. In this way, each member as both

chairman and treasurer has an opportunity to arrange a program he feels will be of interest to the majority of the group. In this way, he also becomes better acquainted with his fellow members and is more tolerant of other members when they serve as chairman.

During the early meetings some discussion arose among the members regarding the scope of the groups activities. Should the meetings be technical or social or combine both activities? Meetings of the New York Sapphire Group have so far been only social gatherings. Informal technical talks combined with a social dinner appears to be the most popular meeting for the Hollywood group. This fact was more than confirmed when Wallace V. (Wally) Wolfe, recently elected director of the Motion Picture Research Council, Inc., gave a talk at RCA-Victor illustrated with motion pictures describing the early use of sound-on-disc in sound pictures. As a contrast, present film re-recording techniques were demonstrated by actually scoring a reel from a current motion picture. This demonstration attracted sixty-two members and guests who more than filled the RCA-Victor review theater.

After its first year, the Hollywood Sapphire Group began considering the problem of standardizing recording techniques. In pursuance of that goal, Mr. John Hilliard, Chief Engineer of the Altec-Lansing Corporation, was elected chairman of the Recording Standards Committee. He, in turn, appointed three Standards Sub-Committees: 1) Stylus Committee with four members, 2) Mechanical Committee with five members, and 3) Committee on Response with five members. These committees have met with the Motion Picture Research Council, supplied NAB's Washington, D.C. engineering offices information on proposed standards, and discussed the problem of standardization with members of IRE, ASA, and RMA.

Mr. Jim Bayless of RCA-Victor as chairman of the Mechanical Standards Sub-Committee has compiled a glossary of standard recording terms. The glossary seeks to avoid the ambiguity in the use of names of components used in sound-on-disc recording and processing. At present, each studio and factory has unique names for one or more of the components used in the production of disc records. The confusion resulting from this practice is readily understandable, particularly by a customer who uses the facilities of more than one factory.

Mr. Kenneth Lambert of MGM, a member of both the Hollywood Sapphire Group and the Motion Picture Research Council is chiefly responsible for arranging two joint meetings of the two groups which resulted in the acceptance of the names and definitions of eighteen specific recording terms.

The terms named and defined are included below. It is believed that by printing this glossary in AUDIO ENGINEERING its readers will circulate the list and in this way help to alleviate the confusion which now exists in the vocabulary of the sound-on-disc recording profession.

PROPOSED LIST OF PREFERRED TERMS FOR DISC RECORDING

The following definitions were originally formulated by the Sapphire Club and later approved in this form at a joint meeting of the Sapphire Club Standards Committees and the Research Council Disc Recording Subcommittee:

Original
A recording made by direct amplification and connection of the sound source microphone to the recording equipment.

Duplicate
A disc recording made when the sound source is from an "Original" or any other recording, regardless of media.

Instantaneous Original or Instantaneous Duplicate
When an "Original" or "Duplicate" is intended to be used for direct sound reproduction.

Process Original or Process Duplicate
When an "Original" or "Duplicate" is intended for process to record pressing matrices.

Master
A metal matrice derived by electroforming from the recorded face of a "Process Original" or "Process Duplicate."

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Metal Positive

Metal matrices derived by electroforming from the "Master."

Stamper

A metal matrice derived by electroforming from a "Metal Positive" and further plated and machined for use as a molding die for record pressing.

Duplicate Master

A metal matrice derived by electroforming from the "Metal Positive" and intended to be used for the further electroforming of "Metal Positives."

Duplicate Metal Positive

Metal matrices derived by electroforming from the "Duplicate Master."

Converted Master Stamper

When a "Master" is further machined and prepared for use as a molding die for pressing records.

Master Test Record

A record pressed using a "Master" (not converted) as a molding die and intended for proof of processing.

Pressed Records

When records are pressed using "Stampers" or "Converted Master Stampers" as molding dies.

The following four terms are applied to records to indicate extent of licensing:

Broadcast Transcription Pressed Records

Slide Film Pressed Records

Special Purpose Pressed Records (Not Licensed)

Phonograph Pressed Records

Recording Stylus