

IRDA Begins Third Year

NASHVILLE — In just two years International Record Distributing Associates has grown from a company consisting of Hank Levine, Mike Shepherd and one secretary, into one of the largest music companies on Music Row, currently employing 16 persons. During these two years, IRDA has moved twice to larger quarters, and expanded their present offices three times. IRDA now has a branch office in Hollywood and plans to open offices in New York and London early next year.

The company started as a result of Levine and Shepherd feeling that there was a need for a complete distribution service for independent producers and small record labels. Starting with almost immediate success in its third month of business with Stella Parton's "I Want To Hold You In My Dreams Tonight" on the Country Soul label, and following with an even bigger hit, "The Man On Page 602" by Zoot Fenster on Antique Records, the distribution company has not been off the national charts since April of 1975 and normally has two or three records charted at a time.

In addition, IRDA is getting heavily involved in album production, with five albums by Gene Autry, a collection of western music called "The Great American Singing Cowboys" featuring such artists as Roy Rogers, Tex Ritter, Rex Allen, Jimmy Wakely, Gene Autry and Eddie Dean; and a jazz album by black guitar artist Boogaloo Joe Jones.

IRDA's staff consists of six full-time promotion people, six secretaries, two shipping clerks and an accountant. Levine, in his capacity as president, administrates the company; executive vice president Mike Shepherd is in charge of promotion, distribution and merchandising. Marsha Gepner is vice president in charge of public relations and advertising.

On the international scene, IRDA has affiliates throughout the world who receive a monthly shipment of records released by IRDA on various labels for decisions as to whether or not to distribute these records in their respective territories. However, Levine states, "With our anticipated London office next year, we will be in even closer touch with the international scene, and we expect to announce some close international ties immediately following January's MIDEM convention."

Among the kudos received by IRDA's distributed labels during the past year was Stella Parton's award as the #2 new female country vocalist for 1975, and an R&B release, "Dancing Free" by Hot Ice on Rage Records, has been nominated as one of the top disco hits of the year.

IRDA will be distributing the all-time best-selling Christmas single, "Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer," backed with "Here Comes Santa Claus" by Gene Autry on the newly-reactivated Republic record label. Among the many chart records in 1976 distributed by IRDA are "Lonely Eyes" by Randy Barlow on Gazelle Records, "Someday Soon" by Kathy Barnes on Republic Records, "Dancing Free" by Hot Ice on Rage Records, "Whispers & Grins" by David Rogers on Republic Records, "When A Man Loves A Woman" by John Wesley Ryles on Music Mill Records and "Ain't It Good To Be In Love Again?" by Vicki Fletcher on Music Row Records.

Gusto Continues To Expand

NASHVILLE — Two years ago, Moe Lytle, a young man with a dream, came to Nashville, Tennessee and Gusto Records was born. When Gusto became a corporation in 1974 their immediate plan was to purchase masters from various labels and to re-issue, merchandise and distribute both records and tapes throughout the United States. The first masters acquired came from Stop Records, Chart Records, Nuggett Records and Fraternity Records. The biggest purchase of masters was from Starday-King Records, which included Hollywood, Federal, Deluxe and several other small labels.

Today the plan for using old masters is tremendously successful, but a new dimension has been added. Lytle, president of Gusto, teamed up with Tommy Hill, well-known producer of many country music standards and from this combination Gusto Records has become a full-service independent record label. Lytle and Hill

together have used the basic idea that only good product will sell, and they have been very selective in signing artists that they felt could make the label grow. Using artists like Mike Lunsford and Red Sovine, Lytle and Hill have been able to score seven chart records out of ten releases.

Expansion

Expanding their operations, Gusto Records has recently purchased the recording studio and office building of Starday-King Records in Nashville, Tenn. The properties were purchased from Tennessee Recording and Publishing Inc. The A&R division, headed by Tommy Hill and the promotion department will have their offices in the new location.

Gusto presently is riding the crest of success with a million selling record "Teddy Bear" by Red Sovine. Sales on this record are soaring even after the record peaked with the number one spot on the country singles chart.

Danny Davis & Co. Celebrate Music Publishing Success

NASHVILLE — Danny Davis, leader of the successful Nashville Brass, seems to be tracking his way toward more success these days within the related field of music publishing.

Lamar Morris, formerly a member of Hank Williams, Jr.'s Cheatin' Hearts, has recently been appointed professional manager of Davis' Acoustic Music, in addition to being a staff writer and musician.

Other activities this year on the Davis publishing team saw Dewayne Orender signed to an exclusive writer's contract, while at the same time he also obtained a recording contract with RCA. Orender, who has had over 25 of his own songs recorded by various artists within the past two years, becomes an official artist himself with his first RCA release due this month.

The Davis fold also netted themselves a hit this year with "Sunday Afternoon Boatride In The Park On The Lake," recorded by R.W. Blackwood and The Blackwood Singers.

Writers with the young company have had recent chart action on recordings by such artists as Connie Eaton, Nick Nixon, The Mills Brothers, Danny Davis & The Nashville Brass, Jim Ed Brown, Brian Collins, Billy Thunderkloud & The Chieftones, Lois Johnson and Barbi Benton, as well as a recent album cut by Loretta Lynn entitled "I'll Leave The Leavin' Up To You."

Jimmy Dean has featured two of the firm's songs on his latest "I.O.U." LP, and a pair of tunes were tapped from the Davis catalog for Slim Whitman's current U.A. album.

Currently included under Davis' umbrella of music publishing and production companies are Danny Davis Productions, Daydan Music Corp. (ASCAP), Lawday Music Corp. (BMI), Allmusic, Inc. (ASCAP) and Acoustic Music, Inc. (BMI).



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