



The first great wave of new independent record labels came between the years 1944 and 1947. The major labels of the time – RCA, Columbia and Decca (now MCA) – had all the established orchestras, singers and vocal groups under contract, so it was up to the independent labels to develop and nurture the new talent and to discover and promote the new trends. Most of the men responsible for founding and sustaining the independent record labels of the 1940s have since retired, sold out or died. In fact, only one of those pioneers is still active with his label: Ahmet Ertegun, chairman of Atlantic Records.

Ertegun, the son of a career diplomat, was born in Istanbul, Turkey. When he was twelve, his father was appointed Turkey's ambassador to the United States. Ahmet attended St. John's College, in Annapolis, Maryland, and Georgetown University, in Washington, D.C. He had always been a record collector, with a strong interest in jazz and the blues.

In 1947, Ertegun and Herb Abramson founded Atlantic. The label scored its first major hit in 1949 with Stick McGhee's "Drinkin' Wine Spo-Dee-O-Dee." Within a few short years Atlantic became the premier rhythm and blues label. The artist roster of the time reads like an honor roll of stars: Ruth Brown, Big Joe Turner, Ray Charles, LaVern Baker, Clyde McPhatter, the Drifters, Ben E. King, the Coasters, the Clovers, Ivory Joe Hunter, Chuck Willis and many, many more. During this period Ertegun was producer or coproducer on the vast majority of records made on his label. He was also active as a songwriter for many of the early Atlantic artists, often using the pseudonym A. Nugetre (Ertegun spelled backwards).

Though Ertegun was less directly involved as a producer in the Sixties and Seventies, he was on hand at Atlantic to direct the phenomenal growth of the label into the area of soul (Otis Redding, Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, Percy Sledge, Booker T. and the MGs, Sam and Dave, Solomon Burke, King Curtis) and rock (the Rascals, Iron Butterfly, Vanilla Fudge, Cream, Led Zeppelin, Yes, the Bee Gees, Blind Faith, Crosby, Stills and Nash, King Crimson, Genesis, Roxy Music, Emerson, Lake and Palmer, the Rolling Stones).

Atlantic continues to produce hit acts, and Ertegun continues to influence and inspire new generations of artists.



In the early days of rock and roll, a few men made it possible for the voice of change to be heard. The forces that were then shaping music foreshadowed the end of separate black and white societies. In the late Forties, Jackie Robinson started playing for the Brooklyn Dodgers, and Jerry Wexler, at Billboard, helped change the name of the black-music chart from Race Records to Rhythm and Blues.

As a boy, Wexler had worked with his father as a window washer. After college (where he studied journalism) and the army, he started reporting for Billboard. But soon he caught the boogie disease. He left Billboard in 1951 to work for a music-publishing company and in 1953 joined Ahmet and Nesuhi Ertegun at Atlantic Records. Before he knew it, he was drinking champagne at all-night recording sessions with Mabel Mercer, singing background with Ahmet Ertegun on Ray Charles songs, driving down a dimly lit Alabama highway with two gallons of bootleg booze on the way to a Rolling Stones session, having a fine time.

Clyde McPhatter and the Drifters, LaVern Baker, Ruth Brown, Joe Turner, Ray Charles, Professor Longhair, Ivory Joe Hunter, Chuck Willis, the Coasters, Aretha Franklin, Joe Tex, Solomon Burke, the Clovers, Wilson Pickett, Duane Allman, Dr. John, Dusty Springfield, Delaney and Bonnie, Willie Nelson, Allen Toussaint, Tony Joe White, Kim Carnes, Mavis Staples and Bob Dylan are just some of the artists Wexler has produced. His work, as classic as the films of Howard Hawks or the stories of John O'Hara, is characterized by conciseness, humor and style. Such Wexler productions as Ray Charles's "What'd I Say" (coproduced with Ahmet Ertegun) and Aretha Franklin's "Chain of Fools" are like surprise parties, serendipitous celebrations.

The lightness of much early rock and roll can be misleading. Men like Wexler, the Erteguns, Sam Phillips and the Chess brothers succeeded because they were strong in their dedication to something they believed in. The future success of rock and roll will depend on such dedication.

Ahmet Ertegun (left) and Jerry Wexler (center) with Big Joe Turner



AHMET ERTEGUN
Born July 31st, 1923
Istanbul, Turkey

JERRY WEXLER
Born January 10th, 1917
New York, New York



In 1928, an Orthodox Jewish family named Chec came to America from Poland. They moved to Chicago, living at 1425 South Karlov, in the South Side, where Leonard, the older son, worked with his brother Phil in their father's junkyard. The Chess family found a sympathetic neighborhood in the black ghetto.

Orthodox prayers, sung in elaborate Hebrew cantillation, found echoes in the blues scales and gospel harmonies of the Chesses' adopted neighborhood. As the years passed, the family made modest investments in liquor stores and eventually began running a saloon called the Macamba Lounge, which featured jazz and blues performers.

The Chess brothers started Aristocrat Records in 1947, issuing small-group and blues releases, then formed Chess Records two years later. The first Chess release was saxophonist Gene Ammons' version of "My Foolish Heart," which was a sizable radio, retail and jukebox hit. The record number was 1425 – a reminder of the brothers' origins on South Karlov. The very next record was Muddy Waters' legendary "Rollin' Stone."

The powerful backbeat and literally electrifying impact of Muddy's amplified guitar would become key elements of rock and roll. Later, in 1955, Chuck Berry brought his distinctive rhythm-guitar patterns to Chess. The backbeat, electric lead guitar and rhythm guitar remain the defining characteristics of rock and roll to this day.

Over the years, the Chess roster expanded to include world-class blues artists like Howlin' Wolf, Bo Diddley, Sonny Boy Williamson (Rice Miller), Little Walter, Willie Mabon, Jimmy Rogers, Otis Spann and Etta James. Chess not only became the true repository of American roots blues but also presented black music for the edification and delectation of white audiences throughout the world.

Phil Chess specialized in jazz recording, working with such great artists as Sonny Stitt, Ramsey Lewis and Ahmad Jamal. Leonard, who died in 1969, specialized in the blues, a form of tragic poetry in folk music, an eloquent combination of joy and lament. And Marshall Chess, Leonard's son, carried on the tradition in his work with the Rolling Stones. No other family has given the world a greater contribution of honest, epic-making music.



LEONARD CHESS
Born March 12th, 1917
Poland
Died October 16th, 1969
Chicago, Illinois

CASH BOX AND THE BIRTH OF ROCK AND ROLL

BY MARTY OSTROW

SEYMOUR STEIN CALLED me one morning last month. "Marty," he said, "you were at *Cash Box* when the whole rock and roll era began to develop. At the time, *Cash Box* captured the essence of what was happening in our industry. Could you do a feature for our Hall of Fame program on the role *Cash Box* played in the early development of rock and roll?"

Seymour was right. *Cash Box* did play an important role in the growth of rock and roll. To understand how, let's step back a third of a century to the early Fifties and see what the record business was like then, in the period when R&B, country and indie-label pop were all beginning to rub shoulders with one another.

At the time, pop stations aimed their programming at a white audience, playing such artists as Perry Como, Dinah Shore, Rosemary Clooney and Doris Day. But each city with a significant black population had at least one station that featured another type of pop music, playing Jimmy Reed, Ruth Brown, Big Joe Turner, Fats Domino, Muddy Waters, James Brown and Chuck Berry.

Billboard was the leading music trade paper. And since the major labels were making most of the big noise in the industry, they were getting most of *Billboard's* editorial space.

Cash Box was known at the time as the jukebox operator's publication. We had a big section dealing with trade news about jukeboxes and coin machines. We got involved in music when our subscribers began requesting a chart of the records that were getting heavy play on the nation's jukeboxes.

Cash Box started a weekly Top Ten jukebox chart, based on weekly phone calls to leading jukebox operators. While compiling this, we were often told that the most profitable locations were the taverns in black neighborhoods.

Occasionally, we asked the white operators how they chose records for the jukeboxes in the black areas. They often said something like this: "One of the Negro kids in my stockroom and one of my drivers tell me what to get. They listen to this R&B stuff day and night. I don't know good from bad when it comes to R&B. You guys at *Cash Box* oughta compile a list of the best R&B records on the jukeboxes like you do for the pop records."

In our desire to cover some aspect of music in greater depth than *Billboard* – and in the hope that it would result in increased advertising revenue – we decided to cover the R&B area more thoroughly and develop a Top Ten R&B chart.

We went to the independent distributors who handled the R&B labels and got a list of key retail shops in black areas. These distributors also gave us a rundown of one-stops (subdistributors who sold records to jukebox operators, candy stores, shoeshine parlors and so forth).

When we started surveying these outlets, we found that the hits varied greatly from city to city. What was Top Ten in New Orleans often never made it onto the Top Ten in L.A. This was because these small R&B labels were seldom in control of their own destinies. They may have had just one national promotion man (if they had one at all). They shipped their records to some thirty different independent distributors and had to hope that these indie distributors would get excited about a new release.

Promotion in the early days of R&B was very crude. The late Leonard Chess related his *modus operandi* in the early years of Chess Records:

"When I had six or seven new records, I would press up as many 78s as I could fit in the trunk, front seat and back seat of my car and would head out from Chicago to my distributor in Shreveport, Stan Lewis. I would head through the back roads and drive through every black area, looking for transmitting towers. I would walk into these little R&B stations (most of which never saw record-company people), give them a free copy of each of the

six or seven new titles, tell them that they were getting an exclusive and beg for regular play. Then I would drive over to the record shop in town, tell them this was getting heavy play and sell them a box right out of the car.

"The rest of the country was blanketed by sending a box or two of the new singles to my indie distributors and then getting on the phone and threatening the distributor that he's gonna lose the line if he doesn't break all seven singles in his area."

Because the hits in each area were so varied, *Cash Box* developed a series of regional R&B charts known as the Hot Charts, reporting weekly on the Top Ten R&B singles in the twelve cities that had the heaviest R&B sales.

It was this feature that eventually made *Cash Box* important. In the early years, songs like "Shake a Hand," by Faye Adams, and "Sixty Minute Man," by Billy Ward and the Dominoes, would rise to the top of these charts – in every city – and never be heard by any white people other than those music junkies who tuned into R&B stations. This material was never even considered for a pop cover at that time. Then, over a short span of a year or two, Bill Haley covered Joe Turner's "Shake, Rattle and Roll," Perry Como covered Gene and Eunice's "Ko Ko Mo," Pat Boone covered Fats Domino's "Ain't That a Shame," the McGuire Sisters covered the Moonglows' "Sincerely," the Crew Cuts covered the Chords' "Sh-Boom," and the Fontane Sisters covered Otis Williams and the Charms' "Hearts of Stone."

And since nothing awakens interest among record-industry people like a new, steady source of hit material, the major labels, music publishers, radio stations and songwriters all developed a keen interest in the *Cash Box* Hot Charts.

At this point, radio was still totally divided, with pop covers being played only on white radio and the original R&B versions being played only on black radio. Then along came Alan Freed, who, more than any other single individual, changed the face of radio. He would play a pop version of a hit, followed immediately by the original R&B version of the same song. The R&B sound became more acceptable to the white ear. Soon the white market began to prefer the original versions. It wasn't long before little independent record manufacturers were coming up with one big pop or rock and roll hit after another.

During this series of events, the *Cash Box* staff was called into a meeting to resolve a dilemma. A record called "Gee," by the Crows, on George Goldner's Rama label, had been riding high on the R&B charts. Then it began to get heavy reports out of the white record shops. Although the word was not yet in the record-industry lexicon, we were experiencing the first "crossover" record.

We resolved the problem by keeping the record on the R&B chart and by placing the same record on the pop chart. Needless to say, this opened a Pandora's box of discussions and arguments on the proper way to compile the total volume from both charts. Similar problems of categorization developed out of the country-music area when Elvis Presley and, later, the Everly Brothers – both originally regarded as country acts – got heavier acceptance in the pop area than they did in country.

I remember a series of meetings during the late Fifties at which we discussed whether a record should be reviewed in pop, R&B or country, or in all three, or in two of the three. We even discussed doing away with the R&B section altogether, because we didn't want to limit a record to only one audience when we couldn't tell from the sound who it would appeal to.

Of course, our confusion at *Cash Box* reflected the changes that were taking place in music and in society. It was a privilege to be able to cover from its inception – and to contribute to – one of the most creative music periods in our history.

COUNTRY WINNERS OF "THE CASH BOX" DISK JOCKEY POLL



MOST PROGRAMMED RECORD
"I DON'T HURT ANYMORE"
★ HANK SNOW
★ RCA VICTOR
★ RUMBALEO MUSIC

MOST PROGRAMMED FEMALE VOCALIST
KITTY WELLS
★ DECCA

MOST PROGRAMMED MALE VOCALIST
WEBB PIERCE
★ DECCA

MOST PROGRAMMED INSTRUMENTAL ARTIST
CHET ATKINS
★ RCA VICTOR

MOST PROGRAMMED VOCAL GROUP
JOHNNIE & JACK
★ RCA VICTOR

MOST PROGRAMMED DANCE BAND
HANK THOMPSON'S BRAZOS VALLEY BOYS
★ CAPITOL

MOST PROGRAMMED SACRED SINGER
MARTHA

UP AND COMING FEMALE VOCALIST
KATY LIND

UP AND COMING MALE VOCALIST
ELVIS PRESLEY

- HEARTBREAK HOTEL
Ella Fitzgerald
RCA Victor 20 6420
(4-500)
- YES, I KNOW WHY
Webb Pierce
Decca 2780, 9 27801
- I WANT YOU, I NEED YOU, I LOVE YOU
Ella Fitzgerald
RCA Victor 20 6420
(4-500)
- BLUE SUED SHOES
Cole Porter
Capitol 316, 45 316
- YOU AND ME
Ella Fitzgerald & Duke Ellington
Capitol 316, 45 316
- I'VE GOT FIVE DOLLARS
Fats Domino
Capitol 316, 45 316
- CRAZY ARMS
Gene Krupa
Capitol 316, 45 316
- FOR RENT
Gene Krupa
Capitol 316, 45 316
- BUDDY
Gene Krupa
Capitol 316, 45 316

R & B WINNERS OF "THE CASH BOX" DISK JOCKEY POLL

MOST PROGRAMMED RECORD
"PLEDGING MY LOVE"
★ JOHNNY ACE
★ DUKE RECORDS
★ LION PUBLISHING

"EARTH ANGEL"
★ PENGUINS
★ DOOTONE RECORDS
★ DOOTIE WILLIAMS PUBLICATIONS

MOST PROGRAMMED FEMALE VOCALIST
RUTH BROWN
★ ATLANTIC

MOST PROGRAMMED MALE VOCALIST
JOE TURNER
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MOST PROGRAMMED VOCAL GROUP
DRIFTERS
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SMALL INSTRUMENTAL GROUP

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Ruth Brown
"EYE YOUNG MEN"
"EVER SINCE MY BABY'S BEEN GONE"
ATLANTIC-1951

TWO TERRIFIC SIDES BY THE GREAT RAY CHARLES!
Ray Charles
"I'VE GOT A WOMAN"
"COME BACK"
ATLANTIC-1950

A GREAT DEBUT ON ATLANTIC FOR A GREAT ARTIST!
Ivory Joe Hunter
"IT MAY SOUND SILLY"
"I GOT TO LEARN TO DO THE WAMBO"
ATLANTIC-1949

ATLANTIC RECORDING CORP.
131 WEST 57th ST. NEW YORK 19, N.Y.

Happy Holidays... and Thanks For Another Wonderful Year

The Cash Box

THE QUESTION OF ELVIS PRESLEY!

Probably the hottest artist in the entire entertainment business today is Elvis Presley. He's certainly creating the greatest excitement, getting the widest press coverage, drawing the largest audiences, and definitely setting lots of records.

Yet, it's become almost a national pastime to knock Presley. Even people who've never seen him are knocking him — on general principles, it seems. But what's worst of all is that there are people in the record business who are knocking him, when he himself is knocking them. Just off-hand, here are a few. What industry wouldn't be proud, for instance, of having created a Perry Como, who's come to represent everything that's good and nice to millions of people all over the country? Or a Dea Rex, who has gone on to be the top female attraction in the motion picture industry? Or an Andy Griffith, who, as the result of one record, received the recognition which enabled him to exploit his acting ability first on Broadway and currently in a motion picture? The record industry has also produced an Eddie Fisher, one of the top names in the entertainment world, and a Johnny Ray, whose appeal has been worldwide, and many others that we could go on listing.

The point is, let's stop being unfair to ourselves. Let's stop knocking the products we create. An Elvis Presley, whether you like his style or don't, is a great thing for the record industry. Let's devote the energy we would spend in hating the guy to trying to develop several more who will sell records at the pace that he does.

The Clovers
Going Strong
LOVEY DOVEY
- YOUR CASH AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT TRASH

"LIFE PROBLEM"
By GUITAR GABLE and The Musical Girls

"CONGO MOMBO"
By LIGHTNING SLIM

"WONDERIN' AND GOIN'"
By LIGHTNING SLIM

"RUN UNCLE JOHN! RUN!"
By JERRY McCAIN and The Washburns

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131 West 57 St. N.Y.C.

"I'LL REMEMBER"
By The Five Satins

REACHING THE TOP
WILLIE MABON
"KNOCK ON WOOD"
"GOT TO LET YOU GO"

RECORD CO.

"PLEASE LOVE A FOOL"
By The Medallions

HOT HITS

in ARLENE
1. HEARTS OF STONE (DeLuxe 6062)
2. YOU USSET ME, BABY (RPM 416)
3. EARTH ANGEL (Penguins 348)
4. RECONSIDER BABY (Lowell Fulson (Checker 804)

in CHICAGO'S South Side
1. HEARTS OF STONE (DeLuxe 6062)
2. YOU USSET ME, BABY (RPM 416)
3. EARTH ANGEL (Penguins 348)
4. RECONSIDER BABY (Lowell Fulson (Checker 804)

in MEMPHIS
1. HEARTS OF STONE (DeLuxe 6062)
2. YOU USSET ME, BABY (RPM 416)
3. EARTH ANGEL (Penguins 348)
4. RECONSIDER BABY (Lowell Fulson (Checker 804)

in DALLAS
1. HEARTS OF STONE (DeLuxe 6062)
2. YOU USSET ME, BABY (RPM 416)
3. EARTH ANGEL (Penguins 348)
4. RECONSIDER BABY (Lowell Fulson (Checker 804)

in LOS ANGELES
1. HEARTS OF STONE (DeLuxe 6062)
2. YOU USSET ME, BABY (RPM 416)
3. EARTH ANGEL (Penguins 348)
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HEARTS OF STONE (DeLuxe 6062)
YOU USSET ME, BABY (RPM 416)
EARTH ANGEL (Penguins 348)
RECONSIDER BABY (Lowell Fulson (Checker 804)
TEACH ME TONIGHT (Dinah Washington (Mercury 70497)
SINCERELY (Moon/Lons (Chess 7581)
WHITE CHRISTMAS (Clyde McPhatter & Drifters (Atlantic 1048)
POISON IVY (Willie Mabon (Chess 1580)
IT WAS YC (Gene Forest (Rounded In Hat)
HAMBABO BABY (Burt Brown (Atlantic 1044)
HURT (Ray Hamilton (Epic 9086)
I'M READY (Muddy Waters (Chess 1579)
HURTS ME TO MY HEART (Faye Adams (Herald 434)
TWEEDEE DEE (Layton Baker (Atlantic 1047)
LAST NIGHT (Little Walter (Checker 805)

THE NATIONS Rhythm & Blues TOP 15

HEARTS OF STONE (DeLuxe 6062)
YOU USSET ME, BABY (RPM 416)
EARTH ANGEL (Penguins 348)
RECONSIDER BABY (Lowell Fulson (Checker 804)
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