



the story behind those GOLDEN RECORDS



1. "No, Not Much" by Four Lads sold much.
2. Smooth Johnny Mathis gets smooth by practice.
3. Doris Day is one film star who sells big.

They're the "Oscars" of Tin Pan Alley, but it's almost impossible to predict which songs will reach the coveted million mark in disk sales.

by David Dachs

HOLLYWOOD Academy Awards, TV "Emmys," Pulitzer Prizes—all are fine in their place. But as far as Tin Pan Alley is concerned, just hand over those "golden records."

"Golden records" are juke-box society's highest award—the "Oscars" of popular music. They are given to artists whose records sell 1,000,000 copies.

These disks aren't pure gold, but gold-coated. Nor can they be played. But there is no mistaking the fact that they represent the pinnacle of success in the 32-bar song business. Careers are made, TV and Hollywood contracts are signed on the basis of a singer's ability to get teen-agers (who buy 95 percent of pop records) to buy a million copies of their effort.

Often a career has been saved by a golden record. About a year ago, pretty brunette singer Connie Francis was about to give up show business. The few disks she made just didn't sell. She planned to enter college.

Then her father begged her to do a sentimental favorite of his, a 1923 "oldie," at a final recording date. Result? "Who's Sorry Now," a 1,600,000 record hit for Connie, and a thriving new career. "Just one million-record seller," she says, "opens up a lot of doors for an unknown!"

A subway ride resulted in a golden record for Perry Como. A few years ago, Mickey Glass, who manages Perry's music publishing firm, was riding home on the subway late at night. In the car he met song writer Dick Manning. After "hellos" were exchanged, Mickey said: "We're looking for a happy novelty for Perry."

Dick replied: "We just did a 'demo' (demonstration disk) on a song like that. Nobody has heard it. Can I see you tomorrow?"

The appointment was kept, and a short while later Perry Como made "Hot Diggity," for which he got a gleaming golden record.

Some golden records are tarnished with tears and heartache.

Irritation reportedly developed between Eddie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds when her golden record, "Tammy," clicked at a time when he couldn't get a hit. Some who spear a golden record are one-hit artists who virtually disappear.

Little Joan Weber, who rode to fame with an instant success, "Let Me Go, Lover," in 1954, has been little heard of since.

MANY ARTISTS, like Frank Sinatra, Nat Cole, or Johnny Mathis, may record a song a dozen times before they are satisfied. But one million-seller, "Four Leaf Clover," was cut in just one "take" by Art Mooney. Art wanted to do it over again, but Harry Meyerson, who supervised the session, said, "It's fine. Do the next tune."

Equally casual was the success of Roger Williams and his winner, "Au-

turn Leaves." The pianist happened to drop by a record session of another artist. The session was finished a half-hour ahead of time. So Roger was asked: "Want to do a test pressing?"

The "test record" turned out to be one of the first million-selling piano instrumentals in years. "We did the side in 25 minutes," Williams said.

How much does a Perry Como or Ricky Nelson make from a million-selling record click? They make about \$40-50,000, approximately four cents per record. The publisher and song writer divide two cents per record, sometimes a penny and a half. The publisher and song writer also garner money from other sources: sheet music (very little), other recorded versions of the song, and performance monies from the playing of the song on radio and TV.

The Tin Pan Alley songsmith gets about the same as the publisher. Take on a million-seller for the two? About

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