

SOLDIERS WIN the BATTLES

By C. BUCK WEST



LAST WEEK we discussed the writing of a song from the aspect of the melody, the lyrics and three possible avenues for getting your song recorded. Without a recording, it is virtually impossible for a song to become a hit. The saturation achieved via radio and television has materially shortened the life of a "hit". Judging by the average quality of today's most popular tunes, this saturation is really in the nature of an act of mercy. I refer in particular to the monotonous sameness represented in the output of the Beatles and their ilk. Occasionally, we will have a quality selection such as "I Left My Heart in San Francisco", "What Kind of Fool Am I?" or "Hello, Dolly." I admit that in the last named the quality that made the song a number one best seller was contained more in the wonderful treatment given the material by Louis Armstrong than in the actual content of the song itself.

TWO MORE examples of the latter wedding of artist and material would be the selections, "People" and "Don't Let it Rain on My Parade" by Barbra Streisand.

"San Francisco", especially as performed by Tony Bennett, had a long and well-deserved life as a pop hit. I am sure that Columbia Records had no idea at the moment of release that this song would gain the popular acceptance that it did. "Fool" was from a Broadway hit musical and was exposed as such so that it had a chance to catch on with the public. Most good tunes--that is, good from a melodic and lyric standpoint--have little chance today. This may be attributed in great part to the so called top forty format employed by many stations and to the fact that the average age of the record buyer today is considerably under that of the average buyer ten years ago. The recording company output in the area of singles as opposed to albums is geared to a twelve to fifteen year old mentality which makes the occasional breakthrough (really the exception proving the rule) of such isolated successes as those named in the above paragraphs.

There is an excellent book on the subject of writing a popular song by Bob Rolontz who had a long and varied exposure to the recording and publishing business as music editor of Billboard,

From the beginning of recorded history the names of military strategists have been recorded. Names such as Hannibal, Alexander the Great, Caesar, Napoleon, Washington, Grant and many others are easily recalled as military giants. These men perhaps won a hundred battles for each one they lost.

Chroniclers of military history have recorded volumes upon volumes of how these men planned and waged their successful battles. However it is history's short-coming to praise the leaders so highly and not heap praise upon the courageous men who waged and won the battles. No general, regardless of his military genius, ever won a battle, nor a war without the necessary

a trade paper (as opposed to a consumer magazine). The title escapes my mind at this sitting since it was something akin to "So, You Want To Be a Songwriter?" which, come to think of it, was the heading of my last week's column, the first of this subject!

Any of the good book shops in town, particularly the nice people at McKays, could locate the exact title and publisher for you. I think it is a must for study if you have any hopes of entering the overcrowded field of songwriting.

ONE OTHER very important suggestion: Once you have successfully combined words and music, if you cannot do it yourself, have a musician you trust reduce it to manuscript then have your selection copyrighted. The Copyright Office, Washington, 25, D. C. will send you the necessary forms and instructions. The copyright serves to establish the date of your claim so that anyone claiming prior rights would have to prove a registration or copyright that was earlier than your own.

The next important thing is that you do not deal with the artist direct unless he or they are very old and dear personal friends. Even then, be careful. Do not deal or attempt to deal directly with the artists and repertoire men at the recording companies. They suffer from a surfeit of material and do not have the time to give your efforts the attention they might deserve.

My suggestion is that you write a letter to the General Professional Manager of one of the better publishing houses, telling him that you have certain material ready and that you would like to submit same to him for his approval. If he answers you, and many of them will under these circumstances, then send your properly prepared copyrighted songs to his attention with a covering letter and a self-addressed stamped return envelope.

More on this later. Meanwhile, those of you who would like to have a copy of "Losing Weight the Satchmo Way", send your self-addressed stamped envelope along with your request to JPD care of The Voice.

numbers of soldiers.

Soldiers win the battles, but generals get credit for winning the wars. Wars can not be won without winning most of the battles. Battles are won by the 'men' and not by the officers.

The Negroes' war against injustice is being waged on many fronts. It is totally true that leaders are needed to guide the maneuvers of the soldiers, but without the warriors who face the enemy the leaders would be a sorry lot. As a matter of fact there would be no leaders if there were not men to follow them. The 'men' who face the fire are just as important as the strategists who plan the course of battle. These are not little men. All men who engage the enemy in battle are big men.

The Negro has no shortage of leadership, but he does have a shortage of soldiers to implement the plans of the leaders. The Negro must muster his full potential behind his leaders if he hopes to be victorious.

The Negro must prepare himself as a soldier in the Civil Rights struggle. He must equip himself with the most important weapon available if he is to emerge from his position of second class citizenship. The Negro's most potent badge for battle is the ballot.

The Negro can win first class citizenship if he throws his full potential into the battle at every polling place in the nation. Negroes can win with ballots, but not with physical force nor violence.

The struggle for acceptance into the main stream of American life is the struggle of every Negro. It is not the duty of the few to fight the battles for the rest. Each Negro individually, and all Negroes collectively, must prepare to take part in the conflict. The first step in preparation is voter registration. After all are registered to vote, the next maneuver must be intelligent, as well as unified use of the ballot.

All Negroes either will go up together, or stay down together. There never will be ONE, single first class Negro citizen until all Negroes are first class citizens. Since we all will go up together we all must pull together. We all must register, and we all must vote together. First, we must prepare for the battle by signing up for the right to vote.

The Negroes' passport to equality is the ballot. Don't sit complacently on the sidelines while others fight your battles. Register and make yourself felt in the combat. Don't wait for George to do it because there are not enough Georges to do your work for you.

Register now and win!

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