

Vinyl shortage affects records' quality, cost

While the oil shortage gets headlines in all the major papers, record companies are, as *Billboard* put it, "frowning brows to invent ways to hurdle the vinyl shortage barrier."

The shortage of the basic raw material for discs, polyvinyl chloride (PVC), has not yet become critical, but its impact has been felt in several areas.

Most of the larger record companies have an adequate supply of PVC. Columbia, which once operated its pressing plant six or seven days a week, is now operating only five days a week. RCA had the foresight to buy a lot of PVC, enough, in fact, to get them easily through the next year. PRC Recording Company said it is getting only 70 per cent of the vinyl it used to get. PRC presses about 110,000 albums and 130,000 singles daily, but, like Columbia, has reduced its work week from seven to five days.

Consumers will be affected by the shortage. Bill Batey, local manager of Discount Records, reported that records are thinner, and most albums that used to be listed at \$5.98 will now be \$6.98. The records included in the price increase are generally those by top artists, whose material probably will sell at any price.

"This just means there will be more quality

releases by the big names and fewer poor releases by unknown and new artists," Batey said.

Terry Moore, of Dirt Cheap Enterprises, said the vinyl shortage has affected them very little. "Most records have not gone up. The only difference is there are more \$6.98 lists and fewer at \$5.98." He also said there may be poorer pressing quality in the next few months, especially from the smaller companies.

diane waneke out of my head

He's probably right. The smaller record companies, in general, do not have their records pressed at any of the large plants, and the smaller plants where they do have their orders processed are getting even less vinyl.

The result has been that the smaller plants, feeling the squeeze even more, have apparently been

stretching their PVC stock by introducing other substances into their records. The drop in quality is marked enough to produce protests from the consumers, and so, future sales by the smaller labels are very much in doubt.

Along with trimming the incredible number of record releases that have always been thrown onto the market, the companies are also cutting back their artist rosters and some company personnel.

In the meantime, Grammy awards are coming up March 2. The nominees are:

Record of the Year

Jim Croce's "Bad, Bad Leroy Brown"
Roberta Flack's "Killing Me Softly"
Charlie Rich's "Behind Closed Doors"
Carly Simon's "You're So Vain"
Stevie Wonder's "You Are the Sunshine of My Life"

Best New Artist

Bette Midler
Eumir Deodato
Maureen McGovern
Marie Osmond
Barry White

Album of the Year

Charlie Rich's *Behind Closed Doors*
Bette Midler's *The Divine Miss M*
Stevie Wonder's *Innervisions*
Roberta Flack's "Killing Me Softly"
Paul Simon's *There Goes Rhymin' Simon*

Best Rhythm and Blues Song

War's "The Cisco Kid"
Sylvester Stewart's "Family Affair"
Ken Gamble and Leon Huff's "Love Train"
Jim Weatherly's "Midnight Train to Georgia"
Stevie Wonder's "Superstition"

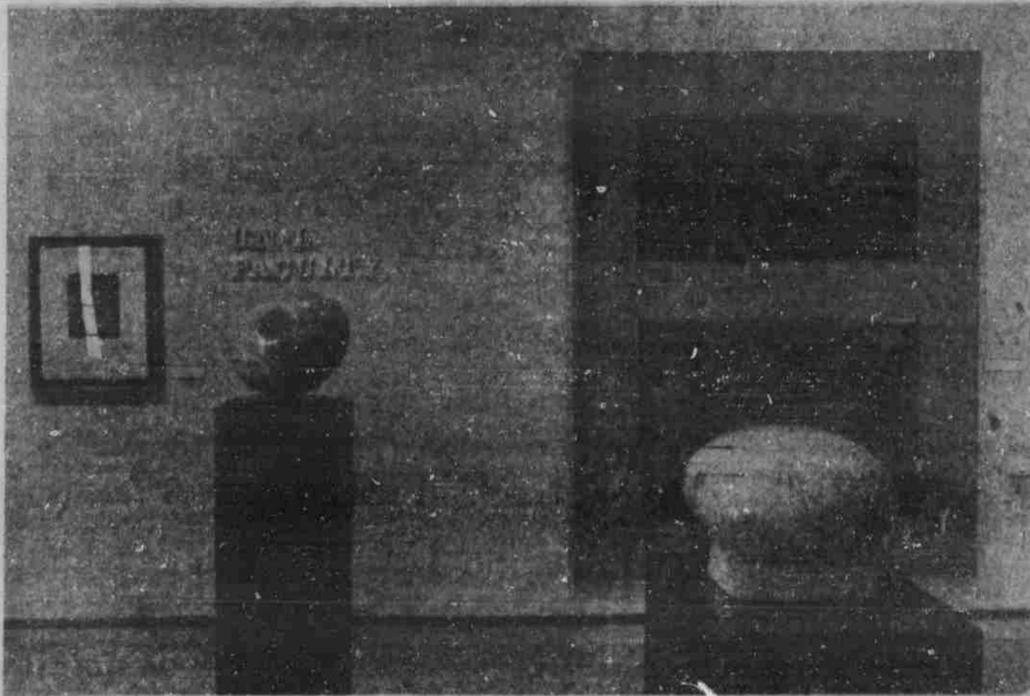
Best Country Song

Kenny O'Dell's "Behind Closed Doors"
Billy Davis' "Country Sunshine"
Flory Bourke's "The Most Beautiful Girl"
Tom T. Hall's "Watermelon Wine"
Kris Kristofferson's "Why Me"

Best Ethnic or Traditional Recording

King Curtis and Champion Jack Dupree's "Blues at Montreaux"
Muddy Waters' "Can't Get No Grindin'"
John Lee Hooker's "Detroit"
Leadbelly's "Live in Concert"
Doc Watson's "Then and Now"

This listing is partial, but it might give you a good idea of what's tops according to the music industry.



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