

Milwaukee Studio Notes

By MICHAEL H. DREW of The Journal

FOR years, Madison stations have supplied Milwaukee broadcasters with top grade announcers such as WTMJ's Jack Baker and Tom Lueders and channel 6's Tom Hooper. Soon, the state's biggest market gets a radio show which has persevered, in one form or another, for a dozen years in the capital.

"World of Hambone," starting on WTMJ Oct. 17, is a special radio show on several counts. First of all, host George Vukelich plays jazz, now rarely heard on AM radio. And, the host reads his own poetry between records.

If the thought of poetry and jazz on the same show has frightened you off in advance, here's Vukelich for the defense:

"We don't label this a jazz and poetry show. I play what I call quiet jazz, much of it modern but none of it way out. We don't get 'nutsy and boltsy' about whether the trombone player was wearing a handkerchief when it was recorded."

"World of Hambone" is scheduled for 10:30-11 p.m. weekdays. Madison's WIBA has broadcast it in a three hour version for the last five years. It began on an FM station in the capital, WFOV, and had later runs on WKOW, WISC and WIBU. It will remain on WIBA.

What does the title mean?

"Hambone," Vukelich said, "is what southern Negroes do when they keep time without an instrument, by tapping their knees. My friends have always called me that and when I started having kids they changed it to Papa Hambone." (Vukelich, 39, has five children now.) On the air, he also uses the name Bill Patrick.

Helping distinguish the program from other nighttime record shows is the presence, on tape, of a Hambone house band. Guitarist Roy Plumb's quartet plays mood jazz behind the poetry and sometimes is heard alone.

Abetting Plumb, onetime arranger for Paul Weston, are pianist-vibraharpist Don Voegeli, WHA music director; bassist Pete Schoelle and drummer Eddie Stein, a widely known Madison photographer.

Vukelich (pronounce that Voo-kay-lick) introduces the tunes and reads rhymes in typical late night announcer style; that is, deep and soft (as if coming from a cotton lined cave).

If "quiet jazz" seems like a contradiction in terms, here are some of the performers who get strong play on the show: Peggy Lee, Nat King Cole, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Stan Getz and Gerry Mulligan. And there's a sampling of what Vukelich calls moldy fig two beat, or Dixieland, by people like Doc Evans.

Vukelich concedes that "Hambone" doesn't have a

mass audience and is aimed at the university community.

Born in South Milwaukee of Croatian and Rumanian parents, Vukelich didn't speak much English before going to school. He still has relatives in Milwaukee county, including a grandfather and a sister.

After his graduation from West Allis Central high school, Vukelich toured Europe (with the army just after World War II). He studied at both the University of Wisconsin and the Toronto (Ont.) Academy of Radio Arts.

"Lorne Greene, the 'Bonanza' star, told me then that I had one of the worst voices he had ever encountered," Vukelich said. "He worked hard with me and remains a good friend. Jack Baker (who then was known as Jack Buechler) broke me in on radio at WKOW."

Vukelich wrote a novel, "Fisherman's Beach," in 1962 and has had a number of articles published in national magazines.

When he's not running his record shows from 7 to midnight on WIBA, Vukelich sweats over a second novel.

Up to now, he has never played a rock 'n' roll record on the air. "I'm either terribly wrong or terribly lucky," he says.

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In another important change at WTMJ Oct. 17, Bill McCollough will move into the 7:20 to 10 p.m. "Mostly Music" chair, replacing Dave Adams. Adams takes over the 10:30 to 1 a.m. "Nightcall" record program in place of Bill Jenkins.

McCollough, incidentally, tried to work the power of suggestion on his wife, while she awaited the arrival of their first child earlier this month. On one of his record shows, he dedicated the tune "Gotta Get a Boy!" to her.

Mrs. McCollough obliged by presenting Bill with a son.

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Interviews with 24 prominent Milwaukeeans are included in five Voice of America "Breakfast Shows" to be taped next week at WTMJ. The talk-music programs are shipped to Voice of America transmitters world-wide. WTMJ newsman Ed Hinshaw lined up the interviews.

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Here's another indication of the popularity of WTMJ's "Ask Your Neighbor." Host Gordon Hinkley invited listeners to a broadcast in the station's auditorium at 9:30 a.m. next Wednesday. The invitation was discontinued on the next morning's show after more ticket requests arrived (325) than the auditorium could handle.



GEORGE VUKELICH (left) and Bill McCollough will have evening radio shows on WTMJ this fall