



## Funklickity

Although in recent years (not just recently!) my activities have centered around the making of woodblock prints, and if asked, I describe myself as a printmaker, I could perhaps just as well describe myself as a publisher. I have a 'catalogue' with sets of prints of my own design and production, and of course all the new prints with designs from our partner Jed.

But this is not the first time in my life that I have been a publisher. Scattered here and there in various music libraries across North America are copies of a couple of sheet music publications under the imprint of the 'Canada Jazz Press'. Any researchers who are curious about the provenance of those works won't find much information available ... at least not until they come across this story. Because the Canada Jazz Press was me!

The little publishing adventure took place during the years that I worked in a music store that specialized in supplying school music departments. We sold everything from tubas to piccolos, as well as sheet music for every possible kind of ensemble, orchestra and choir. Half of our building was a warehouse full of the actual instruments, and the other half was a very substantial library of sheet music. The company had started up on a shoestring, about a year or so before I came along, but grew very rapidly in those early years, and it was a huge challenge keeping the library organized.

Myself and another young man were responsible for that part of the business; I was the perfect type to keep the library running smoothly, with everything properly categorized, filed, organized and inventoried, and he was good at the other side - chatting with the customers, and showing them the latest 'big new thing' that would be suitable for their particular ensemble.

When I myself had been in school, the only ensemble had been a 'band', meaning an ensemble of wind and brass instruments, playing music derived from the military band tradition: mostly marches and arrangements of classics and show tunes. But the library in our store had an extensive new section dedicated to music for what was coming to be called the 'stage band', an ensemble fashioned after the swing era dance bands and made up of saxes, trumpets, trombones and a rhythm section. The music was a mix of jazz originals and arrangements of pop hits.

Some of the traditional publishers had moved into the production of music for these stage bands, but a large section of our catalogue was made up of publications from small mom and pop outfits that had sprung up to feed the demand for this new type of school music.

My co-worker and I - seeing the great success that some of the independent outfits were having - decided to start publishing such music ourselves, in our 'spare' time. We couldn't write the music ourselves of course, but contacted a well-known band leader in town and got his permission to use one of his original compositions, offering him a royalty. We then paid a substantial amount to have this professionally copied out, and had a local printing company run off a couple of hundred sets of it all.

As for how to get our new 'baby' out into the world, that wasn't a problem; because of our jobs, we had access to a trade directory of all school music retailers in North America. We bundled up packages containing a copy of the publication (a catchy original jazz tune called 'Funklickity') along with a cover letter describing

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the plans for our new 'series' of stage band publications. We then sent these off to the music buyer at all the dealers, enclosing a wholesale invoice in each one, and sat back to see what would happen.

What happened - of course - was nothing. The recipients of the packages were professional buyers, and they could see instantly that the Canada Jazz Press was an amateur outfit top to bottom. This first publication of ours was poorly printed, poorly packaged, contained nothing that would help them sell the music (a sound recording, etc.) and came from a completely unknown source. Most of the buyers must have just tossed it aside. They of course had no obligation at all to pay for it, and didn't.

But one place did - sending us a cheque for the full invoice amount - and I can still remember their name - Stanton's Sheet Music, in Columbus Ohio.

Searching now, I see they have a web site with their catalogue of stage band music all online. Typing in 'Funklickity', I get the message "*We were unable to find a result for your request.*" I guess that means they must have sold it! I wonder if they perhaps want another copy ... I think I have a couple of them left in a box in the attic ...

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