

Mixing Gwinsound Jingles

Gwinsound used most of the same writers and arrangers as PAMS, including Tom Merriman and Jodie Lyons. The company took advantage of many of the same singers as the other Dallas studios too, like Jackie Dickson, Jim Clancy, Billy Ainsworth, Brian Beck and Judy Parma. The owner of the company, Tom Gwin, was a veteran big band drummer/percussionist and CRC alumni. So you have to ask yourself, why is PAMS still a revered brand around the world and Gwinsound is but a footnote in jingle history?

Perhaps the answer lies in how Gwinsound jingles were sold, which was mostly via a barter arrangement in which small and medium market radio stations agreed to air a religious program every week in exchange for their jingles. Perhaps it was because PAMS had a number of people including Jon Wolfert (and maybe me) who were so affected by the experience of hearing these jingles on the radio that they spent their lives keeping the brand alive. Perhaps it was because PAMS boasted major market clients like WLS (Chicago) and WABC (New York) while Gwinsound was primarily heard in smaller markets. It could have been for a number of reasons, but the fact remains that Tom Gwin produced some terrific jingles over his years in business, 1965-1980, that are seldom heard today.

I always wanted the chance to mix PAMS jingles from the multitrack master tapes, and I finally got that chance beginning in 1980. (That story has been documented in my jingle books.) I never even thought about mixing the Gwinsound material, but I also got *that* opportunity around 1982 when I was working with the late Ben Freedman's company CPMG. Here is that story.

Ben Freedman contacted me in 1980 because he had heard I obtained the PAMS multitrack tapes after PAMS lost them to the I.R.S. for non-payment of back taxes. That is a gross oversimplification, but the whole story is told much better at www.PAMS.com. So for several years Ben and I created new jingles in both Dallas and Toledo, Ohio using the PAMS instrumental tracks.

In about 1982 through his friendship with Tommy Gwin Ben got custody of the Gwinsound multitracks as well. Tommy had retired and showed the early signs of dementia at this point, sadly. Ben was unable or unwilling to mix these tracks down into usable form so he asked me to tackle this large project. The problem was that I was living in Toledo, Ohio and Ben and the Gwin tapes were in Buffalo, New York, hundreds of miles away.

I suggested to Ben that he fly me to New York and put me up at a hotel, which he did. Each morning he would drop me off at a local studio and leave to do whatever he did, taking no interest himself in how I was doing or how the music tracks sounded. I did have an engineer to assist me with the equipment and that was very helpful.

The first morning I walked into the studio I saw these several shelves of 2" master tapes on one wall. Each had detailed cue sheets inside, telling me which instruments were on which tracks. The 16-track masters usually broke down this way: drums, bass, guitar, sometimes a second guitar or piano, sometimes a pedal steel guitar on the country packages, brass, woodwinds, strings, sometimes a couple of tracks for Moog, and a few tracks open for vocals. On more than one occasion, there were surprise instruments that were not documented, and usually these were not included in the final mixes. My feeling was that if an instrument was not heard on the demo tape or in subsequent re-sings of the jingles, I would not include it my track mixes.

Ben had asked me to mix these multitracks down to just two tracks, ready to sing over. Depending on the instrumentation, I put rhythm instruments on the left and everything else on the right (brass and strings) or I made them true stereo. It depended on which mix would be easiest to work with.

The master tapes were in pretty good shape, and were recorded with no noise-reduction at 30 IPS, which must have cost a fortune because there were so many jingle packages. And I'll bet every one of those tapes weighed 20 pounds!

I spent ten hours a day for three days working with these tapes and while I enjoyed it, the experience was draining. Because the fidelity was so good, it was like being in the middle of the studio while the musicians played. In many cases there were still vocals left on these tapes, indicating to me which station purchased these cuts last.

Fun fact: Gwin Series 15 (called "Turnarounds") was a note-for-note rip-off of the Drake jingles. There was a fast cut, a slow cut, a top of the hour stager and a news jingle, each of which sounded exactly like its Drake counterpart. This was one of Tommy Gwin's most widely-syndicated packages.

Most of these Gwinsound jingles were designed for top-40 or middle-of-the-road stations, but there were also two country packages. The quality of all the original recordings was excellent, and I have since restored them even further with noise-

reduction to get rid of what little tape hiss remained. The writing, musicianship and recording techniques were amazing, especially given that they were from the years 1965 to 1976.

There were giants then.

Ken Deutsch

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