TUCSON'S ZOOM RECORDS

AND

LATE-1950S AMERICAN URBAN POPULAR CULTURE

by

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ABSTRACT

The two components of this thesis (this research document, and a 33-minute documentary film) provide both a scholarly examination of the topic, and a more subjective telling of the Zoom Records story.

The marketing and distribution of pre-recorded music for sale and public consumption is a cultural development as profound as any in the twentieth-century musical world. It is especially relevant to late-1950s American rock and roll, in terms of the music's capture in the rapidly-evolving environment of the recording studio, its release into the marketplace via independent record labels, and its enthusiastic embrace by the burgeoning youth culture of the era. Within this multi-dimensional context, Zoom Records, a tiny, independent record label, was born in Tucson, Arizona. A unique convergence of technological, artistic, and commercial developments and historical events gives special import to the Zoom Records story, as a lesson in entrepreneurship, artistic expression and personal transformation.

PREFACE

This paper is submitted in conjunction with the production of a 33-minute film, "ZOOM!," which constitutes the primary master's thesis submission. As such, the two components of the thesis represent a fusion of traditional musicological inquiry: The written thesis document provides musicological, cultural, technological and historical context, while the documentary film shines a focused light on the fascinating story of the conception, birth and fleeting life of the Zoom Records label. Additionally, the documentary film offers added dimensions – the opportunity to examine the power of music to inspire personal initiative and transformation, and the significant role of the spoken word in bringing to life memories of the youthful adventures of the label's founders and others connected with the events described in the film. The author is grateful for the opportunity to submit his thesis in this hybrid form.

INTRODUCTION

> *"...that's what these are, these are all slices of life, these are all little audio pictures of the moment that live on and on and on, long after that actual session takes place."*
>
> - Music historian/record collector John Dixon, on popular music recordings (Dixon, personal interview, 2011)

The 1950s were a time of significant achievement, upheaval and change in American popular culture. In particular, the ascent of popularized, recorded rock 'n' roll music – as early as 1952, but accelerating with the rise of nationally-popularized recording stars such as Elvis Presley and others beginning in the mid-1950s – is now widely cited as among the leading indicators of a revolution in music and popular culture, and as a significant comment on our nation's post-WWII urban affluence, "automobile culture," and the rapidly-evolving "youth culture" in cities and towns across America.

Much of the popular music of this era was sought out, discovered, recorded and marketed by independent record labels. University of Arizona Music historian Brian Moon states that between 1948 and 1954:

> There were a thousand independent record labels that were formed...(and) the regional effect of these labels, because often they were only important within cities, within counties, within smaller areas…also tells us that the rock 'n' roll era lasted into the beginning of the '60's and reached every little…corner of America. (Moon, personal interview, 2011)

Tucson, Arizona was one such "corner of America" to be touched by the rise in independent rock 'n' roll record labels. In February 1959, a small, independent record label came into being and can be examined from the perspective of over half a century as

an example of the phenomenon of America's urban popularized recorded music. Zoom Records' birth, rise, and brief life in the popular culture of Tucson is notable for its concurrence with the appearance of hundreds or thousands of other such independent labels nationwide, and its coincidental and fortuitous intersection with the wider cross-currents of popular music recording, record manufacturing and distribution, and radio broadcasting of several larger American metropolitan areas.

This paper examines Tucson's Zoom Records as an exemplar of urban popular music culture in the late 1950s, and within multiple intersecting contexts: independent record labels, urban radio markets (Tucson in particular), era-specific recording practices and technologies, the high school rock 'n' roll scene, and American youth culture. It contends that Zoom Records' birth in February of 1959, along with its presence in the Tucson popular music scene, was the outcome of a confluence of factors that, while unique in its particulars, was broadly representative of how hundreds or thousands of small, independent labels were given life in that era, in cities and towns across America.

METHODOLOGY

My work on this subject grows out of a relationship, since December 2009, with Tucson residents Burt Schneider and Ray Lindstrom (referred to here as Burt and Ray), who founded Zoom Records in February of 1959, during their senior year at Catalina High School. Since early in 2011, I have worked with Burt and Ray on the development of a 30-minute documentary film about the label's birth and brief life (from February to August, 1959), its role in Tucson and Southern Arizona's cultural life and history, and its transformative effects on their respective lives and careers.

In the course of the documentary film's production, I have conducted extensive interviews with Burt and Ray, with several of the musicians who recorded on the Zoom label, with the recording studio engineer who captured and mastered their nine 45-rpm sides, with a variety of Arizona music historians and record collectors in Tucson and Phoenix, and others. The filmed documentation of the Zoom Records story has unfolded through the transcription, editing and analysis of these personal memories and reflections on the era and place in which the label was born. I've also been fortunate to be present for, and capture on videotape, emotionally compelling reunions between Burt and Ray and some of those involved in their recording enterprise over a half century ago.

This essay (as well as the documentary film which it accompanies) reflects on the musical, social, historical and technical significance of the Zoom Records label and its appearance in a particular place and time. It is informed by theoretical and musicological

writings that reflect on the deeper social meanings of the experience and its present-day relevance in the lives of those it touched.

SOCIAL RELATIONS, COLLECTIVE MEMORY, AURALITY

Christopher Small has coined the term "musicking," suggesting a perspective on musical experience *not as a thing*, but as an all-encompassing set of *human actions* surrounding the creation, performance and transmission of what we commonly refer to as "music":

> The act of Musicking establishes in the place where it is happening a set of relationships, and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies…each musical performance [to which I would add "recording"] articulates the values of a group. (Small, 1998:13)

Attali considers music "a mirror…an immaterial recording surface for human works…a collective memory…affirmed in time with the beat…," (Attali, 2004:14) in effect commenting not only on music's social qualities generally, but by inference on its special significance in America in the late 1950s, an era of wide and rapidly growing popularization and dissemination of music via 45-rpm records, popular music record charts, record stores, juke boxes, AM radio and the early years of American Bandstand ("It's got a great beat…and you can dance to it."). And, in examining popular culture in particular, notable threads can be found which connect localized expressions of regional cultures to wider currents in national and global cultural movements (Garcia Canclini, 2000:209); such connections are a vital, and particularly interesting, component of the Zoom Records story.

An understanding of the Zoom Records story is derived from its contextualization within the broader cultural experience of reproduced sound and its meanings. That experience can be asserted to have begun with Edison's invention of the phonograph in

1877, and continuing since then with the advent of practical wireless sound-transmission devices near the turn of the 20th century; the wider use of easily transported sound recording devices in the early 1900s (and their employment in the documentation of indigenous musical cultures); the rise of popularized recorded music (jazz in particular) in the century's second decade; the subsequent growth of record labels appealing to a wide variety of listeners distinguished by age, race and locale; and the ascent and evolution of national radio broadcasting networks and popular music radio formats in the decades that followed.

By the post-WWII years and into the early 1960s, recorded rhythm-and-blues (R&B), followed by rock 'n' roll music (beginning as early as 1952), was broadcast on thousands of AM radio stations in cities and towns of every size and type. The genres were a fixture in American households, at a time when recorded sound as a shared human experience grew to play a role of growing significance – a "renewal of aurality in terms of certain experiences of the modern world." (Conner, 2004:61)

But, in the late 1950s, the commercial, cultural and artistic world of rock 'n' roll was shaken by a series of events. The "demise of rock 'n' roll" was widely predicted (and, to some degree, encouraged) by many who held long-entrenched positions in the recording and broadcasting industries. This "near-death experience" for rock 'n' roll, unfolding between 1958 and 1960, was the outcome of an untimely series of scandals, deaths, and career-ending events in the lives of some of the genre's founders and biggest stars,

> victims of fate as well as pressure from the government [in the form of "payola" investigations]. Artists fell by the wayside or were neutralized: [Chuck] Berry was indicted, [Jerry Lee] Lewis was scandalized, Little Richard got religion, [Buddy] Holly crashed, Elvis [Presley] enlisted and [Bill] Haley [of Bill Haley and the Comets] just quietly folded. (Friedlander, 1996:61)

Ironically, yet touchingly, it was in the midst of this turbulent period in the life of the young art form – a time when many both within and without the music industry suggested that rock 'n' roll as a musical, cultural, generational and economic force was in its death throes – that the tiny Zoom Records label was given life, by a pair of ambitious but naïve teenagers, after a basketball game, at a Friday night dance, on a cafeteria floor, in a nearly new high school in Tucson, Arizona.

TECHNOLOGY, POPULAR CULTURE, URBAN CONTEXT

Bestor writes tellingly of how markets act as "stages upon which consumption is rehearsed and displayed." (Bestor, 1999:206-7) In the context of the Zoom Records story, the concept of the broader market (in this case, of popular culture, encompassing the market for rock 'n' roll music in particular) serves as an apt setting, a stage upon which the story arises, and upon which such consumption takes place. He also cites Geertz' depiction of man as "an animal suspended in webs of significance." (Bestor, 1999:235) The Zoom Records story can be perceived as arising in just such a web – at the confluence of recording studio technologies and practices, and of popular music recording, broadcasting and distribution methodologies that were at a unique stage in their development in urban America in early 1959, and which were largely centered on American urban areas. These intersecting "webs of significance" give broader meaning to the Zoom Records story, and provide a spatial and historical context for an appreciation of its significance.

Through the history of recorded music up to the late 1950s, the capturing of a musical performance depended largely on the capacity of the musical artist to behave in the recording studio in much the same way as in a public performance space – to, in essence, create a convincing "live performance" in the recording studio that would be captured on magnetic tape:

> **Jack Miller (recording engineer for Zoom Records tracks in 1959):** In that time period the bands that would come into the studio performed…*they didn't record, they performed.* The studio was like a stage. (author's emphasis added) (Miller, personal interview, 2011)

During this era, single-track recording technologies (based in magnetic tape since the late 1940s) were incapable of the complex cutting, splicing, overdubbing and mixing that become commonplace by the mid-1960s. So, the recording studio's working model, up to the late 1950s, in essence demanded that the musical performer, to be successful, become "the virtuoso of the repeated take." (Chanan, 1995:18)

> **Pete Ronstadt (lead singer with Zoom recording artists, The Nightbeats):** It was one of those deals where unlike what you do now, or even did five or ten years later than that, where you can have somebody lay down this track or that… we were all playing at the same time, or trying to play at the same time. So, if one person screwed up, the band had to start over again. (Ronstadt, personal interview, 2011)

Notably, however, during the seven-month life of Zoom Records, this cumbersome restriction on recording sessions, and on the recording producers, artists and engineers who participated in them, was transformed by the advent of multi-track recording technologies.

> As a result, multi-track recording puts the producer and recording engineer firmly in charge of the studio…the new mode of production therefore begins to turn the recording engineer – the mixer – into a musical creator of a new kind. (Chanan, 1995:147)

> **Jack Miller:** About '59 we got a two track machine…we also got a Gates board that had two outputs on it, so we could make one left, one right…no middle, no pan…so, we could do stereo – kind of. Right after, we got the two track we got the three-track, and we recorded on it, separate tracks, band on one track and vocal on another track…and maybe background voices or a sax solo on the third track, and them mixed them later. (Miller, personal interview, 2011)

The availability by the late 1950s of multi-track recording, in and of itself, transforms the very nature of the recording process, as well as of the perception and reception of the recorded musical track. The recording artist is now often required to perform, alone before a microphone in the artificial environment of the recording studio, and frequently in the absence of his band mates, laying down his vocal or instrumental tracks either unaccompanied or while listening to previously-recorded tracks. The studio professional who directs and supervises the highly elaborate and creative process of crafting the finished recording becomes elevated to the role of the "producer," a musical and technological artist in his own right. And, in the years that followed, the carefully crafted (through overdubbing, recording, mixing, equalization and mastering) studio rendition of a song – now perceived as something separate and distinct from the previously-revered live performance – becomes the object of audience adulation, attention and desire in ways that it never had before. The appearance of Zoom Records in coincidence with the very earliest utilization of multi-track recording technology and practices is part of what gives significance to the label's story.

During this same era, following on the success of artists such as Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly and others, the "youth culture" of America became inextricably intertwined with the burgeoning rock 'n' roll scene in countless ways. As rock 'n' roll stars became increasingly idolized – through appearances on such nationally broadcast programs as the CBS Television Network's Ed Sullivan Show and others – local and regional rock 'n' roll and popular music performers (whose style and manner of performance often carefully imitated those of national stars) came to be the focus of significant "teen adulation," and

to play significant roles in the pop culture of their high school peers, and in their high schools and their local and regional communities.

> **Jack Wallace:** Rock 'n' roll was big, Elvis Presley was big, all of them were big at the time, but to have live rock 'n' roll…and in the peer group, the teenage rock 'n' roll…there wasn't anybody else**.** (Wallace, personal interview, 2012)

Significantly, during this era, local radio and media outlets operated in a way that allowed the support and popularization of such artists, a circumstance that would change profoundly in the early- to mid-1960s (and increasingly so in the decades since), as AM (and later FM) rock 'n' roll radio stations became more formatted, more studiously programmed, increasingly syndicated, and more beholden to larger corporate and commercial interests.

The music of such local favorites, performed and broadcast before one's teenaged peers, serves not only as an expression of age-centered artistic sentiment and romantic angst; it also plays a significant role in the creation of their (often short-lived) popularity, as well as their personal and public identity. As evidence, on the occasion of a 2011 reunion between Ray and Burt and their first recording artist (in the Catalina High School lunchroom where their fateful encounter took place), Ray Lindstrom recounts:

> We were just saying, this is where we first heard Jack Wallace and the Hi-Tones perform. And, the girls were screaming. He was singing, and the girls were screaming. We thought, "This is it – this is the reincarnation of Elvis!" (Lindstrom, documentary shoot, November 2011)

In sum, the late 1950s – in Tucson as in cities and town across America – represents a singular era in popular music, one which both followed the artistic lead provided by nationally known recording artists, producers and marketers, but which also

allowed for a high level of localization and popularization of “hometown favorites” as performers, recording artists and AM radio-driven media stars.

1950S INDEPENDENT LABELS, AMERICAN CITIES, INDUSTRY SUPPORT

In American 1950s popular music, it is fair to say that the history of its several distinct genres is largely the history of the record labels that discovered, recorded and marketed them. The labels of the era included well-established "majors" which had popularized recording artists of the 1940s big band era and were still "in the game," as well as the independent labels that were springing up by the hundreds. In fact, the period under study here, the late 1950s, falls within a wider span representing the prime of American independent record labels, from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s.

> By the mid-fifties, the independent labels had…as good a chance of having a hit with a new record as any of the majors…and for eight years from 1956 through 1963, the American record business exploded with a profusion of labels. (Gillett, 1970:67)

Many of rock 'n' roll's greatest success stories, in fact, had grown out of this explosion of independent record labels, Memphis's Sun Records (the original label of Elvis Presley, and later of Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins and Jerry Lee Lewis and others) among them. Countless other independent labels grew and thrived during this period: Jubilee, Atlantic, Chess, VeeJay, and others. Most were located in medium- to large-sized cities such as Nashville, Chicago, New York, Detroit and Cincinnati. Curiously, no record labels of real significance appeared during this time in some major American cities (including Boston, Baltimore and Pittsburgh). (Gillett, 1970:69)

Smaller independent labels of the era arose, often in small- to medium-sized metropolitan areas such as Tucson, and strongly reflected locally and regionally popular styles of music. (Gillett, 1970:68) They also boasted devoted local and regional followings and received support and airplay (sometimes aided by payola and other dubious marketing practices) by local (usually independently operated) radio stations. As such, the small, local independent labels provided a vehicle for local performers – sometimes those in the early stages of what would prove to be national careers (i.e., Elvis Presley) – an opportunity to "get in on the action" of being a record star, and to feel the rush of celebrity, if only in a limited fashion as compared to their nationally known counterparts. Nonetheless, the experience of operating or recording for a small independent label was a treasured and transformative experience for those fortunate to have the opportunity.

During the same time, the national record and radio industry magazines *Billboard* and *Cash Box* were publishing increasingly sophisticated record "charts." These charts provided important mechanisms for tracking popular music record sales and air play in a variety of categories that reflected increasingly diverse audience tastes and purchasing habits. Such tracking methods furthered the business interests of popular music producers, distributors and radio stations. To a degree, such publications took notice of the up-and-coming stars of local radio markets:

> Billboard set up in 1959 the "Bubbling Under" chart, which covered local hits in regional markets…Now, what's a "bubbling under"? Bubbling under is like you sold twelve copies…you deserve to be not on the national chart but below the chart. (Lichtman, 2002:202)

Thus, due to a confluence of cultural, technological, commercial and other factors, the late 1950s stand as a singular era in the evolution of recorded, popularized rock ‘n’ roll music in America. It is against this backdrop that the story of Tucson’s Zoom Records unfolds.

THE ZOOM RECORDS STORY: JANUARY – AUGUST, 1959

Beginnings and Early Recordings

The story of Zoom Records and its seven-month life in Tucson, Arizona is a tale of friendship, curiosity, determination, and to some degree, naiveté. Burt Schneider and Ray Lindstrom, both seventeen years old and in their senior year at Tucson's Catalina High School, simply didn't realize that starting a record label was something they couldn't (or shouldn't) do. As Burt and Ray tell it, their friendship was based largely on a shared love of the rock 'n' roll scene, its music, its stars, and its influence in the teen circles of which they were a part.

As seniors at Catalina High, the two adolescent pals were part of a somewhat select high school crowd. Erected starting in 1957, the school was only fully completed during the same year in which Burt and Ray graduated, and was only Tucson's second high school. The school structure was noted both locally and nationally (though derided by some) for its highly contemporary, even lavish architectural style and building materials, and its student body was drawn largely from what were, at the time, some of Tucson's more upscale neighborhoods, including the Catalina Foothills. Zoom recording artist (and classmate of Burt and Ray) Jack Wallace recalls, "They called it the 'Disneyland of High Schools'…It was amazing, architecturally, and of course what it presented in fine arts, music, theatre, gymnasium, everything that was there was just exceptional." (Wallace, personal interview, 2012) Over time, Catalina High also

graduated a variety of notable alumni, including pop music superstar Linda Ronstadt, actress Kate Walsh, and crossword guru Merle Reagle, among others. Burt and Ray themselves would both embark on notable careers, as well, achieving varying degrees of success in the media and the business world.

But, in their senior year at Catalina High, Burt Schneider and Ray Lindstrom were just a couple of average teenaged boys, riding the bus to school together, chasing girls in their spare time, and yearning for engagement with the rock 'n' roll music that had so animated their teen years. Their entry into the world of rock 'n' roll recording had its beginning at what can only be considered an entirely appropriate, though inauspicious event: a high school dance, on the evening of Friday, January 30, 1959:

> **Ray:** We were at a high school dance. Appearing at this school dance was a guy by the name of Jack Wallace, he was kinda like Elvis in a way, the slicked back hair, and he had a good voice, and a couple of backup singers, the Hi-Tones. The girls at the dance loved this guy, and they were kind of screaming as they would if this was Elvis. We looked at that and we said "Why don't we record them?" We don't know music, we don't play anything, we don't sing, but we could own the record company that recorded him, and that's how it started. (Lindstrom, personal interview, 2011)
>
> **Burt:** We were entrepreneurs. You know, you hear people say "I don't play anything but the radio," and that's pretty much what it was. And, we saw how this got a great response from everybody at the dance, and we said "Hey…." (Schneider, personal interview, 2011)

The site for this seemingly spontaneous creation of the Zoom Records label – the Catalina High School cafeteria – offers opportunity for reflection on the significance of such a "social space" on interrelationships of its inhabitants, "to locate, both physically and conceptually, social relations and social practice in social space." (Low, 1999:111) In the course of documenting the Zoom Records story, our documentary film crew had

occasion to visit the space in which the labels founders were inspired to approach their classmate and suggest the possibility of recording his music. While filming, as Burt and Ray discussed on camera their memories of starting the label, they were approached by Jack Wallace who had also visited the school that morning (pre-arranged by the film crew, but unbeknownst to Burt and Ray). This "chance" meeting and their joint recollections of the evening of January 30, 1959 were compelling in their power to evoke the significance of the "actual transformation of space – through people's social exchanges, memories, images…into scenes and actions that convey symbolic meaning." (Low, 1999:112)

Burt and Ray's memories of this precipitating event in the story of their record label – the evening they approached the young Jack Wallace at the high school dance – is, even some 52 years later, recalled with remarkable consistency by the singer whom they chose as their label's first act:

> **Jack Wallace:** That's when Ray Lindstrom came up after one of our dances, and said "Hey, would you guys like to record these songs on a record?" Well, of course…. (Wallace, personal interview, 2012)

In the days that followed, the young entrepreneurs – enthusiastic and ambitious, yet uneducated in the ways of business, finance and recording studio techniques – sought out and found connections to the wider world of popular music recording and licensing, record manufacturing, and radio airplay.

> **Ray**: And Burt and I, we would buy Billboard Magazine. And way in the back of this magazine was this ad…and it said "Sidney J. Wakefield, Custom Record Pressing, Phoenix, Arizona." And I called and I said "Hi, I'm Ray Lindstrom, I

wanta make a record, what do I do??" (Lindstrom, personal interview, 2011)

Quite by happenstance, record presser Sidney Wakefield referred Ray and Burt to a Phoenix recording studio, Audio Recorders of Arizona. A phone call to Audio Recorders in the ensuing days resulted in Ray and Burt booking time on Saturday, February 7, 1959 to record two songs ("I Think of You" and "You are the One") with their high school classmate Jack Wallace and his back-up singers the Hi-tones.

It is at this juncture that a significant milestone in the Zoom Record story occurs. Entirely without intention, much less any forethought as to the wider implications of their choice of a recording studio for their fledgling independent label, Burt and Ray found themselves, some eight days after the Catalina High School dance, recording their initial Zoom Records tracks at a studio which, from the perspective of some fifty years, was a pivotal site in the development of American rock 'n' roll music.

> **Jack Miller (recording engineer for the Zoom Records tracks):** Starting in 1957, we were getting worldwide recognition for records that we had recorded, Duane Eddy, Sanford Clark's "The Fool," a lot of people knew if it was coming from Phoenix, it was a certain kind of record that people wanted to buy. The rest of the industry was doing similar things, but we were doing our thing, and our thing was noticed all over the world. (Miller, personal interview, 2011)

Burt and Ray's tiny independent label had, unwittingly, crossed paths with some of the world's leading record industry engineers and producers of the late 1950s. As a direct result, the recordings that they made between February and August, 1959 display an aural quality which (while by no means theirs alone) was arguably a determinative factor in the evolution of the overall sound of American (and British) popular music in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This sound was a result of the location-specific audio

engineering, recording and mixing techniques that had been developed by Floyd Ramsey and Jack Miller at Audio Recorders of Arizona in the approximately two years that preceded Zoom Records' arrival at the studio.

> **Al Perry (Tucson recording artist/record collector):** It was really Duane Eddy that got things going, and what people really don't realize is that low twang sound that Duane [Eddy] got on the guitar, that went on to influence everybody, and we take that sound for granted now, but think of something like "Day Tripper" by the Beatles, that's Duane Eddy right there. Think of [early 1960s] Surf Music, all that stuff that's played on the low strings; that came from Duane Eddy; right there in Phoenix is where they did all that stuff. (Perry, personal interview, 2011)

The "Phoenix twang" referenced here is in evidence in the nine Zoom Records tracks recorded and released over the course of the label's life, and was but one example of the sort of place-specific acoustic experimentation that was common in the area. (Examples include Phil Spector's "wall of sound" heard in recordings he produced just a few years later. Notably, Spector himself was an occasional visitor to Audio Recorders during this same era.) Its basis was unique to the particular studio, Audio Recorders, in which the Zoom tracks were recorded, the result of a combination of technological ingenuity and astute awareness of both the acoustic properties and artistic possibilities of the tools at hand:

> **Jack Wallace:** They had an "echo chamber" that was unique to the west coast. Now this was an echo *chamber*, it wasn't like today which is on computers, they didn't have computers then. So he made it more echo, or less echo – and we called it "echo" – when you sang. (Wallace, personal interview, 2011)

> **Jack Miller:** We had a twenty-one hundred gallon water tank…and we put a speaker down in the tank, and a microphone up in the turret, and we would feed, we would take off a signal from the original signal going to the tape, and we would feed it to the chamber, and we would blend that back with the original signal…and it really made the guitar, the low strings on the guitar sound good. (Miller, personal interview, 2011)

Local, Regional and National Airplay

Within days of recording their first Zoom Records tracks, the young recording executives were able to receive airplay on Tucson's most listened-to AM radio station, KTKT (990 AM). The rapidity with which the initial Zoom Records releases made their way on to the KTKT "play list" testifies to the manner in which medium-market commercial stations of the late 1950s operated. To a greater degree than was possible even several years later, local commercial radio stations in a market such as Tucson had the programming flexibility to air the recordings of local talent in ways that the "corporatization" and syndication of radio stations and programming would not allow by the mid- to late 1960s:

> **Al Perry:** You know, you can't do that now. These local stations, somebody in New York tells them what they've gotta play, you know. The DJ's just picked it up, spun it, the kids liked it, they knew the name, it was so much more free back then, you know? (Perry, personal interview, 2011)

Additionally, a local radio outlet such as KTKT, in late 1950s Tucson, Arizona, provided a degree of local exposure that was typical of the era, but which is unduplicated today, according to late-1950s KTKT afternoon deejay (and later program director) Frank Kalil:

> We were getting 55, 60, 75 percent of the audience…when I was on the air, I had no less than more audience than all the other stations combined; it was pretty remarkable. Everything to do with rock 'n' roll mattered to people in Tucson, cause like I say, more than half of them were listening to that. (Kalil, personal interview, 2012)

The facility with which Zoom Records' 45-rpm's found their way onto local radio outlets was a source of delight for the young record producers, as well as their recording artists:

> **Ray:** Yeah, to hear a record you made on the radio, what an exciting thing that was! Pete Ronstadt said, "I remember the first time I was driving along and heard myself on the radio, what a thrill that was, it's just really exciting!" (Lindstrom, personal interview, 2011)
>
> **Jack Wallace:** I recall driving, and hear them saying – we listened to KTKT – and hearing them saying "And now, the local rock 'n' roll group, Jack Wallace and the Hi-Tones, it's 'You are the One'"…and I thought, oh my gosh! (Wallace, personal interview, 2011)

In the months that followed their initial recordings of Jack Wallace and the Hi-Tones on February 7, 1959, Burt and Ray recruited other acts for their young label. An additional six tracks, recorded by Pete Ronstadt and the Nightbeats and King Rock and the Knights, were completed at the Audio Recorders studio on two additional occasions, in March and July of that year. Expanding and financing the start-up business enterprise to allow for additional investments in recording sessions and 45-rpm record pressings placed new demands on the young entrepreneurs:

> **Ray:** After, for our fourth release, we got four kids from high school to give us fifty dollars apiece, to come up with two hundred dollars. (Lindstrom, personal interview, 2011)
>
> **Burt:** Actually, one of the people that invested turned out to be the CEO of Wells Fargo. (Schneider, personal interview, 2011)
>
> **Ray:** That's right, he says that was his first investment, he says he bet money on the wrong Ronstadt! (laughs) (Lindstrom, personal interview, 2011)

Over the course of the seven months of Zoom's life, several of the label's releases managed to find their way to broadcasters in distant markets, as well:

> **Pete Ronstadt:** I know that one of the things that was a big thrill for me, I was driving home one night, two or three in the morning, and there was an all-night radio station out of Oklahoma City, it was KOMA I think it was called, and damned if I didn't hear "Lonesome Road," and thought "Wow, we've made it!" And, it was one of those things; I thought "We're nationwide!" (Ronstadt, personal interview, 2011)

> **Ray:** Actually, of all the records we sold, we sold more of that record by King Rock and the Knights and it got more national notoriety than anything, especially in Pittsburgh…a disc jockey there used it as his theme song. (Lindstrom, personal interview, 2011)

As the label's songs were recorded and duplicated, its founders also took the bold step of mailing 45-rpm discs to the prestigious, nationally circulated Billboard Magazine, hoping to have their releases noticed by the power brokers of the rock 'n' roll world. Astonishingly, they managed to achieve this on more than one occasion, receiving favorable Billboard review for several of the label's records

> **Bill Wershing:** They sent records off to Billboard and I remember Burt coming up, seein' me in the hall: "You got so many stars in Billboard!" (Wershing, personal interview, 2012)

Through the experience of establishing and organizing the label, Burt and Ray demonstrated a remarkable knack for business, connecting with nationally-known players in the world of rock 'n' roll recording, obtaining airplay in local and distant markets and receiving favorable recognition by knowledgeable industry insiders. And, their business savvy did not go unnoticed by the artists with whom they worked.

> **Bill Wershing:** Burt and Ray had a lot of strengths. They did a tremendous job…just taking a company, no matter how big it is or small it is, from ground zero to where, to a functioning company, is tough! (Wershing, personal interview, 2012)

> **Pete Ronstadt:** They made a pretty good combination, for a couple of high school kids, and they weren't embarrassed or bashful about going out and dealin' with adults. (Ronstadt, personal interview, 2011)

While some limited contacts with stations in other markets did allow some exposure for the Zoom Records tracks outside of Tucson, a lack of a comprehensive regional or national marketing and distribution strategy prevented the Zoom label from achieving broader success. By late summer of 1959, with its founding partners and recording artists graduating from Catalina High, the label's brief life came to an uneventful end.

> **Ray:** It was in August of '59, and you know our high school days were over. Everybody was leaving, kids were going away to college, we were going away to college, it was just the end, it was just a natural ending point of Zoom records. (Lindstrom, personal interview, 2012)

> **Jack Wallace:** Jack Wallace and the Hi-Tones disbanded, early, right after high school in 1959, so from February to June was the extent of Jack Wallace and the Hi-Tones, 1959. (Wallace, personal interview, 2011)

Personal Transformations

In its short life, the Zoom Records label achieved only limited success when compared to the larger independent labels of the era. But, the lessons of the experience were profound for its creators, and had a lasting impact on the two young entrepreneurs.

> **Ray:** And, people would say you're a couple of 17-year old kids, how do you make a record? And, produce it? And press it, and go out and promote it? Well, you learn by asking people. It was kind of the beginning of my business life. (Lindstrom, personal interview, 2012)

After high school and college, Ray Lindstrom went on to have a highly successful career in broadcasting (he is known in some circles as "The Father of the Infomercial") and other fields, and has been recognized both locally and nationally as a noted business leader and innovator.

> **Burt:** You know, it was just more sort of an empowerment sort of thing. That's the part I remember about that, just the idea that we can do something! (Schneider, personal interview, 2012)

Burt Schneider's subsequent career included stints in radio broadcasting, with high level assignments in New York (one such assignment allowed him to conduct televised interviews with a number of prominent pop music stars, including Diana Ross and the Supremes and others), and as a "booth announcer" at WGBH Television (one of the flagship stations of the Public Broadcasting System) in Boston. He also has worked for a number of years as an announcer for Arizona Public Media on the University of Arizona campus.

It's also worth noting that Jack Miller of Audio Recorders of Arizona continued his career as a highly regarded recording engineer both in Los Angeles (where he recorded albums for Jefferson Airplane, the Monkees, the Rolling Stones, Wayne Newton and others) and Phoenix, and is today still professionally active, working on assignment for Canyon Records in Phoenix, where he has done substantial recording for renowned Native American flutist R. Carlos Nakai, Tucson percussionist Will Clipman, and others.

CONCLUSION

An examination of Tucson's Zoom Records provides a window on the larger world of independent record labels in late 1950s America, the reach of rock 'n' roll music, and their significant roles in urban America and the mushrooming youth culture of that era. It offers opportunities for further examination and understanding of the broader popular music recording, marketing and broadcasting scene of its era, providing a locally-relevant instance for the consideration of the issues of consumption, youth identity and the myriad "webs of significance" that connected Ray Lindstrom and Burt Schneider with a wider, and rapidly evolving, musical world.

APPENDIX A:

ZOOM 45-RPM RECORDING TITLES, ARTISTS, TIMINGS, RECORDING DATES, COMPOSERS AND RECORD NUMBERS

(All recordings © 1959 BurtStar Music, BMI)

"Cryin' All Night": Pete Ronstadt and the Nightbeats, 1:45. Recorded August 27 1959. Peter Ronstadt, Nate Foster. ZR-004 side B.

"Doreen": Pete Ronstadt and the Nightbeats, 2:26. Recorded August 27, 1959. J. Devlin. ZR-004 side A.

"I Think of You": Jack Wallace and the Hi-Tones, 2:44. Recorded February 7, 1959. Jack T. Wallace. ZR-001 side A.

"Lonesome Road Rock": Pete Ronstadt and the Nightbeats, 2:12. Recorded March 21, 1959. Peter Ronstadt, Nate Foster. ZR-002 side A.

"Nightbeat": Pete Ronstadt and the Nightbeats, 1:58. Recorded March 21,1959. Peter Ronstadt, Nate Foster. ZR-002 side B.

"Scandal": King Rock and the Knights, 2:08 Recorded February 21, 1959. William Wershing. ZR-003 side A. (Re-released in 1966 as ZR-005)

"Sea of Love": Pete Ronstadt and the Nightbeats, 2:26. Recorded August 27, 1959. Baptiste, Khoury. (Unreleased)

"Send-Di": King Rock and the Knights, 1:56 Recorded March 21, 1959. William Wershing. ZR-003 side B. (Re-released in 1966 as ZR-005, subtitled "Boss Part 2")

"You Are The One": Jack Wallace and the Hi–Tones, 2:00. Recorded February 7, 1959. Jack T. Wallace. ZR-001 side B.

APPENDIX B: HUMAN RESEARCH DETERMINATION

ARIZONA

FORM: Human Research Determination		
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SECTION 3: SIGNATURES

It is against Federal regulations to conduct research involving human subjects without prior IRB approval. Projects that do not require IRB/HSPP oversight may still have other requirements.

- Projects involving **Native Americans,** including the use of existing information or specimens, require review and approval by the tribe(s) involved, prior to beginning your project.
- Projects involving deceased persons and involve Protected Health Information may fall under HIPAA regulations. Contact the **HIPAA Privacy Officer, Jeniece Poole at (520) 621-1465.**

If you have any questions or are unsure how to answer these questions, please **contact the HSPP office at (520) 626-6721 BEFORE** beginning your project. Violating Federal regulations is a serious matter and may result in the suspension of your research and/or loss of federal funding.

Please note: if you determine that this activity is not considered human research and, therefore, does not require IRB review, such determination **cannot for any reason** be reversed or revoked at a later date for **any** part of the project. Further, data derived from this project may not in any way be presented as research. ****Note that any changes made to this protocol after receiving HSPP confirmation will need to be re-submitted and reviewed.****

1. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

By signing below, I, the Principal Investigator, certify that I have accurately answered the items listed and believe that the proposed activity does not constitute engagement in Human Research according to DHHS or FDA regulations.

Daniel R. Kruse Principal Investigator Signature	2/15/11 Date	Daniel R. Kruse - School of Music Print Name & Department
Janet L. Sturman Advisor Signature	2/15/11 Date	Janet Sturman - School of Music Print Name & Department

2. UNIT REVIEW

Based on the information provided by the Principal Investigator, I have determined that this project does not constitute Human Research.

Rex A. Woods Departmental/Unit/Authorized Authority Reviewer (Signature)	REX A. WOODS Print Name
Vice Director Title	2/17/11 Date

3. HSPP REVIEW

Based on the information provided by the Principal Investigator, I have determined that this project does not constitute Human Research.

HSPP Reviewer (Signature)	Print Name

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Carden, Lori (Catalina High School Class of 1959) Tucson, AZ, June 23, 2012

Kalil, Frank (KTKT DJ) Tucson, AZ, November 18, 2011

Lindstrom, Ray (Zoom Records co-founder) Tucson, AZ, January 19, 2011

Miller, Jack (recording engineer) Phoenix, AZ, May 21, 2011

Moon, Brian (Professor of Musicology, University of Arizona) Tucson, AZ, January 20, 2011

Perry, Al (singer/songwriter, recording artist and record collector) Tucson, AZ, April 4, 2011

Ronstadt, Pete (Zoom Records recording artist with the Nightbeats) Tucson, AZ, January 27, 2011

Schneider, Burt (Zoom Records co-founder) Tucson, AZ, January 19, 2011

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