

PM

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NEWS OF NEW YORK



Nickel, Nickel Do-Dee-Da-Da-Da

Pepsi-Cola Hits the Air Spots With a Socko Sales Version of *John Peel*

Austen Herbert Croom Croom-Johnson is a lean, ginger-haired 31-year-old Englishman who prepped for a radio and song-writing career at at BBC. About nine years ago, John Royal, NBC vice-president, was so impressed, he fetched Croom-Johnson to the United States. Now Croom-Johnson is a Force in American radio. He is the man behind the Pepsi-Cola jingles.

During the past six months, the 15-second Pepsi-Cola ditty has been broadcast about 18,000 times on 200 radio stations. The stations average about 10 Pepsi-Cola broadcasts a week. Johnson and his collaborator, Alan Bradley Kent, have sold jingles to other advertisers: Esso, Flit and NBC (National Biscuit Co.) but the wide-spread Pepsi-Cola campaign has made them the top team in their league.

Between them, Kent and Croom Croom-Johnson, called "Ginger" to save time, have fewer inhibitions than a fan-dancer. Their working hours are joyously spent in unbridled abuse, enthusing over swing records and concocting childish advertising ditties. It was during such a shop-talk three years back that the whole thing started. Kent says all he did was to comment, "Ginger, spot announcements stink." Ginger not only agreed but supported the idea of doing something about it all. The Pepsi-Cola campaign is that "something."

Pepsi-Cola Hits the Air Spots

Sing Something Simple

The basic Pepsi-Cola song is classically simple. It is just a swing-out on the old hunting-song, *John Peel*. It opens with a rhythmic "nickel, nickel, nickel" vamp to a four-four count. Then comes the refrain, which, in case you can't read the Tune-Twisters' script above, goes:

*Pepsi-Cola hits the spot,
Twelve full ounces, that's a lot,
Twice as much for a nickel, too,
Pepsi-Cola is the drink for you.*

After several months the jingle was well ground into listeners' ears, so Pepsi-Cola ordered variations on the theme. Some were scored for swing, boogie-woogie and baby-talk. Later the first two lines were rewritten. The last two, which carry the sacred sales message, are never jived up. When still more variations were called for, Kent and Johnson came up with one in the deep-sea basso of Popeye. It shatters a cherished dietary theory:

*Pepsi-Cola hits the spot
Nuts to spinach, look what I've got. . .*

Another national hero pressed into the Pepsi-Cola sales army was the *Lone Ranger* (incognito of course), whose Pepsi-Cola hi-yo goes:

*As I ride the range, I sing this song,
When I like my drinks, I like 'em long . . .*

In addition to the authorized verses there are any number of unofficial switches. The neatest of these comes from a Brooklyn station, where an announcer sings the jingle in Yiddish-American, like Lou Holst.

Pepsi-Cola's chansonettes were originally sung by "Whispering" Jack Smith. For about five months, now, they've been chanted by the Tune-Twisters trio, who not only sing but make noises like musical instruments. In the picture above, Andrew Jackson Love (left) is emitting the Pepsi-Cola "Pah!" When Love isn't pah-ing or singing, he oomphs like a bull-fiddle. The other contributing "Twisters" are Robert Wacker (center) and the guitar twanger, Gene Lapham.

Kent, Johnson and the Twisters are now at work on a jingle for Wrigley's gum. The theme of that one: "Chew, chew, chew." Meanwhile they want to do one more Pepsi-Cola opus, this time in double talk, but Pepsi-Cola has held out firmly against it. Just in case you want to try it on your piano, it goes like this:

*Pepsi-Cola minils the spot
Twelve strof brannis, that's a lot
Twice as gemmer for moolee woo
Pepsi-Cola is the slerm for you*

—J. F.

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