

Cover of the international fan club magazine "CONNIFF & RHYTHM",
produced by Lois Hollands

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The following article by Lois Hollands appeared in the winter 1968 edition of "Conniff & Rhythm", the magazine of the International Ray Conniff Fan Club, volume 32. It refers to the recording sessions of the "Turn Around Look At Me" album. Lois was invited by Ray to attend the recording sessions in order to thank her for her work with fan club. The recording sessions took place from July 1 to 3, 1968. They were supervised and produced by Jack Gold, the sound was supervised by Bob Ballard, Engineering: Jack Lattig. / Ray plays trombone on The Good, the Bad and the Ugly, and he also features "Skeets" Herfurt on the amplified flute, as well as timpani work by Bernie Mattinson (stereo left), and Wally Snow (stereo right). / The album was recorded in Hollywood on 8-track machines with no overdubbing. The instrumentation was: 13 men singers, 12 girl singers, 3 trombones, 3 trumpets, 6 guitars, 2 pianos (organ double), 2 percussionists, string bass, electric Fender bass guitar, rhythm drums, amplified flute (doubling amplified clarinet) and solo trombone by Ray. Ray's photo and the cover photo were taken by Frank Bez. Ray let Lois choose the intro of "This Guy's In Love With You". Here is Lois' report:

A RECORDING SESSION

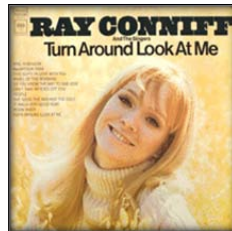
Ray books the recording studio for three days when he has made his mind up when he wants to record a new LP.

Ray usually drives from his flat in Santa Monica to the CBS studios right in the heart of Hollywood which takes him around 30 or 40 minutes. He parks the car in the car park and walks to the back entrance of the studio. Stepping out of the brilliant sunshine into the shade of the closed in studio, which is on the left as you enter the building. This is the big day when the 3 to 5 weeks of hours, putting musical notes down on paper, the ideas bursting and arrangements coming out the way Ray wants and imagines them; the brain wracking, becomes the beautiful sweet sounds of music, the arrangements breathing life and zest another Ray Conniff album is born.

Ray is at the studio by 8 am or 8.30 am, but most times it's around 8 am. As he enters the studio, he finds Jack Lattig, (the engineer) and three guys have set up the seat, music stands, microphones and partitions and are putting the finishing touches to the completion of the operation. Ray goes to his stand, brings out copies of arrangements and puts them on the music stand, he goes over the arrangements, after having a quick chat with Jack. Jack finally makes sure that all the microphones are operational and the sound is coming through on the complicated technical equipment in the control room, where the tapes are made.

At around 8.45 am the singers start to drift in, as they arrive, they chat among themselves about their families and what they have been doing since they were all together. By 9 am Bob Ballard has arrived and checked out that everything is all set for blast off.

Bob also checks that the music is on the stands. He then spends the rest of the time with Jack Lattig in the control room, and with the producer Mr. Jack Gold.



After a short chat with Jack Gold, Jack Lattig and Bob, Ray makes a start just after 9 am. At the far end of the studio, chairs are set out in a semi-circle, the singers take their place and Ray starts on the hours rehearsal. He takes the first song, telling the singers just how he wants the song sung. It is usual for Ray to record 4 songs on the first two days of recording and 3 on the third day.

Time spent on each of the four songs, rehearsing with the singers is about 20 minutes for each song, but it could be longer. Slowly but surely Ray coaxes his group of singers, until they get the feel of how he wants the song performed. The singers really chew the four songs over, going over them bar by bar thoroughly.

The four songs to be recorded on the first day I was in America were "It Was A Very Good Year", "Mrs. Robinson", "People" and "Angel of the Morning", that was on the Monday, on Tuesday it was "Turn Around look At Me", "MacArthur Park", "Can't Take My Eyes Off You" and "Moon River", on the final day Wednesday it was "This Guy's In Love With You", "San Jose" and "The Good, The Bad And The Ugly". Even while the singers rehearse with the piano accompanying them, you can feel the songs slowly stirring to life, the arrangements that Ray's worked so hard on for many hours. When Ray feels that the singers have got the feel of the arrangement, he then tells them to take five (a short break, the singers go and grab a cup of coffee or a soft drink. Meanwhile the musicians have arrived and have set up ready for action. Ray joins the musicians and tells them how he wants certain passages played on certain instruments. While the singers are having their little break, Ray has a 15 minute rehearsal with the orchestra. This is followed by a little sound check for Bob Ballard and Jack Lattig in the control room to make sure that the sound is balanced correctly. Then Ray has a quick sound check with both orchestra and singers. This takes anything from 15 to 30 minutes while final adjustments are made in the recording studio with

the microphones and then in the control room, which makes the time at 10.45 am or 11 am. When everything is completely ready, Ray makes a start on the first takes of the first song. Not one take is made, but anything from 4 to 10 takes can be made of a song, which is quite normal. Also some phrases for insert if needed, (if some parts Ray's not happy about, he will record the particular phrases over again and then insert them into the final take which is selected for pressing, if needed). One song can take, in time anything from $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour to $1\frac{1}{2}$ to do, it depends on the orchestra, singers and sound balance and if Ray is happy about the takes. During the takes and the inserts, there are breaks then while Ray dashes to the control room to listen to the playbacks, the musicians and singers get more coffee or soft drinks and sit around chatting and listening to the playback which is fed back into the studio via powerful loudspeakers. Once Ray is satisfied with the results, Ray will then come out of the control room and start on the takes and inserts of the next song. This is the pattern until all four songs are safely tucked away on tape, what they call 8 track tape, which is about 2 inches wide.

Then at around 2 pm or 2.30 pm (it can be an hour or so earlier at times) the 12 girls and 13 boys step down from their stand, then having a chat among themselves and at the same time they collect their belongings, hurried 'goodbyes' are said, they then dash off to their prospective wives, husbands and kids, the hard mornings work behind them until the next day. The orchestra, which can consist of anything from 8 musicians to 18, when given the OK, like the singers start to pack up, ready to go home to their families. Back again tomorrow and the following day before the Ray Conniff recording sessions are completed and in the can.

During the three day session that I attended the size of the orchestra varied from about 14 to 17 musicians. Which is rather a large orchestra for a singers album and the combination of the 14/17 piece orchestra and 25 singers gives a mighty powerful sound with a lot of punch!

Just a few details about the studio, which is kind of oblong, at one end was the central control room, with the usual glass window (gold fish bowl) which gives one a full view of the studio. You have above this glass window 4 large speakers, each side of the window, so that gives

you 4 speakers in the control room as well, through these you can feed back the music. Above these speakers you have a large clock and in front of the glass window in the studio you have two lights, which are on poles, one red, one green. When the red light is on, no one breathes as the recording is in progress, when the green light is on you can breathe, talk, sneeze and cough if you wish. At the far end of the studio in the left hand corner you will find a coffee urn and paper cups. In front of this to the right slightly you will have the 25 chairs set out in a semi-circle, facing one chair in the front, this is the rehearsal area. Just a little way from the one chair you have the large grand piano, by this piano, you have the drummer then along from the drummer you have the percussion, then in a line you have the brass section. The position of the piano, drums and percussion instruments, are like the straight top line of a figure seven, while the brass is set in the shape of a blown out tail of the figure seven, in front of the drums and percussion you have the guitars, in a line, rather like the letter F backwards and fatter. In front of the guitars you have the fender guitar, the flute or clarinet like the letter E backwards and fatter.

If Ray uses another piano or organ this is in position over the far side of the studio on the left, which then gives you a shape like a fat oblong. In front of this oblong you have Ray's rostrum. When Ray is facing the orchestra, on his right he has the men singers facing his side, while the girl singers face his back, when he is facing the orchestra that is. If you remember in the last edition I did try to give you a rough idea of the positioning. [...]

Well, getting back to the time when everyone has packed up and gone home. At 2 pm Ray will go to lunch with Jack Gold for about an hour or an hour and a half, during which they will talk shop. Then Ray returns to the studio and goes to the playback room (programme room) to check on the editing dates with Jack Lattig. In this programme room there is a tape control panel, with the 8 track tape machine, this machine is really the most ingenious piece of equipment, its job is ... No, I won't tell you what it does, I'll wait until the next edition, when you will find out all about the editing of a Ray Conniff album. So keep a watch out for the next edition. Meanwhile deck the halls with boughs of holly and all that!