

Bozo's Merry-Go-Round Music: Ride 2

Eric Beheim

The July, 2006 issue of the *Carousel Organ* included an article on “Bozo’s Merry-Go-Round Music,” a record with two complete band organ selections that was released in 1954 by Capitol Records. Unlike the 78-rpm band organs that were produced by the Allan Herschell Company in the 1940s for use in its “Merri-Org” amplified record unit, “Bozo’s Merry-Go-Round Music” was intended specifically for the children’s record market. The two band organ selections (*Our Director March* by Frederick Ellsworth Bigelow, and *Ciribiribin Waltz* by A. Pestalozzo) were introduced by Bozo the Clown, a character originally created for Capitol by writer/producer Alan Livingston, and who had been featured on a number of best selling albums. **Figure 1.**



Figure 1. Released in 1954, “Bozo’s Merry-Go-Round Music” offered complete selections performed by what is believed to be a Wurlitzer 165 band organ.

After listening to “Bozo’s Merry-Go-Round Music,” Fred Dahlinger tentatively identified the organ used for the recording as a Wurlitzer 165 (since Capitol Records was based in Hollywood, it was most likely one of two Wurlitzer 165 organs known to have been in the Los Angeles area at that time). The record’s cover designated these two selections as “Ride 1,” which led to speculation as to whether or not a “Ride 2” had ever been released. This writer, who originally heard the two selections from Ride 1 on the radio while growing up in Cleveland during the 1950s, had never encountered Ride 2 in over 30 years of collecting records of all vintages and all speeds. That is, until recently! Proof positive that Ride 2 had been released was found in *The Complete Guide to Vintage*

Children’s Records (2007) by Peter Muldavin, a dedicated collector who spent more than 12 years compiling the first and most comprehensive listing of kiddie 78-rpm records made in the United States.

The Ride 2 record follows the same format as Ride 1: each side opens with a brief spoken introduction by Bozo inviting young listeners to take a ride on his “merry, merry-go-round.” Then comes a complete band organ selection. Side 1 is *Artists Life Waltz* by Strauss and side 2 is *The Thunderer March* by Sousa. After each selection ends, Bozo returns for a few closing words.

Trivia:

On both records, Bozo’s voice is provided by Van DeBar “Pinto” Colvig, the “voice talent” who originally created the role in 1946, and who was also the original voice for Walt Disney’s Goofy.

There is some evidence to suggest that the two “Bozo’s Merry-Go-Round Music” records were “economy” releases that were done quickly and without the considerable expense associated with the production of a typical children’s record requiring special musical arrangements, a full complement of musicians and voice actors, and so on. Even comparing the two record covers side by side (**Figure 2**) reveals how the artwork

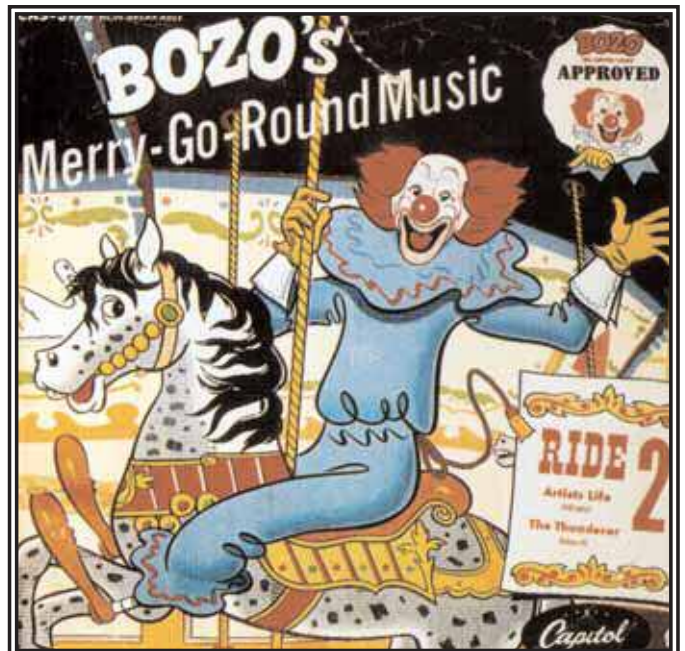


Figure 2. A close examination of the cover art from Ride 2 reveals how much art work from Ride 1 was cleverly used.

for Ride 1 was cleverly reused for Ride 2 as a further cost-cutting measure (at the time, it must have been felt that any record featuring the popular Bozo character would be a best seller). As was the standard industry practice then, both of these records were released in the 78-rpm and 45-rpm speeds. While sales figures for these two records are not available, their relative scarcity indicates that they probably did not sell as well as Capitol's other children's records featuring the likes of Bugs Bunny, Hopalong Cassidy, and Bozo himself.

If you've been searching for an original copy of "Bozo's Merry-Go-Round" Ride 1, finding Ride 2 will be even more of a challenge. Even Peter Muldavin (whose personal collection of 78-rpm children's records exceeds 11,000 titles) admits that it eluded him until only recently, a sure indication that, after 53 plus years, there aren't all that many copies available on the open market. In addition to being prized keepsakes for those of us from the "baby boomer" generation, the colorful Bozo record covers are collector's items in their own right, further contributing to the desirability (and scarcity) of these two titles.

Fortunately, for those who *must* have these records for their collections but don't have the time or the patience to spend the days/weeks/months/years required to locate original copies, it is possible to order a custom-burned CD with all of the selections contained on Rides 1 and 2 from Peter Muldavin's Kiddie Record King website (www.kiddierokordking.com/). Full color copies of the original record covers are also available from Peter—if you mention that you are a member of the COAA, or that you read this article in the *Carousel Organ*, he'll give you a 15% discount on your order.

Was a "Ride 3" ever issued? The scarcity of the first two records tends to indicate that there was probably not enough interest on the part of the record buying public to warrant releasing a third installment of "Bozo's Merry-Go-Round Music." Back in 1954, there was still plenty of opportunities for the general public to hear live band organ music. It was only after the old time amusement parks started disappearing at an

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alarming rate that the demand arose for carousel-related items such as carved wooden figures and band organ recordings. Had the "Bozo's Merry-Go-Round Music" records been released a decade or so later, they might have "gone gold" as they say in the record industry. We can be thankful that, long ago, some record producer unwittingly preserved for posterity examples of the music that has been delighting generations of children (and their parents) right up to the present day.

Eric Beheim is a life-long carousel and band organ fan. He and his wife, Pat, live in Southern California in east San Diego County

Ed Schmidt

Edward Franklyn Schmidt, 74, of McFarland, Kansas, died Friday, August 24, 2007 at Stormont-Vail Regional Health Center in Topeka. He had been a member of the community since 1976.



Ed was born May 17, 1933 in Cleveland, Ohio, the son of Edward and Mildred Birth Schmidt. He attended local schools and graduated in 1951 from Rhodes High School in Cleveland. He served in the United States Army during the Korean Conflict.

Ed spent his adult life building organs (before Ed started building band organs, he worked many years as a craftsman at a furniture company). He worked for many different private collectors building and repairing "band" and other pipe organs all over the country. He took his love for mechanics and music and combined those into his craft of building instruments. Ed also built his own complete band organ (now in the possession of COAA member, Rick McDowell). He was a member of AMICA and COAA.

He married Evelyn Reuter on June 17, 1962 in South Gate, California. She survives at their home.

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An advertisement of a calliope-like musical device for an automobile. Using a interchangeable medium featuring six tunes this was marketed by Christian Tussing. Courtesy: Matthew Caulfield.