

Positive Feedback

Frank Sinatra and Antonio Jobim eight-track tape sells for \$4,550

In 1969, Frank Sinatra and Brazilian composer, arranger and singer Antonio Carlos Jobim recorded sessions for what was to become their second release together, *Sinatra/Jobim*. After the sessions, it is believed that 3,500 eight-tracks (Reprise 8FH 1028) were released (rumor has it a vinyl test-pressing was also pressed for a planned LP). For whatever reason, Warner/Reprise issued an immediate return on all of the store copies released and even attempted to recall all of the sold recordings.

"It is one of the biggest mysteries in eight-track and Sinatra collecting circles," said Portland-based Sinatra collector Howard Bowman. "It's believed that Mr. Sinatra didn't like the cover art or possibly he didn't like the songs on the final release. Of course, he's not around to ask what happened, so we can only speculate, unfortunately."

Although hearsay about what The Chairman Of The Board liked or didn't like about the recording runs rampant, seven of the 10 songs recorded during that session later found a home on side one of the 1971 release *Sinatra And Company* (Reprise FS-1033), and two songs, "Bonita" and "Sabiá," were released on the 1979 compilation, *Sinatra-Jobim Sessions* (Reprise 34025). As for the *Sinatra/Jobim* eight-tracks? According to collectors, as few as three to as many as five of 3,500 survived, making the tape the rarest eight-track ever produced.

Kristen Costello's husband Len is what she calls a "connoisseur of music." The Pennsylvania-based couple are frequent eBay sellers; however, Len had taken a special interest in eight-track recordings.

"He likes to frequent the used music shops and thrift stores looking for unique items and eight-tracks to play in his 1967 Ford Mustang," she said. While surfing the 8-Track Heaven Web site, www.8trackheaven.com, he came across the story of the rare Sinatra recording. "Len showed me this article, and he made the comment, 'Wouldn't it be something if I could get a hold of one of these?'" The discovery of the article would later prove to be destiny.

While searching for additions to his in-car-stereo playlist, he came across a copy of *Sinatra/Jobim*. "He bought quite a few eight-tracks one day from a few different places. He probably paid anywhere from 50¢-\$15 for them, and this just happened to be one of them," Kristen said. "My God, it was like holding the Holy Grail!"

As tempting as it was to hold on to the rare find, on June 18 the Costellos listed their find for sale on eBay. "Me personally, not knowing squat about things like this, I never dreamt that an eight-track



could be worth more than, maybe, \$50," Kristen said. "I sent a few e-mails to some Sinatra collectors, and they were able to give me a little more information. The bottom line was that this tape was worth up to \$5,000. Its value is worth more to me than the tape itself is."

On June 25, an eight-track collector from Massachusetts overwhelmed the competition with a final bid of \$4,550. "It quite literally took my breath away," said Kristen.

"This tape had been previously valued at \$5,000 by some Sinatra collectors' guide, so I guess it comes as not too much of a surprise," said 8-Track Heaven's Malcolm Riviera, "although I have never paid 1/100th of that for an 8-track," he admitted. "\$4,500 for an 8-track is pretty outrageous; I wish I had that kind of money to throw around on anything, much less a single tape. Heck, I only paid \$4,000 for my '93 Volvo." In spite of the four-figure worth of the eight-track, Riviera stated that the value of one rare find will not affect the enthusiasm loyalists to the format already have. "Eight-tracks are already established as a collectible, so whomever is still in the position of re-thinking the collectibility of eight-tracks is simply behind the times. Eight-tracks have frequently fetched higher prices than LP, CD or cassette versions of the same album for years now."

"It will help because it will show collectors that there is value in eight-tracks," said Mike Porohnavi, who has an estimated 5,000 eight-tracks in his collection. "They're not just fodder for the scrap heap."

Have you discovered an ultra-rare recording on an online auction site? I'd love to know about it. Contact me via my Web site, www.isleofwrite.com, or via snail mail, Lisa Wheeler, PO Box 27633, Austin, TX 78755.

— Lisa Wheeler