

Does Anyone Remember?

IN THE late 1940s and early 1950s, many taverns and supper clubs had the Automatic Hostess, a jukebox with no records inside.

To hear some music, a patron dropped in a coin and made his or her request through a microphone, which was connected to a switchboard and a phone line located in a music studio. The studio had over a thousand records to choose from, categorized in large, slotted bins. I worked in one of these studios three 4-hour nights a week, serving various locations in Manitowoc, Wisconsin.

There were two turntables assigned to each establishment. Once in a while, it would happen that two or three records of the same title, especially the newest hits, were played at the same time for different establishments. That's why it was necessary to have four of everything.

Occasionally, on a Saturday morning, the bartender who was cleaning up or stocking coolers would call in on the jukebox microphone to let us know if any lights in the machine were burned out. If the tavern was close to the studio, I'd go and change the bulbs.

The Automatic Hostess came to an end with the coming of the Seeburg 100 selector jukebox with the records right in it.

—Chris W., Ripon, Wisconsin