

The Audio Fidelity Story

Sidney Frey established Kinor Records in New York City in 1951 and issued mainly Jewish-themed records on the label. Distribution was handled by Dauntless International which Frey also owned. In 1954, when he issued LP 901 titled "Merry-Go-Round Music" he used the Audio Fidelity label for the first time. In 1956, Frey changed the corporate name of the company to Audio Fidelity. The A&R director was Emanuel Vardi. Audio Fidelity recorded jazz, international, popular and gospel. Frey established a short-lived subsidiary label Dauntless in 1955 which issued jazz, comedy and spoken word records.

Frey was determined to lead the way in audiophile recording. The company specialized in high technical specifications on the recordings and beautiful graphics on its album covers. Audio Fidelity issued the first stereo LP when it issued AFLP 1872 in November of 1957. Frey had received the record from Westrex which had developed the 45/45 stereo record cutting system; the master provided to Frey was for evaluation only. Many record labels had received test masters but they were waiting for the RIAA (Recording Industry Association of America) to decide which of two competing systems would be picked as an industry standard. Frey scooped everyone by printing up 500 copies of the LP and making them available to the public. By doing this, Frey probably influenced the decision to use the Westrex 45/45 system for stereo recordings. AFLP 1872 came in a black cover with a gold sticker on the front stating "Compatible Stereophonic Demonstration Record For Test and Laboratory Purposes". The record contained one side of the AFLP 1851 "Marching Along with the Dukes of Dixieland" and one side of AFLP 1843 "Railroad Sounds Steam and Diesel, Sounds of a Vanishing Era".

Frey also wanted to preserve historic music and recorded music boxes, calliope music and other mechanical sounds. He used a subsidiary of Audio Fidelity called Audio Rarities to preserve historic performances. He also recorded steam and diesel locomotives for preservation and had an extensive number of albums dedicated to sound effects.

In September 1962, Frey went to Brazil to search out Brazilian jazz artists to bring to the US for a concert at Carnegie Hall. The concert featuring Sergio Mendes and Joao Gilberto was held on November 21, 1962 and bossa nova was presented for the first time to an American audience. Audio Fidelity issued records in Brazil under the Audio Fidelity label and those records used the Audio Fidelity numbering system during the 1962 to 1964 period. It is not known whether all of the records issued in Brazil were also issued in the United States.

By the early sixties Sidney Frey was in declining health. He sold the Audio Fidelity label to Herman Gimbel in 1965. Sidney Frey died in 1968 at the young age of 48.

Gimble changed the company name to Audiofidelity Enterprises in 1971. Audiofidelity purchased Chiaroscuro Records in 1976. The company was later sold to the Phoenix Company in which Audio Fidelity evolved into a reissue label, re-releasing material from Audio Fidelity and other sources. The Phoenix Company did not record any original material. Audiofidelity Enterprises seemed to disappear around 1987 after losing a lawsuit over Jimi Hendrix recordings.

The last releases on the Audio Fidelity label were in 1984.

The Audio Fidelity and associated label discography was compiled using our record collections, Schwann Catalogs from 1953 to 1982, a Phono-Log from 1963, and other sources including the discography of Audio Fidelity at the Syracuse University Library and the Internet. This discography includes the Audio Fidelity Label (Including Audio Rarities), the subsidiary label Chiaroscuro Records, the Dauntless Record label, the predecessor label Kinor Records, the Parallax Record label and the Black Lion and Freedom label which was distributed by Audiofidelity Enterprises.

Tracks are listed in order they appear on the albums, when known. The double slash (//) is indication of the separation between sides. Titles listed without a double slash (//) are listed as printed in the Phono-Log, and the separation between side one and side two is unknown. Titles with an asterisk (*) in front of the number have the titles listed alphabetically since track order is unknown. For those albums where the track-by-track stereo content is indicated, (S) means true stereo, (E) means electronic (fake) stereo, and (M) means mono.