

ATHENIANS RECORD PROFESSI**'Dirk and Tony': Duo's Car**By JAY HARRIMAN
Banner-Herald Writer

Vocalists Dirk Howell...

The lighting, as well as the conversation, was low in the motel's larger lounge one night last week as two young men, one carrying a guitar, stepped onto the wooden platform and prepared to go to work. The older of the two tuned the stringed instrument and attempted to stop a buzzing noise in his multi-speaker amplifier, while the other turned and addressed a number of persons who had gathered in the bar as long as an hour before to see the duo: "You've come to the right place."

Dirk Howell and Tony Brown then began to perform to many who, for nearly 14 months, apparently have agreed with Tony Brown's assertion that they had come to the "right place."

Better known to their friends at the "Inn Place" lounge at Holiday Inn as "Dirk and Tony," the featured singing duo hope to move a giant step ahead in their musical career this week with the release in three Northeast Georgia communities of their first professional recordings.

The two songs, recorded at an Atlanta studio earlier and only last week being pressed onto over 1,000 black discs which will soon be offered for sale locally, were to be launched separately — "We hope for a million-seller" — into the Top 40 lineups at radio stations in Athens, Gainesville and Hartwell.

The boys think the songs will sell "based on what people have told us" after hearing the tape once over WRFC and from hearing the singing team perform them at the lounge, and they hope, after the record is initially previewed locally, "to interest a major label (recording company)."

Dirk and Tony, backed financially by several followers in Athens and recording on their own "A-Town Records" label, plan to "use these three towns as a sample market," according to Dirk. "If it (the songs) won't go in a university town, it won't go," Tony added. If an initial 1,000 records appear "to go" fast, then as many as 2,000 more may be put into circulation locally, and if they go — well the duo is hoping to be picked up by a major recording company and later "put ourselves in a higher income bracket," he said.

The songs, "Lost Between Two Worlds," the "A side" of their first record and probably the one to be released first, and "Just to Know," were professionally produced in Atlanta during 16 hours of recording sessions and with the aid of a backup band including a drummer, keyboard specialist, two guitarists and the bass player of the nationally-known "Dr. John" group.

Both songs have a relatively fast tempo and combine elements of scoring found in various genre of music and played by a number of different recording artists. Unique because the music is their own, the songs hint at melodies and lyrics of the early 60s — "90 per cent" of what Dirk and Tony perform locally is "beach music," they say — however, the recorded arrangements are kept from being totally "teeny bop," and the songs are not unlike many that in some form find their way from Top 40 radio to MOR (that's middle of the road or so-called adult radio). After listening to the tapes, this writer wanted to pull out his axe (instrument) and join up.

Tony, 20, and lead singer, wrote the lyrics to both songs and Dirk, 21, and Tony, both, devised the melody. Performing now without the benefit of other instruments, the duo was helped with the arranging by the musicians who joined them in Atlanta during "the first time" they had ever been in a recording studio.

ATHENIANS RECORD PROFESSIONALLY

'A Duo's Career Blossoming

By JAY HARRIMAN
Banner-Herald Writer

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...And Tony Brown Record Song

The featured musicians — neither have had much formal music training — have high hopes for the future. Tony was quick to say he'd up and move if the opportunity presented itself. Dirk wasn't so fast — "I just got married four months ago," he said.

What may also tie the two Athenians down is the fact they are both juniors in the College of Business at the university. "Dirk's a genius," Tony said, adding the young guitarist, who paints as well as plays, maintains a 3.9 average despite long hours at night.

It all started after high school (Athens High-Clarke Central) when friends, who heard the two "carrying on singing and I'd sort of harmonize," urged them to audition somewhere, Dirk said. Although they went to high school together for over two years, the two really weren't much more than acquaintances during that time.

With about 16 songs learned, the duo auditioned and played for the first time at the Holiday Inn in the fall of 1973. Today, Tony said, "I get requests from people to play 'Lost Between Two Worlds' that I've never seen before."

If the song is successful — and several records released in Athens by local groups in the past have found their way to the shooting range for skeet practice — what's in store for Dirk and Tony? Tony, who describes himself as a "farmer" having been born of parents with rural heritage and having grown up in a small, south Georgia community before moving to Athens, wants to see the beach, and Dirk wants, as does Tony, to have financial security. "We want to get a recording contract."

But primarily, Dirk and Tony want to know now whether they can be successful or not instead of waiting years for the answer. According to Tony, "we want to get it over with and find out whether this thing is going to go." So do a lot of others, including their number-one fan, Ed Wildey, whom they say they owe a lot to.

Later, the same evening they began playing, Dirk and Tony were just getting cranked up and doing what they like to do best.