

He produces records with a Midas touch

By RICHARD TRUBO

LOS ANGELES — Everything Wes Farrell touches turns to gold. Gold records, that is.

Farrell is one of the music industry's youngest and most-talented executives. And although he has remained mostly behind the scenes — as a composer, record producer and music publisher — his efforts have accounted for the sales of about 50 million records in the last 2 years.

"To create well is painful," says Farrell. "It's not an easy process. That's why I work with only the most professional artists. I demand total commitment from the artist to give me everything he has to offer, and likewise I offer him all the energies I have."

Farrell deserves much of the credit for pushing David Cassidy to the top of the pop music world. When "The Partridge Family" television show was still in the working stages, Larry Utall, president of Bell Records, brought Wes in to create a musical concept for the show. He wrote the theme song for the program, and one day asked Cassidy if he could sing.

"David said he had done some singing before," recalls Farrell, "but up to that point, no one had asked him to sing on the show itself. The original plans were that only Shirley Jones would actually do her own singing, and the rest of the voices would be dubbed in. But when I heard what David could do, the entire concept changed."

Farrell is only 32 years old, yet he has wasted little time in compiling a most enviable success record. Born in New York, he dropped out of college and relocated on the West Coast to test his talents in the highly-competitive record industry. And although he had no formal musical training, it wasn't

long before he began writing a long string of hits.

One of his tunes, "Hang On, Sloopy," became a million-seller twice, in versions by the McCroys and the Ramsey Lewis Trio. The Beatles recorded one of Wes's compositions, "Boys," on their very first album.

Soon he was both writing and producing records for Jay and the Americans, the Everly Brothers, the Cowsills, the Brooklyn Bridge, and Dawn. He also produced some of the music in the film, "Midnight Cowboy."

Earlier this year Farrell started his own record company, Chelsea Records. And although he still composes and produces for artists signed to other labels (like Cassidy), most of his efforts are now directed toward his own artists. His major project now, is marketing former evangelist Marjoe into a super-recording star.

Farrell himself selects all the songs that his artists will record. He listens to dozens of songs on tape each day, trying to find the perfect ones for each of his singers. Before he takes one of his artists into the studio to record an album, he will have spent upward of 200 hours preparing for the project.

At Hollywood's Western Recorders Studio, Farrell worked with former evangelist Marjoe. Farrell appeared completely relaxed on the other side of the glass. Wes had spent so much time in organization and preparation that the session almost took care of itself.

"Wes is successful because he's so dedicated to everything he does," says Mike Melvoin, who has done the arrangements and played keyboards on many of David Cassidy's recording sessions. "Wes works with many studio musicians who are also producers themselves. Yet he has their complete confidence and respect."