

MUSIC

Show on the Road

To some Italians, the *Cantagiro* is a living jukebox, to others a musical monster. One way or the other, this year's fourth Cantagiro, or Singing Tour, was a howling success.

The Cantagiro is blatantly patterned after the Giro d'Italia and the Tour de France, the backbreaking Italian and French bicycle races. The vocal version was a grueling series of one-night contests, one part for known pop singers and one for unknowns. It was sometimes hard to tell the difference among the blasting rock 'n' rollers. But as this peripatetic pelvic twisting swept up and down the Italian coast—and even went abroad to West Germany, Austria and the Soviet Union—audiences of 15,000 jammed the outdoor arenas.

The 39 singers were awarded points in the manner of ice skaters by juries randomly selected from the audience. Those accumulating the most points by the end of the competition in Fiuggi were the lucky winners. Lucky indeed, as last year's winner, 20-year-old Gianni Morandi, proved when his subsequent recordings sold 2 million copies. Morandi was the favorite again this year in spite of the competition from Italy's most popular pop singer, Rita Pavone. The slight, 19-year-old Miss Pavone joined the fatiguing contest because, she said, "I've been out of the country for three months and I needed to show myself to the public again."

Autographs: In the Giro and the Tour, glory is as important as money. Not so the Cantagiro. Preceded by sound trucks blaring the songs, and escorted by snarling squadrons of motorcycle police, the caravan of 180 automobiles chalked up 3,000 miles, 10 million spectators, and lots of lire. Most of the caravan was made up of cars advertising the beer, soft drinks and records of the tour sponsors; the companies also sold their products along the way. En route, the singers generously threw fistfuls of their pictures at the crowds and signed an estimated 65,000 autographs. (Morandi, to his shock, was presented with his own autograph—on a bill he had signed for \$320 last year.)

The crowds loved the performers. In the hot Italian sun, bikinied admirers paid explicitly amorous compliments to both male and female singers. In Bari, two policemen resisting a purposeful charge were hospitalized with thumb bites. In Pescara, Morandi was assaulted by female shock troops who ripped off his skintight T-shirt with some of his skin still attached. One enthusiast in Modena hurled himself under the wheels of his favorite's car and simmered down in the hospital.

For the first time, this year's Canta-

giro singers competed before non-Italian audiences, mostly teen-age, in Frankfurt, Vienna and Moscow, where Pavone's obvious popularity began to worry Morandi. In Moscow, of all places, where rock 'n' rollers are as rare as Martians, 10,000 young Muscovites insisted that Pavone give an encore. "Comrades," said the announcer, "this is a contest, no encores." Morandi lamented: "It's going to be Rita, I've known it all along. I'm going to buy my father a shoe factory and go into business with him." Moscow television carried the whole popfest. "It was nice to see," said a Moscow chauffeur. "All we ever get on TV is a ballet or opera or serious music."

For the finals in Fiuggi, a peaceful



Newsweek—Alfred Friendly Jr.

Rita Pavone: And early to bed

spa southeast of Rome, sound trucks blasted the songs from dawn to dusk. The "unknown" category had already been cinched. Mariolino Barberis, 16, had won every match. While his voice was pleasing, his appeal lay more in his severe physical infirmity, a result of polio. Each night he had lurched valiantly onstage to sing, propped up by his cane. The runner-up, 23-year-old Roberta Mazzoni, was handicapped by her shapely figure. (Last year's Class-B winner had a clubfoot.) "My sister has a nice voice," said one contestant sourly, "and next year I'll enter her if I can afford a Seeing-Eye dog."

Although she trailed by fifteen points going into the finals at Fiuggi, Miss Pavone's final total was two points better than Morandi's. Her mother knew the reason. "The other singers were tired because of the nights they spent with their 'fiancés.' Rita doesn't have any fiancés, not even one."