



The Phonographic Record

The Journal of The Vintage Phonograph Society of New Zealand

A Society formed for the preservation of Recorded Sound

Vol. 1, Issue 5.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

April, 1966.

ANOTHER STEP FORWARD Commencing with the next issue, we hope, from time to time, to have illustrations in The Phonographic Record. We are also accepting from now, advertisements concerning your wants, and material you have for sale or exchange. 1/6 per inch, cash with the advertisement, restricted to goods directly associated with phonographs, records, music boxes etc. As space is limited we can print only a few each month. So hurry.

THE MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY We are pleased to report that the Society was represented at the official opening of The Museum of Science and Industry - Canterbury. At the request of the organizers, we displayed an Edison Gem Phonograph which apparently caught the eye of the photographer, as an excellent photograph appeared in the "Christchurch Star". At the last meeting of the Society it was decided that we become a member of the Association of Friends of the Museum. We have also offered our support in their endeavours.

OUR "MASCOT" While the Berliner Gramophone will be retained on our letterhead for some time, it was decided, at the March meeting to change to the Edison Opera on the magazine.

From time to time we shall be printing articles on the repair and maintenance of phonographs, gramophones and other equipment. We will welcome any information regarding such repair and cleaning work as this is of considerable help to other collectors, particularly in this "do-it-yourself" age.

The Repair and Maintenance of Machines

No. 1.

MAINSRING TROUBLES - their cause and cure

C.E. WOLEDGE.

Most phonograph owners have at some time experienced unpleasant noises emanating from the motor of their phonographs; these noises when of a jerky nature, with occasional bumps, denote uneven release of the spring; sometimes the noises are of a slow, grinding nature, with a severe bump at intervals, so severe that at times the whole instrument is shaken. The trouble is known as SPRING CHUGGING and provided the spring is of good quality, the cause is due to the lack of, or faulty lubrication. Another factor to cause chugging is in the design and gramophone motors which have the spring lying flat in a horizontal position, because it is practically impossible to keep the spring lubricated. The reason for this is that when the grease is put in the barrel of the spring, it sinks to the bottom where it stays until the spring is wound, when a small quantity of it is scraped up and this lubricates ONLY the bottom portion of the spring, usually about $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch. The grease that is scraped up does more harm than good, because the solid matter in it keeps the coils apart at the bottom; whereas, there being no grease between the coils in the upper portion, they make close contact and cause the spring to be unevenly wound, with resultant uneven unwinding, causing bumping noises. A spring set in the horizontal position is akin to a driving belt which is unevenly joined, thereby making one side tighter than the other when smooth working is impossible. Also in the case of the spring, the percentage of breakages is greatly increased. The correct position for the spring to be set is the upright or vertical position as in the case of all Edison cylinder machines. This is the only position in which perfect lubrication can be accomplished. This is because the grease

and graphite is tumbled over and over like concrete in a concrete mixer and thus keeps the spring fully lubricated at all times; this is provided that the grease has not dried up through the machine being stored over a long period. Difficulty is entailed in lubrication, owing to the closeness of the coils of a mainspring when it is considered that to achieve perfect running, every coil must be entirely covered with a thin layer of grease.

THE CURE

This treatment is recommended as a cure for chugging. First after winding the spring to the full, insert through the lubricating hole, a small quantity of a solution of equal parts of petrol and kerosene, say about half an ounce and then let the spring run down; rewind and repeat the operation three or four times in order to spread the solution, which will soften the grease already in the barrel and cause it to run in between the coils. If sufficient grease is present, a cure for bumping may even be affected this way, but it is not advisable to rely on the old grease, so the safest plan is to apply a little Edison Spring Lubricant (i.e. if you are fortunate enough to have some) or some graphite grease which can be bought or made by mixing graphite and grease, to complete the treatment, after the petrol solution has had time to do its work. DO NOT ON ANY ACCOUNT USE LUBRICATING OIL as this will cause bumping to an alarming extent; also be sparing with the kerosene because the temper of the spring is likely to be affected by its excessive use. Finally - remember that a spring is at its best working point, when only three quarters wound.

No. 2

TALKING OF CYLINDERS

"A.J.R."

LUSTIGE BRUDER WALTZ

During her talk about Music Hall artists at our February meeting, Miss Rogers said various ones had their signature tune by which they were recognized. Do you know the first person to have a signature tune? It was Albert Whelan whose tune was "The Lustige Bruder Waltz" which I have seen variously translated as "Jolly Brothers Waltz" and "Jolly Fellows Waltz".

Albert Whelan was born in Australia in 1876 and after a career as an actor and entertainer, travelled to London in 1901. His first recording engagement, according to 'Joe Batten's Book' was in 1904. He was a very popular entertainer, and remained before the public until he died in 1962, aged eighty-six. Those who have heard the record "Daniel Farson's Old Time Music Hall" will no doubt remember that Albert Whelan appears on this recording whistling his famous signature tune.

Jolly Brothers (or Jolly Fellows) Waltz was recorded on Edison Blue Amberol No. 1878 by Sousa's Band. The waltz was written by a Viennese composer, R. Vollstedt. The information slip accompanying the cylinder says of Vollstedt, "As a Kapellmeister - or military band leader - he became a great favourite in Vienna. "Jolly Fellows" whose German title is Lustige Bruder and Lustige Schwestern, "Jolly Sisters" are two of his waltzes, famous the world over. He also wrote several dance pieces, such as "Artist's Dream", "Bird's Voices" and "Capri Breezes" as well as one or two musical comedies. I wonder how many people know who R. Vollstedt was. Like so many once famous people, his name now means very little and one of the few links we have with him are a few moments of his melodies engraven on Edison's beautiful Blue Amberol.

CORRECTION: In my article about Hector Grant, I incorrectly wrote "four minute wax record" instead of two minute wax record. So far as I know, he only recorded on two minute records. Edison first introduced his four-minute wax Amberols in 1908, and in 1912 started manufacturing

his famous celluloid Blue Amberols.

TALKING MACHINE NEEDLES (Contd.)

C.E. WOLEDGE.

The early records were rather crude and the surface noise was excessive; to abolish these defects, great efforts were made in the recording departments. Various substances for the record material were used, but it was many years before any great improvement was brought about. During this time great attention was given to the needle in trying out various sizes, shapes, lengths and different hardeners in the wire of which the needle was made. This was a period in which most makers supplied their product in the form of Loud, Medium and Soft with the advice that a new needle should be used for each playing. Many users considered this advice to be merely a dodge to sell more, but such was not the case, because a needle when used develops a cutting edge, and has a tendency to scrape the inside of the record groove, thereby damaging the sound wave. Many disc enthusiasts changed the needle for each class of record; a certain choice for voice reproduction, another for instrumental and still another for bands and orchestras. Some went so far as to use special needles for each kind of voice, soprano, contralto, tenor and bass; also for instruments - violin, piano etc. With the introduction of the 10 inch record, and a little later, the 12 inch, recordings were made of celebrity artists and these were somewhat costly with the result that enthusiasts looked for some means of saving these records from wear. Then a Mr. Frederick D. Hall took out a patent for what he called a "Fibre Needle", the material of which it was made, being a fibrous vegetable substance, usually bamboo. However, Hall's patent did not hold and many other makers supplied fibres. Incidentally this needle was always triangular in shape, and required a similar shaped needle hole in the stylus bar to take it. The bamboo fibre could be used a number of times because to re-sharpen it was only necessary to cut off a shaving with a razor blade to produce a new point. Several other vegetable materials came into use, such as the thorn of the cactus plant, and hedge-row thorns. These had enthusiastic users and seemed to give satisfaction if only for their kindness to records and the reduction of surface noise when compared with the steel needle. They would, however, give only a soft tone and like the bamboo, could not be relied upon to last out a 12 inch disc without deterioration in reproduction. Another needle entry into the vegetable class came from South Africa and was known as the "Burmese Colour Needle"; no details were given concerning its material, but it was not metal. It seemed excessively sharp and was long tapered and by giving it about a quarter of a turn after each playing, it was claimed that it would play fifty records; further it could be re-sharpened with a nail file or scraped with a sharp knife or razor blade. The claims of this product were justified and it was probably the best of all the fibre needles. It was sold in little booklets, each containing ten needles.

To be continued..

ENRICO CARUSO

P.G. ROGERS.

In a profession which has a prominence of feuds and jealousies, it is pleasant to read of one tenor speaking of another "In the seventeen years I knew him, I never heard him say an unkind word of a fellow artist". This was John McCormack speaking of Enrico Caruso. Something of this warmth of personality comes through Caruso's singing and his records have a very special place in the history of recorded sound just as he holds such a place in the history of opera. Caruso was one of only two singers (the other being Luisa Tetrazzini, the famous soprano), whose records were re-issued with an electrically recorded orchestral accompaniment. The issue of these met with a mixed reception, some collectors feeling that they compared very unfavourably with the originals.

The collection of a considerable number of Caruso records need not be a very difficult or necessarily very expensive achievement in New Zealand. Caruso was so well known in the days of early recording that often, in a collection of popular discs, one or two of his recordings would be unearthed. Perhaps this was a "status symbol". Any Caruso recording is worth acquiring; from the Italian and Neapolitan songs of which the celebrated O Sole Mio (H.M.V. D.A. 103) is perhaps the easiest record to get, through to the wonderful operatic solos. In this group, the most famous recording is of the Pagliacci items (H.M.V. D.B. 111). Caruso also sang with many other famous singers and his duet O Soave Fanciulla (Lovely Maid in the Moonlight) (H.M.V. 054129) with Nellie Melba is marvellous and the three versions of the Rigoletto quartet are well worth looking out for.

Although, of course, prices overseas for Caruso records range from a few shillings to pounds, in New Zealand it is quite possible to pick them up for 6d or 1/- . Owing to their popularity, the condition of the records is sometimes not good, but do not pass any over without trying them, as Caruso's voice often manages to rise above the "wear and tear."

For those collectors who wish to learn more of Caruso, the date of his recordings and an idea of their quality, there is available a book CARUSO - HIS RECORDED LEGACY by Freestone and Drummond, Publishers Sidgwick and Jackson, English price 42/- . Recently in the United States, a new book, CARUSO ON RECORDS by Aida Favia-Artsay, Publishers-The Historic Record. - American price \$6.50., has been released and while I have not yet seen it, I understand that Mrs. Favia-Artsay has the correct revolutions per minute at which each record should be played - a very important point as Caruso's records were made in the acoustic era when speeds were not standard.

For those who merely want a list of the records Caruso made, the appendix to the book by his wife Dorothy, ENRICO CARUSO - HIS LIFE AND DEATH is excellent. Many biographies have been written about this man and many stories told; the most significant from the point of view of record collectors of to-day being how Fred Gaisberg of the Gramophone Company, told in 1902 that the young Enrico Caruso asked £100 for recording ten songs telegraphed his London office for permission to record and was refused because the fee was considered exorbitant. He disobeyed the order and in so doing, started an enterprise which resulted in one million pounds being paid to Caruso by the Gramophone Company, while the company itself gained two million pounds. No wonder it is still under speculation as to whether Caruso made the gramophone or the gramophone made Caruso. Which-ever it is, we as collectors have reason to be grateful.

R E M E M B E R , we are pleased to receive at any time, articles for this magazine. If you do not feel you are capable of submitting a finished article, let us have the facts and we shall take over from there.

This Society has been formed for the benefit of all members. If you have a query regarding any aspect of your collecting, write to us and we shall endeavour to help you or put you in touch with someone who can.

At present our membership stands at forty-seven. With your help, we can increase this considerably. Please advise the secretary of the name and address of any interested person and a copy of "The Phonographic Record" will be forwarded.