



The Phonographic Record

The Journal of The Vintage Phonographs Society of New Zealand

A Society formed for the preservation of Recorded Sound

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OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

"STYLUS"

In studying overseas lists of records for sale and even in looking through piles of records in New Zealand second-hand shops, it is easy to pass over some very fine records by artists who are not as well known in this country as Caruso, Galli-Curci and Melba etc. I will mention those which are available reasonably often; records which do not command fantastic prices. Amongst the sopranos, Alma Gluck, Geraldine Farrar and Frieda Hempel, all made beautiful records which shouldn't be too hard to find. Frieda Hempel also recorded for Edison on both Blue Amberol (The Royal Purple series) and Diamond Discs. Elisabeth Schumann, Toti Dal Monte and Maggie Teyte all recorded prolifically; Elisabeth Schumann being of particular interest to followers of lieder. It is interesting to note that Maggie Teyte made one Blue Amberol cylinder for Edison; it is tucked away in the ordinary list and is number 4797 "The Kashmiri Song". Luisa Tatrzzini, who certainly managed to become a very close rival of Melba in the popularity of her recordings made many records in the early days of acoustic recording. Amongst recordings of contraltos, those of Louise Kirkby-Lunn deserve a place in any collection. Her voice is of a much more gentle quality than that of Clara Butt. Tita Schipa and Giovanni Martinelli are two tenors whose records are not too difficult to obtain and although the records of Beniamino Gigli seem to meet with a mixed reception, he did make some very fine ones particularly amongst his earlier records and his duets with Giuseppe De Luca. Amongst the baritones, look out for Titta Ruffo; if you think of Peter Dawson merely as a recorder of balladry, look out for his opera excerpts in English. A Columbia artist who made acoustic as well as electrical recordings was Riccardo Stracciari, his "Largo Al Factotum" can be recommended. When it comes to bass recordings, look out for Alexander Kipnis who, while primarily an operatic artist, was also a fine lieder singer and Malcolma McEachern who although he perhaps gained his fame as "Mr. Jetsam" made many very fine records in his own right. Such a list of recording artists would continue for many pages if every worthwhile singer was named; the above mentioned are just a few of those whose records can be recommended. You, yourself will find many more just as worthy and that is part of the fascination of record collecting.

TALKING OF CYLINDERS

CYLINDER RECORD SLIPS

"W.T.N."

Phonograph cylinder collectors occasionally find small slips of paper in with cylinders, and these provide some interesting information. It seems that the Edison Company put these in to inform the record owner of the nature of the artist or composer, and giving scraps of information which, it was considered, would be of general interest. The intention was to put one in with every cylinder, but owing to the publisher's claim that it was against the copyright act this did not eventuate. Consequently they are not very often found.

Typical of such slips is the one accompanying Edison Blue Amberol No. 1586, "Weeping, Sad And Lonely" By Elizabeth Spencer and Chorus with Orchestral accompaniment. Music by Henry Tucker. Words by Charles C. Sawyer. The sombre sadness of this melody by Henry Tucker is a beautiful commentary on the words to which it is set. Elizabeth Spencer sings it in a quiet, dignified way, and her clear soprano voice is heard to especially good advantage. The humming chorus brings out many beautiful harmonies and adds a touch of pathos well in keeping with the character of the selection. The plates of "Weeping, Sad And Lonely" have long since been melted up, and the song is out of print and cannot be purchased.

The real mission of the phonograph, aside from giving amusement, is here demonstrated, as only by this record can "Weeping, Sad And Lonely" be preserved for posterity.

NOTE The Secretary would be grateful if members having these information slips would advise the number, title and artist of the cylinder so that some form of list can be kept.

WHICH REPRODUCER SHOULD I USE?

W.T. Norris

As there are so many types of reproducers which fit on Edison Phonographs and other such machines, I hope that this chapter and the ones which follow will help in the matter of "what to use on which" and "which to use on what!"

The earliest models, if you are fortunate enough to find them, had glass diaphragms and were used on the early white and later, brown wax cylinders; when the Gold-Moulded cylinders were produced, the glass would not bear the strain and shattered. The next reproducer to appear was a model B and this was used on a key-wind Gem phonograph; it is easily identified by having MODEL B stamped into the weight on the underside and it was used for playing two-minute black wax cylinders which came in boxes marked "Gold Moulded". This was followed by the model C reproducer, also designed to play 2 minute wax only and the most common reproducer for this purpose. It was an improvement on the model B and can be identified by having MODEL C engraved in the top side of the weight which was of a different shape and extended out in the form of a tail. The main difference between the B and the C reproducers was in the setting of the stylus; in the Model B it was in a position perpendicular to the arm, while in the Model C it was mounted in a position parallel to the arm.

Under the pressure of competition, Edison produced a black wax cylinder which played for four minutes and had 200 grooves to the inch, twice as many as the two minute. He made a thread speed change device for all the then current machines and a new reproducer, the Model H. This one is also easy to identify, having MODEL H 4 MINUTE stamped into the top side of the weight. With the thread speed change device, ten 4 minute black wax cylinders were supplied in blue boxes marked EDISON AMBEROL RECORD and on the lid, SPECIAL K or J, etc. This was an introduction to the series of wax Amberol cylinders packed in green and white boxes with green lids. Sometimes the reproducer was painted green on the top to identify it with the green-lidded boxes. Both the Models C and H reproducers have a one ounce weight and a sapphire stylus and both are for black wax cylinders only, the C for two minute and the H for four minute. They should NOT be used to play Blue Amberols as this will spoil the edge on the stylus in less than one hundred playings.

The model K and O reproducers were known as combination reproducers; the K was clearly marked on the top of the weight and the O had a large "O" stamped on the underside of the weight. These have a similar stylus change device by which either two or four minute black wax cylinders can be played without a reproducer change but again both should NOT be used on Blue Amberols. The Model R reproducer was an improvement on the model H; having a larger diaphragm and being clearly marked with MODEL R on the top side of the weight and being for four minute black wax only.

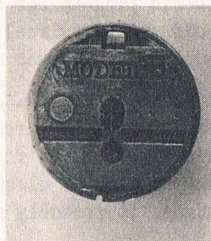
To play Blue Amberol cylinders, Edison machines used a diamond stylus and a heavier weight. The reproducer can be identified by the straight outlet to the horn and by the wording "Licensed for use only on Edison phonographs sold by Thomas A. Edison Inc." round the outside edge of the reproducer. Although these have a Catalogue identification of Diamond B, they were not marked in any way. Edison Amberolas 30, 50, 60 and 75 used the same type of reproducer, these having a side outlet to the horn. The Catalogue identification was Diamond C (not illustrated) but again it was not marked on the reproducer. Both the B and C Diamond-point reproducers are for Blue Amberol cylinders ONLY and will destroy any black wax cylinders which are played by them. Some reproducers were made specifically for machines such as the Concert Amberola (catalogue identification Amberola A.) For this machine there was a Diamond A reproducer for Blue Amberols and a Model M for two and four

(continued on page 7)

Reproducers for Edison Phonographs



Early B



B



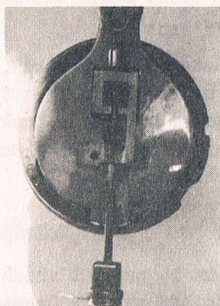
C



H



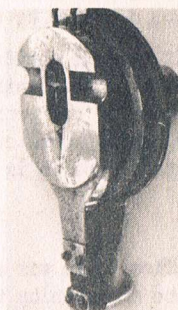
K



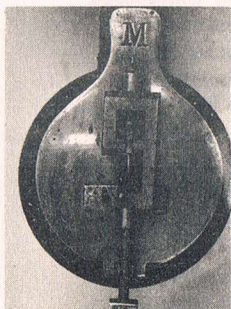
O



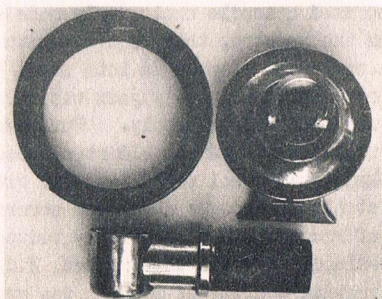
R



Diamond B



M



Fan-tail Combination



Diamond A

Have you ever thought just why you are interested in collecting old phonographs and cylinders? I started thinking about this when our Secretary said, "Why are you a member of this society and what do you hope to get out of it?"

Just why do I collect cylinders? Is it because I think discs are too commonplace and I want to be different? But you see I have joined the society and that would mean that we all want to be different, but we all do the same thing. Quite a paradox!

It can't be because I am not satisfied with the technical quality of today's recordings which are usually better than anything Edison and other early makers turned out. (Although some people say that a re-entrant horn can knock an electric pick-up for six.) I really think it is because of what is recorded today. Those old cylinders really let you hear singers and bands as they really were - no electronic amplification such as is used now.

I see the society as a haven for poor souls seeking refuge from the over-modulated, discordant, subhuman cacophony which continuously assails us from all frequencies of the broadcasting band. (They even play jazz over the YC's now!) And as for the machines on which today's records are played - if anything goes wrong usually an electronics engineer is required to fix it. If a phonograph (or gramophone) stops, it probably means you forgot to wind it up!

The dedication of the magazine of the Vintage Car Club of New Zealand (Inc.) reads - "The fascination of age itself from the flashy mediocrity of our present day is drawing an increasing number of motorists back to the individuality, solid worth and functional elegance that was demanded by a more discriminating generation....."

If ever we decide to include a dedication in "The Phonographic Record", I think it could be something like this:- "The fascination of age itself or revulsion from the mass-produced mediocrity of our present day is drawing an increasing number of people back to the individuality, solid worth and functional elegance that was demanded by a more discriminating generation, and it is to these we dedicate "The Phonographic Record".

TALKING MACHINE NEEDLES (Contd.)

C.E. Woledge

Then there was a novel type of needle which was shown to me, but which I did not have the opportunity to try out. This innovation was the effort of a Gramophone enthusiast who had one of the best and largest libraries in Christchurch and he treasured his collection of classics. He experimented with animal substances and made needles from horn, horse hoof and bone; finally he tried the beak of a rooster and obtained what he considered the ideal material. From then on he used a needle exclusively made of this substance. The shape was of the pattern known as the peg-top, that is a top with a stud protruding to fit in the needle hole. This shape was often adopted in both steel and fibre and had the effect of increasing volume. The introduction of noisy jazz was the reason for the demand for loud music which the Gramophone was expected to supply. For several years, a miniature war waged between the supporters of what was termed the old steel needle and the followers of the new cult, and at one time it looked as if steel would lose the battle, but such was not to be the case. The ascendancy of steel was brought about for several reasons. Firstly, owing to keen competition the price of records had been greatly reduced and some makes were offered at as low as 1/6 each double-sided; the two chief makes, H.M.V. and Columbia were reduced from 3/6 to 2/6. Then the wearing quality of records was greatly improved and the purchaser in many cases was tired of a record before it was worn out, so wear did not trouble him. Fibre needles were more expensive and would not produce the volume which had

become the general demand since many dance records were being issued. The market became flooded with steel needles, foreign makes; German, Swiss, French and Japanese being well represented. With the exception of the Japanese, all the needles were of fair standard; the Japanese were hopeless and would hardly play a 10" record without blurr near the end. The main virtue of these, apart from the many varieties which were always a temptation to try out, was their cheapness; this condition cut into the turnover of the standard makers such as H.M.V., Columbia and Edison Bell. Finally however, the warehousemen and odd importers who were not in the trade came to the conclusion that saturation point had been reached and that there was no fortune to be made from Gramophone needles, so they ceased their activities in this field. Conditions in the line then settled down, with H.M.V. and Columbia taking the lead, closely followed by Edison Bell. Other English makes were also in the race and enjoyed a fair turnover. The "Surperb" loud tone, Columbia needle was probably the most popular and the "Ideal" made by the same company was the first choice of those using a medium tone needle. It was somewhat longer than the average and had a very long taper. Columbia also produced a "Chromium Needle" good for sixty playings. The needle was red in colour and put up in small booklets of ten. These were not on the market for long.

H.M.V. concentrated on their standard line of Loud, Medium and Soft and commanded their share of sales. A new needle named the "Tungsten" was introduced about this time and it was said to have originally come from Chile. Almost immediately H.M.V. brought out a similar style needle under the name of "Tungstyle" which was guaranteed to play 150 records. Put up in booklets of ten, it did not command a large sale. Of the numerous novel designs in needles, the "Spearpoint" was much used. As its name implies it was flattened near the pointed end similar to a spear, the object being to allow variation in the tension of the needle. It actually took the place of three needles in accordance with the position in which it was inserted in the reproducer.

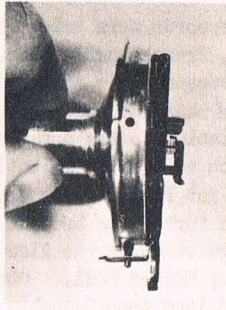
To be continued...

MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF MACHINES

No.2, REPAIRING A BROKEN REPRODUCER ON AN EDISON AMBEROLA

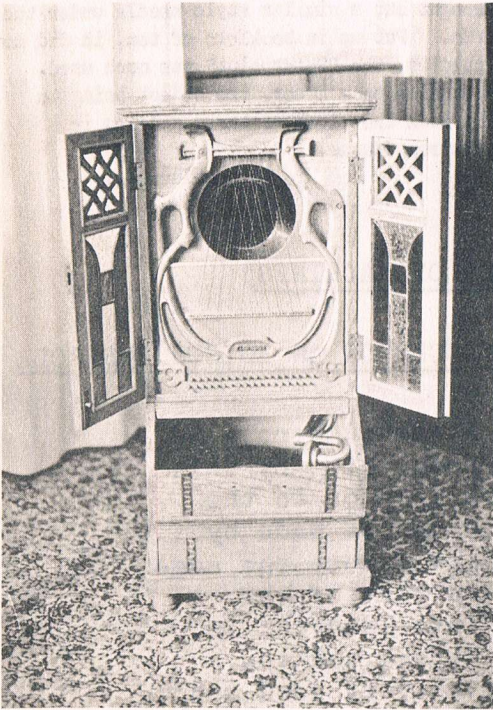
Some members may have an Edison Amberola 30 or 50 which has a broken reproducer. By this I mean a break where the horn fits on to the reproducer. A simple repair can be made by cutting a short length of plastic hose the same size as the hole in the broken part of the reproducer and fitting this into each end so bridging the gap between the break and the horn. I have found this gives very good sound, even though the hole is smaller than the original.

Details of this repair were supplied by W.S. Dini.



L

Two views of N56



The
Klingsor Gramophone



Walter Norris "playing"
the Tanzbar

minute wax. The only difference in the Model M compared with the Model O described earlier is that it has a side outlet. To enable black wax cylinders to be played on Amberolas 30, 50 and 75, an attachment consisting of an insert, elbow, and Model H reproducer was obtainable; the reproducer had half the end of the weight removed to enable it to be fitted - it was sometimes known as the Fan Tail reproducer.

The Opera and Concert Phonographs will generally be found with a Model Diamond A reproducer for Blue Amberol cylinders only, but could be fitted with a Model L for playing black wax four minute Amberols. This reproducer is the same as the Model H, but has a side outlet to the horn. There was also a Model N 56 reproducer and this was obtainable as an extra for Amberola Models IV, V, VI, VIII, and X and again was for four minute black wax cylinders and NOT for Blue Amberols. The N 56 was clearly marked with its model number on the underside of the weight and it had a small spring fitted between the weight and the stylus. There was also a reproducer made for the Edison Concert machine on which were played 5" diameter cylinders; such a machine being quite rare in New Zealand. It was a Model D reproducer and was similar to the Model C black wax reproducer, but in this case it had an elbow outlet. Remember, it is possible to play a Columbia 2 minute Indestructible Cylinder on an Edison Phonograph provided you have a diamond reproducer which will fit a machine which has the correct thread speed.

Close study of the photographs accompanying this article will assist in the identification of your reproducers.

THE TANZBAR MUSICAL BOX

One of our illustrations shows our President, Walter T. Norris "playing" his Tanzbar Musical Box. This "playing" is so convincing that we have asked for some details regarding this fascinating and most unusual instrument.

These machines were made in Germany after the First World War; the actual date not being known to Walter. They were imported to Christchurch by a small firm, "The Lathe And Hardware Import Co." and it is the instrument the owner of the Company kept for himself which Walter has acquired. The principle by which the Tanzbar works is most interesting; the notes being played by mechanical means with arms connected to the valves which are under spring pressure and move upward through the paper whenever a slot appears on the roll. The roll is driven by a weight motor which is given momentum by a ratchet operated by the right hand.

Tanzbar means "dance bear" in German and the machine has a small black bear on a metal disc on the case. Bears were taught to dance on hot coals and then used to collect the money in much the same way as monkeys were used by the organ grinders in England. Machines were made to take two different widths of roll, these being two and four inches; and while a fair amount of effort is expended in the playing, the sound produced is most realistic.

THE KLINGSOR GRAMOPHONE

W.T. Norris

Music boxes in early years were much in demand and even after Edison invented the phonograph in 1877, there was a lapse of time before any real competition was offered. But by 1900 this was not the case, and thus the large music box manufacturers were forced to look hard at the phonograph to such an extent that they either manufactured a combination music box/phonograph or, as in the case of Polyphon who made an adaptor to take a disc and horn but later produced a complete gramophone. The machine was known as a Klingsor and was first produced in 1907. This company also produced discs of the ordinary needle cut type for their machines. It appears that in other countries, the machines were known as the "Aeolian Harp Gramophone" because of the piano wires which were stretched across the horn opening. There were a number of models sold and the bigger the machine, the better it would play. These machines were made in Germany and were nicely made, but the motors were of poor quality. The principle on which these machines worked is known as resonance. You have probably heard that if a

violin is played so as to strike the resonant frequency of a glass it will cause the glass to break. This is another example of resonance. The Klingsor was designed around this idea; that if the strings were strung over the sound outlet and tuned to the right frequency they would amplify and enhance the sound as it came out. All except two models had these strings across the opening of the internal horn and were tuned the same way as a piano and I believe that when they left the factory they were supposed to stay in tune; in fact the catalogue claimed that they never needed tuning. Mr. Woledge, who is a retired phonograph dealer, informed me that when in tune, the ones he heard were wonderful, but they did go out of tune in time. He says that in New Zealand he could never find a piano tuner who could tune one even though a tuning chart was supplied with each machine. There seems to be very few of these machines in New Zealand, four being the present known total and it is one of this four which is pictured in our illustration. The machine is owned by Walter T. Norris.

ADVERTISEMENTS

WANTED TO BUY The following English 45's SCH 5239 (Goodman) HMV POP 344 (Loss) MSP 6191 (Rogers) MGM 3088 (Baron) JKP 2042 (Starr) 45F-J 10806 (Melly) TR 5016 (Hayes) GEP 8600 (Bailey) SEG 8101 (Holliday) OE 9130 (Armstrong) WEP 6103 (Crosby) JAZ 108 (Armstrong) GEP 8709 (Saints Jazz Band) L.P's. AM DVT DLP 3382 (Crosby) AM DECCA DL 4416 (Garber) ENG. GGL 0171 ("Gary on the Ball") ENG. 32-801 (Happy Wanderers). Apply Graham Sanson, 25A Cockayne Road, Khandallah, Wellington, N.5.

WANTED TO SELL Large quantity of 78's. Early instrumentalists including Paderewski, Ysaye, Kreisler etc. Apply Pam Rogers, 73 Flockton Street, Christchurch. 1.

WANTED TO EXCHANGE Edison Blue Amberol cylinders. Apply Walter Norris, "Waipapa", Swannanoa, Rangiora R.D.

WANTED TO SELL Cornet B Flat by Hyams of London. Silver plated Class A, Cost \$45. Offer wanted. Phone Christchurch 889-700 or write C/- Secretary.

WANTED TO BUY Collector would like to purchase record of Marlene Dietrich singing in German, "The Surrey With The Fringe On Top". Also records of Billy Mayerell playing "Four Ace Suite" or other records of Billy Mayerell.