The Phonographic Record

The Journal of The Vintage Phonograph Society of New Zealand

A Society formed for the preservation of Recorded Sound

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CATALOGUING RECORDS

"STYLUS"

A method of cataloguing records is as personal as the type of record collected. The first consideration is to analyse why the particular records have been acquired. Is it the singer or the song, the composer or the conductor, the label or the recording company. Each of us has a tendency to collect records of a certain type and, even though we may have quite wide tastes a certain pattern forms. It is that pattern which forms the basis of a filing system. If you are interested in singers the main emphasis will be on the performer, the title and record number taking second place.

Now to the actual system. The ideal is some form which can be added to without a complete rewriting. I would choose a loose-leaf file - not large enough to be too cumbersome to carry around; my own cover takes quarto size paper. Unless your printing and writing are easily legible, typing gives a much neater appearance. A card system is quite satisfactory - in some ways the easiest to keep up-to-date but it is very much a "keep at home" system. If you do choose a loose leaf system, reinforce the holes in the paper with ring reinforcements and remember that a three-ring binder will be much more satisfactory than a two-ring, the paper sheets being much better supported by use of the extra ring. Next, turn your attention to numbering the records - it is better not to put anything at all on the record itself but to affix a number to the cover. To-day several makes of self-adhesive labels are available and these are very satisfactory. The number on the record cover is noted in the catalogue. Other listed details are again a matter of choice but for the collector of early vocal or instrumental records, I would suggest the following be included. The page headed with the artist; on the left your catalogue number with an indication whether it is a 10" or 12" record, that is say:- 12/1 or 1A, 10/1 or 1B, then the title of the piece played or sung, the name of the opera or work and the composer; the record number and if a double-sided, taken originally from a single, the single sided number and if possible, the date recorded. An example:-

CARUSO, ENRICO

12/1 Les deux Serenades (Leoncavallo) D.K. 104 2-032017 1915

This may seem an unnecessary amount of detail but this information is all interesting and is of particular significance in connection with very early records. Cross-indexing, with listing under composer, opera, title etc. are all possible and all valuable and can be relatively easily worked out. Indexing of cylinders can be carried out in a similar fashion but it is often less cumbersome in this case to have a simple numerical or alphabetical listing. The main aim in cataloguing is to keep the list up to date - if not, what could be several small efforts of a few minutes can become a major operation.

MORE ABOUT REPRODUCERS

W.T. NORRIS (ARTICLE ON MAX WURCKER BY C.E. WOLEDGE)

EDISON

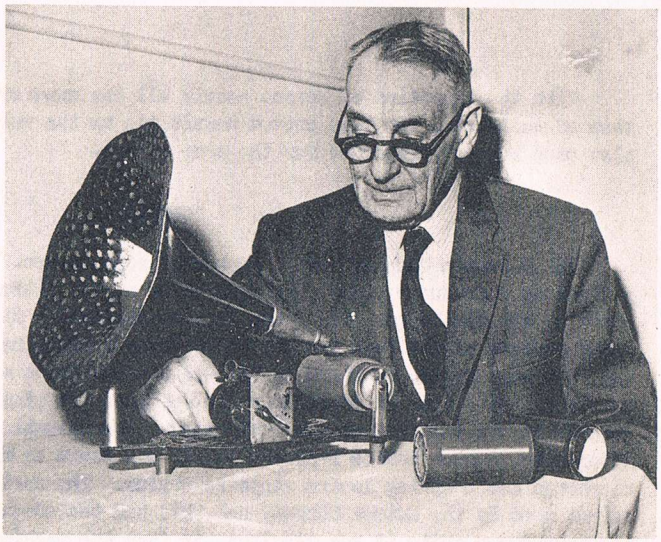
Since the first article on Edison Reproducers, some members still do not seem clear on some points and so to begin with may we direct the beginning of this article to them. They want to know why they should not play Blue Amberols with a four minute reproducer either models H, R or L. They raise the point that, for instance, a model H will play a Blue Amberol quite well and this is a fact we well know; in fact a model O in four minute position gives very good reproduction but it will not do so for many playings due to the fact that models O, H, R, N56, M and L all have a sapphire stylus which is soft compared with a diamond. This sapphire stylus was designed for black wax cylinders and was produced before the diamond stylus reproducer. A word of warning - if Blue Amberols are played with say a model H reproducer, the sapphire stylus will soon develop a sharp cutting edge due to wear and will shave and so spoil the cylinders. If a sapphire stylus is examined after many playings on a blue amberol, blue dust which has been shaved from the cylinder will be seen round the sapphire.

The diamond point was designed for the Blue Amberol, the diamond itself being finely ground in a special process and cemented into the stylus bar by a strong adhesive. The manufacturers claimed that, with care, the diamond point would not wear. Another word of warning - do not play cracked or badly damaged cylinders of Blue Amberol type with a diamond reproducer as this will in time, loosen the diamond in its setting so that it will fall out and thus render the reproducer useless until a fresh stylus bar is fitted. Mr. Woledge says that the Edison Company would not supply just a diamond but only a complete stylus bar with the jewel mounted. He also says that if a jewel becomes loose, it can be glued in again with any strong adhesive. There are other model reproducers which were not included in the first article and one of these is the model S; this is the same as a model K in that it has a two and four minute stylus which is changed by the same method. The main difference is a larger diaphragm and the same body as the model R.

Mr. Woledge has pointed out that the early four minute reproducers were hard on the cylinders because the reproducer weight was very heavy. To overcome this, the weight was reduced by cutting off the sides but this was only done not long before the production of Blue Amberol cylinders and of course, the diamond point reproducer. Study of the N56 reproducer illustrated in our June issue will show this cutting of the weight. Edison, in the years 1927 - 1928 introduced into New Zealand, an improved reproducer which produced approximately 25% more volume than a standard one. It was recommended as being suitable for music for dancing. This extra sound was brought about by having an extra weight attached to the existing one and a small spiral spring joining a hook on the jewel end and the top side of the weight. Apparently the purpose of this spring was to keep the diaphragm in a state of agitation, thus overcoming inertia. At the same time, a reproducer of the same type was supplied with the very fine Diamond Disc machine, the Edisonic. Both reproducers seem rare and difficult to find in New Zealand. We understand that, in order to obtain these, the standard type reproducer had to be handed in, in order to obtain the later model. Even used stylus bars were supposed to be returned to the Edison Factory; the reason for this being that the Company did not want their reproducers used on other makes of machine.

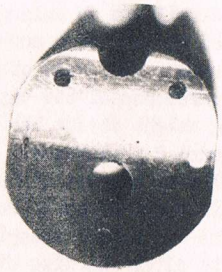
Our
Patron ~

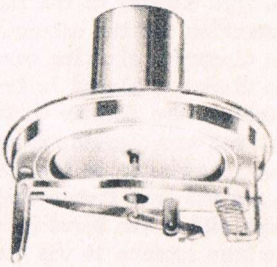
Mr C.E. Woledge



Photograph by William A Gamble

Reproducers





The Edisonic with weight shown separately

Columbia Lyric

With the exception of Edison nearly all the manufacturers of early reproducers made them of vulcanite, but this proved unsuitable as the vulcanite absorbed sound. Wood was also used but was discarded for the same reason.

COLUMBIA

The Columbia Company made a number of reproducers. The early phonograph models had a floating reproducer with a hardened glass stylus fitted into a dome moulding which was glued to the diaphragm. The Pathe Company produced a similar reproducer as did the manufacturers of the Puck and the New Century talking machines; in the case of the last two, the reproducer was fixed to the end of horn which meant the whole horn fitting had to float. This type of reproducer was designed for playing two minute wax cylinders; however it was inclined to slide sideways. The Columbia Company did produce, at a far later date, a much better reproducer. It was known as the Lyric. This had a mica diaphragm and a spring loaded sapphire stylus. The spring was used in place of the weight used by the Edison Company and this had the advantage that a bump would not upset the reproducer while it was playing; in fact the machine could be carried round or turned upside down without any disastrous effect. The company made both two and four minute indestructible cylinders. Mr. Woledge suggests that it is better to play these on an Edison machine with a diamond reproducer rather than wear out the sapphire stylus on the Lyric reproducer. As far as it is known, the Columbia Company did not make a diamond point reproducer for use on indestructible cylinders.

MAX WURCKER

Max Wurcker, a German, was an Edison Jobber in Sydney, Australia, for a number of years and in 1909 constructed a reproducer to fit the Edison Cylinder Phonograph and to play two minute wax cylinders. The design was identical with the Edison model but had several detail alterations, the chief of which was the introduction of an aluminium diaphragm larger than the usual standard size. In addition, the diaphragm had in the centre, a dome which prevented excessive vibration at this point and at the same time gave a greater all-over surface to vibrate. Another detail was an enlarged outlet tube (almost one inch across) to the horn, which necessitated the use of a much larger rubber tube connection and the enlargement of the horn entrance. The only other altered detail was the diaphragm clamping screw being on the circumference of the cap of the reproducer and the diaphragm placed in from the top. Floating weight stylus bar and jewel (stylus) mounting were similar to the Edison standard model C reproducer. These details were somewhat troublesome and went against its popularity because its performance was not greatly superior to the Edison; only on certain types of music was it outstanding; thus to get the best from certain cylinders meant the occasional changing of reproducers. This meant either two horns or an extra attachment to alter the size of the horn entrance. In the bass section it was decidedly superior to an Edison reproducer but otherwise generally it lacked volume.

The introduction of the four minute cylinder was its demise because this cylinder did not have the volume of the two minute and so the reproducer suffered. By test it was found that the larger tube to the horn was the cause of the softness and the insertion of a smaller tube brought up the volume. However it was a well made article produced

entirely in Australia and sold in New Zealand for thirty shillings; each reproducer was given a serial number. Our reason for drawing attention to the Max Wurcker reproducer is to point out that, apart from the early Bettini model reproducer with the plain aluminium diaphragm, Max Wurcker introduced the aluminium domed diaphragm years before the disc machine manufacturers who claimed it as an innovation in the 1920's. As far as is known, no horn was especially made to fit this reproducer. In New Zealand the usual method was to cut a piece off the horn to give an entrance of the desired size.

We asked member Alan Robb who has recently acquired a Max Wurcker reproducer to comment on it:- The Max Wurcker reproducer is quite different from Edison's, both in appearance and in operation. It is bulkier than the Model C I normally use to play 2 minute wax records and has a far more natural tone. It has a wonderful ability to filter out most of the surface noise, especially on slightly mouldy records. The volume is less than that produced by the Model C, but I do not consider this a serious disadvantage. If any member ever has the chance of obtaining one of these reproducers, he should not pass it by as it makes a most interesting addition to any collection.

BETTINI

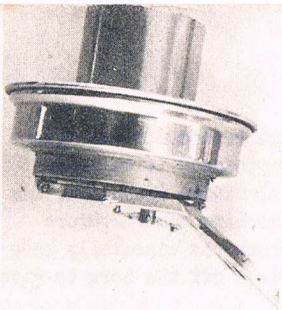
The Bettini reproducer was similar to the Max Wurcker in the large diaphragm and the larger horn outlet but it had an unusual method of a combination floating reproducer with an adjustable counter weight working in a fixed frame. The stylus setting was also unusual - it was made like a spider with several legs of varying lengths leading from the stylus itself in the centre to equal points on a thin aluminium diaphragm. Gianni Bettini was an Italian who settled in the United States; he set out to improve on Edison's apparatus. He entered not only the field of invention but also the recording field and it is for this he is better known.

NEOPHONE

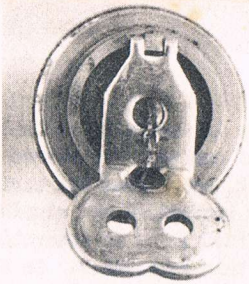
Not a great deal is known in New Zealand about this company but we have been able to ascertain the following:-

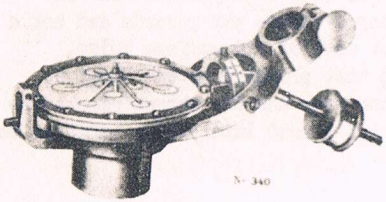
Dr. William Michaelis, a German, invented and produced what appears to be the first hill-and-dale disc. This was in 1904. From Finsbury Square in London, Michaelis set out to conquer not only England, but all of Europe with his new disc. This was a light papier mache disc, white in colour and covered on one side with celluloid. The price for a nine inch disc was sixpence; for a twelve inch, one shilling. What appears to be another first for this company was a special series of single-sided discs twenty inches in diameter, playing from eight to ten minutes. These cost 10/6 but were not of very good quality as regards sound. In 1906 production ceased.

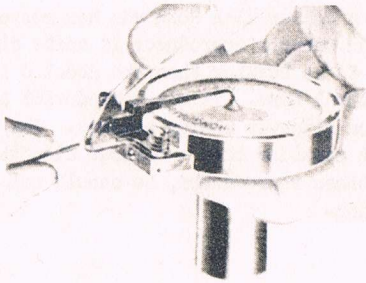
A hill-and-dale type reproducer was invented to play these discs. It was not unlike the Bettini; the main difference being that all the legs of the spider were the same length, the stylus being a sapphire ball. Reproducers were produced to fit standard gramophones of the lateral system and the reproducer pictured could be one of these. It was found in New Zealand. Although Neophone machines are known to have been made none have been found in this country but examples of both the early white disc and a later type have been found. The later disc is black in colour and is of similar material to that of an ordinary 78. The label is coloured mauve and the title is handwritten between this label and the sound grooves on the disc. These discs are double sided and were



Two views of the Max Wurcker

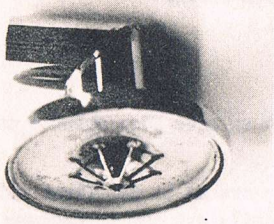






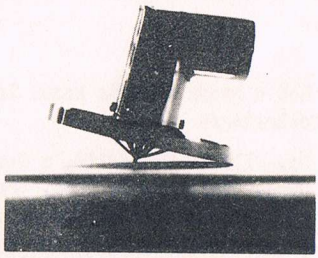
The Bettini

Columbia Patent Needle Holder

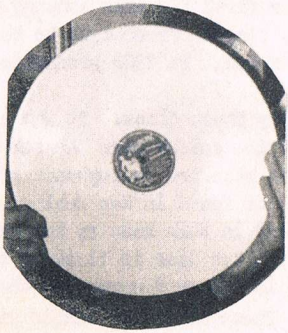


Two views of the Neophone

Photographs by William Main



The Neophone Record



The Klingsor Record

Photograph by William Main

manufactured before 1908 as, in this year, the Neophone Co. closed down. Although it lost its identity as this company, it is interesting to note that from this beginning, by devious progressions, came the Decca Company as we know it today.

THE QUESTION OF PATRONAGE

We were asked the other day, what was discussed when the two editors met with the Society's patron. Looking back on these evenings, we find that the main conversation from us consists of "When was it made - How many came to New Zealand - What type of stylus was used?" etc. etc. You will all have read with interest, the articles written by "C.E. Woledge" but you will not know of the help and knowledge of the same man which goes into many of the others. In so many societies, the patron is purely a figurehead; in our own that is not so. On the eve of his eightieth birthday we are printing a photograph of him; so that you may all see him as we see him, not an interested spectator, but one of the workers. Thank you Mr. Woledge and a very happy birthday.

Mr. Woledge has followed up two of his earlier articles with the following postscripts:-

NOVEL NEEDLE-HOLDER

To complete our discourse on gramophone needles, the following reference to an ingenious little innovation put out by the Columbia Graphophone Co. may be of some interest to readers. This was a new method of holding the needle in the stylus bar of the reproducer. With the introduction of the Berliner spring-driven gramophone which for a time enjoyed a large sale, naturally, until the novelty wore off, it was subject to a great deal of use and this continual use brought about a great deal of wear on the small screw which held the needle in the stylus bar. At that time, the screw was made of brass, the stylus also being of the same metal. This relatively soft metal soon brought about wear on the thread of the needle, likewise on the thread of the screw hole and a new screw became necessary. But, owing to both threads being worn out, a new screw with similar thread was of little use, so makeshifts had to be resorted to. An improvement was brought about by making the screw and stylus bar of steel and they gave much longer service.

The Columbia Co. had begun to make disc machines and had noted this trouble in the Berliner reproducer, incidentally at this time, always referred to as the speaker and set about for a remedy. They did away with the screw and replaced it with a hinged lever, one end of which fitted into a slot in the needle hole of the stylus bar. Pressure of the lever against the needle was supplied by a spring. However, owing to the strength of spring required to hold the needle firmly against the excessive vibration, this ingenious invention was not a success; so back to the screw which was retained to the end of the acoustic gramophone. One of these lever needle holders and stylus bar is in the possession of the Society and may be seen by anyone interested.

SPRING CHUGGING

In our recent article on phonograph chugging we omitted to give the reason for this form of trouble. It was due to air pressure after air had been forced out from between the layers of the spring when winding; then its winding had to become sufficiently strong to overcome the air pressure and allow the layers to separate. The separation was usually accompanied by a loud bump. The object of a solid in the grease, graphite, was to keep the leaves apart and so let in the air. From the foregoing it is evident that it is unwise to wind the spring to its full extent and that it is at its best in such condition. Also, there is little chance of chugging. Graphite was used because even when dry it was

a lubricant but sometimes it was inclined to cake and become useless. Owing to its dirty nature, efforts were made to find a substitute. The firm of Stead & Co., Sheffield, England, one of the largest spring makers in the world, devoted a great deal of time to eliminate the chugging trouble and finally claimed to have solved the problem. They produced and put on the market a grease named VULCAN SPRING LUBRICANT. I have not seen this lubricant in New Zealand.

MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF MACHINES

No. 3 (Continued) CLEANING THE MOTOR AND THE METALWORK OF A PHONOGRAPH

R.W. CORNELIUS

Now the screws should be cleaned - the petrol in which they have been soaking will have removed the surface grease and dirt. I find the best method of cleaning the threads and this goes for the cogs of the motor too, is to hold them in a shallow dish of clean petrol and brush across them with an old tooth brush. When they are clean, a dip of oil is essential and after shaking off the excess they should be screwed back in the casing. Cleaning of the motor can be a messy job but it is essential to remove the old sticky grease and dirt if the machine is to run effectively. Once the motor has been removed from the deck (this was done at the first stage of the cleaning operations) place it in a shallow dish of clean petrol - about ½" in the bottom will do. Get a paint brush and thoroughly brush the whole motor with the petrol. When most of the dirt and grease has been removed, lift the motor out and place on a sheet of newspaper - in about thirty seconds it is dry and a great deal cleaner so that the pulling apart may be commenced. As before, as the screws and small pieces are removed, drop them into a jar of petrol. When the motor is stripped right down or as far as it is considered safe (remember it must be put together again) clean all the teeth of the cogs with the toothbrush until they shine - the sides of the cogs can be cleaned with cutter or Brasso. The spring should be cleaned as described by Mr. Woledge in the April issue of "The Phonographic Record". I find it best to clean everything before I start to reassemble so that I have in front of me clean shining cogs, screws and parts - then its fun to put together. When the reassembling has been completed, a thorough relubrication and oiling is needed as it should be completely clear of all traces of the old grease.

I think I enjoy this part of machine collecting best of all and it is usually the job that most collectors consider to be the worst. I feel it is really worthwhile when the machine runs smoothly and I can take off the lid and the metal work shines back at me and when I lift the deck the motor is completely clean and the brass cogs gleaming.

WANTED TO BUY Disc record "I'm Henery the Eighth I Am" by Harry Champion, cylinder "The Preacher and the Bear" by A. Collins. Also any cylinders by Florrie Forde, Billy Williams and any other Music Hall artistes. A.J. Robb, 206 Weston Road, Christchurch 5.

OUR JUNE MEETING Joffre Marshall demonstrated and explained his methods of repairing and maintaining an Edison Standard phonograph. Of particular interest was the story of his construction of a swan neck for a cygnet horn. Adair Otley played us a tape of voices of the past, tracing through early recordings, world history.