



The Phonographic Record

The Journal of The Vintage Phonograph Society of New Zealand

A Society formed for the preservation of Recorded Sound

Volume 2 Issue 3.

Editorial and Secretarial Address

February, 1967.

73 Flockton St., Christchurch, 1, New Zealand.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

CAPTAIN R.W. BORLAND M.B.E. It is with sincere regret that we report the death of one of our members, Robert W. Borland. The late Captain Borland was Officer in charge of the sick and wounded in the Southern Military District at the time of World War II and it was for these services that he was awarded the M.B.E. In latter years his health was not good and one of his main interests was his association with Abilities Incorporated, a company formed for the employment of the disabled. Although Captain Borland had spent some of the year in hospital, he was able to be present at our Christmas meeting. We shall miss his kindly interest in the Society's affairs.

CHRISTMAS PARTY 1966. There must be few Societies of the size of our own, who can put on in a real theatre with a fine projector, a Christmas programme which would do credit to Kerridge-Odeon (to our overseas members - a large cinema business in New Zealand.) Such was our meeting on November 26th when thirty two gathered at the home of Mr. & Mrs. A.H. Wellbourn, to hold our final meeting for 1966. The Society had hired the film "Edison the Man" starring Spencer Tracy and with the loan of a projector from Mr. A.M. Jackson, we were royally entertained. Our Christmas cake was decorated by Mr. & Mrs. Wellbourn with a very fine model of a Berliner Dog gramophone. We would like to take this opportunity of thanking Mr. & Mrs. Wellbourn and Mr. Jackson.

A RECORD OF RECORDS

"G.B.E."

The cylinders I have chosen to be the subjects of these articles all have some point of interest for other collectors. Some have been chosen because they have a certain style of tune or monologue etc., others because they stood apart from other recordings of the period.

The Advertising Record

This two minute wax cylinder is fairly well-known to collectors; I am fortunate to own one of the few copies known of in New Zealand. This cylinder as its name implies is an advertisement for Edison phonographs. As it was for advertising it was not to be sold but was to be given away. The recording is clear, the voice comes through well although I am unable to identify the speaker. It begins, "I am the Edison phonograph" and ends "Ask your dealer". If any collector has an opportunity of acquiring this cylinder, I would advise him not to hesitate.

BOOK REVIEW. AT THE PIANO - IVOR NEWTON by Ivor Newton. Publishers Hamish Hamilton. English price 30/-.

On that one day of the year when we are unwrapping parcels and wondering how we are ever going to wear that orange and purple tie from Great Aunt Fanny, we had the thrill of opening a Christmas

present of which we could genuinely say "Just what we wanted" and so it has proved. Ivor Newton's modest account of his piano accompanying of the world's greatest singers and instrumentalists is one of the finest books of such type we have ever read. Under his skilful pen, artists who have until now been merely names on records become real people. During a long and distinguished career, Ivor Newton has accompanied such as Melba, Butt, Chaliapine, Teyte, Ysaye and dozens of others. He writes of them with the warmest affection and we can think of no other such book which personifies the expression "the living artist". This is a book, possibly to borrow but we suggest you give yourself a treat - buy it. If you think we are enthusiastic about this book - we are!

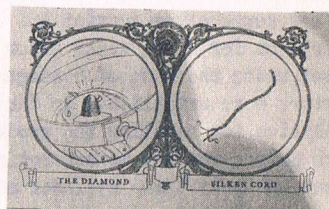
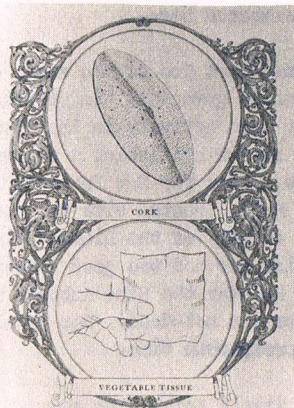
EDISON DIAMOND DISCS

B. THE REPRODUCER - the heart of the machine.

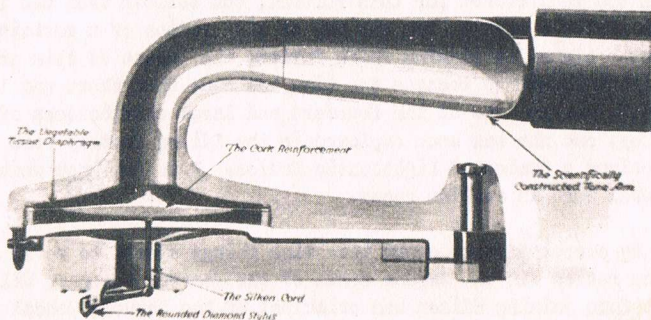
I. Edison took great pains to perfect this important part of his Diamond Disc machine. Anyone who has studied such a machine must admire the workmanship of the whole thing including the reproducer itself. Great claims were made concerning the quality of the reproducer and much time and research went into the production of this part alone.

To start at the beginning - Edison, in his research, endeavoured to produce a reproducer which had no tone of its own and which was also free from metallic tone. Most, if not all, talking machines which were produced at the time of the Diamond Disc used steel needles, steel needle arm and metal or mica diaphragms. THE STYLUS. If a steel needle is dropped on to a hard surface, it will give off a metallic ring but this is not so with a diamond. If one could be obtained as big as a hat and it was banged, it would produce no metallic sound. For his Diamond Disc reproducer Edison used a secret process, grinding a real diamond to a cone shape with a point .06 of an inch in diameter. Advantages included no changing of needles and less wear on the disc. To give greater volume he also extended the aeroplane shaped stylus bar into which he secured the diamond. THE STYLUS ARM. To connect the stylus to the diaphragm, most disc machines used a metal strip thus adding metallic sound. Edison however used silk woven like a sock, to form a cord; throw a silken scarf on a hardened surface and see how much sound it produces. THE DIAPHRAGM. This proved the greatest obstacle. In the past, Edison reproducers had used either copper or mica; the very earliest using glass. All these will produce a tone of their own when dropped on a hard surface. Before a diaphragm was produced, two thousand three hundred different materials were collected and tested. The final choice was forty thicknesses of an imported vegetable fibre laminated and compressed with a secret varnish. The diaphragm was also reinforced with graduated thicknesses of cork made in the form of a disc. The early models had a removable block which attached the stylus to the weight; on later models this was cast in with the floating weight. LONG PLAYING REPRODUCERS. These were manufactured in the same way as the standard play head but the reproducer was on a different angle. It had LONG engraved in the top surface and the diamond was ground to .03 of an inch. These reproducers were produced and sold together with the long playing gearing and the extra spring. The first appearance was around 1927. THE EDISONIC REPRODUCER. The purpose of this reproducer was to give an increase in volume - the claim was for up to 25%. These reproducers had a larger, heavier weight and had a small spring fixed between the opposite side of the arm which holds the diamond and the weight. The writer has seen two models of these and both are pictured. One had a removable throat part, the reason for which is not known but it is thought that this was the earlier one. The reproducers were available in three colours, gold silver and antique silver. Some of our illustrations are taken from a dealer's book on the Diamond Disc. It is most elaborate and contains some beautiful drawings such as that of Edison himself.

ILLUSTRATIONS: FROM THE DEALER'S BOOK ON THE EDISON DIAMOND DISC



THE COMPONENT PARTS



AND THE COMPLETE REPRODUCER

To return to 1913 again for a moment - we were paddling on through that year fairly successfully when a real shock came to hand - the introduction of the Diamond Disc. To put out a disc machine was the last we expected from Edison and no hint of it was ever given to us; for the moment we were not very pleased, but on reflection we realised that this disc was different and was merely a "cylinder" hill and dale record in a new form. However, apart from the two samples to each jobber, no Diamond Discs came to New Zealand until after the war. For the period of the First World War we can consider that the talking machine business in this country was practically at a standstill for most lines. All the Edison jobbers faded out and Edison was not represented here.

In November 1918 when the war ended, we came to what may be termed Part Two of the story of Edison in New Zealand; and although Edison had during the war personally given all his efforts to the war cause after America had become involved, there must have been some activity in the Phonograph Department for a few weeks after peace was declared and Edison goods became available, a company was formed under the name of Phonographs Ltd. and it was granted the sole agency for New Zealand. Headquarters were established in Christchurch and a new building, Edison Hall, erected with the best facilities for handling the products. Ample supplies were arriving, chiefly of the Diamond Disc on which Edison was now concentrating. No doubt he realised that the disc now had too good a start so he put out only three cylinder models, the Amberolas 30, 50 and 75. However the Blue Amberol record was not neglected and new titles came regularly to hand; the cylinder was not dead. New models of Diamond Disc machines were also produced regularly and we enjoyed a prosperous time.

Up until 1925 everything looked rosy; then radio began to make itself felt. The new A.C. model had come on the market and the costly cumbersome battery models with their messy handling were out. Then, as so much less space was needed for the A.C. model, mantel models were introduced and this practically spelt finish to the large cabinets. Radio was also helped by the up-to-date radio stations throughout the land.

It is not generally known that, about this time, Edison went into the radio business and produced about half a dozen beautiful cabinet models termed Lightomatic radio, his own patent. We received one set of these and sold them, several in Christchurch. Our order for further supplies was turned down and I have never known the real reason for this refusal, but believe from the little I have heard, it was because Edison was paying a royalty for the use on his radios of a certain patented gadget and in the agreement there was a clause overlooked which forbade the export of this article. Actually we were rather pleased with this mishap because the time had come when there was little or no sale for cabinet models. Mr. A.R. Harris, one of the founders and large shareholders of the original New Zealand Broadcasting Coy. and who was once employed in the Edison factory took a trip to America and shipped back to New Zealand a number of Lightomatic Radios. I do not know what actually became of them but was told that several were in auction rooms.

However, judging by correspondence about this time things seemed to be in a muddle in the Edison Co. We learnt that the reason was the sudden death of the General Manager, William Maxwell. He was a really live wire and before joining Edison was principal of the Maxwell School of Salesmanship. Things were never the same without him.

(to be continued)

THE SILVER AND BLACK COLUMBIA RECORDS

The 7" Columbia Records reached New Zealand before 1900, probably about 1898; the 10" a year or two later. Many of them had the artist and the title announced at the beginning. These single siders are not uncommon in New Zealand and even today the quality is usually quite good despite their number

of years.

THE NAME IS ———!

"A.J.R."

This series of articles will deal with some famous Music Hall artistes whose stage names were not their real ones. Although you may doubt the value of knowing names which mean little to the man in the street, such information appeals to the author who suggests that if readers do not enjoy such articles they advise the Editor of the type of articles preferred - or better still write an article for the magazine.

THE PRIME MINISTER OF MIRTH.

Of course such a title can only refer to one person - George Robey, or to give him the name with which he was christened, George Edward Wade. He was born in London on September 20th, 1869 and like so many other theatrical people, the name he used on the stage was not his original one. George took his stage surname of Robey from a firm of builders and initially he spelt it "Roby". It is interesting to note that later he took the surname Robey legally by deed poll.

While many comedians have impersonated other famous people, George Robey must be unique in that he once impersonated himself! It was at a Music Hall in Manchester where Harry Tate was doing a turn in which he impersonated famous artistes. One night, Robey arranged with Tate that when he came to imitate him (Robey) he should be allowed to take Tate's place. "I did it" said Robey, "and tried to sing differently as Tate would have done but I heard later that some of the audience thought it a very poor imitation. However I knocked a screen over and behind it was Tate made up as me. We both took a final call and left the audience wondering who was who!"

One of Robey's hobbies was violin making which he originally took up to fill in otherwise idle time backstage. He became very proficient at this hobby and one of his violins was used by Fritz Kreisler at a concert. Another instrument was displayed at the Handicraft Exhibition in London in 1953 where it was played by Lady Hillary of New Zealand.

On January 1st, 1954, it was announced that Robey had been awarded a knighthood. He had been offered a knighthood earlier for his charitable work during the First World War, but he declined it in favour of the C.B.E. He died on November 29th, 1954.

Songs he recorded on 2 minute Edison cylinders include:-

No. 13090	What Funny Things You See.	13098	A Very Deserving Case
13104	Cruel to be Kind	13107	I Bowed to Superior Knowledge
13109	The Idea	13110	Poor Thing
13164	The Roman Gladiator	13166	Say No More About It
13167	The Mayor of Mudecomdyke	13179	As a Friend
13181	Prehistoric Man	13202	I Said 'Oh!'
13208	Salad Substantial and Thick	13279	The Caretaker
13281	Did We?		

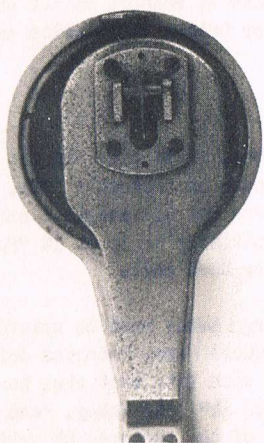
And for those members who are building up their libraries, George Robey has written several books which are well worth searching for.

THE STORY OF SOUND RECORDING FROM ELECTRICAL RECORDING TO L.P.

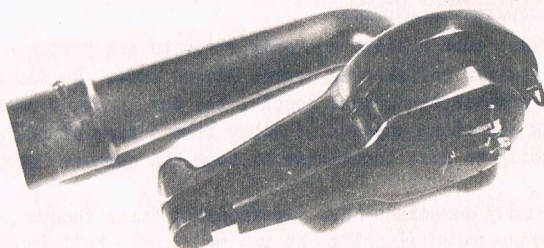
(Continued from Volume 2 Issue 1)

As time went on there were improvements. Records grew from five to seven inches in diameter

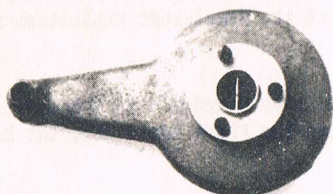
EDISON DIAMOND Disc



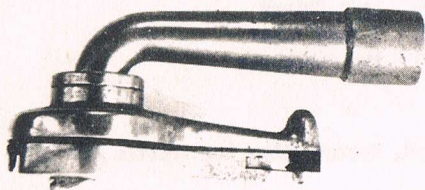
EARLY REPRODUCER WITH
REMOVABLE BLOCK



EDISONIC REPRODUCER



LEFT:- TWO VIEWS OF THE
EDISONIC WHICH HAS REMOVABLE
THROAT PART



BLACK & SILVER COLUMBIA LABEL

then to ten and twelve inches. Gramophones grew bigger and better looking. Models were devised with internal horns, which were later raised to the dignity of being called "tone chambers". Soundboxes became more efficient and by 1924 the gramophone was regarded with respect and affection by a growing circle of music lovers.

Modern recording practice dates from 1925 when electrical recording made it possible to record almost anything successfully and removed the physical restrictions under which artists and technicians laboured in the old days of "acoustic" recording. Then followed various acoustic machines incorporating improved soundboxes and speakers until the advent of the electrical reproducer. The first electrical pick-ups required excessively high point pressure to keep the needle in the groove, nevertheless the use of an electro-magnetic generator as a gramophone pick-up did open the field for our modern high-fidelity recording.

Sound recording improved very slowly during the 1930's suffering setbacks when radio broadcasting threatened the popularity of the gramophone and during World War II when all experiment had of necessity to be directed into warlike channels. Nevertheless, the lessons that had been learned were turned to good advantage. Low distortion amplifiers were employed and improved forms of cutters were developed to increase the frequency range. As far as reproduction was concerned there was a considerable advance in the introduction of lightweight high-fidelity pick-ups, improved amplifiers and wider range speakers.

One of the first attempts at producing a long-playing record was made in America in 1932. It used the same groove dimensions (.008 of 1 inch) as the 78 rpm disc, but it rotated at $33\frac{1}{3}$ revs per minute. The attempt failed, largely due to the severe limitations of the reproducing equipment of the time and the project was abandoned. In 1948 however, Columbia Records (U.S.A.) announced that their engineers had succeeded in perfecting a practical high-quality long playing record. This record also rotated at $33\frac{1}{3}$ rpm but unlike the earlier version it employed a groove which was approximately half that previously used (.0004) and a depth of not more than .0002 of an inch. The combination of the much lower rotational speed and many more grooves per inch resulted in an increase of playing time from the old maximum of $5\frac{1}{2}$ minutes to as much as 30 minutes per side. This is the long-playing microgroove record which we have today.

The 45 rpm record appeared in America in 1949 and certain aspects bore a resemblance to the L.P., particularly in the matter of groove dimensions and pitch (number of grooves per inch). Another radically different feature of this microgroove record was that the centre hole was increased from $5/16$ th to $1\frac{1}{8}$ ". This was done to enable the record to be used on a special changer designed solely for the 45 rpm disc. Most 45s now on sale in New Zealand are equipped with an optional centre, which reduces the spindle hole to standard size. The maximum playing time per side of a 45 rpm record is about eight minutes. And now we have $16\frac{2}{3}$ rpm with a playing time of 25 to 30 minutes on each side of a 7" record, opening a new field for poems, stories and talking books. One of the gems of this series was the complete New Testament of the Bible on 26 with an approximate playing time of 24 hours. A further new speed of $8\frac{1}{3}$ rpm is being experimented with overseas with a playing time in excess of one hour per side - one wonders where the end will be.

PARTS FOR SALE.

Flexible rubber horn connectors - reproducer to horn cut to size	3d. per inch
Leather material for belts, sufficient for one belt and including instructions for gluing	$\frac{1}{6}$ each
Gear covers for Amberola (Reproductions)	16/- each

Grille cloth for Edison Amberola etc.	8" x 12"	9d. piece
	16" x 12"	1/6 piece
Spring tensioning screw fitting for cygnet horn support		8/6 each
Wooden part of top carrying handle for phonographs		2/- each
Gem horns, unpainted		1/- each

All the above, postage extra.

Obtainable from the Secretary, P.G. Rogers, 73 Flockton Street, Christchurch 1.

ALL FOR THREEPENCE

In this day and age, threepence doesn't buy very much. Not even a newspaper, maybe just a miniature cake of chocolate or perhaps a bound copy of "The Family Herald". This is the discovery made by Clive Morrison as he sorted through some old books and came across this most interesting publication dated 1887. It contains an excellent article on the Improved Edison Phonograph, which we will print in a later issue and the following statement on the newly invented gramophone:-

THE GRAMOPHONE. A rival to Edison's phonograph is to be found in the gramophone, invented by Mr. Emile Berliner of Washington, U.S.A. In this instrument speech is recorded on a disc of glass covered with lamp-black instead of on a cylinder coated with tinfoil as in Edison's apparatus; and since the lamp-black offers but little resistance to the motion of the tracing-point, a very perfect "phonogram" is obtained. Of course this cannot be utilised directly to reproduce sound; but by coating it with varnish, the tracing is permanently fixed and can then be copied in metal by a photo-engraving process. The metallic duplicate obtained in this way is now placed on the instrument in the situation originally occupied by the glass disc and from it, it is stated, a very distinct and perfect reproduction of the original speech is obtained.

This interesting paragraph, tucked away on a page dealing with such subjects as Stewed Celery and Perfect Friendships must have been one of the very early references to the disc gramophone. It is interesting to imagine that on reading this, our ancestors knew at once that a new era in home entertainment was dawning but somehow —————

THIRTY YEARS AGO

"Stylus"

Tastes in recorded music as in most other things, changes with the times. Out of curiosity, I looked back to December 1936 to see what was available for Christmas presents in that year. In a competition run by "The Gramophone" magazine on "My Favourite Singer", nearly half the overseas competitors chose John McCormack. Eileen Joyce had made some fine piano records and among the ballad singers are listed Peter Dawson, Richard Tauber and Sydney MacEwan. Enrico Caruso's re-recordings were being issued; Elisabeth Schumann and Beniamino Gigli were well known names and in Variety, I found the records of Gracie Fields, Ronald Frankau and Carson Robison. Prices are interesting too - 1/- a packet of 20 Astra Fibre Needles, 1/6 a tin of 100 Golden Pyramid steel needles, each playing several records. Vocalion Celebrity Records were selling for 2/6, H.M.V. from 1/6 - 6/-, Parlophone Dance Series 1/6, Decca from 1/6 up and Regal-Zonophone 1/-; a whole variety programme of six records advertised for 10/-.

Radio-Gramophones had ousted most of the acoustic machines with the exception of the portables featured by H.M.V.; one re-entrant gramophone No. 194 originally costing £52.10. 0. was for sale at "best offer over £5." Collecting of early operatic recordings was being pursued enthusiastically and I was impressed with a comment by Mr. P.G. Hurst of the feature "Collectors' Corner". It is as true today as it was thirty years ago. "—— the general body of collectors seem to be like myself in that they will not pay more than they can afford and that having secured a treasure, they are not to be tempted to part with it for love or money".