



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 5

Editorial and Secretarial Address

May, 1967

73 Flockton St., Christchurch, 1. New Zealand

This issue of the Phonographic Record will coincide with the fourth Phonograph and Record Collectors' Convention to be held in New Zealand. It will take place in Christchurch over the weekend of June 3rd to 5th and to all who are attending we would like to bring

A WELCOME FROM THE PRESIDENT

On behalf of the Executive I would like to cordially welcome you to this 1967 Phonograph and Record Collectors' Convention, the second to be held since the formation of the Society.

Whether you have travelled a long way to be in Christchurch at this time or whether you are a local collector; whether you are a member of the Society or not, we hold out a hand in friendship - for collecting gives us all a common interest and in the getting together and sharing of knowledge we can all contribute to our common aim, the preservation of recorded sound.

We hope that overseas members will feel they are sharing a little in the Convention as they read this issue which we have given a slightly more New Zealand flavour than usual.

Walter T. Norris

EDISON DIAMOND DISCS

D. THE TONE TESTS.

To many of us all these years later, Edison's Tone Tests still have an air of mystery about them. We must therefore pass on to you the information we have been able to gather as to the effect they had at the time they were held. There seems to be absolutely no doubt that they were completely convincing and that many of the leading Edison artists took part. In 1915 in the library of the Edison laboratory at West Orange New Jersey, the famous operatic soprano Anna Case sang in comparison with her recorded voice reproduced on a Diamond Disc machine. The witnesses to this demonstration were unable to detect any difference between the true voice and that reproduced. In April of the following year, the soprano Marie Rappold sang before an audience of 2500 in Carnegie Hall in New York. Her voice was also reproduced by the Diamond Disc machine and the eminent music critics present were also amazed at the comparison. It was at this time the instrument was described as "the phonograph with a soul".

These tone tests were extensively held in both the United States and Canada over the next year or two. The artists who included many well known operatic singers such as Giovanni Zenatello and Frieda Hempel, would sing in unison with the phonographic reproduction,

stopping occasionally and allowing the instrument to carry on alone. This stopping and starting was not detectable by even some of the most musical people of the era and the newspapers were loud in their praise of the Re-Creation. The other leaders of the talking machine industry at this time, did not, of course, applaud this outstanding success but there is no doubt that the tone tests caused them great concern and led to an outbreak of court actions amongst which was one in which the Victor Talking Machine Co. sued Thomas A. Edison Inc. for infringement of patents. Although the case was a victory for Edison it possibly had the effect of bolstering the morale of Victor Dealers.

Publicity for and the story of the tone tests naturally reached New Zealand and Mr C.E. Wledge, like many others had his doubts about them. However, he was able to gain some first hand information which he passes on to us.

"To demonstrate the claim that a perfect result had been reached with his Diamond Disc Phonograph, Edison organised what he termed "Tone Tests" and offered cash prizes to anyone who could pick any difference between the instrument's re-creation and the actual artist whose voice had been re-created. Such tests were carried out with both vocal and solo instrumental artists and there is no record of anyone ever picking the difference. I had never heard one of those tone-tests and had always had my doubts about them although I reasoned that a vocalist could imitate his own voice to match that of its re-creation through the phonograph. However, I was finally convinced that the tests were genuine by a commercial traveller from America who made regular trips to New Zealand. His name was Riehl and he represented a sporting goods distributing company; he was well known in New Zealand and in Christchurch his goods were handled by Le Brun & Co. and several other firms with sports departments. In conversation with me one day he asked me what I did for a living and I told him I was selling Edison Phonographs. He became very interested and told me he was a real Edison enthusiast and had only a few weeks ago attended an Edison Tone-Test. This was what I had been waiting for a long time, to meet someone who had actually seen and heard the performance; so I pressed him for details and this is what he told me.

In the theatre the curtain was up and in the centre of the stage stood a large xylophone; beside it was an Edison Diamond Disc Cabinet Phonograph and at one side of the stage was a couch. The artist to be tested was a soloist named Lou Frisco, considered the best xylophonist at the time. Lou Frisco walked over to his instrument and began to play. Everything seemed quite normal for a time, but then the light began to fade until the hall was quite dark but the playing was not interrupted. Gradually the darkness disappeared and the light came on - Lou Frisco was sitting on the couch and the phonograph had taken up the running. Mr Riehl said that he would have staked anything that the player had never left the instrument. This convinced him that the test was genuine and he had changed his mind; he had previously always taken the tone-test claim with a grain of salt. In 1928 Mr Arthur Middleton and Mr Paul Althouse toured New Zealand and I had many chats with them. Naturally much of the conversation was relative to Re-Creations and Amberol records as both artists sang for Edison. Mr Middleton, I know, had done tone-tests and I asked him about them. He said he had done only two and they were absolutely genuine."

"THE PHONOGRAPH"

Many will have seen the picture of the old man and woman listening to the phonograph and have wondered about the origin of it. From a post card reproduction distributed by an American phonograph repair firm we have ascertained the following:-

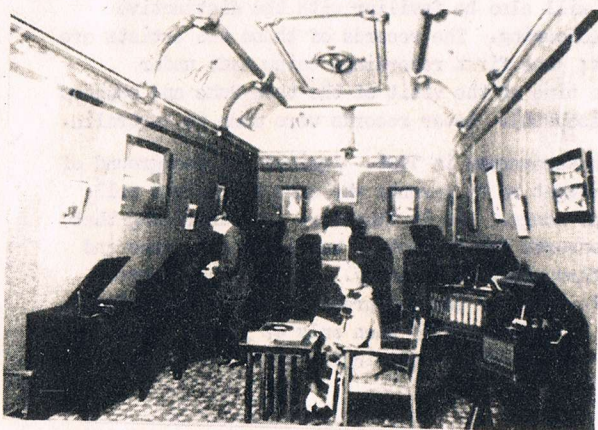


RECORD LABELS "MINSTREL" AND "HERALD"



EDISON HALL

ABOVE: LEFT. "THEN". RIGHT "Now"
BELOW: INTERIOR 1924



UPPER: SPECIAL LABEL FOR RECORDS OF:-
CENTRE: ANA HATO AND
LOWER: DEANE WARETINI

The original was an oil painting by a noted European artist called Massani. This painting was imported into the United States by a New York connoisseur in the year 1905 and exhibited at the Chalfonte, Atlantic City. It appears that it was an exhibition for a short time only, before it was purchased by Edison's representatives. It was duplicated in oil by an American artist and the original hung in Edison's home at Llewellyn Park, Orange, New Jersey.

We cannot explain the reason for the difference in the two versions on our illustrations page and would be interested to hear from any member who can supply any such explanation. Note:- Coloured photographs of this famous painting are obtainable from Walter Morris, "Whaipapa" Swannenoa R.D. Rangiora, New Zealand. Price 4/- for a post card and 12/- for 6" x 4" Postage Extra.

INFORMATION WANTED

We picture, this month, an unusual Edison Diamond Disc label. We would ask any member who can tell us anything about it or its paper cover to get in touch with the Editors. In a later issue we will pass on any information received.

WANTED TO BUY. Edison Blue Amberol cylinder No.2001 "Rastus Take Me Back" by Marie Dressler. G. East, 60 Garreg Road, Christchurch 5, New Zealand (Phone 517-859).

WANTED Blue Amberols - good price paid for any artist. I will pay up to 5/- each for a Blue Amberol (complete with box) by a really good artist. I am also looking for a good, rare cylinder machine and am prepared to pay an excellent price. I am prepared to exchange discs including Caruso and interesting label records for Blue Amberols. Let me know your wants. John Beauchamp, 16 Garreg Road, Christchurch 5, New Zealand (Phone 519-197)

EDISON HALL

In the course of his series of articles on the history of the Edison Company in New Zealand, Mr. Wolledge made reference to Edison Hall in Christchurch. On our illustrations page we show a photograph of the building taken about 1927 and one as it is today. We also show the interior, the photograph taken in 1924.

ANA HATO AND DEANE WARETINI

Many New Zealand record collectors will know well the names and the voices of the Maori singers Ana Hato and Deane Waretini. They will also be familiar with the distinctive Parlophone label with its green and cream colouring. The records of these two artists are a fine example of Maori singing at its best; the first recordings being made under difficulties in a small room in 1926 at the time of the visit of the then Duke and Duchess of York (later King George VI and Queen Elizabeth). Later records were made in Australia.

Ana Hato was born in the village of Whakarewarewa in 1906. Against the background of this thermal area of New Zealand Ana was brought up by parents who were themselves well versed in Maori culture including chants and songs. It is therefore not surprising that in her mid teens, she was taking part in concerts for tourists - her popularity grew and she was asked to give charitable concerts throughout the country. Although her soprano voice was untrained it was very pure and flexible and she was probably the greatest female singer of the Maori people. Ana Hato died in December 1953 when only 47 years of age. She had suffered ill health for some years but had continued singing on all possible occasions.

Her first cousin, Deane Waretini attended the very fine Maori College, Te Aute. After his schooling he lived in Auckland for several years before returning to Rotorua. Through his singing he gradually came into the limelight and in 1926 he first partnered his famous cousin, a partnership that was to last for many years, making its mark in the musical history of New Zealand.

On our illustrations page, we picture these two renowned artists. Their records are moderately easily obtained in this country and should be prized not only because of the fine singing but as examples of Maori culture before it was affected by any European influence.

BOOK REVIEW

THE ROMANCE OF THE GRAMOPHONE by T. Lindsay Buick.

Publishers Ernest Dawson Ltd., 40 Manners Street, Wellington, New Zealand, 1927.

It is perhaps a little unusual to review a book which was published in 1927 but we wish to draw the attention of members to what is possibly the only book on the early history of talking machines which has been published in New Zealand. Although "The Romance of the Gramophone" is difficult to acquire it is not impossible - the search is well worthwhile not only for the historical interest of the book but also for the information it contains. Of particular interest is the preface by Mr. Lindsay Buick in which he makes several predictions for the gramophone with amazing accuracy as we, forty years later, can see. He states:-

"I am frequently asked - What will the future of the gramophone be? To enter into meticulous details would be but to provoke foolish prophecy. I am, however, firmly convinced that the future state of the gramophone will be much more wonderful than its present. When we consider what has been achieved with the "Auditorium" type of gramophone and the promise of an instrument with a magazine, which will play twelve records without stopping, we may well believe that the days of mechanical improvement are not over. Yet it is probable the improvement will come more in the record than in the means of reproduction. Whether these records are to be in ribbon form, covering whole operas and complete oratorios, or whether the recording is to be done by ray of light or by any other process, it is reasonable to say that our application of the science of acoustics to the gramophone will no more stand where it is, than it stood where it was after the invention of the phonograph. Perfection may never be reached, but assuredly there will be further vast strides towards that goal". He also has some interesting comments to make on the radio v gramophone question, "wireless" being then a very recent invention.

The book itself is historical rather than technical and deals with the very early history of sound reproduction, the phonograph and the gramophone under separate headings. There are twelve illustrations and an excellent index. The book contains 107 pages and for the information of second-hand-book seekers, the only copies we have seen have a tan coloured binding with no name down the spine - just a narrow cross band with a star, all in gold at the top and the bottom.

HERALD AND MINSTREL RECORDS

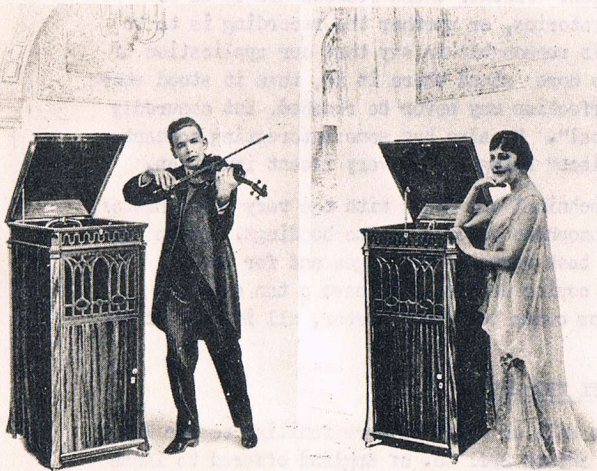
The labels pictured on our illustrations page will no doubt be more familiar to our New Zealand members than those who are overseas. The Edison Bell Co. of England offered to issue a special label to firms prepared to take a certain number of their records. This offer was accepted by the firm of E.W. Pidgeon Ltd who chose as their trade names, Minstrel and Herald. The Edison Bell Co. sent out a catalogue and from this Pidgeons chose their titles afterwards issuing their own catalogues under the new label names, The artists were English and the



"THE PHONOGRAPH"



T. LINDSAY BUICK
AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE
OF THE GRAMOPHONE"



EDISON TONE TESTS

LEFT: ALBERT SPALDING, VIOLINIST
RIGHT: ANNA CASE, SOPRANO



AN UNUSUAL
DIAMOND DISC LABEL

records of good quality, selling originally at 3/6 for Herald and 2/6 for Minstrel. Later competition in the form of lower prices by other Companies forced a corresponding lowering of the retail price. Unfortunately the Edison Bell Co. did not issue regular lists and thus the selling of Herald and Minstrel records was for a limited period only.

TALKING OF CYLINDERS

Just a Wee Deoch and Doris

"A.J.R."

Just the other day, I came across a copy of the cylinder information slip for Blue Amberol No.1819, "Just a Wee Deoch and Doris". This song, made so famous by Harry Lauder is one of the few songs which Lauder did not write himself. It was in fact written by Morrison and Cunliffe about whom I know nothing further. However, I can tell you something about Harry Lauder. He was as you know, famed all over the world as a singer of Scottish songs but what you probably did not know was that his first stage success was as an Irish comedian, in Belfast, Ireland. He sang a number called "Calligan" which can be heard on an Edison 2 minute cylinder number 13759.

Most of Lauder's songs he either wrote himself or in conjunction with another songwriter. Out of interest, I spent several hours looking through the catalogues of Blue Amberol and 2 minute wax (British Series) cylinders and the results are shown in the following table :-

SONGS WRITTEN BY	BRITISH 2 MINUTE	BRITISH BLUE AMBEROLS	TOTAL
Lauder	13	4	17
Lauder and another.	1	2	3
Someone other than Lauder.	-	-	-
	<u>14</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>20</u>

In the above table, the three songs not written by Lauder alone were 2 minute (British) No.13918 "I've Loved Her Ever Since She Was a Baby" by Lauder and Beaton.
Blue Amberol (British) No.23022 "Wee Hoose Among the Heather" by Wells and Lauder.
Blue Amberol (British) No.23059 "Kilty Lads" by Milligan and Lauder.

Many of Lauder's songs appear in the American Series of Blue Amberols but as the American Catalogue does not show composers, I have had to omit it from the preceding table.

As a footnote to "A Wee Deoch and Doris", I would like to add that it was also recorded on a 2 minute wax, British Series No.14109 by Florrie Forde of all people.

A RECORD OF RECORDS

My Beautiful Lady - The Pink Lady by Elizabeth Spencer
Edison Blue Amberol No.1992.

Elizabeth Spencer is probably the best known soprano to be heard on Edison records so it is fitting that I should take at least one of her recordings for this series. In the song "My Beautiful Lady" her own beautiful voice has the power to come out clearly without that "tinny" sound often thought to be a necessary evil of early recording. The verses start in a Spanish-style beat but the chorus is sung in waltz ($\frac{3}{4}$) time, and is in itself a lilting melody made even lovelier by the singer. Elizabeth Spencer's recordings particularly on Blue Amberol and Diamond Disc are not difficult to obtain. Many are duets in which she is joined by other well-known Edison artists such as Thomas Chalmers and Irving Gillette.

HARRY TATE

In the first article in this series, I mentioned how George Robey impersonated Harry Tate. I wonder how many of you know what his real name was or how he came by his stage name. To begin with, his real name was Ronald Macdonald Hutchison which was not the most suitable name for a comedian. Indeed, according to legend the great Marie Lloyd is reported to have said to him when he was trying to obtain an audition, "Call yourself Ronald Hutchison and you'll be finished straight away".

He was then working for the firm of sugar refiners of Harry Tate and Sons and thinking that his employer's name was easy to remember, he decided to call himself "Harry Tate". Tate's trademark was his moustache and it was at Marie Lloyd's suggestion that he adopted it. The inspiration came one day when Tate was swimming in the Thames and a piece of river weed happened to stick under his nose. Marie Lloyd saw how conical the effect of a moustache could be and told him what an asset it would be in his act - and so it proved to be. Tate achieved immortality with such sketches as "Running an Office", "Golfing", "Billiards", and particularly "Motoring".

With so many members now becoming interested in the mechanical work connected with their Phonographs, we reprint an article originally published in the November 1926 issue of the "Edison Musical Monthly".

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CARE AND OPERATION OF THE AMBEROLA 50 PHONOGRAPH

Be sure that the reproducer is firmly seated in the arm and the set-screw tightened. This should be done when the lift handle is down - in playing position.

Then see that the weight lift screw is properly adjusted so that when the lift handle is up - weight is raised up as far as it will go, without straining the weight-suspension spring. This will give ample clearance between the diamond and the record.

For best results, grease or heavy oil should be put on the reproducer tube before inserting it in the horn. This will prevent rattle and insure a tight joint between the reproducer and horn which is important.

See that the horn is free by moving the reproducer back and forth. This should be very free and offer no resistance. Oil the back rod and also the slide. Oil the horn guide pin with heavy oil or grease. Be sure that the cylinder is free on the shaft with about 1/64in end play. Be sure that both ends of the cylinder are oiled. Dust or chips in the gears will cause a clicking noise. Clean the gears with a brush and some oil. Clean and oil the governor. Adjust the governor shaft with about 1/64in. end play.

Drunken or irregular governors are caused by the governor springs not being adjusted properly. Loosen all screws (four of them) and then tighten one after the other, a little at a time. The springs should be bent alike and the balls should be the same distance from the shaft when at rest.

Clean the feed screw and the feed nut. The feed nut must just engage the feed screw when the handle is down. Too much tension will lift the reproducer arm and cause bad regulation. Keep all bearings cleaned and oiled.