The Phonographic Record

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A Society formed for the preservation of Recorded Sound

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

We would like to remind members of the 1973 Convention of Gramophone and Phonograph Collectors to be held this year in the Dominion Museum, Wellington, June 2nd to 4th. We have attended all previous Wellington Conventions and therefore can recommend this one to anyone contemplating attending. Would those members who wish to attend the 1973 Convention please return their application forms as soon as possible to : The Vintage Phonograph Society of New Zealand Inc.,
Wellington Chapter,
P.O. Box 2827,
WELLINGTON.

AN ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF BERLINER DISC PHONOGRAPHS

1896-97

THE SPRING MOTOR

No. 10

We have reached the point in time that saw a major advance in the production of the gramophone; this was the advent of the spring motor.

Up until this time Berliner's hand turned machines were regarded as not much more than a toy, and it was for this reason that few could be found who were prepared to invest in the gramophone industry. Fred Gaisberg, in his book, "Music Goes Round", gives us a very good account of what happened.

Berliner was at this time in need of funds and somehow Gaisberg managed to persuade some Philadelphians connected with the Pennsylvania Railroad Company to invest $25,000 in a company which became known as the "UNITED STATES GRAMOPHONE CO.". He next goes on to tell how in the spring of 1895, while reading the "Philadelphia Ledger" he came across an advertisement which caught his eye. It read thus ("Why wear yourself out treading a sewing machine, fit one of our clockwork motors".)

On investigation, he found an old gentleman with a beard (he doesn't give his name) working in a dingy shop in a back street. His spring motor was large and clumsy but it would do what its inventor claimed; that is, drive a sewing machine.

This impressed Gaisberg so much so that he says he left him a hand turned gramophone with instructions to make and fit a motor to it. A week later, when this model was completed it was demonstrated to the company directors, but it proved impracticable.

We are not told why but guess it was clumsy like the motor he had designed to drive the sewing machine. Somehow it looks as though Eldridge had something to do with the manufacture of this first model as it appears it was produced in his workshop. We believe that this was the reason Johnson became interested in the gramophone.

Young Johnson, then only twenty-nine, tells in his own words how infatuated he became with the musical toy, he says "It sounded like a partially educated parrot with a sore throat, but the little wheezy instrument caught my attention and held it fast". He worked on a motor of his own design and found that if he left the handle to unwind as the gramophone played he could use less parts, cut cost and improve performance. This so satisfied the company directors that after a demonstration of his motor they ordered two hundred. This all took place during the summer of 1896, hence for our date 1896-97.

We are told that the first batch had to be modified before they would work properly, the governor springs being the fault. The advent of the spring motor proved to be the making of the gramophone. The demand soon exceeded the supply, leaving the hand turned model in its wake.

Our illustration is of a model we have not seen in New Zealand and the name given by its owner, Larry Schlick is "English Spring Motor Berliner". We feel that this is much like what Eldridge Johnson's early model may have looked like.

EDISON BOTTLE

J.R. Murtagh

I recently obtained a couple of battery oil bottles, the wording on these is "Edison Battery Oil made in U.S.A., Thomas A. Edison Inc., Bloomfield, N.J., U.S.A.". On the back of the bottle is the signature of Thomas A. Edison running vertically. We guess that bottle collectors will be pleased to see this one, as for many of us there are those who just did not know that they exist. Since we received J.R. Murtagh's letter, we have been able to see one of these oil bottles. They are very small, smaller than we thought, the measurements being one and one half inches wide at the base, three and one half inches high, and one inch wide across the neck. We do not know what type of battery these bottles were used with. Can someone help?

"STROH" VIOLIN

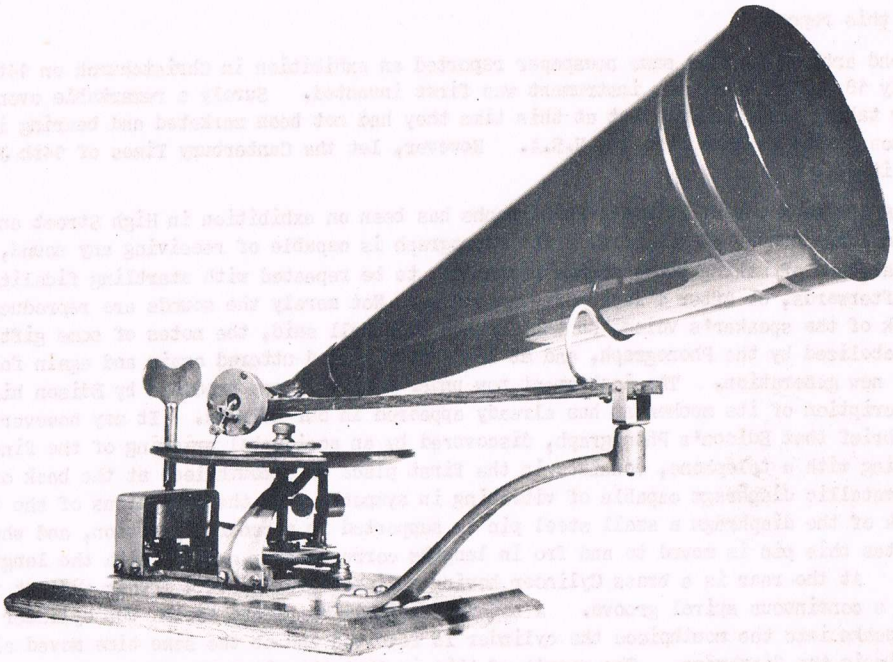
Reg. McCathy

I enclose photos of an instrument that I have come by which I have called a "Phonofiddle". This is for want of a name as I am not sure what the correct one is. The close-up is of the name plate and above it is the pin that the string passes over, it is adjustable by a screw either side.

Editor: We thank Reg. for his letter and clear illustrations, we think this is what is known as a Stroh violin and was used in making recordings in the early years before the advent of electric recordings; that is before 1925. This is the first one of these that we have heard of in New Zealand and would be pleased to hear from anyone who can give us more information.

THE EDISON PHONOGRAPH IN CHRISTCHURCH BETWEEN 1879 AND 1914

During the past few years Mr. R.C. Lamb of the Canterbury Public Library has been endeavouring to extract a full history of the Phonograph from the local newspapers from the time of its invention up to the time of the outbreak of World War 1. Evidently the Canterbury Times, (now defunct) recorded a full story of the instrument at the time it was first publicized but we have



English Springmotor. No. 10

Eldridge R. Johnson

Gianni Bettini

not found this report.

A second article by this same newspaper reported an exhibition in Christchurch on 14th June, 1879 - only 18 months after the instrument was first invented. Surely a remarkable event, especially taking into account that at this time they had not been marketed and bearing in mind the distance of New Zealand from the U.S.A. However, let the Canterbury Times of 14th June 1879 speak for itself.

"During the week one of Edison's Phonographs has been on exhibition in High Street and has attracted a large number of visitors. The Phonograph is capable of receiving any sound, vocal or instrumental, and of making those sounds permanent, to be repeated with startling fidelity either a moment afterwards, or after a lapse of even years. Not merely the sounds are reproduced but every trick of the speaker's voice, so that as has been well said, the notes of some gifted singer may be metabolized by the Phonograph, and at some after period uttered again and again for the delight of a new generation. The instrument now under notice is one produced by Edison himself and a full description of its mechanism has already appeared in our columns. It may however, be stated in brief that Edison's Phonograph, discovered by an accidental pricking of the finger while experimenting with a telephone, consists in the first place of a mouthpiece at the back of which is a thin metallic diaphragm capable of vibrating in sympathy with the vibrations of the voice. At the back of the diaphragm a small steel pin is supported in a central position, and when the disk vibrates this pin is moved to and fro in lengths corresponding exactly with the length of the vibration. At the rear is a brass Cylinder having a diameter of about 4 inches and cut into its surface is a continuous spiral groove. A sheet of tinfoil is placed around the cylinder and when a person speaks into the mouthpiece the cylinder is revolved and at the same time moved along behind the pin in the diaphragm. The result of this is that the pin follows the groove of the roller and produces a series of indentations upon the tinfoil much resembling in their general appearance the dot and dash alphabet of the Morse system of telegraphy. At any subsequent time the cylinder may be restored to its original position and again revolved. The position is reversed. The indentations upon the foil move the little pin to and fro to just the same extent as it moved in forming the indentations. In turn the pin vibrates the diaphragm and these vibrations being audible, repeat the words and sounds recorded upon the tinfoil. The arrangement is simplicity itself, but is nonetheless marvellous and so marvellous too, that it must be seen and heard to be appreciated."

From the "Lyttelton Times" of 24th June, 1879, it was announced that "Lyttelton residents will have an opportunity of inspecting this invention today as it will be shown from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m."

The "Lyttelton Times" of 1st July, 1879 contains the following letter addressed to the Editor: "Sir, If a person speaks to Thomas Edison's Phonograph or speaking machine, in a distinct language,, will it speak his words so that he can understand them? Also, could I recognise the voice." (From Reefton, 22nd June, 1879.) The Editor's reply: "The Phonograph gives a faithful reproduction of the tone of the voice but its distinctness is very variable. A clear sharp voice is reproduced very well; a husky one makes little impression". (Editor, L.T.)

To be continued.

MORE ABOUT BETTINI

Walter Norris

Firstly we are sorry we omitted to state the date and source of the article in Vol. 8, Issue 1, Page 59. This was taken from the 'Scientific American' of April 26th, 1890. We have since come across more information on Bettini himself and the reason he came to immigrate to the United States of America. Gianni Bettini was born in Navaro, Italy in 1860. His parents were wealthy land owners, who educated their son in what was considered necessary for a young man of his standing. This included languages, classical literature, music and the arts. He left school early and

joined the army where he rose in rank, becoming a Lieutenant in the Cavalry. With the army he travelled to Paris where he met and fell madly in love with Daisy Abbott, from Stamford, Connecticut. He left the army and followed Daisy to the United States of America where he persuaded her to marry him. Here in the U.S.A. he turned to inventing, his first product being a mechanical page turner for which he applied for a patent on September 5th, 1888. It is not known how, but he obtained a business phonograph. These at this date were not sold, only sent out on hire. Edison, in early years, was only interested in the phonograph as a machine for office use. For this purpose he set about to produce a better reproducer for the record and play-back heads which were only suitable for speech. He decided he could improve on the type of reproducer then used by Edison and so set about producing one of his own. He and his wife were well known for their hospitality and held many parties to which were invited many artists of the stage. Everyone of course took an interest in his Micro Phonograph and were persuaded to make a record, and in this way Bettini built up a library of many celebrated artists of the time. In 1890 he opened a rented office at 110 Fifth Avenue, New York, and here he began making records for sale along with attachments to fit Edison, Columbia and Pathe machines. In 1892 he published a catalogue containing a list of over 200 titles of celebrity records along with many popular items. Unlike Edison, Bettini did not mass-produce records, only duplicating to order, hence his records were high in price and sold from two to six dollars. each. This explains why Bettini Cylinders are rare and hard to find today. Edison bought his Diaphragm patents in 1902. Bettini, by 1908, had given up the Phonograph. He died in 1938. Bettini's own private collection of originals was apparently stored in a French warehouse from 1914 and it was destroyed by bombs during the 1939-45 war.

MEETINGS

We had an interesting talk at our February meeting by Mr. Hill from the Weights and Measures Dept. Most found this interesting, being a current topic today in New Zealand as it appears most measures will be changed by 1974.

At the March meeting Walter Norris and Bill Dini brought a wide range of Edison reproducers which they talked about and handed round for members to examine.

HOW TO IDENTIFY EDISON MODELS.

We found this script, which was intended for dealers and felt it of interest to collectors of Edison Machines.

GEM PHONOGRAPHS

MODEL "A" Has a flat winding KEY.
Starting button on left side of body.
Has swing arm.

MODEL "B" Has a winding CRANK.
Starting button on left side of body.
Has swing arm.

MODEL "C" Similar in all respects to Model "B" EXCEPT that it has no swing arm.

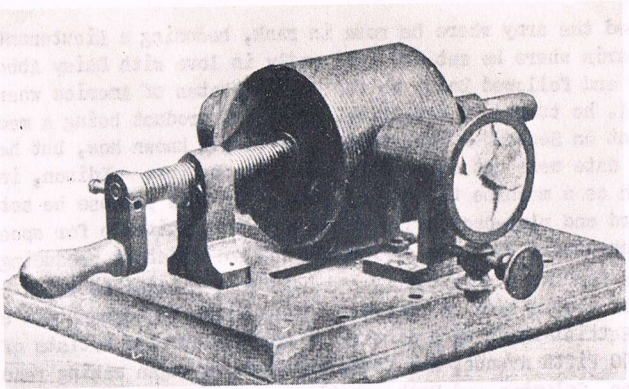
MODEL "D" Maroon finish.
Has combination gears for playing both two and four minute Records.
Has no swing arm.

STANDARD PHONOGRAPHS

MODEL "A" Has black japanned winding crank

Speaker arm equipped with shaving device.
Has swing arm

Edison Bottle



Original Tin Foil

"Stroh" Violin and Decal

MODEL "B" Has nickle plated winding crank that screws onto winding shaft.

Has swing arm

MODEL "C" No swing arm

No shaving device

MODEL "D" No swing arm

Equipped with combination gears for playing both two and four minute Records.

HOME PHONOGRAPHS

MODEL "A" Has black japanned slotted winding crank.

Speaker arm equipped with shaving device.
Has swing arm lock bolt assembled to end of body.

MODEL "B" Has nickle plated winding crank that screws onto winding shaft.

Has swing arm-locking lever in front of body.

MODEL "D" No swing arm

No shaving device.
Has combination gears for playing both two and four minute Records.

TRIUMPH PHONOGRAPHS

MODEL "A" Has black japanned winding crank, with square hole in end.

Speaker arm equipped with shaving device.
Has swing arm-lock bolt assembled to end of body.

MODEL "B" Has nickle plated winding crank that screws onto winding shaft.

Has swing arm-locking lever on front of body.

MODEL "C" No swing arm

No shaving device.

MODEL "D" No swing arm

No shaving device.
Has combination gears for playing both two and four minute Records.

MODEL "E" No swing arm

Has combination gears for playing both two and four minute Records.
Fitted with 4 Ball Governor and Model "O" Reproducer.

HOW TO REMOVE BLUE AMBEROLS

Reprinted from the Edison Phonograph Monthly.

Many persons who operate an Edison Phonograph seem to think that any way at all will do to take off a Blue Amberol Record. The proper way to remove a Blue Amberol Record from the mandrel is to take hold of it by stretching the fingers from end to end over it, and then gently drawing it off without any twisting motion. Care should be taken to see that the diamond point in the reproducer is raised off the record before beginning to remove it. By stretching the hand from thumb to third finger you can

grasp the Blue Amberol Record sufficiently firmly enough to remove it literally, in a straight line, parallel with the cylinder. When the Blue Amberol Record sticks so tight that it will not readily give to the above described action of the hand, do not try to twist it. Instead, let it get the warmth of the palm of your hand for a few seconds and then try again.

In most instances one such application will sufficiently expand the Blue Amberol Record substance to permit of easy removal. If not, give it a little longer application of the warmth of the hand. The reasons why a Blue Amberol Record sticks too tight on the mandrel are as follows:

(1) Forced on too tight when first placed on the cylinder mandrel; or
(2) A difference in temperature;

If the room has grown colder since the Blue Amberol was put on, it will cling tighter than ever...so tight as to be irremovable until warmth is applied.

SUPERFLUOUS

DUFFER...You ought to buy a talking machine. There's nothing like one to keep a fellow home nights.
SUFFER...Buy one? I married one. That's what keeps me out.

"IN THE SWEET BYE-AND-BYE"

2573

"The Sweet Bye-and-Bye" was written by S. Fillmore Bennett, and composed by Joseph P. Webster in Elkhorn, Ill., early (probably in February) in the year 1868. Bennett at the time was a druggist, and owned a small store. Webster was a musician and composer much more than locally prominent because of his many war-time and other songs, one or two of which became quite popular.

It was near closing time at the store one night, as Bennett often told it, when Webster came in, evidently much cast down. Upon being asked the reason for his despondency, Webster replied, "It is no matter, it will be all right in the sweet bye-and-bye." The expression was one frequently used by him. It was a sentiment, found in a poem called "It will be Summer Time Bye-and-Bye" which two years previously, had found a setting in his music.

"The Sweet Bye-and-Bye"! exclaimed Bennett. "Why, wouldn't that make a good hymn?"

"Maybe it would", remarked Webster, indifferently. Bennett went to his desk, quickly wrote the words and handed them to the composer, who, glancing them over and evidently much impressed, jotted down the melody, picked up his violin, and with it first gave life to the score that has carried the verses into every Christian land.

The song came as an inspiration. It was written, sung and approved of within thirty minutes from the moment Bennett picked up the pencil.