

# 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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**EDITOR:** W. T. Norris,  
"Waipapa",  
Swannanoa,  
Rangiora R.D.1.,  
NEW ZEALAND.

**SECRETARY:** Mrs L. Drummond,  
P.O. Box 5175,  
Papanui,  
Christchurch,  
NEW ZEALAND.

No. 33



## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Another year is now upon us; one year closer to the year 2000. We have had letters in the Christchurch Press reminding us of all that Thomas A. Edison has done for mankind and now its all been forgotten.

We have been fortunate to have been sent material on the Edison Light-a-matic radio. This material was included in a volume kindly sent to us by Issac Blonder, a Society member who lives in New Jersey, United States of America. Mr Blonder recently informed us he knew the young Tom Edison.

The Edison Company in latter days bought out the Splitdorf Company and this got them into the manufacture of radios and spark plugs. Radios were their last major effort. The light-a-matic, the main feature was a small bulb which lit brightly when you tuned in to a strong station in much the same way as the magic eye assisted in tuning on later model radios.

We have had a number of replies regarding the little Columbia we included in our last issue — a model BV or Trump; members all say it is a model BV and not an AA.

From Larry Schlick we have been sent a lovely array of photographs of record labels, all in colour. We hope to show some of these in the next issue of the Phonographic Record.

### Letter from Barry Williamson COLUMBIA NEW PROCESS RECORD

Last issue on page 12 we illustrated a Columbia record cover sent to us by Barry Williamson he said his had no number on it.

Dick Hills has one that is numbered and the number is DB 339.

### Letter from Don Lock

In response to our request for information on W & G records, member Don Lock, Kyabram, Victoria, Australia has written as follows:—

“On reading through the latest edition of Phono News which is always welcome, I am interested in the reference to the record label W & G and its apparent obscurity to New Zealand readers of the magazine.

The W & G Record Processing Co. Pty. Ltd. was a subsidiary of White and Gillespie (Melb.) Pty. Ltd., this company being manufacturers of drafting equipment such as scale rules since the 1930's and their factory was situated at 185 A'Beckett Street, Melbourne.

The firm were photo-engravers and later decided to process records as a service to the radio broadcasting industry because record production methods were similar to their established field of work.

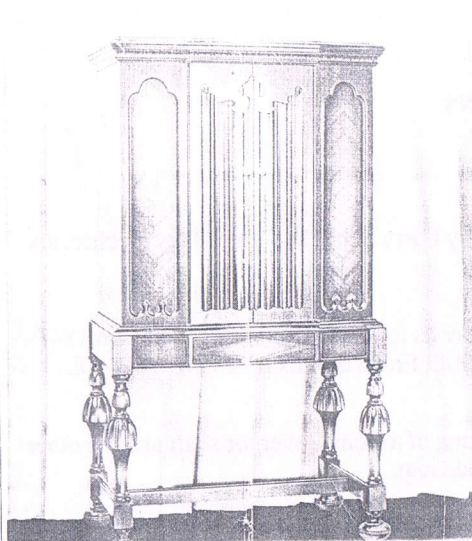
The records were pressed in vinyl and consisted of 10" and 12" 78rpm for radio commercials and 16" 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm transcription discs for serials and radio shows for broadcasting around Australia. In addition to this, W & G were happy to press from overseas masters for the commercial market and surviving 78's even today have excellent fidelity and very low surface noise — providing that light weight stylus pressure had always been used for playing them.

I can remember as a schoolboy in 1946 being shown through the factory and was fascinated at seeing the pre-recorded acetate discs slowly spinning around in various electroplating baths as part of the process in making stampers for pressing.

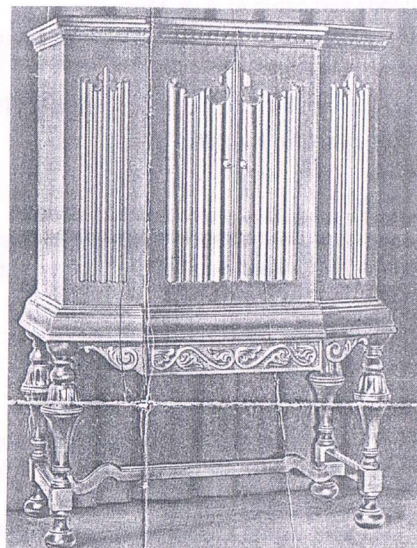
In 1956, W & G set up their own recording studio in Batman Street, North Melbourne with well known Melbourne recording engineer (and pioneer) Bill Armstrong heading operations and W & G became the first in Australia to press microgroove or L.P. records. I believe their first L.P. record was that of the Horrie Dargie Harlequintet, originally recorded on wire and issued as part of W & G's "Selected Release" series. The Logo ">W & G<" which appears on a scale rule I still use is the same as on the record label except for the addition of a grand piano as a background.



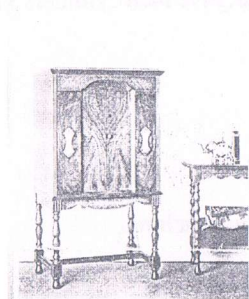
# EDISON LIGHT O MATIC RADIO



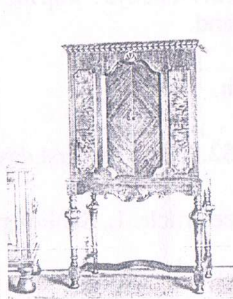
Model R7



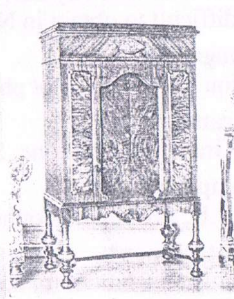
Model R6



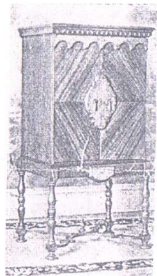
THE NEW EDISON RADIO  
Model R-5



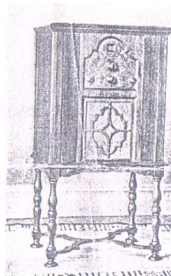
THE NEW EDISON RADIO  
Model R-4



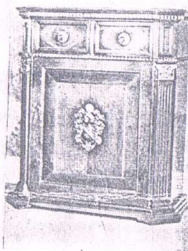
THE NEW EDISON RADIO  
and Electric Phonograph  
Model C-4



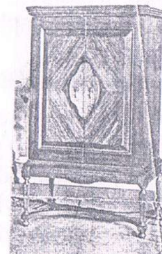
Model R-1 Radio



Model R-2 Radio



Model C-1 Radio  
and Electric Phonograph



Model C-2 Radio  
and Electric Phonograph

Needless to say the W & G label is quite common in Australia and may be distribution was contained within this country although the recording studio itself was certainly operating well into the 1970's before changing hands and name to A & M studios.

I hope this throws a little more light on the subject."

## ILLUSTRATIONS

### **Edison Light-o-matic models:**

See article.

### **Record Labels:**

All the photos of the record labels have been sent to us by Larry Schlick — one Okey electric, six Columbia, one of which is Maori, the next two are Indian.

### **Stamps:**

Kindly sent to us by Steven Ramm, are Romanian, and are as follows: Thomas Elva Edison 1847-1931, 200L. Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra 1547-1616, 400L. Franz Schubert 1797-1828, 400L.

### **Gem Photographs:**

Supplied by James Lowe, Australia, one shows the making of a Gem Governor shaft and the other a restored Gem and a Key Wind Gem. See article Restored Gem.

### **HMV Re-entrant:**

Mr A. Hartt sent us these photocopies of an HMV Catalogue he owns.

### **Donehys Swap Meet:**

These photos were taken by Larry Schlick at Donehys Swap meet last year. Five inch cylinders \$75 - \$150, very difficult to obtain in New Zealand.

### **Edison Phonograph:**

Edison Bijou coin-in-the-slot phonograph.

### **Columbia Gramophone:**

Columbia Grand Gramophone. Sold for \$2,000 on the first day.

### **Columbia Graphophone:**

Columbia B.K. Jewel Graphophone — see article. L. Schlick photo of his machine.

### **Early Gem Attachment:**

Gem 4-minute attachment for an early Gem.

### **Japanese Baby Gramophone:**

All metal baby gramophone made in Japan — 2" x 3" presentation case, sold for \$450 was also at the swap meet.

### **Australian Stamp:**

Australian telegraph centenary stamp 1884-1984.

## REPORT ON THE 20th OCTOBER 1997 MEETING, AT THE HOME OF TONY AIRS

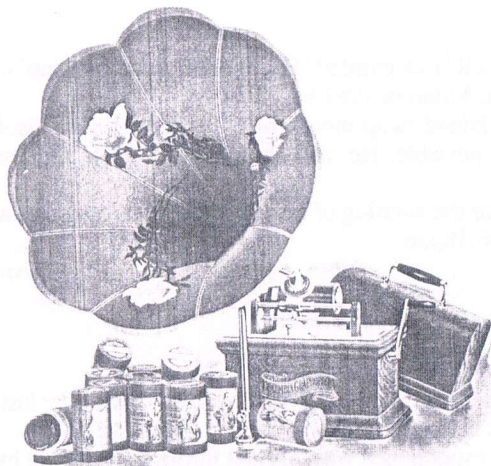
There was a good representation of fourteen members present.

The only item from the business part of the meeting which was of general interest was the fact that the cost of postage today sometimes exceeds the value of the item posted. This fact is not always accepted happily by whoever pays the postage fee.

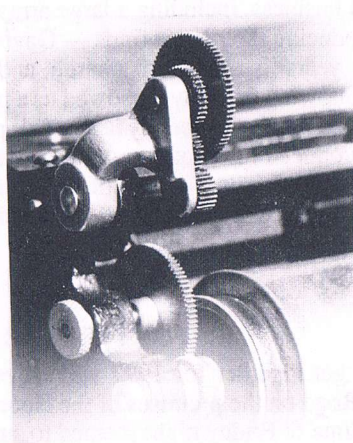
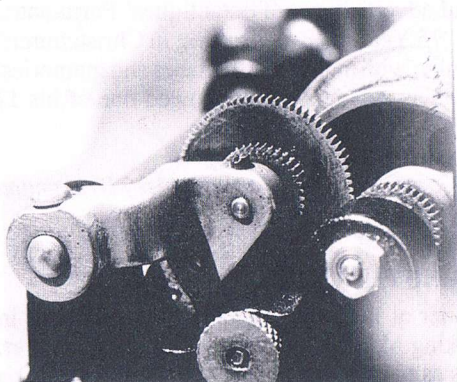
Dick Hills produced his usual spate of 78 records for perusal by members.

Walter produced two Italian catalogues prepared by Marco Contini in 1973. These contained only





Columbia B.K. Jewel



Gem 4 Minute Attachment



All Metal Presentation Case



Australian Telegraph Centenary

black and white illustrations. David Peterson had a small book entitled 'Fonografi E Grammofono' of similar machines by Contini also. This was printed in Milan in 1987 in colour.

Robert Sleeman reported on his visit to McLean's Island swap-meet where he found some Edison cylinder motors, some needle tins and a Columbia portable. He also showed an Edison suitcase cylinder machine which he had purchased locally.

The Christmas dinner function has been booked for the evening of Friday, the 28th November at the Sequoia 88' Restaurant in Tankerville Road, for 6.30p.m.

*Report by Robert Bisphan*

### NOVEMBER MEETING

Thirteen members were welcomed to Dick and Lynne Hill's home on Monday, 24th November last. Adair Otley who had not attended for some time was also welcomed.

The usual business, including a large array of correspondence was worked through, followed by members producing their latest finds — Gavin talked about a compact disc portraying Frances Elda, who in early years lived in Christchurch, and Walter had advertising re 'Photantiques' Parramatta, Australia. Following this Gavin showed us a publication "75 Years of Broadcasting in Christchurch" (celebrations having been recently held). This proved popular, with many familiar faces and memories. Dick Hills produced his usual array of unusual record labels etc., and Adair showed one of his 12 albums on recorded sound — beautifully set out.

Supper and plenty of conversation concluded a successful meeting.

*Report by Lyndsey Drummond*

### REPORT ON THE CHRISTMAS FUNCTION

The final get together for 1997 was an evening dinner at the new 'Sequoia 88' restaurant in Tankerville Road on the premises of the Hoon Hay Working Men's Club on the 28th of November.

The new time of Friday night seemed to suit members as twenty one people attended, which was a much better attendance than previously on Sunday evenings.

All agreed the venue was agreeably spacious and that the food was excellent. I had checked out the restaurant two weeks before our event a few days after it had opened, and have been back there twice since, so it has my full approval and perhaps a future visit could be envisaged before next Christmas by the Society.

*Report by B. A. Bisphan*

### REPORT ON THE FIRST MEETING OF THE SOCIETY FOR 1998

This was held on the 26th of January at the home of Tony Airs. Ten members attended.

It was a subdued beginning for the year as members received the news earlier in the day that our long time member and valued Treasurer, Peter Mattison, had died the previous day, the 25th of January. His services and bright and friendly personality will be sadly missed. At the Chairman's suggestion the members present showed their respect for Peter by standing silent.

The meeting proceeded as usual as far as the business of the Society was concerned, but terminated without the usual display of members' recent finds and the usual inter-relationship of ideas.

Members thanked Tony for his hospitality and a pleasant supper.

*Report by B. A. Bisphan*



## OBITUARY

### THOMAS PETER MATTISON

It was with great sadness that we learned of Peter's death on January 25th, 1998.

Peter joined our Society during March 1969, a quiet, cheerful and helpful member who took part in all Club activities. He was an asset in so many ways, including helping with the shifting and setting up of the Church at Ferrymead.

Peter joined the packing team, along with Gavin East, Joffre Marshall and Stuart Hobbs. He was our only gramophone mechanic and repaired numerous motors for members.

In later years Peter became our Treasurer, a position he held at the time of his death.

Our sincere sympathy to his wife Elaine.

*W. Norris, Editor*

## OBITUARY

### WILLIAM FLECKNOE

We are also sorry to report the death of William Flecknoe, known to us as Bill. He and his wife Gladys came to us about the same time as Peter Mattison, in early 1969.

Bill proved a tower of strength with the shifting of the Church to Ferrymead and during this period, he served the Society as President and also as Treasurer.

His son-in-law, Owen de Joux, became our Secretary in 1972.

Bill is survived by his wife Gladys, a son and a daughter.

*W. Norris, Editor*

No. 33

COLUMBIA

1907-1908

(See Front Cover)

### COLUMBIA JEWEL CYLINDER GRAPHOPHONE, TYPE BK

**The Columbia Jewel** is the greatest value in a high grade cylinder talking machine on the market today, and we challenge the world to produce its equal. The price on this outfit is considerably lower than is asked by others on a similar style cylinder talking machine outfit, but, notwithstanding this fact, we absolutely guarantee the Columbia Jewel to be superior in every respect to any other. The only way to convince yourself of this fact is to test this machine together with others which may be advertised. Remember that we will place this one in your home for 30 days on free trial, and it may be returned to us if not entirely satisfactory.

**The Cabinet** of this machine is built of highly figured quarter-sawed oak, made in the best possible manner, and finished in golden oak which is rubbed and polished to a mirror-like brilliancy. It is 13 inches long, 8½ inches deep and 13 inches high. It has a bent wood carrying cover which cannot break or warp, and the cover is fitted with an oak handle for the purpose of carrying the machine.

**The Motor** has double speed barrels which are fitted with specially tempered springs running three records at a single winding, and can be wound while running. The winding crank is nickel plated, with an ebonized hardwood handle, and the gears throughout are of the best quality solid brass, so perfectly fitted that they are absolutely noiseless. The governor is of the four-ball friction type, true running and equipped with snap lever stop-and-start device.

**The Reproducer** is the latest approved Columbia patented lyric model, with genuine sapphire ball accurately ground. This reproducer is fully illustrated and described on page 7.

**The Handsome Floral Horn** with which this machine is equipped is 24 inches long, with a 20 inch bell. It can be furnished in either red or blue colours, with handsome gold striping. The horn is flower

shaped, with 8 petals and scalloped edges. We also furnish with this machine a 14 inch brass horn with spun brass bell for the purpose of making records. The machine is equipped with a silver nickel horn crane which supports the large floral horn.

#### SHIPPED ON 30 DAYS' FREE TRIAL

*The above information taken from a 1907 Spiegel & May, Stern Co. catalogue. We believe because of the price the BK was sold for it is one of the more common models to be found.*

### EDISON LIGHT-O-MATIC MODELS

What Thomas A. Edison did in his last few years, makes an interesting story. There is an old saying — "A wise man changes his mind, but a fool never does." Edison certainly did this. He gave up producing Hill and Dale for the lateral cut, and did something else he was not in favour of, and that was to manufacture radios, but turned around and purchased "The Splitdof" Radio Company, setting about manufacturing radios with the Edison label.

Splitdof were not new to the business, having produced radios since 1924. The only real problem was in 1929 when a world depression affected sales. Nevertheless, Edison produced a more advanced radio at the time. He advertised twelve models, five we believe, were phonograph combination, which were claimed, would play all types of records. Two puzzles we have: Why were they all priced to sell without valves? The other is — how did they play both Hill and Dale records (Diamond Disc etc), and Victor and Pathe records? Did they change heads? Only one or two came to New Zealand, and so are rare here. They were sold by A. R. Harris & Co., Christchurch, who were Edison agents.

To quote John Stokes from his excellent book "More Golden Age of Radio" he says: "The first Edison radios, produced in 1928, were seven and nine-valve TRF models notable for the use of regenerative grid-leak detection. Regeneration was a feature normally never found in multi-valve AC sets, yet there it was. In "combination" (radiogram) form the 9-valve version was priced at \$1,000. In the following year, 1929, came an 8-valve model with a neutralised RF section but still using out-moded grid-leak detection. By the end of the year a 9-valve screen-grid model intended for the 1930 season was ready. In comparison with the earlier models, this set was of a most progressive design in that it featured diode detection combined with automatic volume control (AVC) even though variable-mu valves had not then been invented. By comparison, other manufacturers, with the exception of Philco, did not have similar models on the market until a year or two later."

### EDISON LIGHT-O-MATIC MODELS

R1 Radio: Blended walnut and panels of burr maple. Size 46" x 22" x 18". Price with dynamic speaker, less valves \$260.00.

R2 Radio: Blended walnut with maple panels. Size 42" x 22" x 16" with Dynamic speaker \$225.00

R4 Radio: Blended walnut. Size 46" x 26<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" x 17". Dynamic speaker. Phonograph jack. Price less valves, \$197.00.

R5 Radio: Almost the same as R4. Size 42<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" x 23" x 15. Price \$167.00.

Model R6: Nine valve model triple screen grid-set, super selective, yet super-sensitive valves. Three 24's, three 27's, two 45's in balanced push pull, one 80 automatic volume control. A noteworthy cabinet, finished in walnut with carved panels and doors. Price \$297.00 less valves. Catalogue does not say combination, but we think it was.

Model R7: Almost the same in every way as Model R6, but looks more compact. Price \$268.00 less valves. We think combination also.

Model C1: Radio and Electric Phonograph. Reproduction of an Italian Credenza. Solid walnut, special super power amplifier with two Dynamic speakers. 48<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" x 43" x 20". Price \$1100.00 less valves.



Model C2: Radio and Electric Phonograph. Blended walnut with panels of burr maple. Size 48 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 28 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 18" One dynamic speaker. Price \$395.00 without valves.

Model C4: Radio and Phonograph combination, plays all makes, needle records same radio circuit as R4 and R5. Walnut cabinet. Price \$325.00 less valves.

Both R4 and R5 were also available for D.C. operation.

Distinguishing Features of the Edison Light-O-Matic Radio Phonograph combinations:

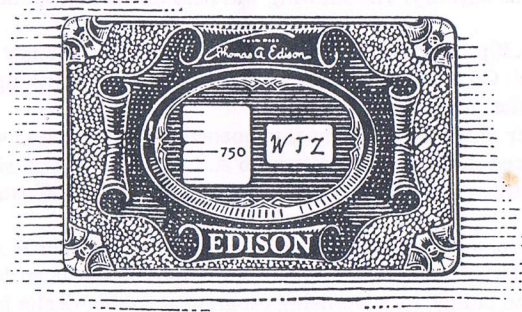
**The Chassis:** Three stages of radio frequency, detector, two stages of audio. For AC operation — using four 226 one 227 one '250' and one 281 rectifier. Built-in Dynamic speakers.

**Long Distance Switch:** The Edison radio, is the local and long distance receiver. When distance is desired, the turn of a switch makes it sensitive to the highest degree.

**Tuning Control:** Single dial illuminated from behind.

**Phonograph Jack on Radios:** Fully electric, each contains the Edison Radio, and an electric amplifying phonograph, electrically driven. Has the only electric pick-up that plays all types of records.

### WHAT IS LIGHT-O-MATIC TUNING?



Light-O-Matic Tuning will arouse your instant interest in the new Edison models. It's new, different, uncanny! You want a station — a flash of light — you have it! That's Light-O-Matic Tuning! Light-O-Matic Tuning makes radio logs obsolete. Stations are plainly and permanently logged on the dial. Simple — nothing to get out of order — and mighty good looking, too. This tuning device, unlike others, actually enhances the appearance of the Radio.

### EDISON DISCONTINUES PRODUCTION OF RECORDS; WILL CONTINUE ON RADIOS AND PHONOGRAPHS

#### Disc Plant to be Devoted to Set Manufacturing

**Arthur Walsh, Vice-president, Reports Demand for Edison Radio is Three Times Production — Present Set Manufacturing Facilities Inadequate.**

Thomas A. Edison, Inc., this city, one of the pioneers in the production of phonograph records, today discontinued the manufacture of records and will devote its entire disc plant to the production of radio and kindred new developments in the radio and home-entertainment field, Arthur Walsh, vice-president in charge of the radio-phonograph division, disclosed.

"This step is being taken regretfully because the phonograph for home entertainment was one of Thomas A. Edison's favourite inventions," Mr Walsh said in announcing the move. "But this is a case where sound business judgment must prevail over sentiment," he declared. Mr Walsh further said in part: "As you know, the Edison radio is a pronounced success and present demand is about three times production. We feel that this demand will increase steadily. The reasons are obvious.

"First, because we have an electrical experience which enables us to produce outstanding radio apparatus.

Second, because the radio business is in its infancy and growing by leaps and bounds. Our present manufacturing facilities are inadequate to satisfy the demand for Edison radios, and these facilities must be increased immediately.

"We are happy in the knowledge that there are many competent manufacturers now producing excellent records, with adequate facilities to take care of all present and future phonograph owners. We are also happy in the conviction that our dealers and distributors will find Edison radio business more valuable than ever, because of this great increase in our radio manufacturing facilities."

Mr Walsh asserted that this change in policy was decided upon after a careful weighing of the record business and its prospects. He also made known the fact that the Edison radio-phonograph division will in the future be known as the radio division.

*Taken from "The Talking Machine and Radio Weekly" Nov. 6th 1929*

### **200 DEALERS SEE NEW EDISON LIGHT-O-MATICS AT GIRARD GATHERING**

An advance showing of the new Edison Light-O-Matic radio models was given recently to over 200 dealers in the Philadelphia territory by Girard Phonograph Co., exclusive wholesaler of Edison radio and phonograph products in this territory. The showing was held on the roof garden of the Bellevue-Stratford hotel.

Dinner was served at 6.30pm and was followed by speeches from officials of Thomas A. Edison, Inc., and the Girard Phonograph Co. the new models were then shown in a striking stage setting and received considerable applause as the curtains were drawn.

J. T. Donohue, manager of the Girard company, opened the meeting and welcomed the dealers to the showing. He then introduced R. R. Karch, assistant to A. L. Walsh, vice-president of Thomas A. Edison, Inc., who spoke on the vastness of the Edison organization and its many industries, and on the stabilization of the radio industry.

The next speaker was Horace Silliman, Eastern sales manager of Thomas A. Edison, Inc., who gave a talk on dealer problems and what retailers should take into consideration when deciding what lines to handle. He also outlined the Edison policy, its advertising program and other dealer helps.

Wm. Arrowsmith, national radio service manager of the Edison company, then spoke on the inspection that Edison sets are subjected to before being shipped from the factory. He also outlined the technical features of the new Light-O-Matic models.

Mr Donohue then spoke of the co-operation the Girard organization will give the dealers in its territory.

*Taken from "The Talking Machine and Radio Weekly" Nov. 6th 1929*

### **MAKING AN EDISON PHONOGRAPH GOVERNOR SHAFT**

I set out restoring a key wind Gem phonograph, which was in a rather pitiful condition. Dirt, corrosion and rust had taken its toll and the case looked like a paling fence. Under the cast body the motor seemed in reasonable condition, except for one part. This was the governor shaft which had a stripped gear. The reproducer is an early mica diaphragm type but seemed in reasonable condition.

New veneer and some oak pieces, wood filler and varnish soon had the case repaired. Stripping down, cleaning, undercoating, painting, transfers and a finishing clear coat soon had the upper part of the machine looking like new. A photograph of the restored body of the key-wind Gem and another Gem on my workbench can be seen on the illustration pages. All that was left was to have the motor working.

The spring was removed and cleaned and lubricated and all the other parts checked. Before final assembly the governor shaft needed replacing. Various enquiries were made regarding a replacement but to no avail. A toolmaker quoted \$300, but I balked at that. All that could be done was to attempt to make one myself.

I have a reasonably well equipped home workshop but certainly no gear cutting milling machines. What I do have is a small lathe and after much thought I wondered if it would be possible to use the lathe to produce the gear. The first step was to turn up a shaft to exactly the same dimensions. After careful measurement of the shaft with the stripped gear I found these were to be exact fractional imperial measurements, such as



$\frac{1}{16}$ " ,  $\frac{3}{16}$ " and  $\frac{5}{16}$ ". A high tensile  $\frac{3}{8}$ " bolt was obtained from the scrap box and eventually turned down to the correct dimensions. Now to tackle cutting the gear.

The first step was to grind down a piece of HSS lathe tool to the profile of the gear. As the gear is very fine this was no easy task as I could not see it with my naked eye. With the aid of a powerful magnifying glass eventually this was carried out. The piece of tool steel mounted sideways in the lathe so that as the carriage was moved towards the chuck the tool could remove a sliver of steel from the blank gear. The carriage was then run back and the tool advanced a very small amount by the cross slide. The carriage was then run back once more taking a deeper cut in the steel. This was continued until the depth of the gear appeared correct. Now this is fine but the gear shaft had to have exactly the required number of teeth.

To put the required number of teeth a type of index had to be made. There are 17 teeth on the gear so dividing into 360 gave an angle of  $21.18^\circ$  between each tooth. (Why couldn't there have been 18 teeth?) Out of cardboard a circular index with the required 17 divisions was drawn and glued to the face of the lathe chuck. A pointer was fashioned and the chuck was able to be turned to each index position and a tooth cut as before. The sideways mounted tool, the cardboard index and pointer can be seen on the illustration pages. After all the teeth were cut the gear was inspected under a powerful magnifier (the one in a Swiss Army pocket knife) and it looked horrible! The depth of the gears looked reasonable but the crests were very ragged. I then used the finest jewellers file I could find and manually filed each crest until it looked as if it would do.

Then I checked with my friendly toolmaker who was amazed at what I had done. He then told me that if I installed it the gear would be stripped again very quickly. This was because of the torque exerted on it by the larger diameter driving gear. He suggested that I have the whole shaft hardened. Following his advice I gave it to him and he sent it to be case hardened. When it was ready the newly made shaft was installed in the motor.

Did it work? Yes it did. Perhaps slightly more noisy than it should be but the governor ran smoothly and the motor could then be reinstalled. With a new leather belt the old Gem could once more play the few good 2 minute wax cylinders I have in my collection (I have many but almost all are eaten out on the surface by a bacteria that seems to dwell in the wool felt liners of the boxes).

At least, with a great effort on my behalf, I was able to do a complete restoration on the old Gem and although it was never the best of reproducing machines it does work and can play the old cylinders with quite reasonable reproduction.

*James Lowe, New South Wales, Australia.*

# **EDISON RECORD No. 1520**

**Tenor Solo**

**Orchestra Accompaniment**

**By REED MILLER**

**NITA GITANA**

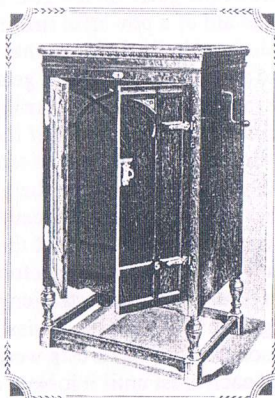
Music by Reginald de Koven. Words by F. E. Weatherley

Copyrighted and published by G. Schirmer, New York

Reed Miller, was born in Anderson, South Carolina, was not satisfied with merely possessing in unusually clear tenor voice, but was determined to become a true artist as well. To that end he has studied under F. Powers, A. Mells and Walter Damrosch. His field of endeavour is a vast one, including opera, oratorio and concert work, and he has appeared in the best theatres all over the country, singing with the New York Symphony Orchestra and with the Theodore Thomas Orchestra. While a member of the famous Frank Croxton Quartet (well known to Edison owners) in which his wife, Nevada Van der Veer was contralto, Mr Miller appeared in all the leading cities of the United States. A most ingratiating feature of Mr Miller's records is his unusually clear diction, a fact which makes itself evident in his rendition of this selection.

# "HIS MASTER'S VOICE"

## EXPONENTIAL GRAMOPHONES



UPRIGHT  
GRAND  
MODEL  
202

Height, 49 1/2 ins.; Width, 29 1/2 ins.; Depth, 23 1/2 ins. Internal Fittings: Gilt-plated, Silver Plated and Enamelled. External Fittings: Antique Bright.

This model is fitted with the latest "His Master's Voice" Patented EXPONENTIAL RE-ENTRANT Tone Chamber, ball bearing tone arm and No. 5A SUSSEX Box, and is designed throughout in accordance with the scientific principle of MATCHED IMPEDANCE. Antique oak cabinet, with ornamental front. Lid lock. Sunk needle.

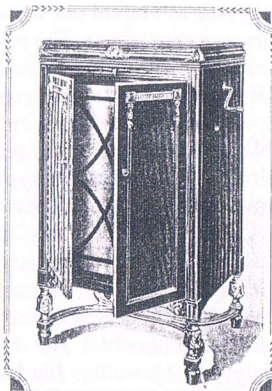
OAK ONLY

SPRING £60:0:0 ELECTRIC £85:0:0

Page Thirteen

# "HIS MASTER'S VOICE"

## EXPONENTIAL GRAMOPHONES



UPRIGHT  
GRAND  
MODEL  
203

Height, 49 1/2 ins.; Width, 29 1/2 ins.; Depth, 23 1/2 ins. Internal Fittings: Gilt Plated and Enamelled. External Fittings: Gilt-plated Brass.

This model is fitted with the latest "His Master's Voice" Patented EXPONENTIAL RE-ENTRANT Tone Chamber, ball bearing tone arm, and No. 5A SUSSEX Box, and is designed throughout in accordance with the scientific principle of MATCHED IMPEDANCE. Best satin finished mahogany cabinet with ornamental front. Lid lock. Sunk needle bowls for used and new needles, together with clips for "Tang-style" needle tins. Automatic lid stays operated by one hand. Four record (12 inch) motor, 12 inch turntable, SELF-RELEASING. AUTOMATIC BRAKE OPERATED BY MOVING TONE ARM TO EXTREME RIGHT, speed regulator and automatic speed indicator.

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Page Twelve

A Schlick



Concert Record



Edison Bijou Phonograph



Columbia Grand



Among the great variety of songs composed by Reginald de Koven, it is doubtful if there is one which equals the brilliancy of "Nita Gitana." It was written after the style of a Spanish serenade, with the swinging rhythm carried by castanets, and the peculiar minor modulations so typical of Spanish songs, strictly adhered to.

## A POSTCARD FROM ILLINOIS

By Matthew Davidson

I have always been fascinated by early recorded sound. Perhaps it is the taste of worlds unknown, the fact that late romantic piano virtuosi, and celebrated leaders like W. E. Gladstone, etched their voices and instruments into permanence, that I find so tantalizing. It's definitely an unusual interest; more often than not, when I wind up my old Victrola No. 2, it is to my wife's chagrin.

The first recording to get me interested in gramophones (and music in general, for that matter) was a recording that my father played when I was 12 years old, namely "Swanee Smiles" (a Fred Hager tune) played by a 1920s Chicago dance orchestra, The Oriole Terrace Orchestra, on the Brunswick label, on, ironically, a Brunswick wind-up gramophone. In a couple of previous interviews I said incorrectly that the tune was "Swanee Ripples Rag." Both times I was mistaken, but I'm sure the slip-up will provide at least a couple of theses for future musicologists!

I've never been an "aggressive" collector; quite a passive one, in fact. But the impetus behind my collecting vintage records has always been the music, and not mere historical significance (although I do have some records of mere historical interest). Because Larry Gushee, musicologist at The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign told me once that most of the more interesting vintage records were swept up by collectors by as early as the late 1940s, it has made my search for early recordings all the more interesting and rewarding, especially when I find unusual items. I have been most fortunate in being able to locate items by the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, James Reese Europe's Society Orchestra, Piron's New Orleans Orchestra, The Southerners, The Goofus Five, Earl Fuller's Jazz Band, and the Original Dixieland Jazz Band among others. When I started collecting at age 12, (while growing up in New Zealand), the first seller I bought from was a retired cardiac surgeon in Baltimore, Maryland, by the name of Lynwood Heiges. I doubt very much that he's still alive; he was in his late 70s when I knew him. In this issue you can see a few unusual labels I've collected over the years.

Ever since I started playing the piano, I have wanted to be a recording artist myself. What I really wanted was to record "classical" music, but after many years I realized that I would probably have to possess inordinate wealth (which I will obviously never possess) in order to establish a concert/recording career in that field. Upon arriving in the United States, I immediately made it my first order of business to at least attempt to release a recording. I figured it might be easier to break into the recording industry by releasing a ragtime recording first. I contacted about 50 companies, all of which flatly rejected my work, some quite unflatteringly. Some new-found acquaintances suggested that I try one of them again with some ideas that they suggested. So I contacted **Stomp Off Records** again, and tried to interest the producer, Bob Erdos, in four different projects. He liked parts of all of my four suggested projects and after much correspondence on my part, he finally agreed to release a recording of mine. I will always be grateful to Bob for my introduction to the recording industry.

I guess I could be accused of being overly ambitious in trying to record the rags of Robin Frost. They are so hard that nobody had ever attempted to record them before. I wanted to make them sound as much like the piano roll arrangements that I had heard as possible, so I wound up often editing in fragments, but I believe the end result was quite startling. I certainly believe that no one could play them live (myself included) the way they sound on my first recording. It was kind of like creating musical special effects. Perhaps this seems emotionally dishonest, but nowadays a recording is never a true indication of a real performance, so why go all the way and create something which can't exist in the real world?

I was new to recording, so I wound up spending \$1,000 on recording costs alone. Fortunately, Bob always pays the rest of the costs on his recordings. After that album was released, I sent it to a handful of producers,





O K E H Label



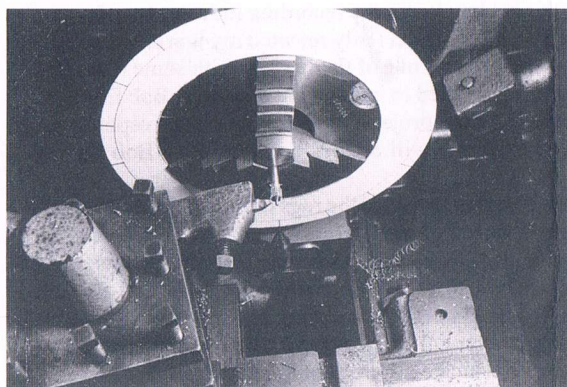
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and one of them, Julian Rice of Fanfare Records, liked what I had done. I released four more compact discs with him. I agreed to pay for half of the production costs for the first CD I made with him and for all of the post production costs on the other three. The compact discs were initially widely distributed, and I even got the chance to release a CD of my contemporary experimental music which I thought would never happen to me in a million years. I made the recording side affordable by learning from my mistakes. By the time I recorded my second, third, and fourth compact discs, I could record one in a third of the time (with one third of the cost) of my first recording.

I entered into this new relationship willingly, because I wanted to experiment with music as much as possible. I never made any money on the recordings; in fact, I lost considerable sums, but that was immaterial to me. The reviews I received were generally speaking extremely positive, which mitigated my financial losses. One reviewer even called me a "musical archaeologist." This was not quite accurate, as I wasn't unearthing the primary source myself and cataloging it anew; instead, I was gaining the sources (musical works) from others and not "restoring" them so much as rearranging them slightly, playing them in my own distinctive fashion, and trying to make them relevant to today.

Unfortunately, the company changed distributors. A year after the last two compact discs were released, they were deleted from circulation. Any of my last four compact discs that weren't sold at discount would be destroyed. I bought back a handful, but could afford no more.

We're talking serious money I lost here, which, however, I paid willingly in an attempt to buy my career and some sort of legacy. I must state emphatically that both I and the company itself entered into the agreement in good faith. But it was a monumentally disappointing blow, and unless I can find another company to re-release my last four compact discs, and release the three new unreleased ones I have recorded, then that is pretty much the end of my recording career.

For Christmas last year, my father sent me my vintage record collection. At last I had full access to all the recordings which had enriched my life as I was growing up. He also sent me my old copy of "From Tinfoil to Stereo." Dry stuff, but I must say it has important information that I wanted. After reading it again, it made me realize that the history of the recording industry is filled with infelicitous circumstances and major disappointments. As I quietly dust off my old 78rpm records and play them to myself on weekends, I try to console myself with the thought that perhaps *my* compact disc will be collected some day by somebody else; perhaps someone quite like myself who is similarly attracted not solely to an unusual label, but rather to the *music*.

## NEW LIGHT ON EDISON'S LIGHT

By Robert Friedel

Digging anew through the voluminous papers of Thomas Edison, scholars are constructing a fresh, more accurate and revealing understanding of his great invention.

No tale in all the chronicles of American invention would seem to be better known than the story of Thomas Edison's incandescent electric light. The electric light, after all, quickly became the epitome of the bright idea, and its creator was for more than fifty years the living symbol of America's inventive genius. But in truth it is only in recent years that we have begun to piece together the complete story of history's most famous invention.

That the full picture of Edison's work on the electric light in the late 1870s should be obscure is a bit strange, for few inventions before the twentieth century are better documented. The records of the famous laboratory at Menlo Park, New Jersey, were voluminous and have been well preserved over the years. Dozens of laboratory notebooks, hundreds of drawings and sketches, a wealth of letters, patents, and other documents all give testimony to the work and lives of the light's inventors. The importance of the effort to invent a practical electric light was widely evident to contemporary observers, so we have, in addition, an unusual number of journalists' accounts of their trips out to Menlo Park. Finally, the fame that Edison achieved with not only this invention but also dozens of others made him an object of attention and adulation for more than half a century after. Journalists, biographers, popularizers, and other writers besieged Edison with regularity, and accounts of the invention of the electric light were among their most popular works. So



how can there be more to be known about such an event?

It is perhaps because there has been *too much* information. The vast numbers of documents, now residing in a large vault at Edison's last laboratory, in West Orange, New Jersey, have so intimidated scholars and other researchers that few have attempted a care combing of them for evidence. The reports in newspapers were always better sources of colour and human interest than of reliable technical information. And the half-century of interviews has resulted in a tale jumbled by romantic recollection and the faulty memories of old men.

(To be Continued) Taken from "Great Inventions"

## ADVERTISEMENTS

### California Antique Phonograph Society:

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### Phonograph Society of South Australia:

An organisation of enthusiasts interested in the collection and preservation of the artifacts of sound recording and reproduction; and research into their evolution. The PSSA Newsletter, containing interesting articles and news, appears eleven times a year. Relevant books and reprints are also sold. Annual dues (Australian currency): N.Z. \$28.00; Canada and U.S.A. \$32.00; U.K. and elsewhere \$34.00. Write to: The Secretary, PSSA, P.O. Box 235, Kent Town, S.A., 5071, Australia. Fax (+61-8) 8261-9953.

### Canadian Antique Phonograph Society:

The interests of the 285 members of the Canadian Antique Phonograph Society (CAPS), now in its 25th year, range across all aspects of sound recording and its history: phonographs and gramophones, all types of sound recordings of historic importance, and related memorabilia. There is particular emphasis placed on the history of recorded sound in Canada.

Membership is \$25.00 U.S. per year and includes a 6-issue subscription to CAPS newsletter, Antique Phonograph News.

For more information please contact: Canadian Antique Phonograph Society, Bill Pratt, Secretary/Treasurer, 122 Major Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2L2 Canada.

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