

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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**COLUMBIA DISC GRAPHONE
A K NO 6 1905**

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

We have known for sometime that Customs, both in New Zealand and overseas can be hard on collectors.

We have also discovered, that because dealers buy in quantity and sell for profit, they can be hit harder.

Just this week I have had a wonderful lot of pictures of Donely's last Swap Meet. We also have excellent articles from Gavin East and Bryan Blanchard, who always keep us up to date with what is happening in the record and phonograph world.

John Shanks has also sent us some interesting pictures to print.

Our Secretary is away on leave, and is due to return early in August.

We have had two good meetings at Gavin East's home in Lincoln. The first was in January (reported in the last issue) and the second in June, when he amazed and impressed us by the quality and volume of his new acquisition – an EMG. The sound quality is unreal! He played to us a Zonophone Green Label '78' record of the 1930s, and it sounded as though the performing orchestra were before us in the same room.

Walter Norris, Editor

ILLUSTRATIONS

1:
First Model AK.

2:
Second Model AK.

3:
Third Model AK.

A, B, C; Columbia Disc Graphophone:

Model AK No. 5. Photos of this model have arrived since our last issue. In our illustrations we have three views of a machine owned by Tony Airs. He kindly took the photographs of his model and sent them to us along with the following description.

Columbia AK (first style, about 1902) features green oak cabinet, embossed wood tone arm, curved steel rod support arm and black japanned horn. Leather elbow, should have 7" turntable.

Described in Robert W. Baumbach's book "Columbia Phonograph Companion" Volume II as 'made for Sears and Roebuck' and sold for \$8.75. Against the normal price of \$15.00, it seems to represent good value for money!

Tony Airs

Unusual Player Piano:

Gavin East demonstrated this piano to us at a meeting at his home, the performance of the "Themola" was excellent, see article by Gavin East.

Istanbul Shop:

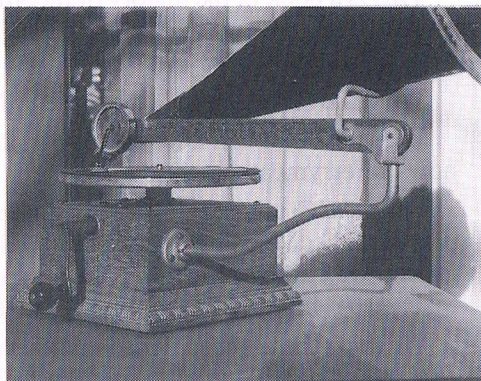
My daughter Jocelyn Smith took this picture last year in Istanbul, it is right next to the covered market in Turkey.

COLUMBIA DISC GRAPHOPHONE MODEL AK NO 6

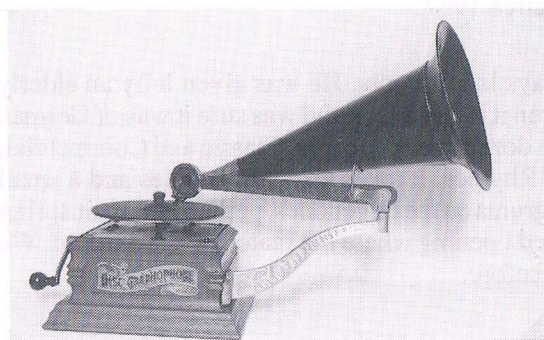
PHOTO'S BY L SCHLICK



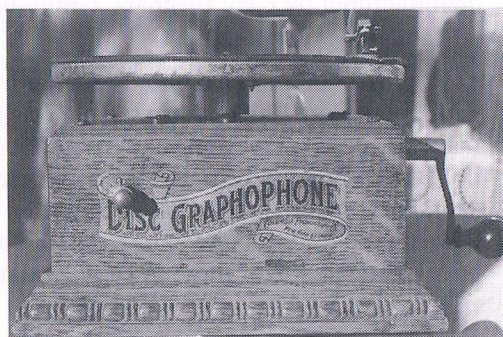
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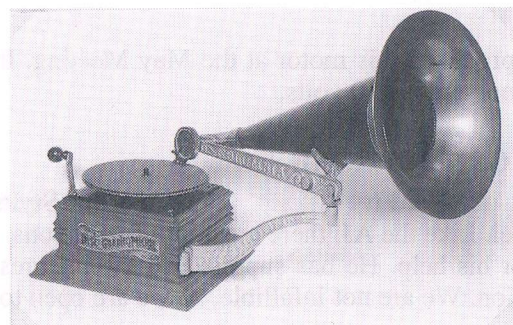
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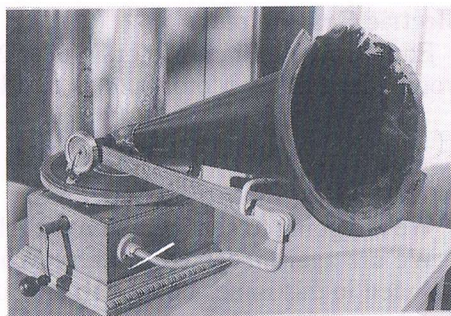
2



B



3



C

TONY AIRS

For the Record:

This is a book of the history of recording in New Zealand, see article by Gavin East in this issue.

Edison Amberola IV:

We believe this model to be rare in New Zealand. It sold for £30, i.e. \$60 when new.

We know that Bill Dini had one in his collection, and this is the only one known to us – now at Ferrymead Historic Park.

From the Catalogue... Cabinet, fumed oak finish, diamond stylus reproducer model B for playing Edison blue Amberol records, also sapphire stylus reproducer model N 56 for playing Edison wax amberol records. Single spring belt drive motor, can be wound while running. Size: $41\frac{1}{2}$ " high, $21\frac{1}{4}$ " wide, $22\frac{1}{4}$ " deep.

We think these unusual machines have a very simple unattractive case. Has anyone in New Zealand obtained one of these? We feel that there must have been a sample imported.

Loud Hailer:

A Post Card from John Shanks of Invercargill which says it is an Election Loud Hailer manufactured by Clay Brothers, Granville, circa 1937.

Bingola:

Roy Shanks sent us a photo of what he says is a Bingola. He was given it by an elderly gentleman from England. He said he was given it in the 1920s and was sure it was of German make. It goes very well and came with about a dozen mixed records, Classic and Commercial, i.e. Huntly and Palmers, and some Nursery Rhymes. It takes standard needles and a small "compact" record is only $3\frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter. It grunts on the larger ones, perhaps the mainspring is weakening. The sound exits from the slotted opening where the match box is situated. We have not seen one of these in New Zealand before.

Record Cover:

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Record and Cover (Larry Schlick).

Play it again Jim:

Article in this issue.

Electric Gram Motor:

Eddy Current Gram Motor. Walter Norris produced this motor at the May Meeting. It works like a Meter Motor but has a ball governor and is 110 volts.

COLUMBIA DISC GRAMOPHONE**1902-1905****Model AK****No. Five****Second Style**

We are going to continue with the AK Model. Like the AJ, there are a lot of variations.

We are again indebted to Larry Schlick for his help. He has supplied all the pictures included in this issue, along with the information. We are not infallible, so we are open to member's suggestions.

We have numbered the illustrations one to three.

(1) First Model AK 1902-1903. Has flat steel bed plate, leather elbow, all black horn and wood arm supporting horn.

UNUSUAL PLAYER PIANO

PHOTO BY G EAST



FRANK HOLLAND STANDING BEHIND

THEMOLA GRAND



INTANBUL SHOP

PHOTO BY J SMITH

for the RECORD

A HISTORY OF
THE RECORDING INDUSTRY
IN NEW ZEALAND

Bryan Staff & Sheron Ashley



(2) Second Model 1903 - Brass elbow, all black horn, wood arm, flat steel bed plate.

Note: Unusual hold down brown rubber. Not a CD product, but came with this particular machine. Has Record Stabilizer embossed on it.

(3) Third Model — 1903-1904. This model has a cast iron bed plate, metal elbow, brass belled horn and a cast aluminium engraved arm.

Cover Picture: AK No. Four, seems much the same as No. Three — all metal arms, metal elbow and brass belled horn.

Donley's Swap Meet:

Four pictures Larry Schlick took, (see his letter).

Out in the Parking Lot.

Setting up on Friday.

How much is that Gem on the Table? sung to the tune of 'How much is that doggie in the window'.

Main Building (note the crowd).

Edison 'Concert' — a lovely 5" machine with a five foot brass horn (not shown), price \$US5,500.

Projectors: Left is an Edison kinetoscope for \$US10,000; and right is a Lubin projector with two lenses — \$US12,000.

DONLEY SWAP MEET

Just came back from the latest Phonograph Swap Meet at Donleys in Union, Illinois. There weren't as many sellers as before, probably because of the hassle and worry over air flight. I am sure the economy has something to do with this, also. BUT... every dealer said that this was one of, if not, the best shows he or she had attended. I'm not buying or selling much these times... but I enjoyed visiting with old and new friends, and spent most of my time doing just that, and taking pictures. I want to "talk" to you about pictures and prices and Columbia machines.

FIRST – Pictures, I don't really know what your readers want in the way of pictures. I try to show as many different machines as possible to show the variety available in one place. There is a tremendous variety of scarce machines on display for three days.

SECOND – Prices, I would think that your readers would be interested in what machines might sell for in the U.S.A. Remember I only quote asking price. Almost all sellers sell for about 10 to 15 per cent of asking price.

THIRD – Location, Personally, I feel that a little background on where this great swap meet takes place adds substance and colour to the story as a whole. I have asked all three of the Donley's (Father and two sons) to supply me with a short paragraph about the history of the swap meet and where it is held each year. They do an outstanding job of putting it on and I am sure most sellers and customers are very appreciative.

Thursday has become "outdoor flea market day". Collectors and sellers gather and set up on the parking lot in front of the main show building. There are quite a few pictures of this early activity. Prices are usually pretty high and firm as most sellers figure... "There is always Friday and Saturday to make a sale". Friday is seller set-up day and there is quite a deal of running in and out as the sellers frantically get their booths in order. By noon things have

settled down and the sellers visit and do their personal shopping. Saturday is the big day... and the big crowd. Sunday is the quiet day and most start packing up around 2.00pm.

Now let's talk about identification and price. Before, I have listed different individual machine prices which don't register in the reader's mind too well. This time I will have notes attached to all pictures showing, and naming the machines and the respective asking price. Now, you can still run small sets or individual pictures in different issues. There weren't any really high end machines, a few Berliners, and a Hexaphone (which sold quite early, and I didn't get a picture or a price. I am going to list a list of machines and prices. If more than one machine then several prices. Vogue Picture records were around for as little as \$50 and as high as \$125 for some scarcer ones, but generally in the \$70-\$85 range. There were fewer record dealers this time but the selection was better.

I tried to get a statement from the Donleys about the last show... but they never called and I couldn't reach them. They did say that they felt that this was one of the best shows they have held. Last year they were saying that the show would soon be out of date with all the use of the Internet. They had many fewer dealers this time... only the main room filled BUT all the best dealers came and there was a much higher quality of items available. Before the show was over ALL of the dealers present had already signed up for the next year. The asking prices seemed a little scary but I guess things sold pretty well. I found a couple of very nice sleeves and some records for others and I bought some nice advertising material from Charlie Hummel... AND HE BOUGHT ME ORIGINAL PARTS TO COMPLETE MY EDISON ELECTRIC FAN. He brought the four bladed blade and the cage and now I have an incredibly rare item completed.

My own remembrance of the history goes something like this. This was the 27th Annual Phonograph Swap Meet held at the dining facilities of the Donley Brothers at the 7 Acres Museum in Union, Illinois. Union is about an hour's ride northwest from Chicago, Illinois. It started in the spring of 1975 (if my maths are correct) and I was one of the first exhibitors, I think there were six of us. We were all part of a phonograph collector's club which met annually in different collector's homes during the year. I was living in western Minnesota at that time so I got to meetings very rarely. We would bring things to sell or swap... and usually the first person to the meeting would buy everything... so there was little left for late comers. We decided to have a BIG swap meet so there would be more "pickings" for all. From there it just grew. The first meet was held at Donley's restaurant and museum. I am not even sure there was a restaurant back then. Today it is a full blown commercial establishment. It has a large phonograph collection (naturally) on one end, and a silent movie theatre. The museum is mainly devoted to early western material, clothing and firearms. There is a gift, souvenir shop, train rides, staged gun fights on the western town boardwalk, a jail, and many other touristy attractions. It is well attended by tourists, and townspeople (Chicago) and well run by the Donley's.

Larry Schlick, 2002

PLAY IT AGAIN, JIM!

by Peter Richardson

Radio legend Jim Sutton is living proof that bus stops outside record stores can damage your wallet.

Back in the 1980s, while keeping an eye open for his bus, Jim would check out new arrivals in the second-hand bins. CDs were taking over from records and music fans were trading in their vinyl, so he picked up scores of cheap LPs from his favourite era, the 1940s and 1950s,.

It became rare for him to arrive home without a new vinyl treasure.

Now, listeners all over the country thank heaven for Jim Sutton and a handful of others on radio who remember when memorable melodies and meaningful lyrics were paramount. Those discs salvaged from store bins and garage sales are now giving pleasure to the generations often forgotten by today's mainstream radio.

Before TV arrived, New Zealanders grew up listening to "the wireless". While new technology has brought more sophisticated entertainment, radio remains a popular option worldwide and offers a special intimacy many believe will never be matched. Radio styles, naturally, have changed and, while still a staple diet for thousands of Kiwis, today's shows tend to be highly interactive and often talk-based.

The popularity of Jim's show, *Nostalgia* on Newstalk ZB, characterised by his genial banter and a simple format, indicates old-style radio with a strong music base is certainly not dead.

His entry to radio wasn't planned, nor had it been his lifetime ambition. If anything, he drifted in via some casual work and just happened to be at the right place when a gap arose. Radio bosses told him, "You'll never make a commercial announcer" but went on to suggest he might simply like to play some music".

"I wouldn't mind giving it a go," thought Jim, and his first show found him sitting in a studio with one LP of 1950s hits and a telephone switchboard which quickly "lit up like a Christmas tree". Delighted responses usually began, "I haven't heard that for years".

There's no doubt in Jim Sutton's mind that music transports many listeners back to another time. This is especially obvious in the request section of his Sunday night show. It's humbling to be the catalyst for so many memories which listeners choose to share," he says.

Jim has always enjoyed music and, in an impressive collection, boasts hundreds of very early recordings by New Zealand artists, mainly on the legendary TANZA label. He's always surprised at how many of these apparently "forgotten treasures" bring back memories for listeners all over New Zealand.

His personal collection includes some 1000 CDs, and racks and racks of LPs, 45s and much-loved old 78s. If that elusive tune is in there, he'll find it — or a listener somewhere may offer a copy.

Jim Sutton's influence isn't limited to New Zealand. The show goes out live on the Internet and when one Florida woman tunes in, it's long past midnight there. Despite the hour, she never misses it!

Nostalgia on Newstalk ZB is now in its 12th year and listener response suggests there's no end in sight. If life's satisfactions come from sharing, then Jim Sutton's midnight trip home from the studio at Weekends should rightly leave him feeling very satisfied.

Jim Sutton's "Nostalgia" can be heard on Newstalk ZB every Saturday and Sunday at 6.00p.m. and his two double CD's, "Nostalgia 1 & 2" (Warner), feature some of the most popular music from the show.

*Taken from "The New Zealand Woman's Weekly", 21 February 1999.
Supplied by Bryan & Marian Blanchard, Timaru.*

Reprinted from "THE PHONOGRAM", October 1900

Printed each issue for those interested in Phones, Graphs, Grams and Scopes.

Devoted to the Arts of Reproducing Sound.

(Part 9)

A NOVEL INTERVIEW

By Mr. Openeer.

I

I called on my friend Colonel Kilo-Watt the other morning, and found him in a jolly good humour. His real name is K. L. Watt, but he is such a store house of energy that all his friends call him Kilo-Watt, out of respect for his untiring horsepower capacity for work.

Here's the story he shot off in explanation of his glee. "It's a good one, Openeer," said he "and I have you to thank for making me a Phonograph enthusiast. You see my stenographer was called away suddenly just after lunch yesterday, and before I could get hold of another one in walks my office boy announcing, George Potkins.

Potkins! by all that's holy! the very man whose talk I wanted to take verbatim. 'Tell him I'm busy — come tomorrow.' No use. Boy come back; Potkins must see me today. Instantly

I thought it all out. I went to the door and sung out 'I can give you just exactly three minutes Potkins — I'll be ready for you in a moment;' and I put my hand up to my ear as if I was deaf, to catch his answer. 'All right Colonel' said he 'I'll boil it down.' 'Huh?' said I 'you'll go downtown?' 'No! no! he shouted in my ear 'I'll boil it down — make it short — I'm in a hurry my self.'

Now it happened my friend Murray had just returned my Phonograph that morning. He had borrowed it about a week ago to take home to entertain friends, and we had played over some of the records he had made with a new extra sensitive Fletcher diaphragm with which my machine was equipped. There it stood on the table; it was the work of but half a moment to wind it up to its fullest capacity, adjust a new blank and slow down the speed. Then I squared the screen and calling 'come in' started the Phonograph going.

'I'm getting old and deaf, Potkins' said I 'you must talk pretty loud, and fast too, for I've



I is for INTERVIEW;
With a *talking machine*
Recording it all
Just back of the screen.

a train to make in eight minutes.' All this with my hand up to my ear. He fell in like a fly in a molasses jug, and yelled at me like an Indian. I stopped him for ten seconds while I closed the windows, for he did make an awful noise, and his talk was supposed to be most confidential. It's funny how you lose all reserve when you're talking to a deaf man. Well, Potkins certainly did; and he turned himself inside out before the three minutes were up, and I had all I wanted to know in better style even than if my stenographer had been there; for ten to one he wouldn't have talked so freely if a third party had been present.

Well the minute he was gone I locked the door and did a war dance. Then I put a reproducer on instead of the recorder and started her up. Then I did another war dance. Say Openeer if you want to hear something slick, come around to my house tonight and listen to that Potkins record. Why it's a peach. You can hear it pretty distinctly even with a horn, and when you put on the tubes it's plainer than the plainest. That's the time I caught old Potkins.

"Kilo-Watt," said I, "of a truth thou didst;" and now whenever I meet him I ask if his hearing has improved.

To be continued

EDWARDIAN DAY, SUNDAY 10th FEBRUARY 2002

Once again the Society was represented at this popular event held in Hagley Park, Christchurch, New Zealand. The Dulcephone and an Amberola 30 from the Society's collection were joined by machines brought along by members to make up a small but attractive display suitable for continuous demonstration from 10.00am to 4.00pm. Brian Reid, Dick Hills, Bob Wright Wilf Boon and I ran the display this year, leaving Tony Airs free to enjoy the veteran car events.

As always it was a pleasure to entertain the public and talk about old gramophones. As time goes by we notice more nostalgic interest in machines such as HMV portables, which people remember in their parent' or grandparents' homes, rather than horn cylinder machines which to more and more people are curiosities in museums. It is the same with cars, where many will walk past a veteran to admire a Morris Eight like the one their family had in the 1950s.

If any reader is thinking that "Edwardian" is stretching it a bit for portables and table models, quite so (as King Edward VII used to say when bored) but the technology is more or less the same and we could hardly expect volunteers to bring nothing but Edwardian items, i.e. not later than 1914 (King Edward died in 1910 but the period is generally extended to the start of the First World War). Anyway, we need not worry too much about historical accuracy when we see what passes for "period costume" at these events. Dad's old dinner suit with a watch and chain and a precariously balanced bowler hat are acceptable for men while the ladies appear in a weird mixture of ankle-length dress, bustle, shawl, bonnet and parasol conforming to no known period. All good fun.

Gavin East

ELECTRIC ACCUMULATORS

The Edison Accumulator

This has aroused so much interest since its advent was announced in 1901 that it may reasonably be pointed out that Edison's is not by any means the first accumulator utilizing

nickel and iron electrodes and an alkaline electrolyte. Dun in 1885, Desmazes in 1887, Michalowski in 1889, Pollak and Krieger in 1896, and Yungner early in 1901, all used nickel electrodes, but none of these cells attained any great success. The present Edison cell is not the same as was announced by Dr. Kennelly in 1901. The new cell is known as type A, and, at the present time, is made in three sizes. Its outstanding features are as follows: *Positive electrodes*, grids in which are secured tubes containing nickel oxide; *negative electrodes*, grids in which are pockets containing iron oxide; *electrolyte*, a 21 per cent. solution of pure potassium hydrate (caustic potash) in distilled water. The unit of the battery is a "cell" consisting of a positive and negative with electrolyte assembled in a nickel-plated "retaining can," a number of these cans to form a battery being held firmly and mutually insulated in a "tray" consisting of a wooden frame having convenient hard rubber insulators. The retaining cans are corrugated to give strength, and the nickel plating is fused to the steel.

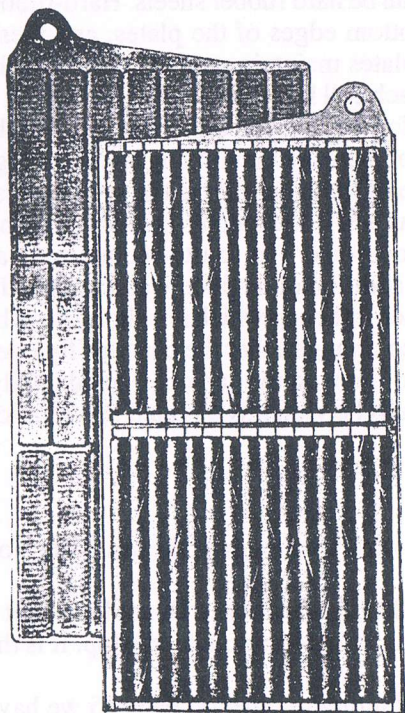


Fig. 49.—Positive (Front) and Negative Plates of Edison A-type Battery.

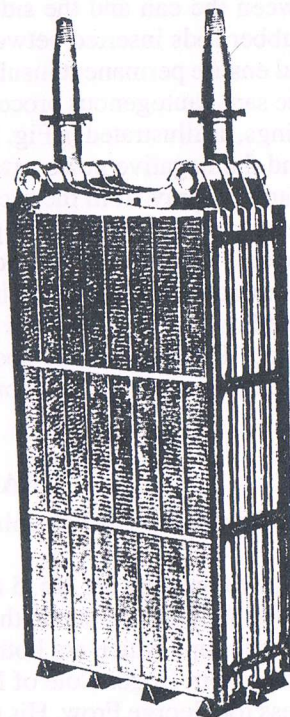


Fig. 50.—Set of Plates of the Edison A-type Battery.

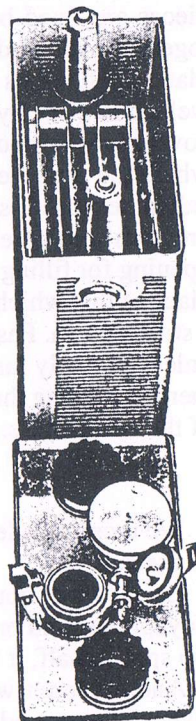


Fig. 51.—Edison A-type Battery and its Cover.

The following is a description of the A-4 cell as at present made; the numeral after the letter indicates the number of positives; The A-6 and A-8 cells are of the same construction, but, of course, larger. Each positive consists of a grid of thirty tubes, in two rows of fifteen each (see the front plate in Fig. 49) of very thin sheet steel, perforated, nickel plated, and reinforced and protected by small ferrules, eight to each tube. The active material (nickel oxide) in the

tubes is interspaced with thin layers of pure metallic nickel in the form of leaves or flakes. Each negative plate comprises twenty-four flat rectangular pockets supported in three horizontal rows in a nickel-plated steel grid (see the back plate in Fig. 49). The pockets are made of thin nickel-plated steel, perforated with fine holes, each pocket being filled with an oxide of iron very similar to iron rust. Each pocket is subjected to heavy pressure, so that it becomes practically integral with the supporting grid.

In a cell the positive and negative plates are assembled alternately, all the positives being connected to the positive pole, and all the negatives to the negative pole. The plates of each group are hung on a connecting rod at a right angle to, but integral with, the pole (see Fig. 50). They are correctly distanced on this rod by nickel-plated steel spacing-washers, and held firmly in contact by nuts screwed on both ends, as illustrated. In an assembled cell nickel plates are alternated with iron plates, the two outside plates being iron (negative) plates, whose outer surfaces are insulated from the retaining can by hard rubber sheets. Hard-rubber pieces are fixed between the can and the side and bottom edges of the plates; and these, together with hard-rubber rods inserted between the plates maintain correct spacing of the plates at all points and ensure permanent insulation. Each cell has a cover (Fig. 51) which is welded in place by the same autogenous process used for the side and bottom seams. On the cover are four mountings, as illustrated in Fig. 51; two of these are the stuffing boxes through which the positive and the negative poles extend. One of the other two is the separator, so called because it separates spray from the escaping gas while the battery is charging. This prevents loss of electrolyte and renders the gases inodorous. The fourth mounting is an opening for filling the cell with electrolyte and for the addition of distilled water to take the place of that which evaporates. This opening has a water-tight cap which is held in place by a strong catch. Fastened to this cap is a small spring, so arranged that the cap will fly open unless properly fastened. This reduces the possibility of leaving the cap open accidentally, thereby causing the electrolyte to spill out should the cells be violently agitated by vibration of the automobile.

ERRATUM

We received a letter from Larry Schlick pointing out errors we made in the last issue Vol. 37 Issue 2.

He says we should have on page 36, No. 5 and 6 called the machine a Hexophone, not a Heyaphone, and on page 36 No. 6 we stated the machine is a Modernola on the top. It is the top split in half, it has two tops which are both open.

Another letter we had from Roger Cole of Nelson pointing out that on page 35 we have given the wrong address for George Frow. His present address is: 48 Woodfields, Chipstead, Seven Oaks, Kent, TN13 2RB, England.

PETER DAWSON BIOGRAPHY

Unfortunately the distribution addresses in the Peter Dawson Biography advertisement in the previous issue were omitted in error. We apologise for this, here they are now: Australia/New Zealand/Japan and S.E. Asia; Unireps, University of New South Wales, Sydney NSW 2052, Australia. Tel: (02) 9664 0999, Fax: (02) 9664 5420, Email:

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OBITUARIES

Donald Cameron

We were very sorry to hear that long time member Donald (Don) Cameron died earlier this year. Don became interested in collecting machines and records as a schoolboy in Wellington in the 1960s. He attended many of the conventions which were held in Wellington and Christchurch in those days. His father Len, who died last year, accompanied him to these and continued to receive our magazine on Don's behalf after Don had moved to Victoria, Australia. We understand that Don had had health problems but news of his passing came as a shock as he had recently written to Walter and it was good to hear from him again.

Merv Neilson

Although not a collector or a member, Merv Neilson, who died recently in Christchurch at the age of 76 after a long battle with emphysema, had a significant connection with old phonographs and gramophones over forty or more years. For Merv was an antique dealer with a particular eye for machines and many were the finds that he unearthed. Most of his business was within the trade and it is certain that choice items sold by antique shops as far afield as Auckland and Melbourne had passed through his hands. Merv was held in respect as a fair trader and he will be missed by his many friends.

Gavin East

OVERSEAS PARTS ORDERS

A disagreement over transport costs and duty has highlighted the problems with sending Cygnet and Monarch Senior horns overseas. We will do our best to send these parts at the most reasonable cost possible, with all arrangements confirmed before dispatch. We will use the postal service where possible but must remind members outside New Zealand that there is no surface post from this country (though the term is still in popular use to describe economy airmail). Customs duty is something that members must allow for and we cannot be too imaginative when filling out the green label.

BOOK REVIEW

For the Record : A history of the Recording Industry in New Zealand, by Bryan Staff and Sheran Ashley. Auckland : David Bateman, 2002, 175p.

This is an attractively produced and interesting account of a subject about which little has been written. It may come as a surprise that the first home-grown record label, TANZA (To Assist New Zealand Artists), did not appear until the end of the 1940s, but of course many

earlier recordings were made by New Zealanders in Australia, notably the famous Maori singers Ana Hato and Deane Waretini. The authors survey the industry (i.e. what was sold here) from the 1900s onward with special attention to the 78 and LP labels which followed TANZA. These are well illustrated. As the 1950s and 1960s recede further into history it is good that the New Zealand record industry is being researched while many of the participants are still around.

The Society has obtained some copies direct from the publisher and can offer them to members for NZ\$35.00 plus postage.

THE STORY OF AN UNUSUAL PLAYER PIANO

In the 1950s it was normal for the New Zealand home to have a piano and for children to be made to try to learn to play it. About 1950 Dad went out to buy a second hand piano for the benefit (?) of my brothers. As Mum said (often), "I sent your Father out to buy a piano and he came home with not just a grand piano but a player piano as well!" Now Dad could not play but he liked piano music, especially Chopin. A friend told him about this player grand and Dad could not resist it. It was duly installed in our modest living room (of which it took up about a quarter). My brothers John and Rodney must have been allowed to give up their lessons after a year or two but Dad enjoyed playing rolls and I remember as a very young child sitting on his knee as he pedalled through one of the old Mastertouch musical comedy selections. As I progressed from crawling under the piano to learning to play it, I began to wonder what breed of machine it was and how we came to have this monster with the big spoked wheel underneath as well as pedals.

The name above the keyboard is "Themola", a variety of "ola" which I have not heard of otherwise. The player action has a plate reading "Higel & Co., London". The piano frame has a cast monogram which baffled me until a piano repairer told me it stood for Marshall & Rose. By the time I figured out what exactly the piano was (a 6ft. Marshall & Rose with Higell pedal/electric Recordo player action) the player had ceased to function and the piano was used as a very good quality manual instrument with a lot of odd hardware attached. Fortunately the player mechanism was not removed.

In 1977 the piano was given a complete restoration by a team of local specialists and it was a joy to hear it running on its original electric motor, which Dad had not used as he preferred the foot action. Unfortunately we now had a splendid grand piano with nowhere to put it. We had moved to a hillside house which Dad was intent on rebuilding so the piano was parked in his business premises. Frank Holland of the National Musical Museum in England was in Christchurch visiting his brother and contacted me as I had written to him asking if he knew the name "Themola". He came to see the piano and expressed approval although we agreed that it would have been even better as a full reproducing piano, e.g. Ampico or Duo-Art. The Recordo is a limited expression system by which the bass and treble are regulated by pneumatics activated by slots in the tracker bar. A Recordo piano will play a standard roll but any expression has to be supplied by the operator using the levers in front of the keyboard.

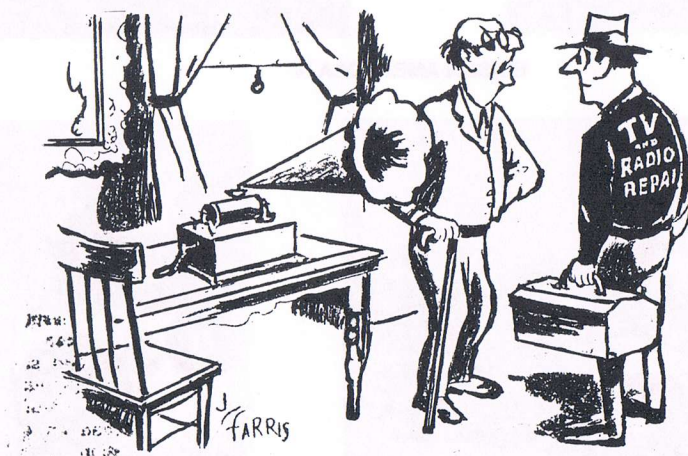
Dad never did see the Themola set up in a suitable room. When he died in 1987 it was languishing in the garage, wrapped and legless. I took it through another two house moves until by the mid-1990s I was in a very small Victorian cottage. I liked the house and the piano but they just did not suit each other. Paul House, a local piano dealer, bought the Themola and

kept it in his shop for about five years. He made no attempt to sell it and enjoyed playing it manually — to him it was a good grand piano which happened to have a player action in it. Paul restrung the instrument as by now the original strings were getting tired.

Just before Christmas 1999 I was amazed to see the Themola in the window of a Christchurch auction rooms. A lady from out of town had seen it in Paul's shop, decided it was just what she wanted for her new house, insisted on buying it, had it transported nearly a hundred miles and set up, decided it was not suitable after all and consigned it to auction. It did not reach reserve so, thinking I was fated to own it again, I made an offer and back it came to Lincoln. Sam's Removals know the Themola very well by now!

What happens next is uncertain. It sits in the middle of my "collection" room surrounded by musical boxes and the odd phonograph, all needing work. It is not used much as I prefer a huge German upright grand for manual playing. Next time I move, the poor old thing may well end up in the auction room again.

Gavin East



"What kind of service do you call that — no parts available!"

SOUNDS OF DIGITAL AUDIO WARS STRANGELY MUTED

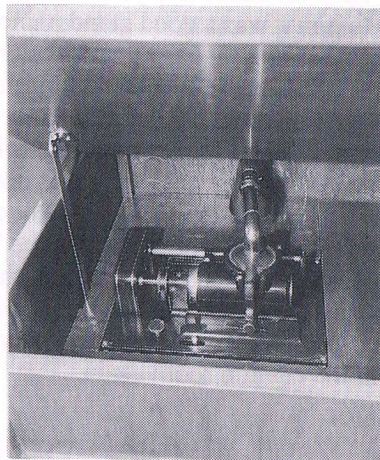
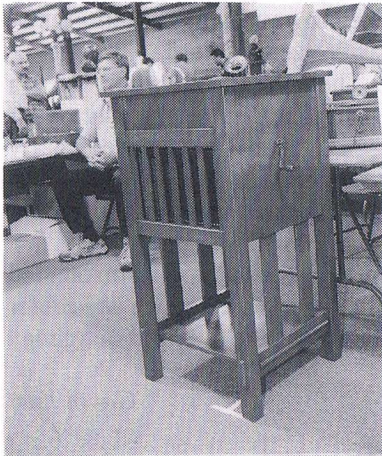
Rumblings in the distance for more than a year, the "digital audio war" that was set to break out this Christmas over the next generation of hi-fi gear promised to be deafening.

With no hot new gadget since video camcorders three years ago, the rival camps of the consumer-electronics industry — Sony on one side, Philips and Matsushita on the other — needed a fresh money-spinner.

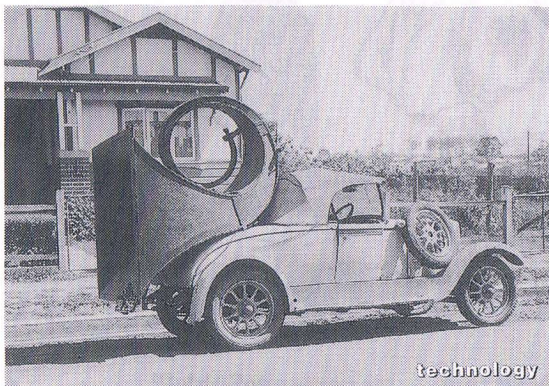
For each, the answer was a product that could both reproduce and record the crystal clarity of compact discs (CDs).

Now the competing digital-audio doo-dads — Sony's MiniDisc and Philip's digital compact cassette (DCC) — are arriving in shops at last.

But so far the battle is sounding oddly muted. For a start, Sony and Philips have swapped technical secrets and the rights to make each others' digital recorders.



EDISON AMBEROLA IV



technology

LOUD HAILER

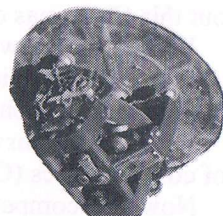


BINGOLA

PHOTO BY J SHANKS



PLAY IT AGAIN JIM



ELECTRIC GRAM MOTOR

Each would still prefer its own system to prevail, but this is no fight to the death. Moreover, it is fast becoming clear that neither product will rescue the battered electronics industry, at least not quickly. Certainly not this Christmas.

With consumer spending sluggish in the world's big markets, the price of DCC and MiniDisc machines alone will be enough to stop most shoppers from buying them. In Britain, DCC recorders — some manufactured by Philips, others by Matsushita — will sell for £549 (\$US850).

The cheapest MiniDisc recorders on sale in Japan — the only place they have yet turned up on shelves — cost ¥80,000 (\$US650). Analysts guess that prices need to drop to \$250 for either product to take off. Then there is the baffling array of new non-audio gizmos vying for each shopping dollar.

Consumers have been bombarded with publicity about the new versions of CD-ROM and CD-I machines that are about to hit the market. These systems use CD-based technology to store pictures and text as well as music.

The applications for such technologies are proliferating widely; they are already revolutionizing the video-game business.

Faced with all this, many bewildered consumers may well decide to sit on their hands. The most likely loser will be Sony.

The MiniDisc recorded is in effect two machines on one: a shrunken CD player for pre-recorded MiniDiscs, and a laser-based device that records sounds on blank discs similar to the magneto-optical storage devices in computers.

As a result, Sony has always seemed a bit confused about how to market the system. Originally it tried to push MiniDisc as a portable CD player that would not skip beats when jostled. Three of its new MiniDisc models are Walkman-like products and a fourth is a car stereo.

But Sony has also led the way to shrinking the size of compact-disc players. Though a CD is over twice the size of a MiniDisc, portable CD players (called Discmans) are nowadays actually smaller than a MiniDisc machine. Better still, they are only a third the price.

Now there are rumours that Sony will try to argue that MiniDisc means the end of cassettes — if true, a bizarre strategy for a firm that still earns stacks of cash from Walkmans.

The rumours may be wrong. It is hard to say, for Sony has fallen strangely silent about MiniDisc. No ads for it have appeared in the mass media; the company says none are planned.

In fact, most of Sony's pre-Christmas advertising has focused on Discmans — precisely the product that the portable MiniDisc will compete with head on.

Few electronics stores outside Japan have any idea of when the new machine will arrive. Nor have music shops been alerted about incoming pre-recorded MiniDiscs. Has Sony given up the Christmas battle before it even started?

Philips has not. This week it begins a worldwide advertising campaign to help launch DCC.

Unlike MiniDisc, the DCC's positioning has always been clear: a sweet-sounding replacement for traditional cassette recorders, but one engineered to play old analogue tapes as well as new digital ones, so consumers will not have to throw out big chunks of their music collections.

Although some big record companies are wary of MiniDisc, all of them (save the one

DONLEYS SWAP MEET

PHOTO'S BY L SCHLICK



out in parking lot on Thursday

OUT IN PARKING LOT



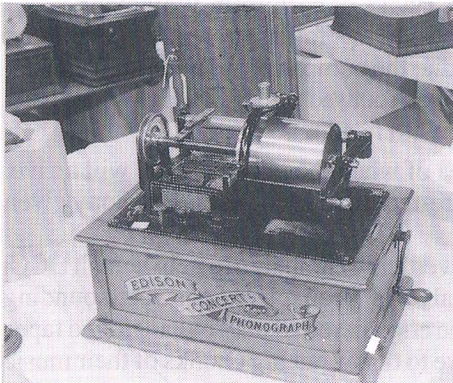
SETTING UP ON FRIDAY



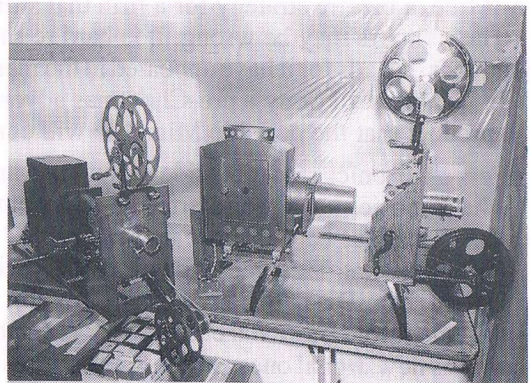
HOW MUCH IS THE GEM



MAIN ROOM



EDISON CONCERT



EDISON PROJECTOR AND LUBIN PROJECTOR

owned by Sony) have endorsed DCC; 400 titles, costing about as much as a CD, will be out by the end of the month.

Philips had hoped to have DCC in stores months ago to give the company a jump on Sony. But a series of technical foul-ups delayed the launch.

Now Philips says the critical clash with Sony will not be this Christmas but next, when there will be cheaper DCC machines available. They argue, plausibly, that DCC is far ahead of what they call their rival's "hypothetical product".

Even so, the fact that a mass market for neither of the systems will emerge briskly is bad news.

Masami Fujino, of SBCI Securities in Tokyo, says neither DCC nor MiniDisc will boost earnings until 1994.

In past downturns the electronics industry has been saved by products such as VCRs and CD players.

This time the nearest thing to a "must have" product on the horizon is the high-definition television set. With the sets selling in Japan for ¥1m-2m, that is a distant horizon indeed.

Taken from "The Economist", 1992

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From cylinder to CD, the Society is for those interested in all aspects of historical sound recording and reproduction at its monthly meetings in Sydney. *The Sound Record*, packed with absorbing articles, reviews and advertisements, appears three times a year and goes overseas by airmail. The Society offers attractively priced books, CDs and cassettes, plus accessories and other memorabilia. Regular auctions at meetings offer rare opportunities to collectors and bargain hunters alike.

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California Antique Phonograph Society:

Dedicated to the preservation of antique phonographs, records and music memorabilia. We meet monthly to display and share our collections.

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For information: Karyn Sitter, 18242 Timberlane, Yorba Linda, CA 92886, USA. (714) 7772486.

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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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