

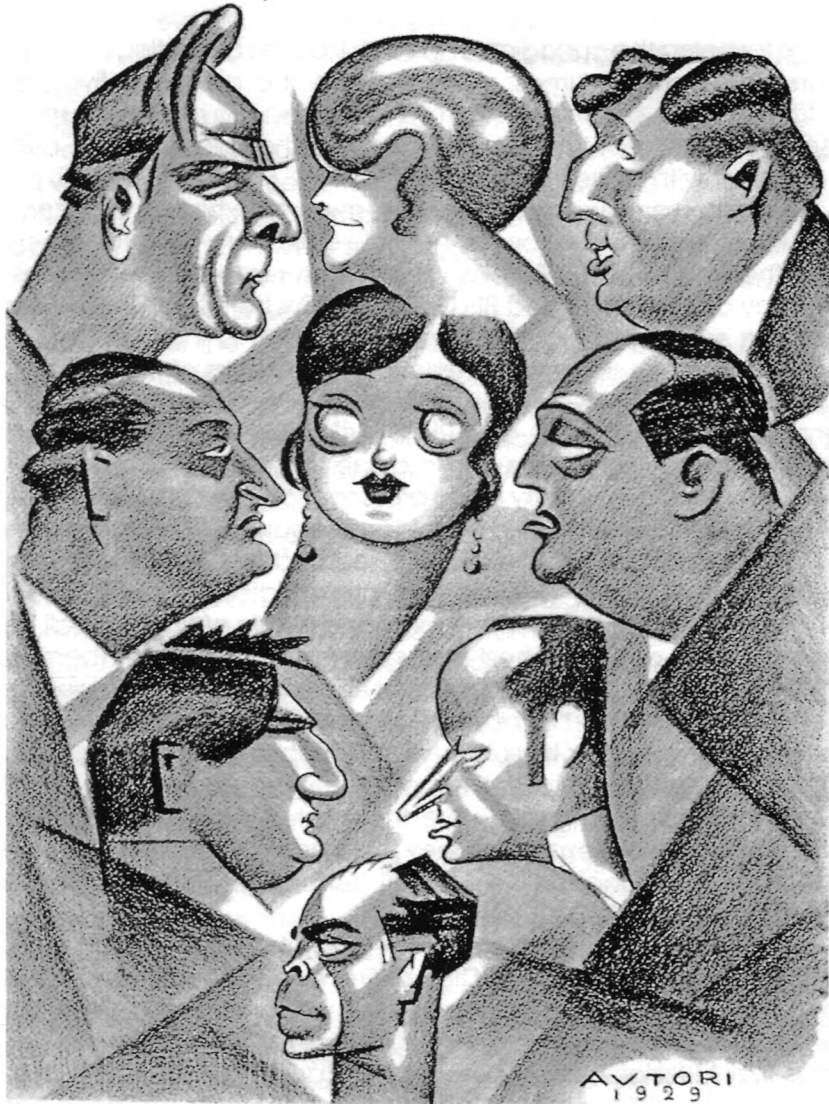
2369-c-2-1 80111 2001  
outside

---

# THE G & T GAZETTE

---

VOL.7  
No.1



Most record collectors know that Enrico Caruso was a very clever caricaturist. The Italian bass, Fernando Autori was also gifted in this direction. How many personalities of the recording world in 1929 can you identify and put names to from the following list. Rosa Ponselle. Theodore Chaliapine, Giovanni Inghilleri, John Barbirolli, Margaret Sheridan, Aureliano Pertile, Mario Stabile, Leon Goosens and the artist Autori?

# GLEANINGS FROM HERE & THERE

## A 'BORN AGAIN' COLLECTOR'S MUSINGS

I take my title from an expression used by Dennis Brew who described himself to me as a 'born again' 78rpm collector. I borrow it to express my feelings for being the custodian of the Ray Hedges collection as it awaited buyers in my garage. Almost every day over the last four or five months, I've taken a few discs down to my house and played them, returning those that didn't meet my particular criteria the following day, debiting my account with those I kept.

A particular source of interest for me was exploring a dozen or so LPs which featured selections by notable collectors. These came out towards the end of the 1950s. As far as I can remember, this series was started by a concern called BELCANTODISC who began with 45rpm re-issues and eventually gravitated into producing 12 inch LPs. Those who participated in this scheme were eminent collectors of the pre and post war period including P.G.Hurst, John Freestone, and Keith Hardwick. Other companies like ROCOCO and RUBINI joined in with their own elite of international collecting. You can imagine the interest I took in these because they provide a pretty good cross section of what was running hot in the record collecting world as shellacs began to fade from the scene.

Most selections on these discs seemed to prefer early items recorded from 1900 to 1910. While I can appreciate why they chose these for a number of reasons like their rarity and a style of singing, it all began to pale on me as I ploughed through their programmes. There was a sameness to their choice and certainly bore little resemblance to what I'd encountered as I set out collecting records in the early 1950s. Playing them as I did, one after the other, wasn't probably a fair thing to do, but it at least allowed me to get a picture of what these veterans of the collecting fraternity thought were the most desirable things on God's earth! Almost without exception they followed in the footsteps of P.G.Hurst, with legendary singers like Maurel, Giraltoni, Pinto, Kruszelnicka, Abendroth etc.

It therefore came as a refreshing surprise when I chanced upon RUBINI'S answer to BELCANTODISC to find a selection by Syd Gray. Here was a man I could warm to! His selection was on the whole very light on the greats. Instead there were singers of more recent fame or more earthly status like Muzzio, Islandi, Onegin, Piccaver, Austral, Kozlovsky and Flagstad. It was all the more pleasurable when I recalled I once had the pleasure of exchanging letters with him years ago, plus the odd shipment of 78rpm recordings.

However, apart from the bias towards certain artists, another thing they

all held in common was the fact that re-issuing has undergone some tremendous improvements since the advent of vinyl. Sadly, not all came up to the mark as far as sound quality is concerned. In their haste to get re-issues to the public before their competitors cottoned on, not every company came anywhere near the standards we now expect of transferring old records. Then again, it would be wrong of me to imply that we now know much better. Not all CD re-issues are blame free, as I will explain later.

I remember how I was put off acquiring LP re-issues *en bloc* by the SCALA company, whose catalogue of famous singers from the past were riddled with incorrect speeds, minimal labelling and no clues as to what originals they used for their compilations. Other companies that followed improved on this as time went by, engaging knowledgeable individuals like Leo Reimens to write programme notes which were crudely printed on sheets of typing paper (Rococo).

Later on, as the big companies began to explore their own resources, the standards in this area of record production improved greatly. EMI's *Voices from the Past* Series in particular were a collector's delight. These in turn led to boxed sets with handsomely printed booklets that were richly illustrated. An adjunct to this middle period of re-issues was the emergence of the recording engineer, who like a knight in shining armour lifted re-issue standards tremendously by virtually turning a pig's ear into a silk purse.

Come the advent of CDs in the 1980s, digital enhancement and the wonders of remote controls. Has the flame which burns bright in the heart of the old time 78rpm collector finally been extinguished? I doubt it. I base this assumption on the fact that within my circle of friends, no one is parting with cherished 78s! Why not?

In my case I simply like handling 78s when it comes to preparing a programme. The physical part of the job makes it simple to stack records in order, or shuffle them around without having to squint at small type. Then there is the playing, squinting to make sure you press the right button on the night. That may be one reason why collectors are hanging onto their shellacs, but there is another more aesthetically pleasurable one which I think remains supreme. Call it ambience or acoustic overtones or simply the presence of a wind up machine in a room with all its smells of oil and wood. All this has lost on a new generation of collectors who don't want all this nostalgic baggage - crackle, click and whoosh! More the pity for them but for a 'born againer'! Mmmmmmmmm!

*Bill Main*

## OSCAR NATZKE by W. S. Meadmore

A VOICE on the telephone suggested that I might be interested to hear a remarkable singer. Who was it? A name was pronounced which I did not catch. Dubiously I said I had heard so many remarkable singers. So have I, the voice continued, but this really is an exceptional one. Already prepared for disappointment, late that afternoon I went to the Kingsway Hall to find that the Parlophone Company were in the full swing of a recording session. Straggling across the stage and part of the auditorium a small orchestra straddled on wooden chairs, an organist sat in the organ loft looking down on us over his shoulder and a choir of men were grouped on one side of the stage. Standing slightly apart from them was a tall, dark headed, muscular young man. Mr. Braithwaite of Sadler's Wells climbed into the conductor's rostrum and tapped with his baton. A bell rang. It rang again and, without further ado, organ and orchestra broke into the preamble to "In a Monastery Garden." My heart sank. Was it for this that I had abandoned my comfortable fireside and braved the rigours of a return journey home in the black-out? I resigned myself to listen to the hackneyed if melodious music. But the next second I was sitting up in my chair in excitement. The dark-headed young man had opened his mouth and his singing was indeed something exceptional and remarkable; a powerful, resonant voice with notes as deep booming and as sonorous as the organ accompanying it, a voice that could make almost any music come to life and be interesting. It made me think of the wonderful Russian bass singing I had heard in happier days, of Chaliapin, and this feeling became more vivid and realistic when, the last bell having been sounded in the monastery garden, the singer began the mournful cadence of "The Song of the Volga Boatman."

The song finished, a buzz of conversation in the orchestra. and Walter Legge said to me "Do you know Oscar Natzke? Oscar Natzke? That was the name which had eluded my ear on the telephone. I did not know Oscar Natzke, but over a cup of tea in the artistes' room, I began to do so. His obvious enthusiasm for singing and his sincerity attracted me. Later I was to hear his story. It is as strange and romantic as any I have heard.

I was shown his press cutting book, begun when his foot had hardly touched the first step of the ladder and when he was a boy in New Zealand. Almost the first cutting is an article by Chaliapin, headed "I Have Known Poverty and Hardship, that is Why I Say Thank God for Success!" One can imagine Natzke reading that and saying "What one man has done, so can another. And so will I!" I may be wrong, but Natzke certainly gave me a tremendous impression of a flaming determination to make good and succeed as much as it is possible for a singer to succeed.

Franz Oscar Natzke was born in Matipara, New Zealand, in 1912. Long

before then, in the early 'eighties, his father, a Russian born in Germany, had come to seek his fortune in New Zealand and acquired a farm of some 3,000 acres. Music had always been in the family and on both sides. Natzke's great grandmother had been a famous Russian soprano, his father had a passion for playing wind instruments, while his mother (a descendant of English colonists) was a concert singer. When a girl her voice had been exceptional and urged by friends she had wanted to come to England to study. Her father would not hear of such nonsense. He said a girl's place was in the home to grow up into a woman, her job to cook and clean and then, in good time, to have and rear children. The old man was a character, an inventor of ingenious agricultural machinery which was to make his fortune, but although these inventions behaved splendidly at trials, the devil got into them when they were tried before interested speculators and they then always failed dismally. In his youth he had built a windmill of brick and wood, for the rest of his life he tilted against imaginary ones.

As a boy Natzke worked on the farm with his two brothers and had little time for schooling. That was to come later. In those days he didn't sing much either. But he remembers the farmhouse and a room full of company, himself standing at a piano, his mother gripping one of his hands like a vice so that he couldn't run away (as he would have liked to do), and playing an accompaniment with her free hand while Natzke sang: "Do I want to see my mother any more?" adding *sotto voce*, but with intense feeling, "No, I don't," so much did he hate the proceedings.

The world depression settled on New Zealand like a blight some twelve years ago. Farming was ruined, the Natzke family did not escape. The farm had to be given up and other means of making a livelihood sought. Soon after, Natzke's father died and it became imperative that the boy of fifteen should somehow contribute something towards his keep. At Freeman's Bay, New Auckland, where great petrol containers spread over the landscape and the masts of scores of careened ships slant skyward, there was (and still is) a blacksmith's shop, where the forge burnt brightly all day and there was no lack of horses to be shod. Natzke was apprenticed to the old blacksmith and in the soot coated forge swung a fourteen-pound hammer for three and a half years for a wage of ten shillings a week. For the first few weeks Natzke despaired of ever being able to stick the exacting and laborious work; after each day's work he could hardly move a muscle and was physically exhausted. But soon his muscles began to harden and he found that he could use the hammer with ease.

When he had served his apprenticeship, he went as a fully fledged smith to the Challoys Phosphate Company. Meanwhile his voice had broken and developed into a *basso profundo* of astonishing sonority and power: encouraged and coached by his mother, Natzke began to sing and was soon fulfilling engagements at local concerts. But this did not satisfy Mrs. Natzke. She knew her son had an exceptional voice and she determined that it should have a chance.

She became haunted with the desire that her son should study with some celebrated teacher in Europe. The family's financial embarrassments made such an ambition appear fantastic, it seemed impossible, but not so to Mrs. Natzke. She would find a way!

Galli-Curci at this time was in New Zealand on a concert tour. Mrs. Natzke wrote and asked if she would be kind enough to hear her boy sing. Galli-Curci replied that she unfortunately was indisposed but her husband. Homer Samuels, who was also her accompanist, would be pleased to do so. The audition took place in the Lewis Eady Hall. Homer Samuels sat at a piano on the floor level. Not far from him, Mrs. Natzke, worried and anxious that her boy would give of his best, occupied a front seat in the auditorium. Oscar, in his rather shabby best clothes, stood on the platform above them. Samuels looked a little bored until Natzke began to sing. Afterwards he said that Natzke's voice, with its unusual quality and range, was one ideally suitable for grand opera.

That opinion was worth having but it didn't move Natzke a step nearer Europe. His mother tried again. She wrote to John Brownlee, the Australian baritone. He was more helpful. Impressed like Samuels by Natzke's voice, he gave him many free lessons, and said if only Natzke could spare the time and get the right tuition his future was assured. These two factors remained the apparently unsurmountable obstacles.

The rest of this part of the story is best told in the words of Anderson Tyrer, the English pianist, composer and conductor: "When I was visiting Auckland in 1934," Mr. Tyrer said to an interviewer, "I was asked to hear a young fellow sing. At first I did not wish to, as I was having a busy time. At length I made an appointment to hear him at 5.30 one evening. But he did not turn up. The next day, excuses were made, another appointment was arranged, and the young chap turned up. He brought his songs with him. I turned them over and selected 'O Star of Eve.' At the first note I sat up startled. It was years since I had heard a voice of such singular strength and beauty. And the range - he was basso and baritone in one. I was so pleased with the young man that I cabled Trinity College asking them whether they would be good enough to grant a scholarship to the finest voice I had ever heard. The reply came at once. The scholarship, giving Natzke free tuition in everything necessary, including languages, would be granted."

A great step had been accomplished, there remained the obstacle of the fare to England and of funds to support Natzke while he was studying. This was happily and quickly settled by the generosity of musical enthusiasts in Auckland who subscribed to a fund which eventually amounted to over a thousand pounds. Natzke landed in this country early in March, 1935. It was so cold that he was wearing three overcoats. "Had there been a boat going back to New Zealand, I should have been strongly tempted to have got on it," he said to me. Mr. J. B. Wright had been entrusted by the trustees of the fund to look after Natzke's affairs, and when Natzke reached London, his first call was on him. Natzke was shown into his office. "My name is Natzke," he announced himself.

Mr. Wright looked at him in amazement. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "I thought you were a Maori!" Indeed from the correspondence he had received from New Zealand, he had been so convinced of this that he had even advised the landlady of the rooms he had taken for Natzke in Hampstead that her lodger was black. When Natzke arrived, travelling bags in hand, the family at the last moment had lost their courage and fled from the house. But a timid servant girl assured Natzke that it was all right, he was expected, and no doubt somebody would soon be in. The landlord was the first to return. "Thank God!" she said, when he caught sight of Natzke. "that you're a white man and speak English. Now I can persuade my wife to come back home!"

At Trinity College, Natzke was fortunate enough to study with Albert Garcia, grandson of that famous Manuel Garcia, who, in 1840, published an essay on the voice that marked an epoch in its modern science, in 1855 invented the laryngoscope as an instrument of investigation, and lived to be 101. Garcia was soon enthusiastic about his pupil and Natzke became almost one of the Garcia family at Golders Green, Garcia freely giving him of his time outside the official hours of the College.

In 1937, Natzke won the Hammond Prize at Trinity College, scoring 96 marks out of a possible 100 - a magnificent achievement. This included 49 Out of 50 for interpretation and general effect. Natzke's examination number was 350; one can estimate from this that the total number of entrants, must have been unusually large.

Friends who had subscribed to the fund in New Zealand were now anxious to hear for themselves how their protegés voice was progressing; it was therefore arranged for Natzke to record some songs and for the records to be sent to New Zealand. At the recording studio, Natzke met Oscar Preuss, Parlophone's recording manager. Preuss thought so highly of the records which Natzke made that he there and then offered Natzke a contract to sign. The records which Natzke has since made for the Parlophone Company have been so highly praised in these columns that there is no point in my stressing their merits.

One more romantic page of Natzke's life remains to be recorded. One afternoon Vladimir Rosing was walking along Wigmore Street, when he abruptly stopped, amazed and delighted at the quality and volume of a bass voice singing part of the Verdi Requiem. Rosing dashed into the studios from whence the sounds proceeded and discovered that the singer was Natzke. Rosing introduced himself and asked Natzke to attend an audition at Covent Garden on the following morning. Natzke did. When he had been heard, Rosing and Percy Herning offered him the leading part of *De Fulke*, in a new opera "The Serf" by George Lloyd which was to be produced at Covent Garden that autumn. Natzke also signed in his contract to appear in *Faust*, *Rigoletto* and *Die Meistersinger*.

On October 10th, 1938, Natzke made his first appearance in grand opera, singing Wagner in *Faust*. Ten days later he appeared as lead in a new and

unknown opera, a trying ordeal indeed for a youngster of 26. He should have been a mass of nerves: no doubt, underneath, he was, but it was not apparent. He sang like a veteran and when, in the first interval, the gallery rose to its feet and clapped and cheered him to the echo, it was obvious that he had made a great success. Surely even Mrs. Natzke in her wildest flights of imagination had never visualised him bowing to the storm of the gallery's pleasure in front of the curtain at famous and historical Covent Garden Opera House ?

The critic of the *Eveninig Standard* wrote "The finest singing of the evening came from Mr. Oscar Natzke as De Fulke, the old feudal lord of the manor. Here at last is a genuine bass voice, rich in colouring, noble in enunciation." All the press was lavish with praise and the *Yorkshire Post* commented on the dignity of his acting.

Half-way through the writing of this article I had to pause to answer a telephone call. "I just rang up to say good-bye," a voice said. I knew at once that that deep booming voice could only be Natzke's. "Why good-bye!" I asked. "I'm off tomomrow." "Off tomorrow." I repeated. "Off where?" "New Zealand. Going for a year\*s concert touring." "Lucky devil," I replied. "The best of luck!"

Which wish, I am sure, will be shared by all readers of THE GRAMOPHONE. All the same Natzke doesn't need much luck more than that wonderful voice of his.



"Hey bop a rebop  
Hey bop a rebop  
Hey bop a rebop . . ."

# GARAGE SALE!

HAVING SOLD UPWARDS OF A QUARTER OF THE RAY HEDGES RECORD COLLECTION, I AM NOW FORCED TO SEE THE REMAINING 7,500 ITEMS INTO APPRECIATIVE HANDS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE .

ON SATURDAY AND SUNDAY 27TH & 28TH OF JANUARY 2001, THE RESIDUE WILL BE PUT ON OFFER TO SCRATCHY RECORDS MEMBERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC, BEFORE THE COLLECTION IS OFFERED FOR A PITTANCE TO GROOVY RECORDS.

78rpm RECORDINGS WILL BE SOLD BY THE ALBUM (SELF SELECTED) EITHER 10 OR 12 INCH FOR \$5 AN ALBUM. FORMERLY THESE COMMANDED A DOLLAR EACH. LPs WILL BE PRICED AT A \$1 EACH. THESE WERE ORIGINALLY SOLD AT \$5 FOR SINGLES OR \$3 EACH IN SETS. UNDER THE NEW PRICING SYSTEM, COMPLETE OPERAS LIKE *RIGOLETTO* OR *CARMEN* WILL BE SOLD FOR \$2 TO \$3 DOLLARS EACH. UNDER THIS PRICING SYSTEM THE COMPLETE WAGNERIAN RING CYCLE WILL ONLY COST YOU \$20-\$30. WHAT A BARGAIN!

PLEASE HELP ME IN THIS MATTER.

# Purchase Tax Stamps on Records

by Adam Miller

Purchase Tax was introduced on 21st October 1940 as part of the taxing of Luxuries during wartime. The tax was imposed upon the record manufacturers not the distributors or retailers. It was expressed as a percentage of the Factory Prices and was imposed at the time the records left the factory. To show what tax had been paid- the EMI, Decca, Philips, Pye-Nixa and Polydor factories in England marked their products with incised or raised code letters. For EMI these are normally found either side of the spindle-hole in relief as shown below.



This was achieved by changing the hollow 'pins' which clamped the stamper in the press at their centres. These resulted in a circular outline 18mm across around the hole, so adding stamped letters to the pin resulted in raised letters near to the centre hole. Decca usually printed the code on the record label.

Occasionally there was a change in the Purchase Tax rate between the time of the record being pressed and its leaving the factory. In these cases, records can be found with two tax codes, the original letter being over-punched by a new one in some cases, like this:



In other cases, an adhesive stamp may have been added to the label, with the appropriate letters (see illustration on rear cover). This helps date the record as being produced under the previous tax regime, but released soon after the change to the next one represented by the stamp. Even without the stamps, the costs provide a useful dating guide to when the records were pressed.

The following table shows the known codes:

<u>Id</u>	<u>Imposed</u>	<u>Ceased</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Code(s)</u>	<u>Description</u>
A	21 October 1940	14 April 1942	33 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub> %	T TAX	Tax
B	15 April 1942	13 April 1943	66 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub> %	DT	Double Tax
C	14 April 1943	9 April 1946	100%	TT	Triple Tax
D	10 April 1946	12 Nov. 1947	33 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub> %	ST	Single Tax
E	13 Nov. 1947	8 April 1948	50%	LT	Autumn Tax
F	9 April 1948	15 April 1953	66 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub> %	DT	Double Tax
G	16 April 1953	27 October 1955	50%	NT NP N	Unknown
H	28 October 1955	1959	60%	RT	Revised Tax?

Records made for the Government or for Export were Exempt from Tax (CodeETorXT). Up to 100 pressings from the same Matrix made for sale in Britain were exempt from 10th August 1948, as were "pressings made for a single

client or organisation in which the copyright will be retained by them". For reasons unknown, the Decca group did not use DT during the second Period of the 66<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>% rate- but used instead CT from April 1948 to the end of 1949, and the IP or +IP until April 1953. It is curious to note that while the printed code was IP the stamp when seen is -PI. They also used AP during 1955, again for reasons unknown.

Based upon the above table and the recording companies upon whose records the stamps are found, the following checklist of stamps can be constructed. There may well be others.

<u>Text</u>	<u>Colour</u>	<u>Perf</u>	<u>Issuer</u>	<u>In Regime</u>
T	Black/blue	15x14	EMI	A
T	Blue	-	-	A
D-T	Black	Roul. 6	EMI	B
TT	Blue	15x 14	EMI	C
T-T	Black	Roul. 6	EMI?	C
ST	Green	14x15	EMI	D
L/T	Orange	14X15	EMI	E
D/T 48	Lilac	14x 15	EMI	F
PI	Black	11	DECCA	Late 1949-April 1953
+P1	Red	11	DECCA	Late 1949-April 1953
NT	Orange	14x 15	EMI	G
RT	Green	14x15	EMI	H
AT	Red	14x15	EMI	-
ET	Violet	14x15	EMI	-
ZT	Grey	14x15	EMI	-
Free Pur.Tx	Black	14x15	EMI	-
Subj.Pur.Tx	Black	14X15	EMI	-
Pur.Tx.Paid	Brown	11	EMI	A
Tax Paid	Blue	Imperf	EMI	A?

The meaning of AT and ZT and their periods of use are uncertain. The letters may have respectively stood for 'Added Tax' and 'Zero Tax'. ET (Exempt from Tax") and ZT may well have been intended for different classes of Tax-exempt records.

The L/T stamps are for the short period of 13th November 1947 to 8th April 1948, a period of a little over 5 months. However, the stamps are fairly frequently encountered. This is possibly explained by the fact that the "Late Autumn Tax" came from an emergency budget, and that the recording companies had little warning of the change and thus had to re-tax a larger volume of records than would have normally been the case. In some instances, an L/T stamp exists stuck over the previous ST stamp on a record pressed as TT.

Acknowledgement is made to Peter Copeland's article", Marks on British 78rpm Records" that appeared in 'The Historic Record', number 18, January 1991.

(SEE ILLUSTRATIONS OVER THE PAGE)



The G&T Gazette is published as time permits and distributed gratis to friends and associates who attend or share in the interests of a group known as "The Scratchy Record Group". Opinions expressed in the Gazette are those of the authors and do not represent the philosophies and beliefs of the SRG. Unsolicited material is welcome. Care with submissions for publication will be exercised, but no responsibility for loss or damage in transit will be accepted. Advertising rates are negotiable. The G&T Gazette is produced on a Macintosh G3 and Agfa studio scanner. All material is copyrighted. Permission to use anything appearing in the Gazette must be cleared in the first instance with the editor William (Bill) Main at 93 Burma Road, Wellington. 6004 New Zealand, telephone (04)971-3535, email wmain@paradise.net.nz This issue was sub-edited by Ron Burt to whom the editor extends his gratitude.