

G&T GAZETTE

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No prizes for guessing who this is identifying a hard to read title on a gramophone recording.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENT - WANTED KNOWN: As a result of reorganising my record collection, I have accumulated a very large pile of unwanted recordings. I have done these up into bundles of 20, making a mix of 10 & 12 inch recordings featuring Jazz and Classical vocal. It is my intention to present these mystery bundles to those who attend my presentation in September. If there are members who would like their bundle before this date, then please call me on 971-3535.

EDITORIAL

Recently with an enforced convalescence at home, I have busied myself with my record collection, undertaking some fairly drastic changes which are long overdue. This has involved me primarily in thinking beyond the square to a certain degree about the way they are stored and how this influences the use of the collection which in my personal instance numbers somewhere in the region of 2,000 recordings (see the feature article in this issue).

While most in our group might treat issues like how their records are stored with some disdain, or at worse with little forethought and care, I would advise those who are about to put their collection in some order, to exercise care and attention in this important discipline.

Over my years as a collector of recordings I have tried several methods of putting recordings on a shelf with paper or cardboard packets interleaving them against one another. This method is universal and one which probably typifies the most common practice amongst collectors. However, how you choose to put them in order is, as I will endeavour to prove, most important, and a decision which should not be lightly entered into without some care and forethought. So read on!

As in the last issue, our double page centre spread is again devoted to records in their packets. While I have received no feed back from members, I do hope you enjoy this feature which will be terminated with this issue unless someone in our group comes forward with another selection for me to publish.

Always wanting to use a cover photograph which gives some idea of the Gazette's content, I have used a photo of myself studying the title and particulars of a record from my collection. This was taken by Jill who thought it might interest members of the SRG! While my eyesight is pretty good, many record companies didn't take into account how ink on labels might appear after fifty or more years. For instance HMV employed gold on a vermilion for many years. It is my sorry lot to report that in some instances the gold has rubbed off, leaving the user in great difficulties when it comes to identifying the excerpt or title of a particular recording. Am I alone in this predicament, or is my eyesight worse than I thought? In an attempt to counter this difficulty, I have a head lamp which I use quite a lot these days! I find it invaluable!

Bill Main

STORAGE AND INDEXING RECORDS

by
BORIS SEMEONOFF

Although albums are in many ways desirable, and look well on shelves, most collectors agree that the use of single covers or envelopes is to be preferred for all except major works. The essential thing, however, is that records should be stored in an upright position, and not piled one on top of the other. The obvious advantages are that records are much more easily found when kept in this way, and there is also much less risk of breakages through edges being pinched by other records. The latter is also a reason why carrying cases are not a very suitable method of permanent storage, since, unless the case is packed very tight, the records are apt to slip from the vertical position.

If albums are used, the collector will find that constant and thorough rearrangement of his collection is necessary. The degree of rigidity, too, is less complete except in the case of plain card albums without much in the way of binding. However, it is a matter of taste, and it is sometimes pleasant to be able to produce for inspection an album containing all one's records by a given composer or artist.

The method of classification used must be left to the discretion of the collector, but the following hints may be useful:

- (1) As far as possible one's classification should be a simple one, and as uniform as possible throughout one's collection.
- (2) Some sort of identification should be written or pasted on envelopes or albums, but preferably not on the labels of records themselves. Sooner or later you will probably change your system, and the marks on the labels will cease to be appropriate, and possibly be difficult to remove. Personally, I am strongly against writing anything on a label, except perhaps the speed of playing, if that is not already indicated.
- (3) Records of different sizes are best kept separately, except in cases of sets of mixed sizes. These are best accommodated in Duplex albums, i.e. those with specially-made pockets, designed to take either 12 or 10 inch recordings.

As to actual arrangement, the following alternatives suggest themselves:

- (i) In chronological order of composers' dates. This involves some difficulty where opposite sides of the same record are by different composers. The best solution is always to give preference to the earlier composer.

SIXTY YEARS ON

by Bill Main

(ii) In alphabetical order of performer's name. This partly does away with the difficulty mentioned above, since both sides are nearly always by the same artist. For duets or ensembles one can establish one's own convention, provided that it is consistently applied.

(iii) In numerical order of catalogue numbers.

(iv) Records may be given private numbers by their owner and a check list kept.

Variations on any of these are, of course, possible. Whichever is used, it is a good plan to have the title or number written on the corner of the envelope which is most readily accessible when the record is in position on the shelf, so that records can be found without taking them out of position.

When possible, shelves should have partitions which should be not more than about 12 inches apart if envelopes are being used. Cardboard envelopes are preferable on the whole, but quite a saving in space is effected if paper covers are used. Space saving is another argument in favour of envelopes as against albums.

Indexing is also a matter of individual taste. Every collection of any size must obviously have its catalogue. Probably the best method is to have a card index. My own is on cards 3 in. by 1 1/2 in., with a separate card for each item even if it extends to less than a single side. Others may prefer to have one or more larger cards for each composer, or each artist, and probably others on which works in the same category are grouped together. Various degrees of cross-indexing are possible, but on the whole it is probably preferable to keep separate indices if different methods of classification are required. Thus the collector of, say, vocal records will no doubt want to keep a note both of what he has by individual singers and an index of the songs, opera excerpts, etc., themselves. The former can usually be made fairly portable for easy reference.

The elementary precautions which one should take to keep one's records in good condition are too well known to require recapitulation here. The main thing is to keep them free from dust at all times. On the other hand, exaggerated caution, e.g. never touching the playing surface with one's hands, is out of place. After all, finger-prints do no harm, and can be wiped off. Records should be lightly brushed from time to time with a cleaning pad or soft cloth, but not necessarily before and after each playing. The little brushes one sometimes sees attached to the tone-arm while playing should be avoided.

This chapter was originally printed in a book called *Record Collecting - A guide for beginners* by Boris Semeonoff published by Oakwood Press in 1951.

While much of what Boris Semeonoff wrote in 1950 is now outdated when it comes to making a catalogue of one's record collection, for instance with computers replacing the time worn index card system, there are some fundamental issues like sleeves over albums and never writing on a record label which are handy hints which remain in vogue today.

When I started collecting records in the 1950s I never thought of albums as a storage alternative. This was because their supply was restricted to one outlet (Beggs) and they cost money which was prioritized to purchasing recordings. As Boris points out, albums caused all sorts of problems when making room for new acquisitions. Ray Hedges was the only living record collector I met who preferred storing records in this manner. Of course, I did encounter records in albums when buying records stored in an upright gramophone with storage below the turntable. However, I did start a card index catalogue which grew at an alarming rate with cross-indexing in order to accommodate composer as well as artist. Des Wilson I believe, was another who indexed his recordings in this manner.

As my collection grew, I constructed shelving to take both 10 & 12 inch recordings in cardboard envelopes which I numbered on the top corner facing out. Also I acknowledged the source of every record which came into my collection with a pencil inscription around the label hole. This had the year I acquired the item along with the initials of the previous owner. I stood by this system until my 'great thinning out' exercise which occurred in the late 1970s, reducing my collection in size from four thousand to several hundred.

Another method of storing and listing a record collection was to use the record company's catalogue number. This brings to mind Brian Salkeld who once told me that as far as his collection was concerned, every record came with a number on the label. This was the company's catalogue number, so why give it another on the packet or envelope that housed it? While there is a lot to commend this system, it does require an enormous number of sub-sections which test one's ability to remember the prefix letters which companies used over the years like the DA & DB H.M.V. celebrity prefixes. I would hate to think how many prefixes there would be in a large collection. As well, artists like Leo Slezak and Emmy Destinn, both of whom recorded for so many companies it would be a nightmare of tremendous proportion to devise a system unless the alphabetical one was deployed.

When my card index system became an encumbrance (by its physical size) I made a one line entry on loose pages which I kept in a ring binder. This lasted me well until I bought my first computer in the mid 1980s. After nearly forty years of collecting records, I became dissatisfied with the way my records were being stored. Looking around for another



I have always been struck by the similarity of the Domed edifice on Odeon recordings to the structure at the Basin Reserve in Wellington!



Can anyone give me an explanation why Parlophone used the pound sterling emblem as their trade mark!

method rather than a number on the record sleeve, I re-arranged them in alphabetical order under each artist's name.

My reason for this was to have individual artists grouped together. This system served me well until quite recently, when I decided it was better to re-arrange them under musical categories. I might add at this juncture that my system was to store my collection in two separate cabinets, one for 10 and the other for 12 inch recordings.

To a large extent this final arrangement was motivated by the fact that my pleasure in playing records of an evening was being thwarted by certain musical items being spread far and wide between the two cabinets. While I still haven't resolved this problem completely, I now enjoy my collection all the more because it is now laid out in categories, giving ready access to the music of my choice. In my opinion this is a winner and gives me pleasure over the other systems.

The 10 inch categories are:

- Classical Vocal
- Music Hall - Personalities
- Dixieland
- Dance & Jazz
- Edison Diamond Discs

12 inch categories are:

- Classical Vocal
- Instrumentalists & Conductors
- Pathe Recordings

With this allocation I enjoy my collection tremendously because every time I decide to play a few records it is easy to locate the type of music I want to listen to without having to resort to my computer index . Admittedly, there are still a few problems with records that don't completely fit into this system like my Edison Diamond Discs and cylinders along with my Pathe recordings.

Every system of setting out a collection of recordings has its good and bad points. What you choose in the end for your own personal needs will evolve as your collection grows. Don't be put off by the effort it might take to establish a system you can live and work with.



Guess who's been caught by the ever active camera of Jill Main, sitting in the Ngaio Dog Park. At my feet are Luke (left) and Henry (right). I'm the one in the sun glasses!

The photograph of the Austrian tenor Leo Slezak on the opposite page was given to me by Mrs Steiner who fled Vienna with her husband Fritz after the Anschluss in 1938. They lived in Karori and were very kind to me when I was starting off collecting records, inviting me to their home and relating their experiences when Gustav Mahler was a leading light in musical circles. Mrs Steiner was a sister of Greta Forst, a soprano who sang many times with Slezak. To date, I have not been able to obtain a translation of the inscription.

This photo came into being after Slezak visited A W Dreyfoog's studio at 38 West and 34th Street near Broadway New York in 1910. It shows Slezak dressed in his role as Otello in Verdi's opera of the same name.

I show this because of interest in the Tauber photograph which we published in the last issue of the Gazette. I wonder if there are any other signed photographs of singers in the collections of our members? If so we'd love to copy them and publish them for all to see.

Bill Main





TAILPIECE:

For those who seldom read our masthead or need reminding, the G&T Gazette was founded in 1995. Altogether there have been 59 issues since its inception the masthead reference to the **Edison Echo** is purely fictitious. At the time I thought it added a bit of class and prestige that it had taken over another publication. Funnily enough no one has ever questioned me about this spurious claim!

The *G&T Gazette* is published quarterly and distributed gratis to friends and associates who attend or share in the interest 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. 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 93 Burma Road, Wellington - 6035 New Zealand. Telephone (04)971-3535, e-mail <wmain@paradise.net.nz> This edition was proof read and edited by Des Wilson.