

Victrola and 78 Journal

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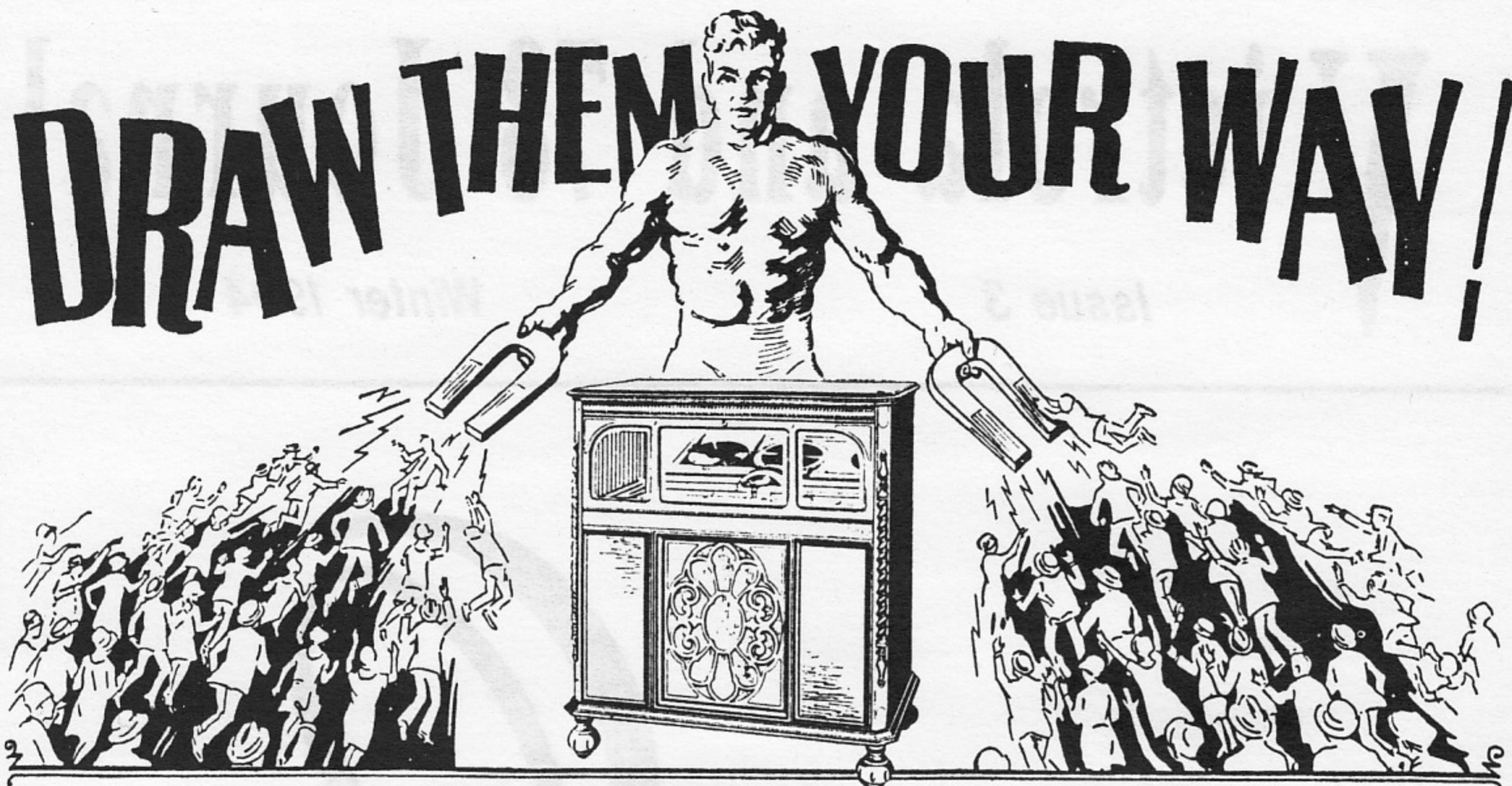
Winter 1994



One

NICK
LUCAS

On Brunswick Only



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NICK LUCAS: A CONVERSATION WITH THE CROONING TROUBADOUR

By Jas Obrecht

Nick Lucas was America's first singing guitar star. During the Roaring Twenties he crooned to countless listeners via radio broadcasts, saw his name attached to a prestigious Gibson guitar, and sold truckloads of Brunswick 78s. Nick launched his recording career around 1922, playing banjo with Bailey's Lucky Seven, a Gennett recording band organized by his friend Sam Lanin. Sometimes credited to the Pavilion Players and Diplomat and Regent Orchestras, many of Nick's Lanin sides were reissued by Starr, Apex, Portland, and the British Westport and Edison Bell Winner labels. He cut for Pathé with the Don Parker Trio, and it's likely he appeared on Husk O'Hare's Gennett release "Clover Blossom Blues"/"Night." He recorded "Tin Roof Blues" and "That Big Blonde Mama" with Victor's Tennessee Ten, and doubled on guitar and banjo on the Russo and Fiorito's Oriole Orchestra Brunswick releases "You'll Never Get To Heaven With Those Eyes," "I Need Some Pettin'," and "Way Down."

His warm, pure tenor blending perfectly with his sophisticated flatpicking, Nick did his most important work as a solo artist. Recorded for Pathe in July 1922, Lucas' fabulous "Pickin' The Guitar"/"Teasin' The Frets" [020794] were the first notable guitar instrumentals on 78. With its three-part structure, "Pickin' The Guitar" is reminiscent of ragtime and turn-of-the-century marches.

In November 1924 Nick signed with Brunswick and struck paydirt with his first vocal/guitar release, "My Best Girl"/"Dreamer Of Dreams" [2768]. The new electrical recording

process improved his sound, as heard on his many Brunswick follow-up hits. Many of these sides demonstrate Nick's rare ability to execute complex, agile guitar parts while singing, a trait mastered by Blind Willie Johnson, Lonnie Johnson, Jimi Hendrix, and precious few others. (I regret not asking Nick about Eddie Lang, since there are significant parallels in their guitar approaches and a likelihood that they knew each other.)

After making his Broadway debut in 1926's *Sweetheart Time*, Lucas toured Europe, setting attendance records at the Cafe de Paris and London Palladium. His career spiraled upward when the *New York Times* reported on November 14, 1926: "Because the Prince of Wales has heard and likes his playing and singing, after the manner of the old Provincial Troubadours, Nick Lucas has suddenly become one of the most popular entertainers in London. After hearing Lucas' singing, which he accompanied on guitar one night this week, the Prince invited him to sing at the ball in honor of the Queen of Spain. Accordingly, Nick is in great demand, not only in theaters and cabarets, but also at homes of the society hostesses." His "A Cup Of Coffee, A Sandwich And You" was a best-seller in Great Britain.

Returning to America, Nick toured vaudeville and continued making records as a Brunswick solo artist. In 1929 he was co-billed with Ruby Keeler, Eddie Foy Jr., and Jimmy Durante in Ziegfeld's *Show Girl*, with music by the Gershwins and a band led by Duke Ellington! Nick's next stop was Hollywood, where he was cast in Warner Brothers' first all-

talkie, all-Technicolor film, *The Gold Diggers Of Broadway*. Studio publicity promised "a profuse procession of revue spectacle scenes in amazing settings" and bragged that the story had "had New York gasping and giggling for one solid year." Released as Brunswick 4418, his show-stoppers "Tip-Toe Thru' The Tulips With Me"/"Painting The Clouds With Sunshine" became his career best-seller, reportedly passing the three million mark. Warner Brothers quickly cast Nick in *The Show Of Shows*, hyped as a "connoisseur's collection of supreme examples of almost every form of screen and stage entertainment." Nestled between John Barrymore's Shakespeare soliloquy and the Ted Lewis Orchestra was the sumptuous "Chinese Fantasy," starring Myrna Loy as an Oriental princess and Nick Lucas as her crooning paramour. Preferring to remain in vaudeville, Nick turned down a Warner Brothers contract.

By 1930 Nick Lucas was America's most famous guitarist, his name appearing on instruction books, guitar picks, and an elegant Gibson guitar. He continued to record for Brunswick during the Depression, although the rarity of these titles suggest that sales were weak. He also starred in CBS and NBC radio shows, appeared in musical film shorts, and headlined nightclubs. On November 16, 1932, Lucas was given the honor of being the last performer to appear on the bill at the Palace. A few weeks later he rerecorded "Picking The Guitar"/"Teasing The Frets," this time for Brunswick. He recorded for other labels later in the decade and toured Australia in the late '30s, making a half-dozen Columbia sides, including a tremendous "Somewhere Over The Rainbow." (Living Era's *Nick Lucas: The Singing Troubadour* LP anthologizes these rare Sydney sides and earlier material.) During the war Lucas starred in several Soundies shorts.

Nick continued to headline prestigious nightclub venues through the 1960s, enjoying long stints in

Hollywood, Reno, and Lake Tahoe. He appeared on television shows hosted by Johnny Carson, Lawrence Welk, Merv Griffin, Art Linkletter, and Ed Sullivan, and continued to light up the big screen with his effervescent personality. He recorded albums for Decca, Diamond, Accent, and Crown. Tiny Tim burst onto the pop scene during the mod '60s, acknowledging Lucas as his idol and proclaiming his old Brunswick 78s the source of his inspiration. When the ukulele-strumming falsetto married Miss Vicky on the *Tonight Show's* most popular episode, Nick was there, singing "Tip-Toe Thru' The Tulips With Me" in the background. He enjoyed another surge of publicity on the first day of 1980s, playing guitar and singing atop a float in the Tournament of Roses Parade.

On assignment for *Guitar Player* magazine, I interviewed Nick on September 30, 1980, at his apartment at 1811 North Whitley Ave., Hollywood, California.

* * * *

I hope you don't mind going back in your career a bit.

Well, all you gotta do is ask questions. Everything you have in mind, why, I'll be glad to answer 'em. I'll tell you the truth, the whole resume of my life from the beginning. I'm 83 now, you know. I hit it August the 22nd. How far back do you want to go?

To about 1906, with your brother Frank.

[Laughs.] Yeah!

Is that when you began learning mandolin?

Yeah. 1906 was just about the time. I was in grammar school; I was just about eight, nine years old. First of all, before I started with my brother Frank, he wanted me to study music without an instrument--solfeggio, which I studied from a Sicilian maestro, they called them in those days. That's all they did is

teach music without an instrument. They taught the fundamentals of the music, of timing, and things like that. I studied that for about a year, and then he put me on the mandolin because in those days mandolin was the dominant instrument with the Italians and with the general public. Of course, it wasn't a commercial instrument; it was mostly for house entertainment--playing weddings and christenings and things like that.

What city was this in?

This was in Newark, New Jersey. That's where I was born.

Was your name originally Nick Lucas?

No, my original name was Dominic. My baptismal name was Dominic Nicholas Antonio Lucanese. That's an Italian name. Antonio was taken after some of my relatives; I guess they always like to include them. So actually I had four names. My first name was Dominic, I understand, due to the fact that I was born on a Sunday. "Domenica" means "Dominic" in Italian.

Was your brother Frank older than you?

Yes. I might say Frank was about five or six years older. He was born in Italy. They migrated from Italy in the early '90s, because I was born in 1897. And he was the first. Then my sister, who passed away about a year ago--she was 85--she was second, and then I was third. There was another sister, and then three more brothers. There's only three left in the family--my brother Lib and my brother Anthony, they're both alive. They're musically inclined, but not professionally.

My brother Frank was a very versatile and thorough musician. He played the accordion, and in those days the accordion was it. It was a very, very popular instrument. And he wanted me to play the mandolin so that I could go with him on different occasions, because we did come from a

very, very poor family. In those days, money was scarce and the wages were very poor. However, the living in those days was very inexpensive also, so there was no problem there. My father was working, of course. My brother would take me along with him, playing in saloons, passing the hat around, which I did. And we played in street cars and passed the hat around. We played on street corners and did anything to make a dollar, so that we could help the family along. When my brother took me around to play all these Italian weddings and christenings, we got the big sum of a dollar an hour.

All this work that I did for him gave me all the practice I needed, especially on the right hand, to get that tremolo and that technique. I had to study the mandolin under his tuition, and he was very stern. He really helped me. He gave me all the musical education that I ever needed. After that we parted, because he went into vaudeville with an act called The Three Vagrants. And then after I graduated school I was on my own, and I got a job in a nightclub in Newark, New Jersey, called The Johnson's Cafe. This was in 1915.

Were you playing guitar yet?

No. Believe it or not, I was playing . . . They wanted more volume than a guitar, so I got myself a banjeaurine, which is a mandolin with a banjo head on it. And in order to get volume, I played the mandolin. That was my basic instrument, the one I started on. My brother, in the interim, he thought he wanted me to play a guitar, so there would be more volume as a background, because the mandolin is primarily a lead instrument. He also started me on the guitar, so I became as good on the guitar as I was on the mandolin. But when I first started, I played the mandolin in the nightclub and bought myself a banjeaurine. They were available in those days--anything that sounded like a banjo.

So I played with this big orchestra that consisted of three men [chuckles]--piano, violin, and the banjeaurine. And we played the revue. They had nightclub revues--like, they had a soprano singer, a comic, a line of girls, and a male singer. And that was the revue. The show lasted about two hours. And we played just with three pieces until eventually it went haywire--they put in a drummer! This was in Newark, and of course Newark is a short jump from New York. Naturally, I got all the work in town, because there was only very few musicians available in Newark who qualified to play for these nightclubs. You had to be a good faker. You had to read quick, you know. And most of 'em was fakin'. They'd say, "Oh, play it in C or play it in D, put it up in F, put it down a key," and if you couldn't do that, the music didn't mean a damn thing. When I went to the Musicians Union, I had to take a regular musical test, pass an examination so I could get my union card. Of course, they don't do that today. They give you a card. Pay your initiation fee, and you're in.

This is where I got all my experience. I was there two years, working with this outfit--the piano, violin, banjeaurine--and I doubled on the guitar when we had to play waltzes and things like that. The guitar just came in handy. From there I went on to another nightclub in Newark called The Iroquois with another combo. I had the great experience of playing with one of the greatest jazz pianists of that era, Blanche Merrill. She played that boogie-woogie piano. She used to live in New York too. We also had violin and drums. Oh, this was giving me all the experience and the qualifications of becoming a great jazz musician--unbeknownst to me.

Was the money good enough to survive on?

I'll tell you, the salary on the first job I got in Newark when I

played in a nightclub was \$20 a week. And I thought that was good then. I was in demand in Newark, and Newark was a wide-open town in those days. They had night clubs all over, and everything went--gambling, prostitution, everything was wide open. Then when I got another job at The Iroquois, they gave me \$25. I bettered myself from \$20 to \$25.

And then we formed a unit called the Original Kentucky Five. In those days, they leaned on the South, like Dixieland jazz bands were very famous. So I got myself a group called the Kentucky Five, and I toured the Interstate circuit and the Keith circuit as a backup to the Zeigler Twins--they did a vaudeville act. I had a violin, and I had alto sax, piano, drums, and myself. I would say that was in the years of 1919 and 1920. I got married in 1917, then my daughter was born in 1918, so naturally I couldn't stay on the road too long. I only stayed on tour with this Kentucky Five, which I originated, for about a year because I had to come home. My wife had my only daughter, and I had to get myself a job around town.

So I got myself a job in New York with Sam Lanin. And at that time Sam Lanin was the kingpin of New York. He did all the recording dates--well, I wouldn't say all, but most of it. I was working with him at the Roseland Ballroom. I played tenor banjo. I had got myself a tenor banjo.

So the volume could cut through the orchestra?

Yeah. And I had the guitar alongside of it at all times for when we played waltzes. It was very difficult to play a three-quarter beat on the banjo, so the guitar came in handy. It blended better with waltzes. I had such great musicians as Jules Levy--that goes way back--on trumpet. We had two bands on the stand. One would stop, and then immediately the other would continue. Those were the days when it was 5

cents a dance, 10 cents. You remember that, way back? You buy tickets and pick up a dame there and dance with her, and that's how they survived. The other band was called Mel Hallett, who was very popular up around the Boston area. And there was a fellow playing piano there with Mel Hallett by the name of Frankie Carle. He became a great pianist. See, these things here were giving me the experience that paid off later on in years.

How did you break into recording?

I did all of Sam Lanin's recording dates. In fact, sometimes I'd do two a day. The sessions were from 9:00 until 1:00, and then from 2:00 to 5:00, and then I still did my job at night. I had a contract with Sam, getting \$90 a week. And the phonograph dates, all they paid was \$20--that was the scale then. So I made \$40 a day, and I practically worked there every day--four or five days a week--making those record dates. I was making a pretty good salary. \$200 or \$300 a week--that was a lot of money!

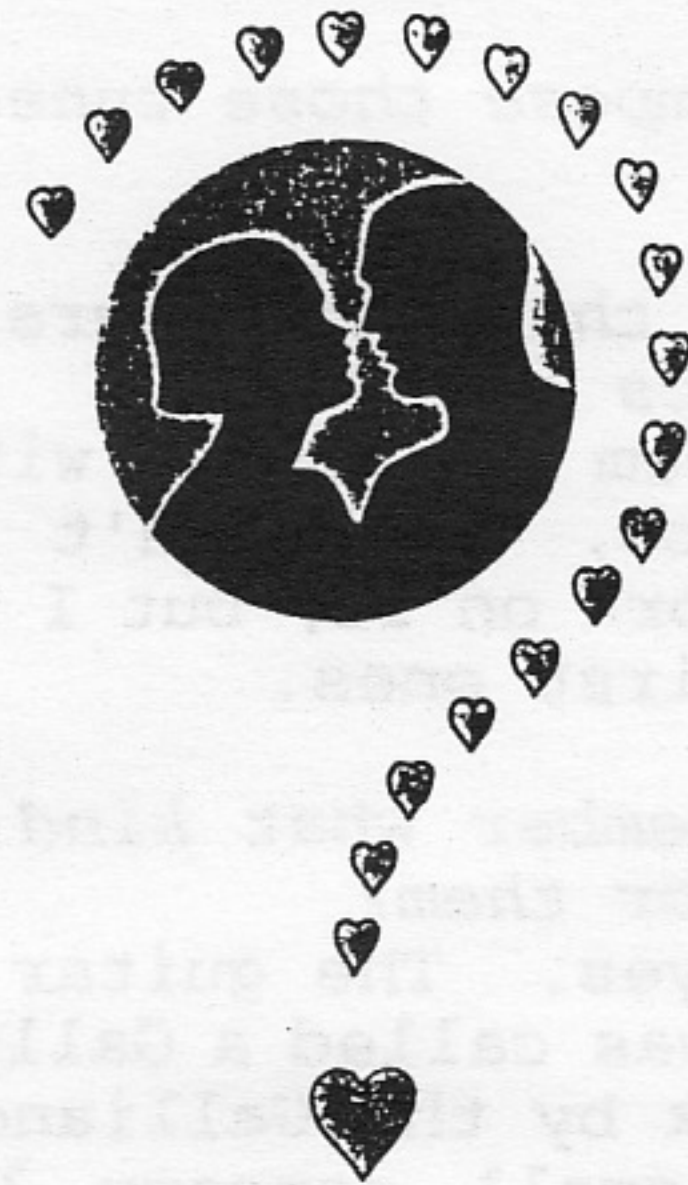
What else do you remember about the Lanin sessions?

We always had trouble with the recording dates, because in those days they had the old cylinder wax. They had a big box in the back, and they kept all these waxes in the box always heated up. And the wax was pretty thick. We only had one horn to catch all the music into the cylinder to record. We didn't have microphones--this was the days before microphones. And we had the conventional combination, like three saxes and two trumpets and a trombone, piano, tuba, and a rhythm banjo. Guitar was unheard of. And we--that means the tuba and myself--had to sit way back in the studio, because when you blow notes out of a tuba, if it's too loud, that needle would jump off the cylinder and they'd have to start all over again. Very sensitive. And the banjo was the same thing, because it was a penetrating instrument.

So I thought up an idea one morning of bringing my guitar to the studio. And Sam says, "What you gonna do with that?" I said, "Well, Sam, I'm having so damn much trouble with the banjo, let me try the guitar." He said, "Well, Nick, they won't hear it." I said, "Well, put me closer to the horn." So he got me right under the horn. Now, this is a great, big horn. Visualize a great, big horn, like you see advertised by the Victor Phonograph Company, the one with the dog. Well, that's what we had. So he put me under the horn, and the instrument was there. The rhythm was more smoother, and we didn't have any trouble with the needle jumping out of the grooves. So he said, "Gee, Nick, that's all right. Keep it in." So that was the

CONTINUED . . .

IRVING BERLIN'S *How* MANY TIMES?



Irving Berlin, Inc.
MUSIC PUBLISHERS
1607 Broadway New York

Nick Lucas had one of his biggest hits in 1926 with Irving Berlin's "How Many Times?": "I'd hate to think that you kissed too many/But I'd feel worse if hadn't kissed any."

beginning of me playing guitar on record dates. Now, I would say that was around 1921 or '22, something like that.

I still worked with Sam for a while, then I worked with Vincent Lopez at the Peking Cafe on 45th Street. That was a hot spot, and in those days, Vincent Lopez was very, very hot in New York. He couldn't do anything wrong.

Did you record "Teasin' The Frets" around this time?

No, "Teasin' The Frets" was done while I was working with Sam with a different group, with a fellow called Don Parker. And on "Teasin' The Frets" and "Pickin' The Guitar," I did that all by myself. That was on Pathé Records.

What was that session like?

The session was from about 10:00 until 1:00, and I was all by myself. All I had was the musical director and the technicians in the studio. Nobody else. They were recorded in New York at the Pathé Phonograph Company on 42nd Street.

Did you compose those tunes?

Yes.

I've heard that those were the first guitar solos on 78.

I seem to agree with you on that. Now, I haven't done any research work on it, but I think they were the first ones.

Do you remember what kind of guitar you used for them?

Oh, yes. The guitar I started on, which was called a Galliano, made in New York by the Galliano Company. It was a small company located on Mulberry Street. I wasn't associated with Gibson until later, when I left New York. I went to join Ted Fiorito, who was an old friend of mine from Newark, and he had a band in Chicago called the Oriole Terrace Orchestra. He was at the Edgewater Beach Hotel there, and he sent for me. He asked me if I would be interested in coming out there, and he offered me \$150 a week. And so my

wife and daughter and I got in the car and drove out there. This was in 1923. It took us about four days to get there, because in those days they didn't have the route numbers. It was town to town--next town, next town. We got to Chicago about four days later. Of course, that was only day driving. I never drove at night because you'd get lost--you wouldn't know where the hell to go. At that time I still had my Galliano. And when I went to Chicago, naturally we were a big hit there at the Edgewater Beach Hotel. We were booked for two weeks, and we stayed there almost three years. That was where I got my big break on radio. In those days, radio was the only media of entertainment. WEBH, Chicago--that was the studio. In the interim between sets, I used to go into the studio, which was right adjacent to our bandstand, and fill in some time with my guitar and sing and kind of croon. And that's when I started to get mail from all over the country. This wasn't a network by any means; it was just that they all had these crystal sets and they would tune in and get me all through the night. I got loads of mail, and I started to become very, very popular. I wasn't getting any money for it--this was all gratis.

How did you get with Brunswick?

The Oriole Orchestra was my first stepping-stone to becoming a success as a singer and a performer. And then Brunswick Phonograph Company, which was located in Chicago, heard me and signed me up to record. And I made a record there called "My Best Girl" and "Dreamer Of Dreams," which was my first recording --all by myself, in the old horn, no microphones. I sang in the horn and I made this recording, and it was a terrific seller. And then I left the band to go on my own in 1925. I was with Dan Russo and Ted Fiorito, and I left them in December 1924. In the interim, I made the record, and the record was catching on all over the country. I was in demand. They wanted me to make personal appearances all over the United States. My

first big theater engagement was at the Chicago Theater in December 1924. This was as a solo act. A friend of mine, Bert Wheeler, heard me sing and told his New York agent about me. He said, "Come out and catch this guy--he's great. I know he's gonna become somebody." So he did. We didn't sign a contract, but we had a handshake, and we were together for about 15, 20 years. From then on I played vaudeville.

My next big break from there came when I played the Palace Theatre in New York. That was the epitome of all. That was tops! And I was a big hit there. Now, England was big in those days. I played at the Cafe de Paris, and the Prince of Wales and the Queen of Spain was in to see my show one night. Then they had me entertain for them privately about two weeks later. That's when I got publicity all around the world, and from then on, I couldn't do anything wrong. When I came back to America, naturally I had all the work I wanted to, and I continued to play in vaudeville, because that was the only thing around. Vaudeville was it. I played the Orpheum, Keith--I played all the circuits. I was making \$3,000 a week. That's like \$30,000 today--maybe more! [Laughs.] All by myself. All I was doin' was singin'!

Your wife and family must have been happy.

They sure were! This all came unexpectedly, because entertainers were far and few between. In those days, the entertainers that were successful and very famous, I could count them on one hand. There was Eddie Cantor, Al Jolson, and Bing Crosby. And I was in that era. I was before Bing Crosby, but I wasn't before Eddie Cantor, though. He was way before me, as was Al Jolson, because I was practically a school boy when they were around. But my ambition was to be as good as them, but I never tried to copy anybody. I tried to be myself. When I recorded, I used my own ideas, and I felt I was a little unique since my guitar and my voice blended. It was one.

I used to play a lot of solos, but in those days they wanted to hear me sing. And today they still want to hear me sing. My voice, thank goodness, is still in excellent condition. And the guitar is a part of my act. See, nobody can play for me. When I sing, I play for myself. I improvise, I play runs in between, and I play a little solo. Like I'll play "Baby Face," and maybe I'll play 16 bars on the guitar. My voice is me. My guitar comes second, but the guitar is the one that made me. Without the guitar, I wouldn't be what I am today. Lucas without a guitar wouldn't be Nick Lucas.

CONTINUED . . .

BABY FACE

SONG
UKULELE
ARRANGEMENT



by
BENNY DAVIS
and
HARRY AKST

JEROME H. REMICK & Co.
NEW YORK . . . DETROIT.

On stage Nick Lucas helped popularize "Baby Face," a song still associated with the 1920s. "Rosy Cheeks," very similar to "Baby Face" in melody and theme, was a huge hit for Lucas in 1927. Jan Garber's 1926 recording of "Baby Face" for Victor (20105) was the most popular version.

I'm not saying this in the spirit of conceit, by any means, but I feel most of these contemporary guitar players studied from my books. I feel that I helped all these contemporary guys way, way back. Gene Autry said, "Without Nick Lucas, I wouldn't be playing the guitar." I had two books on the market. They came out around '26 or '27, right after I became popular on records. The first book was for beginners, and then I had a little advanced one. It was a beginning book for ordinary musicians, because contemporary guitar players in those days, they didn't know from nothing. They wanted to become guitar players, and they picked up my books. They happened to be very popular in those days. In fact, when I played Australia for six months in 1937, there was a group of natives waiting for me at the boat--this was right outside the Fiji Islands--because they all had my books and my guitar picks. I had to give them a concert and play every damn thing I knew on the guitar, because they all had guitars. Now today, as you know, every girl and every boy wants to play the guitar.

What was your biggest break?

When I got to 1929 and played the Orpheum Theater in Los Angeles, with *The Gold Diggers Of Broadway*. This was big time. I was on the bill with Sophie Tucker and Jack Benny and myself. That's pretty stiff company, isn't it? But I was learning as I was going along, watching these performers. I was very observative, and I learned how to get on and off stage, and that wasn't easy. It took me 15 years to learn how to take a bow. Today they do it overnight. So that's where I got my biggest break, with "Tip-Toe Thru' The Tulips." In fact, on April 15th of this year, the Variety Arts Club that I belong to gave me a big testimonial honoring 50 years of "Tip-Toe Thru' The Tulips." I never dreamed that a song would become synonymous with my name all these years. Still, no matter where I go it's "Tip-Toe Thru' The Tulips."

And it's such an optimistic song.

Oh, yeah. I only hope to write another one like it. You see, you never know, when you're in show business, about a song until you sing it to the public. I might think it's great--every songwriter thinks every song he writes is great--but it's not until the public decides upon it, because they're the ones that buy it.

Do you play much these days?

Oh, yes. I'm in good shape physically. My voice is in terrific condition, and I still can play "Pickin' The Guitar" and "Teasin' The Frets"--that's not easy! That takes a lot of fingering. I record for Decca, but that's a small firm. They don't have the distribution. I got something cookin' now: I think I'm gonna grab myself a couple of good country and western tunes. I could handle it very nicely. Get the right background. It would give me a thrill just to know it could be done.

So I'm still active, but I don't get out enough. I don't socialize enough to get acquainted with some of these musicians today that made it big, which I'm happy for. And I had my turn. I had my success, and I thank the good Lord that I still can sing and I still work. I play a lot of fairs and casual dates. Just recently I played three days in Indianapolis at the Shrine show, and I was there last year. They want me back because they enjoy it. It makes me happy to know that I'm still able. As long as my health keeps up, I'm gonna keep doing it until I can't do it any longer!

A sweet, gracious, and generous gentleman, Nick Lucas passed away on July 28, 1982.

© *Jas Obrecht, 1995. All rights reserved.* Jas Obrecht is an associate editor at *Guitar Player* magazine and contributing editor to *Blues Revue*. Published by Miller Freeman, his 1993 book *Blues Guitar: The Men Who Made The Music* contains profiles and interviews with prewar blues artists.

NICK LUCAS: HOW SOME YOUNG PEOPLE RESPOND TODAY

By Tim Gracyk

I write articles and put together issues of Victrola and 78 Journal when I find time in a day of teaching English classes at Santa Clara University and grading essays. Every year I share my hobby with students by hauling in a machine and playing discs from my collection. Their assignment--not graded!--is to listen and then answer questions on a sheet giving lyrics.

I play comic, upbeat tunes (the second song is the exception):

- 1) Collins & Harlan: "Alabama Jubilee" (Victor 17825)
- 2) Richard Jose: "Silver Threads Among the Gold" (Victor 2556)
- 3) Ada Jones: "Now I Have To Call Him Father" (Victor 16144)
- 4) Billy Murray: "Take Your Girlie To The Movies (If You Can't Make Love At Home)" (Victor 18592)
- 5) Aileen Stanley: "My Little Bimbo Down on the Bamboo Isle" (Victor 18691)
- 6) Billy Murray and Aileen Stanley: "Does She Love Me? Absolutely-Positively" (Victor 20643).
- 7) Waring's Pennsylvanians: "I've Never Seen A Straight Banana" (Victor 20562).
- 8) Nick Lucas: "Looking At The World Thru' Rose Colored Glasses" (Brunswick 3283)
- 9) Spike Jones: "Die Fuehrer's Face" (Bluebird 11586)

In a future article I say more about how these young people (average age is 20) react to songs from long ago.

Here I quote comments about Nick Lucas performing "Looking At The World Thru' Rose Colored Glasses." My only introductory remark to students about Nick Lucas is that "here is the Eric Clapton or Eddie Van Halen of the late '20s."

A student writes, "I like acoustic guitar, so that is what grabbed my attention. I also liked the words since they talk about this

one person being happy and having a good day. It puts me in a good mood." Another writes, "Phrases such as 'saying bye to sorrow and hi to Mr. Joy' and 'everything is rosey' really depict the bright side of life. When I think of today's songs, I rarely hear encouraging songs, except in religious gatherings. Maybe the nearest today is 'Don't Worry, Be Happy.'"

One related lyrics to her own life: "I have a roommate who looks at everything through a very small and skeptical window, which makes her act in a negative way. She'll never be happy because the glasses she wears are very dirty." Another: "I never realized that our saying about rose-colored glasses went so far back."

Some were critical. One said she liked all the songs except this one--"slow and sort of so-so." Another: "The only song 'besides 'Silver Threads Among the Gold' that turned me off was 'Looking . . .' It just didn't seem special."

One writes, "I am a guitarist and can safely say that the chords and phrases of this song are not that difficult to play." From another: "There is a great deal of difference between Nick Lucas and someone like Eric Clapton. The guitar of the current era has a lot more chords and changes with the help of synthesizers and other technological advances. This was a more basic or simpler version of today's music."

Another writes, "This song was just so happy that it got annoying. Everything was so 'rosey' and good."

A few had mixed reactions. One writes, "This was a happy song about the world whereas many artists today look at the world's troubles to sing about. I did not like the song all that much but I did like the guitar playing." Another says, "Nick Lucas should have stuck to playing the guitar and left the singing to someone else. I did not like his voice."

THE FIRST SOLO GUITAR RECORDING?

By Tim Gracyk

In notes written for the 1983 Living Era LP Nick Lucas: The Singing Troubadour (AJA 5022), Michael R. Pitts claims that Nick Lucas "recorded for Pathé the first guitar solo record ever made, his compositions 'Pickin' the Guitar' and 'Teasin' the Frets.'" I do not mean to detract from the historical importance of these cuts, but I question Mr. Pitts' contention that Nick Lucas was the first to make a solo guitar recording. The Lucas titles may be the first jazz-oriented solo guitar performances on disc. But that is a different claim.

I own a Victor Grand Prize disc that has a better claim to being the earliest to feature solo guitar work. Octaviano Yañes recorded "Mexican Dance (Habaneras)" for Victor (5662) around 1908. Yañes is credited as composer of the tune, which is played in a folkloric, syncopated style typical of the Latin/Caribbean music of that era. Collectors I contacted suggest earlier guitar recordings were made, but I will first discuss the Yañes disc since I know it well.

Yañes plays an instrument with at least seven strings. From low to high note, it is tuned B E A D G B E. Yañes keeps returning to a thunderous, unfretted low B note, while his low E notes are also played on an open string. He may have used a 7-string instrument of Mexican or Russian origin (the standard Russian-made import guitar in those days was the 7-string), or a converted 11-string guitar, many of which had been produced in Andalucia since the 1890s. The bright tone suggests he is playing with his nails very close to the bridge. I played the disc for other guitar aficionados and they were also impressed.

Yañes was considered Mexico's champion guitarist at that time. He was also a fine composer. I recently listened to the Arriaga Trio's "Dos

Danzónes Yañes" on Edison 20090, recorded in Mexico City around May 1907. Two mandolins and one guitar play a song attributed to Yañes. The guitarist is identified as "Senior Obscura," which sounds so much like a pseudonym that at first I wondered if it could be Yañes himself, but a guitarist with the stature of Yañes probably would have insisted that his real name be used on recordings.

I cannot be certain where Yañes made my Victor recording. Even though many Latin-American artists traveled to New York to record, and Victor number 5662 seems part of a domestic series, we should not assume it was recorded in the U.S. L.E. Andersen, who is doing a comprehensive study of Edison recording activity in Mexico, suspects Yañes recorded it for Victor in Mexico City. Dick Spottswood, author of Ethnic Music on Records, agrees.

Yañes appears nowhere in Victor's "overseas" books, but Mr. Andersen points to gaps in these books which may account for Yañes' absence. Not all Victors of Mexican masters indicate their origin: some bear Mexican-series numbering and some are domestically-numbered. Victor's inconsistency makes the researcher's job difficult.

Although not common then for American popular singers, guitar accompaniment was widespread and beautifully recorded on Mexican and Cuban Edison cylinders. Yañes made various recordings but "Mexican Dances" is the earliest I have heard that features solo guitar work.

L.E. Andersen informed me the artist recorded for Edison's 1907 and 1909 Mexico City sessions though not Edison's 1904 sessions (Victor became active in Mexico City in 1905). The name is sometimes spelt with an "s" at the end and sometimes with a "z." The former is considered correct.

Dick Spottswood listed for me

over a dozen Yañes recordings made for Edison in Mexico City around March to May 1907. Yañes appears to have recorded solo pieces then.

Dick Spottswood also identified two solo guitar performances recorded in Havana, Cuba for Edison by Sebastián Hidalgo. These cylinders are #18941, "Miserere del Trovador," and #19062, "Selva Negra--Polka," composed by J. Castro. The address for the Havana recordings was 146 Industria. We cannot be as precise about dates, but these titles would have been recorded in late 1905 to March 1906, so these are arguably the first guitar solos. Does anyone own copies? We cannot rule out the possibility of earlier solo guitar recordings made in Europe.

Whoever made the first solo guitar recording--whether Hidalgo, Yañes or another, whether on cylinder or disc--deserves recognition, partly because guitar now enjoys a popularity rivaling that of piano in past generations. The history of guitar performance on disc and cylinder is worth tracing. My interest stems from hours spent as a teen listening to modern guitar wizards like Leo Kottke and John Fahey. I am now curious about guitarists in the pioneer era of recording. Clearly we can document solo guitar performances earlier than those of Nick Lucas, Eddie Lang, and Blind Blake. The earliest guitar recordings should be reissued on CD.

Not even the historic 1922 Pathé recording of Nick Lucas doing "Pickin' The Guitar"/"Teasin' The Frets" is available on CD. The later versions done by Lucas for Brunswick in 1932 with piano accompaniment are on the Shanachie CD Pioneers of the Jazz Guitar (Yazoo 1057) although the CD notes imply the early acoustic cuts are on the CD. The notes claim Lucas "has the distinction of recording the first American guitar solos"--the qualifying "American" makes this credible. Lucas is dazzling on these cuts but the uncredited pianist does not add much,

so I'm curious why Brunswick added piano (and puzzled that Brian Rust's Complete Entertainment Discography cites the 1932 disc as "guitar solos"). I am eager to hear the acoustic Pathé disc. Does any reader own this rare Lucas disc?

Guitar accompanied by other instruments can be found on very early recordings, such as one I recently heard of a guitar and mandolin duet of June 1905 on an Edison 2-minute cylinder. The two musicians are Samuel Siegel and M. Lloyd Wolfe. Arthur Collins does the announcement! Edison Phonograph Monthly stated upon this cylinder's release, "This is the first record ever made by this combination of instruments" (promotional literature is not always accurate). L.E. Andersen sent me a cassette of early recordings with guitar--in duet form and as accompanying instrument for Mexican singers. Related recordings include a 1902 zither performance by D. Wormser (he began with Edison in 1899) and a 1902 dulcimer performance by William Moriarity.

The bio-discography The Banjo on Record, edited by Uli Heier and Rainer E. Lotz, confirms what collectors of early discs already know: banjo was incredibly popular in American recording studios in early days. Guitar was never as popular on domestic recordings. In contrast to the percussive plunk of a banjo, the gentle sound of gut strings is not one the acoustic recording process captured well, at least not in the U.S. (Edison had more success in Mexico recording the instrument). That is why this particular Victor Grand Prize 78 by Octaviano Yañes intrigued me from the day I acquired it. The sound is decent because my copy is in excellent condition, but this is not a disc for showing off sound quality on early 78s.

If readers own earlier solo guitar recordings, I would love to acquire a cassette. Also, I would appreciate more information on Sebastián Hidalgo and Octaviano Yañes.

ADJUSTING THE PNEUMATIC LID SUPPORTS ON THE CREDENZA

By Ron Pendergraft

Before discussing lid devices, I will summarize my own history as a machine collector since readers may wonder where my knowledge comes from. I began collecting phonographs when I was about 13. Shortly afterwards, I went to live with various relatives, and lack of space prevented me from dragging my hobby with me, so I left behind my machines and 78s. I gave up the hobby--temporarily, it turns out. Years later, when I was a teacher, I spotted a copy of The Fabulous Phonograph by Roland Gelatt in San Jose State University's music library. I was fascinated by Gelatt's history of the phonograph and a second period of buying machines began. I collected anything I could find. The trouble was I had no real direction.

One day at Stanford University's Archive of Recorded Sound, I met Ed Linotti, curator of the collection. I told Ed I collected various machines and he firmly responded, "Collect Victors! They are the Cadillacs of phonographs." I had accumulated mostly outside horn machine but my collection had no real order. Because of teaching demands, other interests, and limited space, I disposed of my collection around 1980 except for a Victrola VIII that my wife wanted to keep.

In the early 1980s I bought Robert Baumbach's Look For The Dog, a book packed with information. The book led to my third and present love affair with phonographs, only this time I specialize in Victrolas, especially Victor Orthophonic machines. I have less interest in early outside horn or cylinder machines. Ed Linotti helped me by

giving detailed information. He was a treasure-trove of knowledge, history, and suggestions about everything related to phonographs and early records. He died in 1988.

Ed introduced me to Peter Wall, who lives in San Francisco and specializes in reproducer repair. I find Peter to be the best person at rebuilding orthophonic reproducers. Over the years Peter has answered my questions, always eager to share information. His advice comes from his many years of developing repair and restoration techniques.

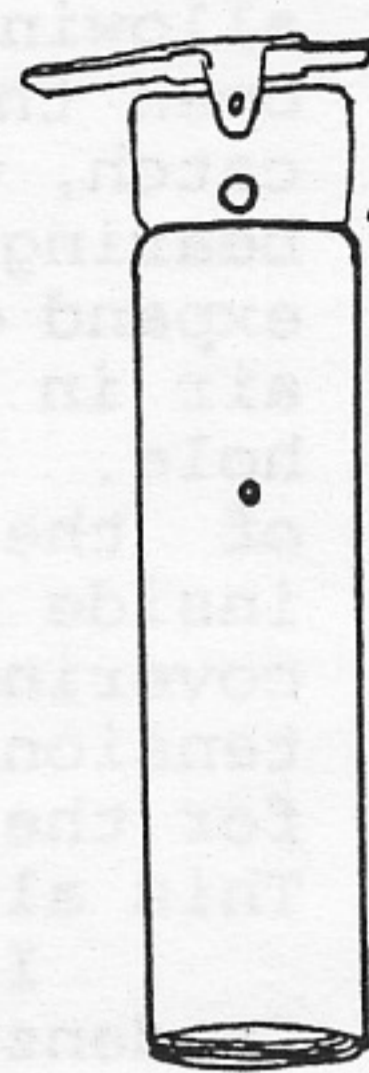
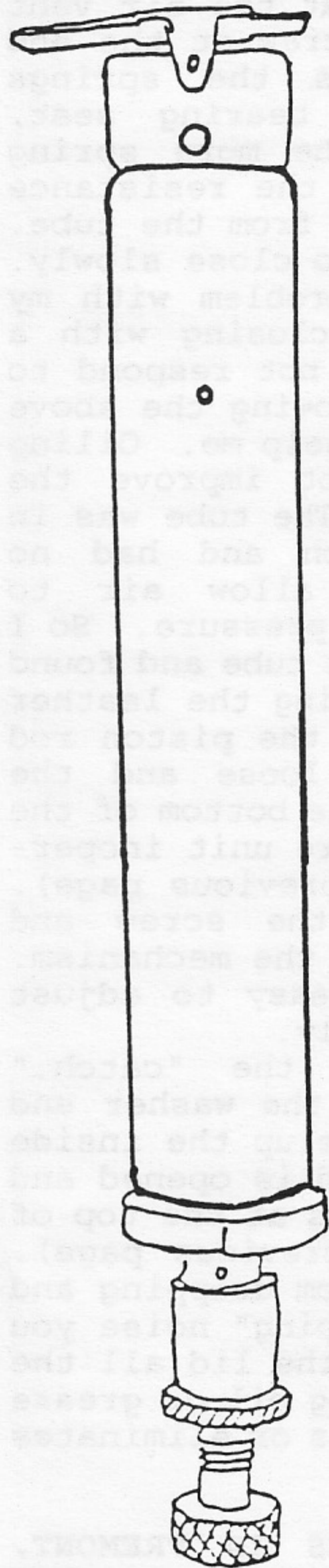
Some of my knowledge comes from Ed Linotti and Peter Wall, and some has been gleaned from tinkering with and restoring my own machines. When I buy a machine I take it apart, clean it, put it back together, and adjust it so it works at optimum efficiency. I don't repair machines other than my own, partly because I don't have an endless supply of parts and partly because my knowledge of non-Victor machines is limited.

Because I take my own machines apart, I am comfortable discussing Victor's closing device for lids. The Credenza and other models use a pneumatic lid closing device that allows the machine's lid to close slowly by itself through a process of cushioning the air from two tubes, one attached to each side of the lid. Victor's literature for Orthophonic Victrolas notes that the "lid should close quietly" and discusses adjustments to make if the lid does not "drop slowly after being released from the catch."

To make adjustments, remove the back of the cabinet. You will see two tubes, each with a tension screw and each about 9 1/2 inches in length.

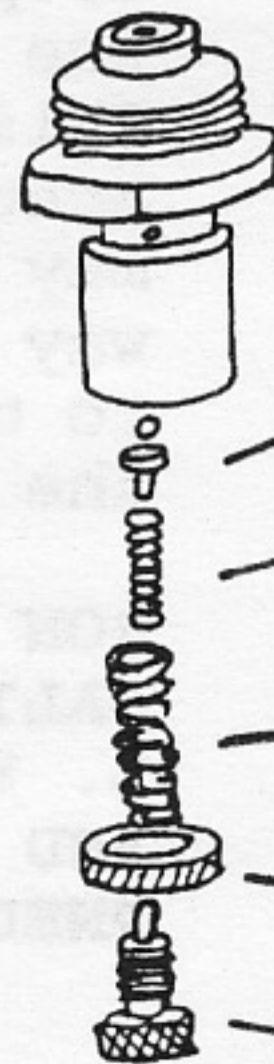
PNEUMATIC CUSHION LID SUPPORT --

AN EXPLODED VIEW



E
F
G

- A = ANGLE BRACE
(ATTACHED TO CABINET)
- B = "CATCH" HOLE (ONE ON
EACH SIDE OF TUBE)
- C = OIL HOLE (?)
- D = PNEUMATIC TUBE
- E = BALL BEARING
- F = BALL BEARING
- G = COMPRESSION SPRING
(KEEPS BALL BEARINGS
TIGHT AGAINST TUBE WALL)
- H = PISTON ROD
- I = PISTON RING (LEATHER WASHER)
- J = METAL WASHER
- K = ATTACHMENT SCREW



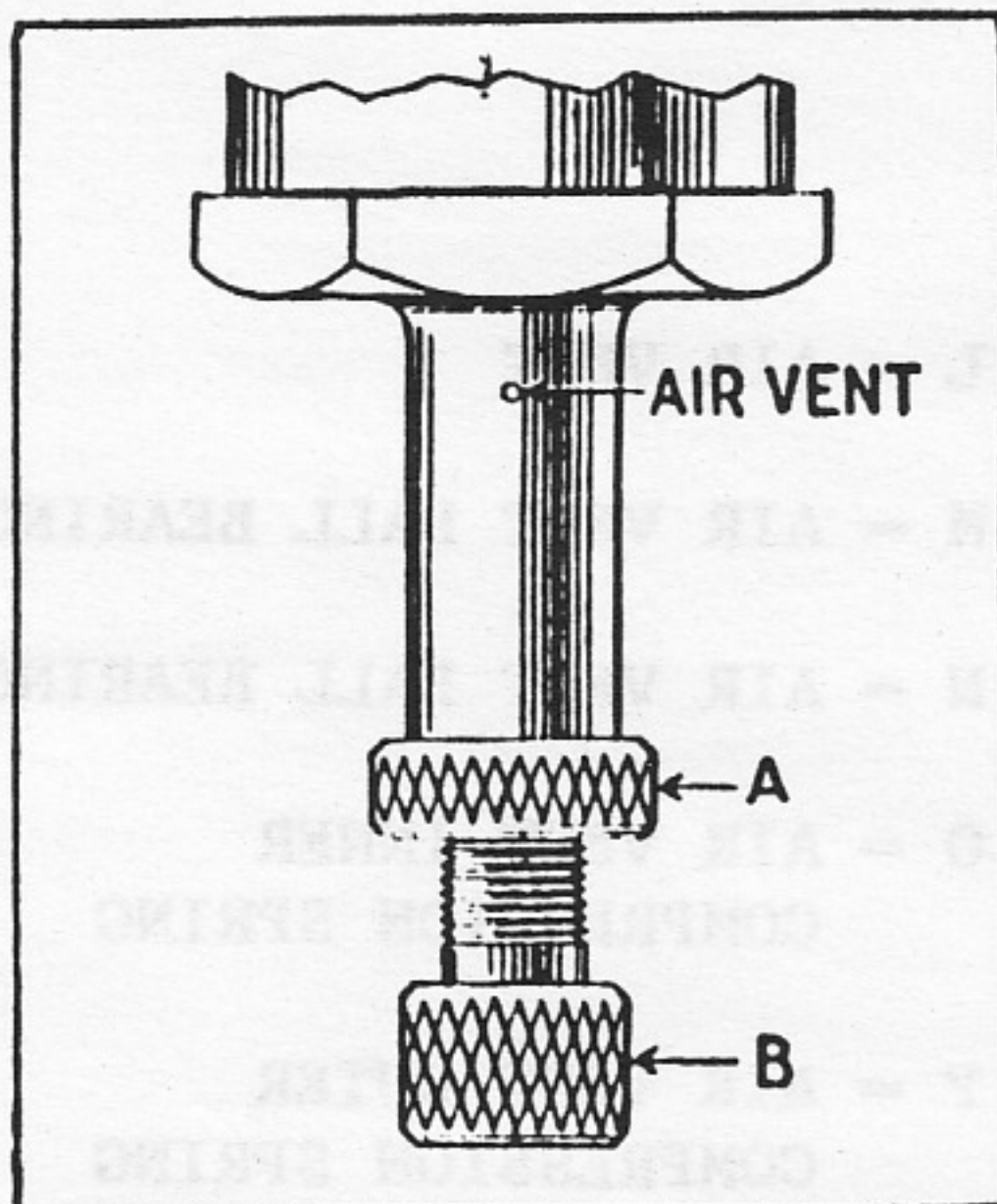
- L = AIR VENT
- M = AIR VENT BALL BEARING
- N = AIR VENT BALL BEARING SEAT
- O = AIR VENT INNER
COMPRESSION SPRING
- P = AIR VENT OUTER
COMPRESSION SPRING
- Q = LOCK NUT
- R = ADJUSTING SCREW

I consulted Victor's 1924 Instructions for the Setting-up, Operation and Care of the Victrola, Spring Motor Type, which says this about adjusting lid supports:

1st -- If the lid closes with a bump, loosen lock nut "A," and turn the adjusting screw "B" to the right until proper cushioning has been secured [see the drawing below]. Then tighten the lock nut. If, after making the adjustment, the lid fails to operate properly, place a few drops of oil (preferably Neat's-foot) in the top of the lid support tube.

2nd -- If the lid closes too slowly or does not close tightly, first insert a small wire or any small pointed metal implement into the air vent. This will remove any dirt that may be clogging the vent. After cleaning the vent, if proper action is not obtained, proceed as directed in paragraph one, only turning the adjusting screw to the left.

These lid supports appear to work on the principle of old bicycle



THIS DRAWING OF THE ADJUSTING MECHANISM IS FROM THE MANUAL CITED ABOVE.

pumps. A large leather washer that is cupped will collapse a bit, allowing air to rush past it as you open the lid. When you release the catch, which is held in place by ball bearings, the leather washer will expand out like a parachute and force air in the tube out at the air vent hole. The tension screw at the end of the tube adjusts the springs inside that hold a bearing seat, covering a hole. The more spring tension, the greater the resistance for the air to escape from the tube. This allows the lid to close slowly.

I once had a problem with my Credenza lid always closing with a thump. One tube did not respond to my adjustments. Following the above instructions did not help me. Oiling and adjusting did not improve the tube's performance. The tube was in good visual condition and had no cracks which could allow air to escape and reduce air pressure. So I dismantled the support tube and found that the screw attaching the leather washer to the end of the piston rod had worked its way loose and the washer was lying at the bottom of the tube, making the entire unit inoperable (see item K on previous page). After I reattached the screw and washer, I reassembled the mechanism. The lid support was easy to adjust and now works perfectly.

Let's consider the "catch." Two ball bearings at the washer end of the piston rod ride up the inside of the tube as the lid is opened and drop into the two holes at the top of the tube (see B on previous page). This keeps the lid from dropping and accounts for the "popping" noise you may hear as you lift the lid all the way to the top. Adding oil or grease to this section reduces or eliminates the noise.

RON PENDERGRAFT LIVES IN FREMONT, CALIFORNIA. SPECIAL THANKS TO NOEL L. WILLIAMS FOR DRAWINGS ON PAGE 13 AND TO PETER WALL FOR INFORMATION ON PNEUMATIC CUSHION TYPE LID SUPPORTS.

LEAD BELLY AND VERNON DALHART: ROOTED IN TEXARKANA

By Sean Killeen

Lead Belly's famous lyric from his award-winning song "Cotton Fields" reveals the contribution of northeast Texas upon his musical expression:

Just about a mile from Texarkana,
In them old cotton fields back home

Texarkana was the birthplace of Scott Joplin. Murvaul, nearby in Panola County, shaped the cowboy song stylings of Tex Ritter, born here in 1905. Another important musical figure nurtured by this area was Marion Try Slaughter, whose formative years and public career in ways parallel that of Lead Belly. Lead Belly charted an enormous segment of American music, defining folk music and making it credible and noteworthy artistic expression. The parallels are worth exploring in some detail.

Slaughter was better known by his professional name of Vernon Dalhart. Avid 78 collectors may know him by several names since Vernon Dalhart records were issued under many pseudonyms--58 pseudonyms, according to Jim Walsh of Hobbies and Dalhart expert Walter D. Haden. He started out life a few miles from Texarkana in Jefferson, Texas. Born in 1883, six years before Lead Belly, Dalhart grew up helping his father on the farm. He learned to ride, work cattle and horses, play the harmonica and jew's harp, and yodel and whistle. Lead Belly grew up near Leigh, Texas in Harrison County, and mastered similar frontier skills as well as the accordion when young.

Try Slaughter was a good pistol shot and was accomplished at bringing down birds and punching cattle. His father died of knife wounds when Try was an early teen. An only child, he lived with his mother on Line Street in the once prosperous Jefferson,

which in the 1880s and 1890s earned a reputation for violence. It suffered hard times because of the declining east Texas economy.

By 1900 Try Slaughter had moved on to Dallas and begun a musical career which would lead him to a place in Nashville's Country Music Hall of Fame. He is immortalized as the first country music recording star, with his record sales topping 50 million total. Dalhart's 1948 New York Daily News obituary cites 25 million as the number of copies sold of "The Prisoner's Song." In 1910 he moved to New York City and continued his study of classical and semi-classical music. He eventually took advantage of this training by recording a few opera arias for companies like Edison but this is not the kind of music for which he is remembered. His first recording was in 1917 for Edison, "Can't You Hear Me Calling, Caroline," which remained his personal favorite. His styling was from down home and he sang in a black dialect. He adopted the stage name Vernon Dalhart, which are names of two small towns in Texas.

From 1916 to 1920, Lead Belly (using the name Walter Boyd) farmed and worked horses in northeast Texas, first as a free man and then as an inmate at Shaw State Farm in Bowie County. In his 1938 recording of "When I Was A Cowboy," Lead Belly incorporated yodeling into his performance, not unlike Dalhart's style.

In the December 1918 issue of Edison Amberola Monthly, Dalhart explained how he came to sing in dialect: "I never had to learn it. When you are born and brought up in the south your only trouble is to talk any other way. All through my childhood that was almost the only talk I ever heard because the sure

'nough Southerner talks almost like a Negro, even when he's white. I've broken myself of the habit, more or less, in ordinary conversation, but it still comes pretty easy."

Walter D. Haden, in an excerpt from a biography in progress on Dalhart, quotes the Victor catalogs of the early 1920s promoting Dalhart's style: "There is no burlesquing in Mr. Dalhart's singing of Negro songs. To quote his own words, he simply imagines he's 'back home' again and sings as the spirit and his experiences dictate."

By the 1930s Dalhart's career was in decline, and he never again enjoyed the commercial success of the previous decade. His final years were spent in Bridgeport, Connecticut where he gave private voice lessons. He was the night check-out clerk at the Hotel Barnum at the time of his fatal heart attack in 1948 at age 65.

Dalhart is noteworthy not only for the extraordinary number of records sold in his heyday, which established him firmly as the first country music recording star, but for his pioneering work in creating a new

genre in music. Lead Belly, during this period, was not yet recording but was honing his 12-string guitar and adding to his song bag. Like Dalhart, Lead Belly was forging the new musical genre of folk music.

When Vernon Dalhart began to record after World War I, the term "hillbilly" was regarded derisively and was accorded an inferior, non-critical status in the music world. Dalhart was instrumental in legitimizing country music because he reached back to his Texarkana roots to give expression to his songs. In the May 1960 issue of Hobbies, Jim Walsh quotes Vernon Dalhart's own summary of his career: "I was educated for grand opera, but really feel I can bring more happiness to the many with the singing of what we popularly call the heart-songs, the ballad type, with their little strains of love--love of family, home, country and dear ones . . . There should be music in all our lives. It would take away much of the grimness and sorrow . . ."

Dalhart's recognition of his roots and his ability to draw upon



"TIC, TOC . . . TIC, TOC." A PRISONER COUNTS THE REMAINING MINUTES BEFORE EXECUTION IN THE 1926 RECORDING OF "THE GOVERNOR'S PARDON." DALHART EXCELLED AT TWO TYPES OF SONGS COMMON TO COUNTRY MUSIC: THE PRISONER'S LAMENT AND THE "EVENT" SONG, WHICH USUALLY RECALLS A TRAGEDY. LEAD BELLY WOULD HAVE KNOWN DALHART'S MOST POPULAR 78S.

the harsh experiences of his youth for musical expression have parallels in Lead Belly's life and career. Both were reared in agricultural settings where horses and pistols were commonplace, and both Southern and Western traditions flourished. Both were only sons and musically gifted from their earliest years.

Dalhart went to Dallas from Jefferson and then to New York. Lead Belly left home and went to Shreveport's Fannin Street, then to Dallas for musical training with Blind Lemon Jefferson. Lead Belly didn't reach New York until 1935 where he died 14 years later, nearly as impoverished as Vernon Dalhart. Both were posthumously recognized by their peers and welcomed to musical Halls of Fame. Music of the 20th century benefitted from their innovations and interpretations of their Texarkana roots. The musical heritage they absorbed was incorporated into their songs as were their families' emotions and expressions.

Walter D. Haden points out in the 1970 Country Music Who's Who that Dalhart's recording in 1928 of "Bully of the Town" could have been a page from the singer's past on Line Street in Jefferson. Lead Belly recorded "Bully of the Town" in 1948 upon the suggestion of his wife Martha. Lead Belly retained the familiar refrain:

When I walk that levee round
I was looking for that bully
of the town

Then Lead Belly added something distinctive:

Looking for that bully, mamma,
That bully of the town
Looking for that bully
What shot the woman down
I'm looking for that bully of
the town

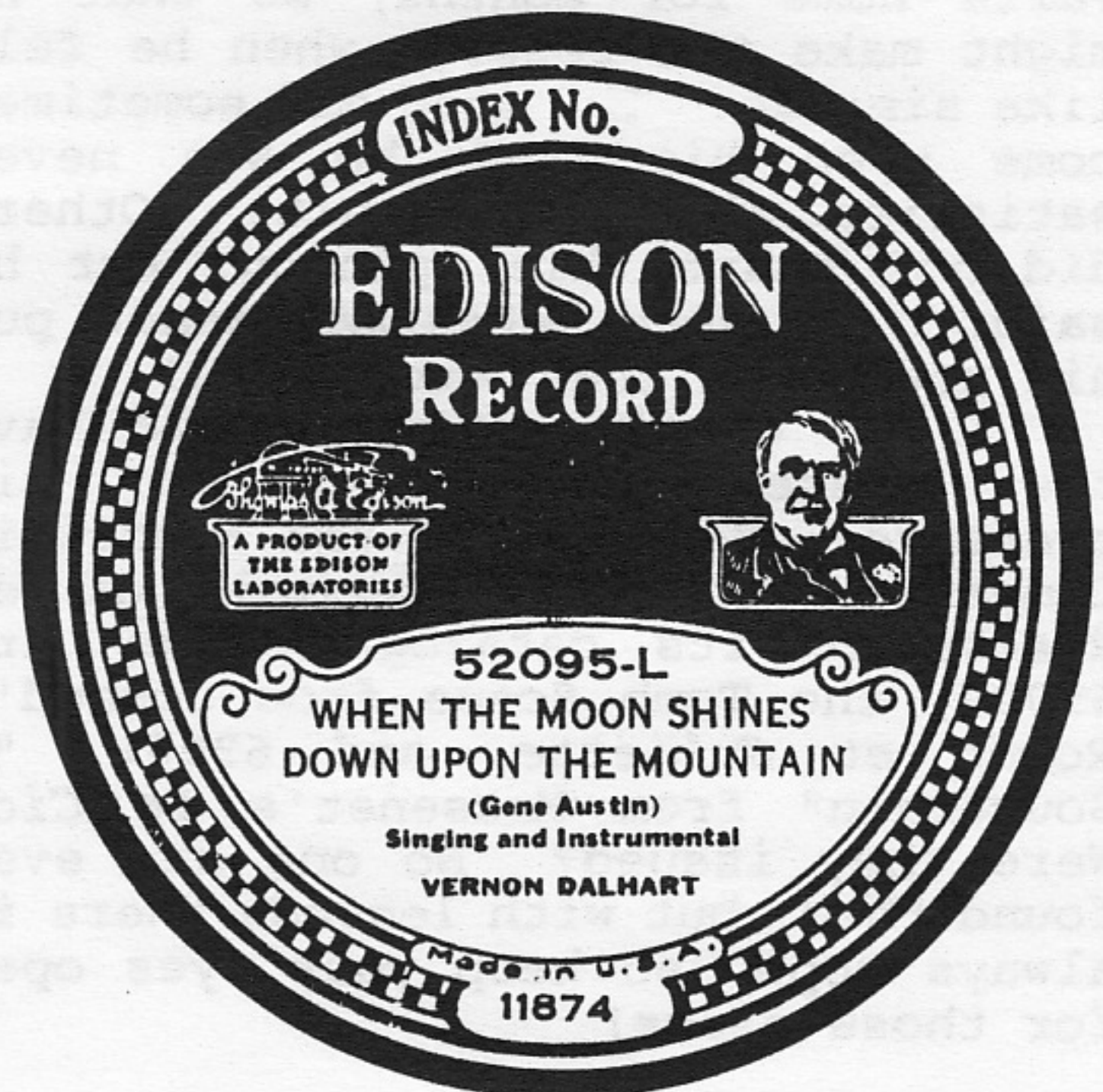
In March, 1924 Lead Belly sang for Texas Governor Pat Neff, who was visiting Huntsville Prison. Neff called upon Lead Belly to sing some hillbilly tunes. Lead Belly obliged and also worked in his famous "Gov. Pat Neff Pardon Song." Soon there-

after Lead Belly was released. He served 7 of his 30 year sentence for allegedly shooting down--as the song puts it--a "bully."

During his last few years in Huntsville Prison, Lead Belly likely heard Vernon Dalhart's series of convict songs, such as "The Prisoner's Song," "The Convict and the Rose," "Behind These Gray Walls," "The Chain Gang Song," "The Governor's Pardon," and "I Want A Pardon For Daddy." The songs may have influenced his composition of the "Gov. Pat Neff Pardon Song."

In the years following his release, while singing in northwest Louisiana, Lead Belly surely heard Dalhart's multi-million selling hit "The Prisoner's Song." In his Only A Miner, folklorist Archie Green says this song "was known in nearly every American home that boasted a phonograph between 1924 and 1929." Here is the poignant refrain of "The Prisoner's Song":

I wish I had someone to love me
If I had wings like an angel
Over these prison walls I would
fly
And I'd fly to the arms of my
loved one
And there I'd be willing to
die.



COLLECTING LEGENDS

By David Banks

Along with records, I collect legends about records, especially concerning singers of opera's Golden Age. A legend is something believed to be true even though it cannot be verified. Legends are usually supported with a tiny bit of evidence. The claim might be dubious but that makes the legend.

Jean de Reszke began his career as a baritone. He studied with Antonio Cotogni and later went to another teacher. In 1879 he made his debut as a tenor and became the greatest tenor of his era. Jules Massenet composed *Le Cid* for him. De Reszke was supreme in Wagner roles and was one of the greatest Tristans of all time. Critic W. J. Henderson praised de Reszke's elegance, finish, unfailing poetry, passion, and intelligent interpretations. The tenor retired from the stage in 1902.

Talking machine companies made every effort to record de Reszke. In her 1934 book *Jean de Reszke and the Great Days of Opera*, Clara Leiser writes, "Various companies offered him enormous sums of money . . . and one of them left its apparatus in his Paris home for months, so that he might make the records when he felt like singing. The mood did sometimes come upon him, but he was never satisfied with the result. Others did not share this opinion, but he said: 'No: Jean DeReszke cannot put his soul into that wax'" (264).

The cautious tenor would have the masters destroyed in his presence. Yet in 1904 the Fonotipia Company listed two records of de Reszke in its catalog. They are 69000, the Tomb Scene from Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, and 69001, "O Souverain" from Massenet's *Le Cid*. Were they issued? No one has ever found them, but with legends there is always hope, so keep your eyes open for those discs!

The soprano Hariclea Darclée liked premiers and appeared in three, creating Catalani's *La Wally*, Puccini's *Tosca*, and Mascagni's *Iris*. She has six 1904 Fonotipia discs listed in Robert Bauer's *The New Catalogue of Historical Records, 1898-1908/09*, with two arias from *Tosca*, two from *Iris*, and two from Verdi's *La Traviata*. They were not assigned catalog numbers. In short, we have six titles but not one test pressing.

In 1928, Darclée recorded some folk songs in her native Romania. She was 68 and her voice was still lovely. One selection is on the CD titled *A Century of Voices at the Carlo Felice Theater, Vol. I, Memories (HR4408/9)*.

This CD also features a record alleged to be Antonio Cotogni. If we go by the earliest year of birth, he is the oldest singer on disc. He was born in 1831 and had his debut in 1852. As previously mentioned, he was one of Jean de Reszke's teachers. In *The Golden Age Recorded*, P.G. Hurst mentions the record now on the CD. When Hurst was asked to identify an unlabeled test pressing of an aged baritone singing "O Casto fior" from Massenet's *Il Re di Lahore*, Hurst thought it might be Cotogni.

The one commercial record of Cotogni--the song "I Mulattieri" with the tenor Francesco Marconi--is included on a CD titled *The Harold Wayne Collection, Vol. II (Symposium 1069)*. Cotogni has no extended solo, so assessing his voice is difficult. The test pressing was a Gramophone and Typewriter Disc with a matrix number next to the 1903 12" records of Sir Charles Santley. Cotogni and Santley were contemporaries. Hurst suggests they went to the studio together and Sir Charles, after recording, said, "Now you have a go, old boy." It is a nice legend. If it isn't true, it should be.

Our next legend concerns Jean Baptiste Faure, who sang the title role in the premier of Ambroise Thomas' *Hamlet* in 1868. He was also in the premiers of Meyerbeer's *Dinorah* and *L'Africaine*. He sang Mephistopheles in the premier of Gounod's revised version of *Faust*. He even composed and is best remembered for his songs "Les Rameaux" and "Crucifix."

On the CD titled *Historic Baritones of the French School* (Symposium 1089), you can hear two cylinders alleged to be Faure. As with the Cotogni test pressing, no documentation exists. One selection is Adam's "Cantique de Noël" and the other is "Leonor! Viens!" from Donizetti's *La Favorita*. I might bet on the Donizetti.

Why do some think it is Faure? The cylinders seem to be Pathés from about 1900 and again we hear an aged voice (Faure would have been 70). Keep in mind that Faure often accompanied himself. The aria from *La Favorita* is cleverly edited yet the pianist easily follows the tempo, rubato, and musical cuts. This would be easier for a singer performing his own arrangement. The voice more or less matches that described in reviews of Faure and does not sound like anyone else we know. This opera was closely associated with Faure. Would anyone care to place a bet?

Sometimes mere legends become established facts when a record is actually found. Some remarkable CDs are *A Recital From The Yale Collection* (Symposium 1135) and *Treasures From Yale's Historical Sound Recordings Collection*, a two CD set issued by Yale University, P-1993. The three compact discs comprise 75 titles. All recordings were legendary--now we can hear them.

Marianne Brandt sang Kundry in the second cast during the premier of Wagner's *Parsifal*. We now have on CD

the only copy of Brandt singing Schumann's "Frühlingsnacht," or "Spring Night". (Brandt's two other recordings are anthologized elsewhere.) We also have Francesco Tamagno singing an aria from *Messalina* by composer Isadore DeLara. Tamagno sang in the premier in 1899. This private recording was never released until now. There is Marié De Lisle singing an aria from Bizet's *Carmen*. She learned the role from its creator, Célestine Galli-Marié. We also have the beloved "Moon Aria" from Dvořák's *Rusalka* as sung by creator Ružena Maturová.

I save the best for last. I used to hear about this record, some denying it exists, others saying it was in the Yale Collection. I refer to Lilli Lehmann's 1907 "Liebestod" from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. Isolde was Lehmann's greatest role (Jean de Reszke was often her Tristan). Perhaps she wanted to sing this at the tempo used on stage, which would explain the music being recorded down to the spindle hole. Her voice is firm, focused, and filled with passion. It swells and soars with the music. She was 59! Singers were trained in those days!

Though not released until now, this may be Lehmann's greatest recording. She sang in the American premier of *Tristan* in 1886. "Vocally the performance was beyond praise," Henry Krehbiel wrote in the *New York Tribune*. "It is seldom given to the public to observe so complete a devotion of an artist to her task. From her first note to her last she abandoned herself without reservation to a publication of the contents of the character."

The legend suddenly comes alive. The greatest moment for a record collector is being able to eavesdrop on history. We read Krehbiel and listen for ourselves. It may be a mere echo but we share in the glory.

DAVID BANKS LIVES IN NOVATO, CALIFORNIA

COMPACT DISCS MENTIONED IN THIS ARTICLE MAY BE FOUND IN SOME TOWER RECORDS. OR ORDER THROUGH NIPPER BY CALLING 914-679-6982.

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

BY TIM GRACYK

An editor needs more material as soon as an issue goes out, so I am lucky to have friends like David Banks, Ron Pendergraft, and Charles Arnhold, who so far have written pieces for every issue of V78J and have even finished items for the 4th issue, which gets mailed in February. Others have joined as regulars since that first issue. Care to submit your own piece? Drop V78J a line.

Most contributors have been collecting 78s--and, in Ron's case, machines--for decades, as they say in their pieces. My own collecting goes back to 1985 and, at age 35, I may seem in the world of collecting a new kid on the block. I purchased my first Victrola, a mint XIV, seven years ago, shortly after a friend passed away. Joel Shimmon introduced me to Beniamino Gigli's 78s during the last months of an illness. I have taken good care of his machine.

In the last ten years I have spent countless hours playing 78s, reading books on machines and artists, and taking "record calls" on the phone--people in my area find out about my hobby and call to sell me their "rare" Glenn Miller 78s.

The greatest challenge of each issue is checking facts. Since I own

most books published on phonographs and 78s, and I have plenty of 78s and cylinders to consult if I need to hear original recordings, I can check most facts in my record room, which is a large finished basement.

I also turn to others, and this is a good place to express gratitude. I've known some experts since my first year of collecting. Bill Knorp has shared information about machines and opera discs for 10 years. I turn regularly to Dave Rocco for facts on pioneer recordings and hot jazz.

When errors pop up in V78J, blame the editor for not investigating thoroughly or for not asking the right questions when checking with others. If you spot a problem or just disagree, write in!

In this small space I want to acknowledge the help of a few with whom I have come in contact only since V78J began. I appreciate the support in letters and on the phone of folks like Dick Carty (he supplied a drawing that will grace the next cover), Ray Phillips, Ron Dethlefson, R.J. Wakeman (he supplied the White-man program on page 35), Martin Bryan, and Bill Klinger. I have others to thank but I'll save names for next issue's "Editor's Comments."

EDISON BRAKE VOLTAGE: A TIP FROM BOB WALTRIP

A question was asked in the last Victrola and 78 Journal about the voltage required to operate an Edison brake. Bob Waltrip of Levelland, Texas, wrote to V78J: "In reference to the direct-current voltage required to operate the Edison Diamond Disc electric brake, Ron Dethlefson informs me that the original instructions do not specify the exact voltage but merely say to use 'a flashlight battery.' I recommend using a common 9-volt battery with the negative side grounded to

the phonograph's bedplate. The electric coil in this brake is very heavy, and 9 volts wouldn't hurt it. If all of the brake's mechanism is unworn and properly lubricated, 9 volts will fire it. Make sure that all of the insulation is intact on the reproducer floating weight lift pin and hinge block, and on the wire that runs from the hinge block down through a conduit on the horn, to the brake, and on the brake-to-bedplate mounting under the turntable." Look for Bob's article in the next V78J!

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JIMMY BERTRAND

The best dance orchestras of the Race make the hottest dance tunes on Vocalion—King Oliver, Fess Williams, Jimmy Bertrand, Elgar, and numerous others make records for Vocalion. To hear any of them is to want them at once. Dance your blues away to these wonderful dance recordings.



FESS WILLIAMS

Here Are the Latest Dance Hits

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|-------|
| Some Day, Sweetheart
Slow Fox Trot | Atlanta Black Bottom—Fox Trot | |
| Dead Man Blues—Fox Trot | High Fever—Fox T Fess Williams' Royal Flush Orchestra | 1058 |
| King Oliver and His Dixie Syncopators | | 75c |
| Tack Annie—Fox Trot | Slow Motion Blues | |
| New Wang Wang Blues—Fox Trot | California Stomp | 1050 |
| King Oliver and His Dixie Syncopators | Sonny Clay's Plantation Orch. | 75c |
| 47th Street Stomp—Fox Trot | Cafe Capers—Fox Trot | |
| Idle Hour Special—Fox Trot | When Jenny Does That Low | |
| Bertrand's Washboard Wizards | Down Dance—Fox Trot | 15477 |
| | Elgar's Creole Orchestra | 75c |
| | Nightmare—Fox Trot | |
| | Brotherly Love—Fox Trot | 15478 |
| | Elgar's Creole Orchestra | 75c |

Special Selection of Vocalion Race Records

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------|
| All Night Shags—Fox Trot | Fat Meat and Greens | |
| Put Me in the Alley—Fox Trot | Sweetheart o'Mine Piano Solos | 1019 |
| Piano-Clarinet-Banjo | Jelly Roll Morton | 75c |
| The Chicago Hottentots | | |
| Charleston Blues | F Minor Blues—Fox Trot | |
| South Street Blues Singing | Chicago Back Step—Fox Trot | |
| Comedienne with Piano, Violin, Cornet | Banjo-Piano-Clarinet | 1004 |
| Viola McCoy with The Dixie Trio | Three Jolly Miners | 75c |
| Daddy Come Back | | |
| I've Got Somebody Now | Gamblin' George Blues | |
| Rosa Henderson with | Somebody Else's Blues | |
| the Four Black Diamonds | Contralto with Piano and Cornet | 1041 |
| Drop That Sack—Fox Trot | Missouri Anderson | 75c |
| Lill's Hot Shots | | |
| Georgia Bo Bo—Fox Trot | Georgia Man | |
| Trot Vocal Chorus | What a Man Singing Comedienne | |
| Lill's Hot Shots | with Piano, Banjo, Clarinet and | 1006 |
| | Cornets Teddy Peters | 75c |

Special Selection of Vocalion

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Give Me That Old Time Religion | |
| In My Heart Piano by Bradford | 1022 |
| Male Voices Cotton Belt Quartet | 75c |
| Go'won to Town—Novelty Fox Trot | |
| Dewey Jackson's Novelty | |
| Instrumental Peacock Orch. | |
| What Do You Want Poor Me to Do | |
| With Piano and Cornet | 1039 |
| Floyd Campbell | 75c |
| Hateful Papa Blues | |
| Leaving Town to Wear You Off My | |
| Mind Sammy Lewis and | 1029 |
| His Bamville Syncopators | 75c |
| Here Comes My Baby | |
| Chicago Policeman Blues | |
| Rosa Henderson with | 1021 |
| the Three Hot Eskimos | 75c |
| I'm Gonna Shout All Over God's | |
| Heaven | |
| We'll Be Ready When the Great | |
| Day Comes Male Quartet with | |
| Piano by Perry Bradford | 1001 |
| Cotton Belt Quartet | 75c |
| Jackass Blues—Fox Trot | |
| Deep Henderson—Fox Trot | |
| King Oliver and His | 1014 |
| Dixie Syncopators | 75c |
| Jambled Blues—Fox Trot | |
| Bogloosa Blues—Fox Trot | |
| Sonny Clay and His | 15078 |
| Plantation Orchestra | 75c |
| Life's Railway to Heaven | |
| The Chief Corner Stone | |
| Vocal Solo with Piano | 1018 |
| Hermes Zimmerman | 75c |
| Lord, I've Done What You Told | |
| Me To | |
| Golden Slippers Male Quartet | |
| with Piano by Perry Bradford | 1005 |
| Cotton Belt Quartet | 75c |
| Messin' Around—Fox Trot—Fess | |
| Williams' Royal Flush Orchestra | |
| Heebie Jeebies—Fox Trot—Fess Wil- | 1054 |
| liams' Royal Flush Orchestra | 75c |
| Nobody Else Will Do | |
| Who's Gonna Do Your Lovin' | |
| (When Your Good Man's Gone Away) | |
| Singing Comedienne with Piano | 1015 |
| and Clarinet Edmonia Henderson | 75c |
| Not Today, Sweet Cookie | |
| I Can't Do That Soprano and | 1036 |
| Baritone, Piano Paige and Warfield | 75c |
| Panama Limited Blues | |
| Tia Juana Man Singing Comedienne | |
| with Piano, Banjo and Saxophones | 1009 |
| Ada Brown | 75c |
| Pebble Blues—Comedian with Piano— | |
| The Pebbles | |
| Can't Sleep Blues—Comedian with | 1042 |
| Piano—The Pebbles | 75c |
| Pig Alley Stomp—Fox Trot | |
| Ridiculous Blues—Fox Trot | |
| Banjo-Piano-Clarinet | 1003 |
| Three Jolly Miners | 75c |

THESE RECORDS

MUSIC

2424 HA

This rare Vocalion flyer from R. Michael Montgomery lowest number here is 1000 (a Sonny Clay recording the highest being 1075 (Evelyn Thompson's "Some Day") That makes for a total of 76 numbers--and presumably the flyer lists only 58 titles from the 1000 series, with

on Race Records--Continued

Plantation Blues—Fox Trot	
Chicago Breakdown—Fox Trot	1000
Sonny Clay's Plantation Orch.	75c
Pistol Paul's Sermon—Jazz Baby	
Moore & Co.	
Morning Prayer—Jazz Baby Moore	1045
& Co.	75c
Pretty Man Blues—Luella Miller	1044
Dago Hill Blues—Luella Miller	75c
Rest Your Hips	
Gut Struggle Contralto with Piano,	1034
Clarinet and Banjo Wilmer Davis	75c
Rolls-Royce Papa	
I'm Gonna Get Me a Man, That's	
All Contralto with Piano, Cornet and	1032
Banjo Virginia Liston	75c
Sadie Green	
(The Vamp of New Orleans)	
I'm Sitting On Top of the World	
(Just Rolling Along)	
Vocal Duet with Ukulele	
"The Sunburnt Kids"	1016
Della and Gene Collins	75c
She's Crying For Me—Fox Trot—	
Dewey Jackson's Peacock Orch.	
Capitol Blues—Fox Trot—Dewey	1040
Jackson's Peacock Orchestra	75c
Snag It—Slow Fox Trot	
Too Bad—Fox Trot	
King Oliver and His	1007
Dixie Syncopators	75c
Sorrow Valley Blues	
Home Town Blues	
Singing Comedienne with Orch.	1017
Irene Scruggs	75c
Stomp Off, Let's Go—Fox Trot	
Static Strut—Fox Trot	1027
Tate's Vendome Theatre Orch.	75c
Struggling—Blues Fox Trot	
Little Bits—Blues Fox Trot	
Piano, Clarinet and Washboard	1035
Bertrand's Washboard Wizards	75c
Sugar Foot Stomp—Shimmy One-Step	
Wa Wa Wa—Fox Trot King Oliver	1033
and His Dixie Syncopators	75c
Sweet Mumtaz—Fox Trot	
29th and Dearborn—Fox Trot	1010
Russell's Hot Six	75c
Swing Along	
Ma Honey Male Voices with Piano	1012
Umbrian Glee Club	75c
Tell Me, How Did You Feel?—Sermon	
with Singing—Rev. Gates and His	
Congregation	
Waiting At the Beautiful Gate—	
Sermon with Singing—Rev. Gates	1051
and His Congregation	75c
The Pearls	
King Porter Stomp Piano Solo	1020
Jelly Roll Morton	75c

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y's collection is dated January 14, 1927. The
made in Los Angeles on February 2, 1926),
y Sweetheart," recorded in December 1926).
ly 76 releases in the series by this date. But
another three from the 15000 series.

PHANTOMS OF THE OPERA: OBSERVATIONS ON A FEW COLUMBIA CYLINDERS AND LITTLE WONDERS

By L.E. Andersen

No one eats more humble pie than the dedicated aficionado of early opera recordings. No matter how much we learn or think we know, another apparently insoluble and usually maddening question arises the moment we begin to relax from our research.

Recently a friend, picking my brain, proffered two moulded brown wax Columbia XP cylinders in E+ condition, each bearing only its number and the familiar faint "Columbia" embossment. No. 7760 was "Il Balen," the Il Trovatore workhorse. No. 7769 was "Non e Ver," by composer Tito Mattei. Could I identify the singers?

Sure! Columbia began this Italian number series under its block system, with baritone Arturo Adamini recording both selections from about 1898 to 1901. Like portions of other blocks, parts of this one were carried over into moulded cylinders despite Columbia's adoption of consecutive numbering around March 1901. Like so many "early" artists, Adamini remade the old numbers on the new cylinders. Or did he?

We played the two announcements and heard what sounded like "Signor Carolli." Never heard of him! Columbia literature I've seen shows nothing, nor does anything else I can find; no listed names are even phonetically similar. A fellow-researcher produced a black Columbia XP of 7769 from late 1903 by Alberto de Bassini, who also recorded as "A. del Campo," but that's not our man.

Columbia was notorious for not identifying artists and for substituting different ones without notice. Catalogues rarely offer more information than "Songs in Italian." Carolli, if indeed that is his name, evidently was an interim performer because Adamini was not available and Adamini ultimately may have been

replaced by de Bassini. Has anyone information?

* * * *

"Little Wonder Operatic" would seem an oxymoron of the worst sort. But 35 years ago I found "E Lucevan" from Tosca on No. 312, which another collector insisted, despite my vehement protests, was a bootleg Caruso. This spring I found Little Wonder No. 313, the Brindisi from Cavalleria Rusticana, and this summer I acquired No. 311, "Vesti la Giubba" from Paqliacci. With curiosity now aroused, I examined every Little Wonder I could find, but no more operatic arias surfaced, and Nos. 310 and 314 featured only the usual popular music.

My opera-wise friend Arthur Paré and I exchanged cassettes. I sent him one of No. 313 and he sent me the voice of one Raoul Romito, whom I had never heard. Florencio Constantino emerged as a possibility, as of course one must judge by artists recording at that time for Columbia, which firm was involved in the manufacture of Little Wonders and whose performers appear thereon.

I concluded, after careful analysis, that Nos. 311 and 312 might indeed be Romito and No. 313 Constantino. I should add my belief that Little Wonders were individual recordings and not abbreviated dubs as has long been theorized. Most emphatically, none is Caruso. The Columbia Orchestra's distinctive sound of, say, 1912-1915 is unmistakable in the accompaniment.

Another opera-wise friend, Larry Holdridge, reports Little Wonder No. 314, "Dei Miei Bollenti Spiriti" from Traviata; and No. 315, "Questa o Quella" from Rigoletto. Both are tenor soli. He guesses the voice might be Carlo Cartica. A new

factor, though, is the apparent dual use of number 314. Either he or I misread it, or Little Wonder used the number twice, as I thought I saw a popular selection thus numbered at Union this spring.

Emerson No. 301 on a little vertical disc must be the source of the Caruso/Little Wonder myth. It is, of course, a pirate of Pathé's dub of Caruso's hoary Anglo-Italian cylinder of late 1903 which features piano accompaniment. Can anyone help unmask the Phantoms on Little Wonder with certainty? And does anyone know if the five in question constitute Little Wonder's entire "operatic block," or are there more?

* * * *

I recall the theme question of radio's old soap opera Our Gal Sunday as something like, "Can a young girl from a mining town in the West find happiness as the wife of a wealthy and titled Englishman?" Now I ask, can a lovely chorus girl fresh from the dressing room find happiness in the hallowed halls of Grand Opera?

Columbia seemed to think so in late 1901, at least if a persistent legend holds true. XP cylinder 31604, announced by Frank C. Stanley as simply "Sextette from Florodora, Tell Me Pretty Maiden, Columbia Record," features his voice with

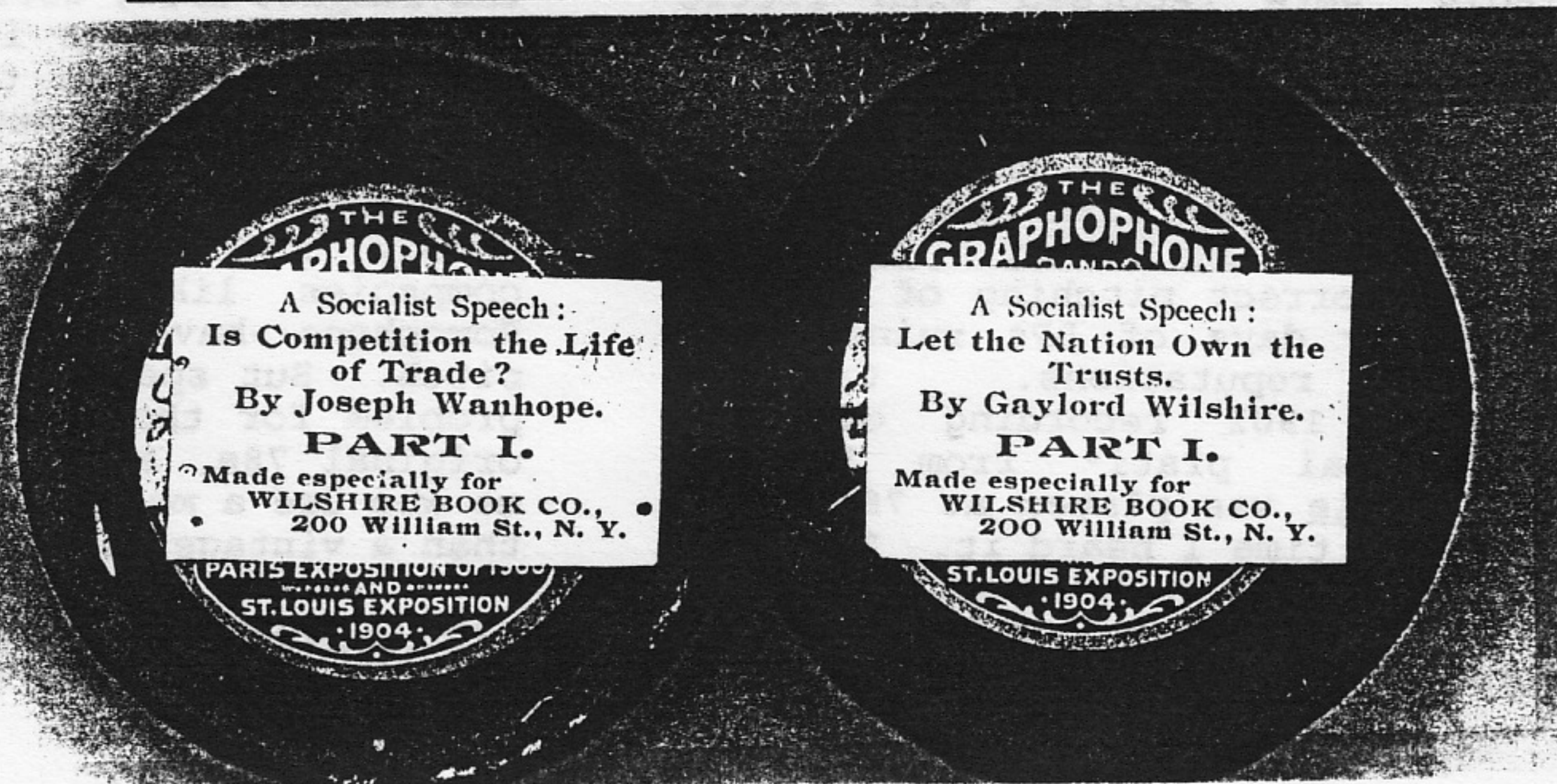
those of tenors Byron G. Harlan and Joe Belmont, and those (according to legend and to Allan Sutton's A Guide to Pseudonyms on American Record, 1892-1942) of three unidentified female members of the original Florodora cast.

Stanley's announcement of No. 31607, listed as "What From Vengeance Yet Restrains Me," is even more terse: "Sextette from Lucia, Columbia Record." Sung at the double-quick, it features the apparent same voices as No. 31604 in a performance best described charitably as unique. At least the poor conscripts were allowed to sing it in English!

Columbia's catalogue describes the talent on both cylinders only as the "Columbia Sextette," and to my knowledge no other sextette selections were ever listed. Considering the closeness of the numbers, the bother of setting up a sextette recording session, and the apparently identical line-up, we must assume the two pieces were recorded in the same session. Worth noting is the fact that while Florodora stayed in the catalogue until at least 1907 if not longer, Lucia did not. Listeners were not satisfied with its mere (forgive me) florid aura.

The question remains: what were the names of these female singers, and were they really from the Florodora cast?

L.E. ANDERSEN LIVES IN BISBEE, ARIZONA.



MODERN EQUIPMENT THAT DELIVERS GREAT SOUND FROM 78S

By Charles Arnhold

I have friends who own Victor Orthophonic Credenzas, and nothing is lovelier than the sound of a mint Victor disc played on a Credenza in excellent shape. Unfortunately, such machines are now hard to come by and can be expensive. A further disadvantage is that Victor machines cannot play hill-and-dale recordings, which means that the omnivorous collector who insists upon the sound of a vintage machine also needs an Edison player and maybe a Pathé as well. I kept a Victrola XIV for many years but used it seldom since I felt the sound never approached what I obtained from selected modern components. For readers curious about what other collectors use in the way of modern equipment, I can describe some equipment on the market today as well as two specific pieces I use that deliver great sound for 78s.

THE TURNTABLE AND SPEED ADJUSTMENT

Equipment that lets us play our discs at correct speeds is especially important. Starting in the late 1950s, LP dubs of historic material came on the market which, to put it kindly, were recorded with little care of speed. An extreme example is on the Jack L. Caidin series Famous Records of the Past (FRP-5). Battistini doing Cocchi's "Per la Patria" sounds like one of the Munchkins in The Wizard of Oz.

Incorrect pitching of dubs in the early days of LPs ruined many operatic reputations. Caruso's November 1902 recording of "Dai campi, dai prati" from Boito's Mefistofele was played at 78 r.p.m. the first time I heard it. This was over a tone high (correct speed for this is 67.92 r.p.m.) and made Caruso sound silly. In those days one read

constantly that Caruso started as a light lyric tenor and his voice deepened gradually over the years. This is not really true. When the discs are played at correct speeds, all the Caruso sound is there, even on the earliest recordings, although a quality perpetually described as "baritonal" did seem to appear in his voice around 1916 in such recordings as "O Souverain" from Massenet's Le Cid. If you play the G & T's, Pathés or Zonophones at the correct pitches, the voice is remarkably consistent, as least through such records as "Angelo casto e bel" from Donizetti's Il Duca D'Alba.

Another example of faulty pitching is Al Jolson's "That Lovin' Traumerei," dubbed in early days by Roccoco Records of Toronto. I am convinced the engineers dubbed it a semitone sharp. When the LP is slowed down, you hear the familiar Jolson voice and the accompanying orchestra gains in tone and body.

In the years during which the main source of dubs was the LP, collectors had some control over pitch since they could purchase turntables featuring speed adjustment. But with the advent of the compact disc, correct pitching at the dubbing source is a must. The few CD players on the market that have pitch control are mostly used by deejays and are not generally available in hi-fi stores. Fortunately, most sources for CD dubs--companies like Pearl, Symposium, Romophone--have been scrupulous about pitch. But speed control remains a problem for those who wish to play original 78s, especially those like me who use a modern turntable rather than a vintage machine.

In the last issue of Victrola and 78 Journal, William R. Moran's list of "Ten Indispensable Records"

included exact playing speeds. Mr. Moran years ago was one of the first writers to point out that it is a rare 78 indeed that plays at 78, and unless we have adequate speed control of a turntable, we cannot hear old recordings as they were meant to be heard. Machines early in the century had speed controls, and if you only play your 78s on vintage machines, you should have no problem.

Two things are important about any modern turntable used for playing 78s. First, it should have a belt-driven, "AC-synchronous" motor with 78 speed. Moreover, it should have a tonearm capable of accepting interchangeable headshells so you can use a variety of cartridges.

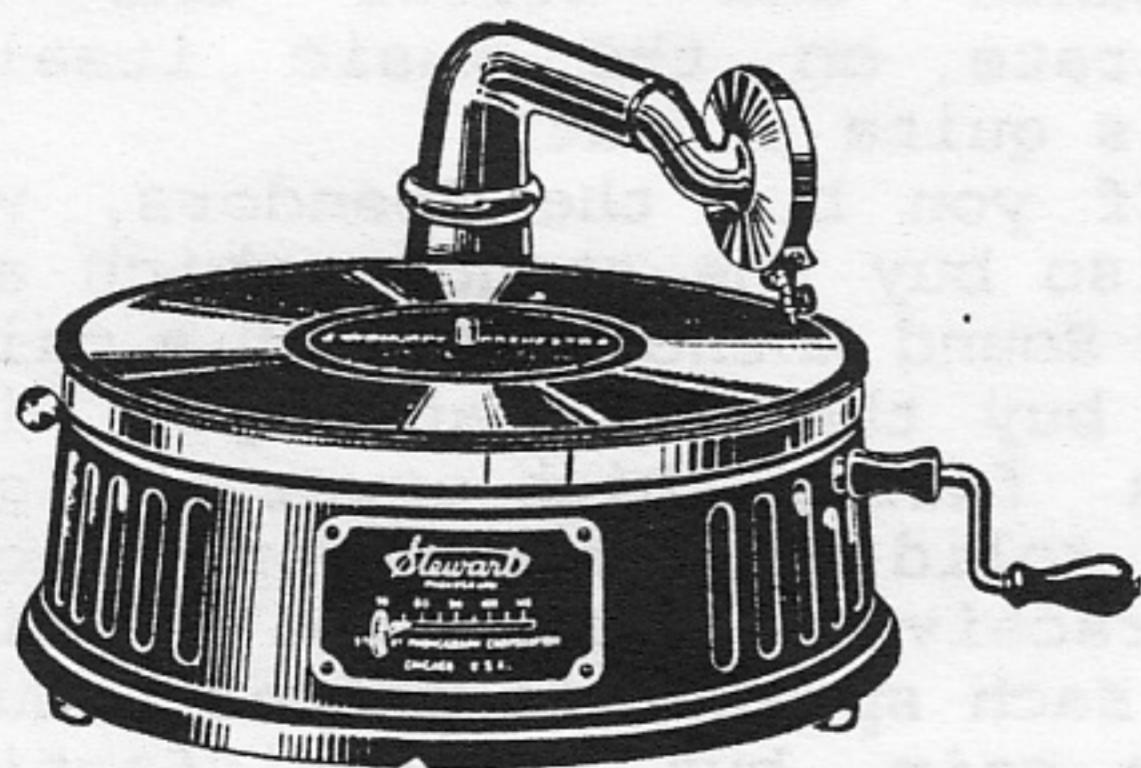
The AC-synchronous motor is important since a device is now on the market which, as an add-on, gives full speed control for turntables--provided the turntables are equipped with such a motor. This is the VPI PLC (Power Line Conditioner), manufactured by VPI Industries of Cliffwood, New Jersey. It lists for \$400.

VPI makes some of the world's best turntables, and this particular device is the ultimate speed control. It controls the frequency of the current fed to the turntable, so by rotating a single knob, you can vary the speed all you want. I have recordings that play anywhere between 66 and 90 r.p.m., and these speeds fall well within the PLC's capabilities. The great thing is that you can plug the PLC into an outlet near a favorite chair, plug an extension cord between the PLC and your turntable power cord, and literally situate the PLC next to your listening chair to adjust playing speed from your seat as the record plays. The couch-potato's dream!

Incidentally, the owner of VPI, Harry Weisfeld, told me several years ago that one could special-order any VPI turntable so it features a 78 pulley. This may be the collector's ultimate turntable.

A turntable must be absolutely level as well as isolated from extraneous vibration. To level the

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turntable, you need a cheap spirit-level and some way of adjusting either the feet of the turntable or the feet of the stand upon which you place it. Isolation from vibration may be difficult since many stands and floors are susceptible to vibration. A dedicated turntable stand is a justifiable expense if you want top results.

The tonearm is important. You need interchangeable headshells so you can use more than one type of cartridge for different types of 78s. Also equip yourself with different sized styli. The two most important cartridges brands are Shure and Stanton. Each has its own merits. They sound quite different. The Shure gives a warmer, richer tone whereas the Stanton possibly provides more detail and is more rugged.

Electronics--that is, the preamp and amplifier--open up a different can of worms, and everyone will have favorites according to taste and budget. Tubed equipment, as opposed to solid-state, enjoys a revival at the moment, with many brands available at all price levels. Tubed preamps and amplifiers generally bring out a palpability in voices that solid-state rarely, if ever, matches.

The other device I consider a must is the Owl 1, a phono equalizer with remarkable properties. You use it between the turntable and preamplifier. Several controls allow you to get the best sound from each 78 you play. Best of all, it has a "vertical" switch that allows the playing of hill-and-dale recordings without further adjustment. Have the correct stylus on hand and bring on the Pathés and Edison Diamond Discs!

By the way, if you are using a separate turntable for LPs, keep it plugged into the phono input on your preamplifier and plug the Owl 1 (into which the 78 turntable is plugged) into one of the other (linestage) inputs. The Owl is a phono stage and is designed to work into a high-level input. This means that you do not have to plug and unplug LP and 78 turntables back and forth.

SPEAKERS AND CABLES

Speakers must be selected according to taste, space, and budget. Audiophiles believe speakers sound their best when well out in a room, not in a corner, on a shelf, or against a wall. Placing speakers away from corners and walls may bring you into conflict with the "spouse acceptance factor," but if you can do it, the improved sound will amaze you. See page 27 for a diagram of my listening room.

In the last year I have heard two speaker systems which give outstanding sound with 78s. They are different in configuration, but what you hear with either is truly marvelous. The first is an English box speaker, the Spendor SP1/2. This is a conventional looking speaker delivering wonderful tonality. Recorded voices never sounded better nor were more easily distinguishable from one another.

As a regular stereo speaker, the Spendor is as good or better than anything I have heard at its price, but as a reproducer of voices, it is equalled by only one other speaker I have heard at any reasonable price, the Magnepan 2.7QR. This is a tall, flat panel speaker. Besides delivering a fine tone, the Magnepan is uncanny in divorcing surface-noise from music. You have to hear this to appreciate it fully. The surface-noise simply separates from the performance and allows one to concentrate on the music itself, which is quite a feat!

If you buy the Spendors, you must also buy the stands, which are made by Sound Anchors at \$400 a pair. If you buy the Magnepan, you will need a fairly high-power, high-current solid state amplifier. Radio Shack receivers simply won't drive them. Each speaker is priced around \$2000 a pair, but the satisfaction they will give over a ten-year period is certainly worth 60¢ a day.

Many people use graphic or parametric equalizers between the turntable and preamp to contour the

sound and cut out high frequencies on 78s, which is where most surface noise resides. I have never heard an equalizer that didn't make the sound worse than it was originally. Even the esteemed Packburn noise reducer seems to reduce the dynamic range of 78s although I may not have heard it at its best. The world's best equalizer is probably the legendary Cello Audio Palette, which is used in major recording studios and by some well-heeled audiophiles. You can buy a good car for the price of the Audio Palette, and owning such an equalizer is only a dream for most of us.

Finally, cables can greatly affect the sound you get. This is true for both interconnects and speaker cable. My two favorites are XLO and Cardas cable. If you have not sampled high-end cables before, the price may stun you. But you will be more stunned when you hear what they do for the sound of your system.

Just for fun, I list the system I would buy for getting the best sound out of my 78s if I were to win a big lottery:

- 1) TURNTABLE: VPI TNT III equipped with 78 pulley. \$5000. This comes with the aforementioned PLC. (By itself, the PLC lists for \$400.)
- 2) TONEARM: Graham 1.5 arm with several interchangeable armwands for different cartridges. \$3000.
- 3) CARTRIDGES: Shure and Stanton with several styli each. \$1200.
- 4) PHONO EQUALIZER: Owl 1. \$389.
- 5) PREAMP: Convergent Audio Technology CAT SL-1 signature (the best). \$4995.

- 6) AMPLIFIER: Convergent Audio Technology JL1 (monoblocs). \$12,800 a pair.
- 7) EQUALIZER: Cello Audio Palette. Beginning at \$18,000.
- 8) SPEAKERS: Wilson Audio XI Grand Slamm. \$64,500. This speaker is so huge you'll need a big room (at least 30' x 20') but you'll have Nellie Melba, Harry Lauder or Louis Armstrong in there with you.
- 9) CABLES: A full set of XLO Signature or Cardas Golden 5. \$5000.
- 10) STANDS: You will need good stands for all of the above. \$3000.

This should about do it. The total amount is \$117,848. If you play LPs, just order a second VPI and set it up accordingly. You can also set up this system to give the best results imaginable with CDs.

If you are interested in knowing more about what equipment I use for 78s or if you have equipment that you think delivers excellent sound, please drop a line. I would be happy to compare notes. Also, I am compiling a list of sources for 78 turntables, cartridges, and other pieces of equipment. I will send the list to anyone who sends a stamped, self-addressed envelope in care of V78J. I also encourage readers to consult Roger Beardsley's article on the same subject in Vol. 39, No. 2 of The Record Collector.

CHARLES ARNHOLD LIVES IN SAN JOSE BUT SOON MOVES TO WASHINGTON D.C. DROP V78J A LINE IF YOU LIVE IN THAT AREA. HE LIKES MEETING OTHER 78 COLLECTORS.

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WHO KNOWS?

The last "Who Knows?" column threw out a few questions, and readers generously sent in information and additional comments.

Regarding the "Z" found in the run-off area of certain Victor Red Seal scroll discs, Martin Bryan, editor of New Amberola Graphic (37 Caledonia St, St. Johnsbury, Vermont 05819), writes, "The whole matter of 'Z' pressings becomes a little more complicated when you consider that some of the 33 1/3 Program Transcriptions pressed in Victrolac also show a 'Z.' Victrolac was a flexible vinyl material which did not wear well when new and has deteriorated with passing years. I can't imagine that RCA considered these pressings of superior quality even when fresh off the press!"

Martin Bryan also discussed The Talking Books, one of which--the elephant--was duplicated in the last V78J: "The Talking Books were recorded and processed by Emerson. I say 'processed' because I believe Emerson never actually had its own pressing plant. The small diameter recordings were numbered in Emerson's 7 inch matrix series. Some Talking Books were actually books with recordings inside. The book would be folded all the way back and placed on the turntable (a hole was punched through the entire book). I know of one which used two 9 inch Emerson masters. The recordings were some sort of celluloid or other light-weight material."

Robert Baumbach mailed to V78J a photograph of a Talking Book I had not seen, The Hippopotamus--clearly one of the best in the series.

We now return to the run-off area of discs. William Cole of Shenandoah, Iowa, raises a different question about what he found in the run-off area of a Victor disc of a slightly earlier era. He writes, "Some time ago I bought 'Medley March of National Airs' performed by The Victor Band on Victor 19729, which is a wing label. The disc has a capital

'E' pressed into the run-off area, so I assumed it was electric when I bought it. However, having listened to the record several times, I am reasonably convinced it is an acoustical recording. Most of us are familiar with Victor's various wing labels, including those of late 1926 bearing the encircled VE stamp, which signifies the electric or Orthophonic mode. Does anyone know what the capital E signifies?"

Normally questions asked in the "Who Knows?" column get answered in the next issue, but I made inquiries ahead of time and received this information from Martin Bryan: "The large E on Victors indicates recordings primarily intended for the educational catalogue. I don't know when the practice began, but I know that it continued well into the Orthophonic period. I just pulled out #20614 by Alexander Schmidt, and the E is stamped just below the encircled V.E. Anyone could obtain these records, but maybe the larger dealers who stocked the entire domestic catalogue weren't required to stock the E records, which were mainly meant for school use."

Perhaps Michael Sherman should include this if he expands his Collector's Guide to Victor Records. Sherman does say interesting things about this very period of the wing label, such as that the highest identified catalog number from the 10 inch popular series with a wing label is Victor 20091 and that VE "was the licensing (royalty mark) for the Western Electric cutting head."

Concerning this transition period, Brian Rust's Victor Master Book cites a catalog number worth memorizing: "The first Orthophonic Victor record to appear was No. 19626." Of course, some acoustically recorded Victors have higher numbers. Will Rust's indispensable Victor Master Book be reissued? Can you cite other essential works out of print too long? Mail in candidates!

MY TEN MOST PLAYED 78S

By Barry R. Ashpole

1 & 2) Giuseppe De Luca (1876-1950): "Povero Rigoletto...Cortigiani, vil razza dannata...Miei signori" from Verdi's *Rigoletto*. These recordings (1929, Mat. No. A41075/43616) taught me that there is a great deal more to opera than tenors. De Luca delivers a most compelling performance--it's great theatre, great opera and great singing.

3) Beniamino Gigli (1890-1957): "Bella figlia dell'amore" from Verdi's *Rigoletto*. This 1928 recording (Mat. No. A 41233) of the Quartet, with De Luca, Amelita Galli-Curci, and Louise Homer, has (perhaps) been equalled but never, in my opinion, surpassed. My first and only copy was from dealer's stock--a crisp clean HMV pressing. A close second for me is the 1917 version (Mat. No. C-19132-2) with Enrico Caruso, De Luca, Galli-Curci, and Flora Perini.

4) Enrico Caruso (1873-1921): "Del tempio al limitar" (with Mario Ancona) from Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers*. Here is a magnificent union of two voices. This disc (1907, Mat. No. C-4327-1) was in the first batch of 78s I bought. If you compare this recording with that by Gigli and De Luca (1927, Mat. No. CVE 41071) you can hear clearly how different--and how great--the two tenors are.

5) Beniamino Gigli: Puccini's *La Boheme*: the final scene from the 1938 recording of the complete opera (Mat. No. 2BA2387). Gigli remains one of the great Rodolfos. The last moments on this record demonstrate how the tenor acted with his voice--it's memorable and touching. I've been searching for the complete opera on 78s, preferably on HMV or VDP. I have only excerpts.

6) Enrico Caruso: "Una furtiva lagrima" from Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore* (1904, Mat. No. B-966-1). This is an excellent example of bel canto with the tenor's voice at its

most pleasing. This what I played most often when learning to listen through the deficiencies of early acoustic 78s and hear (and appreciate) the singing.

7) Enrico Caruso: "Ombra mai fu" from Handel's *Serse* (1920, Mat. No. C-23714-5). If I get my wish, this will be heard at my funeral. I would insist on something of a "cheat" and request that it be an electrical recreation, but not the one attempted by Victor/HMV. What I have in mind is something more recent and not commercially available. It is an example of how those attempts to electrically re-create the Caruso "sound" might have worked--given today's thinking and technology.

8) Enrico Caruso: "Rachael, quand du Seigneur" from Halevy's *La Juive* (1920, Mat. No. C-24461-2). This, quite simply, is a favorite aria. And Caruso's recording of it just happens to be the very first one to find its way into my collection. The tenor's performance is one of great restraint and dignity.

9) Enrico Caruso: "O paradiso" from Meyerbeer's *L'Africana*. It's in just about every tenor's repertoire and for this reason it is often dismissed as nothing more than a concert piece. You have to hear Caruso's 1907 recording (Mat. No. C-4160-2) to really appreciate this aria. You hear it again, "for the first time."

10) Enrico Caruso: "Ah, la paterna mano" from Verdi's *Macbeth* (1916, Mat. No. C-17197). Caruso sings with great conviction. Sorrow and distress are expressed simply and with great feeling. And this recording was a real "find"--25 cents (Canadian) in a garage sale! In the original sleeve! And with no visible signs of wear!

BARRY R. ASHPOLE LIVES IN TORONTO, CANADA. HE EDITS ANTIQUE PHONOGRAPH NEWS AND ARSC JOURNAL.

OUR FIFTEEN MOST PLAYED 78S

By Tom and Virginia Hawthorn

We put our heads together on our ten favorite records and came up with fifteen! Since this list represents both our tastes, think of it as 7.5 records per person. We leave it up to readers to guess which are Tom's favorites and which are Virginia's.

1) Golden Gate Quartet: "Jonah" (Victor). We have always liked tight harmony singing both in mountain and gospel music, and the Golden Gate Quartet was one of the best of their era. All a cappella, great rhythm, and the bass singer at the end blows us away.

2) Enrico Caruso: "La donna e mobile" from Verdi's *Rigoletto* (Victor). This is the disc we play when someone wants to hear a Caruso record. It is also the test record for my reproducer repair service. If a restored reproducer plays the high notes on this, it will play anything.

3) Frank Crumit: "Days of Jubilo" (Victor). We share an interest in history, and this Henry Work tune is representative of the post Civil War era. We've heard modern versions, but Frank's still seems the best--besides, he sings the original words.

4) Frederick Potter: "Red Wing" (Edison cylinder). Here is another great turn of the century tune. The reason we hear this so often is that it is the record I use to test my cylinder reproducer repairs. I've played it hundreds of times and still enjoy it.

5) Mischa Levitski: "La Campanella" (Columbia; by Liszt). I used to play a little classical piano, and when I first got this record years ago, I nearly wore it out. The playing is masterful. Listen to the incredible trill on side 2 and you'll see.

6) Colonial Orchestra: "Copenhagen" (Brunswick). We have always enjoyed the Garrison Keillor public radio show, so imagine our surprise when we heard the theme song (played by Vince Giordano on the show) coming from an acoustic Brunswick record, note for note!

7) Cal Stewart: "Uncle Josh and the Automobile" (Edison cylinder). You can get this in many versions, but our favorite is the Blue Amberol cylinder. The mental pictures Stewart conjures up are great.

8) Tennessee Ernie Ford: "Mule Train" (Capitol). This record is on our jukebox and what a great demo record it is! Ernie takes this overdone tune and really has fun with it, which shows in his performance. We didn't realize how low he could really sing!

9) Tommy Dorsey: "Sleepy Lagoon" (Victor). This is Tommy's only Red Seal Victor record, and it is probably one of the sweetest of the Big Band discs ever made. On our juke box with the lights down low, it is a very romantic number.

10) The Happiness Boys: "I Can't Sleep In The Movies Anymore" (Victor). We like nonsense songs from the '20s and we like old movies, so this record is a natural for us. Jones and Hare are up to their usual tricks in this record. It sounds best on the Victor Credenza.

11) Benny Moten: "South" (Victor). When we are selling at an antique show, we put this record on the turntable of an acoustic phonograph and it is usually sold within 1 minute. Sometimes the phonograph sells also. Luckily, copies are not too hard to find.

12) Ray Noble: "Turkish Delight" (Victor). The British have always had a unique sense of humor, and it shows in this 1930s disc. This is another record that always sells at shows, but we keep a good copy for ourselves.

13) Spike Jones: "Glow Worm" (RCA Victor). We had to get Spike in somewhere, and this is one of our favorites. Perhaps the greatest line ever recorded is on this disc: "Turn the page, ya fathead!" I had to take four years of music in college to appreciate this?

14) Harry Belafonte: "Banana Boat Song" (RCA Victor). Another jukebox disc. We both like '50s rock, and though this piece isn't exactly rock, it still sums up the era for us. "The Great Pretender" by the Platters is a close second in this category.

15) Quartet from *Rigoletto*/Sextet from *Lucia*-any of the versions with Caruso (Victor). A dead heat here. We both enjoy good opera, and these two selections seem to have it all. We have all the different versions and picking out a favorite is hard.

TOM AND VIRGINIA HAWTHORN LIVE IN ROSEVILLE, CALIFORNIA.



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MY TEN MOST PLAYED SCROLLS

By Tom Rhodes

1) Nat Shilkret: "Just a Night for Meditation" (Vic 21547). At first playing this side seems an oddity of two songs pieced together but upon repeated listenings becomes a bewitching production indeed. The extended introduction, marvelous in effect, is superbly played by the house band briskly led by Mr. Nat. Frank Crumit's vocal goes perfectly with the song's style and mood. The tempo is upbeat without the hurried pace of lesser foxtrots. Lots of chromatic and dynamic contrasts, plus neat minor key changes, make this Scroll a standout.

2) Victor Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Rosario Bourdon: "Procession of Bacchus" (Vic 35879). One of the best renditions of this work, period. In contrast to the scarcely revised acoustic manner used by Joseph Pasternack on his early electrics, Bourdon's sessions waxed for Victor symphony and concert sessions seem more modern, with fuller sound. Bourdon was good friends with Wilfred Pelletier of the Met, both conductors displaying the sort of solid non-flamboyant musicianship so needed on early electrical versions.

3) Paul Whiteman & His Orchestra: "I'm Coming Virginia" (Vic 20751). This disk, along with "Muddy Water," puts to rest that old notion that all popular tunes recorded in the 1920s were frenetic "jazz age" ravings by honky, squeaky little bands hyped up on bathtub gin. Knowing only horrid television or LP parodies of Roaring Twenties music, many listeners are unprepared for such steady, full sounding performances. These tonally sonorous, smoothly played sonic feasts are revelations indeed.

4) Jean Goldkette & His Orchestra: "Slow River" (Vic 20926). My first Scroll, rescued from the family cellar and treasured ever since. Goldkette's band, with Bix, does this tune more than justice, with smooth playing, strong even rhythm and wonderful solos. A truly great musical concept carried out in foxtrot form.

5) Paul Whiteman & Concert Orchestra: "Mississippi Suite" (Vic 35859). A grand feast for the ear by any standard. The slow movement is without peer for richness of tone. A must for the Credenza!

6) George Olsen & His Music: "I'm Bringing A Red Red Rose" (Vic 21808). Among many fine Olsen sides of this period, this one ranks at the top. A "big" arrangement, nobly conceived, executed with nearly symphonic grandeur. This "big" sound is very appealing to me and shows off one's Orthophonic machines so beautifully.

7) Arden-Ohman & Their Orchestra: "Can This Be Love?" (Vic 22552). If any recording could be called a masterpiece of style, then this Scroll gets my vote. The sweeping arrangement, soaring strings, and emotional uplift displayed on this song are beyond criticism. It is like no other Victor disk. "Can This Be Love?" conveys a sense of lost elegance and beauty from this bygone era. Truly moving.

8) Gene Austin: "Garden In The Rain" (Vic 21915). One of my all time favorite songs and performances. Carroll Gibbons is a terribly underrated songsmith. The playing behind Austin's memorable delivery is marvelously sensitive and every note

and flourish seem just right. This Victor treasure is a balm for the gritty, transistorized purgatory of the present.

9) Lawrence Tibbett: "When I'm Looking At You" (Vic 1447). Faultless. Tibbett, in his customary superb form, endows a popular song of the better class with his inborn sonority and nobility.

10) Roger Wolfe Kahn & His Orchestra: "Dance Little Lady" (Vic 21801). This record, released not long before the 1929 Crash, seems to me to embody

all that was good in late Twenties popular music. Roger and his orchestra play this Noel Coward tune with a sweep and elan unmatched by any other Scroll disk of the time. The sheer brilliance of this performance, especially after the vocal, must be heard to be believed; its driving rhythm and bravura playing is matched only by the majesty of effect. One is totally caught up in the breathtaking finale. Glorious!

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MY TEN FAVORITE 78S

By Richard Gesner

1) Bob Causer's Orchestra: "I'm Yours for Tonight" (Perfect 15656; 1932). A typical dance record of its time.

2) Jan Peerce: "Bluebird of Happiness" (RCA Victor 9007; 1948). No vocalist could ever roll "r's" like Peerce. The recitative is just heart-wrenching.

3) Jack Smith: "Sunflower" (Capitol 15394; 1949). Here is a vocalist who could sing with a smile in his voice.

4) Tommy Dorsey: "On the Sunny Side of the Street" (RCA Victor 1648; 1945). This may be the most perfect popular record. The combination of artist, song, and arrangement is incredible.

5) Jussi Bjoerling. I cannot slight all of his selections by choosing only one. Everything Bjoerling sang flows over me like a breeze.

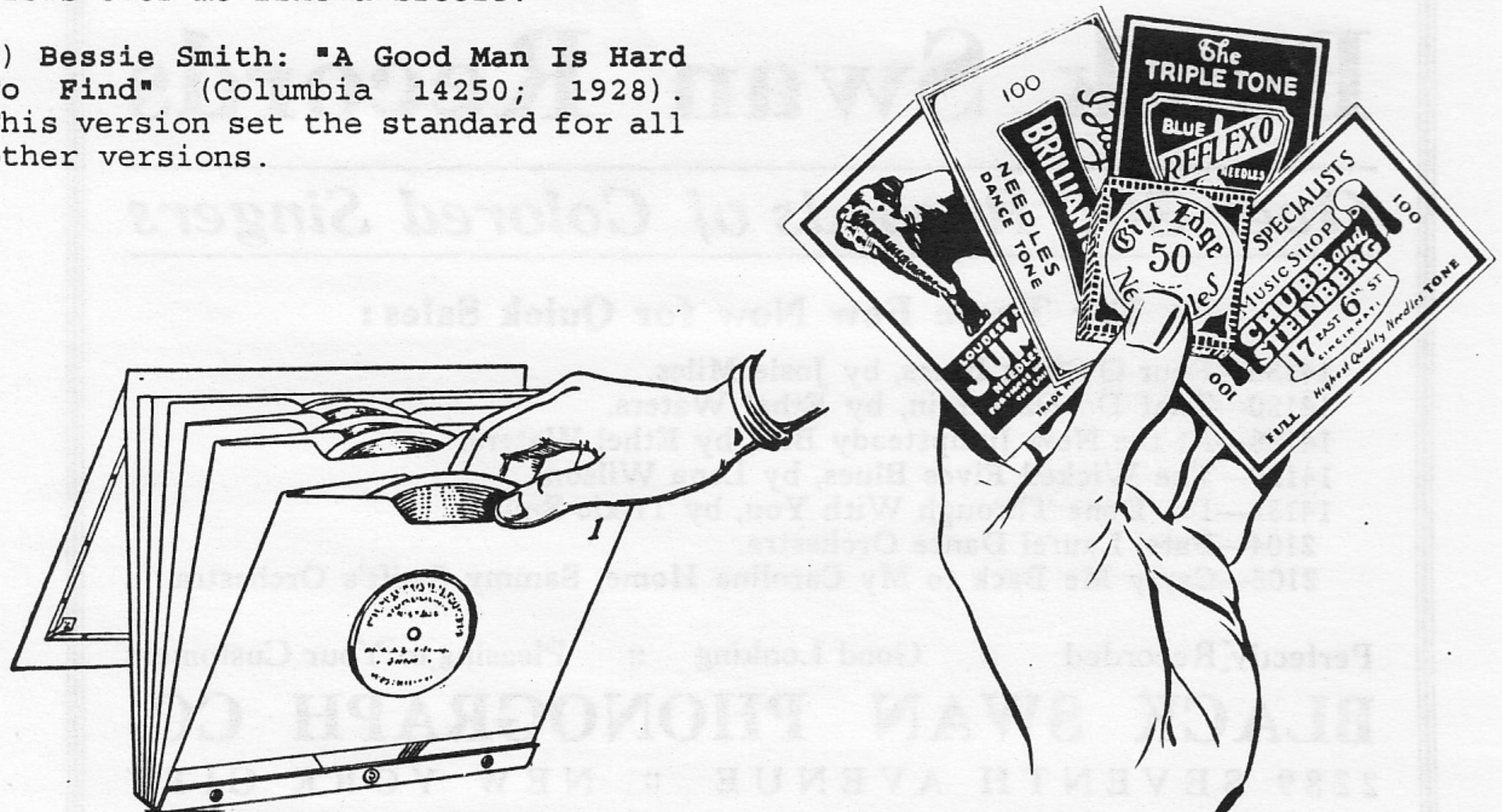
6) Bessie Smith: "A Good Man Is Hard To Find" (Columbia 14250; 1928). This version set the standard for all other versions.

7) Bulawayo Sweet Rhythms Band: "Skokiaan" (London 1491; 1954). A raw South African version of the song which other bands sweetened for Western consumption. The flip side is "In The Mood."

8) Jane Pickens: "Dixie" (RCA 20-3458; 1949). No arrangement of "Dixie" has ever come close to being so original.

9) Cindy Lord: "My Favorite Song" (MGM 11350; 1952). A pleasant version by a female singer who sounded too much like a combination of Joni James and Connie Francis to last at MGM.

10) Judy Valentine: "The Cinderella Work Song" (MGM 10657; 1950). With a voice like Helen Kane and Wee Bonnie Baker, Judy had a knack for making people listen.



NEW PORTABLE ALBUM

BOOK REVIEW:

Reviewed by Tim Gracyk

FROM TINFOIL TO STEREO

By Walter L. Welch and

Leah Brodbeck Stenzel Burt

University Press of Florida, 1994

I invariably find From Tinfoil to Stereo, originally issued in 1959 and reissued in the mid-1970s, on bookshelves of fellow collectors in Northern California. The first and second editions have been invaluable over the years (they are the same aside from a chapter added to the latter). A 1994 revised edition is now out in hardcover. I am sad to report it is not worth its \$40 price.

Walter L. Welch is again credited as co-author. Oliver Read has been dropped from the cover and author Leah Brodbeck Stenzel Burt takes Read's place as co-author. Burt was a curator of the Edison National Historic Site and has published good articles in the past (I know Burt's work in Journal of The American Phonograph Society).

Oliver Read seems persona non grata in this edition. Its Preface avoids the obvious question of why Read no longer gets any credit as an author. Nothing is said to assure readers that the new co-authors are not taking credit for work Read may have done for the book years ago. George Frow mentions Read's name in a brief Foreword but we learn nothing.

Was Read only responsible for illustrations in earlier editions that have now been replaced? In that case, why was he given equal credit in the first place? Was Read only responsible for now-missing chapters on stereophonic equipment? But early editions suggest Read collected early machines, with the second edition's back cover saying he donated nearly 100 to the Smithsonian (visitors to

the Smithsonian tell me the number may be closer to 20). When did Read pass away? The absence of any words in Read's memory seems ungracious.

The layout, illustrations, and scope of the work are different. Old editions had tiny print in newspaper column layout so information could be packed into 550 pages; the layout of the new edition is standard. Gone are extras that made earlier editions rich--or unfocused, depending on perspective. Gone are the graphics that are meaningful only to sound engineers (I won't miss these). Gone is "The Song of Mister Phonograph" sheet music.

Gone are the illustrations that were so helpful in the old editions. I realize captions under a few drawings gave incorrect information, but revising captions would have been easy. Now, mostly new illustrations are grouped in the book's center. Text and visuals are not integrated.

The new thirty pages of illustrations offer quality photographs but most must have been included because of rarity, not relevance to chapters. Seven pages of Edison factories in Berlin, Paris, and Brussels seem excessive. We get four photos of George Gouraud, including one of him dictating into an Edison machine while in bed! Surely one photo of Gouraud was sufficient. No portrait of Emile Berliner or Eldridge Johnson is included. No illustration is Victor related! We instead get publicity shots of obscure Edison artists like Blanche Dann and Harold Lyman.

CONTINUED . . .

Captions for new illustrations are not informative, as with #16's: "Drawing of the Edison phonograph, 1888." Is that all? I have to question this caption's accuracy. The illustration depicts what looks like an "M" Edison machine--compare the drawing with the illustration of an "M" on page 16 of George Frow's The Edison Cylinder Phonographs or see Figure 4-3 of old editions of From Tinfoil to Stereo. Yet the caption cites 1888, which is too early a date. If the old edition is wrong to claim the Class M Edison was first produced in 1889, nothing is said in the new edition to correct this. For an example of an 1888 model, sometimes called the Spectacle because of the "spectacle device" that allowed a recorder and reproducer to be switched, readers should examine page 4 of Frow's book for a fine drawing or see photographs 18-22 in the new From Tinfoil to Stereo (captions do not identify the model).

Gone is the second half of previous editions. The new From Tinfoil to Stereo covers the first few decades of the industry, as suggested by the new subtitle, "The Acoustic Years of the Recording Industry, 1877-1929." It covers up to what is Chapter 19 in the last edition (the second edition had 30 chapters). Many collectors will prefer this focus on early decades since few interested in early recordings care much about the Sennheiser Binaural Recording System or the TED Videodisk player.

Chapters that stayed are shorter, partly because the prose is leaner (which I applaud), but also because information was discarded (which I deplore). The premise seems to be that less information makes for a more complete history. There is some new material, even a new chapter. "The Edison Talking-Doll Phonograph" makes use of Raymond Wile's fine research. But one new chapter is not enough. Other developments merit their own chapters.

You won't find Gennett in the book's index although the company gets mentioned in two sentences (that is all). Nothing is said about Gennett's role in legal battles that opened the door for new labels in the 1920s. If Otto Heinemann's Okeh label is mentioned, I missed it--and the index is blank on this topic. Although I can name other omissions from this book that promotes itself as a history of the acoustic years of recording, we must expect gaps in a history limited to 176 pages of text.

So why a chapter on movies? The subtitle gives 1929 as the cut-off date even though most studios switched from acoustic to electric long before 1929. The last chapter covers the earliest talkies ("Motion Pictures and Sound Recording"), but that only takes us up to Vitaphone releasing The Jazz Singer on October 6, 1927. Why 1929? It can work as a cut-off date since RCA acquired the Victor Talking Machine Company on March 15, 1929 (you won't find this date in the new From Tinfoil to Stereo) and Thomas Edison gave orders that autumn to close up shop. But instead of giving details about these developments, the book includes extraneous material about Edison's Kinetograph camera (a rich topic for a separate book) and concludes with the point that the movie business seemed a "depression-proof industry" after the '29 Crash. The final references to Fox Film, RKO, and Universal make for an odd end to what started as a history of recording.

The Preface mentions no sequel covering chapters that are now missing. Since the new From Tinfoil to Stereo stops long before the stereo era and no Volume Two seems forthcoming, the book should have been renamed to something like From Tinfoil to the End of the Acoustic Era. But even this is misleading. The title should prepare readers for a chapter on movies and somehow indicate that nearly all is told from an Edison perspective.

There is no discernable pattern in what gets included or excluded in the long bibliography except Edison material tends to get in and non-Edison gets ignored. These authors are snubbed:

- 1) Robert Baumbach--Look For The Dog is absent (yet space was found for 50 works about radio and movies)
- 2) E.R. Fenimore Johnson--why ignore the Eldridge R. Johnson biography?
- 3) Fred Barnum--more people should know about the book "His Master's Voice" In America.
- 4) Ted Fagan and William R. Moran--The Encyclopedic Discography Of Victor Recordings is missing!

In 13 pages of entries, could no room be made for Jim Walsh, Roger Kinkle, Michael Sherman, Dick Spottswood? Oliver Read published many items decades ago--doesn't the former co-author of From Tinfoil To Stereo merit a token entry? If Bauer gets in, why not Julian Morton Moses? Why only 4 works from the past decade?

Instead, autobiographies of opera singers are tossed into the bibliography even though passages mentioning the singers have been edited from the text. Included are books by Francis Alda, Emma Eames, Geraldine Farrar, David Bispham, Peter Dawson. The purple prose of such autobiographies makes for fun reading on lazy afternoons but scholars cannot rely on them.

The new edition seems less than a fourth the size of the last edition. A revised book offering fewer words in fewer chapters should not be costly. The new From Tinfoil to Stereo offers 176 pages of text for \$40. A reasonable price might be \$25, the price for Rick Kennedy's new book on Gennett. Few collectors who own an old edition of From Tinfoil To Stereo will need this new edition. If you cannot locate an old edition,

the new edition may suit you, in which case I recommend you buy it from Nauck's Vintage Records (6323 Inway Dr, Spring TX 77389) since 5% is taken off the list price, which helps. Neil Maken's Yesterday Once Again also carries it.

But I suspect libraries are the intended market for this overpriced edition. Librarians may be impressed by the scholarly trappings (footnotes, bibliography, University Press of Florida imprimatur) and conclude this is a definitive work. It isn't.

I find no evidence that the publisher worked to satisfy historians or collectors hungry for a solid history. George Frow says in the Foreword that "several cylinder and disc historians" helped, so I was puzzled by gaps and errors. The Rigoletto tenor aria is given as "Quest o Quella"; contralto Ada Crossley is called a soprano; bass Jean Francois Delmas is called a baritone. I then checked a 1976 book review in which Allen Koenigsberg extolled the second edition but cited errors. These errors remain (Bettini died in Italy but the book still says he never returned to Europe) or errors are gone only because entire passages were deleted.

Incidentally, the book again opens with the Memnon statue built at Thebes around 1490 B.C. The Egyptian relic may indeed represent the first attempt to simulate the human voice mechanically, but opening with this may belittle Thomas Edison's invention. A statue with hidden air chambers generating sound is very remote from a machine that duplicated events. Within decades of Edison recording "Mary Had A Little Lamb," performances of consummate artists--Patti, Tamagno, Melba, Caruso--were captured in a form that allowed for repeated listenings. That is a very different kind of achievement. If passages had to be sacrificed for a slim edition, the opening about Thebes was a good candidate. Good passages were instead deleted.

BOOK REVIEW: LOOK FOR THE DOG, 4TH EDITION (1994)

Reviewed by Ron Pendergraft

By Robert W. Baumbach

I hold few reference works in higher esteem than Robert Baumbach's illustrated guide to and history of the Victor Talking Machine Company. In 1981, when the first edition went to print, Look For The Dog rekindled my interest in phonograph collecting (I had sold off a collection years earlier). The new 4th edition is heavily revised, giving additional information on machines and featuring a new look that will be apparent at first glance. The front and back covers, now in paperback, feature Victor machines in color, which makes this a very attractive volume.

Baumbach has at last tracked down information on the "phantom" Victrola XIII, which was introduced in 1920 and sold for \$250. The illustration on page 80 is not a quality one but I assume it is the only one available. According to Baumbach, the XIII is "identical in shape" to the Queen Anne "period" machine (found on page 136) minus the "Chinoiserie" decorations. The two paragraphs under the illustration help us understand why this model did not sell. Only 662 were produced. Perhaps by the next edition the author will have the good luck of locating a more detailed photo or drawing of the XIII.

Those who have earlier editions of Look For The Dog will note that some pictures included in their copies have been dropped for line drawings. Baumbach states his belief that these newly added Victor factory drawings give a collector better detail for identifying certain models. This is clearly true for the Victrola Mertz-Design on page 84. Also, on page 85 the Victrola XVI drawing shows the detail of the carved decorated panel beneath the lid of the pre-1910 models.

Page 120 shows the unusual Victrola No. 80, Radio (VV-R-80). A radio "was placed into a standard Victrola Number 80 cabinet" (the turntable and its motor are missing!). This radio dates from 1922 and "the real purpose of the instrument was to establish the Victor name in the radio field in case the company decided at a later date to enter the radio market." Had Victor pursued the radio market more aggressively, RCA probably would not have acquired Victor.

Another rare machine, on page 226, is the Revere (Fourteen-One). A Victor factory illustration now replaces the computer-generated drawing used in the 3rd edition.

For new material, Baumbach gives measurements for cabinets in the English manner instead of in the decimal equivalent. Pages of added material feature a different title font, which is helpful for readers wishing to identify the new material. Aside from these pages of added material, the text is the same for the most part. This is a highly readable and enjoyable book for reference.

The one problem with this edition is that typographical errors add up too quickly. I hope the proofreading is better when future editions go to press.

A puzzle for some readers may be discrepancies in dates. Nailing down introduction dates of models is not easy. Compare the dates from a production chart given early in the book with dates on later pages that discuss models. When the dates in the production chart first appeared in 1984 as a supplement to the first Look For The Dog, Baumbach credited B.L. Aldridge, a long-time Victor employee, with compiling production

figures. The production chart is great for quick reference.

But dates do not always agree. For example, on page 98 the Victrola No. 105 is said to have been introduced in 1923. Aldridge's production chart lists this model as being introduced in 1925. The following are other discrepancies:

BOOK PAGE (4TH ED.)	MODEL & INTRO DATE (BAUMBACH)	INTRO DATE (ALDRIDGE)
101	VV-111/1923	1922
170	VV-2-35/1929	1928
171	VV-2-55/1929	1928
178	VV-4-40/1926	1927
179	VV-7-1/1925	1926
180	VV-7-2/1925	1926
182	VV-7-3/1927	1926
187	VV-7-30/1926	1927
194	VV-8-30/1925	1927
198	VV-9-2/1925	1926
200	VV-9-3/1925	1926
205	VE-9-40/1927	1926
209	VE-9-56/1929	1928
224	R-20/1926	1927

Page 80 has a different kind of discrepancy in that the top of the page gives 1921 as the introductory date for the XIII but the text itself gives 1920.

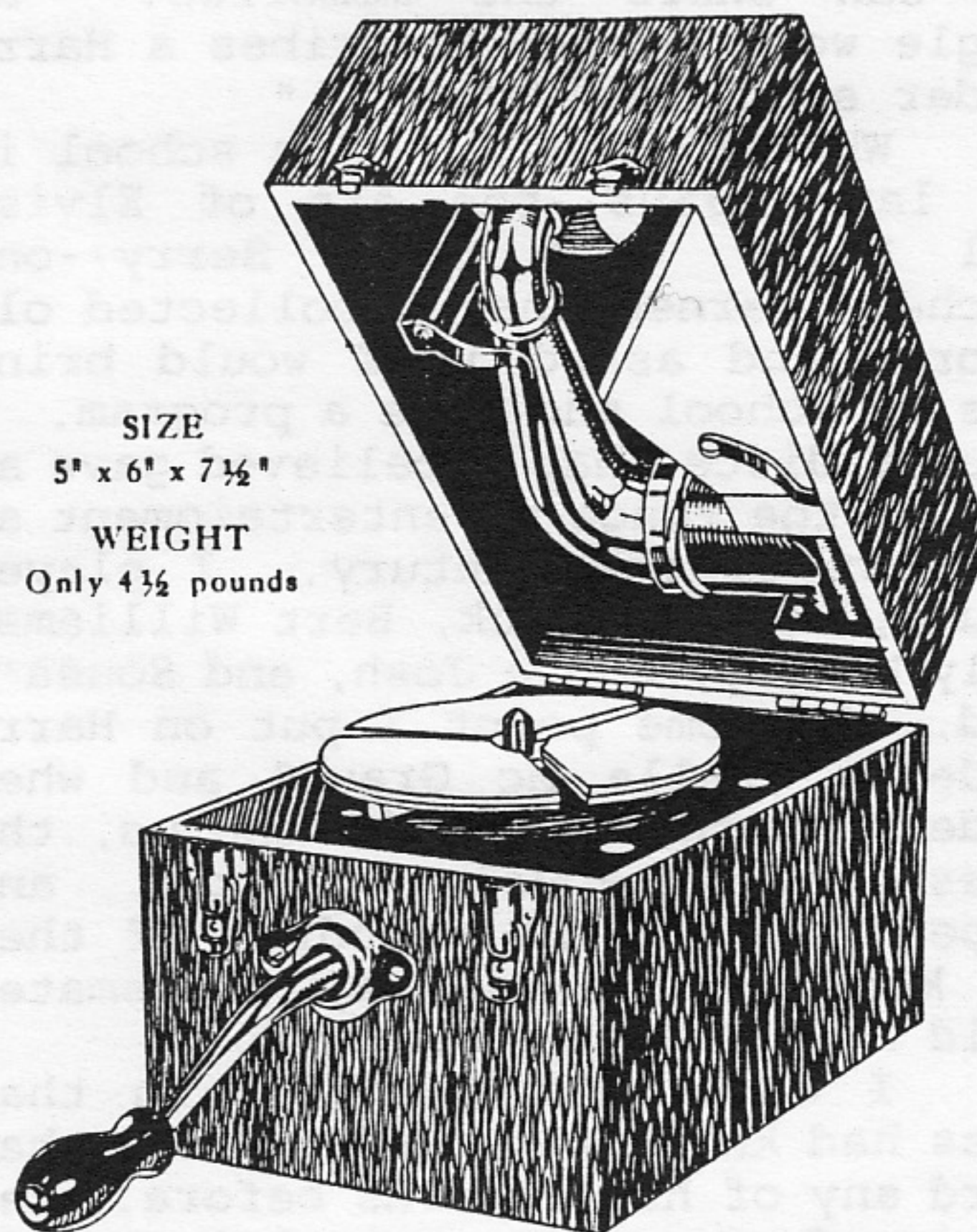
In the 1984 supplement giving Aldridge's figures, Baumbach stated,

"The careful reader will . . . notice that some of the introductory dates in the chart do not agree with those in Look For The Dog. Where a conflict existed between the 'RCA' data and the contemporary reports in Talking Machine World quoted in Look For The Dog, the conflicting dates were printed although the differences were generally only one or two months. This was done not to confuse the issue, but rather to illustrate

the relative unreliability of reconstructing events a half-century after they occurred."

The new edition should include a similar explanation.

I initially surmised that Aldridge knew about a proposed model before it was officially introduced to the public, while Victor's literature dated a model some months later, closer to the actual dealer delivery date. For my theory to work, Aldridge's dates should be earlier than the introduction date cited by Baumbach. But some of Aldridge's dates are later than those listed under Baumbach's model/date column. Moreover, the dates for the 8-30 are two years apart (I suppose this can be explained by the fact it was introduced in 1925 as a Credenza, not the 8-30). I hope Baumbach elaborates on his explanation in a future edition so date discrepancies are better clarified.



SIZE
5" x 6" x 7 1/2"
WEIGHT
Only 4 1/2 pounds

PLAZA MUSIC COMPANY

BOOK REVIEW: THE SIR HARRY LAUDER DISCOGRAPHY

By Darrell Baker and Larry F. Kiner
Scarecrow Press

Reviewed by David Banks

When I was a wee bairn, my grandmother played "I Love A Lassie" for me. I don't know what possessed me but I had the temerity to ask if Harry Lauder was really Scotch. She cleared that up quickly!

From family members I acquired a lot of historical entertainment lore by the age of 10. I could identify all references in Bob Hilliard and Dave Mann's 1950 hit song "Dearie." Consider these lyrics:

Dearie, do you remember how
They loved Harry Lauder's act?
My, wasn't the Palace packed!

As the song goes on to say, "Life was cheery in the good old days gone by." Through the miracle of recordings, a bit of the past is preserved and we too can share the memories. No single word better describes a Harry Lauder song than "cheery."

When I attended high school in the late 1950s--the era of Elvis, Bill Haley, and Chuck Berry--one teacher learned that I collected old records and asked if I would bring some to school and give a program. I brought discs that I believed gave an idea of the range of entertainment at the turn of the century. I played Caruso, Melba, Gluck, Bert Williams, Billy Murray, Uncle Josh, and Sousa's Band. At some point I put on Harry Lauder's "Bella Mc Graw," and when Lauder launched into the chorus, the class spontaneously clapped and tapped feet to the melody. If they had known the words, my classmates would have started singing.

I don't think anyone in that class had known who Lauder was or had heard any of his records before. Yet a voice from a disc recorded some 42 years earlier evoked a response that

would have delighted Lauder himself. I felt this was testimony to Lauder's ability to sway an audience, particularly as this was an audience of teenage rock and rollers.

Lauder's timing delights me. In a song like "Bonnie Leezie Linzey," he interpolates all the whoops and laughs without once missing a beat or allowing the tune to be interrupted. This is among his most exuberant recordings. He sings about going ice skating and adds, almost as an afterthought, "Of course I had me trousers on." His timing is perfect--listeners cannot help but imagine the consequence of a skater in kilts falling on the ice! He next adds, "Well, I always do when I go skating!" His subtle modulation and emphasis on "always" make me laugh.

One often reads about Lauder's clear diction, which used to be compared to John McCormack's. The clarity was demonstrated to me years ago when I attended a program of cylinder recordings given by the Association for Recorded Sound Collections at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California. As the phonograph played on the stage, I was surprised by how well the recordings projected into the auditorium. Sitting in the back, I was not conscious of surface noise and easily sustained the illusion that I was hearing a live performance. We heard 2 minute Gold Moulded Edison cylinders of Billy Murray, Edward M. Favor, Len Spencer, and Ada Jones. These were consummate artists with voices that projected fine--nothing was slurred. But when a Harry Lauder cylinder was played, his voice effortlessly soared to the upper reaches, with every word crystal clear. I felt the contrast was noticeable.

I recently purchased The Sir Harry Lauder Discography by Darrell Baker and Larry F. Kiner. No doubt it has been reviewed elsewhere since it came out in 1990, but it is new to me and may be new to some V78J readers. For Lauder fans it is a must.

The discography is a handsome 8.5" x 11.5" hardbound book of 197 pages. It features a clear, user-friendly layout that facilitates rapid reference work. Records are listed chronologically--that is, by date of recording. Each entry includes date of recording session, company and location of session, accompanist or conductor, song title, composer and lyricist, record size and speed, record label company name, catalog number, matrix number, and take. All recordings are listed: published and unpublished takes; cylinders; and hill and dale as well as lateral cut discs. Reissues on LP, CD and tape are also listed. The book is filled with photos, sheet music, labels and programs.

The authors' excellent biography dispels the myth that Lauder began his career singing Irish songs! There are a list of radio appearances, a filmography, and a complete list of songs Lauder wrote, giving publisher and publication dates along with original keys the songs were written in. Many songs have alternative titles and these are cross referenced. "Bella Mc Graw," for example, is also known as "Back, Back To Where the Heather Grows." Baker and Kiner also list different spellings the titles underwent when re-recorded. "Bella Mc Graw" was also issued as "Bella McGraw." "Bonnie Lizzie Lindsay" was also issued as "Bonnie Leezy Lindsay" as well as "Bonnie Leezy Lindsay."

The book features articles about Lauder's records and discusses how Lauder wrote his songs, discusses film appearances, and gives excerpts from contemporaneous reviews. Articles were compiled from interviews and other sources, so we have Lauder's comments on various topics. A bibliography includes Lauder's own

books and those about him.

The filmography is fascinating. As early as 1904, the Chronophone company filmed the singer with a synchronized phonograph recording. Lauder made six more films for Chronophone in 1907-08. In 1914 he made 14 phonograph-synchronized films for Cort-Kitsee Talking Pictures. Whether he made records for the films or simply pantomimed songs to published recordings is not known.

Lauder films known to exist are missing the recordings. On TV I saw one that had no sound but you could read his lips--he was singing "I Love A Lassie." His dancing, which I had not read about before, astonished me. Lauder was spry as a bouncing ball.

In 1931-32 Lauder filmed nine short sound films for Gainsborough Pictures. In each film he sings two or three hits. My grandmother used to say to me, "Oh yes, Lauder's records are wonderful but you really had to see him!" My parents would second the opinion. My grandparents always went to see Lauder when he appeared in San Francisco. My father told me one could always tell when Lauder had been in town: children would create walking sticks from tree branches (the more gnarled, the better) and in schoolyards imitate Lauder's swagger, which was as famous as Charlie Chaplin's walk. My father said his classmates appeared wearing strange headgear. Lauder's hats were as much a trademark as Ed Wynn's.

Charlie Chaplin and Harry Lauder appeared together during World War I in a short film made for a Liberty Bond drive--they exchange costumes and each imitates the other!

When a book like The Sir Harry Lauder Discography comes out, grab it. When it goes out of print, you'll next find it on a dealer's list for a price equalling the value of the rarest discs it catalogs.

Darrell Baker and Larry F Kiner's The Sir Harry Lauder Discography is published by Scarecrow Press and is available at \$42.90 from Nipper, P.O. Box 4, Woodstock NY 12498-0004 (phone 914-679-6982).

MIRACLES DO HAPPEN

By Neil T. Corning

In the fall of 1993, at one of the regular meetings of the New England Society for the Preservation of Recorded Sound, a collector friend from Vermont, Glen Gurwit, approached me with a gift. He had seen in a collection of records in a junk store two RCA Victor home recording discs with this handwritten notation: "John McCormack--Feb. 10, 1933." Knowing my lifelong collecting of McCormack, he purchased the discs and presented them to me.

What were they? What was February 10, 1933? A call to Peter Dolan of the John McCormack Society of America led to the information that, on that day in 1933, McCormack appeared on a radio program entitled "The Inside Story," hosted by Edwin C. Hill. It was broadcast over the CBS network.

Could these be home recordings of that program? Do other copies exist? They play terribly, almost inaudibly. I could almost hear McCormack speaking. I could almost hear McCormack singing. What could be done?

Another friend transcribed it, using a multifilter. The results were negligible but this verified it was a radio interview along with the tenor singing several songs. Could the discs be restored? I called several well-known dealers and collectors, who advised me of the potential cost. I couldn't afford to restore the discs but felt the broadcast should be available to all.

I told a U.K. record dealer/friend about it, and he checked with a record company executive whom he knew. A week later I was told that this man would transcribe and clean up these discs, and if they are what we think--a rare radio broadcast--then the company would put the broadcast on a compact disc of rare McCormack recordings, which was soon to be issued.

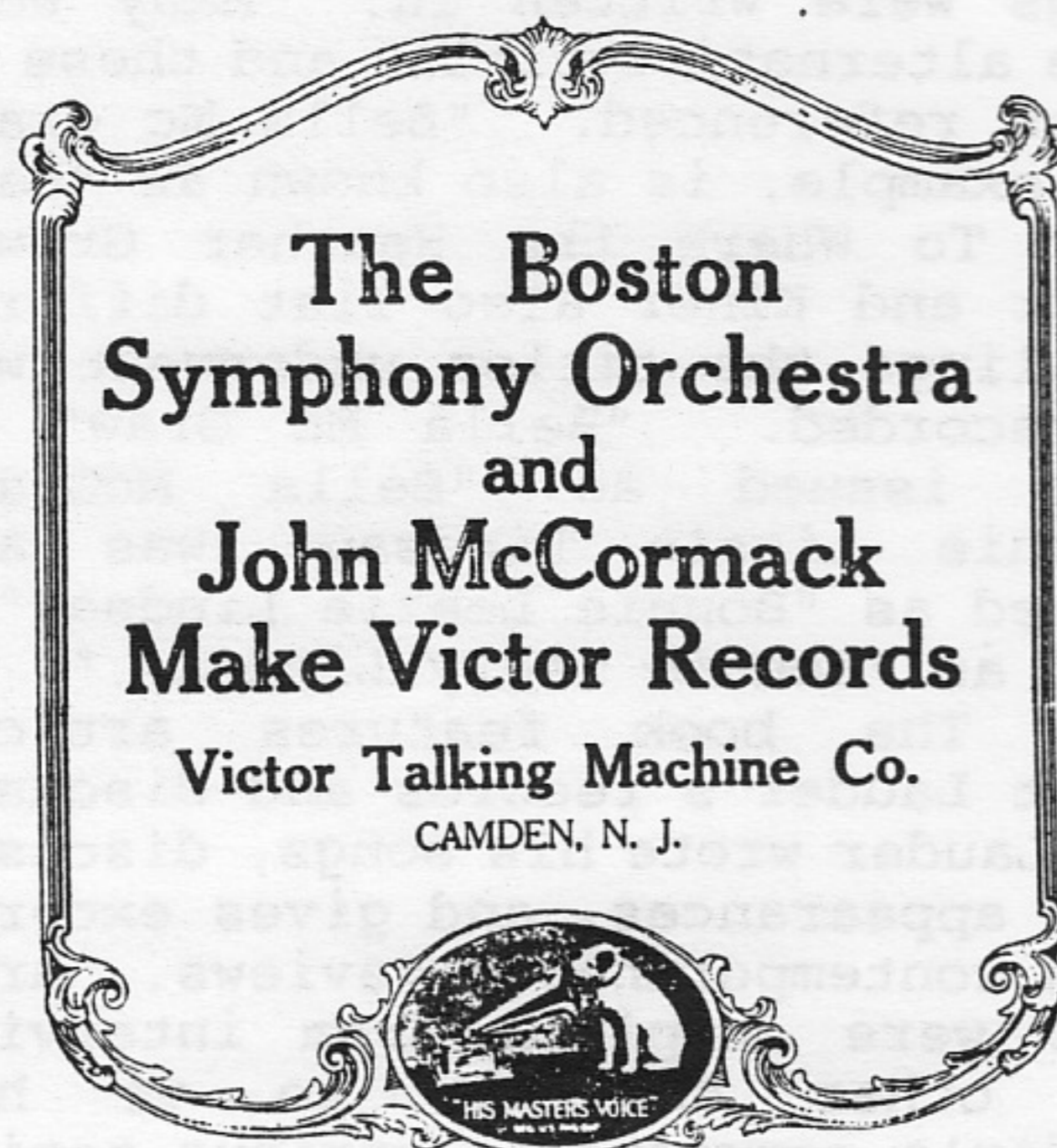
I sent my discs to England and waited. Could anything be done? The answer was a resounding yes!

In a short time, my discs were returned along with a gracious note from Elliot Levin, of Symposium Records. Under separate cover I received a preliminary tape of the transcription. We can now hear the interview though it is still noisy in places. Edwin Hill asks questions and a light hearted, buoyant McCormack responds. Nathaniel Shilkret is introduced and he speaks about all the McCormack records he had assisted with. McCormack tells the story of meeting Caruso in Boston. The Irish singer asks, "And how is the world's greatest tenor today?" Caruso responds, "And when did you become a bass, John?"

McCormack tells of his early days in England touring, and he sings seven songs, one of which he never otherwise recorded. It is "Isle of Beauty," which he describes as the first song he ever learned.

A collector's dream. I own the original recording. Yes, miracles do still happen in record collecting!

NEIL CORNING LIVES IN PEABODY, MASSACHUSETTS. HE WELCOMES YOUR COMMENTS ABOUT MCCORMACK AND OTHER GREAT SINGERS OF THIS PERIOD.



JOHN McCORMACK

FAREWELL TOUR 1938

DATE.		TOWN.	HALL.	TIME.
Tuesday	Sept. 20	FOLKESTONE	... Leas Cliff ...	8.15
Sunday	„ 25	EASTBOURNE	... Winter Gardens ...	8.15
Sunday	Oct. 2	CORK ...	... Savoy Cinema ...	3
Tuesday	„ 4	LIMERICK ...	... Savoy Cinema ..	8
Saturday	„ 8	DUBLIN ...	... Theatre Royal ...	2.30
Monday	„ 10	BELFAST ...	... Ulster	8
Saturday	„ 15	MANCHESTER	... Free Trade ...	7.30
Tuesday	„ 18	LIVERPOOL	... Central ...	8
Saturday	„ 22	EDINBURGH	... Usher ...	3
Monday	„ 24	BIRMINGHAM	... Town	8
Thursday	„ 27	GLASGOW ...	... St. Andrew s	8
Monday	„ 31	LEEDS ...	... Town	8
Thursday	Nov. 3	NEWCASTLE	... City	8
Saturday	„ 5	BRISTOL ...	... Colston	7.45
Wednesday	„ 9	WATERFORD	... Regal Cinema ...	8
Friday	„ 11	CARLOW ...	... Ritz Cinema ...	8
Tuesday	„ 15	TRALEE ...	... Ashe Memorial ...	8
Thursday	„ 17	WEXFORD ...	... Theatre Royal ...	8
Sunday	„ 20	THURLES ...	... New Cinema ...	8.30
Wednesday	„ 23	PRESTON ...	... Public	8
Sunday	„ 27	LONDON ...	... Royal Albert ...	3

Sole Management—FRANK L. COOPER, Steinway Hall, St. George Street, London, W.1.

Mayfair 2140

NEW VELVET TONE

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Records

For Use On All Phonographs

JANUARY No. 1

VOCALS

- 2250-V { You're Driving Me Crazy! Sammy Fain
I'm Alone Because I Love You Sammy Fain
- 2247-V { You'll Do It Someday Rudy Vallée accomp. by His Connecticut Yankees
Little Darlin' Jim Andrews

BALLADS

- 2244-V { Roll Them Clouds Away Vernon Dalhart
Oh! Adam Had 'Em Vernon Dalhart

CLARINET SOLOS

- 7118-V { New St. Louis Blues Boyd Senter
Beale St. Blues Boyd Senter

OLD TIME DANCE TUNES

- 7119-V { Back in the Old Green Hills Eddie Younger and His Mountaineers
If You See My Little Mountain Girl
Eddie Younger and His Mountaineers

DANCE

- 2251-V { You're Driving Me Crazy! F.T. Lloyd Keating and His Music
Someone Sang a Sweeter Song to Mary F.T.
Chester Leighton and His Sophomores
- 2249-V { Cheerful Little Earful (from "Sweet and Low") F.T.
Frank Auburn and His Orchestra
What Good Am I Without You? F.T.
Tommy Christian and His Orchestra
- 2248-V { Satan's Holiday (from "Follow the Leader") F.T.
Chester Leighton and His Sophomores
Something to Remember You By (from "Three's a Crowd")
F.T. Tommy Christian and His Orchestra
- 2246-V { I'm Tickled Pink With a Blue Eyed Baby F.T.
Lloyd Keating and His Music
I Love Love (from "Princess Charming") F.T.
Jerry Mason and His Californians
- 2245-V { I'm Alone Because I Love You F.T.
Rudy Marlow and His Orchestra
Believin' F.T. Edgewater Beach Hotel Orchestra