

FOR THE RECORD - Recent Books

by Michael Biel

Marty, Daniel. Histoire illustrée du Phonographe. Lausanne, Switzerland: Edita-Vilo, 1979. 195 pp. illus.

As I write this, I can see them all sitting out there--naked! No, not my readers, your coffee tables! There's nothing worse than a naked coffee table sitting out there in your living room showing to the world that you are uncivilized, uncultured, and uncouth--unconcerned that your poor, innocent coffee table is being displayed unadorned to the world. But don't despair, help is on the way. I have discovered the perfect coffee table book for anybody interested in phonographs.

This book is simply beautiful. Gorgeous, lavish, exquisite--and expensive: \$60.00 but it is well worth it. It is 10½x12 inches, over an inch thick, weighs about four pounds, has a heavy glossy color cover and is chock-full of about 200 photographs of phonographs, many in color and quite a few are the full page. Put it on the coffee table and when your spouse's noisy friends come to visit they will know right away what your hobby or job is. And when they poke inside they will realize how highly cultured you are--the book is in French. How's that for class? But for us peasants without the continental flair for languages, an English language edition is said to be forthcoming.

In all seriousness, the book is excellent. It does start with a historical section that stresses the work of Thomas Young, Leon Scott de Martinville, and Charles Cros, but this is commendable--not chauvinistic. But in the grand chapter on Edison's tinfoil phonograph the European thrust of the book starts to become evident when you realize that the tinfoil machines illustrated are mainly European--none of Edison's own machines is shown, nor any identified as by the Edison Speaking Phonograph. Co. But it is this European slant to this book that makes it so interesting to us Americans--it gives us a chance to see the machines that we so rarely encounter over here.

The next several chapters cover the major American manufacturers: Columbia, Victor (cited here under the chapter title "Gramophone"), Edison, and Bettini (!). It is here that the full page color pictures start to be dazzling although I will have to ask our English brethren whether a G&T-branded Exhibition reproducer belongs on a "Trademark" model Gramophone. The book now makes a point of going to Europe--although it had already been there--with chapters on the two major European manufacturers; Lioret and Pathe; an American company in Europe: Zonophone (Gramophone Edison, and Columbia are mentioned in passing as having been covered already); and a chapter each on smaller French, German, and miscellaneous European countries. After a section on recording artists we get to the most interesting sections, showing

unusual machines including lamps, dolls, home recording devices, clocks, toys, Stroh stringed instruments, needle boxes, cylinder boxes and European picture discs from the 1930's.

If you can't read French but like to look at pretty pictures, you will still get your \$60 worth of education on phonographic design. If you know your phonograph history you can follow along with the French enough to know that the author seems to know what he is talking about. It is not too hard to understand the captions to identify the pictures. But I have been thoroughly assured by Allen Koenigsberg (who is handling sales on the current French edition) that nothing will stop the publication of the English language edition. It might have less snob appeal, but it might be worth waiting for it unless you just can't live without this glorious book another minute.

One last note, this book deals mainly with external horn machines. There is nary a Victrola to be seen. The only internal horn machines seen are a very few unusual ones. The only exception is a table model Edison Diamond Disc machine--but its picture is next to a picture of a war model Edison disc machine for contrast. I am assuming that the English language edition will not alter this perspective.

Proudfoot, Christopher. Collecting Phonographs and Gramophones. (Christie's International Collectors Series) New York: Mayflower Books, 1980. (Originally published in England by Studio Vista.) 119 pp. illus.

If you can't afford the Marty book, or if your coffee table wouldn't be able to take the strain, you might settle on this book. It is basically British, so it reproduces some of the European flavour of the Marty book, but is much smaller (8x10x5/8") and less expensive (\$14.95), though just as colorful. While some unusual machines are shown, the book stresses the machines that collectors are more likely to come across. Internal horn machines are not shortchanged here, although here too, there are no "Victrola's". They are all HMV versions from England, just as all the external horn Victor-type machines are English G&T's, or Berliner's.

The purpose of the book is to introduce the subject of phonographs to collectors, and to enable collectors to make intelligent observations about the machines they might consider for purchase. There is an emphasis on dating the evolution of machines and introduction of new features. But the text is not a mere listing of these facts, for there is clear insight into the importance of these developments. There is a chapter each on Edison, Columbia, and His Master's Voice, while all other machines are relegated to an alphabetic listing in the fourth chapter. Except for a black and white photo of a Hawthorne & Sheble "Star" disc machine, only the European makers are honoured with an illustration. While I loved seeing a colour photo of an E. M. Ginn Expert Junior handmade phonograph with its huge towering horn, it would have been more instructive to the beginning collector to see a

close-up photo of the Brunswick Ultona tone-arm which was discussed in the text. But then again, we weren't shown the mechanism for the constant linear speed World machine, either.

After a four page chapter on dating guidelines (does this mean: never take a girl to a phonograph auction on the first date ???) there is a good chapter on repair and restoration of the machine's innards, reproducers, and cabinets. But of greatest value to the novice is the chapter on "How to examine a Prospective Purchase." The condition and restorability of the machine is one major concern, but of equal interest is the determination of the machine's complete originality. More and more we see bastardizations of machines in antique stores. The funniest one I've seen was the Edison Diamond Disc machine which had a steel needle soldered to the reproducer in place of the original diamond point! It was in a shop 15 miles from the site of the 1981 ARSC Convention, so a bunch of us had a big laugh at that one! While this book won't make an expert out of a novice, it will present the basic facts in a way that will enable an intelligent collector to continue to discover the truth as he begins to do further research.

This book is one of the first in a series contemplated by the famous international auction house, Christie's. Decanters and decorative lamps are two other titles in the series, so you get some idea of the type of collectors this book might also reach. This type of collecting has unfortunately turned into "investment collecting" so the trend is being continued which has rapidly escalated the "prices" of phonographs way above their "value"--and has effectively priced the average hobblist out of the market. It is commendable that all discussion of pricing is reserved for a two page list at the back of the book of values for all the phonographs illustrated. But there is very little shown for less than \$300 other than some suitcase portables, common machines of the internal horn table-grand design, and some toy machines. Phonographs are big business now, and to prove it there is a slip attached to the rear dust cover flap inviting the reader to send in to Christie's details of a phonograph "in your possession" for a "free appraisal." Draw your own conclusions.

Lotz, Rainer E. Grammophonplatten aus der Ragtime-Ara. (Die bibliophilen Taschenbücher Nr. 141) Dortmund, Germany: Harenberg Kommunikation, 1979. 217 pp. illus.

This is a very nearly successful attempt at producing a label book picturing records of German manufacture from the "Ragtime Era" which, at least for the purposes of this book, is 1906 to 1925. Do not get the mistaken impression that the records pictured are of ragtime or jazz content, it is just the era that is under study. Included are illustrations of 89 record labels shown in full color approximately 3 1/2 inches in diameter, one per page. On each opposite page is a listing of basic discographic data of both sides of the record including a mention of the city and year of recording. Following this is a 26-page essay in German discussing in detail the record companies, trademarks, and pictures on

the labels, and the music contained on some of the records.

The German record industry of this era is very important but often misunderstood by American collectors. Germany acted as a pressing house for many British labels in addition to the records made there for domestic German consumption. The phrase on an early British record such as "Reproduced in Berlin" has often led to confusion--the company really meant "Pressed." Thus, half of the records shown in this book were recorded outside Germany--23 were recorded in London, and 22 were recorded in other countries from the U.S. and Russia to the cities of Konstantinopel to Kuangchou. (The latter record is one of the most intriguing in the book. Imagine a Chinese record with a picture of Hindenburg on it. Not the blimp--the man!)

While the book can be a valuable guide to this important aspect of early phonographic history, and the printing at first glance seems to be outstanding, the color reproduction of many of the labels leaves a lot to be desired. This book seems to suffer from much the same problem as the color dust cover of Brian Rust's "The American Record Label Book." Some labels appear to be reproduced quite well while others are so badly misbalanced as to be very misleading.

Not being that intimately familiar with all of these labels, I must admit that I did not notice the color problem at first, but it became immediately evident as soon as I took out the examples of seven of these labels I had in my collection, along with several more of similar manufacture. Of course I had realized that the gold color would be almost impossible to accurately reproduce without using actual gold ink like the originals. However, the various tints that the gold takes among the different pictures give some clues to which pictures are more off color, and in which direction the mis-balance lies. A whole group of pictures have a reddish cast, and nowhere is it clearer than in the "Cinch" Record picture, which on my several originals were made with a rough tan paper similar to that used in grocery bags. The red cast can be then recognized four pages later on the Famous-Record (#21), and on the Klinge Record (#47), Operaphone Record (#59), and Patria-Record (#65). Compare two very similar Odeon labels (#'s 56 and 57). The first has a very yellowish tint to the gold, while the second has a more reddish cast although not nearly as bad as the others mentioned. I repeat, I realize that gold is difficult to reproduce but it is indicative of other problems. The yellow-green cast to the gold in the Homochord label illustrated in picture #36 makes it impossible to realize that the label is really supposed to be green--and a very rich green, at that. But what color is the Homophon Company GmbH label illustrated in #38 supposed to be? It looks deep blue, but I have two different but similar labels that are black. The flowing red dress on the Odeon lady in picture #58 is washed out into white in many places, and it is difficult to guess that the label is supposed to be green.

Because of the inconsistency of the problems, I feel that the cause might be similar to what happened with the Rust cover: the original photography was done under varying conditions with not enough attention

to proper lighting. The job must be done absolutely correctly if it is to be done at all. It is possible to make color transparencies with true color renditions. On the other hand, ordinary color prints from negatives are rarely in proper color balance. The ideal situation would be transparencies with the added protection of including a standard gray scale and color scale strip in every picture. Color corrections can be made by the printer with the exacting guidance of these test strips. This is what Chester Collins has done on his sheet film transparencies that he has made for the endlessly delayed label book he is preparing with George Blacker. I am not sure how he lights his records for the photography, but I have an almost fool-proof method. Use daylight film and take the pictures outdoors at noontime on a sunny day. You might have to wait a few days for the right conditions, but the pictures will be well worth it. These efforts can be loused by the printer, but fine work can be done with some care, personal supervision, and the selection of the right man to do the job. If it were the printer's fault, all the labels would be wrong in the same direction.

Despite these drawbacks, my initial contention that this book is a worthy guide to an important and misunderstood aspect of record history still holds. It will provide some guidance to records which are seen too rarely by most American collectors to make even accurate dating estimates. It certainly is not a complete guide--the small number of these records in my own collection even showed me that--but the book didn't claim to be complete. It is paperbound, 4 3/4 x 6 7/8 inches, and costs \$10.95 from Allen Koenigsberg at Antique Phonograph Monthly.

Dethlefsen, Ronald. Edison Blue Amberol Recordings 1912-1914.
Brooklyn: APM Press, 1980. 206 + x + 6 pp. illus.

This book started out to be a relatively inexpensive work to reproduce every record slip/booklet for the early Edison Blue Amberol Cylinders but changed its scope and goal slightly to become a more comprehensive work. The main part of the book still is the reproduction of over 225 of the nearly 850 slips that were published between their introduction in December 1912 and their discontinuance after September 1914. But the remaining third of the book includes historical information on the introduction of the celluloid cylinder, the methods of manufacture, details of the live vs. dubbed cylinders, reprints of articles and listings from catalogues, supplements and dealer magazines, and alphabetical listings by titles and artists of the live-recorded cylinders that appeared on Blue Amberol. Of greatest importance are the information and lists of the cylinders issued after 1914 which were not dubbed from discs, and a cross reference listing of live Blue Amberol cylinders and the Diamond Discs of the same selections from which those cylinders were not dubbed.

There were two surprises in the book for me. While I have over 100 Blue Amberols in my collection, I had only been lucky enough to find one slip in all these years. I had no idea that they printed the entire script for most of the comedy monologue, dialogue, and scene

records in the slips. I found out that Uncle Josh bought his automobile to replace "a bone-spavined horse what had spring holts" although having this information in print still does not tell me what this country bumpkin jargon means! At last I can listen to Billy Golden sing "Turkey in the Straw" and know what the words are! Since only about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the published slips are included in this book, many other of my favorite cylinders of these two years are not included here, so I do feel that eventually a book of all of the slips ought to be published.

The other surprise was that somebody else was interested in the fact that Blue Amberol type cylinders had continued to be manufactured by Edison into the 1950's! And it is that fact itself which will be the surprise to almost all of the readers of this column and the book. I was lucky enough to discover this fact when I made a lucky purchase of an actual manufacturing mold of Ediphone School Record No. 15 which had the date it was removed from service pencilled on the box: 7/31/51. At the same time I had also gotten "U.S. Signal Corps Radio No. 4-R Ediphone System" Morse code lesson cylinder with its special machine. Since there were 1939 and 1940 dates on the machine, I assumed that the cylinders also dated from that era. Readers of this book will be able to learn exactly how these Ediphone Blue Amberol cylinders were recorded, processed, and manufactured as late as 1960.

It should be noted that with one exception the record slips are not printed in photographic facsimile, but rather were re-typeset using typefaces of the original styles. I had expected to be disappointed in the book because of this but was happily surprised not to be. All of the flavor of the originals are retained with the added advantages of greater clarity of the type and more slips reproduced in the same space. The only two drawbacks in the book lie in the alphabetic lists of cylinder titles and artists. Without a complete numerical list at hand it is impossible to get full use out of the artist list which just shows the record number of the cylinders made by each artist. The other drawback is the lack of any indication of which cylinders in these lists are included in the record slip reproductions. This causes continual shuffling of pages looking for slips that are not included.

The book is beautifully printed and bound, quite up to the high standards we would expect from Allen Koenigsberg's APM Press. Only 500 signed and numbered copies were produced.

Franklin, Joe. A Gift for People. New York: M. Evans and Company. 1978. 246 + 21 pp. illus.

It is not often that we get a book like this. We have biographies and autobiographies of inventors, performers, recording artists, record company executives, "recorders" (like Fred Gaisberg and Joe Batten), but rarely do we ever get autobiographies of record collectors. To those of you out of the reach of New York radio and television stations WOR and WOR-TV, Joe has conducted nostalgia and interview programs such as "Down Memory Lane" for over two decades on these stations.

Until WOR-TV went on the satellite last year, he was nationally known mainly for his authorship of the long-time best-selling "Classics of the Silent Screen." But Joe is a record collector, and although he usually sticks to L.P. reissues for his radio show and screenings of his collection of silent films are now rare on his TV show, he loves to sit down and talk records.

His early story has been told once before in a full chapter in Paul Whiteman's 1948 book Records for the Millions, "'Little Joe' and his Record Rarities." But as he autographed the first page of that chapter for me, Joe said half-jokingly, "Don't believe a word of what Whiteman wrote about me!" A cynic might feel that this better describes Franklin himself, but he is sincerely concerned with people despite the fact that it sometimes comes across as over-sincerity. The book is not about record collecting, it is about a man who, among other things, just happens to be a record collector. It is about show business, broadcasting recording artists, people he has interviewed, ordinary and extraordinary people he has helped and who have helped him, and a very philosophical view of life. But if you don't have a chance to go to New York and step thru the always open door of his office into a never-never land of delightful clutter and see Joe juggle at least three telephone receivers on his shoulders, take a shot at this book. Old fashioned show business is not yet dead.

REPRINTS OF PHONOGRAPHIC LITERATURE, PART TWO:

THE GREENWOOD PRESS DISCOGRAPHY REPRINT SERIES

I guess we discographers have finally arrived. Just as sound recordings have long been treated as the poor step-sister of the printed page, thus has discography been considered by scholars to be a shoddy imitation of the science of bibliography. All that is changing. Discography has grown up--and quite rapidly, at that! The standards set by this Journal in its published discographies are quite exacting, and the computerized Union Catalogue AAA/ARSC project has developed a set of discography parameters that puts most bibliographic endeavors to shame. Recorded sound is barely more than a century old, the earliest playable sound recording is yet to pass that milestone, and it is less than 50 years since the term "discography" was coined (reportedly by French jazz critic Charles Delaunay, (but I am open to any counter-claim). In spite of this, there is already an ample heritage of early discographies to show us where we have been. These early pioneering discographies are the subject of this series of reprints by Greenwood Press. Twenty-eight of them have been re-printed in 32 volumes so that the new generation of collectors and discographers need not be deprived of their heritage due to the unavailability of original copies. The reprinting of these works is most welcome indeed.

I have some mixed feelings about this series. I feel that the concept of the series is not adequately defined in the title of the promotional brochure: "Discography--A New Collection of Reprinted Books."

While the introduction to the series does state that these books are examples of early discographies, most of the individual descriptions of the books sell them as if these books are still close to the last word on the subject. For example, this is the description of Orin Blackstone's Index to Jazz: Jazz Recordings 1917-1944, originally published serially in four paperbound volumes between 1945 and 1948:

This is one of the earliest discographies published on jazz. Organized alphabetically by performer, this is still one of the most comprehensive discographies for the period it covers, and thus is especially helpful to the jazz collector.

It would be tragic if any collector or library purchased this book thinking that it is a good substitute for Brian Rust's Jazz Records 1897-1942. Blackstone is a good example of the early style of discography--based mainly on published record company catalogues, observation of copies of the records themselves, and a small smattering of record company ledger information--but it certainly is not comparable to the modern style of discography exhibited by Rust. Modern discography techniques rely heavily on large amounts of record company ledger information combined with some far reaching research into the files of performers, producers, and collectors. Blackstone lists the records by released catalogue number with only an occasional matrix number or recording date listed. Rust lists the recordings chronologically by recording date and matrix number for each side. Because of this, Rust is able to list unissued recordings, something Blackstone had no way of including.

Don't get me wrong. I am delighted to be able to have this opportunity to get a copy of Blackstone, and in an edition far more durable than the originals. Except for this series, about the only other way I could hope to obtain a set would be to wait for one of my older collector friends to die--and that is a damnable way to get a book. I am tickled pink over the reprinting of each and every one of the books in this series but these books should not be purchased in lieu of the more complete discographies and catalogues that are now available. This series is designed for libraries and advanced collectors who already have the modern discographies and wish to supplement these with the reprints of the classic early discographies.

There are some exceptions, however. Studies in Jazz Discography edited by the late Walter C. Allen belongs on every shelf right next to a complete set of ARSC Journals. It is an edited transcript of the first two Rutgers University Institute of Jazz Studies Conferences on Discographical Research and another special conference, all held in 1968 and 1969. Some of the other books are likewise of importance not for the discographical data they contain, but for the commentary and reviews of the recordings by the authors. ARSC President David Hall's The Record Book--International Edition, and Charles Edward Smith's The Jazz Record Book are only two prime examples of this genre. But then, these are really not usable as discographies, being as they are

selective guides to a limited number of records. Others of this type include the books in "The Guide to Long Playing Records" series; the Lippincott/Keystone "Collector's . . ." series; and the books by Barbour and Freeman, Gammond (et al.), Sackville-West and Shawe-Taylor, Wilson, and the Critics from High Fidelity. Many of these books were originally meant as a purchaser's guide to the records then available, hardly an adequate definition for "discography." But that does not make them any the less valuable as long as the purchaser understands their limitations. Indeed, there is a value to seeing some reactions to these old recordings made when the recordings were new. There is no reason why the collector cannot use these books as a barometer and guide to which recorded interpretations he should be on the lookout for--and which to avoid. It is a further confirmation that we are supposed to be collecting the music contained on the records as much as the records themselves!

There is one further reservation about this series that I must voice: these reprints are very, very expensive. We should make it clear that these are not "trade books," that is, books that are normally available in regular book stores. These books were designed mainly for purchase by institutions and libraries. Greenwood Press is one of several companies which specialize in reprinting books for libraries. Arno Press is another notable example. Hence these books are printed on heavy, long-life paper with strong, library-type bindings. Most private collectors tend to be more cost conscious on an item-by-item basis than libraries which can purchase large quantities of books from a general acquisitions budget until the lump-sum runs out. The labor of tracking down individual out-of-print books is greater than the extra cost of purchasing an entire reprint series in one group--usually at a slightly reduced complete-collection price. In addition, because the demand for this type of book is limited, so is the quantity printed. This also causes a rise in price. But it is a source of annoyance when we realize that a "trade" reprint publisher like Dover can publish a high-quality paperbound copy of Julian Morton Moses' Collectors' Guide to American Recordings at about one-fifth the price that Greenwood Press probably would have charged. Furthermore, when you realize that the original paperbound book by John Briggs was published in 1962 for \$1.75 and now would cost \$12.50, you must rethink the value of the book vs. the price asked.

Additionally, there is a general myth about the escalating prices of out-of-print books. In general, a used book will not cost more than its original cost, although it is no longer true that an average used book would be priced at half the original price. Some of these books are unusual to find, especially the privately published ones like Blackstone, but a great deal of them are fairly common. As fine as they were, books like David Hall's The Record Book were discarded by collectors at the same time as they discarded their classical 78's. Although David constantly gets letters asking for copies of the various editions of the book, I always see copies in used book stores all over the country. Most used book stores price these books fairly cheaply, especially if the store prides itself on fine bindings and classic books

of general interest. What could be duller to the general public than a book listing scratchy old records. To prove my point, six of the choice originals were sitting on my shelves and had all been acquired second-hand during the last ten years for a total cost of less than \$10. About 8 or 9 of the others had been in print during these ten years, and a few others had only recently gone out of print by that time. You may consider it worthwhile to spend a little time looking for an original copy when you consider that I paid \$1.00 for the edition of David Hall's book reprinted here for \$49.50. That might be an extreme example, but it is not unusual. Remember that all of these reprints are priced greatly above the price originally charged for the original. But if you need the book, the price should be no object. You be the judge.

Before I list the books in this series, I want to make one last editorial comment. I object to the Greenwood brochure's deletion of the name of the original publisher of each volume. They include the city of original publication but not the publisher. This is in keeping with one of the most asinine bibliographic forms which is subscribed to by some scholarly journals. It is a throwback to the days of the Renaissance when the city of publication was more important than the name of the man who printed (published) the book. Come on people, this is the Twentieth Century. Actually, this is an excellent example of just how much further discography has come in 50 years than bibliography has come in 500 years. My other pet peeve is the notation of the reprint publisher and the new publication date on library card catalogue entries instead of the name of original publisher and original date with a suitable note of the reprint edition. A 1936 book is not a 1978 book just because it was reprinted in 1978. Librarians take note. Anyhow, the following list will include the original publishers' name when I know them. If you want to know about the others, you make a trek over to Books In Print back editions and find out yourself!

I have listed the books in the three separate categories in which they apply. I have also split up the listings of the three series which contributed some of the books: "The Guide to Long-Playing Records" published by Knopf; "Keystone Books in Music" a softcover series published by Lippincott; and "Voices of the Past" published by Oakwood Press. Only the first of these series is reprinted here in its entirety, anyway. The reprint price is included in each listing, followed by another price in parentheses. That latter price is the cost per page. This will give you an added guide to just how much some of these books really cost. Because these books are facsimile reprints, there was no real editorial cost to each book--only the cost of paper, plate making, printing, and binding. This cost should be uniform for each book. But partially because of the slender size of some, the per-page cost ranges from an exorbitantly high 15¢ for the 90 page Beecham discography published only six years ago, to a low of 3.5¢ for David Hall's massive International Edition of The Record Book. The contrast does make the latter seem like a glorious bargain until you recall how much I paid for my original copy just about five years ago! They average at 7.1¢ when you average up the averages, but it is 6.2¢ when you divide up the 7,708 pages of the 26 volumes (whose page numbers are included in the brochure) into their individual cost of \$485.00. Since a 1% discount is granted

when purchasing the entire series of 32 volumes for \$510.00, this works out to 5.3 ¢ per page. This may seem like needless nitpicking, but we should all be rooting for the success of this project. I would hate to see it fail just because they have priced themselves out of the market. Remember, most of these books are luxuries, not necessities, and in these days of inflation we are more likely to spend our money on the more definitive modern discographies like Rust or Clough & Cuming.

Jazz Oriented Books

Blackstone, Orin. Index to Jazz: Jazz Recordings, 1917-1944. Fairfax Va.; The Record Changer, 1945-1948. (orig 4 paperback vol) 118, 114, 105, 106 pp. with covers and original advertisements. \$19.75 (4.0¢/p)

Fox, Charles, Peter Gammond, and Alun Morgan. Jazz On Record: A Critical Guide. London: 1960. 352 pp. \$19.50 (5.5¢/p)

Gammond, Peter and Peter Clayton. 14 Miles on a Clear Night. London, 1966. 128 pp, illus. \$12.50 (9.7¢/p)

Jazz on LP's, Revised Edition. London: English Decca, 1956, 282 pp. \$17.50 (6.2¢/p)

Miller, Paul Edward, Down Beat's Yearbook of Swing. Chicago: Down Beat Publishing Co., 1939. 183 pp. (7/5¢/p)

Schleman, Hilton R. Rhythm on Record. London: Melody Maker, 1936. 333 pp. illus. \$19.75 (5.9¢/p)

Smith, Charles Edward, etc. The Jazz Record Book. New York: Smith & Durrell, 1942. xiv, 515 pp. \$27.50 (5.2¢/p)

Studies in Jazz Discography I. Walter C. Allen, Ed. New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Institute of Jazz Studies, 1971. 112 pp. \$13.50 (12.05¢/p)

Classical Oriented Books

Bennett, John Reginald. A Catalogue of Vocal Recordings: From the English Catalogues of the Gramophone Company 1898-1899; The Gramophone Company Limited 1899-1900; The Gramophone & Typewriter Company Limited 1901-1907; and the Gramophone Company Limited 1907-1925. Lingfield, Surrey: Oakwood Press, 1956. 238 xlvii pp. \$19.50 (6.8¢/p)

Bennett, John Reginald, and Wilhelm Wimmer. A Catalogue of Vocal Recordings: From the 1896-1926 German Catalogues of the Gramophone Company Limited, Deutsche Grammophon, A.G. Lingfield, Surrey: Oakwood Press, 404, viii pp. \$24.75 (6.0¢/p)

Briggs, John. The Collector's Beethoven. Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott, 1962. 152 pp. \$12.50 (8.2¢/p)

Broder, Nathan. The Collector's Bach. Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott, 1958. 192 pp. \$14.50 (7.5¢/p)

- Burke, Carnelius G. The Collector's Haydn. Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott, 1959. 316 pp. \$17.50 (5.5¢/p)
- De Schauensee, Max. The Collector's Verdi and Puccini. Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott, 1962. 156 pp. \$13.50 (8.3¢/p)
- Gammond, Peter. Music on Record: A Critical Guide. 4 Volumes. London: 1962, \$65.00
- Hall, David. The Record Book, International Edition. New York: Oliver Durrell, 1948. viii, 1394 pp. \$49.50 (3.5¢/p)
- Kolodin, Irving. Orchestral Music (The Guide to Long Playing Records, Vol. 1) New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955. xiii, 268, vii pp. \$19.00 (6.7¢/p)
- Miller, Philip Lieson. Vocal Music. (The Guide to Long Playing Records, Vol. 2) New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955. xvi, 381, vi pp. \$24.75 (5.9¢/p)
- The Recordings of Beethoven As Viewed by the Critics from High Fidelity. Great Barrington, Mass.: 1971. vii, 173, 10 pp. \$14.50 (7.6¢/p)
- Sackville-West, Edward and Desmond Shawe-Taylor. The Record Guide. Revised Edition, with Supplement. 2 Volumes. London: 1955. \$55.00
- Schonberg, Harold C. Chamber and Solo Instrument Music. (The Guide to Long Playing Records, Vol. 3) New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953. xi, 280, vi pp. \$19.50 (6.5¢/p)
- Schonberg, Harold C. The Collector's Chopin and Schumann. Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott, 1959. 256 pp. \$17.50 (6.8¢/p)
- Sir Thomas Beecham Discography. Redondo Beach, Calif: Sir Thomas Beecham Society, 1975. ix, 77, 4 pp. \$13.50 (15¢/p)

General Interest

- Barbour, Harriet Buxton, and Warren S. Freeman. The Children's Record Book. New York: Oliver Durrell, 1947. 196 pp. \$15.00 (7.6¢/p)
- Bryant, Eric Thomas. Collecting Gramophone Records. London: 1962, 153 pp. \$13.00 (8.4¢/p)
- A Discography of Hispanic Music In the Fine Arts Library of the University of New Mexico. Albuquerque, 1973. 110 pp. \$11.75 (10.7¢/p)
- Gramophone Record Catalogue. Ipswich, England: Suffolk, East, England, County Library, 1969. 225 pp. \$17.50 (7.8¢/p)
- Wilson, W. J. The Stereo Index: A Complete Catalogue of Every Recommended Stereo Disc. London: 1970. 218 pp. \$24.50 (11.2¢/p)

I have not seen all of the books in this series, but will try to give you my capsule opinion of those that I know.

As mentioned before, Blackstone is a fine example of the old-style of discography, based primarily on the order in which records were released. This creates problems when the rare instances occur where recording dates or unissued sides have to be listed. The Ben Pollack listing is an example. Things then get out of order. But in most instances the records for each artist are listed by catalogue number. So if a collector is interested in just a catalogue of the issued records he might find, listed in catalogue number order, with no worrissome details like alternate takes and unissued sides, this might be easier to use than a more complete and modern work like Rust. But remember, a lot of records have been found in the past 35 years that are not listed here. Additionally, none of the additions and corrections that were compiled and published in various collector's magazines have been included here. That might have been a valuable bonus.

I am not familiar with the three British jazz books listed next, but the first two appear to be very limited in scope judging from the descriptions in the brochure. 14 Miles on a Clear Night is subtitled: "An Irreverent, Sceptical, and Affectionate Book about Jazz Records." Because it only lists 40 records that are the authors' favourites I find it hard to classify this book as a "discography." Jazz on Record is billed as "A Critical Guide" ". . . from the point of view of the collector." The third book seems to be a little more valuable. It is a record company publication which is "A Collector's Guide to Jazz" which was then available in England on "Decca, Brunswick, London, Felsted, Duretet-Thompson, Vogue-Coral, Telefunken, and Durium long playing records." Discographic details are given along with cross-reference listings. This might be a gem if you collect British jazz LP's of the early 1950's.

Miller's Down Beat 1939 Yearbook is only partly discographical. There is a "Representative Record Library" chapter which lists some great records by title! But it does give a complete personnel roster for each recording. But the real treasure of the book is the chapter titled: "Valuation of Collectors' Records." Here the records are listed by artist and record number of the original issue, along with the 1938 collector's prices. The top prices of \$25.00 seem to go mainly for some of the records by the white musicians of Chicago's Austin High School gang, Bix Beiderbecke, King Oliver, and four piano solos on QRS by Earl Hines. On the other hand, two of the very rare Jelly Roll Morton records on Autograph are listed at \$2.50 (606 & 607) while another (617) is worth \$10 because King Oliver plays on it. The now-famous \$4,000 Gennett 5275, "Zulus Ball" by Oliver is not listed, but 5274 was listed at \$22.50. There is an interesting history of early jazz milestones which includes the beginning of the Buddy Bolden legend, and a major part of the book is devoted to brief biographies of musicians. Certainly not an authoritative reference work, but the 1938 price guide is great fun!

The Schleman book is the hit of the series. It is a true classic because it actually preceded Charles Delaunay's original Hot Discography, by several months. The Schleman book gives a short biography for most of the musicians and groups, and then lists their records by company and alphabetically by title of each side. Only the record numbers are given. There is a small effort to give approximate dates at a very few of the record company headings, but it is very unsuccessful. This is not strictly a "jazz" book--even Mantovani's Orchestra is included! Some of the biographical details are hard to find elsewhere, and many of the photographs are very rare. The reproduction of those photographs in the reprint edition is so fine that it is difficult to imagine that Greenwood Press was not working with the original 8x10 glossies. There are some very interesting British advertisements included in the index section of the book--and it is a very fine index, by the way. This is not a replacement for Rust, or for Blackstone either, but an interesting book if you already have the others.

Charles Edward Smith and his buddies Frederic Ramsay Jr., Charles Payne Rogers, and William Russell break down the music into the various historical "schools" of jazz. After a lengthy and informative historical introduction of these differing areas, the records themselves are described. The book was patterned on the similar method applied to classical music by David Hall in the original edition of The Record Book published two years earlier by the same publisher. While it makes interesting reading, it is almost impossible to easily look up any particular recording. Important artists are indexed, but sidemen are not. A performer's records might be scattered all around the book. The bulk of the book is devoted to the critical analysis of each record, the artists, and the styles of playing. Only readily available records were listed.

Glowing comments have already been made concerning the Rutgers University Institute of Jazz Studies book of Discon 68 & 69. I must strongly urge all of you again, that you must buy this book. Even if you hate jazz. What was said at these conferences applies to all types of discography, and it is a further indication of the great amount of care and skill it requires to be a discographer of the modern type. It is just a shame that Rutgers ran out of the original \$3.00 copies and never reprinted it themselves. It is also a shame that these conferences died out when Walt Allen died. Now that the Institute has been revitalized under the leadership of Dan Morgenstern, maybe sessions of this nature can resume.

Starting in the books oriented towards classical music, the two volumes by Bennett are straight numerical record lists of the English and German branches of The Gramophone Company in their earliest years. To make the lists shorter, only the last names of the artists are given in the numerical lists, but the full names are given in the artist indexes. Those indexes, by the way, list the record numbers instead of just page numbers. In the main numerical lists only the barest details are given, seldom more than the record number, artist last name, selection title, and composer. Matrix number is given in a few cases. The date of

inclusion in the catalogue is given in the English volume. Another surprising feature of that volume is the inclusion of the speed of the record if it is known not to be 78. The original book was produced from a typewritten manuscript. It is little more than a record list, but an interesting one, at that. Today's user of discographies expects more than this, but these books will come in handy. The other books in this series, "Voices of the Past," were in print at the time of the production of this reprint series, but it would be wise to check with the publisher to see if the others are still available. The English book was Volume One, and the German book was Volume Seven.

Through alphabetic accident, the third through sixth books on the classical list are all part of the Keystone Discography series published by Lippincott. Look down to the next to the last classical book and you will find the fifth book of this series that has been included. There were four others that were not included here: two jazz books by John Wilson, The Collector's Twentieth Century Music in the Western Hemisphere by Arthur Cohn, and another volume by John Briggs, The Collector's Tchaikovsky and the Five. (Are "the Five" perhaps a predecessor group to China's Gang of Four???)

The Keystone Discography series books reprinted here took an individual or pair of composers and studied all of the available recordings of each work. Absolutely no discographical details are given other than the catalogue numbers. I only have a copy of the Beethoven book at hand (an original \$1.75 list price copy!) but judging from its organization, the series lists the records following the individual essays about the music and the interpretations. They are listed in the "approximate order of merit" for each work. There is no index. The overwhelming bulk of Briggs' essays analyze the merits and attributes of the composition. A final paragraph very quickly states the merits of the individual interpretations. Often they are dismissed in only one sentence. Perhaps the other authors give more details about the recordings in their book, but Briggs' study of the recordings of Beethoven gives very little more details than a copy of a mid-1961 Schwann Catalogue upon which the listings were based. The book was probably worth the \$1.75 cost to a Beethoven lover in 1961, and was worth the 35¢ I paid for my copy--but I question the value of the book at \$12.50. I reserve judgement on the other books in the series.

I likewise must beg off reviewing the four volume set by Peter Gammond, Music on Record: A Critical Guide. Orchestral music is covered by the first two volumes, chamber and instrumental music is in the third and vocal music the fourth. The brochure states:

The listings are by composer, based on importance and number of records available. A selective list of those records, and some collector's items, round off each entry.

I continue to question the value of selective discographies, and I am unsure of how valuable the opinions of Peter Gammond and James Burnett are. I'm sorry, but you're on your own here.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that David Hall's opinions are worthy of note. The International Edition of 1948 is the edition to be preferred. It overcomes the mass confusion caused by the layout of the original 1940 edition of The Record Book and the two Supplements of 1941 and 1943. Instead of dividing the music into genre and then having a discussion of the music and records on the right hand pages while listing the records on the left pages--usually several pages away from where they are discussed--the 1948 edition reprinted here lists the records by composer. If there are only a small number of compositions, the discussion of all of the records is combined at the head of the composer's listing. Major composers have numerous discussion sections after the listings of each musical type or major composition.

There is great value to these discussions by David Hall. We find insight into the musical composition; performance; sound quality of the recording; the engineering techniques utilized; and the practices of the record companies in selecting the recordings to be made, issued, and (sob) deleted. While the recordings listed are selected, David had the knack of finding out about records that were difficult to locate and had no qualms about including them. He also listed deleted records that he felt were important--often including a barb to the record company about their stupidity and/or callousness. They are all great fun to read more than thirty years later knowing that the same things still happen today!

The 1948 edition was called "International" not because it listed only foreign records, but because these records were finally again being imported and produced in greater quantities following the turmoil of the previous decade. The bulk of the listings are still the good old Victor Red Seals and Columbia Masterworks. The first portion of the book contains a lengthy overview of the history of music and how they had been treated by the recording industry. Then follows a study of the state of the art of recording and reproduction of mid-1947. Hints of future possibilities of the L.P., pre-recorded wire and tape, and binaural recordings are to be found, but it seems that David remained blissfully unaware of the revolution that was to come within months of the publication: the microgroove L.P. "Dawn of a New Era" he called it in the book published two years later, Records: 1950 Edition. That book--not reprinted here--did not duplicate the contents of the International Edition, and would have been a good companion volume in this series. But while I still maintain my reservations about calling this type of book a "discography," it still is a grand guide to your collection of classical 78's.

Next on the list comes two of the three volumes from the Knopf series "The Guide to Long-Playing Records." The third volume is also included here a little further down the list. I have only my original copy of the Kolodin Orchestral Music at hand. This series covers the first half decade of the L.P. including the first surge of the small independent labels (many of which disappeared shortly after these books appeared.) The records are listed very selectively which lessens the

value of these books as discographies. I have not enjoyed this book as much as Kolodin's earlier books on 78's, A Guide to Recorded Music (1941) and New Guide to Recorded Music (1946). Although he doesn't come out and say it, I sense that he had an overall disappointment in the performances that were available on L.P. by 1955 compared with the riches he remembered on 78's. His commentaries on the recordings are brief, although longer than in the book by Briggs reviewed above. We have all enjoyed Phil Miller's reviews in this Journal, and I wish I had not passed up an original copy of his volume thinking that I already had a copy. (It was in a thrift store during a break in the Bloomington, Indiana ARSC Convention--and I was thinking only of rushing back to get to the business meeting session!!!). Thus I can't comment on it except to say that he must have had fun writing it--it is the longest of the three books in the series!

I also do not have access to the other three books not yet discussed. The Beethoven book by the High Fidelity critics will provide much lengthier reviews than the Briggs book. It was produced following the flurry of Beethoven recordings released in honor of his 200th birthday. The two-volume The Record Guide by Edward Sackville-West and Desmond Shawe-Taylor, with Andrew Porter and William Mann is described in the brochure as a "selective and evaluative guide. . .of both music and recordings of this period."

All of these books seem to be cumulative: they will provide the owner of the complete reprint series with numerous reviews and commentaries of these classical recordings. Yet not one of these books is an all-inclusive discography of all (or nearly all) classical recordings. Nor is it possible to say that all classical recordings will have found their way into at least one of these books. All of these classical music books, except for the two Gramophone Company books by Bennett and the book I am about to mention next, are based around critical studies of the performances on the records. Except in passing during a narrative section, none of the recording dates are given, and nowhere in any of these books are there any indications of matrix numbers, takes, or other details other than an occasional comment about which hall was used for the recording. (Most reviewers loved to sneer at Studio 8H!) These books are more like guidebooks to the performances rather than discographies--which is something the purchaser should know.

The last book on the classical list is just about the only true discography on this list, but I am at a complete loss to understand why it was included. It is the most recent book, also the thinnest and most expensive per page. The Sir Thomas Beecham Society's discography of Beecham just lists the records but also included the things we have come to expect in a modern discography: matrix and take numbers, recording dates, complete issue data, etc. It is so recent that it is impossible to really consider it as a pioneering work and its value is negated by the vastly superior Beecham discography authored by the Editor of this Journal, Mike Gray, four years later. Because both of these discographies were carefully reviewed in these pages by David Hamilton (Vol. XII, No. 3, 1980, pp. 265-269), I will not discuss them further.

Moving on to the list of books of General Interest, I can only discuss the first one, Barbour & Freeman's The Children's Record Book. The title is quite misleading because very little of the book is concerned with what are considered to be "children's records." The purpose of the book was to provide parents, teachers, and librarians with a guide to records which would expand the cultural horizons of children through age 16. Classical music is stressed even for babies. There are some sections of spoken word recordings, and I personally find the greatest value of this book in the delineation of the contents of these records. But as a collector of children's records, I know that fellow collectors will be disappointed in this book if they expect that it is a guide and complete discography of children's records. There's not a single Bugs Bunny or Bozo the Clown record listed. You will find Paul Wing, Ted Cott, Vernon Crane, Frank Luther, and a few others dear to the hearts of kids of my generation, but Walt Disney records are sneered at:

It has been found also that, although children enjoy a background of apt sound effects, there can be too much of a good thing. There is an unfortunate tendency of record companies today to multiply sound effects to a welter of mere noise. Records, for example, taken from the sound tracks of Walt Disney productions like Three Little Pigs are mostly a confusion of shouts to the younger children and somewhat bewildering even to older youngsters not familiar with the picture.

None of these records are actually listed in the book because the authors did not list any record they did not like. They also neglected records with picture-story albums because:

As yet, the illustrations have mostly a rather crude cartoon quality and are not to be compared in artistic merit to book illustrations.

Of all the damnable pompous arrogance! But in actuality this book was published just as the golden age of children's records was beginning--Rusty in Orchestraville, Sparky's Magic Piano, and the Walt Disney Storyteller sets were yet to come--but I doubt that the authors would have allowed the listing of Howdy Doody, and other popular children's stars. A far better book on this subject was A Guide to Children's Records by Philip Eisenberg and Hecky Krasno (New York: Crown Publishers, 1948). It is this book which should have been reprinted. (Maybe I'm biased because I already had an original of the Barbour & Freeman but am still looking for a copy of the Eisenberg & Krasno!)

There are also four pages of jazz records (all from album sets) and two pages of show tunes to guide the youngsters themselves "to build a jazz collection that will be the envy of your classmates and a source of satisfaction for years."

I am hoping to obtain a copy of Bryant's Collecting Gramophone Records to review next time (I had hoped it would have already arrived.)

The brochure says that it "directs itself to monaural collections" which is startling, considering the 1962 publication date! It is supposed to help the "novice and the experienced collector" in the "development, care, arrangement, and administration of a record collection." Stay tuned to this space in the next issue for further details (I hope.)

The collections of two libraries were considered important enough to rate having their catalogues included in this series. Not having access to these volumes does not enable me to disclose the amounts of details contained in each listing nor how comprehensive they are. The University of New Mexico listing of their Hispanic music collection centers mainly on serious music, while the Suffolk, East County Library's catalogue is said to be "especially strong in covering Western European and Eastern European works which are not likely to be found in American libraries."

Perhaps it is appropriate that we end with a book with the audacious sub-title "A Complete Catalogue of Every Recommended Stereo Disc." Can't you just hear Ed McMahon crying out to Johnny, "This book contains every stereo disc you would ever need to have! I can't imagine any other stereo disc even worth making into an ashtray." Then, of course, Johnny would say in his cutsy-pie funny voice, "Wrong, polyvinylchloride breath!" and proceed to list a dozen of the most needed records not included in the book. Somehow I can't trust a book with a title like this--it makes me feel like the publisher is about to send out a goon squad to work you over if you even contemplate buying a stereo disc not in the book. And I still get annoyed at the concept that a record must be in stereo to be worth hearing.

Well, there you have it. Twenty eight titles in 32 volumes. There are some gems and others are mainly curiosities. I must again repeat that these books should only be a supplementary adjunct to other more complete and all-inclusive discographies. I am not sure whether these books would be bought to be used or obtained to allow the study of the history and development of the art and science of discography. I would suggest the latter be the primary purpose, with the former being an added bonus.

It really is a shame that this project was undertaken by a library-type publisher rather than a popular trade reprint publisher like Dover. If you could take away the cloth library binding and replace it with Dover's excellent sewn-signature soft bindings--and take away the \$7 to \$12 that hard bindings usually add to prices--these books would be cheap enough to enable some of them to be "best sellers." The bindings are sturdy but are not really all that attractive. They are a plain uniform yellow, but the typography on the spines are so different from each other that they don't even look that impressive lined up on one shelf. I would rather see the original dust covers reproduced on a paper binding rather than have hard bindings with no reproduction of the dust covers that came with some of the hardbound books. Dust covers sometimes give the only biographical information

about the author--wouldn't you like to see David Hall's 1948 picture which appeared on the dust cover? (It is a shame that so many libraries throw the dust covers away when they get new books. Sometimes a cover illustration is even referenced within the book!)

There are other reprints of interest published individually or in other series by Greenwood. I hope to be able to discuss them in a future installment of this section.

THE "I KNEW IT HAD TO COME TO THIS" DEPARTMENT

Despite the fact that it has been about a year since the previous installment of this department, I had thought that I would not be so unlucky as to have any subjects for this often depressing section. But quite suddenly while writing the earlier sections of this column I came upon three things that fit neatly within the above heading, so here goes.

I recently spent three June days in Chicago at the 1981 International Summer Consumer Electronics Show, a trade exhibit of all sorts of electronic devices from digital watches, televisions, and XXX-rated video-cassettes, to stereo equipment and digitally recorded records. And do you want to know what I spent a good part of those three days listening to? Turntable mats. That's right. I actually sat there and listened to turntable mats! Yes, it has come to that. Now before you start calling for the little men in white coats to come to take me away (ha, ha) let me explain.

Several years ago, after it became evident that the Great American Public was not buying 4-channel Quad equipment, some manufacturers hit upon the notion that we must do away with the dreaded and dastardly demon, Static Electricity. So one after another we were bombarded with turntable mats made of conductive carbon fibres which would drain away static electricity charges from records. But at about the same time, we witnessed the development of several elite-ist stereo equipment magazines which, among other things, started worrying about distortions caused by standard speaker cables and warped records. While this might not bother some of us happily listening to 70-year-old records, these eagle-eared critics (some of whom claim they can tell the degradation of sound whenever a gold-plated connector is used somewhere in the audio circuit) started to notice that these thin cloth-like turntable mats were causing the records to sound different. Investigations into different types of turntable mat surfaces and materials have resulted in over a score of some very expensive mats to have hit the market. But what is most amazing to me is that these people are right--my own ears have shown me that there is an audible difference with different turntable mats.

Each manufacturer has their own pet theories as to why their mat is better than all the others. Most seem to agree on some basic observations: the record should be firmly supported over its entire

surface. Some of this seems to be a return to some rather old methodology. We are now seeing turntable spindle clamps which screw the record down to the turntable a la Emile Berliner in the late 1890's, or the use of a heavy weight on the label area as was used on Vitaphone sound-on-disc recordings and 16" broadcast transcriptions in the 1920's and 1930's. Most of the new mats are very heavy, solid, and dense. The surface that contacts the grooved area of the underside of the record is perfectly smooth with no raised or recessed area except to allow for the thickness of the label area. The record will rest solidly on the entire mat surface. This provides a damping of any resonances or shock waves induced into the disc from the pressure of the stylus. You might recall that Edison had a similar concept in mind when he stipulated the nearly quarter-inch thickness of the Diamond Disc. In addition to being warp-free, they presented a heavy mass up against the stylus. The plaster core of the Blue Amberol cylinders also served this purpose. As any of us who have ever played a Blue Amberol which was missing a chunk of the core knows, without the plaster the sound of the cylinder thins out and the surface noise becomes hollow and resonates. (Strangely, I have not heard this to be a problem on Lambert cylinders, most of which were supported on the mandrel only at the two ends.)

The modern lightweight record will resonate when played even at infinitely light tracking weights unless the entire surface of the record is damped by the turntable mat. Warped records accentuate the problem--hence the clamps and weights. But many of the mat manufacturers agree that excessive clamping and weighting will also increase the problems. The mats differ in the amount and type of damping they impart to the record. Some mats are made of a very, very heavy rubber-like material with different amounts of pressure and vibration absorbing qualities. Some, like the "Platter Matter" and the "Music Mat," are sticky and tacky feeling, and firmly grip the record and the turntable platter. They are soft enough to damp out both turntable rumble from below and "vinyl echo" from the stylus, as well as acoustical feedback from airborne sound waves. Other synthetics, like the harder and non-sticky transparent ruby-red "Aura" by "Platter Pad", are a little stiffer, and exhibit less "give." But the ultimate in the hard and stiff turntable mat surface must be the mats that are actually made of a solid sheet of plate glass. There seems to be at least two of these, the "Marcof Glass Mat" and the "Soundisc" by Dudley Sound. I heard a demonstration of the latter comparing it with a "Platter Matter." And the "Soundisc" did seem to make the record sound a little fuller--especially in the bass--and improved the stereo imaging slightly. But boy, are we picking nits! But did you ever think that we would see the day when people would plunk down \$45 for a piece of rubber to lay on their turntable--or even \$26.00 for a sheet of glass for that same purpose???

I should at least answer the questions that I am sure all of you have about how the glass mats are used. The "Soundisc" was placed on top of a mat made of plain old felt to isolate it from the metal turntable platter. The concept behind the use of glass is that it

allows absolutely no flexing of the vinyl disc to take place, something that the rubber mats allow. At this point I am going to retire from the controversy and let each of you make up your own minds. As for me, I can't afford more than my 89¢ foam rubber mats from Radio Shack (I can sense all the purists recoiling in horror!) but I don't know how much flexing goes on inside an old Columbia laminated record, anyway. In fact, absolutely none of the manufacturers I spoke to had even considered 78's in their testing. Every last one of them were completely oblivious to the fact that there were records larger than 12 inches. (I just happened to have a few 16 inch electrical transcriptions with me one evening. You should have seen the looks of wonderment on their faces when we slipped them out!) We probably could not have gotten any of these people to even admit that any records had ever been made before three or four years ago. Why, anything that elderly would not be worth listening to. You mean they actually listened to records in 1975? How could their ears stand it? (They found it hard to believe that 78's were mostly direct-to-disc. Isn't it amazing what the old folks used to do!) I do sincerely wish that some tests would be made with shellac discs, as well as aluminum based lacquer discs and the very stiff early LP's. Perhaps we do have something to learn from this new generation of hi-fi fanatics. This sounds like a job for Steve "Superman" Smolian!

Oh, by the way, during all of this careful listening there seems to be one factor that is no longer bothering the state-of-the-art fanatic: static electricity. Most of these new pads are not conductive. Also absent this year is another of last year's fads: vinyl fatigue. You might remember that some gloom and doom sayers had warned us that we should allow our vinyl records 24 hours to rest up before playing them a second time. Judging from all the demonstrations of \$15 audiophile discs being played repeatedly to show how the mats improved the sound, this is becoming less of a worry.

The second of the three items to be discussed in this department was called to my attention by my good friend, Larry Stidom. Larry runs "Larry's Rock and Read Shop" here in Morehead, Kentucky, and also writes a rock collector newsletter and columns in several publications such as Goldmine. He had been predicting this for some time but I had failed to see the humor in it: rock collectors are now auctioning off standard record company sleeves for 45 r.p.m. records. I am not talking about the color picture sleeves with the titles and photos of specific artists' records--just general sleeves for RCA Victor, Capitol, Columbia, MGM, Dot, Mercury, Coral, Decca, etc. For example:

- "Lot 2971. This is 25 Capitol sleeves with wide horizontal lines and drawing of performers around the center. This popular sleeve has a perforated corner for record number. All corners are intact."
- "Lot 1981. This is 25 of the early red Columbia sleeve with a stripe from corner to corner."
- "Lot 3002. This is 25 of the familiar RCA sleeve: from the 50's. Has multiple line in the shape of a V."

These listings came from Auction list 32 of the Record Exchanger of Orange, California, closing date June 30, 1981. They estimated the value of each lot of 25 sleeves at about \$9.00 but I cannot confirm yet how the bidding went. They mention that these sleeves were taken off records and showed some sign of wear.

I personally have long been collecting record sleeves when I have come across them. I have found some very interesting information on some of them, but apparently there are very few record collectors who make a point of collecting sleeves. I have had some very strange looks given me by collector/dealers when I have said that I did not want to buy the record they offered but would like to have the sleeve! In all cases they have granted my request but did so with an attitude of complete amazement, puzzlement, and surprise. Offhand, I cannot recall having ever seen standard record company sleeves listed alone in an auction. The early Melba sleeves with her picture visible through the sleeve hole are desirable items for collectors, as is the special Al Jolson sleeve made by Brunswick. But most collectors find nothing valuable about original sleeves. They usually are discarded in favor of heavy green sleeves or special, acid-free sleeves if the collector can afford them.

But the mentality of the collector is a little different now. Many of the rock record collectors (as I have mentioned in this column before) are mainly interested in the "original label" copies of the record to be able to relive the vicarious thrill that he would have had if he had walked out of the record store in 1957 clutching the first copy in town of a now-classic rock hit. Without the original record company sleeve this thrill is not complete. Some rock collectors have even been known to accept a counterfeit reproduction of a record on the original style label in order to get some of the original record's charisma. They have also passed up a better copy of the record on a later-style label in favor of a worn copy on the original-style label. Most of the "regular" collectors I know are searching for records made from the original masters on the best possible material in the best condition--original label be damned. And then quickly it goes into a plain old green sleeve.

But who knows? Maybe soon we will see auction listings for Victor Orthophonic "Here Comes the Band" sleeves, or a Brunswick sleeve with Elisabeth Rethberg on the back. I'll trade you three Mischa Elman's for one Claire Dux.

Lastly comes this little item of great interest.

Well, guys, the jig is up. We have been found out. The sex magazines have discovered record collecting. That is, at least record collecting of some sort. On pages 80 and 81 of the April 1978 issue of Forum: The International Journal of Human Relations (how's that for a title), there is a letter in the "Open Forum" section entitled "Has A Crush on Wife." It seems that a Mr. J. C. from Illinois discovered

one day while sorting out some 78's on the floor to give to the junk shop, that he gets rather turned on when his wife steps on records. Although they apparently have graduated to having Mrs. J.C. step on and crush other objects. they did get their first thrill on Blueberry Hill. I won't bore you with all the graphic details that were included in J.C.'s letter, but I think we have finally discovered what use to make of our Margaret Whiting records, and all the extra copies of Francis Craig's "Red Rose" and "Near You" on Bullet! Just my luck there would be a King Oliver on Gennett in the batch, but what the hey.

Perhaps I should mention that the subject of records is not foreign to many of these magazines. Some of the best reviews of jazz and quality rock records are found in the front pages of magazines like Playboy, Penthouse, Oui, Genesis, Gallery, and others. Playboy has long emulated the tastes of its publisher by frequently featuring articles illustrating some very elaborate stereo equipment. In fact, in Fall 1980, they published the first edition of Playboy Guide: Electronic Entertainment, a PG-rated magazine featuring Ann-Margaret and her expensive stereo system on the cover. Michael Bane wrote a very interesting piece about album covers in the December 1978 issue of Genesis, and the January 1975 issue of Oui featured a cover story about collecting classic jukeboxes. (That cover photo of a Wurlitzer 850 sure includes a special feature not found on the cover of Cynthia Hoover's Music Machines American Style!) The November 1973 issue of Oui provided me with some important information about the recorded contents of the Bhutan phonograph record stamps. You see, ladies, there are articles to read in these magazines!

THE "WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF IT MYSELF DEPARTMENT

This edition's item is not very earthshattering. While it is not taking the country by storm, it does prove that it is possible in this modern day and age to come up with a patentable idea that nobody else has thought of, and to manufacture and market it successfully.

Edison used to exclaim often so that everyone could hear it, that after the rejection of his vote recorder he would only invent things that met an actual demand. So, following that formula, the first step in inventing is finding a need that needs filling. Now, I consider shrink wrapping on L.P.'s to be one of the worst ideas since powdered mashed potatoes, but I guess we have to live with it. Who among us have not had an avid session of opening our latest haul of L.P.'s slowed down or ruined by that one album which thoroughly resists all our efforts at slitting open? How often have we cursed at our stupidity at cutting our nails the night before? And haven't we all looked up to the uppermost shelves and muttered "I wish someone would invent an easier way to open shrink-wrapped records?"

Well, like a flash from a detergent commercial or a Walt Disney movie, someone has. With a stroke of neologistic skill that defies

belief, this new device has been named "The Record Album Opener." It is a little 2" disk of plastic a quarter inch thick that is decorated on one side with grooves and a label to make it look like a little record. But it is the flip side that does the trick. There are two slots in it which each has a small plastic point situated in the middle. You simply place the album's edge in the proper sized slot and draw the opener down the side. The point punctures the plastic and slits it without damaging the cardboard album cover or digging too deeply into the opening.

I picked up a handful of them from an elephantine punch bowl at the Phanstiehl exhibit at the Consumer Electronics Show, so one method of distribution of this device would be as an inexpensive give-away advertising speciality. But it is possible that they will be displayed on cards and sold at the checkout counters in record stores. The manufacturer of "The Record Album Opener" is International Advertising Products which is located in a Wilshire Boulevard suite in Beverly Hills. That fact is enough to tempt us all to go into the inventing business!

I had a chance to put "The Record Album Opener" to a thorough test because during the aforementioned convention trip to Chicago I purchased well over 100 albums, many of which were shrink wrapped. I can report that the "The Record Album Opener" operated without a hitch during the first or second stroke on everything except boxed sets. Perhaps the plastic cutting points might wear out when put to industrial use in a record distributorship warehouse, but cheap replacement costs will probably outweigh any move to manufacture an "Industrial Strength" model.

Now if only someone could convince record companies not to shrink wrap their records. I think it is dumb to put each newly manufactured record into an oven to shrink the wrap. But then again, most of the good records are already out of print, so why worry about shrink-wrap!