

FOR THE RECORD

by Michael Biel

Items included for discussion do not necessarily represent endorsement of ARSC nor do the opinions contained here necessarily represent those of ARSC. We make this statement at the head of Dr. Biel's columns to clarify that he alone chooses the items to be included here, and neither he nor ARSC wants to be blamed for the other's opinions!

PART ONE: GRANDDAUGHTER OF "YES, VIRGINIA. THEY'RE STILL MAKIN' 'EM."

To refresh your memories, this department is striving to document all 78-rpm records made since the demise of that speed. The first two editions appeared in the ARSC Journal, Vol. IV, Nos. 1 and 3. Unfortunately, I do not have any additional records to report on this time, but I have acquired a record which had only been given a minimal mention in the second part on pages 104-5. Here are full details:

Warner Bros. PRO-S-750. Leon Redbone. "Champagne Charlie."
Side 1 Alabama Jubilee. mx. PRO-A-750-1-M1 #104995
Side 2 Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone.
mx. PRO-A-750-2-M1 #104995-X

10", raised rim and center, labels are 3" in diameter while raised center is just over 3-1/2" in diameter and extends beyond the labels, brown print with red highlights over a light half-tone brown background, with printed kraft paper inner sleeve and heavy cardboard outer jacket. Record, inner sleeve, and outer jacket all marked "Promotional Copy Not For Sale," and "From the Warner Bros. Album Champagne Charlie (BSK 3165)." Labels are marked "Stereo" and "78 RPM" but neither of these notations appears on either the sleeve or the jacket.

The inner sleeve has a 3" center hole cut into both sides. The second side is printed blank black; the front side has tan lettering showing through the black background. The artist, title of the album, and record number notice appear above the hole, the song titles to the left, production credits and album notice to the right, and a close-up photo of the artist is in a circle below the hole. A 1978 copyright notice is at the bottom.

The outer jacket is printed in jet black with white lettering and illustrations showing through. The front cover is the same as the original album, with the artist's name, album title, and a line drawing of the artist. The rear of the cover has a larger version of the artist photo in the center with two columns of print on the sides. Full sidemen credits are included.

I again ask all readers to check the other two installments of this department and inform me of any other 78-rpm records issued since the mid-1960s that are not yet listed. I would also appreciate further information (or copies) of the four records I do not yet have: on the Ordinary, Good Tone, Private Stock, and Solid Rock labels. (These have already been described briefly).

PART TWO: BOOKS AND ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

Briscoe, Desmond and Curtis-Bramwell, Roy. The BBC Radiophonic Workshop
--The First 25 Years. London: British Broadcasting Corporation,
1983. 175 pp. illus.

For a quarter of a century, listeners to the BBC have heard a lot of weird things. Some of them have emanated from the Radiophonic Workshop. (The House of Commons has not yet, as far as I know, availed itself of this service.) We Americans have had the occasion to become familiar with the Radiophonic Workshop's work on "Doctor Who" and "The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy." If you do not quite understand what this organization produces, it might best be described as electronic music and comical sound effects intended for use as theme or background for BBC radio and TV programs. All BBC producers can dip into its large catalog of stock items or commission sounds to be made-to-order. It also has facilities to mix very elaborate multi-track recordings.

All manner of electronic music and recording apparatus are illustrated and discussed in this book. Every piece of equipment it has ever used had a personality and a story. The people who designed and employed these devices have a great love for them, and this shows through the engaging writing. You'll become personal friends with the "Wobbulator," "Do Not Fiddle With's," "The Crystal Palace," "The Glowpot Desk," the Harmonium with "Mouse-Proof Pedals," "Giants of Steam," "Mijwiz," the "Delaware," and the contents of "Major Bloodnok's Stomach." The last item was one of the early compositions for "The Goon Show," but the others were all electronic or mechanical devices that made sounds in the early years of the Workshop. They are now largely replaced by synthesizers of modern conventional design. That conversion is well documented with photos of all manner of equipment--home-brew and commercial manufacture.

Of greatest interest are the recording devices themselves. There is an enormous quantity of disc and tape equipment shown, dating from the steel tape Blattnerphone of the late 1920s. Postwar tape recorders like the Motosacoche, Ferrograph, EMI, Reflectograph, and Philips are seen, as is the first eight-track machine purchased by the BBC. The techniques used to obtain electronic music and sounds by way of tape loops, alteration of concrete sound-producing devices, and the makeshift electronic instruments that evolved into synthesizers are lovingly and nostalgically explained. And, based on this tradition, the reader is led through the most modern devices now being used.

People also make up an important part of the Workshop family, many of whom are pictured, described, and quoted. In fact, there is a list of every person who served on the creative staff for more than three months. There is also a list of equipment now in use in each of the BBC's current studios. Finally, and of importance to ARSC, is a listing of the records produced by the Workshop on the BBC label. It is headed with the misleading title, "Workshop Records." Nowhere is it indicated that the label those record numbers apply to is BBC; nor is it stated that the list is solely of BBC Records material, and that the list is not complete. The book illustrates a copy of "Time Beat" on Parlophone records, a 45-rpm single of the BBC-TV interval signal produced by Maddalena Fagandini and released under the jesting pseudonym of Ray Cathode. This record is not listed, and I can't read the number from the photo. The text discusses records made of "The Hitch-Hikers Guide to the Galaxy," but does not list them because they are on Original Records (ORA 45 and ORA 54). Are there other releases we don't know about?

I would love to hear the 1980 Radio 3 documentary on the BBC Symphony Orchestra based on a performance of Bartok's "Concerto for Orchestra" conducted by Pierre Boulez. It was recorded on a 16-track machine "with binaural pairs of microphones over each section of the orchestra in order that when any one member of the orchestra was speaking, the listener was hearing the orchestra from that point . . . Interviews with 20 members of the orchestra were intercut and fitted to the tempo, rhythm, mood and phrasing of the music . . . so that the listener could hear the orchestral passages 'from the front' and also have an impression of the subtle differences in the sound normally heard by each musician." This sounds like a great idea for a commercial release, coupled with a second disc of the undisturbed performance. Other full-length items are discussed that would make likely record releases beyond the short pieces already released in compilation albums. This book will whet your appetite.

Chew, V. K. Talking Machines. 2nd edition. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1981. 80 + iv pp. illus.

Last summer, I had the opportunity to fulfill several long-standing ambitions: to visit the South Kensington Science Museum in London, the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh, and Her Majesty's Stationery Office on High Holborn in London. I really don't know what I expected of the latter, perhaps a stockroom of the Queen's writing paper, but it turned out to be a bookstore just like our own U. S. Government Printing Office stores, or the Information Canada stores of past memory. But at HMSO, I was able to find, at the original list prices, a large selection of booklets and books normally sold at diverse locations, all at one place. This book is otherwise usually sold at the Science Museum. Its official price is £2.95, which at today's exchange rates is about \$3.25, less than half of what it is being sold for in the U. S.