
BOOK REVIEWS

The Blackwell Guide to Blues Records.

Edited by Paul Oliver. Cambridge, MA, Oxford, UK: Blackwell Reference, 1989. vii, 347 pp., index, bibliography.

English blues scholar Paul Oliver has edited and contributed one chapter to a useful guide to early through contemporary blues recordings, stressing current or recently available collections. Emphasis, in his words, is on "the best examples of blues records in each of a number of broad categories," which are selected and discussed by Oliver and eleven other specialists. They are as follows.

Paul Oliver:	Songsters and proto-blues
David Evans:	Early deep south and Mississippi valley blues
Bruce Bastin:	Texas and the east coast
Daphne Duval Harrison:	"Classic" blues and women singers
Mike Rowe:	Piano blues and boogie woogie
John Cowley:	the 1930s and the Library of Congress
David Penny:	Rhythm and blues
Paul Garon:	Postwar Chicago and the north
Bob Groom:	Down-home postwar blues
Dick Shurman:	Postwar Texas and the west coast
John Broven:	Louisiana, New Orleans and zydeco
Jeff Hannusch:	Soul blues and modern trends

Each chapter includes a background discussion of trends, influential performers, and records cited for inclusion. A total of 480 items are included, primarily LP discs in single or multiple sets with cassette and compact disc issues cited when available. Along with general discussions, annotations follow most citations.

A book like this will be of immediate use to libraries and sound archives wishing to compare their holdings with these citations; it will certainly help secure a place for many items which are unlikely to gain librarians' interest otherwise. Individual fans and collectors will have their attention called to many deserving (no, not deservedly!), obscure issues of important music. However, a difficulty the book fails to address is the means of obtaining many scarcer items, particularly those produced overseas by small labels with limited distribution. One-stop operations like Roundhouse in Boston, or Down Home Music in El Cerrito, California, both do good work along these lines and surely comparable agencies are found in Europe, all of whom could have been profitably cited and briefly discussed.

A related problem the user may encounter stems from publication of this book during the twilight phase of the LP record. It took about seven years for microgroove records to completely displace 78s after the introduction of the LP in 1948. Compact discs and, to a lesser extent cassettes, have taken a comparable period of time to supersede microgrooves. Thus, any broad reference work is hampered by the possibility that its comprehensiveness exists only at the time of publication, since new records are constantly being published and old ones withdrawn from sale. Since this book was prepared, two major blues labels are pushing the LP into the past: Rounder and Arhoolie have already abandoned the LP and now publish only in CD and cassette formats. More and more LPs may well become hard to find as this book goes into general circulation.

A third problem arises vis-a-vis archival sets, especially with regard to reissues processed from pre-1950 disc masters or pressings. In many cases, remastering has been performed inadequately, either by amateurs or by otherwise competent engineers who have no idea what a 78 rpm disc should sound like. While preparing this review, I thought about grumping because the book rarely alludes to the problem; on second thought it seemed to me that such attention would be counter-productive precisely because the problem is so pervasive. As CDs grind into second gear in the 1990s, consumers properly expect better sound reproduction, and we can only hope that many of the editions cited in this book will be replaced by new ones of higher quality.

Do not construe the foregoing as criticism of Paul Oliver and his contributors. An ideal time never arrives to publish a guide like this one, which by and large succeeds in what it sets out to do. Oliver and colleagues have written an informative and entertaining guide to the world of blues, with insights which will provoke both new initiates and veterans. *Reviewed by Dick Spottswood*

A Benjamin Britten Discography. Studies in History and Interpretation of Music, 31.

By Charles H. Parsons, Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990, 247 pp. \$59.95.

The previous issue (*ARSC Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 1, p. 34) examined the second volume of Michael Gray's *Bibliography of Discographies* for classical music. The key point was put this way: "If one is going to tackle the discography of a composer or performer, it would be smart to look up the previous attempts (the least one can do is improve on them)." I had already made the same point in "Clues to Composer Discography."

If only Charles Parsons had checked Benjamin Britten in Gray's first volume! He might have winced at the fourteen listings up to 1975, but he would have noticed that just one of them had any notation of serious content (i.e., dates of recording and release), and it was 58 pages long. It was compiled by the present writer.

I find too little satisfaction derived from updating a discography for a second edition, so I have ignored Britten while new recordings, even of his late works written after 1975, proliferated. Since someone else has taken my Mahler discography (word for word) and added ten years of new entries to it, Parsons might have done the same thing for Britten without any objection from me, but he didn't. For Britten I listed about 420 items up to 1975; Parsons lists about 620 items up to late in 1989, but he omits 140 items that I had found. That's not counting folksong arrangements, which he omits.

The two volumes are easy to compare, for the arrangement is quite similar. He lists the works in order of composition; I had separated the works without opus number and followed the composer's opus numbering for the rest, but this list is strictly chronological, even if it forces the opus numbers out of order. The arrangement of the listings is similar, but he adds annotators, producers, engineers, and couplings (the artists are somewhat buried among all these names). Both discographies list the recordings chronologically under each title.

Some of the differences between the two works are striking. Parsons lists six new versions of Op. 83, but none of the three earlier items in my work. For Op. 41 he omits the first three recordings ever made. For the composer's masterpiece, Op. 66, I listed three versions; he adds two recent commercial recordings, as well as two private issues from college choirs, but ignores Herbert Kegel's 1969 issue and the earliest college recording (Crane College, 1966, unavailable to me at the time). For Op. 63 he omits six of my thirteen items. The popular Op. 34 is lacking eight of my entries, the equally popular Op. 28 lacks nine of my items, and nine versions of Op. 4 are missing. For *Peter Grimes* he is unaware of the creator's recording of excerpts never released until 1972. He omits the first recordings of *The Birds*, *The Sycamore Tree*, *The Sword in the Stone*, *Scherzo for Recorder Quartet*, and *Fanfare for St. Edmundsbury* (the only ones of each piece in my list). The most egregious example of all is *A Hymn to the Virgin*, for which he omits seven of my nine entries while adding seven new ones.

Parsons's work is more than just a discography. The recordings are cited within a works list, providing exhaustive data about the compositions and their first performances. But nowhere does he mention *The Ship of Rio* (and its 1969 recording), and the 1938 recording of the Irish Reel from *The Village Harvest* is cited only as a cross-reference. He lists *An American Overture* as a second Op. 27 right after *Hymn to St. Cecilia*. He does list unrecorded works, however, including all the radio and film scores.

My discography was an attempt to put in order the early years before they fell into oblivion, so I went out of my way to establish the early recording dates. I thought it was important to give the precise dates for Boyd Neel's three early versions of Op. 10 on Decca, if only to forestall the question of how many distinct versions existed. Parsons lists the issue numbers for all of them under a 1953 release date. He makes the same mistake with Eduard van Beinum's two versions of Op. 33a/b.

I regret that my proudest achievement has failed to endure in the annals of Britten discography, that of publishing the distinction between two recordings of Op. 28 that both appeared as Argo ZRG 5440. I had to find two different tape transfer numbers among several copies in the (then) British Institute of Recorded Sound to explain why some sleeves bore the legend "recorded 1966" for a record that had been reviewed the year before. Another significant entry also omitted is a Decca recording by Eden and Tamir that was announced but not issued (someone will tell that story some day).

Parsons has three false entries, stating in Op. 18 that the renumbering of London LL994 as 5358 involved a different recording with Britten at the piano (!) instead of Goossens conducting, and in Op. 33a (Boult on PRT) and Op. 56a (Guest on Argo) listing reissues as new recordings. He slips up in listing the two pieces of both Op. 23 and Op. 56 separately, forgetting to list the same discs under both

entries. He lists Op. 73 as a work for flute, violin, and piano four hands, then forgets that the Jeney twins do more than play the piano (he also wrongly attributes the playing of the first performance by the twins, listing violin for one and piano for the other).

There are other problems. In Op. 4 under Boris Brodt the date is not "195?," but 1967 (he only conducted the orchestra from 1964 to 1968, as Holmes points out). In Op. 4 on Music Guild, the artists are Karl Ristenpart and the Saar Orchestra. In Op. 4 on Melodiya the conductor is Guzman (also in Op. 29, omitted here), not Rozhdestvensky (in the Prokofiev coupling only). He fails to point out under Op. 7 that neither recording is complete. The conductor of Op. 9 and Op. 24 is Edgar Cree, and of Opp. 4, 18, and 93, Jean-Walter Audoli. Since Op. 23 is for two pianos, John Ogdon should be joined by Brenda Lucas.

Most of the dates for 78 rpm issues are as much as seven years late, but many LP dates are off three years one way or the other, and the worst errors include Op. 15 under Whitney (1962, not 1977), Op. 18 by Micheau (1954, not 1950), and Op. 34 under Bernstein (1961, not 1973). The precise dates of all of these were included in my earlier work.

The volume is handsome, with paper, printing, and binding on the level suggested by the price. There are so few typos as to pass over them in silence, but there are no diacriticals, and the technology is electric typewriter with underlining (a choice of Selectric typefaces was available fifteen years ago). Except for a title page and two pages explaining the format (almost unnecessary because it is so straightforward), the poor child comes naked into the world, with not a word of introduction. The compiler might have told us something about the composer and his recordings, as well as his own approach to his task. The coding is off-putting. It adds nothing to clarity to use "1mlp" or "1slp" or "1scd" to indicate the number of discs, the recording mode, and the format. In case you wondered, there is also "2-78rpm," which is not explained on the format page. The page layout is generous with white space.

This was a good time to put Britten together again. The overall approach is splendid, and it is unfortunate that Parsons didn't stand on the shoulders of his predecessors. *Reviewed by J. F. Weber*

Assessing, Insuring and Disposing of Jazz Record Collections.

Edited by David Goldenberg. IAJRC Monograph 1. Feasterville, PA: International Association of Jazz Record Collectors, IAJRC Publications, 1990. 86 pp. Paperback. \$10.95. (Available from Richard Lagerman, 1300 Clover Lane, Feasterville, PA 19047).

This is the first book which addresses the disposal of record collections. Though some of it is jazz-specific, most of the ground covered applies to records of all kinds. Chapters were contributed by various authors.

The appraisal section discusses the ethics expected of the appraiser, some of which are common sense, and some mandated by IRS regulations and—viewed from their standpoint—also are logical. Various standards of value are discussed. A number of points could be inserted in the discussion. For example, if the appraisal is for a gift made to a tax-exempt institution, frequently the appraiser is recommended by that institution. Should a conflict of interest arise, all parties must be aware the appraiser is working for the donor, not the institution. Appraisal fees are the donor's responsibility; IRS regulations prohibit payment by the receiving party.

The author states the appraiser's responsibilities include "personally reviewing all of the items in question (a list of records with gradings is acceptable)." This reviewer, who has averaged eight appraisals a year for the past fifteen years, will not work from a list unless he has seen the items and graded them himself. Should the appraisal be questioned, one surely wants to know exactly what one is responsible for defending. Penalties may be visited upon the appraiser as well as the donor.

When exploring the various standards of value, the author fails to discriminate among the cumulative value of individual items and the collection's cumulative value at retail, and that for the aggregate lot at wholesale, all under time constraints for disposal varying from "as long as it takes" to "immediate—we have to vacate the house." He also fails to mention that the IRS allows a percentage premium to be added to the total value for the completeness and organization of the collection.

The section entitled "Appraising Your Collection for Donation to an Institution" is quite sound but might have addressed the problems which arise from limitations placed on a gift. Delayed or limited access, or partial retained ownership by the donor, are reasons the IRS may reduce or completely disallow a charitable deduction; insisting that a library keep a gift intact rather than combining it with a pre-existing collection is another. Potential donors also should be mindful that some institutions may request that a money gift (also deductible) accompany the collection to cover cataloging and other processing costs. A collection may be refused unless processing costs can be found. It also could be accepted and then stored in an inaccessible place pending the availability of such funds.

It should also be emphasized that a charitable donation should be kept intact by the receiving institution for a two-year period. If any parts of the donation are disposed of during that time at less than the appraised value, the organization is obligated to notify the IRS. The form on which they are required to do this would trigger a bill to the donor which reflects this value change, probably with penalties added. This "hold for two years" assurance should be part of the deed of gift.

Donors should understand that libraries cannot expect to generate money to pay processing costs from the sale of surplus items in the donated collection.

Sound recordings held by institutions should be locatable through a catalog which integrates all the holdings in a given location, but a gift does not need to undergo complete formal library processing to be of use in an institutional setting. Until the collection enters the formal cataloging process, a stop-gap funding aid, often the donor's own catalog, can be used to allow access. Often portions of a collection can be marked off in a subject area catalog, such as Rust's books, or a detailed price guide such as Osborne's "Country" or "Show and Soundtrack" guides. The better the donor's catalog, the more attractive the collection may be to a potential recipient, and the better the chances that it will be considered an enhancement to the collection's value by the appraiser.

Chapter Two covers insurance. Inventory is dealt with as a list of items owned, the condition of each, and their replacement value. Some insurance companies' and agents' comments are included as well as their names and addresses. This reviewer suggests limiting appraisal costs by assembling general figures to determine the appropriate level of coverage. Replacement value depends on the market when the records have to be bought after a loss is suffered, not their cost now.

The interrelationship is so closely linked between donation and appraisal that the content of the third chapter, "Donating Your Collection to an Institution," should

have been combined with the opening one. The most interesting question Jerry Atkins raises here is not financial, but that which treats the donor as the collection's parent and the collection as a child up for adoption. "Will there be motivation for use and analysis?" Many institutions see themselves as caretakers which allow the listener access, supplying little more in the way of discographic support than that which arrives with the collection—better than outright refusal but hardly ideal. Increasingly, it is becoming difficult to find homes for collections as the major archives fill up. Sometimes it is necessary to make the gift to a less prestigious place to get the fullest tax advantage. Three institutional archives respond concerning their acquisition policies. None mentions determining if a college has courses into which the sound from gift materials would be integrated as a factor in deciding on recipient institutions.

The volume also avoids discussing what access the donor may have to his collection beyond that offered the general public. Once title has passed, can he get tape copies if the institution's copying policy does not allow this for others? This may have to be stated explicitly in the deed of gift, a document which outlines the recipient's responsibility. A sample deed or two might have been included, as it is a critical piece of paper to all concerned, including the IRS. The donor can obviously add to the collection, but he should realize the materials are not available for trade, even for better items. It also is important to remember that librarianship and collecting mores differ, and once the discs are in the hands of a library, the collection is controlled by the music librarian who has to conform to the bureaucratic requirements and whims of his institution, no matter how stupid they may seem to the donor (or the music librarian, for that matter.)

Non-commercially issued recording tapes are extremely tricky to appraise, and though the sample appraisal in the appendix uses such a collection, there is such a vast and treacherous gray area of unresolved regulation that the subject should have been discussed in much greater detail.

The following chapters are concerned with selling collections—microgroove (by Frederick S. Cohen) and 78 rpm (by Robert Hilbert). Mr. Cohen discusses the dealer's point of view as well as that of the owner, the better to understand each other's needs. The portion devoted to condition is extensive as is that concerning price guides and the effect of the collection's size on the dealer's outlook. However, the authors make a statement concerning the aggregate wholesale price of good LP collections of 2,500 or more records which I find understates the amount a buyer might expect. He says "It has been seen that, after a lengthy review of collections, where each record is inspected and assigned a value, the value of the entire collection averages \$3.50 per record plus or minus approximately 50 cents." Recent events have overtaken this figure, particularly when selling to dealers with access to overseas markets. Quality jazz record collections of size have changed hands at a \$6.00-10.00 average. A large (ca., 25,000), choice, classical LP collection recently was sold in the \$6.00 per disc range, and similar escalations in other LP collecting fields have occurred as well.

The volume should have clarified the relationship between the dealer's anticipated selling price and the proportion of this which the party disposing of the collection might reasonably expect to receive. There are at least three factors at work: the size of the collection, its condition, particularly of the rarities, and any extraordinary expenses a dealer will incur in the buying process. No Guam dealers are

listed among those mentioned in the appendix. Let's assume a collection on Guam is owned by a record-ignorant family which insists on cash for the collection which is large, disorganized and kept in a dark place down two flights in oversize crates which have to be donkeyed about to get at the next one, and contrast this with a well-shelved, well-lit collection in a New York suburb in a street-level room where a vehicle can be brought to the door. Any number of dealers can be called in the New York area. The Guam collection requires long-distance conversations to determine the quality of the unknowledgeable family's holdings, and the condition of the discs (beware the expression, "they're in great shape for their age"). Moreover, the donors have no idea of the difference between originals and reissues, much less imports as opposed to U.S. pressings, not to mention 78s and LPs (the bigger ones are obviously LPs since they play longer than the smaller ones.) Travel costs become a major consideration as well as the otherwise productive time the dealer gives up to make this Guam jaunt. He has to find appropriate cartons, go through the collection once to find what is there and, after a successful negotiation, once again pack it, hire labor to get the boxes up those steps or suffer exhaustion himself in the process, and pay for the collection (does one travel with great quantities of cash?). What banks on Guam have a business relationship to yours? How is all this affected by time-zone difference? Are they calling in other dealers as well so you either have to make the trip twice or take an enforced vacation while the other(s) go over the merchandise? How much is UPS from Guam? Are there cheaper ways of shipping? Is special packing required?

Condition—ah, condition. Everyone wants an item in perfect shape and many are disinterested in those which are imperfect. No matter what price at which the dealer offers a record, there is always a smaller pool of buyers for even slightly damaged copies. A dealer may not even buy a collection which will sell slowly if he already has a higher quality back up stock awaiting selling space.

Then there are money matters. A collection of only rarities will turn over more quickly than one of budget merchandise. Considering alternate uses of the dealer's money such as CDs (certificates of deposit—we have a confusing abbreviation problem on our hands) or the interest he pays if he has to borrow, how long does it take him to recover his capital (including acquisition expenses) and prepare himself to move on to the next purchase.

In most collections not every record is marketable. It is not unusual for the dealer to discard ten to fifteen percent of a lot, and he has to factor this into the transaction. Often this reviewer performs record triage after purchase and before transporting to cut shipping costs.

Based on the above factors, moderated by less exaggerated circumstances, the seller might reasonably expect between 25 and 33 percent of the price the dealer anticipates from saleable items.

Though most dealers prefer buying the best items only, this leaves the seller with a far less desirable torso. With the hot items gone, the balance will inevitably be slower sellers, increasing the investment turnover time. The next dealer in line will pay a substantially lower price for a picked-over lot. I feel it is unethical for the seller not to inform the dealer if some of the material has already been sold, especially if he has to travel to inspect the merchandise. I also have been party to some non-transactions where the seller has actually lied about this issue.

Mr. Cohen goes into disposal methods—outright sale vs. auction vs. consignment, the variety of options available within each method and a “how to” for do-it-yourself sellers. I wish, however, that he had spent some time on the legal obligations incurred by each method, including the increasingly vexing one of dealing with mail fraud. The excellent following section supplements the LP chapter with 78-specific comments.

A caution should be uttered about obtaining appraisals before offering a collection for sale. Advice from a knowledgeable collector friend is a good preparation for entering the market. Asking a professional supplies broader knowledge and intelligence but at considerable cost. The book's appendix which lists dealers and appraisers includes no fees. My own is \$750 per day plus expenses, portal to portal and is mid-priced (I know of one well-established dealer whose rate is double mine), so the element of cost against potential money received should be weighed.

An appraiser is paid for his expertise, his experience, and his ability to convey these opinions on paper in a credible manner to the greatest legal benefit of his client. He simultaneously assumes obligations to the IRS, to the parties involved, and to his profession. Many of my own appraisals have benefitted the donor from conversation with the client's Certified Public Accountant prior to seeing the first disc. Gifts to institutions of relatively inexpensive items in bulk (even the most expensive record is hardly an impressionist painting) calls for appraisal techniques which are unfamiliar to many in the accounting community, no matter how deep their stock-and-bond and real estate expertise.

Pressure on the appraiser to take time-consuming shortcuts which reduce the appraiser's fee may well put the finished product at risk. He must follow certain procedures to protect his work's credibility. Remember, though this is the only collection you are likely to be disposing of, the appraiser does not want this to be last appraisal he is allowed to make.

Both the LP and 78 rpm chapters contain useful illustrated instructions for packing. I expect this will prove a highly popular and often-Xeroxed section.

Unlike many items covered in reviews, this volume will develop into a battlefield manual. Buyers and sellers will fire phrases from it at each other. To avoid unnecessary casualties, this volume should be immediately revised, and perhaps expanded to cover other collecting fields, incorporating at least some of the points mentioned above plus valid ones from other notices. *Assessing, Insuring and Disposing of Jazz Record Collections* is a brave start in a complex and treacherous field. Reviewed by Steven Smolian

The New Trouser Press Record Guide.

Third Edition. Edited by Ira A. Robbins. New York: Collier Books, 1988. 657 pp. \$14.95.

What can one say about a book which describes Ziggy Marley as “reggae for the Benetton generation?” *The New Trouser Press Record Guide* is opinionated, knowledgeable and reasonably droll. Now in its third edition and published five years after the demise of the *Trouser Press* magazine, the book contains information on music which was barely known when *Trouser Press* was one of the best guides to new wave and punk music.

Unfortunately, from the magazine's standpoint, at that time there was little commercial acceptance of this type of music. That has changed, and makes the book

much more relevant. Artists like the Talking Heads, Depeche Mode and the B-52's have graduated to the big leagues, and there is a minor but growing surge in interest for the early punk/new wave bands such as Stiff Little Fingers, the Gang of Four and 999.

To this mix Robbins, who was the magazine's publisher and editorial director, has added rap, world music, reggae and newer punk, metal, and independent label artists.

No need exists to cover superstars in a book like this, but those that fit the concept, such as David Bowie, The Police, R.E.M., Prince, and Madonna are represented. So are old *TP* favorites like Sparks, Bill Nelson and Jonathan Richman, veterans whose influence has always outpaced record sales.

Many independent label and import artists will be new to most readers. And finding the records of said artists will be easier said than done, especially in these days of the shrinking import market.

But more of these recordings are being reissued on CD, and the guide notes those now available. No record numbers are given, but each entry lists records with label and year, taking into account British and U.S. releases. Robbins explains all succinctly in the preface and introduction.

Artists and bands with more releases and more importance, even if this does not always coincide with mass popularity, are accorded extended space. Thus Iggy Pop and the Ramones have lengthy entries, as do Alex Chilton/Big Star, the Flamin' Groovies and the Fall.

There is no index or glossary, but generous use is made of "see also" listings. Some photographs might have helped break up the text, but generally the layout is easy to read. The sense of accuracy is fastidious, another factor which makes the volume a worthy addition to any size of music library. Its value as a reference source is unquestionable.

With 27 different contributors, an inevitable divergence in the quality of writing is evident, though generally the standards are high. And it is a credit to Robbins that 1,900 artists are included (and 6,200 records, according to the back cover).

You may not really want to learn about Virgin Prunes, Mortal Micronotz or the F.U.'s, but somehow it is comforting that they are included. *Reviewed by Bruce Rosenstein*

Full Frequency Stereophonic Sound.

By Robert Moon and Michael Gray, San Francisco: Robert Moon, 1990. Paperback, 83 pp. \$25.00.

Anyone who even glances at collectors' lists will find dealers anxious to offer records that appeal to audio buffs, with high prices demanded for copies. The early stereo issues of RCA, Mercury, and London dominate all these lists. Here is a detailed discussion of one of these, the London recordings of 1956 to 1963. Michael Gray's article, "FFSS and How It Grew," is another treatment of the research that resulted in "The Birth of Decca Stereo" (*ARSC Journal*, Vol. 18, pp. 4-19), but the two articles are complementary.

While the cover lists two authors, it becomes clear from the preface that Robert Moon is the voice speaking in the first person throughout the rest of the book. That does not include two short chapters, credited to Ivan March, reprinted from *The Stereo Record Guide*. The heart of the book is a critical discography in two parts.

One is a chart offering ratings for both performance and sound of the records issued during this period, along with several columns of issue numbers, with the pressing Moon auditioned indicated. The other is a critical evaluation of the best of these records. A group of biographies of artists is also supplied.

One judgement that Moon makes will startle everyone who has seen those ads for "blueback" pressings on London (after the color of the original sleeves). It seems that London's mastering was drastically improved in 1968 with the use of a new cutting machine. All the bluebacks had been cut with poor frequency response above 10kHz. One wonders why they are in demand.

This book will be a useful reference for the dates and places of recording. The occasional odd spelling or choice of words cannot always be blamed on typographical errors. The opinions expressed are sure to provoke anyone who has heard these records; one favorite of mine and another that made a poor impression struck Moon in just the opposite way. The price is far too high, but fans may not mind. *Reviewed by J.F. Weber*

Edison Blue Amberol Recordings, Volume II: 1915 to 1929.

Ed. Ronald Dethlefsen. New York: APM Press, 1981; 512 pp., illustrated. Hard-bound. \$54.95

This is a review of a book that one can no longer obtain. At least, not easily. It is, however, a book that anyone interested in early recording should know about.

Edison Blue Amberol Recordings Volume I (covering 1912-1924) was published in 1980, followed by Volume II in 1981, in limited editions of 500 copies each. Both volumes quickly went out of print. At the time they were issued, they cost \$20 and \$50, respectively. I recently received an auction list from a New York dealer offering used copies of the two with minimum bids of \$175 and \$150 each; Dethlefsen himself has offered a used copy of the set for \$350! What has caused the value of these books to escalate so drastically?

At first glance, these volumes seem a bit of a mish-mash, handsome but somewhat unfocused scrapbooks of early Edison printed material. In fact, they are indispensable sources of information on Edison artists, popular and classical, and the manner in which their recordings first were offered to the public.

Volume II is divided into nine principal sections. The heart of the book consists of 330 pages reprinting nearly every Blue Amberol monthly release bulletin from 1915 to 1929, arranged in chronological order and accompanied by a dating guide. Many of these include descriptive paragraphs about each record released that month. There is also a 38-page section of artist photos; a 30 page chapter by Jim Walsh about Edison artists, including lengthy biographies of Cal Stewart, Vernon Dalhart, Walter Van Brunt, Ada Jones and Collins and Harlan; a chapter on special records made for Henry Ford; illustrative production statistics for Blue Amberol cylinders; literature on Amberola phonographs; a reprint of the "Amberola Monthly" for August, 1918; three dozen pre-1915 cylinder record slips that had turned up since the publication of Volume I; and 28 illustrative liner notes for Diamond Disc issues.

The quality of the reproductions is spectacular, on slick paper and sometimes in color (often blue, of course!). If a record number or issue date is known, information is easy to find. If not, that information must be found in another source in order to

locate a desired artist or recording here. *EBAR, Volume II* cries for an artist and title index. The author planned to publish one in a subsequent volume, but Volume III never materialized.

Nevertheless, the information in *EBAR* is so valuable that it is no wonder researchers who neglected to buy it originally are now paying a premium for used copies. Essentially, this is 500 pages of high-quality reprints of original source documents. The few aggravations (lack of index) and inconsistencies (what are Diamond Disc notes doing here?) are worth the trouble.

What is the moral of all this? Dethlefsen recently has published a comprehensive, 275 page book on Edison Diamond Discs, covering 1910-1929. (This a revised edition of his earlier, smaller book on the same subject.) It is to be printed in a limited edition of 250 copies at a cost of \$45. Too much? Think about it for awhile? If you're at all interested in the subject—don't wait too long. *Reviewed by Tim Brooks*

Rock On Almanac: The First Four Decades of Rock 'n' Roll: A Chronology.
By Norm N. Nite. New York: Perennial Library, 1989. 532 pp., illus. \$14.95.

Chronologies are irresistible. We are so grateful for them that we are willing to overlook faults that might disturb us in other books.

The *Rock On Almanac* has its share of faults, but in such an ambitious and accurate look at rock from the early fifties to mid-1989, it is best to be forgiving, yet vigilant.

Year by year, Nite ushers readers through the major songs released each month, top debut artists, top singles and albums, and such extras as musical highlights of the year, Grammy winners, significant births and deaths, and information on pop-music related movies.

That apparently was not enough, so we also get news highlights, major sports winners, top television shows, Academy Award winners and non-music deaths. This reinforces the almanac nature of the book, and it is fun to read, but this reviewer is not convinced it is crucial information.

For librarians wondering whether the *Rock On Almanac* is a worthwhile reference source, the answer is yes. There is a 42 page index; one section for performers, the other for song titles.

The methodology is presented clearly in the three page introduction. Readers are in no doubt about how this book was crafted. It is intriguing that the information was derived from a computer software product, RockCom, which Nite co-developed with Ken Zychowski in 1983. Nite is a well-known and respected name, the author of three previous books in the *Rock On* series and a long-time radio personality.

The vigilance comes to bear on points like the inclusion of record labels but not numbers, and release dates tied to chart appearance, rather than actual record company release. Picky, but worth noting.

The Debut Artist section for each year also is mildly troubling. Because it is geared to the charts, and not to when each artist actually started recording, we only find out, for example, when Paul McCartney or George Benson first had solo hits, but not when they began their solo careers.

Another point which librarians and others might find jarring is the out-of-sequence nature of some of the photographs. Thus we get a glamorized early-1970s shot of the Rolling Stones with their 1964 listing. With the 1961 entry for Gladys Knight and the Pips is a photo which, unless the Pips anticipated the Nehru jacket sartorial fad by seven years, probably dates from the late 1960s.

Still, this is an excellent ready-reference source on a sprawling subject. The accuracy is scrupulous, and there are nice touches, like noting if a particular record went gold or platinum, and if it reached number one.

Consulting the *Rock On Almanac* will help us decide if rock'n'roll has really progressed. It is difficult to compare, for instance, the singles of 1964 and 1989, and say we have better music now. Even a glance at the supposedly barren pre-Beatles early sixties reveals songs and artists that have easily passed the test of time.

Years that brought us The Ventures, Dion, Lee Dorsey and the Beach Boys couldn't have been all bad.

And how nostalgic and pleasant to see a roll call of the now-departed independent record labels of the fifties and sixties. Come back Scepter, Swan, Valiant, Ascot and B. T. Puppy: all is forgiven. *Reviewed by Bruce Rosenstein*

Performance Practice, 2 vols. I: Music before 1600, II: Music after 1600.

Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie. New York, London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1989. 281 and 533 pp. \$32.50 and \$39.50.

These two volumes are part of "The Norton/Grove Handbooks in Music" series, and as such carry a standard disclaimer that parts of these books have appeared in *The New Grove Dictionary*. The preface contradicts this, however, stating that the contents are entirely new. Performance practice may be called the solution to the problems artists face in deciding how to interpret the printed notes before them. About thirty authors contribute chapters on every aspect of music history from "Chant" to "Since 1940." This journal would not be reviewing books intended for musicologists but for their acknowledgement that recordings are indispensable as objects of academic study on this topic. From first to last, they accept the place of recordings in the study of performance practice.

That last chapter offers splendid examples.

"Although the major works of Stravinsky, Britten, Copland and Stockhausen have nearly all been recorded in performances supervised by the composers, the authority that should be given these recordings is not certain. Stockhausen has indicated that his recordings are to be taken as adjuncts to the published scores, and in at least one case has even asked that the recording be understood as a correction."

(The work is *Refrain*.) Further on, the author Paul Griffiths writes of Boulez: "Both his recordings of *Pli selon pli* take a tempo at the start of "Tombeau" which manifestly contradicts the score; yet in neither case does he observe . . . that the recording is to be taken as a correction."

David Hiley's insights in the chapter on "Chant" drew an appreciative cheer, especially in his discussion of rhythm, but his only reference to recordings cites the Gregorian Congress discs of 1904 as reissued on Discant LPs (reviewed in *ARSC Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 2, p. 72), apart from a passing reference to the series of recordings made at Solesmes. There are far more recordings of chant, with far more to be learned from their myriad approaches to performance.

In between, the introduction to the medieval section cites the complete recording of the secular songs of Dufay on L'Oisau-Lyre, but Christopher Page's essay on "Secular Monophony" modestly fails to mention any of the author's wonderful Hy-perion discs. Page, also writing on "Polyphony before 1400," mentions only one of

these discs in connection with the use of Pythagorean tuning, along with a laudatory mention of Marcel Pérés's *Harmonia Mundi* disc of Aquitanian polyphony.

In the Renaissance section, "Sacred Polyphony" brings in a David Munrow album on Seraphim. James Haar's outstanding article on "Unwritten Tradition" which concludes the first volume cites two fine articles on records in *Early Music*, one by Mary Berry and one by Lance Brunner. He also mentions an Esther Lamandier recording to make a good point.

In the baroque section of the second volume, David Fuller praises William Christie's recording of Lully's *Atys* in a chapter on "The Performer as Composer." An article on "Tuning and Intonation" mentions J. Murray Barbour's writings, but fails to cite his records on the Musurgia label, which would help to clarify the matter enormously.

In the nineteenth century section, it should be no surprise to find abundant mention of recordings. The introduction to this section mentions revisionist interpretations such as Roger Norrington's as well as reissues of historical performances by conductors, instrumentalists and singers, not overlooking the Mapleson Cylinder album. The article on "Voices" makes the point that Peter Schram, born in 1819, who sang with Jenny Lind in the 1840s, recorded for Edison in 1889, and mentions that over 400 items were recorded by seven singers born in the 1830s and 24 born in the 1840s, artists whose style is an invaluable indication of another era.

The next-to-last article, "1900-1940," mentions recording almost as much as the final chapter does. Specific comparisons include the Elgar Cello Concerto in early recordings by Squire, Harrison and Casals, and the degree of portamento in recordings of Debussy's *Nuages* made by the Conservatoire Orchestra in 1929 and 1939. The author of this section, Robert Philip, did his dissertation at Cambridge in 1974 on changes in orchestral playing as shown on records, surely an indication of the heights to which the study of recordings can reach.

It would take a whole article to cite the ways in which the authors might profitably have extended their references to recordings in demonstrating the points this anthology makes. In another generation, a book of wider scope will doubtless be written. But for now, record researchers will know that the evidence on records old and new is acknowledged to be a valuable and even essential source for the study of music of all eras. *Reviewed by J. F. Weber*

National Directory of Collectible Record Dealers, 1990 Edition.

Compiled by Walter Smith. Richmond, VA: Record Finder Publications, 1990. 48 pp. \$4.95. (Available from Record Finder, 8754 Landmark Road, Richmond, VA 23228).

This pocket-sized booklet is a collection of names and addresses of approximately 250 U.S. dealers in "collectible" records. Anyone who submitted basic information to the publisher appears to have been included, without charge.

Walter Smith, publisher of *Record Finder* magazine and a dealer himself, is aptly listed as "compiler," since little editing seems to have been done. Probably the most serious shortcoming is the omission of a consistent indication of the type of records sold by each dealer (e.g., classical, popular, LPs, 78s, cylinders.) Many dealers give a clue in the ten-word description they are allowed with their free listing, but some do not. Unless your tastes are very eclectic, you may spend a lot of time writing letters to find what you want.

The organization is by state (for some reason listed in zip code order). This makes little difference since most of these are mail order dealers. An index by name and by type of recordings sold would have been helpful.

And, of course, there is no evaluation or editorial commentary on the reliability or years-in-business of any of these "dealers." This reviewer recently had an unfortunate experience with one of them, a well-known Florida dealer. He simply didn't send the \$45 worth of merchandise I had won on his auction, after I had paid for it. Inquiries to other collectors revealed that probably this was not due to larceny, just ineptitude. Unfortunately, there was no way to reach him. He does not answer his mail, his home address is not given (only a post office box), and his phone number is unlisted. The number was obtained anyway, but the party who answered said curtly "he's not here" and hung up. After four months of fruitless attempts to reach him, I finally wrote to the regional Postal Inspector. My merchandise arrived shortly thereafter, with an amiable apology.

The dealer is listed here, as you might guess, with a post office box and no phone. Many others who are listed have excellent reputations and are completely reliable. Unless you have another source of information, you are on your own.

Given these limitations, the *National Directory* does its simple job well enough. If you want names and addresses, all presumably current, they're here. *Reviewed by Tim Brooks*

The Decca Hillbilly Discography, 1927-1945.

By Gary Ginell. New York, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989. xxiv, 402 pp., intro., indexes, photographs, \$49.95.

With the continuing absence of a generic country music discography, those of us wishing to document recordings have been forced to resort to magazine articles, old catalogs, LP covers, and other catch-as-catch-can sources. Those lucky enough to have a copy of Brian Rust's *Victor Master Book, Volume 2* (1969; other promised volumes were never published) have found it an indispensable guide to the company's 1925-36 country music output. Twenty years later, Gary Ginell has given us a comparably useful work documenting the life span of Decca's first country record series which spanned the years 1934-45 and totaled 1,113 releases (numbers 5000-6112). The central part of his book consists of alphabetically arranged artist discographies which chronologically list all released and unreleased material made by individuals and groups for Decca's country catalog. Each entry provides the master number, main and alternate titles, release number(s), session personnel, and date and place of recording. Mr. Ginell also surveys Decca's 1935-36 Champion label series, which combined original material with reissues of masters acquired from the Gennett Company of Richmond, Indiana, covering the period 1927-1934. Decca/Gennett/Champion material also was pressed for sale by Montgomery Ward at reduced prices, both through retail outlets and by mail order through the company's ubiquitous catalogs.¹

As a bonus, the book includes an accounting of Decca's 17000-17059 Acadian French series (higher 17000 numbers were devoted to Trinidad calypsos) on the reasonable assumption that Cajun material is also of interest to country collectors and scholars, and because Cajun bands recorded English-language performances which appeared in the 5000 series.

Like any book-length discographic study, this one has its material arranged in ways that will take some getting used to. The artist discography chapter is preceded, and to some extent duplicated, by a 131-page numerical listing whose only additional information is the A/B side designation of each release and the descriptive

legends copied from the three o'clock position on the original labels. Assuming the latter is accurate, which is not always the case, this information could have been incorporated more efficiently into the artist section, with the numerical list reduced to an index. A useful matrix/location index takes advantage of the company's matrix block numbering system to show a chronological and geographic breakdown of material in the discography, including earlier Gennett masters and even a few sides from English Decca which found their way into the catalog. Three further indices cover release dates, composer credits and titles. The latter is both welcome and essential; release and composer information could have been more useful as part of the artist discographies, making for both easier reference and a saving of space. This arrangement also means that no composer data is provided for unreleased items.

All Decca pressings from the period show master numbers and take letters (-A, -B, etc.) found in the wax, except for early pressings which give only takes beyond -A. Despite a statement to the contrary in the introduction, alternate takes do show up, although so-called -C and -D takes invariably seem to be studio transfers or dubs of lower takes. Ginell gives almost no take data, claiming that multiple takes were issued only in rare instances. Other parts of the Decca output include a number of multiple takes, and I find it difficult to believe that the country series did not also have its share. Take designations are a basic component of discography and it is disappointing that they have not been included.

A further problem exists with material by these artists released in series beyond those covered in the book, particularly in grey areas where country music overlaps with other genres, like polka or Irish music. Polka outfits, like the Roman (Romy) Gosz Czech band or the Swiss Hill Billies, also appeared in the label's popular series and in a post-war 45000 polka series. Gosz recorded more polkas for Decca a year after those cited here, but since they were released in the popular series no mention is made of them. The Swiss Hill Billies' session also saw material released in the popular and polka series, but everything not published in the 5000 series is listed either as unissued or not shown at all. Bradley Kincaid and Tex Ritter both had records in Decca's 12000 Irish series; Ritter's one release is cited but not Kincaid's, despite relevant titles like "Down by the Railroad Track" (12035) and "I'd Like to be in Texas" (12053). There is also material made within the 1934-45 period which remained unissued until Decca's 46000 country series began in 1946. Mr. Ginell's focus on the 5000-6000 series precludes listing of material made during the pre-1946 period if it appears only on 46000 issues; in some cases these masters are listed and shown as unissued; in other cases they are omitted. It would have been helpful to cite all country material recorded within the chronological scope of the book, even if a record's release falls slightly beyond its stated scope, simply because such records are of related interest.

The difficulty in enumerating problems of this sort lies in the fact that the space required to discuss them suggests that they tend to outweigh the overall value of the book. In this case, nothing could be further from the truth. In the main body of his work, Gary Ginell documents over 2,500 performances in thorough fashion, supplementing information from Decca's files with the results of numerous performer interviews which have helped elicit recording locations; he even cites hotels where recording took place during field trip stops in places like Houston, New Orleans and Dallas. Mr. Ginell also has done an amazing job of identifying sidemen, both from working bands and from units put together for specific studio dates.

The *Decca Hillbilly Discography* will be indispensable to any collector with an interest in country music from the period and to all institutions with recorded sound archives. *Reviewed by Dick Spottswood*

¹ Pop music star Les Paul received his first inauspicious exposure on record through two Decca-made Montgomery Ward releases in 1936, calling himself Rhubarb Red!

A Discography of Tudor Church Music.

By Timothy Day. London: The British Library, 1989, 317 pp., £35.

This is one of the finest presentations of discography I have ever had the pleasure to use. Timothy Day, curator of Western art music at the British National Sound Archive (NSA), has chosen the body of polyphony running from the Eton Choirbook to Weelkes and his contemporaries, an appropriate block of musical history even if it extends somewhat beyond the Tudor monarchs.

After a preface which clearly sets forth the solutions to the discographic problems he has created for himself, he offers a 36-page appreciation of the music and its revival in the twentieth century which tells us as much about his own love for the subject as it does about the music itself. Packed with illustrative examples and quotations, he begins with Henry Davey's *History of English Music* published in 1895, detailing precisely how much (rather, how little) Davey could have known at the time about the sixteenth century music that he enthused over. He follows with the revival of Tudor music at Westminster Cathedral in London by Sir Richard Terry, choirmaster there from 1902 to 1924; the publication in ten volumes of *Tudor Church Music* under the lead of E. H. Fellowes; the widespread observance in churches, broadcasts, and recordings of the Byrd tercentenary in 1923; the influence of the BBC Third Programme after 1946, following earlier BBC broadcasts of some regularity in the previous decade; the interest of professional choirs after the war, the improvement in church singing resulting from the pressure of the radio audiences listening to broadcast service, and the major shift in performance practice which began with David Wulstan in the 1960s and spread to several other conductors. All of this places the discography in proper perspective.

The main part of the discography is a chronological list of 729 records and broadcasts containing various amounts of Tudor church music, for this book comprises not only commercial records but BBC transcription discs and the NSA's own off-the-air recordings of BBC broadcasts. All entries are identified by the author's own CL code number, and if the disc or broadcast consists entirely of Tudor music the code number is underlined. The list, beginning in 1921, starts off with seven discs of Fellowes' own group, the English Singers, and closes at the end of 1988.

The second part is an alphabetical list of composers, their works arranged alphabetically, with the recordings of each arranged chronologically; this is not an index but a complete discography with citations of the CL numbers. Next comes an index of performers listed alphabetically, citing their CL numbers with dates and composers. An appendix lists nineteen talks on the subject given on the BBC and taped at NSA, with an informative précis of each talk.

For LPs, CDs, and broadcasts running over half an hour, Day provides the dates of recording. I regret this limitation, for he was in a position to obtain a great many more dates from EMI and other sources close to hand. Even if he did not track down the last elusive date, he could have found most of them with much less trouble than most other discographers.

I have already found the book indispensable. It is informative, easy to use, and much more complete than anything else at hand. His coverage of countries and labels is complete, his list of issue numbers extensive, and he cites important reviews (using his own discretion, as he does in many other aspects cited in the preface).

I have one major complaint. In using the composer lists, it would have been helpful to know which CL numbers are broadcasts rather than discs. For anyone actually doing research at the NSA, the distinction may be less important. For the rest of the world, it is vital. In reviewing what appears to be a new recording, one will look up a piece thought to be recorded for the first time. One may find three listings, but only by looking up each of the three will it be clear that there are no previous discs.

The book is beautifully printed and bound, even if the typeface is quite small for the length of the line. The preface cites an enormous collection of discographic sources (such as a staffer of the NSA would have at hand), including the Rigler and Deutsch Index and Kurt Myers's *Index to Record Reviews*. He has identified all the music (by audition if necessary) in the standard printed editions. Best of all, he has created a format suited to the material that he is dealing with, explaining it clearly for anyone who needs to use it. There is no better way to do this sort of thing. I would have been proud to be the author. *Reviewed by J. F. Weber* 🎧

Correction

Despite our best efforts, an error was made in J. F. Weber's review of *Classical Music Discographies, 1976-1988: A Bibliography* (*ARSC Journal*, vol. 21, No. 1, p. 134). The parenthetic sentence at the end of the fourth paragraph should have read, "(It is also not very accurate, as it happens.)" Our apologies go to the author.
