

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