

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.