

***The Patent History of the Phonograph, 1877-1912.***

Compiled, Edited and Annotated by Allen Koenigsberg (lxxii + 87 pp.). Brooklyn, NY: APM Press, 1990. \$54.95 (\$49.95 for subscribers to *Antique Phonograph Monthly*.)

Allen Koenigsberg is a passionate man. Passionate about patents. This volume, fifteen years in the making, is testimony not only to his enthusiasm for that somewhat arcane field, but to the incredible wealth of general knowledge about early phonographs that lurks under his bonnet. It is certainly not light reading, but for anyone interested in the mechanics of early sound reproduction—machines, motors, mainsprings and such—it is a must.

The book is divided into three sections. First are 15 pages of introductory material about the connection between the U.S. patent system and the phonograph, including a typically learned essay by Edison scholar Raymond Wile. Then we have what is perhaps the highlight of the volume, 52 pages describing in considerable detail 101 of the most important, and/or interesting, patents issued to phonographic inventors during the period covered. Each gets its own essay, running as much as a page in length, and is illustrated with original patent drawings in large, clear reproductions. (The actual texts of the original patent applications are not reproduced, however.) Finally there are 87 pages of tables listing *every* patent located by Koenigsberg and his associates that is even vaguely phonograph-related, more than 2,000 in all. These are listed by number (i.e., issue date) and by inventor, with some miscellaneous information in appendixes. It is by far the most comprehensive such list ever assembled, but on the remote chance the author missed something (unlikely) he offers a \$5 reward to anyone discovering a phonograph-related patent not in the book. The scope is extremely wide, covering machines, records, needles, cabinets, coin-ops, cranes, musical toys, miscellaneous accessories, and just about anything else even vaguely associated with the phonograph.

The essays accompanying the 101 leading patents are crammed with detailed information on many subjects, much of it based on the author's own extensive research. The most frustrating aspect of the book, in fact, is the difficulty of locating a particular subject. It might be apparent that a description of Edison's invention of the phonograph, and the events immediately following, would be found under the first patent listed (Edison's original, filed December 24, 1877). But how would one know that revealing information about early talking dolls is under patent no. 528,273 ("Phonograph"); that the evolution of the inside-horn Victrola of 1906 is detailed under no. D:38,113 ("Cabinet for Talking Machines"); or that never-before published information on early picture records (and picture cylinders!) hides under no. 771,758 ("Phonogram or Sound-Record")? Some other interesting essays appear: celluloid cylinders (645,920), early amplification schemes (678,566), the introduction of mass-produced molded cylinders (713,863), record labels (739,318), double-sided discs (749,092) and puzzle records (936,976). There is no subject index to this book, which is unfortunate because the depth and originality of research here is incredible.

The book is printed professionally on very heavy stock, with a sturdy comb binding. The layout exhibits some of the eccentricities common to self-published works (e.g., half the book is numbered with Roman numerals and half with normal Arabic numbers, illustrations may or may not be anywhere near the essay they illustrate, and author's notes in the tables seem to be crammed in wherever there was a little white space). By and large the book is accessible and pleasing to the eye, however.

One suggested way to make use of the book is to look up the patents found on one's own early phonographs, records and accessories. I found this a rather unproductive endeavor, however. Most records and machines carry patent *dates* rather than numbers, and half a dozen different phonograph-related patents (all with frustratingly generic titles) might have been issued on each of those dates. Unless the patent you're after happens to be described in an essay, it may be difficult to identify. A better approach might be to simply browse through the book and make notes. I guarantee that no matter how expert you are in the field, you will learn a lot. *Reviewed by Tim Brooks*

### ***Directory of Record and CD Retailers, 1990-1991 Edition.***

By Keith Whelan. Wharton, NJ: Power Communication Group, 1990. 368 pp. \$14.95. Available from Power Communications, P.O. Box 786, Wharton, NJ 07885

This is a listing of approximately 1,000 record and compact disc stores throughout the U.S. that carry "specialty or rare recordings and memorabilia." The compiler began with a database of all record stores that advertise in the yellow pages, subtracted major chains that carry primarily current material, then sent a survey to the rest. The survey was conducted in early 1990. Those who responded (percent not given) are included here. Note that this is a store list; most dealers who operate by mail order only are not included.

Each entry gives the name, address, phone number and hours of the store, plus a variety of information about the types of recordings sold: percent of stock that is new or used, percent import or domestic, size of stock in various formats (e.g. LPs, CDs, 45s, 78s), and types of music carried. It is in the latter area that the entries are weakest. The author has defined seven broad "music categories"—pre-1950s, 1950s, 1960s, Jazz/Soul/R&B, Folk/C&W, 1970s/1980s and the inevitable "miscellaneous." Each of these is further broken down for a total of 49 sub-categories, some of them oddly placed indeed. For example "classical" and "opera" are under "Pre-1950s," as is "Sinatra" (a musical category?).

Formats are quantified, so the reader has a pretty good idea whether the store specializes in LPs, 78s, or whatever. However, the musical categories are not (and most stores checked off a lot of them), so it is pretty difficult to determine whether a store specializes in, say, operatic recordings or reggae. For example, New York's midtown Colony Music is known for its reissues and out-of-print LPs (at healthy prices), but its entry here lists 48 categories of music indiscriminately. The phone number is given, so I suppose you can call them and ask.

In addition to the main listing, there are helpful indexes by record format (who sells 78s in your county?) and by musical category (looking for military music in Mississippi?). A final section of maps is rather pointless, since it shows simply where the counties are in each state—but does not locate the record stores.

The layout of the book is serviceable, but hardly ideal. In fact, this is not so much a book as a computer print-out bound between covers. It uses the ugly "Line Printer" typeface found on computer printers, no bold or italics to help guide the eye, and lines that seem to run together because the spacing apparently was off.

Despite its limitations, the *Directory* is a useful starting point to help you find stores that sell what you are looking for. *Reviewed by Tim Brooks* 