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—ARNA BONTEMPS

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The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
MURDER BUTTONED UP Paul A. Holmes (Dutton: \$2.50)	Murder of newspaper publisher in his office followed by slayings of ad mgr. and circulation ditto. Penetrative reporter solves it.	Newspaper atmosphere well handled. Hard-drinking reporter competently portrayed. Tale is fast paced but solution must be taken on faith.	Fair
CHORD IN CRIMSON Dale Gallagher (Coward-McCann: \$2.50)	Girl skip-tracer hunts missing society scion in bebop niteries of N. Y. and Phila., encountering murder en route — which she solves.	Tangled and turbulent emotions of various members of aristocratic and high-strung clan given thorough sifting in swift and baffling yarn.	Good
MURDER AND MYSTERY IN NEW MEXICO Erna Fergusson (Merle Armitage: \$3.50)	Nine bloodthirsty factual tales of killings, historic and contemporary, in Southwest — including sympathetically revealing piece on Billy the Kid.	Handsomely printed (though trifle too dog-gone arty) volume is well packed with excitement, mystery, and sharp portraits of tough hombres.	For aficionados
NOT NEGOTIABLE Manning Coles (Crime Club: \$2.25)	Strange doings in Belgian cafe plunge inquisitive Tommy Hambleton into dangerous search for murderous counterfeiters in Brussels and Paris.	Possibly a bit "thinner" than earlier Hambleton yarns, but adequately amusing, violent, thrilling, knowledgeable — and excellently written.	Recommended
DARK ABYSS Clifford Knight (Dutton: \$2.50)	Palm Springs wife gets rid of epileptic husband but has to kill two more before trip to Bermuda seems advisable.	Beyond demonstrating that deep freezes are unsatisfactory as cadaver carriers this follows lines that are fairly familiar.	Below par
SAINT ERRANT Leslie Charteris (Crime Club: \$2.25)	Simon Templar rescues, punishes, assists, or avenges nine ladies in ditto number of typical Saint "long-shorts."	Delicious, devastating, and devilish frills featured in trickily plotted tales mainly rescued from the pulps — including "Thrilling Wonder Stories."	For Saint devotees
NO TRAVELER RETURNS Amber Dean (Crime Club: \$2.25)	Old New York State inn scene of three murders by used-car racketeers. Local sleuth with Intelligence Dept. background takes over.	Beginning and ending are hackle-raising but intervening chapters seem rather thin and casual.	Average
A ROPE FOR THE BARON Anthony Norton (Duell, Sloan & Pearce: \$2.50)	John (Baron) Mannerling defies warnings of death, invades sinister English manor, gets jools, rescues gals, captures killers.	Saint-ish sort of yarn, complete with chases, corpses, secret passages, comical cockney, and ultra-resourceful hero.	Fair
FRAMED IN GUILT Day Keene (Mill: \$2.50)	Top Hollywood scenarist finds himself in tough spot over slaying of English girl — until more murders occur and detectives have doubts.	Good plot, apparently authentic background, interesting characters, and rather sketchy writing. Would make good "B" picture.	Agreeable
THE CASE OF THE LITTLE DOCTOR Hilda Lewis (Random House: \$2.50)	Fictional retelling of Crippen case with all the emotional stops pulled 'way, 'way out.	Shows what a first-class novelist can do with penetrating possible motives that may have lurked behind famous crime passionel.	Good job of writing

The New Recordings

COMPOSITION, PERFORMER, ALBUM NUMBER, NUMBER OF RECORDS	ENGINEERING <i>Recording Technique, Surface</i>	PERFORMANCE AND CONTENT
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DVORAK, SYMPHONY #5 ("NEW WORLD"). Leopold Stokowski and his Symphony Orch. RCA Victor DV 25 (5 pl.)

Comparison: (SAME.) All-American Youth Orch. Stokowski (Prewar). Columbia MM (416 (5))

Astonishing technical difference betw. these in tonal range, but far more in liveness and "presence." Wonderful illustration of progress in the art of realistic recording in the U.S. Old version is thin, distant, mealy. New, one of top-rank series, this orch., made 1947, is tremendously full, round, wide, near.

Same interpretation in both; this is Stok's meat and he does it brown. But All-American was a feeble orchestra, even in this, about its best recorded job; the new orch. plays far better, has enormously improved recording. I'd call this album definitive.

Long Playing (LP) Reissues of interest: Ravel, Quartet in F, Budapest Quartet (ML 4091). Sibelius, Symphony #7, N. Y. Philh. Beecham; Wagner, "Siegfried Idyll," N. Y. Philh. Rodzinski (ML 4086). Shostakovitch, Symphony #1, Cleveland Orch. Rodzinski (ML 4101). Kabalevsky, "The Comedians"; Lecocq, Mlle. Angot Suite, N. Y. Philh. Kurtz (ML 4083). Beethoven, Quartets Opus 18, #2; 95, Budapest Quartet (ML 4073). Debussy, "La Demoiselle Elue"; Ravel, Piano Concerto for Left Hand, Sayao, Nadell; Casadesus, Phila. Orch. Ormandy (ML 4075). Puccini, "La Bohème" (Complete), Met. Opera Co. (SL 1). Dvorak, Slavonic Dances, Cleveland Orch. Szell (ML 2023). Brahms, Piano Concerto #1, Serkin, Pittsburgh Symph. Reiner (ML 4100). Mozart, Two-Piano Concerto, K. 365; Three-Piano Concerto, K. 242. Vronsky and Babin, Lhevinne, Robin Hood Dell, Little Orchs. (ML 4098). Square Dances—Carson Robison & His Old Timers (CL 6029).

THE WAR IS ON

BY THE time this is in print the RCA Victor "third type" of record will be official, with its associated equipment, not interchangeable with the Columbia LP. Though the details are widely rumored at this pre-announcement time of writing, I'll have to grant Victor's correctness in suggesting that comment should await the new record's formal introduction. Said comment will appear, therefore, in coming SRL issues. Suffice it to say at this point that the two competing record systems do undoubtedly represent honest differences of opinion, backed up by enormous resources. Moreover, it may be that the two systems will not compete quite as head-on as may have seemed probable, thanks to practical differences in their usefulness. It is a tragedy, I say again, that we must have two systems in addition to the old. One company was in the field first; the other, with some logic, says may the better system win, regardless of which came first; give both a chance. Whatever the arguments, there is the fact of a war.

Meanwhile an exciting post-holiday period has brought several other sensations, announced but not yet available. Mercury launches a

complete line of LP records, playable on Columbia-type equipment, both popular and classical, with the biggest news a super-LP twelve-inch record that will play as long as one hour and twenty minutes! The record, again, works on present LP equipment; the increased length is due to an ingenious groove spacing device. Mercury claims high quality, in spite of the length, and a tonal range exceeding present LP records. We shall see about that—but at this point one wonders mildly how many musical works can be found, aside from opera, to make use of such astonishing playing time! In addition to the Mercury line there are the new Columbia seven-inch short-playing microgroove records that will cover the popular field and the many shorter classical works that do not need the full LP length, using the present LP equipment. The price is proportionately lower than the standard shellac. One more company will enter the LP field soon with records somewhat shorter in playing time than the Columbia's (making high quality technically easier to achieve). This column will duly report on all of these as they are received.

—EDWARD TATNALL CANBY.

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