

Hi-Fi—Almost

SOME four years after the introduction of LP records, Columbia has put out under its own name its first record player attachment for other than LP records—a three-speed manual model with a single all-groove sapphire stylus—and thereby an era ends. The compelling reasons which led this company to introduce its own player equipment no longer exist—the LP record is taking care of itself very nicely. A three-speed attachment, from Columbia, would seem therefore to be a straight business venture on its own, minus the pump priming aspect of the earlier offerings.

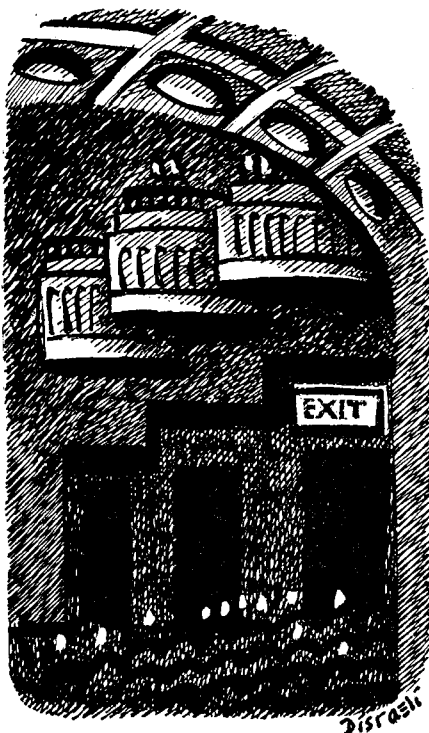
It is perhaps for this reason, realistically, that the new three-speed model, selling at the low price of \$12.95, has a pickup cartridge of limited performance and tonal range and the compromise simplicity of the all-groove needle, whereas the earlier Columbia players featured the wide-range, low distortion CAC cartridge, especially developed by CBS for these very players. One can scarcely register a complaint here. This is no more than a reflection of things as they are right now in the record playing area—which in spite of the great boom of “high fidelity” phonograph equipment these last years, is still, in the large, more or less as it used to be. Record quality has vastly improved. The hi-fi record is the ordinary commercial one, most of the time. But record reproduction in terms of heard sound has for most of us remained the same. Not one in hundreds of buyers of this new three-speed player will find it in any way a tonal limitation—the radio or phonograph to which it is attached is an even greater tonal bottleneck.

Nor, realistically, can we object to the use of the economical all-groove point, though it is clear enough that it must be a compromise, matching neither the large nor the small groove, and a doubtful value in terms of record wear and good reproduction. As Columbia is well aware, most of us will prefer this immediate simplicity and economy to the better long-range value of the clumsy dual point systems, which match both grooves with no compromise. After all, there are worse dangers—just stack four or five naked LP records, out of their folders, on an average dusty table for five or ten minutes and the chances are that more damage will be done to them than in hours of all-groove point playing. No doubt about it, the new Columbia player is a good machine—for its purpose.

And yet what a near-miss this is, failing by a mere cartridge from be-

ing the cheapest, best-buy high fidelity three-speed player available—to fill a brand new in-between area, between the de luxe hi-fi system and the usual home phonograph, an area that would seem to be the coming hope for any sort of large-scale improvement in phonograph reproduction!

The present cartridge in this player is rated fifty to 5,000 cycles, at 2 volts output, strictly suited to the cheaper brands of radio and phonograph now in use. The CAC cartridge of the other



Columbia players rates thirty to 11,000 cycles, with very low distortion and a built-in balance of equalization to suit the average new record. I've tried the two directly, on good equipment; the difference is as great as this would imply. And yet the CAC cartridge sells retail for less than the one currently being used. Its turnover double model, to play all records correctly, costs only about one and a half times the single model.

It is not our business to probe the complex economics of production that determine feasibilities in such a situation. But there can be no doubt of a need, from the record buyer's viewpoint. If Columbia were to add a “de luxe” model (to use conventional selling terminology) of the new three-speed manual player equipped with a CAC-D wide-range turnover cartridge and selling, as it could, at \$20 or less, we would have new fields open to us—for other developments can well coincide.

—EDWARD TATNALL CANBY.

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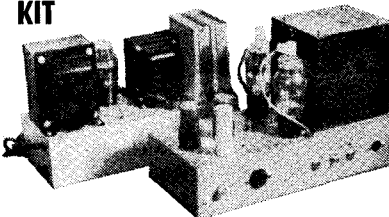
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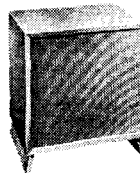
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A Bartlett for Phonophiles

ARE you one who loves a good reference book? That is to say, a book which draws a bead on a difficult subject, tracks it to its lair, goes to the mat with it, and does not relinquish effort until all (or reasonably all) of its categories have been shaken loose, pulled together, reduced to order? Then, in spite of these mixed and mangled metaphors, you should be willing if not glad to pay the \$17.50 asked for the 890-page volume just issued under the title of "The World's Encyclopaedia of Recorded Music," with everlasting credit to its authors, Francis F. Clough and G. J. Cuming. It bears the imprint of the London Gramophone Corporation in association with Sidgwick and Jackson, Limited.

As the authors indicate at the very outset, the volume owes its scheme to Robert J. Darrell's magnificent pioneer work "The Gramophone Shop Encyclopaedia of Recorded Music," but it goes beyond that notable ground-clearing venture in a way possible, perhaps, only in a society operating on an austerity budget. I don't know

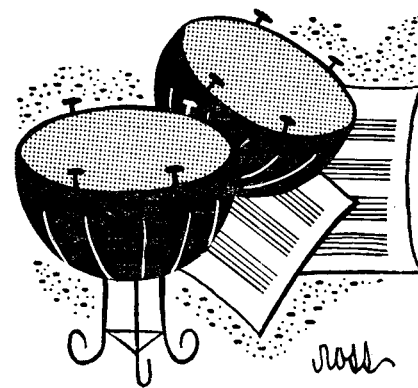
how many worthless projects were tabled to commandeer the paper for this one, but it seems to me the worthiest effort in musical scholarship to be produced anyplace in the world in the postwar epoch.

Spatially, the compilers have considered their oyster to be the period 1925-50 and there are very few consequential discs (even to forty-odd versions of the Bach-Gounod "Ave Maria") issued in that time which are not identified, listed, and provided with coupled sides in this mammoth directory. What is Clough and who is Cuming I cannot say, not knowing the gentlemen; but there can be little midnight oil in Wales (Upper Colwyn Bay is the precise point of origin) they have not burned to produce this veritable Bartlett for discophiles.

Big books merit big reviews, and this is one of the biggest. But, to keep the account within reasonable limits, I will describe it, succinctly, as a work for basic reference rather than as a guide to current production. A sizable supplement carries the currency of entry to May 1951, with a copious listing of LP's issued to that date, but the virtue of the work reposes in its vastly authoritative organization of material precedent to this immediate period. Other aids, such as Schwann, treat the month-to-month snowballing of the repertory; this one, rather, measures the upheavals and arranges the peaks in order of occurrence.

As I have mentioned, the generous allotment of paper and the beautifully clear type arrangement have permitted the authors a broad field in which to operate, and they have cultivated it to a connoisseur's delight. Where else, for example, can you find all the sections of Glazounow's "The Seasons" ballet enumerated, and the precise portions included in its several recordings pinned down? Or a collation of all the piano compositions of Liszt, including arrangements of other composer's efforts, tabulated like the schedule of Long Island railroad trains to Patchogue and Bay Shore?

I note also, in a rather rapid skimming of contents, the exact identification of the Handel items on Beecham's "The Great Elopement"; an index, by name, to every Chopin etude which has a *nom de keyboard*, every Scarlatti sonata for which somebody invented a fanciful designation, all Debussy piano pieces by name, not to mention every single *morceau* of Schumann. These are placed at the beginning of the sections devoted to



the composers (or at the end) and suggest page numbers (for titles) to aid those who are not acquainted with the larger works.

I have a healthy admiration, too, for the tabular comparison of the many versions of Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake," showing just which sections are included in which versions, for the ninety-seven Handel arias listed with directions to the page where each may be found under *Serses*, *Rinaldo*, or whatever, for the breadth of vision which includes, under "Ave Maria," Gounod-Bach, versions by Gracie Fields and Deanna Durbin. (No Crosby, however.) You can learn, too, which of many cadenzas are used in the innumerable versions of Beethoven concerti (those for piano, and the one for violin), and dazzle your friends by mentioning a work called "Rosine" as the source for Gossec's "Gavotte," while dropping a hint that London travelers can find a recording of Henry Hadley's "In Bohemia" overture in the American Library in London.

No compendium such as this would be complete without its suggestion of things unheard which one would rather imagine than hear, and my favor has gravitated to Ethel Smyth's "Fanfare: Hot Potatoes" (page 574) and Arthur Bliss's "Fanfare for a Dignified Occasion" (page 176), not to mention Farnaby's "Simkin said that Sis was fair" (page 187). None of these could possibly conform to the suggestions of the title, and we add them to our "Treasury of the Unheard" along with Roswaenge's "Di bollenti spiriti."

To preserve professional standing in the reviewer's guild, I point to the fact that the conductor for Rubinstein's performance of the Schumann piano concerto is identified as Sternberg instead of Steinberg. Having rubbed off this small blemish, I pass a vote of thanks to Messrs. Clough and Cuming, and commend their huge volume as an indispensable part of any decent musical library whether the user is music-lover or artist, scholar or savant. I shall be cribbing from it forever and ever. —IRVING KOLODIN.

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