

the village Voice

Special Hi-Fi Section

September 26, 1956

Mechanical Marvels of the Modern Record-Changer

by Milton D. Thalberg

President, Audiogersh Corporation

For a device that couldn't possibly work, the modern record-changer is a remarkable piece of automatic machinery. And a look at the inside of any changer will almost convince anyone that it couldn't work and do all the things required of it—yet it does. Within its small chassis is a mechanical brain that accepts the information you give it, translates that information into the necessary sequence of lever movements, and then follows your instructions until it finishes its job. Truly, such a machine vies with modern computers in ability, yet it performs its various duties more smoothly and carefully than you could do them yourself, and it does them time after time without error, noise, or mistake. Furthermore, when you consider that an unwanted movement of as little as six millionths of an inch is sufficient to be objectionable—as it is with a phonograph turntable, for such motion is translated as noise in

the loudspeaker—you would expect to find the type of construction required for celestial telescopes, almost. Yet with all of this precision, good record-changers are not expensive.

New Products

It has been customary for many years for those who want the best in home music systems to insist on a professional type of transcription player, and there are many good ones on the market. But there is no denying the convenience of the record-changer, and the most critical users have turned to products developed only in the past two years as those that can re-

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The Night People

by JEAN SHEPHERD



MOTORIZED, ELECTRONIFIED JEAN SHEPHERD, dropping off his copy at The Village Voice. Voice: Gene Dauter

'FREQUENCY RESPONSE IS NOT ENOUGH'

by Ralph Vaughn, Jr.

Musical consultant and director of installations, Lyric Hi-Fi, Inc.

A few months ago this newspaper presented an excellent article on high-fidelity by the president of the Institute of High-Fidelity Manufacturers. In his article Mr. George Silber covered in detail the various pieces of equipment available to create a hi-fi set.

There are several manufacturers who are producing excellent equipment at this time. However, there is more to getting results than simply having good equipment. By getting results I mean recreating faithfully musical sounds as they were performed. An instrument that will make the Paris Conservatory Orchestra sound like the Cleveland Orchestra, or vice versa, is not only operating incorrectly but is almost impossible to con-

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Progress

OLD MURPH squinted down into the darkness. He was trying to set the volume-level of his transistor applause-generator. "Damn it," he muttered under his breath, "Why the hell do they have to make these knobs so small?"

The theatre seemed even darker than they usually do during the first act. The audience wasn't settled yet, but already people all around Murph were setting up the applause-generators they all carried. He guessed that most of them were moving the pointer to "ENTHUSIASTIC," just as he was, since the majority must have read the same review he had seen in the Times the day before. Perhaps a few might even move the dial all the way over to "TUMULTUOUS" or even "WILD," but not many, because this was a mid-week crowd and did not include more than a sprinkle of out-of-towners, who go overboard for everything and rarely read the Times. He figured there would be the usual quota of flinks who were in every audience and who would set the dials on their Applaudo's to "POLITE" and maybe a few would go as far as "SCATTERED," but that wasn't likely. Not with this crowd anyway.

Better Organized Now

With his Applaudo finally adjusted, Old Murph settled back in his seat to enjoy the evening. He so often these past few years had lacked that wonderful feeling of anticipation and excitement that used to be part of the world of the theatre. But on the other hand, things were better organized now, and it wasn't nearly as hit-or-miss as it used to be. That is, during the old days, when they were just beginning to perfect the play-writing machines over at the IBM labs and the composing-calculators were still primitive as all hell. There was no question about it, when you really thought about things: progress in music and art and theatre were completely tied-in these days with the good old electronic game. And that was Old Murph's meat. As the play droned on smoothly and neatly, Old Murph's mind wandered.

He was about the last of the old Hi-Fi gang, and could remember all the way back to the days when they used live artists to record in the old LP disc-system. "God, LP's!" he thought: "It must be 20 years since I've even heard the name mentioned." For a moment his mind snapped back to the play, but not for long. He had had a hard day and he was tired, and anyway his eyes were bothering him again. It was pleasant to just sit and dream away in the darkness. He was seated near a quiet corner of the Orchestra, and the mood-music

it created added to the sleepy mood he was in. His mind focused on the Orchestra itself.

Of course he was far too young to remember much about hearing actual live orchestra, but his father used to tell him stories of musicians he had known. Real live ones. As far as Old Murph was concerned, he preferred the Orchestra. His earliest recollections of music were connected with LP's and tapes and some of the later film-methods of recording live musicians in studios, but he had never actually seen or heard one in the flesh. Still, everyone knew that music always sounded better when it was recorded, so it wasn't a great loss. And since the RCA people had come up with the first Orchestrons that did away with the musicians themselves, the whole business of music had taken a turn for the better.

An Old Codger

Murph knew a man who had booked concert artists way back in the mid-50's, and the old codger used to tell a lot of strange things about that crowd. Of course, he was a very old man when he died, and it was hard to tell whether he was senile or not, but the stories were wonderful. For example,

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'FREQUENCY RESPONSE IS NOT ENOUGH'

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ceive, although I have heard such machines.

It should be obvious that mere frequency response is not enough. The equipment must be able to show up the subtle nuances, tonal coloration, style, etc., that the artists display at the time of performance. This is what makes the difference between a box that plays and a true hi-fi instrument. Many people who have never witnessed a live performance in-

sist that their system is excellent because it is very impressive. If they would go to Carnegie Hall, they would probably be dissatisfied because the "highs" were muffled, the "bass" was deficient, and the "middles" lacked presence. These are the boys who think the Philharmonic brass section should sound like Perez Prado's "screach section."

Music, Not Just Sound

Unfortunately, there are several recording engineers who share the feeling of the latter. To those who feel that way, each man to his own satisfaction. To those who wish to re-create music, rather than create new sound, and to enjoy what is done by the world's best artists, a system must be chosen which adds no color of its own. In order to do this, it is advisable to consult with a person who is either a musician or is familiar with "live" performances. If, however, you are such a person, choose carefully for natural sound and you have nothing but enjoyment to gain.

Readin', Writin', And High Fidelity

The High-Fidelity Reproduction of Sound will be the subject of one of 40 new non-credit evening courses introduced at NYU in the semester starting this week.

Good News for those who asked for another concert demonstration on

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Mechanical Marvels of the Modern Record-Changer

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place the transcription turntable with no loss of quality.

The changer has a difficult job to do. One thing it must do perfectly: maintain correct and constant speed, hour after hour. This is its primary job, for a speed variation of as little as one per cent is sufficient to cause the music-lover to "throw the baggage out." The wow-and-flutter figure for any good changer

the first place, the hi-fi owner can now be supplied with push-button tuning—buttons to control stopping and starting, to cause the instrument to repeat the record either during its playing or after it finishes, to control the brilliance of the reproduction, and to instruct the machine to wait a while between records, if you wish. This last is a fascinating feature, since it lets you have a pause of up to 5½ minutes between records—especially desirable for background music.

The start and stop buttons win out as the real advantages of push-button operation. One simply places a record on the turntable or a stack of them on the spindle, selects the speed, and presses the start button. From then until the last record on the stack is played, everything is automatic. Yet if the phone should ring and you want to have quiet, you only have to depress the stop button and the entire operation ceases, smoothly and gently.

This, then, is the latest record changer—a machine that performs all the necessary and required functions of all previous record changers, and does them simply, smoothly, gently—while offering as a lagmatpe all the little extra advantages that make it a pleasure to use. With this latest product of the hi-fi industry, the record changer becomes indispensable.

Highlights of the Hi-Fi Show

From 2 p. m. to 10 p. m. every day from tomorrow (Thursday) through Sunday, the New York Trade Show Building, 36th Street and Eighth Avenue, will be jumping with music, odd sounds, lectures, and just plain people interested in music and recording. The High-Fidelity Show there will feature exhibits and demonstrations by 95 leading manufacturers of the latest developments—many quite revolutionary—in components and high-fidelity equipment, and in the new styling of the cabinets that go with them.

One of main attractions of the show will be a series of daily one-hour panels by experts on various aspects of high-fidelity, in non-technical language, and with opportunities to ask questions from the floor. There will also be an all-hours information center where anyone can get his questions answered on any aspect of high-fidelity.

should be less than ¼ of 1 per cent for satisfactory reproduction. Then, too, the changer must accommodate three different speeds, three different diameters, and two types of record grooves. The speed-change control should be manual to be sure of proper settings for your valuable records, for playing an LP at either 78 or 45 r. p. m. is almost sure to cause damage to the grooves. When set for 45 r. p. m., however, the control that determines the speed might just as well control the point at which the stylus drops onto the new record, since all 45's are 7 inches in diameter.

Push-Button Tuning

Now while most of these features appear in practically all changers, there are many other attractive features that appear in only the newest of them all. In

The Night People

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he told how the concert-bookers of that day used to rate live artists by how they compared with the recordings they made. If a man was as good as his recordings, they rated him a 100-per-cent performer; if he was half as good a. his discs, he rated 50 per cent, and so on. The hooker was that no one ever came up with 100 per cent, because they could always edit and splice and doctor a tape endlessly before it was issued. A concert wasn't like that. The guy told Murph that the best concert man he ever heard only came up to less than 75 per cent of his records, and that was considered a miracle. No wonder concerts finally went out of st. le. The artists themselves wouldn't go near a stage when they wised up. There was more dough in making records, anyway. When the Orchestrons took over, that ended that for good. It was just as well.

SUDDENLY the lights went up, and Murph jerked back to the theatre. Instinctively he pressed the button on his Applaudo to signify his approval of the first act. He stretched in his seat, rose, and wandered to the aisle, fishing in his coat pocket for his cigarettes. It felt great to be alive.

Forced Out

An article by Warren DeMotte on new hi-fi recordings, and a listing by Jack Selby of other new record releases, both prepared for this issue, were forced out for want of space. They will appear in the near future.—ED.

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