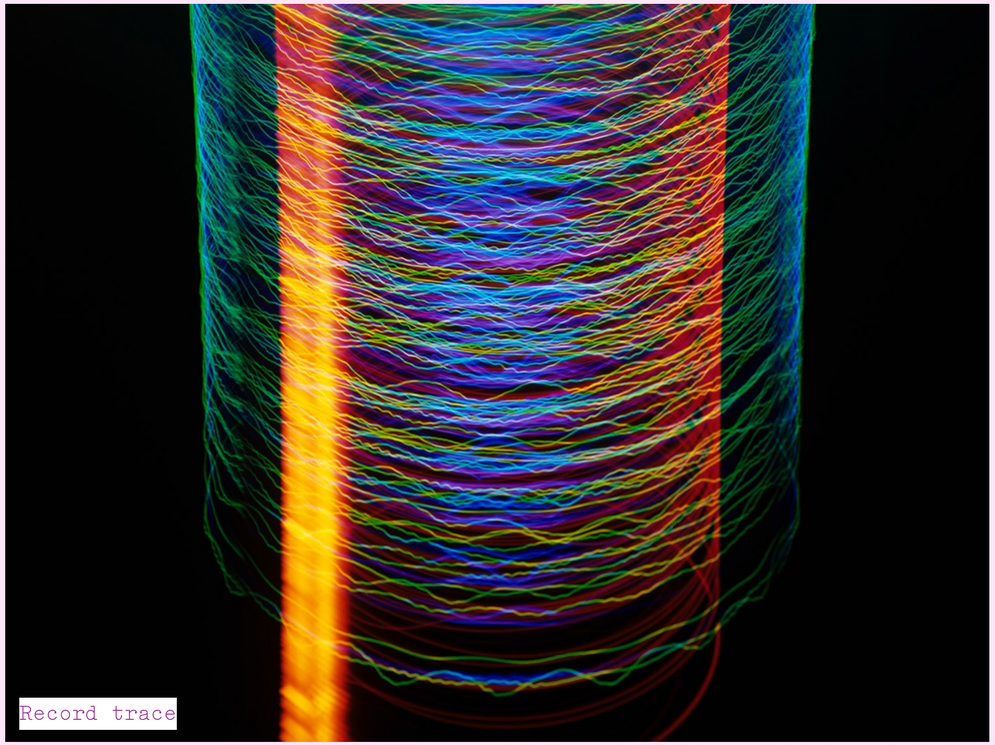
Jamie Dobson

Transparent sound: development of audiophile culture in Britain

British Popular Culture(s) Conference, Falmouth University



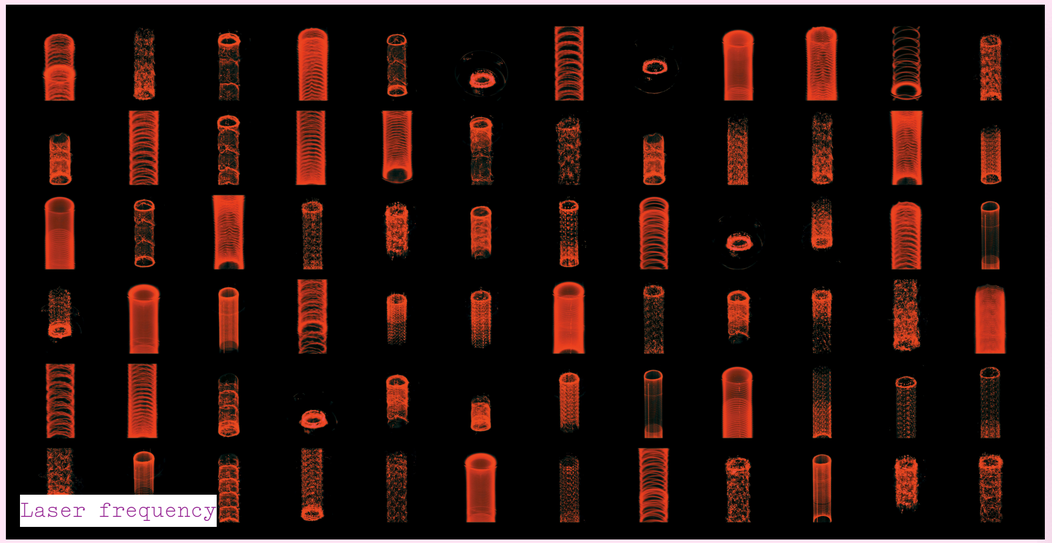
Record trace



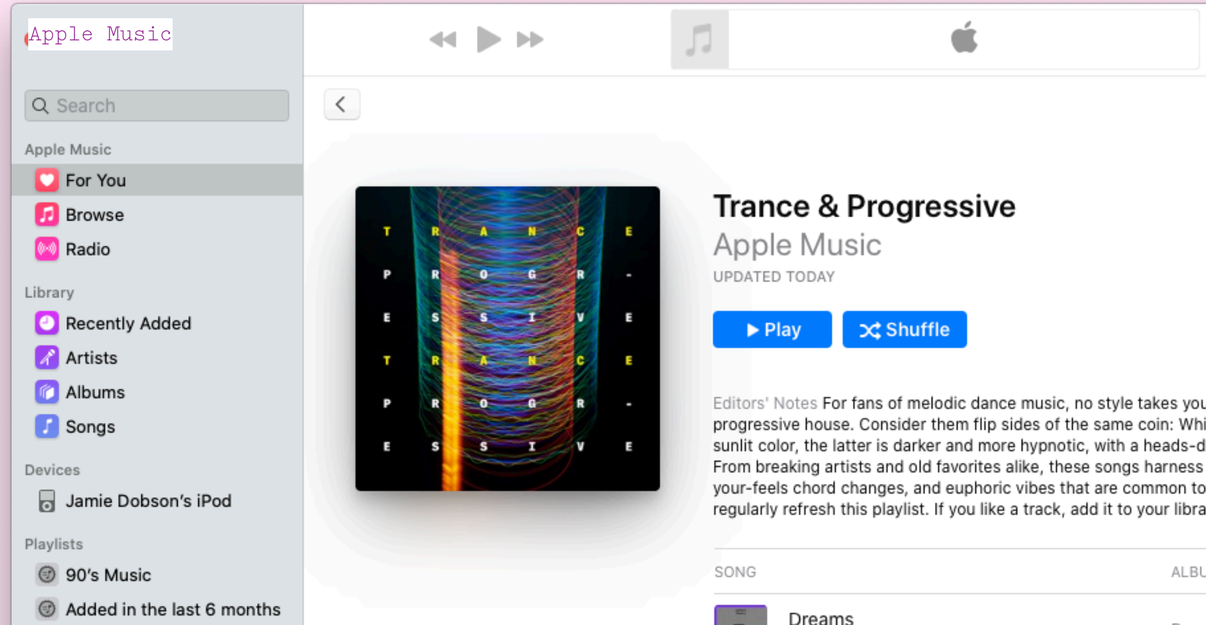
Record trace



Unknown Public

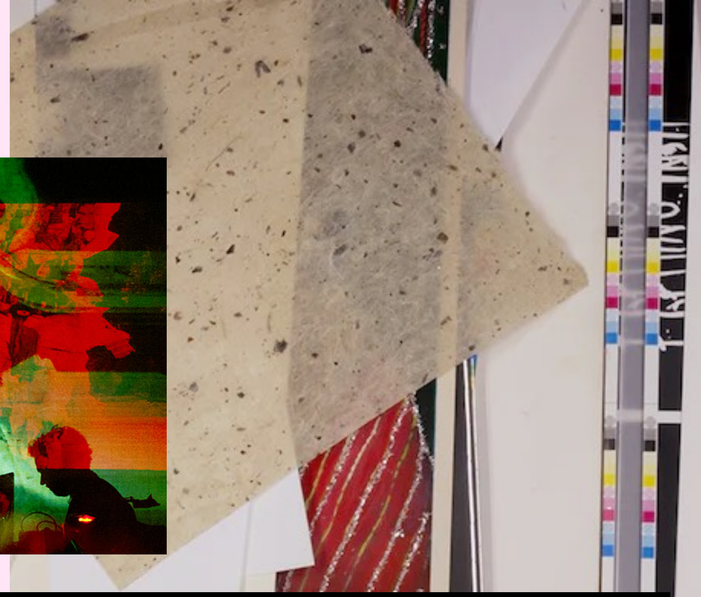


Laser frequency





333





Milesahead

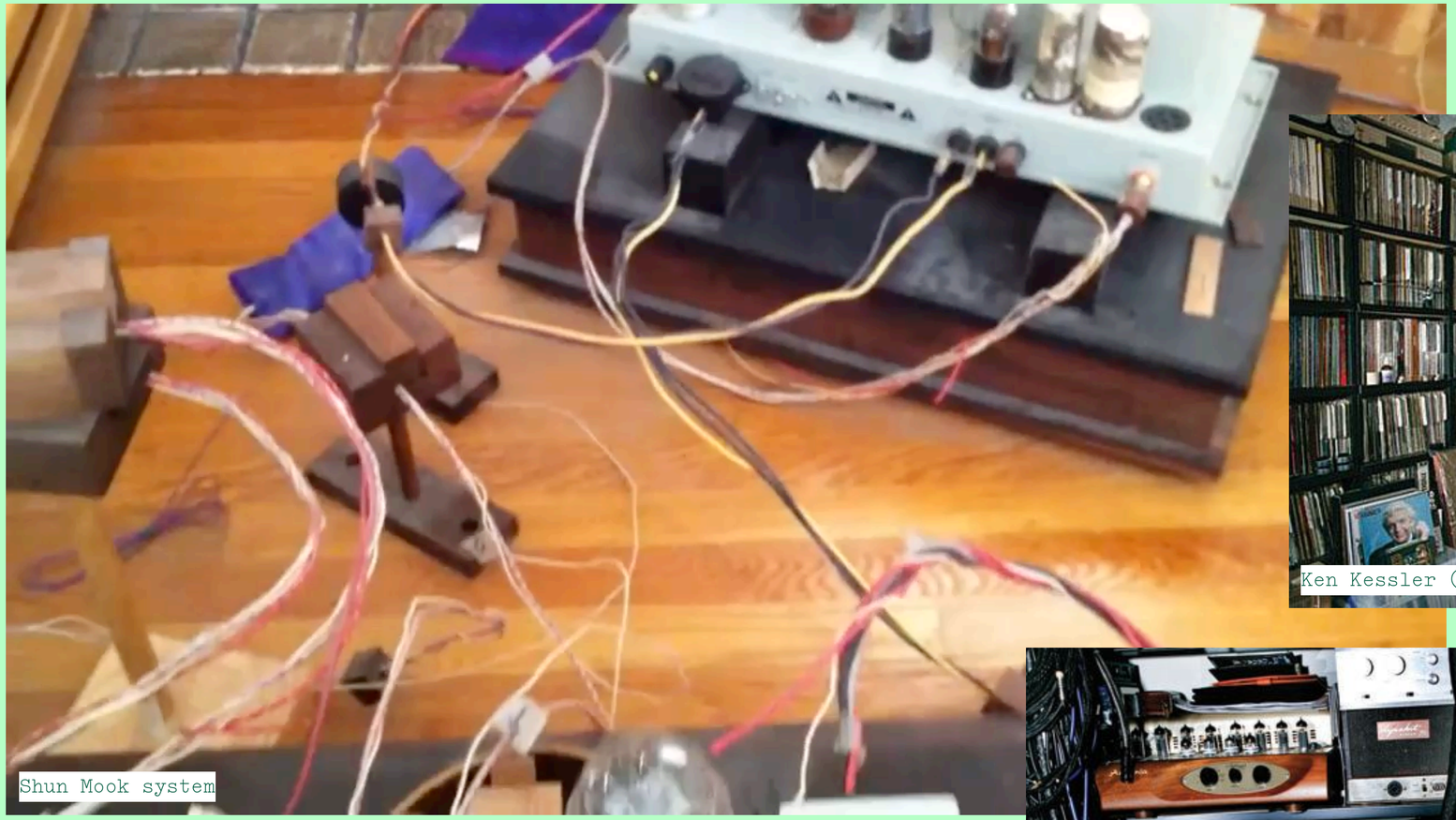


Vaughan Oliver archive



Pixies at The Roundhouse

PhD focus



Shun Mook system

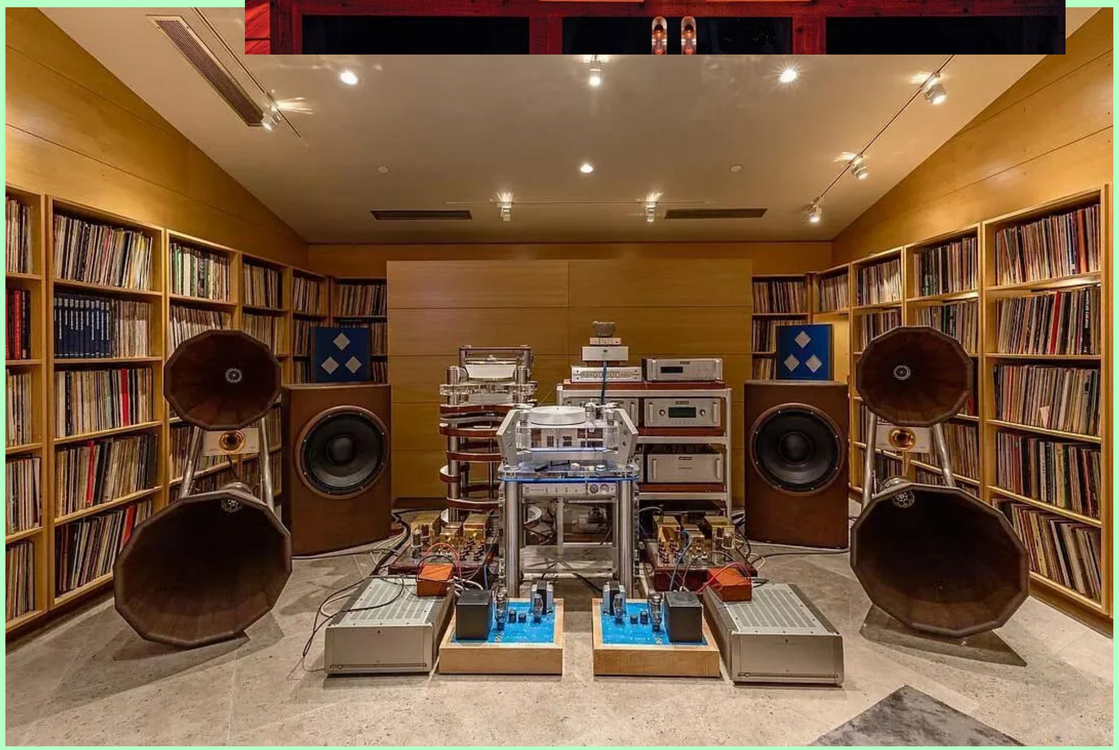


Ken Kessler (Hi-Fi reviewer)











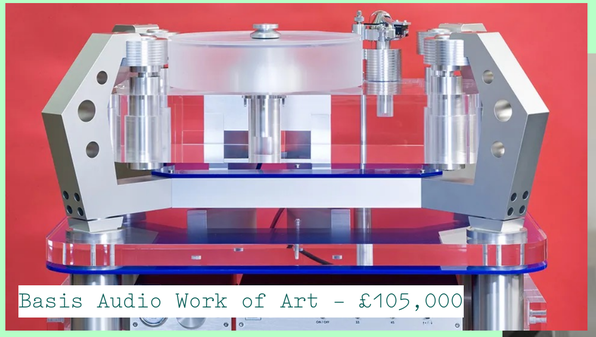
Listening rooms







AV Designhaus Derenville VPM 2010-1 - £460,000



Basis Audio Work of Art - £105,000



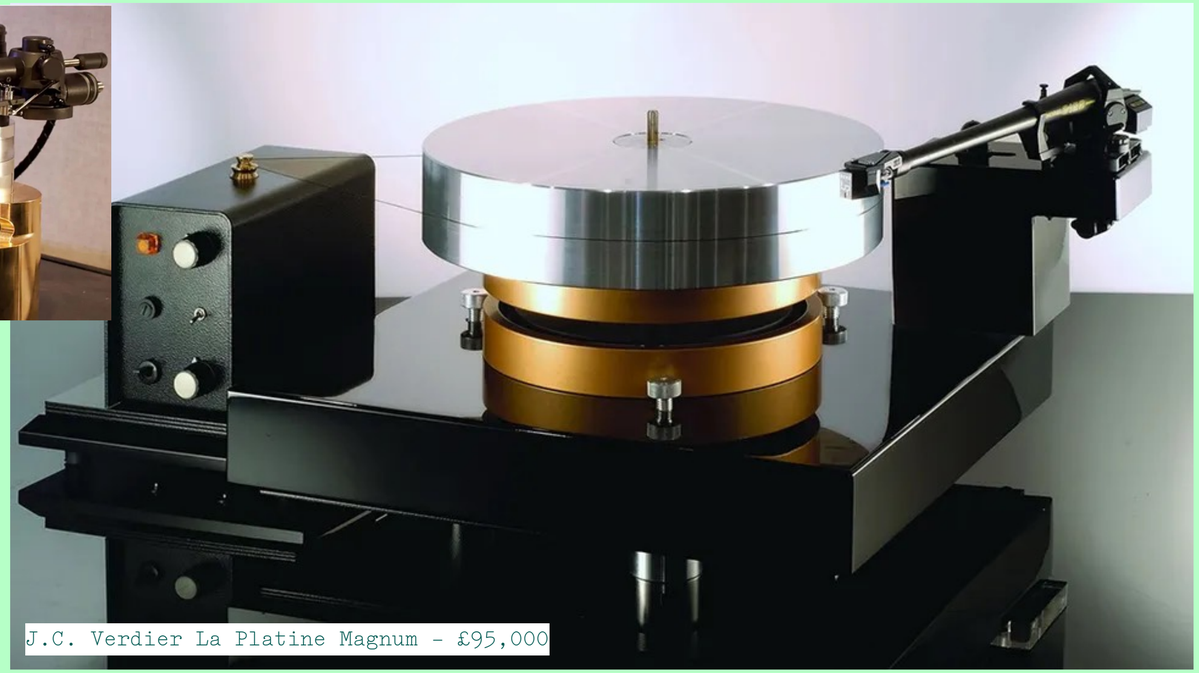
Rossner and Sohn MOTT - up to £105,000



Goldmund Reference II - £165,000

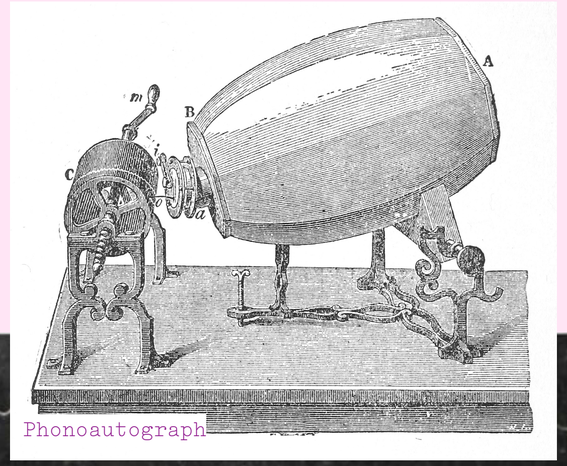


OneDof One Degree - £105,000

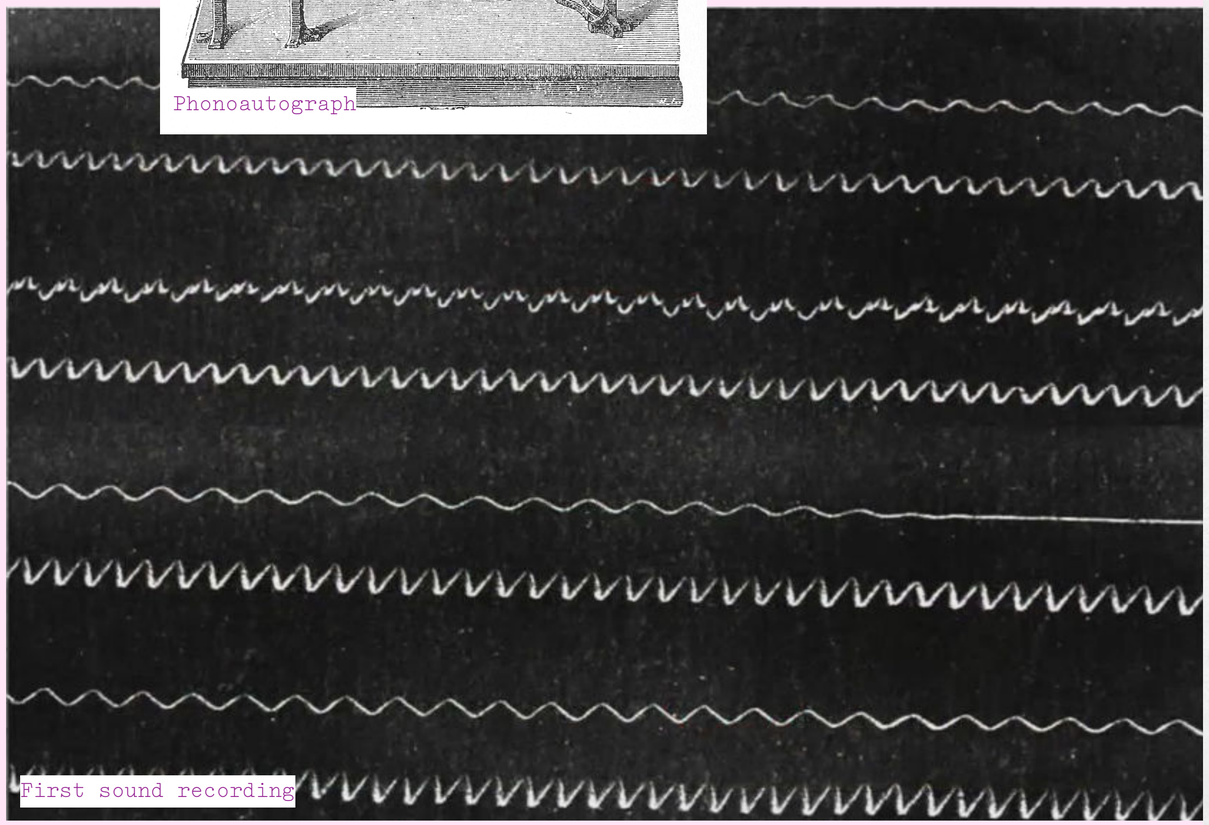


J.C. Verdier La Platine Magnum - £95,000

Origins of audio recording and reproduction



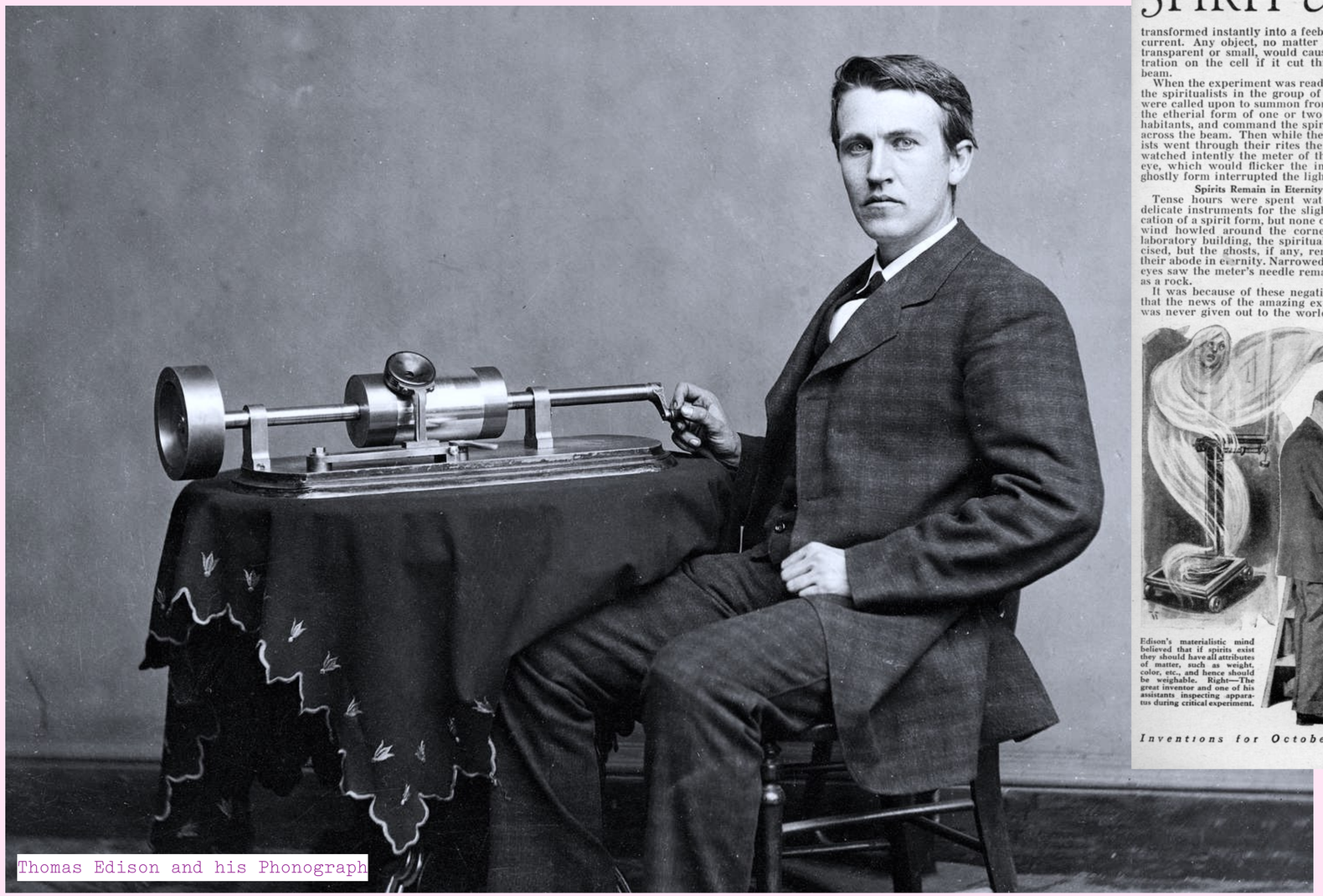
Phonoautograph



First sound recording

Édouard-Léon Scott de Martinville





Thomas Edison and his Phonograph

Modern Mechanics and Inventions, Oct 1933

SPIRIT EXPERIMENTS

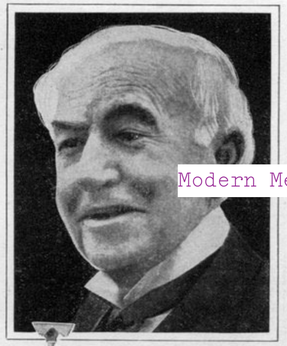
transformed instantly into a feeble electric current. Any object, no matter how thin, transparent or small, would cause a registration on the cell if it cut through the beam.

When the experiment was ready to begin the spiritualists in the group of witnesses were called upon to summon from eternity the etherial form of one or two of its inhabitants, and command the spirit to walk across the beam. Then while the spiritualists went through their rites the scientists watched intently the meter of the electric eye, which would flicker the instant any ghostly form interrupted the light beam.

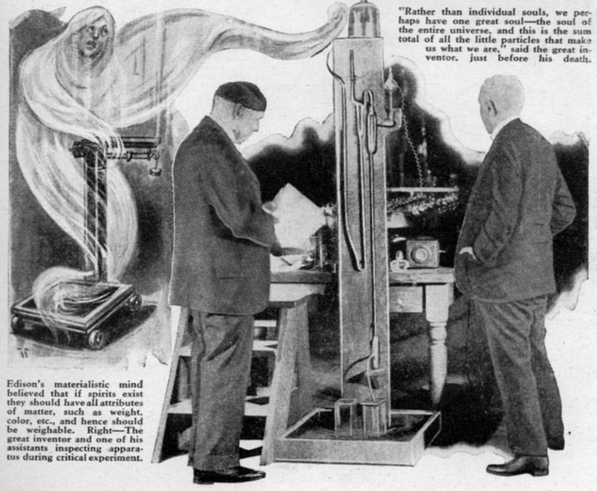
Spirits Remain in Eternity

Tense hours were spent watching the delicate instruments for the slightest indication of a spirit form, but none came. The wind howled around the corners of the laboratory building, the spiritualists exorcised, but the ghosts, if any, remained in their abode in eternity. Narrowed scientific eyes saw the meter's needle remain steady as a rock.

It was because of these negative results that the news of the amazing experiments was never given out to the world. Edison



"Rather than individual souls, we perhaps have one great soul—the soul of the entire universe, and this is the sum total of all the little particles that make us what we are," said the great inventor, just before his death.



Edison's materialistic mind believed that if spirits exist they should have all attributes of matter, such as weight, color, etc., and hence should be weighable. Right—The great inventor and one of his assistants inspecting apparatus during critical experiment.

Inventions for October

35

d That Spirits Should Have All the Attributes of Matter



Artist's drawing here illustrates the set-up of the ghost trap. Spirit crossing beam from projector would interrupt light, causing hand on the meter to flicker.



his belief-shattering dis-
ieving world.

itor was a realist and his
led the stony silence his
profound mind expected to find. If spiritual entities existed Edison believed that they should have some of the attributes of ordinary matter. Hence his belief that if spirits existed they could be detected by the electric eye.

It was Edison's belief, even up to the day of his death, that life in man and animal results from the activity of countless myriads of what he called "immortal units," endowed with intelligent direction of life and its processes.

To substantiate his hypothesis, Edison burnt his finger intentionally! (Before the finger was burned, however, the scientist had a Bertillion print made of his digit.) The burn was severe enough to obliterate all the delicate skin lines, yet after the finger had healed, another print showed that the lines and whorls, even though they had been hopelessly destroyed, had returned to their original position.

From this experiment, Edison got confirmation of his hypothesis that it is these aforementioned "immortal units" which supervised the regrowth of his finger skin, following out the original design. Man, he believed, is a mosaic of such life units, and it is these entities which determine what we shall be.

To make his hypothesis clear, Edison was wont to cite the following analogy. Suppose this earth were visited by some extra-terrestrial being whose eyes were so coarse that the smallest thing he could see was the Brooklyn bridge. Naturally he would take the structure as some sort of natural growth.

Now suppose this imaginary giant were to destroy the bridge, then, after a couple of years, find it rebuilt. Don't you suppose the giant would assume that some guiding intelligence were behind the reconstruction? That's what Edison believed.

36

Modern Mechanix and

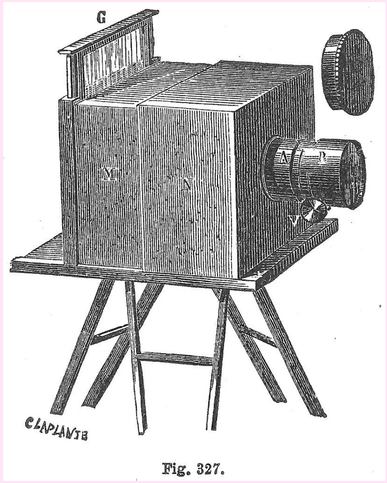
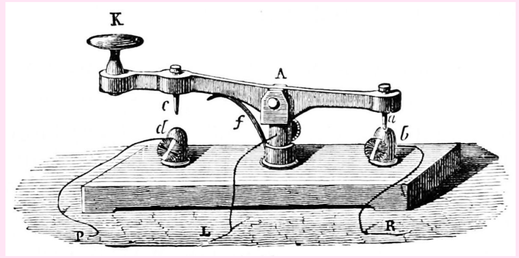
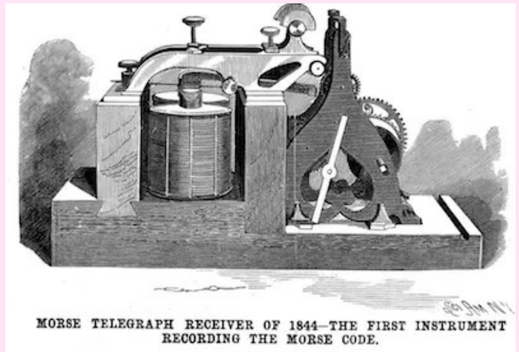


Fig. 327.

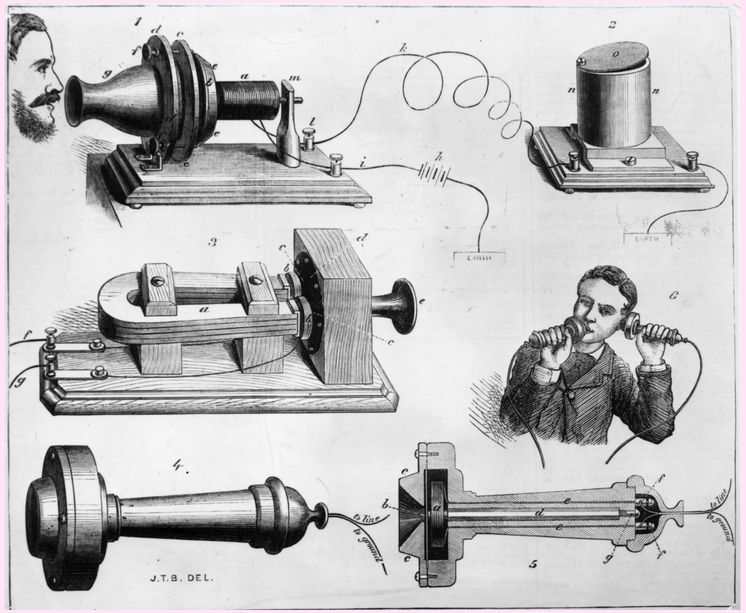
1816



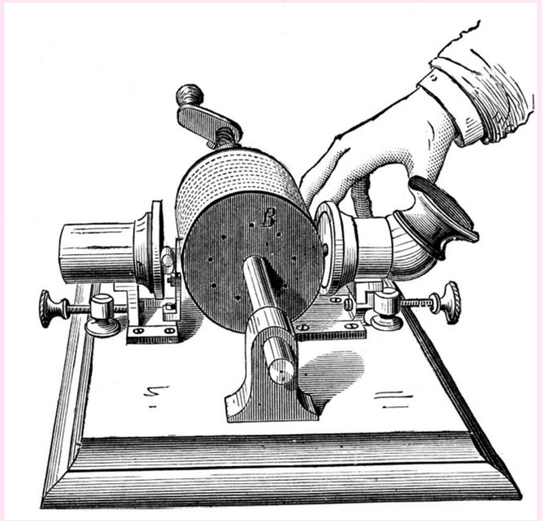


MORSE TELEGRAPH RECEIVER OF 1844—THE FIRST INSTRUMENT RECORDING THE MORSE CODE.

1844



1876

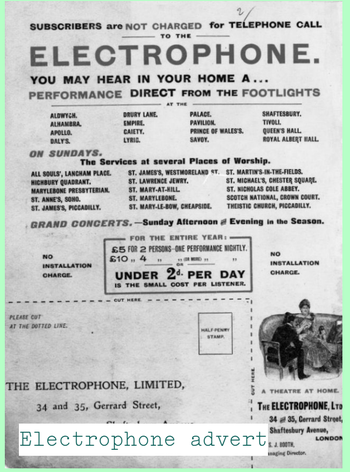


1877

Equipment






SUBSCRIBERS are NOT CHARGED for TELEPHONE CALL TO THE

ELECTROPHONE.

YOU MAY HEAR IN YOUR HOME A...

PERFORMANCE DIRECT FROM THE FOOTLIGHTS

AT THE

ALDWYCH. ALHAMBRA. APOLLO. DALY'S. DRURY LANE. EMPIRE. GAIETY. LYRIC. PALACE. PAVILION. PRINCE OF WALES'S. SAVOY. SHAFTESBURY. TIVOLI. QUEEN'S HALL. ROYAL ALBERT HALL.

ON SUNDAYS. The Services at several Places of Worship.

ALL SOULS', LANCHAM PLACE. HICHBURY QUADRANT. MARYLEBONE PRESBYTERIAN. ST. ANNE'S, SOHO. ST. JAMES'S, PICCADILLY. ST. JAMES'S, WESTMORELAND ST. ST. LAWRENCE JEWRY. ST. MARY-AT-HILL. ST. MARYLEBONE. ST. MARY-LE-BOW, CHEAPSIDE. ST. MARTIN'S-IN-THE-FIELDS. ST. MICHAEL'S, CHESTER SQUARE. ST. NICHOLAS COLE ABBEY. SCOTCH NATIONAL, CROWN COURT. THEISTIC CHURCH, PICCADILLY.

GRAND CONCERTS.—Sunday Afternoon & Evening in the Season.

NO INSTALLATION CHARGE.

FOR THE ENTIRE YEAR:
£5 FOR 2 PERSONS-ONE PERFORMANCE NIGHTLY.
£10 „ 4 „ „ „ „
UNDER 2½ PER DAY IS THE SMALL COST PER LISTENER.

NO INSTALLATION CHARGE.

CUT HERE

PLEASE CUT AT THE DOTTED LINE.

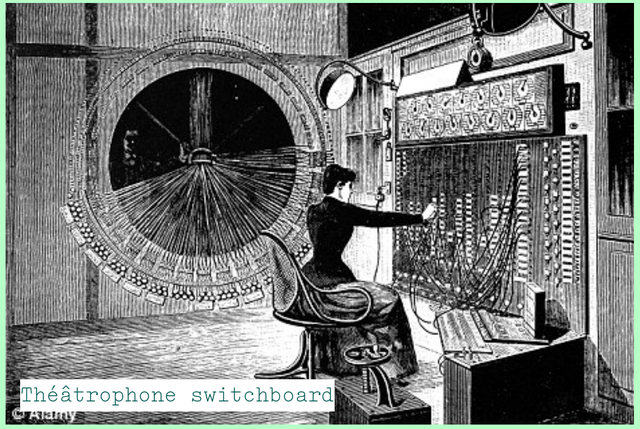
HALF-PENNY STAMP.

THE ELECTROPHONE, LIMITED,
34 and 35, Gerrard Street,

A THEATRE AT HOME.

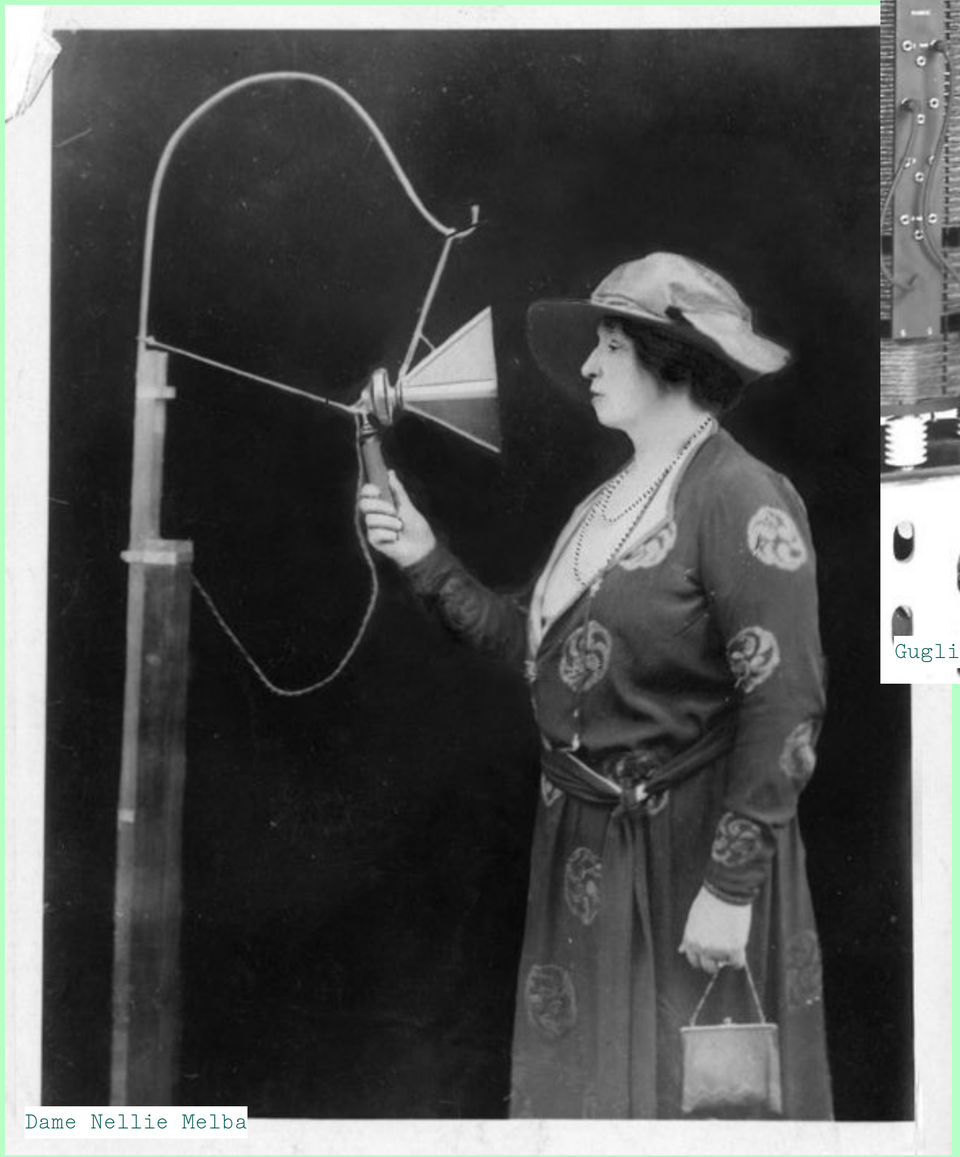
THE ELECTROPHONE, LTD
34 and 35, Gerrard Street,
Shaftesbury Avenue,
LONDON

Electrophone advert

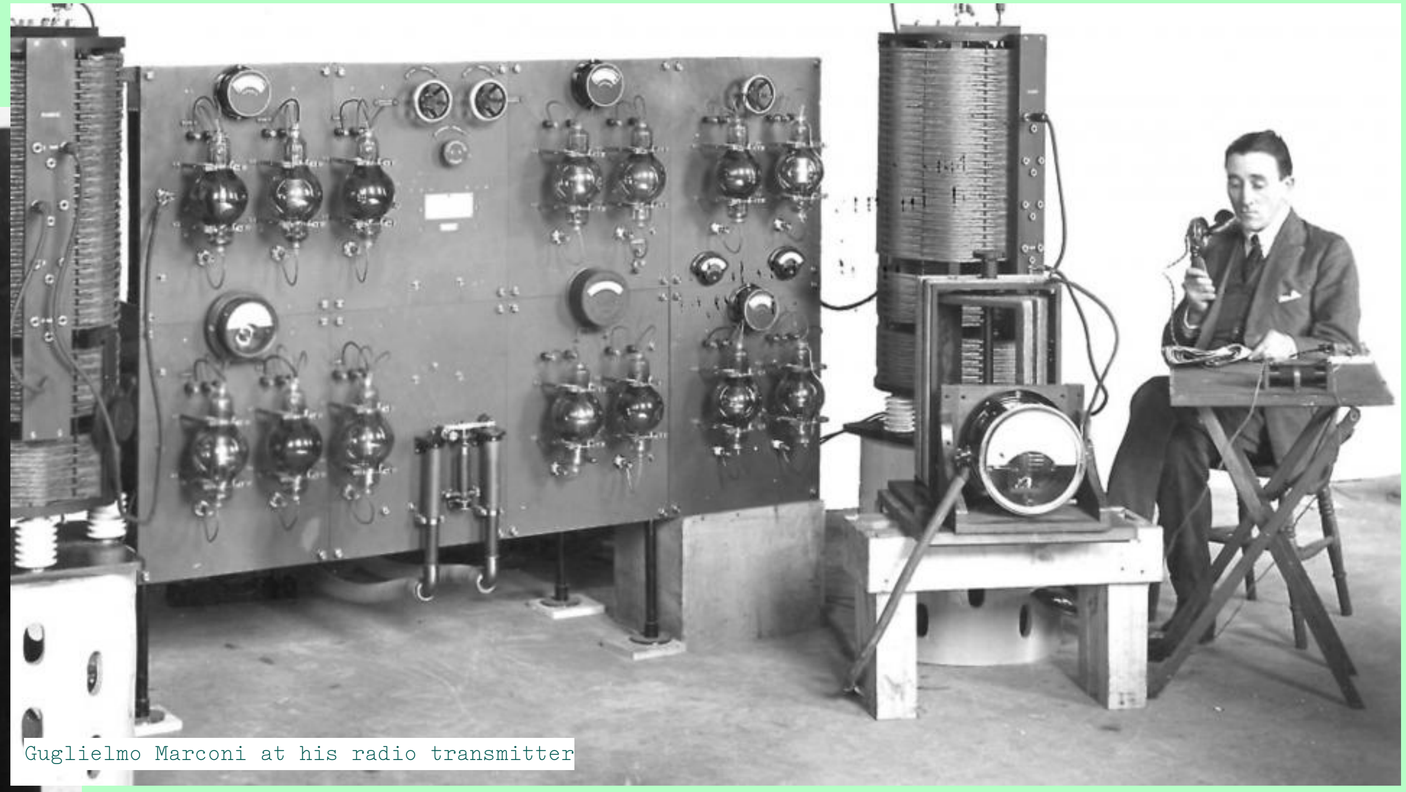


Théâtrophone switchboard


Electrophone



Dame Nellie Melba



Guglielmo Marconi at his radio transmitter



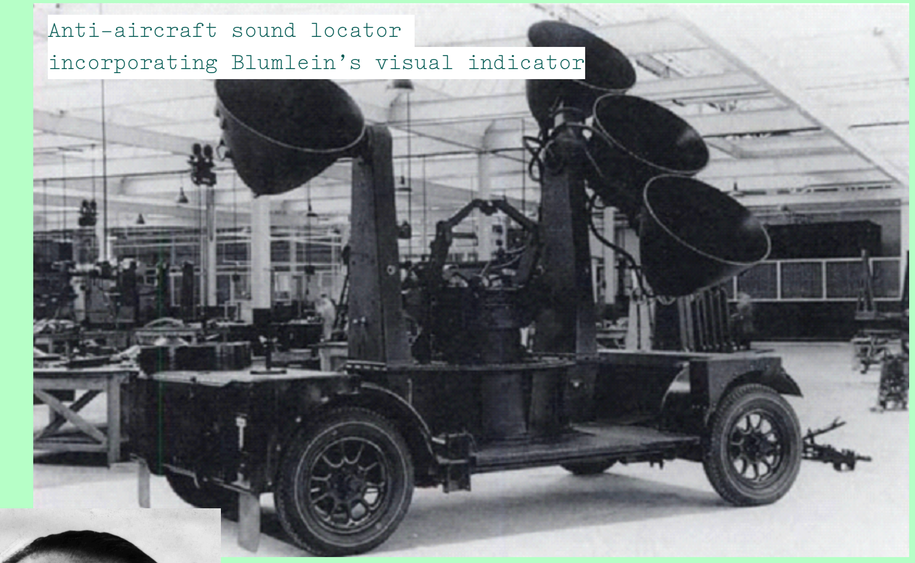
Marconi Wireless Works, Chelmsford, Essex



Sony Walkman


Sony Walkman advert, 1976


Electrophone.T THE ELECTROPHONE MARCH 30, 1901
(Photo by Foulsham and Banfield)



Anti-aircraft sound locator incorporating Blumlein’s visual indicator



Alan Blumlein



Development of record cutting lathe



‘Walking & Talking’ stereo test film



Beatrice Harrison playing to pigeons
(not Madame Saberon)

BBC logo 1927-46

First BBC outside broadcast, 1928



Invite to Foyle Riding



Are YOU ready for stereo sound

BBC logo 1946-53



Media


THE ARIEL GRAND-RECORD
I've loved her ever since she was a Baby
(Lauder)
RODERICK McLAU
Scotch Comedi
No. 1903 a
RECORDED IN LONDON
PEROPHONE
LEADING ALWAYS
Tubaphone S
w. Orchestra
The Dreaming Showdrop
played by
LA FLORIDA
45
ONLY THE LATEST HITS & RECOGNIZED SUCCESSES IN GREAT BRITAIN ON THE PEROPHONE RECORD 14048
ELECTRICALLY RECORDED
KEITH PROWSE & Co. LTD. LONDON
1/2
UNISON RECORD
Concert Hall
Recording
POEM
(Fibich)
STRING ORCHESTRA WITH GRAND PIPE ORGAN
ACO
MADE IN ENGLAND
(a) BEES WEDDING (Mendelssohn.)
(b) PRELUDE (Chopin)
Piano Soli
Played by
MAURICE COLE
G-15387
THE AEOLIAN CO. LTD.
LONDON
ARROW
TRADE
No. A
ABI
DECCA
THE SUPREME RECORD
NOT BE SOLD BELOW THE PRICE
FIXED BY THE MANUFACTURER
CHAPPELL & CO LTD. LONDON
"BROADCAST" TWELVE
SUPER DANCE
MY FUTURE JUST PASSED
From "Safety in Numbers".
Fox-trot (Vocal Refrain)
MARIUS B. WINTER AND
HIS DANCE ORCHESTRA
2594-A
ELECTRICALLY RECORDED BY MARCONI CO'S PROCESS MANUFACTURED BY THE VOCALION GRAMOPHONE Co. LTD
ALL THAT I'M
ASKING IS SYMPATHY
Waltz—Vocal Refrain
(Davis—Burke)
DEAUVILLE DANCE ORCHESTRA
DOMINION
RECORDS
ENCIRCLE THE WORLD
TRADE MARK
(3763)
CAT. NO.
A. 257
RECORD MADE BY DOMINION GRAMOPHONE
RECORDS LTD. AT LUTON BEDS. ENGLAND
PUBLICLY PERFORMED WITHOUT PERMISSION
THERN
BRARY OF
ORDED MUSIC
E IN ENGLAND
78 RPM
SMP 1282
VIOLENCE
es) 2:42 mins.
STWAY STUDIO
CHESTRIA
ght recording first
blished 1963
STREET. LONDON. W.C.2
Citizen
1p
MANUFACTURED
Mindin' my B
(Donaldson-Ka
Sung by
PETE MORRIS (Baritone)
With Orchestral Accompaniment
811
UNAUTHORISED PUBLIC PERFORMANCE, BROADCASTING
MADE IN ENGLAND
Belto
+ IP
(M.958)
THE HENSHINE—
Intro.: My Home; The Hi
Song: The Rowan
(arr. Shand)
JIMMY SHAND'S FOLK DANCE BAND
BL.2455
ALL RIGHTS OF THE MANUFACTURER AND OF THE OWNER OF THE RECORDED
on Bell
DIO
ELECTRICALLY RECORDED
88092 Cinema Organ, Voice and Violin
LOVE'S OLD SWEET SONG
The Elite Trio
839
BRITISH MANUFACTURE
BRITISH THROUGHOUT
EDISON BELL BRIT.PAT. 26689/12.
7602 No. 4
BALLET MUSIC from "PRINCE IGOR"
(BORODIN)
Band of H.M. Scots Guards
Condr.: Lt. F. W. Wood
1064
MANUFACTURERS. J.E.HOUGH Lº EDISON BELL WORKS LONDON.



ffrr records



Decca ffss



Eric B. & Rakim ‘Paid in Full’, 1987



Decca ffrr



A Journey into Stereo Sound, 1958



Coldcut remix

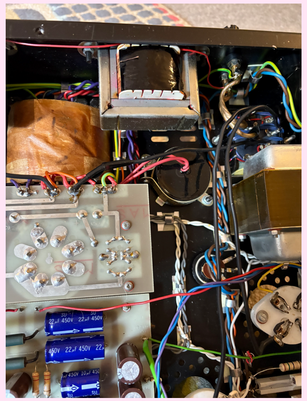


Linn Isobarik speakers











300b amplifier



Revox reel-to-reel



Prototype speakers



Horn speaker



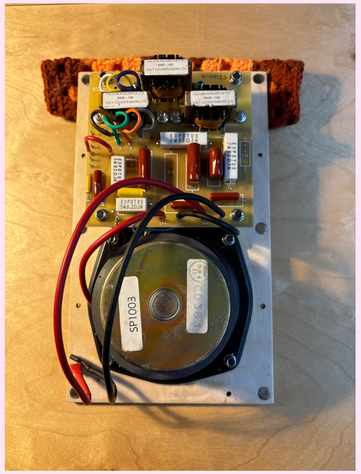
Garrard 301 turntable



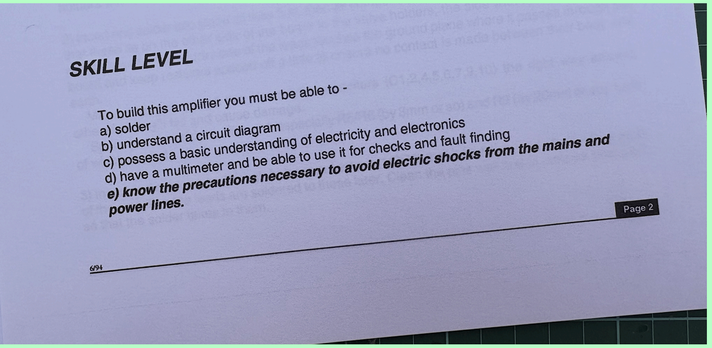
Linn Sondek LP12



LS3/5a speakers



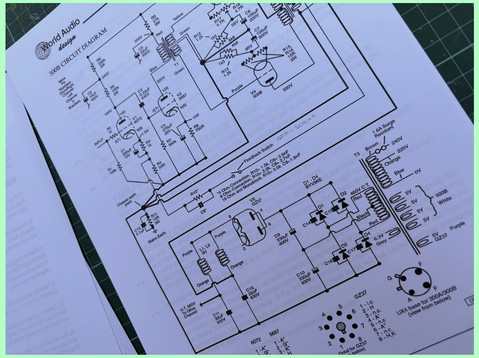
UK culture





World Audio Designs – valve power-amplifier







E.A.R. – valve pre-amp



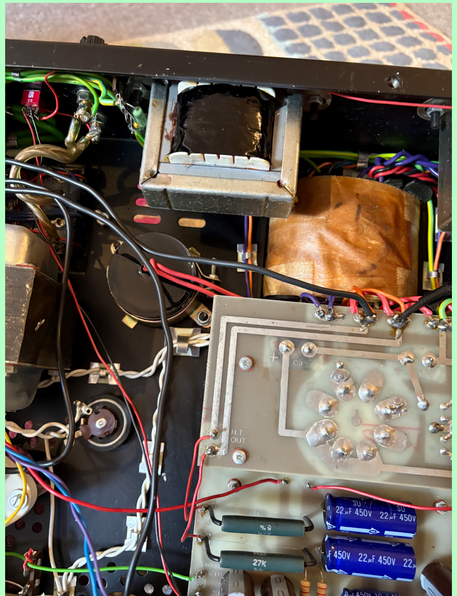






Illustration by Simon Ellinas

A psychologist's view of the lunatic fringe by J. Zelinger

HI-FI FETISHISM

MANY OF US are becoming increasingly aware of those audiophiles who show an extraordinary preoccupation with hi-fi equipment for its own sake. Contributors to as well as readers of *HFN/RR* have expressed irritation with this so-called lunatic fringe, which has been repeatedly criticized for being out of touch with reality.

The symptoms of this preoccupation are well known: an inclination to attach enormous significance to audio equipment's capacity to induce sonic pleasure and an inordinate emphasis on the sensuality of the reproduced sound, with a consequent tendency to relegate the music itself to a secondary position. We can also recognize in this obsessional interest a need to amplify very small differences between audio components out of all proportion to their true value. These audiophiles are prone to convert such differences into preferences, and institute them as rigid ideals.

It is easy enough to dismiss the lunatic fringe, but it is more important to try to understand it. With this purpose in mind I wish to undertake a brief analysis of the psychology of this group of audiophiles.

I know that some readers may feel uneasy with psychology intruding upon the sphere of musical reproduction, but perhaps they can reassure themselves with the thought that psychological knowledge has been partly responsible for bringing some 'sanity' into the controlled subjective assessment of hi-fi equipment. What is more, techniques evolved in the psychological laboratory have been useful in solving a variety of psycho-

For most of us, listening to a chosen disc would involve placing the record on a turntable and making the audio equipment operational. Thereafter we are free to listen—our focus of attention is on the music. Our attention may drawn away from the music by the reproduction of an unexpected pressing defect, which may prove irritating temporarily; but we accommodate to this nuisance and re-establish the original focus of attention.

Another sort of non-musical sound may prove more disturbing. For instance, our attention may be drawn away from the music

and it is these that we judge. We search for differences and try to establish preferences. I am citing these examples in order to underline the common basis of all listeners' responses to musical reproduction. We should recognize that the relationship between our listening to music and our listening to the characteristic sound of audio equipment is not a constant one. It can shift if the circumstances demand it, but it is clear that members of the lunatic fringe have shifted an unusually large proportion of their attention over to the audio equipment.

This shift is not a temporary one. It is long this group of audiophiles hi-fi merely serve the purpose it has also becom

need to be conv
this nomenclature.
someone who has endowed
object (eg a piece of underclothing,
heeled shoe) with sexual significance. He
she requires the presence of this fetish in
order to become sexually aroused, and this is
the case regardless of whether a human
subject is present. Sexual pleasure is entirely
dependent on the fetish.

This form of sexual behaviour, while no
doubt extreme, is really a gross amplification
of normal responses. We are all capable of
investing an inanimate object with sexual
significance, but what has happened for the
fetishist is that the usual source of sexual
pleasure, another human being, is replaced by
an object which itself becomes the source of
pleasure.

In the case of the hi-fi fetishist the true
object of his pleasure, the music, has been
displaced. Or to put it another way, this
pleasure has become dependent upon the
particular characteristics of the audio equip-
ment. This is not to suggest that the hi-fi
fetishist likes music less, it is simply that a
shift of attention has placed the emotional
and perceptual priority firmly on the audio
equipment. This accounts for the equipment's
transformation into a fetish.

We observed that the sexual fetishist
endows an inanimate object with powers not
normally assigned to it. Thus without any
alteration in its real nature that object is
aggrandized and exalted. It has magical
powers assigned to it which resonate on a
level of fantasy in the mind of the fetishist. I
think it is possible to explain the hi-fi
fetishist's attitude of over-estimation and
over-valuation by recourse to the same
process of idealization. Look at it this way. A
piece of music we love will have the power
to move us whether we hear it reproduced via
a music-centre or a high quality system; this
is the power of art. Indeed, many of us may
describe this encounter with the music as
magical. But what happens in the case of the
hi-fi fetishist who has shifted the psychologi-
cal priority from the music to the reproducing
equipment? Musical pleasure (as with sexual
pleasure) becomes dependent on the magical
properties of the fetish, the audio equipment.
But audio components do not possess any
magical properties—they are under the
control of the laws of physics.

Like the sexual fetishist, the hi-fi fetishist
cannot fully bend to the demands of reality
for the simple reason that his relationship to
the fetish is active on a level of fantasy. Of
course, the hi-fi fetishist is not completely out
of touch with reality, otherwise he would
need to deny the existence of the laws of
physics. Therefore, in order to 'accommodate'
his magical thinking to reality he modifies it
so that he can still enjoy the pleasure afforded
to him by his hi-fi system. We see these
modifications appearing in the hi-fi press in
the form of mystification. This reconstituted
form of magical thinking is transparent to all

But given the right
speed and dynamics of xyz
whole gamut of musical emotions
reproduced.

Speed . . . is very difficult to
The speed of a system has
overall perspective with w
ceived and the level of ex
generate . . .

The transformation of s
ing to the xyz was min
improvements in bass
imagery and general
resolution was of su
make confirmatory A
redundant and poin
arm] more emotion
expression was ob
easier to get into

My conclusion a
was more capab
things like the
displayed by

At this stage
better understa
special relatio
Yet we need
appreciate fu
of the fetish
Let us tu
again in o
have obse
functioni
natural
cannot
anothe
fetish,
fetish
confi
inad
sub
do
th
otherwi
Before
this featu
fetishism
exampl
meet w
familia
some
test
audi
fina
se
fu
d
k



Hi-Fi News & Record Review, October 1981



USA - McIntosh power-amp



UK - Quad pre and power-amp



Japan - Luxman integrated amp



Denmark - Bang & Olufsen integrated amp

Conclusion