

## WPIC Transcribes Complete Series of Dickens Novels

Distinctive program feature sets a new high in enduring literary value



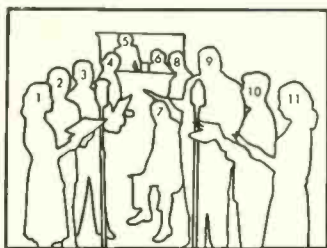
by Evelyn Keller, Publicity Director, Radio Station WPIC, Sharon, Penna.

More than three years of writing and research preceded the inauguration, over Radio Station WPIC, Sharon, Pennsylvania, on September 26, 1948, of a new series of weekly half-hour radio plays based on the works of the English novelist, Charles Dickens.

From the beginning, it was obvious that the huge casts involved largely composed as they were of non-professional talent, would make it impossible . . . or at least, inadvisable . . . to attempt to maintain a weekly schedule of live broadcasts. (In "Nicholas Nickleby," for example, there are thirty-four different characters. Fortunately, they do not all appear in any single episode!) All the programs, have, therefore, been produced in WPIC's studios and transcribed on 16-inch Audiodiscs.

The aim of the series is to present, in half-hour episodes, the complete series of novels by Charles Dickens, numbering fourteen in all, if one includes the unfinished mystery, "Edwin Drood." The intent of the series is to give the radio audience dramatic programs of greater literary value and more lasting interest than soap operas. While individual Dickens works have been produced over the air, this series, so far as is known, marks the first time the entire fourteen novels have been adapted for broadcast use. Much care has been taken to present each work in a form that will be easy for the listener to follow, while yet

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The partial cast of "Great Expectations," consisting of students, amateurs, and ex-professionals, makes a recording for a future broadcast over Stations WPIC and WPIC-FM.

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|---|--|
| 1. Phyllis Williams ("Estella")         | 6. Bonnie Massy (Control Operator—Studio Engineer) |
| 2. David MacArthur ("Pip")              | 7. Raymond Daly ("Magwitch")                       |
| 3. Harold Smith (Announcer-narrator)    | 8. Bruce Hickman ("Bentley Drummle")               |
| 4. Mary McCullough (Turntable operator) | 9. William Pound ("Jaggers")                       |
| 5. Evelyn Keller (Director)             | 10. Edwin Good ("Herbert")                         |
|   | 11. Helen Sloss ("Miss Havisham")                  |

## Tense Moments of History Brought to Life on New Columbia Discs

Priceless Historical Recordings, from 1933 to 1945, Dramatize One of the Most Eventful Eras of All Time

The past decade holds many unforgettable memories for all of us. Memories of world shaking events and screaming front-page headlines. But, perhaps more clearly than anything else, we remember the *radio*. How we used to listen tensely, eagerly, anxiously to the news broadcasts — to the voices of commentators, correspondents, and men who were making history both at home and abroad.

Few of the general public, however, realized that at the same time these memorable voices were coming to us over the air, the recording turntables back at the station

were quietly at work, engraving a permanent record of the drama that unfolded day by day.

The vast library of historical reference recordings and transcriptions filed away in the archives of the country's leading broadcast stations can tell one of the most dramatic stories of all time. They can bring to vivid life events long gone by — they can speak to us with voices of those no longer here.

These priceless historical recordings, however, have not previously been available to the public. But Columbia's recently released album entitled "I Can Hear It Now" brings a collection of dramatic historical selections to all who want to hear and remember. It is available in an album of five 12-inch discs and also on a single LP Microgroove record. This collection was

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# audio record

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Published monthly by Audio Devices, Inc., 444 Madison Avenue, New York City, in the interests of better disc recording. Mailed without cost to radio stations, recording studios, motion picture studios, colleges, vocational schools and recording enthusiasts throughout the United States and Canada

## Transcribes Dickens Novels (Continued from Page 1)

retaining the majority of the myriad characters and the thread of the many plots and sub-plots. Each book is allowed to run its natural course, so that while "Barnaby Rudge" was presented in only four half-hour episodes, "Nicholas Nickleby" will require ten.

The transcribed programs are broadcast at 2:30 P.M. each Sunday afternoon over WPIC and re-broadcast at 8:30 P.M. each Monday evening over its Frequency Modulation affiliate, WPIC-FM. Much interest has been evoked among schools and colleges in the area, and many requests have already been received for permission to use the scripts or the transcribed shows in classroom work. In several speech courses the Sunday shows are required listening, and each episode is discussed in class the following day.

The current schedule, which began in September, 1948, and will run through May, 1949, includes six books: "Bleak House," "Barnaby Rudge," "David Copperfield," "Hard Times," "The Old Curiosity Shop" and "Dombey and Son." The series will go off the air for the summer months, and resume in the fall of 1949 with "Great Expectations."

To date, "David Copperfield" has met with the most enthusiastic public response, and small wonder: It was Dickens' best work and lent itself to the most fluent radio adaptation. But it is hoped that the lesser known works will make a lasting impression on listeners, too, if only to lead them to the D section of the public library. There are low spots in Dickens, as there must be in all such prolific authors. "Little Dorrit" is one of these "lows," but it will be produced, for what it is worth, in seven episodes.

No attempt has been made to include the much overworked "Christmas Carol" in the series, though it is planned to use one of Dickens' other Christmas books . . . probably "Cricket on the Hearth" . . . at Christmas-time, 1949.

Casts are recruited from among the speech students of Youngstown and Westminster Colleges (including one professor from the Drama Department of Westminster), from the members of the Youngstown (Ohio) Playhouse, and local amateurs and ex-professionals. One of the mainstays, for example, a man who has appeared in some role in every Dickens book to date,

## Tense Moments of History (Continued from Page 1)

prepared by Edward R. Murrow, radio news reporter, and Fred W. Friendly, radio producer and script writer. The compilation of this material was, in itself, a monumental task. Over a period of more than 2 years Mr. Murrow and Mr. Friendly played back a total of more than 500 hours of old broadcasts. Over 100 hours of this material were recorded from the lacquer to magnetic tape. This provided a flexible medium from which the final selections were made, and re-recorded on disc form, with narration by Mr. Murrow. His commentary unifies and explains the historical selections, leading the listener effortlessly through the highlights of a 13 year period, from 1933 to 1945. The events recorded are not necessarily included in their precise chronological order, but rather are arranged to give the maximum dramatic effect to the entire presentation.

The first famous voice to be heard is that of Will Rogers, from a recording made in 1932. This is followed by the very familiar voice of Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his message of encouragement to the nation on March 4, 1933. His voice is heard again and again — the last time in his report to



Congress on the Yalta meeting. Then comes Huey Long — the Duke of Windsor in his abdication address — Fiorello H. La Guardia — Alf Landon — and John L. Lewis. You hear a dramatic on-the-spot account of the Hindenburg disaster — the voice of Neville Chamberlain telling a falsely relieved world that, after the acquisition of Sudetenland, Hitler will make no further territorial claims . . . and then the fanatical voice of Hitler himself, in an address to Edward Benes.

Other voices tell of the invasion of Poland — Italy's entry into the war — the fall of France. And later the tense moments of December 7, 1941 are brought startlingly to life, with John Daly interrupting a regular musical broadcast, informing a shocked and horrified nation of the Pearl Harbor attack. Then there is the U. S. declaration of war — the tremendous impact of D-Day — the Nazi invasion of Russia — and finally Hiroshima and the Japanese Surrender.

This is but a suggestion of the full historic contents of "I Can Hear It Now." Not only does it bring back memories more dramatically than could possibly be done by the written word — it points out the as yet untouched possibilities that actual historical recordings can play in the educational field. It is to be hoped that this Columbia Album is but the first of many similar record collections which will be offered to the public. For there is certainly a wealth of this interesting and instructive material available — both in the extensive files of the recording and broadcast companies, and in the hundreds of thousands of disc recordings made by government agencies such as the OWI and the Library of Congress.

\* \* \*

Mr. Edward R. Murrow, noted reporter-analyst, is largely responsible for the compilation of Columbia Records new album of historical recordings. Mr. Murrow, an eye witness to many of the events covered in the album, is the narrator for this collection of actual recorded voices of the outstanding personalities who made history during the crucial period from 1933 to 1935.

is an old-time stage actor who is now the manager of a local liquor store!

Direction and production work is handled by the writer, assisted by a studio engineer, a cutting engineer, a turntable operator for sound effects and music, and a staff announcer. Each half-hour episode is rehearsed and transcribed in one evening's work.

For the writer, this has been an exciting and fruitful experience. The end is not yet in sight, and the whole project may well consume five or six years. They will have been well spent. As a free-lance (for such shows as "Suspense" and the Kate Smith hour, in radio, and for other media),

the writer cannot help but be tremendously influenced by so intimate an acquaintance with an author who could devote an entire page to the description of the buttons on a man's vest, making each button an object of interest and a source of humor.

The success of this series leads one to wonder whether there are not other authors of Dickens' caliber and prolificness to whose well radio might not regularly and profitably carry its bucket. When "Edwin Drood," the fourteenth and final Dickens book, is completed, we mean to go further afield. Conrad? Hawthorne? Wilkie Collins? Stevenson? Perhaps, some day, even Shakespeare.





**disc data**  
for *the Recordist*

**MICROGROOVE IN YOUR STUDIO**  
Part 2, Equipment Requirements  
by C. J. LeBel, Vice President,  
AUDIO DEVICES, Inc.



C. J. LeBel

In our last issue we discussed the three steps in the transition from standard to micro-groove recording, steps which may be taken by any recording organization.

In taking these steps it is necessary to make certain changes in equipment. The most important is provision for cutting at micro pitch — in the range of 224 to 260 lines per inch. Probably 224 to 240 lines is the most desirable range for most applications.

Some equipment already made has provision for this without change — that originally designed to provide continuous variation of feed pitch. In other apparatus some change is necessary. An overhead feed mechanism relies on a change of leadscrew for change of pitch. To make the shift, then, it is only necessary to purchase and insert a new leadscrew.

The swinging arm type of feed mechanism requires a little more effort. The feed action is produced by the operation of a worm and gear sector. The manufacturer of the machine can remove the worm and

substitute another of different characteristics. He also has a removable worm arrangement so that the machine can be changed back and forth between micro and standard groove. The change is not as easy as desired, for the chassis has to be lifted up in the case. However, such a change is not one to be made often, and the arrangement is satisfactory.

Some recording machines have too much vertical vibration to be used for micro-groove, unless an advance ball is used. The machine manufacturer can advise on this point, and can supply an advance ball rig if necessary. Inexpensive semi-professional swinging arm feed type machines are most likely to need this attachment.

The electrical characteristics are even simpler to achieve. When recording regular 16" transcriptions with standard groove spacing and microgroove radius, we would use normal transcription recording characteristics. This would be either the NAB standard 16 db boost at 10,000 cycles) or the 10 db boost which many studios have found to be their usable limit. Columbia microgroove characteristic is the same as NAB, except that the response is slightly higher below 100 cycles. A simple equalizer will take care of this. For a great deal of work the difference is negligible, and standard transcription equalization can be used.

We have carefully refrained from commenting on the 33 1/3 vs. 45 rpm situation. At the start, the average studio will have only 33 1/3 rpm equipment, so there will be no question of choice. Only time and experiment will indicate whether 45 rpm will become a serious factor in the average studio.

It is evident that the transition to micro-groove is an easy one from the equipment point of view.

The subject will be discussed further in our next issue.

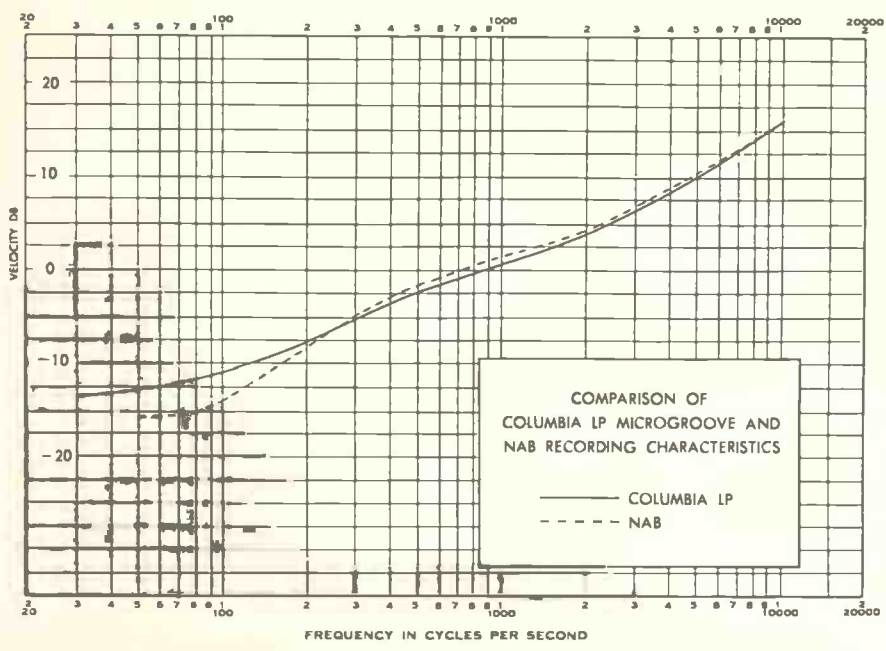
## Wendt's "Wax Works"

The Story of a Record-Making Musical Family

Bill Wendt, a 16 year old student at Thomas Jefferson High School, Richmond, Virginia, was one of the three talented students selected to appear on the Philharmonic Symphony's CBS program "Week End With Music," on October 17, 1948. That's how we first heard about Bill, who is not only an accomplished musician on the violin, piano, cello, string bass, and bells, but is also an up-and-coming recordist. As this is a rather unusual combination of talents, we felt that our readers would be interested in hearing about his recording activities. So here's the story in his own words, as quoted from his letter to the editor of Audio Record:

"I have been doing my own recording work for approximately ten months, having been introduced into this field by my oldest brother, Frank, who first became interested in audio work about seven years ago. When he entered the service he passed on to me his information on recording. While he was away my interest in this field grew considerably with the cutting of numerous discs, but as yet I have not had time to become well acquainted with the more technical side. All of the equipment was built by my brother with the exception of the recorder itself which is a Rec-O-Kut 16 inch recording table with the same make overhead feed; a combination that has served quite well considering the relatively low price. The cutter is a Presto 1-D which is driven by an amplifier using a pair of 6B4's and a UTC out-put transformer #LS-55. Fifteen watts, however, is not sufficient for recording piano with its ever-present peaks, and I am now helping Frank build a 60 watt amp. You see, this recording hobby is a sort of mutual

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Bill Wendt prepares to record one of his favorite orchestral programs in his home studio, at 4207 Monument Ave., Richmond, Virginia.

# Report on "Madame X," RCA Victor's New 45 RPM Record

We have received a number of requests for information on the new RCA Victor 45 rpm record, "Madame X." No technical information has yet been released, but we have collected the available data on the subject. Here it is in brief.

X is a thin 7" pressing of pure vinyl. The center hole is large — about 1½ inches in diameter. Maximum playing time is 5½ minutes. Fine grooves are employed, and the playback stylus radius is 1 mil. Price is slightly under that of an ordinary shellac pressing of the same playing time. So far as we can tell, the recording characteristic is the same as that used on standard Victor records.

The large center hole permits the use of a special record changer of very interesting properties. The record stack is carried on the large size center spindle; there are no outside supports. As a result the changer is extremely compact and extremely rapid. Several observers have timed the change cycle at 1½ seconds. To simplify the mechanism, all discs are of the same diameter, regardless of playing time. Record changer

manufacturers are getting ready for production, and it is rumored that the simplicity of the mechanism will permit a net price of \$5.

The point which has aroused the widest controversy is the speed: 45 rpm. It is rumored that 33⅓ rpm was tried and discarded because of difficulty in securing reliable processing in mass production, when using the slower speed. A moment's consideration will show that for a given diameter, 45 rpm will give 35% higher linear groove velocity than will 33⅓ rpm. It would be possible to get the same linear groove velocity at 33⅓ rpm by increasing the outside diameter to 9½ inches, which would increase the vinyl cost 82% over the 7 inch size. In short, the higher speed is a means of exchanging playing time for wider frequency range and reduced tracking distortion (with a fixed outer diameter).

Our readers will be interested to know that RCA Victor's engineers have promised us an article on "Madame X" for our March issue.

## Wendt's "Wax Works"

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affair between us; I learn from my brother by helping him.

The mixer unit shown employs three channels with 200 ohm T pads as mixers and has D.C. applied to the filaments. The W.E. 633A dynamic mike, G.E. variable reluctance cartridge, and a Jensen JAP-60 woofer-tweeter combination all add up to fine recording and listening. Other equipment includes several more amps of ten and forty watts, an audio oscillator, and a 5" scope, all built by my brother.

Our recordings from the radio are composed mostly of programs presented by the New York Philharmonic, N.B.C., Philadelphia and Detroit Symphonies. I prefer to record works that have never been issued by record companies; consequently, most of our recordings are unavailable elsewhere. I might add that our most prized recording is the first made on the present equipment. It is the "Symphony in A" by John Powell played by the Detroit Symphony. Mr. Powell has used this recording to make corrections on the copy of his score as well as for criticism. We were hoping to have the Philadelphia perform this work sometime this year, but evidently it could not be worked into their program.

I have made recordings of my own voice for speech practice, but Frank has made most of the recordings of our family. We are all musical, all six of us, which offers a lot of material for recording. Several months ago my other brother, Don, startled his friends by recording himself playing the flute, violin, clarinet, oboe, bassoon, and bass all at the same time. It sounded like a full orchestra.

Our record library consists of about 100 hours of classical music at 33⅓ on 16" discs, twenty or thirty albums of commercial records, and ten Columbia LP records which are very fine. My one big trouble is finding time to listen.

As yet I am not certain, but I will probably major in music on the string bass and try for a symphony position or go into radio production. Frank has definitely decided to make music and the audio field of electronics his profession, and I might add that he is now engaged in recording Virginia's foremost pianist and composer, John Powell, at the piano. Some of these recordings have already been pressed and released to the public. I am proud to say that they have been rated by critics as equal to any commercial piano recording released by the large companies.

Well — that just about covers the high spots. I hope it will be of interest to you and your readers.

P.S. I have yet to find a better disc than the red label Audiodisc, and I'm very glad that you have licked the humidity problem. That gave me problems, also."

## Two More Questions and Answers on LP Records

In the November issue of the "Audio Record" we asked if there was anything else our readers would like to know about LP microgroove records. Here are two of the questions received which we believe are of general interest and are not covered in the questions and answers previously given.

1. **Question:** Is more volume required in playing the new LP microgroove records on duo-speed record players because of the decrease of amplitude in the grooves?

**Answer:** One needs about 3 db more volume.

2. **Question:** In what ratio is sound to surface noise compared to both LP and standard pressings?

**Answer:** LP is about 15 db better than standard pressings. In other words, the sound to surface noise ratio being about 40 in standard pressings is 55 for LP.



### ATTENTION RECORDISTS PROFESSIONAL AND AMATEUR

We know of a company that is interested in contacting recordist who can give part time work to recording in their localities. The recording would be on tape and arrangements can be made with this group to obtain the proper type tape machine for this work. Those interested should write the Editor, AUDIO RECORD, giving information as to their qualifications.