The objective basis for the production of high quality transfers from pre-1925 sound recordings

A considerable appreciation of early records is noted in the CD market; however, the resulting signals presented on these CDs are extremely inconsistent. It is un-historical and hence un-authentic to use an expectation of the taste of present-day listeners as the guiding principle for transfers. Rather than trying to criticize those responsible for such transfers, the present paper presents the recording process of the acoustic period in order to promote a necessary step of interpretation and reverse engineering.

Author: Brock-Nannestad, George
Affiliation: The School of Conservation of The Royal Danish Academy for Fine Art, Copenhagen, Denmark
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Today sound recording is for everyone, but for the first 100 years, it was very mechanical and complex. Introduction We are surrounded by recorded sound wherever we go, and we have access to the largest selection ever of recorded sound via personal devices such as the iPod or from the Web. Development in sound recording has spanned more than 125 years, over which time we have seen continuous technical progress from extremely primitive beginnings (Hoffmann, 2005). Instantaneous Recordings From its inception, the cylinder phonograph with its strong motor was a machine for recording and reproduction, whereas the disc phonograph was only for reproduction and only for suitable and mechanically strong records. Method of Recording and Reproducing Sounds 1910 - issued to John C. English Application filed October 14, 1909. Serial No. 252711 957,195 Patented May 10, 1910 Scripophily.com. According to the obituary in the San Antonio Light of Wednesday 20 Feb 1918 (p. 9 column 4) English was living in Atlantic City, New Jersey, when he and his wife decide to travel down to Texas to stay with his wife’s sister and her husband Montgomery Miller [Probably a mistake, since “Miller” was the maiden name of English’s wife and thus of her sister. A discography of recordings produced by the International Zonophone Company and associated companies in Europe and the Americas. 1901-1903. by Ernie Bayly and Michael Kinnear, Victoria, 2001, p. 5-6, 10. From Tinfoil to Stereo. In regard to pre-1972 sound recordings, a majority of that cultural history was produced by commercial entities or rightsholders who either no longer exist or who have decided against maintaining substantial portions of their recording libraries in the marketplace because of limited public interest and subsequent lack of revenue generation. Crossing the nation’s collective fingers and proceeding on a piecemeal “trust us” basis with RIAA and A2IM members will not solve either the problem of orphan works nor the inability of archival institutions to legally preserve our nation’s sound heritage without a concrete commitment from rights holders to recordings. Federal protection of sound recordings would provide, for the first time, a public domain