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Audiophile Society of New South Wales (Inc.)

54 Albert Street, Belmore NSW 2192
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Audio & Music Newsletter

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From your Co-Editor

This month's meeting promises to be a very informative one with a lot of variety for analog lovers, so come along. It will also be informative for those who are curious about the pros and cons of getting into analog. Is analog worthwhile given that CD recordings have improved generally in leaps and bounds??

Maybe bring a couple of VERY WELL RECORDED LPs. Do not bring dodgy recordings, but please come and enjoy the afternoon.

Next month, as has become traditional for the last meeting of the year, the Western Australian Posse will roll into town and show their wares at Haberfield.

Pat O'Brien has promised us another showdown full of surprises. We can all look forward to a bang up November meet.

Also next month, we will be celebrating the end of ASoN's 2008 season with a party at the Gordon Ribs and Rumps Steakhouse. Please see invite below from our Social Convenor, Henry Lo and lock the 30th November 2008 in your diaries.

See you all on Sunday!

John Sawley

This Month's Meeting

**VENUE: Haberfield Community Centre
78-80 Dalhousie Road, Haberfield**
DATE : Sunday, 26th October 2008
TIME : 2.45pm to 6.00pm

DOES ANALOG RULE?????????

This month's meeting will essentially be an analog meeting with various turntables, cartridges and phono stages being demonstrated. I understand that Larry is bringing a tweaked Technics SL1300, Joe a Rock and hopefully Stephen will bring his Lyra Scala. There may be others as well.

This will hopefully be informative as regards what can be achieved with analog. Is it as good as the current recordings on CD? You will have to come and find out!!!

I think this will be very informative for those who want to see if analog is worthwhile. Or maybe stick to CD? However a lot of different options will be demonstrated.

Does Vinyl Still Rule?

Well, maybe not, but it is far from dead. Indeed all the latest indications show that it is a growth industry. This year will see an increase in vinyl releases whereas CD is on the decrease. Wouldn't have had too many give odds on that a few years ago.

Now I don't know much of this month's upcoming meeting except that we will be playing vinyl and not even sure whether any digital playback is in the offering. Maybe we could aim for a new record, the first audiophile meeting in a decade (maybe even in decades) when no CDs will be played? Welcome to a world that preceded 1983.

OK, my job here is to tell about what I will be bringing.

Townshend Elite Rock II Turntable with

Origin Live DC200 Motor Conversion & Dedicated Servo Supply

Townshend Excalibur Tonearm, Very Rare Beast

Vacuum State Moving Coil MC – Best Cartridge Made By Benz Micro

Vacuum State JLTi Mark 2 Phono Stage

If time allows, the Rock II will be fitted with a new custom-made platter from Graeme Keet (aka Graz) from Apogee Loudspeakers in Queensland (yes, Apogee is now pure Australian).

Here is an online user review of the Rock II Turntable that tally with my experience:

Good Points

One of the clearest, most uncoloured analogue sources ever devised, an outrageous bargain. Hear what the music on the master tape actually sounded like.

Bad Points

It's not made any more.

General Comments

The Townsend Rock lost out in the late 1980s and early 1990s to the stranglehold Linn had on dealerships. As a result few punters got the chance to compare the Rock with a Sondek. If they had, they would have heard an obviously clearer, uncoloured transcription of analogue LPs. In contrast, the Sondek (but not all suspended sub-chassis decks i.e. the Pink Triangle) had a tendency to make records sound what I can only describe as 'samey' by adding its own colourations. This may be 'Hi-Fi' but its not high fidelity. Apart from costing almost 50% more than the Rock, which cost £299-£350 in the late 1980s (fetches £620 in today's money), the Sondek requires almost constant maintenance or ridiculously expensive 'upgrades' to make the sound less coloured i.e. closer to the Rock.

I've owned my Rock for almost 20 years and all it's ever needed is new silicon fluid and bearing oil.

Although I got an Excalibur arm (£650) to match the deck 10 years ago the difference was marginal. Cheaper arms like the Regas... [also] do well. I've used a Decca cartridge but settled on a Dynavector Karat D17 II because of lower record wear. I use AVI monoblocks with Quad ESL-63s. My CD player is also by AVI (very good). But the Rock still rules!

My own added comments, the Rock II are just the unvarnished sound of vinyl and thus a true transcription turntable, no hint of false romanticism. The silicone trough at the front of the tonearm puts many off, but once you get used to it there are no fears. It becomes rather natural to deal with and after a while you don't think much of it. Some have described the sound as CD-like, but not in any negative sense but rather it adds what digital playback does well and then adds that elusive vinyl quality that we love.

So hope you guys can make it. I hope we set up the system the way we did at the last September meeting, it was room wise the best we've had. I will be there early to help the setting up and hope there will be general agreement that we do it again. We must put the speakers in front of the arch and simply not use that third of the hall behind the speakers. Every room, I suppose even every *hall* has a sweet spot. Maybe we have finally found it and I think this is the meeting that we are going to find out.

See ya then.

Joe Rasmussen

At The Cross Roads

www.customanalogue.com

Last Month's Meeting



Joseph's triode KT88's which was a very nice sounding amplifier.



These are OTL amplifiers which Joseph made. These had a few gremlins in them and we were unable to hear them properly.



What a great job Patrick did with this turntable – very professional.



The Audio Research preamplifier performed the switching duties.



A big thanks to Patrick and Joseph for bringing a huge amount of gear to the last meeting, various amplifiers, large Dali speakers and a turntable very well made by Patrick. This amount of variety to audition was awesome. The gear is fully described in last month's newsletter and on the green sheets that Patrick and Joseph handed out so there is no need to reiterate.

The meeting began well with auditioning the ultralinear Push Pull monoblock KT88 amps. These were quite good with plenty of power. They drove the Dalis to high levels with no problems. The Dalis seemed quite efficient with two large 10" drivers a mid and a tweeter. Good value for money considering their large size. Patrick had done a great job making the amplifiers, very professional. The only comment from the members was that it was slightly harder sounding when compared to the lower powered triode amplifier which was sweeter and preferred by most members.

We next auditioned KT88 triode amplifier which was a pleasant surprise. Fairly neutral, possibly slightly warm, which was good. These were reasonably sweet sounding and suited the Dali well. Most thought that they were quite an improvement on the ultralinear design. The Sony CD/ SACD player performed quite well and sounded fine with this equipment.

The turntable was then tried with a Dire Straits album. This was quite good but as Stephen Chen noted that there a quite a few different pressings of this album available and perhaps the pressing tried here was not the best available but nevertheless quite pleasant. Being a vinyl enthusiast I had to agree that the CD was better in this instance, with the album played on the day. A better pressing may have produced a better result? The turntable was finished to a very high standard and looked as good as a quite expensive factory unit. A lot of effort has been put into making this and Patrick is to be congratulated on his effort.

The OTL was then tried which sounded promising but produced some gremlins on the day – bad luck Joseph we may hear it in fine form on another day.

So once again, a big thankyou to the boys for their efforts – well done.



CHRISTMAS PARTY ANNOUNCEMENT

XMAS DINNER PARTY SUNDAY 30TH NOVEMBER 2008 - 7:30 PM

Hi fellow members,

Once again we are approaching the festive season. This year I have booked the **RIBS AND RUMPS RESTAURANT** at The Gordon Centre, 808 Pacific Highway, Gordon (phone 9498 4411 www.ribsandrumps.com). There is plenty of parking at the shopping centre. We are having the 3 course set menu which is very extensive and consists of a choice of either meat or poultry or fish or vegetarian dish.

The cost of the **food only** is \$45(cash) per person payable on arrival. You would pay for the drinks separately as you order them. No BYO please. The restaurant has a very good selection of wine and drinks. They do have limited sitting capacity for private functions. So, please **RSVP promptly by Wednesday 19th November 2008**. My contact details: email shiuhanglo@hotmail.com or mobile phone 0412 416 263 or home phone 9427 8056.

On the night we will also collect the membership fee for 2009 which is \$65. So cash up, come along and have a great night.

Henry Lo

What's spinning at the Tower - WS@T

WS@T September 2008

OPO

The following was a result of an op shop haul on September 3

Classical

Gregorian Chant Santo Domingo di Silos (Spain) 1974 Archiv 2533 163 (GER)
Elgar: Introduction and Allegro, Serenade for Strings Marriner/ASMF 1968 Archiv ZRG 573 (UK)

Brahms: Piano Quartet in G minor op. 25 Gilels/Amadeus Quartet DG 2530 133 (GER)

Rita Streich sings Great Opera Arias DG 136 368 (AUS)

Handel Organ Concerti vol. 2 Wolfgang Dallmann/Heidelberg CO Oryx EXP33 (UK)

Ravel: Pictures at an Exhibition Edo de Waart/Rotterdam PO 1975 Philips 6500 882 (NED)

Ibid Mackerras/New Philharmonia Orch. Vanguard VSD 71188 (AUS)

Jazz

Nat King Cole: Love is a Many Splendoured Thing. Pickwick SPC 3046 (CAN)

Popular

Simon and Garfunkel: Sounds of Silence CBS 62690 (UK, Decca pressing)

Dionne Warwick: The Greatest Hits vol. 2 Pickwick SHM 803 (UK)

Various: Turned On 1975 K-Tel TA-253 (AUS)

Various: 1987: Into the Groove EMI AL 240752 (UK)

Steely Dan: Greatest Hits 1972-1978 1978 MCA MAK2 1107 2LP (CAN)

Jacques Loussier Trio: Bach Brandenburg Concerto no.2 (with Royal Philharmonic Orchestra)/Loussier: Etude pour trio. 1974 Decca Phase 4 PFS 4253 (AUS)

Hot Chocolate: Hottest Hits. 1982 EMI RAK PLAY 1018 (AUS)

Trittico: Works by Nelhybel, Albeniz et al. Frederick Fennell/Dallas Wind Symphony 1993 Reference Recordings RR-52

OPR

Canteloube: Songs of the Auvergne. Netania Davrath, orchestra conducted by Pierre de la Roche. 1991 Analogue Productions 180g reissue of 1972 Vanguard APC 002 (US)

Anderson, Leroy: Fiddle Faddle and 14 other favourites. Maurice Abravanel/Utah SO. 1995 Analogue Productions 180g reissue of 1967 Vanguard APC 030

NRR

Neil Young: Harvest 1972/2006 Reprise 180g 799-27239-1 (GER)

(Neil Young has been a strong apologist for analogue over the years, and has always insisted that his albums are released on vinyl; please support his work!)

Stan Getz and the Oscar Peterson Trio: self titled: Los Angeles, October 10, 1957. 2007, Jazz Track Records 180g mono 937LP (NED) (Found at a shop called "Title" in Surry Hills for \$30 www.titlespace.com)

Bob Dylan: Highway 61 Revisited. 1965/2007 Sundazed CBS LP5071 180g mono (US)

Stephen Chen

Originals versus Reissues 12 – PART 1

After the marathon 10th instalment, which was unusual in itself, as for some of the recordings, there was no original, or if the original was present, it has not been reissued on LP, and the 11th, which was a surprise, as I wished to comment on some items “hot off the press”, plus revisit some old ground, after I found yet another reissue; the series returns to some sort of normality. I will deal with them in terms of genre, to avoid discontinuity in the reader’s mind. Some of these I originals or reissues I have bought even up to 5 years or more ago, hence the length if the surveys: the editor is free to divide the instalment into more palatable chunks, due to publication constraints.

I return to the area I believe I do best, which is Classical, as this genre comprises 75% of my collection, and I personally have received music training as a youngster. Before the obvious person comments about “dead person’s music”, may I remind people of living Classical composers like John Rutter, Henryk Gorecki and Arvo Part; plus Popular Music as a genre of dead musicians, including John Lennon, George Harrison, Otis Redding, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison (The Doors) etc.

Beethoven: Violin Concerto. Jascha Heifitz/Charles Munch/BSO RCA LSC-1992 Late RCA “Red Seal” original (24S/ 25S) (1963, rec 1959) versus Classic Records 200 g reissue (both US)

In a hotly contested field for this one of the 3 great “singleton” violin concerti (the others being Brahms and Tchaikovsky), Heifitz’s reading to my ears is still on top the pile, both interpretatively and sonically, almost half a century later. I acquired the Red Seal original in the boxed set in the early 1990s for \$5 at a 2MBS sale, in pristine condition, and have not seen any Shaded or White Dog since, or at least not advertised for an exorbitant sum. Regarding the reissue, I originally intended to buy a 180gram copy, but this was sold out, so I bought the 10LP 200gram “Heifitz Box” instead, which contains his readings of many of the great violin concerti.

The original begins with the glorious RCA string sound, from a mid-hall perspective. The entry of the solo violin reveals a realistic timbre, I presume from his Stradivarius, and he does not overcome the orchestra, despite his desire for pre-eminence. The performance is full of the precision which Heifitz was renowned for. Sound is not quite “perfect”, as my cousin described an audition in a previous incarnation of the system; the only flaw is a hardening on the tutti, which I attribute to tape saturation.

This flaw is not totally overcome on the reissue, where the sound emerges from jet blackness. The extra solidity of the 200gram pressing is immediately apparent, with a firmer bass foundation. It is cut at a higher level, without the hiss also being boosted correspondingly. The violin timbre sounded more like the real thing, with greater extension and air.

The original is still enjoyable, and the reissue more enjoyable still; I have not heard the 4 sided 45 RPM version, which I surmise will lift the sonic bar higher still. So, I give scores of 9.2 for the original, and 9.5 for the reissue, inclusive of a deduction of 0.1 point for the hardness of the peaks. A score of 9.5 is given for the performance. For alternative performances, I recommend Schneiderhan’s on DG 138 999, which was reviewed in instalment 7A of this series, and Perlman’s on EMI ASD 4029, with the caveat that this is an early EMI digital recording.

Beethoven: Symphony no.6 “Pastoral”. Karl Bohm/VPO DG 2530 142 (1974) original versus ClearAudio 200 g reissue (2005) (both GER)

How many of Beethoven’s symphonies were actually named? Interestingly, the numbers are 3 (Eroica), 6 (Pastoral) and 9 (Choral): the 5th is sometimes referred to as “The Destiny” because of its key motifs, the 7th “the apotheosis of the dance”, and

the 8th “the little” as it is wedged between two big ones! Nomenclature aside, the 5th (6A and 10A) and the 7th (8) have been covered in this series, both being incandescent performances from the late Carlos Kleiber. The even number symphonies are gentler, and have been described as “feminine” in contrast to the “masculine” odd-numbered ones.

Narrowing in on the Pastoral, Karl Bohm’s 1976 reading is my favourite, alongside Bruno Walter’s on CBS (MS 6012, HP list), of which I have a 6 eyes original, with questionable sound, which I am surprised that Classic Records has not reissued to this day. I bought the original in the mid 1980s and the Clearaudio reissue in 2005. Since Clearaudio have a reputation in turntables and cartridges, it would be interesting to check out their competence in remastering; the pressing is 200 grams, which I presume is pressed at Pallas. This recording was auditioned in both mine and Greg Rudd’s systems, and the results were consistent. The original has a smooth sound, with richness to the strings, and copious amounts of air, which accompany the flowing, lilting performance. It is a recording to sit down and enjoy, rather than dissect endlessly. The reissue is cut at a higher level, with some of the air being lost. However, a combination of the heavier vinyl, plus or minus judicious equalisation, gives the impression of more or extended bass, although this degree of bass may not be heard in the concert hall. No recording engineer is listed, although I can surmise that it was not Gunther Hermanns.

Clearaudio did a fine job with the remastering, although I find that the reissue skips some of the strengths of the original. What you gain in detail and dynamics, you lose in air, and low level detail. So I call this one a draw, with a sonic score of 9.3. A performance score of 9.6 is given. Originals should not be difficult to find, but you cannot go wrong with the reissue.

Canteloube: Songs of the Auvergne. Victoria de los Angeles. EMI ASD 2876 (1973) UK original versus Testament reissue (UK) (mid 1990s)

Most people know the well known aria “Bailero”, the shepherd’s song, from this collection. This is analogous to saying that “Erbarme Dich” is the St Matthew Passion. There are hundreds of such songs, sung in the Auvergne dialect, which Canteloube compiled, but no collection I am aware of is complete in this regard. This work is the solo equivalent of Orff’s Carmina Burana, in Latin and middle German.

The recording in question is said by the 1984 Penguin Guide as the “pioneering stereo recording”, along with its companion recording, ASD-3134, which I would like to acquire, for completeness. This recording begins with the famous Bailero in all 3 parts, and is backed on the other side by Chausson’s “Poeme de l’amour et de la mer”.

The performance is refined, backed up by natural sound. The engineers are not listed, but I presume that Bishop and/or Parker are involved.

The original is well balanced, and gives a good perspective of voice and orchestra, and good sense of instrumental placement and timbre. The Testament reissue squeezes just that little bit more out of the master tape, and is cut at a smidgen higher level. Both are recommended; the original is already excellent, with a score of 9.1, just edged out by the reissue at 9.3. The original is probably more common, and available at a fairer price. Reference was made to Netania Davrath’s version, on a tube 180g reissue by Analogue Productions of the Vanguard, where I do not have the original. The Penguin describes her performance as more “folksy”, but to my ears, Davrath uses far more vibrato. The tube sound also is far richer.

Copland: Fanfare for the Common Man etc. Donald Johanos/DSO Turnabout original (US) versus Decca pressed UK original TV 34169 versus Analogue Productions reissue APC 004 (1991)

This is a roughly contemporaneous recording to the famous Rachmaninoff Symphonic Dances/Vocalise, which has been extensively discussed in these pages. The Fanfare has been used in Channel 7s Olympic telecasts since Barcelona 1992, and 30 years

ago, there was a cover version by Emerson, Lake and Palmer. The music is familiar, and no further discussion of it is required.

The outcome for the US original versus reissue was predictable, but there was a surprise, which I found pleasant. The US original, which I wet cleaned, was still noisy; the music was there, and hinted at great things, but never really delivered. Surface noise aside, the music was enjoyable, sufficient to give a score of 8.8. The Decca pressing was a lot quieter, and music was immediately more dynamic! I thought that I was listening to an audiophile reissue already, but this is what the average British punter got, as well as CBS which sounded better than the original. I give the Decca a score of 9.2. Analogue Productions have set a high standard for their tube mastered reissues. The RTI surface is silent, and the music is cut at a higher level, with only a minimal loss of ambience and air. This recording is of true demonstration quality, and I hear more of it on my Skala, now with 200 hours on the clock, than any of my previous cartridges. The AP shaded the Decca by a smaller margin, with a final score of 9.4.

Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue/American in Paris. Earl Wild/Arthur Fiedler/Boston Pops Orchestra Original RCA LSC-2367 unavailable: Readers' Digest versus Chesky RC-8 (out of print) reissues. I have not seen a copy of RCA LSC-2367, shaded dog, or white dog, visually in good condition, or advertised for a reasonable price. Hence I have to rely on a loose Australian pressing, from RDS-30 set, titled appropriately "Rhapsody in Blue", which I purchased from an op shop in 2002 for \$1.50. I bought the Chesky 20 years ago, the original 150 gram, not the later HQ-180, both of which are out of print.

The Boston Pops Orchestra are essentially the Boston Symphony out of their tuxedos and evening gowns, who play the "off season" augmented by some local musicians, so musicologically, I consider them as one and the same. This recording, with Earl Wild, whom I consider America's greatest native-born pianist to this day, to my ears, has stood the test of time, both for sound and performance.

On the package set, RCA put an extra 6 minutes on each side, in addition to the contents of LSC-2367. This does constrict the dynamics, but not to the extent of Everest's ridiculous 43 minutes per 33 1/3 side! It would not have mattered to the owners of the time, who would have played this record on their BSR or Garrard changers with ceramic cartridge in the stereogram; on the Skala, the musical timbres were natural, and I may opt up with the recording if I did not have the Chesky. The surfaces are noisy, and I score it 8.5, the only salvation being the performance.

The Chesky was cut "flat" from the RCA 3 track master tape, and the dynamics are well preserved, with each side containing the 16 minute piece. This is the sound collectors pay top price for, and one does not have to bear the high surface noise of the originals. A clear winner for the Chesky, with a score of 9.3; these should be reasonable plentiful and not too fiercely priced. However, I still hope to find a mint copy of a shaded or white dog.

Regarding the Readers' Digest; boxes are common, but not this one, or the best of the lot, "The Romantic Rachmaninoff" (RDS-29): if you find any of these, go for the US RCA-pressed originals or the British Decca pressings as a valid alternative.

Greig: Peer Gynt etc. Ovin Fjelstad/LSO Decca SXL-2012 Australian original versus Speakers' Corner reissue (GER)

Right from the beginning of this series, there is actually a keen contest between the EMI-pressed Australian Deccas, and the Speakers' Corner reissues, even more so for original Decca wide and narrow bands and London bluebacks (which were actually pressed in England, as US Decca was a MCA company).

A colleague once commented that Peer Gynt had become "elevator music" due to it being so well known; however, I would not go so far, as a good performance and recording of a common piece still brings great enjoyment.

The orange label is one of the best of the originals so far, although I would not expect a silent surface for a 1960s pressing. There was a “scratch” on Anitra’s Dance, which turned out to be a large dust particle amenable to wet cleaning. Instrumental timbres were natural, and there was good air, so I give this original 9.0.

The reissue, pressed on a slab of 200 gram vinyl, of course has a firmer bass foundation, and the same comment all applies to all Golden Age reissues, in this set and all others, pressed on 180/200 g vinyl. Surfaces were silent, and dynamics are greater, with only a slight sacrifice in the air. Allowing for age deterioration in the tape, the qualities of early Deccas shine through, so the reissue, heard on the first time on the Skala, scores a 9.4 for a clear win. The margin of course, would be narrower if I had an original Wide band, however, these do not come cheaply!

Mahler: Symphony no. 2 “Resurrection” Georg Solti/LSO Decca SET 325-6 UK original 1966 versus Speakers’ Corner reissue (2005) (GER)

This is a landmark recording, the first to use Dolby A noise reduction. Most of us, especially those of us old enough to have owned cassette decks, would be familiar with the Dolby B system; the “A” was the professional version. Musically, this is the second symphony to feature singing, after Beethoven’s 9th, and Mahler’s first of 4 in his cycle (which others?); Mahler was also the third (of six) to complete a cycle of nine, and answers to fill these gaps will be given at the end of each section.

This symphony is a grand work of five movements, commencing with the “growl” of the double basses from the right stating the opening theme. The second adagio movement reminds me of Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony. The singing starts in movement 4 “Urlicht” (original light) from the Youth’s Wonder Horn, which quotes John 13:3, sung by the contralto. The final movement is a sound painting of the final resurrection on the last day, being heralded by an explosion of an orchestral tutti, and the trumpet call, and a reiteration of the “dies irae” theme. It concludes with a soprano-contralto duet, and the triumphant chorus, “we will rise!” Needless to say, the titles and some lyrics are translated into English.

On the original, the growl of the double basses on the right bites. All instrumental timbres are natural, and the scale of the recording would be wasted on mini-monitors, like Theo’s. There is hardness in the climax of movement 2, after the lilting, bucolic segment, which is due to tape saturation. There was mild surface noise throughout, which did not detract from the enjoyment of the piece, but the noise was increased on side 2 of this set.

The reissue arises (pardon the pun) from a near silent background, with a few ticks, which are sometimes present in new vinyl, disappearing with a few plays. It is cut at a higher level, with a minimal loss of air. It does extract more from the master tape, and the problem with the second movement is ameliorated. There is greater space between instruments and vocal soloists, and the scale of the choir is better defined. The original is one from which I have derived great enjoyment, and can live with, as the Skala deals summarily with the surface noise; I give it a score of 9.2 with a 0.1 point deduction for the glitch on side 2. You could probably not find a noiseless copy, which is rare for that vintage. An even contest, with the reissue declared the winner with a score of 9.4; get this one while it is still available.

(Other Mahler symphonies to contain singing are 3, 4(soloist) and 8.)

Stephen Chen

STAY TUNED FOR PART 2 NEXT MONTH!

Committee Members - Contact Numbers

Provided below is a list of the current members of the Committee and their contact telephone numbers. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with any of these individuals if you have any comments, suggestions, questions, complaints or just want to discuss the latest events in the “hi-fi universe”!

President, Meeting Co-ordinator & Treasurer	Richard Wong Ph: 9972 7139
Vice President & Technical Advisor	Elson Silva Ph: 9789 3114
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Contributions for each issue of “Audio & Music Newsletter” should reach the Editor **no later than the 15th of the month**. The deadline is intended to enable the newsletter to be released at least a week before the scheduled meeting.

Contributions can be sent by email to edkramer@bigpond.com or johnsawley@gfg.net.au