

THEY SHALL HAVE MUSIC

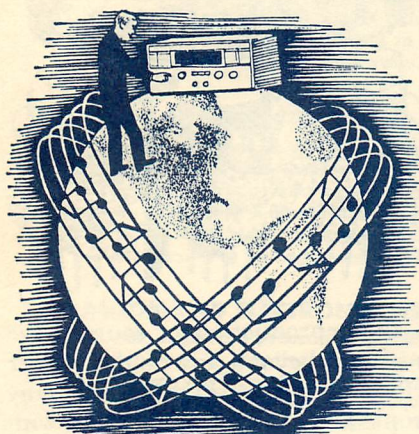
JOHN M. CONLY

THE MILLION-DOLLAR AVOCATION

WHEN, in the course of Siamese events, it became desirable for young King Phumiphon to take to himself a bride, the international brotherhood of heads of state was thrown into a perplexity. For what does one give as a wedding present to a man who already has everything (including *real* white elephants)?

Not among the perplexed, however, were President and Mrs. Harry S. Truman. King Phumiphon was known to be a music lover, and Mr. Truman was the only American President ever to be seen in public following a performance of the Beethoven Ninth Symphony with a score. These circumstances simplified matters. The Trumans called promptly on the man likeliest to solve their gift problem: Avery Fisher.

Within weeks, from Mr. Fisher's New York factory there went out



bound for Bangkok a most magnificent high-fidelity custom phonograph. Set into its hand-rubbed woodwork was a large silver plate, inscribed with the good wishes of the donors. "As if," says Fisher now, with a hint of a grin, "the King was likely to forget who gave it to him."

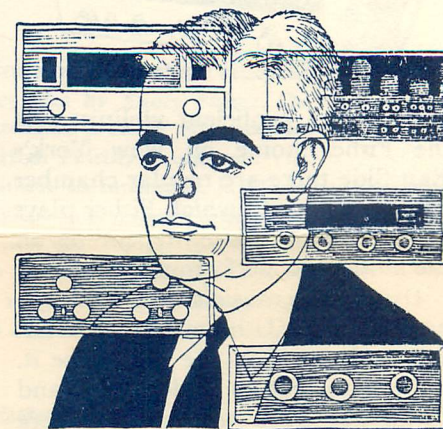
The order for the King of Thai-

land did not disturb the Fisher establishment a bit. In the last twenty-one years, Avery Fisher has become, beyond much question, the leading purveyor of phonographic high fidelity to the world's Very Important People. If you visit the Maharajah of Indore, you will find in his palace a Fisher phonograph. And one of the most elaborate of all Fisher custom installations adorns the living quarters of the Shah of Iran, Mohammed Riza Pahlavi. "Quite a hi-fi man," Fisher comments, "as well as a good sports-car driver; the two things seem to go together."

The list of Fisher's notable clients resounds so nicely and reflects so much hard work, taste, and attention that a small sampling of its membership seems warranted: Max Ascoli, Irving Berlin, Dr. Arthur F. Burns, Lee J. Cobb, S. B. Colgate, Bing Crosby, Thomas E. Dewey, four of the Mesdames Du Pont, Mrs. Marshall Field, Dr. Alberto Gainza Paz, Ira Gershwin, Huntington Hartford, III, William Randolph Hearst, Jr., Lillian Hellman, Henry J. Kaiser, Elia Kazan, Joshua Logan, Claire Boothe Luce, Fredric March, Gian-Carlo Menotti, Mitch Miller, Henry Morgan, Newbold Morris, Malcolm Muir, Mrs. J. C. Penney, M. N. Rand, Roy Rogers, Baron Maurice de Rothschild, Andr s Segovia, Edward Steichen, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, Jennie Tourel, Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, and Sergeant Friday.

The only trouble with this list is that Avery Fisher would consider it incomplete, because it does not include Mr. Gold. Mr. Gold is the operator of a neighborhood hand laundry in New York, and he came calling upon Fisher one day last year. (Fisher, incidentally, owns or leases nearly a block of buildings in Long Island City, and it takes a

good ten minutes, from a standing start, to find his office.) Gold had put together a high-fidelity music system which incorporated several Fisher components and which did not seem to be working as it should. He was distressed. Fisher received him (he receives everybody) and

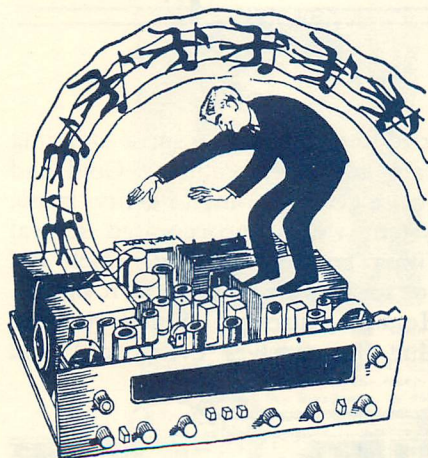


astounded him further by suggesting that they go to Gold's home.

They did, and Fisher reports on the venture: "I went in and I saw a record collection second to none I know of, at least in quality, not even to WQXR's, let alone my own. Not only LPs but 78s. Everything was there that ought to be there, the choicest and most essential things." He went to work on the music system and quite easily made it sound right. But he will not forget Mr. Gold in a hurry. Mr. Gold is the man whose name, Fisher hopes, is (or will be) legion. "This is our intellectual nobility," he says, "make no mistake about it. And it is a very encouraging thing."

Everything seems to encourage Fisher; there has been a kind of serendipity in the course of his life. He is now in the beginning of his fifth decade, a sturdily built man with an orderly thatch of graying

hair, dark eyes, and a ready and rather gentle smile. He was born in the Yorkville section of Manhattan into a family to whom music and phonographs both were an important part of recreational life. His father, Charles Fisher, a real estate specialist, owned one of the nation's biggest collections of acoustic horn gramophones. The boy Avery was allowed to study the violin as early as he wanted to, which was pretty early.



He is still a proficient violinist. At the Fisher home on New York's East Side there are regular chamber music concerts in which Fisher plays first or second fiddle, depending on the music and performing company.

Despite this musicianly bent, when he went to NYU he majored in biology, taking a B.S. He didn't use it. He went instead to Dodd, Mead and Company, book publishers, where he learned book and typographical design. He became very good at this, as is attested by his success with it since as a lucrative hobby. The latest set of books he has designed is Sir Winston Churchill's *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*. Fisher loves to be accosted at parties by people who ask him: "Did you know there's another Avery Fisher, who designs books?"

Profession (book designing) and avocation (high fidelity) exchanged places in 1937. Like sundry others in his present calling, Fisher began his high fidelity experimenting so that he himself might enjoy reproduced music at its best. Broadcasting and recording had far outsped the home radio and phonograph. So pleased was he with the results of his labors that he was anxious to share them, and he also saw that they might be marketable. In 1937, therefore, he quit the book business and founded the Philharmonic Radio

Corporation. His first chief product was a chassis which incorporated a TRF (tuned radio frequency) receiver and a twenty-five-watt beam-powered audio amplifier. He would not tolerate it now, but in its time it was probably the best in the world. He built radio-phonographs as fast as he could, but never quite fast enough to answer the demand. Our latter-day yearning for music, unparalleled in the world's history, had caught up with him.

The war interrupted the joy ride. Fisher sold his company to a big corporation and directed it, through the duration of hostilities, in the production of electronic mechanisms for war.

Once the war was over, he cut loose again and got back to music. In 1945 he established the Fisher Radio Corporation. It is a dual operation, as all his manufacturing has been from the beginning. For prosperous folk, short of time or indolent, he makes assembled phonographs (designed as furniture by Avery Fisher). For venturesome music lovers, who feel themselves partners to Casals or Klemperer, he makes high-fidelity components — amplifiers, preamplifiers, FM-AM radio tuners, remote-control switches (including a stereo balance control that may prevent many a nervous breakdown), and the like. These also are styled tastefully, but with a difference. A Fisher amplifier is, perhaps, a little heavier than it needs to be, by virtue of its oversized components. There is a built-in challenge: if you can lift it you will love it. On Fisher preamplifiers there are always a couple of knife switches, which are completely unnecessary except that they denote a kind of raw, masculine efficiency. Flip one of these and you feel as if you are governing the *S. S. Constitution*, or at least a sizable yacht. A button to push or a knob to turn is not the same thing. Designers have to be psychologists, and Avery Fisher is a very good designer.

His designs upon his customers, however, are entirely benign. He thoroughly enjoys his work, and one gets the impression that this is mainly why he performs it. He thinks profit comes after the job well done and must wait upon it. Accordingly, his procedure in business is a little strange, especially to the people that work for him. One rule, for instance, is that any customer who calls Fisher through the office switchboard gets

to talk to him direct; even Fisher's secretary cannot prevent this.

Fisher has the gift of making right decisions in split seconds and of picking people to surround him who can think nearly as he does. This allows him the liberty of being a business artist, a considerable liberty which he takes seriously. He admits pride in a few things. One of them is the Fisher FM tuner 90, which he thinks helped convert Continental Europe to FM (it outsells all other tuners there) and thus brought better music home to some thousands of Europeans. In other artistic matters he is almost fiercely modest.

His fiddle bow is a Hill, of some renown, but his violin is not of famous make. "If I were to sequester a Strad or a Guadagnini," he explains with fervor, "for amateur use, it would be almost a sin. These instruments should be put at the disposal of professional artists, for the public, not kept in private homes. Anyway," he continues, "this is an age of reproduction, of reproduction that can almost be called perfect."

Patently, this is where the reporter must come to the aid of the man scanned, for never in his life would Avery Fisher audibly presume that he has been of assistance to the endeavors of Johann Sebastian Bach or Ludwig van Beethoven. Yet he and his colleagues and competitors



in the reproduction of sound have so served, beyond any doubt. Never before in the world have so many people listened so earnestly and with such reward to so much good music as now. And most of it happens in living rooms.

Charged with a proposition like this, Mr. Fisher becomes at once gruff (which is uncharacteristic), charitable, and institutional. What he says is, and you are bound to believe him, "It's a very honest business." He ought to know.



Why

Do Fisher Owners Keep On Being Fisher Owners

■ ON JANUARY 31, 1938, Professor Richard Humphrey of the Stevens Institute of Technology accepted delivery on a high fidelity receiver, with a dual speaker system, built for him by Avery Fisher. On December 23, 1960, almost twenty-three years later, Professor Humphrey purchased a Fisher 800 receiver. *His original receiver is still working!* Today it is in the Fisher Museum of High Fidelity Equipment. (Its older brother, also in perfect working order, has for some time been in the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington.) In truth, no Fisher instrument has ever worn out. Year after year, they continue to serve their users. *Why do Fisher owners keep on being Fisher owners?* The best answer to that question, as in Professor Humphrey's case, comes from Fisher owners themselves the world over — from the royal palaces at Bangkok and Teheran, to the humblest of Manhattan apartments. Then, too, the answer may come from the many and unique advantages of Fisher equipment described below. Their importance is obvious to the careful buyer.

ENGINEERING WITHOUT EQUAL One need only evaluate the products and inventions bearing the Fisher name to realize the calibre and thoroughness of Fisher engineering. To name but one recent example, the world's most remarkable FM tuners, with *MICROTUNE*, are their creation. And this leadership in engineering has prevailed for more than twenty-seven years.

TEST AND INSPECTION Every single part in a Fisher instrument, *whether you can see it or not*, has been selected as though it were the most important part. It is subjected to constant scrutiny and test — from the moment it arrives at our Receiving Department, to the moment the complete instrument is placed in a dust-free, moisture-free plastic bag and sealed in its container for shipment to our customers.

AUTOMATED ELECTRONIC TEST Every electronic test and alignment procedure to which a Fisher instrument is subjected is handled by *fully automated instruments* designed and built in our own laboratories by Fisher engineers. Every single piece of equipment receives the same complete and thorough tests. In this vital work all possible errors due to oversight or fatigue have been eliminated.

RELENTLESS QUALITY CONTROL Often Fisher standards for component material are so high that there is nothing commercially available. Dual controls for stereo use with *uniform tracking* did not exist in practical form until Fisher engineers set up measuring and testing techniques for our control manufacturers to follow.

IRONCLAD PACKAGING No matter how fine a product, no matter how carefully it is made and tested, its mission cannot be accomplished unless it reaches you, the user, in the same flawless condition in which the final inspector approved it. The carton in which every Fisher instrument is protected and shipped is *itself* engineered.

INSTRUCTION MANUALS The moment you see your first Fisher Installation and Operating Manual you will know that it is the most complete, easiest to understand, in the entire field. For it was written with affection and respect, written by one who is himself a high fidelity enthusiast, and thoroughly familiar *through personal use* with the equipment about which he writes.

AFTER-SALES SERVICE No matter where you live, you are never far from Fisher parts and service. Replacement parts, should they ever be necessary, are shipped *immediately* on request. We still have parts on hand for units we made twenty years ago — parts that were never needed, but still wait their turn to demonstrate the true meaning of the Fisher name on the product you buy.

WRITE FOR YOUR FREE COPY OF THE FISHER OWNER LIST

■ An eight-page brochure listing hundreds of Fisher owners, a veritable Who's Who of the world's leaders in the sciences, arts, music, publishing, medicine, diplomatic corps, education, finance, theatre, etc. It is the truest index to FISHER quality.



SEND FOR OUR BEAUTIFULLY ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE OF FISHER STEREO UNITS

From The Roster of Distinguished Fisher Owners



"I have just purchased my third Fisher, and it is giving me the same fabulously true reproduction of my phonograph records; and in the reception of high fidelity broadcasts, as do the first two. It is a constant source of enjoyment and relaxation to me."

—ISAAC STERN
Concert Violinist



"I was thrilled and fascinated by the life-like reproduction, not only of my own recordings but those of other artists with whom I have sung at the opera. Many subtle shadings and nuances that I had not realized were in the recordings were fully and beautifully expressed."

— VICTORIA DE LOS ANGELES
Soprano, The Metropolitan
Opera Company



"The Fisher is superb! May I congratulate you on creating an instrument that meets my highest professional and personal requirements for the faithful reproduction of recordings and of broadcast music."

—NATHAN MILSTEIN
Concert Violinist



"The Fisher is, without question, one of the finest instruments I have ever heard anywhere. Its tone is as close to live performance as I believe it is possible to get, and the high fidelity quality is perfect."

— EUGENE ORMANDY
Music Director
The Philadelphia Orchestra Association



"My Fisher is a magnificent addition to our musical home. It is a constant source of pleasure and a superb instrument for the faithful reproduction of recordings and musical broadcasts."

— RISÉ STEVENS
Soprano, The Metropolitan
Opera Company



"I have fallen under the spell of Fisher. What used to be only an instrument of necessity has become a source of unlimited pleasure."

— GIAN-CARLO MENOTTI
Composer



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