

Nigel



Nigel Phillips from Chipping Norton spoke to us about his passion for record players, both playing vintage records on them and building them himself.

Why record players?

I've always been interested in collecting gramophones, radios, and records. I started playing records over 65 years ago and I had a business at one time, buying and selling them. The oldest record I've got was recorded in 1898. It doesn't run for very long but you can still hear the piano on it.

How did you start out?

In the 1960s I found equipment was extremely expensive. In those days, a young person would have a Dansette record player, but I wanted to build better equipment. Stereo equipment was really for the millionaire bracket - no ordinary person had a stereo. It was extremely expensive because it required two loud speakers, plus other special bits and pieces. So, I started to make my own stuff by buying old radios from a local auction sale and wiring them up as a stereo pair.

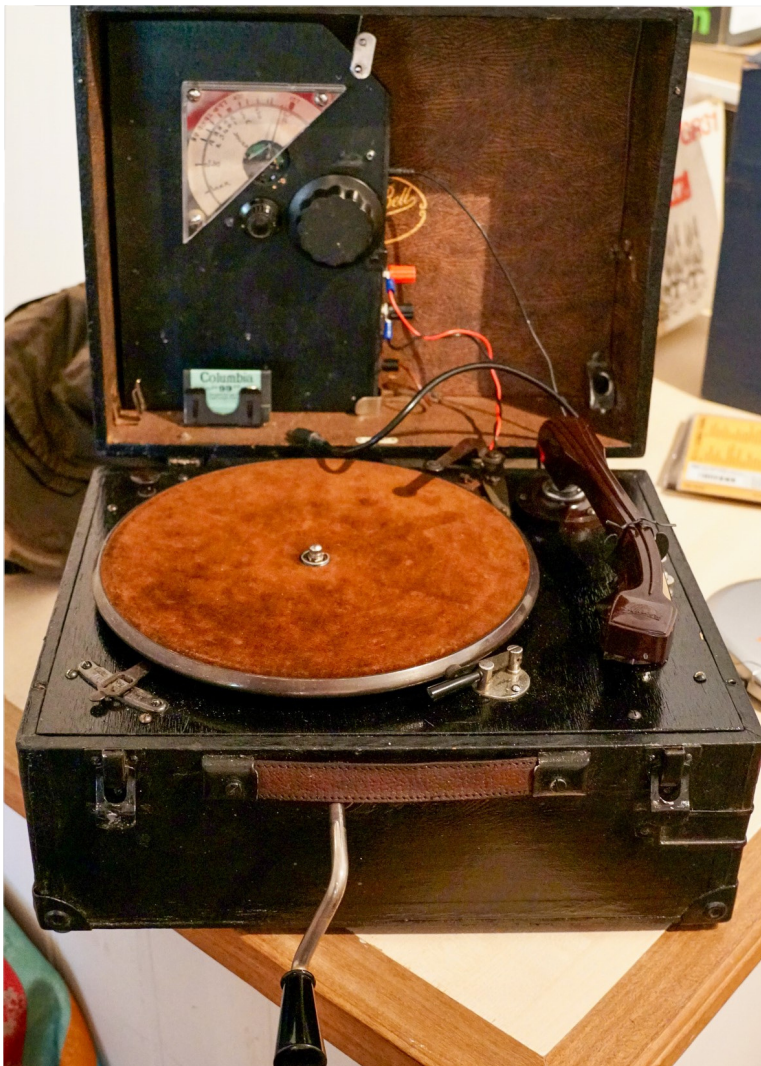
What's your current project?

I'm a practical person, and I still like building my own things. Currently, I am making a steam powered record player. It will be a long-term project and a bit of a novelty, but it should be fun. I'm getting the gramophone side up together, and then eventually I shall have to look around for a small steam engine to put onto it. It's not unique, there were gramophones before the First World War that were actually driven by hot air engines!

Why do you like recorded sound?

Recorded sound is an interesting hobby to get into. It's not treated seriously enough yet. Photographs are beginning to be recognized as historic documents for preserving the past. But recorded sound is another way where you can really listen to the past. You can put a record on, you can hear somebody performing a song who sang it over one hundred years ago.

Imagine what it'd be like if we were sitting here able to hear Mozart or Beethoven? We can hear people like Sir Edward Elgar and Benjamin Britten, and then of course there is all the popular music that has been out over the years. Anybody can hear what the Original Dixieland Jazz Band sounded like in 1917 on records from the time. One couldn't have done that before the advent of recorded sound.



The important thing to me is to keep my mind going, and I like thinking out little problems. I also think it's contributing a little bit, because they are unique machines.

This is a record player project that I did during lockdown. It's a portable radiogram that has a radio, a gramophone, and a big loud speaker coupled together. It's designed for playing the old fashioned 78s. It doesn't run 45s or LPs. At last year's Age UK Oxfordshire Jubilee Tea Party, I used it to play a Second World War record called "Wish Me Luck as You Wave Me Goodbye".