

THE PROFESSOR THRUPIECE GUIDES Nº 1



THE
Professor's
GUIDE
to
MODERN DAY
APPLIANCES
HOME ENTERTAINMENT

THE
THREAD
BONE
PRESS

with an Introduction by
Mrs Amanda J Threadbone
[House Owner of the Year
1998]

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VOLUME I | HOME ENTERTAINMENT

'Home entertainment for the masses is a good thing: it keeps them off the street and out of one's way.'

MRS AMANDA J THREADBONE

INTRODUCTION

The idea for this series of guides - to which the gravitas of Professor Thrupiece's imprimature has been appended [no one was more often stimulated by a gadget than he and experimentation with small electrical appliances was his byword] - came quite late one evening after sherry and charades when a good friend of mine [who shall remain nameless lest she claim some of the credit and an unreasonable proportion of the royalties!]. Adopting a semi-recumbent position, she chanced to mention how much she missed a good session with a dansette, a Cherry-B and a bearded man with a beret. It took me back to a kinder, gentler time when a Will's Whiff was not an indicator of flatulence and a sherbet dip was something you could enjoy without shame in front of the youngest of children. [See Dee P Throwte [June 1958] 'Double Dipping', Dorset Family Health Magazine.

In this series we hope to capture something of the magic, anticipation, excitement and sheer blue-skies optimism which the new technology of the 1950s brought into our otherwise rather humdrum lives. Few who recall the early 1950s will do so with unalloyed pleasure, remembering instead the sheer drudgery, the black and white (grey!!) monotony of it all at a time when a 'good vibration' was a sign that the spring mattress didn't need turning for at least another month. That such a world was shattered by the hum of a radio valve, the soft glow of a cathode-ray tube, the extraordinary liberation of a 12lb portable [Mr Threadbone's was huge] and the 'knitting-wool' tangle of an unspooled BASF 6" tape now seems close to unbelievable. [I vividly recall Mr Threadbone's efforts to record the Royal Variety performance of 1958 by holding his Grundig GCM3 Bakelite Condenser Microphone close to the television speaker whilst we all kept silent vigil!]. But I digress. As always, it has given me great pleasure, and for that, Enriqu , I will always be grateful.

Mrs Amanda J Threadbone
Threadbone Towers

1 | THE CATHODE RAY-TUBED TELEVISION RECIEVER

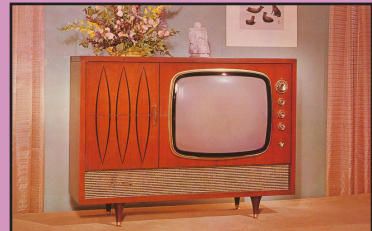
[The whole wide-world in a walnut cabinet]

Few of the 20th century's social revolutions began with less fanfare or more stealth than television. Who amongst us knew that in inviting the Queen into our homes to celebrate her wedding to a then unknown Greek with thinning hair, we were in fact inviting Satan and all his 21st century works (cf 'The Durrells', 'Love Island') along with her? The invention of Dorset-born and educated John

Yogi Bear, television was once sourced from a single monopoly provider of impeccable pedigree [the DBC] and broadcast for four hours per day, weekdays only. Broadcasts began with 'Rule Britannia' and ended with 'God Save The Queen' for which standing [even if holding a mug of cocoa or unwrapping an anticipatory condom] was compulsory. A high pitched tone reminded viewers to switch off their sets once programmes had ended and a small diminishing dot signalled than the 'fun' was over for the night [cf 'unwrapping an anticipatory condom']. Screens could be as large as 12" but - like most women at the time - many settled for less.



In retrospect, television was responsible for the making of several careers and the ending of many more (see Arthur Pesky [2004]: 'A Once Busy Little Bee: Television and Not Me' [Threadbone Press]) as well as mass divorce, on-demand abortions, teenage delinquency, under-age pregnancy, gun crime, alcoholism, pre-menstrual truculence, domestic violence, static homes and 'That's Life'.





2 | THE REEL-TO-REEL TAPE RECORDER

[A ferro-magnetic accident waiting to happen]

Ask a Scotsman his opinion of 'reel-to-reel' and you are likely to get a homily to Jimmy Shand, The White Heather Club and/or Gay Gordon, the well-known Glasgow milliner. Ask a hi-fi buff of the mid 1950s and he will, with a broadening smile of nostalgic aspect, 'reel' off the names: Tandberg, TEAC, Technics, Telefunken and many other iconic manufacturers not beginning with 'T' including Ferrograph, Akai and Studer-Revox. All were equally good at capturing sound and some better than others at festooning the aspidistra with brown magnetic coated party streamers.



But it was surely Grundig, more than any other manufacturer, who brought the embarrassment of hearing one's own voice as others heard it into the domestic arena for the first time and thereby rendered Uncle Gobby Bobby as silent as the grave when the little red light came on and the spools unspooled.

[QUIRKY FACT: 6 out of 10 doctors reported a 75% increase in hand-held microphone-induced repetative arm strain injuries as teenagers as young as 13 sought to record Radio Luxemburg's Top Ten Hits programme on a Grundig TK-23L. from less than 2']

Reel-to-Reel recorders were the progenitors of a family of miniaturised tape-based recording systems including 8 track, the cassette and mini-cassette formats: each smaller yet sonically worse than their predecessors. Together they provide a fine example of technology going backwards before it went nowhere. The reel-to-reel has not made the inexplicable comeback enjoyed by Vinyl, perhaps because few machines survive today, many having been converted into terrariums in the 1990s.





3 | THE RADIOGRAM

[A hybrid furniture cabinet masquerading as an audio centre]

A survey in 1956 provided sociologists with a significant insight into contemporary social trends, revealing [amongst other things] that 75% of all males over 25 wanted a radiogram, whilst 100% of married woman wanted 'a good night's sleep without 'him pestering me''. Little surprise then that Britain's most popular luxury purchase in 1956 was a radiogram which kept both parties happy. Combining a tunable radio with a record player and [sometimes] storage space for an extensive collection of up to 7 78 shellac records or 10 LPs, the radiogram was as stylish as it was functional [ie neither] - as much a piece of furniture as a hi-tech audiophile system. It was the admiration of all, yet satisfied few. A paradox in a box.



Boasting full monaural sound via either a diamond or sapphire stylus and a 6" speaker, this versatile unit was a must-have for those who wanted their living room to look more 'state-of-the-art' than it was and didn't give a toss about whether Pepe Jaramillo, Fernando Mediantepieza or Mantovani sounded like they were playing in the Broadway Baths. By the 1960s it was often gutted and turned into a stylish cocktail bar.

Radiogram enthusiasts of which there are a few [Enrique de los Chicos Perdidos is President of the Dorset Radiogram Society] have recently developed a conversion pack which allows for the reception of a digital signal. It cost £2,700 plus VAT.





4 | THE PORTABLE TRANSISTOR RADIO

[A passport to the alfresco "continental" lifestyle]

The invention of the transistor and its eventual triumph over for the large, heat-producing device known as the valve, liberated the design of the radio, eventually liberating it from its hitherto resolutely hidebound domestic setting. Together with the development of the linear tuning scale, this allowed both the Light Programme and the more serious [and in the event ironically named] Home Service be taken out of the home and hospital and into the park, recreation ground and even the picnic area. [Reception in the kitchen was often poor due to the interference caused by pre-North Sea gas rings, so the 'Get a transistor for her' Campaign did not succeed as hoped.



Many the happy couple whose happy couplings were muffled by the tinny treble and non-existent bass of these hand-held miracles. Some even tried it in the car - with or without the radio. Prices for transistor radios varied depending on weight, finish [plastic or leatherette], handle-style [strap or frame] and functionality [short, medium, long wave or aerial-less just pink noise]. Who will ever forget listening to the World Cup Final in 1966 and missing the vital goals as reception failed

because the wind momentarily blew in the wrong direction? The demise of the transistor radio was foreshadowed in 1969 when Buzz Aldrin forgot to take one to the moon and missed a vital episode of 'The Archers'. Sales never recovered.





5 | THE 8mm CINE CAMERA

[The elephant that never forgot & a painful reminder of families at war]

Few embarrassing family moments escaped the insistent eye of the 1950s home movie camera which, in the hands of a 'cine enthusiast', was capable of inflicting a level of unwanted personal intrusion on family members matched only six decades later by a combination of the twenty-first century smart phone and an unrestrained social media revelling in 'revenge porn', 'cloud hacking' and 'Babe Station-inspired solo gymnastics'. [See also A Pervert (1979) Farewell to Boots: The Polaroid Camera, Theory and Practice (THREADBONE NEW PHOTOGRAPHIC TECHNIQUES)]

By 1959 the Bell and Howell 'three lens' was the instrument of choice, though other tormentors were available. As Mom hid her face behind her hands and the kids forced smiles hardly broader than a tooth-gap, Dad just kept on filming for as long as the clockwork mechanism would allow (average 12 seconds). However many wives reported a positive and unintended consequence of all that filming - Dad retired to the den in winter to edit all those 2 minute spools into one 12 minute 'film' - a process which took dozens of pots of cellulose glue and just as many hours to accomplish, leaving the kids to play with themselves and Mom free to have fun with the Hoover.



The cine camera has had its moments of triumph - eg. Abraham Zapruder's capture of the assassination of President Kennedy and Professor Thrupiece's thoughtful photographic study: 'S-LS As Nature Intended'. The former helped de-bunk a conspiracy theory, the latter made countless lonely men deliriously happy.





6 | THE DANSETTE LONG PLAYING RECORD PLAYER

[Providing the soundtrack to once young lives]



Ask any 1950s teenager what finally persuaded his girlfriend of the time to go 'all the way' [ie hold hands in daylight] and likely as not the answer will be 'Bobby Vee on the Danette'. Many the couple whose first and most memorable intimacies began and ended [2 minutes later - such was the average length of a song] with music from one of these smart devices which [with or without legs] provided the soundtrack to so many young lives. From 'Rock Around The Clock' to 'Norwegian Wood', defences tumbled with rhythmic regularity as stacked singles descended from the automat and vinyl vibes filled the no-so innocent air.

Those now re-discovering vinyl as a high-end, high-cost hi-fi product have little in common with their predecessors for whom a trip to the record shop and an invitation to a friend to 'come over and hear the latest hit' was not only the highlight of the week but also the thinnest of disguises for an evening of debauchery and unprecedented vice [several Babychams, a quick smooch and the chance of removing a fresh 6" from its sleeve.] Headly days.



The 'spread-legged' Danette was particularly popular with men. The demise of the Danette was rapid and came in the form of the Sony Walkman which was smaller, more robust and encouraged vertical rather than horizontal jogging: an altogether retrograde development.





7 | THE ELECTRIC WHISK

[Mother's own kitchen-based entertainment centre]

We make no apology for including, in a comprehensive survey of modern day home entertainment appliances, the ever versatile electric whisk; for as every woman knows, few hours are more diverting or genuinely rewarding than those spent alone in the kitchen preparing delicious treats for one's family and loved ones. Let Albert and his ilk fart about in the lounge and potting shed with their radios and music centres; Marjorie is doing just fine in the kitchen.

Despite the added degree of technical difficulty which the addition of electricity inevitably brings to any device [locating and plugging it into a suitable socket for a start] many women quickly adapted to the electric whisk and came to think of it as their own despite the fact that, generally speaking, hubby paid the hire-purchase installments and never let her forget it. [‘Never, never did so many women have such fun on the never-never’ Mary Beri-Beri].

Though many traditionalist husbands continued to prefer a hand-job, most were eventually converted to alternative methods which - with their regular vibrations - generally achieved the desired effect more quickly and far less stressfully. Stiffening to a self-sustaining peak had never been so easily achieved, with the chance of collapse minimised, provided the operator had carefully read the accompanying manual!





What exactly is a Tape Recorder?

Let's start by saying what it is not...

A tape recorder is not a machine which ticks out Stock Market prices.

It does not provide the ticker tape which is such a feature of the New York welcome to famous people.

A tape recorder is a machine which records sounds; happy sounds, musical sounds, living sounds. And plays them back absolutely true to life. In fact, a tape recorder is something that can be either very useful, absolutely essential, or just downright good entertainment for practically every person you can think of.

The tape on which the music is recorded can be stored easily and is 'unbreakable'. All tape is 'long-playing'—and it doesn't wear out. For the family man a tape recorder provides a family album in sound, from Baby's first word to young John's party piece. And speaking of parties—a tape recorder can join in anything; from 'Consequences' to 'Musical Chairs'. It can give you music for dancing or even provide the accompaniment for 'Knees Up Mother Brown' (if you feel that way inclined).

For the business man a tape recorder brings more efficiency. It helps him save time, helps him by recording important meetings verbatim, takes dictation, reduces routine trivialities. The truth is, that whatever your walk of life, a tape recorder is an asset; either socially, or in business, or at home. Possibly all three combined.



Illustrated above is the Model TK 5

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NO 1

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