

September Meeting report by Albert Pattison.

The format of our September 2017 meeting was different to normal as we enjoyed two presentations rather than one followed by a members' session. 23 members were present.

Our first presenter was Peter Smart of the Huddersfield Recorded Music Society whose talk was entitled "Light as a Feather". This gave us an insight into light music which was much appreciated by those present. Peter started off with an appropriate title – "Horse Feathers" which was played by the Queen's Hall Light Orchestra under the baton of Sidney Torch. This Philip Green number was familiar as it used to be the theme for 'Meet The Huggetts'. We stayed with the 'theme' idea for the next recording, the even more familiar "Coronation Scot" which, when I was a youngster, used to introduce the Paul Temple series on the radio. It used to send a chill down my spine back in the 1950s and still has quite an effect some 60 years later.

We heard "Cavalcade of Youth", a Charles Williams composition called "Trolley Bus" and then had another Queen's Hall performance on "Looking Around". Whilst playing his selections Peter gave brief histories of the pieces, their composers and the performing artists which added to the entertainment. He explained how Robert Farnon came over to Britain from Canada in 1944 and soon had the public noticing his composing abilities as well as his recording skills. We were given a sample of his work with "Jumping Bean" which was recorded by the Kingsway Light Orchestra in 1948.

There followed a lengthy, but enjoyable piece which lasted for over 14 minutes. This was "The First Suite Of English Folk Dances" by Ernest Tomlinson who had originally trained as a wireless mechanic. We heard that he moved to nearby Longridge and that there was a collection of around 50 thousand orchestral sets as a result of his musical dedication. In a session dominated by orchestral works a rare vocal contribution came from Elizabeth Harwood who sang "Early One Morning". She was accompanied by Hendon Grammar School Choir, which included Tomlinson, and was conducted by Charles Mackerass. This first session ended with George Weldon conducting another Tomlinson piece – "Little Serenade".

Following our usual tea and biscuits we settled down to our second session of '1950's UK No. 1 hits on 78s' as presented by Bill Mayers. As a real fan of the 1950s I was very familiar with every track and am sure that many of my fellow listeners were similarly well acquainted. One lady in 1955 had five separate recordings in the British Top Twenty. She was the Irish girl Ruby Murray and the session opened with her recording of "Softly Softly" which was at No. 1 on 18th February 1955. The second recording was a ground breaker which set pop music off in a much more robust fashion. Bill Haley's "Rock Around The Clock" top charted for five weeks in total and was a million seller. In fact world wide it is reputed to have sold around 50 million copies. Bill drew our attention to the guitar solo which used a minimal number of chords in a most effective manner.

We heard "Memories Are Made Of This" by Dean Martin and then "Whatever Will Be, Will Be" by Doris Day. This was played on a South African CBS 78. It came from the film 'The Man who knew too much' and was an Oscar winner when it beat "True Love" into second place. Johnny Ray's successful cover of "Just Walkin' In The Rain" was followed by "Diana" which was composed and sung by a young Paul Anka. It was then the turn of a controversial artist as Jerry Lee Lewis performed "Great Balls Of Fire" which top charted for two weeks in 1958 and was another million seller. As well as his individual singing, Lewis was a strong pianist – but – he was married to a 13 years old girl which was legal back in his home state but was not acceptable in Britain. When this news became public it resulted in Lewis having to abort his British tour and it had a big detrimental effect on his career as a R&R singer. However he did continue to perform in a more country and western style and has given much entertainment over the years.

Other recordings we heard included "It's Only Make-Believe" by Conway Twitty, "Dream Lover" by Bobby Darin and "Here Comes Summer" by Jerry Keller who turned out to be a UK one-hit-wonder. Cliff Richard topped the charts for five weeks with "Travellin' Light" whilst Connie Francis went one week better with "Who's Sorry Now" in 1958. Elvis Presley was much appreciated with his "One Night" whilst the Platters gave us their million selling "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes". A really enjoyable session was closed with another million seller and six week chart topper as Emile Ford & The Checkmates sent us homeward bound with "What do you want to make those eyes at me for" on the Pye label. Our Chairman thanked both our presenters who were rewarded with a good round of applause at one of our best represented meetings.