

London; 19 June 2018

It's hard to believe that it was as long ago as 2011 that Mike Clemence gave an impromptu introduction to V Discs followed in 2012 by a more detailed programme (FtR Numbers 39 and 41, pages 411 and 51 respectively). So **V Discs, part 2** was long overdue.

Mike began with a resumé. In 1942 an industrial dispute in the American music industry led to a ban on new recordings. One consequence was that the supply of recorded music to the troops diminished. Against all the odds, the military succeeded in establishing a million dollar fund to provide new recordings. Musician's fees and copyright were waived on condition that there would be no commercial exploitation of the recordings which were for the use of military personnel only. Record masters were to be destroyed when the scheme was terminated; possession of the records would then become an offence. The records became known as "V Discs". They were 12 inches in diameter and played at 78 rpm with a playing time occasionally rising to 6 minutes. Most were made of a plastic substance. Production lasted from October 1943 to May 1949. In the post-war period many unlawfully owned V discs were confiscated though it seems the authorities were never too concerned about individual copies held as souvenirs. Presumably, it is these which have survived.

The V Discs we heard were of popular, big band and classical music and featured some familiar names: Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey, Duke Ellington, Harry James, Fats Waller, Jascha Heifetz, Toscanini. They were a pleasure to listen to (sadly, because of their soft surface the ones usually found are very worn and noisy). Harry James Flight of the Bumble Bee and Strictly Instrumental was a straight dubbing from the regular 78 which in UK was on Parlophone but other recordings were only on V Disc, Toscanini and the NBC Symphony Orchestra, Dance of the Soldiers was from a Radio Broadcast and Fats Waller's Ain't Misbehavin and Two Sleepy people a special V Disc recording by RCA during the musicians strike. We are very grateful to Mike for a very entertaining and educational evening and Bill for spinning the records.

London Chairman