

play to the outer rim. The second disc would begin at the outer rim and play towards the centre, so that the change-over would bring no sudden deterioration in audio quality.

A number of novelty items on disc contribute an element of social history to the collection. These include Durium discs made from plastic sheets on cardboard; celluloid 'Voice-O-Graph' messages from US soldiers during the Second World War, recorded on location and sponsored by Gem Razors and Blades as 'one of Gem's contributions to the morale of America's armed forces and the folks back home'; and instantaneous records from the 1930s which enabled the public to make recordings for a shilling. Advertisements inform us that a cup of 'Ovaltine' is the secret key to beauty and a healthy night's sleep, and in 1908, Columbia extolled the wonders of the double-sided disc:

The Columbia double-disc record. Music on both sides, a different selection on each side. Two records for a few cents above the price of one. Double disc, double value, double wear, double everything except price. Don't put your record money into any other.

A major strength of the collection is the high percentage of HMV twelve inch red label with the prefix DB and ten inch DAs. Brian was attracted to this label because of the HMV slogan which boasted 'Greatest Voices, Greatest Recordings'. To a large extent this was perfectly true, but they were also the easiest discs to obtain in isolated New Zealand. For many years, discs issued by the EMI conglomerate of Regal, Zonophone, HMV, Columbia, and Parlophone were all that could be purchased, especially during the Second World War. There had been pressing plants in Australia since 1926, with HMV in Sydney and Columbia at Homebush, but in 1932 all the EMI labels combined, and activities were centred at Homebush.

Another major strength of the collection, therefore, is the number of Australian pressings that it contains, many of which were produced using the silent surface process. As early as 1923, Columbia had invented a production process that dramatically reduced the amount of shellac required to make a disc. A central core of graphite was covered on each flat surface with paper, and on top of this was placed a fine layer of high quality shellac. Because the whole disc no longer had to be made of shellac, the quality of the vital playing surface could be improved.

Columbia's British factory failed to perfect the manufacture of this new product, producing more rejects than saleable discs, and the idea was scrapped. However, the process was still in use when the Homebush plant was set up. Australia had all the required chemicals to hand and the success rate was improved to a commercially viable level. Consequently, the Australian discs had less surface noise than their British equivalents, so Brian collected Australian pressings whenever