

Greek Recorded Sound in Australia “A Neglected Heritage”

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The subtitle connects this paper with a landmark publication in the bibliography of commercially recorded sound, the book *Ethnic Recordings in America. A Neglected Heritage* published by the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress in Washington in 1982. This borrowing is intended to signal from the outset that parallels will be drawn in this paper between Greek-Australian recorded sound and the now better documented Greek-American case. Contextualising the story of Greek recorded sound in Australia will also necessitate some narrative of developments in both the broader Australian and the metropolitan Greek record industry, as well as extensive reference to the “English Parent Company” of the principal corporate players in both Greece and Australia. This reflects the fact that sound recording has been a multinational industry virtually since its inception.¹

My paper might have been better subtitled “a neglected research topic”, for this is the inevitable conclusion to be drawn from declared interests and publications to date.² This is a pity, because Greek-Australian recorded

1 The company documents used in this paper are housed at the EMI Archives in Hayes, Middlesex, UK: the reference to country and date sources each document cited to an annual file for either Greece or Australia. ScreenSound Australia has a limited amount of relevant material. I gratefully acknowledge the helpfulness of staff at both these institutions, particularly Ms. R. Edge, Mr. G. Burge and Mr. R. Laird. I am also indebted for material used in this paper and for several informative discussions to Dr. N.G. Pappas, Messrs. P. Cassimaty (Australian-Hellenic Historical Society), K. Horn, C. Tscaderis, C. Zaharopoulos, and Dr. A. Giannopoulos. The interpretation of all this material is of course solely my own responsibility.

2 Andronikos 1995 lists recordings of compositions by Greek-Australian songwriters, but omits

sound is an example of the sort of topic which antipodean Neohellenists are probably best placed to research fully. The need for this research is all the greater because mistaken assumptions are being made about the subject from a distance (Gauntlett, 2001:161 n.40).

This paper therefore aims to signal a complex, multi-disciplinary research topic in urgent need of attention and to provide preliminary insights into some of the issues surrounding it. It further seeks to enlist the practical assistance of interested readers in a documentation project whose best chance of success is as a “mass concern”, as will be explained in the final paragraph.

Scholarly interest in Greek recorded sound in Australia will certainly focus on what it tells us about the Greek-Australian community, in terms of both its cultural practices and its involvement in the economy of Australia as producers, traders and consumers of cultural artefacts. Indeed, the activities of entrepreneurs in Sydney and Melbourne, but also in Athens, London and New York, form one of the most fascinating aspects of the story of Greek-Australian recorded sound. Of particular interest is the insight into the transition from anglocentrism to multiculturalism in the corporate sector, in response to the need to reap profit from all sectors of the population. The staff of EMI (Australia) are reputed to have lacked enthusiasm for Greek music, contemptuously referring to it as “snake-charmer music”.³ EMI (Australia) also decided to keep Greek retailers at arm’s length by appointing one or more Greek distributors at various times, an arrangement which proved far from unproblematic. A more serious hindrance to the vigorous exploitation of demand for Greek records in Australia was the Empire Preferential Import

matrix and catalogue numbers even where major labels are involved and fails to discriminate consistently between published and domestic recordings. Tsounis (1997: 146-49) makes some interesting incidental references to the role of recorded music at Greek-Australian functions and in the training of Greek-Australian musicians for live music-making. Mr. K. Horn refers to imported and local recordings in a PhD thesis on rebetika in Melbourne currently in preparation for Monash University.

- 3 Attested in personal interviews of 2000-1 by Mr. Costas Zaharopoulos (or Con Zahar) of Hellenic Music Distribution, Sydney, and previously of Odeon Music House Pty. Ltd. (Sydney), R & Z Distributing Pty. Ltd. and Z Distributing Pty. Ltd.

Tariff, which kept Australia as a virtual UK fealty within the multinational EMI conglomerate for several decades. The continuing British intrusion into the story of Greek-Australian discography is one of its more bizarre aspects and might be seen as a residue of corporate colonial-tinge more than half a century after Australian Federation.⁴ Whether this triangular relationship substantially hindered or advanced the cause of Greek recorded sound in Australia is a debatable proposition – not least because direct imports from Greece are arguably not the best way of encouraging local Greek-Australian culture.

The preoccupation of this paper hitherto with the documentary value of sound recordings is not meant to detract from their intrinsic aesthetic worth as cultural artefacts. The opposite is clearly the case with Greek-Australian recordings such as the cassette set *Dimitris Tsaloumas reads a selection of his poems*, produced by Owl Publishing (Melbourne) in 1994: these recordings are arguably more complete than the printed collections of Tsaloumas’ poetry since they convey the poet’s voice more fully. Again, Australian recordings of Greek traditional music such as the CD *Melisma* by the Melbourne band Apodimi Compania (BRCD 17, 1992) are composite works of art: the high quality of the recorded performances is visually complemented by the typographical artistry of the accompanying booklet, complete with cover-painting by the Melbourne artist Nikos Soulakis.

One might then wonder why Greek-Australian recorded sound is a neglected research topic, unlike Greek-Australian literature which has quite deservedly enjoyed widespread acclaim and serious critical attention. Part of the answer may lie in a perception that much commercially recorded sound belongs to ephemeral mass culture, which does not enjoy the high culture status of printed literature.

Nevertheless, in the USA the neglect of ethnic recordings as a field of serious study has now been overcome to some extent. The centrepiece of the American achievement to date is Richard Spottswood’s monumental

4 The Imperial Preference Rate of import duty was still being invoked as an impediment to direct importation from Greece as late as 1963 (EMI Archives: Greece 14/5/63 G.N. Bridge [Hayes] to R. Mackenzie [Athens]).

seven-volume work *Ethnic Music on Records. A discography of ethnic recordings produced in the United States, 1893 to 1942* published by the University of Illinois Press. One hundred pages of this work (vol. 3, pp.1133–1234) are devoted to the approximately one thousand Greek recordings made in the USA between May 1896 and 1942. Spottswood’s Greek discography is far from flawless, as the late Ole Smith pointed out in some detail (1992). The Greek section has therefore needed extensive expert underpinning, some of which has been supplied by Ole Smith (1991, 1995), Steve Frangos (1989, 1994, 1995–96), Panayiotis Kounadis (2000:221–9, 251–69) and Aristomenis Kalyviotis (1994a, 1998).

The last two discographers listed above have also made significant contributions to discographical research in Greece itself, whose early story of commercial recording is greatly complicated by lagging behind the Greek communities not only of the USA, but also of the Ottoman Empire.

Given the relatively small number of Greek speakers in any one of these scattered territories, one might wonder at the early motivation of European and American record companies in manufacturing Greek records. The most plausible explanation is that supplied by Pekka Gronow (1981:274): “Recordings of the music of the smallest groups were not made in the hope of large sales, but to help the sale of gramophones, which were manufactured by the same companies.” But the steady production of Greek records in America by the Victor and Columbia companies from 1907 onwards and the latter’s production of a *Columbia Catalogue of Greek Records* in 1911 (Frangos, 1995–96:242 n.11) would additionally suggest a level of appreciation of the commercial potential of minority recordings which was not attained until very much later in Australia. Further incentive was provided to American companies by the problems of intercontinental shipping caused by the First World War, which heightened the need to exploit all sectors of the domestic market fully, including settlers and refugees of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Spottswood, 1990:xvii). A number of trade circulars attest to this intention, e.g. Columbia’s advice to its retailers in 1914: “They are patriotic these foreigners [sic] and their intense interest in their own native music is strengthened by their desire that their children

brought or born in this new country shall share their love of the old” (quoted by Smith, 1991:146; cf. Gronow, 1982:34 and Frangos, 1995–96:242).

One might contrast the attitude expressed in these American documents with the traces of an assimilationist mentality encountered as late as 1962 in a letter from EMI (Australia) to British headquarters: “It should be borne in mind that only the old Greek people continue to buy Greek records [in Australia] and the younger folk after a short period of assimilation change their buying habits to English and American recordings. The number of the Greek community in Australia is not a true guide to the market potential that exists” (EMI Archives: Greece 20/6/1962 N.W. Scott to J.M. Bevierre).⁵

By 1940 the Greek-American community appears to have been producing and consuming records out of proportion to its size: it was the thirteenth ethnic minority in numerical strength but fifth in the table of sales of the non-English recordings produced by Columbia (Smith, 1991:146; cf. Frangos, 1995–96:244 n.14). Moreover, as Smith (1991, 1995) has argued, in the 1930s Greek-Americans were producing some songs of distinctively American content which metropolitan Greeks had some difficulty understanding when they eventually discovered them.

Inter-war Greek-American recordings were also free of some of the taboos which afflicted the emerging industry in Greece, such as the aversion to the bouzouki and its generally low-life exponents. Thus the first commercial recording of a bouzouki seems to have occurred in 1928 in New York⁶ and in 1932 a record with bouzouki solos by Jack Gregory (alias Yiannis Halkias) on both sides was produced by Columbia USA, which proved so popular in Greece that its matrix was exported to Athens for

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- 5 The total absence of Greek records from the international section of its general catalogues of records such as the 1958 *Catalogue of Recorded Music* (HMV, Columbia, Capitol, Parlophone, MGM, Regal Zono), suggests that EMI (Australia) could not conceive of any broader Australian interest in Greek music at that time.
 - 6 At least one copy of the 1928 record (Columbia 56137-F) found its way to Melbourne in the luggage of a Greek immigrant who had lived in America before settling in Australia. The non-commercial recording of bouzouki appears to date from 1917 (Gauntlett, 2001:146).

pressings at the newly built Columbia factory (Gauntlett, 1985:87).

Nearer the time when mass migration of Greeks to Australia commenced in the 1950s, the introduction of vinylite microgroove technology began to weaken the Lambropoulos-Matsas distribution duopoly established by EMI in the 1930s and also undermined the manufacturing monopoly of the Columbia factory in the Athenian suburb of Rizopolis, which was run by an EMI-appointed British manager from its opening in 1931 to its closure in 1991 (apart from the years of the German Occupation). In the 1960s Philips, Nina and other companies started manufacturing in Greece, and over a thousand recording labels are estimated to have spawned over the following four decades (Vlavianou, 1996). Nevertheless in 1966 the Athens Columbia factory was producing over six million records per annum (three times as many as in 1962 and almost fourteen times the pre-War figure), many of the records being of Arabic music and destined for export to the Middle East and North Africa (EMI Archives: Greece 17/11/67 R. Mackenzie to G.N. Bridge).

Robert Mackenzie, MBE, the Scotsman who managed the Athens factory from 1937 to 1968, was also strongly convinced of the enormous export potential of the Australian market for Greek records and made a determined effort to develop it, despite problems of corporate structure and dogged resistance from EMI (Australia), whom he repeatedly accused of neglecting the market as insignificant while also blocking direct supply from elsewhere.

Turning now to Australia, sound-recording had been embraced enthusiastically from the outset and local recordings were already being produced in the 1890s. It is extremely doubtful though whether any of them was of Greek material, as the industry was firmly anglophone and primarily anglocentric. On the eve of Australian Federation, the British Gramophone Co. had established a branch in Sydney, soon to be followed by the British arm of Columbia (Laird, 1999:89, 143), both importing vast quantities of ready made discs and matrices for local pressing.⁷ The British companies' attitude to the Australian market is revealed in a local manager's report to the

7 The first recordings pressed at The Gramophone Company factory at Erskineville, Sydney in January 1926 were of speeches by the British royal family (Laird, 1999: 108-12).

London headquarters in 1926: “We, personally, do not think there is a great deal of talent in Australia – talent that would interest the public – but it is just the publicity which the Columbia Company would gain by recording here that we would like” (quoted in Laird, 1999:124). The Columbia Homebush studios (opened in October 1926) are estimated to have produced a thousand matrices by the time that company merged with HMV to form EMI in 1931 and all manufacturing was consolidated at the Columbia factory (Laird, 1999:108) – again, the likelihood that any of them contained Greek material is small. Though British, American and Australian companies competed for supremacy during the crucial years 1924–34 (documented in detail in Laird, 1999), it was the amalgamated EMI (with headquarters at Hayes, Middlesex) that emerged with a virtual monopoly in Australia which it maintained until the end of World War 2 (Laird, 1999:313).

Accounts of the Australian recorded sound industry in the first half of the twentieth century regularly emphasise its role as “an incidental clearing house for foreign product” (Barker, 1978), but as Laird (1999:xiv) points out, five thousand Australian recordings were issued commercially by 1950. Not one Greek record is listed in the HMV Australian catalogues of the 1920s, even among the “Songs of various nations” pages. Yet, intriguingly, a table of sources of gramophone records imported to Australia for 1926–27 indicates that one pound’s worth (£1) of disks were imported from Greece – compared with £167,663 worth from the UK, £43,945 from the USA, £5,934 from Germany, and £75 from Italy (Laird, 1999:319).

It is possible that the Depression, which caused the merger into EMI in 1931, also made its Australian branch more receptive to the needs of the hitherto unexploited reaches of the market. This may explain the sudden appearance of the following note in the 1933 HMV Catalogue of The Gramophone Co Ltd, Australia (p.97): “Greek Records – A series of Greek records in the Greek language with the prefix ‘AO’ for 10-inch and ‘AP’ and ‘EB’ for 12-inch, [sup]plied on application to The Gramophone Co Ltd, Box 47 PO Newtown, Sydney.”⁸ Additionally on p.223 appears the following

8 To date, I have located one 78 rpm Greek record with the prefix AO, two with EB, and six with AP, all bearing the annotation “Manufactured specially for the Gramophone Co. Ltd.,

entry: “ED 16, Venizelos, President: Address to the Greeks in America & Address to the people of Greece”.⁹

In the 1934 HMV Australian catalogue these listings were replaced by four records of Greek song, all performed by Greek-American artistes:

- EB53 Trelas Kavalieros & [R]amona, [sung by] Tetos Demetriades
- EB54 To Smyrniotaki & Constantinople, Tetos Demetriades
- EB55 Di[o] psarakia melanourgia & Koutsavaki, Marika Papagikas
- EB56 Lemnos Z[ei]b[e]kik[o] & Alatsatiani [Karsilamas], George Del[i]george

The same list of four records reappears annually until 1944, when the *EMI Catalogue of Recorded Music: Columbia, HMV, Parlophone, Decca, Odeon, Regal-Zonophone* (p.220) replaces the second disk (EB54) with “DO2599 ‘Greece will rise again’ – March (official hymn of the National Youth Organisation), Metraxas [sic]-Papademetriou (K. Xenidi Chorus and Band)”.

During World War 2 both recording and pressing continued at Homebush despite shipping problems and shortages of materials, immortalising novelties such as the North Sydney Tramway Depot Mouth Organ Band and Jacko the Broadcasting Kookaburra (Burgis,1997). That the same four Greek records continue to reappear in the 1948 EMI (Australia) catalogue suggests tokenism or perhaps determination to get maximum value out of imported matrices. The continuing inclusion of the

Sydney, N.S.W.” or “Record Manufactured by the Gramophone Record Co. Ltd., Sydney, N.S.W.” The label of EB54 (“Constantinople”) is further endorsed “The Lawrence Wright Music Co., London. Agent W. Bassett, Melbourne.” The content of the recordings includes Greek Orthodox hymns, folk song or music (styled “Greek national dance” on the label, whistled to an instrumental accompaniment in one instance), arias from an operetta, *amanedes* (a type of oriental threnody), and light popular songs in inter-war Western style. One of the records (AP36) bears two songs recorded in America which refer to hashish smoking and are now generally classified as *rebetika*.

9 Recording Venizelos seems to have been regarded in some company circles as one of the more egregious unbusinesslike blunders of Mr. Kissopoulos, one time HMV concessionaire for Greece (EMI Archives: Greece 1930 M. Innes “Report [to the Gramophone Company] on a visit to Greece, April-May 1930”). The motivation behind this record’s brief appearance in, and prompt disappearance from, an Australian catalogue provides much scope for speculation.

alleged composition of Metaxas may also reflect political constraints connected with the Greek civil war. One might also reasonably assume that Greek-Australians took advantage of informal opportunities for the importation of records from Greece.

In 1948 EMI (Australia) underwent a major reorganisation following a visit by the Managing Director of the “English Parent Company”: “EMI (Australia) Ltd. was [...] formed to take over the activities formerly carried out by the branches of the English companies, The Gramophone Co., and Columbia Graphophone Co.Ltd.” (EMI Archives: Australia July 1971 “EMI in Australia” [Business Analysis and Planning Dept.]).¹⁰ In 1949 the revamped Australian subsidiary is reported by its English parent to be “finding a demand for Greek recordings and desirous of drawing up plans for importing records from Greece or of arranging, in the case of couplings for which a worthwhile demand exists, for matrices to be sent to Hayes for pressing the records here” (EMI Archives: Greece 8/7/49 A.H. Saville to the Manager, Columbia Graphophone Co. of Greece). Six copies of “current catalogues of all EMI marks with supplements bringing the issues up to date” are also requested and a reminder is added that headquarters at Hayes, Middlesex must be kept informed.

In June 1950 Columbia (Australia) requested permission of its counterpart in Greece “to dub from certain Greek recordings” for one of its selling agents, the intention being to make approximately fifty copies of the recordings for sale in Australia only. The Greek recordings were initially understood to have originated from the studios of Decca Records USA, but were subsequently discovered to have come from the Athenian studios (EMI Archives: Greece 20/5/50 E.L. Brownsdon to The Columbia Graphophone Co. of Greece). The

10 A fuller description of the new entity is given in minute 1901 (“Australia - Reorganisation”) of the 23/9/48 meeting of the EMI Board of Directors (EMI Archives: EMI Board Minutes 1948). Interestingly, the Australian model was proposed as an exemplar for the reorganisation of EMI operations in Greece (EMI Archives: Greece 25/4/50 A.T. Lack [Hayes] to R. Mackenzie [Athens]). EMI (Australia) Ltd. was converted into a public company in 1957, EMI (UK) retaining a 61.5% interest (EMI Archives: Australia July 1971 “EMI in Australia” [Business Analysis and Planning Dept.]).

reported misrepresentation of the origins of the recordings is an ominous start to the relationship between Athens and Sydney; Athens prudently referred the matter to Hayes for a ruling (EMI Archives: Greece 3/7/50 B. Toumbakaris to Overseas Interests Division, EMI, Hayes).

Copies of correspondence between Sydney and Athens lodged at Hayes, Middlesex reveal that the flurry of activity continues in November 1950 with an urgent dispatch from EMI (Australia) to the Columbia factory in Athens of “a standing order for two samples of every native Greek record, both instrumental and vocal, as soon as they are released. [...] The matter is very urgent as far as we are concerned. Receiving these samples will make it ever so much easier for us in placing our orders *with Hayes*” [my emphasis] (EMI Archives: Greece 22/11/50 R.L. Willis to The Columbia Graphophone Co. of Greece). In reply the Manager of the Greek Columbia factory dutifully reminded Sydney that Hayes “to whom we are supposed to refer all such requests” must agree to the direct dispatch of samples, which might number ten to fifteen per month. He adds that air freight will take 15 days but cost 350% more than sea freight, which takes three to four months. (EMI Archives: Greece 4/12/50 R. Mackenzie to R.L. Willis). The Overseas Interests Division of EMI, Hayes duly assented to this arrangement (EMI Archives: Greece 13/12/50 L.A. Collins to R. Mackenzie), which can hardly be described as expeditious or conducive to rapid market development.

Apart from the repercussions of incipient mass-migration of Greeks to Australia, the sudden burst of correspondence at the end of the 1940s indirectly attests to the activities of at least one local distributor of Greek records. This role was claimed in subsequent documents by the entrepreneur George Yiannopoulos (or Young), trading as Stanley Young Pty. Ltd (apparently the name of his son Anastasios Yiannopoulos), with retail outlets in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide.¹¹ George Young’s turbulent relationship with EMI (Australia) and with his business partners (notably Angelos Roufoglalis or Roufos, the proprietor of the Odeon Music House

11 George Yiannopoulos claimed to have “been selling EMI Greek records in Australia since 1936 and has sold them on an exclusive basis since 1948. A letter from Mr. A. Kerr of EMI

Pty. Ltd in Sydney, who took over Young’s distribution of EMI records in 1958) can be partly documented from the EMI Archives at Hayes, Middlesex; for Young tended to appeal directly to the authority of the English Parent Company, over the head of the Australian subsidiary and occasionally in person.¹² These supplications appear to have continued into the 1960s,¹³ as the competition between Stanley Young Co. Ltd and Odeon Music House manifested itself in rival shops set up in close proximity to each other, selling not only records and gramophones, but a wide range of other domestic appliances bearing EMI logos, including His Master’s Voice refrigerators and washing machines¹⁴ (EMI Archives: Greece 20/6/1962 N.W. Scott to J.M. Bevierre).

It may have been in response to the prospect of EMI’s suspension of supplies of Greek records to him in 1958 for breach of their terms of distribution, that Young launched his own “Apollo” label, which featured distinctive gold lettering on a green background, a golden bust of the eponymous god, and the catalogue prefix SY (= Stanley Young).¹⁵

Australia of 20 April 1948 confirms this fact” (EMI Archives: Australia 17/5/62 R.N. White [Hayes] to G.N. Bridge [International Division, Hayes] — cf. EMI Archives: Australia 20/6/1962 N.W. Scott [Australia] to J.M. Bevierre [Brussels]).

- 12 From EMI Archives it appears that George Yiannopoulos visited Hayes at least twice in 1962 alone, in May and September.
- 13 On 2/2/61 Young wrote to Hayes appealing for reinstatement as a distributor in Australia and again on 31/10/62 requesting that the objection of EMI (Australia) to direct supply of 11,000 records from the Columbia factory in Greece be overruled (EMI Archives: Greece 1962).
- 14 These goods are illustrated in the 72-page Stanley Young Pty. Ltd general catalogue *Γενικός Κατάλογος Ελληνικών Δίσκων και Όλων των Άλλων Ειδών που Διαθέτει η Μοναδική εις το Είδος της Ελληνική Επιχείρησις* published (entirely in Greek) in Melbourne c.1956. It may be significant that none of Young’s own “Apollo” records is listed in this catalogue (cf. footnote 15).
- 15 The earliest mention of this Apollo label occurs in a reference to an allegation it used recordings made by Columbia in Greece (EMI Archives: Greece 16/6/58 L.A. Collins to R. Mackenzie). Mackenzie is instructed to desist from any direct supply of Greek records to Australian retailers except by confirmation of EMI (Australia). Mackenzie acknowledged that the “Apollo label [...] has had some success [...] because room was left for it in the market” (EMI Archives: Greece 19/11/62 R. Mackenzie to G.N. Bridge and J.M. Bevierre). In a letter of 31/10/62 to G.N. Bridge (Hayes), George Young claims to have “stopped new

Young produced about 150 “Apollo” records altogether (mostly 78 rpm), by one account using matrices imported from the USA, where visiting artistes often made cover-recordings of Athenian hits for Greek-American record companies, notably Nina and Liberty.¹⁶ If this is indeed the case, then the Stanley Young “Apollo” label might be seen as an instance of collusion between Greek diaspora entrepreneurs in defiance of local authorities in Australia and Greece, and of their English corporate overlord.

To Mackenzie, the manager of the Columbia Athens factory, the arrangements for supplying Greek records to Australia were an egregious instance of corporate inefficiency and perversity. The style of his correspondence with company headquarters in Hayes¹⁷ becomes increasingly agitated and colourful when the issue of direct supply from Athens to retailers in Australia comes to a head in 1962. Mackenzie estimates that direct sales from Athens could reach 100,000 p.a., given that “first-generation Greek immigrants are avid disc buyers” (EMI Archives: Greece 23/5/62 R. Mackenzie to G.N. Bridge). He argues that having demonstrated its indifference to small orders, EMI (Australia) would suffer no loss of sales. Mackenzie further protests that the refusal of EMI (Australia) to concede to Athens a market which it is not interested in exploiting is undermining

pressings of my label” on the expectation of supply of 11,000 records from the Columbia Graphophone Company of Greece. He claims the volume of sales of his label to be “similar” to those he has promised Mackenzie [sc. 50,000 records p.a.] and “Therefore the status quo will remain unaltered”.

16 Mr. Costas Zaharopoulos suggested this origin for the matrices (personal interviews 2000-1). He also opined that Young may well have had his “Apollo” records pressed at the EMI Homebush factory, in spite of having fallen from grace as an EMI distributor.

17 The delayed introduction of LPs to Greece had previously been a vexation to Mackenzie, as was the insistence of Hayes on compiling LPs from 45s on the basis of “the excellent advice available here in London”, rather than that of the Athenian distributors. To the charge that Greek LPs issued so far “were of no interest in the territory because all the numbers are old ones”, came a reply which also reveals the perception of diaspora Greek needs at EMI headquarters: “We were of course well aware of this fact; we made these LP records, not for shipment to Greece, but for supply to Greeks in many other parts of the world, and I am glad to say that the results we are getting fully justify our estimate of the sales possibilities” (EMI Archives: Greece 12/8/57 F.J. Brooks to R. Mackenzie).

the EMI manufacturing monopoly in Greece too. He cites the specific case of the Nina label as having “pushed itself effectively into Australia where it found a good and almost unexploited market. It was its success with overseas Greeks which encouraged Nina to establish itself with a small record plant in Athens.”

Mackenzie was told in reply that the “business at the Australian end” was more complicated than he appreciated (EMI Archives: Greece 30/5/62 G.N. Bridge to R. Mackenzie). The complex problems of distribution of Greek records in Australia and the local view of how they had arisen were detailed in a subsequent response to Hayes from EMI (Australia). Current arrangements were claimed to be also in the best interests of sales of EMI products other than Greek records (EMI Archives: Greece 20/6/1962 N.W. Scott to J.M. Bevierre).

Mackenzie remained unconvinced and later that year when an attempt by George Young to place a direct order for 11,000 records with Athens¹⁸ was blocked by EMI (Australia) in a flurry of cables between Hayes and Sydney, he fulminated against EMI (Australia) for presiding over a “sales vacuum” and considering only its own interests. He concluded with the diagnosis: “The ‘closed door’ policy of EMI Australia has injured both the company itself and the EMI investment in Greece. *The injury to the latter is a cancer which is still operable*” [original emphasis] (EMI Archives: Greece 19/11/62 R. Mackenzie to G.N. Bridge and J.M. Bevierre). Mackenzie also argues that EMI should exploit the proven sales talent of Australian retailers rather than punishing them for any propensity for using “irregular means” (EMI Archives: Greece 29/9/62 R. Mackenzie to G.N. Bridge). EMI (Australia) held diametrically opposite views on this, and appointed or disenfranchised distributors accordingly.

Mackenzie’s indictment of EMI (Australia) must obviously be evaluated in the light of the particular priorities of the Athens factory, but the figures

18 This order was accompanied by “guarantees” of a further minimum order of 50,000 records per annum (EMI Archive: Greece 12/10/62 cable from G.N. Bridge [Hayes] to J.M. Burnett [Australia]).

invoked by EMI (Australia) by way of justification of current arrangements fall far short of Mackenzie's estimate of potential sales. Total sales of locally pressed EMI Greek records in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide in the twelve months to September 1962 are reported to have amounted to 55,474 singles, 9,760 EPs, and 588 LPs; sales of imported records are reported as 3,800 over two years. But non-Greek EMI records and other EMI goods sold by the distributors amounted to £66,000 p.a. (EMI Archives: Greece 19/10/1962 J.M. Burnett to G.N. Bridge). Significantly for current purposes, the arbiters of the dispute at Hayes reassured EMI (Australia) that there was no wish to disturb its local arrangements, but still expressed concern at complaints reported by Mackenzie about the limited Greek catalogue in Australia and the disastrously long delays in supply of current hit records via local pressings. They also urged increased importation at least of disks not worth pressing in Sydney (EMI Archives: Greece 23/10/62 G.N. Bridge to J.M. Burnett).

These exhortations may have been repeated by Bridge to Burnett in person during a visit to Australia in January 1963 and by Mackenzie to Sturman of EMI (Australia) during a visit by the latter to Athens in the same year, apparently prompted by a new-found belief in Sydney that the market for Greek records in Australia was set to increase dramatically (EMI Archives: Greece 14/5/63 G.N. Bridge [Hayes] to R. Mackenzie). An order for 4,000 records had already been placed with Columbia Graphophone Co. of Greece by EMI (Australia) in January 1963, "the forerunner of many for catalogue records which we cannot produce locally in economical quantities" (EMI Archives: Greece 25/1/63 Assistant Sales Manager, EMI [Australia] Ltd. to R. Mackenzie).

Figures reported for Greek records sales in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide in 1965 bear out this prediction: locally pressed singles rose (since 1962) to 78,839, EPs fell to 3,669, LPs plummeted to 90, while the number of records imported by EMI (Australia) since January 1965 had soared to 22,238 (EMI Archives: Greece 1/11/65 C.E. Barlow [Australia] to K. East [Hayes]).

Although informed in 1965 "that Australia were pressing [sic] upwards of 250,000 Greek records", Mackenzie apparently remained unconvinced

that the Australian market was being exploited to its full potential, particularly in the marketing of “hit records” and kept petitioning Hayes for arrangements more advantageous to his own particular enterprise (EMI Archives: Greece 23/7/65 R. Mackenzie to K. East). Meanwhile EMI in Sydney was by now sufficiently interested in exploiting the sales potential of Greek records in Australia to wish to investigate sources of the large volume of unfranchised imports, which it suspected originated with EMI wholesalers in Greece (EMI Archives: Greece 27/7/65 C.R. Barlow [Australia] to E.J. Jones [Greece]). In reply Columbia Athens did not fail to express surprise at the sudden recognition by EMI (Australia) of the high demand for Greek records in Australia nor to remind them that “exiles [...] almost invariably complain that they cannot get Greek records in Australia”. The suggestion of illegal exports from Greece is then dismissed and the letter closes a little facetiously with: “I hope that there is no piracy on Australian soil” (EMI Archives: Greece 3/8/65 E.J. Jones to C.R. Barlow).

The issue of illicit importation from Greece escalated into a serious vexation for EMI (Australia), fuelled by (perhaps even originating in) animosity between retailers, one of whom set Australian lawyers on the Patents Department at Hayes. It duly reached an ill-tempered, three-cornered stalemate with EMI (Australia) suspecting that the Greek factory was “not anxious to put a stop to such exports” (EMI Archives: Greece 1/11/65 C.E. Barlow to K. East [Hayes]), before finally being shelved in November 1965 amid continuing suspicions and a belated realisation that EMI (Australia) might have less trouble if it did its own Greek distribution (EMI Archives: Greece 23/11/65 and 10/12/65 C.E. Barlow [Australia] to K. East [Hayes] and replies 26/11/65 and 21/12/65). By 1966 Columbia Athens appears to have joined EMI (Australia) in the opinion that Australian distributors of Greek records were more interested in squabbling than in selling (EMI Archives: Greece 28/7/66 E.J. Jones to K. East [London]).

Seemingly unaware of the Pandora’s box he sought to open, in 1968 the Managing Director of HMV (New Zealand) Ltd was prompted by a significant number of enquiries about Greek records to “wonder whether we shouldn’t have a look at this again” (EMI Archives: Greece 17/4/68 A.J.

Wyness to K. East [London]). The reply from Athens is remarkable, first for the information that EMI (Australia) is releasing about a hundred singles p.a. from imported masters (HMV [NZ] is advised to tie in with this arrangement) and secondly for the advice to keep a close eye on the Greek top twenty “since anything not included will be of no interest whatsoever to you” (EMI Archives: Greece 30/4/68 E.J. Jones to A.J. Wyness), which contradicts perceptions held at Hayes about the tastes of diaspora Greeks (see footnote 17).

Documentation of EMI’s Greek-Australian activities then becomes sparse and inconsequential, as the original combattants retire or relocate (Mackenzie, Burnett, Bridge and Jones *inter alios*). In May 1975 an internal EMI (UK) memorandum refers rather surprisingly to the export of Greek records to “the small Greek community in Australia” as small business, not involving substantial sales. More surprisingly EMI (Australia) is reported to be unperturbed by a proposal from Columbia Greece to export direct to a nominated retailer (EMI Archives: Greece 20/5/76 A.B. Logan [Hayes] to P.A.D. Duffell [Gloucester Place, London]). Perhaps in consequence of this, the Columbia Graphophone Company of Greece Ltd soon reports of exports to Australia that: “We seem to have turned the corner (once again!) now that we are back with our traditional Greek customers. It may be noted that during the last six months [Australia] has overtaken the whole of N. America (if the arabic business is removed from those figures)” (EMI Archives: Greece 5/5/76 J.G. Deacon [Athens] to J.M. Bevierre [Brussels]).

The sparseness of the evidence in the EMI Archives for developments from the late 1960s onwards may be simply circumstantial or it may be related to the fragmentary effects of commercial and technological developments such as the rise of cassette-recording and FM broadcasting in the 1970s, and of CD-burning in the 1990s. A 1983 planning document from EMI Records (UK) gives some suggestive insights: “The bears reign! For the first time in over a decade the ebullient, optimistic enigma that is the music industry is vainly searching for answers with which to counter what is now visibly serious decline [...]. Home taping is endemic, habit forming and an increasingly cost-effective way of acquiring a personal collection of music software. [...] Generally, technological hardware [...] is assisting rather than

curtailing this trend” (EMI Archives: Australia July 1983 “Forward Plan 1983. UK Record Operations / EMI Records”).

Thus far we have been concerned solely with recordings imported into Australia from Greece, Britain or the USA, whether in the form of matrices for pressing in Australia or of finished gramophone records, not with Greek-Australian recorded sound in the sense of recordings made of, by, and for, Greek-Australians. Such recordings form a small portion of the totality of Greek recorded sound in Australia, in keeping with the overall reputation of the record industry in Australia as a “clearing house for foreign product”, to recall Barker’s phrase (1978). Importation continues to form the overwhelmingly main source of Greek recorded sound in Australia to this day: the 2001 *General Catalogue of Greek Compact Disks* produced by Hellenic Music Distribution (Sydney) boasts no less than 9,000 imported titles and claims to be “the largest and most complete Greek Music Catalogue in the world”.

In contrast, local Greek-Australian recording is extremely difficult to quantify or document because of its fragmentation over a large number of small labels which were often created and then discontinued or revived in an *ad hoc* manner.¹⁹ Richard Spottswood declared a comparable situation in the post-War USA to be “difficult or impossible to chronicle” and drew a neat chronological line of demarcation under fifty years of American ethnic recordings at 31 July 1942 (1990:xviii; cf. Gronow, 1982:45–49). The student of Greek recording in Australia does not have this option, because such recordings appear to have commenced only after World War 2 and even then not with commercial recordings, but “vanity recordings” destined for dispatch back to the ancestral village as proof of prosperity, fame or talent, or perhaps as a memento of some signal musical event in the Greek-Australian community.²⁰

19 Small Greek-Australian labels include Antonic, Astra, Ekophonic, Globe Enterprises, Mediterranean Melodies, Omikhli Enterprises, Sapfo, Tsakpina, Universal Melbourne, and Ελληνική Εταιρεία Δίσκων Αυστραλίας ΕΛΛΑΣ/ Greek Recording Company — Australia.

20 The Vocalion company had run an advertising campaign in Australia with the slogan “Send your voice home” as early as 1928, but it is not known whether Greeks availed themselves

The earliest commercial recording of Greek-Australian professional musicians which I have personally seen is a 1965 vinylite 45 rpm single (CP-5) made in Melbourne by Thymios and Yiota Stathoulopoulos (cf. Gauntlett, 1993:350). 1965 also saw the inception of the recording of visiting artistes from Greece on the “Zorba” label by Costas Zaharopoulos.²¹ The “Zorba” label also recorded local artistes such as John Tikis (or Tekes), who recorded two LPs and six singles on the label before pursuing a career in Greece (Moore, 1985:11).

Other visitors from Greece made occasional recordings on *ad hoc* labels, such as the “Patris Club” label, apparently devised for a 1968 recording at the Patris Club, Sydney (matrices 36269 and 36270) by Loukas Daralas (“Dalaras” on the label).

It is a pity that EMI (Australia) “does not keep dead files” (as I was informed by the head office at Cremorne), otherwise we might have had valuable information about custom recordings of Greek material which it may have made over the years. The independent Melbourne label “W & G” made a number of 45 rpm custom records of Greek-Australian musicians, including the bouzouki player S. Meidanis and the vocalists T. Krestas and K. Andrikopoulos, while “AWA” made 45 rpm custom records of Greek material in Sydney, including The Four Charms live at the Castellorizian Club.²²

The advent of cassette technology brought Greek commercial recording

of this service before Vocalion closed in 1931 (Laird, 1999: 193-5, 344). Mr. A. Sophocleous of RMIT reported at the Flinders University Research Forum the existence of a custom recording made in Melbourne in 1946 by Ms. Nina Black. Dr. N.G. Pappas has shown me a custom-made, double-sided 78 rpm disc recorded by his father, the late George Papanastasiou, and produced by the Livewire Recording Co. of Beverley Park, Kograh. It features a selection of songs from the review “Μεγίστη” performed by the Castellorizian Brotherhood of Sydney in 1949.

21 Mr. Zaharopoulos informs me that he recorded the visiting Yiota Lydia and Marianna Hatzopoulou on the “Zorba” label.

22 W&G Custom Processed Records (Manufactured by W&G Record Processing Co. Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, Australia): M1001A “Σε φίλο μην εμπιστευθείς” Ζεϊμπέκικο, and M1001B “Μην κλαις γλυκειά μου” Τσιφτετέλι. Σ. Μείντάνη. Εκτέλεσις: Τάσος Κρέστας. Βιολί: Κ. Μπορούδας. Ακορντεόν: Α. Φράγκου. Κιθάρα: Ι. Κονιδιάρης; CA1401A “Αντίο

in Australia within the reach of the expatriate Cypriot oral poet Michalis Azinos, who started selling cassettes of his satirical poetry in Australia in 1975, apparently before this practice became popular in Cyprus (Yiangoullis, 1995:48, 56).

Recordings such as these do indeed preserve traces of a distinctive Greek-Australian identity and culture, as for example, in the lyrics of Thymios Stathoulopoulos’ LP *Rembetika of Melbourne* recorded in 1985 on his own label (as “TS01”) with the financial assistance of the Australian Arts Council (cf. Gauntlett, 1993); in Costas Tsourdalakis’ Cretan couplets about the 1975 dismissal of Whitlam (“the second Kennedy”) recorded by Peter Parkhill on the “Tradition Australia” label in 1984 (LP *Cretan traditional Music in Australia*, Costas & George Tsourdalakis, TAR 010 [mx 208771 & 208772]); in the combination of bouzouki and didgeridoo on the cassette *Costas Tsicaderis live at the Boite* (1985, Boite No. 4); in several recordings of works by classically trained Greek-Australian composers such as Themis Mexis, Constantine Koukias and the Ioannidis brothers, of Greek-Australian rock-bands such as The Atlantics (a surf group) or The Templars, of the soundtracks for Greek-Australian films such as “Head-on” performed by The Habibis...

The list is no doubt long and its contents rich and varied. It seems that the only way of salvaging this “neglected heritage” is by compiling from private record collections the evidence of both local recordings and local pressings from imported masters. I therefore take this opportunity of appealing to readers to look through their collections of records, cassettes and CDs for any Greek materials or performances by Greeks/Greek-Australians, *whose label indicates manufacture in Australia*. What is needed is an accurate copy of everything printed on the label on each side, including *all* the

φτωχογειτονιά” Ζεϊμπέκικο, and CA1401B “Έλα κοντά μου” Ινδικό. Κ. Ανδρικόπουλου. Εκτέλεσις: Κ. Ανδρικόπουλος συνοδ. Λαϊκής Ορχήστρας υπό την Διεύθυνση Κ. Ανδρικόπουλου. AWA Custom Recording (Manufactured by Amalgamated Wireless [Australasia] Ltd. Sydney): AW-33147A stereo “Η δική μου πεθερά”, and AW-33147B stereo “Καστελλοριζιά”. Τ. Χωραφίτης. Recorded live at the Castellorizian Club. Words and music by The 4 Charms.

numbers. If copying is too onerous, arrangements can be made for the labels to be photographed on-site. (Address for communication: Greek Studies [HU3, 206], La Trobe University, Victoria 3086. Email: e.gauntlett@la-trobe.edu.au).

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