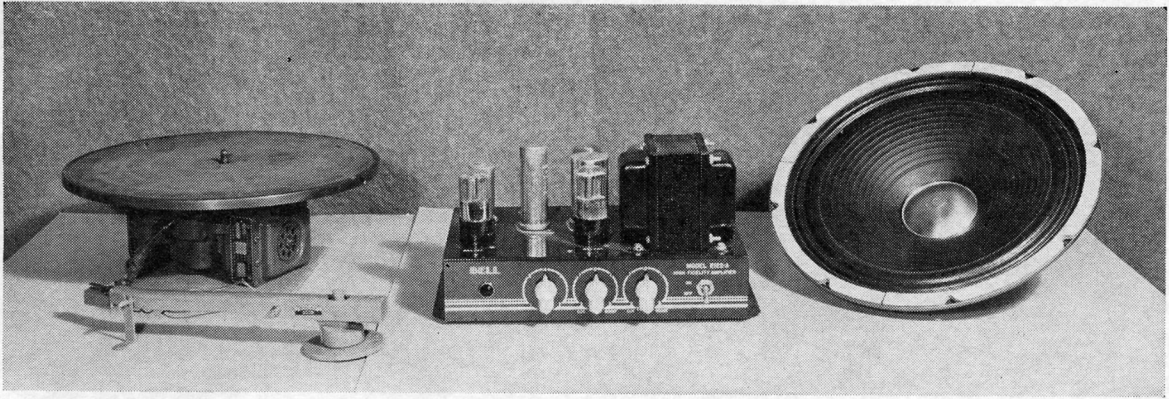


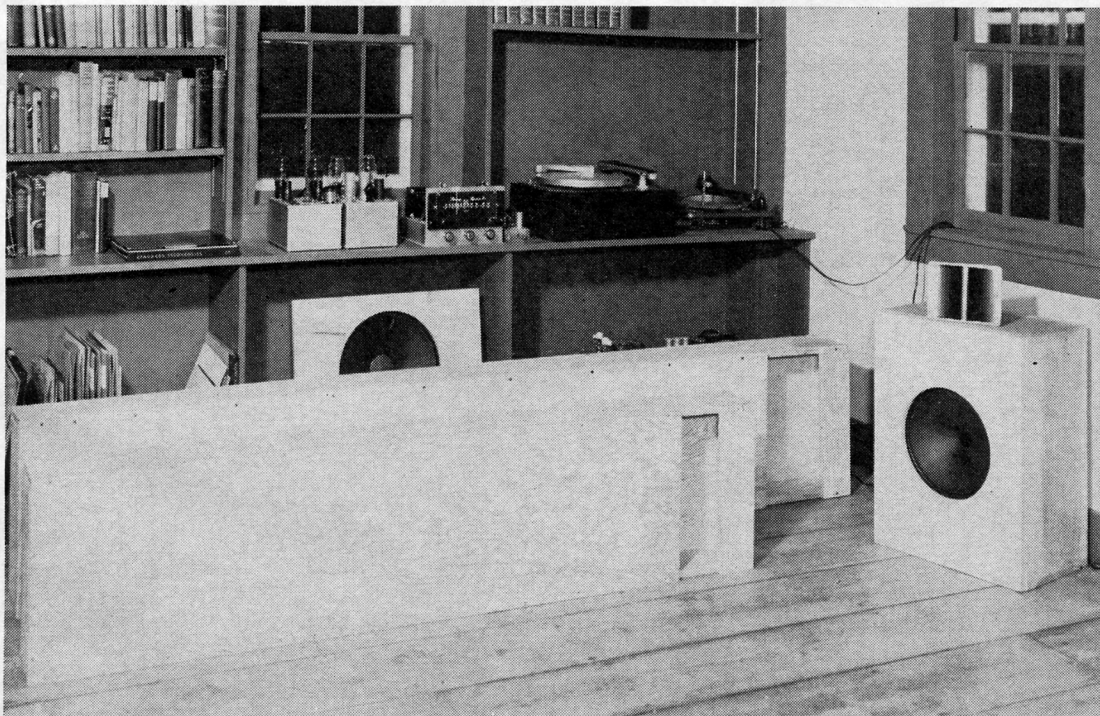
HOW IT ALL BEGAN

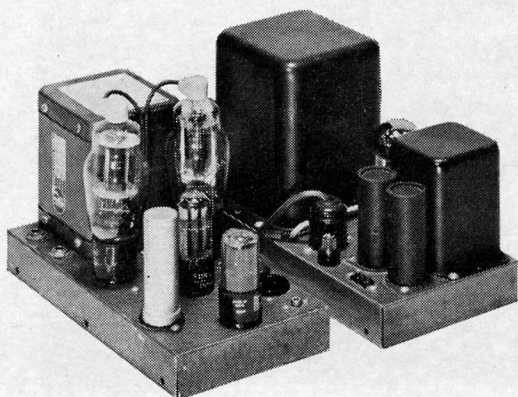
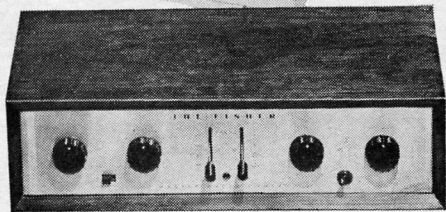
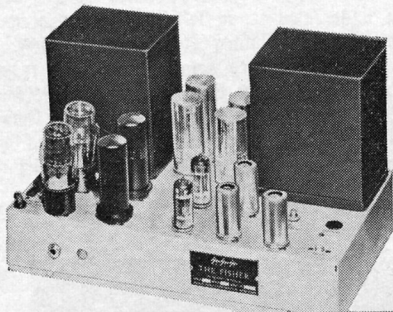
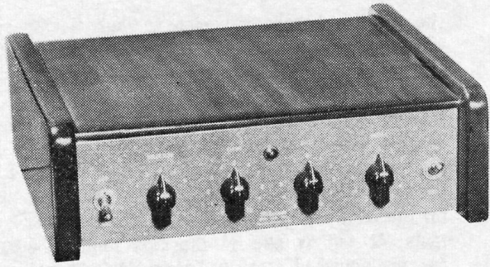
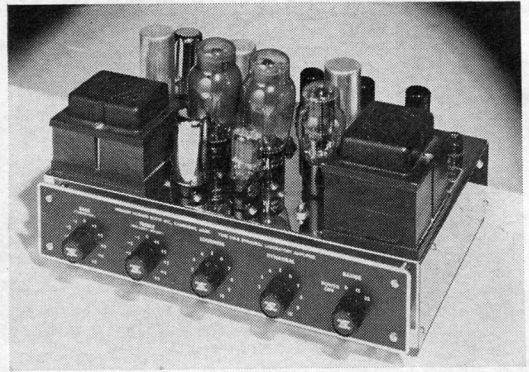
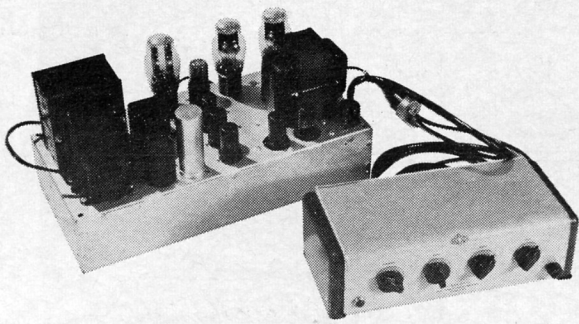
IN THE BEGINNING was chaos—and the delight of discovery. Nothing better illustrates the happy confusion of high fidelity's nonage than the scene above, photographed in 1951. It shows the listening room of Mr. C. G. Burke, one of our early record reviewers and an irrepressible audiophile of those primeval days. Not everyone pursued the quest for good sound with such magnificent abandon. But if not typical, Mr. Burke's clutter is certainly symbolic of a time when high fidelity was a hobby rather than an industry. We do not mean to imply that those were The Good Old Days. In our view, high fidelity has improved immeasurably in every way during the past fifteen years. But, having been around at the beginning, we must admit that photos of long-outmoded equipment and installations do evoke some vivid memories. To those of our long-time readers who share those memories, we dedicate this sentimental journey through the first issues of a new quarterly publication called HIGH FIDELITY Magazine.

A nostalgic reminder of the latest in high fidelity when we were very young.

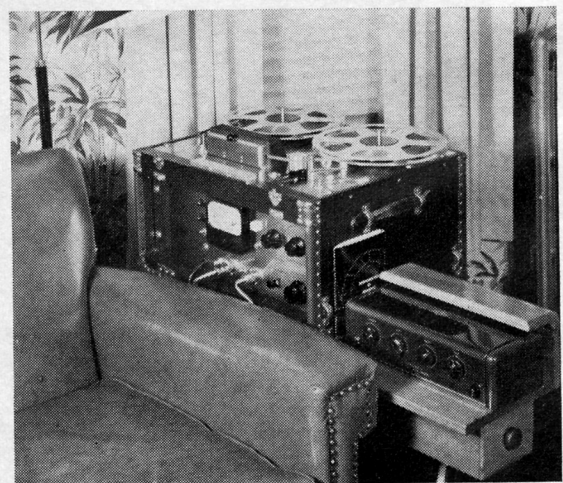


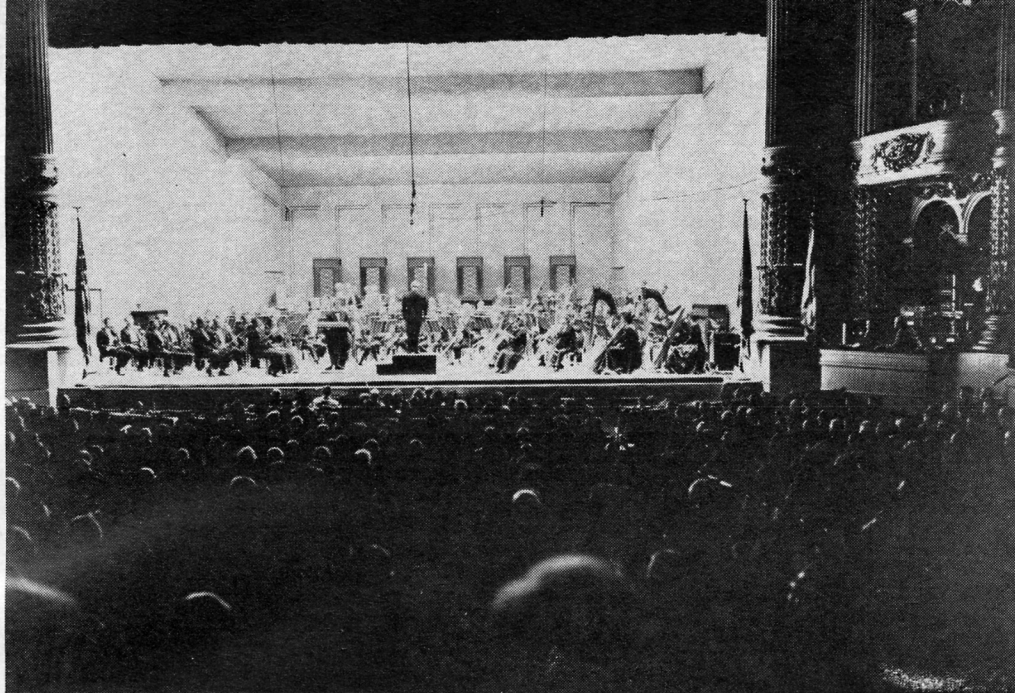
The rough-and-ready approach to high fidelity sound was typified by the above "nuts and bolts" budget system, circa 1951, consisting of a General Industries motor and turntable, an Audax arm and pickup, a Bell 10-watt control amplifier, and a University 12-inch speaker. The turntable had to be mounted on one's own plinth, and the speaker installed in one's own enclosure. High fidelity then was plainly a hobby for the man who possessed more than usual skill with tools. At left is one of the first audio showrooms (as distinguished from a "parts dealer") set up by Kierulff and Co., Los Angeles. Shelves and compartments helped organize an abundance of equipment, although the salon concept was still something for the future: note the steampipes exposed at the ceiling. Section under shelves on left-hand wall contained a row of low-cost "utility" enclosures. Below, one of the first attempts to get improved bass response from ordinary speakers: the "air coupler" system described in Vol. 1, No. 1 of this journal. Those of us who built this monster were so impressed by its deep boom that we ignored (for a time) its distortion.





Many first alarms and excursions into sonic splendor were made with the help of components such as those shown here. Left column, top, the Brook preamp-control unit and mating power or basic amplifier, the latter featuring the use of triode output tubes for linear response and low distortion. Below it, an early preamp by McIntosh: the program selector is numbered rather than marked with the names of program sources (one needed a good memory as well as technical skill in those days). Next is shown a Fisher preamp-power amp combination, the Models 50C and 50A respectively. The former introduced Fisher's slide controls for variable disc equalization, the latter was one of the first high-powered units introduced for home use. Another was the Williamson-type power amplifier, offered by Heath as Kit Model W-3M; power supply and amplifying stages occupied separate chassis. At the top of this column is one of the first high-performing integrated or control amplifiers, the Scott Model 210-B. A novel feature of this unit was its built-in "dynaural noise suppressor" which offered continuously variable control of high and low frequency noises with a minimum of loss of response of musical material. Directly below, an early Ampex, literally a tape recorder housed in a trunk. Equipment like this, originally built for professionals to use at on-location recording sessions, soon found its way into home systems, albeit installed more fittingly than this one.





Live-versus-recorded music demonstrations were an early feature of the burgeoning world of high fidelity. Above, the Philadelphia Orchestra and equipment by Ampex, Fisher, and Jensen intrigued a capacity audience at the Academy of Music, Philadelphia. At right, Edgar Hilliar at the organ in St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Mt. Kisco, N. Y., where an overflow audience could not, for the most part, distinguish between the live instrument and its reproduction via Fairchild and Fisher amplifiers, and speaker systems by Acoustic Research, JansZen, and Bozak; recorders used here were Ampex and Magnecord. Stereo fooled more listeners more consistently than monophonic reproduction. Below, some early audio goodies for the adventurous hobbyist: left, one of the first variable disc equalizers for use with amplifiers which themselves lacked this feature. Made by Pickering, it had to be connected between the turntable and the preamp. Next to it, a Heathkit electronic crossover which separated highs and lows for feeding them to separate power amplifiers and speakers. This "bi-amplifier" approach was the rage for a time but was eclipsed eventually by stereo. Speaking of which, the double-headed tone arm at the right was developed by Livingston to play binaural records engineered by Emory Cook. Two cartridges tracked two grooves cut on the same disc—by today's standards a crude technique but evidence of the reaching out for new goals that characterizes the audio art.

