Guide to the Ampex Collection Addenda ARS.0109

Finding aid prepared by Franz Kunst
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Descriptive Summary
Title: Ampex Collection Addenda
Dates: 1944-1998
Collection number: ARS.0109
Repository: Archive of Recorded Sound
Collection size: 1 box: 1 folder ; 17 open reel tapes (three 5" reels ; nine 7" reels ; four 10.5" reels ; one 12" reel)
Abstract: Various smaller collections related to the Ampex Corporation, the development of magnetic recording on tape, and stereophonic sound.
Access
Open for research; material must be requested at least two business days in advance of intended use. Contact the Archive for assistance.
Publication Rights
Property rights reside with repository. Publication and reproduction rights reside with the creators or their heirs. To obtain permission to publish or reproduce, please contact the Head Librarian of the Archive of Recorded Sound.
Preferred Citation
Sponsor
This finding aid was produced with generous financial support from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.
Related Collections
Stanford University Special Collections holds the Ampex Corporation Records, M1230. The Archive of Recorded Sound holds the Richard Hess Mullin-Palmer Tape Restoration Project Collection, ARS.0035.
Scope and Contents
This is a group of small collections, assembled from various donors, related to the history of the Ampex Corporation and its role in the development of sound recording on tape and stereophonic sound. Stanford University Special Collections holds the Ampex Corporation Records, and some artifacts described here are part of that collection, despite being housed at the Archive of Recorded Sound. The Ampex Corporation, founded in 1944 by Russian émigré Alexander M. Poniatoff, began as a military contractor making components for radar, but became a pioneer in the magnetic tape recording industry through rather unusual circumstances. In 1945, a soldier named John T. “Jack” Mullin was assigned by the U.S. Army Signal Corp to recover examples of Nazi technology from the field. In a radio station near Frankfurt, Mullin confirmed that the Germans had developed a system of sound recording and reproduction using paper and plastic tape. He returned to the United States with fifty reels of audio tape and two AEG Magnetophon brand reel-to-reel machines on which to play them. Following a successful demonstration at an Institute of Radio Engineers conference, Mullin, along with business partner Bill Palmer, approached entertainer Bing Crosby with a proposal for using audio tape in the production of his radio program Philco Radio Time. Crosby thus became the most significant early investor in Ampex's tape recording line. Mullin even worked on the Philco program himself, doing the editing using both the German tape he brought back and with other American brands then in development.
The Ampex Collection Addenda includes two pages of a Philco Radio Time script, possibly with Mullin's notes on the back. The collection also includes an original Magnetphon Tonschreiber tape case with reels and parts. There are also various tapes which came from Jack Mullin via Ampex employee Jim Wheeler, some of which almost certainly came from this case, and miscellaneous tapes from the estate of C.D. (Charles Dewitt) Du Bois, an executive at Ampex beginning in the late 1950s. Finally, there are recordings made in 1998 at a gathering commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Ampex 200, the first tape recorder made by the company.
Indexing Terms
Ampex Corporation.
Mullin, John T. (Jack), 1913-1999
Palmer, William A., 1911-1996
Sound--Recording and reproducing

Physical Description: 3 10.5" open reel tapes

Scope and Contents

Ampex 200 Anniversary Party 4/25/98 in Pleasanton, California. Held at the home of Mark Drury. Among those present: Walter Selsted, former chief engineer; John G. "Jay" McKnight, formerly of Ampex, then of Magnetic Reference Laboratories; and Peter Hammar, founder and curator of the former Ampex Museum. Three open reel tapes, dubbed from the original DAT.

Source
Donated by David Dintenfass in 1998.

2. C.D. Du Bois tapes

Physical Description: 10 open reel tapes: three 5" reels; four 7" reels

Box 1

Professional Recorders in Education

Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape

Scope and Contents

Demonstration tape, 2-track stereo. Recorded, Produced and Duplicated on Ampex Professional Recorders by Audio Distributors, Inc. (Grand Rapids, Michigan address).

Box 1

Here Is The Ampex Home Music Center And This Is What It Can Do. Ampex Demonstration Tape, Catalog No. AT-20 (2 track stereo, stacked heads, 7.5 ips)

Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape

Box 1

Groundbreaking - Ampex Audio, Sunnyvale 1959-01-28

Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape

Scope and Contents

Date determined from Ampex Collection finding aid.

Box 1

John Halloran Choir. A Christmas Greeting In Stereophonic Sound. "To Mr. and Mrs. DuBois, From [C.AA Frey?], Your Ampex Dealer."

Physical Description: 1 5" open reel tape

Scope and Contents

From the printed tape box: "Here for your holiday listening are the voices of the renowned John Halloran Choir singing a group of traditional Christmas carols. These were specially arranged by John Halloran for this tape made for Ampex's friends. This stereophonic recording is sent as a personal Christmas greeting to you and is unavailable in any other form."

Box 1

"To Marketing. Bim Farrar, DeWitt DuBois. From: Gene Russell" (Irish brand tape)

Physical Description: 1 5" open reel tape

Box 1

"To Dube DuBois, From R. Sprague" (Ampex Corporation sticker with Chicago address, Scotch brand tape, 3 3/4 ips) 1959-04-03

Physical Description: 1 5" open reel tape

Box 1

Demon Drums. Concertapes Pre-release Copy (In-line heads, 7.5 ips) 1958

Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape

Scope and Contents

Handwritten identification on circular tape case. Tape was released in 1958 as Duelin' Demon Drums, Featuring Richard Campbell and Harry H. Coon, Concertapes 512(stereo)/411(mono).
3. Mullin tapes from Jim Wheeler

Physical Description: 6 open reel tapes: four 7" reels; one 10.5" reel; one 12" reel

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Bundle 1

Box 1

#7 Hubless Reel: "early '48 Crosby Show from hubless reel" 1948
Physical Description: 1 12" open reel tape

Box 1

#10 Misc 4
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape

Box 1

#11 Misc 3: Rainier Herkimer Hamstrung
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape

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Bundle 2

Box 1

#1 Slot 8
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape

Box 1

#2 Slot 1 "short recording, voice and music"
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape

Box 1

#4 Slot 3 Tonschrieber Reel 3, Tails Out
Physical Description: 1 10.5" open reel tape

Box 1

4. Philco Radio Time script (portion) 1947-10
Physical Description: 1 folder
Scope and Contents
Two non-consecutive pages of a script for Bing Crosby’s Philco Radio Time program, recorded October 3, 1947, and broadcast October 15th. The guest is Dinah Shore. There are handwritten notes (possibly Mullin’s) on the reverse sides.

Box 1

Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape

6. Equipment

Ampex Tape Recorder
Pierce Wire Recorder
Magnetophon Tonschrieber AEG Ton S.b.1 tape case 1944
Scope and Contents
This metal case was brought to the United States by Jack Mullin from Germany in 1945, and has been identified as part of a AEG (Allgemeine-Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft) Magnetophon Tonschreiber. It measures 9.75" x 11.5" x 17" and has "Ton S.b. 1 (Zubehör)" printed on the top. The case held open reel tapes and supplies, and apparently fit next to the actual reel-to-reel player. Inside there are slots for 10” reels. In three slots there are two reels in metal cases and one reel with German writing. No tape is on the reels (see the Mullin tapes for what may be them). There is also a compartment on one side for tools and supplies, including rubber rollers and vacuum tubes (there are two Telefunken LS50s and several smaller tubes in padded holes). A powerful vinegar smell persists, even after seventy years.