



Vaudeville Accordion Classics
The Complete Works of
Guido Deiro
(1886-1950)

Henry Doktorski, accordion

Disc A (73:23)

- 1** Temperamental Rag (3:00)
- 2** Pink Slippers Valse (4:14)
- 3** Preparedness March (3:45)
- 4** Il Pentimento Waltz (4:03)
- 5** Royal Flying Corps March (3:03)
- 6** Kismet Fox Trot (2:46)
- 7** Orazione e Marcia Militare (4:00)
- 8** Western Stars March (2:58)
- 9** Moonlight Waltz (3:26)
- 10** Hand Grenade Throwers March (3:16)
- 11** Deiro Rag (3:43)
- 12** Muskateers March (3:10)
- 13** Deirina Mazurka °(3:40)

- 14** I Don't Care Polka (2:35)
- 15** Lido Tango (5:04)
- 16** Queen of the Air March (2:19)
- 17** Valse Caprice No. 1 (4:00)
- 18** Neapolitan Polka (3:00)
- 19** My Florence Waltz (3:59)
- 20** Egypto Fantasia (5:51)

Disc B (72:09)

- 1** Zampa Rag (2:46)
- 2** Lola Fox Trot (3:39)
- 3** Breitenbush March (2:51)
- 4** Tango Tosino (3:41)
- 5** Guido's Royal March (4:51)
- 6** Light & Shadow Waltz (3:24)
- 7** Variety Polka (4:06)
- 8** Valse Pirouette (2:25)
- 9** Marines March (3:07)
- 10** Dolores Waltz (2:45)
- 11** Los Bomberos March (4:01)

12 - 27 Compositions from

Guido Deiro's Royal Method for Piano Accordion

- 12** Accordionette Waltz (1:09)
- 13** Young Accordionist March (0:57)
- 14** Little Accordion Player Waltz (1:30)
- 15** Torpedo March (2:01)
- 16** Beautiful Girl Waltz (2:35)
- 17** The Peasant Quadrille (1:00)
- 18** Radio Waltz (2:49)
- 19** Dimples Polka (3:43)
- 20** The Accordion Girl Waltz (3:22)
- 21** Sharpshooters March (2:23)
- 22** Venno (Duet) Fox Trot (0:49)
- 23** Jewel Waltz (Duet) (2:16)
- 24** King Boy (Duet) Fox Trot (1:09)
- 25** Minneapolis March (Duet) (2:12)
- 26** California Mazurka (Duet) (2:03)
- 27** Sharpshooters March (Reprise) (2:23)

All compositions by Guido Deiro;

Tracks 17, 22, 24, 25, on CD 2 co-composed with Joseph W. Nicomede

Notes by Henry Doktorski

Guido was born in the village of Salto Canavese, Italy on September 1, 1886. His first accordion was brought from Germany by his uncle Frederico Deiro, when he was nine years old. This accordion had nine keys on the treble and two basses.

Guido said, "One day, when my uncle asked me to play for him, and I refused to do so, he took the accordion and broke it on my head. I think that incident, later on, had a lot to do in making me become a real player. My father bought me another accordion; this one had two rows of keys on the treble and eight basses. I used to play this accordion in front of a fruit stand to attract the attention of the customers."

The family owned general stores and Guido worked there as a clerk by day. But at night, he was a street musician and played his beloved accordion. His talent resulted in his becoming a professional musician, performing in France, Germany, and Switzerland. In 1909, he was commissioned by the Ronco Accordion Company of Vercelli, Italy, to demonstrate the company's piano accordion at the Alaskan-Yukon-Pacific Exposition. This World's Fair was held in Seattle from June to October 1909 and Deiro's performances there created quite a stir.

While in San Francisco in 1910, Deiro gave an impromptu concert and was discovered by an agent for the Orpheum Vaudeville Circuit. He was soon engaged as a headliner, one of the most popular and highest paid acts on the entire bill. Deiro wrote that:

"The manager of the American Theatre at that time in San Francisco was Sid Grauman. Mr. Grauman suggested that I let the singer go and that I do an act alone, so I opened at the American Theatre, June 15th, 1910, billed Deiro, American Premier Piano Accordionist. I was dressed in a white flannel suit, black bow tie, using a chair for the first

two numbers. My program was:

- 1st, Poet and Peasant Overture
- 2nd, Dill Pickles Rag
- 3rd, My Treasure Waltz
- 4th, I Got a Ring on My Finger

That was the first time that the piano accordion was called that name, and the first time that it appeared on the vaudeville stage."

For many years Deiro was a headline attraction in the largest theaters of not only America, but many other countries of the world. He recorded for the Columbia Phonograph Company and also composed quite a group of accordion solos, nearly fifty compositions in all, one of which, *Kismet*, became a hit song.

Guido Deiro recorded a total of 112 known sides beginning in 1911, almost exclusively for the Columbia record company. Each side contained the equivalent of one track, about three minutes of music in the standard ten-inch format. The records were enormously popular in their day, and, along with his vaudeville stardom, helped to propel Deiro to the status of a minor celebrity in American culture by the late teens. Throughout the teens and well into the 1920s, Guido Deiro was the dominant voice of the accordion for Columbia's Italian-American market. In the substantial Columbia Italian catalog of 1916, Guido's thirty seven recordings were the only accordion records listed, apart from one side by Guido's brother, Pietro.

Pietro wrote, "My brother is of a very temperamental and high strung nature but I truly believe that it is these finer traits of emotionalism which have attributed (sic) to his success as an artist. His playing comes direct from his heart and soul. When we were children together I was always inspired by his playing before I began to play the accordion. The thought uppermost in my mind in those days was if I could only become as good a player as Guido."

Contracts in the Deiro archives show that in 1910, Guido Deiro may well have been the highest paid musical instrumentalist in vaudeville at \$600.00 a week! This has been confirmed by none other than Anthony Galla-Rini, the last living vaudeville accordionist, now almost 100 years old, who was performing with his family on chromatic accordion. Newspaper articles, press releases and vaudeville critics' reviews confirm that it was Guido Deiro who coined the name "piano accordion" and first used it professionally.

On July 12, 1916, Deiro performed at the Pan Pacific Exposition and won the Gold Medal. The San Diego Union reported:

"It was a big day at the Exposition. The crowd was one of the best of the year and was estimated at better than 8,000. . . . Guido Deiro, piano accordionist, was one of the hits of the day. Deiro gave a half-hour concert of classical numbers, without even a ragtime selection as an encore. So insistent was the crowd that Deiro had one of the hardest afternoons of his career, and when he concluded, the warmth of the afternoon and his exertions had given him the appearance of a man who had taken a shower bath fully clothed."

In the Spring of 1922, Deiro had the distinct honor of becoming the first accordionist to perform on radio. A contemporary newspaper printed the following account:

"Guido Deiro, one of the country's greatest piano accordionists and a star at the Shubert-Detroit theater this week, gave radio enthusiasts a rare treat Friday night when he headed the regular evening concert of The News broadcasting station. Deiro is a brother of Pietro Deiro, himself a famous accordionist. Great artist, though he undoubtedly is, Mr. Deiro declared that his invisible audience had given him the worst case of stage fright he ever suffered. When he finished his third number, he grinned and said: 'I'd sooner play to 15,000 people in a theater than

before that thing.'

And he indicated the mouth of the telephone receiver in front of him. Had he not admitted his temporary embarrassment, however, no one would have known it, for he played with his customary skill and artistry."

Perhaps Guido Deiro's most exciting itineraries were two "World Tours" by steamer ship in 1928 and 1929. The first tour in the Summer of 1928 took him to Australia where, booked by the Williamson Tivoli Agency, he performed at the best vaudeville theaters on that continent in cities such as Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth. He also made his last recordings while in Australia. On the way back to the United States, he performed in New Zealand, Pago-Pago, Samoa, the Fiji Islands, and Hawaii.

Deiro's second world tour took him to Europe in 1929. A Eureka, California newspaper article dated February 23, 1929 described his tour:

"From here Deiro will proceed directly to New York, via his home in San Francisco, sailing on the Leviathan in order to reach England by April 1. He will open his European season in Glasgow after which he is booked for lengthy appearance in London. His contract calls for bookings in England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Italy and Spain. He will spend considerable time along the Riviera. He expects to be gone a year."

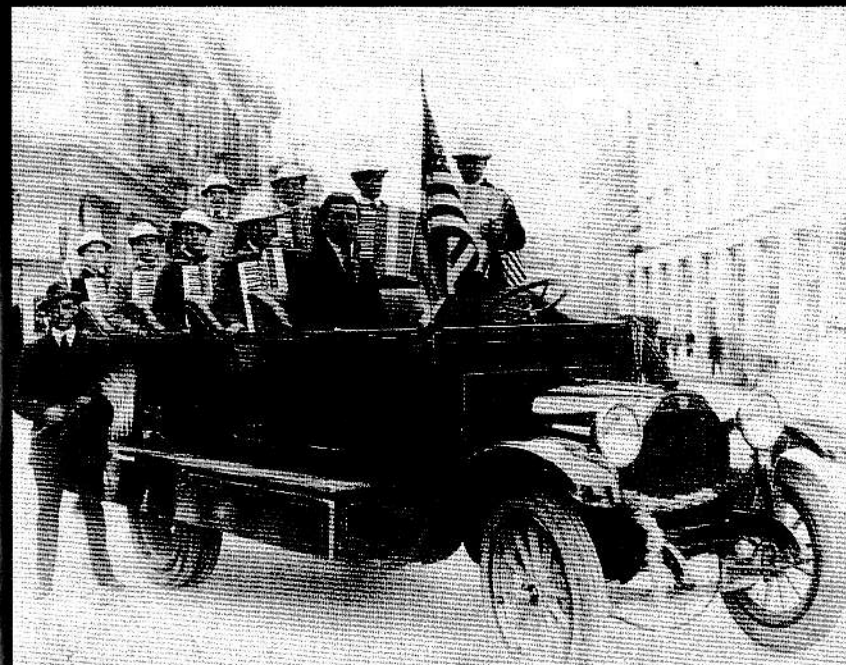
Deiro performed concerts in England, the Middle East and the European continent, remaining over a month in England filling dates in Leeds and Brighton. He headlined at the famous 'London Palladium' and did not return to the United States until 1930. While abroad, the worldwide stock market crash nearly bankrupted him.

Deiro Center of Interest At Accordion Club

SAN FRANCISCO, Aug. 25.—More than 8000 people, with Deiro the center of interest, attended the annual Accordion club picnic Aug. 21 at Fairfax Park. Deiro led a parade of several hundred automobiles, with police escort, and an accordion band of 250 members, all graduates of the accordion school.

Deiro was the most popular Italian in all San Francisco this day. As master of ceremonies, he proved to be the biggest hit of the show and kept the crowds in a merry mood. A motion picture of the principal events was taken and will be kept by the club as a reminder of the very successful picnic.

Deiro has made the accordion an extremely popular instrument and he is one of the real big box-office musical draws.



Guido Deiro with fellow piano accordionists

Deiro wrote nearly fifty marches, waltzes, rags, fox-trots, tangos, mazurkas and polkas. Most were recorded and published. *Deiro Rag* was his first published composition (1913) and was published in a piano arrangement by Jerome H. Remick and Company. Twenty-four pieces were published by B. Quattrociocche of Steubenville, Ohio, the first publisher devoted exclusively to accordion music. Deiro was with the company from its inception in 1916.

In 1936, the 96-page *Guido Deiro's Royal Method for the Piano Accordion* was published by Nicomede Music of Altoona, Pennsylvania; it included numerous exercises, studies and etudes, seven original compositions by Deiro, seven by the publisher, Joseph W. Nicomede, four pieces which were co-composed by both, including four duets for teacher and student, as well as popular tunes by other composers, such as Foster's *Old Folks At Home*, Verdi's waltz from *Il Trovatore*, and Juventino Rosas' *Over the Waves*. Deiro's *Royal Method* was later published by Mills Music of New York City.

The 96-page second volume of the *Royal Method*, consisting of three pieces by Deiro (*The Accordion Girl Waltz*, *Dimples Polka* and *California Mazurka* duet), five pieces by Nicomede (arranged by Deiro), several compositions by composers such as Franz von Suppé (*Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna*), Z.M. Bickford (*Dainty Maid Concert Overture*), Fredric A. Tedesco (*Moonlight Memories*), Franz Liszt (*Liebestraum*), Maxie Fiseigna (*Tango Amoroso*), Jas. Bruzzese (*Calabresa Polka*), and V. Sisco (*Marconi Waltz*), and numerous unattributed exercises, etudes and studies, was also published by Nicomede. The cover included an endorsement by the famous accordionist, Pietro Frosini, "I highly endorse this method." Curiously, the date of publication of the second volume is listed on the copyright page as 1933.

Nicomede also published an anthology by Deiro titled *The Radio Folio: A collection of old time familiar melodies easily arranged by the famous Guido Deiro*.

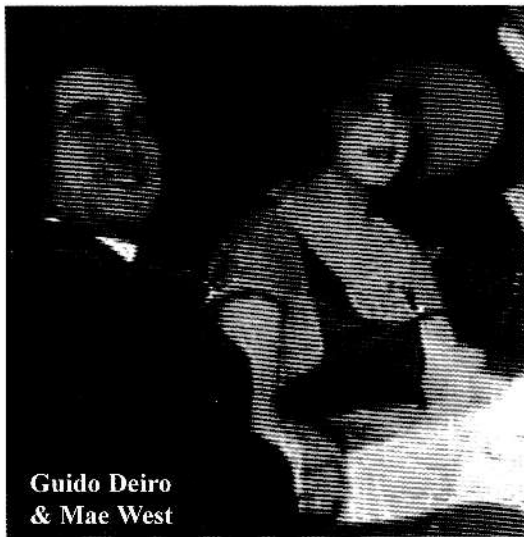
A great book for teaching and radio work. This book included popular tunes such as the Waltz from *Il Trovatore*, *Jingle Bells*, *How Can I Leave Thee*, *The Old Oaken Bucket*, *Farewell to Thee*, *Take Back Thy Heart*, *Marching Thru Georgia*, *Spanish Cavalier*, *John Brown's Body*, *Dream of Love*, and *Home Sweet Home*.

* * * * *

Deiro was not only a consummate accordionist, but an attractive man and passionate lover who married four times. Deiro's second wife was the voluptuous sex icon, Mae West. Mae West (1893-1980) was to become an American legend: movie star, cultural icon, celebrity, comedienne, feminist, sex goddess, wit, vaudevillian, writer, entertainer, businesswoman, and impresario.

Deiro and Mae met for the first time when they both performed at a vaudeville show in Detroit during August 1913. Deiro commanded top billing and was praised in review after review as an accordionist of exceptional ability. Because Deiro was a headliner — Mae was only playing secondary roles at the time — she undoubtedly had hopes that he would give a boost to her career. However, her attraction to him was not entirely for professional reasons. West, who had remained detached from previous lovers, was consumed by Deiro. She found him exciting, passionate, and indulgent. Deiro bought Mae a beautiful diamond ring within a week of their first meeting. He said, "This ring is not a family jewel — it cost me real money. Please wear it." Mae wore it proudly.

West confessed that she fell passionately for the charming accordionist; for the first time, she was in love. She wrote, "I couldn't help myself — [Deiro] was an amazing lover. The sex thing was terrific with this guy. I wanted to do it [with Deiro] morning, noon and night, and that's all I wanted to do." For the first time, physical desire met its match in emotional intensity. West described the affair as "very deep,



Guido Deiro
& Mae West

with Mae. He developed and produced her act and conducted the theater pit orchestra during her performances. Mae appreciated Deiro's musical abilities and used to ask her audiences, "How do you like my leader?" Deiro always got a big hand.

Deiro proved not only an exciting lover to Mae, but also a springboard to increased stature in vaudeville. Things improved even more when he had his new contract specify joint bookings with Mae; he could then be with her and also continue his high-paying work as a headline accordionist. West even made a pledge that she would not appear on the stage without him.

Deiro proposed many times to her and she finally agreed to marry him

hittin' on all the emotions. You can't get too hot over anybody unless there's somethin' that goes along with the sex act, can you?"

Deiro was equally infatuated with Mae and arranged to be booked with her the following week in Rochester, New York. Over the next two seasons, Mae and Deiro attempted to be together as much as possible. At first bookings were difficult to schedule. When Deiro's agent could not book them together, Deiro canceled his own bookings to travel

(perhaps as early as late 1913, or perhaps not until the Summer of 1914 after his divorce from his first wife was finalized) under the stipulation that the marriage be kept a secret. Deiro took Mae to meet his family members in Cle Elum, Washington and, despite his promise, confided to them that the two were, indeed, married.

Although their marriage was supposed to be a secret, their business associates guessed the truth, especially when *Variety* magazine printed a notice stating that "Mr. and Mrs. Deiro" (i.e. Guido and Mae together, as an act) were playing at Shea's in Toronto, Canada, for the week beginning November 29th, 1913. Other sources also confirm their engagement and marriage. Mae herself was quoted in one newspaper of the day referring to Deiro as "her fiancée." During an NBC national radio broadcast in 1946, Walter Winchell stated emphatically, "It wasn't Pietro, but his brother Guido, who was married to Mae West." Joe Laurie, Jr., the author of the superb 1953 book, *Vaudeville*, referred to Guido Deiro as "Mae West's hubby."

Between July 1914 and February 1915, Mae and Deiro appeared on the same bill in theaters throughout the Loew Circuit. Mae worked the accordion into her act, pretending to play as Deiro stood in the wings supplying the real music. Despite Mae's happy recollections of Deiro's tenderness, she knew only too well that he had an extremely volatile side. Infidelity and rumors of infidelity caused their relationship to unravel.

One night Deiro accidentally discovered a note which was passed to Mae at Giolito's, an Italian restaurant they frequented in New York. He read the note aloud, "I love you so much I can't stand it any more. I must meet you and talk to you. I don't care if that man is your husband." Deiro was understandably outraged. Mae tried to pacify him by claiming the note was meant for another woman. However, the next time Mae and Deiro dined at Giolito's, Mae, under the excuse of visiting the powder room, privately met her would-be lover and warned him, "Look, there would be a murder if Guido knew you meant the note for me." Sometime in

1916 Deiro spoke to Mae's parents at their Brooklyn home, "I kill the next man that tries to take her away from me!" Mae's parents did not know she was already married to Deiro. Her father said, "None of those Italian knife tricks!" Her mother, Mathilda, asked her to break up with Deiro.

Mae left for Chicago and disappeared. She wrote, "I see now it was a cruel thing I did to Deiro, breaking without a word of parting, going off to Chicago. Deiro carried on like a Latin maniac, calling Mother at all hours of the night, begging to know where I was, trying to find me. He threatened to have the police search for me, then started drinking heavily, and finally ended up in a hospital, very ill with pneumonia."

Mae filed for divorce from Guido Deiro on the grounds of adultery on July 14, 1920. The divorce was granted by the Supreme Court of the State of New



Mae West, 1914

York on November 9th of that year. Deiro did not appear at the hearings. Mae later said, "Marriage is a great institution. I'm not ready for an institution."

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For nearly two decades — from 1910 to the late 1920s — Guido Deiro was one of the most popular musicians on the vaudeville stage. He routinely traveled back and forth across the United States and Canada (and other countries as well) as a vaudeville headliner. As he commanded top billing, his income was substantial and he lived an opulent lifestyle: wearing only the finest clothes, eating at the finest restaurants and driving the finest cars. Naturally, women who attended his concerts were attracted to him and he was not disinclined to enjoy their intimate company. In these respects at least, his life was not much different from that of a modern day rock star.

The golden age of vaudeville and the extravagant era of the "roaring twenties" began to decline with the advent of the motion picture. As early as 1896 motion pictures were introduced into vaudeville shows as added attractions and to clear the house between shows. Moving pictures gradually preempted more and more performing time from live stage acts until, around 1927, a bill typically featured a full-length motion picture with "added acts" of vaudeville. The stock market crash of October 1929, the great financial depression of the 1930s and the growth of radio and later of television contributed to the rapid decline of vaudeville and to its virtual disappearance after World War II.

Deiro lost his fortune as he had invested heavily in stocks. Vaudeville shows closed, theaters showed talking movies, and he could not find work. He opened an accordion teaching franchise, but his heart was not in teaching.

In 1940, he relocated to the North Broadway area of Los Angeles, an



ca. 1909, with Ronco Piano Accordion:
Deiro's first vaudeville photo

Italian American enclave, and opened a "Guido Deiro Conservatory of Music," teaching and selling accordions. He made a stab at motion pictures, appearing in the musical *Shine on Harvest Moon* and the Carole Lombard comedy *The Other Man*, but work was hard to get during the war years. One by one his studio franchises failed. Gasoline was rationed, making it difficult for students to travel to lessons and for Deiro and his affiliate teachers to get out and home teach.

By 1947, the collapse of his fourth marriage, the hardship of the war years, the waning popularity of the accordion, the failure of his accordion studios and his deteriorating health combined to put the former vaudeville and recording star into a deep depression from which he never recovered. Guido Deiro died at the age of 63 of congestive heart failure in Loma Linda Sanitarium on July 26, 1950.

During his last days, Deiro had his three best friends with him: Syl Prior, James Haney and Anthony Galla-Rini. A fitting tribute was paid to this superb artist by Sydney Dawson of the Accordion Teachers' Guild: "Guido died a great man. His greatness was felt when he walked into any group."

Although the great Guido Deiro passed away in 1950, he continues to live today through his music. Deiro's son, Count Guido Roberto Deiro, has preserved the legacy of his father's musical accomplishments by donating the Deiro Archives—an extensive collection of original sheet music, 78 RPM records, newspaper clippings and his father's own 1924 Guerrini accordion—to the Center for the Study of Free-Reed Instruments (directed by Dr. Allan W. Atlas) at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Count Deiro is also involved in producing recordings of his father's music, (including the present CD collection). In addition, he has commissioned a web site at GuidoDeiro.com devoted to his father's memory, and has funded the restoration of his father's 1928 Vitaphone sound film.

GUIDO
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The first to introduce the piano-accordion
on the **STAGE** – in **CONCERT** – in **RECORDS** – in **RADIO** – in **VITAPHONE**



Advertisement for the
Supremacy Accordion Co.,
ca. 1936

Henry Doktorski

In March 2001, Henry Doktorski performed at the Recital Hall at the Graduate Center at CUNY (City University of New York). Among the works played were two pieces by the virtuoso accordionist/composer, Guido Deiro (1886-1950). Shortly after the concert, Mr. Doktorski received a letter from Guido Deiro's only son—Count Guido Roberto Deiro—who was a young lad when his famous father passed away.

“Bravo! Bravo! It has been more than a half-century since I heard anyone play my father’s music as well as you! My family and I were stunned by your cultivated, dramatic stage presence and musicianship. Your command of the instrument almost exceeds its capabilities. More than that, you demonstrate sensitivity and respect for what the composer was trying to say and you play with genuine feeling. I know my father would have been delighted with your renditions. The audience obviously agreed. Believe me, no one has played his music as well as you did this evening.”

Henry Doktorski is one of the leading concert accordionists in the United States and a recognized figure in international classical accordion circles. He has delighted hundreds of thousands with his interpretations, including performances on accordion with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Tanglewood Festival Orchestra, the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, the McKeesport Symphony and the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, to name a few. He has recorded with the Cleveland Chamber Symphony and the Pittsburgh Symphony (you can hear him on the hit CD *Cinema Serenade* with violinist Itzhak Perlman) and was the featured soloist on two compact discs: *A Classical Christmas* with the Pittsburgh Chamber Orchestra and *Music by George Gershwin* with the Duquesne Chamber Players. Mr. Doktorski serves on the faculty of The City Music Center at Duquesne University as instructor of accordion and is the founder of The Classical Free-Reed, Inc. – a nonprofit educational organization devoted to the accordion and classical music. For more information, see HenryDoktorski.com.



Producers: Count Guido Roberto Deiro and Henry Doktorski

Engineer: Skip Sanders

Executive Producers: Becky and David Starobin

Design: Alexis Napoliello

Liner Notes: Henry Doktorski

On CD 2, Track 27--*Sharpshooters March* Reprise-- Henry Doktorski performs on Guido Deiro's own 1924 Guerrini Accordion, courtesy of the Center for the Study of Free-Reed Instruments, Graduate Center, City University of New York.

Recorded at Anything Audio Studios, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, using two Audio Technica 4050-5 microphones (for the right and left manuals of the accordion) and one Neuman U89 microphone.

Bridge Records wishes to thank Count Deiro; and Dr. Allan W. Atlas of The Center for the Study of Free-Reed Instruments, at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York for their kind assistance.

For Bridge Records: Ashley Arrington, Kelly Ferriter, Daniel Lippel, Alexis Napoliello and Robert Starobin

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