



*Cartwright's passion isn't just a collection; it's a wall-to-wall history of recorded music.*

## A CHAMBER OF MUSIC

*Jim Cartwright of Austin owns 25,000 classical records. Then there are the ones for sale.*

**W**ithout a good set of directions it is easy to get lost in this quaint old neighborhood on the west side of Austin. The arched and gabled brick bungalows have not all been discovered by the fashionable fix-up set, so some of the lawns are shaggy and the houses look their age. When you finally find the address you are searching for, 1404 W. 30th Street, it's a cottage out of one of the more realistic German fairy tales. The door is painted green. On it a small brass plate reads, "Immortal Performances, Classical Records, Bought/Sold."

Jim Cartwright, a tall, scruffily bearded man who is a little shy, is the guardian of the house's secrets. For those enchanted by record collecting, there is unimaginable treasure in every cranny. There is also clutter—boxes of records on the floor, stacks of catalog pages to be assembled. "Don't set anything down," warns Cartwright. "The house swallows things." With a bit of coaxing he will show you around before he takes you out to the garage, where he keeps the rest of the records—the ones that are for sale.

An ancient talking machine sits across from the door of the living room; when Cartwright goes on a picnic, he takes it along and plays old records by Arthur Pryor, John Philip Sousa's assistant band-leader. A pair of superb Dahlquist speakers with black grille cloths are the only visible components of his modern stereo rig. They flank an egg-shaped white lamp that illuminates a battered oil portrait of Cartwright's mother, which leans on the mantel. Scores by Chopin litter the Steinway baby grand.

A crowded hallway to the right leads to an alcove hiding stacks of elaborate stereo equipment—tape recorders and turntables, an equalizer, pre-amps and amplifiers, and a Packburn Noise Suppressor (designed to cut out ticks and pops on old records). Across the hall is the sanctum sanctorum, a library that holds Cartwright's private record collection.

As a longtime collector of classical records, I learned years ago never to trust a dealer who isn't a collector himself. By this criterion Cartwright is eminently trustworthy. Though there is no way of knowing exactly (who would have the pa-

tience to count?), he estimates that he has 25,000 records. Of these, only a third are LPs. Most are 78's, the recorded legacy of the legendary performers of the early years of this century—thus the name of his business. His collection, organized by category (vocal, orchestral, piano, violin) and by artist, contains the bulk of the output on 78's from all the famous classical musicians.

In the midst of everything else sits one of Cartwright's four Edison cylinder machines, devices that play "records" about the size and shape of the cardboard core of a roll of bathroom tissue. Some of these odd records are durable cylinders of celluloid over a plaster of paris core; others are wax, which deteriorates with use and can be broken into pieces that write like crayons. The wax cylinders can be shaved down, and then new material can be recorded on the smoothed surfaces. If a visitor shows a hint of interest, Cartwright will put something substantial—perhaps an antique cylinder of the great Italian baritone Antonio Scotti, recorded circa 1906—on his 1910 Edison Amberola A, which has its horn built into