



COVER ART

EMERSON once said that if a man made a better mousetrap than his neighbour, the world would make a beaten path to his door. Nowadays, unless the mousetrap is properly packaged, the world is not likely to diverge from the broad road of the established market. And the importance of "cover art"—of the package—applies even to such merchandise as gramophone recordings.

Once these arrived in plain clothes, trusting only to their contents, and only the most expensive sets were in glamorous outfits. Even the first long-playing records arrived in overalls primarily designed to protect the expensive and vulnerable surface. Working from the plain clothes of the past, most of the companies chose a design and used it for all their records. But with the rapid growth of a competitive market, anything that would help sell a record was of value. Just as the book industry had developed the use of attractive dust jackets, so the recording companies began to concentrate on more and more striking covers.

Designing for this field is a new art, and the styles are varied. Some companies, like Deutsche Grammophon,

NOT so long ago "cover art" simply meant flossy pictures—almost invariably (and sometimes excessively) feminine. But with the arrival of the long-playing disc and high-fidelity recording, cover art has come to mean something better—something that no longer requires inverted commas



have kept a sober, plain style for their classical recordings, depending upon the quality of work and artists to sell them. Other companies added pictures of artists or composers to help distinguish one record from another, but such presentation was often uninspired. With the advent of jazz and light "mood" music on LPs, the whole style of covers began to change to something more exciting. The emphasis is now on colour, and the more brilliant and unusual the combination, the better. (Black and white reproduction on these pages can suggest only design, and hardly does justice to the beauty of colour and the skill in the original conception and its reproduction.)

Variety in cover style is important, though some companies have used simi-

lar styles for a series. Argo have some fine black and white photographs, Vox have some witty versions of medieval woodcuts for their older music, and Decca have covered their Gilbert and Sullivan recordings with a series of Victoriana. Some of the opera discs, notably the Russian ones, owe something to stained glass, and other artists have produced designs of gaiety and wit in flat colour and line drawings, while some covers are abstrac-



THE PICTURE tells almost everything in this eye-catching cover—for "Folk Songs of the Frontier"—only the minimum of lettering is used

N.Z. LISTENER, MARCH 22, 1957.