

Stereo Review

AUGUST 1973 • 75 CENTS

SPECIAL SPEAKER ISSUE

WHAT KIND OF SPEAKERS SHOULD YOU USE FOR QUADRAPHONICS?



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HAZEL GREEN ACAD
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KY 40332 SCF
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Pioneer's new and



phase distortion, plus substantially better stability with four double tuned phase linear ceramic filters and four monolithic IC's in the IF section.

6-stage limiters

The IF section includes 6-stage limiter circuits. Used in conjunction with differential amplifiers in monolithic IC's, noise interference is completely eliminated with a signal to noise ratio of 75dB.

Exclusive Phase Lock Loop (PLL) IC circuitry in the TX-9100 multiplex section

Developed and used for the first time by Pioneer, the Phase Lock Loop (PLL) circuit is actually an electronic servomechanism. It maintains continuous and precise phasing between the pilot signal and the subcarrier, supplying optimum channel separation. Completely drift free, no alignment is ever required.

The PLL cannot be affected by humidity or temperature since there are no coils or capacitors to be detuned. This provides complete stability and reliability.

New pulse noise suppressor in the TX-9100 operates with computer control

This circuit operates automatically when it is switched on. It effectively blocks radiated noise from airplane and auto ignition systems, neon and traffic lights, etc. It does not interfere with frequency response and stereo separation. Whether the signal is weak or strong, this automatic 'brain' decides when the PNS gate circuit is to operate.

Unique muting control

A 2-position variable muting control uses electronic switching as well as reed relay switching. This eliminates interstation noise and the popping noise of tuning and detuning.

Complete command with a wide variety of controls

Whether it's for AM, FM or headset output levels, Pioneer provides greater operating precision with three independently operated output level controls. A headset may be used without a following power amplifier. Precision tuning is achieved with the aid of signal strength and tuning meters.

AM section highlights IC's

The entire AM section, following the front end, is a unitized IC. A monolithic IC replaces 84 individual components plus a ceramic filter. By using a differential amp circuit and a balanced mixing circuit, there are better spurious characteristics and special AGC amplification.

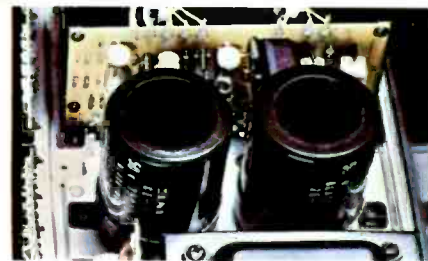
Great specs for great performance

	TX-9100	TX-8100	TX-7100
FM Sensitivity (IHF)	1.5uV	1.8uV	1.9uV
Selectivity	90dB	80dB	60dB
Capture Ratio	1dB	1dB	1dB
S/N Ratio	75dB	70dB	70dB
Image Rejection	110dB	100dB	85dB
Stereo Separation	40dB	40dB	40dB
Distortion (THD)			
Mono	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Stereo	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%
Spurious Response	110dB	100dB	100dB

The Amplifiers: SA-9100, SA-8100, SA-7100

Two separate power supplies utilize 30,000 uF total capacitance

You read it right. The power supply in the SA-9100 uses a total capacitance of 30,000 uF. 15,000 uF each for the balanced positive and negative power supplies. This completely eclipses anything now available in integrated amplifiers. This super high capacitance results in an absolutely pure DC voltage supply. There's constant DC voltage regulation regardless

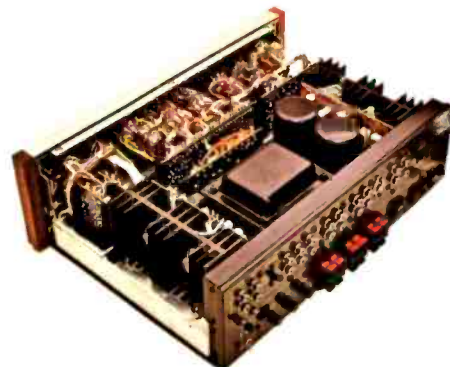


Two 15,000uF power supplies eclipse anything now available in integrated amplifiers.

of line voltage changes and signal input. Even at extremely low frequencies there's stable power output, excellent transient response and minimum distortion — only 0.1% at any frequency between 20-20,000Hz for 60 watts output per channel.

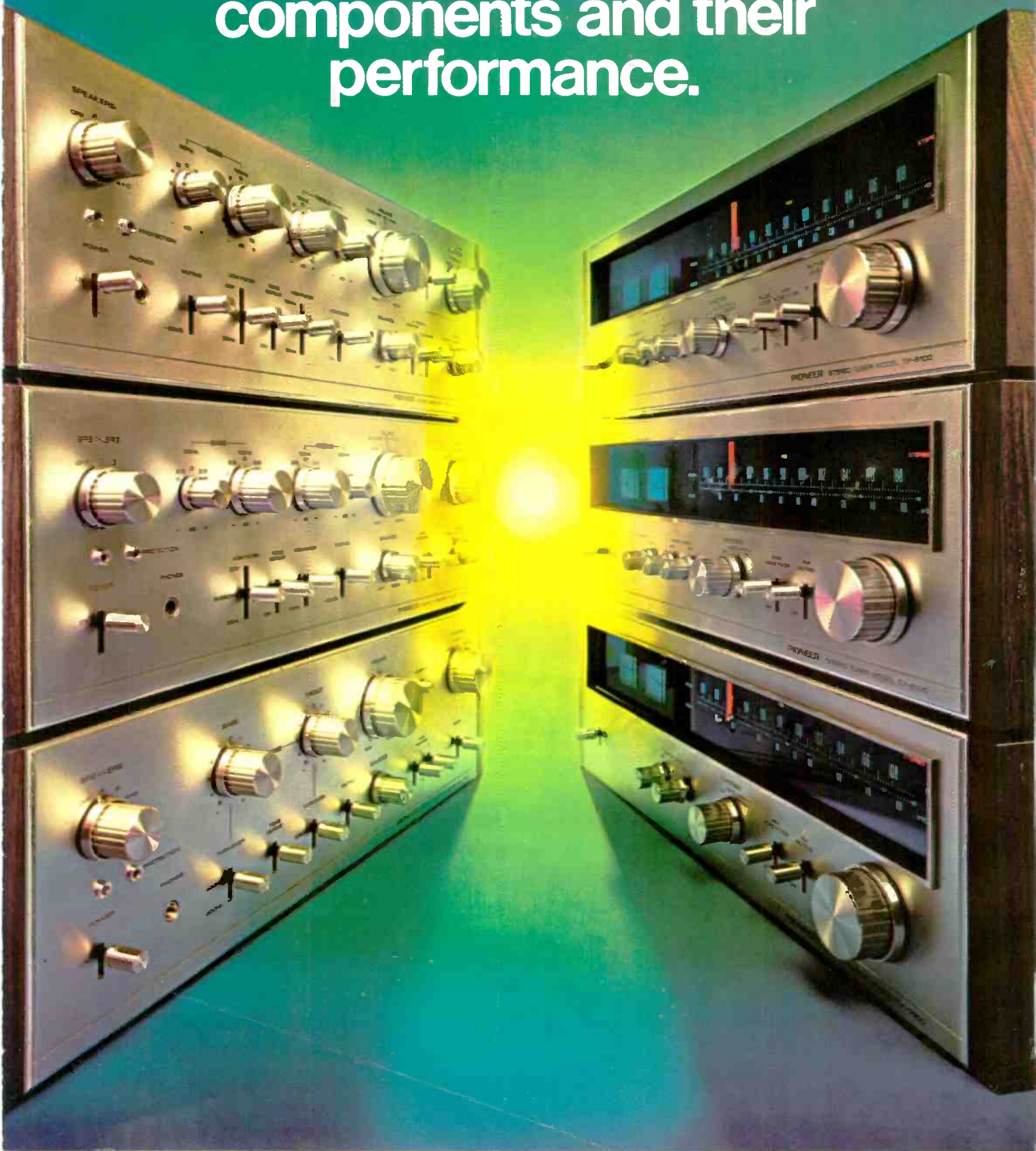
These positive and negative power supplies provide absolute stability in all stages, even in the equalizer amp and proceeding to the control and power amps. Therefore, the signal lines become zero potential to completely eliminate the usual (and annoying) click noise of operating controls and switches.

Stability is increased even further by the differential amplifier used in the first stages of the equalizer and control amplifiers (also the power amp.) 100% DC negative feedback supplies excellent stability and transient response; it also eliminates distortion. To further increase



Interior view. SA-9100

Announcing a major breakthrough
that will have universal impact
on all future high fidelity
components and their
performance.



Introducing Pioneer series of tuners and amplifiers.



The time has come to completely re-evaluate the standard you now use to judge high fidelity performance.

With this new line of tuners and amplifiers, Pioneer presents many ingenious innovations in circuitry that are being used for the first time. However, this exclusiveness is only secondary. While each new circuit can be considered revolutionary by itself, what is even more important is that their combined capabilities achieve precision and performance heretofore unattainable.

The Tuners: TX-9100, TX-8100, TX-7100

FM front end — an engineering triumph

The height of sophistication, the TX-9100's stabilized, drift-free front end replaces printed circuit boards with completely metallized construction. The same used in high precision communications equipment.

Employing three dual gate MOS FET's and a buffer circuit in the local oscillator,

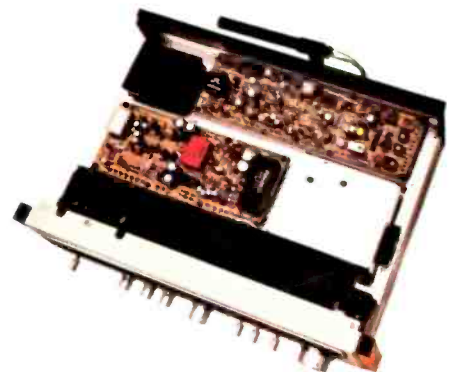


Exclusive heavy gauge die cast aluminum housing assures uncanny stability.

there's exceptionally high gain with extremely low noise. Two tuned RF stages with a 5-gang variable tuning capacitor contribute to the highest selectivity (90dB) and astonishing FM sensitivity (1.5uV). The exclusive use of a heavy gauge die cast aluminum housing assures uncanny stability.

IF section — the epitome of advanced research

In the pursuit of excellence, significant new IF section technology was developed. The result is optimum selectivity with minimum



TX-9100 interior view. Chrome plated shielded front end housing and multiplex section.

stabilization, special electronic regulator circuits are used. Transient response is also improved with a superb damping factor of 70.

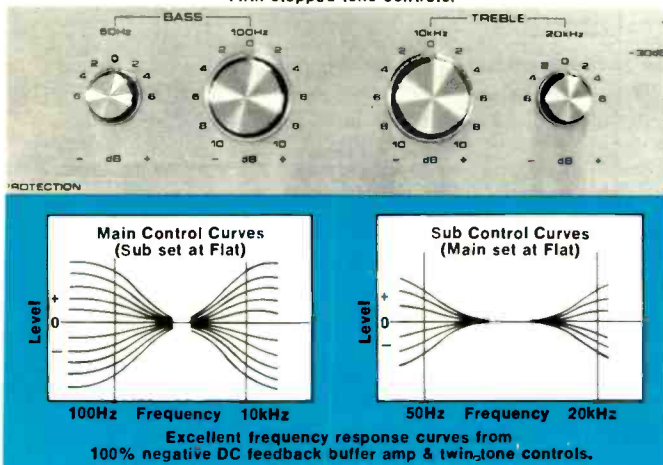
The unique equalizer amplifier

To make certain that extraneous signals do not interfere with the input signal, the equalizer amp is totally enclosed and sealed to shield it against leakage.

There's also extra assurance of precision with special low noise metal film resistors and styrol capacitors. Both are manufactured under continuous computer control to highest laboratory test equipment tolerances: $\pm 1\%$ for resistors; $\pm 2\%$ for capacitors. Until now such precision has been unheard of in hi-fi equipment. Deviation from the ideal RIAA curve is only $\pm 0.2\text{dB}$.

Since a direct-coupled SEPP complementary circuit is used in the equalizer amplifier, virtually any dynamic phono cartridge can be accommodated without overloading or distortion. For example, with 2.5 mV sensitivity, the overload at 1KHz is an unbelievable 250mV, and 1200mV at 10KHz!

Twinn stepped tone controls.



The control amplifier: Twin stepped tone controls custom tailor your listening.

Now you can make the most critical bass and treble adjustments with supreme ease. In fact, there are 5,929 tonal combinations to suit your listening room acoustics and to compare or compensate for component frequency response.

On the SA-9100 and SA-8100 four tone controls (two for bass, two for treble) make 2dB (2.5dB with SA-8100) step adjustments for the entire audio spectrum. Working together with the tone controls is a buffer amplifier with 100% negative DC feedback. The main bass control governs $\pm 10\text{dB}$ at 100 Hz; the sub-bass, $\pm 6\text{dB}$ at 50 Hz. The main treble control governs $\pm 10\text{dB}$ at 10KHz and the sub-treble, $\pm 6\text{dB}$ at 20 KHz. This, plus the tone defeat control (described in the next paragraph) makes the SA-9100 the most exciting-to-use amplifier that has ever powered any hi-fi system.

New tone defeat switch

Because of the extremely wide variety (5,929) of frequency adjustments made possible by the twin tone controls, the tone defeat switch adds extra flexibility. Adjusting the tone controls to your satisfaction, you can flip the tone defeat switch. Bass and treble responses instantly become flat. When it is switched off you return to the original tone control settings.

The power amplifier

To sustain the ultra sophistication of the equalizer and control amp sections, the power amp has a direct-coupled pure complementary SEPP circuit, double differential amplifiers and two constant current loads. The combined effect is the achievement of wide power frequency range and excellent transient response. 100% negative DC feedback is supplemented by 66dB dynamic negative feedback for minimum distortion and absolute stability. The pre and power amps can be used independently with a separation switch.

Exclusive direct-coupling in all stages

Until now direct-coupling has been used only with the power amplifier. Pioneer takes it a dramatic step further in the SA-9100 and SA-8100. Direct-coupling in all stages from the equalizer amp to the control amp to the power amp. More effective? Absolutely. It achieves the finest transient response, wider dynamic range, THD and IM distortion of only 0.04% (1 watt). It's an incredible achievement.

Level set, volume and loudness contour controls adjust to listening preference

Three controls working together adjust to any degree of loudness. The level set control is the primary volume control. Its maximum loudness setting is 0dB.

Successive settings of -15dB and -30dB result in lower gain. Once the desired volume is obtained, the volume control is used for fine adjustments within the given

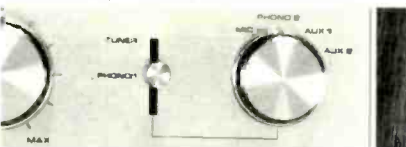
range. While the loudness contour boosts bass and treble, it may also be used with the level set control. The more advanced the position of the level set control, the lower the effective range of the loudness contour.

The original and positive speaker protector circuit

Since the signal is fed directly to the speakers because of direct-coupling, an automatic electronic trigger relay system is incorporated into the power amplifier. This protects the speakers against damage from DC leakage which can also cause distortion. It also prevents short circuits in the power transistors.

Maximum convenience for program source selection

While there is a multiple function rotary switch for microphone, phono 2 and two auxiliaries, Pioneer has included an



Convenient program source selection switch & control lever.

additional convenience. A separate flip type lever control for instant switching between the more widely used tuner and phono 1 and any other single program source. Incidentally, both switches are shielded to protect the input against undesirable extraneous signal pickups.

Two-way tape duplicating and monitoring

There are two separate flip type switches on the front panel of the SA-9100 for tape-to-tape duplicating and monitoring. Two tape decks can be connected for recording, playback and duplicating in either direction, with simultaneous monitoring.

Level controls for phono 2, aux 2

In order to match the level of various inputs, individual level controls are provided for phono 2 and aux 2.

Speaker B control

This special control helps in the use of two pairs of speaker systems of different efficiencies. There is no sacrifice of damping or distortion when switching from one pair to the other.

Impedance selector for phono 2

An easy-to-use switch allows you to employ any phono cartridge input (25K, 50K, 100K ohms).

Two-position high & low filters

The low filter switch on the SA-9100 and SA-8100 has subsonic (below 8Hz) and 30Hz positions. The high filter switch has 12KHz and 8KHz positions.

Maximum versatility in program sources

	SA-9100	SA-8100	SA-7100
Inputs			
Tape monitor—S/N	2-90dB	2-90dB	2-90dB
Phono—S/N	2-80dB	2-80dB	2-80dB
Auxiliary—S/N	2-90dB	2-90dB	2-90dB
Microphone—S/N	2-70dB	2-70dB	1-70dB
Tuner—S/N	1-90dB	1-90dB	1-90dB
Outputs			
Speakers	3	2	2
Headsets	1	1	1
Tape Rec.	2	2	2

Consistent power for every requirement

RMS power both channels driven 20-20KHz	RMS @ 8 ohms both channels driven @ 1KHz	RMS @ 4 ohms single channel driven @ 1KHz
SA-9100 60+60 watts	65+65 watts	100+100 watts
SA-8100 40+40 watts	44+44 watts	60+60 watts
SA-7100 20+20 watts	22+22 watts	36+36 watts

This new lineup of Pioneer tuners and amplifiers is unquestionably the most advanced available today. Yet despite this overwhelming sophistication, they're sensibly priced.

See your Pioneer dealer. He'll show you how this series of fine instruments can outperform any units in their price range. All prices include walnut cabinets. SA-9100—\$399.95; SA-8100—\$299.95; SA-7100—\$199.95. TX-9100—\$299.95; TX-8100—\$229.95; TX-7100—\$179.95.

While not discussed here, Pioneer is also introducing the SA-5200 stereo amplifier and the TX-6200 stereo tuner for high quality hi-fi on a low budget. Only \$129.95 each, with walnut cabinet.

U.S. Pioneer Electronics Corp., 178 Commerce Rd., Carlstadt, New Jersey 07072

West: 13300 S. Estrella, Los Angeles 90248 / Midwest: 1500 Greenleaf, Elk Grove Village, Ill. 60007 / Canada: S. H. Parker Co., Ont.

PIONEER
when you want something better

HERE IS THE WORLD'S ENTIRE SELECTION OF AUTOMATIC TURNTABLES WITH ZERO TRACKING ERROR.

There they are. All one of them. Garrard's Zero 100, the only automatic turntable with Zero Tracking Error.

Not that there haven't been attempts by other turntable makers. Many have tried. This is the first to succeed. And it has succeeded brilliantly. Expert reviewers say it's the first time they've been able to hear the difference in the performance of a record player...that the Zero 100 actually sounds better.

It's all because of a simple but superbly engineered tone arm. An articulating auxiliary arm, with critically precise pivots, makes a continuous adjustment of the cartridge angle as it moves

from the outside grooves toward the center of the record.

This keeps the stylus at a 90° tangent to the grooves. Consequently tracking error is reduced to virtual zero. (Independent test labs have found the test instruments they use are incapable of measuring the tracking error of the Zero 100.) Theoretical calculations of the Zero 100's tracking error indicate that it is as low as 1/160 that of conventional tone arms.

Zero tracking error may be the most dramatic aspect of Zero 100, but it has other features of genuine value and significance. Variable speed control; illuminated strobe; magnetic anti-skating;

viscous-damped cueing; 15° vertical tracking adjustment; the patented Garrard Synchro-Lab synchronous motor; and exclusive two-point record support in automatic play.

The reviewers have done exhaustive reports on Zero 100. We believe they are worth reading, so we'd be happy to send them to you along with a color brochure on the Zero 100. Write to us at: British Industries Co., Dept. H33 Westbury, N.Y. 11590.

**GARRARD
ZERO 100**

\$199⁹⁵

less base and cartridge



Stereo Review

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EDITORIALLY SPEAKING

By WILLIAM ANDERSON

AUDIO QUA(N)DARY

It cannot have escaped the attention of even the most casual observer that the audio industry has been in labor again, or that the issue of its latest confinement has proved to be the most problematical of all. As the beneficiaries of what begins to look like a ten-year gestation cycle, we have welcomed into this musical world the bright and bouncing technological innovations called the long-playing disc (1948), the stereo disc (1958), and now the quadraphonic disc, whose first theoretical, if not commercial, manifestations became visible in 1968-1969. Those blessed with either a long memory or a talent for history know that neither Long Play nor Stereo were uneventful deliveries, the first having been complicated by the unattractively wasteful "war of the speeds" between RCA and Columbia, and the second turned into high comedy when an intrepid upstart of a record company (Audio Fidelity) simply kidnapped the baby from under the noses of the haggling industry mothers and rushed it to the waiting market. The present quadraphonic situation is even worse: the Caesarean section of a perfectly legitimate audio concept ripped untimely from the laboratory, with neither its technical nor its aesthetic aspects yet viable, to face a custody battle mounted by fanatical adversaries in the full glare of the marketplace. No wonder many are already beginning to doubt the kid will ever find a good home.

Now, just how has this dreadful situation come to pass, and what can be done about it? Dropping the epic metaphor and stepping back a bit, let it first of all be stated—boogeyman hunters, conspiracy lovers, and other *Schadenfreudians* within and without the industry notwithstanding—that it is *not* merely a vast and silly plot to sell a lot of unnecessary equipment to a gullible public. In his 1959 book *From Tin Foil to Stereo*, Oliver Read, the first publisher of this magazine, characterized the audiophile impulse as springing from the common "small-boy-grown-up" interest in things mechanical and electrical. What he omitted to add was that this same impulse is as strong—if not stronger—among manufacturers of audio equipment as it is among those who use it. They are as subject to perfectionist dissatisfactions as the rest of us—with the significant exception that they are in a position to do something about them. Thus, toward the end of the 1960's, the energies of dissatisfaction once again combined with a backlog of new electronic technology to attack the usual problem—higher fidelity. The best audio components at that time had already attained levels close to perfection; improvements in styli, turntables, amplifiers, and speakers could be made, but they would be small and their cost uneconomically large. The one real problem that remained—listening-room acoustics—did not lend itself to direct assault (who could hope to rebuild all the nation's living rooms?), but it could be bypassed electronically. One solution was the "equalizer" designed to "tune" the amplifier selectively to make up for frequency-response irregularities in the listening room. Another solution was even more drastic: ignore the room entirely, and *supply* the proper acoustic ambiance on the recording itself—enter quadraphonics. Many engineers in many laboratories were at work on the problem simultaneously, at first with tape applications, and soon with the more important disc. Then, when visiting Sony engineers from Japan discovered that the disc quadraphonic program at CBS Labs had reached the feasibility stage, they jumped the gun, invoked their company's "share the secrets" agreement with CBS, and flew home to build the hardware. The result was the Sony/CBS SQ matrix quadraphonic system. RCA, in an inspired burst of competitive vigor, quickly fired back with its CD-4 discrete Quadradisc system, developed in conjunction with Japan's JVC. And so to the present, with two giants canvassing the globe, signing up converts to a pair of mutually incompatible systems. What to do? The situation has manifestly deteriorated too far to expect any attempt at compromise, even if one were technically feasible. Which leaves us, unalluring as it may be, only "muddling through." Too bad; it's a *beautiful* baby.

Dynaco A-25
\$89.00

Experts Agree: the Dynaco A-25 loudspeaker is unquestionably the best!

"... (The Dynaco A-25's) are quite probably the best buy in high fidelity today."

The Stereophile Magazine

"... The Dynaco had a remarkably neutral quality... The A-25 had less of this coloration than most speakers we have heard, regardless of price... Nothing we have tested had a better overall transient response... Not the least of the A-25's attraction is its low price..."

Julian Hirsch in Stereo Review

"... it was its outstanding transient response which really impressed us. Tone bursts throughout the meaningful frequency range showed up its excellence. In truth, the A-25 produced the finest tone-burst response of any speaker in this manner, regardless of price."

Audio

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Indoor FM Antennas

● Leonard Feldman's article on indoor FM antennas (June) was a most gratifying and helpful treatment of an important and seriously neglected subject. Over the years I've been aware of the paradox that \$1.29 can equal \$200 when the lack of a cheap, proper antenna can negate the potential excellence of a few hundred dollars' worth of sophisticated FM tuner circuitry.

As Mr. Feldman wrote, for many city dwellers the combination of high signal strength and a complex multipath situation makes their reception problem worse than that of suburban listeners. At the same time, regulations often forbid roof installations. I have found that in such cases the directional effectiveness of a rabbit-ears antenna (which I agree is the most efficient indoor solution) can be greatly diminished because of the additional signal picked up by the antenna's nondirectional flat-line lead-in. I've achieved considerable improvement in signal quality by cutting off the supplied twin lead close to the base of the rabbit-ears and then using a length of 75-ohm coax (shielded) cable with 75-300-ohm matching transformers at both the receiver and the antenna. This expedient keeps unshielded lead-in to an absolute minimum (no more than a few inches in all) and makes a surprising difference, since even a couple of feet of unshielded twin lead can pick up disruptive amounts of unwanted multipath signal in high-signal-strength areas.

CHRISTOPHER HAMLIN
New York, N.Y.

Technical Editor Larry Klein replies: I wonder if Mr. Hamlin has tried replacing the regular rabbit-ears flat-line with 300-ohm shielded lead-in? (The shield should be grounded to the tuner chassis.) This should work as well as the coax cable, be easier to handle, and avoid the extra complications and cost of the matching transformers.

● Leonard Feldman and STEREO REVIEW are to be congratulated for the article "Indoor Antennas for FM" which appeared in the June issue. As an apartment dweller who could not erect an outside antenna, I searched in vain for over ten years in your publication and many others for some solid information on how to solve my FM reception problems. Now that I finally own a house, I can solve

this dilemma in the conventional manner. But I certainly sympathize with the plight of those millions of Americans who are stuck with indoor-only antennas. Your article will probably create a great deal of controversy, but at least it is a valid starting point for the further development of information in this long neglected area.

GEORGE COSTELLO
Kansas City, Mo.

Music and Publicity

● There is so much material on "Music and Publicity" that would make fascinating reading. But Stephen Rubin's job in your June issue was so stimulating and witty that I can't find it in my heart to criticize what was omitted: lack of space always modifies the ideal. May I simply note, then, that the one who actually started the entire business should be credited—Constance Hope. Miss Hope, who trained most of the publicists specializing in musicians today, began her career with Lotte Lehmann as her first client in 1933. Other musical clients have been legion, including the Met, the Manhattan School of Music, Jascha Heifetz, Lily Pons, Roberta Peters, and the Musicians Emergency Fund. Her book *Publicity Is Broccoli* is still the trade's primer.

ROBERT CUMMING
Editor, *Music Journal*
New York, N.Y.

Bizarrock

● Noel Coppage aptly strips most of the varnish from the super-"now" P. T. Barnumism of the bizarre-rock medicine show ("Bizarrock," June), a thoughtful debunking much needed if this latest industry-managed trend is to be kept from getting out of hand.

Still, one might have expected more careful discrimination among the grab-bag of groups, and some deeper delving into the historical origins—so deeply and thoroughly British—of the whole thing. It might just be that the demonic energy of Van Der Graaf Generator is the result of solid musicianship and appropriate integration of technology in the studio. At any rate, their albums (yes, *albums*) are certainly not of the deadly boring snake-and-incantation variety. And, after all, the real "gypsy-doctors" are those who continue to create emotionally convincing illusions: behind the sad and tattered lot Mr. Coppage mentions you will find the piercing lyricism of

Pink Floyd and the jazz-frontier sound of Soft Machine. Both groups have been unostentatiously making good avant-garde music for seven years now without studio self-flagellation or stage exhibitionism.

ROBERT BRAY
Bloomington, Ill.

Mr. Coppage replies: You see it, Mr. Bray, I see it, and Michaelangelo Antonioni saw it (he used Pink Floyd music in the soundtrack of his movie Zabriskie Point), but the fact remains that it is not easy to see what's behind the sad and tattered lot because of the pile of dead rats, snakes, mutilated dolls, and hundred-dollar bills they've built up. My idea was that, first, we ought to torpedo that pile.

The Real Rachmaninoff

● Your May issue on Rachmaninoff was a perfect tribute to a great musician; many thanks to Victor Seroff. The portrait by Alan Magee, by the way, is a great character study. Rachmaninoff always came on stage head bent forward and with a shuffling walk. I know this, being nearly eighty and having seen and heard him and a lot of the great and near great in my time.

WALTER P. BRUNING
Beaumont, Calif.

● I was happy to see the centennial memoir of Rachmaninoff in your May issue. I hope many more such articles will appear in American publications because Rachmaninoff was as much a part of the United States as he was of Russia. He became a citizen of this country and is buried together with his wife Natalia Satina and his daughter Irina Wolkonsky in Kensico cemetery, New York. For most of his exile period (1917-1943), "home" for Rachmaninoff was the U.S. I am certain that he loved this country.

The Library of Congress has set up a splendid exhibit on Rachmaninoff. The Library is also the repository of the Rachmaninoff Archive, a collection indispensable for any investigation into his life and work.

ALBERTO D. FAJARDO
Washington, D. C.

Camelot Correction

● In a review of Richard Harris' latest album "Slides" (June), Paul Kresh comments: "Richard Harris . . . has fluttered pulses ever since he sang *If Ever I Would Leave You* in the movie of *Camelot*." Harris played the role of King Arthur in that film. *If Ever I Would Leave You* was sung by Lancelot, acted by Franco Nero (with singing dubbed).

WAYNE WILKINSON
East Peoria, Ill.

Mr. Kresh replies: So that was Franco Nero with a dubbed voice, was it? I saw Camelot on a shaky little ship plowing through the Aegean one summer. They showed it in two parts, mostly out of focus, and the sound wasn't too good; it was a little difficult to tell King Arthur from Lancelot, but whoever dubbed the song did a beautiful job.

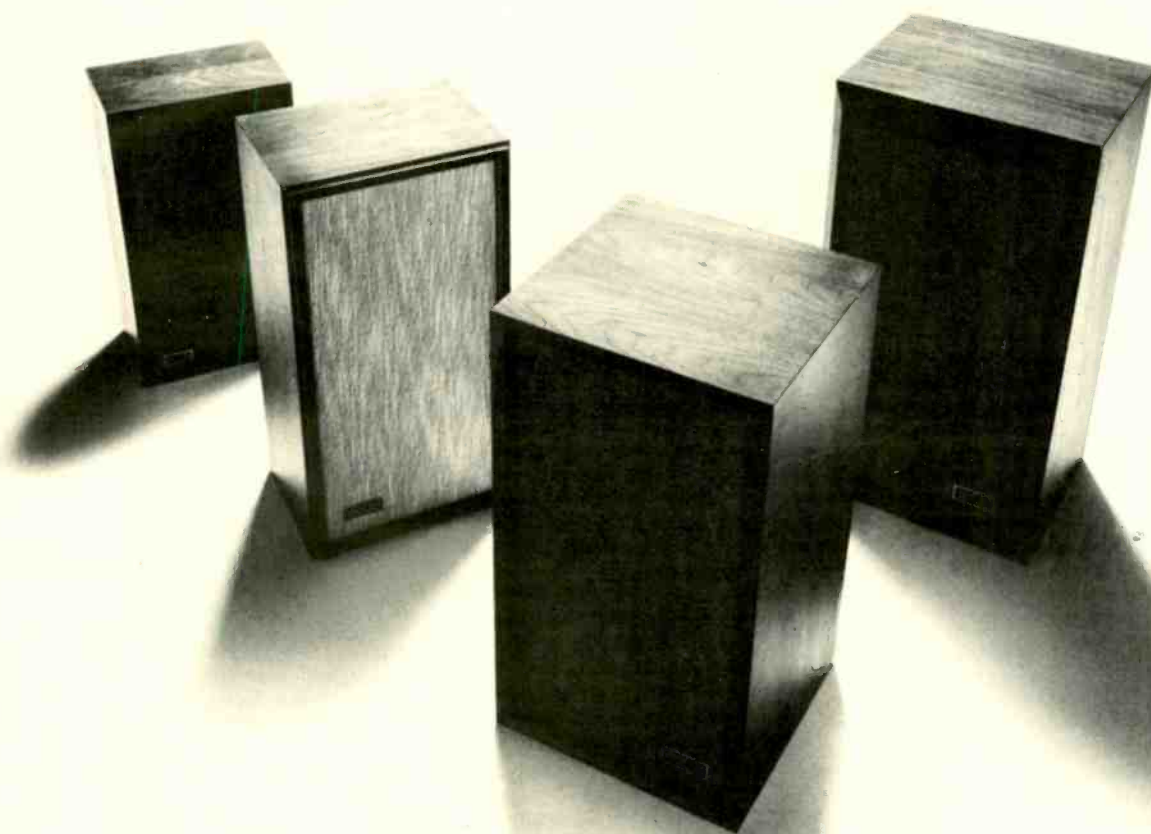
A Swedish Mahler

● Bravo to Lester Trimble for his glowing review of the Pettersson Symphony No. 7 with the Stockholm Philharmonic under Antal Dorati (May). For over two years I have thrilled to the unusual approach used by this brilliant composer in creating what surely is
(Continued on page 8)

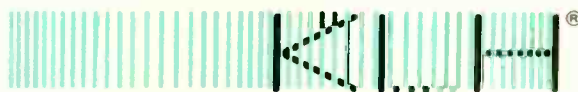
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one of the most protean, emotion-packed symphonic scores I have ever encountered. My acquaintance with this gripping work is the result of a complimentary copy of the recording on the Swedish Society Discofil label graciously sent me by Maestro Dorati in 1971. I recall Dorati's enthusiasm for the piece, and his high praise for its creator, whom he referred to as "... a kind of Swedish Mahler. . . ." Thanks to London's recent release of this material in the U.S., many music lovers here may now share the joy of discovering Pettersson's genius.

JERRY B. DAVIS
Arkadelphia, Ark.

An Education in Elgar

● Bernard Jacobson's thoughtful review of three major Elgar pieces in the May issue should serve as an incentive to those unfamiliar with this music to *become* familiar with it. Detractors consider Elgar's music derivative in the worst (German-Austrian) sense of the term, yet can anyone suggest another piece even remotely similar to *Falstaff*, the *Introduction and Allegro*, or the third movement of the *Second Symphony*? This music bears the stamp of an original and exhilarating imagination. Further, the sheer craft of the music is remarkable.

ALAN KLEIN
Pittsburgh, Pa.

● As an Elgar devotee since my teens, I was extremely gratified to find the new recordings of the symphonies so comprehensively reviewed in your May issue. The *First Symphony* is the only work I know that can still move me to tears even after being played once a week for eight years. I suspect it would win my "desert island" sweepstakes hands down.

For all my pleasure in seeing Elgar get his due, however, I would like to take issue with Bernard Jacobson's review for placing the Boult performance at the head of the list. In my view, Solti's rendition is the finest because it offers the most options. It is the fastest and by far the most energetic in terms of basic beat, yet it relents with the greatest of ease in more introspective passages, particularly in the *Adagio*, which Solti takes not only more slowly than even Barbirolli, but with a far more hushed and emotional inflection. What it boils down to is this: Elgar won't slow down. Barbirolli *never* speeds up, and Boult speeds up only to get the lyrical episodes out of the way while elsewhere mustering none of the energy necessary to bring off an unsentimental conception. Hence, to the bottom of the heap with Boult.

STEVEN KRUGER
New York, N.Y.

Classipop Quandary

● I wish to add one more view to the illuminating remarks of Ron Eyer and the editorial commentary on them in the June "Letters" column. A melody is a succession of symbols (notes) arranged in a certain manner on the staff. Bach or Mozart arranged these symbols differently than some popular contemporary composer has done. The manipulations of these symbols by Bach or Mozart produces in me pleasure and a feeling of exaltation. The manipulation of notes by the popular composer generates in me distaste, and I unconsciously reject it as vulgar, trite, and without merit. The question is: are my feelings caused solely and entirely by my spiritual makeup or are they entirely a product of the manner in

which those symbols are arranged on the staff? Why do I feel delight in a Bach fugue and reject instantly the popular tune? Are my sensibilities subjective or objective?

DAVID FONSECA
Chattanooga, Tenn.

The Editor replies: Without meaning any disrespect, I would say that reader Fonseca has been brainwashed, that his sensibilities, not being his own but an unfortunate characteristic of our culture, are neither subjective nor objective. To paraphrase Keats, the best way of strengthening one's taste is to make up one's mind permanently about nothing, to let it be a thoroughfare for all experience. Granted, there is vulgarity, triteness, and a lack of merit in much popular music, but the same qualities may easily be found in much classical music as well (though perhaps not in Mozart or Bach). Classical music has no patent on virtue, and popular none on vice. Both have their particular excellences and their particular uses. They are parts of a whole, they complement each other, they need each other, and they are not in competition. It is elitist mischief (on both sides) to suggest otherwise.

Discography Roundup

● As an aid in preparing a ten-year supplement to Bruun and Gray's *Bibliography of Discographies*, the compilers would appreciate receiving any information on privately published or unpublished discographies. Works on all subjects are acceptable. Any citations will be acknowledged.

MICHAEL H. GRAY
GERALD D. GIBSON
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C. 20540

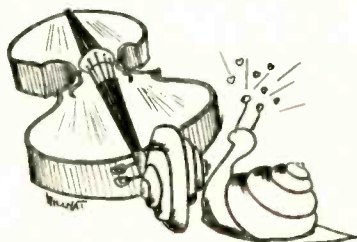
Latin Letters

● For many years I have read your magazine, for my greatest passion is music. Your articles have generally been good—some were poor and a few were extraordinary.

Among these few must be included the superb article by William Livingstone, "A Latin Postscript," in your May issue. For the first time I have had the pleasure of reading in an American publication an article by someone who understands the music of the South American continent, someone who knows that Argentina is different from Puerto Rico.

What thrilled me most was the mention of Carlos Gardel, a musician whose voice and songs are unrivaled. Fifty years after they were composed and despite great changes in taste and styles, *Cuesta Abajo*, *Yira-Yira*, and his other immortal tangos still have the power to make my heart ache whenever I hear them.

But there is a great difference between the article by Joel Vance ("The Latin Connection," also in May) and the one by Mr. Livingstone. The music that Mr. Vance discusses is "Latin" in name only. This music is of purely African origin and does not have the slightest relation to the Latin music that can be heard



in Argentina, Chile, and parts of Colombia and Venezuela.

GUILLERMO J. LEPERA
McMinnville, Ore.

● I enjoyed William Livingstone's article on Latin music very much, and I am very happy to see your magazine paying attention to this kind of music. However, I was disappointed that Lola Flores was not discussed in greater detail. In Spain she is known as "Lola de España," or often simply as "Lola." It would have been nice if at least one of her many albums had been recommended.

CESAR GUERRERO
New York, N.Y.

● Until I read the very interesting article "A Latin Postscript" in your May issue I had thought that *Ramona* and *In a Little Spanish Town* were authentic Spanish or South American songs. I was surprised to learn that they were written by an American, Mabel Wayne. Can you tell me something more about this composer?

VIVIAN RUSSO
New York, N.Y.

Managing Editor William Livingstone replies: I appreciate Mr. Lepera's kind remarks about my article, but I would like to warn him against looking for "purity" in any kind of Western music. For example, the origin of the tango is a subject of considerable controversy. According to a number of Argentine musicologists, the tango rhythm originated in Africa and was developed in Cuba as the habanera, which was in turn taken to Spain where it became popular as the tango de Cádiz, which was then imported to Argentina where the tango as we know it reached its fullest flowering.

I share Mr. Guerrero's enthusiasm for Lola Flores, a Spanish national musical institution, and of her many records I would recommend "Lola Flores" (Regal J040 20799, imported from Spain) as a good introduction to her work.

Mabel Wayne, the composer of Ramona and In a Little Spanish Town, was born in Brooklyn. She studied music in New York and Switzerland, and her many hit songs include It Happened in Monterey; Little Man; You've Had a Busy Day; and I Understand. Elected to the Songwriters Hall of Fame last year, Miss Wayne has retired and now lives in New York.

Keys to Kinkdom

● I really believe that Noel Coppage's review of "The Great Lost Kinks Album" (May) is unfair. His playing up the fact that the album was put together to capitalize on RCA's success with the group is no reason to put down the recording.

No matter what any reviewer says, this is not a disc of throwaways. Back in 1968, when the Kinks' popularity was at an all-time low and their imagination and quality were at an all-time high, they had trouble deciding which tracks to put together for "Four More Respected Gentlemen," an album that was never issued. Instead, the Kinks used some of these songs plus a few more and came up with "The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society," one of their finest albums. The dropped tracks appeared on flips of 45's and the others appear here for the first time.

BARRY MARGOLIS
Minneapolis, Minn.

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CROWN

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BOOKS RECEIVED

Compiled by
Louise Gooch Boundas

● *The Best of George Gershwin*, designed and edited by Lee Snider. Chappell & Co., Inc., 609 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017, 1973, \$5.95 (paper), 168 pp.

September 26, 1973 would have been George Gershwin's seventy-fifth birthday. That he died when he was only thirty-nine seems impossible—surely he lived too few years to have written all he did, to have left such an ineradicable stamp on American music, the American theater, the American consciousness. Not only has the U.S. Post Office issued a George Gershwin commemorative stamp this year, but, as one of its contributions to the celebration, Chappell has published "A 75th Birthday Commemorative Folio." The illustrated book contains scores and lyrics for thirty of Gershwin's songs, including eight from *Porgy and Bess*, six from *Shall We Dance*, and such other favorites as *A Foggy Day*, *Nice Work If You Can Get It*, *Love Walked In*, and *They Can't Take That Away from Me*. Shall we dance?

● *Beethoven: Biography of a Genius*, by George R. Marek. Apollo Editions, New York, 1973, \$4.95 (paper), 696 pp.

Marek's study of Beethoven was very well received when it was published in 1969, and it remains a scholarly, readable book. The hefty paperback edition, like the hardcover edition, contains all kinds of useful appendices, an index, and more than seventy illustrations.

● *A History of Western Music*, by Donald Jay Grout. Revised Edition. Norton, New York, 1973, \$9.95, 818 pp.

The first edition of this book was published in 1960, and it is already a classic as a college textbook. As the author says in his preface, "The purpose of the Revised Edition is to improve this book, not to recast it entirely." It has been updated to correspond to the findings of recent research, and there is a new section on the period since 1950. It is illustrated with musical examples and photographs.

● *The Collector's Twentieth-Century Music in the Western Hemisphere*, by Arthur Cohn. Da Capo Press, New York, 1972, \$8.50, 256 pp.

This reprint of a book originally published in 1961 discusses the recorded work of twenty-seven contemporary composers—twenty-three who are considered U.S. composers (Bloch and Menotti were not born here), one Argentinian, one Brazilian, and two Mexicans. Each composer receives a short introduction, which characterizes his music in general, and a selected critical discography.

● *Twentieth-Century Composers: Britain, Scandinavia and the Netherlands*, by Humphrey Searle and Robert Layton. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1973, \$10.00, 200 pp.

"An imaginary map of twentieth-century music" is the way Nicholas Nabokov describes this series, of which he is one of the general editors (Anna Kallin is the other). *Britain, Scandinavia and the Netherlands*,

the third volume in the series, is an enlightening book about areas that have often and unjustly been considered musical wastelands. The authors are eminently qualified—Searle is a British composer, Layton a writer specializing in Scandinavian music—and the book is very well organized and simply written.

● *Rebel in Radio, The Story of WQXR*, by Elliott M. Sanger. Hastings House, New York, 1973, \$7.50, 190 pp.

Elliott M. Sanger was one of the founders of WQXR, and his book is a history of the famous New York radio station—"The Radio Station of the *New York Times*"—from its beginning in 1936, through many of its financial and programming problems, and up to the 1972 waiver of the FCC AM/FM "50 per cent non-duplication rule." It is an interesting story of an admirable institution.

● *The Opera Companion, A Guide for the Casual Operagoer: Vol. 2, The Synopses*, by George Martin. Apollo Editions (Dodd, Mead), New York, 1973, \$2.95 (paper), 470 pp.

This paperback edition of a book originally published in 1961 contains not only the plots of "masterworks" from *Aida* to *Zauberflöte* but also pronunciation guides and a complete section that briefly describes twenty-six modern operas by nineteen composers. Mr. Martin believes that for the "casual operagoer" a performance is usually a dramatic rather than a musical experience, so he has emphasized words and theatrical structure rather than music. (Volume 1 of *The Opera Companion* is an introduction to the music of opera.)

● *Sunlight and Shadows*, by Kris Kristofferson. Chappell & Co., Inc., New York, 1973, \$4.95 (paper), 72 pp. plus photo supplement.

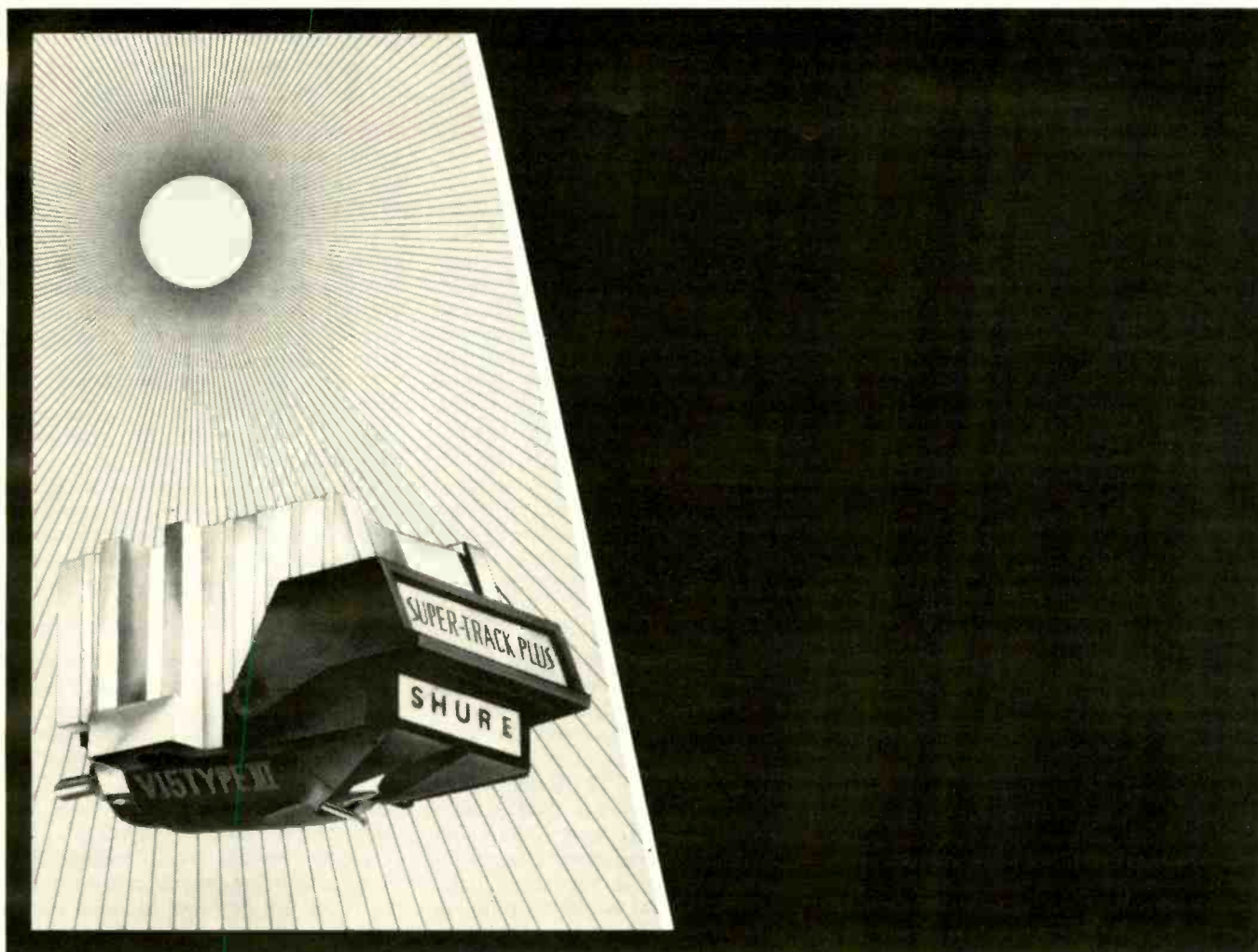
Even Kristofferson's "sunlight" songs have wide streaks of shadow running through them. Never mind. They're nice songs, anyway. And here are twenty-seven of them, including the Grammy-winning *Help Me Make It Through the Night* and CMA Song of the Year (1970) *Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down*. The songbook's photo supplement contains stills from three movies in which the colorful country-pop artist has played: *Cisco Pike* (Columbia), *Blume in Love* (Warner Bros.), and the current *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (MGM).

● *The Chopin Companion: Profiles of the Man and the Musician*, edited by Alan Walker. Norton, New York, 1973, \$3.95 (paper), 312 pp.

This collection of essays on Frédéric Chopin and his music is a paperback reprint of a book originally published in 1966. It contains eleven separate essays (including one on the songs by Bernard Jacobson), a biographical summary, lists of Chopin's works, and indexes.

● *United States Music: Sources of Bibliography and Collective Biography*, by Richard Jackson. Institute for Studies in American Music, Department of Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11210, 80 pp.

Mr. Jackson is head of the Americana Collection in the New York Public Library's Music Division, and his little book is a sensible, catholic list, with commentaries, of sources of information about American music (all kinds, all periods) and musicians.



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445) and 55 to 20,000 Hz (ST-425). The ST-425 and ST-445 have three-position tweeter-level controls that vary the output 2 dB for each step. The ST-465 has, in addition, a three-step mid-range control. All systems have a nominal impedance of 6 to 8 ohms. Dimensions are 24½ x 14¼ x 12 inches (ST-465), 23½ x 13 x 11 inches (ST-445), and 22½ x 12¼ x 10 inches. Except for size, the speakers are identical in appearance, with dark sculpted front grilles. The 465 is finished in walnut veneers; the two smaller systems are clad in walnut-grain vinyl. Prices: ST-465, \$169.95; ST-445, \$99.95; ST-425, \$79.95.

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selector with a fourth DEFEAT position. The power switch is integral with the speaker selector, which switches up to three pairs of speakers singly or in combinations of two pairs. The high- and low-cut filters have 12-dB-per-octave slopes and a choice of two -3-dB points: 6,000 and 12,000 Hz, and 100 and 50 Hz, respectively. Tape-monitoring facilities are present for two tape decks, plus an additional special switch for dubbing from either deck to the other. There are also switchable inputs and outputs for an external four-channel adapter, a noise-reduction unit, and other accessories. Remaining controls are volume, balance, input and mode selectors, loudness compensation, and a -20-dB level-muting switch for brief listening interruptions. There are two front-panel headphone jacks, one of which silences all speakers when used. The rear panel

carries the necessary inputs and outputs (including two phono inputs, one of which has a three-position input-impedance selector, and two microphone inputs), four a.c. convenience outlets, and PREAMP-OUT/MAIN IN jacks. There are also input-level controls for both tape inputs and the auxiliary inputs.

Further specifications include harmonic and intermodulation distortion of less than 0.1 per cent at rated output and signal-to-noise ratios of 75 and 85 dB for the phono and high-level inputs, respectively. The amplifier's IHF power bandwidth is 5 to 40,000 Hz, and the frequency response is 15 to 40,000 Hz ±0, -1 dB (30 to 15,000 Hz ±0.5 dB for the phono inputs). Overall dimensions, with the metal cabinet supplied, are about 19¾ x 5½ x 13¾ inches. Weight is 51¼ pounds. Price: \$519.95.

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Nakamichi 1000 Cassette Deck



- NAKAMICHI RESEARCH, a well-known manufacturer of cassette machines, has developed a high-performance stereo cassette deck with, among numerous other features, separate erase, record, and playback heads, two motors, dual-capstan differential tape drive, and two separate built-in noise-reduction systems. In the Nakamichi configuration, the playback head occupies the space opposite the cassette pressure pad where the combination record/playback

head goes in conventional machines, while the small adjacent slot in the cassette shell admits the record head: the erase head shares the capstan access slot with the first capstan in the tape path. The two capstans rotate at slightly different speeds, which controls the tension of the tape passing the heads and helps eliminate any adverse influences of the cassette cartridge mechanism. The capstan motor is a d.c. servo-controlled unit with speed variable over a range of ±6 per cent by means of a pitch-control adjustment. A separate spooling motor is employed to turn the tape hubs. All the transport functions are solenoid controlled and activated by means of light-touch pushbuttons: the switching is under the command of a logic system that governs the sequence and timing of switching events.

The two noise-reduction systems—B-Type Dolby and the DNL system de-

veloped by Philips—can be used independently or in combination, a technique which is said to provide a reduction in audible hiss of as much as 13 dB or more. With Dolby, the signal-to-noise ratio (weighted) exceeds 60 dB for a recorded level producing 3 per cent distortion. Frequency response is 35 to 18,000 Hz ±3 dB with low-noise iron-oxide tape, and 35 to 20,000 Hz ±3 dB with chromium dioxide. A switch selects the appropriate bias and equalization for the two types of tape. DIN weighted wow and flutter are less than 0.1 per cent. Harmonic distortion is under 2 per cent for a 0-VU recording level at 1,000 Hz. A unique feature of the Nakamichi 1000 is the provision for azimuth adjustment of the record head by means of circuitry that detects phase differences between the two stereo channels. Two large peak-reading meters are provided for monitor-

(Continued on page 14)

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—MARTIN CLIFFORD, *FM Guide*, Nov. '72 & March '73

"... the decoding is essentially the ultimate that can be expected of a matrix system limited to a 20- to 20,000-Hz bandwidth. . . . The listening effect is almost that of discrete surround-sound."

—HERBERT FRIEDMAN, *Hi-Fi Stereo Buyers' Guide*, Spring '73

"It causes [SQ encoded] discs to sound as real four-channel should. . . . This unit, in fact, takes the SQ system as far as it can go—and proves that it is capable of good four-channel."

—*Stereo & Hi-Fi Times*, Spring '73

"Featuring all modes 4-channel operation, this receiver delivered excellent performance. Amplifier distortion is unusually low."

"FM Tuner: The sensitivity measured 1.6 μ V IHF."

—*4-CHANNEL Quadraphonic Buyers Guide 1973*

"A superb four-channel receiver. . . ."

—ROBERT ANGUS, *Modern Hi-Fi & Stereo Guide*, June '73

"... It is evident that the designers of the LR-4000 have done a remarkable job of producing the "most" SQ receiver for the money we have yet seen. . . . We were impressed also with its human-engineering aspects: the controls are laid out in a simple and functional manner, without sacrifice of flexibility. Its quadraphonic performance . . . was outstanding, as was its overall sound quality and general ease of operation. All in all, the LR-4000 is a most impressive achievement—especially so considering its price [499.95]."

—*Stereo Review*, April '73

CBS, the developer of the SQ system, uses the LR-4000 when monitoring 4-channel program material. As do thousands of people to whom sound really matters. But, listen to one for yourself. Then you won't have to take anybody's word for it!

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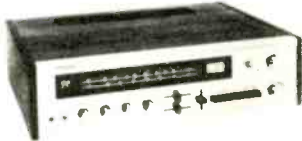
ing recording levels, and a switchable limiter circuit guards against tape overload with program sources of wide dynamic range. There are three microphone inputs, each with its own level control; one of these inputs, labeled BLEND, is

mixed in equal amounts into the two stereo channels. Other switchable operating features include automatic end-of-tape rewind and a memory-stop system in rewind. The dimensions of the Nakamichi 1000—approximately 20³/₄ x

11³/₄ x 8¹/₂ inches—make it suitable for 19-inch rack mounting. The deck is supplied with a walnut wood cabinet. Price: \$1,000. Remote-control facilities will be available shortly.

Circle 117 on reader service card

Concord Model CR-400 AM/FM Four-Channel Receiver



● AN inexpensive four-channel receiver with CBS SQ decoding, a synthesizer circuit for four-channel effects from two-channel material, and complete facilities for discrete four-channel sources has just been brought out by Concord. A cluster of three slider controls adjusts left-right and front-rear balance, while an

adjacent master volume control affects all four channels. Concentric bass and treble knobs provide separate control of the front and rear signals. Loudness compensation, tape monitoring, and mode (MONO, STEREO, and SQ 4 CH) are pushbutton-switched. The input selector has—along with positions for phono, FM, and AM—two additional positions for external four-channel sources. A signal is available at a special FM output jack to feed some future four-channel FM adapter.

Continuous-power output for the CR-400 is 37 watts total in four-channel operation and 44 watts total for two chan-

nels, both with 8-ohm loads. Harmonic distortion at rated output is under 1 per cent. The signal-to-noise ratio for the phono inputs is 65 dB. FM specifications include an IHF sensitivity of 2.3 microvolts, 1.5-dB capture ratio, an alternate-channel selectivity of 46 dB, and image and i.f. rejection of 53 and 85 dB, respectively. A front-panel tuning meter reads channel center for FM and signal strength for AM. There are separate front-panel headphone jacks for the front and rear signals, and an illuminated four-channel output display. Dimensions are 20³/₄ x 5¹/₂ x 15³/₄ inches. Price: \$299.95.

Circle 118 on reader service card

Pioneer RT-1020L Stereo Tape Deck



● THE RT-1020L, Pioneer's finest tape deck, is a three-head, three-motor, 10¹/₂-inch reel design that records in stereo and plays back both two-channel and discrete four-channel quarter-track tapes. A lever switch on the control panel activates the two extra playback-head

gaps and playback preamplifiers necessary for four-channel reproduction, and the large recording-level meters can be switched to read playback levels of the front or rear channels. Light-touch push-buttons control the transport through special switching circuits that permit going directly from one transport function to another. Recording bias and equalization are independently adjustable to suit a variety of standard and low-noise/high-output tapes. The recording-level controls are separate for microphone and line inputs, and permit mixing. Additional operating features include a pause control, sound-on-sound and echo facilities, tape-monitor switch-

ing, and a tape-tension selector. The front-panel headphone jack is designed for phones of 4 to 16 ohms impedance.

The RT-1020L is a 7¹/₂- and 3³/₄-ips machine with frequency responses of 40 to 20,000 Hz \pm 3 dB and 40 to 12,000 Hz \pm 3 dB for the two speeds. Wow and flutter (rms) are 0.1 per cent (7¹/₂ ips) and 0.13 per cent (3³/₄ ips), and the signal-to-noise ratio exceeds 55 dB for a recorded level producing less than 1 per cent harmonic distortion. The bias-signal frequency is 125 kHz. Overall dimensions are approximately 17¹/₄ x 17 x 9 inches. The machine comes with a walnut-finish wood base. Price: \$599.95.

Circle 119 on reader service card

Bose 1801 Stereo Power Amplifier



● BOSE's new 1801 stereo power amplifier, the company's first electronic consumer product, is designed to deliver 250 watts continuous per channel into 8 ohms, or 400 watts per channel into 4 ohms. Bose does not provide other performance specifications for the amplifier. Instead, the company lists the minimum standards it believes will result in no audible degradation of the reproduced sound, and guarantees that the perfor-

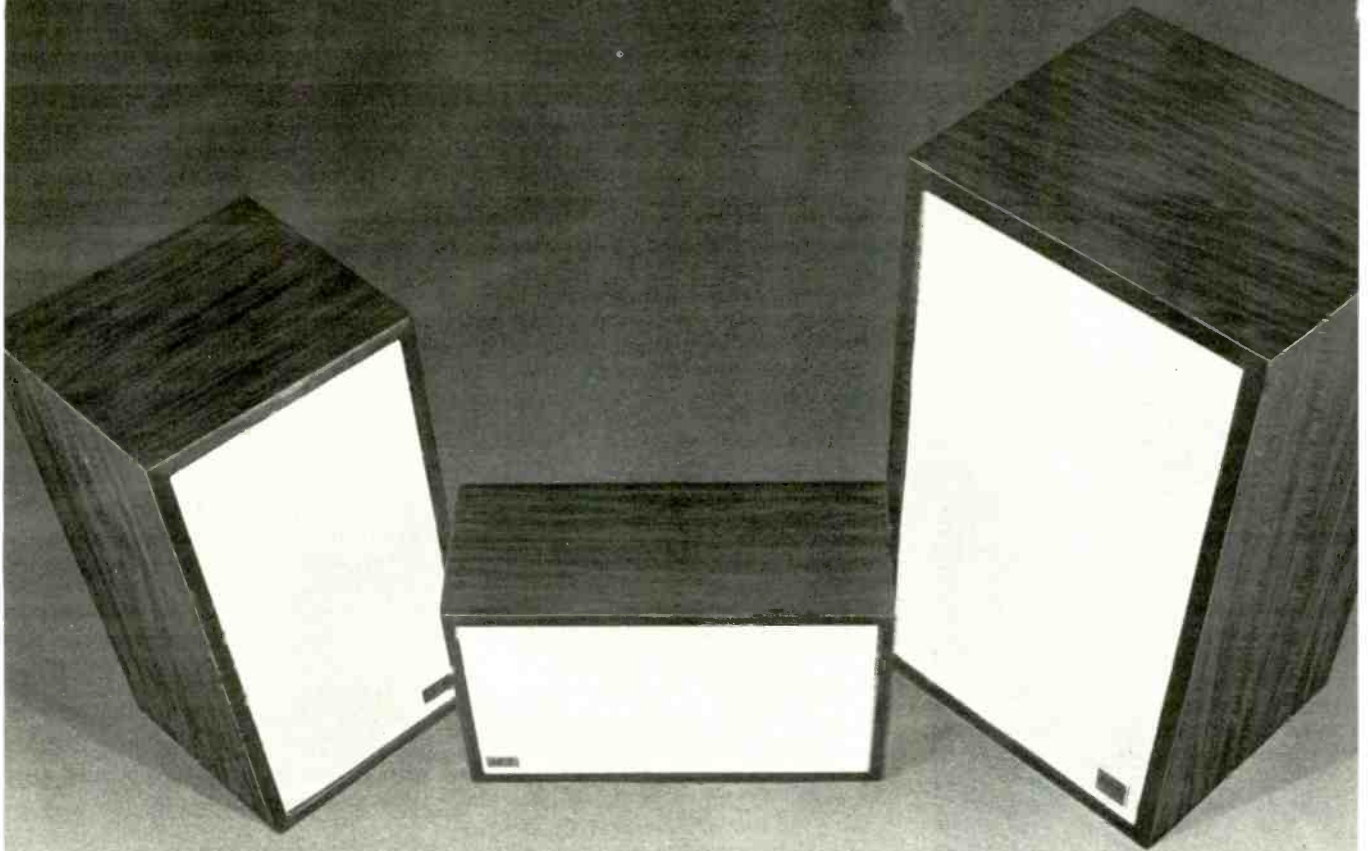
mance of the 1801 falls within these limits. They include a frequency response within \pm 0.25 dB from 30 to 10,000 Hz, \pm 0.7 dB from 10,000 to 15,000 Hz, and \pm 1 dB from 20 to 30 Hz and 15,000 to 20,000 Hz. The signal-to-noise ratio meets the more-than-adequate figure of 100 dB, and harmonic distortion is under the inaudible levels of 0.5 per cent below 5,000 Hz and 1 per cent between 5,000 and 10,000 Hz. Intermodulation distortion is less than 0.5 per cent. Bose also states that amplifier damping factor should exceed 40, overload recovery take less than 25 microseconds, and input impedance be over 50,000 ohms.

The 1801 has front-panel switching and rear-panel connectors for two stereo inputs and main and remote speaker pairs, plus gain controls for the two channels. The amplifier has two types of

visual indicators for monitoring output levels: a pair of large calibrated meters that read average levels, and twin rows of fast-acting light-emitting diodes that register program peaks up to waveform clipping in 6-dB increments. Internal construction is based on two unitized subassemblies, each one carrying a complete stereo channel and operating from a common power supply. Large finned heat sinks surround three sides of the chassis. The amplifier has both electronic and thermal protective circuits and a turn-on delay circuit that prevents excessive current surges. Dimensions are approximately 18 x 7¹/₄ x 18¹/₂ inches; weight is 82 pounds. Price: \$986. A "basic" version without the visual displays costs \$799. The 1801 carries a five-year warranty on parts and labor.

Circle 120 on reader service card

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No matter how much you've paid for the electronics in your stereo system; even if you have a \$1,000 tape deck and a \$800 receiver, if you cut corners on your speakers, you may as well have bought a \$99.95 portable record player.

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CIRCLE NO. 9 ON READER SERVICE CARD

AUDIO QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

By LARRY KLEIN *Technical Editor*



Classical vs. Rock Speakers

Q. *I have heard it said that one should use one type of speaker for classical records and another type of speaker for rock, yet neither you nor Julian Hirsch has ever mentioned such a thing. Do you think it is practical?*

ROBERT GALATI
Bronx, N.Y.

A. I'm not sure what those who espouse such views have in mind. Except under very special circumstances, it seems to me that what you want is a speaker system that can deliver an accurate acoustic analog of the mechanical undulation of the record groove. It appears that those who are pushing the concept of different speakers for different music are saying, in effect, that certain music requires more or less distortion from the speaker, requires mid-range peaks, or bass peaks, or treble peaks, or something other than a flat, accurate response. It seems to me that for best reproduction of *any* kind of music you want low distortion and an extended, smooth, non-peaked frequency response from *all* your equipment. If the musical instruments have been recorded with a specific loudness with regard to each other, you want your speaker to reproduce those levels accurately, no matter what kind of music is involved. If the recording has been engineered so that the brass has an extra "nasal" quality, the bass extra "sock," and the strings extra "bite," the speakers should deliver those qualities—neither more nor less. And the only way a speaker can do that is if it doesn't have *built-in* "nasality," "sock," or "bite."

I can see a situation in which a speaker that does a fine job reproducing string quartets is not suitable for rock, but only because it lacks the efficiency and acoustic-output capability to achieve the sound-pressure levels desired. If the effort to achieve the desired loudness level for rock (or contemporary electronic music) drives either your amplifier

or speakers into distortion because of (1) inadequate amplifier power and/or low speaker efficiency or (2) inadequate power-handling capacity on the part of the speakers, then other speakers of greater efficiency and power-handling capacity would, of course, do a better job. However, all other performance criteria in respect to frequency range and smoothness, distortion, dispersion, etc. continue to be valid. For that reason, a speaker that is able to deliver the high volume levels desirable for rock reproduction, if it is in truth a high-fidelity reproducer, should do just as good a job reproducing the more moderate levels of a string quartet. Fidelity is fidelity—and either you have it or you don't.

The Best Speaker Design

Q. *Can you give me a relative evaluation of the best speaker-system designs in respect to their mode of operation? I'm referring to acoustic-suspension vs. aperiodic vs. transmission-line vs. any other kinds of design you may know of.*

SUNNY CROSSWELL
Patterson, N.J.

A. I can't, but I'm sure that the proponents of each of the particular designs can. Our main concern at STEREO REVIEW is not *how* a system works, but rather *how well* it works, and we have tested and heard excellent systems employing a wide variety of internal design approaches.

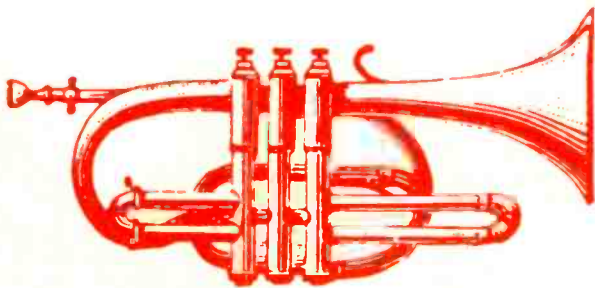
I think it is a mistake to get excessively hung up on a speaker's theory of operation as one of the factors in making a buying decision. There are many other considerations—such as size, appearance, frequency response, dispersion characteristics, potential loudness, efficiency, distortion, etc.—most of which will have far greater practical significance for a given individual than the design principles involved. This is not to say that some designs aren't easier and

(Continued on page 20)



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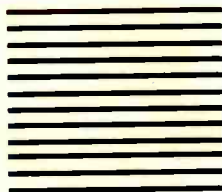
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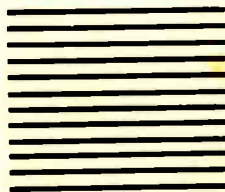


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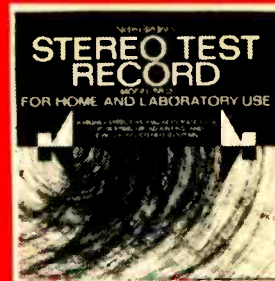
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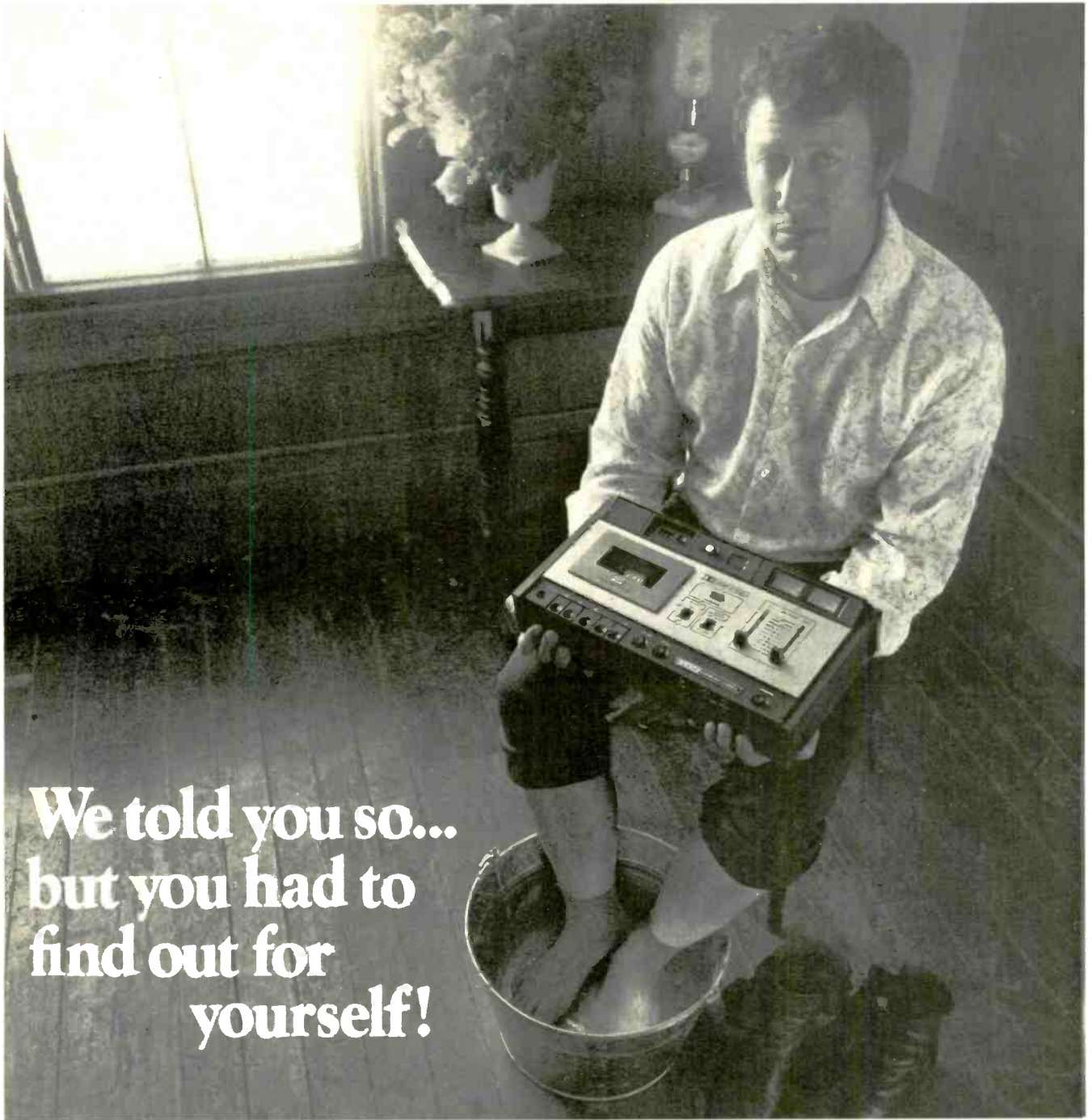
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cheaper to manufacture, more reliable, more efficient, and so forth. These are factors that might indicate better value for the money spent, and should therefore influence your decision.

If the intent of your question is to determine how close a particular design concept comes to achieving some ideal of "absolute fidelity" (cost no obstacle), we really cannot help you, since we know of no way to establish the absolute best among the many high-accuracy reproducers we have tested. All we can—and do—say is something like "this is one of the finest speakers available." It may be that among the group of the best we have tested there is one that comes slightly closer to perfection than the others. But we have no way of *scientifically* making such a fine distinction. And in any practical listening situation, variations in program material, the associated equipment, the acoustic environment, and even room placement will introduce far more variation in the audible outputs of two excellent speakers than will result from the differences in their measured results. *But* if there were to appear on the market a speaker system that sounded as good as the best and was half the price, half the size, and had twice the efficiency, both Julian Hirsch and I would be inclined to judge it *the* best.

Speaker Tone Bursts

Q. *In every one of the loudspeaker system test reports, Julian Hirsch writes something like: "Oscilloscope photos showed very good tone bursts." What should I look for in tone-burst photos? What is ideal?*

DON CAFFERY
Lexington, Va.

A. Abrupt stops and starts—and very little jiggle in between. The idea behind a tone-burst signal is that it tests a speaker system's ability to respond precisely to abrupt changes in level or stops and starts in the signal. If a speaker cone cannot follow the electrical audio signal without either lagging behind its onset or continuing to vibrate after it is gone, then the speaker probably cannot provide clean, clear reproduction of high- or low-frequency transients. Tone-burst photos, in and of themselves, prove nothing, because with practically any speaker it is easy to find some frequencies at which the bursts look fine, despite the fact that they may be a mess at other frequencies. That is why our reports indicate that the tone bursts shown are "typical," or that "overall" the tone-burst response is fine.

Because the number of questions we receive each month is greater than we can reply to individually, only those letters selected for use in this column can be answered. Sorry!

The best time to upgrade your component system is before you buy it.

If you're a typical reader of this magazine, you most likely have a sizeable investment in a component system. So our advice about upgrading might come a little late.

What you might have overlooked, however, is the fact that your records are the costliest and most fragile component of all. As well as the only one you will continue to invest in.

And since your turntable is the only component that handles these valuable records, advice about upgrading your turntable is better late than never.

Any compromise here will be costly. And permanent. Because there is just no way to improve a damaged record.

If the stylus can't respond accurately and sensitively to the rapidly changing contours of the groove walls, especially the hazardous peaks and valleys of the high frequencies, there's trouble. Any curve the stylus can't negotiate, it may lop off. And with those little bits of vinyl go the high notes and part of your investment.

If the record doesn't rotate at precisely the correct speed, musical pitch will be distorted. No amplifier tone controls can correct this distortion.

If the motor isn't quiet and free of vibration, an annoying rumble will accompany the music. You can get rid of rumble by using the bass control, but only at the expense of the bass you want to hear.

Experienced component owners know all this. Which is why so many of them, especially record reviewers and other music experts, won't play their records on anything but a Dual. From the first play on.

Now, if you'd like to know what several independent test labs say about Dual, we'll send you complete reprints of their reports. Plus a reprint of an article from a leading music magazine telling you what to look for in record playing equipment. Whether you're upgrading or not.

Better yet, just visit your franchised United Audio dealer and ask for a demonstration.

You'll find Dual automatic turntables priced from \$109.50 to \$225.00. That may be more than you spent on your present turntable, or more than you were intending to spend on your next one.

But think of it this way. It will be a long, long time before you'll need to upgrade your Dual.



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AUDIO BASICS

By RALPH HODGES

GLOSSARY OF TECHNICAL TERMS—2

● **Alignment** refers to any of several different kinds of electrical and/or mechanical adjustments that must be made on certain audio components if they are to achieve their potential performance. For example, the various circuits of a tuner are aligned for optimum performance at the specific frequencies they must operate at: the heads of a tape recorder are precisely aligned so that their physical relationship (contact angle) to the tape conforms to industry standards and permits efficient pickup of the highest recorded frequencies. Incorrect alignment of an audio component will degrade its performance in one way or another. As a rule, the equipment's manufacturer performs any necessary alignments before it leaves the factory, but with some types of components it is advisable to have the alignment checked periodically as part of a regular maintenance schedule.

● **AM** (amplitude modulation) is the transmitting system that has been in use in public broadcasting since the early Twenties. It employs a carrier signal of fixed frequency, the amplitude (strength) of which is modulated (constantly varied) in accordance with the audio frequency and strength of the program material being transmitted. In the U.S., commercial AM stations are allotted broadcast frequencies anywhere from 535 to 1,605 kHz (kilohertz). Unfortunately, atmospheric and man-made interference is also a form of AM modulation, and it comes through on AM broadcasts as noise or "static." The FM (frequency modulation) broadcasting and reception system is not, by its very nature, as susceptible to this kind of interference, so it is therefore preferred for high-fidelity applications.

● **Ambiance**, in the audio sense, refers to the acoustic properties of any environment in which sound is produced or reproduced. The word has been used most recently to describe the type of

four-channel recording in which the rear channels are devoted exclusively to reproducing the sound reflections (reverberation) from the interior surfaces of the concert hall or recording studio with the aim of communicating to the listener their acoustic contribution to the sound and the spatial sensation of the actual performance.

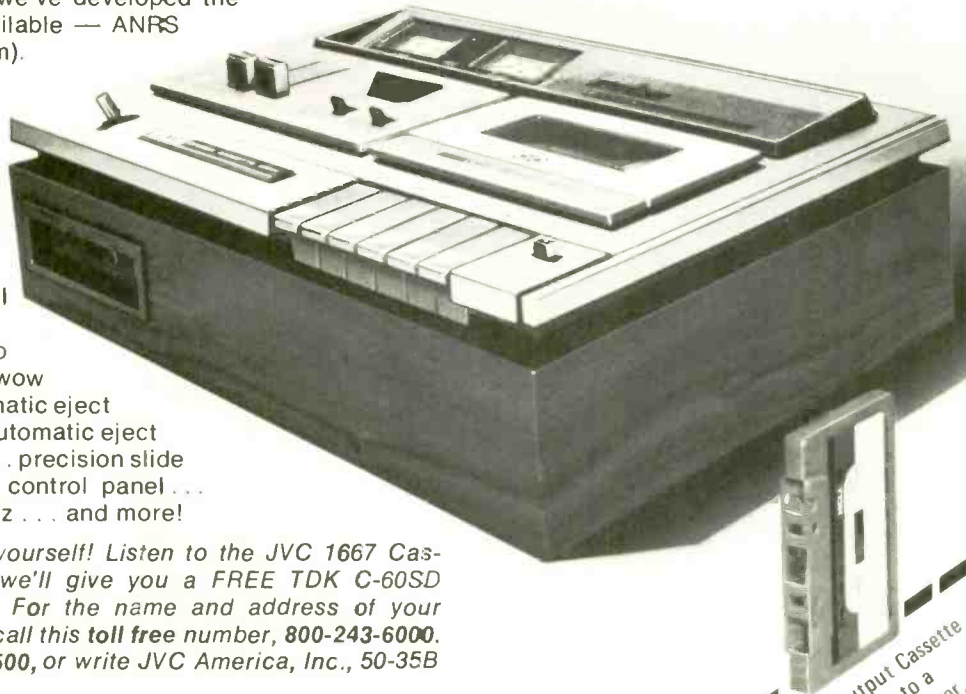
● **Amplifier** denotes any device that increases the strength of an electrical audio signal. Various audio components with specific amplifying tasks go by the names *preamplifier*, *power amplifier*, and *integrated amplifier*.

● **Amplitude** is a quantitative term that means about the same thing as magnitude. In audio, amplitude can refer to the loudness of a sound, the strength of an electrical audio signal, or the extent of the physical excursion of a record groove or speaker cone. When an audio signal is displayed on an oscilloscope or graph, its relative amplitude is usually indicated by the height of the waveform.

● **Anechoic** means, literally, "without echoes." A perfect anechoic environment can be achieved only by the elimination of *all* surfaces that might reflect sound waves—the best example of such an environment would be a point high in the air above an open field. As a more practical substitute, acoustic specialists have long relied on a type of room, called an *anechoic chamber*, whose walls, floor, and ceiling have been treated to absorb (rather than reflect) *almost* (nothing's perfect) all sounds that impinge on them. Engineers refer to chambers as being good—properly anechoic, that is—down to some given frequency. Anechoic chambers are valuable tools for speaker designers and others who must perform precise sonic measurements, but they are not considered congenial surroundings for musical performances. "Free-field" is sometimes used as a synonym for "anechoic."

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The XLM is capable of reproducing anything found on a phonograph record. *Audio*

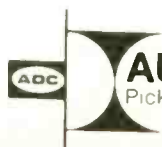
Distortion Distortion readings... are almost without exception better than those for any other model we've tested. *High Fidelity*

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TECHNICAL TALK

By JULIAN D. HIRSCH

● LIVE-VS.-RECORDED SPEAKER TESTING:

From time to time, we hear from readers and manufacturers who criticize (usually on the basis of a misunderstanding) the simulated live-vs.-recorded listening test used as part of our speaker-evaluation process. It has been several years since we described this test in detail, and a review would probably be helpful to new readers. Also, our additional experience in applying it to many types of speakers has provided some new insights into its strengths and weaknesses.

First of all, it must be stressed that this is *not* a test that compares the sound of a speaker under test with that of some "perfect" reference speaker in an attempt to reveal the shortcomings (if any) of the former. The fact is, we have never encountered a speaker we would care to refer to as a "perfect" reproducer, and, as far as we know, no such device has yet been created. In spite of our efforts to make this fact perfectly clear, some people continue to believe that the imperfections of the reference speaker restrict the application of this test to those speakers that are of lesser quality than the reference. This is simply not the case, even though we have found that certain characteristics (dispersion, mostly) of the reference speaker can influence the results of the test to some degree.

The purpose of *any* live-vs.-recorded procedure is to test how closely a speaker can imitate some "real" (or live) sound when both the speaker and the original sound source are brought together for a side-by-side comparison. Obviously this has to involve making a highly accurate preliminary recording of the live source, which will then serve as comparison program material for the speaker. Several companies (most notably Acoustic Research) have conducted public demonstrations of live-vs.-recorded tests before large audiences, using anything from a solo guitarist to a full orchestra.

As a rule, the live performers lead off. At an unspecified moment, a special recording of the same piece made some time earlier takes over, while the musicians continue to go through the motions of playing without actually doing so. The switch between the live and recorded performances (and back again) can take place any number of times. If no one—or few—in the audience can detect the switchovers or hear any significant difference between the real and reproduced sounds, the test is a success; that is, the recording-reproducing chain *including* the speaker can be assumed to be accurate. (The technical problems involved in making an "accurate" recording in the sense required by this test are enormous, but we need not go into that here.) In principle, this sort of test is attractive and logical, and it neatly avoids all questions of individual taste in sound quality. It would seem unarguable that a speaker whose sound reproduction cannot be distinguished from that of some original performance is, at the very least, a *very* good reproducer.

Our simulated live-vs.-recorded test is based on the same theoretical grounds, except that it avoids the necessity of having live musicians on hand at all times by assuming that *any* sound source—musical or not—can serve as a "live" source, *as long as it can be accurately recorded and is precisely repeatable whenever a comparison is to be made.* We use as our "live" sound source the output of a "reference" hi-fi speaker fed a variety of taped program material. Remember that there is nothing special about the reference; *any* speaker capable of producing reasonably loud, wide-range sounds could have been used with equally valid results. Diagram (A) shows how an accurate recording of the sonic output of the reference speaker was made, employing an anechoic chamber to eliminate the effects of room acoustics. The sound of the speaker was picked up by a microphone carefully located in the chamber

TESTED THIS MONTH

●
Fisher 504 Four-Channel Receiver
Superex PEP-79 Stereo Headphones
Heath AD-1530 Cassette Deck
Tandberg 9000X Stereo Tape Deck

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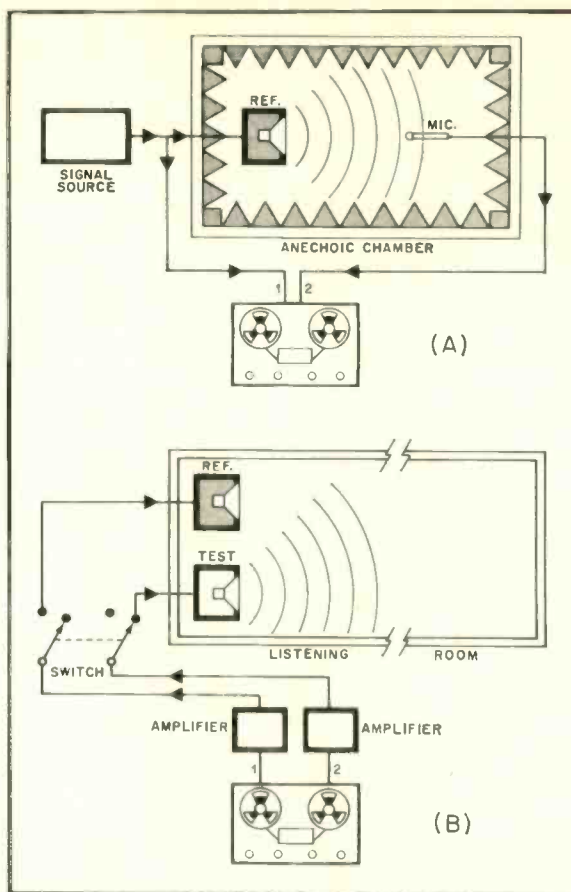
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and recorded on channel 2 of the tape machine. Simultaneously, the program material driving the speaker was recorded on channel 1 so that it would be present on the same tape as the "live" sound and conveniently in synchronization.

The actual test procedure is illustrated at right (B), with the speaker supplying the "live" sound designated REF (for "reference") and the speaker being evaluated labeled TEST. Note that in one position the switch drives the reference speaker with the *original* program material recorded on channel 1 of the tape machine, while in the other position (where it is shown) the recorded sound of the reference system (on channel 2) is fed to the speaker being tested.

In our listening room, we place the two speakers as close together as possible and play the original program from channel 1 through the reference speaker. The "live" sound is now playing in our own room, at a volume level under our control. Then the switch is thrown and channel 2 is played through the test speaker. If the speaker under test is perfect, it should sound *exactly* like the reference speaker playing the original program. By switching from one speaker or the other, the two can be compared at will. The characteristics of the listening room do not enter into the picture, since they will affect both the original and reproduced sounds in



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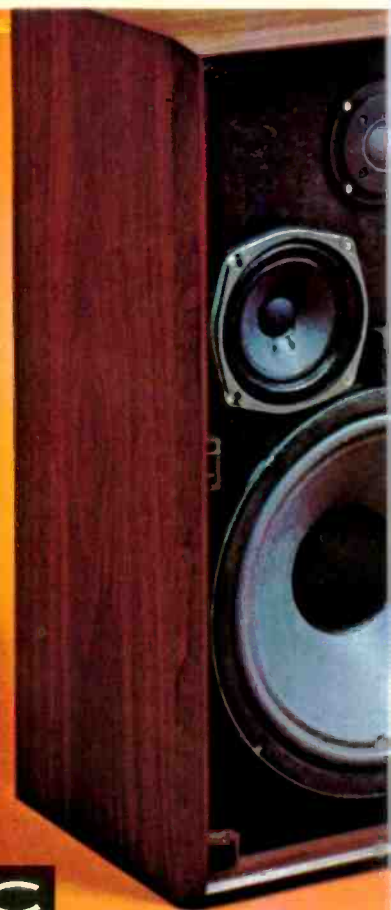
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the same way. To demonstrate the fact that the reference speaker need not be perfect, it is possible to arrange the switching so as to switch the reference speaker from the REF to the TEST position and back again. Our reference speaker, because of minor frequency-response inadequacies (it rolls off gently at the high end), is not able to imitate itself as well as some other speakers with a flatter response can. In other words, an accurate speaker without built-in dips, peaks, and distortions is able to imitate *anything*, but a speaker with defects will add those defects to whatever sound it is trying to reproduce.

IN most cases, our simulated live-vs.-recorded test works exactly as one would hope. We find it easy to identify small variations in response at middle or high frequencies (we have been able to hear as little as 1-dB average difference in one or two frequency octaves). The strength of this comparison lies in the manner in which it removes personal listening preferences from the evaluation process. For example, on some of our program material, the reference speaker produces some highly irritating sounds, but the speaker under test *should* sound exactly as unpleasant. If it sounds "better" (because, for example, it is unable to reproduce some high-frequency distortion in the program material), it is obviously not an accurate reproducer.

Unfortunately, the size of the anechoic chamber used for our original recording limited the test to frequencies above 200 Hz, and lower frequencies have therefore been filtered from the original program. So, to a certain degree, we are still at the mercy of the listening-room resonances and the program material in judging bass performance.

There are, of course, several other objections that could be raised to the underlying principles of our simulated live-vs.-recorded comparisons, but I think it is fair to say that these would also apply to similar tests using on-the-spot musicians. First, there is the problem of making a precise recording of the live sound. Ideally, the miking should be done under anechoic or open-air conditions, so that when the material is played back in a room, there will be no *recorded* room reverberation on track 2 to add to the sound of the test speaker when the reference speaker is playing the nonreverberant track 1. The proper placement of the microphone must be carefully determined so that the mike picks up a representative sample of the acoustic field produced by the live source. This involves the question of *directivity*—the uniformity of output in different directions over the operating frequency range of *any* sound source. In a normal listening room, we hear an integration of the output of a speaker (or other source of sound) as radiated in all directions



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and reflected by the room boundaries. This integrated output is essentially what we measure in our frequency-response tests. However, when making a recording of a speaker in open air—or in an anechoic chamber—the recording microphone receives only the energy radiated in one specific direction, and the frequency response of a speaker in any one direction is not necessarily identical to its integrated energy-response curve. When making the recording, it is therefore necessary to determine by trial and error the microphone location at which the *shape* of the speaker's pressure-response curve approximates the *shape* of its total reverberant-field energy response. Obviously, human judgment is required at this point; but, on the whole, judging from our test results, we feel that the recording was done successfully.

ANOTHER aspect of the same problem affects our listening comparisons. The reference speaker is a more or less conventional acoustic-suspension, three-way system with a wide frequency range and good dispersion. If the test speaker has a roughly similar polar-dispersion pattern, the comparison process is simplified, and sometimes the imitation of the original program is literally perfect. If the speaker under test has much better dispersion in the forward hemisphere than the reference speaker, it will *never* sound exactly the same, since our ears will receive different proportions of direct and reflected sound from the two speakers. In the extreme case of a 360-degree (omnidirectional) speaker, the effect is even more pronounced. We are still able to make valid judgments of overall frequency response and detect rather subtle colorations, but exact facsimile reproduction of a reference that has a more or less directional sound character by one with wider dispersion appears to be impossible. On the other hand, a test speaker with narrower dispersion than the reference speaker can be evaluated easily, since it may be very good "on axis," but will always sound dull when it is rotated slightly away from the listener.

An interesting adjunct to—and test of the validity of—the live-vs.-recorded technique was suggested by Technical Editor Larry Klein. His idea was to insert a $\frac{1}{3}$ -octave band equalizer in the signal path feeding the reference speaker and adjust it by ear so as to achieve the closest possible correspondence between the sound of the test speaker and that of the reference speaker. If our approach is correct, then the resulting equalizer curve should be identical to the frequency-response curve (obtained during our other tests) of the speaker being evaluated. An alternate technique would be to put the frequency equalizer in the signal path of the speaker being tested. In that case, the "correction" curve applied by the equalizer would be the inverse of the test speaker's curve. Mr. Klein's test works, but it is difficult to apply because the listener must be able to estimate at $\frac{1}{3}$ -octave intervals what frequencies need correction, to what degree, and in what direction. However, if we could bring a computer into the act

Although the live-vs.-recorded test, like any other, has its limitations, it remains a major part of our speaker test procedure—perhaps because it is so much more fundamental and relevant to a home high-fidelity speaker's real purpose than most of the "objective" tests that have been devised. In addition, the test should minimize the debate as to the significance of a particular design or performance parameter. If a speaker manufacturer claims that his designs are superior because he has eliminated some old—or recently discovered—form of distortion, the test should show up whatever audible improvement is attained—at least within the limitations discussed above.

Ideally, it would probably be best to have three reference speakers and test tapes—one "normal" forward-facing speaker, one with 180-degree dispersion (covering the front hemisphere), and one 360-degree (omnidirectional) speaker. In the meantime, we have learned to interpret the data provided by our existing setup, and are reasonably satisfied with the validity of the results.

EQUIPMENT TEST REPORTS

By Hirsch-Houck Laboratories

Fisher 504 AM/FM Four-Channel Receiver



● FISHER states that the "Studio Standard" receivers were designed to meet the requirements of both current and future four-channel technology with a minimum of compromise. The three receivers—Models 304, 404, and 504—share the same FM and AM tuners and basic overall design. The principal differences are in their audio power outputs and control features. For this report, we tested the Model 504. (Continued on page 34)

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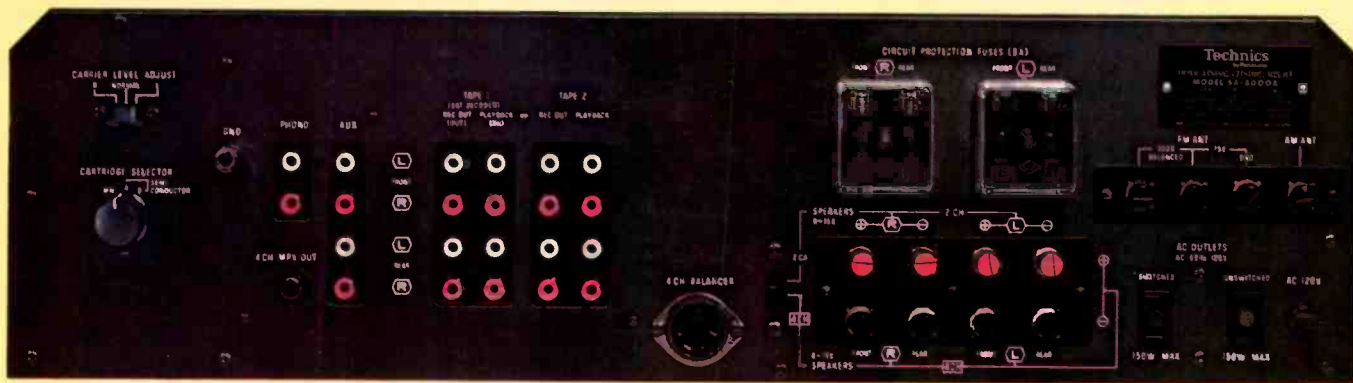


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We are particularly proud of its discrete capabilities. Because it has a demodulator for CD-4 records. Built in! And it adapts to any CD-4 cartridge instantly. Via front-mounted carrier level and separation controls.

The SA-8000X has an exclusive combination of controls and circuitry that adjusts to the coefficients of any matrix method. The Acoustic Field Dimension (AFD) controls and the Phase Shift Selector provide a variety of blendings that encompass every popular matrix system. Even some that haven't been tried yet. And the same controls can compensate for poor room acoustics. Or undesirable but unavoidable speaker placement.

The Technics "Total 4-Channel" concept shows just as clearly in the rest of the front panel. A well-thought-out set of controls manage both volume and balance. There's a large master gain surrounded by separate controls for each channel. And any balance set with the individual knobs is maintained when the master is adjusted.

The rear panel reflects the same versatility. With plug-ins for three 4-channel tape decks. Plus provisions for future discrete FM.

Technics' attention to detail continues inside the SA-8000X. With sophistications like a pair of 4-pole MOS FETs and a 3-gang linear tuning capacitor. A trio of 2-element ceramic IF filters, a new type of epoxy resin coils as well as monolithic IC's in the multiplex circuit.

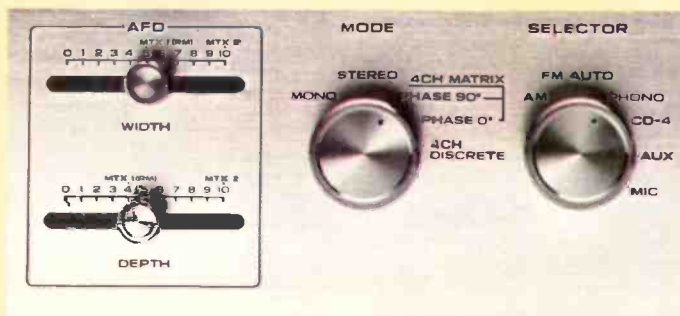
The four directly coupled amplifiers are very gummy in the bottom end and can be "strapped" together. So that in stereo, four amplifiers work as two, which more than doubles per-channel wattage in that mode.

The combined effectiveness of the whole design produces specifications like these:

FM TUNER SECTION		AMPLIFIER SECTION	
Sensitivity	1.9 μ v	1 kHz RMS Power (all ch. driven at 8 Ω)	
Selectivity	65 dB	4-channel operation	64w
S/N Ratio	65 dB	2-channel operation	84w
Capture Ratio	1.8dB	IHF Music Power (4 Ω)	160w
		4-channel operation	
		Power Bandwidth (all ch. driven at 8 Ω)	5Hz-40kHz, -3dB

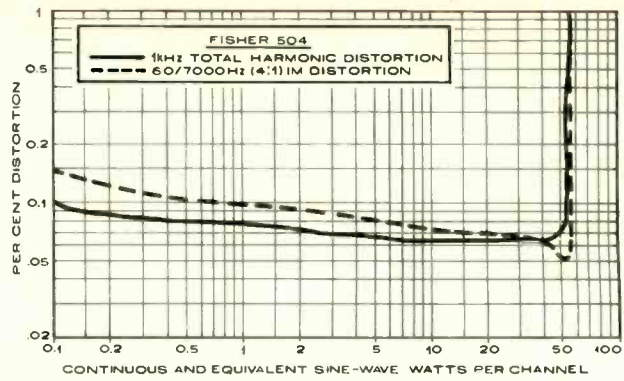
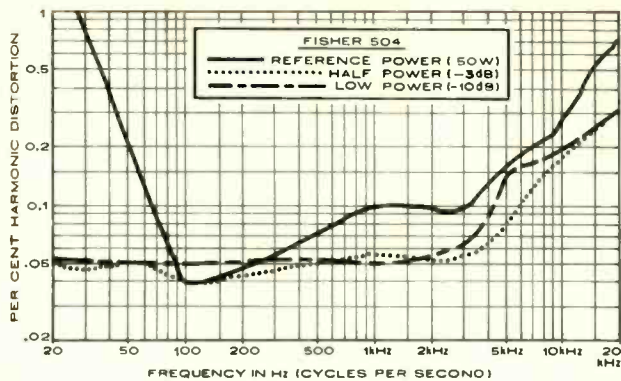
The concept is simple. The execution is precise. The performance is outstanding. The name is Technics.

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Technics

by Panasonic



The curves above show distortion levels with two of the 504's amplifier channels driven in the four-channel mode (see text).

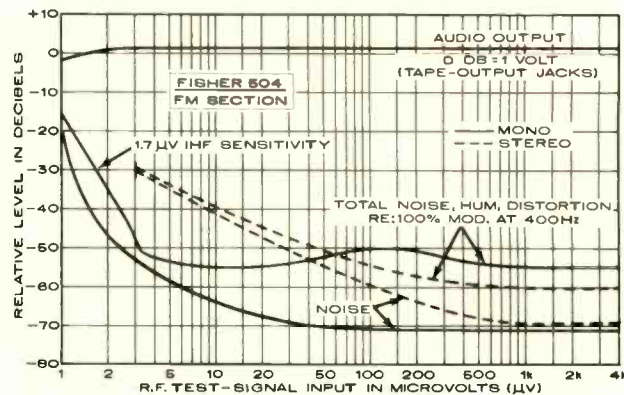
The 504 is a large unit, measuring about 21½ inches wide, 7 inches high, and 17 inches deep, and weighing 43 pounds. The tuning dial scales, lit in blue, occupy the upper center of the front panel, with the two tuning meters (relative signal-strength and zero-center tuning) at their left and the large tuning knob at the right. A red light in the zero-center meter indicates stereo FM reception.

The lower section of the front panel contains all the receiver's operating controls. The pushbutton power switch is at the left, together with separate front and rear stereo headphone jacks. Five vertical sliders adjust bass, mid-range, and treble for the front channels, and bass and treble for the rear channels. For matrix four-channel material, processed through the built-in SQ decoder, the three front-channel controls affect all channels and the two rear-channel controls are inoperative.

The center of the panel is dominated by a smoothly operating "joystick" four-channel balance control, which is probably the simplest and most logical system for adjusting the relative levels of four output channels. Four pushbutton switches to the left of the balance control provide a reduction of audio level for temporary listening interruptions, switch off the FM muting, activate the SQ decoder, and provide noise reduction for stereo FM reception by high-frequency channel blending. When the SQ circuits are activated, an SQ identification lights up in orange to the left of the tuning meters. Four more pushbuttons to the right of the balance control activate an AM muting and noise-reduction system called "DNL," the high- and low-cut filters, and loudness compensation.

Next we come to the speaker switch, which does considerably more than merely select speakers. It has positions for MAIN, REMOTE, and MAIN + REMOTE; all these are in duplicate for the two-channel and four-channel operating modes. There is also a PHONES ONLY position that silences all speakers. The "normal" operating condition is the four-channel mode, activating a red "4" light next to the control knob. When set to the two-channel mode, a "2" light comes on, and the front and rear channels on each side are "strapped" internally to provide in two-channel use more power than is available from each individual channel when they are used as separate drive sources.

The mode/monitor switch has positions marked MONO, STEREO, 4 CH, TAPE MONITOR, and ACCESSORY. In STEREO, a numeral "2" at the left of the tuning meters is illu-



The curves above compare the levels of random noise and of total noise, hum, and distortion with the audio-output level as input-signal strength increases. Both mono and stereo are shown.

minated, and in 4 CH a "4" appears. The TAPE MONITOR position operates with a four-channel or conventional two-channel tape deck connected to the jacks in the rear. The ACCESSORY position is intended for the connection of an external equalizer, noise-reduction unit, or similar device. Equipment connected to the accessory jacks does not affect the signals supplied to a tape recorder, but it does operate during playback from the recorder. A second pair of stereo tape-recording outputs on the front panel is taken off after all the receiver's controls, so that the tone controls, filters, and SQ decoder can be used to process a signal before it is recorded.

The selector knob connects the desired program source: PHONO, FM, AUX 1, or an AUX 2 input also marked QUADRADISC. The last of these is intended to accept the output of a demodulator used with the CD-4 discrete four-channel recordings. The master volume control, which controls all four channels simultaneously, is a horizontal slider located below the tuning knob.

The last front-panel function is the audio display: four red lights to the right of the tuning knob whose brightness varies according to the output level in each channel. Used with the balance joystick, they simplify the electrical balancing of the outputs, although speaker and room characteristics and listener location may require readjustment for correct acoustic balance. A pushbutton on the panel can be used to extinguish the display lights.

The rear of the receiver is dominated by the finned heat-sink radiators for the output transistors, which ran quite cool under all conditions encountered in our tests. The AM and FM antenna terminals can be used for connecting external antennas; or, with the jumper links provided, the internal ferrite-rod antenna (nonadjustable) can be used for AM and the line cord for reception of local FM stations. Except for the phono inputs, all signal input jacks are in quadruplicate. An FM DETECTOR OUT jack is provided for use with a possible future FM dis-

(Continued on page 38)

ERRATUM: SONY TC-377 TAPE DECK

● THE price given (\$389.50) in the June 1973 test report on the Sony TC-377 stereo tape deck is incorrect. The correct price (\$299.95) is almost \$100 less—which makes the excellent TC-377 an even better buy than it appeared in our report. —J.H.

We invented the first high-fidelity speaker. Now we've invented the MAX 12.

In 1915, our Mr. Pridham built the first moving-coil loudspeaker, true ancestor of high-fidelity horns.

We've been improving sound ever since. And everything we've learned in the intervening years has gone into our

new MAX Series 3-way speaker systems. So that you can get everything out of them: completely natural uncluttered sound, good presence, smooth, clean dispersion and response.

The MAX 12 (shown) has a 12"

woofer. The same basic speaker is also available with 10" (MAX 10) and 15" (MAX 15) woofers. All three systems represent 58 years of speaker-design experience.

Don't settle for less.

For more details, write to: The Magnavox Company, Stereo Components Department, 1700 Magnavox Way, Ft. Wayne, Ind. 46804

Maximum power-handling capacity:
75 watts rms.

Minimum power requirements:
10 watts rms.

Level controls:
Separate treble and midrange rotary step switches.

Frequency response:
25 Hz to 20 KHz.

Walnut veneer
instead of vinyl.

Impedance:
8 ohms.

System resonance:
45 Hz.

Tweeter: 2" phenolic ring with viscous edge suspension and molded one-piece cone.

Crossover frequencies:
1500 Hz and 4500 Hz.

Midrange:
2" hemispherical dome.

Woofer:
12" acoustic suspension.

Foam grille, not cloth,
for maximum transparency.

15-3/4" x 25-3/4" x 13-1/4"

Magnavox. You heard right.

CIRCLE NO. 28 ON READER SERVICE CARD



Meet the creator.

It creates echo, cross echo and rotating echo.

It overdubs, mixes down and masters.

It produces "backwards" recordings and pan-pot effects.

It turns one musician into a whole group.

It does just about everything a studio does —
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It's the creator — TEAC's amazing Model 3340 4-Channel Tape Deck, backed by TEAC's exclusive two-year Warranty of Confidence.*

The 3340 is a skillful blend of advanced electronics and precision mechanics that reflects professional sophistication: 10½" reels. Quick and smooth three-motor transport. Four studio-calibrated VU meters. Eight input controls for mic/line mixing. Dual bias. 7½ and 15 ips studio accurate speeds. And Simul-Sync™. Simul-Sync is TEAC's unique electronic system that eliminates the time lag you get with conventional record-playback monitoring. Which means that each track you lay down will be in perfect sync with the next one, and the next, and the next. And it opens up a realm of creative sound limited only by the borders of imagination.

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** For two full years from date of purchase, any TEAC TAPE DECK returned with warranty card and freight prepaid by the original registered purchaser to TEAC or its nearest authorized service station will be repaired free of charge for defects in workmanship or material. This warranty applies only to TEAC products purchased in the United States.

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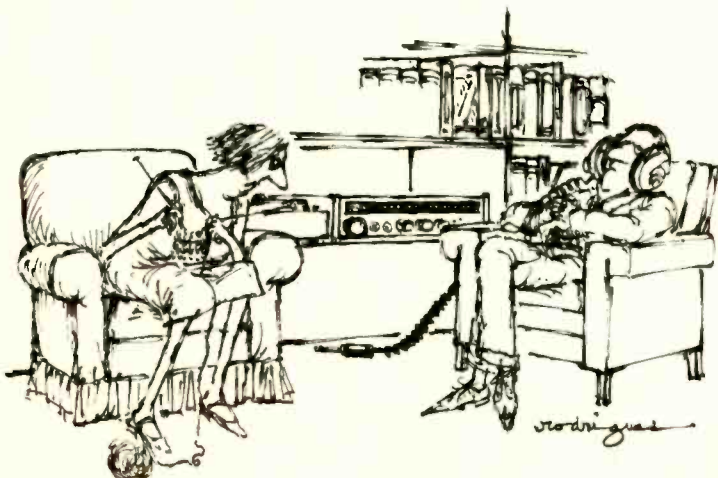
crete four-channel decoder. The speaker connectors are spring-loaded clips whose close spacing requires some care to avoid short circuits. The main speaker outputs are also very close to the heat-sink fins, calling for some manual dexterity during installation.

Fast-acting electronic circuits that silence the affected channel protect the output stages against overloads or shorts. Switching the receiver off for about one minute and turning it on again restores normal operation if the fault has been removed. There is one switched a.c. outlet and a single power-line fuse. The Fisher 504 is supplied complete with a handsome walnut-finish wooden cabinet. Price: \$599.95.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** It should be noted that we are now using a Sound Technology 1000A FM signal generator, which allows us to make meaningful measurements of low-level distortion both in mono and stereo, as well as more accurate measurements of stereo FM channel separation. The Fisher 504 is the first receiver we have tested with the new generator, so that its tested FM performance numbers in these areas cannot be compared directly with the results of previous tests we have made on other receivers.

The FM sensitivity (IHF) was 1.7 microvolts (rated 1.8). A 50-dB signal-to-noise (S/N) ratio was achieved at an input of 2.3 microvolts (mono) and at 28 microvolts (stereo). The ultimate S/N ratio was about 71.5 dB in mono (above 100 microvolts) and 69 dB in stereo (above 1,000 microvolts). FM distortion was -55 dB (0.17 per cent) in mono and was actually *lower* in stereo, measuring -59 dB, or 0.13 per cent. The frequency response was well within ± 1 dB from 30 to 15,000 Hz. Stereo separation exceeded 40 dB from 30 to 2,600 Hz (reaching 50 dB in the 100- to 200-Hz range), and was better than 25 dB at all frequencies up to our measurement limit of 15,000 Hz. Other FM performance parameters included: capture ratio, 1.2 dB at 10 microvolts and 1.3 dB at 1,000 microvolts (very good); AM rejection, 40 dB (fair); image rejection, 68 dB (good); alternate-channel selectivity, about 60 dB (good); 19,000-Hz stereo pilot carrier leakage, -71.5 dB (good). The muting and automatic stereo/mono switching thresholds were each 2.7 microvolts.

The AM frequency response was typical of most AM tuners, being down about 6 dB at 45 and 2,500 Hz. However, the sensitivity and selectivity on AM were excellent, and background noise between stations was exceptionally low. The "DNL" system appeared to function as an interstation-noise muting device, also introducing some apparent reduction in high-frequency response. On strong signals it introduced audible distortion, but Fisher recommends its use only during reception of weak signals.



The audio amplifiers had good tone-control characteristics. The bass turnover frequency varied with the control settings. The front-channel MID control action, which centered at 1,500 Hz, affected frequencies over a four-octave range, providing a maximum of about 10 or 12 dB of boost or cut. The loudness compensation mostly boosted low frequencies, although there was also a slight high-frequency boost at low volume-control settings. The filters had 6-dB-per-octave slopes, with the -3-dB frequencies being about 60 and 3,000 Hz. The RIAA phono equalization was within ± 2 dB from 30 to 15,000 Hz.

An input of 86 millivolts (AUX) or 1.2 millivolts (PHONO) produced a 10-watt output, with the noise being about 74 dB below 10 watts on any input. Phono overload occurred at 65 millivolts, and the high-level inputs overloaded at 4.8 volts—both quite safe values for any program source likely to be used.

In the 4 CH mode, with all channels driven, the output waveform clipped at 44.7 watts per channel at 1,000 Hz with 8-ohm loads. Fisher's rating for this type of operation is 40 watts per channel, and this conservatism appeared to apply to the other audio-output ratings as well. When we drove only the two front channels under these conditions (our usual procedure), the output was 50 watts per channel. Into 4 ohms, it was about 80 watts per channel, and with 16-ohm loads it was 29 watts per channel.

We used 50 watts as a reference full-power output for distortion measurements over the full audio-frequency range—although that is higher than Fisher's rating. At full power, the distortion rose at low frequencies to 1 per cent at 30 Hz; but, in general, at all power levels and across most of the audio band, the distortion was between 0.05 and 0.1 per cent. At 20,000 Hz it was about 0.3 per cent at 25 watts or less, and 0.8 per cent at 50 watts. With a 1,000-Hz signal, the harmonic distortion was between 0.06 and 0.1 per cent from 0.1 watt to 50 watts, increasing rapidly at higher powers. The intermodulation (IM) distortion was equally low over the same power range.

One of the Fisher 504's special features is its "strapped" output circuit for two-channel operation. The strapping provides a greater power output in each of the two used channels than the sum of the combined front and rear channels. In this mode, the maximum output is obtained with 8-ohm loads and is rated at 110 watts per channel at 1,000 Hz, or 90 watts over the full audio range. We measured the clipping point at 132 watts per channel at 1,000 Hz and used the 90-watt rating for our other tests, which yielded results generally similar to those obtained in the four-channel mode. Distortion was typically 0.1 per cent or less, and never exceeded 0.45 per cent from 20 to 20,000 Hz at any power from 9 to 90 watts per channel. The only measurement adversely affected in the strapped mode was the IM distortion at very low power outputs, which was about twice as high as in the four-channel mode. The maximum reading was about 2 per cent at 100 milliwatts output. However, we did not hear any difference in program quality when switching between the two modes of operation. (The article by Robert Carver in the May 1973 issue of *STEREO REVIEW* explains the lack of audible differences despite the measurement difference.)

● **Comment.** We have two minor criticisms of the Fisher 504, both related to its functional design rather than to its performance. The great variety of auxiliary devices and program sources with which the receiver can be used would seem to indicate the need for more than a single a.c. convenience outlet, although a short extension cord with a multi-tap a.c. outlet could be plugged into the Fisher's single outlet. Second, the FM dial scale is difficult to read more closely than about 500 kHz.

(Continued on page 42)

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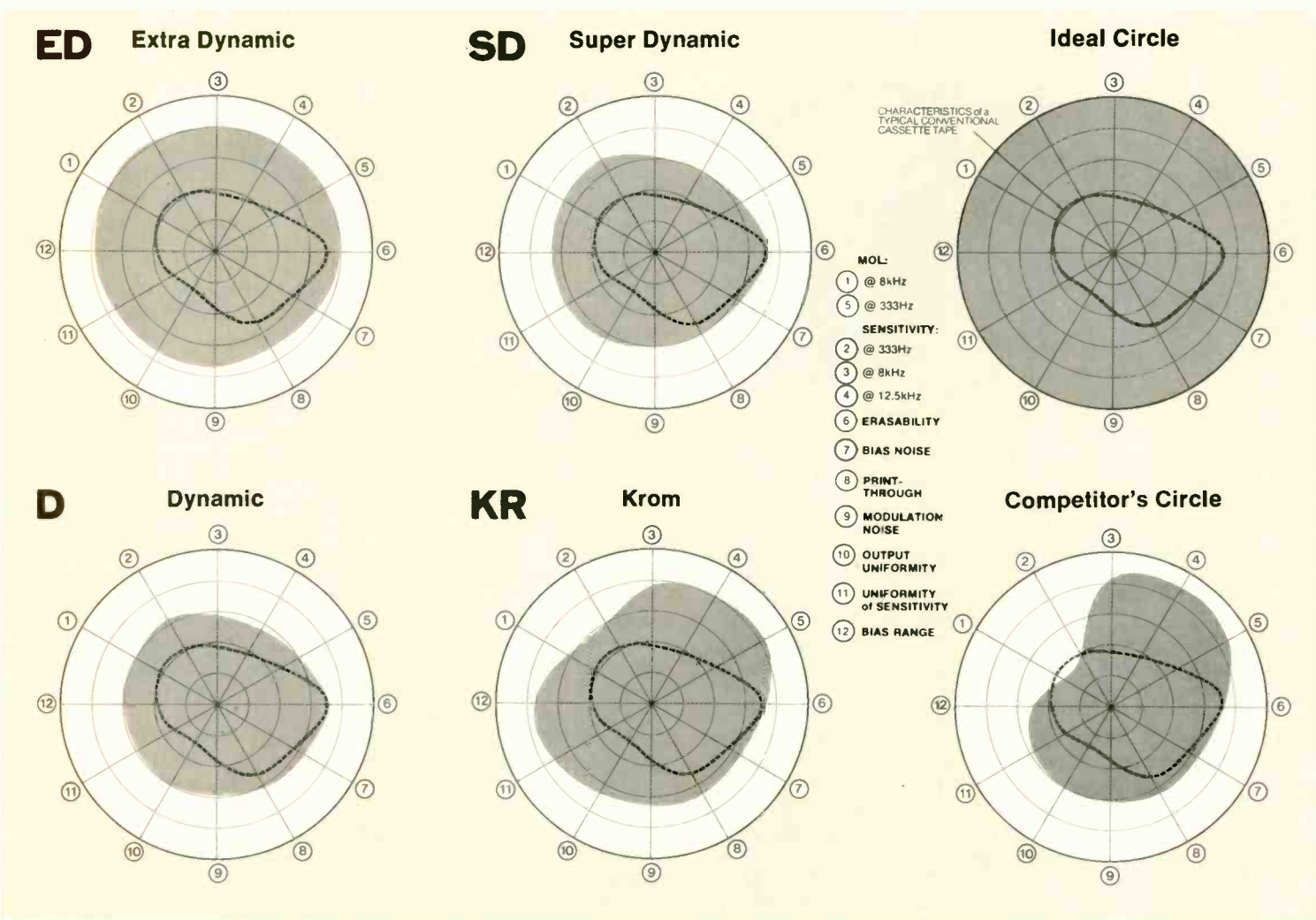
ED EXTRA DYNAMIC offers an entirely new dimension in cassette recording fidelity for the discriminating audiophile. Recording characteristics are vastly superior to any other cassette on the market, for unmatched performance on any cassette deck. Incomparably fresh, sharp and rich sound. Available in 45, 60 and 90 minute lengths.

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The ability of a tape to provide high-fidelity sound reproduction depends not only on the familiar frequency response characteristics, but also on a number of other electromagnetic properties. TDK has selected twelve of the most important characteristics and arranged them on the exclusive CIRCLE OF TAPE PERFORMANCE permitting a direct comparison of the properties of various recording tapes. Each of the twelve "spokes" of the wheel (polar co-ordinates) represents one of the twelve factors; the outer circle represents the ideal characteristics of a "perfect" tape. When we plot the properties of a cassette tape on the circle, the closer these characteristics approach those of the ideal tape — that is the larger and more regular the resulting pattern, the better the sound reproduction capabilities of the tape. The goal is to reach the outer circle.

Shown below are CIRCLE OF TAPE PERFORMANCE characteristics of TDK's ED, SD, D and KR-series cassettes; on the right are the properties of two leading "premium-quality" competitive cassettes. Judge for yourself which cassettes provide the best balanced hi-fi performance.



SD SUPER DYNAMIC, the tape that turned the cassette into a high-fidelity medium. Very high maximum output levels (MOL) and very broad dynamic range assure outstanding reproduction of the complex characteristics of "real life" sound. Clear, crisp, delicate sound reproduction. Available in 45, 60, 90 and 120 minute lengths.

D DYNAMIC series is the entirely new hi-fi cassette from TDK, offering excellent quality at moderate prices with well balanced performance characteristics superior to most "premium" cassettes. New coating formulation assures bright, warm and mellow sound reproduction. Available in 45, 60, 90, 120 and 180 minute lengths, world's only 3 hour cassette.

KR KROM cassettes, available in 60 and 90 minute lengths, are the "more than equal" chromium dioxide cassettes for those who prefer its brilliant, crisp, sharp sound. For use only on decks equipped with a bias or tape type selector switch, KROM cassettes offer unequalled response and outstanding linearity at high frequencies.

We appreciated the ease of changing from separate to strapped amplifiers by the turn of a knob. Since most commercial program material is still in two-channel form, many listeners with good low-efficiency 8-ohm speaker systems can now experience firsthand the benefits of a truly powerful amplifier. And, of course, for four-channel listening, a total of 150 to 200 watts of clean power should more than suffice.

We have not commented on the SQ decoder because we made no measurements *per se* of its performance. We did listen to a number of SQ records, and we would judge this decoder to be the equivalent of the other widely used "front-back" logic decoders we have used. It does as good a job as any of them, but it is not the equal of a "full-logic" decoder. The SQ decoder will also do a reasonable job of "synthesizing" material for the rear channels from

conventional stereo discs, tapes, and broadcasts. Since there is no other matrix provided in the 504, Sansui QS records cannot be heard to best advantage without the use of an external decoder.

Otherwise, the versatility of the Fisher 504 is exceptional, as a review of its features will show. Our test results speak for themselves. Space limitations prevent us from commenting in greater detail on its performance, except to say that it was entirely "bug-free," everything operated in its intended manner, controls were clearly marked, tuning was smooth and noncritical, muting action was excellent, *etc.* In other words, it is a superior product which does everything Fisher claims for it and then some. All in all, the Fisher 504 is a first-rate receiver and an impressive achievement.

For more information, circle 105 on reader service card

Superex PEP-79 Stereo Headphones



● **THE Superex PEP-79** electrostatic headphone system uses the same drivers, headband, and cups as the more expensive PEP-77 system. The cost saving has been realized by using self-energized (instead of a.c.-line-powered) operation and by eliminating the headphone volume controls. Like other electrostatic phones, the PEP-79 cannot be connected to the normal headphone outputs of an amplifier or receiver. It operates through a small control box (the CC-79) driven from the amplifier's loud-speaker outputs. The speakers can be connected to terminals in the rear of the control box, and either speakers or phones can be activated by a rocker switch on its panel.

Electrostatic drivers require a high d.c. polarizing voltage and a comparable signal voltage of about several hundred volts. Unlike some other phones that use a separate a.c. power supply, the PEP-79 control box develops these voltages, using step-up transformers to boost the audio signal and then converting part of that signal to the d.c. polarizing voltage. The chief disadvantage of self-energized operation is the need for a fairly loud signal to "charge" the system initially; in most cases, normal program levels will then maintain an adequate polarizing voltage in the headphones. The left-channel input to the control box supplies the polarizing voltage for both channels in the PEP-79 system.

The Superex PEP-79 headset is light in weight (12 ounces) and has a 15-foot coiled cord fitted with a five-pin plug for the socket on the panel of the CC-79 control box. An optional 15-foot extension cable is also available. The CC-79 control unit is housed in a walnut-grain, vinyl-clad steel cabinet measuring 7 inches wide, 2½ inches high, and 4 inches deep. It requires a nominal amplifier power

of at least 5 watts per channel and will accept a maximum audio input of 15 volts. An automatic protective circuit prevents damage to the system from excessive input voltages. The two speaker-input channels are electrically independent (no common ground), and each is internally loaded with 120 ohms to prevent accidental open-circuit operation of the amplifier. The price of the Superex PEP-79 system is \$85.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** We measured the frequency response of the PEP-79 with a slightly modified ANSI standard earphone coupler. The drive level was 3 volts. This produced an average acoustic output of 107 dB sound-pressure level (SPL) in the low- and mid-frequency ranges, where the coupler characteristics have little effect on the measurements. From 20 to 1,200 Hz, the measured output varied only ± 2 dB.

Like almost every other headphone tested with this type of coupler, the PEP-79 exhibited response irregularities at the higher frequencies, caused by resonances and standing waves in the air volume enclosed by the headphone ear cushions. Since these effects change when different couplers are used (and exist even when the phones are measured directly on the user's head), we have always found it difficult to judge their audible significance. With the PEP-79 they took the form of a regular series of peaks and dips roughly a half octave to an octave apart and having an amplitude range of about ± 7 dB.

The useful frequency range of the PEP-79 exceeded the range of our test microphone. Our curves showed a slightly rising high-frequency response that was strong all the way up to our measurement limit of 20,000 Hz. The electrical impedance of the PEP-79 system varied from a minimum of 9 ohms at 20 and 15,000 Hz to a broad maximum of about 90 ohms at 1,000 Hz. In view of the rather loud 107-dB output from a 3-volt drive level (corresponding to an output of about 1 watt into an 8-ohm load), any amplifier should be able to drive these phones without difficulty. At a 110-dB (*very loud*) sound-pressure level, distortion was quite low—1.3 per cent at 1,000 Hz and 3.5 per cent at 50 Hz.

● **Comment.** It is always difficult to describe the sound quality of a good headphone, and the PEP-79 is no exception to the rule. Unlike the case with speakers, there is no reference (such as a live sound source) for comparison
(Continued on page 44)

Beethoven heard his music better than you do.

Beethoven was nearly deaf when he wrote many of his greatest compositions. Yet he heard every note, every phrase in the genius of his mind.

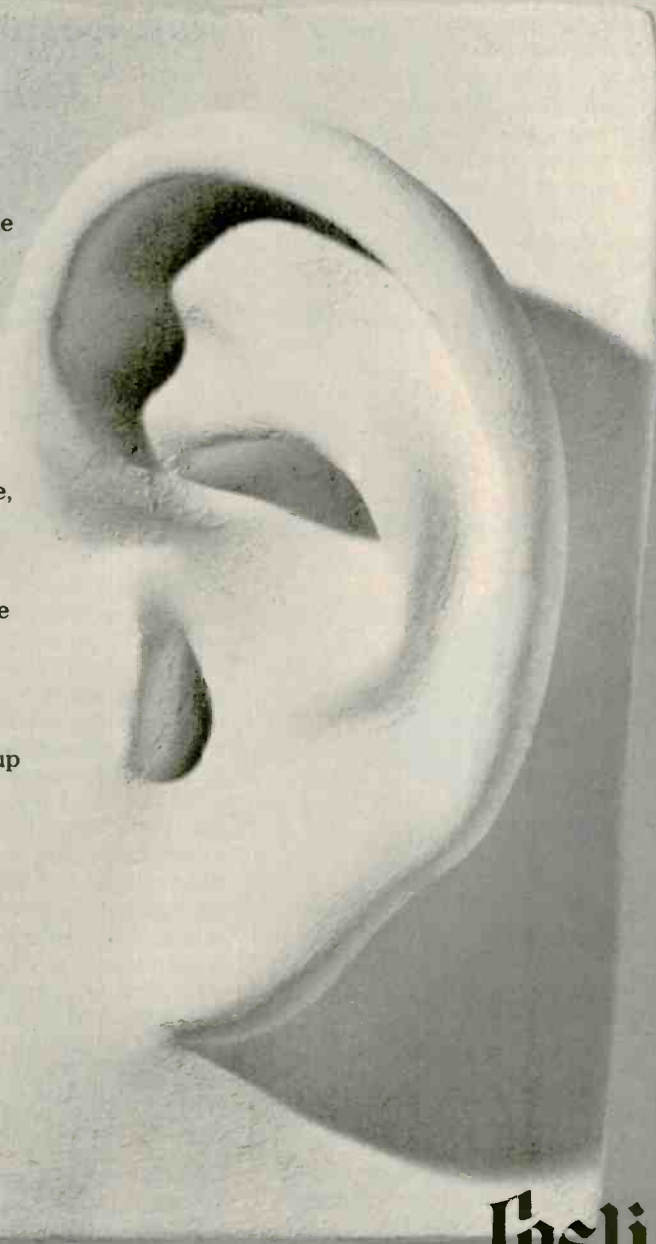
Today, when you listen to a recording of his music, you are not able to hear its full, original dynamics. Every conventional speaker, when placed in your home, falls prey to the "standing wave" problem. Sound waves in a fixed pattern reflect from your walls to "add and subtract" from the true original signals. In this way, standing waves alter the true dynamics and reduce the "live qualities" of the music.

In 1971, the Leslie Speaker group of CBS applied for patents on special designs which—for the first time—effectively dealt with the standing waves. These patents are used exclusively in the Leslie Plus 2 Speaker system.

Here is what this breakthrough means to you. Now, you can hear music with a realism that is unmatched. You literally feel that you're in third row center of your favorite concert hall—no matter what part of the room you are sitting in.

Also, you can achieve this effect with either stereophonic or quadraphonic recordings!

For further information on this unique system, just send in the coupon, or visit your authorized Leslie dealer. Sixty seconds of hearing the Leslie Plus 2 Speaker system will prove everything we say about it is true. Hear it for yourself...soon!



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LESLIE PLUS 2 MODEL 430



LESLIE PLUS 2 MODEL 450

purposes, and the test conditions for headphones are, if anything, even more artificial than those used for loud-speaker-response measurements.

To our ears, the Superex PEP-79 delivers a very wide, clean, and smooth frequency response, with no audible distortion at any reasonable listening level (we do not consider levels of 120 dB and more to be reasonable!). We also compared them with the best of the electrostatic models evaluated in our tests of thirty-three headphones in the July 1972 issue. Whatever differences we heard were minor, and in fact much less than those existing between two top-quality speaker systems. At any given drive level, the PEP-79 produces a considerably higher acoustic output than *any* other electrostatic phone we have tested, and it can generate levels up to about 120 dB without excessive distortion or risk of damage (to the phones, that is).

The light weight of the Superex PEP-79 headset will be

appreciated by anyone who has worn some of the heavier headphones, both dynamic and electrostatic. The ear-cushion seal, though tight enough to exclude external sounds effectively and maintain a strong low bass response, does not exert undue pressure on the wearer's head, and we would rate these phones better-than-average in comfort when worn for extended periods.

The question of whether to buy electrostatic or dynamic phones requires an individual decision. Personally, we find the clarity of electrostatic sound to be unequalled, although a few dynamic phones offer strong competition. A major obstacle to the widespread use of electrostatic phones has been their high cost, typically between \$120 and \$160. The Superex PEP-79, though one of the lowest-price electrostatic headsets we know of, sounds about as good as the best and most expensive ones we have tested thus far—and that is no small achievement.

For more information, circle 106 on reader service card

Heath AD-1530 Stereo Cassette Deck Kit



● **HEATH'S Model AD-1530** is a high-quality cassette deck in kit form with Dolby noise-reduction circuitry. It employs the familiar and distinctive American-made Wollensak tape transport, the same as that used in some of the most highly regarded cassette recorders on the market. As with many of Heath's electronic kits, the AD-1530 incorporates test and alignment facilities. A built-in oscillator provides 400- and 5,000-Hz test signals for setting internal gains and adjusting the Dolby circuits. One of the two level meters can be switched to serve as an accurate electronic voltmeter for making these adjustments, as well as to make d.c. voltage and continuity measurements during the initial checkout procedure.

A special test cassette is provided that has a standard Dolby-level tone for playback calibration, a timing signal for checking tape speed, and musical selections recorded with and without the Dolby process. A blank C-60 cassette of standard tape is also supplied for making other adjustments and checking the recording operations.

The tape transport comes completely assembled. Two large buttons control the **PLAY** and **STOP** functions. A **RECORD** button must be pressed with the other hand (against a rather stiff spring) while engaging the **PLAY** button to make a recording. The power switch is interlocked with the **PLAY** and **STOP** buttons, so that pressing **PLAY** turns on the recorder, and turning the power off disengages the tape-drive mechanism, which also disengages automatically at the end of a tape. The cassette snaps into an open well on the top of the deck, from which it can be ejected by a small lever nearby. Another lever provides the **PAUSE** function, locking when pressed to one side. A nonlatching **REWIND-FORWARD** lever moves the tape at high speed in either direction.

The electronic controls, at the left of the panel, include separate recording-level controls for the two channels and two illuminated meters. There is also a pushbutton-reset tape-index counter and three toggle switches, one paralleling the two inputs for making mono recordings, one controlling the Dolby system, and the last changing recording bias and both recording and playback equalization for either standard ferric-oxide or CrO₂ tapes.

The auxiliary inputs and the outputs are recessed into the rear of the base, together with a switch to inject a Dolby-calibrating tone for adjusting recording levels with different tape formulations. Along the lower front edge of the base are two 1/4-inch phone jacks for low-impedance microphones and a switch to transfer the recording inputs from the auxiliary to the microphone inputs. The Heath AD-1530, on its walnut base, is about 14 inches wide, 5 1/2 inches high, and 9 1/2 inches deep; it weighs 14 pounds. Price (kit): \$249.95. An accessory dust cover costs \$4.95. Electret condenser microphones intended especially for the AD-1530 are available from Heath at \$39.95 each.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** The playback frequency response, measured with a Nortronic test cassette, was flat over most of the audio range, rising to +5 dB at 10,000 Hz and +8.5 dB at 40 Hz. According to Heath, the low-frequency boost in the playback equalization is an intentional departure from the Philips equalization standards. Many tape duplicators are reportedly cutting back on low frequencies on prerecorded cassettes to reduce the effects of overload distortion. The low-frequency boost introduced by the AD-1530 during playback is intended to compensate for this.

With the Heath cassette (ferric-oxide tape), the record-playback frequency response was ± 3 dB from 40 to 15,000 Hz and ± 1.5 dB from 70 to 14,000 Hz. Like most cassette machines, the Heath AD-1530 exhibited some low-frequency "fringing"—a periodic fluctuation in the frequency-response curve below about 200 Hz, which reached a maximum amplitude of about 6 dB at 40 Hz. This effect, which is *not* audible, is independent of the tape used. Our response readings are based on an average of the variations.

The record-playback response with CrO₂ tape was
(Continued on page 46)

MODE

4 CH

RM

2 CH

SQ

MO


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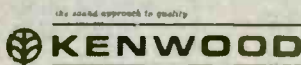
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KR-5340

TWO-FOUR

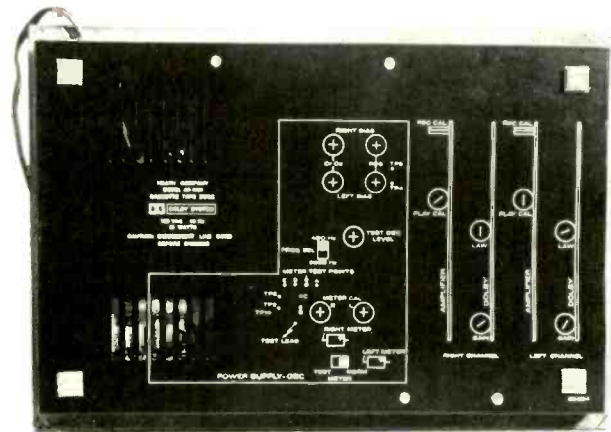
RECEIVER

slightly better at the high end, varying ± 3 dB from 45 to 17,000 Hz. We also made measurements with several grades of ferric-oxide tape. TDK-SD showed a slightly rising high end, to +4 dB at 13,000 Hz and extending to beyond 17,000 Hz. When played back with the tape switch set to CrO₂, giving additional high-frequency roll-off in the playback equalization, the overall response with TDK-SD was much flatter—within ± 1.5 dB from 80 to 15,000 Hz. A typical “standard” tape, Memorex, produced a response to 16,000 Hz, with a slightly better high end than the supplied Heath cassette. Premium tapes such as TDK-ED are somewhat underbiased in this machine as normally set up, although using CrO₂ playback equalization gives reasonably flat response to beyond 17,000 Hz.

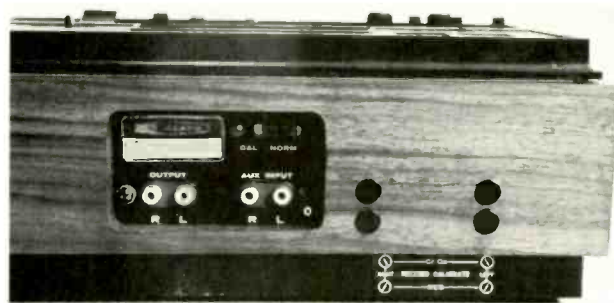
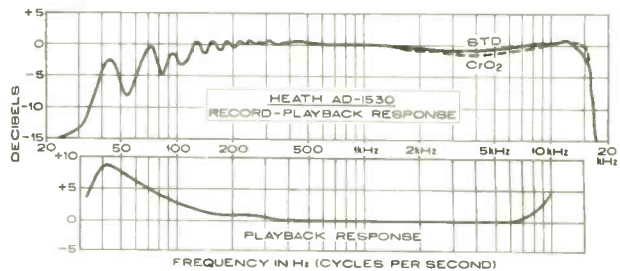
The Dolby circuits “tracked” well at all signal levels, affecting the overall frequency response by less than 2 dB at levels between -20 and -40 dB. The playback distortion reached the 3 per cent reference level at a +2-VU recording input with regular tape, and at +3.5 VU with CrO₂ tape. The corresponding signal-to-noise ratios were 50.5 dB and 58 dB without the Dolby, and 58 and 63.5 dB with it. Distortion at 0 VU was 2.4 per cent with regular tape and 2 per cent with CrO₂. All these measurements were substantially better than Heath’s published ratings.

The required input for a 0-VU recording level was 0.04 volt through the auxiliary inputs and 0.16 millivolt through the microphone inputs. The 0-VU playback output was 0.53 volt. When the recording gain was set so that 3 millivolts at the microphone input produced a 0-VU level, there was no measurable increase in noise. At maximum gain, however, the noise was 19 dB higher through the microphone inputs than through the auxiliary inputs.

The tape speed was 0.5 per cent fast, and 40 to 43 seconds was required for a C-60 cassette in fast speeds, which is about twice as fast as most other cassette decks. The unweighted wow and flutter were 0.02 and 0.23 per cent with our Information Terminals test tape, and 0.02 and 0.19 for a test tone recorded and then played back.



The bottom plate of the Heath AD-1530 serves as a guide to the location of the internal adjustments and the meter test points that are used for the deck’s electrical alignment and check-out.



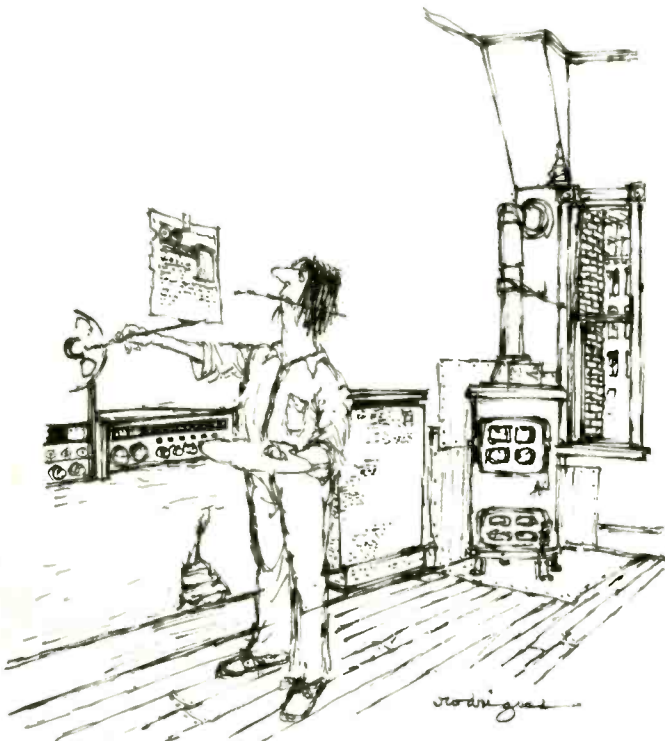
On the rear edge of the AD-1530 are the outputs and auxiliary inputs, as well as the recording-calibration adjustments (separate for CrO₂ and ferric-oxide tapes) and test-tone switch.

● *Comment.* The fine electrical performance of the Heath AD-1530 testifies to the success of the “no external instrument” alignment procedure. In its overall performance this recorder ranks with today’s best commercial units. Our kit builder required about 14½ hours to assemble the kit, and encountered no difficulties.

As usual, Heath’s instruction manual provides a complete analysis of the operation of all circuits, including the Dolby system, and a very comprehensive adjustment and troubleshooting procedure. However, since the setting of recording bias is done entirely with the recorder’s own test meter, there is no procedure for optimizing it with any specific tape. Also, there is no mention that many high-performance tapes can be equalized more accurately if played back with CrO₂ equalization. We would suggest that AD-1530 owners keep this in mind if they discover that some tapes sound a little “bright” after recording.

We were also surprised to find that the manual made no mention of head alignment—a significant omission in our case since the physical shocks of shipment had evidently misaligned the record/playback head of our test unit. Fixing this was a simple matter—so simple that we suggested to Heath that they provide a high-frequency test tone for such adjustment on the calibration tape that comes with the machine. They agreed, and both the recorded tone

(Continued on page 48)



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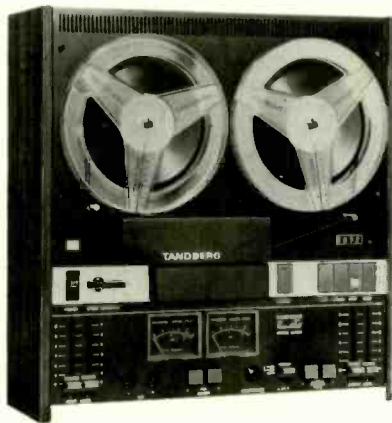
and instructions for using it will be made available in the future. These facilities should be of considerable interest to serious cassette recordists wishing to keep their equipment in top operating condition.

To sum up, although there are no special features in the Heath AD-1530 that are not available from other manufacturers (at a somewhat greater cost, however), we sus-

pect the familiarizing experience of building and adjusting it oneself will prove invaluable to many owners during the machine's operating life. What is more, the end result is the equal of any cassette deck we have tested, and offers the convenience and ruggedness of the fine Wollensak transport, about which we remain highly enthusiastic.

For more information, circle 105 on reader service card

Tandberg 9000X Stereo Tape Deck



● THE Tandberg name has long been associated with single-motor tape decks, but the company's new Model 9000X departs from tradition by offering a three-motor transport that has a unique and highly sophisticated integrated-circuit (IC) logic control system. The 9000X is a three-speed ($7\frac{1}{2}$, $3\frac{3}{4}$, and $1\frac{7}{8}$ ips) machine with separate record and playback heads (and preamps) that permit off-the-tape monitoring. Like the other Tandberg recorders, this one uses a separate cross-field head to apply the recording bias to the tape. With this technique, relatively little high-frequency boost in the recording equalization is necessary (only 6 dB at 20,000 Hz and $7\frac{1}{2}$ ips). This means that there is a substantial improvement in recording "headroom" before signal saturation (overload) occurs. The capstan is driven by a hysteresis-synchronous motor, and separate motors are used for the tape hubs, which accept reels of up to 7 inches in diameter. A photoelectric system stops and disengages the transport at the end of a tape or at any point where a piece of clear leader tape has been spliced into the reel.

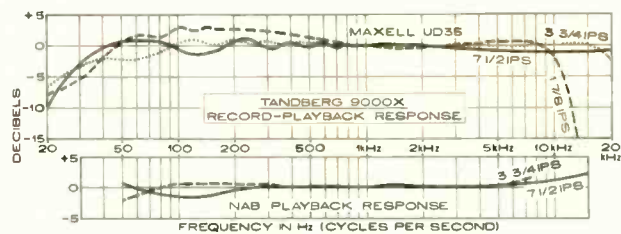
In the rear of the 9000X are the line inputs and outputs (and a DIN connector). Twin front-panel slider controls set recording levels, and another pair adjusts the playback-output levels. Signals applied to the two front-panel microphone jacks mix with the line inputs and share their level controls; there is no provision for separate adjustment of microphone levels. Microphones with rated impedances of 200 to 700 ohms can be used, and the input circuit automatically adjusts the preamplifier characteristics to suit the microphone impedance, maintaining an optimum signal-to-noise ratio.

During recording, the two level meters read the input recording levels, whether or not off-the-tape monitoring is used. When the PLAY button is pressed the meters are electrically switched to read the actual output levels under the control of the playback-level sliders. Meter circuits are designed to have the same response characteristics as the equalized signals fed to the tape head. This minimizes the possibility of tape saturation with high-frequency signals of the sort that conventional meters don't

respond to. In addition, the meters are fast-acting, reading the signal peaks within 40 to 50 milliseconds.

Below the meters are two red RECORD interlock buttons. Two other buttons (labeled SOURCE/TAPE) connect the line outputs to the program source or to the playback amplifiers. A small switch connects the playback from either channel to the other channel's recording input for making sound-on-sound or echo recordings. A headphone jack drives stereo phones with impedances ranging from 8 to 2,000 ohms.

The upper portion of the panel, finished in black like the lower control section, contains the reel hubs, a green pilot lamp for the power switch, and a four-digit index counter. At mid-height on the panel are the five feather-touch pushbutton transport controls, the power switch, and a tape-speed selector lever.



The logic-controlled tape transport system is one of the most fascinating features of the 9000X. Fifteen integrated circuits (equivalent to about seven hundred transistors!) are devoted to this function. The user can switch directly from any mode to any other, except that RECORD can only be engaged when the tape is stopped. For example, during fast forward and rewind, pressing the PLAY button stops the tape almost instantly, and in less than two seconds the transport resumes operation at the selected playing speed.

The RECORD function will not operate unless one or both of the interlock buttons is engaged. Since its action is virtually instantaneous, there is no need for the separate pause control found on most recorders. Once the input levels have been set, the 9000X is ready to record at the touch of a single button. If the PLAY button is touched while recording, the transport switches instantaneously from record to play (if the RECORD button is pressed while the tape is playing, nothing happens). Each button is illuminated in green (except for the red RECORD button) when activated; it is dark at all other times. The foolproof design of the 9000X transport, especially of its braking system, is illustrated by the fact that shutting off the power while the tape is in fast forward or rewind brings the machine to a smooth stop, with no tendency to spill or break tape.

The Tandberg 9000X is mounted on an attractive wooden base, and can be installed vertically or horizontally. Spring-loaded reel-lock hubs eliminate the need for

(Continued on page 50)



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All Stanton cartridges are designed for use with all two- and four-channel matrix derived compatible systems.

rubber reel holders during vertical operation. Its panel dimensions are 16 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches by 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches; the deck is 7 inches deep and weighs 34 pounds. Price: \$649.50. An optional remote-control unit with special provisions to facilitate use of a timer costs \$79.90. Dynamic microphones are also available at \$49.80 each. A carrying case is \$40, and a dust cover costs \$12.

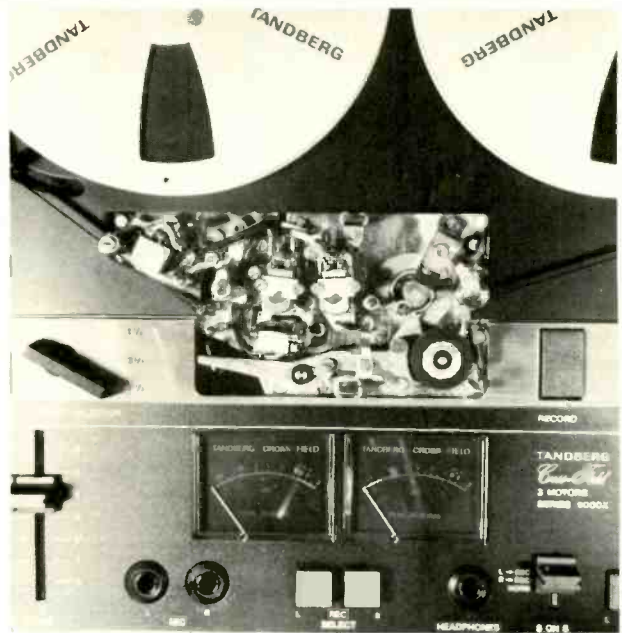
● **Laboratory Measurements.** The playback frequency response of the Tandberg 9000X, over the full range of the Ampex test tapes, was well within ± 2 dB from 50 to 7,500 Hz at 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ ips, and from 50 to 15,000 Hz at 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ ips. The record-playback frequency response, with the recommended Maxell UD35 tape, was typical of Tandberg machines: ± 1.5 dB from 30 to 25,500 Hz at 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ ips, ± 2 dB from 30 to 22,300 Hz at 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ ips, and ± 2 dB from 42 to 9,500 Hz at 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ ips.

An input of 110 millivolts (line) or 0.07 millivolt (microphone inputs, 600-ohm source impedance) produced a 0-VU recording level at 1,000 Hz. The corresponding maximum playback output level was 1.9 volts. These measurements were made in stereo; when only one of the channel recording interlock buttons is depressed, the gain is reduced by about 8 dB. Headphone listening volume was good.

The meters of the Tandberg 9000X are peak-indicating devices that read either -8 or -11 VU (depending on the tape speed) for levels that would produce a 0-VU reading on conventional meters. As a result, the 3 per cent reference-distortion point is reached at $+2$ VU on the meters at 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ ips. We measured slightly over 2 per cent distortion at Tandberg's 0-VU level at the two higher tape speeds, and 4.3 per cent at the 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ -ips speed. The 3 per cent distortion level corresponded to $+1.5$ VU at 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ ips and -2 VU at 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ ips.

Referred to the 3 per cent distortion levels, the unweighted signal-to-noise ratios were 70 dB at 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ ips, 66 dB at 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ ips, and 57 dB at 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ ips. These are equivalent to the best figures we have ever obtained on a consumer tape machine. The noise-level increase through the microphone inputs was not significant for any settings of the recording-level controls likely to be used. The gain of the microphone preamplifiers increases as the source impedance decreases, making the 9000X a good choice for making live recordings with high-quality, low-impedance microphones.

The wow was 0.025 per cent at the slowest tape speed and 0.01 per cent (the test tape residual) at the other



The erase head of the 9000X is located to the far left of the head nest. The record and cross-field bias heads—one facing the other—are directly above the left recording-level meter. The tape-drive mechanism is shown in the disengaged position.

speeds. Unweighted flutter was 0.075 per cent at 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ ips, 0.10 per cent at 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ ips, and 0.17 per cent at 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ ips. The tape speed, as determined by a stroboscope test wheel, was exact. A 1,200-foot reel of tape ran through in fast forward or rewind in 56 seconds.

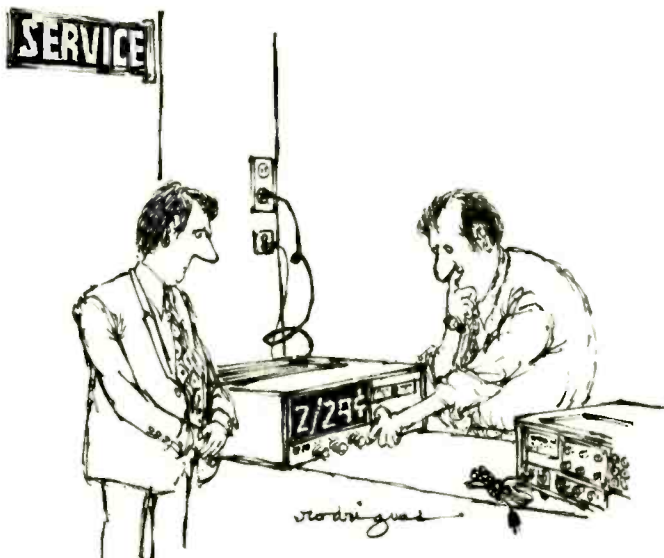
● **Comment.** The performance of the Tandberg 9000X was as nearly ideal as any we have seen. Not only was there no audible change in the sound of records or FM broadcasts when recorded and played back at 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ or 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ ips, but even "pink" or random noise came through unmodified. This is an extremely severe test, particularly of a recorder's dynamic range at the highest audio frequencies. At 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ ips, the overall performance was quite close to that of a top-quality cassette recorder, and the usable signal-to-noise ratio was comparable to that of a Dolby-equipped cassette machine.

Because of the special meter calibration and response characteristics, recordings are made at a somewhat lower level than with most tape recorders. With average readings of about -10 VU, the full dynamic range of the machine is realized, and peaks to 0 VU or slightly higher do not cause significant distortion.

The transport controls operated smoothly and flawlessly during our tests and use of the recorder, and we had no problems in adjusting to their characteristics except for the close spacing (and identical size, shape, and color) of the four basic transport control buttons. Our only criticism (a minor one) of the functional electrical design of the 9000X relates to the lack of separate level controls for the microphone and line inputs. If you wish to use the mike inputs when the recorder is connected into a music system, it is necessary either to switch your amplifier to an unused input or disconnect the recorder's line-input plugs.

The tape-loading path is direct, essentially in a straight line, with a single tensioning arm adjacent to each reel. One-handed tape threading is not only possible, but practical. The Tandberg 9000X, which is priced only about \$100 higher than the manufacturer's best single-motor recorder, offers equal or better electrical performance in every respect, and essentially represents the current state of the art for consumer tape recorders.

For more information, circle 108 on reader service card



Some expert opinions on the Heathkit "Computer Tuner" and AR-1500 Stereo Receiver:

"...The tuner which may well prove to be the 'classic' of the 1970's is Heath's new AJ-1510 Digital FM Stereo Tuner." — Leonard Feldman, AUDIO MAGAZINE

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CIRCLE NO. 21 ON READER SERVICE CARD



GOING ON RECORD

By **JAMES GOODFRIEND**
Music Editor

REPAYMENT IN KIND

THE current weakness of the American dollar on the world's money markets is likely to have eventual repercussions on the American musical scene. A major purpose of any devaluation of currency, whether it is a fixed devaluation or simply a currency left free to find its own value relative to others, is to raise the price of imports in the country whose currency is devalued and to lower the price of that country's exports, thus (the theory goes) equalizing the balance of payments through more selling and less buying. Of course, some people must or will buy imported goods no matter what the national balance-of-payments situation may be. But what they face—what they must already contend with—is a whopping increase in the price of the goods they buy. To a certain extent now, classical music, particularly on records, is an imported product in the United States. How will it be affected?

Actually, classical music has a long history as an imported item here. From colonial days we have brought in most of our music from abroad, whether in the form of compositions to play and listen to and published music to play them from, or the actual persons of composers and performers. Records are only a relatively recent addition to the list. In the more distant past the reasons for this were valid. This was a new country with far too much to do founding an economy to be bothered with the establishment of a native musical culture. That there was indeed a musical culture here at all was in spite of the circumstances, not because of them. Even into the twentieth century, countries like Germany, Italy, and France were far more capable of producing composers, pianists, singers, and violinists than we were, and it seemed far more practical to import such artists than to develop the talent we had at home.

Obviously, all that changed. America for some years now has possessed a musical establishment that, in all ways,

rivals if not surpasses that of any other country. But *recordings* of classical music still tend to be imported items, so some other reason must be involved. And one reason is that it is cheaper, sometimes far cheaper, to produce those recordings *anywhere* else than in the United States. As extreme examples one can hardly forget that the American Recording Society, whose purpose was to record and make available American music, made virtually all its recordings with a pickup orchestra in Vienna, or that the music of contemporary American composers on the CRI label features such performers as the orchestras of Iceland, Norway, and Japan. It was to be expected, perhaps, that most recordings of European music would be made in Europe, but to see recordings of American music, made specifically for the American market, also made in Europe and Japan should have told everybody that something was wrong.

The recording rates for American orchestras and musicians have been the highest in the world for some time now, and they get even higher periodically. The net effect has been to remove recording revenues as an important source of income for American classical musicians and, incidentally, to make the record-buying public more familiar with the sounds of many minor European orchestras than with those of some major American ones. It is not only that the European companies have produced their recordings at home or in neighboring lands; American companies have continually gone to Europe to record those pieces that would be suicidally expensive to record here.

One by one, American orchestras have lost their recording contracts with American record companies. American musicians, as paid by the hour at least, are simply priced out of the market.

Nothing has changed—yet. English ensembles are still about as much cheaper to record as they have been for the

last few years, mostly because the British pound has weakened with the dollar. The Austrian schilling has gained in relation to the dollar, and orchestral rates have gone up in Vienna, but they are still lower than here. Perhaps orchestras in other countries whose currencies have also become more valuable—France, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, the Scandinavian countries, Poland, Hungary, Spain—are still cheaper than here. But they are no longer *that much* cheaper. For the currencies of all those countries, as of this writing, are anywhere from a few percentage points to 25 per cent more valuable in dollars than they were one short year ago. Foreign orchestras may no longer look like such a bargain to American record executives.

The whole financial game will probably not do much to the retail cost of records, unless *all* companies decide together to raise their prices. The retail price of a record is now an established thing in most markets, and it is doubtful that any single company or even a group of companies could compete at a much higher price. Collectors used to paying a dollar premium for an imported disc are likely to rebel at the idea of paying three or four dollars more—that is, unless the quality difference becomes far greater than it is at present, or unless American companies virtually cease making classical records.

THE most interesting possibilities inherent in the situation are those involving the European companies and American musicians. Obviously, the weakness of the dollar had little or nothing to do with Deutsche Grammophon's decision to record *Carmen* in the United States, or, of course, with DG's recording of the Boston Symphony, Angel's of the Cleveland and Chicago, and London's of the Chicago and Los Angeles. Those steps were taken when the projected expense was known to be high, and whether they have proved out, or will prove out, as business ventures is up to the individual companies to decide. But it is interesting to note that if DG were to record that same *Carmen* today it would cost them about seventeen percent less, in terms of Germany currency, than it did before. Such a discount is not to be despised. Should the dollar fall even lower in relation to the Deutschmark, the United States might seem to be a very ripe field for musical exploitation by European companies. That it would be a considerable financial boost to the musical establishment here is unquestionable. But won't it look strange to see premiere recordings of works by Heinrich Marschner, Werner Eck, Max Reger, Franz Schmidt, and the like coupled with the exotic-sounding names of such performing ensembles as those of Boston, Philadelphia, New Orleans, New York, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and San Francisco?

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Grieg's **PEER GYNT**

WHEN Henrik Ibsen wrote the philosophical fantasy *Peer Gynt* in 1867, he was still a comparatively unknown young playwright. Not until a decade later, when in rapid succession he produced *Pillars of Society*, *A Doll's House*, and *Ghosts*, did the full force of Ibsen's social conscience explode upon a largely unprepared and self-righteous society. Yet *Peer Gynt* displays some of the same revulsion against hypocrisy and inequity that permeates the later plays.

It was Ibsen himself who invited his compatriot, Edvard Grieg, to compose incidental music for *Peer Gynt*. Grieg's initial impulse was to decline; he felt that the nature of the play made music a questionable addition, and, perhaps more important, he was put off by the playwright's attacks on the apathy and vacillation of the Norwegian people. Nevertheless, Grieg took up the task of composing the music in the summer of 1873. Progress was slow and spasmodic, and it was not until the summer of 1875 that he completed the score. The first performance of the Ibsen-Grieg *Peer Gynt* was given in February 1876 in the Christiania Theater in Oslo. Grieg was then in his early thirties, and this music, so reluctantly composed, established his name the world over. A dozen years later, Grieg extracted an orchestral suite of four numbers from his score and had it published as his *Peer Gynt Suite No. 1*, Opus 46. Five years after that, in 1893, he put together a second suite from *Peer Gynt*, which became his Opus 55, but it never achieved anything like the popularity of the first.

Grieg himself paraphrased the action of Ibsen's play in the preface to the published score of the second suite:

Peer Gynt, the only son of poor peasants, is a character of morbidly developed fancy and a prey to megalomania. In his youth he has many wild adventures: for instance, he goes to a peasants' wedding and carries the bride off to the mountains, where he leaves her to roam about with wild cowherd girls. He then enters the kingdom of the mountain king, whose daughter falls in love with him and dances to him. But he laughs at the dance and the droll music, whereupon the enraged mountain folk wish to kill him. He succeeds in escaping and wanders to foreign countries, among them Morocco, where he appears as a prophet and is greeted by Arab girls. After many wonderful guidings of Fate he returns home as an old man, and, having suffered shipwreck on his way, he is as poor as when he left. The sweetheart of

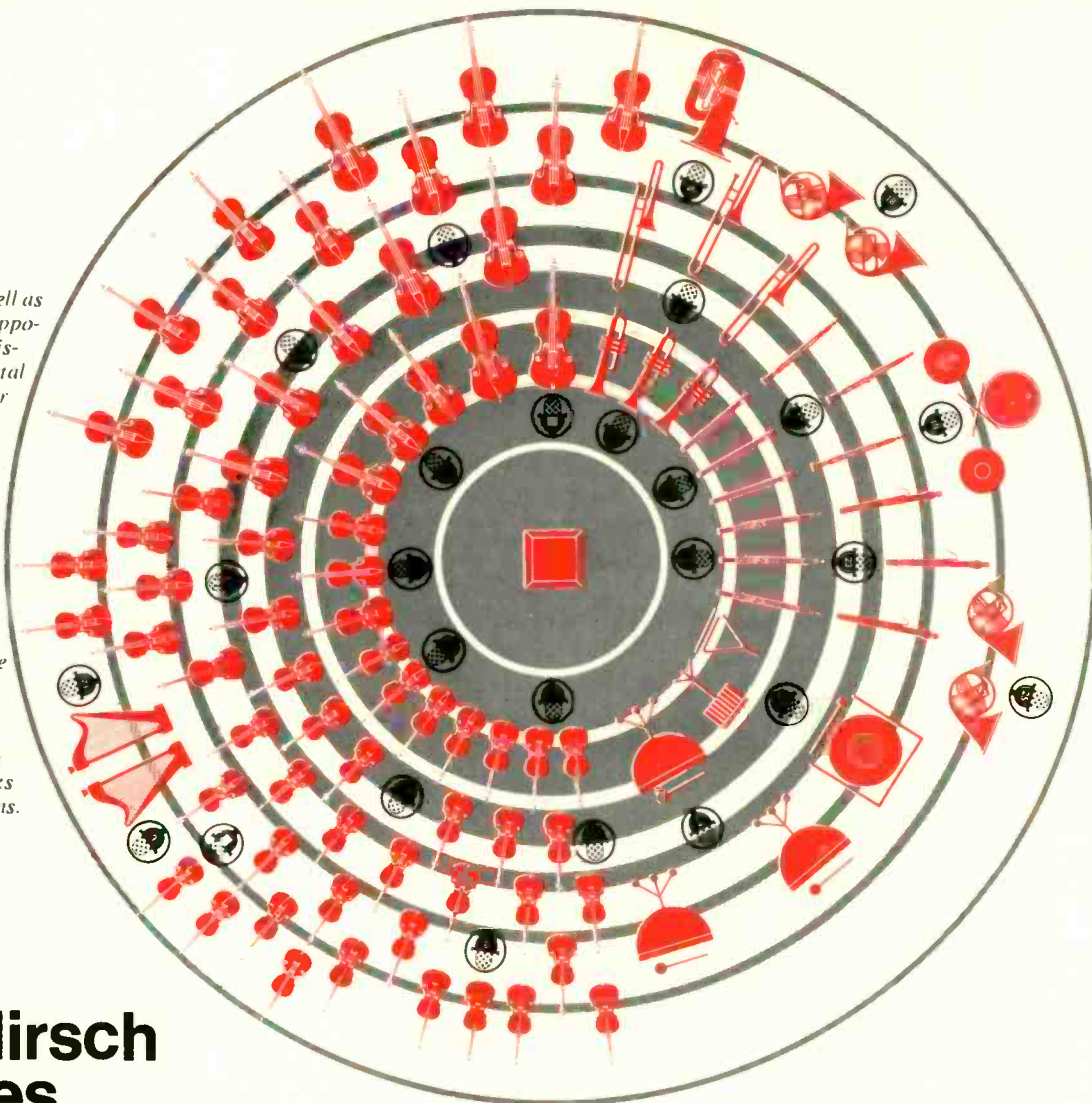
his youth, Solvejg, who has stayed true to him all these years, meets him, and his weary head at last finds rest in her lap.

THERE are in the catalog no recordings of the complete score of *Peer Gynt*, which consists of twenty-three individual pieces. In the early days of long-playing records, Mercury released a disc (MG 10148, mono) containing thirteen of them, which featured a short performance by Alfred Maurstad, Norway's leading interpreter of the title role, but that recording has long been unavailable. Of the three available discs that contain more of *Peer Gynt* than just the suites, Sir John Barbirolli's (Angel S 36531) is the one I recommend. Not only does it include the most music (all but one of the pieces of the earlier Mercury release), but it offers highly sensitive, poetic performances and luminous recorded sound. More, the soprano soloist in the two songs of Solvejg is the splendid Sheila Armstrong.

Angel has also wisely issued the Barbirolli performances in a sequence that embraces only the eight sections that make up the two suites, along with vigorous and graceful performances of Grieg's four Norwegian Dances (S 36803). Of the recordings containing both the suites, I would again recommend Barbirolli's performances, or, alternatively, the lyrical performances conducted by Gennady Rozhdestvensky (Melodiya/Angel S 40048), with Grieg's *Lyric Suite* as disc companion. Where just the First *Peer Gynt Suite* is concerned, no other recorded performance can touch that of George Szell and the Cleveland Orchestra (Columbia MS 6877), a rare example of near-perfect ensemble balance and refinement. Of all Szell's recording triumphs, this is one of the most treasurable, the more so because it is in unexpected repertoire.

Of the available reel-to-reel releases, the most dependable is Oivin Fjeldstad's (London L 80020), which contains the two suites plus the Prelude and *Dance of the Mountain King's Daughter*. Barbirolli's set of excerpts from the score is available in an excellent cassette issue (Angel 4XS 36531), and for a cassette issue of the two suites alone, I recommend the straightforward if unobtrusive versions conducted by Richard Kraus (Deutsche Grammophon 921-015).

The diagram at right as well as the photograph on the opposite page show the novel disposition of both instrumental and microphonic forces for Columbia Records' quadraphonic SQ recording (reviewed in this issue) of Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra. Pierre Boulez conducting the New York Philharmonic. This is certainly an extreme—perhaps even a unique—case, but it illustrates the probable outer limits of the kinds of demands four-channel recording will soon be placing on the reproduction chain, of which not the least important links are the loudspeaker systems.



**Julian Hirsch
discusses**

CHOOSING SPEAKERS FOR

WHEN we are asked—as we increasingly are these days—“What rear speakers should I use in my four-channel installation?” it is tempting to give the “safe” answer: the same ones you are using in front. From the standpoint of four-channel listening quality at least, there is little doubt that four identical speakers would be the best solution. But there are other factors besides listening to be considered, some of them indicating that you might want to use different speakers in front and rear (though not from left to right!).

Assuming that you are starting from scratch, and that you intend to listen only to four-channel, then four small, high-quality acoustic-suspension speakers would probably give you the best overall sound per dollar of speaker investment. But what about our present two-channel stereo, certain to be the

major program source for some time to come? The four small speakers, with front and rear channels coupled for two-channel stereo, could not equal the sound quality (specifically in respect to bass reproduction) of two front speakers with the same total cost. It might therefore be wiser for now to buy two better-grade speakers for the front channels and two lower-price units *with compatible sound characteristics* for the rear. In most cases, mixing low- and high-price speakers from the same manufacturer will give satisfactory results.

Since this approach admittedly favors two-channel reproduction, it is reasonable to ask to what degree it compromises four-channel reproduction. This question will most likely concern those who already have a satisfactory two-channel setup and are considering adding four-channel capability. If



A FOUR-CHANNEL SYSTEM

considerations of available space, decor, and pocketbook can be ignored, it is tempting to avoid any compromise by simply duplicating the front speakers for the rear. For most people, however, cost and other considerations *will* be important, and the question for them comes down to deciding just what they expect from four-channel sound.

So-called "surround sound" recording techniques, widely used for popular music and to a lesser extent with classical works (see review of Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* in this issue), places groups of instruments in a circle drawn about the listener, and it can readily be seen that proper reproduction of this situation will call for identical sound capability from each of the four speakers. If, on the other hand, four-channel sound is seen principally as a means of recreating and reinforcing

those elements of concert-hall acoustics (echo, reflection, and "ambiance") that contribute to a sense of the space in which a musical performance is taking place, satisfactory rear-channel results can be achieved at appreciably lower power levels and within a more restricted frequency range.

In all probability, four-channel systems will eventually have to cope with both of these recording techniques, which makes the answer to the question of compromise on the rear-channel speakers even more critical for the long term. Since we have been listening in four channels almost exclusively for about a year, our practical experience in this area is now extensive. It is, furthermore, gained from listening to a wide variety of both matrixed and discrete program material. At least six very different types of rear speakers have been used, in all possi-

ble combinations, with several times that number of equally diverse front speakers. Oddly enough, the only combination we have never tried is four identical speakers!

It should surprise no one to learn (it didn't us) that poor speakers used in the rear sound just as bad there as they do up front. The sole possible justification for inferior rear speakers is that their purpose is ambiance reproduction only (whether from real four-channel or synthesis techniques). Since the level of the signals then fed to the rear speakers is low, one should not, ideally, even be consciously aware of their presence. Unfortunately, the greater part of the sense of "liveness" imparted by rear-channel ambiance reproduction is contributed (contrary to popular impression) by the *lower* frequencies, and it is precisely at these frequencies that cheaper speakers are most wanting. The so-called "passive" four-channel systems (such as the popular Dynaquad) that work from a conventional stereo amplifier require that the rear speakers used be at least as efficient as those in front. This is because such passive systems allot only a certain amount of the total signal to the rear speakers, and there is no way of increasing the "drive" they receive beyond this.

Once a *reasonable* level of quality has been reached, however, we have found that the specific choice of rear speakers has remarkably little to do with the overall four-channel listening experience. Generally speaking, there are speakers costing as little as \$60 that are fully suitable for use in the rear channels, no matter how good the front speakers may be. Some of the most extreme price pairings of speakers have produced a thoroughly pleasing four-channel effect for us. These combinations included a pair of \$600 speakers in front with a pair of \$70 bookshelf systems in the rear, a pair of very expensive omnidirectionals in front with a pair of well-known direct/reflecting speakers in the rear, and numerous other unlikely combinations. There were, of course, substantial differences in sound quality *per se* and some other differences in "imaging," but we felt that each of the various combinations nonetheless did justice to the program material.

The situation was quite different when we reversed the sound field, however, using the lesser speakers in front and the better ones in the rear. It would appear from our experiments that the dominant sound character of a four-speaker system is determined by the front speakers, regardless of the distribution of the program material among the four speakers. There seemed to be a disturbing spatial anomaly when the rear speakers were audibly supe-

rior in terms of frequency range and smoothness of response. (It would be well to interject an important point just here: keep in mind that, throughout our discussion, we are assuming the use of speakers selected from among the best performing units at the particular price level. With speakers, there is no necessary correlation between price and performance, and it is therefore possible to buy a pair of speakers for, say, \$150 that perform better—or, of course, worse—than another pair selling for perhaps twice that amount.)

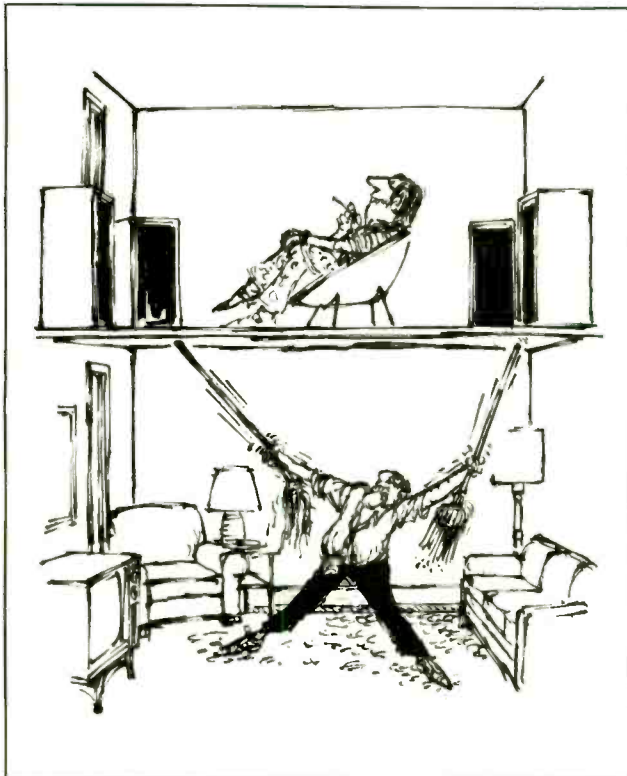
Mixing omnidirectional or reflecting speakers with conventional front radiators might seem to be as unwise as mixing gin and scotch, but in practice we found that the results were far from unpleasant and did not cause sonic upset. Nevertheless, based on our experience with a limited number of such combinations, we would suggest that the use of four speakers with approximately similar dispersion characteristics is advisable. In fact, given reasonably wide-range units, we suspect that polar dispersion is one of the factors that must be most carefully matched for four-channel reproduction. As for the omni-vs.-directional speaker argument, the new battle lines with respect to four-channel have scarcely been drawn, and it is sufficient to say that if you prefer one or the other for two-channel listening, you will probably be happiest with the same type for four.

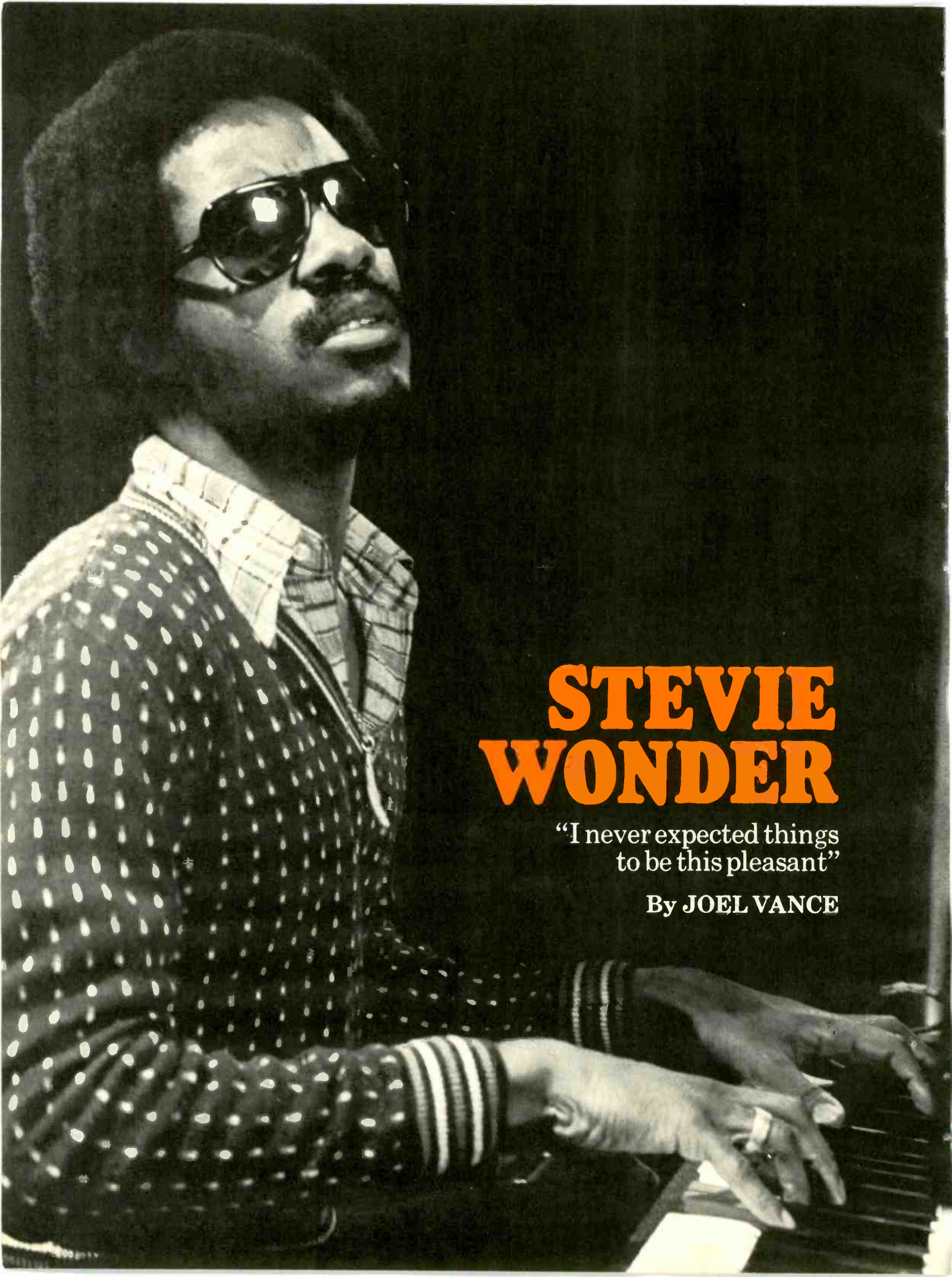
ANOTHER factor somewhat related to the choice of rear speakers is their placement in the room. It is a large and complex subject, involving as it does not only room size and shape, but extremely intricate questions of speaker phasing as well. It deserves—and will get—separate treatment at a later date, but we would like to make one small point here: the conventional or idealized rectangular configuration with the listener in the center may not always be practical in a room (it was not, in our case), but this should not deter you from placing the rear speakers wherever they will fit. Fortunately for all of us—listeners, record companies, and equipment manufacturers alike—four-channel programs so far are not nearly as "discrete" as the optimum use of the medium allows even now, and it is of course still undergoing further development. The localization of sound sources is usually rather vague, even with elaborate electronic hardware, and it often makes very little difference whether a rear speaker is behind you, beside you, or along a side wall. But, to my ears at least, even less-than-optimum four-channel sound is far better than *no* four-channel, and it is well worth the effort and expense required to achieve it.



(Q) RODRIGUES

looks at four-channel





STEVIE WONDER

"I never expected things
to be this pleasant"

By JOEL VANCE

STEVENS MORRIS of Saginaw, Michigan, born black and blind and the third of six children, became "Little Stevie Wonder" at the age of twelve with the two-part single *Fingertips*, a rowdy good-time display of harmonica virtuosity and his first hit record. Since 1963, he has been consistently and at times even wildly popular. His best-known performances are *Uptight*, *I Was Made To Love Her*, his version of Bob Dylan's *Blowin' in the Wind*, *For Once in My Life*, *Ma Cherie Amour*, *Signed, Sealed, and Delivered*, *I'm Yours*, *Superstition*, and *You Are the Sunshine of My Life*.

The "Little" was dropped from his name some years back, and the harmonica became subordinate to his keyboard work as he became more ambitious musically. And so, on turning twenty-one two years ago, Wonder took most of the money he had earned from his recordings and personal appearances, moved from Detroit to New York, and began practically to live in recording studios. In addition to piano, clavinet, and drums, he mastered the Moog and Arp synthesizers. The material he began to write was different from the straight-ahead tuneful entertainment that had made him famous. He also began to produce his own records, and the net result was the album "Music of My Mind," which increased his fame and won him new respect both inside and outside the industry.

"I isolated myself," Wonder says. "I wanted to find the right way to express myself. I did all the parts on the album because I didn't have a group at the time. I wanted to make people aware of some things. Things don't get better automatically; the only way for something to get better is to check it out."

Ewart Abner, president of Motown Records, and before that head of the label's personal management company, recalls a meeting he had with Stevie. "He was about nineteen then. He used to remind me that his day was coming, that when he turned twenty-one he was going to do what he wanted to do. I used to ask him—or tell him—to do things, and he'd say, 'Okay, but when I'm twenty-one I'm going to have things my own way. I don't think you know where I'm coming from. I don't think you can understand it.'"

Abner quickly grew to understand and appreciate Wonder's point of view. Backstage at a Carnegie Hall concert, at which Abner presented Wonder with gold and platinum records (for *Superstition* and the "Talking Book" album), Wonder suddenly had a rush of inspiration. "Get something to write on; it's coming now." Abner grabbed a small brown shopping bag and took down the lyrics to *All Is Fair in Love*, a ballad that will appear on Wonder's latest album, "Inner Visions."

At the recording session for the new album, Abner cued Wonder on the lyrics by speaking through a microphone (which connected directly to Wonder's earphones) as Stevie overdubbed the vocal. Abner read in a calm but affecting voice, and Wonder took the lyrics and ran them through his quicksilver pipes.

Wonder is a furiously active and productive musician. He never knows when to stop, and, considering his talent, there is no need to—except for breath. At the TV taping, he launched his backup group, Wonderlove, into a thirteen-minute version of *Superstition* which interpolated an improvised song about the program itself. Between takes, he picked out a delicate and charming bossa-nova-ish tune that he thought he might "give to the show"—whereupon his lawyer began rattling off, in a genial way, what the legal ramifications of such gifts are. Even after

the taping was finished, Wonder continued to play for the sheer joy of it. He had had a good time, although he admitted that, after three hours of intense music making, he felt a little tired.

Stevie doesn't tire easily. When on tour, he keeps a clavinet and a Sony 550 tape recorder within easy reach. "Sometimes he'll call me at two in the morning," reports his aide-de-camp Charles Collins, "and he'll say, 'Charley, come to the room right away!' I ask him is there anything wrong, and he tells me, 'No, but I just got this song and you've got to hear it.' He's just waked up, you know, and a tune is in his head. It doesn't come from a dream necessarily; he just wakes up and it's there."

But inspiration does occasionally strike at really inopportune times as far as the conscientious Collins is concerned: "We'll be in the dining room and I'll order him a steak. Then he gets a song idea and the steak gets cold. Later on he'll eat cookies. I get a little worried."

WHEN I met Wonder for this interview we sat at a table in the bar/restaurant of the New York hotel he was staying in. He wore a white, fuzzy tam-o-shanter, a light-toned leather vest over his bare chest, and a beaten silver amulet hanging from a chain at his neck. The hotel staff knows and likes him; the *maitre d'* came over to shake hands. Stevie ordered a large tumbler of orange juice with two raw eggs in it, a small milk on the side, and a plate of rolls and butter. No cookies.

I started at the beginning: since he was already a performing professional at age twelve, did he ever think he might have gotten trapped in the role of child prodigy?

"I didn't worry about being this or that. If music was really my life I could get into a lot of other things. I just let it happen."

There was a little more to it than that, of course, though happenstance played its part. I recalled a remark by a former Motown producer that the "Detroit sound" of the early Motown days was actually the result of the acoustical limitations of a small, converted-garage studio. But in that studio there were some real musical talents at work: for example, the "sound" in those days was particularly characterized by a brand of strong, relentless drumming that was exasperating to British musicians because they couldn't imitate it. Wonder grinned and told me the drummer's name was Bennie Benjamin.

"He was really great. He died a few years ago. He could have been recognized, but I don't think he was interested in that. He was always late for a session. He would show up"—Wonder laughed with the memory—"with the wildest excuses for being late. 'Oh, man, I was on my way here, drivin' down the street, when there was this elephant in the road—I'm tellin' ya, man, it was a elephant!' We'd all say, 'Yeah, yeah, Bennie, we know.' But when he'd start to play, everything would be all right."

Wonder's last two albums, "Music of My Mind" and "Talking Book," have altered the composition of his audience as much as they have reflected his personal changes. His following now includes many people who seem to look to him for spiritual comfort and guidance, a burden he accepts with grace, though it often means as much as a grueling two and a half hours on stage.

"It's an exchange of emotions with the audience. It keeps the momentum happening. I get as much as I give . . . I like to feel excited when I work. Sometimes, yeah, you'll get an audience that isn't working with you, isn't receiving you, so I'll cut the show a little short. But most-



Stevie Wonder is soundly kissed by his mother on the occasion of his graduation in 1969 from the Michigan School for the Blind in Lansing.

Right, two generations of music makers: jazz's first horn Miles Davis congratulating Stevie backstage after the youngster's Copacabana opening in 1970.



Below, Stevie and Syreeta Wright married in 1970 and later divorced, but there is talk of a reconciliation.



United Press International

White World Photos

United Press International

ly I think they get pleasure from my music. I try to pass on a little awareness to them—get them to think about new things . . . even controversy, to an extent. All this is important. I remember a girl came up to me once and said she had been going to commit suicide, but then she heard some of my music and she changed her mind. I told her, 'I'm glad you did, and I'm glad the music helped.' You've got to take responsibility, you've got to be there to help the people who listen to you when they need help—I mean, they *made* you; there has to be a reason *why* they made you."

Perhaps inspired by this line of thought about the often complicated relationships between the performer, his audience, and his fame, Wonder abruptly turned the tables: "What do you think—I'm asking *you* questions!—what do you think would happen if the Beatles got back together? Would it be the same?"

I told him I thought not, that it would be rather like meeting a woman you had loved some years before; no matter what you'd had together, too many things had happened to you both in the meantime to start up again. Wonder agreed—it was obviously something he had been giving some thought to, something that had some personal meaning for him.

"No, I don't think the Beatles would happen again. Everybody has to find his own way. I have a song, *All Is Fair in Love*, on the new album . . . 'All has changed with time/The future none can see/The road you leave behind/Ahead lies mystery' . . . This may sound crazy, but what *happened* to all the beautiful souls? Clyde McPhatter . . . after he died this song came to me and it would have been perfect for him. His talent should live on in some kind of way. And Nat Cole. He could have made a very positive contribution to the black movement; he would have had a lot of good things to say."

Wonder had grown pensive, so I asked him what next, what happens after he finishes "Inner Visions"?

"I'd like to take off for awhile. Rest some. I'd like to go to Africa, do an acoustic album. I have thoughts about the outside. Do an album outside—open-air music."

The answer was typically Wonder: "rest" in one sentence, and right back to work in the next. It is a little difficult to realize that, at only twenty-three, Wonder is a ten-year veteran of professional music, that he has had a great track record, and that his talent is only now—now that he has sole control of it—reaching white heat. In a period when "black" music is at once the biggest moneymaker and the most prestigious popular form, when superior, mediocre, or even bad black musicians are therefore assured of an audience they could not have counted on as little as four years ago, and when so much black music remains mired (perhaps for the very same reasons) in pedantic claptrap or a variation on the Endless Funk Figure, Stevie, as befits his name, continues to be a pure Wonder. He refuses to categorize himself or his sound, and is perfectly capable at this time of writing a stage musical, a movie score, or anything else he wants. (He turned down a commission to do the score for *Black Caesar*, an almost villainously exploitative trash movie: "I saw it and I didn't like it.") He is dead sure of his outlook, absolutely confident of his talent.

"I just try to be me, let what is within me come out. I feel like I'm *here* . . . things are pleasant. I never expected them to be this pleasant."

Stevie took another sip of his orange juice and egg. "I'll be here until I die."

IS SPEAKER PREFERENCE A "MATTER OF TASTE"?

Technical Editor Larry Klein comes down on the side of accurate reproduction

IF YOU'VE been interested in high-fidelity for more than about fifteen minutes, you should by now be aware that there is no speaker system so bad that someone won't love it, and no speaker so good that someone else won't hate it. This has led some pundits to proclaim that speaker preferences are *all* a matter of taste and that the proper goal of a successful speaker designer is simply to determine what the average taste is and then cater to it.

Most designers would agree that the major audible differences among speakers arise from frequency-response variations. In fact, the audible irritants known as harshness, nasality, boominess, muddiness, dullness, shrillness, and so forth, commonly thought of as colorations or "distortions," are almost always the result of one or more major frequency-response aberrations. These large dips and peaks in response arise from a number of causes having to do with how well the drivers, the crossover, and the speaker enclosure itself have been designed not only individually, but as an interacting team or *system*. Assuming that the speaker designers know this as well as we do, why do some speakers at a given price level sound so good and others so bad? Why is there no direct correlation between the price of a speaker system and the quality of its sound?

At least part of the explanation can be found in the amount of technical skill possessed by the speaker-design engineer. But the major part of the answer lies in the designer's personal "taste" in sound and/or in the marketing "philosophy" of his company's sales department. We need not spend much time on the question of engineering know-how—though it may come as a surprise to some readers to learn that there are *no* books to read or schools to attend that will teach you the specifics of speaker-system design. It is valuable, of course, to have a working knowledge of electronics and acoustics, but as far as I've been able to determine, the best way to learn how to be a speaker designer is to work with someone who is designing speakers.

Assuming that most speaker-design engineers have enough knowledge to do their job as they see

it, how then can we account for the large differences in sound quality among equivalently priced speaker systems? The key is in that phrase "their job *as they see it*"—which comes down, of course, to "as they *hear it*." Speaker designers tend to fall into one or the other of two major schools of thought. One group takes the position that since most recordings are artificial products assembled in a recording studio, there is therefore no original sonic reality for the speaker to reproduce. An engineer of this persuasion tends to design his products to have an "impressive" or "popular" sound according to his notion of what those qualities may be. To accomplish this, he may, for example, build a response peak into the lower-mid bass, or into the upper bass, the mid-range, the upper mid-range, or even a combination of these. The easiest approach, of course, is simply to let the speaker's drivers do their own things, letting the peaks and dips fall where they may. In general, however, when an engineer isn't trying for a wide, *flat* frequency response, the tendency is to put a peak into the mid-range or upper mid-range, which provides a "more efficient," "up-front," or "louder" speaker with plenty of "projection" and "bite."

SPEAKER designers of the second school of thought operate on the thesis that for a speaker to be good, it must be "accurate." To achieve accuracy a speaker must have a reasonably flat and extended frequency response throughout the audio range. A speaker system with a flat frequency response is a good deal more difficult to design than one with random—or selected—dips and peaks. Furthermore, the attainment of a flat response almost always involves unhappy trade-offs in size, efficiency, and/or power-handling capacity.

Many of the major Japanese designers appear convinced that speakers should be designed to "taste." Not too long ago in Japan I had the opportunity to participate in a computer-assisted speaker-testing session. Visualize, if you will, a room seating perhaps forty people. On a slightly raised dais to the front is a stage with several speaker systems posi-

tioned on the periphery of a large electrically driven "lazy susan." One speaker is always at stage-center position. A push of a button rotates the assembly until the next speaker in line is centered. On the arm rest of each of the forty or so chairs for the audience is a small box with a pilot light and seven pushbuttons labeled respectively -3, -2, -1, 0, +1, +2, +3.

An acoustically transparent curtain is then drawn over the stage to hide the speakers, and the speaker-positioning button is pressed to bring one of the now hidden speakers into playing position. After a few moments of light-classical program material, the button is pressed again, a different speaker moves into playing position, and the program material is repeated. The pilot light on our individual response boxes then lights up, and we (the audience) are instructed to push one of the numbered buttons to indicate the degree of our preference between the first and the second speakers. Pushing the zero would indicate no preference, pushing one of the plus numbers would indicate how much more you like the second speaker than the first, and pushing a minus number would indicate how much less you like it.

I MUST confess that I didn't much care for the sound produced by *any* of the speakers, so I was hard pressed to choose in each case the lesser of two evils. At the risk of offending my hosts, I finally settled on pushing -1 or -2 for almost everything. Where did the computer come in? It simply tabulated the results. The pushbutton data from the audience's response boxes was fed to the computer, which then provided an instantaneous readout on how many preferred which test speakers, to what

degree, and with what kind of music. I asked who normally filled the chairs during an evaluation session and was told that since the goal was to design speaker systems that would appeal to a large cross-section of the public, the audience was carefully chosen to be representative of that cross-section.

Another Japan-based speaker manufacturer, according to a recent newsletter, has divided its line of speakers into two categories, one type having what they call the "British/New England" sound and the other having the "U.S. West Coast" sound. (The geographical designations derive from the locations of the manufacturers of the various best-selling U.S. speaker brands.) The sonic characteristics of each type were defined as follows:

BRITISH/NEW ENGLAND	U.S. WEST COAST
Precise, satisfying sound	Bright, dynamic sound
Wide frequency response	Excellent tone
Serious, exact reproduction	Efficiency
	High acoustic energy

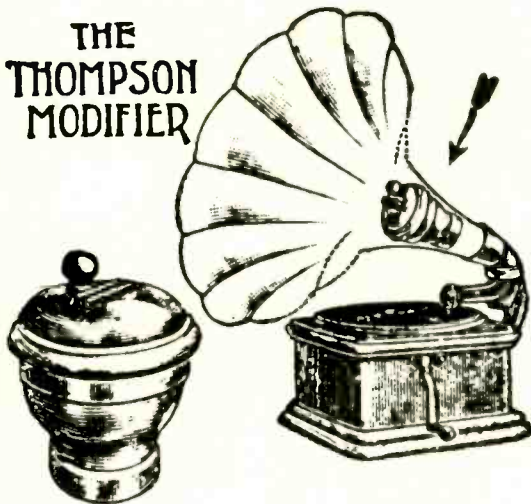
Although I do not subscribe to the implications of the geographical categories—nor, indeed, to the ambiguity of the descriptive phrases—it is clear that the "West Coast" sound is meant to represent those speakers designed to taste, and the "British/New England" sound those designed for a flat frequency response. Here, then, is a manufacturer who apparently feels that *both* categories of reproducer have validity—which implies that a preference for reproduction accuracy is as much a matter of mere taste as a preference for "bright, dynamic sound." As I mentioned earlier, this stance is often defended by reference to today's recording techniques, in which there is often *no* original concert-hall reality

The speaker market gives ample evidence that many manufacturers, at least, are persuaded of the efficacy of the "taste" approach to speaker designing. If they were not, the number of speakers offered to the prospective buyer—as here, in a Japanese audio salon—would almost certainly be much smaller.



Larry Klein

THE THOMPSON MODIFIER



No. 20K5375 This instrument softens the tone, eliminates the metallic sound, takes all the scratch out, and makes the reproduction as soft, smooth and harmonious as the original. Modern disc records are frequently so true to the original, reproducing the sound practically in all its original volume that they are too loud to be pleasant in small rooms, and this Thompson Modifier inserted in the horn of the machine softens the sound, making it pleasant and agreeable even in the smallest of rooms. The Thompson Modifier is strongly and substantially made of brass, nickel plated, fitted with rubber at points where it touches the horn, and instantly put into place or as quickly removed.

There is no talking machine included with this modifier. It is simply an attachment to put into the horn of your own machine.

Price..... 75c

WHILE browsing through the music section of a 1908 Sears, Roebuck catalog, I came across, if not the very first, at least *one* of the first commercial audio-equalization devices. "Strongly and substantially made," Thompson's nickel-plated brass Modifier was designed to be stuffed down the throat of an overloud morning-glory "amplifying" horn on an acoustic "talking machine."

Several of the claims made for the Modifier strike a familiar chord. For example, the statement that "Modern [1908!] disc records are frequently so true to the original . . . that they are too loud to be pleasant in small rooms. . . ." I suspect it wasn't the excessive dynamic range that bothered these early audiophiles, but the fact that most of the acoustic phonographs lacked means of regulating volume.

Apparently the Modifier also eliminated some acoustic-pickup and horn resonances, which moved the ad writer to the hyperbolic claim that the Modifier would provide "reproduction as soft, smooth and harmonious as the original." However, his conscience—or perhaps some primitive truth-in-advertising rule enforced by Sears—led him to warn that, for the 75c spent, "There is no talking machine included with this modifier." *L.K.*

to be reproduced. By the time a typical multi-track tape has been mixed down, possibly with a different frequency equalization applied to each track, there would appear to be no point in a speaker engineer's knocking himself out to attain a super-flat response when the program material has God knows what kind of equalization built into it.

On the face of it, this position has a certain plausibility, but carried to its logical extreme it puts the speaker designer in a position not unlike that of a clothing designer: find out what this year's fashion is, and design accordingly. One year, speakers with boomy bass might be "in," the next year tight bass and/or suppressed treble might be all the rage. Given a situation in which there are no objective standards, *any* taste, subject to the style whim of the moment, becomes just as valid as any other.

Opposed to this position of critical chaos are those loudspeaker engineers who steadfastly pursue the goal of accurate reproduction in their designs. Their view is that even if most recordings have no original concert-hall reality to be reproduced, there *is* a specific signal embodied in physical form in the record grooves (and in magnetic form on tape) that can and should be translated accurately into electrical waveforms by stylus, tape-head, and amplifier and thence into analogous acoustical waveforms by the speaker system. If a flat, wide-range response is a desirable characteristic in a phono cartridge and an amplifier, why should it not be as desirable in a speaker as well? Further, despite the absence of any "original concert-hall" live sound, performing artists, engineers, and producers have nonetheless worked together to get a *specific* sound experience into the record grooves. For the speaker designer to willfully second-guess the sonic intentions of those who are producing the music seems to me to be not only arrogantly presumptuous, but questionable aesthetics as well.

IN my view, it is almost self-evident that a fine loudspeaker should have absolutely *no* sound quality of its own. It should not have "presence," but "absence." It should sound "warm" only when the music it is playing is warm, it should sound "bright" only when the music is bright. Insofar as a speaker has any sonic character of its own, it will add that character to whatever material it tries to reproduce. There are undoubtedly isolated instances in which the sonic qualities of a given recording might be improved coincidentally by the individual coloration of a particular speaker, but such gratuitous "enhancement" would in the vast majority of cases be artistically inappropriate and serve only to degrade the complex process of high-fidelity reproduction.



GRADUS AD PARNASSUM

Shedding a little light on the rocky pathway to musical knowledge to encourage the first fumbling, tentative steps of the initiate

By FREDERICK BECKMESSER

A KNOWLEDGE of classical music and those things that go to make it up is not an accomplishment to be perfected in a mere few months of study. Music is an almost endlessly complicated field in which fact abuts on fact and opinion on opinion, and sometimes one on the other, the collision producing a displacement of both and changing our entire view of musical history and technique. Truly, the study of the history of music is a study of the changes in meaning, across the centuries, of things whose meaning was once thought to be fixed, as Berlioz recognized in his use of the term *idée fixe* in connection with his *Symphonie Fantastique*. That term was once thought to refer to a musical motif, but, in fact, it has to do with form. A symphony, after all, was looked upon as a fixed form in Berlioz's time, an orchestral work in several movements prefaced by a number, a key, and an opus number, the number and the opus number almost never coinciding, and always ending with a finale. Berlioz broke the mold, composing a work that had neither key nor any sort of number but still ended with a finale—really a caricature of a finale—and the symphony has never been the same since; the *idée* was no longer *fixe*.

One of the special difficulties in learning about music is that so much of the terminology is in one or another foreign language, and even in those languages the particular expression may be an ancient one, one whose meaning is no longer clear even to a native speaker of that language. If these two grids (to speak in the scientific manner) representing exotic language and outdated expression, respectively, are now superimposed upon the one that represents continual change in meaning and significance, we can see that the difficulties of the layman's reaching a proper understanding of practically anything in music are all but insurmountable.

Nevertheless, there is hope. If we take things one at a time, step by step (*vide capitulum*), searching, as Bernard Russell would have said, for "areas of reality," we may eventually attain to a knowledge of music that, if not exhaustive, is at least useful for the purposes of relatively abstruse discussion. With such an aim in mind, I propose a group of musical terms, in various languages, to discuss and, per-

haps, in a sublunary way, define. The terms have been selected on one or more of the following criteria: they are frequently encountered in the musical literature; they are almost always misinterpreted; they are rarely encountered in the musical literature; their meaning has changed drastically in recent years; or the terminology is sufficiently exotic to be exciting.

● **A CAPELLA.** Literally, from the head, thus meaning, in actual practice, to improvise, to fake it, to "wing it." The best jazz is almost always *a capella*, and a portion of the Baroque and Romantic organ repertoire began life as *a capella* music, later to be written down in concrete form (see *Musique Concrète*).

● **ACCIDENTAL.** The generic term for a sharp or a flat. The term began with the growth of solo song in the sixteenth century, when the vocalist would, on occasion (and perhaps by chance), sing a note either flatter or sharper than the one intended, and the people would comment, "Oh, she has had an accidental." A more modern development of this—referring, of course, to notes not available on keyboard instruments (see *Just Intonation*)—is called singing, or playing, "in the cracks," and for this style the new musical signs of the double-cross and the semi-detached flat have been developed.

● **AMBROSIAN CHANT.** Any of a large variety of ancient drinking songs. Long thought to be related to the church, Ambrosian chant is actually a pagan survival, ambrosia being of Graeco-Roman origin rather than Hebraic.

● **BAROQUE ORNAMENTATION.** Baroque derives from the Portuguese *Barocco*, meaning a deformed pearl, and Baroque ornamentation refers then to the pearls and, by extension, to all other forms of jewelry worn especially by female performers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to distract audiences from these singers' inability to execute a passable trill or properly belabor a melismatic roulade.

● **CANTUS FIRMUS.** A firm song, a strong song, such as *The Marseillaise* or *The Star-Spangled Banner*. *Canti firmi* have been of enormous importance in the political and social history of the world,

rallying the people to unpopular causes and, in general, doing more than any C.I.A. could to lower the incidence of sedition ("Let me make a nation sing and I care not who makes its laws"—Joseph R. McCarthy).

● **CHANSON DE GESTE.** An early type of troubadourian song in which is enclosed a funny story (jest).

● **COR ANGLAIS.** The English core. This refers to a particular quality of the music of born or naturalized English citizens which seems to have no relation to French, German, Italian, or other traditions of music, but which is, as the poet said, "forever England." The expression is in French so as to make it seem more believable.

● **DUMP.** Sometimes spelled *dumpe* or *domp*. An English tune of parting (sixteenth century). The dump was a musical equivalent (the English being highly musical people in those days) of a "Dear John" letter, in which the loved one was told firmly, if wordlessly, that he or she was no longer needed. Some of the nobility, having continual need of such musical messages, hired eminent composers to write them for them as, so to speak, a trademark. Thus we have such compositions as *My Lady Carey's Dump*, by Anonymous, and such pieces of general usage as *The Irish Dump* (whether this was to be *to* or *from* the Irish is not known) found in the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*.

● **EXPOSITION.** That portion of a musical composition in which both the composer and performer are expected to "show off" whatever they've got. The most recent developments in the art of exposition have been put forward by a bare-breasted young American cellist; her unique expositions have been recapitulated *da capo al fine* in the press.

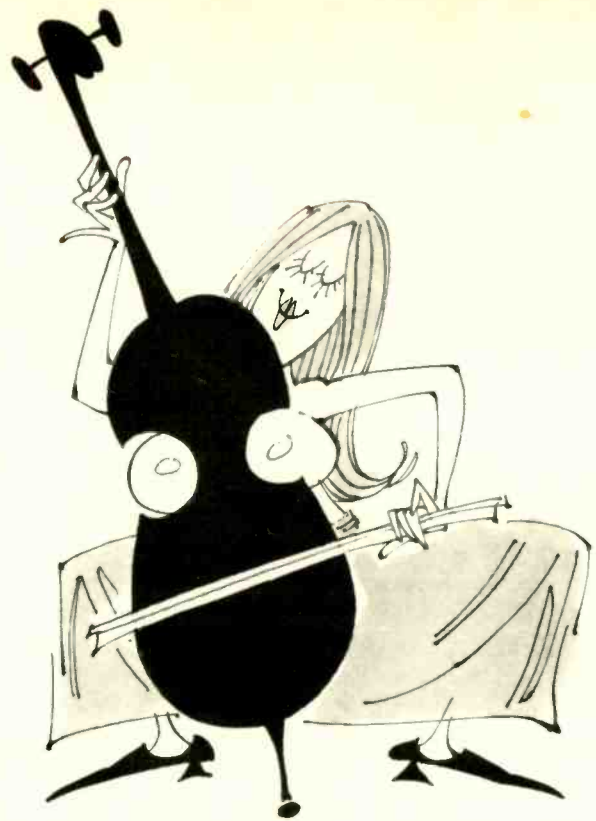
● **FALSO BORDONI.** An Italian castrato singer of the eighteenth century active in England (original name unknown). He got the name Falso Bordoni because of his continual attempts to insinuate himself into operatic casts disguised, in women's clothes, as Faustina Bordoni. Due to the fact that he was a tritone (*q.v.*), he only rarely succeeded, and his appearance was often greeted with opprobrium. Handel, who was aware of this, wrote for him the aria "He was despised."

● **GROUND BASS.** A bass line supplied by a barrel organ, a hurdy-gurdy, or any other hand-turned instrument.

● **HOMOPHONY.** Music sung by an all-male choir.

● **IDIOPHONE.** Any musical instrument, such as a tambourine, designed to be played by one of low intelligence.

● **JEW'S HARP.** A species of lyre, especially that one played by David for King Solomon, as illustrat-



ed in many antique works of art, and, therefore, the only authentic instrument for the accompaniment of psalms.

● **JUST INTONATION.** A term of mild protestation used by singers when they have been accused of singing an accidental (*q.v.*), as in, "That's not wrong, that's just intonation."

● **LAUDA.** A term of great antiquity, but still frequently used today, meaning *fortissimo*.

● **LUDUS TONALIS.** Scatological songs.

● **MAJOR AND MINOR.** Terms used by composers of the late Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods to designate and distinguish their more important works from their less important ones. Thus, Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in C Minor was intended as a work of less significance than his Symphony No. 4 in B-flat Major; Chopin's three sonatas for piano are all, by his own titular admission, negligible music; and Mozart's Symphony No. 25, which is known as the "Little G Minor," is even less important than his general run of minor works.

● **MONODY.** Music meant to be heard from a single sound source. When more than one instrument or voice is involved, various juxtapositions of the performers are necessary, although sometimes a barrier is erected between performers and listeners and the music is funneled through a hole incised in the wall, which has become known as a "speaker."

● **MUSICA FICTA.** Make-believe music, or music that exists in reputation but not in actuality, such as Sibelius' Eighth Symphony, Mozart's *Lullaby*, and the compositions of Terry Riley.

● **MUSIQUE CONCRÈTE.** Concrete music—*real* music—the opposite of *Musica Ficta* above; in

other words, music that exists in actuality if not in reputation, such as Peter Warlock's *The Curlew*, Francis Poulenc's *Elegy on the Death of the Princesse de Polignac*, and the compositions of Arnold Schoenberg.

● **NEAPOLITAN SIXTH.** That fraction of Vienna—comparable to the Latin Quarter in Paris—occupied by Italian immigrants. The music these Italian immigrants brought with them had a great effect upon certain Viennese composers, Schubert in particular being known for his extensive forays into the "Neapolitan region," which is, doubtlessly, where he contracted the disease that killed him.

● **ORGANUM.** Any of several species of music associated with the sexual experience. On the basis of extensive historical evidence there seem to be four major varieties, each presumably related to a specific variety of experience, and known, respectively, as (1) parallel, (2) free and contrary, (3) measured, and (4) melismatic. These terms being sufficiently implicative, it is felt that no further explication is necessary or proper here.

● **PARODY MASS.** Music composed for the celebration of Hallowe'en.

● **PLAINSONG.** Music of the people; *ergo*, folk songs, singing commercials, and the like.

● **POLYPHONY.** Music sung by people of all sexes. Many works composed before 1750, though including parts for soprano and alto, were meant to be sung by boys or by castrati. Such music, then, cannot properly be called *polyphony*; it is, rather, *monophony*, or, at best (in the case of the castrati), *heterophony*.

● **SECONDA PRATTICA.** A charitable criticism given of musical performers who demonstrate an excessive level of incompetence, as in "He really does not lack talent, but he needs a *seconda prattica* (and maybe a *terta*)."

● **SERIALISM.** A general term referring to music that is composed in installments.

● **SUSPENSION.** The interval of time between two installments of a serial composition.

● **SWELL.** A term of appreciation, probably dating into antiquity, used for some reason exclusively with respect to organs.

● **TIERCE DE PICARDIE.** The Picardy Third. A descending interval of a minor third as in, and deriving from, "Roses are flow'ring in *Pi-car-die*."

● **TRITONE.** A person who is capable of singing only three notes, as distinguished from those who can sing only one (*monotones*) and those who can

sing only two (*duotones*). The individual who can sing all the chromatic tones is known in some quarters as a *dodecaphonist*.

● **TROMBA MARINA.** That instrument, often pictured in Italian Renaissance paintings, and looking very much like a conch shell, said to have been played by the minor ocean deities who accompanied Neptune when he rose from the deep.

● **UNISON.** General agreement between conductor and orchestra as to which piece is to be rehearsed or played.

● **VIRGINAL.** Music to be played when the wedding has been called off. A large collection of such music was published by a Mr. Fitzwilliam (see *Dump*).

GRADUS AD PARNASSUM! Steps to Parnassus! It is only by taking one step at a time that we may proceed from ignorance to knowledge. As those ancient and pitiable Greeks, expatriated against their will to Rome and the ultra-Roman colonies, thought of their dear cottages on the slopes of Mt. Parnassus, knowing that the return to their homes could be accomplished only through long and arduous hikes, one step at a time, we too must have the patience to approach the tonality of musical knowledge one step, or even a half-step, at a time. Though the modulations be Wagnerian, still, the tonic is always in sight.

And when we have learned what there is to learn, we too may be greeted by the Maestro, as was that singer who had sung her entire aria in accidentals (*q.v.*) and finally come to rest in the proper key: "Welcome home, Mrs. Worthington."



Frederick Beckmesser has been, for many years, an eminent music critic. Though much maligned in the past for his conservative views, his special insights are those of a good friend of music.

A promising bass-baritone:

SIMON ESTES

By FLORENCE STEVENSON

SIMON ESTES, a young American bass, has accumulated a formidable list of successes, including four recordings on top labels, in only seven short years. Estes made his initial impact on the operatic world in 1965. "It began in Berlin," he explains, "because I was there. I'd followed a girl friend from Juilliard who had gone to Germany to audition. She had me sing for her agent, Friedrich Paasch, who suggested that I audition for the Berlin State Opera. I did and received a contract to sing Ramfis in *Aida*. It was my first professional appearance on any stage."

It happened with almost dazzling speed. Estes arrived in Berlin on Christmas Day, 1964, auditioned in January, and sang in March, receiving fine reviews that brought him more engagements. In addition to Ramfis, he has sung many other leading bass roles with the Berlin company, and with the Hamburg State Opera he sang the role of Uncle Albert in the world premiere of Gunther Schuller's *The Visitation*. He has been heard throughout Ger-



many, Italy, and Switzerland and in Great Britain. In his own country, he has sung with many leading opera companies, including the Chicago, Philadelphia Lyric, and Boston. With the San Francisco company, he sang the multiple bass leads in *Tales of Hoffmann* and the leading role of Carter Johnson in the first American production of *The Visitation*. Last season he appeared with the San Francisco company as Raimondo in *Lucia* and as Don Pedro in the company's revival of *L'Africaine*.

Among the recordings Estes has made are the award-winning Shostakovich Fourteenth Symphony, for which he received a Grammy for his contribution as one of the two vocal soloists. He has also appeared in RCA's recording of Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus*. For Angel (EMI) he sang Il Frate in the Caballé-Domingo *Don Carlo*, and for Columbia he recorded an excerpt from Rachmaninoff's opera *Aleko*.

"I like to make records," he said. "You can learn from recordings while you're making them. In fact, they can

augment the work of a coach. The opportunity to listen to playbacks gives you the best chance to hear if the sound you make is musical and if the voice is in line."

Simon Estes is a rarity among vocal artists in that his decision to be a professional musician came relatively late, and consequently he had a broader education than the average singer. The Iowa-born bass studied medicine for three years and theology for one at the University of Iowa, and he was working for a degree in social psychology when Charles Kellis, a voice teacher at the university, heard him sing a solo in a school concert. Kellis said to him, "You have a very special voice; you ought to be an opera singer."

The suggestion appealed to Estes, who had always loved to sing. As a young boy, gifted with an exceptional high soprano voice of the type that sometimes presages a fine bass in later maturity, he had possessed a high C that many a prima donna might covet. He had sung in church and with various amateur groups. When his voice changed, at eighteen, he became a tenor and went right on singing in glee clubs and with a university group called the Old Gold Singers. All this experience was beginning to add up to something, so Kellis' estimate of his talent was not entirely a surprise. It did spark his determination to become a professional singer, however, so Estes began vocal studies. After four months, at Kellis' suggestion, he auditioned for the Juilliard School in New York. He received a full scholarship, and was in his second year at the school when he went to Berlin and plunged into the professional world of music.

EVERY opportunity that has come to Estes seems to have come quickly. His American career was launched after he auditioned for a grant from the Institute of International Education, for which he had been sponsored by the American consul in Berlin and by Gunther Schuller. When he received the grant, he was asked to participate in the 1966 Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. It brought him a silver medal and subsequent engagements in the United States with the Boston Symphony, the Hollywood Bowl, and other major organizations.

Today his career seems to be established and still expanding. In addition to the orchestral and operatic appearances he makes in the United States, he sings some twenty to thirty recitals per season here and spends six months fulfilling opera, concert, and recital engagements in Europe, where he has appeared at many prestigious music festivals. He has even sung in New Zealand and Australia. He is a gifted musician and a linguist—he speaks fluent Italian and German and not-so-fluent (by his own admission) French, and while in Moscow for the competition he learned to speak and write Russian. On the surface, it looks as if Estes were enjoying all the fruits of success. He is not.

He is one of perhaps half a dozen black male artists in the entire world of opera, and he has had some bitter experiences. For example, a Southern opera manager once planned to engage Estes for a leading role only to have a woman who helped subsidize the company threaten to remove her support if a black were engaged. "So what happened? I didn't sing. What could the manager do?" said Estes, who has had other similar encounters in his native country. He continued, "Then there are the opera managers who are willing to engage you, but only want to pay you peanuts, managers who think they are doing you a favor if they let you sing at all."

But what about the black female singers who are doing so well, such as Leontyne Price, Martina Arroyo, Grace Bumbry, and Shirley Verrett? "Yes." Estes acknowledges. "black women have always done better than men. It's a throwback to the slave society where, in order to keep blacks in line, the black man was robbed of his dignity and pride. I'm not saying that this current attitude toward the black male singer is a *conscious* attempt to rob him of his dignity; it's *unconscious*, and mixed up with it is another unconscious prejudice: the dislike of seeing a white woman with a black man, even on stage.

"It's a great shame, too, because I am not the only black artist who has suffered or is suffering because of this. Bill Warfield should have had the chance to sing something besides *Ol' Man River* and *Porgy*. There are other great black male singers who just don't get ahead. Don't imagine that I want any favoritism because I am black. I only want equal opportunity.

"I feel that I have something to offer. I am grateful to the foundations and the people who have helped me develop my career, and now I would like to express and display what I have learned. I am a religious person, you know. I believe in God and I think my voice is a gift from God. I want to share it with His people, and I also feel I have a mission to help my own people to progress in this profession.

"Black children should have more of a direction, should be initiated into opera. We are a musical people. When I was little, there was always music in my family. We—my mother, my sisters, and I—used to stand around a grand piano that my older sister had received as a gift. She had a really beautiful voice. Anyhow, we used to sing hymns and other music at this piano. My mother had a beautiful voice, too. But of course no one in her native town of Centerville, Iowa, was interested in a black soprano. Nobody knew she might have been an opera singer. Nobody there knew anything about opera, for one thing. Until my teacher said I had an operatic voice, I had never even thought about opera. Now I realize that I was probably born to sing it—my gift for languages, for instance, and my memory. I can learn an opera in five days. Furthermore, if I hadn't come upon this music so late, I might have been able to be a conductor. I love to watch conductors at work, and I would love the feel of having an orchestra at my command—all those marvelous sounds meshing together. But that opportunity was denied me because of my background, because of my poverty.

TODAY I live in New York. I am based in this country, but I sing more opera in Europe than in the United States. My ambition is to sing as much in America as I do in Europe, to open doors for my people. For as you help the blacks, you also help the whites to get more opportunities. My colleagues, I must say, are eager for me to succeed. People like Placido Domingo—a great man, a great singer, and a great musician—they help me, and I want to help myself and other blacks.

"Don't get the impression that I'm being neurotic. I am not neurotic; I am human. You can only improve when you feel you are growing; if people beat you down, then you get complexes." Currently, Simon Estes is remarkably free of complexes, and, in spite of the frankness with which he states his problem, there is no vindictiveness in his approach. It is easy to believe him when he says, "I love music and I love people. I am unable to hate anyone."



I Hear Canada Singing

By Noel Coppage

MY FRIEND Ben, the-world's-most-devoted-Gordon-Lightfoot-fan, paid John Denver the ultimate compliment one night by jumping up in the middle of Denver's *Aerie* to blurt out: "That guy sounds like a Canadian!"

Ben has not, to my knowledge, threatened to Move to Canada and Start Over if the United States drops one more bomb, pollutes one more river, builds one more parking lot, or whatever, but he is aware that a growing number are making such threats every day, and he is aware that there *is* something different about Canadian musicians.

Canada has become the Great, Good Place in the minds of some itchy Americans: quite suddenly, it seems, Canada has come to represent the purity and innocence we as a nation have lost. People whose counterparts years ago thought of moving to California or Australia are thinking of moving to Canada. It offers a recognizable life-style without the problems a large, complex population causes—particularly crowding, pollution, manic capitalism, and the hot and cold warring and braggadocio that go with being a world power. Canada offers a sort of civilized frontier existence that looks more and more attractively loose as life is viewed as increasingly constricted in the States.

Canada's pop musicians, meanwhile, have quietly climbed to high places in our hearts. Neil Young, Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell, Ian and Sylvia, Leonard Cohen, Anne Murray, Gene MacLellan—

where would "American" pop music be today without such figures?

Obviously, part of the appeal of Canadian musicians is connected somehow to the lure of Canada itself, which means the music has somehow *summed up* that attraction. It also means a large number of Americans are more susceptible to that kind of appeal than before. We are, to invoke the words in a Neil Young song, "ready for the country"—and Canada is it. We know this because the music tells us about Canada, and the music has country in it. It conveys to us the spaciousness, the airiness, the simplicity of attitudes toward God, Nature, and the elements that we used to identify as Western.

The lure of the frontier is nothing new to Americans, of course; when Dan'l Boone got to feeling crowded and overcivilized, he struck out for Cumberland Gap, thus acting out a strictly American scenario. Years later, people were still doing the same thing, except Kentucky was nearer the starting point than the goal, which had shifted to California or Colorado, and an old Ford had replaced Shanks' mare.

The unique appeal of Canadian musicians is nothing new either. Many years ago, Hank Snow came down from the North Country to make a name for himself in Nashville's Grand Ole Opry. He didn't sound quite like anything they had heard before, but his Canadian style was so compatible with their



country style that he slipped into the Opry lineup almost casually. But the majority of us weren't ready for the country then. We were still thinking about migrating from the country to the city instead of vice versa. Snow's appeal was restricted to the traditional country-music audience. Now, however, Ian and Sylvia and Gordon Lightfoot are making essentially the same kind of music and we are ready for it. A passion for the outdoors, whether it be the *Four Strong Winds* or *Short Grass* of Ian Tyson, the "blue, blue windows behind the stars" of Neil Young's *Helpless*, or Lightfoot's *Early Morning Rain*, seems to keep Canadian songwriters cleaner and closer to the basics than their counterparts in the States.

LEONARD Cohen, being Jewish and a city (Montreal) boy, might seem at first glance to be an exception to this; indeed, as an acquaintance wrote to me, "It is always *night* in Cohen's songs; there is a disfigured icon on the bare wall; there is a flash of bodies on the bed. Love is bisexual ectoplasm." But Cohen is actually an old folkie at heart—it's just that he's addicted to certain minor-key gimmicks and to romanticizing his own moody, self-centered mutterings. Space is the main attraction in the lure of the frontier, and there is a kind of openness in Cohen's best songs (*Suzanne*, *Bird on a Wire*). Cohen's lyrics often trip over their own super-effete feet, and his melodies have become almost a yowl

of self-parody, but his songs still provide an after-taste of virgin country and uncorrupted experience. The best evidence of this is the surprising success of the soundtrack of Robert Altman's superb film, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*. Altman's choice of Cohen to sing his songs behind pictures of the most authentic frontier-town setting Hollywood has ever achieved was no fluke, but a fine stroke of musical awareness.

Neil Young chose to open his first solo album with a brief instrumental entitled *The Emperor of Wyoming*. The title just about said it all concerning where Young's head is, but he has said it time and again with such songs as *Here We Are in the Years*, *Helpless*, and *After the Gold Rush*. He was largely responsible for the porous texture that let daylight into the sound of the late, great group Buffalo Springfield, and his own albums have been given progressively simpler, more spacious arrangements. This reached some sort of peak in "Harvest," much of which, with its harmonica and steel-guitar backbone, would have been considered out-and-out country music in the years before the Canadians refined our definitions.

Ian and Sylvia have steered the opposite tack, moving from an acoustic to an electric band, but they still achieve a country sound. And they still sing about antelopes, rodeos, salmon, Calgary, truckers' cafés, and flies in the bottle. I recall the early-Sixties folk snobs being a little suspicious of

Ian and Sylvia because they sounded too much like Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper or Lula Belle and Scotty or some of the other known "hillbilly" musicians. Thankfully, there don't seem to be many such purists on the loose these days, but Ian and Sylvia still have to avoid disappointing those (including me) who vaguely want them to go on sounding "Canadian." No problem, though, because the Tysons could scrap their basic flavor about as easily as they could shed their skins.

Anne Murray's austere, unadorned singing style speaks tomes about a background where people regard Godliness and frills as being mutually exclusive. Gene MacLellan's songs often reveal a similar fundamentalism. One of the critics commented that *Put Your Hand in the Hand* probably could not have been written and launched in the United States, notwithstanding the noise the Jesus People were making. Joni Mitchell's ornamentation, on the other hand, is *artful*. She knows exactly what she is doing—and whatever she does must be reviewed in the context that she is probably a genius—but the patented Canadian country ambiance comes through in her songs, especially in the melodies, which are as gentle, timeless, and colorful as a field of wildflowers.

And Gordon Lightfoot is an absolute must for anyone who would learn about Canada by listening. His preoccupation with the images of summer is a Northern predilection. His songs such as *Love and Maple Syrup* and *Redwood Hill* are specifically concerned with both Northern and country folk hardware. Outdoor imagery ("Peekin' through fields of grain . . .," "Ten degrees and getting colder . . .," "Sailin' down the summer wind/I've got whiskers on my chin/And I like the mood I'm in . . .") predominates in his lyrics, and his melodies are purified and refined country melodies. His perspective is reminiscent of that of rural people in the States twenty years ago—a bit defensively testy when any country-*vs.*-city comparisons come up, and always putting in a plug for the country when they don't: "Born in the country and I like that country song," he'll sing, or "I'm on my second cup of coffee/And I still can't face the dawn/The radio is playing a soft country song. . . ." The city's good points he concedes grudgingly, as in: "The skyline of Toronto/Is something you'll get onto/They say you gotta be there for awhile . . ." (this, remember, inside a song about going back to Alberta after giving it a reasonable try in the not-so-big city).

When you hear Canadian voices singing, you don't hear the deliberately unwashed hillbilly country sound that, say, Johnny Paycheck makes, but you hear the same big skies, wheatfields, and moun-

tain streams that get into the Canadian songs. Neil Young's nasal whine is as lonesome as the howl of a wolf. Lightfoot's vocals are rugged, manly, and show the country singer's concentration on style—they stand out among those of his peers just as Marty Robbins' style is unique among *his* gentry. Ian Tyson has the most outdoorsy of all voices; it's impossible for me to listen to him on record and not picture him wearing a mackinaw. Joni Mitchell's voice, even as it artfully dodges into falsetto, counts most on the long, lonesome lines in the upper register. Cohen's mixture of vulnerability and resignation shows the same scars that marked the styles of such pioneer country boys as Jimmie Rodgers and Woody Guthrie.

One obvious thing is that Canadians don't sing successfully in groups very much. Lighthouse has had only fleeting success at juggling its trumpets and its vocals, and the most successful Canadian group, the Guess Who, is from its name on down a carefully contrived imitation American group, with all Canadian flavor ruthlessly washed out. There may be several reasons why Canadian musicians don't bunch up, either as an in-group or an out-group, for self-protection. For example, Canada has no black experience to speak of, and without that the States might not be so group-oriented either. Another way of looking at it is that groups and crowding are simply Un-Canadian. A man or woman with space around him or her is no doubt closer to the Canadian vision than anything that would suggest collectivism is.

So we here—polluted, crowded, mugged, pick-pocketed, tired of engaging in stupid "races" with the other superpowers but apparently unable to stop, forced to earn too much money in order to spend too much—we hope we see a better land in the music of Tyson and Lightfoot, because on some level we assume their perspective is Canada's perspective and that it is a real one: that trees, clouds, meadows, prairies, mountains, and rivers *are* more important than skyscrapers, parking lots, and the endless, badgering cacophony of non-stop merchandising.

To us here, it appears that the young musicians of Canada are the products of fewer and purer influences than the number and kind that bombard the kids with the guitars in the States. It appears that Canadians' love of real things (most of which are still outdoors, despite the best efforts of Andy Warhol and Hugh Hefner) is what makes their music so refreshing, and is also what makes the music, like the country, beckon. And we are ready for it. In increasing numbers, we are ready for the country.

STEREO REVIEW'S SELECTION OF RECORDINGS OF SPECIAL MERIT BEST OF THE MONTH



CLASSICAL

FOR MOZART LOVERS: A LITTLE-KNOWN OPERA DELIGHT

La Finta Giardiniera will probably never be better done than in the new Philips recording

LA FINTA GIARDINIERA, an important yet virtually unknown Mozart opera, has suddenly re-entered the recordings catalog after a long absence. Before some well-earned praise is lavished on Philips Records' remarkable new production, a few words about the work itself may be to the point.

La Finta (or *Die Gärtnerin aus Liebe* in its German rendering) was completed in December 1774 and first performed in Munich in January 1775. Although it was presented in Italian, the autograph score contained a German translation in the hand of Leopold Mozart, which would seem to indicate that a German-language performance was also contemplated. That plan, if plan there was, was never carried out in Mozart's lifetime, but after the inexplicable disappearance of the Italian manuscript of Act 1, the only authentic vocal score that could be compiled and published (1839) by Breitkopf & Härtel was the German one, and, with a few revisions, this is the edition used in the Philips recording.

Mozart was only eighteen when he wrote the opera, but we know enough not to speak condescendingly of "youthful" Mozart works (*Exsultate, Jubilate*, K. 165, the Concertone, K. 190, and the five violin concertos all date from this period). Some of Mozart's biographers nevertheless deal with *La Finta* very casually, though Wyzewa and Saint-Foix appraise it in perceptive detail, drawing attention to its delights without

losing sight of its weaknesses. Going a step further—perhaps a bit too far—W. J. Turner states that "it has an inimitable charm and gaiety, tenderness and fertility of invention, allied to such musical science that I personally prefer it even to the later *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*."

There is no denying the beauty and inventiveness of Mozart's music in this work, but it does suffer from two crucial weaknesses. Excessive length is one of them. The first two acts, in particular, are considerably overwritten, and the set numbers are not only too numerous but also too long individually. The other failing—a faulty sense of musical/dramatic balance—can be laid to the young Mozart's still unformed skills as a musical dramatist.

The opera consists of twenty-eight set numbers, all but seven of which are arias; however expertly contrived these arias are, and however numerous the characters who sing them, they follow one another in a manner that soon produces predictability and monotony. This is made all the more noticeable by the fact that when Mozart does get around to writing a duet (No. 27 in Act 3), it is breathtakingly beautiful. The mastery of his ensemble writing in *La Finta* is, in fact, nowhere in doubt: the finales to all three acts are brilliantly written.

This is essentially a comic opera, but some of its scenes are quite serious and Mozart's music for them occasionally becomes overdramatic. For



HANS SCHMIDT-ISSERSTEDT (1900-1973)
An enduring passion for Mozart



DAVID RHODES: swelling the lutanists' ranks

me, this is not a critical weakness, but simply indicates the overpowering superiority of the musical contribution to the slender dramatic one—I would, as a matter of fact, advise paying as little attention as possible to the cumbersome, complicated plot.

Erik Smith's outstanding annotations reveal the far from widely known fact that, though the late Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt (the conductor here and Mr. Smith's father) was justly honored as a Beethoven interpreter, Mozart was his "greatest enduring passion." Furthermore, his Ph. D. thesis was on the subject of Italian influences on the orchestration of Mozart's early operas. The musical leadership of this performance unquestionably bears out the conductor's lifelong dedication to the music of Mozart. The orchestra of the Norddeutsche Rundfunk sounds like a major performing body under his baton, bringing the music to life with lightness, buoyancy, and full attention to the score's descriptive and other felicities. The solo singers are treated with consideration, the ensembles sparkle, and everything is in perfect balance. The performers are all expert Mozartians; there is not a weak link in the lot. Except for some tightness in the sound toward the centers of the discs (which at times contain more than thirty minutes per side), the technical production is clean and well spread out for effective stereo. This kind of artistic and technical effort lavished on, say, *Le Nozze di Figaro* would have produced the recording of a decade. As an opera, *La Finta Giardiniera* is not in *Figaro's* league, but it has nevertheless been treated to a generous and

triumphant production by Philips. I doubt that it will ever be done better. *George Jellinek*

MOZART: *Die Gärtnerin aus Liebe (La Finta Giardiniera, K. 196)*. Gerhard Unger (tenor), Podestà; Helen Donath (soprano), Sandrina; Werner Hollweg (tenor), Belfiore; Jessye Norman (soprano), Arminda; Tatiana Troyanos (mezzo-soprano), Ramiro; Ileana Cotrubas (soprano), Serpetta; Hermann Prey (baritone), Nando. Chorus and Orchestra of the Norddeutsche Rundfunk, Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt cond. PHILIPS 6703 039 three discs \$20.94.

MUSIC FOR LUTE BY SYLVIUS LEOPOLD WEISS

A delightful program cannily assembled from the works of an eighteenth-century master

SYLVIUS LEOPOLD WEISS, who was born in Breslau in 1686 and held a succession of court posts in Düsseldorf, Rome, Dresden, Vienna, and Prague, died in 1750. He was the greatest lutanist of his day, a veritable Froberger of the lute in scope, technical interest, and expressive power, though his seventy-year juniority puts him in a different position historically. Our knowledge of his life is sketchy. There were some meetings and perhaps a friendship with J. S. Bach, and the two men are alleged once to have engaged in a friendly performing competition. And there is also the story, well known but good enough to repeat, that a jealous French violinist tried to bite Weiss' thumb off, and came so near succeeding that Weiss was unable to play for almost a year.

So much for picturesqueness. The music's the thing, however, and we have been given precious little chance to hear it on the instrument it was originally written for. A few tantalizing snippets of Weiss have been recorded on the guitar by Julian Bream, Narciso Yepes, and others, but the just-released "Music for Lute" album on the Cambridge label is the first, so far as I know, to be devoted entirely to Weiss pieces played on the lute.

It is also a record that I have been looking forward to, quite specifically, for some time, since I have had the pleasure of hearing the album's soloist, David Rhodes, play in that best of all settings for this eloquent, civilized, and supremely intimate instrument—my own living room—and of examining some of his meticulously prepared performing copies of the tablature sources that make the lute literature relatively inaccessible to the general mu-

sician. The finished product, put together in close collaboration with producer Charles Fisher of Cambridge Records, is every bit as good as I had hoped it would be.

Rhodes, a young American who lives in Boston and combines scientific and musical careers, shows himself in this recording debut to be an artist of considerable stature. He plays with something of the sobriety of the late Walter Gerwig, but with none of the mechanical quality that spoiled the German lutanist's performances. Thus, though the registrational extremes of the Bream style are avoided, there is ample sense here of the rhetoric of the music and of its substantial emotional and intellectual content. In other words, it is middle-of-the-road playing, but free of the dullness that the phrase might suggest.

The performer has himself grouped the music on the disc in a pair of suites, from various sources, separated by two shorter sets of pieces likewise unified in tonality. The effect is convincing, delightful, and worlds away from the boredom that non-devotees of the instrument might fear from a whole disc of the solo lute.

The recording is ideally rich if not quite ideally clear, and the record is cut at rather a high level, so that you will have to set your volume control much lower than usual to get a lifelike sound. The sources of the individual pieces are not given on the jacket, and it's a pity, in dance movements like these, that the performance omits some of the repeats. But gripes are incidental—this is a major achievement, and it marks the emergence of an important new talent in the sparse ranks of master lutanists. Another disc, devoted to the French lute, is apparently being planned by Cambridge. It, too, will be welcome.

Bernard Jacobson

WEISS: *Music for Lute. Pieces in F Major or D Minor: Prelude, Allemande, Courante, Gavotte, Sarabande, and Gigue. Pieces in A Minor: Allemande, Sarabande, Men-*

uet. Pieces in D Major: Campanella, Menuet. Pieces in C Major: Prelude, Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Bourrée, Allegro. David Rhodes (lute). CAMBRIDGE CRS 2301 \$5.98.

POPULAR

R-&R JOLLIES FROM THE J. GEILS BAND

"Bloodshot," their latest for Atlantic, is a cheerful burlesque of rock idols

THE J. Geils Band is basically a white blues band—and a superior one. The group's latest album for Atlantic is called "Bloodshot," and I'll just have to say that I haven't enjoyed myself so much in years. The organist plays a little like Booker T. Jones, and the harmonica man has taken the best of two major harp stylists, Jimmy Reed and Little Walter, and added something of his own. And Geils himself has the spooky knack of playing every guitar solo I have ever dreamed of playing. Added to all this is the band's refreshing and cheerful burlesquing of every major rock figure of about the last twenty years. There is, I would hope, little malice in this, but there's certainly a fine ear for the musical excesses of the holy men and a wicked ability to reproduce them.

James Brown gets quite a treatment on *Don't Try To Hide It*, which parodies his endless riffs and his call to the audience on one of his singles, "Are you ready for the bridge?" But where Brown's band at that point plays a couple of different notes and then goes right back into the endless riff, Geils' band answers, "Aw, throw it off the bridge!" and slides into an ensemble vocal of a ditty you will recognize (if you went to some of the same schools I did) as cherishable grade-school-playground porn. The feeble writing and relentlessly tinny vocals of the Mick Jagger of the mid-Sixties get the front end of the boot on *Start All Over Again*, a tune based in part on the Stones' *Good Times, Bad Times*. Presley's famed sex appeal and the unique sound of his records during his well-known cheesy period (late Fifties to late Sixties) take a fall on *Hold Your Loving*. And the latest pop fad—reggae—gets a dig on the group's *Give It to Me* (the single version, edited for airplay, is bereft of its meaty middle section in which the band is just being itself).

J. Geils' straight material isn't exactly what you'd call Great, but it is Good, and played with such spunk, such surety, and such a wealth of sheer r-&-r fun that it is absolutely convincing—so convincing

THE J. GEILS BAND: superior white blues



Atlantic Records

that I was mighty sorry when the needle ran into the run-out on side two. Gimme more, please—and soon.
Joel Vance

J. GEILS BAND: *Bloodshot*. J. Geils (guitars); Stephen Jo Bladd (percussion, vocals); Seth Justman (keyboards, vocals); Magic Dick (harmonica); Daniel Klein (bass); Peter Wolf (vocals). *Ain't Nothin' but a House Party; Make Up Your Mind; Back To Get Ya; Struttin' with My Baby; Don't Try To Hide It; Southside Shuffle; Hold Your Loving; Start All Over Again; Give It to Me.* ATLANTIC SD 7260 \$5.98, ⓑ TP 7260 \$6.98, © CS 7260 \$6.98.

JOHN COLTRANE: ICING ON THE CAKE

Prestige restores to the catalog two eloquent sessions with the Red Garland Quintet

WITH Prestige, Riverside, Blue Note, and a handful of other jazz-dedicated labels building up their artist rosters, the late Fifties/early Sixties proved to be a productive period in jazz recording history. Those were the days when night clubs could still thrive on a jazz policy, and there were therefore more working groups; America's popular music was either bland middle-of-the-road stuff or rock-and-roll, which was then of so low an order that it hardly inspired assimilation by more skilled musicians.

For the time of that nadir of pop music, jazz nursed the musical intellect and underwent its final pre-electronic development. It also bloomed with what may well have been the last crop of truly great jazz individuals, performers who attracted attention with their musical ideas and their ability to execute them, performers who relied on talent rather than gimmickry. One cannot deny that there are some extraordinarily capable new musicians on the scene today, but Armstrong, Tatum, Lester Young, Miles, Parker, and Coltrane all became major influences before their thirtieth birthdays, and one is hard put to find anyone of comparable stature in that age category today.

I hope it isn't so, but John Coltrane may well have been the very last of these jazz immortals to emerge, the last of that handful of performers who set the pace and kept the music young and vibrant. But if it is true, it gives me another reason to hail Prestige's excellent new "Jazz Junction," featuring the Red Garland Quintet of which Coltrane was so important an ingredient—he is the delectable top-



JOHN COLTRANE: *Pied Piper* with a saxophone

ping on a cake that is itself delicious. Originally issued as two separate releases ("All Morning Long," Prestige 7130, and "Soul Junction," Prestige 7181), the two-disc set includes all but two selections from a highly successful 1957 quintet session.

It was a "blowing session," to be sure, but with none of that apathy that so often marks such get-togethers—everyone has something to say, and they say it eloquently. Coltrane—who, with Garland, was a member of the Miles Davis group at the time—had found his direction at this point, and he was beginning to be regarded as the Pied Piper by just about every new saxophonist; Donald Byrd, who had been critically acclaimed two years earlier while a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, sparkles with the fire of Dizzy Gillespie and the cool of Miles; Red Garland, who had been called "a cocktail pianist" by a tin-eared critic, displays his characteristic locked-hands chord style as he gets alternately tinkly and funky; and George Joyner and Art Taylor provide excellent rhythmic support throughout. It's good to see Fantasy bringing back such Prestige sides as these. May they inspire the unplugging of at least a few of those amplified tambourines the air seems to be so full of right now.

Chris Albertson

RED GARLAND QUINTET: *Jazz Junction*. Red Garland (piano); Donald Byrd (trumpet); John Coltrane (tenor saxophone); George Joyner (bass); Arthur Taylor (drums). *Woody'n You; Birk's Works; Hallelujah; Our Delight; Soul Junction; I've Got It Bad and That Ain't Good; All Morning Long; They Can't Take That Away from Me.* PRESTIGE Ⓜ PR 24023 two discs \$6.98, ⓑ M 82423DP \$6.98, © M 52423DP \$6.98.



“If music be the food of love, play on.”

TWELFTH NIGHT, Act I, Scene i, Line 1

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POPULAR DISCS AND TAPES

Reviewed by CHRIS ALBERTSON • NOEL COPPAGE • PAUL KRESH • PETER REILLY • JOEL VANCE

CHARLES AZNAVOUR: *I Have Lived.* Charles Aznavour (vocals); instrumental accompaniment. *The Old Fashioned Way; No, I Could Never Forget; I Have Lived; The Happy Days; To Die of Love;* and five others. MGM SE 4875 \$5.98.

Performance: **Flat champagne**
Recording: **Over-engineered**

You might as well cast Dolly Parton and Johnny Cash in an English-language country-music version of Debussy's *Pelléas and Mélisande* as expect Charles Aznavour to make hearts throb when he sings in English the way he does when he sings in his native tongue. Like the best French *vin du pays*, Aznavour does not travel well. In his new record, packaged in Hollywood by MGM, he seems to be bidding for a title as some sort of imported Rod McKuen, but the ersatz Parisian product he delivers on this occasion only does disservice to his own reputation as Aznavour. Now, this gentleman's stock-in-trade always has been regret over lost loves, and when he sighs in his native tongue over the memories of lovely ladies gone from his life he can bring out a bit of sympathy from the soul of the most callous listener. But it doesn't work in English ("Let's dreenk to yoor laif an' yoor marraij . . . at toms ay fill lunnly . . . avry sizzun for os was a sizzun for lawv"), and the echo his misguided engineers have added spoils even the husky, intimate vocal quality that is all he carries over with him from one language to the other. The thing is, all those clichés about

"lunliness" and "sodness" and the desolation of "defanceless" lovers just somehow sound better in French, especially if you're not quite sure of the words. Here the naked poverty of stupid lyrics and second-rate tunes is obvious



JEFF BECK
One of the Big Brothers of rock guitar

to the point of embarrassment. *To Die of Love* may be a satisfactory translation of *Mourir d'Aimer*, but it will never have the same effect on the human pulse as when Aznavour sings it in his own sweet tongue. P.K.

BECK, BOGERT AND APPICE: Jeff Beck (guitar, vocals), Tim Bogert (bass, vocals); Carmine Appice (drums, vocals). *Black Cat Moan; Lady; Oh To Love You; Superstition; Sweet Sweet Surrender;* and four others. Epic KE 32140 \$5.98, Ⓜ EA 32140 \$6.98, Ⓒ ET 32140 \$6.98.

Performance: **Proficient**
Recording: **Good**

Jeff Beck is one of the Big Brothers of rock guitar, along with Clapton, Hendrix, and a few others—and he knows it. But where Hendrix flailed and sometimes swung blindly

through sheer exuberance, and Clapton imposed self-discipline, Beck just hams it up. Of course, when he takes off his Deputy God badge he really is very good, as in his guest performance of *Lookin' for Another Pure Love* on Stevie Wonder's "Talking Book" album—where he managed to restrain his usually unrestrained ego.

Beck hardly restrains himself on this album, but there *is* more silver than dross here. For one thing, he returns the compliment to Wonder by recording Wonder's tune *Superstition*—which brings up a good question: why don't more rockers record other people's tunes? It would give everybody a chance to hear how good they can be as interpreters rather than fast-buck artists. It is too easy for rockers (major or minor) to whip up ten mediocre tunes and cover up their deficiencies with technical fireworks or hambone vocals. Let them lay it on the line by recording a recognized tune of worth written by someone else. Beck does well in such a situation. Strip him of the excess ego, put him in a position where he can't get away with vaudevillian bluster, and he reaffirms his reputation and talent.

At any rate, on this album Beck is given more than loyal support by Tim Bogert (bass) and Carmine Appice (drums), the two most valuable and reasonable members of that most overblown of rock groups, Vanilla Fudge, who later went on to Cactus. Appice is a fluent drummer, and Bogert is probably the best musician of the trio—if you define "musician" as one who plays his part well and hasn't slipped the spotlight man an extra twenty bucks. Apropos nothing in particular, I had the pleasure of meeting Bogert some years ago. Over a few beers he told me of the time when, as an apprentice technician for NBC, he accidentally pulled the big plug and canceled all TV programming on the East Coast for nearly an hour. Were it only for that, I would love him. J. V.

BLUE OYSTER CULT: *Tyranny and Mutation.* Blue Oyster Cult (vocals and instrumentals). *The Red and the Black; O.D.'d on Life Itself; Hot Rails to Hell; 7 Screaming Diz-Busters; Baby Ice Dog; Wings Wetted Down;* and three others. Columbia KC 32017
(Continued on page 83)

Explanation of symbols:

- Ⓜ = reel-to-reel stereo tape
- Ⓢ = eight-track stereo cartridge
- Ⓒ = stereo cassette
- Ⓛ = quadraphonic disc
- Ⓜ = reel-to-reel quadraphonic tape
- Ⓢ = eight-track quadraphonic tape
- Ⓒ = quadraphonic cassette

Monophonic recordings are indicated by the symbol Ⓜ

The first listing is the one reviewed; other formats, if available, follow it.

THE first thing most people noticed about modern British string-band music was the perfect pair of legs belonging to one Jacqui McShee of the Pentangle.

And now that I've got your attention in just about the same way the Pentangle did, let's dance sideways a bit and avoid speculating on how much Fairport Convention or someone indirectly owes the miniskirt. The thing the Pentangle—and, in its way, the Incredible String Band—labored to perfect has become a healthy, lively sub-genre of pop music. The distinctively British way of spiking folk or folk-like music with rock instruments and techniques has resulted in several fine albums by such groups as Fairport, the Incredibles, Steeleye Span, Lindisfarne, String Driven Thing, Strawbs, and Fotheringay, and by such individuals as Bert Jansch, Sandy Denny, Richard Thomp-

creative energy on arranging, not writing. Maddy Prior is the third great lady of this kind of music. Her vocals don't have the textural stylishness of Jacqui McShee's or the warmth and richness of Sandy Denny's, but Maddy sings with sterling clarity and hits tremendous high notes. Purity, not embellishment, is what this music wants from girl singers. From boy singers, it seems to opt for nasality and a working-class accent. This princess-commoner contrast is (no doubt unconsciously) part of the whole scheme. It surfaces in a different guise as the contrast between the quiet dignity of a Childe ballad and the screaming cultural politics of an electric guitar; it is, to get down to it, the very protoplasm of the contrast between folk and rock. Total purity would equal *no* style, of course, and Maddy's style comes from her quest for purity—

as accents (the *only* way he played for Fotheringay); these are distinctive, while a Donahue lead break is just another electric guitar lead break. In Lucas, however, the band has added a dependable songwriter and a sturdy, rich, baritone solo voice. The latter could be especially valuable as the Convention comes to order yet again.

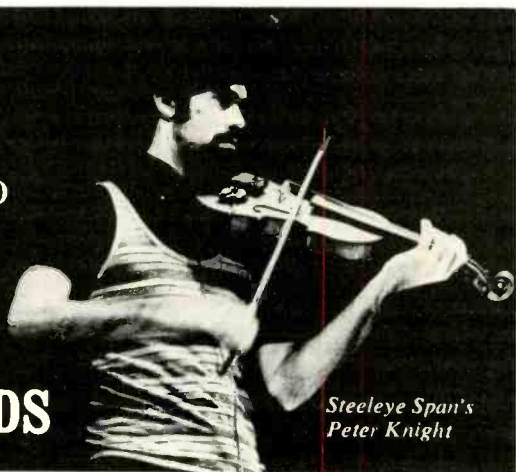
Fairport seems at last agreed on a meaty role for original material: senior member David Swarbrick, a fiddler and therefore a suspected traditionalist, threatens to be a prolific writer. The band still responds to the folk pull, though, and tries to keep its sound open and predominantly acoustic.

Strawbs feels the pull from that side less than ever, and in "Bursting at the Seams" has all but embraced a certain kind of British big-melody/big-production rock. Lead singer and guitarist Dave Cousins (who sounds like a rock singer, except that he also sounds something like Tom Rapp) has led this turn-about, even though he is the only remaining member of the original bluegrass-purist trio that started recording in 1968 under the name of the Strawberry Hill Boys. "Bursting" has the lyricism befitting such a background, however—and although the arrangements are infinitely more conventional than Steeleye Span's, they still involve countless tricky maneuvers that would dumfound your Grand Funks and your Alice Coopers. It is quite a melodic album, not very deep but consistently pleasing. I like *Lay Down* (which seems to be all chorus) best of the songs. A pub rocker called *Part of the Union* kicked up a Labour-Conservative fuss in Britain, but it's not much of a song.

Strawbs has, in any case, met and answered the question that always bazookas such a band: where does all this lead? The Incredible String Band once proved to my satisfaction that it can lead to no definite place and still be *somewhere*. The Incredibles always did a lot of writing, most of it obscure, and have consistently made their arrangements so otherworldly that the path back to their folk roots is discernible only after a dry, academic examination of the various parts of their music. They make use of folk guitar, mandolin, and fiddle techniques, and of phrases and intervals familiar to British folk songs, but they have surely been the most frenetically experimental band to survive the last six or seven years.

Nevertheless, "No Ruinous Feud" seems to indicate that the Incredibles are trying to move their own vaguely planted anchor. The album trots out everything from a Dolly Parton country song to a Caribbean number tapping the talents of a rigidly disciplined reggae group called Greyhound—and the original lyrics are more about concrete people, places, and things and less about farfetched theological vagaries. This may sound better in print, but it doesn't on the record. Most of Robin Williamson's songs here sound as if he's making up the melody as he goes along, and he makes only a tired pass or two at arousing the wit that used to spank his music into odd shapes and contortions. Malcolm LeMaistre's *At the Lighthouse Dance* is gloriously arranged, and his *Down Before Cathy* is a bona fide Incredibles song, worthy of any of their eras. But this album, like their last two or three, pulls too many punches trying to ap-

Noel Coppage cocks an ear to THOSE INCREDIBLE BRITISH STRING BANDS



Steeleye Span's
Peter Knight

son, and Ian Matthews, who are or were members of such bands.

The newest offerings from four fairly reliable practitioners—Fairport, the Incredibles, Steeleye, and Strawbs—taken collectively, help illuminate the problems of growth, change, and personality cleavage that lurk in this kind of music. "Parcel of Rogues" is the second excellent album in a row by Steeleye Span for Chrysalis, easily the standout among the four new ones, and the only one not recorded during some sort of shake-up. "Rosie" (A&M) finds Fairport adjusting to two new members, American electric guitarist Jerry Donahue and Australian singer-songwriter-guitarist Trevor Lucas, both members of Sandy Denny's short-lived but lovely Fotheringay (Sandy, to complete the cycle, was a founding member of Fairport). "No Ruinous Feud" (Reprise) *seems* to be the Incredibles' way of trying to make their music more "accessible," and also finds them adjusting to a new member, Gerard Dott, who plays reeds and keyboards and contrives crazy but effective sax arrangements. And "Bursting at the Seams" (A&M) is, for the Strawbs, a definite step toward mainstream rock.

Steeleye is the inventive folk-rock group at the moment, and "Rogues" is crammed with arrangements so wildly spontaneous and yet so sympathetic they make a good case for adding electricity to *any* song. Steeleye also is the only band of the four still adhering to two key precepts of the Pentangle formula: have a clear-voiced girl singer lend class to your vocals, and spend your

that and a faintly echoey, humid quality I call "mountain-woman singing." "Rogues," brilliantly produced, has some tastefully added studio echo. If Maddy, the mandolin, and the work of a hustling engineer don't grab you in the opening *One Misty, Moisty Morning*, this just may not be your kind of music.

But stick around; there are qualifiers for that, too. When they feel the pull of the folk on one side and the rock on the other, folk-rock bands (even without introducing their own complicating factors, such as the Incredibles' metaphysics) can be pretty unpredictable. Fairport Convention has felt the pull as much as anyone, and has seen valued members go flying off in both directions. Sandy Denny, Denny Thompson, Richard Thompson, Simon Nicol, Ian Matthews... Fairport has lost enough talent to ruin a middle-sized nation, and yet it survives as a pretty good band. But "Rosie," I think, has too many transition scars to be considered one of Fairport's better albums. Apparently trying to ease the listener into the new Donahue-Lucas sound (Lucas is already serving as producer), the album starts with Sandy Denny's unmistakable voice singing guest-shot harmony in the first, title song. It's fine—even if it does sound just like Fotheringay—but effectively it is trickery, for the remainder is not like that at all. The remainder of the album isn't like any *one* thing, in fact, as nobody has given any clear instructions to Donahue's electric guitar. His best work, it seems to me, is in stringy chords in introductions and

peal to a broader, presumably dumber audience. One of the great things about this band, back in the days of *Job's Tears* and such, was the way their wit and intelligence compelled them to point out their own (and, by implication, our) foolish seriousness. For example, you'd be listening to a pleasant, folk-song-rewrite melody and suddenly it would turn back on itself, knock out its own pins, and make one of its own banal (but, you had thought in passing, acceptable) passages the subject of deft ridicule—all the while remaining considerably subtler than, say, Victor Borge's clumsy use of caricature to deflate (as he thought) Mozart. That doesn't seem to happen much nowadays—but I can't believe the Incredibles' muse has saddled up her broom. When they again decide to settle for a small, alert audience, they'll again be free to make the unruly, unearthly music they make best. Only close friends, after all, will tolerate a wild ride on a fragile whim, and that's the kind of exercise the Incredibles need.

RANDOM disappointments aside, it remains true that the musicianship in all four albums is far better than average—and this is usually so in British string-band music. Perhaps that's related to the fact that the British way of merging folk and rock is simple and direct: they just bang them together. The American idea of buffering the collision with some third element such as the plasticized schmalz that once did time in Tin Pan Alley is not even considered. In practicing the British method, the musicians *have* to keep their wits about them, else the disparity between the elements of their music would take over and blow the whole business apart.

STEELEYE SPAN: *Parcel of Rogues*. Steeleye Span (vocals and instrumentals). *One Misty, Moisty Morning*; *Alison Gross*; *The Bold Poachers*; *The Ups and Downs*; *Robbery with Violins*; *The Wee Wee Man*; *The Weaver and the Factory Maid*; *Rogues in a Nation*; *Cam Ye O'er frae France*; *Hares on the Mountain*. CHRYSALIS CHR 1046 \$5.98.

FAIRPORT CONVENTION: *Rosie*. Fairport Convention (vocals and instrumentals); Sandy Denny (vocals); Ralph McTell (guitar); other musicians. *Rosie*; *Mathew, Mark, Luke & John*; *Knights of the Road*; *Peggy's Pub*; *The Plainsman*; *Hungarian Rhapsody*; *My Girl*; *Me with You*; *The Hens March*; *The Four-Poster Bed*; *Furs & Feathers*. A&M SP 4386 \$5.98.

STRAWBS: *Bursting at the Seams*. Strawbs (vocals and instrumentals). *Flying*; *Lady Fuschia*; *Stormy Down*; *Down by the Sea*; *The River*; *Part of the Union*; *Tears and Pavan*; *The Winter and the Summer*; *Lay Down*; *Thank You*. A&M SP 4383 \$5.98.

INCREDIBLE STRING BAND: *No Ruinous Feud*. Incredible String Band (vocals and instrumentals); various other musicians. *Explorer*; *Down Before Cathay*; *Saturday Maybe*; *Jigs*; *Old Buccaneer*; *At the Light-house Dance*; *Second Fiddle*; *Circus Girl*; *Turquoise Blue*; *My Blue Tears*; *Weather the Storm*; *Little Girl*. REPRISE MS 2139 \$5.98.

\$5.98. © CA 32017 \$6.98. © CT 32017 \$6.98.

Performance: **Okay**
Recording: **Very good**

There is nothing to distinguish Blue Öyster Cult from a hundred other groups you can hear in dance joints and local concerts. Taking into consideration that the general level of musicianship in rock has risen greatly over the last five years, it is fair to say of this band that their drummer is fast and accurate, that their guitarist is fluent if hackneyed in his ideas, and that the vocalist affects the standard "mulatto" voice now used by many white singers.

Their material is blowsy and meandering, filled with what are no doubt "deep" images that are open to multiple interpretations—it is the old college poet syndrome of the mid-Forties and early Fifties, when obscurity in symbolism was given serious and even reverent attention by college students, professors, and those enterprising fellows who concocted the New Criticism. But if we are going to have blowsy and meandering "poetic" rock lyrics, why not call in Jack Bruce?

The "Cult" part of the band's name is related to the current goings-on among what has been described as the "rock intelligentsia." There ain't no such animal. There is a clique in New York composed of professional journalists and sometime record producers who imagine themselves to be a kind of Algonquin Round Table. They have access to some rock publications and are not shy about calling on their friends and fellow journalists to write "hype" reviews of the clique's current darlings. Hence the flood of critical hosannas that greeted the first Blue Öyster Cult album. This clique tried the same thing with the Flamin' Groovies, a fine band which the clique ruined, and an abysmally amateur group called Hackamore Brick, now mercifully returned to the concrete basketball courts of Brooklyn.

Blue Öyster Cult, whatever their musical merits (and they are far from overwhelming), is a joke perpetrated by this clique: a joke on the group itself, a joke on the music industry, and a joke on the public. But it's not funny.

J.V.

DAVID BOWIE: *Alladin Sane*. David Bowie (vocals and guitar); Mick Ronson (guitars); Trevor Bolder (bass); Woody Woodmansey (drums); Mike Garson (piano); other musicians. *Watch That Man*; *Alladin Sane (1913-1938-197?)*; *Drive-In Saturday*; *Panic in Detroit*; *Cracked Actor*; *Time*; *The Prettiest Star*; *Let's Spend the Night Together*; *The Jean Genie*; *Lady Grinning Soul*. RCA LSP 4852 \$5.98. © P8S 2134 \$6.98. © PK 2134 \$6.98.

Performance: **As usual**
Recording: **Superb**

David Bowie talks a lot about being a Seventies artist, which is ridiculous. If anything, he represents the end of something, not the beginning; I doubt that there is more of a Sixties artist now before the public. (Do you think it was an accident that when he finally got a hit single—*Space Oddity*—it was with a song that was recorded in, and reeks of, 1968?) Of course, the fact that he feels obliged to make such statements is probably the best indication of how artificial his work actually is: when a real Seventies artist finally arrives, he or she will hardly need to tell us. Bowie has also remarked on several occasions that he

isn't really a rock-and-roller, the implication being that he is somehow *above* all that, and the calculated cynicism of this kind of talk and of almost every move he's made in his quest for rock-and-roll stardom is reflected throughout "Alladin Sane." Perhaps cynicism is too polite a word, and what I really mean is dishonesty ("The Rolling Stones," David announced last year, "are through," and yet the album is loaded with references to the Stones, both musical and lyrical—Jagger's name is bandied about, and there's even a cover of one of their best songs).

Some specifics: as might be expected, the album is superbly produced, and the band sounds better than ever; Mick Ronson may be the most faceless of the new guitar idols, but he knows all the tricks, and David himself seems to be trying very hard not to sound like a night club singer, which is a real plus. But his songs continue in the same vein as "Ziggy Stardust," which means that while some of them rock out quite nicely, like *Watch That Man*, more often they're melodically unmemorable and filled with Bowie's characteristic brand of meaningless pseudo-poetics, the same kind of wretched excess we endured from so many Dylan imitators in the Sixties. To be fair, there is one conspicuous exception: *Cracked Actor* is a simple, effective tale of the decay of a faded Hollywood star, and the music is stark and compelling. It's also the shortest song on the album, which may be significant.

Dave Marsh has suggested that what Bowie lacks most of all is innocence. Well, that's true, certainly, but far more crucial, I think, is that he lacks *passion*. It's not surprising, considering that he has seriously tried to convince us that he's not even *human*, but passion is indeed in short supply on "Alladin Sane"—and if you doubt it, check out his possibly parodistic mangling of *Let's Spend the Night Together*. For that matter, I've already heard two local teenage bands performing his *Suffragette City* with more real feeling than David has displayed in his entire career.

This album, on almost every level, is a classic shuck, a hollow, depressing exercise that has annoyed me more than anything since Cream's "Wheels of Fire." After David's last record, which closed with *Rock and Roll Suicide*, I was tempted to suggest that he stop making promises he wasn't prepared to keep. This time he's saved me the trouble.

Steve Simels

JOHNNY CASH: *Any Old Wind That Blows*. Johnny Cash (vocals); instrumental accompaniment. *Any Old Wind That Blows*; *Kentucky Straight*; *The Loving Gift*; *The Good Earth*; *Best Friend*; and six others. COLUMBIA KC 32091 \$5.98. © CT 32091 \$6.98. © CA 32091 \$6.98.

Performance: **Corn for the crib**
Recording: **Very good**

Mr. Cash apparently is determined to sustain his dubious reputation as the John Wayne of song. The title song on this disc is a ballad about a "restless woman" whose ambition in life seems to be to join all those lonely men who have abandoned their women and are slogging across the West on the road to Phoenix. "She'll go sailin' off on any old wind that blows," Mr. Cash confides, as he fills in the portrait of a feckless lady who will come to no good—unless she makes it to the charts before she runs out of bus fare. He then does an about-face, describing his wife as a

Kentucky Straight, which is presumably the highest praise a member of the Cash family can bestow on a female of reliable habits. The air then grows increasingly thick with gush, as Mr. Cash and June Carter Cash join in handing out the country corn with *The Loving Gift* ("You gave me a blanket/To keep me from the cold"), *The Good Earth* (down-home philosophy for farmers), and *Best Friend*, sung for some reason to the tune of *Chim Chim Cheree*—are our songwriters running out of tunes? Then there's one about the bitterness of job retirement, complete with clichés about the "little old gold watch" and the oppressive foreman who's finally going to get *his*. Finally, as seems to be the fashion on the commercial side of the folk-singing country street these days, Mr. Cash gets down on his metaphorical knees in *Welcome Back Jesus* and the whole thing turns into a revival meeting. I haven't even mentioned *The Ballad of Annie Palmer*, the terror of Jamaica. Maybe I'd better not.

The Dolbyized cassette is practically indistinguishable from the disc in quality. P.K.

JIM CROCE: *Life and Times*. Jim Croce (vocals, guitar); Maury Meuhleisen (guitar); Tommy West (piano); Joe Macho (bass); Gary Chester (drums); other musicians. *One Less Set of Footsteps; Roller Derby Queen; Dreamin' Again; Alabama Rain; A Good Time Man like Me*; and five others. ABC X 769 \$5.98, © M 8022 769 \$6.98, © M 5022 769 \$6.98.

Performance: **Variable**
Recording: **Very good**

If you can accept the mechanizations that go along with Jim Croce's anti-glamour image and his concomitant self-appointment as laureate to the greasers, you'll find he's improving as a songwriter, at least in technical terms, and is once again fronting an excellent, open-but-not-loose acoustic band. There is something hard in his voice, and his lyrics are neurotically self-centered taken as a crop, but if you can listen abstractly, perceiving it all as sounds, it's well worth listening to. Croce seems here to have wriggled out from under the crushing over-influence of certain elevated troubadours of the day—and regardless of what *real* greasers think of him he has developed an excellent ear for the lilt and cadences of beer-joint talk. That he can find a use for this in fashioning *ballads* (and not dogs but baubles of some prettiness, like *Next Time, This Time*) as well as the obligatory malarkey about bar-room hotshots who finally got theirs is, you've got to admit, a sign of some versatility. It's an OK album, and the question of who Jim Croce really is can wait. It doesn't exactly burn, anyway. N.C.

DR. JOHN: *In the Right Place*. Dr. John (vocals); instrumental accompaniment. *Right Place Wrong Time; Same Old Same Old; Just the Same; Qualified; Traveling Mood; Shoo Fly Marches On; Life*; and four others. Atco SD 7018 \$5.98, © 8T 7018 \$6.98, © CS 7018 \$6.98.

Performance: **Very good**
Recording: **Superior**

New Orleans music is so rich in all its forms that a musician can flourish within it for years, altering his style slightly from time to time, as a swimmer might try different strokes in a king-size pool. Dr. John is a valuable zany; his last album, "Gumbo," made me ecstatic, and his previous albums (where he concen-

trated on voodooistic *gris-gris* music) fascinated me. On "In the Right Place" he is trying straighter, white funk material, the same kind of move that Captain Beefheart made with his "Clear Spot" album.

His material (almost all the tunes are his) is better than average, and it is delivered in the familiar grating voice by means of which his musical and personal experience comes through clearly. He is aided by his fellow New Orleansian, the remarkable pianist-composer-arranger Allen Toussaint, whose arrangements are witty, tasty, and colorful—Toussaint's tune *Life* is by far the best here.

I always find Dr. John interesting, but this is the first time he has not been totally satisfying. He is good here, very, very good, and the album shakes me up a mite, but it don't kill me none. Perhaps this is his "in-between" album, before his next trick. But even when he takes a breather, he breathes heavy. J.V.



FANNY
Gusto and professionalism

FANNY: *Mothers Pride*. Fanny (vocals and instrumentals). *Solid Gold; Is It Really You?; All Mine; Summer Song; Polecat Blues; Beside Myself; Regular Guy; I Need You Need Me; Feelings; I'm Satisfied*; and three others. REPRIS MS 2137 \$5.98.

Performance: **Convincing**
Recording: **Good**

Fanny is a solid band, each member of the quartet filling her role with gusto and professionalism. I am particularly attracted to Nicky Barclay's songs; her descriptions of bewildered, feckless, self-defeating lovers exchanging tentative endearments and passing the whips to each other are reminiscent of Dorothy Parker.

June Millington has contributed the delightful *Polecat Blues* ("Bitch, bitch, bitch! . . .") to the album, and drummer Alice de Buhr takes a vocal on *Solid Gold* that sounds like a ghastly mistake until it is revealed towards the end that it is *meant* to be a ghastly mistake. There is something glorious about that note she can't hit for beans. The cool, calm, calculated—and calculating—voice of Jean Millington is heard to advantage on some of the Barclay tunes.

The only thing occasionally annoying about the album is the hippy-dippy boy-genius engineering and production by Todd Rundgren—when it gets out of hand. But in general he serves the ladies well. J.V.

J. GEILS BAND: *Bloodshot* (see Best of the Month, page 77)

STEVE GOODMAN: *Somebody Else's Troubles*. Steve Goodman (vocals, guitar); Steve Burgh (guitar); Hugh McDonald (bass); Steve Mosley (drums); David Bromberg (mandolin, dobro); other musicians. *The Dutchman; Six Hours Ahead of the Sun; Song for David; Chicken Cordon Bleus; Somebody Else's Troubles; The Loving of the Game*; and five others. BUDDAH BDS 5121 \$5.98.

Performance: **Disappointing**
Recording: **Very good**

Vocally, Steve Goodman is about equidistant from sounding like a genuine song stylist, as we used to call them (check *The Dutchman*), and sounding totally ridiculous (*The Ballad of Penny Evans*). The jury, I suspect, will remain out on that one for a while. There is a rattly, fresh but suspect quality about his voice, and it could go either way. But it is his writing that has been hurriedly and resolutely toasted and it is his writing that is ultimately disappointing here. There's a teasing quality in songs such as *Chicken Cordon Bleus* (which quickly sets up a funny premise—old man finally gets fed up with old lady's evangelical vegetarianism—and then goes on and never gets funny) and *Somebody Else's Troubles* (with Bob Dylan somewhere in the background vocals; it has a good theme—Everyman's essential selfishness—but it doesn't have nearly the strength of imagery to illuminate that theme and make it vivid). Only *The Lincoln Park Pirates* is as good as or better than its implied advertisements for itself, being a truly inspired sea-chantey approach to reporting on some hearty car thieves. Interesting problem this kid has—but note also his interesting mind and quantity of apparent talent. This album, you can listen to the problem; maybe next album you can listen to the solution. N.C.

AL GREEN: *Green Is Blues*. Al Green (vocals); orchestra. *One Woman; Talk to Me; Get Back; The Letter; My Girl*; and six others. Hi SHL 32055 \$5.98, © M92055 \$6.98, © M 52655 \$6.98.

Performance: **More restrained**
Recording: **Good**

Mr. Sound and Fury has quieted down considerably since last heard from. He's now a rhythm-and-powder-blues act. However, he still emits an occasional perspiring, agonized yowl, although at a lower decibel range, and he still maintains an "ooohhee-baayaybee" semi-orgasmic approach to almost every song. The best track here is *One Woman*, a soap opera about run-away love, in which he generates some real emotion. The rest is in his familiar style, now subdued, of sandblasting every lyric in sight and musically conveying profound despair about life in general. P.R.

GUESS WHO: *Artificial Paradise*. Guess Who (vocals and instrumentals). *Bye Bye Babe; Samantha's Living Room; Rock and Roller Steam; Follow Your Daughter Home; Hamba Gahle-Usalang Gahle*; and five others. RCA LSP 4830 \$5.98, © P8S 2114 \$6.95, © PK 2114 \$6.95, □ PQ8 2114 \$7.95.

Performance: **Improving**
Recording: **Very good**

The Guess Who have been changing lately. Progress is difficult to follow because they

were never very secure in one place to begin with, but they have been chipping away to make the edge a little rougher. They've also enlarged their tendency—like Led Zeppelin's—to do their best and their worst stuff in the same song. But this is a culminating album, of some sort. The packaging, a caricature of those "You may have already won!" junk mailers, has its childish lapses but is funny enough to make the disc an obvious choice over the cassette (in addition to which the disc sounds noticeably better). The songs encompass a wide variety of styles—and they're not just nods at different styles that the group has used since the "Wheatfield Soul" days, but real exercises. They include, even, a sort of calypso, *Follow Your Daughter Home*, which is one of two or three places here that may mark the first time the group ever looked upon rhythm as something other than a ponderous, suffocating burden. The album does not completely affirm the Guess Who's rockability, though, nor does it mark the start of any real imagination in the handling of the lead instruments. It just says again that the vocals are fine, and that the songwriting's getting better. There have been times in the musical past when we've had to make do with much less.

N.C.

ARTIE KAPLAN: *Confessions of a Male Chauvinist Pig*. Artie Kaplan (vocals); horns, strings, and voices. Chris Dedrick cond. *Confessions of a Male Chauvinist Pig*; *Bensonhurst Blues*; *Harmony*; and four others. HOP! VHS 901 \$5.98.

Performance: **Abrasive**
Recording: **Better than deserved**

Artie Kaplan is a self-described "male chauvinist pig" who, at thirty-seven, is not only male and a chauvinist but also, as is to be expected from self-styled pigs, grunts a lot. Mr. Kaplan sings irritating songs in an irritating voice. He writes them himself, and he croaks them out in a white Brooklyn version of what Louis Armstrong might have sounded like if he hadn't had all that charm and all that talent. The title song is about the horrors of conventional marriage to a girl who "wanted marriage, a home and a baby carriage." I gather that Mr. Kaplan didn't care for the marriage at all. Another, called *Bensonhurst Blues*, is a jeering jibe at some Jewish friend trying quietly to assimilate in Manhattan, hold down a difficult executive job, and forget his parochial past. Kaplan will have none of this. "Your grandmother's accent still embarrasses you," he screams, and winds up intoning Chassidic chants, apparently under the poor guy's window, to make him uncomfortable. Then there's *The American Dream*, in which Mr. Kaplan explicitly rejects the nine-to-five strait-jacket life in a steady job and whines, "There must be a place for me/Just to be what I want to be/Is this just a fantasy?" Since I don't recall offering Mr. Kaplan a job, or inviting him, for that matter, to stand around singing Chassidic chants under my window, or even telling him to get married in the first place, I really don't know what he wants from you and me. But if you like to be nagged in tired rhymes to indifferent tunes, I commend you to Kaplan. He certainly has good accompanists in Arnie Lawrence (alto sax), Burt Collins (trumpet), Richard Greene (electric violin), and Bobby Mann and Vinnie Bell (guitars). I hope he never turns on them the way he turned on me. I mean, I don't even know the man.

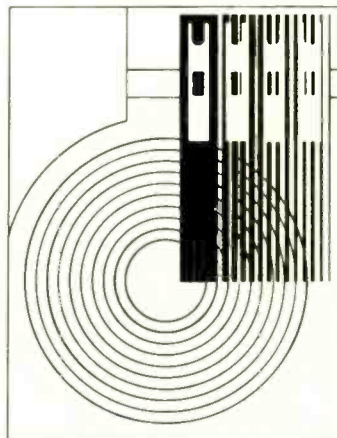
P.K.

ELLEN McILWAINE: *We the People*. Ellen McIlwaine (vocals, guitar); various other musicians. *Ain't No Two Ways to It*; *All to You*; *Sliding*; *Never Tell Your Mother She's Out of Tune*; *I Don't Want to Play*; and five others. POLYDOR PD 5044 \$4.98.

Performance: **Flashy**
Recording: **Very good**

Well, it's all exhibitionism, isn't it?—all performing, all writing, all painting, and so forth. But some performances exaggerate the "Wow, look at me" aspect of it and an uneasiness settles on the throng. I think that happens here; Ellen McIlwaine's mastery of vocal technique is flaunted just a bit, and a suspicion builds that something is happening to erode taste. I can't imagine, for example, why

these particular songs would be recorded all at once except as showcases for vocal excellence. A singer with the extraordinary control and monolithic authority that Ellen has should, in my judgment, sing songs that need to be heard, not smug little exercises in difficulty. Doing the old hymn *Farther Along* without accompaniment is part of the same conceit, although on another album it might work well. The place where I think all this unnecessary muscle-flexing is dropped for the moment is in *I Don't Want to Play*, a sort of charmingly demented country satire for which Ellen reels into an aching falsetto on the chorus and mumbles a fine Fed Up Mama Mumble between the lines. She does plenty for the song that a lesser vocalist could not do, but the point is that the song deserves it, and it



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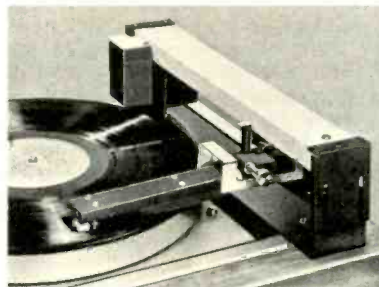
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does something for her and us. Leave us not forget us. One of us—me—is disappointed but not discouraged by this album. N.C.

JOHN MAYALL: *Down the Line*. John Mayall (vocals, guitar, harmonica, organ, piano, harmonium); instrumental and vocal accompaniment. *Broken Wings*; *I Started Walking*; *Someday After Awhile*; *Oh Pretty Woman*; *Stormy Monday Blues*; *Man of Stone*; *First Time Alone*; *Crawling Up a Hill*; *When I'm Gone*; *Crocodile Walk*; and thirteen others. LONDON BP 618/9 two discs \$7.98, © L 72198 \$7.95, © L 57198 \$7.95.

Performance: **Conscientious**
Recording: **Variable**

John Mayall is one of the most conscientious of white blues singers. He is absolutely devoted to the form, emotionally and intellectually; he has gone out of his way many times to enhance or call attention to the reputations and contributions of dead or ignored bluesmen such as J. B. Lenoir. He has been working hard at doing the blues for more than ten years; the personnel of the various bands and combos he has captained have included, among others, Eric Clapton and Mick Taylor.

Unfortunately, however, this two-record set, a semi-reissue of material he recorded for London, demonstrates what his current recordings on Polydor do: he just isn't that good. Bad by no means, but not really good; popular by all means, but not really exciting. An urgently concerned evangelist for the recognition of the blues, Mayall's biggest fault is that in everything he does you can hear him working at it. He works too hard. He is a dynamic drudge.

The first disc of the set is reissued material. Two tracks—*Stormy Monday Blues* and *Hideaway*—feature Eric Clapton playing blazing, bravura solos. Mick Taylor, pre-Rolling Stones, is heard on several tracks but he does nothing outstanding. Mayall himself roams through a variety of *attempts* at the blues; he seems to have tried everything, and listening to this disc is rather like reading a list of the Howard Johnson ice cream flavors.

The second disc of the set, previously unreleased in the United States, was recorded live at a London club in 1964. Mayall's band at this time, based on the recorded evidence, was little more than a typical club combo; it reminds me of the "Live at the Peppermint Lounge" album by Joey Dee and the Starliners of the same period, when the twist was all the rage here. It also reminds me of an English album I heard in 1960, a club recording by Ken Collyer, the English Dixieland king of the time; like Mayall's vocals and instrumental work, Collyer's trumpet was technically accurate but emotionally lacking.

Judging from his record sales and the number of people who turn out for his concerts, Mayall is doing fine. His fans will doubtless be interested in this album. I am not. J.V.

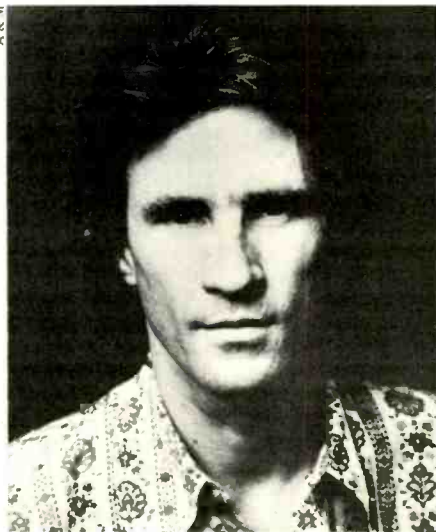
BILL MEDLEY: *Smile*. Bill Medley (vocals); orchestra. *Hello Rock n' Roll*; *Oh Me, Oh My*; *It's Not Easy*; *Smile*; *The Greatest Performance of My Life*; and five others. A&M SP 3517 \$5.98.

Performance: **Excellent, in a way**
Recording: **Very good**

Despite all the harsh edges, Bill Medley is a very romantic singer. He has a worn, observant style with lyrics, and the voice sounds

like that of experience. The semi-Motown production job is a great plus—"semi," since Medley is white and it ain't quite the same Granola as when one who has truly had it gets it on. But there is a lot of real and deep feeling here. Best is *The Greatest Performance of My Life*, which for some arcane reason reminded me of Bogart telling Lupino that she "better beat it, kid, before the coppers get here" in all those old Warner Bros. melodramas that keep showing up on TV and that seem more and more impressive As Time Goes By. If you dig the fatalistic loser-hero that those films chronicled so romantically, then you'll dig Medley. Meanwhile, back to Raymond Chandler. P.R.

LIZA MINNELLI: *The Singer*. Liza Minnelli (vocals); orchestra. *You're So Vain*; *Use Me*; *The Singer*; *Where Is the Love*; *I Believe in Music*; and six others. COLUMBIA KC 32149



BILL MEDLEY

A worn, observant style from a loser-hero

\$5.98, © CA 32149 \$6.98, © CT 32149 \$6.98.

Performance: **"Hooray for Hollywood!"**
Recording: **Tailored**

*Gosh! I'm so happy!! A new recording by Liza Minnelli!!! She's just wonderful!!! The thrill of being a star must make up for all the hard work and on behalf of all the "little people" who made it possible. I'd like to thank her for doing this album and making life so much less humdrum for us all. As you know, Liza won't sing just any old thing, and if she does, such as *You're So Vain* or *Use Me*, she sure does soup it up with Excitement!*

Actually Minnelli is about the most exciting thing to emerge on records since Dr. Joyce Brothers. That she won the Academy Award for her role as Sally Bowles in *Cabaret* is entirely fitting; it was a perfect role for a performer who communicates only by bombast, projects little beyond self-interest, and erupts continuously and unspontaneously in the kind of mindless enthusiasm that, turned outward, can be so endearing in a Martha Raye or a Lily Tomlin.

This album is another foolish expedition into ersatz Stardom. It is supposed to be "gutty" when in reality it is fusty with "deep" and "meaningful" arrangements and soulful vocals that sound as though they had been rehearsed in a Lear jet on the way to the next personal appearance.

Liza Minnelli is not a star. She is an ambitious and confabulated creation of canny show-biz management. The blatant final touch here is the cover photo: Minnelli in a trendy T-shirt adorned with—guess what?—a pin in the form of a star.

Along with Ann Margret (who did deserve her Academy nomination for *Carnal Knowledge*), poor Liza Minnelli has been trapped into being a living parody of herself. P.R.

ANNE MURRAY: *Danny's Song*. Anne Murray (vocals); Pat Riccio Jr. (piano); Skip Beckwith (bass); Andy Cree (drums); other musicians. *Killing Me Softly with His Song*; *He Thinks I Still Care*; *I'll Be Home*; *Ease Your Pain*; *One Day I Walk*; and five others. CAPITOL ST 11172 \$5.98, © 8XT 11172 \$6.98, © 4XT 11172 \$6.98.

Performance: **Good**
Recording: **Very good**

Anne Murray's latest has few flaws, but it has one flaw that bothers me so much it doesn't need any others. That one has nothing to do with the performance of the musicians. Producer Brian Ahern for some reason has elected to put all the soft songs on side one, all recorded in the studio, and all the big-beat numbers on side two, all recorded at an Ottawa concert. An album set up that way doesn't give the artist a fair chance: few listeners can take fifteen minutes of virtually the same tempo without squirming a bit. Side two is the more interesting, if I must choose, even though Barbara George's *I Know* and Gene MacLellan's *Put Your Hand in the Hand* (Gawd, am I tired of that song) are unworthy of a voice like Anne's. There's a lot of stuff going on in the instrumentals, and the backbone of each arrangement is quite striking. Bass player Skip Beckwith and pianist Pat Riccio Jr. are almost perfect sidemen here, both managing to be flashy without drawing too much attention away from the singer. The strings on side one are sweeter than I like, and the horns on side two are, well, horns. Anne's version of Scott MacKenzie's *What About Me* doesn't merely prove that she can tear up an audience with an up-tempo tune—it might send a shiver through the Northern Lights.

This is one smoooooth singer, and one frustrating record. What I'm going to do is transfer it to tape, rearranging the sequence of songs as I go. That'll probably wear out the "pause" button on my machine, but the way Ahern has done it is wearing me out. N.C.

TRACY NELSON: *Poor Man's Paradise*. Tracy Nelson (vocals, piano); Mother Earth (instrumentals); Randy Scruggs (guitar); Beau Dollar (drums); other musicians. *Whatever I Am, You Made Me*; *When I Need You Most of All*; *I Hate To Say Goodbye*; *You and Me*; *Jack's Waltz*; and four others. COLUMBIA KC 31759 \$5.98, © CA 31759 \$6.98, © CT 31759 \$6.98.

Performance: **Very good**
Recording: **Very good**

Tracy Nelson is a great favorite of musicians and critics, myself included, but here we have another album that extends the question: when is she going to make *the* Tracy Nelson album? This one is hurt some by its material and more by its backing instruments. It isn't just a case of too many horns and wah-wah pedals, although there *are* too many; mainly, it seems, the instrumentalists just aren't getting with it—with isolated exceptions such as

Randy Scruggs' excellent accompanying work in *I Just Can't Seem To Care*. The Memphis-flavored choruses, with an over-dubbed Tracy in some of them, are a little less routine, although they too drag at times. But the songs sound too much like the sort they pick out for Rita Coolidge; something that proceeds straight ahead, and has a point to make, would help. Tracy's singing, predictably, is infinitely better than anything else on the record—it's so good you listen to the album more than you want to, if you know what I mean. She may be so good that she scares producers. *Something* makes them blow it. Tracy's long overdue for a chance at something other than a salvage operation. *N.C.*

LAURA NYRO: *The First Songs*. Laura Nyro (vocals); orchestra, Herb Bernstein arr. and cond. *Stoney End*; *Buy and Sell*; *Lazy Susan*; *Billy's Blues*; *Blowing Away*; and seven others. COLUMBIA KC 31410 \$5.98, © CA 31410 \$6.98, © CT 31410 \$6.98.

Performance: **Excellent but imitative**
Recording: **Excellent**

Laura Nyro's first album, previously on Verve, has been re-released by Columbia, and it is as impressive now as it was five years ago. The big performing jump that Nyro made almost immediately after this album's release was to discard all of the Streisandisms that are so obvious here. But then Streisand in 1968 was such an enormously powerful force in pop singing that her style almost *had* to filter through, even down to a (probably) scared kid making her first record. And that basically is what is so disarming about this album: you can hear a tough-minded street kid with a truly creative imagination laying it out as it was in a series of songs that reflected, poetically but realistically, her particular world. *Buy and Sell* remains one of the best drug-culture songs ever written. *Stoney End* has deservedly become a classic, and I'd still trade such romps as *Flim Flam Man* and *California Shoeshine Boys* for any or all of Nyro's later pretentious pronouncements on Humanity's Problems. Somewhere along the way Nyro seems to have convinced herself that she-got-the-whole-world-in-her-hands and the result has been an ever-thickening haze of moral sanctimoniousness in everything she does. Undoubtedly spurred on by her cult audiences, she is, in 1973, a self-aggrandized cartoon of "involvement." Some people see Joan Baez in much the same light, but I do not agree with that.

What we all might agree on, however, is that this is one hell of an album and one that you should own, regardless of my own complete turn-off on Nyro's current downhill slide into Relevancy. *P.R.*

PAN. Pan (vocals and instrumentals). *Long Way Home*; *Lady Honey*; *The Puppet*; *Sad Rag Doll*; and six others. COLUMBIA KC 32062 \$5.98, © CA 32062 \$6.98, © CT 32062 \$6.98.

Performance: **Classy**
Recording: **Excellent**

This album is billed as "A new blend of acoustic and electric guitars with complex, soaring vocal harmonies, built on a foundation of uniquely structured songs which span a range of emotions." What one actually hears is as super-smooth and lubricating as one of those hundred-thousand-dollar TV commercials. Pan seems to be not so much a group as

a collective figment of the impoverished imagination of the music-biz equivalent of Madison Avenue; that is, Class all the way. And Class is what you get here. Everything, including the lead vocals by Keith Barbour and the backup by musicians of market-tested quality, is ninety-nine per cent pure—pure goulash. *Delinga De Mattei* is a bold-faced rip-off of the "I'd like to buy the world a Coke" commercial, and by the time the group gets to *Love Glow (Calamity Jane)*, in which the chorus echoes "calamity, calamity, calamity," the album has become funny in a surreal way.

Needless to say, it's all immaculately and sumptuously produced, very well performed, and about as memorable or involving as a visit from Josephine the plumber. *P.R.*

GRAM PARSONS: *GP*. Gram Parsons (vocals, guitar); James Burton (guitar); John Conrad (bass); Ronnie Tutt (drums); Byron Berline (fiddle); other musicians. *Still Feeling Blue*; *We'll Sweep Out the Ashes in the Morning*; *A Song for You*; *Streets of Baltimore*; *She*; *That's All It Took*; and five others. RE-PRICE MS 2123 \$5.98, © M 82123 \$6.98, © M 52123 \$6.98.

Performance: **Floundering**
Recording: **Excellent**

Remember the old *Naked City* introduction? Well, there are eight million solo albums by former group members that prove such people were better off in groups, and this has been one of them. But that's unfair. What I mean is, *pop music* would be better off with

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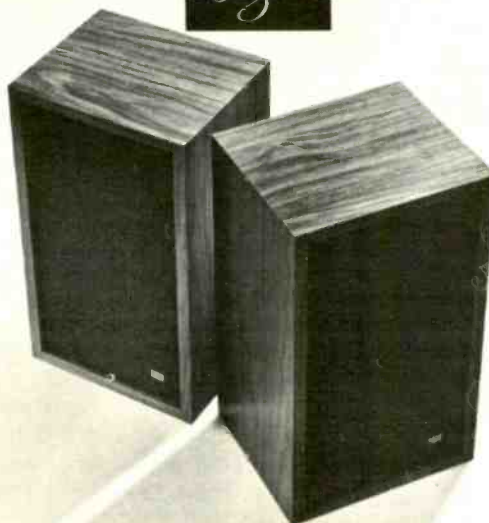
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Gram Parsons singing in the Byrds or Burritos than it is with him singing solo. He's so unsteady as a vocalist that his singing is a constant distraction. Beyond that, "GP" is one of those steel-guitar rock/steel-guitar country (the terms are just about interchangeable) albums in which several people avoid doing any real work on the arrangements because one person (here it's sometimes Al Perkins, sometimes Buddy Emmons) is willing to toil tirelessly over a pedal steel. *Still Feeling Blue*, the first song encountered, is the only spot where Parsons' new country solo style really does anything for me. Beyond that, it's a case of too many of my prejudices being badgered at the same time. *N.C.*

PINK FLOYD: *The Dark Side of the Moon.* Pink Floyd (vocals and instrumentals). *Speak to Me; Breathe; On the Run; Time; The Great Gig in the Sky; Money;* and four others. HARVEST SMAS 11163 \$4.98, 8XW 11163 \$6.98, 4XW 11163 \$6.98.

Performance: **Etoain shrdlu and all that**
Recording: **Good**

It is difficult to comment on Pink Floyd as a band playing music; generally they don't. They wallow in technology. One of their album covers showed all their equipment laid out in a doily design, but it looked like the incidental impedimenta of a panzer division.

In between the huffings and puffings (electronic) on this album (plus the cosmic giggles. Arp-synthesizer Bronx cheers, and something that sounds like a man suddenly waking up and remembering he has tied a pillowcase over his head), there are some comatose vocals. The whole thing—and this is not a knock—would make an excellent score for a horror movie (in black and white, like *Night of the Living Dead*).

I suppose I am an old fudge, but I think this group has never equaled its early single, *Arnold Layne*, which, as far as I know (mark this down), was the first rock-and-roll song about a transvestite. *J.V.*

BILL QUATEMAN. Bill Quateman (vocals, piano and guitar); orchestra. *My Music; Circles; Keep Dreaming; Only Love;* and five others. COLUMBIA KC 31761 \$5.98, 8 CA 31761 \$6.98, CT 31761 \$6.98.

Performance: **Spotty**
Recording: **Excellent**

Here's another premature one-man show by someone who should stay in the background until he gets it all together. Instrumentally Quateman is already a pro. As a songwriter he is halfway there, although it does take some effort to overlook such lines as "I'm just a pirate/With a lend lease life at sea." That's from *What Are You Looking For*, one of the several songs here that feature Quateman singing solo to his own piano accompaniment. These tracks are unmitigated disasters. Since his voice is a muffled falsetto that seems to have a range of about half an octave. When he is covered by the orchestra and his own very good instrumental work on guitar (as in *Get It Right On Out There*), he's not bad at all.

I suggest that Quateman be left on his side in a cool, dark place until he matures. *P.R.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

SEALS AND CROFTS: *Diamond Girl.* Jimmy Seals (guitar, alto sax, vocals); Dash Crofts (mandolin, guitar, vocals); Louie Shelton

(guitar); David Paich (keyboards); other musicians. *Diamond Girl; Standin' on a Mountain Top; Wisdom; Intone My Servant; Ruby Jean and Billie Lee; Jessica; Nine Houses; Dust on My Saddle; We May Never Pass This Way Again; It's Gonna Come Down.* WARNER BROS. BS 2699 \$5.98, M8 2699 \$6.98, M5 2699 \$6.98.

Performance: **Polished**
Recording: **Very good**

Radio listening can create the impression that Seals and Crofts have a narrow, restricted style, the core of it being a kind of low-keyed preachiness couched in high-noted harmonies. In fact, their work is eclectic, or extraordinarily varied, and this album is especially so. An insistent but fairly tasteful electric guitar kicks along such rockers as *Standin' on a Mountain Top* (written in 1964) and *It's Gonna Come Down (on You)*, which are



SEALS AND CROFTS
Eclectic, lyrical, and tasteful

worlds removed from the Seals sax solo also included, or the tongue-chewing cowboy song, or the ballads that are as secular and girl-chasing as anybody's ballads, or the pastel waves of uncategorizable music that are built upon Crofts' mandolin lines in such pieces as *Nine Houses*.

You're almost certain to like some of it, almost certain not to like all of it, but likely to admire, in any case, the way Seals and Crofts manage to sound like Seals and Crofts through all these changes. Myself, I like the guitar-mandolin arrangements, the lyricism, and the taste—and I grow a little weary of being talked down to, which seems necessarily a part of the religious instruction and/or moralizing they periodically lay upon us. I also find this particular album so carefully produced that it is almost sterile in some places. It seems, however, that there are several levels on which I can listen to it, paying varying degrees of attention—and I find some sort of reward at any plateau. Can't explain that. But people who are more heavily into Eastern Thought than I am are continually doing things that affect me in ways I can't explain. *N.C.*

BOB SEGER: *Back in '72.* Bob Seger (vocals, guitar); Pete Carr (guitar); Barry Beckett (organ, piano); David Hood (bass); Roger

Hawkins (drums); Dick Sims (keyboards); Jamie Oldaker (drums); Tom Cartmell (woodwinds); other musicians. *Midnight Rider; So I Wrote You a Song; Stealer; Rosalie; Turn the Page; Back in '72; Neon Sky; I've Been Working; I've Got Time.* REPRISE/PALLADIUM MS 2126 \$5.98, M 82126 \$6.98, M 52126 \$6.98.

Performance: **Very good**
Recording: **Very good**

If hard rock still enjoys the community standing it thinks it does, this should be the place where America discovers Bob Seger—America, that is, beyond Detroit, which has been applauding heartily all along. This album is a bit frustrating, but it presents rock honestly, for the simple, repetitive form it is; generally, Seger gets on with it, with a minimum of pauses for pretentious nonsense. His vocals frustrate me because, so much of the time, he doesn't sing as well as he could. Now and then—usually during an embellishment—he does, and it's impressive. Mostly he sings a handleader sort of vocal: he does know how to lead a band. Here, he uses two: one he just formed, and one made up of Memphis studio musicians, and both are exceptionally tight and fairly inventive. There are no beautiful songs, but three or four solid ones among the six Seger originals give the album a good core. My favorite is either the stanchly autobiographical *I've Got Time* or the stanchly autobiographical *Turn the Page*. *N.C.*

FRANK SINATRA: *In the Beginning, 1943-1951.* Frank Sinatra (vocals); instrumental accompaniment. *If You Are But a Dream; The Girl That I Marry; I Have But One Heart; The Moon Was Yellow; I Couldn't Sleep a Wink Last Night; Time After Time; I'm a Fool To Want You; Five Minutes More; Sunday, Monday and Always;* and ten others. COLUMBIA KG 31358 two discs \$6.98.

Performance: **Cream for your coffee**
Recording: **Good remastering**

Frankie! Frankie! I can still hear the screams in my ears. I was a lowly typist on the *New York Times*, and he was the idol of every teenage girl in town, packing them in around the corner at the Paramount. Who could have guessed he would turn into one of America's most stylish balladeers—and an excellent actor besides, with time left over to make Lord knows how much money from investments?

Frankie! If you want to remember him as he was, with the thin open face and the bow-tie and the pen in hand signing autographs at the stage door, this is the album for it. Columbia has trotted all the old Axel Stordahl arrangements out of the archives and put them together into a kind of portrait of Sinatra. "In the Beginning, 1943-1951" should help explain the phenomenon of what he was to those too young to have been around, and serve as a refresher course for the rest of us. The creamy, velvety voice, the feeling of ease and repose which he later developed and carried over into his mature style, his way of slowing down a tempo so that you had to feel he felt the momentous truth of every word he crooned—these are the qualities of the early Sinatra that abound on these two discs. Some of the songs, like the one Jimmy Van Heusen and Phil Silvers wrote for him about his wife Nancy, are downright dopey, but most of the material is worthy of the caressing style lavished on it. *I've Got a Crush on You* and *Saturday Night and Day by Day* all benefit from

his unforced approach. *Mean to Me* brings a hint of the mockery, the cynical quality, that was to creep in later and relieve the relentless projection of "sincerity" (he learned early how to bend not only his notes but the shape of a song to his style). And then there was the socially conscious side of Sinatra, as reflected in *The House I Live In*, a plea for mutual tolerance among Americans that comes off, sadly, as both wishful thinking and naïveté in today's explosive world. When he dripped, he really dripped—although it's unfair to blame entirely on the singer the icky effect of *Full Moon and Empty Arms*, written in the days when lyric writers were all putting words to piano concertos. On the lighter side, *The Coffee Song* ("They've got an awful lot of coffee in Brazil") comes as a welcome relief from relentlessly slow tempos and solemnities. As for *Ol' Man River*, it's less the Mississippi than some sort of Old Mill Stream in the Southland (maybe the Sewanee) the way Sinatra approaches it, and yet, before he's through, he makes you hear it *his* way and believe it. Finally, there's *Dream*, a mushy, escapist tune that sticks to the ears like marshmallow and seems to summarize that whole period when the bow-tied boy from Hoboken, whose jacket always looked too big on him, held the females of America in sway. P.K.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

JOHN STEWART: *Cannons in the Rain*. John Stewart (vocals, guitar); various accompanying musicians. *Durango*; *Chilly Winds*; *Easy Money*; *Anna on a Memory*; *All Time Woman*; *Road Away*; *Armstrong*; *Spirit*; *Wind Dies Down*; *Cannons in the Rain*; *Lady and the Outlaw*. RCA LSP 4827 \$5.98. © P8S 2111 \$6.98. © PK 2111 \$6.98.

Performance: **Warm and wise**
Recording: **Excellent**

Lonesome John has a way of producing, not theme albums, but albums whose songs make good sense together and in whose lyrics certain references do recur. The background throw-away motif in the last one was light; in this one it's weather, wind and rain. Perhaps he's working on some complicated and subtle multi-volume study of the natural environment. Anyway, he continues to sing with one of the most stylish and distinctive (and least flexible) voices in pop music, a deep, beat-up sort of rasp that goes well with old pickup trucks and faithful mongrel dogs. There's some posturing in his lonesome travelin', of course, but I say if you're posing, *know* you're posing (John does, as you'll concede after hearing a couple of these selections) and do it with style—and John does that: nobody carries off the tough but hurt look for an album jacket better than he does. And nobody wears a cowboy hat as well as he does.

He's had some of these songs on hand for a while—*Chilly Winds*, for instance, was written with Papa John Phillips back in 1962, the era of Stewart's association with the Kingston Trio. The song quality is uniformly high, though, with better-than-necessary melodies and some of the best lyrics recorded this month. Stewart, in such songs as *Spirit* and *Armstrong*, particularly, may not be artistically ambiguous but he is consistently and knowingly ambiguous—you just don't catch him sounding trite, or smug, or sophomoric, or any of those other things that are widely considered endemic to folkies who never duck the issues. Add to that the merits Fred Carter

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NOEL PAUL STOOKEY: *One Night Stand*. Noel Paul Stookey (vocals, guitar); Eddie Mottau (guitar); Mike Epstein (drums); Cameron Kotler (cello); other musicians. *Get Together; Who Love the Girls; Weave Me the Sunshine; One Note Melody; Blessed; Edgar; House Song; Desert Island*; and six others. WARNER BROS. BS 2674 \$5.98. © M 82674 \$6.98. © M 52674 \$6.98.

Performance: **Secondary**
Recording: **Good**

The thing about this album is the enlargement of persona it documents—Paul Stookey going publicly to “Noel Paul Stookey” and hinting that “Paul” may be dropped entirely. A man should not go on forever being identified as one-third of Peter, Paul and Mary, or any other nonexistent group, and this should help free his music from old preconceptions and put him squarely on his own, and stuff like that. Personally, I always found Noel such a rare, off-the-wall name that I felt self-conscious about it. Mr. Stookey’s trouble with it, so far, has been in part fiscal: the album was recorded at a “Noel P. Stookey” Carnegie Hall concert whose audience had to be salted with 1,400 freebies because so few people would buy tickets to hear a Stookey whose first name was Noel.

Side two is where the sound changes to complement the name change: Noel Stookey jumps into hard rock with both feet and stays there right on through an electrified *Jingle Bells*. The album is not terribly impressive, for Noel does (as Paul did) keep too many time-wasters in his program; and by any name he tries too hard to pander, in the form of cuteness, to the snobbish underground aspirations of most rock audiences. The pastel-folkie image has been sufficiently altered, however, and the recording does have its moments—in *Edward and One Note Melody* when it rocks, and in *The House Song*, particularly, when it doesn’t. Brightest of all is the way Noel/Paul keeps his perspective: open the fold-out jacket and there’s a picture of the band, with names printed under each person’s likeness. Under the image of the balding fellow on the right it says “Neal Stookey.” N.C.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

SWEET THURSDAY. Sweet Thursday (vocals and instrumentals). *Dealer; Jenny; Laughed at Him; Cobwebs; Rescue Me; Molly; Sweet Francesca; Side of the Road; Gilbert Street.* GREAT WESTERN GRAMOPHONE KZ 32039 \$5.98, © ZA 32039 \$6.98. © ZT 32039 \$6.98.

Performance: **Easy**
Recording: **Very good**

This is a reissue of a supposedly coveted album of the late Sixties by a sort of all-star team of second-stringers. Persons familiar but not quite famous are, in any era, the best musicians in pop commerce, so it is not surprising that these guys really sparkle when a song allows it and manage to salvage quite a bit in other cases. Nicky Hopkins, formerly of the Stones, Beatles, Kinks, Beck, Quicksilver, and almost everybody else, was the key man:

his piano work is just about *the* model for folk-rock ivory tickling, and he digs fairly deeply into his bag during this workout. His joust with acoustic guitarists Alun Davies (Cat Stevens’ accompanist) and Jon Mark (of Mark-Almond) in *Jenny* is particularly lacy and lovely. Brian Odgers, as usual, is solid and intelligent on bass, and here he dubs in some woodwind accents now and then that should make every producer and arranger who hears them break out in the cold shivers. Harvey Burns’ drumming seems a little harsh for some of the songs, but it is economical and steady. Mark and Davies sounded too much alike then (Davies has since matured nicely as a singer) to provide anything approaching the balance a two-vocalist band needs, although each does at least one fine job as a soloist. The songs, except for *Rescue Me* and the fact that *Gilbert Street* runs three times as long as its melody can stand, are two or three cuts above the song quality you’ll find in most albums these days. This was, in its day (or two), a fine band. N.C.

RICHARD THOMPSON: *Starring as Henry the Human Fly*. Richard Thompson (vocals, guitar, accordion); Pat Donaldson (bass); Andy Roberts (dulcimer); John Kirkpatrick (accordion); Sue Draheim (fiddle); other musicians. *Roll Over Vaughn Williams; Nobody’s Wedding; The Poor Ditching Boy; Shaky Nancy; The New St. George; Painted Ladies; Cold Feet; Twisted*; and four others. REPRIS MS 2112 \$5.98.

Performance: **Very good**
Recording: **Very good**

Fairport Convention graduates continue to make good music in their separate ways. Richard Thompson, whose guitar made him a force to be reckoned with (even as Sandy Denny and Ian Matthews seemed forces aplenty) in Fairport’s early days, has gone solo with a complicated, intelligent, and sometimes tedious album. The old English folk ambience is there (indeed, so is Sandy, for some limited piano and vocal backing, and so is Pat Donaldson, Sandy’s bassist in her successor group, Fotheringay), and so is Thompson’s curious, convoluted, vague way of saying things. So is his guitar, in wave upon wave of overdubs, but the arrangements are busy without being cluttered, or even really very dense. Guitar work that is downright excellent is sprinkled throughout, although it seldom calls attention to itself—there are some uncanny stuttering licks and some Townshend-like tolling-chiming chords that are not to be missed—and Thompson’s taste as a guitarist is flawless. But his melodies are a little dreary; too often he sounds like he’s rewriting Sandy’s rewrite of some venerable refrain about one more fair maiden’s life and hard times. As for his lyrics—well, I’ll just have to live with them a little longer. They’re not dumb, I can say that, and *The Angels Took My Racehorse Away* is my kind of British humor, I can say that. But mostly the lyrics wash over me like a flood and I am unable to concentrate on specifics—only to detect, or think I detect, a generally gentle but reproachful tone that may or may not someday start to bug me. But mark ye: a fine album is a fine album for a’ that. N.C.

THREE DOG NIGHT: *Around the World with Three Dog Night*. Three Dog Night (vocals and instrumentals). *Never Been to Spain; Black and White; Joy to the World; An Old*

Fashioned Love Song; Pieces of April; Eli's Comin'; Family of Man; Liar; Mama Told Me Not To Come; Jam; and seven others. DUNHILL DSY 50138 two discs \$9.98. (R) W 0023 50138 \$9.98. (S) Z 8023 50138 \$9.98. (C) Z 5023 50138 \$9.98.

Performance: **Why?**
Recording: **Good**

There really is no musical reason for this album to be released. The performances are good enough—the band is professional—but it could as easily have been recorded in a Connecticut college gymnasium as “around the world” (which appears to be mostly Japan, judging by the photos on the lavishly packaged album—the printers must be making a fortune on the die-cuts). Almost all the material has been recorded before: it is, in fact, a “greatest hits” album except that these songs were recorded live and the band is not as good live as it is in the studio. Their genius comes through in the studio, where they can use all the available techniques of modern recording—always assuming (as we can with this group) that their material will be superior and their performances equal to the material.

I imagine that the rationale behind the release of this useless album is that the group was going to be or had been on tour, or on vacation, or in rehearsal, or looking for new material to match the high standard of their previous songs and recordings (such a search, in this case, requires patient and ruthless good taste). So this is a “filler” album of no great service to the group or its fans (of whom I am one), though doubtless many shekels will pass over the counters of your local record shop. Me, I'm staying home. J.V.

THE WAILERS: *Catch a Fire.* The Wailers (vocals and instrumentals). *Concrete Jungle; Slave Driver; 400 Years; Kinky Reggae;* and five others. ISLAND SW 9329 \$5.98. (S) 8XW 9329 \$6.98. (C) 4XW 9329 \$6.98.

Performance: **Flat**
Recording: **Excellent**

“Reggae” is a Jamaican rhythm, first heard here on a national scale in 1968 when Johnny Nash, an American singer, recorded “*Hold Me Tight*” and *Cupid*. More recently Paul Simon used a reggae band as the instrumental backup for his hit *Mother and Child Reunion*. American and English artists are now visiting Jamaica to record there, much as they visited Memphis a few years ago. Reggae itself is a charming, sprightly, syncopated rhythm. Whether or not it has the wit and power of calypso I don't know: I haven't heard enough of it to say. But I would guess that reggae, like calypso, depends for its total effect on the abilities of the songwriters/performers.

Although the Wailers are described as one of the most popular and influential bands in Jamaica, this record does not prove them to be anything more than competent, professional musicians with a dearth of material. Perhaps they are tired; they have been together ten years. Perhaps they do not really represent reggae any more than Harry Belafonte, pro though he was, represented calypso. I would be interested in hearing more reggae but not necessarily from this band. J.V.

ERIC WEISSBERG: *Dueling Banjos.* Eric Weissberg (banjo, fiddle, other instruments); Marshall Brickman (guitar, mandolin); Steve Mandel (guitar). *Dueling Banjos* (from the soundtrack of *Deliverance*); *Little Maggie;*

Shuckin' the Corn; Pony Express; Old Joe Clark; Eight More Miles to Louisville; Farewell Blues; Earl's Breakdown; and ten others. WARNER BROS. BS 2683 \$5.98.

Performance: **A deliverance of sorts**
Recording: **Very good**

The marketplace is vulgar, isn't it? *Deliverance* was. I thought, one of the better films of recent years, but it quickly became encircled by a gang of gamy and resolute hucksters playing ring-around-the-dollar. The hawkers' clatter is a sort of dissonant counterpoint to the film's own sensibilities, and James Dickey and John Boorman must be shaking their heads. Eric Weissberg, too, for that matter. He and Steve Mandel, the now-famous pickers behind that strange scene with the in-bred banjo boy, have their names displayed over a still from that scene on the cover of the album jacket. But once you get past the *Dueling Banjos* cut, there's no more Mandel. Marshall Brickman, who's been playing with Weissberg for at least a dozen years, is the other featured picker from there on in—and that's eminently logical, seeing as how this actually is a reissue of the Weissberg-Brickman Elektra album of the hopelessly hopeful title, “*New Dimensions in Banjo and Bluegrass.*” *Dueling Banjos* was simply grafted onto it.

The problem now is to avoid being turned off by all this: Weissberg (like Dickey and Boorman) deserves all this attention, however it came about. For years, he has been capable of playing every instrument in a bluegrass band—so well that he could step into just about any such band, at any position, and improve the sound. The banjo is probably his favorite instrument, and he must surely be one of the fastest banjo players alive. He isn't gifted with Scruggs' instincts, but his approach to an old tune usually involves a unique mix of purist's reverence and tinkerer's curiosity. Brickman's rhythm guitar, which is infallible, slyly provides more than just rhythm. Weissberg is also an excellent, though somewhat clinical, fiddler.

And, since the graft didn't cover it up, you can hear the “other” version of *Dueling Banjos*, appearing as the first cut on side two under the more likely title *End of a Dream*. There it really is a pair of banjos dueling—both played by Eric, I think—instead of the more famous banjo and guitar. Reissue or not, the album deserves to be heard, and Weissberg deserves whatever positive rewards come of all this. N.C.

KAREN WYMAN. Karen Wyman (vocals); orchestra. *Something Tells Me; My World; Just a Little Lovin'; Stay with You;* and seven others. COLUMBIA KC 31704 \$5.98.

Performance: **Standard**
Recording: **Good**

There's very little to say one way or another about Karen Wyman. She sings. Not always well, but competently; not particularly engaged with the lyrics, but not oblivious to the music. The result here is a “girl singer” album of a kind I had thought almost extinct. Probably in clubs Miss Wyman, who possesses that honed sort of good looks that often passes for beauty, is pleasant enough for an opening act, but on record it all seems like a protracted audition. The production is very stately, and perhaps you could enjoy it if you had a seeing-eye ear. P.R.

(Continued on page 93)

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Best of a good lot: Jimmy and Mama Yancey

Treasures from the Atlantic archives: SIX VOLUMES OF THE BLUES

Reviewed by CHRIS ALBERTSON

THE founders of Atlantic Records, Ahmet and Nesuhi Ertegun, started out in the record business as collectors of black music. That was back in the Forties, when rhythm and blues, itself an extension of earlier efforts by black performers of the two previous decades, was laying what became a foundation for much of today's popular music. Almost totally ignored by white promoters (and thus by white audiences as well), black artists of the Forties and Fifties repeatedly saw their creative efforts gain national and international popularity only after a white artist had "covered" their record with what was generally a bastardized rendition: Lil Green's *Why Don't You Do Right* became a Peggy Lee/Benny Goodman hit; Big Mama Thornton saw Elvis Presley take the honors for *Hound Dog*; and Little Richard's material was what kept the fans clamoring for Jerry Lee Lewis.

Fortunately, though the artists were not properly rewarded, financially or otherwise, much of the authentic music was preserved on records by such large companies as RCA (on the Bluebird label), and by such enthusiastic individuals as Ahmet Ertegun.

Now, thanks to the initiative of blues researcher/writer Pete Lowry, much of Atlantic's past recording activity has been re-

leased in a series of six very mixed but generally excellent albums which have the added value of containing a number of previously unissued performances. (I will not comment here on Volume 2, which unaccountably arrived months earlier than the others and has already been reviewed by Joel Vance: "Professor Longhair—New Orleans Piano," February 1973.)

Volume 1 consists of fifteen selections by Georgia-born blues and gospel singer Blind Willie McTell, and only two of them have previously been released. When these recordings were made in Georgia in 1949, McTell—at forty-eight—was a veteran of more than a hundred recordings made between 1927 and 1940 for five major labels and the Library of Congress. He recorded again as late as 1956, but these Atlantic sides—excellently reproduced from the original acetates—capture McTell's full, sometimes bottleneck guitar style and his wit, pathos, and sensitivity as well as—and often better than—anything else I have heard by him.

A very mixed bag indeed is Volume 3. Collator Lowry attempts to come up with an album of Texas-style guitarists, but he doesn't have very much to work with. Over half the album is devoted to mostly unissued

recordings by Lawyer Houston, an extremely obscure singer/guitarist who—at least in 1950—seems to have had little to say that he couldn't say on a couple of three-minute sides. Lowry admits as much in his notes, but, as with so many other collectors, his judgment seems to be based as much on the rarity of a recording as on its musical merit. There is often a good reason why a record is not issued: it simply does not warrant release. Lawyer Houston's rediscovered masters are a case in point.

Rounding out this album are two T-Bone Walker items that might well have remained unissued; a 1958 Guitar Slim (Eddie Jones) piece, more interesting because of the presence of Johnny Griffin, Matthew Gee, Elmo Hope, Percy Heath, and Philly Joe Jones than anything else; R. S. Rankin singing *You Don't Know What You're Doing*, and he doesn't; Ray Agee's *Tin Pan Alley*, which is worth three minutes of your time; and the album's only really outstanding track, Al King's rendition of Lowell Fulson's memorable *Reconsider Baby*. All in all, this volume is not for blues connoisseurs, but for those who must have one of each.

VOLUME 4 is another mixed bag, but it is well mixed. Faithful to its title, it treats us to an impressive collection of blues pianists, famous, not so famous, and obscure. The four sides by Little Johnny Jones, a first-rate artist, are enhanced by the strong guitar presence of Elmore James. Jones and James work very well together, particularly on the opening track, *Chicago Blues*. Floyd Dixon, according to Lowry's notes, is rather elusive, but he was nevertheless located often enough to record over a hundred sides for various small labels between 1947 and 1961. Good as he is, it's a wonder the majors never picked him up. More a jazz pianist/singer than a blues artist, Dixon is perhaps best on *Two Piano Blues*, an instrumental which also features a beautiful, anonymous tenor sax solo.

Little Brother Montgomery's four selections were made on July 18, 1951, the same date and place as the now classic Yancey session that makes up Volume 6 in this series. Montgomery plays his pieces well, but one's listening pleasure is somewhat marred by the sound of the doctored-up piano (was this the Crazy Otto period?). Also from that productive July date stems *Sweet's Slow Blues*, a good piano solo by Frank "Sweet" Williams, and said to be his only one. Meade Lux Lewis' *Riff Boogie* is characteristic and serves as a good teaser for a forthcoming Atlantic album promised to contain the rest of the 1951 session from which it came.

John Lee Hooker is probably the only blues artist who has had a record of his "covered" by Mae West, but it was Hooker's own recording of *Boom, Boom* that made the charts. A compelling performer, Hooker never sounded better than he does on the sixteen tracks of Volume 5. From the humorous *Stuttering Blues* to the poignant *Drifting Blues*, the album is an exercise in changing moods and blues artistry of the highest order.

Good as the best pieces of the other volumes are, the gem of this series is Volume 6, which contains in its entirety the famous July 18, 1951 session with Jimmy and Mama Yancey. It is ironic that Jimmy Yan-

cey was one of the least recorded boogie-woogie pianists, for he was certainly one of the best. There is, for example, no piano solo more moving than Yancey's *How Long Blues*, and his *Yancey Special* is a classic. A left hand like Yancey's does not really need a bass player, but there was one for this session, and Israel Crosby was an excellent choice. Responsible for the bolero-like bass line on Teddy Wilson's memorable *Blues in C Sharp Minor*, Crosby was held in high regard by many pianists, including Albert Ammons. His accompaniment to Yancey is perfect. Although Mama Yancey was never one of my favorite blues singers—her repertoire was largely limited to the five songs heard here (she chose the same five in 1961 when I recorded her for the Riverside label)—she performs her songs with undeniable charm.

ATTRACTIVELY packaged, informatively annotated, Atlantic's Blues Originals series is on the whole a commendable project. It is obvious that a great deal of work went into its assembly, and that work, like the work of the artists who are represented, deserves recognition.

BLUES ORIGINALS, Vol. 1: Blind Willie McTell—Atlanta Twelve String. Blind Willie McTell (vocals and guitar). *Kill It Kid; The Razor Ball; Little Delia; Broke Down Engine Blues; Pearly Gates*; and ten others. ATLANTIC © SD 7224 \$5.98.

BLUES ORIGINALS, Vol. 2: Professor Longhair—New Orleans Piano. Professor Longhair (piano and vocals); instrumental accompaniment. *In the Night; Tipitina; Hey Now Baby; Walk Your Blues Away; Hey Little Girl; Willie Mae; Professor Longhair Blues; Ball the Wall*; and five others. ATLANTIC © SD 7225 \$5.98.

BLUES ORIGINALS, Vol. 3: Texas Guitar from Dallas to L.A. Al King; *Reconsider Baby*. Lawyer Houston; *Dallas Bebop Blues; Western Rider Blues*; and six others. Ray Agee; *Tin Pan Alley*. R. S. Rankin; *You Don't Know What You're Doing*. Guitar Slim; *Along About Midnight*. T-Bone Walker; *T-Bone Blues Special; How Long Blues*. ATLANTIC © SD 7226 \$5.98.

BLUES ORIGINALS, Vol. 4: Blues Piano—Chicago Plus. Little Johnny Jones; *Chicago Blues*, and three others. Floyd Dixon; *When I Get Lucky*, and three others. Little Brother Montgomery; *Farish Street Jive*, and three others. Frank "Sweet" Williams; *Sweet's Slow Blues*. Meade Lux Lewis; *Riff Boogie*. ATLANTIC © SD 7227 \$5.98.

BLUES ORIGINALS, Vol. 5: John Lee Hooker—Detroit Special. John Lee Hooker (guitar and vocals). *Stuttering Blues; Goin' South; Blue Monday*; and thirteen others. ATLANTIC © SD 7228 \$5.98.

BLUES ORIGINALS, Vol. 6: Jimmy and Mama Yancey—Chicago Piano. Jimmy Yancey (piano); *Mournful Blues; Yancey Special; Blues for Albert*; and six others. Mama Yancey (vocals); Jimmy Yancey (piano); *Make Me a Pallet on the Floor; Four O'clock Blues*; and three others. ATLANTIC © SD 7229 \$5.98.

JAZZ



RED GARLAND QUINTET: *Jazz Junction* (see Best of the Month, page 78)

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BOBBY JONES: *The Arrival of Bobby Jones*. Bobby Jones (clarinet, tenor and soprano saxophones); Charles McPherson (alto saxophone); Jaki Byard (piano); Bob Dorrough (electric piano); Richard Davis (bass); Mickey Roker (drums); Sue Evans (percussion). *Thanks to Trane; Ballad for Two Sons; Stone Bossa; Blues for the Brown Buddha; Waltz for Joy; Keepin' Up with Jones; As the Crow Flies*. COBBLESTONE CST 9022 \$5.98.

Performance: **Memorable**
Recording: **Excellent**

The "arrival" of Bobby Jones seems a bit late, considering that his professional career dates back to 1949 when he joined the Ray McKinley band, but to my knowledge this is the first album to appear under his own name, and it compels me to say better late than never.

An overnight arrival in the arts often is followed—in very short order—by an overnight departure, so in that sense perhaps Mr. Jones is better off being late. He certainly has a wide variety of experience to draw from, having run the gamut from Fifties rock-and-roll with Boyd Bennett and His Rockets (*Seventeen—She's a Hot-Rod Queen*) to the Seventies jazz of the Charlie Mingus Sextet. Some of what this experience has taught him is reflected in the present album.

The album gets off to a lively start with Jones' nod to Coltrane, his virile, melodic, and fully mastered tenor paving the way for excellent work by Byard and Davis. Jones displays taste and good soprano sax tone on *Ballad for Two Sons* and plays clarinet on *Stone Bossa*, which also gives us a bass solo by McPherson, one of the finest alto players on the scene today; *Blues for the Brown Buddha* (Charlie Parker) is a fitting tribute. Jones' soprano integrating comfortably with McPherson's alto as it so often did when both men worked for Mingus. *Waltz for Joy* is just that, and *Keepin' Up with Jones*, the only piece here Bobby Jones did not write himself, is hard-driving and full of excellent solo work. *As the Crow Flies* is six minutes of fooling around in a hillbilly-ragtime vein wherein the players had, I suspect, more fun in the studio than you will have listening at home.

The last track notwithstanding, this is a thoroughly enjoyable album that, unlike so many "blowing sessions" of late, will stand repeated listening for years to come. With more albums like this, me and Mr. Jones could easily have a thing going on. C.A.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

THE MAHAVISHNU ORCHESTRA: *Birds of*

Fire. John McLaughlin (guitar); Jerry Goodman (violin); Jan Hammer (keyboards, Moog); Rick Laird (bass); Billy Cobham (drums). *Birds of Fire; Miles Beyond; Celestial Terrestrial Commuters; Sapphire Bullets of Pure Love; Thousand Island Park; Hope; One Word; Sanctuary; Open Country Joy; Resolution*. COLUMBIA KC 31996 \$5.98.

Performance: **Contemporary excellence**
Recording: **Excellent**

The Mahavishnu Orchestra deserves the praise and attention it has been getting. It is a first-class group that gets better with each album. All music defies adequate verbal description, but the totally cohesive sound of this five-piece orchestra simply forbids any attempt. Suffice it to say that John McLaughlin—who first gained wide attention with Miles Davis—is an exciting guitarist who spurns the spotlight (which could be his for the asking) to blend his statements with those of his four fellow musicians, all of whom ride the border between jazz and rock. The resulting music is, however, neither—it stands on its own as an unclassifiable contemporary music of the highest caliber.

There is a great deal going on within each track, and repeated listening constantly reveals nuances that previously escaped my ears. "Birds of Fire" is a highly spiked brew that I strongly recommend you sample. C.A.

GENE RUSSELL: *Talk to My Lady*. Gene Russell (piano and Fender Rhodes piano); Calvin Keys (guitar); Henry Franklin (bass); Ndugu, Charles Weaver, Eddie Gee (percussion). *Get Down; Blues Suite; My Favorite Things*; and five others. BLACK JAZZ □ BIQD 10 \$5.98.

Performance: **Ordinary**
Recording: **Very good**

Gene Russell dedicates his album to "the innovated." Never having been innovated, I don't know what that is, but I presume he means innovative. Well, that's one quality Mr. Russell himself sorely lacks: his playing is tedious and cliché-ridden, the sort of thing one orders martinis to. Russell the composer (as credited on three selections here) is simply Russell playing the blues: no innovation here either. Tadd Dameron's beautiful *If You Could See Me Now* has Russell reading what sounds like a reject from the high-school poetry class over his own pedestrian piano: he could do with some rap lessons from Isaac Hayes or Irene Reid. I am not yet equipped to play quadrasonic records (of which this is one, QS matrix), but I doubt that two additional channels would help much in this case. C.A.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

ETHEL WATERS: *Greatest Years*. Ethel Waters (vocals); accompanied by various studio musicians, including Joe Smith, Muggsy Spanier, and Bunny Berrigan (trumpet); Tommy Dorsey, Jack Teagarden (trombone); Buster Bailey, Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman (reeds); Fletcher Henderson, James P. Johnson, Frank Signorelli, Joe Sullivan (piano); Joe Venuti (violin); Eddie Lang, Dick McDonough (guitar); Gene Krupa (drums). *Sweet Georgia Brown; You Can't Do What My Last Man Did; Shake That Thing; Heebie Jeebies; Jersey Walk; My Handy Man; Porgy; A Hundred Years from Today; I Just Couldn't Take It Baby; You've Seen Harlem*

at *Its Best*; and twenty-two others. COLUMBIA KG 31571 two discs \$6.98.

Performance: **Exquisite**
Recording: **Noisier than necessary**

Ethel Waters had many great years after these 1925-1934 recordings were made, but she had entered another field, so the title of this album is appropriate as far as her recorded music is concerned. She was a contemporary of Bessie Smith, and her early career took her over the same trail of broken-down T.O.B.A. (Theater Owners' Booking Association) theaters, and brought her together—in Columbia's studios—with many of the same accompanists. Unlike Bessie Smith, though, Ethel Waters came to Columbia with a number of recordings under her belt. These early efforts, made between 1921 and 1924 for the Cardinal, Black Swan, and Paramount labels, are nearly all available today on two Biograph albums, but they only hint at what was to come.

What did come during the next ten years—two distinct stages of Miss Waters' development—is well represented in this Columbia reissue: first the earthy, ghetto humor songs that T.O.B.A. audiences loved, and then the more sophisticated torch songs that appealed to whites and that led to Miss Waters' hobnobbing with European nobility and to a stage and screen career. An interesting thing about this chronologically programmed album is how it reflects the abrupt change from uptown to downtown.

My Baby Knows How To Love, recorded in August 1928, literally ended Ethel Waters' "black" period. Starting with her next recording session, in May 1929, her accompaniment became all-white, her style and repertoire changed, and Columbia no longer released her records in their 14000 (race) series. In this set, the change begins with *True Blue Lou*, where she is accompanied by Ben Selvin's orchestra, which includes Benny Goodman and the Dorsey brothers. It is quite a change; at times she is very reminiscent of Ruth Etting, who was then at the peak of her success.

Actually, both of the Ethel Waters here—the tongue-in-cheek double entendres of the first and the drippy sweetness of the second—are magnificent, and the accompaniments are, for the most part, first-rate. Pianist James P. Johnson's accompaniments on three tunes by the late Andy Razaf and Joe Smith's pungent trumpet solo (and subsequent obbligato) on *I've Found a New Baby* are among the instrumental highlights. Miss Waters' irresistible charm oozes out of the grooves throughout, as, for instance, on *Come Up and See Me Sometime*, wherein she offers Mae West followers a tempting alternative. *You've Seen Harlem at Its Best*, a blatantly racist song by the team of Dorothy Fields and Jimmy McHugh, is, however, of historical value only, a grim reminder of attitudes we'd rather forget: "Southern darkies plant the corn 'til every acre's filled, but things are different right uptown; Harlem darkies only plant the corn that's been distilled."

Finally, there are producer Frank Driggs' excellent notes. Crammed with information, they give us a well-written capsule biography of an extraordinary career without going into details of the individual recordings. The only details we really need are in the accompanying discography; the music speaks eloquently for itself. I only wish more care had gone into the technical clean-up process, but the occasional surface noise is easily overshadowed by Miss Waters' artistry. C.A.



THEATER • FILMS

THE HARDER THEY COME. Original-soundtrack recording. Jimmy Cliff (vocals); various guest artists; instrumental accompaniment. *You Can Get It If You Really Want*; *Many Rivers To Cross*; *The Harder They Come*; *Sitting in Limbo*; *Draw Your Brakes*; *Sweet and Dandy*; *Pressure Drop*; *Rivers of Babylon*; *Shanty Town*; *Johnny Too Bad*. MANGO SMAS 7400 \$5.98, Ⓢ 8XW 7400 \$6.98, Ⓢ 4XW 7400 \$6.98.

Performance: **Compelling**
Recording: **Variable**

I am sorry not to have seen the movie from which this music is taken. In it, Jimmy Cliff, a real-life "reggae" star, plays a young man from Kingston's Shanty Town (equivalent to Harlem or Watts) who knows or feels that there are for him only two ways into a higher income bracket: pop stardom and crime. He tries both, becomes famous and infamous, and is destroyed in the end.

Whatever the political and social situation in Jamaica—and it seems to be a mess—the music on this album is fascinating. Its dominant gene is gospel, not the American kind, but the High Anglican kind as reinterpreted by black Jamaicans in a winning vocal combination of proper British speech and native slang. Cliff's selections are heavily influenced by American black music and can be classified as pop-reggae, but *Johnny Too Bad* by the Slickers is at once a charming and chilling combination of outlaw ballad and prayer for the about-to-be dead. *Rivers of Babylon* by the Melodians is moving and embraceable; *Sweet and Dandy* and *Pressure Drop* by the Maytalls and *Shanty Town* by Desmond Dekker (who had a hit here a while ago with *Israelites*) are eerie little foot-tappers—like Death asking for the next dance.

This music, reflecting the theme of the film and the problems of the Shanty Town people, is much more effective than the generally bravura declarations of pain in American soul because it is so laid-back and successfully disguised as entertainment. The most convulsive emotions are declared politely. Perhaps that is the British influence: some C. Aubrey Smith old boy in his tuxedo, looking out across the lagoon at a legation soirée and murmuring, "I find myself in a bit of a state of flux, as it were. Don't want to get drippy, old thing, but lately I've taken to thinking of blowing my brains out; then again, I've also considered blowing *your* brains out." J.V.

ON YOUR TOES. Selections from the Rodgers and Hart musical comedy, performed by Jack Whiting and the New Mayfair Orchestra (vocals and instrumentals). **EVER GREEN.** Selections from the Rodgers and Hart musical comedy, with additional songs by Harry Wood from the film version, performed by Jack Payne, Jessie Matthews, Van Phillips,

BBC Dance Orchestra, Van Phillips Dance Orchestra (vocals and instrumentals). **ANYTHING GOES.** Selections from the musical comedy by Cole Porter, performed by Jack Whiting and Jeanne Aubert (vocals) with instrumental accompaniment. **MONMOUTH-EVERGREEN MES 7049 \$5.98.**

Performance: **Insipid**
Recording: **Poor**

This month's latest musical-comedy history lesson takes us back to the 1930's for a nostalgic session with shows of the period as sung in London by the stars who once appeared in them. By awakening from archival sleep old dance records, and such voices from the past as that of Jessie Matthews, who rose from the London slums to become the reigning queen of Gaumont British movie musicals from 1934 to 1938, and that of Jack Whiting ("clean-cut, sharp-featured, nimble-toed Smiling Jack," as Stanley Green describes him in the program notes), Monmouth-Evergreen has managed to reconstruct the skeletons of these ancient productions, much as a natural history museum assembles a dinosaur out of old bones. *On Your Toes*, a delightful spoof of ballet with choreography by Balanchine himself, boasted a Broadway cast that included Ray Bolger and Monty Woolley, the full-length ballet *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* (a satire on gangster movies), and songs that threaten to live forever—*There's a Small Hotel*, *Glad To Be Unhappy*, *It's Gotta Be Love*, and *Quiet Night* among them. Although there was no original-cast recording made in New York, issuing this sluggish London version with its silly medley and Mr. Whiting's sillier versions of its songs is a bit gratuitous, since a perfectly wonderful recording of the score is still available from Columbia (OS 2590) with Portia Nelson, Jack Cassidy, and a complete *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* under the capable Lehman Engel's vigorous baton.

As for *Ever Green* (or *Evergreen*, as the movie version was called) and the voice of Jessie Matthews—who studied under Gertrude Lawrence, but who has always struck me as a kind of Anglicized, reedy-voiced Jeanette MacDonald—you have to be a dogged devotee of camp indeed to put up with her and her silly leading man Jack Payne. Their dreadfully recorded and ill-restored renditions of *In the Cool of the Evening*, *Dancing on the Ceiling*, and other intermittently scintillating numbers hardly do justice to the songs. The pieces added for the movie version by composer Harry Woods were anything but "evergreen"—decidedly deciduous, rather, and quite dead now. The excerpts from *Anything Goes* are amusing. P.K.

WATTSTAX. Original-soundtrack recording, with performances by the Staple Singers; Eddie Floyd; Carla Thomas; Rufus Thomas; the Bar-Kays; Albert King; Soul Children; Isaac Hayes. STAX STS 2-3010 two discs \$9.98, Ⓢ ST8 2-3010 \$12.98, Ⓢ STC 2-3019 \$12.98.

Performance: **Variable**
Recording: **Excellent**

Stax/Volt, a Memphis label founded in the early Sixties that recorded the authentic Memphis sound—white and black—during that sound's great days, threw a party for 100,000 people from the Watts section of Los Angeles. They filled a stadium, and Stax trotted out most of the people it has under con-

tract to give a supershow, which the company filmed and recorded. This album is being promoted by the label as a musical testament of important social significance, and we are all supposed to listen to it. Now I don't approve of music's being offered on the basis of how socially relevant it is—however just the cause, music always suffers when it mixes with slogans and ballot-boxes. Happily, though, the music contained in this album stands by itself.

The Bar-Kays are the Stax "house band," on call to back up vocalists on recording dates. (During the peak of the Memphis Sound, the wondrous Booker T. & the MG's, now disbanded, alas, were the house rhythm section.) The Bar-Kays are energetic and professional—it would probably be good fun to see and dance to them in a club—but beyond that they don't go anywhere here. Nor do the Soul Children, a vocal group with sparkling precision and not much else.

The superb Staple Singers, blessed with the canny direction of Roebuck "Pop" Staples and the trampoline voice of Mavis Staples, open the album. Their segment includes one of the most genuinely touching and heartfelt songs ever written—Roebuck Staples' *I Like the Things About Me That I Once Despised*. For the shimmering original, get a copy of "The Staple Swinger" (Stax STX 2034); the version on this present album is interrupted by a long rap, which is understandable under the circumstances, but which prevents the real, subtle power of the song from coming through.

Albert King tells the audience, "If you don't know about the blues, we're going to teach them to you," a statement that may seem to be an almost preposterously naïve or at least inappropriate one, considering where it is being made. But it is sadly apropos; young black people these days are working against odds in their efforts to rediscover many aspects of their heritage, and many of them didn't know about Billie Holiday until the Diana Ross movie came out, and have probably never heard of Bessie Smith either. The black community's attitude towards the blues has fluctuated over the years between pride and embarrassment, depending on the vicissitudes of locating themselves—and of being located—in the American matrix. Holiday, Smith, and Albert King are not only black cultural assets, they are national cultural assets. Let us hope that all Americans will soon have the wit to see this bottom line clearly. Mr. King is a pro, he is consistently brilliant and content with his truth. He is all that music should be.

Eddie Floyd is a reliable soul performer, a member of the Stax family from the old days. I am sure he was never, ever, less than professional, a yeoman incapable of doing anything but good things to good material. He does so here.

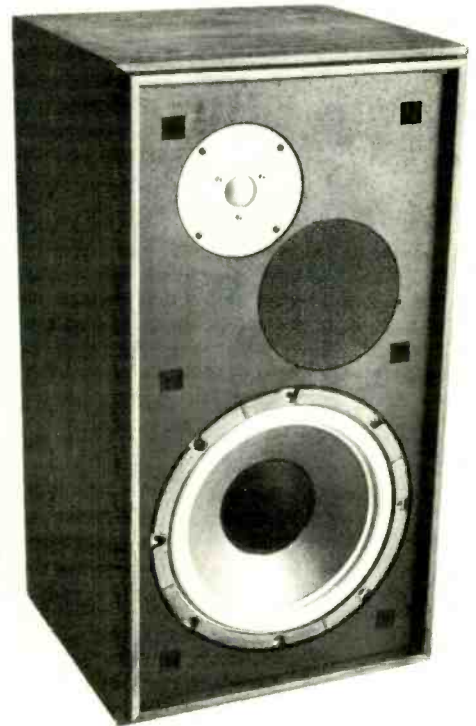
Rufus Thomas and his daughter Carla were among the first popular Stax artists. Rufus is a vaudevillian of the old school; to appreciate what he does, you really must see him. Almost all vaudeville material was slight and inconsequential as written, so this recorded performance, lacking the important visual element, is unsatisfying, but I do treasure one line of his dialogue: "Can I ask you something?" (Audience: "Yeah!") "Ain't I clean?" Carla Thomas is a beautiful and talented young woman (I once had the pleasure of acting with her in a improvised scene from *The Owl and the Pussycat*) who has never quite

made up her mind whether she wants to be a star or not, and that, I'm convinced, is the only thing that has held her back. Besides her nostalgic hit, *Gee Whiz*, she contributes a fine gospel original, *I Have a God Who Loves*.

Isaac Hayes closes the show. He has been Stax's biggest-selling artist since the late Sixties, when his album "Hot Buttered Soul" zipped onto the charts and stayed there. There is an earlier Hayes album, recorded deep into the morning of the previous night, where he sings four tunes while nodding out over the piano on good Tennessee sour mash, and it proves his charm. But since then he has unfortunately taken this persuasive, accidental idea and gooped it up with strings, horns, ooo-eee background singers, and all kinds of claptrap, stretching the songs unmercifully

beyond their intent, hamming it up, and saying all the right things a black artist is supposed to say to his audience to the point where he rivals James Brown in sanctified jive. Perhaps he does this because, before he became famous, he was a house songwriter at Stax in partnership with David Porter (they wrote several fine tunes) and cannot bear to sing a song as written unless he so arranges and performs it as to make it his own. His ordinarily criminal trespassing on other people's tunes (poetic license, after all, has a limit) is somewhat mitigated in Bill Withers' *Ain't No Sunshine*—a deliberately succinct and desperately tender tune—by the performance of Hayes' backup musicians and the holiday circumstances under which it was recorded. As documentaries go, then, a pretty good one. J.V.

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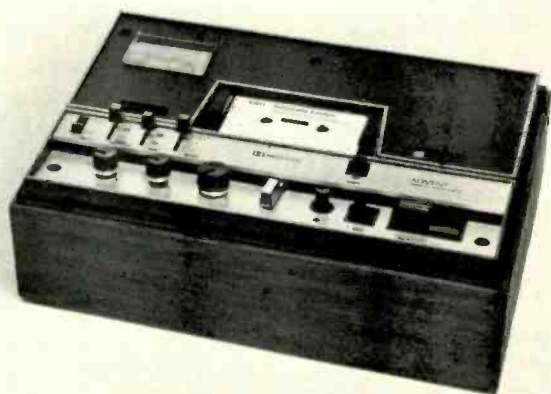


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CLASSICAL DISCS AND TAPES

Reviewed by DAVID HALL • BERNARD JACOBSON • GEORGE JELLINEK • IGOR KIPNIS
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RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BACH: *St. John Passion (BWV 245)*. Peter Pears (tenor), Evangelist: Gwynne Howell (bass), Jesus: John Shirley-Quirk (bass), Pilate and bass arias: Heather Harper (soprano); Alfreda Hodgson (contralto); Robert Tear (tenor); Philip Ledger (harpsichord continuo); Timothy Farrell (organ continuo); Kenneth Heath (cello); Adrian Beers (double bass); Wandsworth School Boy's Choir, Russell Burgess dir.; English Chamber Orchestra, Benjamin Britten cond. LONDON OSA 13104 three discs \$17.94.

Performance: **Distinguished**
Recording: **Very good**

As a performance, this recording is excellent in every respect: the vocal soloists are splendid, the instrumental playing superb, and the all-male choir really fine. Benjamin Britten treats the score with wonderful understanding of its lyrical as well as its dramatic properties; there is nothing stodgy or sanctimonious about his view of the piece, and the pacing of recitatives, arias, and choruses is exceptionally satisfying. From the standpoint of affect, indeed, this is one of the most successful realizations of the *St. John Passion* ever recorded.

This version is sung in an English translation devised by Peter Pears and Imogen Holst. With relatively few exceptions, the recitatives are identical to translations Pears made and sang for the London English-version recording of the early Sixties (OSA 1320, conducted

by David Willcocks). But the arias are not at all the same. Evidently, Pears had still been dissatisfied with the matching of the English words to the pitch and rhythm of Bach's German original in the arias, and there have



PIERRE BOULEZ
A rhythmic, vital Bartók Concerto

been substantial changes from the translation (by Andrew Raeburn) of that previous version, already quite different from the standard 1929 Novello translation. Thus, for instance, the "*Es ist vollbracht*" text in Raeburn's translation read: "All is fulfilled. O rest for all afflicted spirits. This night of woe makes me upon my last hour ponder. Victorious Judah's hero comes, and ends the fight. It is finished." The newest translation of this alto aria is: "The end is nigh! Release for all the sick and grieving! This darken'd sky foretells my final hours of living. Now Judah's champion mounts on high, and ends the fight. It is finish'd."

How does all of this work out musically? Well, except for the recitatives, an awful lot of text simply falls by the wayside, and this is the fault neither of translation nor of diction on

the part of singers or choir; it is simply the nature of the beast. Mainly, however, I find I miss the guttural quality of the German, which as a *sound* fits the pungency of Bach's setting. I can understand the need for an English translation of this type for *concert* audiences not familiar with the German. But for a recording, where it is perfectly possible for the listener to follow a two-way text, it seems to me that a translated performance is gratuitous and that having the words sung in English is not worth losing an important element of Bach's original music. The Harnoncourt recording on Telefunken, which involves a close approximation of the kind of performance Bach himself must have desired with old instruments and chamber forces, still continues to be my personal favorite, and the sound there is far clearer than the somewhat swimmy acoustics of the new London version.

For all of that, however, this is still a distinguished performance that has great appeal. A text leaflet is included. I.K.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BARTÓK: *Concerto for Orchestra*. New York Philharmonic, Pierre Boulez cond. COLUMBIA □ MQ 32132 \$6.98, 8 MAQ 32132 \$7.98.

Performance: **White-hot**
Recording: **Excellent two-channel; intriguing four-channel**

Pierre Boulez gives this popular Bartók work the white-hot cutting edge that is really implied in the score; his reading, precise in line, balance, and dynamics, imbued with the utmost rhythmic vitality, allows the music's own expressive intensity to emerge. As with many other works, there is no need to gild the lily to help the music make its full effect, and this Boulez performance is one with which I'll be able to live for a long, long time.

There is one point, however, that puzzles me about almost every performance of this music: why does everybody (except Dorati) disregard the *accelerando* work-up to the final bars clearly indicated in the published score? You will recall the great full-brass peroration of the *fugato* tune, the quick pause followed by the pell-mell rush of the string-woodwind

Explanation of symbols:

- Ⓜ = reel-to-reel stereo tape
- Ⓢ = eight-track stereo cartridge
- Ⓒ = stereo cassette
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- Ⓡ = reel-to-reel quadrasonic tape
- Ⓢ = eight-track quadrasonic tape
- Ⓒ = quadrasonic cassette

Monophonic recordings are indicated by the symbol Ⓜ

The first listing is the one reviewed; other formats, if available, follow it.

body, a *big* ritard, and then the final bars which almost everybody simply *slams* into, even though the score indicates that the fast tempo is to be reached by way of an *accelerando*. Boulez follows the crowd in disregarding the letter of the score—a surprise to me—and it is the only musical criticism I have of this otherwise superb performance.

As for the recorded sound, I marvel at the skill of the Columbia post-mix crew in being able to come up with a result from a twenty-six-microphone pickup that complements in every way the clarity and brilliance of Boulez's reading. There is tremendous impact in the two-channel playback, which is what I have been referring to in the performance part of this review. But the controversial aspect of this particular recording, of course, resides in what emerges from the four-channel (SQ) playback. And it has nothing whatever to do with the concert-hall listening experience. Only violins, cellos, harps, timpani, and part of the metallophone percussion emerge from the front channels (the harps are divided extreme left and right), while string basses, trumpets, and bass drum are heard from the right rear, horns and bassoons from the center rear, and flutes, oboes, clarinets, trombones, and tuba from the left rear. This has resulted from no "mix" but from an actual physical "surround" orchestra setup, which is shown, along with careful depictions of the entire four-channel recording arrangement, on the elaborate double-fold record jacket.

The thing *does* work technologically, but musically I find it, though initially intriguing, in the end just plain disconcerting if not downright annoying. This is not because I am inalterably opposed to the surround concept; it's just that the Bartók Concerto for Orchestra, in my opinion, is not a score to which it can be applied with any genuine aesthetic validity or hope of success. There is a fair amount of music for which surround techniques can be very effective—Gabrieli, the Mozart *Notturmo* for Four Orchestras, and Ives' *The Unanswered Question*, for instance—but this work is not part of that repertoire. So I shall continue to enjoy this otherwise splendid recording in two-channel playback. And I hope that Columbia will in the future use their obviously effective surround recording techniques on music that will achieve genuine aesthetic enhancement thereby, and that they will come up with something more appropriate for such works as this one. *D.H.*

BAX: *November Woods* (see **HOLST**)

BEETHOVEN: *Music to Goethe's Tragedy "Egmont," Op. 84.* Gundula Janowitz (soprano); Erich Schellow (speaker), Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Herbert von Karajan cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530 301 \$6.98.

Performance: **Goosey**
Recording: **Good**

Beyond the familiar overture, there is a wealth of moving, even great, music in Beethoven's set of pieces for Goethe's *Egmont*. The place to hear it, however, is not in this recording. Like so many composers, Beethoven emerges from Karajan's ministrations sounding like a glutinous cross between Bruckner and César Franck. It is, indeed, astonishing how wide a range of musical styles this conductor can reduce to sameness.

If sheer golden solidity of orchestral sound is your primary concern, or if you want a large

quantity of additional narration taken from Grillparzer, George Szell's excellent performance with the Vienna Philharmonic on London CS 6675 is the version to have. But I think Maurice Abravanel, on a regrettably deleted Vanguard disc, came closer to the spirit of the music, and his soprano soloist, Netania Davrath, was far better than either Karajan's colorless Janowitz or Szell's rather tremulous Pilar Lorengar. *B.J.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BEETHOVEN: *String Quartets, Op. 18.* Bartók Quartet. QUALITON LPX 11423-25 three discs \$17.74.

Performance: **Just right**
Recording: **Excellent**

With this volume—the first in a complete set of Beethoven Quartets—the Bartók Quartet



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
From a contemporary portrait, circa 1801

comes of age. This relatively young ensemble—founded in 1957, it first became widely known in the Sixties—has quite naturally been associated with the quartets of the great Hungarian composer whose name it assumed. But, in spite of associations, these musicians are really classicists at heart, heirs to the good old Viennese tradition. Budapest is, let us remember, just a short boat ride down the Danube from Vienna and, in some ways, preserves the sense of a bygone era even better than the principal seat of the old Empire.

Be that as it may, these are superb performances: delicate and strong, beautifully balanced and phrased, subtle and supple, rich, articulated, clear, and full of poetry. I find almost nothing to fault. Again and again, the players strike the perfect tempo, turn the phrase corner in just the right way, and spin out a rhythm, a contrapuntal web, or a big form with exquisite grace, naturalness, or even, if required, presumption.

One of the unusual features of this ensemble is the notable difference between the tonal character of the violins. The second violin has a tone intermediate between a violin and a viola, and this creates a clear second line and an ensemble that, while blending beautifully, can also separate out into four individual and easily distinguishable parts.

All the tonal and dynamic planes are very well laid out, and yet the music always moves ahead with perfect unanimity. These are all

tales beautifully told and equally well recorded. I eagerly await the quartet's later Beethoven, for, on the basis of Op. 18, this ensemble can be ranked as one of the handful of great string quartets around. *E.S.*

BOISMORTIER: *Concerto in E Minor for Flute, Violin, Oboe, Bassoon, and Continuo.* **TELEMANN:** *Concerto in F Major for Horn, Flute, Harpsichord, and Bassoon.* **ZELENKA:** *Sonata V, in F Major, for Two Oboes, Bassoon, and Continuo.* Elinor Preble (flute): Ray Toubman (oboe, in Boismortier and Zelenka); Wilfred Burkle (oboe, in Zelenka); Robert Brink (violin); John Miller (bassoon); Ralph Pottle (horn); Olivia Toubman (cello, in Boismortier and Zelenka); Daniel Pinkham (harpsichord, in Boismortier and Zelenka); James Weaver (harpsichord, in Telemann). CAMBRIDGE CR 3825 \$5.98.

Performance: **Ingratiating**
Recording: **Top-quality**

"Coronation and Banquet Music" is the album title of this rerelease of recordings by members of the Boston Baroque Ensemble, a group that unfortunately is now defunct. The sonata by Johann Dismas Zelenka (1679-1745) was evidently intended for the coronation festivities of Karl VI in 1723 at Prague; the remaining two works are not specifically connected with any event, but they too are examples of good eighteenth-century background fare, far more substantial than today's canned restaurant-elevator-etc. pap. The recordings, recouped from two separate discs (Cambridge CRS 1814 and 1815) and dating back as far as 1963, feature superbly balanced, clean sound. The playing is in all cases very good, though on occasion it is a bit un-subtle tonally with a tendency to run dynamics on the same level. Among the players, the bassoonist, John Miller, must be singled out for some stunning execution, and the disc on the whole can be recommended as a pleasantly rendered example of late Baroque musical entertainment. *I.K.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BOTTESINI: *Grand Duo Concertant for Violin, Double-bass, and Strings.* **ROSSINI:** *Sonata No. 5, in E-flat Major; Sonata No. 6, in D Major.* Luciano Vicari (violin); Lucio Buccarella (double-bass); I Musici. PHILIPS 6500 245 \$6.98.

Performance: **Very fine**
Recording: **Very fine**

With this disc, I Musici completes its recording of the six string sonatas credited to the twelve-year-old Rossini. The two included here are absolutely delightful, fluffly pieces that are captivatingly melodious and, as in the last-movement *Tempesta* of No. 6, effectively programmatic with rain and storm effects. The performances are superb. The disc's other side is the multi-movement Grand Duo for violin, double-bass, and strings by the Italian double-bass virtuoso, Giovanni Bottesini (1821-1889). This, too, is great fun to hear, though its amusing operatic-like permutations can hardly be described as more than an entertaining Romantic period piece. The solo playing here is delectably virtuosic, and the sound overall is gorgeous. *I.K.*

BRUCH: *Violin Concerto No. 1, in G Minor, Op. 26; Violin Concerto No. 2, in D Minor, Op. 44.* Yehudi Menuhin (violin); London Sym-

phony Orchestra, Sir Adrian Boult cond. ANGEL S 36920 \$5.98.

Performance: **Loving**
Recording: **Good**

If memory serves me, the Bruch G Minor Concerto was the vehicle for Yehudi Menuhin's first full-scale recording with orchestra, done in 1931 or thereabouts with Sir Landon Ronald and the London Symphony. Since then Menuhin has recorded the G Minor Concerto with Pierre Monteux, Charles Munch, and Walter Susskind. With this, his fifth recording of that music, Menuhin also gives us the first domestically issued stereo recording of the "other" Bruch violin concerto, the D Minor, composed for Pablo de Sarasate a dozen years after its more celebrated predecessor.

For all the sterling musicianship and loving care that Menuhin and veteran collaborator Sir Adrian Boult lavish upon the D Minor, the music seems to me—save for the dramatic recitative middle movement—pretty heavy going compared with the untrammelled lyricism and vigor that suffuse the music Bruch composed back in his twenties. I still find the G Minor Concerto, especially in a properly vital performance, a rewarding and wholly satisfying listening experience.

Menuhin and Boult tend to understate the rhetorical aspects of the music in their reading, but do splendidly by its broadly lyrical aspects. The recorded sound is appropriately warm and spacious. *D.H.*

BRUCKNER: Mass in F Minor. Heather Harper (soprano); Anna Reynolds (mezzo-soprano); Robert Tear (tenor); Marius Rintzler (bass); New Philharmonia Chorus and Orchestra, Daniel Barenboim cond. ANGEL S 36921 \$5.98.

Performance: **Okay**
Recording: **High-church**

I will sternly repress the impulse to ask Daniel Barenboim, "What's a nice boy like you doing in a place like this?" One simply does not expect an Israeli musician to launch himself with such fervor into an intensely Catholic Mass. But why not? We all accept today the notion that art is universal, and certainly Bruckner universalized his intense religious faith—which is more evident here than in his symphonies, of course, but which is no less universalized here. In any case, this is (for technical reasons if not musical ones) a concert Mass, not a strictly liturgical setting. Indeed, it is Bruckner's *Missa Solemnis*, and its sweep and grandeur are well realized here.

But in other respects I am less enthusiastic about this performance. Bruckner's characteristic contrapuntal lines do not always clarify themselves without a little help, and Barenboim does not always provide that help. For example, the principal line at the beginning of the *Sanctus* is clearly in the flute, while the violin figure weaving around it must be somewhat subordinate; but here the flute line is lost in the swirl. The acoustics account for a lot of the problems. Perhaps a resonant church lends the right atmosphere for some listeners, but I personally think that the music itself should create the atmosphere. I have no objection to nice, rich sound, but I also like to hear the music.

As nearly as I can tell, the solo and choral singing is good to excellent. The orchestral playing, although capable, is not quite in that class, and I feel that Barenboim has not done

all his homework. This is a performance produced, I suspect, largely on feeling and innate musicianship, somewhat covered over with a gloss of Baroque architectural verber, and that is not really enough. *E.S.*

CHOPIN: Twenty-four Études, Op. 10 and Op. 25. Maurizio Pollini (piano). DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530291 \$6.98.

Performance: **Extraordinary technical achievement**
Recording: **Superior**

Among the many previous recordings of the complete Chopin Op. 10 and Op. 25 Études, including such distinguished versions as those by Cortot, Arrau, Ashkenazy, Anevas, and Vásáry, Maurizio Pollini's must take a high place if only for the incredible technical mastery he displays. This is not the sort of thing anybody can fake or get around through judi-



ANDRÉ WATTS

Sensitive, honest Chopin interpretations

cious tape splicing; it is really all here, immaculately clean, totally controlled, and brilliant beyond belief. Listen to the opening C Major Étude for some idea of the effortlessness of Pollini's technique; or Op. 10, No. 4, or the "Black Key," or the final three of Op. 25. The twenty-four Études have seldom before been recorded to such stunning, brilliant technical effect. Yet, as much as I admired Pollini's playing, I felt emotionally cheated by his cool, sentimentless, and anti-Romantic approach. This is not to say that the rhythm is metronomic rhythm: on the contrary, there is rubato. But there is precious little warmth, charm, or sense of personal involvement to go with it. It is something like a beautifully recorded, well-oiled, perfect machine. *I.K.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

CHOPIN: Sonata No. 2, in B-flat Minor, Op. 35; Fantaisie in F Minor, Op. 49; Étude in C Major, Op. 10, No. 1; Étude in C-sharp Minor, Op. 25, No. 1; Étude in C-sharp Minor, Op. 25, No. 7; Étude in C Minor, Op. 25, No. 12. André Watts (piano). COLUMBIA M 32041 \$5.98, Ⓜ MA 32041 \$6.98, Ⓢ MT 32041 \$6.98.

Performance: **Very impressive**
Recording: **Very good**

André Watts' first all-Chopin recital (his only previous large-scale Chopin recording was

the F Minor Concerto) must be described as an unqualified success. The program reflects the pianist's seriousness of purpose—no easy crowd-pleasers here. Nor does Watts give in to obvious sentimental effects. Rather, he has his own ideas (for example, the pedaling in the Fantasy's second theme after the *agitato* section) and more than enough temperament to project all these works with a feeling of controlled individuality that never really departs from the composer's purpose. Always there is sensitivity, and there is an overriding honesty in his approach (that includes—for the sake of continuity, I presume—a few minor smudged passages that might otherwise easily have been edited out) that has made these interpretations more and more attractive to me with repeated hearings. I don't think that Watts has as yet found the ideal tonal approach to Chopin, for there is not enough variety of nuance, shadings if you like, at the moment, and his tone has a tendency at times to become a trifle hard. But overall this is a highly impressive contribution to the Chopin discography, one that can be recommended with enthusiasm to any piano collector. Columbia's sound is very good on the disc version and almost as impressive on cassette: the latter, however, is recorded at such a low level that when the volume is raised some of the benefits of Dolby are vitiated and hiss becomes evident. *I.K.*

DEL TREDICI: I Hear an Army. Phyllis Bryn-Julson (soprano); Composers Quartet. *Scherzo.* Robert Helps and David Del Tredici (pianos). **DIAMOND: String Quartet No. 9.** Composers Quartet. *Nonet.* String ensemble, Charles Wuorinen cond. COMPOSERS RECORDINGS INC. CRI SD 294 \$5.95.

Performances: **Excellent**
Recording: **Okay**

Expressionism is truly the "conservative" music of our time, and here are some good examples. David Diamond and David Del Tredici are composers of different generations—Diamond, born in 1915, is Del Tredici's senior by twenty-two years—and there are major differences in their music. Diamond's Ninth Quartet and *Nonet* are chromatic string music—free chromaticism combined with some serialism—that is based on traditional procedures. David Del Tredici's Expressionism, however, is far more intense, dissonant, "psychological." As such, it seems to be personal and more contemporary—as contemporary, that is, as a young composer working directly in the tradition and even the idiom of Berg and Sessions can be. It is hard to know how to place a composer like Del Tredici; he seems born out of his time. But, after all, what does the listener care about chronology? *I Hear an Army*—set to words by James Joyce and well sung by Phyllis Bryn-Julson—is an effective, intense, and personal (I would almost say "neurotic") kind of large-scale piece that never lets up on the intensity of its vision.

Not that any of this is easy to take in. The very intensity and commotion of *I Hear an Army* gives it a kind of dramatic impact largely missing from the other pieces here. The Composers Quartet is excellent in this work and in the Diamond String Quartet, but the string *Nonet* seems slightly under-rehearsed. Del Tredici and Robert Helps are the excellent pianists in the former's Scherzo.

A curious oversight: there is no clear band between the end of *I Hear an Army* and the beginning of the Diamond Quartet. It is ac-

tually possible to find the spot tonally and by style; but the same string quartet is playing at both ends, there are several notable pauses near the end of the Del Tredici, one piece ends and the other begins with trills, and the dynamic levels are somewhat similar—so confusion could result. *E.S.*

DIAMOND: *String Quartet No. 9; Nonet* (see DEL TREDICI)

HODDINOTT: *Roman Dream; Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano.* **TATE:** *Apparitions; Three Gaelic Ballads.* Margaret Price (soprano); Gerald English (tenor); Cardiff Festival Players, James Lockhart dir. ARGO ZRG 691 \$5.95.

Performance: **Good**
Recording: **Good**

This disc presents the music of a composer born in South Wales in 1929 (Alun Hoddinott) and another born in England in 1911 (Phyllis Tate). Hoddinott shows every sign of solid training and craft. His first piece, *Roman Dream*, tends toward the combination of "post-Webernism" and "post-Bartókianism" practiced by some Americans these days. It is an effective fusion, especially when it is used to evoke a musical dream or nightmare as it is in this case. Hoddinott's Trio, however, is pretty dull, academic stuff.

Phyllis Tate's *Apparitions* use harmonica and piano as accompanying instruments, trying (apparently) to evoke a sort of Olde Englishe music with sardonic touches. I find the songs coy and unbearably monotonous. And the Three Gaelic Ballads are not much more compelling. *L.T.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

HOLST: *A Fugal Overture, Op. 40, No. 1.* **BAX:** *November Woods.* **MOERAN:** *Sinfonietta.* London Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Adrian Boult cond. MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY MHS 1229 \$2.99 (plus 65¢ handling charge from Musical Heritage Society, Inc., 1991 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023).

Performance: **A-1**
Recording: **Good**

Musical Anglophiles owe a special vote of thanks to the Musical Heritage Society for their American issues, from England's Lyrita label, of a whole panorama of British music of the early twentieth century. The disc under consideration here is a fine sample. Other MHS goodies include Sir Adrian Boult's readings of the two Elgar symphonies, the Arnold Bax Sixth Symphony, a fine lot of Holst conducted by the composer's daughter, Imogen, and works of John Ireland.

For me the prize of the present package is the terse and lively Holst Fugal Overture, built on a theme that oddly anticipates the "Old Joe has gone fishing" chantey in Britten's *Peter Grimes*. Here and there in the piece, one catches bits of the folksy Holst, and of the fun-loving Holst of *The Perfect Fool*. At any rate, I find this one of the most enjoyable pieces in the orchestral repertoire.

November Woods is one of three symphonic poems composed by Arnold Bax (1883-1953) in 1916-1917 which together constitute his first major work for orchestra. As are the other two pieces, this one is a curious amalgam of post-Wagnerian chromaticism and French Impressionist aesthetic with an overlay of Celtic atmosphere (though Bax himself

was not of Celtic ancestry). But the sheer richness of Bax's harmonic texture tends to obscure whatever musical substance there is to the piece. I find the Bax of the symphonies (he wrote seven, and six have been recorded in stereo on British labels) far more interesting, especially Symphony No. 3, which has been beautifully recorded by RCA on its English label.

Ernest J. Moeran (1894-1950) is virtually unknown in this country, except to 78-rpm disc collectors who own the String Trio and the curiously imposing G Minor Symphony recorded just after the War on the British Columbia and HMV labels respectively, and to those who may own the MHS disc of the Cello Concerto. The Sinfonietta presents Moeran in his most attractive light and with his craft at its peak. The music is warm and exuberant, a nice mix of the folksy and the Waltonian-cosmopolitan. Moeran did have



SAHAN ARZRUNI

Delightful, unmannered Children's Album

something of a fatal faculty for assimilating varied stylistic influences, but in the Sinfonietta he manages to remain very much his own man. It is most enjoyable.

The recording, of 1968 vintage, is of high excellence, and the performances under Sir Adrian Boult are exemplary. *D.H.*

KHACHATURIAN: *Children's Album, Books 1 and 2.* Sahan Arzruni (piano). MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY MHS 1490 \$2.99 (plus 75¢ mailing charge from Musical Heritage Society, 1991 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023).

Performance: **Engaging**
Recording: **Workmanlike**

Aram Khachaturian has never dissembled about his musical intentions. He calls his own music "coarse and straightforward," and has never pretended that it is more profound or subtle than it is. When he gets too ambitious and starts flinging notes into the air like confetti, as in his piano concerto, he turns himself into a musical ape in evening clothes, but in his ballet music—in *Masquerade* and *Gayne* and *Armenian Dances*—he sets out only to delight, and only a churl would put his fingers in his ears.

Such a sensibility would seem ideal in a composer writing pieces for children, and in

this album of his piano pieces for "advanced youngsters" Khachaturian proves himself worthy of their attention. This collection may not be fine enough to take its place beside Debussy's *Children's Corner* or Schumann's *Kinderscenen*, but it is fresh and engaging and authentic in its own right. Pieces like *The Birthday* and *Little Leopard on the Swing* are full of mischief and high spirits. *Skippping* and *Horseman's March* make use of literal allusions to reassure the listener by letting him know exactly where he is. *Invention* and *Eastern Dance* are in the familiar Armenian idiom identified with Khachaturian's adult style—*Invention*, in fact, is a piano transcription of a segment from *Gayne*. Book One, originally published here with the unauthorized title *The Adventures of Ivan*, is simpler and less demanding in tone than Book Two, with its rhythmic complexities, more daring dissonances, and greater stress on thematic development. Most delightful in the second series is a musical portrait of two chattering, vehement ladies called *The Two Funny Aunties Have Quarreled*, and the program ends with a dazzling *Toccata*.

Khachaturian not only knows what he wants as a composer, but has strong opinions about the interpretation of his work as well, which he feels should be virile and unmannered, devoid of pretension. Sahan Arzruni, who knows his fellow Armenian personally and has talked to him at length on the subject, is all these things. *P.K.*

KODÁLY: *Háry János* (see PROKOFIEV)

LULLY: *Thésée (highlights).* Anne Ayer (mezzo-soprano), Vénus, Médée, Aeglé, Cérés; Hugues Cuénot (baritone [sic]), Mars, Égée, Arcas; Mimi Mattei (soprano), Dorine; Martin Isepp (harpsichord); Richard Harand (cello); Georg Binkau (bass); Vienna Volksooper Orchestra. Willard Straight cond. RCA VICTROLA VICS 1686 \$2.98.

Performance: **Unsatisfactory**
Recording: **Very good**

The story of Giovanni Battista (he changed his name early on to Jean-Baptiste) Lully is one of the most fascinating in the annals of music. Born in 1632, he was barely into his teens before he was taken to France to serve as an instructor in Italian to a Mme. de Montpensier. His employer did not at first care for him and installed him in her kitchen, but he seems eventually to have become her music director. Then his talents as a violinist, actor, and dancer brought him to the notice of the young Louis XIV, whereupon he became a member of the king's orchestra. He soon rose to become one of the most influential personages at court, composing opera-ballets with librettists such as Molière and, Machiavelli-like, organizing and controlling the state of theater music in France. Lully's death in 1687, curiously, came about through an infection caused by his having hit his foot with a conducting staff during a rehearsal of his *Te Deum*. Among his musical achievements are not only thirty ballets and fourteen operas but also the introduction of stylized declamation as recitatives and the French *ouverture*. Considering the man's colorful personality and musical innovations, it is all the more surprising that so little Lully is available on records: a handful of examples of his sacred music, some marches for outdoor ceremonies, and, from his stage works, a skimpy few arias in anthologies and some selected dances.

So one ought to be grateful for the present disc, a forty-six-minute sampling of vocal and instrumental music from Lully's 1675 opera-ballet, *Thésée*. As usual with this kind of stage entertainment, the partly allegorical plot is a complex one, dealing mainly with the rivalry of the sorceress Médée with Aeglé for the hand of Thésée (Theseus), who is really the son of Égée, King of Athens, who himself is betrothed to Médée and is enamored of Aeglé. . . well, you get the idea. Unfortunately, the performance here is far from distinguished. Anne Ayer, singing four roles (including those of the two rival ladies) in a monochromatic, expressionless, and often flat-pitched manner, is the weakest of the cast. Mimi Mattei, with her bright soprano the most appealing singer, is heard only in a brief minor role. Tenor Hugues Cuénod, billed as a baritone (!), provides the most intelligent and stylish renditions, but his voice is unable to differentiate and characterize the three roles he takes. And there is no music here for the title role. What is most difficult to understand is the stringing together of all the excerpts: there are no separate bands at all, so that the effect is that of a continuous sequence of arias, duets, and instrumental interludes. It is almost impossible to follow the flow of the drama when isolated segments with the same singers taking different parts are all joined—and there is only a synopsis of the plot without texts or translations. One more point on the musical sequence: Nos. 10 through 13 (*Le Sacrifice* through the second *Entrée*) are to be heard at the start of side two, not at the end of side one as indicated.

The conducting is adequate but certainly reveals no special knowledge of Baroque stylistic conventions: the opening overture is not double-dotted, no attempt at rhythmic inequality is made, cadential trills are omitted in orchestral and vocal parts, and, in fact, there is throughout a surprising lack of vocal ornamentation. There are some very unrefined moments, both in phrasing and dynamics and in the orchestral playing (some of the loud sections are just plain raw), and the recorder intonation is downright poor. Although Martin Isepp does provide some strong leadership as continuo player, some of the harpsichord playing becomes a bit too busy. Sonically, the disc reproduces well.

In sum, there are moments, as in the extended duet recitative of Act I, when the present record may prove useful (mainly because there isn't anything else) for demonstrating the Lully declamatory style. As for the dances and orchestral interludes, however, it is only necessary to sample the five brief excerpts from *Thésée* conducted by Raymond Leopard on L'Oiseau-Lyre SOL 301 to realize what a difference an understanding of style, elegance, and refinement can make. I.K.

MAXWELL DAVIES: *From Stone to Thorn; Hymns; Antechrist; Missa Super L'Homme Armé.* Vanessa Redgrave (speaker, in the *Missa*); the Fires of London. Peter Maxwell Davies dir. L'OISEAU-LYRE DSLO 2 \$5.98.

Performance: **Dazzling**
Recording: **Superb**

Peter Maxwell Davies is a young English composer (born 1934) with a brilliant imagination and two distinct styles, one of which I like enormously. Two of the four pieces on this record—*From Stone to Thorn*, a sort of cycle or extended song for soprano and in-

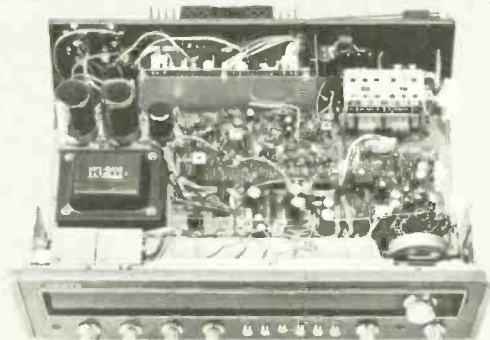
(Continued on page 103)

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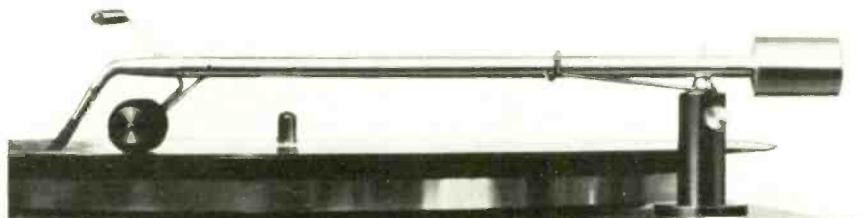


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MARTINON'S PROKOFIEV

His recording of the complete symphonies for Vox tells us more about the conductor than the composer

By LESTER TRIMBLE

SERGEI PROKOFIEV was one of the twentieth century's most prolific, gifted, and influential composers, and one of the truly great technicians as well. It is impossible to listen to his symphonies without marveling at his adroitness in shaping his materials to his purposes. Occasionally, however, one can be disappointed, for Prokofiev sometimes settled for a *fabrikant* attitude toward the orchestral form that has carried many of the most profound ideas and emotions in Western music.

Without belittling his achievements in the symphonic genre in any way, it should be pointed out that in his middle career (and sometimes in his later career) he seemed to make very little distinction between the symphony and any other kind of music for orchestra. Certainly the fact that he could with equanimity (and with faultless technique) transfer massive chunks of material from his opera *The Flaming Angel* to the Symphony No. 3, and from his ballet *The Prodigal Son* to the Symphony No. 4, would seem to indicate that he felt (or hoped) no particularly great distance separated these various musical forms. Perhaps none does. But it has always seemed to me that most musical ideas carry with them a particular atmosphere that reveals the environment of their birth even when they are transplanted to another environment. As a perhaps overly obvious example, the weird, "witchy" passages that Prokofiev lifted from *The*

Flaming Angel for the Symphony No. 3 sound, in the later context, descriptive and theatrical rather than abstract, philosophical, and symphonic. And many portions of the Symphony No. 4 seem balletic in spirit, despite the way the composer altered the material.

Vox's new two-volume compendium of all seven of Prokofiev's symphonies and two overtures presents a portrait of the composer, but one, I think, that is not as revealing as it might have been. Conductor Jean Martinon does a fine job with a number of the symphonies, particularly those that stem from Prokofiev's period of living in France (and Prokofiev was tremendously—if temporarily—influenced by that experience). Martinon seems to understand exactly what the expatriate Russian had in mind, and he brings out the qualities of brute force and lyricism that are at the heart of the music's vigor.

I am one of that odd minority of people who feel that Prokofiev's Second Symphony ranks with his best. Of its two movements (it was modeled on Beethoven's Op. 111 Piano Sonata), the first drives forward with inexorable energy and almost flawless logic, while the long set of variations that make up the second carries one through changing, contrasting, unpredictable moods without losing either perspective or consistency of purpose on the way.

Martinon is hampered in his performance

of this work, as in all the others, by the fact that the National Orchestra of French Radio is not a first-rate ensemble. It has long been a management tradition in Paris to overwork and underpay orchestral musicians, and the result has been a parallel tradition amongst the players of indifferent sloppiness despite terribly good musical training. That, perhaps as much as anything else, is what these performances are about. Complex rhythms challenge the orchestra more than they should, fast tempos are likely to bring forth raggedness in the ensemble, and even intonation occasionally leaves something to be desired. But, withal, this orchestra is what the French would call a "musical" ensemble, and with such expertise as it cares to muster added to Martinon's sensitive, intelligent (if not always stylistically aware) leadership, the performances throughout the two volumes are communicative, and sometimes they are even exciting.

Prokofiev's First ("Classical") Symphony, for instance, receives a bright and vivacious performance, fast in tempo and full of delicate Haydnesque charms. Martinon plays its little musical game with subtlety and grace. The Second Symphony, one into which Martinon seems to have special insight, comes off beautifully. Whether this work is indebted to Honegger or vice versa is hard to tell, but it has much in common with that composer's gutsy, thick-textured

orchestral style. I find it a very satisfying piece, and this is a fine performance. The Third Symphony is in part, like the Second, a work "as hard as iron and steel" (the description is Prokofiev's). I have always found its organization disconcertingly episodic, and Martinon does little to knit the piece together. He plays each subsection for its own momentary character rather than trying to relate it to the whole. Inevitably, therefore, the piece moves in fits, starts, and what seem to be sentimental paroxysms. Symphony No. 4, though gentler by far than the Third, has the same flaw of episodic organization—which, again, Martinon does not or cannot disguise. The orchestra plays more satisfactorily than in the Third, but is even so a bit dilatory. (This performance, by the way, is of the original score of 1930 rather than the revised version of 1947.) Filling out portions of Volume I are Prokofiev's Overture on Hebrew Themes, arranged by the composer from his original sextet version of the same music, and the Russian Overture, Op. 72.

VOLUME II begins with Prokofiev's most nearly perfect venture in symphonic writing—the Fifth Symphony—which is, in my opinion, one of the finest twentieth-century works in its genre. Unfortunately, after a well-played first movement, Martinon's interpretive abilities and the orchestra's tenuous hold on professionalism give out. The conductor makes the chauvinistic and provincial error of superimposing his French aesthetic on this very un-French music, and the players do their bit by dropping back into their normal lassitude. The Sixth Symphony, a less watertight but at times even grander utterance than the Fifth, escapes full expression throughout this performance for many of the same reasons. So does the Seventh. In the latter, Martinon makes the complicated mistake (which he has made in other works) of playing it as if it were a ballet composed by Tchaikovsky and orchestrated by Ravel with the help of one of those Hollywood Viennese.

In a review that has perforce dealt with the entire symphonic output of a composer as important as Prokofiev, one feels the need for a summation. I find this difficult to achieve. This pair of Vox Boxes is more interesting for what it tells us about Jean Martinon and the National Orchestra of French Radio than for what it tells us about Prokofiev. And although Martinon's reading of the Second Symphony alone would make me buy the first volume, for the other works I'd rather pick and choose elsewhere in the catalog.

PROKOFIEV: *Symphony No. 1, in D Major, Op. 25* ("Classical"); *Symphony No. 2, in D Minor, Op. 40*; *Symphony No. 3, in C Minor, Op. 44*; *Symphony No. 4, in C Major, Op. 47*; *Overture on Hebrew Themes, Op. 34*; *Russian Overture, Op. 72*. National Orchestra of French Radio. Jean Martinon cond. Vox SVBX 5123 three discs \$9.95.

PROKOFIEV: *Symphony No. 5, in B-flat Major, Op. 100*; *Symphony No. 6, in E-flat Minor, Op. 111*; *Symphony No. 7, in C-sharp Minor, Op. 131*. National Orchestra of French Radio, Jean Martinon cond. Vox SVBX 5124 three discs \$9.95.

struments, and *Hymnos* for clarinet and piano—are in the other style, which is vehement and neo-post-dodecaphonic in atmosphere if not in technique, and which I find totally graceless and unattractive. If you heard his *Decline and Fall*, which used to be available on an Angel record, you will be familiar with this brand of Schoenbergian expressionist hysteria.

The attractive side of Maxwell Davies—sorry, it's another of those double-barreled English surnames *sans* hyphen, like Vaughan Williams—emerges in the compositions that take their inspiration from his keen interest in and knowledge of medieval and renaissance musical sources. *Antechrist*, a short piece for five instruments, and the longer *Missa Super L'Homme Armé*, which is not a Mass at all but trades on Mass-like glosses on the famous old popular tune, are of this type, and they are worth any amount of listening to. The *Missa* is, I think, the less successful of the two, because that too-facile, faceless hysteria wells up again toward the end of it. But *Antechrist* is a tiny masterpiece. Like the composer's earlier—and very beautiful—*Sinfonia* and String Quartet, which have regrettably never, to my knowledge, been recorded, it builds to magnificent purposes on fragments from the thirteenth century and earlier and reshapes its materials from a new and entirely cogent viewpoint. It also goes intellectually further than those earlier pieces in establishing a kind of second-order expressive distance from its origins, achieving a wickedly sardonic disruptiveness of style perfectly in keeping with the title, and reminiscent, in its different modern terms, of the "seditiousness" Beethoven's Second Symphony was accused of in its composer's time.

Stimulating stuff, then, superbly performed by Maxwell Davies' own contemporary music ensemble and flawlessly recorded by L'Oiseau-Lyre. *B.J.*

MESSIAEN: *Catalogue d'Oiseaux*. Jocy de Oliveira-Carvalho (piano). Vox SVBX 5464 four discs \$12.95.

Performance: **Sounds good, but . . .**
Recording: **Fair, but . . .**

Record reviews tend to be an inconclusive genre, and this is going to be one of the most infuriatingly inconclusive samples. Messiaen's voluminous *Bird Catalogue* is as absorbing and imaginative as any of his large-scale works, dazzling in its multi-level elaboration of nature's data. Jocy de Oliveira-Carvalho sounds like a dedicated and skillful exponent of the work, though, compelled as I am to review her performance without having the music in front of me, I cannot vouch for her accuracy. But either she or the Vox engineers or perhaps both have failed to make the music sound as exciting as it can—there is simply not enough color to the tone or freedom to the attack of the piano as it is reproduced here, even though Vox has added an unusual fourth disc to the box to cope with the wide dynamic range of the music.

And so I cannot conscientiously recommend that you go out and buy this recording, especially since two other versions have recently been released in Europe—one by Messiaen's collaborator and the co-dedicatée of the work, Yvonne Loriod, and the other by that excellent Messiaen pianist Robert Sherlaw Johnson—and one or the other of them is surely bound to put in an appearance here before long. *B.J.*

MOERAN: *Sinfonietta* (see HOLST)

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

MONTEVERDI: *Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda; Il Ballo Delle Ingrate*. Luigi Alva (tenor), Narrator in *Combattimento*; Heather Harper (soprano), Clorinda, Venus; Lillian Watson (soprano), Cupid; John Wakefield (tenor), Tancredi; Stafford Dean (bass), Pluto; Anne Howells (soprano), Ungrateful Soul; Members of the Ambrosian Singers (in *Ballo*); Leslie Pearson (harpichord, in *Combattimento*); Raymond Leppard (harpichord, in *Ballo*); Kenneth Heath (cello); Adrian Beers (double-bass); English Chamber Orchestra, Raymond Leppard cond. PHILIPS 6500 457 \$6.98.

Performance: **Outstanding**
Recording: **Very fine**

Although both *The Combat Between Tancredi and Clorinda* and *The Dance of the Ungrateful Women* come from Monteverdi's eighth book of madrigals, both works can be described as dramatic scenes or even one-act operas. The first is devoted to the highly emotional and affecting story of how Tancred unknowingly slays his beloved, having taken her for a Saracen soldier; *Ballo* is part dance and allegorically condemns women who won't submit to their lovers by drawing on the example of those ensconced in hell for their lack of feeling. Each is a superb work, and each has often been recorded. The present performances, which were taken from a five-disc "Monteverdi Madrigals" album (Philips 6799 006), are among the best I have ever heard and may be recommended without reservation. The *only* reason for not acquiring this particular disc would be that you already own (or intend to purchase) the complete five-record album. The sonics are superb, and complete texts and translations are included. *I.K.*

MOZART: *La Finta Giardiniera* (see Best of the Month, page 75)

OVERTON: *Pulsations* (1972). **TRIMBLE:** *In Praise of Diplomacy and Common Sense* (1965). Richard Frisch (baritone); The Ensemble, Dennis Russell Davies cond. COMPOSERS RECORDINGS INC. SD 298 \$5.95.

Performance: **Expert**
Recording: **Crisp and clean**

Hall Overton's premature death last year deprived American music of one of its most stimulating presences on both the creative and the teaching scene (he taught at both Juilliard and Yale School of Music). *Pulsations*, for a mixed chamber ensemble of strings, winds, and percussion, sums up in a sense Overton's preoccupation with achieving a personal creative synthesis of jazz and the so-called advanced contemporary idiom. Taking *Pulsations* on these terms, I'm not sure that he has succeeded, but the results, in any event, are fascinating and brilliant, especially in the jazz-style outbursts that emerge from recurrent serial quasi-recitativo material.

Lester Trimble's *In Praise of Diplomacy and Common Sense*, for baritone and percussion (predominantly) ensemble that functions also as speaking-singing chorus, is up against the problem of so many works based on journalistic coverage of crisis events. In this instance we have a montage from the 1960's of the horrors of the Congo and the Near East,

eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., and bits of the Warren Report on President Kennedy's assassination. The piece makes its point in a brilliantly cinematic way, complete with over-dubbed speaking voices in varied perspective, and one is left at the end stunned with what the so-called civilized human race has done and is doing to itself in our own lifetime. But, one asks, will this work and similar pieces—Martirano's *L's GA*—outlast even briefly the first-person memory of the events that gave them birth?

The performances are altogether superb, the recorded sound a bit dry but very clean. Baritone Richard Frisch is to be commended not only for his musicality, but for his enunciation, which drives home with great power every syllable of the text. *D.H.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

PROKOFIEV: *Lieutenant Kijé, Suite*. **KODÁLY:** *Háry János, Suite*. Dan Iordachescu (baritone); Philharmonia Orchestra, Erich Leinsdorf cond. SERAPHIM S 60209 \$2.98.

Performance: **Spectacular**
Recording: **Superb**

After fifteen years in Europe and America, Sergei Prokofiev returned to the Soviet Union in 1933 and became a citizen of his native land. His first assignment on home ground was to write a score for the satirical film *Lieutenant Kijé*, a movie about a fictitious officer of the Russian Army in czarist times whose name stayed on the lists because nobody had the nerve to tell the czar that he had himself created Kijé after misreading an aide's report. The movie deals with the fictive Kijé's adventures—his birth as a creature of bureaucracy; his love affair and elaborate wedding; a sleigh ride in a troika; and his death, which nobody need mourn since Kijé never really existed in the first place. The suite from this score is justly popular, as it evokes with panache the pomp and circumstance of upper-class life in a vanished St. Petersburg, the glitter of parades and lavish balls, the privileged life of titled ladies and dashing officers.

The suite has been recorded many times—once for RCA with the Boston Symphony by Leinsdorf himself—but never as engagingly as here. For one thing, the Romance and Troika episodes are performed for probably the first time on records as the composer intended—by an ardent baritone with a lusty voice, which surely describes Mr. Iordachescu. Even if your stock of standard master works already contains a *Lieutenant Kijé* Suite, you will want to own this one, played with a sumptuousness that yet does not smother the mockeries of the score under its weight of rich sound, in a spacious, almost startlingly brilliant recording.

The same is true of the suite from *Háry János*, which Leinsdorf also has recorded before, but never as spectacularly as on this occasion with the Philharmonia. Háry János makes a good companion for Lieutenant Kijé, being a fantasist where the other is a creature of fantasy, and having inspired an equally delightful set of musical episodes based on his imaginary adventures. Háry is the Hungarian hero of Kodály's opera about a tavern habitué who regales his fellow patrons with tales of his conquests not only of Napoleon but of the emperor's wife Marie Louise. The suite ignores the plot of the opera and concentrates on its background atmosphere—a musical

clock in the Viennese imperial palace, the tumult of the battle in which Háry defeats Napoleon, the nocturnal delights of Háry and a peasant girl friend, his vengeful punishment of the French emperor, and the final "Entrance of the Emperor and His Court," described by the composer as "an ironical march of triumph . . . not the Austrian reality but only a Hungarian peasant's way of imagining" such a ritual. None of these ironies are lost on Mr. Leinsdorf as he leads the Philharmonia through an alluring performance of the suite, bringing clarity to the exotic instrumental effects of the highly original orchestration usually lost under the ministrations of less loving hands. At Seraphim's bargain price of \$2.98, this spectacular double feature of musical caricatures should be hard to resist. *P.K.*

PUCCHINI: Operatic Arias (see Collections—LEONTYNE PRICE)



YEVGENY MOGILEVSKY
The best Rachmaninoff Third Concerto yet

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

RACHMANINOFF: *Piano Concerto No. 3, in D Minor, Op. 30*. Yevgeny Mogilevsky (piano); Moscow Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, Kiril Kondrashin cond. MELODY/A/ANGEL SR 40226 \$5.98.

Performance: **With loving care**
Recording: **Good**

As might be expected, the Rachmaninoff centennial year has brought an embarrassment of recorded riches. Only last November I praised quite unreservedly the Ashkenazy-Previn recording of the Third Piano Concerto (London CSA 2311). Now, here is Yevgeny Mogilevsky, the latest under-thirty Soviet pianist, collaborating with Kiril Kondrashin, who conducted the memorable 1958 Van Cliburn live concert recording (RCA LSC 2355). And they come through with what I find to be the best realization yet of this immensely fascinating work.

In many respects Mogilevsky and Kondrashin have accomplished a kind of Russian counterpart, with vastly updated sound, to the 1958 Cliburn performance; there is all the brilliance one could possibly ask for, the most loving care in details of phrasing and balance, and an all-pervading expressive warmth and feeling for the architecture of the work as a

whole. I wonder, indeed, whether young Mogilevsky has been coached by Sviatoslav Richter, for he has much of the flair for tonal coloration and dazzling passage work of Richter at his best.

I am reminded of Richter, too, in the fashioning of this recorded performance as a whole: it is like great chamber music. Yevgeny Mogilevsky is no boilermaker, but a superbly cultivated and brilliant musician, and Kondrashin gives him the kind of orchestral backing that fits his solo work hand-in-glove. The recorded sound, too, is of a more intimate character than has been usual with Soviet sonics, which have tended toward blowsy over-reverberance. In short, for me at least, a wonderful disc! *D.H.*

ROSSINI: La Pietra del Paragone

Test pressings of Rossini's *La Pietra del Paragone* (Vanguard VSD 71183-5) have finally arrived, and I can keep the promise I made in the June issue to provide a technical evaluation of the discs (the original review was based on advance stereo tapes).

To begin with, the set has been issued on three records, not four as was the original plan. The price is \$17.94. Every side runs between twenty-five and thirty-four minutes, which makes it quite a lot of music for the money, but what is more important is that there is really only minor degradation of the sound quality at the ends of these long sides. The quadraphonic recording is neither a surround job nor a mere ambient one. The action takes place in front of you and to the sides, sometimes somewhat to the rear on the sides, but the experience is still essentially a theatrical one: you are not dropped into the middle of a whirling mass of music. The recorded sound itself is first-class—clear, sharp, pleasing in tonal quality. Some of the balance problems I mentioned in June are still present (in stereo playback, at least), but most seem to have been adjusted. The orchestra sounds marvelous in both stereo and quadraphonic playback, but the solo voices, particularly in the recitatives, still seem slightly distant in stereo, though not so much so in four-channel. All in all, this is technically a superb job, and it is capped by some of the finest pressings I have heard from an American company. Vanguard really took extra care on this one, and it shows. *Eric Salzman*

ROSSINI: Operatic Arias (see Collections—MARILYN HORNE)

ROSSINI: Sonata No. 5, in E-flat Major; Sonata No. 6, in D Major (see BOTTESINI)

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

SCHUBERT: Schiller Songs. Der Jüngling am Bache; Sehnsucht; Das Mädchen aus der Fremde; An die Freude; Das Geheimnis; An den Frühling; Gruppe aus dem Tartarus; Die Bürgschaft; Die Götter Griechenlands; Der Pilgrim. Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (baritone); Gerald Moore (piano). DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530 306 \$6.98.

Performance: **Masterly**
Recording: **Excellent**

Here is another individual release from DG's gigantic two-volume collection of Schubert

songs, and it is an eminently sensible one. It is the only all-Schiller collection known to me. Since, however, Schiller's poetry did not possess in abundance the simplicity and natural songfulness of, say, Heine, Eichendorff, or even much of Goethe, these songs are likely to be of more interest to the specialist than to the general aficionado.

There are, of course, several surefire songs here. The stormy and majestic *Gruppe aus dem Tartarus* is a masterpiece by any yardstick, and, in its own way, the yearning, idyllic *Die Götter Griechenlands* is no less so. Two songs related in atmosphere and style. *Sehnsucht* and *Der Pilgrim*, express the poet's yearning for a world of idealism, a world whose unattainability is summed up in the final line of the latter: "Und das Dort ist niemals hier" ("And that place is never here").

The main problem is *Die Bürgschaft*, a long narrative poem about friendship and selfless sacrifice. It is one of the treasures of German literature, but even Schubert is defeated by its length and by its poetically perfect but musically limiting strophic construction, and the song remains, for all the mastery of these superb interpreters, a lengthy and not particularly absorbing musical recitative. *An die Freude* is Schubert's catchy and lightweight 1815 treatment of the *Ode to Joy* lyrics that Beethoven was to treat more profoundly a few years later.

The performances are outstanding in terms of clarity, poetic insight, and collaborative rapport. In the lyrical and contemplative songs Fischer-Dieskau has no peer. He can be excessively dramatic for the song's purposes (as in *Der Jüngling am Bache*), and some climaxes find him straining for range and volume, but his superior interpretive gifts generally triumph over vocal limitations to achieve the essence of poetic and musical truth. Gerald Moore's contribution is above criticism.

G.J.

RECORDINGS OF SPECIAL MERIT

SCHUBERT: *Sonata in A Major (D. 959)*; *German Dances ("Ländler"), Op. 171 (D. 790)*. Alfred Brendel (piano). PHILIPS 6500 284 \$6.98.

SCHUBERT: *Sonata in B-flat Major (D. 960)*; *Fantasia in C Major, Op. 15 (D. 760, "Wanderer")*. Alfred Brendel (piano). Philips 6500 285 \$6.98.

Performances: **Alt Wien**
Recordings: **Seductive**

Whatever is left of the old Classic-Romantic tradition is so suspect at this point that one approaches recordings like these with a certain sense of disbelief. Brendel is no old-timer—he was born in 1931—but his background just about covers the old Austrian Empire and his roots are impeccably *alt Wien*.

I don't know any other pianist with such a total sense of identification with the long and late Schubert sonatas. Everyone agrees that the B-flat and A Major Sonatas of Schubert are masterworks, but how often do they turn out (if they turn up at all) to be meandering, faintly boring, and not quite in focus? Here they have their full status: their supple and songful poetry, their divine and epic simplicity—a plain way of speaking poetry. Brendel has the special gift for catching the beauty of the Schubert moment without losing the flow and the sense of the larger Classical form.

(Continued overleaf)

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The "Wanderer" Fantasy is more than just a bonus on side two of the B-flat Sonata. Its concision and outgoing virtuosic qualities are in curious contrast to the larger, more intimate flow of the sonatas. If there was any doubt that Brendel is the master of these aspects of Schubert as well, it should be quickly dispelled. The "Wanderer" is as strong, concentrated, and outgoing as the sonatas are subtle, artful, and reflective. However—there is *one* weakness in Brendel's approach—the German dances on the overside of the A Major Sonata lack a distinctively dance-like impulse. Both of these recordings are attractive sonically. *E.S.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

SCHUMANN: *Symphony No. 3, in E-flat Major, Op. 97 ("Rhenish"); Symphony in G Minor ("Zwickau," unfinished).* New Philharmonia Orchestra, Eliahu Inbal cond. PHILIPS 6500 298 \$6.98.

Performance: **Wonderful**
Recording: **Fine**

This disc concludes young Israeli conductor Eliahu Inbal's traversal of the four Schumann symphonies with the tricky "Rhenish" and a fascinating bit of juvenilia heretofore virtually unknown and of course unrecorded.

Not since Bruno Walter and the New York Philharmonic recorded it thirty years ago have I heard a reading of the "Rhenish" that moves and breathes as beautifully as this one by Mr. Inbal. In general, I find, the majority of readings of the "Rhenish" tend on the one hand toward the lumpy and sentimental, or, on the other, toward being overwrought in the fast movements and ill at ease in the slow ones. But by some miracle of musical alchemy, Inbal makes everything work: the music moves without seeming jumpy, the middle movements have warmth without sliding into gooey sentimentality, the "cathedral" movement is suitably imposing without becoming stuffy, and the finale fairly seethes with *joie de vivre* without being manic about it.

By way of bonus, the second side of the disc concludes with part of Schumann's first attempt at a symphony, begun in Heidelberg in his twentieth year and actually performed in Zwickau, thanks to the good offices of Friedrich Wieck, then Schumann's mentor and in time to become his violently unwilling father-in-law. A major masterpiece this music is not, but it has a fine surge and swing—with an occasional Weberian tincture—that presage the mature composer to come. (There is a new recording of this work on BASF due next month, which will, apparently, include more of the music than is given here.)

The New Philharmonia players respond superbly to every nuance of Inbal's conception of the music, and the whole musical achievement is suitably glorified with flawlessly beautiful recorded sound. *D.H.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

SCRIABIN: *Études, Op. 8, Nos. 2, 8, 10, 11; Études, Op. 42, Nos. 3, 4, 5; Feuillet d'Album, Op. 45, No. 1; Two Poems, Op. 69; Sonata No. 10, Op. 70; Vers la Flamme, Op. 72.* Vladimir Horowitz (piano). COLUMBIA M 31620 \$5.98, © MA 31620 \$6.98, © MT 31620 \$6.98.

Performance: **Superb!**
Recording: **Good**

Were I told that my proverbial "desert island

record library" could include only a single disc of Scriabin's music, this latest from Vladimir Horowitz certainly would be it—and not only because of the phenomenal performances it contains, but also because virtually the entire range of Scriabin's musical language is represented on its two sides.

Horowitz begins with the lyrical and very slight *Album Leaf* in E-flat, then turns his attention to some of the best post-Chopin-style pieces from the Op. 8 *Études*; the lovely No. 8 in A-flat and the No. 10 in D-flat, whose chromatic chordal passages are played here with extraordinary mastery, are the high points of this group. Side one concludes with three prime samplings from the middle-period Op. 42 *Études*, progressing from gossamer delicacy through the lyrical to the passionately assertive. It is the gossamer piece, No. 3—sometimes called the "Mosquito" *Étude*—that offers some of the most extraordinary



ELIAHU INBAL
Makes everything work in the "Rhenish"

pianism on this extraordinary disc. Such *staccato-pianissimo* playing must be heard to be believed.

Side two is devoted wholly to the last major Scriabin piano works, beginning with the Tenth Sonata, which was originally issued as part of the two-disc set from Horowitz's 1966 Carnegie Hall concert. It is good to have a remastering minus the intrusive applause that marred the original issue, and there can be no question that this stands as one of Horowitz's most impassioned, brilliant, and poetic performances. The music itself is essentially metamorphic development of an initial "call" motif and is less of a sonata in the Classical sense than one in the generic sense of a "sound piece." The Horowitz rendering of the enchanted trills at the sonata's climactic peak simply beggars description. The Two Poems, Op. 69, are slight, evanescent affairs, one quietly enigmatic, the other with a suggestion of fireworks display (this is a first LP recording, to the best of my knowledge). As if the performance of the Tenth Sonata were not enough, Horowitz finishes off his program with *Vers la Flamme (Toward the Flame)*, a sort of *cre-scendo* piece related in spirit to the Tenth Sonata, in which he almost literally burns up the keyboard in a stupendous display of combined dynamic wizardry and high-voltage intensity of phrasing and rhythmic pattern.

All told, this is an extraordinary recorded performance, marked by good, clean sound throughout, and adding up to just about the ideal introduction to the music of Alexander Scriabin. *D.H.*

STOLZ: *Blumenlieder, Op. 50* (see Collections—ROBERT STOLZ)

TATE: *Apparitions; Three Gaelic Ballads* (see HODDINOTT)

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Quartet No. 1, in D Major, Op. 11; Quartet in B-flat Major.* Borodin String Quartet. MELODIYA/ANGEL SR 40222 \$5.98.

Performance: **Expert**
Recording: **Very good**

Originally written for a benefit concert whose purpose was to make the composer's own financial condition a little more stable, Tchaikovsky's First Quartet has become famous for its *andante cantabile*, which has been murdered by almost every combination of instruments imaginable. When Leo Tolstoy heard it, in the composer's presence, tears streamed down his face, and Madame von Meck (later to become Tchaikovsky's patron) was "filled with longing for something mysterious, inexplicable and at the same time marvelous," which took her breath away and sent "a shiver through me from head to toe." The famous *andante* is perhaps too familiar to evoke such reactions in us any more, but this quartet has other virtues. The folksy third movement is particularly delightful, and the whole work is given expert treatment on this record by the Borodin Quartet, whose members have been playing in Russia and touring the world to acclaim for a quarter of a century. The Droic Quartet's razor-sharp performance on Deutsche Grammophon is perhaps a mite more stirring, but the Borodin musicians do right enough by their countryman.

Filling out the second side of this disc is the Quartet in B-flat, a student work of a far more introspective and intimate—almost religious—nature. All that survives of the original manuscript is the *allegro*, but that is a substantial piece of writing in itself. Here Tchaikovsky turned to a folk tune, as he was later to do for the *andante cantabile* of the First Quartet, transmuting the raw material to a poignant eloquence in a treatment which, even though he was still a boy when he worked on it, is instantly recognizable as his own. The playing here is appropriately subtle. *P.K.*

TELEMANN: *Concerto in F Major for Horn, Flute, Harpsichord, and Bassoon* (see BOISMORTIER)

TRIMBLE: *In Praise of Diplomacy and Common Sense* (see OVERTON)

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

VERDI: *Giovanna d'Arco.* Placido Domingo (tenor), Carlo Vili; Sherrill Milnes (baritone), Giacomo; Montserrat Caballé (soprano), Giovanna; Keith Erwen (tenor), Delil; Robert Lloyd (bass), Talbot; Ambrosian Opera Chorus and London Symphony Orchestra, James Levine cond. ANGEL SCL 3791 three discs \$17.98.

Performance: **Good**
Recording: **Very good**

Giovanna d'Arco (1845) was Verdi's seventh

opera, following *Ernani* and *I Due Foscari*, both introduced in 1844. The libretto came from the facile hands of Temistocle Solera, on whom Verdi generally called when he wanted a sprawling epic reduced to manageable dimensions. As he was to do with the later *Attila*, Solera pursued his task with excessive zeal: his libretto bears hardly a trace of its literary source, Schiller's *The Maid of Orleans*. Historical inaccuracies are not the point (the Schiller drama itself was far removed from history), but Solera decimated the dramatic personae, eliminated much of the pageantry, and, in fact, reduced the action to the level of a domestic tragedy. Aside from two roles of small consequence, the opera's cast consists of Joan of Arc (Giovanna), her perplexed, hostile, but eventually contrite father, Jacques (Giacomo), and the young King Charles (Carlo), who in this opera represents such love interest as Joan of Arc is allowed to have in pursuit of her heroic mission.

Musically, *Giovanna d'Arco* is a mixture of soaring melodies, unmistakable signs of superb theatricality, and occasional crudities—all characteristic of early Verdi. There are a fine overture, several outstanding arias for the three principals, some moderately effective ensembles, and martial scenes of stirring vigor. There is also a great deal of choral music: patriotic choruses (echoing the spirit of Garibaldi and Cavour, in Verdi's customary manner), heavenly choruses to inspire Joan, and demonic ones to tempt or to dissuade her. The last are the least successful, particularly the "Tu sei bella" passage in the prologue, which is a lilting three-eight tarantella and, of course, singularly undemonic. Such flaws, however, are relatively insignificant: *Giovanna d'Arco* is a viable and enjoyable opera in its historical context, and its first complete recording merits praise in this era of excessive repertoire duplications.

The Angel set offers the recording industry's all-purpose trio of principals and the Metropolitan Opera's James Levine in his first major recording assignment. He brings to his task the brisk efficiency characteristic of his local work: undeniable theatrical flair, lively pacing, precision, strong rhythmic definition. There is a lack of precision, however, in the way Verdi's specific markings are followed or, rather, ignored: early in the prologue, for example, a choral attack marked *tutta forza* ("Maledetti cui spinge...") sounds weak as a result of such an oversight, and similar carefully specified Verdian instructions are ignored by Sherrill Milnes in his aria "Franco son io" and Montserrat Caballé in the finale of Act 2. Stronger leadership would have benefited the music in these instances. And a mellower, more restraining approach would have been desirable in some of the *marziale* passages (the overture and the finale of the prologue are two instances), where Mr. Levine seems to overemphasize the coarseness of the orchestral writing.

The singing, by and large, is very good. Caballé sounds somewhat tentative in her first aria, "Sempre all'alba," particularly in a rather awkwardly written cadenza-like passage (which was omitted in Renata Tebaldi's aria-disc rendition released some years ago), but she floats some lovely pianissimos in "O fatidica foresta" (Act 1), and does her dying scene exquisitely. As virtually always, Plácido Domingo's singing is tasteful, artistic, and tonally pleasing; my only reservation concerns his less than absolutely clear pointing of the words. Sherrill Milnes, on the other hand,

fails to do full justice to his part, one of Verdi's great baritone-father roles; a more sensuous tone and more awareness of nuances would have made his contribution better than just good routine.

In sum, we have a performance here that is neither as exciting nor as fully idiomatic as it could have been. It is nonetheless a laudable achievement, absolutely complete, and it makes a good case for a long-neglected opera that has not only a great deal of attractive music but also anticipations of *La Traviata*, *Rigoletto*, *La Forza del Destino*, and even *Otello*. Verdians will love it, and opera collectors will be pleased to discover it. G.J.

WEISS: *Music for Lute* (see Best of the Month, page 76)

ZELENKA: *Sonata V, in F Major, for Two Oboes, Bassoon, and Continuo* (see BOISMORTIER)

COLLECTIONS

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

HEINZ HOLLIGER: *Oboe Concertos*. Leclair: *Concerto in C Major, Op. 7, No. 3*. A. Marcello: *Concerto in D Minor*. Vivaldi: *Concerto in D Minor (P. 259)*. Telemann: *Concerto in G Major for Oboe d'Amore, Strings, and Continuo*. Heinz Holliger (oboe and oboe d'amore); Christiane Jaccottet (harpsichord continuo); members of the Dresden State Orchestra, Vittorio Negri cond. PHILIPS 6500 413 \$6.98.

Performance: **Exquisite**
Recording: **Excellent**

That silly old description of an oboe as "an ill wind that nobody blows good" could not be demolished more effectively than by summoning up the names of some of the instrument's greatest exponents of our day: Leon Goossens, Evelyn Rothwell, and Roger Lord from England, Pierre Pierlot from France, Helmut Winschermann from Germany, and Robert Bloom, John deLancie, Harold and Ralph Gomberg from our country are among those who have established international reputations as oboists, either with orchestras or as soloists. Within the last ten years Heinz Holliger, who was born in Switzerland in 1939, has joined this list: as a soloist he is already at the very top of his profession. He is also well known now as a composer, and he appears to be following both careers with extraordinary success. His performing interests are wide, embracing the oboe literature from the Baroque to the most complex scores of our own time. This diversity may be readily seen in his equally wide recorded output, to which is now added a spectacular disc of Baroque oboe concertos.

The album title, "Famous Oboe Concertos," perhaps really applies only to the Marcello, but the remaining concertos by Leclair, Telemann (for oboe d'amore, tonally veiled and pitched slightly lower than the normal oboe), and Vivaldi are at least relatively well known from previous recordings. Holliger himself has previously recorded both the Marcello and the Leclair (the latter has also received a number of recordings on the flute), but the present versions are, from the standpoints of solo virtuosity and orchestral finesse, stylistically and technically far superior achievements.

To all four works, Holliger brings an ex-

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traordinary variety of tonal shadings and articulations. One wonders how the man is able to breathe. Some of his long-line phrases do run counter to Baroque performance aesthetics; otherwise, however, stylistic requirements, including some effective if not fully exploited (that is, conservative) embellishments of the solo line, are well taken care of. The choice of tempos throughout is excellent, the orchestral contribution is splendidly vital, transparent, and dance-like, and the audible, well-balanced harpsichord continuo is most enjoyably handled by Holliger's Swiss compatriot, Christiane Jaccottet. The recorded sound is richly detailed, warm, and impeccably clean, beautifully complementing one of the most exquisite oboe performances I have ever heard. I.K.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

MARILYN HORNE: *Rossini Arias. The Siege of Corinth: Avanziam . . . Sei tu che stendi, O Dio (Neocle's Scene, Act III); L'ora fatal s'appressa . . . Giusto ciel (Pamira's Prayer, Act III). La Donna del Lago: Mura felici (Act I); Tanti affetti (Finale).* Marilyn Horne (mezzo-soprano); Ambrosian Opera Chorus and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Henry Lewis cond. LONDON OS 26305 \$5.98.

Performance: **Triumphant**
Recording: **Excellent**

Spectacular is the word for Marilyn Horne's achievement here. These Rossini excerpts offer the most intricately contrived, the most excessively ornamented, and the widest-ranging vocal music imaginable, replete with hazardous leaps, trills, and roulades. Miss Horne triumphs over them fearlessly, without compromising either tonal beauty or musical exactitude, in this splendid display of golden-age-quality singing. It is not without a certain degree of exhibitionism, but can we blame a singer for showing off skills she alone possesses to such a virtuosic degree?

Oh yes, the music. *La Donna del Lago* (1819) and *The Siege of Corinth* (the 1826 revision of the earlier *Maometto II*) are obscure but far from undistinguished Rossini. Rumor has it that the latter work—which was rescued from oblivion by Thomas Schippers in 1969 and became a vehicle for Beverly Sills—is due for a Met revival.) Both operas are represented here by music allotted to contralto (male?) and soprano characters, and Miss Horne handles the necessary vocal quick change with remarkable ease. Neocle's Scene, which takes up the entire first side, seems a bit long for its musical interest. The Prayer is quite beautiful, recalling certain better-known passages from *Norma*—except that it antedated the Bellini opera by more than a decade. "Tanti affetti" is a brilliant rondo finale Miss Horne has been using as an insert number for the Lesson Scene of *The Barber of Seville*.

The glorious voice is treated to worthy support from conductor Lewis, who realizes the orchestral felicities with a sure hand. G.J.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

MUSIC FROM THE COURT OF FERDINAND AND ISABELLA. Anon.: *Dondé se sufre, Juana; El cervel; Sola me dexaste—Minno amor, dexiste ay; L'amor, donna, ch'io te porto; Guarda, donna, el mio tormento; Ave, Virgo, gratia plena; Dios, ti salve, cruz preciosa; Jançu, Janto.* Alonso (attrib.): *La*

tricotea sa'Martín la vea. Verardi: *Viva el gran Re Don Fernando con la Reina Doña Isabella.* Alva: *Ut queant laxis.* Escobar: *Virgen bendita sin par; Sumens illud.* Milán: *Fantasia XI: Aquel caballero, madre.* Mudarra: *Claros y frescos rios; Tiento.* Anchieta: *En memoria d'Alexandre.* Santa Maria: *Fantasia I, XI, XXV.* d'Ascanio (Josquin des Prés): *In te Domine speravi.* Cabezón: *Diferencias sobre la gallarda milanese.* Ortiz: *Recercada quarta; Recercada settima.* Encina: *Triste España.* Early Music Consort of London, David Munrow cond. ANGEL S 36926 \$5.98.

Performance: **Exceptional**
Recording: **Excellent**

This is a superb collection of music associated with the Spanish court of Ferdinand II, King of Castile, and his wife Isabella, patron of Columbus. The works contained here are not all in chronological order, and among them is



HEINZ HOLLIGER
Exquisite oboe concertos

music somewhat past the time of the two rulers (for example, the instrumental *recercadas* published mid-sixteenth century by Diego Ortiz). The variety is extraordinary: pieces for outside festivities and more intimate indoor entertainment, religious songs and light-hearted *frottolas*, individual voices and combinations of voices as well as instrumental pieces played on the vihuela, harpsichord, clavichord, regal, viol, recorder, and consorts of Renaissance wind instruments. The performances (no individual participants are named, which is a shame) are quite marvelous, but then one may expect that from David Munrow and his group—he was responsible for the "Henry VIII and His Six Wives" television production soundtrack.

Not only are all the works sung and played with unusual sensitivity, but there also has been far more attention paid to stylistic requirements than on most Renaissance discs, certainly more than on any previous Spanish anthology from this historical period. A good example of this is the beginning of the disc's second side, a *villancico* by Luis de Milán in which the solo tenor adds some extraordinarily well-conceived florid embellishments to his part. But this is far from the only example of this kind of stylistic expertise: the album abounds with such niceties. The instrumental playing and singing are vivid, colorful, and

appropriately intense and striking. Texts, translations, and excellent annotations are provided. Most highly recommended. I.K.

MUSIC OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

Limburgia: *Motet, "Ave Maria."* **Dunstable:** *Antifon, "Alma redemptoris mater."* **Dufay:** *Canzona, "Vergine bella"; Hymnus in Adventu Domini, "Conditor alme siderum"; Motet, "Nuper rosarium flores."* **Gregorian Chant:** *Introit, "Terribilis est."* Anon.: *Salve Regina.* Elly Ameling (soprano); Theo Altmeyer, Wilfred Brown, Bernard Michaelis, Hans-Joachim Rotzsch (tenors); Willi Gesell, Hans-Martin Linde (baritones); Soloists of the Tölzer Boys Choir, Gerhard Schmidt-Gaden dir.; Members of the Collegium Aureum. BASF HB 20349 \$5.98.

Performance: **Competent**
Recording: **Very good**

This curious collection would appear to be an album in search of a proper title. The cover and album spine proclaim Dufay as the principal composer and *Domweihmotette für Florenz* (Motet for the Consecration of the Cathedral of Florence, Italy) as the chief work; but Dufay's "Nuper rosarium flores" is the only piece here written specifically for that Florentine event of 1436, and it is not one of any great duration. The program annotations talk vaguely about fifteenth-century *Ars Nova* but fail to connect the other composers with any logic, although Johannes de Limburgia, who may have lived in Italy, and John Dunstable, an Englishman, were contemporaries of Dufay. Nor do the notes, which are trilingual but do not include any texts at all, provide the information that the Gregorian introit, "Terribilis est," serves in fact as the tune for the lower vocal parts of the Dufay consecration motet, which follows it on the disc. There is as well no itemized list of what performers sing what pieces (instruments are used exclusively in the anonymous *Salve Regina*; the Boys Choir soloists are heard only in the Dufay isorhythmic motet), and even the performances, though perfectly suitable, have no special features to recommend them other than that they are earnest. The tempos throughout are rather slow and pleasantly lyrical, but more varied pacing might have prevented the program (which incidentally has been assembled from several Harmonia Mundi collections previously issued in Europe) from sounding so dull. I.K.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

LEONTYNE PRICE: *Puccini Heroines. La Bohème: Sì, mi chiamano Mimì; Donde lieta uscì; Quando me'n vo'. Edgar: Addio, mio dolce amor. La Rondine: Ore dolci e divine. Tosca: Vissi d'arte. Manon Lescaut: In quelle trine morbide; Sola, perduta, abbandonata. Le Villi: Se come voi piccina. Madame Butterfly: Un bel dì. La Fanciulla del West: Laggiù nel Soledad.* Leontyne Price (soprano); New Philharmonia Orchestra, Edward Downes cond. RCA LSC 3337 \$5.98.

Performance: **Stunning**
Recording: **Excellent**

Leontyne Price has not been as much in view in recent seasons as her many fans have wished. There have been recordings, to be sure, but some of these have shown the soprano off her best form. The doubts and concerns may now be laid to rest: in her latest

recorded recital the diva emerges in absolutely stunning form. Her "juicy lyric" tones (the artist's own description) have taken on a new lightness: they are produced effortlessly and soar into the high register with the familiar sovereign freedom.

Lest one dismiss the disc as just another Puccini recital, it should be made clear that the music includes not only Price specialties (Tosca, Butterfly, Fanciulla), but also selections from roles she has not previously essayed (Mimi, Manon Lescaut, La Rondine) and even arias from Puccini's still relatively unfamiliar earliest operas, *Le Villi* and *Edgar*. The entire program is sustained on an exalted artistic level, tonally luminous, refined in phrasing, sensitively controlled in dynamics from ethereal *piano* to triumphant and undistorted *forte*. There is always an intelligent projection of character: Miss Price's Mimi is delicate and poignant, her Manon is fervent and desperate, her Tosca—in the "*Vissi d'arte*," at least—is humbly immersed in prayer. Only Musetta's Waltz does not come off with a total spontaneity, but there, too, the singing cannot be faulted. And in purity, security, and marvelous control Miss Price displays strength after strength in this exceptional program. "Puccini Heroines" offers the rare phenomenon of a great artist artistically rejuvenated at the peak of her career.

Ordinarily I distrust liner notes of such effusive praise as is lavished upon this record by Speight Jenkins, but I cannot take issue with his observations. The finely detailed orchestral accompaniments match the unusual sensitivity of the vocal performances, the sound is excellent, and texts are supplied with the disc. G.J.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

THE LAST NIGHT OF THE PROMS. Berlioz: *Les Troyens: Hail, All Hail to the Queen.* Wagner: *Wesendonck Lieder: Träume: Schmerzen.* Mendelssohn: *Octet in E-flat Major, Op. 20: Scherzo.* Walton: *A Song for the Lord Mayor's Table: The Contrast: Rhyme.* Elgar: *Pomp and Circumstance, March in D Major, Op. 39, No. 1.* Williamson: *The Stone Wall.* Arne: *Rule, Britannia.* Parry: *Jerusalem.* Anon.: *God Save the Queen.* Jessye Norman (soprano, in Wagner): Elizabeth Bainbridge (mezzo-soprano, in Walton and Arne); BBC Chorus. BBC Choral Society, and BBC Symphony Orchestra, Colin Davis cond. PHILIPS 6588 011 \$6.98.

Performance: **Rousing, and more**
Recording: **Excellent live**

Here is another massive dollop of mass hysteria from London's famous Promenade Concerts, and in spite of myself I enjoyed every minute of it. The first such disc, released a year or so back, must have been a great success, or it would not have had a successor. Most of the music included in this second volume is new, so collectors need not be afraid of duplication.

Essentially, this is a record you buy for atmosphere rather than purely musical considerations. But there are artistic rewards here too. Unlike his predecessor at the Proms—Sir Malcolm Sargent—Colin Davis is not only a charismatic figure but also a first-rate musician, and his performances on this record, always good, rise in the Mendelssohn and in one or two other pieces to a rare level of poetry and imagination. And then it was a stroke of something like genius on the part of

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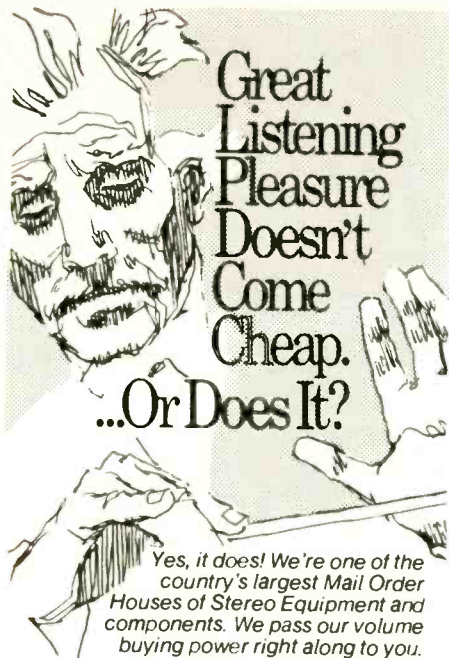
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the BBC, which runs the concerts, to commission Malcolm Williamson to write a sort of mini-opera, *The Stone Wall*, for the 1971 Last Night. His piece, a paradigm of telling simplicity, employs the full resources of the audience of 6,000, and Davis puts it together with fascinating skill.

There are some minor annoyances. The words in the vocal pieces, not given anywhere on the jacket, are hard to catch. But in *Rule, Britannia* the audience, as always, can be clearly heard singing "Britannia rules the waves." That's *not* what it says: the correct text is "Britannia rule the waves," an imperative or a subjunctive or something, and I keep wishing Davis or someone would make a short admonition to this effect. But don't worry about nasty, pedantic old me. As a sheer breath-catcher, and as a taste of a real warts-and-all musical culture, the record will do very well as it is.

B.J.

RUSSIAN OPERA OVERTURES. Rimsky-Korsakov: *Overtures to Sadko, May Night, The Tsar's Bride, The Maid of Pskov.* Glinka: *Overture to Ruslan and Ludmila.* Borodin: *Overture to Prince Igor.* Mussorgsky: *Overture to Khovanshchina.* Bolshoi Theater Orchestra, Yevgeny Svetlanov cond. MELODIYA/ANGEL SR 40221 \$5.98.

Performance: **Excellent**

Recording: **Excellent**

I am always intrigued by the difference between performances of operatic music done by conductors who function primarily in the theater and those by conductors whose home is the concert hall. One hears the same notes, but different music!

This recording is a good case in point. You would not have to read the liner notes to be aware that the ethos of these performances is theatrical. The atmosphere of each overture clearly implies that a curtain is about to rise, evoking the image of an orchestra pit, dim house lighting, and the high reaches of darkened boxes where an audience listens, eagerly anticipating the stage action.

The performances are all exciting. They are surcharged with drama, tend toward fast tempos, and (as is usually true in the opera house) sometimes sacrifice polish to thrust. I don't think I've ever heard the *Ruslan and Ludmila* overture played so fast, and I'm glad I don't have to play it myself. But it's all functional and very musical as well.

L.T.

ROBERT STOLZ: Gala Concert. Stolz: *Gruss aus Wien; Schenk Mir Dein Herz; Vor Meinem Vaterhaus.* Johann Strauss: *Die Fledermaus: Overture.* Johann Strauss, Sr.: *Radetzky March.* Lehár: *Gold and Silver Waltz; Friederike; O Mädchen, Mein Mädchen.* Kálmán: *Der Zigeunerprimas: Waltzes.* Jurek: *Deutschmeister Regiment March.* Heinz Hoppe (tenor); symphony orchestra, Robert Stolz cond. BASF KBB 21121 \$5.98.

STOLZ: Blumenlieder, Op. 500. Anneliese Rothenberger (soprano); Günther Weissenborn (piano); orchestra, Robert Stolz cond. BASF KBB 21458 \$5.98.

Performances: **Con amore**

Recordings: **Excellent**

Both of these discs appear to be "spin-offs" from recent television productions involving Robert Stolz, one of music's remarkable non-agenarians. In the "Gala Concert," in addition to conducting three selections from his

own vast output, Stolz presents works by his predecessors in Vienna's magic operetta chain: the Strausses, Lehár, and Kálmán. He conducts the three marches with admirable zest, and the extended Lehár and Kálmán waltzes with the expected idiomatic mastery, though with uncommonly broad rubatos. The *Fledermaus* overture is given in Stolz's own "arrangement," which accommodates the score to the resources of a less than full-size symphony orchestra. (No doubt, Strauss himself had no larger orchestra at his command, but our ears by now are spoiled by the richer sound.) Heinz Hoppe sings his three songs in an effective, schmaltzy style, though his "*O Mädchen, Mein Mädchen*" is not seductive enough.

The *Blumenlieder* is a cycle of eighteen brief songs (with introduction and epilogue) inspired by that many different flowers. Apparently composed many years ago, it is a charming idea, its execution tasteful and devoid of excessive sentimentality. Still, the entire sequence may prove too sweet for some tastes. Miss Rothenberger sings enchantingly, and the sound is excellent on both discs. The notes, however, are in German only—a most unwise procedure if this new label wishes to build an American following.

G.J.

RENATA TEBALDI: In Concert. Donizetti: *Me voglio fa 'na casa.* Mascagni: *La tua stella; Serenata.* Tosti: *Sogno.* Rossini: *L'Invito-Bolero.* Zandonai: *L'Assiuolo.* Cimara: *Stornello.* Ponchielli: *Non leggevamo insieme.* Pergolesi: *Se tu m'ami.* Paradies: *M'ha presa alla sua ragna.* Scarlatti: *O cessate di piangermi.* Gluck: *O del mio dolce ardor.* Ricci: *Il carrettiere del Vomero.* Marcadante: *La sposa del marinaio.* Bellini: *Malinconia, ninfa gentile.* Puccini: *E l'Uccellino.* Renata Tebaldi (soprano); Richard Bonyngé (piano). LONDON OS 26303 \$5.98.

Performance: **Enjoyable**

Recording: **Good**

"Tebaldi in Concert" offers a program similar to those given by the diva in various American cities during the 1972-1973 season. This is music of Romantic sentiments and strong emotions, requiring an interpretation of flowing, Mediterranean lyricism. The songs have been carefully chosen to explore the soprano's middle range, which is warm, rich, and beautifully expressive. It is easy to see that the positive aspects of her kind of vocal art combined with the glowing Tebaldi stage presence can work a great deal of magic on a concert audience.

But the dazzle is somewhat muted in the absence of the visual element, for many of the songs are musically unsubstantial and not very satisfying. A few of them, though, are of unusual interest. The unfamiliar *Sogno* carries the unerring stamp of Tosti's insinuating mastery, the Zandonai song is sensitively atmospheric, Mascagni's *Serenata* and Puccini's *L'Uccellino* are little gems, and, of course, the Pergolesi, Scarlatti, and Gluck items are long-admired bel canto staples. The best songs, it so happens, also offer the best examples of Tebaldi's singing; the one exception is the otherwise uninteresting Ponchielli song, which the artist crowns with a very lovely sustained piano ending.

Richard Bonyngé, who has probably uncovered some of these half-buried semi-treasures, accompanies them lovingly. The notes by Gerald Fitzgerald are helpful, but texts should also have been supplied.

G.J.

David Hall
listens critically to
**THE PHILADELPHIA
ON QUADRADISCS**

*Philadelphia's Town Hall, 1973:
conductor Ormandy and the orchestra
at play in the multitudinous
forest of the microphones*



Adrian Seidel for RCA

RCA HAS BEEN putting out its compatible discrete four-channel CD-4 Quadradiscs since mid-fall of last year, and I have commented on several of them on the basis of two-channel stereo playback. I have finally been able to hear these discs and the three others listed below in four-channel playback with the proper CD-4 demodulation equipment, and I must say that the playback results, as sheer sound, are simply stunning. In general, and with the exception of the "Bach's Greatest Fugues" album, which divides wind-brass choirs into left and right components, the same basic orchestral setup seems to have been used for all the Philadelphia Orchestra recordings: violins to the left, woodwinds spread across front center, percussion placed rear center, brass to the right rear together with string basses, and cellos and violas right front. (It should be understood that the "rear" referred to here is the rear of the orchestra in its normal stage position as heard by the listener in front of it, not the area behind the listener.) There has been no attempt to produce a "surround" sound here. Even the Bach disc, with its divided wind choirs, limits itself to a sort of "U"-shaped sound-source arrangement in which the orchestral spread at its extremes emerges very sharply from left and right in dialogue episodes. The sound coming from the rear speaker, then, is essentially supportive and ambient, and it materially enhances the space illusion without in any way falsifying the orchestra's position or muddying the musical texture.

As heard through a Panasonic SE-405 CD-4 System disc demodulator and its associated EPC-450C phono cartridge, the sound of these performances comes forth with astounding transparency and body. In short, the system works—and superbly. The above comments can be applied just about equally to all the Quadradiscs I have heard thus far. Musical evaluation of the discs is a more individual thing, however—as is, to a certain extent, the recorded sound when *not* heard through CD-4 equipment. These matters I'll take up for each disc separately.

The Bach fugues, heard even in two-channel stereo, make glorious sounds. Whether one is for or against orchestral transcriptions of Bach organ works in general, one must admit that this four-channel

disc makes the most of the music's antiphonal potentialities. The Arthur Harris transcriptions are generally lighter and more Baroque-organ-like in texture than most of the well-known transcriptions of the past by Elgar, Respighi, Schoenberg, Wood, Caillet, Stokowski, and Ormandy himself, except for some rather understandable moments of over-flamboyance, such as in the cadenza episode of the A Minor Fugue. The performances are turned out with the highest possible Philadelphia tonal gloss and super-brilliant execution. The recorded sound matches these qualities in every respect, with full-bodied presence, a warmly reverberant acoustic, and clarity of texture. But not even the "fabulous Philadelphians" can match a first-rate Baroque organ when it comes to bringing punch and rhythmic vitality to this particular music.

Together with its companion pieces, the *Capriccio Espagnol* and the *Russian Easter Overture*, *Scheherazade* represents the peak of Rimsky-Korsakov's achievement as virtuoso composer and orchestrator, and, understandably, the work has remained a special challenge for virtuoso conductors, orchestras, and even recording teams. This has been so from the earliest Stokowski-Philadelphia Victor recording of the late Twenties right up to this latest Philadelphia venture with Ormandy conducting.

As heard in two-channel stereo, the record seems to demonstrate the broadest possible "spread" of string tone, with the multiplicity of solo episodes—in the *Kalendar Prince* movement particularly—emerging as points and lines of brightness on the luminous string-tonal canvas. In general, there seems to be a tendency to soft-pedal low percussion transients (I don't hear much bass drum impact in the *Festival at Bagdad*) and to rely on the string body and mid- and low-range brasses to sustain the tonal body as a whole.

The Ormandy performance stresses the languor and sensuality of *Scheherazade* rather than its animal excitement, let alone its subtleties (such as they are). Listeners demanding these other qualities should look into the Stokowski London Phase 4 issue for the first and the Angel recording by Beecham with the Royal Philharmonic for the second. Despite the latter's age (it was re-

leased about fifteen years ago), it holds up amazingly well by any standards.

This is the third time around for Eugene Ormandy with the Sibelius Second Symphony, and it is by far the most broadly expansive reading of his three recordings. While it may lack the cragginess of George Szell's performance with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw for Philips and the fierce intensity of Koussevitzky's 1950 mono recording with the Boston, this latest Ormandy performance must take a place among the best of the more recent recorded renditions.

As with the *Scheherazade*, the recorded sound, when heard in normal stereo, spreads itself over a very broad horizontal canvas and does not come across with quite the impact of at least some other recordings I have heard whose orchestral layouts and microphone setups were designed for two-channel stereo only. But the CD-4 playback, as described above, is something else, and in musical terms this is Ormandy's best realization yet of this staple of the repertoire.

In conclusion, then, I am mightily pleased with what I have first heard of CD-4 playback. I wonder what problems may arise in the future as the result of less than perfect quality control in pressing. Discs made by the discrete four-channel system will obviously need superior quality control, and it remains to be seen if it can be consistently supplied. But, to my ears, CD-4 and RCA pass the first tests with flying colors.

BACH: *Fugues* (arr. Arthur Harris). *E-flat Major* (from BWV 522, "St. Anne"); *G Minor* (BWV 578, "Little"); *D Major* (from BWV 532); *G Minor* (from BWV 542, "Great"); *A Minor* (from BWV 543); *C Minor* (from BWV 549); *C Major* (from BWV 564). Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra. Eugene Ormandy cond. RCA □ ARD1 0026 \$5.98, [B] ART1 0026 \$7.95.

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: *Scheherazade*, Op. 35. Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra. Eugene Ormandy cond. RCA □ ARD1 0028 \$5.98, [B] ART1 0028 \$7.95.

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TAPE HORIZONS

By CRAIG STARK



IN THE AIR AND ON THE TAPE

YOU may have noticed, while listening to music with a lot of bass in it, that some low tones seem to stand out while others are barely audible. And, puzzlingly, sometimes just moving your position in the room slightly will make the same note sound alternately loud and soft. To paraphrase the Bard, "The fault, dear reader, is not in our speakers, but in our rooms, that they are too short." Which brings us, in a roundabout sort of way, to an elementary confusion many recordists have encountered: the difference between acoustic and recorded *wavelengths*.

Consider a sound wave which, at room temperature, travels through the air at about 1,130 feet per second. When you hear an organ pedal note of 20 Hz, the physical distance between corresponding condensations and rarefactions of the air is then 1,130 divided by 20, or 56.5 feet. That is the *acoustical* wavelength of the 20-Hz note. A 20,000-Hz overtone from a piccolo, in contrast, has an acoustical wavelength of 1,130 divided by 20,000, or 0.0565 foot (0.678 inch). Clearly, then, the higher the frequency the shorter the acoustical wavelength.

Tape recorders, of course, don't run at the 1,130 feet per second speed of sound, or you'd get little more than a second of music on the normal 1,200-foot reel. (Imagine trying to run a machine at 13,560 inches per second!) But at the more usual speed of 7½ ips, the organ pedal note recorded on the tape is 7.5 divided by 20, or 0.375 inch, while the piccolo overtone is 7.5 divided by 20,000, or 0.000375 inch. The 1,000-to-1 ratio between the two tones, whether recorded or acoustical, remains the same, but what takes place in the air in a distance of 56.5 feet is translated electromagnetically into about ⅓ of an inch of tape—at 7½ ips. And, of course, if you have a cassette machine, the *recorded* wavelength of *all* notes will be reduced by a factor of four: the wavelength of the 20,000-Hz piccolo overtone becomes 17⁄8 divided by 20,000, or 0.00009375 inch (93.75 millionths of an inch).

In either the living room or the recorder's playback head, *one-half* a wavelength becomes a really significant figure, for the lowest frequency (the longest acoustical wavelength, determined by the room length) at which a room will resonate helps the speaker radiate sound by adding the first return bounce of the air wave from the rear wall to reinforce the corresponding part of the next wave generated by the speaker. For 20 Hz, that means a listening room at least 28.25 feet long for maximum efficiency in bass propagation. On tape, the problem is the high frequencies, since the playback head puts out its greatest signal when the two pole pieces that form the head gap are separated by *no more than* one-half the recorded wavelength. Thus, the longer the room, the better the bass reproduction, and the narrower the playback-head gap, the better the high-frequency reproduction. The large acoustic spaces required for efficient low-bass reproduction are costly, and so also are the precision methods needed to make small-gap heads that reproduce the short high-frequency wavelengths on cassettes.

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I bought a Marantz 4 channel receiver because I refuse to be stuck with an electronic antique.



Not one to tolerate obsolescence (planned or unplanned), I considered the stereo vs. 4-channel question carefully, then purchased a Marantz receiver for three compelling reasons.

One. Marantz has Dual Power. This means you get full power of four discrete amplifiers working all the time. When you're listening to regular 2-channel tapes and records you can combine the power of all four channels into the front speakers. This means even if you're not ready to commit yourself to a complete 4-channel system, you can buy Marantz now and when you get the other two speakers just flip a switch. You have 4-channel. Meanwhile, you're not compromising 2-channel because you're getting more than twice the power for super stereo.

Reason number two. Marantz receivers feature the exclusive snap-in snap-out adaptability to any 4-channel matrix decoder. This means that your Marantz stereo will never be made obsolete by any future 4-channel technology because the Marantz snap-in SQ[®] module is designed to keep up with the changing state of the art. What's more, Marantz receivers have Vari-Matrix—a built-in circuit that will synthesize 4-channel sound from any stereo source (including your stereo records and tapes) and will also decode any matrix encoded 4-channel disc or FM broadcast.

Reason number three. Marantz receivers, from the Model 4230 up, feature built-in Dolby[™] noise reduction to bring you the quietest FM reception ever. And you can switch the built-in Dolby into your tape deck for noise-free, no-hiss recording from any source. A real Marantz exclusive.

I chose the Marantz Model 4270 because it suits my needs perfectly. It delivers 140 watts continuous power with under 0.3% distortion. And it's literally loaded with features. However, your requirements may be more modest than mine. In which case you can own the Marantz Model 4220 which delivers 40 watts with Dual Power. Or you can go all the way and get the Marantz Model 4300 with 200 watts. It is the very best. Choose from five Marantz 4-channel receivers from \$299 to \$799.95.

The point to remember is this—whichever model Marantz 4-channel receiver you do buy, you can buy it today without worrying about its being obsolete tomorrow. Look over the Marantz line of superb quality receivers, components and speaker systems at your Marantz dealer. You'll find him listed in the Yellow Pages. Think forward. Think Marantz.

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We sound better.

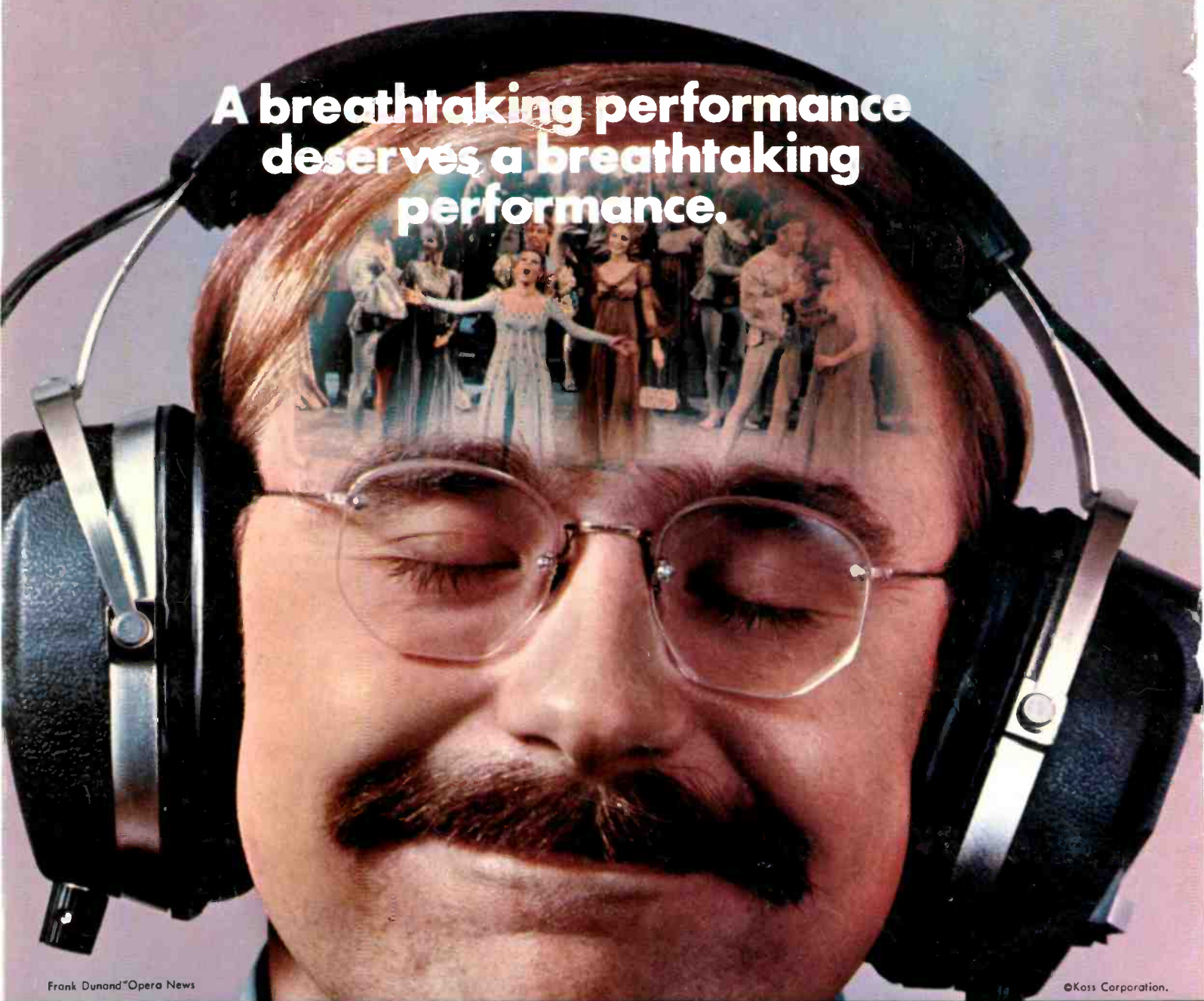
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**TM Dolby Labs, Inc.



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Frank Dunand "Opera News"

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And because all Koss

Quadrafones feature volume-balance controls on each ear cup, you'll have any seat at the opera at your fingertips. A twist of your fingers will put you front row center one minute and in the middle of the opera house the next. And all without moving from the comfort of your easy chair.

But even more importantly, Koss has added a 2-channel to 4-channel selector switch on the



left ear cup. In the 4-channel position, two 1½-inch dynamic driver elements in each ear cup deliver breathtaking quadraphonic sound from either matrix or discrete systems. In the 2-channel position, both drivers in each ear cup are connected in parallel for an unparalleled sound of 2-channel stereo. Either way, the switch to Koss Quadrafones is worth it.

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Specialist for a live demonstration. Or write for our free full-color catalog, c/o Virginia Lamm. The Sound of Koss Quadrafones will take your breath away, but the price won't... from \$45 to \$85.

Koss K2+2 Quadrafones



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