

Stereo Review

APRIL 1985 ● \$1.75

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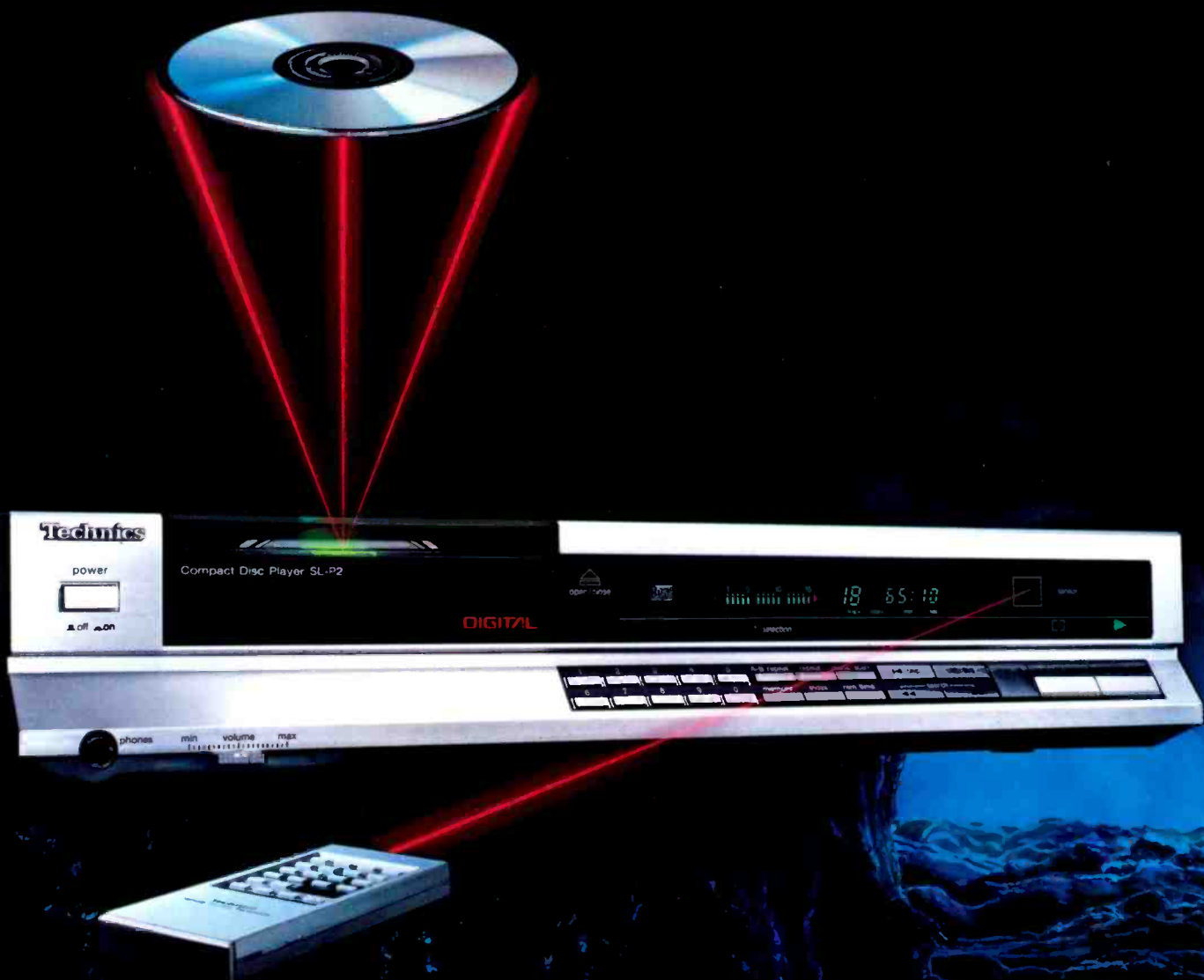
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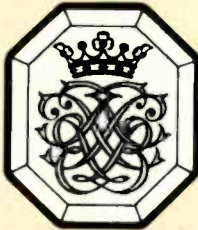
by Gordon Sell and Christie Barter

BACH'S BIRTHDAY

Deutsche Grammophon is celebrating the 300th anniversary of the birth of Johann Sebastian Bach, on March 21, with the release of a New Bach Edition. It will run to twelve volumes and will comprise a total of 130 LP's specially priced at \$4.98 each.

Appearing on DG's Archiv label, the set will draw on the company's extensive catalog for major works like the St. John and St. Matthew Passions,

but new and recent recordings are included as well, among them the complete Well-Tempered Clavier played by harpsichordist Kenneth Gilbert. An abbreviated Bach set on Compact Discs will be available later this spring.



Bach's family seal

SUPER-BARGAIN VIDEO MOVIES

VCI Home Video, which made history last fall by offering prerecorded movies at \$9.95 retail, is going one better by making ten titles available for only \$5.95. They include The Road to Nashville, Attack from Outer Space, Cotter, and the classic Dick Tracy Meets Gruesome. Never before released to the home video market, any one of the ten feature films may be ordered by sending \$5.95 plus \$2.95 postage and handling, along with an unopened blank tape (VHS T-120 or Beta L-500), to VCI at 6535 East Skelly Drive, Tulsa, Okla. 74145. VCI will also supply the tape for an additional \$4.99. Write or call (1-800-331-4077) for a complete list of the ten titles.

TECH NOTES

The 3M Company has developed an antistatic treatment for video-cassette tapes and shells that is said to prevent dirt attraction and reduce dropouts....The video industry's first prerecorded 8mm video release is X-rated....Sony

says it is developing a CD player that records....General Electric is test marketing a line of audio equipment, including a CD player. ...Mobile Fidelity Sound Labs has developed a "high reliance" coating that is claimed to make its CD's more damage resistant.... December 1984 VCR sales set an all-time record of 1.2 million units....Several companies are expected to introduce Compact Disc video graphics adaptors this summer; these will provide pictures or lyrics along with the music.... CompuSonics says it will begin delivering consumer versions of its floppy-disc audio recorder some time this summer.

BAND AID TO "VIDEO AID"

Latest to join music-industry efforts to rush food money to famine victims in Ethiopia (see "Record Makers," page 57) is Virgin Video. The British company has produced a 90-minute star-studded compilation of film clips titled "Video Aid." Included are recent hits like Wake Me Up Before You Go by Wham!, Frankie Goes To Hollywood's famous live performance of Relax, and Paul McCartney's No More Lonely Nights. An American distributor for the fund-raising video had not been named at press time.

FIRST-CLASS CENTENNIAL

The United States Postal Service has issued a commemorative stamp honoring American composer Jerome Kern on the 100th anniversary of his birth. Introduced in January (Kern's birthday, January 27, was the same as W.A. Mozart's), the stamp is the first one intended for first-class use at the newly established 22-cent rate.

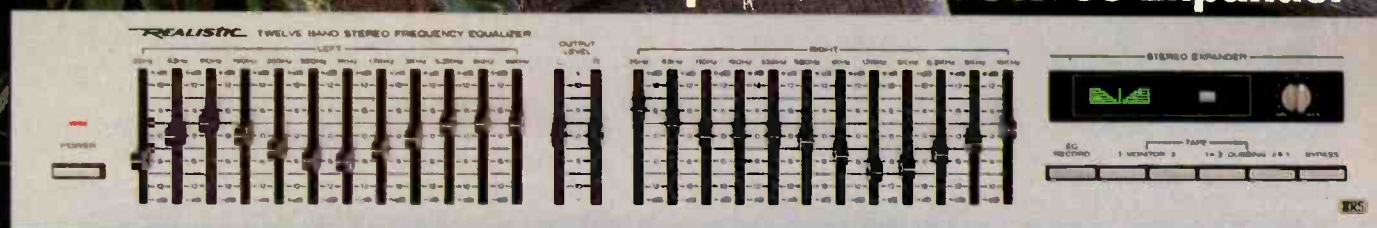
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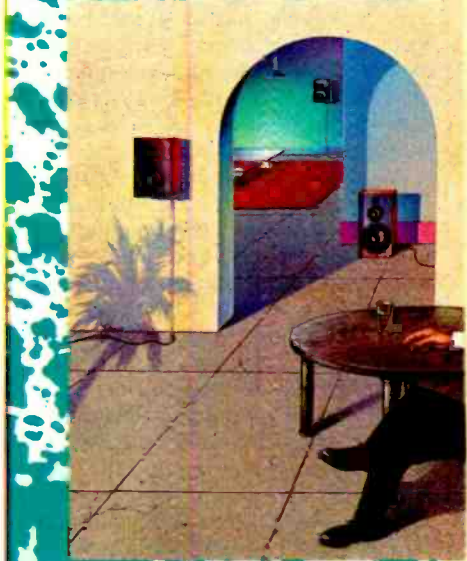
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by William Livingstone



With rock goddess Patti Smith and author Steve Simels (right) in 1977.

Success

WHEN a former publisher of this magazine told me that the old half-gallon wine jug I was using to water the plants in my office was not fit for the editor of the world's most widely read music and audio magazine, I brought in a copper watering can from home. It held less water than the jug and was harder to use, but it gleamed nicely on the window sill. When nobody was looking, however, I still used the jug, wondering if the responsibilities of rank outweighed the privileges.

At about that time the late Dr. Harley Shands, a noted linguist as well as a distinguished psychiatrist, said to me, "I don't understand why you are not enjoying life more. After all, you're a success." When I modestly challenged his use of the word "success" to describe *me*, he said, "Well, you're not rich—journalists don't make a great deal of money—but you are well known in a field in which your work is respected, your name appears in many conspicuous places, and you know a lot of important people. That's success."

I enjoyed rerunning Dr. Shands's flattering words through the tape recorder of my mind. I recalled a few youthful academic achievements, and I remembered the pride I felt when an article I wrote was published in the *New York Times*.

My mother thinks I peaked journalistically when my interview with

Beverly Sills was a cover story in this magazine. I think success became mine when my debut on the Metropolitan Opera Quiz broadcast was good enough for the producer to make me a regular panelist on the show. Later, you see, when I met rock star Patti Smith at a party at the St. Regis Hotel ("... important people ... conspicuous places ..."), she immediately began to talk about opera.

She knew who I was! I was a contender, and she was eager to tell me that as a child she had sung the role of the Shepherd Boy in *Tosca*.

Such heady excitement is rare. A more consistent reward of my position with STEREO REVIEW is that I work with bright, talented, amusing people. Our relationship with rock critic Steve Simels has given me particular pleasure.

Steve came to us fresh out of college in 1972. His style was formed before he joined the staff, but I have enjoyed editing his copy and watching him mature as a writer. We've collaborated on many projects, and we still laugh at each other's jokes.

Steve is now a certified success. He has written a book. Called *Gender Chameleons: Androgyny in Rock 'n' Roll*, it will be brought out in May by Timbre Books/Arbor House Publishing Company. It takes stamina as well as talent to write a publishable book, and that's the kind of achievement that impresses me as *real* success.

I recall an ad for Gucci's men's cologne that quoted Dr. Aldo Gucci as saying, "Nobody is born successful. One becomes successful." Although Dr. Gucci is not one of the important people I know, I like his message that success is not inheritable, but must be won by individual effort. The ad implies, of course, that such hard work should be rewarded with luxurious Gucci products. I was thinking of giving Steve a copper watering can when his book comes out. Perhaps a bottle of Gucci cologne would be a more appropriate gift.

In the meantime, an excerpt from the book is included in this issue as the article "Rock Gender Benders" on page 52. I'm proud of Steve, and I hope you will read his article, laugh at his jokes, and buy his book. □

Stereo Review

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Record of the Year

When I received the February "Special Awards Issue," I expected to see Joe Jackson's "Body and Soul" included as one of the twelve best records of the year. In his July 1984 "Best of the Month" review, Mark Peel said that "Anyone without the kind of 'New Music' credentials Joe Jackson has would be hooted off to Las Vegas—or, worse, the Grammys—for making music [so] unapologetically romantic. . . ." It's easy to see that Jackson won't win any Grammys, but it's hard to understand why STEREO REVIEW's editors found six other 1984 pop/rock albums (including the two honorable mentions) more deserving of a Record of the Year award than "Body and Soul."

Of your choices, only Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A." and the Pretenders' "Learning to Crawl" are worthy of such a distinction. Huey Lewis's "Sports" is also a fair album. But it is beyond me how you can consider Tina Turner, Prince, and Cyndi Lauper to be "great" music makers.

SCOTT D. GREENE
Wharton, N.J.

Style

STEREO REVIEW's new look is *fantastic*—to say the least! I think the improvement is staggering. The magazine is so visually appealing now, catering to my eyes as well as my brain. Whoever designed the new format deserves a big pat on the back; the job was done well. STEREO REVIEW now has the contemporary look of the Eighties.

JEFFREY B. HEALEY
Old Bridge, N.J.

Our current format was designed by Art Director Sue Llewellyn and was unveiled in the issue of November 1984.

Rumble Grumble

Peter Mitchell's January analysis of the pros and cons of different turntable drive systems didn't mention the affliction that sent me muttering and cursing to join the ranks of the belt-drivers, never to desert. About fifteen years ago I bought a top-of-the-line gear-drive turntable made by a nationally famous manufacturer. After three years, it developed a rumble. It didn't take long to

diagnose bearing wear. After checking the owner's manual and finding nothing about lubrication, I decided to try it anyway—but the only way I could have gotten oil into the main bearings would have been to immerse the whole shebang in it.

I didn't think then, and still don't, that three years' use was good enough before the bearings started to quit. I bought a belt-drive unit (from a different manufacturer), and it's given no trouble in more than a decade. And I can oil it if I need to.

My question to Mr. Mitchell is this: how much rumble does a direct-drive turntable have when the bearings begin to go? I bet it beats Niagara Falls.

MAURICE CHAZOTTES
Sidney, B.C.

Technical Editor Gordon Sell replies: Direct-drive technology has come a long way since your fifteen-year-old turntable. The modern polymer bearings used in most direct-drive turntables today can run for many years without lubrication at the motors' relatively slow operating speeds, and some units use magnetic bearings that do not wear at all.

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Stereo Review

Engineering Grammys

In his January column, Julian Hirsch says that "the skill of the recording engineer and others involved in the original recording and its duplication are much more important to its ultimate quality than whether it is ultimately produced in analog or digital form." If this is so, why aren't Grammy Awards presented to recording engineers on an equal basis with the artists and producers?

WOLFGANG FRIEDLANDER
Cranbury, N.J.

Along with artists and producers, engineers receive Grammy Award certificates for Record of the Year, Album of the Year, and Best Classical Album. In addition, there are separate engineering categories: Best Engineered Recording, Non-Classical, and Best Engineered Recording, Classical. The rerecording engineer is honored in the Grammy Award to the Best Historical Album.

Undercover Porn

Reading through the February "Letters" section, I came across Jeff Reid's

complaint about "porn jokes" in Alanna Nash's comments on the recording group Exile. I was astounded; I had missed them! I immediately found the article and review Mr. Reid mentioned but, alas, could detect no sex. Then it occurred to me that perhaps STEREO REVIEW, not wanting to tarnish its image, had concealed what I sought. I recalled how some rock groups conceal satanic messages in their albums, which can be discovered only by playing them in reverse. So I held up the pages to my reading lamp and tried reading them backward. Nothing. Foiled again!

I have a heart-on for your magazine, so how about in the future making it easier to find this elusive sex? As for Mr. Reid, I'm surprised he overlooked that the October feature on Exile began on page 69. My word, will smut never cease?

GREG GRUSE
Bowden, W. Va.

Bad Manners

I was happy to see Bad Manners get the big shake with one of your "Best of the Month" reviews in January. But

while critic Mark Peel certainly seems to have his sense of ska on double-time, I believe he has passed out some incorrect information.

He calls "Forging Ahead" the first American album from Bad Manners. If I remember correctly, MCA released the group's self-titled debut album in 1981. I remember the great dance tunes: *Lorraine, Lip Up Fatty, King Ska Fa*, and loads more.

RON GLUCKMAN
Anchorage, Alaska

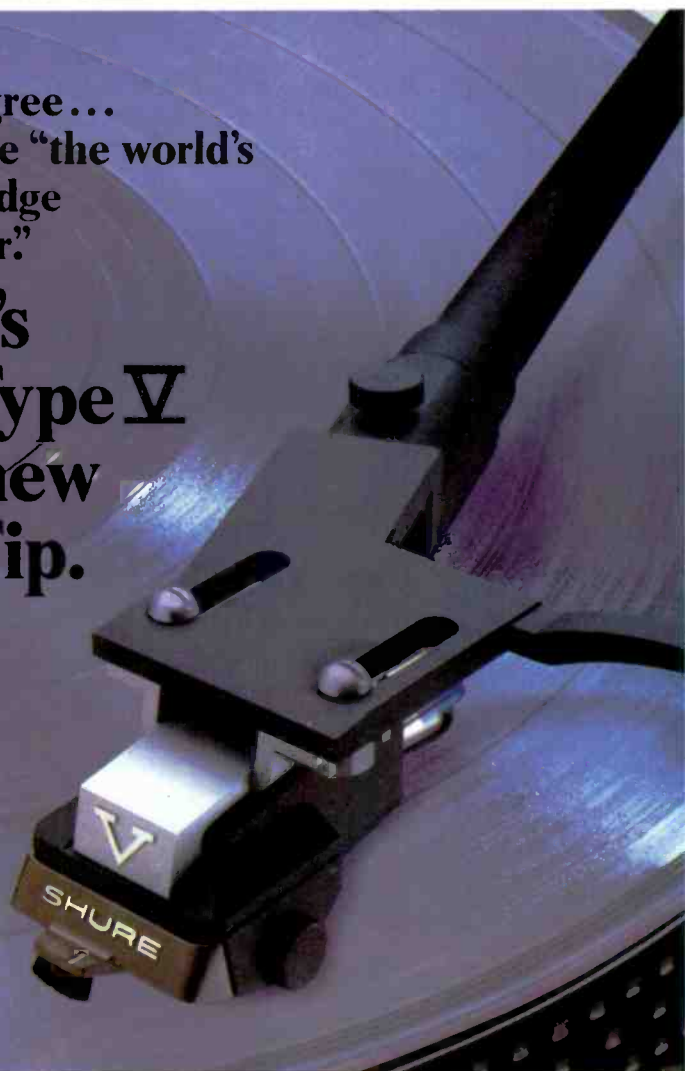
Oops—you caught one. But it turns out that MCA released two albums by Bad Manners prior to Portrait's "Forging Ahead." One was named after the group; the other was titled "Klass."

Correction

Although Etcetera Records, Amsterdam, enjoys the services of free-lance producer Klaas Posthuma, he is not part of the company, as was mistakenly indicated in Richard Freed's February "Best of the Month" review of Charles Rosen's Schumann record, which was produced by Posthuma.

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NEW PRODUCTS



Luxman

The second Compact Disc player introduced by Luxman, the D-405, has Duo-Beta circuitry with two feedback loops said to minimize the audible side effects of negative feedback. The player is able to skip forward or back on the disc by track or index number and to accept programming by track number, elapsed time, or remaining time. Fast-forward and fast-backward controls allow manual access to any point on a disc. In order to extend the life of the components, the laser diode and disc motor automatically shut off if the player is left in the pause mode for more than 15 seconds. A push of a button will then resume playback from the same point on the disc. The player can repeat any desired segment on the disc. There is a headphone jack with level control on the front panel.

Copper-film capacitors and nonmagnetic resistors are employed in the D-405 to help eliminate distortion caused by external magnetic fields. Dynamic range is given as 96 dB. Total harmonic distortion is less than 0.003 percent, and wow-and-flutter is below measurable limits. The player measures 17 $\frac{1}{16}$ inches wide, 3 $\frac{3}{16}$ inches high, and 12 $\frac{3}{16}$ inches deep, and it is finished in champagne gold. Prices: \$599.95. Luxman, Dept. SR, 19145 Gramercy Pl., Torrance, Calif. 90501.

Circle 120 on reader service card



Monster Cable

Interlink CD, a new interconnect cable from Monster Cable, is designed for use between a Compact Disc player and a preamplifier or receiver. According to the manufacturer, the cable is "specially wound to compensate for the transient and phase distortions of the digital process, as well as the 'group delay' distortion encountered in the filtering process." The cable is also said to minimize the harshness of some CD program material as well as providing quicker transients, tighter bass, and more coherent sound. Price: \$3 per foot in bulk (without plugs). Half-meter cables: \$40 per

pair. One-meter cables: \$50 per pair. Monster Cable, Dept. SR, 101 Townsend St., San Francisco, Calif. 94107. Circle 121 on reader service card

Bose

The Bose 101 Music Monitor can be used as an extension speaker in the home, outdoors, or in a van or recreational vehicle. Each ported polystyrene enclosure contains one 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch full-range driver and passive electronic equalization. Nominal impedance is 4 ohms. Recommended amplifier power is in the range of 10 to 60 watts rms. Wall-mounting brackets and mounting arms are optional. The grille comes in white, red, blue, or green with a white enclosure. An all-black model is also available. Each speaker weighs 5 pounds and measures 6 x 9 x 6 inches.



Price: \$179 per pair. Bose Corp., Dept. SR, 100 The Mountain Rd., Framingham, Mass. 01701.

Circle 122 on reader service card

Ortofon

The Ortofon MCP 100 Super is a moving-coil cartridge designed for P-mount tone arms. The armature is shaped as a tiny cross so that the number of windings can be increased. A samarium-cobalt ring magnet completely encircles the coils so as to produce a homogeneous magnetic field. The cartridge's output voltage is said to be high enough for use with all amplifiers that have built-in MC inputs. If additional boosting is desired, Ortofon's optional T5 transformers can be used. The T5's (\$50 per pair) are mono transformers, not much bigger than a phono plug, that fit directly into the phono inputs of the amplifier.

The MCP 100 Super weighs 6 grams and has a tracking-force range of 1.25 to 1.5 grams. The vertical tracking angle is 20 degrees. Its elliptical stylus has an equivalent stylus tip mass of 0.5 milligram. Rated frequency response is 20 to 20,000 Hz, and channel separation is 25 dB. Price: \$250. Ortofon, Dept. SR, 122 Dupont St., Plainview, N.Y. 11803.

Circle 123 on reader service card



Koss

Built into a cassette shell, the Koss KED/1 demagnetizer is meant to be inserted into a tape player like any normal cassette. Demagnetizing requires one second, with a red LED indicating completion. Eliminating magnetic build-up on the tape head is said to improve the output levels of midrange and high frequencies. The KED/1 comes with a storage case. Price: \$16.99. Koss Corp., Dept. SR, 4129 North Port Washington Ave., Milwaukee, Wis. 53212.

Circle 124 on reader service card

Harman Kardon

The PM665, along with three other, lower-powered new integrated amplifiers from Harman Kardon, features high instantaneous current capability, low negative feedback, ultra-wide bandwidth, and discrete-component audio stages. It also has dual RIAA-equalized phono sections that are said to eliminate transient distortion and ensure flat frequency response. One RIAA network passively provides the required low-frequency boost and high-frequency rolloff while the other maintains the same level of negative feedback at all frequencies from 20 to 20,000 Hz. The built-in moving-coil head amplifier is said to be improved over previous models, with higher dynamic accuracy. A capacitance trim control enables matching the phono circuitry to the particular phono cartridge used.



The PM665 is rated at 100 watts per channel from 20 to 20,000 Hz with 0.08 percent total harmonic distortion into 8 ohms. Price: \$650. The similar PM655, at 60 watts per channel, is \$450. The PM645 (40 watts per channel) and PM625 (20 watts per channel) lack the dual phono sections and some other features. Prices: PM645, \$275; PM625, \$195. Harman Kardon, Dept. SR, 240 Crossways Park West, Woodbury, N.Y. 11797.

Circle 125 on reader service card

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NEW PRODUCTS



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The LAST Factory's System Formula series consists of five record- and stylus-care products. System Formula 1 (\$9.95) is an extra-strength record cleaner for either first-time cleaning or deep cleaning. Formula 2 (\$14.95) is a record preservative to treat the vinyl and prevent wear. Formula 3 (\$5.95) is an all-purpose record cleaner. Formula 4 (\$4.95) is a non-alcohol-based stylus cleaner. And Formula 5 (\$15.95) is a stylus treatment meant to extend stylus life and prevent wear. LAST Factory, Dept. SR, 2015 Research Dr., Livermore, Calif. 94550.

Circle 125 on reader service card

Kalglo

Protection against voltage surges is provided by the Kalglo INL-II in-line voltage suppressor and EMI/RFI noise filter. It has a three-stage surge-suppression network and a three-stage filtering network. A status light indicates the unit is working normally. It comes with



a 7-foot cord and can be used with any electronic or electrical equipment that has a detachable CEE-22 power cord. Price: \$44.95. Kalglo Electronics, Dept. SR, 6584 Ruch Rd., East Allen Township, Bethlehem, Pa. 18017.

Circle 126 on reader service card

Babb

The Babb Models 534 and 934 car speakers feature polyester high-frequency cones with eight ribs that act as right-angle motion transformers enabling the voice coil to transmit its energy laterally into the cone, which acts as a transmission line. This construction is said to eliminate intermodulation and Doppler distortion and to provide 180-degree high-frequency dispersion. The patented Teflon-bearing voice coil provides a free-moving rear suspension system so

that the conventional spider is eliminated. Both models have metal woofer cones and use 30-ounce magnets.

The Model 934 is a 6- x 9-inch oval speaker with a frequency response rated as 25 to 18,000 Hz \pm 3 dB. With a 1-watt input, the sound-pressure level at 1 meter is 97 dB. The Model 534 is 5 1/4 inches in diameter and has a frequency response of 32 to 18,000 Hz. Its rated sensitivity is 94 dB. Both models are made in 4- and 8-ohm versions. Prices: Model 934, \$220 per pair; Model 534, \$200 per pair. Babb Audio Corp., Dept. SR, 3230-A Towerwood, Farmers Branch, Tex. 75234.

Circle 127 on reader service card



Spandau

The SP-230A bass-reflex speaker is the top model in the Spandau line. Its cabinet design is said to reduce standing waves since no two side panels are parallel, and each enclosure has 3 inches of sound-absorption material inside. Diffraction is said to be reduced by the sloping sides, which add up to a smaller total surface area than the usual rectangular speaker cabinet.

The four drivers are a 12-inch woofer, a 6-inch mid-bass driver, a 2-inch mid-range, and a 1-inch tweeter. Crossover frequencies are 150, 800, and 5,000 Hz, and the slope is 12 dB per octave. Dual banana plugs are used at the terminals. Sets of four hidden casters are mounted on the bottom of the cabinets to facilitate moving the speakers, each of which weighs 95 pounds. Price: \$780 per pair. Spandau Speaker Systems, Dept. SR, 4134 Manchester Ave., Stockton, Calif. 95207.

Circle 128 on reader service card



Naim

Made by Naim Audio, the NAI135 mono power amplifier is rated for 75 watts continuous output into 8 ohms. Distortion of all types, including noise, is given as less than 0.1 percent. The amplifier is cooled by a fan that turns on only when the chassis temperature reaches a set point; the speed of the fan then increases if necessary until thermal equilibrium is reached. The input impedance is 22,000 ohms. Frequency response is given as -5 dB at 5 and 40,000 Hz. There is no slew-rate limiting within the amplifier's rated power and bandwidth. Price: \$2,990 per pair. Audiophile Systems, Dept. SR, 6842 Hawthorn Park Dr., Indianapolis, Ind. 46220.

Circle 129 on reader service card

Epicure

The LDA100 car stereo power amplifier from Epicure Products (EPI) is claimed to have noise-free operation even during turn-on. A time-delay circuit connects the speakers to the output of the amplifier after it has stabilized in



order to avoid initial pops and thumps in the speakers. A filter prevents noise or interference from the car's electrical system from affecting the amplifier. Three-way circuit protection prevents damage to the amp or speakers if the output stage is overloaded, the outputs are short-circuited, or the amp overheats.

Switchable input sensitivity allows the LDA100 to be driven by a receiver's high-level speaker outputs or low-level preamp outputs. Rated power output is 50 watts per channel into 4 ohms from 20 to 20,000 Hz with less than 0.05 percent total harmonic distortion. Signal-to-noise ratio is 86 dB, and the damping factor is greater than 200. The LDA100 is 3 3/16 inches high, 8 3/4 inches wide, and 6 3/16 inches deep. Price: \$199.95. Epicure Products, Dept. SR, 25 Hale St., Newburyport, Mass. 01950.

Circle 130 on reader service card

AUDIO/VIDEO NEW PRODUCTS



Pioneer

Pioneer's VS-60 video selector is designed to help combine audio and video components into an integrated system that can be controlled from a single unit. Four direct video inputs and outputs are included along with three audio inputs, one audio output, and one direct video-monitor output. Two-way tape dubbing from one VCR to another can be done without having to change cables, and another video source can be viewed at the same time.

Dynamic Noise Reduction (DNR) is included to reduce noise in the audio output of low-fidelity video-cassette recorders and TV sets. The audio signal-to-noise ratio is given as 100 dB, video S/N as 55 dB. The VS-100 is finished in black and measures about 2 3/8 inches high, 16 1/2 inches wide, and 8 1/2 inches deep. Pioneer Electronics, Dept. SR, 5000 Airport Plaza Dr., Long Beach, Calif. 90801.

Circle 131 on reader service card



NEC

The NEC VC-N70 is a Beta Hi-Fi VCR that is said to be designed to satisfy the needs of both advanced audio and video enthusiasts. The VCR is stereo ready and will be able to decode stereo-sound TV broadcasts with the use of an accessory adaptor (SA-84A, \$99). The extensive front-panel display includes two twelve-segment-per-channel LED peak-level meters and a stereo TV indicator. Convenience features include skip search, an easy-to-use program timer, remote control, and a "noiseless" pause control. Price: \$999. NEC, Dept. SR, 1401 Estes Ave., Elk Grove Village, Ill. 60007.

Circle 132 on reader service card

Denon

Denon's AVC-500 audio/video control center is designed to integrate audio and video components by providing processing and switching for both types of signals. A proprietary circuit in the unit is said to restore the full natural ambience of a stereo recording by utilizing its phase information. Mono sources can be processed to sound like stereo by a built-in stereo synthesizer.

The AVC-500 has three sets of input

and output jacks for video and four sets for audio. An automatic copying circuit activates the input selectors. The built-in five-band graphic equalizer operates only when there is an incoming audio signal, thus preventing an increase in background noise during quiet sections. Additional audio effects can be added during video copying, and audio processing can be switched in and out. A video enhancer circuit prevents deterioration and noise generation during copying.

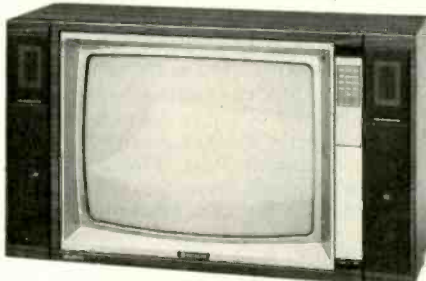


The AVC-500 includes an amplifier rated at 22 watts per channel into 8 ohms. This amp can be used to drive a pair of rear speakers if the control unit is used with a separate amplifier. Price: \$375. Denon America, 27 Law Dr., Fairfield, N.J. 07006.

Circle 133 on reader service card

Hitachi

Stereo-sound TV broadcasts can be internally decoded by Hitachi's new CT-1958 color television and played back by separate two-way speakers on each side of the cabinet. The 19-inch set also features Hitachi's Signal Tracker color-control system, random-access electronic tuning for 139 channels, and a wireless remote control. The speakers have separate bass and treble controls. Separate audio-output jacks allow use of external speakers, and video and audio input jacks are also included. The comb filter is designed to improve picture quality. On-screen displays show



the time and the selected channel. The cabinet has a wood-grain finish. Price: \$739. Hitachi, Dept. SR, 401 West Artesia Blvd., Compton, Calif. 90220.

Circle 134 on reader service card

Teac

The LV-1000 LaserMate video-disc player from Teac uses a high-resolution three-beam laser pickup. Two side beams lead and trail the main beam for tracking-servo control. Compatible with both CAV and CLV discs, the LV-

1000 switches to the correct playback mode automatically. CX noise reduction is included. Random access is possible through frame search, chapter search, or time search. Rapid scan works in both forward and reverse. Slower scanning can be done using double- or triple-speed play. The normal viewing speed of 30 frames per second can also be slowed to one-sixteenth normal speed or even further to frame-by-frame playback at 1- or 3-second intervals. An interval-repeat function can repeat any section up to 256 times.

An input/output port with an eight-pin DIN connector is provided for connection to an external controller such as a home computer. Audio output jacks permit connection to a stereo system. There are also video output jacks for a video monitor, an antenna input jack, and a VHF output for a regular TV receiver. The remote control has a numeric keypad for chapter, frame, and time programming. The LV-1000 is



about 16 1/2 inches wide, 17 inches deep, and 4 3/4 inches high. Price: \$800. Teac Corp. of America, Dept. SR, 7733 Telegraph Rd., Montebello, Calif. 90640.

Circle 135 on reader service card

Panasonic

The PV-1431 VHS Hi-Fi VCR from Panasonic carries a substantially lower list price than earlier Panasonic hi-fi VCR's. The front-loading recorder comes with a fourteen-function wireless remote control. One-touch recording is featured, with up to four hours of recording time. Besides the VHS Hi-Fi recording system, which records the audio tracks beneath the video signal using two extra heads mounted on the video rotating head drum, the PV-1431 records standard linear audio tracks with Dolby noise reduction. In the hi-fi mode, audio specifications include a dynamic range of 80 dB and wow-and-flutter of 0.005 percent.

Still-frame and slow motion are offered in the SLP video mode. The unit includes audio level meters, a picture-sharpness control, and a 107-channel electronic tuner. Price: \$1,050. Panasonic, Dept. SR, One Panasonic Way, Secaucus, N.J. 07094.

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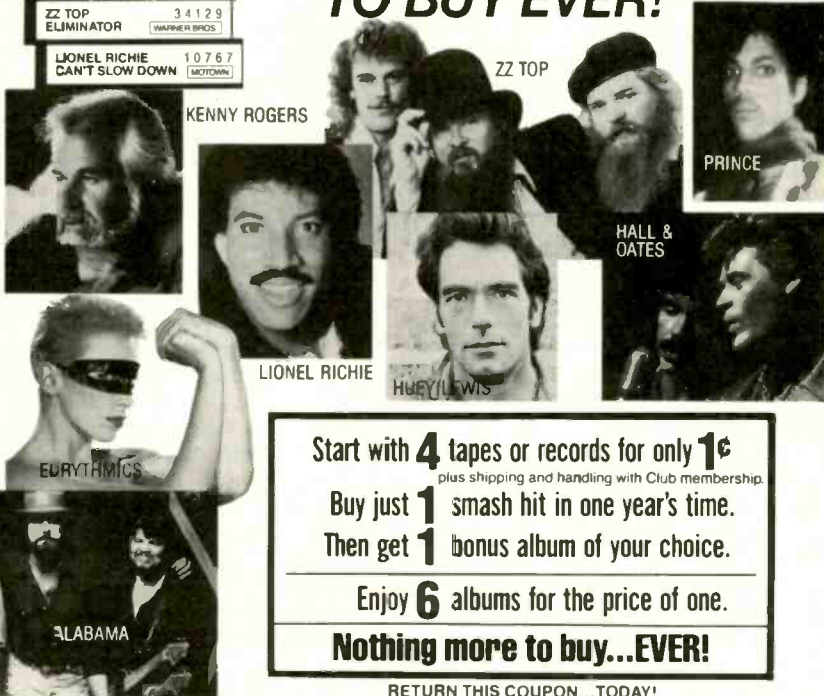
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U-BP (Y9)

by David Ranada



Resolution

THE most frequently encountered video specification in data sheets and ads for consumer video equipment is *resolution*. It is usually stated as a number of "lines," with the numbers usually falling between 200 and 400. Just what does all this mean?

In video, resolution is a measure of a component's ability to keep closely spaced details in an image separated, or resolved. Generally speaking, the greater the number of lines in a video component's resolution specification, the greater its ability to convey picture detail.

A complete resolution specification has two dimensions, vertical and horizontal. The "lines" referred to are alternating black and white stripes of equal width. *Vertical resolution* is the ability to resolve horizontal stripes, *horizontal resolution* how many vertical stripes can be discerned. However, both horizontal and vertical resolution specs and measurements are supposed to refer the number of lines to the *vertical* picture dimension. Thus, a horizontal resolution of 300 lines means that the component can resolve vertical stripes on the screen whose thickness is such that 300 of them (150 white alternating with 150 black) could be stacked (if turned horizontally) in the *height* of the active picture area—no matter how many of these stripes fit across the

width of the picture area. Some manufacturers, however, are using the latter, higher figure for their horizontal-resolution specs, thereby confusing the whole issue.

Evaluating resolution involves generating a stripe-pattern TV signal by a test-signal generator or a video camera pointed at a resolution test pattern, feeding it through the unit under test (camera, VCR, or monitor), and seeing how thin and closely spaced the lines get before the reproduced image changes from fine lines into an undifferentiated gray area. Horizontal-resolution test patterns always refer the spec to the vertical dimension.

Since the NTSC television system used in this country has a 525-scan-line frame, one might expect that the vertical resolution of a television picture is always 525 lines. That is not the case. First of all, not all 525 lines are part of the active picture area, since the scanning time assigned to some of them occurs while the camera or monitor is moving its scanning beam from the bottom to the top of the image in order to begin scanning another field. About 483 scan lines are left for the picture itself.

But not even all of those 483 lines end up being seen. Suppose, for example, that a thin, white, horizontal line in the original image were placed so that it fell on the border between two successive scan lines in a TV camera. If the original line were thin enough (the width of one camera scan line), it would be picked up by *two* scan lines in the camera, one from the first interlaced field and one from the second. When seen on a monitor, the line that was one scan line wide will have expanded to the width of two and will look gray, not white.

Vertical resolution, in this case, would fall by half, to about 242 lines. Not only that, but if the thin line in the original image were to move vertically by only half a scan line, it would be reproduced in full white on one scan line from one of the two fields making up a video frame. The effect of thin horizontal lines moving up and down, therefore, is a flickering interference pattern, which is the main reason one should avoid wearing finely striped clothes when appearing on TV.

Flickering horizontal lines is one of the most significant faults of any interlaced scanning system.

On the whole, however, TV pictures are not screens full of horizontal stripes. A "normal" picture does not suffer to such an extent from scanning-related loss of vertical resolution. According to a number determined from visual experiments, the "Kell factor," about 70 percent of the theoretically available vertical resolution should be obtained in practice with typical images. The maximum possible vertical resolution, therefore, has fallen from our first assumption of 525 to 483 to only 338 lines (70 percent of 483).

Horizontally, the maximum possible resolution is limited by the allowed bandwidth for a video signal. In practical terms, the bandwidth for TV broadcasts, video-disc playback, etc. is 4.2 megahertz. Doing the mathematical calculations results in a limit for horizontal resolution of roughly 330 lines (about 80 lines per megahertz).

While there are methods for increasing the apparent resolution of a video image, beware of video components claiming resolution capabilities beyond the limits given here. (Some higher figures result from the manufacturer's failure to refer the horizontal resolution to the vertical dimension. In these cases, simply multiply the spec by 0.75 to obtain a correct figure.) High-resolution monitors do exist—they're used as computer displays and in professional video applications—but they won't be of any particular advantage in home-video applications because those applications involve signals from sources whose resolution is limited as defined above. You can use a monitor with 400-line resolution to watch a TV broadcast, but it won't appear any more detailed than on a monitor with 330-line horizontal resolution since the TV signal just doesn't carry any more picture detail. Home VCR's (Beta and VHS) and video cameras have far less resolution than live TV broadcasts.

Finally, this method of specifying resolution, with its referral of all measurements to the vertical dimension of the picture, does *not* automatically give an advantage in detail to larger screen sizes. □

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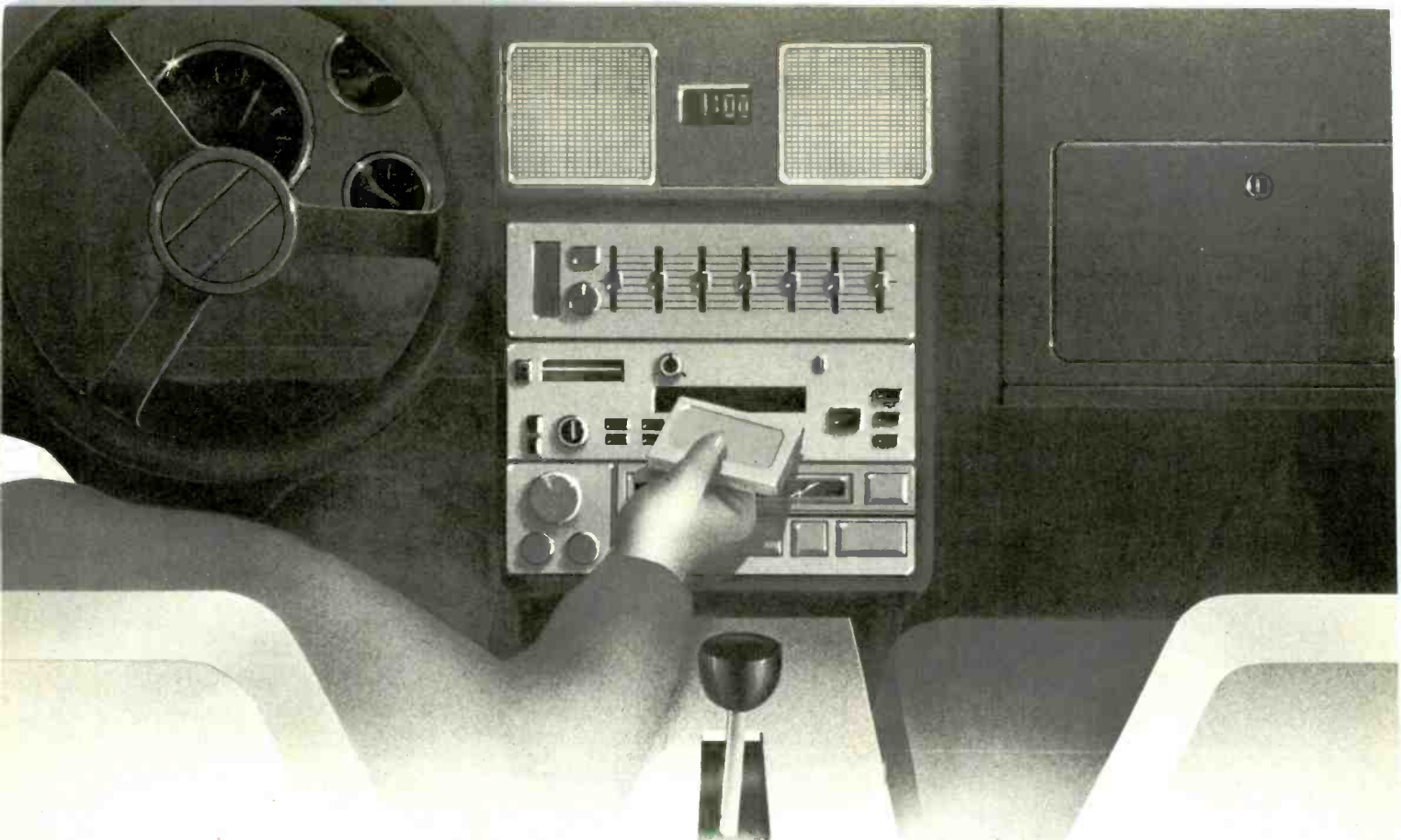
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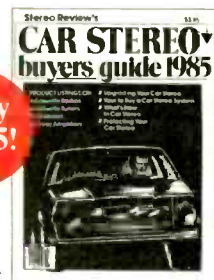
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by Julian Hirsch



The Audio/Video Synergy

FOR many years, audio and video—specifically, hi-fi audio and television—coexisted as home entertainment media with relatively little direct competition for the consumer's discretionary-purchase dollar. In fact, most dedicated audiophiles tended to look upon TV with disdain—after all, what kind of sound can you expect from a 4-inch speaker?—while the far greater number of TV viewers had either never heard of “hi-fi” or else equated it with the low-priced, mass-market systems sold through department and discount stores. The sound from these systems was not much better than that of TV sets, so there seemed little reason to combine the two.

In the late 1940's, however, I first became aware of the unheard audio content in TV programs, even the ones of that time. Many were live productions, and playing them through any reasonably good audio system disclosed the sounds of creaking camera-dolly wheels and dragging cables, sounds unsuspected by the average viewer or, I am sure, by the TV broadcasters! Granted, making such noises audi-

ble added little to the value of a program, but it was fun to extract them from their hiding places in the broadcast TV sound.

More to the point, the sound of TV programs took on greater immediacy and realism when heard through an audio system instead of in the more usual anemic version that came through straight from the TV set. Perhaps there was not enough potential advantage to justify widescale merging of hi-fi with TV at that time, but for many years I played mono TV sound through my home music system and almost always found the effect worthwhile. With two good speakers 12 feet apart and the TV set midway between them, the sound image was much more believable than it had ever been when it was strained through the miniature amplifier and speaker of a typical TV set.

Readers of STEREO REVIEW are well aware that things are very different today. Not only are there combination audio/video receivers (see page 43 in this issue), but increasing numbers of TV sets have line-level audio-output jacks for connection to the high-level inputs of an external audio amplifier or receiver. Even before stereo TV was officially announced, let alone a reality, many television sets had “stereo outputs,” with comb filtering or phase shifting used to create two somewhat different audio channels from one—apparently the popular conception of what “stereo” is supposed to be.

At last we have an FCC-approved stereo sound system for television, and both TV sets and VCR's containing the necessary decoding circuitry are beginning to appear, or at least to be announced. It would

seem that the much-heralded “marriage” of video and audio is finally about to be consummated in broadcasting as it has been in prerecorded video discs and tapes that are available for home use.

What does all this mean for the

For many years I played mono TV sound through my home music system and almost always found the effect worthwhile. The sound image was much more believable than it was when strained through the amplifier and speaker of a typical TV set.

consumer? I have mentioned some of the results of playing TV sound through a wide-range reproducing system. However, live broadcasts are virtually nonexistent today, most so-called “live” productions actually having been videotaped in advance, and apparently the wheels on 1985 TV-camera dollies have been improved over the past thirty-odd years to the same degree as almost every other aspect of electronics technology. So even with stereo TV, you're not going to hear those behind-the-scenes noises I enjoyed for so many years. Furthermore, the soundtracks of older movies cannot tax the sonic limitations of even the most low-fi TV set. There *are* some movies whose sound (with stereo, Dolby surround-sound encoding, wide frequency range, etc.) does contribute greatly to their total impact, and these are obvious candidates for full-bore stereo TV transmissions.

True, at this time it is hard to see many signs that the (audio) message is catching up with the medium. That is, many TV broadcasters aren't yet taking advantage of the opportunities that have opened up for better sound. Last year I was certainly disappointed to find, when we tested the first VCR to come to us with stereo-sound decoding, that even in New York, the largest TV market in the country, only one TV station was equipped to transmit stereo sound—and this capability

Tested This Month

*Rotel RA-870 and
RB-870 Amplifiers
Technics SL-J2
Turntable
Klipsch kg⁴ Speaker
Hitachi VT-88A
VHS Hi-Fi VCR*



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TECHNICAL TALK

was being used to enhance (?) talk shows and the like!

But the situation is changing. At the end of 1984, there were ten TV stations in the U.S. equipped to air stereo TV and/or second-language programming. More stations will probably start broadcasting it sometime this year. Meanwhile, though, buyers of TV or VCR equipment with stereo capability should be aware that a glowing front-panel stereo indicator does not necessarily mean that you are receiving a stereo broadcast, merely that the TV station is transmitting a stereo subcarrier. If what you hear sounds like mono, it probably is mono!

Let's say that you actually do

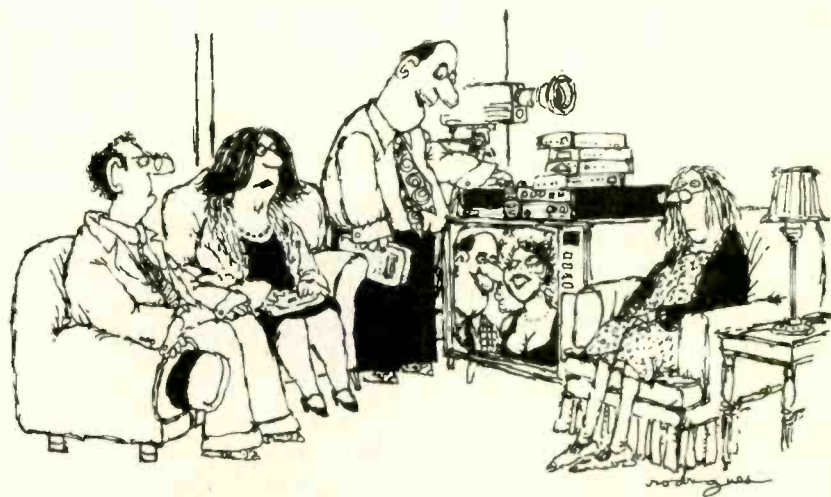
From my own experience, good sound, even in mono, enriches the visual experience in much the same way that some foods or wines complement others. But don't expect it to be a miraculous transformation.

have stereo TV sound in your locality, and many more of us will surely have it within a matter of months. What does it add to the enjoyment of the average TV program? Obviously, the answer will differ for

every individual. From my own experience I can say that good sound, even in mono, enriches the visual experience in much the same way that some foods or wines complement others. But don't expect a miraculous transformation of what you get from broadcast TV merely from a cleaning up of the sound. The enhancement is likely to be more subtle than that.

Certainly, as long as the vast majority of TV programs are recorded in mono, you won't revolutionize your TV listening overnight by upgrading to stereo equipment. The most obvious candidates for stereo TV broadcasts are, of course, those movies that already have stereo soundtracks as well as the kind of musical programs previously available in stereo only through TV/FM or cable/FM simulcasts.

The prerecorded video-cassette field is quite a different story. There are already dozens of prerecorded movie and music videos featuring either Beta or VHS Hi-Fi stereo sound. Their number is growing daily. If your VCR offers the hi-fi mode, you have made the first step, and a major one, toward enhancing your audio/video enjoyment, in addition to having acquired thereby a superb audio-only recorder. If it can also decode stereo TV broadcasts, you're ready for anything that comes along. Let's just hope it comes soon. □



"... Now here's a video tape of Lydia and me on vacation in Montreal—'course, that's not Lydia, Lydia wasn't quite right for the part, so I hired this girl to play Lydia. Well, anyhow, here's Lydia and me leaving our hotel..."

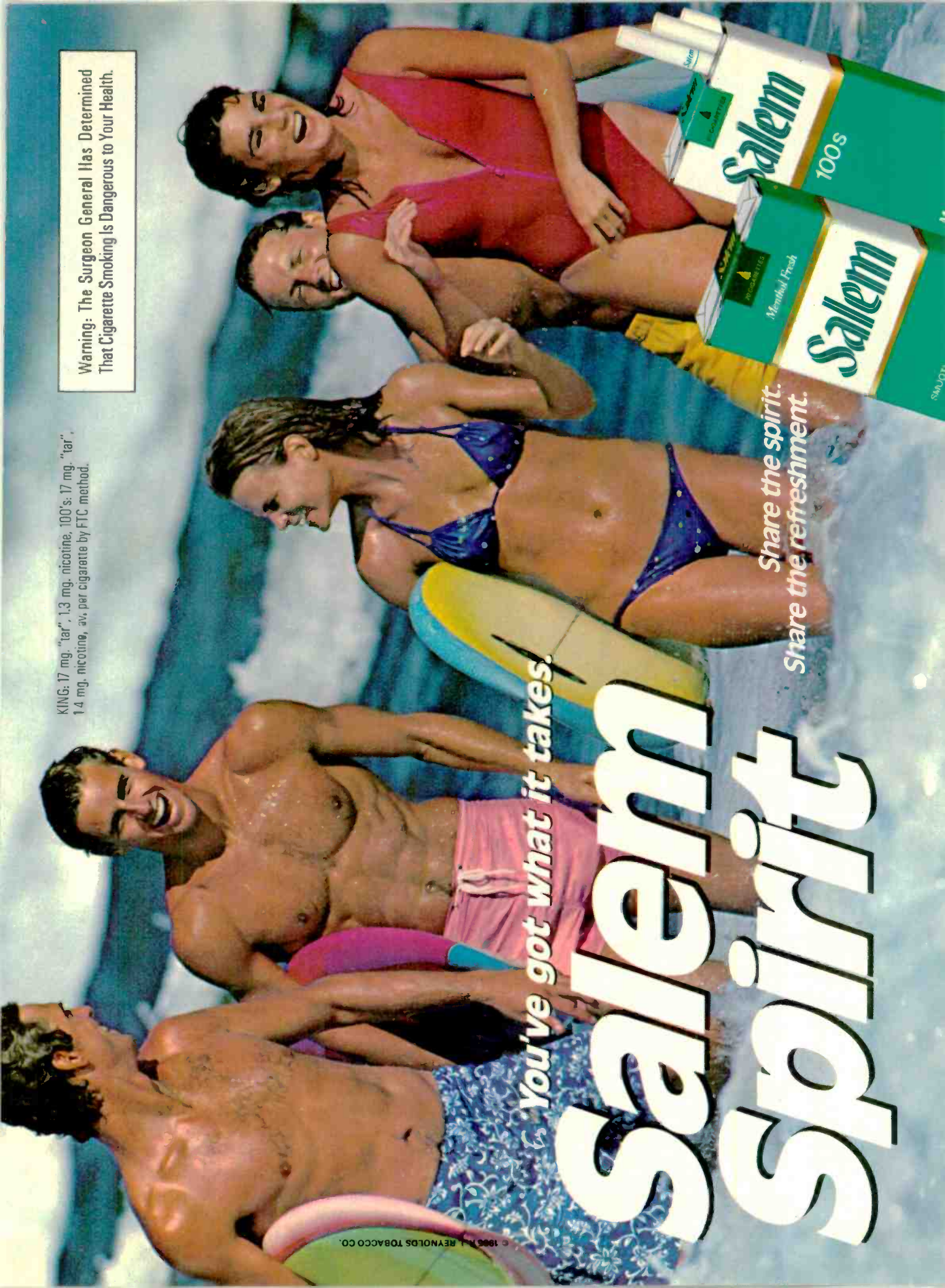
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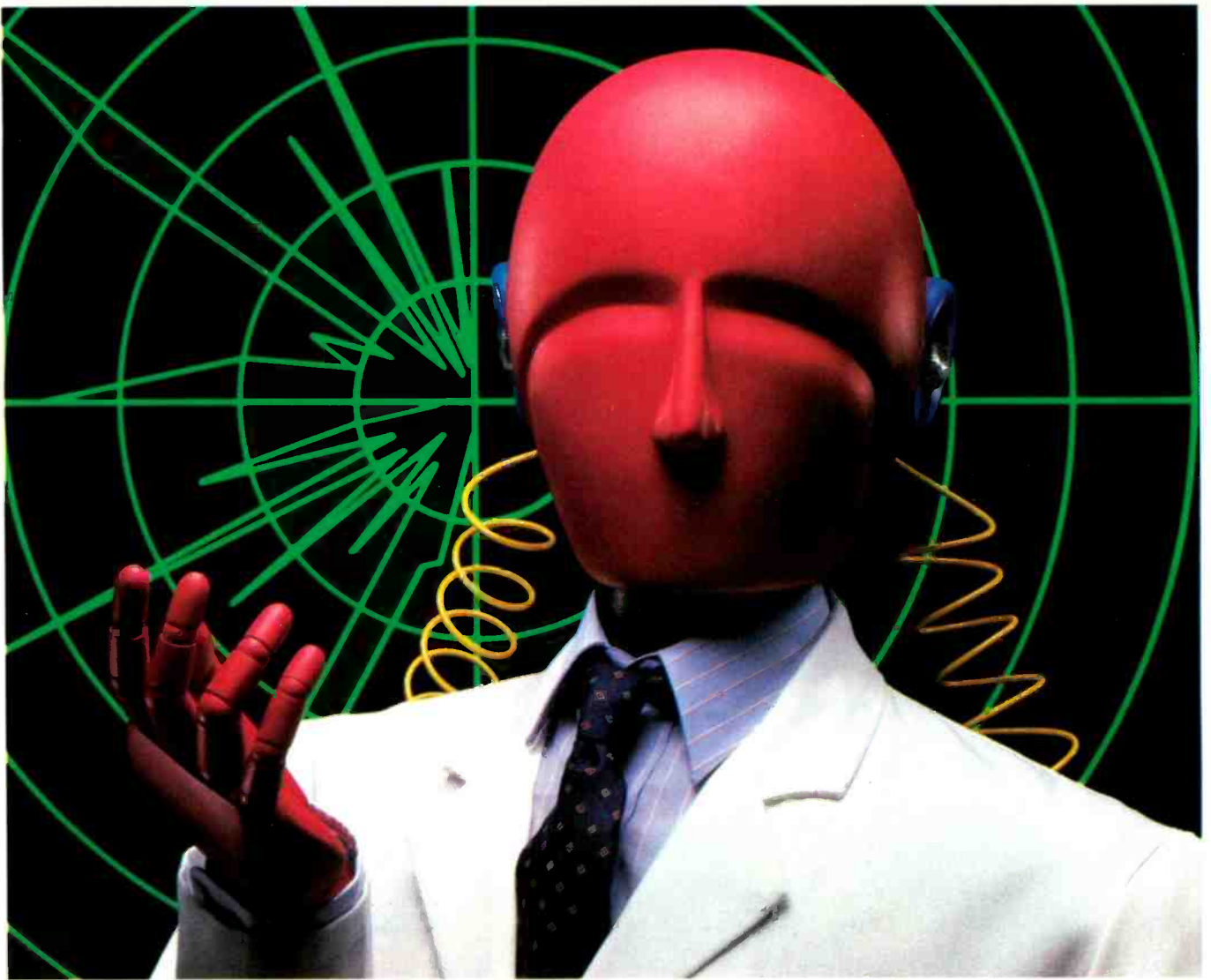
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ROTEL RA-870 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER AND RB-870 POWER AMPLIFIER

Julian Hirsch, Hirsch-Houck Laboratories



ROY SCHNEIDER

ROTEL'S RA-870 integrated stereo amplifier departs from the usual industry practice in several respects. For one thing, its front-panel controls are limited to four basic functions: volume/balance (a dual knob with slip-clutch coupling); input selection (pushbuttons for phono, tuner, or CD player); tape monitoring for two decks with a one-way dubbing facility, but without the capability of recording one source while listening to another; and listening-mode selection (stereo, mono, or reverse stereo). There are no tone controls or filters, but there is a headphone jack and a switch to select a built-in pre-preamplifier for a moving-coil cartridge (there are separate input jacks in the rear for MM and MC cartridges).

In another departure, indicator lights are used very sparingly. There are six LED's to indicate the select-

ed input source. Another three, red ones to the right of the power switch, indicate the amplifier's operating status when the amp is turned on, when its protection circuits have been tripped, and when the two stereo channels have been connected for mono (bridged) operation.

The option of bridging is one of the more useful and unusual features of the RA-870. A small slide switch on the rear apron of the amplifier interrupts the signal path between the preamplifier and power-amplifier sections and "bridges" the two channels to form a mono amplifier that has more than twice the power capability of a single stereo channel. In this mode, the RA-870 is meant to be used with its companion, the RB-870. This is a basic power amplifier, identical electrically to the power-amplifier section of the RA-870 and matching

it in overall size and appearance.

The RB-870 can, of course, be used as a conventional stereo power amplifier, but when its rear-apron switch is also shifted from NORMAL to BRIDGED MONO, its power capabilities match those of the RA-870 amplifier in its bridged mode. In addition to the usual stereo input jacks, the RB-870 has a pair of output jacks. In bridged operation, its inputs are driven from the preamplifier outputs of the RA-870 and its outputs return to the power-amplifier inputs of the RA-870.

When the RA-870 and RB-870 are used in combination, they form a high-quality and very powerful two-piece integrated stereo amplifier. In normal stereo operation, the power-amplifier sections of the RA-870 and RB-870 are rated (very conservatively, as our tests revealed) to deliver 60 watts per channel into 8-ohm loads from 20 to 20,000 Hz with no more than 0.03 percent total harmonic distortion. In bridged operation, the *nominal* power rating becomes 120 watts per channel, also at 0.03 percent distortion. Although this is a fairly high power, it is hardly enough to give

A slide switch "bridges" the two channels of the RA-870's power amplifier in order to form a mono amplifier that has more than twice the power capability of a single stereo channel.

the Rotel RA/RB-870 combination a unique status among integrated amplifiers. But our test measurements of these amplifiers' actual output told a very different story.

Even in normal operation, these amplifiers are rated only for driving loads of 8 ohms or higher. Bridging two amplifiers generally rules out using very low load impedances, such as 2 or 4 ohms, so it is reasonable for the bridged Rotel amplifiers to carry only an 8-ohm rating.

The speaker-output terminals on both amplifiers are insulated binding posts that tightly clamp the stripped ends of speaker wires. Although they superficially resemble

the multi-way binding posts used on some amplifiers, they do not accept banana plugs or similar types of mating connectors, and their spacing is not compatible with standard dual banana-plug connectors. The RA-870 has two switched a.c. outlets on its rear panel, but neither can be used to switch the RB-870. The manual specifically warns against connecting a power amplifier to the RA-870's outlets, each of which can handle loads up to 50 watts.

The Rotel RA-870 and RB-870 are both finished in black and measure about 17 inches wide, 12½ inches deep, and 3½ inches high. The RA-870 weighs about 21½ pounds, the RB-870 about 20¾ pounds. Prices: RA-870, \$475; RB-870, \$375. Rotel Audio of America, Dept. SR, P.O. Box 653, Buffalo, N.Y. 14240.

Lab Tests

Preconditioning the RA-870 for one hour at 20 watts (one-third rated power) made its top only moderately warm. When it was driving 8-ohm loads at 1,000 Hz, the outputs clipped at 78 watts per channel. Disregarding the amplifier's lack of a 4-ohm rating, we also tested it with both channels driving 4-ohm loads, and it clipped at a gratifyingly high 115 watts per channel. Emboldened by this result, we tried the same thing with 2-ohm loads. We measured 145 watts per channel as the output waveform clipped—simultaneously blowing both internal power-line fuses.

These measurements indicate that the current output capability of the RA-870 is not limited so much by its internal circuits as by its power-supply fuses. Obviously, a user should not attempt to drive very low-impedance speaker loads with the RA-870, especially at high average power levels, since these fuses are not meant to be user-replaceable. The apparent lack of conventional current limiting in this amplifier as shown by our tests encouraged us to measure its dynamic power capability with loads of 2, 4, and 8 ohms. The short-term 8-ohm output was 88 watts, but with 4-ohm loads this increased to 164 watts, and with 2 ohms it was 264 watts. Clearly, the RA-870 is not

HIRSCH-HOUCK LAB MEASUREMENTS

■ RA-870 Amplifier

Sensitivity for 1-watt output: tuner/CD, 21 mV; phono (MM), 0.275 mV; phono (MC), 0.045 mV

Signal-to-noise ratio (referred to 1-watt output, A-weighted): tuner/CD, 87 dB; phono (MM), 81 dB; phono (MC), 68 dB

Phono (MM) input overload: 170 to 185 mV

Phono (MM) input impedance: 47,000 ohms, 100 picofarads

RIAA equalization error: 20 to 20,000 Hz ±0.5 dB

Frequency response: 20 to 20,000 Hz +0, -1 dB [-1 dB at 20 Hz, -0.25 dB at 20,000 Hz]

1,000-Hz output power at clipping: 78 watts into 8 ohms, 115 watts into 4 ohms, 145 watts into 2 ohms

Dynamic power output (20 milliseconds duration): 88 watts into 8 ohms, 164 watts into 4 ohms, 264 watts into 2 ohms

Clipping headroom (8 ohms): 1.15 dB

Dynamic headroom (8 ohms): 1.65 dB

Maximum distortion from 20 to 20,000 Hz, 60 watts output: 0.029

Slew factor: 3.5

■ RB-870 (bridged/mono mode)

Sensitivity for 1-watt output: 67 mV

Signal-to-noise ratio (referred to 1 watt output, A-weighted): 85.5 dB

Frequency response: 20 to 20,000 Hz +0, -1.1 dB [-3 dB at 12 Hz and 280,000 Hz]

1,000-Hz output power at clipping: 242 watts into 8 ohms, 324 watts into 4 ohms

Dynamic power output (20-millisecond duration): 306 watts into 8 ohms, 480 watts into 4 ohms, 462 watts into 2 ohms

Clipping headroom (8 ohms): 3.05 dB

Dynamic headroom (8 ohms): 4.07 dB

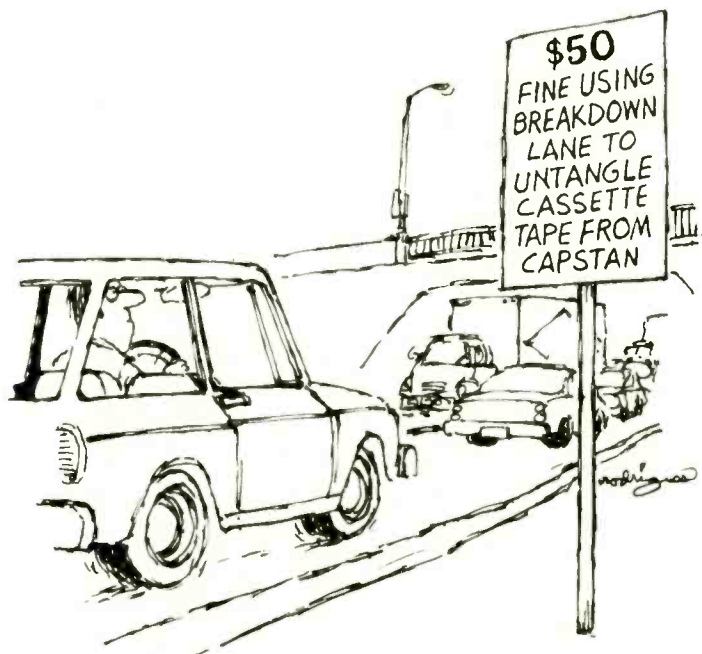
Maximum distortion from 30 to 20,000 Hz, 120 watts output: 0.0145%

your ordinary "60-watt" amplifier.

In its other characteristics, the RA-870 was also an excellent performer. Its noise levels were very low (although, as is often the case, the MC phono input was considerably noisier than the MM input). Phono equalization was very accurate, and the input characteristics were nearly ideal. The amplifier distortion was typically between 0.01 and 0.02 percent for outputs between 0.1 and 70 watts into 8 ohms and about 0.02 percent for 4-ohm loads. (Distortion measurements

could not be made with 2-ohm loads since continuous power levels into that impedance either blew the line fuses or overheated the amplifier and shut it down.) Across the audio frequency range, from 20 to 20,000 Hz, the distortion was typically 0.015 percent and never exceeded the 0.03 percent rating at the rated power output or less.

Since the RB-870 is identical to the RA-870's power-amplifier section, we connected it for bridged mono operation and made all our measurements in that mode. To our



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surprise, not only was the clipping power far greater than twice that of a single channel, but the distortion was even lower! Driving 8 ohms at 1,000 Hz, the RB-870's mono output clipped at 242 watts. We repeated this measurement with a 4-ohm load, into which the amplifier delivered a hefty 324 watts. In view of our dwindling supply of 4-ampere fuses, we decided not to attempt 2-ohm operation except for the 20-millisecond bursts of the dynamic-power test. The dynamic power outputs we measured into 8, 4, and 2 ohms were nothing short of mind-boggling: 306, 480, and 462 watts!

After that, the bridged-mode distortion readings were almost anticlimactic. At the rated 120 watts output or less, the distortion was between 0.007 and 0.014 percent at frequencies from 30 to 20,000 Hz. It reached 0.03 percent at 20 Hz and 60 watts, and we could not get more than 75 undistorted watts out of the amplifier at 20 Hz. But this test was made on a very hot amplifier, and we suspect that the RB-870 would have developed its rated power easily at 20 Hz had it been at a normal operating temperature.

Comments

Normally, bridged power amplifiers require that both sides of each speaker output be isolated from ground. We took pains in measuring the RA/RB-870 to maintain this isolation, but listening tests through our speaker/amplifier comparator require the use of a common ground between the two speaker outputs and the signal inputs. The instruction manuals for the Rotel RA-870 and RB-870 do not mention such an isolation requirement, so, with some trepidation, we connected both amplifiers in their bridged modes to our listening system. To our considerable relief, the combination worked perfectly, providing the most powerful integrated stereo amplifier we have had the pleasure of using. The Rotel RA/RB-870 sounded as good as one would expect considering the tremendous power reserves of a system capable of many hundreds of watts output. It can, in fact, deliver almost a kilowatt of short-term output to a pair of speakers whose nominal 8-ohm

impedances drop to 4 or 5 ohms or lower at some frequencies.

Although at any usable gain setting the noise level was completely inaudible through the high-level inputs and the MM phono input, the MC input produced some audible but unobtrusive hiss at high gain settings. The absence of switching transients from the amplifier outputs was welcome (and necessary, in view of the high power capabilities). The identical physical structure of these amplifiers invites stacking them for combined operation. Nothing is said about that in the manuals, but Rotel told us by

The Rotel RA/RB-870 sounded as good as one would expect considering the tremendous power reserves of a system capable of many hundreds of watts output.

phone that they recommend placing the RA-870 on top of the RB-870 if the units must be stacked. It was encouraging to find that both amplifiers remained comfortably cool during extended normal use, perhaps because their ventilating holes and heat sinks allow a free flow of air when they are stacked.

Considering the RA-870 as a 60-watt integrated stereo amplifier, its pricing is about average for similarly rated products on the market. The same can be said of the RB-870 and of the bridged combination at its rated output of 120 watts per channel. The pricing picture changes, however, when you consider what this combination really does instead of what its overly conservative ratings claim for it. The RA-870 and RB-870 together make up an attractive, reasonably compact integrated amplifier that can drive most real-world speaker loads to levels in the range of 250 to 500 watts per channel, depending on the speaker impedance and the duration of the power demand. We cannot recall seeing any other integrated amplifier that can match that distinctly above-average power-output capability.

Circle 140 on reader service card

TECHNICS SL-J2 TURNTABLE

*Julian Hirsch,
Hirsch-Houck Laboratories*

INEXPENSIVE yet sophisticated, the Technics SL-J2 is a fully automatic direct-drive turntable whose servo-driven linear-tracking tone arm accepts plug-in P-mount cartridges. The SL-J2 offers automatic selection of the playing speed and the tone-arm indexing position as well as a feature not often found in its price range: a skip-search capability that enables the arm to skip over up to nine bands on a record in either direction. An optical sensor on the tone arm counts the appropriate number of blank (unrecorded) intervals between cuts as the arm scans across the record.

The SL-J2's dynamically balanced tone arm is built into the hinged plastic dust cover, which lifts the pickup into a safe position whenever it is raised to load or remove a record. Lowering the cover places the pickup at the outer diameter of a 12-inch record, but the stylus is safely above the surface of the record (or rubber platter mat if no record is in place) until the START control is pressed. When the power is on, a red LED on the tone arm, which can be seen through the cover, shows the arm's movement across the disc. There is a corresponding indicator in the calibrated scale on the top of the cover.

With the speed-selector switch next to the platter in its normal AUTO position, the arm's optical sensor determines whether a 7- or a 12-inch disc has been loaded and moves the arm to the appropriate starting position. If no record is on the platter, the arm moves to the 7-inch position and then, not sensing reflected light from a disc surface, returns to its rest position. The playing speed, 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ or 45 rpm, is also selected automatically to match



The Technics SL-J2 illustrates, better than most audio components, how much more value per dollar buyers receive today compared with only a few years ago.

the record diameter. For a non-standard record such as a 7- or 10-inch LP or a 12-inch 45-rpm disc, the speed and index diameter must be set manually with two additional switches on the top of the base near the platter.

A third switch, normally left in its middle M, or medium, position, adjusts the sensitivity of the optical sensor for the skip-search system. If the blank intervals between bands on a record are unusually narrow, the sensor may overlook them. To avoid this, the switch is set for high sensitivity. On the other hand, the groove spacing on some records is greater than usual in order to accommodate large recorded amplitudes, and this might cause the sensor to interpret normal spaces as unrecorded band divisions. In this case, the low-sensitivity setting should be used.

The SL-J2's tone arm cannot be moved by hand even when the dust cover is open, but only by use of the operating controls on the front of its base. Large, flat pushplates start and

stop the player, and two smaller plates, one for each direction, control the skip-search function. The MUSIC SELECT window on the front panel normally displays a large red 0 when the player's power is on, serving as a pilot light. If one of the SKIP-SEARCH controls is lightly tapped, the numeral in the window increases by one digit, to a maximum of 9 with successive taps. At the same time, the pickup lifts and the arm moves forward or back the number of tracks selected, then begins or resumes play.

The SKIP-SEARCH control plates can also be used for "manual" cueing to points between band divisions. Holding one of the plates in for a couple of seconds causes the pickup to lift and the arm to slew in the desired direction until the control is released. There is a small CUEING button to raise or lower the pickup in place on alternate touches, and a REPEAT button can be pressed to cause a record to replay indefinitely (until the button is pressed again).



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TEST REPORTS

The Technics SL-J2 is 12½ inches square, about the size of a record jacket, and 3½ inches high. It weighs 9½ pounds. Price: \$200. Technics, Dept. SR, One Panasonic Way, Secaucus, N.J. 07094.

Lab Tests

We installed a Shure V-15LT P-mount cartridge in the arm of the Technics SL-J2 for our tests. No adjustments are possible (or needed) with the mounting system's standardized arm and cartridge dimensions, mass, and tracking force. The cartridge merely plugs into the end of the arm.

The foolproof design of this player also prevented us from

from acoustic feedback in any case.

The measured rumble of the SL-J2 was average for a direct-drive turntable: -32 dB unweighted, -55 dB with ARLL weighting, and -61 dB with DIN-B weighting. Although the major rumble frequency component was below the audio range, at about 8 Hz, there were also fairly strong components at 30 and 83 Hz, but the rumble was not audible at any normal playback level. Flutter was low, 0.05 percent in a JIS-weighted rms measurement and ±0.07 percent DIN-weighted quasi-peak. The speed error was less than 0.1 percent (probably comparable to the tolerance of the test record). Tone-arm capacitance measured 150 picofarads.

ated smoothly and quietly, and the skip-search feature worked as claimed on records having visible gaps between bands. On some discs, however, the brief intervals between portions of the recording were cut with normal groove spacing, and in some of these cases the optical sensor did not interpret the divisions as silent intervals even when set to its maximum sensitivity.

Comments

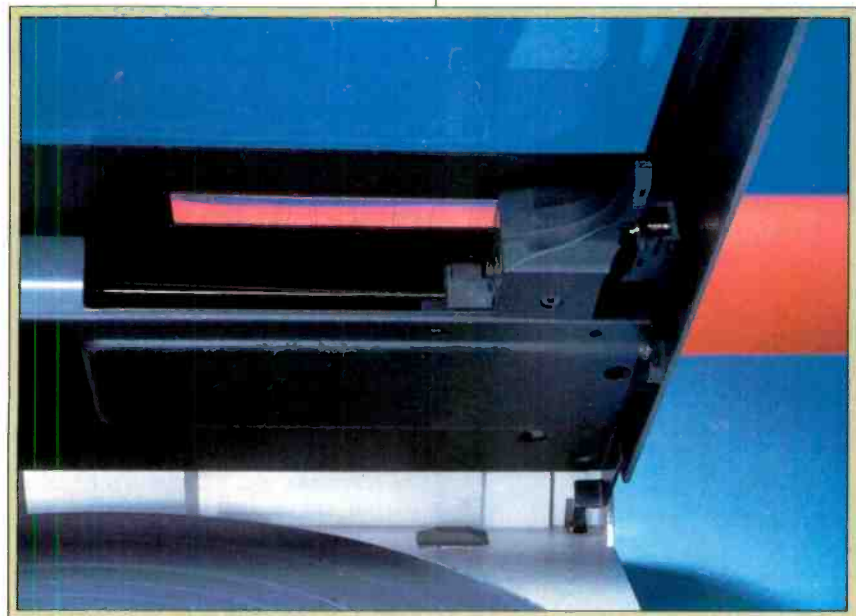
The Technics SL-J2 illustrates, better than most audio components, how much more value per dollar buyers receive today compared with only a few years ago. It is attractive, about as compact as a player for 12-inch records can possibly be, extremely simple to set up and operate, highly versatile, and still relatively inexpensive.

The high degree of standardization inherent in the P-mount system means that the overall performance of this player should be virtually independent of the cartridge installed in it, and the cartridge can be installed without the usual critical setup alignments. The linear-tracking tone arm, having no need for antiskating compensation, remains in place when the cueing button is operated, and the stylus returns to the exact point on the record from which it was raised (a feat few pivoted arms can match). The simple operating controls make the player usable even by a child without risk of damage to records or the cartridge.

The only substantive criticism I might direct against this unit is that the interior is not illuminated well enough for accurate manual cueing of the pickup to portions of a recording not separated by visible (or photoelectronically detectable) gaps. The red position light on the arm is not very helpful. A strong external light would solve this problem, however.

In sum, the Technics SL-J2 is a lot of record player for the money. It may not appeal to some hard-core audiophiles (to whom the simple and foolproof P-mount system seems to be anathema), but for playing records well its overall value is hard to match.

Circle 141 on reader service card



RED AICON

checking the actual tracking force (nominally 1.25 grams) or the isolation from external vibration since the arm is completely inaccessible to the user and cannot be lowered to a stationary record. We could tell, however, that the player is quite resistant to impact on its cover or base while it is playing a record, since tapping these did not cause groove jumping unless the impact was quite severe. On the other hand, the audio-frequency components of the tapping were plainly audible in the playback signal. We did not have any problems with acoustic feedback, but our room and test setup are relatively free

The start-up time for the SL-J2 to begin playing a 12-inch record from the beginning was only 4 seconds. If the skip-search function was used to start on a band near the end of a disc, start-up time increased to 9 seconds, which is comparable to the normal start-up time of many automatic turntables. At the end of a record the mechanism took 10½ seconds to shut off the platter motor and return the pickup to its rest position.

The low-frequency arm/cartridge resonance was at its maximum at about 12 Hz, a nearly ideal frequency from the standpoint of tracking warped records. The player oper-

KLIPSCH KG⁴ SPEAKER SYSTEM

Julian Hirsch, Hirsch-Houck Laboratories



The overall range and smoothness of the kg⁴'s frequency response rank it very high among the speakers we have tested.

THE Klipsch kg⁴ is a two-way floor-standing speaker system featuring unusually high efficiency (for a home speaker) combined with an extended, smooth frequency response. Its handsomely finished oak-veneer enclosure is 24¼ inches high, 15¾ inches wide, and 10¾ inches deep, and the system weighs 45 pounds. The dark brown, wood-framed cloth grille is retained by strong plastic fasteners and requires considerable effort for removal.

The front panel of the kg⁴ contains two white plastic-cone woofers, one above the other, with a nominal diameter of 8 inches. At the top of the panel is a horn-loaded tweeter—a device unusual in home speakers—with mouth dimensions of 8½ x 3 inches. The crossover frequency is 1,800 Hz. On the rear panel of the enclosure is a 12-inch passive cone radiator that extends the low-frequency response limits of the smaller bass drivers. The binding-post terminals, recessed into the

rear of the cabinet, accept banana plugs, including dual plugs on ¾-inch centers, as well as wires. There are no external controls or adjustments. Price: \$520 per pair. Klipsch & Assoc., Inc., Dept. SR, P.O. Box 688, Hope, Ariz. 71801.

Lab Tests

Since no specific suggestions for room placement were supplied with our samples of the Klipsch kg⁴, we tried them first about 1 foot from the rear wall and moved them through a range sufficient to establish that the speaker-to-wall spacing was not at all critical. The 1-foot distance was used for our room-response measurements. Our FFT quasi-anechoic measurements were made with the speaker standing in the clear, as far as possible from any walls.

Bass response was measured separately for the driven woofers and the passive cone. For these tests we used close microphone spacing and combined the two curves with allowance for the radiating areas of the different sources. The bass curve was spliced to the smoothed room-response curve (made with a sweeping warble-tone sine wave), which had been corrected above 10,000 Hz for the known absorption characteristics of the room. The resulting overall composite frequency-response curve confirmed our earlier subjective impressions, and we consider it to be a reasonably valid description of the performance of this speaker in a listening room of average size and acoustic properties.

The overall response thus derived was very flat, ±3.5 dB from 30 to 20,000 Hz, making the kg⁴ rank very high among the speakers we have tested in respect to the range and smoothness of its frequency response. There were several minor ripples in the curve between 1,000 and 6,000 Hz, but their peak-to-peak amplitude did not exceed 5 dB. In general, the output showed a broad maximum between 50 and 400 Hz, and on average it was slightly elevated in the range from 5,000 to 7,000 Hz as well as above 13,000 Hz. The low-bass output decreased at about 6 dB per octave below 60 Hz (the effective crossover

ROY SCHNEIDER

HITACHI VT-88A VHS HI-FI VCR

Julian Hirsch, Hirsch-Houck Laboratories



RED AXON

FEATURES

- Records and plays back at all three VHS speeds (SP, LP, EP)
- Approximate time remaining on tape displayed automatically during operation
- Unattended timer-controlled recording for up to five events over fourteen days
- Can be used with video camera
- Sound recording from TV broadcast, camera, TV/FM simulcast, or any external high-level audio source
- Electronic four-digit index counter/clock
- Twin-slider audio recording-level controls
- Separate peak-reading LED audio-level indicators for each channel marked from -20 to +8 dB (red above 0 dB)
- Peak hold on recording-level display for levels above 0 dB
- Defeatable automatic level control (ALC) for audio recording
- Instant Recording Timer bypasses ordinary programming procedures
- Wireless infrared remote control operates normal recording and playback functions, sequential channel selection, fast search, and single-frame advance
- All usual VCR features, including fast forward and rewind, pause, high-speed search, single-frame viewing, etc.
- Digital-synthesis TV tuner receives all UHF and VHF channels, and cable channels A-W

HITACHI'S VT-88A VHS Hi-Fi video-cassette recorder is able to record both wide-range stereo audio tracks and the standard mono soundtrack along with the picture from a TV broadcast or other video source. In the VHS Hi-Fi system each stereo audio channel frequency modulates a carrier in the 1- to 2-MHz range, and these are recorded

together with any accompanying video information on a standard VHS video cassette through separate heads on the rotating video head drum. The sound channels are recorded just ahead of the video. When the video is recorded over the audio tracks an instant later, it partially erases them near the tape's surface but leaves them intact below the video information layer.

The video and hi-fi audio heads are mounted with an azimuth difference of about 30 degrees, so that in playback each set of heads responds only to the appropriate program material. This "depth multiplexing" system provides essentially complete playback isolation between the audio and the video signals even though they occupy the same segment of tape and share part of the same frequency spectrum, enabling them to be processed separately without interference.

The use of a frequency-modulation (FM) system for the hi-fi audio, together with special noise-reduction (companding) circuits, gives VHS Hi-Fi an audio capability that is vastly superior both to that of a conventional VCR audio track and to home analog audio recorders. Wow and flutter are reduced to nearly unmeasurable levels, the dynamic range is extended to 80 dB or more, and the frequency response covers the full audio spectrum, from 20 to 20,000 Hz, with only minor variations.

In addition to VHS Hi-Fi, the Hitachi VT-88A has a host of standard features typical of higher-priced VCR's. Most are listed in the box below the photograph, but a few deserve more detailed comment.

First, there are self-calibrating tape-remaining indicators, similar in function to those found on audio cassette decks. During the first minute or so of playing or recording a cassette, the VT-88A calibrates itself to the tape's overall length. Thereafter, a series of green LED's shows the approximate running time remaining on the cassette, from 240 down to 30 minutes. When only 30 minutes of tape remains, the "30" light flashes.

The tape-remaining indicators are especially useful in conjunction with the VT-88A's Instant Recording Timer (IRT), a button on the front panel that can immediately place the unit into record mode for 1/2, 1, 1 1/2, 2, 3, or 4 hours. The IRT is intended to get around the more involved programming operations when a quick start is desired (for instance, to catch an unscheduled broadcast). Accordingly, the channel-selection buttons are locked when the IRT is used, on the assumption that what's coming in



INTRODUCING RENAULT If you heard Renault Encore's performance is impressive, get ready for a rave review on Encore GS. A new 1.7-litre fuel-injected engine combined with a computer monitored ignition and a 9.5 to 1 compression ratio turns out 41% more horsepower and 32% more torque for '85. It's geared to a front wheel drive 5-speed overdrive transaxle, supported by 4-wheel independent suspension with gas charged shocks, **PERFORMANCE**

twin coaxial rear torsion bars and wide steel belted 14" radials for a road hugging discipline. And the finely tuned dual outlet exhaust system leaves behind a sporting **36 MPG HWY, 29 MPG CITY.*** The European born and bred Renault Encore GS. *Built in America*, with a price that's more than sporting. It's affordable.

*Use EPA est. for comparison. Your results may differ.
Buy or Lease. From American Motors. Safety Belts Save Lives.

RENAULT
THE ONE TO WATCH 

AUDIO/VIDEO TEST REPORT

from the TV tuner at that moment is what needs to be recorded.

The body of the VT-88A is covered in wood-grain vinyl, and the front panel is black with silver trim. It measures 17 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 4 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches and weighs about 23 pounds. Price: \$1,195. Hitachi Sales Corp. of America, Dept. SR, 401 W. Artesia Blvd., Compton, Calif. 90220.

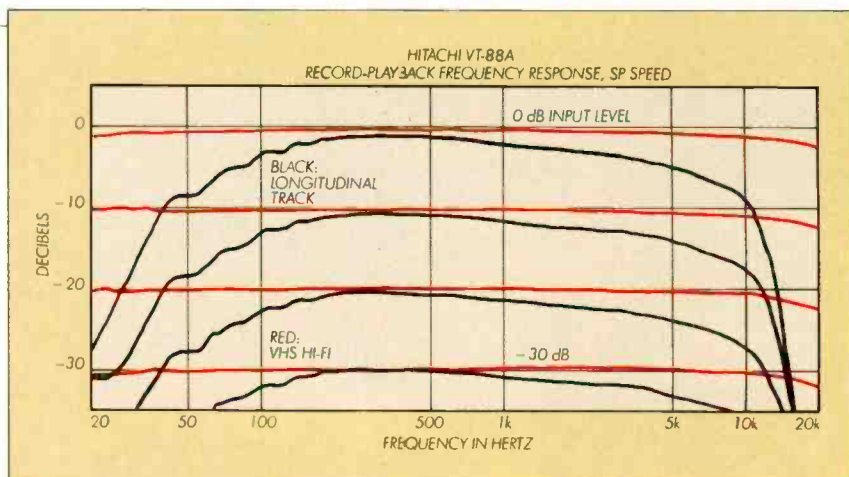
Lab Tests

The record-playback frequency response of any VHS Hi-Fi VCR is essentially independent of the tape speed since the high-speed rotation of the head drum effectively determines the rate at which the tape passes over the heads. Because the audio recording is done with high-frequency, constant-amplitude FM signals, the tape-saturation effects typical with ordinary tape recorders are also absent. In other words, both frequency response and distortion are virtually independent of recording level up to the point where the FM carrier's deviation exceeds the system's linear range. This characteristic was demonstrated by our measured frequency response for the Hitachi VT-88A (see the accompanying graph), which was down only about 0.5 dB at 20 Hz and 2 dB at 20,000 Hz. The curve was nearly flat over most of the intervening range at all recording levels from 0 to -40 dB (referred to the indications of the LED level display).

The 1,000-Hz harmonic distortion was about 0.25 percent at 0 dB and also at +10 dB (off scale on the level-indicator display). Measured distortion rose rapidly above +10

The Hitachi VT-88A's A-weighted S/N of 88 dB ranks among the highest, closely approaching that of some CD players.

dB, as could be expected, with visible waveform clipping occurring at +11 to +12 dB. A playback distortion of approximately 3 percent was reached at +11.5 dB, which we used as the reference level for our measurements of the signal-to-noise ratio (S/N). The VT-88A's A-



HIRSCH-HOUCK LAB MEASUREMENTS

Frequency response in hi-fi mode (referred to 1,000-Hz level): 20 to 20,000 Hz +0.5, -2 dB

Frequency response in normal mode (at -3-dB response points): 90 to 5,000 Hz at SP speed

Harmonic distortion (at 1,000 Hz in hi-fi mode): 0.25% at 0 dB; 0.26% at +10 dB

Signal-to-noise ratio referred to +11.5-dB signal level (A-weighted): 88 dB in hi-fi mode

Signal-to-noise ratio referred to 0-dB signal level (A-weighted): 50 dB in normal mode

Flutter: hi-fi mode, 0.003% JIS-weighted, \pm 0.0045% CCIR-weighted; normal mode, SP speed, 0.063% JIS-weighted, \pm 0.1% CCIR-weighted; normal mode, EP speed, 0.1% JIS-weighted, \pm 0.15% CCIR-weighted

Input sensitivity for 0-dB recorded level: 92 millivolts

Input overload level: 4.1 volts

Playback level from 0-dB signal: 0.5 volt

Rewind time for T-60 cassette: 103 seconds

Stereo channel separation: 58 dB at 1,000 Hz; 49 dB at 100 Hz

weighted S/N reading of 88 dB ranks among the highest we have observed from a hi-fi VCR, closely approaching that of some CD players. Flutter was measured at both the fastest (SP) and slowest (EP) tape speeds, but no differences could be detected between them.

For comparison, we also measured frequency response, distortion, noise, and flutter for the standard mono audio track (conventionally recorded along the length of the tape) at the fastest tape speed. The frequency response was surprisingly good (see graph) considering how slow this tape speed is by conventional audio standards. The reference recording level for 3-percent playback distortion was 0 dB, and the distortion varied little over a wide range of input levels. The corresponding A-weighted S/N was 50 dB. The normal-mode audio flutter was much like that of an audio cassette deck over the recorder's full range of operating speeds.

Although we made no measurements of the video performance of the VT-88A, off-the-air recordings and playback of commercially duplicated tapes and tapes recorded on other machines confirmed that its

picture quality was excellent at all three tape speeds.

Comments

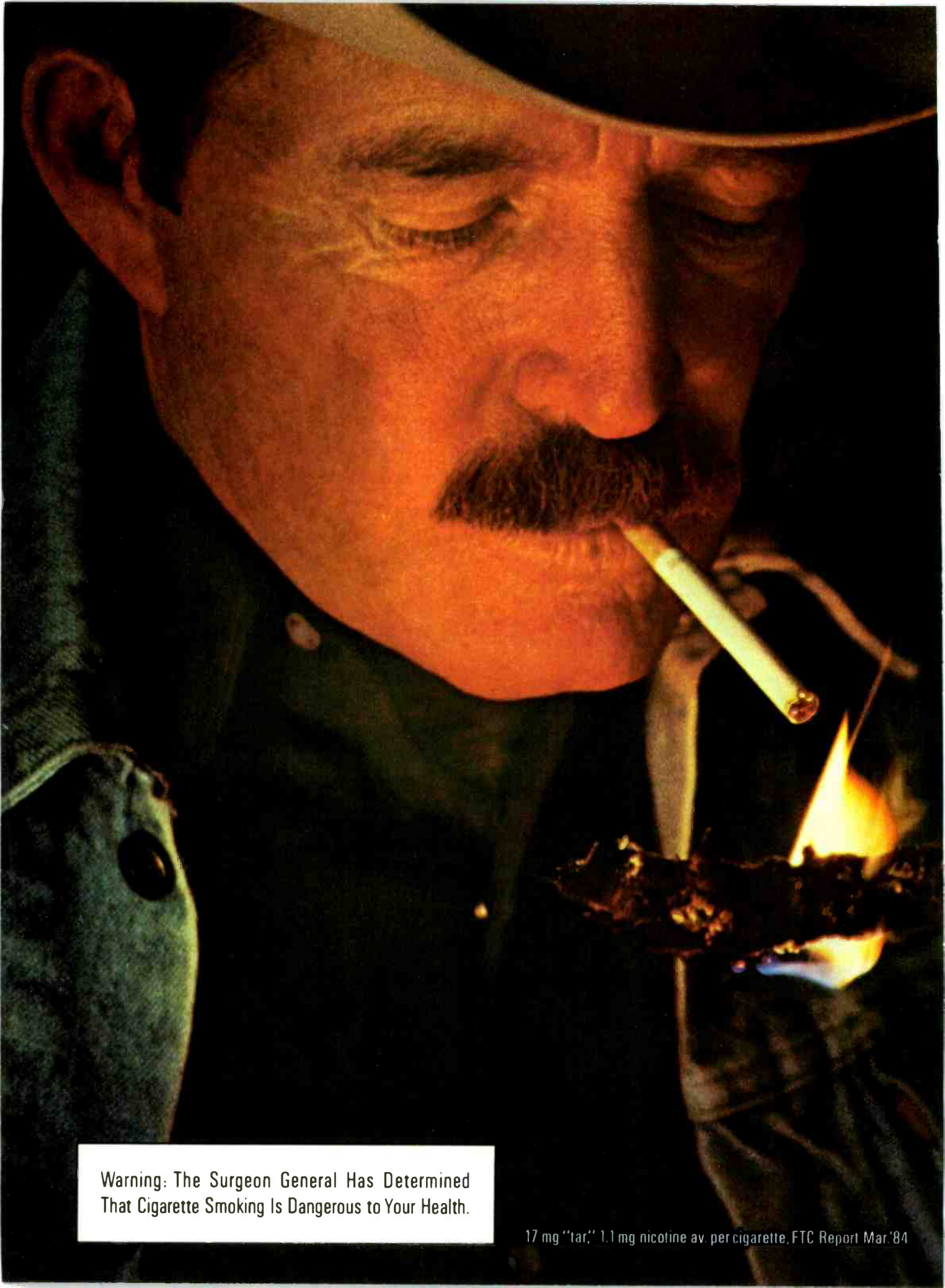
Our overwhelming impression of the Hitachi VT-88A was of a very easy-to-use VCR. It is thus a relatively rare animal. Like many other VCR's, the VT-88A has its least frequently used controls behind hinged panels or doors, where they are unlikely to be disturbed or to confuse the user. The TV-tuner channel settings are located beneath a door on top of the cabinet, and the various operating controls needed for everyday use are readily accessible on the front panel without presenting an unnecessarily complicated appearance.

Ancillary operations like setting the digital clock and programming the TV channels were as simple as we have seen, and we were further aided by an admirably lucid and complete instruction manual. Combine this operational simplicity with audio and video performance that's right up there with the other VHS Hi-Fi machines we have tested, and you have an unbeatable package.

Circle 143 on reader service card

A black and white photograph of a man wearing a cowboy hat and a long-sleeved shirt, rolling a cigarette. He is standing in a field with several cows in the background. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows and highlights. The text is overlaid on the lower part of the image.

**A hundred years ago,
if a man wanted a good smoke, he had to roll his own.**



Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined
That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

17 mg "tar," 1.1 mg nicotine av. per cigarette, FTC Report Mar '84

Today, you just light up a Marlboro.





CES

14 SHOW STOPPERS

Promising New Products

by Gordon Sell

Twice a year the people who decide what hi-fi and video products are going to be sold in your neighborhood audio and video salons embark on pilgrimages to the great electronics-industry trade shows that are held in Chicago each summer and in Las Vegas in the winter. These Consumer Electronics Shows (CES), put on by the Electronic Industries Association (EIA), give the manufacturers a chance to show off—and sell, of course—their newest products to the people who in turn sell them to the public.

At the latest audio/video extravaganza in Las Vegas, *STEREO REVIEW*'s editors and writers scoured the exhibits to find out what was new and interesting. For all of us it was like being kids in a candy store. The products shown on these pages are a cross section of what we saw. You will be able to see much more at audio and video showrooms in the coming months.

The 1985 Las Vegas CES wasn't a show with a lot of revolutionary new products. Rather, it demonstrated that the technologies introduced at recent shows—the digital Compact Disc, Beta and VHS Hi-Fi, and, to a lesser extent, stereo TV—have really come of age. There were also many new conventional audio products—amplifiers, speakers, receivers, turntables, and accessories.

As a product category, the Compact Disc has really arrived. Many manufacturers are already selling their third-generation CD players. Prices appear to be stabilizing, with the least expensive machines carrying a list price of between \$300 and \$400 and selling at discounts of \$50 to \$100 below that. So, if you've been holding your breath waiting for the \$100 CD player, be prepared to turn blue. There were also quite a few car stereo CD players on exhibit.

In the Beta and VHS Hi-Fi VCR category there was a lot of activity. Several new companies presented their first hi-fi VCR's, and many that had already offered such products introduced newer models at lower prices. Some of the new VCR's include built-in stereo TV reception capability.

The Beta manufacturers created some excitement by announcing a modification of the format called

Super Beta. This system shifts the carrier frequency by 800 kHz to achieve a greater luminance bandwidth, which is said to result in a 20 percent improvement in horizontal resolution. Super Beta VCR's, including some with Beta Hi-Fi, will probably be available later this spring.

Another interesting video product was Mitsubishi's prototype video monitor/receiver with a 35-inch picture tube. The picture was incredible compared with projection TV's of the same size. It is expected to be available in the fall and will cost in the neighborhood of \$3,000 to \$3,500.

Acoustic Research generated a lot of interest with its new controlled-directionality speaker, which has since been renamed "The Magic Speaker" Model MGC-1. It has a separate time-delayed side-firing two-way system that can be controlled to vary the ambience.

There were dozens of other speakers on display, many of which sounded very good. As the years have gone by, the overall average quality of the specialist speaker companies has improved, so that a tour through the high-end exhibits is no longer the kind of ear-straining experience it once was.

In separate audio components there was a lot of activity—new amps and new tuners abounded among the high-end companies. I heard a few diatribes against digital audio, but in general there was an amazing acceptance of it among the high-end exhibitors. There are even some signs that they are beginning to come to terms with video. A year ago any high-end person who used a CD player for demonstrations was considered a traitor to the cause. At this show CD players were standard equipment in almost every demonstration room, and a few brave souls were using hi-fi VCR's and LaserDisc players to demonstrate their wares with music videos.

People in the industry have been talking about the merger of audio and video since the late Seventies. Over the years, with the development of products like the LaserVision video-disc player, hi-fi VCR's, and now stereo TV, the merger has become a reality. At this CES, for the first time, it was taken for granted.

Proton's Model 540 integrated amp is rated at 40 watts per channel into 8 ohms, but its dynamic power rating is 120 watts into 8 ohms, 210 into 4 ohms, and 340 into 2 ohms. Price: \$360.



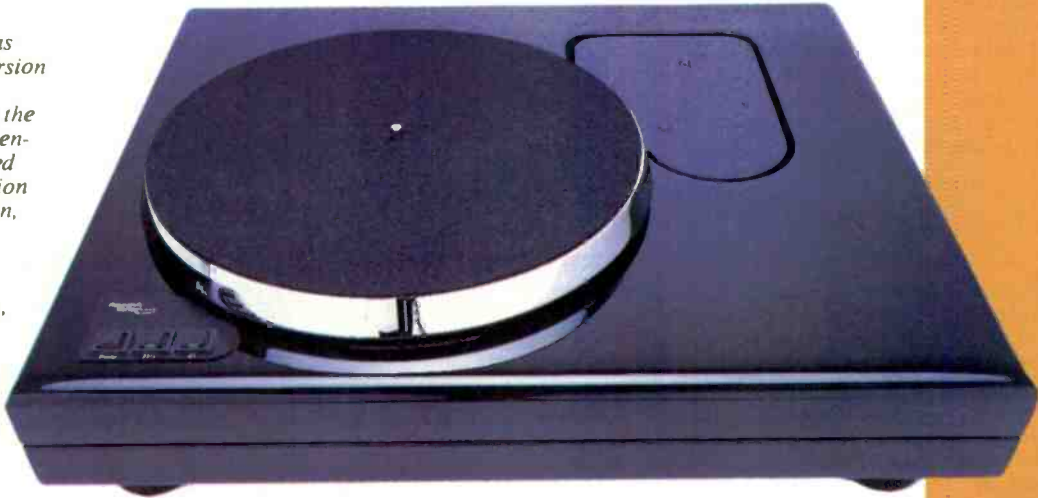
The Apex Systems Model 5000 surround-sound system offers many options intended to enhance video sound, including six speaker feeds, a subwoofer feed, and full remote control. Price: \$799.



Digital audio processors enable VCR's to record high-quality digital audio on video tape. The PCM-501ES from Sony offers either 14- or 16-bit resolution at all tape speeds. Price: \$750.



Acoustic Research has introduced another version of the well-known AR turntable, to be called the New ETL-1. The suspension has been improved for even greater isolation from external vibration, especially in the horizontal plane, by use of a dual-spring three-point suspension, adjustable isolation feet, an energy-absorbent mat, and a die-cast zinc platter. Price: about \$700 without a tone arm.



The NAD MR-20 20-inch video monitor/receiver earned favorable comments from those who saw it demonstrated. It uses a comb filter to extract the color subcarrier while retaining a full 4.2-MHz bandwidth for high resolution. The MR-20 has full stereo and SAP reception capability and too many other features to list. Price: \$948.



The technologies introduced at recent shows—the digital Compact Disc, Beta and VHS Hi-Fi, and, to a lesser extent, stereo TV—have really come of age.

The **Revox B215** cassette deck has dual-capstan drive, four motors, and three microprocessors for maximum user control over all aspects of recording and playback. The deck can automatically determine the correct bias and equalization for any tape and store the settings for six different types. It has Dolby B and C noise reduction and Dolby HX Pro headroom-extension circuitry. Price: \$1,390.



There were numerous companies displaying 8mm video-cassette recorders, most of them aimed at the home-movie market. Canon's **VR-E10** can record and play back 90-minute tapes using four heads mounted on the standard 40-mm drum. The mono audio signal has a rated frequency response of 30 to 14,000 Hz \pm 3 dB and a 70-dB signal-to-noise ratio. The audio is frequency modulated and multiplexed with the video signal by the rotary heads. Price: \$900.



Recently Nakamichi began to diversify its product line, previously limited to audio tape decks, by introducing car stereo units and, last fall, CD players. Now there is a full line of Nakamichi hi-fi components including a tuner designed by Larry Schotz and a series of amplifiers based on the Stasis technology developed by Nelson Pass of Threshold.

The **ST-7 AM/FM tuner** uses a Schotz Noise Reduction (SNR) circuit that automatically varies high-frequency channel separation as a function of signal strength and modulation level. The tuner has sixteen station presets and a signal-strength/multipath meter. Price: \$595. The matching **CA-5 preamplifier** has inputs for phono, CD, tuner, auxiliary, and two tape decks and outputs for two amplifiers. Price: \$595.

The **PA-7 power amplifier** is rated at 200 watts per channel. The Stasis power-amplifier technology uses parallel voltage and current amplifiers for each channel. Price: \$1,495. The similar 100-watt-per-channel **PA-5** (not shown) is \$850.



The Sanyo VCR7500 is a Beta Hi-Fi VCR with built-in stereo TV/SAP reception capability. The five-motor quartz-locked drive system operates at Beta II and III speeds, and the unit has a two-head rotary record and playback system. There is a fourteen-day, eight-event tuner/timer with 105 VHF, UHF, and cable channels. Other features include wireless remote control, picture search, auto/memory rewind, audio dubbing, and nine-segment level meters. Price: \$750.



The 150-pound Onkyo M-510 amplifier is rated for 300 watts per channel continuous power into 8 ohms. Its dynamic power ratings are 400 watts into 8 ohms, 750 watts into 4 ohms, 1,300 watts into 2 ohms, and 2,100 watts into 1 ohm! (The measurements were made with a 100-volt Japanese version; 120-volt U.S. models may do even better.) Expected U.S. price: around \$4,000.



Dahlquist's new DQ-20 speaker drew favorable comments from many people at the show. This phased-array three-way system has a 1/2-inch dome tweeter, a 4 1/2-inch midrange cone, and a 10-inch woofer. Each driver is in its own enclosure, and the bass and midrange enclosures are heavily damped. The DQ-20 has a nominal 8-ohm impedance, a sensitivity rating of 90 dB SPL, and usable response down to 28 Hz. Price: \$1,800 per pair.



LAYMAN NEWMAN STUDIOS



Compact Disc player prices appear to be stabilizing. So, if you are holding your breath for the \$100 CD player, be prepared to turn blue.



There was amazing acceptance of digital audio among the high-end exhibitors, and even signs they are coming to terms with video.

C E S

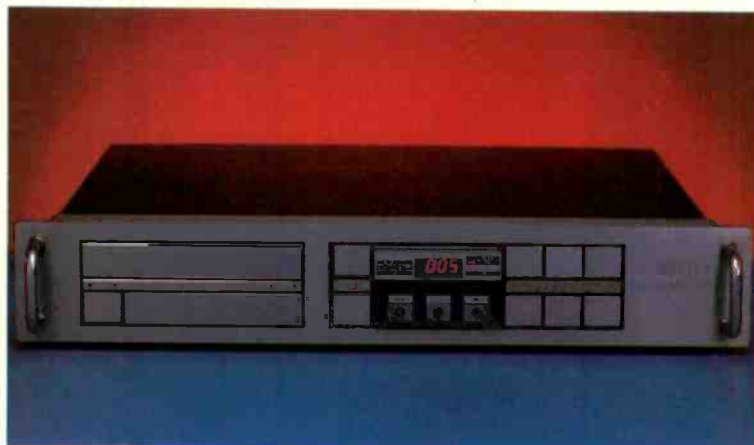


Harman Kardon introduced a line of in-dash car stereo cassette/tuners with narrow-gap playback heads said to have a frequency response of 20 to 20,000 Hz \pm 3 dB. All models have Dolby B; the top-of-the-line CH160 also has Dolby C. All models use a unidirectional tape-drive system to avoid the azimuth-alignment problems common to autoreverse players. Prices range from \$275 to \$475.

HK is also offering a low-priced (\$50), low-power car amplifier rated at only 3.5 watts into 4 ohms—but with 5 amperes current capability and a 90-dB signal-to-noise ratio.



Yamaha has taken a rather unusual approach to the problem of playing Compact Discs in a car stereo system. Their prototype YCD-1 player uses plastic caddies that protect the discs from dust and dirt. A caddy with a CD inside it is loaded into the slot on the front of the player. Once the caddy is inside the player, a switch opens a window on the caddy so the laser pickup can read the disc. The player shown at CES was only a prototype, and production units are not expected until the fall. The caddies are said to be inexpensive and quite easy to load.



The new Carver Compact disc player incorporates Carver's Digital Time Lens, which is said to correct for some of the "problems" of digital sound. The circuit changes the ratio of L + R to L - R signals and adjusts the equalization of the L - R signal to make the sound more closely resemble analog sources. The player has a three-beam laser pickup, uses 16-bit D/A conversion and double oversampling, and offers many convenience features. Price: \$650.

LAYMAN NEWMAN STUDIOS

AUDIO VIDEO RECEIVERS

by Fred
Petras

C Who needs an A/V receiver? Anyone who wants the best of both worlds.

hanging patterns in home entertainment create the need for new consumer electronics products. A recently developed product is the audio/video receiver, which exists in various configurations. One of them may become an important part of your electronic home entertainment system, and you may feel the need for it fairly soon.

At present A/V receivers have been introduced by a dozen big-name manufacturers, and there are a few with lesser-known brands. Industry seers now predict that "everybody who is anybody in audio or video" will soon be selling A/V receivers, with models to meet almost any requirements.

Who needs a stereo A/V receiver? Anyone who wants the best of both the world of audio and the world of video. An A/V receiver can add a great deal of convenience to merging these two worlds, alternating between them, and enjoying both of them to the hilt. If you're plagued with a clutter of audio and video equipment scattered around your listening/viewing room, if you have to go through a variety of contortions to connect, disconnect, and switch units for various functions, an A/V receiver may be just the thing to make matters easier and much more pleasant for you.

What an A/V receiver does, essentially, is to interconnect various pieces of audio and

Jensen's
AVS-1500
was the
first true
audio/video
receiver.
Price:
\$990.



NEC's AV-200E audio/video control center is designed to integrate two TV's, three VCR's, a tuner, a cassette deck, and a pair of speakers. \$199.



video gear so that by merely touching a button or two, either on the receiver itself or on a remote control, you can enjoy any audio or video program source, record TV or radio broadcasts, dub video or audio tapes, or record from a turntable or Compact Disc player. You could, for instance, watch a TV special on your large-screen video monitor while listening to a high-quality stereo simulcast, at the same time recording the program on a hi-fi VCR for "repeat performances" at will. If you later decided to duplicate the tape for someone else's pleasure, you could do so with equal convenience using a second VCR—while simultaneously listening to or watching another program.

Then again, you might elect to copy your latest digital Compact Disc for play through your car system. Press a button or pushpad to start the CD player and another to start a cassette deck connected to the receiver, and you're in business. If you want to dub several CD's onto a video-tape cassette for several hours of uninterrupted, ultra-convenient listening, you handily access the CD player and hi-fi VCR through the receiver's control panel, and all audio dubbing connections will be made automatically.

These are just a few examples of what you can do with a full-featured A/V receiver acting as the control center of an integrated home audio/video entertainment system. You can obtain similar results using other interfacing components, such as integrated amplifiers, audio and video tuners, and various multi-outlet signal processors and switch boxes. What to select will depend on your current assemblage of audio

and video components and what's needed to "marry" them.

If you're too busy or too intimidated to assemble a personal A/V system, there's a third possibility: single-brand A/V home entertainment setups. These totally integrated, cabinet-mounted ensembles from such companies as RCA, JVC, Fisher, Sanyo, Pioneer, etc. offer a high level of convenience and flexibility of operation, but the price tags are also high—starting at around \$2,000 and ranging well beyond \$6,000.

Only you can decide what best suits your requirements. First off, though, a word of warning: the nomenclature can be misleading. While a number of manufacturers offer so-called "audio/video receivers," a few have rather abused the term by merely relabeling the standard audio AUX input as the VIDEO input. New models entering the market may have two or three auxiliary inputs variously labeled VIDEO, TV, VCR, or LDP (for laser video-disc player), possibly along with one labeled CD. Such inputs can only accommodate the *audio* output signals of a VCR, TV set, or video-disc player for reproduction through the receiver's amplifier. They cannot handle the *video* signals. Therefore, before you buy an "A/V receiver," be sure you know what it actually does rather than merely what its name suggests.

Full-featured audio/video receivers usually offer various convenient dubbing facilities. These permit playing a video cassette on one VCR and rerecording it, through the receiver, on another VCR, even one using a different format. Video and

audio signals can also be routed from a video-disc player, TV set, or TV tuner to a VCR for taping, and FM radio signals can be recorded onto a video cassette's audio tracks so that you can enjoy FM simulcasts on a time-shift basis.

When recording video through a receiver, you can simultaneously monitor the original program material as it is being recorded, but you cannot immediately see the recorded results (as you can when recording on an audio deck with three heads). Moreover, dubbing from one VCR to another is generally one-way, VCR 1 to VCR 2; two-way dubbing, from VCR 2 to VCR 1 as well, is still a rare provision on current models.

While much of the program material on video cassettes is in stereo, most TV programs are still mono. Recognizing this, many manufacturers have incorporated stereo-synthesizer circuits in their A/V receivers so that they produce something like stereo sound when playing mono video (or audio) programs.

Not only can you combine audio and video with the more elaborate A/V receivers, but you can also use them to control video games or displays for personal computers. A flick of a switch, and presto! the video game or computer graphics appear on your video monitor or TV set, with whatever sound may be involved emanating from the system's speakers.

Examples of A/V receivers with all or most of the control and handling capabilities described above include the Jensen AVS-1500 (\$990), the JVC R-X350VB (\$370), the Kenwood KVR-A50 (\$305), the Pioneer SX-V90 (\$800), SX-V300



The Technics SA-450 A/V receiver has a built-in TV audio tuner and audio inputs for video equipment. It has a rear-panel jack for stereo TV. \$320.

(\$270), and SX-V200 (\$220), the Sansui S-X1130 (\$950), and the Sony STR-AV760, STR-AV560, STR-AV460, and STR-AV360 (\$500 to \$240).

Some of these full-featured receivers even offer additional capabilities. Sansui's S-X1130, for instance, has sharpness and fader controls to enhance the video picture, and its "Multidimension" circuit not only simulates stereo sound from mono sources but expands the "sound stage" of true stereo from any source. The Jensen AVS-1500 is notable for having a complete VHF TV tuner section with both an audio and a video output. It also has a "stereo-ready" multiplex output jack, so it can handle stereo TV broadcasts with an accessory adaptor. The AVS-1500 and Pioneer's SX-V90 both have DNR (Dynamic Noise Reduction) to eliminate the high-frequency hiss and noise often found on the video soundtracks of old movies or TV programs.

For many users, being able to control most or all of the elements of a total home entertainment system from the comfort of a sofa, easy chair, or bed is an extremely attractive feature. Thus, more and more A/V equipment is becoming available with remote controls that duplicate most of the control functions on the main receiver unit. With some models the remotes are included; with others, such as Sony's STR-AV760, STR-AV560, and STR-AV460, it's an optional extra (\$40 more for these models).

While "video-ready" audio-only receivers merely permit playing the audio tracks of video programs through them, a few models also provide the kind of video sound

enhancement offered on full-featured A/V receivers. The Ultrax Models R100, R70, R55, R35, and R25 (\$600 to \$150), for instance, have a MATRIX setting that converts mono video sound into synthesized stereo for added depth and "presence." (The R100 further offers switchable DNR.)

Some other receivers offering synthesized stereo are Sansui's S-X1100 (\$800), Onkyo's audio-only Integra TX-85 (\$620) and TX-65 (\$485), which also have a dynamic-range expander, and the Technics SA-550, SA-450, and SA-350 (\$450 to \$270), which use "Stereoplex" circuitry to enhance the mono sound from built-in VHF tuners. These Technics receivers also have an output for the Technics SH-4090 stereo TV adaptor (\$180), which enables them to reproduce stereo broadcasts and/or SAP (Secondary Audio Program) signals such as a second-language soundtrack or commentary separate from the main soundtrack.

If you prefer discrete components over receivers, integrated A/V amplifiers offer many of the same advantages as receivers, and sometimes at a saving in cost. While the choice at the moment is somewhat limited, such equipment should become more readily available as manufacturers try to serve all parts of the growing A/V consumer market. Among current suppliers, JVC offers the A-X500VB (\$500), a 100-watt-per-channel integrated A/V amplifier with a built-in seven-band graphic equalizer. Described as "digital and video ready," the A-X500VB has inputs for three video sources as well as connections for a Compact

Disc player and a full complement of other audio facilities, including two-way tape dubbing. Users can also dub from one VCR to another or from a TV set/monitor or video-disc player.

Another company with an integrated A/V amp is Akai. The 22-watt-per-channel AV-U8 (\$400) has four audio and video inputs, enables dubbing between various video program sources, and includes a built-in 4-inch (diagonal) black-and-white TV monitor that lets you watch one TV program while recording a different one. Another bonus is a noise-reduction circuit that decreases hiss from audio/video sources.

Technics has two integrated A/V amplifiers, the 100-watt-per-channel SU-V6X (\$390) and the 65-watt SU-V4X (\$300). Both have three video inputs. Other integrated amps with some A/V capabilities are available from Marantz and Proton, and you can be certain that more are on the way.

As far as we know, only one audio manufacturer currently sells an A/V preamplifier, Technics, whose SU-MA6MK2 (\$600) features an eight-position logic-controlled input selector. Four of the inputs are intended to link video with audio equipment or for VCR-to-VCR dubbing. The SU-MA6MK2 is even set up to dub from one VCR connected to a PCM digital audio processor to another for those who want the ultimate sound quality in home recording equipment today.

Another kind of discrete A/V component is the video tuner/control. One example is Pioneer's VC-T700 (\$499), which can be added to an existing stereo audio system with

Sony's STR-AV760 A/V receiver can switch a wide variety of audio and video signals. It has inputs for phono (MM or MC), CD/aux, and a TV tuner, inputs and outputs for two audio tape decks and two VCR's, and outputs for speakers and a video monitor. The built-in AM/FM tuner has ten presets, and the amplifier has 80 watts per channel. Remote control optional. \$500.



just one connection. The VC-T700 has inputs for a video monitor or ordinary TV set, a video-disc player, and two VCR's. Among its controls are record-out selectors that can send your choice of program to either one or both VCR's. A remote control enables you to send the video-disc player's video output to the TV screen while routing its audio output to your existing stereo amplifier and speakers. When the VC-T700 is used in conjunction with Pioneer's 50-watt-per-channel SA-V700 (\$249) amplifier, a touch of the ss button on the remote control sends a simulated-stereo audio signal to the amplifier for added ambience on mono programs.

Similar A/V capabilities are provided by Jensen's AVS-2100 video tuner (\$520), which also offers fully adjustable Dynamic Noise Reduction for low-noise audio from standard video cassettes and a multiplex receptacle to receive stereo TV through an optional adaptor. The tuner's direct-access remote control permits selecting either of two video sources in addition to a home computer or a video game. Synthesized stereo from mono sources is also an option.

A fourth type of component in a comprehensive A/V system is the audio/video signal processor. Some of these devices go beyond the capabilities of A/V receivers and integrated amplifiers to provide some control of video picture quality, and in some cases they facilitate bidirectional dubbing between VCR's.

A good example is Sansui's AV-77, a \$350 device with switching for

bidirectional recording between two VCR's as well as dubbing from a video-disc player, a component TV tuner, a video camera, or an audio component to a VCR. RCA-type input and output connections for two VCR's, a video-disc player or TV tuner, an audio amp, and an audio tape deck are located on its rear panel. For convenience in making temporary connections, there is a second set of inputs and outputs for one VCR on the front panel as well as a socket for a camera and a microphone jack.

The AV-77 provides sophisticated video signal-processing capabilities during editing and playback that are analogous to those we've long had for audio. There are sharpness and detail controls and a selectable hue control that enables exchange of one primary color for another or the addition of more red, green, or blue to the overall picture. Other special picture effects are possible, including solarization, in which the outlines of images are intensified while the interiors are muted. A fader control permits fading both picture and sound in or out, and a vertical and horizontal "wipe" gradually replaces one scene by another. For customizing the audio portion of a video recording, the AV-77 has a dbx noise-reduction system and special circuits for expanded stereo or simulated stereo from a mono soundtrack.

Denon's new AVC-500 audio/video control center (\$375) is notable for a five-band graphic equalizer for the audio tracks of video programs, which are said to present an



entirely different set of equalization problems, such as poor bass and unintelligible voices, than audio-only sources. The AVC-500 has three sets of video and four sets of audio input and output terminals, an automatic copying circuit that activates the input selectors, and facilities for video copying among up to three decks. An external audio input permits audio effects to be added during video dubbing, and a built-in audio processor allows additional creative sound shaping. A video enhancer circuit is said to ensure a high-quality video image on dubs by eliminating deterioration and noise generation during copying.

For those who wish to use the AVC-500 directly for playback of the audio portion of video programs, rather than routing the signals through an existing hi-fi system, or for reproduction of ambience channels, it has a built-in 22-watt-per-channel amplifier. Another feature is a so-called Ambience Recovery System for restoring the full ambience of recordings by manipulating the phase information present in any stereo record.

Pioneer's slim-line VS-60 video selector (\$150) also permits dubbing between two VCR's in either direction without having to reconnect cables. And it permits dubbing while you watch a different video source. The VS-60 has four video input/output pairs, three audio inputs, one video-monitor output, and one audio output. Other features include DNR and simulated stereo from mono sources.

Akai has created two selectors for use in "audio/video walls." The SS-V20 (\$650) features a built-in 4½-inch color TV monitor and six input jacks—three for VCR's and three for other video sources, including two additional video monitors. It permits bidirectional dubbing between A/V components and has hidden front-panel jacks for one VCR plus an independent external-processor jack. The SS-V5 (\$200) has five input jacks—three for VCR's and two for other video sources—plus connections for an external A/V processor. It too provides bidirectional dubbing and has a front-panel VCR jack.

NEC's AV-200E audio/video control center (\$200) also functions as a 12-watt-per-channel stereo amplifier. It features a video image enhancer to improve picture sharpness and contrast in playback and dubbing as well as synthesized stereo from mono sources. The front panel contains two of its total of four sets of video inputs and outputs. There is no phono input.

Clearly, whether you opt for a convenient all-in-one receiver or put together a customized system with discrete components, you'll find high-performance audio/video products to meet your needs. The equipment may show you some needs you didn't even know you had. Developed in response to changing patterns in home entertainment, the new audio/video products will, in turn, change the way you watch and listen. They will make it pleasanter by making it easier and more convenient. □

Sansui's AV-77 audio/video processor offers extensive video signal processing in addition to comprehensive video and audio switching and dubbing facilities. \$350.

Pioneer's SX-V300 has audio/video controls for two VCR's or one VCR and a video-disc player as well as the usual audio receiver functions. \$270.

HOW TO HOOK UP EXTRA SPEAKERS

*Extension speakers can add depth and dimension to your life.
Here are some ground rules for setting them up.*

F *by Larry Klein*

For many people, part of the excitement of acquiring new audio equipment is the opportunity to set up pairs of stereo speakers in several rooms—and perhaps out on the patio too. But despite the implicit promise of the three-position (A, B, A + B) speaker switches found on many integrated amplifiers and receivers, getting an amplifier to drive those extra sets of speakers frequently turns out to be not all that easy. There's no problem with running separate pairs individually, but simultaneous operation of two (or more) pairs is sometimes another matter altogether, especially with low-impedance speakers.

The Current Problem

Most people assume that if an amplifier or receiver has substantial output power it will be able to drive an almost unlimited number of speakers. While there's a bit of truth in that assumption, the situation is actually much more complicated. The fact that an amplifier is rated to deliver, say, 50 watts per channel to 8-ohm loads doesn't necessarily mean it can do as well attempting to drive several sets of speakers when the combined impedance on each channel falls much below 4 ohms.

In any electrical circuit, the lower the resistance of the load, the greater the current flow. For example, a 100-watt light bulb draws more current from the a.c. line than a 40-watt bulb does because its filament resistance is lower. Similarly,

low-impedance speaker loads draw higher currents through an amplifier's output transistors. And if the amplifier's output circuits—or power supply—aren't designed to handle the high current demands, any of several things may occur individually or simultaneously:

- The audio signal may be severely clipped, leading to very audible distortion. Some amplifiers when overloaded generate spurious signals that can damage speakers.
- The amplifier's protection circuits may be triggered, either instantly or after the output transistors get hot enough. This will shut down the amplifier completely or partially. When things cool down or the low-impedance overload is removed, performance usually returns to normal—unless, of course,

the protection is provided by a fuse that has to be replaced.

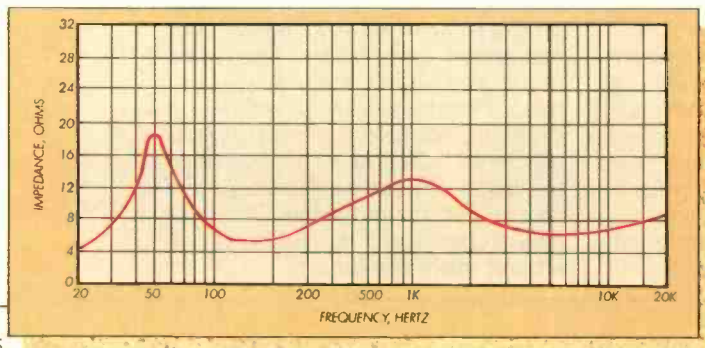
- Improperly designed protection circuits triggered by transient signal conditions may produce distortion or, if the protection is ineffective, blown-out output transistors.
- Overheating is likely, since an overloaded amplifier will run consistently hotter than normal. Overheating may shorten the amplifier's operating life, and during operation extra ventilation will be required.

All these problems can be avoided either by trading up to an amplifier with greater current reserve or by observing some basic ground rules.

The Loaded Question

Most of today's speaker systems have a "nominal" 8-ohm imped-

Impedance curve of a popular 8-ohm loudspeaker (courtesy NAD)

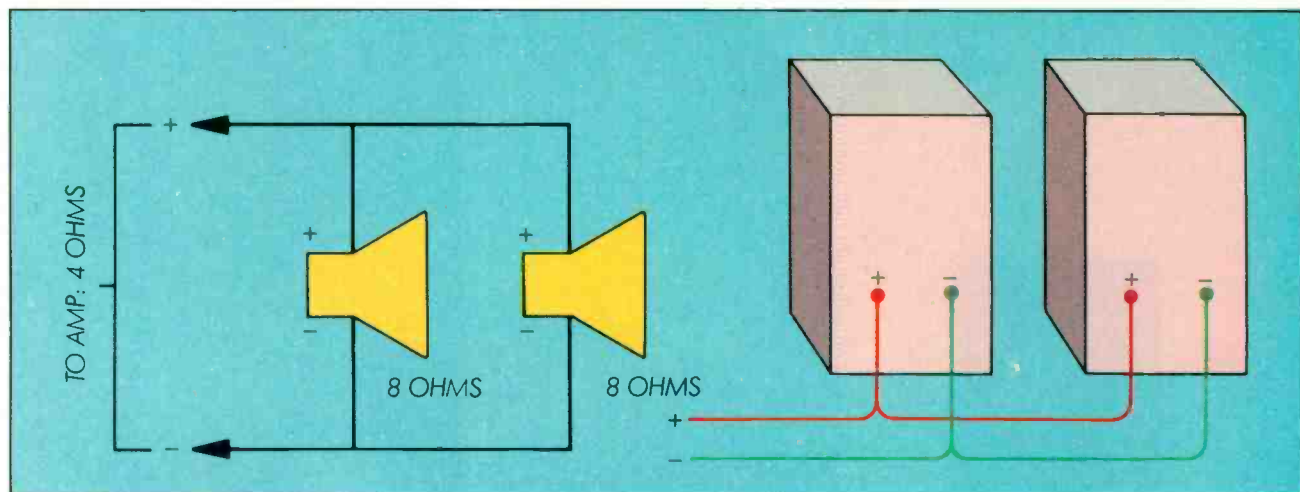




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arallel connection of a pair of 8-ohm loudspeakers presents an amplifier with a total load of 4 ohms.



ance rating, and both the EIA and the FTC specify an 8-ohm load for testing and rating amplifier power. However, you should be aware that the term "nominal" is the manufacturer's acknowledgment that the actual impedance of most speaker sys-

Technics SB-R100 is a two-way coaxial system that measures 12½ inches square, 2½ inches deep. \$260 per pair.



tems varies widely with frequency—and that under some signal conditions it may actually fall to less than half its rated value. This effect is illustrated in the graph on page 48, the impedance curve of a popular 8-ohm speaker.

Connecting two pairs of 8-ohm systems in parallel, as most built-in speaker switches do, changes the nominal load seen by the amplifier to 4 ohms per channel, as in the diagram on this page. Today, almost all amplifiers will drive 4-ohm loads, but any attempt to drive an additional set of 4-ohm speakers, or even to mix a set of 4-ohm extension speakers with 8-ohm main speakers, may cause trouble.

Two sets of 8-ohm speaker systems can usually be run simultaneously without difficulties. You

have no guarantee, however, that your amplifier won't overheat, distort, shut down, or blow fuses if you play music very loud or if the combined parallel impedance of your particular speakers falls much below 4 ohms. None of these effects will permanently damage a well-designed amplifier, but they can certainly put a crimp in a Saturday-night dance party.

So, if you want to play multiple sets of speakers, carefully check the specification sheets of the amplifiers or receivers under consideration before you buy. Try to choose one whose spec sheet specifically states that it can drive low-impedance speaker loads—of, say, 2 ohms. You'll find that the power available at 2 ohms is likely to be several times the 8-ohm power, particularly for momentary peak demands.

At one time, Harman Kardon and NAD were practically the only hi-fi companies producing moderately priced equipment with high-current capability. But within the past several years many other manufacturers have seen the light and have begun to upgrade the low-impedance drive capabilities of their products. Still, to be safe, unless an amplifier's ability to drive low-impedance loads is explicitly mentioned in the specs, assume it doesn't have that capability.

Series or Parallel?

If your amplifier, like most, connects extra sets of speakers in parallel with the main ones, it's best if each pair of speakers is a different model. The object is to try for dif-

ferent impedance curves for each pair. You don't want all the speakers connected to each channel simultaneously plunging toward 2 ohms at some specific frequency.

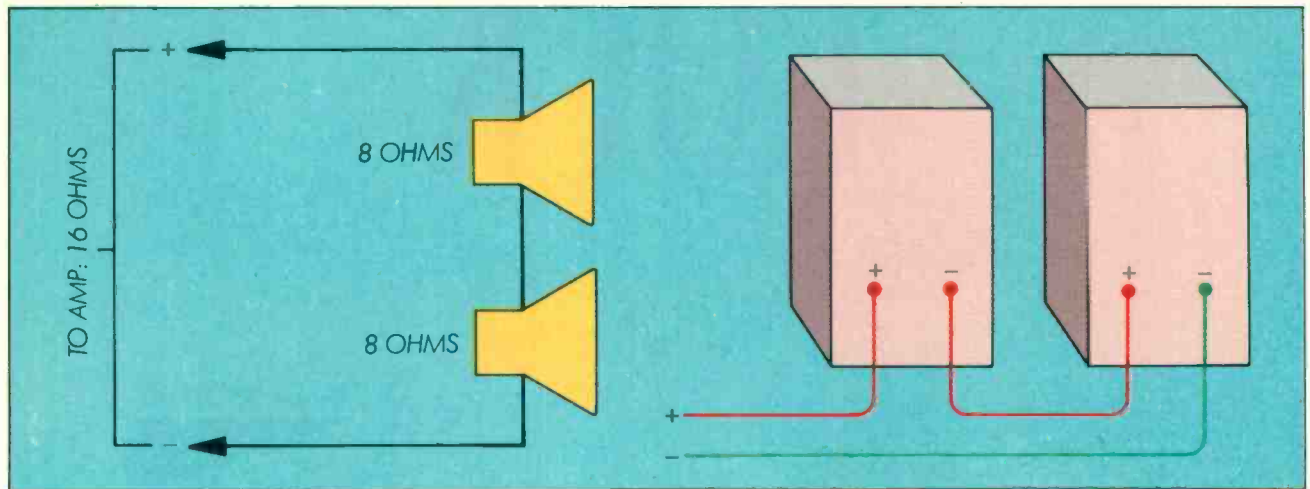
Some amplifier switches connect additional speakers in series with the main speakers (see diagram on the facing page). This sums the impedances (a 4-ohm and an 8-ohm speaker would thus present a safe 12-ohm load to an amplifier) and eliminates problems of excessive current drain. But each speaker then sees the other as a series resistance that is constantly changing with frequency. It follows, therefore, that when played together each set of speakers will sound somewhat different than they do when played by themselves. The only time that it may be sonically safe to connect two speakers in series is when they both have the same impedance curve—in other words, two speakers of the same model from a manufacturer with good quality control.

Canton's two-way GL-300F speaker is acoustically tuned for wall mounting. Besides the finish shown, it is also available in black walnut. \$375 per pair.



There's a simple test that can tell you which kind of switching your amplifier uses. If speaker pair A goes dead when you set your speak-

Series connection of a pair of 8-ohm loudspeakers presents an amplifier with a total load of 16 ohms.



er switch to A + B without a B pair hooked up, your amp uses a series-switching arrangement.

Getting Wired

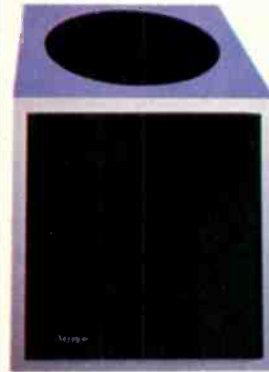
Your choice of wire for connecting extension speakers comes down mostly to a simple matter of resistance per foot. The thin 22-gauge wire frequently sold for speaker use has a resistance of about 0.016 ohm per foot. A 30-foot length of such wire would put almost 1 ohm in series with a speaker (0.48 ohm for each conductor). That may not sound like much, but it means that with a 4-ohm speaker, 20 percent of the amplifier power going to the speaker would be wasted heating up the connecting wire. In addition, there would be audible frequency-response aberrations resulting from

per foot, 14-gauge 0.005 ohm per foot, and 12-gauge 0.003 ohm per foot—assuming in each case that there are two copper conductors involved. If the wire's total resistance in series with the speaker is less than 0.2 ohm or so, no significant frequency-response or signal-loss problems are likely to be experienced. Obviously, a 4-ohm speaker is more sensitive to a given value of speaker-wire resistance than an 8-ohm speaker would be.

A certain amount of series resistance may actually be beneficial with some amplifiers and speakers, particularly if it keeps the total impedance seen by the amplifier from falling too low. For example, you might try using 22-gauge wire with a 4-ohm extension speaker as a safety measure to keep the total impedance reasonable. You might even like the effect on the response.

addressed business envelope with your request).

If you would like a factory-built speaker switcher with built-in low-impedance safeguards, high-quality units that will handle adequate amounts of amplifier power are available from Adcom, Canton, Niles Audio, Russound, and



Allison: Six, an 11¼-inch cube, is a two-way system designed to be mounted against a wall. \$320 per pair in vinyl finish; \$344 in oak or black or white lacquer.

Bose 101's, with optional multiposition stands, make good extension speakers. \$179 per pair.



Marine version of the B&W LM-1. \$598 per pair.

interaction between the speaker's impedance variations and the series wire resistance.

Standard 18-gauge lamp cord measures about 0.013 ohm of resistance per foot; 16-gauge is 0.008 ohm

External Switching

If your integrated amplifier, receiver, or power amplifier lacks the speaker-switching capabilities you would like but is otherwise satisfactory, you might try an external switch setup. In the August 1982 issue of STEREO REVIEW, Roy Allison diagrammed seven different build-it-yourself switching arrangements that are not only suitable for a variety of speaker impedance combinations but also prevent problems from excessively low load impedances. Reprints are available free. Write to: Stereo Review, Speaker Switch Reprint, One Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016 (please enclose a stamped, self-

Switchcraft. If your amplifier has a "floating-ground" output circuit, make sure that any switch box you try does *not* use common-ground wiring for both channels. The instructions for both the switch box and your amplifier should cover that point. If in doubt, ask the dealer or manufacturer.

If your needs go beyond the solutions offered by commercial speaker switch boxes, you will have to have your setup custom designed by a local hi-fi shop or sound-equipment installer. An expert installer can set up your system to deliver good sound from speakers A + B + C + D . . . *ad infinitum*. □

DIAGRAMS BY NINA WALLACE

ROCK GENDER BENDERS

by Steve Simels

It started with Marc Bolan,
David Bowie, and Lou Reed...

IT was the best of times. It was mellow, it was Glitter, it was Decadence and Bisexual Chic, it was Punk, and, finally and endlessly, it was Disco. It was quaaludes (as the White House found out), cocaine (as the White House found out), angel dust, and all of the above, especially at Studio 54 (as the White House found out). It was Charles Manson, Guru Maharaj Ji, Scientology, est, Sun Myung Moon, and, lest we forget, the Reverend Jim Jones. It was, for better or worse, in sickness and in health, the Seventies.

Conventional wisdom has it that, above all, the Seventies were boring. Nothing happened, the pundits tell us. I demur. Actually, a lot happened, albeit strictly in the low comedy sense (since we are talking pop culture here). Consider, if you will, such landmarks as reggae being hailed as the next big thing instead of disco. Or other big yucks including the *Sgt. Pepper* soundtrack, the Pat Boone comeback, the martyrdom of Sid Vicious, Chuck Berry's being sent to the slammer mere weeks after serenading Jimmy Carter on the White House lawn, the contention in the *Village Voice* that John Travolta was "an actor [my italics] who combined the smoldering sensuality and presence of Marlon Brando and Elvis Presley," and serious explications of the disco phenomenon which tried to dignify with the patina of Art a music whose highest, purest expression was found in the oeuvre of Grace Jones.

Actually, if the Seventies were anything at all, they were a bad joke

pushed headlong to some dimension beyond insult. Bob Dylan got religion. *Billboard*, the record-industry trade journal, came up with the memorable headlines "The Future of Nostalgia" and "Vietnam: A Major Market Fades." Linda Ronstadt told the press that Standard Oil had just as much right to rule the world as the Eagles. The wife of the Prime Minister of Canada hung out with Mick Jagger, and she got accused of social climbing.

Fortunately, despite this catalog of horrors, the Seventies had at least one redeeming feature: rampant androgyny. In fact, androgyny was the decade's gift to a generation of kids who thought their older brothers and sisters from the Fifties and Sixties were jerks, but who proceeded, courageously and with utter conviction, to make even bigger buffoons of themselves.

With the exception of the Rolling Stones, by 1970 most of rock's old guard (and nearly all of the new breed) had given up on gender confusion as a tactic. In England as in the States, legions of ersatz bumpkins twanged whiney songs of neurotic self-pity to the strains of acoustic guitars. Even keepers of the flame, bona fide rock bands like the desperately lamented Creedence Clearwater Revival, felt constrained to dress themselves as lumberjacks. Flash, passion, outrageousness, teenage humor and stupidity—all the things that had made rock inspirational—were dismissed as hopeless anachronisms. It was a dismal time.

Then, suddenly, all hell broke loose. For this, we have to thank

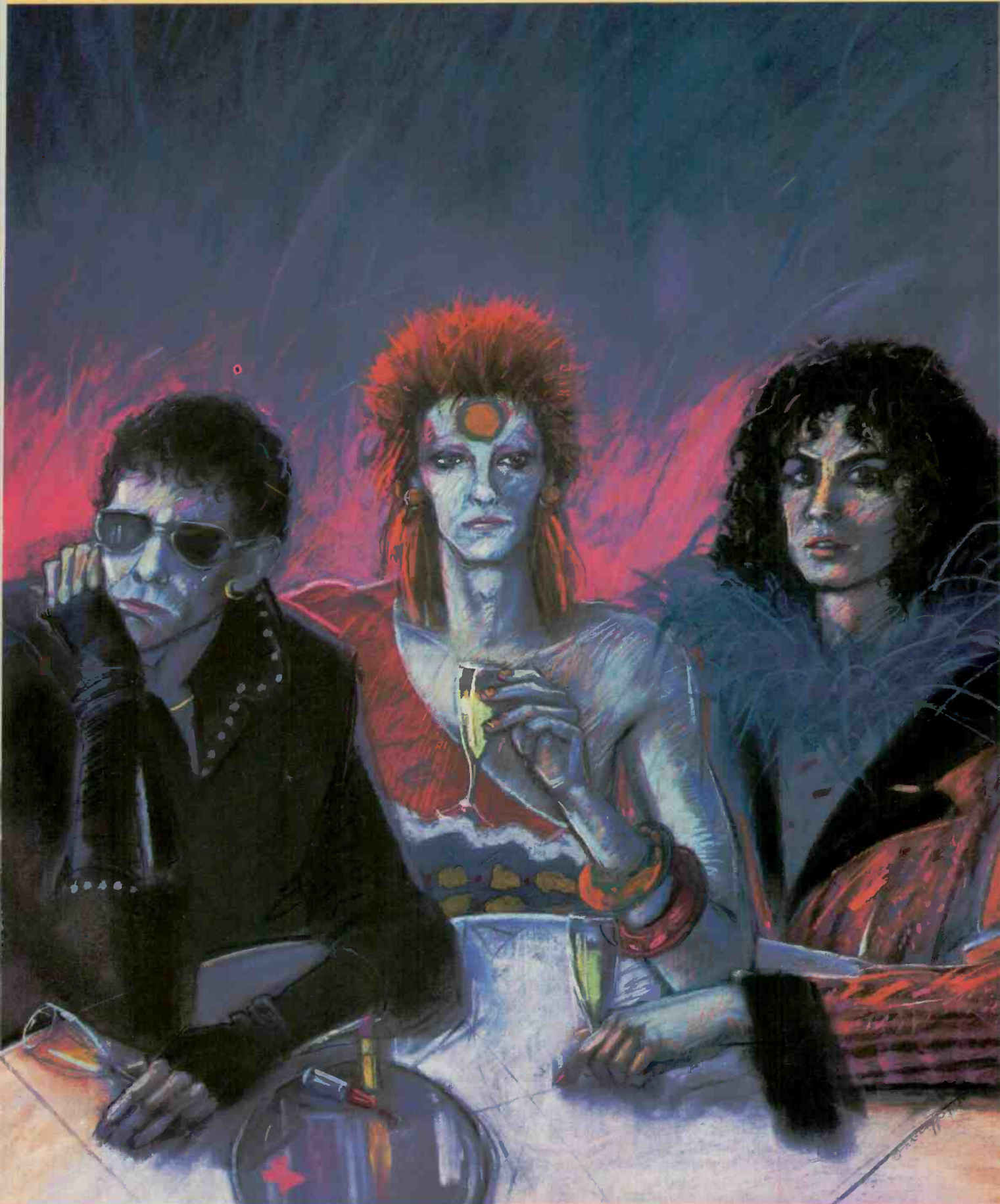
AN·DROG·Y·NOUS

(än-drōj' ə-nəs) *adj.* **1.** Having female and male characteristics in one; hermaphroditic.

2. Botany. Composed of staminate and pistillate flowers. Said of the flower spikes of certain sedges. [Latin *androgynus*, from Greek *androgynos*: ANDRO- + -GYNOUS.]

—an·drog' y·ny *n.*

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (American Heritage and Houghton Mifflin, 1969)





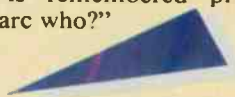
three young men who had been waiting in vain throughout the Sixties for somebody to notice them. Regarded either as obnoxious preening narcissists or as genuine visionaries, the triumvirate who kicked off the Great Androgyny Scare of the early Seventies were Marc Bolan, David Bowie, and Lou Reed.

Short ones first. Scraggly, diminutive, ambitious Bolan spent the latter half of the Sixties cross-legged as part of Tyrannosaurus Rex, an acoustic guitar-and-finger-cymbals outfit that flourished briefly with music reeking of marijuana and incense. Bolan's lyrics were full of fey Tolkienesque poesy, heavy on fairies and mythological references. Naturally enough, he developed a cult following on the basis of such twaddle, but by the early Seventies he was broke, frustrated, and something of a joke.

His solution was simple: like Dylan before him, he'd dab his eyes with liner and go electric. It worked. Overnight the newly rechristened T. Rex (now consisting of Bolan and various anonymous sidemen) became the first genuine post-Beatles pop stars in Europe. Bolan made an interesting enough teen idol: ominously, intriguingly androgynous to older fans, feminine and cuddly to the younger ones. In an earlier century, he probably would have been a

Talmudic scholar, but in our own time, tarted up as a leather-bar Keebler elf, he was a genuinely arresting presence.

Bolan was massively successful in Europe for several years, but despite one or two American hits and high-pressure tours, he never caught fire in the U.S. In any event, in the midst of a minor European mid-Seventies comeback, the ringlet-tressed minstrel of Leprechaun Boogie was wiped out in the now traditional rock-star car crash. Today, though his influence lingers on, he is remembered primarily as "Marc who?"



David Bowie, on the other hand, is still with us despite a Sixties career as singularly undistinguished as Bolan's. From 1964, as David Jones (a name he ditched after the Monkees' Davy Jones beat him to the brass ring), he was responsible for some of the lamest ersatz-Yardbirds blues-rock heard by sentient mammalian ears, but he was nothing if not persistent. Hanging around the fringes of the mod and flower-power scenes, he hoped to capitalize on his admittedly striking good looks (having eyes of two different colors didn't hurt) and honed what would become his major talent—imitating the styles of anybody he could, whether they deserved aping or not.

After a period of stringent self-analysis, immersions in Tibetan Buddhism, classes with a well-known mime artist, and mingling with the Andy Warhol crowd in New York, Bowie decided to turn himself into a reincarnation of the young Katharine Hepburn. This got him noticed during various promotional visits to the States, and by the time he had readied himself for an American concert debut, he had developed a genuinely striking character to portray: the first homosexual rock star from Outer Space, a.k.a. Ziggy Stardust.

Bowie's Ziggy, considered dispassionately, was one of the silliest conceits ever marketed, an inane mixture of Jimi Hendrix and Flash Gordon. Yet, coming as it did in 1972, when everybody else was playing the blues in flannel shirts, he couldn't help but cause a stir. Neither could the coy references Bowie made to the pop press about his alleged bisexuality (he had a wife and child, both of whom looked like him) or the Ziggy show's centerpiece, wherein Bowie performed fellatio on the neck of Mick Ronson's guitar as the strobe lights flashed. To younger kids whose exposure to Bowie was also their first experience of live big-time rock-and-roll, Ziggy was nothing less than a revelation, and Bowie became an instant hero. Suddenly, every teenager in the world wanted to be one of Ziggy's Spiders from Mars.



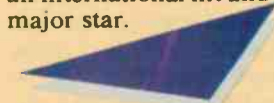
From far left:
Patti Smith
(Peter McCaffrey),
Alice Cooper,
Marc Bolan
(Warner Bros.),
Lou Reed (RCA),
New York Dolls
(Lynn Goldsmith),
Alice Cooper
(Atlantic)

Bowie quickly took advantage of his new-found notoriety, and, in a move that garnered him a lot of press, he decided to aid the career of various struggling artists whose work he fancied. One of these became one of the most durable and influential American rock-and-rollers, a nice Jewish boy from Long Island named Lou Reed.

The former leader of the Velvet Underground, a New York-based band that made its initial splash by virtue of a connection with Andy Warhol's menagerie of sexual inverts and potential suicides, Reed had nonetheless developed a reputation as an exquisitely acute songwriter, a genuine rock poet of the lower depths who chronicled with compassion and sympathy the lives of the socially unapproved humanoids of the New York sex-and-drugs demimonde.

Nonetheless, the Velvets never made much money, and by the early Seventies Lou was back at his parents' house in Nassau County, more or less in seclusion. At which point David Bowie dragged the torpid ex-Velvet to London, producing an album that assembled fans and critics were convinced would be Reed's masterpiece. "Transformer," perhaps the silliest and most insipid work of Reed's career to date, yielded him his first hit single ever, a song of more than passing relevance to our theme, *Walk on the Wild Side*.

It recounted in doggerel form the careers of several of the characters Lou had known in his Warhol days, a few of whom (including the breathtakingly beautiful Candy Darling) were transvestites. Despite this, and despite the song's unblushingly frank language—it remains the only song ever to have cracked AM radio with an unambiguous use of the phrase "giving head"—it was an international hit and made Lou a major star.

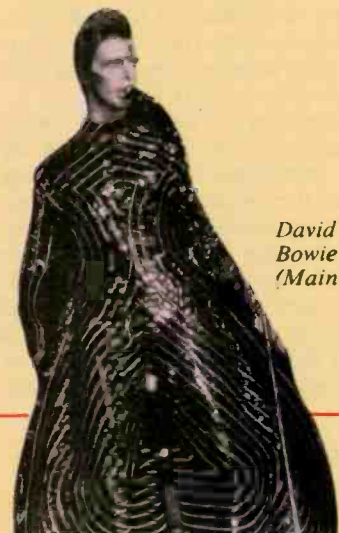


Lou's reaction to this was predictably perverse: he turned himself into an S-&M drag version of the Frankenstein monster. Now grossly overweight, he waddled onto rock-and-roll stages in Europe and America dressed in combat boots, black leather, and more make-up than Marcel Marceau. He spent the next several years in even more bizarre pursuits. Sometimes he shaved his hair in the shape of an Iron Cross or adopted the look of a discharged Marine drill sergeant; on other occasions he squired around a creature of indeterminate sex who some have sworn was a dead ringer for *The Addams Family's* Cousin It. Reed even went to the lengths of marrying an airline stewardess, whom he divorced almost immediately. His post-Bowie work reflected this confusion, and the albums he recorded during the middle Seven-

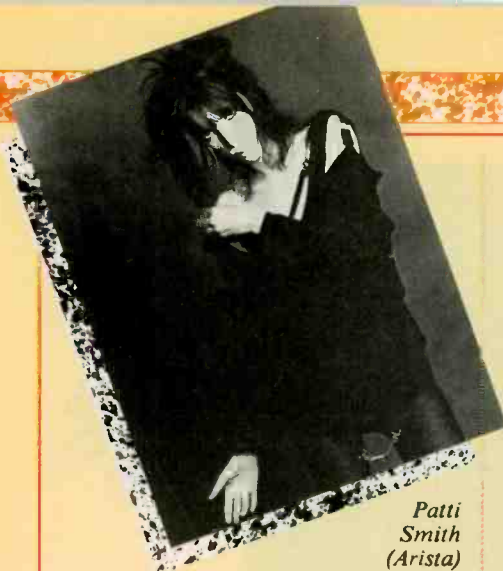
ties were rotatable only for their unmistakable, lacerating self-loathing.

Lou, I am happy to report, has rebounded very nicely in the Eighties, both artistically and personally. Hailed belatedly as the Godfather of Punk, he seems to have come to terms with his personal demons, and as a bonus he has lately favored us with three superb albums ("The Blue Mask," "Legendary Hearts," and "New Sensations") that not only stand comparison with his work with the Velvets, but deal quite movingly with life as a genuine adult, rather than the usual Eternal Adolescent stance favored by most aging rock stars.

Just as Elvis and the Beatles paved the way for deviation in all shapes and sizes, so too did Bolan and Bowie and Reed. The most successful of their followers was a band named after its leader, Alice Cooper (né Vincent Furnier). At his peak "Alice" not only redefined gender confusion (and confusion in general) but horrified mothers and fa-



David
Bowie
(Main Man)



Patti Smith
(Arista)

thers far more than David Bowie ever did. Though Alice wasn't remotely gay, somehow the sight of this underweight, overmade-up *schlemiel* in platform shoes constituted the most subversive and commercially successful assault on the West's old fogies in rock history.

Alice's music, despite its occult trappings, preoccupation with horror movies, and dead babies, had no overarching themes and no apparent artistic goals beyond sounding good on Top 40 radio. This it did very well indeed. Perhaps lack of ambition is what led to Alice's eventual fall from public favor. All he ever wanted to do, really, was to get real rich and play golf with George Burns. In that he achieved both these goals, I salute him, wherever he is.

A motley contingent of working-class kids from the outer boroughs, the New York Dolls were less successful than Alice (none of them, to my knowledge, ever played golf with anybody), but they were perhaps even more outrageous and in some ways more influential than Alice. Despite the handicaps of serious drug dependency (their first drummer choked to death in his bathtub after swallowing too many pills along with his post-gig cocktails) and musicianship that might best be described as hit-and-miss, the Dolls became the toast of a New York rock scene set around the now defunct Mercer Arts Center.

Indisputably, the Dolls were something to see. Capitalizing on their resemblance to the Rolling Stones, they made the most of their androgyny by wildly exaggerating it, becoming the first band anywhere to make lipstick and Carmen Miranda platform heels as much a part of their art as Marshall amps. And if David Johansen sang like a frog, or if bass player Arthur "Killer" Kane,

with all the charm of an aging Walter Brennan in drag, knew only three notes, still the Dolls had "It"—style, charisma, call it what you will, but they had it.

Unfortunately, as far as the record-buying or concert-going public was concerned, the "It" the Dolls had might just as well have been spinal meningitis. Despite a stack of great reviews, the band was ultimately reduced to such lame publicity stunts as embracing Maoism before giving up the ghost for good.

Most of the acts that flourished in the shadow of the Dolls were blatantly talentless poseurs, preposterous parodies of a parody (like the unmourned Harlots of 42nd Street, zit-faced ex-porn actors passing for rockers). Some, however, were actually amusing, such as Wayne County, who achieved his androgyny the old-fashioned way: he earned it (surgically). And there was one in particular who, though occasionally full of cow flop, nonetheless managed to make some of the best rock-and-roll of the Seventies, as well as to become, on balance, the most influential rocker of her day. Hyped by her record company with the unlikely appellation of "The Wild Mustang of American Rock," she is better known by you and me as Patti Smith.

Of course, Patti was not the first girl to do it like the boys. Back in the Sixties, future punk-rock scene maker Genya Ravan achieved a certain vogue with her all-girl band Goldie and the Gingerbreads, and in the early Seventies, Reprise Records risked a substantial amount of capital on Fanny, four young women who played perfectly respectable rock-and-roll. Other, lesser, female rockers included Isis and the unfortunate Bertha, a funk quartet whose "Bertha Has Balls" advertising campaign was, perhaps, ill-advised.

Still, when Patti made the transition from solo poetess to working rock-and-roller, she was enough of a novelty that most people weren't ready for a rock star of her gender, even one so clearly possessed by the same spirit that possessed the male stars she admired. Perhaps to compensate, Patti drove the point home by turning herself into a nearly flawless mixture of the sensibilities and visual styles of Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, and Bob Dylan circa

"Blonde on Blonde." The impersonation was so successful that when a short-lived New York skin mag published nearly decade-old nude photos of her, just after her first above-ground record release, many people were surprised that she was so obviously, er, female.

Patti never quite copped to her own androgyny ("Gender is irrelevant when we're talking about art at the highest level," she said), and in any case her music had a certain built-in appeal to a rock audience that had grown up, as she had, on old Phil Spector girl-group singles. She may have been, simultaneously, a bitch on wheels and a vulnerable gamine, a pompously mystical poetess and a hilarious rock-and-roll fuckup, but at heart she was the kind of girl who had sung *Be My Baby* in the back of her school bus, and like Bruce Springsteen, another Jersey kid with similar roots, she was all but impossible to resist if you'd ever lain awake nights thinking about what rock-and-roll meant. On some fundamental level, she seemed to deserve stardom.

She achieved it, of course—four great albums, one great hit single—and with it she smashed the gender line in rock-and-roll for all time. Female rockers are today such a commonplace that it's hard to imagine the effect her breakthrough had on the exclusive men's club that was traditional rock. But Patti, despite the significant age difference between her and the punk kids who idolized her, was quite literally an inspiration to a generation, the Geraldine Ferraro or Sally Ride of rock-and-roll.

As of this writing an ex-rock star (by her own choice), raising a child with one of her heroes, MC5 guitarist Fred "Sonic" Smith, Patti has retired, perhaps forever, from the pop wars, leaving in her wake the GoGo's, Joan Jett, Chrissie Hynde, the Bangles, and countless gender-integrated bands on both sides of the Big Pond. But whether she returns to the fray or not, she remains the Mother of Them All. Not bad work for a kid from South Jersey. □

This article was excerpted from Steve Simels's book, *Gender Chameleons: Androgyny in Rock 'n' Roll*, which is to be published in May by Timbre Books/Arbor House Publishing Co.



by Christie Barter & Steve Simels

GET YOUR FEET OFF THE FURNITURE DEPARTMENT: Those youngsters pictured below making a mess of the upholstery are, of course, **New Edition**, the teenage funksters responsible for the recent hit single *Cool It Now* (MCA). But what are they doing on the couch? Well, it seems that a New York City radio station recently held a "Why I Want New Edition to Play in My Living Room (in twenty-five words or less)" contest, and the kid who won only had a studio apartment. As a result the band performed instead in a smallish Manhattan rehearsal studio (that's their couch) just big enough to contain the group, the contest winner, and several of his relatives. Rumors that this has spawned a trend remain unconfirmed at press time. □



New Edition: making do

I'm just hoping that if enough of us yell and scream and stamp our feet and have tantrums . . ."

So read the *New York Times* quoting Beverly Sills, general director of the New York City Opera. She was hopping mad—and was adding her voice to the general outcry over the 11.7 percent cut in the budget of the National Endowment for the Arts as proposed by the Reagan Administration.

"I'm just appalled," Sills said. "I think that to take that enormous percentage off such a minuscule amount in support of the arts is a disgrace."

Sills has always been an outspoken defender of the arts, and she was speaking on this occasion for many embattled arts administrators like herself. Her voice is



Beverly Sills: hopping mad

heard in a more conventional way in "The Art of Beverly Sills," Angel Records' new CD-only compilation of recordings she made when she was the reigning American soprano of her generation. Included in the new album are arias by Mozart, Rossini, and Richard Strauss, as well as two previously unreleased Verdi arias. □

THE members of Kiss (left to right, Paul Stanley, Gene Simmons, Bruce Kulick, and Eric Car) may have ditched their trademark Kabuki drag, but not to worry: those white bakery togs are not the heavy-metal four-some's latest innovation in stagewear. Actually, the boys are wearing the outfits for reasons of industrial hygiene while on an inspection tour of PolyGram's Compact Disc factory in Germany. Seems the plant (which has the capacity to churn out 60,000 CD's a day) was pressing up the band's latest platinum album, "Animalize," and the guys wanted to get a look at the process.

If the idea of super high-fi-

Kiss: heavy metal meets the silver disc



delity heavy-metal makes you nervous, the news from legendary folk-rocker **Richard Thompson** is that his just-released album "Across a Crowded Room" may be issued on CD with an added song not on the LP. □

IN all the excitement surrounding hits like the all-star single (and video documentary) "Do They Know It's Christmas?," which raised healthy sums in aid of Ethiopian famine victims, the charitable efforts of other pop artists, often working single-handedly, tend to go relatively unnoticed.

In 1982, **Kenny Rogers** and his wife Marianne established the World Hunger Media Awards "to encourage, honor, and reward those members of the media who have made particularly significant contributions" toward solving the problems of hunger in the world. Among the latest winners was the cartoonist **Herbert Block** (a.k.a. Herblock) shown here flanked by the Rogerses in a ceremony held at the United Nations in New York. Rogers himself

collected his tenth and eleventh Platinum album awards from the RIAA at the end of last year.

Another artist who can be credited with good works is **John Denver**, whose good sense of timing was evident when he returned to the U.S. to report on a fact-finding tour of Africa for UNICEF only days before the "Do They Know It's Christmas?" team announced its plans.

Kool and the Gang performed at New York's Avery Fisher Hall in January to benefit the United Negro College Fund. **U2** donated the proceeds from one of their holiday shows at Radio City Music Hall to Amnesty International U.S.A. And **America**, a group that has raised funds before to help protect threatened species, played a benefit in Amsterdam recently, the proceeds of which went to the World Wildlife Fund.

Finally, returning to the music industry's efforts on behalf of the Ethiopian famine victims: they continue with the just-released single *We Are the World*, written by **Lionel Ritchie** and **Michael**



The Rogerses: good works

Jackson and performed by a bunch of American all-stars including **Tina Turner**, **Stevie Wonder**, and **Bruce Springsteen**. □

GRACENOTES. **Beach Boys** fans take note: Vestron Video is readying a documentary on the group—*Beach Boys: An American Band*—for home release. Clocking in at 103 minutes, the program includes videos, home-movie footage from the band members, and formerly unreleased song material taken from **Brian Wilson's** original master recordings. □

by Christie Barter & Steve Simels

THE city of Odense, Denmark, is best known to Americans as the home town of Hans Christian Andersen, who was born there in 1805. Odense has been in the news more recently because a long-lost symphony by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was discovered there.

In 1982 the archivist of the Odense Symphony came across the manuscript of a symphony in three movements which turned out to be a youthful work by Mozart. It was known previously only from a catalog listing as a Symphony in A Major with the Köchel number 16a. On December 9, 1984, the Oden-



Hulce: Mozart miracle

se Symphony conducted by Tamás Vetö gave the piece its first performance in nearly two hundred years.

The people at the Arts & Entertainment Network have assembled *The Mozart Miracle*, an hour-long video documentary hosted by Tom Hulce, the young American actor who portrays Mozart in the current movie *Amadeus*. Airing on A&E channels on April 12 and 13, *The Mozart Miracle* combines footage from *Amadeus* with an account of the discovery and authentication of the symphony and includes a performance of the work itself that was taped in Odense.

For those without access to cable TV, a première recording of K. 16a by Vetö and the Odense Symphony has just been released by Unicorn-Kanchana, a British label that is imported by Harmonia Mundi USA. □

THE fourth program of the 1985 Live from the Met season is a telecast of Puccini's *Tosca* in the company's new production staged by Franco Zeffirelli. Singing the title role is soprano Hildegard Behrens, who sang her first *Tosca* in Paris in December and is now making her first appearances in the role in New York. In Paris her Scarpia was the baritone Gabriel Bacquier (shown here). At the Met, Scarpia will be sung by Cornell MacNeil and Cavaradossi by Plácido Domingo. Conductor Giuseppe Sinopoli makes his Metropolitan Opera debut with this production. Airdate: March 27, on PBS.

On April 7, Easter Sunday, the PBS network will carry a performance of Gounod's *Faust*, the first in a taped-for-telecast Faust series being presented by the Opera Company of Philadelphia. The title role is sung by the French tenor Alain Vanzo, Mephistopheles by the American bass James Morris, and Marguerite by the British soprano Valerie Masterson. Serge Baudo conducts. □

HEA D Kink Ray Davies has worn a lot of hats during his career—producer, arranger, composer, singer, guitarist, and front man. Now, however, Davies is donning a new hat, that of film-maker. The accompanying photo shows Davies (hatless) in a Hitchcock-style cameo appearance—he plays a street musician—in *Return to Waterloo*, an hour-long cinematic excursion that he scripted and directed.

Billed as "a surrealistic suspense film," *Waterloo* gives

Davies: branching out



Behrens with Bacquier in the Paris production of *Tosca*

us a day-in-the-life of an English commuter, played by Ken Colley (familiar to film fans from *Star Wars*), along with a lot of Kinks music on the soundtrack. Our spies tell us it's unlike any of the long-form rock videos to date, that it's a thoughtful, highly personal piece of work, but you'll be able to judge for yourself pretty soon: RCA Video is rush-releasing the film into theaters and plans to have it available in home video formats by summer. □

MUSIC video, rather than theatrical films available for home use, is the usual subject of this space. But the March release of *Gone with the Wind* by MGM/UA Home Video qualifies in a way as an event in the history of music video. For the price (suggested retail) of \$89.95, you get a double video-cassette package with the complete Max Steiner soundtrack. The audio on these tapes has, in fact, been "digitally enhanced for stereo," according to MGM/UA. You also get, of course, one of the all-time great film classics, all three hours and fifty-one minutes of it. □

Ronnie Lane once again has something to smile about. The former Faces bassist, whose career ended when he was disabled by multiple sclerosis, recently presented a check for one million dollars to ARMS America, an organization engaged in research against the disease. That money came from a series of

benefit concerts featuring some of Ronnie's pals from the old days, a Who's Who of English rock including Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page, Bill Wyman, Charlie Watts, and Steve Winwood. If you missed the shows, don't fret: they're now available on two video tapes from Media Home Entertainment. The tapes list for \$29.95 each, and a portion of the proceeds



Lane: fighting MS

from their sale will continue to go to MS research. □

IN addition to *The Mozart Miracle* noted above, A&E Network is also presenting a new six-part series of ninety-minute programs called *Sounds Magnificent*, beginning April 11. Produced in England, the series is essentially a "story of the symphony" from Haydn to Shostakovich. André Previn, who is the host, conducts the Royal Philharmonic in the musical portions of the six shows. □

Stereo Review's critics choose the outstanding current releases

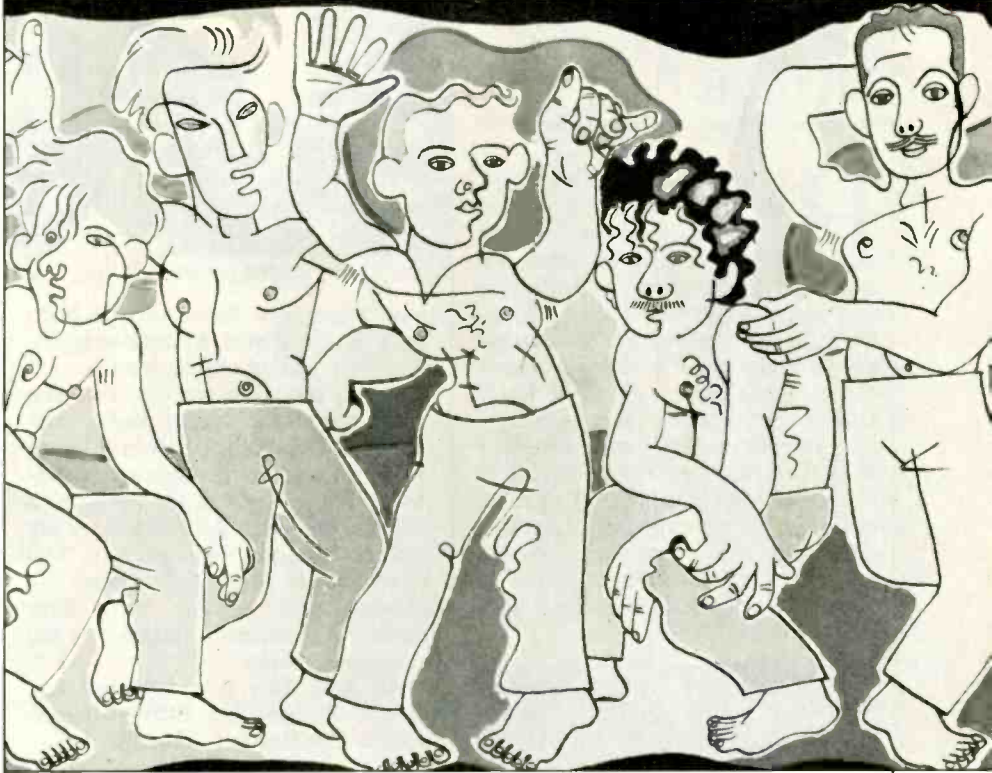
FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

DON'T be put off by all the "next-big-thing" hype for Frankie Goes to Hollywood. The group's "Welcome to the Pleasure Dome" is the most absorbing new rock album of 1985—absorbing for its daring vision, intelligence and skepticism, cheeky self-confidence, and primal danceability.

"Welcome to the Pleasure Dome" is a status report on the 1980's, where "sex and horror are the new gods," and an invitation to chuck the conventions and morality and inhibitions of a bankrupt civilization in favor of the pursuit of pleasure. The arguments are a combination of philosophy and whimsy, and the tone swings from sardonic to sentimental. Under the brilliant hand of producer Trevor Horn (he's produced for Yes and other groups), Frankie's music is richly layered and compellingly rhythmic, a frenzy of sweaty rhythm chords, pounding percussion, and raw vocals that are colored with elaborate sound and special effects.

The first side of the two-record set may be one of the best sides of dance music of the year. Propelled by a bass line that's straight out of Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, the title cut is an extended ten-minute poly-rhythmic jam—drums and percussion, echoing rhythm, and driving lead guitar. It works on many levels: as a paean to hedonism, as a smug but realistic celebration of the band's sudden fame, and, of course, as dance music.

Side two carries the dance beat further and faster with the frankly sexual *Relax*, a lesson in pleasure-enhancing technique lit up by laser beams of synthesizer and African drumming. Frankie moves from sex to violence with a bizarre cover of



Portrait of the artists, "Groping for Trouts in a Peculiar River"

Edwin Starr's Vietnam-era classic, *War*. Over a conga intro, plangent funk-bass backbeat, and screeching synthesized effects, lead singer Holly Johnson delivers a rather tweedy, collegiate-sounding lecture on wars of nationalism and revolution before launching into a spirited rendition of Starr's anti-war anthem. The side concludes with the frightening *Two Tribes*, which depicts a world crumbling at its foundations, and with yet another lecture, this one a brief discussion of the true nature of orgasm.

Having vented at least some of their spleen, Frankie turns unexpectedly nostalgic on the third side with three more covers: Gerry and the Pacemakers' *Ferry Cross the Mersey*, Bruce Springsteen's *Born to Run*, and the Bacharach/David standard *Do You Know the Way to San Jose*. Interestingly, each of these songs has a strong sense of rootedness that contrasts with the aura of chaos and alienation that runs through the rest of the album. Side four turns this sentiment on its head, however, with four rousing, rather cynical love songs, one of

which, *Krisco Kisses*, is an amusing parody of the lead singer of Culture Club, Boy George.

Although marked by a thinly veiled contempt for the public at large, Frankie Goes to Hollywood is a band that must be heeded. Their vision of a planet gone mad on the eve of its annihilation is terrifying and provocative. The alternative they offer is not a practical possibility, but you may almost convince yourself otherwise after hearing "Welcome to the Pleasure Dome."

Mark Peel

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD: *Welcome to the Pleasure Dome*. Frankie Goes to Hollywood (vocals and instrumentals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Well...; The World Is My Oyster; Snatch of Fury (Stay); Welcome to the Pleasure Dome; Relax (Come Fighting); War (... and hide); Two Tribes (for the victims of ravishment); Ferry (Go); Born to Run; Do You Know the Way to San Jose; Wish (The Lads Were Here) including the ballad of 32; Krisco Kisses; Black Knight White Light; The Only Star in Heaven; The Power of Love; Bang...* ISLAND 90232-1 two discs \$12.98, © 90232-4 one cassette \$12.98.

TUCKWELL'S SPLENDID MOZART

By gathering together Mozart's handful of horn concertos, some of his chamber music with horn parts, an aria, and some duets, and fleshing out some fragments, Barry Tuckwell has come up with a fascinating set of records. The three London discs, specially imported by PolyGram, reveal Mozart's devotion to the horn and the many different ways he wrote for it. But the collection is no mere pedagogical vehicle, nor is it an ego trip for Tuckwell, who is one of the finest horn players on the musical scene today. It makes for a splendid evening of varied music by Mozart.



THE CARSON OFFICE

Barry Tuckwell: new dimensions

The four Horn Concertos, which are available separately in the U.S. on a single Compact Disc, elegantly display Tuckwell's considerable virtuosity as both soloist and conductor. In many respects the most difficult work in the set, however, is the Quintet for Horn and Strings. The horn part, more exposed than it is in the concertos, is almost as flexibly written as the clarinet part in the popular Clarinet Quintet. Tuckwell plays it with great subtlety and beautifully scales his sound to the strings of the Gabrieli Quartet.

The aria "Se il padre perdei" from *Idomeneo* takes on a new dimen-



ANN SUMMA/RETNA LTD.

Los Lobos: rooted yet fresh, heartfelt, and up to date

sion when you focus on the horn part, as this album invites one to do. Soprano Sheila Armstrong is superb, in any case, in the way she sings the long legato lines, and Tuckwell's obbligato commentary underlines the aria's restrained passion. In the Quintet for Piano and Winds, Tuckwell is, of course, only one of four fine wind players. The ensemble is vigorously paced by pianist John Ogdon, who here makes a welcome return to the recording studio.

All told, this is a splendid set, splendidly recorded. Bravo Mozart! And bravo Barry Tuckwell!

Stoddard Lincoln

MOZART: Horn Music. *Horn Concertos Nos. 1-4* (K. 412, 417, 447, 495); *Sinfonia Concertante in E-flat Major* (K. Anh. 9); *Concert Rondo in E-flat Major* (K. 371); *Fragments in E-flat Major, D Major, and E Major* (K. 370b, 514; K. Anh. 98a). *Idomeneo: Se il padre perdei.* Barry Tuckwell (horn); Sheila Armstrong (soprano, in aria); English Chamber Orchestra, Barry Tuckwell cond. *Quintet for Piano and Winds* (K. 452). John Ogdon (piano); Barry Tuckwell (horn); Derek Wickens (oboe); Robert Hill (clarinet); Martin Gatt (bassoon). *Quintet for Horn and Strings* (K. 407); *Three Duets for Two Horns* (K. 487). Barry Tuckwell (horn); Gabrieli String Quartet. LONDON/POLYGRAM SPECIAL IMPORTS ◉ 410 283-1 three discs \$32.94. Horn Concertos only: LONDON ◉ 410 384-2 no list price.

LOS LOBOS GOES AGAINST THE TRENDS

IMAGINE an album that simultaneously evokes the Fifties Chicano rock of Ritchie Valens, the Canadian wheat-field soul of

the Band, the anthemic folk-pop of Creedence Clearwater Revival at the time they did *Who'll Stop the Rain?*, the outlaw-country sound of Willie Nelson or Freddy Fender, and the Phil Spector barrio romanticism of an old Ronnettes record. Think you'd like it? Then "How Will the Wolf Survive?" by Los Lobos should be right up your back alley. It's as *rooted* a pop record as I've heard in ages, a nearly flawless mix of styles you'd have thought were rendered hopelessly old hat by the current wave of overproduced synth-pop ironists. Yet here it all manages to sound fresh, heartfelt, and up to date.

The key to the album's victory over fashion seems to be the lead singer and composer for Los Lobos, David Hidalgo. Whether he's singing blues like Howling Wolf on *Don't Worry Baby* or doing a confessional country weeper like *I Got Loaded*, Hidalgo's work is authoritative, his emotions believable. His songwriting is already world class. His signature song (the album closer here), *Will the Wolf Survive?*, gets my perhaps premature vote as the Most Moving Rock Song of 1985.

Hidalgo's kind of defiantly honest self-expression may not be what the current climate fosters, and somehow I doubt that a bunch of paunchy L.A. ghetto kids will ever make it onto MTV. But if there's a God in music heaven, Los Lobos will be around for a while. Miss this one at your peril. *Steve Simels*

LOS LOBOS: *How Will the Wolf Survive?* Los Lobos (vocals and instrumentals); other musicians. *Don't Worry Baby; A Matter of Time; Corrida #1; Our Last Night; The Breakdown; I Got Loaded; Serenata Norteña; Evangeline; I Got to Let You Know; Lil' King of Everything; Will the Wolf Survive?* SLASH/WARNER BROS. 25177-1 \$8.98, ◉ 25177-4 \$8.98.

SIMON ESTES: MASTERLY WAGNER

It was less than twenty years ago, in 1966, that the American bass-baritone Simon Estes won a prize in the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. Estes's career since then has been rather remarkable, but his discography has never begun to keep up with it and gives no real indication of his stature. I was happy, therefore, to learn a few months ago that Philips has signed him to a contract calling for at least four records a year.

The first fruit of this commitment is a wonderful collection of Wagnerian excerpts, which I imagine will be a collector's item some day. Three of Estes's particularly successful roles are represented here: the Dutchman in the Act I monologue from *Der fliegende Holländer*, Wotan in the Act II Narration and Act III Farewell and Magic Fire Music from *Die Walküre*, and Amfortas in the Lament from the first act of *Parsifal*. Heinz Fricke conducts the Staatskapelle Berlin; the brief parts for Brünnhilde in the first *Walküre* excerpt and for Titurel in the one from *Parsifal* are sung by Eva-Maria Bundschuh and Heinz Reeh, respectively.

Estes's total immersion in and consummate mastery of all three roles is powerfully conveyed by the recording, especially in the excerpts from the *Dutchman* and *Parsifal*. Every word and every note are given the greatest poignancy, and the sense of dramatic flow is exception-

al. The voice itself is a simply splendid instrument.

I'd have thought we'd have had a complete recording of the *Dutchman* with Estes by now, and the monologue here, welcome as it is, makes me wish even more for the full opera. It would be good not only to have Estes's performance preserved in its entirety but to hear it with a more adequate orchestral partnership than the present one, which is competent but no more. My only other complaint about this release has to do with documentation. Philips has provided neither the texts nor, in fact, a word of commentary on any of the music, and the *Parsifal* excerpt is misidentified.

But it's what's in the grooves that counts, and Estes's fine singing and exceptional characterizations put this recording in a very special class. It is good to have the largish excerpts uncut too, and the two assisting singers acquit themselves well. With a total playing time of nearly sixty-seven minutes, the LP and tape represent very good value indeed, and the sound quality (allowing for a less than ideal balance between voice and orchestra) is first-rate. The CD, which I haven't heard, should be a knockout.

Richard Freed

SIMON ESTES: *Scenes from Wagner.* *Der fliegende Holländer: Die Frist ist um. Die Walküre: Lass ich's verlauten . . . Was keinem in Worten ich künde; Leb wohl, du kühnes, herrliches Kind! Parsifal: Mein Sohn Amfortas . . . Wehvolles Erbe.* Simon Estes (bass-baritone); Eva-Maria Bundschuh (soprano, in *Die Walküre*); Heinz Reeh (bass, in *Parsifal*); Staatskapelle Berlin, Heinz Fricke cond. PHILIPS 412 271-1 \$10.98, © 412 271-4 \$10.98, © 412 271-2 no list price.

NOW ON CD Compact Discs of previously released LP's

POPULAR

- **DAVID BOWIE: *Pinups.*** RCA PCD1-0291. Revivals of Sixties rock (May 1974).
- **JAMES GALWAY/HENRY MANCINI: *In the Pink.*** RCA RCD1-5315. "Gleeful, expert" (February 1985).
- **A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC (Sondheim).** RCA RCD1-5090. Original London cast. "Winsome" (December 1975).
- **PAUL McCARTNEY: *Wings Over America.*** COLUMBIA C2K 37990. "Keepsake" of the 1976 tour (March 1977).
- **TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS: *Damn the Torpedoes.*** MCA MCAD-5105. "Truly vital mainstream rock" (January 1980).
- **SIMON AND GARFUNKEL: *Bridge Over Troubled Water.*** COLUMBIA CK 09914. "Superbly accomplished" (July 1970).
- **BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN: *The River.*** COLUMBIA C2K 36854. "An Event" (January 1981).
- **THE WHO: *Tommy.*** MCA MCAD-2-10005. Original-soundtrack recording. "Second thoughts" (June 1975).

CLASSICAL

- **BACH: *St. John Passion.*** Schneidt. ARCHIV 413 622-2 AH2. "Dramatic and well-paced" (October 1979).
- **BACH: *St. Matthew Passion.*** Richter. ARCHIV 413 613-2 AH3. "Truly impressive" (October 1980).
- **BOÏTO: *Nerone.*** Nagy, Queler. HUNGAROTON HCD 12487/89-2. "Strong and involved" (January 1984).
- **GLASS: *Glassworks.*** Riesman. CBS MK 37265. "Evocative magic" (September 1982).
- **MAHLER: *Symphony No. 9.*** Tennstedt. ANGEL CDCB-47112. "Transcendent" (October 1980).
- **RAMEAU: *Pièces de clavecin.*** Bob James. CBS MK 39540. "Fascinating and delightful" (February 1985).
- **SCHUBERT: *Arpeggione Sonata; Variations on Trock'ne Blumen; Ständchen.*** Galway. RCA RCD1-5303. "Silver tone" (January 1985).
- **WIENIAWSKI: *Violin Concertos Nos. 1-2.*** Perlman, Ozawa. ANGEL CDC-47107. "Terrific pizzazz" (July 1973).
- **ZAPPA: *The Perfect Stranger.*** Boulez. ANGEL CDC-47125. "Intelligent and inventive" (March 1985).

Simon Estes: fine singing and exceptional characterizations



*Discs and tapes
reviewed by
Robert Ackart
Richard Freed
David Hall
Stoddard Lincoln*

BACH: *Magnificat in D Major (BWV 243)*. HOFFMANN: *German Magnificat*. Jane Bryden, Julianne Baird (sopranos); Jeffrey Gall (alto); Frank Hoffmeister (tenor); Jan Opalach (bass); the Bach Ensemble, Joshua Rifkin cond. PRO ARTE PAD 185 \$11.98, ©PCD 185 \$11.98.

Performance: *Excellent*
Recording: *Excellent*

Pursuing the well-researched but controversial practice of using one singer per part in early music, Joshua Rifkin and the Bach Ensemble here turn their attention to Bach's well-known Magnificat in D and an interesting German Magnificat for solo soprano that was long attributed to Bach, then to Telemann, and finally to Melchior Hoffmann. Although the performance of the Bach Magnificat is wonderfully clear, with precise singing and clarion-sounding early instruments, I missed the sonorities of a full chorus. The concerto effect is lost, and the individual singers, no matter how excellent, cannot supply the full sound the choral writing needs.

The Hoffmann Magnificat is beautifully sung by the soloist (apparently Jane Bryden, although the only special billing she gets is that her name is listed first). Her voice is crystal clear, her phrasing and articulation exquisite. The Hoffmann work is, in fact, alone worth the cost of the record. *S.L.*

BARTÓK: *Violin Concerto No. 1* (see BERG)

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 7, in A Major*. English Chamber Orchestra, Michael Tilson Thomas cond. CBS M 39052, © MT 39052, no list price.

Performance: *Neat but not gaudy*
Recording: *Very good*

This latest installment in Michael Tilson Thomas's Beethoven series with the English Chamber Orchestra is marginally less convincing from an interpretive standpoint than what he gave us earlier in the Fourth and Sixth Sym-

Explanation of symbols:

- = Digital-master analog LP
- Ⓢ = Stereo cassette
- Ⓢ = Digital Compact Disc
- Ⓜ = Monophonic recording



*Conductor
Herbert von
Karajan:
bringing out
Wagner's
musical
poetry*

KARAJAN'S DUTCHMAN

IF you had to describe Herbert von Karajan's new Angel recording of Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* in a single word, that word would probably be "lyrical." In recent seasons Karajan has turned increasingly toward a relaxed, often understated, flowing style of musical interpretation, peculiarly his own, in which orchestral balances are handled so carefully that climaxes are satisfyingly achieved without frenzy. While other eminent conductors may drive the music (and it is their prerogative to do so), Karajan has evolved an instantly recognizable way of letting it unfold.

Karajan's approach places considerable emphasis on the orchestra, and in this recording the Berlin Philharmonic is the star. The contrasting orchestral tonalities, the attention to details of instrumentation and their contribution to the musical fabric, all become commendably evident as the performance develops. Karajan's concern with Wagner's musical poetry (as distinct from the poetry of the text) emphasizes the strongly rhythmic qualities in the opera; his low-keyed approach to much of the score allows the musical climaxes to swell and burst in a particularly exciting way.

As the Dutchman, José van Dam sings with an amplitude of clear, rich, resonant, well-focused tone that is a joy to hear. His initial monologue, starting in understatement, builds to a fine dramatic peak and is sung with such conviction that the listener shares the loneliness and yearning of the fate-beset wanderer. His duet with Daland beginning "*Ach, ohne Weib*" is equally touching. In Act II his duet with Senta, which starts quietly, almost tentatively, builds

and finally soars with the new-found joy both are experiencing.

Dunja Vejzovic, a soprano with an uncommonly well-placed voice, is an ardent and expressive Senta; her handling of the Narrative is especially affecting. Kurt Moll, as Daland, sings with warm resonance and a fine sense of character—a somewhat venal but nonetheless loving father who has warmth and a suggestion of humor. As Erik, Peter Hofmann brings a passionate sincerity to his performance; the urgency of his unrequited love for Senta is touchingly communicated. Thomas Moser's Steersman and Kaja Borris's Mary are also well sung.

The Vienna State Opera Chorus performs in exemplary fashion, meeting with evident enthusiasm and musical assurance each contrasting section, from the strongly rhythmic sailors' passages to the lilting delicacy of the Act II maidens' chorus. The interplay of the sailors and village maidens at the start of Act III is one of many highlights of this performance, which culminates in the brilliantly performed finale, full of excitement and persuasion—the inevitable consummation of Karajan's approach to the opera. In sum, an excellent recording. *Robert Ackart*

WAGNER: *Der fliegende Holländer*.

José van Dam (baritone), the Dutchman; Dunja Vejzovic (soprano), Senta; Kurt Moll (bass), Daland; Peter Hofmann (tenor), Erik; Thomas Moser (tenor), the Steersman; Kaja Borris (mezzo-soprano), Mary. Vienna State Opera Chorus; Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Herbert von Karajan cond. ANGEL ● DSCX-3958 three discs \$36.98, © 4D3X-3958 three cassettes \$36.98.

phonies. As I noted in reviewing those recordings, it is a pleasure to listen to well-considered readings performed by a crack orchestra of the size used in Beethoven's own day and with the winds balanced appropriately with the strings. Thomas's treatment of the Beethoven Seventh is endowed with most of the same virtues, including a generous number of repeats in the outer movements. Among the more positively interesting aspects of his performance is the emphasis on the "dotted" rhythms of the allegretto's main theme. Disturbing, on the other hand, are the tempo differences in the finale between the opening figure in eighth-note triplets and the main theme proper.

I found it most instructive to compare the digitally recorded Pro Arte disc of the Seventh performed by the Stuttgart-based Collegium Aureum on original instruments. While the performance doesn't have quite the tension of a conductor-led reading, I find the total result more satisfying, if only because the old-style natural horns don't overwhelm the orchestral balance in the first and last movements, as is the case even with Thomas's carefully worked-out performance. *D.H.*

BERG: Violin Concerto. BARTÓK: Violin Concerto No. 1. Kyung Wha Chung (violin); Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Sir Georg Solti cond. LONDON 411 804-1 \$10.98, © 411 804-4 \$10.98, © 411 804-2 no list price.

Performance: *Excellent*
Recording: *Stunning*

Itzhak Perlman and Seiji Ozawa gave us a Berg Violin Concerto some five years ago that has been the standard by which others must be measured. Their fine-sounding analog recording, paired with the Stravinsky concerto, has been transferred to CD, so it competes quite directly with the new digital version by Kyung Wha Chung and Sir Georg Solti. While Perlman's Berg exudes the otherworldly aura many of us associate with the work, Chung and Solti are no less effective—and seem no less idiomatic—with their relatively earthy approach, turning out a performance that is full of vitality and by no means deficient in subtlety. The playing is very beautiful, very committed, very fully integrated, and it is superbly recorded, with a degree of definition quite surpassing that of any previous recording of the work. Moreover, I'm sure Bartók's brief early concerto, which he himself set aside, adapting its first movement as the first of his *Two Portraits*, has never had quite as strong a presentation as the musicians and London's engineers have given it here.

No one who has the Perlman/Ozawa Berg is going to want to replace it, but lovers of the work, lovers of fine violin playing, and aficionados of the Compact Disc are going to want this new recording as well both for its provocatively different view of the work and for its stunning sound. *R.F.*

BRAHMS: Piano Concerto No. 1, in D Minor. Krystian Zimerman (piano); Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Leonard Bernstein cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 413 472-1 \$10.98, © 413 472-4 \$10.98, © 413 472-2, no list price.

Performance: *Weightily Romantic*
Recording: *Very good*

If you want a Brahms D Minor Piano Concerto saturated with Romantic *Sturm und Drang*, here it is. Leonard Bernstein has the timpani in the opening orchestral *ritornello* sound thunderously like the cracks of doom, and soloist Krystian Zimerman, whose recordings of the three early Brahms



Krystian Zimerman

piano sonatas for DG are among the very best, matches the orchestra lightning bolt for lightning bolt. By the same token, both artists also extract the last ounce of ruminative sentiment from the extended lyrical episodes that abound in the end movements. The famous adagio goes very slowly indeed, running a good two minutes longer than that of Emanuel Ax and James Levine in their Chicago recording for RCA, which won high praise in these pages.

As noted at the time, the Ax/Levine collaboration seemed like outside chamber music without in any way diminishing the high Romantic emotionality and architectural grandeur of the work. While Zimerman and Bernstein storm the heavens and plumb the depths, I prefer the disciplined yet warm eloquence of Ax and Levine, even if the orchestral texture is less well defined sonically in their recording. Sound buffs may prefer the DG recording, but sometime I'd like to compare these two performances on Compact Discs. *D.H.*

GERSHWIN: Second Rhapsody; Cuban Overture. GERSHWIN (arr. Bennett): *Porgy and Bess—A Symphonic Picture.* Cristina Ortiz (piano, in *Rhapsody*); London Symphony Orchestra, André Previn cond. EMI ANGEL 4 DS-

37773 \$11.98, © 4XS-37773 \$11.98, © CDC 47021-2 no list price.

Performance: *Good, but . . .*
Recording: *Superb*

The sound of this Gershwin collection on CD is sensationally more lifelike than the already good sound of the LP, further enhancing the outstanding accounts of the *Second Rhapsody* and the *Cuban Overture*. But the performance of Robert Russell Bennett's "picture" of *Porgy and Bess* is the same truncated affair it is on vinyl. Although Max Harrison's annotation advises that the sequence opens with a depiction of Catfish Row before dawn, the Strawberry Woman's cries, and the Requiem for Jake, these sections are in fact omitted, as is the storm music that Bennett placed between "I got plenty o' nothin'" and "Bess, you is my woman now" later on. Altogether, what we get here is about a third of Bennett's score.

There is no other recording of the *Second Rhapsody* quite as effective as this one, and the percussion in the *Cuban Overture* is reproduced with incredible vividness, but I can't recommend this *Porgy*. Bennett's full sequence, conducted by Eduardo Mata, is on an RCA CD (RCD1-4551) along with Mata's less winning (and much less vividly recorded) account of the *Cuban Overture* and a good-enough one of *An American in Paris*. And a newer CD version, by Antal Dorati and the Detroit Symphony on London (with Grofé's *Grand Canyon Suite*), should be available by the time this review is in print. *R.F.*

HOFFMANN: German Magnificat (see BACH)

MENDELSSOHN: Piano Sonata in E Major, Op. 6; Prelude and Fugue in E Minor, Op. 35, No. 1; Variations sérieuses in D Minor, Op. 54; Rondo capriccioso in E Minor, Op. 14. Murray Perahia (piano). CBS 4 IM 37838, © IMT 37838, © MK 37838, no list price.

Performance: *Superb*
Recording: *Likewise*

Not long ago I was enjoying Murray Perahia's recording of the two Mendelssohn piano concertos and thinking, now that he's finished his Mozart concerto cycle, wouldn't it be nice if CBS had him explore Mendelssohn's solo repertoire? I didn't know this record was on the way, but it couldn't be more welcome. The sonata, by all odds the least familiar portion of this program, is not quite as early a work as its opus number would suggest; it is actually contemporaneous with the *Midsummer Night's Dream Overture*. As Phillip Ramey observes in this annotation, while the sonata is a tribute to Beethoven, with themes borrowed from his works, the style is a good deal closer to Weber's. Perahia makes the strongest case for it I have ever heard, and the sound of his instrument is captured with surpassing

realism in a sonic focus exceptional for both clarity and warmth.

The more familiar, and more mature, pieces on side two are brought off with similar distinction and with the most irresistible balance of substance and charm. I'd have thought all six of the Op. 35 Preludes and Fugues would be presented as a unit, but if CBS intends to distribute the remaining ones in five more Mendelssohn albums by Perahia, well, that will be just fine! *R.F.*

MILHAUD: *Le Carnaval d'Aix; Suite française; Suite provençale.* Michel Béroff (piano, in *Carnaval*); Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra, Georges Prêtre cond. ANGEL • DS-38121 \$11.98, © 4DS-38121 \$11.98.

Performance: "*Carnaval*" best
Recording: *Well-focused*

Michel Béroff's playing of the solo part in *Le Carnaval d'Aix* is quite stunning, and Georges Prêtre captures the flavor of its twelve little sections very convincingly. This work happens to be available in a composer-conducted recording, however, while neither the delicious *Suite provençale* nor the orchestral version of the *Suite française* has been available at all for some time, and in these Prêtre is unfortunately less than fully satisfying. He shows little patience for the expansiveness, rhythmic subtlety, or warmhearted geniality such conductors as Munch, Golschmann, and Milhaud himself have brought to the *Suite provençale*, contenting himself instead with a bland and breezy exposition of the imaginative touches in the scoring. This is merely a stopgap version of a work that can be enchanting. I would advise either hunting for the deleted Munch *Suite provençale* on RCA or simply waiting for a better recording of it.

Although Angel's sound is clear and well focused, there is the gratuitous irritation of having the *Suite française* split for turnover after the second of its five brief movements when the two suites could have been accommodated on one side without crowding. *R.F.*

MOZART: *Horn Music* (see Best of the Month, page 60)

PUCCHINI: *Turandot.* Eva Marton (soprano), Turandot; Katia Ricciarelli (soprano), Liù; José Carreras (tenor), Calaf; John-Paul Bogart (bass), Timur; Robert Kerns (baritone), Ping; Helmut Wildhaber (tenor), Pang; Heinz Zednik (tenor), Pong; others. Vienna Boys Chorus; Chorus and Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera, Lorin Maazel cond. CBS 13M 39160 three discs, © 13T 39160 three cassettes, © M2K 39160 two CD's, no list price.

Performance: *Disappointing*
Recording: *Variable*

This recording has long been anticipated and, in view of the forces brought together to produce it, has been to a considerable degree prejudged without

Poet at work.



MURRAY PERAHIA

Murray Perahia has earned the title "poet of the piano" for many reasons. His worldwide reputation is built on his perceptive interpretations of the works of many composers. And *Time* has praised him as "the most eloquent lyric virtuoso" living today.

Recently, Murray Perahia became the first American ever to record the complete cycle of Mozart's piano concertos. He has taken on the challenges of Chopin, recorded and performed Mendelssohn to rave reviews, and is currently exploring the Schubert piano repertoire and also the Beethoven piano concertos with Bernard Haitink and the Concertgebouw Orchestra.

In April, Perahia will make his Carnegie Hall solo recital debut. CBS Masterworks is extremely proud of its long association with such a uniquely talented artist, and congratulates him on this latest milestone in a truly outstanding career.

MASTERWORKS



a hearing. It has been assumed that this *Turandot* would be "definitive" (whatever that means). Sad to say, it is not.

Recorded live at the Vienna State Opera, the performance is highly theatrical, from the opening chords, taken at a deliberately slowed tempo, to the closing measures, played and sung "full out." That the performance builds in intensity and excitement is due in large measure to Puccini's genius but also to the fact that it was recorded live; even the growing enthusiasm of the audience is felt as the applause increases in vigor. The feeling one has of being present at a particularly stirring and powerful performance is the chief virtue of this album.

The sound varies in quality, sometimes muffled, sometimes sharply clear, sometimes—for apparently no reason—increasing or decreasing in volume. On occasion the chorus sounds muddy; at other times its sound is sharply focused. These variations presumably reflect what was happening on stage, but the sound engineers might have foreseen or corrected such effects.

It is the musical, more specifically the vocal, quality of the performance that is particularly disappointing. Eva Marton's singing is indeed amazingly accurate. Her pitch hits dead-center at every point, regardless of how long she has been dealing with notes above the staff. But it's like watching a sharpshooter bring down every target; the flow of *Turandot*'s music is often missing. Marton sometimes breaks the musical continuity to take a breath. Her performance has fire and authority and, at the end, a credible measure of ardor, but it rarely flows musically.

Katia Ricciarelli's finest moments are in Act I. Her delivery of the single line "*Perché un dì nella reggia, m'hai sorriso*" is full of such melting tenderness that you wonder what on earth Calaf can see in *Turandot*. Her aria "*Signore, ascolta!*" is beautifully phrased and meaningfully interpreted, and she ends the final "*pietà*" pianissimo, as Puccini wrote it, rather than swelling the note, as is often done, to signal the close of the aria. Her later moments, though always approached with dramatic honesty, are less effective because her voice, sadly, shows the wear of having sung roles too heavy for it.

Such wear is revealed in José Carreras's performance from the outset. His singing is effortful, and, to overcome the difficulties of Calaf's music and his own present limitations, he inflects lines that do not and should not require such treatment. His top notes are often pinched and sometimes not sustained as the score is written, and his pitch is often wobbly.

On the positive side among the vocal performances, John-Paul Bogart sings smoothly and affectingly as Timur, and the Ping, Pang, and Pong bring to their long scene at the beginning of Act II a real sense of character. The Vienna State Opera Chorus sings exceptionally well, particularly in the *piano* passages,

which are beautifully articulated. The orchestra's sound is sumptuous. Throughout, Lorin Maazel is in authoritative charge, molding a dramatic performance while supporting his soloists with careful tempos and dynamics. In all, this set will do, but . . . R.A.

PURCELL: *King Arthur*. Jennifer Smith, Gillian Fisher, Elisabeth Priday, Gill Ross (sopranos); Ashley Stafford (alto); Paul Elliott (tenor); Stephen Varcoe (baritone); Monteverdi Choir; English Baroque Soloists, John Eliot Gardiner cond. ERATO/RCA ◉ NUM 751272 two discs \$21.96, © MCE 751272 two cassettes \$21.96, © ECD 880562 two CD's no list price.

Performance: *Superb*
Recording: *Superb*

Although not as well known as *The Fairy Queen* or the *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day*, Purcell's opera *King Arthur* is one of his finest scores. While the masques in the *Fairy Queen* can stand apart from their dramatic context, those in *King Arthur* are closely tied to Dryden's tale of the conflict between the early Britons and the invading Saxons. But certainly the opening sacrificial scene to Woden equals the finest Purcell anthem, the antiphonal representation of good and evil spirits in the ensuing Bog Scene is stunning, the River Nymph's attempt to seduce Arthur, "the British Worthy," and the following chaconne are magnificent, and the charm of the celebrated Frost Scene is unsurpassed. In between these main pillars of the music are many wonderful songs and dialogues, not to mention the splendid overture and the charming dances. The score deserves careful study, and close attention is rewarded.

John Eliot Gardiner's new recording by the Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists is a joy. The excellent soloists all sing with a typically English purity of sound that is appropriate to Purcell's florid recitative and supple melodies. Elisabeth Priday as Cupid, in particular, charms a frosty Stephen Varcoe, as the Cold Genius, in the Frost Scene. And how Arthur can resist the sensuously matched voices of Jennifer Smith and Gillian Fisher in the River Scene is a lesson in self-control. The choral sound is pure and sumptuous, and the band of early instruments sparkles. This stunning album displays the genius of Purcell in one of his most inspired works. S.L.

SCHOENBERG: *Pierrot Lunaire, Op. 21*. **WEBERN: *Concerto, Op. 24*.** Jane Manning (voice, in *Pierrot*); Nash Ensemble, Simon Rattle cond. CHANDOS ABR 1046 \$13.98, © ABT 1046 \$13.98.

Performance: *Terrific*
Recording: *Vivid*

Although this recording is being issued now for the first time, and very impressively, with Direct Metal Mastering, it was actually made in 1977, when Simon



James Levine: lyrical Schubert

Rattle was only twenty-two. In that respect, it is a terrific demonstration of precocious musicianship, and, by any standard, Rattle's *Pierrot Lunaire* is the most compelling performance of the work yet on records.

Jane Manning, I gather, is quite a specialist in *Pierrot*, which she has also recorded with the Elsinore Players on the Danish label Paula. More than any other soloist I have heard, she captures the essence of the *Sprechstimme* style and projects the ultimate in the requisite *bizarrierie*. The intensity is remarkably real precisely because Manning and Rattle judge so well just how far they can go without tending to overdo; the co-ordination of elements is consummate. The recording itself is strikingly vivid. If the instruments—the clarinet in particular—now and then tend to cover the voice, that just makes the experience more vivid.

This is the only *Pierrot* on discs at present to come with a second work, which makes for a very sensible side layout, and the Webern *Concerto* is an ideal filler. I can register only two complaints. First, Chandos has provided a separate insert for the *Pierrot* text but gives it only in English. The original German is clearly called for. Second, the visible division on side one, which ought to have been between Parts I and II, actually comes between the last two sections of Part I. Neither of these lapses, however, really detracts from the enormous appeal of this outstanding production. R.F.

SCHUBERT: *Symphony No. 9, in C Major (D. 944, "Great")*. Chicago Symphony Orchestra, James Levine cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON ◉ 413 437-1 \$10.98, © 413 437-4 \$10.98, © 413 437-2 no list price.

Performance: *Lyrical*
Recording: *First-rate*

The first of James Levine's Chicago recordings for Deutsche Grammophon is an attractive one, curious in at least one respect. While Sir Colin Davis and others have recorded the "Great" C Major with all its repeats, Levine takes the repeats in only one movement, the scherzo, which thereby turns out to be

as long as the slow movement and longer than both the outer ones. Some listeners will feel this throws the symphony out of balance, but it is in a sense the key to Levine's approach to the work, which responds to its openhearted, lyrical qualities and is free of ceremonial gestures or anything hinting at monumentalism. The music is grand enough as Schubert set it down, after all, and Levine has the good judgment to let it breathe with real Schubertian spontaneity and songfulness. Rhythms are solid, details are exquisitely clear (but, again, without self-consciousness), the orchestral playing itself is first-rate, and so is the sound. *R.F.*

TCHAIKOVSKY: Piano Concerto No. 1, in B-flat Minor, Op. 23; Piano Concerto No. 3, in E-flat Major, Op. 75. Victoria Postnikova (piano); Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Gennady Rozhdestvensky cond. LONDON/JUBILEE ① 410-112-1 \$6.98, ② 410-112-4 \$6.98, ③ 410-112-2 no list price.

Performance: *Broad-scale*
Recording: *Very good*

The husband-and-wife team of Gennady Rozhdestvensky and Victoria Postnikova recorded all three of Tchaikovsky's piano concertos at Vienna's Sofiensaal during the fall of 1982, and the recordings were released in Britain in

the spring and summer of 1984. Presumably the American release of the Piano Concerto No. 2, which is played uncut, will not be long in following this new issue of Nos. 1 and 3.

Postnikova and Rozhdestvensky opt for a very broad-scale and ruminative approach to the opening movement, which takes up almost twenty-three minutes of playing time. Postnikova handles the solo role in the first movement in a freewheeling fashion, albeit with telling pianistic prowess in terms of passagework and dynamics. The same holds for the slow movement, where for my taste the normally dazzling and capricious central section lacks sparkle. In the finale the emphasis is on the lyrical aspects even in the opening theme, which normally has a certain nervous tension.

The Third Piano Concerto was left by Tchaikovsky as a single, lengthy allegro, with a cadenza that is grueling both in extent and virtuoso demands. The music itself, save for a lively Russian-dance secondary theme, is rather undistinctive, and I'm not surprised that the composer chose not to go on with a slow movement and finale.

The CD sounds rich and spacious, as one might expect from the Sofiensaal locale. The solo piano is well focused, and both the frequency range and dynamics are impressive. *D.H.*

VICTORIA: Motet, O quam gloriosum est regnum; Missa O quam gloriosum; Missa Ave maris stella. Westminster Cathedral Choir, David Hill cond. HYPERION ① A66114 \$13.98.

Performance: *Luminous*
Recording: *Excellent*

Although Tomás Luis de Victoria's oeuvre is comparatively small and limited to liturgical and devotional music, his music embodies the passion of the Spanish Renaissance as brought under the classical control of Rome. The passion is felt more than heard as it strains against the rigidity of sixteenth-century compositional techniques in its presentation of the age-old Latin texts. But London's Westminster Cathedral Choir produces a clear, luminous sound that enables us to hear the important inner workings of the contrapuntal style. The articulation is good, and the shading is beautifully conceived so as to highlight the emotional ebb and flow of the music, which the recording so beautifully conveys. Would that more of our churches today were filled with such noble sound! *S.L.*

WAGNER: Scenes (see Best of the Month, page 61)

WEBERN: Concerto, Op. 24 (see SCHOENBERG)

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STEREO REVIEW APRIL 1985 67

Discs and tapes reviewed by
 Chris Albertson
 Phyl Garland
 Louis Meredith
 Alanna Nash
 Mark Peel
 Peter Reilly
 Steve Simels

DEBORAH ALLEN: *Let Me Be the First*. Deborah Allen (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *I Can't Stand It; Prove You Right; Let Me Be the First; You Do It; Heartache and a Half; It Makes Me Cry*; and four others. RCA ● AML1-5318 \$8.98, © AMK1-5318 \$8.98, © PCD1-5318 no list price.

Performance: *Star in waiting*
 Recording: *Gorgeous*

In "Let Me Be the First," the follow-up to her country-pop mini-LP of last year, Deborah Allen has taken her pop leanings to the limit, turning out a very satisfying record of romantic pop ballads. Most of the tunes, which Allen wrote with her husband, Rafe Van Hoy, have a definite Sixties "girl-group" feel to them, but Van Hoy has produced them with an eye on the Eighties. In fact, there is a faint futuristic sound to much of this, perhaps the result of the album's having been the first totally digital recording done in Nashville.

Allen's voice isn't a very big one, nor is it especially pleasing, since it has that slightly off-speed, little-girl quality that also marks Dolly Parton's vocal style. But Allen scores high on taste, sensibility, and songwriting ability—even if several of her tunes call for pipes about the size of Tracy Nelson's, and even if she has a lot to learn about delivering an emotional lyric. I suspect that Allen will be a real contender on both the country and the pop charts before long, especially if she keeps turning out material the quality of *Heartache and a Half*, the first single off the album and a genuine killer. Keep your eye on this gal. *A.N.*

STEVE BARGONETTI. Steve Bargonetti (guitar); Paul Nowinski (electric and acoustic bass); Mark Soskin (electric and acoustic piano, synthesizer); Kim Plainfield (drums, percussion). *Arcane; E.S.P.; Inside a Rainbow; Rock with Me Tonight; The Harlem Express;*

Explanation of symbols:

- = Digital-master analog LP
- © = Stereo cassette
- Ⓢ = Digital Compact Disc
- Ⓜ = Monophonic recording

THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS

STAGING an ancient Greek tragedy, *Oedipus at Colonus* by Sophocles, as a contemporary black Pentacostal church service must have seemed fairly outrageous when Lee Breuer and Bob Telson's *The Gospel at Colonus* opened at the Brooklyn Academy of Music last season. But the show's hearty success and subsequent tour proved their concept was inspired. Now there's an original-cast recording from Warner Brothers, and it's a remarkable tapestry woven out of ultra-cool pop, funk, blues, and gospel that shimmers with hallelujah frenzy.

Produced by Steely Dan's Donald Fagen and his long-time producer, Gary Katz, along with Telson and Daniel Lazerus, the album works superbly as an aural experience. Not least of the reasons for its success is the use of the same singers who first launched this pop-gospel show into heavenly orbit. Instead of engaging big-name actor/singers or stars from the contemporary r-&-b scene, the producers wisely retained the original performers, most of whom are legends in black gospel.

Taken on its own terms, Telson's music holds up splendidly. Punctuated by swaying soul and dynamic doo-wop, at least six of the numbers are guaranteed to get even the most acrid, dried-up curmudgeon on his feet seeking salvation. The lyrics, adapted by Telson and Breuer from standard English translations (excerpts from *Oedipus Rex* and

Antigone are also used), come alive in ways I certainly didn't expect. The age-old drama breathes with modern life and compassion through gospel-style call-and-response vocal trade-offs.

Some of the individual performances are stronger than others, of course. At least on records, Clarence Fountain as Oedipus does not come across with quite the anguish you'd expect from a worn-out and banished old dude who's blinded himself for unwittingly killing his father and wedding his mother. But the sound of Jevetta Steele's impassioned invocation (*Live Where You Can*) and her embodiment of Oedipus's sister Ismene (*How Shall I See You Through My Tears*) are enough to keep this one near my turntable.

Steele and soloists Martin Jacox and Willie Rogers of the Soul Stirrers deserve special credit for making *The Gospel at Colonus* a moving and cathartic recording, whether you consider it a show album, a musicalization of the Theban cycle, or simply a record of sweet, uplifting soul. *Alanna Nash*

THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS (Telson-Breuer). Original-cast recording. Clarence Fountain and the Five Blind Boys of Alabama, the J. D. Steele Singers, the Institutional Radio Choir, J. J. Farley and the Original Soul Stirrers (vocals); instrumental accompaniment. WARNER BROS. 25182-1 \$8.98, ©25182-4 \$8.98.

Clarence Fountain and
 Blind Boys of Alabama



and three others. QWEST 25147-1 \$8.98, © 25147-4 \$8.98.

Performance: *Stimulating*
Recording: *Good*

Already heralded as a new star on guitar, Steve Bargonetti amply demonstrates on this debut album that he is worthy of his publicity. His work is probably best described as eclectic, reflecting a fascinating panoply of influences. He covers a musical terrain ranging from the acid-edged aggressiveness of *Arcane*, which evokes memories of early Al Di Meola, through the intricate virtuosic passages of Miles Davis's *E.S.P.* to the classical nuances of *Moonlight Romance*. And *Hip Hibiscus* is a tour de force that blends post-bop riffs with Latin flavors. The only bewildering offering in this otherwise stimulating set is *The Harlem Express*, which has a heavy country feeling with direct quotations from the Australian folk song *Waltzing Matilda*, none of which seems to have anything to do with the mood or music of Harlem. Possibly humor was intended, but it is so oblique as to be lost.

Bargonetti is a twenty-seven-year-old comer who's fully in command of the guitar and able to carry his listeners to new realms in the modern musical universe. Recommended. P.G.

BIG COUNTRY: *Steeltown*. Big Country (vocals and instrumentals). *Flame of the West; East of Eden; Steeltown; Where the Rose Is Sown; Come Back to Me; Tall Ships Go*; and four others. MERCURY 822 831-1 \$8.98, © 822 831-4 \$8.98, © 822 831-2 no list price.

Performance: *Almost formula*
Recording: *Dense*

When last heard, Big Country had stumbled onto a *schtick* that was one of the most likable in recent rock: big, exhortatory anthem-like tunes, delivered with a twin-guitar attack, that simultaneously suggested Cinemascope-

ic Marlboro Country American film music out of the Copland school and ancient English folk songs. Their debut album was as seamless a mélange of *Appalachian Spring* and various Childe Ballads as anyone had ever imagined. The stuff on "Steeltown," however, suggests that the band has exhausted its store of ideas. Yes, the imitation-bagpipe effects remain impressive, and yes, the overall sound—an evocative mixture of Celtic roots and heavy-metal—is still likable. Mostly, though, what we get here is a lot of pointless riffing, aimless non-tunes, and gargantuan overproduction. The whole thing verges so perilously on unintentional self-parody that when a straightforward rocker like *When the Rose Is Sown* comes along, it seems as inappropriate as a tarantula on a spinach salad.

Someday these guys are going to compose a really splendid film score for a neo-John Ford Western. Until then, if this album is any indication, you can ignore them with impunity. S.S.

CAPTAIN SENSIBLE: *A Day in the Life of . . . Captain Sensible*. Captain Sensible (vocals); other musicians. *Wot; It Would Be So Nice; Glad It's All Over; Martha the Mouth; It's Hard to Believe I'm Not*; and six others. A&M SP-5026 \$8.98, © CS-5026 \$8.98.

Performance: *Cheerfully mediocre*
Recording: *Slick*

Captain Sensible (a.k.a. Ray Burns and formerly bassist with the Damned) favors us here with what, for all its faults, is one of the more stylistically wide-ranging records in quite a while. You hear echoes of Ian Dury's Cockney r-&-b, unrepentantly straight disco, Beatlesque whimsey and psychedelia, and even Rodgers and Hammerstein (an electro-pop rendition of *Happy Talk*, no less). Unfortunately, you also hear Sensible himself, and his affectedly flat working-class twang is nowhere near as charming as he intends it to be.

Neither, I'm afraid, is the rest of "A Day in the Life." A few of the tracks here have been English hits already, so perhaps you should ignore my carping and have a listen. As far as I'm concerned, though, this is the sort of album for which cut-out bins were invented. S.S.

RICHARD CLAYDERMAN: *Amour*. Richard Clayderman (piano); orchestra. *Memory; Chariots of Fire; Ballade pour Adeline; Only You; Hello*; and six others. COLUMBIA BFC 39603, © BFT 39603, no list price.

Performance: *Smooth*
Recording: *Lush*

Richard Clayderman is actually the performing name adopted by French-born Phillipe Pages. For several years he toured with French rocker Johnny Hallyday before going out on his own as a pianist. Smart move. One of his earliest recordings, *Ballade pour Adeline*, included here, has sold 22 million copies in thirty-eight countries. The Clayderman style is lushly romantic, slightly to the left of Liberace, slightly to the right of Peter Nero. And also, I assure you, slightly *ennuyeux*. P.R.

JUDY COLLINS: *Home Again*. Judy Collins (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Only You; Everybody Works in China; Yellow Kimono; Home Again; Shoot First; The Best Is Yet to Come*; and four others. ELEKTRA 60304-1 \$8.98, © 60304-4 \$8.98.

Performance: *Genteel*
Recording: *On the gimmicky side*

Even if you are a long-time Judy Collins fan, you may have to work a bit to enjoy this album. The shrillness that marred Collins's work in the last few years is, I'm happy to report, mostly gone. But in its place is a sort of inaccessible attitude: Collins distances herself from the material and her audience, as if she's more concerned with delivering a recital than doing any kind of real commu-

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nication. This has been coming on for years now, and Collins's current producers, Dave Grusin and Larry Rosen, haven't helped any with their snappy, but ultimately cold, production.

The material is Collins's usual eclectic bag, with a smattering of theater songs, some esoteric novelty-pop, an affecting anti-violence song-drama (*Shoot First*, written by Collins herself), a couple of forgettable pop pleasantries, and a rather histrionic duet with T. G. Sheppard on the title song. There has never been a more ardent Judy Collins fan than I was when Collins was doing such impassioned songs as Ian Tyson's *Someday Soon* and her own *My Father*, but she has lost me of late. I don't hear much emotional involvement from her any more, nor anything of much musical interest either. A.N.

GAIL DAVIES: *Where Is a Woman to Go*. Gail Davies (vocals); Dolly Parton, Vince Gill, J. D. Souther (harmony vocals); other musicians. *Break Away; The Trouble with Love; Lovin' Me Too; Unwed Fathers; Different Train of Thought; Jagged Edge of a Broken Heart*; and four others. RCA AHLI-5187 \$8.98, © AHK1-5187 \$8.98.

Performance: *Inspired*
Recording: *Very good*

Gail Davies has long been an "artist's artist," but so far she has failed to catch on in a big way with the record-buying public. One reason is poor promotion, stemming in part from how the Good Ol' Boy network of Nashville perceives her—as a Liberated Woman, only slightly less desirable than a leper—and the other is a marginal lack of commercial radio material on her previous five albums.

"Where Is a Woman to Go" is Davies's first LP for RCA (she has been on almost every other major label there is), and it ought to put her high on the charts where she belongs. There are two very strong country tunes here, *Jagged Edge of a Broken Heart* and the moving *Unwed Fathers*, a Bobby Braddock/John Prine song that has the old-timey sound of the unwed-mother songs Dolly Parton is fond of writing—and which features Parton herself on harmony vocals. But there is also a duet with Vince Gill that evokes the Everly Brothers (*Lovin' Me Too*), a great hot-to-trot boogie number (*Different Train of Thought*), some good get-down-and-roll-in-it blues (the title tune), a couple of nice ballads, and a stylish, New Wave-influenced song (*The Trouble with Love*) that proves Davies doesn't mind taking chances.

Davies is producing with sharp, bold strokes, bringing in only the instruments she wants, and only when she wants them—a laudable practice, of course. Still, I would have preferred a fuller and less acoustic sound on a couple of the tracks that seem thin in the instrumentals, and I wish Davies (who co-produced) had brought up the vocals a tad. But that's nit-picking. I have no

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real criticisms of "Where Is a Woman to Go." It's an important album for Davies and maybe even an important one for Nashville. There are only a handful of country artists who want to see their music grow instead of just branch out, and Gail Davies is one of them. Give her a listen. *A.N.*

BOB DYLAN: *Real Live*. Bob Dylan (vocals, guitar); Mick Taylor (guitar); Ian McLagen (keyboards); other musicians. *Highway 61 Revisited; Maggie's Farm; I and I; License to Kill*; and six others. COLUMBIA FC 39944, © FCT 39944, © CK 39944, no list price.

Performance: *Not his best*
Recording: *Lousy*

This is Dylan's fourth official live album (or fourth and a half, if you count "Self Portrait"), and, frankly, I wish he would just release what everybody knows is his masterpiece—the oft-bootlegged Albert Hall set—and be done with it. Stuff like "Real Live" is not going to do much for his reputation because, basically, it is an all-star disaster. Despite the presence of a potentially interesting band, including ex-Rolling Stone Mick Taylor, the performances are even more raggedy and unrehearsed than you'd expect from Dylan, which is going some. The recording, despite the efforts of genius producer Glyn Johns, sounds as if it had been phoned in via a bad satellite connection, and the star himself sounds alternately uninvolved (*Maggie's Farm*) or desperately overtired (*Tangled Up in Blue*). Some people may, of course, call all that an improvement after the Las Vegas slickness of the earlier "Bob Dylan at Budokan," but I am not so disposed. *S.S.*

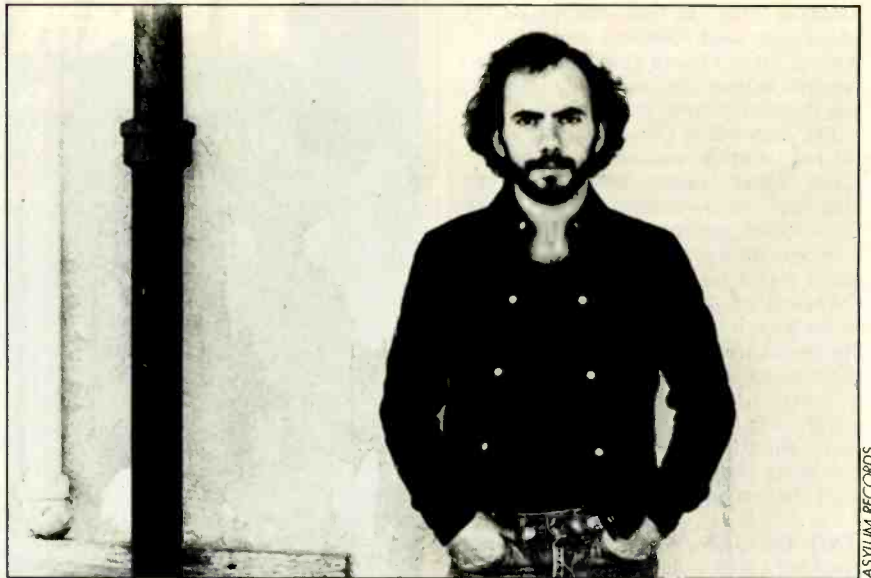
FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD: *Welcome to the Pleasure Dome* (see Best of the Month, page 59)

GENERAL PUBLIC: . . . *All the Rage*. General Public (vocals and instrumentals). *Hot You're Cool; Tenderness; Anxious; Never You Done That; Burning Bright*; and five others. I.R.S. SP70046 \$8.98, © CS70046 \$8.98.

Performance: *Weak*
Recording: *Good*

General Public has all but convinced me to start working on a proposal to get funding for research on why so many excellent ska bands break up and why their pared-down, re-formed versions are so consistently disappointing. First the Specials dissolved into the dreadful Fun Boy Three. Now the English Beat, one of the U.K.'s most authentic, swinging ska bands, has given birth to General Public, a pale substitute led by former English Beat members Dave Wakeling and Ranking Roger.

General Public's new album, ". . . All the Rage," isn't bad, just bland. Where the English Beat kept your palms slapping and feet tapping with frenetic percussion and sax riffs



Steve Goodman: a sly sense of humor and appreciation of the absurd

and syncopated rhythm guitar, General Public drifts past without causing so much as an eyebrow to raise. General Public is a smaller ensemble, more rock-oriented, and more reliant on keyboards, but these are mere technical details. More important is the generally depressed level of enthusiasm.

There are a few bright spots on "Rage"—*Hot You're Cool* and *Matter of Fact* slip into nice, midtempo grooves that work up a mild lather. But these morsels leave me hungry for meatier Beat classics. *M.P.*

BARRY GIBB: *Now Voyager*. Barry Gibb (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Shine Shine; Face to Face; Fine Line; I Am Your Driver*; and seven others. MCA MCA-5506 \$8.98, © MCAC-5506 \$8.98.

Performance: *Slick*
Recording: *Expensive*

Every aspect of this album is so expensively glossy, so tailored to a known audience, that it might have been produced by a computer at the Harvard Business School. The star is Barry Gibb, of the Bee Gees, who wrote or co-wrote all of the songs and who performs them with all the authority, neatness, and accuracy of a printout in a fancy type face. His single duet with Olivia Newton-John, *Face to Face*, has the communicative fire of two store-window mannequins eyeing each other. On his own in the rest of the album, he radiates the oily assurance of a guy convinced he has the Formula. He doesn't. *P.R.*

STEVE GOODMAN: *Santa Ana Winds*. Steve Goodman (vocals, acoustic guitar); Jethro Burns (mandolin); Byron Berline (fiddle); Kris Kristofferson, Emmylou Harris, Herb Pedersen, Linda Dillard (supporting vocals); other musicians. *Face on the Cutting Room Floor; Telephone Answering Machine; The One That Got Away; Queen of the Road; Fourteen Days; Hot Tub Refugee*;

and four others. RED PAJAMAS RPJ-003 \$8.95 (from Red Pajamas Records, P.O. Box 233, Seal Beach, Calif. 90740).

Performance: *Valedictory*
Recording: *Good*

When Steve Goodman died of leukemia last year, the music world lost not only one of its most distinctive performers and songwriters (his *City of New Orleans* has long been considered a classic), but also one of its few original humorists. On stage and in his records, Goodman was capable of producing tears in the eyes of his audience, but it was his sly sense of humor and appreciation of the absurd that really assured him a place in their hearts.

"Santa Ana Winds," on his own Red Pajamas label, is Goodman's last album. It's a generous reminder of his splendid gift for spotting society strolling along with its slip hanging out. Sometimes that humor was couched in otherwise poignant situations, such as in *Face on the Cutting Room Floor*, about the hundreds of young women who herd into Hollywood each week hoping to become movie stars, or *The One That Got Away*, about the lies men and women tell their cronies to keep their pride intact.

Often enough, however, Goodman laid it on the line. How many people cannot sympathize with his frustration at constantly getting somebody's *Telephone Answering Machine?* And are there many among us who do not have some secret contempt for the leather women who bike their troubles away in the pages of *Easy Rider* magazine or soothe their shriveled psyches in Hot Tub, California?

One of the songs that best sums up Goodman's humanity—the reason for his line of work, I suppose—is *You Better Get It While You Can* (*The Ballad of Carl Martin*). A tribute to a late musician and friend (a black mandolin picker), it laments the passing of a man Goodman called the inspiration for

"my musical character." If you want to be someone, Martin told him, you'd better get it while you can, because if you wait too long, it'll be gone. Goodman mulled that advice around for a while and came up with his own summation: "The cradle to the crypt is a mighty short trip." So it was, Steve, so it was. *A.N.*

JOHN HARTFORD: *Gum Tree Canoe.* John Hartford (vocals, banjo, fiddle); Jack Clement, Mark Howard (guitar); Sam Bush, Mark O'Connor, Marty Stuart (mandolin); Jerry Douglas (dobro); other musicians. *I'm Still Here; Way Down the River Road; Your Long Journey;* and seven others. FLYING FISH FF 289 \$8.98, © 90289 \$8.98.

Performance: *Dazzling*
Recording: *Crisp and clean*

John Hartford has always been a man of surprises, but it's been a long time since he delivered so many pleasant ones at once. In an atmosphere that is as laid-back as a Sunday afternoon excursion in a well, in a gum-tree canoe, Hartford and legendary gonzo producer Jack Clement have created a multicolored sampler of the American musical heritage that spans more than a century and evokes as many moods and tempos and styles as you are ever likely to find on one album.

Amazingly, it all works beautifully, and whether Hartford is performing a Civil War ballad, an original composition, or a head-turning, bluegrass rendition of a rock-and-roll classic, he and Clement manage to make it sound fresh and yet authentically *country* at the same time—quite a neat trick.

Without question, Hartford's vocals are suitably direct and even deadpan when need be. But much of the credit for the great success of this album lies in the ensemble sound Hartford and Clement get from their guest sidemen, all superlative players and many near legends in bluegrass and country picking. The instrumentals, with their neat showcase solos and thrilling runs and fills, are as cohesively conceived as a symphony. You get the feeling these fellows are more interested in playing *with* each other than just laying down their parts.

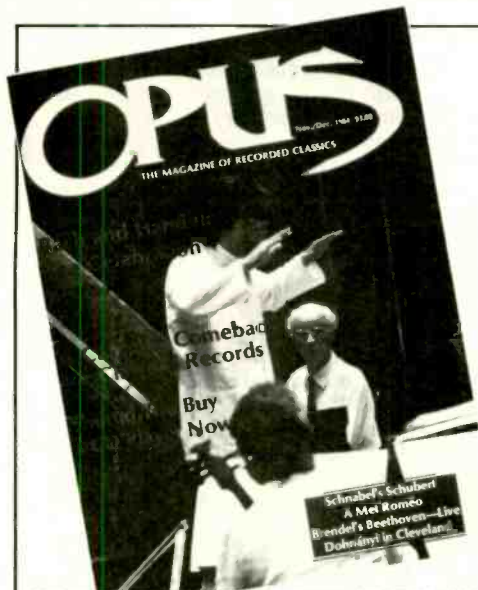
The most important thing, though, is the absolute joy that radiates from this record. "Gum Tree Canoe" may be the most commercial album that Hartford has ever done, and therefore the most accessible, but it is also his most enjoyable overall. Whether you're looking for a tour de force of acoustic picking or simply a mood brightener to get you through the late-winter doldrums, "Gum Tree Canoe" should more than fill the bill. *A.N.*

HEAVEN 17: *How Men Are.* Heaven 17 (vocals and instrumentals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Five Minutes to Midnight; Sunset Now; This Is Mine; The Fuse; Shame Is on the Rocks;* and four others. VIRGIN/ARISTA AL8-8259 \$8.98, © AC8-8259 \$8.98.

Performance: *Disappointing*
Recording: *Poor mix*

Heaven 17's newest attempt to fuse a social and political message with a dance beat is the group's least satisfying record to date. Martyn Ware's pulsating Linndrum rhythms and Ian Marsh's synthesized horn arrangements and funk-inflected keyboards continue to set a danceable stage for the band's soap-box pop, but Glenn Gregory's vocals here are ponderously theatrical—almost bordering on night-club parody. They are also inflated by a heavy-handed recording mix that pushes the album's more interesting instrumental elements deep into the background.

According to the album's publicity release, "How Men Are" is intended to be strongly anti-nuclear. For my money, it would be more convincing if the lyrics clearly indicated that nuclear weapons were the issue. Clear images are needed when you want to be persuasive, not the kind of cryptic poesy we get here. But the low point of "How Men Are" must surely be the intermin-



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able, bilious, ten-minute invective at the close of the second side, called *And That's No Lie*. I don't know what the girl did, but these guys really let her have it. C'mon, fellas, ease up! *M.P.*

REBBIE JACKSON: *Centipede*. Rebbie Jackson (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Hey Boy; I Feel for You; Centipede; Ready for Love; Open Up My Love*; and three others. COLUMBIA BFC 39238, © BFT 39238, no list price.

Performance: *Fair*
Recording: *Good*

Rebbie Jackson is the oldest sister of the most famous performing family in America today, which just may have something to do with the release of this record. Brother Michael wrote and produced the title track, and it's about the only place on the album where there's any action at all stirred up. Rebbie sounds like five or six other well-known singers at various times but never enough like an identifiable self to generate more than the mildest interest. *P.R.*

EVELYN "CHAMPAGNE" KING: *So Romantic*. Evelyn "Champagne" King (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Heartbreaker; Out of Control; So in Love; Till Midnight*; and five others. RCA AFL1-5308 \$8.98, © AFK1-5308 \$8.98.

Performance: *Good*
Recording: *Good*

Evelyn "Champagne" King is several steps above the average r-&-b singer, and it's evident in the way she's maintained her success over the last several years that she has a large and faithful audience. She doesn't mow you down the way that Aretha or Prince can, but she can be relied on to stir up a certain amount of often danceable excitement. Her best effort here is *Just for the Night*, in a high-tension arrangement featuring the synthesizer work of one of her producers, Hawk. Still more superstarlet than superstar, King seems well on her way to a long career. *P.R.*

LOS LOBOS: *How Will the Wolf Survive?* (see Best of the Month, page 60)

MADONNA: *Like a Virgin*. Madonna (vocals); instrumental accompaniment. *Material Girl; Angel; Like a Virgin; Over and Over; Love Don't Live Here Anymore*; and four others. SIRE 25157-1 \$8.98, © 25157-4 \$8.98.

Performance: *Shrink-wrapped*
Recording: *Okay*

We may never know how good an artist Madonna really is. Nor care, for that matter. Her self-styled image as a willful, seductive waif, literally bursting out of her low-cut lace undergarments, peering wantonly through heavy, black eyelashes, pre-empts any critical judgment of her music. Whether you like her new album, "Like a Virgin," has nothing to do with the music and every-

thing to do with whether you perceive Madonna as a tough, terrifically sexy graduate of the streets or as successful entertainment packaging.

"Like a Virgin" sounds thin to me—not terrible, but predictably commercial, with all Nile Rogers's funk riffs in neat little rows and Madonna's pinched, coquettish soprano sounding believable enough when the subject is money, or sex, or her own advancement, but unconvincing when the subject is love or heartbreak. While there's some evidence here of the real thing, "Virgin," like Madonna herself, probably will go further than the material warrants thanks to the package. *M.P.*



Reba McEntire: no frills

BARRY MANILOW: *2:00 AM—Paradise Café*. Barry Manilow (vocals, piano); Sarah Vaughan, Mel Tormé (vocals); George Duvivier (bass); Mundell Lowe (guitar); Shelly Manne (drums); Billy Mays (piano, Fender Rhodes); Gerry Mulligan (baritone saxophone). *Paradise Café; Say No More; When Love Is Gone; Night Song; When October Goes*; and six others. ARISTA AL8-8254 \$8.98, © AC8-8254 \$8.98.

Performance: *Excellent*
Recording: *Excellent*

To the MOR public Barry Manilow has been an idol; to the critics he's been a cornball; to his record company he's been a goose that lays golden eggs; but with this new release he has become a genuine pop-music star of the first rank. His aim was to record a "saloon"-style album of eleven of his own songs in his own arrangements performed with a small group of topflight jazz musicians. Well, he's done it, and it's a glittering success in every aspect.

It's hard to tell on first hearing if the songs themselves really have "legs," but such things as the title cut, *Big City Blues* (a duet with Mel Tormé), and *What Am I Doin' Here* sound as if they'd been around, successfully, for

generations. Manilow's performances, too, are glossy, stylish, and vastly assured. He's taken the set-'em-up-Joe style of delivery out of the geriatric unit and placed it securely in an Eighties idiom. Just how good he's gotten can be measured by his duet with Sarah Vaughan in *Blue*, in which he and "Sassy" sound as if they'd been singing together since the days of the Apollo.

A very fine album, worth your time and attention. *P.R.*

REBA McENTIRE: *My Kind of Country*. Reba McEntire (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *How Blue; That's What He Said; I Want to Hear It from You; Before I Met You*; and five others. MCA MCA-5516 \$7.98, © MCAC-5516 \$7.98.

Performance: *Down-home*
Recording: *Very good*

One of the music trade publications recently called Reba McEntire the finest female country singer since Kitty Wells. When you think about how Kitty Wells actually *sounded*, that isn't all that much of a compliment, but you get the drift. The Country Music Association named McEntire female vocalist of the year this past October, and one reason is that McEntire remembers what it was like when country singers wanted to be *country* and not headliners in Las Vegas. With her last album, McEntire looked as if she might be persuaded to forget that—her former producer tried to drown her in strings—but now with Alabama's producer, Harold Shedd, in control, things are back to normal. McEntire is a no-frills singer with an uncanny gift for phrasing, a talent for sounding as if she's lived every line, and an Oklahoma accent that's as thick as warmed-over grits. If she keeps coming up with performances—and song material—as strong as this, she'll be one of the Big Ones soon. *A.N.*

MALCOLM McLAREN: *Fans*. Malcolm McLaren, Betty Ann White, Debbie Cole, Michael Austin, Angie B. (vocals); Robby Kilgore (instrumentals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Madam Butterfly; Fans; Carmen; Boys' Chorus; Lauretta; Death of Butterfly*. ISLAND 90242-1 \$8.98, © 90242-4 \$8.98.

Performance: *Wonderfully strange*
Recording: *Interesting*

After making his fame as a huckster nonpareil managing the Sex Pistols and Bow Wow Wow, Malcolm McLaren is now establishing himself as rock's most brilliant collage artist, a remarkable and welcome turnabout. On 1983's "Duck Rock," McLaren pieced together bits of American music and dance—rap, break dancing, "scratching," double-dutch jump-roping, even square dance—with field recordings of African choirs and drums. "Fans," McLaren's latest musical collage, is even more fascinating, juxtaposing straightforward performances of operatic arias by Puccini and

Bizet with updated dance versions of McLaren's own invention. The results, while not always successful, are delightfully amusing and at times actually quite moving.

Framing the album are two famous arias from *Madama Butterfly*. The first, "Un bel di," weaves Puccini's haunting melody, sung by soprano Betty Ann White, together with a disco rendition by Debbie Cole. In the aria, Butterfly sings of her enduring fidelity and love for her American husband, a U.S. naval officer named Pinkerton. In McLaren's funk version, Butterfly's song of waiting translates as "Gotta have something to believe in/My white honky, I do miss him." While it may seem preposterous, McLaren's modern idiom is remarkably faithful to the original text. And it's not only danceable, it manages to convey the beauty of Puccini's music at the same time.

McLaren flounders a bit with the other aria from *Butterfly*, which has McLaren himself, as Pinkerton, narrating the opera's tragic denouement. But he's smashingly funny in his other voice-over narration, on the Boys' Chorus from Puccini's *Turandot*. In the opera, the children's chorus is a symbol of innocence in an otherwise savage royal court; McLaren's updating is quite the opposite. As a children's choir sings, McLaren recites a litany of transgres-

sions that landed him on a chain gang when he was sixteen. It is hilarious.

Elsewhere, McLaren has Carmen's famous *Habanera* sung by a Times Square hooker, turns the tenor aria "Nessun dorma" from *Turandot* into the backdrop for a passionate fan letter from a teenaged groupie, and makes another teen lament, this one to Daddy, out of an aria from Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*. Whether McLaren's novel interpretations will win any converts to opera is doubtful. But, like the best collage art, "Fans" tunes our ears to new ways of hearing the familiar, creating surprising relationships, humorous transpositions, and unexpected emotions. I liked it a lot. *M.P.*

ELVIS PRESLEY: A Golden Celebration. Elvis Presley (vocals, guitar); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *My Heart Cries for You; Suppose; Blue Moon of Kentucky; Harbor Lights;* and seventy-two others. RCA Ⓜ CPM6-5172 six discs \$49.95.

Performance: *Variable*
Recording: *Fair to poor*

Elvis Presley would have been fifty on January 8 this year, and to commemorate the date RCA has issued a slew of Presley anniversary albums and singles, the most impressive of which is a six-record anthology, in a gold-embossed

box, entitled "Elvis Presley—A Golden Celebration."

Promoted as an individually numbered collectible, the set contains seventy-six performances, fifty-nine of which have never before been released, including a number of legendary live appearances. According to RCA, the material selected for the set presents Elvis at "critical junctures" in his career—the famous network-TV performances on the Dorsey Brothers, Milton Berle, Steve Allen, and Ed Sullivan shows in 1956-1957, the 1968 Singer comeback special, as well as the outtakes from the 1954-1955 Sun sessions, two complete live concerts Presley gave in 1956 in Tupelo, Mississippi, and a number of home recordings and interviews. Any references to Presley's last "critical juncture"—his sad and bloated final days, when his singing grew increasingly pathetic—have been politely avoided. The collection concentrates only on the King's glory days, when life was one pink Cadillac after another.

There are a couple of ways to react to the package. One is to laud RCA for excavating some truly revelatory material and for bringing much of Presley's historic, seminal work together. The other, however, is to admonish the company for using the anniversary to pick over the bones of what is already a pretty stripped-clean skeleton and for

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labeling every unreleased scrap of tape a "treasure."

Both reactions are justified, but by the end of side six, where an anonymous voice conducts a worthless interview with a hepped-up female fan, it becomes impossible not to suspect that RCA was willing to use almost anything to fill up twelve sides, even some dreadful and poorly recorded tapes Presley made in the Army in Germany.

If the Army tapes might justify Presley's leaping out of the grave and dragging the set's producers off kicking and screaming, another set of home tapes, discovered at Graceland last summer by producer Joan Deary, contains two songs that come across as absolute stoppers. Presley was, by most accounts, a lonely and agonized man, haunted by secret demons, and nowhere does that show as pointedly as in these versions of *My Heart Cries for You* and *Suppose*, the latter fraught with the kind of despair that drives rational men to commit desperate acts. It says more about Presley, the man, than all the other seventy-five performances put together.

Unfortunately, such moments are few in this package, although the uncredited liner notes and accompanying period photographs add perspective and give enjoyment that transcends even the music. The question remains, however, whether "Elvis Presley—A Golden Celebration" belongs in your collection. My own feeling is that it detracts rather than adds to Presley's reputation as a musician (although he sang remarkably well in live situations even as a teenager), and that in drawing a portrait of Presley as a cultural hero, it only reinforces his image as a pimply working-class kid who got caught up in something he didn't understand. *A.N.*

RAMONES: *Too Tough to Die.* Ramones (vocals and instrumentals). *Mama's Boy; I'm Not Afraid of Life; Too Tough to Die; Durango 95; Wart Hog; Danger Zone;* and seven others. SIRE 25187-1 \$8.98, © 25187-4 \$8.98.

Performance: *Running in place*
Recording: *Good*

This album is being widely touted as some sort of a comeback, apparently inspired by the band's younger hardcore competition, but, frankly, I can't hear it. The lyrics are a little more explicitly political than previously, the one cut produced by Eurythmic Dave Stewart has the kind of mainstream pop feel that has eluded these guys in the past, and, yes, there are even some genuinely funny lines. Still, most of the album is the same listless, going-through-the-motions guitar thrash these guys have been dishing out since they got upstaged by the New Wave. Not bad for a bunch of self-confessed pinheads, of course, but not particularly inspirational either. *S.S.*

DOC AND MERLE WATSON: *Down South.* Doc Watson (vocals, guitar, harmonica); Merle Watson (guitar, banjo);

T. Michael Coleman, Buddy Davis (bass); Sam Bush (fiddle). *Fifteen Cents; Bright Sunny South; Slidin' Delta; Coal Miner's Blues; Solid Gone;* and seven others. SUGAR HILL © SH-3742 \$8.98, © SH-C-3742 \$8.98.

Performance: *Pure and pretty*
Recording: *Digitally clean*

An unopened Doc and Merle Watson album always promises—and later delivers—at least three things: an almost continuous display of exceptional acoustic flat-picking; a production devoid of gimmicks, multitracking, and crooning chorines; and a devotion to tradition that goes so far beyond loyalty as to suggest that the elder Watson was there when Jimmie Rodgers picked up his first long-necked instrument and the Carter Family first heard *Wildwood Flower*.

Although Watson has written a wealth of wonderful original tunes through the years, the material here is the kind he's best known for, and you come to expect the typical stark-but-sweet Watson treatment. But an experienced listener also expects a certain sameness to the Watsons' albums, mainly because of the arrangements and the similarity of the songs. In the past, they've sought variety by experimenting with rhythm sections and different sidemen. Here Merle has brought in fiddler extraordinaire Sam Bush, of Newgrass Revival, who adds immeasurable spice and vitality to his four cuts (including the marvelous *Hesitation Blues* and the old fiddle tune *Twin Sisters*) and lifts the album out of what could have been a sort of monotony.

It is probably impossible for the Watsons to make a *bad* album, and in the end this is a perfectly *charming* one, a lovely, loving tribute to the power and the beauty of root country music. *A.N.*

Collections

REVENGE OF THE KILLER B'S. Fleetwood Mac: *Cool Water.* Marshall Crenshaw: *Somebody Like You.* Depeche Mode: *Sometimes I Wish I Was Dead.* Rank and File: *Post Office.* B-52's: *Moon 83.* Madonna: *Ain't No Big Deal.* Pretenders: *Money.* And five others. WARNER BROS. 25068-1 \$8.98, © 25068-4 \$8.98.

Performance: *Entertaining*
Recording: *Mostly excellent*

Here's yet another collection of oddities and B sides rescued from the Warner Brothers vaults, and, like last season's highly regarded "Attack of the Killer B's," the selections are usually worth hearing. As before, no particular style dominates. There's everything from the country-punk of Rank and File and the pure pop of Marshall Crenshaw to the metallic neopsychodelia of Echo and the Bunnymen. Also as before, for my money the less experimental things (such as Kid Creole's sprightly *You Had No Intention*) come off better than the more self-consciously modernist entries

(Depeche Mode's *Sometimes I Wish I Was Dead*, for example).

Still, regardless of your prejudices or mine, there's clearly something here for nearly everybody, and I hope the folks at Warners keep releasing similar packages forever. Personal fave: the ragged but passionate live runthrough of *Money* by the Pretenders, in which Chrissie Hynde almost erases memories of the long-ago similar version by John Lennon. Definitely worth buying. *S.S.*



Madonna: a killer B

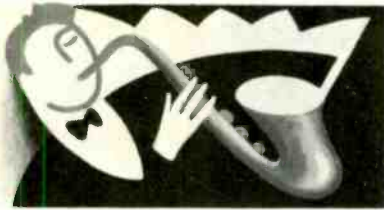
WORLD CLASS PUNK. What: *Campbells Sign.* Zyklome: *Scapegoats.* Ratos de Porao: *Parasita.* Deja Voodoo: *Jungle Out There.* And twenty-three others. ROIR A-131 © \$9.98 (plus \$1.25 postage and handling charge from ROIR, 611 Broadway, Suite 725, New York, N.Y. 10012).

Performance: *Polyglot noise*
Recording: *Extremely variable*

Billed as containing performances by twenty-seven bands from twenty-five countries, this cassette suggests that punk is the first rock style that truly travels well. In fact, whether they're Australian, Finnish, or Czech, nearly all the bands here sound identical, which shouldn't be surprising given the blinding speed with which most of these outfits spit out their lyrics. It hardly matters what language they're in; they're all equally incomprehensible, which blurs national distinctions somewhat.

Beyond that, I can only observe that the recordings range from professional-sounding studio jobs to some that remind me of tapes I made of my high-school band on a mono Wollensak machine in 1964, and that the music runs the gamut from the most extreme hardcore three-chord thrashing (the Brazilian group Ratos de Porao on *Parasita*) to fairly lyrical, sophisticated neo-folk (*Shock Time for Rock* by South Africa's Pop Guns). All in all, "World Class Punk" is an entertaining anthology that proves punk is the Esperanto of our time, not to mention a superior lease-breaker. *S.S.*

JAZZ



BILL BARRON: Variations in Blue. Bill Barron (tenor and soprano saxophones); Jimmy Owens (trumpet); Kenny Barron (piano); Ray Drummond (bass); Ben Riley (drums). *September 1979; Minority; Be Who You Are; Variations in Blue; The Name of This Is; Swingin' in Bushnell Park.* MUSE MR 5306 \$8.98.

Performance: *Excellent*
Recording: *Very good*

In recent years saxophonist Bill Barron has spent more time teaching than performing in public, but as chairman of the music department at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, he is never far from music. That he keeps in touch with good sounds is very much in evidence on "Variations in Blue," an album he produced a couple of summers ago. Heading a timeless quintet

that includes his brother, pianist Kenny Barron, trumpeter Jimmy Owens, bassist Ray Drummond, and drummer Ben Riley, Bill Barron has made with this album a generous donation to the jazz library, both as composer and player. He should pop out of the classroom more often. C.A.

RICHIE BEIRACH: Elegy for Bill Evans. Richie Beirach (piano); George Mraz (bass); Al Foster (drums). *In Your Own Sweet Way; Spring Is Here; Peace Piece;* and three others. PALO ALTO JAZZ PA 8065 \$8.98.

Performance: *Tinkly tribute*
Recording: *Excellent*

I know "Tinkly tribute" sounds as if I'm trying to be cute or funny at the expense of what is most certainly a serious, sincere tribute by pianist Richie Beirach to the late Bill Evans. But Evans's music did have a tendency to be tinkly, and I must confess that for me it had begun to wear a bit thin towards the end. Beirach plays very beautiful music, and he does it with a sensitivity that cannot easily be dismissed. I just don't find it the least bit exciting. Jazz should give the listener a tingly feeling, and I have to say that this album, like much of Evans's work that has been scraped from the bottom of the barrel, leaves me rather cold. C.A.

BILL COLEMAN: Blowing for the Cats. Bill Coleman (trumpet); orchestra. *Gentle Storm; One Room Flat; Saucy Suzy; Eve's Apple; Twenty Turtles on a Tree; Blow Them Sounds; Blue Is How You Feel; Take a Trip to the Moon; Sweet Lily of Mine; Jumping on the Moon;* and two others. DRG SL 5200 \$8.98, © SLC 5200 \$8.98.

Performance: *Rich*
Recording: *Very good*

Trumpeter Bill Coleman was born in Paris, Kentucky, but he spent much of his life in and around Paris, France. That is why only a few Americans are familiar with his name. "Blowing for the Cats" is a superb set of mellow, accessible jazz recorded in Paris in 1973 but, inexplicably, never before released. Coleman is in excellent form as he moves with youthful vigor through twelve original tunes against a background that sometimes features lush brass and strings, sometimes lightly swinging jazz. Sad to say, this veteran trumpet player, who first visited Europe with Lucky Millinder's band in 1933, did not live to see the release of this record, but it will surely make many listeners wonder why they never heard of him before. C.A.

JEAN-LUC PONTY: Open Mind. Jean-Luc Ponty (violin, piano, synthe-

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HEARING Cleo Laine perform in person is a rare pleasure, providing as it does an opportunity to enjoy jazz singing at its best. Her annual appearances at Carnegie Hall have become a jubilant ritual for the British artist's devoted core of American followers, generating a heady anticipation that peaks when she strolls out on stage to her opening ovation, a golden vision with corkscrew hair.

As a souvenir for those who attended Laine's tenth-anniversary concert at Carnegie, and for the benefit of those not present there the evening of April 6, 1983, DRG Records has released a delightful two-disc recording fairly bursting with the imagination, daring, and exceptional musicianship that always characterize the work of Cleo Laine and her musical director, instrumental accompanist, and husband, John Dankworth.

First of all, there is the marvel of Laine's voice, a resonant, reedy instrument of broad range, amazing flexibility, and distinctive texture with just a whisper of huskiness at its edge. No less remarkable are her sense of phrasing, her keen ear, her faultless taste, her clear enunciation, and her engaging wit—the last exemplified here by *Sing Me No Song*, the pseudo-operatic entreaty of a composer to his tone-deaf sweetheart.

The backbone of this set is formed by Laine's treatments of standards by such immortals as Harold Arlen and Hoagy Carmichael. Evergreens like *Any Place I Hang My Hat*, *Georgia on My Mind*, and *Stardust* are pruned into fascinating new shapes by Dankworth's arrangements. Nine of the other songs are Dankworth originals, including new yet traditional-sounding blues and settings of lines by Shakespeare and Housman. The assumption of literary sophistica-

tion on the part of the audience is refreshing in today's climate in which so much is geared to the lowest common cultural denominator.

Some of Dankworth's songs are attractive but unmemorable, others laced with smile-evoking whimsy. Where he and Laine really excel is in performance. There is a special excitement in the way the two of them engage in musical exchanges, trading increasingly demanding solos note for venturesome note. And the most touching selection here is a haunting rendition of *Never Let Me Go*, one of the most poignant ballads ever written, sung as if directly from Laine to Dankworth.

The set leaves a warm, soft, fully satisfying glow in the ears. As Cleo Laine announces in the second cut on side one, it was "a grand night for singing." It always is when she takes the spotlight.

Phyl Garland

CLEO LAINE: *Cleo at Carnegie—The 10th Anniversary Concert*. Cleo Laine (vocals); John Dankworth (clarinet, alto and soprano saxophones, electric piano); other musicians. *Any Place I Hang My Hat*; *It's a Grand Night for Singing*; *Good Morning*; *It's a Lovely Day Today*; *I'm Shadowing You*; *Crazy Rhythm*; *Primrose Color Blue*; *We Are the Music Makers*; *You Spotted Snakes*; *Methuselah*; *When I Was One and Twenty*; *Sing Me No Song*; *Triboro' Fair*; *You've Got to Do What You've Got to Do*; *He Was Beautiful*; *Turkish Delight*; *Never Let Me Go*; *Hoagy Carmichael Medley (Georgia on My Mind/Lazy Bones/The Nearness of You/I Get Along Without You Very Well/My Resistance Is Low/Stardust)*; *I Want to Be Happy*. DRG DARC-2-2101 two discs \$12.98, © DARC-2C-2101 one cassette \$12.98.

DRG RECORDS

sizers, rhythm computer). *Modern Times Blues; Watching Birds; Intuition*; and three others. ATLANTIC 80185-1 \$8.98, © 80185-4 \$8.98.

Performance: *Robotic*
Recording: *Very good*

French violinist Jean-Luc Ponty's new album is entitled "Open Mind," and that is exactly what I tried to keep as I listened to it. Unfortunately, the once-brilliant jazz violinist, who emerged on the scene in the late Sixties, has long since succumbed to trendy gadget music. Here he immerses his considerable talent in a swamp of synthesizers, letting it rise occasionally only to dissipate, as if in an ever-shifting wind. It seems that Ponty has lost his direction, but there are, nevertheless, occasional strokes of brilliance in his work. I just wish he would serve it up without the tasteless garnishes. C.A.

RED RODNEY: *Hi Jinx at the Vanguard*. Red Rodney (trumpet, flugelhorn); Ira Sullivan (tenor and alto saxophones, flute, trumpet); rhythm section. *On the Seventh Day; I Remember You; Let's Cool One; I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)*; and two others. MUSE MR 5267 \$8.98.

Performance: *Honest bop*
Recording: *Good remote*

Bebop trumpeter Red Rodney and his sidekick, Ira Sullivan, had been reunited for only a few weeks when this album was recorded at New York's Village Vanguard in 1980. Still a team, they sound even better and tighter together today, but there is a certain charm about this set, which was recorded without their knowledge. The rhythm section could have been better, and there are faltering moments in the ensembles, but inspired solos rescue the album and justify Rodney's decision to allow its release. C.A.

BEN WEBSTER: *Gentle Ben*. Ben Webster (tenor saxophone); Tete Montoliu Trio. *The Man I Love; Sweet Georgia Brown; Barcelona Shout; Don't Blame Me; How Long Has This Been Going On*; and three others. FIDELIO FL 4475 \$7.98.

Performance: *Average Webster*
Recording: *Good*

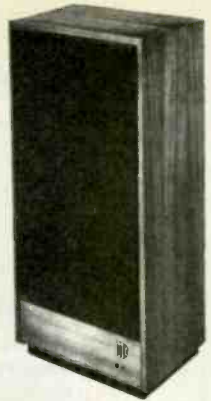
"Gentle Ben" by the late Ben Webster was recorded in Spain in 1972, licensed to a Dutch company, and manufactured in Hungary. Jazz, of course, is among the most international of languages, and few have spoken it as fluently as Webster. His tenor was gentle, but it also had a bite to it, and both qualities are in evidence here. The accompaniments, by the Tete Montoliu Trio, are a bit bland, but there is enough fine playing by Webster on this record to make it a good buy. (Incidentally, "Bent" is a common name in Denmark, where Webster lived, so his composition *My Nephew Bent* does not refer to an out-of-shape relative.) C.A.

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Discs and tapes reviewed by
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BRYAN ADAMS: *Reckless.* Bryan Adams (vocals and instrumentals); other musicians. *Run to You; Summer of '69; Somebody; Heaven; Kids Wanna Rock; This Time.* A&M VIDEO VHS Hi-Fi 61003 \$19.95, Beta Hi-Fi 21003 \$19.95.

Performance: *Trite*
 Recording: *Excellent*

Bryan Adams is the very model of a modern rock star. He's photogenic (or, in this MTV era, let's say videogenic), he seems to have a bad attitude toward women, and he has absolutely nothing original to say. Think that's overly cynical? Then take a gander at his new video, which is being marketed by A&M as the greatest thing since . . . oh, since Moses came down from Mount Sinai.

Song after song in "Reckless" hits you with the most stunningly banal imagery imaginable: Bryan backstage, pining tragically for a groupie (*Heaven*); Bryan in a black-and-white Thirties Dust Bowl scene (*Run to You*); Bryan and his band storming a hockey rink (*Somebody*). Not only have you seen it all before, but you'll wish you hadn't.

This schlock that dare not speak its name is served up state-of-the-art, of course. The photography is slick—director Steve Barron knows how to move his camera around—and the VHS and Beta Hi-Fi sound will test the outer limits of your stereo system. Still, what's on view here is a second-rate sensibility, shameless self-mythologizing (the star as Golden Boy/Tragic Figure), and a near-textbook example of how corrupted the idea of rock-and-roll in the Eighties is becoming. *L.M.*

KIM CARNES. Kim Carnes (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Invisible Hands; Voyeur; Draw of the Cards; Bette Davis Eyes.* PIONEER ARTISTS LaserDisc PA-84-M010 \$10.99.

Performance: *Winning*
 Recording: *Excellent*

If you are as tired of MTV's chatty video jockeys as I am, and if you also have or plan to get a LaserDisc player, I hope you will join me in encouraging the escalation of eight-inch MusicVideo releases like "Kim Carnes," on which the raspy-throated blonde performs such hits as *Bette Davis Eyes*. This is not concert footage but rather a sixteen-minute cluster of four individual videos, all excellently conceived, expensive looking, and pertinent. Video producers too

often ignore the lyrics and dish out silly visual accompaniments, but that is not the case here. My favorite is *Draw of the Cards*, but the whole disc is a delight, and technically it's superb. *C.A.*

PHIL COLLINS: *Live at Perkins Palace.* Phil Collins (vocals, piano, drums); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *I Don't Care Anymore; I Missed Again; You Can't Hurry Love; In the Air Tonight; Behind the Lines; People Get Ready;* and five others. PIONEER ARTISTS LaserDisc PA-84-094 \$24.95.

Performance: *Good*
 Recording: *Good remote*

You may know Phil Collins from his work with the group Genesis, but unless you are a very serious rock follower, chances are good that you first noticed him when he gave new life to the Holland-Dozier-Holland song *Can't Hurry Love*. "Live at Perkins Palace" is a fifty-five-minute concert performance that includes that old Supremes hit as well as ten other songs, most of which were written by Collins. If you are a Collins fan, you will love it all; if you are not, you will probably still find yourself swaying here and snapping your fingers there. Collins is not a great singer, but he has a certain magnetism that comes through on this set. *C.A.*

DONIZETTI: *Lucia di Lammermoor.* Anna Moffo (soprano), Lucia; Lajos Kozma (tenor), Edgardo; Giulio Floravanti (baritone), Enrico; Piero di Vietri (tenor), Arturo; others. RAI Chorus; Rome Symphony Orchestra, Carlo Felice Cillario cond. VIDEO ARTS INTERNATIONAL VHS VAI-OP-1 \$69.95.

Performance: *Fine*
 Recording: *Good mono audio*

The deterioration of Anna Moffo's voice had not begun in 1971, when she faced the cameras on location to film this version of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. In fact, she is marvelous to hear as well as to see. The supporting cast is strong, and the exterior and interior backgrounds of an actual seventeenth-century castle contribute to the mood. I do, however, wish that director Mario Lanfranchi had called the shots with more imagination, and that he had spent less footage panning up, down, and around the castle's grounds. The Mad Scene is also visually dull, and (if you don't mind missing the English subtitles) you might do well to close your eyes during the celebrated Sextet. Zeffirelli would have done it right. *C.A.*

HALL AND OATES: *The Daryl Hall and John Oates Video Collection—7 Big Ones.* Hall and Oates (vocals and instrumentals); other musicians. *Maneater; Private Eyes; I Can't Go for That (No Can Do); Say It Isn't So;* and three

others. RCA/COLUMBIA PICTURES VHS Hi-Fi 60386 \$19.95, Beta Hi-Fi 20386 \$19.95.

Performance: *Should be better*
 Recording: *Excellent*

Given that Hall and Oates are, as the liner notes maintain, the most popular duo in rock history, you'd think their videos would be slightly less banal than



Kim Carnes: winning

the rest of the canned brain damage you get on MTV. And on the basis of this particular collection, it seems that they are—slightly. The songs, of course, are terrific.

Hall and Oates are by now the undisputed masters of a genre that borrows from the Beatles, Philadelphia soul, early Seventies bubblegum, and SoHo minimalism without sounding the least bit forced. The imagery that accompanies the music here, however, is somewhat less imaginative than you might hope. *Adult Education*, for example, is staged as yet another parody of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. *One on One* is a pointless travelogue featuring Hall wandering the streets of Greenwich Village, and *Say It Isn't So* is a performance piece staged in—talk about original—an alley at night.

Not everything is quite so dull. *Private Eyes*, with the band in detective drag, is a nicely executed mixture of Motown and *film noir*, and *I Can't Go for That* mates Cocteauesque visuals with the duo's most artfully artificial electronic r-&-b to terrific effect. Overall, though, the impression you come away with after sitting through "7 Big Ones" is that the music is vastly better than the visuals. *L.M.*

MENOTTI: *The Medium.* Marie Powers, Anna Maria Alberghetti, others (vocals); Radio Italiana Symphony Orchest. (Continued on page 86)

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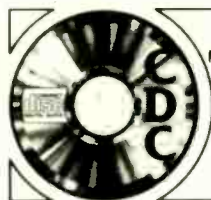
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Performance: *Outstanding*
Recording: *1950 film*

Gian-Carlo Menotti's *The Medium* first appeared on Broadway in 1946, and four years later the composer directed this slightly modified film version. Menotti modified *The Medium* because film enabled him to embellish his work with exterior scenes; he also wrote additional material for newcomer Anna Maria Alberghetti, whose cinematic Monica is as gripping as Evelyn Keller's was in the stage production. Re-creating their original roles are Marie Powers (it is hard to imagine a more perfect Madame Flora), Beverly Dame as Mrs. Gobineau, and Leo Coleman as the mute, Toby. Sung in English, the film—whose soundtrack once appeared on the Mercury label—was made in Italy, where the setting, in an ancient, lower-income neighborhood, is appropriately dramatic and eerie. This is a superb production. *C.A.*

MINKUS: *Don Quixote* (Baryshnikov production). Mikhail Baryshnikov, Cynthia Harvey (principal dancers); American Ballet Theatre Company. American Ballet Theatre Orchestra, Paul Connelly cond. PIONEER ARTISTS LaserDisc PA 84-082 \$34.95.

Performance: *Splendid*
Recording: *Excellent*

You don't have to be a ballet fan to appreciate the grace and splendor of Mikhail Baryshnikov's full-length production of the Ludwig Minkus ballet based on Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. This is an American Ballet Theatre performance taped at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1983, and it is stunning. Baryshnikov and Cynthia Harvey are lovely to look at as they breeze their way through a romantic comedy so lively that it could rival any Broadway musical, yet sufficiently rooted in tradition to be a distinguished classic. The sets, costumes, music, and movements are all captured impressively on this ninety-minute LaserDisc. *C.A.*

SAN FRANCISCO BLUES FESTIVAL. Clifton Chenier: *Louisiana Two Step; What I Say; Calinda*. Albert Collins: *Cold, Cold Feeling; Frosty*. Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown: *Sometimes I Slip; Six Levels Below Plant Life*. John Paul Hammond: *Look on Yonder Wall*. And seven others. SONY VIDEO LP VHS Stereo \$24.95, Beta Hi-Fi \$19.95.

Performance: *Spirited*
Recording: *Good*

When a white man born into great wealth sings the blues of a black man born into abject poverty, something fails to ring true. John Paul Hammond has spent years trying to change that, but, as this release bears out, the challenge is too great. The Charles Ford Band does a better job at meeting it, and

harmonica player Mark Ford is excellent, but the peak performances here are provided by Albert Collins, Johnny Littlejohn, Clifton Chenier, and Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown—plus a promising newcomer named Robert Cray, who captures the spirit of his roots admirably.

In between the music, we hear performers and members of the relatively small audience describe the blues. "One thing that gives me the blues," says a black woman, "is to have a beautiful day like today, and I don't see no black people here." That's enough to give anyone the blues. *C.A.*

STYX: *Caught in the Act*. Styx (vocals and instrumentals). *Mr. Roboto; Rock-in' the Paradise; Snowblind; Renegade; Heavy Metal Poisoning; Cold War*; and seven others. A&M VHS Hi-Fi VC 00001 \$29.95, Beta Hi-Fi BC 00001 \$29.95, PIONEER ARTISTS LaserDisc PA-84-086 \$24.95.

Performance: *Uneven*
Recording: *Good*

If you are a Styx fan, "Caught in the Act," an eighty-seven-minute video that sandwiches a concert between two slices of a thin storyline, is for you. If you aren't totally gaga about this group (I mean, to the point where fan loyalty has impaired your senses), I suspect you will be embarrassed by the dreadful bit of drama that has Dennis DeYoung and Tommy Shaw fighting against a Big Brother type who has banned rock-and-roll. Wooden acting aside, the script, by Tommy Shaw, who has since started pursuing a solo career, is to drama what Menudo is to choreography. It takes up far too much time on a cassette that otherwise contains acceptable musical performances. *C.A.*

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Eugene Onegin*. Galina Vishnevskaya (soprano), Tatiana; Larissa Avdeyeva (mezzo-soprano), Olga; Yevgeni Kibkalo (baritone), Onegin; Ivan Petrov (bass), Gremin; others. Orchestra and Chorus of the Bolshoi Theater, Boris Haikin cond. CORINTH VHS 123 \$69.95, Beta 123 \$69.95.

Performance: *Superb*
Recording: *Quite good*

Tchaikovsky's opera *Eugene Onegin*, based on the Pushkin poem, comes alive in this vivid 1958 film adaptation by screenwriter Alexander Ivanovsky and director Roman Tikhomirov. It has lush, often stunningly beautiful exterior shots, authentic nineteenth-century interiors, and a cast that looks just right. The cast's realistic appearance is owing to the fact that, with one exception (Ivan Petrov), the characters we see are not the singers we hear. The lip-syncing is technically well done, the colors are believable, the occasional narrative bridges from Pushkin's verse are tastefully placed. My only complaint is the handful of inexplicable jumps that occur, but you can easily learn to live with them. *C.A.*

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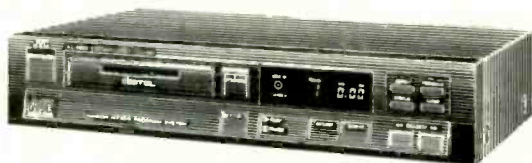
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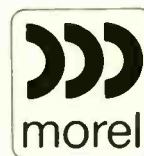
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HOWARD BLOOM

President, The Howard Bloom Organization, Ltd.

As the founder of one of the most successful public-relations firms in the rock-music business, Howard Bloom is, as he puts it, "video dependent." The very way in which his business is conducted has been revolutionized by video.

Bloom says, "Video has had a profound effect on popular music, and I now have to be on top of what's going on in music video just as much as in the records my clients make and the audiences they reach in their tours across the country." Accordingly, Bloom's office is equipped (somewhat modestly) with a thirteen-inch Sony Trinitron, wired into a small KLH receiver, and a pair of bookshelf speakers.

"Normally I have MTV running on that little television set the entire ten to twelve hours I spend in the office every day. Back at home is where my real video rig is set up. Since I have to be as knowledgeable as I can about music on television, I have two VCR's. Both of them are JVC front-loaders—you have to have front-loaders if you have cats—and both are stereo with Dolby. Their most important feature to me, though, is not the stereo playback capability but the fact that each one has an eight-event programmable timer.

"People say that nobody uses those eight positions, but I do. There are about ten national music-video shows on broadcast TV right now, so I'm tearing my hair out

because I don't have ten presets. About once every four months I sit down with the *New York Times* TV section for an hour and comb it for all the music-video programming appearing on a regular basis. Then I spend the agonizing half hour it takes to program my eight presets. So when I'm home over the weekend, I have six hours or so that cover almost all of the music programming for the week—programs like *Rock in America*, *Friday Night Videos*, *Solid Gold*, and Casey Kasem's *America's Top Ten*.

"Then by Saturday evening I'm ready for the other VCR, which is set up for my personal entertainment. And I want to get a third one for science shows—*Nova* and stuff like that." For the present, Bloom's second VCR is programmed to record reruns—shows like *Taxi* and *The Rockford Files*. "Being able to record these old shows is a blessing for someone who has not had time to watch much television for years and years."

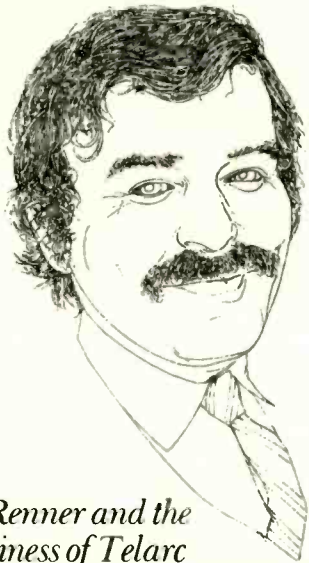
Since the Howard Bloom Organization, Ltd., not only conducts public relations for such artists as Billy Idol, Kenny Rogers, and Hall and Oates, but also handles press for Sony's video software operations, Bloom does not have to buy many prerecorded music videos. They are in a sense his stock in trade.

"As for movies," he says, "my wife and I used to subscribe to Home Box Office and tape movies that interested us, but there were so few movies of value on HBO that we had them unplug us, which is not an easy process—they don't let you go easily.

"Then right after New Year's we discovered a video store around the corner from home and caught up with the rest of America: we rented our first movie. It was Monty Python's *The Life of Brian*, and we had a wonderful time with it."

On a recent evening after wading through sixty hours of music videos, Bloom wanted relief and put on what he thought was an installment of *Taxi*. By mistake he got yet another music show. "I watched this one—really watched it—from beginning to end, and I was astonished at how wonderful they can be. Y'know, I thought. I should watch these more often!" *Christie Barter*

by *Ralph Hodges*



*Jack Renner and the
Timeliness of Telarc*

ONE midnight in the remote past I received a phone call to the effect that an obscure audiophile record producer by the name of Jack Renner was, at that very moment, setting microphones up in front of a subensemble of the Cleveland Orchestra, and that an observer's place in the control room had been reserved for me. All I had to do was get myself and a change of underwear from New York to Ohio in less than no time at all. I very nearly made it, but some very mundane considerations trapped me in the end, so Jack Renner and his company, Telarc, entered history without my in-person benediction. Hasn't hurt them a bit.

What was so tremendously exciting about Telarc's Cleveland enterprise was that it represented an escape from the hammerlock that the major record companies had previously had on the major symphony orchestras, then generally considered to be Boston, Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, and, of course, Cleveland. At Sheffield Lab, Doug Sax had just released landmark direct-to-disc recordings of Prokofiev and Wagner by the Los Angeles Philharmonic with Erich Leinsdorf conducting. But the L.A. group did not yet enjoy the highest esteem, and many also felt, as

proved true, that Sax was not going to make such ambitious projects his daily fare. Renner, however, meant routinely to record great symphonic ensembles in a way hi-fi enthusiasts could respond to. To date he has fulfilled that promise many times over—and yet it could also be said that he hasn't really started.

Some twenty years ago, Renner was a fairly typical "vanity" recordist, putting his musical background to work miking talented college ensembles and other aspiring amateurs and collecting his fees directly from the performers. "My goal was always to get where I am now, but there was no clear-cut direction at the time. I just moved along any paths that seemed possible to negotiate." Bob Woods, Telarc's executive vice president, also musically trained, arrived to become the catalyst that perfected Telarc's chemistry, and a series of releases with organist Michael Murray brought the young company a bit of public attention. But until the late Seventies there was really nothing to be seen but another tiny recording operation filling in the gaps left by the major labels and somehow managing to get by.

Telarc's first session with the Cleveland Orchestra was a direct-to-disc production, and Renner reports that it was principally the appeal of this "new" technology that sold music director Lorin Maazel on the project. The critical reactions were extreme; those who loved it loved it a lot, and those who didn't were unsparing in their abuse. Most impartial onlookers reckoned that Telarc was down for the count after such mixed reviews, but within a year Renner returned, this time with conductor Frederick Fennel, cutting engineer Stan Rickner, and a Soundstream digital tape recorder, and proceeded to bass-drum his way into glory with only three microphones and the Holst band suites.

Renner is a minimalist recordist, never using six microphones where three will do and eschewing devices such as transformers in the signal path. Although he thinks the world might very well have another fling at quadraphony someday, he does not anticipate leading any four-channel parades. Even for his forth-

coming release of the Berlioz Requiem (a quadrasonic natural) performed by the Atlanta Symphony, he kept to his practice of mixing directly to two tracks. Renner's dismissal of multimikers is emphatic: "As long as they continue to believe they can't record an orchestra with fewer than thirty microphones, we'll continue to beat their pants off. . . . To say that they're forced into it, or that they can find no better way, is a miserable excuse."

Telarc's immediate and unflinching adoption of digital audio—specifically Soundstream digital equipment—raised the hackles of certain segments of the audiophile market, but their negative attitude has not raised Renner's anxiety level. "We now have an extensive library that, literally, speaks for itself. On the other hand, how do you account for the fact that other people using the Soundstream, now accepted as the best-sounding digital recorder, manage to make awful sounds? It has to be the way they're going about what they're doing. The technology being handed to us by digital is marvelous, but technology is no substitute for technique."

Regretfully, Renner admits that it will never again be as easy for anyone to accomplish what he has been able to do—that is, bring a tiny, undercapitalized label into successful competition with the giants who have ruled the record business since Edison. Doors are shutting too fast. But the man still won't stop trying to help. "My best advice is that a strong background in music and performance practice is the first essential, and vast recording experience is the second. Everyone who has ever been involved with creative ventures at Telarc has had a musical background."

Thanks to Jack Renner's exceptional talents, Telarc recordings, both on LP and CD, are available in most record stores. I think you should buy at least one, whether to love or to hate, and to have a listen to what many people, including me, believe to be the future direction of classical-music recording in the United States. The experience won't kill you, and it may get you excited beyond all expectations. That's good. That's exactly what Renner has in mind. □

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