

HIGH FIDELITY

ICD © 08398

Buying New Components?

5 Brand-New Stereo Components & Accessories

Six Lab/Listening Tests:

Crown's Straight Line One preamp, Kenwood's KA-801 integrated amp, Mordaunt-Short's Pageant speaker, Series 20's F-26 tuner, ME's Series III S tonearm, and Audio Technology's 510B

bar-graph display

Buying System?

Experience Concert-Hall Sound-Ons

Buying Recorded Music on Tape?

Tipoffs & How to Avoid Them

New Video Tape & Video Disc Equipment



R. H. S. A. N.
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13820



Ambience Generators - see page 55

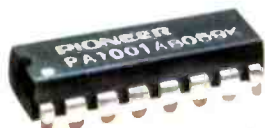
THE RIGHT WAY.



when combined with lower audible frequencies.

Most of our competitors use a standard high band filter to cancel out this signal. Unfortunately, it also cancels out some of the music.

Pioneer created a special integrated circuit that eliminates this pilot signal without affecting the music.



A pilot signal canceling circuit that lets you hear only music and nothing more.

Which means that you're assured of hearing everything the musicians had intended you to hear. Nothing more. And nothing less.

Obviously, the SX-780 is the only receiver that gives you this feature in this price range. The others give you the noise.



An accurate picture of what you're listening to.

WATTAGE METERS THAT LET YOU SEE WHAT YOU'RE HEARING.

When a receiver has wattage meters, it lets

you see exactly how much power is going through your speakers. So that it not only helps prevent unnecessary damage due to overloading, it helps you make cleaner FM recordings.

Of course, the SX-780 has other virtues conspicuously absent from our competitors' models. Like a built-in wood grain cabinet. Which is something others give you the option of paying extra for.

But what really separates Pioneer's SX-780 from others is more than just a matter of wood cabinets, wattage meters, metal bottoms, DC power, or even price.

It's our commitment to giving you a quality hi-fi receiver, no matter how much, or how little, you plan to spend.

So if you're planning to spend less than \$400, you couldn't ask for more than the SX-780.

PIONEER
We bring it back alive.

POWER: 45 watts per channel min. at 8 ohms from 20:20,000 hertz with no more than 0.5% total harmonic distortion
FM SENSITIVITY: Stereo: 37.0 dBf

S/N RATIO: Stereo: 72 dBf
CAPTURE RATIO: 1.0 dBf
POWER METERS: 2
SPEAKERS: A, B, AB
TONE CONTROLS: Dual
TAPES MONITORS: 2

PIONEER DID IT

INTRODUCING THE SX-780.

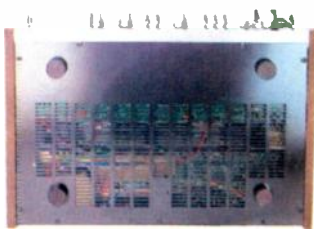
It seems that our competitors think they've mastered the art of building a moderately priced receiver.

Unfortunately, most of them appear to be the work of cost reduction engineers, rather than high fidelity engineers. People whose jobs depend on the cost of what goes into a receiver, not the sound that comes out of it.

At Pioneer, on the other hand, we build a receiver that sells for under \$400 with the same care given to a receiver that sells for over \$1000.

A perfect example is the SX-780.

It offers the kind of features, value and sound you won't find in any other comparably priced receiver.



Metal shields our SX-780 from spurious noise.

metal. It's designed to shield the tuning section from spurious noise and keep CB interference from getting in the way of your music.

Equally important is the fact that our bottom has a special ventilating system that allows air to circulate freely around the heat sinks. This not only reduces FM drift due to overheated tuning elements, but increases the life expectancy of the circuitry.

A DC AMPLIFIER WITH THE POWER TO ELIMINATE DISTORTION.

The SX-780 features the same DC power configuration found in today's most expensive receivers.



DC power supply found on the most expensive receivers.

A STRONG CASE FOR THE METAL BOTTOM.

If you turn over our SX-780, for instance, you'll notice the bottom is made of heavy gauge

It provides cleaner sound and richer, more natural bass because it eliminates feedback and something called TIM (transient intermodulation). Transient intermodulation is a form of distortion that can keep you from hearing the subtle overtones in your music.

Which interestingly enough is why receivers with a conventional power amplifier might possibly be able to match the specs of the SX-780, but never the sound.

A PILOT SIGNAL CANCELING SYSTEM THAT'S UNHEARD OF IN THIS PRICE RANGE.

All stereo FM stations in America broadcast their music over a pilot signal of 19,000 hertz.

If not eliminated, this signal tends to create an extremely high pitched sound

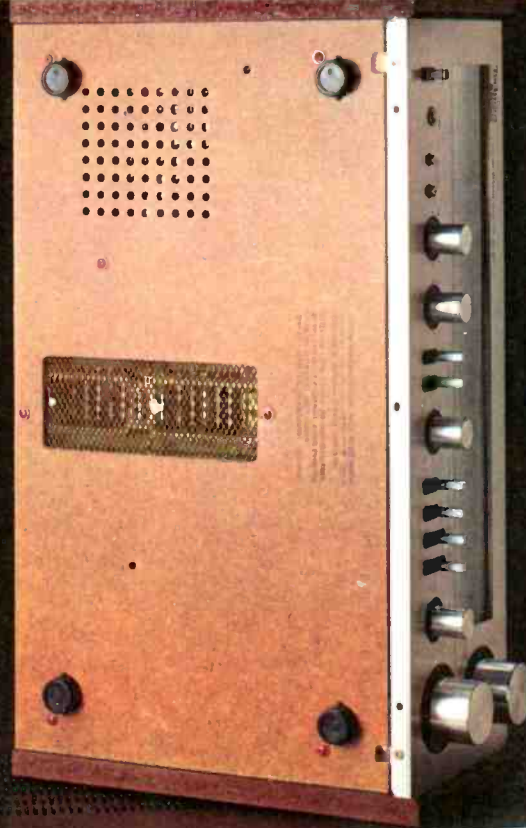


**THERE ARE A LOT
OF WAYS TO BUILD
A RECEIVER THAT SELLS
FOR UNDER \$400.**

YOU CAN
LEAVE OUT
DUAL WATTAGE
METERS LIKE
MARANTZ DID.



YOU CAN INSTALL
AN INEXPENSIVE
PRESS BOARD BOTTOM
LIKE TECHNICS DID.
INSTEAD OF
A METAL ONE.



YOU CAN USE
A CONVENTIONAL POWER
AMPLIFIER LIKE
KENWOOD DID.
INSTEAD OF
AN ADVANCED
DC AMPLIFIER.



YOU
CAN USE
STANDARD
HIGH BAND
FILTERS LIKE
YAMAHA DID.
INSTEAD OF SPECIAL
INTEGRATED CIRCUITS TO CANCEL
THE UNWANTED FM PILOT SIGNAL.





DT 440

MADE FOR EACH OTHER.

Earphones are made for ears. Yours. That's why the Beyer DT 440 has sound so natural and is so light and comfortable you don't even know it's there, even after many hours.

At 9.6 ounces, it is one of the lightest headphones available. And its weight is evenly distributed among the sponge-padded ear-cups and air-filled headband.

There's no great weight suspended from your head, and your ears never get squeezed.

Some people complain about the isolation of headphones that close them off from the world. So we built the DT 440 with a high velocity open design, to allow a natural mixture of recorded music and environmental sound.

How does it sound? Most

people say "spectacular." A great combination of impact and intimacy. The overall sound is wonderfully smooth and transparent. With clean, rich bass response. Powerful, lifelike midrange. Crystal-clear, undistorted highs. And perfect stereo imaging.

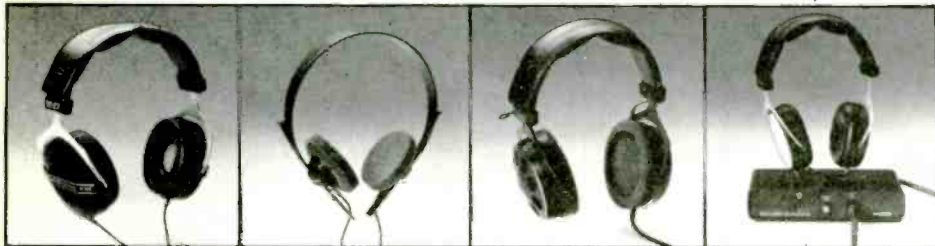
For sound – and for comfort – nothing beats a Beyer. We'd like to make one for you.

DT 220

DT 302

DT 441

ET 1000 / N 1000



Beyer 
Dynamic

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Put more sound in your system with the finest in audio accessories from Audiotex Laboratories



The Director

stereo tape and input control unit. Adds two auxiliary inputs, two tape monitor circuits, plus equalizer input or third tape monitor to your system. Lets you record directly from one tape recorder to another while listening to a third input source through your system.

The Controller

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including the RC-2000, revolutionary new record cleaner and destaticizer — a master stroke in record care!

Gold cables and connectors

plated with 23k gold for lowest possible resistance, cleanest possible connection.

Audiotex Laboratories



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Circle 8 on Page 117

WE COULDN'T SAY SCOTCH® NOW HAS THE WORLD'S TRUEST SOUND IF IT WEREN'T THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH.

Here's the proof... new Scotch® Metafine®. Made with pure metal particles, not just metal oxide, it delivers higher highs, lower lows—*double* the output of chromium dioxide tapes.

The same dedication to technological perfection that made Metafine possible is a part of every Scotch recording tape we make.



SCOTCH® RECORDING TAPE. THE TRUTH COMES OUT.

4 HIGH FIDELITY

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SOLUTION TO HIFI-CROSTIC NO. 47

Felix Mendelssohn: "Letters"

Queen Victoria came in wearing a housedress. Catching sight of the music pages strewn over the floor by the wind, she began to pick them up. Prince Albert helped, and I was not idle. While he explained the organ stops to me, the Queen remarked she would put everything straight again.

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HIGH FIDELITY and **HIGH FIDELITY/MUSICAL AMERICA** are published monthly by ABC Leisure Magazines, Inc., a subsidiary of American Broadcasting Companies, Inc. Warren B. Syer, President; Herbert Keppler, Senior Vice President, Photographic Publishing Division; Leonard Levine, Vice President, Advertising; Warren Tuohy, Vice President, Finance; David Lee, Circulation Director; Cathleen Aiolsi, Personnel Director; Wayne Armentrout, Director of Manufacturing. Member Audit Bureau of Circulation. Indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature. Current and back copies of High Fidelity and High Fidelity/Musical America are available on microfilm from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106. Microfiche copies of these magazines (1973 forward) are available through Bell & Howell Micro Photo Division, Old Mansfield Road, Wooster, O. 44691.

Editorial correspondence should be addressed to The Editor, High Fidelity, Great Barrington, Mass. 01230. Editorial contributions will be welcomed, and payment for articles accepted will be arranged prior to publication. Unsolicited manuscripts should be accompanied by return postage.

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Technics SL-1200 MK2.

Tough enough to take the disco beat.
And accurate enough to keep it.



Whether you spin records professionally or for pleasure, you'll be pleased with Technics SL-1200 MK2. After all, like our other professional turntables, the ones many radio stations use and discos abuse, the SL-1200 MK2 has the phenomenal accuracy of Technics quartz-locked direct drive: Speed accuracy is an astonishing $\pm 0.002\%$. Wow and flutter is a paltry 0.025% WRMS. Rumble is an infinitesimal -78dB . And the price is an unbelievable \$350.*

Just as unbelievable is how well the SL-1200 MK2 resists acoustic feedback. Even with sound levels as high as those in a disco. The reasons: A solid aluminum diecast chassis, a heavy, one-piece rubber base, a double-damped platter and critically tuned spring legs.

But no matter where you are, you'll also value these other features: Quartz-locked variable pitch control ($\pm 8\%$) that lets the professional instantly mix the beat of different

records and lets you tune a record to a particular instrument.

There's also a highly sensitive, low-mass, gimbal-suspension tonearm that puts and keeps your stylus where you want it with minimal friction of only 7 mg , both horizontally and vertically. And an illuminator that puts the record in a good light even when you aren't.

All this and Technics specifications, too. They invite comparison. Especially with the most expensive turntables.

MOTOR: Quartz-locked DC direct drive. SPEED: $33\frac{1}{3}$ and 45 RPM . STARTING TORQUE: $1.5\text{ kg}\cdot\text{cm}$. STARTUP TIME: 0.7 sec . (90° rotation at $33\frac{1}{3}\text{ RPM}$). WOW AND FLUTTER: 0.025% WRMS. RUMBLE: -78dB (DIN B). PITCH ADJUSTMENT RANGE $\pm 8\%$.

The SL-1200 MK2 from Technics. It has the same phenomenal accuracy of the Technics turntables many FM stations use and discos abuse.

*Technics recommended price, but actual retail price will be set by dealers.

Technics
Professional Series

HIGH SPEED RECEIVERS: FASTER RESPONSE MEANS MORE ACCURATE SOUND.



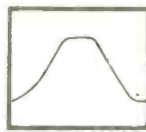
The new Kenwood receivers actually outperform all other receivers, as well as our competitors' separate amplifiers and tuners in transient response.

The reason is Kenwood's exclusive technical breakthrough: Hi-Speed. It allows our receivers to react more quickly to musical changes. So what comes out of your receiver matches precisely what went in.

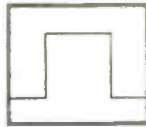
You'll hear the difference as dramatically accurate, open sound with superior imaging and detail. Like hearing an individual singer in a vocal group.

Hi-Speed is available in four models, all DC-amplified for clean bass response. Each one also has switchable wide and narrow IF bands for low-distortion FM reception, plus dual power meters.

And each Hi-Speed receiver has unique individual features that make a real difference in the tonal quality of music. Like dual power supplies that eliminate crosstalk distortion. Or a pulse count detector that digitally reduces FM distortion by half



Distorted waveform response produced by conventional receiver.



Square waveform response of Hi-Speed receiver.

while significantly reducing background noise. Or a built-in equalizer with ten turnover frequencies for full acoustic control.

Whichever model you choose, you'll be getting the most advanced receiver technology and performance available today. Advances far beyond the competition.

Your Kenwood dealer will be happy to demonstrate Hi-Speed, now.

HI-SPEED™

Hear the future of high fidelity

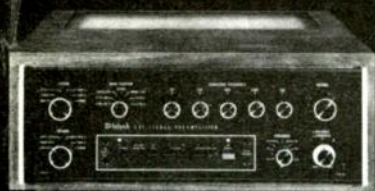
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Circle 35 on Page 117

TOO HOT TO HANDLE

Q. What is the prevailing opinion in the industry about cheap vs. expensive speaker wire? One dealer told me he could prove the superior sound of the expensive cables, compared with lamp wire, in his demonstration room. Is there anything special I should look for or ask about at the time of the demonstration?—Joe F. Wilson, Pasadena, Calif.

A. As long as he is a reputable dealer, we would assume careful matching of levels and avoidance of any other differences that could invalidate the comparison. Even so, we would look askance at any comparison that is not fully double-blind (in which neither the tester nor the subject knows the identity of the options), and double-blind tests are difficult to set up. At this point, two contrary opinions can be found within the industry: 1) that at least some of the special (and very expensive) speaker cables deliver significant ("fantastic," "superb," etc.) improvements, and 2) that they provide no improvement—perhaps even can be deleterious to the sound or stability of the amplifier driving them—and are promoted on spurious technical grounds. So heated is the debate that objectivity is hard to come by—hence the importance of double-blind testing. Our findings, pro and con, have largely been negative to date; we have found no major differences.

Q. I live about 125 miles southeast of Phoenix, which offers a good selection of FM stations, but I am being foiled in my attempts to reach them with my Pioneer TX-8500II tuner and Radio Shack antenna due to the interference of a local station. The problem transmitter, about one-half mile east of my home, belongs to KWFm (92.9 MHz). I pick up that station in at least twenty places on the dial. I have heard of "traps" one can build to block out such overpowering signals. Is it possible to build a variable trap to block out the local signal and still receive the weaker, more distant Phoenix station?—Harry Rogers, Tucson, Ariz.

A. Sounds to us as though the front end of your tuner is being overloaded. As a first step, use shielded twin-lead or coaxial cable between the antenna and the receiver, because the local

station may be picked up by an unshielded line if there is a slight imbalance. Next, orient your antenna for minimum pickup of the local station. Most antennas have several nulls in their pattern, and you may be able to null out the Tucson station and still be pretty much on the beam for Phoenix. Be aware that the null will be very sharp.

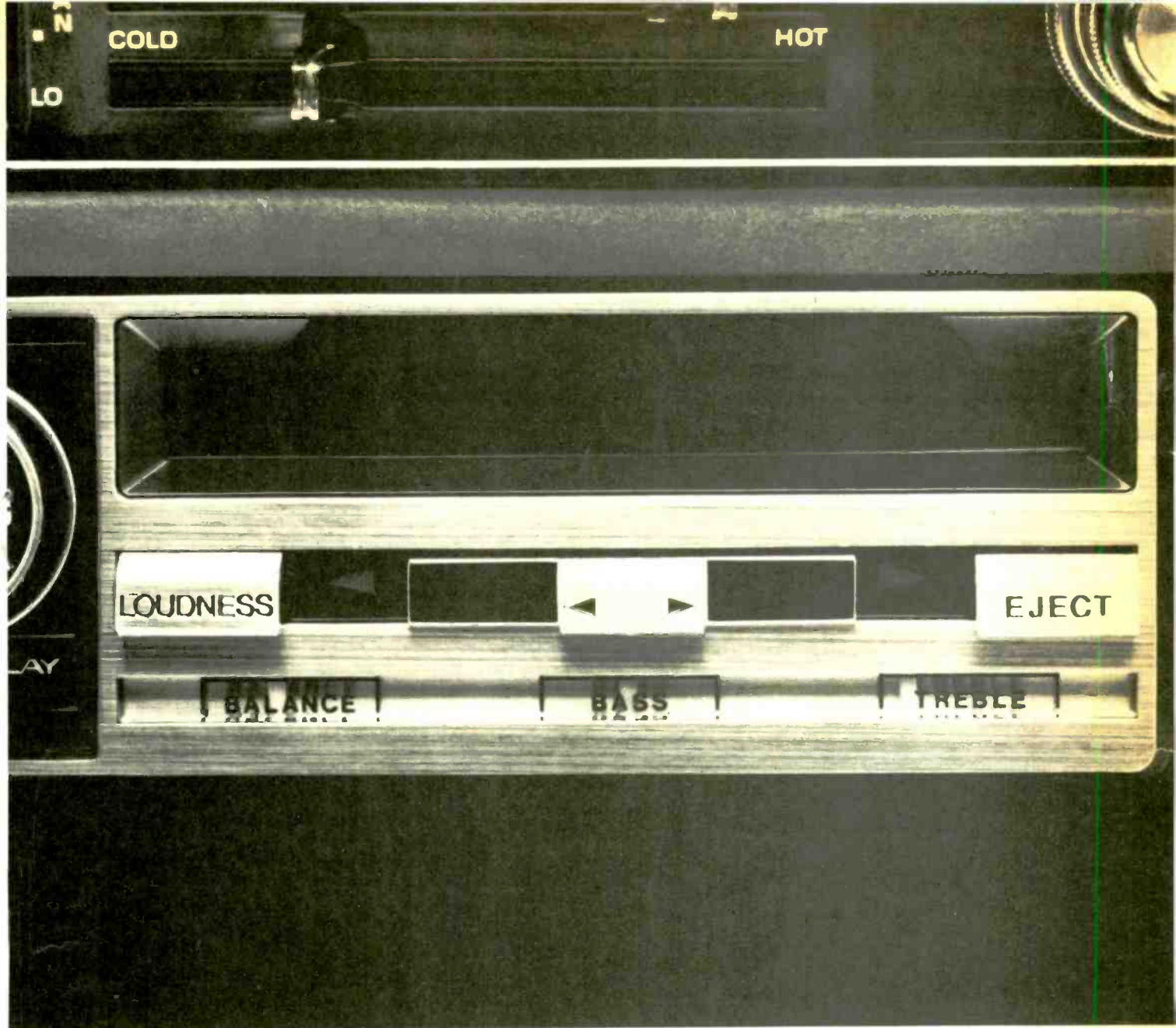
If that doesn't cure your problem, a trap might. We suggest you contact KWFm, because its engineers may be able to help. First, however, be sure your tuner is properly aligned for best selectivity. Sometimes a simple attenuating pad can be helpful because it will reduce the level of the local signal so that it does not overload the tuner. Of course, it reduces the level of the desired signal as well.

Q. I have a pair of AR-11s. Recently, I read that their impedance goes down to as low as 1.75 ohms at some frequencies. I have also read that many receivers and amplifiers employ limiting circuits that become activated once the impedance dips below 4 ohms. I have heard that, unless limiting circuits are used, such receivers and amplifiers may give up when pushed to deliver power at 2 ohms. Just what does this mean in terms of the performance of the amplifier and speakers?—H. Sayeed, Chicago, Ill.

A. In general outline, what you say is all true. It is not the impedance itself that triggers the protective circuitry, however, when an amplifier tries to drive an undesirable load. So-called V-I limiters monitor the current delivered to the speaker plus the voltage across the output transistors. When the combination is such as to endanger the output transistors, the circuitry reduces the drive to the output devices (and hence the current through them) to protect them. Since this is more likely to happen with low-impedance loads, there is a natural concern about how a speaker like the AR-11 will mate with a given amplifier. But activation of the circuitry depends both on its design and on how much power is being delivered to the speaker in relation to the capabilities of the amp. We have satisfactorily mated the AR-11 to a number of powerful amplifiers; protection triggering is more likely in amps having lower power ratings and/or less efficient heat sinking.

Continued on page 10

Circle 33 on Page 117 ▶



Fill it up with premium.

What premium gasoline can do for your car, premium tape can do for your car stereo.

And there's no finer premium tape than Maxell.

Every type of Maxell tape is designed to give you the widest frequency response, the highest possible signal-to-noise ratio and virtually no distortion. All of

which results in *high octane* sound.

And to make sure our cassettes don't run out of gas somewhere down the road, we've constructed them to tolerances as much as 60% higher than industry standards. We use the finest high-impact styrene, precision pins, polyester and screws.

Because of this, we believe Maxell makes the world's finest cassettes.

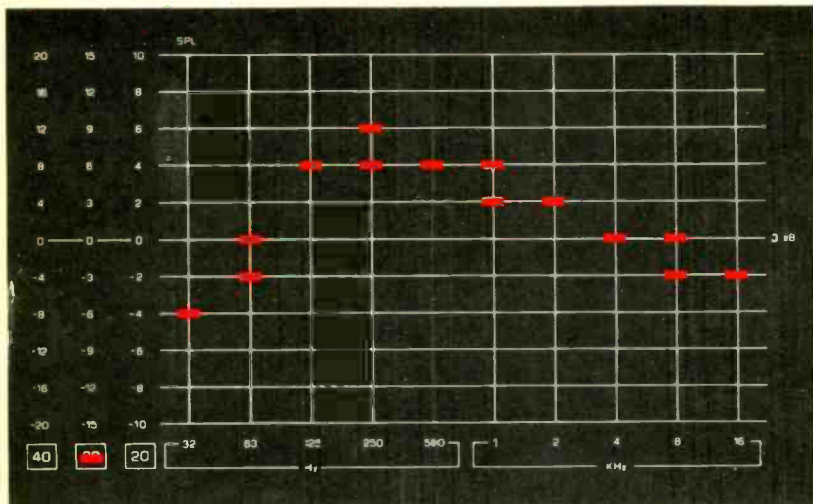
And every year, hundreds of thousands of people who own car stereos are driven to the same conclusion.



maxell

Maxell Corporation of America, 60 Oxford Drive, Moonachie, N.J. 07074.

Now hear this.



The extraordinary Scott Audio Analyzer.

Now, you can see exactly what you hear.

With Scott's new 830Z Audio Analyzer, you can evaluate and then maximize the performance of your receiver, preamp, amplifier, cassette deck, cartridge and speakers. You can even evaluate speaker placement and tape compatibility.

Get the best out of your sound system. See your nearest Scott dealer or write H. H. Scott, Inc., 20 Commerce Way, Woburn, MA 01801.



SCOTT
Makers of high quality high fidelity equipment since 1947.

Circle 44 on Page 117

HEADPHONES THAT PUT THE MOST EXPENSIVE SPEAKER SYSTEMS TO SHAME.

When you listen to Sony headphones, you'll share an intimacy with the music you've probably never experienced before; you'll hear subtleties you've missed with most speakers.

Admittedly, this may sound rather extraordinary. But then, so do our headphones.

SONY

We've never put our name on anything that wasn't the best.



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10 HIGH FIDELITY

but the actual probability also will depend on listening level, the spectral distribution of energy in the music, and so on.

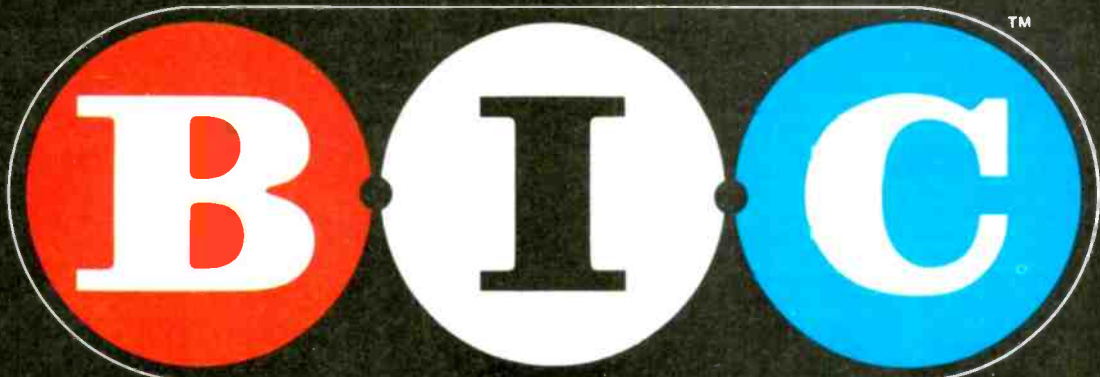
Q. I have read many reviews of equipment in stereo magazines, and I have yet to see a "bad" one. Is this because you guys fear losing ad money? As an audio salesman, I have noticed that certain pieces of audio gear that have super specs are not durable; in some cases, highly touted amplifiers constantly overheat. The public should be made aware of these things, rather than being given misleading information. —D. Morgan, Wilimantic, Conn.

A. We try to pick products that will be both interesting to read about and candidates for reader purchase. Even so, we sometimes find serious faults and, occasionally, outright dogs once they get to the test bench or the listening room. When that happens, we either put the screws to the manufacturer to correct serious problems before our readers can buy any units with the offending trait, or, if that's impossible or impractical, simply report the shortcomings. We wish we could spot all of the potential problems; but evaluation of those associated with long-term use are beyond the testing reach of our magazine—or anyone else's, as far as we know.

Q. I would like to tape concert broadcasts from an FM station that transmits a Dolby-encoded signal. Though I have yet to get a suitable Dolby unit, I do have a 25-microsecond Dolby de-emphasis switch on my receiver. I plan to make the tapes by recording the station's Dolby calibration tone ahead of the music and using this tone to match the output of my Teac A-2300SX to the Dolby unit, when I get it, for playback. Will this work, or is there a better alternative?—Daniel Morrison, New York, N.Y.

A. Yes, it will; though there are alternatives, we can't think of one that's better. As a matter of fact, we favor the idea of keeping such tones at the head of all encoded tapes as a positive reference, though most listeners (as opposed to audiophiles) likely would be annoyed by hearing the tones in advance of the music and would rebel if they were to be included on commercially recorded tapes. **HF**

The one and only computer-locked, digital drive changer-turnstile. B-I-C introduces the 80 Z. With a brain equal to room-size computers of just 10 years ago. A microprocessor that instructs a system intelligently enough to actually read and adjust platter speed (not simply motor speed). A unique digital drive system that's capable of unequalled nominal speed accuracy (to within .01 rpm). With a digital read-out that's over 300% more accurate than any strobe. The state-of-the-art 80 Z is one of six new belt drive, straight tone arm B-I-C models. For complete details write B-I-C|AVNET, Dept. Z, Westbury, N.Y. 11590. **The new 80 Z Changer-Turntable.**



Say "Bee-Eye-Cee". Think "Best-In-Components."

Series Z Changer-Turntables | Cassette Decks | SoundSpan™ Speaker Systems | The Beam Box.®

Circle 10 on Page 117

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RPAHW1

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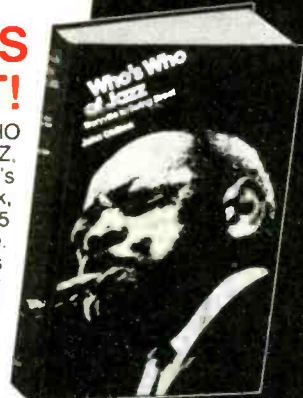
YES! I would like to audition *Louis Armstrong*, my introduction to GIANTS OF JAZZ. Please send this three-record album to me along with John Chilton's *Who's Who of Jazz*, and enter my subscription to GIANTS OF JAZZ. If I decide to keep *Louis Armstrong*, I will pay \$19.95 (\$24.95 in Canada) plus shipping and handling, and the book will be mine to keep at no additional cost. I will then receive future albums (each one containing three 12-inch records) from GIANTS OF JAZZ, shipped an album at a time approximately every other month. Each album will cost \$19.95 (\$24.95 in Canada) plus shipping and handling and will come on the same 10-day free-audition basis. There is no minimum number of albums that I must buy and I may cancel my subscription at any time simply by notifying you. If I do not choose to keep *Louis Armstrong* and the accompanying book, I will return the complete package within 10 days, my subscription for future albums will be canceled and I will be under no further obligation.

Check here if you want two tape cassettes and book instead of records (\$2 extra). RVAH22

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Check here if you want two tape cassettes and book instead of records (\$2 extra). RVAH22 (\$2 extra).

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GIANTS OF JAZZ



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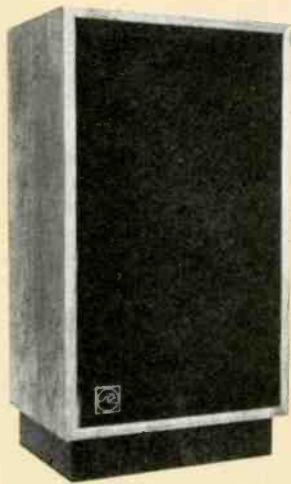
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Manhattan Pacific three-way speaker

In its Nova RF-7 speaker system, Manhattan Pacific uses a 12-inch woofer with a 40-ounce ferrite magnet, a 4-inch midrange driver, and a 1-inch textile-dome tweeter. Power-handling capacity is rated at 150 watts (21 3/4 dBW) continuous. Add \$20 to the suggested retail price of \$279 if you want the optional 6-inch walnut base.

Circle 141 on Page 117



Digital receiver from Vector

Vector Research, a new name in the receiver market, is offering the VRX-9000, rated at 80 watts (19 dBW) per channel for 0.08% THD. The receiver features digitally synthesized tuning, preset memory for six FM and six AM stations, variable loudness control, and an optional remote tuner control. It also has power output meters, a Dolby-FM de-emphasis switch, a midrange control, and tape-dubbing capability. The price is \$750.

Circle 136 on Page 117



Thorens' black-belt cassette drive

The PC-650 three-head cassette deck—the first from Thorens on the U.S. market—incorporates two motors plus sophisticated belt-drive engineering (adapted from the company's turntable designs) and Thorens' electronic servo tape tensioner. The double Dolby noise-reduction circuitry has a built-in test oscillator and front-panel calibration controls. In addition, there are full-logic electronic transport controls, a MUTE switch for noiseless fade-in and fade-out, and a separate headphone/monitor amplifier, as well as an optional timer and remote control. The PC-650, which can be converted for metal tape at the factory, costs \$1,075.

Circle 137 on Page 117



Audio Control updates equalizer

A new version of the Model 520 five-band equalizer with infrasonic filter is available from Audio Control. The Model 520B includes a tape-monitor circuit with front-panel switching and a redesigned infrasonic filter rated at 18 dB per octave. In addition, the company says that the frequency response has been extended to 3–100,000 Hz to match the widening specs of many amplifiers and receivers. Price for the Model 520B is \$119.

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(more)

Circle 58 on Page 117 ▶

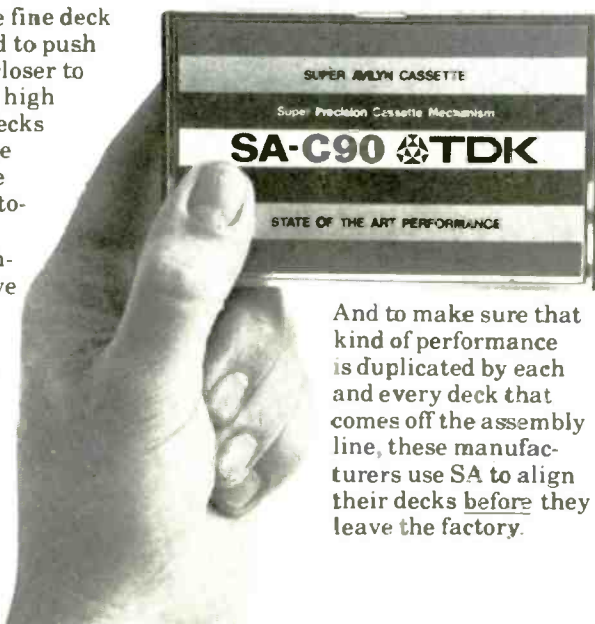
The standard bearers.



The high bias standard.

In the past few years, these fine deck manufacturers have helped to push the cassette medium ever closer to the ultimate boundaries of high fidelity. Today, their best decks can produce results that are virtually indistinguishable from those of the best reel-to-reel machines.

Through all of their technical breakthroughs, they've had one thing in common. They all use TDK SA as their reference tape for the high bias position. These manufacturers wanted a tape that could extract every last drop of performance from their decks and they chose SA.



And to make sure that kind of performance is duplicated by each and every deck that comes off the assembly line, these manufacturers use SA to align their decks before they leave the factory.

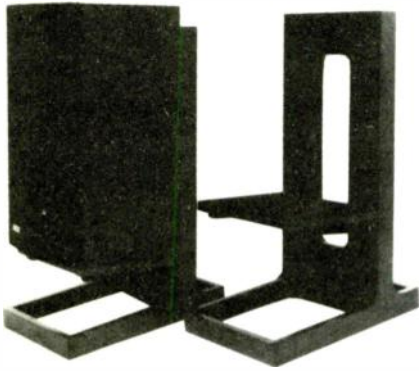
Which makes SA the logical choice for home use; the best way to be sure you get all the sound you've paid for.

But sound isn't the only reason SA is the high bias standard. Its super-precision mechanism is the most advanced and reliable TDK has ever made—and we've been backing our cassettes with a full lifetime warranty* longer than anyone else in hi fi—more than 10 years.

So if you would like to raise your own recording standards, simply switch to the tape that's become a recording legend—TDK SA. TDK Electronics Corp., Garden City, NY 11530.

TDK
The machine for your machine.

*In the unlikely event that any TDK cassette ever fails to perform due to a defect in materials or workmanship, simply return it to your local dealer or to TDK for a free replacement.



Make-it-yourself speaker stand

Component Furnishings offers complete construction plans for a vertically adjustable loudspeaker stand designed around a 9-degree rearward tilt to aid in sound dispersion. Basic dimensions are 12½ by 27½ by 16½ inches, though they can be changed to match those of the speaker. According to Rod Sweetland, designer of the stand, the result is a structure that is not top-heavy and will remain stable at any height setting. Price for the plans (no materials or tools are supplied) is \$4.00.

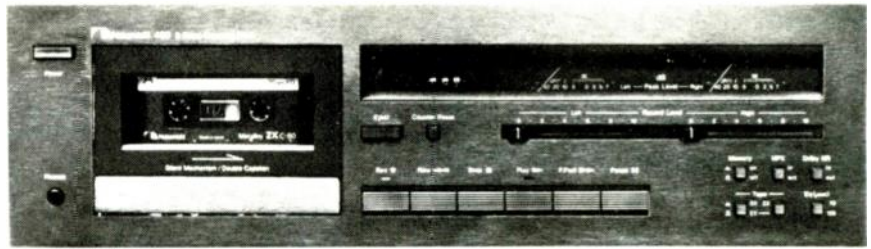
Circle 139 on Page 117



Direct drive from Zenith

The Zenith Radio Corp. now has its own semiautomatic direct-drive turntable, Model MC-9050, with an S-shaped tonearm and front-mounted speed selector, speed fine tune, and cue control. The cueing action is damped; arm adjustments include antiskating. The MC-9050 costs \$249.95 equipped with a Shure elliptical-diamond pickup.

Circle 140 on Page 117



A medium-priced Nakamichi deck

The Model 480, Nakamichi's first two-head deck with metal-tape capability, uses a transport design based on that of the more expensive 580 series and features a defeatable multiplex filter in its Dolby circuitry, separate bias and equalization switches, slider level controls, and 47-dB peak-responding meters. The deck affords optional remote control and can be set for timer operation. Transport functions are IC-logic controlled with direct access between modes. Frequency response is said to be 20 Hz to 20 kHz at less than 1% total harmonic distortion with metal tape. The Model 480 costs \$495.

Circle 143 on Page 117



Furman parametric in stereo

In the PQ-6, Furman Sound expands on a good idea. Basically, it consists of two single-channel, three-band PQ-3 parametric equalizers (reviewed in *BACKBEAT*, June 1977). Each control group provides up to 20 dB of boost over anything from one-third octave to four octaves; the higher Q of the cut action allows a range of between one-tenth and one octave and is capable of sharp notch-filter action. The 19-inch rack-mountable equalizer is fitted with ¼-inch phone jacks and lists at \$495.

Circle 144 on Page 117



Nikko controls time/space

Nikko Audio is delivering its time-delay synthesizer, the rack-mountable ATD-1. It features front-panel controls for HALL SIZE (SMALL/MEDIUM/LARGE) and HALL CHARACTER (marked 1/2/3, for degrees of relative liveness) and for decay time of the reverberation (from 100 milliseconds to 2 seconds). Also included are rotary controls for input and output levels and for STAGE DISTANCE. A two/four-channel switch permits use with a single stereo amp and speaker pair (with the reverb folded into the front channels) or, as full ambience surround, with a second set. S/N ratio of the main signal is rated at 80 dB and frequency response at within 1/10 dB from 20 Hz to 20 kHz. You say you want the sound of St. Patrick's Cathedral? You've got it—for \$449.95.

Circle 142 on Page 117

(more)

Circle 41 on Page 117 ▶

THE PHASE 8000 IS AS CLOSE TO PERFECT AS YOU CAN GET.

SIGNAL/NOISE: -78dB.
WOW & FLUTTER: 0.013%.
TRACKING ERROR: 0.
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No other turntable can match the Phase 8000, because no other turntable has such advanced motors. You can't buy a quieter turntable.

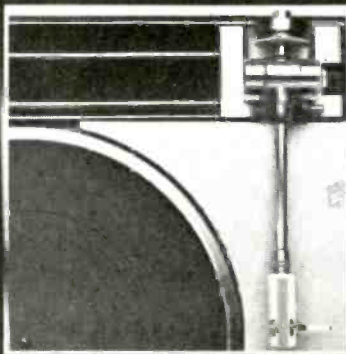
Or one with as low wow & flutter.

Or one that tracks better.

The Phase 8000's tangential tracking tone arm keeps the stylus in perfect 90° tangent with the grooves. It's the same way the master disc was cut, so the motion of your stylus is identical to the cutterhead stylus. There's absolutely no tracking distortion. No crosstalk. No skating force that can actually re-cut your grooves.

NEW LINEAR MOTOR ELIMINATES MECHANICAL LINKAGE

Other manufacturers have tried to move tangential tone arms with worm gears.



Belts. Rollers. All with the same sad result: Mechanical connections pass on the noise and vibration of the motor.

The Phase 8000 solves this problem with an ingenious Linear Motor. The tone arm base is a permanently magnetized armature that glides along guide bars above electro-magnetic coils. The arm moves by direct induction—not mechanical connection. So there's virtually no noise.

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BAF Pro II or III C-90	\$2.99	Maxell UD 35-180 3600 ft	CALL
Maxell UD C-60	\$2.99	(10")	CALL
Maxell UD C-90	CALL	Scotch 212 1800 ft	\$5.19
Maxell UD C-120	CALL	Scotch 207 1800 ft	\$5.19
Maxell UD XL I or II C-60	CALL	TDK X-1800 1800 ft	\$4.32
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Sony Low Noise C-90	\$7.42	Scotch L-500 (2 Hour)	\$13.50
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TDK D C-90	\$2.10	Scotch VK-250 (4 Hour)	\$17.95
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TDK AD D C-60	\$2.52	Fuj T-120 (4 Hour)	\$17.95
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Optonica's RT-6905 cassette deck combines an Automatic Program Music Selector with a multifunction microprocessor-based timer. The deck can be programmed to automatically play up to fifteen selections on a cassette in any order and can repeat the sequence up to five times. The timer section can automatically control the on/off switching of the deck plus any peripheral equipment in up to 42 start/stop functions a week. Bias and sensitivity "tuning" for individual tapes also is automatic. Separate head elements and double Dolby circuitry allow tape monitoring. The RT-6905, with dual-capstan closed-loop drive system, quartz-locked servo capstan motor, and two-speed servo motor for the hub drive, costs \$1,800.

Circle 146 on Page 117



Eventide's new Harmonizer

Well known for its studio-quality audio delay lines, Eventide Clockworks has introduced its improved Harmonizer, Model H-949. It can change the pitch of an input signal over a three-octave range (up one octave or down two) via either a front-panel control or the HK-940 keyboard, which also works with the original H-910 Harmonizer. The H-949 has two outputs, rated for up to 400 milliseconds of delay from each. S/N ratio is rated at 96 dB and bandwidth at 15 kHz. Eventide says the 949 can achieve small-ratio pitch changes without the traditional "glitch" familiar to users of the 910. The new model costs \$2,400; the optional keyboard, which varies the pitch in discrete intervals, is available for \$500.

(more)



The Deep—001



Life Goes to the Movies—500



Born Free—003



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Why JVC's new metal decks knock out your ears and not your wallet.



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Even though we knocked out the hi-fi world last year with the world's first true metal-compatible deck, we're not the only company that sells them now. So we've decided to stay one jump ahead by offering you SIX metal compatible models from \$299 to \$749.* Each packed with a free Metafine C-46 metal particle cassette.

One reason we're doing this is because our metal-compatible, KD-Series decks perform so well with conventional tape, you might never get around to buying a metal tape!

But pop the Metafine cassette in and you'll hear the difference. Suddenly you've gained 6dB output level, 10dB signal-to-noise and at least 3000 Hz of high end. Even more with our computerized KD-A8!

Features like Sen-Alloy™ and Super-ANRS even at \$299.*

Our key to metal tape performance is all in our heads. Super-hard, low-distortion Sen-Alloy heads different from any other manufacturer's. When we toss in our unique Super-ANRS noise reduction system that adds 10dB S/N at 5kHz and our

famous Multi-Peak recording indicators, you get a knock-out sound.

All in decks starting at less than \$300.*

T-shirts and posters at your JVC dealers.

The arrival of a whole line of decks this good for prices this reasonable is worth celebrating. So we've outfitted participating



dealers with free posters and even some limited edition T-shirts, all with our knock-out Technical Knockout graphic.

Just walk in and ask to hear a comparison of conventional oxide versus metal

particle tape in a JVC KD-A3, A5, A6, or A8. (The three-head KD-A77 and two-color fluorescent meter A7 will be in the stores by December.)

Where do you go to hear for yourself just how much better metal sounds than oxide?

Call 800-221-7502 and get knocked out.

That's the toll-free number that tells you where you'll find your nearest participating JVC dealer. (In New York, call 212-476-8300.) Drop in to see and hear the technical knock-outs, including the top-of-the-line KD-A8. It features B.E.S.T., the computerized bias/equalization/sensitivity tuning system that fine-tunes the deck to any tape $\pm 1/2$ dB, special "X-cut" heads that add another octave of bass, (flat all the way down to 25Hz!), solenoid operation, Multi-Peak recording indicators, and a host of other audiophilia. All for just \$799.*

Stop in and take advantage of the free metal tape with each deck, and free posters and T-shirts, while supplies last.

But stunning as JVC's new metal decks are, free offers like these won't last for long.

Now you're ready for JVC.



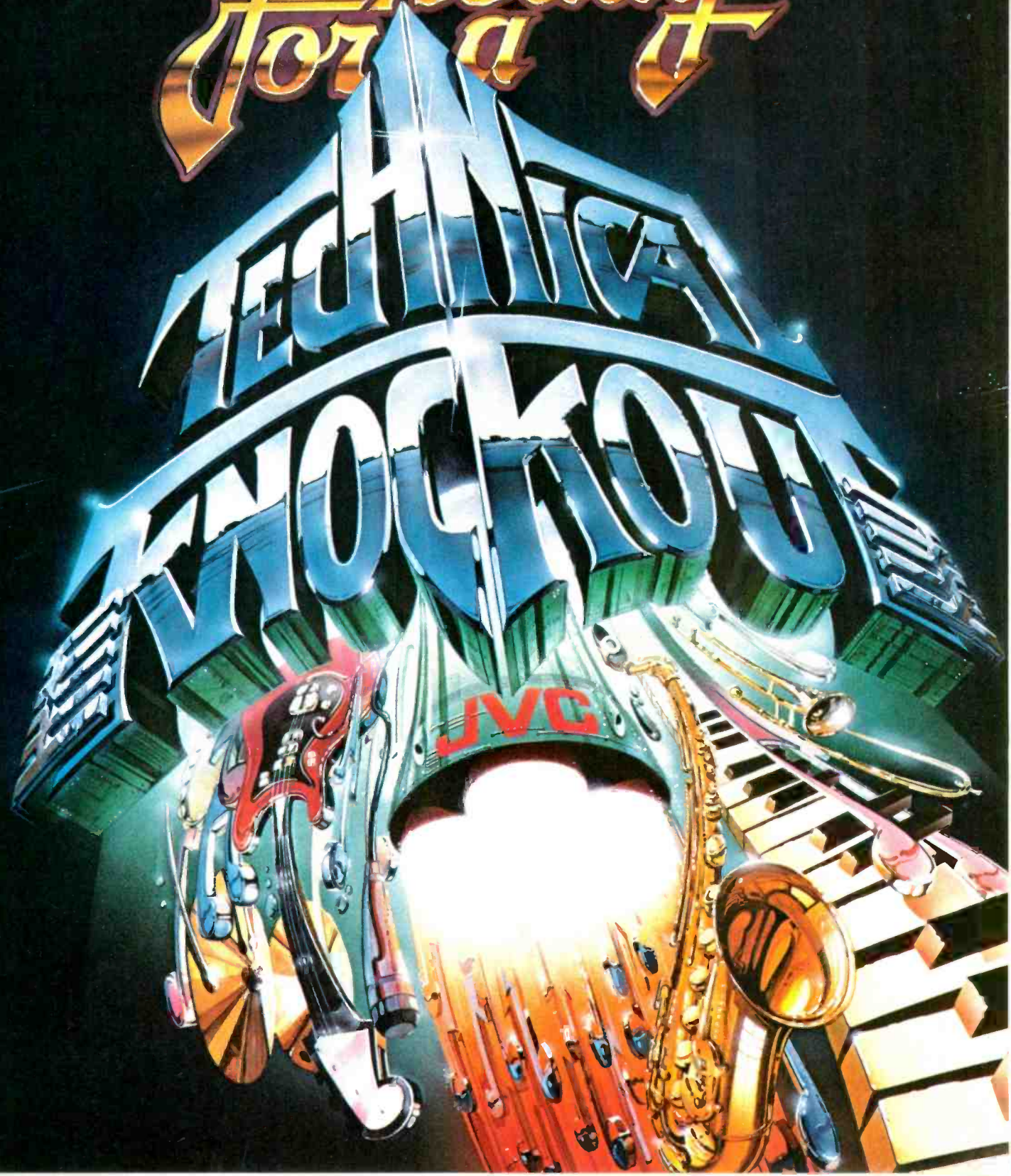
KD-A8 with B.E.S.T., KD-A3, KD-A5

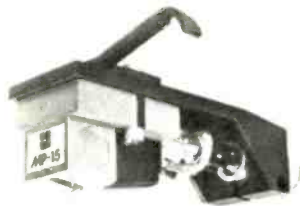
JVC

US JVC CORP.

Shown: KD-A8 with B.E.S.T., KD-A5, KD-A3.
*Suggested Retail Price.

Get
Ready
for a





Moving-permalloy Ozawa pickup

In the MP-15 fixed-coil phono cartridge, Ozawa combines a high-compliance, elliptical-diamond stylus assembly with an extremely rigid fiber-glass-reinforced body. Terminal pins are gold-plated to protect against oxidation. The cartridge body incorporates an anti-magnetic shield to maintain a high signal-to-noise ratio. The price of the MP-15 premounted in an Ozawa headshell is \$175; unmounted, it is \$150.

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HIGH FIDELITY



Sennheiser mike controls feedback

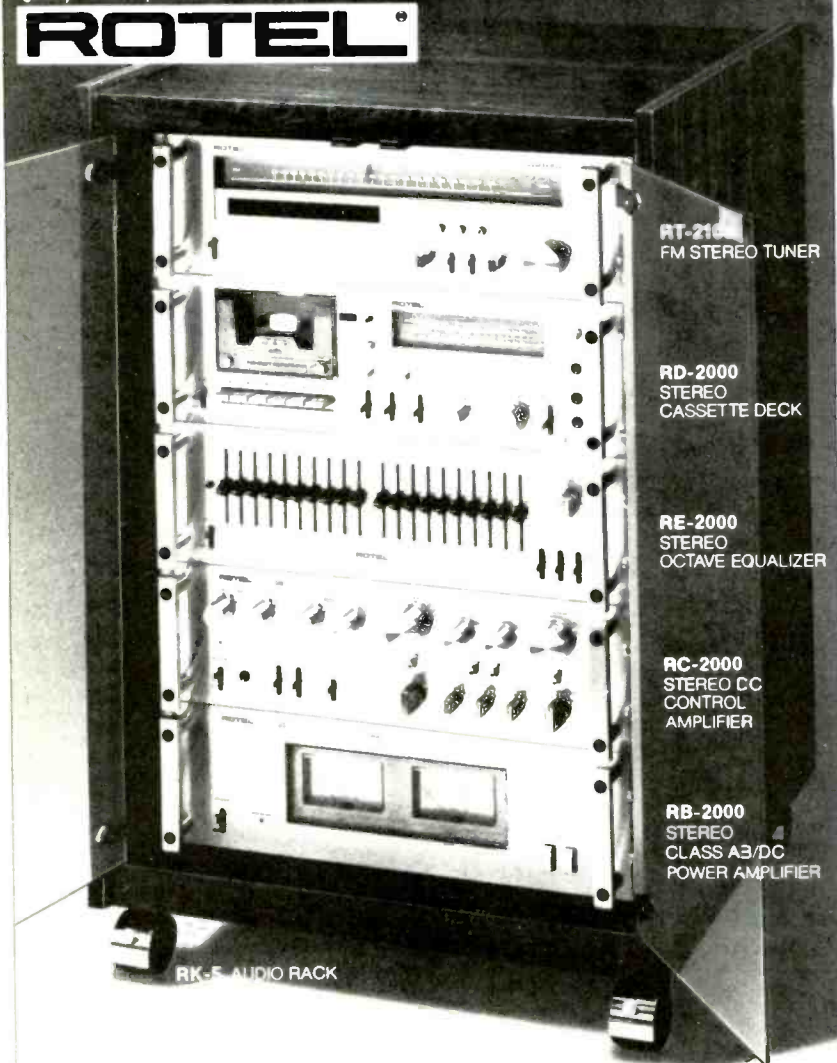
The Model MD-431 cardioid dynamic microphone from Sennheiser is said to provide high feedback-free power levels without restricting frequency response in on-stage professional use and to be particularly suitable for close-miked soloists. A built-in low-cut filter suppresses impact sounds from the stage and similar noise, a pop screen controls explosive sounds. A magnetically activated reed switch that provides click-free on/off switching can be removed. Suggested retail price of the MD-431, which weighs just 9 ounces, is \$339.

Circle 148 on Page 117

ROTEL OF AMERICA, INC. 1055 SAW MILL RIVER ROAD, ARDSLEY, NEW YORK 10502
(in Canada—WHITE ELECTRONICS, Malton, Ontario)

Quality. Uncompromised.

ROTEL



RT-2100
FM STEREO TUNER

RD-2000
STEREO
CASSETTE DECK

RE-2000
STEREO
OCTAVE EQUALIZER

RC-2000
STEREO CC
CONTROL
AMPLIFIER

RB-2000
STEREO
CLASS A3/DC
POWER AMPLIFIER

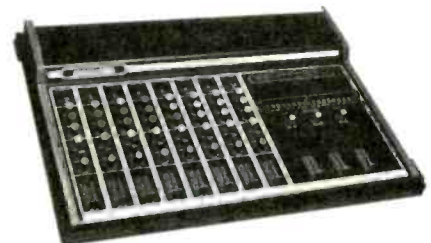
RK-5 AUDIO RACK

from the 2000 Series:

The Primary System—simply for damn good music.

THE HEART AND SOUL OF SOUND

Circle 44 on Page 117



Acoustic's mixer

Acoustic, long known as makers of instrument amplifiers, has introduced the Model 924 stereo mixer. Each of its eight inputs has three-position EQ, reverb/effects send, pan pot, and level fader controls. Each output channel has a nine-band graphic equalizer as well as two eight-segment light-bar displays for monitoring levels. Extensive back-panel patching permits interfacing with external mixers, amplifiers, and special-effects devices, and the 924 has a built-in reverb spring. Its case is made of wood and fiber glass. It costs \$950 and is available with Acoustic's Lifetime Protection Plan.

Circle 150 on Page 117

(more)



The Ultimate Headphones...

The Unique, New PRO-50 by Realistic...only \$79.95

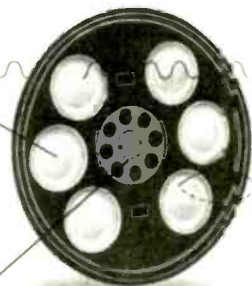
The first headphones designed to reproduce sound the way you would hear it at a live performance. With the stereo image *in front of you*. With *natural*, unexaggerated channel separation and depth perception. But without the bass boominess and resonant peaks so common in other headphones. Along with exciting listening you get comfort, because PRO-50 weighs a scant 10.4 ounces including

cord and plug. The secret of this breakthrough is in the six passive diaphragms encircling the driver. These "slaves" perform two vital functions. At upper-middle and high frequencies they let the ear listen in a "free field" that eliminates self-resonance, and they allow the ear's own *natural* resonances to develop. Combined with acoustical resistances, this forms a controlled and highly damped vent to flatten resonant peaks and extend bass response. PRO-50 has an audio range of 16-20,000 Hz. All this performance without user adjustments — PRO-50 is self-adjusting. Come in and discover the ultimate in headset hi-fi. By the company that also builds and markets the TRS-80,[™] the world's most popular personal computer.

PASSIVE DIAPHRAGMS

The diaphragms allow the ear to develop its own *natural*, desired resonance at mid and high frequencies, allowing PRO-50 to act as an open-air headphone

Active driver-transducer



Six passive diaphragms bring a new level of realism to headphone hi-fi

Below their own resonance, the diaphragms do not allow bass notes to pass, thereby working as a coupled headphone

Prices may vary at individual stores and dealers

Realistic — Sold Only at

Radio Shack[®]

A DIVISION OF TANDY CORPORATION, FORT WORTH, TX 76102
OVER 7000 LOCATIONS IN 40 COUNTRIES

dbx sticks it to records.



VANGUARD
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 VOX
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 MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY
 DIRECT DISK LABS
 CHALFONT
 VARESE SARABAND
 ORION
 DESTO
 DESMAR

So smile. Because when you see a record with a dbx[®] Encoded Disc[™] sticker, you know you're getting a record that puts an end to scratchy surface noise and compressed dynamic range.

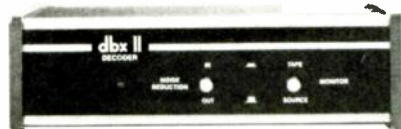
While state-of-the-art digital and direct-to-disc recordings offer improved sound quality, they still suffer from the traditional limitations of vinyl pressings. Now, dbx discs bypass these restrictions and let you play music on your stereo system that's virtually noise-free, with a dynamic range that is typically 50% greater than what conventional records provide.

With the cooperation of many respected record companies (who have also been frustrated with vinyl disc limitations), dbx has obtained some of their finest master tapes for remastering. dbx discs are first encoded (recorded) using dbx's patented noise reduction technology. When decoded (played back) through the Model 21 Disc / Tape Decoder (or using the disc decode function in dbx Models 122, 124, or 128 Noise Reduction Systems), the full dynamic range present in the original master tape is reproduced. Surface noise is dramatically reduced as well, typically 30 dB lower than on conventionally-recorded discs.

Visit your dbx dealer and get stuck on the sound of dbx Encoded Discs. There's an ever-growing selection of albums to satisfy most every musical taste, and dbx discs are priced lower than today's "audiophile" records. Look for the dbx sticker — it's the sign of record companies that really care about music.

dbx, Incorporated, 71 Chapel St.,
 Newton, MA 02195, (617) 964-3210.

dbx



Making Good Sound Better

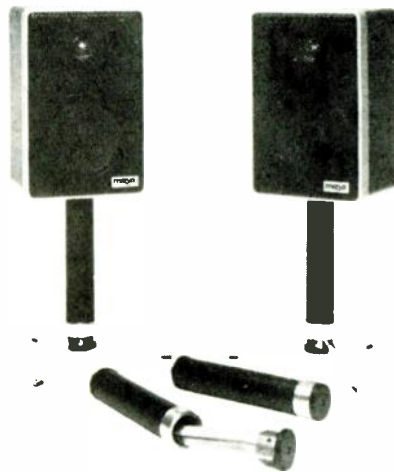
Circle 13 on Page 117



Moving-coil pickup by Sonic Research

Dubbed the Dimension 5, the new moving-coil cartridge from Sonic Research does not demand a separate head amp or stepup transformer since its output is sufficient to drive conventional preamps. It has a newly designed lambda-shaped stylus and single transmission path cantilever said to provide better phase coherence than traditional stylus assemblies. The stylus of the S250 Dimension 5 is user-replaceable.

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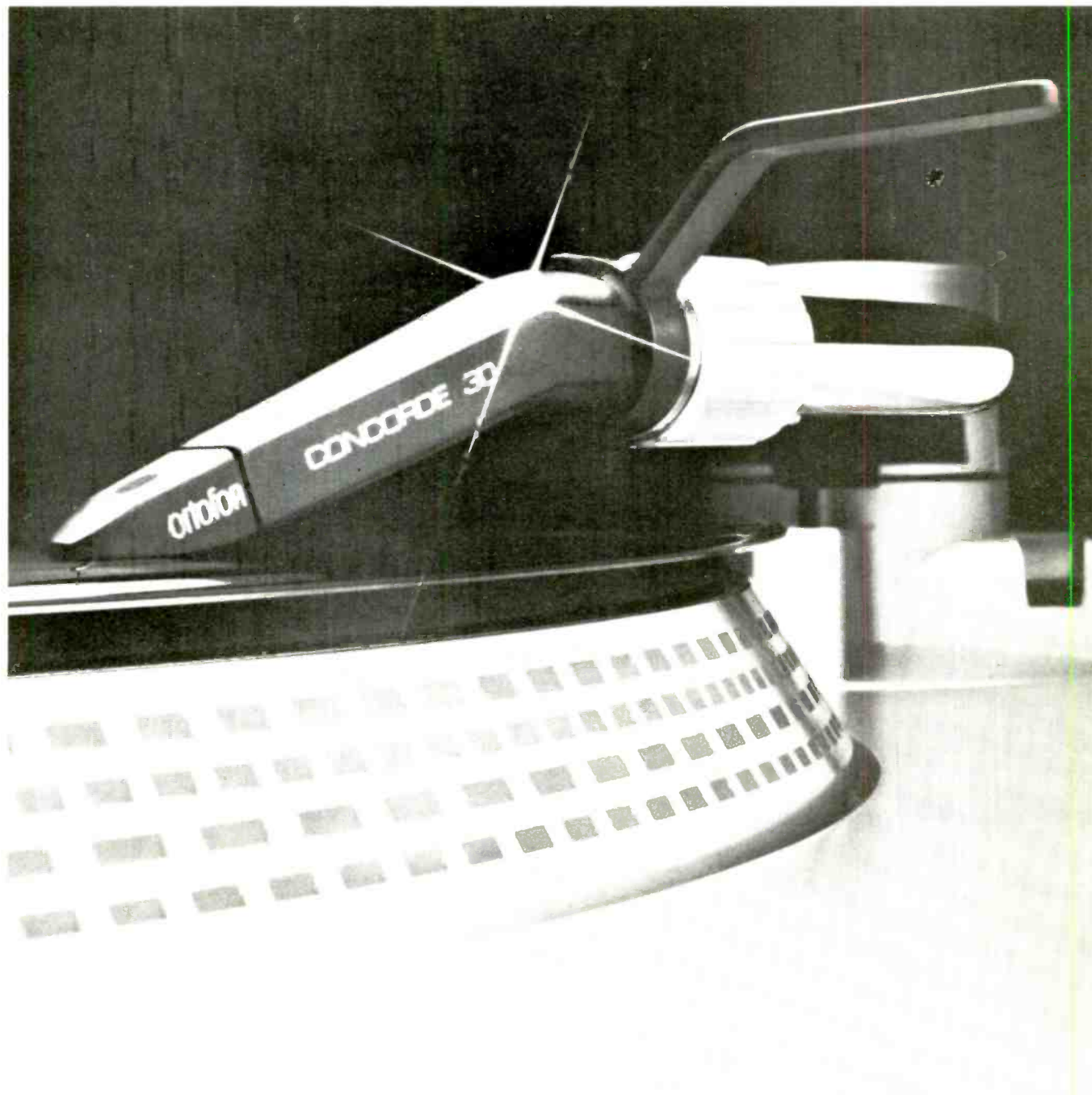


Mesa supports minis

Mesa Electronics offers a set of universal minispeaker stands that will accommodate Mesa's own Model 30 speakers and most other minis that are fitted with tapped mounting sockets. The stands measure 6 inches high and feature tripod legs that telescope into the stem of the stand when not in use. A pair costs \$24.95.

Circle 149 on Page 117

(more)



LAUNCHING A NEW ERA IN THE REPRODUCTION OF MUSIC FROM RECORDS.

A strong claim, but true. The Concorde combines a cartridge and headshell in a single form, but weighs less than most headshells alone. The reduction in record wear and distortion, and the ability to track accurately despite warpage, pay incalculable dividends to music lovers.

Ortofon dealers are now ready to demonstrate the Concorde. It's worth a visit just to see and hear this remarkable cartridge that stands at the very frontier of music reproduction technology. For complete information write: Ortofon, 122 Dupont Street, Plainview, New York 11803.

The Watts Parastat



In 15 seconds your records are clean, dry and ready to play.

With some systems you pour liquid on your records (and rub it into the grooves), while with others you brush the dirt around (and rub it into the grooves). The Watts Parastat is neither of these.

By placing a plush velvet pad on either side of a soft nylon brush and adding a drop or two of Parastatik[®] fluid, a

remarkably efficient system is created.

The brush bristles lift the rubbish to the surface. The pads collect and remove it. And the Parastatik[®] fluid supplies just the right degree of humidity to relax dust collecting static without leaving any kind of film or deposit behind.

No other system does so much for

your records in so little time.

So when you want the best, ask for the original. The Parastat, by Cecil Watts.

Watts products are distributed exclusively in the U.S. by: Empire Scientific Corp., Garden City, NY 11530.

EMPIRE EMPIRE EMPIRE EMPIRE EMPIRE EMPIRE EMPIRE EMPIRE EMPIRE EMPIRE

Cecil & Watts Ltd

Circle 18 on Page 117

Women and audio: an update

Though audio retailers report an increase in the number of female customers, it seems that women still are reticent about purchasing audio gear in the higher price brackets. According to a study published by Venture Development Corp., women still concentrate their purchases in compact systems and budget components. It disclosed that 24.1% of the owners of systems costing under \$400 are women, but when the price reaches the level of medium-quality separates—\$400 to \$799 for the system—only 9.7% of the owners are women. Female ownership decreases to 6.8% in the \$800–\$1,399 range and dips to 2.5%

for systems worth \$1,400 or more.

The study conjectures that women still are intimidated by the myriad features and specifications associated with high-priced separates. Economics has an impact, too, according to the authors.

Though wage discrimination is illegal and women are actively sought for entry-level positions, the number of women in high-paying jobs still is a small fraction of the total.

Dolby meets the VCR

Though no date has yet been set for their availability, the forthcoming VHS video cassette recorders with two-chan-

nel (stereo or bilingual) audio capability will also come equipped with the familiar Dolby B noise reduction. JVC, Akai, Hitachi, Matsushita, Mitsubishi, and Sharp have all agreed in principle to provide Dolby circuits as a standard feature of their two-channel VHS decks.

According to a spokesman from Dolby Laboratories, the decision to employ noise reduction stems from the belief that many consumers will choose high quality stereo systems rather than the notoriously poor single-driver speakers built into TV receivers. Just as with audio cassette recorders, the narrow track width and slow tape-to-head speeds of the audio tracks on home video tapes benefit from some form of noise reduction—not only to reduce tape hiss, but to permit wider frequency range and lower distortion through reduced recording levels. **HF**

ACCURACY. JBL LAYS IT ON THE LINE.

Why do so many stars and studios use JBLs? And more discos* than any other speaker?

Accuracy is the answer. The music as performed. That's the sound the pros insist on.

No wonder 7 of the 10 top albums in 1978 were recorded, mixed or mastered on JBLs.**

And that's the sound we demand in every speaker in our line. JBL speakers are designed

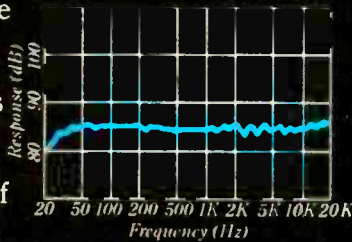
to match the music as played. Clear and lifelike.

We can state this with some pride since we create our speakers from the ground up. Concept, design, individual components—all are created at our plant and tested against stringent engineering specifications. Rigorous quality control is applied every step of the way.

We could go into more technical detail

but we want to keep our message short and sweet. The reason so many stars, studios and professional installations prefer our speakers is JBL accuracy. Their living depends on how good they sound. So if you question your own ears, trust theirs.

James B. Lansing Sound, Inc., 8500 Balboa Boulevard, Northridge, CA 91329.



On-axis frequency response, L212 system.

FIRST 
WITH THE
PROS.



*Billboard Disco Survey, 1978.

**Recording Institute of America Survey.

THE SPARKOMATIC SOUND. CAR STEREO THAT GETS THE TRAVELIN' MAN UP WHEN THE LIFTS CLOSE DOWN.



The day is done—the last run a fading memory. But the fun isn't over, there's plenty après down the road.

On the road, Sparkomatic Car Stereo will keep your spirits high. And warm your ears with incredible high fidelity.

Traveling with our High Power series means getting there with the epitome in high fidelity specs. FM sensitivity, separation and noise reduction is equal to the highest home component standards. Distortion is indistinguishable. The overall sound efficiency overrides anything the competition offers—at any price.

Listening to Sparkomatic's SR 3300 High Power AM/FM Stereo with Auto Reverse Cassette is literally a touching experience. *Feather touch* electronic instrumentation expedites major high fidelity functions. Separate bass/treble and balance/fader controls discipline the sound for the most discriminating tastes.

45 watts of power makes this component-style stereo a spacious encounter in the space of your car. A set of Sparkomatic Speakers completes a sound system that reaches new heights in car high fidelity.

Get down to a Sparkomatic Dealer for a High Power Car Stereo demonstration.

SPARKOMATIC
For the Travelin' Man™



For our free catalogs on Car High Fidelity write:
"For The Travelin' Man", Dept. HF
Sparkomatic Corporation, Milford, PA 18337

My Own Christmas Shopping List

by Robert Angus

Gifts to complement car stereo systems

"He comes in here every year at about this time," the clerk in my favorite car stereo emporium said, nodding toward an eccentric-looking old gent in long red underwear. "He says he likes to get his Christmas shopping done early."

So do I. And as I watched the old duffer thoughtfully fingering some of the most luxuriant white chin foliage it's ever been my pleasure to see, I mentally ran down my own gift list. My skinflint Uncle Alistair always is a problem, so I decided to start with him. I was torn between the "Directory of Concert Music Stations," which is free (that's about what Uncle Alistair spends on my gift each year), and Prince Corporation's \$349 24-function car computer. That would get his attention, I thought. His Scottish soul would delight in computing the gas mileage in his 1964 VW Beetle, or estimating his arrival time on long trips, or keeping track of his expenses en route. But then, he would be more likely to mark me down as a foolish spendthrift and leave his fortune in pinched pennies to a home for wayward cats.

So I settled on the directory, which not only lists every commercial and non-commercial U.S. radio station broadcasting classical music, but gives details about the rest of their schedules. Cross-indexed both alphabetically by call letters and geographically, it even gives some indication of how far each signal reaches by listing transmitter powers and antenna heights (the more of both, the cleaner the signal you're likely to receive over a wider area). You can get a copy by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Station WFMT, 500 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611. Since Uncle Alistair drives a great deal, this guide is likely to find a spot in his glove compartment.

Next on my list is a handful of TDK metal-particle cassettes. At \$12.95 for each C-60, they're not cheap, but when I think of the recipients' faces when they hear how their metal-tape recordings sound in a car, it's worth it. No mat-

ter that their car stereo units don't have sendust heads and metal playback equalization—or, for that matter, that their home decks don't, either. I'm going to suggest that they record on their existing equipment, then play the tapes back in the car for breathtaking highs and rich lows unobtainable any other way.

For a lady of my acquaintance whose new car features 4-by-10-inch rear-deck cutouts, a pair of Jensen Triax II three-way speaker systems (\$140). If anything can sound good in that insane configuration, these Jensens will. Or I could just get her an adapter from East Coast Enterprises of Miami, Florida, which offers one for installing 6-by-7-inch oval speakers in the 4-by-10 cutout without any alteration of the existing mounting. Theoretically, it also works with a 6-by-9 speaker.

For my country cousin George, whose bucolic tastes keep him in the almost-FM-less wilds, an Audiovox AB-50 antenna booster would be very handy. It is a low-cost (\$22) way of increasing the effective range of his FM car radio by as much as twenty miles and simply plugs into the antenna line between the antenna itself and the receiver input. It draws very little current from a battery lead via the ignition block, and it works.

Then there's my nephew, Edgar, who worked all summer so that he could get a basic system for his '71 Chevy. He already has a perfectly acceptable tape deck and tuner in his Pioneer receiver, but the amplifier could do with a little help. I'm getting him Radio Shack's 40-watt booster with built-in five-band equalizer. There are dual illuminated audio power meters, and, when he gets around to adding rear speakers, he can use the unit as a front/back fader control. It costs \$100, by the way.

A great little stocking stuffer for my brother-in-law is Ampex' Model 220 cassette-head cleaner/demagnetizer. He's too lazy to do the job any other way. The Ampex looks like a cassette; he merely has

to "play" it in his car deck. And it only costs \$4.69. (There's also an eight-track version, Model 228, priced 90 cents higher.)

A gift any do-it-yourself sterophile will find well worth having is "Auto Stereo Service & Installation" by Paul Dorweiler and Harry Hansen (Tab Books, \$9.00). In its 252 pages are all sorts of useful tips on installing, maintaining, and servicing car stereo equipment, with schematics for twenty-eight popular models (I noticed that the heavy-set gent in the red union suit was buying a copy, too.)

Finally, there's me. Goodness knows, I've done enough hinting, but all I get most years is another couple of pairs of hand-knit argyles. This time, though, I'll just plain ask for Clarion's top-of-the-line Model 958A receiver—\$420 for the basic unit, with a choice of 15 or 30 watts of amplification, at \$55 and \$100, respectively. It comes with digital FM tuning, a ten-station memory (five AM, five FM), signal scanning and seeking, a Dolby auto-reverse cassette deck, and specifications that look more like those for home equipment than for car components.

I could see that the elderly gentleman was finishing his list, too. "There's just one more thing," I heard him say. "I'm afraid I'm going to need a burglar alarm. It isn't like it once was, when I could leave everything right out there in the open, in plain sight."

The salesman recommended Empire Machines & Systems' Model E4-PKV, consisting of a 114-dB siren, all the necessary mounting hardware, a control box, and an electronic siren. It costs \$60 unmounted. "If you're the least bit handy, you can mount it yourself in a very short time," the salesman said. "Personally, I'd recommend installing an extra switch behind your car stereo system, so that the alarm goes off whenever anybody tries to tamper with it. The nice thing about this system is that you don't need a key in the outside of the vehicle to turn it on or off—you do that with a toggle switch inside."

"Well, I'm not altogether sure just how practical that's going to be for the sleigh," the old man replied. "You see, I've got to keep the top down in order to get everything in when I set off on Christmas Eve. What I'm worried about this year is one of the reindeer getting mugged when I'm sliding down the chimney into one of those condominiums. You never can tell what you're going to find on a rooftop these days." **HF**

THE DIGITAL READOUTS ON THE NEW SANSUI RECEIVERS ARE NOT WHAT COUNT.



Sansui

NEW EQUIPMENT REPORTS

Preparation supervised by Robert Long, Peter Dobbin, and Edward J. Foster. Laboratory data (unless otherwise noted) supplied by CBS Technology Center or Diversified Science Laboratories.



Another Maverick Preamp from Crown

New Measurement Standards:

In making comparisons between current reports and those published in the past, readers are cautioned to pay particular attention to the reference levels and similar test criteria cited. S/N ratios for electronics, in particular, are measured very differently now that we have adopted salient features of the new IHF amplifier-measurement standard. While we believe that the new technique (which also implies a saner approach to loading of all inputs and outputs) will result in measurements that more perfectly reflect audible, in-use effects, they cannot be compared directly to the numbers resulting from the former, more conventional lab measurements.

Crown Straight Line One control unit plus SL-1 PM phono preamp module, both in metal cases. Dimensions: SL-1, 19 by 3½ inches (front panel), 7¼ inches deep plus clearance for controls and connections; SL-1 PM module, 4¼ by 1¼ inches. AC convenience outlets: four switched (1,200 watts max.), one unswitched. Total price: \$599; additional SL-1 PM modules, \$225; DL-2MC moving-coil phono module, \$250; optional wooden cabinet for SL-1, \$60 in walnut veneer or \$145 in solid rosewood. Warranty: "full," three years parts and labor. Manufacturer: Crown International, Inc., 1718 W. Mishawaka Rd., Elkhart, Ind. 46514.

Crown's new Straight Line One preamp—an obvious reference to the "straight wire with gain" concept of circuit purity—takes a very different design approach from its older brother, the computer-compatible DL-2 (test report, December 1978). By omitting some of the usual preamp niceties, the engineers have kept the internal circuitry as simple as possible. The result is a preamp with vanishingly low distortion and extraordinarily fine sonic qualities. And, as a concomitant of this approach, the SL-1 is relatively unexceptional in terms of the features it offers.

You won't find tone, loudness, or tape-dub controls, for example. Audio purists have long recognized that conventional tone controls introduce some distortion. If your room demands some tonal balancing, an octave equalizer can be inserted before the main amplifier. And you won't even find a phono preamp stage in the SL-1 itself. A separate phono preamp module, delivered with the control unit, is intended to be mounted close to the turntable, so that the signals from the pickup travel through relatively little cabling (for minimum hum and IF interference) before amplification to line level. The scheme was put to good use in the DL-2, and a moving-coil preamp module designed for that preamp is offered as an option with the SL-1.

The front panel mirrors Crown's engineering objectives: efficiency without flash. The volume control is detented in 2-dB steps, the balance control in 1-dB steps. Since phono signals are preamplified elsewhere, they can be accommodated at any of the four input jacks, and the front-panel PHONO indication is arbitrary; a second phono module can feed Aux 1, for example, though it would require a special connector (available from Crown) to power both modules from the single supply jack on the back of the SL-1.

Since the merits of a preamp hinge largely on the performance of its phono stage, a lab and listening appraisal of the phono module reveals just how excellent the ensemble really is. A two-position switch on the SL-1 PM provides a choice of 47,000 or 100,000 ohms to match the impedance characteristics of various cartridges.

OUR PATENTED DIGITALLY QU

DIGITAL READOUTS

While digital readouts may improve the looks of a receiver and make it easier to use, only digital circuitry can improve the receiver's performance. That's why all the new Sansui Double-Digital receivers use our patented Digitally Quartz-Locked Tuning System, too.

DIGITALLY QUARTZ-LOCKED TUNING

To meet its rated distortion specifications, a receiver's tuner section must be perfectly center-tuned. The slightest mistuning causes distortion of the final signal to increase rapidly. And even if a tuner is accurately tuned initially, it may drift away from the desired frequency within a short time.

Sansui's Digitally Quartz-Locked Tuning System automatically provides optimum tuning that not only remains perfect while you listen, but stays on the same center frequency even if the receiver is turned off and back on again later.

Conventional quartz-controlled tuners use an analog phase reference circuit that may lose accuracy as a result of harmonic interference. Sansui's patented digital tuning system

actually counts the vibrations of a quartz-crystal time-base and compares it to the tuned-in frequency for instant corrections.

When you listen to any of the new Sansui Double-Digital receivers, you'll immediately hear the difference that perfect tuning makes.

You'll also see the difference in the specs. The tuning sections are extremely sensitive, with unusually high signal-to-noise and spurious response ratios.

PURE POWER DC AMPLIFICATION

A great receiver needs more than a superb tuner section. The amplifier must be first rate, too. That's why Sansui uses our own unique Pure Power DC amplification system in all of our Double-Digital receivers.

While some other receivers have low Total Harmonic Distortion (THD), a Sansui DC receiver can achieve lowest Transient Intermodulation Distortion (TIM) simultaneously. That's because our high slew rate, fast rise time DC circuits provide sufficient drive current to respond instantaneously to even the most fleeting music transients. The music reproduction is remarkably



JARTZ-LOCKED TUNING DOES.

life like, crisp and clean.

ELECTRONIC LED POWER METERS

The all-new peak power level LED display gives you an instantaneous reading of the power output of each channel, so you can continuously monitor the power you're sending to your speakers. This electronic indicator responds much faster and more accurately than any conventional needle-type meter.

ALL THE EXTRAS, TOO

The new Sansui receivers are high technology through and through. So we've designed them with special protection devices to prevent any mishap. Protective circuits save the output transistors from excessive current and keep too much direct current from your speakers.

And we haven't forgotten about the con-

trols and features that make it possible for you to fine-tune the music. Like the bass and treble controls, which operate with an absolute minimum of distortion. And tone defeat switch plus audio muting on our top three models. The volume controls with 41 click-stops, and ultra-smooth tuning knobs, are large and centrally placed for ease of operation. Taping, too, is simple, with versatile and complete facilities.

Everyone is proud of a great-sounding, high performance receiver. But you should be proud of its looks as well. With Sansui, you will be.

Ask your authorized Sansui dealer to show you one of our Double-Digital receivers. Ask him to turn it on. You'll see that your music never had it so good. And you never heard it better. That's something you can count on.

G-7700

- 120 watts per channel, min. RMS, both channels driven into 8 ohms, from 20 to 20,000Hz with no more than 0.025% Total Harmonic Distortion.
- Power Amplifier Frequency Response: DC to 200,000Hz +0, -3dB
- FM Sensitivity: 9.8dBf (1.7uV IHF T-100)
- FM Signal-to-Noise Ratio: 76dB
- FM Spurious Response Ratio: 90dB

G-6700

- 90 watts per channel with no more than 0.025% THD under the same conditions
- Power Amplifier Frequency Response: DC to 200,000Hz +0, -3dB
- FM Sensitivity: 10.8dBf (1.9uV IHF T-100)
- FM Signal-to-Noise Ratio: 75dB
- FM Spurious Response Ratio: 70dB

G-5700

- 75 watts per channel with no more than 0.03% THD under the same conditions
- Power Amplifier Frequency Response: DC to 200,000Hz +0, -3dB
- FM Sensitivity: 10.8dBf (1.9uV IHF T-100)
- FM Signal-to-Noise Ratio: 75dB
- FM Spurious Response Ratio: 70dB

G-4700

- 50 watts per channel with no more than 0.05% THD under the same conditions
- FM Sensitivity: 10.8dBf (1.9uV IHF T-100)
- FM Signal-to-Noise Ratio: 75dB
- FM Spurious Response Ratio: 70dB

SANSUI ELECTRONICS CORP.

Lyndhurst, New Jersey 07071 • Gardena, Ca. 90247
 Sansui Electric Co., Ltd., Tokyo, Japan
 Sansui Audio Europe S.A., Antwerp, Belgium
 In Canada, Electronic Distributors

Circle 45 on Page 117

Sansui





G-4700

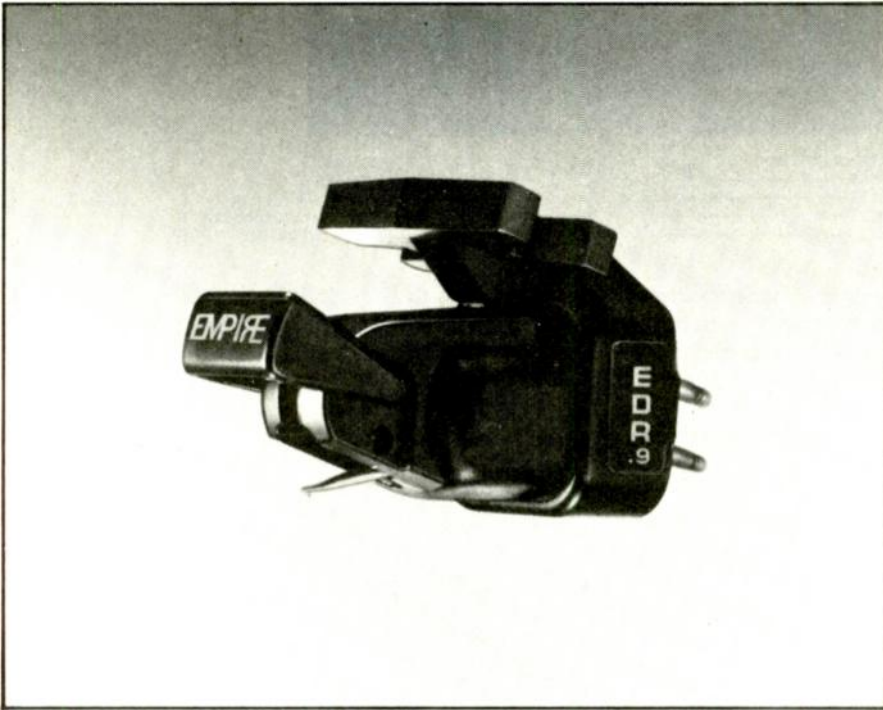


G-5700



G-6700

Empire's EDR.9 The Phono Cartridge Designed for Today's Audiophile Recordings



Direct-to-Disc and digital recording have added a fantastic new dimension to the listening experience. Greater dynamic range, detail, stereo imaging, lower distortion and increased signal-to-noise ratio are just a few of the phrases used to describe the advantages of these new technologies.

In order to capture all the benefits of these recordings, you should have a phono cartridge specifically designed to reproduce every bit of information with utmost precision and clarity and the least amount of record wear.

The Empire EDR.9 is that cartridge. Although just recently introduced, it is already being hailed as a breakthrough by audiophiles, not only in the U.S., but in such foreign markets as Japan, Germany, England, France, Switzerland and Sweden.

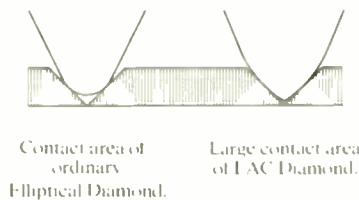
What makes the EDR.9 different?
1. _____



Within the cantilever tube, we added a mechanical equalizer. It serves two purposes: (1) to cancel the natural resonance of the cantilever tube, and (2) to

improve the overall transient response of the cartridge. The end result is a stylus assembly that has a mechanically flat frequency response. The frequency response extends from the 20Hz to 35kHz with a deviation of no more than ± 1.75 dB. No other magnetic cartridge has that kind of performance. We call this stylus assembly an "Inertially Damped Tuned Stylus," the refinement of which took over 6 years.

2. _____



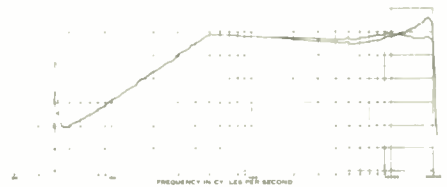
In order to reproduce a groove containing extreme high frequency musical overtones, the stylus tip must have small enough dimensions to fit within the high frequency portion of the groove. Yet, the smaller the stylus tip, the greater the pressure applied to the record surface and the more severe the record wear. In the EDR.9, we have responded to these conflicting requirements by developing a stylus that has the proper dimensions from side-to-side, a much

smaller dimension from front-to-back, and a very large, low pressure degree of contact between stylus and groove top-to-bottom. The net result of this large contact area, which engineers call a "footprint," is that the stylus of the EDR.9 can track musical signals to the limits of audibility and beyond, yet has the lowest record wear of any cartridge presently available. The stylus shape of the EDR.9 is called L.A.C. for "Large Area of Contact."

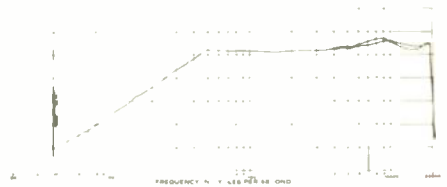
3. _____

Conventional cartridges exhibit radical changes in their frequency response when connected to different preamplifiers. This is because the load conditions—the amounts of capacitance and resistance provided by the preamp—vary tremendously from one preamp to another, and from turntable to turntable. Consequently, most phono cartridges, even expensive ones, have their frequency response determined essentially by chance, depending on the system they are connected to.

But the electrical elements of the EDR.9 have been designed to remain unaffected by any normal variations in load capacitance or resistance. Thus, the EDR.9 maintains its smooth frequency response and accurate transient-reproduction ability in any music system, irrespective of loading conditions.



A conventional cartridge's frequency response changes when connected to different preamps.



EDR.9 is not affected by changes in loading conditions.

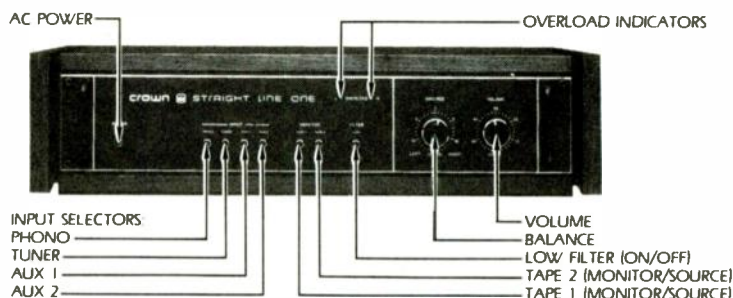
4. _____

Then, as a final test of performance, we listen to every EDR.9 to make certain it sounds as good as it tests. At \$200, the EDR.9 is expensive, but then again, so are your records.

For more detailed information and test reports, write to:

Empire Scientific Corp. **EMPIRE**
Garden City, NY 11530





**Crown Straight Line One preamplifier
with SL-1 C Series phono module**

OUTPUT AT CLIPPING	11 volts
HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD; 20 Hz to 20 kHz)	
aux input	< 0.01%
phono input (gain at 40 dB)	~ 0.01%
FREQUENCY RESPONSE	
	+0, -½ dB, < 10 Hz to 4.7 kHz;
	+0, -3 dB, < 10 Hz to 310 kHz
RIAA EQUALIZATION	± ½ dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz
INPUT CHARACTERISTICS (IHF loading, A-weighting)	
	Sensitivity S/N ratio
aux	52½ mV 102½ dB
phono, max. gain	0.173 mV 78½ dB
phono, min. gain	2.27 mV 79½ dB
PHONO OVERLOAD (clipping at 1 kHz)	
maximum gain (49½ dB)	36½ mV
minimum gain (27½ dB)	475 mV
PHONO IMPEDANCE	48k or 98k; < 20 pF
LOW FILTER	-3 dB at 33 Hz, 18 dB/octave

The actual load measures close to these values and is "classic"—consistent over the frequency band—with very little capacitance. If your pickup wants higher capacitance, it's easy to add more. (Were the capacitance too high, it could not be corrected.) Gain is continuously variable (27½ to 49½ dB at 1 kHz) for each channel via screwdriver controls on the top of the phono module. Sensitivity is excellent, and the gain is sufficient even for many of today's moving-coil pickups. Distortion is negligible at less than 0.01%, and RIAA equalization deviates from ruler flat by only 1/10 dB. In listening tests, bass sounds exceptionally solid, and treble emerges bright and clean, with good definition.

The main control unit also passes muster handily, with all lab measurements easily exceeding Crown's specifications. We wonder about the 33-Hz cutoff frequency on the filter. Since the phono preamp measures virtually flat down to 5 Hz, some form of infrasonic filtering seems necessary to remove potentially damaging record warp information. Fixing the cutoff at 33 Hz, however, will necessarily remove the very deep bass fundamentals found on some of the newer digital and direct-to-disc recordings. Some of us also lament the absence of a headphone jack on the SL-1 (though there is one on the matching Power Line One amp).

In its lean and ultrafunctional way, the SL-1/phono-module combination seems as representative of Crown's enviable tradition for quality as the complexities of the DL-2 did in its way. Whether in the listening room or on the bench, it acquits itself superbly in all major respects. But that should not be news to Crown's many admirers, who doubtless will not be alone in welcoming this latest essay in what audio design is all about.

Circle 135 on Page 117

A Smooth, Clean, Tasteful Speaker

Mordaunt-Short Pageant Series 2 speaker system in walnut cabinet. Dimensions: 13 by 21 inches (front), 9 inches deep. Price: \$495 per pair; optional floor stands, \$80; speakers and stands, \$550. Warranty: "limited," five years parts and labor. Manufacturer: Mordaunt-Short, Ltd., England; U.S. distributor: Mordaunt-Short, Inc., 1919 Middle County Rd., Centereach, N.Y. 11720.

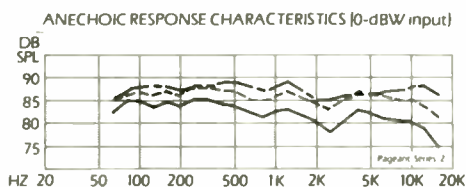
We were not really surprised at the sound of Mordaunt-Short's Pageant Series 2 loudspeaker. Over the years British speaker companies have turned out consistently fine products that eschew sonic fireworks in favor of accuracy and clarity, and the Pageant is such a system. Unlike many other compact bookshelf models that aim for drama and heightened "presence" in the midrange, it delivers a decidedly neutral, uncolored sound. It might even be described as symptomatic of British reserve, though we see it as respect for musical reality.

A two-way vented system, the Pageant is intended for vertical placement at least 12 inches from the floor; while mounting on a bookshelf would accomplish that end, Mordaunt-Short also offers an optional pair of speaker stands for off-the-floor placement. The driver complement includes a dome tweeter crossed over to a combination bass/midfrequency driver at 3,500 Hz. Two toggle switches located just above the spring-loaded amplifier connections provide 2 dB of attenuation in the mid- and high-frequency ranges, respectively.

In tests at CBS Technology Center, the speaker accepted the manufacturer's maximum recommended continuous power input—100 watts (20 dBW)—with no sign of strain at a sound pressure level of 108 dB. In pulse tests, it took peak values 6½ dB higher at the onset of unacceptable distortion. Efficiency, for a system of this sort, seems moderately high. And the impedance values vary relatively little across the



Mordaunt-Short Pageant speaker system



- boundary-dependent region
 - - - average omnidirectional response
 - · - · average front hemispheric response
 - · · on-axis response
- AVERAGE OMNIDIRECTIONAL OUTPUT
(250 Hz to 6 kHz)
82% dB SPL for 0 dBW (1 watt) input
- CONTINUOUS ON-AXIS OUTPUT (at 300 Hz)
108 dB SPL for 20 dBW (100 watts) input
- PULSED OUTPUT (at 300 Hz)
114% dB SPL for 26% dBW (41.7 watts) peak
- "NOMINAL" IMPEDANCE 6 ohms
- APPROX. TWEETER CONTROL RANGE (re "flat")
+0, -2 dB, above 3 kHz
- APPROX. MIDRANGE CONTROL RANGE (re "flat")
+0, -2 dB, 1 to 3 kHz

frequency band, offering a consistent load to the driving amplifier, though paralleled pairs present a load of 3 ohms at 150 Hz, and some amps may balk at that.

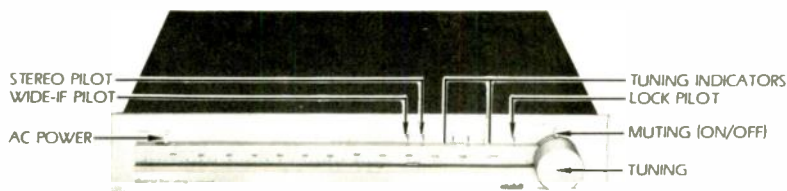
Some of the credit for the exceptional clarity of the Pageant can be found in its very low distortion figures. Both the second and the more intrusive third harmonic stay well below 1/2% for most frequencies above about 75 Hz at normal listening levels. Even with the speaker driven hard, the third harmonic increases very little in the mid-range and treble, while the second still averages less than 1%. In its ability to reproduce 300-Hz tone pulses, the Pageant shows a virtual mirror image of the input signal, though a small amount of overhang does appear in the 3-kHz test, perhaps as a result of cabinet reflections.

There is very little in our listening-test results to qualify the overall impression of smooth, clean, well-controlled sound. The "woofer" range extends unusually high and exacts a price in that distortion figures are somewhat higher around 2 kHz than they generally are above or below it, but the result can be a barely perceptible edge in the higher vocal and woodwind sounds that, in some instances, lends to them a little extra "bite" or "crispness." And the deep bass is, predictably, less clean and extended than the high treble, though it is at least on a par with typical speakers of this size.

The Pageant's greatest virtue, however, lies in what it doesn't sound like—a box. Though pop music fans may find the speaker relatively retiring, without the kind of up-front quality rock music demands, people with more catholic listening habits are likely to find the Pageant's clarity and detail very much to their taste.

Circle 131 on Page 117

Series 20's No-Holds-Barred FM Tuner



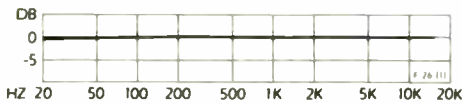
Series 20 Model F-26 FM tuner. In metal case. Dimensions: 16 1/2 by 2 1/4 inches (front panel), 12 1/4 inches deep plus clearance for controls and connections. Price: \$1,000. Warranty: "limited," two years parts and labor. Manufacturer: Pioneer Electronic Corp., Japan; U.S. distributor: Series 20 division of U.S. Pioneer, 20 Jewell St., Moonachie, N.J. 07074.

The high technology that characterizes the Series 20 brand is very much in evidence in this tuner, the first from the line we have tested. Some of its features—quartz-locked tuning, choice of IF bandwidth—should be familiar to most readers, but others evince a no-holds-barred approach that requires some extra comment on the circuitry. For example, the front end of the F-26 is substantially more sophisticated and selective than average. It incorporates two stages of RF amplification rather than one, and five (rather than three) tuned stages improve rejection of out-of-band interference. The local oscillator is double-tuned and buffered—most unusual—to increase its stability and resistance to "pulling." Its frequency is compared with a quartz-reference oscillator and, when precisely on target, locks into position, lighting a front-panel indicator. There are two entirely distinct IF amplifiers and two detectors. The wide-band circuitry employs a Bessel filter (noted for minimal distortion, thanks to its linear-phase characteristics) along with a SAW (surface acoustic wave) filter; the associated detector is chosen for ultrawide bandwidth. In the narrowband mode, more conventional circuitry (ceramic filters and a quadrature detector) replaces the wideband strip.

The F-26 switches between the two IF modes automatically on the basis of signal strength and quality; you have no choice in the matter. If the signal strength is relatively high (approximately 36 dBf or more) and relatively clean—that is, free of adjacent-channel and (presumably) multipath interference—the tuner chooses the wide-band option. Otherwise, it stays in the narrow, more selective mode. The decision is made as you tune the device and is "irrevocable" (unless you touch the tuning knob once again to force a reassessment) even though the interference may disappear while you're listening. Incidentally, the touch sensor in the knob produces a brief muting

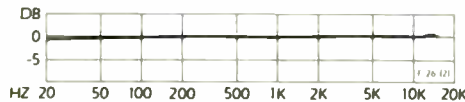
Series 20 F-26 FM tuner

MONO FM FREQUENCY RESPONSE



+0, -½ dB, 20 Hz to 15 kHz

STEREO FM RESPONSE

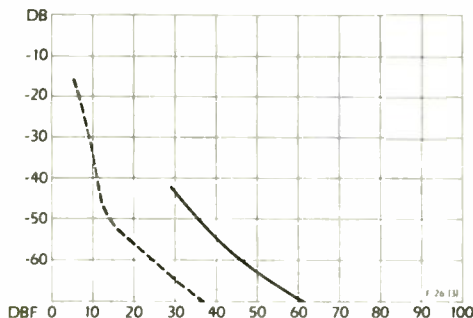


± ½ dB, 20 Hz to 15 kHz

CHANNEL SEPARATION

> 40 dB, 20 Hz to 15 kHz

FM SENSITIVITY & QUIETING



— stereo noise (quieting)

- - - mono noise (quieting)

Stereo sensitivity (for 50-dB noise suppression)

35½ dBf at 98 MHz, with 0.53% THD+N

(38½ dBf at 90 MHz; 39½ dBf at 106 MHz)

Mono sensitivity (for 50-dB noise suppression)

14 dBf at 98 MHz

Muting threshold 23 to 44 dBf (adjustable)

Stereo threshold 28½ to 48½ dBf (adjustable)

Stereo S/N ratio (at 65 dBf) 71½ dB

Mono S/N ratio (at 65 dBf) 80 dB

CAPTURE RATIO

(see text)

ALTERNATE-CHANNEL SELECTIVITY

63½ dB

HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD+N; wide bandwidth)

	stereo	mono
at 100 Hz	0.13%	0.086%
at 1 kHz	0.038%	0.041%
at 6 kHz	0.11%	0.12%

HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD+N; narrow bandwidth)

	stereo	mono
at 100 Hz	0.30%	0.11%
at 1 kHz	0.18%	0.070%
at 6 kHz	0.21%	0.17%

STEREO PILOT INTERMODULATION

wide bandwidth	0.021%
narrow bandwidth	0.071%

IM DISTORTION (mono)

wide bandwidth	0.019%
narrow bandwidth	0.049%

AM SUPPRESSION 52½ dB (see text)

PILOT (19 kHz) SUPPRESSION ~84 dB

SUBCARRIER (38 kHz) SUPPRESSION ~84 dB

each time it's triggered, which we find a minor annoyance during touchup tuning.

The tuning feels extremely light but free of backlash; the tuning scale, though somewhat inconvenient to read and sparsely marked, is extremely accurate across the band. Diversified Science Laboratories reports that our review sample read precisely 0.06 MHz low at all three test frequencies, suggesting that a minor relocation of the pointer would have made it perfect across the board. As you approach a station, a pair of green lamps indicate whether you are tuned above or below it; when you are on the mark, a red lamp lights. Then, when you release the knob, this lamp extinguishes and a separate LOCKED light comes on. The extinction of the tuning lamp may seem disconcerting, but we find we adapt to the system after some use. You must tune quite precisely to achieve lock, presumably to avoid the sort of distortion conventional automatic frequency controls are prone to introduce.

The F-26 is a sensitive tuner—extraordinarily so in the middle of the FM tuning range. The muting and stereo thresholds are adjustable separately via back-panel controls with ranges of approximately 20 dB. The minimum threshold levels differ; you can set up the tuner so that it unmutes but stays in mono on stations too weak for quiet stereo reception. This eminently sensible duality is rarely available on today's tuners, which frequently either switch to stereo before reasonable quieting has been achieved or (worse) suppress many weak stations that would admit of quiet mono. In terms of quieting, the muting threshold (which can be totally defeated) can be set to correspond with a S/N ratio between 59 and 75 dB; the stereo-threshold range corresponds to quieting from 41 to 62 dB. We tend to set the stereo control to its midpoint or beyond to assure at least 50 dB of S/N. The muting can be set to the minimum: Even with its 23-dBf input, the mono S/N approaches 60 dB. There is no switching-resistance "hysteresis" range in either threshold, nor is there a mono or blend mode switch on the F-26, though noisy stereo signals can be ameliorated by switching to mono in the system through which the tuner is playing.

The ultimate signal-to-noise ratio in both mono and stereo is uncommonly good (note that both quieting curves fall off the bottom of our graph), and the figures exceed the specifications guarantee for the FM generator used by DSL to make the measurement. The vanishingly small THD+N in the wideband mode exceeds the generator specifications as well. In the narrow mode, the THD+N is only slightly higher. Intermodulation measurements reflect similar characteristics. AM suppression is about average at the customary 45-dBf input level for this measurement but improves substantially with increased signal—to 65½ dB at 65 dBf.

The capture ratio and selectivity could be measured only in the narrow-band mode since the automatic circuitry correctly interprets any two-signal test input as a case of interference and insists upon adopting the more selective option. And even in this mode, the lab found unequivocal capture-ratio results difficult to come by. We might have called it "better than 6 dB," but that would tempt comparisons that are both unfair and very unflattering beside the numbers that can be measured with more conventional (wideband) circuitry. What the bench finding means remains indeterminate; we discovered no untoward behavior that could be attributed to the high capture-ratio measurement. Alternate-channel selectivity is good, and the adjacent-channel selectivity (16½ dB) surpasses by a wide margin that of any other tuner we have measured for this characteristic. The frequency response is essentially identical regardless of IF mode, audio mode, or channel and is almost perfectly flat to 17 kHz. The pilot-canceling circuitry eliminates any vestige of 19-kHz signal, and the 38-kHz subcarrier is also notably absent. Channel separation is extraordinarily good [the entire unwanted-channel plot lies below the bottom calibration point, usually -40 dB, on our stereo response/separation graph, so we saw no point in showing the curve] and, interestingly, is not degraded when the F-26 chooses the narrow IF mode.

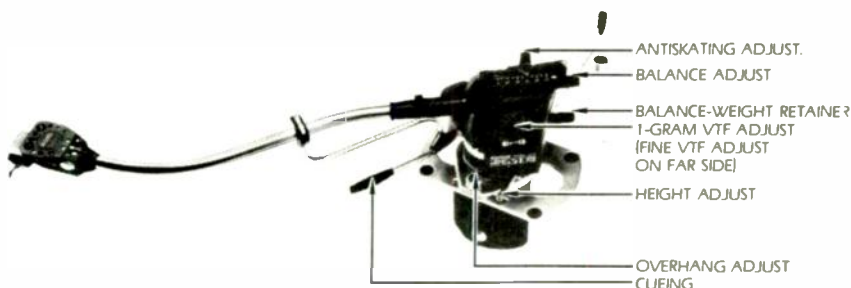
Interfacing the tuner with the rest of the system is easy. You have a choice of a fixed-level or a variable-level audio output. A separate output can be connected to an oscilloscope display to reveal multipath conditions, or the "vertical" output can be connected to an input of your stereo system so that the antenna can be oriented by ear for minimum multipath interference. The F-26 forgoes all forms of signal-strength or multipath indication—a design decision whose importance will depend in large measure on your local reception conditions.

In our listening area, stations abound from all points of the compass, and we find the lack of a signal-strength indicator (at least) a drawback. With our crowded listening conditions, the F-26 opted for narrow bandwidth more often than not. It

opened up for stations that were "in the clear," but even the narrow mode delivers reception as good as any we've heard. The low end of the audio sounds somewhat cleaner and more powerful than average, and the highs are received with exemplary clarity. Indeed, any deficiencies we heard seemed due to the station and/or the transmission. This brings up the ultimate point: When a high fidelity tuner exceeds the performance of a laboratory generator—which, in turn certainly exceeds that of a station's transmitter—the time has come for FM transmission to be improved!

Circle 134 on Page 117

SME Series III Rebottled



SME 3009 Series III-S tonearm

TO NEARM RESONANCE & DAMPING
 vertical 9.2 Hz; 6-dB rise
 lateral 6.8 Hz; 4-dB rise

TOTAL LEAD CAPACITANCE 310 pF
 (see text)

ARM FRICTION negligible in either plane

MAX. VTF-GAUGE ERROR
 reads 0.05 gram high at settings of 2 or 2½ grams

SME Model 3009 Series III-S tonearm, with 4-foot audio cables.
Price: \$240; optional FD-III-S silicone fluid damping system, \$44.50. Warranty: "limited," one year parts and labor. Manufacturer: SME, Ltd., England; U.S. distributor: Shure Brothers, Inc., 222 Hartrey Ave., Evanston, Ill. 60204.

When we reviewed the SME 3009 Series III tonearm (November '78), we found ourselves exclaiming: "What Lafite Rothschild is to Bordeaux, SME is to tonearms: a member of the exclusive grand cru class." In reviewing SME's newest, a simplified, somewhat less expensive version of the arm, we are tempted to continue the enological metaphor, comparing the Series III-S to a lesser wine of the same vineyard. Such a comparison would, however, be fallacious, for it is the same quality wine in a less expensive container.

The design is, in fact, almost identical to its more expensive sibling. Price has been reduced by forgoing some features and substituting plastic for metal in some parts. For instance, the silicone fluid damping system was included in the price of the original Series III; now it is available as an option. (We should note that by purchasing the fluid damping system you will be paying almost as much for the ensemble as for the original.) Other changes include a plastic terminal housing below the pivot in place of the original metal one, no lateral balancing mechanism, and sliding counterweight adjustment rather than a rack-and-pinion arrangement. The integral headshell and S-shaped titanium arm are identical to the original.

In setup, the Series III-S demands just as much patience and care as its progenitor. When it comes to balancing the arm and setting the tracking force, poking the sliding counterweights fore and aft and then locking them in place is not particularly onerous. Antiskating force is applied in fairly standard quantities by a hanging weight-and-pulley arrangement; bias is quite linear in proportion to vertical tracking force when it is calibrated to match. Tracking forces, too, are quite linearly applied, with no measurable error in the calibration below 2 grams and only negligible error above. The lead capacitance can be altered from SME's nominal 300 picofarads (it actually measures 310) by snipping out a shunt capacitor built into each of the phono plugs and substituting another value representing the difference between the ideal value specified for your pickup and SME's 75-picofarad rating for the arm with no shunt capacitor at all.

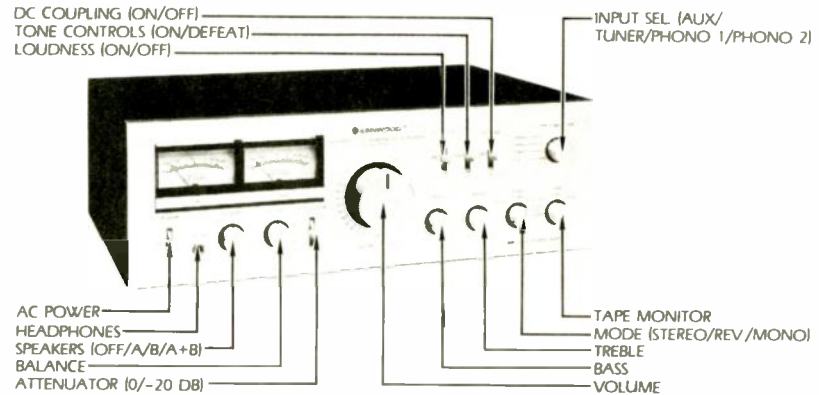
In lab measurements, the tonearm performed with distinction. With a Shure V-15 Type III cartridge mounted in the arm, the vertical resonance falls just short of the "perfect" 10-Hz point. In our lab test of the Series III with silicone damping, the resonance point landed at the optimal 10 Hz with a rise of 5½ dB. The fact that the newer arm, without silicone damping, just about matches its more expensive brother is testimony to careful design.

In use, the cueing action is well damped in both rise and descent. When

the arm is returned to the holder, a clip locks it securely, and a gentle flick releases it. At some \$50 less than the previous model, the Series III-S still is far from inexpensive, but the saving is welcome. It exists for the very serious audiophile whose choice of a pre-damped pickup (the Shure V-15 Type IV comes to mind immediately for obvious reasons) may well make the damping of the original Series III redundant.

Circle 133 on Page 117

A Nimble Integrated Amp



Kenwood KA-801 Integrated amplifier

RATED POWER 20% dBW (110 watts)/ch

OUTPUT AT CLIPPING (both channels driven)
 8-ohm load 20% dBW (120 watts)/ch
 4-ohm load 22% dBW (175 watts)/ch
 16-ohm load 18% dBW (75 watts)/ch

DYNAMIC HEADROOM 1% dB

HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD, 20 Hz to 20 kHz)
 at 20% dBW (110 watts) - 0.015%
 at 0 dBW (1 watt) - 0.01%

FREQUENCY RESPONSE (at 0 dBW)
 DC coupled +0, -1/4 dB, 10 Hz to 52 kHz,
 +0, -3 dB, < 10 Hz to 238 kHz
 AC coupled +0, -1/4 dB, 50 Hz to 52 kHz,
 +0, -1 dB, 25 Hz to 115 kHz,
 +0, -3 dB, 13 Hz to 238 kHz

RIAA EQUALIZATION +1/4, -0 dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz

INPUT CHARACTERISTICS (re 0 dBW, A-weighting)
 sensitivity S/N ratio
 phono 0.26 mV 77 1/2 dB
 aux 21 mV 82 1/2 dB

PHONO OVERLOAD (1-kHz clipping) 240 mV

PHONO IMPEDANCE 51k ohms, 120 pF

DAMPING FACTOR (at 50 Hz) 140

Kenwood KA-801 integrated amplifier, in metal case. Dimensions: 17 1/4 by 5 1/2 inches (front panel), 14 1/4 inches deep plus clearance for controls. AC convenience outlets: two switched (100 watts max. total), one unswitched (400 watts max.). Price: \$699. Warranty: "limited," two years parts and labor. Manufacturer: Trio/Kenwood, Japan; U.S. distributor: Kenwood Electronics, Inc., 1315 E. Watsoncenter Rd., Carson, Calif. 90745.

In a way, the KA-801 sums up what has preceded it among Kenwood's electronics: It is described as a "high-speed DC integrated dual-power-supply amplifier." The "speed" of the amp refers to its slewing rate (150 volts per microsecond, according to Kenwood), which is kept extremely high to forestall slew-rate limiting and related dynamic intermodulation effects. The term "DC amp" has been variously defined—either as direct coupling or as direct current, though direct (capacitorless) coupling implies the ability to pass direct as well as alternating currents. The intent here is to prevent audio-band phase shifts caused by rolloff even when the latter is well outside the band. The dual power supplies prevent a high-level sonic event in one channel from loading down the power supply of the other and introducing distortion; they have been a feature of Kenwood amplifier sections for some time. Together, these measures represent what the company sees as the sort of design care that puts today's amplifier circuitry ahead of that of only a few years ago.

At the same time, there is a sense of breaking new ground in the KA-801. The satin-silver finish, recessed knobs, long lever switches, and other detailing break stride with Kenwood tradition in subtle ways. In most respects, the front panel strikes us as quite well laid out and pleasant to use. The only significant exception is the tape-monitor knob. Its "normal" (12 o'clock) position is SOURCE, flanked by A PLAY and B PLAY. Beyond the A PLAY position are two more for A-to-B dubbing: B MON and SOURCE MON. Neither these escutcheon markings nor the owner's manual gives an entirely adequate picture of the switch's workings. Dubbing is possible only from A to B, and recording from any other source is more problematic on the B deck than on A. If you are recording on B alone and inadvertently switch to A PLAY instead of B PLAY for monitoring, you lose your input signal; if you are recording on both and want to monitor A, B will again lose its input signal and be fed instead from A's output. For this reason, the A PLAY position can be used to check the original signal during dubbing, comparing it to that at B MON; the SOURCE dubbing position allows you to hear a different program (not the dubbing source) while your tape copying is in progress. But it seems to us that several alternative switching arrangements are less confusing and restrictive for the multideck user.

As you might expect from the data, the listening quality of the amplifier is excellent. There is plenty of power for typical home systems—the dynamic headroom figure implies that, with music, it will deliver the equivalent of about 150 watts into an

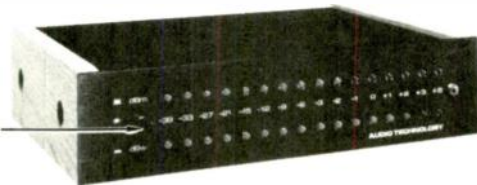
8-ohm load—and it is essentially free of noise and distortion. (The power meters avoid the most irksome ills of competing designs, but their scale is too compressed at the high end to give a very useful fix on output in the critical clipping region.) The phono preamp, which presents a consistent (though nonadjustable) load to the pickup, is particularly clean and quiet. An input capacitor makes this the one non-DC element in the design but still leaves response (extrapolated from the RIAA playback specs) flat at 5 Hz. The AC-coupling (“DC off”) mode—which, judging from the switch markings, Kenwood appears to consider normal operation—reduces 5-Hz response by 9½ dB. It also (and with any input) reduces 20-Hz response slightly. With most program material, the difference between modes is totally inaudible; with severely warped records, a sharper infrasonic filter might have been preferable, though we could hear no evidence of overload there.

The tone controls pleased us. The bass shelves below about 100 Hz over a range of approximately ± 10 dB; the treble, which has little effect below about 3 kHz, does likewise at the extreme top end of the range, addressing sonic sparkle without falsifying midrange brightness materially. The adjustment range is more than adequate and the detented steps within it are well spaced for practical use. The loudness, which follows recent psychoacoustic findings in altering the bass only, produced mixed reactions, from “quite pleasing” to “unusually tubby.” Very efficient speakers, of course, exaggerate the loudness action because the VOLUME need not be advanced beyond the middle of its range for reasonable listening levels. Incidentally, the detented volume control is calibrated in steps that increase from 1 dB (at the maximum-output end of its range) to 4 dB (before dropping off from –70 dB to no output at all), but the knob can be cajoled into perching between detents if you want finer divisions.

To what extent Kenwood’s specific circuit measures should be credited with the excellent listening quality of the KA-801, we can’t tell. It’s enough that this is a very good integrated amp with pleasant, clean styling and good flexibility in the features that really count.

A “Bar Graph” Tonic for Tired Meters

SOURCE (LINE-LEVEL/POWER)



Audio Technology Model AT-510B stereo LED level display, in metal case with wood ends. Dimensions: 7½ by 1¾ inches (front panel), 5½ inches deep plus clearance for connections. Price: \$149.95. Warranty: “limited,” two years parts and labor. Manufacturer: Audio Technology, 1135 Tower Rd., Schaumburg, Ill. 60195.

Considering how many home tape decks with barely usable metering systems have passed through our hands in the last decade, a useful peak-reading add-on could be a welcome product for thousands of recordists who continue to use older decks. Most of the add-on displays we’ve seen are more concerned with monitoring amplifier power than with low-level signals; the Audio Technology 510 is conceived with both applications in mind. It exists in two standard versions: The 510B, reviewed here, with multicolor LED rows (green below the 0-dB reference, amber at 0 dB, red above), and the one-color Model 510 for \$10 less. In addition, custom color coding can be ordered, at somewhat higher prices, from Audio Technology. And an alternate front panel is calibrated vertically, should that orientation suit your system better.

The front panel holds the two rows of LEDs (one for each channel), calibrated from –39 to +6 dB, in 1-dB steps between –3 and +3, in 6-dB steps below –15, and in 3-dB steps elsewhere. The only other front-panel feature is a pushbutton mode switch (dBm/dBw, representing line-level and power measurements, respectively). The back panel has screw inputs for power leads from a set of speaker outputs on your power amp plus a pair of pin jacks for line-level inputs. Next to the latter are a pair of level adjustments; on the far end is a three-position switch: OFF/ON/CAL, the last switching in a signal that acts as an objective reference for the setting of line-level sensitivity. (With commendable frankness, a legend near this switch says, “fuse inside.”)

Report Policy: Equipment reports are based on laboratory measurements and controlled listening tests. Unless otherwise noted, test data and measurements are obtained by CBS Technology Center, a division of Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc., and Diversified Science Laboratories. The choice of equipment to be tested rests with the editors of HIGH FIDELITY. Samples normally are supplied on loan from the manufacturer. Manufacturers are not permitted to read reports in advance of publication, and no report, or portion thereof, may be reproduced for any purpose or in any form without written permission of the publisher. All reports should be construed as applying to the specific samples tested; HIGH FIDELITY, CBS Technology Center, and Diversified Science Laboratories assume no responsibility for product performance or quality.

There are two adjustments for power calibration. The first sets the 0-dB threshold to trigger at nominal values of 25, 50, or 100 watts (14, 17, or 20 dBW). But since the 510, like the vast majority of such devices, responds to voltage—not power itself—an impedance switch also is provided so that the sensitivity of the display can be adjusted for loads of 4, 8, or 16 ohms.

If you want, you can fudge the calibration to some extent. Say you have a 200-watt amplifier and an 8-ohm speaker. You can set the controls for a 0-dB indication at 100 watts into 8 ohms, in which case rated power from your amp will run the display up to +3 dB. But you can also move the impedance switch to 16 OHMS; now the 0-dB LED will illuminate at the voltage required to deliver 200 watts into 8 ohms because it is the same as that required to deliver 100 watts into 16. But we still find most power indicators—including this one—of little practical value. (Incidentally, the “dBW” of the front panel does not represent dBW; it simply means that power is being displayed and not that—like the dBW—its 0-dB reference is at 1 watt.)

As a level indicator for the tape recordist, however, the 510B is a useful tool indeed. (We tried the monochrome 510 first and found it of very limited value in home recording because such intense concentration on the calibration numbers was required to get information from it; the 510B’s multicolor display solves this problem handsomely.) For in-use testing, we chose a Teac 450, a top model in its day but equipped with rather sluggish meters of limited range plus a single peak-reading LED triggering on the higher of the two channels—a scheme that struck us as somewhat problematic from the start and has since been eclipsed by more readable peak displays. Since the deck has a switched AC outlet (intended for the tuner in automatic broadcast recording with a timer), we plugged the 510B into it and thereafter ignored the back-panel on/off switch. The 450 has two pairs of output jacks; we connected one to the 510B and the other to our stereo system. (For decks with only one output pair, a Y connector can be used.) Then we played a Dolby reference tape on the 450 and adjusted sensitivity of the 510B to trip the LED representing -2 dB at this signal level in order to put the 0-dB indication near the DIN reference of 250 nanowebers per meter. That completed the calibration of the 510—as long as we didn’t diddle with the output level controls on the 450.

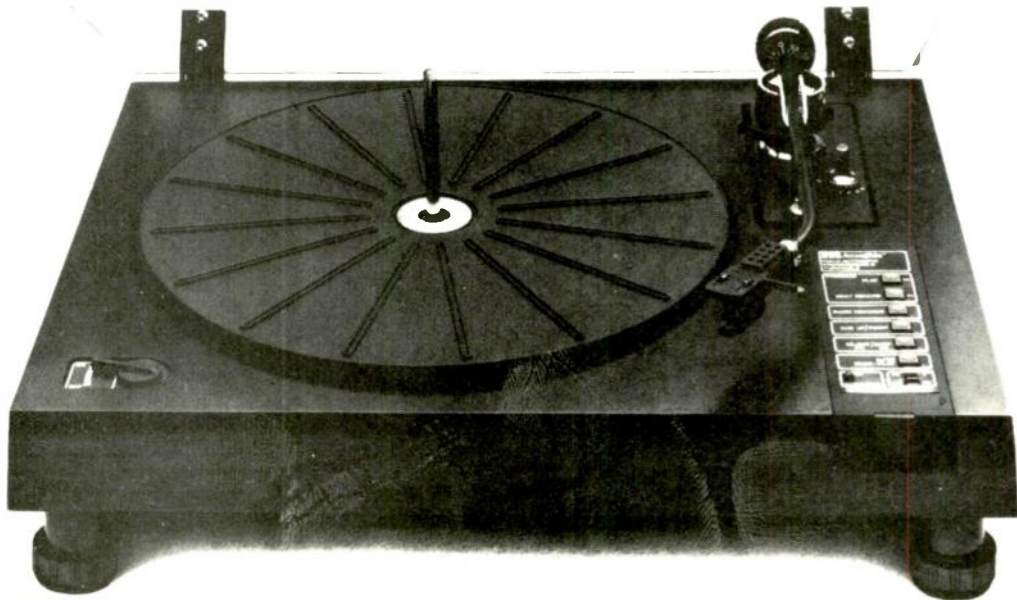
We find it easiest to make mental allowance for the headroom properties of individual tape/recorder combinations (allowing readings 2 or 3 dB higher for a “super” tape than for a more modest formulation), though it would be entirely possible, after a little experimentation, for you to come up with a specific calibration point for each combination and readjust the 510B each time you switch tapes. But, however you approach that question, the display itself does an admirably quick and consistent job of reading the signals you feed it. Its response is essentially flat, in DSL tests, from 10 Hz to 20 kHz. (Its sensitivity increases by about 1 dB between there and around 100 kHz, gradually rolling off above, but there should be no signal to be read in that range.) The LEDs in our test sample fire within about ½ dB of their calibration points. Crosstalk is better than the 45-dB range of the display can read; with one channel driven hard enough to light its +6 LED, even the -39 LED does not glimmer on the other. The adjustment range allows inputs as low as 36 millivolts to read 0 dB, but at no setting does internally generated noise light any of the LEDs. And the input impedance (8,500 ohms minimum, at the maximum sensitivity setting) should be high enough to avoid significantly loading down typical circuitry to which it might be attached. The calibration system, perhaps, leaves something to be desired in that it is sensitive to AC line voltage, but we think the recorder itself should be a more useful source of a setup level reference in most home systems anyway.

More important, the 510B really does upgrade the precision with which we can record on older machines. Intelligent setup—from whatever reference—is a must, of course, putting a premium on your understanding of your recorder, your tapes, and their concerted capabilities. By the same token, this sort of knowledge quickly leads to dissatisfaction with the less capable built-in metering schemes and encourages use of a more precise, informative display. The Audio Technology 510B is the best add-on for that purpose we have found on the home market.

Circle 132 on Page 117

Introducing Accuglide™. The computerized remote control turntable.

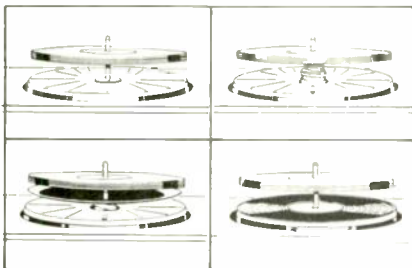
**It provides hours of viewing pleasure.
(You read it right. Viewing pleasure.)**



Even before you enjoy listening to Accuglide™, you're going to want to spend time just watching it. Because Accuglide performs like no other turntable you've ever seen.

Watch Accuglide's unique rotary spindle raise and lower your records like an elevator. So your hard rock doesn't drop on "Madame Butterfly."

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In fact, no other record changing system is as gentle. So your records couldn't be in better hands. Not even your own.

Accuglide's remote control lets you play the "Hallelujah Chorus" from across your living room. Hallelujah!

Now, listening to relaxing music can really be relaxing. Thanks to Accuglide's remote control you can play your favorite music without jumping up and down.

In fact, you can even raise and lower the volume from 40 feet away. So you won't be hassled by your neighbors if you want to play a hustle at 11 PM.

Play it again, Sam, is only one of 27 commands you can give Accuglide.

Simply press the right buttons on the Accuglide turntable or its remote control, and Accuglide's built-in computer stores up to 27 different commands.

So, you can change a record, reject it (you didn't like that one

anyway), raise the tone arm (so you can answer the phone), then resume play without missing a beat, repeat it (because now you want to hear it without any interruptions), then raise your records back to starting position so you can start all over again.

Accuglide's tubular "J" shaped tone arm is superbly balanced for exceptional tracking. And comes with a precision ADC magnetic cartridge with elliptical diamond stylus. Plus, the belt-drive Accuglide has the kind of specs you'd expect to find in the finest turntables. Like Wow and Flutter that's less than .04% WRMS and Rumble that's better than -66dB (DIN 45539B).

And if you think all this sounds good, how does this sound?

You can have all this viewing and listening pleasure for a song.



BSR Accuglide™ The computerized remote control turntable.

DIRECTIONS

To solve these puzzles—and they aren't as tough as they first seem—supply as many of the Output words as you can in the numbered dashes following the Input. Unless otherwise specified in the Input, the Output consists of one English word. "Comp." means compound, or hyphenated, word.

Transfer each letter to the square in the diagram that bears the corresponding number. After only a few correct guesses you should begin to see words and phrases emerging in the diagram, which when filled in will contain a quotation related to music, recordings, or audio.

The words in the quotation are separated by darkened squares and do not necessarily end at the end of a row.

Try to guess at these words and transfer each newly decoded letter back to its appropriate dash in the Output. This will supply you with further clues.

A final clue: The source of the quotation—the author and his work—will be spelled out by the first letters in Output, reading down.

The answer to HIFI-Crostic No. 48 will appear in next month's issue of HIGH FIDELITY

E 1	J 2	M 3	S 4	R 5		U 6	W 7	X 8	T 9	L 10	V 11	Y 12	O 13	M 14	
K 15	G 16		C 17	E 18	U 19	X 20	L 21	I 22		D 23	N 24	O 25	M 26	O 27	
H 28	A 29	R 30	X 31	C 32		E 33	K 34		L 35	J 36	G 37	W 38	U 39		S 40
Y 41	V 42	T 43	E 44	X 45	F 46		V 47	U 48	R 49		G 50	P 51		B 52	M 53
K 54	N 55	L 56	X 57	E 58	W 59		R 60	I 61	C 62		S 63	A 64	O 65	K 66	V 67
	T 68	L 69		W 70	I 71		P 72	R 73	X 74	E 75		M 76	N 77	D 78	U 79
	E 80	S 81		J 82	M 83		G 84	X 85	O 86	L 87	V 88	K 89	I 90	X 91	
S 92	V 93		M 94	P 95	Y 96	L 97		T 98	U 99	L 100		E 101	X 102	R 103	
K 104	V 105		S 106	G 107		B 108	A 109	O 110		Y 111	I 112	S 113	W 114		U 115
O 116	T 117	G 118		M 119	R 120	X 121	P 122	O 123		D 124	L 125	E 126		A 127	F 128
J 129	S 130		O 131	X 132	D 133		O 134	I 135	E 136		R 137	Y 138	G 139	K 140	
N 141	H 142		E 143	U 144	X 145	L 146	M 147	V 148	G 149	N 150	J 151		K 152	P 153	T 154
R 155	O 156	M 157	E 158		C 159		U 160	X 161	L 162	M 163	J 164	G 165	I 166		A 167
W 168	H 169	K 170	U 171	Y 172		I 173	B 174	E 175	J 176	L 177	N 178	V 179		G 180	X 181
M 182	O 183		R 184	T 185	A 186		I 187	O 188	U 189		L 190	V 191	K 192	P 193	E 194
Y 195	N 196		G 197	F 198	U 199	X 200	M 201	S 202	L 203						

INPUT

A. "L'Abandon d'_____;" Milhaud; "_____ at Barbe-Bleue." Dukas

B. Acoustician Beranek

C. See Word H.

D. Cellist Claus

E. Requiem (4 wds.)

F. Purpose

G. Melchior or Windgassen (Ger.)

H. With Word C., a simple Catholic rite

I. Weber opera

J. "The Old _____," Kreisler arrangement

K. Four Couperin sonatas, recorded by Telefunken (2 Fr. wds.)

L. Austrian conductor, with the Boston Symphony 1962-69 (full name)

M. Opera by Richard Strauss (3 wds.)

N. With Word R., Britten opera (2 wds.)

O. French intermission

P. Amelia's husband

Q. "Pressed into service means pressed out of _____" -Robert Frost

R. See Word N. (3 wds.)

S. Salzburg "Haus" (Ger.)

T. Old French dance with no notes shorter than eighth notes

U. Rolling Stones hit taken over by Tina Turner (3 wds.)

V. Meter to measure acoustical frequencies

W. A clef

X. Movie with music by Prokofiev (2 wds.)

Y. Late nineteenth-century Italian opera style

OUTPUT

167 186 64 29 109 127

52 174 108

17 159 62 32

78 133 124 23

175 1 143 101 158 18 44 194 80 58 75 136 33 126

128 198 46

197 84 139 149 118 37 107 180 50 16 165

28 142 169

90 112 173 166 61 22 187 135 71

129 164 2 151 176 82 36

140 192 54 34 170 89 104 152 15 66

56 21 177 190 10 97 87 35 125 162 100 69 146 203

163 119 182 83 53 157 201 14 3 76 26 94 147

141 77 150 55 24 196 178

156 183 123 65 116 27 134 13

122 95 153 193 72 51

25 188 131 86 110

73 184 49 60 120 155 30 5 103 137

63 4 113 92 130 40 106 81 202

43 98 117 185 9 68 154

144 99 19 189 39 199 171 79 115 48 160 6

179 67 191 93 47 42 88 11 148 105

114 59 7 70 168 38

121 74 102 85 45 132 91 8 145 57 20 181 200 31 161

12 96 41 138 172 111 195

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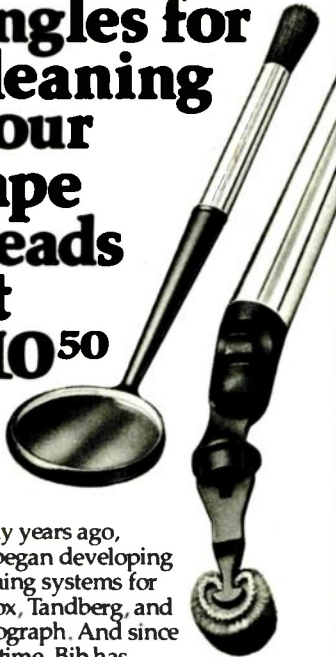
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The kit includes an inspection mirror, fluffy brush, head cleaning fluid, and 3 extra snap-on tips. And it comes in a velvet-lined hard plastic case.

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China Boosters

It is not my habit to write fan letters, but I must thank you for Leonard Marcus' article "China Chronicles" [August].

Having been involved in music and music education for the past thirty years, I appreciated his interesting and vivid description of the cultural life of a people about whom we still know far too little.

Henry Pordes
Cantor & Music Director
Narberth, Pa.

We greatly enjoyed Leonard Marcus' candid comments on his trip to the People's Republic of China. We toured China shortly after he did and, like him, were fascinated by the mixture of traditional and Western music and by the valiant efforts to make up for the loss of talented performers during the latter part of the Cultural Revolution.

Musically speaking, the high point of our visit was the performance of *Swan Lake* by the Beijing Ballet, featuring China's leading ballerina, Bai Shuxiang, in the Odette-Odile role as her comeback to the stage after an eight-year absence caused by the Gang of Four. The Chinese *Swan Lake* followed the Soviet formula—including a Jester to comment on the behavior of the aristocrats and ending happily for the hero and heroine.

Ted and Ida Thau
Salinas, Calif.

Marcus said that his old college housemate, now a top official in the Chinese Foreign Ministry, had his face shown all over the U.S. in the press and on TV when he accompanied Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping [Teng Hsiao-ping] to this country. Why didn't you show us what he looks like?

Dr. Benjamin Nerenberg
Los Gatos, Calif.



Editor Leonard Marcus with onetime housemate Ji Chaozhu (Chi Chao-chu) in a reunion at the Peking Hotel.

Subscription Recording

I would like to hear from readers who are interested in forming a club spe-

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at Columbia & RCA
by David Rosenthal
A glimpse of some hoarded
treasures—and why
they languish unheard**

**Best Records of 1979—
International record critics
do their stuff**

cializing in recordings of the neglected, lesser-known, and in some cases unknown classical music repertory. Operating expenses would be covered by members' subscriptions prior to recording sessions.

The Opera Rara Club of England functions in this manner. It should be possible to carry over its success to symphonic music if enough music lovers respond to this idea.

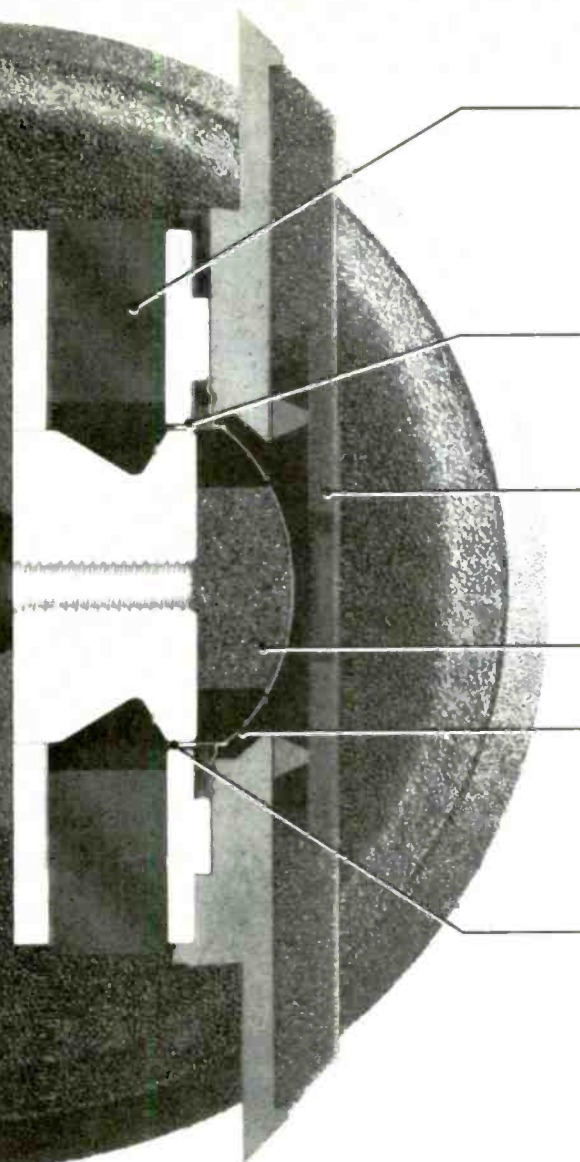
Alex F. Soave
192 Central Park Rd.
Plainview, N.Y. 11803

Guthrie and Shenandoah

Sam Sutherland is correct in saying that Arlo Guthrie fans would be charmed by "Outlasting the Blues" [BACKBEAT, September]. This Guthrie fan was also charmed by Sutherland's sensitive review. I especially appreciated his remark about Guthrie's backup band, Shenandoah. Maybe I'm prejudiced (being from the same neck of the woods as these people), but having had the opportunity to see them play with and without Arlo over the past several years, I've been quite impressed with their musical talent as well as their stage manner. I wouldn't be surprised if this band turned out to be another *The Band*.

Jessie Rose
Pittsfield, Mass.

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The Super-Dome™ tweeter in the new generation of Interface speakers represents an extraordinary development in speaker design. Electro-Voice engineers have developed the first high-performance tweeter capable of matching the high efficiency and extended bass response found in our optimally vented, computer designed Interface:A. Super-Dome has the sonic excellence normally associated with a dome tweeter and the efficiency heretofore found only in cone tweeters – two to four times that found in a standard dome. Plus, its voice coil will withstand a full 25 watts power input long term. That's *five times* the power handling capacity of other standard dome or cone tweeters.

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Circle 59 on Page 117

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AN APPEAL TO READERS

From time to time we are asked for advice about how to integrate audio equipment into a home (or other) setting, and it strikes us that there is no better source anywhere for such advice than HIGH FIDELITY's readers themselves. So we are soliciting photographs—color or black and white—of your audio installation, together with a detailed description and some information as to why you believe it a particularly successful union of equipment, room, and decor, how solutions to the problems you encountered in assembling, interfacing, and generally meeting your particular needs can be of help to others, or whatever. If the results warrant, HF plans to publish the most interesting responses in our pages or in some other form. We will return your photographs when we finish with them, if you so specify. And don't feel limited to the parlor: We will consider installations in cars, vans, boats, ski lodges, and woodsheds—and basement or garage recording-studio setups particularly—if they are marked by sufficient imagination. Send your material to the Editorial Director, HF, Great Barrington, Mass. 01230.

Cleaner One: Correction

Your August issue contains a serious misstatement: [In "High Fidelity News"] you describe Transcriber's Cleaner One record cleaner as "ten times purer than water-based fluids." Our literature states rather that it is ten times purer than *distilled* water-based fluids. Because you omitted the word "distilled," the implication is that our fluid is not water-based, but rather utilizes some other base ingredient.

As our approach to record care is "less is more"—i.e., ultra-purification of the water with minimal chemical presence—it is quite disturbing to have the opposite impression created. Naturally, it is frustrating to see our product misrepresented, however unintentionally, to the consumer.

John Sheasgreen

Vice President & General Manager
Transcriber Company, Inc.
Attleboro, Mass.

The Divine Sarah

I read with great interest the letter from Nicholas Pietroforte concerning the translation of *Die schöne Müllerin* and Andrew Porter's reply [July]. I have long been against translation of vocal works, for all the usual reasons. But I am forced to make an exception for the work of Sarah Binks, the "Sweet Songstress of the Saskatchewan," as reported by her biographer, Paul Hiebert. One short example will show how

discover . . .



The inside story of a classic.

Introducing a new type of record cleaner. Meet the CLASSIC 1, the only cleaner of its kind. Developed to satisfy you, the discriminating audiophile.

Neutralizing the static charges that attract and hold destructive micro-particles of dust and dirt on your record's surface is one of the major problems in record care.

Ordinary cleaners attempt to reduce static charges by applying fluid directly to the surface of the record or cleaning unit. Direct application of fluid involves an inherent risk of harmful residue build-up and should be avoided except in the case of abnormally dirty or greasy records. In fact, normal maintenance should not involve wetting the record.

At last, the CLASSIC 1 has the answer to safe and effective cleaning. Not only are static charges reduced, but the problem of residue formation is eliminated. Cleaning is safe and effective because inside the CLASSIC 1 is



the exclusive MICRO STOR SYSTEM which utilizes a humidification/cleaning process rather than a 'wet' technique.

The secret to the MICRO STOR SYSTEM is a permeable matrix of many thousands of tiny glass beads which retain the cleaning fluid. Through capillary action, a vapor penetrates the velvet surface creating a field of humidity sufficient to reduce static charges. Disc contaminants can now be removed safely and easily without wetting the record and risking residue build-up.

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Circle 22 on Page 117

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Circle 27 on Page 117

her translations stand out from the crowded field:

You are like one flower
So swell, so good and clean
I look you on and longing
Slinks me the heart between.

The rest of this poem is translated in an even more indescribable manner, as is her version of *Die Lorelei*. Surely Mr. Porter would have included the Divine Sarah's work in his list had he known of it. Unfortunately, translations occupied Madame Binks for a relatively short time as she progressed along her unique path to Parnassus, and her biographer tends to slight her efforts, which perhaps explains the relative obscurity of her great work.

Gerry Craig
Scarborough, Ont., Canada

Ellington Star Brown

First it was a rival magazine's critic; now *HIGH FIDELITY* jazz doyen John S. Wilson makes a silly statement about the Ellington band [*BACKBEAT* review of "Unknown Session," July]. Wilson writes that Lawrence Brown "was not featured as frequently as some of the other Ellington stars in the band's heyday." From 1933 to 1942, the band's real heyday, Brown took as many solos as Bigard, Hodges, Carney, and Williams, and more than Nanton, Hardwicke, Stewart, Tizol, and Greer. He was featured on slow blues such as "Moon Mist," almost all ballads, and up-tempo tracks such as "Rose of the Rio Grande." "Rose of the Rio Grande."

Donald R. Hanson
Honolulu, Hawaii

Fidelio Broadcast

In his review of the Met's *Fidelio* [July], Dale Harris mentions a 1950 version of the opera conducted by Wilhelm Fürtwangler. How may one get this recording?

Molly Rice
Des Plaines, Ill.

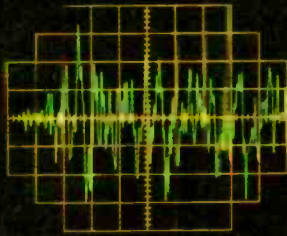
The recording can be obtained through DiscoCorp, P.O. Box 771, Berkeley, Calif. 94701.

HIGH FIDELITY welcomes correspondence from its readers that falls within the scope of our coverage—music, recordings, audio componentry, and aspects of the general cultural milieu that relate to these. Letters may be edited in order to sharpen their sense and style and to pare their length, and we suggest therefore that correspondents confine themselves to 400 words. Please keep 'em comin' to the Editor, *High Fidelity Magazine*, The Publishing House, Great Barrington, Mass. 01230.

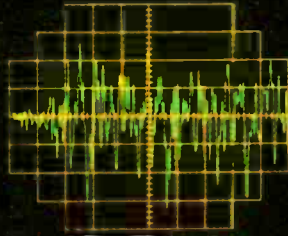
Circle 62 on Page 117 ▶

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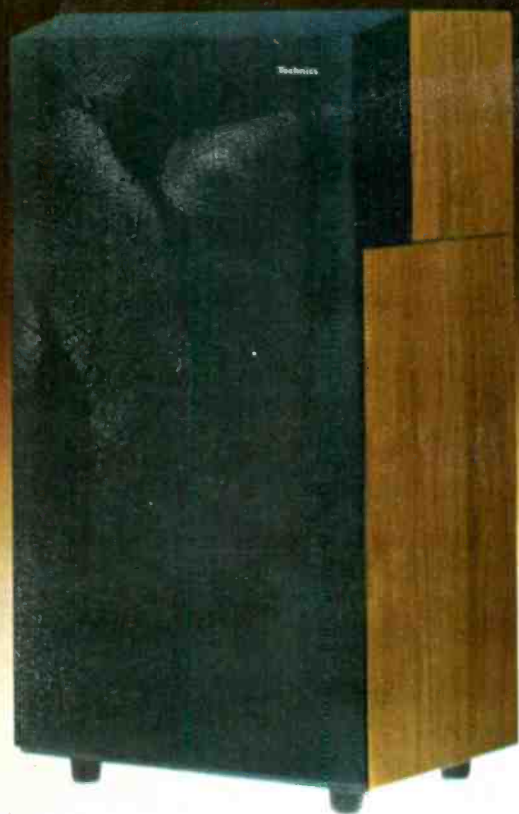
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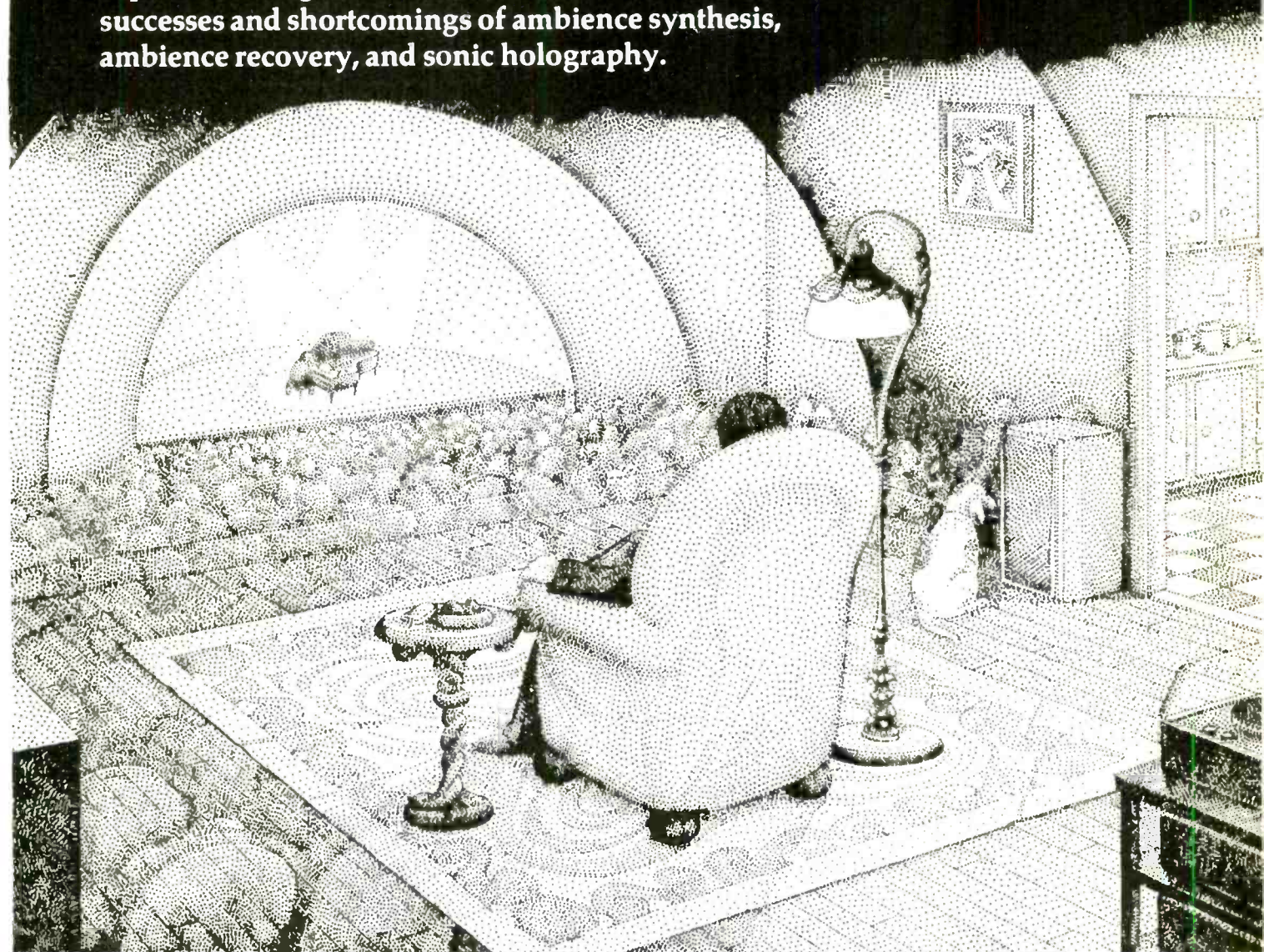


* Return to Sound Guard, P.O. Box 5003, Muncie, IN 47302. Offer expires April 30, 1980.

Circle 54 on Page 117

Ambience and Space: Six Experts on the State of the Stereo Art

A panel of designers and manufacturers debates the successes and shortcomings of ambience synthesis, ambience recovery, and sonic holography.



Ambience synthesizers represent one of the most talked-of recent developments in high fidelity, yet few people understand the intent of these magical little boxes. To shed some light on them, Robert Long, HIGH FIDELITY's audio-video editor, invited six of the leading proponents of ambience synthesis to a round-table discussion of the sonic rationale for such enhancement. Participating in the session, held one evening during last June's Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago, were Bob Carver, pres-

ident, Carver Corporation; Joel Cohen, president and chief engineer, Sound Concepts; Don Cole, vice president, Audio Pulse Electronics; Anthony Federici, president, Peter Scheiber Sonics; Peter Mitchell, free-lance consultant to Analog and Digital Systems; and Andy Petite, formerly of the Advent Corporation, now vice president of Boston Acoustics, Inc.

HIGH FIDELITY: What does enhanced ambience contribute to normal stereo re-

production, and how does this enhanced sound relate to the recorded acoustics? **Mitchell:** High fidelity equipment is good enough to reproduce with a very high degree of accuracy the sound of musical instruments, singing voices, and so on. The real difficulty, however, is replicating the sense of space one experiences at live performances. Whether it's in a club with walls 30 feet apart or a symphony hall with walls 100 feet apart, at a live performance you can sense with your eyes closed the size of the space



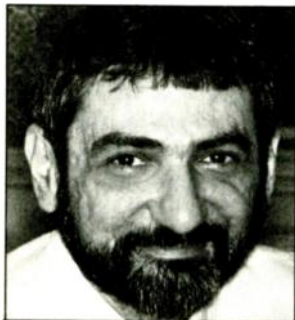
"The goal is to create an illusion of acoustic space."

Peter Mitchell



"We are very nervous about making any allusion to quad because of its stigma."

Don Cole



"Many people create absurd effects with delay units."

Joel Cohen

that you're in. The time-delay systems that are on the market now have two goals: first, to extract from recordings that sense of the ambience of the large environment that is already present in them and to reproduce it more accurately than can be done with just a stereo pair of speakers; and second, when there is inadequate or inappropriate ambience included in the recording, to give the listener the option of synthesizing more in order to create a sense of a larger space. Both of these modes of operation—ambience recovery and synthesis—are available in most existing time-delay systems.

HF: You say that time-delay devices can *extract* ambience from a recording, but isn't a time-delay unit really synthesizing ambience?

Mitchell: Only in part. In any sort of stereo reproduction, we are really talking about illusion-making. Time-delay systems create their illusion by taking a stereo signal and reproducing it through a second pair of loudspeakers located more or less to the sides of the listener, after a delay in the 20–50 millisecond range. Ambience recovery devices, such as Scheiber Sonics' Spatial Decoder, operate by extracting the out-of-phase information in stereo recordings and routing that through a back pair of speakers. But the goal is the same—to create an illusion of space. As it happens, ADC's Model 10 contains both—a matrixing circuit as well as time-delay circuitry.

HF: Is ambience synthesis or recovery necessarily inaccurate in reproducing what the record producer put into the recording?

Cole: That depends on the producer's goal in recording the original piece.

Petite: His goal is to sell records, and he will doctor the sound in a way that he thinks will make that record salable.

Federici: There are record producers today, however, who are merely attempting to re-create on that disc what they heard at the time of the recording by using two- or three-point miking.

Carver: This can be clarified if we think of how we perceive aural space. In order to get a clear picture of what is happening on the recording we need both information on where the instruments are (localization) and an undefinable sense of the space where the recording happened (ambience).

Mitchell: One might want to emphasize

that they are exactly opposite in character. Localization should be specific, ambience should be nonlocalized.

Carver: That's right. Ambience tells us something about the environment. Localization tells us something about the sounds that we are listening to.

Cohen: And the goal is to have both in proper proportion.

HF: Granted, but Andy said that the producer's purpose is to sell records—to make a specific sound that will sell. Especially in rock recordings, where the original recording environment is a series of sound booths, of what use are ambience enhancers and how can they contribute to the reproduction of *accurate* sound?

Petite: I think that there are a lot of very dry recordings, particularly studio recordings, that benefit from ambience synthesis. Actually, I prefer the term "room expansion." What I've been involved with in my work with Advent has been a matter of trying to replace the small-room acoustics of most listening environments with a sense of a much larger space.

Carver: A believable illusion then, however obtained, is okay with you?

Petite: Yes. Many dry studio recordings do benefit from the illusion of a larger space. We were amazed when we listened to the original recording of "Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" through a time delay. It was recorded in the most simplistic kind of stereo; two of the performers are on one channel, two on the other, and the extra-musical effects float somewhere in between. The realism of those effects was startling when we played the record through a "room expander"—surely much closer to what the producer intended. It really benefited from being played through a "room expander." Federici: Before the word "benefited" can be used, one has to accept that any tampering with the actual signal itself can be beneficial. And there one can get into a lot of problems.

Petite: But most time-delay devices don't tamper with the original stereo signal. That still goes untouched to the front speakers. They create the effect of a larger space by means of a delayed signal fed to two rear speakers. The whole thing started sometime in the late '50s, when Aeolian Skinner, the organ manufacturer, responded to the requests of a

number of its customers to make the pipe organs that had been installed in small churches sound as if they were much larger. Skinner actually came up with a system using, I believe, thirteen channels of delay. The techniques used were not terribly reliable (mostly tape delay), but they were able to simulate the sound of a large cathedral in a room not much larger than an ordinary living space. I never heard that system, but Ed[gar] Villchur of AR and Henry Kloss did, and they both described it as being the most exciting reproduced sonic experience they ever had. I believe that AR's interest in four-channel reproduction stemmed from Villchur's impression of that demonstration. And I think a properly done time-delay system, using modern techniques, really goes a long way toward providing a more realistic experience. While time delays are not capable of reproducing the specific sound of a Symphony Hall or a Carnegie Hall, the effect is still a lot better than two-channel stereo.

Cole: Our approach at Audio Pulse has been to model as many surfaces as possible of an illusionary concert hall with the lowest possible distortion. Our newest time-delay device has six delays that model the rear, top, both sides, bottom, and stage walls. Ten or fifteen years from now, when computing power is cheaper, you'll probably be able to model 200 acoustic surfaces. If you want to reproduce the sound of La Scala as opposed to Symphony Hall, all you'll have to do is insert a card encoded with La Scala's particular acoustic surfaces—including proscenium arches, fire escape doors, and so on—into a multichannel delay device. But, for now, the idea of letting the user determine what is the appropriate space for a particular recording helps in the formation of the illusion of a larger space. From the time you are born, you acquire a feel for the acoustic space you live in. Bathtubs sound like bathtubs, shower stalls like shower stalls, because you've been in them. When you listen to cabaret music in a cabaret, it sounds real because you look around and you can see that you're in a 50-foot room; you hear the same group playing on a record made at the same cabaret with good miking, and it doesn't sound the same. You might not be able to define the difference consciously, but the difference does exist. Our job, as any

magician knows, is to create a believable illusion of that cabaret environment. And we think that the user needs to have control over the degree of delay because he's the one comparing the recorded sound with his own model of reality—not the recording engineer's model, not the composer's, but his own sense of what a specific environment should sound like.

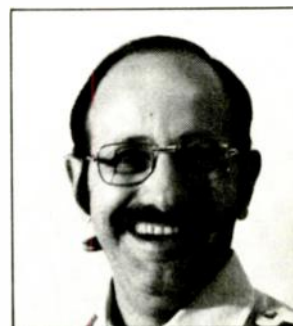
Federici: Doesn't the effect depend on how perceptive the listener is as to whether or not the illusion is actually being created?

Cole: No. You don't have to be an optical mathematician to know that if you close one eye you lose some information. You don't have to understand the process to appreciate it.

Cohen: Unfortunately, many people are not very perceptive, and they deliberately create absurd effects with delay units. We have people constantly coming and listening to our device, and they don't know what they're hearing. They say, "You want me to spend all this money, and I can't hear it." And we say, "Well, you're not supposed to be aware of the ambience as such, any more than you are at a live concert." We sell a little delay unit intended for car use, and it's capable of generating very loud levels in the rear channel and fairly extraordinary delays. I find people who own it driving around with the rear channels much louder than the front and the delay shoved way up—a totally unnatural effect. They bought the equipment, and they want to hear it working. All of our talk about accuracy presupposes that the user will not abuse the equipment.

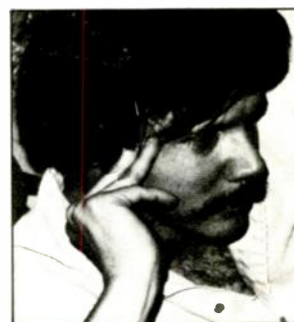
Federici: Our approach at Scheiber Sonics is to re-create the sound field that existed at the time of the recording, or the sound field that was artificially supplied at the time of the recording. Subjectively, we aim for accuracy in imaging and localization in 360 degrees of space. If, in a live recording you are playing through our system, someone shouts from the audience, you can point to where the shout came from and even approximate the distance from which it came. With some well-phased recordings, if there was someone rustling a program directly behind a mike during the concert, that sound will appear to come from behind the listener's seat.

HF: Since the Scheiber name in the past has been associated with a four-channel



"A properly done time-delay system goes a long way toward providing a more realistic experience."

Andy Petite



"Ambience tells us something about the recording's environment; localization tells us something about the sounds we are listening to."

Bob Carver



"We aim for accuracy in imaging and localization in 360 degrees of space."

Anthony Federici

Ambience devices on the cover: (from bottom to top) Audio Pulse Model 1000 Digital Time Delay; Carver Corporation Model C-4000 Sonic Holography-Autocorrelation Preamplifier; Sound Concepts Model SD-550 Ambience Restoration System; Scheiber Sonics 360-Degree Spatial Decoder; ADS Model 10-01 Acoustic Dimension Synthesizer; Advent Model 500 SoundSpace Control.

matrixing and dematrixing approach, can we get a clarification as to whether your present product is explicitly designed to work with two-channel material or is it also designed to work with SQ-encoded material?

Federici: It will function with SQ, but it's primarily designed to work with two-channel stereo sources. Our device picks up the differences in amplitude and phase between the two channels and translates it through a matrix into directionality. If you give it a mono signal, it can do nothing.

Cole: Is the effect the same with all source material, or is it variable with the inherent quality of the disc?

Federici: It varies with what's done at the time of the recording. If the recording was done with three-point miking, you will get more natural ambience; multi-miking will result in the same amount of ambience, but the perspective of the instruments will be inherently artificial.

HF: What happens on a record where each voice and instrument is miked separately?

Federici: Even if each is miked separately, there is some reverberation.

Those out-of-phase signals, once put through the matrix, are restored to the degree that you do not get any strange sounds popping up behind you.

HF: What about the Carver holographic generator? It seems to be getting a lot of attention, but what does it do, spatially, in reproducing records?

Carver: Using the amplitude and phase information that's on the record, it creates a believable illusion of the vector space that was associated with the recording. The effect is accomplished using just two front speakers.

Mitchell: Would it be correct to say that the Scheiber approach is attempting to re-create a 360-degree sound field and that the sonic hologram is primarily aiming at a frontal half circle?

Carver: No. Ideally, the sonic hologram will create a complete vector space field for each ear. In the Scheiber system you

have four speakers surrounding you and these vectors add up in space. As you move around, the vectors change; there's a different field for different points in the room. In a live performance, if I sit in one spot, the vector associated with that point in space can be defined; it has amplitude and direction. That's really not much information, but your ear/brain, being as magical as it is, takes that limited information and gives you a picture of the world out there in all its glorious reality. My goal in the sonic hologram is to re-create that very simple set of vectors. If my device does a complete job, it will re-create the 360-degree sound field. It turns out, however, that there are some constraints that make it impossible to get real 360-degree sound, but we come pretty close.

Mitchell: As I see it, sonic holography and time delay are complementary approaches. The sonic hologram can provide, perhaps, a more accurate resolution of the spatial quality of the original sound sources in the arc in front of the listener. But I think you still need something to fill in the omnidirectional space around the listener.

Carver: Exactly. That's why the sonic hologram preamp also has a built-in time-delay device to provide a reverberant signal to two rear speakers.

Federici: But if you're reproducing the 360 degrees of space as you stated, why do you want to add artificial reverberation?

Carver: There's just not enough information on a regular stereo record to allow complete regeneration of that 360-degree space. The hologram gives a very believable illusion of exact instrumental localization, and the time delay fills in with the necessary ambience.

HF: What about Sound Concept's approach to ambience?

Cohen: We set out to make something that could be added to a stereo system to provide an enhanced effect without destroying anything that was there already. That, to me, is a tough job. As a result we ended up with a device that is almost a pure delay line. We made it variable because we found that the "reality" of the apparent extraction depends on matching the ambience to the listening room and speakers. The illusion that it creates is that the direct sound stays where it was originally, up front, but the ambient, or longer-lasting, sound is peeled off the front wall and appears to fill the room. While we don't manipulate the front

channels, we do maintain coherence between the ambience channels, which seems to solidify the stereo image in front. We don't claim our unit can transport the listener to the concert hall of his choice. We drew that line based on the fact that we didn't feel we could come up with a system that accomplished such an effect without creating detrimental side effects. We did put some artificial reverberation capacity into the machine. Interestingly, ours has the simplest reverberation of any device available in that we are using a single delay, but we do provide filtering and limiting to prevent the reverberation from becoming disagreeable. Our pride in the device rests on the fact that it adds significant spatial enhancement without inhibiting the quality of the total system.

HF: How do you accomplish the delay in the Sound Concepts device?

Cohen: We use analog shift registers, or bucket brigades, and surround them with a compander and other circuitry to make the sound quality a good deal better than a lot of the digital techniques that cost more to implement. But no one technology, bucket brigade or digital, is inherently better than the other. The techniques themselves are really not important.

Cole: Yes. Each technique can be a poor performer or a good one, depending on the engineering.

HF: It seems that, with the possible exception of the sonic hologram, you all are aiming toward the ultimate quadraphonic sound system.

Cole: Oh, don't use that word! Quadraphonics is not a technique; it is a name. Four-channel sound still offers as big an improvement as stereo does over mono. Maybe thirty years from now it'll be normal to have seventeen speakers in your home, and everybody will think that's what's natural. The original four-channel AR tapes in the '60s were dynamite. But the manufacturers—of both equipment and source material—hyped the effect to absurd levels. There is nothing wrong with quad except its bad name. If somebody carried the banner and said we're going to use four-channel technology as it was originally intended, we would not need digital time-delay units or sonic holograms. As manufacturers, I think we are very nervous about making any allusion to quad because of the stigma attached to it, but the concept of four-channel sound is what most of us are still really talking about. **HF**

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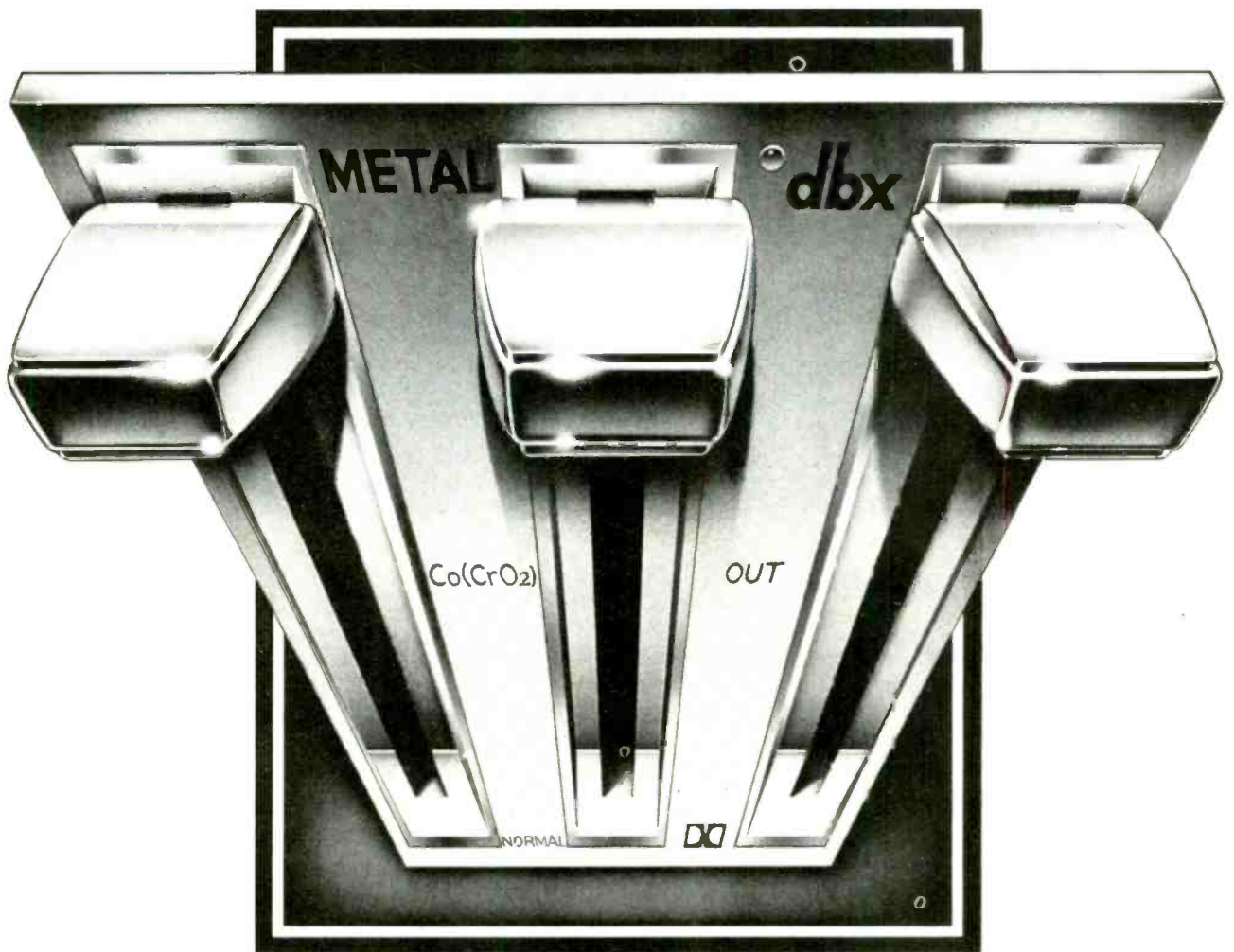
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It may seem strange to begin a tribute by saying that I did not know Walter Legge at all closely until he was in retirement. We had encounters in 1951 and 1956, but it was not until we were fellow jurors in the first Karajan competition in 1968 that we began to spend much more time together. By then I was out of recording and in television—about which, so far as music was concerned, Walter had grave doubts, although its audience potential tantalized him. “You may get millions of viewers,” he would say, “but how many of them can tell the difference between the excellent and the second-rate? And if they are persuaded to accept the second-rate as excellent, what damage are you doing?”

Most of the descriptions of Legge are true. He was vain, arrogant, intolerant, and utterly brilliant. Any account he gave of the many artists he discovered carefully omitted the names of those who either had not been successful or had, for one reason or another, deserted him. Yet I think there has been no comparable artistic force in the history of the record industry. It is easy to forget how vulnerable he must have been in his early days. He joined His Master’s Voice (now EMI) at twenty-one as a writer of the equivalent to today’s album notes. He had no formal training and could not play, sing, or conduct (although he may have drawn comfort from the knowledge that Elgar, Beecham, and Walton, among others, were largely self-taught). In any case, Walter Legge would never have survived long in academic circles: His kind of perception was intuitive. He maintained a slightly arrogant contempt for most academics all his life, not because of what they were, but because so many of them would insist on performing in public despite their lack of performance flair. He would not have crossed the road to hear an academically “authentic” performance of *Messiah*, but he would have walked several miles to hear Beecham conduct his corrupt but uplifting version. Legge could accept almost anything except the artistically dull.

At twenty-five he invented the idea of limited editions, covered by subscription only, for repertoire of slight general appeal. HMV, to its great credit, gave him his head, and the first volume to appear consisted of Hugo Wolf songs sung by Elena Gerhardt. From then on

Walter Legge: An Appreciation

Two decades ago, Walter Legge of EMI/Angel and John Culshaw of Decca/London were arguably the most prominent international record producers. Legge died last March, aged seventy-two. Here Culshaw, a contributing editor for this magazine, reminisces about his older compatriot, judging that “there has been no comparable artistic force in the history of the record industry.”



Walter Legge and his wife, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, aboard ship in the early Fifties



Some artists whose recording careers were launched or accelerated by Legge: Wanda Landowska . . .



Artur Schnabel . . .



Herbert von Karajan . . .

until the outbreak of war, the Society editions, as they were called, flourished. Edwin Fischer recorded Bach's forty-eight preludes and fugues, Artur Schnabel all the Beethoven piano sonatas, and Fritz Kreisler the ten violin sonatas. Wanda Landowska played Bach, Couperin, and Scarlatti. Beecham conducted Delius and Sibelius, and as the operation expanded it took in those marvelous Glyndebourne productions of *Figaro*, *Così*, and *Don Giovanni* along with a Berlin recording of *Zauberflöte*, also conducted by Beecham.

The quest for excellence had become Legge's hallmark by the time he was thirty, but what was even more remarkable was that he had gained the total confidence of those many years his senior. Let there be no mistake about it: Legge was not one to sit in the control room following the notes and pronouncing on their accuracy or otherwise. He may have been an unknown part of the performance so far as the record buyer was concerned (producer credits were not to be granted for at least another twenty years), but in the studio he was not afraid to make known his views on phrasing and intonation and—in the case of *Lieder*—the meaningful use of words. (He had taught himself German and was fluent to the point that he could switch into almost any dialect.)

In 1938 began an interim period when he served as Beecham's artistic assistant at Covent Garden; then, during the war, he used his contacts with artists to set up concerts for the troops. He did not lose touch with EMI, and when the

war was over he began a quest for new talent. He faced a quite different scene. There was severe competition from the American companies; rumors were afloat that DG would soon resume activities and that Philips was about to enter the market; and in the United Kingdom, Decca, which had never been a serious competitor on the classical side, was emerging as a threat to EMI's near monopoly. But Legge found and launched such artists as Karajan, De Sabata, and Cantelli. He brought us Schwarzkopf (who later became his wife) and Welitsch and Seefried. He did much for Callas, Gobbi, and Christoff; and he discovered Ginette Neveu, Dinu Lipatti, and Dennis Brain, all three of whom were to die through accident or illness before their full potential could be revealed. Several of these artists had made records before, but none compared with those they made with Legge, and the list I have given is far from comprehensive.

Alongside this activity he founded and coached the Philharmonia Quartet, which eventually developed into a string orchestra whose players were drawn from the best of the youngsters in the RAF Symphony Orchestra. After the war the string orchestra grew into the full Philharmonia Orchestra, which Beecham, because of past loyalties, expected to inherit. But Beecham and Legge could no longer work in harness: They were too alike. Beecham, miffed, went off to form the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and in 1947 Legge chose Herbert von Karajan—then a relatively unknown figure—as his principal conductor. Over the

next few years came the classic recordings of *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Rosenkavalier*, *Falstaff*, and *Hänsel und Gretel*, along with much of the standard orchestral repertoire. In those years the Philharmonia was probably the best British orchestra of all time. Richard Strauss came to London to conduct it; so did Furtwängler; and so did Toscanini in his only London concerts after the war. Let us not forget that the competition was severe. The London Philharmonic, the London Symphony, the BBC Symphony, Beecham's Royal Philharmonic, and Barbirolli's Hallé Orchestra (which, immediately after the war, was considered the best in England) were not exactly asleep. Yet try as they did, the others could not compete with Legge's handpicked band. He was immensely proud of it, and rightly so; but he ruled it with an iron fist that no glove would cover, and he made more enemies than friends. He was ruthless and in a hurry; the British fondness for compromise, which is often upheld as a virtue but is more frequently an excuse for the second-rate, was beyond Legge's comprehension. A day or two after he died I mentioned to a musician that there would be a memorial service for Legge in London. "Really?" he said. "I'd have thought a Black Mass more appropriate."

My first encounter with him was in Bayreuth in 1951, when he and his EMI team were recording *Meistersinger* and Act III of *Walküre*, while in the adjoining room my Decca colleagues and I were concerned with *Parsifal*. Even at that late stage EMI was still committed to



Sir Thomas Beecham . . .



Irmgard Seefried . . .



and Guido Cantelli

78 rpm, whereas we were recording specifically for LP. Legge was incensed by EMI's technical conservatism (*Meistersinger* eventually emerged, I think, on sixty-eight 78-rpm sides), but he was loyal to his firm. As I recall, his only comment about the Decca team was expressed in one word: "Upstarts!", he snorted. We had recorded and hoped to issue the Knappertsbusch version of *Götterdämmerung*, not least because of Astrid Varnay's Brünnhilde; but as Elisabeth Schwarzkopf was singing Woglinde, there was no hope of getting agreement at the time. Now, almost thirty years later (and although in the meantime Schwarzkopf has made an as yet unreleased recording for Decca produced by Legge), there is still little hope of clearance because of the complexities in tracing members of the orchestra and chorus that took part in 1951, to say nothing of gaining permission from the estates of those artists who have since died—among them Ludwig Weber (Hagen), Hermann Uhde (Gunther), and Bernd Aldenhoff (Siegfried).

My next encounter with Legge was in 1956. Two years earlier I had accepted a post with Capitol Records to develop its classical catalog; but when, in January 1956, Capitol was taken over by EMI, I was left in a kind of limbo. In practice it meant that I would become a member of Legge's staff, which prospect I viewed with a mixture of delight and apprehension. Our one and only meeting at that time was not a success. He seemed relieved to find that I shared his lack of academic background but in-

sisted on putting me through a sort of musical quiz, of which I remember very little now but about which I teased him mercilessly in later years. He asked me what was the particular balance difficulty in the fourth measure after letter B in the first movement of Brahms's Second Symphony. I said that I couldn't remember where the letters were placed but that, if he'd give me a score, I would try to tell him the difficulty, if any. He did not care for that answer. It was, I found out, a typically unfair Legge ploy, for he had just finished recording the symphony the day before, whereas I had not seen the score for something like four years.

I moved back to Decca some months later, but we met socially on occasion and he seemed to be much more affable. I recall, however, that the defection of Karajan to Decca in 1959 infuriated him and sent him scurrying to Vienna to try to salvage the situation. It was one of his strengths and failings that he took everything personally; in other words, if he had given every ounce of his musical perception to bring about the nearest to perfection that he could imagine, it followed that an artist's loyalty to him would not deviate. He never heeded the words Sir David Webster would utter when he was general administrator at Covent Garden. "Expect anything you like," Webster used to say, "except gratitude from an artist." But I don't think it was exactly gratitude that Legge wanted, for as such it would have embarrassed him. He wanted recognition of his *uniqueness*—the fact that nobody before

him had dared to trespass on grounds that were regarded as a province of the performing artist. If, before Legge, Madame X chose to sing out of tune or to phrase badly or to mispronounce her words, then generally she would be allowed to do so; but when Legge came on the scene, Madame X would either get it right or receive a lesson on *how* to get it right. What's more, she would go on doing it *until* she got it right. In Legge's eyes, that was why the company was paying him.

He left EMI somewhat abruptly in 1964 after thirty-six years. It remains inexplicable that, with another fifteen years or so of active life before him, he was not immediately invited to produce by other companies. Representatives of one or two such companies have told me that artists refused to work with him, but while that may be true in a few cases there still were plenty who would have welcomed the chance. It was almost as if the companies were taking revenge on someone who was too big for them. Legge did not fit into any category. If to achieve what he wanted meant trouble, then he would make trouble. You could not put him on a leash.

At the same time, he disbanded the Philharmonia Orchestra in what looked then like a fit of pique. But the orchestra reassembled as the New Philharmonia and made itself available to companies other than EMI. It remained a good orchestra, but it was not (and never could be) the Philharmonia of old. What had started as a quest for perfection had turned into a bid for survival; and Legge,

having retired to Switzerland, wanted no part of it. More than a decade later the orchestra was able to drop the word "new" from its title, but still Legge remained in isolation. He had no time for "self-governing" bodies, because although he knew that self-government might well lead to more work, the concept was incompatible with the standards he had set for himself and his orchestra. If the price of a kind of democracy was a leveling down of those standards, he was not interested; what he cared about was leveling up.

We spent our longest and closest time together in 1968, when Karajan invited us to serve as jurors in the first of his international conductors' competitions in Berlin. It was a rather distinguished jury, but Walter had little time for most of his fellow members, whom he regarded as too academically inclined at the beginning and too politically slanted by the end. He was right on the second point at least, for as the semifinals approached it was clear that Eastern and Western blocs had, without any overt pressures, come into being. Walter and I stayed in the same hotel, walked to and from the hall each day, and dined together most evenings. (His choice was invariably Kempinski's because partridge, which also happens to be a passion of mine, was in season. This routine was broken only every third or fourth night, when Karajan would invite us to his favorite restaurant, called the Ritz, which was sufficiently dark and partitioned as to bring him as close to invisibility as he is ever likely to come.)

On the way to the hall on the first day Walter said: "We mustn't sit together. Otherwise they'll suspect collusion." So we always sat on opposite sides of the hall. The marking system was curious: Each juror awarded points in several categories, and when the jury assembled after each heat the points were read aloud—in other words, everyone knew how everyone else had voted. I was surprised and pleased to find how often Walter and I agreed; but when we differed, it was a huge difference. We sat together only once during the semifinals, when one of my favorite candidates was appearing. Walter did not care for him. "But," he said to me, toward the end of the first movement of Beethoven's Seventh, "at least I'll agree that, when he gets the rhythm wrong, he sticks to it." As usual on such occasions, there was a

If, before Legge, Madame X chose to sing out of tune or to mispronounce her words, then generally she would be allowed to do so; but with Legge, Madame X would either get it right or receive a lesson on how to get it right. What's more, she would go on doing it until she got it right.

quota of candidates' wives and friends, plus a handful of cranks who claimed that this conductor or that was only where he was by virtue of wholemeal bread or yogurt or some kind of meditation. As one such candidate came on, a lady leaned over Walter's shoulder and announced in a heavy Slavic accent, "He is vegetarian!" Walter scarcely turned round. "If he can conduct the piece in front of him," he said slowly, "then I don't care if he's a Seventh-day Adventist homosexual Eskimo."

Our evenings together during the competition were virtual monologues, and although I was quite content to listen, I pressed him constantly about the book he was supposed to be writing. It was a sore spot. I think he half-wanted to write it and had possibly even started to do so, but in the end he scrapped all but a few fragments. There were, I believe, several reasons for this. First, although he had a fund of anecdotes second only to Beecham's, I don't think he wanted to be remembered for such things. Second, even given his capability as a writer, I doubt whether he could have described precisely what it was that he communicated in the studio. The nearest he came to anything like that was during the master classes he and Schwarzkopf presented during his final years, but even they were not truly indicative of him. He was not a great teacher of *students*; he was a great teacher of those who thought they knew it all already. Third, I think he was inhibited by his limitations. His range of interest extended from Bach (just) to Sibelius; his focal point was in the middle of the nineteenth century. (Even there he had a few blind spots: He


once wrote something rather silly about a liking for Tchaikovsky being a sign of "musical adolescence.") I suspect that this had something to do with his being self-taught: Without the pre-Bach era and without contemporary music, he felt that he lacked something, in which case he did himself an injustice. It is quite easy to become a comprehensive musician with a little knowledge about everything from Monteverdi to Elliott Carter, but it is something else—and much more difficult—to know *Cosi* or *Tristan* or *Rosenkavalier* or Wolf's songs in the way that Walter knew them.

In 1977 he and Elisabeth joined Hans Hotter, Peter Pears, Gerald Moore, and several others to form the jury at the first international competition for *Lieder* singers held at Aldeburgh. By the end of the first day he had overturned several appercarts and stepped on numerous delicate local toes, but he was, as usual, right. The heart condition that had been troubling him for some years was kept at bay by the largest collection of multi-colored pills I have ever seen. Yet he did not allow it to limit his daily alcohol requirements or his intake of enormous cigars. ("Where's Walter gone?" was a regular question at the Maltings. "Follow the smoke trail," was the equally regular reply.)

The last time I saw him was a month or two before his death when he was dining in style with Sir John Tooley, the present general administrator of Covent Garden. He looked well, as he always did when he was hatching up something. Then, on March 22, he died. At the memorial service at St. James's Piccadilly on June 6, his own Philharmonia Chorus sang Mozart and Bruckner, the address was given joyfully by his old friend H. C. Robbins Landon, and Walter's last protégé, a young American bass-baritone called Kevin Langan, sang Wolf's *Um Mitternacht* in a way that proved that even at the end the old master had not lost his ear for a great voice in the making.

Whoever chose the reading for the service chose aptly. It was found in Old St. Paul's Church, Baltimore, and dated 1692. It ends with the words: "With all its shams, drudgery, and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy." Walter Legge, whatever he did *not* leave behind, still left more than enough to die a happy, active man. **HF**

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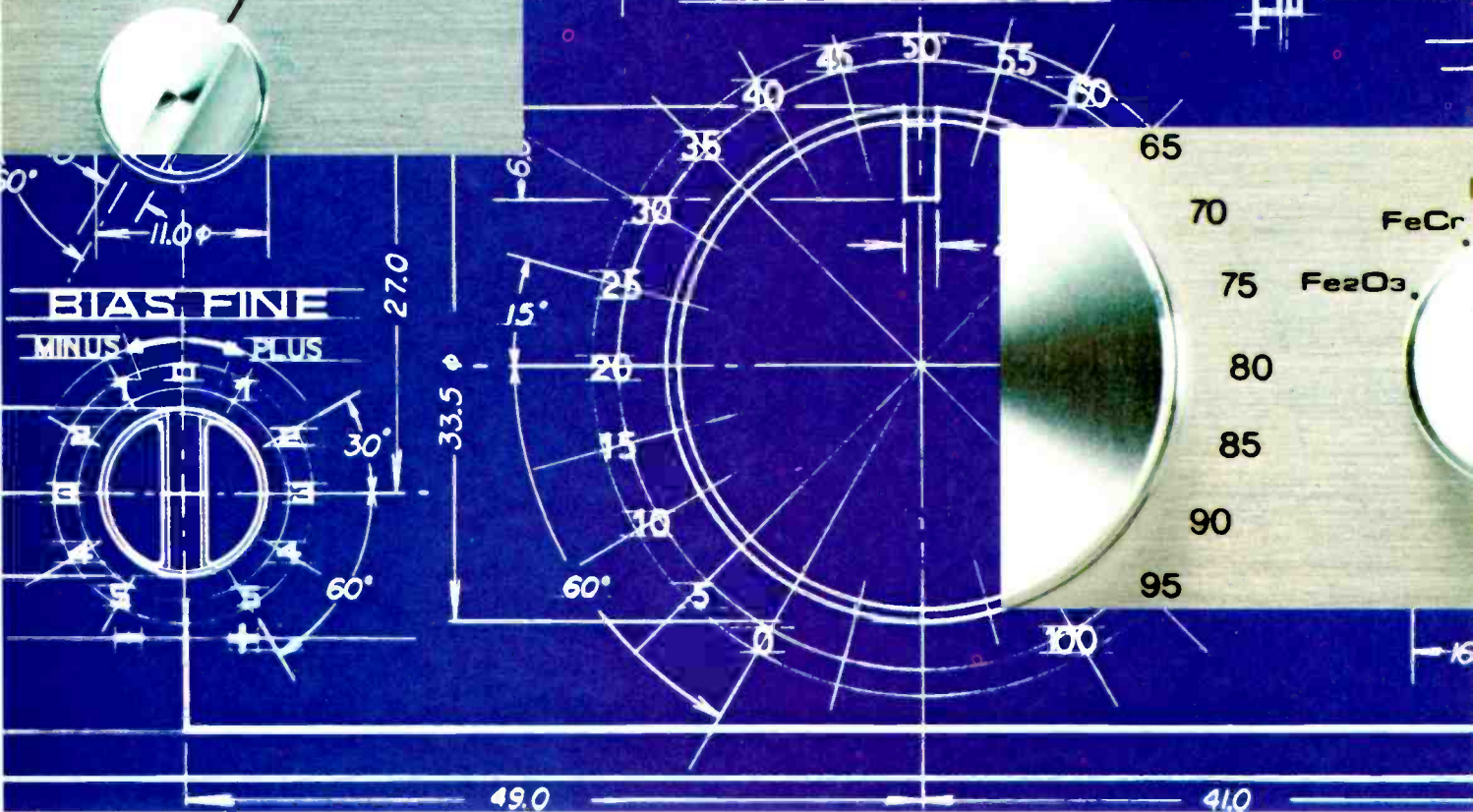
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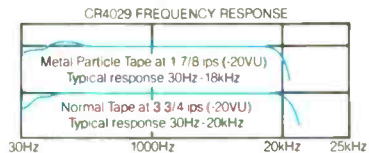
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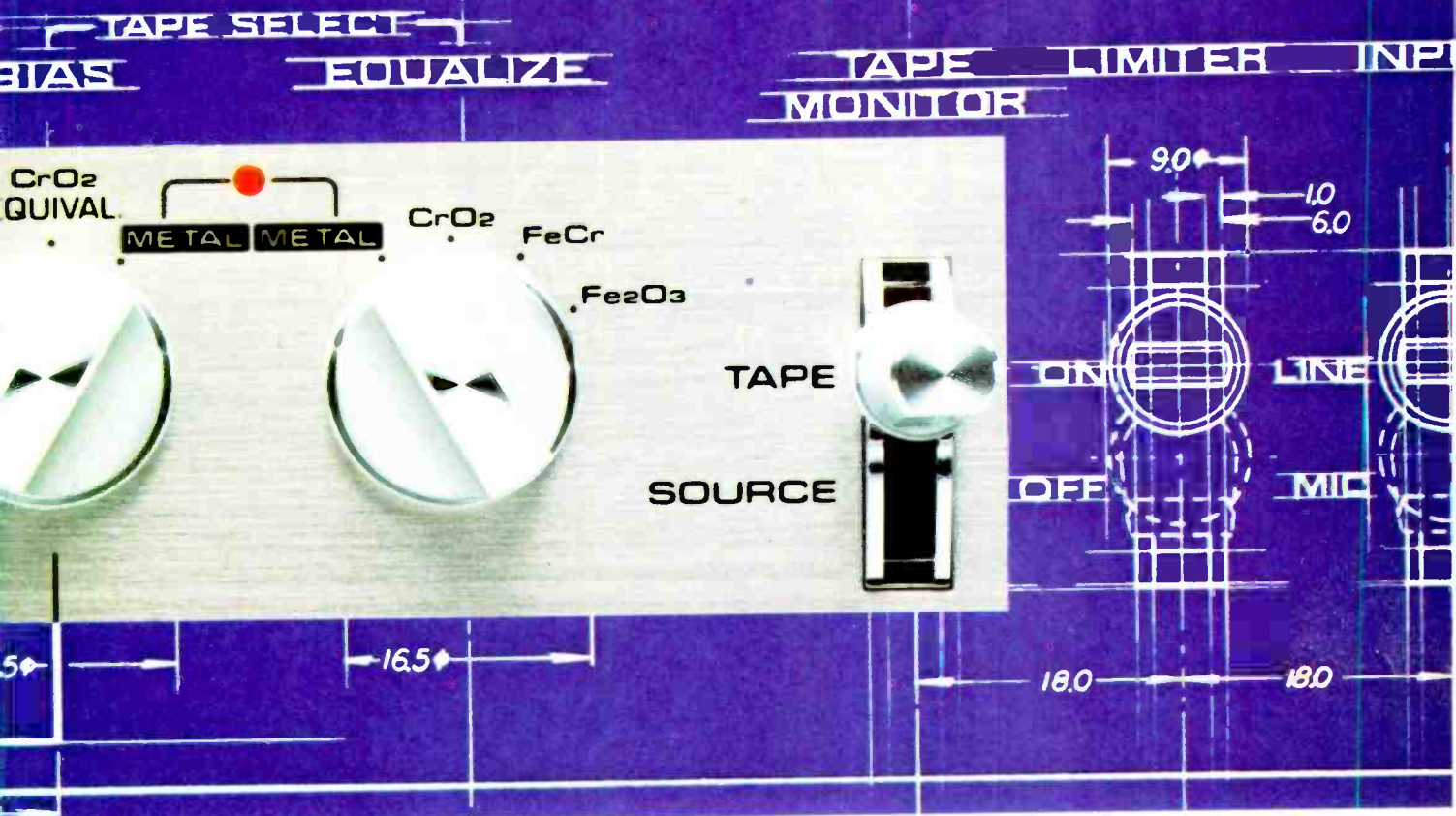
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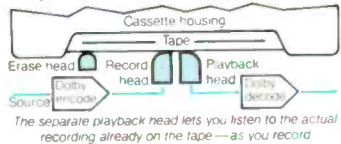


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VHT RECORD AND PLAYBACK HEADS



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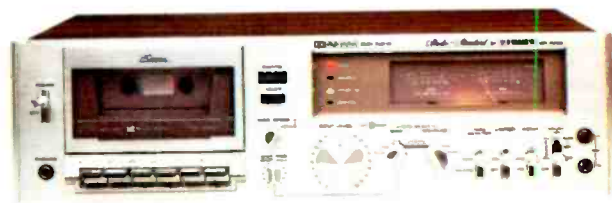
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SPECIFICATIONS:

Motor	(1) DC-Servo	Frequency Response 1 7/8 ips
Drive System	(1) Capstan	FeCr Tape (± 3dB) 30Hz-16kHz
Number of Heads	3	Metal Tape (± 3dB) 30Hz-18kHz
Head Material	VHT/Sendust	Frequency Response 3 3/4 ips
Wow and Flutter		Normal Tape (± 3dB) 30Hz-20kHz
1 7/8 ips	0.06% WRMS	CrO ₂ Tape (± 3dB) 30Hz-22kHz
3 3/4 ips	0.05% WRMS	FeCr Tape (± 3dB) 30Hz-22kHz
Signal-to-Noise Ratio (CCIR Weighted)		Metal Tape (± 3dB) 30Hz-25kHz
(Dolby Off)	52dB	Total Harmonic Distortion at OVU
(Dolby On)	62dB	1 7/8 ips 1.5%
Frequency Response 1 7/8 ips		3 3/4 ips 1.2%
Normal Tape (± 3dB)	30Hz-14kHz	Tape Selector Switch Norm., CrO ₂ , FeCr, Metal
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Video Recording: State of the Art—For Now

by Bennett Evans

Today's video cassette equipment does wonderful things: Imagine recording with a frequency response of up to 4 or 5 MHz on tape that moves as slowly as 0.44 inches per second, less than one-fourth the rate of audio cassette tape. But when it comes to tape handling, video recorders don't operate quite as gracefully as their audio counterparts. Audio decks are quick on the trigger, zipping tape about with gay abandon. To locate the passages you want to hear, many audio recorders let you listen in on the tape as it whizzes by, and others will automatically seek out the space where one selection stops and the next begins or even find and play a pre-programmed list of such selections. Even without these features, switching back and forth from fast-forward to play until you find a particular spot on the tape takes just an instant.

All this is old stuff to audio recorder owners—probably including most of you—while, to owners of most current video cassette recorders, it's a glimpse of an unknown paradise. Judging from the prototypes recently unveiled, however, that paradise is imminent.

Progress has been made toward solving the problems inherent in handling video tape. For example, all current systems get around the bind of high-frequency response at low tape speed by moving both the tape and heads to raise the relative tape-to-head speed. The heads are mounted on a rotating drum; when you load a VHS or Beta cassette into the recorder, a mechanism inside the deck opens the tape-protecting doors of the cassette, extracts the tape, and wraps it roughly halfway around the head drum. In fast-forward or rewind, the tape is usually released from contact with the head drum, which adds a little time when switching between PLAY and a fast-wind mode and makes monitoring the tape as it winds impossible.

The coming generations won't inherit those problems. First to announce a system that could get around them was Sony, whose SL-5400 Betascan unit can

show you the images on the tape in both REWIND and FAST-FORWARD. According to Sony, this feature can be built into Beta-format machines but not into decks using the competing VHS format, whose tapes are returned to the cassette for fast-forward and rewind. The deck also has playback at three times normal speed for quick review; sound is speeded up as well, but a special circuit keeps the pitch normal.

In Japan, Sony has a model with all these features plus field-by-field ultraslow motion advance and automatic rewind at the tape's end. Sanyo's new programmable Beta machine has features similar to Sony's Japanese one; Toshiba's latest also has picture search. And most Beta-format machines have the freeze-frame feature (in PAUSE)—and with less tearing or bending than before.

All this, say Beta advocates, points up that system's superiority. But the first machine with high-speed playback in this country was the VHS-format JVC 3600. Admittedly, the high-speed feature was less zippy than the new Beta fast playback. Sony's is three times normal viewing speed and Sanyo's five times; JVC's, by contrast, operates at twice normal speed. (The pitch of its sound goes up, but not so much as to become unintelligible.)

Other VHS machines with fast or slow playback are coming, too. Akai's Activideo portable is able to play back tapes at double speed with good picture quality or scan them (with poorer picture quality) at four times normal speed. It also has variable-speed slow motion and a still-frame mode. Sharp's VC-6800 VHS deck is equipped with a video version of its APLD (Automatic Program Locating Device), borrowed from its audio cassette decks, to stop the tape at any of up to 99 programmable points on the tape. Some Panasonic models (and, presumably, some of those it builds for other companies) have a simplified version of this, stopping automatically at the beginning of the last recording when you rewind but not allowing you to key in the number of the selection you

want—or to fast-forward to it—as the Sharp does.

A Question of Time

APLD aside, the Beta machines can save you more time in locating (and speed-watching) programs and program segments, while VHS machines offer longer recording times. In fact, it's largely the ever longer recording times that make all these program-locating devices necessary. Finding a half-hour program on a 1-hour tape is easy; finding it on a 9-hour tape will be rough.

And 9-hour tapes are on the way; tapes running 4½, 5, and 6 hours already are here. A long-play race has been on since the VHS decks appeared as competition to the Betamax. The original Betamax could record for an hour (at a transport speed of 1.57 ips) on a tape 471 feet long. By recording at a slightly slower speed (1.31 ips) and using a larger cassette that could hold more tape (about 786 feet), the first VHS decks could capture 2 hours at a crack. But that was just the beginning. Now there are two more speeds: LP, at 0.66 ips, for 4 hours of recording time, and EP, at 0.44 ips, for another 50% time increase, or 6 hours total.

The Beta machines, in the meantime, have dropped their original (Beta I) speed altogether, substituting half-speed Beta II decks (0.79 ips) that run 3 hours on L-750 tapes that are 50% longer, and have added a speed of 0.53 ips for 4½ hours. You'll be hearing about 5-hour Beta machines this fall: first from Toshiba, and then from Zenith. That doesn't mean there's yet another tape speed on the market—just another tape length. Using thinner tapes, the new L-830 cassettes will record for about 77% longer, stretching the 4½-hour (X3) speed to 5 hours.

Another 50% increase is expected for VHS tapes, bringing the 6-hour machines up to 9 hours at the EP speed. JVC, which originated the VHS format, never did adopt the LP speed, feeling that playback quality suffered too much

(the loss in quality is appreciable but far from horrifying) to make the gain in tape economy worthwhile. It has announced the Vidstar HR-6700U that operates in the original SP speed and the slower EP, using separate pairs of heads for each for optimum recording quality. Fast-play-back time differs between speeds too: twice normal speed for SP, three times normal for EP.

Tape Takes New Twists

For the last few years, Beta and VHS have so dominated the home video market as to make their competitors (Quasar's VX-2000, Sanyo's V-Cord II, and the earlier Akai portables) virtually invisible. But some totally new formats that are in the offing should have high visibility indeed.

There has been much talk in the industry about longitudinal recording systems. These get the high tape-to-head speeds that video requires by the simple expedient of moving the tape very fast. That simplifies the tape path, since no rotating head drum is necessary; the tape tracks run the length of the tape (hence "longitudinal") rather than diagonally across the tape, as the video tracks do in conventional helical-scan machines. But they eat up many more inches of tape per second of recording time. (Their *area* consumption may actually be lower.)

Toshiba unveiled its prototype this past summer. Designed by Norikazu Sawazaki, credited with the invention of helical scanning, it has an endless loop of tape 100 meters (328 feet) long by 1/2 inch wide. The tape has 220 tracks and runs at 6 meters per second, or about 236 ips. Every 17 seconds, as the loop completes one circuit, the tape head shifts down 60 micrometers to the next track. Over that small distance, the tape head can shift fast enough to keep the interruption in the sound and picture to an imperceptible 0.002 second.

There's no fast-forward in Toshiba's LVR fixed-head recorder nor any rewind—they're not necessary, since it takes no more than 21.4 seconds to get from any spot on the tape to any other (4.4 seconds to get from the first track to the last, plus 17 seconds for the point you want to come around again). The average access time is only about 10.7 seconds. You can select any track by number, using a digital key pad on the deck or on a remote-control device. The demo unit measured less than 10 inches wide,

6 inches high, and 13 inches deep and weighed just under 18 pounds. But Toshiba showed sketches of some other possible designs, including one that can fit into a video camera. The camera itself is kept small with the use of a solid-state, flat charge-coupled-device imaging element, instead of the conventional tube. Toshiba hopes to have such cameras in two to three years.

BASF has shown prototypes of its LVR in Europe and probably will show it here and introduce it there next year. This system has one major and several minor differences from the others. The major difference is that the tape is not an endless loop; it shuttles back and forth, reversing as each of its 72 video tracks comes to an end. The tape itself is 8mm (0.31 inch) wide and 1,971 feet long. At 157 ips, it runs about 2.5 minutes in each direction, with a 0.1-second blackout (more noticeable than Toshiba's but "unnoticeable in action scenes," according to BASF) each time it reverses. It will have dual sound tracks too.

Few details are available yet on Funai Electric's offering. It has designed a video cassette system that could use standard audio compact cassettes, though there's a good chance it might use similarly sized cassettes of quarter-inch tape. Recording time would be 20 minutes, and possibly an hour with metal tape. Kodak is rumored to be working on something as well, possibly using longitudinal scan; some, but not all, of its recent flood of video patents tend that way. Matsushita is developing a fixed-head system, but its engineers feel helical-scan types (like VHS) are safe bets for the near future.

At least one major new helical-scan system is emerging, from Philips, in conjunction with Grundig. It should be available by the end of this year in Europe and might reach this country in 1980. The Philips Video 2000 uses a tape that looks—surprise!—like an enlarged version of the compact audio cassette, which Philips originated. Like the audio cassette, the video one has two "sides." Eventually, there should be auto-reverse models; for the time being, users will have to flip the cassette over at the end of each side, but since each side holds 4 hours, that shouldn't be onerous. The tape is one-half inch wide and 1,150 feet long, at least in the European version. (A U.S. version might require longer tape for the same recording time.) That naturally requires a slightly larger cas-

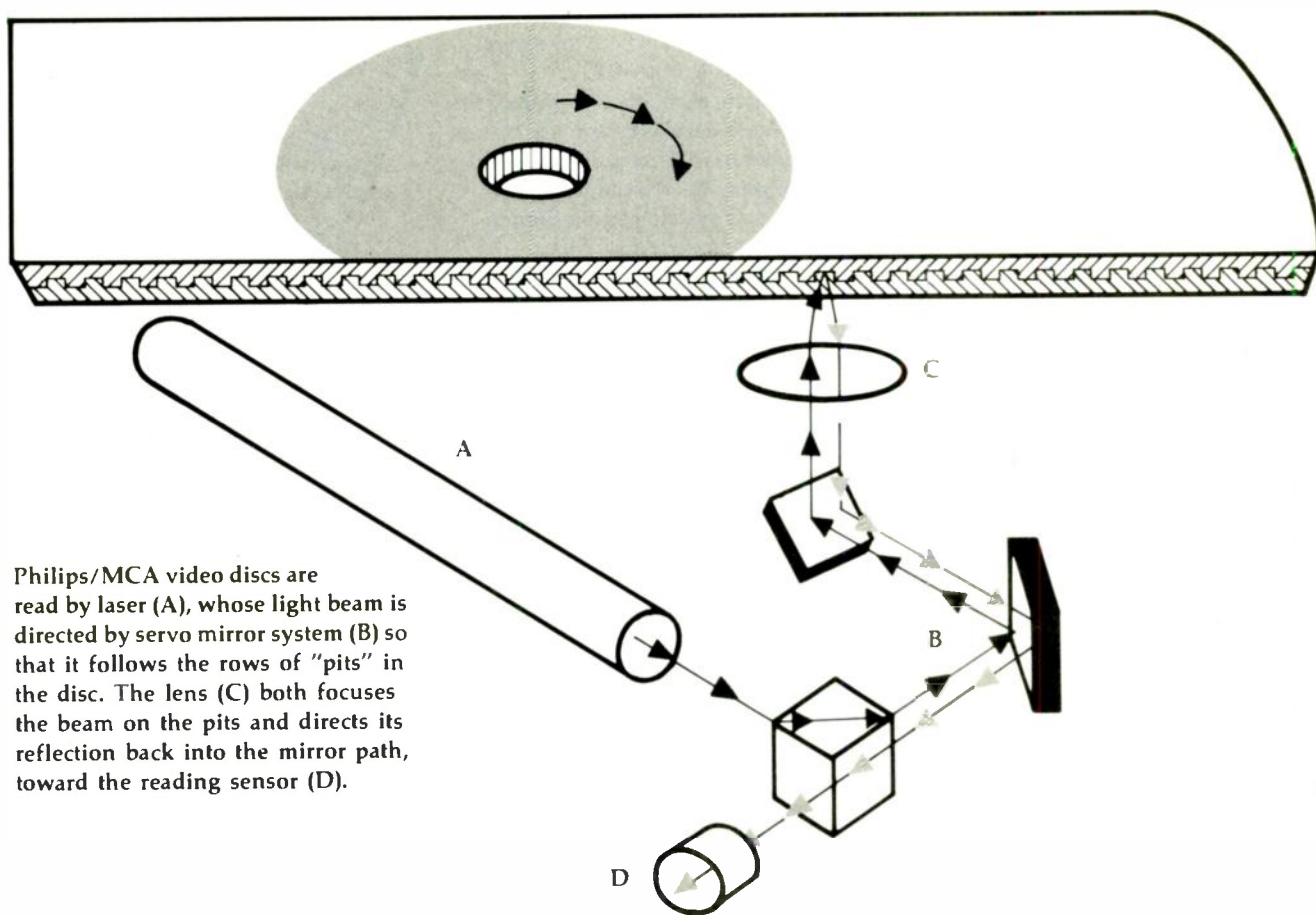
sette—about 7% greater than the volume of a VHS cassette. Its tape speed (0.96 ips) is about double that of VHS and Beta at their slowest, but since the entire signal is recorded on less than half the tape width, its economy in terms of square feet per hour falls right between the most economical VHS and Beta systems. Because just half the tape is used in each direction, there's some possibility that portable models will use quarter-inch tape cassettes, recorded in one direction only; presumably, the cassettes from the portable would be playable in the standard machine as well.

Orthodox as the tape transport seems—at least in comparison with the BASF and Toshiba longitudinal systems—some interesting technology went into the Video 2000 format. To start with, there's dynamic track following. Correct head tracking will be automatic, because piezoelectric elements in the head drum will shift head positions minutely until they match the track positions on the tape. This will help keep images clean during slow-, fast-, and stop-motion operation. Dynamic noise suppression enhances sound quality, and later versions of the deck will have stereo sound.

Key wells built into the Philips cassette shell tell the recorder what length tape is within; one possible use is in programmable decks, to warn automatically if the tape is too short to record everything the deck is programmed for. Other key wells set bias and equalization for chrome or metal tape; metal might eventually allow slower-speed models. Two mystery tracks on the tape, for which no specific use has been announced, could contain tape "address" codes, digitally encoded program names, or other data. Right now, locating programs and program segments should be easy: The four-digit counter automatically resets at zero when the tape is rewound (it will rewind automatically after play, if desired), and key pads on both the deck and its remote control can locate any part of the tape by its counter address.

Discs—And More Discs

A recent Arbitron survey to determine why and how owners use their video decks disclosed that VCRs were used 45% of the time to record unattended (a figure that may rise a bit now that more decks can be programmed to



Philips/MCA video discs are read by laser (A), whose light beam is directed by servo mirror system (B) so that it follows the rows of "pits" in the disc. The lens (C) both focuses the beam on the pits and directs its reflection back into the mirror path, toward the reading sensor (D).

record several shows, on different channels, over periods of a week or so), 35% to preserve a show while it is being watched, and 20% to tape one show while another is being watched. Some 75% of users said they wanted to "time-shift" the broadcasts to a later viewing time—an application unique to the home recorder, as opposed to the play-only disc systems. In program content, 44% said their most recent tapings had included TV series programs, 36% movies, and 12% sports.

Since much of the program material deck owners record is movie fare that could easily appear on discs, the latter seem to have a ready-made market. And the benefits of video disc technology are tremendous. Because its entire surface is accessible at once, the disc allows the listener instant access to anything recorded on it. It's a lot faster to swing an arm across a record (or, in video disc systems, to move it across by motor or solenoid control) than it is to wind from one end of a tape to the other. The same open accessibility makes discs cheaper to produce: An entire disc can be pressed in 30 seconds, while a tape must be duplicated inch by inch. (That's

a prime argument for systems like the longitudinal VCRs: Toshiba's entire tape, for example, could be dubbed in 17.5 seconds at normal speed, though it would take a 220-track duplicating setup to accomplish that.)

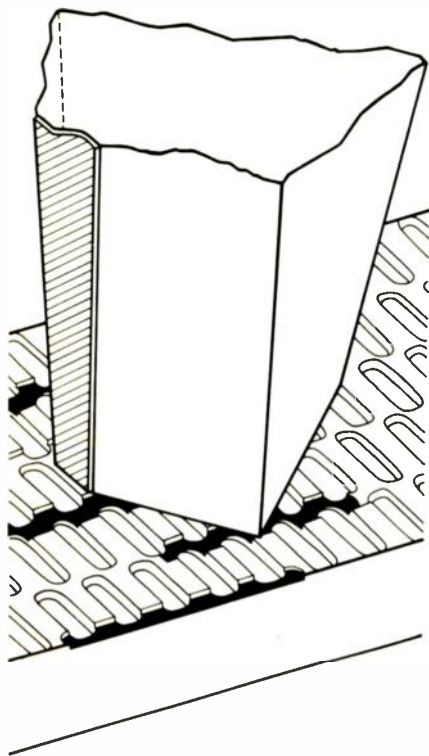
Everybody and his cousin has a video disc system in the labs or, as in the case of Magnavox, in test markets. Even with the recent price hike that pushed discs to \$16 and \$25 apiece, the tab still is attractive compared to \$30-\$50 for tapes of similar material. The laser-scanned Magnavision system (developed jointly by Philips—parent company of Magnavox—and MCA) is being sold only in the Atlanta and Seattle areas so far, but Magnavox obviously is pushing it hard. Pioneer may have a player for the MCA DiscoVision discs this fall. (It already sells an industrial version.)

Others have worked on laser or other optical systems over the years: among them Zenith, Thomson-CSF, Sydnor-Barent, Bosch-Fernseh, Sony, Hovid, i/o Metrics, Hitachi, Matsushita, and Battelle Specific Northwest Labs (for Digital Recording Corporation). Some of these approaches have been very original: In the Battelle system, for example,

the optics revolved while the disc stood still. The Sydnor-Barent disc revolved at 1 rpm, presenting photographic images that the player would scan into video. Thomson-CSF toyed with the idea of cheap, throw-away discs (good for about three plays) to be sold at stands like magazines, and Matsushita's ODSVR could record as well as play. With the exception of Sony, little has been heard from any of them this year.

Meanwhile, the major competition for the Philips/MCA disc will probably be RCA's SelectaVision. Like a conventional phonograph disc, it uses a physical-contact stylus riding in grooves. But the stylus does not trace the modulations as a phonograph stylus would: It senses them as variations in the capacitance between the stylus and the disc surface. The original RCA disc had to be coated to produce the necessary capacitive properties; the latest versions are uncoated.

RCA hopes to have its system on the market some time next year, with a player price of \$400. The cost estimates may not be too far off, despite inflation; the disc player will have only 620 parts (compared to 4,200 in the average VCR—



JVC's disc system senses changes in capacitance between the disc surface and an electrode on one face (at left in the illustration) of the stylus as the pits pass beneath it. Shallow indentations (shown black) between pit rows trigger servo that keeps stylus aligned with row.

though that's diminishing), most of them available off the shelf. There's a long list of licensees for SelectaVision, including BSR, Clarion, General, Mitsubishi, NEC, Pioneer, Plessey (Garrard), Sharp, and Toshiba. But since licensees incur no obligation until they begin production, there's no way to tell how committed they are.

Matsushita's Visc system, first shown last year, is similar to RCA's in disc configuration, but its pickup senses variations in pressure, not capacitance. According to RCA, Visc units can play SelectaVision discs—and if Visc discs were pressed with the right conductive compounds in the plastic, SelectaVision players could play them, too. For a while, it looked as if Matsushita might be leaning away from Visc in favor of a capacitance disc system developed by its smaller affiliate, JVC. The most interesting technical feature of the JVC physical-contact system is that the disc is grooveless: Tracking pits encoded in the

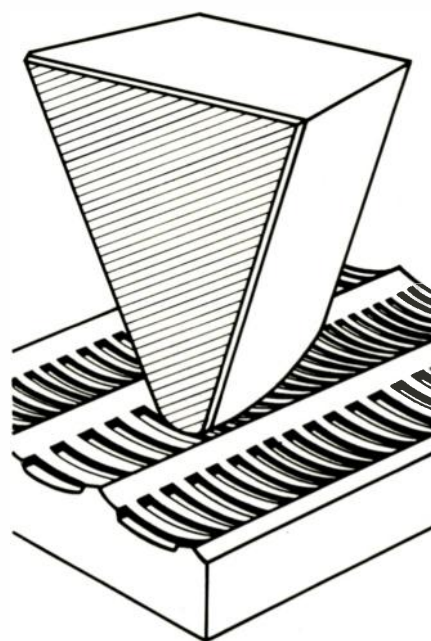
disc serve as references for a stylus motion feedback loop that keeps the stylus centered in its path. Since RCA announced definite production plans for SelectaVision, Matsushita seems to be leaning back toward Visc, perhaps because of its potential for compatibility. But JVC says its system could be modified for such compatibility, too.

All the physical-contact systems offer the potential of cheap disc manufacture using existing (or slightly modified) phonographic-disc presses. The grooveless systems—so far, just JVC's and Philips'—offer easy still-frame repetition, since the stylus need not physically jump a groove. The Philips laser system has at least one other major advantage: Because its discs are scanned optically, modulations can be buried beneath a transparent plastic coating that protects them from dirt and accidental damage. Since the laser beam is focused on the subsurface modulation plane, dirt and scratches are out of focus (and hence invisible) to the optical system.

And Back to Audio

All of these video systems are at least potentially adaptable for digital audio, which (like video) requires wide bandwidth. The Electronic Industries Association of Japan (EIAJ) has already adopted a standard for pulse-code modulation (PCM) adapters—the "black boxes" used to record and play back digital sound on video recorders. Toshiba, Sharp, JVC, and Sony have shown such adapters, but no marketing plans have been announced yet. (Sony's non-standard PCM-1, available for about a year, probably will be replaced by the EIAJ-standard PCM-10.) The standard includes a 44.056-kHz sampling rate (for an effective audio frequency limitation of 22 kHz) and 14-bit quantization (for 84-dB dynamic range). It makes sense; going to 16-bit quantization would raise the cost dramatically. Sony's 16-bit PCM-1600 costs about ten times as much as the PCM-1, and requires at least a professional U-Matic video recorder, since the home Beta and VHS recorders don't have enough bandwidth for it.

But the black-box PCM-adaptor approach is probably a dead end: expensive, hard to edit without very expensive accessory equipment, and limited to just two channels. Most home recordists have little to record that would justify the cost and complexity. They tape little



RCA SelectaVision disc uses similar capacitance pickup, but with groove instead of servo, for alignment. The similarly grooved Matsushita Visc disc has pickup that senses pressure, not capacitance, but is capable of playing SelectaVision discs as well.

live music, and to use PCM to dub from phonograph discs or off the air would be overkill in the extreme since PCM's audio quality is potentially far better than that of the program material.

The real breakthrough in home digital listening will be audio playback systems based on the video disc, with their advantages of easy access and comparatively cheap replication. RCA has been all but silent about this possibility, but Matsushita, JVC, and Sony all have shown digital audio discs using essentially the same player as their video discs. (Sony's, incidentally, runs 2½ hours on one side.) Philips is the main exception; its audio disc, though using technology similar to its video version, will require a completely different player. On the other hand, the Philips disc, just 4½ inches in diameter, is easier to carry around and could even fit in dashboard slots—something you can't do with the more common 12-inch discs. **HF**

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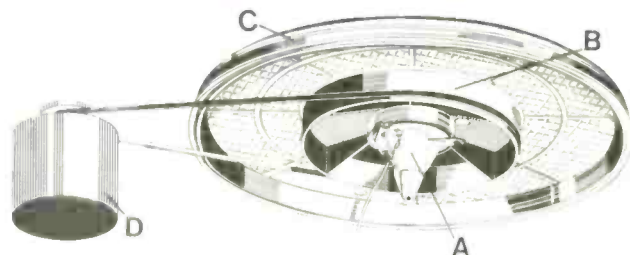
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Prerecorded Video Tapes: Buyer Beware

When you purchase recorded video cassettes, you're likely not to get what you pay for.

by Robert Angus

Nowhere in the field of consumer electronics is the maxim "caveat emptor" as applicable as in prerecorded video cassettes. With some 5,000 titles available, ranging from hard-core porn to lectures on art appreciation and including a selection of recent and vintage feature films, there's certainly no dearth of diversity in program material to entice you. Unfortunately, the feature films being offered by the more than thirty companies that produce and/or distribute the video cassettes often are quite different from the versions you first saw at the Roxy.

For instance, the mere fact that you've bought something titled *Birth of a Nation* doesn't necessarily mean that you have all of it. There's a difference of 42 minutes in playing time between the versions offered by Videola and Video Yesteryear, with the latter using two cassettes to hold the entire epic. In video cassette form, some feature films differ only by a few frames from the original, while others lack entire scenes.

Reasons for the differences vary, mainly according to the type of film under consideration, but the cuts are all traceable to a remarkably cavalier attitude on the part of video cassette duplicators. For films from the silent era and sound features of the '30s and '40s, duplicators depend in large measure on old prints obtained from collectors. The trouble is that these prints bear only a small resemblance to the masters, since each print bears the scars of its commercial showings. If, for instance, a projector in Poughkeepsie acted up one night in 1939 and tore the sprocket holes out of a foot or two of film, the projectionist would probably have cut out the damaged portion and spliced the film for the next showing. For a video duplicator to get his hands on a clean master print from the vaults of 20th Century-Fox or Paramount would, of course, involve a substantial fee, so he seeks out collectors who have the old "edited" prints.

Even easier to understand are the reasons for the variations in porn flicks, which make up about 10% of the titles in catalogs and well over half of the recorded video tapes sold today. Since the Supreme Court decision to allow communities to set their own standards regarding pornography, these films have been edited to suit particular locales. The consumer who thinks he is purchasing the original hard-core version of *Deep Throat* may, in fact, be getting a copy of a print that was originally shown in a town still shuddering at the memory of Clark Gable's profanity in *Gone with the Wind*. So extensive are the cuts made in porn films that one duplicator has managed to squeeze both *Deep Throat* and *The Devil in Miss Jones* onto a single two-hour VHS cassette.





Piracy has muddied the waters even further. The video pirate ranges from the basement entrepreneur, who either buys video cassettes from a dealer and copies them or tapes feature films from regular TV broadcasts, to mobsters who bribe film studio employees to supply clean prints of first-run features. Some have even been known to check into motels that offer Home Box Office and cable TV with a video recorder as their only "luggage." The situation has become so bad that a group of authorized duplicators, most of whom specialize in porn, have banded together to do something about it. Beau Buchanan, spokesman for the International Home Video Association and star of an X-rated opus called *Captain Lust and the Amorous Contessa*, complains that his own company, International Home Video Club, is by no means the only duplicator selling the flick. "I like to think that our picture quality is better," he says ruefully.

Some of the worst cuts appear in video cassette versions of feature films pirated from TV broadcasts. After the network has edited out scenes that might offend viewer sensibilities or be inappropriate for children to see, a movie is cut further to fit into a particular time slot. In some cases, a two-hour feature will be trimmed down to between 80 and 90 minutes. When cut to fit a commercial-ridden, 90-minute midday movie slot, little more than an hours' worth of footage may be aired.

One strategy to determine just how bowdlerized a film on video cassette has become is to check the playing time listed in the catalog against the original uncut length in a reference work such as Leonard Maltin's *TV Movies* (Signet Books). Another is to do your business with a duplicator associated with a major studio, such as Allied Artists or Magnetic Video (a subsidiary of 20th Century-Fox). In addition to these, Warner Bros., ABC, and Columbia Pictures in the U.S. and EMI in the U.K. are getting into the prerecorded video business. While these are not infallible ways of obtaining an uncut version, it usually results in the best possible print for mastering and an assurance that some care went into making the transfer.

Just as two different video cassettes of the same movie aren't necessarily created equal in terms of length, they may not be equal in picture quality either. As you might expect, the color of the door in International Home Video Club's version of *Behind the Green Door* is green—but it's turquoise blue in at least one alternative version offered by a pirate tape duplication house in Pennsylvania. Why? Possibly because of an off-color print used to master the cassette, possibly because of lack of care in transferring the film to tape or in the duplicating process itself. IHVC is the authorized distributor of *Green Door* on video tape, but there are many unauthorized copies on the market, and the sophistication of the transfer technology can vary widely.

In theory, it's a very simple matter to project film onto a screen or reflective surface and tape it with a closed-circuit TV camera. Video Yesterday and a number of smaller duplicators do it just this way—using a quality projector and screen to create the image, a \$10,000 color CCTV camera, and a U-Matic recorder to make the master. Equipment designed to do the job without a screen (and the inherent loss of picture quality a screen entails) usually consists of an L-shaped device with a film projector at the end of one leg and a video camera at the end of the other, both mounted facing a mirror at the "joint." A piece of ground glass acts as the screen. The image projected on the ground glass is reversed by the mirror mounted behind it, which relays the picture right-side-about to the video camera feeding a VCR. IVC markets such a device for \$100; Quasar's K-1502 converter, priced at \$130, encloses the optics in a box.

Such equipment is intended for home use, and the results usually are quite satisfactory, but some duplicators and pirates are using them for tapes that are offered in stores at prices up to \$100. Allied Artists and other film studios in the video tape business—and some quality-conscious bootleggers—use a device called a film chain, which electronically transfers an image directly from film to video tape. It costs less than \$5,000, produces a quality video master, and is easier to use than the home converters.

All of these systems work, provided the film in question has the same aspect ratio as your television set, a width-to-height ratio of 1.33 to 1. That was the standard for 16- and 35-millimeter film until the introduction of wide-screen techniques in the early '50s, and the television industry simply copied it. Recent wide-screen Hollywood films, however, have an aspect ratio of 1.85 to 1.

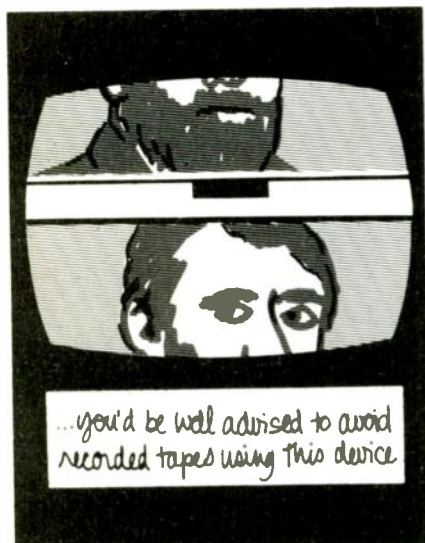
In order to get wide-screen films onto a TV screen without haphazard chopping, a specialist must scan each one scene by scene, and sometimes frame by frame. His crop marks are fed into a computer that makes the corrections by moving a mirror up and down and side to side to frame just that portion of each scene selected by the technician. Hollywood features are prepared for TV broadcast with this technique, and the major duplicators are using it for video cassettes as well; the big-time pirates are not because of its cost and complexity. Instead, customers who pay up to \$200 for a current wide-screen feature not released on tape by the studio that owns it may find some of the action taking place at or even beyond the edge of the screen.

As any home recordist knows, it's possible to link two Beta or VHS decks to copy from one to the other, just as you would with two audio cassette decks. The difference is that you lose more with video than you do with audio; home video cassette copies tend to be snowier than the originals. To alleviate this by providing the "slave" deck with the best possible signal, most duplicators use a U-Matic master played on a professional-quality U-Matic deck. It doesn't take much knowledge of electronics to expand this basic duplicating setup from one master machine and one slave to a master feeding its signals via a distribution amplifier to half a dozen or more slaves, both Beta and VHS. And that's exactly what small copiers like Video Yesteryear do. Done with care—with a quality distribution amplifier and signal monitor, and by an engineer who knows what he's doing—the results can be first-rate. A more elaborate system, similar in concept to high-speed audio duplication installations, features $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch or 1-inch master tape in a gravity-fed bin, with the transport feeding as many as 18 slaves. Since most video cassette duplication still is in the custom stage, these duplicators haven't yet come into widespread use.

Some of the more serious distributors are taking special pains to make their product as enjoyable as possible—especially with classic black-and-white films. Blackhawk, for example, tints some of its films: a vivid red behind battle scenes and fires, sepia for turn-of-the-century cityscapes, green for country vistas, and so on. Videola adds a piano accompaniment to silent films. And in copying the early silents, Video Yesteryear approximates the original projection speed (about 16 frames per second) that is seriously falsified by sound projectors (at 24 fps), producing a "Chaplinesque" style never intended by the director. The result might be more natural movement, but the tradeoff comes in reduced sharpness and brightness, sometimes with black bars intruding on the image, as the projector shutter closes during the video camera's frame scan.

Until recently, you haven't had to worry about finding cheap tape





in a video cassette shell that is poorly designed or manufactured. That situation is changing. Sony and Matsushita—the primary manufacturers, respectively, of the Beta and VHS formats—have tried hard to maintain rigid standards for blank tape, but their control is limited. For example, in a recent raid on a New Jersey tape bootlegging operation, FBI agents discovered tooling and molds for VHS shells that had not been approved by Matsushita and that, according to a company spokesman, would not have passed muster. Also, some individuals and packagers are bulk-loading the cheapest half-inch video tape they can buy into genuine VHS and Beta shells. And with the entry of a number of new blank tape licensees into the field, few duplicators expect tape prices to remain as high as they have been. “Now that there’s competition for my business,” confided one, “somebody’s going to figure out how to make it a lot cheaper than it’s being made now.”

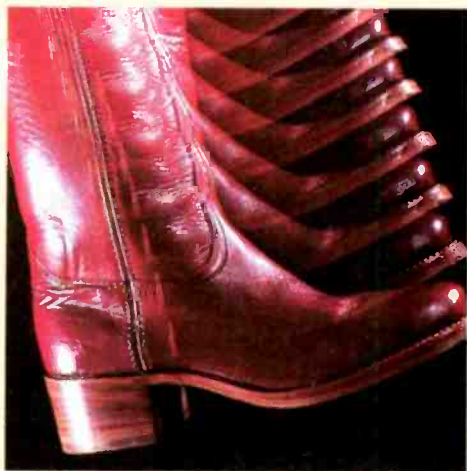
One step taken by legitimate duplicators to thwart unauthorized copying of their cassettes is to reduce the strength of the sync signal recorded between frames of the TV picture. The remaining signal is just strong enough to hold the image horizontally and vertically on your TV screen, but not strong enough to survive the copying process. The result is a copy whose picture rolls helplessly for the length of the tape—if there is any picture at all. At least, that’s the way the system works in theory. Some existing TV sets have just as much trouble as the copiers in coping with the weakened sync pulse. While this applies particularly to older receiving sets, it’s also true of some of the new automatic models. For that reason, most duplicators who have tried the theft-guard idea have abandoned it and are searching for some other way of accomplishing the same thing. If you’re unlucky enough to own a set that requires a fairly strong sync signal, you’d be well advised to avoid recorded tapes using this device. And that’s easier said than done, because there’s no marking on the tape or package to indicate why your picture is rolling.

Now that you’re armed with all this knowledge, how can you use it to make sure you get the best quality recorded video tapes? “One thing the consumer can do is to check prices,” advises International Home Video Association’s Buchanan. “I’d be very suspicious of a price that’s too low. The price of blank tape is a fixed cost, and the dealer wants a profit of anywhere from 30% on up. That means that a feature-film selling price of \$29.95 doesn’t include anything for the artist or producer.” Sounds logical, but because everybody has been charging whatever the traffic will bear, prices have remained high—despite varying quality.

A better guide is the packaging and labeling of the video cassette itself. Bootleg operations can and do use attractive four-color sleeves and full-color reproductions of theater posters as labels, but more commonly they rely on spartan paste-on labels for both the cassette and the box. Buchanan suggests that the more elaborate the sleeve and label design, the more likely it is that the product has a legitimate (i.e., quality) source.

Knowing your vendor—both the dealer who sells you recorded video tape and the manufacturer whose name is on the package—is perhaps the safest route. Retailers may have no more idea than you have what they’re buying when they take on a line of recorded tape, but they do know when customers come in to complain—and responsible dealers drop the lines that cause complaints. Once you’ve found a reputable dealer (as opposed to a gift shop with a couple of dozen video tapes on a shelf or an “adult bookstore” with its own assortment of cassettes), select one tape, take it home, and try it. If you’re satisfied with it, you’re likely to find that the other tapes produced by the same duplicator will be comparable in quality. **HF**

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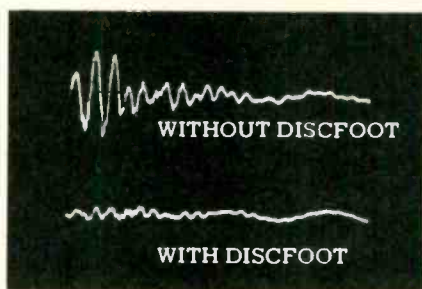
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Berlioz Bonanza

A recent spate of releases and reissues turns up many palpable hits and, in the Suk/Fischer-Dieskau *Harold in Italy*, an all-time champion.

by Harris Goldsmith



Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau: surpassing Toscanini

In my October 1976 review of the Imai/Davis *Harold in Italy* (Philips 9500 026), I speculated that a Karajan/Berlin/DG version might give us the modern edition we have been waiting for. Lacking that, a superb performance on a Supraphon-derived recording just issued anew by Quintessence is the finest we have had on commercial disc.

Josef Suk, a thoroughbred violinist, has made the transition to the lower-pitched instrument beautifully. He is just as aristocratic as a violist, always playing dead in tune and producing gleaming, perfectly focused tone; his phrases are shapely. Yet for all its outward containment, his interpretation has pathos and brilliance. Suk's playing is akin to Nobuko Imai's on the Philips disc—if anything, even more commu-

nicative and distinctive in style. Admittedly, the comparison isn't quite fair: Imai was handicapped by Colin Davis' tasteful but tepid (and, at times, technically sloppy) orchestral framework. Suk, by contrast, is aided by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau's fastidious and wonderfully perceptive conducting and by a marvelous Czech ensemble.

Stylistically the baritone-turned-maestro is very close to that hitherto unsurpassed *Harold* interpreter, Arturo Toscanini. His reading has the same poise, clarity of texture, and shapely structure, the same classical refinement and sensitivity, and the same rhythmic precision and technical brilliance. Once or twice, I worried that the care was a little too much—that the patriotic polish suited Mozart more than Ber-

Continued on next page

BERLIOZ: Harold in Italy, Op. 16

B Josef Suk, viola; Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, cond. [Eduard Herzog, prod.] QUINTESSENCE PMC 7103, \$3.98.

Robert Vernon, viola; Cleveland Orchestra, Lorin Maazel, cond. [James Mallinson, prod.] LONDON CS 7097, \$8.98. Tape: CS5 7097, \$8.98 (cassette).

Pinchas Zukerman, viola; Orchestre de Paris, Daniel Barenboim, cond. [Paul Myers, prod.] COLUMBIA M 34531, \$7.98. Tape: MT 34531, \$7.98 (cassette).

Donald McInnes, viola; Orchestre National de France, Leonard Bernstein, cond. [John Mordler, prod.] ANGEL S 37413, \$7.98 (SQ-encoded disc). Tape: 4XS 37413, \$7.98 (cassette).

BERLIOZ: Symphonie fantastique, Op. 14.

Orchestre de Paris, Daniel Barenboim, cond. [Günther Breest, prod.] DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2531 092, \$8.98. Tape: 3301 092, \$8.98 (cassette).

Orchestre National de France, Leonard Bernstein, cond. [John Mordler, prod.] ANGEL S 37414, \$7.98 (SQ-encoded disc). Tape: 4XS 37414, \$7.98 (cassette).

H U.S.S.R. State Symphony Orchestra, Oskar Fried, cond. MELODIYA/EURODISC 88 329 XAK, \$8.98 (mono) [recorded in 1937].

B Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, Arvid Jansons, cond. WESTMINSTER GOLD WGS 8350, \$3.98 [recorded in 1962].

B R Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Pierre Monteux, cond. LONDON STS 15423, \$3.98 [from RCA LSC 2362, 1959].

Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy, cond. [Jay David Saks, prod.] RCA RED SEAL ARL 1-2764, \$7.98. Tape: ARK 1-2674 (cassette), ARS 1-2674 (8-track cartridge); \$7.98 each.

London Symphony Orchestra, André Previn, cond. [Christopher Bishop, prod.] ANGEL S 37485, \$7.98 (SQ-encoded disc).

H London Symphony Orchestra, Felix Weingartner, cond. PAST MASTERS PM 19, \$7.98 (mono) [from European Columbia originals, October and November 1925] (distributed by German News Co.).

BERLIOZ: Symphonie fantastique, Op. 14; Carnaval romain, Op. 9.

H R B Concertgebouw Orchestra, Eduard van Beinum, cond. RICHMOND TREASURY SERIES R 23205, \$3.98 (mono) [from English Decca originals, 1952].

lioz. Fischer-Dieskau does not churn up as much excitement as Toscanini at the end of the opening "Harold in the Mountains," where Berlioz directs that the tempo accelerate until it reaches double time. And though the rhythm of each conductor is tautly controlled, in the final "Orgy of the Brigands," Toscanini's cuts loose with greater abandon.

On the other hand, the new performance has more colorful and eventful orchestral playing. Note the tinge of vibrato in the cornets, making the first-movement section with viola and harp restating the Harold *leitmotiv* especially affecting; the exotic tang of the oboe and bassoon (but the English horn's third-movement solo sounds a bit *too* countrified); the almost chamber music lightness of the strings' triplets at the end of the "Orgy." Toscanini's never-released 1939 broadcast with William Primrose had this kind of sunshine, but his 1953 reading for RCA, obtainable now as a German import (AT 112), sounds slightly impersonal and chilly. I prefer Suk and Fischer-Dieskau to Carlton Cooley and Toscanini on performance alone, and a generation's sonic improvement ought to count for something. The sound of the inexpensive Quintessence pressing compares favorably to the original Supraphon and Eurodisc SQ editions—a little firmer on the low end, though perhaps lacking some of the original delicacy. This is not only an incredible *Harold*, but an incredible bargain as well.

Too bad Vernon/Maazel and Zukerman/Barenboim have to contend with an interpretation of such unflinching rightness, for in many respects there is much to be said for both of them. The former is crystal clear, intelligently paced, and classical in organization. In many ways it approximates the Cooley/Toscanini, though with less energy. But alongside Suk/Fischer-Dieskau, it sounds pale.

Zukerman, however, is a real personality, not a mere obligato player. At times he recalls Primrose—his sound is alto-like rather than tenorlike. And the vibrato (which many will find excessive) makes certain phrases sound akin to Wieniawski. Zukerman uses a great deal of portamento, and there are passages (e.g., Page 17, bar 1, of the International miniature score) where the playing is labored and the intonation suspect. Aside from a few crass details, such as a ridiculous accelerando at the end, Barenboim's conception is solid, rhythmic, and well paced. The Orchestre de Paris



Josef Suk

Harold as aristocrat

lacks the complete top-to-bottom textural clarity of the Czech, Cleveland, and NBC orchestras, but much of the playing is excellent. The horns are particularly velvety throughout—no more of that once notorious saxophonelike wobble—and the winds are distinguished. Columbia's recording has very bright, forward winds, harp, and tambourine and a somewhat diffuse, matted quality on the timpani and lower brass. On the whole, it is pleasingly luminous. My main quarrel with Zukerman and Barenboim is that their unvaryingly lyrical and oh-so-yearning view of this Byron-derived masterpiece tends to emasculate the work: instead of *Childe Harold*, we are given something closer to Bunthorne.

Leonard Bernstein and Donald McInnes, by contrast, evoke *Alice in Wonderland* ("Speak roughly to your little boy . . ."). The music is abruptly yanked about, just like the Duchess' unfortunate child, and all sorts of vulgar Bernstein mannerisms pepper the interpretation. Some of these, to be sure, were heard in his earlier Columbia recording with the New York Philharmonic—the meretricious ritard near the end of the first-movement introduction, the gaudy diminuendo-crescendo on the six-four chord near the end of the "Orgy"—but they sound especially grotesque here. Indeed, even where Bernstein tries to follow the composer's directives, as in the *con gravità* passages of the "Orgy," there is a

lack of flow, proportion, and at times even precision that ruins the intended effect. McInnes is a more finely grained soloist than William Lincer was on the older disc, but Lincer's truck-driver approach admirably fitted into the scheme of things, whereas McInnes sounds bland and nonplussed by the conductor's ego trip. Angel's recorded sound alternates between commendable delicacy (the *ppp possibile, quasi niente* in the first movement) and swarthy muddiness (the string tone in the "Pilgrims' March"). Mostly, it is like the performance itself—coarse and confused. Recordings like this one contribute to the fallacious notion of Berlioz as a garish showman.

Bernstein has slightly more success with the *Symphonie fantastique*. This version is more delicately engineered than either of his performances on Columbia, and the French orchestra plays with grace and general refinement. The conductor is not insensitive to this music, as he is to *Harold*, but errors of judgment nevertheless abound. In the first measure he introduces an obtrusive ritard, and the composer's carefully plotted rubato is thrown out of kilter at the first movement's bar 107 with more uncalled-for swooning. In countless instances he destroys the flow with incorrect dosages of accelerando or allargando, and the lack of centered tone and rhythmic bite devitalizes many of the blazing climaxes. In place of Berlioz' "Passions and Reveries," Bernstein's performance merely sounds spaced out.

Barenboim's *Fantastique* has a generalized kind of passion, but sometimes muscle is used indiscriminately. While his overall reading is very sound, there are times when he allows the brass to go their own brazen (and Brucknerian) way. I find some of the other accounts here more sensitive and idiomatic than this one. DG's recording is excellent—such immediacy and wide dynamic range!

Eduard van Beinum's early-Fifties version of the work still has magnificent clarity of texture and presence; instructions, too, are meticulously followed. For all that, I find his reissue disappointing. On this occasion Van Beinum's literalism seems rather nervously impatient, without the breadth and repose he often has shown, and divests the music of its expansiveness. There are wonderful details in the Concertgebouw's execution—many will like the low-pitched, dark-sounding chimes in the "Witches' Sabbath"—but generally, I find the interpretation self-denying and frustra-

ting. The same is true of *Carnaval romain*. Van Beinum's later Epic version, if I remember correctly, was much more robust and rhetorical; this one is superbly clear in sound and sternly controlled, but it makes even Toscanini's contemporaneous account on Victrola seem positively broad-scaled and expansive. Richmond's fine new remastering, incidentally, gets the "*Scène aux champs*" onto Side 2 uninterrupted (the overture precedes the symphony on the first side).

London also restores the fourth of Pierre Monteux's five recorded *Fantastiques* to circulation. Like the Van Beinum reprint, the new version obviates the third-movement side break of the old RCA. The sound also seems brighter than before, with more biting definition and more solid *tutti*. This great conductor's meticulously considered, classically poised interpretation did vary, slightly but significantly, each time he performed the work. This reading, somewhat more reflective and subdued than his norm, is beautifully, if unidiomatically, played by the Vienna Philharmonic. Curiously, the inverse of this equation—the Viennese Bruno Walter leading the Paris Conservatory Orchestra—produced much the same sort of polished poetry and rounded-off sonority, though its tempos were faster. (That 1939 recording is now available on Turnabout THS 65109; the same label offers Monteux's more vigorously extroverted 1962 performance with the Hamburg NDR Symphony, on TVS 34616. Both break "*Scène aux champs*" at midpoint.) Monteux reputedly favored his recording with the Paris Symphony (RCA M 111), but that account has never been transferred to microgroove.

Ormandy and the Philadelphians have been recording the *Fantastique* since the early 1950s, and the new RCA version must still compete with the second of two earlier Columbia discs. Over the years, the conductor's tempos have become a shade slower, yet I think his insights have deepened. There are no surprises here—it is just a superbly traditional reading, played with clarity and beautiful instrumental dovetailing. Unless one seeks the ultimate in delirium and exquisite poetic sensibility (a reasonable enough preference), this is an account that can be lived with easily. RCA's sound is among the best given this great orchestra, with more biting timbre and leaner climaxes than one might expect from an ensemble celebrated for its heft.

Angel also does very well by André

Previn, and his *Fantastique* documents the great strides *he* has made as a conductor of late. I especially like the shimmer and translucency—the linear separation—of this conservatively conceived reading. At times, though, Previn strikes me as detached. Certainly, the opening chords of the first movement seem mild-mannered and set the stage for what turns out to be a slightly tentative "trip"; it is almost as if the young artist delineated by Berlioz had eschewed his opium for aspirin.

Felix Weingartner's version goes back to the earliest days of electrical recording. An acoustically reproduced one made a few months before was scrapped when the microphone came into use. Strangely, since the *Fantastique* was apparently one of Weingartner's specialties, he never re-recorded it with more modern sound, even though his career lasted another fifteen years. Even more surprising, this transfer sounds infinitely better than one would expect from the scholarly essay by Christopher Dymnt that accompanies the reissue. This is a marvelous dubbing, true of timbre, dynamically unfalsified, and relatively pleasurable to hear. Some of Weingartner's performances, when heard on old noise-ridden 78s, sounded staid and drab; when the fine detail is restored, the reading is transformed into something far more eventful and eloquent. (This happened, too, with the recent Turnabout reissue of the Beethoven Ninth Symphony.) To be sure, Weingartner stresses the symphonic rather than the fantastic element, and thus the beginning of the first movement proper, the introduction to the final "Witches' Sabbath," and other such especially programmatic passages sound rather dispassionate, even perfunctory. But he shows a perceptive and valid point of view. Dymnt apologizes for the London Symphony's playing and explains that in 1925 the orchestra was in a slump. Yet the performance is not so bad, aside from a few fluffs. I hear more disgraceful things all the time from some of our "major" orchestras.

Oskar Fried's interpretation is also very symphonic but almost the opposite of the Weingartner approach in its aesthetic. Since the name of this conductor is unfamiliar to most today, some history is in order: Fried (1871-1941) was, like Klemperer and Walter, a Mahler protégé. Klemperer, not a particularly charitable judge of his colleagues, called him a genius—although many of his interpretations evidently caused heated controversy. A Jewish

Marxist, Fried fled to Russia after the Nazis took over his homeland and died a Soviet citizen. The Eurodisc/Melodiya reissue documents the shipshape discipline that he imparted to his Muscovite players in the last years of his life. This is a remarkable interpretation, indeed. Fried has a way of parenthetically introducing snippets of double time into a broad, slow-moving context, giving the illusion of a static, logical progression. The "*Marche au supplice*" is subjected to particularly wild extremes of tempo and rubato, but all is manipulated with almost hypnotic personal magnetism.

Even though the sound is husky and overloaded, it gives a striking suggestion of the spaciousness and powerful dynamic range of Fried's conception. The huge bells in the *Dies Irae* section of the finale could almost literally rouse the dead, and who cares that Berlioz directed that they come from "behind the scene"? (Weingartner, incidentally, follows Berlioz' suggestion that a piano be used to double the chimes if ones with suitably low pitch cannot be found.)

Fried's and Weingartner's performances, for all their antique vintage, must be taken seriously, as they are in Russia. Weingartner's way was strongly reflected in Gennady Rozhdestvensky's recorded performance (Melodiya/Angel, deleted), and something of Fried can be discerned in the 1962 Leningrad Philharmonic version conducted by Arvid Jansons. The very slow first-movement introduction, stately rather than pulsating, is a case in point. Much of Jansons' reading, though, suggests the *Fantastique* as Pablo Casals might have conducted it in his later years. The playing is strong, unaffected, perhaps a bit stolid, but full of rugged characterization (note the rock-steady tempos and the vigorously accented but overly loud cellos and basses at bar 78 of the first movement). With virtuosic execution from the indisputably world-class orchestra and clean, somewhat boxy, reproduction, this Westminster Gold disc must be regarded as one of the catalog's more interesting *Fantastiques*. It may be too Brahmsian for many listeners, but it is a performance of merit and profile (and a considerable bargain). Unfortunately, the "*Scène aux champs*" is split between sides.

None of the present nine editions of the *Symphonie fantastique* includes the optional cornet parts that Berlioz later added to "*Un Bal*," and only Previn and Bar-enboim observe the repeat in the first movement.

Bach Suites by the English Concert: An Energetic Swirl of Wigs and Satins

Trevor Pinnock's group demonstrates that period-instrument ensembles can produce elegant and exciting music.

by Scott Cantrell



Trevor Pinnock: authenticity without "quaintness"

The English Concert—for those to whom the name is unfamiliar—is another in the growing number of “early music” ensembles utilizing period instruments or modern reproductions. Founded in 1973 by the young British harpsichordist Trevor Pinnock, it has previously recorded works of C. P. E. Bach on the British CRD label, and its version of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* has drawn well-deserved raves on both sides of the Atlantic. Now under contract to DG, Pinnock recently recorded the Bach toccatas (Archiv 2533 402/3), and with these new performances of the orchestral suites he inaugurates what promises to be a most exciting series of ensemble recordings.

For those with an enduring skepticism about “original instrument” groups, I

could do no better than to recommend these splendid performances, for here we are spared the slightest suggestion of the “quaintness” sometimes associated with such groups having insufficient mastery of their instruments. The playing is both impeccable and marvelously effortless, and the interpretations are as rich in elegant detail as they are secure in broader stylistic proprieties. I am particularly struck by the compelling rhythmic vitality, due in no small measure to the buoyancy of the phrasing and articulation: Lines are quite lovingly shaped, and even individual notes seem to have a life of their own.

There is a welcome freedom from excessive nineteenth-century vibrato, but the strings make enormously expressive use of the *messu di voce* (the “swelling” on in-

dividual notes that by Bach's time was a long-established part of performance practice). In this respect the *pièce de résistance* is the famous Air in *S. 1068*—beautiful in any case, but rarely so intense as here—and the effect is much enhanced by Pinnock's evident fondness for prolonging and stressing the auxiliaries of the *appoggiaturas*. There is some discrete decoration of repeats, too, that in the Air being a model of elegance.

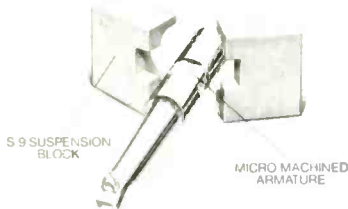
Elsewhere I suspect many listeners will be surprised by some brisker-than-usual tempos, especially in the overtures. In this matter Pinnock is very much in agreement with the school of thought revealed in Nikolaus Harnoncourt's more recent recordings, for he pointedly rejects the old interpretation of the French overture as a pompous and relatively static movement. Without really vitiating the sense of grandeur, Pinnock reminds us that, after all, these are introductions to sequences of dances, and from the outset we are prepared for an energetic swirl of wigs and satins. The sense of proportion is never lost, though, and nothing sounds remotely breathless or out of control.

I have had a good deal of pleasure in past years from the recordings of these works by Harnoncourt, Collegium Aureum, and Raymond Leppard, but these remarkably engaging performances by the English Concert seem to me to eclipse the competition. (I'm happy to note that a forthcoming release will include the remaining suite, so the triple concerto—also elegantly performed here—will not ultimately deprive us of Pinnock's renditions of all four.) I am, indeed, hard pressed to find anything in these renditions that I don't like. My only reservation has to do with the slightly larger-than-life sound of the (obviously multimiked) recordings. Even so, I suspect that most listeners nowadays prefer this type of sound, and I would not hesitate to list these among the finest Bach recordings I've heard.

BACH: Suites for Orchestra: in C, *S. 1066*; in B minor, *S. 1067*; in D, *S. 1068*. Concerto for Flute, Violin, Harpsichord, and Strings, in A minor, *S. 1044*.*

*Stephen Preston, flute; *Simon Standage, violin; English Concert, Trevor Pinnock, harpsichord and cond. [Gerd Ploebusch and Andreas Holschneider, prod.] ARCHIV 2533 410 (*S. 1044, 1067*) and 2533 411 (*S. 1066, 1068*), \$8.98 each. Tape: 3310 410 and 3310 411, \$8.98 each cassette.

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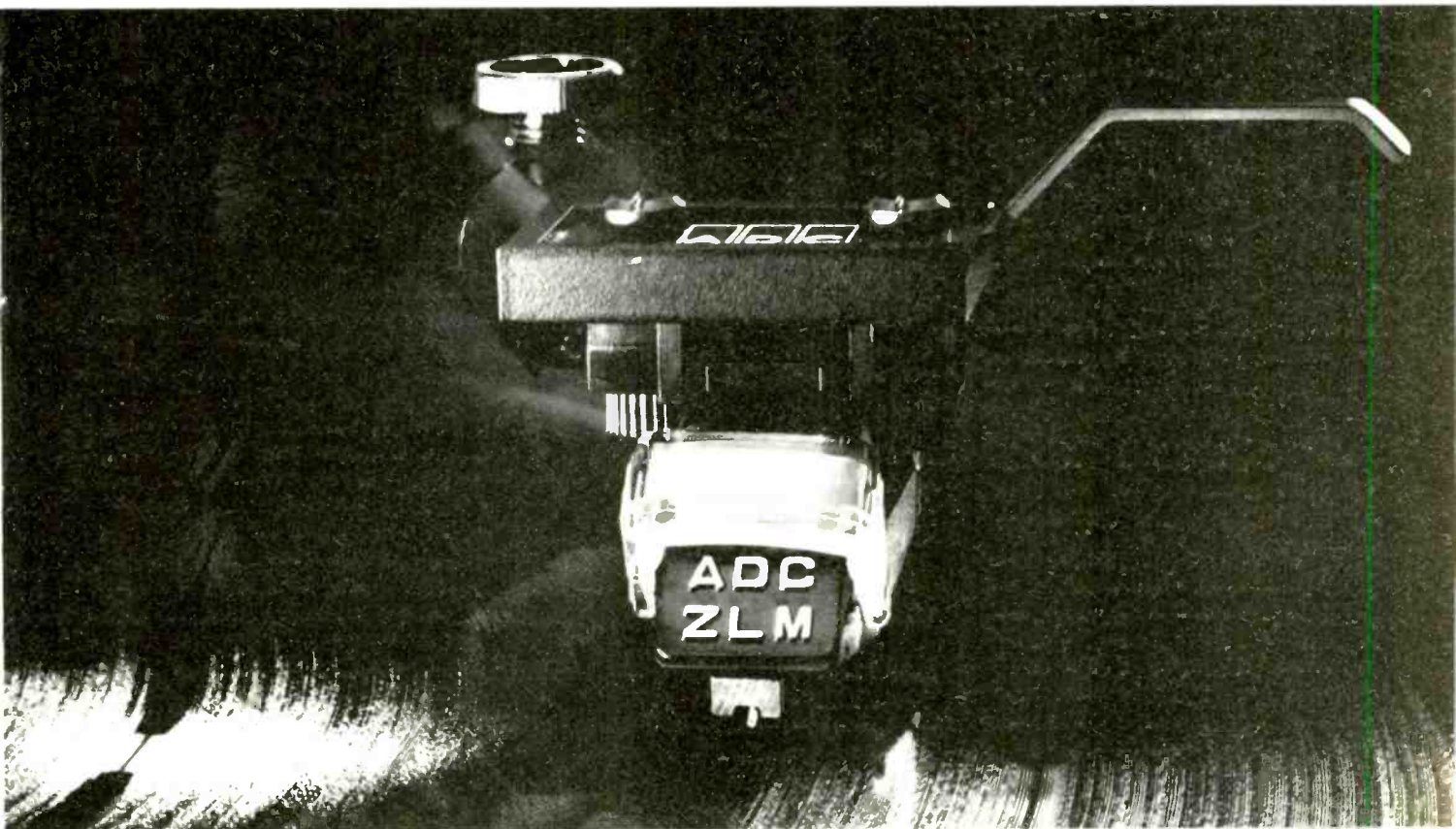
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The Cleveland Quartet—New maturity in the Beethoven quartets

BACH: *Suites for Orchestra*, S. 1066–1068. For a feature review, see page 88.

BEETHOVEN: *Quartets for Strings*. Cleveland Quartet. [Jay David Saks, prod.] RCA RED SEAL ARL 4-3010, \$31.92 (four discs, manual sequence).

Quartets: No. 7, in F, Op. 59, No. 1; No. 8, in E minor, Op. 59, No. 2; No. 9, in C, Op. 59, No. 3; No. 10, in E flat, Op. 74 (*Harp*); No. 11, in F minor, Op. 95.

The first installment in its Beethoven cycle is something of a tenth-anniversary milestone for the Cleveland Quartet, which is now associated with Eastman School. (It has had no connection with Cleveland since 1971.) On the whole, this is a worthy offering, even considering that recorded competition in these quartets is fierce.

A few measures of any of these per-

formances show that the ensemble has made giant strides since its recording debut in the Brahms quartets (RCA VCS 7102, August 1973). These readings display a welcome naturalness of phrasing, an understanding of how to vary a basic tempo, and a grasp of the totality—in a word, a maturity—that contrast with the naive, short-sighted impulsiveness of yore. And they differ greatly from what I remember of the Cleveland's live Beethoven: for example, the firm, confident, long lines of this expansively conceived F major *Razumovsky* Quartet as against the labored, unrhythmic account I heard some years ago. Certain technical problems remain: There are more instances of loose chording than a major quartet should tolerate, and—more detrimental—the edgy and opaque ensemble sound results, I suspect, from an inclination of all four players to force their tone. But enough shortcomings have been erased to make me confident that, in time, other deficiencies will disappear.

The musicians have obviously thought about the specific character of each of these very different works. Though some solutions come nearer the heart of the mat-

ter than others (Op. 59, No. 3, seems to get the most finished performance, and the explosive way with Op. 95 seems better suited to that work than a similar extroversion is to the *Harp*), all of the interpretations here are devoid of superficiality, of the kind of cosmetic emphasis and playing for technical safety that characterize too many American ensembles. For the first time in my listening experience, the first movement of the E minor Quartet is given with its specified double repeat, thereby letting us hear a first ending for the second half. The annotations by cellist Paul Katz are a model of succinctness and pragmatic musical intelligence, and I applaud RCA's decision to opt for manual sequence. H.G.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonatas for Piano*: No. 13, in E flat, Op. 27, No. 1; No. 14, in C sharp minor, Op. 27, No. 2 (*Moonlight*); No. 16, in G, Op. 31, No. 1.

Vladimir Ashkenazy, piano. [James Walker, prod.] LONDON CS 7111, \$7.98.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonatas for Piano*: No. 1, in F minor, Op. 2, No. 1; No. 17, in D minor, Op. 31, No. 2 (*Tempest*); No. 19 in G minor, Op. 49, No. 1.

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Vladimir Ashkenazy
Pianism of superb quality

Mihaly Bächer, piano. [János Mátyás, prod.] HUNGAROTON SLPX 11858, \$7.98.

BEETHOVEN: Sonatas for Piano: No. 13, in E flat, Op. 27, No. 1; No. 30, in E, Op. 109. Variations in E flat, Op. 35 (*Eroica*).

Mihaly Bächer, piano. [Jeno Simon, prod.] HUNGAROTON SLPX 11938, \$7.98.

The superb quality of Ashkenazy's pianism can be illustrated by a couple of details in Op. 27, No. 1: the perfect voicing and legato of the first-movement melody when it returns in the left hand following the stormy intrusion; the miraculous ease with which he effects the skips and shifts in the tricky (indeed, to the average pianist, nasty) last movement. Such extreme virtuosity may well be a luxury in Beethoven, where some *gaucherie* is not only permissible, but perhaps even desirable, but one can hardly blame an executant so blessed for exulting in such technical equipment. For the most part, Ashkenazy is admirably self-effacing here, but some may prefer a bit more rigor and angularity in their Beethoven, less pulling back at such devices as *subito pianos*. London's typically reverberant, soft-focus piano tone tends to emphasize the Chopinesque aspects of Ashkenazy's readings. On the whole, though, this is one of the better episodes in his series.

At first, Bächer's stouter emphasis and squarer, more metrical delivery brought me closer to Beethoven's tonal world, but not for long. Soon sobriety crosses the line into drabness, and the impression grows that many of the slowish tempos are chosen more from necessity

than from conviction. Certainly the *Tempest* Sonata needs much more *Sturm und Drang*, and even more intense introspection, and the *Eroica* Variations have rarely, if ever, sounded so tame and pedestrian as here. The other four sonatas on these two Hungaroton discs fare somewhat better. But my guess is that this Hungarian pianist (evidently recording a cycle) is an eminent pedagogue rather than an inspiring re-creative temperament. The piano sound is close and boxy—honest but unalluring. H.G.

BÉRIOT: *Scène de ballet*—See Respighi: *Concerto gregoriano*.

BERLIOZ: *Orchestral Works*. For a feature review, see page 85.

BRAHMS: *Serenade No. 2, in A, Op. 16*.

London Philharmonic Orchestra, William Jackson, cond. [Brian Culverhouse, prod.] CHALFONT C 77016, \$7.98.

BRAHMS: *Serenade No. 2, in A, Op. 16; Variations on a Theme by Haydn, Op. 56a*.

London Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Adrian Boult, cond. [Christopher Bishop, prod.] ANGEL SZ 37648, \$8.98.

Here at the same time is the London Philharmonic giving what must be the slowest and the fastest performances on records of the Brahms A major Serenade. The thirty-five-minute rendition by William Jackson, a new name to me, may not fill up every inch of this Chalfont disc. Yet his cautious, one-beat-after-the-other conducting all but embalms the rustic spontaneity of the piece and makes the record seem interminable.

Boult was pushing ninety when he taped his Angel performance, which is fully ten minutes shorter than Jackson's. The brio, gaiety, and affectionate informality are quite special, but I fail to understand Sir Adrian's dreadful hurry with the central Adagio (whose non troppo marking is underlined with a vengeance). It makes little musical sense and surely wasn't necessary to squeeze the work onto one side. That has been achieved only on István Kertész' slightly more relaxed version (London CS 6594, coupled with a fine edition of Dvořák's wind serenade—the only one listed in SCHWANN). Boult's excesses in the third movement make preferable not only Kertész' performance, but also the wise and gentle interpretation of Pablo Casals (MRS 1; Marlboro Recording Society, 5114 Wisconsin Rd., Washington, D.C. 20016).

Boult's mid-Fifties Westminster recording of the *Haydn* Variations was a favorite of mine, and his remake bids fair to become one as well. The tempos are broad, but the general style light and easy. Such details as the counterpoint of the fourth variation and the horn-low strings cross-rhythms of the sixth are again brought out with clarity. Overseas, the Boult serenade is paired with the earlier D major Serenade in a two-disc package. I trust Angel will make the other half available in due time.

Both recordings are vivid—Chalfont's in a more close-up style, with some wiriness on top and background noise, Angel's more distant, airy, and generally cleaner. A.C.

BRAHMS: *Vocal Works*—See Mendelssohn: *Psalm 42, Op. 42*.

DEBUSSY: *La Mer; Nocturnes**.

Chorus of the Orchestre de Paris*; Orchestre de Paris, Daniel Barenboim, cond. [Günther Breest, prod.] DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2531 956, \$8.98. Tape: 3301 056, \$8.98 (cassette).

DEBUSSY: *Images for Orchestra; Danses sacrée et profane**.

Karel Patras, harp*; Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Serge Baudo, cond. [Milan Slavický, prod.] SUPRAPHON 4 10 2429, \$8.98 (SQ-encoded disc).

Vera Badings, harp*; Concertgebouw Orchestra, Bernard Haitink, cond. PHILIPS 9500 509, \$8.98. Tape: 7300 669, \$8.98 (cassette).

DEBUSSY: *Nocturnes; Jeux; Images for Orchestra: No. 2, Iberia*.

Cleveland Orchestra, Lorin Maazel, cond. [James Mallinson, prod.] LONDON CS 7128, \$8.98.

This cornucopia of orchestral Debussy features the ranking ensemble of the composer's countrymen and what are arguably the most refined orchestras of Eastern and Western Europe and the U.S. In this music, style, refinement, the ineffable "right sound" are an eternal and almost mystical quest.

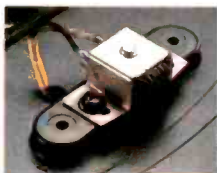
I have trouble believing that Debussy wrote with an inner vision of the kind of sonorities French orchestras produce nowadays—the winds so serpentine, the brass tremulous with that massive spread to the tone, the strings sweetly rambunctious. The Orchestre de Paris may be working to change that stereotype, but on the evidence of this new *La Mer* and *Nocturnes*, the musicians are no more successful

Continued on page 96

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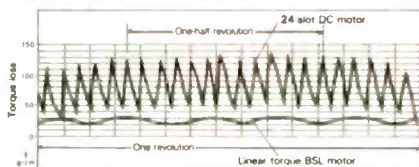
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by R. D. Darrell

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Of course the discs must be played back with a DBX decoder—either a circuit embodied in one of the previously available compander models or the new Model 21, an automatic decoder list-priced at \$109. Just seventeen such discs had been planned for release by the time you read this (more are promised soon, perhaps even before Christmas). The seven representative issues I am reviewing here are, at best, a motley lot. And ordinary records cannot benefit by the DBX system, so until a larger, more varied repertory of encoded discs becomes obtainable, any general recommendation of the new system must be qualified. However, I have no reservation in commending it to investigation by avid audiophiles—or, indeed, to anyone anxious to get some notion of what the future holds when and if systems exist that make digital playback of digital recordings practicable: full emancipation from recording's age-old enslavement to extraneous noise. (It's unfortunate that as yet there are no DBX encodings of digital or direct-to-disc recordings, since they obviously would be ideal for complete surface-noise silencing.)

Getting us off to a tepid start musically, the "Showcase" sampler is a collection of jazz and classical selections. The ultrarealistic sonics of the jazz side are impressive, but the classical examples (short pieces or movements for solo guitar, piano, and organ, plus a hymn for small



The Empire Brass Quintet
Benefiting from DBX

chorus and organ) are all negligible in their present performances. The first of the two Rachmaninoff suite transcriptions for piano and orchestra is almost embarrassingly ineffectual; the other is mildly interesting as a miniature-concerto metamorphosis of a popular two-piano work.

The 1972 guitar program by Laurindo Almeida and Ruth Laredo's acclaimed Scriabin recording of 1973 effectively demonstrate how much solo instruments gain (far more than large ensembles) when the noise veil is drawn back. Ringing brass timbres benefit immeasurably too. And since I had heard the brilliantly played "Baroque Brass" and "American Brass Band Journal Revisited" in the normal disc version and on the already remarkably quiet Dolby cassettes, I particularly appreciated how much silenced surfaces do for them—serving, as it were, as black velvet backgrounds for gleaming tonal diamonds.

Of this heterogeneous collection, the Strauss "Gala" undoubtedly proffers the widest all-round appeal. I have the original, normally processed disc edition for direct comparison with the encoded one, and, again, the "cleansing" enhancement is dramatic, not least in the increased vividness of the spotlighted cymbal crashes in the *Thunder and Lightning* Polka. Complete background silence sets off to perfection the delightful, lightly accompanied violin-solo version of Johann Strauss I's disarmingly

simple *Kettenbrücke* Waltz, Op. 4. For that matter, this whole program is a delight even in normal form with what would be considered—by all pre-DBX standards—admirably quiet surfaces. For John Georgiadis, long the concertmaster of the London Symphony, revives the old Straussian tradition of using a relatively small orchestra and contributing his own occasional violin-solo passages (*Accelerationen* and *Loreley-Rheinklänge* Waltzes). If the silky-sweet near schmaltz of these solos contrasts rather startlingly with the brisk, crisp, no-nonsense, reasonably idiomatic ensemble readings—well, that well may have been true of the Strausses' own practice.

All of which brings us back to content rather than means. Silence is indeed heavenly, but it's an empty heaven if there isn't real music in it. DBX's welcome if variable initial outing promises much for really substantial program material.

DBX RECORDING TECHNOLOGY SHOWCASE SERIES, VOL. 1.

Various artists. [Jerome Ruzicka, prod.] DBX RTS 1, \$20.

RACHMANINOFF: Suites: No. 1, Op. 5 (arr. Harkness)*; No. 2, Op. 17 (arr. Hoiby)†.

Lee Hoiby, piano; Harkness Symphony Orchestra, Jorge Mester, cond.*; London Symphony Orchestra, Lawrence Foster, cond.†. DBX GS 2007, \$12 [encoded version of DESTO DC 6431, recorded 1969].

LAURINDO ALMEIDA: Art of.

Laurindo Almeida, guitar. DBX SS 3003, \$8.00 [encoded version of ORION 7259/SINE QUA NON SAS 2027, recorded 1972].

SCRIABIN: Preludes: Opp. 11 and 74. Poem, Op. 32, No. 1.

Ruth Laredo, piano. DBX GS 2004, \$12 [encoded version of DESTO DC 7145, recorded 1973].

EMPIRE BRASS QUINTET: Baroque Brass.

Empire Brass Quintet. [John Newton, prod.] DBX SS 3001, \$8.00 [encoded version of SINE QUA NON SA 2014, recorded 1977].

AMERICAN BRASS BAND JOURNAL REVISITED.

Empire Brass Quintet and Friends, Frederick Fennell, cond. DBX SS 3004, \$8.00 [encoded version of SINE QUA NON SAS 2017, recorded 1978].

STRAUSS FAMILY GALA.

Johann Strauss Orchestra, John Georgiadis, violin and cond. [Brian Culverhouse, prod.] DBX GS 2006, \$12 [encoded version of CHALFONT C77011, recorded 1978].



Gould



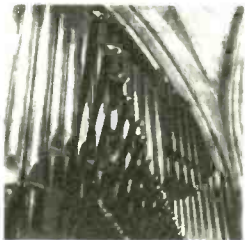
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Lorin Maazel
A fine orchestra for Debussy

now than a decade ago, when they so murkily recorded the same pairing under Barbirolli (Angel S 36583). Under Barenboim, there is nothing of the celestial romp about the chattering woodwind triplets in "Fêtes," and the voice-leading in "Sirènes" is badly smudged (e.g., even with mutes on, the trumpets at figure 10 ought to be heard). In the overside *La Mer*, idiomatic affection is no justification for the ludicrous upward slides from violas and second violins between Nos. 58 and 59 of the finale.

Barenboim himself runs into too many problems in the *Nocturnes*. The main tempo of "Nuages" (Debussy marked it "modéré") is so broad that not only is the pointillistic effect of the piece lost, but there is no room to maneuver the even more extreme slowdowns in the final pages. The gear change to the processional episode in "Fêtes" is almost parodistic, and by ignoring the "retenu avec force" two bars after No. 7 in "Sirènes," the climactic point of that selection is lost. *La Mer* suffers fewer structural miscalculations from the conductor, but the abrupt and jagged retreat of the tide at the climax of the second section is too shapeless and bland, the transition to the reflective central section of the final movement rhythmically weak.

Vibrato and nasality are well-known characteristics not only of French, but also of Slavic, orchestras. One that tames this is the Czech Philharmonic, which also boasts wind players of comic-opera distinctiveness, cracklingly brilliant brass, bouncily pungent strings, and great inner clarity be-

tween these choirs. Serge Baudo (who helped develop the Orchestre de Paris) has been busily recording French repertoire in Prague, and this latest example shows that he and the Czech Philharmonic are a good match for each other and the composer. The *Danses sacrée et profane* for harp and strings are light and feathery in articulation, palpitating in their warmth. The *Images* (all three together, but not in the prescribed order due to the side-distribution exigencies of this coupling) are also distinguished. The oboe d'amore in "Gigues" wails with suavely modulated expressivity; the flutes and bassoons shed a crystalline play of light and shadow on "Rondes de printemps"; the outer sections of "Iberia" crackle with smartly drilled exuberance. First-rate music-making, compromised, alas, by a thick veil of resonance that adds a porous, ill-defined boom to the proceedings. Did some sonic ideologue at Supraphon think Western Impressionism had to sound decadent and sluggish?

In the same coupling, the Concertgebouw Orchestra is similar to the Czech Philharmonic insofar as individual instrumental coloration is firmly defined, articulation is crisply distinct, and brass rather forward. But the Amsterdam sound is basically cooler, its tone somewhat more limpid and sweet. Haitink's approach is a straightforward one. He does best at conveying the regretful, dainty antiquity of the *Danses*, where the velvety loveliness of the Concertgebouw strings are completely in their element. But the scintillant bump-tiousness of "Iberia" and the trembling, timeless ecstasy of "Rondes de printemps" don't fully come across here. It's hard to say if it's Haitink's insufficiently mercurial temperament or the fact that the well-behaved ensemble lacks the dry and disembodied character, the fleet weightlessness, that is needed to respond to Debussy's ever-shifting harmonic textures and density values.

Of all the great American orchestras, I feel the Cleveland possesses the combination of chamber-music-like delicacy, achromatic crispness of detail, and propulsive virtuosity that suits this idiom. These players respond with uncanny, split-second exactitude to the changeability of a Debussy orchestral score. The sonic image on the present recording is one of freshly scrubbed purity. What is amazing is that the orchestra sounds so right that I can forgive Maazel his basically uneasy sense of the undulant rhythms and latent cohesion of *Jeux*, his trim and rather unsensuous phrasings throughout the *Nocturnes*, and, in

"Iberia," the failure to fully realize the needed taut and rollicking execution of the opening and the puffy rhythmic distensions that come into the last two movements. One flaw of balance: The chimes in the last movement of "Iberia" begin too loudly.

London of late has seemed prone to issuing "Iberia" without the other sections of *Images*. This is not the way to build a systematic Debussy collection, so I'll recommend a listen to the Maazel recording for the uncanny way London has captured the Cleveland sound. More satisfying Cleveland performances can be found in Szell's *La Mer* (Odyssey Y 31928, with Ravel works) and the Boulez *Images* and *Danses* (Columbia MS 7362). A.C.

GLAZUNOV: The King of the Jews (incidental music).

■ Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra, Siegfried Köhler, cond. [Heinz Jansen, prod.] TURNABOUT QTV 34739, \$4.98 (QS-encoded disc).

These days there aren't many first-ever recordings of sizable works by well-known composers, and that is probably the best justification for the present Russian curio: excerpts from the incidental music Glazunov was invited—indeed royally commanded—to compose for a 1914 mystery play by none other than the Grand Duke Konstantin Romanov. Versatile craftsman that he was, Glazunov did a highly competent job, not least in cautiously treading a sure path between the abyss of religious sentimentality on one hand and of passionless abstraction on the other. Typically, his music is beautifully scored—an attraction effectively exploited here by engineer Heinz Jansen's warmly rich and open recording of conductor Siegfried Köhler's spirited and expressive performance.

The jacket notes quote from an unpublished memoir by Glazunov on the work's origins, but they do not tell us how much of the score these preludes and entr'actes comprise. Tantalizingly, however, they suggest that there's at least one serious omission: a "chorus in honor of the resurrection," which, according to the composer, made the most lasting impression in the original production. R.D.D.

HANDEL: Concerti grossi (6), Op. 3; Concerti grossi (12), Op. 6.

■ Grande Ecurie et Chambre du Roy, Jean-Claude Malgoire, cond. [Georges Kadar, prod.] ODYSSEY Y4 52334, \$15.92 (four discs, manual sequence).

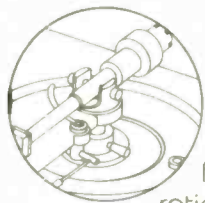
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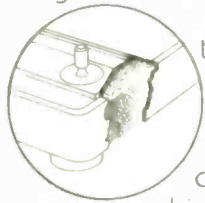
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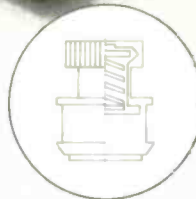


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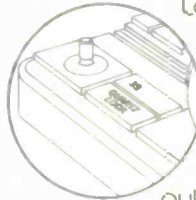


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BACH, J.C.: *Sinfonias* (6). Marriner. PHILIPS 9502 001, Sept.

BEETHOVEN: *Piano Concerto No. 4*. Rosen, Morris. PETERS INTERNATIONAL PLE 110, Aug.

BEETHOVEN: *Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano (Archduke)*. Suk Trio. SUPRAPHON 4 11 2137, Oct.

BEETHOVEN: *Works for Cello and Piano*. Starker, Buchbinder. TELEFUNKEN 36.35450 (3), Oct.

BERG: *Lulu*. Silja, Berry, Hopferwieser, Dohnányi. LONDON OSA 13120 (3), Aug.

BOCCHERINI: *Symphonies* (6). Leppard. PHILIPS 6703 034 (3), Sept.

BOULEZ: *Sonata for Piano*. WEBERN: *Variations for Piano*. Pollini. DG 2530 803, Oct.

BRAHMS: *Variations on a Theme by Handel*. Arrau. PHILIPS 9500 446, Oct.

DONIZETTI: *Lucrezia Borgia*. Sutherland, Horne, Bonyngé. LONDON OSA 13129 (3), Oct.

FAURÉ: *Requiem; Pavane*. Popp, Nimsgerm, A. Davis. COLUMBIA M 35153, Oct.

JANÁČEK: *Quartets for Strings*. Gabrieli Qt. LONDON TREASURY STS 15432, Oct.

KREBS: *Concerto for Harpsichord, Oboe, Strings, and Continuo*. Holliger, Jaccottet, Van Wijnkoop. ARCHIV 2533 412, Oct.

MASSENET: *Cendrillon*. Von Stade, Gedda, Welting, Rudel. COLUMBIA M3 35194 (3), Aug.

MARTINŮ: *Symphony No. 1; Variations for Piano and Orchestra*. Lechner, Neumann. SUPRAPHON 4 10 2166, Sept.

SHOSTAKOVICH: *Lady Macbeth of the Mzensk District*. Vishnevskaya, Rostropovich. ANGEL SCLX 3866 (3), Sept.

STRAUSS: *Die schweigsame Frau*. Scovotti, Adam, Janowski. ANGEL SZCX 3867 (3), Oct.

VIVALDI: *Motets*. Ameling, Negri. PHILIPS 9500 556, Oct.

ELLY AMELING: *Souvenirs*. COLUMBIA M 35119, Aug.

BUCK ROGERS. *Original film soundtrack recording*. MCA 3097, Aug.

FARNON: *Captain Horatio Hornblower Suite*. CITADEL CT 7009, Oct.

SWEENEY TODD: *Original Broadway cast recording*. RCA RED SEAL CBL 2-3379 (2), Aug.

At first sight, this release looks irresistible: an integral collection of both the great Opp. 3 and 6 concerti grossi, recorded with period instruments, and at budget price. But on first hearing, it turns out to be a dubious bargain.

In the past, I've often been kinder to Malgoire's releases than many of my colleagues, largely because, for me, the infectious relish with which he generally infuses his performances of baroque-era masterpieces outbalances his sometimes mannered readings and slipshod orchestral playing. That's perhaps still true of the livelier movements here, but elsewhere his idiosyncrasies become inexcusably excessive and the orchestral playing exasperatingly rough and heavy-handed. Nor are matters helped by the often overresonant, too closely miked engineering.

For music of this stature, we demand something far better than Malgoire seems able to give us. We're lucky to have a number of preferable choices, among which I'd rank first Neville Marriner's Op. 3 (Argo 5400) and Op. 6 (London CSA 2309). R.D.D.

HANDEL: Sonatas for Violin and Continuo, Op. 1.

Josef Suk, violin; Zusana Růžicková, harpsichord. [Peter Willemoës, prod.] SUPRAPHON 4 11 2321/2, \$17.96 (two SQ-encoded discs).

Sonatas: No. 3, in A; No. 6, in G minor; No. 10, in G minor; No. 11, in F; No. 12, in F; No. 13, in D; No. 14, in A; No. 15, in E.

Although all the Handel Op. 1 sonatas are apt enough—given baroque-era leeway—for flute (or recorder), oboe, or violin, those primarily intended for the violin long were considered to be (as indicated in SCHWANN 1) Nos. 3, 10, and 12–15. In recent years, however, the discovery of the autograph score of No. 6 proved that it too was for the violin rather than for the oboe, as suggested in the Walsh publication, c. 1731. (All these sonatas probably were composed earlier, at least some of them back in Handel's Hannover years.) In the present set, these seven "authentic" violin sonatas are augmented by Op. 1, No. 11, which is generally considered to be primarily intended for the flute or recorder.

Since the only other currently available set, of the basic six violin sonatas only, is the 1970 Nonesuch album of rather routine performances by Susanne Lautenbacher, with Koch and Ruf on continuo, there is a need for this newer set, which extends beyond the considerable audience for every new Josef Suk recording. But his always elegant playing is more likely to sat-

isfy his fans than Handelian connoisseurs. They can never forgive the failure to reinforce the bass line of Zusana Růžicková's competent but rather characterless harpsichord part by a continuo gamba or cello. And they are unlikely to deem Suk's consistent use of vibrato as stylistically authentic.

For nonspecialists, the performances' warm expressiveness and the gleamingly bright (if just a bit sharp-edged) sonics are sure to be enjoyed—in stereo as well as in quad, which adds little, if anything, aurally significant. But connoisseurs will continue to long for the reissue (perhaps now in the midprice Privilege series) of the 1970 Archiv set by Eduard Melkus, accompanied by Müller, Scheidt, and Wenzinger, which included Nos. 1b, 3, 6, 10, and 12–15 of Op. 1, plus an isolated Sonata in G and an Adagio and Allegro in A. R.D.D.

HAYDN: *Lo Speciale*.

CAST:

Grilletta	Magda Kalmár (s)
Volpino	Veronika Kincses (s)
Sempronio	Attila Fülöp (t)
Mengone	István Rozsos (t)

Zsuzsa Pertis, harpsichord; Ferenc Liszt Chamber Orchestra, György Lehel, cond. [Zoltán Hezser, prod.] HUNGAROTON SLPX 11926/7, \$17.96 (two discs, manual sequence).

During the last decade of the nineteenth century a Viennese "critic/scholar" by the name of Hirschfeld stumbled upon the manuscript of Haydn's opera *Lo Speciale (The Apothecary)*. In his hands the score was reworked—i.e., drawn and quartered—and as *Der Apotheker* was repeatedly performed, even by Mahler at the Vienna Opera. This was the only Haydn opera known until the beginning of the 1950s, when research began to unearth his mature theater music and effectively refuted our ideas about Haydn the opera composer, which virtually all of us in this business had based on this single printed score. Hirschfeld did an abominable job; without informing his readers, he shamelessly changed whatever he could, and since the extant manuscript is a torso, with large portions missing (all that remains from the third act is one aria and the finale), he added an overture, arias, and other numbers. The situation was exacerbated by commercial exploitation. The Vienna Choir Boys (or rather their arrangers and managers) have made the already unscrupulously mangled score into a thing of cloying juvenile prettiness. Now that the Cologne Haydn Institute has published a critically correct score (used for this record-

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Circle 6 on Page 117

ing), adding the newly discovered overture and a few other things, we must revise our views; the splendid recording by Hungaroton is not only a great help toward achieving this but offers a very entertaining hour and a half.

Still, the reevaluation is not an easy task. First of all, of course, the surviving score is lamentably incomplete. A staged performance would be difficult, if not impossible, unless a present-day Hirschfeld is called to the rescue, but Mahler's recomposing of Weber's *Three Pintos* should warn us against this sort of remedy. Furthermore, the opera was commissioned for the opening of the small opera theater in the Esterházy palace, and at that time the prince's musical establishment consisted of a mere four singers, two tenors and two sopranos, so Goldoni's excellent libretto had to be severely amputated. At that, the third male role, that of Volpino, had to be given to one of the sopranos, hence excluding the usual imbroglione between two (at least) amorous couples.

Despite all these difficulties, Haydn went to work with enthusiasm, and he produced remarkably operatic music, even though at this stage of his career he had had little operatic experience. The nine arias (seven of which are in sonata form!) are shapely, witty, full of good tunes; the finales are vivacious; and the orchestral writing is superb. If *Lo Speciale* does not reach the level of Haydn's later operas, it offers delectable music and admirable craftsmanship, and if a staged performance is hard to imagine, a recording is much deserved.

Magda Kalmár (Grilletta) is her accomplished self, and Veronika Kincses (Volpino) joins her on almost equal terms. Mengone, the Apothecary's helper, is sung by István Rozsos, who is a bit uncomfortable above the staff—Haydn repeatedly demands high Cs—and whose voice is not the most attractive. Nevertheless he holds his own most of the time. Attila Fülöp, in the title role, is a much more secure and versatile artist. All of them are a little too closely miked, though otherwise the sound is very good—a little attenuation puts things right. György Lehel furnishes first-class, precise support with his fine little orchestra, and Zsuzsa Pertis, the continuo harpsichordist, could not be better.

As is Hungaroton's wont, an elegant and tasteful booklet with the complete text in four languages and a fine essay by László Somfai completes the album. P.H.L.

LALO: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano, No. 1, in C minor, Op. 7. SAINT-SAËNS: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano,

No. 1, in F, Op. 18.

■ Caecilian Trio (Sally O'Reilly, Beverly Lauridsen, Annie Petit). [Marc Aubort and Joanna Nickrenz, prod.] TURNABOUT TVC 37002, \$4.98.

LALO: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano, No. 3, in A minor, Op. 26; Sonata for Violin and Piano, in D, Op. 12.

■ Jean Martin Trio (Flora Elphège, Claude Burgos, Jean Martin). MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY MHS 4017, \$5.20 (\$3.95 to members). Tape: MHS 6017, \$6.95 (\$4.95 to members) (cassette). (Add \$1.25 shipping, Musical Heritage Society, 14 Park Rd., Tinton Falls, N.J. 07724.)

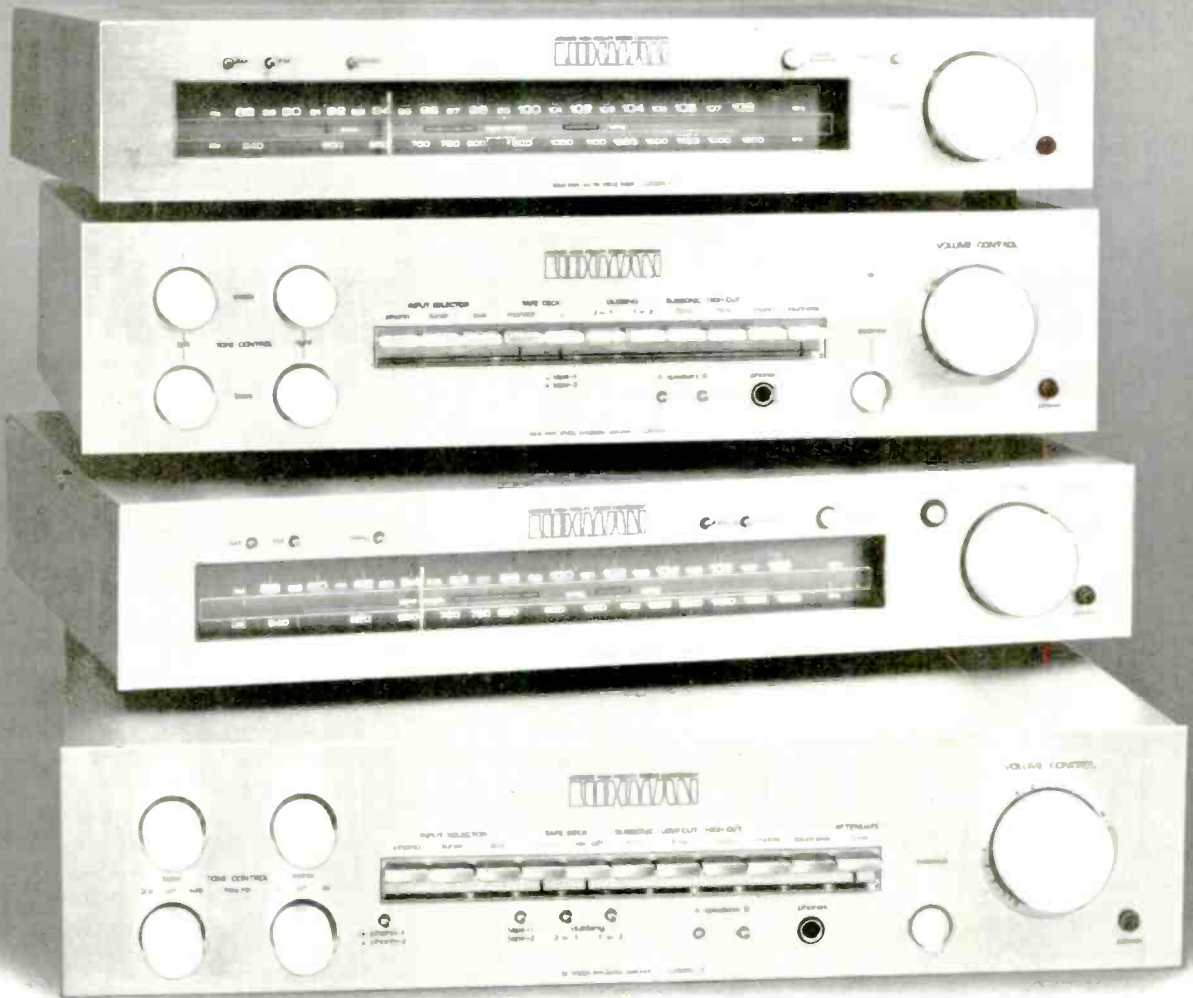
Can it be that there's a modest Lalo revival in the making? In any case, it's a delight to extend our knowledge of the pioneering French nationalist's chamber music, for which his earlier career as ensemble violinist and violist so effectively prepared him. We've had the violin sonata before—indeed the 1973 Temianka/Dominguez Orion version (73105), coupled with D'Indy's Op. 59 Violin Sonata, remains available. But the First Trio, like the coupled Saint-Saëns Trio No. 1, is plausibly claimed to be a premiere recording, and I have never come across any previous recording of the Third Trio.

The Caecilians' record debut, in Turnabout's new chamber music series, is an unqualified success characterized by rewarding as well as fresh programmatic materials; deft, alert, lilting performances; and well-nigh ideally balanced, warmly ungimmicked recording. My only mild complaint is that the endearing early Lalo trio isn't dated (it probably stems from his late twenties, in the early 1850s), although a date—1863—is given for the Saint-Saëns. The latter is patently a more serious and intricately constructed work, with a much more prominent bravura piano part, but it never matches Lalo's charm.

The Lalo Third Trio of 1881 is also a more ambitious, indeed magisterial, composition, notable for its eloquently evocative slow movement, its catchy ostinato-figure second movement (which Lalo later orchestrated as an independent scherzo), and the use of some cyclic thematic returns in its cheerful, toccatalike finale. Beside it, the violin sonata (undated, but said to use material from a *Grand Duo contant* of 1853) seems less distinctive and rewarding, although it too boasts many beautiful moments, not least in its extensive, well-varied variations movement.

Here the gleamingly bright French Arion recording is lighter in weight than Turnabout's, the ambience is a bit drier, Jean Martin's bravura piano-playing some-

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what brittle in tonal quality, while he tends to dominate—both sonically and in personality projection—his partners. The rather tense but deftly assured readings seldom strike far below the music's scintillating surface attractions, but they do have unmistakable Gallic stylistic authenticity. R.D.D.

MAHLER: Symphony No. 4, in G.

A Barbara Hendricks, soprano; Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Zubin Mehta, cond. [Ray Minshull, prod.] LONDON DIGITAL RECORDING LDR 10004, \$9.98.

They make Mahler Fourth recordings all the time now and in all corners of the world, but this is the first Mahler work to be taped using the digital method, and that's news! As could be expected from London, this is as clean and full a recording as you could want, with ample but unboomy bass and utterly silent background levels. Others, such as the Telarc-Soundstream productions, have given us more sensational crescendos, and I suppose a specialty disc like this shouldn't be afflicted by the moment of pre-echo that occurs before No. 11 in the finale. Still, a technically praiseworthy job.

What is missing is a musically informed transparency of texture. For example, I'd like to decipher the orchestration starting three bars after No. 7 in the Adagio: Is it the oboe solo of the older editions, or the trumpet passed to oboe passed to English horn of the Critical Edition? That's a crucial distinction, and I couldn't make it here, though it's perfectly apparent on most of the decent analog versions. And as far as dynamic range goes, digital or not, I'd love to hear some really soft playing on this record.

Part of the problem may be Israel's Mann Auditorium. Much of it is surely the Israel Philharmonic, clearly lacking the subtlety to project the whimsical magic as well as the virtuosity of this symphony. It gets tiresome to listen to a loud and tonally unvaried horn or to scrappy and sour violins.

Mehta's enthusiasm for Mahler is well publicized, and some will undoubtedly find this reading amply energetic and amply schmalzty. I find it poorly controlled and the mannerisms tedious (e.g., the distension between cues 10 and 11 of the scherzo). Barbara Hendricks, to be sure, is aptly youthful and playful in the finale.

Except for sound buffs, I can't recommend this Mahler Fourth over such modern competition as Abbado, Horenstein, Levine, Kubelik, and Klemperer and the historical reissues of Mengelberg, Walter, and Van Beinum. A.C.

MENDELSSOHN: Psalm 42, Op. 42; Psalm 95, Op. 46.

Christiane Baumann and Joana Silva, sopranos; Pierre-André Blaser, tenor; Andrew Swinnerton, oboe; Gulbenkian Foundation Chorus and Orchestra, Michel Corboz, cond. ERATO STU 71101, \$8.98 (distributed by RCA Records).

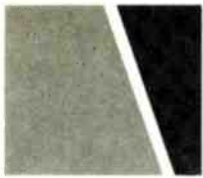
BRAHMS: Motet, Op. 74, No. 1; Marienlieder, Op. 22; Ten Songs.

Gulbenkian Foundation Chorus, Michel Corboz, cond. RCA RED SEAL ARL 1-3350, \$8.98.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, production of liturgic and other sacred music by the great masters had been largely surrendered to professional church musicians, organists and choirmasters, who felt that, as of yore, their duties included composing, whether they had any creative talent or not. It was their music that was commonly heard in the churches, much of it mediocre or worse. But these two recordings from Erato demonstrate that some of the masters continued to compose sacred music. Moreover, many of their little-known—or entirely unknown—works are masterpieces that should be heard and cherished.



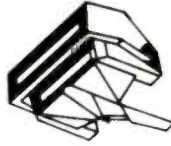
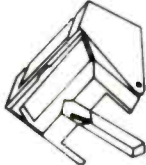
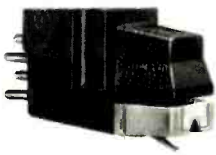
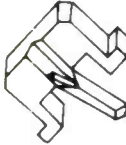
Both Mendelssohn and Brahms were devoted to choral music, and a considerable portion of their oeuvre is vocal. Perhaps it will come as a surprise that in the nineteenth century Mendelssohn was known and particularly appreciated as a choral composer, especially in England; even in this country choral societies were named after him. Brahms was even more productive in this field. Both composers were highly influential in the field of the oratorio, and both revived interest in a cappella music as well as in men's and women's choirs. Both were students of the great baroque choral art, though Brahms (not a mean musicologist in his spare time) went considerably beyond Mendelssohn and was a connoisseur of the music of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; both were masterly contrapuntists, and both had a marvelous sense for vocal music and choral euphony. (Curiously, Brahms, who could be dense, even ungainly, when writing for the piano or the orchestra, was almost always felicitous when writing for voices.) Also, both were considered "academic" composers and suffered temporary eclipses; during 1910-40, Mendelssohn was practically dismissed as a minor composer, while somewhat earlier Mahler and Wolf conferred the same status on Brahms. And in the context of our present discussion, it should be noted that both were very religious.

Mendelssohn had an almost Mozar-



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tean feeling for form and sound, no matter what the genre or medium. The two *Psalms* employ a large orchestra, the standard classical ensemble being augmented by another brace of horns, three trombones, and the organ. The latter is, of course, altogether superfluous, but to this day it is added even to symphonically conceived works to make them more "religious." (The author of the notes, sensing its extraneous presence, naively decides that it plays "a sort of continuo"!)

Fortunately, conductor

Michel Corboz makes it quite inconspicuous. The orchestra is used impressively, especially in view of the fine and independent choral setting. Mendelssohn writes virtuosos counterpoint that at the same time is unobtrusive; the motifs wander with easy grace from the voices to the instruments and vice versa. At other times, as in No. 2 in *Psalm 95*, the orchestra asserts itself with splendid brassy vigor. Berlioz much admired Mendelssohn's choral/instrumental writing, as he saw it especially in the *Wal-*

purgisnacht. As we listen to the beautiful beginning of the *Psalm 42*, to the dramatic accompanied recitatives, and in particular to the majestic final chorus, we realize that this "rediscoverer" of Bach was much more influenced by Handel's choral art (also evident in the sturdy choruses in *Elijah*). In the second *Psalm* there is a remarkable quintet for the unusual ensemble of one soprano, two tenors, and two basses, and the final chorus is again of almost Handelian grandeur. Also, unlike *Paulus*, this work contains no anachronisms in the utilization of the baroque stylistic elements.

Turning to Brahms, we immediately enter another world, the hallowed a cappella art of the Renaissance on Brahmsian terms. While Mendelssohn's sympathies were more southern (hence his preference for that Italianate Englishman, Handel), Brahms is clearly the north German who goes back to the ancient Flemish and German art of Lasso, Schütz, Buxtehude, and Bach. These works, notably the motet, testify to a deep earnestness and are full of longing and hope, sorrow and consolation. The melodies are quietly declaimed, interlacing smoothly but occasionally rising to peroration, though in the Marian songs and the shorter secular pieces the tone is consistently that of delicate and intimate chamber music. Brahms is chary of pauses and transition passages. Everything, though lightly woven, is concentrated, requiring a similar spiritual concentration from the listener. The part-writing is extraordinarily clear and transparent, with many finesses in the cadences.

The motet abounds in elaborate but never ostentatious polyphony—chorale variation, canon, and so forth. (There is no point in trying to analyze the construction in the space available. It is simply magnificent music.) The question *Warum?* (Why?), which returns at the end of every strophe, is deeply affecting and binds together the elegiac verses. Brahms was very fond of folk music and in the *Marienlieder* achieves a marvelous synthesis of the simple folksong with the sophisticated spiritual madrigal of the sixteenth century. These songs capture the childlike innocence of the delightfully archaic peasant poetry with equally archaic but highly refined modal turns. The spirit of this poetry called for strophic songs, but the slight departures in the repeats are marvels of the art of variation. A kind of horn motif crisscrosses all the songs in ever new garb, unifying the set and finally gently fading into the distance. Or in one song Brahms ends every verse with a lovely re-

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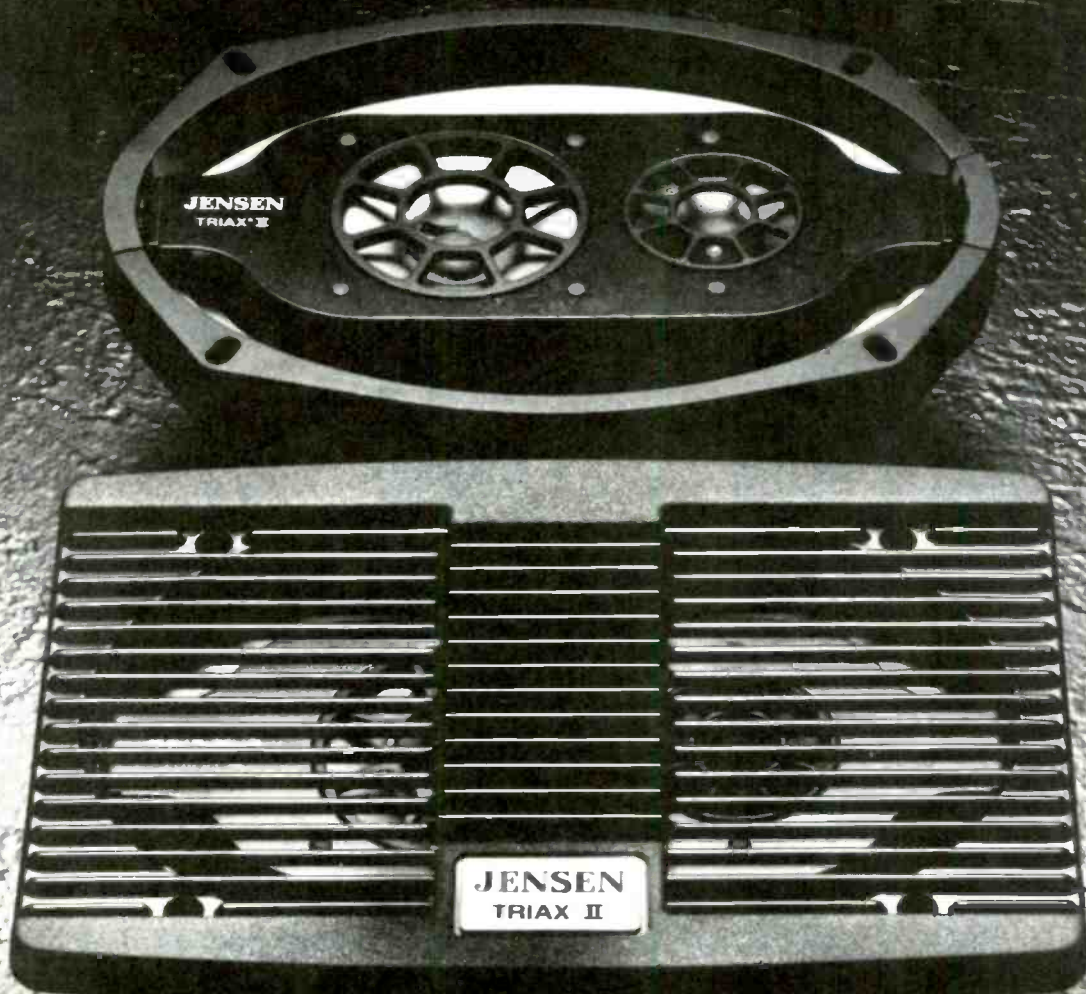
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frain, "Pray for us, Mary!" The secular songs are equally delectable. Here the composer sings of the bud ready to burst into flower, there of the mysteries of the night, but occasionally the music flares up passionately.

The performances are excellent and, in the a cappella pieces, superlative. In the Mendelssohn *Psalms*, the chorus is a little dominated by the treble and there is a slight echo (probably the engineers' fault), but in the Brahms works, Corboz and his fine chorus accomplish miracles. Though some of the pieces are long, the unaccompanied singers do not drop the pitch even half a millimeter, the pace always follows the sense and mood of the poetry, and the dynamic scheme is a triumph of musicianship. P.H.L.

MOZART: Concertos for Violin and Orchestra: No. 2, in D, K. 211; No. 5, in A, K. 219.

English Chamber Orchestra, Vladimir Spivakov, violin and cond. [John Willan, prod.] ANGEL SZ 37511, \$7.98.

VLADIMIR SPIVAKOV: Violin Recital.

Vladimir Spivakov, violin; Boris Bechtereov, piano. [John Willan, prod.] ANGEL SZ 37574, \$7.98.

SCHUBERT: Sonatina No. 2, in A minor, D. 385. PAGANINI: Cantabile in D, Op. 17; Le Streghe, Op. 8 (arr. Spivakov). BRAHMS: Hungarian Dances: No. 2, in D minor; No. 6, in G; No. 9, in E minor; No. 16, in F (arr. Joachim).

At only thirty-five Vladimir Spivakov is, if not direct successor to the crown long worn by David Oistrakh, at least the latest upholder of the Russian traditions of violin virtuosity established by Leopold Auer and his immediate pupils. He has been acclaimed in American concerts since 1974 but is only now making his domestic record debut on Angel (I presume he has recorded for Melodiya in Russia), released to coincide with his live appearance—in the K. 211 Concerto—in New York's Mostly Mozart series. Both discs testify eloquently not only to Spivakov's supreme technical

skill and artistic elegance, but also to distinctive powers of personality projection.

The greater and more familiar *Turkish Concerto*, K. 219, is of course the more musically rewarding of the present concertos, and it also is the more pellucidly recorded in well-nigh ideal sonic coloring and balances. The Second Concerto seems to have been recorded at a different time and under slightly less ideal conditions.

If some Mozartians, like myself, are a bit biased toward cooler, less intensely expressive timbres and phrasing, even we must find it hard to resist Spivakov's persuasiveness as a soloist here and quite impossible to quarrel with him as a conductor. For, in contrast to too many soloists who double as conductors, he first assumes sure, taut control over his fine little orchestra, then goes on to stimulate it to infectiously vital performances. Even the doubts some of us may have about the suitability of Spivakov's tonal slickness may be ungrounded. After all, Mozart himself wanted his violin solo parts to "flow like oil."

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may be even more impressive, especially for its phenomenal Paganiniana: the richly suave *Cantabile* and the fabulously virtuosic *Streghe Variations*. The sonatina and dances also are superbly played, though perhaps just a little too opulently for Schubert and in more Russian than Hungarian gypsy style for the Brahms-Joachim pieces. Spivakov is admirably supported by a pianist who is far less reticent and subordinate than most accompanists. Indeed, Bechterevo goes a bit overboard, drunken with power, in some of his solo passages in *Le Streghe*.

Two outstanding releases. But in buying the Mozart disc, make sure you don't get a pressing like my review copy, which is afflicted with a raspy beginning of each side. The recital disc is a model of Angel's recent marked improvement in record processing. R.D.D.

MOZART: Serenade No. 7, in D, K. 250 (*Haffner*).

Josef Suk, violin; Prague Chamber Orchestra, Libor Hlaváček, cond. [Jan Vrána, prod.] SUPRAPHON 1 10 2097, \$8.98.

COMPARISON:
Phi. 6500 966 Ughi, De Waart/Dresden

The many admirers of Josef Suk's aristocratic artistry will welcome this record. And they, at least, will have no objections to his tonal and personality prominence in the serenade's second, third (trio), and fourth movements, in which he stars like a true violin-concerto soloist. Even listeners who would rather that a soloist fill a more discreetly concertante role will share the uncommon relish both Suk and the ensemble obviously have for this music. The conductor's enthusiasm and his dash and impetuosity in the livelier passages are quite infectious.

De Waart's *Haffner* (November 1976) is never quite as exhilarating, but in compensation its second movement is more radiantly evocative and finespun soloist Uto Ughi blends more homogeneously with the ensemble. The Philips recording is just a bit warmer, and it includes—as the Supraphon disc does not—the serenade's companion K. 249 March. So this earlier

version remains my first choice, but I'd deeply regret not knowing the distinctively different Suk/Hlaváček approach to this many-faceted music. R.D.D.

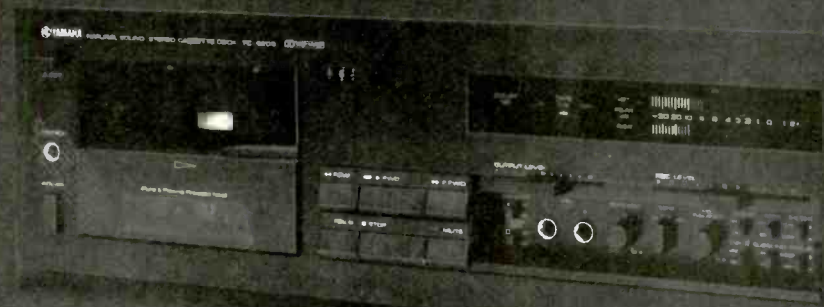
MUSSORGSKY: *Pictures at an Exhibition* (arr. Ravel); *Night on Bare Mountain* (arr. Rimsky-Korsakov).

A Cleveland Orchestra, Lorin Maazel, cond. [Robert Woods, prod.] TELARC DG 10042, \$17.98 (Soundstream digital recording; distributed by Audio-Technica).

It is fitting that Telarc turned to its neighbor, the Cleveland Orchestra, to record the work that has been a high-water mark of sonic technology since the high fidelity movement began. The results beggar superlatives.

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literally wall-shaking bass drum. (Minor complaint: The timpani in "Baba Yaga's Hut" is too reticent.) Dynamic range is breathtaking, as those who have already invested in Telarc's Cleveland Symphonic Winds and Atlanta Symphony records will have come to expect. All of it is musically proportioned, so the image is just about what you'd get in a nice midauditorium seat.

Though I've had trouble under-

standing the recent move of the Clevelanders' multilabel recording activity away from Severance Hall, this disc convinces me that Masonic Auditorium can yield ideal results when really skilled seating and mike layout are employed. Even more amazing, the essential dryness and bite of the ambience make Rimsky-Korsakov's orchestration of *Bare Mountain* sound blunt, virile, and as primitive as if the scoring was Mussorgsky's own. (David Lloyd-Jones has

conducted the composer's original on a Philips collection long overdue for domestic issue.)

I didn't have on hand Maazel's two previous *Pictures* recordings with the Philharmonia for Angel and London but remember them as rather dry run-throughs. The current interpretation could be more playful in the "Tuileries," "Unhatched Chicks," and "Limoges" sections. However, the brazen, staccato attacks of "Catacombs" are as apposite as the trumpets' cackling enunciation of "Baba Yaga," and everywhere the Clevelanders' playing is admirable. At the close of "Great Gate of Kiev," Maazel takes a bigger ritard than I can remember ever hearing before. I fancied he was reveling in the deep bass wallops as much as I was. You will, too, if your equipment can take it and your neighbors downstairs aren't afraid an H-bomb test is taking place over their heads. A.C.

RESPIGHI: *Concerto gregoriano**.

BÉRIOT: *Scène de ballet, Op. 100**.

R *Kurt Stiehler, violin; Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra, Ernst Borsamsky, cond. *Carl Taschke, violin; Leipzig Philharmonic Orchestra, Herbert Kegel, cond. **VARÈSE SARABANDE VC 81090, \$7.98** [from **URANIA** *URLP 7100, 1953, and *URLP 7166, 1955].

It's a shame that the record companies have not commemorated the hundredth birthday of Ottorino Respighi, (July 9) 1879-1936, by expanding his discography, but at least Varèse Sarabande has resurrected for the occasion an old recording of his 1921 *Concerto gregoriano*. It's a serious, even noble, work in which solo violin virtuosity is exploited for expressive, evocative ends, and it deserves a far more eloquent, far less nervously intense performance than it is given here. For that matter, even this less than adequate account deserves better than its painfully penetrating, oppressively close 1973 recorded sonics.

Urania's 1955 master tape of the filler is more typical of good mono engineering. And while the fiddler's showpiece *Siène de ballet* by the "Belgian Paganini" Charles de Bériot (1802-70) is aesthetic fluff at best, it is deftly made, well-varied, and genuinely entertaining. It also is an apt vehicle for the superb violin and orchestral playing by soloist Carl Taschke and conductor Herbert Kegel, with Leipzig's Philharmonic, which proves to be far superior to that city's Radio Symphony. R.D.D.

SAINT-SAËNS: *Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano, No. 1*—See Lalo: *Trio*.

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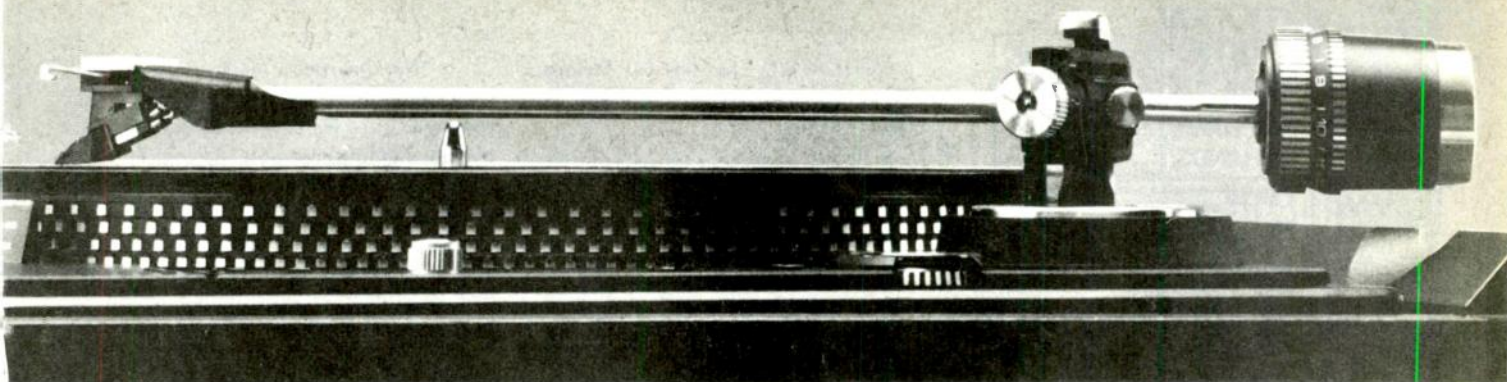
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SCHUBERT: Quartets for Strings: No. 15, in G, D. 887; No. 12, in C minor, D. 703 (*Quartettsatz*).

■ Gabrieli Quartet. [Michael Woolcock, prod.] LONDON TREASURY STS 15418, \$4.98.

SCHUBERT: Quartet for Strings, No. 15, in G, D. 887.

Guarneri Quartet. [Peter Dellheim, prod.] RCA RED SEAL ARL 1-3003, \$7.98.

Quartetto Italiano. PHILIPS 9500 409, \$8.98. Tape: 7300 617, \$8.98 (cassette).

The design of Schubert's last string quartet is grand, its content fierce and uncompromising. Technically the writing bristles with problems: tremolo passages that tire the muscles; unisons that cruelly reveal even the slightest uncertainty of intonation; starkly original—and curious—voice leadings and harmonic turns that must be impeccably balanced if they are to make sense. Like that of *Winterreise*, the emotional climate of D. 887 is remote and frostbitten, even numbing. The occasional bright colors and fragments of melodic warmth are deflected from the tremolos much in the way that sunlight glistens off icicles. The shorter *Quartettsatz* was composed some years earlier but in its grim ferocity is akin to the G major.

Because of its complexity and inaccessibility, the latter is not performed as frequently as the other, indisputably great, Schubert quartets. Over the years, though, most of the major ensembles have recorded it—both the Amadeus and Hungarians twice, in fact. My favorites are the second Hungarian version, a long-deleted Angel LP, and the old Columbia shellac set by the Kolisch Quartet. Two other older editions must also be mentioned: the 1953 Budapest (Odyssey Y 3 33320, December 1975), a sane, lyrical interpretation that I find slightly stodgy, and the 1938 Busch (recently reissued in England and Japan), expansive in concept but much too slurry and laissez-faire in ensemble.

The Guarneri's heated style and fondness for abrupt shifts of color and tempo produced memorable results in Schumann's A major Quartet, which I heard them perform last winter. Somehow its identity with Schubert's more contained mode of expression seems less comfortable. This is an interpretation beset with little tricks and exaggerations of phrase, many distracting rather than absorbing. The tarantellalike last movement sounds too heavy. Most serious, the Guarneri opts for a syrupy kind of vibrato that reminds me of those very smooth canned peaches that slide off the spoon.

The Quartetto Italiano's performance, by contrast, seems more intent on coming to grips with the music than on displaying dazzling ensemble playing. The dimensions are grand, the pacing almost iconoclastic in its deliberateness. By observing the first-movement repeat (the only time I have heard it), the Italians expand that movement to Brucknerian lengths—nearly twenty-three minutes. The reading has compelling depth and profile and a real sense of vision. One recurrent factor is the Italiano's all-on-top-of-the-strings lack of tonal variety. It's always silk, never diamonds, and D. 887, of all pieces, demands that the bow bite into the string with brilliance. For all that, the Philips release preserves a unique and valuable account: This is a very special performance.

London-based Gabrieli Quartet gives us an impeccable, civilized view of the work. There are no interpretive tricks or extremes of tempo here, but a warm and thoroughly sympathetic traversal of the notes, organized with logic and graciously proportioned tone, if without the last measure of insight and conviction. In many ways, this straightforward, polished account resembles the Budapest interpretation, albeit with crisper sound and more rhythmic movement. Though the Gabrieli version does not tempt me to part with my Kolisch and Hungarian records, its modest price, tasteful expertise, and generous bonus of a worthy reading of the *Quartettsatz* make this London Treasury disc the preferred available edition. Its reproduction and processing, like that of Philips and RCA, is first-class. H.G.

SCHUBERT: Songs.

Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, baritone; Sviatoslav Richter, pianist. [Cord Garben, prod.] DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530 988, \$8.98.

Des Sängers Habe, D. 832. Wehmut, D. 772. Der Strom, D. 565. Das Zügenre-glöcklein, D. 871. Abendbilder, D. 650. Auf der Donau, D. 553. Der Schiffer, D. 536. Totengräbers Heimweh, D. 842. Am Fenster, D. 878. Die Sterne, D. 939. Fischerweise, D. 881. Liebeslauschen, D. 698. Der Wanderer, D. 649. Auf der Bruck, D. 853. Im Frühling, D. 882. Aus "Heliopolis" II, D. 754.

With due consideration given to the baritone's current vocal condition, this Schubert recital (recorded during a concert at the Touraine festival) holds few surprises. On reflection, that fact is itself surprising: a rare, though not unique, collaboration between two of the world's most

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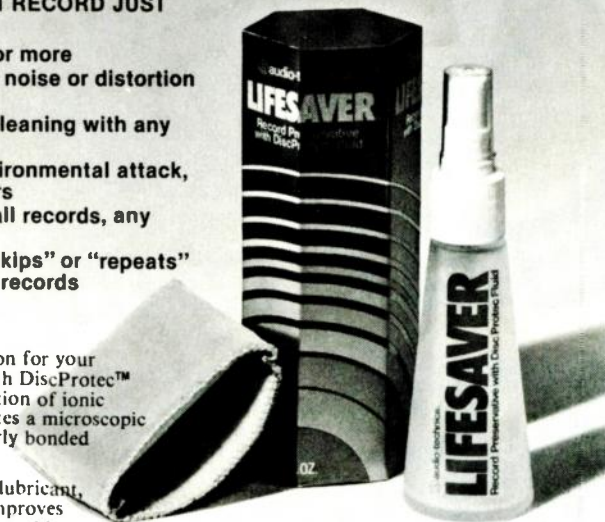
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celebrated and distinguished musicians, and the result is really rather dull!

I've listened several times, and pulled out earlier recordings for comparison, and still cannot offer an explanation with any security. Is the prevailing reserve of these performances a consequence of purposive austerity or of mutual uncertainty? When Richter is fussily picking out the "inner-voice" tune in *Das Züngleinlein*, one might incline to the second possibility, but there are in fact few such hazards in this material, and indeed the pianist bounds through *Auf der Bruck*—a celebrated challenge to the accompanist—with confidence to spare, if not quite the vitality of Moore or Britten in past recordings. And the melodic threads among the piano figurations of *Im Frühling* have rarely been laid out with such delicacy.

If this be calculated introversion, a restrained "late style," then I regret I find it comparatively unrewarding. On the other hand, those who missed these songs in earlier recordings (most of them in Dieskau's EMI series, and all of them in the big DG packages) might still find the disc worth investigation, for there are few chestnuts here, and some imposing Schubertian achievements, especially among the later songs.

The French audience is remarkably quiet, the sound clear though less vivid than that of DG's Dieskau-Moore collaborations. Texts and translations are provided. D.H.

SCHUBERT: Symphonies (5); Rosamunde: Overture and Incidental Music.

Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Zubin Mehta, cond. [Ray Minshull, prod.] LONDON CS 7067 (Nos. 4 and 8), CS 7114 (Nos. 1 and 2), CS 7115 (No. 6 and *Rosamunde* excerpts), \$7.98 each. Tape: CS5 7067, CS5 7114, CS5 7115, \$7.98 each cassette.

Symphonies: No. 1 in D, D. 82; No. 2, in B flat, D. 125; No. 4, in C minor, D. 417 (*Tragic*); No. 6, in C, D. 589; No. 8, in B minor, D. 759 (*Unfinished*).

COMPARISON:

Ang. S 3862 Karajan/Berlin Phil.

These three discs bring Zubin Mehta's Schubert cycle with the Israel Philharmonic near to completion. All that is missing is Symphony No. 7, of which there is a new performing version by Brian Newbould.

On the whole, Mehta's Schubert is idiomatic: His control over dynamics and phrasing is admirable; he is capable of getting punctilious, rhythmically well-sprung playing from his forces; and—with one ex-

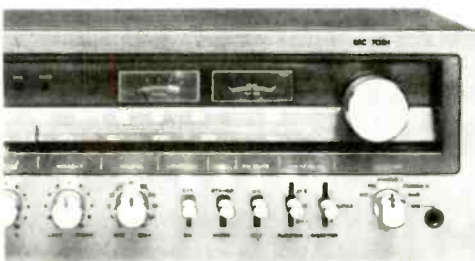
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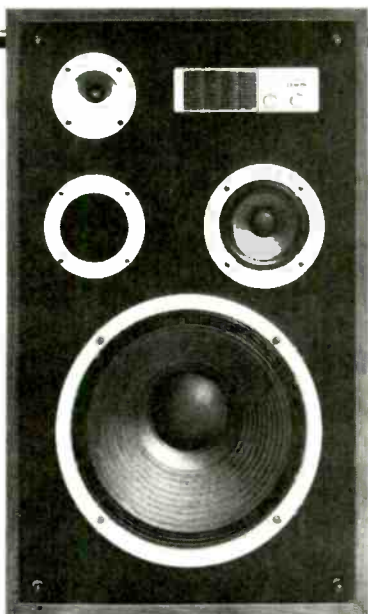


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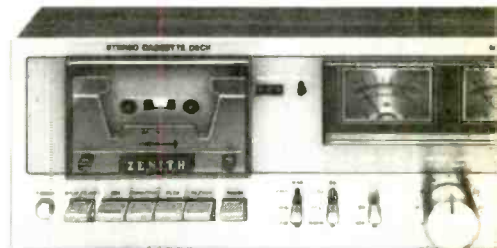


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ception—his performances are both well paced and interpretively straightforward. The exception, perhaps with some irony, is the *Unfinished*, which is probably the work he knows best and has been conducting the longest. Perhaps it is because of this familiarity that Mehta tends to distrust his apparent instinct, opting instead for an ostensibly metaphysical approach that ends up sounding both prosaic and metrically plodding. (Such square, lumbering violins in the first movement's tremolando opening theme!)

Symphony No. 1 is exceedingly well sprung in its bouncing accentuation, and the excellent violins scintillate throughout No. 2, which also scores in letting one hear the exposition repeat, rarely heeded in concert or on record. Indeed, this account of D. 125 is a close rival for Karajan's in judicious pacing, and London's sonics may reproduce more cleanly on most systems than Karajan's thicker, more problematic to equalize engineering.

Unfortunately, the playing of the Tel Aviv orchestra fails to come up to the standards of such ensembles as Berlin, Amsterdam, Boston, and Chicago. There is a certain swarthy to the string sound, and an opacity to the trombones that precludes brightness. Even the woodwinds, though clean and professional, lack tonal distinction, producing instead a kind of stout-tongued "meat and potatoes" sound. To compare Mehta's trimly professional, conventionally paced *Rosamunde Overture* with Karajan's courageously broad, symphonic reading is to compare good, ordinary routine with the revelatory. H.G.

Recitals and Miscellany

CLEVELAND SYMPHONIC WINDS: Macho Marches.

A Cleveland Symphonic Winds, Frederick Fennell, cond. [Robert Woods, prod.] TELARC DG 10043, \$14.95 (Soundstream digital recording; distributed by Audio-Technica).

In his second digitally recorded release, the renascent Frederick Fennell shifts from the symphonic-wind originals and transcriptions repertory of his spectacular first Telarc issue (December 1978) back to that of military and concert marches with which he excelled in his Eastman-Rochester/Mercury years. And he gives us not only another electrifying demonstration of the still scarcely plumbed powers and vivid

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naturalness of the new technology, but also up-to-date exemplars of his long-quieting genius for epiphanizing the symphonic march.

Do I—in what well may be sheer sonic intoxication—exaggerate? Judge for yourself by listening, on the best wide-range playback equipment available, to the present delectable *Belgian Paratroopers* by Leemans, the salty *Sea Songs* of Vaughan Williams, and even the well-worn but now miraculously re-animated *Florentiner March*, Op. 214, by Fučík.

My only niggling quibble is over the come-on program title. "Macho" possibly is applicable to Grafulla's blustery *Washington Grays* and Barber's *Commando March* (a poor American cousin of the best Elgar, Vaughan Williams, and Walton essays in this genre), but it's dubiously pertinent elsewhere. Perhaps the expertise of the fine Cleveland wind and percussion players—perhaps also the seemingly illimitable powers of digital technology—give Fennell more assurance than when he had to exert tighter control over his Eastman-Rochester players in early stereo days. Or perhaps he has simply mellowed and no longer feels any pressing need to prove himself.

Compare, for example, his present reading of Sousa's *Stars and Stripes Forever* with his somewhat faster, more blustery, less proudly high-stepping Mercury version of some twenty years ago: The new one is considerably less tense, notably more buoyant. And while Fennell never italicized, as many bandmasters do, the famous peeping-piccolo obbligato to the third theme, here it is almost wispily thrown away.

Except for an uncharacteristically zestless Johann Strauss I *Radetzky*, the other marches are as warmly ear-beguiling as they are galvanically toe-tickling: Seitz's swaggering *University of Pennsylvania*, the ever-captivating Miles-Zimmerman *Anchors Aweigh*, and Ganne's swinging *Marche Lorraine*. Overall, this happy combination of unique technological, executant, and interpretative talents establishes new high standards for recorded march music. R.D.D.

MORTON GOULD: Orchestral Program.

A London Symphony Orchestra, Morton Gould, cond. [Brian Culverhouse, prod.] **CHALFONT** SDG 301, \$15 (Soundstream digital recording; distributed by Varèse Sarabande Records).

SHOSTAKOVICH: Festival Overture, Op. 96. **RAVEL:** Bolero. **GINAS-**

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TERA: Estancia: Ballet Suite. WEINBERGER: Schwanda: Polka and Fugue.

MORTON GOULD: Danzas fantásticas.

▲ London Symphony Orchestra, Morton Gould, cond. [Brian Culverhouse, prod.] CHALFONT SDG 302, \$15 (Soundstream digital recording; distributed by Varèse Sarabande Records).

FALLA: La Vida breve: Dance No. 1. El Amor brujo: Pantomime; Ritual Fire Dance. Three-Cornered Hat: Final Dance. TURINÁ: Danzas fantásticas, Op. 22: No. 3, Orgía. ALBÉNIZ: Iberia (orch. Arbós): El Corpus en Sevilla; Triana.

Morton Gould's born-again career as a recording conductor began auspiciously with his own *Foster Gallery* and *Spirituals for Orchestra* on a direct-cut disc (Crystal Clear CCS 7005, June). Now it continues with the first two examples of a promised eight-disc digitally recorded series made in London's Watford Town Hall and Tooting All-Saints Church, September 1978. Still to come are the long-anticipated updating of Gould's greatest success, the *Latin American Symphonette*, and the debut of his new *Festive Music Suite*. Meanwhile, he has chosen to devote the powers of current technology to some of the favorite orchestral showpieces of earlier years, most of which never have been recorded so spectacularly. All the digital advantages are arrestingly evident, not least in some of the most resoundingly solid bass-drum thwacks yet captured on disc.

The exhilarating Shostakovich overture is successful for its rollicking if rather slapdash performance. And of course the *Bolero's* long, gradual crescendo, the brutal vehemence of the complete *Estancia Suite*, and the massive apotheosis of the *Schwanda* fugue all benefit incalculably from the enhanced clarity and strength. But in these three works (the last two available previously only in aging versions) the playing is just too cautious, the interpretations too contrived, to achieve the full bravura effectiveness they demand.

Even so, they fare better musically than the Spanish favorites on the other disc, where the orchestra seems to have been inadequately rehearsed and Gould's readings are excessively mannered, sometimes stilted, sometimes overvehement. Undoubtedly some younger audiophiles will be oblivious to anything other than the truly sensational sonics. But those of us who were introduced to this music by Arbós in 78-rpm days or by Argenta in the early-LP era—or, for that matter, by such non-Iberian virtuosos as Ansermet, Sto-

kowski, and Fiedler—will be keenly aware of what the most miraculous audio technology never can give us by itself. Chastening as it may be, audiophiles must be reminded that the paraphrased adage can *not* be inverted to: Take care of the sounds, and the [musical] sense will take care of itself. R.D.D.

MICHAEL NEWMAN: Classical Guitarist.

▲ Michael Newman, guitar. [Lincoln Mayorga and Doug Sax, prod.] SHEFFIELD LAB 10, \$14.

BACH: Violin Partita No. 2, S. 1004: Chaconne. ALBÉNIZ: Torre bermeja. TURINA: Fandanguillo. SAINZ DE LA MAZA: Campaños del Alba.

KAZUHITO YAMASHITA: Romance de Amor.

▲ Kazuhito Yamashita, guitar. [Hiroshi Isaka, prod.] RCA DIRECT MASTER SERIES RDCE 8, \$15.95 (distributed by Audio-Technica).

TRAD.: Romance de Amor. SOR: Introduction and Allegro, Op. 14; Andante, Op. 31, No. 4. BRITTEN: Nocturnal, Op. 70.

Good classical guitarists are abundant these days, and a few young artists are volunteering to play guinea pig for super-disc producers in return for a chance to make a recording debut. Michael Newman and Kazuhito Yamashita, each playing three short works and an extended finger-breaker, do not perform entirely flawlessly here. But the blemishes are few, and the unforgiving microphones of the direct-cut process afford us an honest first encounter with these remarkably talented and promising musicians.

Newman, a New Yorker who studied with Oscar Ghiglia and now teaches at Rutgers, devotes the first half of his recital to early-twentieth-century Spanish music that demands the full spectrum of guitar technique. The Albéniz *Torre bermeja*, a piano work nowadays heard more frequently on the guitar, makes much of pizzicato, chordal runs, quick arpeggio passages, and harmonics. Turina's *Fandanguillo*, composed for Andres Segovia, emphasizes the instrument's percussive aspects, and Sainz de la Maza's rarely heard *Campaños del Alba* is a beautiful tremolo study. Newman proves equal to their technical demands, and the understanding and depth of feeling that he brings to them make them more than merely showy vignettes.

The real test of strength here is the Bach chaconne. Unfortunately, it does not fare as well as the Spanish works: Not far

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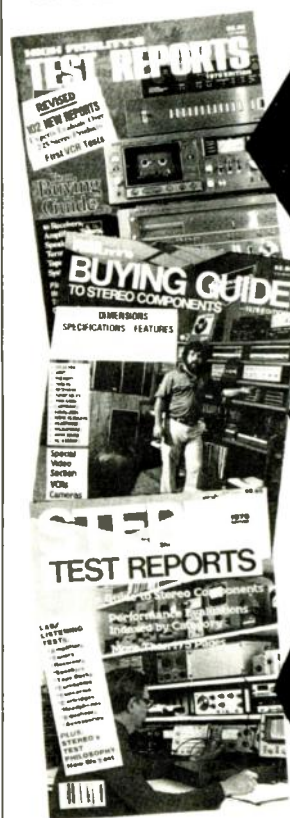
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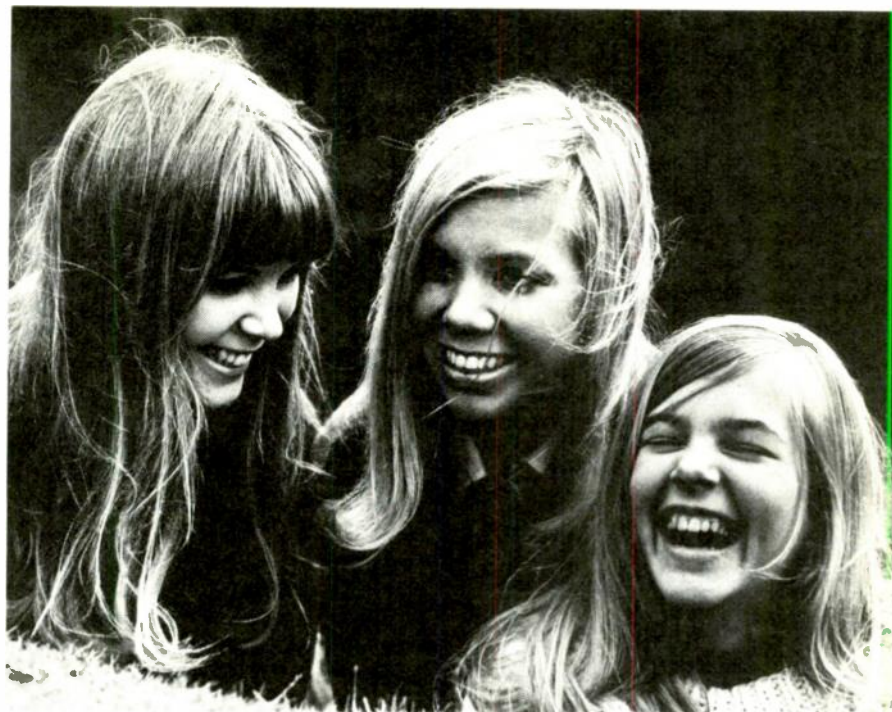
into the piece there are audible blunders. Yet, in stylistic approach, subtlety of nuance, and overall contour, this is a fine reading. The arrangement—a more proper term than “transcription”—is Newman’s own, although it does not differ significantly from those of Segovia (MCA 2520, rechanneled) and John Williams (Columbia MS 7195).

Yamashita, who was sixteen when he made this recording, opens his program with one of the simplest works in the guitar repertory, the traditional Romanza that Narciso Yepes popularized in his *Jeux interdits* film score. One can justify recording this first-year student piece if one has something exceptional to say with it, but the young Japanese guitarist performs it without poetry: Each repeated melody is played with the same dynamics and timbre. Yet he brings a good deal of fire to the Sor work and carries off the little Andante study that closes the side with grace and warmth.

My first impulse on hearing the monochromatic reading of the Romanza (here called *Romance de Amor*) was to skip immediately to Side 2 to see what Yamashita made of the Britten *Nocturnal*, which is to the guitar what the Liszt B minor Sonata is to the piano. Surprisingly, this taxing masterpiece presents neither technical nor interpretive hurdles that he does not surmount with strength to spare. His reading is a bit on the fast side—he traverses it a full four minutes faster than Julian Bream does (RCA LSC 2964)—but he evokes the sometimes dreamy, sometimes turbulent moods Britten’s score calls for.

Both artists are well served by the direct-cut process. Sheffield’s recorded sound is sparkling and noise-free. In fact, it may be *too* accurate, picking up such sounds as fingers sliding on strings that are often edited out of tape-to-disc recordings. And the engineers chose not to fade between cuts as Newman checked his tuning. Those accustomed to the more idealized guitar presentation on conventional discs may find this taste of realism intrusive. The Yamashita disc, on the other hand, was apparently recorded in a larger hall and with greater attention to ambient sound. Therefore, only the absence of tape hiss distinguishes it from the standard larger-than-life guitar treatment. Incidentally, as well recorded as both discs are, I find that the recent ones by Bream on RCA and by Pepe Romero on Philips sound almost as crisp and clean.

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direct-cut process schematic, are included with the Japanese RCA import. The liner-note translations are unbelievably bad, however. For instance, we are told that the Britten work "was composed in 1964 at J. Breme's request [and] was created musically based upon a poem of John Downs." Actually, *Nocturnal*, composed in 1963 for Bream, is a set of variations on a lute air by John Dowland.

It is noteworthy that just a decade ago, Bream was the only guitarist capable of playing *Nocturnal*, and not many were up to respectable performances of the Bach chaconne. These days it is not uncommon to hear both works at debut recitals or to find them on recordings by performers as young as Yamashita and Newman. (When Newman was Yamashita's age, he recorded the Britten work for a quadriphonic reel-to-reel specialty label, Ambiphon QR 7052A.) If Yamashita's *Nocturnal* lacks Bream's maturity and Newman's chaconne is not as note perfect as Williams', these performances nevertheless serve as powerful indications of what to expect from the third post-Segovia generation. A.K.

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Twenty years ago, the 180-year-old American shape-note tradition was just about unknown by sophisticated musicians and music-lovers in our country. Now, thanks to the missionary zeal of such choral groups as the Abbey Singers, the Gregg Smith Singers, the Old Stoughton Musical Society, the Old Sturbridge Singers, the Robert Shaw Chorale, the University of Maryland Chorus, and the Western Wind—and, above all, thanks to the Bicentennial celebration—we have come to realize that we have a unique choral heritage. It is a heritage fascinating in its extraordinary blend of melodic quirkiness, unusual voice leading, folk-related minor-modal tonal-

ities, crude strength, and wild eloquence.

This shape-note tradition, primarily a phenomenon of southern culture, was made up of two distinct elements: the composed music of eighteenth-century New England and the so-called spiritual folksong—a secular song or dance to which religious texts were sung. As the Revolution receded and America once again looked to the old country for its prototype of what choral music was to sound like, the creations of New England tunesmiths such as William Billings and Daniel Read left the port cities and went inland, following the track of western movement. And the folk hymns, spawned by the religious revivals at the turn of the new century, were notated and published for the first time in the tune books that itinerant music teachers sold to their choristers to earn a few more dollars. This music picked up the oddly shaped note heads (triangle, circle, square, diamond) that enabled the untutored singer to recognize at a glance the syllables then used in solmization (fa, sol, la, mi) and to develop unbelievable virtuosity in sight-reading. In the early singing schools, the syllables, used first only as a device for learning the music, ultimately became part of the ritual Big Sings that dotted the countryside.

One of the most successful collections of shape-note music was a tune book called *The Sacred Harp*, compiled by Georgian singing masters Benjamin Franklin White and E. J. King and published in Philadelphia in 1844. It has remained in print, with revised editions appearing in 1850, 1859, 1869, 1911, 1936, 1960, 1966, and 1971. Since 1911, the revisions have been essentially the work of the Denson family of Alabama, and the compilation has come to be known as the *Original Sacred Harp*. In each of the twentieth-century editions, new tunes, written in the idiom of eighteenth-century rural South, have been added. It takes something of an expert to distinguish between the old and new.

It is from the latest revision that the Word of Mouth Chorus has taken the twenty-one marvelous miniatures on "Rivers of Delight." This disc is of outstanding interest to aficionados of early American music, less because of its repertory than because of the chorus' approach to the material. Most previous recordings of shape-note music are sung in the choral tradition: Jeremiah Ingalls, William Walker, and Elkanah Kelsey Dare are sung in the same way as Handel, Haydn, and Mendelssohn. The music is strong enough to withstand such "artistic" treatment, but this is not the

way it is sung by the people to whom it is a vigorous tradition. At the hundreds of Sacred Harp gatherings held annually throughout the South (and now beginning to invade the North), the singers rigidly follow the practice developed in the nineteenth-century singing school. Each singer is given a chance to come before the class, grouped in a hollow square on chairs and benches, to lead a lesson—that is, a song or two of his choice. They are first sung through with the *fasola* syllables, then with their traditional words. Dynamic variation is almost completely sacrificed in the interest of obtaining a uniformly loud, strong, nasal sound. Both men and women sing the soprano, alto, and tenor parts an octave apart, thus giving what seems like a four-part harmonization a strange seven-part texture.

The Word of Mouth Chorus, oddly enough, is based not in the South, but in Plainfield, Vermont. Its leader, Larry Gordon, tells us of the group's experience with the shape-note tradition at the Georgia State Singing Convention in April 1976. "We were moved," he writes, "by the deep fellowship among the participants, a fellowship that reached out to include us, bridging vast boundaries of age, culture, politics, and religion. Moreover, the singing itself—the rhythmic drive, the unrestrained quality of the voices, the sheer power of the sound—permanently altered our approach to Sacred Harp music. We like to regard Sacred Harp as a live tradition which can be the vehicle for a very special sharing among singers of all ages and abilities. In our area, people have begun once again to create new songs using this idiom, as well as new texts reflecting some of the concerns of our present-day lives."

The singers, who perform a wide variety of music, including medieval and renaissance, throughout New England, may not be the real thing, but they are a reasonable facsimile thereof. Listen to their way with Joseph Stephenson's fuguing-tune "Milford," a prototypical English composition dating from 1760 that set the pattern for Billings; to their version of the spiritual folksong "Wondrous Love," first notated around 1835; to the astounding sweetness of John G. McCurry's 1846 arrangement of "Parting Friends." And listen to the timelessness of Paine Denson's "Peace and Joy," composed in 1950 in the eighteenth-century New England idiom. The shape-note tradition lives! I.L.

VLADIMIR SPIVAKOV: Violin Recital—See Mozart: Concertos for Violin and Orchestra.

KAZUHITO YAMASHITA: Romance de Amor—See Michael Newman: Classical Guitarist.

Theater and Film

DRACULA. Original film score by John Williams.

London Philharmonic Orchestra, John Williams, cond. and prod. MCA 3166, \$7.98.

John Williams is the man who single-handedly put film music of symphonic scope back on the commercial map and revived public cognizance of soundtrack creativity. Whatever one's reservations about the sumptuously and self-consciously eclectic nature of his methods, one must unhesitatingly salute the prodigious artistry and *éclat* underlying all of his recent work. He has been so plentifully exposed on disc and his idiosyncratic approach to film scoring has become so well entrenched that, instead of ticking off the inventive borrowings from the likes of Holst, Korngold, Herrmann, and Prokofiev, one is immediately aware of the influence of previous Williams embodiments on his latest effort.

While not conceived on the grandiose scale of *Star Wars*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, and *Superman*, the glowing music for *Dracula* projects another important dimension of Williams' multifarious gifts. It is without doubt his most purposefully romantic score; it has gradually become apparent that he, in essence, is trying to re-establish a viable romantic language for our post-romantic cinema. This development is somewhat ironic in view of his earlier incarnations as Johnny Williams the jazz pianist and expert purveyor of tongue-in-cheek pop scores in the Mancini manner.

Of course, the antecedents of *Dracula* in the tradition of the Gothic tale are romantic enough to begin with, and Williams' sensuous, ecstatic, almost mystical music provides a perfect aural frame for Frank Langella's intensely Byronic conception of the title role. The emphasis in both the screenplay and the music is not on flamboyantly horrific and supernatural effects, but rather on psychologically plausible inward states and dramatic situations expressed within a larger-than-life, stylized, almost operatic ambience.

The surging and enraptured main theme, with its Wagnerian convolutions, sets the primary scene for the simplistic



Frank Langella as Dracula
Backed by a purposefully romantic score

story line of fatal bloodlust and carnal damnation. Development of this febrile, *Liedtad*-like motif is interrupted by set pieces depictive of nocturnal landscapes of the soul, storm scenes, hairsbreadth escapes and chases, etc. If anything, the music often calls up memories of Berlioz' *Faust* as filtered through a twentieth-century imagination. Perhaps at times one is too much aware of attempts to elicit the desired response in the auditor, but Williams' work has always borne the imprint of a knowing craftsman rather than of an genius.

The interpretation by the London Philharmonic (curiously unidentified except in the liner notes) under the composer's baton is adequate, though no match in size and splendor for the National Philharmonic, which has performed some of his earlier scores. Incidentally, another peculiarity is the lack of credit to veteran Hollywood orchestrator Herbert Spencer. The recording sounds slightly strident and top-heavy, lacking in the kind of warm and resonant acoustics Williams' music requires, though the MCA pressing and surfaces are satisfactory. P.A.S.

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Circle 14 on Page 117

THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES.
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London Philharmonic Orchestra,
Frank Collura, cond. [John Steven Lasher,
prod.] ENTR'ACTE EDP 8101, \$8.98.

Hugo Friedhofer has been a unique figure on the Hollywood film-music scene: universally admired by his colleagues for his impeccable craftsmanship and enormous sophistication but almost totally unrecognized by the public. After many anonymous years as filmdom's busiest orchestrator—working for men like Korngold and Steiner—he came into his own as a composer during the late 1940s. Rather than overpower the screen image with obtrusive aural rhetoric, Friedhofer is a master of understatement. He approaches each film as a singular problem requiring its own set of musical coordinates; hence the somewhat self-effacing, even superficially neutral, character of many of his finely honed scores.

However, even in his most methodical efforts, one can pinpoint subtle characteristics that recur: a homogeneous intervallic source for most of the thematic material; an almost unbroken line of motivic metamorphosis that precisely reflects—and occasionally dovetails directly with—the dramatic flow of the narrative; and a large arsenal of stylistic options not only encompassing the full range of film music from Newman to Raksin, but also revealing a thorough immersion in the history of music from Haydn to Schoenberg.

All of these traits are magisterially called into harmonious play in Friedhofer's score for the Academy Award-winning *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), which together with *One-Eyed Jacks* represents the pinnacle of his achievement on records to date. For the score to this beloved movie, he created a synthesis of musical Americana that stands alone in the annals of film music. Among its components are Coplandesque diatonic hymnal modes, faint echoes of military bugle calls, casual downbeat blues, allusions to nursery tunes and sentimental popular ballads, bustling cityscape scherzos, grindingly dissonant ostinato chords, and, suffusing all these disparate elements, chromatic lyricism of piercing tenderness and compassion bearing Friedhofer's typical octave-leap figurations in the melodic line.

As a result, this marvelously organic score becomes an eloquent celebration and commemoration of a fragile value system—small-town, middle-class American family life—which, after the upheaval of World

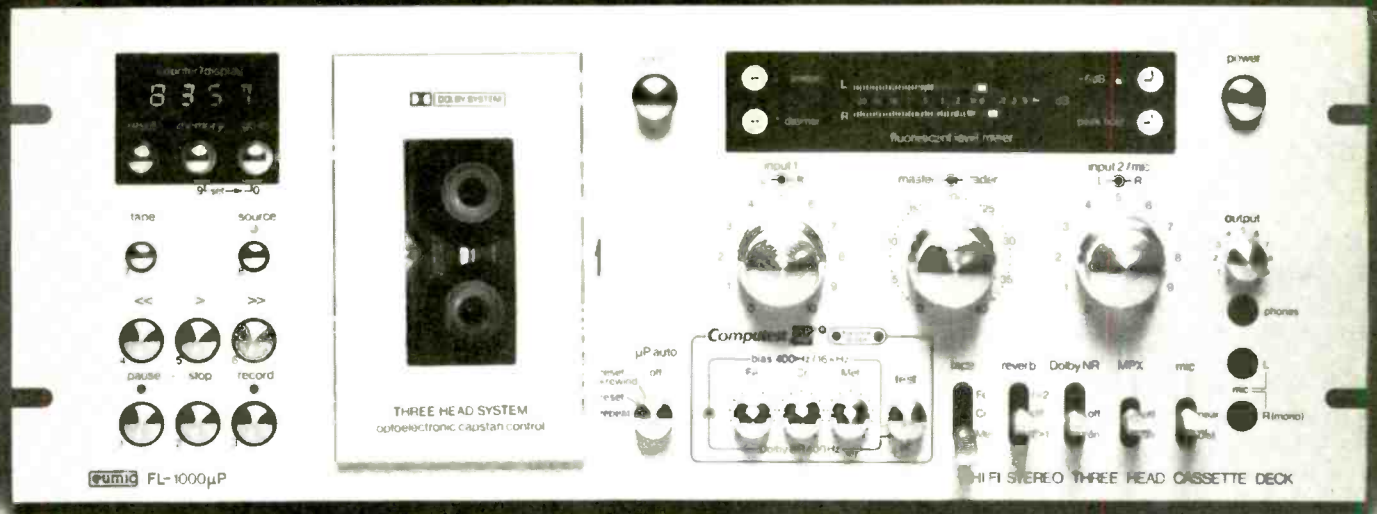
War II, was briefly rediscovered but was on the verge of being swept away by the suburban wave of housing developments, superhighways, and shopping centers that, paradoxically, had been unleashed by the war's dislocations. Thus, in its searching and cherishing attitude toward the characters and their struggles to readjust to civilian life, in its respectful and unpatronizing sensibility to the universality of the story, the music creates an almost subliminal yearning for the irretrievably lost times, places, and feelings that could not possibly have been apparent to its initial listeners. These were indeed "the best years of our lives," musically speaking as well.

Friedhofer's tapestry is seamlessly woven and captures each emotional nuance exactly. Anyone familiar with Robert E. Sherwood's and William Wyler's ineffably affecting dramatization can follow its progress just by listening to this record. The musical argument is so tastefully, so resourcefully, and so unpretentiously unified and fulfilled that, with repeated hearing, one is constantly discovering new subtleties of thematic interrelationship and design.

This welcome release has been put together by producer John Steven Lasher with the same loving attention to detail that characterizes the composer's work. In every respect it is a fitting tribute: The orchestrations by Anthony Bremner, painstakingly reconstructed from a sketchy piano score with Friedhofer's full cooperation and authorization, and the performance by the London Philharmonic under Frank Collura are entirely immaculate and authentic. All of the score's significant passages are included in proper sequence, and the package contains several bonuses: some jaunty exit music written for movie-house showings but apparently seldom used, a seven-inch record of the "Homecoming" scene with dialogue taken directly from the soundtrack, a reading of Gene Lees's affectionate tribute to Friedhofer as an artist and a man, an extensive thematic analysis by Canadian composer Louis Applebaum, and a comprehensive history of the film's production and synopsis of its story by Royal S. Brown. The engineering, pressing, and surfaces are all that we have come to expect from Entr'acte—well-nigh perfect.

There must be many others who, like me, have waited decades for this landmark score to receive its due on records. But whatever your generation, if you plan to purchase only one film-music disc this year, this is without doubt your mandated choice. P.A.S.

Circle 20 on Page 117 ▶



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20th-Century Opera, Open-Reel Gems, Fiedler Memorials

by R. D. Darrell

Modern opera masterpieces

The distinctively original music of Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937) is only slowly becoming known outside Poland, so his remarkable 1918-25 opera, *King Roger*, is likely to come as an electrifying revelation to most American listeners. Its lack of action may debar it from stage success, but neither that nor its murky mythic symbolism (Christianity vs. paganism, Apollo vs. Dionysius) weakens the potency of its virile music—music suggestive in some ways of Mussorgsky, Bartók, or Janáček, yet still quintessentially Szymanowskian. Authoritatively performed by Warsaw State Opera soloists, chorus, and orchestra under Mieczyslaw Mierzejewski and impressively recorded by Polskie Nagrania engineers, its appearance in a two-cassette box also marks the tape debut of the Aurora label (5061-2, \$19.96, including notes and English text) distributed by Qualiton Records.

Far better known both off and on records is Benjamin Britten's first opera, the *Peter Grimes* of 1945. The composer's own 1958 London version, starring Peter Pears, has long been a connoisseur favorite, but it's not currently available on tape. This of course enhances the value of the Prestige Box three-musicassette edition of the recent Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, production (Philips 7699 089, \$26.94, including notes and text). And this set, featuring Jon Vickers' robust enactment of the title role and Colin Davis' more somber reading (both of which have been acclaimed in recent stage productions), boasts distinguished attractions all its own—not least its warmly expansive recorded sonics.

One taster's choices

Perhaps it's an occupational hazard that for me many cassettes of familiar music in routine performances leave so few truly vivid, highly pleasurable impressions. Anyway, the listening experiences I relish most and most hope others will share are those of more provocative musical adventures, more perceptive artistic insights, or exceptional sonic stimulations. All three criteria are met in two superb Americana programs in the current Nonesuch cassette-debut list (\$4.96 each): on N5 1313, the Weaver/Smithsonian period-instrument "Nineteenth-Century Ballroom Music" revivals I raved about in the disc edition (November 1975) and, on N5 1341, the more recent summer-bandstand "Cousins," starring Ronald Barron, Gerard Schwarz,

and Kenneth Cooper in engagingly sentimental or raggy trombone and cornet (with piano) divertissements by such turn-of-the-century worthies as Arthur Pryor, Herbert C. Clarke, and Henry Fillmore.

Audiophiles who still prize the sonic-spectacular brass-ensemble Gabrieli recordings once so popular as high fidelity demonstrations should have learned by now that *that* modern-instrument sound wasn't at all what the composer had in mind. What he did want is much more authentically re-created by Andrew Parrott's London Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble in a perhaps less thrilling, but certainly more artistically rewarding, program of a dozen of the best *Canzoni e sonate* of 1597 and 1615 (DG Archiv 3310 406, \$8.98, with Denis Arnold's first-rate notes).

Then it's good to rediscover onetime celebrity composers whose considerable talents have been largely forgotten. We're reminded that Hummel once was a worthy rival of Beethoven in his very early Double Concerto, Op. 17, starring Eugene List and Carroll Glenn, and a quintet arrangement of the late Op. 74 Septet, with List in the leading miniature piano-concerto role (Monitor M 55002, \$4.98). And we're powerfully reminded of Waldteufel's symphonic-waltz challenges to the Strauss family in Willi Boskovsky's second, and superior, recording of his work (Angel 4X5 37547, \$7.98), this time with the London Philharmonic. The program contains such irresistibly seductive works as *Pomone*, *Les Sirènes*, *Très jolie*, *Pluie de diamants*, *Mon rêve*, and *The Grenadiers*.

Reel novelties and returns

Busily exploiting its now near-monopoly of open-reel production, the specialist firm of Barclay-Crocker continues to provide the tape faithful with a steady flow of old and new programs, as well as with a reel-repertoire catalog and bimonthly *Reel News* supplements (\$1.00 to new customers, by mail from Barclay-Crocker, 11 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10004). Outstanding is the belated American release of two of the finest English choral works: Elgar's composition for choir and orchestra, *The Music Makers*, and Parry's superb setting of Milton's *Blest Pair of Sirens*. Both are magnificently performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus under Sir Adrian Boult, in full-blooded 1967 sonics that scarcely could be surpassed today (Vanguard/B-C 71225, \$8.95). And the delight I expressed in January in the disc

edition of Neville Marriner's exhilarating Boyce "symphonies" is further enhanced by the even better sound on reel tape with Dolby noise reduction (Argo/B-C F 874, \$9.95).

Among the older recordings, there's another English masterpiece, Purcell's incomparable *Dido and Aeneas*, in the memorable 1962 version starring Janet Baker and conducted by Anthony Lewis, with Thurston Dart as harpsichord continuoist (Oiseau-Lyre/B-C E 60047, \$8.95). Almost as welcome is the belated tape appearance of the 1968 Nelsova/Abraavanel/Utah version of Bloch's spellbinding *Schelomo*, coupled with his stylistically akin, but never as successful, *Israel* Symphony (Vanguard/B-C D 10007, \$7.95).

Arthur Fiedler (1894-1979)

The last time (too many years ago) I talked with Arthur Fiedler, he told me that his prime ambition was to match Sir Henry Wood's half-century as conductor of the London Promenade Concerts. Earlier this year he did indeed lead the opening concert of his fiftieth Boston Pops season. However, a large batch of musicassettes specially released to celebrate that golden anniversary have been fatefully transformed into memorials of a wholly unique recording career. As one who has heard and reviewed most of the innumerable discs and tapes that have appeared since the first Pops releases of 1935 and the adventuresome Sinfonietta programs beginning in 1938, I can only repeat my earlier tributes to the most extensive and varied legacy any conductor has left us. This legacy is memorable less for its unparalleled popular and financial success than for the consistency of its uncompromisingly high technical and executive standards.

Of these latest—surely not the last—examples of Fiedleriana, be sure to hear the fine anthology-summary of the long association with RCA Red Seal ("Greatest Hits," CRK 2 3383, double-play, \$8.98) and at least some of the eight current Deutsche Grammophon cassettes (\$8.98 each). Particularly notable is the novel Bernstein program (3334 002) with Irwin Kostal's fascinating transcription of much of the *Mass*; the "Symphonic Bach" orchestrations by Stokowski, Walton, Holst, et al. (3334 001); one of the best of Fiedler's—or any American conductor's—Strauss family programs (3334 008). There is no better way to remember Fiedler than by such eternally vital music-making as this. **HF**

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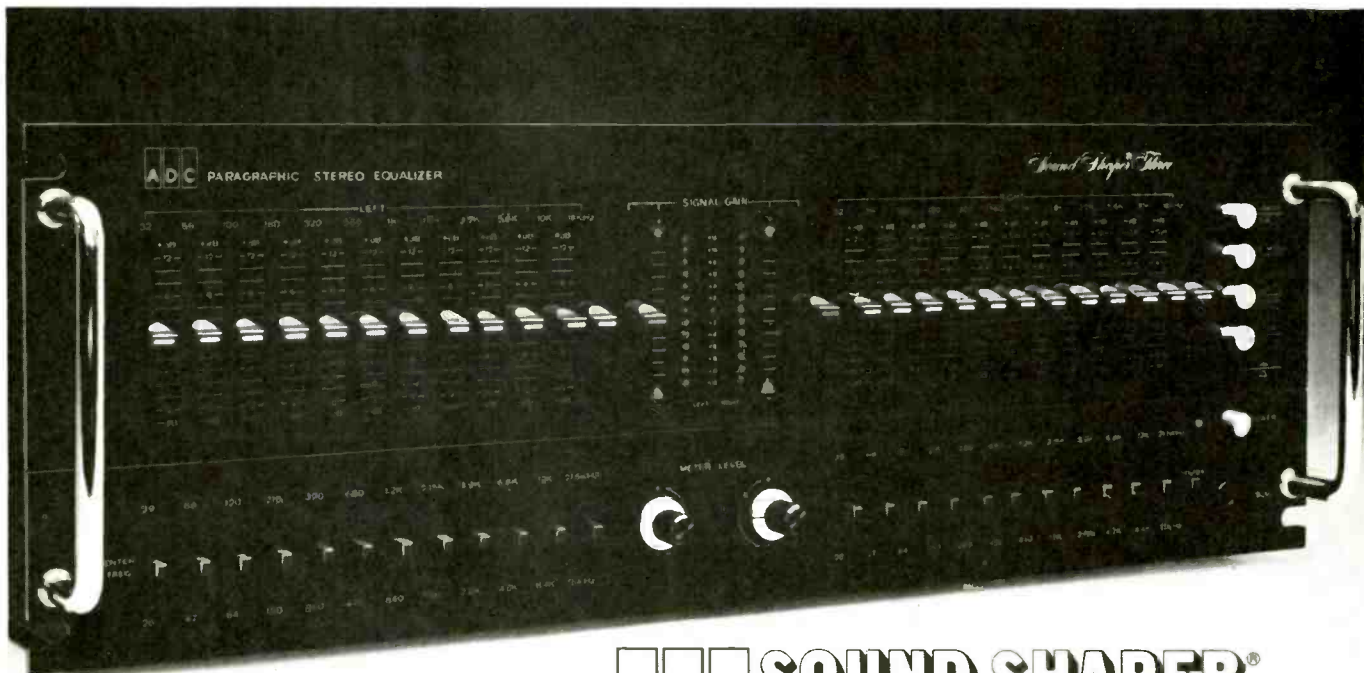
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BACKBEAT



Karla Bonoff: Great Songs Don't Come Easy

by Steven Rea

“**E**verybody stop bugging me!” is what I finally had to say. ‘I don’t know when I’ll have these songs. It might be two months from now or it might be three years!’” Thus singer/songwriter Karla Bonoff explains how she exorcised the specters shrieking “*Where are the songs?*” in her ear; how she warded off the relentless entreaties of her record company, her manager, and even her friends to *write, write, write*.

The pressure has been on throughout this past year. From Columbia’s vantage point, two years is by no means the ideal span of time to follow a debut album that fared exceptionally well, garnering accolades from the press, heavy radio play, and strong sales. The buzz surrounding this unknown artist was sparked in part by her first LP’s inclusion of three Bonoff songs — *Someone to Lay Down Beside Me*, *Lose Again*, and *If He’s*

Ever Near— that had been recorded earlier by Linda Ronstadt on “Hasten Down the Wind.” Second albums are usually rush-released in the heady wake of such hoopla. Yet hers, “*Restless Nights*,” didn’t see the light of day until two weeks ago.

Karla Bonoff, aged twenty-seven, is not a prolific songwriter. She has written only twenty or so songs in the last decade — at least, twenty that she deems worthy of recording. “With the first album I had all the time in the world,” the dark-haired, dark-eyed Bonoff recalls, seated in her stark, modern living room in Hollywood Hills. “I had lots of songs to choose from. Then when the record came out and did really well I started to tour. Suddenly it was the middle of 1978, I was back home, they wanted me to make another record, and I didn’t have any songs.

“I’ve talked to friends who write,” she continues. “They all say it’s a killer between your first and second albums. And it’s true, especially if your first does at all well. If mine had had two hit singles and sold a million copies, there would’ve been that much more pressure. Emotionally, I wouldn’t have been ready for that. I mean, I look at someone like Rickie Lee Jones and I think, ‘Great,’ but there’s a part of that success that’s very hard to handle. It’s just so fast.”

Bonoff’s rise to rock’s loftier realms has been accomplished at a much more cautious, deliberate pace. The pragmatic, soft-spoken singer kicked off her career in the early ’70s, a time when John David Souther and the Eagles’ Glen Frey were performing as Longbranch & Pennywhistle, when the likes of Linda Ronstadt, Jackson Browne, Doug Dillard, Rick Nelson, assorted members of



Karla with a&r man Philbin

Poco, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, and the Byrds all jostled and jived at the bar of Doug Weston's Troubador. Those were the halcyon days for these Angelenos, who amalgamized elements of folk, rock, and country into the "L.A. sound" that spread like wildfire across the country as the '70s rolled on.

Bonoff holds her own with that crowd now, traveling in the same circles as Browne, Ronstadt, and Souther, whose work she cites as being the most influential on her own. Awesome superstars like the Eagles and James Taylor (she still speaks of J.T. in hushed, reverent tones) play on her records. Was she surprised to find herself in the company of these people whom she used to admire from the audience? "It did stun me at first. I always felt I was not a part of that generation. Age-wise I am, but I felt younger — I was always looking up to these people. But secretly, I kept working on my songs."

Born and bred close to the UCLA campus in West Los Angeles, Bonoff began her performing career with her sister, Lisa, in the late Sixties. In 1970, she met up with Kenny Edwards, ex-bassist in the Stone Poneys. Soon after they formed Brydle, a band rounded out with friends Andrew Gold and Wendy Waldman. The group signed with A&M and recorded one never-released album. After traipsing through folk clubs like McCabes and the Golden Bear, performing talent nights and concerts at the Oakwood School (a private high school where Gold and Waldman were classmates), Brydle broke up. Edwards and Gold joined Ronstadt's aggregation while Waldman and Karla went off to pursue solo careers. Some lean, quiet years ensued, punctuated with appearances at junior college cafeterias and hoot nights at the Troubador, but there was never any doubt in Bonoff's mind that she'd chosen the right road. "There was a point at which I had spent so much time in music that I didn't think there was anything else I could do. Once you've spent eight or nine years doing something like this, unless it's really clear that you've failed, it's sort of silly to stop."

Boyfriend Edwards — who produced both "Karla Bonoff" and "Restless Nights" — eventually played some of Karla's songs for Ronstadt, who decided

to record three of them. At about the same time, a Columbia a&r man saw Karla play and wanted to sign her. "I had just told my manager that I'd had enough — that I wasn't going to get signed on a Monday night at the Troubador. It was my last gig, when Peter Philbin from Columbia saw me." But it wasn't as easy as just being told she was signed. She had to make a demo tape, and, more ominous, fly to New York and audition live for the entire a&r department in a conference room at CBS's "Black Rock" headquarters. "I'd play a song," she remembers, "and there'd be total silence. I'd play another, and again, silence. Then I walked over to this horrible upright piano and played a few more songs. They said, 'Okay, thank you,' and I walked out. No one told me I'd been signed until the next day. It was awful."

What that cold consortium of corporate ears heard were moody, melancholy songs about love — dark, impassioned lyrics that almost exclusively dwell on the paranoid and twisted sides of romance and relationships, jealousy, infidelity, the protagonist as victim of love. "I have more of a sense of humor than appears in my work," Karla insists. "Writing for me is therapeutic. It's difficult for me to write a happy song. If I've gone through something particularly hard or particularly emotional, there's the process of being able to write about it and get it out of your system that helps you feel better. Songs are an exaggeration of feelings. My songs really are 'true,' but I think, like any craft, when you're fine-tuning something it becomes larger than life."

"Restless Nights" was recorded at L.A.'s Sound Factory in two separate sessions, one in November '78 and the other in the early months of 1979. In the interim Karla was struggling — she had nowhere near the material for an album. "It was the pressure of knowing that you've got to do it, that it's serious now, that you really are a 'recording artist.' I'd just wake up some mornings and go, 'I'm never going to write again. People are going to find out it's all a fluke. I'm just a one-album artist and it's all over.'"

"I had to sit down and figure out how I wrote, how much of it was inspiration and how much of it was discipline. I discovered that a lot of it is just doing it all the time — sitting down every morning

"I look at someone like Rickie Lee Jones and I think, 'Great,' but there's a part of that success that's very hard to handle. It's just so fast."

"I'd wake up some mornings and say, 'I'm never going to write again.'"



and working at it. Even if you write something that stinks, you have to keep doing it to keep your chops up."

Bonoff composes, usually finding a melody first, on both guitar and piano; a sleek black concert grand sits on one side of her spacious living room. On "Restless Nights," however, all songs but one—*Loving You*—were written on guitar. The *creme de la creme* of session players, many of them mainstays of Ronstadt's recording nexus, comprise the LP's band: guitarists Waddy Wachtel and David Lindley, drummers Russell Kunkel and Rick Marotta, pianist/guitarist Andrew Gold, and producer Edwards, who played bass. Additionally, James Taylor, J.D. Souther, the Eagles' Don Henley, and Garth Hudson of the Band lent themselves to the sessions. Bonoff played acoustic guitar and piano on several tracks, all of them originals except the traditional *The Water Is Wide* and Jackie DeShannon's *When You Walk in the Room*, a '60's hit for the British group the Searchers. DeShannon sang background vocals on the new rendition.

Karla cut some of her vocals live: *The Water Is Wide*, *The Letter*, and most of *Only a Fool*. "I had to fix a couple of places in *Only a Fool*," she says with a wry smile, "because I choked at one point during the take.

"The rock & roll stuff is harder, because you can't hear as well when you're playing. I do a live vocal when we're doing the instrumental tracks. Then I go in one day and do three more takes. That's four vocals on four tracks. Then we combine those, going through line by line and taking the best ones and putting them together. Then we come back and say, 'Well, that's all good except for those three lines,' and then you punch in those lines. . . . You can get crazy with that, doing it over and over again to the point of ridiculousness. But I did it a lot less this time than on the first album."

Though "Restless Nights" credits only Edwards as producer, Karla says she coproduced it and thinks she's ready to take full responsibility for the next one. "With an artist like me it's not too difficult. There's essentially no problem with choosing material. What it gets down to is hiring musicians who are right, doing the vocals, and mixing. At this point I know what musicians work well with me, and I

know a lot more about my own vocals. The mixing would be the part I know least about, but I think if you're working with a good engineer then there's no trouble. For the paperwork, you just hire a production coordinator."

There's a discernible difference between '77's "Karla Bonoff" and "Restless Nights." The latter's songs are punchier, its ballads more resonant. Karla sustains the last note of the jealousy-tinged *The Letter* with composure and command. *When You Walk in the Room* rocks out with cool, Southern Californian assurance. In short, the new LP reveals a maturer, more confident artist.

And this time she didn't give any of the songs away prior to recording them herself. While she doesn't deny that the Ronstadt covers were "the best thing that could have happened to me," she has since had to live with a burdensome load of Ronstadt comparisons. "I never thought I sounded like Linda, but I knew when I recorded the same three songs there might be a problem, and basically the same musicians were involved, so the tracks sound somewhat the same.


"A lot of kids don't look at credits. When I toured I'd be playing these songs and I realized that a lot of people in the audience thought I learned them from Linda's record. So I made it a point two or three times during the set to say, 'I wrote these songs.'"

Through Christmas, she will be headlining at a series of clubs and small concert halls with her five-piece band. On her late '77/early '78 tour she performed as an opening act for Jackson Browne ("That was a luxury—I'd play about forty minutes, great sound and lights, I was done by 9:30, and that was it") and on her own club dates, with two sets a night. "I didn't have a lot of stamina. When I first went out I got three colds in five weeks, and it turned out I had to have my tonsils out. Since then I haven't been sick at all." The prospect of going on the road doesn't bother her, though it doesn't thrill her either. There's not much difference between motels in New England and motels in New Mexico, not much to do between soundchecks, shows, and long drives sitting in the back of a rented station wagon. Thus far, she has managed to write only one song on the road, *Trouble Again*. "I had the

melody in my head and I wrote the lyrics in a Rent-A-Car when we were touring the Northwest. Driving between Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver I thought it was such a waste of time, so I wrote the song. I'm hoping I can do more of that."

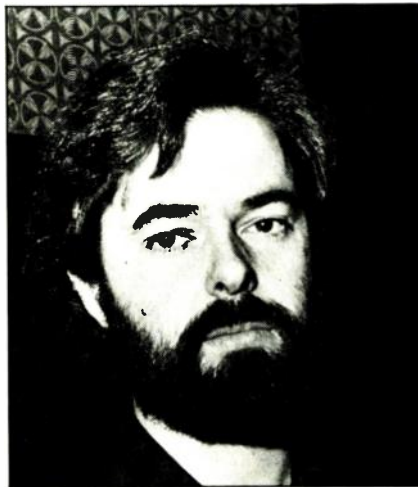
These days, Los Angeles is experiencing a revitalized rock scene not unlike the one Karla knew a decade ago. Even the Troubadour, after a few slow years of half-empty houses and rising costs, is once again a major showcase and watering hole for a new breed of musicians. This time the Western-garbed Jackson Brownes and J. D. Southers have been supplanted by young songwriters with strange names and short, spikey haircuts, tight black pants, narrow lapels, and narrower ties, playing an amalgam of '60s pop, rockabilly, reggae, and frenetic, snappily syncopated rock (read *New Wave*).

Karla somewhat guiltily admits that she hasn't kept up on the current rock scene. She still listens to the same ol' folks: Taylor, Souther, even the old Verve/Folkways classics she was weaned on. "With all this new music going on, I'm beginning to feel like part of the older generation. It's scary. Are people going to want to listen to 'Restless Nights' or are they going to say, 'Oh, that's wimpy old '70s songwriter music!' That's kind of frightening. But I know, in my heart, that ultimately the songs will last. Good songs, it seems to me, survive any changes that go on in music. Look at Cole Porter. I'm hoping that what I'm doing is a real long-lasting thing. That I can, ten years from now, still be writing songs. Not necessarily touring, but writing good songs."

Meanwhile, Columbia executives have told her that they'd like her to begin work on the third album in autumn 1980. Karla hasn't started writing yet. But she will, she will. 



Lenny Waronker—A&R up, WB



Rupert Perry—A&R up, Capitol



Greg Geller—A&R up, CBS

A&R: Dream Job of the Record Biz

by Sam Sutherland

Few record company posts are as coveted as those in artists and repertoire or a&r, the sector responsible for overseeing the acquisition of artists and the production of recordings. On paper, the job seems almost too good to be true: A&r staffers get paid to spend their days and nights listening to music, traveling in search of new acts, and monitoring studio sessions. They even get free stereo equipment.

Add the intoxicating prospect of scoring a career-making discovery like the next Beatles or Bob Dylan, and it's clear a&r is a dream job, right?

Half right. The dream is invaded by a host of nightmares that explain why a&r is as misunderstood as it is attractive. For every diamond-in-the-rough he or she finds, an a&r rep will wade through scores of clones, poseurs, and enough crackpots to suggest a background in psychotherapy as a career prerequisite. As for the signing of unknowns and superstars alike, actual negotiations bring the a&r staff in closer contact with managers, attorneys, and accountants than they do with the artists themselves. And since the majority (75%) of any label's releases fail to make a return on the investment, the employee responsible for committing those dollars is among the most vulnerable of executives.

"An a&r department does anything and everything," says Rupert Perry, Capitol Records' division vice president in charge of a&r activities. Perry, an affable Englishman who has significantly rebuilt his team since taking over the department at mid-decade, typifies the responses of most a&r chiefs through his mix of commitment and humor in explaining the glories and grievances that come with the territory: "Even though a&r's prime role is to sign artists, there's a whole pile of work you do up to the point of signing, as well as beyond, right through to actual release and marketing."

Like his peers, Perry tends to see his function as part critic, part cheerleader, and frequent politician: "You deal with the heartaches—what did or didn't work on the record itself, why that first album didn't sell, why the act is dissatisfied with its producer. You tend to be the one person everybody comes back to, because you're the one who originally came to them and said, 'Hey, come sign with Capitol.' You have to have creative ability and input, you have to have business acumen, and you have to be something of a psychiatrist."

It hasn't always been that way. Though the centrality of the function has been more or less constant throughout the history of the record business,



its duties and sphere of power have changed considerably. Before the rise of rock & roll and the crossover impact of country and black music, the term “artists and repertoire” afforded a more precise description of the role than it does now, since the industry was still centered around its earliest source of million sellers, the song. It was the a&r executive’s job to literally pick songs and match them with talent. And, in an era before lawyers, managers, and ambitious label heads all got into the act of signing their own prestigious acts, the a&r exec not only spotted and signed talent, but also provided creative guidance through selecting arrangers and engineers and supervising sessions.

One of Perry’s predecessors, and among the most experienced a&r reps still active, is Dave Cavanaugh, with Capitol for nearly three decades after entering the industry as an arranger and producer. “There was no use of independent producers or large in-house production staffs in the sense you see now,” he recalls of his first years. “You really fulfilled that function yourself, along with what would now be seen as an artist-relations function.

“While you did occasionally find artists who wrote their own songs, it wasn’t to the extent you see today.” As a result, the ties between a&r and music publishing were close. Cavanaugh recalls that “we used to see the publishers every Thursday, and the major publishers all had established appointments. It was like your day at the barber’s—something automatic in your schedule. Sometimes a publisher would come in with no new copyrights to look at, and just sit in your office for the allotted time.

“When the smaller publishers came in, it was like a butcher’s market: They’d take a number and wait in line, and around four in the afternoon you’d start seeing them.”

The rest of the week was spent cutting records or striking deals, and in retrospect the prolific output during that era of mono simplicity is dizzying. “We used to cut two or three songs a day, and finish as many albums every week,” says Cavanaugh. “Now they think someone’s really miraculous if they can finish an album in a few weeks. It usually takes months.”

The ’50s changed that mode of operation radically. Apart from the revolution in recording technology and the greater complexity of stereo, public taste ushered in new musical styles that changed both the business and its aesthetic parameters. The major labels were reluctant to enter rhythm & blues, country, and their eventual by-product, rock & roll, and a new generation of individual entrepreneurs raced into the breach.

Early pioneers like Sun Records’ Sam Phillips, Atlantic’s Ahmet Ertegun and later Jerry Wexler, and Elektra’s Jac Holzman respectively helped launch rockabilly, r&b, and folk by wearing every conceivable executive hat. Financing their labels on a shoestring, in most instances, these mavericks superseded separate a&r, promotion, and marketing departments by finding the talent themselves, producing the sessions, plugging the records, and even lugging the finished discs to the stores.

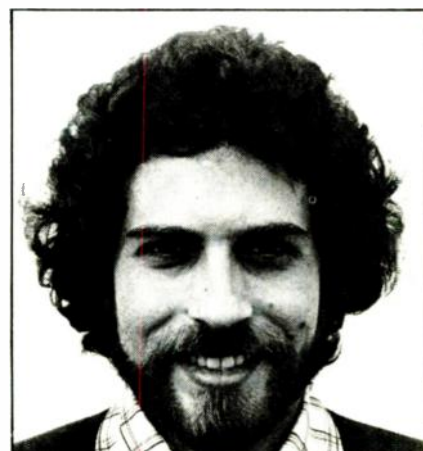
Similarly, established publishers demurred at seeking material from these genres, and new publishing companies—sometimes tied to indie labels—emerged. Apart from breaking the major publishers’ hold on recordings, the growth of new publishing companies coincided with the rise of writer/performers—a trend that would come to dominate popular music during the ’70s and, accordingly, alter record companies’ relationships with talent.

The rise of small regional independent labels willing to support these styles created another alternative to conventional a&r acquisitions: master licensing deals. Local producers or labels would produce and sell finished masters to other companies with better distribution, thus eliminating the purchaser’s production involvement.

An a&r rep will wade through scores of clones, poseurs, and enough crackpots to suggest a background in psychotherapy as a career prerequisite.



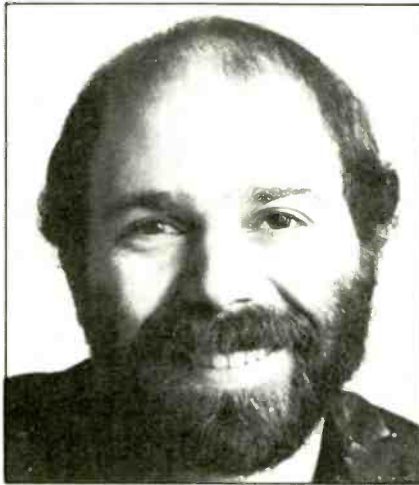
Karin Berg—A&R, WB



Bruce Garfield—A&R, Capitol



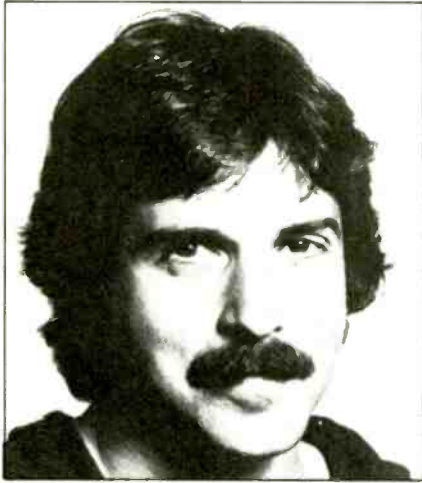
Steve Barri—staff producer, WB



Bruce Botnick—producer, CBS



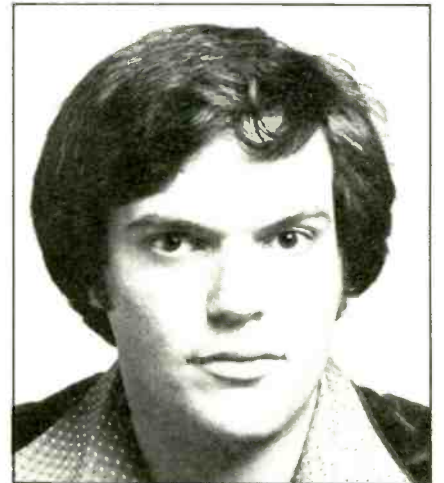
David Cavanaugh—A&R up, Capitol



Bobby Colomby—A&R up, Capitol



Cecil Hale—A&R up, Capitol



Richard Landis—producer, Capitol



John Palladino—recording, Capitol



Roberta Peterson—A&R, WB



Bruce Ravid—A&R, Capitol



By the '60s, the shift in market share from older majors to now successful independents, coupled with the advent of multitrack recording, left traditional a&r structures considerably weakened, as rock and soul acts moved outside company studios and in-house producer staffs. Overall, the larger established companies adapted slowly to the new music while indies and producers working closer to the "street" made broad inroads.

Lenny Waronker, Warner Bros. Records' vice president in charge of a&r and among the most successful and respected producers in the business, joined the company during the '60s. The son of a veteran record man and founder of Imperial Records, Waronker agrees that it was an era dominated by independent producers. "During the days of the independent producer, a&r's in-house production emphasis changed," he notes. "With so many major hits being produced by indies, the labels began to wonder, 'Why the hell should we do it?'"

As a result, says Waronker, "most of the a&r staffs weren't very functional in terms of production. And at that time, there frankly weren't that many good producers working in-house."

Waronker himself was among the reasons Warner Bros. took the opposite path, building up its in-house staff even as the majors like CBS, RCA, and MCA (then Decca) scaled down. Joined by other young producers like Russ Titelman and Ted Templeman, Waronker sought a staff that would attract talent, a goal that today finds Steve Barri, Gary Katz, Jerry Wexler (the label's senior VP in charge of East Coast talent), and Michael O'Martian among the personnel now producing on a regular basis for Warner Bros.

Since the mid-'70s, most competitive labels have followed suit, building strong in-house production staffs in an effort to regain control over their recordings. CBS's Columbia and Epic divisions have both developed successful producer rosters, and Capitol has likewise reintroduced in-house producers and reaped hits in the process.

Says Gregg Geller, vice president of contemporary music for Columbia, "What we've done here in the last few years is get more involved in the creative side as well as the administrative side, by bringing in more producers like Joe Wissert and Bruce Botnick." A key force behind that shift is the skyrocketing cost of launching a new act.

"When you say 'administration' to an a&r man, it's really a matter of managing a recording project," he explains, "and that is ultimately a question of economics. . . . Costs are just going through the roof. It's unbelievable what studio time costs here and elsewhere when compared to ten years ago."

That economic concern dictates not only stronger in-house production capabilities as an investment safeguard, but also a need for separate active scouting staffs. Says Waronker, "The staff here is split between record producers and a&r people. Once you start producing in the studio, you're kept off the street, making it difficult to really stay on top of talent. So you need a combination of both to have an effective staff."

Geller agrees, adding, "It's not even enough to know what's happening now. In a business that is really fashion-conscious and changes rapidly as a result, there's got to be some forecasting."

Thus larger a&r departments have employees whose time is devoted to sifting through demo tapes and attending auditions. Top department executives are unanimous in stressing the central role played by these scouts and place a high priority on individual commitment. Waronker asserts, "We encourage people to be willing to go to the wall for an act, and if someone is willing to do that, we'll follow through and sign them."

Such was the case in Waronker's department when two staffers, one on each coast, championed a young British quartet whose lean, blues-based music sidestepped current trends. "Roberta Peterson and Karin Berg were really on

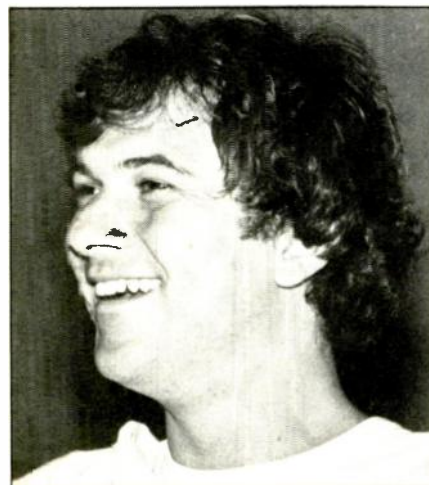
"You deal with the heartaches: Why that first album didn't sell, why the act is dissatisfied with its producer. . . ."

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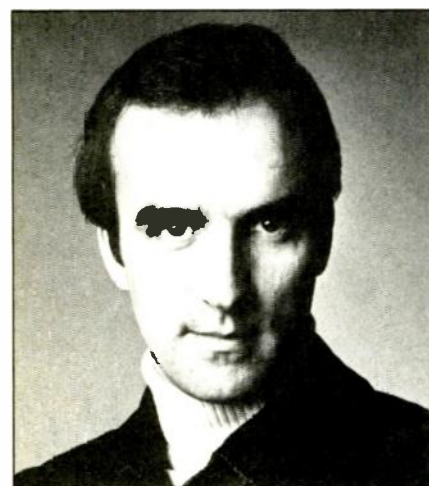
"You have to listen to unsolicited tapes if at all possible."



Ted Templeman—producer, WB



Russ Titelman—producer, WB



Joe Wissert—producer, CBS

to that project," Waronker confirms, adding that the rest of the a&r staff wasn't sure whether mainstream fans would welcome the band's undeniably classy work. But goaded by Peterson and Berg, the label did sign the group, and Dire Straits went on to write one of 1979's most heartening success stories.

Similarly, "the reason Rickie Lee Jones happened," says Waronker, "was that Ted Templeman and I heard her and said, 'She's too good not to sign.' We didn't even consider whether she could be a hit."

Columbia's Geller enhanced his reputation for taking on new trends when he gambled on a seeming long shot named Elvis Costello, and Costello's producer, Nick Lowe. Geller notes that one of Columbia's West Coast staffers, Peter Philbin, "fought a one-man crusade for Karla Bonoff. No one in the company was really interested in Karla, but he waged a war to make sure that the project would be handled properly."

Such left-field hits are themselves prime motivators, and further explain why a&r departments tend to manifest team loyalty more than other sectors where executive competition can be withering. Capitol's Perry underscored that aspect by introducing me to five of his key staffers and noting their backgrounds: Dr. Cecil Hale, a radio and promotion veteran; Bruce Garfield, formerly head of the label's press and artist relations; Richard Landis and Bobby Colomby, both musicians (the latter a founder of Blood, Sweat and Tears); and Bruce Ravid, another former promotion rep.

"We're all coming from different backgrounds," explains Perry, "and I think that's good. They're bringing in a variety of perspectives, so that you can have Anne Murray at one end of the spectrum and the Knack at the other."

Today, such a&r departments face fiercer competition than ever. Most department heads agree that their reps are traveling more frequently in the hope of finding artists on their home turf, rather than waiting for a manager or agent—or, worse, another label—to find them first.

"No label can cover the entire country," says Geller. "Columbia probably has the largest a&r staff in the country, but there's no way that we can cover it all. . . . Even so, you have to try."

Meanwhile, would-be superstars are submitting more cassettes and open-reel demo tapes than ever. "You have to listen to unsolicited tapes if at all possible," says Geller, "and listen to them not just once, but several times," even if those tapes were cut with a five-dollar mike, or the artist's dog was barking throughout the take. And screening live acts can mean long hours of club-hopping, suffering through fourth-rate garage bands in the hope another Knack or Elvis Costello or Dire Straits will take the stage and make the wait worthwhile.

If such rigors tend to dampen the fun, it's still obvious a&r executives enjoy their frenzied pace: Try finding one who'd trade their post for the often higher-paying niches of promotion or sales, and it becomes clear that the industry's "ears" are among its most enthusiastic, if exhausted, partisans. ☺

Next Big Thing Fever

by Sam Sutherland



The Police (top) and the B-52s: label execs' latest love objects

American popular music is as much a product of fashion as of art. Now that the recording industry is again embracing rock & roll after its year-long affair with disco, that underlying tension between commerce and artistic expression merits particularly close scrutiny. Against a backdrop of this year's severe sales slump, New Wave-influenced rock has made the transition from grass-roots ugly duckling to commercial swan. Executives who found the rough-and-tumble style laughable at its inception have embraced a new faith, fervently hailing the movement as their salvation. While we agree on aesthetic terms, and commend the trade's more creative producers and a&r folk for their sincere support, the motives fueling many of the conversions are somewhat questionable.

A year ago, radio stations ratified an emerging but still minority style by shifting dramatically to disco program-

ming. But by the first half of 1979, the dream of disco-pop had become an economic nightmare for record companies: Apart from a handful of legitimate stars, its momentum failed to carry over into the industry's real coin of the realm, album sales.

By the spring, the fever that catapulted disco stations to the top of their markets cooled as quickly as it had risen. Disco's strength—singles—revealed itself as a central market problem, not a solution, to an already faltering market. Executives confronted the possibility that twelve-inch singles had replaced, not enhanced, album sales.

The LPs that did sell, and are continuing to do so, reflected the breakthrough of a style that, only a year earlier, had been declared moribund: New Wave rock. And radio, repenting for its defection to the dancefloor, found it could gain new listeners by spinning Moon Martin,

Talking Heads, the B-52s, Nick Lowe, or the Police instead of the latest disco retreat.

Now the music industry, spurred by radio's new willingness to expose this revitalized rock, is applying the same overkill tactics it did to disco. The Next Big Thing is being trumpeted, the bait sweetened by the very cost savings outlined in POP-POURRI last month.

We've long held that the fresh stance behind New Wave offers a vitality missing from too many big-budget superstar projects. The rewards of new artist exposure to listeners and musicians alike are manifest in the summer's success stories. Yet, ironically, the very processes that foisted an all-disco environment on us some months back arose from similar perceptions. Disco was still an underground style closely tied to its audience when the over reaction started. At its earliest stages it too offered reduced production and marketing costs in comparison with the pop mainstream. Then the majors entered the ring, escalating the costs, formalizing the music, and ultimately neutralizing the very economy of scale that made it attractive in the first place.

Now those same companies are following suit with rock. As the genre rings in at the cash registers, labels busily search for the next Knack. In the process, they're subsidizing a new generation of clever pretenders as well as impressive originals, simply because both tend to wear the same clothes, play the same chords, and tout a new rock consciousness.

In short, fashion—and finance—rules, not art. What seemed precariously avant garde two years ago is now acceptable simply because it generates profits. For the rock fan, that has meant a return to more passionate and involving mainstream rock. Yet we may also be experiencing an eclipse of other less trendy but no less worthwhile popular styles, simply because of the industry's preoccupation.

If disco's decline indicates anything, it's the possibility that no single musical style can reign supreme without risking rapid burn-out. To an invisible nation of record buyers who prize Bach as much as the Beatles, and see no conflict between Charlie Parker and Jimi Hendrix, that's hardly news. One hopes that the record industry will someday sense as much.

The Significance of Dylan's Departure

by Nick Beaumont

Bob Dylan: Slow Train Coming

Jerry Wexler & Barry Beckett, producers
Columbia FC 36120

Better listen before you snicker. It's easy to crack wise at the mere thought of Bob Dylan, prince of masks, surrendering his public myth at the feet of the Savior. Yet that's what he does on "Slow Train Coming," and that's why the record is his most compelling in nearly a decade. Whether or not the listener shares his specific devotion, the riveting passion behind these new songs is no pose.

What makes this thematic triumph an equally impressive musical one is his first formal collaboration with outside producers since the early '70s. In his choice of Jerry Wexler and Barry Beckett, Dylan has found perfect translators for the fervent spiritual tone of his material. Opting for an expressive synthesis of blues and gospel elements, Wexler and Beckett have achieved the most polished-sounding Dylan record in years, yet they never permit that added luster to obscure the songs' immediacy. Guitarist Mark Knopfler, drummer Pick Withers—both of Dire Straits—bassist Tim Drummond, and keyboard mainstay Beckett are Dylan's most empathic and eloquent instrumental partners since the Band.

Beyond Dylan's own success, though, lies the broader significance of the new album as a possible bellwether. At a time when secular and sacred music have been, for the most part, discretely segregated, the uncompromising stance here is revelatory when taken by a pop avatar as influential as Dylan. I don't think it's mere coincidence that the LP arrives at a time when an increasing number of rock-generation artists—like Andy Pratt and Van Morrison—are beginning to reveal their formal ties to religious disciplines.

Dylan stands apart in intensity, though. As the titles suggest, and the lyrics

verify, every song here is rooted in the fundamentals of Christian thought. But the subordination of his own symbolic universe to so orthodox a system is less jarring than it seems on the written page, for the righteous moral tone animating the record isn't very far from the defiance that shaped his classic '60s works. Then, as now, he could be seen working at a distance from the mainstream of American life, assailing its weaknesses and internal contradictions. With his new sense of commitment, he has again divorced himself from that mainstream, and in that respect "Slow Train" loops back to those earlier records in content as well as delivery.

Nor is the spiritual focus of these songs new: Images and gestures derived from scriptural sources have long been part of his lexicon, originally adapted from sturdy American folk roots, and the elemental imagery and lean diction of these songs are of a piece with his earliest broadsides and ballads. His best records have used mystical sources, from the righteous political fury expressed in his earlier protest work—which couched conflict in absolute terms—to the apocalyptic brinksmanship of his most hallucinatory works, "Highway 61 Revisited" and "Blonde on Blonde."

What renders these new songs potent even for the avowed agnostic is Dylan's starkly realized balance of redemption and judgment. Producer Wexler has minimized the radicalism of the artist's conversion by observing that "he's always been both evangelical and apocalyptic." That's as good a thumbnail perspective of "Slow Train Coming" as I can think of.

Grounding his observations in human, not divine, nature, Dylan's prime topic is "spiritual warfare, flesh and blood breaking down," as he outlines in *Precious Angel*. He can no longer accept the hip complacency of the age, and his driving principle now is as harsh as final judgment: "It may be the Devil or it may

be the Lord, but you're gonna have to serve somebody," he sings in the opening song. That sense of good and evil in irrevocable opposition remains the backdrop for the entire record, beating like a heart from the opening lines of *Gotta Serve Somebody* to the meditative *When He Returns*.

If that sounds perilously close to spiritual panhandling, the emotional richness of the songs argues otherwise. With the exception of the embarrassingly precious *Man Gave Names to All the Animals*, which is only partially redeemed by its piquant melody and lambent folk-reggae arrangement, Dylan avoids using simplistic catch phrases, redefining moral absolutes with his sharply realized poetic sense. And on the title song, that approach binds his reawakened sense of purpose to a vision of America's promise shattered both from within and without.

The record's sustained power makes it impossible to quote specific lyrics. Suffice to say that these songs ring with lines that churn in the memory and illuminate everyday perceptions long after the disc stops playing. "Slow Train" has the force of an American epic that reveals itself only with repeated listening.

Special mention must be made of guitarist Knopfler, whose own songs in Dire Straits have already invited comparison to Dylan, and whose guitar playing has evoked another Dylan collaborator, Robbie Robertson. For this project, Knopfler has pared an already restrained personal style to even leaner phrases and effects. Whether adding shimmering harmonics to a stately ballad (*I Believe in You*) or squeezing out an angry single-note blues obbligato (on *Gonna Change My Way of Thinking*), Knopfler plays closer to Albert King's classic blues style than his own poignant synthesis of country, blues, and rock. It's a somewhat self-effacing yet undeniably risky shift that this young Briton brings off handsomely.

Less obvious but no less central to the dark beauty and taut precision of the music is Beckett, whose electric piano and organ realize these songs with the delicacy of water colors. Beckett's long and distinguished career has often carried him through the heartlands of gospel and blues, and he parlays that knowledge into a beautifully restrained performance.

Helping to tie all these elements together, of course, is Wexler, for whom the project at hand marks his best work in years.

Hipsters will doubtless wince, and I don't expect to hear any of these songs at the disco. But to anyone on the verge of an easy putdown, I'd offer Dylan's own view: "I don't know which is worse, doing your own thing, or playing it cool."

J. J. Cale: 5

Audie Ashworth & J.J. Cale, producers Shelter SR 3163

by Steven Rea

J. J. Cale's loping forays into smoky, country-rooted realms continue unfettered on "5," the whisky-voiced singer/songwriter/guitarist's simply enough titled fifth album. While his stylistic steadfastness might suggest a career impasse, Cale is so slow-poky and easy-going that to envision him distraught over the turns—or lack of turns—his music has taken is almost inconceivable. He's too busy sitting on his Tennessee mountain back porch listening to the leaves drop to worry about it.

Recorded and mixed at four different studios with an assortment of Nashville players (drummer Kenny Buttrey, pianist David Briggs, and bassist Carl Radle among them), "5" nonetheless sounds like the product of one session. Cale and longtime cohort Audie Ashworth have produced it with unassuming clarity, employing straightforward and mostly spare arrangements. (*Sensitive Kind* and *Mona*, the two side-closers, take exception with added strings and horns.)

As much as anything by Cale can, "5" jumps out at you with the bluesy rocker *Thirteen Days*, his talkin'/singin' vocals coupled with Christine Lakeland's lulling choruses. Lakeland graces much of this LP, singing and playing bass, guitar, and piano, as well as sharing a writing credit on the calypsoish *Katy Kool Lady*. Other songs range from the sensuous, literally (finger-) snappy *Boilin' Pot* to the spry, jazzy *Friday*. Cale's guitar on Bill Boatman's and Roger Tillotson's *Let's Go to Tahiti* (the sole selection he didn't write) has a suitably South Pacific twang, while *Fate of a Fool* shuffles along with mumbley melancholy.

Cale has been making records like



Cale—the fifth shuffle



Cash—the right connections

"5" for nearly a decade now. In the last few years Eric Clapton has emulated his laidback blues approach with considerable success, covering several Cale tunes in the process. Dire Straits' Mark Knopfler also shares much common ground with Cale (though Knopfler sings with a raspier, Dylanesque edge). In fact those who latch on to that group's *Sultans of Swing* or their new "Communique" LP and then hear Cale for the first time will probably think J. J.'s making some pretty blatant steals. But Cale knows better, rocking out on his rocking chair as the lazy days pass by.

Rosanne Cash: Right or Wrong

Rodney Crowell, producer Columbia JC 36155

by Ira Mayer

Ignore the second side of this Linda Ronstadt/Emmylou Harris-like country-rock debut and you'll discover a pretty voice, a few interesting songs, and some tasty arrangements. Overall, in fact, "Right or Wrong" is pretty but bland—easy listening for country folk who like their rocking light and for rock folk who think country is a peculiarly Southern California idiom. Edited, Keith Sykes's opening title track should make a good single; it moves at a nice clip, and Rosanne Cash midroads it right between the Ronstadt power-belt and Harris' oh-so-laidback wimpiness.

There's an appealing sense of tradition to Cash's voice that stems, in part, no doubt, from father Johnny Cash and husband/producer Rodney Crowell. It comes through most dynamically on her own *This Has Happened Before*. Almost a tearjerker, the opening verses are the most underproduced moments on the album—and the ones that display her voice most sympathetically. A good, upbeat cover of the old calypso number *Man Smart, Woman Smarter* would have been better with a little reggae undercurrent. But Sykes (certainly a subject for a "what-ever happened to . . ." discussion) contributes another solid tune in *Take Me, Take Me*.

Crowell's songs, which account for four of the remaining six tracks, are characterless. And given his predilection for straddling the country-rock fence from dead center, they tend to wash out the im-

pact of Cash's potentially electrifying singing. A couple of Jerry Jeff Walker or Willie Nelson numbers ought to do the trick, next time, along with a little less fear of expression.

The Clash

Mickey Foote, Lee Perry, Bill Price, & the Clash, producers
Epic JE 36060

by Ken Emerson

If "The Clash" had been released in America two years ago, when nine of its seventeen tracks were issued in England, it would have come as a shock and a revelation. That original LP was nearly the first British punk-rock album conceived as a whole rather than as a collection of singles and filler like the Sex Pistols' "Never Mind the Bollocks." The unified onslaught of its attack on the boredom and brutality of contemporary life seemed overwhelming at the time, but today it sounds quaint and almost impotent. Thanks to what the late Herbert Marcuse labeled "repressive tolerance," in only two or three years' time society has been able to assimilate and domesticate even the aggression of punk rock.

What makes "The Clash"—a compilation of cuts from that first album plus subsequent singles—fascinating is its documentation of the group's increasing awareness of the doomed nature of rebellion in the streets or on the stage. Although an early song wishes for a "white riot/Riot of me own," a later single, the eloquent *White Man in Hammersmith Palais*, ruefully recognizes that "it won't get you anywhere/Fooling with your guns." Rampaging rock gives way to resignation set to a reggae beat. Whereas once the Clash sang, "I'm so bored with the U.S.A.," on the new bonus single included in this album, they ask almost eagerly at the end of an American tour, "Will I see you again?"

As the group's attitudes have changed, so has their music, and diehards will undoubtedly accuse them of having sold out. Instead of bristling with crude power, the most recent material, such as *Gates of the West* and a snappy remake of *I Fought the Law*, is clever and catchy in the manner of the Boomtown Rats or even Thin Lizzy. *Groovy Times* goes so far as to sport a solo on acoustic guitar. Instead of frothing at the mouth, lead singer

Joe Strummer actually enunciates his words. But, old and new alike, they're well worth listening to—not only for their clear-eyed political candor, but also for memorable images such as "The wind howls through the empty blocks, looking for a home."

Unlike the Sex Pistols, who were inevitably consumed by their feral fury, the Clash have survived by clinging to a common-sense humanity. Despite the rough-and-tumble of their name, violence holds little fascination for them. When they threaten to "burn the city down" on *Clash City Rockers*, they're scarcely more inflammatory than the Bay City Rollers. That they themselves have come to realize this makes "The Clash" an album that is more than a little sad because of the disillusionment it records, but also highly honorable because of the honesty it embodies.

Paul Jabara: The Third Album

Paul Jabara, producer
Casablanca NBLP 7163

by Christopher Petkanas

Surely the epic disco wedding, honeymoon, and divorce was inevitable. All sorts of unabashedly gimmicky ideas have been tried; marriage could not have remained untouched, certainly not by a music that thrives on novelty and stops at nothing to gain attention. Paul Jabara's, Greg Mathieson's and Jay Asher's idea for an entire album side is superlative, at least as far as these things go, though their treatment of it could hardly be called imaginative.

Jabara has proven himself as a Top 40 composer with Donna Summer's *Last Dance* and Barbra Streisand's *The Main Event*. And for anyone wondering what would encourage him to cowrite for himself the parts of both bride and groom (as Deedee in drag in a lace gown, veil, garter, and frosted wig, as Vinny in a tuxedo), the album sleeve supplies a clue: "Special thanks to . . . all the kids in Brooklyn who gave me my neuroses." So there. Furthermore, the album cover is named and designed after one of Streisand's from the Sixties. Cleverness abounds.

A full libretto is enclosed, so it is possible to follow the ceremony, the honeymoon flight to Puerto Rico, a love scene, the fight that loosens the knot ("Suddenly you're aloof," says V.: "You're

the one who went cold . . . you lousy dancer," says D.: "I hate you!" they say in unison), and the courtroom scene that finally undoes it. Jabara is also the preacher, judge, and tour guide. The bridesmaids, guests, neighbors, chorus, spectators, girls, inlaws, and jury are played by an all-star cast: Bruce Roberts, Pattie Brooks, Brenda Russell, Brooklyn Dreams, and more. But the lyrics and tacky dialogue aren't very inspired, the production is unspectacular, and not many of the clichés that have grown up around American-style matrimony are exploited. *Disco Wedding* depended on exploitation, zaniness, and irreverence, and there is not enough of any. Still, Jabara deserves a nod, if only for putting the idea into the works.

His androgynous voice comes out in the open on Side 2's *Foggy Day*, evincing the whispery, hoarse, and pouty qualities of Carole Bayer Sager. Donna Summer crashes in on *Never Lose Your Sense of Humor*, which she had a hand in writing, and, predictably enough, the energy level rockets, the orchestra perks up, and everyone is sailing. Although the material is somewhat below her, she provides the most vital, sit-up-and-listen moments on the album.

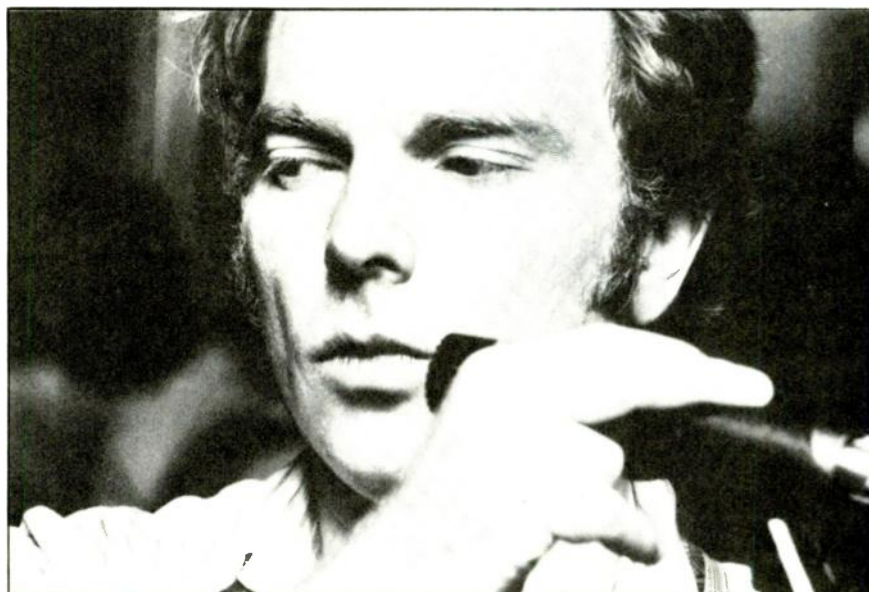
Jabara has a ballad to himself at the close, *Just You and Me*, from *Rachel Lily Rosenbloom*, an ill-fated, early-Seventies Broadway show he cowrote. The sentimental and pedestrian song has a jolting effect, for here out of the blue Jabara is being serious and earnest. No matter, for a new ending has been tacked on. Vinny and Deedee coo their reconciliation.

Van Morrison: Into the Music

Van Morrison, producer
Warner Bros. HS 3390

by Crispin Cioe

The music on this album is split between Van Morrison's perennial twin musical passions: gospel-based r&b and Gaelic melodies that spring from the European plainsong and troubadour traditions. There's a general sense of happiness and clarity here, as if Morrison has finally distilled his feelings down to their most essential musical level. In a sense, "Into the Music" is the full-circle complement to his most cosmic, allegorical work on older songs like, ironically, *Into the Mystic*. Now, with his musical bearings



Morrison—a depth that most of his peers can't match



Newman—few challenges

straight, he sings as freely about his life and feelings as he ever has.

Of course, gospel is the ultimate combination of earthbound emotional expression with spiritual dedication. The song *Full Force Gale*, with its moving Ry Cooder slide-guitar solo and Pee Wee Ellis' and Mark Isham's near-sanctified horn charts, could easily become a gospel standard. When Van sings "Like a full force gale, I was lifted up again by the Lord," he stands squarely in the American gospel tradition. And yet on the next tune, *Stepping Out Queen*, he earnestly celebrates the woman he loves, one who likes to "go to a party . . . and laugh loud and hearty." His meaning is quite clear when he sings "I'll come in your garden and then we'll go steppin' out." The song alternates between dramatic half-time verses and chugging, horn-driven choruses, with every drop of meaning wrung from its words. Even the sole cover tune, the beautiful old standard *It's All in the Game*, is cast as a softly rocking r&b ballad, with Toni Marcus' viola weaving around the singer's sincere rendering of the timeless lyrics.

The other side of the Morrison coin is best summed up in the song *Troubadours*. While David Hayes and Peter Van Hooke, on bass and drums, lay down a solid rock-ballad rhythmic foundation, trumpet, strings, and Robin Williamson's pennywhistle conjure up the "troubadours coming through town . . . with their

freedom song." *Rolling Hills* features a purer and more traditionally Irish-sounding arrangement. Against a stately mandolin and simple bass line, Van sings that "with my pen I'll write my song among the rolling hills," and he sounds completely imbued with the spirit of a wandering minstrel, content to live "with my wife and child" and "do my jig."

As complex a character as Van Morrison presents, his music always reveals and at times even heals. The various styles and traditions he combines—like the soul-music exclamation "I can't stand myself" with a keening violin—often create little epiphanies that only he could deliver. "Into the Music" blends heartfelt religious fervor with what he calls "backstreet rock and roll." These are mixed emotions that many people share, and his ability to get at them on this album reveals a depth that most pop music today misses.

Randy Newman: Born Again
Lenny Waronker & Russ Titelman,
producers. Warner Bros. HS 3346
by Ken Emerson

Eight of the eleven songs on "Born Again" include the word "little," a crucial entry in Randy Newman's laconic lexicon—not for nothing did he entitle his last album "Little Criminals." The word usually triggers the contempt and simultaneously the compassion, the sarcasm, and the sentimentality that make Newman's

work so provocatively double-edged. The best of his songs, such as *Sail Away* and *Rednecks*, flash their irony in front of your face only to twist suddenly and stab you in the backside of your complacency.

But "Born Again" is not quite as sharp as "Little Criminals" or "Good Old Boys" before that. Its ironies are more obvious, dulled by a cynicism that almost smirks. A certain redundancy has also crept in. The man in *Pants*, whose thundering threat to expose himself turns into a pathetic plea, is simply the son of the flasher in *Naked Man* on "Good Old Boys." *Ghosts* is yet another tinkling song about an old man whose life is ending with a tear jerking whimper, not a bang. And nothing here balloons into the full-blown lunacy of a song like *Jolly Coppers on Parade* on "Little Criminals."

Nor do many of the arrangements seem terribly inspired. Michael Bodcicker's synthesizer is ubiquitous but outstanding only on *Pretty Boy*, where it rumbles ominously like a thunderstorm about to burst overhead. Far and away the finest song on "Born Again," *Pretty Boy* is a beautiful and scary evocation of the eroticism of violence. The vicious taunts that a streetcorner punk spits out at a John Travolta-type ("that dancing wop") metamorphose into a chilling sexual invitation: "Talk tough to me, *Pretty Boy*."

The outcome of this confrontation is never made explicit, for Newman
Continued on page 141



Carolyn Mas: Sheer Moxie

by Steven Rea



Carolyn Mas

Steve Burgh, producer
Mercury SRM 1-3783

Recent years have witnessed the rise of a whole new breed of women rockers: tough, independent singer/songwriters who've assumed stances previously reserved almost exclusively for male performers. To wit, the beatnik punkism of Patti Smith, the ballsy blues swagger of Rickie Lee Jones, the quirky eccentricity of Stiff Records' Lene Lovich, and the out-and-out rock mettle evinced by the likes of Cindy Bullens, Carlene Carter, Rachel Sweet (a late-'70s street version of Brenda Lee), the Pretenders' Chrissie Hynde, and Suzi Quatro. The days of the demure, soft-spoken singer/songwriter are on the wane, as women take to shaping their own personas.

Carolyn Mas, a twenty-four-year-old Bronxville, New York, native, has been heralded by the New York press (and her record company) as the "female Bruce Springsteen." While it's unfair to burden any artist with such a weighty—and altogether silly—comparison, some similarities exist: most notably a big, throaty voice, a dramatic performing sensibility, and her songs' arrangements. Steve Burgh, who produced Steve Forbert's excellent debut, "Alive on Arrival," and David Landau, an itinerant guitarist on Jackson Browne and Warren Zevon tours, have framed Mas's zealously upbeat rock numbers in an expertly exuberant if somewhat familiar Springsteen-like setting. Crispin Cioe's saxophone runs resonate with the same vim and vigor that mark Clarence Clemons' reed work with Springsteen. Burgh has even re-created the "Born to Run" Spectorish wall of sound—John Siegler's bass and Andy Newmark's drums surge with keen, kinetic unity, while keyboardist Robbie Kondor alternately pounds, pushes, and paces Mas's melodies along.

But when it comes down to it, Mas, who plays electric guitar and piano, has little in common with Springsteen's road-and-romance street-smart sagas. The cover photograph presents a diminutive, dark-eyed young lady attired in scarf, top hat, and black jacket more appropriate for a day at the polo grounds than for any back-alley rendezvous. And the New Yorker's themes are far more introverted and self-directed than Springsteen's. On *Stillsane* (reminiscent in its chorus of Carl Carlton's hit *Everlasting Love*) she attempts a reaffirmation of her sanity in the face of a fragmented relationship. *Sadie Says*, which has all the earmarks of a Top 40 single (one of three tracks written with guitarist Landau), sports the emphatic chorus:

"Sadie says, 'Boy don't you worry'
Sadie says it's going to be alright

Sadie is older and knows more than I do
And I believe what Sadie says is right"
Here, Mas grapples with an alter ego/imaginary friend in order to come to grips with the real world. Whether intentional or not, her true rock & roll colors are revealed on the opening verse of *It's No Secret*, which resides in close musical proximity to the Yardbirds classic *Shapes of Things*.

Mas sings in the succinct, precise phrases of a trained vocalist, which, in fact, she is, having studied at the American Music and Dramatic Academy and performed with the Light Opera of Manhattan. An educated larynx sometimes runs counter to rock's gritty spontaneity, and to her credit she manages to bypass that dilemma, succeeding even among the spirited, handclapping street gang shouts of *Quote Goodbye Quote*.

She isn't all high-energy rock & roll. *Snow*, a midtempo swell guided by Kondor's piano and Landau's tense, sparse guitar, walks a stylistic line between the dirgelike incantations of Patti Smith and the bellowing pop chanting of Barbra Streisand. *Call Me (Crazy To)* calls to mind Carly Simon's level-voiced narrative compositions.

"Carolyn Mas" is by no means a flawless work. A few selections are buried on Side 2 as they deserve to be: She struggles to make sense (and fails) in *Never Two Without Three*, while *Do You Believe I Love You* suffers from a frantic, grating quality, and *Sittin' in the Dark* just flails around in search of a distinctive hook. Mas scored her record contract in impressive short order after a series of New York City club dates (which met with much critical hoopla and praise) and an unprecedented airing of her demo tape on WNEW-FM. Her sheer moxie no doubt jarred listeners from their mellow a.o.r. (album-oriented-radio) stupors, and it's a good thing. The world needs more rock & rollers like her. ♪

throughout this album is playing ingeniously with our notions of narrative. These song-stories full of throwaways and non sequiturs are prologues and epilogues in which everything has already happened or is only about to. Like the man in *Pants*, these songs tease, but unlike Newman's best work, they seldom strip away a listener's assumptions. There are lots of chuckles in the masterful nuances of his ostensibly offhand vocals, but there are very few challenges in what he is singing. Judged by the high standards Newman's previous albums have set, "Born Again" is, well, a *little* record.

Sweet Inspirations: Hot Butterfly
 Bob Monaco & Al Ciner, producers
 RSO RS 1-3058
 by John Storm Roberts

The Sweet Inspirations is a trio with two lead singers, and on "Hot Butterfly" it is backed by a tight little group featuring Don Grusin on keyboards and Airto on percussion. The results are split. About half the tracks are—within the parameters of 1979 female-group singing—imaginative, varied, and spunky. The rest are not.

Things start off fine with *Hot Fun*, a jaunty, squeaky-clean piece whose lilting instrumentals and sharp, tricky backup vocals beautifully frame Myrna Smith's singing. Next comes *Face to Face*, which sets Sylvia Shemwell's rather earthy and more knowing voice over an effectively haunting, obsessive backup drone.

Then things take a nosedive into two totally bland and antiseptic soft-soul ballads—one apiece for Smith and Shemwell—whose Tinker-Toy arrangements make for amiable but insipid stuff. Two of the B-side tracks, *Love Is on the Way* and *It's the Simple Things You Do*, bom-bom along pleasantly enough instrumentally, but the vocals are something else: The first, a tune with a fairly subtle hook, gets a warm, pretty three-voice treatment, the second brilliantly ranges all over the lot, from ooo-ooo to gospel-choir chanting.

Interspersed are two far more gutsy pieces. On *Holding Back*, horns, voices, rhythm, and keyboards bounce off each other in a way that not only enables the instrumental to swing on its own, but supports Smith's ballad vocal just right. And the closing *Do It Right* opens with two voices echoing each other over an eerily whispered third, and develops into a lead sung over a heavy blues/rock guitar buzz.



Sweet Inspirations

It's almost pure young-Aretha in spirit and sound. In all, the Sweet Inspirations is an outstanding vocal trio when it's not sabotaged by vacuum-packed arrangements.

Talking Heads: Fear of Music
 Brian Eno & Talking Heads, producers. Sire SRK 6076
 by Ken Emerson

On their two previous albums, Talking Heads turned their nervous inexperience to their own advantage, creating a quirky, compelling music of neurotic tension and amateur charm. There had never been anything quite like it. And there probably never will be again, for by now the Heads have acquired a self-assured mastery that gives the lie to their new album's title. Music is one thing this band need never be afraid of again.

As if to signal this maturation, lead singer David Byrne's voice has dropped from a puppy-dog yelp to an echoing growl. His guitar playing has grown up, too. His solos cut through the music with the confidence of a cleaver, and his rhythms no longer twitch and stutter. Instead, this is relentless rock & roll.

These changes have taken a bit of the edge off Talking Heads' uniqueness. Time and again, "Fear of Music" recalls David Bowie. The main connection, of course, is Brian Eno, who coproduced this and their last album and whose collaborations with Bowie have yielded similar results. But the link lies deeper: in Byrne's lowered voice and even in some of the lyrics. *Life During Wartime*, a doomy dramatization of an urban Armageddon, resembles nothing so much as Bowie's *Panic in Detroit*. The restless cosmopolitanism of *Cities* echoes the themes of Bowie's most

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SpinOffs

New Acts

by Crispin Cioe

The A's

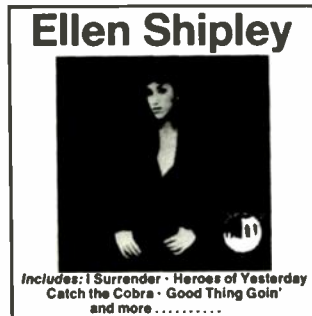
Rick Chertoff, producer
Arista AB 4238

This is straight-ahead pop/rock from Philadelphia, served up with a large side order of deadpan humor. Lead singer Richard Bush projects a quavering irony that's perfect for lines like, "All my friends want to settle down, get married, move to Levittown." Solid playing and lean production lend credence and depth to songs like *Artificial Love* and *Teenage Jerk Off*.

Sam the Band: Play It Again

Hank Medress & Dave Appell, producers
Casablanca NBLP 7156

A Vanilla Fudge for the '80s (they even cover *Take Me for a Little While*). Sam the Band features bombastic Broadway-style arrangements that range from rock to orchestral ballads. But very strong group vocals, especially



on *Dancing Queen*, point to a pure pop soul.

Breathless

Don Gehman, producer
EMI America SW 17013

Jonah Koslen, ex of Cleveland's Michael Stanley Band, leads this brawny-sounding sextet. *Breathless* veers between the melodic yet hard style of Boston (*Nothing's Gonna Change My Mind*) and a more current and chunky rock-disco approach (*Dead of the Night*). The band's rich, full sound lends resilience to its more standardized a.o.r. material.

Gary Numan & Tubeway Army: Replicas

Gary Numan, producer
Atco SD 38 117

Numan mixes surprisingly mellow synthesizer patterns over spare, steady rhythm tracks, the entire effect reminiscent of mid-'70s Bowie. The lyrics are starkly superb renderings of a future in which humans befriend machines, and the cut *Are 'Friends' Human?* is already doing well.

The Records

Various producers
Virgin VA 13130

No doubt about it, *Starry Eyes* is a great single, with Huw Gower's ringing,



Byrds-style guitar cruising out on the grim-but-game chorus lyric. The good news is that the Records' entire debut is quite solid, being an amalgam of intelligently crafted and rough-hewn pop/rock in a thoroughly modern vein. Great lyrics predominate, including the wonderful exclamation: "Girls that don't exist are haunting me."

Ellen Shipley

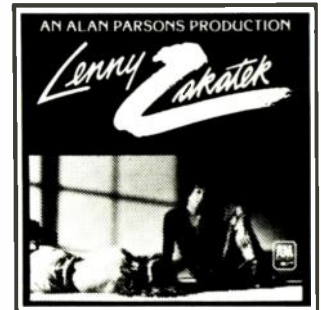
Ralph Schuckett & Ed Sprigg, producers
New York International/
RCA BXL 1-3428

With collaborator Ralph Schuckett, Ellen Shipley writes sinewy tales of urban desire. Her vocal style often echoes the great female singers of the early '60s, and Schuckett's ingenious keyboards set the stark and hard-edged production scenario. *Catch the Cobra* is a particular little gem in this collection of big-city rock & roll emotions.

The Sinceros: The Sound of Sunbathing

Joe Wissert, producer
Columbia JC 36134

Aficionados will recognize the Sinceros as the able studio stalwarts who played on Lene Lovich's highly regarded debut. On their own, they subtly blend hip '60s licks and enough innovative rhythmic



fillips to establish a unique sound, with suitably elliptical lyrics. This is very now music.

Vapour Trails

Larry Carlton & Vapour Trails, producers
Warner Bros. BSK 3363

This is genuinely sweet, slightly progressive pop from a trio of British sessions vets. Larry Carlton's hip L.A. production gives the record a snug warmth that contrasts nicely with the players' obvious instrumental chops. John McBurnie and Andy Dalby sing especially well in tandem, notably on *True Love*, and bassist Phil Curtis adds an appropriate jazz-fusion edge that keeps the tempos pleasingly bright.

Lenny Zakatek

Alan Parsons, producer
A&M SP 4777

This erstwhile singer for the Alan Parsons Project has long been a vocalist for hire in England. His debut features, at its best, some very snappy funk/rock. The production is tight and sassy, especially on *Was It Easy* and *Do It Right*, and Zakatek's voice is smoothly sensual. Elsewhere, a slew of string-laden ballads—some quite pretty (like *One Is a Lonely Number*), others more routine-sounding—are quintessentially m.o.r. fare.



Continued from page 141
recent album, "Lodger."

Such affinities do not detract from the achievement of "Fear of Music"; rather, they indicate that the Heads have entered the mainstream of modernist rock. And, though the waters they navigate are turbulent, they're seldom murky. Byrne has outgrown the adolescent indirectness of many of his earlier songs to write generally straightforward lyrics, the message of which is that only animals on earth and angels in heaven are not fretted by the burden of an irrecoverable past, the fragility of the fleeting present, and the inevitable apocalypse of the future.

These are weighty themes, and so is the music, beefed up by the chatter and swirl of Eno's synthesizer. Indeed, this band can't properly be called Talking Heads anymore; this is rock with real body.

Wha-Koo: Fragile Line

Alan V. Abrahams, producer
Epic/Citylights JE 36173

Danny Douma: Night Eyes

Danny Douma & Nick Van Maarth, producers. Warner Bros. BSK 3326
by Sam Sutherland

In its earlier incarnation on ABC, Wha-Koo's style derived from its two principal songwriters who together set some imposing goals for the band: to be both passionate and slickly ironic, riveting and tender, and, above all, brainy. Echoes of Steely Dan and Fleetwood Mac rung through their first two albums, especially the second, "Berkshire," an underrated charmer.

Problems surfaced, though, in the form of rock that sometimes verged on hysteria, and r&b that sounded more store-bought than homegrown. Career frustration over lack of commercial acceptance doubtless contributed to the pressures, and by last year writers David Palmer and Danny Douma had gone their separate ways, and Wha-Koo splintered.

Palmer took the band's name and much of its thunder, but the otherwise all-new lineup has little of the lightning needed to illuminate his material's landscape. The performances on "Fragile Line" hew to his seasoned sense of craft, and the arrangements display a corresponding tightness. Yet there's a grim determination that sets a clenched tone for the proceedings, and Palmer's sometimes

needlessly ornate imagery does little to improve matters. It's as if he means to prove his intellectual credentials by flexing his angst whenever convenient. The results often prove juiceless emotionally, despite Palmer's urgent vocal readings.

Douma's solo debut, by contrast, is actually more of a Wha-Koo reunion: Co-producer Nick Van Maarth was the band's guitarist, Claude Pepper the drummer, and Peter Frieberger the bassist. With the rhythm section and Douma's and Van Maarth's guitars augmented by a handful of outside players, the resulting ensemble is a comfortable one. The old band's delicate acoustic work was often a highlight, and here it is mellowed to an even more satisfying level.

Yet although it clearly emphasizes more sultry tempos and softer textures than the current Wha-Koo, "Night Eyes" isn't entirely laidback. *Hurt to Pride* is at once melodic and insistent, punctuated by soaring guitar phrases and frosted by rich vocal harmonies. Douma, like Palmer, possesses a powerful voice, but he achieves a more relaxed delivery throughout, sounding less mannered whether easing through a loping ballad (*Endlessly*) or trying a blue shuffle (*Hate You*, clinched by its formidable guest support from Mick Fleetwood, John McVie, Christine McVie, and Eric Clapton).

Production, too, is warmer, yet handsomely clean, underscored by the balance between acoustic and electric instruments. Perhaps more important, Douma is developing into an impressive writer whose songs wear well, revealing an unforced lyricism and a deceptively spare but intelligent verbal sense.

Fans of the old band more taken with their bombast than their grace will gravitate toward the new Wha-Koo. The harder edge to the playing, while less distinguished, does carry more force. How this band and the mutineers headed by Douma diverge in future efforts could easily see rock splitting from roll.

**Led Zeppelin:
In Through the Out Door**
Jimmy Page, producer.
Swan Song SS 16002
by Crispin Cioe

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Circle 64 on Page 117



Led Zeppelin—one of the three great ones

isn't any. What do you want it for?" Indeed, I thought, the group needs little advance publicity. Along with the Who and the Rolling Stones, it has a huge cult following, one that could easily populate several large cities. "In Through the Out Door" should add a few more precincts to the map.

The truly odd thing about Led Zep is that the band can lay off the scene for three years without a studio album of new material (its last, "Presence," was released in 1976), and come back with a new effort that not only clearly shows growth and development, but does so without kowtowing to many recent trends in rock & roll. How it does this is, coincidentally, summed up in this album's cover photography, which stylishly depicts various classic American artifacts and people in a run-down American bar, c. 1940. The point is that Jimmy Page, John Bonham, Robert Plant, and John Paul Jones continue to heavy up gritty American blues and soul styles, but by now the process is so streamlined that they've literally cornered the market.

The first cut, *In the Evening*, leads off with a clanging guitar part similar to the one in Van Morrison's 1965 chestnut *Gloria*. It's a riff whose lineage is probably traceable to Howlin' Wolf's early-'50s sides. The last tune on Side 1, *Hot Dog*, can only be called heavy-metal country, with Plant vowing "I'll never go to Texas anymore." Another surprise, closing out Side 2, is a soul ballad in 3/4 time, *I'm Gonna Crawl*, which begins with idyllic and lush violins before sliding into an Otis Redding-inspired verse. On all these stylistic excursions, Led Zep's ability to first grasp and then transmogrify root forms of American music is what makes the songs

so arresting. Page's guitar playing consistently sets the stage for these excursions—on the long, superbly arranged *Carouselambra* his bombastic-yet-controlled style is exemplary. As producer, he achieves (at Abba's Polar Music Studios in Stockholm) cavernous sounds that perfectly frame the larger-than-life qualities in the band's music.

But the real capper here is *All My Love*, a funk-rocker in half-time that breaks into a steamy, uptempo Latin bridge, with drummer Bonham pinning both these grooves to the floor. Page takes a guitar solo late in the song, passing it through a synthesizer. It's not long, but his ideas and energy are so arresting that it immediately re-establishes him as one of the most exciting and virtuosic rock guitarists of all time. Add to this the fact that Plant's voice has gotten more genuinely soulful and less mannered in the last couple of years, and we're talking about one of the three greatest rock & roll bands extant.

⋮⋮⋮ JAZZ ⋮⋮⋮

Gary Burton & Chick Corea: *Duet*
Chick Corea & Gary Burton, producers
ECM 1-1140

by Don Heckman

The vibraphone has never been one of my favorite instruments. Its lack of control over tone and pitch production, as well as its tendency to lead players into rapid-fire and ultimately boring fast runs, usually drives my listening attention right out the window. To Gary Burton's credit, he brings enormous sensitivity to his music—but still its vibes music. Add to this the



Corea—a pleasant surprise

fact that Chick Corea's recent keyboard outings have been pretentious in the extreme, and you'll understand why I didn't expect much from a Corea-Burton collaboration.

To my surprise, "Duet" is, for the most part, a delight. Burton keeps the mallet pyrotechnics to a minimum and Corea plays with more pure jazz feeling than he has since his live outing last year with Herbie Hancock. The best moments come in two pieces by bassist Steve Swallow, *Never* and *Radio*, which bring the very best out of Corea. The pianist's own works are less impressive. *Duet Suite* sails along for over fifteen minutes of interesting, but disjointed, exchanges between vibes and piano. *Song to Gayle*, obviously dedicated to Corea's lady, Gayle Moran, is surprisingly lacking in feeling; if romanticism is implied, it is too icily cerebral for this listener to catch it. Four *Children's Songs* are similarly cool, no doubt suggested—but not inspired—by Bartok's *Mikrokosmos*. Fortunately, Corea has also included a straight-from-the-shoulder, Flamenco-chord piece, *La Fiesta*, which allows both players to zip happily through simple chromaticisms and bright Latin rhythms.

No, I'm still not a vibes fan—not yet. But "Duet" has reminded me that I am a Burton fan, and that I might return to being a Corea fan. Let's hope that ECM is encouraged enough by the response to this album to put these two complementary players together in the studio again.

Red Norvo and Ross Tompkins: *Red and Ross*

Carl E. Jefferson, producer
Concord Jazz CJ 90
by John S. Wilson

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Circle 23 on Page 117



Red Norvo's music has a remarkable, almost extramusical quality to it. Listening to any of his five selections on "Red and Ross," one can almost picture him peering out over his vibraphone, looking as surprised and happy with the sounds he is making as his audience. That sly, twinkling quality is complemented by his innate ability to swing in any tempo, any situation. And here, in a live performance at Donte's in North Hollywood, he is in perfect, swinging company: bassist John B. Williams, drummer Jake Hanna, whose rhythmic instincts are very much like Norvo's, and pianist Ross Tompkins, whose rolling, rumbling, probing style generates tremendous momentum.

It is an easy, comfortable situation for Norvo. Besides running out his delightfully dancing lines, he takes on Tompkins in a couple of unaccompanied and bass-accompanied choruses in which they intertwine in some challenging ad-lib passages. One minor gripe: "Red and Ross" follows the live act's format, with the leader's introduction preceded by a piano solo. On a record that purports to feature Norvo, it seems pointless to include a cut on which he does not play.

**Dave Pell's Prez Conference
Featuring Joe Williams:
Prez and Joe**

Dave Pell, producer
GNP Crescendo GNPS 2124

Last year, California-based saxophonist Dave Pell formed a group called the Prez Conference to record four-saxophone arrangements of some of Lester Young's better-known solos. He was, of course, following the earlier example of Supersax, which recorded ensemble arrangements of Charlie Parker's solos. But unlike his predecessor Pell has expanded upon this premise to also record the vocal solos of Billie Holiday, Jimmy Rushing, Ella Fitzgerald, and Helen Humes, as performed here by Joe Williams.

Williams emits the confidence of a singer who knows who he is musically; while he shows affection for his material and its performance sources, he does not defer to them. The one slight exception is *Boogie Woogie*, which Rushing—one of Williams' inspirations—sang with Count Basie's band. But even here, Williams extends, rather than copies, his source. His singing on *Lady Be Good* and *You Can*

Depend on Me, which had no vocals in their original Basie big-band renderings, offers a variety in musical color that the steady saxophone diet of the first Prez Conference release did not. Williams also adds a new luster to *Getting Some Fun Out of Life* and *Fooling Myself*.

As on the earlier disc, Young's solos are arranged by Bill Holman, this time with greater success. The tempos are in a more swinging groove, and the four saxophonists—Pell, Bob Cooper, Bob Hardaway, and Bob Efford—get the chance on *If Dreams Come True* to cut away from the ensemble for individual solos. But Williams gets the most credit for giving the set life and color. **J.S.W.**

Solar Plexus
Solar Plexus, producer
Inner City IC 1067

Solar Plexus, a new jazz group from the San Francisco area, arrives on a great wave of anonymity. No doubt that will change, since its debut LP is surely one of the most promising of the year. The instrumentation—trumpet, woodwinds, voice, keyboards, bass, and drums—is not particularly unusual, but the modifications that are made to it are. Trumpeter and coleader Randy Masters also plays cornet, flugelhorn, piccolo, trumpet, and a set of percussion instruments ranging from gankuoi to caxixi. Coleader Denny Berthiaume doubles on acoustic and electric pianos, Hohner clavinet, several Arp synthesizers, and various phasers, among other things. Vocalist Lin McPhillips sings through a Roland Space Echo, a phaser, and a ring modulator.

Yet what emerges from all this high wattage tonal modification doesn't sound particularly electronic—certainly not to the degree that, say, Weather Report has sounded lately. Perhaps that's because Berthiaume and Masters are gifted composers; the electronic devices available to them are used mostly for unusual textural effects. What is startling, and, as such, dominates the group's sound, is the refreshing use of unusual meters: 8/4 in *Voa*, *Quetzal!*, 6/8 and 5/4 in *Nevadan Madam*, 9/8 and 3/4 in *Rubaiyat*, a mix in *Stutz Bearcat*. Uncommon meters have not generally fared well in jazz, despite the success of Paul Desmond's *Take Five* and the sadly overlooked experiments by

Continued on page 149

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Continued from page 145

Don Ellis. But Solar Plexus brings them off, usually successfully, and always with the feeling that they are a logical, rather than a contrived, part of the musical line.

I can't be quite that positive about other aspects of the performance. First, as soloists, the musicians simply cannot improvise on a level comparable to their ensemble playing. Only Lin McPhillips (who is strongly, but not oppressively, influenced by Urszula Dudziak) shows first-rate jazz potential. The rhythm team of drummer Russ Tincher and bassist Mickey McPhillips is fine, even excellent at times; but it is no better or worse than local A-team rhythm players in towns like Atlanta, St. Louis, and Dallas. The real problem centers on, ironically, Masters and Berthiaume. When they solo, each tends to pull the group down to a more mundane, alas a more parochial, level. When Masters tries to sound like Woody Shaw or Miles Davis, he simply exposes his own inadequacies; and Berthiaume has a distressing tendency to articulate fast passages with the banana-fingered bravado of a jazz Liberace.

My feelings about "Solar Plexus" are, obviously, mixed. But when I consider the limited studio time that was available to them (perhaps one tenth what Weather Report used for their last album), I tend to view the recorded debut of their complex music quite favorably. **D.H.**

Clark Terry: Ain't Misbehavin'

Norman Granz, producer
Pablo Today 2312 105

What we have here is a jazz rendering of the score from *Ain't Misbehavin'*, a Broadway show based on the music of Fats Waller. The musicians involved in this jazz-on-jazz disc are Clark Terry on trumpet, flugelhorn, and vocals, Chris Woods on alto saxophone and flute, Oscar Peterson on piano, Victor Sproles on bass, Billy Hart on drums, and Johnny Hartman singing the title song. In all, a very accomplished jazz cast, with the blithe spirits of Terry and Woods seeming to be very much part of the Waller mode. It's astonishing that they miss the target so badly. Perhaps doing a jazz version of a jazz score means getting as far away from the original style as possible. But this doesn't explain how the buoyancy that epitomizes Waller is translated into

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listless, heavy-handed plodding.

There are some exceptions. Peterson turns *Handful of Keys* into a driving whirligig, with no suggestion of Waller's stride, but with a spirit that stimulates Terry and Woods. And two ballads, (*What Did I Do to Be So*) *Black and Blue* and *Mean to Me*, provide effective vehicles for Terry. But the soulful Hartman is the wrong kind of singer for *Ain't Misbehavin'*, driving home the record's underlying message: Don't try to beat a jazz master at his own game. J.S.W.

Weather Report: 8:30

Josef Zawinul, producer
ARC Columbia PC2 36030 (two discs)

There's been a lot of doubt lately about where—or what—the real Weather Report is. Leader Josef Zawinul is a superb melodist; when he allows his oddly lyrical-but-funny tunes to blossom, as on 1977's "Heavy Weather," the results can be enchanting, even to some of the young, rock-oriented audiences who could care less about the band's jazz roots. But, on the evidence of '78's "Mr. Gone," Zawinul—who seems to take an ever-stronger role with each new recording—hasn't been very concerned with melody lately. Most of his energies have been devoted to a hell-bent search for some kind of electronic apocalypse, a mission that has taken the group more and more deeply down the path of high-decibel sound manipulation.

Now, just when all was beginning to seem lost, Weather Report issues "8:30," an LP that reminds us of its enormously diverse talents. Three of the four sides were recorded live. Interestingly, three tunes—*Birdland*, *Teen Town*, and *A Remark You Made*—first appeared on the "Heavy Weather" album. None are from the generally more electronically-oriented "Mr. Gone." Some tracks re-examine Zawinul pieces from earlier Miles Davis and Weather Report albums; bassist Jaco Pastorius solos on *Slang*, and saxophonist Wayne Shorter makes the curious choice of an old standard, *Thanks for the Memory*, for his solo vehicle.

The four new tunes—8:30, *Brown Street*, *The Orphan*, and *Sightseeing*—are uneven but promising. The first is a very brief, self-indulgent tour through the innards of Zawinul's synthesizer sounds. *Brown Street*, on the other hand, is crisp

bright, and tuneful, with Latin currents flowing through the rhythm section. The obviously programmatic *The Orphan* evokes the sympathy Zawinul is looking for, but even here, the children's chorus and warm Shorter tenor sax tend to be buried by the ubiquitous synthesizer. Shorter's *Sightseeing* is the kind of strongly jazz-routed tune that was once the bread and butter of this band. They would do well to favor more pieces like it.

The live performances ebb and flow. At times they clearly pander to audience enthusiasm; more often they allow space for Shorter and Pastorius to extend their solos. Comparison with the original versions (of *Birdland*, for example) generally come off favoring the more intense vitality and jazz-based soloing here. (Which tends to confirm the feeling among many critics—this one included—that Zawinul's tightly controlled recordings are not accurate representations of Weather Report's real essence.) Shorter's tendency to stay in the background for the last few years has not helped his playing. On tenor, he has become a pale, often flawed, imitator of Sonny Rollins (for evidence, check his solo on *Thanks for the Memory*); his soprano work is interesting, but lacking in presence and character. On the rare occasions when he pushes through to the foreground—his gutsy driving solo on *Brown Street* and warm lyricism on *The Orphan*, for example—we remember how good he really can be. Pastorius continues to be a suspect performer to me, all flash and fury with six notes assailing us where one would do quite nicely. His bass, as always, is mixed too far forward, often obscuring Shorter's solos. Maybe it's significant that he is the coproducer, while Shorter is only an assistant engineer.

Zawinul's keyboard playing is as elusive as the group's identity. In his salad days with Cannonball Adderly, he was an adept funk-merchant, good with time and soul licks, but hardly a master of invention. Nowadays he covers everything with a blanket of electronics. There are moments when he sounds like he is playing Solovox in a cocktail lounge; at other times, his old funkiness breaks through.

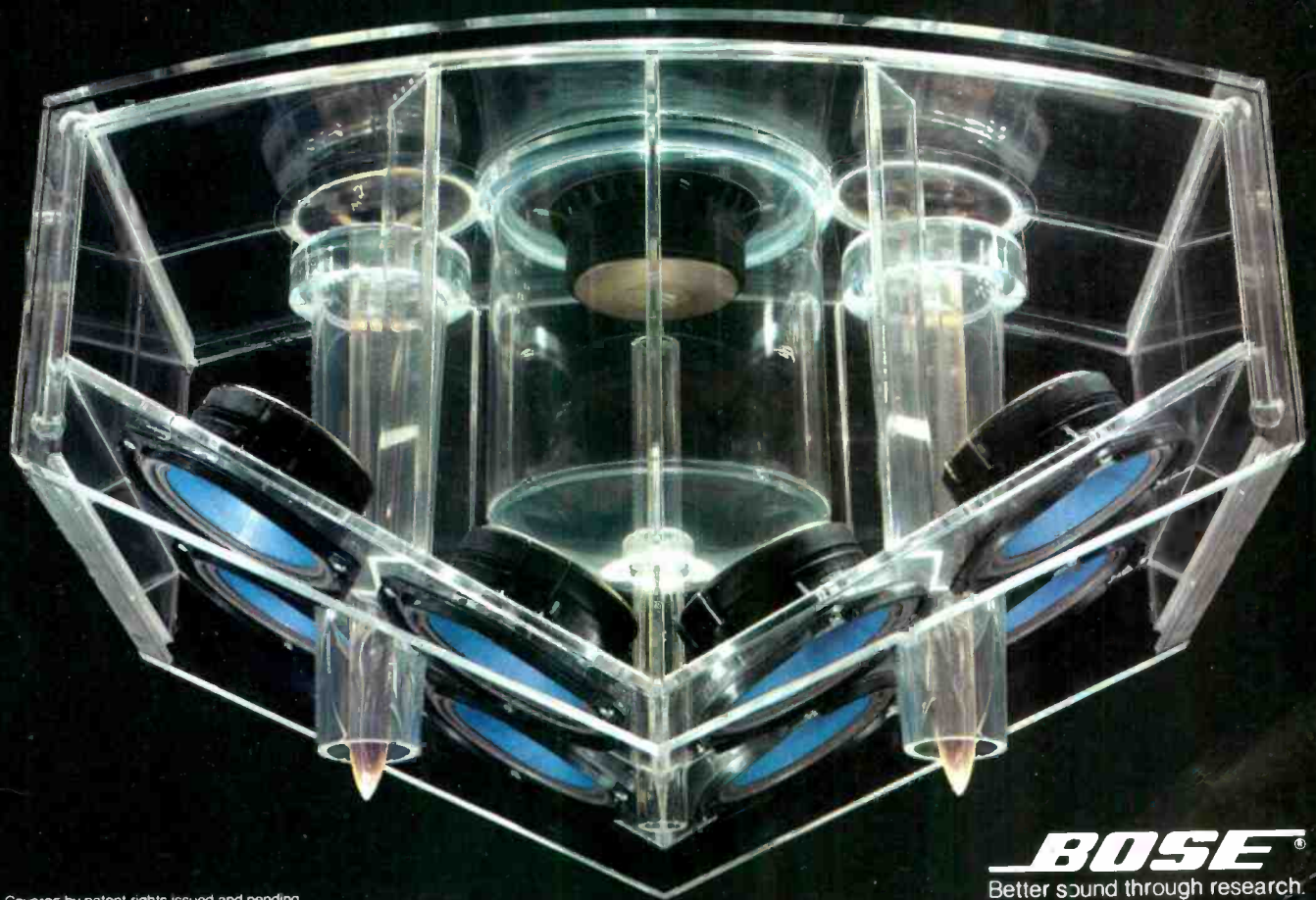
Weather Report's talents are clearly there: in a live setting like this one, they are often shown in astoundingly inventive light. But the flaws are there, too, and they show no sign of diminishing. D.H.

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