Stereo Review

AUGUST 1974 • 75 CENTS

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FORMERLY HI FI/STEREO REVIEW

Stereo Review

AUGUST 1974 • VOLUME 33 • NUMBER 2

THE MUSIC

THE EQUIPMENT

THE REVIEWS

THE REGULARS

COVER: Design by Borys Patchowsky; photo by Bruce Pendleton

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Every Fisher receiver is designed for people who love to play music; but the new Fisher Studio-Standard 514 goes a step further. It's designed for the active audiophiles who get their kicks out of playing *with* the music, the people who can't even wait to get a new component out of the box and up on the shelf before trying it out. These are people who listen with their hands as much as their ears, and while others are snapping their fingers and stamping their feet, they're flicking switches, pushing plugs, and twirling knobs.

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We left out nothing.

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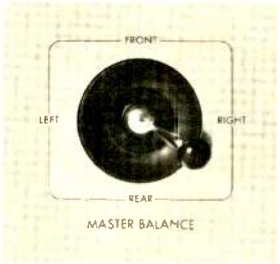
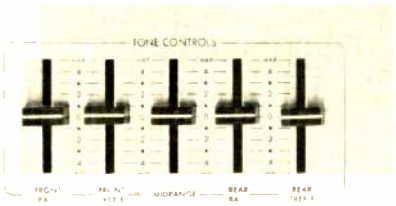


An elaborate tone control and filter system, centering on studio-style slide potentiometers, provides further fine tuning of the audio environment.



As you might expect, there are separate bass and treble controls for front and rear, but Fisher has added a midrange presence control, with maximum effect at about 1.5k Hz. It's just about the most useful and potent control you could add to a component, and can dramatically highlight a vocal performance against an instrumental background.

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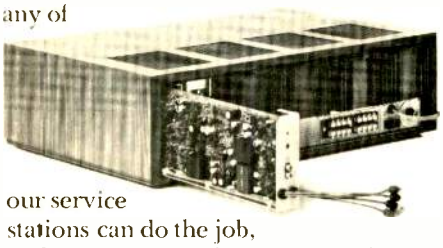

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Stereo Review

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EDITORIALLY SPEAKING

By WILLIAM ANDERSON

OPERA AND MONEY

For the past six years, the Metropolitan Opera has been putting on a late-spring "mini-season" in New York, three weeks of productions that fall after the "regular" season has ended. For this opera lover at least, it is an almost unadulterated treat. The weather is usually nice—frequently splendid, in fact—thus mitigating those perennial bugaboos, balky transportation and bulky clothing. The audiences, too, are in a festive mood, perhaps because there are fewer sullen, put-upon New Yorkers and more eager-to-be-entertained tourists, and the singers respond by giving just a little more. Most of the superstars, to be sure, are lacking, off to Europe for their round of music festivals and Swiss-lake holidays, but we do not live by caviar alone.

I saw four productions, all of them devoted, in their different ways, to that subject (love and death) opera knows best, and I might as well include here my mini-reviews. The production of *Don Giovanni* was successful (Mozart's music aside) mainly for its effective costumes and still (after sixteen years) singularly communicative Eugene Berman sets. It will also be memorable as my first exposure to Frederica von Stade, the Zerlina, a young American singer of already immense authority and unquestionable promise. Thomas Stewart made a fine figure of a Don, but his peacock posturing and athletic bumptiousness were psychologically obtuse—Don Giovanni is not a narcissistic jock. Contrariwise, I found Pilar Lorengar's matronly dumpling of a Butterfly movingly drawn and ravishingly sung, but the sets just a bit Barbie-dollish. Marilyn Horne's Carmen was often gorgeous in musical terms, but not in dramatic ones. Carmen, like Don Giovanni and others of Passion's slaves, has no sense of humor, and her character is diminished by making her a Bad Girl, campy, vulgar, and petulant. The sets were ugly and inappropriate, the smugglers' scene (a film-projected cave) looking like the Dawn of Man as staged at Bayreuth, and the bullfight scene like lunch hour outside the Skoda munitions works. *Der Rosenkavalier* profits much from its incredibly beautiful sets, but the ensemble playing of the cast, without ever reaching Olympian heights, was quite up to them. Evelyn Lear may understand the Marschallin a little better when she is a little older, and by the same time Richard Best may have learned to refine the coarse peasant out of his Baron Ochs.

I would not like it to appear, from these cavils, that I did not enjoy the mini-season, for I did. One of opera's many pleasures is the opportunity to learn, to expand one's appreciation and understanding, even from less-than-ideal productions. But this, alas, may be the last of the mini-seasons: the Met's financial troubles, despite the influx of government money, substantial private gifts, and, of course, rising ticket prices, are steadily worsening. Expenses for the 1972-1973 season, for example, were $24,064,000, income $16,274,000. That left $7,790,000 to be made up by donors, a fund-raising challenge I, for one, would hate to face. But it might be made a little less challenging if potential contributors had some idea of just where all this money goes. I might not then have received the suggestion recently offered by a Canadian reader, to the effect that the Met be "democratized," becoming a truly national institution deserving of wide public support, by locating itself one year in Washington, the next in Atlanta, then St. Louis, and so on. A reasonable enough idea on the face of it, but not when it is known that the house the Met now uses—and *needs*—cost in excess of $50 million to build; that it would mean hauling about the country not only an incredible weight of scenery and costumes, but 78 people in the chorus, 95 in the orchestra, 35 in the ballet, 15 conductors, and 140 principal singers; that these are outnumbered by the 450 non-performing employees—stage hands, costumers, scenery builders, ticket sellers and takers, clerical, switchboard, and maintenance workers, many of them highly skilled and, for financial and family reasons, unable or unwilling to turn themselves into opera gypsies. So the Met must stay at home; but wouldn't a fund appeal based upon its underpublicized—perhaps even unimaginable—household expenses find a sympathetic ear these days? Would we be lucky enough to have *two* Avery Fishers?

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Carpenters

● Here we go again tossing around the merits of the music of Richard and Karen Carpenter (June). I, for one, am disappointed at opening every other issue of STEREO REVIEW and seeing the Carpenters skewered on some clever reviewer's spit.

Somewhere along the way your staff formed the corporate opinion that to be of any cultural value, music and musicians must be obscure and unacceptable to large numbers of people. In spite of what your staff may think, obscurity is not a virtue but rather a detriment. This detriment must be overcome if anyone is to receive any enjoyment from a talent. I admire the unrecognized genius who is commercially unacceptable but aesthetically pure. However, I think it is an equal feat to hit the mainstream as squarely as the Carpenters have. The degree of finesse they apply to their work – vocally and instrumentally – has so far been unmatched in my opinion. They have also served (and very well, I might add) to bring some otherwise obscure people to the forefront of the music profession. Leon Russell and Paul Williams are but two of these people. Though their work may be sheer genius, it took a commercial vehicle to give them the lasting quality needed to make their songs the "standards" of the future. As for Mr. Reilly's comment on the Carpenters' lack of "growth," I can only interpret this to mean they did not have a half-dozen practice albums before they got a good one, as with many groups. When all is said and done, history supports the theory that the mainstream has lasting power, but hundreds of amateurish, aesthetic die-hards are forgotten. Keep on pickin', Richard; I'd love to be getting your royalty checks!

LES SUMMERS
Indiana, Pa.

● In his June Carpenters review, Peter Reilly makes the common error of the non-artist by assuming that any person should create or compose as a reflection of his generation. I would have little respect for any artist, Richard and Karen Carpenter included, who sought approbation from his age group before deciding to create. Furthermore, the Carpenters never stated they were spokesmen for anyone, though they are the unquestionable favorites of many, probably most of them young. Whether or not they are the spokesmen for the thousands who enjoy them is unimportant, as it is equally unimportant that the Grateful Dead might be spokesmen for others. Any true art is the spokesman only for its creator.

ROBERT REID
Weston, Mass.

Gershwin's Second Rhapsody

● With all the activity and publicity attending this year's seventy-fifth anniversary of the birth of George Gershwin, is there any possibility of *just one* new stereo recording of his *Second Rhapsody* for piano and orchestra? My old (circa 1954) recording with Leonard Pennario and the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra is showing definite signs of age.

M. C. MANNING
Victoria, B.C., Canada

None that we know of, but Leonard Pennario's has just been re-released by Angel (S-36070); see page 111.

Bishop's Mozart

● The splendid new Philips recording of Mozart's Piano Concertos K. 467 and K. 503 with Bishop, Davis, and the London Symphony is everything Igor Kipnis says it is (May). One minor correction, however: Stephen Bishop has at least one other recorded Mozart performance to his credit, namely that of the great E-flat Trio (*Kegelstatt*) for piano, clarinet, and viola, K. 498. Mr. Bishop is joined by Jack Brymer and Patrick Ireland in what is surely the best performance of this work now available on records (Philips 6500 073).

JOHN C. LASSITER
Williamsburg, Va.

Open Door Policy

● I am writing in regard to the letter from William B. Jordan (June) concerning what a "classical rookie" might enjoy. I thought *nothing* about classical music until I heard *Putnam's Camp* by Charles Ives. At that time (I was thirteen) it impressed me tremendously. I didn't know then that this music is considered by some people not to be music at all.

Later that week I heard Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Hymnen*, and I became fascinated with electronic music. I didn't know that Stockhausen also wrote for conventional instruments, so I was disappointed when I bought the RCA recording of *Kontra-Punkte*. But suddenly I became fascinated again by complex rhythms, new sounds, tone colors – the whole bit. Ives introduced me to Stravinsky, who led me to Tchaikovsky; Stockhausen's *Opus 1970*, believe it or not, led me to Beethoven. These composers led me everywhere imaginable: from the Mothers of Invention and the Beatles to Bach and Mozart (ah!) and also to Cage, Berio, and Boulez.

I guess what I am trying to say is, before you can begin to *appreciate* and pass on the tradition of timeless masterpieces to the next generation, you just have to be fascinated. It is not impossible to start with Ives and Stockhausen. You can start anywhere, and after you do, *all* the doors open.

JOHN ATWELL
Culver City, Calif.

Cheech & Chong

● In his review of Cheech & Chong's "Los Cochinos" (June), Joel Vance established the fact that these two "Third World People" are nothing more than "low-wit, vile clowns." Mr. Vance has obviously never been part of a teenage gang. Maybe he has never had any "lower class" or "street people" friends who have talked freely around him. If he had, he would appreciate the vaudeville type of humor involved in their albums. Many of the phrases and words used by these two "masters of ghetto humor" are the exact words and phrases used by so many of my old high school and dropout chums. Cheech & Chong humor is very exact and is closely related to everyday happenings that were and really are funny.

PHILLIP R. MASTERS
Glendale, Ariz.

● Congratulations to Joel Vance for setting the record straight about Cheech & Chong (June); I was quite upset last time around when they were given a favorable review. What irks me is that they take such an easy approach to humor. "If we say downers, it'll be funnier than reds." It's on the same level as Archie Bunker flushing the toilet, always good for a laugh.

THOMAS H. WOLFE
Chestertown, Md.

More Bix

● In reference to Thomas Hustad's letter (June) regarding Joel Vance's review of Dill Jones' "Davenport Blues," I wish to report that Ralph Sutton recorded the four Bix piano compositions in solo piano performances in the early Fifties on Commodore FL 30,001 under the title of *Bix Beiderbecke Suite*. Further, Mr. Sutton played these pieces as they were written and, I must say, exceedingly well.

R. W. LEUTHAUSER
Warren, N.J.

Consumer Complaints

● It seems to me that the spirit of consumerism needs to be manifested by the American record-buying public. Of late the standards of quality control on the part of the larger American firms appears to have deteriorated disgracefully. Most customers count themselves lucky if technical pressing defects on new purchases leave the record playable, and I expect all of us make large numbers of trips to return those albums which are unplayable. Only a callous disregard for the welfare of the customer and a cynical estimate of his docility

(Continued on page 15)

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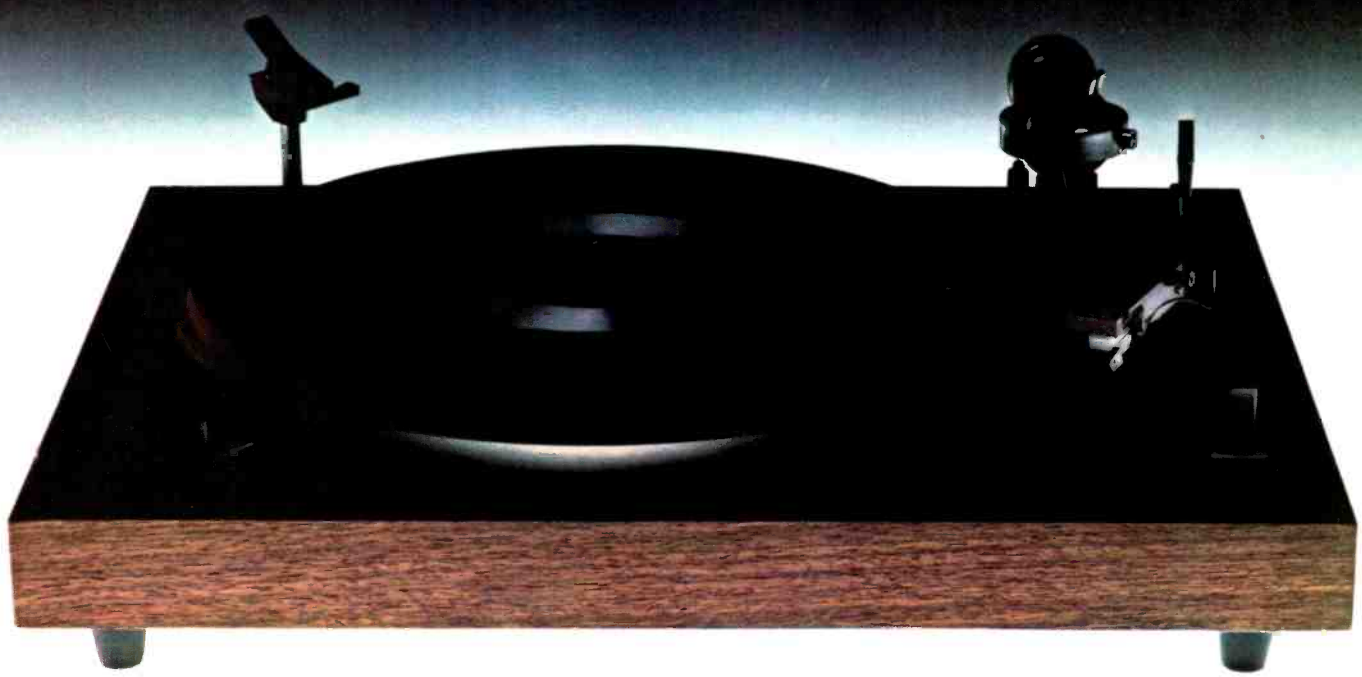

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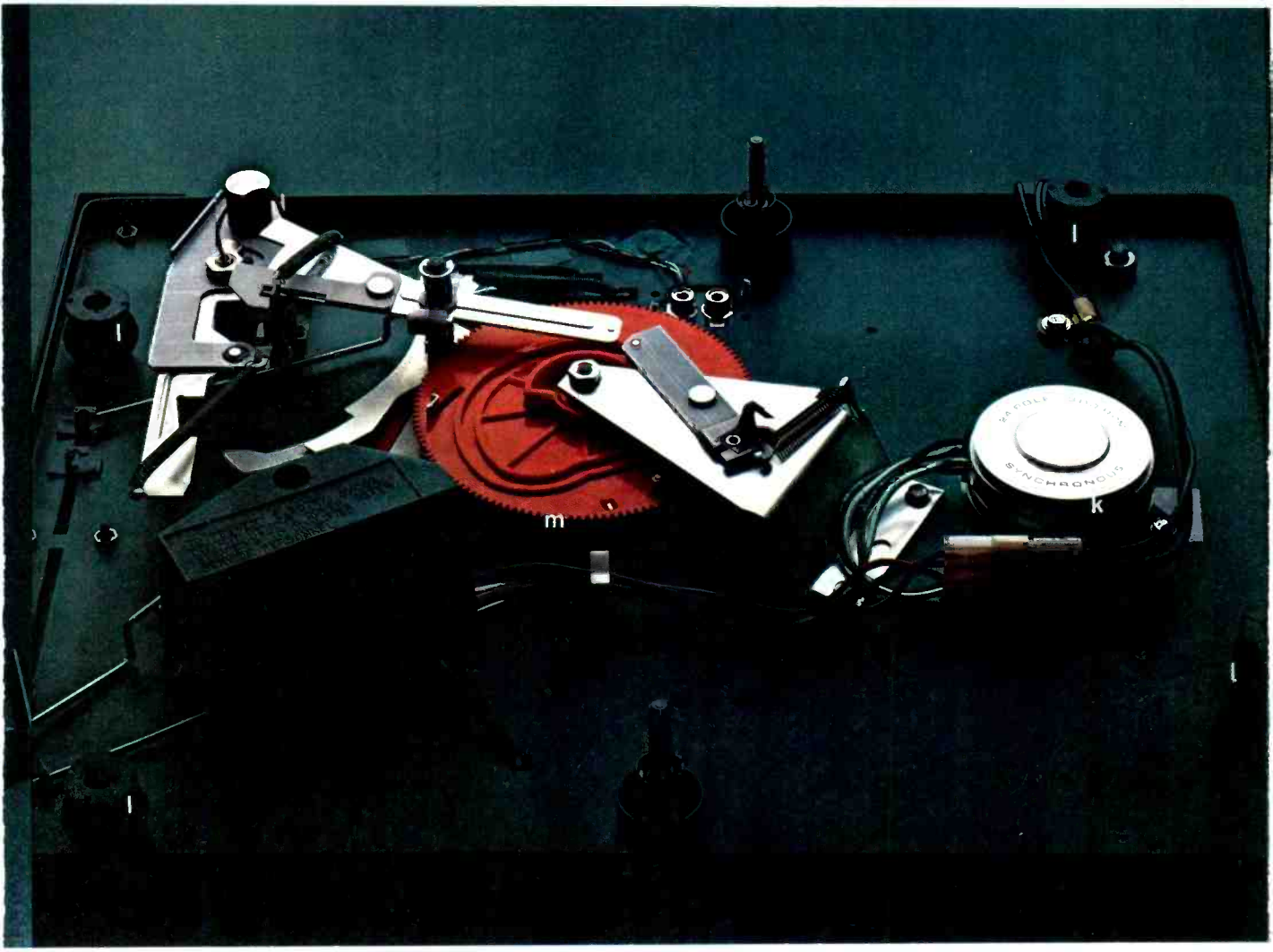
The 980 and 960 are identical except for the 980's electronic speed and pitch control circuitry and its lighted strobe. Accessories available include solid oiled-walnut wood base — matte black molded base — and hinged dust cover.



To play one record automatically (which we recommend for the sake of your cartridge and your records) move the program lever to "1", tap the *cycle button* (**j**) and the play-shut off cycle proceeds. Perhaps the most unique feature of the program system is that it allows you to pre-program as many as 6 plays of a single record and then shuts the machine off automatically after the program is completed.

The cycle button is worth noting in that it requires only a feather touch (90 grams pressure) and travels only .0625". It controls all functions with so light a touch that it precludes jarring of the unit plate, and accidental damage to records or stylus. Even when the tone arm is tracking, the unit can be put into "reject" smoothly, without jarring the tone arm, as frequently happens in most automatics.

For automatic play you can program 1 to 6 records. For example: to play 6 records in sequence, place them on the spindle and steady them with the clip at the outboard edge of the platter. Slide the program lever to "5", press the cycle button, and go about your business. The 2-point record support has no sensing mechanism in the spindle. It is thus superior to other 2-point systems and completely does away with the instability and hang-ups typical of umbrella spindles. Even records with worn center holes drop smoothly.

The B·I·C program system is simple to operate. And it has simplified the turntable's underside to the point that the 980 and 960 are actually less complex than some manuals with automatic features which can play only a single side.

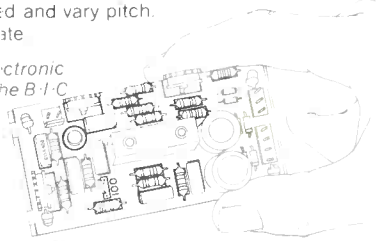
Underneath the turntable: The utter lack of confusion on the underside of the B·I·C turntables speaks for itself. Look under any changer or automatic turntable and you'll be amazed at the number of visible parts B·I·C engineering has eliminated.

There are other items under here which deserve your attention.

The *motor* (**k**) is a 24-pole synchronous unit which operates at 300 RPM. Its advantage is that at 300 RPM its fundamental vibration frequencies are well below audible levels. The 1800 RPM motors used in other automatics have audible vibration frequencies. A 24-pole motor delivers a smoother flow of power than a 4-pole unit. The superiority of the B·I·C power unit is one of the reasons that initial lab reports on these turntables look so good.

The unit shown above is the B·I·C 960. If it were the 980 you would see, in addition, the solid-state *circuit board* which electronically governs speed and incorporates pitch control. The 980 uses electronic circuitry to lock in speed and vary pitch.

It is permanently accurate.



The solid-state electronic speed control of the B·I·C 980 allows pitch variations of ±3%.

The mechanical "tapered pulley" pitch controls used on other machines, which inevitably go sour with age, have been eliminated.

Notice the four *shock mounts* (**l**) which form the interfaces between the unit plate and base... four small rubber isomer shock mounts, designed specifically for these turntables. They protect the unit from external shock and acoustic feedback. More than that, they are further evidence of the care and attention which has been lavished on every detail in these machines. Compare them with the metal springs used on automatic turntables and you'll quickly see the difference.

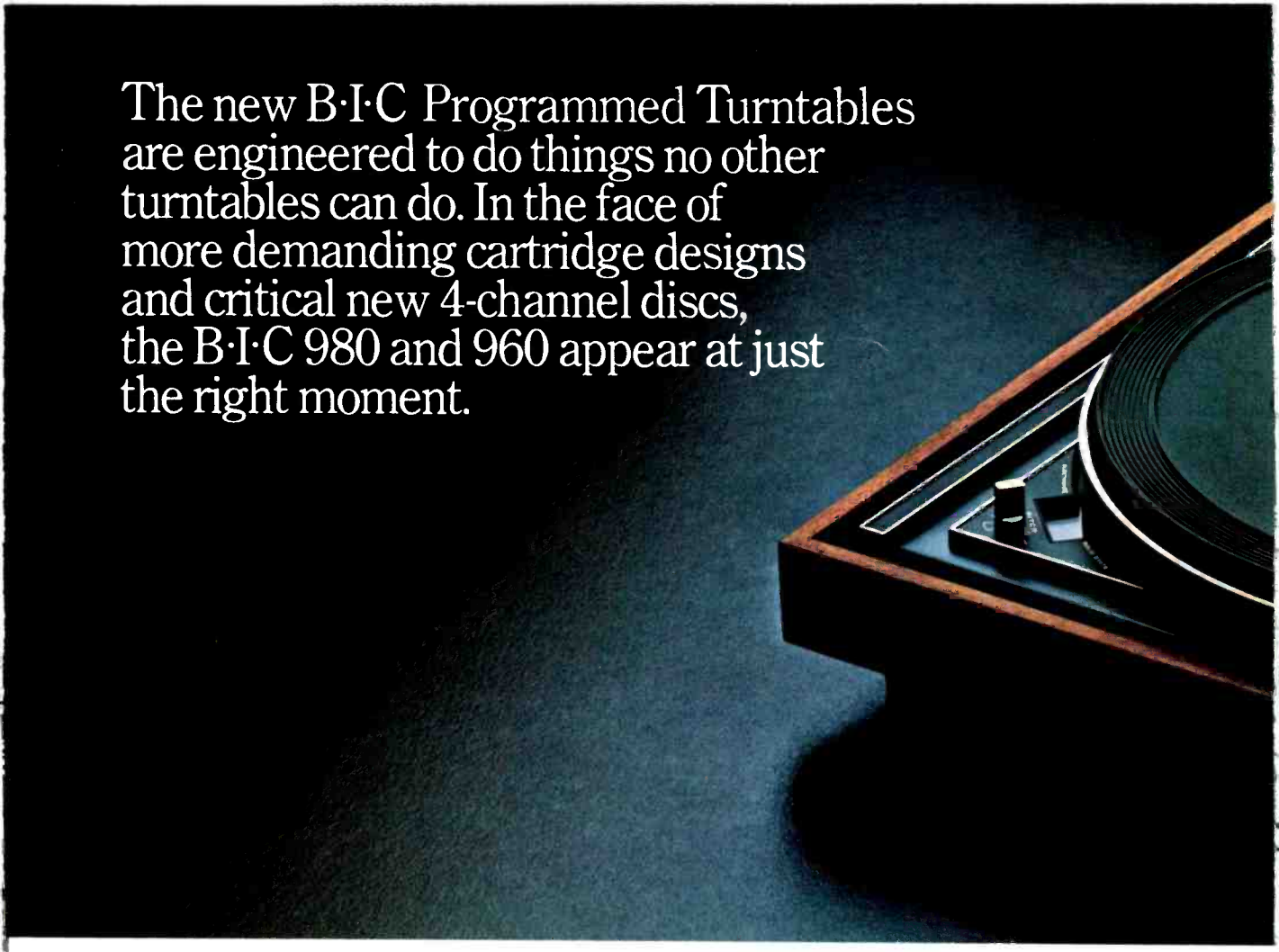
The *red cam* (**m**) in the middle of things is made of material which is not subject to the wearing effects which metal cams suffer. The material has its own internal permanent lubricity.

The platter (**n**) shown in the exploded view at right represents another technical advance. Old style heavyweight platters which were used for their flywheel effect are no longer needed because of innovations in electronics and system design. The B·I·C turntables carry this die-cast non-ferrous, 12" platter, which has been mated by computer analysis to the rest of the drive mechanism.

A few words about our warranty: B·I·C is the name on our turnables. Your dealer knows the name British Industries Co., very well.

If you have any questions about the special relationship we've had with record playing components for the past 37 years, why not ask him about us. But, reputation or no reputation, you may still ponder the wisdom of jumping into equipment that has not been proved in home trial, no matter how good it looks on paper.

The new B·I·C Programmed Turntables are engineered to do things no other turntables can do. In the face of more demanding cartridge designs and critical new 4-channel discs, the B·I·C 980 and 960 appear at just the right moment.



The Status Quo:

The mechanism that turns your records and carries your cartridge has become an increasingly critical part of your audio system.

More than ever before, today's turntable buyer is faced with a classic dilemma.

"Should I buy a single-play manual turntable for its playback superiority?"

Or..."should I buy an automatic for its superior record-handling capabilities?"

Until now, the dilemma has remained unsolved.

Enter B·I·C

British Industries Co., creator and builder of the new B·I·C turntables has been the major innovator in this field since 1936.

No company has better credentials or greater experience with record playback equipment in the components field. The best proof of that is the instruments which B·I·C now introduces.

The 980 and 960 are unique.

They have been engineered to solve once and for all the "manual vs. automatic" dilemma.

They are belt-drive as opposed to all automatic changers which drive the platter via an intermediate idler wheel.

They are powered by a 24-pole, low speed (300 RPM) motor while most automatics use 4-pole, high RPM motors.

In all three areas of function—platter drive, tone arm system, and multiple play capabilities, the B·I·C turntables offer refinements and advances which set them apart from everything else in the market. As a matter of fact, several B·I·C turntable features are not to be had on any other instrument at any price.

A Brief Introduction

The B·I·C 980 is shown above. It is identical to its companion, the 960, except for the 980's electronic drive, pitch control, and lighted strobe which are discussed later in this announcement.

You have probably already noticed its low profile. This is not an optical illusion or a styling trick. The 980 and 960 are indeed as low and trim as they appear.

This lack of bulk is your first clue that the B·I·C turntables are not merely manuals with automatic features added...that they are in fact "originals", designed from the start to be simple, as only sophisticated engineering can make them.

Moving parts found in conventional

automatics have been eliminated right and left. In the process, potential sources of malfunction have disappeared. Potential sources of noise and vibration have also been eliminated.

Operating controls are grouped in a single program panel on the right side of the unit. To say that this panel brings new logic to the turntable and new refinement and simplicity to its operation, barely does it justice.

The tone arm incorporates several dramatic improvements which set it apart from all others.

And of course you have noticed at the bottom of the page a cutaway drawing of the B·I·C platter which reveals the belt-drive mechanism. No other turntable which can play more than a single record offers belt-drive and all its advantages.

The drive system alone sets B·I·C turntables apart. But there's more.

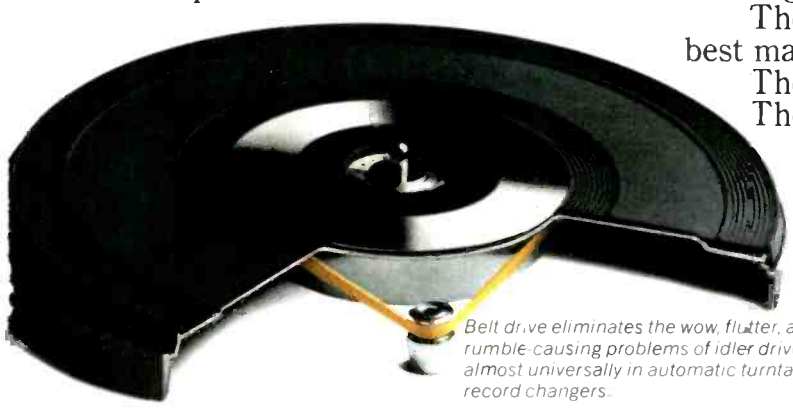
These turntables are built entirely in the United States of American-made parts. They are built in B·I·C's own plant where all aspects of manufacturing are in B·I·C's hands. They are the first fine turntables of their type built in this country, and they meet and exceed the high standards you have come to expect only from imported equipment. Beyond what that means in technical terms, they do not come to you burdened with import duties or fluctuating exchange rates.

They are rugged. They are built of the best materials that can be had.

The 980 will sell for about $200.

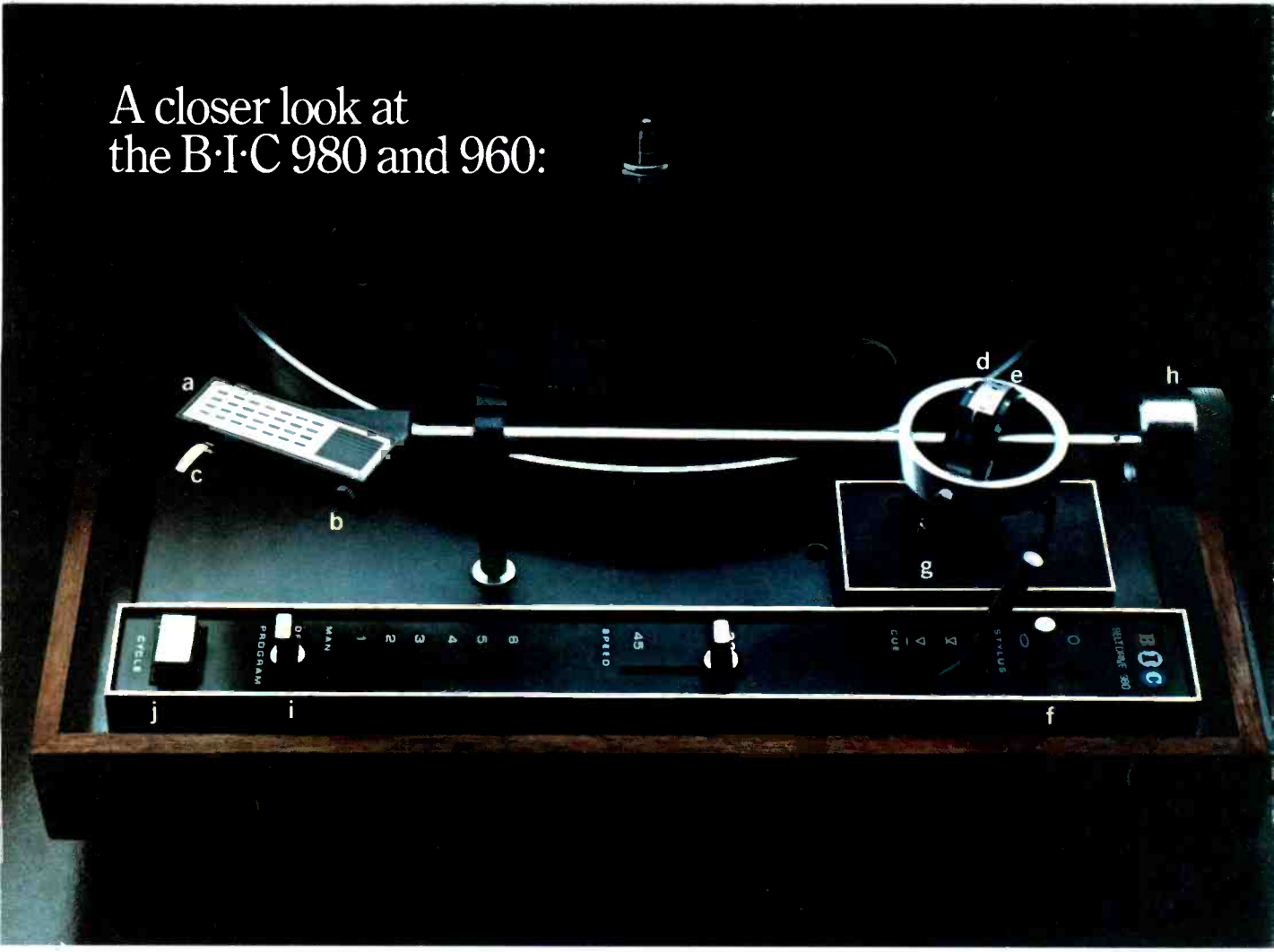
The 960 for about $150.

While they are not inexpensive, they will stand stringent comparison with machines costing $100 to $200 more. Anything less, they outperform by a wide margin.



Belt drive eliminates the wow, flutter, and rumble-causing problems of idler drives used almost universally in automatic turntables and record changers.

A closer look at the B·I·C 980 and 960:



The tone arm system: The B·I·C tone arm incorporates both simple refinements and radical departures from current designs. The result is a system which is, in our view, better than anything else now offered. Let's review its features from left to right as you see them pictured above.

The cartridge shell (**a**) has two precision adjustments to combat playback distortion. In mounting the cartridge, overhang can be adjusted with the aid of a gauge which is supplied. And, for the first time, stylus angle is also adjustable, using the gauge and set-screw (**b**) in the side of the shell. Regardless of cartridge depth or other variables, the stylus can be set to track at precisely 15° – the forward vertical angle that generates lowest playback distortion.

The cartridge shell is securely mated to the tone arm by a fail-safe, 4-prong, side-mounted connector, and is locked in place by a threaded knob. This eliminates the potential problem of intermittent signal inherent in slide-in cartridge carriers which are used in automatics.

Even the *finger lift* (**c**) is a pleasure to use. It is a wide stainless steel arc like those on studio turntables. It is one more indication that these B·I·C turntables have been designed for the serious hobbyist.

The geometry of the *tone arm* brings lateral tracking error down to .3° of arc per inch, which is insignificant in terms of playback distortion. The pivotry of the tone arm produces another important result. When 6 records are played in series there is virtually no variation in tracking force from first record to last. This variation in tracking force, found in other machines, has been a major criticism of automatics.

The arm is mounted in a minimal friction gimbal and is designed to track flawlessly at forces below the lowest limits of any cartridges now available or conceivable at this time.

Anti-skating and stylus force adjustments (**d, e**) are mounted in tandem over the gimbal where they flank a single linear scale, calibrated in .25 gram increments. Gone are the usual separate scales for conical and elliptical stylii. Selection of stylus mode is made by a separate lever (**f**) on the program panel at the right of the tone arm.

Cueing is viscous-damped in both directions and, for the first time, its rate can be adjusted. A small knob at the base of the tone arm (**g**) allows you to vary climb and descent for from 1 to 3 seconds. This adjustment is found only on B·I·C turntables. It enables the owner to accommodate his personal preference and also provides a means to compensate for variations in cueing time caused by changes in ambient temperature.

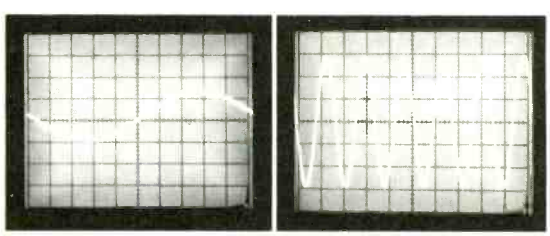
The massive *counter balance* (**h**) is completely isolated from the arm and incorporates a knurled band which makes balancing the arm fast and accurate. The entire tone arm system is protected by a safety bar which makes it virtually impossible to drop the arm on a record or on the platter.

The program system: The B·I·C turntables have been designed to play as many as 6 records in series. At the same time, the design eliminates some important criticisms which have been levelled at automatic changers in the past.

Automatic changers use a complex series of gears, cams, and levers to sense the number of records stacked on the spindle, and to activate the machine. The B·I·C design eliminates this sensing mechanism. Instead, all cycling information is set on the program panel by the operator. Many parts, a good deal of weight, noise, and vibration, are eliminated. Reliability is greatly improved.

To play one side this is all you do.

If you are hooked on manual play, insert the single play spindle which rotates with the platter. Move the program lever (**i**) to "MAN" and place the arm on the disc. After play the arm will return to rest and the machine will shut off.



B·I·C's 24-pole motor (left) has sub-sonic fundamental rotation frequency of 5 Hz with harmonics all below audible range. 4-pole units (right) have fundamental frequency of 30 Hz and harmonics all fully audible.

and passivity can satisfactorily explain this remarkable state of affairs.

Whenever you, as a buyer, are faced with flagrant examples of shoddy products from a particular label—say, a remarkably high percentage of bad pressings—you should declare a personal moratorium on that label, and inform the customer relations department of the company of your action. Perhaps a large enough number of these little individual embargos would force American record companies to adopt the kind of quality control standards that have been the rule in Europe for many years. Otherwise the companies' estimate of the docility and passivity of their buying public will prove to be well-founded.

BOB HIRSCHFELD
Berkeley, Calif.

Jokers

● Congratulations and thanks to two members of your staff, Noel Coppage and Steve Simels: to the former for exposing Elton John as the joke he is, and to the latter for intervening and giving a fine review of Procol Harum's "Exotic Birds and Fruit" (June) before the former could get his hands on it.

PETER HARTBARGER
Shelbyville, Tenn.

Fine Fiddling

● If Joel Vance *really* appreciates "fine country fiddling," I suggest that he look beyond Doug Sahm ("Best of the Month," April). While everybody is busy showering attention on Sahm, dozens of really fine country fiddlers remain largely unnoticed. Fiddle music LP's Mr. Vance (and others) might enjoy: Clark Dessinger, Fiddler (Folkways 2336); Benny Thomason, "Country Fiddling from the Big State" (County 724); "Old Time Fiddle Classics," Volumes 1 and 2 (County Records); Fuzzy Mountain String Band, "Summer Oaks and Porch" (Rounder 0035).

MAGGIE COOK
Austin, Texas

Auteur! Auteur!

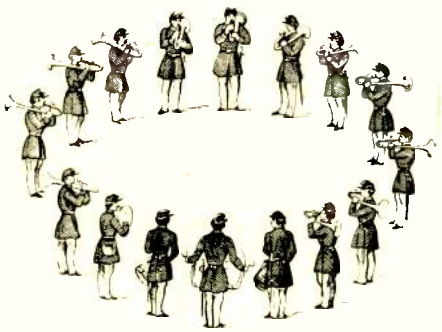
● Joel Vance's gratuitous dismissal of Phil Spector's work as "aural overkill" in his review of Ike and Tina's "Nutbush City Limits" (June) was too much to ignore. "A Hollywoodish big-for-big's-sake approach," Vance called it. Funny, but Phil doesn't *look* Hollywoodish! If Vance hears no more than "overkill" in the Spector "wall of sound," he'd better have his ears and his system evaluated. One of them ain't state of the art.

Phil Spector is a human synthesizer. He was *the* pioneer in utilizing the studio as an ax. I have spent hours with engineers at Sigma Sound Studios puzzling over Phil's records. His echo techniques are still a mystery to me despite my experiments with tape delay into a chamber, delay into a plate, delay from a chamber, delayed send and return, varied echo return pan positioning, etc. And his overdubbing: perhaps Vance knows how many guitars play that searing background lick in *Awaiting On You All* (George Harrison: "All Things Must Pass")? Perhaps it's a Cooper Time Cube . . . three live guitars . . . an echoplex?

How many other producers have a style so original, so demanding, and so *successful* that it is avidly copied by others (*e.g.*: Roy Wood, *See My Baby Jive*)? I do not fall into the trap of demanding a critic be a musician or producer or engineer before he can knowledgeably review a record, but I do think it is fair to expect a certain degree of familiarity with the art of making records. Phil Spector was the first producer. He taught the world that records could, and should, have a unique sound; that records were more than re-creations of live performance, that records were a medium themselves. And then, as the first of the great pop *auteur*/producers, he styled a sound that no one else has ever been able to duplicate.

DENNIS WILEN
Philadelphia, Pa.

The Editor replies: When Phil Spector did what he did is immaterial. Whether he was the first to do it is immaterial. How he accomplishes his mysterious effects is immaterial. And the number of times he has been imitated by other producers is immaterial. Only one thing counts: how it all sounds. To Joel Vance it sounds like "aural overkill." Would reader Wilen deny Mr. Vance the privilege of having his own response to what he hears?



Rock-Deaf

● Dan Dugan's article on rock-music stereo systems (May) does readers a disservice by failing to warn of the hearing impairment that will be sustained if one listens to sound levels of 105-115 dB for prolonged periods. Music at such levels does feel good, I will admit, but I believe that a little sacrifice now is well worth being able to enjoy the music, say, thirty years hence.

GEOFFREY F. PRANKUS
Storrs, Conn.

The jury is still out on whether or not overexposure to loud rock music leads to hearing deficiencies. As soon as one study confirms that it does, another comes along to refute it. Perhaps we will know in another couple of decades, when the young of the coming generation start to complain that their parents don't listen *to them!*

One Consumer Reports

● I couldn't help wondering, after reading his June column, what sort of gratuities or retainers the recording companies had proffered to William Anderson in order to induce him to become their James St. Clair, as it were. I have been listening to and collecting long-playing recordings for over two decades. In that period of time, I have witnessed the *physical* quality of recordings decline almost as dramatically as the quality of the devices that play them has improved. With almost minimal care, for instance, I can still play and enjoy a recording dating from the mid-Fifties that is relatively noise-free. By contrast, just about one out of every two or three records that I buy now is marred by high surface noise, scratches, poor pressings that cause the tone arm to "stick" or jump over grooves, and so on. Since these defects occur in new and (presumably) previously unplayed recordings, the question of proper care can hardly be germane. Indeed, the frequency of defective recordings is *so* great that I don't even bother returning them any more. Why should I, when chances are that the replacement will be no better?

Perhaps Mr. Anderson should read some of the other columns in the magazine he putatively edits. My interpretation of Larry Klein's remark ("Audio News") in the same issue, that a vinyl shortage is allegedly "forcing record-pressing plants to use increasing amounts of 'regrind' [reground vinyl] in new discs," is that pressing plants have all along been employing reground vinyl in making new recordings; the convenient excuse of a petroleum "crisis" is simply now allowing them to increase the percentage of reground vinyl at a faster rate than they could have done otherwise. When consumers justifiably complain about the shoddy physical quality of discs, the recording companies can, following the example of the oil companies, shift all the blame to the "vinyl shortage," all the while cutting costs, hiking profits, and laughing all the way to the proverbial bank. With such as William Anderson as their advocate, how can they lose?

As long as I am writing, conceivably you can explain to me and your other readers why you ethnocentrically reserve the prestigious designation "classical" for what in fact is nothing more than European (or European-derived) composed musics. Ravi Shankar, for one, has often explained that the raga music he plays is as "classical" as the composed music of Europe, and there are other types of music, in other countries, that have equally well developed a body of tradition that deserves the title of "classical." You will, of course, argue that the traditional usage dictates, etc. Likewise, the traditional usage has until recently dictated that a grown black man be considered a "boy" and a grown woman of any color a "girl." Since these traditional usages have gone by the boards, I see no good reason for hanging onto the term "classical" to denote European composed music. The narrow biases of race and class inherent in that practice may not be fully apparent to the editors of STEREO REVIEW, but rest assured, they are not mistaken in other quarters.

NEAL CORT
Oakland, Calif.

The Editor replies: Paranoia has so few pleasures that I would like to gratify Mr. Cort by reporting that my little nest is a regular blizzard of feathers delivered to me in hundred-pound lots by grateful schemers at the record companies whenever I lay a figurative posy on them. But such is not the case, perhaps because every time I do so I am promptly doublecrossed by our putative reviewers, who simply will *point out, with inconsiderate ingenuousness, that so-and-so's new "Emperor" Concerto is a nekkid travesty. McCarthyism aside, however, if Mr. Cort were not so purblind a collector of conspiracies he might easily have spotted the distinction carefully made in the very first paragraph of the editorial: ". . . there is indeed many a slip between stamper and turntable for which the buyer is in no way responsible. . . ." I am sorry nonetheless that his record-buying luck has been so bad—particularly since mine has been,*

(Continued on page 16)

perhaps unfairly, so good . . . but there I go with another posy.

Record companies have indeed been using "regrind" in their product all along (though only in popular discs), and they have never made any particular secret about it. Ecological benefits aside, it (plus other shifts) has for some time enabled them to sinfully cut costs without passing rising labor, materials, and other expenses along to the consumer via higher record prices. (Let Mr. Cort reflect on what he paid for records as much as ten years ago and then ask himself what other item of consumption has remained at the same price level for so long.) One of the hidden costs of such a policy, of course, is all too often quality. It is my own opinion that the industry would have done better to raise prices (they must finally do so now), but the whole question is one of hideous complexity, and perhaps not. As for the petroleum "crisis" and the "vinyl shortage," Mr. Cort may interpret as he sees fit, but what it finally comes down to is whether you believe in Amalthea's horn of plenty or not; I don't, but I suspect that those who do are manufacturing future misery for us all.

In "classical," Mr. Cort is belaboring a dead horse. Of course other cultures (there aren't that *many) have their classical musics too, and when the rare recording drawn from them seems to be of sufficient interest to* this *culture, we do review it, and in our "classical" section—examples have been the classical music of India (Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan) and of China (the Peking opera). But it is hardly surprising that our readers should, here in this* Western *civilization, be concerned primarily with the products of that civilization, "European" or no.*

The adjective "prestigious" as applied to classical music is Mr. Cort's own evident prejudice; "classical" to us is not weighty with "ethnocentric bias" but merely descriptive of musics that have certain techniques of composition and certain intended uses in common. The magical power of words is such that even as innocent a one as "classical" may cause a temper to flare, a heart to yearn for the avenging justice of the barricades and the cleansing fire of the class wars, but it is not likely to be discarded until we have something reasonably descriptive (a good enough reason) to take its place. And, yes, we have stopped beating our wives.

Classical Murder

● Yesterday I went to the Wherehouse (one of a West Coast chain of discount record stores) to buy my self-imposed quota of $20 to $30 worth of classical records. As I approached the rear of the store (a seemingly habitual abode for classical records), I saw empty shelves and boxes of unpacked records. Upon inquiring I learned that the boxes had just been packed with the remaining stock of classical records. They were being shipped back because the store will no longer carry classical records.

I don't fully comprehend this event, but I know that I don't like it. What can I (we) do about the increasing unavailability of classical records?

CHRIS BEKIARIS
Pittsburg, Calif.

Do what other minorities do: scream bloody murder, loud, long, and at concert pitch. Also organize, agitate, picket, boycott, and twist arms.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Compiled by
LOUISE GOOCH BOUNDAS

● *Pure Contraption—A Composer's Essays*, by Ned Rorem. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York (1974), 149 pp., $6.95.

Some of these pieces could qualify as "essays," I suppose, but the subtitle of Ned Rorem's latest collection is a little misleading. It's more of a notebook, really. Perhaps the best description of it is in the book itself: "After a party for *The Paris Diary* [an earlier Rorem book] Frank O'Hara tells Joe LeSueur who tells Joe Adamiak who tells me that my journal reads like *The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book* without the recipes." It is literate and informed and provocative, and it certainly does not contain anything approaching recipes of any kind.

● *Carmela*, by Paul Gillette. Warner Paperback Library, New York (1973), 428 pp., $1.75 (paper).

This novel, which traces the career of operatic soprano Mella Londra, is a *roman à clef* roughly paralleling the life of Maria Callas. Assuming that Londra is Callas, it is amusing to guess who the other characters represent. The book is very trashy, marvelous fun, and perfect summer reading for an opera fan.

● *Louise Homer and the Golden Age of Opera*, by Anne Homer. William Morrow & Company, New York (1974), 439 pp., $10.

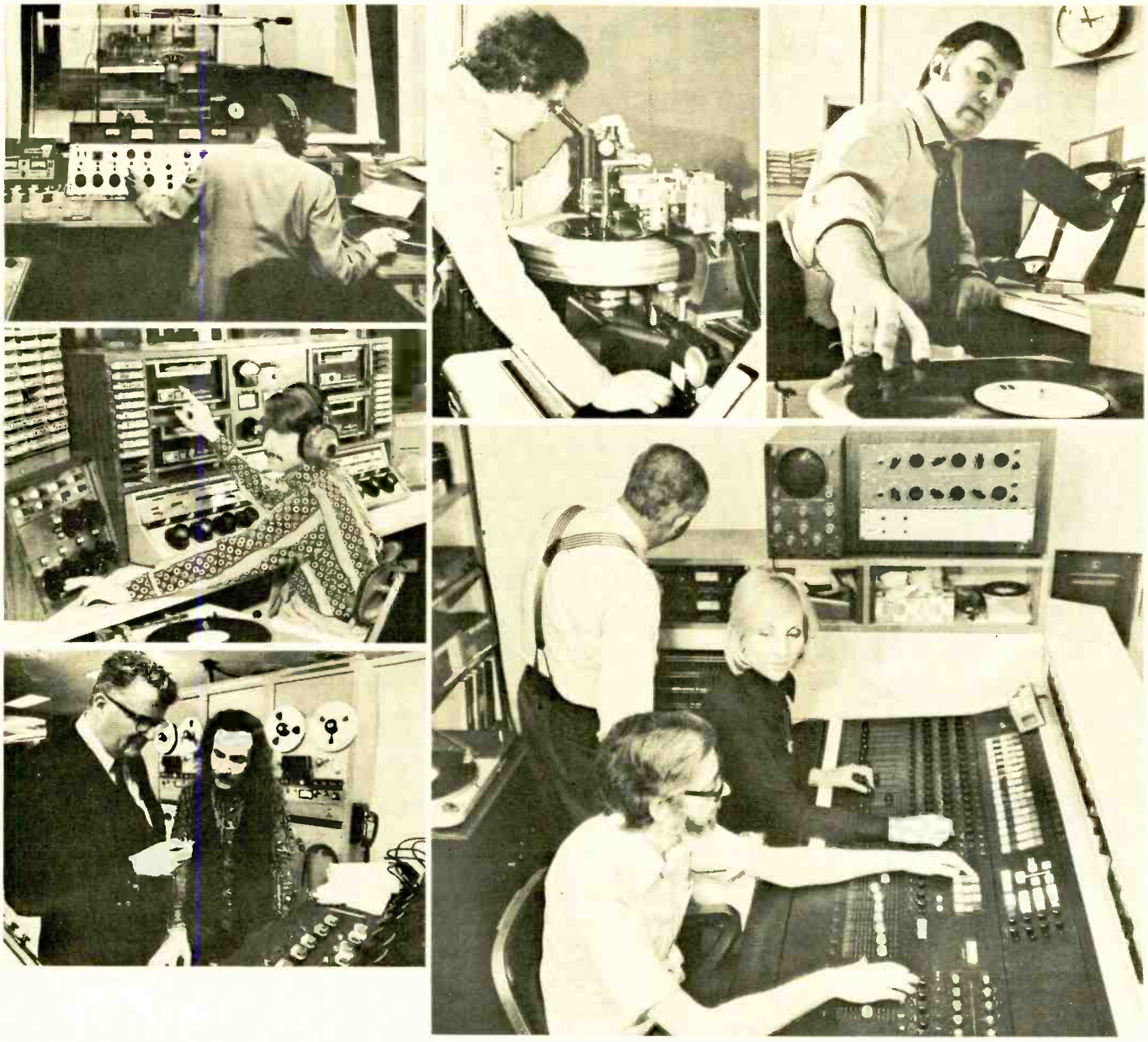
Louise Homer, the leading contralto at the Metropolitan Opera during the early part of this century, sang with such illustrious colleagues as Enrico Caruso, Geraldine Farrar, Lillian Nordica, Emma Eames, and Marcel Journet under conductors Gustav Mahler and Arturo Toscanini, among others. She was also one of the first Victor Red Seal recording artists. The details of her brilliant career and her happy marriage and home life (she was the mother of six) are lovingly told in this biography by one of her daughters.

● *Record and Tape Reviews Index—1972*, compiled by Antoinette O. Maleady. Scarecrow Press, Inc., P.O. Box 656, Metuchen, N.J. 08840 (1973), 519 pp., $12.50.

STEREO REVIEW is one of eighteen publications indexed in this useful volume, which contains four sections: a straight listing of classical music by composer, music in collections, spoken recordings, and a performer index. Included are tapes and discs reviewed in 1971 and 1972.

● *A Concise History of Opera*, by Leslie Orrey. Scribner's, New York (1973), 252 pp., $4.95 (paper).

In surveying the development of opera over four centuries, the author treats it as a branch of theater, with interesting comments on changing techniques of stagecraft and scenery as well as musical evolution. He concludes that opera is still a vital art form. Generously illustrated.



In response to the needs of the recording and broadcast industries, Stanton creates the new calibration standard ....the 681 TRIPLE E....

A definite need arose.

The recording industry has been cutting discs with higher accuracy to achieve greater definition and sound quality.

Naturally, the engineers turned to Stanton for a cartridge of excellence to serve as a primary calibration standard in recording system check-outs.

The result is a *new* calibration standard, the Stanton 681 TRIPLE E. Perhaps, with this cartridge, the outer limits of excellence in stereo sound reproduction has been reached.

The Stanton 681 TRIPLE E offers improved tracking at *all* frequencies. It achieves perfectly flat frequency response to beyond 20 Kc. It features a dramatically reduced tip mass. Actually, its new nude diamond is an ultra miniaturized stone with only ⅔ the mass of its predecessor. And the stylus assembly possesses even greater durability than had been previously thought possible to achieve.

The Stanton 681 TRIPLE E features a new design of both cartridge body and stylus; it has been created for those for whom the best is none too good.

Each 681 TRIPLE E is guaranteed to meet its specifications within exacting limits, and each one boasts the most meaningful warranty possible: an individual calibration test result is packed with each unit.

STANTON

For further information write Stanton Magnetics, Inc., Terminal Drive, Plainview, N.Y. 11803.

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NEW PRODUCTS

THE LATEST IN HIGH-FIDELITY EQUIPMENT

McKay Dymek AM Tuner and Antenna

● THE McKay Dymek Company, specializing in high-quality equipment for AM reception, offers two products for the AM listener: the Model AM3 AM-only tuner, and the DA3, a tunable AM antenna-preamplifier. The Model AM3 solid-state tuner has a linear tuning-dial scale, signal-strength meter, and push-button-selected bandwidth adjustment for improved selectivity for minimizing interference when picking up distant stations. Local-Distance pushbuttons also switch an attenuator at the input of the tuner to prevent overload by strong local signals. The sensitivity of the AM3 is 3 microvolts for a 10-dB signal-to-noise ratio. Distortion at 1,000 Hz ranges from 0.5 per cent at 30 per cent modulation to 1.5 per cent at 80 per cent modulation. The i.f. rejection is 25 dB; the antenna-input circuit incorporates an adjustable filter for rejecting i.f. interference. The selectable bandwidths offer a choice of approximately 3,000 or 9,000 Hz. There is a fixed notch filter at 10,000 Hz providing 45-dB rejection of adjacent-channel interference.

The DA3 antenna is a shielded, rotatable ferrite-rod device mounted on a small control module containing a two-stage FET preamplifier and interference filter. A front-panel tuning knob is calibrated from 550 to 1,600 kHz. There is also a sensitivity control, and an on/off switch that connects the output to an optional external antenna in the off position. Although the DA3 is especially recommended for the AM3 tuner, it can be used with any AM tuner or receiver. Its overall dimensions are approximately 13½ x 9 x 11 inches. Price: $127. The AM3 tuner, with wood trim pieces, measures 16 x 8 x 4½ inches. Price: $255. McKay Dymek offers both units on a ten-day free-trial basis or through a leasing plan with option to buy.

Circle 115 on reader service card

Akai GXC-75D Auto-Reverse Cassette Deck

● A NEW stereo cassette deck from Akai features Dolby B noise reduction, a tape selector with positions for low-noise and chromium-dioxide tape, and an automatic reverse function in both the playback and recording modes. The auto-reverse system employs separate capstans and two erase heads symmetrically arranged around the single glass-and-crystal-ferrite record/playback head. The system can be set for a single tape pass in either direction, a single forward-and-back cycle, or continuous cycling. With the deck in the record mode, a safety mechanism halts the tape after one forward-and-back cycle to prevent erasure of the material just recorded. Pushbuttons can override the automatic functions at any time.

In addition to Dolby noise reduction, the Akai GXC-75D has the company's ADR (automatic distortion reduction) circuit to minimize high-frequency saturation of the tape and a switchable recording-level limiter circuit (OLS). Separate dual slider controls are provided for recording and playback levels. In addition to the standard transport controls (fast speeds, PLAY, STOP, and RECORD), there are pushbuttons for PAUSE and tape direction. A memory-rewind function permits automatic return to any preselected point on the tape.

Frequency response of the GXC-75D is 30 to 16,000 Hz ±3 dB with chromium-dioxide tape (30 to 14,000 Hz ±3 dB with standard low-noise tape). The signal-to-noise ratio exceeds 58 dB with Dolby (50 dB without), and distortion is less than 1 per cent for a 0-VU recording level at 1,000 Hz. Wow and flutter are 0.1 per cent. The microphone inputs have an impedance of 4,700 ohms. The stereo-headphone jack is rated at an output of 30 millivolts with 8-ohm phones. Dimensions of the GXC-75D are approximately 18 x 5¾ x 12 inches, and its weight is about 17½ pounds. Price: $429.95.

Circle 116 on reader service card

Sansui QA-7000 Four-Channel Amplifier

● THE Model QA-7000 is a four-channel integrated amplifier incorporating Sansui's most sophisticated "Vario-matrix" four-channel decoder and synthesizer. Vario-matrix is a separation-enhancement technique that is used in combination with the Sansui QS matrix decoder (essentially conforming to the standardized Regular Matrix) and a special circuit that synthesizes a four-channel program from two-channel material. The decoder can also be switched to a PHASE MATRIX position, which is effective in decoding SQ source material. Both the decoder and the synthesizer can be switched for a "surround-sound" presentation or for a mode that localizes the performers in the front of the four-channel sound field. The amplifier also handles discrete four-channel sources and two-channel material conventionally.

At any frequency from 20 to 20,000 Hz, each of the four power amplifiers of the QA-7000 is rated at 12 watts continuous into 8 ohms, with all four channels driven simultaneously. Harmonic and intermodulation distortion are both less than 0.15 per cent at rated output. The signal-to-noise ratios are better than 70 dB for the phono inputs, 80 dB for high-level inputs.

Prominent on the front panel of the QA-7000 are four illuminated meters, with an associated rotary control to simultaneously set their sensitivities. Concentrically mounted tone-control knobs adjust the front and rear channels independently. Knob controls are also used for left-to-right and front-to-rear balance. The amplifier accepts inputs from two phono cartridges, tuner, and two high-level auxiliary sources. The TUNER and AUX inputs are in quadruplicate. Two four-channel tape decks can

(Continued on page 20)

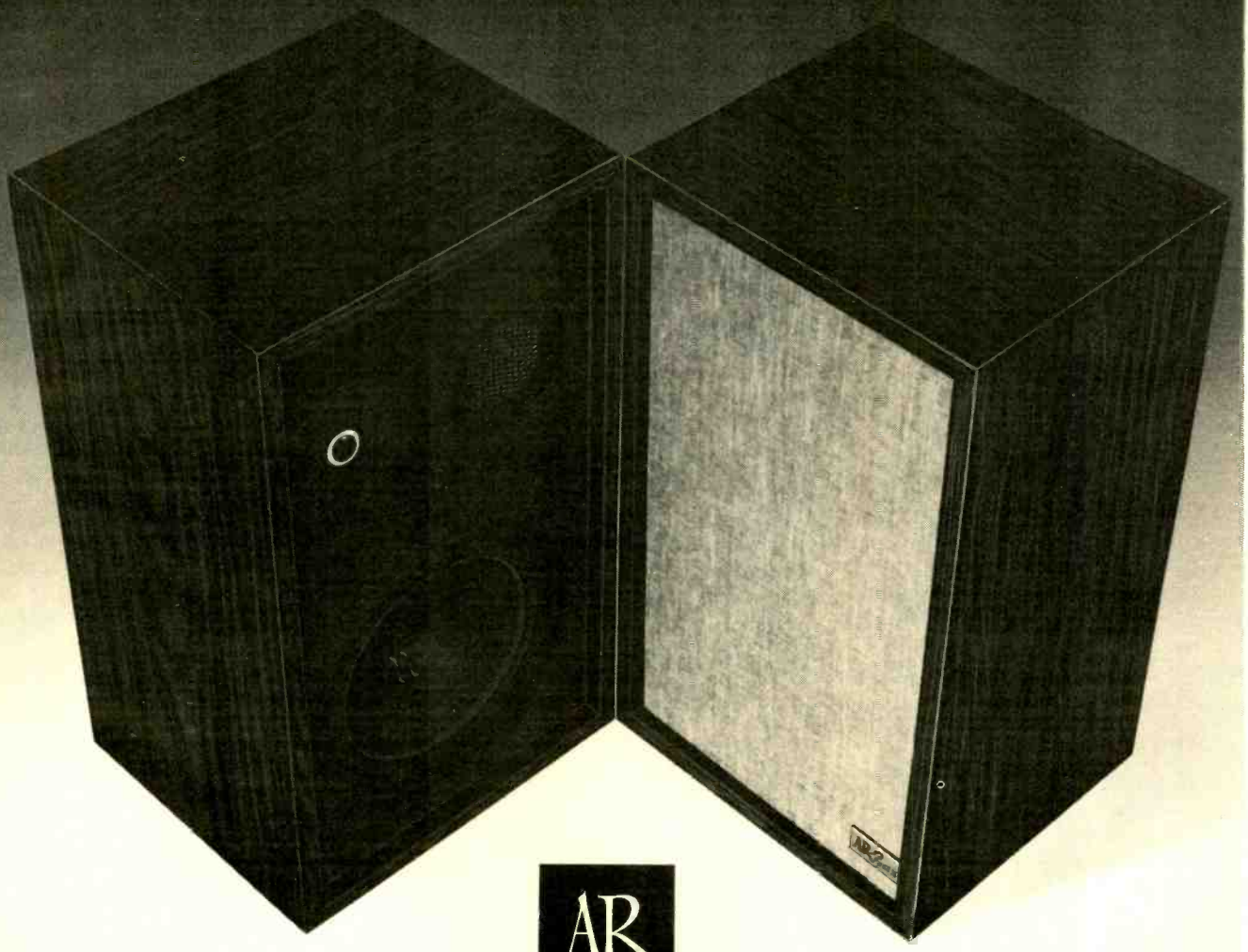
AR-2ax

One of a line of industry standards.

Every audiophile knows AR is famous for its superb speaker systems. Each has become the standard of the industry in its class. AR speaker engineers have designed a range of speaker systems priced as low as $69 and as high as $600. Regardless of the investment you plan, each AR speaker system will provide the greatest accuracy in sound reproduction.

The AR-2ax is a good example. This 3-way speaker system offers a well balanced, accurate and finely dispersed response over all frequencies. Natural reproduction of music without exaggeration or artificiality of sound. Separate controls on the back permit independent adjustment of the level of the mid-range and high frequencies.

You'll find it difficult, if not impossible, to find any speaker to equal its performance anywhere near its $149 price. For more detailed information, please write.



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also be accommodated, plus a single two-channel deck. Source/tape switching is provided for all tape connections. In addition, the output of one of the four-channel decks can be dubbed to the other, and the output of the matrix decoder/synthesizer can be switched to feed the record circuits of one of the four-channel decks. Front and rear stereo headphone jacks are provided. Removable jumpers on the rear panel connect the preamplifier and power amplifier sections, and switching permits the four power amplifiers to be "bridged" for two-channel operation, thus more than doubling the per-channel power output. The QA-7000 has dimensions of approximately 17½ x 5½ x 12¾ inches; its weight is about 31 pounds. Price: $569.95.

Circle 117 on reader service card

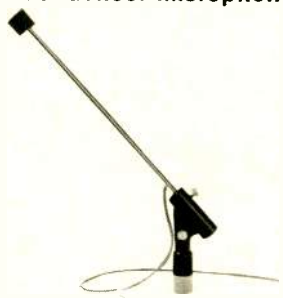
B & O MMC 6000
CD-4 Phono Cartridge

● THE newest magnetic phono cartridge from Bang & Olufsen offers the capability of playing CD-4 four-channel "discrete" discs at a tracking force of 1 gram. This results in part from a stylus shape that provides small horizontal and large vertical contact areas at the record groove. As with other styli that have similar configurations, the small horizontal areas permit correct tracing of the high-frequency carrier; the large vertical areas reduce tracking pressure and record wear. The stylus consists of a very small "naked" diamond bonded to a flattened surface on a solid beryllium stylus shank. Effective tip mass is 0.22 milligram. The stylus, which is an integral part of the generating system and is not user replaceable, employs an X-shaped iron armature that modulates a magnetic field brought to the pole pieces of the four output coils. Signal output of the cartridge is 0.6 volt/centimeter/dyne.

The MMC 6000 has a usable frequency response up to 45,000 Hz and within ±1.5 dB from 20 to 15,000 Hz. Stereo separation exceeds 25 dB at 1,000 Hz and 15 dB at 30,000 Hz. All these specifications are minimum values and individual specs are packed with each cartridge. The tracking-force range is 0.7 to 1.5 grams, with 1 gram recommended for normal use. The MMC 6000 has a compliance of 30×10^{-6} centimeter per dyne, and it is designed to work into a nominal load of 100,000 ohms with 100 picofarads capacitance. The vertical tracking angle conforms to the new standard of 20 degrees. The contacts on the cartridge plug directly into the tone arms of B & O record players, eliminating the need for mounting hardware. A mounting bracket and screws are provided for installation in other tone arms. The MMC 6000 weighs 4 grams (5½ grams with mounting bracket). Price: $85.

Circle 118 on reader service card

Group 128 SD-140
Electret Condenser Microphone



● THE first audio product from Group 128, Inc. is a lightweight electret condenser microphone with a frequency response of 40 to 16,000 Hz ±3 dB and a usable dynamic range of 113 dB. As the Model SD-140, the microphone is in the form of a thin aluminum shaft (¼ inch in diameter by 10½ inches long) with a pop/wind screen at one end and a removable black-anodized counterweight ballast at the other. A stand adapter with standard threading is also provided. A compact external power supply, connected to the microphone through a 6-foot flexible cable, energizes the electret element. The power module is 2¼ x 1½ x 1⅜ inches. It has a gain control, on/off switch, and an integral clip to attach it to a performer's belt; it takes a 9-volt transistor radio battery.

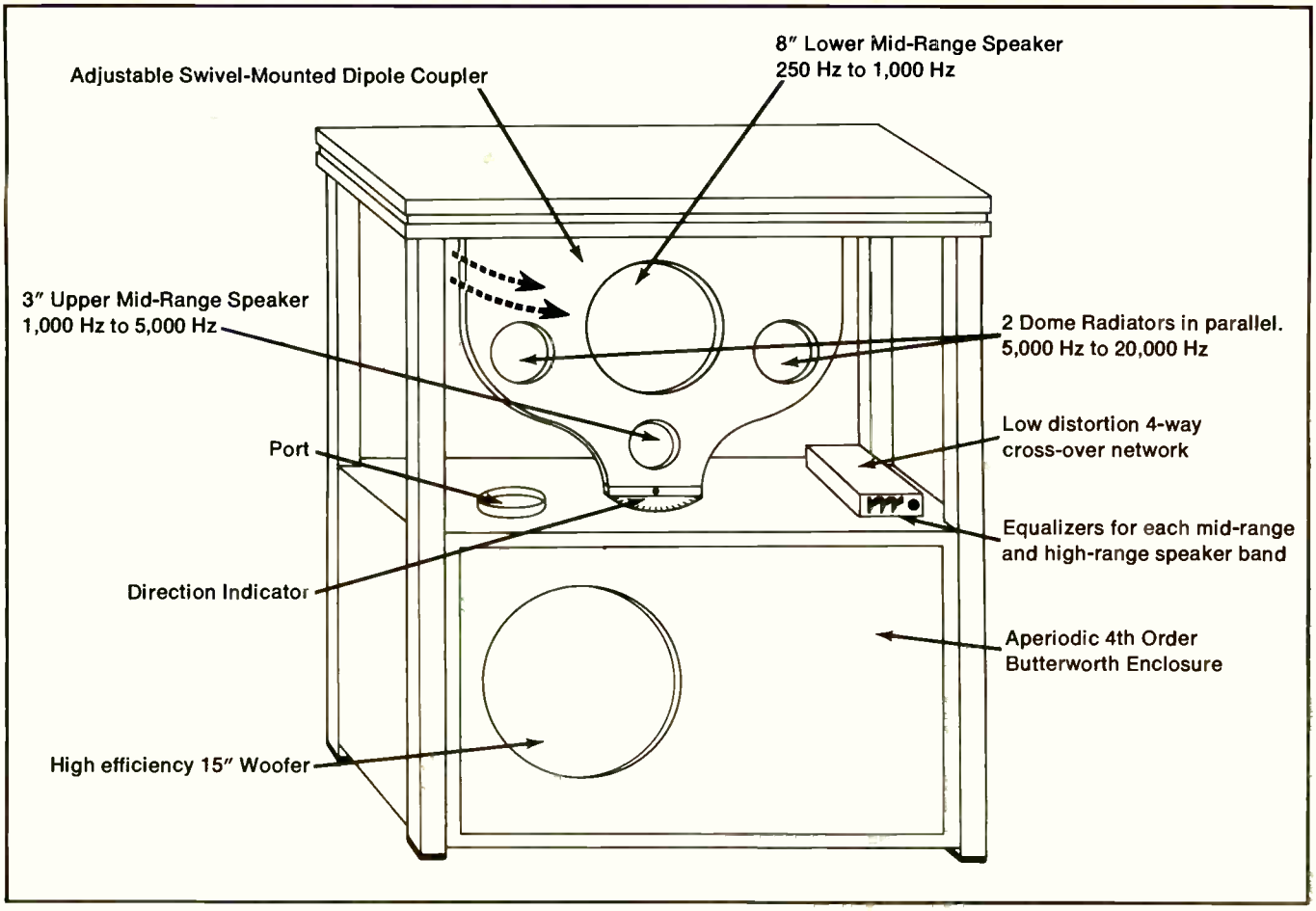
The SD-140 is an omnidirectional device with an output level of −49 dBm within ±3 dB. Maximum sound-pressure level is 140 dB, with distortion less than 0.3 per cent at a 100-dB sound-pressure level. The noise level ("A" weighted) is the equivalent of a 27-dB sound-pressure level. The unbalanced output (a standard phone jack on the preamplifier module) is suitable for use with input impedances from 250 to 50,000 ohms. The microphone is relatively immune to shock and the effects of temperature and humidity. Its weight, without the ballast or stand adapter, is approximately 2 ounces. Price: $134.50. The SD-140 is also available in a low-impedance version with a balanced output and as an unmounted element (Model P700) that can be attached right to an instrument.

Circle 119 on reader service card

AR LST-2 Speaker System

● ACOUSTIC RESEARCH has announced the introduction of a second "Laboratory Standard Transducer" model, the LST-2 (the original LST is now designated the LST-1). The new system employs a 10-inch woofer mounted in a sealed enclosure about 1⅓ cubic feet in volume; it faces directly forward. The mid-range and high-frequency drivers (three of each) are distributed over the three frontal planes of the system's enclosure, resulting in a virtually hemispherical sound-radiation pattern. They are dome designs, with diameters of 1½ inch (mid-ranges) and ¾ inch (tweeters). The crossover points are 525 and 5,000 Hz. A switch located on the front of the enclosure provides a choice of three acoustical contours: flat from 30 to 20,000 Hz; slightly increased low-frequency output; and slightly attenuated high-frequency output. Amplifier power of at least 25 watts per channel continuous is recommended to drive the speaker. The system is fused for protection against overdrive. Nominal impedance is 8 ohms; the resonance of the woofer (installed) is approximately 56 Hz. The LST-2's enclosure is solid oiled walnut, with dimensions of 25½ x 18½ x 9¾ inches. Price: $400.

Circle 120 on reader service card



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CIRCLE NO. 24 ON READER SERVICE CARD

AUDIO QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

By LARRY KLEIN *Technical Editor*

FOR this month's Special Speaker Issue I am going to abandon my usual Q & A format and address myself to a single pertinent and frequently asked question: How do I choose speakers for my hi-fi system?

If you've been reading audio magazines or shopping at hi-fi stores, it should be apparent that speakers are the most problematical of all components. Since speaker designers themselves frequently disagree on what qualities make a speaker good, it is no wonder that speaker shoppers are somewhat confused by the proliferation of brands and models with their conflicting claims of superiority.

To start with, let's look at the question of price. Does *more expensive* mean *better*? Not necessarily. A speaker's price is *somewhat* related to its design, but a speaker may have a big or little voice coil, a large or small cabinet, high or low efficiency, or two, three, or more drivers, and yet none of these design factors—or others—will *automatically* ensure high-fidelity results. What, then, does determine quality? The answer, I've concluded, is the critical ear of the designer—his ability to hear precisely what is right or wrong with the speaker system he is trying to put together. I say the *ear* of the designer rather than his knowledge because I have heard some abominable systems produced by companies with highly trained engineers and top-notch test facilities, and, conversely, I have heard some very fine systems assembled in basement workshops by accountants and school teachers. Of course, good speaker systems are most likely to be produced by someone who has a good theoretical and practical background, adequate test facilities, *and* a good ear.

What does someone with a good ear listen for? Basically, for "accuracy" of reproduction. I believe that it is the function of a loudspeaker to provide an accurate acoustic analog of the electrical audio signal fed to it. A speaker should have no tonal character or sound quality of its own. It should not have "presence," it should have "absence." In other words, a speaker, in itself, should be neutral. Insofar as a speaker does have some sonic character of its own, it will add that character to whatever material it is reproducing. Sometimes the special coloration of a particular speaker may enhance the sound for a given individual on a given piece of music. But, for most recordings, the speaker's contribution will probably be inappropriate and will degrade reproduction.

It takes practice to learn to detect those sonic qualities that make some speakers sound more accurate—or real—than others, and it seems odd that such judgments can be made using program material (records and tapes) that in themselves have unknown sonic characteristics. However, I suspect that people who spend time evaluating speakers develop, after a while, a sort of sonic memory of acoustic reality. The evaluation process then consists of comparing that memory with the reproduction while listening carefully for the specific characteristic ways that speakers go wrong. If this sounds like a chancy, unscientific, and terribly imprecise technique, all I can say in its defense is that well-trained ears can make a fairly accurate guess as to a speaker's frequency-response curve simply by listening to a group of well-recorded discs. And that judgment can be objectively validated by independent laboratory test techniques. I know this because the technical staff of STEREO REVIEW has been involved in just this sort of procedure for many years.

There are several ways you can evaluate the performance of a speaker system in a showroom. In general, you'll find it easier to make judgments if you are listening to one speaker rather than to a stereo pair. However, the specific location of the speaker may tilt its frequency balance toward the highs or the lows (this can be tested by switching to the other member of the pair). But when auditioning omni- or multi-directional speaker systems, it *is* necessary to listen to them as a pair in order to evaluate their particular "spatial" qualities.

An important aspect of a speaker's bass performance is its freedom from spurious resonances. This can be tested by tuning in several FM stations and listening carefully to various announcers on the speaker(s) under consideration. One or two of the announcers may have naturally deep voices, but if *all* of them sound as though they were broadcasting from the bottom of an oil drum, you can be sure that the loudspeaker under test (not the announcer) has a bass resonance peaking somewhere in the 100-Hz region. For some people this resonance provides a pleasant enhancement of the musical beat, but the price paid is loss of upper-bass clarity and (usually) absence of genuine low bass.

To evaluate the high-frequency performance of a speaker system, listen to recordings that include tambourines or cymbals being brushed, clashed, or hit with a stick. Concentrate on the ringing or shimmering sound that is typical of these instruments. You will probably have to listen carefully for this quality in several speakers before you can easily distinguish between those that have it and those that don't. While listening for shimmer, also note the amount of record/tape noise (hiss) and distortion present. Excessive noise and/or an ear-irritating raucous quality in the highs usually result from a peak in the speaker's high-frequency response that conventional tone controls can't correct without killing the highs altogether.

ANOTHER quality essential to good speaker performance is wide dispersion—the ability to spread the higher frequencies in a broad arc across the listening room. Good dispersion provides a superior stereo image and a sense of openness and airiness. You can make a fast check for adequate high-frequency dispersion by using the interstation noise of an FM tuner (you will have to switch off the interstation-noise muting to do this). Stand directly in front of the speaker and listen carefully to the rushing, hissing quality of the noise. Then, concentrating on the hissy aspect in the sound, walk off to the left or right of the speaker system; at some point on both sides of the cabinet you will probably find that the hissy quality disappears. (The hiss may also diminish if you duck your head toward the floor.) The wider and more even the area covered by the very-high-frequency hiss, the more open and natural-sounding the speaker will be when playing music. (This test should be made only after you have already established that the speaker's high-frequency response on-axis is everything it should be. If a system is already short on highs, you may not notice any loss.)

For many speaker manufacturers, the mid-range is still a problematical area. Sometimes a system has a mid-range emphasis (a "presence" peak) built in

that imparts a sense of projection, a front-row-center quality, to everything played through it. However, the unpleasant side-effects generated by such peaks include harshness, emphasis of high-frequency noise and distortion in the program material, and a kind of nasality or honkiness that accompanies and discolors much of the material the speaker is reproducing. I have worked out a simulated "live-*vs.*-reproduced" technique that makes it possible for anyone to imitate—and hence to identify—this last type of objectionable coloration.

First set up an FM tuner as you did for the high-frequency dispersion test. Then cup your hands over your mouth (as though you were trying to warm them with your breath) and make a loud "shhh" sound. Now remove your hands and make the same sound. Repeat several times until you hear the difference clearly. The hollow, rather nasal quality heard with your hands in front of your mouth is a good approximation of the coloration associated with mid-range peaks in a speaker. If you switch among a number of speakers while listening to FM interstation noise, the speakers with the nasal quality should stand out like sore thumbs (ears?). And once you know what to listen for, you should be able to detect this same defect (when it occurs) on recordings of, say, the female voice. For example, a loudspeaker with a mid-range peak will cause Carly Simon to sound positively adenoidal.

Remember that almost any irregularity in frequency response causes some coloration of the sound—and this coloration will pervade *everything* coming through the speaker. For this reason, it is relatively easy to determine whether the fault lies with the speaker system or with the program material, but you may have to listen to a variety of program material to be sure that you've ear-tested every frequency area of concern. Male voice is good for bass balance; female voice and horns for mid-range; and harp, castanets, cymbals, etc., are good for the highs.

As a final point I should at least acknowledge the comment that frequently follows the "What speaker should I buy?" question. How many times have you heard—or said—"I really don't have a trained ear, so I don't need very good speakers." But your ears inevitably *do* become "trained" to a surprising degree if you listen critically to enough music. Therefore, if you settle at the beginning for inadequate speakers, sooner or later you will find yourself somewhat dissatisfied with their sound, if not acutely irritated by it. It pays to spend time researching the test reports in this and other magazines and listening carefully in the audio showrooms. If you approach speaker shopping as something of a research project, you are most likely to make a good choice right at the outset.

AUDIO BASICS

By RALPH HODGES

ANTI-SKATING

I DON'T know how old the idea of anti-skating (or skating compensation) is, but as recently as 1966 its pros and cons were a subject of lively debate in these pages. Then as now, many of the points at issue never did get fully resolved. However, record-player manufacturers came gradually to the conclusion that skating compensation did no discernible harm (and might even do some good, at least in respect to sales), so they began including it in their products. Today it's a standard feature on most tone arms.

What is anti-skating? It is a calibrated rotational force, or *torque*, applied by a spring or some other mechanism within a tone arm, that tends to swing the arm away from the center of a record and out toward the edge. What purpose does it have in doing that? It is trying to precisely counterbalance an opposite force that pulls the arm away from the edge and toward the record center. The origin of this *skating* force is as follows:

In playing a record, there is friction between the phono stylus and the record groove that exerts a small, steady tug on the tone arm. If tone arms were straight, the tug would bear directly on the arm pivot, which would absorb it. But for reasons involving optimum tone-arm geometry (which we needn't go into here), most tone arms are bent so that the phono cartridge is angled somewhat toward the record center. This means that the tug has a force component in a direction sideways to the arm's length. And, since the arm is free to pivot sideways, it does—or tries to (actually, the stylus holds it in place by being lodged in the record groove). But on an ungrooved record the arm would "skate" rapidly inward toward the turntable spindle.

In the mono era there was no reason to be concerned about skating force. However, when the present technique of stereo-disc recording (left channel on the inner wall of the groove, right channel on the outer) was introduced along with lower tracking forces, matters changed.

The problem was that the tone arm's inward bias tended to push the stylus into the inner-groove wall and away from the outer wall. In effect, this resulted in an uneven distribution of tracking force between the two walls, with the inner wall receiving more than the necessary force and the outer wall playback suffering for lack of it. On heavily recorded passages this could actually result in loss of groove-to-stylus contact and distortion in the right channel. So anti-skating systems were devised to restore the equilibrium.

When audiophiles think about the anti-skating on their tone arms (if they do at all), it's usually just to wonder whether it's set correctly. This is a little ironic, because it happens to be impossible to adjust skating compensation for *all* the conditions encountered on all records. As is well known, skating force varies with tracking force. But it also varies with stylus shape, recorded level (higher levels entail "rougher" grooves with more friction), and even the vinyl formulation of the specific record (softer vinyls exert more "drag"). Anti-skating has to be a compromise between these factors.

STEREO REVIEW usually advises that anti-skating be set to result in equal mistracking in the two channels when mistracking does occur. The adjustment requires a special test record, such as STEREO REVIEW's Model SR 12, with equal signals of extremely high levels in the two channels. In theory, at least, this method of adjustment optimizes the anti-skating for the conditions when it's really needed: that is, when mistracking is likely to occur.

Another adjustment "philosophy" recommends a setting that produces equal long-term stylus and groove wear in both channels. The average consumer lacks the means to adopt this procedure, which requires sophisticated optical equipment. However, if he follows the instructions of his record player's manufacturer he will probably come close to the correct force, which is somewhat lower than that for the "equal mistracking" test.

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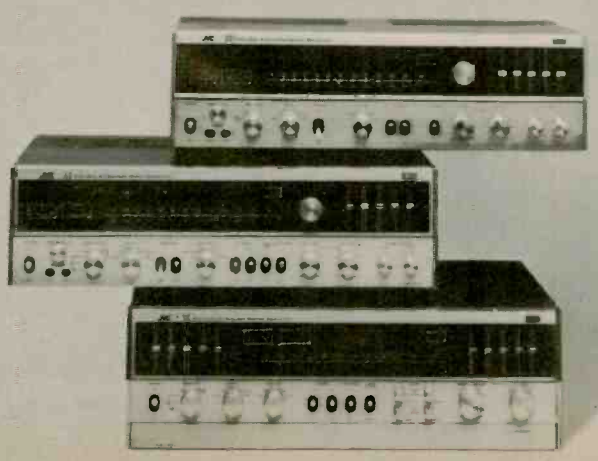

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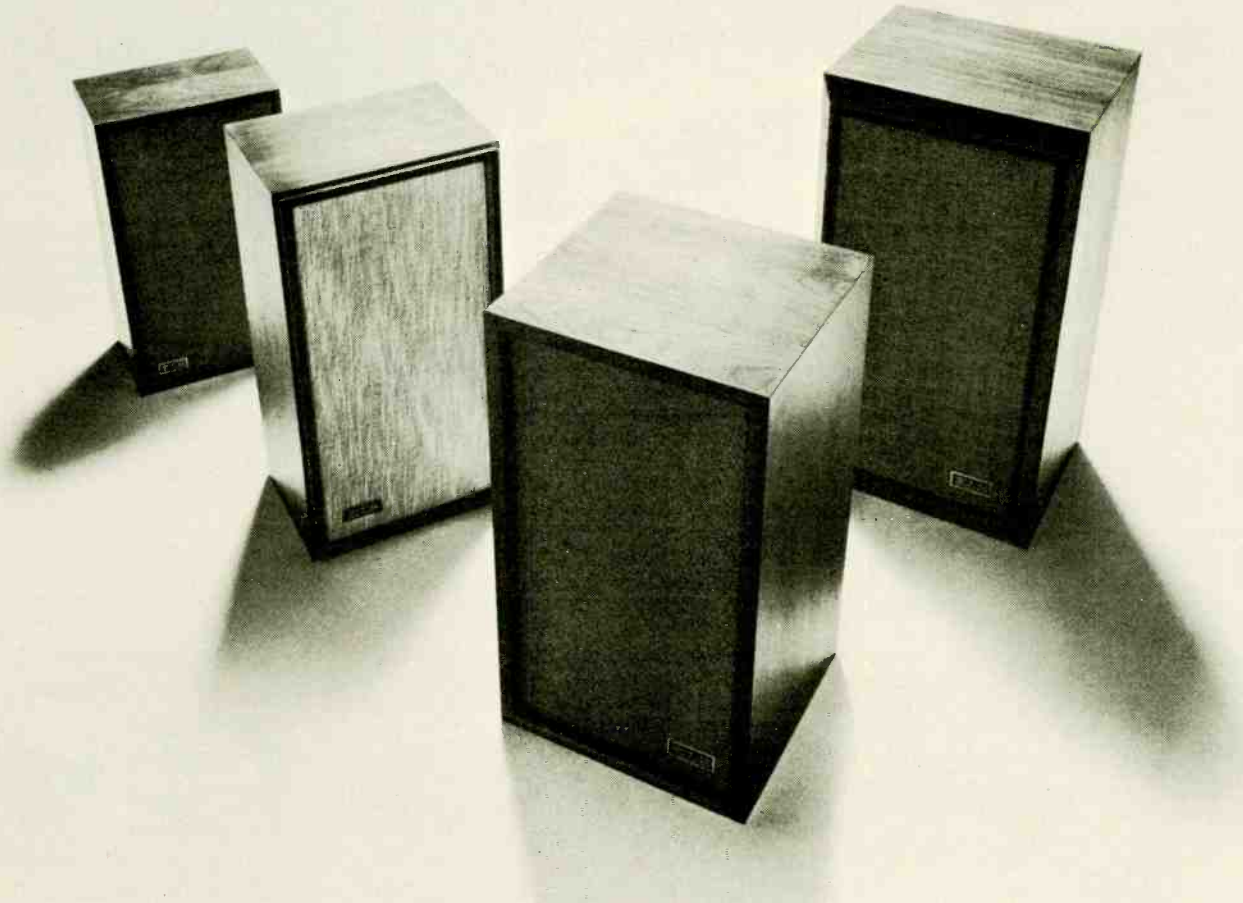

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TECHNICAL TALK

By JULIAN D. HIRSCH

● **WHICH SPEAKER SHOULD I BUY?** is one of the questions most frequently asked by readers. Of course, I also receive variations on the theme, such as "Which is better, Brand A or Brand B?" or "Which is *the* best speaker available?" What it usually comes down to is a request for *me* to make, or advise on, a decision which is as purely personal as one's choice of clothes, spouse, or hair style. I am flattered, but for a number of reasons I simply cannot give meaningful answers to such questions. Putting hair styles aside (as I have done for some years), you and I may very likely have widely divergent tastes in sound, to say nothing of fashion and marriage partners. This does not mean that some speakers are not indisputably superior to others, but when we come to the point of having to make a choice among the very fine ones, more often than not there is considerable room for disagreement.

To see why this is so, let us consider first the matter of tuner and amplifier performance. There is general agreement as to what these components should and should not do. Measurement techniques are quite well defined, so that tests of a given unit made by different laboratories generally agree closely. One would expect to find little disagreement on the relative merits of amplifiers, at least insofar as their technical performance is concerned.

Nevertheless, there are many "golden-eared" audiophiles who claim to be able to hear subtle differences among various models of amplifiers, differences not explainable by any measurements. I must confess that I almost never hear these elusive characteristics in my own listening comparisons. Perhaps I have a tin ear, but more likely I have merely acquired a degree of resistance to being "brainwashed" into thinking I hear something that I really do not. However, let us, for the sake of argument, say that there *is* an audible difference between two amplifiers that measure the same in all areas. Let us say further that it takes the form of a subtle coloration that appears only when a specific program (such as a one-of-a-kind master tape, or an obscure and hard-to-get record) is being played through some esoteric and costly speaker available only from a handful of specialty dealers. (This may sound as though I'm exaggerating for effect, but I assure you that the exaggeration is as slight as the differences in sound that are made much of by those super-golden ears.) If one amplifier really *does* sound better than another, its superiority will be heard on *any* reasonably good program played through *any* reasonably good speakers. Furthermore, in a test situation, the "better" amplifier should be chosen in a large percentage of cases, by audiences of trained listeners who do not know what items are being compared, in a "double-blind" test (in which even the person doing the switching does not know at any given moment which amplifier is playing). Do you know of any amplifier so superior to its competition that it could pass that test? I don't. I submit that any "superiority" so elusive that it is not reflected in the test data and does not *consistently* show up in a scientifically designed double-blind test is not a superiority at all.

TESTED THIS MONTH

●

Koss HV/1LC Headphones
Superscope R-340 Receiver
SAE Mark IIICM Power Amp
Dokorder 7140 Tape Deck

What has all this to do with speakers? Unlike amplifiers and tuners, no two models of speakers sound precisely alike, and it does not take a trained ear to hear the differences. And, as a matter of fact, no specific speaker sounds the same in different listening rooms or even when placed in different parts of the *same* room. To go further, no speaker in a given placement sounds exactly the same (with a pink-noise test signal) when *heard* from different parts of the same room.

Tests and measurements seldom provide definitive yes/no answers with speakers. A major difficulty is that there is little agreement on what a speaker is *supposed* to do in many of its performance aspects. Think about that, if you will. Beyond the simplistic approach that it should "sound good," there's no consensus as to the exact properties an ideal speaker should have for reproducing music in the home. How can we possibly make tests, then, if what we are testing for is undefined?

When I hear a speaker demonstrated at a show or elsewhere, I may or may not like what I hear, but I reserve judgment until I get it into my *own* familiar listening environment and am able to audition it with known program material. And even if I happen to like the sound of somebody's Model 6⅞X (which also measures as good as it sounds), I still would not definitively judge another speaker by how closely *its* sound matches that of my test sample of the Model 6⅞X.

In general, what I listen for in a speaker are the faults—a little heaviness or thinness in the bass, an overly projected mid-range, high-frequency beaming, dullness or crispness, a blurring of the detail, and so forth. But I sometimes have in my listening room two speakers, neither of which to my ears has significant faults, but which do *not* sound precisely alike. Which is "better"? I don't know.

All of these evaluations help me to judge the sound quality of a speaker in

my room, but unfortunately it won't definitively predict the speaker's performance in *your* room. It is true, though, that a really good speaker (flat power response, low distortion, good transient response, etc.) will be more likely to please more people in more different acoustic environments than an inferior speaker.

My point in all this is *not* that speakers cannot be evaluated, but simply that they cannot be evaluated in terms of the "very best," "second best," and so on. Note that I'm also *not* saying that speaker choice is simply a matter of taste. Taste *does* enter into the sonic picture, however, in respect to how much your ears might be offended by a specific kind of sound aberration. For example, almost all really critical listeners react negatively to peaks in the area of 5,000 to 8,000 Hz. Nevertheless, as of a year or so ago, a speaker system that was notorious for this quality was also a best seller. This means that those who chose that system over its competition (1) did not hear the peak at all; (2) heard it and loved it; or (3) heard it and didn't like it, but were impressed with *other* sonic virtues of the system. To my ears (and those of the other technical staff members) the speaker system in question was simply unlistenable.

We at Hirsch-Houck Labs, and the editors of STEREO REVIEW, all other things being equal, invariably prefer the *sound* of a speaker that in measurement proves to have a smooth and flat frequency response. In addition, a speaker that *measures* flat is likely to have a better transient response and (because of the way we make the measurement) good high-frequency dispersion. Perhaps our preference for flat, uncolored sound is *also* a matter of taste, but it is the only kind of speaker response that gives the listener a good chance of hearing a balanced sound quality from most of today's program material.

All of this is probably small comfort to anyone who is struggling with a speaker-purchase decision and would like some definitive advice. Larry Klein's Q & A column this month should be of some help. In addition, I would suggest that you listen to a number of well-reviewed speakers in a well-equipped dealer-demonstration room—including some priced beyond your budget. Then try to find something in your price class that doesn't sound radically different from what you have decided is the best speaker you can compare it with. This is not too difficult, since some rather low-cost speakers have the *essential* sound character (barring bass and treble refinements) of some much more expensive systems. Then take a pair home (be sure you have the right to exchange them if they fail to perform as expected), and listen again. If you like them, fine. If not, try another model. Remember, you are trying to please yourself, not a reviewer or the fellow down the block with the super-deluxe hi-fi system.

If your speakers must be bought "sound unheard," you will of course have to depend on someone else's judgment. With all due modesty, I don't think you would go far wrong with any speaker favorably reviewed in STEREO REVIEW, but please don't expect us to provide the ultimate word on what speaker will provide the best possible response in every circumstance. We simply *can't* do it, and I don't know of any group, individual, or test lab that can.

EQUIPMENT TEST REPORTS

By Hirsch-Houck Laboratories

Koss HV/1LC Stereo Headphones

● THE Koss HV-1 stereo headphones, originally reported on in March 1973, are now offered in a modified form, with a channel-level control built into each ear piece. The HV/1LC, as the latest version is known, has the essential design of the HV-1, with an "open-air" construction that makes no attempt to isolate the wearer from room sounds (or others in the room from the sound of the phones). The specifications of the HV/1LC are identical to those of the HV-1. The two models also look alike, except for a color change from black to brown and the small volume-control knob on the outside of each earpiece. The Koss phones have 2-inch Mylar diaphragms driven by 1-inch voice coils with a well-damped 200-Hz resonance. They open to the outside through slots in the plastic ear cup.

The HV/1LC phones are designed to operate from amplifier outputs of any impedance from 3.2 to 600 ohms. A 0.6-volt signal will create a 95-dB sound-pressure level (SPL) at the wearer's ears, and the phones can provide very high sound levels without damage or excessive distortion. The maximum rated SPL is 113 dB on a continuous basis, with peaks to 127 dB accommodated. The Koss HV/1LC (less cord) weighs just under 10 ounces, and the lightweight coiled cord can be extended to 10 feet. Price: $49.95.

● ***Laboratory Measurements.*** We measured the frequency response of the HV/1LC using a Koss-designed headphone coupler and obtained close agreement with measurements supplied by Koss. Like speakers, headphones generally show rather ragged response curves, but our test data agreed closely with that obtained on the earlier HV-1. The curve produced by our test coupler showed two dips at 2,000 and 9,000 Hz, and a smooth rolloff from 150 Hz down. Overall, the curve varied only ±7.5 dB from 20 to 20,000 Hz, which would be considered rather good response for most speakers in a normal room.

For an SPL of 98 dB at 1,000 Hz, the distortion of the acoustic output was less than 1 per cent, and at 108 dB it was 2.6 per cent. These figures represent rather low distortion for such loud listening levels, and serve to illustrate one of the advantages of headphone listening for those who like their music at levels approaching that of an original live concert-hall performance.

Our test sample was about 4 dB less efficient than the original HV-1 tested last year. An input of 0.6 volt generated an SPL of 97 to 98 dB in the mid-range; a maximum of 104 dB was reached at 200 Hz, and the level fell at a rate of 4.5 dB per octave at lower frequencies. The electrical impedance of the phones was an almost constant 150 ohms from 20 to 20,000 Hz at their maximum level-

(Continued on page 30)

How to make the sound system you bought sound like the sound system you bought.

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No matter how much time, effort, or money you put into your sound system, chances are it's not giving you peak performance—the level it was designed for.

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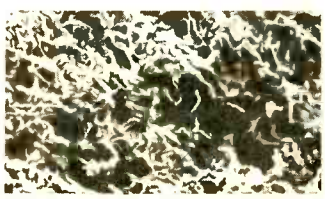

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Here's why: take a good look at the two micro-photos. Audua is denser and more uniform. It can capture more delicate harmonic overtones and transient phenomena than that other premium tape.

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control settings. Reducing the control setting increased the impedance to a maximum of 1,000 ohms at the minimum setting.

● *Comment.* Individual volume controls for each ear make it possible not only to adjust listening levels without affecting other headphone or loudspeaker listeners, but also to trim the left-to-right balance to one's taste. We were somewhat skeptical of the utility of this feature until we tried it, and that convinced us that level controls are certainly worthwhile.

When we reported on the earlier Koss HV-1 phones, we commented on their smoothness and overall excellent sound, which we compared favorably to that of the Koss ESP-9 electrostatic phones. We repeated that listening comparison with the HV/1LC's, including the original HV-1 in the test. The surprising result was not the similarity of the HV/1LC sound to that of the ESP-9 (which we would have expected), but the fact that it sounded even better than the HV-1, and therefore even more like the ESP-9. The definition and sonic balance of these phones were most impressive, and one would never suspect from their subjective bass response that the measured curve falls off rapidly at the low end. It is entirely possible that the low-bass response of these phones is actually much better on the head than it is on an artificial test and measurement coupler. Certainly that is the way they sounded to us.

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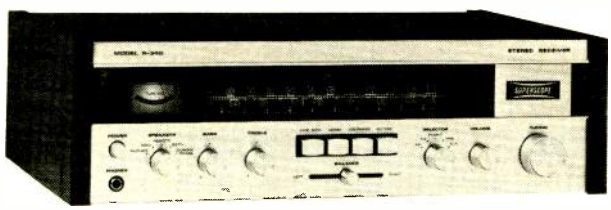
Superscope R-340 AM/Stereo FM Receiver

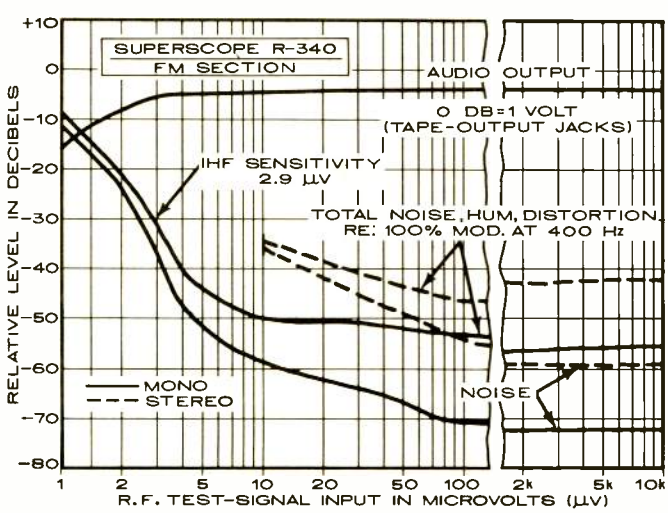


● SUPERSCOPE's AM/stereo FM receiver, the R-340, is a modestly priced unit having many of the qualities and features of far more expensive receivers. It is handsomely styled, with a satin-gold front panel and knobs, and a wooden walnut-grain cabinet. The normally blacked-out dial area and tuning meter are illuminated in a distinctive magenta color when the receiver is turned on.

The R-340 speaker selector connects either, both, or neither of two pairs of speakers, and in addition has a QUADRAPHASE position for driving an additional pair of rear-placed speakers with a modified left-minus-right (L − R) audio signal (similar to the well-known Dynaquad system) to simulate a four-channel program from a two-channel source. The stereo-headphone jack is located near the speaker switch. Other knobs on the panel include the bass and treble tone controls, volume control, and input selector (with positions for AM, FM, PHONO, TAPE, and AUX). A large knob drives the smooth flywheel station-tuning mechanism.

Four prominent pushbuttons in the center of the panel, below the magenta dial area, control the tape-monitoring function, mono/stereo switching, loudness compensation, and FM muting. Below them is a horizontal slider control for channel balance.

The rear apron of the R-340 contains three pairs of insulated spring connectors for main, remote, and rear "Quadraphase" speakers. There is a tilting AM ferrite-rod antenna. A detector-output jack will supply a signal to any external decoder that might be developed for a future FM discrete four-channel system. There are two a.c. convenience outlets, one of which is switched. In its cabinet, the Superscope R-340 is about 17 inches wide, 11¼ inches deep, and 4⅞ inches high and weighs approximately 17½ pounds. Price: $259.95.



In the graph of FM performance, the levels of both random noise and noise plus distortion are compared with the audio-output level as signal strength increases. Both mono and stereo are shown.

● *Laboratory Measurements.* In general, the Superscope R-340 handily surpassed its published performance specifications in our lab tests. In some cases the results were surprisingly far beyond what one would expect from such an inexpensive receiver. For example, the distortion, both harmonic (THD) and intermodulation (IM), at rated power was unexpectedly low. The IM and THD (at 1,000 Hz) were about 0.1 per cent at 0.1 watt output, about 0.06 per cent in the vicinity of 1 watt, and approximately 0.1 per cent at 10 watts. The audio amplifiers of the R-340 are rated at 10 watts per channel into 8-ohm loads, and with both channels driven we measured the power output at the clipping point (with a 1,000-Hz test signal) as 10.6 watts into 8 ohms, 11.2 watts into 4 ohms, and 7.7 watts into 16 ohms.

At 10 watts output, the distortion-*vs.*-frequency was about 0.1 per cent from 100 to 6,000 Hz, increasing to only 0.25 per cent at 20,000 Hz. Like most small receivers, the R-340 has limited low-frequency power-output capabilities, and with full power output the distortion rose below 60 Hz but was still below 1 per cent at 50 Hz. However, at 5 watts output the distortion was less than 0.2 per cent from 20 to almost 20,000 Hz (typically 0.09 per cent), and it was even lower at 1 watt.

The tone-control characteristics were conventional, but the entire control action took place in about two-thirds of the knob rotation from center position. The loudness compensation boosted low frequencies moderately and high frequencies slightly. The RIAA phono equalization was quite accurate—within ±1.2 dB

(Continued on page 34)

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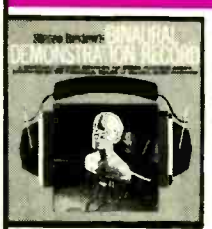

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Unlike conventional automatic tonearms, the 1218 and 1229 track records at the original cutting angle. The 1229 parallels single records, moves up to parallel changer stack. The 1218 has similar adjustment in the cartridge housing.

You'll appreciate some things about a Dual right away. Others will take years.

You can appreciate some things about a Dual turntable right at your dealer's: its clean functional appearance, the precision of its tonearm adjustments and its smooth, quiet operation.

The exceptional engineering and manufacturing care that go into every Dual turntable may take years to appreciate. Only then will you actually experience, play after play, Dual's precision and reliability. And how year after year, Dual protects your precious records; probably your biggest investment in musical enjoyment.

It takes more than features.

If you know someone who owns a Dual, you've probably heard all this from him. But you may also wish to know what makes a Dual so different from other turntables which seem to offer many of the same features. For example, such Dual innovations as: gimbal tonearm suspensions, separate anti-skating scales for conical and elliptical styli, and rotating single play spindles.

It's one thing to copy a Dual feature; it's quite another thing to match the precision with which Duals are built.

A case in point is the tonearm suspension. Every gimbal is hand assembled and individually tested with precision instruments especially developed by Dual. Vertical bearing friction is specified at 0.007 gram, and quality control procedures assure that every unit will meet this specification. Only by maintaining this kind of tolerance can tonearm calibrations for stylus pressure and anti-skating be set with perfect accuracy.

Other Dual features are built with similar precision. The rotor of every Dual motor is dynamically balanced in all planes of motion. Additionally, each motor pulley and drive wheel is individually examined with special instruments to assure perfect concentricity.

Precision and reliability.

Despite all this precision and refinement, Dual turntables are ruggedly built, and need not be babied. Which accounts for Dual's unparalleled record of reliability, an achievement no other manufacturer can copy.

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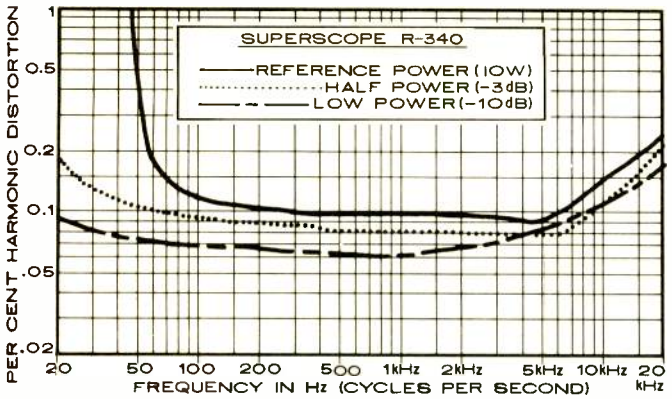

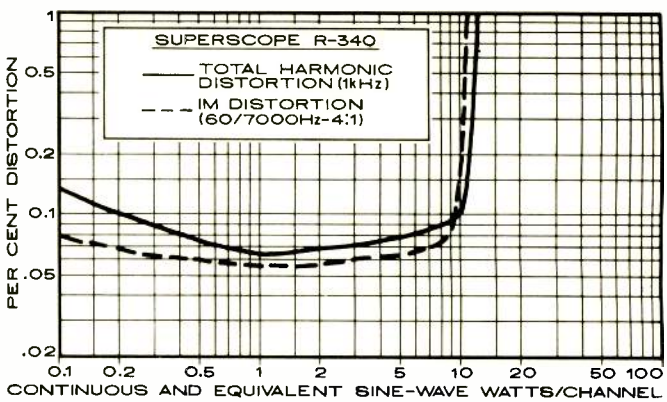

from 30 to 15,000 Hz. The receiver was somewhat less susceptible than most to interaction between cartridge inductance and phono-equalization circuits; its response fell by 1 dB at 10,000 Hz and from 1.5 to 3 dB at 15,000 Hz, depending on the cartridge used.

An input of 110 millivolts (AUX) or 1.8 millivolts (PHONO) drove the amplifiers to 10-watt outputs. The respective signal-to-noise ratios were to 78 dB and 72 dB—both very good. The phono preamplifiers overloaded at a very high 135 millivolts, giving them an exceptional signal "headroom" before distortion.

We measured the IHF sensitivity of the FM tuner as 2.9 microvolts (μV) in mono and about 7 μV in stereo. Quieting of 50 dB was reached at 4.8 μV in mono and 60 μV in stereo. The signal-to-noise ratio in mono at 1,000 μV was 72 dB, and in stereo, 58 dB. The FM distortion with a 1,000-μV test signal was 0.13 per cent in mono and 0.75 per cent in stereo. The capture ratio was 3.6 dB at 1,000 μV. AM rejection varied with signal level, measuring 34 dB at 1,000 μV and 48 dB at 100 μV. Image rejection was 54.4 dB, and the 19-kHz pilot carrier was suppressed 50 dB in the audio outputs. The alternate-channel selectivity measurements revealed a rather asymmetrical i.f. response above and below the signal frequency depending on the tuning, but it averaged about 47 dB.

The FM interstation muting operated in a gradual rather than an abrupt "on-off" manner. As the signal dropped from 26 to 14 μV, the audio volume fell off smoothly. The muting was completely free of noise and transients, and it can be switched out. The automatic stereo/mono switching threshold was between 10 and 15 μV. In stereo FM, the frequency response was flat within ±0.25 dB from 30 to 6,000 Hz, rising to +2 dB at 10,000 Hz and returning to the original level at 15,000 Hz. The channel separation of this receiver was extraordinary—among the best we have ever measured in an FM tuner. From 30 to 4,500 Hz, the separation was between 42 and 48 dB, falling smoothly to an excellent 32.5 dB at 15,000 Hz. The AM frequency response was also slightly better than that of most receivers, being down 6 dB at 4,600 Hz.

● *Comment.* In the design of an inexpensive receiver (and in today's market a $260 receiver can be considered inexpensive), several options are possible. The amplifier power can be fairly high, but may fall off markedly at the frequency extremes and have appreciable distortion at all power levels. This practice could produce some impressive ratings for advertising purposes, but not much of a receiver. Alternatively, the power output could be reduced, retaining very low distortion and other desirable characteristics of an amplifier. In the tuner section, there are similar trade-offs to be made, and certainly no one can expect a low-price tuner to match the performance of a more expensive design. Usually the reduction of tuner performance may not even be noticed in strong signal areas *if* the basic qualities of low noise and distortion are retained.

In our view, the Superscope R-340 represents one of the better design-*vs.*-price compromises. Its audio section is truly excellent in every respect, and by using it with fairly efficient speakers the 10-watt limitation should not prove bothersome. In the FM tuner, selectivity and sensitivity have been sacrificed somewhat. On the other hand, it is adequate to do the job properly in most urban and suburban situations. And even the AM tuner sounded better than most.

We also appreciated the smooth "feel" and general air of quality in this receiver and its operating controls. We would characterize the Superscope R-340 as a moderately sensitive, moderately selective, low-power receiver of the highest quality. This is *not* a contradiction in terms. The R-340 may be inexpensive, but it is *not* cheap.

Circle 106 on reader service card

SAE Mark IIICM Stereo Power Amplifier

● THE SAE Mark IIICM by Scientific Audio Electronics, Inc., is a rugged stereo power amplifier conservatively rated to deliver 200 watts per channel to 8-ohm loads over the full audio range. The amplifier circuits are direct coupled throughout except for a blocking capacitor at the inputs. The protection circuits include voltage/current limiters, thermal sensors, and a relay, activated by an elaborate electronic sensing circuit, that effectively disconnects the speakers from the amplifier in the event of any potentially damaging output signals. The relay also delays application of signals to the speakers for a few seconds after the

(Continued on page 36)

Introducing the SL-1300. The precision of direct drive. The convenience of automation.

Now Technics adds convenience to perfection.

The SL-1300. The fourth and newest Technics direct-drive turntable. And the first with convenient, fully automatic operation.

Auto-Start. Auto-Stop. Auto-Return. Auto-Repeat. And the kind of outstanding specifications that are normally found only in a manual turntable.

WOW & FLUTTER	0.03% WRMS
RUMBLE	−50dB (DIN A), −70dB (DIN B)
LONG-TERM DRIFT	Less than 0.1% (over 30 min.)
MIN. STYLUS PRESSURE	0.25 grams
TRACKING ERROR	±1.6°

The SL-1300, like all Technics turntables, uses our electronically controlled DC motor. But with an improvement. The platter is part of the motor. Making the drive even more direct. It also reduces parts, increases reliability and produces an ultra-thin profile.

The gimbal-suspended automatic arm is $9\frac{1}{16}$", pivot to stylus. For extremely low tracking error. And its four pairs of pivot bearings increase the rotational sensitivity while maintaining flawless balance.

Our anti-skating control requires only one scale for all types of styli. While gold-plated contacts in the head shell assure reliable contact and help prevent hum.

And we haven't forgotten the more refined details. Like Memo-Repeat. So you can play a record from one to five times. Or indefinitely. There's also a new prism strobe. Two-speed variable pitch controls. Dust cover. Feedback-insulated legs. And low capacitance phono cables for CD-4 records.

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

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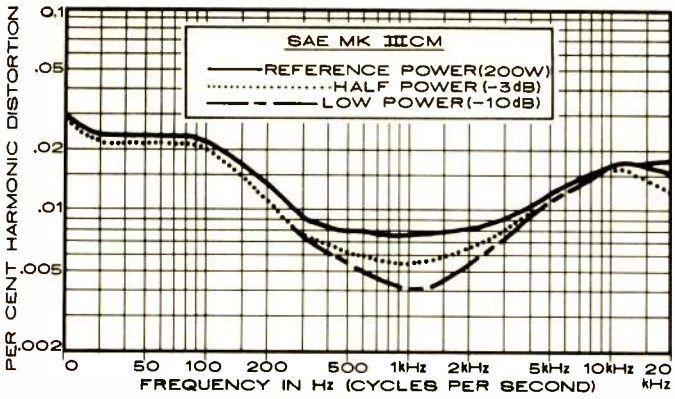
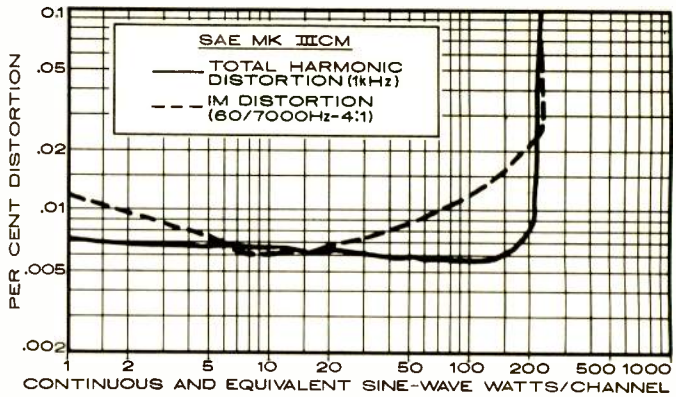
Technics
by Panasonic





power is turned on, eliminating the possibility of a transient "thump." The amplifier's power supplies are also protected by four internally installed fuses.

The output stages of the SAE Mark IIICM operate with a relatively high quiescent current, effectively eliminating all traces of crossover "notch" distortion, even at very low output levels. This causes the amplifier to run moderately (but not excessively) warm during normal operation. Two large illuminated meters on the front panel indicate the power output from each channel. A control knob increases the meter sensitivity in 6-dB steps to a maximum of 24 dB. At the maximum sensitivity setting, outputs of less than 10 milliwatts can be read on the meters. Another switch reduces the input-signal sensitivity of the amplifier by up to 12 dB in 3-dB steps. Power to the amplifier is switched by a pair of on-off pushbuttons.

The heavy-duty output binding posts and phono-type input jacks are in the rear, together with a 10-ampere slow-blow a.c.-line fuse. The three-wire line cord has a three-prong plug, which serves as a reminder that the amplifier should *not* be plugged into a switched a.c. outlet on a preamplifier since most cannot handle the considerable current drawn by this amplifier at full power. The SAE preamplifiers (and one or two others), however, can safely control the power drawn by the unit.

The Mark IIICM is 17 inches wide, 6 inches high, and 14½ inches deep; it weighs about 40 pounds and carries a five-year warranty on parts and labor. Price: $950. A similar amplifier (the Mark IIIC) without the meters is $850.

● ***Laboratory Measurements.*** With both channels driven into 8-ohm loads by a 1,000-Hz test signal, the amplifier's output waveform clipped at 232 watts per channel. With 4-ohm loads, the power was 380 watts per channel, and into 16 ohms it was 136 watts per channel.

At 1,000 Hz, harmonic distortion was below the noise level at levels under 1 watt, and it was between 0.006 and 0.008 per cent from 1 watt to 200 watts. Just below the clipping point (230 watts) it was a mere 0.16 per cent. The intermodulation (IM) distortion was less than 0.023 per cent from 200 milliwatts to 200 watts, typically measuring under 0.01 per cent. Even at a 5-milliwatt output level it was under 0.06 per cent, confirming SAE's claim of very low crossover distortion. Across the full 20- to 20,000-Hz range there was little variation in distortion at any power level up to 200 watts. Below 100 Hz, harmonic distortion was just over 0.02 per cent and above 10,000 Hz it was about 0.015 per cent. At most intermediate frequencies the distortion measured between 0.004 and 0.008 per cent at all power levels.

An input of 0.31 volt drove the amplifier to our reference power output of 10 watts, with the highest setting of the input-sensitivity selector. The unweighted noise level in the output was 86 dB below 10 watts, or 99 dB below the rated 200 watts. The power calibrations of the meters were generally within 10 per cent of the actual power output when using sine-wave test signals.

The frequency response of the Mark IIICM was as flat as that of our test equipment: ±0.1 dB from 5 to 100,000 Hz, falling to −1 dB at 200,000 Hz and to −3 dB at 300,000 Hz. The square-wave rise time was between 1 and 1.5 microseconds, and was unaffected by the setting of the input-gain switch.

The amplifier's protective circuits worked well—almost *too* well, in fact, since the thermal cut-out shut down the amplifier frequently during our full-power measurements, necessitating a cooling off period before tests could be resumed. Of course, these tests involved conditions unlikely to be encountered when reproducing any musical program. (The action of the protective thermal sensor prevented the heat sink of the amplifier from ever becoming uncomfortably hot to the touch.)

● ***Comment.*** SAE emphasizes the ability of the Mark IIICM to drive reactive loads at high frequencies and high power levels without damage or significant distortion. We operated the amplifier at full power into a dynamic-speaker load and added a 3-microfarad capacitor across the speaker terminals. It had no effect whatever on performance.

All we can say about the sound quality of the SAE Mark IIICM is that it was notably clean and transparent at all times, and at all listening levels. Even with output-meter indications averaging

(Continued on page 38)

Why nearly every record player is like a car that doesn't steer straight.

If you've ever driven a car with badly aligned front wheels or a defective steering mechanism, you know what we're talking about.

It's a queasy feeling when you can't make the car point in the same direction as the road is pointing.

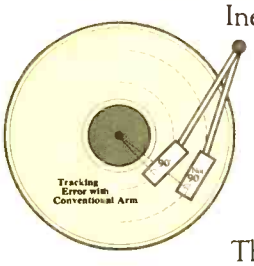
There happens to be a distinctly comparable problem with record players, except that it's a nearly universal deficiency, not just a malfunction.

Of course, in this case there's no human life at stake, only the fidelity of the reproduced sound. And sometimes the life of the record.

Like a car, the phono cartridge (or pickup head) should point where it's going. Right down the middle of the groove. Not at an angle to it.

A more scientific way of saying the same thing is that the head should remain perpendicular to the line drawn through the stylus tip and the turntable spindle.

Any deviation from this ideal is known as tracking error. It's measured in degrees and it causes distortion. Inevitably.



The trouble is that there's no way to avoid tracking error and the resulting distortion with any conventional pivoted tonearm. Why? Because the head swings in an arc and is therefore at a continuously changing angle to the groove as it travels across the record.

The problem has remained fundamentally the same since the Emile Berliner gramophone of 1887. It has been minimized, thanks to improvements in tonearm geometry, but it hasn't been eliminated.

With one important exception.

In the current line of Garrard automatic turntables, the top three models are equipped with Garrard's unique Zero Tracking Error Tonearm.

This remarkable invention ends tracking error once and for all. The head is always properly lined up with the groove because it's hinged instead of fixed and keeps adjusting its angle during play. A simple idea, yes, but the engineering details took the world's leading manufacturer of turntables seven years to perfect.

The Zero Tracking Error Tonearm is a major technological coup, not just a glamour feature. You can hear the difference.

The "Acoustics" column of *Rolling Stone* magazine, for example, reported that the original Garrard turntable equipped with the new arm "sounded markedly 'crisper' than other turntables" under otherwise identical test conditions.

It's true. Just like a car that doesn't steer straight, tracking error can make a nasty sound.

It can even cause unnecessary record wear. The information engraved in the grooves of the new CD-4 discrete four-channel records is so finely detailed that it can be partially wiped out by a stylus that doesn't sit absolutely square and true.

Ask your nearest Garrard dealer about the Zero Tracking Error Tonearm.

It's absurd to tolerate a problem that somebody has already solved.

Top of the line: Garrard Zero 100c, $209.95. Other Garrard automatic turntables from $49.95 up.

Garrard
Division of Plessey Consumer Products
100 Commercial Street, Plainview, New York 11803

50 to 100 watts per channel, which should have resulted in clipping on peaks, we could hear no change in the character of the sound (be sure your loudspeaker systems can handle this level of drive power before you try this!).

The SAE Mark IIICM is a worthy, if not inexpensive, addition to the limited number of exceptionally fine high-power amplifiers. Few audiophiles should find its power inadequate, and obviously its electrical performance in respect to distortion, noise, and so forth is at the state-of-the-art level.

Circle 107 on reader service card

Dokorder Model 7140 Four-Channel Tape Deck

● THE Dokorder Model 7140 tape deck has a host of features formerly available only on much more expensive machines. For example, it can record and play back simultaneously on either two channels or four channels, at speeds of 3¾ or 7½ ips. It has "Multi-Sync," which is Dokorder's term for multiple-track synchronization. This means that any of the four tracks of the recording head can be switched to function in the playback mode while a recording is made simultaneously on any or all of the other tracks. This permits each track to be recorded separately (and at different times) while keeping all tracks perfectly synchronized with each other.

The microphone and line inputs for each of the four channels can be mixed with their separate, but concentric, gain controls. The four playback-level controls are also two concentric pairs. On the lower edge of the front panel are four standard microphone phone jacks and two stereo headphone jacks (for front and rear channels). Above them are four meters that indicate both recording and playback levels. Tape monitoring is controlled by four pushbuttons that connect each of the recorder's four outputs to either the source or to the playback amplifier output for that channel. A fifth button shuts off the rear channels for two-channel stereo operation. Nearby are a small slide switch and level control for the special effects (sound-on-sound and echo), with the level of the signal fed from one channel to the other controlled by the SOS/ECHO knob.

The three-motor transport has a hysteresis-synchronous capstan motor and is fully solenoid controlled. Toggle switches control power, tape speed, and the pause function, and there is a four-digit index counter. A two-position TAPE SELECTOR optimizes the recording bias for NORMAL and SPECIAL tapes. Individual pushbuttons (with indicator lights) can be used to place any or all channels in the recording mode (when the REC button is pressed on the tape-transport control). The transport controls are mechanically latched pushbuttons which require an appreciable operating force. Above them are the four MULTI-SYNC levers. The tape transport has tensioning levers which provide an automatic shut-off action. The head assembly plugs in as a unit for easy replacement.

The Dokorder Model 7140, with the wooden side panels supplied, is 16⅞ inches wide, 17¾ inches high, and 6¾ inches deep; it weighs 41 pounds. Although operation is claimed to be possible with either vertical or horizontal mounting, there are no mounting feet on the back panel and ventilation would probably be impaired in a horizontal position. Price: $629.95 (an optional dust cover is available for $23).

● ***Laboratory Measurements.*** Over the range of the Ampex NAB test tapes, the playback frequency response at 7½ ips was ±2 dB from 50 to 15,000 Hz, and at 3¾ ips it was ±1.25 dB from 50 to 7,500 Hz. Record-playback response measurements were made with Maxell UD35 tape, using the SPECIAL bias setting. At 3¾ ips, the overall response was ±1.5 dB from 40 to 16,000 Hz. At 7½ ips, it was ±2 dB from 45 to 25,000 Hz. The low-frequency response fell off quite rapidly at 7½ ips, and less rapidly at 3¾ ips. All four channels had essentially the same frequency-response characteristics. We were able to measure only a very small difference between the two settings of the TAPE SELECTOR switch. However, the high-frequency response and overall output level were substantially better with the UD35 tape than with 3M 203, suggesting that the machine is set up to perform best with low-noise/high-output tapes.

A line input of 60 millivolts (mV) or a microphone input of 0.7 mV produced a 0-dB recording level, which played back with an output of 0.65 volt. The 3 per cent reference distortion level was reached at +7 and +8 dB at 3¾ ips and 7½ ips, respectively. The unweighted signal-to-noise ratio (S/N) referred to this level was 55.7 dB at 3¾ ips and 59.5 dB at 7½ ips. Using the IEC standard weighting for better subjective correlation, the S/N measurements improved to 62 and 66 dB. Through the microphone inputs at the maximum gain setting, the noise increased only 1.5 dB. Crosstalk between the four channels, at 1,000 Hz, was −43 to −46 dB.

The tape speeds were correct for both 7½- and 3¾-ips operation. Combined wow and flutter (with an unweighted rms measurement) was 0.1 per cent at 3¾ ips and 0.09 per cent at 7½ ips. In fast forward and rewind, 1,800 feet of tape was handled in 84 seconds. Headphone volume was good, tested with both 8-ohm and 200-ohm phones. The meter ballistics were somewhat slow compared with true VU meters, so that they read about half their steady-state value when driven with 0.3-second (300-millisecond) tone bursts.

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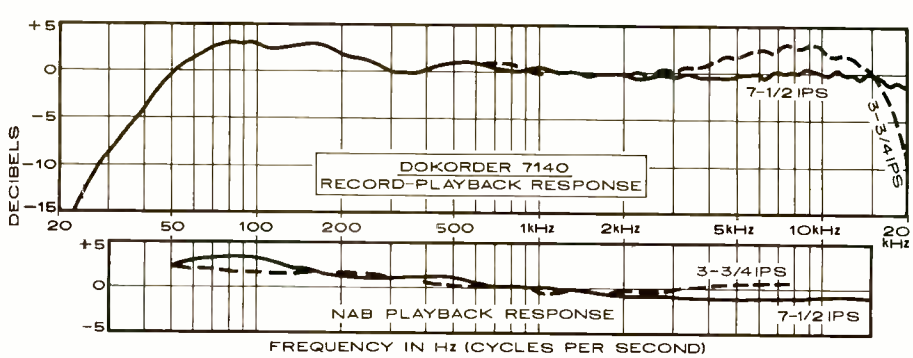


If Beethoven were alive today, he'd be recording on "Scotch" brand recording tape.

Beethoven was a genius. But he was even more than that.

He was a pro.

He was tough and demanding and insisted on perfection in everything he did. Just like the pros in today's music business. The people who may be putting a hundred thousand dollars on the line when they walk into a studio to put down a record.

And nearly 80% of all master recording studios use "Scotch" brand recording tape.

What else would Beethoven record on?

So, next time you record something take a hint from the master.

Use "Scotch" brand—the Master Tape.

Buy two cassettes, get one free.
Applies to 60-minute LOW NOISE/HIGH DENSITY cassettes at participating "Scotch" brand dealers as long as supply lasts.

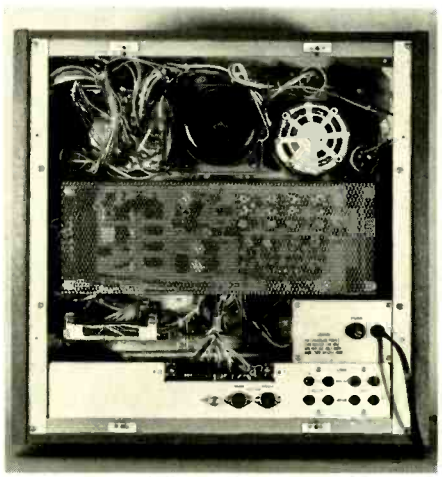
3M COMPANY

The Master Tape.

Dokorder Model 7140 Tape Deck . . .

(Continued from page 38)

● ***Comment.*** During our testing, every one of the Dokorder's many controls, modes, and features worked perfectly. Despite its rather imposing appearance, it is a very easy and "un-fussy" machine to operate. As can be inferred from the test results, its sound is first rate. The tape-overload margin is considerable, when referred to the meter's 0-dB indication, so that the recording-level settings are not at all critical. Its other characteristics, including S/N, flutter, and speed accuracy, come close to meeting the highest professional standards, and are certainly adequate for the critical home recordist for whom this machine is intended.



A rear view of the Dokorder 7140 shows the reel and capstan motors above a large circuit board holding some of the electronics.

Listening to FM interstation hiss recorded and played back through the Model 7140, we could hear a moderate low- to mid-frequency coloration, apparently caused by a slight emphasis in response below 200 Hz. The highs were perfect at 7½ ips, and were reduced by a barely detectable amount at 3¾ ips. Needless to say, FM music broadcasts were recorded and played back with complete fidelity.

We enjoyed experimenting with the Multi-Sync feature (this was our first exposure to this capability). For anyone interested in doing live demo rock tapes, a track-synchronizing machine has become a must. Although it lacks some of the glitter and operational refinements of some other more expensive recorders, the Dokorder Model 7140 nevertheless manages to deliver more honest performance and total versatility than we have seen in any other comparably priced machine. At its current price, particularly if you are interested in track-synced live recording, it is an outstanding value.

Circle 108 on reader service card

clearly the new standard of excellence

A completely new standard of performance, the standard of an ESS Heil air-motion transformer, has been brought to popular sized loudspeakers with the introduction of the exciting new ESS amt 5 reference bookshelf.

A compact, convenient, and reasonably priced loudspeaker of such excellence was impossible until the latest development in ESS Heil air-motion transformer high frequency drivers – the ESS Heil air-motion transformer "power-ring" tweeter. Created expressly for use in the amt 5, this unprececented tweeter allows the absolute purity and exciting transient resolution of an ESS Heil air-motion transformer system to become available in the universally popular and adaptable "bookshelf" size loudspeaker. The amt 5 continues the ESS tradition of sound as clear as light, throughout its range, with a powerful new 12 inch woofer that provides deep, rich bass and clean, concise transients precisely matched to the transparency of its Heil air-motion transformer tweeter.

Whatever your taste in music, if you desire an easy listening, less expensive speaker system, you are no longer limited to outmoded and conventionally engineered products. You can now own and enjoy the accurate reproduction and built-in lasting value of an ESS Heil air-motion transformer, the loudspeaker of the future. Finally from ESS, a state-of-the-art bookshelf, the ESS amt 5 reference bookshelf.

A full color brochure describing in simple language the unique operation of the ESS Heil air-motion transformer and showing the full line of ESS loudspeakers is available, free, at your authorized ESS dealer. If you would like a brochure mailed to you, write to ESS, Sacramento.

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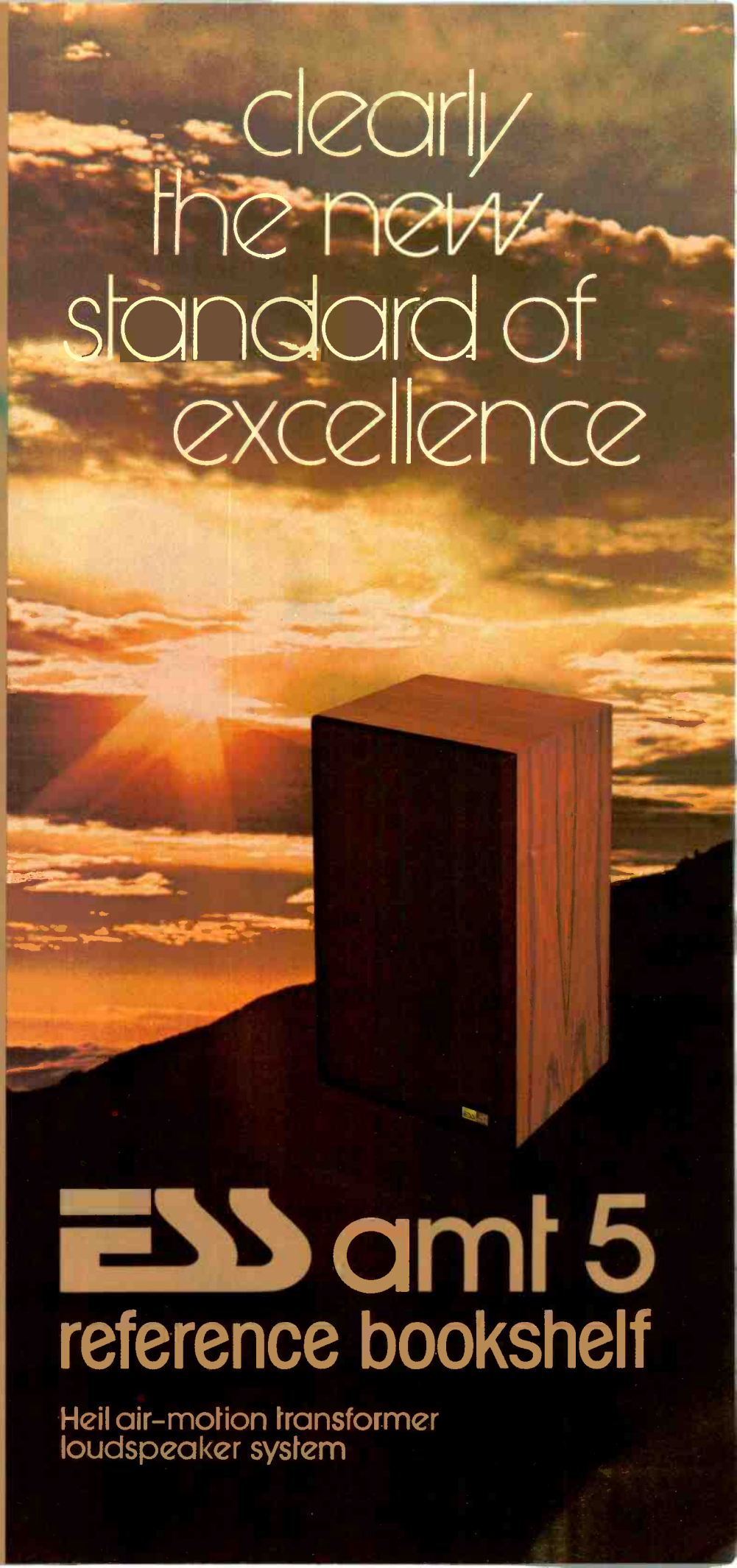
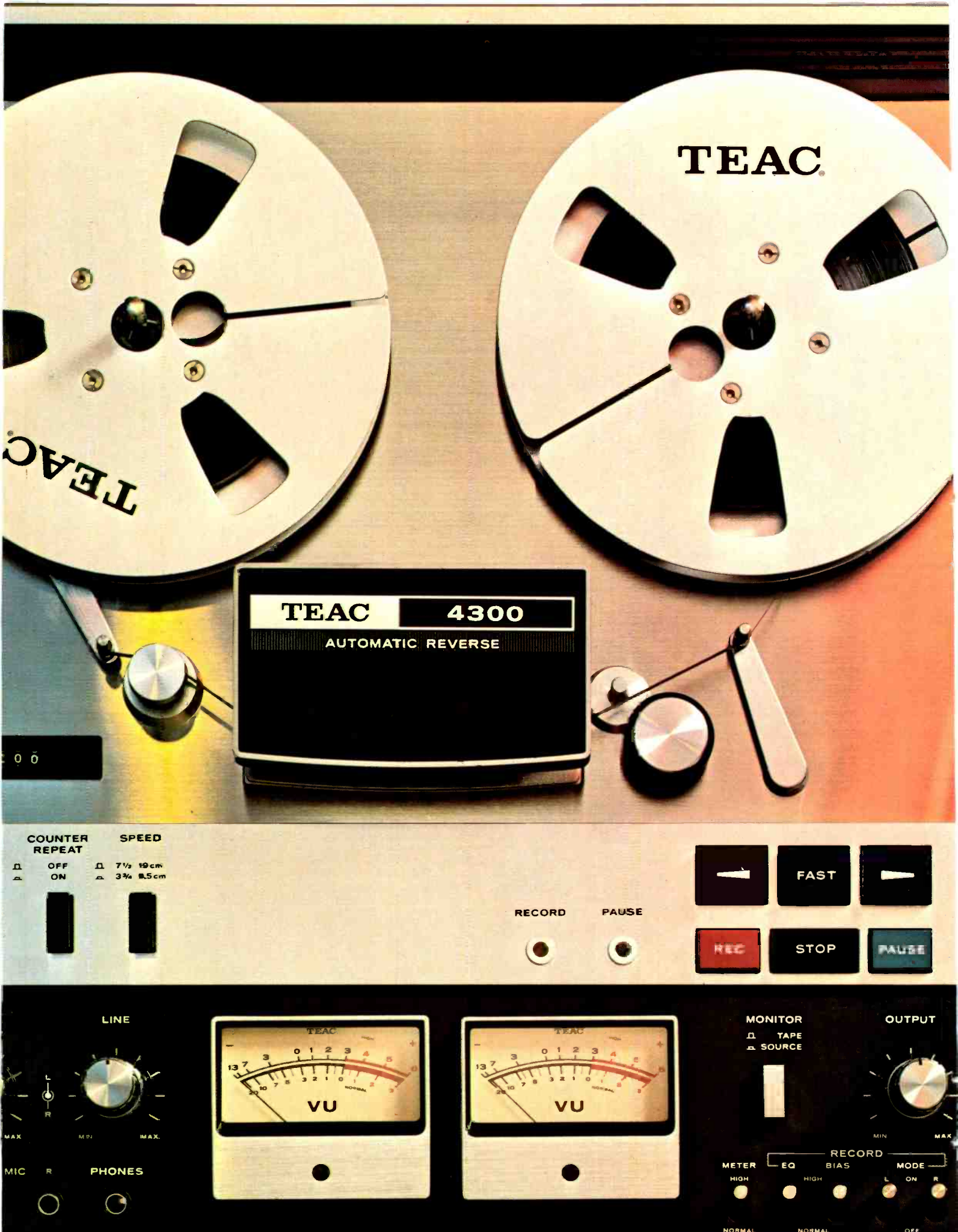


ESS amt 5
reference bookshelf

Heil air-motion transformer
loudspeaker system


TEAC
TEAC
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COUNTER REPEAT
OFF
ON
SPEED
7½ 19cm
3¾ 9.5cm
RECORD
PAUSE
FAST
REC
STOP
PAUSE
LINE
MAX
MIN
MAX
MIC
R
PHONES
VU
VU
MONITOR
TAPE
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METER
RECORD
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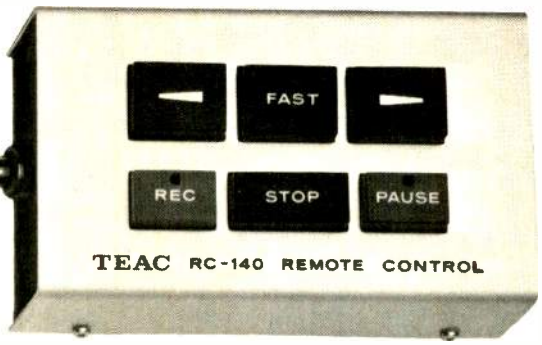
BIAS
MODE
HIGH
HIGH
L
ON
R
NORMAL
NORMAL
OFF

4300.
The non-stop Teac.

One of the greatest things about tape is listening to more than 20 minutes of music without having to turn a record over. Of course, with most tape recorders you've got to turn the reel over to play the second side of the tape.

We've taken care of that problem with our 4300 Automatic Reverse Stereo Tape Deck. You can put your favorite tape on the 4300 and listen to it for days without ever touching any controls. But if you *do* touch the controls, you can rewind or fast forward...without bothering to push the stop button between functions.



That's because we've engineered a logic circuit into the touch button controls that makes it virtually impossible to stretch or break a tape. And with three motors, you get super fast and safe tape handling. If you're really hooked on convenience, pick up our RC-140 remote control and operate the 4300 any where in the room.

Besides providing you with non-stop listening, the 4300 is still a tape *recorder*, and a damn good one, too. It has four heads that allow direct tape monitoring while recording, plus two direction playback. Mike and line mixing allow you to be creative by simultaneously recording from two different sources. Separate bias and equalization circuits even let you pick the type tape you want to use, standard or high-energy.

One more thing: with the 4300, you can make all your existing tapes work. No obsolescence. Check it out at your TEAC dealer soon. He's got specs and a demonstration for you.

Another magic music machine from TEAC.

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CIRCLE NO. 48 ON READER SERVICE CARD

THE BEATLES: DOWN BUT NOT OUT

Eric Salzman reviews two new books

WILFRED MELLERS is an English musicologist and music professor who has written a number of useful articles and books. His *Music in a New-Found Land* was the first major survey of American music, ironically written and first published in Great Britain. He takes popular music quite as seriously as "serious" music and has no hesitation about applying as much advanced sociological, ethnological, musicological, or theoretical/technical analysis to a pop song as to a symphony.

In principle, so far so good. I heartily approve of the way Mellers plays the game, but unfortunately his newest book, *Twilight of the Gods: The Beatles in Retrospect*, strikes out (or whatever the cricket equivalent might be).

Strike 1: Pretentious, foolish title.

Strike 2: Pretentious, foolish, pseudo-ethno-musicological poppycock. ["Even the harmony provoked intuitively by modal melody and blue guitar techniques effects a kind of re-Renaissance—in wide-eyed, open-eared wonder at the 'pure' sensuality of thirds and sixths—strictly comparable with similar effects of harmonic 'discovery' in African musics (especially children's songs) and in the musics of Europe's late Middle Ages and early Renaissance."]

Strike 3: Pretentious, misleading "analyses," fussy detail, and an implication of completeness when as much is omitted as is included.

The title suggests that the great gods of yesterday have reached senility and decadence. In fact, the dissolution of the Beatles as a group probably did more to keep their legend alive than continuing their collective existence might have done. Moreover, all four of them are still reasonably young and operational. Mellers does attempt to explore their first solo flights, but this aspect of the book is, of course, already out of date. The sectional titles of the book are equally dubious: "Novices' Departure," "Context and Death," "Rebirth and Return of the Initiate," and "Exit and Lament" (which mysteriously turns into "Exit and Torment" at one point).

Ironically, with all the learned disquisitions on African children's games, "quasi-monodic incantations," and "devilishly flattened tritonal" fifths (as opposed to "godly perfect" fifths), some of the most obvious sources for Beatles music are missed: the English music hall, Yiddish musical theater, Gilbert and Sullivan, old movies, old 78-rpm pop recordings, and so forth. Mellers' conception of Liverpool working-class culture is strictly *noblesse oblige*.

Perhaps the biggest problems stem from basing the musical deductions and analyses not on the music itself, firsthand, but on a series of organ arrangements that, engraved as they are here in a fine old English hand, look more like a Sir John Stainer oratorio than Lennon-McCartney tunes. Mellers constantly describes the melodies, rhythms, and chords in terms of the printed music, which is often obviously at variance with the originals. (Don't try to play along; many of the songs have been rather arbitrarily transposed to other keys.) And, although he appears to describe the complete evolution of the Beatles, he has omitted many famous songs. Any study of the Beatles—particularly one that goes into great detail describing some relatively obscure songs—that doesn't even mention *I Want to Hold Your Hand*, *She Loves You*, *Yeah, Yeah, Yeah*, *All My Loving*, *Can't Buy Me Love*, *Don't Let Me Down*, *I'm a Loser*, *Day Tripper*, *In My Life*, *I've Just Seen a Face*, *Hello Goodbye*, *Hey Jude*, or *Lady Madonna* has (let us be kind) missed a thing or two. In fact, Mellers seems to have missed a couple of whole albums and more than a few singles. (the situation is complicated by what specific English albums contain—those described do not always correspond to the equivalent American releases).

The more's the pity, for Mellers is an intelligent man who takes pop music as seriously as it ought to be taken and who has many insights to offer. But in the present context they just don't get through; the book is all but unreadable, the analyses can be matched up with the music only with great difficulty, and, in the end, there is no real underlying point of view to tie it all together.

WHAT a relief, then, to turn to Milt Okun's arrangements of seventy-three Lennon-McCartney Beatles mini-masterpieces in the collection published by Quadrangle last December. One might complain about some of the editorial decisions (Why only Lennon and McCartney? Why only seventy-three songs when including another dozen would have meant including everyone's favorite?), and of course no arrangements, no matter how clever, could duplicate the originals with respect to performance practice and media mixing. Still, these arrangements (for keyboard—piano or organ—with guitar chords and on two rather than the usual three staves) are quite acceptable and, if not brilliant, eminently playable (where the music is transposed that fact is indicated; you can, in general, actually play along with your recordings). In spite of many early opinions, even the "Sergeant Pepper" and "Abbey Road" songs hold up extremely well without all the electronic trickery. I missed some songs—*Dear Prudence* and *Martha My Dear* and *Sun King* and *I Want You (She's So Heavy)* and *Fixin' a Hole* and *Run for Your Life* and *I'm Looking Through You* and *Drive My Car* and *Octopus' Garden* and some of George's contributions. But I guess you can't have everything.

Anyway, the future of these songs is going to be as much in the playing and singing of them as in their continuing existence in the groove archives. Seventy-three songs in a well-arranged, easy-to-use, accessible songbook form is a much longer stride toward Schubertian immortality for Lennon and McCartney than all of Professor Mellers' well-intentioned profundities.

Twilight of the Gods: The Beatles in Retrospect, by Wilfred Mellers. The Viking Press, New York (1974), 209 pp., $8.95; illustrated with musical examples.

Great Songs of Lennon and McCartney, by John Lennon and Paul McCartney; edited by Milton Okun. Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co. (1973), 288 pp., $17.50; illustrated with photographs.

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GOING ON RECORD

By JAMES GOODFRIEND
Music Editor

DOING THINGS RIGHT

LAST MONTH I had a few unkind words to say about the presentation of classical music on television and about the miscalculations, by the producers, of both the strengths and the weaknesses of the medium. Though STEREO REVIEW is concerned only peripherally with television, a simple matter of justice compels me to couple an addendum to that criticism and call some attention to what is certainly the finest, most tasteful cinematic production of a piece of classical music I have ever encountered – on television or in the theater.

The program to which I refer is a film shown on National Educational Television (WNET) in New York City on May 5 of this year. It has been shown before on other stations elsewhere in the United States and probably will be shown again. The title of the film is *The Bolero*, and I urge my more musically sophisticated friends not to groan and cease reading at this point, but to bear with me for a few moments. I too consider Ravel's *Boléro* to be decidedly unpromising material for television presentation. I too have been bored by the piece since halfway through my first hearing of it about thirty-five years ago. And certainly, if ever there was a piece to show up the deficiencies of television's audio quality, *Boléro* is it, since the sum total of its interest lies in its orchestration. So I didn't come to the telecast in a terribly receptive frame of mind.

But what the film demonstrates most positively is that it is possible to accomplish near miracles through the consistent application of imagination and good taste. *The Bolero* proved to me that though television is an intimate medium, it does not have to limit itself to intimate music. I am now interested in *hearing Boléro* again. If that in itself isn't a near miracle, I don't know what is.

The film opens, a bit unpromisingly, perhaps, with a view of the setting up of music stands for a concert, the unpacking of instruments, and general tuning up and tootling around. We then get into bits of interviews – the players of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the conductor, Zubin Mehta. I emphasize the "bits," because that is exactly what they are, snippets carefully chosen from longer conversations that, in their wholeness, would inevitably be boring in the extreme. But the bits are not boring; they are by turns informative, funny, affecting. Mehta says something to the effect that he hopes never to hear *Boléro* again for as long as he lives, not at all the sort of comment one expects on a program of classical music "for the masses." The flutist goes over her opening solo, a bassist confesses that music gives him astonishing relief from family quarrels and other problems, a bassoonist points out the difference between playing his solo in the privacy of his home and in the heightened tension of the concert or recording situation and admits to nervousness. The producers and editors have chosen to keep just the right few sentences in each case.

Eventually, of course, things must go on to the performance of *Boléro* itself, and so they do. But the flutist's opening solo has a new cachet now that we have heard her talk about it and rehearse it. One is *interested* in the tone color she produces and how she does it. And one quietly congratulates the bassoonist for carrying off his solo with perfect aplomb in what we *now* know to be a tense situation. We are struck by the conductor's obvious (visually and aurally) involvement in music he has just scorned, and a new respect creeps in for both his duplicity and his sheer ability to put the full service of his talents into something in which he does not quite believe. The performance, really, is quite a knockout.

Now, what goes on visually while the performance is taking place? Obviously, this is the hard part, for the visual element is what makes all those concerts on television so stultifying and all those "special presentations" so loathsomely cute. What goes on here is really nothing more than you would expect to go on if you were used to intelligent and tasteful telecasts of classical music. There are no "outside" images; the orchestra is the source of virtually everything you see.

The images go from simple and direct to complex and indirect as the music proceeds, so that the music becomes heightened in interest by visual means just as its repetitiveness begins to tell. For the flute solo we see the flute, for the bassoon solo, the bassoon. But there is a delay before the camera shows the alto saxophone, so that we may ask ourselves upon hearing it, "Now, what is that?", before seeing the instrument. The film thus accentuates the fact that there *is* an alto saxophone in *Boléro*. Similarly, the camera at one point, instead of going directly to the melody instrument, picks up the harp which is playing an accompanimental figure, and thus directs our *aural* attention to that figure, which we probably had not really *heard* before. After allowing time for the point to be made, the camera goes beyond the harp to show us who has the melody. This is, among other things, using the visual element in such a way as to effectively compensate for the deficiencies of the audio. The harp made visible is, at a crucial moment, also made audible.

A suspicion of cliché artiness creeps in when the screen shows a pair of abstract shapes moving and changing in time to the music. But as the camera recedes and the scene lightens, the "abstract shapes" turn out to be the sides of Maestro Mehta's tailcoat and the rhythmic movement is his. Artful rather than arty.

The camera moves to a closeup of a string player, but once the player and the instrument on which he plays have been clearly established, the picture limits itself to the movement of the bow across the strings, not as in a detailed scientific examination, but as a producer of abstract patterns of movement related directly to the music.

IT is this continuous duality of purpose that makes the film so exciting: the visual material is interesting in itself but also pertinent to what is going on musically at the moment. The verbal comments are revealing of personality but also informative about the music. The strengths of the television medium are used not only for their own sakes, but also to compensate for the *weaknesses* of the medium.

The film was produced and directed by Allan Miller, associate conductor of the Denver Symphony, and Bill Fertik, photographer. The editor was Sara Stein. *The Bolero* won an Academy Award for a live-action short subject. I cannot think of a film that deserved an award more.

THE SIMELS REPORT

By STEVE SIMELS

WAITING FOR THE SEVENTIES

ONE of the record trade magazines recently ran a cover story entitled—are you ready?—"The Future of Nostalgia." And if that doesn't tell you everything you need to know about the general banality of the period we now find ourselves living through, I don't know what does. Beyond that, however, when the headline first caught my eye, I found myself having a flash of cosmic proportions, something I have not experienced since finding out that the Walrus was really Paul. And what was this blinding insight, you might well ask? All right, I'll tell you.

The Seventies are a hype. They don't exist. At least in rock-and-roll terms, there *are* no Seventies.

That's right, folks, we've been sold a bill of goods. *Phonograph Record* talks about "pop music for the Seventies," *Rock Scene* asks "we're into the Seventies. Are you?"—but the fact of the matter is that there is absolutely nothing new happening, and the Sixties have not yet ended. You don't agree? Well, consider the facts.

- The biggest stars in England right now are two gents named Gary Glitter and Alvin Stardust, both safely on the wrong side of thirty, who purvey exactly the same kind of music they made in the early Sixties when (as Paul Raven and Shane Fenton) they had extremely minor careers as imitators of Billy Fury, himself an extremely minor imitation of Eddie Cochran, who was, in turn, an Elvis imitator.
- David Bowie, who more than anyone else is responsible for the idea that the Seventies are somehow spiritually different from the Sixties (his whole career is based on an attitude of contempt for the rock of that period, perhaps a result of his own commercial failures during those years, which were not surprising given the dreck he was churning out), has a new album out. It begins with a dead-serious recitation of a ridiculous poem with apocalyptic science-fiction overtones, and, further, it's a *concept* album. Now, I hate to be a nit-picker, but there is absolutely nothing more Sixties than a concept album. And, of course, that whole pulp sci-fi fixation is just a watered-down rehash of stuff done in the Sixties by the Byrds, Jimi Hendrix, and, more recently, Paul Kantner of the Airplane. (And let's not forget Bowie's stage act, which is strangely reminiscent of Arthur Brown, the original Sixties madman.)
- Despite huge hypes, the American public has remained profoundly indifferent to the whole glitter phenomenon—John Denver, Loggins and Messina, and the Allman Brothers are much bigger stars than Bowie or the Dolls—and rock festivals in the old-fashioned sense are making a comeback. Watkins Glen was the clue, and if you don't believe me, then you didn't check out any of the recent *In Concert* shows, taped at a festival in California, which were mind boggling. Besides featuring an awful lot of boring music, the crowd and stage crew all looked and sounded as if they had just seen the Woodstock movie and memorized all the lines.
- Psychedelic music is back, only this time they're calling it jazz, and its avant-garde pretensions are just as wearisome as they were at the height of the Summer of Love. You can tell me all you want about Herbie Hancock, John McLaughlin, or Weather Report, but objectively there's almost no difference between what they're doing now and the most banal psychedelic excess of the early Dead or the Mothers. Even the technology has come full circle—what, pray tell, is the difference in sound between an Arp synthesizer and the kind of electric organ noises you can find on old Del Shannon or surfing records?
- Soul music? Are you kidding? The big new stars, like the O'Jays and the Spinners, are all aging cats who were third on the bill with the Motown All Stars ten years ago, and for very good reasons—they couldn't sing as well as the headliners.

None of this is meant as a value judgment, you understand: the question of whether or not the general level of rock and other allied forms has fallen lately is not what I'm talking about at all. (I think it has—hell, even the level of schlock has declined—but that's unimportant.) The real . . . uh . . . bummer in all of this is that the various artists and critics who are pushing the idea of Seventies consciousness are doing us a tremendous disservice. Nothing is as dated as the recent past, someone once said, but you would think that we would have learned *something* in the past few years, like the danger of revisionist history. I'm thinking specifically of the prejudices that developed in the Sixties, when groups like the Beach Boys were, for a time, treated as if they were worse than antique. The prevailing attitude in those days was that the then "new" music had somehow transcended its roots, and, in fact, that those roots were pretty crummy to begin with. We were all somehow embarrassed about early rock-and-roll and our relation to it, and the kind of Sixties snobbery that developed seems almost amusing now. But it wasn't—perhaps you remember that although Beach Boy Brian Wilson was on the board of directors of the Monterey Pop Festival, his group was forced to cancel their appearance because of quite legitimate fears that the long-haired audience would laugh at them. Today, the Beach Boys are hip again, and that paranoia seems ludicrous: not only are we no longer embarrassed about those days and nights in the parking lot, but we realize that a lot of great—indeed, timeless—music was made in that context. Given that example, though, you would think we'd be a bit more careful about rewriting the history of the Sixties. I don't want to sit in a field with 500,000 people anymore (never did, if truth be told), but what the hell has that got to do with music anyway? Is the Airplane's "Surrealistic Pillow" less of an album now that we don't wear love beads and caftans? Is "Sgt. Pepper" any less terrific because John Lennon doesn't have a David Bowie haircut?

THE point is that when the *real* Seventies arrive they won't have to proclaim themselves as such. When someone really does something new, we'll be too busy being knocked out by it to even worry about concepts like what decade this is; the fact that we *do* is proof enough that whatever it is we're looking for hasn't arrived, and just how desperate we all are. Just you wait—in two years Lurex tops and platform heels are going to look sillier than crewcuts and Pendletons did in 1966, and glitter will be as passé as the twist. Someone's got a lot of owning up to do, and you know who you are.

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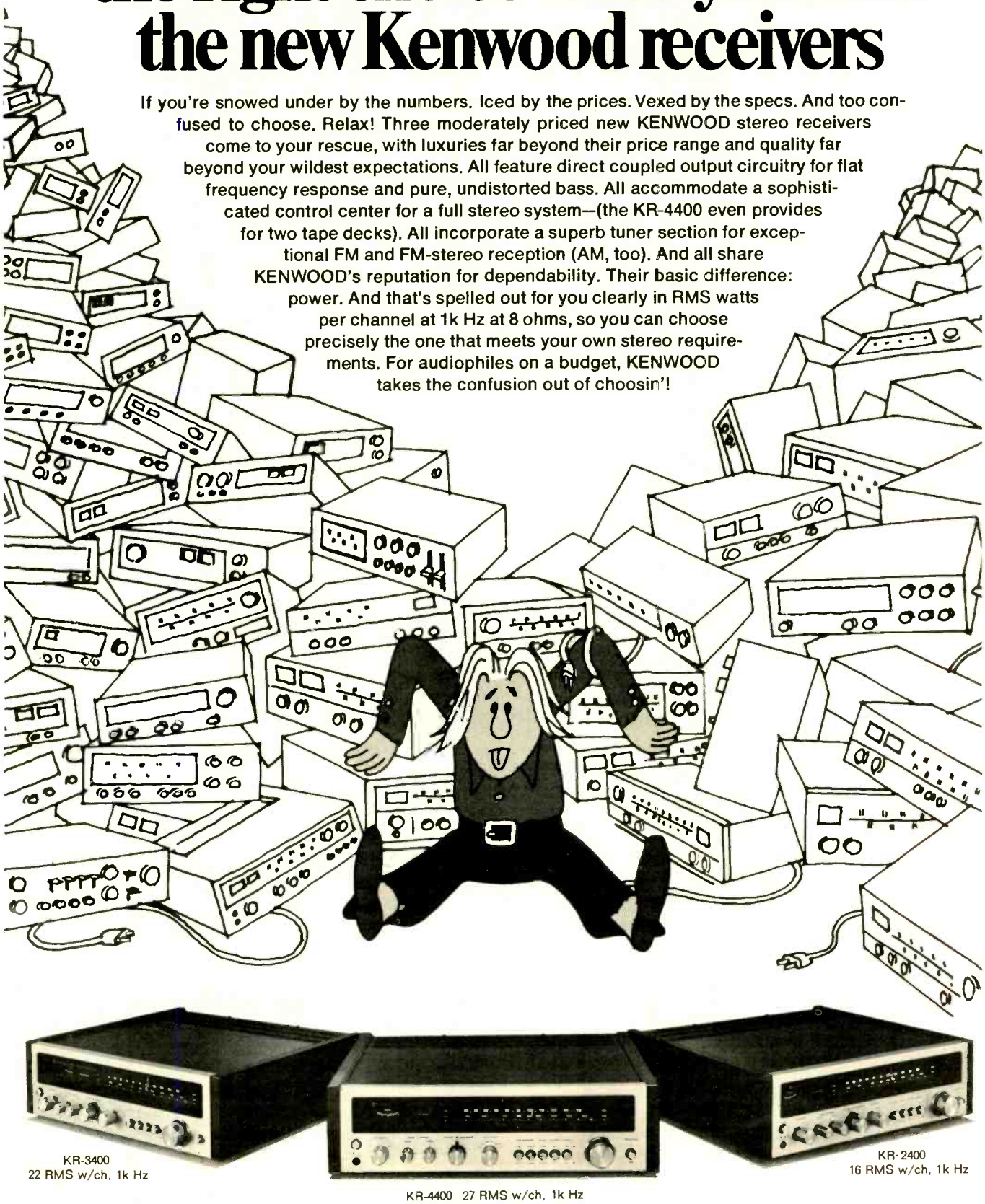

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THE BASIC REPERTOIRE · 172

By MARTIN BOOKSPAN

FRANCK'S SYMPHONIC VARIATIONS

THE history of music is full of examples of ambitious fathers who exploited the talents of their gifted offspring for monetary gain. Leopold Mozart springs immediately to mind: he pushed his genius son, Wolfgang, and his somewhat less remarkable daughter, Marianne, onto the concert stages and into the imperial ballrooms of Europe at an age when both should have been allowed to enjoy the more innocent pleasures of childhood. But Leopold, a gifted musician himself, was astute enough to realize that there was a point beyond which his ambitions had to be curbed: in the voluminous correspondence between father and son (Wolfgang's constant travels as a performing virtuoso and respected composer forced long periods of separation), there are many instances of Leopold's growing restraint in forcing his own demands or wishes upon his son.

A less benign example of parental domination was the relationship between Isaac Albéniz, the Spanish composer, and his father. The elder Albéniz subjected his son to such a brutal and senseless regimen of practice and discipline that young Isaac was only thirteen when he ran away from home for the last time and stowed away on a ship bound for the Caribbean islands.

Somewhere between the Mozart and Albéniz situations lay the relationship between César Franck and his father. Franck *père*, as a matter of fact, tyrannized *two* sons, enrolling them both at a tender age in the Liège Conservatory in their native Belgium. When César was barely twelve, the father moved the family to Paris so that the boys might develop more quickly into *Wunderkinder*. César flourished at the Paris Conservatoire, but when he exhibited a marked preference for composition over performing, the father quickly withdrew him from the institution and insisted that he pursue a career as a performing virtuoso. Franck reluctantly went along with his father's wishes until he was twenty-four, playing concerts designed to overwhelm audiences with his technical brilliance and composing flashy piano pieces for virtuoso display.

After a couple of stormy years, the final break between father and son came when César brought "disgrace" upon the family by marrying an actress. From then on he lived a private, not to say secluded, existence as church organist, teacher, and composer until he died nearly a half-century later. During most of these years Franck avoided composing for the piano altogether, but during the last half-dozen years of his life he produced a string of piano works that are among the glories of the literature for the instrument.

In 1884, when he was sixty-two, he composed his *Prélude, Chorale et Fugue*, which he conceived originally as a Bach-inspired two-part work. Once he began the composition, however, the music assumed much larger proportions: it became a complex but extremely effective and profound personal statement. In the same year came another work for piano, this one with orchestra, in which Franck completed his ultimate retreat from the flamboyant piano pieces of his earlier years. Titled *Les Djinns*, it is rarely performed, perhaps partly because the piano is treated as an ensemble rather than as a solo instrument.

These two works were followed by the Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra of 1885, and the Prelude, Aria, and Finale of 1886-1887. The latter score is related to the *Prélude, Chorale et Fugue* in the bigness of its concept and the richness of its invention. But it is the Symphonic Variations that is probably Franck's most popular work after his Symphony in D Minor. The eminent French pianist Alfred Cortot once described it as "the most perfect . . . of Franck's artistic realizations. Here both balance and proportion are ideal."

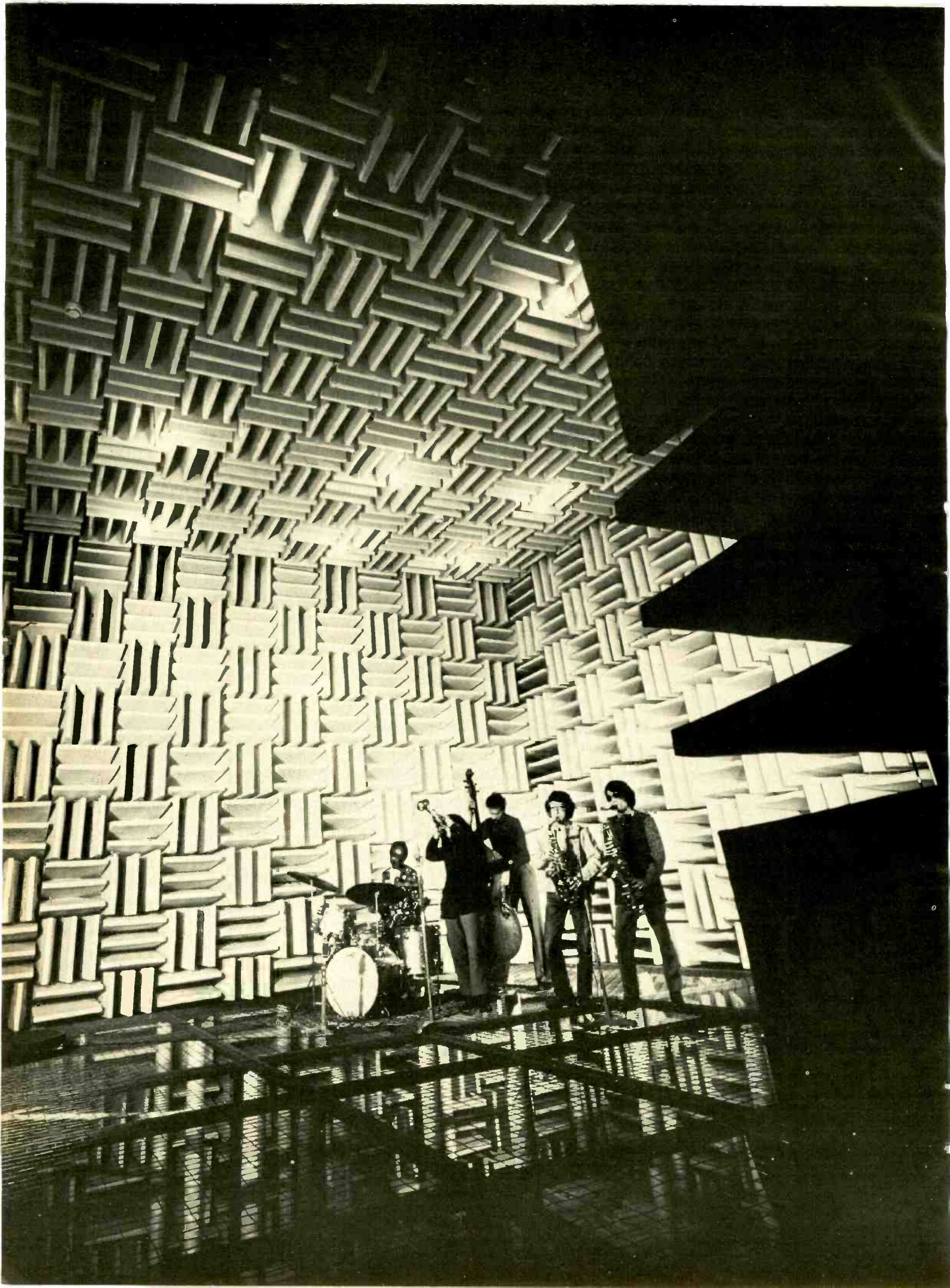
A rather aggressive theme, played fortissimo by the strings, begins the work. With a striking similarity of concept to the slow movement of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto, this stern pronouncement is immediately answered by the solo piano in a gentle, conciliatory manner. As the music progresses, there follow six free variations in which the solo piano is assigned many arpeggios and other digital embellishments. An exuberant rondo finale rounds off the work in great high spirits.

AMONG the currently available recordings of the Symphonic Variations, four strike me as having special merit, and one of these is truly outstanding. The merely excellent ones are by Robert Casadesus with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra (Odyssey Y 31274), Clifford Curzon with Sir Adrian Boult and the London Philharmonic Orchestra (London disc CS 6157, reel L 80064), and Artur Rubinstein with Alfred Wallenstein and the Symphony of the Air (RCA disc LSC 2234, cassette RK 1285). All three were recorded during the 1950's and are thus early examples of stereo technology. Surprisingly, the sound on both the Casadesus and Curzon recordings holds up quite respectably. But the sound reproduction afforded Rubinstein betrays its age: the piano has a glassy tone, the strings are rather harsh and wiry in places, and the balances leave something to be desired. Still, there is a captivating sense of spontaneity and effortlessness in Rubinstein's performance. The Casadesus and Curzon performances, if lacking the degree of personality that Rubinstein gives his, are nevertheless distinguished and perceptive accounts of the music.

My favorite among all the recordings of the Symphonic Variations, however, happens to be the newest: the performance by Alicia de Larrocha with Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos conducting the London Philharmonic Orchestra (London CS 6818). This is a meticulously inflected performance, orchestrally as well as pianistically, with detailed attention to the architectural structure of the music. The radiant warmth and subtle shading of the playing is captured in recorded sound that is rich, well balanced, and remarkably clear.

Unfortunately, the Larrocha-Frühbeck performance has the least appropriate disc-mate of them all: the faded Khatchaturian Concerto (though it, too, receives a performance of uncommon distinction). But I have absolutely no hesitation in citing the new London recording of Franck's Symphonic Variations as my first choice—worth having, whatever it is paired with.

* Mr. Bookspan's 1973-1974 UPDATING OF THE BASIC REPERTOIRE is now available in convenient pamphlet form. Send 25¢ and self-addressed #10 envelope to Susan Larabee, Stereo Review, 1 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016 for your copy. *



SPEAKER PERFORMANCE

Taken together, free-field frequency response and acoustic power response measurements are informative indicators

By Daniel Queen

THERE are many ways of measuring the frequency response of a loudspeaker. The trouble is, no one of them, alone, is totally informative about how a speaker will sound in normal use in a conventional living room. It is not unusual, for example, to find that a speaker system legitimately specified by its manufacturer as having a "flat" frequency response to beyond 15,000 Hz (in an anechoic test chamber) nevertheless sounds dull or muddy when listened to in the average home environment. Nor is it uncommon for a speaker moved from one room to another to undergo a complete change of sonic "personality," becoming shrill when it was once muted, or vice versa. Mind you, what we are talking about here are not subjective or psychoacoustic phenomena, but actual changes in the way the speaker is performing.

Obviously, if the sound of a speaker can change drastically in different acoustic environments, no single frequency-response measurement made in one specific environment is going to be able to tell the whole story about its audible performance. However, when we have at our disposal at least *two* kinds of frequency-response data, it is sometimes possible to draw a few conclusions about how a speaker will be affected by its surroundings, or at least to account for the effects of environment when such effects occur. The two different frequency measurements most often used for this purpose are referred to as the *free-field axial frequency response* and the *power response*.

The so-called "free-field axial response," which provides the frequency-response specification most often supplied by manufacturers, is usually made in an anechoic chamber with a microphone directly in front of (on the axis) of the speaker. The loudspeaker is driven with a sine-wave signal which is swept slowly from the lowest to the highest audible frequency. The variations in sound-pressure level picked up by the microphone are automatically plotted on a graph by a curve tracer synchronized with the frequency sweep. In an anechoic chamber, *only* the sound radiated directly to the test microphone is picked up and measured. Because an anechoic chamber, as its name indicates, is without echoes (sound reflections), sound radiated at other angles will never get reflected back to the microphone and therefore will not be measured.

If a loudspeaker had the same frequency response in *all* directions that it does on-axis, the free-field axial response would be a true indicator of its frequency performance. However, no real loudspeaker can achieve such uniformity fully. Since listening rooms are not anechoic chambers, they will reflect the sound, more or less, that the speaker emits in various directions, and therefore what ultimately reaches the listener is a mixture of direct and reflected sound. It follows from this that any measurement technique that attempts to predict a speaker's performance in a room must take these reflections into account.

This brings us to the power-response measurement, which is frequently made in a *reverberation chamber*. Whereas an anechoic chamber is designed to be as nonreflective as possible (ideally it should have infinite sound absorption), a reverberation chamber is designed to furnish the opposite condition—infinite reflections and zero absorption. In a reverberation chamber, all the sound radiated by the speaker in every direction bounces around billiard-ball style, eventually reaching the measuring microphone. Such a test chamber enables one to measure *all* the sound radiated by a speaker, or, in other words, its *total acoustic power output*. This can be plotted as the power/frequency response on the same type of graph as the free-field frequency response.

To help avoid spurious results from phase interference in the chamber power-response measurement, a random-noise generator is used to supply the test signal. The generator output is fed to a variable filter that permits only a narrow band of frequencies (perhaps a third of an octave) to pass through to the speaker. This filter is tunable, and so designed that it can be automatically swept slowly through the entire audio range. The sweep is synchronized with the chart recorder (the same as with a free-field measurement), and the resulting curve shows the response of the speaker as though individual frequencies were used instead of a mixed random-noise signal. *(Continued overleaf)*

◀ *A jazz group making an experimental recording in JVC's anechoic chamber, one of the world's largest. Note the wire-mesh floor.*

Although a power-response measurement taken under such conditions may seem unnecessarily strange and complex, it relates quite well to what we hear from a loudspeaker in a normal room—although, of course, a living room is neither totally reverberant nor totally anechoic, but something between the two. Normally, the sound we hear comes not only directly from the loudspeaker, but is reflected from room surfaces as well. Reflections that reach us within a short interval—from thirty to ninety thousandths of a second (30 to 90 milliseconds)—after the direct sound are not perceived as individual "echoes"; they instead fuse in a smooth blend with the first arriving sound. The reflected sound portion provides timbre and sense of space.

The representation of an oscilloscope trace in Figure 1 shows what happens to a sound produced in a living room. A loudspeaker has been driven by the single sine-wave cycle shown on the upper trace. The lower trace, taken at a representative listening position, shows that room reflections have spread the energy from the original cycle over a long period of time—approximately 65 milliseconds. This is within the "fusion-time" range, and hence what the listener hears is a composite of the speaker's direct and reflected radiations. Any meaningful frequency-response measurement of a loudspeaker must therefore take these reflections into account. This is the merit of the power-response measurement as made in a reverberation chamber.

It should be obvious that sound that includes reflections must be affected by the acoustic nature of the materials it is being reflected from. Living room surfaces (walls, furniture, drapes, and rugs), unlike the walls of the anechoic or reverberant test chambers (which totally absorb or reflect everything down to some low frequency), are unpredictable in respect to their reflectivity at different frequencies. How does this affect the relevance of the power response?

During a fusion time of 65 milliseconds, sound travels about 74 feet. This means that in an average-size living room, the sounds finally reaching the listener will have been reflected, on the average, just about eight times. The percentage of sound reflected from (rather than absorbed by) room surfaces such as carpets, furniture, drapes, etc., may vary from 20 per cent at high frequencies to 95 per cent at low frequencies. Surfaces such as plaster walls and ceilings usually reflect over 95 per cent at *all* frequencies. If the less-reflective materials cover 20 per cent of the room surface area, the average reflection will vary from about 95 per cent at low frequencies to about 80 per cent at high frequencies—a difference of less than 1 dB. After about eight and a half reflections, this difference will have increased only 3 dB. However, rooms with an unusual amount of absorptive material such as heavy lined drapes, ceiling treatment, thick rugs, etc., will show greater variation—as much as 8 dB. Putting all these figures together, we find that the power response measured in a reverberation chamber will, at worst, usually be within ±4 dB of what one hears in the living room.

A power-response measurement on a single loudspeaker indicates only how it will sound in a monophonic system. To reproduce stereo and quadraphonic material accurately, the loudspeaker must provide information about space and direction. Another look at Figure 1 will give us an idea of how complex a task this is. Note that among the long train of reflections produced by the short pulse from the speaker there are some that are actually slightly stronger than the first sound to reach the listener. (The first sound, of course, is that which comes *directly* from the speaker.) This seems odd for two reasons: (1) sound intensity should diminish with distance, and the reflected sound must have travelled a greater distance than the direct sound; and (2) on each reflection from a room surface some energy should have been absorbed, further reducing the intensity of the reflected sound.

One good explanation for this odd circumstance is that the sound in the louder reflections had a much higher intensity *at the time it left the loudspeaker* than the sound that travelled directly to the listener. This often occurs when, for stereo listen-

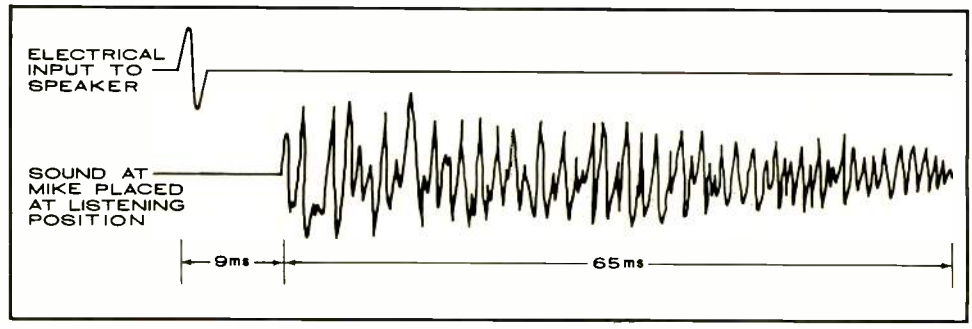


Figure 1. A single-cycle input to a speaker in a normally "live" room produces a drawn-out train of impulses as numerous room reflections reach the measuring microphone.

ing, one sits off the axis of a loudspeaker which beams most of its output *on-axis*. Therefore, the higher-intensity reflected sound that reaches an off-axis listener may actually be the on-axis sound bounced from a hard surface. But how can the loudspeaker give us an indication of direction, when what we hear are reflections from *many* room surfaces, some of them being louder than the sound coming directly from the speaker(s)?

Human hearing has adapted to a reflective environment by using only the first sound in a series of identical (technically "coherent") sounds to indicate direction. However, if two coherent sounds arrive from *different* locations within one millisecond of each other—a condition that seldom occurs in nature—the source will appear to be *between* the points of origin. This is the aspect of the hearing process that recording engineers exploit to create sonic "images" of recording artists at various positions *between* pairs of speakers. But, useful as it is, it can also create confusion. Thus, if presented with a soft direct sound and a stronger reflection delayed in time by a millisecond or so, the ear may focus on a point somewhere between the speaker and the reflecting surface. This causes the apparent sound source to be displaced away from loudspeakers which are designed to radiate most of their energy toward the walls.

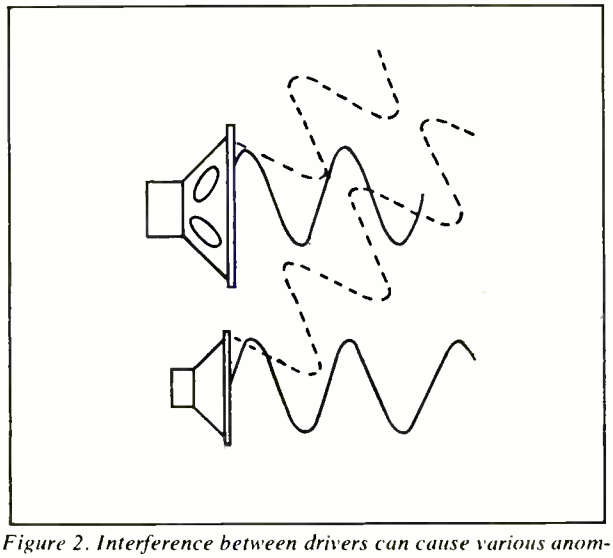


Figure 2. Interference between drivers can cause various anomalies in speaker performance. Here the off-axis output of the lower driver interferes with the on-axis output of the upper one.

The same effect can also occur when more than one driver in a loudspeaker system radiates the same frequency at the same time, as is shown in Figure 2. This can happen in systems using multiple drivers covering the same frequency range or in the area of crossover in two- and three-way systems. If one sits at an angle such that the interference of the direct sound from the two sources causes cancellation (because of phase differences), the ear may home in on a reflection. And to compound the confusion, when the angular response of the speakers used varies with frequency, instruments may appear to wander as they change pitch.

Unfortunately, this type of loudspeaker defect will not show up as such in either the free-field or the power-response measurements. However, its presence can sometimes be detected by comparing the two. In Figure 3, the on-axis response of the speaker looks flat from 30 to 17,000 Hz, falling off only at the extremes of the audio range. In contrast, the power response, while holding up well at low frequencies, dips at about 1,800 Hz and then falls rapidly above 4,000 Hz. This could be the response of a three-way speaker system with crossovers at 2,000 and 5,000 Hz. The dip at 1,800 Hz suggests the "flat" on-axis response is actually due to on-axis, in-phase reinforcement of the mid-range and tweeter, as it was in Figure 2. The rapid drop-off above 4,000 Hz suggests that the tweeter is suffering from on-axis beaming and is radiating little energy to the sides.

From all this it should be evident that when the manufacturer provides us with the total acoustic-power response of his loudspeaker, he has done much toward telling us how it will sound in an actual room. If he further provides us with the free-field axial response, we can make a judgment about the directional characteristics of the speaker. Nevertheless, it is possible that the kind of situation shown in Figure 2 may not show up as a difference

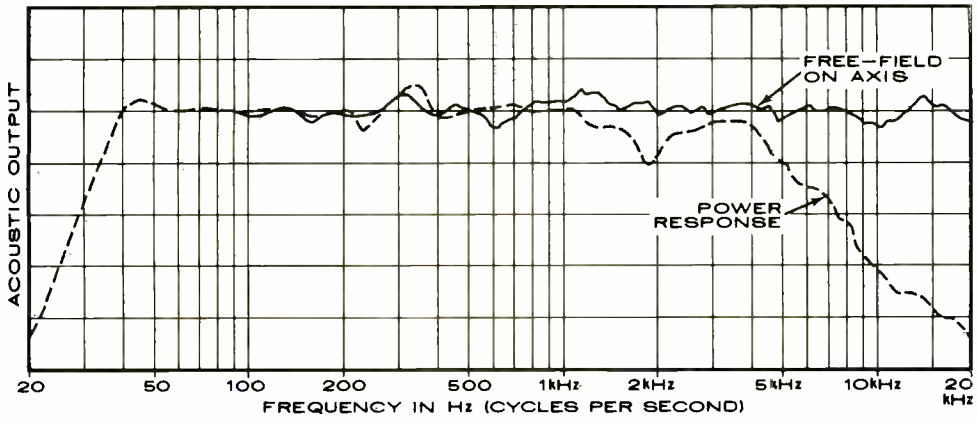


Figure 3. On-axis and power responses of a speaker system compared. The dip in the power response at 1,800 Hz suggests interference between drivers, and the rapid roll-off in response above 4,000 Hz indicates tweeter "beaming."

between the axial response and the power response. However, the same kind of random-noise signal used for power-response measurements can disclose—by ear—such response irregularities: using an FM receiver tuned off-station to supply the random noise, and moving slowly in a circle about a yard or so from a speaker system, listen for changes in sound quality. If the radiations of the individual drivers are interfering with each other, you will hear an effect as though the sound were swishing up and down.

So far we have talked about only one characteristic of a loudspeaker—its frequency response. But the reverberation chamber helps to unravel other once-mysterious differences in the sound of loudspeakers which appear to measure identically in the anechoic chamber. One elusive characteristic is transient response. This is a measure of the ability of the speaker cone to start and stop in precise response to the controlling signal. With poor transient response, castanets, for example, will sound like maracas. This is an indication that the speaker cone has too much inertia for its operating conditions, making it hard to start—and, once moving, to stop.

Fortunately, a property which is a result of this inability to stop is discernable in the power-response curve. When hit with transient signals that activate the frequencies at which it has troubles, the speaker cone tends to resonate, producing a particular output frequency. The cone, in other words, "rings." And each combination of mass and compliance (compliance in this case is the amount of stretching the cone will do) results in such a resonance frequency. At these frequencies the efficiency is higher, resulting in peaks in the acoustic-power response that are particularly evident when noise bandwidths narrower than 1/3 octave are used as the test signal. Such peaks often do not appear in the free-field, on-axis response because they are hidden by phase interference. A smooth power-response curve is usually an indication of good transient response.

While poor transient response is indicated by peaks in the power-response curve, the curve sometimes also shows sharp dips caused by poor crossover design in a multi-driver system. However, such dips can also be caused by resonances resulting from the cone dimensions; they relate to the phenomenon called *cone breakup*. When properly controlled, this cone breakup actually helps to extend and smooth the frequency response of the loudspeaker, but when it is poorly controlled the different parts of the cone are putting out signals that interfere with each other. When the signal input at a frequency near the dip is strong enough, a spurious frequency—at half the input frequency—is radiated. In the jargon of the loudspeaker manufacturer, this is *cone-cry*, and it is indeed a forlorn sound.

Throughout this article we have been discussing *acoustic power*; now let us define it in practical terms. Any form of energy—electricity, light, mechanical motion, sound—can be measured in terms of the amount that flows or is transferred or converted in a given time. We call that rate of flow *power*, and we measure it in *watts*. However, our ears do not hear changes in power; they hear changes in *air pressure*. For a sound source—be it a loudspeaker or a musical instrument—to produce a given pressure at our ears, the amount of power it must radiate varies with the environment that must be filled up with the sound. A symphony orchestra must radiate an average of about 5 watts of sound to produce an average 90 dB sound-pressure level at a seat in a large auditorium, but a loudspeaker need radiate only 0.05 watt to produce the same level in our smaller living rooms. The early reflections shown in Figure 1 may allow a lower sound-pressure level to produce an equivalent subjective *loudness*—but only for reproduction of speech and some transients, not for sustained musical sounds.

A typical bookshelf speaker system has an efficiency of about 0.5 per cent. To radiate an acoustic power of 0.05 watt, it will need an electrical power drive from the amplifier of 10 watts. To properly reproduce peaks only 20 dB over the average, an amplifier with 1,000 watts output will be required—plus a speaker system that can take it. Since only 0.5 per cent of the energy going into the speaker is radiated as sound, the remaining 995 watts must be dissipated as heat somewhere in the speaker system.

Ordinarily, the peaks will be sufficiently short that heat will not build up enough to do damage, but the danger is still there. An efficiency rating based on a speaker's total acoustic-power output can make the consumer aware of this danger, as well as provide some guidance in the selection of an amplifier whose power capabilities are in accord with the needs of his speaker system. The total acoustic-power response measurement thus provides us with the other half of the picture described by the free-field response. It is another step toward providing laboratory specifications that will predict how a loudspeaker will perform in a home environment.

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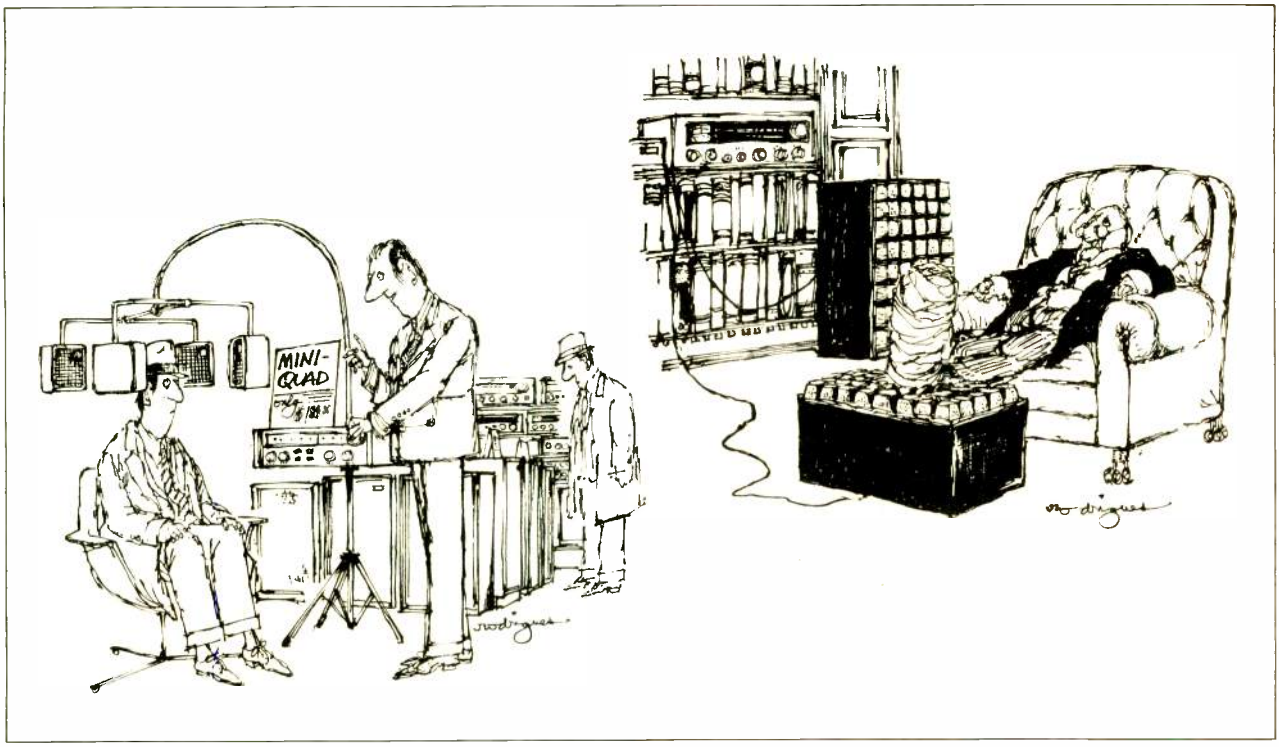
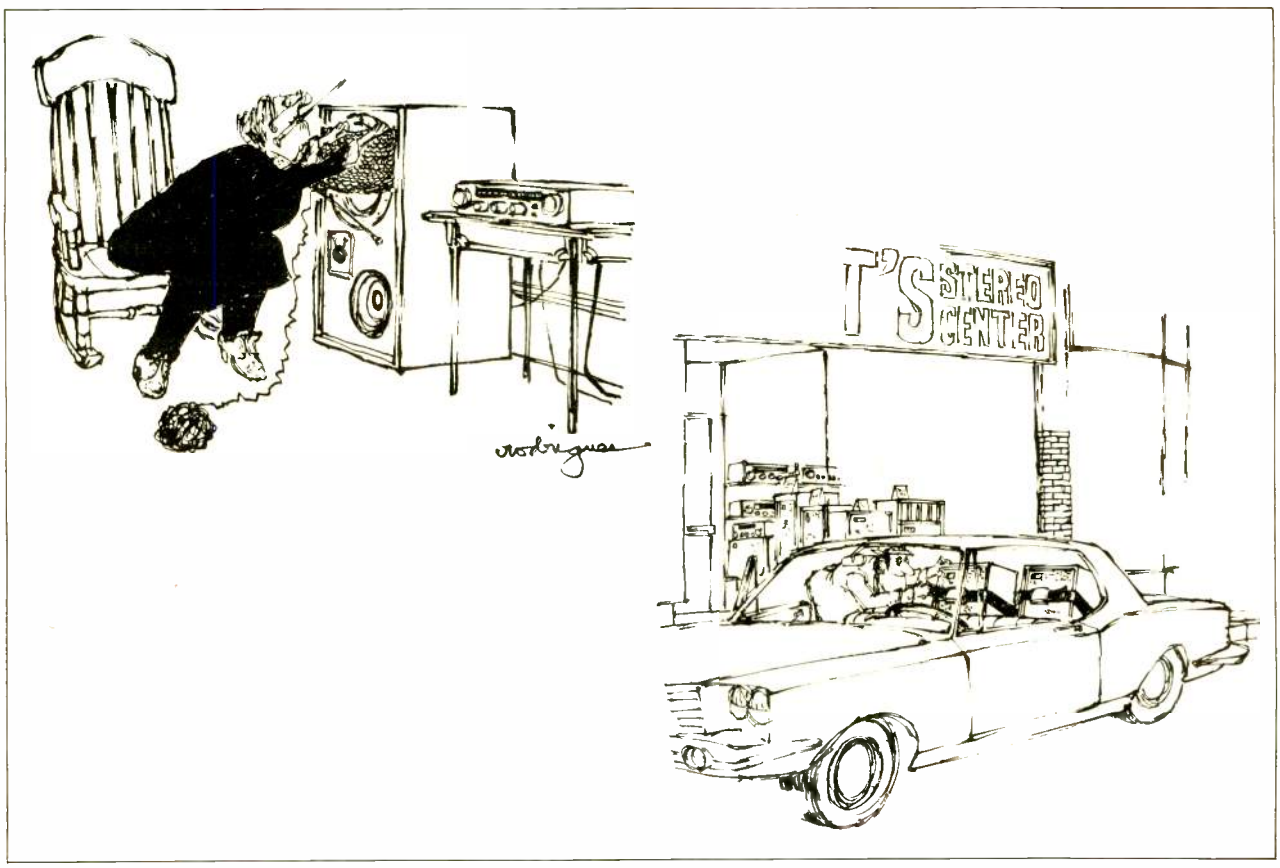
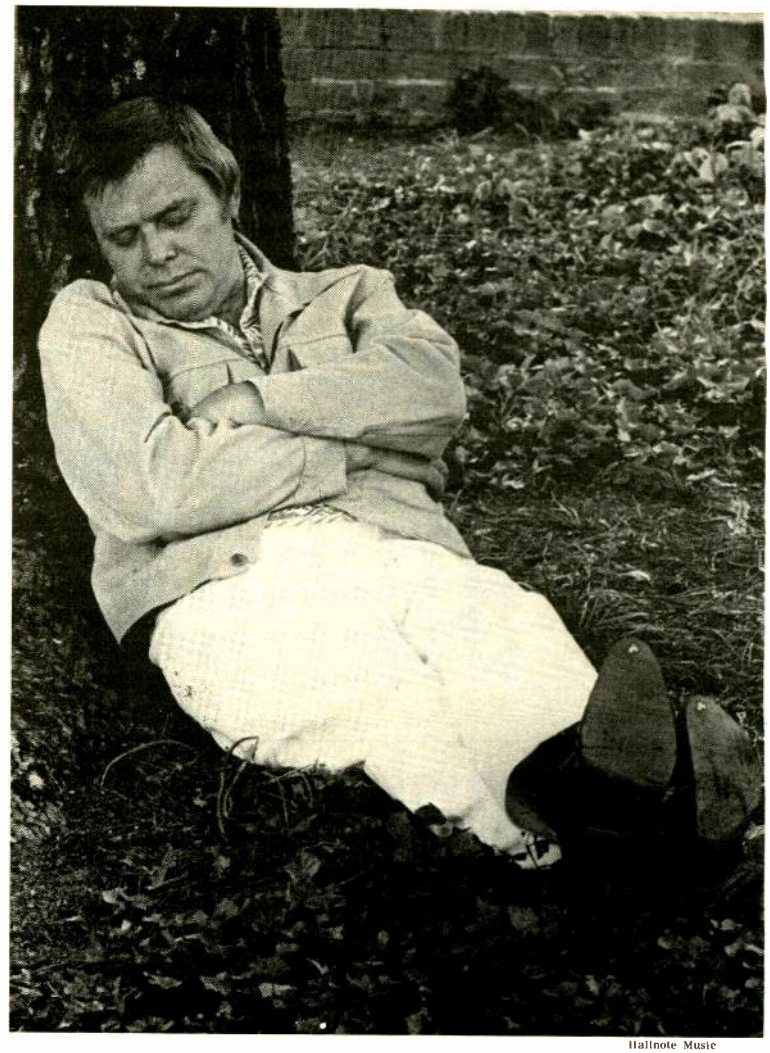


RODRIGUES ON LOUDSPEAKERS



TOM T. HALL

Noel Coppage catches the Old Storyteller with his feet up, but not exactly napping



Hallnote Music

THE Storyteller was lying down in a chair. His feet, in boots branded with two T's over an H, were hanging over an ottoman and he was peering between them at a spectacle that simply would have outraged the secretary of the Harper Valley PTA: an ordinary twenty-seven-inch color television screen on which this big hotel in sinful New York City was imposing a closed-circuit movie rated "R" and involving a lot of running stark naked in the woods by this blonde girl one might describe as tediously confused but willowy.

Yes, we were a long way from Harper Valley, a long way from Olive Hill, Kentucky, the real-life hometown of Tom T. Hall—and 150 miles farther than that from my own old digs in that same state. Tom T. Hall did not rise; he cranked his body around and extended a hand and said, "Good to see ya." And while I was looking for a repository for my soggy jacket, finding none, and depositing it on the carpet behind his chair, Tom T. came up on one elbow and gave some woman—one of several persons in the room—a long, noisy goodbye kiss. Then he stood up and gave her another. He lay down in the chair again and told Ria McKaie, the Mercury Records publicity person, "Naw, you don't have to leave. We're not going to interview. We're just going to talk." Then he asked someone to call room service for some more of that wine, which turned out to be Paul Masson rosé sent up by the half-gallon. I was only dimly aware of all this, of course, being half an hour late and soaking wet, and thoroughly preoccupied with designing tortures of various sorts for the people who run oil companies, airplanes that don't land where or when they're supposed to, taxicabs that won't stop, and people who have nothing better to do than clog up the sidewalks when a man has to be somewhere.

We were well into that not exactly tasteless but certainly efficient wine before I tried to make sense out of present, random observations. Must have been along about then that I started to speculate that Tom T. just might have been making a bit of a *show* of not getting up, not having someone take the visitor's coat, doing all that loud smooching in front

of strangers known to be handy with typewriters, and, later, getting our wine glasses mixed up and pouring the contents of mine down his own throat . . . in which case, was he watching to see what I would do about all or part of this?

I had to reach practically across his lap to get hold of *his* glass, but I picked the bastard up and drained it—or "dreened" it, as they used to say in Kentucky—in one gulp, or perhaps two, and made a last-second decision against trying to flash Tom T. a knowing Good Old Boy look because, for some reason, the thing that filled my mind was the expression on my uncle's face the time he told us his stump-sucking mare had made her escape by eating the fence. There are journalists whose sensitivity to form and manners might drive Tom T. to a dramatic nose-picking demonstration or something, I fancied, and this had all the markings of some kind of test. Tom T., I thought, wanted to establish as quickly as possible—so there'd be *some* time left to talk about his extraordinary songwriting record—that he isn't about to brown-nose any journalists, or anybody else. Tom T., as they say down home, is as independent as a hog on ice.

It is not easy for a preacher's son from Kentucky to grow up and be so candid, but I guess Hall has worked at it, and I can see that it works in a kind of circular way to guard the salvageable portion of his privacy. Anyway, one who allows—perhaps encourages—strangers to quote him saying any damned thing that pops into his head is interesting in proportion to what pops, and Tom T. doesn't have to sweat that. He's the Storyteller, remember, and also a pretty fair ad-libber, pun-maker, joke-rememberer—hell, he's even a *reader*—so he would make good copy even if he hadn't written *Harper Valley PTA*, *Ravishing Ruby*, *The Day That Clayton Delaney Died*, *Subdivision Blues*, and scores of other tunes that have made the country-music hit parade at the rate of one or two a week for something like nine years. Mercury naturally looks at his string of achievements and at what good copy he generates and has visions of his CROSSING OVER, which is like having visions of untold riches ("cross-over" is the term for the manic record buying that can happen when the vast popular-music audience takes a shine to a country artist).

Harper Valley PTA crossed over for country singer Jeanie C. Riley six years ago and is still selling. Hall, who once turned down a recording contract because he figured he was doing all right as a songwriter, is less concerned about crossing over than—there's no uncorny way of saying this—doing his own thing, going his own way, hoeing his own row.

"I don't run out and buy a record to see what's quote going on unquote," he told me. "You know, sit down with a pile of records and an ounce of grass and 'get into' these latest sounds from the coast or someplace, because first thing you know we might both be doing what they're doing and nobody would do what Tom T. Hall does. I don't want to do any *reactionary* writing, is all. I just hear my music the way everybody else does, you know, on the radio, in the car, at the drugstore, whatever. I try to keep in touch with what real people—as opposed to pickers—are doing, watch Walter Cronkite, read the newspaper, drink a little booze . . . ."

HALL is so successful at making his story-songs ring true to people who have lived them, I think, because he has a way with words, of course, and a great ear. He says the two main influences came from Ernest Hemingway and a Kentucky guitar player (who inspired *The Day That Clayton Delaney Died*), and Hemingway's concern for clean, economical language has served Hall well. With a few simple strokes, he can give the listener volumes of information. Take this little slice of *The Ballad of Forty Dollars*: "They hired me and Fred and Joe/To dig the grave and carry up some chairs/It took us seven hours/And I guess we must've drunk a case of beer." But Hall knows that gravedigger—and other mostly poor, mostly white, mostly rural, mostly Southern characters somewhat like that old boy—so well that I think not of Hemingway but of Faulkner and *his* great ear when I hear the songs. While the language is lean, the details are there just when they're needed, releasing old memories with a soft shock that is as satisfying as the fog a boy releases when he kicks a puff-ball on a hillside padded and damp with rotting leaves, and getting at what Hall once told *Newsweek* it was all about: "I try to make people hear my songs and say, 'God damn, I thought I was the only one who knew that.' "

Here's what I mean, in *Don't Forget the Coffee, Billy Joe*: "Me and Quentin went back on the hill/And cut some wood/Burnin' in that old Warm Mornin' stove/It sure smelled good." Quentin is not just a good Faulknerian name, but a *perfect* one for that time and place; "back on the hill" is exactly how they talked, when I was there, about the place where they cut wood. But the thing that really makes it is that brand name in there. I haven't thought of Warm Morning stoves for years, but my grandfather had one and so did every other farmer we knew about. Much is triggered by that small throwaway reference.

"You know what I get first," Tom T. said, *almost* sitting up in his chair. "I don't know what to call it

. . . a premise, an idea . . . it has no form. It's not worded, and I don't rush it. I just let it lay there. . . .

"I try to make whatever large statements I have to make in the form of stories involving ordinary people—I can't handle huge concepts, but I can handle two or three characters for two or three minutes.

"They asked me to write a Watergate song and I did [*Watergate Blues*], sort of clinically, but if I'd taken more time I could've written a real Watergate song. It wouldn't have been a big, head-on treatment; it might have taken the form of a story about a pooh bear, or a cab driver and a passenger, but it would have been about Watergate.

"I get up in the morning and I know what *that's* like, so sometimes I think, well, Nixon has to get up in the morning too, same way, and so did Hitler, and so does McGovern and so did Jesus—you might be able to figure out how I voted by the way I paired 'em off there—and I'm not thinking of myself on their level but trying to bring them down to mine. We have some common experiences. So I believe the actions and reactions between two individuals, two little grains of sand in this big old universe, can tell any story you have to tell, make any statement you have to make. Everything world-shaking can happen right here in this room, all the emotions. You can have World War III in an automobile accident—same emotions, same violence—as far as the individuals involved are concerned. I can't manipulate the whole world, but I can manipulate these little grains of sand."

Hall's way of doing things may rankle semi-official Nashville in many respects. He is suspected of being an intellectual, doesn't call everybody "hoss" the way simple songwriters down from the hills are expected to, and is identified with such renegades as Kris Kristofferson, Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, and Tompall Glaser, old boys who never set out to behave like chamber-of-commerce PR men and ain't about to start now. And certain powers in Nashville are *quite* image-conscious these days ("In Nashville," Tom T. says, "we're known as 'the unstables' ").

His song language, rippling with the cadences and heaped up with the homilies of real people's talk, seems more at home among the old country songs, good and bad, by such people as Jimmie Rodgers and A. P. Carter than it does among the slogans and singing commercial rewrites and square-hip "cross-over" whoring in the majority of your "modern" country songs. He has the same cavalier attitude about melodies those old fellows had, too, having used essentially the same one at varying tempos for four or five songs ("Picture a daisy swaying in the breeze," he told me when I asked him about melody writing, "then picture a train wreck—somewhere between the two is the right melody for anything you've got to say"), but occasionally, as they did, coming up with a dandy that *doesn't* sound something like all his others.

But Hall has developed his intelligence the way the good folks back home pointed it; his becoming a storyteller rather than a dealer in abstractions, cosmic or otherwise, was the natural way to go. Larry L. King, another country boy and one of the best of us old magazine writers, put it this way: "My country forebears talked colorfully and well in their country idioms of adventures among snake-handling religious cults or experiences along the creek banks, and they provided helpful instructions in the arts of coon hunting, blacksmithing, and crop tending. It was not easy, however, to catch them discoursing on ideas." Back up in the country (Larry's from Texas), a man who wanted to make a point, teach a lesson, illuminate a concept, inspire someone, or suggest how society might be improved did it by telling a tale. That was the way Jesus did it.

And so it may come to pass that a visitor in Tom T. Hall's hotel suite hears him worry aloud about finding gasoline for his band bus by relating the parable of Waylon and the truck stop—how Waylon Jennings, not long back, set up his sound system in a dried-up truck stop and did a show for striking truckers who, in appreciation, found enough gasoline to get Waylon's bus back on the tour.

Or Tom T. may, in the preamble to one story, relate this whole other story. Getting set to tell me how he met the old black man who, with such questions as "How old you think I am?" and "You ever drink any watermelon wine?", inspired the writing of *Old Dogs, Children, and Watermelon Wine* (I'd heard the story before, but I wanted a crack at any fresh details that might surface), Tom T. reminded himself that this occurred "just after I gave away the P. A. system."

It seems his sound system was a dud. "Must've had three grand in the son of a bitch and it still squeaked and belched and staticked all the time," he said. "We were playing at Flamingo Park there in Florida, outside the Democratic National Convention, supposedly pickin' so the kids would stay there and not go tear up the town. Damn thing was doing its usual routine, buzzing, popping, cutting out and all, so I said to the crowd, 'Soon as we finish this last song, you people can have this God-damned P. A. system.' Man, they swarmed all over the stage, grabbing speakers, amps, picked the place

clean in about fifteen seconds. I was just standing there, sort of blinking at all this, when a little man came up to me, very timidly, and said, 'Mr. Hall, . . . uh, you just gave away three of my microphones.' I'd forgot we'd rounded up some extra mikes in our efforts to balance the sound." That was reason enough for Tom T. to go to a bar—almost anything is—and the encounter with the old man and the creation of *Old Dogs* followed.

"Wrote it down—this will sound hokey, now—on an airplane sick bag as I was flying back to Nashville," he said, and did I say *fresh* details? "Got off the plane at 9:30, recorded the song at 10 o'clock. Ought to do more of them that way, get 'em before they cool off."

Tom T. tends to downgrade his singing with sentences like, "I just go in the studio and do what Jerry Kennedy tells me"—Kennedy being his producer—or "I'm just another old boy who picks guitar and sings through his nose." But in fact he has developed a reasonably on-key baritone that isn't nearly as nasal as it appeared in his first few albums. He can sound clipped, harried, and testy, which is just the thing for the outrageous *Subdivision Blues*; he can sound personally hurt in something like *I Flew over Our House Last Night*; and he can sound several ways in between. He *is* more valuable as a writer, however, for nobody else is getting to the quick of rural-slanted themes as he is in songs like *Homecoming*, in which a picker comes home, not exactly having made it big and too late for his mother's funeral . . . in songs like *Ravishing Ruby*, about the waitress who's still watching for her daddy, a trucker, who left her with the old couple who run this truck stop a long time back . . . and others, lots of others.

He cranked his body around for another semiprone handshake when I left, and I left actually thinking, By George, I've got this old boy figured out—and it didn't take long for that thought to leave me feeling depressed . . . somehow taking it as a personal loss that there were numerous grey hairs among the brown ones on his thirty-six-year-old head, eight or ten unneeded pounds ranging themselves around his tall frame . . . wishing I didn't have a furtive, all but hidden interest in knowing what kind of marriage he and Dixie, who writes a country-music column and raises bassett hounds, have back there in the Nashville suburbs . . . alarmed, at some hazy party, to find myself thinking of Tom T. Hall and Kris and Waylon and Johnny Cash and other pickers and saying into the nearest clump of heavy hitters and Kafka quoters, "The aware person's alternatives are either (a) too much whisky, or (b) too much Billy Graham."

But I'm better now, thank you, having realized in a brief fit of common sense that we had there a little case of identifying, or projecting, or some other of those psych terms that try to get at the notion that it wasn't so much Tom T. that I was analyzing as it was myself. We've got a few things and prejudices in common, but, hell, a horseback glance at the stuff he's written confirms he's a much more complicated man than I could hope to unravel in an afternoon, soaked as I was by the elements, harrassed by the schlock troops outside, numbed by cheap wine, and distracted by crazy naked wenches' romping images on that once reliably bland institution of visual Muzak, the tube. As if to cap my sudden and happy collision with common sense, Tom T. Hall wrote a song that as much as says he knew all along what I was up to, so let me (as it says in a lot of old country songs and in one of Tom T.'s newer ones) leave you with this thought, as worded by Tom T. into *Last Hard Town*, a song about the motivations of pickers and of listeners and possibly of magazine writers, and about how they view one another:

They came to see the people
That they thought we were
And never changed their minds;
They explained away the difference
'Cause the folks who love a picker
Can be blind.

They misunderstood the words
But understood that our
Intentions were the best;
The thing that keeps us goin'
Is the good folks
In the last hard town we met.*

Better than the cover of The Rolling Stone*? Tom T. and his wife Dixie contemplate his name set in brass in the star-studded concrete walkway in front of Nashville's Country Music Hall of Fame.*

Country Music Foundation

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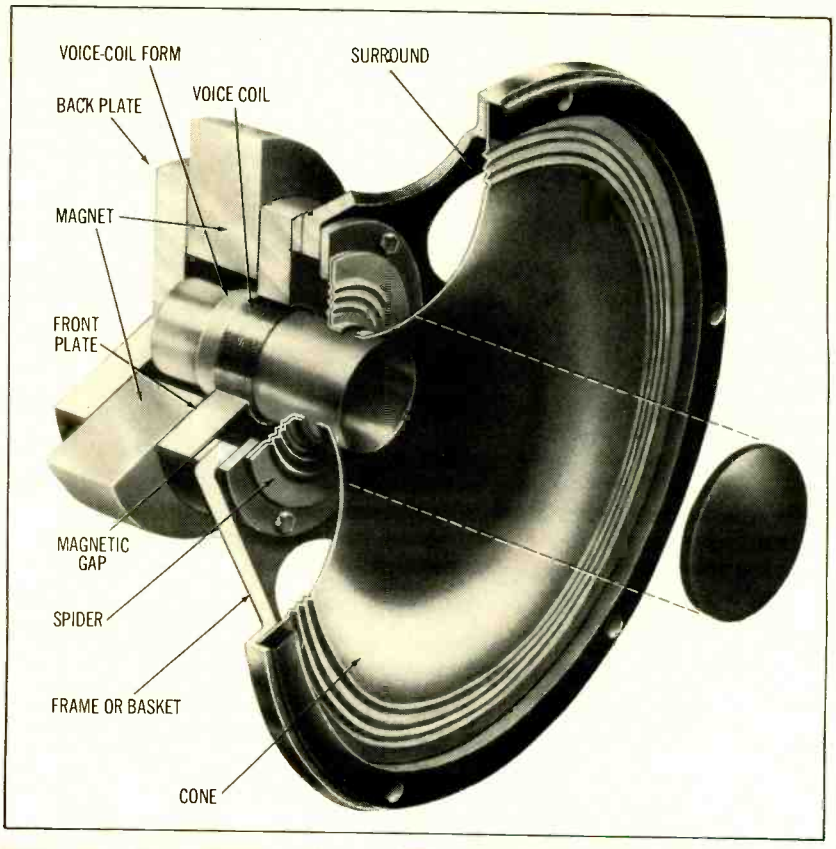

Fig. 1. A cutaway view of a conventional driver (full-range or low-frequency) showing the various internal parts. Other types of dynamic drivers, such as tweeters, contain essentially the same parts, although they differ somewhat in appearance and construction.

LOUDSPEAKER FAILURE

Its causes and prevention

By Peter W. Mitchell

CAN you damage your loudspeakers by playing music too loud? Yes, and you don't need a super-power amplifier to do it. Even a low-power amplifier can cause damage if it is regularly pushed beyond its maximum power-output capability. But you needn't panic; such damage doesn't happen very often. Still, for your peace of mind, as well as to protect the investment you have made in high-quality speakers, you might like to know what *causes* loudspeaker failure in general and what you can do to prevent it in your system. To show how and where damage can occur, we'll begin with a review of loudspeaker anatomy.

Anatomy

Most loudspeaker systems consist of one or more *drivers* installed in an enclosure. By driver, I mean a woofer, a mid-range, or a tweeter. The driver (see Figure 1) consists of several parts, most prominent of which is the "diaphragm," the shallow cone or rounded dome that is visible when the enclosure's grille is removed. Attached to the back of the cone or dome is a cylindrical bobbin on which is wound a coil of fine wire, the *voice coil*. The voice coil fits into a narrow circular slot in an assembly consisting of a permanent magnet and a surrounding structure of soft iron. The slot, or "gap," has to be narrow in order to concentrate the magnet's field on the voice coil. A circular piece of spring-like corrugated fabric, called a *spider*, is used to guide the movement of the voice coil so that it remains centered in the narrow slot of the magnetic assembly. Woofers (low-frequency drivers), tweeters (high-frequency drivers), and mid-ranges are all made this way, though they differ in details. (This description, of course, applies to "dynamic" speakers, which represent the vast majority of speakers sold today. Electrostatic loudspeakers and a few other novel types are constructed differently.)

The combination of voice coil and magnetic assembly constitutes an electric "motor" designed to be driven by the output of an audio amplifier. The amplifier, in sending an audio signal to the speaker system, causes an electrical current to flow in the voice coil—a small current for small signals, a rather large one for loud musical passages. The flow of the current causes a varying magnetic field to be formed about the voice coil, and this field, because

of its interaction with the driver's magnet, causes the coil to move rapidly backward and forward (vibrate) in the magnetic assembly's slot. And since the coil is attached directly to the diaphragm, it also moves, in turn imposing *its* vibratory motion on the air in the form of rapid pressure variations, otherwise known as *sound.*

The louder the sound a given speaker system is called upon to produce, the greater must be the current flowing through its voice coil and the longer the back-and-forth motions *(excursions)* performed by the voice-coil/diaphragm assembly. These are the factors of most concern to us.

Types of Damage

Aside from the obvious possibilities of direct physical abuse (rupturing the diaphragm with a well-placed kick, or dropping the whole loudspeaker down a flight of stairs), there are two common sources of loudspeaker damage: excessive voice-coil excursion (especially in the woofer) and the buildup of excessive heat in the voice coil (especially in the tweeter).

● ***Excursion.*** For music reproduced at average home loudness levels, the back-and-forth excursion of the voice coil is only a small fraction of an inch. This usually leaves enough excursion in reserve to handle the loudest musical moments on modern recordings, or even to permit a substantial increase in the volume-control setting. But if you ever do drive the voice coil beyond its design range, several things can happen. The voice coil may be driven all the way back into the slot in the magnet structure, so that it strikes the back plate of the assembly. This voice-coil "bottoming" is quite audible, often taking the form of a rapid clacking or clicking or even a hair-raising "blatt." Another possibility is that excessive excursion will drive the voice coil so far forward that it pops out of its slot and fails to reenter it properly. This often results in permanent misalignment. The voice coil then rubs against the internal parts of the magnet assembly, causing a scraping or a rattle on certain notes. Another possibility is that the coil could become jammed in the slot, preventing further movement altogether. Excessive excursion may also stretch or tear the fabric spider that holds the coil centered in the gap, or it may similarly damage the diaphragm where it is bonded to the metal frame of the driver. Finally, there are the wires that carry the electric current to the voice coil from the speaker's input terminals (or from the crossover); if the coil is vibrating back and forth too vigorously, these wires are flexed excessively and may fray and finally break. Figure 2 on the following page illustrates some of these mishaps.

Of these excursion problems, voice-coil bottoming in the woofer is by far the most frequent, the result of playing music too loud. The other kinds of damage mentioned above usually require drastically excessive excursion. For instance, if you install standard a.c. plugs and extension sockets on your speaker wires in order to permit convenient disconnection of the speakers for house cleaning, sooner or later someone will make the mistake of plugging a speaker line into an a.c. wall socket. The speaker will absorb over a thousand watts of power, emitting a brief but very loud death rattle—and the demise is not covered by the warranty. So if you want to have quick-disconnect plugs in your speaker lines, use *any* kind of connector (phone plugs or dual banana plugs) other than the a.c. type. (Incidentally, speaker drive signals themselves pose no shock hazard, so you needn't worry about exposed wires or pins as long as they don't touch each other and short-circuit the amplifier.)

● ***Heat.*** When you play music loud, your amplifier puts more electrical current through the voice coils of your speakers. Now, whenever an electrical current flows in a wire, some heating occurs, and the greater the current the hotter the wire becomes. This is why house wiring is equipped with fuses or circuit breakers, to stop excessive current safely before it can overheat the wires in your walls and start a fire. There's not too much danger of fire inside your loudspeakers, but it is possible, by persistently playing music at excessive loudness levels, to build up enough voice-coil heat to melt the insulation of the voice-coil wires, thus causing a short circuit, or to char the voice-coil form and the adhesive bonding the wire. Tweeters are particularly susceptible to this kind of damage, since their design requires low-mass voice coils with thin wire that heats up all the more quickly.

General Precautions

In the preceding paragraphs I may have painted a frightening picture of loudspeaker vulnerability. Actually, high-fidelity loudspeakers are not all that fragile; in fact, they could be considered the most reliable component in an audio system. But their design is optimized for reproducing recorded music in the home, and the likelihood of damage goes up when a speaker is fed signals its designer did not anticipate for it.

At mid-range frequencies, where most music (and especially recorded music) has its greatest concentration of sonic energy, a good speaker can play loud enough to satisfy practically anyone. In fact,

for much music, even small speakers can safely be driven by surprisingly powerful amplifiers.

But with loud signals at very low and very high frequencies, a speaker can run into severe problems. It is characteristic of loudspeakers that, the lower the frequency of a musical sound, the greater is the excursion needed to produce a desired sound level. A good loudspeaker can safely play tympani drum beats (with a fundamental frequency of, say, 200 Hz) as loud as you please. But to reproduce a *bass* drum (perhaps around 50 Hz) at equivalent loudness levels would require upwards of sixteen times greater voice-coil/cone excursion, which may run the voice coil out of the gap or "bottom" it.

Usually the smaller and less expensive a loudspeaker is, the less power-handling capacity it has at extremely low frequencies. (Don't confuse this with frequency response. There are some compact, low-cost speaker systems that *respond* down to the lowest frequencies and reproduce a bass drum well at musically satisfying levels in a conventionally small listening room. But they won't shake the floors nor fill a large hall with adequate bass levels.)

Since excessive excursion is the result of too much signal at the lowest frequencies, woofer damage can be avoided by a straightforward rule: *don't* turn up your volume and bass controls too much at the same time. Feel free to use as much amplifier bass boost as you like at moderate loudness levels, and feel free to crank up the volume control to a satisfyingly loud level with just moderate bass boost. But high volume and high bass boost *together* are a prescription for danger. When a woofer is overdriven it may exhibit audible distress signals: clicking (voice-coil bottoming) or buzzing. If you hear these noises, turn down the controls fast!

There are other potential sources of excessive low-frequency input. If you leave the volume and/or bass controls turned up high while lowering the phono stylus to a record groove or while tuning rapidly across the FM dial, strong low-frequency pulses can be generated that may cause enormous woofer excursions and possible damage. Some tape recorders and amplifiers may also produce low-frequency thumps during switching. And, of course, connecting or disconnecting any shielded cables should *never* be done with the system turned on. Finally, cleaning the phono stylus with your equipment on and switched to the phono input can produce massive low-frequency signals, even if the proper technique is used (brush only from back to front, not side-to-side). If you have rugged speakers and a low-to-medium power amplifier, these various low-frequency impulses may prove to be annoying rather than dangerous. But if your amp is rated at

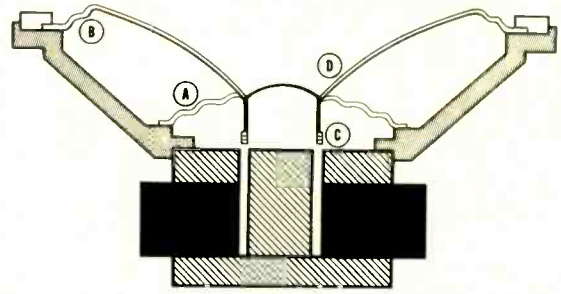

Fig. 2. Profile of an overdriven cone driver. The inner (A) and outer (B) suspensions are contorted or torn by excessive excursions. The voice coil (C) may be permanently driven out of its gap, damaged by mechanical and/or thermal stress, or separated from the cone (D).

100 watts or more per channel, you should definitely write to the manufacturer of your speakers and inquire about fusing your speaker lines. Remember that many amplifiers can pass large signals with frequencies far above and below the range of human hearing, so it's sometimes what you *don't* hear that proves damaging in the end Fuses may protect your speakers against these unperceived intruders. In addition, with all amplifiers it is wise to make a habit of turning the volume control down before operating any other control in the stereo system.

The principal factors in tweeter failure are heat and broken connecting leads. A good tweeter can accommodate astonishingly large bursts of *momentary* power, but *sustained* high-frequency signals can burn it out or cause its wires to break from continuous rapid flexing. It is fortunate that the power-handling capability of tweeters is well matched to the sonic characteristics of most music. Those instruments which can generate large amounts of high-frequency energy (bells, cymbals, and other percussion instruments) usually do so only in brief bursts with rest periods between notes. Instruments that can produce continuous high-frequency sounds (piccolos, organ, violins) usually do not do so very loudly. Most classical, jazz, and even rock music is therefore no threat to your tweeters even if played at high volume levels.

But beware of music containing repeated or sustained sounds that are both high-pitched and very loud, as these can melt tweeter voice coils at high volume-control settings. For example, in some rock recordings the engineers compress the dynamic range to a nearly constant volume level, so that your tweeters are not given time to cool between bursts of maximum energy. With these recordings you shouldn't attempt to approach the sort of sustained high loudness levels that are heard in clubs and at highly amplified concerts unless you

are confident of your speakers' capabilities in this regard. Uncompressed high-fidelity recordings, on the other hand, not only sound more lifelike and have more impact than compressed recordings; they are also generally safer to play at high volume levels because they have a high peak-to-average ratio. Even though the peaks may draw the full power of the amplifier, they will do so only briefly, whereas the long-term average levels will be considerably lower. On the other hand, one tends to set the volume control somewhat higher for uncompressed music since the average level is lower, so when a loud, uncompressed peak comes along, it may blow the speaker fuses.

Unlike acoustic musical instruments, electronic music synthesizers such as the Moog can generate sustained high-frequency sounds at any level the composer desires, and so may exceed the performance capabilities of high-fidelity loudspeakers. Brief beeps and whistles that sweep up and out quickly are usually no problem, but if the music contains continuous high whistles, play it safe and moderate the volume level. Another way you might melt your tweeters' voice coils is by feeding in single-frequency test tones from a signal generator or test record with the volume control turned up to help you hear the highest tones clearly. Test tones are hazardous for several reasons. First of all, unlike music signals, they are continuous, and the tweeter doesn't get a chance to cool off between notes. Secondly, because of the nature of the human hearing mechanism, the ear finds the true intensity of single-frequency tones difficult to judge. They often sound *much* softer than music at the same levels, thus tempting one to increase the amplifier output to a level beyond what the speakers can tolerate. Tape recorders that let you hear the tape while in fast-forward or rewind must also be used with care; if you leave the volume up, the near-ultrasonic twittering can be very hard on tweeters, even if it doesn't sound very loud to your ears.

If you find that, at the loudness level you enjoy, the sound takes on a biting, harsh, or gritty texture it lacks at lower levels, then you may be driving your amplifier into distortion. The strident quality is caused by clipping, which generates lots of spurious high-frequency energy. ("Clipping" is what an amplifier does to the musical signal when driven beyond its rated power output.) If you find this biting edge on the sound attractive (some do) and continue operating your stereo system this way, you are gambling with the life of your tweeters. They can reproduce short bursts of high-frequency energy brilliantly, but a continuous diet of clipping distortion is murder. This is a situation where a high-power amplifier, reproducing the signal loud and clear, can actually be safer than a lower-power amp which is continuously driven into distortion. According to one manufacturer, more tweeters are damaged by moderate-power amplifiers than by super-power amps operating cleanly. Therefore, as you turn up the volume, listen to the quality of the sound. As long as it sounds at least as clean as it did at lower levels, you're safe. But the intrusion of an edgy or distorted quality that gets rapidly worse as volume increases is a danger sign.

Incidentally, if your amplifier has provisions for plugging in an electric guitar or electric bass, don't play such instruments loudly through your stereo speakers. *Recordings* of these instruments (which have been subjected to various limiting processes) can safely be played through high-fidelity speakers, but special instrument speakers are needed to handle the direct output from the electric instruments themselves unless they are played very softly. Of course, if you want to play even recorded rock music at the loudness levels encountered in the front row at a rock concert, you need speakers designed specifically to produce those sound-pressure levels. Practically no conventional high-fidelity loudspeaker can.

Specific Tips

As I have indicated, high-fidelity loudspeakers made by reputable manufacturers can safely be used with amplifiers of any power rating to play most kinds of music as loud as most people want to hear it in their homes. Much of the time, there is no need to be at all concerned with the power-handling capabilities of loudspeakers. But if you want to protect your speakers from accidents and from extreme conditions, follow these sensible rules:

1. Don't install standard a.c. plugs on your speaker wires.
2. Be alert for the danger signs of an overdriven stereo system: clicking or buzzing from the woofer, and strident or gritty treble that clears up at lower loudness levels.
3. Turn down the volume when changing records, tuning FM, flipping switches, fast-winding a tape, etc.
4. At high volume levels don't use excessive bass boost, especially with small speakers.
5. Don't play FM interstation hiss or high-pitched electronic music at very loud levels, and don't play test tones at even moderately loud levels.
6. If you are using a very high-power amplifier, follow your speaker manufacturer's recommendations about fusing. (There's no easy formula for calculating the proper fuse for a given speaker.)

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How to get next to your very own NEARPHONES

A midsummer project for the demon audiophile

By Larry Klein
Technical Editor

THE young lady who graces our cover this month is sitting in one possible version of a build-it-yourself nearphone listening chair. The term "nearphone" was coined by Peter Tappan, an acoustician with the firm of Bolt Beranek and Newman, and the nearphone approach has been explored by other researchers in past years. But since the design demands that nearphones be either part of a piece of furniture or take the form of a rather ungainly speaker arrangement, the nearphone configuration reached the market only in an expensive but good-looking chair manufactured by Lee West, Inc. (2824 Metropolitan Place, Pomona, California 91767). However, there's no magic element in the design, and following the simple instructions below should enable you to convert any suitable chair (or small

enclosed area) into an inexpensive nearphone "environment."

The theory behind the nearphone is gratifyingly simple. It not only combines some of the best features of earphones and conventional loudspeakers, but also eliminates some of the faults inherent in both. Today's better stereo headphones have evolved to a state of sonic excellence, and in respect to distortion and frequency and transient response, they sound quite as good as the finest speakers and are a lot less expensive for the sound quality delivered. However, as most headphones users are aware, discs and tapes are not normally recorded in a way that is particularly compatible with headphone listening. Not only is the stereo stage created by headphones distributed variously and unnaturally across your brow, your pate, or the nape of your neck, but in addition the performer placement rotates in a very un-concerthall-like way as you turn your head. It is for perfectly valid psychoacoustic reasons, therefore, that some people find earphone listening most unpleasant, and quite apart from the possible physical discomfort of having to wear a device on the head. Judging by the sales figures, however, those who find headphones sonically unbearable—or physically unwearable—are in the minority. Or possibly the discomforts experienced are more than compensated for by the joys of hearing a frequency response unaffected by poor room acoustics and of being able to deliver to the ears a loudness level that if attempted with loudspeakers would provoke unpleasant reactions from the neighbors.

Since the nearphone listener hears what acousticians refer to as the "on-axis near-field" of the speakers, a very smooth, extended, and low-distortion response can be obtained from inexpensive drivers installed in simple baffles. This is true because large movements of the speaker cones (a prime source of distortion) are not required, nor is wide dispersion. Too, resonances from the baffle and, of course, room effects are avoided. One 6-inch or larger single-cone, full-range driver can be used for each channel. (Lafayette, Radio Shack, Olson, and others sell such units for well under $20 a pair.) Avoid two-way systems unless the woofer and tweeter are mounted coaxially. Many of the better car-radio speakers made by Jensen and others should do a fine job either mounted in their original baffles or installed in home-built baffles. You can pay up to $50 a pair for these, but the special virtues, in a car, of the more expensive units are not really needed in nearphone application, mostly because the speakers won't be driven as hard.

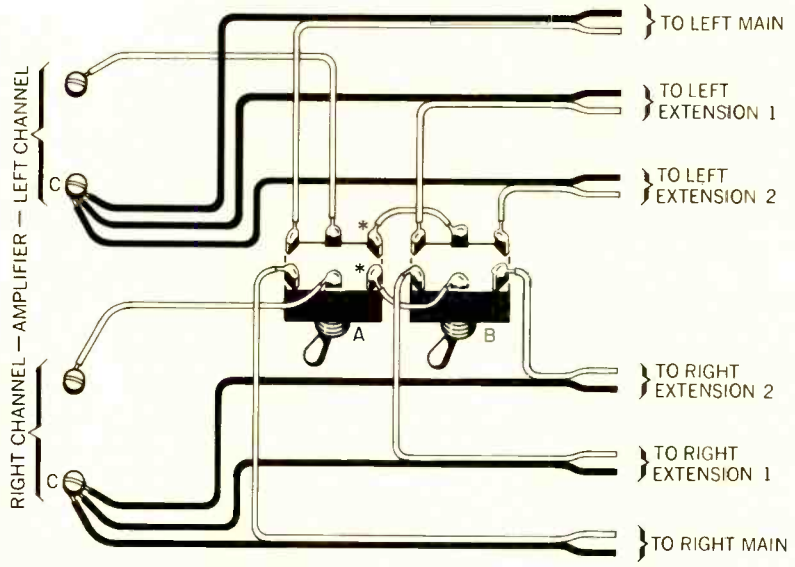
For reasons similar to those that enable headphones to deliver an "impossible" low-frequency response given the limitations of their "baffle" dimensions, nearphone speakers can do very well with an open-back flat baffle with, say, a foot or so frontal area and perhaps 8-inch sides. The larger the drivers used and the closer they are to the ears, the less is required from the baffle.

The speakers should be mounted at ear level and as far forward as possible, but tilted so they are aimed directly at the ears of the listener. For a four-channel speaker arrangement, simply move the two rear speakers about until you achieve the most pleasing channel-to-channel balance. As a possible bonus, anyone outside the nearphone field will hear the music at background level, while the nearphone listener hears a satisfyingly loud performance.

THE connections to your amplifier are conventional. Use the amplifier's remote-speaker terminals or buy or construct (see the diagram at left) a switch setup that will permit you to hook in the nearphone speakers. Wire in a stereo level control (actually a pair of concentrically mounted L-pads, available from most parts suppliers) between the amplifier output and the speakers. This will enable you to adjust both the overall level and the relative balance between the nearphone drivers. Set the amplifier controls so that the nearphones are playing slightly louder than you would normally use them, and then make fine adjustments with nearphone pads. Note that if you use the L-pads turned down more than 50 per cent while the amplifier is turned up, you may overheat the pads. Quadraphonic nearphones will require *four* level controls, of course.

If the preceding instructions seem somewhat skimpy, it's mostly because the best procedure to follow is one of trial and error. Adjust the speakers' positions for the best effect before fixing them permanently in place. There are no rules to follow other than those given above, and when you get things right, the sound quality will really surprise you.

If your amplifier doesn't have a switch for handling remote speakers, you can put together the switching system shown below. Designed to accommodate two pairs of extension speakers (switch A selects either MAIN *or* EXTENSION *speakers, B selects* EXTENSION *1 and 2), the circuit can be modified to permit switching only between main speakers and one pair of extensions: eliminate switch B and all* EXTENSION *2 wiring, then connect the two white wires from right and left* EXTENSION *1 to the starred terminals on switch A.*



MADY MESPLÉ

A French soprano scores a classical "breakout"

By Henri-Louis de La Grange

"Music is not only my occupation. It is my passion, my reason for existing!" says French singer Mady Mesplé. "But if I were to be reborn, I would like to be a man—and a conductor." Few other sopranos in history would, I think, have made such a statement, especially those who venture into the lofty regions above the staff, regions reputedly inhabited only by scatterbrains. But Mme. Mesplé is not a usual sort of soprano, nor a usual sort of woman, as her abruptly challenging candor demonstrates.

When I interviewed Mesplé in her New York hotel shortly after her debut at the Metropolitan Opera earlier this season, she answered my questions and told me the story of her life in the simplest, most straightforward way. Her love of music stems from her background and early youth. She was only four years old when her parents took her to the opera for the first time. It was a performance of *Faust* at the Capitole Theater in her native city, Toulouse. Was it an instant revelation? "Not at all," Mesplé replied. "I was scared to death because I had been told that I would see the devil in the flesh. I kept asking my parents why the tenor 'couldn't speak.' They explained that he was an Italian singing in his native language, but I was deeply disturbed just the same."

Mado, as she was then called, was lucky to have been born in Toulouse, which is probably the only city in France with a real singing tradition. Music was the cause of her parents' meeting and subsequent marriage, since both were members of the same choral group. Because of this, was Mado's early wish for a singing career immediately encouraged? She seemed surprised by my question. "Not in the least! My mother had a lovely voice when she was young, but my grandmother wouldn't hear of a singing career for her: 'That milieu of gypsies is not for us!' My mother felt the same way. She was sure that artists were all people of dubious morals, and she wouldn't accept the idea of my appearing on a stage." Such prejudices are by no means unusual in France, the country which nearly denied a Christian burial to its greatest playwright, Molière, because he died an actor.

Fortunately, young Mado's early passion was for music, not the theater, and she was allowed to start *solfège* (vocal exercises and sight-singing) at the age of four. Quite soon, she decided that she wanted to be a singer, but her passion for music and a precocious talent for sight-reading nearly destroyed all chances of a career. When she was nine, she was given some opera scores and spent most of her time at the piano, singing *all* the parts. Why should she be content with Marguérite and Carmen when Don José and Mephisto were also fascinating characters? Soon these became her favorite roles, with disastrous effect on her fragile young voice. Mado's *solfège* teacher sounded the alarm and warned her that if she continued all hope of a career would have to be abandoned.

Later the young soprano studied harmony at the Toulouse Conservatory, intending to move to Paris and become a concert pianist. This dream was never fulfilled, but she did pursue her piano studies long enough to make a living for a short time as an accompanist and jazz performer. By then she was already seriously studying singing with Madame Izar, a former operetta soprano and the wife of the director of the Capitole. The Izars became the young girl's patrons, mentors, and close friends. After consent had been obtained from Mesplé's family, partly by force (Mado proved her determination by running away from home) and partly by deceit (she promised her mother her vocal abilities would be displayed only in church or during first-communion banquets), Madame Izar, a Belgian, obtained the young singer's first engagement in Belgium. "I shudder when I think how bad I must have been. There I was in Liège making my stage debut as Lakmé (of all parts), wearing eccentric costumes (a white gown with bright red sunflowers in the first act, spangles in the second) designed by a friend of mine, a Toulouse Beaux Arts student! All I knew about stage performances was that I must walk on and then walk off after I had sung."

The performances must have been at least vocally satisfactory, however, for Mesplé was engaged by the Liège Opera and sang a number of roles there. Nevertheless, the theatrical and musical experience thus gained did not greatly increase her self-confidence, and when she later auditioned with 180 other singers for the Brussels Opera, she was so sure she had failed that she did not even bother to consult the list of the five winners—on which her name came first. Later, when she went to Paris, a similar lack of self-confidence led her to wait for several weeks before using the letter of introduction which Madame Izar had written to the director of the Opéra. After her first audition there, she was engaged at once, but rather than the happy fulfillment of a lifelong dream, this heralded a period of complete stagnation. The Opéra was then passing through one of the saddest periods in its long history. Most of the huge company seldom—or never—appeared on stage, although they drew regular salaries. "One day," Mesplé recalled, "I met the administrator in one of the corridors. He had never heard of me and asked me who I was."

To make matters worse, Mesplé, who had married in the meantime, had been very ill after the birth of her daughter. Her voice had suffered greatly: the high notes, E and F above the staff, were still there, but little else. For several months, whenever she sang in public, her vocal production was insecure and she suffered lapses of memory. So Mesplé started to reconstruct her entire technique with the help of Janine Micheau, her teacher at that time.

Her gloomy period finally came to an end, and Mesplé regained full control of her vocal means, but still no one at the Opéra seemed to remember that she existed. Joan Sutherland had been invited to sing *Lucia* in Paris and the

entire Covent Garden production had been imported for the occasion. After Sutherland had sung her scheduled performances and returned to England, a responsible French administrator suddenly realized that the sets were in Paris for a year and that the Opéra possessed a suitable tenor (Alain Vanzo) and a fine baritone (Robert Massard) for *Lucia*. Mesplé was the only possible choice for the title role, and one day, arriving for a rehearsal, she saw her name printed on a poster which announced the next *Lucia* performance. She had hardly ever sung in the larger house, the Opéra itself, but only at the Opéra-Comique, and this seemed the chance of a lifetime. But she wasn't happy, she was furious. She had never sung *Lucia* in Paris and felt it would be folly to improvise such an important debut. She therefore declined the honor and made her Paris debut in the role only several weeks later. Very soon she found herself singing it regularly, as well as Gilda in *Rigoletto* and the Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute*.

Mesplé has also made a name for herself as a concert and opera performer of some difficult avant-garde works. Was she always well-disposed toward the music of this century? "Not a bit," she answered. "My first modern role was Hilda in Henze's *Elegy for Young Lovers*. I usually learn new parts very quickly, but three months before the premiere I still hadn't managed to memorize one single phrase. I decided to give up. Then the director of the Nice Opera, where the performance was to take place, told me he would find a German soprano to sing the role in French since 'once again it appeared that French singers were not responsible professionals.' I was deeply mortified, of course. Then I thought of Fischer-Dieskau, who had created the leading role in this opera and must have liked it since his motives could not have been money or fame. So I decided to persist and finally discovered that I enjoyed the part.

"Shortly afterwards the viola player Serge Collot brought me a new score by one of the most brilliant younger composers of the French school, Betsy Jolas. It was a quartet for strings and voice. The idea interested me, and I accepted right away. Betsy made a few alterations to suit my voice, and rehearsals began. It was one of the worst ordeals of my life. Betsy's ear is flawless, and she was never satisfied with anything but complete perfection. Sometimes after practicing for two hours with the trio, I felt as if my brain would explode, and I still wasn't sure of myself." Betsy Jolas' quartet had an immediate and tremendous success at its premiere, and so did Mesplé, whose performance was a triumph of accuracy and musicianship. She later sang the work in England, Switzerland, and Spain and recorded it for Pathé Marconi (the French affiliate of EMI). "It is so beautifully written for the voice that I never feel tired after a performance," Mesplé said. "All the 'friends' who told me that modern music would ruin my voice must be disappointed!" Since then Maurice Ohana, Patrice Mestral, and Philippe Capdenat have all dedicated compositions to Mesplé, and she has sung Varèse and Schoenberg at the Domaine Musical, an association founded by Pierre Boulez to further contemporary music.

Before I interviewed Mesplé, Boulez told me that her accuracy of pitch had dazzled him during two performances of Schoenberg's *Herzgewächse* for which he had recently engaged her in London. When I repeated Boulez's comment to her, Mesplé replied, "Perfect pitch? Not at all. I don't have it and never have had it. Boulez is wrong. My *solfège* teacher had told me that my pitch was perfect, but Madame Izar patiently convinced me otherwise. It was a painful realization, but I suddenly understood that the *placing* of a note could alter its pitch. Intonation is still my main concern when I practice. The Doll's Aria in *Hoffmann*, for instance, is not difficult vocally, but to get each note exactly right is another matter. Every time I sing it, I am afraid."

When I asked her which past and present singers had been her models, Mesplé mentioned two French coloraturas, Lily Pons and Gabrielle Ritter-Ciampi, as well as the Spanish soprano María Barrientos, whose fast and accurate vocalises she finds unsurpassable. Maria Callas was also a leading influence because of her way of giving dramatic meaning to every musical phrase. Among her favorite artists, Mesplé also named Barbra Streisand, whose performance in *Funny Girl* she considers an invaluable lesson for classical singers.

"My life? My plans? Please talk to my manager. I forget so much. Yes, there was Moscow last May, but I wasn't happy at the Bolshoi. I felt that most of the people attended more out of a sense of duty than for the love of music." Mesplé's busy schedule has recently included singing several roles in Buenos Aires as well as Milhaud's *Christoph Colomb* in Brussels. After a 1973 tour of Russia, Hungary, Poland, and Rumania, she returned to France to record four operettas—Jean-Robert Planquette's *Les Cloches de Corneville*, André Messager's *Véronique*, Louis Ganne's *Les Saltimbanques*, and Charles Lecocq's *La Fille de Madame Angot*—and some aria recitals. Among her records available in the United States are an album of Strauss waltzes, an album of French arias, Villa-Lobos' *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5*, Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*, and several works by Erik Satie (all on the Angel label) and a complete version of *Lakmé* (Seraphim).

ABOUT America, Mesplé made only favorable comments. The New World is not a new experience for her. Before her debut at the Met as Gilda in *Rigoletto*, she had already sung in Miami (*Lakmé* and Philine in *Mignon*), Washington (*Le Comte Ory*), and Chicago (*The Magic Flute*). "What about the Met, then?" was my last question. "Did you find it very large, cold, and inhuman as has been claimed?" "No, I didn't," she replied. "In fact, my work there will remain one of the most pleasant memories in my entire career. The atmosphere, both backstage and in the auditorium, is extremely warm, much more so than in Russia. Here, at least, I feel that people attend the opera because they want to hear the music and the singers. I was particularly happy to make my debut with Serge Baudo conducting, since I have often sung with him in Lyons." Obviously, Mady Mesplé loves America, and one explanation is that American audiences love her. In Seattle, after a local disc jockey had programmed her Angel disc of Strauss waltzes, record shops had difficulty keeping the album in stock, and the Seattle audience took her to its heart when she later appeared with the Seattle opera company. A popular-disc "breakout" is not all that unusual, but when was the last time a classical disc scored one?

Henry-Louis de La Grange, *a French scholar educated partly in the United States, is the author of the definitive biography of Gustav Mahler, of which volume one was published last fall.*

STEREO REVIEW'S SELECTION OF RECORDINGS OF SPECIAL MERIT

BEST OF THE MONTH

CLASSICAL

SARTI'S UNPRETENTIOUSLY MAGNIFICENT *RUSSIAN ORATORIO*

Musical Heritage Society brings to light an enchanting work by a Mozart contemporary

GIUSEPPE SARTI (1729-1802) was an Italian composer of considerable accomplishment and great charm. He is remembered today only because Mozart, who liked both him and his music, used a tune from his *Fra i Due Litiganti il Terzo Gode* in his own *Don Giovanni* (it is played by the stage band during the banquet scene) and for a set of keyboard variations. Newell Jenkins once recorded a Sarti *Concertone per Più Strumenti Obbligati* for the Haydn Society, but a new Musical Heritage Society disc of his *Russian Oratorio* (derived from the catalog of the German publisher L. Schwann) constitutes this composer's entire active discography at present. Perhaps it won't quite set off a wholesale Sarti revival, but it might well become this year's "sleeper"—even rock-crazed pre-teeners succumb to it without a struggle, and stern musicologist types find themselves going back to it again and again for the sheer fun of it.

Sarti held many posts throughout Europe during his lifetime, and though he died in Berlin on his way home to Italy, his last dozen years or so were spent in Russia, initially in the service of Catherine the Great, later with Prince Potemkin and the Emperor Paul as his patrons. He composed some colorful works to Russian liturgical texts, including a *Te Deum* (for the victory at Ochakov in 1789) which anticipated Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* in its use of bells and cannon. The *Russian Oratorio* (it seems to have no more specific title) evidently relates to Easter: the text is from the Good Friday Vespers and Psalms 67 and 150. The large orchestra includes a pair of piccolos apart from the flutes and four each of clarinets and horns, as well as a prominent organ, a harp, and percussion. The music itself is a fascinating blend of Italian and Russian elements, recalling some of Vivaldi's festive works and yet superbly suited to the Russian text.

Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, Kremlin

Following the splendid orchestral overture, the double chorus is featured in all the remaining numbers but one; the soloists appear only in that penultimate section, a delectable trio with a lovely violin solo. The final chorus, on Psalm 150 ("Praise the Lord . . . with fanfares . . . with harp and zither . . . with drum and horn . . . with lyre and flute . . . with crashing cymbal . . . "), is an incredible swirl of inventive instrumentation, exultant choral writing, and majestically propulsive rhythm. Sarti does not use actual cymbals, but lets the triangle represent them, and this—combined with the dancing piccolos as the crescendo of hallelujahs mounts and the melodic figure in the timpani echoes the words of praise—serves to underscore the ingratiating naïveté that lends the work its Russian flavor. The oratorio achieves an unpretentious magnificence, more like a warmhearted fairy tale than any conventional treatment of

sacred texts—or so it seems in this joyous, almost ecstatic performance, apparently recorded in a huge church whose acoustic provides the ideal frame for both the grand effects and the intimate ones.

The brief fugal *Gospodiin Pomiluj Ny* (the Orthodox equivalent of a Kyrie—the transliteration in contemporary Russian would be *Gospodii Pomiluj Menyá*) is an attractive little encore, but it is the marvelous final chorus of the oratorio itself that will be encored on most turntables. And if I were you, I think I'd lay in a supply for Christmas.

Richard Freed

SARTI: *Russian Oratorio; Gospodiin Pomiluj Ny.* Alena Miková (soprano), Věra Hubáčková (mezzo-soprano), and Maria Mrazová (contralto), in oratorio; Czech Philharmonic Chorus, Prague; Bratislava Radio Orchestra, Václav Smetáček cond. MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY MHS 1735 $3.50 (plus 75¢ shipping charge, from Musical Heritage Society, Inc., 1991 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023).

PREY AND AMELING: THE BEST IN LIEDER

Two new discs of Schumann and Schubert are the kind that makes a critic's work easy

LIKE Hans Hotter and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau before him, Hermann Prey is now indulging in the privilege (for him) and the luxury (for his listeners) accorded to exceptional song recitalists—that of re-recording his earlier interpretations. The procedure is understandable: every conscientious artist restudies his repertoire; searching for new approaches and finding fresh insights are part of artistic growth and responsibility. There are any number of interpreters, of course, from whom one attempt suffices for a lifetime, but Hermann Prey is of a different breed. And, fortunately, interpretive growth has not been accompanied in his case by the frequently unavoidable vocal decline. Now in his mid-forties, Prey is at his artistic zenith: his sonorous baritone sound is as warm and rich as ever, attractive over the entire compass, and controlled by exceptional expressive powers.

Two Philips discs devoted to songs by Schubert and Schumann document this happy state of affairs. Prey's new *Dichterliebe* stresses the elegiac aspects of these beautiful Heine-Schumann songs (while understating their bitterness) more than his earlier version (Vox 5562, deleted) did. Enhanced by tempos that are a shade slower than ideal, the cumulative effect will appear to some as overly sentimental. The singing, however, is so consistently beautiful in tone, sensitively graded dynamically, and superbly clear in enunciation that criticism is easily disarmed. The eight Schubert songs on the disc are among the greatest. The two "Wanderer" songs are given the same lyrical—and I would agree that these *are* perhaps a shade over-sentimental—treatment that characterizes the *Dichterliebe* cycle. *Die Forelle* and *Auf dem Wasser zu singen* are rendered with a lightness and charm few male interpreters are able to bring to these delicate pieces. *An die Musik* is the only disappointment. It lacks spirituality and involvement, and it is indifferently sung. Leonard Hokanson accompanies the singer superbly throughout the entire recital.

The second disc is all-Goethe, all-Schubert, but only half-Prey, since one side is devoted to "feminine" songs interpreted by soprano Elly Ameling. It was a happy idea to include the seven songs inspired by Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and to have the two artists share them. Prey delivers the three "Songs of the Harper" with a moving elegiac feeling, holding his tone level down to a range between mezzo-forte and pianissimo. A mellow approach characterizes the entire side, including even the stormy *Erlkönig*. The drama emerges through the music, and there is no resort to devices of exaggeration, no distortion of the vocal line. This is not the *only* way to interpret the song, to be sure, but it is an eminently persuasive one. Karl Engel's accompaniments are effective.

Elly Ameling is the kind of singer who makes a critic's work very easy: her singing is all enchantment and deceptive simplicity. The legacy of Elisabeth Schumann and Elisabeth Schwarzkopf is in good hands. Since the accompaniments of Dalton Baldwin are all one could ask for, I can say that

HERMANN PREY: *new approaches, fresh insights*

Philips Records

these two discs are representative of the highest level of lieder-singing being offered today.

George Jellinek

SCHUMANN: ***Dichterliebe, Op. 48.*** **SCHUBERT:** ***Der Wanderer; Die Forelle; Auf dem Wasser zu singen; An Sylvia; Lachen und Weinen; Lied eines Schiffers an die Dioskuren; Der Wanderer an den Mond; An die Musik.*** Hermann Prey (baritone); Leonard Hokanson (piano). PHILIPS 6520 002 $6.98.

SCHUBERT: ***Four "Mignon" Lieder; Die Liebende schreibt; Nähe des Geliebten; Heidenröslein; Liebhaber in allen Gestalten.*** Elly Ameling (soprano); Dalton Baldwin (piano). ***Three "Gesänge des Harfners"—Der Sänger; Erlkönig; Ganymed.*** Hermann Prey (baritone); Karl Engel (piano). PHILIPS 6500 515 $6.98.

PROFITS OF SCHOLARSHIP: A ROSSINI RARITY UNEARTHED

Philips presents the recording debut of a "scandalously operatic" Messa di Gloria

THE *Messa di Gloria* of Gioacchino Rossini was first performed on March 24, 1820, in the Church of San Ferdinando in Naples and was thereafter almost totally forgotten. Unlike the *Stabat Mater* and the *Petite Messe Solennelle*, which date from the years of the composer's retirement, this Mass was composed at the height of his operatic career.

As a newly released British performance for Philips attests, it is an extraordinary combination of unabashedly operatic music—Rossini actually reused some of its ideas in *The Siege of Corinth* and *William Tell*—with serious orchestral-and-choral writing that suggests Beethoven, Haydn, or even Handel. The arias, some of them complete with cabalettas, are scandalously operatic—and are very likely what caused the work to be so neglected. In contrast, the "serious" writing is extraordinarily imposing and intense. If you can accept these startling contrasts—the Mass as a dramatic work filled to the brim with expressions of joy and anguish—then there is enormous pleasure to be gained from this music.

The credit for reviving this unusual work must go to Herbert Handt, an American tenor active for many years (primarily) in Europe. The phenomenon of a singer-conductor is a relatively new one (tenors Sherrill Milnes and Placido Domingo come to mind). Handt, who has an excellent reputation as an interpreter of early and recent music, began a second career as a conductor a number of years ago, specializing at first in early Italian music. Perhaps one now ought to add a third skill: in the process of singing and conducting early music he also became something of a scholar and editor (he is a friend and neighbor in Italy of Haydn scholar H. C. Robbins Landon). Since Rossini's manuscript of the *Messa di Gloria* is lost, it was to some degree necessary to prepare a practical edition for performance, and Handt has done this with skill and evident affection. One expects that he would be knowledgeable about the handling of the voices, but his instrumental conducting is equally impressive. The music has buoyancy, fervor, and even a certain grandeur. With the exception of an exaggeratedly Italianate tenor (Rossini loudly deplored the appearance in the mid-nineteenth century of this kind of singing), the soloists are excellent and the playing equally so. An attractive recording.

Eric Salzman

HERBERT HANDT: *skill and evident affection*

ROSSINI: ***Messa di Gloria.*** Margherita Rinaldi (soprano); Ameral Gunson (contralto); Ugo Benelli and John Mitchinson (tenors); Jules Bastin (bass); B.B.C. Singers; English Chamber Orchestra, Herbert Handt cond. PHILIPS 6500 612 $6.98.

POPULAR

THROWING SOME LIGHT ON THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

Mercury's two-disc album of live performances ought to help set the . . . er . . . record straight

POOR Lou Reed is competing with himself again—commercially, that is—since a new album of previously unreleased Velvet Underground performances follows hot on the heels of his recent

"Rock 'n' Roll Animal," a situation similar to the one he was in when Atlantic released Brigid Polk's cassette of the Velvet's engagement at Max's Kansas City at the same time RCA was pushing his first solo album. Much as Lou would probably prefer it, the Underground just won't go away. And frankly, if you feel (as I do) that Lou has been generally making an ass out of himself since their demise, and that "Animal" was just too slick a presentation of songs that walk a thin line between being moronic and sublimely terrifying, then you're going to dig the hell out of this new record. I certainly do.

The Velvets were always a puzzle; depending on how your glands reacted, they were either a classic hard-rock band, an amateurish bunch of musical cretins, the ultimate in avant-garde music/theater, a New York street gang with a taste for esoteric oldies, a sinister collection of transvestite speed-freak/junkies, or a pop-oriented bunch of sentimental balladeers. Perhaps their appeal was simply that nobody was ever really sure *what* they were. Which might also account for the fact that they were never as big with the public as with the critics, although at one time (around 1966-1967) you were just as likely to hear their first album at student parties as you were to hear, say, the Stones. At any rate, in 1969, at various gigs in Texas and San Francisco, someone (perhaps at their record company, although this is all very mysterious) made a series of high-quality, honest-to-god stereo performance tapes of the band (by now sans Nico and John Cale), and somehow Mercury has gotten the rights to them and has seen fit to release them. I can only describe this as a public service.

So what do we get? Most of the band's best numbers, some previously unrecorded gems featuring Lou at his most corny and charming (*Over You*) and some early thoughts on tunes later resurrected on the solo albums. The results are by and large incandescent; Lou's vocals are great—comparisons with the limp, mannered shouting he displayed on "Animal" are ludicrous—and the rest of the crew is in fine form. The guitar work (by Lou and Sterling) is sensitive and propulsive, Doug's bass is melodic and rock steady, and Maureen's drumming maintains its usual level of Neanderthal primitiveness. Especially revelatory is the version of *Heroin*; without Cale's devastatingly atonal viola obbligato to contend with, Lou sings it almost prettily, and the result is a much more seductive—and therefore more terrifying—reading than even the classic original. This cut alone is worth the price of admission.

The lesson of all this is that Lou Reed is (was?) one of the great rock singer/songwriters, and that in the Velvet Underground he found the perfect musical means to express his not inconsiderable ideas. This new set is a gas, one of the best live rock albums of this or any other year, and if it's not quite as good as "Loaded" (the band's penultimate studio statement, where their raunch was even more completely distilled) it's damn close, and that's saying something. If your only exposure to Lou has been his increasingly disappointing post-Velvet work, then "1969 Velvet Underground Live" will come as a remarkable surprise. If you're already a fan, I don't have to tell you. For both factions, as well as those who just like first-rate rock-and-roll, the bottom line is *get it.* *Steve Simels*

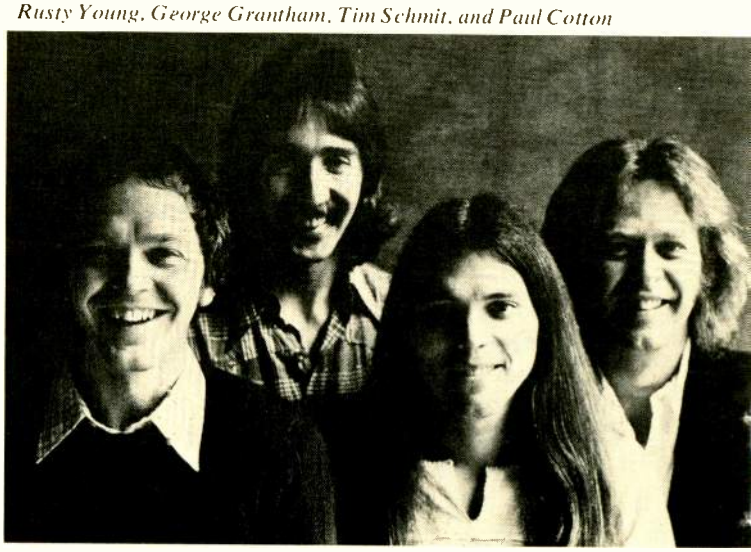
THE VELVET UNDERGROUND: ***1969 Velvet Underground Live.*** Lou Reed (guitar and vocals); Sterling Morrison (guitar); Doug Yule (bass and vocals); Maureen Tucker (percussion). *Waiting for My Man; Lisa Says; What Goes On; Sweet Jane; We're Gonna Have a Real Good Time Together; Femme Fatale; New Age; Rock and Roll; Beginning to See the Light; Ocean; Pale Blue Eyes; Heroin; Some Kinda Love; Over You; Sweet Bonnie Brown/It's Just Too Much; White Light/White Heat; I'll Be Your Mirror.* MERCURY SRM-2-7504 two discs $7.98, ⑧ MC8-1-7504 $6.98.

POCO IS ENOUGH

Holding on, but not holding still, as their move into "straight" rock demonstrates

Poco loses key members the way I lose ball-point pens, but the group hangs in there. Latest to depart, as this is written, was Richie Furay, founder

Rusty Young, George Grantham, Tim Schmit, and Paul Cotton



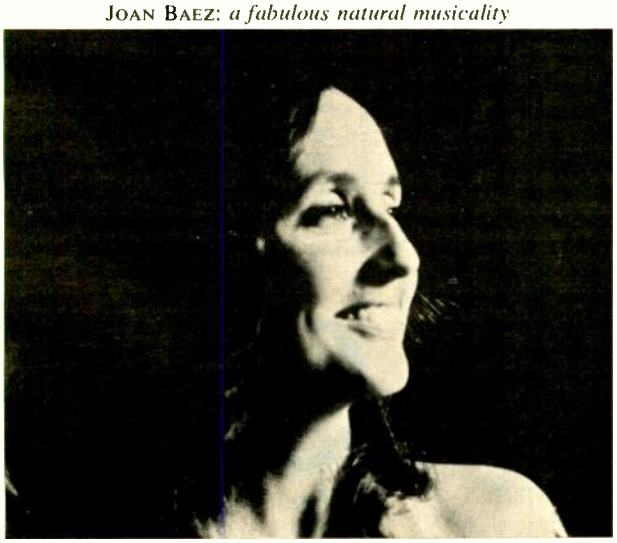
Epic Records

(no less), chief songwriter, and chief singer—and their new album for Epic, the first without him, is just fine. One reason is that Jack Richardson's production, moving Poco away from country-rock into solid rock, has taken well. And the major reason for *that* happy condition must be the versatility of Rusty Young, the pedal steel player who has made his seemingly specialized instrument fit so nicely into the changing arrangements and has improved on other instruments (banjo, dobro, electric guitar, etc.) as well.

But there are other important reasons too, and they are named Paul Cotton, Tim Schmit, and George Grantham. Furay's singing is missed, but not all that much; lead guitarist Paul Cotton is improving as a singer, and Schmit (bass) and Grantham (drums) are still hitting those castrati notes on the vocals. Furay seems to be missed more in the harmonies—they seem to have a little less sheen—than in the solo singing. Schmit, who has written a whole string of lifeless songs, has two winners here—*Krikkit's Song*, excessively wordy as usual but nice, and *Skatin'*, a fine rocker with some thought put into a thematic interplay between words, melody, and arrangement.

The whole of side two is a delight, the album ending with two of Cotton's strongest songs: *Angel*, beautifully acoustic and spiked with a delicate, almost silky electric guitar part, and *You've Got Your Reasons*, wherein he does some adaptation of Dave Davies' or Pete Townshend's (or somebody's) chime chords in just the right way. Poco is no longer the first and best country-rock band. What it is now is one of the very few so-called "straight" rock (love that term) bands that can keep me listening, when I'm not being paid to listen, all the way to the very end. *Noel Coppage*

JOAN BAEZ: *a fabulous natural musicality*



A & M Records

POCO: ***Seven.*** Poco (vocals and instrumentals); Burton Cummings (keyboards); other musicians. *Faith in the Families; Drivin' Wheel; Skatin'; Rocky Mountain Breakdown; Krikkit's Song (Passing Through); Angel; Just Call My Name; You've Got Your Reasons.* EPIC KE 32895 $5.98, ® EA 32895 $6.98, © ET 32895 $6.98.

JOAN BAEZ: "GRACIAS A LA VIDA"

Her voice is as fresh as a deep-canyon waterfall in a new Spanish-language album

JOAN BAEZ's "Gracias a la Vida" is her finest album in years (and it has indeed been some little time since the last one). In it she displays again that fabulous natural musicality and that electrifying intensity with a lyric, both projected through a voice that catches at the heart in a way that is almost literally enchanting. She is singing in Spanish this time—it could just as well be Urdu for all I'd care—as a tribute to her father ("he gave me my Latin name and whatever optimism about life I may claim to have"), and the result is a triumph.

Her voice sounds as fresh—and refreshing—as a deep-canyon waterfall, even in the heavily dramatic *El Preso Numero Nueve* (*Prisoner Number Nine*) or *De Colores* (*In Colors*), a song associated with the United Farmworkers Union in America (Joan Baez remains political, no matter what the language). But it spirals into an ethereal beauty in the title song, in the traditional *El Rossinyol* (*The Nightingale*), and in the lovely folk song *Paso Rio* (*I Pass a River*), so tenderly and feelingly sung it would melt a stone.

If you like Joan Baez, chances are this album has already been added to your collection. If you don't like her (and I suspect that many don't—for reasons that have little to do with music), try it anyway. You can throw the English-translation sheet away and rejoice in the loveliness of the sound. The production (by Ms. Baez and Henry Lewy) is admirable, and Tommy Tedesco on lead guitar is nothing short of terrific. Joni Mitchell makes a brief appearance on *Dida*, confirming and elevating my already high regard for her taste. *Peter Reilly*

JOAN BAEZ: ***Gracias a la Vida.*** Joan Baez (vocals and guitar); orchestra. *Gracias a la Vida; Llego con Tres Heridas; La Llorona; El Preso Numero Nueve; Guantanamera; Te Recuerdo Amanda; Dida; Cucurrucucu Paloma; Paso Rio; El Rossinyol; De Colores; Las Madres Cansadas; No Nos Moveran; Esquinazo del Guerrillero.* A & M SP 3614 $5.98.

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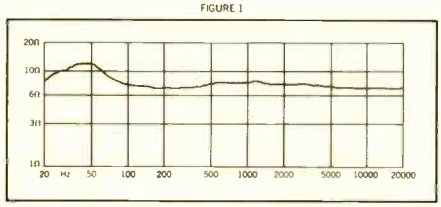
Throughout the history of high fidelity, the acoustic engineer and the audiophile have been plagued by the distorting influence of the never perfect speaker enclosure. The RTR 280DR represents the first major breakthrough in eliminating this adverse effect.

This breakthrough was not easy. It required a complex design incorporating four custom designed woofers . . . one front mounted, two side mounted with balancing networks, and one planar slot loaded driven through a reverse phase bridge network. Proof of performance is shown by the complete lack of fundamental resonance exhibited by the broad, smooth curve shown in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1



280DR Impedance, Midrange control at "5," Tweeter control any setting

This unique design earned the following comments from Dr. R. C. Heyser in *Audio* magazine (Nov 1973): "The harmonic distortion on the 280DR is extremely low. A flute tone E_1 (41.2 Hz) at 20 watts input produced 1 percent E_2 (second harmonic) and 1 percent A_2 (third harmonic). The critical mid bass remained below 0.4 percent at this same level.—The lack of sonic distortion lulled us into testing at high power.—Investigation of the impedance plot showed that we were in fact delivering close to 200 watts of heating power to the 280DR at maximum test level."

Total Dispersion

Many music lovers, relating to the concert hall experience, have maintained that the ideal speaker should radiate uniformly hemispherically. (This is not to be confused with the "reflecting concept.") The 280DR was engineered for "Total Dispersion."

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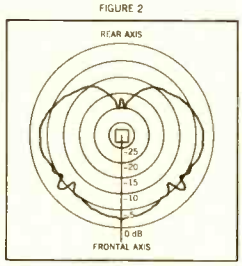
FIGURE 2



280DR Polar Energy Plot

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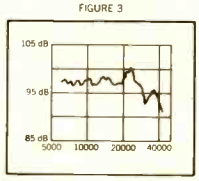
Total bandwidth is dependent on the proper in-system functioning of all transducers. The four woofers are designed and manufactured by RTR. They are special ten-inch transducers with butyl surrounds and two-inch epoxy impregnated voice coils. Five magnetic high frequency drivers are utilized to properly simulate concert hall ambience. A newly developed super tweeter, operating on the piezoelectric ceramic disc bender principle, extends overall response of the 280DR to 25,000 Hz. Figure 3 shows the uniformity of the frequency response of this super tweeter.

In an average listening room, the midrange and tweeter controls can be adjusted to yield the typical overall frequency response of the 280DR as shown in Figure 4 within ±3dB of the illustrated curve *without equalization*.

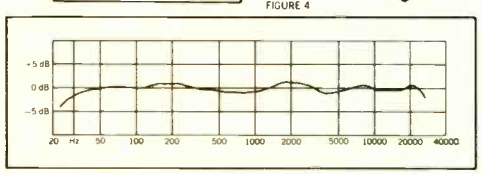
FIGURE 3



280DR Super Tweeter Frequency Response

280DR Response Characteristics

FIGURE 4



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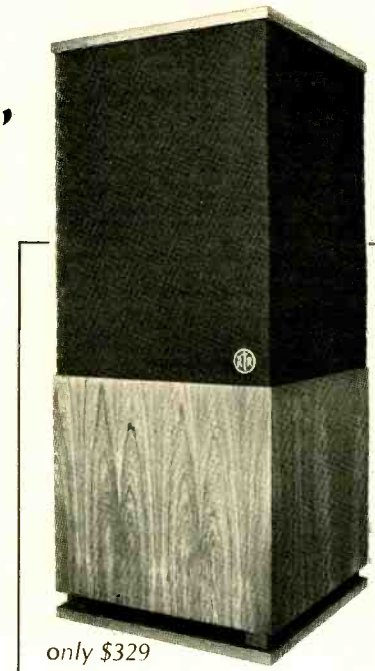

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POPULAR DISCS AND TAPES

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

BADFINGER: *Ass.* Badfinger (vocals and instrumentals). *Apple of My Eye; Get Away; Icicles; The Winner; Blind Owl; Constitution; When I Say*; and three others. APPLE SW-3411 $5.98, ⑧ 8XW-3411 $6.98, Ⓒ 4XW-3411 $6.98.

BADFINGER: *Badfinger.* Badfinger (vocals and instrumentals). *I Miss You; Shine On; Love Is Easy; Song for a Lost Friend; Why Don't We Talk; Island; Matted Spam; Where Do We Go from Here?*; and four others. WARNER BROS. BS 2762 $5.98, ⑧ M8 2762 $6.98, Ⓒ M5 2762 $6.98.

Performances: **Hello-goodbye**
Recordings: **Both very good**

It's a real moving experience. Badfinger leaving Apple and signing up with Warner Brothers, and sorting through references to it in their last Apple and first Warners recordings is, as such pastimes go, much less boring than the double crostic in *Saturday Review/World*. And the music isn't bad either. Badfinger always struck me as the favorite puppy dog figure in the house of Apple, the house the Beatles built, but I gather from the cover of "Ass" that they took a slightly different view of themselves there. It shows a jackass wearing earphones and being tempted by a giant carrot in a giant hand reaching down from heaven—Somebody in the Sky with Carrots, let's say. . . .

The first song in that album says, "You are the apple of my eye./You're the apple of my heart./But the time has come for us to part." The second song goes on at some length about how the writer (listed as all of Badfinger) just *has* to get away. Then the first track of the Warners album is *I Miss You*, which doesn't actually say anything directly about Apple or the Beatles but makes a body think, particularly when it is followed by a title like *Where Do We Go from Here?* or by the lyrics of *Matted Spam* (by Pete Ham) that say a frame of mind has "locked me outside of my own rock-and-roll." And then—you probably think I'm making this up—back on "Ass" there's a fine rocking song called *Constitution* whose words seem to apply nicely to the music game: "I could sing the blues anywhere I choose, if I wanted/. . . I could join a race, I could paint my face, if I wanted. . . ." What makes this poignant is the fact that Badfinger still sounds like the late early Beatles.

And it's still a good little band, and the thematic stuff is encased in good, fairly light rock-and-roll in both albums, the last Apple one being a little more tuneful and the first Warner Brothers one being a little more imaginative. The latter has some steel-band backing in one cut, a beautiful multi-acoustic guitar treatment in a pretty song called *My Heart Goes Out*, and other small suggestions that someday Badfinger may try to sound a little less like the Beatles—but there's also *Shine On*, a lovely song written and performed just about exactly the way George Harrison, probably the focal point of all the father-figuring of the past few years, writes and performs. "Badfinger" does, however, have the first "flash forward" I've ever heard in a record album: sound effects of someone walking down a sidewalk or across a parking lot and entering a building in which we hear the final moments of Badfinger's recording of *Why Don't We Talk* being played on a radio or juke box or other low-fi device. Then we flash to the present and hear Badfinger's recording of the song firsthand. Maybe it won't dazzle Robert Altman—maybe it won't even dazzle Mike Nichols—but it does show that Badfinger is staying loose and continuing to practice on the old footwork. Happy housewarming, lads. *N.C.*

Atlantic Records

MAGGIE BELL
A dynamite sense of lyric

JOAN BAEZ: ***Gracias a la Vida*** **(see Best of the Month, page 75)**

MAGGIE BELL: ***Queen of the Night.*** Maggie Bell (vocals); orchestra. *Caddo Queen; Souvenirs; Oh My My; The Other Side; Trade Winds*; and six others. ATLANTIC SD 7293 $6.98.

Performance: **Not quite together yet**
Recording: **Excellent**

Maggie Bell has been around a while; she played the Mother in "Tommy," was with Stone the Crows, and has twice been winner of the English *Melody Maker* readers' poll. The talent she displays here more than lives up to her credentials: a strong, exciting voice, urgent projection, and a dynamite sense of lyric. She races through the eleven tracks here with an energy and vitality that I haven't heard since Joplin, and when she does bring it off completely, as she does in *Oh My My* and *Yesterday's Music*, she is galvanizing.

The rub (and isn't there always one?) is that there is a pussyfooting air to a great deal of

Explanation of symbols:

- ® = *reel-to-reel stereo tape*
- ⑧ = *eight-track stereo cartridge*
- Ⓒ = *stereo cassette*
- □ = *quadraphonic disc*
- R = *reel-to-reel quadraphonic tape*
- 8 = *eight-track quadraphonic tape*
- C = *quadraphonic cassette*

Monophonic recordings are indicated by the symbol Ⓜ

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

the arrangement and production work. Everyone seems to realize that Bell could be The Next Big Star, and consequently everything sounds a little sanded-down, a little varnished, and a little on the safe side. Bell herself seems to suffer from this kid-glove handling, and often sounds (*Caddo Queen*) as if there were someone looking over her shoulder. Too bad, because I don't think Star Deportment adds a thing to her performances.

By all means listen to the album—Bell really is good. But also hope that she has the good sense to listen to all of the advice offered her and then proceed to follow her own instincts.

P.R.

BLUE SWEDE: ***Hooked on a Feeling.*** Blue Swede (vocals and instrumentals). *Destiny; Never My Love; Silly Milly; Pinewood Rally;* and six others. CAPITOL ST-11286 $6.98, ® 8XT-11286 $6.98, © 4XT-11286 $6.98.

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

Blue Swede is a group from (where else?) Sweden, and they are incredible in at least one respect: they have mastered Rock English and its enunciation so perfectly—or at least Bjorn Skifs, who does most of the lead vocals, has—that it would be impossible on casual hearing to identify them as being from the land of the Bergmans and the blondes. Unfortunately their material and their performances are routine even by American standards, which are pretty low lately.

As the American dollar sinks softly into the devaluation horizon I expect that more of these imported groups will be appearing. I've already gotten a press release from Vienna about a red-hot new act called Hedy and the Lamarrs, singing their big hit *Man tut was man kann.* Can't wait.

P.R.

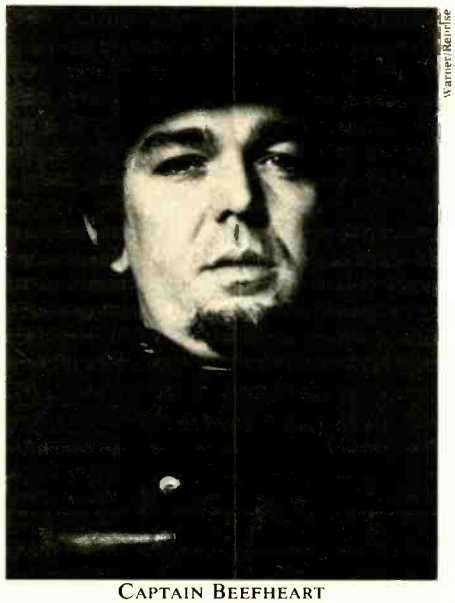
DAVID BOWIE: ***Diamond Dogs.*** David Bowie (vocals and guitar); Mike Garson (keyboards); Herbie Flowers (bass); Tony Newman and Aynsley Dunbar (drums). *Future Legend; Diamond Dogs; Sweet Thing; Candidate; Rebel Rebel;* and five others. RCA CPL1 0576 $6.98, ® CPS1 0576 $7.95, © CPK1 0576 $7.95.

Performance: **Ho hum**
Recording: **Good**

I've been re-reading all my Bowie reviews from the last year or two, and they've struck me in retrospect as pretty vicious; granted, I find his personality repellent, and feel that he's been an almost totally negative influence on rock-and-roll. Still, the man did write *All the Young Dudes,* and I love that song with a passion. Perhaps I've been unfair. Okay then, I thought, let's really try to like David's new album when it arrives. Let's bend over (no quip intended) backwards, in fact.

So I tried. I put "Diamond Dogs" on, and pushed all preconceptions out of my mind, determined not to let the Bowie personality interfere with my appreciation of a *record.* Unfortunately, halfway through side one, I had nodded out in my seat. This, my friends, is junk. I have to admit, I'm surprised. Bowie's earlier work was at least superficially impressive, because, as Nick Kent put it, David has a talent for creating "grandiose, thoroughly vacuous images . . . without actually transforming them into anything tangible, he simply endows these images with layer upon layer of synthetic sheen, so that one rarely questions their credibility, having been utterly bamboozled by the sheer scope of their superficiality." In other words, he was a master of the kitchen-sink approach, and even if you detested what he was doing, he held your interest, by and large, while he was doing it.

This time out, however, David apparently decided to show us he's a musician as well as a symbol of teenage revolt; so, with Mick Ronson off to pursue a solo career, Dave did all the lead guitar work here (for what it's worth, he's not bad in a primitive sort of way). Unfortunately, it becomes painfully obvious that Ronson, who appeared on all his other albums, was the one with the smarts all along; the arrangements on "Diamond Dogs" are uniformly blah, and the production (also, for the first time, a one-man job by the artiste) is so restrained as to be nonexistent. The songs themselves are merely silly, unless you're impressed by love poems to lizards.


Warner Reprise

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART
The crazy uncle in the attic

There is, however, one exception to all of the above: *Rebel Rebel,* as you probably know by now, is a dynamite little piece of catchy Sixties rock-and-roll, and it's sung and played with real conviction and fire. I will resist the temptation to observe that if the Easybeats had done it, it would have been a classic, and simply mention that, sadly, this is a different version from the one RCA has out as a single. That *Rebel Rebel* is shorter, more elaborate, and better done overall—grab it, and save your $6.98.

Sorry, David, I really tried this time. Too bad, since I was in the mood, that you didn't.

Steve Simels

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART AND THE MAGIC BAND: ***Unconditionally Guaranteed.*** Don Van Vliet (vocals, harmonica); other musicians. *Upon the My-O-My; Sugar Bowl; New Electric Ride; Magic Be; Happy Love Song;* and five others. MERCURY SRM-1-709 $6.98, ® MC8-1-709 $6.95, © MCR4-1-709 $6.95.

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

I was thinking the other day that it's been ten years since Captain Beefheart made his first records. In the decade he's been active, the valiant, quixotic Captain has made some remarkable music: crude, delicate, beaty, baffling, direct, and furtive, all tinted with a cartoonist's sense of movement and a child's delight in the sound of words.

Beefheart has been variously described as ominous, benign, and "strange." He may not even be a musician at all. He may simply have wandered into music because it has replaced acting as the quickest way to get yourself known as a performer. I think Don Van Vliet (the Captain's real name) would have made a mighty good juggler, puppeteer, ringmaster, or the kind of crazy uncle whose nephews are always sneaking up to the attic to let him out because he's such fun and makes more sense than other grown-ups do. At any rate he is a marvel.

The Captain is on a new label, and musically he has returned to something like what the Magic Band was playing in 1965, when he started writing and recording his own material. But not quite. There *was* something "strange" about listening to Beefheart in 1965. He was widely thought to be either wildly confused about what he was doing or five years ahead of his time (it turned out to be the latter). His remarkable voice, capable of producing both an orangutan bass and a piercing, pinched tenor, his invention of a yodeling gulp for syncopated vocal percussion, his shadowboxing with the English language, his early combination of two distinct influences—Delta blues and the jazz sax of John Coltrane—all added up to wonderment.

Five years later, progress being what it is, he was probably *fifteen* years ahead of his time. His music sounded like a tribe of Ubangis whose study of the twelve-tone scale had been interrupted by the drunken delights of an unbroken series of Polish weddings. Was it true that he accepted into his band only people who did not know how to play music? Were his tunes and arrangements gibberish? Was he lucky enough to be making so many mistakes all at once that it sounded like he knew what he was doing? Or was it a sort of music—like Whitman's poetry—that has to await the invention of new standards so that it can be appreciated?

Shortly after these experiments, the Captain began saying that he was "going to write some really commercial stuff" (at which his followers and acquaintances scoffed, "He's been saying that for years!"). But in his last two albums for Reprise—"The Spotlight Kid" and "Clear Spot"—he was moving in a pop direction. With "Unconditionally Guaranteed" he seems to have arrived. The songs are short, danceable, and carefully arranged. The Captain's vocals are—for him—muted and a bit studied. Even his harmonica, of which he was a brutish master, has been softened, although it is still very bluesy. But this is not to say that the efforts here aren't Beefheartian. He is one of those artists who may make *concessions* of their own free will, but who are constitutionally incapable of compromising. He is also one of the very few figures in rock (although I doubt that Beefheart is "rock" any more than, say, Gershwin was "jazz") whose musical history is so interesting that it is almost mandatory to hear *all* of his records. Taken together, they are like the last edition of *Leaves of Grass*—something you would not want to read all the way through because you would get tired of tricky old Walt changing masks and tinkering with various modes of address to the reader. But sampled judiciously, Beefheart's (so far) collected works are

(Continued on page 82)

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CIRCLE NO. 25 ON READER SERVICE CARD

CANDIDE:
The best of all possible musicals

Reviewed by Paul Kresh

Betty Lee Hunt Associates

Mark Baker (Candide) and Maureen Brennan (Cunegonde) get in touch with their audience

My poor backside had scarcely recovered from an hour and three quarters without intermission spent on a tiny wooden stool in the midst of a jam-packed audience in what was once the orchestra of New York's Broadway Theatre watching the celebrated revival of *Candide* when the album of the complete production arrived. I chose the best-padded armchair I could find and settled back to enjoy in comfort this two-record replay of the whole show, complete with dialogue. I was not disappointed, and I don't think you will be either. For this musical adaptation of Voltaire's ever-popular satirical novel subtitled *L'Optimisme*, a long hoot at the Pollyanna creed of Leibniz that "all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds," also turns out, with its sparkling, refurbished Bernstein score and its new book by Hugh Wheeler, to be the best of all possible musicals.

The first Broadway version of *Candide*, a "comic operetta" that opened to an icy critical reception in 1956, had been smothered under the ministrations of too many master chefs – Lillian Hellman, Richard Wilbur, John Latouche, and Dorothy Parker all involved with the book and lyrics, Tyrone Guthrie's super-staging at the Martin Beck, an overly operatic approach to Bernstein's exuberant score for his third musical following *On the Town* and *Wonderful Town*. This time Wheeler (who wrote the book for *A Little Night Music*) has gone back to Voltaire for the plot and wit of the satirical travelogue, Bernstein has handed over a stack of songs deleted from the first production, and Stephen Sondheim has written additional lyrics. With the character of Voltaire brought in as "recurring narrator" and the hero Candide and his beloved Cunegonde restored from middle age to their teens, all works smoothly now and comes off brilliantly. To those of us who over the years have worn out our copies of the *original* original-cast recording starring the late Max Adrian, Robert Rounseville, Barbara Cook, and Irra Petina, the new *Candide* comes across as virtually a brand-new show.

When the imperturbably optimistic tutor, Dr. Pangloss, his pupil Candide, and the high-born Cunegonde set out, singly and together, on their global journey of disastrous discoveries, *Candide* as staged at the Broadway Theatre takes place all around you – there are platforms over your head, drawbridges, ramps, and runways everywhere, the orchestra is planted in four different parts of the house, jungle vines descend about your ears, and twenty-three actors playing eighty-five roles bob up all over the place. In his production for records, Thomas Z. Shepard has tried to convey this feeling of movement and of being in the center of the action; to a surprising degree, in terms of sheer sound, he has succeeded. When Candide is reunited in Lisbon with his master after an earthquake, only to be dragged off for punishment by the Inquisition at an auto-da-fé ("What a day, what a day for an auto-da-fé"), the feeling of presence is remarkable. When the Old Lady appears to comfort the hero after Dr. Pangloss is hanged and Candide himself is flogged, they make their entrance into Cadiz to the tune of *I Am Easily Assimilated* with an amazing degree of realism. Above all, the wholesome decision to record the entire show (this has been done before to advantage with *The Most Happy Fella* and the original-London-cast recording of *Man of La Mancha* on Decca as well as with ABC's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*) results in entertainment that never flags or palls.

Aside from the production values of the album, this version – winner of the New York Drama Critics Circle and five Tony awards – captures far more wittily the opportunities Bernstein seized in his music, garbed in its scintillating Hershy Kay orchestrations to parody the musical styles of the tango, waltz, barcarolle, Turkish harem music, and eighteenth-century pastorale in a constantly engaging, mocking musical treatment. This is a score far more sophisticated in terms of musical development than any comparable one in the repertoire; the overture alone rivals the masterpieces of its genre and already is something of a classic in its own day. Most appealing of all are the performances by the cherubic Mark Baker as Candide; by Maureen Brennan as the baron's china-doll niece Cunegonde, whose apparent frangibleness is belied by her ability to survive brothel slavery, rape on the high seas by Barbary pirates, and even the final death of the cow on which she and Candide had built their hopes for the future in the Garden of Eden; by June Gable as an infinitely adaptable lascivious Old Lady, complete with "high middle Polish" accent; by Lewis J. Stadlen as the undiscouragable Dr. Pangloss, as Voltaire himself, and in several other, smaller roles; in fact, by just about everybody in the huge, agile cast.

In the earlier recording (which keeps appearing and reappearing – now in the regular Columbia, now in the Columbia Special Products catalog – a little the worse of late for artificially induced stereo), Robert Rounseville as Candide and Barbara Cook as Cunegonde provide giddy musical thrills throughout, Max Adrian is a suitably irrepressible Plangloss, and Irra Petina singing *I Am Easily Assimilated* is simply beyond comparison.

There is a qualitative difference between these two recordings; the newer one is superbly presented, but the older one is really sung; perhaps it is sung *too* full-bloodedly (which may have contributed to its box-office failure), but it is exhilarating nonetheless. The original disc of *Candide* was a fantastic accomplishment for its time and deservedly had a runaway success despite the theatrical debacle. I would hate to be without it, the vitality and the verve of the new one notwithstanding. One other factor compels ownership of both: although several new songs (*Auto-da-Fé*, *Sheep's Song*, *Constantinople*, and others) have been added, two particularly fine songs from the original production have been deleted in the new one (*Eldorado* and *What's the Use?*). *Candide* is probably Bernstein's best composition to date; two recordings of it seem hardly too many. The first is a legendary and unique classic. The new one sets the standards for original-cast recordings, in regard to performance, production, and technical quality, at a new high from now on.

CANDIDE (Hugh Wheeler, Richard Wilbur, Stephen Sondheim, John Latouche – Leonard Bernstein). Original-cast recording of the complete production. Lewis J. Stadlen, Mark Baker, Maureen Brennan, Sam Freed, June Gable, Deborah St. Darr, and others. COLUMBIA S2X 32923 two discs $9.98, ® SAX 32923 $11.98, © STX 32923 $11.98.

CANDIDE (Richard Wilbur, John Latouche, Dorothy Parker – Leonard Bernstein). Original-Broadway-cast recording. Max Adrian, William Olvis, Robert Rounseville, Barbara Cook, Irra Petina, and others. COLUMBIA SPECIAL PRODUCTS AOS 2350 $6.98.

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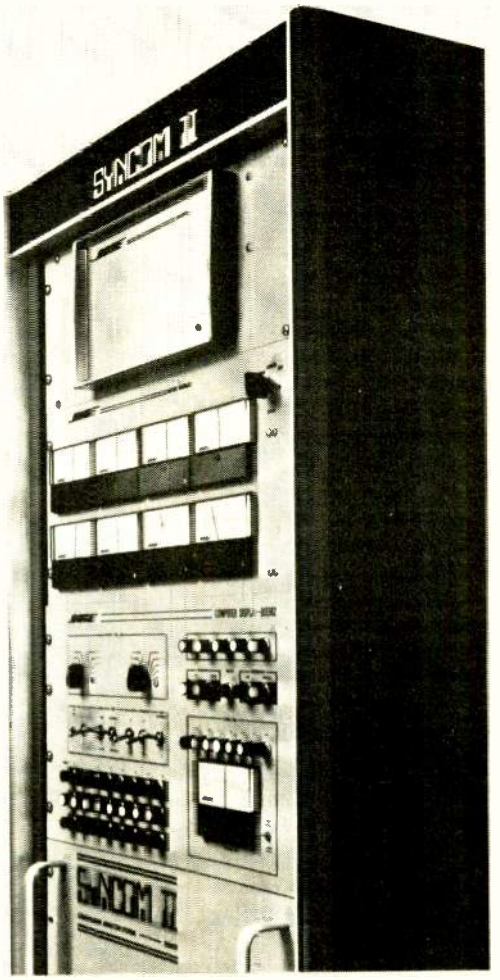

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fascinating, and "Unconditionally Guaranteed" belongs in the canon.

And may I take this occasion to congratulate the Captain on the first ten years of his odyssey, and to wish him as many more as it pleases him to take? I *knew* you were out there, Don. *J.V.*

CHICAGO: ***Chicago VII.*** Chicago (vocals and instrumentals). *Skinny Boy; Call on Me; Wishing You Were Here; I've Been Searchin' So Long*; and eleven others. COLUMBIA C2 32810 two discs $11.98, ® C2A 32810 $9.98, © C2T 32810 $9.98.

Performance: **Background**
Recording: **Excellent**

All things considered, I think I'd rather spend time with the Chicago Seven that appeared in Judge Hoffman's court than with this album that bears the same name. Chicago doesn't really even make music, much less rock music. Instead, they make a series of hip-sounding excesses that come across more like background "music" for a TV commercial advertising a motor bike, a new yogurt, or some other trendy product for the with-it consumer. Play any band here and you end up with the same mental picture: long hair (carefully tousled), patched jeans, and the smug smile of contentment urging you to BUY.

That the record public continues to buy, and BUY. Chicago's pap is one of those mysteries surely being probed at this moment in places like the Harvard Business School. The production, superb as usual, probably has something to do with it. *P.R.*

COMMANDER CODY AND THE LOST PLANET AIRMEN: ***Live from Deep in the Heart of Texas.*** Commander Cody and the Lost Planet Airmen (vocals and instrumentals); crowd at the Armadillo World Headquarters in Austin (noise). *Armadillo Stomp; Good Rockin' Tonite; I'm Comin' Home; Down to Seeds and Stems Again Blues; Sunset on the Sage; Little Sally Walker; Git It; Oh Momma Momma*; and five others. PARAMOUNT PAS 1017 $5.98, ® C 8091 1017 $6.98, © C 5091 1017 $6.98.

Performance: **Head-down slamming**
Recording: **Good**

This was recorded live in Austin, Texas, and is an overaggressive windbag of an album. The crowd's enthusiasm, the expression of which cuts down nicely on the amount of mediocre rock you might otherwise have to listen to, since cheering takes up maybe twenty per cent of the grooves, asserts that, for all our kidding of Texans, we've got to admit they're not easily bored. There *is* some positive feedback from the audience, and I'm forced to admit that Commander Cody's bunch is no sloppier live than it is in the studio—hell, I'll even admit the band is exceptionally tight on the beat, for what that's worth—but the vocals are still incompetent, the steel guitar is still cruelly overplayed, and the material would have squeezed a yawn out of Gene Autry back when he was trying not to excite anyone with his "Melody Ranch" radio programs. I think this band owes at least as much to hype as Grand Funk does, that its members are much too busy playing cowboys to pursue any musical ideas, if any ever occur, and that the subtype of music its sound is based on—country swing—is a bore to start with. But I'm prejudiced and always seem to miss the good in hypes. Maybe this is somehow a good band, as some people think. Maybe they really do grow three-bedroom watermelons down in Texas, too. *N.C.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

KIKI DEE: ***Loving and Free.*** Kiki Dee (vocals); Elton John (keyboards); Davey Johnstone (guitar); Dee Murray (bass); Nigel Olsson (drums); other musicians. *Loving and Free; If It Rains; Lonnie and Josie; Travellin' in Style; You Put Something Better Inside Me; Supercool; Rest My Head; Amoureuse; Song for Adam; Sugar on the Floor.* ROCKET MCA-395 $6.98, ® MCAT 395 $6.98, © MCAC 395 $6.98.

Performance: **Gorgeous**
Recording: **Excellent**

This is a pretty nifty album on all counts, not

MCA Records

KIKI DEE
No real competition in rock

the least of which is that in Kiki Dee we finally have a distaff singer who knows how to rock. Think of it—who else have we? Maggie Bell is tough indeed, but she's more in the Aretha mold, which is something else; Joni Mitchell is too damned ethereal to ever really get down; Helen Reddy is a one-joke act; Suzi Quatro works much too hard at appearing brainless; Bette Midler makes music for your older sister, the kind that drives you to rock in the first place; Carly Simon would like to be Philip Roth but only has the talent to be Erich Segal; Sandy Denny is terrific, but too regal; Lori Lieberman and Anne Murray are strictly MOR; and Tracey Nelson, Maria Muldaur and Bonnie Raitt are busy singing the blues. So there you have it—no real competition.

Regardless, Kiki is damn good; she has a rich, strong, and very womanly voice, with plenty of power when she needs it. In "Loving and Free" she doesn't need it as often as I would like, but when she does, she acquits herself splendidly—I'm thinking especially of *Supercool*, a wry little put-down of a jive teen type, in which she rides effortlessly over a rockin' heavy backdrop provided by Elton John and band. Most of the rest of the material is much less aggressive and more like what people seem to expect from "girl singers," but even there Kiki demonstrates a soulfulness that makes the rest of them sound puerile. The backings, by the cream of the British session cats (Elton's band and various Fairport Conventioneers) is splendid, and the production (by Elton) is George-Martin-majestic.

I will conclude by mentioning that Kiki, once upon a time, was one of the very few white artists ever signed by Motown, which should be credentials enough for anybody, that she does the best cover of a Jackson Browne song I've ever heard or expect to, and that she reminds me vocally of a female John Lennon. I think I'm in love. *Steve Simels*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

DR. JOHN: ***Desitively Bonnaroo.*** Dr. John (guitar, vocals, keyboards); Allen Toussaint (keyboards, percussion); other musicians. *Quitters Never Win; Stealin'; Mos' Scocious; (Everybody Wanna Get Rich) Rite Away; RU 4 Real; Can't Git Enuff; Desitively Bonnaroo*; and five others. ATCO SD 7043 $5.98, ® TP 7043 $6.97, © CS 7043 $6.97.

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

Dr. John's latest outing includes more delicious New Orleans gumbo music than did his last album (with which I wasn't thrilled—but don't listen to me; it was the biggest commercial success he's had). This one combines just enough soul-pop with the real thing, and there are half a dozen songs guaranteed to set you romping and stomping. *Mos' Scocious, (Everybody Wanna Get Rich) Rite Away*, and the title tune are delightful. *Stealin'* is a folkish blues remarkable for its catalog of things nasty people will do ("like stealin' med'cine from the sick"), and *RU 4 Real* contains some marvelous lines.

The rhythm section—Leo Nocentelli, George Porter, Jr., Arthur Neville, and Joseph Modeliste—are all New Orleans men and used to be known as the Meters, under which name they had several instrumental hits in the late Sixties. According to the album cover, Modeliste plays "trap drums," which is almost a forgotten skill these days. What it means, basically, is that graceful but fairly complex rhythms are played on the cymbals with no more than perfunctory attention paid to the rest of the drum set. Trap playing was less unusual some years ago, but since the days of the big bands, drummers have been expected to or have demanded to make as much noise as possible, especially in rock. But Dr. John is *not* rock. He is a subtle blend of many styles, which is what New Orleans is all about, musically and as a city.

Allen Toussaint, a greatly gifted man, has again arranged and produced. With a hit album behind them, he and Dr. John have apparently relaxed their concern about making dead-on soul-pop records and have arrived at a juicy happy medium that satisfies both pop requirements and their mutual home-town musical preferences. There is a lot of tasty playing here, too. G'wan, get yourself some of this gumbo. *J.V.*

DOOBIE BROTHERS: ***What Were Once Vices Are Now Habits.*** Doobie Brothers (vocals and instrumentals). *Another Park, Another Sunday; Eyes of Silver; Black Water; Spirit; You Just Can't Stop It; Flying Cloud*; and six others. WARNER BROS. W 2750 $6.98, ® L 82750 $7.97, © L 52750 $7.97.

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

The trouble with rock-and-roll these days is

that you can pass yourself off as an Important Artist simply by playing it; the form has become more important than the content. To add to the trouble, a better than average band (such as the Doobie Brothers) gets lost in the amorphous mass of rock along with both the stellar and the lousy groups.

The Doobies combine enough of the jive of current rock with enough talent to make them worth listening to twice. But thrice? Most likely nay; they are good, but not *that* good. It may be, years from now, that one or more of them will turn up as a member of a killer band that won't quit. It's been known to happen. In the meantime, the Doobies are a *good* group, and you could do a lot worse. Small praise? Cold comfort? Look about you these days—baby, *that* is rock-and-roll. Especially when, as in this particular case, the album title is better than the music. *J.V.*

ARETHA FRANKLIN: ***Let Me in Your Life.*** Aretha Franklin (vocals and piano); orchestra. *Let Me in Your Life; A Song for You; Oh Baby; I'm in Love*; and seven others. ATLANTIC SD 7292 $6.98.

Performance: **Spotty**
Recording: **Good**

If Aretha gets any grander the only thing left for her will be an official coronation. Here she's awash in furs and diamonds on the cover, and mostly orb and sceptering it in the music itself (*With Pen in Hand* and *A Song for You*). The only time she really confirms her place as a superstar and one of the great influences in modern pop singing is in Stevie Wonder's *Until You Come Back to Me*. I had put the record on and, becoming bored with all the posturing, gone into another room. Suddenly that magical fifth track started and my head turned as completely around (well, almost) as that kid's in *The Exorcist*. She was tearing Wonder's song apart and putting it back together again as only she can, and I was as enthralled and impressed as I was when I first heard her years ago at the Village Gate. Unfortunately, the rest of the album seems to veer between the throne room and a gospel antechamber. Aretha-won't-you-please-come-home? *P.R.*

GRAND FUNK: ***Shinin' On.*** Grand Funk (vocals and instrumentals). *Shinin' On; The Locomotion; Little Johnny Hooker; Mr. Pretty Boy*; and four others. CAPITOL SWAE-11278 $6.98, ® 8XZ-11278 $7.98, © 4XZ-11278 $7.98.

Performance: **Loose, looser . . .**
Recording: **Good and loud**

Grand Funk is the best-known and most successful example of a group that has musically prospered since its members stopped taking themselves seriously. Looking back on their career with Terry Knight as their manager/producer, it is now doubtful that they *ever* wanted to seem so stuck on themselves. Knight's press agentry was brilliant and offensive; he concocted the success of the group by emotionally manipulating both Grand Funk and their audience. Yet what an irony that the man who so hurt and embittered Knight, inspiring him to take his revenge on music and the music business, was the same man to whom Knight turned to punish Grand Funk when they grew weary of him. That such a phenomenon as Grand Funk should begin and end because of the mutual hostility and need of Knight and Allen Klein (the former manager of the Beatles—Paul McCartney dissenting—and the Rolling Stones) is worthy of stone tablets.

But how different and how much calmer things are since Todd Rundgren became Grand Funk's producer. He has enabled them to relax, to have fun, to *grow*. Surely only this talented young man could have convinced Grand Funk to do a perfectly acceptable version of that old groin-grinder *The Locomotion*, originally cut in the very early Sixties by the forgotten Little Eva, and co-written by the then-apprentice songwriter Carole King (is there any truth to the legend that Little Eva was actually the downstairs maid of Ms. King's parents?).

Grand Funk has prospered under Rundgren, who has not only maintained their unbroken streak of gold albums (this is the, what? twelfth?) but also gave them their first gold single, *We're an American Band*. Much more, he has given them his sense of adventure. They are now boyish and exuberant, where before they were bratty and pompous. As a band they continue to improve. *J.V.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

HOLLIES: ***Hollies.*** Allan Clarke (vocals); Bernie Calvert (bass, vocals); Tony Hicks (guitar, vocals); Terry Sylvester (guitar, vocals); Bobby Elliot (drums, vocals). *Falling Calling; It's a Shame, It's a Game; Don't Let Me Down; Out on the Road; The Air That I*

OVER HERE! IS MELLOROONEY

Reviewed by Roy Hemming

In a pinch, two Andrews sisters (Patty and Maxene) are quite enough.

WELL, all reet now. It would seem that most of those early 1940's "B" movie musicals (the ones that used to fill out the double-feature bills at the nabes) have long since gotten lost on the back shelves of Hollywood's vaults. They rarely show up on TV (perhaps because their sixty-five-minute running time is too short for standard TV movie-programming slots), and they're not the sort of flicks that film societies tend to build "artistic retrospectives" around. But, no, they're not dead. A variation has turned up quite alive on nostalgia-prone (at least for a time) Broadway, kicking up a storm of boogie-woogie and jitterbug beats and mellorooney quips, and starring the two surviving Andrews Sisters. Their new show, *Over Here!*, may well be one of the slickest, peppiest, most entertaining "B" movies ever made, with a lightweight plot involving a World War II troop train en route from L.A. to New York with an assortment of GI's and civilian entertainers—plus Mitzi the Nazi Spy.

Inevitably, the Columbia original-Broadway-cast album can capture only the show's sounds; missing therefore are all the unique visuals from zoot suits and drape shapes to numerous other vignettes of the life styles of the Forties. And, as in most of those "B" movies from which *Over Here!* is descended, the sounds just aren't that memorable on their own. To be sure, the brothers Sherman (Richard M. and Robert B., whose film-composing credits include *Mary Poppins*, *Tom Sawyer*, and *Chitty-Chitty Bang-Bang*) have captured the *flavor* of the era perfectly in their music and lyrics, as have orchestrators Michael Gibson and Jim Tyler. Each of *Over Here!*'s songs is original, yet they all sound (as they were meant to) exactly like something you've heard before. The problem is that, while this works on stage in tandem with the show's lively settings and costumes and Will Holt's casual book, the album's derivative sounds merely remind you of the *better* Dorsey, Miller, Krupa, and, yes, Andrews Sisters songs that are still in circulation on discs and tapes. One exception: the song called *The Good Time Girl* (in the album, that is; it is listed more candidly in the theater program as *The V.D. Polka*). Its beat may be straight out of several old-time hits, but the lyrics are the sort that never, never got on the air or into the movies in the Forties!

Patty and Maxene Andrews (LaVerne, the other sister of the original trio, died six years ago) sing with their usual irrepressible buoyancy and warmth, though their voices are considerably huskier than they used to be—a condition probably not helped by today's engineering fidelity, in contrast to recording standards of their former heyday. And when they launch into the show's final song, *No Goodbyes*, you can't help hoping that they mean every word of it, that they'll go right on singing and entertaining in their inimitable way for a long time to come.

Janie Sell's show-stopping *Wait for Me, Marlena* comes across delightfully in the album, as does Samuel Wright's *Don't Shoot the Hooey to Me, Louie*. However, the show's big band—so effectively placed on stage during the performance—suffers throughout the recording from the closer-up studio miking of the singers.

THE album package itself is skimpier than Columbia's standard; it could certainly have used a page or two of photographs to at least give something of a feeling of the show's lively visual sense of its period. Even so, fans of the Andrews Sisters, fans of the show, and fans of the Forties will find the album version of *Over Here!* mellorooney enough.

OVER HERE! (R. M. and R. B. Sherman—Will Holt). Original-Broadway-cast recording. Patty and Maxene Andrews, Janie Sell, Douglas Watson, MacIntyre Dixon, William Griffis, Samuel E. Wright, John Tavolta, April Shawhan, John Driver, Phyllis Somerville, Jim Weston (vocals); The Big Band, Joseph Klein cond. COLUMBIA KS 32961 $6.98, ⑧ KSA 32961 $7.98, Ⓒ KST 32961 $7.98.

Breathe; Rubber Lucy; and five others. EPIC KE 32574 $5.98, ⑧ EA 32574 $6.98, Ⓒ ET 32574 $6.98.

Performance: **Strong**
Recording: **Excellent**

The Hollies have been among the half-dozen most important British rock groups for many years, not by being good regularly but by periodically agitating the imagination into concocting a fanciful notion of what they *could* be if every little thing fell into place. This album, something of a comeback, is the Hollies doing that again. It is not a great masterwork—even if it were in every other way, it could not drag its lyrics to the pinnacle—but it has some great stuff in it that eggs the listener into imagining improvements in the weaker stuff and what would happen *then*. The singing, thanks in part to Allan Clarke's return to the group, is about as good as rock-group vocal harmonizing can get—tighter than the Bee Gees, warmer than Badfinger, more versatile than Poco, cleaner than the Byrds, able to leap tall ballads with a single bound. Tony Hicks and Terry Sylvester are surprisingly good with the guitars, too, when they have ideas. The material lacks depth, but some of it will give avid listeners a good run for a month or so. *The Air That I Breathe* is clearly the best song, a dandy that comes on grandly elated with itself but is so stylish and graceful it turns that into a positive attitude. It will even be forgiven by us critics for being as commercial as grits in Valdosta. *Don't Let Me Down* is a nice long-time-on-one-chord kind of mood thing, brilliantly arranged, and *Rubber Lucy* is most appealing among four that rock a little harder. But there are some time-wasters in there, too, including one with a lot of ping-ping-ping jazz on the piano and including some rather drawn-out tunelessness before the good things begin on side one. Not a great album, but to improve on it much would be to. . . .

But you see what kind of thinking it inspires. Damn Hollies, messin' with my head again. *N.C.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

JANIS IAN: *Stars*. Janis Ian (vocals and piano); orchestra. *Stars; Sweet Sympathy; Dance with Me; Page Nine; Jesse*; and five others. COLUMBIA KC 32857 $5.98, ⑧ CA 32857 $6.98.

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

Seven years after the success of *Society's Child*, a watershed topical song written when she was fifteen, Janis Ian is back, at the age of twenty-two, with songs composed during her own private season of hell. Always one of the most sensitive of composer/performers, often hypersensitive in live performance, she has at last stopped meandering artistically and come to some positive conclusions: yes, the public will eat you alive if you let it, but she still wants to be a *Star*; yes, she was deeply in love with *Jesse*, and though he's gone she's still in love (*You've Got Me on a String*). However, she's still looking around (*Sweet Sympathy*) and has a pretty good idea of what kind of life she wants with any new love (*Page Nine*), and, what-the-hell, life goes on anyway (*Applause*). The old bitter rage is evident only once here, in *Dance with Me*, in which her fury over the contemporary American scene can send smoke spiraling out of your speak-

(Continued on page 86)

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ers. It's very strong, tough stuff, and it makes Lauro Nyro and some of the other female composers of protest songs sound like the bluestocking mumblers of bitchery that they often are (I loved it).

Unfortunately there still lingers an air of veiled contempt, a touch of the common scold, about Ian's performances which often contradicts the more positive sense of the lyrics. *I* don't mind it, but I know that others do and will be turned off by it. But this is an album definitely worth listening to nonetheless, most importantly as an opportunity to hear a real artist struggling to sort out and to communicate through a morass of negative and positive emotions. Ian is trying her damndest to mellow, and except for that one track here she seems to be succeeding. Her next job is to achieve a more relaxed recording manner. C'mon baby, smile! *P.R.*

MAHALIA JACKSON: ***The Life I Sing About.*** Mahalia Jackson (vocals and narration). *I'm Gonna Live the Life I Sing About in My Song; Childhood Memories; Blacks in New Orleans; New Orleans Music and Musicians; Funerals in New Orleans; Didn't It Rain*; and six others. CAEDMON TC 1413 $6.98.

Performance: **Revealing reminiscences**
Recording: **Good**

Mahalia Jackson sat in the "gaudy green and gold plush living room" of her Southside Chicago home talking into a small Wollensak tape recorder on a table near her. The year was 1958, and she was going to make a movie about her life with the help of producer Jules Victor Schwerin, who had made a documentary called *Indian Summer* about the battle of people in the Catskill Valley to keep their lands from being flooded, and was eager to create a companion piece on the subject of "black people of the Mississippi Delta in the vortex of social change." For three days the gospel singer talked about her life, about growing up in New Orleans and the early influence on her style of Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey; she spoke of the brutality of the police who would "run colored people in" on the slightest pretext and beat them senseless, of the murders white men could commit and get away with during the Mardi Gras season as long as the victims were black, of church influences on her music, and why she never would agree to sing jazz or blues or anything but gospel. The movie was never made.

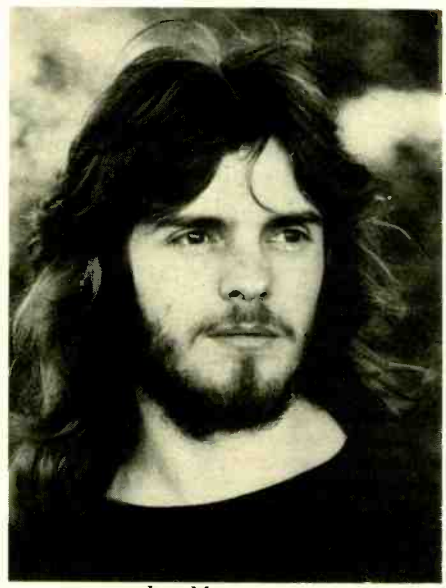
The tape recording was saved. The woman who made it is gone now, but Caedmon acquired the tape and has done a fine job of presenting the material on it interspersed with recordings (from the vaults of Columbia) of some of the songs that made Miss Jackson's reputation—*I'm Gonna Live the Life I Sing About in My Song, Didn't It Rain, God Put a Rainbow in the Sky*, and her incomparable singing of *The Lord's Prayer* in gospel style. It adds up to a fascinating hour with a woman who saw too much but never let anything—discrimination, poverty, insults, even being made to sit in Aunt Jemima rocking chairs wearing a bandanna on her head for TV appearances—degrade or defeat her. *P.K.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

JEFFERSON AIRPLANE: ***Early Flight.*** Jefferson Airplane (vocals and instrumentals); other musicians. *High Flyin' Bird; Runnin' 'Round This World; It's Alright; In the Morning; J.P.P. McStep B. Blues*; and four others. GRUNT CYL1-0437 $6.98, ® CYS1-0437 $7.95, © CYK1-0437 $7.95.

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

Now *this* is the way to go in there and pillage those vaults. None of these selections has been in an album before, and six (if one believes Bill Thompson's excellent liner notes; seven, if one believes some of the ads) are being released for the first time in any form. The one that steals the show is *In the Morning*, a rakish blues thing Thompson says was "more or less a jam" following a late-night "Surrealistic Pillow" recording session. It features singing by Jorma Kaukonen, harp by John Hammond, and guitar by Jerry Garcia, and all are tremendous. The cut doesn't overpower everything else, but it helps validate the album and helps offset some of the weaker



IAN MATTHEWS
Great taste and high intelligence

selections. *All* of side one is a delight, with Grace Slick's predecessor, Signe Anderson, heard a few times and Airplane founder Marty Balin working his vocal specialness into such stuff as *High Flyin' Bird* (irrevocably identified with Richie Havens, of course, but Thompson says this taping got bumped out of the lineup of the first album, "Jefferson Airplane Takes Off," although the Airplane frequently performed it in those days) and *Go to Her*, which had (reasonably) been scratched from the already ballad-heavy "Surrealistic Pillow." Those weaker moments I mentioned include *Up or Down*, written by Jorma's brother Peter, whose inanities should not be allowed to go on for six minutes, and another of Paul Kantner's tuneless jousts with sci-fi, *Have You Seen the Saucers*. Grace's *Mexico* is not exactly momentous, either, but it is slightly innovative, in a nutty sort of way, melodically.

A neat thing, though, is how it all fits together into an album. I've heard "concept" albums whose parts didn't relate as well. And, needless to say, I've heard countless rock-and-roll bands in recent years that never dreamed of playing this well, and never will. *N.C.*

BUZZY LINHART: ***Pussycats Can Go Far.*** Buzzy Linhart (vocals, guitar); orchestra. *Shoo That Fly; See You Again; Friends; The Justice Game; There It Goes Again*; and six others. ATCO SD 7044 $6.98, ® TP 7044 $6.97, © CS 7044 $6.97.

Performance: **Hippity-hop**
Recording: **Excellent**

It would take a worse grouch than I am not to be entertained by Buzzy Linhart's bouncy songs and hippity-hop performances. *Shoo That Fly*, for instance, is a cheerfully off-the-wall idyl about nothing very much at all that is performed by Linhart as if he believed every word. *See You Again*, "a medium Fox Trot," is plaintively yowled by Buzzy as if he were trying to make out in some Palm Court with Marguerite Dumont. Not that his lyrics don't often make a looney sort of sense—eventually. That I can't remember a damned one of them didn't in any way lessen my pleasure while listening to the album; that I occasionally enjoy tagging down the absolute middle-of-the-pop-road on a pogo stick also doesn't bother me in the least. And if you think there *aren't* any bigger grouches than I, I suggest you check out any "serious" reviewer's opinion of Linhart: the lip-curl of disdain will spread from here to Berkeley. Anyway, I had fun. So will you. *P.R.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

IAN MATTHEWS: ***Some Days You Eat the Bear and Some Days the Bear Eats You.*** Ian Matthews (vocals, guitar); other musicians. *Ol' '55; I Don't Wanna Talk About It; A Wailing Goodbye; Keep On Sailing; Tried So Hard; Dirty Work*; and four others. ELEKTRA 75078 $5.98.

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

The sound Ian Matthews has developed for his albums is smooth and flowing. He sings harmonies with himself, holds notes a split second longer than one expects, backs himself with lazy, tasteful, sometimes contrapuntal steel-guitar lines, and knows just how to make everything else ease back a little so that even a simple, easy acoustic guitar lick can have maximum effect. Unfortunately the sound can put the whammy on surprise and has a leveling effect: it brings down Jesse Winchester's *Biloxi*, in this case, by about as much as it improves such a methodical song as Gene Clark's *Tried So Hard*. But Matthews is still tinkering with it, having tried weaving Lynn Dobson's unpretentious sax and some respectable Charlie McCoy-influenced harp by Joel Tepp into this one. Tinkering must be the explanation for the appearance of his fine song, *Keep On Sailing*, in its second successive album. He hasn't changed it much, singing perhaps a tiny bit slower and with less harmonizing, and trading the minor backing role of a piano for the minor backing role of the sax—and, yes, bringing up the acoustic guitar (by Andy Roberts this time) in just the right places. Tepp and guitarist Danny Weis add more spice than one would expect, given the stylized overall sound, to fine back-to-back versions of Danny Whitten's *I Don't Wanna Talk About It* and Matthews' *A Wailing Goodbye*. Matthews is not a prolific writer, but he has great taste and high intelligence, and I could see someone similarly equipped picking up one of his songs thirty years from now, running through it and mumbling "Not bad." And that's an enormous compliment, or, granted that Mr. Matthews has the gift of patience, will be. *N.C.*

VAN MORRISON: *It's Too Late to Stop Now.* Van Morrison (vocals): instrumental accompaniment. *Ain't Nothin' You Can Do; Into the Mystic; I Believe to My Soul; Domino; I Just Wanna Make Love to You; Bring It On Home; Saint Dominic's Preview; Listen to the Lion; Here Comes the Night; Gloria; Caravan; Cypress Avenue*; and six others. WARNER BROS. 2BS 2760 two discs $11.98, ® J 82760 $9.97, © J 52760 $9.97.

Performance: **Monotonous**
Recording: **Good**

I haven't followed Van Morrison's career closely, but I remember him as the lead singer of Them (*Gloria, Here Comes the Night*), then as a solo (*Brown Eyed Girl*), and as one of the discoveries on the late Bert Berns' Bang Records label. Morrison moved to Warner Brothers around 1967 and changed his style of songwriting from more or less straightahead pop-rock to introspective jazz-blues. Though he has prospered as a rock artist, he is really a white blues singer with an overlaid jazz style.

Since the late Sixties and early Seventies, when he reached a peak with the delightful (and very jazzy) *Moondance* and *Domino*, Morrison has had his artistic ups and downs. This album, a live program of his hits and better-liked tunes, doesn't settle anything. His vocal work is strong and sturdy, but after one side of this four-side set everything he does sounds the same. It is something like reading too much George Bernard Shaw. The band behind him is excellent, particularly saxist Jack Schroer. The arrangements are very good, but the wonderful extended riff in *Into the Mystic* sounds watery compared to the studio version on the "Moondance" album.

For the umpteenth time, I must complain about live albums. Readers should know, if they don't already, that live albums are usually released because (1) the performer is too lazy or messed up to get in the studio and do a real session; (2) the performer and the label are renegotiating the contract and playing Mexican stand-off; (3) the performer has left the label, and the company, not having enough studio recordings in the can, tells the engineers to pull those tapes of the Pomona Trade School concert; or (4) the performer has a sensitive ego and will not allow his singles to be collected into a "greatest hits" package. I wouldn't swear any of this has anything to do with this album, but I'm very suspicious. *J.V.*

MARTIN MULL: *Normal.* Martin Mull (vocals, guitar); orchestra. *Rome and Bored; Drunkard's Waltz; Ego Boogie; Woodstock Samba; Wood Shop*; and eight others. CAPRICORN CP 0126 $6.98.

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

Any album that states in its liner notes that "This album contains *no* cheap shots at the Carpenters or Carl E. Simon" can't be *all* bad. "Normal" is boring at times, perhaps, and not pointed enough often enough, but it's still a fair amount of fun. Martin Mull comes closest to real humor in his *Dialing for Dollars*, in which a man explains that he will be on Easy Street once he gets a call from that quiz show, and how he even has had an extension put in the bedroom so he won't miss the call when it comes. The biggest problem is that Mull's powers of characterization are not all that strong. Mild fun. *P.R.*

ANNE MURRAY: *Love Song.* Anne Murray (vocals); instrumental accompaniment. *Love Song; Just One Look; Another Pot o' Tea; Children of My Mind; Real Emotion*; and five others. CAPITOL ST-11266 $5.98, ® 8XT-11266 $6.98, © 4XT-11266 $6.98.

Performance: **Great, but . . .**
Recording: **Very good**

Anne Murray continues to sound great and continues to be directed or managed or produced in a way that strikes me as too narrowly exploitative. Her albums continue to be slapped together with the kind of thinking that is apparent in the slapping together of Tom Jones' albums—which from here looks shallow and concerned only with quickie commerce. Usually this is not a very grave sin in pop music, because, what the hell, in ten years nobody will remember many of these so-called stars anyway; but in this case it involves the managers' failure to realize what a rare talent they're guiding, and the responsibility that implies. What we perceive is Annie represented one way to the country music audience, another way to American pop music, another way in Canada.

Consequently her albums try to cover several bases in diverse ways in a shotgun production approach that always hurts them. This one starts out with a string of trivial, hacked-out songs that do only one thing for the ear: being badly written, they sometimes call for awfully high or awfully low notes, and we get to hear Annie hit those. Dead on. Paul

(Continued on page 90)

GORDON LIGHTFOOT is not an Indian. Of *course* not, but in the early-morning stupor perhaps the thought did flicker that, maybe, his having a name like that and being from Canada, well. . . . Marjorie Harris, journalist, caught this dull wink of a moment and inked it in; an old copy of *Maclean's* magazine preserves it in a paragraph about Lightfoot mingling with the audience at the Cellar Door Club in Washington, D.C.: "We sat down at a table and one of the very cool, self-possessed girls sitting there looked him straight in the eye in her American way and asked, 'Are you an Indian?' "

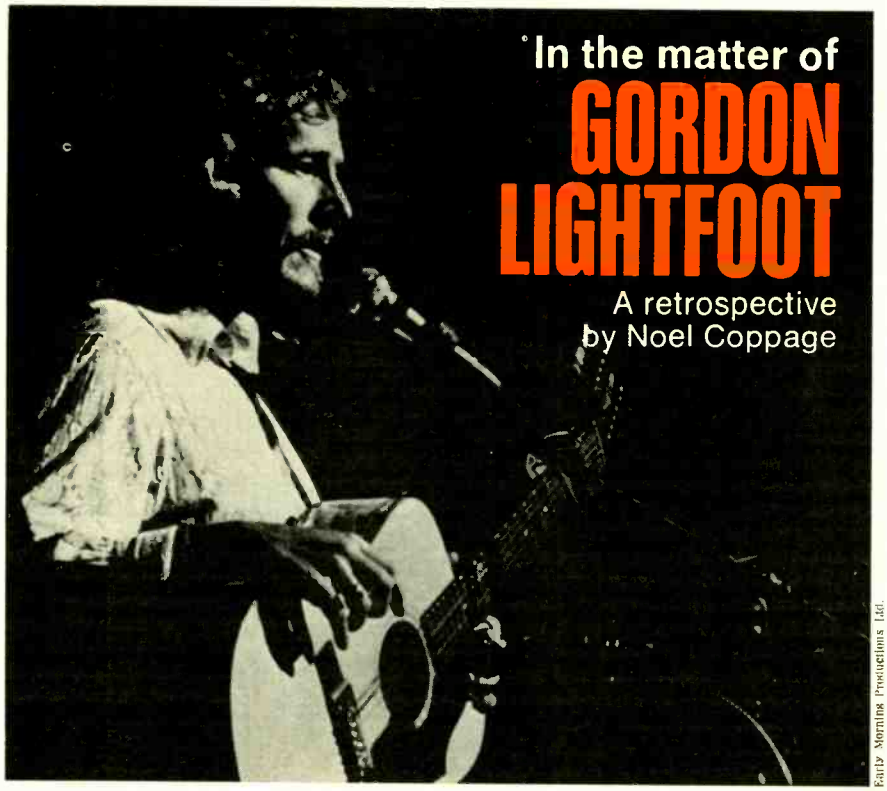
The question is not simply brazen, nor simply "American"; it's also wistful—marking not the first time, not by a long shot, that a cool, unblinking stare connected back to a dreamy romantic soul. It would *seem* more *romantic*, you see—at least to self-possessed youngsters who have had glancing encounters with the "noble savage" motif a few times in assigned readings but have not grappled with the philosophical intricacies of this on into the night—if Lightfoot were an Indian . . . if his hometown (Orillia, Ontario) were in the frozen wilderness instead of being a civil little place on a nice lake 180 miles nearer to the *equator*, for God's sake, than Bob Dylan's hometown (Hibbing, Minnesota) is . . . if Lightfoot had learned a few guitar chords at the feet of some magnificent, tragic hobo instead of learning to sight-read music in a conventional, middle-class piano-lesson grind . . . if he had come to us scarred and leathery from the highway rather than poised and sharp from a showbusy career kickoff as a chorus singer (and—ta-da!—*hoofer*) in the Canadian television series "Country Hoedown." But it wouldn't work, for Lightfoot, were he any of those things, wouldn't be one of Us.

By Us I mean the mongrels and hybrids who can have no very profound racial self-image, noble, savage, or otherwise, but who *do* get around, who *have* developed a wide-angle cultural view—imprinted, perhaps, with a ghostly and rosy after-image of nobility. It's unofficial, naturally; people like Cromwell and Jefferson bounced royalty out of the spotlight and put Us in the Egalitarianism business, and we not only see the logic in their arguments but bore each other silly by endlessly and piously repeating them during business hours. But when we get home and put our feet up, and toy with our closet yearnings. . . . A child can, had jolly well *better*, follow the thread that runs through ugly duckling stories, enchanted frog stories, sleeping beauty stories, Cinderella stories, "You, Too, Can Be Queen for a Day!", Horatio Alger. Rags-to-riches is a poor way of stating it; nobody-to-somebody is closer to the quick. Gaining wealth makes scorekeeping easier, but gaining *class* is the thing. When I was a child, one could easily see the branch line running through the modern updatings of the finished product, or at least the knight-errant model of it: the Lone Ranger, Batman (Bruce Wayne was an *aristocrat*), Wyatt Earp, and, speaking of Canadians, Sergeant Preston of the Yukon. Virile men every one, but also dignified. Patricians. I never doubted they would know which fork to use.

Gordon Meredith Lightfoot would too, if one can judge that sort of thing from the way he looks, the way he sounds, and the way he writes. His vocals are virile in that gentlemanly, classy way our little systems are set up for. His language takes into account our long-standing prejudices toward sound and cadence (Poe made available some of his insight into this in his account of how he contrived *The Raven*: "L"-sounds and "R"-sounds are naturally pleasing to us, and so forth). Lightfoot's music is similarly structured within traditional feelings about which way lies man's "higher" potential, for beauty, enlightenment, cleanliness, etc., all of which, one hopes, work out to melodies fit for kings.

Lightfoot is not only faithful to the old parameters without thinking it all through (if he were an Indian, he *would* have to think about it, and there, as we always say at this point, is the rub), but he is good at it. In our terms, he's Significant: I don't know how many songs he has written, but he has recorded (as this is written) 103 of his own pieces in nine studio albums, one live album, and two "greatest hits" things, and maybe fifteen, maybe *twenty* of those have some chance of staying lit when pumpkin hour comes to such names as Arlen, Porter, Dylan, and Lightfoot. I think at least five Lightfoot songs—*Early Morning Rain*, *The Way I Feel*, *For Loving Me*, *Canadian Railroad Trilogy*, and *Circle of Steel*—are going to cast long shadows as long as men's homes are their you-know-whats.

LIGHTFOOT's shortcomings, naturally, are more nearly the result of being than doing. Our vision tends to build up a soft layer of schmaltz around the edges; when maidens become as fair as we think we want them, they also become bland. The intervals of our traditional folk melodies are—compared to the slippin', slurrin', oozin', slidin' that some other folks like in a melody—rather formal and impersonal in their prettiness. Noticing this, perhaps subconsciously, we tend to make it worse by bringing in something like a swirl of strings to warm things up. Lightfoot started doing that when he encountered John Simon, producer of his third album, "Did She Mention My Name?", and has been tinkering with it fairly regularly since. The timeless themes and grand schemes he often tackles also tend to impose a stylized, depersonalized tone between artist and listener. Lightfoot writes a serviceable sea song, for example—*Christian Island*, *Yarmouth Castle*, *Ode to Big Blue*—but I cannot tell, to use Hemingway's test, whether he's writing what he truly feels or what he's *supposed* to feel about the subject. For what it's worth, I did read, again in *Maclean's*, that he has a special fondness for the Maritime Provinces. Songs about traveling (all of Us do get around) appear in his repertoire almost as frequently as love songs do, and in the self-evaluative travel music—songs like *Don Quixote*, *Ordinary Man*, *Hi-Way Songs*, *Somewhere USA*, and *Minstrel of the Dawn*, in which Lightfoot examines the troubadour's way of life—he is one of Us at our best: compassionate, eloquent, but direct and honest, too, and smoothly, efficiently intelligent. But in the workingman's songs, such as *Boss Man*, *Cotton Jenny*, and *Mother of a Miner's Child* (*Canadian Railroad Trilogy*, performed best in the live album "Sunday Concert," is more like a sweep-of-history overture), Lightfoot seems to know just enough about the subject to sound well-meaning but superficial—even though *Jenny* has a beat that won't quit. The other side of our fantasy about receiving the ultimate, well-deserved kiss, shedding the warts, and walking off with the princess may be this exalting we do of the little man—coping with the present, drawn-out (how



Early Morning Productions Ltd.

long, O Lord?) situation. And how do we put our hearts into *that*?

Lightfoot is of course aware of his own special gifts, that a measure of bigness is achieved, and now and then he'll go on a little foray, just to show you (and perhaps himself) what the pop-music equivalent of the eighty-yard run looks like. The very first album, "Lightfoot," is crammed with biggies, but those had been stockpiled and previously recorded by such people as Ian and Sylvia, or Peter, Paul and Mary, or Marty Robbins. A more conscious exercise in razzle-dazzle comes in the second album, "The Way I Feel" (neither is easy to find in disc form now, but United Artists has out eight-track tape versions of both, designated U8084 and U8085, respectively), for which Lightfoot decided to write something in a minor key and came up with *A Minor Ballad* —in what sounds like C Minor—an extraordinary melodic achievement for a folkie. Not only does it refuse to roll over and sound like gypsy music, not only does the melody do right by its subject, line by line, note by note, but it is a thing of unearthly, almost painful beauty. As a way of coming down, Lightfoot follows it on the album with *Go Go Round*, which is just that, a round about a go-go dancer. It seems to be a throw-away that I don't seem able to throw away. Lightfoot has almost patented a certain kind of up-tempo ballad, demonstrated by *It's Worth Believin'* (in "Old Dan's Records"), *Second Cup of Coffee* (in "Don Quixote"), and *Go My Way* (in "Summer Side of Life"), music that pickers love to play and which, in the recordings, allows his great lead guitarist, Red Shea, and his great bass player, Rick Haynes, to demonstrate *their* specialness. Lightfoot can write the ambiguous, apply-anywhere lyric when he wants to, as *That Same Old Obsession* proves, and he can write satire that makes the target squirm even during the instrumental break—and can make the rest of us set up mental mirrors for a quick once-over too—as *Lazy Mornin'* does. Generally, however, his approach to lyrics is conventionally "poetic," concerned with putting fairly graphic images complete with good color resolution into our minds. "The way I feel is like a robin/Whose babes have flown to come no more . . . ." There. Nothing spectacular about it. Nothing spectacular about Byron's best stuff, either—just fairly ordinary words in a comfortable, natural-seeming order. But it's beautiful, and infinitely more difficult to do, and infinitely more lasting in its effect, than those thesaurus-ravaging spewings of, say, middle-period Dylan. Lightfoot's eloquence is sometimes wasted, of course, as few of us consistently edit ourselves all that well all the way; *Something Very Special* has one of those awful, scale-diddling melodies that sinks such good lines as "I was something she could use/Like a good friend or a pair of shoes/Or any kind of good news." Even such a song as *Don Quixote* suffers because part of its melody seems to be a rewrite of something else (something *really* else: its last incarnation was in *Teen-Age Queen*). But small slip-ups notwithstanding, it is clear that Lightfoot has extraordinary command of the tools, and that he respects them.

He's not easily thrown off, either, by the pounding in the temples triggered by various Captain Now figures. His response to the enormous pressure on people in his line of work (and mine) to be *H*I*P* back there at the turn of the decade was to make a "Nashville" album, "Summer Side of Life," which did list in its credits such names-familiar-to-credits as Chip Young, Ken Buttrey, Charlie McCoy, Vassar Clements, and the late Junior Huskey, but Lightfoot didn't "go Nashville"—Nashville "went Lightfoot." He kept his good friends and sidemen, Shea and Haynes, prominently in the foreground, and altered his songwriting style not one iota. And, since the Nashville cats' prowlings around the edges did scratch away some of the schmaltz, and since the songs are strong ones, it may be the best Lightfoot album of all. Time will most likely choose between it and whatever fully realized work spins off of "Old Dan's Records," an album fairly pulsating with hints and suggestions. "Sundown," which followed "Old Dan's Records," is no help in determining exactly which direction Lightfoot is going to take; what it is is an excellent composite of several directions he has taken before. Well, time is working for him.

LIGHTFOOT, you see, is not just a figure for you and me to contend with, but one for our *children* to contend with also, and maybe their children. He may be one of Us, but he is not just *another* one of Us. He's a distillation, a refinement; his work does not amplify our romanticism's flaws to the degree it amplifies our lyricism, even though it may be inevitably hemmed in by the ultimate distortion in our pretty vision. There's a lot of room in there, and he knows how to work in it. Knowing his work is not the same as knowing Lightfoot, but my suspicion, based on his work, is that he realizes all of this. He may even have been having a little —shall we say quixotic?—fun with it on some dim, early-morning-first-cup-of-coffee level of awareness when he thought up the song title *You Are What I Am*.

LIGHTFOOT! *Rich Man's Spiritual; Long River; The Way I Feel; For Loving Me; The First Time; Changes; Early Morning Rain; Steel Rail Blues; Sixteen Miles; I'm Not Sayin'; Pride of Man; Ribbon of Darkness; Oh Linda; Peaceful Waters.* UNITED ARTISTS UAS 6487 $4.98, ⑧ U8084 $6.98, © K0084 $6.98.

GORDON LIGHTFOOT: ***The Way I Feel.*** *Walls; If You Got It; Softly; Crossroads; A Minor Ballad; Go Go Round; Rosanna; Home from the Forest; I'll Be Alright; Song for a Winter's Night; Canadian Railroad Trilogy; The Way I Feel.* UNITED ARTISTS UAS 6587 $4.98, ⑧ U8085 $6.98, © K0085 $6.98.

GORDON LIGHTFOOT: ***Did She Mention My Name?*** *Wherefor and Why; The Last Time I Saw Her; Black Day in July; May I; Magnificent Outpouring; Does Your Mother Know; The Mountain and Maryann; Pussywillows, Cat Tails; I Want to Hear It from You; Something Very Special; Boss Man; Did She Mention My Name.* UNITED ARTISTS UAS 6649 $4.98, ⑧ U8107 $6.98, © K0107 $6.98.

GORDON LIGHTFOOT: ***Back Here on Earth.*** *Long Way Back Home; Unsettled Ways; Long Thin Dawn; Bitter Green; The Circle Is Small; Marie Christine; Cold Hands from New York; Affair on Eighth Avenue; Don't Beat Me Down; The Gypsy; If I Could.* UNITED ARTISTS UAS 6672 $4.98, ® UST 662C $7.95, ⑧ U8143 $6.98, © K0143 $6.98.

THE BEST OF GORDON LIGHTFOOT. *Go Go Round; Softly; The Way I Feel; For Loving Me; Early Morning Rain; I'm Not Sayin'; Black Day in July; Canadian Railroad Trilogy; Did She Mention My Name; Bitter Green; Pussywillows, Cat Tails.* UNITED ARTISTS UAS 6754 $4.98, ® UST 6754 B $6.95, ⑧ U8218 $6.98, © K0218 $6.98.

GORDON LIGHTFOOT: ***Sunday Concert.*** *In a Windowpane; The Lost Children; Leaves of Grass; I'm Not Sayin'/Ribbon of Darkness; Apology; Bitter Green; Ballad of the Yarmouth Castle; Softly; Boss Man; Pussywillows, Cat Tails; Canadian Railroad Trilogy.* UNITED ARTISTS UAS 6714 $4.98, ® UST 6714 B $6.95, ⑧ U8162 $6.98, © K0162 $6.98.

CLASSIC LIGHTFOOT. *The Last Time I Saw Her; Walls; Rosanna; Home from the Forest; If I Could; Something Very Special; Affair on Eighth Avenue; Mountains and Marian; Long Way Back Home; Ballad of the Yarmouth Castle.* UNITED ARTISTS UAS 5510 $5.98, ® U8272 $6.98, © K0272 $6.98.

GORDON LIGHTFOOT: ***Sit Down Young Stranger.*** *Minstrel of the Dawn; Me and Bobby McGee; Approaching Lavender; Saturday Clothes; Cobwebs and Dust; Poor Little Allison; Sit Down Young Stranger; If You Could Read My Mind; Baby It's All Right; Your Love's Return; The Pony Man.* REPRISE 6392 $4.98, ® B 6392 $6.95, ⑧ M8 6392 $6.95, © M5 6392 $6.95.

GORDON LIGHTFOOT: ***Summer Side of Life.*** *10 Degrees and Getting Colder; Miguel; Go My Way; Summer Side of Life; Cotton Jenny; Talkin' in Your Sleep; Nous Vivons Ensemble; Same Old Loverman; Redwood Hill; Love and Maple Syrup; Cabaret.* REPRISE MS 2037 $5.98, ® RST 2037 B $6.95, ⑧ M8 2037 $6.95, © M5 2037 $6.95.

GORDON LIGHTFOOT: ***Don Quixote.*** *Don Quixote; Christian Island; Alberta Bound; Looking at the Rain; Ordinary Man; Brave Mountaineers; Ode to Big Blue; Second Cup of Coffee; Beautiful; On Susan's Floor; The Patriot's Dream.* REPRISE MS 2056 $5.98, ⑧ M8 2056 $6.95, © M5 2056 $6.95.

GORDON LIGHTFOOT: ***Old Dan's Records.*** *Farewell to Annabel; That Same Old Obsession; Old Dan's Records; Lazy Mornin'; You Are What I Am; Can't Depend on Love; My Pony Won't Go; It's Worth Believin'; Mother of a Miner's Child; Hi-Way Songs.* REPRISE MS 2116 $5.98, ⑧ M8 2116 $6.97, © M5 2116 $6.97.

GORDON LIGHTFOOT: ***Sundown.*** *High and Dry; Carefree Highway; Is There Anyone Home; Somewhere USA; Too Late for Prayin'; Sundown; Seven Island Suite; The List; The Watchman's Gone; Circle of Steel.* REPRISE MS 2177 $5.98, ⑧ M8 2177 $7.97, © M5 2177 $7.97.

Grady's *Another Pot o' Tea* demonstrates how some writers repeatedly blow it from sheer carelessness: after inventing a good line, ". . . I'm in love with the Irish accent to your stories," Grady cheapened it by sticking it in the middle of a chorus and using it three times. Someone like Gordon Lightfoot, who *really* knows how to write songs, would have used it once. Song selection in most of Anne's albums seems to have been based on which writers were considered "hot" at the moment, emphasis on moment. One result in this case is that a pleasant lightweight, *Watching the River Run* by Loggins and Messina, has to carry a much heavier aesthetic responsibility than it should—it should be on an Anne Murray album, perhaps, but as a breather—and so the best moments come when the "who's hot" question doesn't apply, in the simple blues-gospel riff for *Backstreet Lovin'*, whose freedom from cuteness and other selfconscious baloney allows Annie to see if she can muscle her way into the place where they have all those flatted thirds and sevenths, and where Bonnie Raitt and Maria Muldaur have taken up most of the elbow room, and, by God, Annie *does* it.

This is not to say there aren't pleasant moments in the other songs—just that they occur while the songs obviously are nose-diving into oblivion. *You Won't See Me* is certainly not Lennon-McCartney in a serious bid for immortality. *Send a Little Love My Way*, a Mancini-David movie tune, is forgiven up to a point because it is a specialized period piece, but it is back-dated nonetheless.

Murray is being used as if there's always tomorrow in which to get around to digging out the great songs and making the classic recordings that are possible with her talent, and that she will be remembered by if she *is* remembered. In my own life, I have not found tomorrow to be that reliable. *N.C.*

NEW RIDERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE: *Home, Home on the Road.* New Riders of the Purple Sage (vocals and instrumentals). *Hi, Hello, How Are You; She's No Angel; Groupie; Sunday Susie; Kick in the Head; Truck Drivin' Man; Hello Mary Lou*; and four others. COLUMBIA PC 32870 $5.98, ® PCA 32870 $7.98, © PCT 32870 $7.98.

Performance: **Superficial slamming**
Recording: **Very good**

It would be interesting to know what the New Riders' reputation—and bank account—would amount to without their off-and-on connection with Jerry Garcia. He's listed as producer of this album; some day I must get a record-company vice president drunk and find out what the producer of a live album *does*. Jerry, of course, is a veritable rock-and-roll god in some quarters and is hugely respected in most others, but he didn't get that way by trying to halve the distance between early Poco and late Texas Playboys, which is what NRPS still sounds like to me. This album seems to work best when I am preoccupied with something else and only half listen to it. The phrasing, the licks, the lines in the verses are so obvious that I don't see how anyone with the normal number of errands to run and bills to worry about could afford to waste more than half his attention on it at one time. One might perk up occasionally, noting a tiny spark in the song itself—and find that, sure enough, they're doing a song written by someone outside the group: *Kick in the Head, Truck Drivin' Man* . . . even Gene Pitney's poor old *Hello Mary Lou* sounds fresh compared to *Groupie* and *Sunday Susie* and other NRPS originals. The group is technically capable, I'm sure, but it has just about reduced the interpretation of music to a science. I don't know much about science, but I know what I like. *N.C.*

POCO: *Seven* **(see Best of the Month, page 74)**

ALAN PRICE: *Between Today and Yesterday.* Alan Price (vocals, piano, organ); orchestra. *Left Over People; Away, Away; Angel Eyes; City Lights*; and eight others. WARNER BROS. BS 2783 $6.98, ® M 82783 $6.97, © M 52783 $6.97.

Performance: **Interesting**
Recording: **Good**

For the last fifty years the English class system and its Establishment have been under such assault in story, drama, and song by such a variety of people that the assaults themselves have become that most cherished of English things—a tradition. That the assaulters can often be seen in later, paunchier years carefully making their way down the steps of White's Club or some other bastion of privilege, after a three-claret lunch, probably on their way to receive a knighthood, doesn't seem to alter the public's fascination with them in their iconoclastic heydays. (Would you believe Sir Mick Jagger?)


Warner Brothers

ALAN PRICE
A jolly young class warrior

Alan Price is one of the better batterers. His work has a fine edge of angry satire, particularly in the group of songs he labels *Yesterday*. *The Jarrow Song*, the story of a hunger march, is very effective, as is *Left Over People*, but the other four songs leave the distinct impression that Eleanor Rigby has married Bertolt Brecht—and not for the better. *Today*, the second side, is much livelier going, especially *You're Telling Me* and *City Lights*.

In all, it's an album by someone who is trying to say too much too quickly from a sardonic stance that in itself becomes a cliché. Price still seems to need the kind of plot direction that Lindsay Anderson provided for him in *Oh Lucky Man!* The music Price wrote for that film didn't quite stand up on record (though it worked beautifully in the film) and neither does this "thematic" attempt. One thing that I don't doubt, my opening remarks aside, is Price's sincerity. Whether or not he will become a composer-performer of any real influence is still an open question. *P.R.*

CHARLIE RICH: *Very Special Love Songs.* Charlie Rich (vocals, piano); orchestra, Cam Mullins arr. *A Very Special Love Song; Why Don't We Go Somewhere and Love; Take Time to Love; A Satisfied Man; A Field of Yellow Daisies; Why, Oh Why*; and four others. Epic KE 32531 $5.98, ® EA 32531 $6.98, © ET 32531 $6.98.

Performance: **Ree-spectable**
Recording: **Good**

Charlie Rich and his previous album, "Behind Closed Doors," which I found to be as exciting as a cup of tea into its third day of cooling, won just about ever' li'l thang at the latest Academy of Country Music awards bash—everything except the "entertainer of the year" designation for Charlie. That went to Roy Clark, of *Hee Haw* fame.

It now becomes necessary for me to invoke good old boy language, for I'm bound to say that what the ACM says is good country music don't mean diddly, and something like that ought to be said plainly. Don't know as I'd go along with Hank Williams entirely ("Man's got to have mule manure on his boots to play country"), but one just *has* to accept Kris Kristofferson's broader gauge: "If it *sounds* country, it's country." Who could argue with that, eh? Okay, then, Hoss, I put it to you: Does Charlie Rich sound country? Does Roy Clark? Or do they sound like Sandler and Young separated and each in his own way trying to emulate Dean Martin?

That's not very nice, actually; Charlie Rich is a capable singer, and I did enjoy *Big Boss Man*, which he did when he was somewhat funkier. Nowadays he seems to be the ideal of some Nashville vice president who's been worrying about "respectability" and "image" for as many years as he's been trying to forget there *is* such a thing as mule manure. Charlie (and Roy) is good for Nashville's image, some think, and who can blame Charlie for accepting the crown of a kingdom he isn't in? This is another middle-of-the-road album, with all the cascading strings and ooo-aahing choruses any teevee variety show producer could want. Couple of decent ballads in there, and of course there's only so much Charlie's jazz-singer phrasing can do to de-corn the lyrics of *Almost Persuaded*. There is that. There is also the likelihood that the album *is* ahead of its time in a pretty depressing way: when *the* country is all suburbs, everyone's roots will lead to music like this. *N.C.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

SIEGEL-SCHWALL BAND: *The Last Summer.* Corky Siegel (piano, harmonica, vocals); Jim Schwall (guitar, vocals); Rollow Radford (bass, vocals); Shelly Plotkin (drums). *Rock Me Baby; You Don't Love Me Like That; I Won't Hold My Breath; The Sun Is Shining*; and four others. WOODEN NICKEL BWL1-0288 $5.98, ® BWS1-0288 $6.95, © BWL1-0288 $6.95.

Performance: **Dazzling**
Recording: **Excellent**

Unless fate is kind this will be my last rave review of the Siegel-Schwall band, the remarkable Chicago blues quartet that could be

(Continued on page 94)

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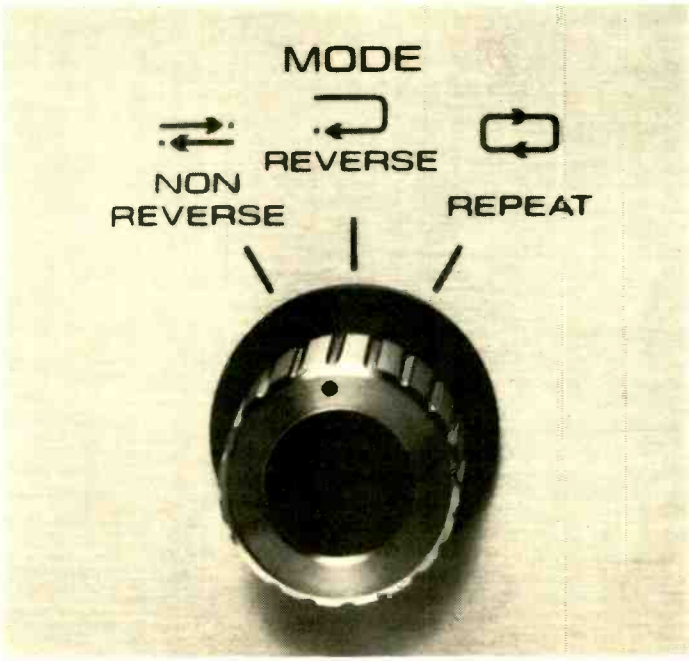

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Lincoln Perry

THAT'S (MGM) ENTERTAINMENT!

The roar of Leo the Lion and the sound of all those endearing musicals are heard again in the land

Reviewed by Peter Reilly

LEO THE LION'S tail has been dragging now for so many years that at any mention of the studio he symbolizes, the toothless old cat looks embarrassedly and disdainfully away. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer is, to all intents and purposes, only nominally still in the picture-making business. Huge sections of the enormous Culver City lot have been sold to real-estate developers; the lavish costumes and elaborate sets have been auctioned off; the executive offices in the Thalberg Building are emptied of showmen, replaced by accountants and other experts in the dismantling of corporations. One thing these experts realize is the value of the Metro legend as old Hollywood's biggest, richest movie studio with an unmatched roster of contracted star performers ("More stars than in the heavens" was, I believe, the old slogan). It is an asset that they have exploited endlessly, and it serves again as a major lure in the decoration of Metro's new Grand Hotel in Las Vegas, where you can feed coins into the slot machines under the blown-up limpid gaze of a Garbo in *Camille* or a slightly cross-eyed Norma Shearer in *Romeo and Juliet*. Alas, poor Leo, we knew you well.

But recently the rarest and most potent of catnips has arrived in the form of *That's Entertainment!*, a joyous compilation of clips from Metro musicals from 1929 to 1958, and it is reported by those who sat behind Leo at a recent screening that the old boy wept tears of happiness. The soundtrack album from this film pastiche is an equally pure delight, not just for nostalgiaphiles or "film" historians, but for anyone who remembers when movie musicals were mass escapist entertainment. Yes, they were as mindless and ephemeral, for the most part, as a game of bean-bag, but they were always beautifully crafted and peopled with stars, dramatic and musical, who had been molded into genuine folk heroes and heroines. For those who *don't* remember: lay down your copy of *Siddhartha*; forget your obligation to be depressed by everything going on currently (the tag line on the advertisements for *That's Entertainment!* is "Boy, do we need it now!"); ask yourself if it is at all possible that perhaps Tolkien might just have been influenced by Walt Disney; thus free yourself from any lingering guilt about intrinsic "cinematic" worth, and enjoy, enjoy!

Enjoy the pleasures, for instance, of what I gather are previously unreleased tracks from the early and mid-Thirties: the mighty Joan Crawford walloping across *I've Got a Feeling for You* from *Hollywood Revue of 1929* or *Heigh Ho, the Gang's All Here* from 1933's *Dancing Lady* (featuring Fred Astaire in his first screen role) in a frantic, flapper frenzy; Jean Harlow, her game but lock-jawed attempt to imitate the then-fashionable Gatsbyish Long Island accent never more hilarious, as she confides, sounding to modern ears strangely like William F. Buckley, ". . . and Oi ken tayke it awn the chin, becawz Oi'm *Reckless* . . ." from, naturally, the picture of the same name; the amazing Eleanor Powell tap-toeing her way through *Rosalie* (a song L.B. Mayer commissioned Cole Porter to write as closely parallel to *Rose Marie* as the laws of plagiarism would allow since the Romberg operetta had been a big hit for him the year before); Bing Crosby, still very much the boy singer in *Going Hollywood* from 1933; Cary Grant, faking his way through *Did I Remember* from a 1936 Harlow epic called *Suzy*; and even Clark Gable, making a hash out of *Puttin' On the Ritz*, which was exactly what the plot of Robert Sherwood's *Idiot's Delight* demanded of him in his role as a broken down song-and-dance man.

AMUSING as these excerpts are, they are only historical side glints, since the "Metro *musical*," as we know it, didn't really become an entity until the advent of 1939's *The Wizard of Oz*. What probably brought it about was L. B. Mayer's ascension to absolute control of MGM after the death of Irving Thalberg. L. B. was, first and foremost, a showman, whereas Thalberg had always been a creative producer as well as a great admirer of the literate sheen and gloss of the New York theater tradition. He was more interested in the dramatic film, with endless rewrites by internationally known authors that he hired by the handful, than in escapist entertainment—unless it were sophisticated comedy, preferably high, and inevitably English. So, while Warner's (*its* fiftieth anniversary was saluted here last month) ground out the brassy, fast paced, and often surreal Busby Berkeley phantasmagorias, while Twentieth Century Fox rushed Shirley Temple and Alice Faye into one vehicle after another, and while over at RKO they were producing the immortal Astaire-Rogers series (films that surely transcend being called "musicals": they are works of art), Metro stayed aloof. Oh, L. B. had the hugely successful Jeanette and Nelson, but they, after all, did "operettas" in keeping with MGM's, and Thalberg's, "prestige" image.

With Thalberg's death, the approach of war and the audience's demand for escapist fare, L. B.'s ability to at last follow only his own instincts, plus the emergence of producers such as Arthur Freed, who were able to capture the ear of the front office for support of their projects, and a talent pool of fresh, in some cases prodigiously gifted (Garland and Rooney), young musical performers, both the times and the box-office atmosphere were right for what was to become the "Metro musical."

There is only one excerpt here from *Wizard*, a medley by Garland, Bert Lahr, Ray Bolger, and Jack Haley including *Over the Rainbow*, but it is good enough to indicate why this movie has been seen by more people than any other in film history (a fact, and another example of TV-your-magic-spell-is-

everywhere). It was a marvel in 1939 and it is a marvel now.

Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland were teamed in a series of musicals—*Babes in Arms*, *Babes on Broadway*, and *Strike Up the Band*—and there are excerpts from all of them here. Despite the horror stories that have since come to light about the treatment of what were essentially still kids—the twelve-hour-a-day work schedules, being brought to the studio hospital to be sedated for a few hours and then awakened by handfuls of "uppers" to be back on the set—Garland and Rooney still come across as truly endearing performers, Garland's voice strong and enthusiastic, Rooney with a show-biz-brat *élan* still unsurpassed.

Garland grew and grew as a musical artist, as the excerpts here show, from the 1944 *Under the Bamboo Tree* (with Margaret O'Brien) from Vincente Minnelli's charming, and visually stunning, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, to the bravura *Get Happy* from *Summer Stock*, made in 1950 and Garland's last completed Metro film. (She did most of the prerecording for *Annie Get Your Gun* before she was fired; whatever happened to those tapes?)

If Garland was the only authentic artist to emerge from the Metro musicals (Astaire came to the studio as an established star in the late Forties; Gene Kelly's best work has been in the field of choreography and direction, and as a performer he has always had a certain coldness; the Sinatra of these films was still only a skinny juvenile singing-lead; and Crosby was an exclusive Paramount property from the mid-Thirties on), there is still a bounty of other entertainment to be heard on these recordings. How about froggy-voiced June Allyson doing *Thou Swell* from *Words and Music* in 1948 or pairing with Peter Lawford in the *Varsity Drag* from *Good News* a year earlier? Not bad at all. Or that Harz Mountain canary Jane Powell twittering *It's a Most Unusual Day*—*and* making you enjoy it? Or Debbie Reynolds in the time of her actual chronological youth cutting up with Carleton Carpenter in *Aba Daba Honeymoon* from 1950? Or Kathryn Grayson, the prima donna with the itsy bitsy soprano (who, in profile, and no matter how the costumes tried to camouflage it, could have given Jane Russell a run for the measurements trophy at the drop of a deep breath), singing to stalwart, stolid, Howard Keel that they should only *Make Believe* from the 1951 production of *Show Boat*? And Lena Horne, as magnetic in 1943 singing *Honeysuckle Rose* as she is now in 1974? And how about the excerpts from *Singin' in the Rain*, a musical that is a triumph from beginning to end—and which I wish Stanley Kubrick had never thought of using as "ironic" counterpoint in his swinish *A Clockwork Orange* (to me it was rather like using *The Carnival of the Animals* as the score for a documentary about the yearly massacre of baby seals).

THE apotheosis of the "Metro musical" here is probably the track from the best-forgotten *Hit the Deck* of 1955, in which Tony Martin, Vic Damone, Debbie Reynolds, Jane Powell, Ann Miller, and Kay Armen are all swept up in one stupendous production number to sing *Hallelujah*. All cheerful, all wholesome, surrounded by a really mammoth orchestral sound, and all singing and dancing as if their contracts depended on it, they deliver one of those finales that was supposed to—and oddly enough often did—send audiences home in a happy glow. The glow and the bloom soon wilted at MGM, where this kind of film was already on the way out, but this number is so archetypal in its very *lack* of distinction that it probably sums up the whole era of lighthearted fluff better than anything else could.

Gigi (1958), from which there are a couple of excerpts here, was a distinguished production in every respect. It was vastly more intelligent, witty, and beautiful to look at than the average big Metro musical. With an original Lerner and Loewe score, fine acting, and a thread of civilized literacy rare in films of any kind, it was a triumph (Thalberg would have loved it). But it was a special case, a project MGM deliberately lavished care and craftsmanship upon in an attempt to bring audiences back to the kind of entertainment the studio was famous for. The film itself was a great success, but it failed to revive interest in the movie musical form. Why? Probably because the audiences had gotten bored with the *Hit the Deck*, *Date with Judy*, and *Two Weeks with Love* fare which was the main gristle for the sausage mill Metro musicals had turned into. Mayer had long been gone from the studio and now it was every cost-cutting man for himself. Even five years earlier, *Gigi* would probably have been run through the production line with Ann Miller as Gigi, James Whitmore in the Chevalier role, Tony Martin in the Jourdan part, and, for a little comic relief, Marjorie Main in place of Hermione Gingold.

THE Metro musical died because of its own apparently easy popularity. They began to cut corners and use *only* people they had under contract, and many of those securely of the second rank. In short, the goose that started to lay gilt instead of golden eggs locked the barn too late. *Gigi* was an attempt to return to the old perfectionist ways of *An American in Paris*, *The Bandwagon*, *The Pirate*, *High Society*, and many others, the kind of films that it seemed only a studio with such huge resources could produce. But by then the public was buying only the *exceptional* musical—if indeed they were buying musicals at all.

Granted, it was an innocent, rather knuckleheaded era in movies, but here is one innocent knucklehead who used to sit hour by enraptured hour watching a world he knew to be unreal and not giving a damn. "That's Entertainment!" is an album I feel the same joyously uncritical way about. Today's movies, for all their wearying pose of telling it like it is, are just as unreal, but there are dream worlds and there are nightmare worlds, given my choice, I'll take the dream every time.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT! Original-soundtrack recording. Fred Astaire, Bing Crosby, Gene Kelly, Peter Lawford, Liza Minnelli, Donald O'Connor, Debbie Reynolds, Mickey Rooney, Frank Sinatra, James Stewart, Elizabeth Taylor, and others; various orchestras. MCA MCA2-11002 two discs $11.98, ⑧ MCAT2-11002 $13.98, © MCAC2-11002 $13.98.

excellent even if it didn't try and, since it does try, is sublime. I am told the group has disbanded. But I have heard that before; on other such occasions they changed their minds and hung around a while longer. I pray it may be so now.

Siegel-Schwall is one of the few groups as good on live albums as they are in the studio. This collection was recorded at The Brewery in Lansing, Michigan, and the well-known Quiet Knight in Chicago. Among the highlights: Rollow Radford's pinched, intense vocal in *Rock Me Baby*, with the longest pause before finishing up a tune that I've heard on any record. This is the dramatic pause deliberately stretched beyond its utmost limit: it is high comedy, like Jack Benny's stare at an audience before delivering the punch line thay have all heard before and can't wait to hear again. Siegel-Schwall's audience goes delightfully berserk. Further highlights: Jim Schwall's funny *You Don't Love Me Like That*, with its parody of blues-song sexual symbolism, Corky Siegel's piano in *The Sun Is Shining*, which develops a blues-boogie crescendo like the dawn coming up like thunder, and Siegel's wonderful harmonica in *Hey, Billie Jean*.

I hope this is not the last album from Siegel-Schwall, but even if it is, there are three albums that preceded it, and to have heard all four is a gift. I am grateful. *J.V.*

STEELEYE SPAN: ***Now We Are Six.*** Steeleye Span (vocals and instrumentals). *Thomas the Rhymer; Two Magicians; Edwin; Twinkle Twinkle Little Star; Seven Hundred Elves; The Mooncoin Jig; Drink Down the Moon; Now We Are Six; Long A-Growing; To Know Him Is to Love Him.* CHRYSALIS CHR 1053 $5.98.

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

This album's flaws may make it a collector's item, as Steeleye's inventiveness may yet prove legendary. Meanwhile, it has to spend some time as another piece of documentation of the way business exploits art. Record contracts call for an orderly scheduling of things, and the creative juices just don't flow that way. The album is padded. *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*? *To Know Him Is to Love Him*? Come on, now; as jokes they're mundane and as music they're no longer valid – and we can generate enough ambient noise around here without wasting such a talented group on the project. Besides, the Spector song is cast in a key that's weird for Maddy Prior, and considering her vocal range, that's hard to do. David Bowie *can* play the sax, though, if that's what it's all supposed to prove.

The title "song" is more padding, even if it does help mention that a drummer has been added to the Steeleye lineup: it's a pastiche of "traditional riddles" set to music, a coupling that improves neither the riddles nor the music. *Long A-Growing* disappoints me, although it is a fine old song existing in several versions; Steeleye simply didn't choose one of the nicer versions (old folkie types will remember a more interesting incarnation entitled *Daily Growing* and probably identify it with Sandy Paton, but the loveliest recording of it appears on Joan Baez's second album and is entitled *The Trees They Do Grow High*). *Two Magicians* is long and repetitive.

But finally, after many small disappointments, we come to the meat, which is everything else. Those five songs, one an instrumental, seem to be what Steeleye actually had in the way of material when the schedule called for churning out another album – if, that is, one comes to expect from them albums of the quality of "Below the Salt" and "Parcel of Rogues." A few more months, maybe weeks, and who knows how this one would have turned out? *N.C.*

STEELY DAN: ***Pretzel Logic.*** Steely Dan (vocals and instrumentals). *Rikki Don't Lose That Number; East St. Louis Toodle-oo; Parker's Band; Barrytown; Through with Buzz; Pretzel Logic*; and five others. ABC ABCD-808 $4.98.

Performance: **Erratic but fine**
Recording: **Clean**

I much admired Steely Dan's last album, mostly for a tune called *Pearl of the Quarter*.

ABC/DUNHILL Records

THREE DOG NIGHT
High-class entertainment

There isn't another such stunner this time around, but the band is still one of the most marvelously inventive to appear since rock took a nosedive some four years ago.

The trouble with the effort here is that most of the tunes seem to be working prototypes. Maybe an idea used in one of them will result in a gem two or three albums hence, but for the moment Steely Dan is treading water. I listen to the instrumental performances and the colorful arrangements and I'm impressed. But the lyrics baffle me; maybe *they* know what they're talking about, but I can't get a clue.

There are, however, two songs well worth hearing. One is *Parker's Band*, which at first sounds like another of those damned rock-and-roll *sieg heils* to get-it-on-and-boogie-down but on second listening is a nice historical piece, set in the Forties, urging other musicians to hurry to Birdland so they can sit in with the great Charlie Parker. The other is an entirely charming version of Duke Ellington and Bubber Miley's *East St. Louis Toodle-oo*, taken at a jaunty tempo with the wah-wah guitar imitating Miley's muted trumpet solo and a country steel guitar playing the bridge. The pianist comes in for a chorus and plays very much like Fats Waller. At the end, the drummer hits the biggest cymbal he can find, *à la* J. Arthur Rank, in cute mimicry of Ellington's "jungle sound" of the Twenties and Thirties. Steely Dan's musical joke is in the best of taste. Though they are treading water, I would rather hear Steely Dan do that than hear most bands at full stroke. *J.V.*

CAT STEVENS: ***Buddha and the Chocolate Box.*** Cat Stevens (vocals, guitar, keyboards); Alun Davies (guitar, vocals); Gerry Conway (drums, vocals); Jean Roussel (keyboards); Bruce Lynch (bass); other musicians. *Music; Oh Very Young; Sun/C79; Ghost Town; Jesus; Ready; King of Trees; A Bad Penny; Home in the Sky.* A & M SP 3623 $5.98, ⑧ 8T 3623 $6.98, © CS 3623 $6.98, 8 8Q 53623 $7.98.

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

Why am I, at this late date, feeling grumpy about how coy/dumb a Cat Stevens album title can look in the right light? Why do I keep remembering the instrumental temperament of this album as a shouting match between the drums and piano when it is plain, when I am listening to it, that there is texture, there is a reasonable amount of lyricism, and there are a few melodic ideas, at least, that are almost worthy of "Tea for the Tillerman"? I think my impressions of "The Foreigner," which certainly *was* foreign in the recorded messages of Cat Stevens, are having some carryover here, and it isn't doing either Stevens or the interests of fair play any good. I sort of cringe every time logic calls for the post-"Foreigner" Stevens to make one of those grungy collisions with a piano keyboard, with glottal explosion to match. And I must say he could have done himself some good, even among people who weren't exposed to "The Foreigner," if he had defied logic (or at least predictability) a few times.

All right. Carryover or not, *Oh Very Young* is quite a nice (if unsurprising) song. *Sun/C79* carries on the semi-mysterious side of Stevens with a fair amount of grace, even if the synthesizer part does sound grafted on, and *King of Trees* has elegance, *Home in the Sky* charm, and not only because they are cast in the humility that was, and may again be, the undeniably attractive thing about Stevens, taste aside. And *Ready* is a dud, with many a collision with the English language as well as the keyboard – "I love I love I love I'm ready to love" indeed. *Music* isn't much better, *A Bad Penny* isn't so hot, and *Jesus* and *Ghost Town* are awful in other ways. I think "The Foreigner" was an experiment, which, on balance, probably shouldn't have been immortalized in vinyl. But it *was* a worthy exercise for the doer of it, while too much of this album – considering the source – seems like simple sandbagging.

It's time, I think, for certain gifted persons – and not *just* Cat Stevens – to stop inflating the value of their tiniest whims and get back to hard work. *N.C.*

B. W. STEVENSON: ***Calabasas.*** B. W. Stevenson (vocals and guitar); orchestra. *Anna-Lisa; We Had It All; Roll On; Dry Land; Song for Katy*; and five others. RCA APL1-0410 $5.98, ⑧ APS1-0410 $6.95, © APK1-0410 $6.95, 8 APT1-0410 $7.95.

Performance: **Arid**
Recording: **Poor**

This is a strangely dry and lifeless album from a performer whose previous work I have admired. Stevenson seems to be skimming his material, and the production is so poor that he

sounds as if he is giving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to the microphone, while his acoustic guitar playing is so grossly magnified in volume that it is reduced to noisy thwanging. He's okay in *Roll On* and *Here We Go Again*, but not much more than that. *P.R.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

THREE DOG NIGHT: ***Hard Labor.*** Three Dog Night (vocals and instrumentals). *Sure As I'm Sittin' Here; Anytime Babe; Sitting in Limbo; Put Out the Light; I'd Be So Happy; Play Something Sweet (Brickyard Blues); On the Way Back Home; The Show Must Go On.* ABC DUNHILL DSD 50168 $4.98, ⑧ 8023-50168C $7.95, © 5023-50168C $7.95.

Performance: **Super**
Recording: **Excellent**

Three Dog Night is damned good. Their performance, production, and material have been so consistently good for so many years that we have a right to expect excellence from them. They are high-class entertainment.

So is this latest effort, though the band has changed producers. This album was produced by the ubiquitous Jimmy Ienner, who also produces Raspberries (delightful) and Lighthouse (not so delightful). Ienner is a pro, able to get along with bands that play in different styles and have different intentions. He does very well by Three Dog Night. If he had not been the producer for this session I doubt that the group would have recorded *I'd Be So Happy*, written by Lighthouse member Skip Prokop. It is not much of a tune, nor are the lyrics such as to knock you off your feet, but they are direct and tender and sentimental (a young man anticipates growing old with his best girl), and in the hands of this mighty band the song becomes a thing of beauty.

Other candidates for Valhalla are *Play Something Sweet (Brickyard Blues)* and *Sitting in Limbo*. The former was written by that wonderful gentleman from New Orleans, Allen Toussaint, and how Three Dog Night must have enjoyed cutting it! The joshing lyrics—witty and kicky—are the kind that performers love because it gives them something to bite into, just as a good actor loves a good script. *Sitting in Limbo*, written by reggae star Jimmy Cliff, is much recorded these days. It is from the soundtrack of the film *The Harder They Come*, and, though it concerns a Shantytown (Jamaica) boy who can't see any way to get out of the social box he's in except through fame or crime, it is really about anyone who ever felt himself forced into a corner. The tune is delightful rhythmically and melodically, and it is a hell of a lot of fun to sing. *Sitting in Limbo* deserves the special treatment it gets. All in all, a first-class job. *J.V.*

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND: ***1969 Velvet Underground Live*** **(see Best of the Month, page 73)**

BOBBY WOMACK: ***Lookin' for a Love Again.*** Bobby Womack (vocals and guitar); orchestra. *Doing It My Way; Let It Hang Out; Point of No Return; Copper Kettle*; and six others. UNITED ARTISTS UA-LA-199-G $6.98, ⑧ UA-EA-199-G $6.98.

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

Bobby Womack's talents aren't very deep, but he does manage to be consistently entertaining. In his own material (*Doing It My Way*, or *Let It Hang Out*), projecting a free and easy approach set against some flashy arrangements, he's quite striking. But in *Copper Kettle*, or *Don't Let Me Down*, written by others, he elides most of the meaning while still offering a good enough musical performance. Extremely fine Muscle Shoals engineering and sound. *P.R.*

ALLEE WILLIS: ***Childstar.*** Allee Willis (vocals); orchestra. *Childstar; I Have; Who You Gonna Be?; Into Feeling Lonely*; and six others. EPIC KE 32575 $5.98, ⑧ EA 32575 $6.98.

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

This is an interesting album by a highly literate young woman who tends to amuse herself at great length. She writes most of her material, and often hits it on the nose (bloodying it in the process), as in her description of a now grown child actor in the title song. When she gets into introspection (*I Have*, or *Into Feeling Lonely*), the results aren't really all that spectacular.

She has a fine, dry lyric sense, however: there is a lot of fun in *If Only You Were Robert Young*, and a lot of uncloying whimsy in *What Kind of Shoes Does September Wear?* The music, unfortunately, never gets much beyond the tinkle tinkle of the I-feel-swell or I-feel-lousy kind of accompaniments all too common on first albums. Nice try. *P.R.*

(Continued on page 96)

JAZZ

CAB CALLOWAY: ***Sixteen Classics.*** Cab Calloway (vocals); orchestra, including Dizzy Gillespie and Jonah Jones (trumpets), Chu Berry (tenor saxophone), and Cozy Cole (drums). *Jonah Joins the Cab; Paradiddle; Pluckin' the Bass; Take the A Train; Ratamacue*; and eleven others. CBS Ⓜ 62950 $6.98.

Performance: **From good to great**
Recording: **Abominable**

CAB CALLOWAY: ***Hi De Ho Man.*** Cab Calloway (vocals); orchestra, including Dizzy Gillespie and Jonah Jones (trumpets), Quentin Jackson and Tyree Glenn (trombones), and Chu Berry, Ike Quebec, and Rudy Powell (reeds). *Nagasaki; My Gal; San Francisco Fan; Oh Grandpa; Honey Dripper; St. James Infirmary*; and fourteen others. COLUMBIA G 32593 two discs $5.98.

Performance: **Echoes of an era**
Recording: **Echo is right, alas**

Long before he became a Broadway musical star, Cab Calloway was hepcatting it up to the tune of his spirited band, which usually included some of the hippest men of jazz. Often combining good music with humor, many of Cab's recordings could, I suppose, truly be called classics, though never in the sense of the Armstrong Hot Five or early Miles quintet recordings. They are liberally sprinkled with outstanding solos, a feature well demonstrated in each of these reissue sets. The music, then, is not what bothers me here; it is the sloppy presentation.

When French CBS started its ambitious "Aimez-vous le Jazz" series, Columbia's home office refused to cooperate with the producers, often forcing them to use scratchy source material while a good metal master gathered dust in the Bridgeport vaults. For this reason, Columbia now ironically finds itself importing from France its own recordings with quality that does not meet its technical standards – that is to say, the technical standards of the Columbia reissues of the past few years. But "Hi De Ho Man" seems to indicate that those previously held standards no longer apply for domestically produced albums either. Like reissues of the early Fifties, the sound of what should be called "Hi De Ho Ho Ho ho ho ho Man Man Man Man man man man" drowns Calloway and his men in an echo that is supposed to make us believe we are experiencing stereo. It all fits hand in glove with the liner notes by Mort Goode; they echo the worst of the disc jockey notes we used to find on Wayne Newton and Don Ho albums. To add insult to injury, we get only five selections per side, and they seem to have been chosen at random.

I recommend the French release over the domestic one, and I hope Columbia regains its senses before it thrusts more reissue schlock on the buying public. *C.A.*

HAMPTON HAWES: ***Playin' in the Yard.*** Hampton Hawes (piano); Bob Cranshaw (electric bass); Kenny Clarke (drums). *Pink Peaches; De De; Stella by Starlight*; and two others. PRESTIGE P-10077 $5.98.

DEXTER GORDON: ***Blues à la Suisse.*** Dexter Gordon (tenor saxophone); Hampton Hawes (piano); Bob Cranshaw (electric bass); Kenny Clarke (drums). *Gingerbread Boy; Some Other Spring*; and two others. PRESTIGE P-10079 $5.98.

GENE AMMONS: ***Gene Ammons and Friends at Montreux.*** Gene Ammons (tenor saxophone); Hampton Hawes (electric piano); Bob Cranshaw (electric bass); Kenny Clarke (drums); Kenneth Nash (congas); Nat Adderley (cornet); Cannonball Adderley (alto saxophone); Dexter Gordon (tenor saxophone).

CTI Records

MILT JACKSON
A master vibraphonist

Yardbird Suite; 'Treux Bleu; New Sonny's Blues; and two others. PRESTIGE P-10078 $5.98.

Performances: **Routine**
Recordings: **All right**

Musicians like jazz festivals for several nonmusical reasons: they provide jobs (of which there is not exactly an abundance these days); they often involve travel to pleasant parts of the world; they bring together performers and friends in settings conducive to after-hours fun and frolic; and they often result in record albums that might not otherwise have been made. But jazz festivals are no longer what they were when George Wein first pitched a tent at Newport. They have become big business, with armies of film, television, and recording technicians and producers forming part of an impresario's choreography, and with individual contractual obligations to the various media influencing and often dictating a festival's musical program. Sadly, all this seems to have produced an apathy of spirit that is reflected in the music.

The three Prestige albums reviewed here were all recorded on the same day during last year's Montreux Jazz Festival. Featured in all three is the Hampton Hawes trio, a group of very fine musicians who seem to be consumed by boredom. We hear them alone on the first album, and it is immediately evident that Hawes is not delivering the promises he made a few years back when he was recording for the Contemporary label.

Adding Dexter Gordon to anything has got to be an improvement, as indeed it is on the quartet album, and even though Gordon is not playing at full capacity he easily outshines Gene Ammons' performance on the last album. The "Ammons and Friends" set is somewhat livened up by the addition of Gordon and the Adderley brothers on one long track, *'Treux Bleu.* (It is small consolation, but the music within this album is infinitely superior to the cover, a horror on a par with the worst of the old Savoy gospel albums.)

If I sound unduly harsh, let me say that these are not *bad* albums – I think the Dexter Gordon set is a good one – but none of them give us what we might expect from the artists featured. What they do give us is what we have unfortunately come to expect from festival recordings. *C.A.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

MILT JACKSON: ***Goodbye.*** Milt Jackson (vibraphone); Hubert Laws (flute); Cedar Walton (piano); Ron Carter (bass); Steve Gadd (drums); with Freddie Hubbard (trumpet), Herbie Hancock (piano), and Billy Cobham (drums), on *SKJ* only. *Detour Ahead; Old Devil Moon; Opus De Funk; Goodbye; SKJ.* CTI CTI 6038 $6.98, Ⓑ CT8 6038 $6.95, Ⓒ CTC 6038 $6.95.

Performance: **Top-drawer**
Recording: **Excellent**

Thirteen years ago, Riverside Records sent me to Chicago to produce a series of albums. The result was disastrous because my bosses, in a classic case of false economy, furnished me with engineers who not only disliked the music I was recording but had hitherto worked only on flushing toilets, squeaky screen doors, and other sounds of the home. I daresay it would take a similar situation to come up with a Milt Jackson/Hubert Laws recording that was anything less than excellent.

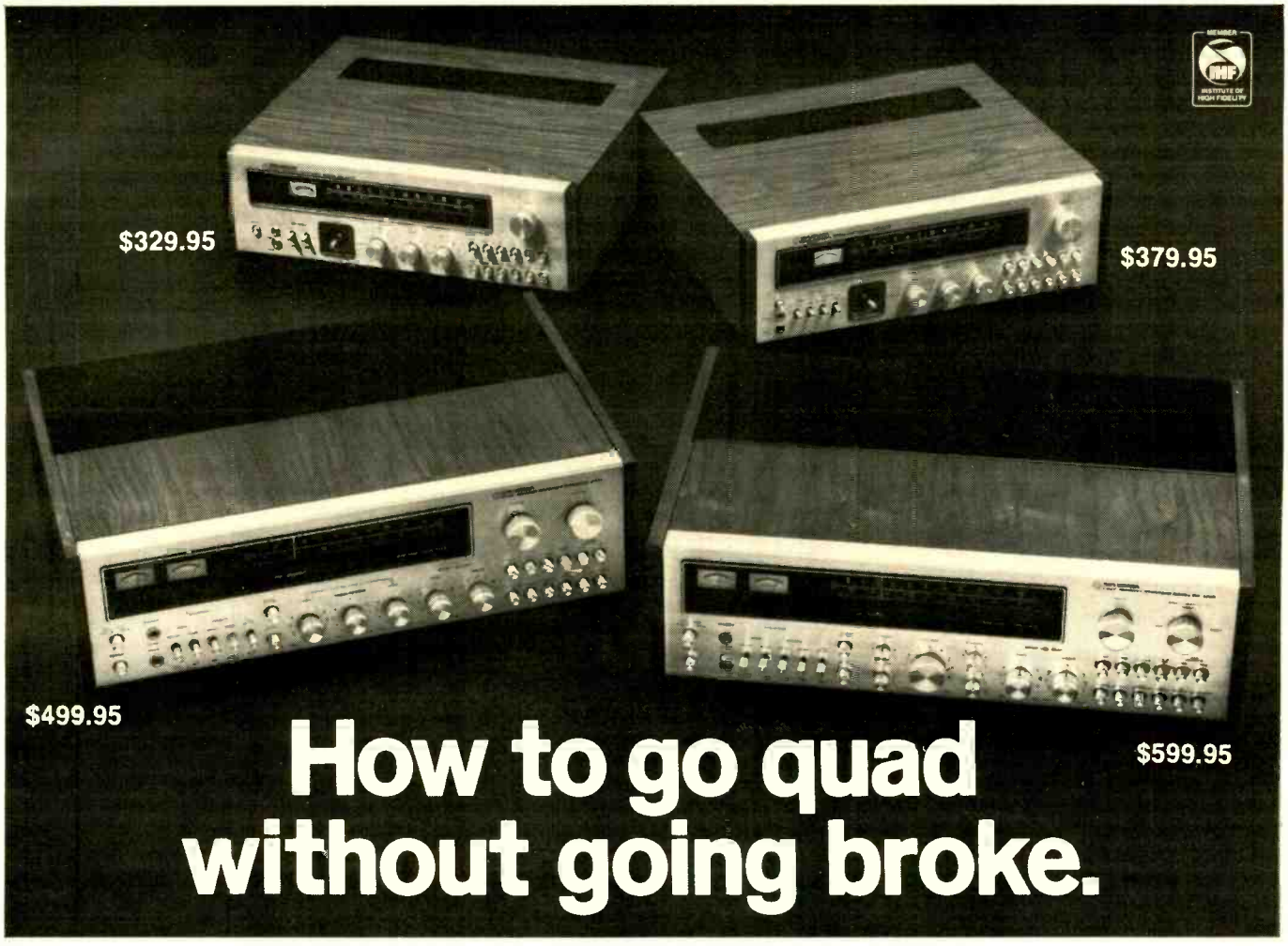
Masters of their respective instruments, they flourish amid the illustrious company that completes the quintet heard on four of these selections. *SKJ*, recorded a year earlier (in December 1972) is a pleasant diversion in the middle of side two, with some fine solo work by Freddie Hubbard and Herbie Hancock, and with Billy Cobham on drums. "Goodbye" is indeed a good buy. *C.A.*

OREGON: ***Distant Hills.*** Paul McCandless (oboe, English horn); Ralph Towner (guitar, piano, trumpet); Glen Moore (bass, violin, flute, piano); Collin Walcott (sitar, tabla, clarinet, piano, marimba, guitar, drums). *Aurora; Dark Spirit; Mi Chinita Suite; Distant Hills*; and three others. VANGUARD VSD-79341 $5.98.

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

Friends who've been in that part of the country since I have tell me that Oregon the state has signs up at its borders saying "Nice place to visit but we wouldn't want you to live here" or something like that – and Oregon the jazz combo seems to be telling me something of a similar nature. The Paul Winter Consort, which either is no more or is drastically altered, seeing as how most of its members now call themselves Oregon, was a sort of psy-

(Continued on page 99)



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GTE SYLVANIA

BING CROSBY:

The man who invented American popular singing

Wide World Photos

Paul Whiteman's Rhythm Boys: Bing Crosby, Harry Barris, Al Rinker

Der Bingle's early jazz years in a new Columbia album

Reviewed by Joel Vance

CRITIC Henry Pleasants—with good and weighty reasons—recently identified Bing Crosby as one of the *The Great American Popular Singers* by including him in his book of that title. It would be presumptuous of me to agree had I not been of the same opinion myself since I was ten—that is to say, twenty-two years ago.

Most people (those of us over thirty, at least) choose either Crosby or Frank Sinatra as *the* all-time great American pop singer. They are about equal in technique, both have proved themselves excellent dramatic actors (although Crosby is way ahead of Sinatra in acting musical comedy), both have led highly publicized lives, both have been pop idols, and both have retired. But Sinatra came out of retirement when he shouldn't have, and he lacks Crosby's sense of humor. I suppose I always favored Crosby because he didn't take himself too seriously, and I freely admit my prejudice that, with notable exceptions, most of the good songs got written and sung between 1924 and 1935, the period when Crosby invented the profession of crooner. His sense of intimate drama made him the first real singing personality (or the first real singer who had a real personality).

Crosby's appreciation of jazz coincided with the music's adventurous flowering of the Twenties, and he worked with many of the leading artists of the time: Bix Beiderbecke, Paul Whiteman, Don Redman, Duke Ellington, Joe Venuti, and Eddie Lang. Jazz in the Twenties belonged to a limited group of people, most of whom freely crossed or refused to admit there was such a thing as a color line, so Crosby had more than a working knowledge of the great black players of the day. The jazz brotherhood was an informal fraternity, and it is fascinating to speculate about what jam sessions he wound up at and how many times he, along with other notable white musicians working in or passing through New York, found themselves up at Fletcher Henderson's house for a dawn breakfast in Harlem.

Sinatra has often acknowledged that Crosby was his inspirational model. He took the conversational vocal further than Crosby did, and he approached singing (as Henry Pleasants points out) in the *bel canto* manner; Sinatra paid more attention to the beauty of his art than Crosby did. He also worked harder at understanding a song than Crosby did. That is why Sinatra often sounds like he's rubbing the stomach of a song while Crosby is merely combing its hair. But Crosby had an objectivity and an effortlessness based on experience that always eluded Sinatra. Frank Sinatra couldn't sing a mediocre song well. Bing Crosby could: as illustrated in Columbia Special Products' new two-disc set of his early performances, he did it often. Sinatra's comeback in the Fifties was based on carefully selected material, such as in the classic "In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning" album, which allowed Sinatra to portray himself as a lonely tough guy grudgingly confessing that he's human. Crosby, in the meantime, could record such tripe as *Sioux City Sue* and bring it off.

"The Bing Crosby Story—The Early Jazz Years" includes performances from 1928 to 1932, that four-year period in which Crosby invented urban American popular singing. The release of the collection has apparently been hanging fire for seven years, since the liner notes by Larry Carr (who selected and collated the material) are dated December 20, 1967. Most of the material has long been out of print, and some of it has never before been issued. It takes Crosby through his earliest days, when he was working with the Rhythm Boys as a singer for Paul Whiteman, the leading (and most innovative) bigbandleader of the time, and from there on to solo fame. There are moments in the album that are charming because they present the sassy boyishness of a legendary man.

There are also some damned good performances that still stand up, even though they were recorded nearly fifty (!) years ago, and some that are timeless.

Just what Crosby was able to do for a song is demonstrated in *Baby Oh Where Can You Be* (despite its fine title, a mediocre tune), which was recorded in 1929. To prove that the melody isn't much, listen to Fats Waller's piano solo of it recorded in the same year (RCA LPV-562); the tune just isn't there. But add Crosby's vocal and, despite the semi-sappy lyrics, it comes alive, it's believable, he makes it work. His feeling for jazz as a popular music—which it was in the Twenties—is perfectly demonstrated in *'Taint So, Honey, 'Taint So*, recorded with Whiteman's band when the great Bix Beiderbecke was the jazz horn in the brass section. And what Sinatra was able to do ten years later was pioneered by Crosby on *Can't We Be Friends*.

An odd recording date combined Bing with Duke Ellington's orchestra in 1932, when Ellington was winning fame with his lush "jungle" sound. It probably galled the band that the tune assigned to them was *St. Louis Blues*, by then a weary chestnut, but they performed it with the attack and grace for which Ellington will always be remembered. Crosby's style is not compatible with the Duke's, though, for they were both highly individual artists creating their own art forms. To make matters worse, the tune itself is false: it was a folk melody notated by W. C. Handy in the early 1900's, and he added a bridge in tango style for commerciality's sake. Only Bessie Smith could make a performance of it a work of art. No white singer has yet been able to bring it off, but Crosby comes as close as any of them has. Ellington's band is marvelous, and Crosby is doing his best, with the best of intentions. Two takes are included here; he muffs the lyrics in the first, making it a song about a girl *by* a girl, but in the second he is more relaxed and so is the band. From a historical point of view, *St. Louis Blues* is probably the most valuable song in the collection because it shows how two great artists make the best of a bad situation.

Crosby's scat vocals appear throughout the album. Many of them have only a kind of period charm and would be dismissable were it not for Crosby's being one of the few white vocalists who would even attempt them with any hope of success. For Bixomaniacs like me, there is a loving tribute to Beiderbecke from the days when he, Crosby, and Lennie Hayton were all members of the Whiteman band. Bix's 1928 derby-hat-muted solo in *Sweet Sue* is recalled—in 1932—by Crosby's scatting and a simply astonishing piano solo by Hayton, who sounds like Bix and Fats Waller at the same time. This song was performed for the sheer joy of it, and it is superb.

Despite its glories, this collection does not contain *all* of the best early Crosby, some of which is available in "Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra, Featuring Bing Crosby" (Columbia CL 2830), "Paul Whiteman, Volume II" (RCA LPV-570), and "Bing Crosby: Rare Early Recordings, 1929-1933" (Biograph BLP-C13). But as a tribute to and further proof of Crosby's casual, determining genius, "The Bing Crosby Story" is a real treasure.

BING CROSBY: ***The Bing Crosby Story—The Early Jazz Years, 1928-1932.*** Bing Crosby (vocals); instrumental accompaniment, including the orchestras of Paul Whiteman, Duke Ellington, Don Redman, the Dorsey Brothers, and Lennie Hayton; the Rhythm Boys; Joe Venuti and Eddie Lang; the Ipana Troubadours; others. *Mississippi Mud; Wa-Da-Da; 'Taint So, Honey, 'Taint So; My Suppressed Desire; Makin' Whoopee!; I'll Get By; If I Had You; Susianna; Let's Do It, Let's Fall in Love; The Spell of the Blues; My Kinda Love; Till We Meet; Louise* (two versions); *I Kiss Your Hand, Madame; Baby Oh Where Can You Be; Can't We Be Friends?; Without a Song; Gay Love; If I Had a Talking Picture of You; After You've Gone; Sweet Sue, Just You; You Brought a New Kind of Love to Me; Livin' in the Sunlight, Lovin' in the Moonlight; St. Louis Blues* (two takes); *How Long Will It Last; My Woman; Paradise; Lord, You Made the Night Too Long; Sweet Georgia Brown; Cabin in the Cotton.* COLUMBIA (M) CE2E 201 two discs $11.96.

chedelic-classical jazz chamber ensemble arrayed around the saxophone (you wouldn't call it sax) playing of Paul Winter, into which a lot of planning went. It wasn't one of your swinging, brilliantly improvisational bands, but it did nice things with tone color. Without Winter and cello player David Darling, the group *still* sounds a bit stiff, as if its ability to read music is interfering with its playing. The compositions are a bit looser and less linear, and sound much more like the output of a poor man's Satie than the Winter repertoire did, but tone color remains the overriding concern. What bothers me most is the fact that Ralph Towner probably is a remarkable guitarist and this esoterica doesn't allow him to get on with it. Paul McCandless' oboe is the most commanding instrument in this album, mostly because a listener with a penchant for making some kind of sense of the progressions will naturally latch onto the seamlessness of it. The Indian things seem to fit in nicely, and it *is* all quite civilized—just not terribly listenable. It would seem excellent background music for one of those hip, expensive boutiques that are always rising and falling in places like Aspen and Saratoga . . . and how is Bend, Oregon, fixed for smart boutiques these days? *N.C.*

PHAROAH SANDERS: ***Village of the Pharoahs.*** Pharoah Sanders (soprano and tenor saxophones, vocals, percussion); Cecil McBee and Stanley Clark (bass); Sedatrius Brown (vocals); others. *Village of the Pharoahs; Memories of Lee Morgan; Myth*; and two others. IMPULSE AS-9254 $5.98.

Performance: **Pretentious**
Recording: **Good**

Pharoah Sanders is a better saxophone player than his records would lead you to believe, but he drowns his talent (and that of others) in a sea of tiresome pretension. Surely that pseudo-spiritual bag must have a bottom, and I for one have had my fill of that tambourine rattle-finger cymbal-anguished moan and Leon Thomasian yodel bit. The final track, *Went Like It Came*, is a confused rhythm-and-blues mumbo jumbo which, I suppose, is some sort of inside joke, but the real joke is on whoever buys this album. *C.A.*

LESTER YOUNG: ***Prez in Europe.*** Lester Young (tenor saxophone); accompanying rhythm sections. *Lester Leaps In* (two versions); *These Foolish Things; Lullaby of Birdland*; and three others. ONYX 218 $5.98 (available by mail from Onyx Records, 160 West 71st Street, New York, N.Y. 10023).

Performance: **Rose among weeds**
Recording: **Beggars can't be choosers**

This is Lester Young recorded under less than ideal and largely unknown circumstances in Europe during late 1956 and early 1957. It is Lester Young in splendid form, carving out beautiful figures against a background of noisy audiences and rhythm sections that rarely approach the quality of even his weakest moments.

Young's playing makes it easy to put up with poor recording and inadequate accompaniment, but Dan Morgenstern's attempts to disprove Young's alleged homosexuality are pointless. Really, who cares? Certainly that is not a subject to be brought up in liner notes. Forget the notes, listen to the record, and wish you had been around when Lester leapt in. *C.A.*

CHOOSING SIDES

By IRVING KOLODIN

DELIUS' KOANGA

At the outset, the first recording ever of Frederick Delius' opera *Koanga* (Angel SBLX 3808, recorded under the auspices of the Delius Trust) displays more than a slight similarity to another durable product of nineteenth-century Southern culture: Asa Candler's Coca-Cola. Neither is exactly intoxicating, but both are curiously refreshing to the taste and, despite many imitations, lastingly unique. But as it progresses, *Koanga* takes on some of the properties of a more potent beverage of the region: Southern Comfort. And by act three we are reminded that it was in France that Delius rounded off the writing of the score, for the fire of cognac has unmistakably crept into it.

Koanga is, of course, a by-product of Delius' exposure to the superficially languorous but basically fervid and schismatic life of the South, which he experienced at first hand during his residence there between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-four. The first, more famous part of the visit was spent near Jacksonville, Florida; the later, less picturesque portion in Danville, Virginia. The time was between 1884 and 1886, and not only were there ex-slaves living out difficult lives on all sides, but the physical facts as well as the spiritual remnants of the plantation culture were visible wherever Delius traveled.

The literary impulse for *Koanga* was derived from *The Grandissimes* by the popular American novelist George Washington Cable (whose knowledge of life in New Orleans and surrounding Louisiana also supplied the background for Henry F. Gilbert's *The Dance in Place Congo*, produced as a ballet at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1918). But Delius had already heard the tale of the ferociously proud African who resisted slavery from Florida Negroes who had learned it firsthand when New Orleans was the port of entry for slave traders. Delius had also learned "slave" songs, or what more recently have been called "spirituals," from the same informants. What brought all this together and fired his creative impulse were the powerfully poetic and richly human elements in Cable's retelling of the tale.

In Dahomey, Africa, Koanga was a prince of his realm and a priest of Voodoo Manian. This made him infinitely preferable as a potential husband, in the eyes of the mulatto Palmyra, to her pursuer Simon Perez, overseer of the American plantation on which the action takes place. To quell Koanga's raging spirit and harness his extraordinary energies, Don Jose Martinez, master of all he surveys (bodies and souls as well as fields and crops), decrees that Koanga and Palmyra shall marry. The infuriated Perez arranges Palmyra's abduction from the wedding, and Koanga, after felling him with a blow, retires into the bayous to cast a voodoo spell that will avenge him and his fellow slaves. Eventually he returns in search of Palmyra and kills Perez, but is captured and flogged to death. Palmyra renounces her Christian faith and stabs herself fatally.

What kind of opera this makes was seen for the first time in America only four years ago, in a production at the Lisner Auditorium in Washington, D.C. There were critical objections to some of its theatrical crudities and shortcomings, but little other than praise for its massive musical interests. It is to these, of course, that the listener is now exposed in the excellent recorded performance under the direction of Sir Charles Groves. Convinced Delians will, of course, want it without further urging. Unconvinced Delians, or those for whom the later, better-known works have only a marginal interest, will find *Koanga* full of new insights into the composer and a beguiling contact with a strain of American folk music rarely comprehended so sensitively.

As of the middle 1890's, when Delius went seriously to work on the opera, a direct frontal attack on the subject matter required greater boldness than he could muster. His librettist C. F. Keary therefore framed the action of *Koanga* as a story told to the "quality" young white folks of the plantation by Uncle Joe, a family retainer. For a while the music suggests that Uncle Joe could be a blood brother to Stephen Foster's *Old Black Joe* and that the St. Johns River, on the banks of which Delius vainly tried to grow oranges, couldn't have been far from the banks of the Suwanee (as a matter of geographical fact, they are only sixty miles apart at their closest point).

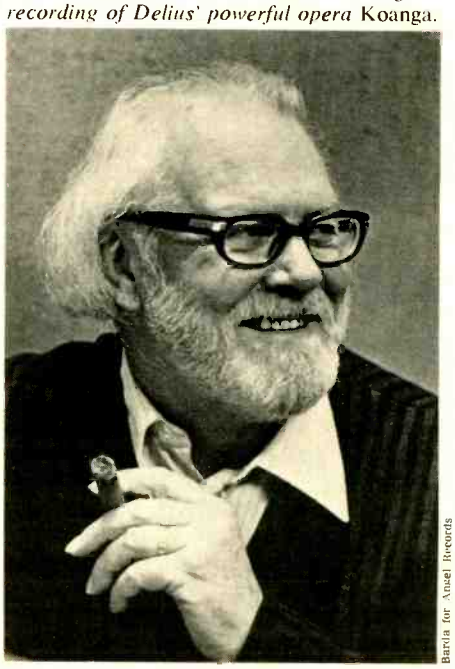
But there are also, even amid the evocations of a bygone time in the first scene, unmistakable indications of the Delius of 1895, already hearing, in his mind's ear, the language of tone and the accents of color that he would soon (his tone poem *Paris* dates from 1899) control completely. Constant Lambert is on record as declaring that it is a sign of weakness in a composer "when our attention is inevitably directed toward one particular facet of his music—Delius' harmony or Stravinsky's rhythm" (in *Music Ho!*, page 308). But it is certainly a sign of greater weakness when a composer lacks *anything* to draw our attention. Nonetheless, to be bracketed with Stravinsky in 1934 (when Lambert's statement appeared in print) was more of a compliment to the just-deceased Delius than he had enjoyed during most of his life.

It is, however, no mere matter of repetition or of mannerism that makes the harmonic web woven by Delius a difficult one to escape; it is rather the special mark of his musical intelligence that he was able to find new, "different" harmonic expedients endlessly available to him. Sir Thomas Beecham, Delius' lifelong sponsor and benefactor, probably knew the composer's works better than any contemporary, and I have a clear recollection of his remarking: "I would take a wager that I could write out from memory the orchestral score of Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben* with a minimum of error. I wouldn't take such a wager with any major work of Delius. Too much change, too much that is unpredictable in the voice leading."

Once under way (which is to say at about the middle of side two, and much as Puccini struck his lifetime stride midway in the second act of *Manon Lescaut*), *Koanga* is replete with instances of Delius' devising miraculous options—and almost always taking the least expected of them. There are fine spots in act one (especially a quintet at its close, when the Koanga-Palmyra match has been made and those affected by it express their conflicting emotions), but it is only with the superb aria by Palmyra just before her wedding, the infectious *La Calinda* that follows, and Koanga's outburst after Palmyra's abduction that we begin, aurally, to sit up and wait expectantly for each new turn of the drama to unfold, for its music to take flight.

As *Koanga* picks up and advances what was best in the *Florida* suite of a few years before (with its less-developed version of *La Calinda*), so *Koanga* itself set in motion a host of impulses that soon became fulfillments

Sir Charles Groves is conductor in Angel's recording of Delius' powerful opera Koanga.



Barla for Angel Records

in other works. Do you admire *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*? You will find its predecessor in a nocturnal moment shortly after the curtain rises on act three (page 106 of the vocal score). Do you fancy the nature poet in Delius? *Koanga* is an opera played entirely outdoors, with never an indoor scene of any kind. Neither Salomon Jadassohn nor Carl Reinecke, with whom Delius "studied" at the Leipzig Conservatory, would find a trace of their beloved textbook counterpoint in *Koanga*, but it is filled with a polyphony of orchestral colorations, vocal values, and dynamic pulsations, alive and functioning before *Klangfarbenmelodie* had even been born. Mahler hadn't yet met Alma at this time, and Schoenberg was still working in the bank.

For those who persist in asking the question "Where did all this come from?" the only reasonable answer can be, "From the grace of God." *Florida* itself begins with a section not unlike the *Morning* in *Peer Gynt* by Delius' dear friend Grieg, and it is not without a suggestion of *Rustle of Spring* by Christian Sinding, with whom Delius passed some student days in Leipzig. But in neither case is Delius *imitating*; rather, he is already doing *their* thing *his* way. In *Koanga* it is amusing to observe that when the hero takes a vow to be true to his voodoo deities, the orchestra endorses his determination with a descending scale clearly belonging to Wotan's spear. And if you search your mind for a prototype for the vocal chorus in *La Calinda*, you might eventually settle on the Polovtsian Dances in Borodin's *Prince Igor*, which was heard in Paris as early as 1889. But these are straws in the wind, barely sufficient for one brick of the structure Delius eventually put together.

A separate article could be devoted to the new libretto by Douglas Craig and Andrew Page, who produced *Koanga* for Sadler's Wells in 1972. In an introductory note in the printed libretto supplied with the album, they undertake to assure the reader that *Koanga* is good despite the weaknesses they enumerate. But they obfuscate the issue with references to changes and insertions in the score, all dating back to the early years of the century and all included in the piano-vocal score published in 1935 (a year after the composer's death). And they do *not* mention the insertion of a high B-flat as Palmyra's dying note in place of the mid-range one Delius originally wrote.

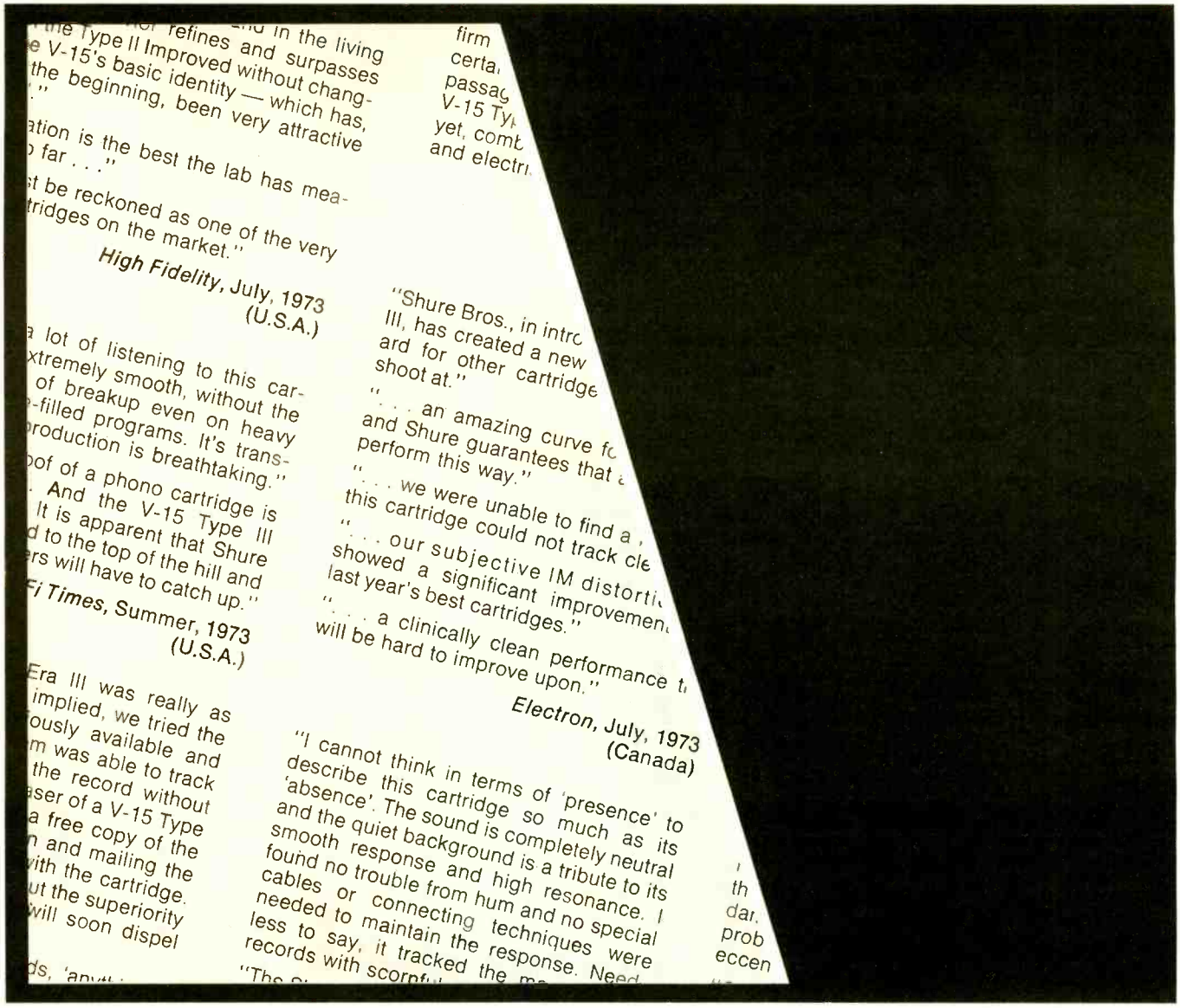
The new version of the text, admittedly necessary because the one set by Delius was contrived by several hands, none of them skilled, has some oddities of its own. I have in mind particularly the rendering of one key line of Palmyra's—"Africa! land of my fathers"—as "Africa! land of *his* fathers" (meaning Koanga's fathers). It could be that they were mindful of the subplot in which it is disclosed that Palmyra was the issue of a white father and a black mother, but, for purposes of identifying herself with Koanga and Africa, the use of the first-person possessive was certainly poetic—as if speaking of "forefathers"—and not merely familial.

Tom Barnett for the Opera Society of Washington

Claudia Lindsey (Palmyra) and Eugene Holmes (Koanga) also starred in the production of Koanga *presented by the Opera Society of Washington in 1970. Pictured is the wedding scene.*

All is redeemed, however, by the splendor of the performance, especially the staunch sound of Eugene Holmes as Koanga and the charming personality that shines through the Palmyra of Claudia Lindsay (both were in the Washington production). The temptation to say, of Koanga, "What a role for Paul Robeson—or for Kenneth Spencer or William Warfield—in his prime" is offset by the evidence Holmes provides of eventually qualifying to be the next in that great line. The subordinate participants are all excellent, likewise the blend of sound contrived by Christopher Bishop (recording producer), Christopher Parker (balance engineer), and John Willan (assistant producer).

A final cautionary note: adherents of opera as drama should lift the stylus from the groove after Palmyra's death; the epilogue reprising the scene of the opening, with the white folks listening to Uncle Joe, is just too anticlimactic. Strangely, though, Delius' skill in regaining that mood *musically* is equal to the task! The musical strengths of this work are often as unexpected as they are undeniable.



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CLASSICAL DISCS AND TAPES

Reviewed by RICHARD FREED • DAVID HALL • GEORGE JELLINEK • IGOR KIPNIS
PAUL KRESH • ERIC SALZMAN

BARTÓK: ***Fourteen Bagatelles, Op. 6; Dance Suite.*** Robert Silverman (piano). ORION ORS 74152 $6.98.

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

On the evidence so far, Robert Silverman is the most noteworthy keyboard talent Orion has introduced. His following up his Copland and Schumann recordings with one devoted to Bartók gives some indication of the range of his sympathies, and the performances here more than sustain the impression of depth, technique, and overall maturity left by his earlier ones. The *Bagatelles* have been recorded infrequently enough to qualify as something of a novelty, and the piano version of the Dance Suite has evidently not been recorded before at all. The latter is interesting to hear once or twice, especially when it is as well played as it is here, but it is not the sort of thing one would rush to hear again, for, as John Downey acknowledges in his very detailed annotation for the recording, "the keyboard version cannot compete in brilliance and color with its orchestral brother. . . ." The piano sound is quite good, but the surfaces could be quieter. *R.F.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BEESON: ***The Sweet Bye and Bye.*** Noel Rogers (spinto soprano), Sister Rose Ora Easter; Judith Anthony (soprano), Sister Rees; Carolyne James (mezzo-soprano), Mother Rainey; Paula Seibel (soprano), Sister Gladys; Walter Hook (bass), Brother Smiley; Robert Owen Jones (tenor), Billy Wilcox; Elizabeth Green (soprano), Miss Northern New Jersey; Thomas Claffy (tenor), Second Bather; Dennis Howell (bass-baritone), Third Bather; William Latimer (baritone), First Beauty Judge; Chorus and Orchestra of the Kansas City Lyric Theater, Russell Patterson cond. DESTO DC7179/80 two discs $11.96.

Performance: **Stunning**
Recording: **Excellent**

Tornay Management, Ltd.

NOEL ROGERS
A supple and impassioned soprano

The fifty-two-year-old Jack Beeson, whose brief opera based on William Saroyan's *Hello Out There* made it all the way to educational television and is available on the Desto label along with his taut and suspenseful full-length *Lizzie Borden*, has come up with another operatic thriller with an enormous potential for wide popularity in *The Sweet Bye and Bye*. Once again he has built a taut musical melodrama inspired by a newspaper scandal of the Twenties—this time, one suspects, the story of evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson, whose exploits provided the tabloids of her day with the stuff of many a juicy headline.

In Kenward Elmslie's fast-moving and eminently singable libretto, Sister Rose Ora Easter, the allegedly virginal founder, president, and "Beloved Leader" of the Lifeshine Ark and the Lifeshine Radio Hour as well as editor of the *Happy Hymnal* and *Monthly Digest*, has pretended to drown herself in the ocean off the beach in Atlantic City in order to run off with a local confidence man named Billy Wilcox with whom she has been conducting a secret love affair. As the action unfolds, from the Atlantic City boardwalk to a New York penthouse to the "Miracle Room" where Sister Rose Ora's possessive mother commits a murder rather than countenance the ruin of her evangelical operation, the stage is alive with suspense and surprises.

Those familiar with Beeson's earlier scores will find here once more the same open, innocent charm, the same certain hand in evoking the emotional possibilities of lurid situations, the same crackling orchestration, and something new as well: a probing for the emotional undertones that lend the most naïve aspects of the story a powerful kind of poignancy. Beeson has made the most of the opportunities in Mr. Elmslie's text to compose choral settings of impressive beauty, and it is to his credit that he has resisted the two most obvious temptations of the entire enterprise: to compose pastiches echoing Twenties jazz, and to parody the evangelical Baptist singing style. He has avoided both paths rigorously, devising instead music in the frank, direct idiom he has made his own, and building scene by scene to the cinematic climax in a musical language that owes nothing whatever to parody. The librettist, too, has avoided the easy line of caricature which the situation might have invited, choosing to keep Sister Rose Ora's lover Billy an equivocal and, in the end, a sympathetic fellow with honest intentions. Nor is Mother Rainey, for all her Momist oppressive ways, quite the pat figure she might have turned out to be in less sensitive hands.

To clinch the effectiveness of *The Sweet Bye and Bye* there is the perfectly stunning production by the Kansas City Lyric Theater under Russell Patterson, the company's general director, who has supervised over seventy different productions and conducted more than two hundred performances—including

Explanation of symbols:

Ⓡ = *reel-to-reel stereo tape*
Ⓢ = *eight-track stereo cartridge*
Ⓒ = *stereo cassette*
□ = *quadraphonic disc*
Ⓡ = *reel-to-reel quadraphonic tape*
Ⓢ = *eight-track quadraphonic tape*
Ⓒ = *quadraphonic cassette*

Monophonic recordings are indicated by the symbol Ⓜ

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

works by Samuel Barber, Carlisle Floyd, Vittorio Giannini, and Robert Ward—in the past fifteen seasons. Noel Rogers is an impassioned Sister Rose Ora and uses her supple soprano to enormous advantage. As Mother Rainey, who prefers death to the disgrace of her order, mezzo-soprano Carolyne James is as overbearing and as menacing as she ought to be, but never allows the matron of the flock to turn into a comic-strip Katisha. Tenor Robert Owen Jones, with some of the most lyrical passages to make his own in a juicy role, and in some lovely duets with Miss Rogers, is thoroughly persuasive—as, indeed, are all the other members of an economically employed cast who represent members of the Lifeshine Ark, bathing beauties, beauty judges, and other natives of the early-Twenties resort setting. A complete libretto and a folder of information about the participants (though none about the composer or the librettist) are provided. And the recorded sound is first-rate. *P.K.*

RECORDINGS OF SPECIAL MERIT

BEETHOVEN: ***Sonata No. 6, in F Major, Op. 10, No. 2; Sonata No. 7, in D Major, Op. 10, No. 3; Rondo in C Major, Op. 51, No. 1; Minuetto in E-flat Major; Bagatelle, Für Elise.*** Bruce Hungerford (piano). VANGUARD VSD 71187 $5.98.

BEETHOVEN: ***Sonata No. 19, in G Minor, Op. 49, No. 1; Sonata No. 20, in G Major, Op. 49, No. 2; Sonata No. 21, in C Major, Op. 53 ("Waldstein"); Andante Favori in F Major (WoO 57); Lustig-Traurig (WoO 54).*** Bruce Hungerford (piano). VANGUARD VSD 71186 $5.98.

Performance: **Knockout**
Recording: **Okay**

Bruce Hungerford seems well on his way to recording every note of solo piano music Beethoven ever wrote, and more power to him. The cornerstone of his latest pair of releases is a knockout *Waldstein* that is technically astonishing and musically very near perfection. The two sonatas of Op. 10—early Beethoven in his best inventive, eccentric, playful, and lyric moods—are, in their own way, just as impressive. Perhaps the most remarkable (and easily underrated) virtue of these performances is Hungerford's knack for catching exactly the right tempo. The Australian pianist sets a perfect frame within which he realizes a remarkable scheme of phrasing, and the dynamics seem at once invented and inevitable. Even where a specific choice might be questioned—the slow allegretto of Op. 10, No. 3, for example—one is, in the end, entirely convinced. Another important point is that Hungerford always scrupulously works out of the best reading of Beethoven's own text and yet never seems constrained or limited by that. These performances flow, bounce, jog, or drive ahead as necessary and with equal ease and conviction; at the same time, they find their own very real level of freedom. Very impressive.

Something might be said against including the very minor and ultra-simple sonatas of Op. 49 with the large-scale and showy *Waldstein*, but Hungerford has a knack for treating important, medium-weight, and minor Beethoveniana with equal respect and conviction. The two discs are somewhat uneven technically, with echo being somewhat prominent—and occasionally annoying—on the Op. 10 sonatas. The piano sound—the instrument is a rebuilt 1920 Steinway with a character all its own—is what I would call comfortable; not to everyone's taste perhaps (it is not a brilliant sound), but always clear and evocative of the kind of piano sound Beethoven must have had in mind. *E.S.*

BEETHOVEN: ***String Quartets Nos. 7-11. No. 7, in F Major. No. 8, in E Minor, and No. 9, in C Major, Op. 59, Nos. 1-3 ("Rasumovsky"); No. 10, in E-flat Major, Op. 74 ("Harp"); No. 11, in F Minor, Op. 95 ("Serioso").*** Végh Quartet. TELEFUNKEN SPA 25096-T/1-3 three discs $17.94.

Performance: **Highly polished**
Recording: **Good, but . . .**

Twenty years ago the distinguished Végh ensemble recorded all the Beethoven quartets

ABC Records

SHIRLEY VERRETT AND BEVERLY SILLS
Honoring Bellini

plus the *Grosse Fuge* for Discophiles Français, and they were released in this country by the Haydn Society. Now we have Telefunken issuing here a three-disc set that appears to be the first installment in a Végh *stereo* traversal of the cycle, also made in France, but this time released there on the Valois label.

Musically, the readings are impeccable—at least in terms of tonal polish and intonation—but in the three *Rasumovsky* Quartets I miss the passionate intensity of phrase and rhythmic surge of the Budapest Quartet readings or those by the Juilliard Quartet, issued originally on Epic and still awaiting a deserved return to general circulation. The Végh gives us its best in the virtuoso fluencies of the *Harp* Quartet, especially in the lovely slow movement, and when, in the grimly taut *Serioso*, they finally get down to business and play Beethoven in truly committed fashion, with all risks taken and no holds barred, the result is a really exciting realization of one of my special favorites among the Beethoven quartets.

The major problem with this Telefunken issue is not with the performances as such, nor with the general quality of the recording, which is warm-toned, comfortably spacious, and effective in its stereo spread and localization. But in the slow-movement *pizzicato* episodes of both the F Major and C Major *Rasumovskys*, the right-channel overbalancing of the cello becomes almost intolerable: even in the normal *arco* passages, the tendency is toward cello overprominence. The identical passages on the Budapest and Juilliard recordings reveal no comparable problem. I hope that a remastering of the Végh set will correct a situation that mars an otherwise carefully thought-out and often very fine recorded performance. *D.H.*

BELLINI: ***Norma.*** Beverly Sills (soprano), Norma; Shirley Verrett (mezzo-soprano), Adalgisa; Enrico Di Giuseppe (tenor), Pollione; Paul Plishka (bass), Oroveso; Delia Wallis (soprano), Clotilde; Robert Tear (tenor), Flavio; John Alldis Choir; New Philharmonia Orchestra, James Levine cond. ABC AUDIO TREASURY ATS-20017-3 three discs $17.94.

Performance: **A Beverly-Shirley show**
Recording: **Good**

The Norma of Beverly Sills and the Adalgisa of Shirley Verrett are the principal ornaments of this album. Their glitter deserves a worthier setting.

No one since Maria Callas has revealed as much as Beverly Sills does here of Norma the woman, illuminating her pride, her conflicts, her vulnerability. Miss Sills' interpretive artistry is particularly moving in the episodes relating to Norma's maternal feelings: the poignancy of a phrase like *"Sento un diletto ed un dolore insieme d'esser madre"* (Act I, Scene 5), the despair projected into the recitative *"Dormono entrambi"* (Act II, Scene 1) speak volumes. Nor are the big vocal challenges slighted. The *"Casta Diva"* is majestically and eloquently phrased at a slowish tempo in the "original" key of G (though reverting to the more traditional F Major for the *allegro* section). She invests her part in the *"In mia man"* duet with audible suffering and makes the most of the arching melody of *"Deh, non volerli vittime"* just before the final ensemble. The hardness of resolve in Norma's character—required in her entrance monologue *"Sediziose voci"* and in some of her dialogues with Pollione—is not Miss Sills' strong suit, nor are her sustained notes always firmly controlled. Some fluttery tones and several acidulous high notes cause her achievement to suffer by comparison with the Sutherland and Caballé Normas in purely vocal terms. In comprehension and dramatic projection, however, Beverly Sills surpasses both divas.

Shirley Verrett as Adalgisa is a worthy partner. Like Sills, she is always dramatically alert and able to invest the role with a real personality. Miss Verrett is not as natural a Bellinian as her colleague, but her musicality allows her to assimilate the style. She manages the tessitura bravely, including a high C that is firmer than Miss Sills'. Although the blend of their vocal timbres is not ideal, the superior artistry of the two singers brings off their joint scenes extremely well. My only complaint about Miss Verrett's performance is technical: she often slides into notes instead of attacking them directly.

These two ladies are the show as far as I am concerned. Enrico Di Giuseppe and Paul Plishka, two serious artists, labor commendably at tasks that are a shade beyond them. The Clotilde is fine, the Flavio is inadequate. Neither of these artists is a major problem, however. The conductor, alas, is.

(Continued on page 107)

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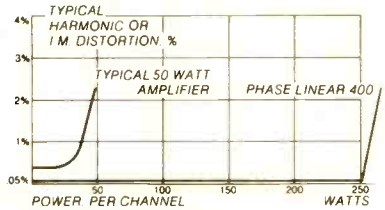

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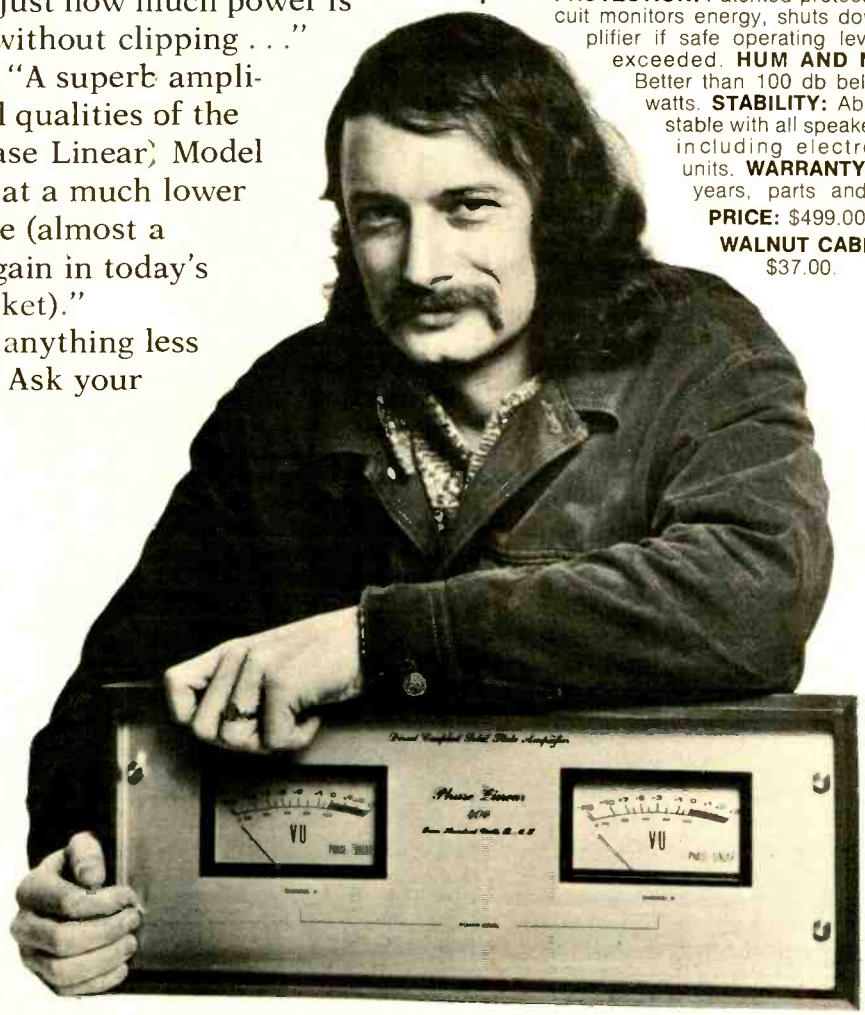

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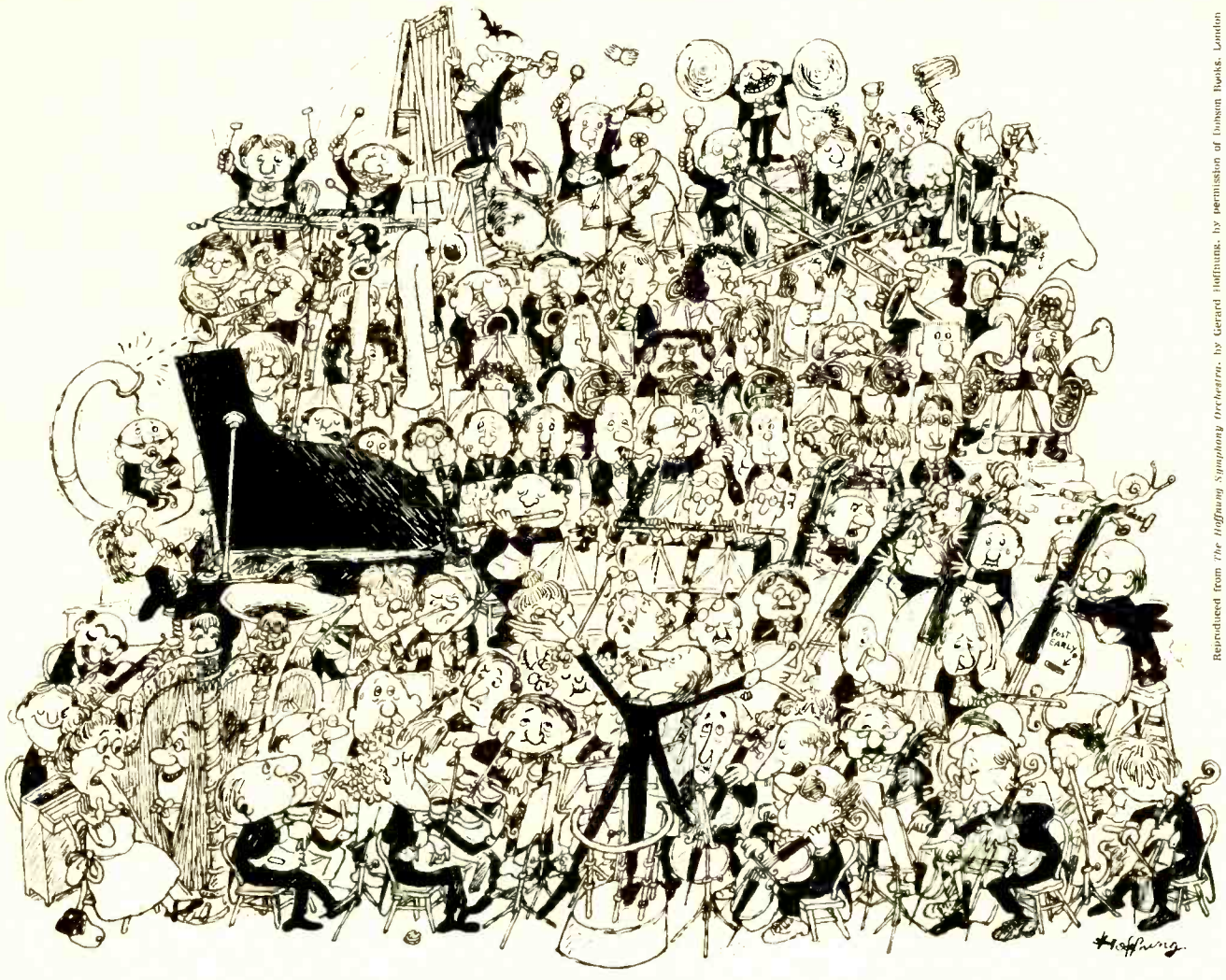

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THE BEST OF HOFFNUNG: A SALUTARY REVIVAL

Reviewed by James Goodfriend

It must be the major weakness of *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* that there is no entry for Gerard Hoffnung. Hoffnung, who died in his forties in 1959, was a conscientious performer on the bass tuba, a musical cartoonist of considerable genius, and the creator, directly or indirectly, and through the medium of various "Hoffnung Music Festivals," of some of the greatest moments music has ever known. A number of those moments are to be found on a new single release, selected and reissued from the previously issued albums of Hoffnung Festivals, all of which are now, alas, out of print.

There are two principal things that differentiate Hoffnung-inspired humor from most of the lesser attempts to be funny through serious music. One of them is the basic respect for music that underlies all the comedy. The other is the incredible level of talent that goes into the joke. One feels only respect for Dennis Brain and awe at his feat of rendering a movement of a Leopold Mozart horn concerto on a length of garden hose. One laughs, certainly, but the laugh is as much one of delight as of humor. One delights equally in the clowning of the orchestra because it is evident that the musicians have to be superbly good at what they do to be able to do it *wrong* so well. Hoffnung never tried to parlay amateurish inabilities into a joke: the professional competence of everyone associated with his festivals is uncompromising.

So is their devotion to music. The satire on Viennese twelve-tonal music (*The Barber of Darmstadt*) is by a composer who, in his own serious music, uses the techniques of the Viennese twelve-tone composers. The *Grand, Grand Overture* is by one who well knows the *métier* of occasional music. The humor and the satire, therefore, are from the inside. There may be a little egg on Beethoven's face at the finish, but his image does not lie in shards while the barbarians dance around it.

My own favorite moments here include Dennis Brain's trill on the hosepipe, the first entry of the Hoover vacuum cleaners in the *Grand, Grand Overture*, virtually all of the "Tchaikovsky" *Sugar Plums* by the recorder consort, and, above all, the final entry of the trumpet in the *Leonore No. 4* Overture, featuring, I would guess, every trumpet, cornet, and Boy Scout bugle within a hundred miles of London. For such items, among others, "The Best of Hoffnung" is as vital a record to own as almost anything in the basic repertoire.

THE BEST OF HOFFNUNG. Arnold: *A Grand, Grand Overture.* **Tchaikovsky (realized by Elizabeth Poston):** *Sugar Plums.* **Horovitz:** *Metamorphosis on a Bed-time Theme.* **L. Mozart:** *Concerto for Horn and Strings: Third Movement.* **Beethoven (?):** *Leonore Overture No. 4.* **Haydn (arr. Donald Swann):** *Symphony No. 94, in G Major ("Surprise"): Andante.* **"Bruno-Heinz Jaja" (Humphrey Searle):** *Duet, from The Barber of Darmstadt.* **Leonard:** *Mobile for Seven Orchestras.* April Cantelo (soprano); John Amis (tenor); Ian Wallace (bass baritone); Owen Brannigan (bass); Dennis Brain (hosepipe); Kionel Salter (harpsichord and organ); Dolmetsch Ensemble; Happy Wanderers; Hoffnung Festival Symphony Orchestra, Malcolm Arnold, Joseph Horovitz, Norman Del Mar, Lawrence Leonard, Lionel Salter, and Humphrey Searle conds. ANGEL S-37028 $5.98.

Among the virtues of James Levine's leadership is his insistence on firm rhythmic definition—a welcome tendency in an opera that is often betrayed by flaccid conducting. Just the same, the flowing, elegiac world of Bellinian melody is clearly not this conductor's domain. Even in the hurly-burly of early Verdi, the crudities permitted here would be considered excessive, particularly those savage fortissimo chords slashing, like thunderclaps, into tender cantilenas. There is also much coarseness in the orchestral tone as a result of improperly balanced chords and inexact ensemble, particularly in the passage leading up to *"Casta diva"* and in the *allegro* section following it (*"Fine al rito"*). Some of the conductor's tempo miscalculations are also damaging: Pollione's entreating appeal to Adalgisa is deprived of its implicit tenderness, and the trio *"Oh di qual sei tu vittima"* is turned into a fast and heavy-footed mazurka.

This kind of restless and inappropriate leadership prevents me from recommending the album, but I urge ABC to issue a disc of highlights, encompassing as much of Sills and Verrett as possible, for these two artists do honor to Bellini. *G.J.*

BIZET: ***Symphony No. 1, in C Major.*** **PROKOFIEV:** ***Symphony No. 1, in D Major, Op. 25 ("Classical").*** Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Neville Marriner cond. ARGO ZRG 719 $5.98.

Performance: **Good**
Recording: **Excellent**

BIZET: ***Symphony No. 1, in C Major.*** **SCHUBERT:** ***Symphony No. 1, in D Major (D. 82).*** Paris Philharmonic Orchestra, René Leibowitz cond. OLYMPIC 8108 $2.49.

Performance: **Vigorous**
Recording: **Electronically simulated stereo**

Neville Marriner's pairing of Bizet and Prokofiev represents two kinds of neo-Classicism: a mid-nineteenth-century French Conservatoire version and an early-twentieth-century nose-thumbing Russian version. It makes a charming program in the St. Martin's high style. No whiff of academia here. The Bizet is bright, lively, jaunty, exhilarating, and, if a hair short of perfect polish, nevertheless a great pleasure. The Prokofiev is less successful. Bizet dances, Prokofiev plods. Curious. The recording is superb, perfectly balanced and as free of extraneous noise as you could wish.

There was no particular need for Everest to resurrect the ancient Bizet and Schubert recordings by the late René Leibowitz. Though the interpretations are strong and musical, there never was such an orchestra as the Paris Philharmonic, and there is not much good that one can find to say about the playing of whatever orchestra it is on this disc. Simulated stereo is like simulated sex; not very satisfying to anyone. *E.S.*

BUSONI: ***Indian Diary*** **(see TCHAIKOVSKY)**

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BUXTEHUDE: ***Singet dem Herrn; Laudate Dominum; Herr, auf Dich traue ich; Also hat Gott die Welt geliebet.*** Emilia Petrescu (soprano); Klaus Martin Ziegler (organ); instrumental ensemble. Klaus Martin Ziegler cond. MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY MHS 1714 $3.50 (plus 75¢ handling charge from

the Musical Heritage Society, Inc., 1991 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023).

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

The simple beauty of Buxtehude's cantatas had a profound effect on the history of music but not on posterity. Our idea of the Baroque cantata comes from the more developed, more complex, and, yes, more dramatic works of J. S. Bach. Bach learned from and imitated his distinguished predecessor, but, as with all his music, his cantatas are much more highly embellished than the simpler forms of the age.

Buxtehude's position as organist and music director in Lubeck was one of the most prominent in Germany, and he directed a musical establishment in which practical music for the church and concert music were inextricably interwoven. He was a genuinely popular composer, and his church cantatas speak with a dignity and simplicity that is closer to folk tradition than to the complexities of traditional counterpoint, vocal virtuosity, ornamentation, operatic drama, or display.

Nevertheless, in spite of their immense appeal, these works are not very well known today. The works recorded here are solo cantatas with supple vocal lines supported by a surprisingly rich instrumentation. All of them have their attractions, but the knockout number is undoubtedly "*Herr, auf Dich traue ich*"—"In Thee, O Lord, I put my trust." The performances and recordings—originally released in Germany by Cantate—are excellent. Emilia Petrescu, a singer not previously known to me, has an attractive voice very beautifully used. Klaus Martin Ziegler is responsible for the excellent integration of the organ continuo with the idiomatic instrumental playing. Phrasing and tempo are full of life: the music breathes. Good, clear sound. *E.S.*

CAGE: *Six Melodies for Violin and Keyboard* (see **CRUMB**)

CARISSIMI: *Judicum Salomonis; Jephte.* Rena Garazioti, Eugenia Ratti, Paola Brunello, Andree Aubrey-Luchini (sopranos); Lucienne Devallier (contralto); Amadeo Berdini (tenor); Sergio Pezzetti, Ugo Trama (basses); Coro Polifonico of Milan; Orchestra dell' Angelicum, Luciano Rosada cond. (in *Judicum*), Giulio Bertola cond. (in *Jephte*). Musical Heritage Society MHS 1715 $3.50 (plus 75¢ handling charge from the Musical Heritage Society, Inc., 1991 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023).

Performance: **Faint praise**
Recording: **Audible splices**

Carissimi was an important and probably great composer. I say "probably" because nearly all his work is forgotten, and even the moving and dramatic *Jephte* is known largely through dubious editions and performances. But Carissimi, who worked in seventeenth-century Rome, pretty much set the form of the sacred music drama and, through his fluid and expressive handling of recitative, arioso, and chorus, had an enormous influence on opera and oratorio well into the nineteenth century.

This recording of *Jephte*, although far from misrepresenting the work, is not going to spark a Carissimi revival. The singing is unremarkable and unidiomatic. We know enough about Baroque ornamentation—even in the still-mysterious seventeenth century—to state confidently that no respectable singer would have left out all those juicy appoggiaturas, wonderful cadential trills, and other Baroque-a-brac, any more than Bernini would have left the water out of his fountains. The recording has some odd acoustical perspectives and an embarrassing splice or two.

The *Judgment of Solomon* is a curious work, possibly not by Carissimi at all. It may have been written by his pupil Cesti, himself a significant figure in the history of music and music drama. It is in fact somewhat different in character from *Jephte*, with little orchestral ritornellos in the Venetian operatic style and some very striking duet writing for the two rival women characters. Again the performance gives an idea of the work without inspiring enthusiasm. *E.S.*

CRUMB: *Makrokosmos, Volume I—Twelve Fantasy Pieces after the Zodiac for Amplified Piano.* David Burge (piano). NONESUCH H-71293 $3.48.

CRUMB: *Four Nocturnes for Violin and Piano (Night Music II).* YUN: *Gasa.* WUORINEN: *The Long and the Short.* CAGE: *Six Melodies for Violin and Keyboard.* Paul Zukofsky (violin); Gilbert Kalish (piano). MAINSTREAM MS/5016 $5.98.

Performances: **Excellent**
Recordings: **Good and close**

George Crumb's music, with its simple, imaginative color fantasy and its meditative, mystical qualities, makes an ideal subject for contemporary recording. Not surprisingly, it

is turning up on discs with greater regularity recently than the music of almost any other living composer. *Makrokosmos*—the allusion to Bartók is quite intentional—is a set of twenty-four piano pieces arranged in two zodiacal cycles and endowed with such individual titles as "Pastorale (from the Kingdom of Atlantis, ca. 10,000 B.C.) Taurus [J.B.]" or "Dream Images (Love-Death Music) Gemini [F.G.L.]." It is, as usual with Crumb, all about the terror and fascination of infinity: brilliantly evocative and not a little theatrical.

The first volume of this double set has been recorded with the utmost authority, sensibility, and flair by David Burge, for whom the pieces were written. Burge has not only to pound and strum pizzicatos, muted tones, and harmonics, and knock about the frame of the piano, rapping and bashing as well as dropping and scraping various metal objects on the amplified strings, he must also play a passage with thimbles on his fingers (but not bells on his toes), quote Chopin, and whistle, moan, shout, chant, and intone litanies. None of these techniques is by itself startlingly new, but the sum of them put together with the incredible insistence and single-mindedness of Crumb's dark vision produces an overwhelming effect.

Crumb's Nocturnes for Violin and Piano are somewhat earlier works and hence not quite so unrelenting or despairing as the *Makrokosmos*, but the basic musical impulses are the same. Interestingly enough, the work lines up, not with the "modern music" on the Mainstream disc—Wuorinen's intense, expressionist solo piece, *The Long and the Short*, or even Isang Yun's somewhat oriental *Gasa*—but with the simple, repetitious pentatonic *Melodies* of John Cage written almost a quarter of a century ago. All of this music is brilliantly performed by Paul Zukofsky, the reigning new-music violinist in this country, with excellent assistance from Gilbert Kalish. The recordings are good, and Nonesuch gets particular high marks for catching the nuances of Crumb's mystically vibrating fortepiano. *E.S.*

DEBUSSY: ***Four Early Songs*** **(see FLAGELLO)**

DEBUSSY (arr. Tomita): ***Snowflakes Are Dancing (sic); Reverie; Gardens in the Rain; Clair de Lune; The Engulfed Cathedral; Passepied; The Girl with the Flaxen Hair; Golliwog's Cakewalk; Footprints in the Snow.*** Isao Tomita (Moog synthesizer). RCA ☐ ARD1-0488 $6.98, ARL1-0488 $5.98.

Performance: **Inscrutable**
Recording: **Overdone**

Hard on the heels of the announcement that "Switched-on Bach" has passed the one-million mark in sales (the second—Van Cliburn's Tchaikovsky First was the first—classical record ever to do so) comes this new RCA entry for the title of "most unnecessary record of the year." "Unnecessary" does not necessarily mean "unsalable," and Isao Tomita's technologically advanced tinkerings with a Moog synthesizer and other associated equipment have already produced sympathetic rumblings that show there is likely to be a solid and sizable market for this reinvention of the hula hoop. Large amounts of money will probably accrue to all associated with it, and that should make them both glad and proud of themselves. But people involved in music and records are a funny breed. To reap the profits from the successful design and marketing of a chrome-plated mousetrap is not enough for them; they want to be congratulated on its aesthetic qualities as well.

No way! Whatever appeal the record has for college freshmen, there is no doubt that its musical values are nil. Mr. Tomita's vision of Debussy is secondhand from third-rate film background music, and Debussy's notes are purely an excuse for sound effects that would not be out of place supporting a winter werewolf romance. Those readers old enough to remember the Theremin will find its ghostly imitation of a sort of human voice imitated here in turn by the Moog—with the modifications that the "soprano" seems to be singing through clenched teeth, and her nonverbal meanderings reveal, at times, an Oriental inflection. The echo of a rather nasty mountain snowstorm insinuates itself every now and then, we are occasionally offered the sound spectacle of an emphysematous whistler, and one piece has for background a continuous noise that reminds me of nothing so much as the sound of the passing of a New York Central train as heard from the parlor of a house built too close to the railroad tracks.

Connoisseurs of electronic techniques will find here that the Moog can do all sorts of tasteless things they had not imagined it capable of before, and they will also find that Mr. Tomita, acutely sensitive to the unpleasantly mechanical rhythms of most such electronic ventures, has at times programmed a sort of rubato into the music. Unfortunately, mechanically produced rubato is mechanical itself, and the net effect is that of an improperly

regulated motor—which is very unnerving.

The CD-4 quadraphonic recording posits the listener at the center of this whirling mass of musical gibberish. The acoustic ambiance resembles that of the Holland Tunnel, and one has the acute feeling that something, somewhere, is going to break. As a matter of fact, the rear speakers in my rig fairly frequently broke up under the onslaught of a lot of high-energy mid-range sounds (something that has not happened to me with any other four-channel disc I have played, CD-4, SQ, QS, or what have you), and though this may be due to deficiencies in my equipment, I have the feeling that the disc has been grievously overcut.

Enough said. I am inordinately fond of the music of Claude Debussy, and I only wish I had it within my power to repay Mr. Tomita in kind for the gift of this record. Say, with something like opening a MacDonald's on top of Mount Fuji. *James Goodfriend*

DELIUS: *Sea Drift; A Song of the High Hills.* John Noble (baritone); Liverpool Philharmonic Chorus; Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Charles Groves cond. ANGEL S-37011 $5.98.

Performance: **With feeling**
Recording: **Spacious**

These first stereo recordings of two of the acknowledged masterpieces of the Delius canon are long, long overdue. The lesser-known of them, a particular favorite of mine, is the *Song of the High Hills*, perhaps the most truly poetic of all Delius' tone poems (the voices are used only for an atmospheric vocalise), with a middle section highlighted by a marvelous Norwegian-inflected melody that Grieg himself might have envied. Sir Thomas Beecham was more at ease in handling the trochaic figuration of the "action" episodes, but, as might be expected, the music gains enormously in the new recording from the spacious stereophonic ambiance, and Sir Charles Groves does elicit a fine performance.

Sea Drift is something else again. Most English commentators regard this, rather than *Song of the High Hills*, as the finest of the large-scale Delius scores. Certainly the composer's response to Walt Whitman's poetic recollection of his boyhood experience of loss and separation gave rise to music of a special richness and poignancy. However, I find it an extraordinarily difficult work to realize satisfactorily, partly because of the problems of balancing the baritone soloist-as-narrator with the equally important chorus-as-commentator, and partly because of the difficulty of keeping the music from going slack in its slower sections, especially early in the work. Despite faulty internal balances within the orchestra caused by improper microphoning, Beecham's 1955 recording managed these problems superbly. For all the loving care Sir Charles Groves puts into his performance, and even though John Noble is excellent in the crucial baritone role, I feel that Delius is betrayed by this recording: the baritone is too much in the foreground relative to the chorus, and the words are lost in an ambiance that is overly spacious for this particular music, an ambiance that also dilutes the presence of the orchestral low register. Here, again, the earlier Beecham recording provides an object lesson. Admittedly, this is a highly personal reaction to *Sea Drift*, and those who do not demand perfection will undoubtedly find much here in which to take pleasure. *D.H.*

DRAGONETTI: *Concerto in A Major for Double Bass and Orchestra.* VANHAL: *Concerto in E Major for Double Bass and Orchestra.* Thomas Lom (double bass); Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, Werner Steifel cond. MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY MHS 1713 $3.50 (plus 75¢ handling charge, from the Musical Heritage Society, Inc., 1991 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023).

Performance: **Generally good**
Recording: **Good**

Concertos for double bass are not exactly a surplus commodity in the musical marketplace—so it is a pleasant surprise to have the Musical Heritage Society come forth with two examples of the genre, one from Haydn's Bohemian contemporary, Jean Baptist Vanhal, the other from Domenico Dragonetti, a Venetian whose friendship with Beethoven

LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI (*ca.* 1925)
A remarkable consistency

clearly inspired the latter's double-bass scoring in the Fifth and Ninth Symphonies.

The Vanhal piece is fairly run-of-the-mill Viennese-Classical-school fodder, but the Dragonetti, eclectic or no, is something else again. It is spirited and bouncy, and the writing for the solo instrument provides vivid evidence of why the composer had a reputation as "the Paganini of the double-bass." This is virtuoso stuff, with double-stops and harmonics aplenty, and it is quite something to hear how Thomas Lom steers his ungainly instrument over Dragonetti's formidable technical hurdles. Aside from the almost inevitable minor lapses of intonation, Mr. Lom's playing is remarkable for both its agility and rhythmic vitality. The recording is fairly intimate in ambiance, yet warm and well-balanced. *D.H.*

DVOŘÁK: *Symphony No. 9, in E Minor, Op. 95 ("From the New World").* Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Rafael Kubelik cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530 415 $7.98.

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

DVOŘÁK: *Symphony No. 9, in E Minor, Op. 95 ("From the New World").* Two complete performances: New Philharmonia Orchestra, Leopold Stokowski cond.; Philadelphia Orchestra, Leopold Stokowski cond., with "Outline of Themes" spoken and played on the piano by Stokowski. RCA CRL2-0334 two discs $6.98.

Performance: **Very good**
Recording: **New Philharmonia excellent, Philadelphia historical**

Rafael Kubelik's third recording of the *New World*, originally issued last fall as part of his complete Dvořák symphony package that sold out before most collectors even knew it was available, is superior to his two earlier versions on all counts, for the balance between vigor and sentiment is superbly judged and both the playing and the sound are outstanding. The same remarks apply in general to Leopold Stokowski's latest *New World*. Both of these distinguished versions take their places in the short list of preferred recordings of the work, and a case might be made for putting either of them at the head of that list. Kubelik's is the more galvanic, Stokowski's the more expansive, but neither lacks vitality and warmth of heart.

All three of Kubelik's versions are available now: Mercury last year reissued his 1951 Chicago Symphony version (in set MG3-4501, mono), and his 1956 stereo recording with the Vienna Philharmonic is on London STS-15007. Stokowski's last previous *New World* antedated the first of Kubelik's, and now that he has returned to RCA for a new series of major recordings (following several years of activity for London's Phase 4 series), the company has had the happy thought of presenting his newest and oldest versions of the work in a single package, complete with the maestro's "Outline of Themes" which accompanied the 1927 set. Actually, that was the second of his six recordings of the *New World* so far, but it was the first of the five that have been released to the public: it was, in fact, album M-1 in Victor's Musical Masterpiece series. The New Philharmonia performance was taped last July; unencumbered by concern over 78-rpm side length, it has a smoother flow than its predecessor and breathes a bit more comfortably, but there is a remarkable consistency in Stokowski's approach after forty-six years—a majestic and convincing approach which includes a striking regard for clarity of line. (In his spoken "Outline of Themes" Stokowski confidently identifies themes "of Indian origin," "of Negro origin," etc. We know the themes were all Dvořák's own, but if Stokowski had said "character" instead of "origin" he would not have been off the mark at all. The voice of the conductor at forty-five, in any event, is unmistakably recognizable to anyone who may have heard him speak at twice that age: it is a charming document.)

It should be noted that neither Kubelik nor Stokowski takes the repeat in the first movement. Czech musicians have assured me that Dvořák wrote in first-movement repeats for the sake of form but never observed them when he conducted his symphonies. Many people, however, feel the repeat in this case makes for a better-proportioned work, and it *is* taken in the Bernstein, Klemperer, and Kertész-London Symphony recordings. *R.F.*

FLAGELLO: *Cantata: The Land.* Ezio Flagello (bass-baritone); I Musici di Firenze, Nicolas Flagello cond. **PERGOLESI: *Salve Regina.* DEBUSSY: *Four Early Songs.*** Joan Grillo (mezzo-soprano); Orchestra Sinfonica di Roma, Nicolas Flagello cond. MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY MHS 1559 $3.50 (plus

75¢ handling charge from the Musical Heritage Society, Inc., 1991 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023).

Performance: **Lost cause**
Recording: **Okay**

Nicolas Flagello's *The Land* is a rich, sirupy setting of six nature poems by Alfred Lord Tennyson, no less. Tennyson's concept of the countryside is literary and secondhand enough, but at least he knew what a throstle is and what it sounds like. Flagello's throstle sounds exactly like Shrovetide carnival in St. Petersburg. The throstle as firebird perhaps.

The Pergolesi piece and the little-known Debussy songs are performed in arrangements by Mr. Flagello, the whole constituting a very curious package indeed. *E.S.*

FRANCK: *Symphonic Variations* **(see The Basic Repertoire, page 51)**

GERSHWIN: *Cuban Overture; Porgy and Bess Medley; Second Rhapsody; Variations on "I Got Rhythm."* Leonard Pennario (piano); Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra, Alfred Newman cond. ANGEL S-36070 $5.98.

Performance: **Half-and-half**
Recording: **Very good**

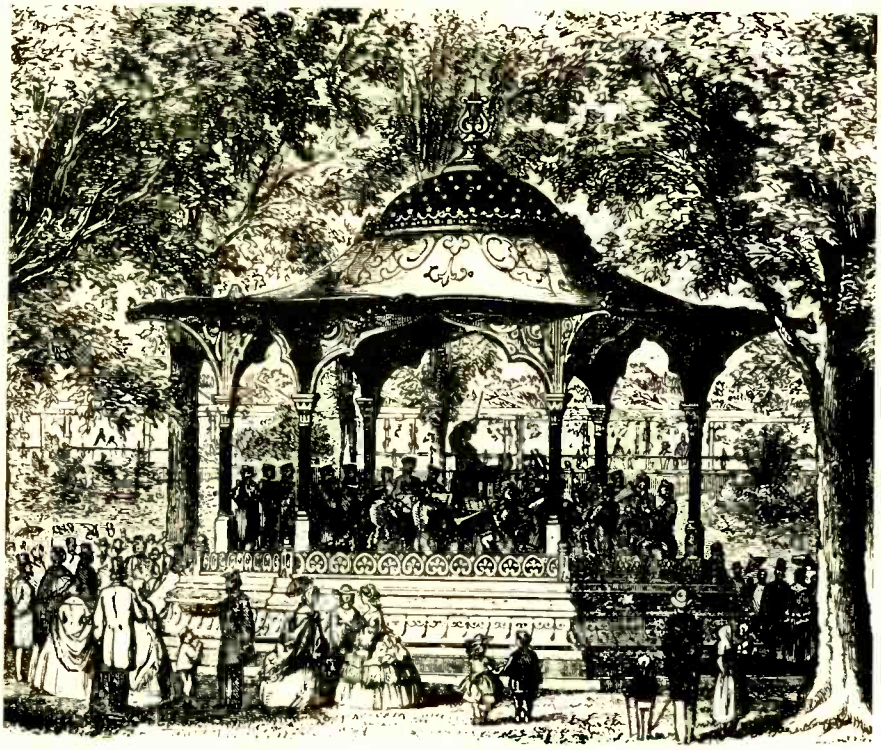
GERSHWIN: *A Self-Portrait in Sound. Piano-Roll Medley—Rialto Ripples/On My Mind the Whole Night Long/Tee-Oodle-Um-Bum-Bo; Fascinating Rhythm; Liza; I Got Rhythm.* George Gershwin (piano). *Porgy and Bess: Introduction; Summertime; A Woman Is a Sometime Thing; Finale, Scene One, Act One; My Man's Gone Now; Bess, You Is My Woman Now.* George Gershwin (piano and vocals); Abbie Mitchell (soprano); Edward Matthews (baritone); Ruby Elzy (soprano); Todd Duncan (bass-baritone); Anne Brown (soprano); orchestra, George Gershwin cond. MARK 56 RECORDS 667 $5.98 (available from Mark 56 Records, P.O. Box One, Anaheim, Calif. 92805).

Performance: **Documentary**
Recording: **Well-preserved**

The Angel collection of Gershwin music for piano and orchestra, released a number of years ago by Capitol under the romantic title "Gershwin by Starlight," represents the sumptuous Hollywood approach to Gershwin which substitutes sugar for salt and dresses up the music in a tuxedo. The concert opens with the *Cuban Overture*, written after the composer spent a brief vacation in Havana in 1932. But is *this* the *Cuban Overture*? Not quite. It is a setting by Greig McRitchie that transforms the piece into a rhapsody ("fresh new rhapsodic arrangements for piano and orchestra," it said on the old Capitol cover) full of elaborate decorations that deplete the simple energy of the work and slow it down to an un-Gershwinlike exercise in schmaltz. The same thing happens to the music from *Porgy and Bess*, which Mr. McRitchie was also allowed to lay his hands on. When will conductors find Gershwin's own intelligently constructed suite of music from his opera and start playing what he wrote, instead of all these improvements that get in the way of his genius? The performances of the *Second Rhapsody* and the *I Got Rhythm* Variations are something else again, since they are played as Gershwin wrote them. The *Second Rhapsody* started out as music for a cityscape sequence in a movie called *Delicious*, for which one minute of the music finally was used. Gershwin got permission from Fox to extend the piece into a concert work. He called it everything from *Manhattan Rhapsody* to *New York Rhapsody* to *Rhapsody in Rivets* before it was premiered as *Second Rhapsody* in 1932 by the Boston Symphony under Serge Koussevitzky. The critics loved it, but for some reason the work is seldom played. This version with Pennario as soloist and Newman conducting is the only recording of it available, and it is worth buying the whole album for. I have heard it played less sentimentally than it is here, but at least it's intact, and its lovely, misty blues melody deserves a place in any Gershwin collection. The playing of the clever and endlessly inventive *I Got Rhythm* Variations, on the other hand, is unbuttoned, idiomatic, and one of the best in the catalog. So it's two up and two down on this Angel reissue.

The percentages are somewhat better on a new release from Mark 56 Records. The "crisp, jaunty, sure, and distinctive" Gershwin touch Edward Jablonski speaks of in his informative liner notes is in evidence throughout this mixed bag of treasure from various vaults. Gershwin wrote *Rialto Ripples* in 1916 in collaboration with Will Donaldson, and the history of American music contains some tedious arguments about just how much of this "piano rag" is Gershwin's. In addition, one could dispute to little avail about the speed at which this piano roll ought to be

(Continued on page 114)



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CORNET CORNUCOPIA

The finest hour of Bandstand Baroque revived

Reviewed by Robert Offergeld

It is seldom that one and the same recording offers us grand nostalgias, a blaze of instrumental fireworks, and, in stylistic terms, a gallery of high-comedy charades and impersonations—all of it conducted with musicological responsibility and unfailing high spirits. The new Nonesuch release in which all this *does* happen is a sort of two-artist, one-record revival of Bandstand Baroque at its wildly ornate best, and I expect to meet nothing else half as entertaining between here and the coming Bicentennial.

Ready for it or not, what we have here is nothing less than the return in glory of the long-gone virtuoso *cornet*, for god's sake, and it breaks my heart that W. C. Fields isn't here to make a movie around it. Nonesuch calls this gorgeously nutty adventure "Cornet Favorites," and both terms of this title are precise. With one exception, the pieces were all written specifically for that stubby little valved horn with the voice of murky gold and the treacherous intonation—an admittedly cranky but gregarious and widely beloved instrument that no trumpet can ever quite replace. And of course the pieces were once popular "favorites" indeed, particularly in the madly expansionist heyday of Teddy Roosevelt, so that by definition, not to say design, they are just possibly the *gaudiest* instrumental solos of any kind ever devised.

As it happens, the album's *cornet* honors are done by Gerard Schwarz, a Paganini-type *trumpet* virtuoso in his twenties who is already a legend where legends grow slowest, which is to say in the shop talk of his professional peers. Mr. Schwarz's demonic roulades, trills, scales, and arpeggios, not to mention his hair-raising prodigies of double and triple tonguing, are supported joyously at the piano by composer William Bolcom, who when necessary evokes no end of proper brass-band pomp and grandiloquence, but who also is right up there with Mr. Schwarz in passages of heart-rending but manly pathos. Mr. Bolcom, who is thirtyish, is no slouch himself in the legend department, as you know if you're in touch with ragtime piano (Nonesuch 71257), and he reveals here that his widely noted poetic faculty is not at all inconsistent with a streak of robust comedy.

Mr. Bolcom also does, and does handsomely, the album's liner notes, and this is not the least interesting aspect of the production, for it opens wide a chapter in American musicology that has been virtually ignored.

To begin with, consider how little we know of the great cornet soloists themselves. In the eighties and nineties some of them were all but national figures—bandstand heroes at innumerable county fairs, political conventions, seaside entertainment piers, centennial expositions. It is true that musicians today dimly recall the names of the stellar ones: Bowen Church, Walter Rogers, Jules Levy, Frank Simon, Herman Bellstedt, Herbert L. Clarke, among others. Many of them were alumni of Patrick Gilmore's great Civil-War-era band or of Sousa's later ones (a few of the great cornet virtuosos were, in fact, exact contemporaries of America's first great piano lion, Louis Gottschalk), and we also know amusing anecdotes about their fantastic personal vanity, their glittering uniforms, their hilarious professional rivalries, their ferocious mustaches. But the one book that made a real beginning at pulling the whole extraordinary story together, *Pioneers in Brass* by Glenn Bridges, is now ten years old and out of print.

Then there is the little matter of repertoire, which not unexpectedly came mainly from the ambitious and madly contentious virtuosos themselves, and consequently is pretty fantastic in several ways, beginning with titles. When did *you* last hear Herbert L. Clarke's *From the Shores of the Mighty Pacific—Rondo Caprice*? As Mr. Bolcom remarks, Clarke took the "curiously rigid form" of the cornet solo about as far as it could go (it usually consisted of a sort of triptych, being a set of variations or a rondo installed grandly between two monumental solo cadenzas), and although we can legitimately make certain assumptions about its probable evolution, nobody has yet made extensive demonstration of it in print.

As a matter of even stranger fact, relatively little, considering the importance of the subject, has been done in America about the larger genre of which the cornet solo is properly a part—namely, that genre called by the French *la musique légère*, which is music described as "light" not because it is organically less sound or morally less sincere but because it is designed to help the human race celebrate its less weighty moments. Sousa and Victor Herbert are only two of America's great masters of the genre, and happily "Cornet Favorites" contains several grand examples of lesser talents that certainly qualify in the broader field.

The earliest piece in the album is *Fantaisie and Variations on "The Carnival of Venice"* by Jean Baptiste Arban, who wrote it in 1864, when he was professor of cornet at the Paris Conservatoire. Arban also wrote a celebrated cornet method that surprisingly enough is still standard, and his *Fantaisie and Variations* must be very near the outer limit of what one mortal can do with a horn.

The album's latest piece in the direct tradition is Frank Simon's *Willow Echoes*, composed in 1918, or just about ten years too late for Virgil Thomson to have heard it in his childhood. Yet the last piece chronologically on the program, which is Thomson's *At the Beach—Concert Waltz* (composed in 1929 and arranged for trumpet in 1949) turns out in a way to be music *about* all the rest of the program—a lovely paradigm of all the summery seaside music of that vanished world, and the sounds that Messrs. Schwarz and Bolcom invest it with are not a whit less than ravishing.

By coincidence, a quite other kind of cornet recording deserves mention here if only for the magnificent sound of its concluding piece, which is an arrangement, presumably by Greig McRitchie, of the old gospel hymn *Amazing Grace*. The album is from Paramount and is entitled —you may not be prepared for this— "Jack Daniel's Original Silver Cornet Band in Concert," and I hasten to add that the band is indeed the house ensemble of that venerable and historic distillery than which there is no nobler name in the annals of Tennessee sour mash. The liner notes do not fully describe the band, or even name its performers, but I judge from certain clues that it consists of three cornets, two altos, a tenor, and a baritone, plus—and this I'm sure of, because the liner mentions finding the instrument in Reno, Nevada, in what sounds like a hockshop —a superb old E-flat helicon bass, so called because the horn actually encircles the person playing it. It was also called the "rain-catcher" because its bell pointed upward, and in early American comic drawing it is often represented as being full of water, occasionally also being the tenement of surprised frogs, fishes, and other beasties.

THE tune used for *Amazing Grace* in JDOSCBIC is the plainly Scottish one in the Methodist Hymnal that is identified only as "Early American Melody." And if Mr. McRitchie's arrangement of *Listen to the Mocking Bird*, for example, may strike you as insupportably cute, his version of *Amazing Grace* is something else. It is as simple, strong, and touching as some primitive legend from the morning of faith, and after you hear the noble, darkly gorgeous sound that the Jack Daniel ensemble produces for it, you may agree that it was a great mistake ever to supplant the old helicon bass with the sousaphone. You may also switch hopefully to you know what brand of sour mash.

CORNET FAVORITES. Clarke: *From the Shores of the Mighty Pacific—Rondo Caprice; Sounds from the Hudson—Valse Brillante; The Débutante—Caprice Brillante; The Bride of the Waves—Polka Brillante.* **Frank Simon:** *Willow Echoes.* **Arban:** *Fantaisie and Variations on "The Carnival of Venice."* **Thomson:** *At the Beach—Concert Waltz.* **Höhne:** *Slavische Fantasie.* Gerard Schwarz (cornet), William Bolcom (piano). NONESUCH H-71298 $3.48.

JACK DANIEL'S ORIGINAL SILVER CORNET BAND. *There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight/The Bear Went over the Mountain/Ta-Ra-Ra-Boom-Te-A/Hail, Hail the Gang's All Here (medley); I Had a Dream Dear; The Whistler and His Dog; Paddlin' Madelin' Home; Aura Lee; You and I; Listen to the Mocking Bird; Shenandoah; Row, Row, Row; Tennessee Waltz; Waiting for the Robert E. Lee; On the Banks of the Wabash; Dixie/Bonnie Blue Flag (medley); Amazing Grace.* Greig McRitchie arr. PARAMOUNT PAS 6093 $5.98.

played—did Gershwin really race through it, or should the speed control be slowed down, or is William Bolcom's approach more valid in the gentler treatment he gives it in his Nonesuch Gershwin recital? I like it both ways, and I also enjoyed the other pieces in the piano-roll medley—as I enjoyed the surprisingly unsentimental run-through of the bluesy *Second Prelude*, a kind of penthouse lullaby. But the real event of this album occurs on side two—a rehearsal on July 19, 1935, before the opening of *Porgy and Bess* and while the composer was still at work on the orchestration of his "folk opera." With Gershwin conducting and commenting throughout, this transcription (from the private collection of a Mr. John V. Gromback) contains the original "Jazzbo Brown" piano music that was later eliminated as the lead-in to *Summertime*, with the famous lullaby beautifully sung by soprano Abbie Mitchell; *A Woman Is a Sometime Thing*, with Edward Matthews not quite getting the hang of it but rather moving in his halting interpretation anyhow; the fervent Act One finale, with the orchestra in full cry; Ruby Elzy already thoroughly polished in her treatment of *My Man's Gone Now*; and the duet *Bess, You Is My Woman Now*, with Todd Duncan as Porgy and Anne Brown as Bess performing even better than they did for the Decca original-cast album a year later. The sound, complete with page-rustlings and Gershwin filling in for the chorus in *Summertime*, is slightly painful but clearer than you might expect. This is a revealing document, one no Gershwin admirer will want to be without for his collection. *P.K.*

GILBERT AND SULLIVAN: *The Mikado.* John Wakefield (tenor), Nanki-Poo; Marion Studholme (soprano), Yum-Yum; John Holmes (bass-baritone), Mikado; Clive Revill (baritone), Ko-Ko; Jean Allister (contralto), Katisha; Denis Dowling (bass-baritone), Pooh-Bah; John Heddle Nash (baritone), Pish-Tush; Patricia Kern (mezzo-soprano), Pitti-Sing; Dorothy Nash (soprano), Peep-Bo. Sadler's Wells Orchestra and Chorus, Alexander Faris cond. STANYAN 9009 two discs $7.95 (from Stanyan Records, Box 2783, Hollywood, Calif. 90028).

Performance: **Superfluous but stylish**
Recording: **Very good**

Talk about your feasts and famines! We Gilbert and Sullivan addicts live out our days longing for the D'Oyly Carte Company to issue just *one* recording of *Utopia, Ltd.* or *The Grand Duke*, and what do we get instead? An umpteenth *Mikado*. It seems that at least it might have been done for once with dialogue included. But no, the Sadler's Wells Opera Company is content to stick to the score—or almost.

This version starts out on the wrong foot by opening, not with the marvelous chords of Sir Arthur Sullivan's superb orchestra overture, but with a medley of tunes from the operetta arranged by somebody named Dodgson. After that, though, matters do improve considerably. The famed opera company is more than equal to the musical demands. John Wakefield is a tenor with the charm, the voice, and the proper appreciation of Gilbert and Sullivan performance tradition to put over delightfully correct versions of *A Wand'ring Minstrel, Were You Not to Ko-Ko Plighted*, and other nuggets of melodic charm provided for the character. Marion Studholme is a lovely Yum-Yum, winningly supported by the Peep-Bo of Dorothy Nash and the Pitti-Sing of Patricia Kern. All three laudably resist all temptations to simper. Miss Kern has a few moments in the first-act finale where I wish she could sound more pert and impudent and less operatic, but she makes up for it later, especially in her solo during *The Criminal Cried*. Clive Revill, who won Tony Awards here for his Fagin in the Broadway version of *Oliver* and his acting in the musical *Irma La Douce*, turns out to be an excellent choice for Ko-Ko, the Lord High Executioner. Jean Allister's love-starving Katisha should be sufficiently fierce for anyone, and Denis Dowling as Pooh-Bah and John Heddle Nash as Pish-Tush are both eminently satisfactory.

In fact, the only disappointment is the Mikado of John Holmes, whose bass-baritone is ripe and lusty but whose ferocities are milk and water compared to those of Darrell Fancourt, Donald Adams, and Owen Brannigan, heard respectively in the Richmond, London, and Angel complete recordings. The orchestra and chorus under Alexander Faris are suitably brisk and exuberant, bringing out all the nuances of Sullivan's score to excellent advantage, and the recorded sound is good, but there is no text—which is rather chintzy of Stanyan. *P.K.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

HAYDN: ***Quartets for Flute, Violin, Viola, and Cello, Op. 5: No. 1, in D Major (Hob. II:D9); No. 2, in G Major (Hob. II:G4); No. 3, in D Major (Hob. II:D10); No. 4, in G Major (Hob. II:1).*** Vienna Philharmonic Chamber Ensemble. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530 360 $7.98.

Performance: **Graceful**
Recording: **Excellent**

The six quartets for flute and strings attributed to Haydn (only two of the set are absolutely authenticated) were most likely written during the composer's earlier Esterházy years. They are cheerful, charming works in the popular *galant* idiom, highly melodious and totally unprofound. They make ideal late-night listening. All six works used to be available on Angel S36226 in an extremely brilliant performance by Jean-Pierre Rampal and the Trio à Cordes Français, but that disc seems to have been deleted from the catalog. The present group, members of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, take slightly more leisurely tempos and a few additional repeats omitted by the French players, thus managing to include only the first four quartets in their album, but their style is more felicitous in this material. Everything here is relaxed, splendidly balanced as to ensemble, and utterly *gemütlich*. One might carp about an occasional appoggiatura played as a short grace note rather than a longer one, but otherwise the performances are well-nigh ideal. Spacious, airy, but detailed reproduction is another bonus. *I.K.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

IMBRIE: *Symphony No. 3.* London Symphony Orchestra, Harold Farberman cond. **SCHUMAN:** *Credendum.* Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy cond. COMPOSERS RECORDINGS, INC. CRI SD 308 $5.95.

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

The *Credendum* (*Article of Faith*), composed

in 1955 for the U.S. Commission for UNESCO, is one of William Schuman's most dramatic and effective scores, reflecting what Schuman would call his "unabashedly" affirmative outlook in the form of a highly virtuosic concerto for orchestra. That Columbia retired its pre-stereo recording of Ormandy's superb performance was regrettable; that no one has yet come forth with a new stereo version seems incredible. CRI has now taken over the Columbia tapes and done an exceptionally successful job of "electronic enhancement"; it is one of this label's finest rescues and, under the circumstances, hardly less significant than a brand-new production.

While the reappearance of the *Credendum* is what excited me, the other side of this disc is by no means a mere makeweight. One of these days, I suspect, there is going to be an explosive breakthrough for the music of Andrew Imbrie in the concert programs of our major orchestras, and his Third Symphony, composed for the Hallé Orchestra in 1970, is the sort of work that could help bring that about. Like the Violin Concerto, it is not only original in its language and brilliantly put together, but very openheartedly communicative. Farberman and the London Symphony give it a first-rate performance that is very well recorded.

While the disc merits the most enthusiastic recommendation, I would like to register a complaint about the labeling. It is only by reading the respective composers' program notes that one learns that each of these works is in three movements. This assuredly basic information is not given on the disc labels or the liner heading, and the markings of the symphony's movements are not identified even in Imbrie's notes. And the silly puff about the LSO states that the orchestra's "distinguished history became a matter of international interest when André Previn became its principal conductor." Anyone ever hear of Pierre Monteux? *R.F.*

LISZT: *Transcendental Etudes; Six Consolations; Liebestraum No. 3.* Jorge Bolet (piano). RCA CRL 2-0446 two discs $11.96.

Performance: **Blockbuster**
Recording: **Hard as nails**

LISZT: *Grosses Konzertsolo; Valée d'Obermann; Ballade No. 2, in B Minor.* Frederick Marvin (piano). GENESIS GS 1048 $5.98.

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

Liszt's twelve *Transcendental* Etudes in their final 1851 realization are pretty much the ultimate test for piano virtuosity in the heroic-romantic manner. To twentieth-century ears, the musical substance varies in quality from fustian (*Mazeppa*) and sentimental (*Ricordanza*) to the most fascinating and brilliant in rhythm, tone-color, and harmonic daring (No. 2 in A Minor, No. 10 in F Minor, *Feux Follets*, *Harmonies du Soir*, and *Chasse-Neige*). Except for *Mazeppa*, where Liszt turned the piano into the equivalent of a full orchestra (the piece later became No. 6 in the series of thirteen symphonic poems), the *Transcendental* Etudes are wholly pianistic in style—and a pianist has to be a combination of keyboard tiger and poet to play them all with complete success.

In the tiger department Jorge Bolet is second to none. Indeed, he is the only pianist I have ever heard bring the *Mazeppa* off with total conviction, thanks to his unbelievable command of velocity and rhythm and a singular flair for the special type of quasi-operatic rhetoric in which Liszt steeps his more obviously dramatic works. Bolet also excels in the satanic aspect of Liszt's musical language, as in his incredible performance of the Paganini-like Etude No. 2 in A Minor. That he is not altogether lacking in the poetic virtues is revealed in the fine tonal gradations achieved in his playing of the *Consolations* (why weren't these separately banded?), of which the popular No. 3 emerges as the best and least cloyingly sentimental. For me, however, the poetic aspect of the *Transcendental* Etudes is still best set out in Vladimir Ashkenazy's London disc, which offers seven of the series, by and large the seven best. Ashkenazy takes no back seat to Bolet in the virtuosity department, and he *does* convey far more effectively the atmospherics of the *Harmonies du Soir*. But it is the difference in recording techniques that is largely responsible here: Ashkenazy's piano is recorded very richly, with the low end of the keyboard favored somewhat, while Bolet's made-in-Spain taping stresses the upper-middle keyboard range to a point where the ear rebels in fatigue by the end of Etude No. 12. A good dose of mid-range cut at 2000 kHz improves the sound of Bolet's disc a great deal.

There are no such problems with Frederick Marvin's Genesis disc, for it was engineered by one of the finest sound-men around, Richard C. Burns, whose Overtone Records,

produced during his New Haven days, were among the gems from the independent labels of the monophonic era. Microphone placement seems a mite distant from the piano, but the balance between keyboard registers is flawless.

Frederick Marvin, who in the past has done noteworthy recordings of little-known works by Soler and Schubert, shows himself the equal of any of the keyboard tigers when it comes to the Liszt repertoire, and there is also poetry aplenty in his pianism. All three of the super-formidable works essayed by Mr. Marvin display extreme contrasts between the piano as Romantic singer and the piano as chordal-percussive orchestra. One can well understand why Liszt later recast the *Grosses Konzertsolo* for two pianos (as the *Concerto Pathétique*), for here is more than twenty-two minutes of finger-busting passage work and fistfuls of chords that would be enough to defeat any pianist in concert performance, but might be feasible with the aid of tape-recording technology.

Vallée d'Obermann, the sixth and most ambitious of the nine pieces that make up the Swiss Year of the *Années de Pèlerinage*, is no mere scenic evocation, but a cosmic meditation inspired by passages from a novel of Étienne Pivert de Senancour. Marvin takes a decidedly broader view of the music than Vladimir Horowitz (on Columbia M2S 757), who traverses the Lisztian cosmic landscape in thirteen minutes as against Marvin's nineteen! Where Marvin's Obermann is a balefully brooding creation, Horowitz's is at once Byronic and Promethean, and his reading of the music is much more closely related to declamatory speech rhythm than Marvin's.

The one real problem I have encountered with the Genesis disc is faulty pressing: my review copy has a badly off-center side one. *D.H.*

MAHLER: ***Das Klagende Lied.*** Heather Harper (soprano); Norma Procter (contralto); Werner Hollweg (tenor); Netherlands Radio Chorus; Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam, Bernard Haitink cond. PHILIPS 6500 587 $6.98.

Performance: **Excellent**
Recording: **Orchestra at expense of voices**

Das Klagende Lied is perhaps the penultimate expression of that spirit of fairy tale and dark legend that dominated so much of Central European artistic expression in the nineteenth century. (The "ultimate" work in this genre is Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*.) It is early Mahler—its first version was completed as early as 1880, when he was only twenty—but it is in no sense an immature work. The texts, elaborated by Mahler himself from a story by Ludwig Bechstein, are not exactly kiddie stuff. A minstrel carves a flute out of a bone which turns out to be that of the king's brother. The bone-flute, all by itself, proceeds to sing a merry song at the king's wedding about how the brother was murdered by the bridegroom, a revelation so shocking that it brings down the very castle walls on the jolly throng.

The version here is the revised score in which Mahler himself omitted the original first section. Mahler rather overelaborately divided the texts between three soloists and chorus with plenty of exclamations of *Leide* and *Weh*—sorrow and woe—at every other line. If the constant wailing tone of the texts is a little much, the music is not. *Das Klagende Lied* is one of Mahler's most immediately appealing works, with a wealth of melodic expression and dramatic contrast that seems always to the point.

This is an excellent performance with some attractive, intense singing and playing. In my opinion, though, the recording is really *too* beautiful. The lush resonance around the sound makes the louder passages muddy and often submerges the chorus in a sea of orchestral sound; occasionally even the solo voices seem to lack profile. In spite of this, I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the piece and the performance, and I should add that the recording, in as quiet a pressing as you could wish, has an extraordinary dynamic range. *E.S.*

MAHLER: ***Das Lied von der Erde.*** Richard Makos (tenor); Olga Dorag (contralto); Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra, Václav Jiráček cond. OLYMPIC 8110-E $2.98.

Performance: **Vital but cut**
Recording: **Early-Fifties public performance?**

The legend "distributed by Everest Records" on the record sleeve and the curious Pearl Buck-style translation of the title as "The Good Earth" immediately arouse doubts and suspicions about this recorded performance. In true Everest fashion, no texts, translations, or biographical material on the performers are given anywhere, nor is the source of the recording identified. Furthermore, the names of the soloists and conductor are nowhere to be found in the directories and catalogs at my disposal at the New York Public Library. Private Czech sources, however, have confirmed that Václav Jiráček *is* a real person and that he *is* the conductor of the Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra. That being so, the soloists too, despite the equal unfamiliarity of their names, are probably who they are said to be. The source of the recording, though, remains a mystery. Since the disc has been released (along with other Mahler records by Jiráček) simultaneously with a half a dozen records formerly on the long defunct Oceanic label (*ca.* 1953), could all these Jiráček recordings have been tapes rejected for release by Oceanic for technical deficiencies?

The singers are good ones, the tenor showing less strain than most in the cruel tessitura of the opening of the *Trinklied*. The conducting too is solidly in the Central European Mahler tradition, judging from what can be heard through a good bit of variable background noise and fluctuating recording levels, all subjected to "electronic stereo" processing. While the vocal portions are complete here, there are gaps (apparently edited from or not recorded on the tape) in the orchestral interlude midway in the first movement and in the lengthy corresponding interlude in the finale, here cut by a full three minutes.

The general quality of recorded sound calls to mind much of the work done on German Magnetophon recorders in the early Fifties, and a telltale bit of flutter in the solo clarinet might support that thesis. *D.H.*

MAHLER: ***Symphony No. 6, in A Minor.*** Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra, Václav Jiráček cond. OLYMPIC 8101/2 two discs $4.98.

MAHLER: ***Symphony No. 7, in E Minor.*** Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra, Václav

Jiřáček cond. OLYMPIC 8106/2 two discs $4.98.

MAHLER: ***The Nine Symphonies (complete).*** *No. 1, in D Major.* London Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Adrian Boult cond. *No. 2, in C Minor ("Resurrection"); No. 3, in D Minor; No. 4, in G Major.* Performers unidentified. *No. 5, in C-sharp Minor.* London Symphony Orchestra, Rudolf Schwarz cond. *No. 6, in A Minor; No. 7, in E Minor.* Performers unidentified. *No. 8, in E-flat Major.* Vienna Festival Orchestra with soloists and choruses, Dimitri Mitropoulos cond. *No. 9, in D Major.* London Symphony Orchestra, Leopold Ludwig cond. EVEREST 3359/12 twelve discs $29.80.

Performances: **Good**
Recording: **Not good**

The Boult, Schwarz, Ludwig, and Mitropoulos recordings in the Everest set have been available on their own for some time, and their virtues have been acknowledged; what is intriguing is that theirs are the only performers' names listed here; the cover information reads "and other well known conductors," but the disc labels fail to disclose their identities or those of the ensembles and soloists involved in their performances. Since Olympic is an Everest label, comparison of the new Jiřáček Sixth and Seventh with those in the big set was indicated, and they are indeed the same. I suspect the Second is from the same source, but Nos. 3 and 4 have me stumped: their vocal portions are sung in Russian, and my only guess, based on nothing substantial, is that they are broadcast performances conducted by Kiril Kondrashin. (In the Moscow Philharmonic performance of No. 4, conducted by David Oistrakh on Melodiya/Angel SR 40076, Galina Vishnevskaya sings in German.)

Aside from the dubious satisfaction afforded by these guessing games, there is little here to entice the listener. Jiřáček shows a very good feeling for the Mahler idiom, but the sound of his recordings and the Russian (?) ones is too wretched to put up with; one begins to wonder if the taping was done by a short-wave buff in California instead of the Czech Radio's own engineers in Prague. For Mahler, of all composers, that just won't do. Nor will much else in the make-up of these discs. In the Olympic No. 6, contrary to the label copy, the andante *precedes* the scherzo on side two; this is put right in the big set (in which nearly all side layouts are different from those in the respective individual releases), but the sound quality is even poorer. In the Third Symphony, which here bears an Italian subtitle I have never come across before (*La Programmatica*), the fourth and fifth movements are labeled as one, making the finale the fifth instead of the sixth. The long finale of the Second Symphony is accommodated on a single side – but the advantage is erased by the gratuitous insertion of a separating band in the middle of the side! The first three movements of No. 1 are all on side one, effecting another undesirable pause, between the third and fourth movements of that work. The annotation for the entire set of nine symphonies is accomplished in four paragraphs of nebulous content; texts are not provided for any of the vocal portions – nor is there any indication that there *are* vocal portions in any work but No. 8.

A note on the Everest cover states "Some portions of this set are electronically re-recorded to simulate stereo," but the disc labels are not marked to show which sides are genuine stereo and which are "simulated." Only the Boult, Schwarz, and Ludwig contributions are genuine stereo; they were sonic showpieces when they first appeared on the original Everest label some fifteen years ago, but as remastered for this set they are simply well met with their new companions. Even though these records sell for less than half their "list price" in many stores, they are no bargain.

R.F.

MAHLER: ***Symphony No. 8, in E-flat Major ("Symphony of a Thousand").*** Joyce Barker, Elizabeth Simon, Norma Burrowes (sopranos); Joyce Blackham, Alfreda Hodgson (altos); John Mitchinson (tenor); Raymond Myers (baritone); Gwynne Howell (bass); New Philharmonia Chorus; Bruckner-Mahler Choir of London; Ambrosian Singers; Orpington Junior Singers; Highgate School Choir; Finchley Children's Music Group; Symphonica of London, Wyn Morris cond. RCA CRL2-0359 two discs $6.98, ® CRS2-0359 $9.95, © CRK2-0359 $9.95.

Performance: **Exciting**
Recording: **Voices lost in the haze**

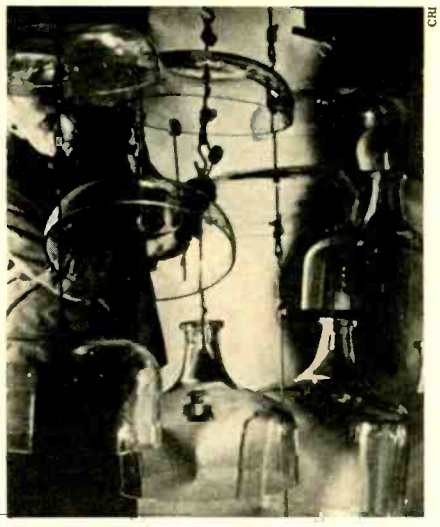
This is an exciting performance on a grand scale, but I find the recording a muddle. Wyn Morris, a product of South Wales, the Royal Academy of Music, the Berkshire Music Center, and Cleveland (where he studied with George Szell and conducted the Cleveland Chamber Orchestra), is the founder of the Symphonica of London, which kicked off its career with this modest offering.

The virtues of the recording can be found in the exceptional breadth and excitement of it all. Morris launches the interplanetary orbits of this musical cosmos with a really large-scale time and space sense. But not even the talented Mr. Morris makes more than the usual continual *fortissimo* choral shouting match out of the first movement. A big problem here and all the way through is the lack of presence and clarity in the voices. The sense is that of everyone straining at the extremities of his resources but lost in the glorious recorded haze. I would like to be able to comment on the quality of the singing – the choral work and, in particular, the various soloists – but, except for certain passages, I am actually not quite sure what is going on. I see four times as much in the score as I can hear. I am not faulting Morris particularly for these problems – every other recording of this work that I have heard has the same difficulties. Somehow there must be a way – brilliant miking, multitrack recording, quad playback, the works – to make this music come clean!

Yet, I must also insist on the extraordinary dynamic quality of the performance, which does come through with great strength. Morris has the sense of the whole, and, working in long takes and with a careful, brilliant control of tempos, he builds up immense power. What details emerge – largely orchestral, occasionally vocal – are impressive, and there is, at the very least, a feeling for line and phrase that takes us to those outer regions where Mahler wanted us to go. Some day I would like to hear all – or at least some large part – of this music. In the meantime we have its dynamic and spiritual sense in this performance. English texts only.

E.S.

MOZART: ***Don Giovanni.*** Ingvar Wixell (baritone), Don Giovanni; Martina Arroyo (soprano), Donna Anna; Stuart Burrows



Partch with his Cloud Chamber Bowls

HARRY PARTCH

Organic food for souls tormented by contemporary music

Reviewed by Eric Salzman

***

HARRY PARTCH wrote *The Bewitched*, a dance-satire, in an abandoned shipyard in Sausalito, California, between 1952 and 1955. It was performed (and recorded) at the University of Illinois in 1957 during a brief period when Partch was "in residence" at that school, and it is one of the few of his works ever to have been performed in New York.

The reason for the rarity of performances of Partch's music is easy enough to explain: he composes for the unique instruments he himself invented and constructed. Unique is the right word; in most cases, there is only a single example of each instrument in existence. *The Bewitched* features his Cloud Chamber Bowls, Spoils of War, Marimba Eroica, Boo, Diamond Marimba, Surrogate Kithara, Harmonic Canon, and Chromelodeon—instruments as beautiful and exotic (to hear and to see) as their names—as well as a few more familiar types. The musicians who play the instruments are not merely accompanists to the drama of this piece; they are protagonists. In addition to contributing to the visual impact of these extraordinary constructions by playing them on stage, the instrumentalists also form a vocal Chorus of Lost Musicians who experience various uncommon misadventures of modern life: "Three Undergrads Become Transfigured in a Hong Kong Music Hall" and "A Soul Tormented by Contemporary Music Finds a Humanizing Alchemy" and "Visions Fill the Eyes of a Defeated Basketball Team in the Shower Room" and "The Cognoscenti Are Plunged into a Demonic Descent While at Cocktails" and much, much more.

The Bewitched is a remarkable example of Partch's ritual music-theater, which, like his music, has much in common with non-Western (and, perhaps, early Western) art. He deals with the paradoxes and the banalities of contemporary life in terms of magical and spiritual transformation. And his theater, again like his music, is anti-specialized, anti-tragic, and very much conceived as an antidote to the ills and woes of technological civilization.

Partch has been pursuing his musical and dramatic ideas for lo, these many years in virtually complete isolation from the fashionable trends of modern art. His aesthetic of nonspecialization, the rhythmic-percussive qualities of his music, the handmade beauty of the instruments (sight and sound), the utter simplicity of the melodic elements—harmony and polyphony seem scarcely to exist for him—are all expressions of an idea of the role of art in relation to community and basic human needs, notions that might have been thought—at least until quite recently—to have long since disappeared in sophisticated technological society. Partch's assertion of these needs is a remarkable achievement, particularly in view of the fact that modern institutions and social forms seem incapable of responding to such proposals. Hence the particular importance of sound recordings in disseminating his music and ideas. Partch himself seems to have realized this quite early, and for many years he issued his own recordings on the Gate 5 label—named for the shipyard gate in Sausalito. The original recordings have long since become unavailable, but Composers Recordings Inc. has been performing a signal service in reissuing them.

The recording of *The Bewitched* is of special note for several reasons. This is a recording—first-rate, it must be said—of the original performance, only part of which was issued by Gate 5. It is, then, the first *complete* release of the original tapes, and, even though (dread words) "rechanneled for stereo," it is still a remarkably successful achievement. Since this is a dance work, the vocal elements are relatively subordinate, and it is the quality of the instrumental sound that must carry the work. And it does indeed carry it, in terms of both performance and quality of recording. Why a recording of doggedly anti-technological music made at a university in 1957 and rechanneled for stereo by CRI more than fifteen years later should sound so much better than a lot of fancy items being processed these days is one of the mysteries of technological culture. But it does.

I don't think anyone could follow the argument of *The Bewitched* just by reading Partch's vastly amusing, philosophical/poetic, often incomprehensible notes, but in a way the music—wonderfully banal ("primitive," if you like), yet basic, rich, magical, and even complex in its simplicity—tells its own story. I cannot imagine how anyone who can—or will—listen with open ears, who can re-create for himself the receptive attitude of childish wonder, can be anything but entranced and delighted with it. It's very healthy stuff, too. In today's supermarket of heavily processed and overpackaged musical goods, Harry Partch provides real organic food.

PARTCH: *The Bewitched.* Freda Schell (voice); University of Illinois Musical Ensemble, John Garvey cond. COMPOSERS RECORDINGS INC. CRI SD 304 two discs $11.90.

(tenor), Don Ottavio; Luigi Roni (bass), Commendatore; Kiri Te Kanawa (soprano), Donna Elvira; Wladimiro Ganzarolli (bass), Leporello; Richard Van Allan (bass), Masetto; Mirella Freni (soprano), Zerlina. Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Colin Davis cond. PHILIPS 6707 022 four discs $27.92.

Performance: **Good but not exceptional**
Recording: **Very good**

The merits of this new *Don Giovanni* are considerable, but two weighty factors keep it from attaining true distinction: a routine Don and a musical leadership that, for all its impressive qualities, fails to be consistently pleasing.

To take the positive aspects first: the Elvira of Kiri Te Kanawa is a decided winner. Her lovely tone and refined technique are constant throughout, and interpretively she gains momentum as she progresses. The entrance aria could do with more incisive nuance, and the little arietta "*Ah fuggi il traditor*" (No. 8 in the score) is neutralized by the conductor's overfast tempo, but everything coalesces in "*In quali eccessi, o Numi*," in which passion and coloration enhance the radiant tone quality. Stuart Burrows offers a Don Ottavio that at least matches, and probably surpasses, his counterparts on currently available recordings in terms of elegance, agility, and accuracy. Mirella Freni is a secure and attractive Zerlina, and Luigi Roni is a commanding Commendatore.

Wladimiro Ganzarolli avoids buffoonery, but he is not humorless—his is a Leporello solidly vocalized, and his clearly projected tones come off to good advantage alongside the frequently unfocused ones of Ingvar Wixell's Don Giovanni. The latter, being a good actor, may be more effective on stage. In this context, though, he is short on magnetism and tonal allure, and such a Don Giovanni is in deep trouble even before the Commendatore's visit.

The Donna Anna of Martina Arroyo is somewhat miscast. Insufficient vocal agility, which defeated this gifted artist in *I Vespri Siciliani*, is again her undoing. She cannot negotiate her part as written in the Masked Trio or in the Sextet (No. 20), and though she manages the taxing "*Non mi dir, bell' idol mio*," she does so with obvious effort.

John Constable's inventive harpsichord playing adds many delightful touches to an orchestral contribution of uneven quality. Colin Davis rates high in his ability to maintain precision and clear textures; the Quartet "*Non ti fidar*," for example, is rarely set forth with such transparency. On the other hand, there are moments when businesslike efficiency is all that his reading communicates. Ottavio's phrase "*Lascia o cara*" in the first scene lacks consoling tenderness, "*Finch' han dal vino*" is driven beyond the kind of *presto* that a singer can meaningfully articulate, and the opening duet of the second act is rattled off by Leporello and the Don in a machine-like fashion. Many of Da Ponte's recitatives in this opera are gems, but they are often delivered here without charm or involvement.

The technical production is good, and the album is attractively packaged, but it cannot be recommended against the magnificently conducted Giulini set (Angel 3605, with Sutherland and Schwarzkopf as two unbeatable Donnas), the powerful if controversial Klemperer reading (Angel 3700, with Nicolai Ghiaurov's irresistible Don Giovanni in the

bargain), or the tonally aging but still respectable London 1401, which offers Siepi, Della Casa, Gueden, and Corena as its vocal attractions. *G.J.*

MOZART: ***Sonata in D Major for Two Pianos (K. 448); Sonata in C Major for Piano, Four Hands (K. 521).*** Christoph Eschenbach, Justus Frantz (pianos). DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530 285 $7.98.

Performance: **Strong, simple**
Recording: **A bit dull**

K. 448 is Mozart's only work for two pianos; its companion here is the last of five sonatas for one piano, four hands. Both can be classified with late, vintage Mozart, more strictly comparable with some of the later concertos than the solo sonatas. Whereas the solo sonatas belong in the realm of chamber music, these works have a rather public display character. Mozart was equally adept at both kinds, and these sonatas are close to the top of the rather small list of great works in the four-hand keyboard genres.

Christoph Eschenbach and Justus Frantz are two very capable young German pianists who take this music seriously and with simple, straightforward feeling. Perhaps something is missing here—today we consider Mozart a plain speaker, but in his own day he had a reputation for embellishing a point now and then. These are strong, clean performances which give off a bit of sparkle if not a lot of wit. Where cool, suave playing is required—the last-movement allegretto of the C Major Sonata is the best case in point—the performers are at their best. The recorded sound is on the dull side, especially in the two-piano work, where the problems of separation and spatiality—composed into the music by Mozart, but not easy to deal with even in stereo—do not seem to have been entirely solved. *E.S.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

MOZART: ***Symphonies: No. 1, in E-flat Major (K. 16); No. 4, in D Major (K. 19); No. 5, in B-flat Major (K. 22); No. 10, in F Major (K. 74); No. 44, in D Major (K. 81/73L).*** Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Neville Marriner cond. PHILIPS 6500 532 $6.98.

Performance: **Ideal**
Recording: **Superb**

This is the first volume of what promises to be a series of early Mozart symphonies. The numberings to which these youthful works have been subjected have been a source of considerable confusion ever since it was discovered that some of the earliest were not written by Mozart and that in addition to the usual forty-one symphonies there were several others. Thus, this disc contains Symphonies No. 1, No. 4 (really Mozart's *second* work in this form), No. 5, No. 44 (K. 73L, composed in 1770), and No. 10. Although I presume that a second disc will take care of some of the other symphonies composed between No. 5 and No. 10, I rather regret that Philips has not seen fit to record and press them in chronological order, if only to help collectors keep things straight on the shelf.

Musically, these pieces are of course a far cry from the Mozart of the later symphonies, but there are astonishing moments nonetheless; it is certainly disconcerting to hear such well-put-together sounds as the opening movement of K. 16 and realize that they are from the pen of a boy who was just turning nine. It is also fascinating to note the development between even such neophyte pieces as the first two symphonies, written in 1764-1765, and the Tenth Symphony, just slightly more sophisticated, of five years later.

These works have all been recorded previously, but I do not believe they have ever been given as scintillating and sparkling a performance as Neville Marriner and the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields give them here. The ensemble itself is simply sensational, the prominent high horn parts brilliant, and the expression of lyricism wonderfully refined. I am also delighted to hear them use a harpsichord continuo (after all, if it's proper in Haydn . . .). And the sound reproduction is faultless. *I.K.*

MOZART: ***Symphony No. 38, in D Major ("Prague," K. 504); Symphony No. 41, in C Major ("Jupiter," K. 551).*** BBC Symphony Orchestra, Colin Davis cond. PHILIPS 6500 313 $6.98.

Performance: **Very good, and yet. . .**
Recording: **Excellent**

In a recent review of Philips' reissue of Colin Davis' 1962 recording of the two symphonies that fit between the two on this record, I found the performances "forceful, crisp, dramatic, tightly controlled—and a little austere." These new performances are a little austere, too; they are, in fact, unremittingly solemn. I get the impression that Davis is trying to force both works into a tragic mold which the music itself resists. (The minuet in

the *Jupiter* seems not only devitalized, but jarringly plaintive.) I'm sure many will welcome this record as representing a fresh view, however, and anyone so disposed will find much to admire in the polished playing, the firm rhythms, the clarity with which the most minute felicities of Mozart's scoring are revealed. I can only say that I find more not only to admire but to enjoy in Eugen Jochum's *Jupiter* (Deutsche Grammophon 2530 357) and in several other versions of the *Prague*—including Davis' own earlier recording with the English Chamber Orchestra on L'Oiseau-Lyre SOL-266. *R.F.*

PERGOLESI: *Salve Regina* **(see FLAGELLO)**

POULENC: *Four Easter Motets; Four Christmas Motets* **(see STRAVINSKY)**

PROKOFIEV: *Symphony No. 1, in D Major, Op. 25* **(see BIZET)**

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: *Le Coq d'Or; The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Phevronia (orchestral excerpts).* Aleksei Korolov (bass), Dodon; Yuri Yelnikov (tenor), Gvidon; Alexandre Poliakov (baritone), Aphron; Leonid Ktitorov (bass), Polkan; Gennady Pishchoev (tenor), Astrologer; Antonina Kleshcheva (alto), Amelfa; Nina Poliakova (soprano), Le Coq d'Or; Klara Kadinskaya (soprano), Queen of Shemakha; Choir and Opera-Symphony Orchestra of the All-Union Radio, Aleksei Kovalev and Yevgeny Akulov cond. (*sic*). WESTMINSTER GOLD WGSO-8241-3 three discs $8.96.

Performance: **Very Russian**
Recording: **Voices clear, orchestra distant**

I don't know what dark recesses this recording came out of or even how antique it actually is, but, making due allowances, it has a good deal in its favor. The allowances that must be made are as follows: distant orchestral sound, generally low recording levels, and all-around poor production featuring no libretto and no liner information at all. What you get, once past the allowances, is a thoroughly Russian version of a most extraordinary and baffling opera. There is no question that the sound of the Russian words and Russian singing fills the recesses of this work with vocal color and complements the richness of Rimsky's orchestration. And there is something quite satisfactory about the singing, which is strong, focused, and without any fat. The women's sound is a little edgy for my taste, but all of it is quite striking. The chorus, as might be expected, is excellent. All the voices are recorded quite far forward, and the striking melodic character of the work is well brought out. But the lack of clarity in the orchestral sound is a disappointment with orchestral music as rich and colorful as this. Nor is the orchestral playing very remarkable from a technical point of view. Nevertheless, the larger sense of the music is excellent. These musicians play and sing not notes but phrases; they make not patterns but pictures.

Unfortunately, production reaches a low level in more than one sense. The recording is cut at levels that dip into the surface noise, which is at times considerable. The sixth-side material—orchestral music from another Rimsky opera, *The Invisible City of Kitezh*—is inadequately described on the label and unmentioned anywhere else! The information level of the packaging is so low that one doubts even the little that is provided. For example, is Aleksei Kovalev a co-conductor of the performance with Yevgeny Akulov (does it really take two conductors to produce one Russian opera?), or is that merely a misprinted, misplaced reading for the name of the principal bass singer? *E.S.*

ROSSINI: *Messa di Gloria* **(see Best of the Month, page 73)**

SAINT-SAËNS: *Symphony No. 3, in C Minor, Op. 78 ("Organ").* City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Louis Frémaux cond. KLAVIER KS 526 $5.98.

Performance: **Respectable**
Recording: **Generally good**

From its beginnings as a company devoted chiefly to piano-roll reissues, the West-Coast Klavier label has been branching out into the general concert repertoire, orchestral and otherwise. This recording of the Saint-Saëns "Organ" Symphony originated with the Studio Two label in England in mid-1973 and offers a perfectly respectable and well proportioned reading by the French conductor who has been musical director of the City of Birmingham Orchestra since 1969. The sonics are amply resonant and reasonably clear in texture, if a bit lacking in violin "bite." The sonority of the organ is properly imposing in both the quietly lyrical slow movement and the brazen finale. The stereo spread and depth are most effective. Nevertheless, the performance as such is no match in terms of dramatic impact for RCA's twelve-year-old Munch-Boston Symphony version, and the older recording still holds up remarkably well, despite its relatively flat perspective. I still opt for RCA and Munch. *D.H.*

SARTI: *Russian Oratorio; Gospodiin Pomiluj Ny* **(see Best of the Month, page 71)**

SCHOENBERG: *String Quartet No. 1, in D Minor, Op. 7.* LaSalle Quartet. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530 329 $7.98.

Performance: **Impressive**
Recording: **Excellent**

The more I hear the Schoenberg First Quartet the less I understand it. The work is gigantic in size: a single super-post-Wagnerian forty-five-minute movement which, after the definiteness of its opening D Minor tune, seems to allow itself the possibility of going anywhere and everywhere in the most complex ways. The music is all based on the economical use of a limited number of basic ideas exposed, used, and re-used in one combination after another, thus anticipating the elements of Schoenberg's later twelve-tone music. But the possibilities still seem infinite, and there is the sense that this particular work or performance has merely exposed a few of the endless combinations.

None of my questioning of the work is to be construed as a criticism of the LaSalle Quartet. Quite the contrary, they succeed in dealing with the many complexities and discontinuities of the piece—which is constantly changing tempo, texture, and character—in very convincing ways. The many technical problems are under excellent control, the rich and colorful string writing is set forth in all its variety, and the inward, expressive moments are quite beautiful. In the end, the glory of this music is simply the sheer beauty and lushness of its sound. *E.S.*

SCHUBERT: ***Lieder*** **(see Best of the Month, page 72)**

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

SCHUBERT: *Lieder. Gretchen am Spinnrade; Der Tod und das Mädchen; Lachen und Weinen; Die junge Nonne; Der König in Thule; Mignon's Song; Frühlingsglaube; Am Bach im Frühling; Die Rose; Auf der Donau; Des Mädchens Klage; Im Abendrot; Romanze; An die Nachtigall; Ave Maria.* Christa Ludwig (mezzo-soprano); Irwin Gage (piano). DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530 404 $7.98.

Performance: **First-rate singing**
Recording: **Not quite first-rate**

For reasons best known to Miss Ludwig and Deutsche Grammophon, about half of this program duplicates the artist's recorded recital (Angel 36462) released some six years ago. It would have been more rewarding, certainly, to hear material previously unexplored by this remarkable mezzo; on the other hand, Christa Ludwig's Schubert interpretations are the kind that can be enjoyed over and over again.

Comparison being really unavoidable in this case, I must observe that, while the singer is in fine form here, it is the Angel disc that shows her at the very pinnacle of her artistry. Her new versions of *Gretchen am Spinnrade* and *Ave Maria*, both taken at a somewhat faster tempo, do not match her previous ones in richness of tone and refinement of detail. (The *Ave Maria* on the Angel disc is simply stunning.) Nonetheless, I have nothing but praise for her singing in the present sequence: it is warm, eloquent, and committed throughout, and her choice of such relatively unfamiliar songs as *Auf der Donau*, *Die Rose*, and *Der König in Thule* enhances the recital.

Irwin Gage's accompaniments are certainly competent but frequently unassertive. He is also a shade casual with his ornamentations, as witness the turns in *Frühlingsglaube*. Nor is the accompaniment helped by the reproduction, which is veiled and diffuse insofar as the piano sound is concerned. In short, this is quite a good release, but it *could* have been magnificent. *G.J.*

SCHUBERT: ***Symphony No. 1, in D Major*** **(see BIZET)**

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

SCHUBERT: *Vocal Quartets. Der Tanz; Des Tages Weihe; Hymne an den Unendlichen; An die Sonne; Begräbnislied; Gott im Ungewitter; Gott der Weltschöpfer; Lebenslust; Gebet.* Elly Ameling (soprano); Janet Baker (contralto); Peter Schreier (tenor); Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (baritone); Gerald Moore (piano). DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530 409 $7.98.

Performance: **Effective**
Recording: **Excellent**

First the duets and trios, now nine vocal quartets are among the treasures Deutsche Grammophon has recently brought to light from the bountiful Schubert legacy. Nearly all of these quartets were originally written for mixed chorus rather than four vocalists, and some of the weightier poems do seem to call for bigger sonorities. Just the same, they can be effectively rendered by a solo quartet of this distinction.

(Continued overleaf)

The pieces are certainly minor Schubert, even though the poems (by Schiller, Klopstock, and some lesser lights) are generally solemn and uplifting. All are skillfully written; for all its length, *Gebet*, the longest and most elaborate of the nine, is beautifully contrived for the voices (this one *was* written for four solo voices—in one day, it so happens, at the Esterhazy Castle of Zseliz in 1824). The performances are just about what we can expect from four outstanding singers and a peerless accompanist. *G.J.*

SCHUMAN: *Credendum* **(see IMBRIE)**

SCHUMANN: *Dichterliebe, Op. 48* **(see Best of the Month, page 72)**

SCHUMANN: *Liederkreis, Op. 24; Liederkreis, Op. 39.* Robert Tear (tenor); Philip Ledger (piano). ARGO ZRG 718 $5.95.

Performance: **Competent**
Recording: **Good**

The two *Liederkreise* of Robert Schumann—Op. 24 was inspired by poems of Heine, Op. 39 by those of Eichendorff—both originated in 1840, the composer's great "year of song." Although they might seem preordained to share the same disc, the fact is that they have seldom been coupled. The infrequently recorded Op. 24 is currently represented only by Fischer-Dieskau's performance (Deutsche Grammophon 139 109). There are three recordings of Op. 39, which singers prefer for a very good reason: it contains some of the most effective Schumann songs, such as *Intermezzo, Waldesgespräch, Mondnacht*, and *Frühlingsnacht*.

I would like to say that this Argo disc combining the two attractive cycles fills the gap well, but it does no such thing. Robert Tear is a musicianly, tasteful, and cultivated singer with a good command of style and language, but his voice lacks sensual appeal. Competitive versions of the Eichendorff cycle by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (Angel), Christa Ludwig and Walter Berry (Deutsche Grammophon), and Anna Reynolds (Oiseau-Lyre) are all preferable, in that order. *G.J.*

SMETANA: *Choruses. The Three Riders; The Renegade (two settings); The Peasant; Our Song; Festive Chorus; Song of the Sea; The Dedication; The Prayer; My Star; The Swallows Arrived; The Sunset.* Czech Philharmonic Chorus, Josef Veselka cond. SUPRAPHON MS 1 12 1143 $5.95.

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

As the detailed and helpful notes accompanying this disc disclose, Smetana became attracted to choral music early in his career and found it a rewarding field of activity for the rest of his life. Virtually all of his works for *a cappella* choir are contained on this record, and all but the last three titles are settings for male choruses. The earliest entry is the intensely patriotic *The Three Riders* (1862); the last, *Our Song* (1883), was written toward the end of the composer's life, when he was severely ill and totally deaf.

National sentiment and the love of nature are the main subjects of these choruses. Perhaps the most elaborate among them is the pastoral *The Peasant* (1868), in which the evocation of the Bohemian countryside is comparable to what Smetana was to achieve a few years later in the orchestral cycle *Ma Vlast*. The two different settings of another patriotic song called *The Renegade* (1863) suggest that this may be the most popular work in the collection. If it is, I am not surprised, for, while it is a bit repetitious, it is irresistible and virtually unforgettable.

The three soloists in *The Three Riders* are only adequate, but the choruses sing with spirit and precision. Occasional minor faults of intonation do not detract from the appeal of this rather specialized but interesting disc. *G.J.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

STRAVINSKY: *Mass.* POULENC: *Four Easter Motets; Four Christmas Motets.* Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford; London Sinfonietta, Simon Preston cond. ARGO ZRG 720 $5.98.

SIMON PRESTON
Updating an old English tradition

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

Stravinsky would have loved this recording of his Mass. Only in England can one find choirs with as pure and heavenly a sound as this one, and that is the sound that Stravinsky wanted for his treble voices. The tenor and bass sections of this choir are equally good, and the winds of the London Sinfonietta are first-rate. Stravinsky might have wanted a crisper recorded sound—that was his particular taste in all musical matters—but most listeners, myself included, will be very happy with the combination of richness and blended clarity that characterizes Merton College Chapel, Oxford, and which suits this intense, slow-moving music very well.

If the Stravinsky Mass emerges not as the dry exercise it sometimes seems to be, but as one of the few really deeply felt religious works of the century, no small credit is due to Simon Preston, the organist and choirmaster at Christ Church Cathedral, who is making quite a reputation for himself in a modern version of a grand old English tradition. Preston knows how to match up the rich, big sound of the English choral society with the more modern taste for a clean sound and a high degree of musical intensity and insight. The result here is a twentieth-century musical fresco of really grand dimensions.

The Poulenc *a cappella* Easter and Christmas Motets make a logical reverse for the Stravinsky Mass, although I don't think they are musically in the same class. The religious part of Poulenc's musical personality was as real and important as his better-known irreverence and wit. But even at his most intense—in the anguish of the Easter Motets of the late 1930's or the celebration of the 1952 Christmas pieces—and even in these very firm and beautifully phrased performances, there is an old-fashioned, sweet harmonic sameness that I find does not hold me after a while. At any rate, though, these are all exceptional performances, and everything "sounds." *E.S.*

SUBOTNICK: *4 Butterflies.* Created by Morton Subotnick on the Electric Music Box. COLUMBIA M 32741 $5.98.

Performance: **Purely electronic**
Recording: **Tape-to-disc**

Morton Subotnick, one of the important American electronic music and multimedia composers of the past decade, is now associate dean of the School of Music and director of electronic music at the California Institute of the Arts, that legendary innovative center near Los Angeles funded largely by Walt Disney money. I don't know what the Electric Music Box is, but I would guess that it is a synthesizer with sequencing circuits—something like the Buchla (which Subotnick used in earlier works) or the later Moog models. The butterfly idea works here by analogy with the larva-cocoon-butterfly cycle of transformation, the final state of free flight being unexpected and yet inherent in the earlier form.

It has been a while since a purely electronic record has turned up, and in a way the piece has a curiously old-fashioned and even "neo-classical" sound. I'm not offering this observation as criticism; on the contrary, it is meant to suggest the musicality of the work, which is apparent all the way through. It is interesting to observe the evolution of Subotnick's electronic work from the kind of automated pop sound of *Silver Apples of the Moon* to the more elaborate orchestral sound of its successors to the rather clear, delicate, almost chamber sound of this work. Perhaps more than in any previous electronic work of Subotnick, there is a quality of sound fantasy that is engaging. As in a lot of recent American music, there is an Eastern character to this fantasy: a nature/number meditation of a rather subtle variety. In spite of the butterfly analogy, I'm not sure that the music really has any sense of development—that it gets anywhere—but it just *is* in quite an attractive way. *E.S.*

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Sonata in G Major, Op. 37.* **BUSONI: *Indian Diary.*** Stephen Manes (piano). ORION ORS 74154 $6.98.

Performance: **Good**
Recording: **Flawed**

Orion has always shown enterprise in its piano recordings, and this disc is a fine example of imaginative programming: two works more heard *about* than actually heard, one of them the major solo piano work of one of the great composers of orchestral music. (The only other stereo recording of the G Major Sonata is in the first of Michael Ponti's Tchaikovsky sets, Vox SVBX-5455; the only other current version of the Busoni is played by Gunnar Johansen on his Artist Direct label.) Stephen Manes does not sound as if he had

simply walked into the studio and sat down to play these pieces, but had actually lived with them and got inside them. Unfortunately, the sound appears to be ever so slightly distorted (a little flat, a little quavery), and the surfaces are rather gritty. Perhaps not all copies are so affected: this sort of thing turns up in releases from various companies from time to time, and it often happens that the only flawed copies are the ones that go to reviewers. If the repertoire appeals to you, it might be wise to check out a copy before purchasing it. *R.F.*

TCHAIKOVSKY: ***Symphony No. 3, in D Minor, Op. 29 ("Polish").*** Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Moshe Atzmon cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530 401 $7.98.

Performance: **Amiably lyric**
Recording: **More space than presence**

Although its opening movement is true, in its fashion, to the symphonic conventions, Tchaikovsky's *Polish* Symphony strikes me as essentially balletic in feeling, though none the less enjoyable for that. Moshe Atzmon offers an amiable, sensitive, lyrical, and loose-jointed reading of this rather loose-jointed work. The impression is reinforced by the recording's somewhat overspacious ambiant sound, which, I would guess, emanates from the Singakademie rather than the Sofiensaal the Vienna Philharmonic usually favors as a taping locale. The end result may be pleasing to the ear, but it is not very revealing of the music's texture and rhythmic bite—a most important element of the polonaise-style finale. The orchestral playing, notably in the solo wind department, and the subtleties of phrasing achieved in the middle three movements (there are five in all) are among the better aspects of Mr. Atzmon's reading, but the work as a whole needs the lift and drive that Lorin Maazel gave it in his 1965 recording for London with the same orchestra. *D.H.*

VANHAL: ***Concerto in E Major for Double Bass and Orchestra*** **(see DRAGONETTI)**

WUORINEN: ***The Long and the Short*** **(see CRUMB)**

YUN: ***Gasa*** **(see CRUMB)**

COLLECTIONS

ROBERT GERLE: ***The Best of Hungary.*** **Dohnányi:** *Ruralia Hungarica.* **Kodály:** *Adagio; Intermezzo, from Hary Janos.* **Bartók:** *Sonatina; Roumanian Folk Dances; Evening in the Village; Hungarian Folk Tunes.* Robert Gerle (violin); Regis Benoit (piano). WESTMINSTER WGS-8250 $4.98.

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

This is a well-conceived and unconventional program—with the exception of the Bartók Roumanian Dances, these selections are hard to come across, even on records. All are folk-derived or folk-inspired except the Kodály Adagio, which is the slow movement of an uncompleted sonata. The Adagio is also the only selection here that was conceived for violin and piano, though this version of Dohnányi's *Ruralia Hungarica*, originally written for violin and orchestra, is the composer's own masterly transcription. There is nothing wrong with the other transcriptions, either, by the way. They are by Joseph Szigeti, André Gertler, and Robert Gerle himself, all authoritative interpreters of Bartók and Kodály.

The idiomatic command essential to a good performance of these intensely nationalistic pieces is a positive element of this recording. Gerle is Hungarian by birth, and Benoit, an American, demonstrates his understanding of the idiom in his cimbalom-like articulation of the piano part in the Dohnányi slow movement. These are eminently violinistic pieces, not at all easy to play, and there are a few untidy moments (mainly of chordal intonation) here and there. The music, however, is very enjoyable and refreshingly unusual.

The disc is a reissue of Westminster 17150, with good sound and surfaces, but the ending of the *Ruralia Hungarica* appears to have been poorly edited. *G.J.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

MINIATURES FOR STRINGS. Gershwin: *Lullaby.* **Haydn:** *Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 103.* **Mendelssohn:** *Variations and Scherzo, Op. 81.* **Puccini:** *I Crisantemi.* **Schubert:** *Grave and Allegro in C Minor (D. 103).* **Wolf:** *Intermezzo in E-flat Major.* Juilliard Quartet. COLUMBIA M 32596 $5.98.

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

This is a welcome and valuable collection of pieces rarely encountered (except for the Haydn) in concerts *or* on records. It would be worth its price for the Gershwin *Lullaby* alone, a subtle and intriguing eight-minute work composed about 1919 (when Gershwin

was twenty-one) and never recorded before. But the *Lullaby* may not be the only "world premiere recording" in the album, which happens to be a more imaginative compilation than Columbia's misleading labeling of the Schubert item, in particular, suggests. It is listed as "*Quartettsatz* in C Minor," but what one hears is not the familiar work of 1820 so titled; only by noting the Deutsch number (103 instead of the expected 703) and studying the anonymous annotation is one able to identify this music as a Grave and Allegro composed a half-dozen years earlier and put into performing condition by Alfred Orel as recently as 1939.

This complaint is hardly a minor matter, since it is quite conceivable that several collectors might be inclined to pass up the record in order to avoid duplicating the much-recorded *Quartettsatz* (D. 703)—ironically unaware that what they assume to be that work is actually one that is available on no other disc. The Haydn, listed only as "Andante and Minuet" on the disc label, at least gets a parenthetical mention of its official title on the liner, but pinning down the Mendelssohn entry is made gratuitously troublesome by Columbia's omission of its opus number.

All of this is irksome, but of course it is what is in the grooves that really matters. These interesting and attractive works draw very affectionate and communicative playing from the Juilliard Quartet (vintage late 1960's, when Raphael Hillyer was still the group's violist), and the sound is first-rate too. *R.F.*

JENNIE TOUREL AND LEONARD BERNSTEIN: *At Carnegie Hall.* **Tchaikovsky:** *Wait!; Night.* **Debussy:** *Fantoches.* **Duparc:** *La Vie Antérieure.* **Satie:** *Le Chapelier.* **Rachmaninoff:** *Oh, Cease Thy Singing, Maiden Fair.* **Schumann:** *Six Songs from Liederkreis, Op. 39.* **Liszt:** *O Quand Je Dors.* **Offenbach:** *La Périchole: O mon cher amant; Ah! Quel diner.* Jennie Tourel (mezzo-soprano); Leonard Bernstein (piano). COLUMBIA M 32231 $5.98.

Performance: **Individual**
Recording: **Good**

This memorable concert in Carnegie Hall, on March 2, 1969, found the beloved Jennie Tourel in the characteristic form of her twilight years. She had an abbreviated range and a diminished control over tone color and intonation, but there are still glimpses here of former glory: the exquisite pianissimo ending of *O Quand Je Dors*, or the haunting effect that permeates the Rachmaninoff song. Her charm, vivacity, and natural theatricality never abandoned her, and they give the entire recital a festive aura. The program, too, honors an artist whose range of interest was extraordinary and for whom, and for whose audience, every concert was an exciting adventure. There are times, of course, when only lovely contours are provided by Miss Tourel, and the mind must fill them in with nuances remembered from earlier and more bountiful times. Leonard Bernstein adjusts his accompaniments sensitively and lovingly to his friend's singing: the music and the enthusiastic audience reaction are captured in good, warm acoustics. *G.J.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BARRY TUCKWELL: *Horn Concert.* **Telemann:** *Horn Concerto in D Major.* **Cherubini:** *Sonata No. 2, in F Major, for Horn and Strings.* **Förster:** *Concerto in E-flat Major for Horn and Strings.* **Weber:** *Horn Concertino in E Minor.* **L. Mozart:** *Concerto in D Major for Horn and Strings.* Barry Tuckwell (horn); Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Neville Marriner cond. ANGEL S-36996 $5.98.

Performance: **Superb**
Recording: **Splendid**

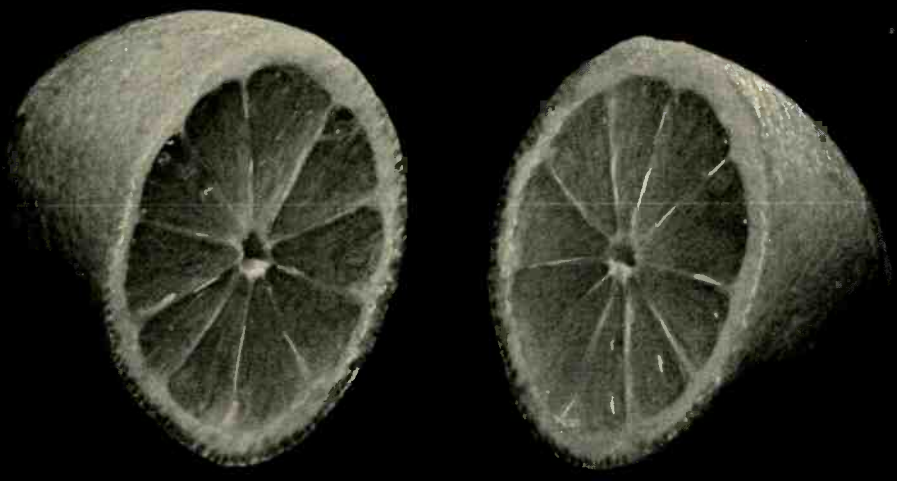
Messrs. Tuckwell and Marriner have put together a collection of concerted music with horn that avoids the monotony of key and style inherent in the genre, but in so doing they have posed for the soloist incredible problems of *agilità*, improvised ornamentation, *sostenuto* playing, and phrasing. Such problems require of one man the combined talents of the great British horn players Aubrey and Dennis Brain (father and son). If what he does on this disc is any indication,

BARRY TUCKWELL
All the great British horn players combined

Barry Tuckwell has certainly achieved that distinction.

The brief Telemann piece that opens the disc is a delightful bit of "barococo" fluff, the slow movement of which gives Tuckwell a prime opportunity for some superb *sostenuto* high-register playing. The Cherubini piece is an odd amalgam of *sonata da chiesa* and Rossini-style *buffo* operatic aria, extremely effective in its way. More run-of-the-mill is the music of Christoph Förster (1693-1745), whose work is related to that of the Mannheim school of Czech-Austrian composers. The Weber Concertino is something of a tour de force with its extraordinary chordal cadenza—the unusual effects being achieved by the player's humming one note and playing another in order to produce the resultant combination tones. The Leopold Mozart piece concludes with an exhilarating finale, with the horn playing virtually in the clarino register.

As high- and low-altitude marksman, as creative interpreter in the way he handles ornamentation problems, as *musician*, Mr. Tuckwell is a genuine phenomenon, and here he very luckily has the collaboration and fine musicianship of Neville Marriner and his group to back him up all the way. More, the sound exemplifies the work of the EMI recording staff at its very finest. A most enjoyable and fascinating album. *D.H.*



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TAPE HORIZONS

By CRAIG STARK

TAPE-RECORDER HYGIENE

APART from inquiries about specific product recommendations and the integrity of the Watergate tapes, the subject most of my readers ask about is how to care for their recorders and tapes.

In addition to routine household dusting, recorders need two kinds of periodic cleaning: physical and magnetic. The tape has yet to be made that does not shed *some* of its oxide particles with every playing, and unfortunately these tend to accumulate on tape heads and guides, pressure pads, and the capstan/pressure-roller drive system. If not removed, this debris can cause slippage in the drive mechanism. The resulting wow and flutter is heard as inconstancy or "graininess" in pitch. In addition, the oxide accumulations on the heads cause momentary "drop-outs" in the signal and loss of treble response.

Happily, the solution is as near as a bottle of isopropyl or rubbing alcohol and an ordinary cotton-tipped swab. If the tape you use has a brown surface, the chocolate-colored band that develops on the black pressure roller is an obvious warning that housekeeping is in order. If the tape you use has a black oxide, you will have to look more closely to see the shiny band that appears. In any case, the build-up of flaked-off oxide particles *must* be removed from *all* parts in the head assembly and anywhere else the moving tape contacts the recorder.

Though unseen, residual magnetism induced in heads, guides, and capstan represents an even greater potential danger to your tape collection, and preventive or therapeutic treatment is indicated at least as often as physical cleaning. Professional studios "degauss" their machines daily (every 8 to 20 hours of operating time is the usual recommended rule of thumb) to guard against this insidious force. A magnetized component anywhere in the tape path will create some hiss and permanent loss of high-frequency signal whether you're recording or simply playing back a tape.

Fortunately, head demagnetizers are inexpensive accessories available from all dealers, and using them properly takes less than a minute. Start by turning your recorder off and removing all tapes from the immediate vicinity. Remove the head covers (you should have done this already for the physical cleaning), and, holding the tape-head degausser at arm's length, plug it in, push its "on" button (if it has one), and bring it in close proximity to each of the surfaces that contact the flowing tape. Then, with the demagnetizer still on, withdraw it slowly and smoothly. Turn it off when it is at arm's length from the machine and the job is done. *Note*: to avoid any danger of scratching the tape heads, it is a good idea to put a piece of plastic tape over the tip(s) of the degausser. (Because of differences in physical design, not every tape-head demagnetizer will be able to get to the heads of every recorder. Check with your dealer to make sure that there is no potential problem.)

For most audiophiles, lubrication of a recorder is best left to a yearly visit to the service technician. Too much is as great a danger as too little! Obviously, though, bearings and sliding and rotating surfaces must have lubricants. If you want to do the job yourself, follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.

Tape care is no less important. Always keep tapes in their containers when not in use, and put tape reels on edge—*not* piled atop one another. I recommend the professional practice of leaving tapes in a *played*, not a *fast-wound* condition, for the latter tends not only to create an unevenly wound tape "pack," but also to put internal stresses on the tape layers that may cause damage. For the same reason, it's a good idea to play—not rewind—a tape at least twice a year. Avoid storing tapes next to a radiator, in the immediate vicinity (within 2 to 3 feet) of strong magnetic fields (loudspeakers, motors, or power transformers in hi-fi equipment), or in a car trunk during warm weather. Given proper care, your tapes should outlast their owner!

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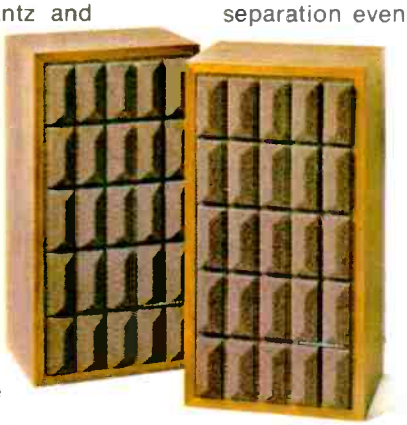

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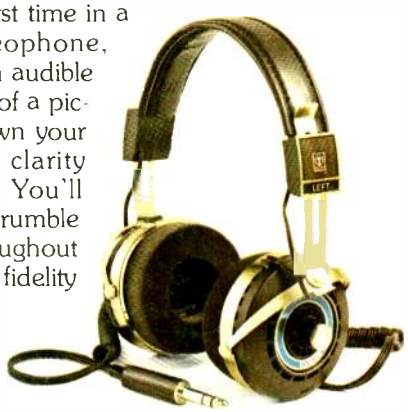

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