

Stereo Review

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BUYING GUIDE**

**CASSETTE DECK
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EJECT

PHONES LEVEL

PHONES



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Closed Loop Dual Capstan

INTRO SCAN

PLAY

REC/PAUSE STOP MUTE/SEARCH

14:46

COUNTER

RESET MEMORY REPEAT TAPE

AUTO MODE BIAS ADJUST PLAY TRIM

REPEAT OFF
TIMER
0-M PLAY
PULL REC

LEFT PEAK/HD
RIGHT TAP

MONITOR



06276

0 272761 5

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The New Grand Am SE.

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Critics called it
“lascivious, unmusical,
and
tasteless.”



Hear
it in
all its grandeur.

Jesús López-Cobos

In 1875, the reviews of *Carmen* were so bad that after 33 performances Bizet became ill and depressed, and died.

One critic said it was licentious, an incarnation of vice. Another (Tchaikovsky) said it would become one of the most

popular operas in history.

“They were both right,” says maestro Jesús López-Cobos.

“As a Spaniard, I can empathize with the themes. But as one whose background is mostly operatic, I know the *motivation* of the music. For instance, Don Jose’s music should sound ‘sarcastic’. And *Carmen*’s themes should, indeed, be sexy. The work should evoke visual as well as musical images. Listen, and you will see them.”

The job of recording engineer Jack Renner was to sit you in the best seat in the house.

“And to re-create, as accurately as possible, what happened in time and space.”

“Re-create” is the operative word. Unlike rock, which is typically massaged and ‘fixed in the mix,’ orchestral music is best captured the way it sounds in the hall. A combination of direct and reflected sound that comes first from the musicians and, nanoseconds later, from the room.

“We used three meticulously placed omnidirectional mikes going direct to digital two-track and then straight to CD. There is no mix, no EQ, no compression, no processing of any kind.” What there is, is Bizet. At his most lascivious.

Visit a Boston Acoustics dealer and listen to this Telarc disc on a pair of T930 II loudspeakers.

Music this good should be heard on speakers this good.



Jesús López-Cobos, Conductor, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

True audiophile speakers, the Boston T930 II Towers are among the finest in the world at any price—despite the price. They are worthy of Bizet, of López-Cobos, and of the best seat in the concert hall provided by Renner.



BostonAcoustics

GET AN UP CLOSE CD OF BIZET'S CARMEN SUITE, L'ARLESIEUNNE, AND SYMPHONY NO. 1 IN C MAJOR PERFORMED BY THE CINCINNATI SYMPHONY. Send check for \$5.00 (U.S) for shipping to: Boston Acoustics, Dept. S, Box 625, Holmes, PA 19043. Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery. Offer good until April 30, 1992 or while supplies last.



Cover

The Yamaha KX-930 is one of many high-performance analog cassette decks available today. See page 55 for a buying guide to blank tape and cassette decks and page 44 for tips on how to select the optimum tape for your machine.

Photograph by Jook P. Leung

Stereo Review

INCORPORATING HIGH FIDELITY®

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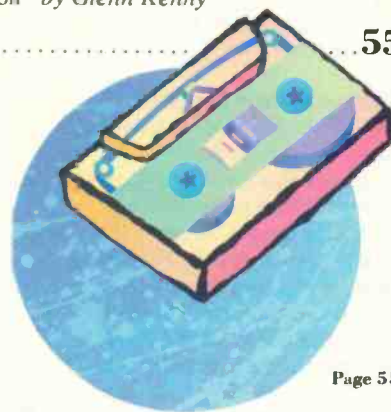
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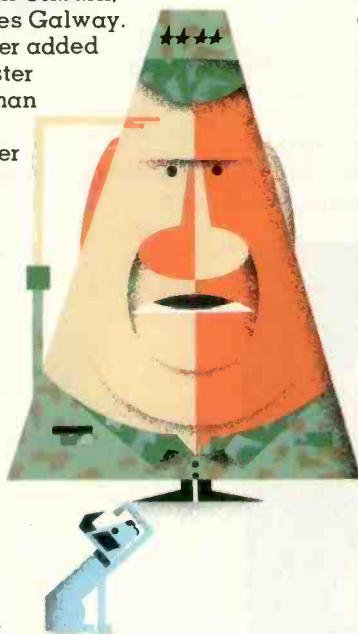
BULLETIN

DDDead?

The SPARS code—a three letter designation (such as ADD) indicating whether analog or digital technology was used, respectively, in recording, mixing, and mastering a CD—could be history soon if the group that invented it has its way. The Society of Professional Audio Recording Services recently recommended that the code be discontinued, arguing that current audio technology is too complex for the code to explain accurately what went on throughout the record-making process.

Nipper's New Recruit

BMG Classics' top-of-the-line label, RCA Red Seal, is probably the most prestigious in the history of recording classical music. Among the artists presented on RCA Red Seal have been the singers Enrico Caruso and Leontyne Price, the conductor Arturo Toscanini, the pianists Artur Schnabel and Van Cliburn, and the flutist James Galway. The latest performer added to the Red Seal roster is General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, who was the commander of allied forces in the Persian Gulf War. General Schwarzkopf, now retired, is making his RCA debut as the narrator of Aaron Copland's *Lincoln Portrait* in a recording by the Saint Louis Symphony conducted by Leonard Slatkin. It is due in stores on February 11, the day before Lincoln's birthday.



by
William
Livingstone
and
Glenn Kenny

Stamp Out Technophobia

To reduce consumer confusion and "technophobia," the Electronic Industries Association's Consumer Electronics Group (EIA/CEG) has published the new *Consumer Electronics Terminology Dictionary*. Designed as an educational tool for sales personnel so they can help consumers make informed buying decisions, it is useful for anyone interested in home audio or video, mobile electronics, television, computers, and so forth. For nonmembers of the EIA single copies of the 78-page, soft-cover book cost \$4.50 postpaid from Electronic Industries Association, CEG Office of Member & Industry Relations, 2001 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20006-1813. Reduced prices are available for bulk orders and for EIA members.

Best Sellers

The Recording Industry Association of America has certified as multi-Platinum (for multimillion sales) the following recordings: Garth Brooks, "Ropin' the Wind" (Capitol), five million; Michael Bolton, "Time, Love and Tenderness" (Columbia), four million; Guns N' Roses, "Use Your Illusion II" (Geffen), three million; Madonna, "The Immaculate Collection" (Sire), three million; Bonnie Raitt, "Luck of the Draw" (Capitol), two million.

Sound Environment

Koss Corporation, the maker of Koss Stereophones, is distributing free ear plugs at music and sporting events as part of its on-going effort to make the public aware of the long-term effects of exposure to sound-pressure levels

above 95 dB and to teach people ways to protect their hearing. The new program, called "Support Your Right to a Sound Environment," began at a Metallica concert where sound levels as high as 116 dB were measured. Koss distributed 10,000 sets of earplugs. The campaign will last through 1992.

Mega Music on PBS

On February 24, PBS will telecast a concert by the tenor Luciano Pavarotti and his friends, "Pavarotti Plus," in the Live from Lincoln Center series, now a General Motors Mark of Excellence presentation. It is the one-hundredth broadcast in the series, which has won seven Emmy Awards.

On March 2, on PBS, Live from Lincoln Center will present a celebration of the Rossini Bicentennial (no, Virginia, Mozart wasn't the only one). The world-beating cast includes Marilyn Horne, June Anderson, Thomas Hampson, and Samuel Ramey.

Other PBS musical shows in March include Natalie Cole singing the songs of Nat King Cole in the Great Performances series, now underwritten by Texaco, on March 7. Also on that date will be a special concert by Crosby, Stills, and Nash and another by Neil Young.

On March 10 a nostalgia blowout called "Those Fabulous Forties" will feature Doc Severinsen, Jack Jones, and Tony Tennille. (Sonny Tufts isn't listed, but we're hoping.)

On March 11, Juliet Prowse and Bobby Short host the "Big Band Ballroom Bash," and there is a documentary called "The Magic of Bing Crosby" and a concert by Neil Sedaka. Check local listings. □

Introducing a receiver with so much going for it, there's hardly enough room to do it justice.

Weight:
lbs.
oz.

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Panel

Due to Yamaha's patented HCA Circuitry, the RX-950 delivers pure Class A performance, yet runs exceptionally cool. The amplifier in Yamaha's new audio-dedicated receiver will never degrade to Class AB, no matter how high the output.

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The RX-950 features ToPART. A new system design that virtually eliminates interference between channels and delivers maximum signal purity.

40
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When the RX-950 is used with other Yamaha RS-compatible components, the entire system can be controlled by a single remote control.

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Up/Down
Tuning

Record Out
Selector allows
you to record
one source
while listening
to another.

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Search
Tuning

Pure Direct
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all tone and bal-
ance controls and
the pre-main cou-
pler to maximize
signal purity.

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input selector and
volume controls
with LED indica-
tors. A superior
system which elim-
inates the noise
and distortion
inherent in elec-
tronic switching.

Front Panel
Headphon
Jack

Speaker termi-
nals with
heavy gauge
connectors for opti-
mum results.



Sleep
Timer
(Front
Remote
Control)

UL
Listed

The RX-950 delivers 120 watts RMS per channel into 8 ohms from 20-20,000 Hz at no more than 0.015% THD. Or 180 watts RMS per channel into 4 ohms from 20-20,000 Hz at no more than 0.03% THD.

To keep output impedance to a minimum, speakers are switched in front of their terminals, rather than at the switch position.

For signal purity, exceptionally thick 1.6 mm high quality wire is used to route signals through the amplifier.

The thick base of the RX-950 has exceptional anti-resonance, anti-magnetic and superior damping characteristics.

Offers 4 dedi-
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17 3/8 inches

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frequencies.

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control, maintains
natural tonality,
even at low
volume levels.

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combines the perfor-
mance of the finest
separates with the
convenience of a
receiver.

The RX-950 is designed to
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any installation system.

High Gain
AM Loop
Antenna

The heavy chassis and extra large
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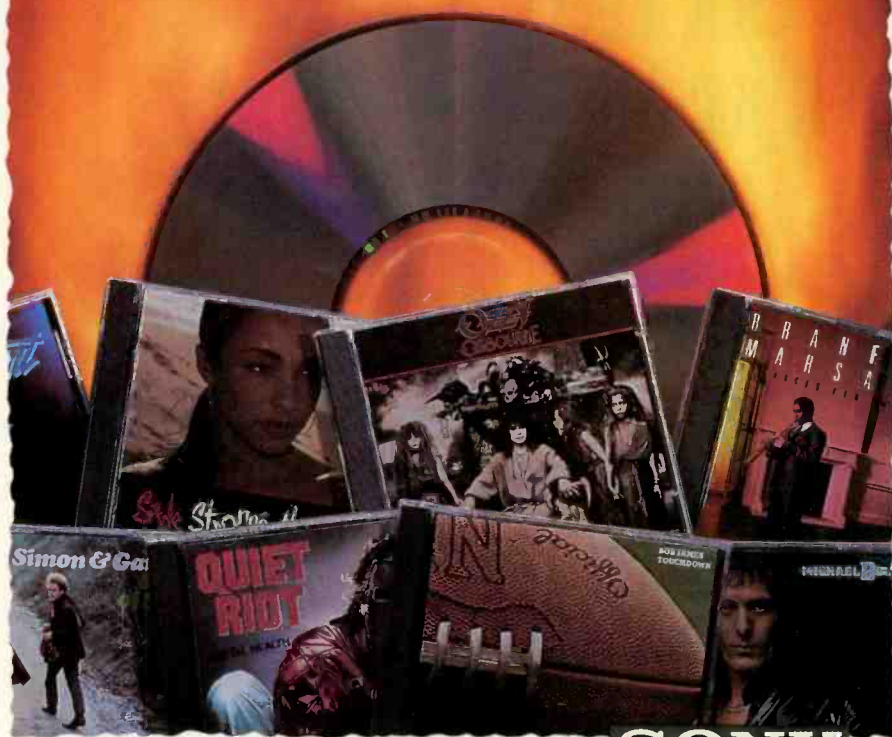
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The Byrds	09516	Glora Estelan	35822
Bruce Springsteen	Wild, Innocent, E. Street Shuffle	Sade	44210
Julia	38640	Aerosmith	44480
Johnny Mathis	34667	James Taylor	34811
Simon & Garfunkel	Sounds of Silence	Sarah Vaughan	42515
Neil Diamond	Heartlight	Big Audio Dynamite #10	40705
Ozzy Osbourne	No Rest for the Wicked	Bob James	35594
Quiet Riot	Mental Health	Placido Domingo	37243
Ted Nugent	33692	Branford Marsalis	42122
Morvin Goye	Midnight Love	Judas Priest	34787
Isley Brothers	Greatest Hits, Vol. 1	Leonard Bernstein	46713
		Legalize It	34257
		Never Too Much	37451
		Eyes of Innocence	35822
		Stronger Than Pride	44210
		Gems	44480
		JT	34811
		Brazilian Romance	42515
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NEW PRODUCTS

Nakamichi

Nakamichi's first all-in-one stereo system, the Soundspace 7, combines a CD changer and a receiver in one chassis with a pair of matching two-way speakers. The changer features the company's MusicBank system, which enables the user to store six CD's in the unit while playing a seventh in the single-disc tray. The player has fifty-track programming, three random-play modes, and four repeat modes. The amplifier uses Harmonic Time Alignment circuitry for lower

distortion; the quartz-lock tuner has ten station presets. Input and output jacks are gold-plated, the fluorescent display has an automatic dimmer, and there is a 60-minute sleep timer. Dimensions of the receiver/CD changer unit are about 21 x 4 1/4 x 12 1/2 inches; the speakers are about 11 1/4 x 17 1/2 x 9 inches. Price: \$2,200 complete. Nakamichi America Corporation, Dept. SR, 19701 S. Vermont Ave., Torrance, CA 90502.

Circle 120 on reader service card



Onkyo

The TA-RW909 is the first Onkyo dual-well dubbing deck to carry the company's top-of-the-line Integra designation. Each transport has three motors and circuits for Dolby B and Dolby C noise reduction as well as Dolby HX Pro headroom extension. Onkyo's Accubias control enables the user to fine-tune

recording bias. Other features include Power Glide tape loading and random play (usually found only in compact disc players). The deck has a fluorescent display and comes with a full-function wireless remote control. Price: \$700. Onkyo, Dept. SR, 200 Williams Dr., Ramsey, NJ 07446.



Technics

The SL-XPS900 is the first Technics portable CD player to use the company's 1-bit MASH digital-to-analog conversion system. It also features twenty-four-track programming, a wireless remote control, a headphone-cord remote control, and an optical digital output. When the supplied rechargeable batteries are used in tandem with a pair of AA alkaline batteries, the unit can play up to 10 hours continuously. The player's S-XBS circuitry is said to enhance low-frequency response, and a Live Sound function adds ambience effects. A soft carrying case, multivoltage AC adaptor, and system connection cord are included. Price: \$369. Technics, Dept. SR, 50 Meadowlands Parkway, Secaucus, NJ 07094.

Circle 121 on reader service card

Pinnacle

The Pinnacle PN50 two-way bookshelf speaker system uses the company's Diaduct port technology. Magnetically shielded, it can also be used for the center channel in a surround-sound system. The PN50 has a 5 1/4-inch mineral-filled polycone woofer and a 1-inch ferrofluid-cooled metal-dome tweeter. Bandwidth is given as 45 to 21,000 Hz, sensitivity as 87 dB. Nominal impedance is 8 ohms, and recommended amplifier power is 10 to 125 watts rms. The cabinet has rubber feet to protect supporting surfaces. Dimensions are 7 1/4 x 14 1/4 x 6 1/4 inches. Price: \$125 each. Pinnacle Loudspeakers, Dept. SR, 255 Executive Dr., Suite 310, Plainview, NY 11803.

Circle 122 on reader service card



NEW PRODUCTS



Carver

The five-channel HR-895 is Carver's first audio/video receiver with Dolby Pro Logic decoding. It is equipped with seven audio inputs, four composite-video inputs, and three S-video inputs. Other ambience modes include Hall, Matrix, and simulated stereo. The main front channels are rated for 110 watts each, the center channel for 75 watts, and the

rear channels for 35 watts each. Different sources can be selected for different rooms at the same time. The tuner features Carver's proprietary Asymmetrical Charge-Coupled FM Detection technology for improved reception of poor stereo signals. Price: \$1,200. Carver Corporation, Dept. SR, P.O. Box 1237, Lynnwood, WA 91763.



Coustic

The Coustic RTA-33 is a digital one-third-octave graphic equalizer and real-time analyzer that can be custom-mounted in a car's dash; the chassis pulls out for security. Using a high-speed digital signal-processing (DSP) circuit to handle data, it can average 256 pink-noise response measurements in just 10 seconds

and store the result for comparison with other measurements. Other features include selectable input sensitivity, a parallel printer port, a pink-noise generator, and a peak-hold switch. Price: \$1,395. Coustic, Dept. SR, 4260 Charter St., Vernon, CA 90058-2596.

Circle 127 on reader service card

Lift Display

The Liftboy Junior Cabinet from Lift Display holds a total of 160 compact discs in eight compartments with slide-out trays. Each CD case is held in its own slot so that users can flip through a tray. The tempered glass door is opened by a touch latch. Dimensions of the matte black, wood-laminate cabinet are 14½ x 29½ x 12¾ inches. The Liftboy Junior comes ready to assemble. Price: \$149. Lift Display, Dept. SR, 115 River Rd., Suite 105, Edgewater, NJ 07020.

Circle 128 on reader service card



Canton

The Ergo 100 is part of Canton's new series of floor-standing bass-reflex speakers. The three-way system has two 9-inch woofers and a 6-inch midrange, all made of graphite-reinforced polypropylene, and a 1-inch tweeter. The midrange driver is isolated in a separate chamber and positioned above the tweeter to correspond with the listener's ear level. Frequency response is given as 18 to 30,000 Hz, sensitivity as 93 dB. Nominal impedance is 4 ohms. Maximum recommended amplifier power is 250 watts per channel rms. The cabinet measures 45 x 11 x 13 inches and is available veneered in black or white ash, walnut, oak, or mahogany; high-gloss black, white, and mahogany are extra-cost options. Grilles are perforated steel plates that can be painted to match the cabinet. Price: \$3,500 a pair. Canton Electronics, Dept. SR, 915 Washington Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55415-1245.

Circle 129 on reader service card



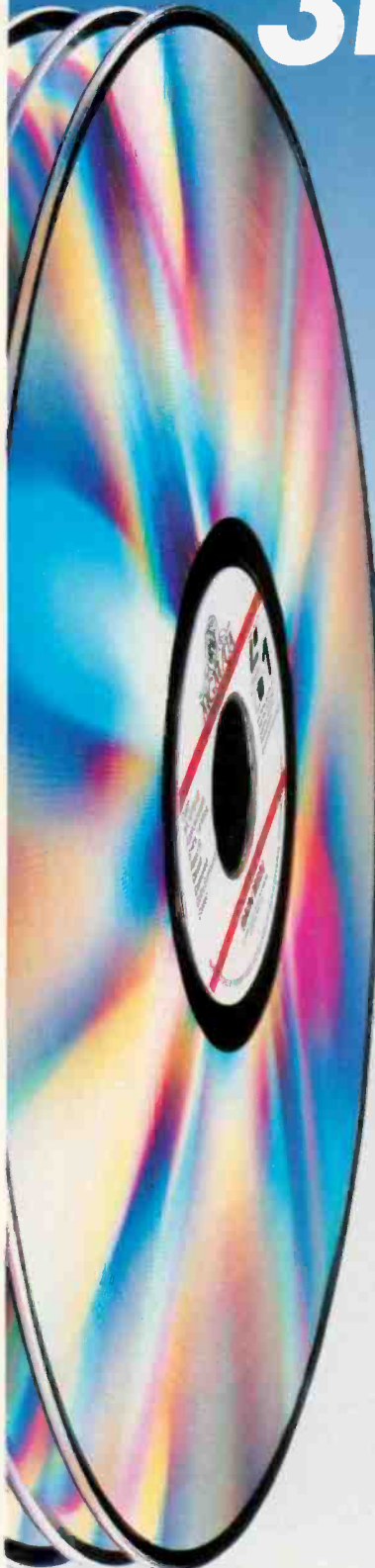
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THE BLUES BROTHERS	2117062	BULL DURHAM	2360002
THE DEER HUNTER	★ 2124072	ROAD WARRIOR	★ 4973052
BACK TO THE FUTURE PART II	★ 9213042	TANG & CASH	★ 6474042
THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING	★ 0858032	DANGEROUS LIAISONS	★ 6387002
DUNE	2111022	ROAD WARRIOR	6028052
2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY	0025012	THE LAND BEFORE TIME	5822052
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FIELD OF DREAMS	9203062	MICHAEL JACKSON: MOONWALKER	4686032
DIRTY DANCING	4955072	Q & A	3807092
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THE COLOR PURPLE	★ 6301032	DANGEROUS LIAISONS	1043072
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THE RIGHT STUFF	6043062	EDWARD SCISSORHANDS	1046042
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DOCTOR ZHIVAGO	★ 0026002	AN AMERICAN TAIL	2184042
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LETTERS

Combi-Players

While "Combi-Players" by Michael Riggs and Julian Hirsch in January was quite informative, it did not address the issue of whether any combi-player can play discs encoded with graphics (CD+G). Why the oversight?

MICHAEL A. MARKS
Dunn Loring, VA

Was the Realistic MD1000 (\$500) purposely left out of the test of moderately priced combi-players? I don't think it skimps on the main features, and its horizontal resolution is specified as 425 lines. Is there any way of checking that?

DARYL K. MORRIS
Philadelphia, PA

Michael Riggs replies: We don't know of any combi-player that reproduces the graphics on CD+G discs. There is almost no demand for CD+G in this country, and the necessary decoding hardware would increase player prices.

We selected the Denon, Panasonic, and Pioneer players because we thought they were interesting units in the popular \$600 to \$700 price range. The Realistic MD-1000 was favorably reviewed in the Spring 1991 issue of our sister publication, Sound & Image. At that time Ian Masters measured its horizontal resolution as around 400 lines, which is typical performance for a laserdisc player.

Parasound Preamp

With reference to the recent Julian Hirsch review of the Parasound P/FET-900 II preamplifier (January), we would like to make the following comments.

First, the price. While we tried to telephone your editor in time to catch our announced price increase from \$425 to \$455 effective January 1, 1992, apparently our call went astray. Still and all, even at the slightly increased suggested retail, this unit represents "an excellent value... at a truly affordable price."

Second, concerning the "strange problem" Mr. Hirsch encountered in his testing—a succession of blown fuses on plugging the unit into a power amplifier, a problem not encountered with the second unit shipped to STEREO REVIEW—this was simply a case of a miswiring of the AC fuse with the AC switched outlet peculiar to the first fifty units we received from the factory. We caught it in our U.S. quality-control operation, but we did not QC the unit Mr. Hirsch received. We are firm believers in "telling it like it is" and shipping stock production units for testing, not "tweaked" one-of-a-kind samples.

Third, and finally, the 1.2-dB "dip" Mr. Hirsch found at 20 Hz in the phono

circuit: Circuit designer John Curl, who has some of the most sophisticated circuit-testing equipment in the world, has been unable to duplicate this number. With all of the units he has tested, he confirms that the P/FET-900 II is within 0.2 dB of the RIAA curve from 20 to 20,000 Hz.

RICHARD SCHRAM
Parasound Products
San Francisco, CA

Dynaco Stereo 70 II

I have a couple of questions about the test report in December on the Dynaco Stereo 70 Series II power amplifier. In referring to the bias-balancing system, the review states, "If the output tubes are not balanced, one of the lights will be brighter than the other," and there is also a reference to "the output-tube current-balance indicators." But in the photograph you can see BIAS ADJUST and a LO and HIGH designation above the two LED's for each channel. Does the amplifier have a bias adjustment for each pair of output tubes, as did the original Stereo 70, or does it have a bias balance for each channel, or does it have bias and balance adjustment?

Also, the original Stereo 70 was a Class AB amplifier, but the new Series II is described as Class A; that would represent quite a change in design, but no mention was made of this.

TIM EDING
San Jose, CA

Julian Hirsch replies: Mr. Eding is correct. The adjustment sets the bias for the pair of tubes in each output stage, as in the original Stereo 70. As for the operating class, it is, strictly speaking, Class AB. But the use of the "ultra-linear" output circuit, with transformer taps for the screen grids, considerably improves the efficiency relative to a conventional Class A tetrode stage. In my use of the amplifier, the bias lights did not flicker at ordinary listening levels, indicating constant plate current (Class A). Only near the amplifier's rated output was there a substantial change in plate current.

Acoustic Modeling

Ken Pohlmann's December "Signals" column on the Bose Modeler program was quite interesting, but the folks at Bose aren't the only ones using such software to model the acoustics of performing spaces. Dan Healy, the sound engineer for the Grateful Dead, uses a program called Autocare, along with architectural layouts and loudspeaker specs, to customize the sound system for every venue the band plays—more than

thirty different venues a year! Whether they perform in a 10,000-seat hockey rink or a 70,000-seat stadium, the Grateful Dead have unmatched live sound.

LARRY PERYER, JR.
Hamden, CT

Are there any programs available to the public similar to Bose's Modeler that will run on an IBM-compatible personal computer?

DWIGHT H. MULCAHY
Dallas, TX

None that we know of.

Jellinek Returns

In the December issue I came across the review of Dawn Upshaw's new CD, "The Girl with the Orange Lips." As I read, I said to myself, I know that style: the sincerity, the precision, and the always positive and laudatory approach even when finding either flaw or blemish. The *G.J.* did not fool me for a second; it had to be George Jellinek. I went back a few pages to the heading of the classical-music section, and George Jellinek it was. The Hungarian-Cuban-American vocal-music critic was back at home. Bravo!

BENITO DEL CUETO
San Juan, PR

Taping CD's

I enjoyed "How to Make Great Tapes from CD's" by Ian Masters (December). With a reasonably priced Dolby C machine, a little care, and good blank tapes, I have been able to make surprisingly close copies of CD's. I only wish my tapes had the "punch" (dynamic range?) of the source material. Would copies made on a good stereo hi-fi VCR yield any audible improvement in this area?

TOM ARDEN
Toms River, NJ

They might.

Correction

In the February "New Products" item on Tree Dimensions' Stack Racks (page 14), the prices given were incorrect. The suggested retail price of the SR 02 unit is \$39.95, and the SR 03 and SR 08 units are \$49.95. We regret the error. □

We welcome your letters. Please address correspondence to Editor, STEREO REVIEW, 1633 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. You should include your address and telephone number for verification. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.



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Taking Control

**Tuners and preamplifiers—fifth
in a series on the practical business
of buying audio equipment**

AUDIO systems take many forms, from the basic all-in-one electronic package with a couple of speakers to a full array of separate components, each with one specific job. The merits of combinations versus separates have been argued for decades and will no doubt continue to be discussed long after we are all hearing our harp music live, but all hi-fi systems, whether they come in many boxes or few, have to provide for several basic functions.

First of all, there has to be some means to control what's playing. It's a rare listener who wants to hear music from only one source. These days, a typical system includes cassette and FM capabilities, and most of us still have turntables. Add a CD player and perhaps a hi-fi VCR, and the need for a convenient method of selecting and routing signals is clear. That's one job of a preamplifier. Another is to offer some control over whatever signal has been selected: at least a volume control and usually left/right balance too.

Most preamps also include some form of equalization that can compensate for small acoustic problems or quirky program material. The simplest form is the familiar pair of treble and bass tone controls, but built-in multi-band equalizers are available as well. It's easy to be seduced by such preamplifier features, so remember that excessive equalization usually results in worse sound, rather than better. Unless your equipment or room has specific problems that must be ad-



ressed, it's better to opt for simplicity in this area.

Beyond the basic functions of program selection, volume and balance adjustment, and tone control, most preamps still provide the special circuits required to deal with the signal from a phono cartridge, and most offer input/output switching for at least one tape recorder. More elaborate models provide considerable flexibility in routing signals from one component to another to facilitate things like tape-to-tape dubbing.

Like preamplifiers, FM tuners are often built into other components, par-

ticularly receivers, and they usually add little cost. It is certainly possible to put together an audio system without radio capability, but few of us choose to do so, even if we listen to radio only on rare occasions. In most situations, a minimal-performance tuner is all that's required, and, in fact, today's tuners don't vary much in the level of performance they offer. Still, difficult reception locations or special requirements (like the need for many preset stations) might well lead you to a more ambitious separate tuner. Either way, the things you should consider in shopping are basically the same.

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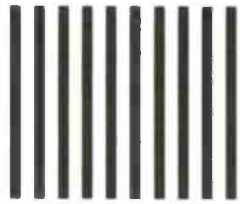
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WHAT MATTERS

When it comes to preamplifiers, it might be said with some justice that *everything* matters. It is your system's control center, after all, and any problems with it will affect everything you listen to. Fortunately, the state of audio design is such that the performance of "pure" electronic components like preamps and power amps is almost always as close to perfect as it needs to be. Tuners are pretty straightforward as well, and, in fact, many manufacturers use the same integrated tuner circuits. Nevertheless, there are definitely some specs and functions worth looking into.

- **INPUTS AND OUTPUTS.** The most common complaint about preamps is that they don't let you hook up enough source components, and the number of devices you might want to connect is getting larger every day. So make sure that any preamp you consider has enough inputs to do what you want, and then some—extra inputs are cheap. And if you intend to create an integrated audio/video system, check out the video switching capabilities offered, if any. It is possible to switch video signals externally, and sometimes that's preferable, but in most cases it's more convenient to switch everything together.

- **SENSITIVITY AND SELECTIVITY.** Most FM tuners work well in most situations, but if you live far away from your favorite station, or if the station you want to hear is crowded up against another one on the FM dial, differences in tuner sensitivity and selectivity may be important. The two factors often work together, but good sensitivity is more important for pulling in distant stations, and good selectivity is necessary to reduce interstation interference. For sensitivity, lower numbers are better; for selectivity, go for higher values.

- **REMOTE CONTROL.** There is no longer any need to hover over your hi-fi equipment to run it, as remote controls are now almost universal. But they differ widely in what they do and in how easily they do it—some are complicated enough to make an airline pilot weep. Make sure that the remote control supplied with your preamp will let you do what you want, or investi-

gate a multipurpose remote to control the whole system.

Increasingly, systems are being designed to provide sound to more than one room, with control from several locations. There are numerous ways to obtain multiroom audio, but only a

few are likely to suit your particular needs and budget.

WHAT DOESN'T

Because electronic audio components have reached the point where there's little mystery to their design, few of

The Lingo

Most of the vocabulary used to describe tuners and preamplifiers is shared by other audio components as well, particularly those that, in fact, contain tuners and preamplifiers, such as receivers.

TUNER. A device that detects radio signals and turns them into line-level audio signals. In most cases both the AM and FM bands are handled, although AM performance is usually minimal. A handful of FM-only tuners exist at the high end of the price scale. If a tuner also contains some control functions, it is a tuner/preamp; if it has a power amplifier on the same chassis as well, it's a receiver. At one time, manufacturers talked about "digital" tuners, which had nothing to do with digital audio but meant that the station frequencies were displayed numerically (in digits) rather than by a pointer on a horizontal scale.

PREAMPLIFIER. The "pre" refers to this device's position in the audio chain—before the main (power) amplifier—rather than to any of its functions. It's sometimes called a "control amplifier," which describes the function more clearly. One special type is the phono preamp, which applies the appropriate processing to the signal coming from a phono cartridge. Phono preamps are usually integrated with control amplifiers but may be separate components. A "pre-preamp" (or "head amp") is a device that boosts the signal from a moving-coil cartridge so that it can be dealt with by a conventional phono preamplifier.

TAPE-MONITOR LOOP. Tape recorders are both sources and destinations, so they have distinctive requirements when it comes to

connection with a preamplifier. In most cases, whatever has been selected by the input control is fed both to the later stages of the preamp and to a pair of jacks connected to a tape deck's inputs, so that whatever is being listened to can be recorded at the same time. The deck's outputs are connected to a second set of jacks on the preamp. A monitor switch feeds either the direct input or the signal from the tape recorder to the later circuits of the preamp, which provides a sort of secondary input selector that enables you to switch between a tape and something else. When recording, however, the main input selection is routed through the tape recorder—and sometimes the tape as well—which lets you hear what you are recording. Some preamplifiers let you select different sources for recording and listening.

QUIETING. To a point, FM radio reception is insensitive to signal levels: As long as there's enough signal reaching the antenna terminals, the signal-to-noise ratio will be good, and increasing the input level won't improve it. Below a certain level, however, noise increases dramatically, especially in stereo, which is inherently noisier than mono. A plot of audio output S/N versus RF input level is called a quieting curve. Tuner manufacturers specify sensitivity as the minimum signal level needed to achieve a certain degree of quieting (usually 50 dB nowadays), the lower the better. There are various ways to state this level, the most useful being in decibels referred to 1 femtowatt, or dBf. Sensitivities of about 12 dBf in mono or 36 dBf in stereo for 50-dB quieting are excellent. Be careful, however, not to confuse this with the less stringent "usable sensitivity" specification, which will always give better figures.



Remote controls are now almost universal, but they differ widely in what they do and how easily they do it. Some are complicated enough to make an airline pilot weep.

the usual quality indicators mean very much. The manufacturers aren't any less enthusiastic about their specs and features, but many you can ignore.

- **NUMBERS.** It is relatively easy to measure what appear to be quite gross differences between components in characteristics like harmonic distortion and noise, and such comparisons are routinely made. But if both the good and the "bad" numbers represent errors well below the threshold of audibility, it hardly matters. If one phono section boasts a signal-to-noise ratio (S/N) of 80 dB, guaranteeing that its noise contribution will be so far below the surface noise in any record as to be completely inaudible, pushing it down to 90 dB serves only to show it can be done. Some FM tuner specs are indeed important in a limited sort of way (see above), but many are not.

- **EXOTIC CIRCUITS AND FUNCTIONS.** It follows that if most variations in electronic performance are inaudible, the way an audio designer chooses to put together a particular piece of gear should be irrelevant. It may please you to show off a preamplifier bristling with vacuum tubes, for instance, and there's nothing wrong with that as long as you are under no illusions as to their effect on performance. By the same token, unusual materials for connectors and internal wiring are unlikely to pay immediate sonic dividends, although gold connectors *are* slightly less prone to oxidation than their more mundane cousins.

Other circuit subtleties do have their place but are of interest only to a minority of users. Techniques to alter the sound stage may be pleasant and appropriate for certain sorts of material, for instance, but in some cases they may represent a reduction of fidelity rather than an enhancement of it. Built-in digital-to-analog (D/A) converters may have some theoretical benefit, but for most users they are a solution to what is not a problem to begin with. D/A converters are a necessity, however, if the preamp includes digital signal processing (DSP) functions and a convenience in any preamp that provides digital inputs and outputs for a digital recorder.

- **TUNER OVERLOAD.** Although *real* overload—the front-end kind—is

important, what we're talking about here is unnecessarily elaborate features in an FM tuner. More than a handful of preset stations, for instance, is probably more than you'll ever use—how many stations do you listen to regularly? And how difficult is it to tune in a new one now and then? Tuner makers seem to think it's a pain, and they offer massive memory banks and a proliferation of auto-tuning schemes. These do work, and if you really need them, fine. But they also cost money that might well be better spent elsewhere in the system.

- **COST AND CAPABILITY.** It's natural enough to drool over the massive and hyperexpensive equipment that holds a place of honor in the audio store but basically gathers dust. If you can afford the really exotic stuff, you can be sure that it will perform superbly and be a worthy part of a high-quality sound system. Less expensive equipment, however, usually performs just as well in every meaningful respect; whatever differences there are rarely have much relation to differences in cost.

In some areas, added cost sometimes does result in sonic improvement, as when you buy a more powerful amplifier or a larger speaker with deeper bass response and better power-handling capability. But when it comes to straightforward components like tuners and preamps, you are usually safe putting your money toward extra features—if you want them—and taking a high level of performance for granted.

GET WITH IT

The central components of an audio system tend to be fairly self-sufficient, so add-ons and maintenance products are seldom required. Nevertheless, as elsewhere, good cables (usually supplied) are a must, and some means of cleaning contacts and controls from time to time can be useful. You may need some form of antenna other than the T-shape dipole supplied with most tuners, but you won't be able to judge that until you have taken the tuner home and tried it out. Otherwise, shelves that place the buttons where you can get at them are the best enhancement for control components.

NEXT: *Amplifiers*



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TEST REPORTS



Pioneer Elite CT-93 Cassette Deck

Craig Stark, Hirsch-Houck Laboratories

HIGH-END cassette decks, which seemed like an endangered species for a while, have taken a new lease on life in the Pioneer Elite CT-93. From its wood-veneered side panels to its copper-plated chassis, from its one-chip Dolby S circuits and one-touch tape-optimization button to its pressure-pad-release head design and switchable Dolby HX Pro headroom-extension system, the CT-93 exudes quality in its appearance, ease of use, and up-to-the-moment engineering.

At first sight, the CT-93's head design seems conventional: Separate recording and playback head elements, with a shielding spacer between them, are contained within a single case. Such a three-head "sandwich" (the erase head, upstream, is the third) enables instant source-vs.-tape com-

parisons. It also enables the designer to select head elements whose physical and electrical characteristics best satisfy the different requirements for recording and playback.

What makes the CT-93's sandwich head far from conventional, however, is a series of small, projecting nodules, or bosses, along its top and bottom edges, just above and below the actual tape path. These bumps hold back the cassette's felt pressure pad, keeping it from pushing against the back of the tape as it normally would. Over the years, just one manufacturer besides Pioneer seems to have recognized that the pressure pad in a cassette is needed only to mask shortcomings in the design of a deck's mechanical system. More important, the force that the pressure pad exerts at the point of contact between tape and head creates

"stiction," which increases modulation noise and thus muddies the sound. Musical clarity often lies in such engineering details.

The CT-93's transport uses the proven technique of belt-coupling a DC servomotor to dual capstans. This isolates the short section of tape passing across the heads, which helps minimize wow and flutter. A spring-loaded stabilizer platform tightly squeezes the cassette in place when the door is closed, damping any vibrations that might arise in the shell itself. A second DC motor powers the reel hubs, and a third motor is used for the power-assisted functions.

Any initial tape slack in the cassette is automatically taken up when the power-assisted door is closed. The door is not easily detachable, however, which makes head cleaning and demagnetizing slightly less convenient than usual. Label visibility in the cassette well is marginal, but an illuminated panel at the back of the well makes it easy to see how much tape remains on a side. Sensors inside the cassette well detect the tape type in use and set the appropriate bias and equalization.

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TEST REPORTS

FEATURES

- Separate recording and playback heads with pressure-pad release
- Three-motor, dual-capstan transport
- Dolby B, C, and S noise reduction
- One-button optimization for bias, Dolby level, and equalization
- Dolby HX Pro headroom extension
- Four-digit fluorescent counter/timer
- Dual-range peak-level indicators with hold switch
- Fifteen-selection program search with return-to-zero button
- Line/straight switchable input
- Switchable FM-multiplex filter
- Powered cassette-well door
- Facilities for external-timer operation

LABORATORY MEASUREMENTS

Fast-forward time (C-60): 81 seconds

Rewind time (C-60): 81 seconds

Speed error: +0.42%

Dolby tracking error: Dolby B, ± 0.3 dB; Dolby C, ± 0.5 dB; Dolby S, ± 0.5 dB

Wow-and-flutter: 0.022% wrms, 0.042% DIN peak-weighted

Line input for indicated 0 dB: 62 mV

Line output at indicated 0 dB: 0.34 volt

Meter indication at IEC-standard 0 dB: +4 dB

• **Tape: TDK AD (Type I, ferric)**

IEC 0-dB distortion: 0.58%

Meter indication at 3% THD + noise: +8 dB

Signal-to-noise ratios (in decibels):

	Unwtd.	A-wtd.	CCIR/ARM
NR off	56.7	61.3	57.5
Dolby B	61.3	70.4	67.8
Dolby C	63.0	77.7	76.9
Dolby S	65.3	79.9	79.6

• **Tape: TDK SA (Type II, chrome-equivalent)**

IEC 0-dB distortion: 1.8%

Meter indication at 3% THD + noise: +6 dB

Signal-to-noise ratios (in decibels):

	Unwtd.	A-wtd.	CCIR/ARM
NR off	57.3	63.5	60.6
Dolby B	58.3	71.0	70.5
Dolby C	60.3	78.1	78.2
Dolby S	63.8	80.3	80.2

• **Tape: TDK MA (Type IV, metal)**

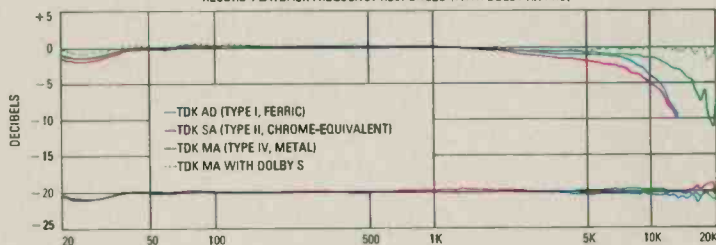
IEC 0-dB distortion: 1.0%

Meter indication at 3% THD + noise: +10 dB

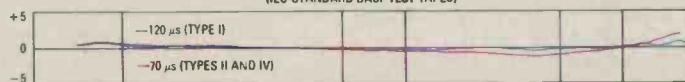
Signal-to-noise ratios (in decibels):

	Unwtd.	A-wtd.	CCIR/ARM
NR off	60.3	65.6	62.3
Dolby B	64.3	74.2	72.4
Dolby C	66.1	81.3	80.7
Dolby S	69.8	83.3	83.1

PIONEER ELITE CT-93 CASSETTE DECK
RECORD-PLAYBACK FREQUENCY RESPONSES (WITH DOLBY HX PRO)



PLAYBACK-ONLY RESPONSES
(IEC-STANDARD BASF TEST TAPES)



FREQUENCY IN HERTZ

channel fluorescent display shows the signal levels going to and from the tape. The normal range is calibrated from -30 to +12 dB, and the switch-selectable expanded range reads in 1-dB increments from -3 to +12 dB. The display automatically holds signal peaks for approximately 1 second, but pressing the HOLD MODE switch will keep the highest signal peak registered lit indefinitely. This makes it easy to determine the maximum signal level on a CD or record you want to dub without having to stare at the display through a dry run.

Unfortunately, Pioneer chose to set the 0-dB point on the displays at the outmoded Japanese reference level of 160 nanowebers per meter (nW/m) rather than the more up-to-date IEC level of 250 nW/m. So with any modern high-quality tape, you must mentally adjust to using the +4-dB indication on the CT-93's level display as your real 0-dB reference.

The four-digit tape counter can be set to show counter units, running time, or time remaining on the side. A pushbutton lets you set the remaining-time range for C-60, C-90, C-46L, and C-80L cassettes. The display panel also provides indicators for tape-motion status, tape or source monitoring, tape type, noise-reduction and Dolby HX Pro status, and whether the deck has been optimized for the specific tape in use. If such a welter of information seems too much for your taste, all but the counter display can be turned off at the touch of a button.

To optimize the CT-93's internal settings for a specific tape you press a single button (twice, to prevent accidents) and wait for 10 seconds as the bias-control knob rotates back and forth, apparently of its own volition. Actually, it's being motor-driven from within by the CT-93's microprocessor-controlled Super Auto BLE (bias-level-equalization) system. The system records, plays back, and level-checks dozens of combinations of three frequencies (400, 3,000, and 15,000 Hz), instead of the usual two, to find the bias and equalization settings that will produce the flattest frequency response.

To keep the Dolby noise-reduction systems tracking accurately, the Super Auto BLE system also compensates for differences in tape sensitivity (the playback output level for a given

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Rolling Stones—Sticky Fingers (Rolling Stones Rec.) 350-645

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The Byrds—Greatest Hits (Columbia) 342-501

Kenny Loggins—Leap Of Faith (Columbia) 430-256

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Simply Red—Stars (East-West) 429-522

Nancy Wilson—With My Lover Beside Me (Columbia) 429-225

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Neil Diamond—Lovescape (Columbia) 428-318

Eddie Money—Right Here (Columbia) 428-037

Simple Minds—Real Life (A&M) 427-203

Naughty By Nature (Tommy Boy) 429-993

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Public Enemy—The Apocalypse 91. The Enemy Strikes Black (Def Jam Columbia) 428-003

Richie Sambora—Stranger In This Town (Mercury) 427-831

New Jack City—Various Artists (Giant) 426-825

Vanessa Williams—The Comfort Zone (Wing) 426-510

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Seal (Sire/Warner Bros.) 426-827

Squeeze—Play (Reprise) 425-777

Stevie Nicks—Timespace: The Best Of Stevie Nicks (Modern) 425-694

Robyn Hitchcock And The Egyptians—Perspex Island (A&M) 425-645

Aaron Neville—Warm Your Heart (A&M) 425-611

Carreras/Domingo/Pavarotti—Encore! (Sony Master.) 425-470

The LA's (Go! London) 424-895

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Johnny Mathis—Better Together - The Duet (Columbia) 424-408

Original Cast—Phantom Of The Opera (Polydor) 424-333

Roger Waters—The Wall-Berlin 1990 (Mercury) 423-855/393-850

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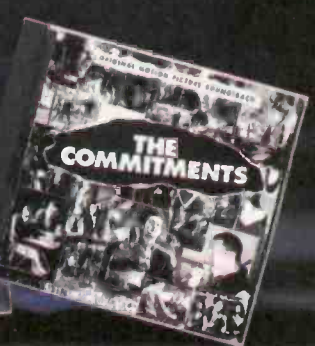
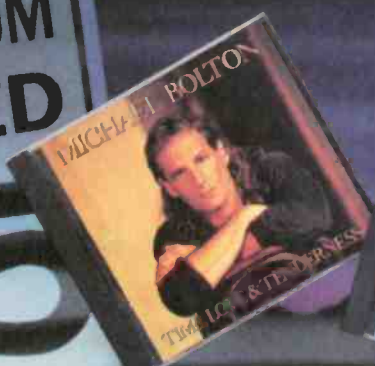
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Skid Row—Slave To The Grind (Atlantic) 422-220
Vladimir Horowitz—The Last Recording (Sony Classical) 405-985
Damn Yankees (Warner Bros.) 405-886
Depeche Mode—Violator (Sire/Reprise) 405-423
Nine Inch Nails—Pretty Hate Machine (TVT) 402-438
Kenny G—Live (Arista) 401-505
Chicago—Greatest Hits 1982-1989 (Reprise) 401-166

Robert Palmer—Addictions, Volume One (Island) 400-937
Eric Clapton—Journey-Man (Reprise) 400-457
Janet Jackson—Rhythm Nation 1814 (A&M) 388-918
Billy Joel—Storm Front (Columbia) 387-902
Michael Bolton—Soul Provider (Columbia) 383-083
Fleetwood Mac—Greatest Hits (Warner Bros.) 375-782
Journey—Greatest Hits (Columbia) 375-279
R.E.M.—Green (Warner Bros.) 375-162
Foreigner—Records (Atlantic) 318-055

Electronic (Warner Bros.) 422-097
U2—The Joshua Tree (Island) 354-449

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input). At the end of the process the tape rewinds to the point at which the tests began, and you're ready to record. If you wish, you can manually override the BLE bias setting; for our tests, we didn't.

The new Dolby S noise-reduction system joins the familiar Dolby B and Dolby C in the Elite CT-93. In conventional signal-to-noise ratio (S/N) measurements, Dolby S adds only 2 or 3 dB to the numbers. To hear its effectiveness, however, you have only to crank open the recording-level control and turn up your amplifier's gain while recording and playing back a tape with no input signal. Switching from no Dolby to Dolby B will reduce the recorded hiss level significantly, and switching into Dolby C will lower it much further. At this point, however, you will hear a gravelly low-frequency "grunge" that no one would want as a constant background accompaniment to, say, a delicate harpsichord recording. Switch in Dolby S, and the grunge disappears—the audible effect is positively astonishing.

Most deck manufacturers who offer the Dolby HX Pro headroom-extension system hard-wire it into the deck's circuitry. On the CT-93 you can switch it off if you like, but since it contributes significantly to preserving high-level treble information without harming other performance characteristics, I don't see any reason you'd ever want to exercise this option.

Operation of the main transport control buttons is conventional except that if you press fast-forward or rewind while playing a tape, you move only to the next selection. By repeatedly pressing these buttons while the tape is moving, you can skip forward or back as many as fifteen selections. The fast-winding modes work normally if the tape is stopped, however, and a return-to-zero (RTZ) button lets you go directly to the zero point on the tape counter.

The front-panel headphone jack has its own volume control, but the main output levels are not adjustable. A LINE/STRAIGHT switch is provided to bypass the recording-balance control to insure maximum channel separation. The usual switch is provided for external timer operation, and another switch is supplied for synchronized dubbing from compatible Pioneer CD players. The stereo FM-multiplex fil-

ter switch is located on the rear, as are the jacks for input and output signals and for a remote-control accessory.

The Pioneer Elite CT-93 measures 18 inches wide, 14 inches deep, and 5¼ inches high, and it weighs 23 pounds. Price: \$1,200. Pioneer Electronics (USA), Inc., Dept. SR, P.O. Box 1720, Long Beach, CA 90801.

Lab Tests

Measured with our calibrated IEC-standard BASF test tapes, the CT-93's playback response was very flat across the entire audible band, with no pronounced peaks or valleys.

The deck's overall record-playback frequency response, using our stan-

If you record and play back a tape at high gain with no input signal, even Dolby C will leave a gravelly low-frequency "grunge." Switch in Dolby S, and the grunge disappears.

dard samples of TDK AD (Type I, ferric), TDK SA (Type II, chrome-equivalent), and TDK MA (Type IV, metal) was, if anything, even flatter. At the usual -20-dB reference level, response was within ± 1 dB or better for all three tapes, which is proof not only of well-designed heads but of the effectiveness of the Super Auto BLE optimization system. At the 0-dB level, with Dolby HX Pro on, there was slightly less treble rolloff than we usually find. As the accompanying graph documents, with Dolby S switched in, overall metal-tape response at 0-dB was within +0.5, -2 dB from 20 to 20,000 Hz.

The A-weighted signal-to-noise ratios were exceptionally high, ranging from 79.9 dB (TDK AD) to 83.3 dB (TDK MA) with Dolby S engaged. Decks with poorly designed recording heads do not show so marked an increase in S/N when switching from ferric to metal tapes, as the heads themselves begin to saturate (and contribute distortion to the measurement) before the metal-particle tape reaches

its limit. The CT-93 was commendably free of this fault.

Its wow-and-flutter measurements of 0.022 percent wrms and 0.042 percent IEC/DIN peak-weighted also place the CT-93 in a class with the best. The absolute speed error of 0.42 percent was slightly higher than we would have expected, but it should be inaudible to any normal listener.

The CT-93's sensitivity and output levels were entirely conventional, and its fast-winding times were good. The Dolby tracking error was exceptionally small, a tribute to the accuracy of both the BLE system and the Dolby chips themselves.

Comments

In both its human engineering and its sonic performance, we found the Pioneer CT-93 very difficult to fault. True, the placement of the multiplex-filter switch on the rear of the deck is inconvenient, but it should be needed only in exceptional situations. And the 0-dB point should have been set where the unit's display now shows +4 dB, a much more realistic reference point with today's tapes. Still, these are minor grouplings. The controls are well laid out and worked smoothly, the deck's operation was quiet and sure, and the Super Auto BLE system is so quick, easy, and accurate that there's no excuse at all not to use it to optimize every recording you make.

Playing prerecorded tapes and dubbing a variety of sources, from CD's to FM interstation hiss, the CT-93 was as close to flawless sonically as we could hope to find. With any analog copying process there is always *some* loss, and it is always possible to find source material where a direct A/B comparison will disclose *some* audible difference between the copy and the original. But the deck's extremely low levels of wow, flutter, and noise enabled even a pure 3,000-Hz sine wave—a terribly tough test for an analog recorder—to come through the record-playback process almost completely unscathed. With musical material the imaging was solid, the frequency response as nearly perfect as we could detect, and the noise, with Dolby S, inaudible. We welcome the Pioneer Elite CT-93 to that very small company of decks we can recommend to the most serious audiophile without reservation. □



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Advent New Vision Model 350 Loudspeaker System

Julian Hirsch, Hirsch-Houck Laboratories

ADVENT'S Model 350 speaker system, which heads the company's New Vision series, is a floor-standing two-way column speaker measuring 43 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches high, 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches wide, and 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches deep. Each speaker weighs about 43 pounds.

Unsnapping the black cloth grille reveals two 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch woofers just above the midpoint of the speaker

panel, which, like most of the cabinet exterior, is finished in a teak veneer. A 1-inch soft parabolic-dome tweeter is at the top of the panel. The wooden cabinet rests on a separate rectangular base plate, 15 inches wide and 12 inches deep, that is finished in a glossy black. The top of the cabinet is also covered by a glossy black acrylic surface. The hexagonal cross section minimizes internal resonances.

The bottom of the speaker cabinet is supported by feet about an inch above the base. The woofer enclosure is vented at the bottom and couples to the room through the gap between the cabinet and the base. The speaker connectors, insulated binding posts that accept single or double banana plugs as well as stripped wires or spade lugs, are recessed into the lower portion of the back panel.

Advent rates the frequency response of the Model 350 as 41 to 23,000 Hz \pm 3 dB and claims that the tweeter response varies less than \pm 1 dB over a 30-degree angle (either horizontal or vertical) up to 13,000 Hz. The usable lower limit to the response (the -8-dB point) is given as 35 Hz, and 23,000 Hz is said to be the upper limit (-3 dB). Nominal impedance is 6 ohms, with a 4-ohm minimum, and the system is rated to handle a peak input of 500 watts and an average input of 125 watts.

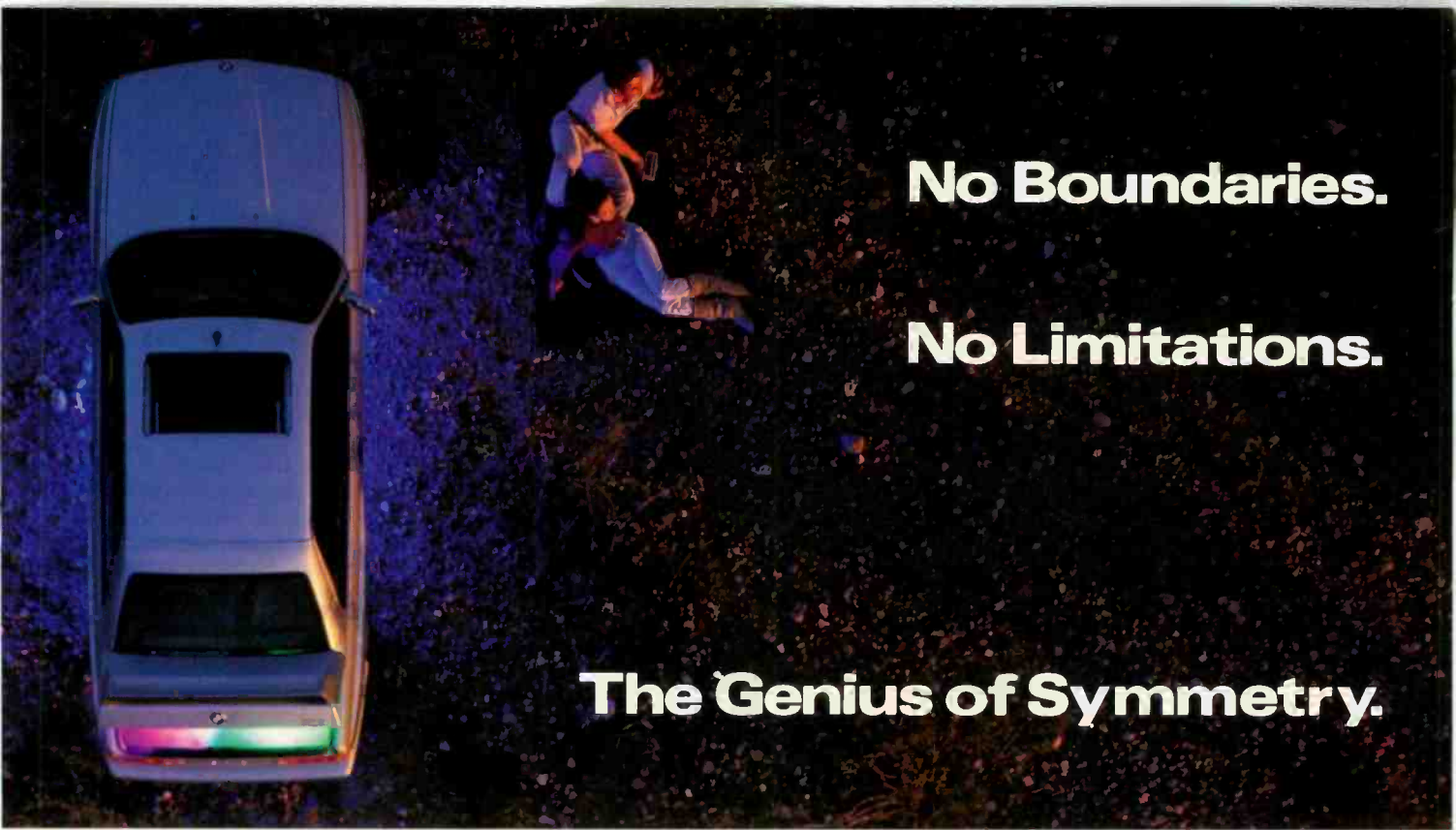
Sensitivity is rated as 89 dB sound-pressure level (SPL) at 1 meter with an input of 2.83 volts. The woofer resonance frequency is 65 Hz (\pm 5 Hz), and the crossover to the tweeter takes place at 3,000 Hz. Price: \$699 a pair. Advent, Dept. SR, 25 Tri-State Intl. Office Ctr. Lincolnshire, IL 60069.

Lab Tests

Aside from the usual irregularities from room-boundary effects, the averaged room-response curves of the two Advent Model 350 speakers showed a relatively uniform response from 70 to 1,000 Hz and from 2,500 to 20,000 Hz. However, the output between 1,000 and 2,500 Hz was 5 to 10 dB lower than that in the octaves immediately above and below that range.

The close-miked woofer response was flat within \pm 3 dB from 50 to 800 Hz. Because of the proximity of the microphone to the speaker cones, measurements at higher frequencies were invalid, though they clearly showed a depressed output from 1,000 to 3,000 Hz and a rapid drop above that frequency, matching the room-response curve. The composite curve, formed by joining the bass response to the room response, showed an elevated output from 60 to 800 Hz, a depression of 5 to 8 dB from 800 to 2,500 Hz, and a relatively constant response (\pm 2.5 dB) from 2,500 to 20,000 Hz.

The woofer resonance was at 65 Hz,

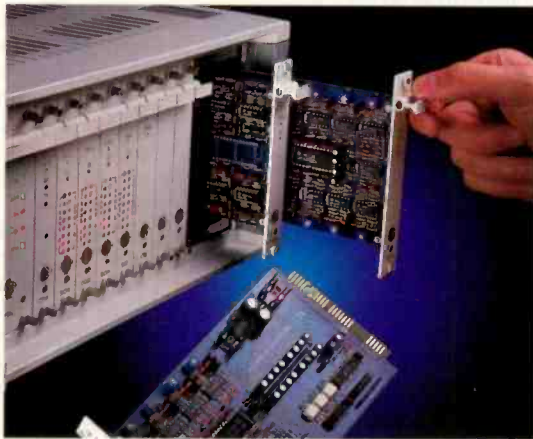


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exactly as specified, and that is also where the impedance was at its maximum of 15 ohms. The minimum impedance, 3.8 ohms, occurred at 180 Hz, and average impedance over the audio range was very close to the systems' 6-ohm rating.

The tweeter dispersion was good, with an output change of less than 3 dB over a 45-degree horizontal angle up to 10,000 Hz. Off-axis response fell to -5 dB at 12,000 Hz and -18 dB at 20,000 Hz.

The system's sensitivity was 90.5 dB, slightly better than rated. Woofer distortion, measured with a constant input of 2.7 volts (equivalent to a standard output level of 90 dB), reached a minimum of 0.3 percent at 150 to 200 Hz and remained under 1 percent up to 1,000 Hz. At lower frequencies the distortion increased gradually, to 1 percent at 57 Hz, 2 percent at 50 Hz, and 4.5 percent at 40 Hz.

In pulse power tests, the woofer cones "bottomed" audibly with a 100-Hz input of 430 watts into their 4.6-ohm impedance. At higher frequencies the amplifier clipped before the speaker showed any obvious signs of distortion, reaching 970 watts into a 6.5-ohm impedance at 1,000 Hz and 880 watts into 7.2 ohms at 10,000 Hz.

Comments

During our initial listening to the Advent Model 350, before making any measurements, we found the overall sound to be smooth and not obviously

colored, but with a "soft" quality that suggested a broad emphasis of bass and lower middle frequencies (or the equivalent condition of smooth but reduced-level highs).

Our measurements confirmed that impression. The upper-midrange depression gave the sound stage a somewhat distant character, although the sound was not as bass-heavy as that of many other speakers with a similar response elevation in the 100- to 200-Hz range, which can add a muddy or boomy quality to the sound.

We were fortunate to have Advent's own performance data and response curves on our test samples. Although the company's test environment is certainly very different from ours, the supplied curves also showed the midrange depression and several other details of response variations that appeared in our measurements.

Overall, we found the Advent Model 350's to be thoroughly listenable and comfortable to live with. There was no lack of deep bass or extreme highs in spite of the slightly soft sound quality. Given their size and handsome appearance, we had to remind ourselves constantly that these are actually quite inexpensive speakers, priced just above the typical small bookshelf system. While they cannot fully match the sound of most speakers that cost two or three times as much, the difference is surprisingly small. All in all, the Advent Model 350 is an excellent value in today's speaker market. □



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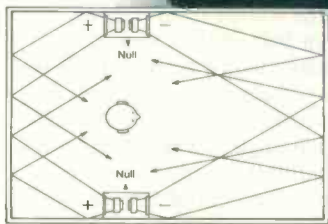


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TEST REPORTS



Hughes AK-100 Sound Retrieval System

Julian Hirsch, Hirsch-Houck Laboratories

SEVERAL years ago, a scientist at Hughes Aircraft Company (a division of General Motors) developed a new stereo-enhancement system called the Sound Retrieval System (SRS). Although SRS was originally developed for car audio, it appeared to have application to home systems as well, especially when the listening room could not accommodate normal speaker spacings.

Initially, Hughes licensed SRS to Sony (and later RCA) for use in TV receivers, a logical application since SRS was said to create a stereo sound stage extending well beyond the speaker boundaries. The advantages of creating fully spread stereo images from the closely spaced speakers of a TV set are obvious.

More recently, Hughes formed an Audio Products Division, which is marketing a component using an enhanced form of SRS under its own name for use in home music systems. The Hughes AK-100 measures approximately 17 inches wide, 11½ inches deep, and 4 inches high and weighs about 8¼ pounds. It is designed to be

connected into a tape-monitor or external-processor loop of a preamplifier or receiver. Its only signal connectors are back-panel input and output phono jacks, plus jacks that replace the normal function of the tape or processor loop used for connecting the AK-100.

The front panel contains a large grid display that shows the spatial distribution of the audio signal by luminous green dots that extend horizontally and vertically from the bottom center. The horizontal row of dots indicates the relative level and direction of the difference components (L - R and R - L) of the processor's output signals. These are responsible for the directionality and ambience in a stereo program. The vertical column of dots indicates the relative level of the center (L + R, or mono) component of the output signals.

Control knobs on the panel adjust the relative levels of the CENTER and SPACE components and the AK-100's overall output level. The other controls are pushbuttons, whose activation is indicated by small lights beside them. In addition to the power button,

there is a bypass switch and a 3-D MONO switch to create a stereo-like sound from mono sources. With some stereo TV or video programs, a low-frequency rumbling noise can be heard. Pressing the FILTER switch reduces this noise; if it persists, the program may be in mono, rendering the filter circuit ineffective (the 3-D MONO switch should be used in that case). The REVERB TRIM button slightly reduces the amount of reverberation in the program. A LOOP SELECT button engages the AK-100's own external-processor loop, replacing the function of the corresponding circuit (or tape-monitor loop) in the amplifier to which it is connected. The remaining buttons turn the display on and off and select a bar or dot display pattern.

The AK-100's operation is based on the psychoacoustics of human hearing. A listener's localization of a sound source is based primarily on the sound's arrival times and levels at his ears (which will be different for each ear unless the source is directly ahead of, above, or behind the listener).

A secondary factor is the variation of the ear's frequency response for sounds arriving from different azimuth and elevation angles, which helps the listener determine whether a source is ahead, above, or behind him. A normal stereo program lacks the ability to convey this information, so that the perceived sound stage is usually limited to the front of the room, possibly

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The Saints
(Warner) 10455

Wilson Phillips
(SBK) 00726

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Heart Shaped World
(Reprise) 73735

KLF: White Room
(Arista) 23333

Carreras, Domingo,
Favartotti: 3 Tenors
(London) 35078

Janet Jackson's
Rhythm Nation 1814
(A&M) 72386

Bryan Adams:
Reckless
(A&M) 51540

Emerson, Lake &
Palmer: Brain Salad
Surgery
(Atlantic) 54608

Desert Rose Band:
True Love
(MCA/Curb) 53633

Bob Marley: Legend
(Island) 53521

Patsy Cline:
12 Greatest Hits
(MCA) 53849

U2: Rattle And Hum
(Island) 00596

Paul Simon:
Negotiations And
Love Songs 1971-86
(Warner) 20461

Mötley Crüe:
Dr. Feelgood
(Elektra) 33928

The Go-Gos:
Greatest Hits
(I.R.S./A&M) 50315

Kronos Quartet:
Black Angels
(Elektra) 62287

Eagles:
Hotel California
(Asylum) 30030

Ric Ocasek:
Fireball Zone
(Warner) 10936

Andy Summers:
World Gone Strange
(Private Music) 51756



Natalie Cole:
Unforgettable 83452

Jesus Jones: Doubt
(SBK) 44654

Skid Row:
Slave To The Grind
(Atlantic) 54433

Simply Red: Stars
(East-West America)
90658

Gladys Knight:
Good Woman
(MCA) 84390

INXS: X
(Atlantic) 64378

Travis Tritt: It's All
About To Change
(Warner) 64147

Damn Yankees
(Warner) 14852

Whitney Houston:
I'm Your Baby
Tonight
(Arista) 10663

Olvinyls
(Virgin) 74057

Metallica: ...And
Justice For All
(Elektra) 00478

Lenny Kravitz:
Mama Said
(Virgin) 10041

Jon Bon Jovi:
Blaze Of Glory
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Chicago: Twenty 1
(Reprise) 10533

Kiss: Smashes
Thrashes And Hits
(Mercury) 00736

De La Soul Is Dead
(Tommy Boy) 64101

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Skynyrd's Inneryds
(MCA) 01150

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Pickin' On Nashville
(Mercury) 24740

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Songbook:
Night And Day
(Verve) 10613

Van Halen:
For Unlawful,
Carnal
Knowledge
10016

Van Halen:
5150
70220

Clint Black: Killin'
Time (RCA) 01112

Pat Benatar:
True Love
(Chrysalis) 44663

Linda Ronstadt:
Greatest Hits, Vol. 2
(Asylum) 60157

Van Morrison:
Moondance
(Warner) 64585

The B-52's:
Cosmic Thing
(Reprise) 14742

Bruce Hornsby: A
Night On The Town
(RCA) 63689

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In The Blood
(MCA) 44569

Tom Petty:
Full Moon Fever
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(DG) 25211

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Gipsy Kings:
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(Elektra) 34546

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(Atlantic) 53718



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Ladyland
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The Sun Years
(Rhino) 64181

Eddy Holly:
From The Original
Master Tapes
(MCA) 20069 *

The Best Of
Ray Charles
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Jerry Lee Lewis:
Original Sun
Greatest Hits
(Rhino) 54118

The Best Of
Aretha Franklin
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Carl Perkins:
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Dancing With The
Kinks (Arista) 60077

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extending slightly beyond the speakers at either side and sometimes enhanced by surround techniques that restore some ambience or front-to-back directionality to the sound.

Hughes says that SRS processing restores a stereo signal's missing spatial cues. By matrixing the left and right channels it creates a sum signal (L + R) and two difference signals (L - R and R - L). Hughes does not give specific details of the subsequent processing, except to say that it does not involve delay or artificial reverb, harmonic regeneration, or phase correction. Apparently the SRS circuit extracts information regarding a program's ambience and spatial characteristics from the difference signals, and about its vocal and other center-positioned sounds from the sum signal, then uses this information to guide some undefined processing and equalization. Finally, the modified signals are rematrixed into a new two-channel stereo output.

In addition to giving the user independent adjustment of the CENTER and SPACE (difference) components, the AK-100's SRS circuit has what Hughes calls an "automatic directivity servo," which it says establishes and maintains a source position, even when it is in motion, without modifying the apparent positions of stationary sound sources. The SRS process is said to enhance program dynamics and to create a sound stage that does not change as a listener moves about the room. Price: \$449. Hughes Audio Products, Dept. SR, P.O. Box 7000, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688.

Lab Tests

The AK-100's specifications are limited to its noise and distortion levels and its input and output levels and impedances. Hughes points out that, as with many other signal-processing devices, normal frequency-response measurements cannot be applied to the AK-100 and simply states that its passband is 20 to 20,000 Hz.

For the most part, our bench tests were limited to verifying the manufacturer's ratings, which were approximately correct. The AK-100 had a rather low input-overload level of 1.35 volts, a potential source of trouble with CD players (whose standard 0-dB, or maximum, output is 2 volts). On the other hand, we never heard any

signs of overload or clipping during our use of the processor, so this characteristic is probably not a significant fault. The output clipped at 3.6 volts.

The A-weighted noise level varied quite widely with control settings. The worst-case reading of -78.5 dB referred to a 0.5-volt input was obtained with all level controls at maximum, an unrealistic setting. At the manufacturer's reference settings, the noise was -82.7 dB, and at our usual listening settings it was -87.7 dB. Most of the noise energy was above 20,000 Hz, and power-line hum components were at least 100 dB below 0.5 volt. In other words, the AK-100 will not add audible noise in normal operation.

With centered controls, the processor's frequency response was perfectly flat from 20 to 7,000 Hz and down only 1 dB at 20,000 Hz. Its phase shift was slight, not exceeding 30 or 40 degrees even at 20,000 Hz. In the 3-D MONO mode, the frequency response was somewhat altered, but the variation of less than ± 4 dB over the full range was not unreasonable for this type of product. At a 1-volt output, a 1,000-Hz signal generated total harmonic distortion (THD), not including noise, of 0.057 percent, consisting mostly of the third harmonic.

Comments

Conventional measurements of a device such as the Hughes AK-100 are of little value in judging its worth. For that, one must rely mainly on listening tests. We installed the AK-100 in a good music system and listened to a variety of program material, both stereo and mono, from CD's and FM broadcasts. The two pairs of speakers we used were both very good, with excellent imaging and tonal balance.

The SRS processing had an unmistakable effect whose magnitude and specific characteristics depended on the relative and absolute settings of the CENTER and SPACE controls. To some degree, the processing did extend the sound stage, but the most obvious effect was an increased warmth from an emphasis in the lower-middle and bass ranges.

We especially listened for an extension of the stereo stage beyond the speakers (which were about 9 feet apart in a room 15 feet wide), but it was so slight as to be unnoticeable with most stereo material. At no time did

the *stereo* program appear to come from the sides or rear, as has been implied by some publicity on the system. The effects of the SRS processing depended strongly on the settings of the CENTER and SPACE controls, making it very difficult to establish any meaningful norm. Furthermore, the processing almost always increased the apparent sound level together with its other effects, making A/B bypass comparisons difficult or impossible.

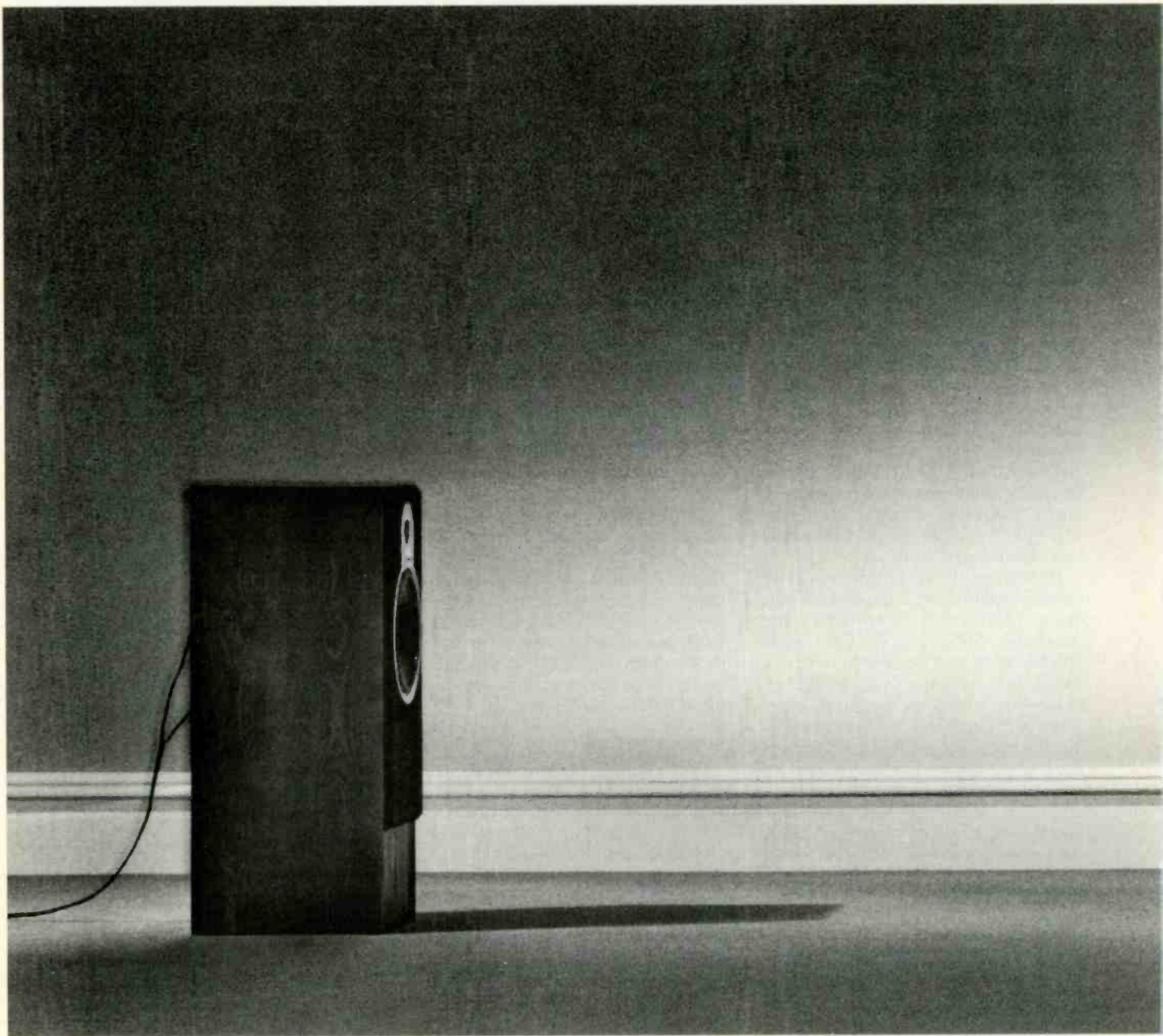
It may be, of course, that my preference in sound quality is so different from that of the SRS designers that I did not perceive its effects as an improvement. The resulting sound was certainly *different*, and it might well appeal to many listeners.

The AK-100 did achieve impressive results with *mono* program material, however. Engaging the 3-D MONO button not only changed the normal center location of a mono source but spread it out beyond the speakers, along the sides of the room all the way to the rear where I was listening. The effect was startling, to say the least. There was a slight "phasiness" in the sound, but the spatial effect was strong over a considerable range of listening positions. This was more or less what I had hoped to hear with stereo sources but never did.

By placing the speakers very close together (about a foot apart), I could also appreciate the benefits of SRS in TV applications, especially with the usual mono sound program. The result was a convincing example of apparently full-stage-width "stereo" from FM broadcasts that has been blended to mono in the tuner. Even when the program was returned to stereo and the 3-D MONO switch was turned off, the closely spaced speakers produced a stereo stage whose width was many times their spacing.

The bottom line here seems to be that the Hughes Sound Retrieval System, as implemented in the AK-100, is an ingenious signal-processing scheme that can make substantial changes in the spatial balance of a stereo program and an enormous improvement in mono programs. When fed stereo signals, it appears to be most effective with closely spaced speakers and decreasingly so (to the point of making almost no difference spatially) as they are moved to more usual positions. □

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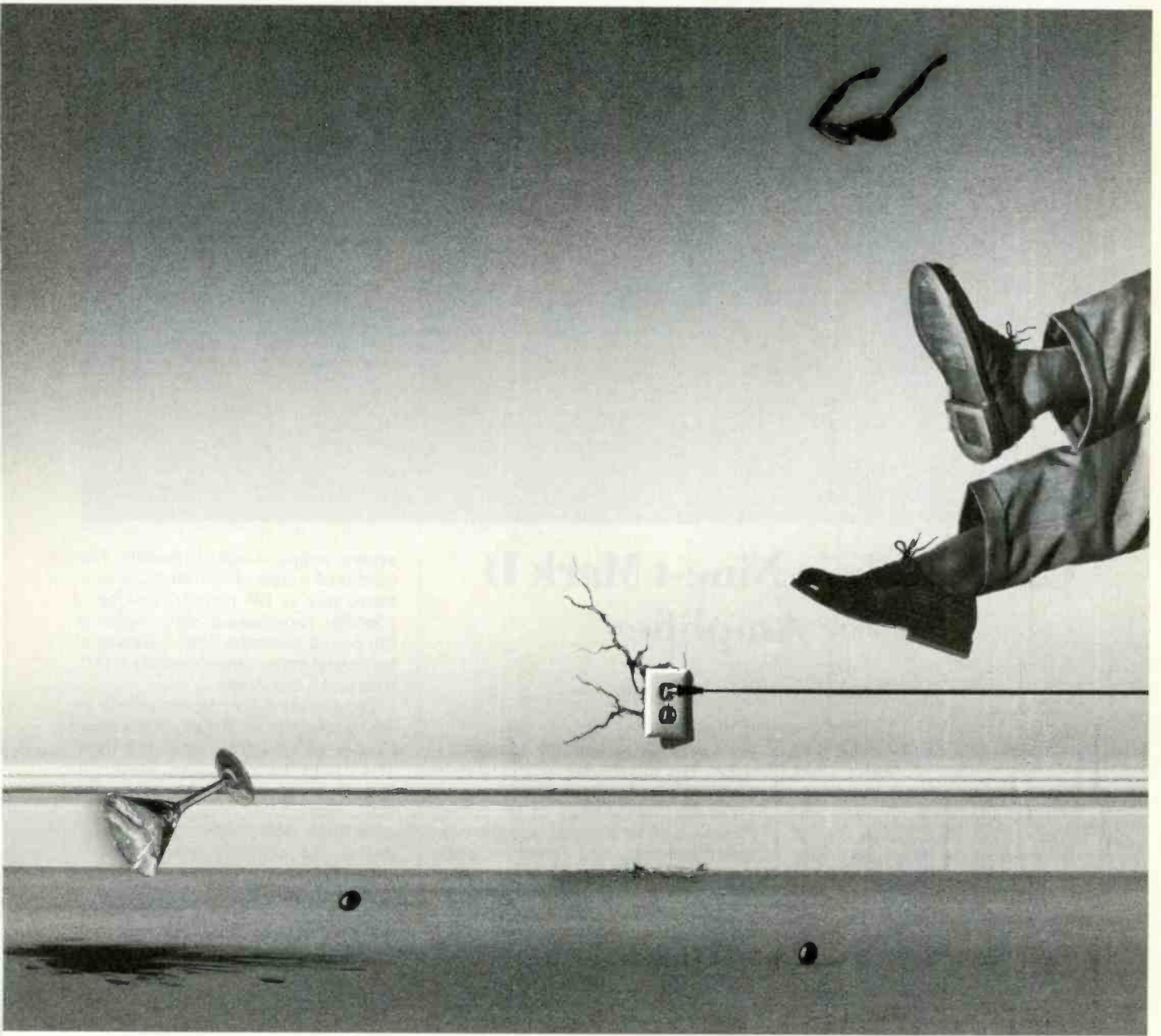
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Carver Silver Nine-t Mark II Power Amplifier

Julian Hirsch, Hirsch-Houck Laboratories

A COUPLE of years ago, Bob Carver startled the audio world with the introduction of a gigantic and very expensive tube amplifier, the Silver Seven. On the face of it, the Silver Seven appeared to be the antithesis of Carver Corporation's line of compact, light, affordable amplifiers based on Carver's innovative Magnetic Field power supply. The amplifier was named the Silver Seven because all of its internal wiring is silver, and all the other components in it are of similarly premium quality.

The Silver Seven is a large, heavy monoblock (single-channel) amplifier with fourteen KT88 or 6550 power tetrodes in its push-pull Class A output stage. A fifteenth tube serves as a screen-voltage regulator for the others. A huge output transformer, with output taps for driving 8-, 4-, or 1-ohm loads, is at the rear of the chassis, and the three low-level tubes near the front (a 12BY7 input stage and a pair of 12BH7 drivers) are partially concealed by a thick aluminum slab that carries

the Carver logo and the amplifier's name. The single knob control adjusts the amplifier's input sensitivity.

On the sloping front of the Silver Seven's separate power supply is a meter indicating the combined plate current of the fourteen output tubes (normally about 300 milliamperes but adjustable over a wide range by a screwdriver control on the rear of the amplifier). There are no tubes in the power supply (the solid-state rectifiers are inside the unit), and a husky power transformer is its dominant feature.

Carver does not stress the Silver Seven's specifications other than to point out that it has a very conservative power rating of 375 watts into any matched load and an A-weighted noise level better than 110 dB below 375 watts (corresponding to 84 dB below 1 watt).

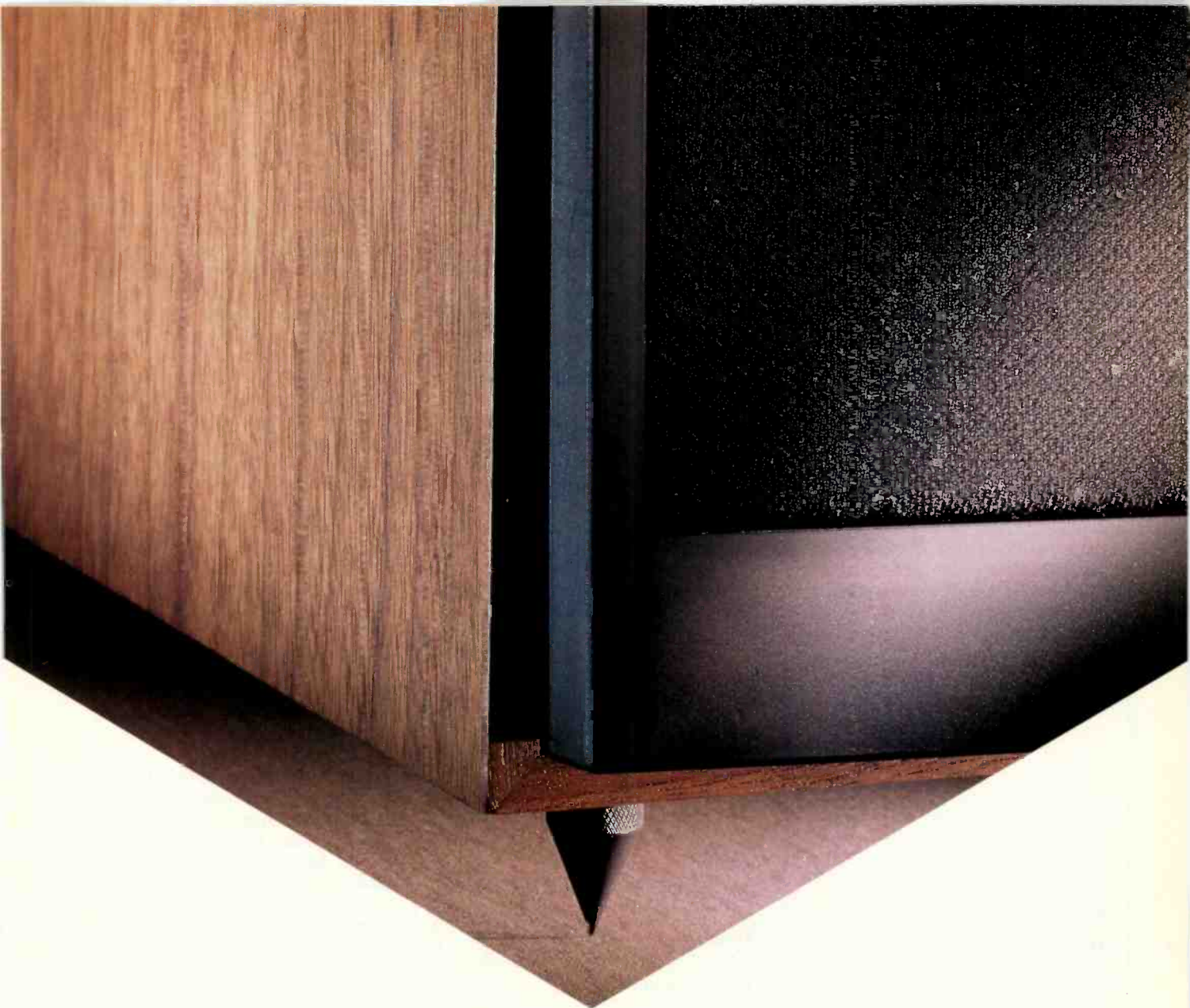
Each amplifier and power supply is supported by a thick slab of black granite, polished to a mirror-like surface; a soft rubber isolating pad is between each base and chassis. Each amplifier alone weighs 47 pounds, and

a power supply weighs 44 pounds. The combined weight of the four bases in a stereo pair is 108 pounds, making a complete two-channel Silver Seven a 290-pound ensemble that occupies a horizontal space approximately 6 feet wide and 2 feet deep.

The Carver Silver Seven clearly is not an amplifier for the average audiophile, even a wealthy one. Aside from its extraordinary size and weight, a pair of Silver Sevens costs \$17,500 with Type 6550 output tubes and even more with KT88 tubes. Nevertheless, the amplifier has earned an enviable reputation among those golden-eared audiophiles who have been fortunate enough to own a pair or who have listened to it at length.

Obviously, Bob Carver did not expect the Silver Seven to become a significant part of his line, or (probably) even a profitable one. He had another purpose in producing it, one related to his long-time thesis that the sonic differences between amplifiers, which can be real in some cases, if not always significant, are primarily related to their transfer functions.

An amplifier's transfer function is the mathematical relationship between its input and output. A perfect amp would not change a signal, no matter how complex, in any way other than its level—no phase shift, no change in response at different frequencies, no distortion or noise, and



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so on. That perfect amplifier has yet to be made, though most nowadays come close enough to satisfy the human ear.

Carver's thesis is that if two amplifiers, perfect or not, have *identical* transfer functions, they *must* sound alike. There can be no rational argument with that. Since no amplifier has a truly perfect transfer function, the question is: How much change can be tolerated in a signal before it becomes audible?

Carver believes (and many others, including me, agree) that audible differences among amplifiers can best be demonstrated by a null test, in which the outputs of two amplifiers drive opposite sides of the *same* load, such as a loudspeaker. If the two amplifiers are indeed identical, there will be no net voltage across the load, and no

sound will be heard. What little sound can be heard in such a test also gives a clue to the *nature* of the difference, whether it is a matter of frequency response, noise, or distortion.

Carver claims, and has demonstrated, that it is possible to tweak an amplifier so that its transfer function matches that of another amplifier within close limits—so close, in fact, that the two cannot be told apart by an experienced listener. That was the real reason for the Silver Seven: to be a reference transfer function for Carver to duplicate in a much less expensive transistor amplifier, which would then deliver the same performance as a state-of-the-art tube amplifier.

The result was named the Silver Seven-t (the "t" stands for Transfer Function Modified), which was re-

cently revised to the current Silver Nine-t Mark II. Like the tube "original," it is a monoblock amplifier, though a much smaller and lighter one. It is also styled somewhat like the Silver Seven, although its Magnetic Field power supply is integral rather than on a separate chassis. Carver claims that the transfer function of the Silver Nine-t is so close to that of the Silver Seven that the outputs of the two can be nulled to a depth of at least 40 dB into a loudspeaker load.

Nonetheless, the two amplifiers do not really have identical electrical characteristics. The Silver Nine-t is considerably more powerful than the Silver Seven, especially into low-impedance loads, occupies a fraction of the space, weighs a mere 16 pounds including its built-in power supply, and sells for about one-tenth the price of the Silver Seven—\$2,000 a pair. Carver Corporation, Dept. SR, P.O. Box 1237, Lynnwood, WA 98046.

Lab Tests

The sheer logistics of handling both of these amplifiers together required a slight modification of our normal testing procedure. A pair of Silver Sevens (in six heavy boxes) and a pair of Silver Nine-t's were brought to our laboratory by Bob Carver and his local sales representative, who unpacked them and set them up. There was room on our test bench for only one Silver Seven with its power supply and one Silver Nine-t.

We made our customary basic measurements on both amplifiers. In addition to frequency response, distortion, sensitivity, and noise, we also measured each amplifier's output impedance. This was necessary because one of the very few external factors that can affect the sound of an amplifier, though in a rather subtle fashion, is the interaction between the load (speaker) impedance as a function of frequency and the amplifier's source impedance, or its damping factor (the source impedance divided into a typical speaker load of 8 ohms). If two amplifiers are to give identical sound, or a deep null when their outputs are combined in a loudspeaker load, it is necessary that their damping factors, as well as their basic frequency-response and (to a lesser degree) distortion characteristics be very nearly identical. (In the case of damping factor, it suffices if

LABORATORY MEASUREMENTS

SILVER NINE-T MARK II

Output power at clipping (1,000 Hz):
680 watts into 8 ohms, 1,050 watts into 4 ohms

Clipping headroom: 0.73 dB

Sensitivity (for a 1-watt output): 50 mV

Dynamic power output (1,000 Hz):
625 watts into 8 ohms, 1,010 watts into 4 ohms, 1,360 watts into 2 ohms

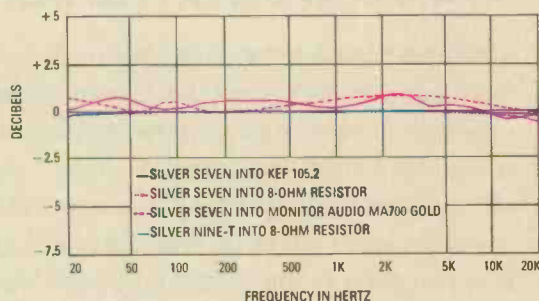
Dynamic headroom (relative to rated output): 0.36 dB

Maximum distortion at rated power (20 to 20,000 Hz into 8 ohms): 2% at 20,000 Hz

A-weighted noise (referred to a 1-watt output): -75 dB

Frequency response (into 8 ohms): +0 -0.18 dB from 20 to 20,000 Hz

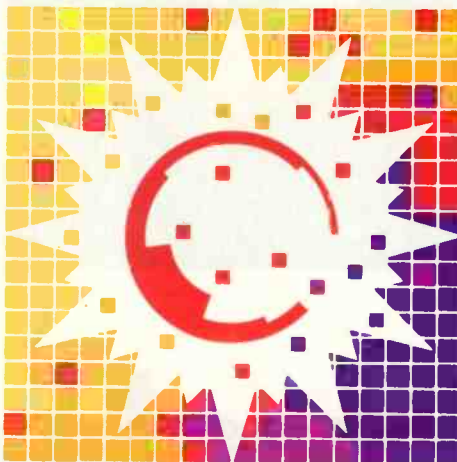
Damping factor: 9.2



The Silver Seven and Silver Nine-t Mark II exhibit very flat frequency response into a purely resistive load, but because of their unusually low damping factors (typical of tube amplifiers), their response varies somewhat into more complex load impedances.

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TEST REPORTS

this is high enough in both amplifiers to keep any response differences brought on by interaction with the load impedance small enough not to be audible.) One of the main goals of our test of these two amplifiers was to determine how well the Silver Nine-t actually matches the Silver Seven in these respects.

The Silver Seven's power output into 8 ohms at 2 percent total harmonic distortion plus noise (THD + N) was about 420 watts from 30 to 5,000 Hz, dropping to 340 watts at 20 Hz and 200 watts at 20,000 Hz. With a slightly higher idling-current setting (close to true Class A operation), the output was about 430 watts from 20 to 13,000 Hz, falling to 215 watts at 20,000 Hz. We used the lower (standard) current throughout our other tests, however. The dynamic power output was 500 watts.

The amplifier's distortion at its rated 375 watts was 0.5 percent from 40 to 1,000 Hz, increasing to 1.3 percent at 20 Hz and 2.7 percent at 20,000 Hz. At 1,000 Hz, the distortion was a minimum of 0.18 percent between 10 and 30 watts output, rising to 0.43 percent at 1 watt and 0.6 percent at 410 watts, at the verge of clipping. Damping factor was a very low 8.6 at 1,000 Hz, which is typical of tube amplifiers. Input sensitivity for 1 watt output was 50 millivolts at the maximum gain setting, and the A-weighted noise output was -88 dB referred to 1 watt.

The Silver Seven's frequency response at 1 watt output into a standard 8-ohm resistive load was flat from 30 to 10,000 Hz, falling to -0.1 dB at 20 Hz and -0.3 dB at 20,000 Hz. It fell off more rapidly at higher frequencies, to -3 dB at 60,000 Hz. Given the amplifier's high output impedance (low damping factor), we were not surprised to find that its frequency response into loudspeaker loads reflected their impedance curves, with typical variations of a decibel or so at various frequencies in the audio range.

Similar measurements of the Silver Nine-t showed that the two amplifiers had identical frequency responses (within 0.01 dB) from 20 to 4,000 Hz, which encompasses the range in which the ear is most discriminating. They diverged slightly at higher frequencies, with the Silver Nine-t's output being higher by 0.09 dB at 10,000 Hz and 0.18 dB at 20,000 Hz.

The Silver Nine-t was substantially more powerful than its vacuum-tube progenitor. The 1,000-Hz output clipped at 680 watts into 8 ohms and at 1,000 watts into 4 ohms. We didn't have enough suitable power resistors to form an adequate 2-ohm load, which would have had to handle far more than 1,000 watts.

At a constant 1 percent THD + N, the Silver Nine-t's output was 640 watts from 20 to 13,000 Hz, falling off rapidly at higher frequencies to 100 watts at 17,000 Hz. At its rated 575 watts into 8 ohms, the distortion was between 0.06 and 0.1 percent from 20 to 1,500 Hz, rising to 0.45 percent at 10,000 Hz and 2 percent at 20,000 Hz.

The Silver Nine-t's damping factor was 9.2, very close to that of the Silver Seven. Most modern transistor amplifiers have damping factors on the order of 100 or more, which is probably a

We can say with assurance that the Carver Silver Seven and Silver Nine-t Mark II sounded absolutely alike despite their totally different circuit designs.

major cause of any sonic differences between them and tube amplifiers, since a very low damping factor will result in much larger frequency-response variations into the impedances presented by different speakers.

Other measurements of the Silver Nine-t included a sensitivity of 50 mV for a 1-watt output (identical to that of the Silver Seven) and a noise level of -75 dB (slightly, but not audibly, higher than that of the Silver Seven). The Silver Nine-t's dynamic power was especially impressive: 625 watts into 8 ohms, 1,010 watts into 4 ohms, and 1,360 watts into 2 ohms.

The final test was the nulling of both amplifiers into a KEF Model 105.2 speaker, using both sine-wave and music signals. The output power from the amplifiers was a few watts (a comfortable listening level). Critical adjustment of the Silver Seven's level control brought the speaker's output down to a barely audible whisper,

which seemed to consist mostly of program rather than distortion. If we had been able to trim the phase difference between the two amplifiers, perhaps the null would have been even deeper. It was certainly at least 40 dB deep as Carver had claimed.

Comments

Several things were proved by this comparison, though many other questions were not addressed at all—how the amplifiers "sounded," for example, which probably has no definitive answer given the dependence of their frequency responses on the impedance characteristics of the attached loudspeaker. Our major goal was to verify that two totally different amplifiers can be made to sound identical by careful matching of their transfer functions (as Bob Carver has been claiming, and demonstrating, for some years), and this was shown beyond a doubt. Although we cannot comment generally on the sonic characteristics of either amplifier, we can say with assurance that they are absolutely alike in this regard, despite their totally different circuit designs.

Some very critical listeners have found the Silver Seven to be a superb-sounding amplifier, however. I can testify that, overkill or not, it is a magnificent piece of audio hardware, as beautiful as it is potent, and, except for the problems of paying for it, satisfying its thirst for electricity, and finding the room for it, I would be most happy to own a pair.

But there is an obvious message in our test results. You don't have to buy a \$20,000 amplifier (our test sample was fitted with the premium-price KT88 tubes) to enjoy everything it can do, and more, without the by-product of heating your house electrically. The Silver Nine-t was the real winner in this comparison. Lacking most of the glamour, bulk, back-breaking weight, and cost of the Silver Seven, the solid-state Silver Nine-t is the clear choice for the audiophile with Rolls-Royce taste and a Ford income who wants vacuum-tube sound without the hassle and expense of retubing periodically. Besides the Silver Nine-t Mark II, Carver's line now includes four more conventional and less costly stereo power amplifiers whose transfer functions have also been adjusted to match that of the Silver Seven. □

The \$19 (And It's



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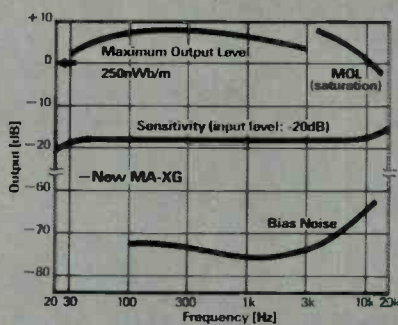
mechanism with an inner layer of fiberglass-reinforced plastic for strength, and a non-rigid plastic outer layer to reduce resonance. A precisely balanced system of internal sound stabilizer weights serves to reduce modulation noise even further.

All this technology surrounds a unique dual-layer metal tape that provides the highest output and lowest noise of any tape in TDK's history.

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If you still can't bring yourself to spend the better part of your paycheck on the MA-XG, we have good news.

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in the world has gone into our less outrageously priced tapes. Which may explain why *Audio* magazine's tests also revealed TDK not only has the best normal bias tape, but the best high bias tape (in lowest noise and widest dynamic range) in the world.

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CHOOSING THE RIGHT TAPE

BESIDES price and playing time, **To make good recordings, make sure your tape and deck work as a team.** what should you consider when buying tape for your cassette

deck? Are some types of tape a better choice for the kinds of music you want to record? And are the user-adjustable bias and sensitivity controls that adorn the front panels of so many decks really worth the bother?

To answer these questions requires looking at the basic types of tape available, the variations among tapes of the same type, and the way in which tapes interact with the recorder. Let's start with the differences among the three major tape types, since that also provides an opportunity to explain some of the underlying

PHOTOS BY JODIK P. LEUNG



BY CRAIG STARK

factors that determine how well the tape you buy will work in your cassette deck.

The tape in standard cassettes uses ferric oxide (Fe_2O_3) as its magnetic material. Designated as Type I, such cassettes are also known as "normal bias" tapes. Bias is an ultrasonic signal (usually between 90,000 and 120,000 Hz in frequency) that is generated in a deck's recording circuits and added to the audio signal that flows through its recording head. The effect of bias is both to increase the signal level that can be recorded on the tape and to lower distortion. Increasing the bias current beyond a certain point,

through most of the high-frequency range.

Although there were (briefly) some Type III dual-layer "ferrichrome" tape formulations, the most significant further improvements in overall performance came with the development of Type IV cassettes. Type IV tapes use pure-metal particles rather than oxides as their magnetic material. Metal-particle tapes use the same 70-microsecond playback equalization as Type II tapes, but they require about twice as much bias current.

Type IV tapes can produce, at all frequencies, a much higher output than either Type I or Type II formula-

input level no longer produce any increase in output level. (Indeed, increasing input level beyond saturation at high frequencies actually *reduces* the output level.) Unfortunately, the level of bias current that maximizes low-frequency MOL also lowers the tape's high-frequency MOL. Thus, in determining the optimum bias for a given tape there is always some trade-off between maximizing S/N and maintaining high-frequency response at high recording levels.

Choosing a Tape Type

If you have to choose a tape on the basis of type alone, are there any general rules to guide you in your selection? Figure 1 (facing page) helps provide an answer. It shows response curves obtained by recording frequency sweeps on representative samples of the three tape types both at a low level (-20 dB) and at a high level (0 dB). At -20 dB (used for standard cassette-deck response measurements because the results correlate well with performance when recording typical music), the differences among the three tapes are negligible. At the 0-dB level, however, differences in high-frequency MOL among the three tape types are apparent in the relative amounts of treble rolloff.

It takes no engineer to see that the clear high-frequency winner is the metal-particle tape. And, though not indicated in the graph, Type IV tapes also yield higher signal-to-noise ratios. Rule 1, then, is that where high-level high-frequency response and maximum dynamic range are critical—as they often are when dubbing CD's—the price premium for metal-particle tape is worth it.

Figure 1 also shows that the difference between the high-frequency MOLs of the Type I and Type II tapes is much less marked. The normal-bias, Type I ferric tape does have a small edge (about 1½ dB at 8,000 Hz) in the high frequencies, largely because of its 120-microsecond playback equalization. This should (and usually does) result in a signal-to-noise advantage for Type II tape, however, because of its 70-microsecond EQ. On the other hand, Type I tapes have improved dramatically in both noise level and high-frequency performance.

Thus, the practical differences between Type I and Type II cassettes are relatively subtle. If your musical taste runs to classical music, in which there are often very quiet passages (or complete silence), a Type II cassette will usually have a slight overall advantage

The clear winner at high frequencies is Type IV metal-particle tape.

however, severely reduces the tape's high-frequency storage capacity. With cassettes, especially, relatively small changes in bias can make large differences in treble response, so it is very important that the bias be set properly for the particular tape you are using.

Type II tapes use chromium-dioxide (CrO_2), cobalt-enriched ferric-oxide (chrome-equivalent), or, in a handful of cases, pure metal particles as their magnetic material. Type II cassettes are known as "high bias" tapes because their optimum bias level is approximately 50 percent greater than that for Type I cassettes.

The inherent advantage of Type II tape over Type I is that it can hold considerably more high-frequency signal. At the time high-bias cassettes were introduced, tape hiss was a much more serious problem than it is today (Dolby B noise reduction and chrome tape came simultaneously to cassettes with the introduction of the groundbreaking Advent Model 200 cassette deck in 1970). For this reason, the treble gain provided by Type II tapes was spent, so to speak, in reducing tape hiss by changing the playback equalization from the Type I standard of 120 microseconds to 70 microseconds. The effect of the modified playback equalization is to reduce tape noise by approximately 4½ dB

tions. In practical terms, this means that when you use Type IV metal-particle tapes you can usually drive your deck's recording-level indicators 2 to 3 dB further "into the red" than with other tapes. More low-frequency output from the metal tape means a better signal-to-noise ratio (S/N). More high-frequency output means less treble dulling when you record loud passages that are rich in high-frequency energy.

At low frequencies, the MOL (maximum output level) of a tape is normally defined as the point at which third-harmonic distortion reaches 3 percent. The third-harmonic distortion of a 315-Hz signal is, simply, a spurious signal that shows up at 945 Hz. Conventionally, cassette signal-to-noise ratio is determined by comparing the 315-Hz MOL of the tape to the recorded noise level produced when the 315-Hz tone is turned off.

At high frequencies, however, it is impossible to measure the distortion directly, because the third harmonic (45,000 Hz for a 15,000-Hz signal) falls outside the frequency range the deck can reproduce. At high frequencies, therefore, a tape's MOL is taken to be its "saturation point"—that is, the point at which further increases in

over Type I. On the other hand, if the music that appeals to you contains moments in which hiss could obtrude on silence, but top-hat cymbals play a big role, a Type I cassette may be a slightly better choice. Neither, however, can do as good a job as a Type IV cassette.

There is one consideration (apart from price) that might lead you to forgo the advantages of a metal-particle tape. All cassette decks—even the least expensive battery-operated portables—can use Type I tapes, and all but the least expensive portables have switchable bias and equalization for Type II cassettes. But even when they nominally support the use of Type IV cassettes, some decks cannot take advantage of all that metal-particle tapes have to offer.

The reason is that the high bias levels required by Type IV tapes, combined with the hot audio signals for which one normally would choose them, put a premium on the design of the deck's recording head. An inexpensive tape head can begin to run into distortion-producing magnetic saturation before the metal tape does. The problem is more likely to afflict two-head decks than three-head decks, but the latter are not automatically immune. You can spot such marginal machines by looking at their signal-to-noise figures. If there is not at least a 2- to 3-dB increase in S/N between chrome-equivalent Type II cassettes and metal-particle Type IV cassettes, the deck cannot take full advantage of Type IV formulations.

Optimizing for Your Tape

Whichever tape type you choose, if you're not using the specific brand and formulation within that type that the manufacturer used to adjust your deck at the factory, you're probably not getting optimum performance. Within each type there are important differences between specific tapes that can significantly affect performance.

Just how important these differences can be is apparent in Figure 2, which shows the overall record/playback frequency response of two metal tapes, measured at the customary -20-dB recording level, with and without Dolby C noise reduction. The 20,000-Hz response of Tape A, for which the deck was adjusted, is down by less than 1 dB without Dolby and less than 3 dB with Dolby C switched on. In the same deck with the same settings, the response from Tape B,

Effects of Tape Choice on Frequency Response

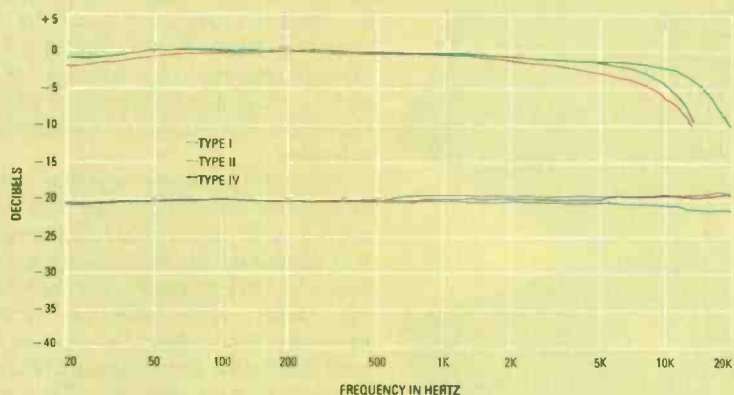


Figure 1. Tapes of all three types are capable of flat, extended response when the amount of high-frequency energy in the signal is low or moderate, as indicated by the lower record/playback response traces made at a -20-dB recording level. The advantage of Type IV tape becomes evident when the signal is rich in highs, as shown by the upper curves made at a 0-dB level.

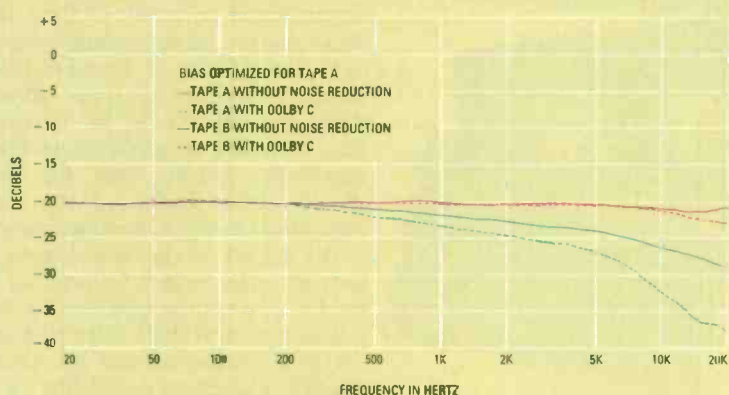


Figure 2. Tape performance depends heavily on correct matching of tape to machine. These curves show the record/playback responses of two different brands of Type IV metal tape in a deck whose bias has been optimized for one of them. The tape for which the deck was adjusted shows very flat response, whereas the other tape exhibits a severe treble rolloff caused by overbiasing. Note also how Dolby noise reduction exaggerates the response errors.

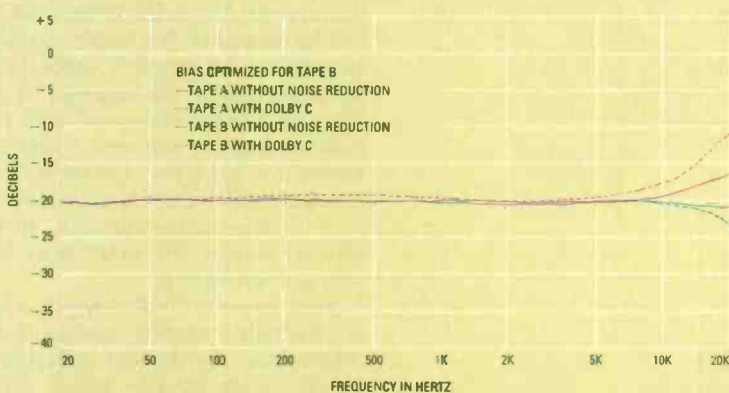


Figure 3. Here the tables are turned, with the deck adjusted for Tape B instead of Tape A. Tape B now gives flat frequency response while Tape A shows the rising high-frequency response characteristic of underbiasing.



also a top-brand metal tape, is down by 9 dB at 20,000 Hz without Dolby and a whopping 17 dB with Dolby C.

Figure 3 shows the performance of the same two tapes, this time with the deck's bias and sensitivity optimized for Tape B. Now Tape B has the flat response, while Tape A shows a 4½-dB high-frequency rise without Dolby and a screeching 9-dB boost at 20,000 Hz when the Dolby C circuits are activated.

Admittedly, most brand-to-brand differences within the same tape type are not as dramatic as in our example. It is important to note, however, that the curves in Figures 2 and 3 show that the Dolby noise-reduction system *magnifies* the frequency-response errors that arise from mismatches between tape and recorder. Since you will almost certainly be using one of the Dolby systems for every recording you make, even relatively small brand-to-brand differences can become audibly significant.

The front-panel controls that manufacturers put on many of their tape decks give you an opportunity to minimize the effects of brand-to-brand variations within tape types. Ideally, three controls should be provided: bias, recording equalization, and tape sensitivity. Ideally, too, the deck should supply calibrated test tones with which to make the adjustments.

The setting of the bias control affects the extreme high frequencies the most. A recording-equalization control (rarely provided) helps fine-tune the treble response, but it's usually possible to do pretty well in this regard with just a bias adjustment. A tape-sensitivity control enables you to compensate for the fact that different formulations often produce different overall output levels from the same input signal. This is important because the operation of the Dolby noise-reduction systems is level-sensitive and will be thrown off if a deck's recording circuits are not properly calibrated to the sensitivity of the tape you use. In fact, it is the prevalence of such mismatches and the response errors they create that led Dolby Laboratories to require that decks incorporating its new S-type noise-reduction system provide means for optimizing both bias and sensitivity.

Most cassette decks supply a bias control only, however, and most also require you to make your adjustments by ear rather than by meter. Under this scheme, optimum bias is taken to be the control setting at which there is no audible difference in high-fre-

quency content when you switch from source to tape while recording.

If you must make your adjustments this way, the easiest and most reliable approach is to use FM interstation hiss or a noise band on a test CD, not music, as your test signal. You should make sure your deck's tape-type selector is set properly for the cassette you are using (though many now switch automatically) and set the recording-level control for a reading of approximately -10 to -20 dB on the meters to insure against possible treble overload while you're making the bias adjustment. Since FM hiss or the noise band of a test CD not only contains a large high-frequency component but also tends to sound consistently the same, you can use this technique even with a two-head deck, which requires you to rewind the tape before you can listen comparatively to the result of recording at various bias-control settings.

The greatest difficulty with using your ear as a measuring instrument is that slight differences in tape sensitivity can easily be perceived as differences in frequency response. If your deck includes a sensitivity control, adjust it before you try to optimize the bias, and check it again afterwards.

Happily, some top-of-the-line decks automate the optimization process entirely, using a microprocessor to generate and analyze the necessary test signals. This yields far more accurate results than any amount of "earballing," and in just a fraction of the time. If your recorder is getting on in years, you might want to consider looking not only for the right tape but for a new deck as well.

EVEN if your deck provides no means of adjustment, or you can't afford one that does, you're not entirely out of luck. Go out and buy cassettes of various grades from a number of the major tape manufacturers. (If you're really lucky, your deck's owner's manual may get you started with some explicit suggestions, but don't rely on those exclusively.) Then try the live-versus-recorded noise comparison described above with each of them to help you choose the one that is best matched to your deck's factory settings. Such comparisons require patience and a willingness to throw away a little money up front on test cassettes, but over the long haul you'll wind up with much better recordings than if you just take potluck on tape selection. □

TO hear many prophets of audio tell it, the DAT (digital audio tape) format might just as well be called DOA. The mass-market introduction of DAT, which enables users to store up to 2 hours of digital audio on a remarkably tiny cassette, was long delayed by record-industry protests that home "cloning" of compact discs would result in billions of dollars in lost revenue. The industry never proved its case, but it did flex a lot of muscle, effectively keeping the format out of the U.S. for years. The handful of DAT decks marketed here were unveiled gingerly, at high prices, blank tapes are still very expensive, and very few prerecorded tapes have been released.

A few smart, well-traveled, impatient folks who bought their decks in Japan started the DAT buzz in the professional-recording community, and, truth to tell, that's still where most of the buzz is. The recent "royalty" agreement between equipment manufacturers, record companies, and music publishers may mean a wider availability of DAT decks, but the impending introduction of the Digital Compact Cassette (DCC), digital audio recordings on cassettes the size of today's analog tapes and decks that will play both analog and digital cassettes, has stolen almost all of DAT's thunder. Many predict that because of the newer format's backward compatibility, DCC will leave DAT in the dust.

Don't count on it. DAT will remain strong for pro and semipro applications. And some audiophiles (at least those who approve of digital recording in the first place) wrinkle their noses—actually, they scream bloody murder—at the idea of data-compression techniques like the one used in the DCC format. Today's DAT aficionados love it for three reasons: its quality, its versatility (aside from audio, DAT can also store still video and alphanumeric data), and its engineering sophistication. These are precisely the qualities that attracted videophiles to such once market-moribund technologies as the laserdisc and 8mm video. While DAT may never become a mass-market item, it's not going the way of the dinosaur either. The following look at some of the impressive DAT decks now available should give you an idea why DAT is still an attractive option.

DAT LIVES!

Sony offers the widest range of DAT equipment. Shown here, clockwise from top, are the \$650 DTC-700 home deck, featuring 1-bit A/D and D/A conversion; the \$450 DTX-10 for car systems, which includes a built-in tuner; and the TCD-D3 DAT Walkman (\$850), with a mike input, attenuator, and backlit level display to facilitate live recording.



B Y G L E N N K E N N Y



The RX-P1 from Sharp is a multipurpose player/recorder designed to work equally well at home, in a car, and on the go. It features dual 1-bit D/A converters and comes with a cassette adaptor for car use, a full set of connection cables, a rechargeable battery, an AC adaptor, and a carrying case. Price: \$1,500.

The HD-S100 portable from Aiwa (\$950) weighs little more than a pound but uses the same 30-mm head drum as home decks. It features 1-bit D/A and A/D conversion, a wired remote control, separate recording-level controls for each channel, and a 6-volt rechargeable battery.



Aiwa's XD-S260 (\$1,100), a home deck compatible in style and synchro operations with the company's line of mini systems, offers 1-bit A/D and D/A conversion, a three-motor drive system, and a plethora of subcode functions.

JVC's XD-Z1010TN (\$1,700) features a K2 interface, which is said to eliminate noise in the digital signal before it reaches the D/A converter or the analog circuits. It also offers an 18-bit digital-bias D/A converter, facilities for mixing the stereo line and microphone inputs, and sophisticated editing capabilities.

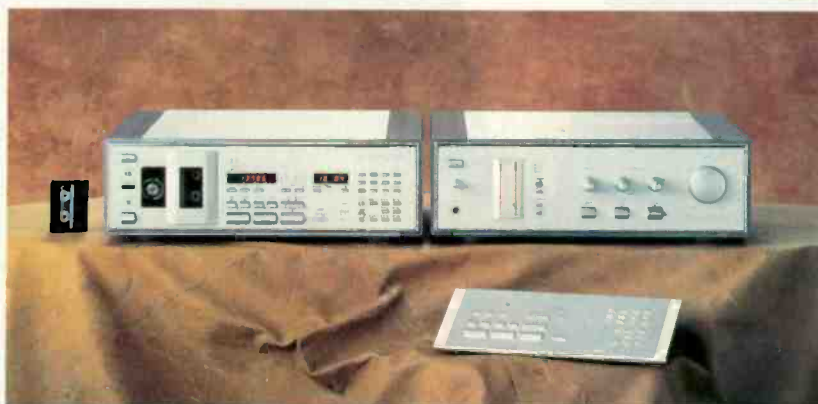




Denon's \$1,000 DTR-2000 home deck features 20-bit, eight-times-oversampling Lambda D/A converters, three record/playback sampling rates, ID subcode editing, search at 250 or 400 times normal speed, and both optical and coaxial digital inputs and outputs.



The DTR-80 portable player/recorder from Denon has dual 18-bit, eight-times-oversampling D/A converters, stereo mini jacks for microphone input and headphone output, high-speed search, and a backlit display. It can operate for about 4 hours on four alkaline batteries; an AC adaptor is included. Price: \$900.

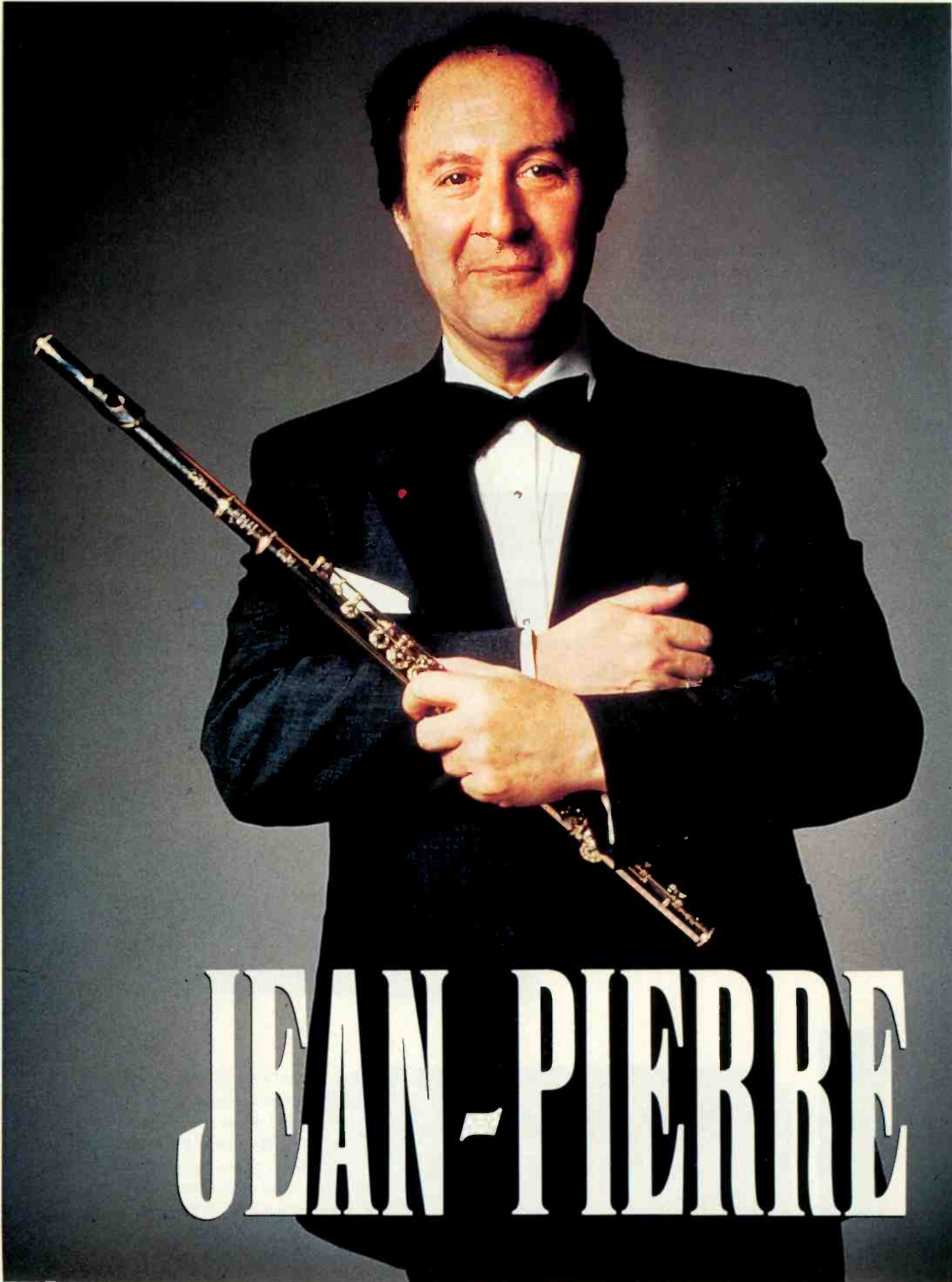


The Model 1000 recorder (\$5,900) and the Model 1000p digital audio processor (\$5,100) combine to form Nakamichi's Digital Audio Recording System. The recorder features a four-head design and many sophisticated operating conveniences as well as the company's Fast Access Stationary Tape Guide Transport mechanism. The processor features a high-precision 20-bit D/A converter.

The \$800 Technics SV-DA10 features the company's MASH 1-bit D/A and A/D conversion system. A shuttle-search dial enables the user to search tapes at up to 400 times normal speed, and a wireless remote control is supplied.



The DT-901 (\$1,100), part of Onkyo's Integra line, features ultra-high-speed search, and high-performance amorphous heads. It uses 1-bit A/D and D/A converters and has optical and coaxial digital inputs as well as an optical digital output.



JEAN-PIERRE

JEAN-PIERRE RAMPAL, the French flutist who celebrated his seventieth birthday on January 7, 1992, holds a unique distinction—he is the first modern practitioner of his instrument ever to rise from the orchestral ranks and lead a flourishing career as a solo virtuoso. Only James Galway, his younger Irish rival, has had similar, if somewhat later success. While there is no love lost between the Gaul and the Gael, together they have made the flute the world's most popular woodwind.

Rampal's concerts, which have been taking him around the world these last forty years, are usually sold out and generally packed with young people who find a unique enchantment in the music so lucidly played by the portly, balding Frenchman. His suave, supple tones contrast oddly with his bear-like physique and businesslike stage demeanor.

"You must have personality—that is what the audiences want to hear," he remarked affably in his Marseilles-flavored English during a recent visit to New York. "It is hard to explain personality—I cannot do it myself. Maybe you have to ask the audiences. But I am very proud that young people keep coming to hear me. Some maybe have become a little older, but they still look young to me!"

Rampal is currently playing some ninety to one hundred concerts a year ("I never count them," he insists), gives master classes when he has time, has taken up conducting, and turns out recordings by the dozen, with an exclusive contract since 1981 with Sony Classical. Sony will mark his seventieth birthday by putting out a three-CD package called "Great Flute Concertos."

The formal observance in New York of Rampal's birthday will come on February 3 at Avery Fisher Hall, when he will be joined in a special program by his friends the violinist Isaac Stern and the cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. "We all played together for each other's sixtieth birthday," he explained, "and we are doing the same for our seventieth."

Rampal came to his instrument naturally, for his father was first flutist of the Marseilles Symphony Orchestra and professor of flute at the Marseilles Conservatory. Jean-Pierre entered the conservatory at age twelve and also studied with his father, making a formal debut in recital at fifteen. Nevertheless, he was destined by his parents for a career as a surgeon and was actually in medical school when the Germans occupied France. He says he "hid out" in Paris during

the war, entering the Conservatory, where he eventually won first prize for flute. He played for several years in the Paris Opéra orchestra but soon began trying solo recitals.

Although Rampal makes no pretense to modesty, he thinks that he and his flute came along at just the right time. "I think the revival of the flute as a solo instrument was tied into the general awakening of interest in Baroque music that took place after [World War II]," he explained. "Europeans needed to discover the Baroque at that time. After what they had been through, it was necessary for their balance of mind to find that kind of equilibrium.

"But I always had the feeling that some day it would happen that the flute would become a solo instrument. We have a beautiful repertory, and now more and more contemporary composers—contemporary, not avant-garde!—are writing for it. I have had pieces written for me by Poulenc and Jolivet in France, David Diamond and Ezra Laderman in the United States. Now Krzysztof Penderecki is working on a concerto, but he is very slow."

Repertory, of course, is something of a problem; beautiful though it may be, the flute repertory is not overly extensive,

"IT'S NICE TO HAVE A CROWD. WE ARE ALL A LITTLE 'HAM,' YOU KNOW. BUT IT'S ALSO MORE INSPIRING TO PLAY FOR MANY PEOPLE THAN FOR A FEW."

RAMPAL

necessitating transpositions and adaptations of music composed originally for other instruments. "I'm not against transcriptions," Rampal said, "but only when it is necessary, possible, and proper."

Two of his most recent Sony CD's illustrate the point admirably. One is devoted to concertos for two flutes in which Rampal is joined by Shigenori Kudo, a young Japanese whose work he admires. Three of the concertos—by Cimarosa, Vivaldi, and Anton Stamitz—were indeed written for two flutes. The fourth, however, is Mozart's Concertone for Two Solo Violins, which, it must be admitted, takes on a new level of interest when transposed for two flutes. The other Sony CD is devoted to flute transcriptions of relatively neglected music by Mozart, including such odd pieces as the Andante for Mechanical Organ (K. 616) and a Rondo for Soprano (K. 577).

Rampal has always expressed a predilection for Mozart's music, which he said is growing "more and more." He refuses to credit the oft-repeated story



Stern, Rostropovich, and Rampal

that Mozart really hated the instrument. "He may have made some kind of crack about it in a letter he wrote," Rampal said. "But that was because this guy who commissioned a flute piece from him, Monsieur de Jean, didn't pay him and was very pretentious. And maybe he didn't like some flute players, so that produced a reaction. But Mozart had to love the flute. He couldn't have written the G Major Concerto if he hadn't."

Rampal says that there are flute transcriptions he refuses to play. In an apparent dig at James Galway, whom he calls "Jeemee" in his accented English, he observes that the Irish flutist has recorded Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* with the flute replacing the solo violin. "I won't record it," declared Rampal. "It belongs on the violin—to transcribe it destroys the music. Besides, we have eighteen Vivaldi concertos for flute. We don't need *The Four Seasons* too."

Popular and folk music play lesser

parts in Rampal's repertory than in Galway's, but they are by no means lacking. He has made at least a dozen recordings with the jazz pianist Claude Bolling, one of which, Bolling's Suite for Flute and Jazz Piano No. 1, stayed on the charts for ten straight years. "Claude was a good friend of mine," Rampal said, "and we made this recording just for fun. Somebody from CBS happened to hear it, and they put it out. Then Ravi Shankar asked me to do a recording, and I love Indian music, so I said, 'Why not?' And when I visited Japan I liked the music there, so I recorded my 'Japanese Melodies.' Every musician likes to change a little bit, no?"

Whatever kind of music he's playing, Rampal admits frankly that he'd rather play it in a large hall than a small one. It's a preference that goes beyond the size of the house receipts. "It's nice to have a crowd," he explained. "We are all a little 'ham,' you know. But it's also more inspiring to play for many people than for a few. With a few people, I'm not turned on so much. Small groups can get a little snobbish, too limited, too elite. I like the elite people, of course, but also the normal people."

Rampal's feeling about crowds extends even to his teaching, for he prefers to work with master classes rather than one on one. But Rampal's love for large audiences does not particularly extend to television. "I do it, but it's not my favorite medium," he said. "A long time ago I did all the Mozart concertos on TV in Paris. But it's like making a movie—you have to play for the camera, and I want to concentrate on the music."

One process in which Rampal feels perfectly comfortable is recording. He should be: He's been doing it long enough. His studio activities encompass the 78-rpm, LP, and CD eras, and he says he's even ready for digital tape. "I love recording," he said. "Unfortunately, I don't even have all of the old wax recordings that I made myself. I gave them to friends, and there are some I was left without. I remember the first recording I ever made, the Mozart D Major Quartet with the Pasquier Trio. The first movement was very good, the rest not quite as good—but, of course, in wax you had to take it as it came out. Then, with LP's, you could do a little splicing on the tape. Now you can splice everything you want, but I hate to do it. I would much rather have complete takes. I think the CD's sound better than ever—absolutely no noise."

Rampal's conducting is generally confined to works in which he is also appearing as flute soloist, but he says it is an aspect of musicmaking that he thoroughly enjoys. "I do it as much as I can—whenever they ask me," he said. "But I will not say to anybody that I will play only if you ask me to conduct, too. There are people who say that, you know? Or they say, 'If you engage me, you must engage my wife, or my girl friend.' I hate that."

UNLIKE string players, who like old instruments, most woodwind players prefer modern ones. Rampal plays a 14-karat-gold flute made by Haynes of Boston. He believes gold imparts a warmer, darker, and more mellow sound than does silver, which he acknowledges is more brilliant, or platinum, which he considers "very cold." The most famous champion of the platinum flute was the late William Kincaid, the great flutist of the Philadelphia Orchestra a generation ago. On one point at least Rampal is in agreement with Kincaid, who once remarked that the flute was "the easiest instrument to play badly and the hardest to play well."

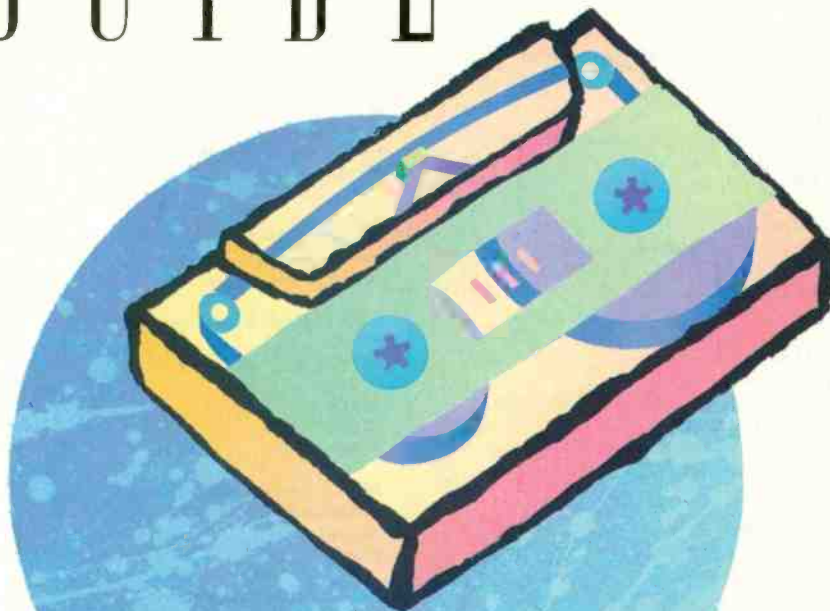
"That probably can be said of all instruments, but especially of the flute," Rampal remarked. "From the eighteenth century on amateurs have found it quite easy to blow into the instrument and make a bad sound."

Rampal has nothing but praise for today's crop of younger players, however. "There is an enormous number of fantastic flutists," was the way he put it. "More and more, they seem to be developing." Asked for names, he began to reel them off: Ransom Wilson, Shigenori Kudo, Carol Wincenc, Paula Robison, Robert Stallman . . . "I could give fifty," he said, "but just to give some, that's not very nice for the others."

In any case, Jean-Pierre Rampal has no doubt that the future of the flute as a virtuoso instrument is assured. But those who intend to pursue solo careers can count on continuing to face at least one formidable rival—Rampal himself. He said he feels fine at age seventy—just about the same as he did at age sixty—and has no thought of retiring. "When I feel it is time, I will stop," he said. "But not yet. I still feel what I did when I started: The flute isn't the end for me. The music is." □

Herbert Kupferberg, a senior editor of Parade magazine, is the author of The Book of Classical Music Lists (Penguin) and other books on music.

TAPE BUYING GUIDE



WHILE compact discs may be spinning like there's no tomorrow, analog cassettes are still the most popular format for recorded music. When you consider that more than half a billion blank and prerecorded cassettes were purchased last year, it's no wonder that the tape deck remains a stereo-system staple. Plain and simple, cassettes are the most practical medium for making copies of CDs, LP's, or other tapes, and they will continue to be until recordable-CD technology becomes affordable or the new Digital Compact Cassette or Mini Disc proves itself in the marketplace. The following guide lists the available blank cassettes, analog and DAT, and gives a representative sampling of today's analog decks for home use; see page 49 for DAT decks. (Open-reel equipment and tapes are used mainly by professionals nowadays.) Specifications and features were provided by the manufacturers, and all prices are suggested retail, so actual selling prices may vary. Now, hit that play button.

—Bob Ankosko

BLANK TAPE

BASF

Digital Audio Tapes

Features ultra-fine metallic pigment.

DAT C120. 120 min	\$11.99
DAT C90. 90 min	\$10.99
DAT C60. 60 min	\$9.99

Chrome Maxima II Cassettes

Double-layer pure chrome formulation in a precision housing.

C100. 100 min	\$4.69
C90. 90 min	\$4.29
C60. 60 min	\$3.29

Chrome Super Cassettes

Double-layer chrome tape and precision shell.

C100. 100 min	\$4.19
C90. 90 min	\$3.69

Chrome Extra II Cassettes

Pure chrome formulation.

C100. 100 min	\$3.29
C90. 90 min	\$2.99
C60. 60 min	\$2.69

Ferro Extra I Cassettes

Iron-oxide formulation.

C100. 100 min	\$1.89
C90. 90 min	\$1.69
C60. 60 min	\$1.49

CERTRON

Certron CTX Cassettes.

90 minute, high-bias.

5-pack	\$12.99
2-pack	\$5.99

DENON

All Denon cassettes feature a head-cleaning leader and a lifetime warranty.

Digital Audio Tapes

Ultrafine metallic-particle tape with special back-coating.

R-120 DT. 120 min	\$14.99
R-90 DT. 90 min	\$12.99
R-60 DT. 60 min	\$10.99
R-20 DM. 20 min. Demo-Master	\$9.99

High Specific Gravity Cassettes

Pure-metal formulation in heat-resistant shell.

MG-X100. 100 min	\$8.99
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S-Port Cassettes

Thin case with rounded corners and edges.

S-Port Metal. 100 min. 2-pk	\$6.99
S-Port High. 100 min. 2-pk	\$4.99

HDM Metal Cassettes

Pure-metal tape.

HDM-100. 100 min	\$5.99
HDM-90. 90 min	\$5.50
HDM-74. 74 min	\$4.99

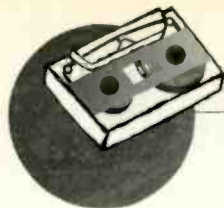
HD8 High-Bias Cassettes

High-density formulation combining metal particles with cobalt-doped gamma ferric oxide.

HD8-100. 100 min	\$4.99
HD8-90. 90 min	\$4.75
HD8-74. 74 min	\$4.25
HD8-60. 60 min	\$3.75

HD7 High-Bias Cassettes

HD7-100. 100 min	\$4.25
HD7-90. 90 min	\$4
HD7-74. 74 min	\$3.50



BLANK TAPE

HD6 High-Bias Cassettes

HD6-100. 100 min	\$3.50
HD6-90. 90 min	\$3.25
HD6-74. 74 min	\$2.75

DX1 Normal-Bias Cassettes

DX1-90. 90 min	\$2.25
DX1-60. 60 min	\$1.75

DIC

Digital Audio Tapes

Fabricated with densely packed, ultra-fine-grain magnetic metal particles.

120XR. 120 min	\$11
90XR. 90 min	\$9
60XR. 60 min	\$8
46XR. 46 min	\$7
30XR. 30 min	\$6
15XR. 15 min	\$5

DYSAN

Features lightweight, space-saving cases and a unique labeling system.

Metal Cassettes

110 min, 2 pk	\$6.99
90 min, 2 pk	\$5.99

High-Bias Cassettes

110 min, 2 pk	\$4.99
90 min, 2 pk	\$4.49

Normal-Bias Cassettes

120 min, 2 pk	\$3.99
110 min, 2 pk	\$3.49
90 min, 2 pk	\$2.99
60 min, 2 pk	\$2.49

FUJI

Digital Audio Tapes

Super-Fine Metallix formulation.

DAT (R-120). 120 min	\$12.95
DAT (R-90). 90 min	\$11.95
DAT (R-60). 60 min	\$10.95

FR Metal Series Cassettes

High-bias metal tape.

FR (C-90). 90 min	\$5.99
FR (C-60). 60 min	\$5.49

FR-II PRO Series Cassettes

High-bias double-coated tape in a heat-resistant shell.

FR-II Pro (C-100). 100 min	\$5.49
FR-II Pro (C-90). 90 min	\$4.99
FR-II Pro (C-60). 60 min	\$4.49

FR-IIx Series Cassettes

High-bias double-coated tape.

FR-IIx (C-90). 90 min	\$3.99
FR-IIx (C-60). 60 min	\$3.49

DR-II Series Cassettes

High-bias double-coated tape.

DR-II (C-100). 100 min	\$3.49
DR-II (C-90). 90 min	\$2.99
DR-II (C-60). 60 min	\$2.49

DR-I Series Cassettes

Normal-bias tape.

DR-I (C-90). 90 min	\$1.99
DR-I (C-60). 60 min	\$1.49



JVC

Digital Audio Tapes

Three-layer metal-powder coating and ABS shell.

R-120XD. 120 min	\$14
R-100XD. 100 min	\$12.70
R-90XD. 90 min	\$12
R-60XD. 60 min	\$10

XFIV Cassettes

Ultra-fine metal particles, oblique hubs, and precision-engineered shell.

XFIV-90. 90 min	\$3.90
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AFI Cassettes

Normal bias with tensilized polyester-base film.

AFI-90. 90 min	\$3.90
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AFII Cassettes

High bias with tensilized polyester-base film.

AFII-90. 90 min	\$2.50
AFII-60. 60 min	\$2.20

GI Cassettes

Normal bias with polyester-base film.

GI-90. 90 min	\$1.55
GI-60. 60 min	\$1.30

LORAN

Digital Audio Tapes

Made to custom lengths with 10-tape order.

Pro-DAT. 120-min	\$10.50
Pro-DAT. 60-min	\$7.50
Pro-DAT. 30-min	\$6
Pro-DAT. 10-min	\$5

ESQ Series

High bias; polycarbonate shell.

ESQ-90. 90 min	\$4.99
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MAXELL

Digital Audio Tapes

Features Ceramic-Armor metal particles.

R-120DM. 120 min	\$14.99
R-90DM. 90 min	\$12.99
R-60DM. 60 min	\$10.99
R-46DM. 46 min	\$8.99

Metal Vertex

MV-90. 90 min	\$14.99
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MX-S Metal Cassettes

MX-S 100. 100 min	\$5.99
MX-S 90. 90 min	\$5.29
MX-S 60. 60 min	\$4.39

MX Metal Cassettes

MX-110. 100 min	\$4.49
MX-90. 90 min	\$3.99
MX-60. 60 min	\$2.99

XLII-S Epitaxial High-Bias Cassettes

60 min-100 min	\$3.59-\$4.99
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XL-II Epitaxial Cassettes

High-bias chrome tape.

46 min-100 min	\$3.29-\$4.39
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UD-II Epitaxial High-Bias Cassettes

46-100 min	\$2.49-\$3.69
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XLI-S Epitaxial Cassettes

Normal bias.

60 min-90 min	\$3.59-\$4.39
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UD-I Epitaxial Cassettes

Normal bias.

60 min-90 min	\$2.49-\$2.99
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UR Cassettes

Normal bias.

46 min-120 min	\$1.49-\$2.79
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MEMOREX, BY MEMTEK

CDX II High-Bias Metal Cassettes

90 min	\$4.79
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dBS Normal-Bias Cassettes

110 min	\$3.29
120 min	\$1.94
90 min	\$1.39
60 min	\$1.09
45 min	\$1.04

CDX Type IV Metal Cassettes

110 min	\$3.25
90 min	\$2.99

HBX II High-Bias Cassettes

Ferricobalt tape.

60 min-90 min	\$2.79-\$3.69
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HBS II High-Bias Cassettes

110 min	\$2.79
100 min	\$2.59
90 min	\$2.29
76 min	\$1.99
60 min	\$1.79
46 min	\$1.59

MRX I Normal-Bias Cassettes

Full lifetime warranty; clear shell.

90 min	\$1.99
60 min	\$1.79

Normal-Bias Cassettes

For general-purpose recording; clear shell.

120 min	\$1.99
90 min	\$1.49
60 min	\$1.19
46 min	\$1.10

REALISTIC, BY RADIO SHACK

MIV Metal Cassettes

Fine-grain metal particles, 5-screw housing, and hinged storage box.

60 min-90 min	\$4.99-\$5.99
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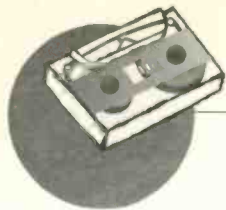
MII Metal Cassettes

Head-cleaning leader.

MII-100. 100 min	\$4.99
MII-90. 90 min	\$4.79
MII-76. 76 min	\$4.49
MII-60. 60 min	\$3.99

HD High-Definition Cassettes

High-bias chrome-equivalent tape with head-



BLANK TAPE

cleaning leader, hinged storage box, and index card.

HD-100. 100 min	\$3.69
HD-90. 90 min	\$2.99
HD-76. 76 min	\$2.79
HD-60. 60 min	\$2.49
HD-46. 46 min	\$2.39

LN Low-Noise Standard Ferric Cassettes

Hinged storage box with index card.

LN-120. 120 min, 2-pk	\$3.49
LN-90. 90 min, 2-pk	\$2.39
LN-60. 60 min, 2-pk	\$1.99
LN-30. 30 min, 2-pk	\$1.69

XR Type I Premium Ferric Cassettes

Hinged storage box with index card.

XR-120. 120 min	\$2.79
XR-90. 90 min	\$1.99
XR-60. 60 min	\$1.49
XR-46. 46 min	\$1.39

RECOTON

SX 100 Cassettes

Normal-bias tape.

SX 100-10. 10 tapes, 100 min	\$20
SX 100-2. 2 tapes, 100 min	\$5

High-Bias Cassettes

UX 90-10. 10 tapes, 90 min	\$16
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SCOTCH, BY 3M

Digital Audio Tapes

Scotch DAT-120. 120 min	\$14.99
Scotch DAT-90. 90 min	\$12.49
Scotch DAT-60. 60 min	\$10.99
Scotch DAT-46. 46 min	\$8.99

High-Bias Cassettes

Scotch XS II-S. 90 min	\$4.19
Scotch XS II-S. 60 min	\$3.29

Normal-Bias Cassettes

Scotch CX. 90 min	\$2.99
Scotch CX. 60 min	\$2.59
Scotch BX. 90 min	\$1.99
Scotch BX. 60 min	\$1.69

SONY

Digital Audio Tapes

120 min	\$18
90 min	\$16
60 min	\$12.50

Metal Master Cassettes

90 min	\$10.99
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ES Series Cassettes

Metal

100 min	\$7.49
90 min	\$6.99
60 min	\$5.99

High Bias

100 min	\$4.49
90 min	\$3.99
74 min	\$3.49
60 min	\$2.99

Normal Bias

100 min	\$3.99
90 min	\$3.49

74 min	\$2.99
60 min	\$2.59

SR Series Metal Cassettes

100 min	\$4.49
90 min	\$3.99
60 min	\$2.99

UX-Pro Series High-Bias Cassettes

90 min	\$4.49
60 min	\$3.99

UX-Turbo Series High-Bias Cassettes

100 min	\$4.49
90 min	\$3.99
60 min	\$3.29

CDu Series

Metal

100 min	\$4.49
94 min	\$3.99
74 min	\$3.29
54 min	\$2.79

High Bias

100 min	\$3.49
94 min	\$2.99
74 min	\$2.49
54 min	\$2.29

UX Series High-Bias Cassettes

100 min	\$3.49
90 min	\$2.99
60 min	\$2.29

HF Series High-Bias Cassettes

120 min	\$2.69
90 min	\$1.69
60 min	\$1.59

TDK

MA-XG Metal-Alloy Cassettes

Dual-layer metal Finavinx tape formulation housed in 5-piece mechanism.



MA-XG 90. 90 min	\$18.99
MA-XG 60. 60 min	\$16.99

DA Digital Audio Tapes

Super Finavinx pure-metal tape formulation with compound binder.

DA-R120. 120 min	\$14.99
DA-R90. 90 min	\$12.99
DA-R60. 60 min	\$10.99

MA-X Metal-Alloy Cassettes

Ultrafine Finavinx tape formulation in antiresonance mechanism.

MA-X 100. 100 min	\$5.99
MA-X 90. 90 min	\$5.29
MA-X 60. 60 min	\$4.39

MA Metal-Alloy Cassettes

Ultrafine Finavinx tape formulation in antiresonance mechanism.

MA 110. 110 min	\$4.49
MA 90. 90 min	\$3.99
MA 60. 60 min	\$2.99

SA-X High-Bias Cassettes

Dual-coated Super-Avilyn tape in antiresonance mechanism.

SA-X 100. 100 min	\$4.99
SA-X 90. 90 min	\$4.49
SA-X 60. 60 min	\$3.99
SA-X 50. 46 min	\$3.29

SA High-Bias Cassettes

Super Avilyn tape formulation in antiresonance cassette shell.

SA 100. 100 min	\$4.39
SA 90. 90 min	\$3.79
SA 80. 80 min	\$3.69
SA 60. 60 min	\$3.29
SA 50. 46 min	\$3.29

SD High-Bias Cassettes

Avilyn tape formulation in multiface shell.

SD 100. 100 min	\$3.69
SD 90. 90 min	\$2.99
SD 60. 60 min	\$2.49
SD 50. 46 min	\$2.49

DS-X Normal-Bias Cassettes

Nonporous ferric tape formulation in multiface shell.

DS-X 100. 100 min	\$3.69
DS-X 90. 90 min	\$2.99
DS-X 60. 60 min	\$2.49

D Normal-Bias Cassettes

Fine pure-grained ferric tape formulation.

D 120. 120 min	\$2.99
D 90. 90 min	\$1.99
D 60. 60 min	\$1.69
D 50. 46 min	\$1.69
D 30. 30 min	\$1.49

3M BLACK WATCH

All Black Watch tapes feature a lifetime warranty.

7707 Digital Audio Tapes

Proprietary pure-metal-particulate formulation.

DT-120. 120 min	\$20
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4040 Metal Cassettes

100 min	\$9
74 min	\$7

2020 High-Bias Cassettes

100 min	\$6
74 min	\$4



TAPE DECKS

ACOUSTIC RESEARCH

RD-06 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features brushless direct-drive DC servomotor; sendust-core record/playback head; ferrite-core erase head. Bias control; record-balance function; optional remote control. S/N: 55 dB (no NR), 64 dB (Dolby B), 73 dB (Dolby C); w&F 0.2% DIN; FR: 30-20,000 Hz ± 3 dB (metal). 17 x 4 1/2 x 13 in; 12.4 lb . . . \$500

AIWA

AD-F810 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Dual-capstan design; bias-shield head block; tape-stabilizing mechanism; sendust erase head; PC-OCC wire head coils; auto rec mute; auto tape-bias selector; direct CD/DAT inputs; headphone jack with level control. IC-logic feather-touch controls; memory rewind/repeat; independent L&R FL peak-level meters; timer record/playback; manual bias and recording sens controls. FR: 10-19,000 Hz ± 3 dB (normal bias), 10-20,000 Hz ± 3 dB (high bias), 10-21,000 Hz ± 3 dB (metal); S/N (metal): 65 dB (Dolby B), 78 dB (Dolby C); w&F 0.035% wrms. 17 x 5 x 11 1/2 in; 11.2 lb. \$400

AD-WX717 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B and C NR. Features one autoreverse deck; tape-stabilizing mechanism; auto rec mute; auto tape-bias selector; headphone jack. IC-logic feather-touch controls; high-speed dubbing; continuous playback mode; music sensor; blank skip; timer record/playback; bidirectional auto rewind; wireless remote control. FR: 20-16,000 Hz (normal bias), 20-17,000 Hz (high bias), 20-18,000 Hz (metal); S/N: 78 dB (Dolby C, metal); w&F 0.065% wrms. 17 x 5 1/4 x 10 1/2 in \$300

AD-R707 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features autoreverse; tape-stabilizing mechanism; auto rec mute; auto tape-bias selector; headphone jack. IC-logic feather-touch controls; electronic tape counter; FL peak-hold level meter; bias fine-tuning; music sensor; blank skip; timer record/playback; wireless remote control. FR: 20-16,000 Hz ± 3 dB (normal bias), 20-17,000 Hz ± 3 dB (high bias), 20-18,000 Hz ± 3 dB (metal); S/N: 78 dB (Dolby C, metal); w&F 0.065% wrms. 17 x 5 1/4 x 10 1/2 in; 8.8 lb \$275

BANG & OLUFSEN

Beocord 6500 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features autoreverse; sendust head; auto search and record level. FR: 30-18,000 Hz ± 3 dB (high bias); w&F 0.09% wrms; speed deviation $\pm 1.5\%$; S/N (normal bias): 63 dB (Dolby B); S/N (high bias): 65 dB (Dolby B), 74 dB (Dolby C); S/N (metal): 64 dB (Dolby B), 73 dB (Dolby C). \$1,250

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO

CT50 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Full-logic tape transport; 2 motors; laminar-alloy record head; trim control. Output voltage 500 mV; input sens 80 mV; w&F 0.07%. 16 1/2 x 5 x 11 1/4; 10 lb . . . \$500

CARVER

TD-1700 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Dual-capstan trans-

port; oxygen-free rec/play head core; MPX filter. Auto bias adjustment; high-speed dubbing; dual FL meters; memory rewind/repeat; rec mute; headphone jack; wireless remote control. 19 x 4 1/2 x 11 1/2 in; 15 lb \$600

TDR-2400 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Full-logic control; dual autoreverse transports; MPX filter. Auto tape-bias selector; high-speed dubbing; LED meters; memory rewind/repeat; rec mute; headphone jack; wireless remote control. \$520

DENON

All Denon cassette decks feature Dolby B and C NR, bias fine-tuning, full auto stop, auto space, headphone jack, and compatibility with Denon's IS-system remote control.

DRW-850 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby HX Pro. Features dual autoreverse transports; 2-motor transports with nonslip reel drive; revolving amorphous-alloy heads; dual power supply; dual-recording mode to make 2 simultaneous copies of an external source; autoreversing relay-record and relay-play modes. Peak-reading FL meters; high-speed dubbing; output-level con-



Denon DRS-810

trol; auto tape-bias selector; music search; recording-balance control; FL real-time counter; remote control with independent deck controls. FR: 20-19,000 Hz ± 3 dB (metal); S/N: 74 dB (Dolby C); w&F 0.06% \$500

DRM-710 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby HX Pro. Features Super Permalloy combination head in die-cast aluminum base; dual-capstan 3-motor transport; dual power supply. FL peak-hold meters; output-level control; auto tape-bias selector; music search; recording-balance control; record-return mode; real-time counter. FR: 20-20,000 Hz ± 3 dB (metal); S/N: 76 dB (Dolby C); w&F 0.038% \$400

Horizontal-Loading Cassette Decks

DRS-810 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby HX Pro. Features Super Permalloy combination head in die-cast aluminum base; dual-capstan 3-motor transport; ceramic-composite cassette stabilizer; dual power supply. Peak-hold FL meters with 50-dB range; output-level control; auto tape-bias selector; auto tape-monitor function; music search; recording-balance control; record-return mode; FL time counter. FR: 20-20,000 Hz ± 3 dB (metal); S/N: 75 dB (Dolby C); w&F 0.038% \$500

DRR-780 Cassette Deck

Dolby HX Pro. Features autoreverse; revolving record/playback head; ceramic-composite cassette stabilizer; dual power supply. Output-level control; auto tape-bias selector; music search; record-balance control; record-return mode; FL time counter with remaining-time display; wireless remote control. FR: 25-18,000 Hz ± 3 dB (metal); S/N: 74 dB (Dolby C) \$400

DUAL

CC-5850RC Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features amorphous record/playback head; computer-controlled 2-motor drive. Bias control; auto tape-bias selector; music search; electronic counter with memory; level display with peak hold; record mute; balance control; repeat play; headphone jack; remote-control capability with CR-5950RC receiver. FR: 25-16,000 Hz (normal bias), 25-18,000 Hz (high bias), 25-19,000 Hz (metal); S/N (normal bias): 65 dB (Dolby B), 73 dB (Dolby C); S/N (metal): 68 dB (Dolby B), 76 dB (Dolby C); w&F 0.05% wrms. Black anodized finish \$505

CC-8065RC Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features computer-controlled 2-motor drive. Bias control; auto tape-bias selector; programmable music search; record mute; timer; 4-digit counter with memory; headphone and mic jacks. FR: 25-15,000 Hz (normal bias), 25-17,000 Hz (high bias), 25-18,000 Hz (metal); S/N (normal bias): 64 dB (Dolby B), 71 dB (Dolby C); S/N (metal): 67 dB (Dolby B), 74 dB (Dolby C); w&F 0.06% wrms. Black \$440

FISHER

CR-9070 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features switchable MPX filter; full-logic controls; metal-tape compatibility; 2 motors. Input- and record-level controls; blank skip; linear time-tape counter; headphone jack; remote control. FR: 15-20,000 Hz ± 3 dB (normal/high bias); S/N: 52 dB (no NR), 62 dB (Dolby B), 72 dB (Dolby C); w&F 0.05% wrms. Black. 17 1/4 x 5 1/4 x 10 1/4 in; 11.5 lb \$500

CR-9030 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features switchable MPX filter; full-logic controls; metal-tape compatibility; pulse counter; 2 motors. Input- and record-level controls; blank skip; headphone jack; remote control. FR: 20-17,000 Hz ± 3 dB (normal bias), 20-18,000 Hz (high bias); S/N: 52 dB (no NR), 62 dB (Dolby B), 72 dB (Dolby C); w&F 0.06% wrms. Black. 17 1/4 x 5 1/4 x 10 1/4 in . . . \$400

CR-W905B Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B and C NR. Dual autoreverse transports; full-logic controls; switchable MPX filter; metal-tape compatibility; 1-touch high-speed dubbing; sequential playback; intro scan; blank skip; digital tape counter; remote control. FR: 40-15,000 Hz ± 3 dB (normal/high bias); S/N: 62 dB (Dolby B); w&F 0.06% wrms. Black \$350

HARMAN KARDON

All decks have an MPX filter and Dolby B and C NR; FR specification covers all types of tape unless otherwise noted.

TD4800 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby S NR and HX Pro. Features closed-loop dual-capstan transport; isotropic heads; bias tone generator. Record-calibration and output-level controls; headphone jack; auto tape-bias selector; music search; intro scan; record mute; remote control. FR: 20-22,000 Hz ± 3 dB . . . \$1,199
TD4600. 2-head version of above . . . \$749
TD4500. As TD4600, without Dolby S . . \$549

DC5700 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby HX Pro. Features dual autoreverse transports; isotropic heads; cross-Dolby recording. 1-



TAPE DECKS

touch high-speed and standard-speed copy modes; synchronized autoreverse copy mode; time counter; music search; intro scan; auto pause; edit mode; bias control; wireless remote control. FR: 20-20,000 Hz (normal bias), 20-18,000 Hz (high-speed dubbing) \$799
DC5500. As above, without cross-Dolby recording \$649

TD4400 Cassette Deck

Dolby HX Pro. Features solenoid transport; isotropic heads. Bias control; record mute; auto tape-bias selector; music search; intro scan. FR: 20-20,000 Hz ± 3 dB \$419

JVC

TD-V541TN 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features computerized full-logic control; closed-loop dual-capstan design with direct-drive motor; PC-OCC coil and lead wiring in heads; cassette-shell stabilizer; powered tape-well lid; auto recording-level adjustment with compatible CD player; CD-direct input; headphone output. Bias control; switchable MPX filter; peak-level search; FL display with peak-level meters; music scan; auto rec mute; timer record/play; auto tape-bias selector; gold-plated terminals; balance control; Compu Link system compatibility. FR at -20 dB: 15-17,000 Hz ± 3 dB (normal/high bias), 15-19,000 Hz ± 3 dB (metal); S/N 59 dB (no NR, metal); w&F 0.023%; crosstalk 60 dB at 1,000 Hz; ch sep 40 dB at 1,000 Hz. 17 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ in; 12 lb \$380

TD-W805TN Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features dual autoreverse record/playback transports; computerized full-logic control; cassette-shell stabilizers; powered tape-well lids; auto recording-level adjustment with compatible CD player. Synchro high-speed dubbing; bias control for one deck; FL display with peak-level meters; dual 4-digit linear counters; music scan; auto/synchro rec mute; timer record/play; auto tape-bias selector; balance control; headphone output; Compu Link system compatibility. FR at -20 dB: 30-15,000 Hz ± 3 dB (normal/high bias), 30-16,000 Hz ± 3 dB (metal); S/N 58 dB (no NR, metal); w&F 0.08%; crosstalk 60 dB at 1,000 Hz; ch sep 40 dB at 1,000 Hz. 17 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ in; 12 lb \$370

Super Digifine Series

TD-V1050TN 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features high-density base, precision-finished aluminum die-cast tape-drive base, airtight tape-well sealing, and cassette-shell stabilizer to minimize resonance and vibration; dual-capstan drive with direct-drive motor; PC-OCC head coils; low-impedance regulated power supply; headphone output with volume control. CD-direct input; adjustable bias and level calibration; FL display with peak display, level meters, and auto shutoff; time-remaining and elapsed-time displays; peak-level search; 4-digit linear counter; music scan; balance control; gold-plated terminals; Compu Link system compatibility; remote control. FR: 15-19,000 Hz ± 3 dB (normal/high bias), 15-21,000 Hz ± 3 dB (metal); S/N 61 dB (metal); w&F 0.022%. 17 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ in; 17 lb \$700

KENWOOD

KX-W8030 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features dual/autoreverse record/playback; full-logic computer-

controlled transports with independent controls; auto-bias adjustment; switchable MPX filter. 1-touch high-speed dubbing; timer record/playback; computer-controlled CD recording system; multifunction program search; separate record-level and balance controls; continuous relay play; index scan; auto tape-bias selector; multifunction FL display; auto rec mute; headphone jack; remote controllable. 13 lb \$379

KX-7030 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features 3-motor design; full-logic control; closed-loop dual-capstan drive; switchable MPX filter. Peak search with CD source; auto bias adjustment with memory presets; separate record-level and balance controls; auto tape monitor; tape counter; system remote compatibility \$379

KX-W6030 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B and C NR. Features dual autoreverse record/playback transports; full-logic computer-controlled transports with independent controls; auto MPX filter. 1-touch high-speed dubbing; timer record/playback; computer-controlled CD recording system; program search; separate record-level and balance controls with center detents; continuous relay play; index scan; auto tape-bias selector; auto rec mute; system remote compatibility. 12 lb \$299

LUXMAN

The following cassette decks carry a five-year parts-and-labor warranty.

K-351 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features system bus computer circuits; voltage-driven amplification with Duo-Beta feedback circuitry; switchable MPX filter. Music and blank search; auto tape-bias selector; one-touch CD recording \$600

K-110W Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features autoreverse; high-speed dubbing; simultaneous playback of 2 tapes; relay play \$580

K-110 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features autoreverse record/playback; logic controls \$480

MARANTZ

SD-72 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features pure-copper-OCC record and playback heads; rotary motors for tape and reel drives, linear motor for head positioning; dual-capstan closed-loop twin-belt all-alloy transport; die-cast mechanism base with cassette stabilizer; MPX filter; 3 line-level inputs. Adjustable bias; manual recording calibration for Dolby levels; digital peak-level display; remote control. FR (± 3 dB): 20-19,000 Hz (normal bias), 15-20,000 Hz (high bias), 15-21,000 Hz (metal); S/N: 59 dB (no NR, normal bias), 62 dB (no NR, metal/high bias), 79 dB (Dolby C, metal); w&F 0.03%; THD 0.7% high bias. Gold finish with alloy side panels \$599

SD-725 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features dual autoreverse record/playback transports; optical end-of-tape sensors; MPX filter. Simultaneous/sequential dual-deck recording; 10-second intro scan; music search; blank skip; FL display with dual tape counters; wireless remote control. FR (± 3 dB):

20-17,000 Hz (normal bias), 20-18,000 Hz (high bias), 20-19,000 Hz (metal); S/N: 55 dB (no NR, normal bias), 59 dB (no NR, metal/high bias), 75 dB (Dolby C, metal); w&F 0.06%. \$599

MITSUBISHI

M-T5010 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features dual autoreverse transports; twin amorphous tape heads; high-speed synchronous dubbing. Auto tape-bias selector; variable intro scan; music search; counter search; record mute; blank skip; programming menus on video monitor in A/V systems; remote control \$699

NAD

Model 6100 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features Dyneq range expansion; NAD/Dolby-developed Play Trim to optimize high-frequency playback response; full-logic controls; bias fine-tuning; remote control. Rack mountable \$499

Model 6340 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features Dyneq range expansion; full-logic controls; bias fine-tuning \$399

NAKAMICHI

CR 7A 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B and C NR. Features asymmetrical dual-capstan transport; 3 motors; manual azimuth fine-tuning; elapsed-time and remaining-time counters. Output-level control; memory stop/play; LED meters; soft-touch controls; headphone jack; rec mute; auto and manual tape/EQ selection; auto fade; auto repeat; wireless remote control. w&F 0.027% wrms; FR: 18-21,000 Hz ± 3 dB (high bias); S/N: 66 dBA (metal), 72 dBA (Dolby B). 17 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 12 in; 19.8 lb \$1,800

CassetteDeck1 Cassette Deck

Dolby B and C NR. Features asymmetrical dual-capstan transport; DC servo capstan motor; pressure-pad lifter; auto slack-tape takeup; integrated construction of head and playback amplifier; multiregulated power supply; defeatable MPX filter; azimuth and bias fine-tuning controls; gold-plated input/output jacks. Bidirectional auto search; auto repeat; timer record/playback; record mute; output-level control; tape selector with interlocked EQ selection; system remote compatibility; 4-digit tape counter. FR: 20-20,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N (metal): 72 dBA (Dolby C), 66 dBA (Dolby B); w&F 0.035%; THD 0.9%. 17 x 4 x 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ in; 13 lb \$849

CassetteDeck1.5 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B and C NR. Features asymmetrical dual-capstan diffused-resonance transport; micro-processor-controlled mechanism; independent alignment and shielding for record, playback, and erase heads; precision-laminated Crystalloy-core record and play heads; pressure pad lifter for play head; multiregulated power supply; DC-servo capstan motor; dual-mono amplifier design; Class A recording amplifier; tape slack take-up mechanism; bias fine-tuning; defeatable MPX filter; headphone output. Bidirectional auto search; 4-digit electronic counter; timer record/playback; auto repeat; record mute; system remote-control compatibility. FR: 20-21,000 Hz ± 3 dB; w&F 0.035% wrms; S/N: 66 dB (Dolby B), 72 dB (Dolby



TAPE DECKS

C); THD 1% (normal/high bias), 0.8% (metal); ch sep 37 dB at 1,000 Hz; crosstalk 60 dB at 1,000 Hz. 17 x 4 x 12 1/2 in; 11.9 lb \$699

CassetteDeck2 Cassette Deck

Dolby B and C NR. Features DC-servo capstan motor; silent mechanism; pressure-pad lifter; auto slack-tape take-up; multiregulated power supply; defeatable MPX filter. Bidirectional auto search; bias fine-tuning; auto repeat; timer record/playback; record mute; tape selector with interlocked EQ selection; system remote compatibility; 4-digit tape counter. FR: 20-20,000 Hz \pm 3 dB; S/N (metal): 64 dB (Dolby B), 70 dBA (Dolby C); W&F 0.06%; THD 1.0%. 17 x 4 x 12 1/2 in; 11.9 lb \$399

NIKKO

ND 150W Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B and C NR. Autoreverse. FR: 25-17,000 Hz; S/N: 56 dBA (no NR); W&F 0.07%. \$249

ONKYO

Integra TA-RW909 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro in both decks. Features dual 3-motor autoreverse record/playback transports; full-logic controls; motorized tape loading system; power transformer designed to reduce flux leakage and interference; copper-plated chassis; Accubias bias fine-tuning system. Synchronized CD-to-tape dubbing; random play; high-speed dubbing; programmable music search; FL display with 10-segment peak level meter; dual 4-digit tape counters with real-time display; headphone jack with volume control; wireless RI-system remote control. \$700

Integra TA-2800 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features computer-controlled 3-motor transport; dual capstans. Auto tape-bias selector; record calibration; real-time counter; switchable MPX filter; RI remote-control compatibility. FR: 20-21,000 Hz (metal); S/N: 60 dB (no NR, metal); W&F 0.035% wrms. 17 1/2 x 5 1/2 x 14 1/2 in; 14 lb \$650

Integra TA-207 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features 3-motor design; closed-loop dual-capstan transport; isolated transformer; Accubias bias fine-tuning system; CD synchro start; bidirectional music search; auto tape-bias selector; switchable MPX filter; real-time tape counter. FR: 20-20,000 Hz (metal); S/N: 60 dB (no NR, metal); W&F 0.04% wrms. 17 1/2 x 5 1/2 x 14 1/2 in; 15 lb \$530

TA-RW470 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B and C NR. Features 2 motors; autoreverse; real-time tape counter; standard and high-speed dubbing; continuous play; RI-system remote-control compatibility \$500

Integra TA-R500 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features full-logic 3-motor autoreverse transport; 3 independent power supplies; low-impedance linear-switching power supply for audio path. Auto tape-EQ selector; switchable MPX filter; real-time counter; FL peak-hold level indicators; auto space and record mute; bidirectional music search; block repeat; RI-system remote control \$450

TA-R401 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features autore-

verse; full-logic 2-motor autoreverse transport; Accubias bias fine-tuning system. Auto tape-bias selector; real-time counter; CD synchro start; bidirectional music search; single/block repeat; FL display; 10-segment peak-level indicator; RI-system remote control. FR: 20-19,000 Hz (metal); S/N: 58 dB (no NR, metal); W&F 0.07% wrms. 17 1/2 x 4 3/4 x 12 1/2 in; 11.2 lb \$380

OPTIMUS, BY RADIO SHACK

SCT-89 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C noise reduction and HX Pro headroom extension. Features full-logic control; auto tape-bias selector; high-speed dubbing; repeat sequential play; record mute; mic jacks; recording-level meters. FR: 30-15,000 Hz \pm 3 dB (normal bias), 30-17,000 Hz \pm 3 dB (metal); S/N: 62 dB (Dolby B), 70 dB (Dolby C); W&F 0.06% wrms. 17 1/2 x 5 x 11 1/2 in; 11 lb \$300

PARASOUND

D/HX-550 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features hard alloy head; polystyrene capacitors; play trim control to optimize tonal balance. FR: 20-19,000 Hz; S/N: 67 dB (Dolby B), 78 dB (Dolby C); input imp 30 kilohms; output imp 600 ohms. 17 1/4 x 4 3/4 x 10 in; 12 lb \$265

PHILIPS

FC-60 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features electronic real-time counter; mode display; digital peak-level display with peak hold; bias fine-tuning; record-calibration controls; Philips RC-5 remote-control compatibility \$549

FCR-515 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B and C NR. Features dual-deck continuous record/playback for up to 3 hours. Auto 2-way recording; simultaneous/sequential recording on both decks for up to 3 hours; high-speed dubbing. Music search; memo function; blank skip; Philips remote-control compatibility . \$499

FCR-50 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features logic-controlled transport mechanism; alloy flywheel; hard Permalloy head; switchable MPX filter. Music search; auto music scan; blank skip; auto space; record mute; Philips remote-control compatibility \$399

PIONEER

Auto BLE refers to Pioneer's one-touch microcomputer-controlled automatic bias, level, and equalization optimization. Super Auto BLE refers to a similar system for 3-head models performing equalization optimization at 2 frequencies.

CT-WM77R 7-Cassette Changer

Changer with 6-cassette magazine-type well and single-cassette well. Features Dolby B and C NR; Dolby HX Pro; NR memory; autoreverse; 9-hr continuous play/record; large insulator feet; random play; cassette scan; all-rewind mode; CD-to-tape synchro recording; auto tape-bias selector; auto space; track skip search; blank skip; timer relay record/play; high-speed dubbing; edit dubbing; FL peak-hold meter; 4-digit counters; headphone output; remote control. FR: 20-17,000 Hz

(normal bias), 20-18,000 Hz (high bias), 20-19,000 Hz (metal); S/N: 57 dB; W&F 0.055% \$510

CTS709 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features Super Auto BLE; Z-tape transport mechanism; digital tension servo; auto monitor; FL peak-hold meter; peak-hold modes; CD-to-tape synchro recording; auto tape-bias selector; auto space; record mute; track skip search; headphone output with volume control; timer record/play; powered loading and eject; 4-digit tape counter. FR: 15-19,000 Hz (normal bias), 15-19,000 Hz (high bias), 15-20,000 Hz (metal); S/N: 60 dB; W&F 0.027%. 16 1/2 x 5 1/2 x 12 1/2 in; 12.8 lb \$500

CT-M66R 6-Cassette Changer

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Autoreverse; 9-hr continuous record/playback; random play; cassette scan; all-rewind mode; CD-to-tape synchro recording; auto tape-bias selector; auto space; track skip search; timer relay record/play; FL peak-hold meter; headphone output; remote control. FR: 20-17,000 Hz (normal bias), 20-18,000 Hz (high bias), 20-19,000 Hz (metal); S/N: 58 dB; W&F 0.055%. 16 1/2 x 5 3/4 x 14 1/2 in; 16.6 lb \$440

CT-W650R Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Dual autoreverse transports; Auto BLE; FL peak-hold display; CD-to-tape synchro recording; auto tape-bias selector; auto space; track skip/search; blank skip; high-speed dubbing; relay play; timer record/play; headphone output; mic input. FR: 20-17,000 Hz (normal bias), 20-18,000 Hz (high bias), 20-19,000 Hz (metal); S/N: 57 dB; W&F 0.055%. 16 1/2 x 5 1/2 x 10 1/2 in; 10.1 lb \$385

Elite Series

CT-93 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby S, B, C NR and HX Pro. Features bias oscillator; Super Auto BLE; amorphous heads; dual-capstan design; peak-level calibration system; digital tension servo. Auto monitor; auto tape-bias selector; auto space; record mute; \pm 15-song skip search; CD-to-tape synchro recording; timer record/play; FL peak-hold meters; peak-



Pioneer CT-WM77R

hold mode switch; 2-mode meter range; headphone with volume control \$1,200

CT-41 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby S, B, C NR and HX Pro. Features Super Auto BLE; Z mechanism; hard Permalloy heads; dual-capstan design; digital tension servo; auto monitor; auto tape-bias selector; auto space; record mute; \pm 15-song skip search; CD-to-tape synchro recording; timer record/play; FL peak-hold meters with dual-range switching; headphone jack with volume control \$800

CT-W51 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro in both decks. Features dual autoreverse transports; Auto BLE in both decks; auto tape-bias selector; auto space; record mute; \pm 15-song skip search; blank



TAPE DECKS

skip; high-speed dubbing; relay record/play; timer record/play; FL peak-hold meter; dual 4-digit digital counters; headphone jack; switchable reverse mode; dubbing-level adjustment; SR-system remote-control compatibility. . . . \$570

PROTON

AD-630 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR, HX Pro, dbx. Features autoreverse; 3-motor IC-logic mechanism; horizontal-drawer tape mechanism; switchable MPX filter; headphone output; microphone input jacks. Real-time tape counter; repeat; music search; bias selector; auto bias optimization; record mute; record-level meter; output-level control. W&F 0.05%; S/N (normal bias): 50 dB (no NR), 60 dB (Dolby B), 70 dB (Dolby C); S/N (high bias): 54 dB (no NR), 65 dB (Dolby B), 75 dB (Dolby C); FR: 30-17,000 Hz \pm 3 dB (normal bias), 30-18,000 Hz \pm 3 dB (high bias) \$800

AD-431 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features Permalloy heads; autoreverse; MPX filter; headphone output. Digital tape counter; auto music search. Remote-control compatibility with AV-445 receiver. W&F 0.06%; S/N (normal bias): 50 dB (no NR), 60 dB (Dolby B), 70 dB (Dolby C); S/N (high bias): 56 dB (no NR), 66 dB (Dolby B), 70 dB (Dolby C); FR: 30-17,000 Hz \pm 3 dB (normal bias), 30-17,000 Hz \pm 3 dB (high bias) \$300

AD-430 Cassette Deck

Dolby B and C NR and HX Pro. Features 2-head, 2-motor IC-logic transport \$280

REVOX

H11 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features 3 microprocessors for control of bias, level, EQ, transport, and real-time counter; 3 motors; digital memory of bias, level, and EQ setting for 6 tape formulations; azimuth-stable pivoting headblock. Auto/manual record-level setting; 2 programmable locate buttons; loop mode; auto start-of-record scan; counter to compute elapsed time on partially-wound tapes. W&F 0.1% wrms; FR: 40-15,000 Hz \pm 3 dB (normal bias); S/N (normal bias): 57 dB (no NR), 65 dB (Dolby B), 72 dB (Dolby C). 18½ x 5½ x 14¾ in; 20.3 lb . . . \$1,990

ROTEL

RD965BX Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features 2-motor full-logic control; Permalloy-core record/playback head; ferrite-core erase head; stable power supply; selected high-quality components in rigid metal chassis with extruded-aluminum front panel. FL peak-level display; record mute; bias fine-tuning; jacks for connection to other Rotel components. FR: 30-16,000 Hz \pm 3 dB (normal bias), 30-18,000 Hz \pm 3 dB (metal); W&F 0.035% wrms; S/N (high bias): 55 dB (no NR), 75 dB (Dolby C). 17¾ x 4¾ x 13 in \$399

RD955AX. As above, without bias fine-tuning or record mute. 17¾ x 4¾ x 11¼ in \$349

SANSUI

D-X311WR Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features dual autoreverse transports; switchable MPX filter; bias control; hard Permalloy record/playback heads; dou-

ble-gap ferrite erase head. High-speed dubbing; 16-song program search; auto tape-bias selector; auto record mute; tape lead-in; memory stop; 8-cycle relay play; manual recording-level control; FL peak-level indicator; 4-digit electronic tape counter; timer record/play; headphone output. FR: 20-21,000 Hz (metal); W&F 0.06% wrms; S/N (metal): 58 dB (no NR), 65 dB (Dolby B), 75 dB (Dolby C). 16¾ x 4¾ x 10¾ in; 10.9 lb \$350

D-X11WR Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Autoreverse; switchable MPX filter. Auto music search; auto record



Teac W-580R

mute; auto tape lead-in; peak-level indicator; high-speed dubbing; synchro dubbing. FR: 20-20,000 Hz (metal); W&F 0.09% wrms; S/N (metal): 58 dB (no NR), 65 dB (Dolby B), 75 dB (Dolby C). 17 x 5 x 10¼ in; 10.5 lb \$280

SHERWOOD

DD-4010C Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features dual autoreverse transports with one deck record/playback and other deck playback only; high-gain tape head; 2-motor design for each deck. Selectable continuous relay play; blank skip; high-speed dubbing; auto music search; synchro record and dub; timer record/play; mic input with mixing control; auto tape-bias selector; headphone jack. FR: 25-16,000 Hz \pm 3 dB (normal/high bias), 25-17,000 Hz \pm 3 dB (metal); S/N: 65 dB (Dolby B), 74 dB (Dolby C). 17¼ x 5 x 9¾ in; 12 lb . . . \$250

SONY

TC-WR97ES Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features SIRCS II LSI chip for 2-way communication between A/V components; dual autoreverse transports; 3-motor design for each deck; laser amorphous heads; bias control. High-speed dubbing; relay play; tape counter; switchable MPX filter; FL display; remote-control compatibility. FR: 20-20,000 Hz (metal); W&F 0.06%; S/N (metal): 59 dB (no NR), 74 dB (Dolby C). 18½ x 5 x 14 in; 16.6 lb \$600

TC-K870ES 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. 3 motors; direct-drive dual-capstan design; laser amorphous heads; full-logic control; bias control; MPX filter; tape counter; FL display; remote-control compatibility. FR: 15-22,000 Hz \pm 3 dB (metal); W&F 0.024%; S/N (metal): 61 dB (no NR), 76 dB (Dolby C). 18½ x 5 x 13¾ in; 17.4 lb \$600

TC-WR875 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Autoreverse; high-speed dubbing; dual record; remote-control compatibility; dual tape counters; FL display. FR: 30-18,000 Hz (metal); W&F 0.06%; S/N (metal): 58 dB

(no NR), 73 dB (Dolby C). 17 x 5¾ x 11¼ in; 11.7 lb \$500
TC-WR775. As above, with dual electronic tape counters. W&F 0.07%. 10.8 lb \$330

TC-K677ES 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B NR and HX Pro. 3 motors; dual-capstan design; laser amorphous heads; bias control; full-logic control; switchable MPX filter; remote-control compatibility; tape counter; FL display. FR: 15-22,000 Hz \pm 3 dB (metal); W&F 0.05%; S/N (metal): 61 dB (no NR), 76 dB (Dolby C). 18½ x 5¾ x 13¾ in; 17.8 lb \$400

TC-K670 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Remote-control compatibility; FL display. FR: 30-18,000 Hz (metal); W&F 0.07%; S/N (metal): 60 dB (no NR), 75 dB (Dolby C). 17 x 5¾ x 11¼ in \$350

TC-RX70ES 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Autoreverse; 3 motors; single-capstan design; laser amorphous heads; full-logic controls; MPX filter; remote-control compatibility. FR: 20-20,000 Hz \pm 3 dB (metal); W&F 0.06%; S/N (metal): 59 dB (no NR), 74 dB (Dolby C). 17 x 4¾ x 11¼ in; 10.4 lb \$330

TEAC

V-7000 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features closed-loop dual-capstan design; large capstan flywheel; PC-OCC head wiring; dual regulated power supplies; antistatic cassette stabilizer; gold-plated line input/output. Independent L/R channel bias and level adjustment; switchable MPX filter; gold-plated CD-direct input; electronic tape counter; digital peak display; CD synchronous recording; program search; CD recording-level control; auto monitor; record mute with auto spacer; wireless remote control \$800

V-5000 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features hard Permalloy head; closed-loop dual-capstan design; large capstan flywheel; PC-OCC head wiring; anti-static cassette stabilizer; dual regulated power supplies; gold-plated line input/output. Independent L/R-channel bias and level adjustment; switchable MPX filter; gold-plated CD-direct input; electronic tape counter; CD synchro recording; program search; CD recording-level control; auto monitor; rec mute with auto spacer; remote control \$660

V-3000 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features hard Permalloy head; belt capstan-drive system; PC-OCC combination head; anti-static cassette stabilizer; MPX filter; gold-plated line input/output; auto monitor; record mute with auto spacer; wireless remote control \$500

W-580R Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features dual autoreverse record/playback transports; dual hard-Permalloy record/playback rotating head system; 2 DC and 2 DC-servo motors; 2-motor IC-logic tape transports. Dual-deck continuous record/playback; dual parallel/series recording; high/normal-speed one-touch autoreverse dubbing; L/R mic inputs; record mute with auto spacer in both decks; bias fine-tuning; CD-deck synchro dubbing; headphone output. W&F 0.06% wrms; FR: 30-19,000 Hz (metal); S/N: 69 dB (Dolby B), 79 dB (Dolby C). 17¾ x 5 x 10¼ in \$370

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TECHNICS

RS-B965 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR, HX Pro, dbx. Features digital-servo quartz direct-drive motor; dual-capstan closed-loop transport; full-logic control; aluminum die-cast transport chassis; amorphous PC-OCC-coil record/playback heads; isolated circuit blocks; Class AA record amp; phase-compensation circuitry in playback amp; independent power supplies; cassette stabilizer; powered cassette loading. Real-time electronic counter with memory stop/repeat; record-level control; CD-direct input; semiautomatic bias/rec-level calibration with 400/10,000-Hz test-tone oscillators; switchable MPX filter; auto tape/source monitor select; program search; auto tape-bias selector; rec mute; master record-level and balance controls; timer record/playback; headphone jack with level control. FR: 20-20,000 Hz (normal bias), 20-22,000 Hz (high bias), 20-23,000 Hz (metal); S/N: 57 dBA (no NR), 66 dB (Dolby B), 74 dB (Dolby C), 92 dBA (dbx); w&F 0.03%. 17 x 5 1/2 x 11 1/2 in; 14 lb \$700

RS-TR555 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR, HX Pro, dbx. Features dual autoreverse record/playback transports each with 2 motors; full-logic control; dual-range FL peak-level meters with precision switchable to 1-dB steps. Simultaneous parallel recording; series recording; high-speed dubbing; program search; synchro start/stop; auto rec mute; dual electronic tape counters; CD synchro dubbing with select Technics CD players; auto tape-bias selector; L/R recording-level controls; timer record/playback; headphone jack; remote compatible with select Technics receivers. Brushed-aluminum front panel. FR: 20-18,000 Hz (normal/high bias), 20-19,000 Hz (metal); S/N: 56 dBA (no NR), 66 dB (Dolby B), 74 dB (Dolby C), 92 dBA (dbx); w&F 0.07%. 17 x 5 1/2 x 11 1/2 in; 12 lb \$400

RS-BX606 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features digital-servo quartz direct-drive 2-motor transport; full-logic control; real-time electronic counter with memory stop/repeat; repeat play; bias fine-tuning; dual-range FL peak-hold meters; switchable MPX filter; auto tape/source monitor select; program search; auto tape-bias selector; rec mute; master record-level and balance controls; timer record/playback; headphone jack with level control. FR: 20-19,000 Hz (normal bias), 20-20,000 Hz (high bias), 20-21,000 Hz (metal); S/N: 57 dBA (no NR), 66 dB (Dolby B), 74 dB (Dolby C); w&F 0.05%. 15 x 5 x 11 1/2 in \$300

VECTOR RESEARCH

VCX-270 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features 2-motor logic transport; high-frequency trim and bias fine-tuning controls; switchable MPX filter; headphone jack with volume. FR: 30-17,000 Hz; S/N: 67 dB (Dolby B), 75 dB (Dolby C); w&F 0.05% wrms. 16 1/2 x 4 3/4 x 11 1/4 in; 12.5 lb \$280

YAMAHA

All decks compatible with Yamaha's RS system remote control.

KX-W952 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro for both decks. Features dual autoreverse record/playback transports; 12-layer amorphous record/playback

TAPE DECKS



heads; sorbothane-stabilized aluminum cassette doors; independent decks allowing simultaneous recording of 2 different sources and playing of one deck while other is recording. One-touch simultaneous or relay recording; play trim; separate controls, meters, and displays for each deck; high-speed dubbing; normal-speed cross-Dolby dubbing; random-program, manual, and skip dubbing; 15-selection both-deck random program play; headphone jack with deck selector, level control, and dedicated amplifier; auto tape-bias selection; intro scan; auto rec mute; rec return; blank skip; selectable reverse mode; 4-digit time counter; remaining-time indication; peak-level meters with hold. 17 1/2 x 5 1/2 x 14 1/4 in. \$699

KX-930 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features dynamic bias servo; closed-loop dual-capstan transport; 12-layer amorphous heads with PC-OCC coil windings; full-logic controls; optical-balance tuning for bias and tape sens. Auto tape-bias selector and monitor; direct music search; 9-selection program playback; timer record/playback; repeat; memory stop; intro scan; play trim; bias control; 19-segment LCD meter with peak hold; master fader; 2-speed fast winding; optimum record-level indicator; headphone jack with level control; wireless remote control. Finished in black \$599

KX-W602 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and one deck HX Pro. Features dual autoreverse record/playback transports; full-logic 2-motor transports for each deck; amorphous record/playback heads. Peak-level meter; 4-digit counter; manual, normal, high-speed, auto, skip, and random-program dubbing modes; remaining-time display; relay play for 24-hr control play; relay record; 9-selection random-program play; wireless remote control. Finished in black; 13 lb \$519

KX-R730 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features autoreverse with optical sensor; 4-motor transport; micro-computer-controlled auto record level with digital level indicator; amorphous play/record head. 13-segment LCD peak-level meter; LCD time counter; auto fader; MPX filter; 2-speed fast winding; bidirectional intro scan; auto tape-bias selector and rec mute; rec return; memory stop; remote-control eject/close; headphone output with level control; music search; repeat; wireless remote control. Black finish \$499

KX-W332 Double Cassette Deck

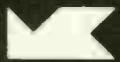
Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features one deck with autoreverse record/playback, other deck playback only; full-logic 2-motor transport for each deck; 12-layer amorphous record/playback heads in one deck, hard Permalloy playback head in other. Peak-level meter; one-touch dubbing; auto rec mute; music search; full repeat; record return; relay play; auto tape-bias selector; headphone jack. Black finish \$399

KX-330 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C NR and HX Pro. Features 2-motor design; amorphous playback/record head. 13-segment LCD peak-level meter; 3-digit LCD time counter; MPX filter; play trim; bias adjust; record-level balance control; optimum-record-level indicator; bidirectional intro scan; auto tape-bias selector; memory stop; headphone output; music search; repeat; wireless remote control. Black finish \$299

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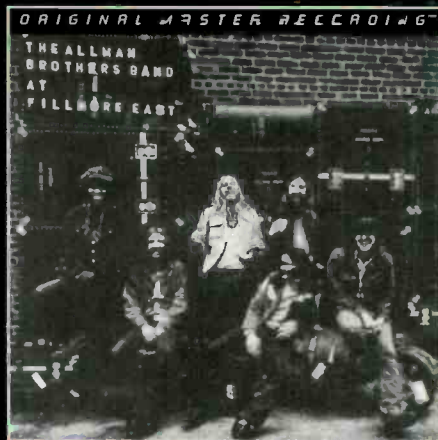


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Luka Bloom Takes A Ride

LUKA BLOOM is such an irreplaceable singer, songwriter, and life force that you feel as if you know him, or at least would like to, simply from listening to his records. His second Reprise album, "The Acoustic Motorbike," builds on the unaccompanied acoustic sound of his first, adding small embellishments here and there without sacrificing the intimacy that is so central to his appeal. A touch of mandolin, for instance, adds a note of tartness to the forlorn yearning of *You*. The hand-on-skin thump of African drums sets up a loping beat in *I Need Love*, and a plangent fiddle underscores Bloom's plea. Sometimes Bloom's dynamic touch on the strings of the guitar makes you imagine you're hearing a band when there isn't one.

Irish by birth and a New Yorker by choice, Bloom harks back to the days when troubadours converged on the Big Apple with beat-up guitars and a headful of dreams and ideals. What sets him apart is his refreshingly unfashionable zeal for life, which rippled all over "Riverside," his debut album of two years ago. Although he's notably more subdued in "The Acoustic Motorbike," his downbeat songs don't reflect a loss of faith in life's goodness so much as a profound sadness at its wasting.

Bloom is not, it turns out, a reflexive optimist, and he squarely faces down some somber moments here. *Bones*, for instance, is a chilling song about disillusionment ("Someone's murdered the child in me") that segues into *Bridge of Sorrow*, a folk-rap offering counsel to an acquaintance trapped in suicidal despair. *Be Well* closes the album on a forbidding note similar in tone to Richard Thompson's *Lullabye* or one of the late Nick Drake's more doleful threnodies.

The quest for faith and cheer in a faithless world may be Bloom's preoccupation, but there are moments of respite and transcendence scattered like steppingstones throughout "The Acoustic Motorbike." In the title song



he recounts a bicycle ride across the Irish countryside so vividly that you can feel the wind in your face, see the scenery, feel the ache in your legs. You also share the biker's disgust with the modern, mechanized rat race as cars and trucks whiz by him. But the predominant emotion is one of liberation—from the car and petroleum dependency, from the daily grind, from his own too-serious mind. "Pedal on, pedal on, pedal on for miles, pedal on" is his delightfully hypnotic chant to the brisk accompaniment of a chugging acoustic guitar. Then there's a quite touching straight-faced acoustic version of (*I Can't Help*) *Falling in Love* (yes, the Elvis Presley weeper), and *I*

Need Love is as unabashed an appeal for true love and the commitment and values it entails as you'll ever hear a singer put on record. Everything Bloom sings is shot through with an emotional honesty that makes him one of the brightest and worthiest new faces on the music scene.

Parke Puterbaugh

LUKA BLOOM: *The Acoustic Motorbike*. Luka Bloom (acoustic guitar, vocals); other musicians. *Mary Watches Everything; You; I Believe in You; I Need Love; Exploring the Blue; This Is Your Country; Acoustic Motorbike; (I Can't Help) Falling in Love; Bones; Bridge of Sorrow; Listen to the Hoof Beat; Be Well*. REPRISE © 2-26670 (46 min), © 4-26670.

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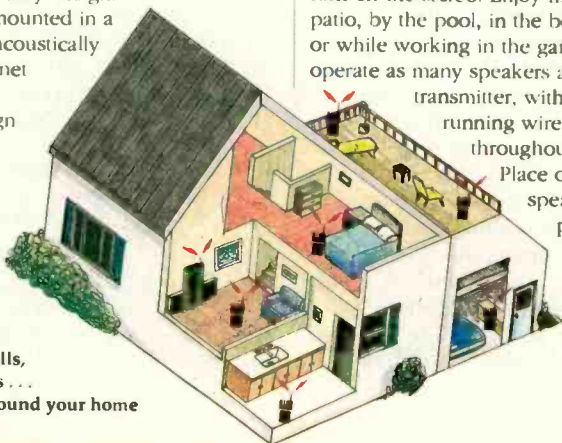
At the 1990 Consumer Electronics Show the convention floor was buzzing with the news of **Datawave's WS7 Wireless Speaker System**. This product has been touted in a number of electronics magazines as one of the most exciting new products of the 90's. The heart of Datawave's breakthrough design is a patented FM technology which broadcasts music wirelessly from a small transmitter to satellite speakers. The transmitter, about the size of a paperback book, broadcasts music from virtually any sound source to a receiver built into the speaker - **no speaker wires are needed!**

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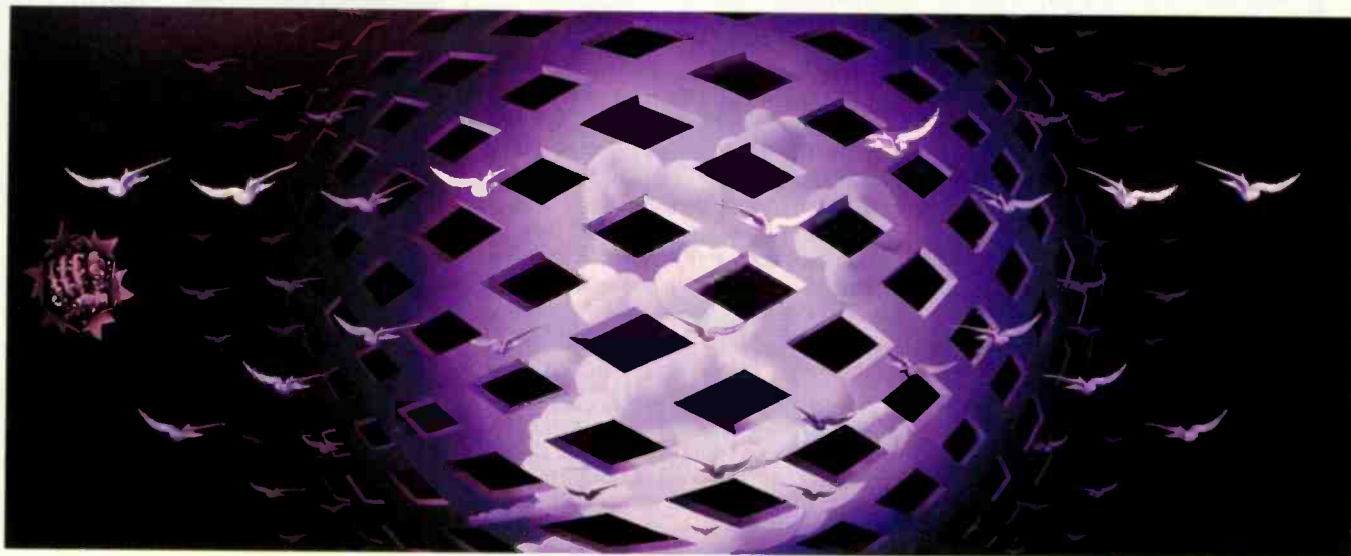
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Sharon Isbin Plays Rodrigo

THE first recording by the guitarist Sharon Isbin to come my way was Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* on Denon, with the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra under Hideomi Kuroiwa. It made a fine impression, but there were so many recordings of this deservedly popular piece. Now, of course, there are still more, but her stunning remake on Virgin must surely be ranked among the very best.

In both the *Concierto de Aranjuez* and the *Fantasia para un Gentilhombre*, Isbin is absolutely in her element: The music unfolds with spontaneity, flair, and affection, and with the sort of commitment that calls attention to the music rather than the performer. Lawrence Foster, always an especially sympathetic concerto partner, has the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra in beautiful shape, not merely playing

well but truly responding. There is a stimulating sense of give-and-take throughout the performances, and the recording itself could hardly be better in terms of balance or vividness.

The Vivaldi *Concerto in D Major* that rounds out the disc is the one usually favored by guitarists, the *Lute Concerto, RV 93/P. 209*, in the Pujol arrangement, edited further by Isbin. Not the most imaginative make-weight, you might think, but it, too, is a knockout performance, striking enough to be the deciding factor for more than a few listeners.

Richard Freed

RODRIGO: *Concierto de Aranjuez; Fantasia para un Gentilhombre.* **VIVALDI** (arr. Pujol and Isbin): *Concerto in D Major (RV 93)*. Sharon Isbin (guitar); Lausanne Chamber Orchestra, Lawrence Foster cond. VIRGIN © 91192-2 (58 min).



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The Multifaceted Abbey Lincoln



Lincoln:
jazz singer,
composer,
actress, poet,
and political
activist

EACH new album by Abbey Lincoln not only contains exquisitely crafted music but rounds out our image of this jazz singer who is also a composer, actress, poet, and political activist. The rich fruits of her experience abound in her new Verve release, "You Gotta Pay the Band," a worthy successor to 1990's "The World Is Falling Down," her first on a major label after several years' hiatus.

Five of the ten selections in the new album feature Lincoln's own words and music, and she also supplied the arrangements with assistance from Randolph Noel. Lincoln chose instrumentalists with a keen eye for those whose artistry would best complement her own, especially the late Stan Getz, whose lush tenor saxophone and masterly phrasing are major contributions to the set. Other assets are the quintessentially tasteful piano work of Hank Jones and the venerable Charlie Haden's bass.

Yet the focus remains on Lincoln's singular vocal style. Like Billie Holiday, to whom she is often compared, Lincoln has a distinctive voice, not pretty in the conventional sense, but

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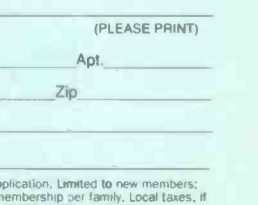
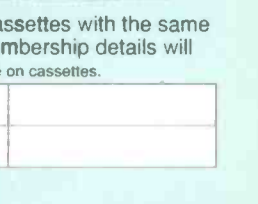
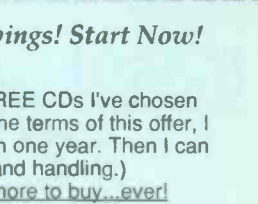
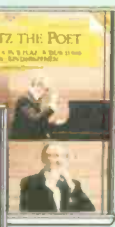
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capable of projecting nuances of feeling and intent that a smoother sound could not. Every note she sings here is carefully thought out, every syllable meticulously sounded, every utterance, from the bitterly acerbic to the achingly wistful, plotted for effect.

Lincoln's artistry is especially apparent in her own songs. The opener here, *Bird Alone* (which has nothing to do with Charlie Parker), is gorgeously poignant and has a kind of classic beauty that makes it sound familiar from the first hearing. The title song, *You Gotta Pay the Band*, is etched in irony, and *When I'm Called Home* is

haunted by ghosts and broken dreams. And the riveting *You Made Me Funny* is less a song than a poetic dramatization reminiscent of Lincoln's contribution to the seminal protest album "We Insist!"

But Lincoln is no less effective in compositions by others. In the standard *Brother, Can You Spare a Dime*, she adds a raw edge to the familiar lyrics, making the situation as real as the last homeless person you saw on the street. And she is simply beautiful in Johnny Mandel's *Summer Wishes, Winter Dreams* and *A Time for Love*. "You Gotta Pay the Band" is a re-

markable album by a great vocal artist who is finally coming into her own. *Phyl Garland*

ABBEY LINCOLN: *You Gotta Pay the Band*. Abbey Lincoln (vocals); Stan Getz (tenor saxophone); Hank Jones (piano); Charlie Haden (bass); Marcus Johnson (drums); Maxine Roach (viola). *Bird Alone; I'm in Love; You Gotta Pay the Band; Brother, Can You Spare a Dime; You Made Me Funny; And How I Hoped for Your Love; When I'm Called Home; Summer Wishes, Winter Dreams; Up Jumped Spring; A Time for Love*. VERVE © 314 511 110-2 (59 min), © 314 511 110-4.

Leonard Slatkin's Vaughan Williams

LEONARD SLATKIN'S new RCA Victor CD of the Vaughan Williams Fifth and Sixth Symphonies with the Philharmonia Orchestra is a stunning success, both musically and sonically. Indeed, it's hard to believe that this is Slatkin's first recording of major works by the great English composer.

The Fifth Symphony was completed at the height of the Nazi air blitz against London, but it evolved during the years when Vaughan Williams was preoccupied with his opera on Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. There is much more Bunyan than blitz in the Fifth, and most performances have tended to emphasize the pastoral and spiritual element. But in recent years conductors such as Yehudi Menuhin have explored the tensions that underlie the surface of the predominantly serene score. Slatkin takes the same approach, in his own fashion, and at marginally faster tempos than in Menuhin's recent recording on Virgin, save in the seraphic third movement (*Romanza*), where some may question his unusually deliberate pacing. Where Slatkin and the Philharmonia players achieve glory is in the *Presto misterioso* scherzo, an amazing amalgam here of atmospheric and orchestral virtuosity. The performance as a whole belongs among the best.

The reading of the apocalyptic Sixth Symphony, begun in the closing years of World War II and completed in 1947, is a genuine triumph. The first movement goes at a fast clip, avoiding any lumpiness, yet there is no sense of



skating over the surface of the music. The atmosphere generated in the sinister second movement is simply bone-chilling, and the strenuous polyphony of the sardonic scherzo comes across with the utmost power and brilliance. The big test is the eerie and extended epilogue finale, according to the composer an evocation of Prospero's valedictory in *The Tempest*. The music rarely rises above a *pianissimo* level and constitutes a singular exercise in stamina and control for the players. Its realization here is flawless.

The recording was made in Watford Town Hall, London, which proves to

be virtually ideal, both warm and spacious, and the microphone placement provides superb imaging. The epilogue of the Sixth Symphony makes a telling justification for noise-free digital recording technology, for such remarkably detailed low-level dynamics could never be heard in concert. In a word, don't pass this one by.

David Hall

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Symphony No. 5, in D Major; Symphony No. 6, in E Minor*. Philharmonia Orchestra, Leonard Slatkin cond. RCA VICTOR © 60556-2 (72 min), © 60556-4.

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ASTER AWEKE: *Kabu*. Aster Aweke (vocals); instrumental accompaniment. *Yedi Gosh (My Guy)*; *Yaz-Oh (Grab It, Get It On)*; *Kabu (Sacred Rock)*; *Kezira*; and four others. COLUMBIA © CK 47846 (47 min), © CT 47846.

Performance: *Compelling*
Recording: *Satisfactory*

Aster Aweke's music is not quite like anything you've ever heard, unless you've already been exposed to her extraordinary vocal artistry. The album represents a most unusual fusion of traditional Ethiopian music, with lyrics in that country's language, and elements of Western pop. Like an ancient enchantress, Aweke unleashes her inner self, uttering oddly twisted wails and singing intricately elaborated melodic lines that can be as lovely as a piece of lace or as tough as a spider's web. Occasionally she sounds like the young Miriam Makeba in a higher, thinner register, but the keening quality and complex ornamentation distinguish her sound from other types of non-Western music that have found an audience in this hemisphere.

Aweke's British producers, Iain Scott and Bunt Stafford Clark, have provided her with instrumental settings that are at times quite close to American pop, as in *Yedi-Gosh (My Guy)*, an exuberant celebration of romantic attraction, and there are even traces of African-American gospel cadences in *Bitchengna (Loneliness)*. But most of the time Aweke's exotic original style prevails, and the instrumentals are fashioned around it. Most impressive is the hypnotically beautiful title song, *Kabu (Sacred Rock)*. All in all, Aster Aweke is so compelling a singer that somehow it doesn't matter if we don't understand a word. **P.G.**

LUKA BLOOM: *The Acoustic Motorbike* (see Best of the Month, page 65)

MICHAEL FEINSTEIN: *Sings the Jule Styne Songbook*. Michael Feinstein (vocals); Jule Styne (piano, vocals). *I've*

Heard That Song Before; I Don't Want to Walk Without You, Baby; It's Magic; The Music That Makes Me Dance; I Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out to Dry; and twenty-eight others. ELEKTRA NONESUCH © 79274-2 (58 min), © 79274-4.

Performance: *Stylish*
Recording: *Crisp*

Here, in the second of what is proving to be a unique and historic series of albums surveying American show music with the participation of the composers themselves, Michael Feinstein serves up no fewer than thirty-three songs by the too-long-underappreciated Jule Styne. Styne, of course, is the composer of the Broadway hits *Gypsy*, *Funny Girl*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, and *Bells Are Ringing* as well as more than eighty film scores—from *Anchors Aweigh* and *Romance on the High Seas* to the long-forgotten *Sweater Girl* and *Puddin' Head*.

The new album is even better than the worthy "Burton Lane Songbook," which inaugurated the series—partly because Styne is a more versatile pianist (and livelier occasional co-vocalist) than Lane, and partly because Feinstein himself digs into the songs more convincingly. Particularly interesting are two previously unrecorded Styne-Sondheim songs, *Home Is the Place* and *Nice She Ain't* (cut from *Gypsy*). And the liner notes—a conversation between Styne and Feinstein—are chock-full of fascinating, surprisingly frank revelations about Styne's working relationships with his collaborators and musical interpreters over the years. **R.H.**

PATTI LABELLE: *Burnin'*. Patti LaBelle (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Feels Like Another One; Somebody Loves You Baby (You Know Who It Is)*; *When You Love Somebody (I'm Saving My Love for You)*; *I Don't Do Duets; Temptation*; and six others. MCA © MCAD-10439 (59 min), © MCAC-10439, LP MCA-10439.

Performance: *In top form*
Recording: *Very good*

This is one of the best albums Patti LaBelle has released in some time, consistently excellent in both performance and material. The songs are probably the more important ingredient, since LaBelle could generate excitement singing scales. But "Burnin'" features the kind of sassy, sweet, soul music that helped make her a star in the first place.

Bunny Sigler composed and produced two of the very best numbers, *Somebody Loves You Baby (You Know Who It Is)* and the title track, *Burnin' (The Fire Is Still) Burnin' for You*. Both are steeped in a searing sensuality and climax in the sort of swirling high passages that are LaBelle's hallmark. Then there's the

captivatingly tuneful *When You Love Somebody (I'm Saving My Love for You)* by Jonathan Butler, the South African pop wiz, two songs co-written by Nona Hendryx (a former colleague in the landmark soul-rock group LaBelle), and the intoxicatingly offbeat *I Hear Your Voice* by Rosie Gaines and Frances Jules of Paisley Park. There are two duets. The one with the equally formidable Gladys Knight, in the Hamlisch-Bergman ballad *I Don't Do Duets*, does full justice to both singers, and that is saying a lot. Equally successful is the pairing of Michael Bolton's rusty baritone with LaBelle's soulful wail in his romantic lament *We're Not Makin' Love Anymore*.



Aster Aweke, enchantress

LaBelle truly demonstrates her versatility in the hip-hop-flavored *Feels Like Another One* and the inspirational *When You've Been Blessed (Feels Like Heaven)*, highlighted by dazzling choral effects. A winner all around. **P.G.**

THE NEW YORK ROCK AND SOUL REVUE: *Live at the Beacon*. Donald Fagen, Michael McDonald (vocals, piano); Boz Scaggs, Phoebe Snow, Eddie and David Brigati (vocals); other musicians. *Intro; Madison Time; Knock on Wood; Green Flower Street; Shaky Ground; At Last; Lonely Teardrops*; and eight others. GIANT © 24423-2 (67 min), © 24423-4.

Performance: *Sleek*
Recording: *Excellent*

The enigmatic don of Steely Dan, Donald Fagen, rarely set foot on a stage with that

Explanation of Symbols

- Ⓢ = Compact disc
- Ⓣ = Tape cassette

Southside Johnny

If there were a special Grammy Award for persistence, Southside Johnny Lyon would deserve to win it. Through lean and fat times, he has never stopped recording or taking to the stage with his band, the Asbury Jukes. His first three albums remain his best (and best known), and for good reason: great singing, a killer horn-packed band, tough tunes and production by Miami Steve Van Zandt, who now goes by the name Little Steven, and considerable songwriting input from fellow Jerseyite Bruce Springsteen. Despite some fine moments, Southside's output in the Eighties never quite scaled those same heights, and the old gang went their separate ways. Happily, the new "Bet-

ter Days" reunites Southside, Little Steven, Springsteen, and the Jukes, and time hasn't diminished their chemistry.

Sound, offering vignettes of success and failure, will power and determination, and a struggle for transcendence of *Born to Run* proportions. In fact, Southside Johnny, Little Steven, and Springsteen raise their voices together in *It's Been a Long Time*, a song that just might be the equal of that earlier epic. Their exchange can't help but bring a tear to the eye, especially when they sing, "Raise your glass for the comrades we've lost/My friend it's been a long, long time." It's a near perfect song, and the power and commitment that undergird it are sustained throughout "Better Days." (P.S. to Springsteen fans: He also wrote *All the Way Home*, a pretty midtempo ballad, and plays keyboards

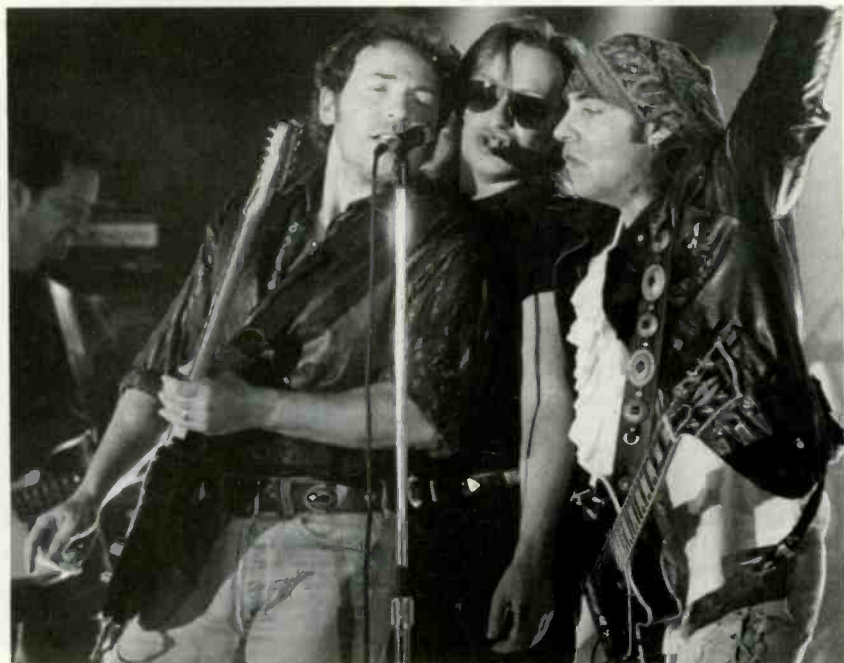
studio-bound duo during their Seventies reign. After nearly a decade of screaming silence—his last album was 1982's "The Nightfly"—he's recently undertaken a spate of live appearances as the prime mover behind the New York Rock and Soul Revue, but he seems to have turned studio-shy. Fagen pulled together a group of like-minded singers of similar vintage for this project. There's nothing heavy going on here, and that's exactly the point. What you see is what you get: a group of elder statesmen having a go at soul oldies and familiar originals.

Unlike Steely Dan's albums, this isn't a brain-busting exercise in double entendre; like Steely Dan's albums, it is note-perfect and flawlessly played (a scary proposition, considering it's a live recording). As for the singers, Michael McDonald breaks out of that studious, serious voice of his and gets into the funky flow of Jackie Wilson's *Lonely Teardrops* and *Minute by Minute* from his tenure with the Doobie Brothers. Fagen sings a trio of tunes, including chillingly exact covers of Steely Dan's *Pretzel Logic* and *Chain Lightning*. Phoebe Snow soars and caterwauls, Boz Scaggs proves he's still got his chops, and ex-Rascal Eddie Brigati and his brother lead the way through spirited versions of the blue-eyed-soul classics *Groovin'* and *People Got to Be Free*. The album won't change the world, but Fagen's New York Rock and Soul Revue is good, cleanly recorded fun. As for the future, however, I hope this represents a fond look backward and not the death of ambition for Fagen. P.P.

NIRVANA: *Nevermind*. Nirvana (vocals and instrumentals). *Smells Like Teen Spirit; In Bloom; Come As You Are; Breed; Lithium; Polly; Territorial Pissings; Drain You*; and four others. DGC © DGCD-24425 (59 min), © DGC-24425, LP DGC-24425.

Performance: *Aggressive*
Recording: *Rough*

Nirvana, a punky, metallic, hard-rock trio from Seattle, has made a huge splash with "Nevermind," their first major-label release, which came out of nowhere to kick and spit its way into the Top 10 on the album charts. "Here we are now/entertain us/I feel stupid and contagious" screams leader Kurt Cobain in *Smells Like Teen Spirit*, the sensational first single. Someday people might look back at this line as the Nineties equivalent of "I can't get no satisfaction." *Smells Like* is a roiling, gloriously snotty tune, stomping from adolescent petulance to bored self-contempt before petering out with the enervated lines, "I found it hard/It was hard to find/Oh well, whatever/Nevermind." No other song here quite matches that one for spunk and spite, but all of the same musical elements burst out elsewhere—from the furious speed metal of *Breed* to the herky-jerky punkosity of *Territorial Pissings*. The pounding eases only a few



Together again: Springsteen, Southside, and Little Steven

and guitars in it. His appearances here are the only ones he made on record in the last year.) Parke Puterbaugh

"Better Days" is a survivor's album. In most of the songs the protagonists either look back at the old days, when they led penniless but uncomplicated lives, or vow to keep their heads above water as they face an uncertain future. The rasp in Southside Johnny's voice is a sign of the miles he's logged, and the soulful grit of the horns and guitars underscores his message. Former E Street Band drummer Max Weinberg's eloquent fills and powerful rolls give the material a walloping grandeur that's perfectly in sync with Little Steven's Phil Spector-style production. "Better Days" is more like a mural than a Wall of

SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY AND THE ASBURY JUKES: *Better Days*. Southside Johnny (vocals, harmonica); Little Steven, Bobby Bandiera (guitar); Bruce Springsteen (vocals, guitar, keyboards); Rusty Cloud (keyboards); Gary Tallent (bass); Max Weinberg (drums); the Miami Horns; the Jukes Horns; other musicians. *Coming Back; All I Needed Was You; It's Been a Long Time; Soul's on Fire; Better Days; I've Been Working Too Hard; Ride the Night Away; The Right to Walk Away; All Night Long; All the Way Home; Shake 'Em Down*. IMPACT © ITPD-10445 (57 min), © ITPD-10445.

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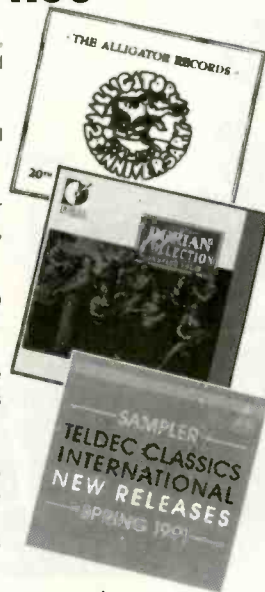
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times, most notably in *Lithium*, a song about a paranoid schizophrenic that contains the lines, "I kill you/I'm not gonna crack."

Cobain's thick, surging guitar meshes perfectly with Chris Novoselic's melodic bass and David Grohl's intensely snappy drumming. The trio's ability to punch up the music and shift it back down on a dime enhances the catchiness of the music beneath the snarling. Even when you don't understand the words coming out of Cobain's mouth—and that happens a lot—you can't help but be riveted by his performance. He takes his singing to an extreme, beyond angst and frustration to near incoherence. For Nirvana, what you screech is evidently less important than how you screech it. *R.G.*



Nirvana: out of nowhere, spunk and spite

SMOKEY ROBINSON: *Double Good Everything*. Smokey Robinson (vocals): vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Why; Rewind; Be Who You Are; I Love Your Face; I Can't Get Enough; When a Woman Cries*; and four others. SBK © CDP-97968 (39 min), © CP-97968.

Performance: *Wonderful*
Recording: *Good*

Smokey Robinson is a miracle of durability. One of the originators of the Motown Sound and long a linchpin of that firm, he has now struck out on his own. The songs in his new solo album are so beautifully crafted, with such a keen ear for the marriage between lyric and melody, that they're guaranteed to please.

The unifying thread is Robinson's singular voice—almost delicate but unmis-

takably masculine in its high register, marked by an eternal edge of youthful anticipation. Nobody else sounds quite like him, and what a wonderful sound it is! As a songwriter, he ranges from the pulsating ironies of *Skid Row* through the boundless ebullience of the title song, *Double Good Everything*, and the gospel-inflected insistence of *I Can't Get Enough*. Every word, every note rings true. All of his mastery comes into sharp focus in the shimmering *I Love Your Face*, certainly one of the loveliest ballads he has ever written.

With this release, Robinson reaffirms his greatness. Not only has he maintained a high level of performance over several decades, but his new work suggests that the best is yet to come. *P.G.*

STEWART/GASKIN: *Spin*. Dave Stewart (keyboards and rhythm programming); Barbara Gaskin (vocals); other musicians. *Walking the Dog; The Cloths of Heaven; 8 Miles High; Amelia; Trash Planet; Golden Rain; Your Lucky Star*; and three others. RYKO © RCD 20213 (60 min), © RC 20213.

Performance: *Cool and playful*
Recording: *Sparkles*

Keyboardist Dave Stewart (not the Eurythmics founder) and vocalist Barbara Gaskin make progressive *pop*, not progressive *rock*. There is a difference, and it has something to do with scaling down virtuosic pretensions and playing with a lighter and more lilting touch. Within an accessible framework, tunes take some unexpected detours—as in the tempo

shifts and melodic modulations that turn an old rhythm-and-blues standard like *Walking the Dog* into a technicolor free-for-all—without hitting the listener over the head with the musical equivalent of Thor's hammer. "Spin" is a user-friendly trip through inner space with a subtext of nostalgia for the lost Sixties.

Among the album's four covers, the duo's kryptonite-powered version of the Byrds' *8 Miles High* survives the transition from twelve-string to synths with no loss of forward thrust or tingling mystery. And while Stewart/Gaskin's version of *Amelia* is too close to Joni Mitchell's own to serve much purpose, the duo's medley of *Guantanamera* and *Louie Louie*, performed as arranged by the easy-listening Sandpipers (remember them?) back in 1966, is a pleasure. The original songs are filled with nature imagery and flowing melodies, with *Trash Planet* (a satire of our garbage-filled lifestyles) and *The 60's Never Die* (an encomium to headier times) leaving the deepest impressions. To borrow from Timothy Leary, you could do worse than "tune in, turn on, and drop out" to Stewart/Gaskin's musical trip. *P.P.*

UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD (original-soundtrack recording). Talking Heads: *Sax and Violins*. Julee Cruise: *Summer Kisses, Winter Tears*. Neneh Cherry: *Move with Me (dub version)*. Crime & the City Solution: *The Adversary*. Lou Reed: *What's Good*. And fifteen others. WARNER BROS. © 26707-2 (70 min), © 26707-4.

Performance: *Haunting*
Recording: *Varies*

Filmmaker Wim Wenders assembled a soundtrack for his latest film that is nearly as cinematic as the movie it accompanies. Four of the tracks are scored instrumental snippets; the remaining fifteen are project-tailored songs by the likes of R.E.M., Elvis Costello, Patti Smith, and T-Bone Burnett. They all sustain a mood of mordant reflection on life's passing with words and music that are dreamy, otherworldly, and ineluctably sad. The restrained air of melancholy recalls T. S. Eliot's lines, "This is the way the world ends/Not with a bang but a whimper."

The temporarily reunited Talking Heads' *Sax and Violins* is a sprightly item with a wicked lyrical undercurrent, and Patti Smith's contribution, *It Takes Time*, is a synthy, spoken drone jointly credited to her and husband Fred Smith. R.E.M.'s *Fretless* is a forlorn soliloquy from singer Michael Stipe ("Please please please don't try to tell me what I am") that comes off like a pop Gregorian chant. Elvis Costello dusts off a gem from the Kinks' fruitful midperiod, *Days*, giving it an unearthly glow, as if sung from beyond the grave. T-Bone Burnett's excellent, acerbic *Humans from Earth* would make a great premise for a film in its own right. Then there's *Summer Kisses, Winter Tears*, an ancient

Elvis Presley soundtrack item sung by actress Julee Cruise, co-produced by David Lynch, and as haunting and strange as an episode of *Twin Peaks*.

U2 supplies the title track (which also appears in their own "Achtung Baby"). There are also worthy songs from Depeche Mode, Daniel Lanois, Jane Siberry, Nick Cave, and the German band Can. But the soundtrack's hands-down classic is Lou Reed's *What's Good*. Framed by a symphonically dynamic guitar figure, the song finds him posing a series of penetrating questions and answering with this parting shot: "Life's good, but not fair at all." *P.P.*

WEBB WILDER: *Doo Dad*. Webb Wilder (vocals, guitar); other musicians. *Hoodoo Witch; Tough It Out; Meet Your New Landlord; Sittin' Pretty; Big Time; Sputnik; Run with It*; and five others. PRAXIS/ZOO © 72445-11010-2 (53 min), © 72445-11010-4.

Performance: *Sci-fi fantasia*
Recording: *Very good*

Webb Wilder—who works hard, rocks hard, eats hard, sleeps hard, grew big, and wears glasses because he needs them—has a doozy of a new album in "Doo Dad." Wilder (a.k.a. John McMurry) and his session-players-on-

acid band whip through a dozen mind-altering tunes, including a sound-effects-laden *Hoodoo Witch* and swampedelic covers of Big Joe Williams's *Baby Please Don't Go* and the Electric Prunes' *I Had Too Much to Dream (Last Night)*. The driving Williams blues standard includes a personal remembrance from Wilder about the time he says the two kept company, something that elevates it from merely a tribute. But there's far more original work in other tunes.

Everyday (I Kick Myself), a guitar-based rocker by Wilder and producer R. S. Field, pays kinky homage to the Rolling Stones (a guy thinks the gal will go for him if he's masochistic). And *Sputnik*, a Field and Bill Lloyd instrumental, at once recalls Duane Eddy's big, twangy tremolo guitar and all the Sixties surf music that ever washed between your ears. As usual, Wilder pulls out all the stops, mixing bizarro humor and furtive word play ("You're never too small to hit the big time") with rockabilly salutes to Jerry Lee Lewis (*Big Time*) and Nick Lowe (*Meet Your New Landlord*) or laying a Yardbirds kind of hook over Southern roots rock and the middleweight power chords of a toned-down Aerosmith. In other words, "Doo Dad" is Hillbilly Gothic at its deadpan best. Play that in your trailer park, Bubba. *A.N.*

Collection

TURN OF THE DECADE: Ben & Jerry's *Newport Folk Festival*. Pete Seeger: *This Land Is Your Land/Prelude*. Indigo Girls: *American Tune*. The Subdudes: *He's Got You on His Mind*. Luka Bloom: *Delirious*. Shawn Colvin: *Cry Like an Angel*. And eleven others. RED HOUSE © RHR CD 36 (63 min), © RHR C 36.

Performance: *Living-room friendly*
Recording: *Good remote*

Do we really need—or even want—another version of Pete Seeger scratching on the banjo and declaring *This Land Is Your Land*? Probably not, but the rest of these performances from the Newport Folk Festivals of 1989 and 1990 are another matter. Despite the intriguing list of stars, including Michelle Shocked, Richard Thompson, Shawn Colvin, Luka Bloom, and Sweet Honey in the Rock, almost none of the performances represent the artists at the top of their form. But there are still lovely moments a-plenty, including the Indigo Girls' *a cappella* version of *American Tune* (nearly as affecting as Paul Simon's), Luka Bloom's intense and libidinal *Delirious*, Robert Earl Keen, Jr.'s moving portrait of a Mexican gardener in *Mariano*, Rich-

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ard Thompson's eerie and compelling *She Moves Through the Fair*, Cheryl Wheeler's literate and sensual *Arrow*, Greg Brown's clever, percolating *Good Morning Coffee*, and Michelle Shocked's pinched vocals in Steve Goodman's *Ballad of Penny Evans*. Here, too, is a chance to hear Flaco Jimenez without the rest of the Texas Tornados, even if a little squeeze box goes a long, long way. The selections have everything a good folk festival should have—songs that raise your consciousness, give rise to your dreams, and, ultimately, nourish your soul. No argument here. A.N.

Jazz

CHET BAKER: *Out of Nowhere*. Chet Baker (trumpet, vocal); Frank Adams (alto saxophone); Frank Brown (guitar); Ted Adams, Ron Adams (bass); Wade Robertson (drums). *Fine and Dandy; Au Privave; Lady Be Good; There Is No Greater Love*; and four others. MILESTONE © MCD-9191-2 (50 min), © 5M-9191.

Performance: *Topnotch*
Recording: *Wanting*

The silky tone of Chet Baker's lyrical trumpet graces some of my favorite jazz recordings, beginning with the great 1952 piano-less Gerry Mulligan Quartet sides on the Pacific Jazz label. Baker's career blossomed after that as his frail, sensuous singing voice reached beyond the confines of the jazz world and garnered him considerable commercial success. But in the Sixties he began a downhill slide—a long bout with drugs and all that goes with them.

"Out of Nowhere" is a new Milestone release recorded during a 1982 Christmas Eve club date in Tulsa, Oklahoma. One could wish for greater presence, technically, but the performance is top-notch. Leading a hastily assembled quartet of local musicians, Baker plays with all the lyricism and finesse that marked his earlier work, and the group is right up there with him. Too bad that in his single vocal, *There Will Never Be Another You*, he's singing off-mike, because it features some engaging, atypical scatting. The trumpet recording also lacks presence, but you don't have to strain to hear it.

It is said that when a somewhat wasted Baker met jazz pianist Aldo Mussolini (the dictator's son), he whispered in that quiet voice of his: "Hey, man, I heard what they did to your dad—what a drag." I love that quote, and I recommend this album to anyone who loves good, straight-ahead jazz. C.A.

STAN GETZ: *The Best of the Verve Years, Vol. 1*. Stan Getz (tenor saxophone); Dizzy Gillespie (trumpet); J.J. Johnson (trombone); Gerry Mulligan (baritone saxophone); Chick Corea, Oscar Peter-

son, Bill Evans (piano); Herb Ellis, Charlie Byrd (guitar); Ron Carter, Ray Brown (bass); Connie Kay, Max Roach, Shelly Manne (drums); Ella Fitzgerald, Astrud Gilberto (vocals); other musicians. *Early Autumn; Desafinado; Con Alma; Girl from Ipanema; Summertime; My Funny Valentine; You're Blasé; Blues for Mary Jane; Flamingo; Here's That Rainy Day; Insensatez*; and thirteen others. VERVE © 314 511 468-2 two CD's (143 min), © 314 511 468-4 two cassettes.

Performance: *Lofty*
Recording: *Generally very good*

When Stan Getz's soft, ethereal sound rose from the bosom of the 1947 Woody Herman Herd in a recording of *Summer Sequence, Part IV* (later renamed *Early Autumn*), he stepped into a spotlight that would follow him for more than forty years. A superb ballad player, Getz won a large following outside the jazz world, but he was also a gutsy improviser who could please the most discriminating modern jazz fan. "The Best of the Verve Years" presents the tenor saxophonist in a wonderful variety of contexts, all of which suit him perfectly. There is Getz the combo player, doing amazing things to such familiar songs as *Stella by Starlight*, *Here's That Rainy Day*, and *My Funny Valentine*. Then there's Getz the orchestral soloist, brilliantly stepping up front for *Early Autumn* with Russ Garcia, *Manha de Carnival* with Gary McFarland, and an Eddie Sauter composition, *I'm Late, I'm Late*, with strings and woodwinds. And, of course, there is also Getz with fellow giants like Dizzy Gillespie, Gerry Mulligan, Oscar Peterson, and Ella Fitzgerald.

The scope of Getz's recorded work was such that even a double album bare-

ly scratches the surface, but this is only one volume in what I hope will be a comprehensive series of Getz reissues on Verve. And let us not forget his many great performances for other labels as well. More, please. C.A.

ABBEY LINCOLN: *You Gotta Pay the Band* (see Best of the Month, page 68)

BRANFORD MARSALIS: *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Branford Marsalis (soprano and tenor saxophones); Wynton Marsalis (trumpet); Courtney Pine (tenor saxophone); Robert Hurst (bass); Jeff "Tain" Watts (drums). *Roused About; Xavier's Lair; Cain and Abel; Gilligan's Isle*; and four others. COLUMBIA © CK 46990-2 (78 min), © CT 46990-4, LP 46990.

Performance: *Solid*
Recording: *Very good*

I have always thought Branford was the more musically interesting of the Marsalis brothers. In his latest album, "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born," he opens with two soprano-saxophone improvisations—the title tune and *Roused About*, dedicated to the late Charlie Rouse—accompanied only by bassist Robert Hurst and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts. It was Coltrane who brought the soprano sax to modern jazz, so it is not a coincidence that most current soprano players are smitten with his style. *Roused*—written by Hurst, who also solos passionately—is indeed a Trane-ish romp, but there is also much that is Branford in it. The title track is quite different in mood; almost a dirge at first, it remains ever so somber after perking up somewhat, and it takes its theme from a Brahms symphony (the third movement of the Third Symphony, if memory serves). Here it is only the length of the solo that brings Coltrane to mind.

Branford's tenor comes on strong after that, soaring beautifully into *Xavier's Lair*, a piece that really displays his satisfying combination of technical and creative skills. Brother Wynton joins in for the next tune, which Branford with a touch of humor has named *Cain and Abel*. No sibling rivalry here, just engaging harmony. *Gilligan's Isle* has Branford's tenor glowing again, flowing freely above, into, and under a strolling rhythmic base. This is a wonderfully laid-back performance of considerable substance.

A battle between soloists is a jazz tradition, and we have one here in *Dewey Baby*, a fierce up-tempo bout in which Branford faces British tenorman Courtney Pine. Both are formidable players, but Pine tends to step a mite too hard on the Coltrane circular-breathing treadmill, while Marsalis is more individual. The duel would have made a perfect ending for this album, but there is more, a strutting, peckish soprano trek called *Beat's Remark*. Add it all up and you have 78 minutes of intriguing music by one of the most gifted young players on the scene today. C.A.

Branford Marsalis



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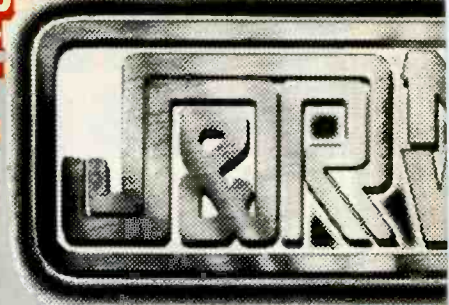
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Recent discs and
cassettes reviewed by

Robert Ackart, Richard Freed, David Hall,
George Jellinek, Eric Salzman, and
David Patrick Stearns

BRUCKNER: *Symphony No. 7, in E Major*. New York Philharmonic, Kurt Masur cond. TELDEC © 73243-2 (63 min).

Performance: *Enlivening*
Recording: *Homogenized*

Teldec has lost no time in documenting Kurt Masur's new identity as music director of the New York Philharmonic. This Bruckner Seventh was recorded live last fall, at the opening concert of his first season in New York, and the disc was in the stores less than two months later. It is a noble reading—noble, but free of gratuitous mysticism. Clearly, Masur is more concerned with finding the music's natural momentum and maintaining steady rhythm than with building "cathedrals in sound." There is a greater sense of vitality here, the sort of underlying tension and spontaneity that make live recording worthwhile, as

Masur and the New York Philharmonic



Explanation of Symbols

- Ⓢ = Compact disc
- Ⓣ = Tape cassette

well as more brightness in the playing, than in his earlier recording of the work with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. At the same time, there is a mellowness new to the Philharmonic, and it does not by any means cancel out brilliance. Masur does not include the controversial cymbal clash in the slow movement, and I've never missed it less.

Measured by the standards Teldec itself has achieved in its earlier recordings of the Philharmonic under Zubin Mehta, the sound is a little disappointing in respect to both smoothness and definition. I'd have liked more body in the strings and more bite and crispness in the brass; although the focus seems very close, both of these choirs sound rather "homogenized." This could have been part of Masur's design, the way he went after the aforementioned mellowness, or it could be that recording in Avery Fisher Hall with an audience present, as Teldec intends to continue doing with Masur, will require further adjustments. Overall, a heartening beginning for what has already begun to sound like Masur's Philharmonic. *R.F.*

DVOŘÁK: *Five Bagatelles, Op. 47; String Quartet No. 12, in F Major, Op. 96 ("American"); String Quartet No. 14, in A-flat Major, Op. 105.* Takács Quartet. LONDON © 430 077-2 (74 min).

Performance: *Irresistible*
Recording: *Excellent*

How many other string quartets would be able to perform Dvořák's Bagatelles for Two Violins, Cello, and Harmonium without augmenting their personnel? Not one to sit on his hands while his colleagues perform, the Takács Quartet's violist, Gábor Ormai, sounds more than comfortable and utterly persuasive at the harmonium. And what endearing pieces these are! Here they serve as an enticing prefatory gesture to quite exceptional performances of two of the warmhearted Bohemian master's deservedly best-known string quartets. In both the thrice-familiar F Major and the A-flat Major, the work that brought the cycle to its true culmination as well as its conclusion, the Takács players come about as close as mere humans can to the ideal balance of warmth and vigor, while their unflinching taste is by now as much a given as their technical security. Since the London production team has come through with a sonic frame perfectly matched to the qualities of the performances, and managed to get all three on a single generously filled disc, the only word for this release would seem to be "irresistible." *R.F.*

FRANCK: *Prélude, Choral et Fugue.* **LISZT: *Mephisto Waltz No. 1; Au Bord d'une Source; Sonetto 104 del Petrarca;***

Waldehrauschen; Gnomesreigen; Rhapsodie Espagnole. Murray Perahia (piano). SONY CLASSICAL © SK 47180 (60 min).

Performance: *Mostly superb*
Recording: *Very good*

The performance of the Franck *Prélude, Choral et Fugue* that opens this program is downright ravishing—not for anything like the usual reasons but for the elegance Murray Perahia brings to this sometimes abused work. It isn't that he understates at any point, but simply that he refuses to allow himself to be tempted toward anything like grandiosity. His fleet but by no means breathless reading has wonderful momentum and an unflinching sense of proportion; everything unfolds with disarming spontaneity, building to a climax that is charged with radiance.

The Liszt portion begins with a *Mephisto Waltz* that suggests Perahia sees the Prince of Devils more as a master of subtle intrigue than as an inelegant orgiast. It is striking in its way, and gorgeous pianism, but one does want a bit more of a splash; Minoru Nojima manages to give us both the subtlety and the splash in his still incomparable Liszt collection on Reference Recordings. *Mephisto* is the only work duplicated on these two discs, and for the rest Perahia is clearly outstanding. The sequence is devised to exploit a variety of images, building to outright jubilation in the seldom heard *Spanish Rhapsody*—the effect being to make, with the Franck, a brilliant and substantial frame for the shorter pieces. The sound is very good; all but two of the performances were taped at the Maltings, Snape, which, for Perahia especially, seems to be a sure-fire recording venue. *R.F.*

HAYDN: *Violin Concertos in A Major (Hob. VIIa:3), G Major (Hob. VIIa:4), and C Major (Hob. VIIa:1).* **MOZART: *Rondo in C Major (K. 373).*** Christian Tetzlaff (violin); Northern Sinfonia, Heinrich Schiff cond. VIRGIN © 91489-2 (67 min).

Performance: *Attractive*
Recording: *Excellent*

All of the Haydn concertos on this CD were lost and reappeared only in this century, the A Major as recently as 1950. The C Major turns up now and again and has been recorded a few times. The G Major, an early and minor work, is old-fashioned and not convincing, but the others are better pieces of music than any of the Mozart violin concertos. I will never understand why Haydn always plays second fiddle.

The plain, attractive performances here convey the sweetness, the grace, and the solidity—if not the depth and grandeur—of these works. They're not the kind of performances that will sell

this music to the unconvinced but are admirable nonetheless. Sensitive playing, excellent sound, and a nice bonus in the form of Mozart's best concerted music for violin and orchestra. *E.S.*

LISZT: *Mephisto Waltz No. 1; other piano works* (see **FRANCK**)

MAHLER: *Lieder eines Fahrenden Gesellen; Kindertotenlieder; Five Rückert-Lieder.* Thomas Hampson (baritone); Vienna Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON © 431 682-2 (68 min).

MAHLER: *Lieder eines Fahrenden Gesellen; Kindertotenlieder; Four Rückert-Lieder.* Andreas Schmidt (baritone); Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Jesús López-Cobos cond. TELARC © 80269 (56 min).

Performances: *Both good*
Recordings: *Both excellent*

The orchestral songs reveal the essential Mahler: his anguish, his torments, and his unique mix of simplicity and sophistication. The conductors of these two new recordings, however, offer divergent views of the music. Jesús López-Cobos attempts the near-impossible: an objective approach to this intensely subjective, not to say neurotic, composer, achieved by unusually brisk pacing and emotional restraint. That, obviously, was not Leonard Bernstein's way with Mahler. His tempos here are slower than those of any other conductor known to me (Furtwängler excepted), rubatos abound, and emotions are given free rein. Interestingly enough, for all his objectivity, the López-Cobos reading is neither prosaic nor superficial, while Bernstein's, for all his excesses, is still uniquely compelling.

Of the singers, both very good indeed, Andreas Schmidt has the truer baritone sound: rich, warm, and smoothly produced. He also enjoys a kinder microphone treatment, which allows him to emerge unscarred by the orchestral torrents in *In diesem Wetter* (*Kindertotenlieder* No. 5). With a voice that is lighter and less resonant, Thomas Hampson finds more expressive nuances under Bernstein's expert guidance, but in strictly vocal terms I am partial to Schmidt's richer sound. Bernstein unquestionably works with a greater orchestra; the Vienna Philharmonic, with its wonderful horns, clearly has the edge over the Cincinnati Symphony. Still, I find López-Cobos's relatively unsentimental Mahler quite intriguing. *G.J.*

MOZART: *Requiem (K. 626).* Angela Maria Blasi (soprano); Marjana Lipovšek (contralto); Uwe Heilmann (tenor); Jan-Hendrik Rootering (bass). Chorus and Orchestra of the Bavarian Radio,



Christian Tetzlaff: attractive Haydn and Mozart

Colin Davis cond. RCA VICTOR © 60599-2 (53 min).

Performance: *Big and romantic*
Recording: *Big and resonant*

If a moratorium were declared on further recordings of the ridiculously overexposed Mozart Requiem in the wake of the bicentennial year, this one would have to be allowed to sneak under the wire. It is a strong-minded performance that shows the music at its most theatrical and dramatic. Colin Davis seems to approach the work as if it were Mozart's last opera, and his rather Mahlerian reading is far more romantic than *Don Giovanni*. Not only does he employ a large chorus, large orchestra, and large-voiced soloists, but he wrings as much contrast and pathos out of them as possible. While not everyone will like this approach, it is realized with utter consistency and considerable artistry.

I usually prefer authentic-instrument performances, but I was won over by the sincerity of this one. It has been a long time since I've heard the Mozart Requiem performed by forces that sound like they really mean it. *D.P.S.*

MOZART: *Rondo in C Major, K. 373* (see **HAYDN**)

NIELSEN: *Symphony No. 3, Op. 27* ("Espansiva"); *Symphony No. 6, Op. 116* ("Semplice"). Pia-Maria Nilsson (soprano); Olle Persson (baritone); Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Esa-Pekka Salonen cond. SONY CLASSICAL © SK 46500 (71 min).

Performance: *Brilliant*
Recording: *Crisp*

This disc winds up Esa-Pekka Salonen's somewhat hectic traversal of the six

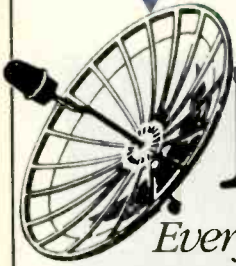
symphonies by Denmark's Carl Nielsen, and for me it is the most successful.

Salonen gets things off to a rousing start with a high-spirited opening movement of the "*Sinfonia Espansiva*." The pantheistic slow movement, with its off-stage duet-vocalise, is superbly atmospheric. The bittersweet third movement is notable for its contrapuntal clarity. Only in the processional finale does the conductor let us down with rather too pompous pacing.

The last of the Nielsen symphonies, No. 6 from 1924-1925, is the work of an artist face to face with his own mortality, doubtful both of his own achievement and of the fate of music itself as he has known it. The glittering glockenspiel at the opening paves the way for the first movement's icy polyphonic rumination. The "*Humoreske*" second movement, for winds and percussion only, is a savage commentary on the musical avant-garde of the time. The slow movement, again intensely polyphonic in texture, is resigned lamentation, and the finale is a set of variations ranging from the simplistic through the horrifying to the grimly sardonic. Salonen seems to have just the right temperament for this piece, bringing to it a hard and volatile brilliance that heightens its emotional impact, and his reading is complemented by the bright and crisp acoustic of Stockholm's Berwald Hall. The Swedish Radio Orchestra plays with great verve throughout. *D.H.*

PROKOFIEV: *The Fiery Angel, Op. 37.* Nadine Secunde (soprano), Renata; Siegfried Lorenz (baritone), Ruprecht; Heinz Zednik (tenor), Agrippa, Mephistopheles; Ruthild Engert-Ely (alto), Fortune-teller, Mother Superior; Kurt Moll (bass), Inquisitor; others. Gösta Ohlin's

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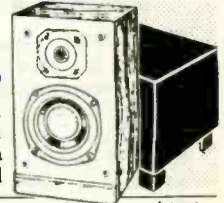


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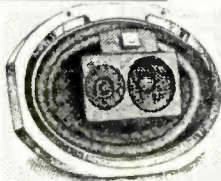
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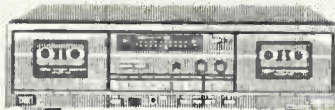
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Performance: *Very strong*
Recording: *Good*

The Fiery Angel was the greatest disappointment of Prokofiev's career. It is a sprawling music drama written in the early Twenties after an obscure Russian symbolist novel about a hysterical young woman, who either has or has not been seduced by Satan, and a young man by the name of Ruprecht, who consorts with necromancers—he even hangs out with Faust and Mephistopheles—in the vain hope of winning her love. In the final scene, she manages to organize an orgy in a convent right in front of Ru-



Laplante: generously inflected Ravel

precht and the Grand Inquisitor, who orders her to be burned at the stake. Curtain. I am not making this up.

Whatever possessed (so to speak) Prokofiev to spend years of his life on this ill-fated project—he wrote both the libretto and the music—will never be known for sure. The work was never performed in his lifetime (he recycled some of the music into his Third Symphony) and had its first concert and theater performances only in the mid Fifties. *Ognennyj Angel*—to give it its original Russian name—is, in fact, fatally flawed: heavy and melodramatic but without any real conflict or dramatic motor to drive it along. Ruprecht is mad for the girl, and the girl is mad—period. All the cards are on the table in the very first scene, and nothing changes thereafter. Composers

should probably not be allowed to write their own librettos.

The score is powerful, relentless, suffocating. It is not particularly Prokofievian. It was called Wagnerian from the beginning, and, although Prokofiev objected, Wagnerian is what it is. Perhaps its biggest fault is that the composer never finds a consistent tone or character that responds to the subject matter. There is anguish. The powers of darkness are ever present. But there is no magic, no mystification, no surprise, few shadings or subtleties, no real struggle. We experience the torture of these damned souls but never get a glimpse of what goes on inside.

This recording, made in Sweden with a non-Russian international cast, is sung in the original language. Everyone involved deserves a merit badge just for the effort. The part of Renata, without a doubt one of the most challenging in all of opera, is strikingly performed by Nadine Secunde, an American soprano who has made a considerable reputation in Europe. Siegfried Lorenz, one of the best singers to come out of the old East Germany, is a strong presence in what is virtually a *heldentenor* role. Among the secondary characters, Kurt Moll is outstanding as the Inquisitor—inevitably an ominous bass. Everyone is caught up in the seething energy and violent heavings of this tremendous, agonizing score. I can't imagine a better realization of an impossible piece of music. *E.S.*

RACHMANINOFF: *Piano Concertos No. 2, in C Minor, Op. 18, and No. 3, in D Minor, Op. 30.* Horacio Gutiérrez (piano); Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Lorin Maazel cond. TELARC © CD-80259 (73 min).

Performance: *Bravura*
Recording: *Very good*

Telarc's latest release featuring Horacio Gutiérrez offers the two most famous Rachmaninoff piano concertos, with Lorin Maazel and the Pittsburgh Symphony as formidable collaborators. If you like a bravura approach to these pieces, Gutiérrez is your man. He's fleet-fingered, totally in control of the most exacting passage work, and shows splendid rhythmic address in the final movements. He may seem a bit wanting in poetry, at least in the rather brisk opening movements, but he does let up on the tension to bring us very lovely tone and phrasing in both adagio movements. In the Third Concerto, he plays the shorter of the two cadenzas Rachmaninoff provided, and he turns on the fireworks with a vengeance.

The microphone placement is fairly close, giving a strong sense of presence to the piano, but without putting the orchestra in the shade. I felt as if I were surrounded by the orchestra rather than in, say, a first-row balcony seat. *D.H.*

RAVEL: *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales; Miroirs; Gaspard de la Nuit.* Christopher

O'Riley (piano). ALBANY © TROY052-2 (67 min).

Performance: *Cool and objective*
Recording: *Nondescript*

RAVEL: *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales; Gaspard de la Nuit; Menuet Antique; Sonatine.* André Laplante (piano). ELAN © CD 2232 (61 min).

Performance: *Chopinesque*
Recording: *Warm and excellent*

It's hard to imagine two more different approaches to Ravel. Christopher O'Riley, a young American pianist who has made a career for himself as both a virtuoso soloist and a chamber musician after winning prizes in the Leeds and Van Cliburn competitions, seems most concerned with the music's abstract qualities, its lace-like form and use of exotic modes. He may have been influenced by the ultra-transparent recordings of French music by Pierre Boulez, particularly in his slowish tempo for *Alborada del Gracioso*, which he seems to be examining under a microscope. There are no significant revelations resulting from this scrutiny, however.

André Laplante, whose career was launched after winning the silver medal at the 1978 Tchaikovsky Competition, seems less concerned with Ravel as an innovator; he approaches the music as one of the composer's contemporaries might have. No other recording I've heard of *Gaspard de la Nuit* has so generously inflected it with a Chopinesque rubato or used this technique so effectively to give the music an almost physical sense of movement. Laplante's considerable coloristic skills and almost luxuriously spacious tempos enable him to bask in the shimmering resonance of Ravel's harmonies. The result reminds us of Ravel's debt to Debussy and Fauré. I've never heard anything quite like it, with the possible exception of Alfred Cortot's 1931 recording of *Sonatine*.

Laplante's performances are flattered by the warm acoustics of Gaston Hall in Washington, D.C., but O'Riley's are undercut by the slightly boxy, impersonal acoustics of the Barn in Bedford, New York. In sum, Laplante's recording is a valuable addition to the Ravel discography, while O'Riley's is an elegant but earthbound misfire, which is curious considering what an electrifying performer he is in concert. *D.P.S.*

RODRIGO: *Concierto de Aranjuez; Fantasia para un Gentilhombre* (see *Best of the Month*, page 68)

SCHUBERT: *Sonata in B-flat Major (D. 960).* **SCHUMANN:** *Kinderszenen, Op. 15.* Vladimir Horowitz (piano). DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON © 435 025-2 (56 min).

Performance: *Affectionate*
Recording: *Good to excellent*

This release is labeled "Horowitz the Poet," and that heading is in large mea-

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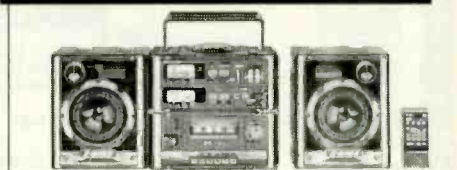
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sure justified by the insights and affection apparent in the performances, the Schumann in particular. *Kinderszenen* was a favorite of Horowitz's, and its best-known section, *Träumerei*, was one of his most frequent encores. The performance here, from a recital given in Vienna in May 1987, has been in circulation for a year or two in video formats. This is its first appearance on CD, though, as it is also for the Schubert, a New York studio recording made a little more than a year earlier. Horowitz shows his affection in the most convincing way, by approaching both works fairly straightforwardly. There is even a bit of understatement in the Schumann, as if he were simply touching chords of memory—but it is enough to bring the music fully and warmly to life. The occasional coughs from the audience should disturb no one, but what a pity to have the enchantment broken by the applause at the end.

There is another coughing nor applause to mar the Schubert, which is also recorded a little more richly. Not a "basic" version of this great valedictory work, perhaps, but more persuasive than Horowitz's own earlier one (from his 1953 Carnegie Hall recital) and in its own right full of interesting things. Horowitz took the repeat in the first movement but kept the music moving to insure its welcome. Some listeners may miss the tragic emphasis other pianists bring to the slow movement; my own feeling is that the unforced resignation in Horowitz's performance rings truer. Throughout the work I like the way the music is allowed to speak for itself without being fussed over or overinterpreted, while at the same time inner voices and contrapuntal lines are exceptionally clear. *R.F.*

SCHUMANN: *Kinderszenen* (see **SCHUBERT**)

R. STRAUSS: *Salome*. Eva Marton (soprano), Salome; Bernd Weikl (baritone), Jochanaan; Heinz Zednik (tenor), Herodes; Brigitte Fassbaender (mezzo-soprano), Herodias; others. Berlin Philharmonic, Zubin Mehta cond. SONY CLASSICAL © S2K 46717 two CD's (101 min).

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

R. STRAUSS: *Salome*. Cheryl Studer (soprano), Salome; Bryn Terfel (baritone), Jochanaan; Horst Hiestermann (tenor), Herodes; Leonie Rysanek (soprano), Herodias; others. German Opera Orchestra, Berlin, Giuseppe Sinopoli cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON © 431 810-2 two CD's (101 min).

Performance: *Outstanding*
Recording: *Outstanding*

Both of these new sets are estimable, but the Giuseppe Sinopoli-Cheryl Studer version yields more of the qualities I look for in *Salome*. While the Sony recording is entirely acceptable, the Deut-

sche Grammophon is crisper and more brilliant, capturing more of Strauss's orchestral coloration. Some of this difference may lie in microphone positioning, but I suspect that Sinopoli's approach to the score is also a factor. In contrast to Zubin Mehta's solid but essentially "standard" reading, Sinopoli's comes across as a fresh realization of the familiar music. One is sharply conscious of the interplay of orchestra and voice and of the use of voice as an instrument, sometimes melding with the total musical texture only to emerge at climactic moments with striking clarity.

Any performance of *Salome* is inescapably dominated by the interpretation of the protagonist, a soprano role requiring endurance, a range of well over two octaves, and a mastery of vocal acting. Admirably coloring her voice to reveal her character's changing personality, Cheryl Studer is undaunted by the music's range, tessitura, or length of line. It is a vocally luminous and dramatically cogent performance. Eva Marton sings the role with thoughtful dramatic intent and for the most part with musical accuracy. At this stage in her career, however, she does not sound comfortable with her part's range. She breaks phrases sometimes, or delivers them as though they were unrelated to what precedes or follows. The effect is to sunder the soaring musical line.

Bernd Weikl's Jochanaan is creditable; in full-bodied tone he pours out the prophet's faith, sanctity, and final horror. As with Marton, the role seems high for him, and often his warmth of voice becomes woofiness. Sinopoli's Jochanaan, Bryn Terfel, commands a clearer baritone; his top notes have a "ping," and his words are more intelligible. Both Heinz Zednik and Horst Hiestermann are fine musically as Herodes, but Hiestermann makes more of the text.

There is a tendency to overplay the part of Herodias, to over-inflect, to make ugly sounds of Strauss's music. Both Brigitte Fassbaender and Leonie Rysanek avoid these pitfalls, and, indeed, both offer satisfying performances. But Rysanek is such an experienced, schooled artist that her portrayal is more nuanced than Fassbaender's, and it is free of the latter's occasional vocal exaggeration. The celebrated Dance of the Seven Veils, one of the best sections in Mehta's recording, is sumptuously played in both sets. *R.A.*

VIVALDI *Concerto in D Major* (see **Best of the Month**, page 68)

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Symphonies Nos. 5 and 6* (see **Best of the Month**, page 69)

Collection

ORQUESTA NOVA. *Piazzolla: La Muerte del Angel; Oblivion.* **Franzetti: Little Village; Al Caer la Noche; Serena-**

ta; Nocturne. **Grenet: Drume Negrita.** **Jobim: Por Toda a Minha Vida; Amparo; Retrato em Branco e Preto.** **D'Rivera: Wapango.** **Villa-Lobos: Choro No. 1.** **Paulau: Atorrante.** Orquesta Nova, Carlos Franzetti cond. CHESKY © JD54 (53 min).

Performance: *Refined*
Recording: *Luscious*

A small bunch of years ago, when I produced the "Tango Project" albums



Studer: a luminous Salome

for Nonesuch, virtually no attention was paid in this country to the serious, European side of Latin music—tango and such. Since those days, and the success of the show *Tango Argentino*, this kind of music gets a lot more attention. It is certainly taken seriously and for the beautiful music that it is by Carlos Franzetti and his Orquesta Nova.

Franzetti is from Argentina, and he has either composed or arranged ten of the fourteen numbers on this beguiling disc—mostly Argentine tangos and milongas and Venezuelan waltzes, with Cuban *son* and *danzón* and some Jobim bossa nova in between. The arrangements have a refinement that is almost the opposite of the usual Latin clichés yet is also true to the Latin spirit. Listen to the opening dark Piazzolla piece or the minor-key tango at the end; the strictness, delicacy, and rhythmic edge combine to make a powerful impression.

All but one or two of the players are non-Hispanic New York musicians, but they are individually excellent, and Franzetti has welded them into a convincingly Latin ensemble. The recording, made at the General Theological Seminary, is luscious. To think that the tango, once denounced from every pulpit in the country, is now so sensuously recorded in a seminary! *E.S.*

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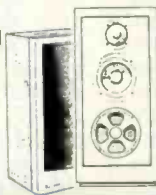
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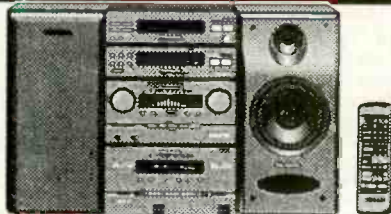
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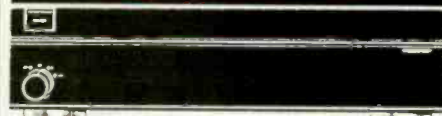
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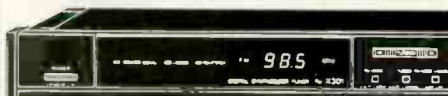
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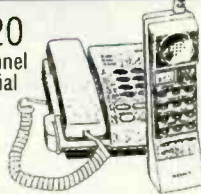


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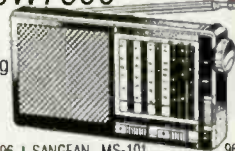


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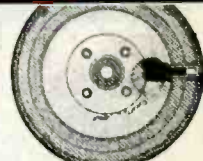
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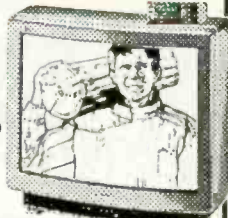
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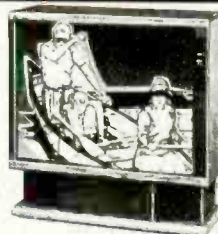
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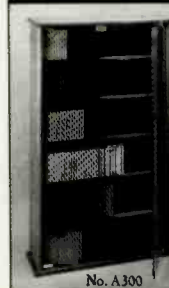
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March

R · E · C · O · R · D · S

by Robert Ripps,
Maryann Saltser,
& Steve Simels

Abbey Lincoln has remained a strong voice in jazz for four decades, from her early days performing in clubs in Hawaii under the name Gaby Lee to her latest Verve release, "You Gotta Pay the Band" (see review in "Best Recordings of the Month"), featuring the late Stan Getz in



Lincoln in the Sixties

CANDID RECORDS

his last studio recording. "Having him on the session really affected my own instrument," Lincoln said of Getz, with whom she had never before worked professionally. "He brought everything he had to the session and helped make the whole thing very easy." Pianist Hank Jones, bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Marc Johnson, and violist Maxine Roach are also featured in the new album. Lincoln herself handled the arrangements and wrote half of the songs.

Just before the album's release, the Black Filmmakers Association presented the world premiere of the docu-

mentary *You Gotta Pay the Band: The Words, the Music, and the Life of Abbey Lincoln*, which highlights Lincoln's status as a role model for young black women.

POP/JAZZ singing stars and classical cellists don't often cross paths, but Bobby McFerrin and Yo-Yo Ma were both at Tanglewood for Leonard Bernstein's seventieth-birthday gala in 1988. They became friends and have since performed together in concerts in San Francisco and Boston. Recently they teamed up for a Sony Classical recording in which McFerrin's vocal improvisations join Ma's cello in light classical pieces such as the Bach-Gounod *Ave Maria* and *The Flight of the Bumblebee* and in several of McFerrin's compositions.

SOUL singer/preacher Al Green joined singer/songwriter/producer Arthur Baker for *Leave the Guns at Home* in Baker's recent debut album on RCA, "Give In to the Rhythm." The pro-gun-control song was also featured at a press conference last fall held at New York City's Abyssinian Baptist Church and co-sponsored by RCA Records and the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence. At the press conference, Green and

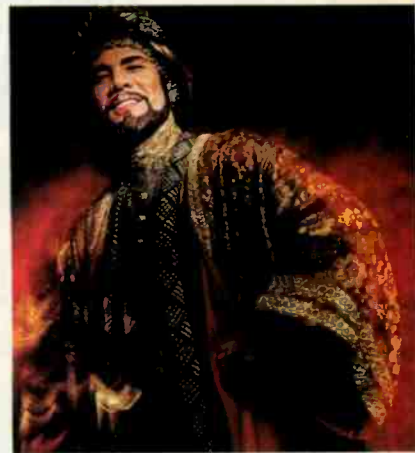
Baker were joined in performance by a chorale of children who have lost family members to handgun homicide. RCA is currently taping public-service announcements about handgun control for music-video and news programs. Besides Green and Baker, artists involved in the project to date include Queen Latifah, MC Lyte, Yo Yo, Africa Bambaata, and Salt n' Pepa.

THE renowned basso Samuel Ramey stars in the first new recording in Sony Classical's Broadway line, a



Green (center) and friends

remake of *Kismet* that also features opera singers Julia Migenes, Jerry Hadley, and Ruth Ann Swenson and Broadway star Mandy Patinkin. Sony Broadway is also reissuing original-cast albums from



Ramey: going Broadway

the old Columbia Masterworks catalog. Among the first titles, many on CD for the first time, are *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* with Carol Channing, *The Most Happy Fella*, *Irma la Douce*, and the classic 1956 recording of *Candide* with Barbara Cook.

Kurt Masur, the New York Philharmonic's new music director, has signed an exclusive contract with Teldec Classics for thirty-two recordings with the orchestra over the next six years. The first release was Bruckner's Seventh Symphony, recorded live at Avery Fisher Hall last September. A CD of Dvořák's "New World" Symphony and Slavonic Dances is due this month. Planned for release later this year are four live recordings of works by Ives, Brahms, Reger, Franck, and Mahler.

Terri Nunn, the former lead singer of Berlin, is finally stepping out on her own with "Moment of Truth," her solo debut on Geffen. Nunn left Berlin in late 1987, after sharing in the acclaim for such hits as *The Metro* and *Sex (I'm a . . .)* from 1983's "Pleasure Victim" and the Oscar-winning *Take My Breath Away* from the *Top Gun* soundtrack. "I hid in Berlin," she says. "I didn't expose a



McFerrin and Ma: crossover pals

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lot of myself. Now everything's different. Success is not as important as challenge."

Nunn co-wrote more than half of the songs in her new album, touching on such deeply personal subjects as her father's suicide when she was fourteen. Her other recent projects include a cameo in the upcoming film *Gift*, which was written and directed by Perry Farrell, lead singer of Jane's Addiction.



Nunn: bye-bye, Berlin

MEZZO-SOPRANO Marilyn Horne, virtuosic champion of the music of Rossini, will take part in a 200th Birthday Gala at Lincoln Center (move over, Mozart!) on the composer's actual birthday, February 29. Some of those set to join Miss Horne in the festivities are fellow Rossini lovers Frederica von Stade, Thomas Hampson, June Anderson, Chris Merritt, and Samuel Ramey, with the Orchestra of St. Luke's conducted by Roger Norrington. A

BETTE MARSHALL/IMG CLASSICS



Horne: celebrating Rossini

repeat performance of the Rossini birthday bash will be televised in the PBS Live from Lincoln Center series on March 2.

Just released is Horne's new all-Rossini song disc on

RCA Victor Red Seal. And for a break from *bel canto*, she recorded an album of lullabies from around the world, which RCA will release later this year.

Spinal Tap, the world's most famous fictional heavy-metal band, is back. First seen in Rob Reiner's hilarious 1984 "rockumentary" *This Is Spinal Tap*, the group has signed a recording contract with MCA, and an album is scheduled for early this year. Original Tap stars Nigel Tufnel (actor Christopher Guest), David St. Hubbins (comedian Michael McKean), and Derek Smalls (satirist Harry Shearer) will all be on hand for the new record, as well as an as yet unnamed celebrity drummer chosen in a public audition at the Los Angeles Coliseum (Tap's previous drummers have either exploded or died from spontaneous combustion). Mick Fleetwood, ex-Go-Go Gina Schock, and ex-Monkee Mickey Dolenz are said to be the front runners. A video of Tap's forthcoming concert tour is also reportedly in the works.

THE Takacs String Quartet makes its Carnegie Hall debut February 7, performing the Schumann Piano Quintet with pianist András Schiff. The Takacs is recording the essential quartet repertory from Schubert to Brahms for London Records; Schiff joins in whenever piano is required. Due this month is a Brahms disc that includes the Piano Quintet.

GRACENOTES. Charles Mackerras, whose Mozart symphony cycle for Telarc has been highly successful, conducts the label's first opera recording, *The Magic Flute*, released late last



Spinal Tap lives!

year. The cast includes Barbara Hendricks, Jerry Hadley, and June Anderson. . . . The boxed set of Sixties material by the Hollies, originally scheduled for release by EMI in time for Christmas, has been delayed so that original members Allan Clarke, Tony Hicks, and Graham Nash can finish some new songs to be included (just like the old days). EMI is also readying yet another Yardbirds reissue, with all of the Jimmy Page cuts that were left out of the recent Columbia/Legacy Yardbirds package. . . . The Japanese violinist Kyoko Takezawa's first two releases under her new exclusive RCA Victor Red Seal contract are a disc with Tchaikovsky's First Violin Concerto and Prokofiev's Second and a recital disc including works by Bartók and Brahms. . . . A tribute album of star performances of songs by cult favorite Richard Thompson is due this spring from Capitol. It will feature R.E.M. (whose version of Thompson's *Wall of Death* is already finished), Chrissie

RICHARD DUDLEY-SMITH/WAGNES BRUNEAU & ASSOC'S.



Takacs Quartet: basic rep

Hynde of the Pretenders, and others. . . . Chanticleer, the male *a cappella* ensemble, recently released on its own label "With a Poet's Eye," a collection of contemporary American works including some commissioned by the group, and a recording of the *Missa Berzerette Savoyenne* by the sixteenth-century composer Antoine Brumel. □

STEVE GRANITZ/RETNA

BACKBEAT

by Steve Simels



PHOTO OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES BY BART EVERLY, COURTESY EMI

A Few That Got Away

WHILE cleaning house the other day (and not otherwise distracted by MTV's "The Making of Kurt Loder's 'Keith Richards and the X-Pensive Winos Live' Liner Notes" special), I suddenly confronted a sobering truth. To wit: Over the last year or two, I had accumulated stacks of CD's, in all sorts of pop genres, that I really liked but for one reason or another had never written up in these pages. Well, better late than never and all that, so now—with apologies to the artists involved—here's a retrospective roundup of a few of my favorite things from the early Nineties.

- **Otis Ball:** *I'm Gonna Love You Till I Don't* (Bar/None). First-rate, witty, hook-laden pop rock from the finest singer-songwriter currently living in Hoboken, New Jersey. Imagine Nick Lowe without the cynicism or Squeeze without the cleverness for its

own sake and you'll have an idea of how charming and accessible Ball's best stuff is. Pick hit: the simultaneously optimistic and melancholy title track, a gem that some smart above-ground artist—Cheap Trick, perhaps, or Susanna Hoffs—really ought to cover.

- **MC5:** *Kick Out the Jams* (Elektra). Post-modern youngsters (defined here as anybody born after the release of the Partridge Family's hit single *I Think I Love You*) may not be aware of this, but the MC5 was the only American group of the Sixties fit to be mentioned in the same breath as the early Who or the Yardbirds. In other words, it was among the most exciting outfits ever to commit loud noise to tape, and "Kick Out the Jams"—the Five's live debut album from

1968—can now be seen as a stunning precursor of both heavy metal and punk. The new CD version also makes a nice memorial for lead singer Rob Tyner, who died last year (although not before contributing wonderfully over-the-top liner notes). Sure, the album's revolutionary politics are dated, but its sound and fury remain overwhelming.

- **The Questionnaires:** *Anything Can Happen* (EMI). Here's an amazing anomaly: a mainstream rock band that writes melodically memorable songs, makes interesting guitar-based noises, and largely eschews cliché while still sticking to the rock-and-roll verities. And they know how to make records, too. How do they get away with it in these debased times? Darned if I know. I do know, however, that lead singer and songwriter Tom Littlefield deserves a lot of credit, that a band that can sift influences as varied as the

Georgia Satellites and the Beach Boys deserves a wider hearing than the Questionnaires have gotten, and that this album's *In the Back of My Mind* is the most gorgeous lost-love ballad in years. Your move, kids.

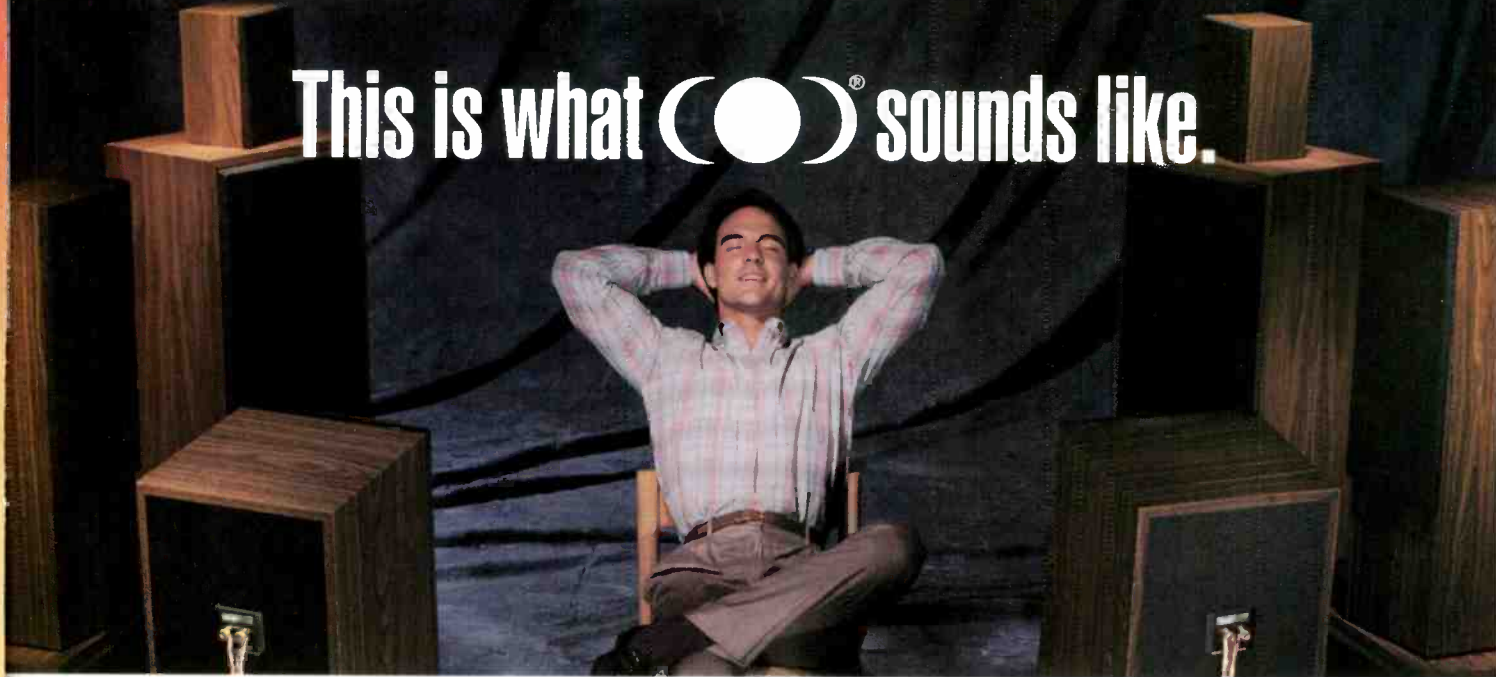
- **Monty Python Sings** (Virgin). At last, on one convenient CD, all the best musical numbers from the Pythons' various films and albums, including the sublime *Sit on My Face*, the theme from *The Meaning of Life* (sung—unaccountably but hilariously—by Eric Idle in a bad French accent), and, of course, *The Lumberjack Song*. A lyric sheet, amusing in itself, is included, so feel free to join in with the lads when the spirit moves you.

- **The Grifters** (original soundtrack recording, Varèse/Sarabande). Director Stephen Frears's atmospheric realization of a Jim Thompson pulp novel is one of the best American movies of recent vintage, but its secret weapon just may be veteran composer Elmer Bernstein's wow of a score, an eerie combination of Fifties *Naked City*-style jazz and *Threepenny Opera*-period Kurt Weill played by a small orchestra plus electronics. It's not quite like anything you've ever heard before, and it works like a charm even without the film's accompanying visuals.

- **Screamin' Jay Hawkins:** *Black Music for White People* (Rhino/Bizarre). Rock's original (and apparently ageless) wild man returns here with inimitable deconstructions of songs by Jerome Kern and Tom Waits (among others). And while we're on the subject, check out Rhino's Best of Hawkins compilation ("Voodoo Jive") and "At Home with Screamin' Jay Hawkins" on Legacy. You'll thank me for it, I promise.

- **Negativland:** *U2* (SST). A hysterical parody of the world's most self-righteous band, intercut with foul-mouthed Casey Kasem outtakes from *America's Top 40*, that's sort of a cross between the Firesign Theater and the Beatles' *Revolution Number 9*. Unfortunately, this may be the funniest CD you'll never be able to buy, since U2 sued and had it pulled from stores. □

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