$1.50 FEBRUARY 1981

HIGH FIDELITY

ICD 08398

VIDEO TODAY

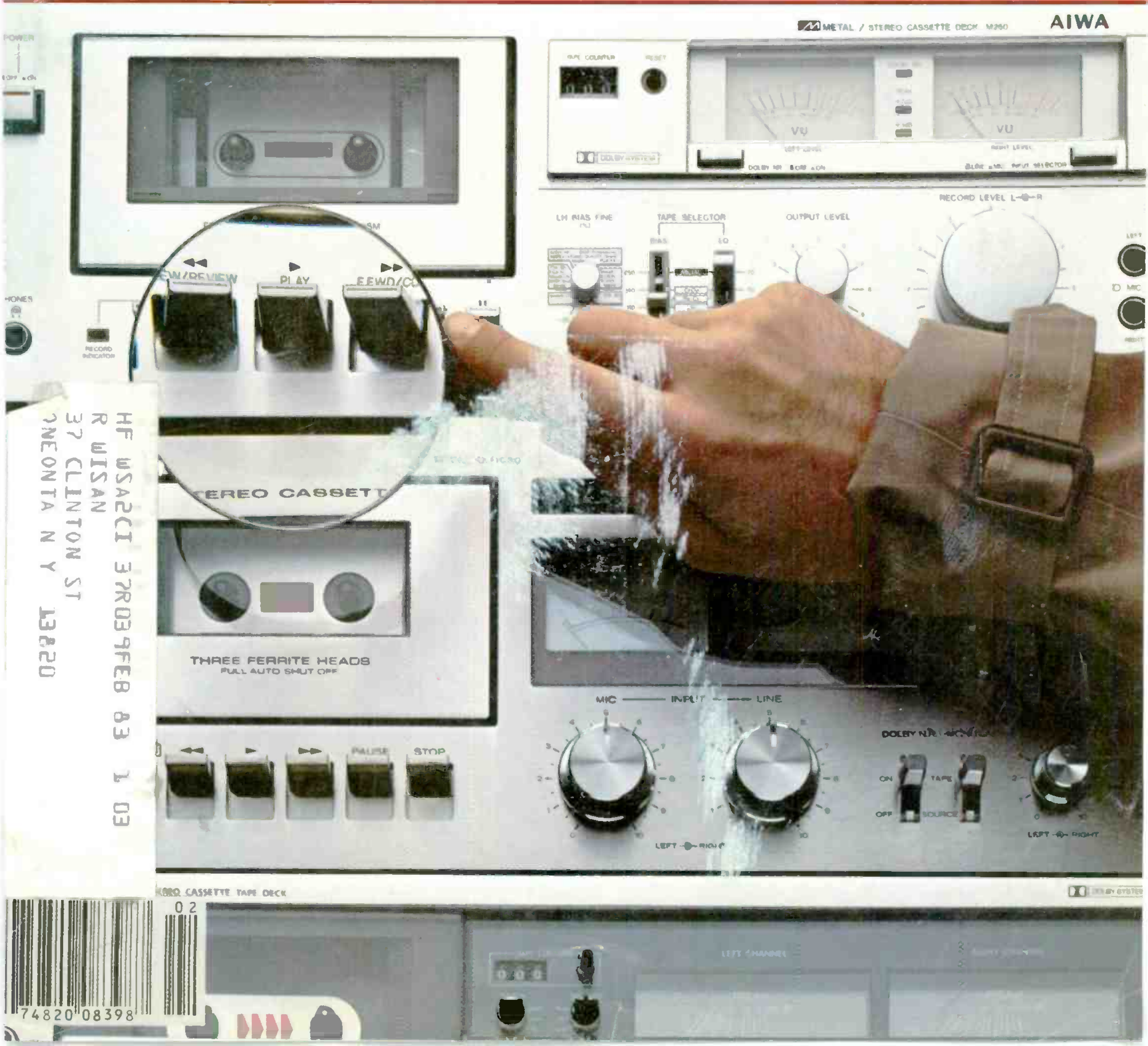
Projection TV–The Big Picture

SPECIAL TAPE ISSUE

Two In-Depth Investigative Reports

Phony Blank Cassettes–How You Can Spot Them

First Off-the-Shelf Tests–What They Revealed



Introducing Pioneer LaserDisc.

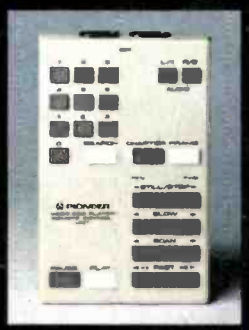
The biggest innovation in television since television.

Imagine you could sit down in front of your TV set and see virtually any movie or concert you wanted to see when you wanted to see it.

Imagine you could actually see and hear concerts on your TV in stereo. The best stereo you've ever heard. Or cut to your favorite scene in a movie at will. Or study sports in slow motion, even one frame at a time. Imagine a machine that could teach your children at their own rate.

You now have just an idea of Pioneer LaserDisc. A remarkable innovation that puts both picture and sound on a record. And plays them both by means of a laser beam onto your TV and through your hi-fi. (The player hooks up to your TV with just one wire. And when it's not in use, your TV plays the way it normally plays.)

The laser picture quality is exceptional. As good as the best broadcast reception you've ever seen. And laser sound is better than the best conventional audio recordings you've ever heard. And since nothing touches the disc but a laser beam, the disc never wears out. The quality is forever.



For all it does, surprisingly, the suggested retail price of the player is only $749* (just $50 more with remote control). And you can own a disc of a great movie or concert forever for the cost of taking your family to the movies.

There are a few hundred different discs to choose from right now. And more and more are coming out every day. Someday, virtually anything that entertains anyone will be on the disc.

Nothing we say here will fully prepare you for the magic of Pioneer LaserDisc. You simply have to see it.

For a personal demonstration from the dealer nearest you call us at 800-621-5199 toll free. (In Illinois 800-972-5855.)

LaserDisc

PIONEER®

Circle 27 on Reader-Service Card

*Suggested retail price, actual price set by dealer.

RC4™

THE QUIET REVOLUTION IN RECORD CARE

The newest in Record Care Programs from one of the oldest names in audio.

Pickering cartridges have built an outstanding twofold reputation—excellence in sound along with protection of record longevity through exact tracking tolerances, low tracking weight and careful stylus design. A natural extension of this concern is in the field of record care itself.

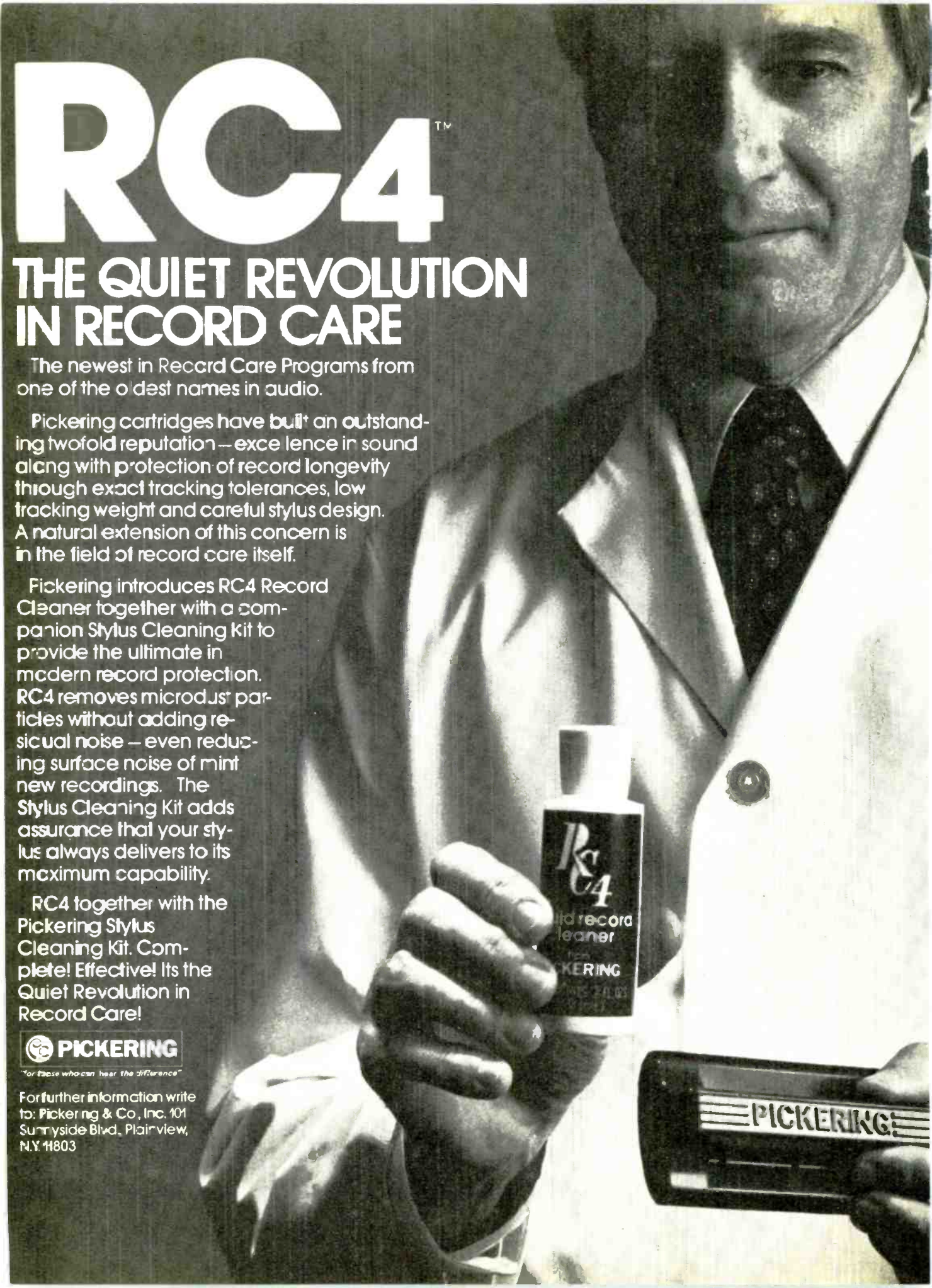
Pickering introduces RC4 Record Cleaner together with a companion Stylus Cleaning Kit to provide the ultimate in modern record protection. RC4 removes microdust particles without adding residual noise—even reducing surface noise of mint new recordings. The Stylus Cleaning Kit adds assurance that your stylus always delivers to its maximum capability.

RC4 together with the Pickering Stylus Cleaning Kit. Complete! Effective! Its the Quiet Revolution in Record Care!

PICKERING

"For those who can hear the difference"

For further information write to: Pickering & Co., Inc. 101 Sunnyside Blvd., Plainview, N.Y. 11803



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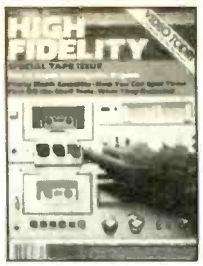

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Midwest: ABC Leisure Magazines, Inc., 190 N. State St., Room 632, Chicago, Ill. 60601. Telephone: 312-782-1173. William P. Gordon, Midwest Advertising Manager.

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Circle 32 on Reader-Service Card ▶

Making an accurate and faithful recording on most cassette decks requires a lot of practice, a lot of patience and a lot of jumping up and down. After all, with conventional decks, you have to adjust the recording levels as the music varies. But not with Technics RS-M51.

The first thing the RS-M51 does is select the proper bias and EQ levels for normal, CrO_2, or the new metal tapes, automatically. That makes life easy.

So does our Autorec sensor. Just push a button and wait seven seconds while the RS-M51 seeks the proper recording level. 16 red LED's tell you the deck is in the "search" mode. When the green LED lights up, you're ready to go.

For manual control of the recording level, there's also a fine-adjust switch which raises or lowers levels in precise 2 dB steps. While the RS-M51's two-color peak-hold FL meters show you the signal being recorded.

With the RS-M51's record/playback and sendust/ferrite erase heads, you'll not only hear superb dynamic range, you'll also get a wide frequency response: 20 Hz to 18 kHz with metal. And with an electronically controlled DC motor and dynamically balanced flywheel, wow and flutter is just a spec (0.045%), not a noise.

Technics RS-M51. Don't be surprised if its intelligence goes right to your head.

Technics
The science of sound

Letters

The "Audiophile Record" Revolution

In "Digital vs. Analog vs. Direct-Cut Discs" [November 1980], you ask if a consumer should pay extra bucks for a company's recording just because it is direct-cut or digital. I answer with a resounding no!

Telarc has its pressings made in Germany. The results are excellent, but the quality of the product is not superior to what Philips and DG have done routinely for years at little more than half the price. In England, EMI/HMV charges the same price for its digital releases as for its full-priced analog records. Paying more for digital is a ripoff.

Digital may be the technology of the future. But if it is standardized at its current level, it will offend all lovers of classical music who still remember what an orchestra sounds like in Carnegie Hall.

Sidney Marks
Brooklyn, N.Y.

The article by Leonard Marcus and R. Derrick Henry reinforced for me some of the reasons I find digital mastering superior. This conclusion was derived from my continuing interest in audiophile records and from listening to them and using them on my weekly WGUC public radio program.

It is your panelists' arguments against digital recording that speak most strongly for it, to my mind. It brings out more clearly any faults of the performers, producers, equipment, or the record itself. Compare the RCA digital recordings of Bartók's "Concerto for Orchestra" and Ravel's "Daphnis et Chloé." The former is a multichannel production; the latter adheres closely to the purist, minimal-miking technique. Digital technology brings out the gimmickery, the unreality of the "viewpoint" of the multimike technique, just as the advances in cartridge, amplifier, and speaker design have brought out the flaws of conventional discs and created a market for audiophile records.

Some producers of digital recordings are aware of this transparency. In producing those from Delos, microphones designed for high-pressure applications beyond the need of most traditional recording situations were utilized. A lesser mike would have worked in an analog taping but not in the digital.

A test is only as good as the material tested. Imagine comparing haute cuisine and nouveau cuisine using Spam.

Myron Bennett
Cincinnati, Ohio

What does your article really prove? Isn't the problem in the analog process of making a record? Analog records don't have a dynamic range of greater than 60 dB, so what's the difference if the recorder used allows a dynamic range of 100 dB? It's not the recording process that needs to be perfected, but the discs themselves.

William Redeker
Union, N.J.

Your November article ["Digital Audio: A Revolution Reconsidered"], in which you undertake to rationalize away a potential buyer's doubts about investing now in expensive analog equipment, is garbage. Whatever difficulties may stand in the way of the digital revolution, the major ones have already been resolved, and there can be little doubt about the future of analog equipment: It will become obsolete.

Computer-driven equipment will take over almost every activity known to man. Pointing out small technical difficulties and possible drawbacks is petty and serves only the interests of people heavily invested in analog. Let these people sell their threatened technology for less.

It is the investor who makes money on a technology, and it is the investor who should lose money when that technology is superseded. Any anticipated loss should be factored into the prices of merchandise sold.

David T. Springs
San Diego, Calif.

Mr. Springs is apparently a true believer. We'll stick with our skepticism.—Ed.

Over the years I've seen many a photograph of acoustic phonographs with morning-glory horns. The one on the opening page of your article on digital audio is one of the great beauties.

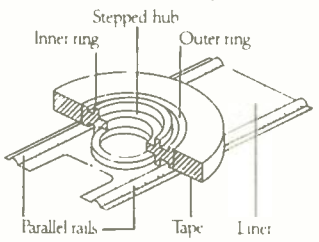
By the time I came along, these horns were cabinet-enclosed, under the platter. But I wonder, in that blessed age before computers, did builders design morning-glory horns according to an acoustic law—were they exponen-

Circle 26 on Reader-Service Card ▶

WHY ONLY SONY WINDS UP WITH FULL COLOR SOUND.

Strangely enough, some of the things that make Sony Full Color Sound sound so terrific are things you can't hear.

Such as Sony's unique experience and technical achievement. Sony makes both tape *and* the equipment that plays it. So Sony's experience with tape recording is unique among major tape manufacturers. After all, you'd better know all there is to know about tape decks before you make a tape. Sony does.



Cross section of SP mechanism

Then there's unique Sony *balance*. The fine-tuning of all the elements that go into making a tape, so that each synergistically complements the other and delivers the finest recording humanly and technically possible to achieve.

You also can't hear Sony's unique SP mechanism, one of the carefully balanced elements in every Sony tape. It's a perfect example of Sony technical achievement. The SP mechanism is what makes the tape run so smoothly inside the cassette. And smoothly running tape is critical for total, perfect tape performance.

Smooth running means less friction. So some of the most popular tape makers give the tape as much clearance inside the cassette as possible. (We used to do the same thing.) But this method results in uneven or too tight winding and actually increases friction as you wind and rewind the tape. Jamming and even a stopping of the tape in its tracks can result.

It was clear to Sony that even, uniform winding was the key. So Sony reversed the basic thinking about friction completely and invented the SP mechanism, the first positive guidance system on the market. Instead of giving the tape lots of room, it gently guides the tape smoothly and precisely through the cassette, and onto the reels, with a maximum of positive precision support, yet with an absolute minimum of friction. This is a perfect example of Sony pioneering and how the Sony balance system works.

Some of the unique patented Sony innovations are the stepped hub wheel, which suppresses wobble; parallel "rails" of the liner which guide the tape and hub and keep the tape winding flat and even. Even the surface which touches the tape is special graphite-coated polyester, for the least possible friction.

Our Sony SP mechanism is actually 10 times more trouble-free in lab tests than our old conventional mechanism. And the increase of friction after 200 "torture-test" windings and rewindings has been reduced by nearly ⅔!

The fact is, the more sophisticated your equipment, the more you'll appreciate Full Color Sound. Listen to Sony SHF (our best normal bias tape), EHF (high bias), FeCr or Metallic tape. Listen to the perfect balance of its perfect components. It's the secret of Full Color Sound. **SONY.**

tial, for example—or did they just go by eye and ear?

One fellow I studied with a short while still grew his own cactus needles. Ah! Those were the days.

E. D. Hoaglan
Omaha, Neb.

Exponential and other mathematical flare shapes were used in acoustic horns, though the large majority probably were designed more by eye and ear than by theory.—Ed.

New Hampshire Professionals

With reference to Karen Monson's review of the New Hampshire Symphony's recording of Virgil Thomson's Third Symphony on CRI [October 1980], I would like to correct one statement. I don't know where the information came from that the orchestra is "semi-professional," but that is not the case. It is made up of fully professional musicians, most of them from either Boston or New York.

Alan Hale
New York, N.Y.

Sound and Furie

Reviewing DG's recording of Verdi's "Luisa Miller" [October 1980], your K.F. claims that "Elena Obraztsova is the first Federica I've heard with a functioning chest register." This is a lie. I happen to know that in 1978 he attended a Metropolitan Opera performance with Mignon Dunn and that he has claimed—in print and in conversation—that Obraztsova and Dunn are the only currently functional dramatic mezzos he knows of, meaning among other things that they do have working chest registers. (I believe that inspection of his tapes will also turn up a 1971 Met version of the opera with Dunn.)

K.F. may well have been disappointed by Dunn's Federica, but surely this resulted from some difficulty in adapting to Italian line shapes and some general vocal malaise—as I recall, 1978–79 wasn't her happiest season. With reference to Federicas with functioning chest registers, however, I'd be willing to bet that Dunn was K.F.'s first.

I do wish your writers would get their acts together before delivering the Word. Maybe you should pay them more?

Kenneth Furie
New York, N.Y.

INTRODUCING. A CASSETTE DECK WITH A MIND OF ITS OWN.

AKAI proudly announces the GX-F95. The future of recorded history. **A 21st century cassette deck for the audiophile who can't wait.**

Within seconds after popping in a cassette, this incredible computerized sound machine will have accurately determined bias, equalization, sensitivity tuning and more – automatically. For virtually any tape on the market.

You'll also find sensor light full-logic solenoid controls, and switchable 24-section/2-color bar meters with peak hold.

And the specs on the GX-F95 are equally impressive.

Frequency response with metal tape is an amazing 25-21,000 Hertz. And Signal-to-Noise with metal tape is 62dB (Dolby* on improves up to 10dB, above 5000 Hertz). Harmonic Distortion, less than .06%.

And now, the 3-head performance and reliability of our exclusive Super GX Combo head, whose glass and crystal ferrite construction adds up to over 17 years of virtually wear-free performance – guaranteed.** Fantastic. **The latest addition to the longest all-metal cassette line around.**

Remarkable as the GX-F95 is, it's only one of 11 superb AKAI cassette decks – two of which offer reversing record and playback capabilities.

All metal-capable, the line includes models from $189.95 to $1,195.00, with plenty of stops in between.

So if you're in the market for a great sounding cassette deck, look no further than AKAI.

Including the brand-new GX-F95 with its computerized brain. Maybe the most intelligent thing we've ever done.

AKAI, 800 W. Artesia, Compton, CA 90224.

*TM Dolby Labs, Inc.
**Limited Warranty

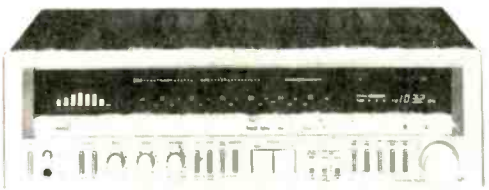
The mind boggling GX-F95 is only one of 11 superb cassette decks AKAI has to offer. All metal-capable.

A K A I

YOU NEVER HEARD IT SO GOOD

High Fidelity News

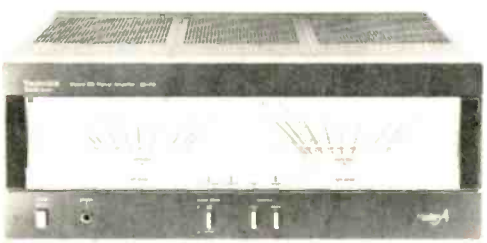
Feature-packed Sansui receiver



Sansui's latest is the Model 8900ZDB, a frequency-synthesized stereo receiver with instant memory recall for up to twelve preselected stations. The unit features 125 watts (21 dBW) per channel, LED power output meters, built-in decoder for Dolby FM broadcasts, and an IC block that provides all the needed circuitry for a plug-in stereo adapter for AM when, and if, such broadcasting begins. Up and down pushbuttons adjust volume, and a lighted display shows the relative volume setting. In the FM section, a buzzer emits a brief audible signal to announce that a station has been locked in. And a frequency spectrum analyzer displays the distribution of energy in any audio signal across eight bands. The 8900ZDB costs $900.

Circle 140 on Reader-Service Card

Pro power from Technics



Oversized meters highlight the faceplate of the SE-A5 power amp, latest addition to the Technics Recording and Broadcast Series of professional components. The unit's sliding bias circuitry, dubbed New Class A, delivers 120 watts (20¾ dBW) of output per channel with no switching and crossover distortion. The amp is said to be shielded from external electromagnetic fields and can be placed beside or stacked with other components without interference. Price of the SE-A5, which has full electronic protection circuitry, is $700.

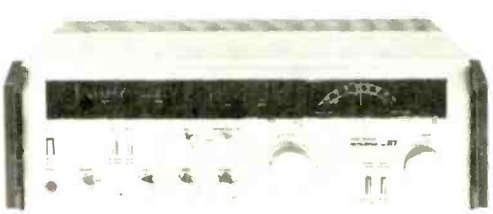
Circle 144 on Reader-Service Card

Magnepan gets armed

Magnepan claims that the Untrac-I tonearm comes close to the theoretical ideals of zero inertia at frequencies below audibility and infinite inertia at and above audibility. The 9½-inch arm tube and the headshell are formed of carbon-fiber material for lower mass and maximum rigidity, and a massive hemispherical counterweight is mounted close to the pivot. Arm height can be adjusted during play to alter the vertical tracking angle. The Unitrac-I costs $295.

Circle 142 on Reader-Service Card

Low-cost receiver from Mitsubishi



Mitsubishi's receiver offerings now number three, with the introduction of the DA-R7. Rated at 30 watts (14¾ dBW) per channel, the new model features dual FETs in the first stage of a three-stage differential amplifier and output power packs mounted on oversized die-cast aluminum cooling fins. The FM tuner and phono sections are said to be identical to those in the DA-R20 receiver (test report, November 1980). The DA-R7, with touch-sensitive lock tuning, costs $290.

Circle 139 on Reader-Service Card

(More)

Circle 31 on Reader-Service Card ▶

The continuing story of TDK sound achievement.

Part Seven.

You are looking at the moment of truth. If every other part in a TDK cassette has played its role perfectly, the tape will move between the pressure pad and the recording head with remarkable precision. There will be no fluctuation. High frequencies won't be lost. Hiss and distortion won't enter in. Music will be reproduced unfailingly.

TDK dual spring pressure pad and tape in cassette.

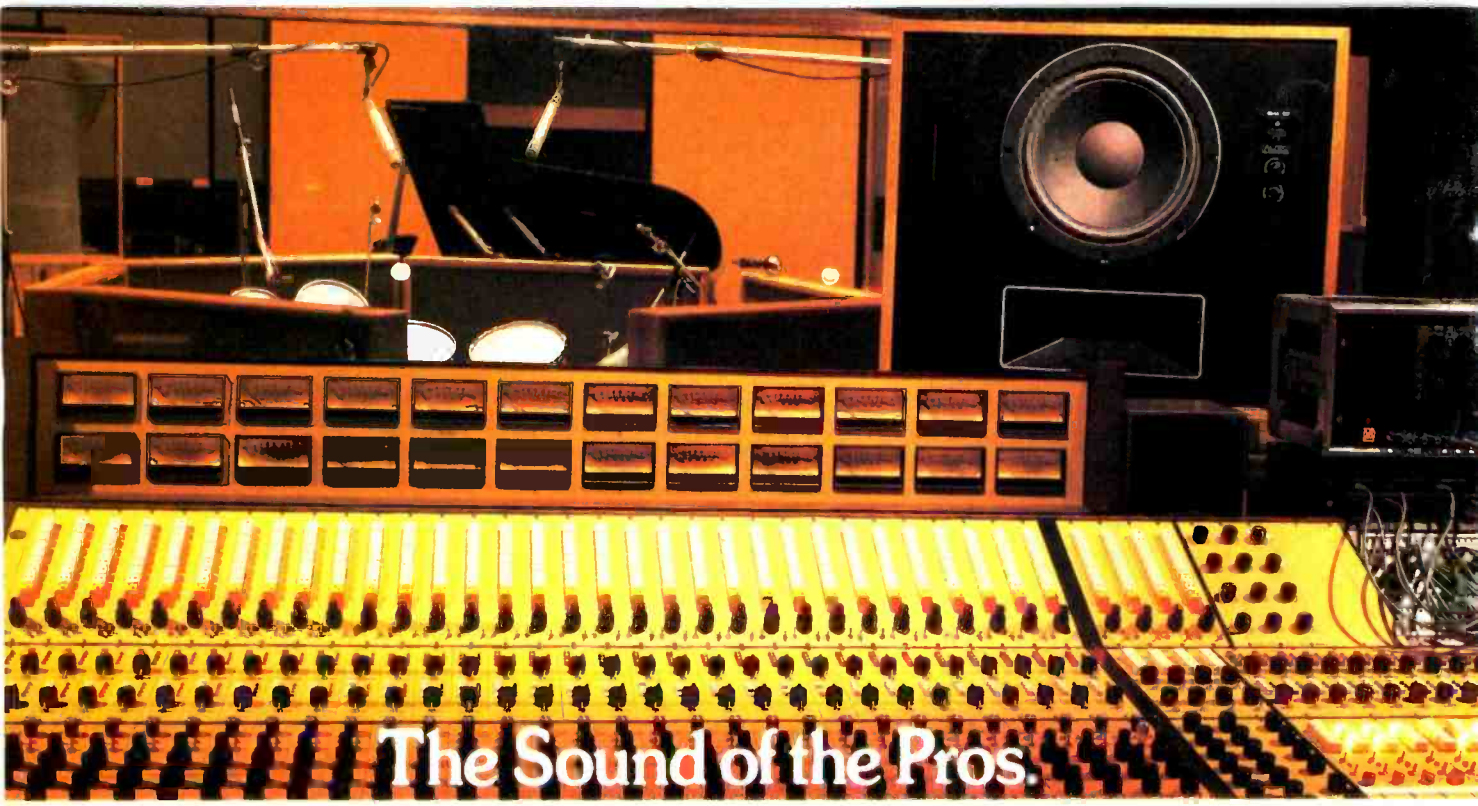
Part Seven, the TDK dual spring pressure pad, is an innovation. Its double "Y" structure distributes pressure evenly on the total pad surface, allowing full tape-to-head contact. Total sound. In designing it, TDK engineers used a metal alloy of nickel, copper, and zinc which has a perfect balance of resiliency and strength. Then they searched for the perfect pad. They found urethane has a tendency to stick, slip and tilt in the direction of tape travel. Tape loses contact at the dead center of the head core. Sound is lost. Felt also has its problems. It often causes rough output in the high frequencies. The TDK pad is made from a special mix of organic fiber, cut to exact dimensions. Tape contact is always at an optimum, preventing high frequency dropouts and excess friction.

Having gone to such lengths for perfection, our engineers avoided one last slip up. The anchor. The TDK dual spring pressure pad is precisely positioned in an interlocking pin system. It can spring back and forth but never move laterally. The last threat to sound at that point was stray magnetism. TDK stopped that by placing an extra-thick metal shield behind the pad assembly. Now nothing can stand in the way of perfectly recorded music. You can see *Part Seven* and the other TDK parts perform through the shell of the classic TDK MA-R cassette. It set new standards in reliability and metal sound.

TDK continues to set the standards with every cassette. In high, normal, and metal bias. In every type of machine. And it's all based on a simple philosophy. Perfection is the outcome of many elements interacting perfectly. TDK achieves a higher standard of musical performance for one unvarying reason. Music is the sum of its parts.

TDK

The Amazing Music Machine.



ean Way Recording, Hollywood, CA

For the Pro at Home.

We've been perfecting professional sound reproduction for almost half a century. From the famous Voice-of-the-Theater™ to our studio monitors and large floor-standing models, Altec Lansing is continuing a tradition of creating significant advancements in speaker technology. And now we've taken the most recent professional sound innovations and put them into our new speakers for the house, our models 4, 6 and 8. As a result, you can hear what has made Altec Lansing a long time favorite in studios, theaters and on sound stages from coast to coast: Crisp, clear sound realism.

Professional features made for the home.

Here are some of the acoustic innovations featured by our new speakers: The Altec Tangerine,® a revolutionary radial phase plug that brings out all the high frequencies blocked by standard circumferential phase plugs. It works with our new LZT (Lead Zirconate Titanate) ultra high-frequency compression driver that replaces magnets and voice coils with a state-of-the-art semiconductor for super clean sound.

Another important professional feature is our Mantaray® constant directivity horn that expands your listening "sweet spot" well off to the sides of the speakers.

We've also developed a different approach to a cross-over network design that minimizes distortion and improves high-frequency response. In addition, each of our new models is equipped with an Automatic Power Control to protect the speaker from power overloads without shutting off the sound.

There's also a new look to our new home speaker line. We use rare Endriana wood from the South Pacific for our speaker cabinetry which highlights an unusually rich woodgrain and exhibits extraordinary acoustic properties.

Of course, there's a lot more to our speaker designs than these new enhancements. The sum total of many years spent in speaker research and development is incorporated in our home models.

Sound experience in a Free brochure.

If you'd like to learn more about all the professional features we've built into our new line, write for our free brochure "A New Generation of Speaker Systems for the Home." Better yet, visit your nearest Altec Lansing listening room and find out how we adapted our professional sound quality to the environment of your home. For the name of your local dealer, call toll-free (800) 528-6050, Ext. 730; in Arizona (800) 352-0458. Or write: Altec Lansing International, 1515 S. Manchester Ave., Anaheim, CA 92803.

ALTEC LANSING

High Fidelity News

Finer ferrics from Maxell

Maxell claims that a new particle-manufacturing process and an improved binder yield a respective increase of 1½ and 2 dB in sensitivity for its XL-IS and XL-IIS premium ferric cassettes. The earlier formulations, UDXL-I and UDXL-II, remain on the market. The symmetry of the XL cassette shells is said to be held to close tolerances so that azimuth loss is minimized. Other refinements include improved slip sheets for stabilized tape travel and a special clamp to secure the leader tube to the hub for near perfect hub circularity. Both the normal-bias XL-IS and high-bias XL-IIS cost $5.10 for the C-60 length and $7.00 for C-90.

Circle 136 on Reader-Service Card

Full-range electrostatic from Acoustat

The Model Two is said to be one of the few full-range electrostatic speakers capable of extended low-bass response, high efficiency, and loud playing levels in one moderate-sized system. The Acoustat Corporation claims that much of the credit for this goes to its Magnekinetic drive system, a biformer that supplies the necessary polarizing voltage without allowing impedance to drop below 3 ohms. The system, which can operate with amplifiers rated from 50 to 100 watts (17 to 20 dBW) per channel, reportedly is capable of 108-dB sound pressure levels. Price of the Model Two is $1,200 a pair.

Circle 145 on Reader-Service Card

Correction

In our item in the November 1980 issue on Boston Acoustics' latest loudspeaker, we misidentified the model as the A-100. The $130 two-way acoustic suspension design, with an 8-inch woofer, is the A-70. The A-100, which we reviewed in June 1980, is a two-way system with a 10-inch woofer and costs $180.

◀ **Circle 2 on Reader-Service Card**

Compact KEF comes in colors

KEF's Model 303 Series II loudspeaker offers a choice of seven grille sleeve colors, and the molded base and top are available in either brown or black, making it compatible with just about any color scheme in the home. The compact two-way system can, according to KEF, be driven with as little as 10 watts (10 dBW) and is rated at a sensitivity of 86 dB sound pressure level with a 1-watt (0 dBW) input. Cost of the Model 303 Series II is $450 a pair; optional ULS-40 stands sell for $85 a pair.

Circle 148 on Reader-Service Card

Dynamic kit from Heath

Heath expands dynamic range with its Model AD-1706 Active Audio Processor. The company claims an increase of up to 17 dB, a 7-dB gain through the dynamic range expander and 10 dB of noise suppression using three bandpass filters. This single-ended device (no preprocessing necessary) reportedly reduces noise by 3 dB at 2 kHz and by 10 dB between 4 and 15 kHz. The AD-1706 costs $250 in kit form.

Circle 137 on Reader-Service Card

AES honors Foster

In recognition of his "contributions to audio measurements technology," Edward J. Foster has been named a Fellow of the Audio Engineering Society. Foster is, of course, HIGH FIDELITY's consulting audio editor and, as principal of Diversified Science Labs, intimately involved in our equipment testing program.

(More)

High Fidelity News

Astatic's fresh look at pickup design

A newcomer to the magnetic phono pickup market, the Astatic Corporation, has developed a variant on the fixed-coil principle that it calls "moving flux." Astatic has eliminated the pole pieces usually attached to the coils, thereby preventing a purported time-delay effect in the transduction of mechanical to electrical energy. The new design is said to result in moving-coil performance with the high output of moving-magnet and induced-magnet pickups. Top-of-the-line Model MF-100, with parabolic diamond tip, costs $270; three other models range in price from $80 to $160.

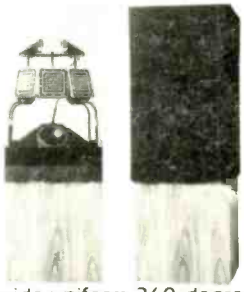
Circle 143 on Reader-Service Card

Janszen's back

Long associated with electrostatic speaker systems, Janszen has brought out its first new model in several years. The Z-IIA, combines a two-element electrostatic driver with a refraction lens system, said to improve high-frequency dispersion. Low frequencies are reproduced with a 10-inch woofer in an acoustic suspension enclosure. An increase of 6 dB in efficiency over previous models is claimed for this speaker. The Z-IIA, which comes with a power module to supply the necessary electrostatic polarizing voltage, costs $500.

Circle 139 on Reader-Service Card

From the Cosmos



Its eleven electrostatic elements mounted in an umbrella array, the Cosmostatic Omnidirectional speaker system is said to provide uniform 360-degree sound distribution. The electrostatic elements are powered by a built-in amplifier that provides necessary DC biasing voltage as well as the audio drive. Frequencies below 1 kHz are handled by four 6-inch woofers, which are driven by the main system amplifier. Manufactured by Cosmos Industries, the Cosmostatic sells for $3,600 per pair.

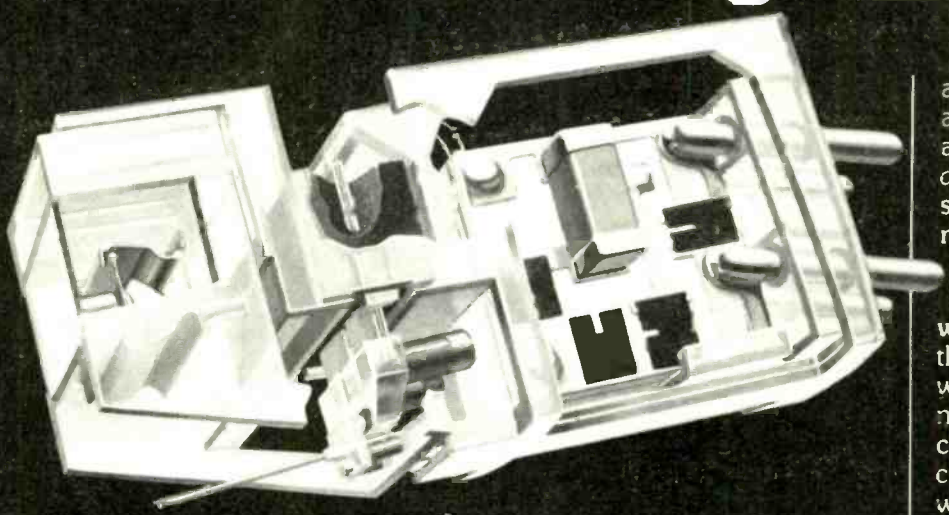
Circle 141 on Reader-Service Card

Sonus Bronze

Newest addition to the Sonus pickup line is the Bronze, a fixed-coil cartridge with line-contact diamond tip. The unit is said to be relatively uncritical with regard to associated equipment and will operate well in most lightweight tonearms. Frequency response is rated ± 1½ dB from 10 Hz to 20 kHz. The Bronze, with a recommended vertical tracking force range of 1 to 1½ grams, costs $130.

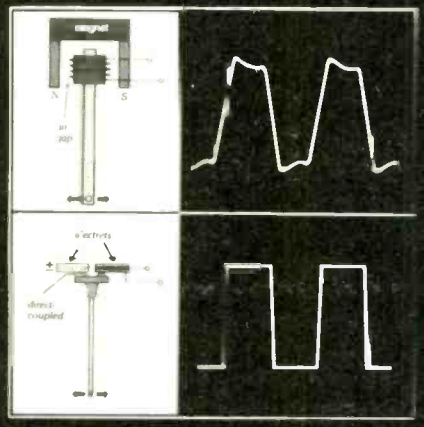
Circle 138 on Reader-Service Card

Micro-Acoustics System II:
The Stereo Cartridge. Reinvented.



Direct-to-disc. Digital. Dolby.™

While record-making has made quantum jumps over the last few years, one thing has remained essentially the same: the phono cartridge. Because, whatever their price, all are essentially the same—a coil and magnet interacting across an air gap. With built-in electromagnetic delays that degrade musical transients. And a single damper that trades off tracking and transient ability.



Transient ability of high-priced moving coil magnetic cartridge (top) vs. new MA System II. Note how magnetic cartridge air gap and hysteresis delay distort the square wave.

Pushed to their limits by clever engineering, some still offer remarkable (if costly) performance.

But now there's something better. More than a new cartridge design...a new cartridge *technology*. Its name: Micro-Acoustics System II.

Transient response up to 10X faster than magnetic cartridges. Like the best amplifiers, System II is direct-coupled. Eliminating the air gap delay by uniting a microscopic stylus and ultra-lightweight cantilever with a patented* electret transducing system.

The only cartridges with a brain. Unlike magnetic cartridges, which require critical matching of tonearm cable capacitance and preamp inputs—something that's virtually impossible to achieve—MA System II cartridges are "intelligent." A built-in microcircuit automatically *matches the cartridge* to the rest of the system, eliminating the transient and high-frequency response problems of magnetic cartridge designs.

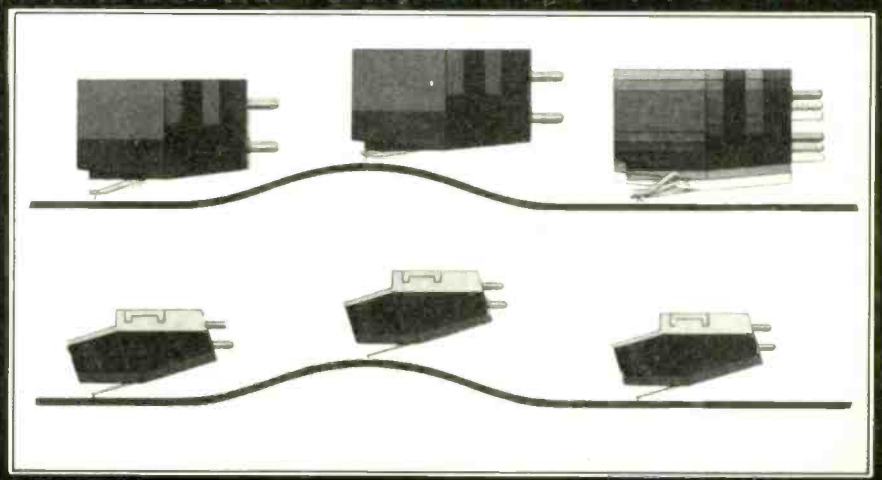
Independent suspension and damping. Instead of the single damper magnetic cartridges use to achieve compliance (for tracking ability) and damping (for transient ability), System II utilizes *independent* suspension and damping systems. The result is performance that's optimized—not compromised.

The ultimate answer to record warp. The laws of physics prove that the problems of playing warped records are best eliminated by dynamic damping in the cartridge. But only MA System II cartridges have a special internal warp damping system. Magnetic cartridges have no such provisions.

Optimum performance in any tonearm. With their carbon-fiber housings and lightweight transducers, MA System II cartridges are the lightest ever, for lowest cartridge/tonearm mass. And therefore, the best performance. System II's exclusive Vari-Balance™ system, with removable weights, allows a cartridge to be optimized for any tonearm.

All this, as the diagrams reveal, is just the beginning. But impressive as System II's technology is, it only hints at the *audible* difference it can make in your music.

To experience that, we invite you to visit your Micro-Acoustics dealer.



Record-warp tracking of magnetic cartridge (top) vs. MA System II. Note how magnetic cartridge's single-bearing design *oscillates* from record warp, producing distortion, while MA's warp-damping system prevents oscillation.

*U.S. Pat. No. 3952171. Dolby is a registered trademark of Dolby Laboratories, Inc.

ma®
Micro-Acoustics
8 Westchester Plaza, Elmsford, NY 10523

CrossTalk

Q. I am having a severe problem in recording warped records. My system consists of a Denon DP-790 turntable with a Grado F1+ pickup, a Heathkit AR-1500A receiver, Kenwood KX-1060 cassette deck, and ESS AMT-5 speakers. When taping even slightly warped discs (as virtually all of them seem to be these days), the bouncing of the tonearm is picked up and recorded by the cassette deck, making the recording virtually unlistenable. Oddly enough, I never hear this sort of distortion when I play the record; it occurs only on the taped copy. Is there anything that can be done to prevent this problem?—Richard Dalin, East Windsor, N.J.

A. In simplest terms, the large infrasonics being generated by the tonearm/pickup combination as it tracks the warps are overloading the cassette deck and causing intermodulation distortion in the audible range. The quick fix in this situation would be to install an infrasonic filter (available, for instance, from Ace Audio in East Northport, N.Y.) directly at the recording output jacks on the receiver; the infrasonic filter on the receiver itself will be of no help if it is wired after the tape monitor loop. However, the best solution is to try to raise the arm/pickup resonance above the warp frequency region. Aside from the infrasonics caused by a large low-frequency resonance rise, the scrubbing of the stylus in the grooves during the "bouncing" you have observed also results in audible intermodulation distortion. A pickup with a stiffer cantilever than that on the Grado might help.

Q. I am becoming increasingly annoyed by the problem of surface noise on new recordings. I am speaking not of the noise cut into the disc by poor mastering, but rather of the impossible task of getting dust off the disc during playback. I use Discwasher D-3 and the Adcom Discotron antistatic gun. The record surface appears spotless, but the popping and crackling during play make listening almost unbearable at times. How can I remedy the situation? —Michael Franklin, Chesapeake, Va.

A. Your complaint is, unfortunately, all too common. Assuming that the records are relatively free of surface imperfections (a rare condition) and have been cleaned thoroughly, what remains could well be static buildup. In our evaluations of devices like the Adcom Discotron, we found that it is quite easy to induce a large static charge while attempting to neutralize whatever charge was already there. You might try a permanent antistatic preparation—Stanton Permostat or Audio-Technica Lifesaver. Also, a pickup like Shure's V-15 Type IV with its conductive fiber brush will allow static charges to bleed off the record during play.

Q. I'm a bit puzzled about the quality of FM broadcasts. In contrast to the quality of sound I hear from tapes and records, FM varies from noisy to rather thin. All the dynamics are there, but somehow FM broadcasts lack the robustness and depth of other program sources. Can a DBX noise reducer such as the one you reviewed [Model 224, August 1980] be used to improve the subjective qualities of FM music, and, if so, can it be accommodated in the tape monitor loop?—John Geene Jr., Vallejo, Calif.

A. No single, unequivocal explanation for the "thinness" you experience in FM signals suggests itself. Given good reception, the most obvious fidelity deterrent usually is the excessive use of processors intended to deliver consistently high modulation levels without overmodulation—limiters, compressors, and so on. But if this were the source of your complaint, we'd expect your description to be different.

The DBX unit we reviewed is inappropriate for "cleaning up" FM signals. Expanders have been suggested for this purpose (among the most obvious examples, DBX's own 118, with variable expansion, or the more sophisticated units in the line topped by the DBX 3BX). Of the "denoisers" (expanders or dynamic filters) that might be applied to FM reception, the tape loop is, indeed, the logical place for them. The normal setup has an on/off switch for the denoiser action and a source/tape monitor switch. If you simply want to listen to the broadcast via the denoiser, you should switch the first on, the second to source, and the monitor switch on your preamp or whatever to tape (to select the tape connections to which you have the denoiser attached). Some devices also have a pre/post tape switch by means of which you can apply the denoising either to what's going onto the tape (recording) or what's coming off it playback), which we find helpful.

Q. After reading Michael Riggs's article "How to Buy an Amplifier" [March 1980], I became terribly confused as to the importance and/or dangers of direct-coupled amplifiers. Will a DC amp improve the sound of my system, or is it just another gimmick?—Sidney J. DeBlanc, New Orleans, La.

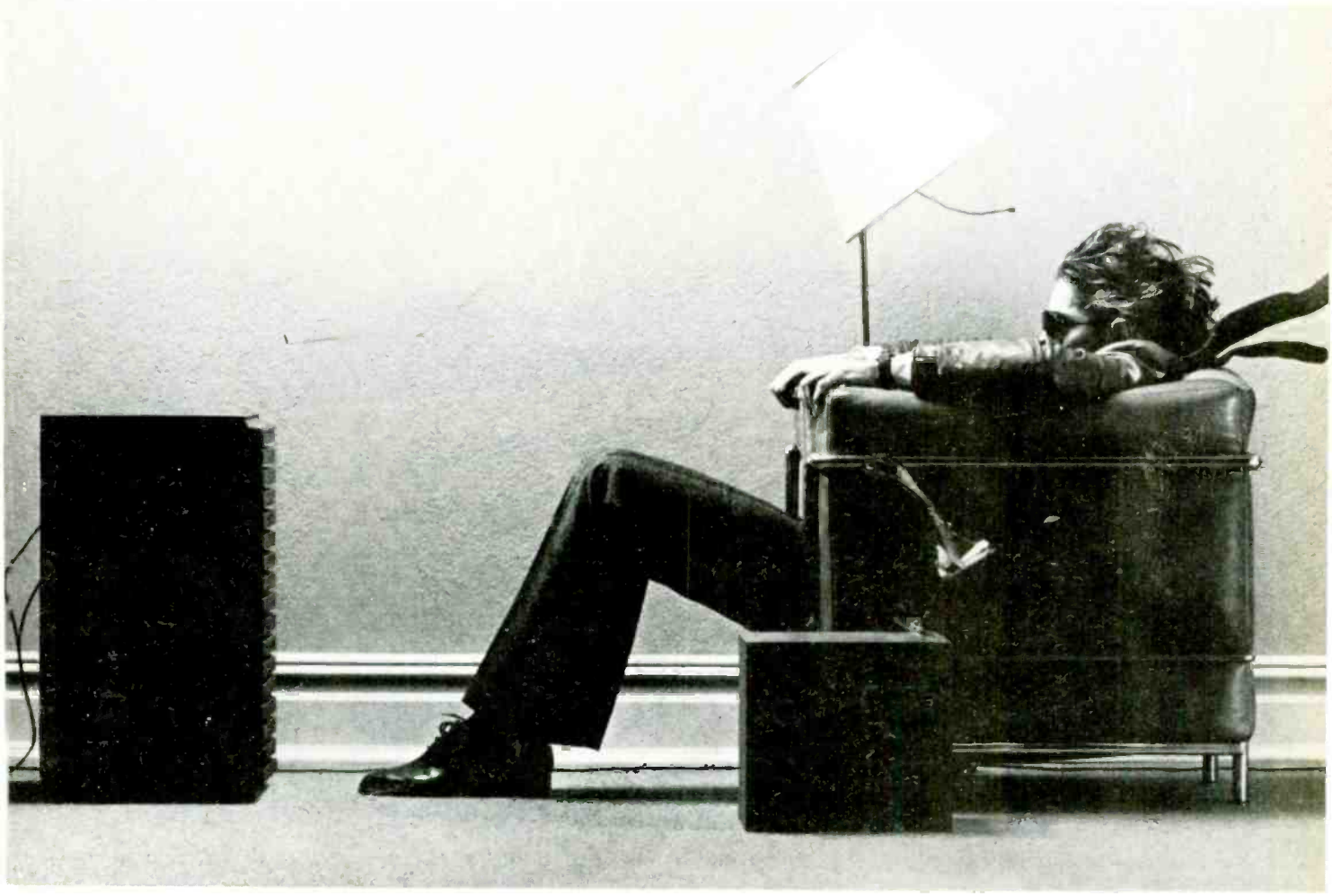
A. In a direct-coupled amplifier, capacitors in the output stage are removed, allowing frequencies from 0 Hz (direct current) on up to pass unfettered through the circuit. Such a circuit configuration promises minimum phase shift in the audible band as a result of its extended frequency response, but it can prove irksome when unwanted signals such as record-warp output or thumpy switching and turnon transients are allowed to pass unfiltered to your speakers. You can guard against this by keeping the infrasonic filter on your preamp switched in and by using a preamp with a turnon delay. Thus audible improvement with a DC amplifier is marginal at best, and it can entail side effects that more than offset the virtue. But while our enthusiasm for DC circuitry is limited, we would not call it a gimmick.

Q. I own a Kenwood KA-9100 integrated amp, the top of which becomes quite warm to the touch after one or more hours of normal use. The prominent external heat sinks, however, remain much cooler. Is my unit misbehaving, and will the heat levels it builds up shorten its life?—Dan Blake, Chapel Hill, N.C.

A. From your description, the KA-9100 seems to be doing just fine. The fact that the heat sinks remain cool indicates that the heat generated by the output transistors, which are mounted on the heat sinks, is being safely dissipated. It is quite normal for the top of an amplifier to become warm after long periods of use; most amplifiers have grilles to vent heat generated by the various electrical components. The only danger to a well-designed amplifier's life-span comes when another piece of equipment is mounted directly on top of it, thereby blocking convection cooling. **HF**

We regret that, due to the volume of reader mail we get, we cannot give individual answers to all questions.

AFTER 500 PLAYS OUR HIGH FIDELITY TAPE STILL DELIVERS HIGH FIDELITY.



If your old favorites don't sound as good as they used to, the problem could be your recording tape.

Some tapes show their age more than others. And when a tape ages prematurely, the music on it does too.

What can happen is, the oxide particles that are bound onto tape loosen and fall off, taking some of your music with them.

At Maxell, we've developed a binding process that helps to prevent this. When oxide particles are bound onto our tape, they stay put. And so does your music.

So even after a Maxell recording is 500 plays old, you'll swear it's not a play over five.

maxell

IT'S WORTH IT.

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

Circle 19 on Reader-Service Card

"...an outstanding product on any absolute scale of measurement without regard to price." -STEREO REVIEW

Read more of what Stereo Review magazine had to say about the Yamaha CR-840 receiver:

"The harmonic distortion of the CR-840 was so low that without the most advanced test instruments it would have been impossible to measure it."

When speaking of the OTS (Optimum Tuning System), an easy-to-use Yamaha feature that automatically locks in the exact center of the tuned channel—for the lowest possible distortion, Stereo Review said, "The muting and OTS systems operated flawlessly."

Among Yamaha's most significant features is the continuously variable loudness control. By using this control, the frequency balance and volume are adjusted simultaneously to compensate for the ear's insensitivity to high and low frequency sound at low volume settings. Thus, you can retain a natural-sounding balance regardless of listening level. As Stereo Review states, "...another uncommon Yamaha feature."

And there's more. Like the REC OUT/INPUT SELECT feature. These separate controls allow you to record from one program source while listening to another program source. All without disturbing the recording process. Stereo Review's comment was, "...the tape-recording functions of the CR-840 are virtually independent of its receiving functions." One could not ask for greater flexibility.

In summing up their reaction to the CR-840, Stereo Review said, "Suffice it to say that they (Yamaha) make it possible for a moderate-price receiver to provide performance that would have been unimaginable only a short time ago."

And the CR-840 is only one example in Yamaha's fine line of receivers. For instance, High Fidelity magazine's comment about the Yamaha CR-640 receiver: "From what we've seen, the Yamaha CR-640 is unique in its price range."

And Audio magazine has remarks on the Yamaha CR-2040 receiver: "Without a doubt, the Yamaha CR-2040 is the most intelligently engineered receiver that the company has yet produced, and that's no small feat, since Yamaha products have, over the last few years, shown a degree of sophistication, human engineering, and audio engineering expertise which has set them apart from run-of-the-mill receivers."

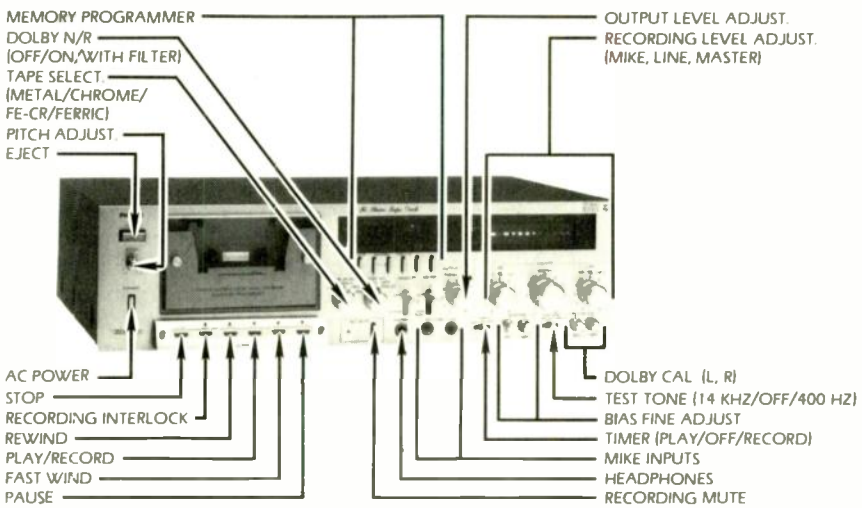
Now that you've listened to what the three leading audio magazines had to say about Yamaha receivers, why not listen for yourself? Your Yamaha Audio Specialty Dealer is listed in the Yellow Pages.

To obtain the complete test report on each of these receivers, write: Yamaha International Corp., Audio Division, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622.

YAMAHA

New Equipment Reports

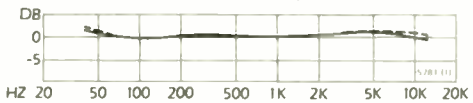
Preparation supervised by Robert Long, Peter Dobbin, and Edward J. Foster. Laboratory data (unless otherwise noted) supplied by CBS Technology Center or Diversified Science Laboratories.



Cassette Deck from the "Inventors"

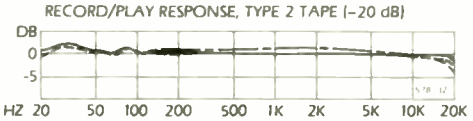
Philips Model 5781 cassette deck

PLAYBACK RESPONSE (TDK test tape, −20 dB DIN)



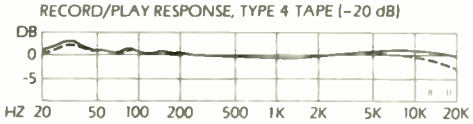
L ch +1¼, −¾ dB, 40 Hz to 12.5 kHz
R ch +1 ¾, −¼ dB, 40 Hz to 12.5 kHz

RECORD/PLAY RESPONSE, TYPE 2 TAPE (−20 dB)



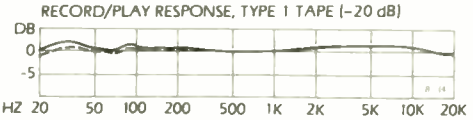
L ch +2½, −1 dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz
R ch +1½, −2½ dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz
with Dolby noise reduction
L ch +2½, −2 dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz
R ch +1½, −3 dB, 20 Hz to 19 kHz

RECORD/PLAY RESPONSE, TYPE 4 TAPE (−20 dB)



L ch +3, −½ dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz
R ch +2½, −3 dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz

RECORD/PLAY RESPONSE, TYPE 1 TAPE (−20 dB)



L ch +2, −¾ dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz
R ch +1½, −1¼ dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz

Philips Model 5781 cassette deck, in metal case. Dimensions: 17¾ by 4¾ inches (front panel), 12¼ inches deep plus clearance for controls and connections. Price: $570. Warranty: "limited," one year parts and labor. Manufacturer: made in Japan for Philips High Fidelity Laboratories, P.O. Box 7950, Knoxville, Tenn. 37914.

"Let's test a current Philips model and find out how the inventors of the cassette approach their offspring today," we said. A nice idea, but altogether idle philosophically, as it turns out. Americans today get their Philips products from the U.S. company of that name; long gone are the days when Philips of the Netherlands built decks that appeared throughout the world under a variety of brand names—here Philips' own Norelco brand and several others, including Ampex. The provenance of this "American Philips" deck is specified on the back panel as made in Japan. But not designed in Japan, from what we see: The search for competitive production costs does not dictate product configuration. Behind the international-style faceplate resides a deck of some unusual traits and better than quotidian performance.

The most impressive data, perhaps, are those for wow and flutter. Note that the record/play numbers are smaller than those for playback, suggesting that the residual flutter in the playback test tape is higher than that in the deck! Response is certainly very good, and we were able to get excellent signal replication with a wide variety of ferric tapes using the bias and sensitivity adjustments the way the manual directs. These mandated adjustments also were made prior to measurement. The tapes suggested for that purpose by Philips were all from TDK: AD ferric as Type 1, SA ferricobalt as Type 2, and MA metal as Type 4. The last proved the hardest to adjust the deck for, and its curves are not significantly better than the rest except in high-level response, where significant compression at 0 dB is postponed until the frequency is pushing 10 kHz.

On the practical side, we particularly liked the 5781's transport controls. The PAUSE leaves virtually no audible clue to its use: It is fast-acting and pop-free. When you want to record, you can press the interlock along with PLAY in the normal fashion if you wish; unique in our experience is the option to press RECORDING, PAUSE, and PLAY sequentially, leaving you in PAUSE but ready to go on cue. Since no two of these three buttons are contiguous, the likelihood of accidental recording is virtually nil. Yet you need less finger dexterity than usual when you do want to record.

We also like some features of the recording indicator, which is adequately calibrated (with 1-dB steps in the immediate vicinity of 0 dB), fast-acting (responding within 3 dB of full values for signal-burst durations of at least 10 microseconds), and—most important—equipped with both a peak mode and a peak

S/N RATIO (re DIN 0 dB; A-weighted)

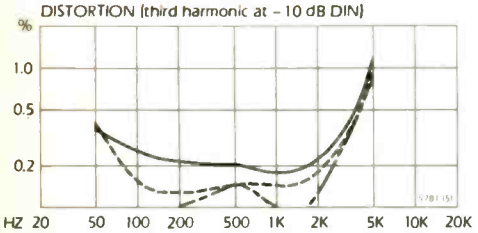
	Type 2 or 4	Type 1
record/play without noise reduction	55¼ dB	54¼ dB
with Dolby noise reduction	64	63 dB

METER READING FOR DIN 0 dB +3 dB

METER READING FOR 3% DISTORTION (at 333 Hz)

Type 2 or 1 tape	+5 dB
Type 4 tape	+8 dB

DISTORTION (third harmonic at –10 dB DIN)



——— Type 2 tape ≤1.14%, 50 Hz to 5 kHz
– – – – – Type 4 tape ≤0.79%, 50 Hz to 5 kHz
——— Type 1 tape ≤0.89%, 50 Hz to 5 kHz

ERASURE (333 Hz; re DIN 0 dB)

Type 2 tape	75 dB
Type 4 tape	70½ dB

CHANNEL SEPARATION 39¾ dB

SPEED ACCURACY 1.0% fast at 105 VAC;
0.7% fast at 120 VAC;
0.4% fast at 127 VAC

WOW & FLUTTER (ANSI/IEEE weighted peak)

	average	maximum
playback	±0.05%	±0.08%
record/play	±0.04%	±0.06%

SENSITIVITY (re DIN 0 dB; 333 Hz)

line input	105 mV
mike input	0.39 mV

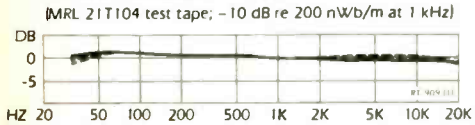
MIKE INPUT OVERLOAD (clipping) 21 mV

MAX. OUTPUT (from DIN 0 dB) 1.4 V

Pioneer's Premier Open-Reeler

Pioneer RT-909 open-reel deck

PLAYBACK RESPONSE AT 7½ IPS
(MRL 21T104 test tape; –10 dB re 200 nWb/m at 1 kHz)



Forward direction

——— L ch	+1½, –1 dB, 31.5 Hz to 20 kHz
– – – – – R ch	+1, –1¼ dB, 31.5 Hz to 20 kHz

Reverse direction

——— L ch	+1¼, –0 dB, 31.5 Hz to 20 kHz
– – – – R ch	+1, –1½ dB, 31.5 Hz to 20 kHz

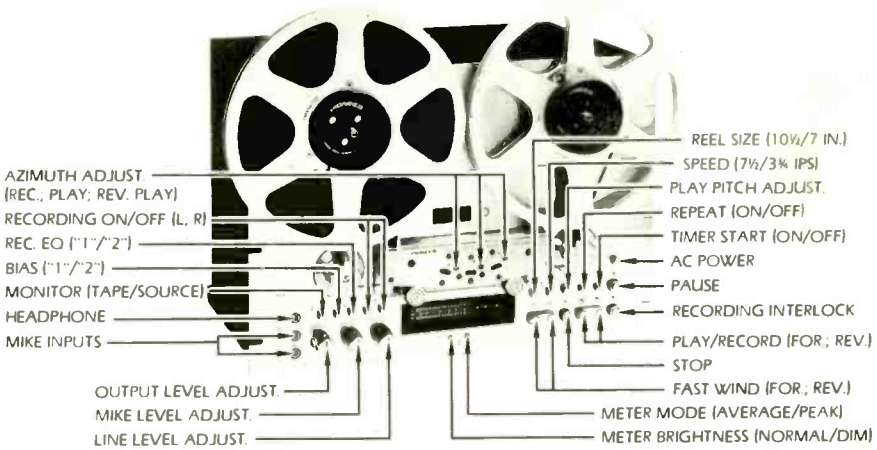
hold. The latter is of the type that "decays" automatically after a few seconds; it won't keep track of the highest maximum that occurred while you were, say, answering the phone, but it also won't get "stuck" on a maximum and fail to report when subsequent signal levels fall too low. Our one serious complaint is with the dim illumination of the red (0 dB and above) portion of the scale; it sometimes goes unnoticed—and the levels therefore can be misjudged—by contrast to the bright green below 0 dB.

Pleasant, but of less immediate consequence for many users, are the mixing scheme and the automatic transport functions. The former gives you separate MIKE and LINE knobs, each of which has friction-clutched elements for the two channels plus a MASTER fader. The automatic functions include what are generally called MEMORY REWIND and MEMORY PLAY but allow two counter readings to be stored in memory as well so that you can "keep your place" on the tape (with 000 at the head) and still set up for continuous repeat of any portion of the tape. Incidentally, the counter continues cumulatively unless you either turn off the machine or manually reset it, which you can do only in PAUSE or STOP.

On the other hand, we disliked some details. The Dolby switch markings struck us as downright confusing. And the manual (in idiomatic English, though printed in Japan) seems a bit sketchy. Our opinion on this last point was tempered, however, when we perused an inserted addendum whose ten languages (!) demonstrated how confusing the manual might have been on so truly international a product. But the addendum itself refers to a feature that, as far as we know, is unique with Philips: a radio-interference avoidance switch. It appears to offer an option in bias-oscillator frequency so that, should you encounter "beating" between the deck and the carrier frequency of a MW (AM in the U.S.) or LW (Long Wave: a broadcast service of more importance in Europe than in North America), you can do something about it.

Perhaps that switch speaks loudest to the point that the 5781 is truly a Philips product and not just another Japanese-built deck. Though it's not radical in design, it keeps reminding you in subtle ways that the thinking that went into it is out of the ordinary. That would be faint comfort if the result were not sterling performance. But it is, and our recommendation of the deck is therefore hearty.

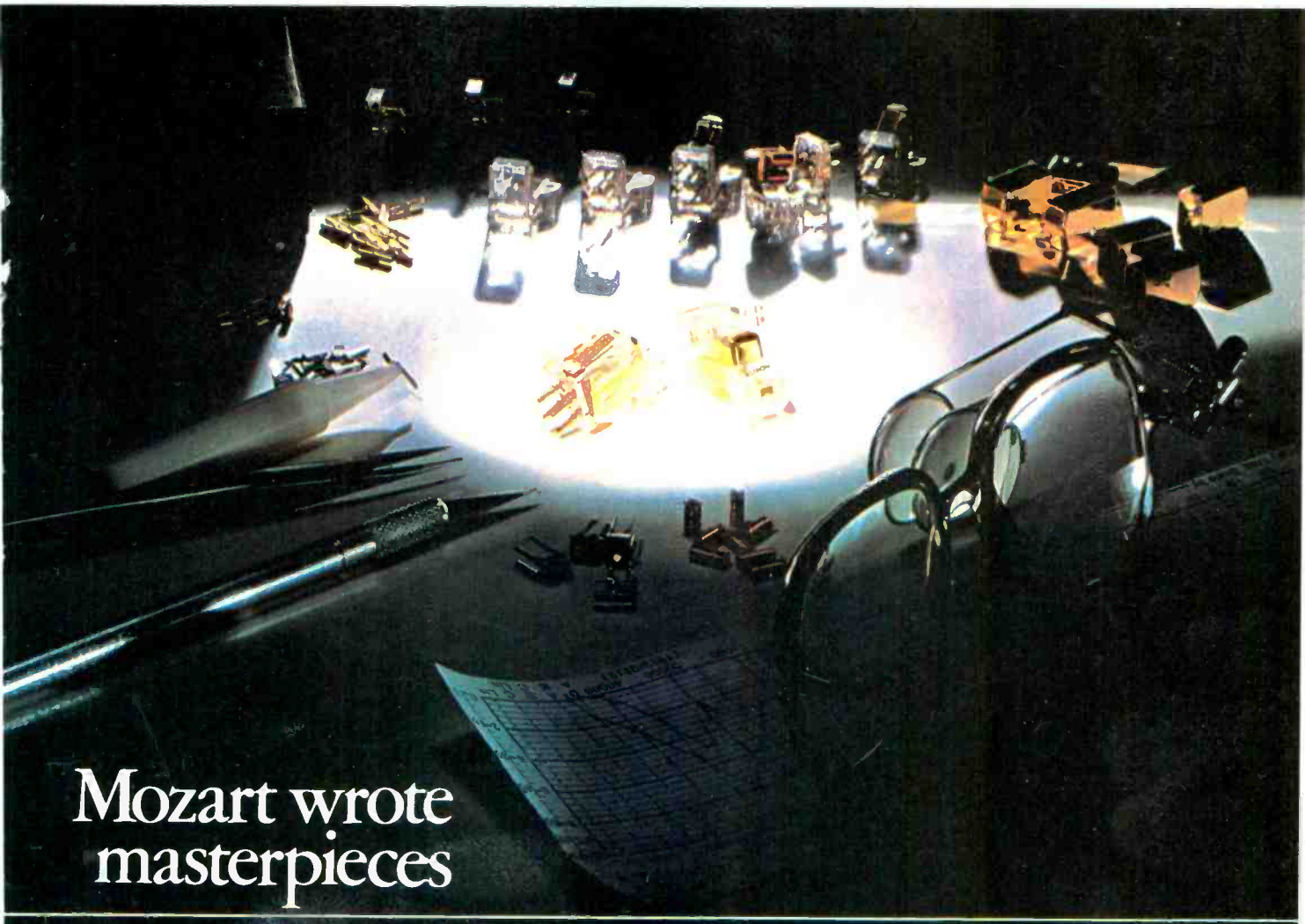
Circle 133 on Reader-Service Card



Pioneer RT-909 two-speed (7½ and 3¾ ips) open-reel deck with bidirectional playback, in rack-mountable metal case. Dimensions: 19 by 13 inches (front panel), 11 inches deep plus clearance for controls. Price: $900. Warranty: "limited," one year parts and labor. Manufacturer: Pioneer Electronic Corp., Japan; U.S. distributor: U.S. Pioneer Electronics Corp., 85 Oxford Dr., Moonachie, N.J. 07074.

For several years Pioneer's open-reel line has concentrated on rack-mountable models. The latest exemplar is the first in the current group to accommodate 10½-inch NAB reels. It is very similar to the 7-inch models, however, differing mostly in the way the multiple function buttons and knobs are deployed on the main panel.

Circle 4 on Reader-Service Card ▶



Mozart wrote masterpieces

We build them

Introducing the new hand-crafted Astrion.™ How do we achieve such unparalleled musical excellence? One by one. Piece by piece. All by hand. Each and every Astrion component is hand inspected, hand selected and finally hand assembled by our most skilled craftsmen. Like you, they look beyond specifications. That's why they personally audition every Astrion they build.

What qualities do they look for? Performance without restriction. Realism without compromise. Music. Pure and simple. We could go on. But why listen to a description when you can listen to our new Astrion. Take your most cherished recording to one of our selected Astrion dealers. What you hear will be incredible. What you don't hear is what you never should.

Like distortion caused by conventional cantilevers. Our engineers did away with it. By eliminating the conventional metal cantilever. In its place is a laser-etched solid sapphire shaft. Its high "stiffness-to-mass" ratio solves any flexing problems. Its exceptional purity creates a new standard for transient response.

In keeping with that high standard is Astrion's exclusive hand polished "extended contact" elliptic diamond tip. It's the smallest nude diamond tip we've ever made.

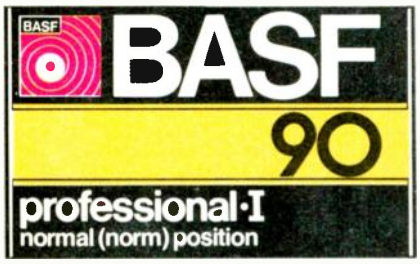
Our engineers also developed a unique pivot suspension system for the Astrion. The Orbital Pivot System.™ Unlike other systems there are no restrictive armature wires, adhesives or governors. Instead each armature is micro-machined to form a perfect fit with the Astrion's S-4 suspension block. It's that simple. It's also that much more compliant in all signal directions.

The hand-crafted Astrion. A masterpiece built to do justice to all the masterpieces written. For the location of your closest ADC Astrion dealer write Audio Dynamics Corp., Pickett District Road, New Milford, CT. 06776 or call toll-free (800) 243-9544.

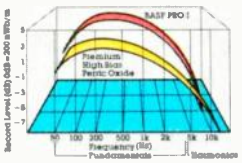
ADC ASTRION

The Tape Guide

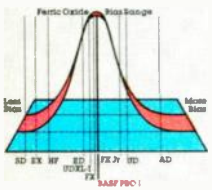
Professional·I. The one tape that stands up when you crank it up.



Premium ferric oxide tapes have more headroom which allows higher maximum recording levels (MRL). Among all premium ferric oxides PRO I has the best MRL for loud recordings. Uniform maghemite particles provide increased headroom for very accurate and loud recordings with virtually no distortion. In the fundamental music range (20Hz-5kHz) PRO I can be recorded louder and driven harder than even high bias tapes. PRO I is the internationally accepted reference tape, whose bias point is specifically matched to the Type I/normal/ferric position on today's high quality cassette decks.



Greater headroom allows more distortion-free recording



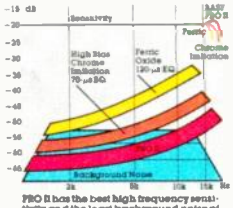
PRO I is designed to be compatible with the normal bias setting of most cassette decks than any other ferric tape.

Professional·II. The world's quietest tape puts nothing between you and your music.

High bias tapes consistently provide wider frequency response and less tape noise (hiss or background noise) than any other tape type. Among premium high bias tapes PRO II is in a class by itself. It is the second generation chromium dioxide tape with superb frequency response and outstanding sensitivity in the critical (10kHz-20kHz) high frequency range. It also has the lowest background noise of any other competitive tape available today.

The pure chromium dioxide particles in the PRO II, unlike ferric oxide particles, are homogeneously shaped and universally sized to give this tape superior performance

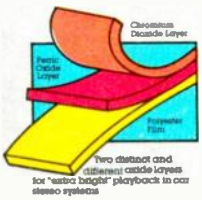
PRO II will capture the many subtle harmonics of the most demanding recordings and play them back with the reality and presence of a live performance. PRO II is the tape for the Type II/chrome/high bias position that comes closest to Metal tape performance for half the price.



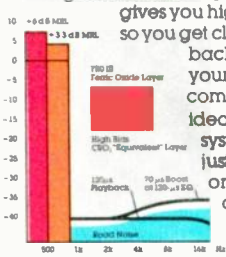
PRO II has the best high frequency sensitivity and the least background noise of any high bias tape

Professional·III. The only car tape that eliminates the car.

Ferrichrome tapes combine the benefits of chromium dioxide and ferric oxide tapes for superior performance in car stereos. The top layer is pure chromium dioxide for unsurpassed highs and low background noise. The bottom layer is ferric oxide for superior lows and great middle frequencies. And it also gives you higher recording levels, so you get clearer, louder playback without cranking up your volume control to compensate. PRO III is the ideal tape for car stereo systems and performs just as well in the home on the Type III/ferrichrome position.



Two distinct and different oxide layers for "extra bright" playback in car stereo systems



PRO III provides a higher maximum recording level (MRL) than high bias tapes, and effectively boosts the highs to overcome road and car noise

"The guarantee of a lifetime."
All BASF tape cassettes come with a lifetime guarantee that covers everything. Should any BASF cassette ever fail—for any reason—simply return it to BASF for a free replacement.

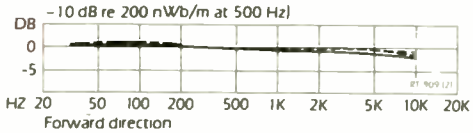
GUARANTEE OF A LIFETIME

Patented "Jam-Proof" Security Mechanism (SM).
All BASF tape cassettes come with our exclusive SM—Security Mechanism. Two precision arms actually "guide" the tape in a smooth, exact and consistent track, so that winding is always even, no matter how often the cassette is played. SM puts an end to tape jamming

BASF

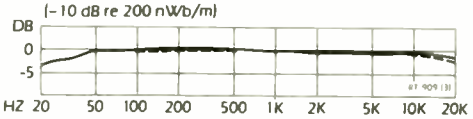
Crosby Drive, Bedford, Massachusetts 01730

PLAYBACK RESPONSE AT 3¾ IPS
(MRL 21F101 test tape;
–10 dB re 200 nWb/m at 500 Hz)



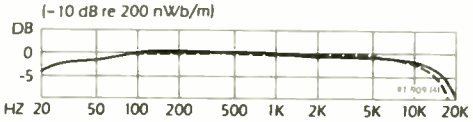
Forward direction
——— L ch +¾, –2 dB, 31.5 Hz to 10 kHz
– – – – – R ch +¾, –1½ dB, 31.5 Hz to 10 kHz
Reverse direction
— — — L ch ± 1 dB, 31.5 Hz to 10 kHz
— — — — R ch +1, –2 dB, 31.5 Hz to 10 kHz

RECORD/PLAY RESPONSE AT 7½ IPS
(–10 dB re 200 nWb/m)



——— L ch +½, –3 dB, 23 Hz to 20 kHz
– – – – – R ch +0, –3 dB, 23 Hz to 20 kHz

RECORD/PLAY RESPONSE AT 3¾ IPS
(–10 dB re 200 nWb/m)



——— L ch +¼, –3 dB, 24 Hz to 13.5 kHz
– – – – – R ch +0, –3 dB, 24 Hz to 11.5 kHz

S/N RATIO (re 200 nWb/m; A-weighted)

	7½ ips	3¾ ips
playback	60 dB	57¾ dB
record/play	55¾ dB	54½ dB

METER READING FOR 200 NWB/M 0 dB

METER READING FOR 3% DISTORTION (at 400 Hz)
at 7½ ips +8 dB
at 3¾ ips +8 dB

DISTORTION (third harmonic)
at –10 dB re 200 nWb/m
7½ ips ≤0.15%, 50 Hz to 5 kHz
3¾ ips ≤0.24%, 50 Hz to 5 kHz
at –10 dB re 400 nWb/m
7½ ips ≤0.36%, 50 Hz to 5 kHz
3¾ ips ≤0.64%, 50 Hz to 5 kHz

ERASURE (400 Hz; re 200 nWb/m) 78 dB

CHANNEL SEPARATION (at 400 Hz) 56 dB

CROSSTALK (Track 3 recorded at 100 Hz)
Track 4 (left reverse) –55 dB
Track 2 (right reverse) –59¼ dB

SPEED ACCURACY (105 to 127 VAC)
forward 0.9% slow at 7½ ips,
0.6% fast at 3¾ ips
reverse 1.3% slow at 7½ ips;
0.2% fast at 3¾ ips

SPEED ADJUSTMENT RANGE (playback only)
at 7½ ips +9.3 to –10.1%
at 3¾ ips +10.6 to –8.8%

WOW & FLUTTER (ANSI/IEEE weighted peak; r/p)

	average	maximum
at 7½ ips	± 0.025%	± 0.04%
at 3¾ ips	± 0.05%	± 0.07%

SENSITIVITY (re 200 nWb/m; 1 kHz)
line input 40 mV
mike input 0.28 mV

MIKE INPUT OVERLOAD (clipping) 140 mV

MAX. OUTPUT (from 200 nWb/m) 0.83 V

REWIND TIME (7-in. 1,800-ft. reel) 91 sec

◀ **Circle 6 on Reader-Service Card**

The RT-909 uses four heads: erase, recording, and playback for the forward direction of tape travel, and playback for the reverse direction. Thus the bidirectionality of the transport functions only in playback. Azimuth adjustments for the recording head and the two playback heads appear right on the head cover. The manual says, "Do not adjust these screws unnecessarily since this may impair the quality of the sound." We would put it more bluntly: Keep your cotton-picking hands off unless you know what you're doing; but if you do, rejoice in being able to make these adjustments so easily should they become necessary. The recording interlock system is a little unusual in today's equipment. The interlock button itself is right next to the forward transport button, which seems to beg for unintentional recording. Not to worry: When you are playing a tape, you can disengage the two buttons at the far side that "arm" the two channels. (If you're recording in mono, you need arm only one.)

The three-motor transport has a servo DC motor driving a pair of capstans both for closed-loop tape control and for symmetrical drive in the two directions of tape travel. On either side of the head housing are idlers whose tension arms can be rotated and locked near the six-o'clock position for a straight tape-threading path. The excellent transport logic (which cannily overrides all nonsensical commands) prevents your starting the tape until you have released the tension arms so they can do their intended job. When you activate the PAUSE, which is very fast-acting for an open-reel model and leaves no objectionable noises on the tape during recording, the tape is stopped without removing it from the heads or muting them. (There are no tape lifters in the usual sense; the capstan/pinch-roller assemblies retract in the fast-wind modes to prevent tape/head contact.) So you can hand-cue ("rock") the tape in PAUSE to find editing points. Hallelujah! For all their sophisticated features, few decks today can make this claim.

But there's a catch. If you mount the deck in a rack, you'll find that it should be close to eye level if the transport buttons are to fall easily under your fingers. But you can't see under the head cover to mark your edit points unless the deck is well above eye level, which is very impractical in most setups and, in any event, makes the control labeling hard to read. (It's evidently meant to be seen from above.) The obvious solution is to place the deck on its back like a studio model, but it's not built for such use. It is delivered with attached supports for use with the deck standing upright (they must be removed for rack-mounting); they extend behind the deck to protect the signal connections in the back panel. When the deck is on its back, the back ends of these supports prevent it from lying flat. If you remove the supports, the weight of the deck rests precariously on the signal-cable connectors. We finally propped it level with the supports still in place—an inelegant but satisfactory solution to a problem we're surprised Pioneer never addressed. But, to repeat, we must give the RT-909 high marks for allowing editing, however awkwardly.

The admirable fluorescent bar-graph metering is calibrated from below –30 to +8 dB, with "blips" at 1-dB intervals from –10 dB up and a more emphatic design from 0 dB up. The peak mode is truly instantaneous, reading only 1 dB low with an input pulse duration of 0.05 millisecond (50 microseconds). There seems no point in going to pulses any shorter than that in pursuit of our usual –3-dB reading. The averaging mode, intended to smooth out the transients that the peak mode registers, needed at least 45 milliseconds to come within 3 dB of full reading in the Diversified Science Laboratories test—not much slower than some supposedly peak-responding designs. Neither mode displayed any overshoot.

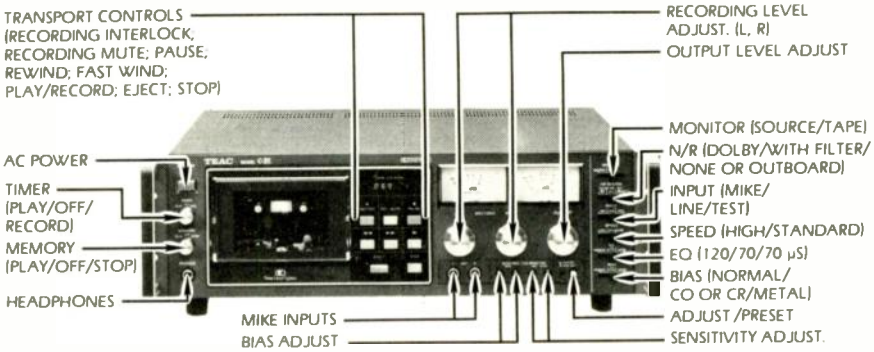
With Maxell UD, the tape suggested by Pioneer for DSL's tests, a 0-dB SOURCE meter reading delivers a flux density of 200 nanowebers per meter, which reads –1 dB on playback with the OUTPUT set at its central detent. Since the playback (but not the source) metering is affected by the OUTPUT setting, while the sound level of both is affected by it, you have two primary setting options. You can compensate for tape sensitivity and thus get exact A/B comparison in both metering and sound when you use the deck's monitoring switch. Or you can adjust for tape-loop gain in your system and get A/B comparisons at its monitoring switch—thus, perhaps, giving up comparable source/tape metering but avoiding awkward changes in listening level when you switch the deck out of your system.

As you can see by examining the photograph, there are many more features we could describe, though most are so familiar that they need no discussion here. A perusal of the data shows that technical competence is sound for a consumer deck (if not up to professional par). It's about what we would expect in

an under-$1,000 deck these days were it not that so many features—in particular, the bidirectionality, which complicates design problems considerably— are thrown in, so to speak. In that respect, the RT-909 presents excellent value indeed.

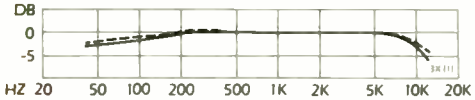
Circle 134 on Reader-Service Card

An "Everything" Deck from Teac



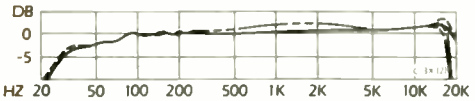
Teac C-3X cassette deck at 1⅞ ips

PLAYBACK RESPONSE (TDK test tape; −20 dB DIN)



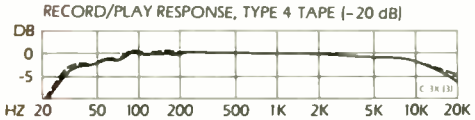
——— L ch +½, −5½ dB, 40 Hz to 12.5 kHz
----- R ch +½, −4 dB, 40 Hz to 12.5 kHz

RECORD/PLAY RESPONSE, TYPE 2 TAPE (−20 dB)



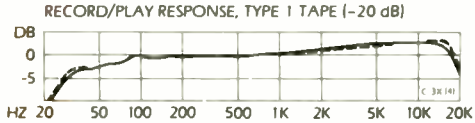
——— L ch +2, −3 dB, 37 Hz to 20 kHz
----- R ch +4, −3 dB, 33 Hz to 20 kHz
with Dolby noise reduction
— — — L ch +2, −3 dB, 37 Hz to 17 kHz
— — — R ch +2½, −3 dB, 33 Hz to 17.5 kHz

RECORD/PLAY RESPONSE, TYPE 4 TAPE (−20 dB)



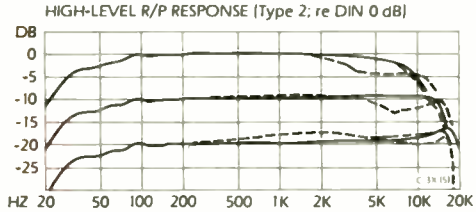
——— L ch +½, −3 dB, 35 Hz to 12 kHz
----- R ch +½, −3 dB, 31 Hz to 12.5 kHz

RECORD/PLAY RESPONSE, TYPE 1 TAPE (−20 dB)



——— L ch +3¼, −3 dB, 37 Hz to 19.5 kHz
----- R ch +3¼, −3 dB, 32 Hz to 20 kHz

HIGH-LEVEL R/P RESPONSE (Type 2; re DIN 0 dB)



——— without noise reduction
----- with Dolby HX
— — — with Dolby noise reduction without HX

S/N RATIO (re DIN 0 dB, A-weighted)

	Type 2	Type 4	Type 1
record/play without noise reduction	56½ dB	55½ dB	55½ dB
Dolby record/play	65 dB	64¼ dB	64¾ dB

METER READING FOR DIN 0 DB +1¼ dB

METER READING FOR 3% DISTORTION (at 333 Hz)

Type 2 tape	+5 dB
Type 4 tape	+3 dB
Type 1 tape	+3¾ dB

Teac Model C-3X two-speed (1⅞ and 3¾ ips) cassette deck, in rack-mountable metal case. Dimensions: 19 by 5¼ inches (front panel), 12¾ inches deep plus clearance for controls and connections. Price: $650. Optional accessories (not tested): RX-8 DBX noise-reduction unit, $550; TO-8 test-tone oscillator, $60; RC-90 remote control, $65; AH-50 rack-mount handles, $20. Warranty: "limited," one year parts and labor. Manufacturer: Teac Corp., Japan; U.S. distributor: Teac Corp. of America, 7733 Telegraph Rd., Montebello, Calif. 90640.

If you want a compendium of current "favorite" features for the serious recordist, Teac obliges with the C-3X. It is "metal ready" (of course), features high-speed recording, has Dolby with HX built in and provision for an add-on dedicated DBX noise reducer, and has user-adjustable bias and recording sensitivity ("Dolby tracking"). And there's MEMORY STOP and MEMORY PLAY plus TIMER PLAY and TIMER RECORDING. Very impressive—although somewhat more so on paper than in the using, for a variety of reasons.

Let's start with the noise-reduction options. Two of the three positions on the selector switch choose Dolby B—either with or without the HX option (there is no multiplex-filter defeat option)—while the third is, in essence, an OFF position in the deck as delivered. To add the DBX option, which replaces the OFF, you must remove a pair of back-panel jumpers and plug the RX-8 into these four jacks and a multipin CONTROL SIGNAL socket nearby. For the not inconsiderable price, you get the ability to switch your DBX encoding and decoding at the C-3X front panel.

The nondefeatable multiplex filter limits response bandwidth with the Dolby circuit on, of course. When we switched in the HX, we got rather strange results. As the high-level response curves show, it does stretch upward the frequency at which self-erasure kills output, but not by much and at the expense of an odd-shaped "bite" out of the response curve in the region immediately below self-erasure. This would suggest an apparent loss, rather than the touted gain, in perceived high-frequency response with signals containing lots of loud highs. The levels at which the difference can be perceived are so high, however, that it's hard to find program material to demonstrate the effect. Suffice it to say that what differences we heard did not contradict the evidence of the curves.

The nature of the response complicated the assessment because, with the preset options and the TDK tapes suggested by Teac (SA-X as the "chrome" Type 2, MA as the metal Type 4, and AD as the ferric Type 1), the replication is not particularly precise. Recordists choosing a model in this price class will want to buy the test oscillator (TO-8) as well, in our opinion, to get the very flat curves of which the deck is capable with some tweaking. Since we were reporting on the C-3X without its options, we tried to set bias and sensitivity using only what a typical tapeophile might have handy—a test signal from the output of another deck, interstation "pink noise" from an FM tuner, and so on—and found it rather heavy going, though the ultimate result was quite satisfactory and could have been achieved much faster with a standard multifrequency generator. The manual

DISTORTION (third harmonic, at −10 dB DIN)
Type 2 tape ≤0.69%, 50 Hz to 5 kHz
Type 4 tape ≤0.60%, 50 Hz to 5 kHz
Type 1 tape ≤0.83%, 50 Hz to 5 kHz

ERASURE (333 Hz; re DIN 0 dB)
Type 2 tape 71 dB
Type 4 tape 70¾ dB

CHANNEL SEPARATION 54½ dB

SPEED ACCURACY 0.1% fast at 105 VAC; 0.3% fast at 120 & 127 VAC

WOW & FLUTTER (ANSI/IEEE weighted peak)

	average	maximum
playback	±0.09%	0.12%
record/play	±0.10%	0.13%

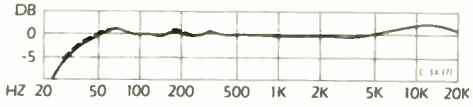
SENSITIVITY (re DIN 0 dB; 333 Hz)
line input 78 mV
mike input 0.31 mV

MIKE INPUT OVERLOAD
46 mV at clipping, with 10% second harmonic distortion, 16.5 mV at 3% second harmonic

MAX. OUTPUT (from DIN 0 dB) 0.74 V

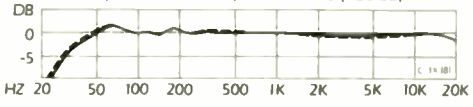
Teac C-3X cassette deck at 3¾ ips

RECORD/PLAY RESPONSE, TYPE 2 TAPE (−20 dB)



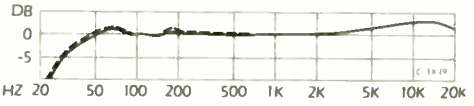
——— L ch +2¾, −3 dB, 33 Hz to 20 kHz
----- R ch +2½, −3 dB, 32 Hz to 20 kHz
with Dolby noise reduction
——— L ch +2½, −3 dB, 33 Hz to 17 kHz
——— R ch +3¼, −3 dB, 32 Hz to 17 kHz

RECORD/PLAY RESPONSE, TYPE 4 TAPE (−20 dB)



——— L ch +1½, −3 dB, 33 Hz to 20 kHz
----- R ch +1⅝, −3 dB, 32 Hz to 20 kHz

RECORD/PLAY RESPONSE, TYPE 1 TAPE (−20 dB)



——— L ch ±3 dB, 35 Hz to 20 kHz
----- R ch ±3 dB, 32 Hz to 20 kHz

provides instructions that apply equally well to such a generator or to the TO-8.

At first glance, the Diversified Science Labs data for the high (3¾ ips) transport speed don't seem to offer much extra performance. It's true that dynamic range is extended by only a dB or two in the midrange, but headroom is extended dramatically at high frequencies. (DSL even ran some curves at +5 dB; severe compression didn't appear until the 10-kHz region!) The high speed with any of our test tapes outperforms the standard speed with metal in this regard. Response at more reasonable levels is not extended significantly, however; it is good at 1⅞ ips, and the multiplex filter becomes the limiting factor at either speed as soon as you turn on the Dolby circuit.

There is no input mixing. With such a deck, Teac assumes that a separate mixer will be used by recordists with serious intent and provides hookup instructions for its own MX-8. The separate left- and right-channel recording-level knobs facilitate balance adjustment but are ganged internally for easy fades—a fetching idea, we think.

The logic of the transport control panel works nicely, allowing you to go from one function to another without hitting STOP and, by pressing PLAY and the recording interlock simultaneously, go straight from playback to recording in what some manufacturers call a "flying start." For some types of "electronic" (as opposed to cut-and-splice) editing, this works well. The PAUSE is less efficient, leaving noticeable "ticks" on the tape when there is no signal and speed burbles where there is continuous tone. We'd rate it fair or average.

The downturn at the very top of the playback response curve is to be expected on Teac decks with our TDK test tape, since its azimuth is not the same as that of Teac's test tapes. Without an agreed arbiter, characteristic differences of this sort will continue to show up between brands, and top-end response can be reduced when you record a tape on one deck brand and play it on another. There is no question of TDK being right and Teac (and other brands of like mind) being wrong—they're simply different. A l'enfer la petite différence, as the French might say.

The C-3X thus is the centerpiece in an ambitious scheme. If you take just the deck and the optional test oscillator (at least, for a start), you will have a capable combination without entering the cost stratosphere. If you buy all the options, frankly, we would consider the ensemble overpriced by comparison to decks with comparable features built in. If DBX noise reduction is a major attraction for you, you can add it at lower cost via that company's own products rather than by choosing Teac's add-on. In a word, we'd recommend the centerpiece but are less enthusiastic about the whole table setting.

Circle 131 on Reader-Service Card

S/N RATIO (re 0 dB at 250 nWb/m, A-weighted)
record/play on Type 2 tape 57¾ dB
Dolby record/play on Type 2 tape 66 dB

METER READING FOR 250 NWB/M +1½ dB

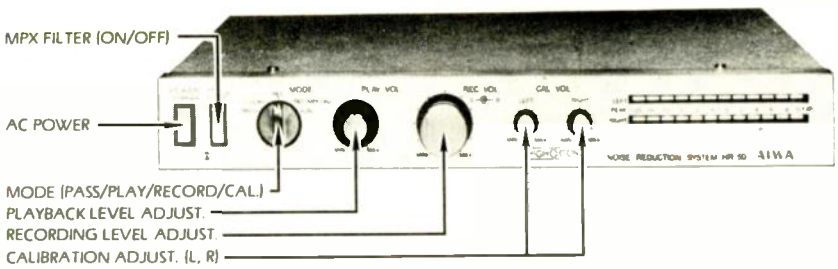
METER READING FOR 3% DISTORTION (at 333 Hz)
Type 2 tape +5¼ dB
Type 4 tape +3¼ dB
Type 1 tape +4 dB

DISTORTION (third harmonic, at −10 dB)
Type 2 tape ≤0.37%, 50 Hz to 5 kHz
Type 4 tape ≤0.57%, 50 Hz to 5 kHz
Type 1 tape ≤0.63%, 50 Hz to 5 kHz

High Com Noise Reduction —from Aiwa

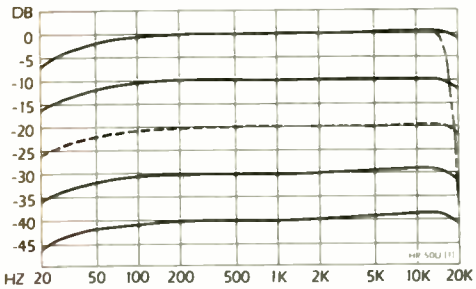
Aiwa HR-50U High Com noise-reduction system, in metal case. Dimensions: 9⅞ by 11¼ inches (front panel), 9 inches deep plus clearance for controls and connections. Price: $220. Warranty: "limited," one year parts and labor. Manufacturer: Aiwa Co., Ltd., Japan; U.S. distributor: Aiwa America, Inc., 35 Oxford Dr., Moonachie, N.J. 07074.

Last August we reported on three outboard encode/decode noise-reduction systems (DBX Type II, Sanyo Super-D, and Nakamichi High-Com II) and, in an accompanying article, compared them to each other and to the familiar Dolby B circuit built into most cassette decks. Our examination of High Com (actually a Telefunken system, though this embodiment comes from Aiwa) is therefore by way of addendum to that coverage. It will by no means be the last, if the most recent Japan Audio Fair is any indication. Though all of the systems, available or merely announced, are alike in being companders that compress the signal before it is recorded and expand it reciprocally on playback, their specifics vary enough to make them functionally incompatible.



Aiwa HR-50U High Com noise-reduction system

THROUGHPUT* FREQUENCY RESPONSE



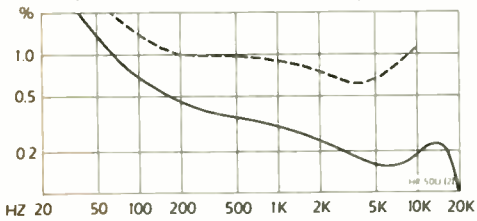
——— at 0, -10, -30, and -40 dB
- - - - - at -20 dB +¼, -3 dB, 41 Hz to 20 kHz
——— with multiplex filter

THROUGHPUT* S/N RATIO (re 0.5 V; A-weighted)
76 dB

MAXIMUM THROUGHPUT* LEVEL (visible distortion)

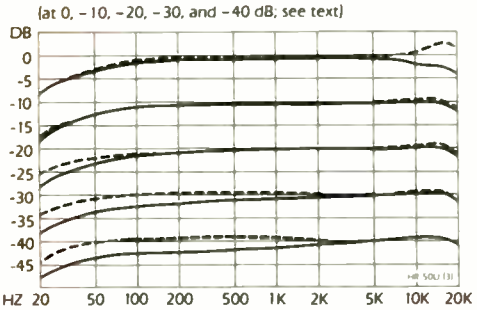
at 20 kHz (worst case)	0.9 V
at 1 kHz	1.6 V

THROUGHPUT* HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD)



——— at 0.5 volt < 1%, 70 Hz to 20 kHz
- - - - - at 1.5 volts ≤ 1.1%, 200 Hz to 10 kHz, clipping level drops below 1.5 volt above 10 kHz

"MISMATCHED" THROUGHPUT* RESPONSE
(at 0, -10, -20, -30, and -40 dB; see text)



——— with 3 dB of unwanted gain in "recorder"
- - - - - with 3 dB of unwanted loss in "recorder"

*With output of encoder (one unit) connected directly to input of decoder (second unit) so that test signal passes through both, simulating "ideal" tape recorder in encode/decode signal path.

The HR-50 is designed to encode or decode but not to do both simultaneously; if you have a monitoring ("three-head") deck and want simultaneous playback evaluation of the signals you are recording, you'll need two units. Since there is a PASS position on the selector, you can leave the Aiwa in your system even when you're playing or recording Dolby or other tapes without High Com encoding. Unlike the High Com designs that Telefunken says we should expect to see built into consumer decks (including its own), this one makes no provision for decoding Dolby B through the High Com IC.

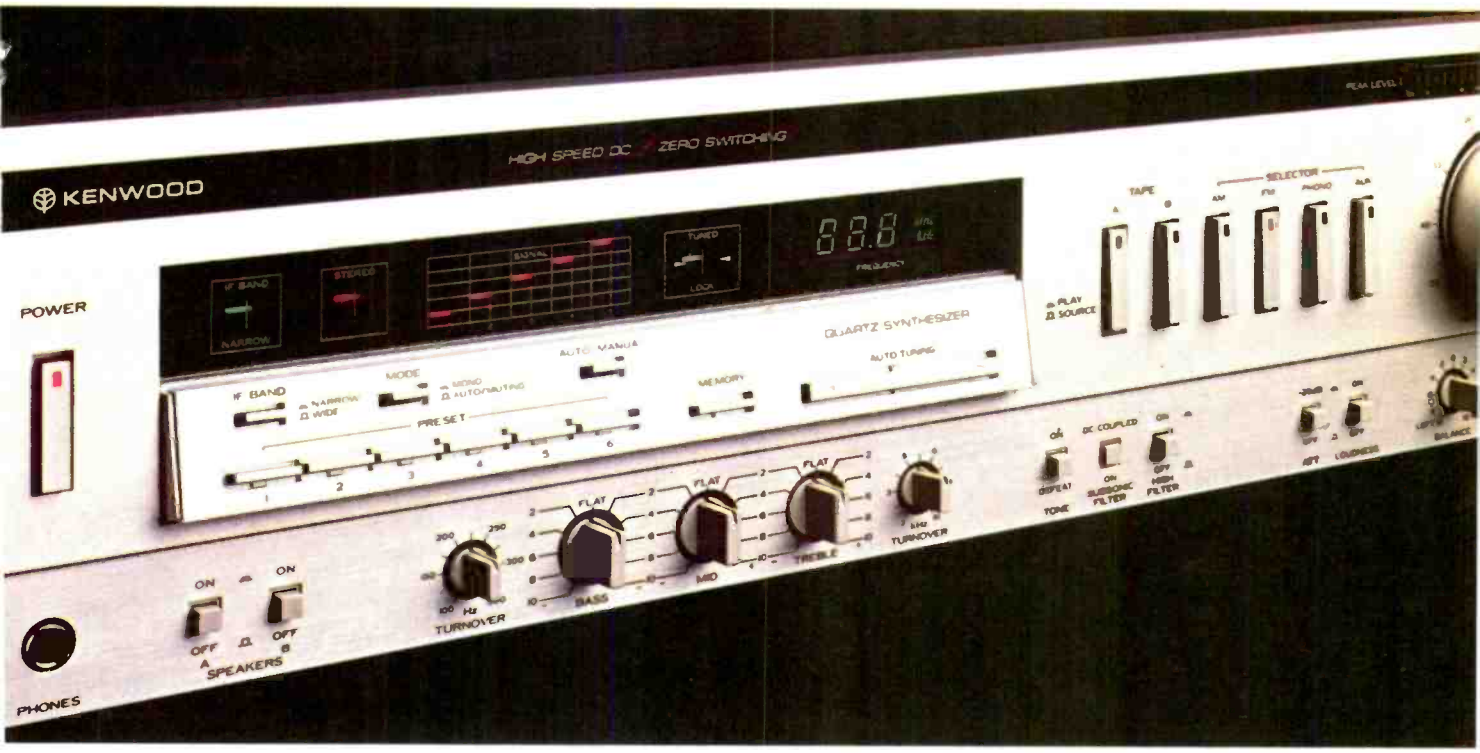
The four-language manual, in which the English is reasonably idiomatic, tells you to adjust your recorder for a signal level of 200 nanowebers per meter from the HR-50's built-in 600-millivolt 315-Hz test tone. Since this is the same as the Dolby reference level, the double-D Dolby logo that appears on many deck meters might be used as a reference. (Aiwa, however, forbears to mention that jealously guarded brand name.) As the manual points out, many decks also choose this level as the meters' 0 dB (or "0 VU"), though it says that Aiwa's own decks use 160 nanowebers per meter (2 dB lower) and therefore instructs you to set the test tone at +2 dB on Aiwa models or others with this reference level. Unless you can find a test report that, like ours, gives the reference level for your deck's meters, this may be a hard specific to come by; in its absence, you can probably get by quite well by using whatever 0 dB the meter offers, but we'd suggest keeping a cassette, recorded this way with the test tone, as a reference should you change decks or want to adjust anyone else's to play your High Com tapes on. The playback adjustment from this test tone is via two small knobs (one for each channel) on the HR-50; turn them until they light the +3 calibration elements on the High Com.

The calibration of these displays runs -15, -7, -5, -3, and -1 dB, all in green; 0, +1, and +3 dB in amber; and +4, +6, and +8 dB in red. This leaves you a 1-dB calibration "window" in which to set the test tone, though the divisions generally are coarser elsewhere. The only other exception is in the immediate vicinity of the display's 0 dB—the presumable target area during recording. The manual's specific admonition, however, is that the red indicators (that is, at +4 and above) should flash only on "maximum 'peak' inputs." We took that to mean that the red segments should light only on rare occasions and that we should concentrate on keeping most maxima as near the 0-dB calibration as possible.

This leaves somewhat more headroom above these maxima than normal setup would give with the same signals. Like other 2:1 compression systems, the extra headroom is needed to prevent high-frequency tape saturation—with its attendant distortion and compression—as moderate signal levels are boosted toward the saturation point. At such levels, the highs actually are recorded about 3 or 4 dB below midrange or bass tones of equal input level, which helps prevent saturation. At extremely high levels, however, compression ceases at very high frequencies; if music were to contain such extreme signals—it doesn't—the results could be disastrous. At the other extreme, low-frequency compression also ceases at levels below about -30 dB. This is no doubt intentional; it keeps low frequencies from modulating ("pumping") the high-frequency hiss in playback. Compression continues in the highs to very low levels for maximum hiss reduction in playback.

The foregoing all presumes that High Com will be used in conjunction with a cassette deck, not with open reels. And in other ways as well, the system seems to have been thought out very specifically in terms of the cassette format. Encoder noise, for example, measures 53½ dB below DIN 0 dB (250 nanowebers per meter) with our test setup, while its headroom measures 3 dB above DIN 0. (At higher frequencies, where it is needed less, the headroom is even lower; the "missing" portion of the 1.5-volt distortion curve actually is beyond the clipping threshold.) Those figures are about par for mediocre cassette tapes. A good deck

Its mother was a computer. Its father was a Kenwood.



THE KENWOOD KR-770 RECEIVER

We think our new KR-770 is the most intelligent high performance receiver in the world.

The heart of our new receiver is its remarkable brain. A microprocessor-controlled quartz synthesizer tuning section, which uses Kenwood's unique computerized digital frequency encoding system to provide incredibly accurate, drift-free AM and FM stereo reception.

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And for performance, the KR-770 provides a long list of innovative Kenwood engineering features. Like Hi-Speed™ circuitry for exceptional musical clarity. DC to give crisp, clear bass response down to 0 Hz. Our new Zero Switching output circuits to eliminate crossover distortion. And wide and narrow IF band circuitry to maximize FM reception.

You also get digital frequency read-out. LED indicators for power output, signal strength and function controls. Plus a built-in equalizer.

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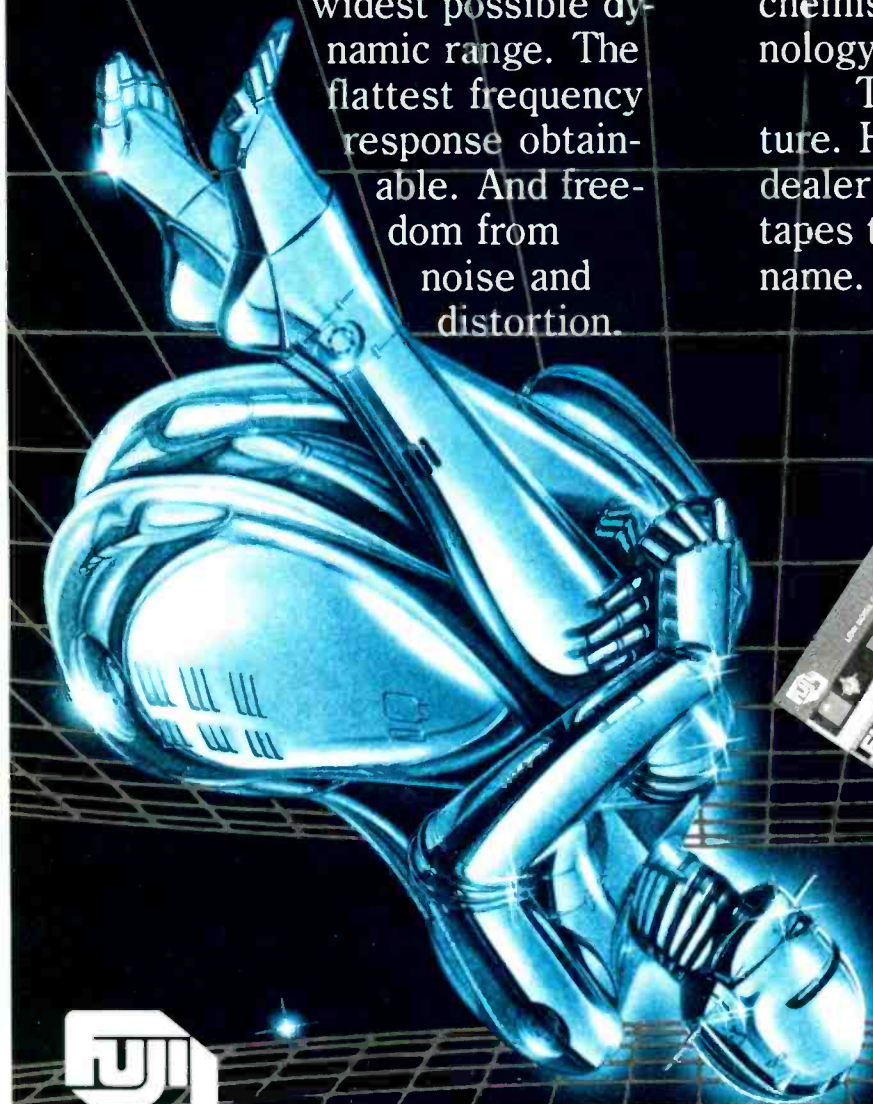
The sound of the future. Hear it at your audio dealer today. In four superb tapes that share a single name.



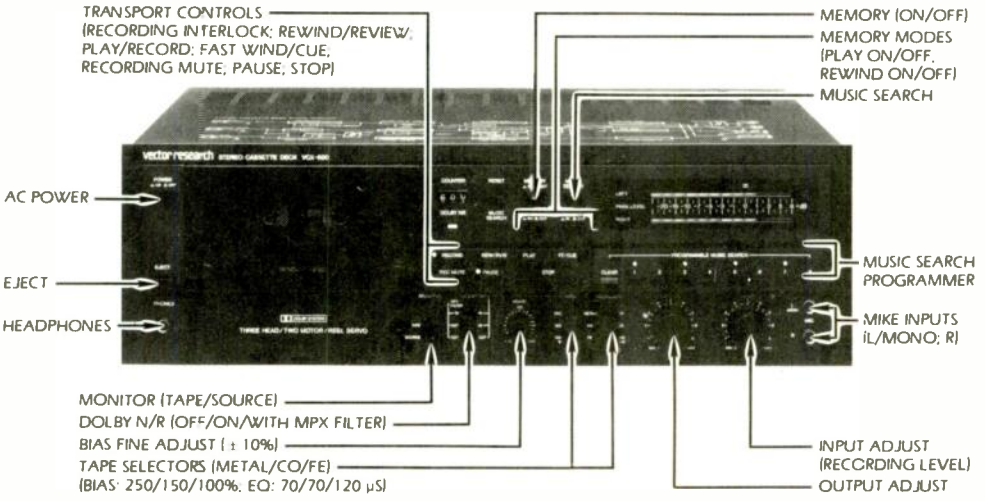
FUJI
CASSETTES
Imagination has just become reality.

with a metal cassette should have more dynamic range than the HR-50 can take full advantage of, while even more will be "wasted" with open reels. Of course, High Com's "limited" dynamic range measures 86 dB with our setup, and that should be plenty for most of the purposes to which cassettes are put, even by serious recordists.

And, even were it less expensive, the HR-50 would be of interest only to serious recordists. Though its level calibration is less critical than that in some systems and the sonic price to be paid for careless adjustment not very steep, the 2:1:2 compander scheme does put a premium on good mechanical quality in both the deck and the cassettes. Level fluctuations due to dropouts or poor head contact are doubled by the playback expansion. So, as always, the extra noise reduction is won at a price. But it is won: We were able to realize a measurable 25 dB or so of real hiss reduction relative to unprocessed tapes, depending on the usual variables, and therefore confirm the claimed "20 dB or more." If "the low-priced spread" with its 10 dB is not good enough for you, here's another alternative.

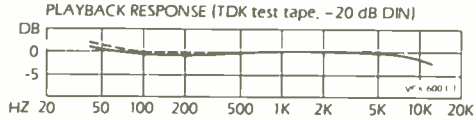
Circle 135 on Reader-Service Card

A Classy Deck from Vector Research



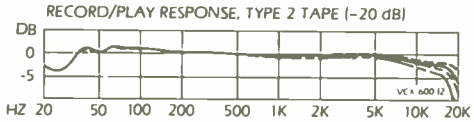
Vector VCX-600 cassette deck

PLAYBACK RESPONSE (TDK test tape, −20 dB DIN)



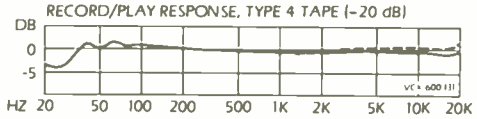
L ch +¼, −2¼ dB, 40 Hz to 12.5 kHz
R ch +2, −3 dB, 40 Hz to 12.5 kHz

RECORD/PLAY RESPONSE, TYPE 2 TAPE (−20 dB)



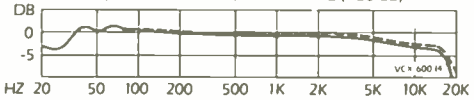
L ch +1½, −3 dB, 29 Hz to 17.5 kHz
R ch +1¼, −3 dB, 29 Hz to 19.5 kHz
with Dolby noise reduction
L ch +1½, −3 dB, 29 Hz to 10 kHz
R ch +1¼, −3 dB, 29 Hz to 15 kHz

RECORD/PLAY RESPONSE, TYPE 4 TAPE (−20 dB)



L ch +1¼, −3 dB, 29 Hz to 20 kHz
R ch +1¼, −3 dB, 29 Hz to 20 kHz

RECORD/PLAY RESPONSE, TYPE 1 TAPE (−20 dB)



L ch +1, −3 dB, 29 Hz to 10.5 kHz
R ch +1, −3 dB, 29 Hz to 16 kHz

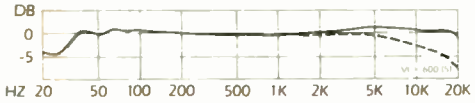
Vector Research Model VCX-600 cassette deck, in metal case. Dimensions: 17¼ by 5½ inches (front panel), 13½ inches deep plus clearance for controls and connections. Price: $750; VRC-2 remote control, $75. Warranty: "limited," one year parts and labor. Manufacturer: made in Japan for Vector Research, Inc., 20600 Nordhoff St., Chatsworth, Calif. 91311.

A young American-based company whose products are manufactured in Japan, Vector Research has obviously targeted its market with great care. Like the VRX-9000 receiver (test report, April 1980), the VCX-600 commends itself to the value-conscious buyer seeking lots of operating conveniences as well as a high degree of performance.

Let's begin with the conveniences, for this deck is filled with automated goodies. There are an AUTO-REWIND option that triggers at the end of the tape and an AUTO-PLAY that will take over at the head end. With MEMORY engaged, the transport will rewind to the spot at which 000 shows on the mechanical turns counter. In combination these controls make continuous-repeat setups possible. An automatic music-search function allows fast wind to the next programmed selection or back to the beginning of the selection you're playing, provided that there is at least a four-second interval between programs. Or you can preprogram up to eight songs for sequential play in the forward-wind direction. Even more useful, though less esoteric, are the CUE and REVIEW options in fast forward and rewind, respectively. The transport logic also offers "flying start" recording: direct access to the recording mode from playback. And the PAUSE is one of the least obtrusive and quickest acting we've seen on a solenoid-controlled transport.

The tapes suggested by Vector Research and used by Diversified Science Laboratories in checking out the deck were all from TDK: AD as the Type 1 ferric, SA as the Type 2 chrome-compatible ferricobalt, and MA as the Type 4 metal.

BIAS ADJUSTMENT RANGE, TYPE 2 TAPE (–20 dB)



——— minimum bias
----- maximum bias

S/N RATIO (re DIN 0 dB, A-weighted)

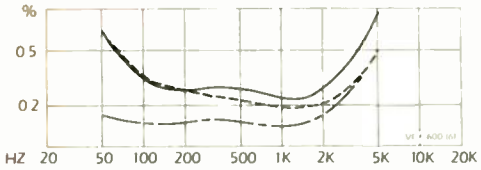
	Type 2	Type 4	Type 1
record/play without noise reduction	57 dB	54¾ dB	55½ dB
Dolby record/play	64¾ dB	63 dB	64 dB

METER READING FOR DIN 0 DB +3 dB

METER READING FOR 3% DISTORTION (at 333 Hz)

Type 2 or 1 tapes	+5 dB
Type 4 tape	+8 dB

DISTORTION (third harmonic, at –10 dB DIN)



——— Type 2 tape · 0.93%, 50 Hz to 5 kHz
----- Type 4 tape · 0.70%, 50 Hz to 5 kHz
— — — Type 1 tape · 0.48%, 50 Hz to 5 kHz

ERASURE (333 Hz, re DIN 0 dB)

Type 2 tape	75 dB
Type 4 tape	67½ dB

CHANNEL SEPARATION 52½ dB

SPEED ACCURACY 1.2% fast, 105 to 127 VAC

WOW & FLUTTER (ANSI/IEEE weighted peak)

	average	maximum
playback	±0.06%	±0.09%
record/play	±0.07%	±0.11%

SENSITIVITY (re DIN 0 dB, 333 Hz)

line input	78 mV
mike input	0.30 mV

MIKE INPUT OVERLOAD (clipping) 42 mV

MAX. OUTPUT (from DIN 0 dB) 0.68 V

Results are generally quite good, with almost identical high-frequency headroom characteristics in Types 1 and 2. Headroom improves dramatically with the Type 4 tape but at some expense in S/N ratio, limiting the net gain in dynamic range.

Bias can be tweaked here over a moderate range, but the lack of a built-in test-tone oscillator calls for careful listening tests for those who choose not to use the recommended tape types. Actually, with the SA and AD C-90s used in our evaluation, the minimum bias setting provided somewhat flatter response than the recommended center position (employed for all data except the bias-range curve); the C-60 metal tape and the same length in the other two tapes were just about spot-on at the center setting.

The twelve-segment peak-reading signal display is calibrated from –20 to +8 dB, with fine (1-dB) increments only from –1 to +1 dB, where they are most needed. There is no overshoot in the action; it will respond to within 3 dB of full values for any signal duration of at least 30 milliseconds and provides a headroom "pad" of 3 dB between its 0-dB calibration and DIN 0 dB to accommodate brief transients.

The speed-accuracy figure is something of a curiosity. Manufacturers generally prefer speed to be on the high side; slow transports inhibit high-frequency response to some extent. And +1% is taken as a rough par in this test, making the VCX-600 slightly beyond the pale. While that figure is not good enough for professional uses (a 60-minute radio show played 1% fast would leave half a minute of dead air—long enough to accommodate an extra commercial), it actually is better than is needed for any normal consumer purpose. Since a half-tone pitch difference requires a speed change of about 6%, the falsification introduced by a 1.2% change is too small to take seriously. Admittedly, most decks do better here, but we would rather see Vector shave 0.02% off the wow figures—which are very good but not exceptional—than lop that extra 0.2% off the speed figure.

All the convenience features on the VCX-600 don't come cheap, so our evaluation of the model as an attractive value presupposes that you are ready to spend money on such functions to begin with. If you are, you will find several decks that don't perform as well but sell for twice the price or more. The features may be somewhat more elaborate on these competing models, but they aren't necessarily more useful and don't necessarily address your specific needs. So look the field over carefully; if you do, you're likely to find the Vector as attractive as we did.

A Quick Guide to Tape Types

Our classifications, Types 0 through 4, are based largely on those embodied in the measurement standards now in the process of ratification by the International Electrotechnical Commission. The higher the type number, the higher the tape price generally is in any given brand. Similarly, the higher type numbers imply superior performance, though—depending in part on the deck in which the tape is used—they do not guarantee it.

Type 0 tapes represent "ground zero" in that they follow the original Philips-based DIN spec. They are ferric tapes, called LN (low-noise) by some manufacturers, requiring minimum (nominal 100%) bias and the original, "standard" 120-microsecond playback equalization. Though they include the "garden variety" formulations, the best are capable of excellent performance at moderate cost in decks that are well matched to them.

Type 1 (IEC Type I) tapes are ferrics requiring the same 120-microsecond playback EQ but somewhat higher bias. They sometimes are styled LH (low-noise, high output) formulations or "premium ferrics."

Type 2 (IEC Type II) tapes are intended for use with 70-microsecond playback EQ and higher recording bias still (nominal 150%). The first formulations of this sort used chromium dioxide; today they also include chrome-compatible coatings such as the ferricobalts.

Type 3 (IEC Type III) tapes are dual-layered ferrichromes, implying the 70-microsecond ("chrome") playback EQ. Approaches to their biasing and recording EQ vary somewhat from one deck manufacturer to another.

Type 4 (IEC Type IV) are the metal-particle, or "alloy" tapes, requiring the highest bias of all and retaining the 70-microsecond EQ of Type 2.

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS LISTEN.

THE SANSUI 900 SUPER SYSTEM.

Just listen.

Your ears will tell you immediately. Here is sound that's just about as good as it gets. And your eyes will tell you here's styling that's a cut above the rest.

But best of all, here is a sensibly priced complete system of high performance separates that is as easy to use as it is to buy.

All you have to do is plug it in — and enjoy.

C-77 Control Center/Preamplifier with Automatic Fader and Moving Coil Pre-Preamp Unique in offering full stereo mixing with the convenience of an automatic and manual fader for smooth, professional sounding transitions from any connected source to any other, plus a built in pre-preamp for moving-coil cartridges. Variable loudness control.

B-77 LINEAR-A DC Servo Power Amplifier with Spectrum Analyzer and Peak Power Meter. Sensibly rated at 60 watts/channel, min. RMS, both channels into 8 ohms from 20-20,000Hz, with no more than 0.03% THD. Direct-coupled throughout, it features Sansui's exclusive new "Linear A" circuitry for low distortion with high efficiency, along with separate 10-band spectrum analyzer and peak power displays that show just what your system is doing.

T-77 Quartz-PLL Digital Synthesizer FM/AM Tuner with 8 Preset FM/AM Stations and Auto Search Digital Quartz-PLL Synthesizer design, which guarantees the most accurate tuning possible, is the highlight of this extraordinary tuner. Stores up to 8 stations in memory circuits for instant recall.

This system also has a direct/

drive automatic-return FR-D3 turntable with its low 0.028% wow/flutter and 72dB S/N ratio.

The attractive audio rack that contains the 900's components has additional space for an optional Sansui metal-tape compatible cassette deck.

Also included are two S-50 12", 3-way loudspeakers specially designed to perfectly match the system's components and fill your listening room with an uncanny amount and quality of music.

If you love great high fidelity, but don't have the patience for a lot of shopping and technical talk, you'll want to see and hear the Sansui 900 Super System. Visit your Sansui dealer and find out how

easy it is to own a top-of-the-line high fidelity system.

The Sansui 900 Super System. All you have to do is listen.

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Exhilarating! Electrifying! Exquisite!

That's OPUS 33

Samsung's new S-33 Slimline Series gives you live quality stereo components beyond compare on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Just take a look at some of these specs—the S-33A amp gives you 25 watts per channel minimum RMS at 8 ohms with no more than 0.05% THD from 20 to 20,000 Hz and the S-33T AM/FM tuner has a handsome display of LED indicators.

The S-33D direct load cassette deck has a metal tape capability, Dolby NR* System and LED indicators. All three components feature "Soft-Touch" controls. Impressive? When you test this sleek, modern line of components, you'll be even more impressed at the price. The brushed aluminum facing and slim design compliment any modern decor. So, check it out today for a pleasant surprise in listening pleasure. Yours, from Samsung.

*Dolby is a trademark of Dolby Laboratories.

VIDEO TODAY

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Are You a Signal-Napper?

Is it "evil" to acknowledge the existence of backyard antennas that can receive transmissions from satellites, as the president of the Motion Picture Association of America states (see "Letters," this issue)? Or is the reaction of the MPAA, which contends that a recent article in VIDEO TODAY advocated piracy of pay-TV signals, simply an indicator that once ironclad controls on TV programming are becoming unglued? Has the technology associated with the broadcasting and reception of television signals evolved so quickly that it now threatens the existence of those who profit from it?

First, the question of legality: Can you or can you not erect an antenna in your backyard and receive satellite TV transmissions, including those from Home Box Office and other pay-TV services? The answer is a resounding "maybe."

Almost two years ago the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ruled that you require no permit to erect your own satellite receiving station. However, it said nothing about the legality of receiving (for free) pay-TV programming carried by the satellites. Several months later, a U.S. District Court ruling in California said, in effect, that owners of entertainment programs could not prohibit off-the-air recording of their property because it would be impossible to police every living room in America. The court made clear that free reception of signals using publicly owned airwaves applied strictly to those cases where reception was for private, noncommercial use.

But even here the line is fuzzy. The most obvious example of private, nonprofit use is your family watching an HBO movie in your home. A business such as a bar, which offered HBO (via a satellite antenna) would probably be in violation of existing statutes, since it could be argued that the business profited from the availability of the TV programming even though patrons weren't specifically charged for it.

On the other hand, say you used satellite-derived pay-TV signals as part of entertainment at a party with your friends. In theory, you've cheated the copyright holder and the actors out of royalties they would have received had the programming been viewed through some authorized means, such as at a movie theater or via a cable TV system.

The real question is how would anyone prove "theft of services"? The only law that relates in any way to the controversy is the Communications Act of 1934, which is so unclear that both sides have used it to support their arguments.

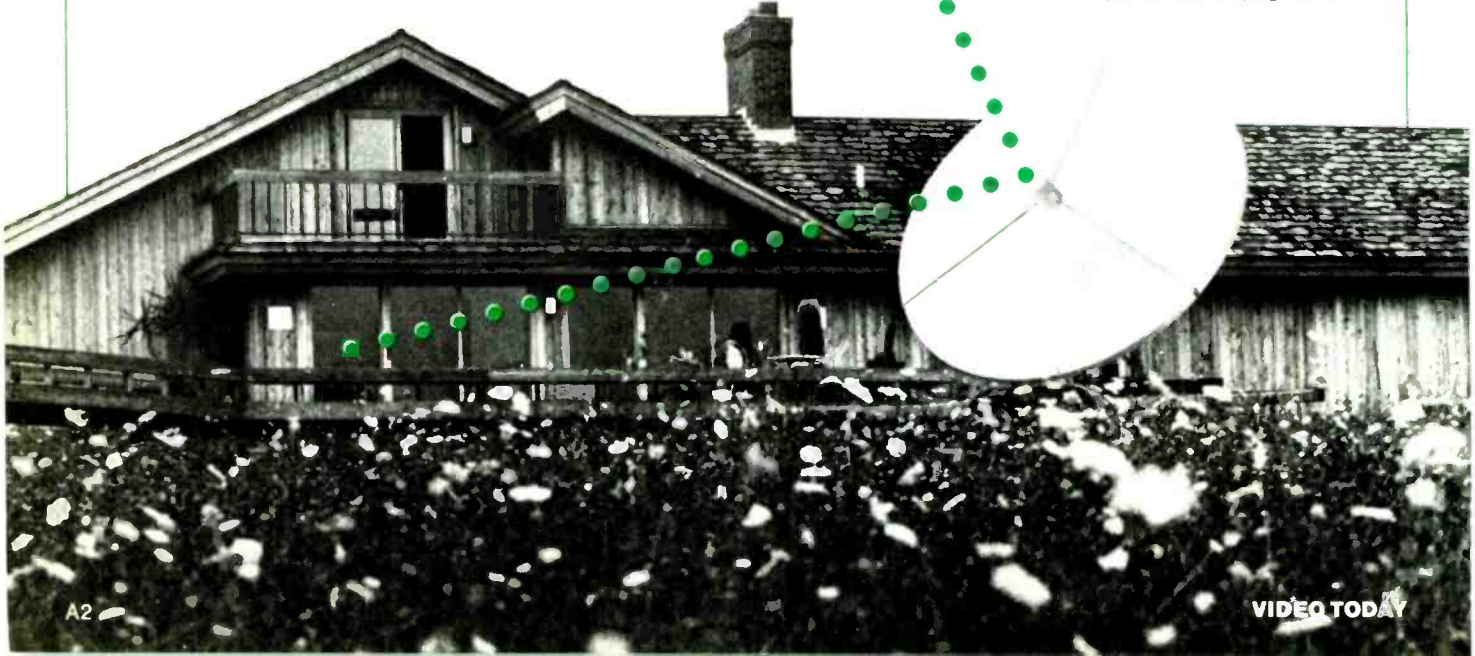
Well, if it's not *clearly* illegal to pluck pay-TV signals off the airwaves, can a moral argument be made for people restraining themselves from doing it? Program owners, such as film studios, TV networks, individual stations, and cable systems, point out that they have invested millions of dollars in the programming and that, if they are unable to recoup their investment, there will be no pay-TV for anyone.

The other side of the argument — proffered by satellite antenna enthusiasts — is that the law holds that radio frequencies are public property and that any broadcaster runs the risk that his signals will be received by people other than those authorized. They argue that people with the greatest interest in the antennas live in areas not adequately served by either broadcast or cable TV stations and that no evidence exists that those who have watched pay TV "for free" would have paid for it if the service were offered.

For its part, the MPAA has called upon all hands to plug leaks in the dike that contains the reservoir of programming. Independent of its efforts regarding satellite transmissions, the MPAA is reported to be underwriting research and development of a device that would prevent you from video taping any TV programs — even off-the-air or cable. Implementation of any such system would require approval of the FCC.

Would some type of video signal scrambler be effective in curbing satellite signal-napping? It is doubtful that simple scramblers would work; simple decoders would undoubtedly be marketed to override them. Sophisticated scrambling is expensive and as yet is not being seriously considered.

(continued on page A16)



A dish antenna (below, right) in the backyard can let you tap into satellite transponder broadcasts —including pay TV programs.

THE FIRST HIGH GRADE VIDEOTAPE.

Video cassette recorders have changed a lot in the last few years. New features like six-hour recording, slow motion and freeze frame have added a great deal to home recording.

But there's one drawback. To utilize these new features, you must operate your cassette recorder at a slower speed. And this places increased pressure on the videotape, which can cause the magnetic oxide particles on the tape's surface to loosen and eventually fall off. Once this starts to happen, a loss of picture quality isn't far behind.

At Maxell, we've always been aware that a video cassette recorder can only be as good as the tape that goes in it. So while all the video cassette recorder manufacturers were busy improving their recorders, we were busy improving our videotape.

The result is Maxell Epitaxial HG, the first high grade VHS videocassette. In technical terms, there are several significant differences between our high grade and regular videotape.

For one thing, our oxide particles are smaller and more densely packed on the tape surface. Which is why we have a better frequency response and signal-to-noise ratio, especially at the slower recording speeds.

And, because of our unique binding process and calendering system, the oxide particles on Maxell HG stay put. This drastically reduces friction and video recorder head wear. So not only will you get better picture quality, but you'll be able to enjoy it a lot longer.

All in all, no other home videotape can deliver better color resolution, sharper images or cleaner sound than Maxell HG.

So if you own a VHS recorder, please remember one thing. If you want high grade picture quality, you need a high grade tape.

maxell
IT'S WORTH IT.

VideoFronts

Latest Video News and Products

Try Before You Buy

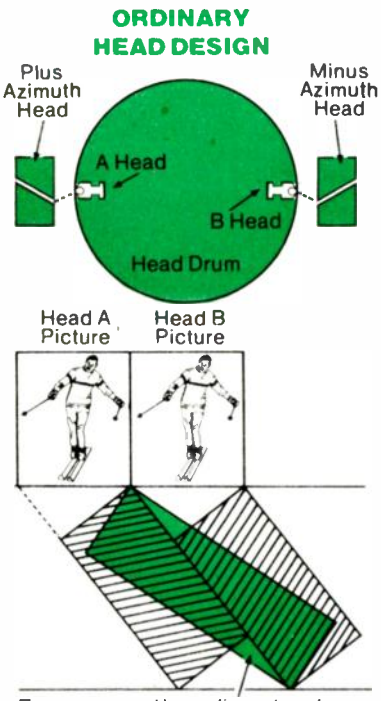
For those of you who hesitate to pay $50 or more for a feature film on video cassette, or to whom $1,000 seems a lot to spend for a VCR when you're not certain how much you'll use it, a solution is at hand: rental. At a recent home video programming seminar sponsored by the ITA (recently renamed the International Tape/Disc Association), video software and hardware manufacturers generally agreed that less expensive alternatives to purchasing video equipment are necessary. As a result, expect to see an increasing number of dealers offering rentals of video cassettes, generally at $10 or less per week. And look for the emergence of dealers who rent VCRs. Some rental decks already are being provided in the New York City area.

Radio Shack Goes for RCA-Type Video Disc

Though acknowledged by many as the least spectacular of the video disc formats — no special-effects features and a mono soundtrack — RCA's CED could well become the dominant system by virtue of its price and expected large-scale availability. The latest retailer to join the RCA fold is the Tandy Corporation, with 6,000 Radio Shack outlets. To be marketed under the Realistic brand, the Radio Shack player will be manufactured in Japan and is scheduled to appear

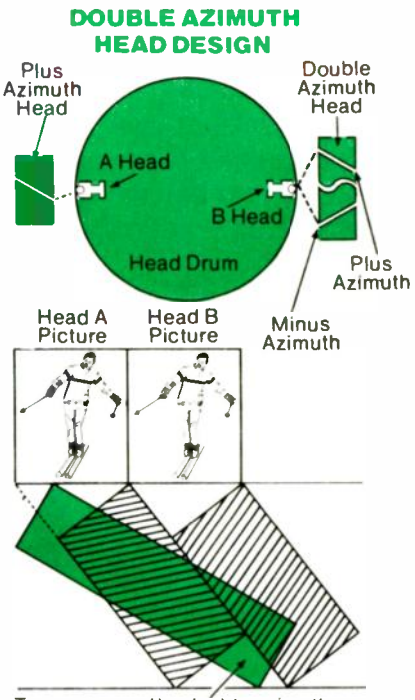
Jitter-Free Slow Motion Said Possible With Sony's New Double-Azimuth Head

Despite improvements in home VCRs, both the Beta and VHS formats have had difficulty in producing noise-free pictures in slow-motion modes. Both designs use two record/playback video heads located on opposite sides of a rotating head drum. The gap in one head (A) is offset a certain number of degrees in one direction; the gap in the other head (B) is offset the same amount in the opposite direction. At normal speeds, the heads record and play back alternating tracks, with the offset head gaps preventing intertrack interference. ■ But in still motion, this same technique *creates* interference. With the tape stationary, a single track is read by both heads; for example, track A is read by heads A and B. Since the B gap is offset in the opposite direction from that of the magnetic field recorded by the A head gap, an unstable signal results, creating a jittery picture. ■ Sony's solution — shown recently in Japan — has been to add a second gap to one of the heads (B). This second gap is identical in offset angle to the single gap on the opposite head (A). In still motion, only the track (B) corresponding to the two identical offsets is read, eliminating interference. For slow motion, the deck alternates between normal and still modes. as in a sequence of B,B;B,A;B,B;B,A; etc. Again, the result is said to be noise-free reproduction. The next generation of Betamax VCRs is expected to incorporate this double-azimuth system. We believe that VHS manufacturers will follow with a comparable technique.



Tape area read by ordinary head design during still motion.

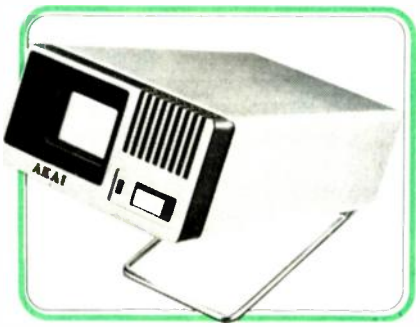
Incompatibility of head-gap slant with that of signal recorded by opposite head produces jumpy, blurred picture.



Tape area read by double azimuth head design during still motion.

Stable picture results from matching slant of head gap to that of recorded signal.

in mid-'81. Tandy is the third major retailer to commit to the RCA grooved capacitance system, following closely announcements by Sears and J. C. Penney.



A tiny remote video monitor called the RC-V10 "Peek-a-View" is available from Akai. The device incorporates a 1½-inch television screen and a remote pause button. This armchair monitor is designed to allow you to check what your VCR is recording should you be taping while watching another channel. Weighing only 2 pounds, it is also handy for in-the-field recording; it derives its power directly from Akai's VPS-7300 portable VCR. Cost is $169.95.

VHD Disc System Backers Announce Late-1981 Launch

When the VHD (Very High Density) video disc system becomes available on the U.S. market later this year, its backers plan to have sufficient hardware and software to place it in a directly competitive position with RCA's SelectaVision and the Philips/MCA laser systems. ■ Three companies — jointly owned by General Electric, Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., Ltd., of Japan, Victor Company of Japan (JVC), and Thorn EMI, Ltd., of England — have been formed to support the launch of the VHD system. VHD Programs, Inc., will handle program distribution and artistic production; VHD Disc Manufacturing Co., production of the video discs; and VHD Electronics, Inc., the manufacture of the disc players. The initial VHD disc catalog is projected to contain about 160 feature movie productions as well as about 40 special interest discs, many of which will center on music performances recorded in stereo sound.

Head-cleaning cassettes for both VHS and Beta VCRs have been added to Maxell's video accessory line. Head-cleaning is accomplished by inserting the proper cassette (T-CL10 for VHS, L-CL10 for Beta) into the VCR and depressing the play button for about 30 seconds. The cassettes cost $15.99 and $14.99, respectively, and are said to provide about 100 cleaning operations.

Want More Information?
If you'd like further information about any of the equipment or companies mentioned in the pages of VIDEO TODAY, write us at P.O. Box 550, Dept. VT, Great Barrington, Mass. 01230.

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PROJECTION TV (PART II)
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Bright Ideas on Correct Lighting

Indoor-lighting tips for your home video movies. by Tony Galluzzo

"If I only had this on video tape!"

You've probably heard this lament — most likely you've even said it yourself — for those priceless moments that are repeatable only if they have been captured on film or tape. But how do you get what you want when shooting indoors under less than ideal lighting conditions?

If you are to believe some of the prevailing video propaganda, all you do is set up a camera and recorder in average room light, press the buttons, and let 'er roll. After all, most video cameras can now record an image with a minimum of 9 footcandles; some of the very latest go lower than that, according to manufacturers' specs. So what's the problem?

Let's backtrack a bit before we all get too excited to enjoy ourselves. Yes, it is possible to obtain and record some form of image in very low light with nearly any video camera on the market, black and white or color. I have actually seen — and have been able to recognize — people I know under truly dismal lighting conditions. But was I pleased with the image? Absolutely not. The people looked as if they belonged in a lineup at the local precinct.

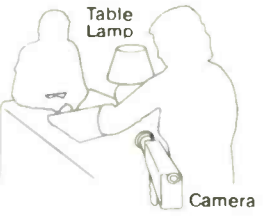
Indirect incandescent room light and overhead fluorescent illumination often produce some fascinating images, but most are dreadful. Colors are way out of balance, shadows blot out essential details, and the entire scene seems like a foggy memory of what actually happened.

Would I be willing to go out and spend a bundle on professional lighting gear to satisfy my aesthetic sense of what a good video image should look like? Not unless some hotshot producer were ready to fork over the required greenbacks. On the other hand, unless I had some control over the lighting, I wouldn't bother shooting at all. I hate to be disappointed.

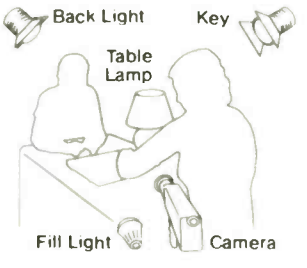
So when you're shooting a party, a conversation, maybe an interview or someone playing live music, how do you get quality without hassle? You resort to a simple two-light setup that can be manipulated to achieve an amazing assortment of lighting tricks. It centers on using the right light in the right place. And you won't even need light stands, the bane of all but the most expert cameramen. You can tape small, lightweight lights to walls, ceilings, doorways, chairs, and other surfaces with a magic substance known as gaffer tape. It holds fast, yet peels off

(continued on page A8)

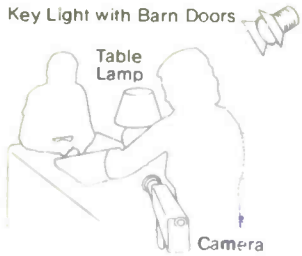
1. Table lamp light — The only source of light in this scene is the table lamp (or "practical" light), placed between two subjects. While a 75-watt bulb may be sufficient for an exposure at this close distance, the image is harsh and much detail would be lost to the video image.



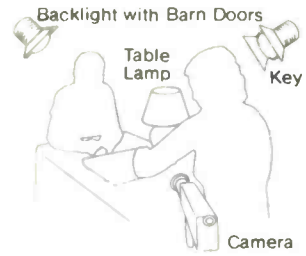
4. Table lamp, key, fill, and back light — A fill light has been placed slightly to the left of the camera position to erase all those facial shadows. But it's overdone and creates an artificial shadow of the girl and an overlit image that is unrealistic for living-room light.



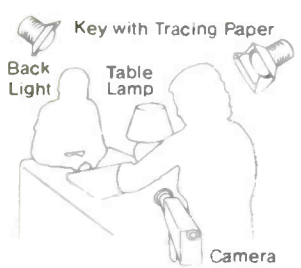
2. Table lamp and key light — A 500-watt photoflood was aimed from upper right to act as a key or main light, and a 150-watt bulb of the right color temperature (3,200°K) was placed in the table lamp. This improves things considerably, but shadows may be disturbing.



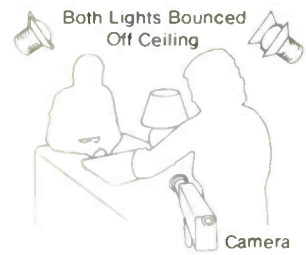
3. Table lamp, key, and back light — We've added a 250-watt photoflood with barn doors aimed from upper left to provide separation from background shadows for the girl facing us. This is fairly good dramatic lighting, but the image may still present too much contrast for video.



5. Table lamp, back light, and key light with diffusion — In this case we've clipped two layers of tracing paper to the key light to soften shadows; we've widened the barn doors of the back light to provide a bit more fill on the face and a stronger glint to the hair and shoulders.



6. Bounce light — Back and key lights have been turned upward and bounced off a white ceiling for overall, soft illumination and minimization of shadows. I prefer the richer, more dramatic lighting in No. 5, but this type of soft light is pleasant for most situations.



easily without damaging the surfaces. (In motion-picture lingo, a "gaffer" is a lighting technician.)

Most of the situations shown here were lit with only two photoflood lamps — sometimes only one — plus the table lamp (called the "practical light") that is already part of the scene being recorded. In one instance, we used three lights to show that too much light is often as undesirable as too little. Overlighting a scene not only throws an ugly shadow onto the background (in this case a white wall), but also produces an artificial quality; you know this light cannot be coming from a natural source (in this case, the table lamp.) It's simply overkill. Good lighting has its own natural quality. If there is a light fixture shown in the scene, you would obviously try to record it so that the illumination appears to be originating from that source. Shadows produced by other lights that crisscross and fall every which way are confusing and ugly. Natural shadows from the apparent source of light belong; if they seem to be too strong, there are ways of toning them down.

Beyond this short course in basic lighting, there are a few other essentials required by video. Correct exposure, of course, is much easier to achieve with video than with film. You attach the required cables for camera, recorder, and television set, turn on the lights, and adjust the image. Some video cameras contain built-in, automatic light meters that help set the correct exposure level. Others require you to adjust the level manually by turning an f-stop, or aperture, ring on the lens. (Many cameras have both.) Either way, the task is painless, since you can check your exposures immediately on the screen or on the electronic viewfinder attached to the more sophisticated models.

After you've propped up the kind of lighting that pleases you for a particular situation, you take a "reading" that is unique to video: the white balance check. The first thing you do is set the correct filter position, for indoor or outdoor lighting. This simply moves a color-correction filter into place to adjust the camera for the proper color temperature. Photographic daylight is usually rated at about 5,500°K, and indoor lighting, using photographic lights, is rated at 3,200°K. (K is for Kelvin, who invented this temperature-rating system.)

Once that is established, you set up a white card at your subject's position and turn on all the lights. Adjust your camera for the proper exposure and aim it at the card so that the card fills the frame. Now you can turn the white balance or tint control until you attain the whitest white possible with your system. If you achieve a decent white, all other colors should fall properly in line. They may not be perfect, understand, but they will be as close as the lighting and system allow. In order to give yourself a fighting chance when shooting color indoors, you should visit your local photo shop or a motion-picture or video supply house and buy lamps with the 3,200°K color temperature.

If you're serious about video photography, consider purchasing quartz-halogen bulbs, which fit into special lamp housings. Quartz lights come in all shapes, sizes, and wattages. They also maintain the proper color temperature for the life of the lamp (then there's an abrupt drop in temperature and the bulb dies out.) Traditional tungsten-filament bulbs, on the other hand, fade slowly, both in color temperature and intensity; with video, you can see the changes taking place as a "warming" of the image. You can adjust your camera for the change, but eventually the color will become intolerably red and you'll have to replace the bulbs. Tungsten-filament bulbs, used in the photofloods found in nearly any photography shop, are rated at either 3,400°K (for shooting Kodachrome movies) or 3,200°K (for video.) They have the advantage of being much less expensive and less delicate than the quartz variety and will fit into almost any screw-type fixture to augment existing room light.

The illustrations shown here, in fact, were made with 500-watt photofloods placed in Lowel Light fixtures, which can be taped up and swiveled or tilted in the desired direction. To narrow the light and control it further, I added "barn doors," black metal flaps that swivel on a hinge arrangement snapped directly onto the lamp. They're a bit expensive, but I find them essential for cutting the light or forming partial shadows to soften overly bright areas of a scene.

In order to reduce shadows on faces and walls, I used one or two layers of thick artists' tracing paper attached to the barn doors with clip clothespins or large paper clips. The paper should not touch the bulbs or be left hanging in front of lamps for more than a few minutes at a time. While I've never experienced a photoflood fire, the possibilty always exists. Spun-glass sheets, which won't catch fire, also can be used. They can usually be found in motion-picture lighting supply stores. And Lowel Light Manufacturing and other makers of lighting equipment sell frosted sheets of fire-resistant plastic, metal scrims, and filtration sheets in a variety of colors.

You can also soften shadows — and produce a lighting quality that is generally "flatter" and has less contrast than you can achieve with direct lights — by bouncing lights off white ceilings, walls, or reflector cards. For the cleanest white light possible, make sure your ceiling and wall surfaces are really white. Off-white shades such as buff and cream tend to introduce a warmer tone to the image. This is especially critical in video photography, since some of that color will be transmitted to the camera and produce undesirable multitint effects. The already difficult-to-achieve facial tones are the most critical and are most noticeably distorted by "off-the-wall" color reflections.

As you shoot more and more video, you'll notice that shadow detail is lost in shots where the lighting produces a high degree of contrast. In this regard, video cannot hold a candle — much less a photoflood — to film. The key is *contrast ratio*, or the range between the brightest and darkest areas of the image. Most films will reproduce a fairly broad contrast ratio, giving you subtle gradations of tonal details from white to black. Up until now, video has not shown itself to be capable of handling this range. Shadowy areas usually look muddy, and details in the darkest parts of the image are normally lost on the tube.

How do you circumvent this deficiency? By lessening the contrast ratio with softer lighting, as described above. While it might not be the most realistic lighting for a given situation, most people agree that it's pleasant and appealing — especially attractive when shooting close-ups. If you still want your subjects to talk to you after playback, go for the softer lighting first, then experiment with the dramatic stuff once you have them in your confidence.

Regardless of the type of lighting you use, keep track of the total drain on any one circuit. While complicated lighting and wiring set-ups call for a more involved knowledge of electricity, the general rule is to use no more than 1,500 watts on a 15-amp circuit or 2,000 watts on a 20 amp circuit. If you're unsure about the stability of your wiring, use less or get advice from an electrician. The two light setups suggested here, however, utilize wattage well within the limits of a normal household circuit.

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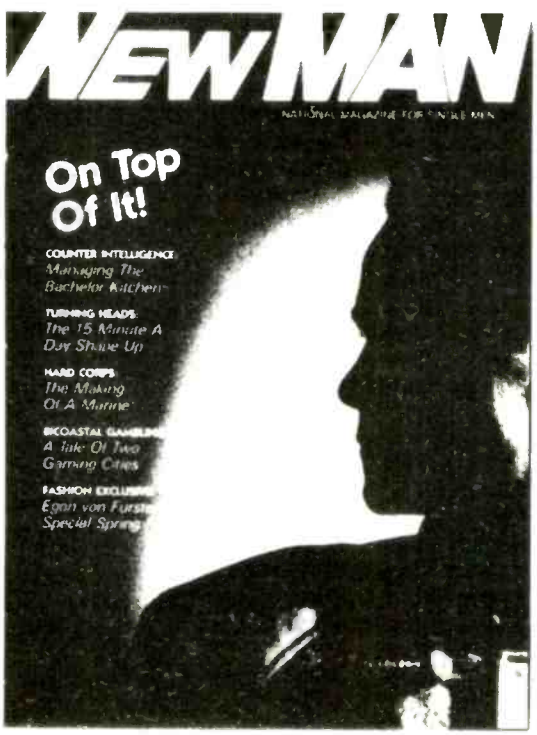

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"Video Music" Fact or Fantasy?

Why you may have difficulty buying original made-for-video programming

by Mia Amato

A lot of talk and not much action — that's the best way to describe the current state of affairs in home video music. What's limiting the availability of video music recordings for the home market? It's not the artists: Many, like David Bowie, Bruce Springsteen, and Billy Joel, are financing video tapes of their performances out of their own pockets. It's not the technology: We can now buy video disc machines that offer stereo sound and high-quality video reproduction. The best guess is that it is corporate timidity and uncertainty about whether a market really exists for such products.

For the videophile who is also an audiophile, availability of music tapes is pretty limited. Much of the material is ten or fifteen years old; e.g., "Rod Stewart and Faces" from Home Theatre/VCI, "Jimi Hendrix at Rainbow Bridge" from Video Tape Network, and "Twenty Years of Rock 'n' Roll" (with the Five Satins, the Coasters, and others) from Media Home Entertainment. And it's the small, independent companies that are most active in video music, not, surprisingly, the large conglomerates that spew out even more movie titles week after week. Though their names may not be household words, these firms are well established, well distributed, and in many ways true pioneers in the field.

Video Tape Network has the most up-to-date material. "We're a small company so we have to be a step ahead," says VTN president John Lollos. Recent musical releases are Thin Lizzy and Boomtown Rats concert tapes. Also of interest is a 1977 documentary shot in London with music by and interviews with the Sex Pistols, Eddie and the Hotrods, and others of that ilk. Called "Raw Energy," the tape is often rough but is well paced and absorbing in its survey of the early punk movement. New wave fans can also enjoy "The Cabaret," which features performances by XTC, Magazine, and the Movies intercut with black-and-white cartoons. Most of these were made and originally aired in England. Few rock-music specials are made specifically for American television, so Lollos says he has difficulty finding quality music video here.

One of the biggest problems facing video cassette distributors, according to Ron Safnick, president of Media Home Entertainment, is securing the music rights for material. Because the prerecorded video cassette is still so new, contracts with performers, songwriters, recording companies, and music publishers must be renegotiated before a program can be released, and that requires months of meetings and paperwork. To get around the problem, Safnick has recently contracted for six original half-hour programs based upon simpler licensing arrangements.

"We're calling the series 'Rock Shows,' " he says. " 'Rock Show I' and 'Rock Show II' will be available by February. The first has the Cars, J. Geils, Hall & Oates, and David Bowie. The other features Queen and the Pointer Sisters."

Home Theatre/VCI claims the largest number of music programs, covering rock, jazz, and country. Spokeswoman Dran May also says that obtaining music rights from record companies is an obstacle; company president Al Landau adds that often the fees demanded by an artist's management or record label are too high to justify putting a performance on cassette. But Home Theatre/VCI is producing its own programs now, through a subsidiary called Visual Records. The latest tape teams country stars Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard. Currently available are "Teddy Pendergrass," "Hall & Oates" (taped live, at Cleveland's Agora Ballroom), and "Yvonne Elliman."

Mia Amato is a San Francisco-based freelance writer specializing in video music.

Jazz is the exclusive concern of Improvising Artists, Inc., distributed by Inovision. Most of the company's tapes consist of live footage mixed with the abstract forms of a video synthesizer, which can alter the colors and shapes of the visual images that accompany the music. Tapes by this small company include improvisational works by Sun Ra.

A late entry into the field is All Star Video, which specializes in such nostalgia items as "The Best of Louis Armstrong," "Frank Sinatra Live in Concert," and "Duke Ellington and His Orchestra," as well as several Judy Garland tapes.

So far, none of the major video labels — Magnetic Video, WCI Home Video (Warner), or MCA Video Cassette—has shown any interest in jazz, pop, or classical music tapes. Since all are connected with movie companies, they simply find it easier and cheaper to release extant feature films than to break new ground. Those films-cum-cassettes do include such music movies as WCI's "Woodstock" and Neil Young's "Rust Never Sleeps." "Saturday Night Fever" was a big seller for Paramount last year. Magnetic Video (connected with 20th Century-Fox) goes in for such family fare as "The Sound of Music" and "The Muppet Movie." These companies see themselves primarily as distributors of video software, not producers of it, as witness the fact that WCI Home Video is handling the distribution of cassettes from Chrysalis Records and Time-Life Video.

(Left) Scenes from "Rock Justice," a made-for-video rock opera written by Marty Balin; (above) James Taylor performs in a concert program from CBS Video Enterprises; (bottom) "The 20 Years of Rock and Roll," Vols. 1 and 2, from Media Home Entertainment.

One company interested in creating musical programming on its own is Time-Life Video, according to John Peisinger, programming vice president. Its very first tape was the Kinks' "One for the Road," a collage of concert footage for rabid Ray Davies fans. Why the Kinks? Peisinger claims the group has "a broad audience appeal." He also says the project, initiated by lead singer Davies, "was relatively inexpensive compared to some of the other original programming ventures presented to the company."

Devo's collection of films, "The Men Who Make the Music," was offered for a short time by Time-Life Video's mail-order video club. It was dropped, according to Peisinger, because sales were disappointing. The firm has no plans to sell it via retail outlets.

Peisinger adds that he is talking to other recording artists about concert or conceptual programs but declines to mention their names. "We don't begin development of any product here without marketing's stamp of approval," he says. He feels that video cassette music should cater to the demographics of the VCR buyer: "people over thirty, who tend to be less interested in contemporary music."

For a while, it looked like record companies were going to produce video music, what with all the "video divisions" that they set up and boldly announced in entertainment trade papers. Not so. Chrysalis, which started the ball rolling last year by announcing the release of Blondie's "Eat to the Beat," floundered for eleven months before finally reaching an agreement with WCI to distribute the tape. In the interim, Chrysalis tried unsuccessfully to lease the program to Showtime and Home Box Office. Not so coincidentally perhaps, the very company that produced the work, John Roseman Productions, folded. The tape itself has been criticized for lip-synched performances and sloppy editing. Nevertheless, its release has encouraged Chrysalis to start production on a second Blondie tape, "Autoamerican."

EMI owns several record labels, including Capitol, but its attempt at home music video distribution has gone nowhere. EMI Videograms has two completed video works, a concert tape by the Knack and "Rock Justice," an original rock opera

(continued on next page)

penned by ex-Jefferson Starship star Marty Balin. Their release has been announced and postponed six times. Furthermore, a promotional clip for the "Rock Justice" soundtrack album, designed for television, was never aired because the company claims it "lost" the master tape. "We haven't abandoned the projects," EMI exec Dan Davis assures VIDEO TODAY. "We've put them on hold."

In November most of the staff of the Videograms division was abruptly transferred to another project. EMI currently distributes movie cassettes in England under the name Thorn-EMI Video Programmes. Its director, Don MacLean, said there are now no definite plans to release either "Rock Justice" or the Knack tape there. This may have something to do with the fact that Thorn-EMI's joint video disc project with GE and JVC to market the latter's VHD discs is now targeted to bow in the U.S. before next Christmas.

CBS Video is closely linked to CBS Records, but vice president of business and administration Mickey Hyman says not to expect original programming for quite a while. He says the costs are too high.

"The market's not big enough to sustain a full production program," Hyman explains. "We cannot afford to make the kinds of investments necessary for original video discs and video tapes. We're doing most of our production with an eye toward using it in cable or foreign television first."

Such a plan would probably mean a two-to-three-year lag between production and retail release. In the meantime, Hyman has rounded up some old programs for the CBS Video catalog. The two musical selections offered are "James Taylor in Concert" and "ELO in Concert at Wembley," both of which have appeared on cable TV. The Electric Light Orchestra program, originally produced for British TV, contains some splashy special effects and is the more visually interesting of the two. CBS Video also lists in its catalog two Bolshoi Ballet programs and "Rude Boy," a semidocumentary about the English band the Clash, which is advertised as depicting "a world of music, drugs, and casual sex."

Record-company video divisions are getting off to a slow start despite the fact that they have thousands of hours of music video tape on hand. Some is live concert performance, some lip-synched dramatization of the music for TV and/or promotional use.

"If record companies were smart, they'd compile collections of these promos for cassettes," says Cheryl Benton, a video cassette distributor who serves more than 200 video stores. "Perhaps they feel they won't make enough money."

Barry Reiss of MCA, whose video division now distributes only movies, also points the finger at record companies. Speaking at a video music conference last November, Reiss commented on "the paranoia record companies suffer about the video business." He pointed out that many recording artists are contractually unable to make a video tape without the permission of the record company that "owns them." This, he says, makes it almost impossible for an independent video producer to create a music program.

This attitude indeed keeps innovative programs out of the hands of the consumer. For example, a promotional video tape commissioned by Atlantic Records for the Rolling Stones' last album, "Emotional Rescue," has the distinction of being the first commercial use of thermographic imaging, an experimental technique that reads shapes in terms of body heat. The resulting tape has the Rolling Stones clearly visible on screen but in a wash of pulsating colors. Atlantic has no plans to release the work. "Maybe sometime in the future, when there are a lot of video discs out there, the company will consider it," says Atlantic spokesman Ben Hill. "Right now there are too many legal points involved."

The largest of these "legal points" is deciding ahead of time how to divide up the profits, if any, among the singers, songwriters, musicians, and music publishing firms.

"No record company wants to be the first," MCA's Reiss asserts. "They're all afraid they'll make a bad deal — it's paranoia again." Another worry of the record companies is that there may not *be* a profit. Most echo the sentiments of Jo Bergman, the outspoken director of TV and video for Warner Records, who has often stated that the home video audience is simply not large enough or interested enough to support such initiatives.

Will the video disc change the situation? Those in the know say video disc software will be created only by manufacturers of the hardware. Magnavox, after two years of foot-dragging, is finally moving toward national distribution of its laser-optical video disc player called Magnavision, and U.S. Pioneer is marketing LaserDisc, its own version of the Magnavox machine. And RCA is still planning to introduce its long-awaited CED player — a capacitance-reading stylus-in-groove machine — by March of this year.

Although RCA has been criticized because initially its player will not have stereo sound, its programming division says it is actively seeking music material. The first catalog, according to programming division vice president Seth Willenson, will carry "The Grateful Dead Movie," the Rolling Stones documentary "Gimme Shelter," and Blondie's "Eat to the Beat." "The original 'Eat to the Beat' video will be on the first side of our disc," explained Willenson. "Side 2 will have five different video artists doing interpretations of other Blondie material." Another spokesman for RCA confirmed that a video disc deal with Fleetwood Mac is nearing completion.

RCA put more than $160,000 into a video production of "The Planets," Todd Rundgren's interpretation of Tomita's adaptation of Gustav Holst's symphonic work. After the first side of the proposed disc was completed, RCA pulled out. Depending on whom you talk to at RCA, the project was shelved because "it was inappropriate" or because there were problems about rights to the music. Rundgren himself concedes that "The Planets" may never be finished and has taken the company to task publicly several times for its lack of vision. For its part, RCA says it doesn't plan to finance other original programming for a long, long time.

"Our strategy now is to *acquire* the best possible programming," Willenson explains. "The next step will be to develop programs with the artists and artist managements."

In the optical disc camp, the promise of the Magnavox machine is yet to be fulfilled. MCA's uninspired movies-only catalog is unlikely to change soon, and because of production problems, discs in the catalog have been only spottily available up to now. But audio reproduction on these discs, played back through decent stereo speakers, is of high quality, with good dynamic range and stereo separation. *(continued on page A16)*

Projection TV (Part I)

The Big Picture

An interview with Henry Kloss, projection television pioneer

To most of us, television is a 19- or 23-inch screen. Such a small screen, however, really is incongruous with our other viewing habits. We see our 35mm slides on a screen at least 4 feet wide, and movie theater screens are enormous. Why, then, has television remained a small-screen phenomenon? ■ After all, large-screen television, or "projection TV" as it is popularly called, has been with us for some time commercially; if you've ever seen a closed-circuit telecast of a sporting event in a theater, you've seen projection TV in action. But only recently has the concept of large screens in the home begun to catch people's imaginations. ■ One of the barriers to popular acceptance has been price — the cost of most systems has been more than $2,500; another has been picture quality, which has tended to be dim and grainy. Now prices are dropping, and the latest systems have vastly improved pictures. Next month we'll take a close look at the technologies behind the various designs and elaborate on the models you can buy. This month we offer an insightful interview with one of the acknowledged pioneers in the field of home projection TV: Henry L. Kloss. ■ Kloss is currently head of Kloss Video Corporation in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which makes the NovaBeam projection system. Though he gained greatest prominence for developing home speaker systems for KLH and Advent, his love has always been projection television. VIDEO TODAY visited him at his plant to discuss the development and future of this entertainment medium.

(continued on next page)

VIDEO TODAY: *Henry, we've had about thirty-five years of small-screen TVs. What makes you think that television viewers will accept a 6½-foot screen in their living rooms?*

Henry Kloss: Ever since we developed the ability to reproduce motion pictures, the thrust has been to show them on bigger and bigger screens for the impact and naturalness they afford. The fact that we have become used to small screens is really an accident, born out of expediency.

Back in the '40s the technology to make large tubes just didn't exist; in fact, the earliest black-and-white sets were really projection systems. Since only very small picture tubes could be manufactured, lens and mirror arrangements were devised to enlarge the image. Unfortunately, the pictures were dim and hazy, and as soon as the ability to manufacture large tubes developed, projection TV was scrapped. Color TV, however, lends itself most logically to projection; in fact, using three separate tubes to project red, green, and blue images onto a screen where they converge to form a true color image is by far more elegant and logical a technique than the conventional shadow-mask picture tube.

VT: *As an audio designer, you surprised many people when you switched your emphasis to video, especially to a product that really didn't exist before the Advent VideoBeam. Why did you do it?*

HK: I was consumed with the idea of perfecting the technique for many years. In fact, I left KLH and started Advent for the sole purpose of developing and manufacturing a projection TV system. For the first two years at Advent, I concentrated solely on research into projection systems, but I ran out of money. To finance the project, I turned again to loudspeakers.

VT: *The audio components you are credited with designing while at Advent and KLH were generally acknowledged as quality products at a reasonable price. But your NovaBeam system costs $3,000, and competing three-tube systems are even more expensive. When can we expect less expensive projection systems?*

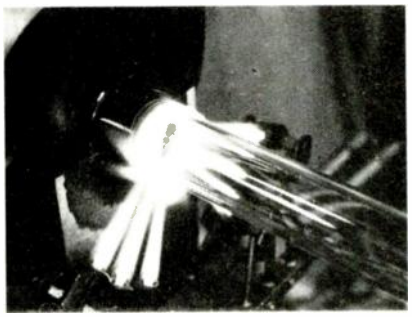
HK: The price of projection TV will never come down to conventional TV prices, but then, color sets will always be more expensive than black and white. Prices for three-tube projection systems are, however, starting to come down.

VT: *You claim that the tube you use in the NovaBeam represents a leap in quality and a dramatic reduction in manufacturing costs. How?*

HK: The Novatron tube is a catadioptric device; that is, the spherical mirror and lens necessary to project the image are integral to the tube itself. Such a tube can collect twice as much light as a tube with external mirror and lens; plus it solves the problem of maintaining close tolerances with spherical mirrors. While at Advent, I approached a tube manufacturer and asked how much such a catadioptric device would cost. When he came back with a figure of $15,000, I decided to do it myself.

VT: *In your early work on the system at Advent, did you have any idea about what manufacturing these tubes would require?*

HK: None at all. I went out and bought some books on picture tube design, learned how to flame seal a vacuum tube, and bought a small assembly line from a defunct tube factory. The technology was there all the time; I just brought together the elements in one spot.



VT: *Though several manufacturers quickly followed on your heels with big-screen systems, there really doesn't seem to be a groundswell of consumer interest. Do consumers object to two-piece systems cluttering up their living rooms?*

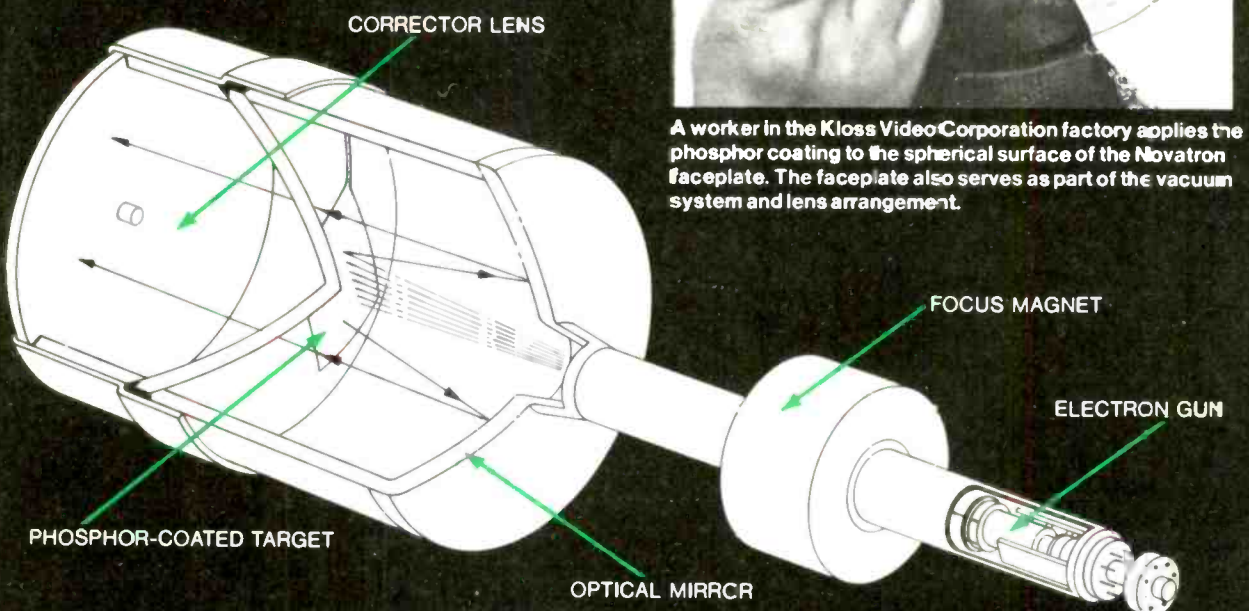
HK: Undoubtedly, systems like mine are not the most attractive to consumers. A separate projector in the middle of the room and a huge 6½-foot screen are probably drawbacks. I'm obstinate enough to continue in that direction because I think that two-piece systems are capable of the highest image quality. But the majority of big-screen sales in the future will probably be in one-piece, rear-projection systems.

VT: *What direction do you think video will take over the next few years?*

HK: Of course, projection TV will find an increasing role as the focus of entertainment-oriented programming. I also expect to see an increasing realization on the part of manufacturers and consumers that the quality of TV can and should be improved. Component TV will, I hope, be the next step. It makes great sense to sell a TV monitor with inputs for VCRs, video discs, and tuners. As a matter of fact, once the tuner section of a TV is removed from the main chassis, greater care and attention to performance can be lavished on it, making for improved broadcast reception. Of course, such a move will demand a more active role on the part of consumers — comparing specifications and making choices the way they do now with audio and camera gear. But it will be worth it.

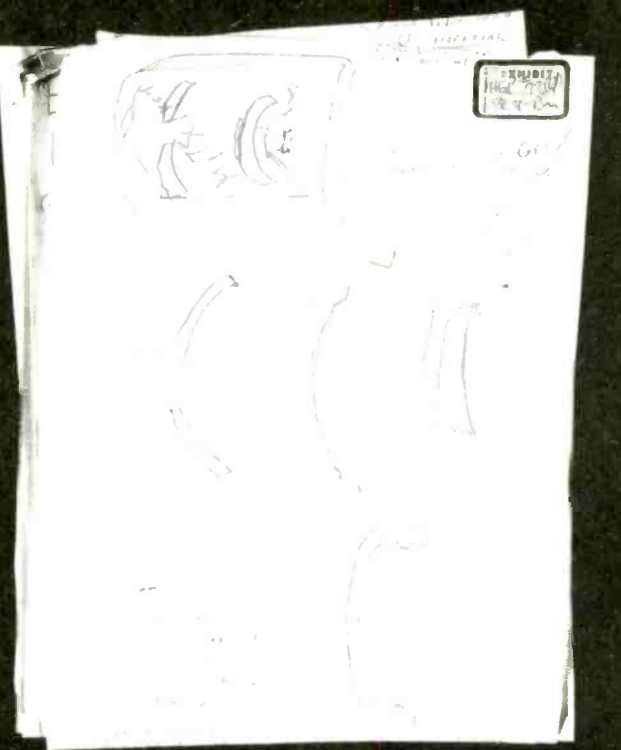
The Novatron tube, brainchild of Henry Kloss, is unique in the field of projection TV for its all-in-one design.

A worker in the Kloss Video Corporation factory applies the phosphor coating to the spherical surface of the Novatron faceplate. The faceplate also serves as part of the vacuum system and lens arrangement.



The console of the NovaBeam two-piece projection system contains the basic video chassis and tuner as well as three separate Novatron tubes.

Brought to focus on the 6½-foot (diagonal) screen, the red, green, and blue images created by the separate Novatron tubes converge to form a full-color picture.



Inventor at work: The outline of the Novatron picture tube first appeared as a sketch in Kloss's notebook (c. 1976). A catadioptric device, the tube incorporates electron gun, phosphor target, and necessary optics in one ensemble.

SIGNAL-NAPPER
(continued)

For its part, the FCC would seem to be encouraging backyard antennas — though certainly not for illegal purposes. Early last October the FCC's staff urged that the agency essentially take a hands-off approach to the development of direct satellite-to-home transmissions. The staff report suggested that the intense competition for TV viewers — given all available program sources, including cable TV, video tapes, video discs, and satellite transmissions — would eliminate the need for any regulation.

The organization that is championing the use of backyard satellites is called, appropriately enough, SPACE (Society for Private and Commercial Earth Stations). At a recent gathering of satellite enthusiasts, this Washington-based organization indicated that it is taking a moderate stand in the debate. One of the speakers at the conference, Richard L. Brown, attorney for SPACE, acknowledged the program producers' positions and stated that buyers of earth stations should pay an annual royalty fee, which would be split up among program suppliers.

So where does that leave you now, if you're considering buying a backyard antenna? The FCC recommends that you get permission from the owner of the signal. SPACE suggests that you pay program suppliers a fee. The MPAA says you shouldn't buy an antenna in the first place. It seems likely that formal agreements on when and how the growing video audience can legally use signals transmitted via satellite will be settled about the time that backyard satellite antennas are available in sufficient quantities and a low enough price to be feasible for the average person to buy. We expect this to occur about 1985, suggesting that compliance with any use or fee proposals, at least for the immediate future, will be voluntary. Whether noncompliance is evil is a matter of opinion.

— William Tynan

Letters

Astonishing and Evil

Among the more astonishing and evil — yes, evil — things I have encountered lately has been the comment in your November issue ("In Focus") on backyard satellite receiving antennas. It is evil because the magazine shamelessly advocates thievery — just plain piracy.

There can be no other interpretation, and certainly no excuse, when you recommend purchasing satellite receiving antennas to pick up pay TV for free. Just pick off the air, without compensation or authorization, programs protected by law. Is that your policy?

Our member companies negotiate to provide copyrighted movies and other material to pay TV. Entrepreneurs pay for these programs, and they expect, as our companies do, to be protected from pirates.

Jack Valenti, president
Motion Picture Association of America, Inc.
Washington, D.C.

Certainly VIDEO TODAY does not advocate piracy, as a perusal of the article in question will show. We simply pointed out the existence of the antennas and noted that the cost of the devices (several thousand dollars) is gradually coming down so that it is within the grasp of more people. For a further discussion of the matter, see this issue's "In Focus."

VIDEO TODAY welcomes letters from its readers. Correspondence should be sent to Video Today, P.O. Box 550, Dept. VT, Great Barrington, Mass. 01230.

Credits: A2, Third Wave Communications; A6, A7, Tony Galluzzo; A11, Rock Justice Courtesy Bob Haimen, James Taylor Courtesy CBS Video; A11, A13, A14, A15, Robert Curtis

"VIDEO MUSIC" *(continued)*

U.S. Pioneer plans its own line of discs that can be played on either its LaserDisc or the Magnavox machine. "We will be putting emphasis on music and original production," Berry Sherick, president of Pioneer Artists, the company's software arm, tells me. He says several musical artists have approached him with disc ideas, and a number of programs are in the works. Until the deals are signed and sealed, he won't say who they are but hints that the style will not be rock, but adult/contemporary. "Big-name middle-of-the-road performers will be our best draw," Sherick says. He adds he is also anxious to develop classical music tapes.

"Ballet and opera — that's your video audience, really," he asserts. "If I could get Luciano Pavarotti doing *Otello*, I'd be in seventh heaven."

While you are waiting for the software bust to become a boom, you might want to drop a line to the record company of your favorite artist or to the video companies, whose addresses are listed here. It will demonstrate your interest and give them some idea of what you'd like to see on your home screen. Until they are convinced that there is a market out there, home music video hasn't much chance of gathering momentum.

ALL STAR VIDEO
SUITE VSB
3483 HEMPSTEAD TURNPIKE
LEVITTOWN, N.Y. 11756

CBS VIDEO ENTERPRISES
51 WEST 52ND ST
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10019

HOME THEATRE
6464 SUNSET BOULEVARD
SUITE 540
HOLLYWOOD, CALIF. 90028

IMPROVISING ARTISTS
26 JANE ST.
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10014

MAGNETIC VIDEO
23434 INDUSTRIAL PARK COURT
FARMINGTON HILLS, MINN. 48024

MEDIA HOME ENTERTAINMENT
116 NORTH ROBERTSON BLVD.
SUITE 701
LOS ANGELES, CALIF. 90048

RCA SELECTAVISION
30 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10112

TIME-LIFE VIDEO
1271 AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10020

VIDEO TAPE NETWORK
115 EAST 62ND ST
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021

WCI HOME VIDEO (WARNER)
75 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10019

MCA VIDEO CASSETTE
445 PARK AVE.
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

the best value in hi-fi

Three V15 Type IV Technological Breakthroughs

Dynamic Stabilizer Suspended from two viscous-damped bearings, acts like a shock absorber to maintain constant cartridge-to-record distance and uniform tracking force; eliminates record groove skipping caused by warp; cushions the stylus from accidental damage.

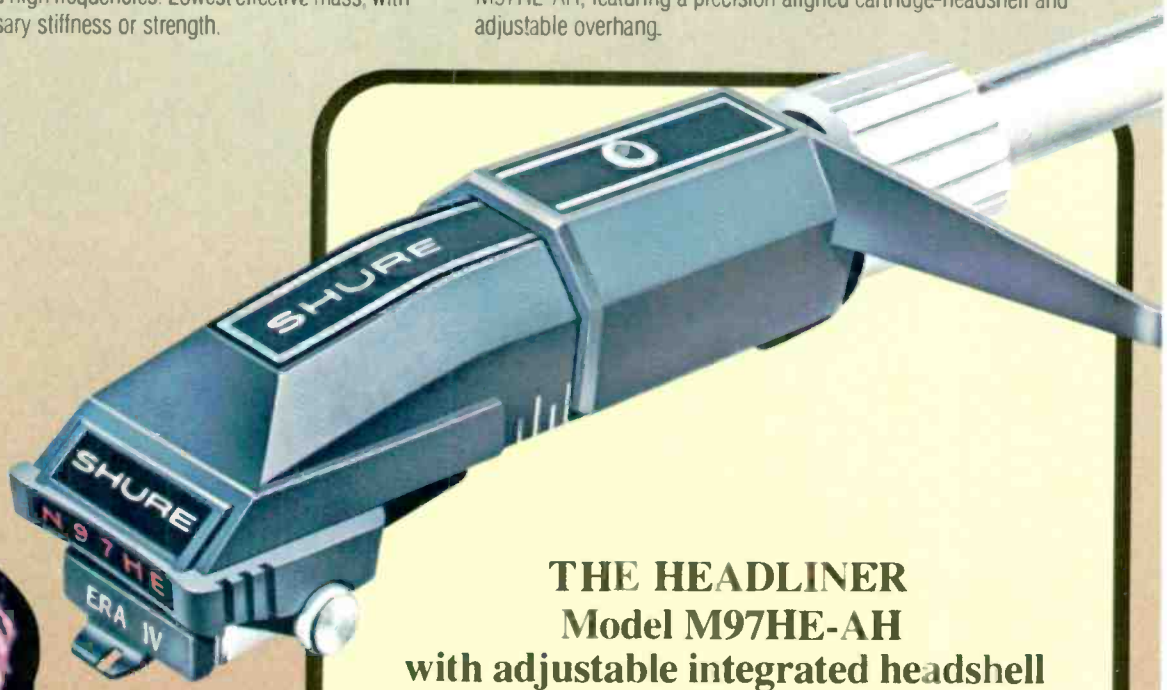
Electrostatic Neutralizer 10,000 conductive graphite fibers discharge static electricity from the record during play. Eliminates attraction of dust and tracking force variations caused by static charges.

Telescoped Shank Greatly improves trackability at the critical middle and high frequencies. Lowest effective mass, with no sacrifice of necessary stiffness or strength.

Plus a Studio Cartridge Innovation

SIDE-GUARD Stylus Deflector
A unique lateral deflection assembly developed by Shure for its professional studio cartridge—prevents the most common cause of stylus damage by withdrawing the *entire* stylus shank and tip safely into the stylus housing before it can be bent by sideways thrusts.

In 6 Models to Match Any Turntable, Any Budget All these features are incorporated into six moderately-priced cartridges—with tracking forces ranging from ¾ to 3 grams, and three different stylus configurations—including the revolutionary distortion-reducing Hyperelliptical stylus. Headlining the M97 Series is the M97HE-AH, featuring a precision aligned cartridge-headshell and adjustable overhang.



THE HEADLINER
Model M97HE-AH
with adjustable integrated headshell

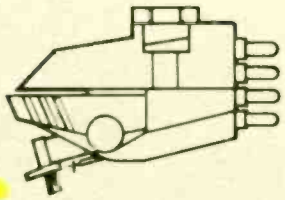
M97 SERIES phono cartridges

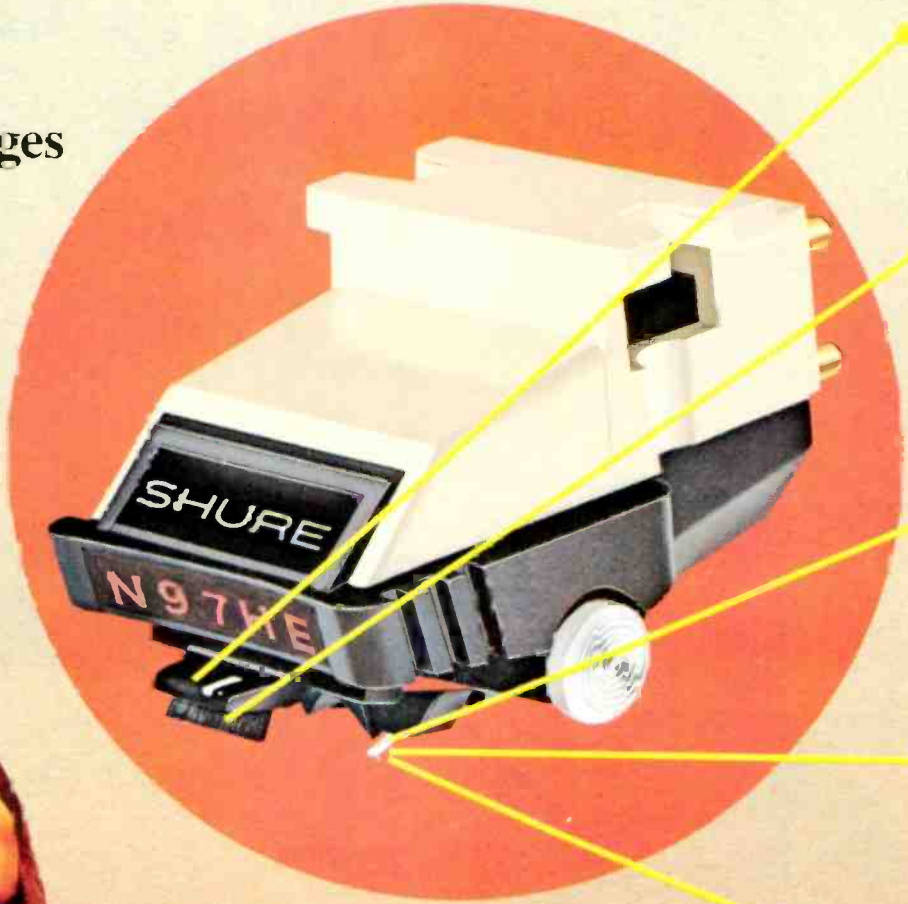
GENUINE® SHURE®

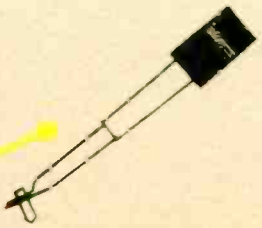
GENUINE SHURE®

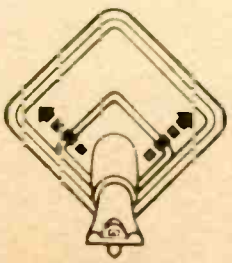
M97 Series Phono Cartridges

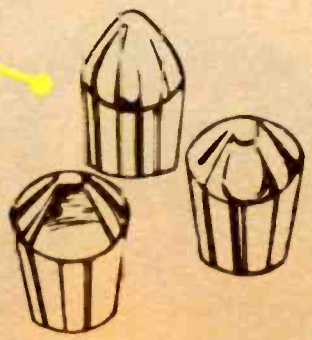
INNOVATIVE DESIGN & SUPERIOR SOUND IN A COMPLETE RANGE OF PICKUPS

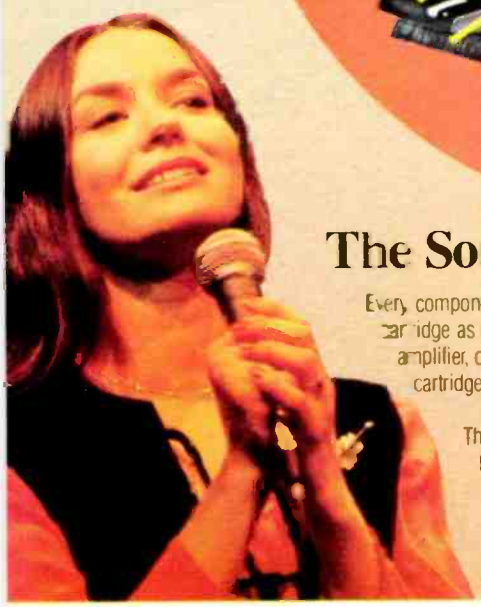








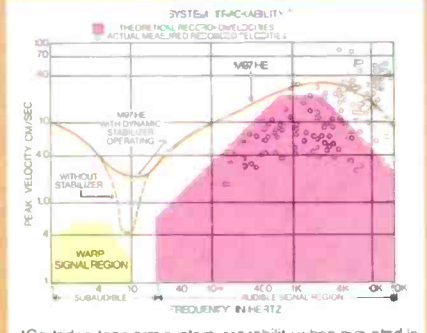




The Source of Sound

Every component in your system depends on the electrical signal generated by the phono cartridge as it tracks the record groove. No matter how much you spend on a turntable, amplifier, or speakers, your system can't provide true high fidelity sound with an inferior cartridge. What's more, a cartridge that mistracks can ruin your records!

The M97 Cartridge Series was developed by Shure in answer to the need for a broad spectrum of high-trackability cartridges for audiophiles seeking a high-performance cartridge with top-of-the-line features at a moderate price. Whether you are buying your first system or upgrading a current one, and whatever the requirements of your turntable or budget, there's an M97 model that will give you optimum performance for the money.



*Cartridge-tone arm system trackability when mounted in SME3009 tone arm at 1 gram tracking force.

Superb Trackability

Trackability is the most important characteristic of a cartridge. Simply put, trackability is the ability of a cartridge to maintain contact with the record groove at a given tracking force.

In the trackability chart, the shaded area at bottom left represents the actual warp signals found on records; the shaded area at right represents the *theoretical* limits of record cutting velocities; the scattered dots are the "hot-test" recorded velocities *actually measured* on many of today's difficult-to-track records. The solid line shows the trackability of the M97HE at 1 gram.

As you can see, the M97HE has trackability much higher than the theoretical limits, higher even than most of the measured "hot" points at only 1 gram. In addition, the M97HE trackability in the warp signal region is well above the danger area due to the effect of the Dynamic Stabilizer. Thus the cartridge is able to achieve its full potential trackability at *all* frequencies, on *every* record, warped or not.

Trackability of the M97HE-AH, M97ED, and M97GD is equal to the M97HE. The M97EJ and M97B achieve this high level of trackability at slightly higher tracking forces.

The Dynamic Stabilizer

The revolutionary Shure-designed and -engineered Dynamic Stabilizer is viscous-damped to resist sudden changes in motion, such as those caused by subaudible warp (between 5 and 15 Hz). This damping ensures that the tone arm will follow the irregularities of the record surface, even at the critical frequency of arm-cartridge resonance. The original cartridge-to-record distance is thus maintained, and vertical tracking angle and stylus tracking force remain constant —even on severely warped records! Stabilizing the distance, angle, and force ensures that the full tracking capability of the cartridge is realized at all times.

Electrostatic Neutralizer

Electrostatic charges on the record are omnipresent and unevenly distributed. As these charges attract the cartridge toward the record, they change the arm-to-record distance, the vertical tracking angle, and the stylus tracking force. The result is undesirable wow and flutter.

During play, 10,000 electrically conductive fibers in the Dynamic Stabilizer continuously sweep *just ahead of the stylus* preparing the groove about to be played. They pick up the static electricity and discharge it to ground, much like a miniature lightning rod. The record surface is electrically neutralized. The static charge is prevented from effecting arm-to-record distance or from altering the vertical tracking angle—and the tracking force is stabilized to minimize wow and flutter.

The Telescoped Stylus Shank

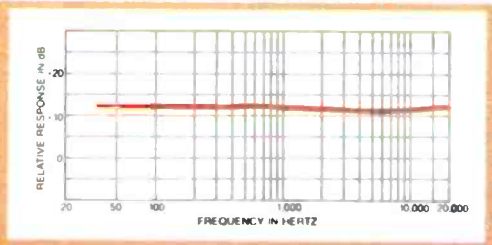
Shure's unique telescoped stylus shank, originally designed for the V15 Type V, is standard on every M97 Cartridge. This design was made possible by the most advanced computer simulation techniques—which have been widely acclaimed by technical audio critics. The telescoped stylus shank greatly improves trackability at the critical middle and high frequencies by combining significantly lower effective mass with the stiffness necessary for clear, undistorted reproduction.

Unique SIDE-GUARD Stylus Deflector

The most common cause of stylus damage occurs when the stylus is pushed sideways and bent, for example, when the cartridge is accidentally bumped against the edge of a record. To help prevent this, Shure's new M97 Series Cartridges feature a unique lateral deflection assembly, called the SIDE-GUARD which responds to side thrusts on the stylus by withdrawing the entire stylus shank and tip safely into the stylus housing before it can be bent. The arrows in the illustration at left show the direction the stylus takes when it is subjected to lateral movement.

Choice of Stylus Configurations

The M97 Series of cartridges are available with a choice of Hyperelliptical, Biradial (Elliptical), or Spherical stylus tips. There are two tracking force ranges: ¾ to 1½ grams, and 1½ to 3 grams. Plus the Headliner, Model M97HE-AH which offers the simplicity of plug-in connection. All styli are interchangeable so as your system grows, you can upgrade performance for the cost of the replacement stylus alone. The selector chart at right will help you choose the model that delivers optimum performance with your turntable and within your budget.



Ultra-Flat Response

The frequency response of the M97 Series is extremely flat throughout the entire audio spectrum. The effect is pure and uncolored re-creation of every instrument, every voice. It is a clear, neutral sound that is a delight to the musical ear. The response curve of the M97HE and M97HE-AH is shown in the chart above.

M97 SERIES CARTRIDGE SELECTOR

the HEADLINER

¾ to 1½ grams with adjustable integrated headshell

Combination cartridge-headshell. Hyperelliptical stylus for minimum distortion. Four-pin universal bayonet mount and precision overhang alignment. Instant attachment to the tone arm of most turntables.

Model HE-AH

STYLUS CONFIGURATIONS

Nude Hyperelliptical

¾ to 1½ grams

Hyperelliptical nude diamond tip configuration is better suited to reproduction of the stereo-cut groove than any other tip configuration. Reduces intermodulation and harmonic distortion by as much as 25% over conventional Elliptical or long contact tips.

Model HE

Nude Hyperelliptical

¾ to 1½ grams

Nude Biradial (Elliptical) tip configuration reduces distortion (when compared to a Spherical stylus). Nude mounting reduces stylus tip mass for high trackability at an ultra-light tracking force.

Model ED

Nude Biradial (Elliptical), .0002 in. x .0007 in.

¾ to 1½ grams

Nude mounted Spherical tip configuration for the audiophile who requires ultra-light tracking forces at a lower cost.

Model GD

Nude Spherical, .0006 in.

1½ to 3 grams

A superb cartridge with Biradial (Elliptical) tip, offering high trackability and high fidelity at a slightly heavier tracking force. An excellent choice for an older turntable, or one that requires heavier tracking forces for proper operation.

Model EJ

Biradial (Elliptical), .0004 in. x .0007 in.

1½ to 3 grams

Spherical tip, an excellent value, offering high trackability at a very affordable price. A good "first" M97 cartridge to buy now and which you can upgrade later.

Model B

Spherical, .0006 in.

---

78 rpm Stylus also Available

N978E Biradial (Elliptical) Stylus. (.0005 in. x .0025 in.) For playing 78 rpm records at 1½ to 3 grams with any M97 Series Cartridge.

Shure supplies a replacement stylus (needle) for virtually every cartridge we've ever made

. . . a sound investment in record care & listening pleasure

No matter which Shure cartridge you own, from today's V15 Type IV all the way back to the M3D, the first true high fidelity stereo cartridge, you can get a Genuine Shure replacement stylus that can bring it right back up to its original performance specifications. Upgrade styli are available to fit some Shure cartridges for performance *beyond* original specifications.

Even as the performance of the rest of your high fidelity system can be no better than the performance of the cartridge, the performance of a fine Shure cartridge can be no better than its stylus. Cartridges don't wear out—styli do. A worn or damaged stylus can cause irreparable damage to your valuable, possibly irreplaceable record collection. Don't take the chance! Have your stylus professionally inspected *at least* once a year, and replace it if necessary with a Genuine Shure replacement stylus.

Don't be fooled by cheap imitations. Sophisticated equipment designed by Shure assures uniformity and unwavering adherence to specifications. Insist on the name SHURE on the stylus grip.

GENUINE® SHURE®

Shure Brothers Inc., 222 Hartrey Ave., Evanston, IL 60204. In Canada: A. C. Simmonds & Sons Limited.
Manufacturers of high fidelity components, microphones, sound systems and related circuitry.

First-Ever Off-the-Shelf Cassette Deck Tests

How to make sure you're getting the specs you paid for.

Story by Robert Long; documentation by Edward J. Foster

John Kleman (left) and Ben Strong of Sound Odyssey, a dealership in Wappingers Falls, New York, instigated this story with their complaints of inconsistencies in cassette deck quality control.

It was more than a year ago that I first met Ben Strong and John Kleman at a Poughkeepsie Audio Society meeting. Ben, in particular, kept asking questions about the equipment used for our test reports. What made us think that our samples represented the performance level our readers would get if they bought the same models? Didn't we think that they had been hand-tweaked—or, at least, hand-selected—to meet their specs? Isn't it misleading to talk of sample performance as though it were model performance?

Admittedly, one or two samples don't represent a cross-section of production on any given model, and we run a disclaimer to that extent in every issue. And we know that some samples are specially tested (if not tweaked) before they are sent to us; if there's not a sheaf of test results packed with the component, the packing slip may bear some notation like, "Be sure Jack in the service department sees this before it is shipped." Even when there's no indication of special treatment for our samples, the opportunity obviously is there. But as I told Ben, our experience indicates that, more often than not, the tweaker ends up his own victim.

The most obvious example I can think of involves tweaking the tape, so to speak, rather than the deck. Let's say there's a new formulation with a higher coercivity than the one for which the deck is set up. A company executive may tell us to use it because he knows that our record/play response measurement will extend 1 kHz or so higher than it would with the older formulation. What he doesn't allow for is the fact that the new "hotter" tape will find the deck somewhat underbiased for its purposes and consequently introduce a peak of several dB just below the top cutoff frequency. When we hear the acid brasses, the clangorous triangles, and the emphasized FM hiss that result, we're likely to recommend in our review that you don't go for quite so hot a tape. The relationship between formulation and bias setting really does have very audible consequences that often are quite different from what you might predict from a simplistic single-number approach.

Much the same is true of azimuth—defined as the functional perpendicularity of the head gap to the tape path. In theory, it's quite simple: Set the playback azimuth to a standard (generally it's a question of maximum high-frequency output from a test tape) and adjust recording azimuth until you get maximum high-frequency output in playback with the tapes you record. A number of problems cloud the issue, however. If the tape skews (rides crooked) as it passes the heads, its effective azimuth is changed, confusing or compromising any attempt to adjust the deck with that tape—and all tapes skew

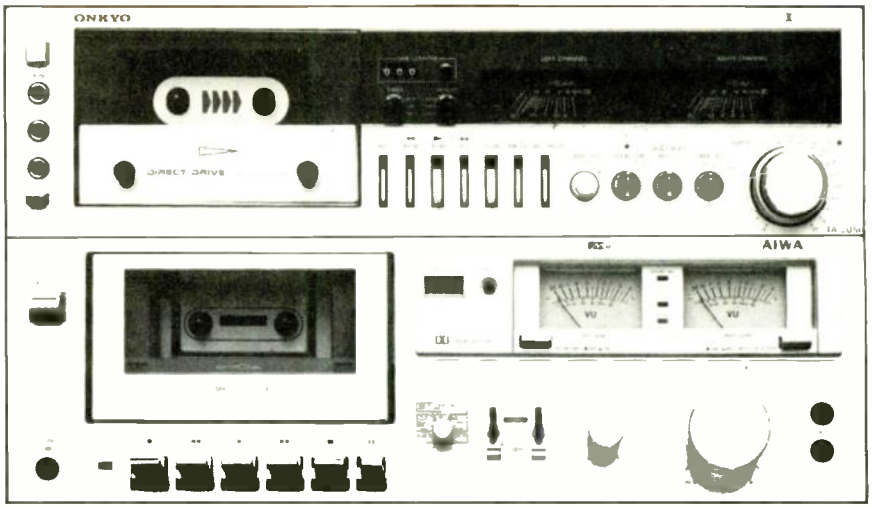
to some extent, however slightly. And the azimuth of test tapes, even expensive ones from respectable companies, isn't consistent, particularly from brand to brand. Which "standard" is correct? It's a subject that needs more attention.

So azimuth checkout on the production line is not as straightforward as you might at first assume. Nor is bias checkout. Some years back, for example, it was not uncommon to check bias current by measuring the voltage at the output of the bias oscillator; Ohm's Law dictates that, if the voltage is right, the current (which actually does the bias job by inducing an AC magnetic field in the recording head) will be too—as long as the impedance remains constant. But production tape heads of identical design don't necessarily have the same impedance. So actual bias current could be all over the place until manufacturers recognized the problem and adopted checkout means to prevent it. And it was my strong impression that such problems had been solved.

As it turned out, Messrs. Strong and Kleman are colleagues in a dealership called Sound Odyssey in Wappingers Falls (just downriver from Poughkeepsie) and therefore had some practical experience with a wide variety of decks. They both insisted that they regularly encounter a great deal of variation between one sample and another in most of the brands they sell, with some samples incapable of meeting their specs straight out of the box.

"Azimuth and bias adjustments just aren't made as carefully as they could be on the production line," Ben told me, "and when your reader sees a test report, the chances of his buying a sample that will perform as well as your tests indicate it should are very poor." He explained that at Sound Odyssey they won't let customers simply walk out with unopened cartons; every deck they sell is checked on the bench and readjusted as necessary.

By this time I was all ears. Long-term readers may be aware that I've been sounding off on the bias problem for years, though for a slightly different reason. My question: How can a deck manufacturer write specs based on the presumed use of a specific tape formulation for which the deck has been adjusted and then keep mum about what tape it is? The answer is that, without information about the tape, the purchaser must pick his favorite brand and either take his chances on getting the performance he paid for or spend some extra bucks to have a service technician readjust the deck for the chosen tape. Sound Odyssey, it seemed, was including that readjustment in the purchase price.



Facing page: top, Nakamichi Model 582 with Nakamichi SX tape; bottom, Kenwood Model KX-1030 with TDK SA tape. Above: top, Onkyo Model TA-2050 with Maxell UDXL-II tape; bottom, Aiwa Model AD-M250U with TDK SA tape.

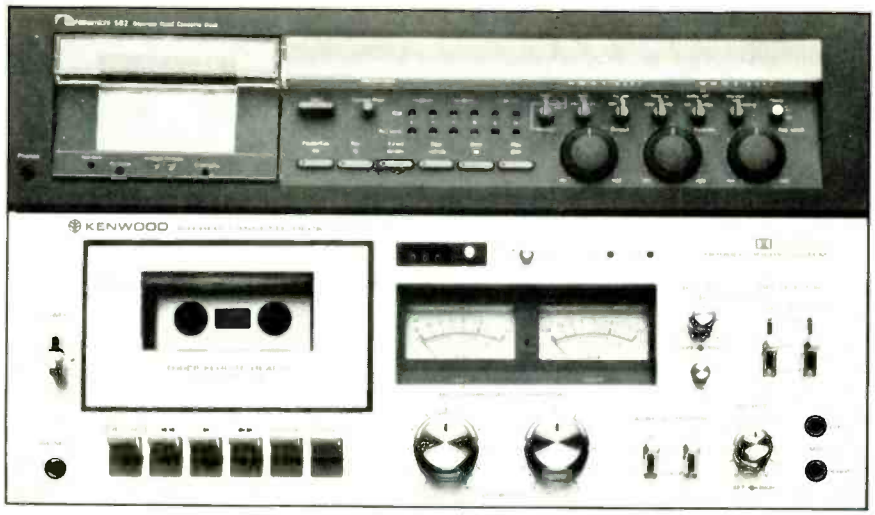
As Ben recounted anecdotes about this model and that brand, designed to illustrate just how inconsistent factory practice can be, I found it difficult to believe that the problem was quite as severe as he said. Obviously, he was proud of the service Sound Odyssey offered its customers; maybe he was hoping for a little publicity. But he didn't come on like a salesman pursuing his own commercial interest. There was an undeniable altruism in the passion with which he addressed his topic.

Then he threw down the gauntlet: We could measure samples from unopened cartons in the Sound Odyssey stockroom, just as they came from their respective manufacturers, so that we could see for ourselves. It was an offer I couldn't refuse.

Ed Foster—who would be making our measurements at Diversified Science Laboratories—eventually joined John and me in the Sound Odyssey store so that we could pick models and work out the logistics for testing them. We wanted a variety of brands and of price points, but we had to pick models of which multiple samples were in stock so that comparisons could be made. And we had to keep the numbers within reason to avoid overburdening the stockroom, DSL's patience, and the pages on which we tried to report our presumably earth-shaking findings. Three samples each of four different models, chosen with a preference for ones we had already tested (from manufacturer samples) in HF, seemed about right.

John and Ben both appeared convinced that, in their experience, no brand is better checked out than Nakamichi, so we quickly decided on the Model 582—which we had tested for our August 1979 issue—as a sort of "control" against which, to some extent, the others would be measured. And since it's up near the $1,000 bracket, we decided to make it the top of our price span. We had tested the Kenwood KX-1030 (in the $500 bracket) in May of 1978, so we chose it as the next step down in our price spectrum. There we ran out of HF-tested decks of which Sound Odyssey had at least three samples. But the Onkyo TA-2050, selling in the $350 bracket, appeared similar to the more expensive TA-2080, which we reviewed in the April 1980 issue; since Onkyo has not been in the deck business long, we presumed that design would be largely the same for the same functions—though the Accubias adjustment feature, for example, is manual in the 2050, automatic in the 2080. And, finally, we lit on the Aiwa AD-M250U, which sells in the $250 bracket, as our low-end model.

Ed's basic approach was the same as that for our test reports, though since we needed to look only at those parameters that would be affected by the manufacturer's care in checking out the deck, we didn't need the full test series. We decided to measure playback response with our standard TDK test tape (which would show up any inconsistencies in playback azimuth setting more clearly than any other test), record/play



Three samples of each of the models pictured here were taken off the shelves of Sound Odyssey and tested by Ed Foster of Diversified Science Labs. The tests were run with the deck manufacturers' recommended Type 2 tapes.

response both with and without Dolby noise reduction and using the Type 2 ("chrome") tape recommended by the manufacturer (obviously, a check of bias setting and, with the Dolby switch on, of tape-sensitivity adjustment), wow and flutter and speed accuracy (checks on mechanical consistency), recorded level for 3% third harmonic distortion at 333 Hz and the third harmonic distortion reading on a 5-kHz tone at -10 dB (both of which would be influenced by the bias setting), and noise measurements with and without the Dolby circuit (as a quick cross-check on general record/play quality).

One of our thou-shalts of test reporting is that we approach the product the way the manual tells us to—just as a purchaser would if he's got his head on straight. The Nakamichi and Kenwood manuals tell you to tweak the user-accessible bias adjustments (and, on the Nakamichi, recording-head azimuth) before you record anything; Onkyo says you can use the table in its manual to set the Accubias for any of various tape brands that it recommends for the deck; only the Aiwa offers no user bias control for Type 2 tapes. (Its ferric setting only is adjustable.) Perhaps we should have stopped at this point and asked ourselves what we were doing checking factory bias and azimuth adjustments on decks that offered user adjustments in these respects. Of course even the Nakamichi has no user adjustment of playback azimuth, so the validity of our playback test remained. But what about bias?

Well, consider the fact that none of us—John, Ben, Ed, or I—raised the question at the time. Some sort of bias adjustment, manual or automatic, is commonplace at the upper price points; any deck without it would be, to that extent, atypical and therefore of questionable value in documenting what you can expect to find when you buy. More important, however, is the reason the minority of manufacturers omit the control from their premium decks: Bias adjustment, they contend, means nothing; optimum performance lies in a calculated tradeoff among it, recording EQ, distortion, and frequency response. To play off bias against relatively flat de facto playback response and ignore the remaining factors is not, in their opinion, the route to best possible performance. Thus, even when the bias is user-adjustable, factory misadjustment of such related matters as recording EQ can compromise overall performance, and the resulting variations in headroom (as documented by our distortion tests and in a high-level record/play frequency sweep, which we regularly make but don't regularly publish) should show that this is happening.

But perhaps I'm getting ahead of my story. Before we get any deeper into significances, I should go over Ed's results model by model—beginning at the top of our price spectrum, where we would expect the greatest sample-to-sample consistency and, therefore, best confirmation of the measurements published in our test report.

The Nakamichi's playback response curves do, indeed, match squarely—within a fraction of a dB in either channel to the very top, where the spread still is less than ± 1½ dB, whether we're comparing the three off-the-shelf samples with each other or with our published report. Record/play response curves are equally good, staying within about ± 1½ dB all the way from 20 Hz to 20 kHz. But in the high-level curves (made at DIN 0 dB instead of our standard -20), the original test sample shows more compression than those borrowed from Sound Odyssey. The difference is not much (a couple dB less output from the original sample in the 10-kHz range), but the store samples definitely measure better. And the average of the current samples proved marginally better than the original in flutter, distortion, and noise. Only in speed accuracy, which slipped from a superb 0.1% fast to a merely good average of 0.7% fast, was there anything that might be regarded as a deterioration.

The Kenwood playback curves are all well within ± 1 dB of each other on the current samples—a far more consistent result than I had dreamed likely at the outset of the tests. The relationship of these curves to those published in our test report is hard to assess because the latter were made with a Philips test tape that we no longer use, but there seems to be good correspondence between the two sets of data. The record/play curves also matched extremely well in comparing the three current samples, but the test-report sample consistently managed about 2 kHz more response at the top end and a comparable extra extension in the bass. From the appearance of the curves in the contour-effect region, I'd guess that Kenwood has made some change in head design. But while I wouldn't expect these differences to be audible with the large majority of musical signals, an improvement of more than 6 dB in noise figures should be. Still, CBS weighting was used in measuring the test sample, A-weighting for the current stock; generally they give similar results, but it's no longer possible to prove that they would have in this particular case and that the improvement therefore really is more than 6 dB. Other data are similar, though the test-report sample consistently measured a hair better than the later production.

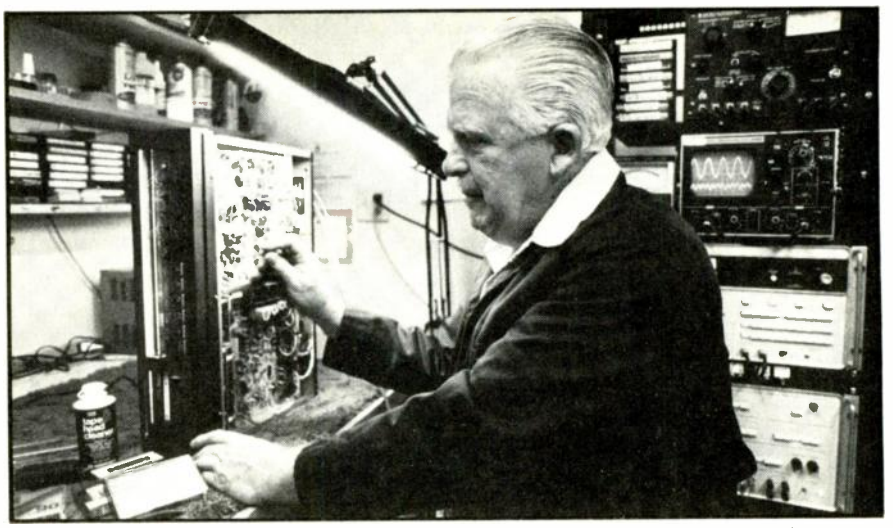
Ed's playback measurements on the Onkyo TA-2050s also were extremely consistent and a good match for those from our report on the TA-2080; the latter did have a slight high-end droop instead of the broad but gentle

rise that showed up in the 2050s. But with the Accubias set at "0" (the preset "normal," supposedly adjusted for the Maxell UDXL-II tape Ed was using), the high end of the record/play curves showed unmistakable signs of overbias droop. When he tuned the Accubias on each sample, which resulted in a different setting for each, the results flattened out beautifully—not only extending response, but improving intersample similarity. Comparison with the 2080 would seem unfair because differences in the bass end (the 2050s actually proved smoother and flatter), plus the monitoring capability that is included in the 2080 but not the 2050, indicate that the head design is quite different. Still, the top end of the adjusted 2050 curves are very close to the 2080's. Flutter, speed accuracy, distortion, and noise all were quite consistent in the 2050s, and all but speed accuracy (which remained unchanged) were measurably better than we had found in the more expensive model. Most dramatic in this respect was midrange headroom: The average 2050 reading was almost 2 dB better than that for the 2080.

But these specifics should not obscure the essential message: that until Ed had tweaked the three samples—a technique not available to the average owner since there is no built-in oscillator or "tuning" procedure like those of the 2080—the 2050s not only fell short of the response spec as we read it (so did all the Kenwood samples), but were inconsistent and generally no better than so-so.

With the Aiwa, of course, we have reached a price category where some relaxation of technical standards is called for. Careful quality control takes time; time costs money; a $250 price on a relatively full-feature deck has little "fat" in it to pay for that cost. Still, I've known Aiwa products that offered astonishing value at modest prices, so perhaps I should have been prepared for the excellent results with the AD-M250U. The spread on the playback and record/play response curves was almost as little as in those for the Nakamichi. And much the same can be said for the other measurements, though 5-kHz distortion proved a little sloppier in the Aiwa samples. (Performance itself is not really on a par with that of the Nakamichi, of course, but it's better than you have any clear-cut right to expect at $250.)

Well, where does that leave us? In these twelve samples we've found astonishingly little intersample inconsistency for any given model except the Onkyo—less difference between samples, in fact, than we sometimes find between channels of a single test-report sample. (Manufacturers' specs are another matter, of course.) We've found generally good confirmation that purchasable samples measure up to the expectations generated by those provided for our test reports. We've also found what we should have expected: As the kinks get shaken out of the production line, performance may improve, in some respects.



Ernest Rueger, technician at Sound Odyssey, tweaks the bias on a Nakamichi 582 to suit the tape preference of the customer. He will perform the service on any deck.

But what I've just said relates only to the twelve samples that Ed measured. Perhaps if someone had reached to the right instead of to the left in the Sound Odyssey stockroom, it would have altered our results dramatically. And what about other models, to say nothing of other brands? Twelve samples certainly is not a definitive cross-section.

I was considering these thoughts as I went to the editorial meeting in which we were to discuss this issue. Under my arm was a loose-leaf binder into which Ed had crammed all his test data and notes on how they were arrived at. What did they really mean? I laid the book on the meeting-room table and explained that, if anyone had hoped this would be an exposé (a secret desire always lurking in the corners of editorial offices), he had better give up forthwith.

"But that must mean," somebody interjected, "that when you have data on a given model, you can buy it with confidence." I explained about manufacturers' specs—how their meaning varies widely from one company to another—and pointed out that we had taken only a tiny sampling from only four of the many companies offering cassette decks, concluding that such across-the-board confidence certainly would not have been justified by our results even if one model had not benefitted so significantly from Ed's custom adjustment.

"Then you're agreeing with the people at Sound Odyssey that all decks should be checked out by a competent dealer before they're taken home," said somebody else. As a matter of fact, I do agree with that proposition for the best of all possible worlds (meaning, among other things, that you have the most liberal of all possible budgets when you go shopping). But I don't agree with the original premise: that what you buy generally will be markedly poorer than a test report would lead you to expect. Although you have to be taking some chance with an off-the-shelf deck, the stakes are not nearly as high as I feared when the subject first came up.

"Well, what would you recommend to our readers?" That they look for a dealer with his own service department (always a good idea) and arrange for a checkout before they buy. And, since overhead on such departments is high, they should expect to spend extra on the service, whether by paying a service fee or simply by passing up a bare-bones discounter who can't provide the service. Think of it as insurance that prevents your ruining any otherwise treasurable recordings with a misadjusted deck.

"In fact," I suggested finally, "why don't I tell the whole story just as it happened and let readers make up their own minds what the facts are?" And that's what I ended up doing. **HF**

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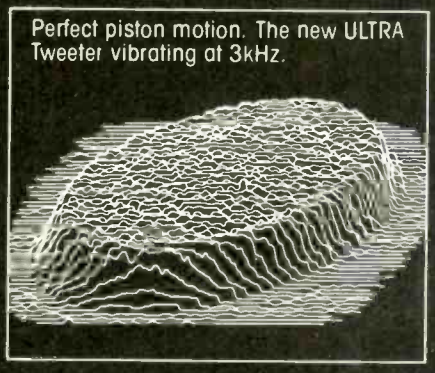

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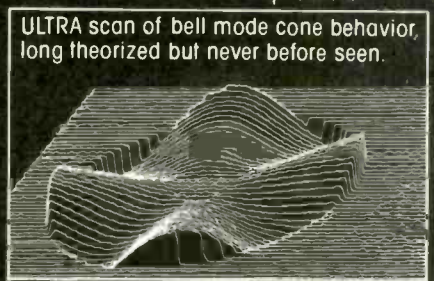
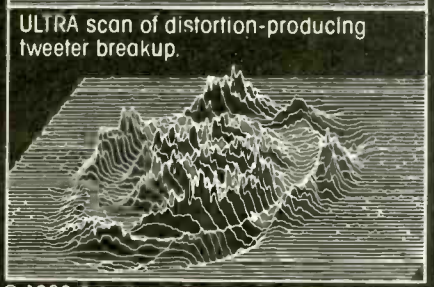


ULTRA scan of bell mode cone behavior, long theorized but never before seen.



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Counterfeit Cassettes: The Kowloon Connection

Our roving reporter tracks the tape ripoff to its source

by Robert Angus

You'll find them on The Strand in London, in the big department stores in Frankfurt, in flea markets, and in side-street audio and camera emporia across America. They're counterfeit and near-counterfeit audio cassettes, a growing plague for both audiophiles and manufacturers because, although they look like premium-priced tapes from Sony, TDK, Maxell, Memorex, Certron, and others, they don't perform like them.

The first look-alikes appeared in the U.S. about five years ago. The packages and labels were dead ringers for those of name-brand tapes, but the brands (always written in the same style or typeface as those they copied) were altered slightly: Sonny, KDK, Maxwell, Memex, and so on. Prices were low—often less than half that charged for the real thing—and with good reason. The tape inside was strictly bargain-basement, badly coated with inferior oxides, and the shells and moving parts were so inferior that many tapes jammed after only a few passes through a recorder.

The major manufacturers, alarmed by the large number of returns and customer complaints, fought to have Customs agents seize the cassettes at ports of entry. Civil and criminal actions were brought against dealers who sold the stuff, distributors who handled it, and the importers who brought it to the U.S. in the first place. Unfortunately, not all the sources could be traced, and some manufacturers' cases were hampered when they discovered that they'd never properly registered their package de-

signs with the government.

Outright counterfeits began showing up about two years ago. They are the same inferior product as before but actually carry the names of the quality brands they imitate. You have to have a pretty good eye for printing quality to distinguish the difference between these copies and the real thing.

"It's a real problem," a TDK executive admitted. "Every time we have discovered this product coming into the U.S., we have taken steps to stop it. The problem is finding the source."

Oddly enough, I found at least one source of the counterfeit product during a recent trip to Hong Kong. I didn't have to snoop around the waterfront or pay handsome bribes to underworld contacts. A friend offered to introduce me to a tape counterfeiter and even suggested I take my camera along. In Hong Kong, where Mammon is king, it seems that even counterfeiters are proud of their operations.

There were no blindfolds, no dark alleys, no secret passwords. Instead, I pulled up to one of Kowloon's many aging industrial buildings and made my way up the freight elevator to be greeted by a rotund, smiling businessman. He hastened to explain that he got into the cassette tape business almost by accident. "When Chiang Kai-shek moved out of China in 1949, I was a journalist in Shanghai," he said. "I had just missed military service in the war and had been lucky enough to receive musical training. I wanted to be a concert violinist."

Instead he fled to Hong Kong, where he went to work in a factory that made plastic toys. He continued, "I learned everything there was to know about injection molding machines. Then, because my English was good, I got involved in sales, meeting customers from overseas. One thing led to another, and I eventually started my own company.

"Early in the '70s, when the toy business slowed down, we converted one of our molding machines to produce cassette shells to take up the slack. I bought tape from Japan and set up an assembly line. Gradually, as demand from overseas increased, we added to the cassette side of the business, converting machines and employees from the toy side. I still make some accessory items like cassette racks and carrying cases, but the rest of the business is making cassettes for customers all over the world."

The 150 people employed in the factory are not enough to keep up with the demand for cheap cassettes.

The factory occupies two floors and is an OSHA inspector's nightmare. A teenager heat-seals cassette boxes at a bench, and just overhead are hundreds of pounds of flattened cartons supported by a wooden shelf with shaky brackets. Because space is at a premium, materials and finished products are stored everywhere. Through this morass of incoming parts, outgoing products, shipping cartons, raw and packing materials, snake power cords for the tools that make the factory run. Upstairs, five injection molding machines do their thing surrounded by cartons of styrene pellets and additional packing materials that inhibit the free movement of workers.

The clerical department, comprising half a dozen typists, a bookkeeper, and a stenographer, is only slightly less cramped than the main plant floor. Magazines, files, and reference books lie everywhere, spilling out of a bookshelf on one wall onto desktops and the floor. Even the owner's once-spacious private office is not immune to the clutter. Cheek by jowl with some beautiful books on Chinese art are business directories, phone books, trade journals from a dozen countries, and hundreds of samples of his own and his competitors' handiwork.

Some 150 people are employed in the factory, but they're not enough to keep up with the demand for cheap cassettes from the U.S., the Middle East, Europe, and Latin America. So the counterfeiter has worked out an arrangement with his brother, who still lives in Shanghai, to operate an assembly plant on the mainland using parts produced in Hong Kong. "The government in Beijing knows what we're doing, and we have its blessing," he explained. "The only requirement is that I must buy back everything my brother produces. We are not permitted to sell any of it in the People's Republic."

He boasted that he can produce practically any grade of cassette: "If I'm pressed, I can produce one for as low as 8¼ cents, although I wouldn't want to use it myself." For that, an importer would get a C-60 assembled in the People's Republic with a shell made from Hong Kong molds on an injection molding machine made in Hong Kong (both significantly cheaper than better-quality molds and molders from Japan or Germany). The shell has five screws and a spring pressure pad assembly, but the tape pack may consist of ends spliced from as many as five pancakes (first-quality tape has no splices, except where it's attached to the leader at the ends), reject tape purchased in bulk from Japan or the U.S., or outside cuts from the webs of large industrial coaters. The label may be blank, or it may carry a name you've never heard of.

On the other hand, the same plant can produce a cassette you won't be able to tell from premium-priced products selling from $4.00 to $9.00. Its shells are almost twice the weight and thickness of the cheapie and are formed in German or British molds that the counterfeiter said are exact copies of those used by TDK or Maxell. The chrome or chrome-substitute ferric tape inside may very well come from one of the big-name factories. Its total manufacturing cost: about 18 cents. "I'll give you as good a cassette as you're willing to pay for," he said cheerfully. "I'll put whatever tape inside it you choose—but you'll have to pay the price."

He'll also put the label of your choice on the outside, and that can cost you money too. When you're buying thousands of pieces, you can have your own name on the label at no extra charge. A look-alike label adds a fraction of a cent to the price, and an outright copy as much as a whole cent to each cassette. He noted that, thanks to the heat Hong Kong authorities are feeling from legitimate tape companies, the printers who supply the labels and insert cards for the boxes are charging more for running the risk of being caught with the counterfeits on their premises.

Between the extremes lies a wide range of cassettes, including some with very familiar packaging. Like most of his competitors, he takes the position that the customer is always right. If a shady wholesaler from Cleveland or Los Angeles wants a famous name on the box, he will provide it.

He wouldn't say what percentage of his business is counterfeits and look-

alikes but admitted that it's a profitable part. "We used to be able to put any kind of cassette into one of those packages," he said. "Now, with the authorities looking on, we and the people we sell to want a better quality cassette, one that looks like the name brands." That means screw assembly instead of sonic weld and a gray high-impact styrene shell instead of the lightweight translucent variety common only a year or two ago. It may also mean better hubs and locks, pressure pad assemblies, and tape.

"There are fashions in this business, as in any other," the Hong Kong counterfeiter continued. "In America, you equate a black shell with quality. In other parts of the world, it's a gray or ivory shell that buyers look for, while we make transparent shells for cassettes to be sold in Japan. Interestingly enough, we do short-length cassettes for sale to some of the same companies that say we are counterfeiting their products." The chances are, he pointed out, that when you buy a medium-priced cassette recorder or radiocorder, the demonstration tape that comes with it may be one of his products or that of a competitor.

"I try to keep abreast of what's going on in the industry, not only here, but also in Europe, North America, and Japan," he said. "I subscribe to most of the leading trade journals, and I read them. I think it gives me an edge on my competition."

As we talked, an employee came in carrying two obviously warped cassette shell halves. "They're from one of our old machines upstairs," he explained. "If I put them together so that the warps pull away from each other, the shell should be all right for sale in the Middle East. The two warps counteract each other, and the cassette should work just fine." He sends the worker back to produce more warped shells.

What's next in tape counterfeiting? He doesn't see anything that would make him stop what he's doing, nor does he see anything wrong in it. "I merely give my customers what they ask for," he said. And what they're asking for now are video cassettes.

Unlike Ampex, BASF, Memorex, and 3M, which spent months developing tape and shells that would pass Sony's and Matsushita's rigid requirements so they could obtain licenses to manufacture Beta and VHS cassettes, the counterfeiter is already producing both types of video cassettes without the bother of licenses. "I don't need one," he told me. "My molds were made originally for TDK and Sony. You can't get any better than that."

In fact, his video cassette shells are, part for part, direct copies of the Sony Beta and TDK VHS shells. Even an

How to Spot the Phonies

It's possible to protect yourself against counterfeit cassettes by taking a few basic precautions. Henry Brief, executive secretary of the International Tape Association, offers the following tips.

1. Check the price. If it's significantly lower than you're used to paying, look out. Legitimate manufacturers and retailers do offer deals on their tapes, but they don't cut the price in half.

2. Examine the package carefully. Does it simply resemble the one you're used to buying? Is the brand name spelled correctly? If so, is the printing quality up to the manufacturer's usual high standards, or is one color out of register with the others? Are letters in small print reproduced clearly?

3. Shop at established dealerships. Legitimate retailers shun counterfeit tape because they know it invites customer dissatisfaction and the possibility of legal action. Counterfeits most commonly turn up in stores that don't normally stock tape, don't stock a full range of tape, or are temporary operations (such as street vendors, flea-markets, and the like).

4. Compare the cassette with a bona fide product, if possible. The counterfeit usually is lighter and is more likely to rattle when you shake the box.

Only one of the four cassettes pictured on the facing page is a genuine Maxell product. Obviously, the one at the upper right is a phony, but the name Maxelite might fool a shopper who only glances at the label or thinks it's a new Maxell tape type. The sample directly below it is also counterfeit. Maxell cassettes have five screws holding the shells together; the missing screw here belongs just below the C-90 designation. That leaves the two tapes at the near right.

Identical? Almost, but the counterfeiter missed one small detail. The bogus cassette is the C-90 (top). It lacks the HM indicia printed repeatedly on the white cellophane tab on genuine Maxell cassettes. Interesting, too, is the $3.98 price tag on the counterfeit; Maxell's suggested resale range for that tape and length is $3.25 to $4.10. Paying top dollar for a phony is a double insult. (Incidentally, Maxell informs us that with the new packaging that has superseded that in the picture, complaints about counterfeits have virtually ceased.)

If you're in doubt about a cassette's authenticity, buy one anyway, say the experts. Open the package, examine the label carefully for printing quality and neatness (many counterfeit labels are crooked or wrinkled), and shake the cassette. If the components inside seem looser than usual or if there is a definite rattling sound, you probably have a counterfeit. Also, if the cassette jams after a few plays, the odds are good that it's a phony.

If you buy a cassette in good faith and discover that it's counterfeit, you should take it back to the dealer and demand a refund. Established dealers may grumble, but they'll usually give your money back. If you've bought from a street merchant, the odds of getting a refund or a good cassette may be slim. In that case, say the tape makers, send the cassette with as much information as you can supply to the manufacturer whose name appears on it. Try to remember the name and address of the place you bought it, how much you paid, the date of the purchase, and any other information that seems pertinent. Manufacturers victimized by counterfeiters are not obligated to refund money or send you a good cassette, but some will, particularly in exchange for information that could aid them in shutting down a counterfeit distribution network.

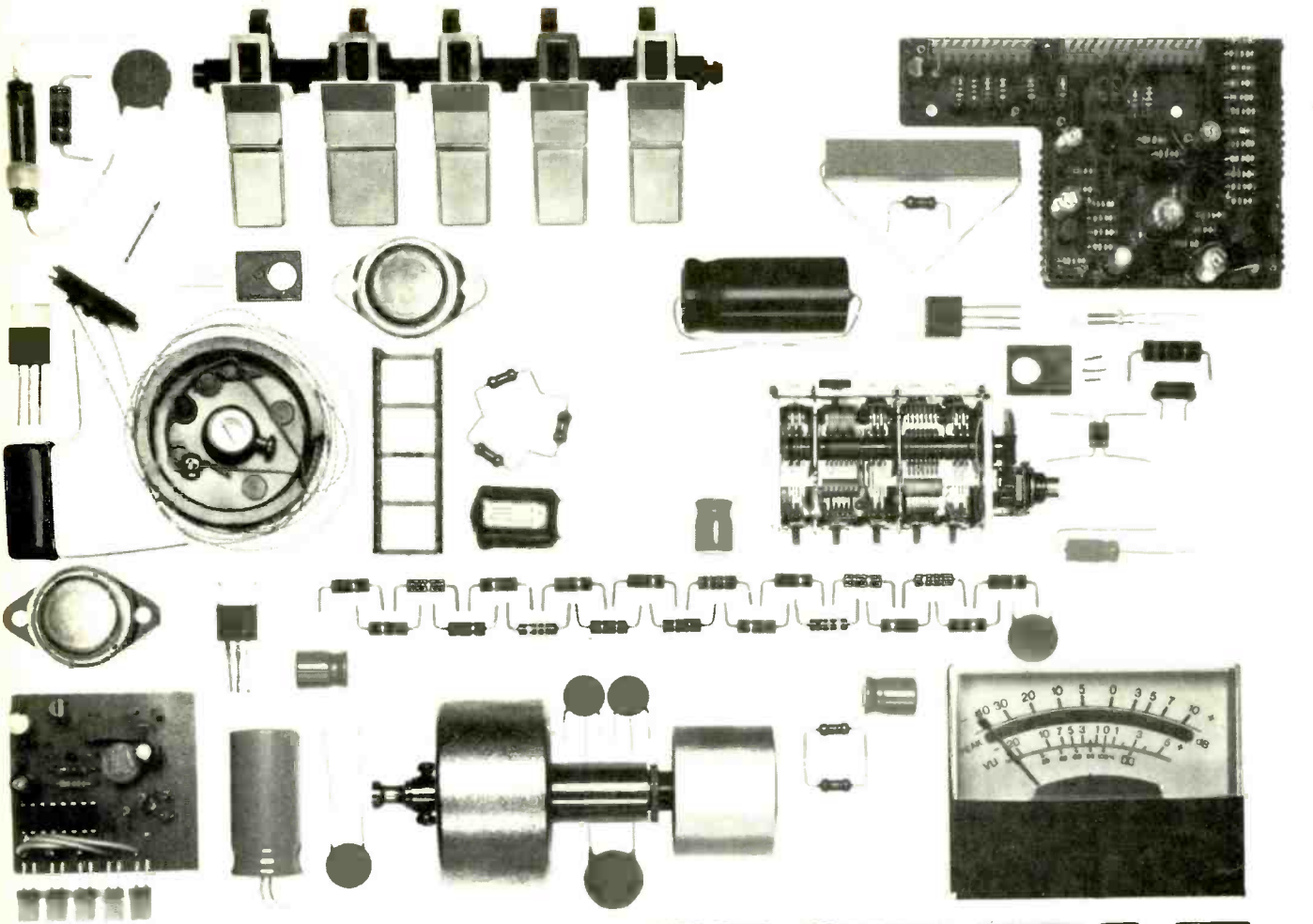
expert, without the aid of measuring devices, would find it impossible to tell the copy from the original. The man who does not flinch at copying audio tape trademarks has avoided infringing those for VHS and Beta. He identifies one as "V-type" and the other as "B-type."

Tooling of audio and video cassette molds ranges from mirror likenesses of popular Japanese shells to crude copies made in Taiwan or Hong Kong. "When possible, I try to buy molds from one of the major Japanese manufacturers," he said.

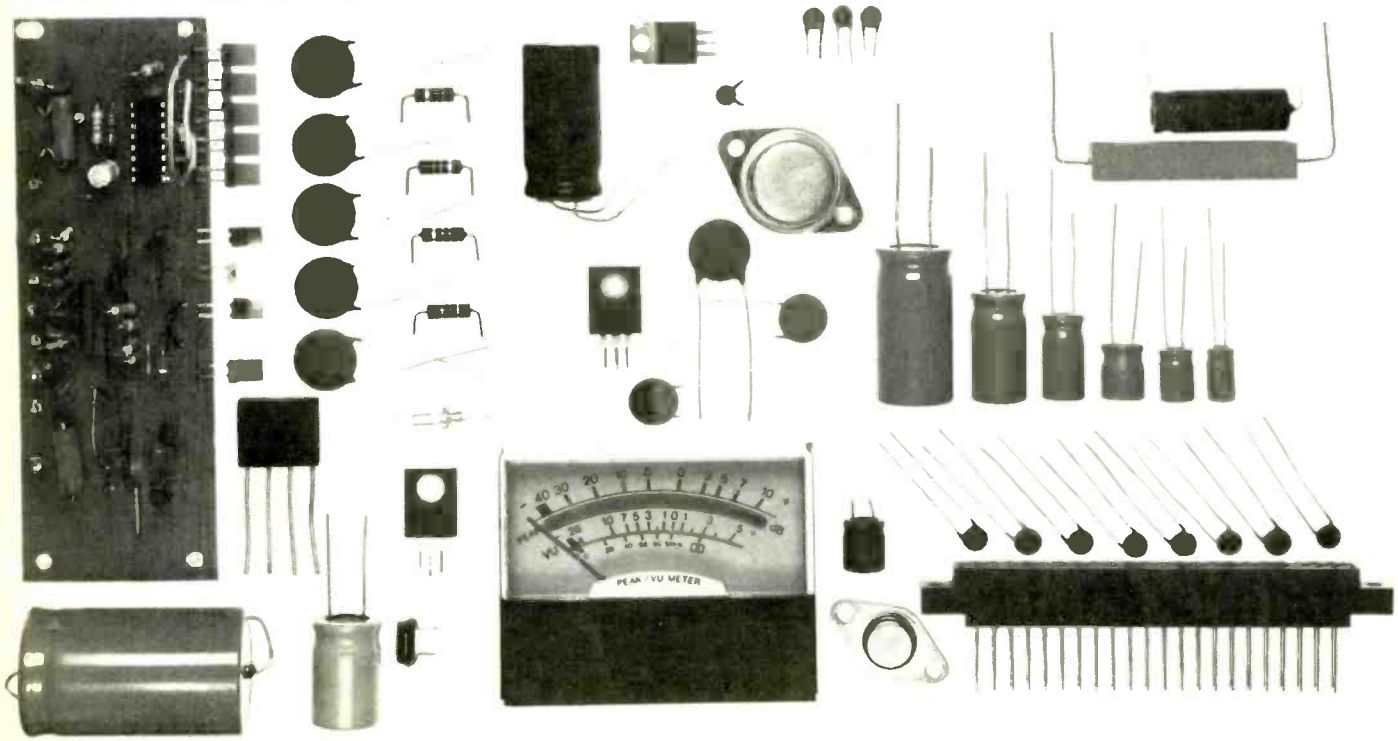
None of the leading cassette manufacturers I have talked with would admit to selling its molds. "When we're done with a mold, or when it's worked out, we earmark it for destruction," a spokesman for one major brand told me. "It is possible that instead of destroying it, someone salvages it and resells it abroad for his own profit, but that is very definitely against company policy."

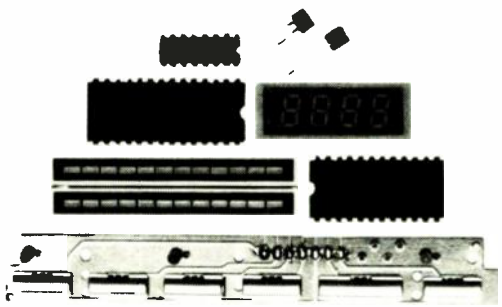
When it's not possible to use an "official" mold—and enough cheapie product looks close enough in quality, design, and tolerances to lend credence to the story—counterfeiters resort to locally produced molds, in some cases made directly from conventional audio and video cassettes purchased at a store. So far, most video cassette pirates seem to be uncharacteristically generous in the quality of their products. Cassette shells, for example, are comparable in thickness and weight to those of the name brands, and many copies have the same parts complement as the ones with which you're familiar. But that will change as the counterfeiters become more accustomed to video and start taking the same shortcuts they do with audio cassettes. Shells will get thinner, to get more out of a pound of styrene. Springs and sleeves inside the shell will disappear if it seems that the cassette will function for a few times without them. One counterfeiter has already substituted a Rube Goldbergian reel-locking assembly for the spring-and-lever lock designed by Matsushita for its VHS cassettes, and other changes could be in the making. Tape quality, below par now, will doubtless diminish further.

Who buys knockoff audio and video cassettes? The counterfeiter stated proudly that he sells tapes to just about every country in the world, including the Soviet Union: "The Americans and the Europeans don't buy the cheap stuff anymore. They want better quality, and they want familiar brand names." And the really awful product? "We sell all we can make in the Middle East," he replied. "They bargain for the very best prices, and we have to cut corners to make a profit. But they take it and they keep coming back for more." **HF**



SIMPLY INCREDIBLE





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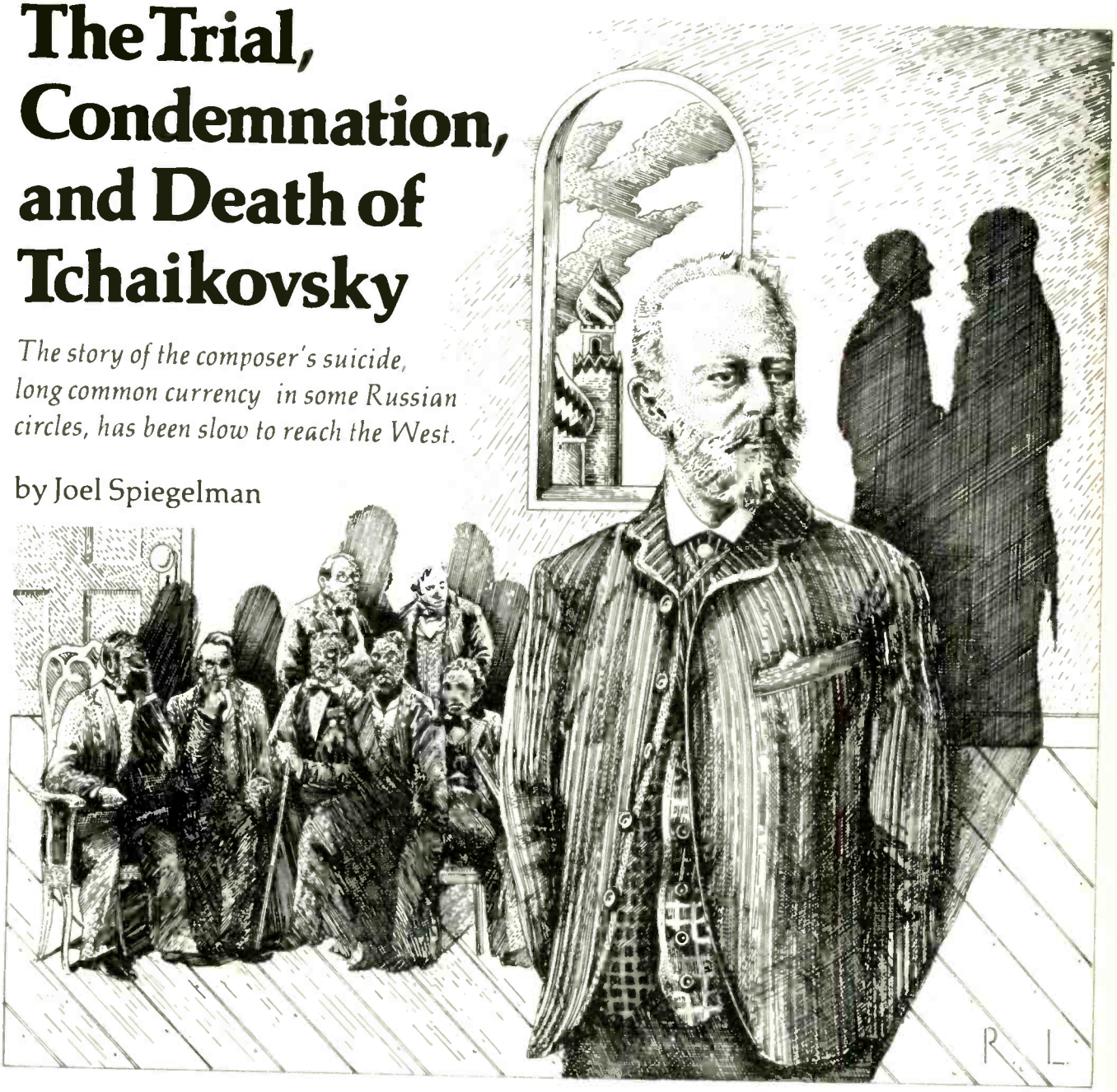
Dual

The Trial, Condemnation, and Death of Tchaikovsky

The story of the composer's suicide, long common currency in some Russian circles, has been slow to reach the West.

by Joel Spiegelman



"For those of us who lived in Leningrad, there was no question but that Tchaikovsky's death was a suicide. In the '20s and '30s, many of his contemporaries were still alive. For example, Professor Alexander Vyacheslavlovitch Osofsky [student of Rimsky-Korsakov, professor of music history and dean at the Leningrad Conservatory] worked at the time of Tchaikovsky's death in the Ministry of Justice. He told me his story, and it was no mystery to him or his contemporaries that Tchaikovsky took his own life. The story has been passed down from father to son to grandchildren."

Alexandra Anatolyevna Orlova, a Soviet émigrée musicologist who arrived in the United States two years ago, tells a dramatic and gripping story of the final days of Russia's great composer Peter Ilytch Tchaikovsky. Not yet widely known in the West, it challenges all official accounts of his death and—if accurate—uncovers one of the greatest scandals in the history of music.

All official versions say Tchaikovsky died on November 6, 1893, of cholera after drinking a glass of unboiled water during a St. Petersburg epidemic. Yet even as he lay dying, rumors of suicide were rampant. Significantly, the most elementary health precautions were flouted. No quarantine was imposed on the house, and an uninterrupted chain of visitors came to inquire about his health. He died in the presence of sixteen people: four doctors, his brothers, nephews, servants, nurses, and a priest—an unconscionable crowd for a cholera death. All the sheets in the house were used up and more had to be collected from the family to cope with the profuse vomiting and diarrhea; instead of being burned, however, the bedclothes were sent out to be laundered—

Joel Spiegelman, composer, conductor, and pianist, is a specialist in Russian and Soviet music. He is a professor of composition at Sarah Lawrence College.

and for some unknown reason returned dirty!

Neither were any precautions taken after death. Tchaikovsky's body should immediately have been sealed in a zinc coffin and removed, and the house completely disinfected; instead, following the 3 a.m. death, people began to gather around the open casket at about 10 a.m. for a wake. The coffin remained open for almost two days, and many came to bid farewell. Rimsky-Korsakov was to write: "How strange, Tchaikovsky died from cholera, but access to his body was completely unobstructed." He then described the way people kissed the deceased's face.

The day after his death, St. Petersburg's *New Times* published an article "The Illness and Death of Peter Ilytch Tchaikovsky," by one of his physicians. Dr. Lev Bernardovitch Bertenson wrote in detail of how the illness had progressed with all the concomitant symptoms of cholera. On November 10, the day after the funeral, the *New Times* published a letter from Modeste Tchaikovsky describing his brother's last few days before and during the illness. Mrs. Orlova contends that these two articles contain a mass of inconsistencies. For one, Dr. Bertenson lost a whole day in his report, placing the death a day early on November 5 (despite writing so soon after!); Modeste didn't lose that day. In his subsequent memoirs, Modeste would furnish another account of his brother's death. But Mrs. Orlova recalls that in 1938 she read a letter from Dr. Bertenson to Modeste, written right after the event, containing complete instructions as to how to describe death from cholera.

David Brown, a British biographer of Tchaikovsky, has passed Mrs. Orlova's findings on to a Professor Wright, a clinical pathologist at the University of Southampton. Dr. Wright's conclusions: If, as described, no precautions were taken, Tchaikovsky most probably did not die of cholera. Neither, to judge from the descriptions of Modeste and Dr. Bertenson, did he die of arsenic poisoning, a possibility further ruled out by the relaxed, quiet expression on his death mask, taken immediately after his passing. He probably died from some other poison.

Perhaps suicide, then, but why?

According to Mrs. Orlova, "It seemed Tchaikovsky was paying too much attention to the nephew of Duke Stenbock-Thurmor. He was a nice young man, and Tchaikovsky took a liking to him. Whether anything went on between them is unknown; what is known is that the duke wrote a letter of complaint to the czar and gave it to the Chief Prosecutor of the Senate [comparable, perhaps, to an assistant attorney general], Nikolai Borisovitch Yakobi. Yakobi had been a classmate of Tchaikovsky's at the St. Petersburg College of Law. Public airing of the issue could have meant deprivation of all civil rights, exile in Siberia, or worse. All his life Tchaikovsky lived in fear of people learning his secret. Nothing could have been worse than exposure.

"In one sense, it wasn't really suicide, but murder. They condemned him, and they did it in a terrible way: He was to take his own life."

"Not that people didn't know: they did. But there was no fuss made over it; he was apparently forgiven everything. Still, to start a court case involving Tchaikovsky would have meant a scandal, not only for Russia, but for the whole world. He was the pride of Russian music and the most popular composer in the world."

Mrs. Orlova's connection with the case began in 1938. Upon graduation from the philological faculty of Leningrad University in 1935, she began working as a music librarian in the manuscript department of the Leningrad Conservatory. She subsequently married the director of the library of the Moscow Conservatory, and in 1938, both she and her late husband were invited to work on the archives at the Tchaikovsky Museum in Klin (near Moscow) in preparation for the 1940 centenary.

She worked at Klin for two years, becoming acquainted with all of the letters and other materials in the archive. Tchaikovsky's letters to Nadezhda von Meck had already been published, evoking a strong interest in his private life. The editor of that collection, Vladimir Zhdanov, was the first to raise publicly the question of the composer's homosexuality. According to Mrs. Orlova, he did it crudely; many were repulsed and turned away from the music. (Even today, in Russia, homosexuality is looked upon with abhorrence; it is, as it was then, considered a disgrace, an infamy, a crime against God and man worthy of prison or exile.) Zhdanov did not properly explain how deeply he had suffered. Tchaikovsky had seen it as an affliction, an illness of which he tried to rid himself. With no one was he as open as with Von Meck, and his letters to her reveal the full drama of his soul.

As interest in his personal life grew, the question of his death was once again opened. Mrs. Orlova did her own accounting of his final days: "I researched each day of his life from the moment of the first performance of his Sixth Symphony [October 28, 1893], and I searched for many years to find out why he would take such an extreme step. I knew that on the evening of October 31 he went to the theater—but where he spent the entire day, I didn't know.

"Quite by accident and for a completely different reason, I was referred in 1966 to the curator of the numismatic section of the Russian Museum [Leningrad], Alexander Voitov. He was the last peacetime graduate of the College of Law [class of 1914] and had devoted his whole life to learning the history of his alma mater. He had a wonderful library on the college and information on all of its students.

"When we met, the subject naturally drifted to Tchaikovsky. I said that for many years I had been trying to get information about one of his final days; that I knew about the suicide but, in order to be completely convinced, I needed information about that one day. He said that, as it turned out, he could help me. He told me the following story: When he was a student at the college, he used to spend his free time, holidays, and vacations at Tsarskoye Selo [now Pushkin] with his family. With them often was Elizaveta Karlovna Yakobi, either a close friend or a distant relative—and the widow of Yakobi, who died in 1902. In 1913, a year before Voitov's graduation, the twentieth anniversary of Tchaikovsky's death was widely celebrated in Russia. And there were again discussions of his suicide. Mrs. Yakobi told Voitov that she knew he was interested in the history of his school and its students. She had on her soul a terrible

secret. She was already old and didn't want to carry it to her grave. She felt he should know it and let it be preserved for history."

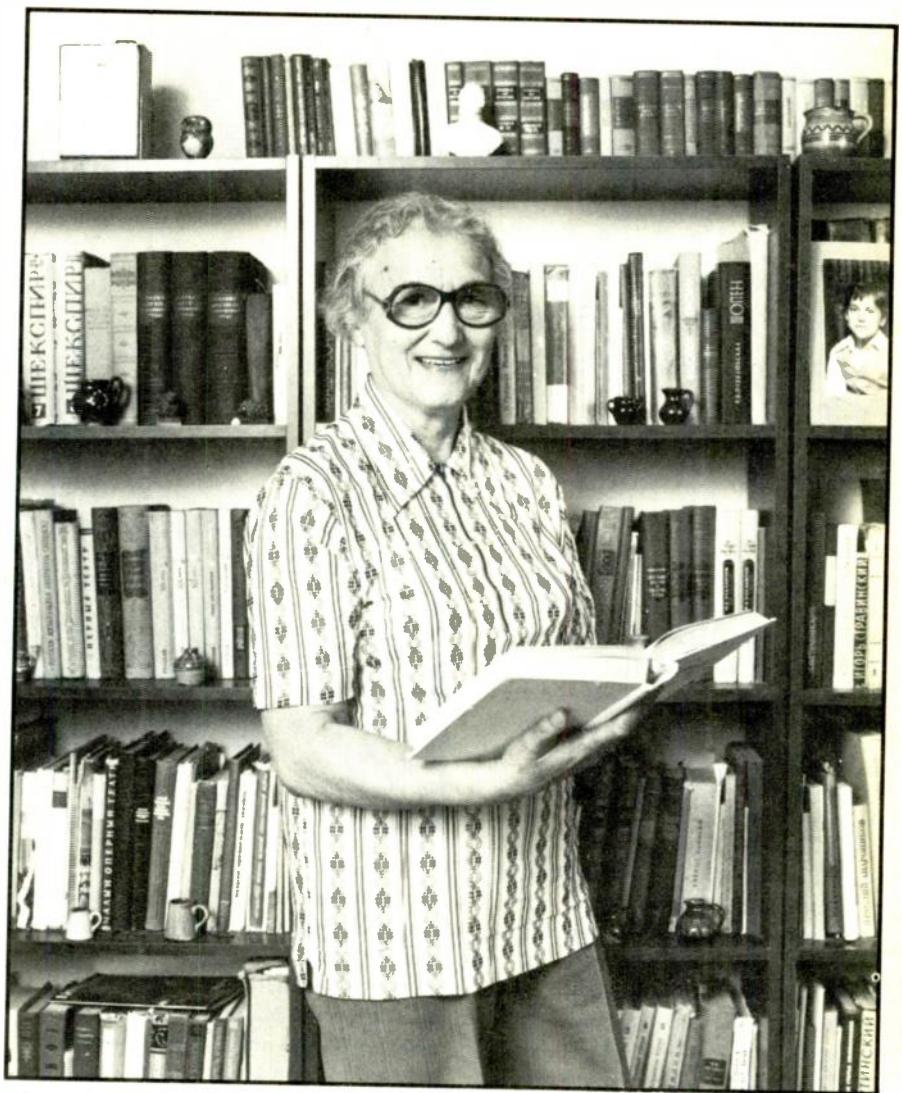
As Mrs. Orlova relates Mrs. Yakobi's story: "Duke Stenbock-Thurmor wrote his letter to the czar about Tchaikovsky and his nephew and gave it to Yakobi. Yakobi could not very well prevent an official complaint from reaching the czar. Yet this disgrace, he felt, would reflect not only on Tchaikovsky, but on the whole College of Law. He decided to call a 'court of honor,' made up of his classmates—all those still living. The court contained eight members. They met in Yakobi's office [at home], while Mrs. Yakobi sat in the adjacent living room knitting. Tchaikovsky himself was present.

"The court of honor began in the morning and lasted all day. She did not hear exactly what was said, but she did hear tremendous excitement, shouts, agitated and angry voices coming from the next room. After about five hours, Tchaikovsky darted out of the room looking white as a sheet and, twisting to his side, ran out the door.

"The rest remained for quite some time, talking, sometimes quietly, sometimes with great agitation. When everyone had left, Yakobi told his wife what had gone on and instructed her never to tell anyone. He called it a 'judgment' on Tchaikovsky and said that they had asked for his death. So in one sense, it wasn't really suicide, but murder. They condemned him, and they did it in a terrible way: He was to take his own life. And he had to do it in such a way that nobody would know."

"Another interesting thing Modeste never mentions," Mrs. Orlova goes on: "Vassily Vassilyevitch Bessel [a music publisher and former fellow student of Tchaikovsky's], in his memoirs, writes that on November 1, the day after the court of honor, August Gerke went to visit Tchaikovsky. Gerke, a lawyer who must have participated in that court, was one of the directors of the Russian Musical Society. He was slightly younger than Tchaikovsky and friendly with him. According to Bessel, he went to speak about a new edition of the opera *Oprichnik*, but I am sure he delivered the poison. Tchaikovsky couldn't have gone to the pharmacy himself, and he couldn't send anyone. It was probably agreed that the poison would be obtained for him.

"Tchaikovsky was taken ill on the morning of November 2. He wouldn't let the doctors near him until evening. By then he must have known that the poison had taken effect. He died four days later."



Alexandra Orlova, photographed at her new home in Jersey City, New Jersey.

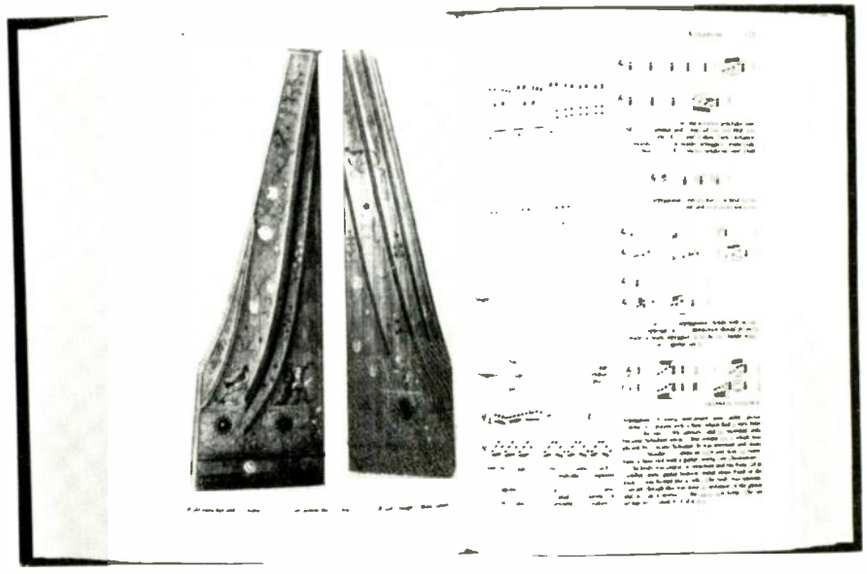
Mrs. Orlova returned to Klin shortly before her immigration. She wanted to refresh her memory but was not allowed access to the documents—still extant—that she had once studied. The letters to Modeste in which Tchaikovsky bared the most intimate details of his private life remain shrouded by a veil of Soviet Victorianism. Letters and other writings by Modeste are also withheld. And certain materials that conclusively pointed to suicide were destroyed. Mrs Orlova claims to have photocopied many of them, but the copies were destroyed during the war, along with her entire archive. As for Dr. Bertenson's letter to Modeste, it can no longer be found.

How strange, Mrs. Orlova says, that so many knew the facts—all the relatives, finally, the doctors, and the servants. Even Czar Alexander III knew, and for him, the death of Russia's great composer was a singular tragedy. He found out about the court of honor too late to be able to do anything. And everyone who knew told someone else, in confidence, who passed it along the same way. Still, "if Tchaikovsky's suicide had been admitted publicly, there would have been no church funeral, no grand memorial in the Kazansky Cathedral, and he would have been buried in some out-of-the-way place. He was buried with great honors. It was absolutely essential to hide his suicide. And his brothers and everyone else who knew helped to cover it up. At the time, it was completely understandable. But why now, after so many years, must this information remain hidden?" **HF**

"New Grove": Not Just Another Pretty Face-Lift

Aided by computer techniques, the latest "edition" presents a heap of new information at a whale of a price.

by Patrick J. Smith



Sir George Grove assembled the first edition of what has become the most famous and comprehensive of music encyclopedias between 1877 and 1889. Four subsequent editions appeared, the fifth dated 1954 with a supplement in 1961. Yet there are good reasons for not calling the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*—finally published at the end of 1980—the sixth edition.

It is 97% new. The fifth edition had ten volumes; this one has twenty, containing well over double the number of words. Whereas prior editions relied heavily upon British contributors and reflected, in the words of *New Grove* editor Stanley Sadie, "a xenophobia," this one draws upon 2,300 contributors from all parts of the world, a significant proportion of them from the United States. Sadie led a committee of more than forty sub-editors and national advisors, and the material was edited by another team in London. The new work also opens and enlarges upon areas of music hitherto only lightly explored: ethnomusicology, musical philosophy, the musical history of cities and countries, great musical collections, popular music, and jazz. The sections on singers, conductors, instrumentalists, critics, scholars, and others associated with music (librettists, impresarios, patrons) have also been expanded, and many more illustrations and music examples have been included.

This was a daunting undertaking from the moment in 1969 when the English publisher Macmillan (no present relation to the American company), Grove's publisher from the outset, decided the *New Grove* should be not an expansion, but a renaissance. It is to Sadie's credit that he has, over years of frustration in dealing with contributors and printers, steered this formidable armada of words to safe harbor—albeit more than a few years after his original target date (1977) and more than a few hundred pounds over the original, optimistic price.

What are the results? No mere human could answer that question comprehensively, but on the basis of perusal of several of the volumes in hand, a few comparisons can be made.

Like previous editions, the *New Grove* is laid out in two columns per page, with a similar type size, yet the new, larger page accommodates many more words. The lists of composers' works following articles—of prime value for the user—are not as spaciously laid out; indeed, they are often crammed in, and the chore of finding specific works becomes more difficult than in the fifth edition. Among other sacrifices, first names of opera librettists are reduced to initials, and some of the dedicatees' names have disappeared. But to the good, contributors' names, rather than initials, appear after the entries.

And how much more is offered! The explosion of musical study since World War II has unearthed quantities of works heretofore buried or thought lost and has radically changed opinions about composers, musical styles, influences, and general musical history. And all of this is apart from the recent development of music itself.

In the original *Grove*, which comprised four volumes, Marc-Antoine Charpentier went unmentioned. The list of works appended to his brief entry in the last edition still amounted to less than a page. But the *New Grove* adds to a full article more than ten pages of composition listings. In the fifth edition, Guillaume Dufay's entry totaled four columns; now there are thirteen columns of text and six pages of works. And so on: The Bach family entry begins on page 774 (with an elaborate eight-generation family tree) and runs to page 877. The music of the Australian aborigines is allotted fifteen pages, with pictures and music examples.

In some cases, this more accurate scholarship has diminished the romantic fancy of music history. No longer do we witness the horrible fate of the eccentric nineteenth-century French pianist/composer Alkan, said to have been crushed under a falling bookcase. He apparently died surrounded by, not buried under, his beloved books.

Of course, any dictionary will be read both for the information it contains and for the style and insights of each contributor. Sir George's contributions to the original have been rightly praised for their learned yet readable style, which was consciously directed at "the musical amateur." Perhaps his most notorious entry was long held out as symbolic of the age in which he wrote: his fifty-seven-plus-page encomium on Mendelssohn. (His Beethoven entry took up only forty-seven pages!) Yet a rereading of that first edition compels admiration, for much of it is still germane. For instance, Gian Andrea Mazzucato's article on Verdi, which does not include the works written after 1881, was nonetheless a remarkably accurate assessment of a living composer. Would that some of the *New Grove* entries on current composers read as well a hundred years hence!

Grove's original dictionary was a good example of a group of learned men writing for a largely lay public, and their individual quirks gave the work a texture and flavor similar to those of such one-man efforts as Percy Scholes's *Oxford Companion to Music* and Nicolas Slonimsky's *Baker's Biographical Dictionary*. The immense growth of the musicological "industry" has perforce diminished this easy colloquiality between savant and reader. An academic restraint and a dependence upon scholarship have taken precedence, and the rewriting sub-editors have inevitably smoothed things out. But that does not mean that the *New Grove* offers a bland homogeneity. The immense variety of its contributors ensures diversity of tone, as—to choose one example—Winton Dean's Handel entry reveals. Scholarship and lifelong acquaintance with the subject are allied with opinion to form a readable and rewarding whole. And quite often, a sentence will leap out to grasp the casual reader's attention, such as this one by Michael Steinberg: "Horowitz illustrates that an astounding instrumental gift carries no guarantee about musical understanding."

One of the major claims made for the *New Grove* is that it has sought to redress the comparative neglect of American music. Indulging in a little chauvinism, I found that, by and large, it fairly assesses the works and careers of American composers, classical, popular, and jazz. Although the unsigned entry on Philip Glass is decidedly skimpy, the major figures Ives, Copland, and Carter are well treated. Only Leonard Bernstein is shortchanged; Richard Jackson's entry regurgitates the necessary factual data and leaves it largely at that. There is little effort to place Bernstein's real and lasting contributions as conductor, teacher, composer, and above all, American musical figure in the perspective of our musical life; whatever one may think of his symphonies or his Broadway musicals, he *has* mattered. Victor Fell Yellin's article on George Chadwick provides an instructive comparison—a brief but masterly exposition of the American composer's work and position.

And still in the chauvinistic vein, one inexcusable omission should be noted: There is no entry for the eminent American critic B. H. Haggin.

Is it all worth $1,900 (the current price)? That is very much a personal decision, subject to considerations of usefulness. Although the price is, at first and second glance, formidable, when taken in the context of prices currently charged for music books, it becomes—if not reasonable—at least understandable. Coffee-table books of limited value sell for upwards of $50; each *Grove* volume comes out to less than $100, and each contains a small mountain of information.

For most, the fifth edition will continue to be adequate; the problem is to find a copy. Once the new sets are delivered, a few secondhand copies of the older edition will probably find their way into stores and library sales. But for anyone who works seriously in music or who wants to be up to date—or to show off what is considerably more than the latest musical toy—this massive compendium is a must.

One final consideration: The *New Grove* was delayed partly because it makes extensive use of computer techniques, which entailed the usual glitches. But now that all the material is stored on electronic discs, it can be retrieved and updated and—as can be surmised—easily programmed to produce minibooks extracted from the complete work. I doubt that Macmillan will publish any of these for a few years, until the full set has sold its quota, but I expect that eventually there will be *New Grove* dictionaries of opera, of baroque music, of American composers, and others—a cottage industry of spinoffs. **HF**

Behind the Scenes

Another New York musical landmark appears to be doomed. To the great chagrin of many at Masterworks—and much of the American classical recording industry—the CBS Records Group has taken steps to sell its Thirtieth Street Studio C to a development firm, which plans to raze it to make way for the inevitable apartment building. A converted Greek Orthodox church, the studio has been used—by RCA, Nonesuch, Vanguard, and others as well as by CBS—for all sorts of classical and cast productions but is considered one of the finest in the world for the recording of chamber music.

That *Tristan und Isolde* the late **John Culshaw** was supposed to produce for Philips ["Editorial," July 1980] will go ahead without him, with **Leonard Bernstein** conducting the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and a cast led by **Hildegard Behrens** and **Peter Hofmann**. And an elaborate production it will be—a compilation of live recordings of three pairs of concert performances in Munich, with Act I scheduled for last month, Act II for April, and Act III for November. Apparently champing at the bit coming off his sabbatical year, Bernstein stole a march on 1981 by scheduling piano rehearsals for Act I on New Year's Eve.

This *Tristan* will have to compete with two others from Polygram. Decca/London will offer a performance led by **Reginald Goodall**, with the young British dramatic soprano **Linda Esther Gray** and **John Mitchinson** in the lead roles and **Gwynne Howell** as King Marke. Despite Mitchinson's formidably clean and powerful Heldentenor, his stage career has been limited by his bulky appearance. This is the Welsh National Opera production (in German, unlike Goodall's *Ring* recordings), recorded in Swansea following a tour in Wales and England. But it is Deutsche Grammophon that claims a Welsh Isolde in the person of **Margaret Price**. She is partnered by **René Kollo** in a cast that also includes **Brigitte Fassbaender** as Brangäne, **Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau** as Kurvenal, and **Kurt Moll** as King Marke. **Carlos Kleiber** conducts Dresden State Opera forces in a recording due for release in late 1981.

From the time he was a fifteen-year-old student and protégé of first violinist **Walter Levin**, **James Levine** and the LaSalle Quartet have made a specialty of the Schumann Piano Quintet, Op. 44. Last fall, in conjunction with a series of live performances, they recorded the work for Deutsche Grammophon in New York. The Metropolitan Opera's music director found himself with unwonted (not to say unwanted) free time, and the sessions, scheduled for three days, were completed in two.

Levine's most recent operatic project was his digital *Zauberflöte* for RCA, lifted—not quite intact—from the Salzburg Festival production and recorded in Vienna with Vienna State Opera forces. From the original cast the recording retains **Martti Talvela** (Sarastro), **Eric Tappy** (Tamino), and **Christian Boesch** (Papageno) but substitutes **Ileana Cotrubas** for **Lucia Popp** (Pamina) and **Zdislava Donat** for **Edita Gruberová** (Queen of the Night). Popp reportedly turned in a wonderful performance at Salzburg, sixteen years after having recorded the role of Pamina's mother with Klemperer; one can only speculate that Cotrubas was brought in to boost sales. When Donat took over Gruberová's role at Salzburg, one critic described her performance as "cautious," but the reason for Gruberová's absence is clear: She has already signed with EMI/Angel to sing the role in **Bernard Haitink**'s Munich recording next spring.

The latter production raises another question: Since Haitink's Glyndebourne *Zauberflöte* with the London Philharmonic was so widely praised, why isn't he recording it in England with his former orchestra? It seems he's giving the Philharmonic wide berth these days after several brushes with management, including a flap over current director **Georg Solti**'s dismissal of a favorite oboist.

The Bach recordings of Brazilian pianist **João Carlos Martins**, originally supposed to have been released by Tomato [June 1980], have fallen instead to Arabesque. This month's issue of the six partitas will offer the first three of a projected eighteen digital discs containing the complete keyboard works, with completion of the series timed—more or less—to coincide with the 1985 Bach tercentenary. And later in the year will come the digital recording of Chopin nocturnes by **Arturo Moreira Lima** also previously announced by Tomato. **HF**

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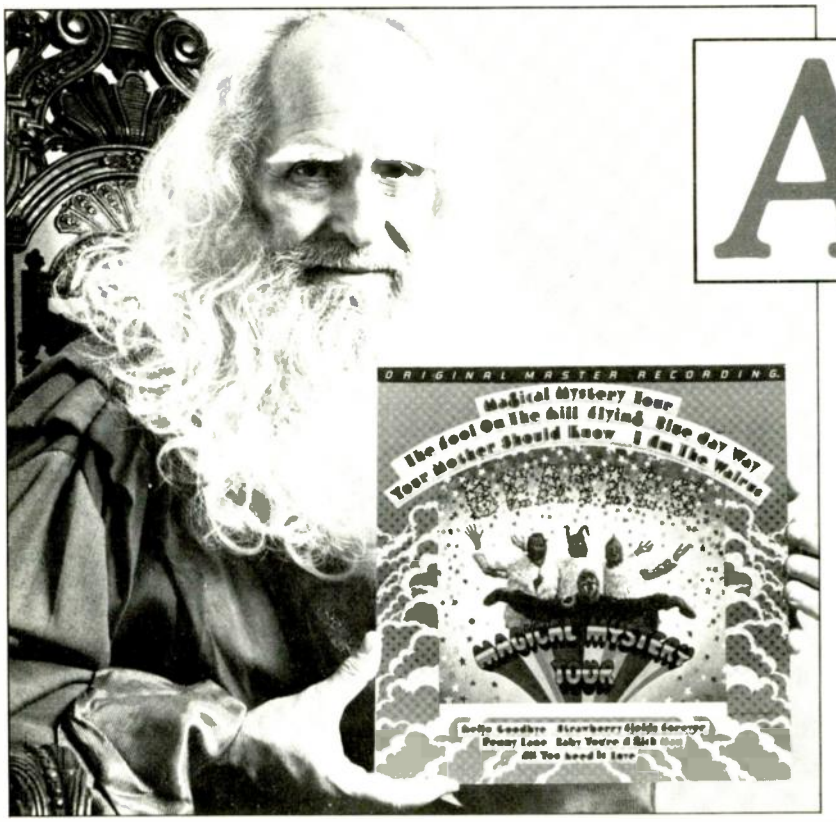

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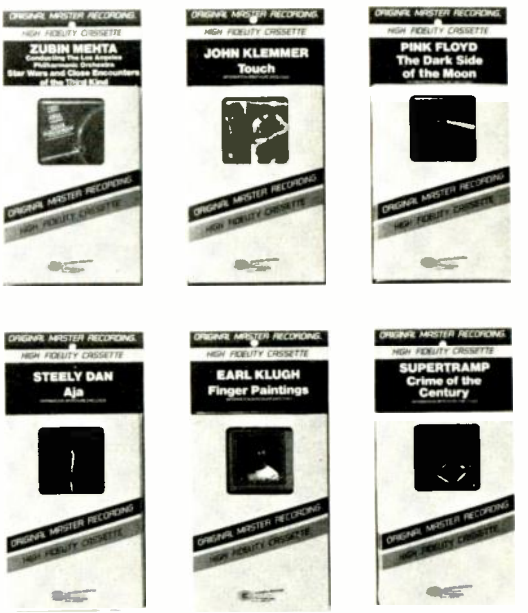

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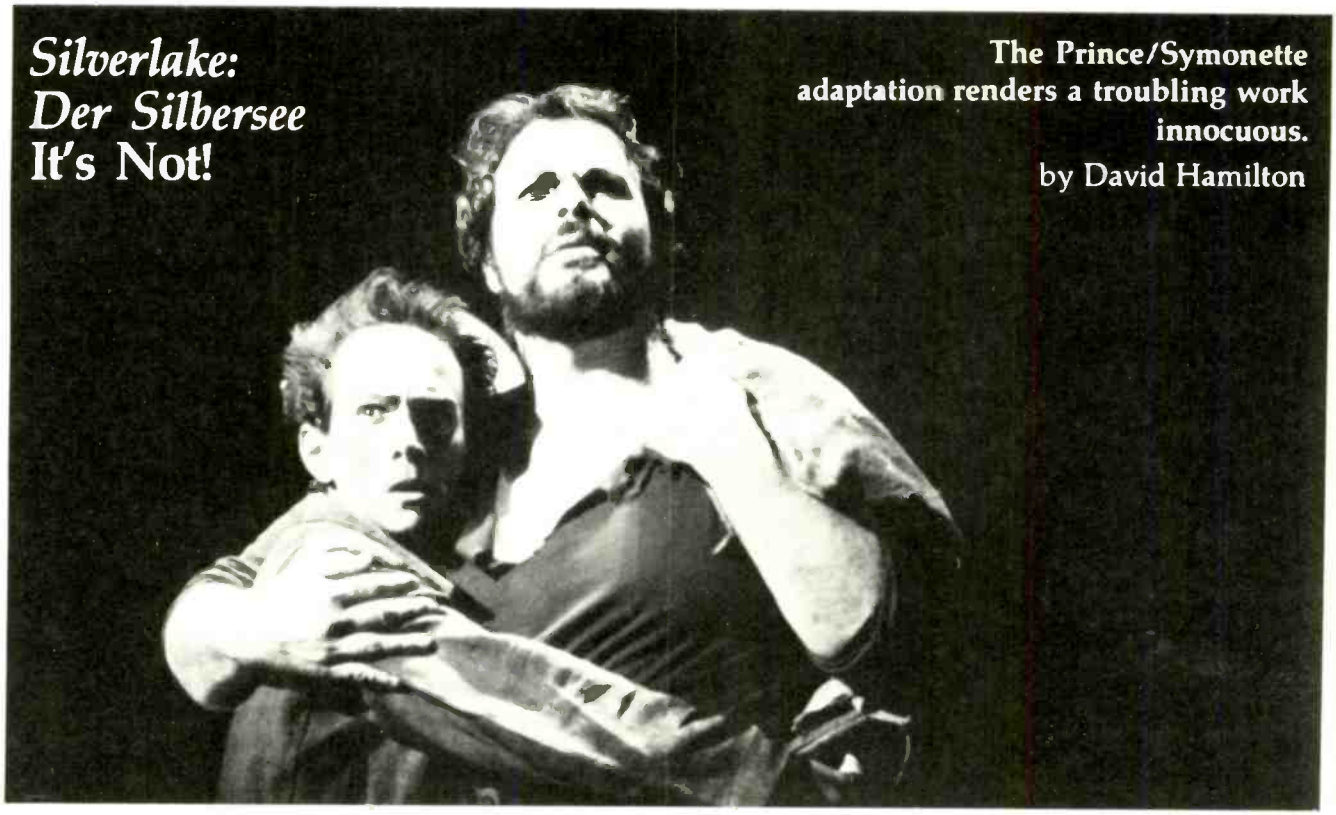
Record Reviews

Silverlake: Der Silbersee It's Not!

The Prince/Symonette adaptation renders a troubling work innocuous.

by David Hamilton



William Neill's forceful Severin contrasts with Joel Grey's wan stereotype as Olim.

Der Silbersee, a play by Georg Kaiser with music by Kurt Weill, occupies a special niche in history: Its premiere has been described as "the last day of the greatest decade of German culture in the twentieth century." Written as the infection of Nazism was raging through Weimar Germany, *Der Silbersee* opened simultaneously in Leipzig, Erfurt, and Magdeburg on February 18, 1933. By then, Hitler was already chancellor; nine days later, the Reichstag would be burned.

Kaiser's play is a parable about a society in which economic disintegration has brought the have-everything and the have-nothing classes near to open warfare, leaving the middle class a hard choice between self-interest and compassion. With courage and idealism, Kaiser and Weill spoke for compassion and for hope at a time when both were in short supply. Not surprisingly, despite a remarkable public and critical response, *Der Silbersee* was soon banned in Germany; a month after the opening, the Weills fled to Paris. Except for a much-abridged Berlin production in 1955, the work has not been staged since.

"*Silverlake* is not *Der Silbersee*," notes Weill scholar Kim Kowalke in his detailed and precise notes for the Nonesuch recording. You bet. The credits read as follows: "Book by Hugh Wheeler (after Georg Kaiser), lyrics by Lys Symonette, music by Kurt Weill; selections of Weill's incidental music integrated by Lys Symonette." I can't imagine that, Weill's ancestry aside, the Nazi authorities would have found much objectionable about it. All the political and economic substance has been tossed overboard, and Kaiser's play reduced to a commonplace tale about personal forgiveness between two not very interesting men. Kaiser's mystical, symbolic final scene remains, an obscure footnote to something that has not happened; were the words not obscured by choral diction, it might seem even more irrelevant. Weill's refined score, much removed from his *Dreigroschenoper/Mahagonny* manner, has been fitted with awkward English words and smothered by an unceasing jangle of repetitions and irrelevant snippets of music from earlier scores.

There are two questions involved here: the necessity of such "adaptation," and its success. Even in 1933, *Der Silbersee* was not without problems. After his full-scale operas *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* and *Die Bürgschaft*, Weill returned to the medium of "play with music" only out of necessity; the controversial content of his works involved more financial and political risk than most German opera houses were willing to take after 1930, and the spoken theater promised to be more accessible. But his musical language was now beyond the powers of most actors; he was careful about range, but a good ear for pitch and a sure sense of phrasing are called for. At the same time, the length of the spoken drama (some two-and-a-half hours over and above an hour's worth of music) was more than operatically trained singers could cope with. In the upshot, significant amounts of music had to be omitted at the 1933 performances.

Presumably such problems, and the unfashionableness of the play, are behind its long absence from the theater. Today, of course, it is Weill's music that excites our interest; any "adaptation" ought to preserve it intact and permit it to be performed adequately—that is, by trained voices. An opera house can presumably furnish the voices, as well as the chorus and orchestra that are not, at least in America, readily at the disposal of drama companies. But that

almost certainly means trimming the spoken drama to the bone.

Granting that necessity, I am far from convinced that the further decisions taken by Wheeler, Symonette, and director Harold Prince follow with any inevitability. First, there is the gutting of the plot's political and social significance; in Kowalke's liner note, Wheeler is quoted as saying, "I'm so bored with that 1930-ish pissy-assed socialism that I can't take it. The original play is so difficult and highfalutin I could barely make out what it was all about." Despite this jejune arrogance, it was to Kaiser's play that Weill wrote his music, and the clarity and intensity of the score are surely in some part due to his vivid response to the subject matter. Symptomatically, Prince and Wheeler have found it necessary to omit Severin's "Hunger Song," an aggressive march tune that unavoidably raises the issues they are trying to ignore.

The most famous song in the score is "The Ballad of Caesar's Death" (recorded years ago by Lotte Lenya in her album of "Berlin Theater Songs"), an implicit but unmistakable denunciation of Hitler that must have galvanized the 1933 audiences. In Kaiser, it is sung as a "set piece" by Fennimore, a naive and idealistic girl; in *Silverlake*, unfathomably, it has been put in the mouth of Frau von Luber, a proto-Nazi character! You might reinterpret the words in such a way as to make this fit—but not with the music Weill wrote; nor would he ever have given Von Luber an utterance of such stature.

But insensitivity to Weill's music is rampant in *Silverlake*. In the original, "melodrama" (spoken dialogue over music) is used on occasion, for special purposes. In *Silverlake*, virtually all the dialogue is treated this way. Some of the underscoring consists of repetitions of *Silbersee* music, but the incidental music Weill wrote for a 1927 production of Strindberg's *Gustav III* is also drawn upon.

It beats me what this is supposed to gain; something is surely lost. The *Silbersee* music was written to be heard in small doses over the course of an otherwise nonmusical evening; in *Silverlake*, the constant extraneous "noise" robs it of its proper contexts and numbs our sensitivities, as well as introducing stylistically alien material. (It also obscures musical connections: For example, the opening of the Lottery Agent's tango picks up an important rhythm from the preceding material, but in *Silverlake* a chunk of music from the Overture intervenes. I wonder who chose the verb "integrate" to describe this operation—its result is exactly the opposite.)

The stylistic objection can also be raised against another interpolation: The song "*Die Muschel von Margate*" was written in 1928 for Leo Lania's play *Konjunktur*, and its original lyric, about oil-trust pollution, still sounds quite timely today. The cheerful tune to which these unpleasant matters are ironically set is very much in the *Happy End* style. In *Silverlake*, the "Petroleum Song" has become a "Friendship Duet" for the two heroes; the irony is gone, the piece reduced in stature.

That stature is further reduced, I am bound to add, by Lys Symonette's lyric: "A fool is he/who cannot see/the forest from the trees," it begins, and our jaws drop—did we really hear "*from* the trees"? Did they actually sing "Sharing each sorrow, each laughter"? Earlier, in the waltz of the two shopgirls, we were offered the nonsensical alternative "for profit or for gain," and such elegant accentuations as "salesla-*deez*." These lyrics are not in American English, but in Broken English, a language not unfamiliar to City Opera audiences, though rarely heretofore recorded.

Which brings us to the most baffling matter of all: Nonesuch's decision to record the whole kit and caboodle. Whatever ad hoc theatrical and practical justification there may be for the Prince/Wheeler/Symonette version, what we need on record is Weill's original score, well sung in the original German; instead, we have been given an expensive memento of a not very happy occasion. (The crowning irony is that Nonesuch and the City Opera might have given us, instead, a recording of *Street Scene*, a Weill work that the company does in a complete and authentic version.)

Nor can one wax very enthusiastic about the performance. Several of the voices are not good: The salesgirls are tremolo-ridden, the Lottery Agent short of range, Frau von Luber rough and worn in tone. William Neill brings a good deal of force to Severin's music, but Joel Grey gives us a wan stereotype as the policeman Olim; Elizabeth Hynes's normally sweet voice is not flatteringly recorded. There is not much lightness or transparency in the playing of such subtle numbers as the "Road to Silbersee" duet, and the frequent trumpet solos sound odd indeed, as if doubled or overdubbed. In the Overture, Julius Rudel jarringly changes gears at the entrance of the "Caesar's Death" tune, despite Weill's specific instruction to the contrary. This is not an enjoyable performance, and the tight, dry digital sound shows all its flaws as under a magnifying glass.

It may be that *Der Silbersee* cannot be made satisfactory for modern stages and theatrical institutions. But the music can be salvaged, and already has been, for concert purposes. David Drew and Josef Heinzelmann made a concert version, with simple connecting narration, that was performed at the Holland Festival in 1971 and the Berlin Festival in 1975; this should certainly be recorded soon, preferably by Gary Bertini, who conducted the 1971 performance with firmness and grace.

The orchestral suite made by Karel Solomon, and recorded by Turnabout, is a less satisfactory substitute, containing the Introduction to Act III, five vocal numbers (including the "Hunger Song" omitted from *Silverlake*), and an abridged version of the Finale; the vocal lines are assigned to instruments—often to a solo violin, which does not seem the happiest of choices for this ascetic score. The members of the MIT Orchestra contribute some good solo turns, but the ensemble is sometimes below professional standards. David Epstein's tempos are well chosen, in line with Weill's markings.

(The fourteen-year-old Korngold's prodigy of an overture, on the overside of Turnabout's disc, will attract a different audience; there is nothing more original or substantive here than in the mindlessly skillful *Die tote Stadt*, but the facility is amazing.)

For all their limitations, these recordings do tell us that *Der Silbersee* is an important and distinctive work in Kurt Weill's catalog. His style is purified of the aggressively demotic characteristics of the *Dreigroschenoper/Mahagonny* period, with a wider emotional range and yet no sacrifice of accessibility. The choice of harmonies is always individual and refreshing, the orchestral writing austere as befits the subject. I look forward to a recording that will do it justice.

WEILL: Silverlake.

CAST:

Fennimore	Elizabeth Hynes (s)
Frau von Luber	Elaine Bonazzi (s)
Salesgirls	Penny Orloff (s)/Jane Shaulis (ms)
Olim	Joel Grey (t)
Severin	William Neill (t)
Lottery Agent/Baron Laur	Jack Harrold (t)
Johann	Harlan Foss (t)
Dietrich	Robert McFarland (t)

A New York City Opera Orchestra and Chorus, Julius Rudel, cond. [Eric Salzman, prod.] NONESUCH DB 79003, $23.96 (two discs, automatic sequence, digital recording).

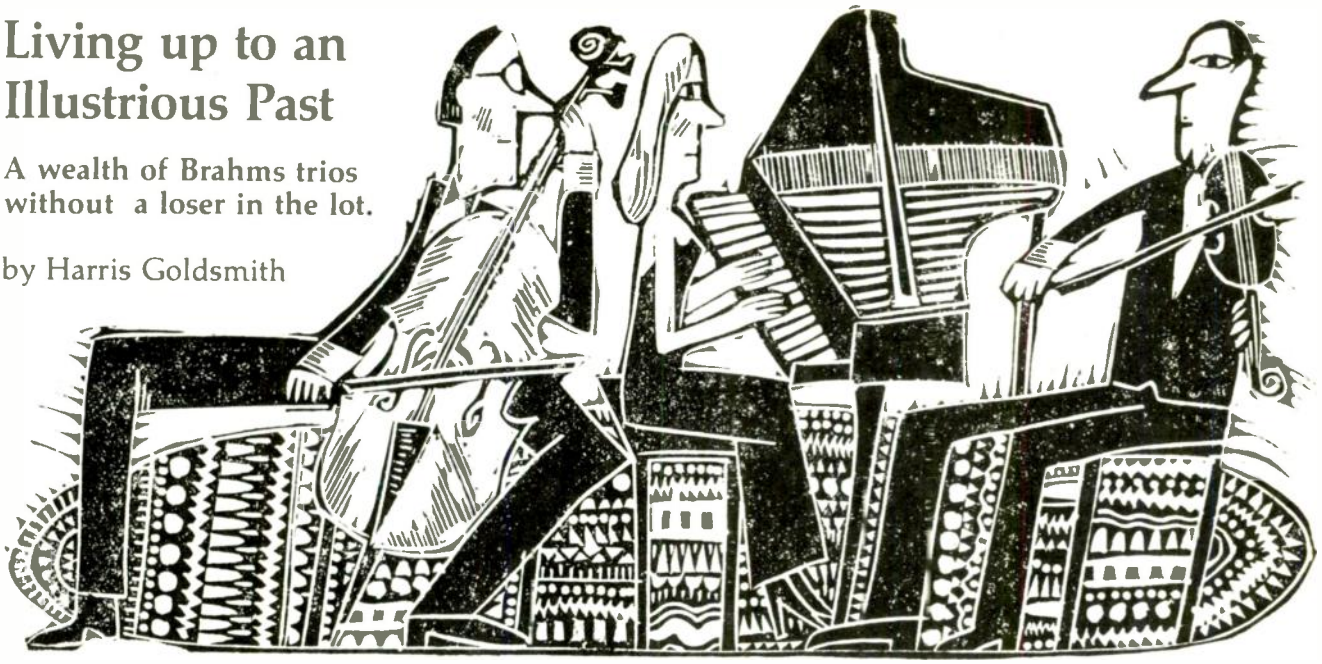
WEILL: Der Silbersee: Suite. KORNGOLD: Schauspiel-Ouvertüre, Op. 4.

B MIT Symphony Orchestra, David Epstein, cond. [John Newton and Judith Kellock, prod.] TURNABOUT TV 34760, $4.98.

Living up to an Illustrious Past

A wealth of Brahms trios without a loser in the lot.

by Harris Goldsmith



Brahms's demanding trios have been well served by the phonograph. Over the years some of the greatest artists have recorded them, and since chamber music—which requires chiefly clarity and good balance—could be decently rendered even by early engineering techniques, many of those older performances can still be readily enjoyed. The 1932 version of the horn trio by Aubrey Brain, Adolf Busch, and Rudolf Serkin remains viable; in fact, it survived in the catalog until just recently. The 1951 recording of Op. 87 by Adolf and Hermann Busch and Serkin (Odyssey 32 16 0361), released for the first time in 1970, remains available, as does the 1941 Op. 8 of Jascha Heifetz, Emanuel Feuermann, and Arthur Rubinstein (RCA LM 7025). In truth, the latter performance, though unique in its rushed, compact way, is not as deserving of immortality as some unavailable collaborations by less fashionable virtuosos (for example, the Stern/Casals/Hess Op. 8; the D'Aranyi/Cassadó/Hess and Szigeti/Casals/Hess Op. 87s; and the superb Kell/Miller/Horszowski Op. 114). Indeed, an informed source tells me that Rubinstein shared my reservations about that old B major and that his dissatisfaction led to the 1972 recording with Henryk Szeryng and Pierre Fournier of the three conventional trios (and the Schumann Op. 63; RCA ARL 3-0138), impressively vibrant if occasionally heavy-footed interpretations.

Considering the richness of this legacy (and the above list by no means includes *all* the distinguished or interesting interpretations; I've always wanted to hear what Italian composer Alfredo Casella and his compatriots made of Op. 87), it is high praise indeed to state that every one of the performances under review is more than satisfactory. With such a surfeit of competence, the attempt to separate the good from the excellent and the excellent from the extraordinary becomes even more subjective—not to say haphazard—than usual.

Two of these releases sound an imperative tone and must be considered first. That featuring Wolfgang Schneiderhan, Enrico Mainardi, and Edwin Fischer adds yet another "golden age" classic to the treasure trove. These superb artists are all in top form in readings transcribed in 1951 (Op. 87) and 1953 (Op. 8) for the Bavarian Radio and presented with that organization's cooperation. For the period, the sound is surprisingly good: All three instruments are clearly present and well balanced, and the piano tone in particular is magnificently solid and plangent. With the metallic highs (more severe in Op. 87) tamed by modest equalization, the performances spring vividly to life.

What a team these three make! Fischer is not note-perfect (he never was), but he possesses such authority—rhapsodic freedom combined with an incontestable grasp of classical structure. The masterly string players match him phrase for phrase, and their interaction yields a personal imprint and eloquence that linger in the memory. The magnificent expansiveness of the Op. 87 third-movement trio section quite equals the Szigeti/Casals/Hess for breadth of utterance and far surpasses that distinguished reading for disciplined cohesion. Similarly, the opening movement of Op. 8 has wonderful sophistication and self-contained symmetry. Every younger player should note the way the firm basic pulse is maintained through all sorts of flexible gear shifts and judicious manipulations; one can easily imagine Brahms, Joachim, and Hausmann doing these works in similar style.

The other particularly newsworthy item is the first recording of the original Op. 8. In 1890, Brahms revised his composition of more than thirty years earlier, and it is that revision everyone plays today. Finally, we can evaluate the two versions side by side. Many annotators have had their say on the subject, and—as we can now hear—much of it has been arrant nonsense. Brahms, we learn wrongly from these sources, "did not change it significantly" (the Supraphon annotations); in fact, he rewrote it almost in toto. Nor is the older version "a third again as long as the one we know today" (as the notes for an old Westminster disc claim); the timings are about the same for both, though the original version—with its faulty instinct for where and when to do what—gives the *impression* of being interminable and self-indulgent.

For all that, we can learn much about Brahms by comparing the scores. In earlier years he was more reckless, and certain details in the 1854 work show an audacious experimentalism: the intriguing end of the scherzo (the one movement left relatively intact later) and the subordinate section of the finale. On the other hand, the older Brahms was more confident; he had gained a much more trustworthy dramatic sense, a quality that shows up again and again in the more suitable secondary themes—and most important, in the elimination of such discursive elements as the fugato at the end of the first movement and the absurdly misplaced agitation just before the end of the

original slow movement. Also worth noting, some of the discarded secondary themes are more Mendelssohnian than Brahmsian; Brahms in fact retained (and expressed) his admiration for Mendelssohn in later years, long after his own stylistic fingerprints had hardened. I have lamented the unavailability of the original Op. 8, and the Odeon Trio has performed a genuine service in exhuming it for public scrutiny. But please don't read me wrong: With this excellent rendition safely preserved, everyone may now proceed as before—playing the 1890 Op. 8 with strengthened conviction that it is incomparably superior to its forerunner.

The Musical Heritage Society offering (licensed from Seon), when completed, will include all the Brahms trios; a second volume containing the revised Op. 8, the posthumously discovered A major, and the more usual versions of Opp. 40 and 114 will be along shortly. Though Brahms condoned the viola substitution in the horn and clarinet trios, he must certainly have done so for monetary rather than artistic reasons. Still, Op. 40 sounds surprisingly good, the viola often suggesting the horn when blended with the violin and piano. (Or perhaps former conditioning persuades my ears to hear the instrument not present.) Only a few prominent horn calls in the finale are disappointingly bland. Brahms was less happy with the original substitution of a cello for the horn; we have *that* version, too, in an earlier MHS offering (3647/8) by the Olewsky Trio, and it does not work nearly so well as the viola version. As for the clarinet trio, the lack of tonal contrast hurts more in the alternative version, though no more so than in Beethoven's reworking of his Op. 11 Clarinet Trio for conventional piano trio.

The Odeon Trio—led by the excellent onetime Schnabel student Leonard Hokanson—is not particularly supple or subtle; stylistically, its firm, masculine, nonsense readings suggest Friedrich Wührer's recordings of the Schubert piano sonatas. Yet the level-headed vigor has its merits, and I especially like the way these players sweep through Op. 87. The musical argument is always set forth with cogent honesty, and if technical refinement is not stressed, neither is it lacking.

The Telefunken set doesn't stand up in this exalted company. To be sure, it offers sound, energetic interpretations, beautifully reproduced in superbly clean imported pressings. Yet the format—three trios on four sides—is uneconomical, since the Pro Arte (Bis) and Beaux Arts (Festivo) Trios add the posthumous A major with no compromise in processing or fidelity; moreover, held to the very highest standard, the Vienna Haydn Trio's interpretations are a bit contrived and theatrical (rather than dramatic). In the trio of Op. 8's scherzo, for instance, the line is not allowed to flow, and the tricky pullbacks and subito pianos become rather tiresome.

The San Francisco Trio's Op. 87, lavishly spread onto two sides of a premium-priced audiophile pressing, also seems to be out of the running, but perhaps I underestimate the market for such specialty discs. Certainly, the sonics are gorgeously lifelike. There is much to praise in the forthright, technically assured, musically reliable rendition as well. The dynamic range is admirable, and at no point is the music misrepresented by the state-of-the-art emphasis; yet neither is it elevated. The players do not command a particularly opulent sonority, and their instruments sound like inexpensive ones.

Josef Suk recorded Trios Nos. 1–3 for London (recently deleted) with János Starker and the late Julius Katchen and a still earlier version of the Third with his collaborators here, Josef Chuchro and Jan Panenka (once available on Crossroads and scheduled for revival by Quintessence). These performances, dating from September 1976, reflect the ideal of classical Brahms—one might call them Beethovenian. The music is tersely structural, gleaming and transparent in sound, purged of all rhetoric. The earliest Suk Op. 101 was more deliberate and expansive, but all the new versions are much more convincing than their London counterparts; here phrases are taut without being casual. But Supraphon's engineering is undistinguished: The piano tone is clattery and hollow, the strings sound raspy and shy of bass; I was unable to improve the run-of-the-mill sound much through equalization. Surfaces, moreover, are afflicted with sundry pops, ticks, and imperfections.

In the horn trio, Zdeněk Tylšar, the Czech Philharmonic's fine principal hornist, employs a tasteful vibrato that never violates the tonal characteristics of his instrument, and his mellifluous, supple playing matches his partner's aristocratic approach. But for all the intelligence and refinement, there is too much emphasis on textbook form and not enough on the work's enchanted atmosphere and moodiness. Should the first movement sound so chilly and antiseptic? Should the scherzo be so staid in its outer sections and so lacking in brio? What with the deletion of the Brain classic and the domestic unavailability of the choice modern account by Hermann Baumann, Stoika Milanova, and Malcolm Frager on BASF/Harmonia Mundi, the superb and exciting London edition (CS 6628) by Barry Tuckwell, Itzhak Perlman, and Vladimir Ashkenazy is practically unrivaled.

The differences between the interpretations by the familiar Beaux Arts and the unfamiliar (at least to American audiences) Pro Arte are subtle. Both groups

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BRAHMS: Trios for Violin, Cello, and Piano: No. 1, in B, Op. 8; No. 2, in C, Op. 87.

Wolfgang Schneiderhan, violin; Enrico Mainardi, cello; Edwin Fischer, piano. BRUNO WALTER SOCIETY BWS 739, $7.00 (includes postage; Discocorp, Inc., P.O. Box 771, Berkeley, Calif. 94701).

BRAHMS: Trios (5).

Odeon Trio; Rainer Moog, viola*. MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY MHS 4215/7, $20.85 ($13.35 to members) (three discs, manual sequence). Tape: MHC 6215/7, $20.85 ($14.85 to members) (three cassettes). (Add $1.25 for shipping; Musical Heritage Society, 14 Park Rd., Tinton Falls, N.J. 07724.)

Trios for Violin, Cello, and Piano: No. 1, in B, Op. 8 (orig. version); No. 2, in C, Op. 87; No. 3, in C minor, Op. 101. Trio for Violin, Viola, and Piano, in E flat, Op. 40.* Trio for Viola, Cello, and Piano, Op. 114.*

BRAHMS: Trios for Violin, Cello, and Piano, Nos. 1–3.

Vienna Haydn Trio. TELEFUNKEN 26.35471, $21.96 (two discs, manual sequence).

BRAHMS: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano, No. 2, in C, Op. 87.

A San Francisco Trio. SOUND STORAGE SSR 2010, $13.98 (distributed by Audio Source, 1185 Chess Dr., Foster City, Calif. 94404).

BRAHMS: Trios for Violin, Cello, and Piano, Nos. 1–3; Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano, in E flat, Op. 40*.

Suk Trio; Zdeněk Tylšar, horn*. [Milan Slavický, prod.] SUPRAPHON 1 11 2251/2, $17.96 (two discs, manual sequence).

BRAHMS: Trios for Violin, Cello, and Piano: Nos. 1–3; in A.

Trio Pro Arte. [Robert von Bahr, prod.] BIS LP 98/9, $19.96 (two discs, manual sequence).

R Beaux Arts Trio. PHILIPS FESTIVO 6770 007, $13.96 (two discs, manual sequence). Tape: 7650 007, $13.96 (two cassettes). [From WORLD SERIES PHC 2-013, 1968.]

BRAHMS: Trio for Clarinet, Cello, and Piano, in A minor, Op. 114. BEETHOVEN: Trio for Clarinet, Cello, and Piano, in B flat, Op. 11.

George Pieterson, clarinet; Bernard Greenhouse, cello; Menahem Pressler, piano. PHILIPS 9500 670, $9.98. Tape: 7300 826, $9.98 (cassette).

are very mercurial and sophisticated, and both possess a tonal suavity that walks a fine line between golden heft and unyielding classicism (à la Suk). At first seemingly prosy and uneventful, the Bis readings soon make a splendid effect; in the climaxes, it becomes evident that these artists (Czech violinist; Danish cellist and pianist) have a vivid dramatic sense, which they were merely keeping in reserve. The Beaux Arts (recorded with its original violinist, Daniel Guilet, still at the helm) has never sounded better on records. The forthright vitality of the playing impels the slightly astringent sound urgently forward without losing the requisite (piano-dominated) mass. Ultimately, I prefer the Beaux Arts in the early A major (an attractively lyrical work that suggests the subsequent A major Piano Quartet) but the Pro Arte in the others.

Some loose ends: The Pro Arte and Suk Trios observe the exposition repeat in Op. 8's first movement, the others don't. The Festivo format neatly allots a side to each work; Bis and Supraphon, undoubtedly because of the added repeat, allow the Op. 8 finale to spill over onto a second side, which is completed by the terse Op. 101. Telefunken devotes two full sides to Op. 8.

As a postscript to the Festivo reissue, Philips offers a full-priced coupling of the Brahms and Beethoven clarinet trios. When the Beaux Arts recorded its Beethoven cycle some years ago, I lamented that it saw fit to present the charming Op. 11 in its decidedly more poker-faced violin version; now it makes amends.

The recent Tashi version (RCA ARL 1-2217) was remarkable—a reading of bracing refinement and deliciously puckish humor; if anything, the new recording sounds an even more urgent appeal. Pianist Menahem Pressler's purling technique and biting détaché runs match Peter Serkin's sprinting pianism note for note. Clarinetist George Pieterson proves Richard Stoltzman's equal, and his tonal robustness is perhaps more assertive than Stoltzman's kittenish limpidity. Cellist Bernard Greenhouse supplies wondrous tonal beauty, and for once, his second-movement solo has a presence not always forthcoming from this excellent musician. (At times he seems overly discreet in the manner of a continuo specialist.)

The Brahms is equally irresistible, in a broad, spacious treatment that nevertheless maintains structural integrity and the fine balance heard from Kell/Miller/Horszowski and Honingh/Bylsma/Frager (on that excellent BASF disc). And Philips' resonant, high-level reproduction—pulsating and commanding—is as "audiophile" as anything I've ever heard. A stupendous success!

An Instrument Whose Time Has Come

Among a spate of recent recordings on fortepiano, Malcolm Bilson's superb performances stand out.

by Nicholas Kenyon

A remarkable instrument: Philip Belt's reproduction of a Mozart piano.

At last, the real thing. These four solo discs by Malcolm Bilson—two from Nonesuch, two from Titanic—represent a decisive advance in the cause of the fortepiano as a real musical instrument. There have, of course, been worthy, fascinating, and illuminating recordings made on the fortepiano before now: the performances of Jorg Demus (with the distinctly inauthentic Collegium Aureum, in Mozart piano concertos), Paul Badura-Skoda (on an all-Mozart disc referred to below), Richard Burnett (in Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin*, with Nigel Rogers), and several others. In particular, there has been the remarkable achievement of the German Toccata label, not distributed here, which is devoted to recordings from the historic instrument collection at Bad Krozingen Castle; the veteran Fritz Neumeyer plays a variety of restored eighteenth- and nineteenth-century instruments with his younger colleagues Rolf Junghanns and Bradford Tracey. Here in America there have been several "historic instrument" recordings—one made in 1977 by Bilson himself and violinist Sonya Monosoff on instruments from the Metropolitan Museum (Pleiades P 104), which sounds antique indeed beside these new releases. In a class of their own are the two new Titanic recordings of eighty-eight-year-old Mieczyslaw Horszowski playing 1732 sonatas by Lodovico Giustini on the Metropolitan's famous 1720 Cristofori piano; no mere archaeological exercise, these sprightly, loving performances give a real insight into the early development of the piano, showing us what it could do and what it could not.

Yet it is no disrespect to all these performers to say that Bilson achieves something quite different. He interprets great music with a musician's insight—and his insights grow out of the right instrument. No allowances, no apologies are necessary for either instrument or performer. You don't feel the need to say, "Well, of course, you have to bear in mind that it's an experiment/that he has been playing only a couple of years/that the piano's about to fail apart." Bilson is to the fortepiano what Landowska was to the harpsichord or Bream to the lute: *Now* we realize what the antiquarians were making such a fuss about; now it makes musical sense. I could put Bilson's records on my turntable and play them for the most sophisticated connoisseur of modern piano playing and say, without the least apology: "There, you have been wrong all along. *This* is how Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven should sound."

Lest this statement give the impression of removing the shoe and banging it on the conference table, some explanation is in order. I would not wish to be without the great recordings of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven sonatas made on modern pianos. But there are certain things the finest pianist cannot do on a modern Steinway that these composers require him to do; and there are many more things he does that they never meant for him to do. (Bilson's article in *Early Music*, April 1980, explains many of these things well; an introduction to the crucially different mechanism and action of the fortepiano should be found in standard reference works.)

On the first of these Nonesuch discs, Bilson plays two pieces Beethoven marked "*Sonata quasi una fantasia*": Op. 27, Nos. 1 and 2. Take the very opening bars of Op. 27, No. 1, in E flat. Two distinct textures are heard: simple semi-legato chords in the treble, sixteenth-note lines in the bass. A modern piano makes of this *one* sound; as soon as they enter, the overtones of the bass notes inevitably color the treble sound. But Bilson can make them absolutely independent, each perfectly characterized. Take the start of the Allegro: In what modern

performance can you hear distinctly the thick low chord and rushing notes of the first half-bar? The same is true of the start of the Adagio con espressione, all in the bass clef. Any modern pianist must artificially reduce the accompaniment to let the melody sing; Bilson doesn't need to. And ditto the final section. How often is the beginning just a series of grunts until the melody emerges in the treble? Here, the varied returns to this rondo theme are crystal-clear, every sixteenth punched out crisply.

Now all this might be dismissed if the piano sounded awful. Bilson's instrument—a modern copy by Philip Belt of a Louis Dulcken piano in the Smithsonian Institution—sounds good, with none of the unevenness and jarring noises that often afflict restored originals. More important, Bilson does not give a performance just to show off the instrument; his is an interpretation that grows naturally out of it. In the much-abused *Moonlight*, he shows clarity and originality of thought. The triplets of the opening are the essence of the piece, not an accompaniment. There's no nonsense about keeping the sustaining pedal open throughout (he never puts theories above musical sense); the harmonies are beautifully controlled. Then, in the Presto, the same triplets are transformed into arpeggios—and they are not a wash of sound; every note is heard separately, even when the rapid motion moves into the bass. (Again here, note the definition of registers: no confusion.)

Two general points emerge in this movement that are important in all the works recorded here. The fortepiano can make a real sforzando—the note struck really hard, the sound dying away immediately—in a way that the modern piano, with its built-in sustaining power, finds difficult. (So here, the massive chord on the last beat of the bar doesn't cloud what follows.) And on the fortepiano, the performer can play full-out fortissimos, especially in the bass, without fear of ruining the balance; no careful adjustment is necessary.

This last point becomes vital in the Mozart performances on this disc (the two rondos) and on the other Nonesuch record (the F major and B flat major Sonatas). Every great pianist scales down his Mozart on the grand piano, and as a result a quite distorted impression of restrained feeling emerges. Bilson, instead, gives sharply etched, hard-edged accounts that make fortes sound like fortes. Other fortepianists have recorded the A minor Rondo: Badura-Skoda, on a disc Telefunken released in its "original instruments" series (6.42425) plays it on an original 1790 Schantz piano; but it sounds clumsy, the accompaniment figures banal, the melodies uneven, when compared with Bilson's eloquent reading. There are moments here in which music, instrument, and performer come together in a quite miraculous way: when the treble triplets of the middle section (not an entirely different sound from that of the grand piano) flow down into the deepest bass register with an utterly unfamiliar clarity and expressiveness; or when in the closing bars the tenor sings out the unearthly dissonance of a minor ninth against the bass. And for once, each little detail of articulation Mozart wrote into the score can be heard and makes sense.

For Mozart and Haydn, Bilson uses another Belt reproduction, of a Mozart instrument by Anton Walter housed in Salzburg. This is a remarkable fortepiano, absolutely even in touch, able to sing freely yet with a reedy power at the climaxes that hits the listener fiercely. I suppose a singing quality is what most people treasure in a Steinway or a Bösendorfer. Yet there is a difference, as Bilson reminds us, between an Isolde singer and a Despina singer, and may not the same analogy be drawn with pianos? The Bilson recordings of K. 332 and 333 (which Alan Tyson has recently redated 1783–84) prove that the fortepiano can sing, beautifully. The unfolding of K. 333's first movement is gentle and deftly controlled; the extraordinary modulation that opens the second half of the slow movement is breathtaking; and the fully developed concerto form of the last movement, complete with cadenza, is sparkling but always pungent—never merely pretty. In K. 332 the crisp alternations of piano and forte are a delight; the slow movement, played with the elaborations of the first printed edition, is rhapsodically moving; and the finale is exhilarating. (But where on earth does Bilson get the scrunches on the syncopated notes, bars 167–8?)

Steven Lubin, who plays these same two Mozart sonatas on the Spectrum recording, is no less musical in his approach. Yet he sometimes misunderstands Mozart, I think, as when he broadens and pedals the chord sequences in the first movement of K. 332 where they move across the beat from three-in-a-bar to two. And alas, his piano is a poor instrument, shrill at the top and clangy—just the sort of thing to alienate a conventional pianist. He clearly has great talent; I hope he can soon acquire a better fortepiano.

The merits of Bilson's two Haydn discs—released by the outstandingly adventurous (if ill-named) Titanic Records, which has a fine catalog of original-instrument recordings—need little emphasis. Once again, the clarity of the music and the sense of scale in the performance benefit from the choice of instrument. This is the first time I have heard the jolly finale of the E minor Sonata sound anything but pert; the finale of the B minor, with its tense octaves, is positively frightening. The jokey major/minor alternations of the F major are here forcefully done, and the wonderful first movement of the C minor (like those in the Mozart sonatas, a highly unusual treatment of sonata form) is superbly paced, rising to a powerful climax in the development. Bilson treats Haydn quite coolly; there's no exaggerated humor, and the yearning sequences (in the first-movement developments of the A major and E minor) are highlighted with a precise, restrained use of rubato.

Perhaps as Bilson goes on with these recordings—and I hope the two companies are planning long series but not pushing him to record too much too soon (a new Nonesuch Beethoven disc is scheduled for March release)—he will take more risks, be a little more flamboyant in his articulation and phrasing, especially in Haydn. Still, these recordings are likely to win wide acceptance as first-rate performances of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven; and that, I think, is a breakthrough. On this evidence, the fortepiano is an instrument whose time has come.

BEETHOVEN: Sonatas for Keyboard: No. 13, in E flat, Op. 27, No. 1; No. 14, in C sharp minor, Op. 27, No. 2 (*Moonlight*). MOZART: Rondos: in D, K. 485; in A minor, K. 511.

R Malcolm Bilson, fortepiano. [Janet Shapiro, prod.] NONESUCH H 71377, $5.98 [from ADVENT cassette E 1056, 1977].

MOZART: Sonatas for Keyboard: No. 12, in F, K. 332; No. 13, in B flat, K. 333.

Malcolm Bilson, fortepiano and prod. NONESUCH N 78004, $8.98.

B Steven Lubin, fortepiano. SPECTRUM SR 125, $4.50. Tape: SC 225, $4.50 (cassette). (Add $1.50 for shipping; Spectrum, Harriman, N.Y. 10926.)

HAYDN: Sonatas for Keyboard, Vols. 1*–2†.

Malcolm Bilson, fortepiano. [Ralph Dopmeyer, prod.] TITANIC TI 51*/2†, $9.00 each [*from ADVENT cassette E 1068, 1979].

Sonatas: No. 31, in A flat†; No. 33, in C minor*; No. 35, in A flat*; No. 38, in F*; No. 41, in A†; No. 47, in B minor*; No. 53, in E minor†.

GIUSTINI: Sonatas for Keyboard, Vols. 1*–2†.

Mieczyslaw Horszowski, fortepiano. [David Parker* and Laurence Libin†, prod.] TITANIC TI 78*/9†, $9.00 each.

Sonatas: No. 1, in G minor*; No. 2, in C minor†; No. 4, in E minor*; No. 5, in D†; No. 7, in G*; No. 9, in C†; No. 10, in F minor*.

Classical Reviews

reviewed by	*Allan Kozinn*
John Canarina	*Paul Henry Lang*
Scott Cantrell	*Irving Lowens*
Kenneth Cooper	*Robert C. Marsh*
R. D. Darrell	*Karen Monson*
Kenneth Furie	*Robert P. Morgan*
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R. Derrick Henry	*Paul A. Snook*
Nicholas Kenyon	*Susan Thiemann Sommer*

Anne-Sophie Mutter: Golden tone and consummate technique

BACH: Organ Works.

A Hans Otto, organ of the Freiberg (East Germany) Cathedral. [Reimar Bluth and Yoshiharu Kawaguchi, prod.] DENON OX 7184-ND, $15 (digital recording; distributed by Discwasher).

Prelude and Fugue, in G minor, S. 535; Prelude and Fugue, in C, S. 545; Toccata and Fugue, in D minor, S. 565; Fantasy in C, S. 570; Fugue in G minor, S. 578; Schübler Chorales (6), S. 645–50; Trios: in D minor, S. 583; in C minor, S. 585.

A Michael Murray, organ of Methuen Memorial Music Hall, Methuen, Mass. [Robert Woods, prod.] TELARC DG 10049, $17.98 (digital recording; distributed by Audio-Technica).

Toccata in F, S. 540; Fantasy and Fugue, in G minor, S. 542; Passacaglia and Fugue, in C minor, S. 582; Chorale Preludes: Alle Menschen müssen sterben, S. 643; Vater unser im Himmelreich, S. 737.

It is often said that Bach's organ music sounds best on the instruments of the turn-of-the-eighteenth-century North German "school," the work of Arp Schnitger being representative. In fact, Bach spent all his adult life in Saxony, and the instruments he knew best were products of a very different tradition, combining the delicacy of South German organs with colorful reeds and cornets inspired by French models. Completed in 1714, the organ of Freiberg Cathedral is a distinguished exemplar of the style; it is, in fact, the creation of a builder whose work Bach knew intimately: Gottfried Silbermann.

Captured in a recording both transparent and spacious, it sounds mightily impressive, and its unequal temperament and flexible wind system bring new life—and, indeed, *humanity*—to the music. Organist Hans Otto acquits himself well, too; though not exactly revelatory, his interpretations are thoroughly accomplished and often engaging. There are some odd stops and starts in the D minor Fugue, but he projects the musical rhetoric of the G minor Prelude and Fugue, S. 535, with admirable power. Throughout, his articulation has a nice liveliness, and his willingness to stretch the pulse to shape phrases is welcome. How gratifying it is, too, to be given the performer's registrations as well as the organ specification!

With the Methuen organ (Walcker, 1857–63; Aeolian-Skinner, 1946–47; Andover, 1970–71), of course, historical authenticity does not enter; but as comparison with the Silbermann record reveals, the new-world sonorities are not exactly worlds removed from what Bach knew. I cannot, alas, warm to Michael Murray's rather unremarkable 1950s-style interpretations, which in no way acknowledge the last twenty years' research into baroque keyboard performance practices. What we get is a speeded-up reincarnation of Murray's teacher, Marcel Dupré, cloaked in that preposterous notion of an "unbroken performance tradition" from Bach—by way of Forkel, Hesse, Lemmens, and Widor.

The playing is all very neat and fluent, to be sure, but the monotonous nineteenth-century legato is relieved only by "hiccup" articulation of repeated notes (as in the countersubject of the passacaglia's concluding fugue), and the registrations are decidedly outgrowths of modern combination actions. Even those less offended by such details may find Murray's rigidly metronomic G minor Fantasy hard to swallow. Here the boldness of the improvisatory flourishes becomes mere formula; an artisan's individual masterpiece is parodied as a machine-stamped K-Mart special. More's the pity in that the recorded sound is so awesomely lifelike and the production lives up to Telarc's standard. S.C.

BEETHOVEN: Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, in D, Op. 61.

Anne-Sophie Mutter, violin; Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Herbert von Karajan, cond. [Michel Glotz and Günther Breest, prod.] DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2531 250, $9.98. Tape: 3301 250, $9.98 (cassette).

Anne-Sophie Mutter, Karajan's latest find, is now seventeen. DG's liner notes remind us that Joachim (in 1844) and Menuhin (in the 1920s) gave memorable performances of this work at even earlier ages, and the point is well taken; if parts of this impeccably phrased, and at times insightful, performance suggest a Trilby/Svengali relationship between soloist and conductor, the totality leaves no doubt that Mutter's great talent fully deserves the conductor's (and DG's) trust. My only quibbles pertain to a certain static, overly careful formality in parts of the first two movements. The violin playing is golden-toned, superbly schooled, and consummate from any technical standpoint. Though her interpretation will doubtless develop as she matures (her live broadcast performance with the European Youth Orchestra at the

B Budget
H Historical
R Reissue
A Audiophile (digital, direct-to-disc, etc.)

Critics' Choice

The most noteworthy releases reviewed recently

BACH: English and French Suites, S. 806–17. Curtis. TELEFUNKEN 46.35452 (4), Jan.

BARTÓK: Bluebeard's Castle, Op. 11. Sass, Kováts, Solti. LONDON OSA 1174, Jan.

BEETHOVEN: Triple Concerto, Op. 56. Mutter, Ma, Zeltser, Karajan. DG 2531 262, Sept.

BERG: Lulu: Suite. Der Wein. Blegen, Norman, Boulez. CBS M 35849, Jan.

BRAHMS: Double Concerto, Op. 102. Perlman, Rostropovich, Haitink. ANGEL SZ 37680, Dec.

DVOŘÁK: Symphony No. 7, Op. 70. Philadelphia, Ormandy. RCA RED SEAL ARL 1-3555, Nov.

GRIEG: Works for String Orchestra. Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, Tønnesen. BIS LP 147, Nov.

HANDEL: Sonatas for Two Oboes and Continuo (6). Holliger, Bourgue, Jaccottet. PHILIPS 9500 671, Dec.

HAYDN: Symphonies Nos. 97, 98. New York Philharmonic, Bernstein. CBS M 35844, Oct.

JANÁČEK: Diary of One Who Vanished. Márová, Přibyl, Páleníček. SUPRAPHON 1112 2414, Nov.

JANÁČEK: Fate. Hajóssyová, Přibyl, Jílek. SUPRAPHON 1112 2011/2 (2), Oct.

LISZT: Hungarian Rhapsodies (7). Various. ARABESQUE 8011, Dec.

MASSENET: Le Roi de Lahore. Sutherland, Lima, Milnes, Bonynge. LONDON 3LDR 10025 (3), Jan.

MOZART: Eine kleine Nachtmusik, K. 525; Ein musikalischer Spass, K. 522. Amadeus. DG 2531 253, Dec.

OFFENBACH: Suites for Two Cellos (2), Op. 54. Peclard, Pidoux. HARMONIA MUNDI FRANCE HM 1043, Nov.

PURCELL: Music for a While. Deller, Christie. HARMONIA MUNDI FRANCE HM 249, Jan.

RUGGLES: Complete Works. Thomas, Kirkpatrick. CBS M2 34591 (2), Oct.

SCHOENBERG: Orchestral Works. BBC Symphony, Boulez. CBS M 35882, Jan.

SCHUBERT: Piano Sonatas (2), D 571, 625. Tirimo. SAGA 5469, Nov.

SCHUBERT: Symphony No. 7, in E (arr. Weingartner). Berlin Radio, Rögner. SPECTRUM SR 116, Aug.

SHOSTAKOVICH: Symphony No. 4, Op. 43. London Philharmonic, Haitink. LONDON CS 7160, Nov.

SOLER: Keyboard Works. Puyana. MERCURY SRI 75131, Dec.

ARTHUR FIEDLER: Forever Fiedler. RCA CRL 3-3599 (3), Sept.

FERNANDO DE LUCIA: The Gramophone Company Recordings, 1902–9. RUBINI RS 305 (5), Dec.

1980 Salzburg Festival showed somewhat more abandon), this performance already joins the select ones of this much rendered masterpiece.

Karajan directs with a stronger, more purposeful hand than in his previous recording with Christian Ferras (DG 139 021). The close miking powerfully reproduces the Berlin Philharmonic's ravishing sonority—such purity of woodwind color, such mellow horn tone!

Mutter plays Kreisler's cadenza in the first movement. And one curious detail: As she did in her Salzburg performance, she bows two notes in the Rondo usually played with left-hand pizzicato. **H.G.**

BEETHOVEN: Sonatas for Keyboard, Op. 27 (2). For a review, see page 61.

BEETHOVEN: Trio for Clarinet, Cello, and Piano, in B flat, Op. 11. For a review, see page 59.

BRAHMS: Trios (6). For a review, see page 59.

GIUSTINI: Sonatas for Keyboard (7). For a review, see page 61.

HANDEL: Harpsichord Works.

Luciano Sgrizzi, harpsichord. MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY MHS 4183/4, $13.90 ($9.90 to members) (two discs) (add $1.25 for shipping; Musical Heritage Society, 14 Park Rd., Tinton Falls, N.J. 07724).

Suites: Vol. 2: No. 4, in D minor; No. 5, in E minor; No. 6, in G minor; No. 7, in B flat; No. 8, in G. Sonatas: in C (2); in A minor. Capriccios: in F; in G minor. Prelude, Allemande, and Courante, in C minor. Aria in A. Prelude and Allegro in G minor.

Zuzana Růžičková, harpsichord. [Milan Slavický, prod.] SUPRAPHON 1111 2491/2, $17.96 (two discs).

Suites: Vol. 1, No. 2, in F; Vol. 2: No. 4, in D minor; No. 7, in B flat; No. 8, in G. Sonatas: in C; in G minor. Preludes and Allegros: in G minor; in A minor. Fantasia in C. Fugue in A minor. Concerto in G. Air in B flat. Air with Variations.

Handel's keyboard music was for years so completely overshadowed by the harpsichord works of his contemporaries J. S. Bach and Domenico Scarlatti—and by his own vocal music—that it was rarely heard either on disc or in concert. This has changed dramatically over the past seven or eight years, however; there is now a substantial number of recordings by such major artists as Igor Kipnis, Malcolm Hamilton, and Glenn Gould, and this is all to the good, as the music is uncommonly interesting. Although generally less complex than Bach's and less flashy than Scarlatti's, Handel's keyboard fare is nonetheless brilliant—full of textural inventiveness and expressive variety.

These sets overlap on roughly half of the contents. (Although the common pieces are few, they are lengthy.) Luciano Sgrizzi offers far the more successful readings, with strong forward impetus in the faster numbers and subtlety and restraint in the slower ones. Especially telling is his rhythmic flexibility, which lends an effective give and take to the musical flow without any sacrifice of metrical control. His ornamentation—so important to this music, which sometimes more resembles a sketch for improvisation than a finished composition—is consistently tasteful and varied.

Zuzana Růžičková, on the other hand, seems stiff, imparting to these works an inappropriate heaviness and rigidity. Technically she performs more than adequately, but she keeps the music from breathing sufficiently. Her ornamentation is considerably less generous than Sgrizzi's, and what there is seems unimaginative and predictable. Especially regrettable is her fondness for dotted rhythms, applied with mechanical consistency.

Both sets provide notes on the music. Musical Heritage's include information on the provenance of the individual pieces; Supraphon's are confined to generalities about Handel's clavier oeuvre, and they contain an anachronistic gaffe unforgivable in such a release: a reference to Handel's "piano" style. Unfortunately, there's no information at all about the performers, neither well known in this country. **R.P.M.**

HAYDN: L'Incontro improvviso.

CAST:

Rezia	Linda Zoghby (s)
Balkis	Margaret Marshall (s)
Dardane	Della Jones (ms)
Ali	Claes H. Ahnsjö (t)
Osmin	Domenico Trimarchi (b)
Calandro	Benjamin Luxon (b)
Sultan/Second Underdervish	Jonathan Prescott (bs)
An Official/First Underdervish	James Hooper (bs)
Third Underdervish	Nicolas Scarpinati (bs)

Lausanne Chamber Orchestra, Antal Dorati, cond. PHILIPS 6769 040, $29.94 (three discs, manual sequence).

L'Incontro improvviso (*The Unforeseen Encounter*, 1775), Haydn's sixth opera, is certainly one of the finest buffa operas in the classical literature. The original manuscript, lost and only recently rediscovered by the distinguished Danish musicologist J. P. Larsen—in, of all places, Leningrad—formed the basis for the 1962 published score used in this recording. *L'Incontro* is an "abduction" or "Turkish" opera, a genre

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very popular in the second half of the eighteenth century. Gluck wrote one, eventually entitled *The Pilgrims of Mecca*, and the libretto of Haydn's opera was actually derived from Gluck's. The best known of these Turkish operas is of course Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio*, which followed Haydn's by seven years, but Mozart could not have known the earlier work.

One is always amazed at Haydn's thorough familiarity with Italian operatic tradition, style, and idiom and his felicitous setting of Italian texts; after all, he never visited the melodious peninsula. But then, as conductor of the Esterházy court opera, he often performed works by Piccinni, Paisiello, and Galuppi. The spirit of the Italian buffa is everywhere in this work, always expressed with classical elegance; the music is fine-grained, tingling and brilliant without being flashy. Like his great younger friend and colleague, Haydn goes much beyond the simple amusement offered by the Italians. He knows that the jest will misfire if overdone, and there is no horseplay—though, to be sure, there is a great deal of fun.

The buffa and the oft-told story of the abduction afford a small world, but Haydn enlarges its horizon. Alongside the tripping buffo patter there are, as in Mozart's *Entführung*, occasional ascents to the highest spheres of opera. Also, this serene artist with the twinkling eyes can be ironical, mocking the opera seria and even himself. Like Mozart, he demands far more elaborate singing than was customary in the Italian buffa, and his demands on the orchestra are similarly exacting; this orchestra does not merely accompany with needlework finesse, but is a partner, a member of the cast. No Italian, except perhaps Rossini (who in his comic operas was still an eighteenth-century classicist), could match Haydn's handling of the orchestra—and Rossini learned it from him.

Interestingly, notwithstanding the "Gluckian reform," most of the arias—even the duets—are in da capo form, and the "proscribed" secco recitatives flourish in abundance. The overture was missing from the manuscript. Helmut Wirth, the able editor of the modern score, added a Sinfonia in D (Hob. Ia:6), and he plausibly argues here that it is the missing prelude; at any rate, it is a spanking good piece that fits the case. Needless to say, the paraphernalia of Turkish (or Janissary) music, cymbals, drums, and triangle, are present, though Haydn's Turkish music (like Mozart's Alla turca in the A major Piano Sonata) is wholly fictitious and sounds suspiciously Hungarian to me. He often picked up folk elements when roaming the fields around Esterháza with his dog and fowling piece.

The work's forty-seven numbers show great variety. The buffo canzonettas are delightfully amusing, but the heroine's big seria arias are pure music-drama, like much of the Countess' music in *Figaro*. Also in the seria vein, there are pensive pieces alongside coloratura ones. And there is a sophisticated takeoff on martial music (No. 30), with trumpets and drums. The ensembles, all masterpieces, include a very funny nonsensical duet between two baritones, other duets in pure, languorous bel canto, and a burnished vignette of a trio for the three women in Act I (No. 12), partly unaccompanied. The three finales are as impetuous as they are remarkably constructed. They start in a leisurely, conversational manner, the dialogue lightly distributed among the protagonists, with a most attractive feeling of *laissez-aller* in pace and tone. Then the textures begin to solidify, the tempos become animated, and the finales end in the customary whirling jubilation.

The performance is superb and absorbing. Antal Dorati is in full command, and the mobile, accurate little orchestra follows him readily. He stays remarkably close to the changing moods; in particular, the fine heroicomic accompanied recitatives show dramatic flexibility and the seccos, not in 4/4 time, flow naturally. The embellishments are tasteful and always within bounds. Only the continuo, though fulfilling its function, is somewhat questionable. It is not necessary, especially in recordings, to use both cello *and* doublebass; it muddies the sound. But the main trouble is that many of our harpsichordists still feel called upon to belabor the continuo with a lot of irrelevant frills, whereas they need only support and guide inconspicuously. Dorati arpeggiates too much; an arpeggio at the beginning of a recitative is fine—it settles the pitch unmistakably for the singer—but thereafter, crisp chords are in order. And the cello should be as "dry" as the harpsichord and not linger behind.

The outstanding cast could not be more compatible. All three sopranos are superb: Linda Zoghby (Rezia) has a full and ringing voice, but she can also execute limpid legatos and pianos; Margaret Marshall (Balkis) is an accomplished coloratura, who takes the difficult roulades and sudden high notes accurately; and Della Jones (Dardane) is equally good, although her diction could be better. Mellifluous tenor Claes Ahnsjö (Ali) articulates and enunciates beautifully, and his bel canto is warm and communicative; only a single high falsetto tone escapes him uncontrolled. Baritone Domenico Trimarchi (Osmin) sings and acts in the best Italian buffo tradition, without ever falling into slapstick. Benjamin Luxon (Ca-

landro) employs his noble baritone with fine musicality. All supporting roles are more than adequately filled.

Osmin's role, allotted in the score to a tenor, here falls to a baritone. I have no quarrel with the transposition, probably made by association with Mozart's Osmin. At any rate, the traditional buffo role almost always goes to a bass, and it comes off much better theatrically in that vocal range.

The sound is very good—a little too good, in fact. It is close, too forward, and a bit insistent, but the shrillness in the high tones can be avoided by attenuating the treble. The learned Wirth provides excellent notes. P.H.L.

HAYDN: Sonatas for Keyboard (7).
For a review, see page 61.

HOLST: The Planets, Op. 32.

A Scottish National Orchestra, Alexander Gibson, cond. [Robert Matthew Walker, prod.] CHANDOS ABRD 1010, $15.98 (digital recording). Tape: ABTD 1010, $15.98 (cassette). (Distributed by Brilly Imports, 155 N. San Vicente Blvd., Beverly Hills, Calif. 90211.)

COMPARISONS:

Haitink/London Phil.	Phi. 6500 072
Marriner/Concertgebouw	Phi. 9500 425

An early digital recording of Holst's symphonic showpiece is no surprise. What's unexpected is its provenance—a Scottish performance for the British Chandos series sponsored by the Bank of Scotland. Also noteworthy is the seeming ease with which the engineering overcomes the new technology's main weaknesses (excessive sharpening of *ff* high-register tones and an arid ambient chilliness), while exploiting its most characteristic strength (a revelatory lucidity of even the most complex sonic textures). My familiarity with the digitally recorded repertory is still limited, but all-round, this is the most satisfactory disc example I've heard. (I haven't yet heard the cassette edition.) Sonically, it is also the most spectacular, with more brazen bite, white-hot incandescence, and shattering impact in climaxes than any previous *Planets* recording, including Solti's powerful recent one (London CS 7110). Yet it also is remarkable for its pianissimos and pellucidities—not least in the long-extended choral morendo into inaudibility at the work's indefinable ending.

The extensive double-folder jacket notes (by Malcolm Walker) are richly informative about the music, conductor, and orchestra. But tantalizingly, they say nothing about the specific recording system and equipment used, merely (albeit deservedly) crediting artistic director and sound engineer Brian Couzens and digital recording engineer Ralph Couzens.

Sonically, then, this is a *Planets* that no Holstian and no audiophile can afford to miss. As an orchestral performance, it stands up very well. As an interpretation, Sir Alexander's is one of the better ones, if scarcely the best. He is, of course, mightily aided by the digital technology, but also slightly handicapped, with just too vivid a sonic presence, too searching a transparency, to achieve the full impressionistic magic—let alone the putative mysticism—of the quieter passages. The reading is often too matter-of-fact; Gibson never rises to Haitink's magisterial heights of eloquence or matches Boult's bluff heartiness or Marriner's poetic grace. But his fierce drive and thunderous climaxes—further energized by the incalculable powers of digitalism—are more than a match even for Solti. And at least in the "Jupiter" movement, he does as well as, if not better than, anyone, with both its rowdy gusto and fast-flowing, fervently songful, unforgettable Andante maestoso tune, which in England has shared the fate of *Land of Hope and Glory*: degeneration into a patriotic hymn, "I vow to thee, my country."

Even while transfixed by these potent sonic thrills, I cling steadfastly to my preference for the 1970 Haitink version. Nor would I want to be without the more uneven but fine 1978 Marriner account (especially in its Barclay-Crocker open-reel edition). And I'm eagerly anticipating American release of the latest, by EMI, of the many recordings by the *Planets'* earliest and uniquely authoritative proponent, Sir Adrian Boult. Nevertheless, this Gibson disc is in a class by itself. R.D.D.

KORNGOLD: Schauspiel-Ouvertüre, Op. 4. For a review, see page 57.

MOZART: Sonatas for Keyboard, Nos. 12, 13; Rondos (2). For a review, see page 61.

MOZART: Symphonies: No. 38, in D, K. 504 (*Prague*); No. 39, in E flat, K. 543.

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Karl Böhm, cond. [Werner Mayer, prod.] DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2531 206, $9.98. Tape: 3301 206, $9.98 (cassette).

MOZART: Symphonies: No. 36, in C, K. 425 (*Linz*); No. 38, in D, K. 504 (*Prague*).

Mostly Mozart Orchestra, Jean-Pierre Rampal, cond. [David Mottley, prod.] CBS MASTERWORKS M 35840, $8.98. Tape: MT 35840, $8.98 (cassette).

MOZART: Symphonies: No. 25, in G minor, K. 183; No. 29, in A, K. 201; No. 32, in G, K. 318.

R London Symphony Orchestra, Colin Davis, cond. PHILIPS FESTIVO 6570 207, $6.98. Tape: 7310 207, $6.98 (cassette). [From PHILIPS PHS 900 133, 1967.]

MOZART: Symphonies: No. 29, in A, K. 201*; No. 39, in E flat, K. 543*.

R Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Ferenc Fricsay, cond. [Hans Weber and *Otto Gerdes, prod.] DG PRIVILEGE 2535 130, $6.98. Tape: 3335 130, $6.98 (cassette). [From DG 138 125*/709*, 1960-62.]

MOZART: Symphonies: No. 31, in D, K. 297 (*Paris*); No. 32, in G, K. 318; No. 35, in D, K. 385 (*Haffner*).

R Stuttgart Klassische Philharmonie, Karl Münchinger, cond. LONDON TREASURY STS 15529, $5.98 [from LONDON CS 6625, 1970].

Karl Böhm's remake of the late Mozart symphonies continues with Nos. 38 and 39 in spacious, majestic, big-orchestra performances that recognize their inherent operatic character. The *Prague* gets off on the wrong foot with the horns slightly anticipating the opening attack, but that out of the way, a most imposing introduction leads into the moderately paced, dignified Allegro, complete with exposition repeat. Rarely taken, this repeat gives an added dimension to the movement—and a length of well over thirteen minutes, making it one of Mozart's longest symphonic movements. The Andante, a bit slow, flows gently nonetheless, and the finale, also with repeat, is genial and unhurried—not as rollicking as it might be, yet firmly controlled and successful in the context.

Böhm's E flat is similar in tempos and general approach, but he takes only one repeat, the short one at the beginning of the Andante. In that movement he lingers needlessly on the first pair of eighth notes in the opening phrase and in each of its repetitions. And after a stately minuet, his finale just doesn't scintillate; what works in the *Prague* doesn't work here: A fleeter tempo is needed to keep the running violin passages from sounding like exercises.

Jean-Pierre Rampal's recorded conducting debut offers another *Prague*, one that also includes the exposition repeats in the outer movements. He is the first conductor I've heard since Klemperer to separate the first and second violins in Mozart symphonies. (Klemperer, of course, did this in all repertory.) An old saw holds that the second violins project better when grouped with the firsts because their F holes then face the audience; this is utter nonsense. When separated from the firsts, the seconds invariably emerge as a distinct section in their own right, not merely as a shadow of the firsts. And so they emerge under Rampal. In none of the other recordings here can they be heard so clearly, regardless of microphone placement.

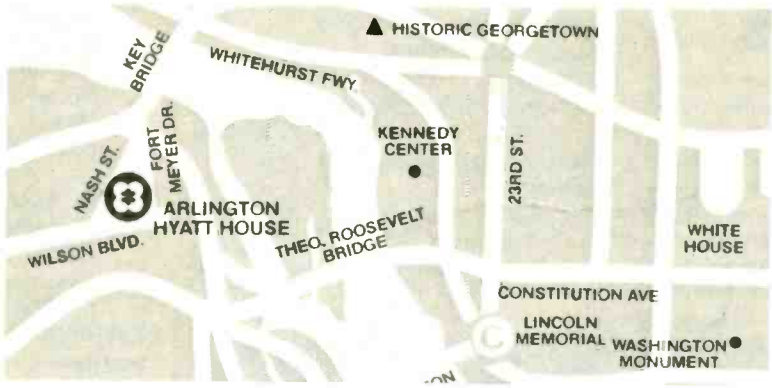
As for performance, the *Prague*'s first movement is more bracing than Böhm's, though Rampal slows for the second theme; with his slower basic tempo, Böhm doesn't have to. Rampal, too, takes the finale at a safe, comfortable tempo that falls short of the Presto marking. The recording makes the first violins sound as though they are out in short left field, with many of their softer details buried in the orchestral fabric.

Rampal's *Linz* is more successful, with a really arresting opening and a nicely alert and flowing Allegro spiritoso (without repeat). The Minuet (too brisk) and the Trio (too slow) sound like two different pieces, and the pauses between them only emphasize the disparity. The finale (with repeat) could also be swifter but is convincing. The Mostly Mozart Orchestra plays very well in the *Prague*, excellently in the *Linz*. Reservations aside, these are most appealing renditions. Now I suppose we can look forward to "James Galway Conducts Mozart."

Colin Davis' 1967 performances are outstanding. No. 29's first movement

THE VENERABLE WASHINGTON HI FI SHOW MOVES ACROSS THE POTOMAC

The oldest established audio exposition in the United States is moving to its fifth location in February. First presented in 1954, the Washington Hi Fi Stereo Music Show in 1981 is staying well within the metropolitan area, but is moving across the Potomac to the highrise business center of Rosslyn, Virginia, within easy sight of the downtown of the nation's capital. The show will be in the recently built Hyatt Arlington, chosen because of convenient parking and a major Metro subway station across the street.



Most of the five floors of exhibit rooms in the Washington Hi Fi Show, which runs Friday, Saturday and Sunday, February 6-7-8, will be occupied by manufacturers. But, in accordance with principles established from its beginnings 27 years ago, selected retailers participate and are encouraged to sell—either taking orders for delivery from their stores or allowing customers to take their selections with them right from the show floors.

In keeping with trends in the industry, sophisticated video components will be demonstrated at the Hyatt Arlington, including the first Washington showing of Pioneer's Laserdisc system with its stereo audio capabilities. Advent expects to have a first display of its newest big-screen video models, and video cassette recorders will be shown in depth.

Washington will get its first sight and sound of Infinity's $20,000 IRS Speaker System, which made a substantial impression at its first showing at the San Francisco Hi Fi Show last November. Other audio products to be introduced include a new dbx 20/20 equalizer, and a tone arm invented locally by Herbert Papier of Wheaton Music in nearby Maryland. Steremote will also make its Washington debut.

The High Fidelity Music Shows, as they were originally called, were founded by and are still produced by M. Robert Rogers and Teresa Rogers. They have operated in major markets nationwide since 1964. After Washington, the 1981 schedule includes New York, October 2-3-4, and Los Angeles, November 20-21-22.

RECENT RECORD RELEASES

The following listings are excerpts from the "New Listings" section of the January Schwann Record and Tape Guide. Some listings contain a cross-reference (†) to other works on the recording. Letters in brackets refer to language used in vocal music (G, German; E, English, etc.). Cassette editions are indicated by the symbol ●. Quadriphonic discs are indicated by a Q following the record number; digital discs are indicated by a D following the record number.

AUBER, DANIEL-FRANÇOIS
Manon Lescaut (1856)
Mesplé, Orliac, Runge, Bisson, Marty, French Radio Orch. Lyrique & Cho. [F] 3-Ara. **8059L;** ●9059L

BACH, JOHANN SEBASTIAN
Bach Program
Gould: Goldberg Var.—Aria; Little Preludes in C, S.933, c, S.934, C, S.924; 2-Part Inventions Nos. 1,8,4,14; Partita No. 1—Minuets & Gigue; English Suite No. 3—Gavottes; Well-tempered Clavier, Bk 1—Nos. 21,5,1; French Suite No. 5—Gavotte, Bourree, Gigue; Fughetta in c; 2-part Inventions Nos. 10,3,13,6,15; French Suite No. 3—Minuet & Trio; French Suite No. 6—Minuet, Bourree, Gigue; English Suite No. 2—Bourrees & Gigue
Col. **M-36672;** ●MT-36672

BARBER, SAMUEL
Adagio for Strings (from Quartet, Op. 11)
Munch, Boston Sym. † Elgar:Intro.; Tchaikovsky:Ser. Op. 48
RCA **AGL1-3790;** ●AGK1-3790

BEETHOVEN, LUDWIG VAN
Overtures
W. Richter, London Pro Musica Sym. (Egmont, Coriolan) † Sym. 5
CMS/Sum. **1007;** ●41007
Sonatas (32) for Piano
No. 8 in c, Op. 13, "Pathétique"
Drescher † Son. 21
CMS/Sum. **1089;** ●41089
No. 21 in C, Op. 53, "Waldstein"
Drescher † Son. 8
CMS/Sum. **1089;** ●41089
Symphonies
No. 5 in c, Op. 67
W. Richter, London Pro Musica Sym. † Overtures
CMS/Sum. **1007;** ●41007

BENNETT, ROBERT RUSSELL
Second Sonatina, for Piano (1951)
Kaye † Gould; MacDowell
GC **4195 (D)**

BLOCH, ERNEST
Poems of the Sea, for Piano (1922); Five Sketches in Sepia (1923)
Corbató † MacDowell:Sonata
Orion **80383**
Quintet for Piano & Strings
Johannesen, New World Qr
GC **4193 (D)**

BOCCHERINI, LUIGI
Quintet in e for Guitar & Strings, Op. 50, No. 3
Böttner, Kehr Qr † Haydn:Qr in D
Turn. **37014;** ●CT-7014

BRAHMS, JOHANNES
Liebeslieder Waltzes, Op. 52, 65
LA Vocal Arts Ens., Guzelimian, Herrera [G] None. **79008 (D)**
Quartets (3) (complete)
Guarneri Qr † Schumann:Qrs Op. 41
3-RCA **ARL3-3834;** ●ARK3-3834

CHOPIN, FRÉDÉRIC
Concerto No. 1 in e for Piano, Op. 11
Perahia, Mehta, NY Phil.
Col. **M-35893;** ●MY-35893
Sonata in g for Cello & Piano, Op. 65
Drinkall, Lozano † Grieg:Sonata
Orion **80387**

DVOŘÁK, ANTONÍN
Concerto in a for Violin, Op. 53
Accardo, Davis, Concertgebouw Orch. † Romance

Phi. **9500406;** ●7300614

Quartets in D, Op. 23; E♭, Op. 87 (piano)
Firkusny, Juilliard Qr
2-Col. **MG-35913**

Romance for Violin & Orchestra, Op. 11
Accardo, Davis, Concertgebouw Orch. † Vn Con.
Phi. **9500406;** ●7300614

Symphony No. 9 in e, Op. 95, "New World"
A. Davis , Phil. Orch.
Col. **M-35834;** ●MT-35834

ELGAR, EDWARD

Introduction & Allegro for Strings, Op. 47
Munch, Boston Sym. † Barber:Adagio; Tchaikovsky:Ser. Op. 48
RCA **AGL1-3790;** ●AGK1-3790

FAURÉ, GABRIEL

Pelléas et Mélisande, Op. 80
Zinman, Rotterdam Phil. † Schoenberg:Pelleas; Sibelius:Pelléas
2-Phi. **6769045**

GOULD, MORTON

Sonata No. 3 for Piano (1936)
Kaye † R. Russell Bennett; MacDowell GC **4195 (D)**

GRIEG, EDVARD

Holberg Suite, Op. 40
Leppard, English Ch. Orch. † Lyric; Sigurd Phi. **9500748;** ●7300833

Lyric Suite, Op. 54
Leppard, English Ch. Orch. † Holberg; Sigurd
Phi. **9500748;** ●7300833

Sigurd Jorsalfar, Op. 56 (suite)
Leppard, English Ch. Orch. † Holberg; Lyric
Phi. **9500748;** ●7300833

Sonata in a for Cello & Piano, Op. 36
Drinkall, Lozano † Chopin:Cello Son. Orion **80387**

HAYDN, (FRANZ) JOSEPH

Concerto in E♭ for Trumpet & Orchestra
Swarowsky, Vienna Volksoper Orch. † Qr Op. 71/1
CMS/Sum. **1105;** ●41105

Quartet in D for Lute & Strings, H.III/8
Böttner, Kehr Qr † Boccherini:Qr in e Turn. **37014;** ●CT-7014

Quartets (82)

Quartets (3), Op. 71
Hamburg Wührer Qr (No. 1) † Tr Con. CMS/Sum. **1105;** ●41105

IANNACCONE, ANTHONY

Trio for Flute, Clarinet & Piano (1979)
Hill, Abramson, Jacobson † Van de Vate Orion **80386**

KABELEVSKY, DMITRI

Sonata for Cello & Piano, Op. 71 (1962)
Cooke, Watkins † Locatelli
GC **7093 (D)**

KORNGOLD, ERICH WOLFGANG

Schauspiel Ouvertüre, Op. 4 (1911)
Epstein, M.I.T. Sym. † Weill
Turn. **34760;** ●CT-2315

KUBIK, GAIL

Symphony for 2 Pianos (1949; rev. 1979); Prayer and Toccata for Organ & 2 Pianos (1969; rev. 1979)
Hambro, Swiatkowski, Raver, Hambro, Swiatkowski Orion **80372**

LISZT, FRANZ

Fantasia & Fugue on "Ad nos", for Organ
Jansen-Wedekind † Franck:Chorales; Prelude
CMS/Sum. **5048;** ●45048

LOCATELLI, PIETRO

Sonata in D for Cello & Piano (arr. Piatti, from violin sonatas Op. 6)
Cooke, Watkins † Kabelevsky
GC **7093 (D)**

MacDOWELL, EDWARD

Sonata tragica in g for Piano, Op. 45
Corbató † Bloch:Poems
Orion **80383**

Woodland sketches, Op. 51
Kaye † R. Russell Bennett; Gould
GC **4195 (D)**

MARTINŮ, BOHUSLAV

Fantaisies symphoniques (Sym. No. 6) (1951-3)
Munch, Boston Sym. † Piston:Sym. 6 RCA **AGL1-3794;** ●AGK1-3794

MASSENET, JULES

La Navarraise
Horne, Domingo, Milnes, Bacquier, Lewis, London Sym. [F]
RCA **AGL1-3793;** ●AGK1-3793

MENDELSSOHN, FELIX

Sonata in F for Violin & Piano (unpubl.)
Luca, Epperson † C. Schumann; Schumann:Son. Op. 105
None. **79007 (D)**

MOZART, WOLFGANG AMADEUS

Serenade No. 6 in D, K.239, "Serenata Notturna"
Winschermann, German Bach Soloists † Ser. 12; Ser. K.525
Ara **8077;** ●9077

Serenade No. 12 in c, Op. K.388
Winschermann, German Bach Soloists † Ser. 6; Ser. K.525
Ara. **8077;** ●9077

Serenade in G, K.525, "Eine kleine Nachtmusik"
Winschermann, German Bach Soloists † Ser. 6, 12
Ara. **8077;** ●9077

MUSSORGSKY, MODEST

Pictures at an Exhibition
Kun Woo Paik (piano)
Ara. **8073;** ●9073

PISTON, WALTER

Symphony No. 6 (1955)
Munch, Boston Sym. † Martinů
RCA **AGL1-3794;** ●AGK1-3794

ROSSINI, GIOACCHINO

Overtures
Abbado, London Sym. (Semiramide; Scala di seta; Turco in Italia; Barber of Seville; Tancredi; William Tell)
RCA **ARL1-3634;** ●ARK1-3634

SCHOENBERG, ARNOLD

Pelleas und Melisande, Op. 5
Zinman, Rotterdam Phil. † Fauré:

Pelléas; Sibelius:Pelléas
2-Phi. **6769045**

SCHUMANN, CLARA
3 Romances for Violin & Piano, Op. 22
Luca, Epperson † Mendelssohn: Son. in F; Schumann:Son. Op. 105
None. **79007 (D)**

SCHUMANN, ROBERT
Quartets (3), Op. 41 (complete)
Guarneri Qr † Brahms:Qrs
3-RCA **ARL3-3834;** ●ARK3-3834

Sonata in a for Violin & Piano, Op. 105
Luca, Epperson † Mendelssohn: Son. in F; C. Schumann
None. **79007 (D)**

SIBELIUS, JEAN
Pelléas et Mélisande, Op. 46
Zinman, Rotterdam Phil. † Fauré: Pelléas; Schoenberg:Pelleas
2-Phi. **6769045**

Symphonies (7)
No. 2 in D, Op. 43
Ormandy, Phila. Orch.
RCA **AGL1-3785;** ●AGK1-3785

SNOW, DAVID
The Passion & Transfiguration of a Post-Apocalyptic Eunuch (1978-9)
Back, Campellone, Snow
Op. One **55**

STRAUSS, RICHARD
Till Eulenspiegel, Op. 28
Kreutzer, Royal Danish Sym. † Tchaikovsky:Marche; Nutcracker Suite CMS/Sum. **1057;** ●41057

STRAVINSKY, IGOR
Le Sacre du printemps
Maazel, Cleveland Orch.
Telarc **DG-10054 (D)**

TCHAIKOVSKY, PIOTR ILYICH
Concerto No. 1 in b♭ for Piano & Orch., Op. 23
Gilels, Mehta, NY Phil. (& Bach-Siloti:Prel. in b)
Col. **IM-36660 (D);** ●HMT-36660

Manfred (symphony), Op. 58
Thomas, London Sym.
Col. **M-36673;** ●MT-36673

Marche slave, Op. 31
Kreutzer, Royal Danish Sym. † Nutcracker Suite; Strauss:Till
CMS/Sum. **1057;** ●41057

Nutcracker Suite, Op. 71A
Kreutzer, Royal Danish Sym. † Marche; Strauss:Till
CMS/Sum. **1057;** ●41057

Serenade in C for Strings, Op. 48
Munch, Boston Sym. † Barber:Adagio; Elgar:Intro.
RCA **AGL1-3790;** ●AGK1-3790

Symphony No. 3 in D, Op. 29, "Polish"
Haitink, Concertgebouw Orch.
Phi. **9500776;** ●7300850

Symphony No. 4 in f, Op. 36
Ozawa, Orch. de Paris
Ara. **8079;** ●9079

VAN DE VATE, NANCY
Music for Viola, Percussion and Piano (1976)
Johnson, Wiley, Zuckerman † Iannaccone Orion **80386**

VIVALDI, ANTONIO
Beatus Vir (Psalm 111)
Marshall, Lott, Negri (see Sacred)
3-Phi. **6769046;** ●2-7699147

Credo, R.591
Marshall, Lott, Negri (see Sacred)
3-Phi. **6769046;** ●2-7699147

Dixit Dominus, R.594
Marshall, Lott, Negri (see Sacred)
3-Phi. **6769046;** ●2-7699147

Magnificat (Ossecensis)
Marshall, Lott, Negri (see Sacred)
3-Phi. **6769046;** ●2-7699147

Sacred Choral Music
Marshall, Lott, Daniel, Rolfe Johnson, Thomaschke, Finnie, Burgess, Collins, Negri, English Ch. Orch., Alldis Cho. [L] (Vols. 5-7): Introduzione al Dixit; Dixit Dominus; Credo; Magnificat; Laudate Pueri; Magnificat; Beatus vir
3-Phi. **6769046;** ●2-7699147

WEILL, KURT
Silverlake:Suite
Epstein, M.I.T. Sym. † Korngold
Turn. **34760;** ●CT-2315

moves at a true Allegro moderato tempo, alla breve, with gently flowing motion. Tempos and inflections are perfect throughout, the finale in particular receiving a brilliantly athletic reading. The very close miking of the slow movement's muted strings, however, precludes a suitably subdued atmosphere. Elsewhere, the first violins sometimes lack unity. Davis' account of the turbulent No. 25 is quite forceful, though perhaps the opening Allegro could have more fury; the little No. 32 is thoroughly winning here. While I have enjoyed my reacquaintance with this fine record, I would have preferred new versions by Sir Colin, in the light of his added experience and depth.

Ferenc Fricsay is not a conductor whose work I knew well when he was alive. His No. 29 does not flow as naturally as Davis' in the first movement, some phrases falling prey to sentimentality. The Andante does have a better atmosphere, though the finale is less robust. On the whole, this is an enjoyable performance. No. 39, however, remains earthbound. Its sound is leaner than Böhm's, but the Vienna Symphony is no match for the Vienna Philharmonic in polish, especially in the woodwinds. The fast tempos are generally quicker than Böhm's, but again the finale fails to take off. The second movement, much too slow to begin with, becomes even slower in the minor-key sections.

I don't know exactly what the Stuttgart Klassische Philharmonie is, but under Karl Münchinger, it gives bright and airy performances, the *Haffner* being especially spirited. In the *Paris* finale, too many held-back chords and breath pauses disrupt the natural flow of the music; I would also prefer a slightly faster tempo there, à la *Haffner*. J.C.

PUCCINI: Le Villi.

CAST:

Anna	Renata Scotto (s)
Roberto	Placido Domingo (t)
Guglielmo Wulf	Leo Nucci (b)
Narrator	Tito Gobbi (spkr)

Ambrosian Opera Chorus, National Philharmonic Orchestra, Lorin Maazel, cond. [Paul Myers, prod.] CBS MASTERWORKS M 36669, $8.98. Tape: MT 36669, $8.98 (cassette).

This issue fills a gap; since the deletion of the undistinguished Gaudagno-led performance on Victor, starring Adriana Maliponte and Barry Morell, the catalog has been bereft of *Le Villi*. Moreover, this is a far better effort than Victor's. As all too often, Maazel's conducting is erratic and insensitive, but unlike Gaudagno's, it is not lethargic. And all the other participants are much better than their predecessors.

Renata Scotto's uncomfortable top notes and occasional tendency to overplay her hand do not detract from the lively intelligence that makes her Anna so engaging. Her enunciation is particularly gratifying. In beauty of sound Placido Domingo far surpasses Morell, though his characterization of Roberto is hardly more specific. Admittedly the part is impossible to portray with any conviction, since Fontana's inept libretto fails to provide the faithless young man (harried to his death in the final scene) with either motivation or complexity. Domingo sings his aria (*"Torna ai felice"*—once recorded by Alessandro Bonci) handsomely. Leo Nucci is perfectly acceptable in the role of Anna's father, albeit somewhat weak at the lower end of his range.

The National Philharmonic and the Ambrosian singers perform well, though the chorus' somewhat shallow tone in the scenes that feature the avenging Villi (cousins to the Wilis of *Giselle* Act II) aggravates the immaturity of Puccini's conception. Tito Gobbi handles the spoken narrative (designed by Fontana to eke out the lacunae in his drama) with grace and vividness. The recording is good but for the close miking of solo voices. Notes and a bilingual text are all printed faintly in minute type on dark pink paper. D.S.H.

SHOSTAKOVICH: Symphony No. 13, Op. 113 (*Babi Yar*).

Dimiter Petkov, bass; London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, André Previn, cond. [Suvi Raj Grubb, prod.] ANGEL SZ 37661, $8.98.

COMPARISON:

Eizen, Kondrashin	Mel./Ang. SR 40212

If it seems frivolous to choose a recording on the basis of bells, I do have more respectable reasons for preferring the Kondrashin Thirteenth: the conductor's unshowy good sense; the purposeful playing of the Moscow Philharmonic and singing of the U.S.S.R. Russian Male Chorus; perhaps most important, Artur Eizen's handling of the solo part. But I keep coming back to the tolling bell that helps set the doom-impending tone of the opening "Babi Yar" movement, that returns to color the supposedly dying "Fears" of the fourth movement, and that underlies the adversities of "A Career" in the finale. (Note: By "the Kondrashin Thirteenth" I mean the Melodiya/Angel version. Although the 1965 mono broadcast tape issued by Everest retains considerable interest, its virtues are equaled and in most regards surpassed by the subsequent studio recording.)

Which is not to say that the two Western recordings (in addition to the Previn, the deleted Ormandy/RCA) are worthless. In each case the basic power of the piece comes through; the Thirteenth Symphony is the hardest of Shostakovich's works to misunderstand completely, and in all the recordings to date the performers have responded to its basic spirit. Still, it's the native performers who appreciate and communicate most fully its genuine subversiveness. For once in the history of Soviet artistic repression, the bureaucrats stumbled across a worthy target: Although the sticking point was ostensibly the "Babi Yar" movement's indictment of officially sanctioned anti-Semitism, Khrushchev's minions must have noticed the frontal assault made by the symphony as a whole on centralized authority and its encouragement of all the worst elements in human nature over impulses to honesty and decency.

Abuses of institutional power aren't exactly unknown in the West, but we don't confront them with the specificity and immediacy that, for example, Soviet citizens do, which may explain the expressive vividness of Kondrashin's players and singers, to whom there is nothing at all abstract about Yevtushenko's poems or Shostakovich's setting. And so when it comes to such details as the tolling bell, or the rhythmic tapping of castanets and wood block that characterizes the women silently shuffling "In the Store" (the third movement), the Russian performers don't merely execute the music; they live it.

The Previn recording is long on detail, and from a purely sonic standpoint I'm impressed. The massed tuttis pack quite a wallop—sample the long one that leads into the recapitulation of "Babi Yar"—and the winds in particular are registered with striking precision. Even with the 37:20 second side, this record impresses me more than nearly all the "audiophile" productions I've heard. (A word of caution: I had some tracking problems with this disc, more on the 24:50 Side 1 than on Side 2. Undoubtedly this reflects the limitations of my equipment, but you may want to keep it in mind.)

The question is, what does this sound add up to? The answer is, not enough. Previn and the London Symphony do very nicely where the mode of expression called for is extroverted; the "Humor" of the second movement is bolder and brasher here than in the Russian performances. Similarly, the muted-trumpets-et-al. triplet figure in "Fears" and the puckish bassoon solo in "A Career" tell nicely, but these details actually tell more vividly—less ostentatiously, but more *vividly*—in the Russian version. I also find the London Symphony strings generally bland relative to the winds (especially the hyper brasses);

even the violin solos of "Humor" and "A Career" fizzle ineffectually.

And where the music is more inward in content, Previn glides through it. He must have had something in mind with his broad scaling of the uninterrupted last three movements (which comprise that 37:20; Ormandy takes 35:33, Kondrashin 32:30), but I can't hear what. The predominantly slow and quiet "In the Store" and "Fears," so gripping in Kondrashin's hands and fairly strong in Ormandy's, rather go through the motions. One might on this evidence suspect that it's the music, rather than the performance, fading in and out.

Of course a stronger soloist might have held those movements together. For a concise sample of the qualities of the three stereo recordings, listen to the opening of "In the Store" and note especially the tonal richness and vibrancy and the verbal sensitivity of Eizen's singing; the voice sounds here like a great bass in the classic Russian tradition. Ormandy's Tom Krause sings better than I've ever heard him otherwise, but this is easy-way-out casting: While most of the writing does lie more comfortably for a baritone than for a bass, what's intended is clearly a bass with rock-solid control up to E flat and even, in "Humor," E natural; the music goes no higher.

This adds up to one rough outing for the bass, who is singing mostly at the top of his range, thus producing a very different sound from that of a baritone singing in what should be a fairly easy part of *his* range. What a baritone can't do at all is to provide the contrast in timbre that is called for by the dips into the bass's lower range. For example, the opening lines of "Humor"—"Tsars, kings, emperors, rulers of the whole world, commanded parades, but humor, but humor, they couldn't"—are set mostly on hard-driving repeated middle Cs, rising to D flats for "humor" but then dropping to a low G, bass country, for "they couldn't."

Previn's Bulgarian bass, Dimiter Petkov, is reasonably at home with the Russian text and is of the right basic voice type. Unfortunately he doesn't have either the vocal control or the expressive imagination (it's hard to have the second without the first) of Eizen, or even of Vitaly Grimadsky, Kondrashin's 1965 concert soloist. Petkov's vibrato often encompasses nearly a semitone, producing some harmonic confusion along with the woolly tone.

Eizen is admittedly given unnatural prominence in the Melodiya engineering; I'm inclined to think he would sound *more* impressive in a more honest balance. But I don't find the balance overly disturbing (Eizen can stand the close scrutiny, and I can adjust readily enough to the perspective), and it is in any event a plausible *musical* choice—the solo part *is* important. In fact, I find the Soviet engineering entirely satisfactory on musical grounds, for all that it's less sophisticated than EMI's. Perhaps *because* it's less sophisticated.

If the Ormandy recording were available, it might constitute a compromise of sorts between the musicality of Kondrashin and the greater technical pizzazz of Previn and company. The Philadelphia strings are certainly more virtuosic than the London Symphony's, though the Ormandy performance is generally less uninhibited than the Previn—sometimes a good thing. But the Ormandy recording *isn't* available, so we needn't trouble ourselves with that option.

It should be noted that Ormandy and Previn use the unaltered original text, while Kondrashin necessarily substitutes the revised quatrains that Yevtushenko and Shostakovich plugged into the first solos in the exposition and recapitulation of "Babi Yar." The revisions unquestionably dull the bite of the poem, but they seem a relatively minor compromise and a small price to pay for what remains. K.F.

TANNER, SIU, AND ELLIOTT: Boy with Goldfish.

A Leon Siu, singer and guitar; Malia Elliott, singer; Timothy Farrell, organ; Nigel Brooks Chorale, Lee Holdridge, cond. [Tom Null and Chris Kuchler, prod.] VARÈSE SARABANDE VCDM 1000.30, $15 (digital recording).

A collaboration of composer Jerre Tanner and the Hawaiian folk duo Leon (Siu) and Malia (Elliott), *Boy with Goldfish* is an ambitious and extremely eclectic dramatic cantata based on a rather convoluted Hawaiian legend of good vs. evil. It was inspired by a series of brightly hued paintings by John Thomas, similarly titled, and in the first performances, Thomas' paintings were projected on screens behind the orchestra; here they are strikingly reproduced on the foldout sleeve.

The seed of the score is the Hawaiian traditional tune "*Opae E*," which Tanner first heard at a Leon and Malia concert. Working with the duo, he fashioned a symphonic score that includes "*Opae E*" (in Hawaiian), a cycle of Siu-Elliott ballads (mostly in English), and some unifying orchestral material. The score calls—albeit sparingly—for a handful of native instruments, which add only the slightest exotic tinge to the lush orchestration. Not surprisingly, the work proved a considerable success when the Honolulu Symphony took it on a tour of the islands in 1976. When arrangements were made to record it digitally, Tanner expanded the score to include organ and chorus and added some new orchestral music.

The resultant epic, predominantly European-sounding, can best be described as "artsy-folksy." The Siu-Elliott sections are simple and pretty but sometimes cloying; at their most complex, these ballads bring to mind the British classic-rock band Renaissance; more often, they recall Peter, Paul, and Mary singing "Puff, the Magic Dragon." Tanner's contribution is somewhat more distinguished, if not particularly original or adventurous: His idiom is accessibly major/minor, and he borrows stylistic touches from many schools, most notably the Wagnerian and the English pastoral. But his skillful transformation of several Siu-Elliott melodies into pervasive leitmotivs holds the work together better than the plot advanced by their lyrics does.

The performance is competent, at times even enthusiastic. Yet some sloppy entrances by the London Symphony strings make me wonder whether it wouldn't have been better to record this piece with the Honolulu Symphony—players not only more familiar with the score, but who undoubtedly feel closer to it than do the London musicians, apparently sight-reading. (The musicians union's uniform scale rule strikes again.)

Whatever the shortcomings of piece and performance, this is a digital display disc par excellence. Tanner's orchestration is suitably splashy, and one has to wait only a few short minutes for the first percussion barrage. The large forces are captured with great clarity by the Soundstream recorder; balances are realistic, and the pressing is perfectly quiet. The lavish packaging includes song texts, translations, a narrative poem, explanations of the goldfish legend and the digital recording process, and notes on the Hawaiian instruments used. A.K.

TCHAIKOVSKY: Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, in D, Op. 35; Sérénade mélancolique, Op. 26.

Gidon Kremer, violin; Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Lorin Maazel, cond. [Wolfgang Stengel and Günther Breest, prod.] DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2532 001, $10.98 (digital recording). Tape: 3302 001, $10.98 (cassette).

Shizuka Ishikawa, violin; Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Zdeněk Košler, cond. [Libor Mathauser, prod.] SUPRAPHON 1110 2460, $8.98.

COMPARISON:

Perlman, Ormandy/Philadelphia
Ang. SZ 37640

Like Itzhak Perlman's recent account of this concerto with Ormandy, Gidon Kremer's performance is uncut and similarly

coupled with the earlier serenade. But one could hardly imagine two more divergent approaches.

Save for its unorthodox completeness, Perlman's recording (his third by the ripe age of thirty-four), exemplifies the "establishment" view. His peaches-and-cream lyricism and big, evenly produced tone are rescued from cloying sentimentality by a welcome bite in the high notes (perfectly in tune). Ormandy and the Philadelphians fit their accompaniment like a velvet glove, the orchestra's celebrated lushness (brilliantly captured in Angel's superb wide-range engineering) imparting a further grandeur. Gidon Kremer has also previously recorded this work in a Soviet edition I haven't heard. This thoroughly riveting account calls to mind Hanslick's famous review of the concerto's first performance, by Adolf Brodsky. The music, for a while, "moves soberly . . . and not without musicality and spirit. But soon vulgarity gains upper hand. . . . The violin is no longer played: It is yanked about, torn, beaten black-and-blue." After a well-behaved middle movement comes the finale, reminiscent of a Russian fair: "We see plainly the savage, vulgar faces, we hear curses, we smell bad vodka. Friedrich Vischer once observed, speaking of obscene pictures, that they stink to the eye; Tchaikovsky's violin concerto gives us for the first time the hideous notion that there can be music that stinks to the ear."

Kremer begins with honest lyricism, albeit stated with a tart, ascetic kind of sonority. But soon his playing becomes impudent, outrageous. He lunges at upbeats, even in lyric passages; he jerks tempos about; he digs in with scratchy vehemence, often contrasting extreme delicacy with a ferocious, raspy kazoo sound. And the finale also meets Hanslick's description. In my experience, only Huberman gave such a performance.

Maazel at times seems nonplussed by all this, but he adds his own spark. This is not a fusion of two equal temperaments (as in Milstein/Abbado, DG 2530 359; Szeryng/Munch, Victrola, deleted), but an entente cordiale in which two opinionated—and perhaps contradictory—protagonists listen politely and then counter each other. DG's digital sound is much like its analog product; the dynamic range, however, is smashing.

If Perlman's interpretation resembles Van Cliburn's, Rubinstein's, or Berman's in the B flat minor Piano Concerto, Kremer and Maazel parallel Horowitz and Toscanini. You will either love or hate their recording, but you won't find it dull.

Shizuka Ishikawa, a young Japanese prizewinner at the Prague (1969), Wien-

iawski (1972), and Queen Elizabeth of Belgium (1977) Competitions, cannot quite match either Kremer or Perlman—or Milstein—but her Supraphon recording is certainly worthy. Her approach is essentially lyrical, and although she makes some effective gestures in such places as the first-movement cadenza, she doesn't quite convey the feeling of a grand line and temperamental thrust. Nor is her tone—very suave and agreeable in soft passages—quite pure in moments of stress. But the Czech Philharmonic supports her capable and musical performance well, and Supraphon's spacious engineering frames it beneficially. The usual cut text is used. H.G.

VERDI: Stiffelio.

CAST:

Lina	Sylvia Sass (s)
Dorotea	Maria Venuti (ms)
Stiffelio	José Carreras (t)
Raffaele	Ezio di Cesare (t)
Federico	Thomas Moser (t)
Stankar	Matteo Manuguerra (b)
Jorg	Wladimiro Ganzarolli (bs)

Austrian Radio Chorus and Symphony Orchestra, Lamberto Gardelli, cond. PHILIPS 6769 039, $19.96 (two discs, manual sequence). Tape: 7699 127, $19.96 (two cassettes).

In Vienna in 1875, Verdi was interviewed by a local journalist. Asked his opinion of Wagner, he answered tactfully—and added that he, too, had attempted music-drama, "and that was in *Macbeth*." *Macbeth*, in 1847, represented his first attempt to find music for Shakespeare. In the next few years, he turned twice to another "classic," Schiller, in *I Masnadieri* and *Luisa Miller*. And then in 1850 he tackled for the first time a modern play, *Le Pasteur* (Emile Souvestre and Eugène Bourgeois), which had had its premiere in Paris in 1849, while Verdi was living there. (An Italian translation had also been published.) *Stiffelio*, the opera that resulted, makes one think about Verdi the progressive, Verdi the experimenter, ever urging his librettists to abandon the old formulas and give him something new, exciting, even "bizarre."

In the context of the Ottocento lyric stage, the subject matter of *Stiffelio* was certainly novel: the matrimonial troubles of a nineteenth-century pastor who preaches charity and forgiveness all round but finds it very difficult to forgive his errant wife. (At the time of its composition, Verdi was living openly with a fallen woman, *una traviata*, not yet his wife, who had borne two or three illegitimate children.) At the climax of the opera, Stiffelio ascends the pulpit. The Bible falls open at John 8; he reads out the story of the woman taken in adultery; looking at his wife, Lina, he continues with a broad C major melody—echoed by all the congregation—"And God declared that she was forgiven." In an earlier scene, he forces Lina to sign a deed of divorce, ignoring her tears of repentance. And then she turns on him spiritedly—on the man who has coldly regained his honor at the price of his wife's love—insisting that the priest must hear the confession that the husband had refused to listen to. "*Ministro, confessatemi*"—by the Censor, the line was changed to the innocuous "*Rodolfo, deh! ascoltatemi.*"

Stiffelio was by no means a failure at its premiere (Trieste, 1850). That season, there were also productions in Florence and Rome. The Fenice did it early in 1852, the San Carlo and Palermo in 1855. But always in a censored form to which Verdi took strong exception. In 1857 he reworked the opera as *Aroldo*, moved the setting to a medieval Kentish castle, turned the pastor into a crusader, and composed a new final scene no longer in church, but on the banks of Loch Lomond.

Aroldo, widely performed, became the "authorized" version. *Stiffelio* had a last revival in Barcelona in 1860, and then disappeared until it was revived in Parma in 1968. The New York Grand Opera did it in Brooklyn in 1976, and Sarah Caldwell in Boston in 1978. In Germany, a *Bühnenfassung* has gone the rounds. Now we have this Philips recording, a coproduction with Austrian Radio, performed from authentic material (which did not exist before) prepared with the cooperation of members of the European Broadcasting Union (the state radios of Britain, Canada, Holland, Austria, Sweden, and France). An *Aroldo* recording—Eve Queler's, with Caballé and Cecchele—is on its way from CBS. (It has been out for some months in Europe.) The *Stiffelio/Aroldo* comparison is rather like that between *Forza* 1862 and *Forza* 1869: Verdi did some retouching for the better and wrote some fine new music, but the original is a stronger, stranger, more exciting, and more consistent drama. Moreover, in this case a striking plot and situations were reduced to medieval flummery. As Julian Budden puts it in the album note, in Verdi's refashioning "it is difficult not to feel that he took the dramatic heart from the opera, often replacing the new and the arresting with stage cliché." The basic conflict that propels *Stiffelio*—can the preacher practice what he preaches?—disappears in *Aroldo*.

Budden begins by suggesting that *Stiffelio* is "the most unjustly neglected of Verdi's operas." I'm inclined to agree, though *Un Giorno di regno* also has its claims. But *Stiffelio* is certainly more ambitious. The forms are novel and unconventional (particularly in the two Lina/Stiffelio interviews). There is some fairly tacky music in the first act, and the libretto is clumsy (five letters are too many for one plot), but once the exposition is done the music becomes expressive, stirring, potent, and beautiful.

The title role was written for Gaetano Fraschini, known as the *tenore della maledizione* from the thrilling force with which his Edgardo used to curse Lucia di Lammermoor after she had signed the wedding contract. It calls for a singer who commands heavy, ringing tones, passionately intense declamation, and noble fervor but can also be tender and loving—a Martinelli, a Vickers, a Domingo. His line carries instructions like *cupo con ira* and *con voce terribile*—the last accompanying an outburst declaimed across the F sharps at the bottom and the top of the staff. Carreras is odd casting, and he does not seem to have lived with the role long enough before recording it. In the Philips *Un Giorno* (6703 055), he was not a sparkling comedian; in this *Stiffelio*, he is not a powerful tragedian. In a rather superficial way, he sings the music agreeably enough.

Sylvia Sass has a voice: not conventionally beautiful, but strong, firm-centered, attractive, and individual in timbre. Yet her Lina lacks schooling and style. Her handling of the preghiera "*Ah te ascenda*" is delicate by intention, but the tone becomes feeble. In the aria "*Ah! dagli scanni*," she blithely ignores Verdi's long phrasing slurs, his joining slurs, and his accents. Again and again, she fails to hold notes for their full value.

Stankar was composed for a refined baritone of the old school. Manugeurra isn't exactly that. He hurries the fioriture of his aria and flips through the cadenza in a perfunctory way. In the cabaletta, he observes the composer's instruction—"all this piece must be sung extremely softly, until the last phrase" and *con voce soffocate e convulsa*—to begin with, but long before that last surprising phrase is reached, he falls into a healthy, comfortable forte. Nevertheless, he sings with color, with character, and with more feeling for the drama than anyone else. Ganzarolli has recorded much for Philips; surely only brand loyalty can make acceptable the rusty tone and sloppy rhythm with which he gets the opera off to a bad start.

Gardelli's conducting is capable enough but, like much else about the set, suggests an assignment carried through rather than a passionate commitment to this particular work. There's a moment just before Stiffelio forgives Lina when there's a tense dramatic pause, for no one—not even Stiffelio himself—knows what he's going to say: a long pause—and then, *con slancio*—. Carreras and Gardelli go through the passage in strict tempo. On a different level,

but again suggesting the failure to get everything as good as possible before releasing the set: There's an old-style obtrusive tape join, with a change of ambience, in Lina's aria. For the rest, it's an average-to-good recording. And an average-to-good performance such as one would be happy to encounter in the opera house. Records need to be better. A.P.

VIVALDI: The Four Seasons, Op. 8, Nos. 1-4.

A Elmar Oliveira, violin; Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Gerard Schwarz, cond. [Marc J. Aubort and Joanna Nickrenz, prod.] DELOS DMS 3007, $17.98 (digital recording) (distributed by Supersounds Ltd., 2210 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 315, Santa Monica, Calif. 90403).

Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Iona Brown, violin and dir. PHILIPS 9500 717, $9.98. Tape: 7300 809, $9.98 (cassette).

COMPARISON:

Loveday/Marriner Argo ZRG 654

VIVALDI: Concertos for Violin and Strings, Op. 8: Nos. 5-10*; Nos. 11-12†. Concertos: for Flute and Strings, in D, RV 429; for Cello and Strings, in B minor, RV 424.†

Simon Standage, violin; Stephen Preston, flute; Anthony Pleeth, cello; English Concert, Trevor Pinnock, harpsichord and dir. [Simon Lawman, prod.] VANGUARD VSD 71273*/4†, $7.98 each.

If there had to be a digital *Four Seasons* (and I'm not completely convinced), then the new Oliveira/Schwarz provides exactly what many will want in such a release: super-luscious sound, demonstratively brilliant solo violin work, and exciting orchestral playing, recorded with immediacy and faithfulness. Indeed, in one important respect this *Seasons* is among the leaders: The balance is ideal, with continuo instruments well forward to match the soloist, violins split left and right, and cellos and basses solidly in the center. The recording is generally close and vivid. But from the first strenuous, weighty birdsong of *Spring*, Oliveira's performance proves all too worthy of a Tchaikovsky Competition winner. The energy, lithe rhythms, and sheer strength of his playing are admirable, but it's all out of scale. The slow movements become either self-consciously glassy (*Summer*) or sickly-sweet-Christmas-cardy (*Winter*). The orchestra is at its best in the fast movements—the finale of *Summer* is magnificent—though there are some roughnesses. (I would have retaken the finale of *Autumn* for the ill-tuned second eighth note in bar 3.) The harpsichord playing is adventurous—too much so in the sleep in *Summer* and the Lullyesque frost scene in *Winter*

(where it confuses the rising harmonies), but elsewhere excellent.

The Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields' recording of the *Four Seasons* with Alan Loveday is among the best available; the *Penguin Stereo Guide* gives it a coveted rosette and calls it "magical. . . , with an element of fantasy that makes the music sound utterly new." Much of that success comes from the imaginative use of acoustics and of varied continuo instruments (brilliantly played by Simon Preston). It's a measure of the disappointing casualness of the Academy's new Philips version that we don't even find out who the reliable but uninteresting continuo player is. (He does, however, do the right sort of thing in the sleep and frost sections!) Some of the vivid moments of the old version are retained: a switch from harpsichord to organ, an extra bit of resonance, a wiry sound for the accompaniment of the slow movement of *Summer*. Yet the slow movements (especially in *Spring* and *Autumn*) don't flow. Brown's solo playing is insistent and not very relaxed. Some of her entrances—at the start of *Winter*, for instance—are electrifying; but too often the bow hits the strings like a ton of bricks, and one can almost see the resin flying during the figurations.

The orchestra plays solidly. I prefer the Los Angeles group in the swooping scales of *Summer*'s finale, but as both orchestras were creations of Neville Marriner (who hovers over Schwarz and Brown like a *deus ex machina*), there's not much to choose between them. Full marks to both companies for exemplary sleeve documentation: the poetry in Italian and English, with music examples.

The originality of the Standage/Pinnock *Four Seasons* has been highly praised here (Vanguard VSD 71257, May 1980); the two new discs complete the Op. 8 set. Both music and performances are wonderful: It is refreshing to escape from the sterility of playing techniques based on generalized assumptions about how the music should sound and to encounter a style that has clearly been thought out to suit the music. As Nicholas Anderson's fine notes stress, a concerto such as No. 11, in D, is as good as anything in the set; its majestic opening movement and thrusting finale are here deftly shaped and lightly projected. Simon Standage plays the violin solos commandingly, though it is a pity that Nos. 9 and 12 were not done with oboe for the sake of variety (as on the only rival to this recording, Harnoncourt's, Telefunken 26.35386, which boasts fine orchestral playing but less good solo violin work). There are two admirable bonuses, a flute concerto and a cello concerto, the former breathily but expressively done by Stephen Preston, the latter tensely yet compellingly played by AnthonyPleeth.Highlyrecommended. N.K.

WEILL: Silverlake; Der Silbersee: Suite. For a review, see page 57.

Recitals and Miscellany

EVELYN LEAR SINGS SONDHEIM AND BERNSTEIN.

Evelyn Lear, soprano; Martin Katz, piano. [M. Scott Mampe, prod.] MERCURY SRI 75136, $6.98. Tape: MGI 75136, $6.98 (cassette).

BERNSTEIN: Peter Pan: Who Am I?; My House. On the Town: I Can Cook, Too; Some Other Time; Lonely Town. SONDHEIM: Sweeney Todd: Green Finch and Linnet Bird. Evening Primrose: I Remember. Follies: Could I Leave You?; Losing My Mind. A Little Night Music: Send in the Clowns.

This delightful collection of songs presents two great men of the American musical theater, Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim, at their best, albeit with none of their joint efforts. The selections are sometimes childlike, sometimes spunky, sometimes loving, and sometimes lonely but always memorable. Sondheim's style is the more complex, Bernstein's the more fun. It's a great mix.

I think I'd be happier hearing Evelyn Lear sing this music in live performance than on record, however. There is barely a handful of beautifully sung notes on the entire disc, yet the soprano clearly knows how to communicate the wide range of emotions. She's like a little kid in the selections from Bernstein's incidental music to *Peter Pan*; then she's a curious young woman in "Green Finch and Linnet Bird" from Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*. And this is the first time I have ever caught all of the words to "Send in the Clowns." Her diction is superb—a good thing, since Mercury furnishes no printed texts.

Pianist Martin Katz arranged "Clowns," as well as "I Remember," "Could I Leave You?", "Losing My Mind," "Who Am I?", and "My House." Unfortunately, he got a bit carried away, especially in the Sondheim songs; the pianistic excess makes the music sound overblown and acts as a reminder that this is one of those cross-cultural exercises, classical musicians taking a show-tune detour. "Losing My Mind" is a case in point—a wonderful song that neither needs nor wants the help of the grand Rachmaninoff manner to make its effect. Lear seems to understand this, Katz

obviously does not; the results are discomforting. K.M.

EZIO PINZA: The Golden Years.
H Ezio Pinza, bass; various accompaniments. PEARL GEMM 162/3, $19.96 (two discs; mono) (distributed by Qualiton Records, 39-28 Crescent St., Long Island City, N.Y. 11101) [from VICTOR and HMV originals, 1923-30].

BELLINI: Norma: Ah! del Tebro (7/12/23). I Puritani: Cinta de fiori (12/17/24). BIZET: Carmen: Toreador Song (1936; unpublished). BOITO: Mefistofele: Ave Signor (12/17/24); Son lo spirito che nega (6/20/23). DONIZETTI: La Favorite: Et sais tu (with Robert d'Alessio, tenor; 6/20/23); Les Cieux s'emplissent d'étincelles (12/17/24) (in Italian). Lucia di Lammermoor: Dalle stanze, ove Lucia (7/11/23). GOUNOD: Faust: Le veau d'or (4/8/29); Eh bien! Que t'en semble? . . . A toi les plaisirs (with Aristodemo Giorgini, tenor; 12/19/24) (in Italian). HALÉVY: La Juive: Si la rigueur ou la vengeance (7/12/23); Vous qui du Dieu vivant (11/29/24) (in Italian). MEYERBEER: Robert le Diable: Voici donc les débris du monastére antique . . . Nonnes, qui reposez (3/22/27) (in Italian). MOZART: Don Giovanni, K. 527: Finch' han dal vino; Deh, vieni alla finestra (3/28/30). Die Zauberflöte; K. 620: O Isis und Osiris (3/22/27) (in Italian). ROSSINI: Il Barbiere di Siviglia: La calunnia (1938; unpublished). SAINT-SAËNS: Samson et Dalila: J'ai gravi la montagne (with Gertrud Wettergren, soprano; 1936; unpublished). THOMAS: Le Caid: Drum Major's Aria (4/14/27). Mignon: De son coeur j'ai calmé (12/17/24.) (In Italian.) VERDI: Aida: Mortal diletto ai Numi (1/5/28); Nume, custode e vindici (with Giovanni Martinelli, tenor; 11/29/27). Don Carlos: Dormirò sol nel manto mio regal (2/17/27). Ernani: Che mai vegg'io . . . Infelice! (5/7/29). Requiem: Confutatis maledictis (5/7/29). Simon Boccanegra: A te l'estremo addio . . . Il lacerato spirito (6/19/23). Il Trovatore: Di due figli . . . Abbietta zingara (7/10/23). I Vespri siciliani: O patria . . . O tu, Palermo (2/17/27).

There is a great deal of Pinza on LP, and nearly every item he recorded has been transferred more than once. Still, this fine set will assume some precedence, since it combines most of his Italian HMV acousticals of 1923-34, a number of his late-'20s Victors, and three excerpts from Met performances of the '30s that are released commercially for the first time here. It's hard to imagine you'll want to be without it, if you're interested in Pinza.

And of course you should be, but I'll eschew any lecturing because Pinza is so obviously a singer who needs no promo-

tion—the romance of the voice can elude no one who is not steadfastly against pleasure. As to what accounts for the romance, though, that's a matter suitable to discussion. And so much of it lies in a realm remote from that of Studied Art, a land where those latter-day aristocrats, teachers and critics, are commoners, if not on the Enemies List. For his voice is the projection in sound of a truly extrovert personality, a doer, a man of enormous athletic and sexual energy and of masculine authority, who reveled in the public projection of those qualities. It's the sound of unforced macho, a macho that just *is*—not a macho that tries to be, is in defiance of or compensation for, or that grunts and blusters after assertiveness and dominance. Tsk-tsk if you will, but I notice you're not lifting the tonearm.

The natural corollary of this vocal personality is Pinza's simplicity of style. "Natural" for two reasons: an easy identification with the material, and an easy identification with himself. For a man of genuine confidence and self-belief (at least onstage), singing material that is an unquestioned manifestation of his own time and place, it's not to worry. Our actors will fret over "style" in Molière, but not in Arthur Miller—yet Miller, just as certainly as Molière, has a style, which will someday come to seem relevant to performers and their audiences. That is the day when Miller's characters will be in mortal danger.

Still, art and craft are not absent from Pinza's personal performing style. Like Caruso's, his singing embraced most of the refinements a singer of more ordinary talent will strive to "make his own"—because he does not own them. Stanislavski studied the art of Chaliapin to answer the question, "What is he really *doing*?" Thousands of performers have profited (nearly all indirectly) from that analysis. But when one reads Chaliapin's own comments on the matter, one is very far from an articulation of process. He only *did* it; Stanislavski understood it.

It is too easy to say that Chaliapin's art was essentially dramatic, and Pinza's essentially lyric. Yet to hear them attentively is to acknowledge some validity in the distinction. Pinza is undeniably theatrical, but he dwells in the sound and behavior of his voice on the music, more than in the character in the scene. And the sound is of such extraordinary character and quality. As with all great vocalists, we find that the command of extremes of range and dynamic is reflected in the tone itself. In his prime (as heard on these records), he ranged—without interference and with utterly consistent response—from low E or E flat to the high F sharp, so that everything from Sarastro to Escamillo was truly his property. Throughout that range, excluding only the top step and the bottom few, the dynamic span stretched from a feathery *mezza voce* to a round, ringing forte. A capacity for floridity gave him an easy yet still full-throated brilliance in the scales of the *Caid* song or the flourishes of Osmin's aria (preserved on the later Mozart recordings with Bruno Walter). The handling of the voice in Mozart's Figaro or Giovanni was quick and springy, though its sound still rich and thrusting. Throughout the range, a luxurious legato was spun on a filament of quick, natural vibrato.

By the standards of his own and earlier generations of bassos, none of these attributes was in itself unique. With respect to range, a few (the Russians Sibiriakov and Kipnis, the German Bohnen, the Spaniard Mardones, the Italian De Angelis come to mind) even combined a comparable stretch with a slightly weightier caliber. Bohnen and Kipnis had at least a comparable flex of dynamics, and Chaliapin surpassed in the use of an ethereal (yet connected) pianissimo in the upper range. A handful of the lighter, more elegant French bassos (Plançon is the classical reference point) were superior with divisions and possessed true trills.

But Pinza is in their league in all these respects, and stands alone in two more: completeness and beauty of tone, and purity of legato. There just is not another bass voice with this prismatic array of colors, this superbly defined vowel profile. The sound carries us to a poetic level of description—a diamond-hard, flamelike core, wrapped in a deep, night-black velvet—but the words overreach and fall short at once. It's an addictive voice, the kind that becomes an obsession.

Owning this sound, he let it work for him, and his combining of the sound with his legato and his mastery of messa di voce virtually constitutes his "style." The result is well illustrated by his voicing of the *Ernani* aria, a relatively uncomplicated piece, and particularly by comparison with the interpretation of the best of the postwar Italian bassos, Cesare Siepi, whose early version is presently on London R 23218, in the midpriced Treasury Series. The purpose here is by no means to run down Siepi, whose recording is extremely beautiful and whose equal we seek in vain amongst the current crop, but only to specify. In the succinct recitative, we notice primarily two things: Pinza's version is quicker and more straightforward, and the articulatory elements (i.e., consonants) are more tightly bound to the resonance properties (vowels)—one factor in a perfect legato. The overall effect is simpler and more biting.

With the beginning of the aria proper, another aspect of the legato becomes apparent. This is the portamento, the carrying of the vowel in a little glide through the intervening space to the next pitch, within the indicated note value. Until recently, the presence of slur marks in all post-classical vocal music was taken to dictate use of the portamento, without much debate. A little surprisingly, Siepi ignores them completely, sustaining the pitch of each half note in the first four phrases until the next syllables land on the eighth notes at the third beat. It is still clean and smooth, in the more modern manner, but what is missing is made clear by Pinza's choice, which binds each interval with a delicately mournful little fall, more pronounced on the higher intervals (*"credevi," "le nevi"*) than on the preceding lower ones (*"-telice," "tuo crine"*). Borne on the spin of that shimmering vibrato, the effect is one of the things singing is about—as distinct from, for example, excellent xylophone playing. It is intensified by Pinza's ability to suddenly drop from mezzo-forte to piano (with no break in momentum, loss of clarity, or alteration of vowel) for the portamento on the last two syllables of *"immacolato,"* as if the recollection of his faith in Elvira's purity suddenly struck a particular spot. Magic.

It is not only a question of the expressive value of the glide where marked. For as the aria proceeds, we must ask what means the singer has of distinguishing groups of notes not so marked. As in all early Verdi, many of these are given accents, and these are fairly obvious, especially inasmuch as they usually play against the weak beats of their measures, or represent a clear, declamatory finality. But others are given staccato marks. In the older style, which took portamento for granted, these notes were rendered in what was called (I fear I must use the past tense) the half-staccato, meaning a clean definition of pitches on short note values, but without breaking the line. Without the portamento, a singer has no means of defining such gestures except overemphasis, which Siepi tastefully eschews. Finally, there are the many note groups marked with nothing at all, which is of course how the whole cavatina will sound when deprived of the portamento. And does. One still has tempo to play with, of course, and we note that Siepi suddenly hurries at *"mi dovean gli anni almeno,"* then broadens expansively in the succeeding bars; Pinza's variations are less marked, over wider stretches. With more variety in the line, in the dynamics, and in the tone itself, the rubato can be simpler, and the more imaginative singing has a more direct effect.

In the cadenza, Siepi sings what is marked. It is a modest bit of show. It has a subdued tone and allows him to settle richly on the low G flat—all certainly defensible. Pinza, though, takes the more proclamatory option that allows him a forceful upper G flat, brought back inward by a final pianissimo so feathery that we are sure the line will break before the voice, still soft, picks up just the necessary degree of firmness for the last *"cor."*

There are other purely technical differences, the chief one being that Pinza's tone has a more rock-solid positional underpinning—attacks are cleaner, the open vowels more honestly sounded, the intonation in the middle of the voice never suspect, as it often was in Siepi's. Later in Pinza's career, the voice's balance slipped to the heavier side. The tone became, if anything, rather richer, but the piano singing lost some of its precision and the top of the voice tended to flatness of pitch (whereas Siepi's tone lost some of its size and the top became thinner in quality). For a big soprano (e.g., Flagstad or Ponselle), such settling can be translated into lower repertory; for a bass, there's nowhere to go except many, many Sarastros. Or a freak Broadway musical.

Of the twenty-seven selections in this set, only one is second-rate—a hack *"La calunnia"* from one of the hack *Barbers* the Met has dumped on us for at least a half-century, and probably longer. My special favorites are the literally incomparable voicings of the *Vespri* aria (listen to *that* recitative!), the Requiem *"Confutatis"* (the later one on the complete set under Serafin is nearly as good, but not quite), the *Roberto il Diavolo* invocation, the *Puritani* cavatina, and the *Mignon* berceuse—the last two are models of suppleness of line and floated half-voice in the bass range, respectively. The Mozart selections are correctly prized, and it is wonderful to hear the narrations Ferrando and Raimondo given their true stature. In Pinza's day, such roles were actually taken by such singers—an observation that applies also to the High Priest of Dagon, whose entire scene with Dalila is heard here in a 1936 broadcast excerpt. Pinza's singing here brings the opera's antagonist (and therefore, the drama) to authoritative life of a sort that he (and therefore, the drama) has since just ceased to lead. This is also unique among Pinza's recordings in offering a quite respectable

grade of sung French, and the cool, evenly sung Dalila of Gertrud Wettergren is the best of the partnerings on these records. (I cannot except Martinelli, whose *Aida* Temple Scene is surprisingly tight and sour for 1929, or D'Alessio, a fine lyric tenor not at his best in the *Favorita* excerpt.)

Regrettably, there is some pitch discrepancy in the *Samson* scene, understandable given the source. Less forgivable is the transferring of the *Faust* Scene 1 excerpt a half-step high. It can be heard in correct pitch on Club 99 99-12—a splendid single-disc collection of fourteen of the 1923-24 acousticals, carefully transferred from good originals—and I recommend that disc to anyone not prepared to invest in the Pearl double album. With this exception, Pearl's transfers are live and correct, and the set is the logical LP cornerstone for any collection of this core curriculum singer. C.L.O.

Theater and Film

NORTH BY NORTHWEST. Original film score by Bernard Herrmann.

A London Studio Symphony Orchestra, Laurie Johnson, cond. STARLOG/VARÈSE SARABANDE SV 95001, $15 (digital recording) (distributed by VARÈSE SARABANDE).

This long-awaited release, appearing some twenty years after the film, completes the trilogy of the most inspired scores Bernard Herrmann wrote for Alfred Hitchcock—the others, of course, being *Vertigo* (Mercury SRI 75117) and *Psycho* (Unicorn, out of print). *North by Northwest* has some of the former's Romantic exuberance and the latter's spine-tingling asceticism, and like most of Herrmann's output, it exemplifies the creative enhancement of a film narrative through the meshing of visual and aural images. The complementary response of Herrmann's restive genius to the more cold-blooded genius of Hitchcock resulted in music that not only fits the film integrally and enhances its impact, but for the most part stands on its own as valid musical expression.

From the outset the *Northwest* music imposes its dynamic persona with an arresting main title in a throbbing, swirling fandango rhythm that threatens to go out of control. Herrmann was such a painstaking craftsman in matching his ideas to the exact needs of each scene that many of the subsequent cues are brief, economical, and frankly episodic variants of the metrical and intervallic characteristics of this generative principal theme. Except for a plangent, *Tristan*-like love theme—also inventively woven into the score's dramatic evolution—these somewhat bare and fragmentary, tension-producing passages, with their repeated-note patterns and insistently sequential modulations, occasionally make for neutral and even uneventful listening on the purely musical plane. Paradoxically, they testify to Herrmann's integrity as a film composer first and foremost. Perhaps as a result of his early training in scoring radio drama, he often eschews the more traditional symphonic elaborations of a Korngold, Rózsa, or Waxman, and confines himself, like a musical jeweler, to small-scaled, detailed reworkings of his deliberately elementary and malleable basic materials. This is all the more remarkable in view of the exceptional capacity for long-breathed lyrical phrases and large gestures he displays in such concert works as the symphony and the cantata *Moby Dick*.

Another crucial facet of his personality repeatedly illustrated here is his faultless sense of timing, as evidenced by a stalking, low-key humor in an ironic and macabre mode paralleling Hitchcock's own. *Northwest* is also replete with examples of his precise mastery of the dynamics of sonority, encompassing the full range from *fff* tuttis to the highlighting of just one or a few instruments, sometimes in unorthodox registers or combinations.

But it is during the extended "Mt. Rushmore" section of the film's close that Herrmann puts his permutational skills through their most spectacular paces in a kind of symphonic apotheosis, bringing all of the separate motivic elements together in an incrementally tautening and terrifying finale. It climaxes in the groundswell of a long-held dissonant chord (in some ways the sinister matrix of all that has gone before), which is deftly passed up through the various sections of the orchestra while the timpani gambol ominously underneath—a gesture that provides at a stroke both uncanny musical unity and emotional release.

The result of a new collaboration between Varèse Sarabande and *Starlog* magazine, this realization is well-nigh impeccable. Using what sounds like a handpicked orchestra, Laurie Johnson demonstrates a real affinity for the workings of Herrmann's muse; he never rushes or overdelineates but permits the music to build naturally to its breathtaking peaks. And the digital recording techniques—once you heed the recommended adjustments in volume level—impart an X-ray kind of clarity and freedom from distortion right into the inner grooves, all the while virtually eliminating any subliminal awareness of hearing a reproduction instead of an actual performance. In spite of its inflationary price, this issue commands the attention of anyone even minimally interested in the dramatic uses of musical imagination. P.A.S.

The Tape Deck

by R. D. Darrell

Rehearing the past

One of the relatively few domains in which tape collectors have legitimate cause to envy discophiles is that of historical treasures: recordings made—in mono, of course—back in the 78-rpm or early LP eras that preserve celebrated or characteristic performances by outstanding artists. Most of these productions, usually technically improved, are reissues of once famous releases; some are only now made generally available—off-the-air broadcasts, private recordings, or takes originally passed over for publication. In either case, their primary appeal is to veteran collectors anxious to replace well-worn originals or to atone for having missed earlier opportunities. Yet these treasures should be of incalculable value to youngsters too, giving them a chance to measure for themselves the true stature of the giants of yesteryear, to learn what thrilled earlier generations of connoisseurs and what made certain artists literally unique, incomparable, and irreplaceable. The best of the reissues also are sobering reminders that, great as technological progress in audio has been, it is still incremental: The finest sonic achievements of the past remain vitally potent even to the most sophisticated ears and minds.

Operatic voices . . .

Among the few musicassette producers currently featuring significant historical programs, the youngest, Arabesque, is the most active and imaginative. Its operatic-aria anthologies ($6.98 each) bring back four exceptional singers: Tiana Lemnitz, the soprano who at her peak approached absolute tonal perfection more closely than anyone else I've ever heard, in a program from 1938–48 (9028); Miliza Korjus, who died just recently, in performances from 1934-36 (9013), when her coloratura bravura was simply dazzling; Gerhard Hüsch in 1935–39 excerpts from *Tannhäuser* and other German operas (9022) rather than the Lieder for which he is better known; and the all-round workhorse tenor Helge Roswaenge in a 1936–43 anthology (9003), a microcosm of the varied repertory in which he long excelled. The accompaniments are orchestral throughout, featuring mainly conductors Bruno Seidler-Winkler and Hans Udo Müller. The original recordings stand up remarkably well in—for the most part—effective, ungimmicked transfers.

Rossinians will welcome the return of the first electrically recorded *Barber of Seville*, a La Scala production starring Riccardo Stracciari and Mercedes Capsir under conductor Lorenzo Molajoli (9029-3L, $21.94, three cassettes with libretto). And of course everyone ever mesmerized by the stentorian voice (or just the legendary reputation) of the most famous tenor of all time will rush to get the latest Soundstream digital restorations in the RCA Red Seal "Complete Caruso" series: Vols. 8 and 9, 1910–12 originals (ARK 1-3570/1, $8.98 each).

. . . conductors and pianists

From its seemingly inexhaustible archives, Deutsche Grammophon continues to resurrect the sometimes almost perversely idiosyncratic, often sheerly magnificent, Furtwängler/Berlin Philharmonic performances, now in Privilege cassettes ($6.98 each). New releases are a singularly spontaneous, if unevenly played and recorded, Tchaikovsky *Pathétique* live from Cairo, 1951 (3335 165); quintessentially Romantic Schumann (Fourth Symphony and *Manfred* Overture) and Weber (*Euryanthe* Overture) of 1949–53 (3335 805); surprisingly restrained Beethoven (Fourth Piano Concerto with Conrad Hansen, *Leonore* Overture No. 2) of 1949 (3335 807); and the sublimely magisterial Schubert Ninth of 1951 (3335 808).

And from *its* archives, no less capacious, RCA Red Seal continues its tributes to the younger Horowitz (one of the few transcendent stars of the past still very much alive and active) by restoring his memorable three Clementi sonatas of 1954 and his tautly controlled Beethoven *Emperor* Concerto of 1952 with Fritz Reiner (ARK 1-3689/90, $8.98 each).

Karl Ziehrer (who?) redivivus

Leaping from historical performances to present-day revivals of bygone favorites, and from "serious" music to the lightest of whipped-cream tonal entertainment, we have—from the Vienna Light Music Society—the first recording of *Der Fremdenführer*, one of some twenty operettas by Karl Michael Ziehrer (1843–1922), a once popular bandmaster and dance and musical-comedy composer remembered in this country only by an occasional march or waltz. This 1902 work will delight listeners who can follow its long stretches of rapid-fire Viennese-dialect dialogue and its typically complicated story of student and café-society life. But others will have to settle for its tunefulness; there are no notes, texts, synopsis, or even selection titles for the three-cassette set (VLMS 215/7, $27 postpaid from the K.C. Company, P.O. Box 793, Augusta, Maine 04330).

The rough-and-ready, but documentarily valid, live recorded performance by the Vienna Volksoper Company under Rudolf Bibl includes lusty applause for every selection and almost continuous uproarious laughter during the broadly comic scenes—an audience enthusiasm hard to resist, even for the most mystified non-German-speaking listener. Side 6 proffers a more readily and widely appreciable batch of Ziehrer orchestral favorites in performances more polished, yet no less idiomatic, led by Max Schoenherr: *Die Landstreicher* Overture, *Wiener Mädl'n* and *Gebirgskinder* Waltzes, and Op. 525 (!) *Fächer* Polonaise.

When B.C. means Barclay-Crocker

Far older, indeed ancient, music is valuably revived in one of the current releases by the open-reel format's savior-specialist, Barclay-Crocker (11 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10004): the delectable twelfth-century *Play of Daniel*, lovingly brought back to piquant life by the Pro Cantione Antiqua and Landini Consort under Mark Brown (Argo/B-C F 900, $9.95, with notes and texts).

Then the Philips reel debut list of last November is promptly augmented by three more sure best-sellers, led by the complete Tchaikovsky *Nutcracker* by Antal Dorati and the Concertgebouw (R 6747 257, double play, $21.95), with superb orchestral playing and ultratransparent recording ideally suited to demonstrate this format's technological superiority over even the best cassette and disc editions. Also exemplifying state-of-the-art audio excellence is the first reel representation of the acclaimed Marriner/St. Martin's Academy Haydn symphony series: Nos. 92, *Oxford*, and 104, *London* (G 9500 304, $10.95).

It's only in the mighty Schoenberg *Gurre-Lieder*, by Bostonian forces under Seiji Ozawa (R 6769 038, double play, $21.95), that the open-reel advantages are somewhat negated. A high modulation level exacerbates the resonances of soloists too closely miked, and while two of the three cassette- and disc-edition side breaks are eliminated, the reel turnover comes midway through the haunting Song of the Wood-Dove. For once, the cassette is an even or slightly preferable choice! **HF**

BACKBEAT®

Don't Mess with Millie

by Christopher Petkanas

In a garishly wallpapered office on Fifty-first Street and Broadway, soul singer Millie Jackson sits at an executive-size desk tending to the daily routines of her very healthy career. She consults with employee Richard Frisch, a brash man in his twenties who administers Keishval Enterprises and Double Ak-Shun Music, her production and publishing firms. A secretary is on the phone trying to find the Holiday Inn nearest Phoenix, Arizona, where Jackson, three backup singers, and an eight-man band are scheduled to make an appearance.

Flanked by two shopping-bags full of fan mail and the outrageous, clanking metal headdress she wore on the cover of the gold LP "Royal Rappin's," Jackson's very presence clearly implies that she runs her own show. Sixteen years ago her instincts told her that a ribald personality and a sexually explicit approach to music could yield big bucks. Having followed those instincts, today she can take full credit for being an international success.

In a way, she's an industry anomaly. Five of her fourteen releases on Spring/Polydor have gone gold (sold 500,000 units) without substantial airplay. "Airplay has nothing to do with my popularity," she says. "If I depended on it I'd starve to death." Both "Royal Rappin's," a collection of duets with Issac Hayes, and the two-disc "Live and Uncensored" hovered around the No. 50 spot on the pop LP charts in 1980. Though she has never had a pop Top 10 LP or single, she consistently tops the soul charts. Unlike many of her contemporaries, she despises—and openly bad mouths—disco, and says she wouldn't have yielded to it even if her career had depended on it. Sticking with her original, outrageous plan pays off just fine: "We recorded the *Phuck U Symphony* [a take-off on Beethoven's 5th] and it did just what I thought it would for record sales. I think very business-minded. Sales is the bottom line."

Brio and assertiveness aside, Jackson's rise hasn't been breezy. She was raised mainly by her father—her mother died when she was two—in a rural town a few miles outside of Augusta, Georgia. Though she had a succession of five stepmothers, she characterizes her childhood as "fantastic." When she was fourteen her dad left her in the care of her grandmother and preacher grandfather while he went up North to find work. A year later she ran away to join him in New Jersey. She lives there today, in Teaneck, where Wilson Pickett and the Isley Brothers are her neighbors. She was married once for eight months; neither of her two children are by her ex-husband.

At the age of sixteen, Jackson moved to New York City and started modeling after school for true confession-type magazines. It was also at about this time that she was coaxed onto the stage at a club where some friends were playing and the performing bug got her. This was 1964, when Motown—specifically, the Supremes—was all the rage; Aretha's big breakthrough was three years away.

From 1966–72, in haunts, gymnasiums, and church basements in Harlem, Brooklyn, New Jersey, and Connecticut, Millie sang, as one critic put it, "about

being black and about not being Aretha Franklin." "That's a possibility," she counters, "an opinion. Everybody in every club sang one of her songs when I started, so I went out of my way not to do her material, but not because I didn't like it. I did Gladys, Otis Redding, Ben E. King, Mavis Staples." From the start, the nubby texture of her brawny alto recalled that of Gladys Knight. Jackson's approach, however, is a unique amalgam. She combines Redding's country ease with the gospel-rooted styles of Pickett and Aretha. Unlike those models, she never sang in the churches and never had to make the transition from sacred to secular.

Her latest represents a change in direction—it's clean.

Her first recording contract in 1970 resulted in a single on MGM, *A Little Bit of Something*, which went nowhere. It was not until she signed a long-term production deal with Spring that things began to happen. Her first LP "Millie Jackson," produced the single *Ask Me What You Want*. When that became a mild r&b success, she finally quit modeling. "Everything happened accidentally," she recalls. "Spring heard me, liked me, signed me. I never pursued a recording contract. Singing was a part-time job. I was content. I was never on Broadway with a little attaché case and a demo record asking, 'Would you take me, please?' I never took me serious."

My Man, a Sweet Man, a boldly executed pledge-my-love song also from that first album, further spread the news of her arrival. "It was the only crossover hit I ever had," she says. Yet another single, *Child of God*, describes sexual and social hypocrisy in general. In particular, it relates how a needy woman whose kids are playing on the streets entertains a man "under their father's sheets." Radio programmers cited the infidelity theme as their reason for not airing the song.

During this time Jackson was learning music theory from her road band. "They taught me a lot," she says. "And I familiarized myself enough with the piano to write. Three or four years ago I took a test at Juilliard in order to enroll. I told the professor, 'You know I came here to better my career. Why do I have to name three Russian composers? I could give a damn!' He said, 'Well, you have to know theory—about major and minor, about diminished and augmented.' When I told him I knew all that he said, 'Go home. You're further ahead now than the majority of students graduating this year. You say you've got a record? How many of my students do you think would love to have one? If you go through these classes you're going to think about the right way of doing things and kill your artistic side. Go home,' he said."

In 1973, *Cash Box* named both Aretha and Jackson Best Female R&B Vocalist for, respectively, "Hey Now Hey (the Other Side of the Sky)" and "It Hurts So Good," Millie's second LP. She also released another "Millie Jackson" LP that year, followed by "Caught Up" in '74, the single from which—Luther Ingram's (*If Loving You Is Wrong*) *I Don't Want to Be Right*—won her a Grammy nomination. The LP and its successor, "Still Caught Up," were both concept works that painstakingly dissected the three-sided affair. "The idea was based on my live show at the time," she says. "But since I was working in dinky clubs where the record company people wouldn't dare come—they'd get mugged!—I had to tape it for them to hear it [and approve it]." Both of the "Caught Up" volumes were recorded at Muscle Shoals Sound Studios (see BACKBEAT, November 1980) with Jackson and veteran soul producer Brad Shapiro (Pickett, James Brown, Johnny Taylor) sharing production duties. The LPs went gold and the Jackson/Shapiro/Muscle Shoals crew has stayed together ever since.

"I tapped on a few desks and said, 'I'm gonna do what the hell I want and if it doesn't sell it's my career. Throw my contract in the garbage.' "

Jackson's production credit implies far more than choosing material and backup personnel. "Brad and I and the Rhythm Section arranged everything on the last three albums," she says. "We begin with a basic chord chart. From there we go on whatever I'm feeling the song should be like. You get in there and groove on it and maybe decide that the keyboardist should change instruments. We all work together with the background singers to come up with the most appropriate lines for them to sing. The whole works is done right there in the studio. My vocal is me—period."

"I think very business-minded. Sales is the bottom line."

In spite of the sales success of the "Caught Up" LPs, Millie still wasn't getting much airplay. Spring attributed this to the concept approach and to her sexual explicitness and decided it was time to clean things up. She tried it their way with her next two discs, "Free and In Love" and "Lovingly Yours." As she recalls it, "Spring said, 'The deejays are refusing to play your records because you're cursing and we're sick of these songs that go from one into the other.' So, I did what they wanted. After I saw the sales I tapped on a few desks and said, 'I'm gonna do what the hell I want and if it doesn't sell it's my career—throw my contract in the garbage.' I went into the studio and did 'Feelin' Bitchy' and it was the biggest album I ever had. I had no power then to say, 'I refuse to let you hear anything until it's finished,' but I said it and stood by it. Somebody else would have torn up my contract, but the company people and I could holler and then still go to lunch as friends."

"Feelin' Bitchy" (1977) ushered out the mistress character, went gold, and spawned the gold single *If You're Not Back in Love by Monday* and a lesser hit, *All the Way Lover*, by Barry Latimore. Its success helped her get complete control over her product in her contract renegotiations with Spring that year. "I wasn't really aware of my worth until they offered

me money for things I'd been doing since 1974," she remembers. "I never took the time to notice how big of a business I was in. I was too involved in the artistic side to look at what I was worth as opposed to what I was getting. When I discovered all these dollars they were willing to give me, I got serious."

In return, Spring requires two albums a year. "That's about it," says Jackson. "I think that's too much—people get a chance to tire of you. But I don't think the schedule will change. An artist who gets big promotion and radio play will jump on the charts immediately and then burn out in three months. So he can release two a year. But by the time there's a little promo on an album of mine, one or two stations play it, and people actually know about it, it's time for another release. I never get full promo at the time when awareness is highest. It stinks.

"Of course, doing two a year it's almost impossible to top the last one every time out. You have to try to go in a different direction with each album so that if it's not better than the previous one, at least it's different, and therefore just as good." Compared to '78's "Get It Out 'Cha System," '79's "A Moment's Pleasure," and '80's "For Men Only," Side 1 of her latest, "I Had to Say It," certainly represents yet another change of direction—it's clean. It is also as well balanced and satisfying as any album side she has made. The renowned Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section—guitarist Jimmy Johnson, bassist David Hood, drummer Roger Hawkins, and keyboardist Barry Beckett—carves out a deep, certain groove that positively anchors her vocals. *I Ain't No Glory Story*, whose only drawback is an initially wordy intro, features a squealing harmonica and a bubbling guitar line, a party-hearty hook that connects on first hearing, and an electrifying, chaotic, wailing send-out. Her favorite is her own *It's Gonna Take Some Time This Time*, which portrays a vulnerable woman who regards love with awe.

Side 1 is a different story, unfortunately, and features several overly long raps. While she intimates that she wouldn't mind retiring the rap on record, "the company wouldn't allow it. Besides, I owe it to the fans."

Those fans are a loyal and diverse group: When she brings her live show to New York, she sells out both Harlem's Apollo Theater and Carnegie Hall. In 1978–79 the elaborate Millie Jackson Revue travelled to some thirty cities. The show was nothing less than a four-act play with Millie portraying the roles she made famous on the "Caught Up" LPs. Backed by the flashily dressed Moments (now of Ray, Goodman & Brown fame) and several sweet girl-group voices to serve as foils to her own, she is a buoying performer whose compelling presence evokes the formidable Dinah Washington, the r&b queen who first helped bring the genre to the attention of white audiences. Yet, dressed in electric pink Spandex tights, wide, flailing sequined stripes, and incongruous farm-girl pigtails, Jackson is also a comedienne with the poise and timing of, say, Carol Burnett. Her impersonation of a blue-eyed soul singer shows more insight into Mick Jagger's shtick than he would care to have exposed. Exhausted after her frantic characterization, she tells the audience, "Now you know why niggers don't sing that shit."

"Airplay has nothing to do with my popularity. If I depended on it I'd starve to death."

Jackson doesn't enjoy managing herself. "It's a pain in the neck and very time consuming, but no one has given me a better offer. I haven't given a manager 20, 25, or 30 percent of my money because I've found that I can speak for myself very well. He'd have the right to place me with a booking agency, but I've already got one that I like. I've never had any trouble collecting money or saying whether or not I want to work this week."

Clearly, Jackson has no illusions about the kind of business she is in. Asked for an interpretation of one of this writer's favorite songs, she replies, "I'm not trying to advocate anything. I'm just saying, 'Like this record and buy it. Gimme your money.'"

Recording "Gaucho": Doctors, Lawyers, and Gremlins

by Sam Sutherland

Before the multiple-platinum sales of "Aja" carried their music to a broad pop constituency, Steely Dan's Walter Becker and Donald Fagen had earned enviable, even intimidating reputations among their professional peers. As architects for some of the '70s' most stylish, intelligent pop records, the two songwriters had long been known for their unerring musicianship and their keen interest and involvement in production technique. Not coincidentally, each recording also has served as a barometer for the current state of the art in professional multichannel recording.

Originally formed as a sextet, Steely Dan's real stars were always the songs themselves: In contrast to rock's usual preoccupation with personality, Becker and Fagen refused to offer a single persona, preferring to lead their band through a series of narrative encounters at once novelistic in detail and disturbingly oblique in meaning. If crack guitar duels were an early trademark, so was the duo's penchant for harmonic ideas culled from jazz and classic pop sources, anticipating an ensemble approach that eventually shelved the usual fireworks of rock and pop for a more structured style. By the mid-'70s, Becker and Fagen had reduced Steely Dan to a "floating workship" manned by a shifting cast of outside players, and had abandoned the concert trail altogether to focus on recording.

Since then, the prospect of a new Steely Dan album has been as eagerly anticipated a pop event as any. This was particularly true of "Gaucho," since the earliest reports of a new work in progress began over two years ago. With popular music undergoing several twists in fashion since "Aja" hit the airwaves late in '77, and the music industry itself weathering unexpected turmoil in the interim, some pop observers predicted a major musical or technical shift from Steely Dan. Instead, "Gaucho" arrived to dispell such drastic theorizing while leaving the duo's credentials intact (see review, p. 88).

As Fagen recently explained in an interview, "Records are our only business." Yet the single-minded devotion that he, Becker, and producer Gary Katz bring to writing, arranging, and recording their music has often been misread: Some critics claimed that beneath the seamless playing and spacious mix of "Aja" lurked a chilly sense of superiority to their fans. The fastidiousness that Katz agrees has earned the duo their legend as "maniacally picky" artists has been translated all-too readily into images of two lab-coated technocrats approaching their music with all the passion of biochemists splicing genes.

"We thought we had a record for a long time. . . . Then we had to start from scratch."

Upon closer examination, the seven-song "Gaucho" is neither test-tube concoction nor slapdash pop sequel. Much of its two years in production can indeed be traced to the perfectionism of the authors. But more mundane obstacles, such as a flurry of lawsuits between the band and their label, MCA Records, and a serious auto accident that kept Becker out of commission for many months, also figure prominently. And even before the new set began taking shape, Steely Dan made several career decisions that would ultimately prolong its release.

First came the move to Warner Bros. Records, which actually predated "Aja" (see BACKBEAT, November, 1977). Katz was given several extracurricular production assignments while Becker and Fagen made their debut as jazz producers, helming sessions with Warne Marsh and Pete Christlieb. Then the duo decided to move back to the East Coast, after over six years of what both perceived as an exile to the West.

"We took a year off, basically, after 'Aja,' and then started writing," explains Fagen. "So the period of time between this album and 'Aja' doesn't really represent how long the record took."

"There was a long 'getting to know you' phase with the New York musicians as well, a courtship," adds Becker. Although the "Aja" sessions involved players from both coasts, the duo's early months in New York found them hungrily soaking up the city's live musical life, visiting clubs, lofts, and concert halls. The new musical climate may have also influenced their original intents. "We would put in a lot of work just to find out that ultimately something wasn't going to make it," says Becker, "whereas in the past we could tell on the first layer of work. On *Glamour Profession*, we must've spent three times as much time and effort making versions that turned out to be just demos."

The emphasis on ensemble feel has generally dictated a somewhat conservative use of overdubbing, and much of Steely Dan's recorded work represents relatively "live" group performances with solos and vocals added later. This time, however, "we made more use of layering

than we have in the past," says Fagen.

The amount of time spent in trial and error carried its own false hopes. According to Fagen, "Some of our experiments with tunes became more than experiments—we thought we had a record for a long time. We didn't realize, that we didn't—really. Then we had to start from scratch." If that suggests more of a hit-and-miss approach than admirers might have suspected, the truth appears to be somewhere in between. Becker says that they dispensed with rehearsing musicians prior to entering the studio while finishing "Pretzel Logic" in 1974. But then they supply players with a relatively detailed road map to their

Most pop and rock sessions start with a notated outline of the basic rhythm structure, with instrumentalists frequently expected to provide solos, fills, and dramatic effects through improvisation. Becker and Fagen have long strived for more thorough arrangements. "We have pretty complete charts when we come in," says Fagen. "It's basically a case where Takes 1 through 10 will be rehearsals, and Takes 11 through 50 will be takes."

Casting musicians is another time-consuming process, despite Steely Dan's obvious familiarity not only with name pop studio talent but lesser-known jazz stylists. "Gaucho" uses four different drummers, two bassists in addition to Becker, eight horn players, nine backing vocalists, and four guitarists. Add in percussion, Fagen's keyboards, and Becker's guitar, and the size of the band's musical auxiliary becomes apparent. The two songwriters and their producer further admit that additional musicians are often involved but they wind up on the editing room floor.

"Twelve songs were cut this time, I think, which is general operating procedure for us, but not uncommon," observes Katz. "Other producers I know also will routinely overcut, just for the option of having more of a choice on the final work." As for the "embarrassing" need to scrap performances by highly-regarded players, he sees that happening "less and less—it used to be more guys on the floor than were left on the tape in the machine. But I think our experience is reducing that somewhat."

But the search for the perfect solo or the right rhythm section feel is the very essence of Steely Dan. That, and the highly-arranged character of the music, explains in part why they haven't ventured further into associations with jazz stylists. Although they have used such players as Phil Woods, Christlieb, and Wayne Shorter, they continue to work with more familiar musicians like Tom Scott, the Brecker Brothers, and Dave Sanborn. This they attribute to the latter group's ability to take direction in a highly-structured recording situation. Explains Katz, "All of us want the best players we can get. I guarantee that if John Coltrane was alive, Donald would be down on his knees."

That reverence for good musicianship may explain why Becker and Fagen remain consistently critical of their own work as instrumentalists, despite the fact that Becker has taken a more visible role as guitarist on the last two LPs while Fagen—who had retreated to a lower profile as occasional synthesizer player—

"It used to be more guys on the floor than were left on the tape in the machine."

is again prominent on keyboards on the new album. "The way I feel about my guitar playing, to be perfectly honest with you," says Becker, "is that it's to be used only as necessary, or 'taken as directed.' If there's anybody else we think can do it, we get him first." Yet he does concede that his more intimate understanding of the songs has found him choosing that "last resort" more and more. His guitar might have been even more dominant had he not been effectively removed from the project to recuperate from his injuries.

His partner is equally self-effacing. "I think it's essentially the same deal as it is with Walter," says Fagen. "If I don't feel that any of the particular musicians get the right feel, I'll do it myself." As for the greater emphasis in "Gaucho" on electric piano and synthesizer, as compared to the acoustic piano parts heard on the last two albums, he minimizes any intended stylistic shift. "Some of that was just a matter of practicality. The studios we were working in didn't have particularly good-sounding acoustic pianos. At one point we rented a Steinway and got a lemon."

As with "Aja," sessions took place on both coasts and involved a virtual batallion of engineers, all working under executive engineer Roger Nichols, a

control-room ally since the Dan's first album. Newer to the team is Elliot Scheiner, who handled the final mixdown and—with veteran engineer Bill Schnee—basic tracking. Recording at Soundworks, A&R, Sigma Sound, and Automated Sound in New York, and at the Village Recorder and Producers Workshop in Los Angeles, the project inevitably led to technical as well as musical experimentation.

Becker, a self-confessed audiophile, was eager to investigate digital recording. "We had the Soundstream people come in, since they were in town for another project," recalls Katz. "They did a little demonstration for us with our tapes, but it was unsatisfactory for us." A second try came when it was discovered that one tape had extraneous noise on the

"I guarantee that if John Coltrane was alive, Donald would be down on his knees."

empty tracks reserved for overdubs. Fagen flew to Los Angeles with the flawed reel to oversee an analog-to-digital transfer.

Ultimately, however, they decided to stay with the analog approach—this time. "We decided it didn't sound any better than the Studer conventional analog two-track," Becker says. "Digital sounded a little different, but not necessarily better." The toss up in sound and the greater editing problems incurred with digital were the final determining factors. Katz adds that he found digital had a harsher high end.

The trio has had similar disappointments with highly touted technical aids before. Noise reduction remains a particularly sore point: "We had a terrible experience with DBX," says Katz, alluding to the disastrous production gremlins encountered with "Katy Lied," "so we try to eliminate the need altogether." They do this by reaching for as high a signal level as possible on the tape; although noise reduction may be used on an individual instrument where deemed appropriate, they avoid channeling the entire master tape through Dolby or DBX units.

Even after the album was sequenced and mixed down to a final two-channel master tape, new problems arose. As the last record owed to MCA, which had purchased Steely Dan's original ABC label, "Gaucho" became a legal football for much of the past summer. First, Becker and Fagen argued that MCA had failed to make a full accounting of certain royalties due, thus entitling them to void their contract. MCA responded with a countersuit and a bid for an injunction blocking any move to a new label. Rumors of the new music's quality were the only solace for Dan fans as the months stretched on, and it was only in October, with both sides in the dispute eager to get the record out by Christmas, that a compromise was reached.

MCA got the album, and, against Becker and Fagen's wishes, made it the first single LP other than a soundtrack to carry a $9.98 list price. The company justified this by pointing to the enormous production outlay for the album, said to exceed a million dollars. Katz has since said the actual cost was "considerably less" than that.

Steely Dan did win a major concession in obtaining quality control over production of the initial run of discs. After Katz supervised the mastering sessions with engineer Bob Ludwig at New York's Masterdisk, he additionally oversaw plating of the first batch of stampers and mothers at Europadisc, a facility known for high quality work. Added care was also taken in handling and preparing the newly cut masters, rushing them to the acid bath to prevent any possible surface deterioration. "Oddly enough, it worked," reports Katz, adding, however, that their control ended with the first run of promotional discs.

Although by now accustomed to the lengthy process of making each new album, Katz is eager to streamline the procedure by establishing a studio expressly for Steely Dan. "Had you asked me about this last year, I would've given you the same answer," he cautions. "But we're talking about it now, along with Elliot and Roger. We'd like to put up a room, or buy an existing facility, to serve as a workshop primarily for overdubs and mixing. There are more than enough existing rooms for basic tracking, and we're not interested in being in the studio business. We wouldn't lock everybody else out, but it would basically be there for us, so we wouldn't have to worry about other people coming in the middle of a project." It looks as if the floating workshop may soon have its own classroom.

Gaucho: Listen Again

Steely Dan: Gaucho
Gary Katz, producer
MCA 6102
by Sam Sutherland

On first hearing, "Gaucho" suggests a seamless extension of the sleek, jazz-inflected pop of "Aja," its music even more subdued and elegantly measured than that platinum-edged predecessor. Once again, Steely Dan conceals razor-sharp edges and cavernous thematic traps beneath its songs' burnished surfaces. The very languor of the music and its smoothly meshing rhythmic and harmonic mechanisms are aural metaphors for the chic, soulless scenarios described.

More than ever, Walter Becker and Donald Fagen play the mordant intelligence of their lyrics against the seductive bloom of their melodies and arrangements. A similar subtlety characterizes their growth as composers. "Aja" was a quantum step forward in its distillation of the melodic and topical hallmarks of earlier Dan albums; "Gaucho" is an even purer essence. That these new songs represent a less dramatic shift in musical focus is more an indication of how far the duo has refined its style than it is a sign of stagnation.

Here the musical focus is somewhat narrower than before. Tempos hold to a middle ground, ranging from the studied rests that punctuate the brooding *Third World Man* to the loping undertow of *Time Out of Mind*. The interplay between bass lines and drums is pared to a lean pulse; brass and reed charts are distinguished as much by what their authors have edited out as by the close harmonies and sculpted single lines that remain. And the electric guitar, once this band's most pointed concession to rock etiquette, is more than ever subordinated to the role of melodic embroidery. Even the supporting rock guitarists, such as Rick Derringer and Dire Straits' Mark Knopfler, are guided toward the rounder tone and melismatic phrasing of jazz stylists.

The combined effect of all this is so lissome and effortlessly propulsive that it's tempting to call it all "soothing." But consider the experiences of the featured characters: Drug deals, fitful sexual trysts, dreams of violent rebellion, and the shadow of emotional and spiritual betrayal all pace the action. While the locales are generally stylish, the forces at work are menacing. Side 1 in particular is haunted by the dazed, narcissistic Hollywood dream so often invoked on earlier Dan songs, suggesting that if Becker and Fagen have moved back to their Big Apple origins, they have yet to exorcise the Lotusland demons that surrounded them for much of the '70s. There is even an ambivalent whiff of jaded nostalgia for the decadent West on the opening *Babylon Sisters*.

On *Hey Nineteen*, Fagen croons a wry blues for a new generation gap as his thirtyish protagonist tries to connect with the teenage woman of the title. That lust becomes their only bond as the singer catalogs their alienation: "No, we can't dance together, No, we can't talk at all," he laments, before yielding to a choral bridge at once desolate and funny: "The Cuervo Gold / The fine Colombian / Make tonight a wonderful thing."

Elsewhere, the plotlines are typically deceptive, at once studded with incriminating detail and laced with ambiguity. *Glamour Profession* offers three vignettes that gradually overlap, its characters implied accomplices. Hoops McCann, the basketball player seen in the opening verse, seems irrevocably tied to Jive Miguel, the visitor entertained in the third verse: The former's "special delivery" suggests he's nothing more than a runner for Miguel's L.A. network. The commodity in question is probably cocaine, yet Becker and Fagen refuse to spell it out, and therein rests much of the track's appeal.

More straightforward is *Time Out of Mind*, a corrupted hymn of sorts that mates the mystical promises of its charlatan narrator to a sinuous r&b groove. *My Rival* similarly downplays double meanings and missing links to sketch the singer's rage in explicit detail ("I loved you more than I can tell / But now it's stomping time").

Throughout, the musicianship and Gary Katz's immaculate production are as lucid and inviting as we've come to expect from Steely Dan, suggesting that "Gaucho," like "Aja," is a masterful collection that will continue to reveal added nuance and new meaning for months to come. Apparent models can be found—the introduction to the title tune, for example, shares the gospel harmonies and bluesy syncopation of Keith Jarrett's ensemble recordings with Jan Garbarek—but the sum total is purely Dan. As such, "Gaucho" is a stunner, and my candidate for the best of the year.

Abba: Super Trouper
Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus, producers. Atlantic SD 16023
by Steven X. Rea

Of the four things Sweden is most famous for—blondes, clogs, suicides, and Abba—Abba is certainly the most curious. Curious because of its gargantuan success (whether or not, as their label claims, they are "the biggest-selling group in the world") and because, while it continues to dish up undeniably catchy singles like *The Name of the Game*, *S.O.S.*, etc., its albums are consistently little more than so much glossy pop mush.

"Super Trouper" is perhaps more rife with said mush than any previous Abba effort. Anna and Frida's shrill, crackling harmonies still hit the listener like a cold Scandinavian wind and Benny Andersson's keyboards and synthesizers still bounce with diehard, uncanny verve. But the group's trademark savvy is herein wasted on a collection of mediocre tunes.

The LP's first single, *The Winner Takes It All*, is an overlong, uneventful ballad, only somewhat buoyed by a spry, upbeat chorus. The title track fares better—the profitable Abba corporation (among the largest nongovernment-owned money makers in its socialist state) adopts the-show-must-go-on nobility and frames it in what sounds like a discofied Christmas carol. Elsewhere, various pop elements rear their candy-sweet heads: Phil Spector (*On and On and On*), the Bay City Rollers, and Crispin St. Peter (*The Piper*).

It's no small coincidence that one of Abba's two major publishing arms is called Countless Songs, Ltd. Indeed, Benny and Björn churn them out like

Abba: rife with glossy pop mush

Brown: rhythmic magic

Bruce and friends

there's no tomorrow. But when it's all said and done, their writing is somewhat limited. While Abba is unquestionably good fun, one can't help wonder how much longer it can get away with such superficiality.

James Brown: Live and Lowdown at the Apollo, Vol. 1
James Brown, producer
Solid Smoke 8006 (P.O. Box 22372, San Francisco, Ca. 94122)
by Tom Vickers

This LP was recorded eighteen years ago, even before James Brown first crossed the pop color barrier with *Papa's Got a Brand New Bag* in 1965. Long out of print, its rerelease comes on Solid Smoke Records, a Bay Area independent with an honest interest in preserving the great music of yesteryear. And this is indeed great music.

While the Beatles and Dylan are looked upon as the masterminds of Sixties pop lyrics, Brown created a revolution in rhythm with staccato horn lines, fatback drums and church-inspired screaming. Though his lyrics were often sorely lacking, his intricate arrangements and rhythmic syncopations communicated a sophisticated yet primal force that hit harder than mere words could ever hope for. Brown was, and is still, possessed with a rhythmic magic that has yet to be duplicated by any of the numerous funk bands working in the idiom he created.

From the opening MC hype of the "hardest working man in show business" to the final refrain of Brown's signature standard *Please, Please, Please*, "Live and Lowdown at the Apollo" shows the singer at the height of his ballad period. Originally the style he was most famous for, his ballad singing sounds like a cross between the yearning of Little Willie John and the exhortation of a Baptist preacher. On tunes like *Bewildered, Try Me*, the haunting *Lost Someone*, and *I Don't Mind*, you can hear the audience screaming and understand why. He still had most of his midrange, and the ease with which he swept back and forth between falsetto and baritone was truly overpowering.

Equally so are the uptempo numbers, the very tablets on which modern funk is modelled. The driving *I'll Go Crazy* along with the double-time *Night Train* and *Think* are the harbingers of what was soon to evolve. And between the peaks and the valleys are Brown's raps—preachings on suffering that are as emotionally deep and heartfelt as anyone can stand.

Avoid at all costs Brown's recent Polydor live release, "Hot On the One." "Live and Lowdown" is the genuine article, the definitive word on one of the greatest singer-entertainers ever to whirl and pulse across a stage.

Jack Bruce and Friends: I've Always Wanted to Do This
Jack Bruce, producer
Epic JE 36827
by Dave Kirby

Listening to "I've Always Wanted to Do This," one would never guess that bassist Jack Bruce has played with such high-voltage outfits as Tony Williams' Lifetime, Cream, and Bruce, West & Laing. With its mixed bag of blues, funk, and r&b-flavored rock, his latest offering takes few chances and relies less on firepower than on spare production.

Bruce's vocals are highlighted on all of the LP's ten short cuts. On tunes like *Hit and Run* and Billy Cobham's *Wind and the Sea*, he sounds strained and wooden, diluting the power of his own bass playing and Cobham's enthusiastic percussion support. He's at his best during the quieter moments, i.e. *Mickey the Fiddler* and the intro to *Bird Alone*, where he sounds much like the Band's Richard Manuel. *Running Back* is saved by its substantial but not intrusive background vocals, and *Out to Lunch* is set in a sparse, bluesy context in which Bruce obviously feels comfortable.

Guitarist Clem Clempson quietly takes on the role of team player, saving up for two or three soaring solos on *Running Back, Dancing on Air*, and *Out to Lunch*. Keyboardist/guitarist David Sancious also stays out of the spotlight, providing rhythmic support or tasty fills at the right

moments. Though they both make their presence known throughout, neither ever indulges in the ego-tripping that pervades most fusion these days.

"I've Always Wanted to Do This" approaches the tone of Steely Dan's rock and avoids the high-gloss tongue-in-cheek attitudes of jaded rock stars engaged in self-parody. Bruce is out to have some fun and doesn't ask that we take him too seriously.

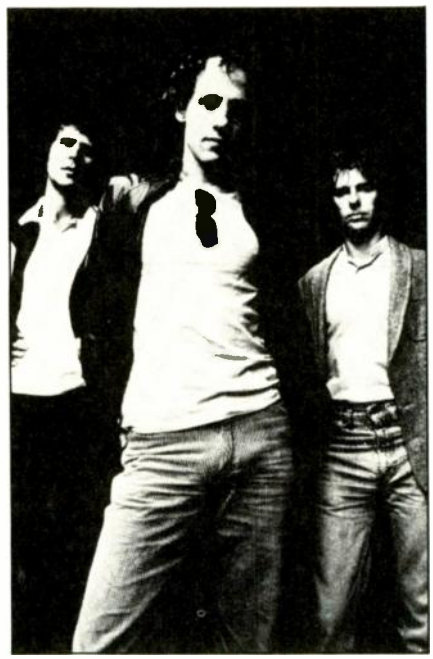
Dire Straits: Making Movies
Jimmy Iovine & Mark Knopfler, producers. Warner Bros. BSK 3480
by Steven X. Rea

Given the eccentric nature of their blowout hit in '78, *Sultans of Swing*, Dire Straits have maneuvered themselves into an enviable position in the pop world: No one expects a group so glaringly unhip to come up with another multiplatinum monster, yet thanks to their initial success frontman Mark Knopfler can call his own artistic shots. In these days of smart new wave pop and abrupt, dissonant electro-rock, those shots are beguiling, singularly able affairs.

"Makin Movies" steers the same essential course as last year's solid, subtle "Communique": a set of longish rock portraits, penned with a willowy, skilled hand, sung with that unmistakable, unaffected Dylanesque rasp, and embued throughout with Knopfler's mesmeric guitar. (He is one of very few rock axemen whose extended solos never leave the listener disinterested.) Then the LP takes its predecessor's bass and drums r&b mixdown a few steps further by adding E Street Band keyboardist Roy Bittan to John Illsley's and Pick Wither's brew.

Additionally—and ironically—with the departure of rhythm guitarist David Knopfler, brother Mark's basic rhythm and lead tracks propel the Straits' sound headlong into a tougher, leaner rock domain. The plaintive, gutsy refrain of *Hand in Hand*, the exhilarative punch of *Expresso Love*, and the swift, appropriately named *Solid Rock*, all surge along with unequivocal mettle.

It's the trio of songs that comprise Side 1—*Tunnel of Love*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Skateaway*—that are this album's tour de force. The first wheels and spins across some imagined global fairground in search of true love, while Knopfler variably plucks, pulls, and stretches notes from his guitar with tenacious skill. He is also adept at planting mini-homages



Illsley, Knopfler, Withers

Dolly: a step backwards

throughout his work. Here, when he sings "big wheel keep on turning" Credence Clearwater immediately springs to mind; on *Romeo and Juliet* he modernizes Shakespeare with wry cool as Juliet looks at a serenading Romeo and observes (by way of the Angels' '63 hit) "Hey la my boyfriend's back." On *Skateaway*, with its spooky organ chords and rolling beat, Knopfler plays the dispassionate onlooker, eyeing the cheesey escapades of some kind of surfside roller queen.

What has happened to Knopfler and Dire Straits is very rare. By sidestepping the heady zeal of a quick success and remaining steadfast to their own early design, they have become so good that they've probably excluded themselves from repeating the massive commercial magnitude of their first record. But as long as they come up with discs like "Making Movies," who can complain?

Dolly Parton: 9 to 5 and Odd Jobs
Mike Post & Gregg Perry, producers. RCA AHL 1-3852
by Mitchell Cohen

It seemed implausible that Dolly Parton would again record an album with depth and dignity; ever since her enshrinement on Johnny Carson's couch, her music has been the glitziest pop/country, lacking the conviction of early works like "My Blue Ridge Mountain Boy." "9 to 5 and Odd Jobs" is, on the surface, unpromising: a blatant tie-in with her film debut, featuring a cartoonish cover and a grating title song that sounds like a theme from the TV sitcom that will inevitably follow the movie's success.

On closer look, the LP is indeed slick, but it also has bite and deals with subjects—labor and class—close to Parton's heart. She has made this concept album an opportunity to cover excellent songs by Woody Guthrie, Merle Travis, and Mel Tillis, to act as hooker and autoworker, to borrow from Stephen Foster, and to return (in her own *Poor Folks Town*) to the quality that made her so special before she became a Star.

The album has flaws and makes compromises. Dolly's rewrite of *The House of the Rising Sun* is saddled with a bothersome synthesizer riff, strings engulf the end of a lovely *Detroit City* (with a spoken passage that only Parton could get away with), and the characters in *Working Girl*—a prostitute, an executive, and a pink collar worker—are created more from observation than from any real understanding.

When Parton sings *Dark as a Dungeon* with heartwrenching simplicity, or Guthrie's *Deportee*, or the only straightforward love song on the album, *But You Know I Love You*, she is open and affecting in a way she has rarely been lately. Her compassion comes through, along with the drive that helped her escape the traps these songs depict. "9 to 5 and Odd Jobs" is her finest album in ages.

Continued on page 93

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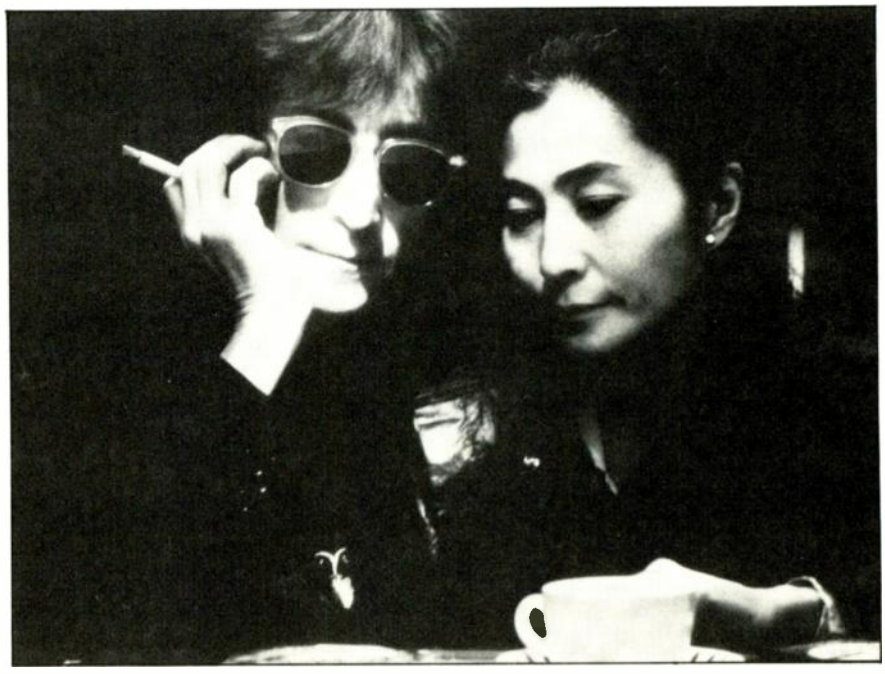
John Lennon's Last

by Mitchell Cohen

John Lennon & Yoko Ono:
Double Fantasy
John Lennon, Yoko Ono,
& Jack Douglas, producers
Geffen GHS 2001



In a calamitous turn of events too fraught with sadness and irony for the heart to bear, "Double Fantasy" has gone from John Lennon's longed-for musical re-emergence to his last recorded testament. What sounded a few weeks ago like a man's too-complacent statement of tranquility now can only be heard in the dark context of tragedy and in the blazing light of an unparalleled career.

To listen to John's voice on the Beatles' Hamburg tapes of 1962, the Decca demos, the "Please Please Me" album, is to witness the fabric of rock music being torn to shreds and rewoven by a very young man with conquest on his mind. Later songs as diverse as *It Won't Be Long, You Can't Do That, Help!, Every Little Thing, Any Time at All, Don't Let Me Down, Rain, Instant Karma, I'm a Loser, Jealous Guy,* Side 2 of "Rubber Soul," and almost everything on "John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band," show how he changed rock singing and composing as dramatically as Brando changed screen acting and with the same emotional intensity.

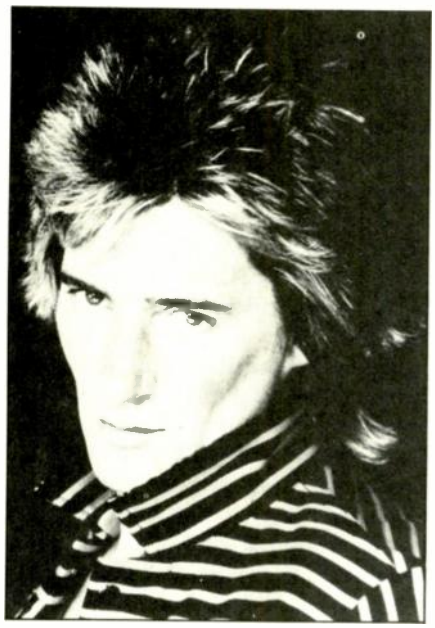
We saw John Lennon more naked than any other modern star; no one was more unafraid of image-risks, of going too far: Every step the Beatles took forward, for good or ill, was guided by John. When at last they were quartered, he embarked on a crusade that shocked and embarrassed much of his audience, confused many others, and resulted in work that was distressingly erratic, but always marked by honesty and humanist integrity. If Lennon was too susceptible to dubious characters like the Maharishi and assorted yippies, he was also a very public person eager to use his influence to shake up things that needed it.

He retreated, he accumulated wealth and property, he raised a son. Then, he was coming back; expectations were high. The single that preceded "Double Fantasy," *(Just like) Starting Over,* was a typically droll, wonderful Lennon tease, from the Presley vocal mannerisms and the pun implied in the title ("Just Like" = "J.L."), to the corny piano and background vocals and definitively hummable melody. His legendary trash-pop instinct was clearly operating at 45 rpm.

The album, unfortunately, isn't quite as good. After five years inside their house, John and Yoko brought their dialog out of doors, expecting it to engage us. They were so wrapped up in their homelife, so rapt in attentiveness toward each other and their child, that "Double Fantasy" doesn't even acknowledge any other humans except those who would question the couple's self-imposed isolation. This album is not what a Lennon admirer might have chosen as an artistic epitaph. On it, a well-adjusted musical craftsman, an artist with the capacity to startle, addressed his own familial condition and found that it was just fine, thanks.

But complaining about its limited vision seems not only inappropriate, but mean-spirited. For though only sentimentality could rank it with his finest work, one can't fault the familiar abrasion of *I'm Losing You,* the oriental delicacy of *Beautiful Boy,* John's warm singing on *Watching the Wheels,* the mea culpa ballad *Woman,* the crisp New York City ambience, or even Yoko's dance-rock contributions. "Double Fantasy" bows to rock's past (copping from Buddy Holly on *Dear Yoko*), nods towards Lennon's own (paraphrasing *Cry Baby Cry* on *Cleanup Time*), and details his life in the Dakota. As such, it leaves us with questions about Lennon's possible musical future, questions we thought he'd have the next forty years to explore. "Double Fantasy" sounds like a step, not a stop.

From the days before the Beatles landed in America, until the news that caused so many tears and nightmares, their every move as a group and as individuals was a matter of concern to us. Now something is gone that is irretrievable; someone of immeasurable importance has been ripped from us. John Lennon was almost always overwhelming, in his audacity, passion, ego, directness. Now we have been overwhelmed by him once more, with grief and with gratitude for a life that permanently marked and altered our own.



Stewart: purely emotional

Summer: a penchant for rock

Continued from page 90

Rod Stewart: Foolish Behaviour
Harry the Hook, Rod Stewart Group, & Jeremy Andrew Johns, producers
Warner Bros. HS 3485
Crispin Cioe

Along with Elvis Presley, Mick Jagger, and Bob Seger, Rod Stewart is one of the few authentic rock & roll singers to become an across-the-board pop star as well. The process began with his mid-'70s, Tom Dowd-produced LP, "Atlantic Crossing," and reached full fruition with 1978's "Blondes Have More Fun" and its single *Da Ya Think I'm Sexy?*

On "Foolish Behaviour" he continues to grow as a pop songwriter, yet never sacrifices the essentially gritty approach that makes him one of the great rock singers. The m.o.r. ballad *My Girl*, for instance, is pure pop crossover fare. Yet it keeps safe distance from Manilow-land via the tune's emotional directness and Memphis soul roots and Stewart's soul-wrenching delivery. (Phil Kenzie also contributes a stunning alto sax solo.)

There are also some convincing dark moods on this album, revealing a sensitivity that Stewart's earlier work only suggested. On *Say It Ain't True*, he squeezes every drop of meaning from the ballad's paranoid, jilted-lover lyrics, using melisma and impassioned screams as beautifully as he has managed on wax. Of course, Stewart's original stock-in-trade was flat-out rock & roll, and with the high-octane band here (basically the same unit that played on "Blondes"), he still interprets rock in the explosive Little Richard/Chuck Berry tradition. *Better Off Dead* cranks out raunchy guitar chords with a savage grace that's all too rare today, and engineer Andy Johns captures the song's raw, live energy without sacrificing the modern fidelity associated with rock in the '80s. Granted, this is the kind of tune Rod's been peddling for years, but he's actually getting better at it.

The secret here is, I'll wager, purely emotional. Whether the newfound maturity in these songs is a result of having become a family man or just plain living, "Foolish Behaviour" shows Stewart infusing his tried-and-true musical approaches with new depth and meaning. "Put yourself in my place for awhile, going out of fashion, growing out of style," he sings on *Say It Ain't True*. It's a measure of his talent that he can expose the scars of experience without sounding either callow or oversentimental.

Donna Summer: The Wanderer
Giorgio Moroder & Pete Bellotte, producers
Geffen GHS 2000
by Crispin Cioe

Donna Summer is the genuine article, a singer of such imposing power that she has totally transcended the limiting disco context in which she first made her fame. "The Wanderer" continues her long-time association with writers/producers Giorgio Moroder and Pete Bellotte, but it contains less artifice and more Donna than any of her previous LPs. It also features some of L.A.'s more energetic studio musicians in guitarists Jeff Baxter and Steve Lukather and the always-brisk bassist Lee Sklar.

As anyone who has listened closely knows, there are more sides to Summer than early hits like *Love to Love You* ever intimated. One that emerges here is her penchant for rock, which actually isn't all that surprising since she once mentioned Lou Reed and the Velvet Underground as one of her early musical influences. While "The Wanderer" contains nothing as extreme as that outfit's late-'60s rock-noir, Summer fashions some very bittersweet visions out of her producers' palette of electronic and conventional rock & roll colors. *Nightlife* is a descriptive landscape of nocturnal attractions in the big city, set to a rock-disco beat with driving rhythm guitar and slinky electric piano. *Cold Love*, a composition sleekly tailored to her persona, is a rock lament that starts with the statement "I go for the best, end up with much less," and finishes with the question, "Whatever happened to that sweet old love?"

The material that Summer had a hand in writing packs a special wallop. The title song/album-opener—with its glossy synthesizer patina and glib lines ("The whole world is my home, no need to worry")—sets up an idealistic tone that the singer proceeds to debunk throughout the rest of the LP. *Breakdown* is a sincerely down and dirty tune about infidelity. While the next song, *Grand Illusion*, isn't as specific about the the singer's malaise, Summer's eerie high vocal harmonizing with Stephanie Spruill set against spacy, insinuating synthesizers leaves little doubt that the subject is emotional pain. The singer's own *Running for Cover*, a slow funk number, alludes to an early tough life in the streets, while the pounding chorus implies that those memories don't fade easily, even with success.

Lest we forget that Summer began singing in Boston churches as a child, the album closes with her *I Believe in Jesus*, an unabashed pop/gospel composition replete with backing choir to set off her husky, soaring vocal. On "The Wanderer" Summer moves from sin to redemption, all the while remaining a bonafide pop icon. Within the slick confines of this musical format, it's a bravura performance.

XTC: Black Sea
Steve Lillywhite, producer
Virgin VA 13147
by Steven X. Rea

Just when XTC begins to get on your nerves with its clanging hammer-on-spikes percussion and minor chord breakdowns, out pops a dazzling hook or whimsically deft melody. Which is why, if one is in the mood for a little cacophony, XTC can be fairly satisfying.

There is nothing on "Black Sea" quite as intriguing as the last album's *Making Plans for Nigel* (a big U.K. hit) or *Ten Feet Tall*, but bassist Colin Moulding and guitarist/keyboardist Andy Partridge—XTC's singer/songwriters—have come up with a couple of witty, snappy gems. *Respectable Street*, with its fierce, early Eno-like backbeat, takes to task the ennui of the upper middle class with an eye for detail akin to the Kinks. Partridge's vocal here, as throughout, sounds like a cross between the Police's Sting and Talking Heads' David Byrne. *Generals and Majors*, with its wild, scraggly guitars, boasts a synthesizer riff reminiscent of the whistling troops on *Bridge Over the River Kwai*.

XTC's biggest strength lies in its lyrics, alternately rich and cool, abrupt and wacky. *Rocket from a Bottle* offers little glimpses of ecstasy against a pounding, frenzied backdrop. Even more of a standout is *Burning with Optimism's Flames*—a manic, euphoric piece of speed-rapping irreverency.

It appears that this outfit can go one of two routes: further out there in the far reaches of avant-minimalist punk-funk, or back in toward a more traditional, restrained pop road. Without abandoning the smart thrust and off-kilter charm of its music, one hopes XTC will choose the latter course.

Neil Young: Hawks & Doves
David Briggs, Tim Mulligan, & Neil Young, producers
by Mitchell Cohen

One side is a campfire, the sound close and intimate, the presence pre-electric: you can hear every slap on the wood, every crack in the voice. The other side is a barn dance with fiddle-bows and steel guitars, yelps and hollers. It's an album for the winter of '80–'81: shoring up, getting ready for a return to polemics, advancing by retreating. "Hawks & Doves" doesn't talk politics, it hovers over the landscape, and like all the best of Neil Young's music, the album is by turns lucid and impenetrable. Young keys in on the new pervasive mood, the transition of the American ethic to "We don't back down from no trouble/We do get up in the mornin'."

A departure from '79's two rocking "Rust" volumes, "Hawks & Doves" refers to '77's "American Stars 'n Bars" in name and cover art, to '78's "Comes a Time" in emotional timbre, and, even further back, to Buffalo Springfield's *Broken Arrow* and Young's earliest solo projects. (This is particularly apparent on this LP's *The Old Homestead* and ballads like *Little Wing*.) In a way, the record sounds like a response to the country jingoism of rebel rousers like Charlie Daniels, much as "Rust Never Sleeps" acknowledged new wave's challenge. "I ain't tongue-tied," Young exclaims, "just got nothin' to say/I'm proud to be livin' in the U.S.A."

There is humor on the title cut and *Coastline*. And on *Union Man*, a motion at an American Federation of Musicians meeting concerns bumper-stickers. But "Hawks & Doves" also has a melancholy sense of loss that is particularly opportune. Young can't be unaware of the resonance inherent in calling a character *Captain Kennedy*, especially in the context of a war-bound son reflecting on a humiliating battle that defeated his father. The cryptic images (a naked rider, three talking birds, a priest, a telephone booth, the pull of a not-full moon) of *The Old Homestead*, the ocean floor blues of *Lost in Space*, *Little Wing*'s solitary nostalgia all have a weightless, restless feeling. And for one hoedown singalong, Young has fashioned a slogan to take the republic into the years of Ronald Reagan: *Comin' Apart at Every Nail*.

JAZZ

Henry "Red" Allen and Coleman Hawkins: 1933
Bill Bennett, production coordinator
Smithsonian Collection R 022
(P.O. Box 10230, Des Moines, Iowa 50336)
by John S. Wilson

They played together only briefly in Fletcher Henderson's early '30s band, but Red Allen and Coleman Hawkins' partnership is one of the more significant in jazz. This is due primarily to the fifteen small-group sides they made as coleaders in 1933, all of which are brought together for the first time on this disc. As John McDonough points out in his informative notes, 1933 was virtually a dead year for the record business: "It's a wonder that any jazz records were made that year," he says. This explains why, with the exceptions of *Jamaica Shout* and *Heartbreak Blues*, none of Allen and Hawkins' records are as widely known as those of such celebrated teams as Louis Armstrong and Earl Hines or Charles Parker and Dizzy Gillespie.

Two of these sides were deemed so hopelessly uncommercial that they stayed on the shelf for forty years, finally emerging in 1973 on French CBS. Five were made in New York for English Parlophone, eight were aimed at the jukebox trade and consisted of the dregs of music publishers' catalogs. Still, nothing could stifle Allen and Hawkins in this particularly exploratory period of their careers. Allen stresses his Armstrong roots and Hawkins sometimes plays as sweetly as (as McDonough suggests) Carmen Lombardo. Indeed, the range of expression Hawkins covers here is even broader than that of his later playing. Since they also use the superb trombones of Dicky Wells, J. C. Higginbotham, or Benny Morton, and musicians from the Henderson or Benny Carter bands (including Benny himself), vitality bristles under even the most placid surfaces throughout.

Bob Crosby and His Orchestra—1938
Circle CLP 1
(3008 Wadsworth Mill Place, Atlanta, Ga. 30032)
by John S. Wilson

Back in the Thirties, the Bob Crosby band was often denigrated for trying to swing with a Dixieland 2/4 beat instead of the accepted 4/4. But on this 1938 recording—which is being commercially released for the first time—the group sounds fresh and invigorating, particularly compared to the reissues of some of the period's more successful bands.

The disc is part of the World Transcriptions series, a radio service in the '30s and '40s that recorded the best bands of the period (under thinly disguised pseudonyms) for broadcast purposes only. George H. Buck, Jr. acquired the rights to the Transcriptions in the early '70s, and, after storing them in various garages for the last ten years, has finally

Henderson: brilliant delivery

started issuing them. The Crosby LP is the first.

Initially, the most impressive thing about the album is its sound. It is superb, not only by 1938's standards but by today's. It contains an excellent cross-section of the Crosby repertoire, including the ballads, which are invariably slighted in the band's reissues. With its mixture of a Dixieland beat and a swing projection, the group gave even the dullest ballads a strong rhythmic propulsion. So even dreadful lyrics and a singer as bland as Kay Weber sound tolerable.

The disc also contains a pair of Bob Zurke's specialties (though they originated with Joe Sullivan and Meade Lux Lewis) in *Little Rock Getaway* and *Honky Tonk Train Blues*. There are lots of Eddie Miller and Matty Matlock solos and, for seasoning, one horrible novelty. For Crosby fans, this is a far better collection than the recordings the band turned out for Decca during the same period. And for the uninitiated, it is a provocative introduction to a Swing band that has been overlooked in the face of Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, and Glen Miller.

Joe Henderson, Chick Corea, Ron Carter, Billy Higgins: Mirror, Mirror
Joachim E. Berendt, producer
Pausa, Inc. PR 7075
by Don Heckman

Joe Henderson is the least known of these four fine jazzmen. It's fitting, therefore, that he should dominate the generally uncomplicated, straight-ahead jazz that emerges on "Mirror, Mirror." All-star sessions like this one used to be common in the days before "concept" jazz albums or the big bucks, super-expensive crossover productions. The ingredients are simple enough: an old standard (in this case, *What's New?*), a piece or two from each of the participants (two from Carter, two from Corea, and one from Henderson), a lot of good vibrations, and very little rehearsal.

All of this places a responsibility on the soloists to make something out of whole cloth. Henderson is the man on the spot here, and he delivers—brilliantly on two or three tracks. He plays best, as does the ensemble, on the Corea pieces, *Mirror, Mirror* and *Blues for Liebestraum*. The title track is a lovely waltz, destined to become a jazz classic. Both the rhythmic base, with its shifting between two and three, and the harmony, with its unexpected chromatic changes, provide precisely the kind of challenge that good improvisers want. Henderson responds with a loping solo that is half-melodic and half driving rhythm. It is surely one of his best on record.

Blues for Liebestraum is notable primarily for the bouncing, joyous improvisational interplay between Henderson and Corea. This is contemporary jazz at its finest, uncluttered by political or commercial considerations. Would that there were more of it.

Once past these tracks—and a lyrical, but essentially lightweight interpretation of *What's New?*—the music begins to pale. Granted, it's difficult to make this kind of session work from start to finish. Two exceptional tracks, one good one, and three that are pleasant but meandering is not such a bad effort, all things considered. And on the plus side throughout is the playing of Henderson. Come to think of it, a taste of his music in Corea's Return to Forever group might bring about a much needed revitalization.

Bob Brookmeyer / Composer, Arranger with Mel Lewis and the Jazz Orchestra
Norman Schwartz, producer
Gryphon G 912
by John S. Wilson

Mel Lewis and the Jazz Orchestra started out in 1966 as the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis band. Though it has had Jones as

Continued on page 100

by Elise Bretton

Musical Theater

Barnum. Vocal selections
Big 3/Notable. 13 songs. $7.95

Barnum has won three Tony awards including one for its star, Jim Dale. The Michael Stewart/Cy Coleman score is jaunty and highly polished, but, geared as it is to display one performer's showmanship, strictly marshmallow.

From the outset, the title character bombards us with exuberant, rapid-fire patter songs (*There Is a Sucker Born Every Minute, Museum Song, The Prince of Humbug*) worthy of Danny Kaye in his prime. The slick Barnum we meet here is a wheeling-dealing dynamo, more charming and flamboyant than any of his American Museum headliners, and so much more talented than they are that he hardly needs a supporting cast. (His star attraction, Jenny Lind, sings only a tepid waltz.) The chorus numbers include the obligatory chin-up routine *One Buck at a Time*, and the razzling-dazzling *Come Follow the Band* and *Join the Circus*. The score would have benefitted from more contrast and less bombast and features only one, albeit lovely, ballad in *The Colors of My Life*, which has been recorded by several m.o.r. artists.

A Day in Hollywood, A Night in the Ukraine. Vocal selections
Big 3/Regent. 12 songs. $7.95

Theater audiences love this two-part invention by erudite Englishmen Dick Vosburgh and Frank Lazarus. Part 1, *A Day in Hollywood*, is a song and dance spoof of 1930s Hollywood, complete with ushers tap-dancing down the aisles of Grauman's Chinese Theater and disappearing right into the silver screen itself. The second part of this frivolity, *A Night in the Ukraine*, is a loose adaptation of Chekov's *The Boor* as a vehicle for the Marx Brothers. After seeing the show, I was all a-dither to examine the folio and play through a genuinely witty score.

What I hadn't realized was that a good deal of my enjoyment had been derived from the show's deft staging. Though Vosburgh and Lazurus have a genuine affinity for the sound and style of the '30s, unless one has seen the show (the original cast album is poorly recorded), it is hard to appreciate a song whose recurring lyric is "oh, see those famous feet, all those famous feet," or to understand the humor in the repetition of one word, "again," in the song of that title. Another thing I hadn't realized was that America's own Jerry Herman made several contributions to the score. (He was apparently called in after the show went into preproduction.) His *The Best in the World, Nelson*, and *Just Go to the Movies*—showy numbers of a type once known as "special material"—are far more appropriate for the home musician. Aficionados will of course relish the entire score, and we can all rejoice in the renaissance of the Broadway revue.

Coleman of "Barnum" fame

Christopher Cross

Popular

Christopher Cross
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Boz Scaggs: Middle Man
Warner Bros., 9 songs, $7.95

These two singer/songwriters ride high on the LP charts and the printed versions of the material that put them there enable you to play and sing along. Just remember that you'll have to be your own backup band.

Happiness Is . . . Enchanting Music
Big 3. 57 songs. $7.95

This is a delightful nosegay, guaranteed to please the let's-gather-'round-the-piano crowd. The material spans most popular styles and the easy-play arrangements are unburdened by excess ornamentation in the vocal line. To name only a few of the enduring copyrights represented: *Just the Way You Are, Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing, Breezin', Theme from New York, New York, Laura, Help Me Make It Through the Night*. The remaining forty-nine are equally felicitous.

The Best of Linda Ronstadt
Columbia Pictures. 24 songs. $8.95

The queen of country/rock keeps a surprisingly low profile in this latest collection: no glamour shots, no bio, no discography—just ninety-one pages of solid hits. Good for her, and even better for the purchaser. If you're feeling vulnerable, there's lots to identify with here: *Poor Pitiful Me, Tracks of My Tears, When Will I Be Loved, You're No Good, Love Has No Pride*, and many more.

Carly Simon: Come Upstairs
Warner Bros., 9 songs. $8.95

A funny thing happened on the way to the piano: I started reading through Carly Simon's new folio and I couldn't find a melody anywhere. There's a lot of music, to be sure, but very little of it soars. I think what has happened is Ms. Simon's music biz companions have convinced her that her forté is strictly lyrics and that her musicianship needed shoring up—by them, of course. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our lady of *Anticipation* and *You're So Vain* needs no musical takeover from alleged friends who hold synthesizers in one hand and collaborators' contracts in the other. C'mon, Carly, believe in yourself and you've got it made.

Linda: just hits

Carly: sans melody

Super Women Super Stars
Big 3. 26 songs. $5.95

This is a pleasant, medium-priced folio that should attract even the anti-ERA faction. The women are almost evenly divided between interpreters and writer/performers, though one who excels in both, Dolly Parton, is represented only as an interpreter. Material is topnotch country (Crystal Gale, Loretta Lynn), rock (Cher, Janis Joplin), folk (Joan Baez), m.o.r. (Barbra Streisand, Helen Reddy), disco (Donna Summer), punk (Blondie—i.e. Debbie Harry) plus more that defies categorization. Good music, good value.

There Is Love, There Is Love A Collection of Wedding and Love Songs
Warner Bros., 46 songs. $7.95

Here's a kitschy item that has got to be the howl of the year. The folio's cover is gold-engraved white plastic, designed to resemble a wedding invitation, and the first page is a reproduction of an actual marriage certificate (in case the clergyman of your choice runs short), and that's followed by two pages of do-it-yourself geneologies.

Then there's the music. For the bride and groom over sixty there are such predictable warhorses as *I Love You Truly, Wedding March, Oh Promise Me, Let Me Call You Sweetheart, Body and Soul, I Believe, 'S Wonderful, It Had to Be You*, and *Tea for Two*. For the "younger generation" try *Feelings, Evergreen, Time in a Bottle*, or Barry Manilow's *This One's for You*. I wonder who gets custody of the folio.

Also received this month

Today's Pop Hits
Bradley/April-Blackwood, 13 songs, $5.95

Featuring wispy material by Billy Joel, ELO, and Robbie Dupree, and Olivia Newton-John's *Xanadu* in an outrageous key.

The World's Greatest Sheet Music
Cherry Lane, 17 songs, $4.95

Two-line piano-vocals of John Denver, TV's *Dallas* theme song, and some Neil Sedaka revivals. Fine for the money.

Top Hits Of 1980, Vol. 2
Warner Bros., 18 songs, $5.95

Rupert Holmes, Diana Ross's *Upside Down, Fame*, and Ma Bell's commercial *Reach Out*.

Country Feelings
Big 3. 41 songs, $6.95

Too many biggies to tabulate. The material has been recorded by such luminaries as Larry Gatlin, Don Williams, the Kendalls, and Conway Twitty.

The Knack: But the Little Girls Understand
Warner Bros., 12 songs, $8.95

How the little girls understand is beyond me. When Grandma was an ingenue, guys like this had to go to night school until they mastered simple subjects and predicates, at the very least.

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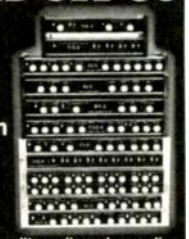

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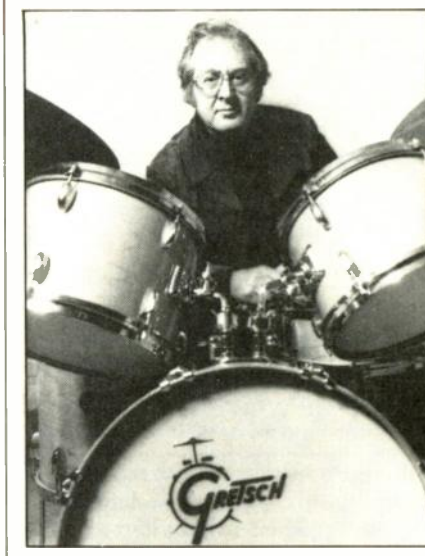

Lewis: a certain anonymity

Continued from page 95

resident composer for much of its existence, it continues to lack a distinctive identity. This makes it no different from other contemporary post-Kenton bands (unless you consider Maynard Ferguson's screeching a style); Buddy Rich and the latter-day Woody Herman are equally anonymous.

On this disc, the presence of Bob Brookmeyer and Clark Terry help to move the group out of its current big-band rut. Terry guest solos on two numbers, playing *El Co* with more fire and freshness than he has shown on most of his recent recordings. Brookmeyer performs as a composer/arranger on *Skylark* and plays valve trombone throughout Side B. As a writer, he hangs uncertainly on the edge of the ordinary, sometimes swinging favorably upward (*Ding Dong Ding*), sometimes wallowing in routines that must have been written in his sleep (*Hello and Goodbye*). As a performer, however, Brookmeyer has a gangling charm that adds a touch of individuality to the performances.

Throughout its career the Lewis band has provided a home for New York's best young musicians and it is still a top notch musical outfit. It plays Brookmeyer's arrangements as technically well as the Gerry Mulligan Concert Jazz Band, one of its lineal predecessors that Brookmeyer was also closely associated with. But the guiding editorial hand of Mulligan is missing. What the band does have at the moment is superb alto and soprano saxophone soloist Dick Oatts, who, with Terry, gives this set its enlivening moments.

Rollins: worth the frustration

Boyd Raeburn: Jewells
Bob Porter, producer
Savoy 2250 (two discs)
by John S. Wilson

In the five vital years of its existence, 1943-48, Boyd Raeburn's orchestra was never recorded by a major label. Always described as being ahead of its time, it was, without question, the most important "unknown" of the big band era. Listening to this collection of records made mostly for the small Jewell label between 1945 and 1947, it becomes clear, for instance, that Raeburn's group laid the groundwork for the Stan Kenton band of the '50s and for all the Kenton-influenced bands that followed.

Admittedly, some of its proclaimed avant-garde qualities come out now as pretentiousness; nonetheless, the ensemble was always provocative. This is due to its arrangers—George Handy, Johnny Richards, Ed Finckel, and Ralph Flanagan. The BRO also had some brilliant young sidemen in alto saxist Hal McKusick, tenor saxist Frank Socolow, trumpeters Tommy Allison and Ray Linn, trombonists Tommy Pederson and Ollie Wilson, and vocalists Ginnie Powell and David Allyn.

This is a complete collection, and stacked up against any other group's sequential recordings, the band fares unusually well. Handy's arrangements make up most of the first two sides, and they are adventurous even when he is trying to be commercial. Richards' charts bring depth and polish to the last two sides. It is fascinating to follow singer Powell's quick growth from a good copy of Anita O'Day in 1945 on a swinging *Rip Van Winkle*, to a warm, open, full-voice on the band's last records in 1947. But Allyn—who leaned toward Billy Eckstine's big, hollow, vibrating sound—never managed to get past his singing-in-a-barrel effect.

Leader Raeburn was a medical student who accidentally fell into band-leading. He started with one minor-league band in the '30s and ended with another in the '50s. One thing this two-disc set does not explain, despite Jack McKinney's excellent notes, is why he had this unusually adventurous band in the '40s, particularly since, as neither an arranger nor a soloist, he made no vital contribution.

Sonny Rollins: Love at First Sight
Orrin Keepnews, producer
Milestone M 9098
by Don Heckman

Once again, saxophonist Sonny Rollins teases us with this new release. Like most of his other recent Milestone recordings, "Love at First Sight" tiptoes gingerly between jazz and pop and fusion and rock, never quite sure where to place its claim. But, again, it is impossible to write it off as a complete loss, despite the absurd character of some of the music. Rollins is far too perceptive a creative force to allow things to get totally out of hand.

Little Lu is molded on Rollins' classic *St. Thomas*. Despite the familiarity of it all, he manages a respectable, though not great, solo. Undoubtedly the superb rhythm team of George Duke on piano, Stanley Clarke on bass, Al Foster on drums, and Bill Summers on congas helps keep the quality high, but in the long run, a piece like this simply pales in comparison with its source of inspiration. The overdubbing of lyricon and tenor sax on *The Dream That We Fell Out Of* is, however, just silly—the kind of device that should be left to players who lack Rollins' skills at pure improvisation.

Things finally begin to pop on the saxist's classic *Strode Rode*. It's a piece that has urged him into some fine soloing in the past, and it works just as well here. This is a loose, floating, unpressured Rollins, as expansive as he ever was, yet stretching his ideas and using a vocabulary that is both old and new. The same can be said of *The Very Thought of You*, a lovely old Ray Noble ballad. Rollins is one of the rare jazz players who can make a simple statement of melody into a ravishing experience—his first chorus is a testa-

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Weather Report: the emphasis is rhythm

ment to the value of simplicity. George Duke follows with a solo that will be a bit too "coctaily" for some tastes (but note Clarke's wonderful underpinning), but Rollins comes back and breaks the tune out of its boundaries.

With Duke's *Caress*, the proceedings slip back into boredom. Rollins tries briefly, toward the end, to make something out of nothing, but to no avail. Finally, he and Clarke stretch out on a jointly devised work called *Double Feature*. In all, a mixed bag: Just when you want to chuck the whole thing aside and dig up some of Rollins' old Prestiges, he freezes you with a perfectly brilliant eight, sixteen, or twenty-four bars. Frustrating, but in his case, it's probably worth the effort.

Weather Report: Night Passage
Zawinul, producer
Arc/Columbia JC 36793
by Don Heckman

Weather Report is one of the few contemporary jazz groups that arouses eager anticipation with each new release. The last few efforts have ranged from the upbeat popularity of "Heavy Weather" to the somewhat less successful "Mr. Gone" and "8:30."

"Night Passage" takes a new tack by moving Josef Zawinul's synthesizers—dominant on recent recordings—into the background. Fusion ideas have been set aside. There is, instead, an almost revivalist emphasis on traditional, but extremely propulsive, jazz rhythms. Perhaps drummer Peter Erskine has finally begun to have an impact as a creative force in the group. Whatever the cause, the net result is one of the finest albums Weather Report has ever made.

The most immediately accessible track is a reworking of a stunning Duke Ellington/Harry Carney tune, *Rockin' in Rhythm*, in which tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter plays lead and Zawinul's synthesizers provide the harmonies. I expect it was done as a lark, but, as sometimes happens with top-of-the-head ideas, it works brilliantly. Zawinul's *Dream Clock*—a moody, dreamily lyrical piece framed by synthesized sounds—is less accessible. But it proves, if anyone needed the evidence, that Zawinul can compose lovely melodies, even when they are little more than fragments. His *Forlorn* lays a blues-based, almost down-home line atop a bitonal rhythmic foundation. Again, the piece succeeds on the strength of his melodic creativity, and on his willingness to juxtapose two seemingly disparate elements.

Shorter's only compositional contribution, *Port of Entry*, is a gutsy, rhythmic, almost African-sounding piece (the effect of which is heightened by guttural shouts). His playing here, as elsewhere on the album, is filled with a fervor and enthusiasm that has been absent for too long. The solo accolades, however, have to go to Jaco Pastorius whose double-time bass improvisation on *Port* can only be described as astonishing.

Fast City, though not a terribly interesting piece, is as vital an improvisation as Zawinul has ever played. He moves from one synthesizer sound to another, never pausing, driving his lines with almost ferocious intensity. Less impressive is *Night Passage*, a rambling, long-toned composition that, though it does manage to gather momentum, never seems to arrive at its intended destination. *Madagascar*, the closing track, is the kind of slow developing work that probably sounds terrific in performance, and suggests the side of Weather Report that appeals to the big-arena audiences.

Most important, the two omnipresent elements throughout the album are those that, in the past, Weather Report has implicity downplayed: improvisation and rhythm. It's nice to discover that the group still retains a healthy respect for the very basic stuff of great jazz.

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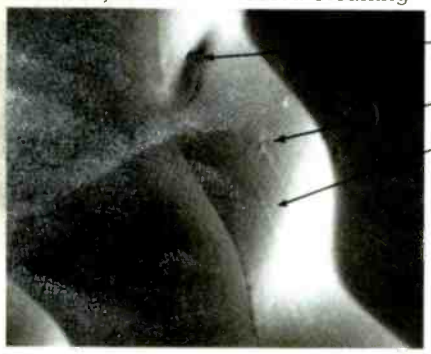

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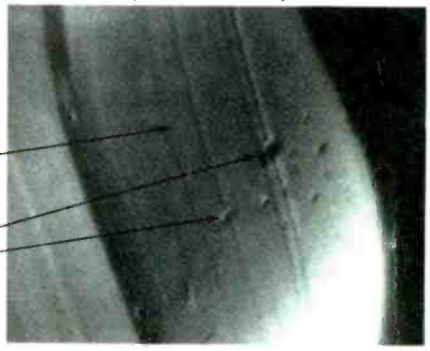

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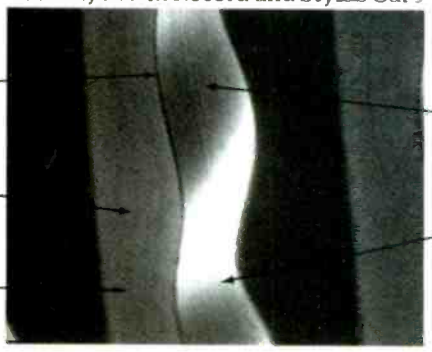

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