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HIGH FIDELITY

AUDIO

VIDEO

TEST REPORTS

MUSIC

SUPERPORTABLES!

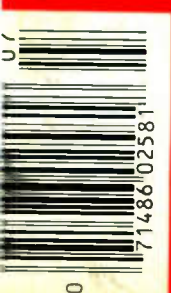


FIELD TEST!

FIRST LOOK!

**Sony's 8mm
Camcorder**

Incredible "Credit-Card" Stereos!



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jumps.

Imagine all that explosive vibrancy in
a clear cassette that gives you a clear
view of exactly how much Sony tape is left.

Unheard of? Of course. Every other
tape pales by comparison.



HIGH FIDELITY

AUDIO & VIDEO



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On the Cover: Clockwise from top left: Panasonic PV 200 Omnimovie camcorder; Sony CCD V8 camcorder; Sony SRF 201 stereo FM Card Walkman; Panasonic H 25 AM stereo FM receiver; Sony Video 8 8mm videocassette; TDK FHG VHS videocassette.

EDITOR'S PAGE

by William Tynan



An anniversary year

This year has its share of anniversaries. As I'm writing this, two that summon mixed emotions are being noted worldwide: the 40th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe and the 10th anniversary of the departure of the United States from Vietnam. In the music world, this is the 300th anniversary of the birth of three of its masters—Bach, Handel, and Scarlatti—as well as the 400th of Heinrich Schütz and the 100th of Alban Berg. And in consumer electronics, 1985 marks both the beginning and the end, respectively, of the 25th year in the U.S. for two of the industry's major movers and shakers: Sony and Panasonic.

True, the state of the art of today's audio and video equipment is the culmination of efforts by many individuals and companies, but there's no doubt that any new products from the labs of Matsushita Electric (parent company of the Panasonic and Technics brands) and Sony are watched closely, as they often portend trends. The American divisions of these two manufacturers recently previewed their new product lines for their sales forces and a small contingent of press, several weeks prior to the giant Summer Consumer Electronics Show, where most major announcements are made to the trade. A glimpse of the future appears both on this month's cover and in a special report in "Currents." Full SCES coverage will appear in our September issue.

Our AUDIO & VIDEO features this month include a field test by regular contributor Robert Angus of the Japanese-market version of Panasonic's Omnimovie (featured on the cover). The U.S. version should now be available. In "Bringing Home the Movie Experience," Dawn Gordon describes the current crop of surround-sound decoders, which unlock the Dolby-encoded high fidelity soundtracks of movies on videodisc and videocassette. Finally, "Autophile" columnist Jay Taylor offers detailed pointers on installing car stereo systems in three challenging types of convertibles.

On the music front, Robert E. Benson profiles Charles Gerhardt, who with the National Philharmonic Orchestra has just completed a major recording project for Reader's Digest. The 22 sessions covered works by everyone from Tchaikovsky to Leroy Anderson. And in BACKBEAT, Wayne King explains how "Best Of" compilations are slowly revising rock history (for better and worse), John Piccarella distinguishes between schmaltz and substance in the Doors, and Steve Futterman reviews Bill Evans's *Complete Riverside Recordings*, an 18-record boxed set.



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LETTERS

CD INDEXING: GET TO THE POINT

I wonder how many readers of your magazine shared my puzzlement at the reply from Hans G. Gout on the subject of indexing Compact Discs ["Medley," March]. It is hard to believe that it took some five months for Polygram to come up with such a confusing response.

Mr. Gout will have us believe that Polygram has not indexed its releases so far because so few of the CD players in use can read index numbers. Or is it because the company did not have the necessary equipment? The reply does not make that clear. However, he writes that Polygram is about to begin indexing—even though the status of player capability has not changed at all.

I don't know why Mr. Gout tries to pretend that selecting index points is such an agonizing problem. I doubt that any CD buyer really cares who chooses the index points, as long as they are chosen judiciously. Surely the issue is whether *track* numbers or *index* numbers should be used. Who decided where to place the track numbers within the individual movements of Herbert von Karajan's Mahler Ninth, Mr. Gout?

Gordon Lilley
Ottawa, Ont., Canada

We, too, thought that it was a confusing reply and that Polygram was ducking some of the important issues you refer to in your letter. However, the company does seem to be mending its ways. As this issue of HIGH FIDELITY was going to press, the first Polygram CD with indexing arrived in the stores: London's recording of Le Sacre du printemps with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Charles Dutoit. Also indexed is London's CD re-mastering of Turandot with Dame Joan Sutherland, Montserrat Caballé, and Luciano Pavarotti, conducted by Zubin Mehta. The mountain has labored and brought forth two mice, but perhaps more are coming.—Ed.

HERRMANN LOST IN "THE TWILIGHT ZONE"?

I was interested to read Marius Constant's account of his writing of *The Twilight Zone's* signature theme ["Medley," April]. Not to detract from Constant's deserved place in the history of cultural music, but I am always irked to see another ingenious compos-

er get lost in the shuffle. The more ethereal music that introduced some of the earliest *Twilight Zone* episodes was written by Bernard Herrmann, better known for his work in cinema.

Jeffrey S. Menkes
Chicago, Ill.

Herrmann's scores for The Twilight Zone—including the alternate main and end titles—were reviewed by Noah André Trudeau in "Submitted for Your Approval" (August 1984), the article that originally prompted Constant's remarks.—Ed.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

"Enescu"? Where did Bill Zakariasen get this spelling [reviews, April]? True, many Roumanian names use the "cu" ending, but not this one. Two friends of mine studied under Georges Enesco, and that is how he signed his correspondence.

Ernest Flnke
Sedona, Ariz.

Our authority for the spelling of Enescu's name is The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians. It states: "Georges Enesco" is only "the form of his name he adopted while living in France." We also use the accepted spelling of Romania.—Ed.

CORRECTIONS

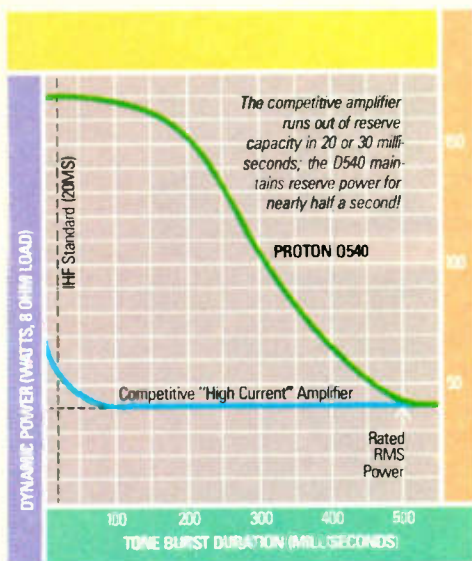
Just a note of clarification to K. Robert Schwarz's otherwise accurate and thoughtful review of Peter Lieberon's Piano Concerto [April]: The pressings are not imported. They are domestic pressings done at Europadisk, Ltd., in New York City on German Teldec virgin vinyl.

Elizabeth Ostrow
Director of Artists and Repertoire
New World Records
New York, N.Y.

Contrary to an erroneous statement made in our review of John Fogerty's Centerfield (April), Fogerty first played saxophone on record—both modest solos and a multi-tracked facsimile of an r&b sax section—on Creedence Clearwater Revival's Cosmo's Factory (1970).—Ed.

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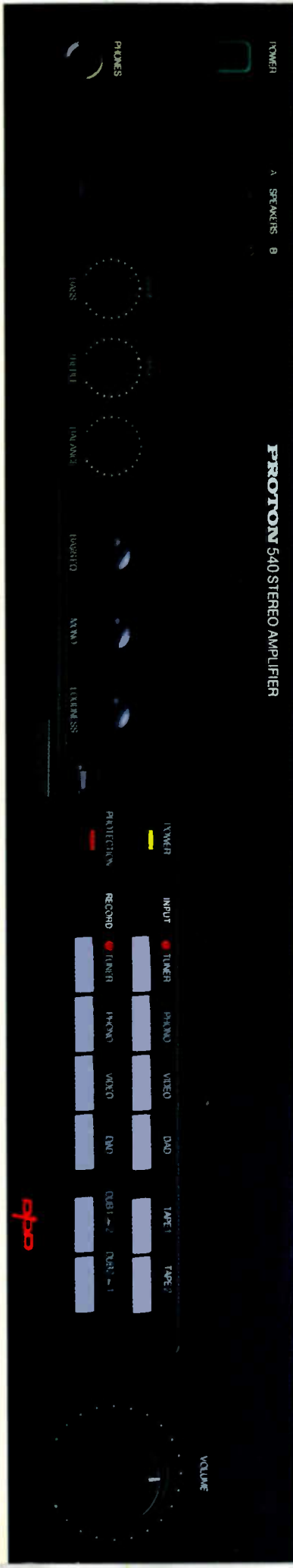
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P R O T O N





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CURRENTS

High-Tech Hi-Fi Toys

Okay, serious audiophiles: It's time to lighten up, grab your portable audio gear, and head for the great outdoors. You won't have your 100-watts-per-side with you, but if the first of this year's portables are harbingers of offerings to come, you'll have plenty of lightweight music-makers to choose from. (Material for this special portables preview was garnered from recent national sales meetings held by Panasonic and Sony, two companies whose products

usually are solid indicators of industry trends. Similar offerings from other companies should be available soon.)

ENDLESS SUMMER

Dual-well "dubbing" cassette decks, which first appeared for home use two years ago, are odds-on favorites as the hottest portable feature this summer. Although you can actually use them as dubbing decks, the primary purpose of the twin wells in portables is to give you, in conjunction with automatic reverse, an almost limitless stream of music without having to change tapes: First both sides of one tape play, and then the

unit switches to play the second tape.

The "most portable" award goes to Sony for its WM-W800 dubbing Walkman, which accepts tapes in both sides of its 17/16-inch-thick body. Most dubbers, however, will likely



resemble Panasonic's RX-F22 (shown here).

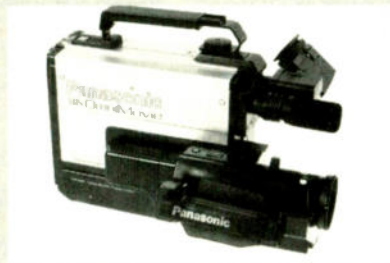
"CREDIT-CARD" STEREO

Stereo FM receivers keep getting smaller and lighter. Last year's twist was miniature

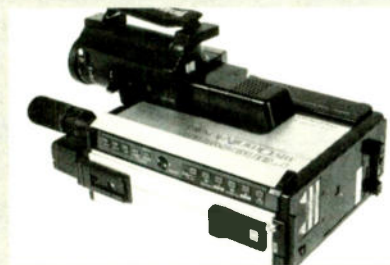
headphone/receivers; this year, ultraslim, credit-card-size, rechargeable NiCad-powered receivers will probably steal the scene. Weighing just barely more than one ounce, Panasonic's AM/stereo-FM H-25 slips into an AC recharger; Sony's stereo-FM SRF-201 docks with a portable (!) recharger powered by three AA cells said to be capable of giving 50 charges. Having used both units, I can verify that the ability to recharge the units and avoid constantly changing batteries is a real asset. The sound quality of the two receivers is also good.

(Continued on page 8)

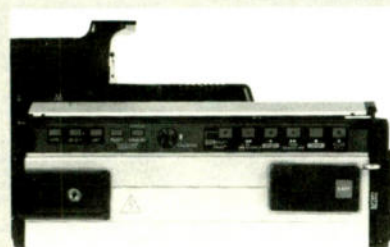
SONY'S VIDEO 8: WHAT IMPACT WILL IT HAVE?



Omnimovie: 7 1/2 lb., 160-min. taping ...



4 heads, Newvicon, regular audio ...



play back tape on VCR to view on TV

The video field may soon embark on an era of transition as a result of Sony's new 8mm camcorder. Although not the first to debut an 8mm system—Kodak, Canon, and Polaroid have sold them for several months—Sony is the first "video" company to embrace the format. The CCD-V8 (right) has state-of-the-art features that place it squarely in competition with not only the VHS Omnimovie design (left) and VHS-C Videomovie, but also Sony's own Betamovie. Weighing only about five pounds, it uses a charge-coupled device (CCD) instead of a tube, for very good low-light sensitivity (19 lux) and minimum lag; a new metal-evaporated (as opposed to metal particle) tape, roughly the size of an audio cassette, for better video quality; and AFM audio recording, like that found in Beta and VHS Hi-Fi VCRs. Playback through a TV is via a plug-in palm-size adapter, which connects directly to audio and video inputs on a monitor or to the VHF antenna terminals of a standard TV. Will 8mm become a major video format or go the way of RCA's highly promoted, now defunct CED videodisc? Sony predicts that 8mm and 1/2-inch (both Beta and VHS) will have equal market shares by 1990. Independent observers believe success hinges on developing prerecorded 8mm software, which now is virtually nonexistent.

W.T.



Video 8: 5 lb. 1 oz., 120-min. taping ...



2 heads, CCD imager, AFM audio ...



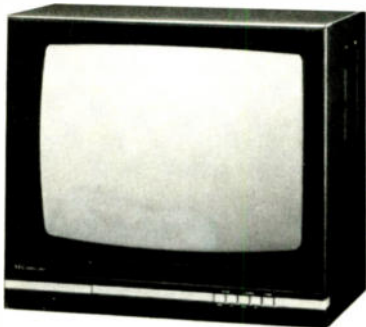
direct TV playback via plug-in adapter

CD TRICKLE-DOWN

And finally, in what has affectionately been called the "yuppie boom box," Sony has provided us with the first portable music system to include a Compact Disc player. The CFD-5 incorporates a D-5 CD player in a



17-pound unit complete with cassette deck, receiver, equalizer, and detachable speakers.



NEC TV Goes Full Stereo

The highly successful NEC CT-2501A, among other of the company's component and large-screen TV products, included a stereo amplifier and dual speakers plus provision for an outboard stereo adapter like the \$99 SA-84A. NEC now offers two models with full stereo capability built in. The CT-2505A monitor/receiver is the 2501A's direct successor. Its features include a 25-inch (diagonal) black-stripe-matrix picture tube behind a smoked-glass antiglare screen, a 134-channel cable-ready tuner with a built-in timer, multiple input and output options, wireless remote control, comb-filter color-separation circuitry, and automatic flesh-tone control. It sells for \$950. The \$779 CT-2020A is similar, except that its 142-channel tuner feeds a flat, truly rectangular 20-inch picture tube for an undistorted rectilinear picture. For more information, write NEC Home Electronics (U.S.A.), Inc., 1401 W. Estes Ave., Elk Grove Village, Ill. 60007.



Mitsubishi Three-Way 6x9s

The SG-69TM car speaker system, one of three new models from Mitsubishi, is designed to handle the output from amplifiers rated as high as 100 watts into 4-ohm loads. The woofer is made to fit the standard 6-by-9-inch oval cutouts in many cars' rear decks. Mounted within it are a 2 1/4-inch midrange driver and a 1 1/4-inch tweeter. Response of the SG-69TM is rated at 50 Hz to 20 kHz; a pair sells for \$100. Additional information is available from Mitsubishi Car Audio, Mitsubishi Electric Sales America, Inc., 799 N. Bierman Circle, Mount Prospect, Ill. 60056.



Concord Car AM/FM/Tape

New to the Concord line of automotive sound equipment is the HPL-117 receiver/tape deck, which sells for less than \$340. It incorporates two features unique to Concord: switchable FNR FM noise reduction, designed to eliminate the effects of multipath and other forms of interference, and the Matched Phase Amorphous Core tape head in the automatic-reverse transport. Other features include automatic scan and a 24-hour clock. The universal 4 1/4-inch chassis is relatively simple to install in most cars. For more information, write Concord Electronics, 6025 Yolanda Ave., Tarzana, Calif. 91356.



Versatile Numark Amp

Numark Electronics Corp. has designed the SA-220 power amplifier to combine ruggedness, the features needed for a wide range of applications, and reasonable price. At the flip of a single slide switch you can convert it from an 8-ohm-rated 125 watts (21 dBW) per channel in stereo to 180 watts (22 1/2 dBW) in mono. A heavy-duty power supply is said to deliver extra transient headroom above these ratings. All three standard input con-

(Continued on page 11)

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Illinois Alan's Creative Stereo: Bloomington • Northbrook • Schaumburg • Vernon Hills • Waukegan • Audio Plus: DeKalb • Columbia Audio Video: Buffalo Grove • Highland Park • Rockford • Glenn Pool's: Champaign • Norma • Hi Fi Hutch: Villa Park • Midwest Hi Fi: Sterling • Northwest Audio Video: Crystal Lake • Simply Stereo: Mt. Prospect • Stereo Design: Riverdale • Sundown One: Springfield
- Indiana** Classic Stereo: South Bend • Hi Fi Buys: Greenwood • Indiana polis • Lafayette • Muncie
Iowa Audio Emporium: Sioux City • Audio Labs: Des Moines • Audio Odyssey: Iowa City • Stereo Shop: Cedar Rapids
Kansas Audio Electronics: Overland Park • Audio Wilsons: Wichita
Michigan Absolute Sound: Ann Arbor • Royal Oak • Alma's Hi Fi: Birmingham • Dearborn • Farmington Hills • Audio Shoppe: Saginaw • Court St. Listening Room: Saginaw • Puft's: Petoskey • Sound North: Iron Mountain • Sound Room: Grand Rapids • Portage • Stereo Shoppe: Lansing • Traverse City
Minnesota Audio King: Brooklyn Center • Buttsville • Edina • Minnesota Roseville • MeFi TV & Audio: Duluth • Sound Shop: Alexandria • Detroit Lakes • Sound World: Austin • Manitoa • Rochester
Missouri Johnson Audio: Columbia • Sound Central: St. Louis • Stereo One: Cape Girardeau
Nebraska Stereo West: Lincoln • Omaha
North Dakota Midwest Audio: Minot • Pacific Sound: Bismarck
Ohio Audio Craft: Cleveland • Fairlawn • Indiana • Mayfield Heights • Toledo • Westlake • Classic Stereo: Lima • Jamieson's: Toledo • Stereo Lab: Cincinnati • Columbus
South Dakota Sound World: Sioux Falls • Team Electronic: Rapid City
Wisconsin Audio Emporium: Milwaukee • Sound Central: St. Louis • Stereo One: Cape Girardeau • Sound Seller: Marinette • Sound World: Appleton • Green Bay • Lacrosse
- SOUTH CENTRAL**
Arkansas Leisure Electronics: Little Rock • Sound Room: Searcy
Louisiana Audio Fidelity: Shreveport • Audio West: West Monroe • Sound Electronics: Lafayette • Opelousas • Stereo Village: Baton Rouge • Gretna • Metairie • New Orleans
Oklahoma Audio Advice: Tulsa • Hi Fi Shop: Lawton • Sound Advice: Stillwater
Texas Arnold & Morgan: Dallas • Garland • Audio One: Austin • Audio Tech: Temple • Waco • Audio Techniques: Longview • Brock Audio: Beaumont • Hamilton Bryan: Wichita Falls • Island Audio: Galveston • Sheffield Audio: Houston • Sound Room: Amarillo • Sound Towne: Texarkana • Soundquest: El Paso • Ultra Electronics: Lubbock • Walker Audio: San Angelo
- WESTERN**
Alaska Holt's Music: Fairbanks • Shimek's: Anchorage
Arizona Audio Emporium: Tucson • Hi Fi Sales: Mesa • Sound Pro: Flagstaff • Sounds Great: Tucson
California Absolute Audio: Orange • Beverly Stereo: Los Angeles • C&M Stereo Unlimited: Fairfield • Creative Stereo: Santa Barbara • Santa Maria • Thousand Oaks • Ventura • High Fidelity Shoppe: Walnut Creek • Radio Mart: Redding • Shelley's Stereo: Santa Monica • Woodland Hills • Sound Advice: Bakersfield • Sound Company: San Diego • Sound Fantasy: Napa • Sound Goods: Campbell • Sounding Board: Berkeley • Sounds By Dave: Chico • Stereo Store: San Francisco • Systems Design Group: Redondo Beach • World Electronics: Davis • Sacramento • World of Sound: Mill Valley • San Francisco
Colorado Soundtrack: Avada Aurora • Boulder • Denver • Littleton • Sunshine Audio: Colorado Springs • Pueblo • Waco • Sound • Boulder
Hawaii Stereo Station: Honolulu
Idaho Audio Warehouse: Twin Falls • Electracraft: Sandpoint • Stereo Shoppe: Boise
Montana Rocky Mountain Hi Fi: Great Falls • Spectrum: Missoula • Thrifty Ear: Bozeman
Nevada Upper Ear: Las Vegas
Oregon Bradford's High Fidelity: Eugene • Royal Mobile Sound: Pendleton • Sound Chamber: Klamath Falls • Stereo Superstore: Beaverton • Portland • Sanjour Beach
Utah Boyers Audio: Provo • Broadway Music: Salt Lake City
Washington Definitive Audio: Seattle • HiFi Stereo: Spokane • OC Stereo Center: Bellingham • Mt. Vernon • Oak Harbor • Northwest Audio Video: Bellevue • Lynnwood • Seattle • Tukwila • Tin Ear Stereo: Richland
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*U.S. Patent No. 4,459,432 Other patents pending.

Canadian Distributor: Evolution Audio

Polk Audio Inc.
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REDEFINITION.

THE CARVER RECEIVER

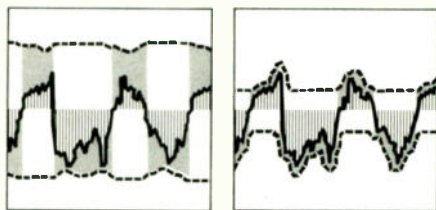
Redefines your expectations of receiver performance with the power you need for Digital Audio Discs plus virtually noise-free stereo FM reception. A receiver with astonishing performance incorporating two highly significant technological breakthroughs: Bob Carver's Magnetic Field Power Amplifier and his Asymmetrical Charge Coupled FM Detector.

ESSENTIAL POWER: Your system needs an abundance of power to reproduce, without distortion, the dynamic range of music on Digital Audio Discs and fine analog recordings.

The Magnetic Field Amplifier in the CARVER Receiver gives you 130 watts per channel* of pure, clean power with superbly defined, high fidelity reproduction.

The Magnetic Field Amplifier produces large amounts of power (absolutely necessary for the accurate reproduction of music at realistic listening levels) without the need for heavy heat sinks, massive transformers, and enormous power capacitors required by conventional amplifier design.

Unlike conventional amplifiers which produce a constant, high voltage level at all times, irrespective of the demands of the ever-changing audio signal (Even when there is no audio signal in the circuit at all!), the Magnetic Field Amplifier's power supply is signal responsive. Highly efficient, it produces *exactly and only* the power needed to carry the signal with complete accuracy and fidelity.



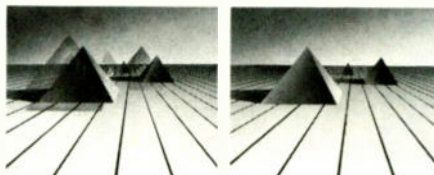
Solid line: audio output signal. Broken line: power supply voltage. Shaded area: wasted power. Vertical lines: power to speakers.

The 130 watts-per-channel* CARVER Receiver is about the same size and weight of conventional receivers having merely 30 watts per channel!

NOISE-FREE RECEPTION: The AM-FM CARVER Receiver gives you FM stereo performance unmatched by that of any other receiver.

As it is transmitted from the station, the stereo FM signal is extremely vulnerable to distortion, noise, hiss and multipath interference.

However, when you engage CARVER's Asymmetrical Charge Coupled FM Detector circuit, the stereo signal arrives at your ears virtually noise-free. You hear fully separated stereo with space, depth and ambience!



Reflected multi-path signals cause audible distortion.

Asymmetrical Charge Coupled FM Detector gives your ears a true sonic image.

The Asymmetrical Charge Coupled FM Detector was first introduced in CARVER's TX-11 Stereo Tuner, receiving unparalleled critical acclaim:

"A major advance...its noise reduction for stereo reception ranged from appreciable to tremendous. It makes the majority of stereo signals sound virtually as quiet as mono signals, yet it does not dilute the stereo effect."

Julian D. Hirsch, STEREO REVIEW

"Separation was still there; only the background noise had been diminished, and with it, much of the sibilance and hissy edginess so characteristic of multipath interference."

Leonard Feldman, AUDIO

"What distinguishes the TX-11 is its ability to pull clean, noise-free sound out of weak or multipath ridden signals that would have you lunging for the mono switch on any other tuner we know of."

HIGH FIDELITY

"The Carver Receiver is, without question, one of the finest products of its kind I have ever tested and used."

Leonard Feldman, AUDIO

The CARVER Receiver has been designed for fidelity, accuracy and musicality. You will want to visit your CARVER dealer for a personal audition of this remarkable instrument.

*130 watts per channel RMS into 8 ohms, 20 Hz to 20 kHz with no more than 0.05% total harmonic distortion.



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(Continued from page 8)

nectors are provided on the back panel: balanced (Cannon), unbalanced professional (1/4-inch phone), and gold-plated pin (RCA) jacks. The phone jacks are repeated on the front panel for lash-up operation. Its 5 1/4-inch LED-arc "meters" offer two sensitivity ranges and two brightnesses—particularly helpful in stage or deejay work. The SA-220 costs \$599. Information on the company's audio products is available from Paul Friedman at Numark Electronics Corp., Box 493, Edison, N.J. 08837.

Rogers Bass Booster



The LSB-1 subwoofer (the bottom unit in the picture) was designed by Rogers, the British loudspeaker company, to complement small speaker systems of low to medium sensitivity—such as its own LS-3/5A or LS-1. The enclosure has veneer laminated to both the outer and inner surfaces to increase panel stiffness. Dual drivers, one at each end, are designed to deliver wavefronts to the inner surface that are out of phase, reducing cabinet vibration. Write the U.S. distributor: Niad Products, Inc., Box 1250, Falls Station, Niagara Falls, N.Y. 14304-0260.

More CD Firsts

Sanyo Electric, which recently announced the opening of its California plant for custom-pressing Compact Discs, offers two innovations to its customers. First, there's its HR (High Reliance) coating, which is said to make CDs more resistant to both heat (warping) and abrasion. Sanyo expects HR to be in demand for a number of applications: broadcast, data storage, institutional, and—particularly timely, in view of recent hardware announcements—car stereo. Another use is for audiophile pressings, and the first HR com-

mercial release is, in fact, Mobile Fidelity's *Woodstock*.

More exciting, perhaps, are the CD graphics that Sanyo is prepared to cut and press. Promoters of the Compact Disc have long talked of the medium's potential for displaying text (opera librettos, for instance), still pictures, or similar material on a TV screen while the music is playing, but such features have yet to appear in any commercial issue. Three alternatives are available from Sanyo. The relatively high-resolution mode (288 by 192 dots, or pixels) has a wide range of color options and can deliver a new image every 10.4 seconds. The same resolution is possible, but with a more restricted palette, at 2.6 seconds per image. By reducing resolution to 288 by 24 pixels (most appropriate for text or other line graphics) and limiting the color range even more, the image rate can be increased to one every 0.3 second.

CD graphics uses digital subcodes that have been reserved for such ancillary purposes since the very beginning. That is, they don't impinge on the audio bandwidth or duration of the music—up to 74 minutes in the

standard format. Because that's more time than is needed for some releases, Sanyo offers yet another option: graphics on the record itself, where extra labeling space can be created by trading away the unwanted recording time. Sanyo will cut what it calls Short Play Time Compact Discs, with up to 12 minutes of music (the approximate equivalent of a 45-rpm EP). They will have the same starting radius and other technical characteristics as existing CDs and will play on the same equipment, but will leave space outside the recorded area for laser-engraved graphics.



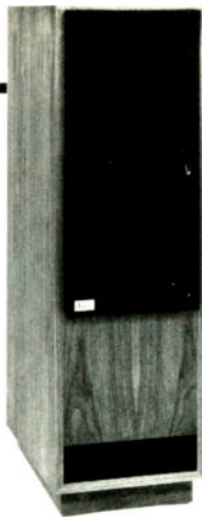
Two Heads . . .

Spare headshells for conventional S- or J-shaped tonearms are available from Signet. The SK-506 is machined from magnesium for a combination of low mass and rigidity and is damped with a special compound that is said to control resonances at all frequencies. Both overhang and azimuth are user-adjustable so that the geometry can be fine-tuned to the cartridge and arm with which the SK-506 is used. Signet, which leaves retail pricing entirely to its dealers, can be reached by mail at 4701 Hudson Dr., Stow, Ohio 44224.

Studio Sound Comes Home

Fried's Studio IV loudspeaker is designed as a home music reproducer with performance nearly indistinguishable from that of the company's G/2A monitor. The Studio IV is sold in matched, mirror-image pairs (\$1,100) whose orientation can be adjusted with a built-in tilting device to make best use of the dispersion pattern, which emphasizes the inward direction for good stereo imaging. The floor-standing design occupies 12 by 18 inches of carpet space—less than some "bookshelf" speakers on their stands. Its relatively tall, narrow format is dictated partly by the "line tunnel" woofer-loading system, partly by the desire for good dispersion.

The woofer has two diaphragms: a conventional 8-inch copolymer polypropylene cone outside and, where the dustcap normally would be, a 2-inch polypropylene cone that



is said to smooth and extend the frequency response through the midrange. The unusually massive magnetic structure is vented through the pole pieces to carry energy from the turbulence of the air trapped in the gap into the enclosure, where it can be absorbed, rather than out through the dustcap into the listening space—the usual solution. Fried claims an improvement of 7 dB in peak dynamic range from this one feature alone. The woofer/midrange driver is crossed over—via an unusual series network that Fried says preserves phase relationships to a degree that conventional crossovers cannot—to a high-power dome tweeter, the third generation of its sort from Fried. You can write for more details to Fried Products Co., 7616 City Line Ave., Philadelphia, Pa. 19151.

They'd Rather Switch

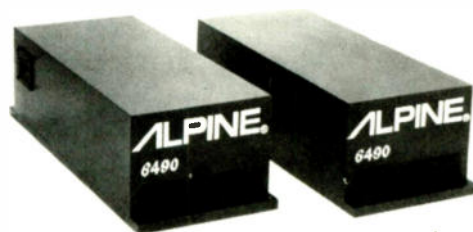
Parasound has introduced a compact (1 inch high) switcher for those who want to use a portable Compact Disc player (like the Sony D-5) with their car system, but don't know how to wire one in. For \$30, the CDS-1 gives you switching between the front-panel inputs (for CD) and an automotive tape player, plus a 9-volt supply jack and LED indicators to show which source is in use. For more information, write Parasound Products, Inc., 680 Beach St., Suite 400, San Francisco, Calif. 94109.



Sound Picture Window

Sony has found a way to mold a large, clear window into an otherwise opaque cassette shell with a single die. The resulting housing

offers a clear view of the tape inside without the imprecision unavoidable when windows are formed as separate pieces and assembled into the shells—a critical matter when, as in Sony's design, the window also acts as the bearing for the hubs that hold the tape "pancake." All of the company's cassette formulations (or reformulations, in recent months) now enjoy similar shells, from the inexpensive ferric HF to the premium Metal-ES. Details are available from Sony Tape Sales Co., Sony Dr., Park Ridge, N.J. 07656.

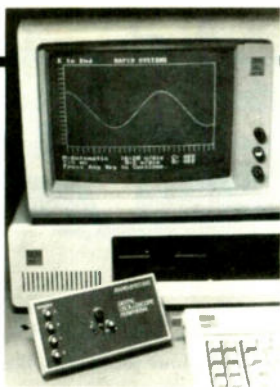


Boss Bass on Wheels

Alpine uses part of the vehicle interior as an extension of the folded horn in its Model 6490 subwoofer, designed to cover the frequency range from as high as 500 Hz down to 30 Hz. The port at the end of the 20-inch enclosure is aimed toward a corner, following the lead of the classic folded horns that were the glory of early high fidelity systems. The acoustic suspension driver feeds this port via an internal labyrinth and is rated to handle peaks to 150 watts. Mounting flanges and quick wiring connectors that simplify installation are included. Write Alpine Electronics of America, Inc., 19145 Gramercy Pl., Torrance, Calif. 90501.

Home Computer Lab

You can turn many Apple, IBM, and Commodore computers into audio lab devices with the help of add-ons offered by Rapid Systems. Its Digital Oscilloscope Peripheral, aided by the software that comes with it, functions as a four-channel digital oscilloscope with a 2-MHz sampling rate and 500-kHz bandwidth. The resulting display covers 138 by 288 pixels, plus room for four lines of text, and employs color. There are ready-to-run versions for the IBM PC and XT and the Apple II, IIe, and IIc (\$499 each) and for the Commodore 64 and SX-64 (\$399). The company also offers additional software for spectrum analysis (\$149) and related utilities (\$69). Probes are not included. Write Rapid



Systems, 5415 136th Place, Bellevue, Wash. 98006.

Floating a New Issue

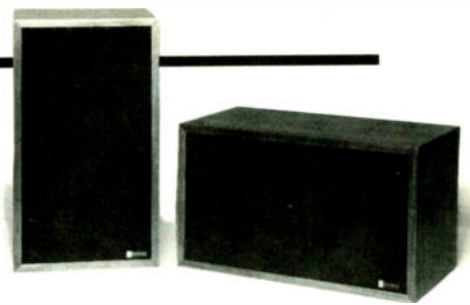
The Jecklin Float has been known to audiophiles for some years as a unique electrostatic headset—one that is formed like a broad horseshoe-shaped band and suspended from the top of the wearer's head, rather than pressed against the ears. The purpose of this design is to hold the transducers just far enough from the ears to prevent them from distorting the auditory path, seeking the most natural sound and stereo imaging that headphones can provide. The Jecklin Float has been a very expensive headset, however: \$425, including the electronics needed to sup-

ply bias voltage to the electrostatic transducers from the power amplifier taps to which they must be connected.

Now two new Floats have been announced at a fraction of that price, using dynamic rather than electrostatic drivers. The Jecklin Float I sells for \$73; the more sophisticated Float II, with a somewhat lower distortion rating and slightly more extended deep-bass response, is only \$15 more. Both are based on the same underlying philosophy as the original model, but unlike it, they can be driven directly from regular headphone jacks. Write the importer, Electrocompaniet, Inc., Box 127, Hollis, Maine 04042.

3D on a Bookshelf

A speaker system that falls somewhere between the traditional "bookshelf" size (two cubic feet) and today's very compact models has been announced by 3D Acoustics. The Model 303, which sells for \$389 per pair, is housed in an enclosure 19 inches long. It incorporates a 6½-inch woofer loaded by an 8-inch passive radiator mounted on the back



panel, crossed over at 2.5 kHz to a 1-inch cloth dome tweeter. Write 3D Acoustics, 652 Glenbrook Rd., Stamford, Conn. 06906.

Sylvania VHS Camcorder

Until recently, VHS was Mr. In-between in video camcorder formats. The Beta models accepted full-size Beta cassettes; the 8mm models used much smaller cassettes to keep bulk to a minimum. VHS offered a special cut-down version of its cassette, holding only 20 minutes of recording time, primarily for use in camcorders. Now Sylvania is among the companies offering a VHS model that will accept regular, full-size cassettes. The VCC-150 weighs just over six pounds (plus battery pack and cassette), uses a ½-inch Newvicon image tube, and has a rated sensitivity of 20 lux through its autofocus lens. Price has not been announced. Write Syl-

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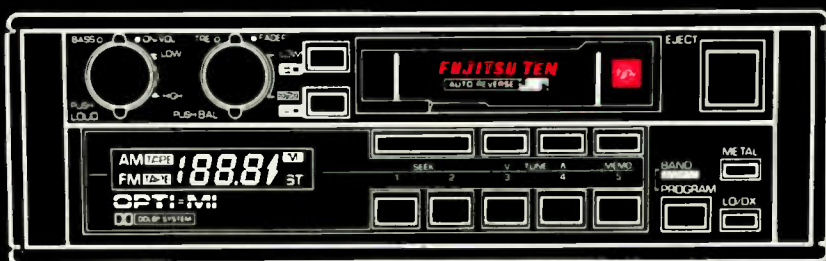
Discwasher, leader in the technology of audio and video care products, also provides advanced systems for cleaning tape decks and VCR's.



The sound and sight come through clean and clear.
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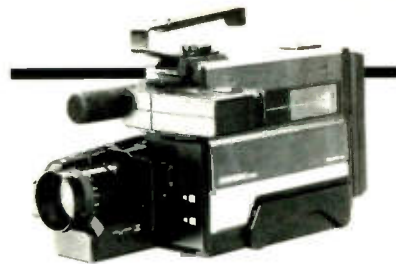


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vania Audio-Video Products, North American Philips Consumer Electronics, Box 6950, Knoxville, Tenn. 37914.

A/V Sound Processor

The Model TE-600, the latest in the Rhoades series of "black boxes" that adapt TV sound for stereo system listening, can be used for audio-only purposes as well. It includes IC-based stereo simulation from mono sources. DNR single-ended noise reduction (a dynamic filter based on a National Semiconductor IC), and ambience processing of stereo signals. These features are individually switchable so that any or all can be bypassed as you choose, and the device will pass signals through unprocessed when it is switched off. It can accommodate a total of three stereo or four mono sources; one mono input is designed to work from the speaker connections of a TV set and is isolated so that it can be used with "hot chassis" sets. For additional information, write Rhoades National Corp., Box 1052, Columbia, Tenn. 38401.

Budget New Tech

Wharfedale has adapted the design of its Model 708 loudspeaker—whose enclosure is made of panels that are said to be both light (important in keeping shipping costs low, particularly for imported products) and rigid (for resonance-free performance)—to two less expensive systems. The 506, shown here, relies on an internal brace and interaction between panels, rather than the expensive laminated panels used in the 708s, to achieve the necessary stiffness. The magnesium frame of its 8-inch woofer is fitted into the fiberboard front panel in the same way as is done in the 708. In essence, it locks within the thickness of the panel (rather than being screw-mounted to the surface) for a tight, permanent fit with minimum dead weight. What resembles an acoustic lens in the photograph is actually the mounting of the 3/4-inch aluminum dome tweeter. Connections within the sealed enclosure are made with 32-strand high-purity copper wire. The 506 sells for \$300 per pair, the similar but larger 508 for \$450 per pair. Wharfedale is located in Building E, 700 Billings St., Aurora, Colo. 80011.

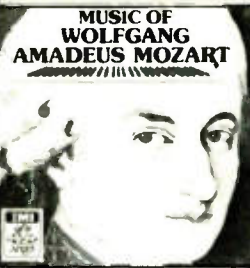
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*Angel Compact Disc

One of the most advanced cassette decks in recorded history.

With its advanced technology and features, Yamaha's new K-1020 cassette deck makes most others seem like ancient history.

To begin with, the K-1020 has a specially designed closed-loop dual-capstan transport system. There's one capstan on either side of the record and playback heads. This insures that the tape is always in optimum contact for exceptional frequency response and low wow and flutter. And separate reel and capstan motors insure that the tape drive stays isolated from the reel operation for increased reliability and reduced modulation distortion.

Each of the three heads in the K-1020 is specifically designed to maximize its performance. The pure Sendust record head has a 2-micron gap for precise signal recording. The pure Sendust playback head has a 0.7-micron gap for accurate reproduction as high as 23 kHz. And the double-gap erase head has an ion-plated 0.3-micron glass coating to insure that it erases even difficult metal tape formulations completely.

To set the correct bias for not only different

tape formulations, but each individual tape, the K-1020 has an Optimum Record Bias Tuning system. Just press the TEST button and adjust the bias control until the ORBiT tuning indicator shows you the bias is precisely set. Then to prevent saturation, use the variable O-VU recording level indicators to set the level for each tape formulation/noise reduction combination.

Of course, a deck as advanced as the K-1020 gives you a choice of Dolby* B and C as well as dbx** noise reduction. Plus full-time Dolby HX Pro* to increase headroom by as much as 8db at 20 kHz. Along with a full complement of convenience features including a four-digit real-time counter with auto memory.

And the K-1020 is just one in a complete line of new Yamaha cassette decks. Because history has a way of repeating itself.

K-1020 shown with Yamaha YHD-1 Orthodynamic Headphones
*Dolby and Dolby HX Pro are trademarks of Dolby Laboratories
**dbx is a trademark of dbx, Inc.

Yamaha Electronics Corporation, USA, P.O. Box 6660, Buena Park, CA 90622



CROSSTALK

by
Robert
Long



FOREVER DYNACO

My dad built a Dynaco PAT-4 preamplifier and Stereo 70 amplifier, which still work. The amp has done so perfectly for 18 years; the preamp developed a problem only after 16 years. Test reports of the time (including yours) praise Dynaco products highly, though the reviewers weren't sure how long solid-state products would last. But today, in spite of their actual durability, I can find no review or ad for Dynaco products. What happened to Dynaco?

Eric A. Giles
Waynesboro, Miss.

It fell on hard times some years back and, as of this writing, appears to be inactive. Meanwhile, David Hafler—Dynaco's cofounder, longtime guiding spirit, and chief product designer—returned to the kit business with the company that bears his name, and he has developed updated models that have been very successful. In view of that—and of the continuing interest in the Dynaco name, as witness letters like yours—the brand may yet reappear.

DISC-ONCERTING

I'm interested in learning whether the industry has developed technology for disc recording at home, now that we have cassette recorders.

Charles Eddy
Weyburn, Sask., Canada

If you mean what I think you do, you're more than a generation too late. Home disc recorders were developed before World War II and probably

reached their peak with the Presto semipro models of the Forties. But by the end of that decade, tape (and the Brush Soundmirror home recorder) already was proving easier for the amateur to use, with better overall sound quality and durability and much longer continuous recording time. In the Fifties, the LP's microgroove became standard, increasing the difficulty of getting good results on home disc machines and enthroning tape as the home recording medium of choice. I see no possibility of a renaissance in home analog disc cutters, but user-recordable digital discs already are glimmering on the horizon. As long as you don't hold your breath, you may survive the current disc drought.

MIDGET MONITOR

In a magazine devoted to the recording industry, I notice—along with the massive consoles, digital echo generators, equalizers, and so on that I'd expect—a small, cubical monitor speaker with a single driver. If it's being used to mix sessions, it must be either very, very good and capable of emulating much larger speakers or so bad that it reflects the qualities of AM table radios, cheap car radios, boom boxes, and the like. Which is it?

Jim Gillivan
Walnut Creek, Calif.

The latter. It's standard practice to check mixdowns and even studio takes of pop records on such speakers to make sure that they aren't too demanding to reproduce satis-

factorily where it counts—on the balance sheets, at least. Classical music, which nobody's even hoping will go platinum, never is subjected to this pragmatic indignity, as far as I know.

SNAP, CRACKLE—WHY?

My Sansui D-99X tuner is hooked to the master antenna on the roof of my high-rise. When I walk across the room, I get a crackling sound. Which would help the most: getting the Carver TX-11 tuner, getting the separate Carver add-on to use with the Sansui, or getting an NAD or Proton with the Schotz circuit?

J. H. Askanas
Philadelphia, Pa.

The Carver and Schotz designs both address the problems of receiving weak stations—which shouldn't be the point in a center-city high-rise with a community antenna. But your description of the crackle suggests that you're picking up RF (radio frequency) energy from the release of static electricity, which would be audible only with very weak signals. (Check your tuner's signal-strength meter.) So my first guess is that the antenna system is at fault. Perhaps it has a trap to prevent interference with TV signals by filtering out the FM band. Or it may simply need a hefty distribution amplifier.

If your problem is related to tuning distant (and therefore weak) stations, either the Carver circuit or the Schotz should give you an edge over conventional tuners. However,

I can't speak at first hand about the add-on version of the Carver (although it should work fine), and some incarnations of the Schotz seem more effective than others. Overall, you should get comparable results with either the Carver TX-11 tuner (test report, January 1983) or the NAD 7155 receiver (May 1985), which we consider the most impressive Schotz model we've tested. But the behavior of the two is not identical, and one might prove a little more effective under your particular conditions.

FAST TALK

A friend with very bad eyesight needs a portable tape recorder that will play back intelligibly at faster than dictation speed for permanent notes on lectures and so on. But she would also like to play music cassettes on it. I know Radio Shack has an adjustable-speed portable, but I haven't heard it. Does it—or any other model—offer outstanding music reproduction?

L. H. Krakowski
Constableville, N.Y.

I certainly wouldn't call the reproduction quality on the two such portables I've encountered outstanding. But then I find some pocket portables downright excruciating, and millions of Americans walk around blissfully plugged into them. You've got to define your criteria for "outstanding" if you expect a useful answer. But if your friend's standards are high, she might be well advised to buy two decks: one for notes and one for music.

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BASICALLY SPEAKING

by
*Michael
Riggs*



What You Can Hear: Vibration

In recent issues, I've been discussing what you can and can't hear from the standpoint of component features and specifications. This column continues that theme. For a description of the underlying philosophy, see "Basically Speaking," May and (especially) April.

This month, I want to explore the subject of vibration, which has managed to become a matter of some controversy in audiophile circles. The concern originates from the gross problems that can arise with analog turntables, which may skip when jostled or generate acoustic feedback when the playback level is very high. The mechanism of acoustic feedback is basically the same as that of feedback in public-address systems, wherein the sound picked up by a microphone is reproduced by a loudspeaker and then picked up by the microphone again, amplified, reproduced, and so on, in a vicious, howl-producing circle. A turntable can act as a crude microphone, vibrating in sympathy with the sound in the room and transmitting those vibrations through the cartridge stylus to the amplifier and back out the speakers. And even when the level of excitation is not high enough to cause obvious feed-

back, it may muddy the sound—rather like very high distortion.

Avoiding such problems requires careful design of the turntable's suspension. The best approach, when it's done properly, is to put the platter and tonearm on a rigid subchassis isolated from the turntable base by very compliant springs. If the system is tuned to a resonance frequency of 2 or 3 Hz, it will do a remarkably effective job of rejecting disturbances at higher frequencies. It may, however, be disconcertingly susceptible to footfalls and other similar disturbances that produce considerable energy near the suspension resonance. But even this problem can be controlled through good design and careful damping of the springs.

Most turntables rely on some type of shock-absorbing feet for isolation. This method (which varies widely in effectiveness) is never as good as a well-conceived suspended-subchassis system, but it can provide respectable shock and feedback rejection. You also can buy add-on isolation bases and feet, such as VPI's turntable platform and Audio-Technica's AT-605 adjustable damping feet, but their efficacy is similarly variable. In any event, vibration can be a problem—possibly a severe one—for analog turntables; measures to combat it can definitely yield sonic benefits.

Even the record itself can be a culprit. A poorly supported vinyl disc can be a crude microphone diaphragm, picking up sound and transmitting the re-

sulting vibrations to the stylus. You can demonstrate this for yourself by putting a record on your turntable with the stylus resting on it but the motor off, turning up the volume control on your amp, and having someone speak loudly into the record. Chances are you'll hear the voice through your speakers.

For this reason, it is a good idea to ensure that records contact the turntable mat over as much of their surface as possible, just to be on the safe side. This implies a flat, smooth mat that does not support records at just a few points. Perhaps by extrapolation, some have argued that the composition of the mat affects the sound and that there are sonic advantages to holding the record firmly against it by means of a weight, clamp, or vacuum. These theories have spawned a variety of accessories that may or may not be beneficial. Flattening the record to the mat should help reduce any tendency to sympathetic vibration, but it is hard to say whether this makes an audible difference in any particular case.

The significance of the mat's composition is even more debatable. However, it has been demonstrated that absorbent mats (typically made of rubber-like materials) damp vibrations within records—which can arise simply from the stylus moving along the groove—better than do hard mats (such as those made of glass or metal) or felt.

The use of such a mat can't hurt, but it never has been proved that any audible improvement will result.

Finally, we come to the question of how vibration affects the performance of amplifiers, Compact Disc players, and the like, which is another subject of current interest. If a CD player is hit too hard, it will skip, but the amount of force required normally is great enough that this should be a problem only for car units. Yet there are both CD players and amplifiers that have shock-mounted circuit boards and damping feet similar to those on most turntables. The argument is that vibration can affect purely electronic components in ways that will cause sonic coloration.

This was a realistic concern during the tube days, when a sharp rap on an amplifier case might reward you with a hollow "boinnng," but solid-state electronics have done away with such "microphonics." There is no evidence, empirical or theoretical, to support the notion that vibration of transistorized equipment will impair its sound quality or that any need exists for special measures to isolate amplifiers, tuners, and other such equipment from external shock.

Our August issue is devoted to tape, so next month I will digress a bit with a column on how noise reduction systems work. ●



Is this any way to listen to your stereo?

If you listen to an ordinary stereo, you're not hearing very well. Because most speakers distort the original sound. The reproduction you get is uneven and inaccurate. So you might as well be wearing earmuffs.

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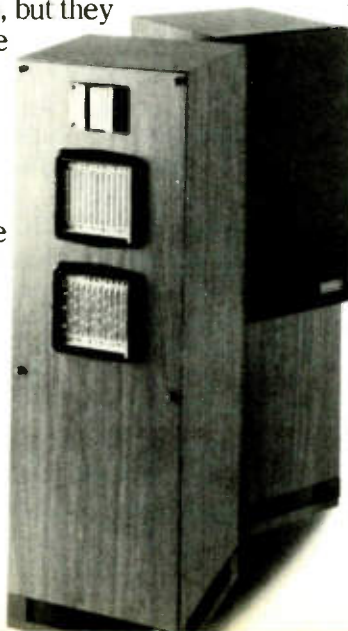
duction throughout the frequency range. And it's about as close to the real Bach or B.B. as you can get.

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Tokyo Tryout

by Robert Angus

How the first full-size VHS camcorder—Panasonic's Omnimovie—fared in our exclusive hands-on evaluation

Omnimovie is the first VHS-format camcorder to use a full-size cassette and consequently to offer as much as 160 minutes of recording time. When Panasonic previewed it to the American consumer electronics press in January, units were expected to be generally available by late spring. But as I write this (in late April), only two are in the U.S.—officially, at least.

When Panasonic offered me the chance to try out the Japanese-market model during a recent visit to Japan, I jumped at it. I was told that some minor differences exist between the unit I was to use and the ones that will be sold here. The Japanese version, called the Maclord, comes without automatic focus; labeling, of course, is in Japanese; and some differences exist in specifications, perhaps because the two models are made in different factories. But the transport is the same, according to Panasonic, as is the pickup tube. Performance should therefore be similar.

When I checked into my Tokyo hotel, a Maclord was waiting for me. Weighing 5 ½ pounds without battery pack and measuring 6 inches wide by 7 ½ inches high by 12 ¾ inches deep (not counting viewfinder and carrying handle), it is slightly heavier and larger

Robert Angus (on location, above) writes extensively on video equipment and technology.

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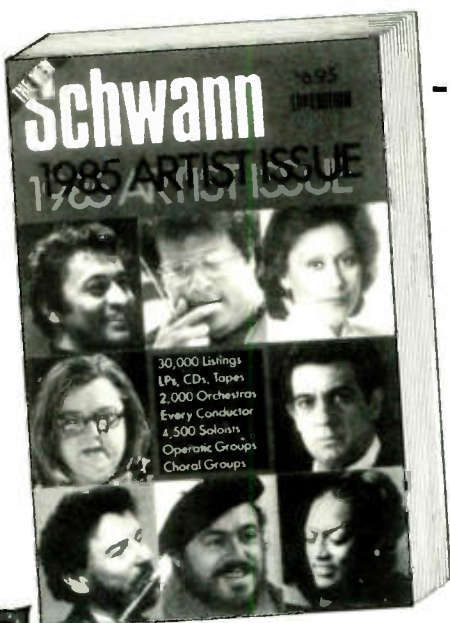
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than some other camcorders.

I quickly discovered that the controls are easy to find and use. The power on/off switch is exactly where I expected it to be, alongside the lens assembly on the front of the recorder body. With my hand through the grip on the right side of the camera (no camcorder I've encountered provides for a comfortable southpaw grip), my thumb rested naturally near the transport start/stop button, and my index and middle fingers could reach the wide-angle and telephoto controls for the zoom lens with ease. These mechanisms are simple to operate and less likely to be pushed inadvertently than those on some other camcorders I've worked with.

Tape transport controls for recording, playback, fast forward and reverse, pause, and stop are on a strip along the top-right edge of the unit. Next to them are a digital counter with memory index, a tracking control, and buttons for setting the date. If desired, you can record the date to appear along with the taped scene.

To keep colors bright and vibrant, you should check the white balance of a video camera before recording and anytime ambient lighting changes. Setting white balance with the simplified system on the Maclord/Omnimovie is a breeze. The camcorder comes with a translucent white lens cap and an automatic balance-setting control. All you have to do is turn the camera on with the lens cap in place, aim at the scene you intend to shoot, and press a button on the left of the camera body beside the lens. The word "white" flashes several times in the viewfinder. When it disappears, remove the lens cap and begin shooting.

A luggage-style styrene

case, which also holds necessary accessories such as extra battery packs and cassettes, is included. But even when empty, the case is not light, and you may opt (as I did) to carry the unit sans case, using a sturdy canvas tote bag for the accessories. The Maclord/Omnimovie is a rugged piece of equipment, and it survived numerous trips on planes, buses, and trains throughout Japan without damage.

Though it weighs only about a pound more than JVC's VHS-C Videomovie [see July 1984], I could feel the additional weight by the end of a day of lugging it around. The load is increased by the greater size and weight of the extra videocassettes. On the other hand, the VHS-C format offers only 20 minutes of recording time—compared with 90 for 8mm, 160 for Omnimovie, and 180 for Betamovie.

In my experience, however, shorter recording time is not a disadvantage—and moreover, longer recording time is not always a huge asset. I now choose primarily short tapes and during this trip used TDK's Hi-Fi T-30s. Ask yourself whether you can sit through two hours of unedited home movies. I can't.

Also, Nicad battery packs, which weigh about half a pound, are intended to last from 30 to 45 minutes. However, for casual recording—the kind you'd normally do while on vacation—I've found that batteries actually yield only about 15 minutes of true recording time. Much of the power is consumed in standby by the transport, during threading and unthreading the tape, and in zooming the lens back and forth. Autofocus lenses drain a battery even faster. So actually recording 160 minutes will consume a bundle of batteries.

In general, I found the

Maclord/Omnimovie easy to use and capable of good results under a variety of lighting conditions. Colors were lifelike and images reasonably sharp and well defined. Most footage was shot in daylight, with conditions ranging from fog to brilliant sunshine on fresh snow. But I obtained equally good results shooting in a Tokyo subway, in a nor-

Tokyo. Each stamp is reproduced with great clarity and detail: You can see the engraving lines (and the breaks in them). Colors, too, are absolutely accurate.

I found one small problem with the unit I used. A tape played back through either the small built-in black-and-white viewfinder monitor or a cable to a 13-inch color TV set



Author tapes Bullet Train using Maclord Omnimovie (Inset) is U.S. version.

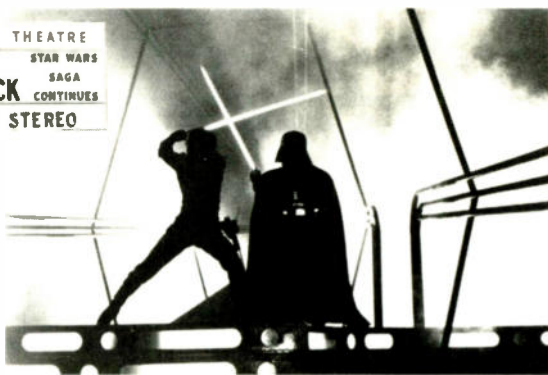
mally lit hotel room at night, and in a very dim nightclub, where the unit captured well-defined faces even in semi-darkness. Minimum illumination is stated as 10 lux, which I judge to be right on target. Scenes taped in low-light situations turned out far better than expected.

Like some other camcorders, this model includes a macro feature for shooting very small objects, such as insects, plants, and illustrations from books. A button on the lens barrel prevents you from slipping accidentally into the macro mode when zooming back and forth and must be released to engage the macro function. You then make the necessary adjustments with the manual zoom lever. I obtained breathtaking results using the macro mode to tape the philatelic collection in the Museum of Communication in

appeared perfectly acceptable. But when I later played the same tape on my home VCR through a 25-inch monitor, some small imperfections were visible—occasional flagging at the top of the screen and slightly jagged edges on vertical lines, such as telephone poles. I tried all the tapes on two other tabletop VCRs and encountered the same problems.

Panasonic engineers opined that these problems may have resulted from skewing of the tape in the camcorder I used. They informed me that my unit had been supplied on very short notice, had been used for field testing immediately before I received it, and could have been slightly out of adjustment. But I must add that only picky perfectionists like me would notice the effects; a more casual viewer probably would not. ●

NORTHPOINT THEATRE
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK
STAR WARS SAGA CONTINUES
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BRINGING HOME THE MOVIE EXPERIENCE

In this age of VCRs and HBO, it's interesting to reflect that people still love to go out to the movies. For some it's the appeal of spending a few hours away from home in a place where you can enjoy yourself without having to think about anything else. Others like the social aspect: Watching a movie is something you do with a crowd, whereas watching television is something you do with, at most, a few other people. The picture's better, too—bigger and sharper—and the sound, when it's done right, more life-like and exciting. All these qualities contribute to the special attraction of the cinema.

The superiority of good theater sound is not simply a matter of fidelity in the conventional sense, because a high-quality home audio system will almost always have smoother, flatter response and less coloration than the hoary, PA-like sound systems typical of most movie houses, even after the equalization they get if a Dolby Stereo setup is installed. And with the advent of Hi-Fi VCRs, videodiscs, and stereo TV, the source need no longer be a lim-

Dawn Gordon writes frequently about audio and video.

iting factor. The key is Dolby Stereo surround sound, which provides realistic ambience and sonic special effects to match and reinforce their visual counterparts.

Although you may not be able to fit 200 people and a Cinemascope screen into your living room, you can have sur-

round sound. All that's required is one of the home decoders available from a handful of companies, a couple of extra speakers at the back or sides of the room, a small second amp (if one isn't built into the decoder), and a video source capable of playing back stereo soundtracks.

HOW IT WORKS

In its full-blown form, Dolby Stereo is a six-channel system:

**Adding surround sound
to your audio-video system
unlocks new dimensions
of realistic ambience.**

by Dawn Gordon

three for the front (stereo plus a mono center channel) and three for the surround. The sound is recorded with Dolby A noise reduction onto a strip of magnetic tape attached to a 70mm print of the movie. A simplified four-channel version is used for 35mm prints, in which a single surround sig-

In a theater equipped for

35mm Dolby Stereo, the output from the optical track is first routed through a Dolby A decoder. It then passes through an L-R (left minus right) circuit to extract the matrixed surround track and steering logic that makes sure everything gets routed to the proper channel. Once separated out, the surround-channel information goes through a modified Dolby B decoder and a delay line on its way to amplifiers feeding speakers at the sides and back of the auditorium. The regular left and right stereo signals go to the front, along with a mono (L+R) center channel obtained by summing the two main channels.

Fortunately, it's not very hard to do the same thing at home, provided the signal has already been through a Dolby A decoder and has not otherwise been tampered with. And that's what you normally get on stereo videocassettes, videodiscs, and simulcasts and what you will get on stereo broadcasts of movies when they become available: the 35mm Dolby Stereo soundtrack after Dolby A decoding. Most of the surround effect can be obtained with a simple Hafler-type dematrixing scheme, in which a pair of

speakers are placed at the sides of the room, near the back, with their ground terminals hooked together and their hot terminals connected to the positive outputs of the amplifier in parallel with the corresponding leads to the front speakers. (See "A New Dimension for Video Sound," November 1983.) This scheme also works for ambience extraction from ordinary stereo records; in fact, it was the basis for the old Dynaco Dynaquad adapter, which can be pressed into service for video surround sound if you happen to have one.

Or you can get serious and buy one of the dedicated surround-sound decoders now on the market. These range in price from less than \$200 to almost \$800 and offer a wide range of user conveniences and signal-processing options. Some include built-in amps, remote control, and even SQ decoding for those quadraphonic LPs you bought in 1975. Here's a quick look at what's available.

APHEX

Aside from being at the top alphabetically, the Aphex decoder is also the most expensive of the bunch. At a hefty \$799 with wireless remote, this unit is not cheap. Aphex is known

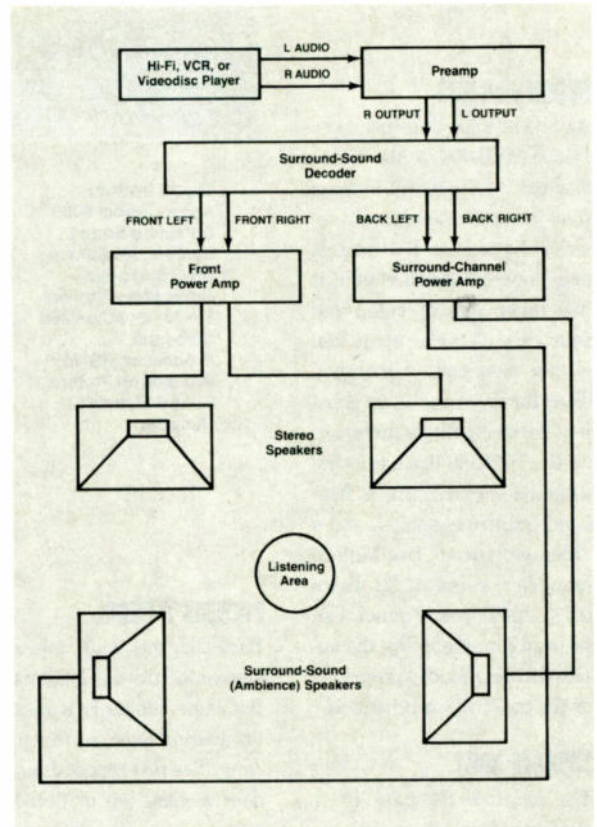
for its professional line of equipment (in particular, the so-called Aural Exciter), and this consumer decoder is made with the same manufacturing procedures as the company's other products.

Instead of limiting the surround channels to a narrow range of 100 Hz to 7 kHz, as most other decoders do, the Aphex uses "full bandwidth" decoding (presumably 20 Hz to 20 kHz). Additionally, it includes provisions for SQ quadraphonic decoding, simulated stereo, and, most important, ambience extraction. This last feature is basically the same as surround-sound decoding, but without steering logic, which can make conventional audio recordings sound unnatural.

The Aphex can provide signals for as many as six speakers, including a front-center channel, which improves dialogue localization. The unit does not have a delay line, as most of the others do, but there is a provision for an optional external delay device. No power amp is included.

AUDIONICS SD-2

Also new on the block is the Audionics SD-2—a very simple matrix decoder with some nice touches. First off, it processes the full audio band and



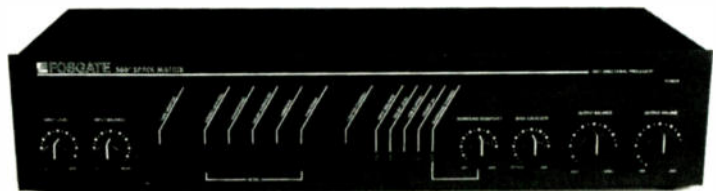
SURROUND SOUND SETUP. Dolby decoder is wired between preamp and amp of a stereo system. A second amp is needed to power the rear set of speakers. Some decoders include amp sections as well as a variety of signal-processing options, remote control, and even SQ decoding.

offers an adjustable delay of 5 to 30 milliseconds, enabling you to fine-tune the sound to your room. Automatic input balancing assures optimum decoding of the surround channel at all times, and direct-coupled decoding circuit-

ry minimizes unwanted phase shift. A front-center channel and a bypass switch also are included. Add a little Dolby B noise reduction on the surround signals, and you have a very nice decoder, for \$359.

(Continued on next page)

Clockwise from top: Fosgate 3601 Directional Processor; Phoenix Systems P-250DL decoder; Denon AVC-500 A/V Control Center



THE MOVIE EXPERIENCE

DENON AVC-500

As its name implies, the Denon AVC-500 Audio/Video Control Center (\$375) is more than just a surround-sound decoder. Besides an L-R matrix ambience-extraction circuit, it has three sets of video and four sets of audio input and output terminals, with provisions for video and audio copying between three different decks. The unit also has a simulated-stereo circuit, a five-band graphic equalizer, and a video enhancer. The built-in amplifier, rated at 22 watts (13½ dBW) per channel, can be used for amplifying the audio portions of video programs or for the surround channels.

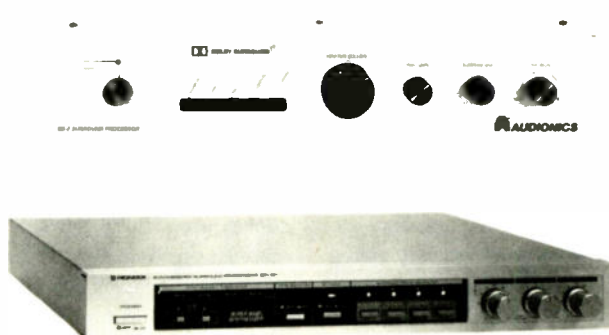
FOSGATE 3601

The original Fosgate 101A suffered from steering-logic "ping-pong" effects and pumping and breathing, which could make it sound unnatural. But it did have the best front-to-back surround-sound separation available. Now Fosgate has introduced an entirely new design that addresses the problems of the old one. The Model 3601 includes a fixed 20-millisecond delay, improved steering logic, band-limiting (to 7 kHz) and Dolby B noise reduction on the surround channels, an ambience mode with reduced steering logic, an optional front-center output, and a surround-channel amplifier rated at 40 watts (16 dBW).

Gone is the Model 101A's SQ decoding capability, but the built-in amplifier more than makes up for that. The \$550 price tag is reasonable, and for another \$75 you can have remote control. And if you want that super-surround-sound experience on the road, Fosgate is working on a car unit, too.



Top to bottom:
Aphex Model 6000 Surround Sound System; Audionics SD-2 Surround Processor; Pioneer SP-101 Synthesized Surround Processor; SSI M-360 Motion Picture Sound Effects Decoder



PHOENIX P-250DL

Basically, this is an improved version of the old P-25, using the same simple L-R matrix: no steering logic, no fancy circuits. (See test report, June.) It does a good job of decoding surround sound and an even better job of extracting ambience from conventional stereo recordings. It is much quieter than its predecessor, and the surround-channel bandwidth has been extended to 12 kHz. Other changes include a variable delay (5 to 50 milliseconds) half as long as before, a center channel for stable dialogue localization, and a stereo synthesizer for mono recordings. Like the P-25, the P-250 does not have a built-in amplifier. As always, Phoenix will supply you with a kit so you can build the unit yourself (\$179), or you can order it fully assembled for a mere \$250.



PIONEER SP-101

The Pioneer SP-101 is similar to the Phoenix P-250DL. It incorporates L-R matrixing without steering logic and has a stereo synthesizer and a front-center channel. But the SP-101 is said to deliver the full audio band on the surround channels. Also, the Pioneer unit has a bass synthesiz-

er circuit that generates subharmonics of low-range signals to add extra power and depth to low-frequency information. How you like this is a matter of taste and circumstance. I find the extra low end distracting in straight ambience extraction, but it's great for movie surround sound. The SP-101 is very quiet and affordable at \$299.

SSI M-360

Surround Sound, Inc., was perhaps the first manufacturer to develop a consumer decoder primarily for use with movie soundtracks, following the Dolby Stereo specifications so closely that Dolby Labs has granted the unit its official seal of approval. The M-360 is a simple matrix decoder with a built-in 10-watt (10-dBW) mono amplifier. The \$350 unit's surround-channel bandwidth conforms to Dolby standards in being limited to a range between 100 Hz and 7.2 kHz (see test report, August

1984). Some might prefer a more powerful amplifier, but fortunately an external amp can be connected. The variable delay is a nice touch, and you can adjust it from 16 to 54 milliseconds. The unit has Dolby B noise reduction on the surround channel and a pleasing stereo synthesizer for mono recordings. SSI also is introducing a high-end model with steering logic, a 40-watt (16-dBW) amplifier, quieter circuitry, remote control, a front-center channel, and lots of other enhancements.

Surround sound is definitely here to stay. Everything from *American Graffiti* to *Star Wars* is encoded to bring home the movie theater experience. In future, decoders no doubt will be incorporated into TV tuners, monitor/receivers, and even audio receivers. And when stereo TV broadcasting becomes commonplace, surround sound will be busting out all over. ●

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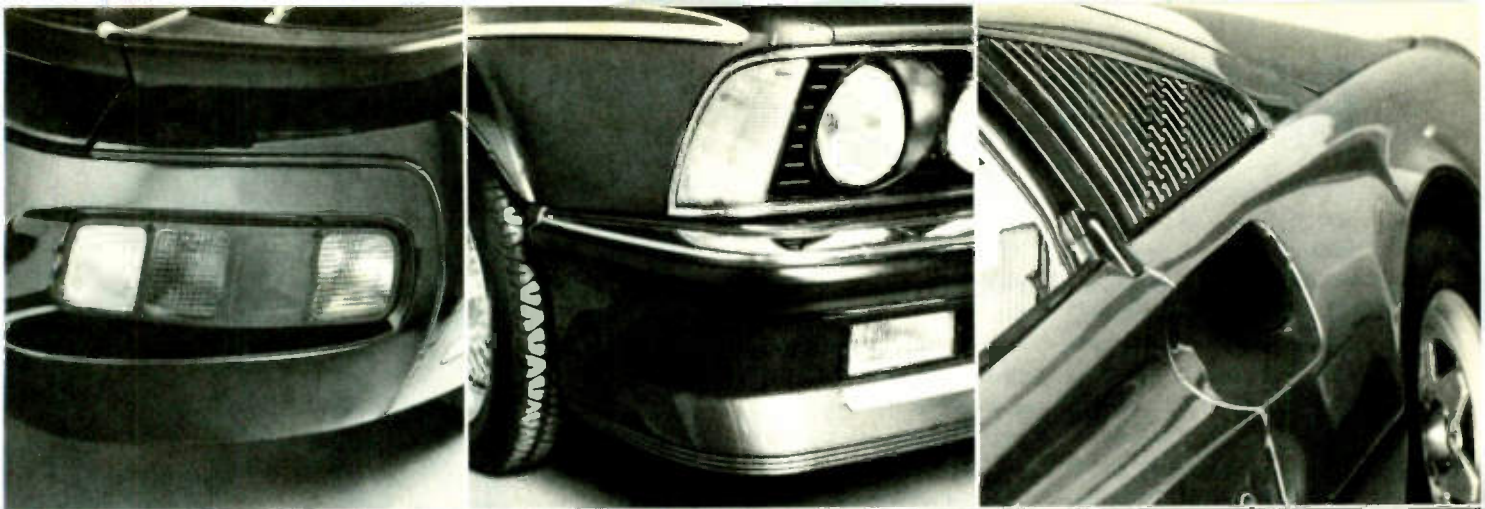
Upgrading
a convertible's
car stereo
system poses
more than a few
hurdles.

by Jay Taylor



With the arrival of summer comes the irresistible urge to hop in the convertible and take a spin with the top down. Nothing complements a carefree cruise better than good music; however, ragtops present special problems for mobile audio.

The most obvious and persistent challenge to music in an open car is wind noise. Recent advances in aerodynamic design have made it possible to drive at highway speeds and not be beaten to death by your own hair, but convertibles will never be as sonically well behaved as their hardtop cousins. What does this mean in car stereo terms? Power—extra power to drive your speakers to levels loud enough to be heard above the roar of the wind and the road. A basic 4-watt in-dash receiver



Finally, car audio as good as your car.

Very few companies selling car stereos are real *audio* companies. With 75 years of experience reproducing sound, Denon wishes to point out the level of their home audio technology present in the new DC-series of car audio equipment.

For example, the only audio components — home or auto — offering the level of circuit sophistication found on the new Denon Car Audio DCA-3250 Power Amplifier are Denon's own top-of-the-line receiver and separates.

Similarly, the Dynamic Range Expansion circuitry found on Denon's new Car Audio DCR-7500 AM/FM Stereo Tuner/Cassette Deck otherwise can be found only on Denon's DE-70 Dynamic Equalizer.

The *differences* between Denon car and Denon home audio equipment will become apparent the moment you sit behind the wheel. To build car audio for people who love good sound as much as fine cars, Denon created a very limited, ultra-high quality range of car audio components, specifically engineered to become *part* of the automobile. Controls fall to hand and information is displayed with the *driver* clearly in mind.

For the car lover, Denon Car Audio does more than offer true auto high fidelity — it becomes an integral part of the thrill of driving.

DENON

RAC TOP

might be considered serviceable in a coupe, but the additional noise of a cabriolet demands a hefty outboard amp.

Power can be purchased, but no amount of money will make your favorite pair of 6-by-9 speakers fit into a non-existent rear deck. The car top has to go somewhere when not in use, and it's unfortunate that it tends to occupy the best-possible speaker location. Secondary locations such as the rear side panels just above the back seat must now be seriously explored.

MUSTANG

That's the spot Ford chooses for rear speakers in the Mustang, and though the location itself is fine, the factory-installed speakers leave a lot to be desired. Fortunately, replacing the 6-inch dual cones (wishfully labeled "Premium Speakers" by Ford) is not particularly difficult.

Begin the operation by removing the bottom half of the rear seat. No tools are required; just grab the rear edge and pull up. With this out of your way, remove four Phillips Screws from each of the side panels: Two are on the edge near the door, the third is partially obscured by the rear seat back, and the fourth is visible near the top storage cavity. There is no need to remove the seat belts, but you must take out the doorsill trims (three more screws each). This not only allows side panel removal, but facilitates routing new heavier-gauge speaker wire to the front of the car. One more screw holds each of the rear window cranks; with the cranks off, the panels should pull forward and free (1).

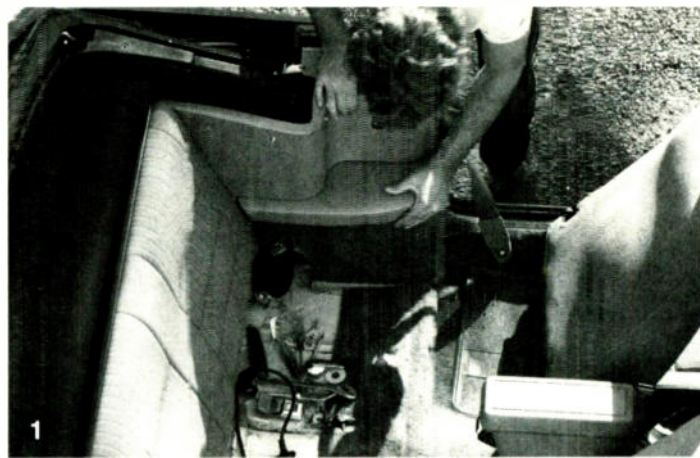
The bracket holding the factory speaker wraps around its edge to form a cradle of

sorts; unfortunately, the space is a bit too small to accommodate an aftermarket replacement (2). Using pliers, flatten the rim of the bracket to allow the new speaker to sit firmly against it, then mark and redrill the bracket to accept the new screw pattern (3). The 6½-inch speakers I used had a mounting depth of 2½ inches, which as it turned out was the absolute maximum possible (4, 5).

Tweeters that project past the woofer edges should pose little problem, since the factory bracket is angled into the corner of the side panel (the left speaker pointing at the front-seat passenger, the right at the driver). Deeper speakers would require modification or removal of the seat-belt retractors, an approach I strongly discourage. All that was required in this installation was to trim a corner of the plastic tube feeding into the retractor, a solution that in no way affected its function. With this accomplished, the panels were refitted, and the results gave no visible indication that surgery had been performed.

The front dash speakers are also very agreeable to replacement. Nine Phillips Screws—five along the upper edge of the instrument panel and two in each defroster vent—secure the entire top of the dash. To prevent a dropped screw from disappearing forever into a vent, plug each with a rag before starting the process. With the dash top removed, both 3½-inch factory speakers are readily accessible (6). In my installation, the replacements fit perfectly (7), but the spacing of the two screw holes was a bit different, necessitating a little cutting.

Before attempting to install your receiver/tape deck,



MUSTANG MUSCLE
Replacing the rear speakers requires removing the back seat and disassembling the side panels. The mounting bracket may require redrilling.

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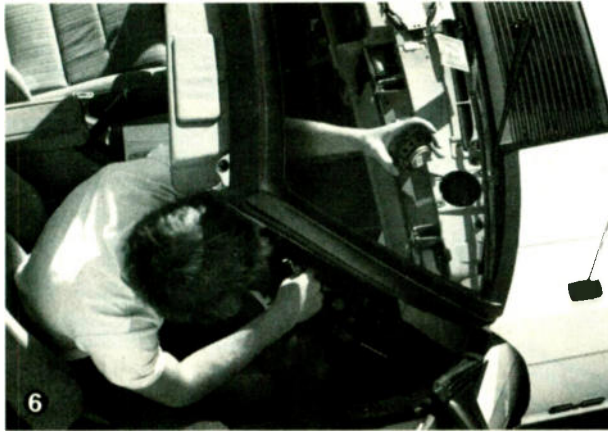
estimated. And you'll smile every time you listen. This sound is that good. In the final analysis, your sound system is only as good as your speakers. If your speakers can't play it all, you won't hear it all. So don't buy backwards. Speakers first—and begin with a Classic!

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DYNAMIC DASH
Changing the dash-mounted tweeters requires unscrewing and dropping the dash, which is easy. When installing a new front end, use the same spacer as on the left shaft of the factory radio. Otherwise, it will sit at an angle.

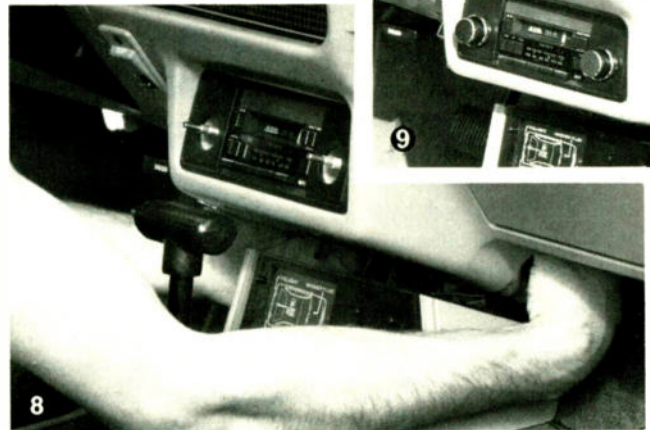
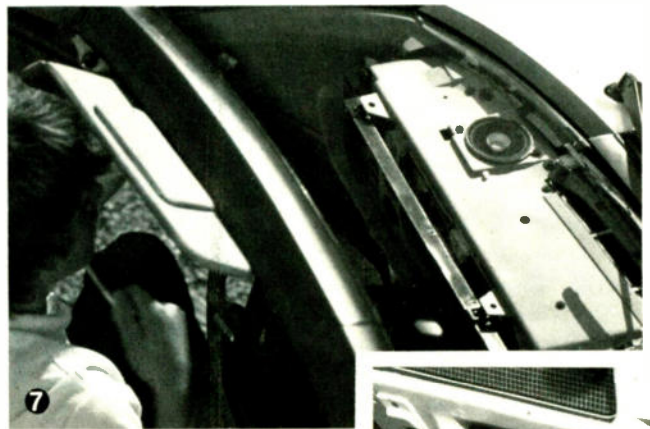
look in your tool box. If a quick inventory fails to turn up a $\frac{1}{16}$ -inch-deep socket, now is the time to buy or borrow one. I couldn't budge the factory radio's shaft nuts with my usual tricks, and the result was a delay that could have been avoided. When the shaft nuts are off, the unit is still secured by a backstrap. Remove a $\frac{7}{16}$ -inch (11mm) bolt centered just underneath the radio opening, disconnect the leads (power, speaker, and antenna), release the console support bracket on the driver's side by unscrewing its three hex bolts, and the radio is free to be taken out.

Don't put in your replacement front end before first measuring the spacer on the left side of the factory radio. If you fail to use the same thickness on the left shaft of the new radio, the finished product will be angled toward the passenger seat. Because the car I worked on was equipped with a digital clock, I chose a receiver with an analog tuning

scale (8). In my opinion, this made the dash less distracting—especially since it would have been difficult to match the clock's red LEDs with the same-color readout on the front end.

A nosepiece gasket, supplied with most new radios, is also required to fill the large area above a standard-size nosepiece. Pushed in as far as possible, most aftermarket front ends should be close to flush (9), and I was pleasantly surprised to find that no modification of the shaft wells was necessary. After tightening the shaft nuts, I replaced the factory backstrap. Because the new radio was much shorter than the original, however, I was forced to fashion the backstrap into a shape that bridged the resulting gap.

Power was obtained through the factory wiring plug. At the suggestion of an installer, I kept the existing filter choke in-line to ward off potential engine noise. Since



this was an analog receiver, no constant 12-volt power lead (used in digital units to keep the preset memory active) was necessary. Larger-gauge speaker wire was brought forward from the rear speakers and concealed under the plastic doorsill. With speaker wiring completed, the job was finished.

JEEP CJ-7

Jeeps, such as this year's CJ-7, present the usual convertible problems plus a few that are unique. Unlike the Mustang and other more "civilized" convertibles, the CJ-7 is much more likely to find itself in the middle of a thunderstorm with the top not only down but missing altogether. Soggy situations require mobile music equipment to be either protected from or oblivious to the elements. For this reason, speakers with polypropylene cones are highly recommended. And because very few in-dash radios are de-

signed to be weatherproof, consider using a camouflage cover-up to protect yours. Such plastic shields, sold as guards against theft, can protect equipment from dust and moisture.

No guesswork is involved in choosing locations for the front speakers: There is a pair of multislot openings in the metal dash (1). This is the only factory dash arrangement I've ever seen that is asymmetric; if you drive alone it's great, but a front-seat passenger will be quite a ways off-axis. If the Jeep comes without a stereo, these holes, as well as the radio opening, have covers held in place by several small nuts.

Speakers measuring $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches are a necessity. Installing one just to the right of the radio is a five-minute operation, but fitting a speaker on the driver's side (2) is a task made especially difficult by the intrusion of the emergency brake mechanism. My installer/adviser suggested re-

RAGTOP

moving the brake release, a chore I avoided by carefully (very!) pushing aside wiring from the Jeep's electrical system farther back and threading the speaker into position with its wiring already attached. But this approach still required me to loosen a screw on the brake release (for an extra bit of room) and to put the speaker on the two bottom studs first before tilting the top forward. In selecting a speaker for this spot, make sure that any tweeter assembly does not project forward, or it will hit the dash before the rim is up solid. Because of the critical dimensions required of the speaker, I feel compelled to suggest a specific model: the AFS Kriket 8234P (which just barely fits). Should you choose something else, make sure you can return it if necessary.

Rear speakers must be of the surface-mount variety, since cutting a hole anywhere in the back of the vehicle would leave the magnet assembly and the back of the cone exposed to the elements. Although rear speakers were not a part of this installation, a pair is shown on top of the wheel well beside the back seat (3, 4) as an illustration of how easily the addition could be made. I have seen speakers attached to roll bars, but they're quite a bit more conspicuous. Naturally, their use in conjunction with a soft top or no top presumes that you live in a low-risk neighborhood. And once again, weatherproof materials are recommended.

There were two requirements for the in-dash receiver: I wanted high power built in, yet the depth of the chassis could not be greater than 5 inches. Built-in power was partially an accommodation to my laziness, but it also meant



JEEP JIVE
Best locations for speakers are behind the precut multislot dash openings and on the surface next to the rear seat. Speakers with polypropylene cones give maximum protection against dust and rain.

there would be one fewer component to get rained on or stolen. The limited depth was a very real restriction imposed by a heater duct running directly behind the dash opening. The selected front end covered both bases, and only a slight amount of filing of the shaft holes was necessary for a perfect fit. Since the dash itself was a heavy-gauge steel, I secured the unit with shaft nuts on both sides, adding a third set to hold on the faceplate. If your particular Jeep is destined to spend a lot of time off the road, a backstrap would be a good investment.

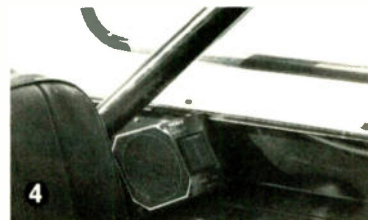
One necessity that a Jeep fails to provide for is an antenna; thus, you are left to your own devices when drilling the holes. The preferred CJ antenna has a spring base and is turned 90 degrees to mount on the side of the vehicle. The most common location is on the passenger side in the front of the door. Pick a spot just above the "Jeep" logo, making sure that the mast does not interfere with the side mirror. Be certain that the required holes are accessible from the inside and that your efforts will not damage anything under the dash. If you drill too

high, you will not be able to attach the necessary coaxial antenna lead. One of the two holes may have to be larger than what your biggest drill bit can accomplish, but the hole can easily be enlarged with a round file.

FIAT 124

For 19 years, Fiat has produced one of the most beautiful convertibles on the road: the 124 Sport. With timeless Pininfarina styling and a proven double overhead cam engine, it has been lacking only a good stereo. And although accommodations for a music system are somewhat limited, they are not nonexistent. With a little hard work put into it, the 124 Sport can sound as good as it looks. Indeed, if you own one, you probably *like* to work on it, or you would have sold it years ago.

Because the car has remained basically unchanged over almost two decades, most of what I've done to a particular '76 will be applicable to whatever year might be in your possession. The location of the receiver/tape deck, for instance, is still at the top of the console just below the



dash (1). Two large Phillips Screws on either side hold the entire console assembly in place. It may be necessary to lift up on the dash to get this centerpiece out (2). Once the console is removed, you can disconnect the lighter, the hazard switch, and the courtesy light to facilitate your work.

The nosepiece opening will almost certainly have to be enlarged to accommodate any but the smallest of aftermarket receivers. A hacksaw blade can be pressed into service, but the job can be very time-consuming. A grinder or nibbler should speed things up. If you're going to use the faceplate supplied with the new receiver, enlarging the factory opening need not be an exacting affair, since any excessive cuts will be covered by the finished product. Chassis depth should not present a problem either, particularly with the new front ends available. However, you may have to rearrange the snarl of wires in this area to permit replacement of the console assembly.

A speaker measuring 5 1/4 or 6 1/2 inches should fit easily in the kick panel, but this is not to say that such an installation is a simple process. Although

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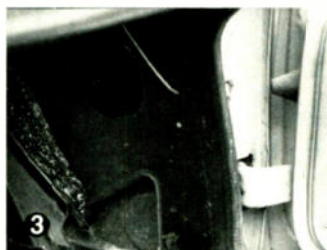
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*1 Watt @ 1 meter = 94.5dB

Panasonic
just slightly ahead of our time.

RAGTOP



FIRED-UP FIAT
A new front end is fairly easy to install, but upgrading the speakers takes diligence. Mounting them directly to the sheet metal instead of the plastic storage bins gives superior sound and a better appearance.

there is ample depth for the speaker, the kick panel itself is solid sheet metal—the kind of obstacle that has led many well-intentioned do-it-yourselfers to cut a hole in the footwell's plastic storage bin and mount the speaker there instead. But that solution ends up looking shoddy, and the lack of an enclosure guarantees awful sound. Spend the time—cut the metal (3). Your diligence will be rewarded.

For best results, I recommend removing the plastic storage bin/surface panel before cutting the metal underneath. This not only provides a cover for any mistakes you might make, but enables you to see the structural braces that you do *not* want to cut. Their position is indicated by a series of spot welds; if you're not sure, tap on the metal, then cut where it sounds hollow. I allowed 6½ inches from the bottom of the plastic to the lowest portion of my cut in order to avoid having the speaker blocked by the storage bin.

A space of 4½ inches from the edge of the door should clear a vertical brace. If you're still not sure where to cut, drill a small hole and explore the void with a finger.

Unlike the Jeep or the Mustang, the Fiat has no provisions for dash-mounted speakers, and placing your only pair in the kick panels has one big disadvantage: poor treble dispersion. Indeed, most of the high frequencies are doomed to be absorbed by a leg or drowned out by the wind. With this in mind, I decided to experiment with the latest wave of high-end car speakers. Matched component drivers and crossovers allowed me the luxury of mounting the 5¼-inch woofers in the kick panels and the tweeters up high on the doors. This particular speaker system, the EPI LS-80X (5), has surface-mount tweeter modules (4), so the hardest part of the job was routing the wires.

Should you opt for such a setup, you'll be faced with re-

moving the door panels and drilling four holes per side. Each door panel is secured by several obvious Phillips Screws, the armrest (which conceals three more screws), the door latch (one screw), and the window crank. The crank is held by a small spring clip, which can be dislodged with a strategically placed screwdriver between the crank and the plastic trim ring. With all of the door panel items removed, only a few friction pins remain, and a careful but firm tug will disengage these.

To keep the speaker wire out of the car interior, I drilled a small hole just forward of the bottom bolt securing the windshield assembly. After carefully wrapping the wire where it exited from the main body of the car (to prevent a future short), I fed it through the lower bolt hole of the upper door hinge and down to an opening in the metal. From there, the replaced door panel covered its travel up to the tweeter location. Two screws

held the tweeter assembly in place, with a third hole for the wiring. Once the necessary wire length had been determined, I went back and taped the wire to the door hinge, making sure that it didn't get pinched as the door was closed.

When the job was complete, I couldn't help being impressed by the sound. The remote tweeters provided exceptional separation and response, while the sheet-metal-enclosed woofers gave a good punch. The crossover assembly, mounted to the passenger side of the console, had tweeter level controls, but I found the lowest of the three settings to be optimal. However, different installations (and different listeners) might favor a brighter adjustment, and it's nice to have the option.

Overall, this was a much more demanding installation than that for the Jeep or the Ford, and an amateur should definitely consider it a weekend project. Don't be discouraged, though: The job may take some time, but it's not particularly technical, and the results are worth the effort. ●

TEST REPORTS



ONKYO TX-85 AM/FM RECEIVER

Dimensions: 19 by 5 inches (front panel), 16½ inches deep plus clearance for controls and connections. AC convenience outlets: one switched (100 watts max.), two unswitched (200 watts max. total). Price: \$620. Warranty: "limited," three years parts, two years labor. Manufacturer: Onkyo Corp., Japan; U.S. distributor: Onkyo U.S.A. Corp., 200 Williams Dr., Ramsey, N.J. 07446.

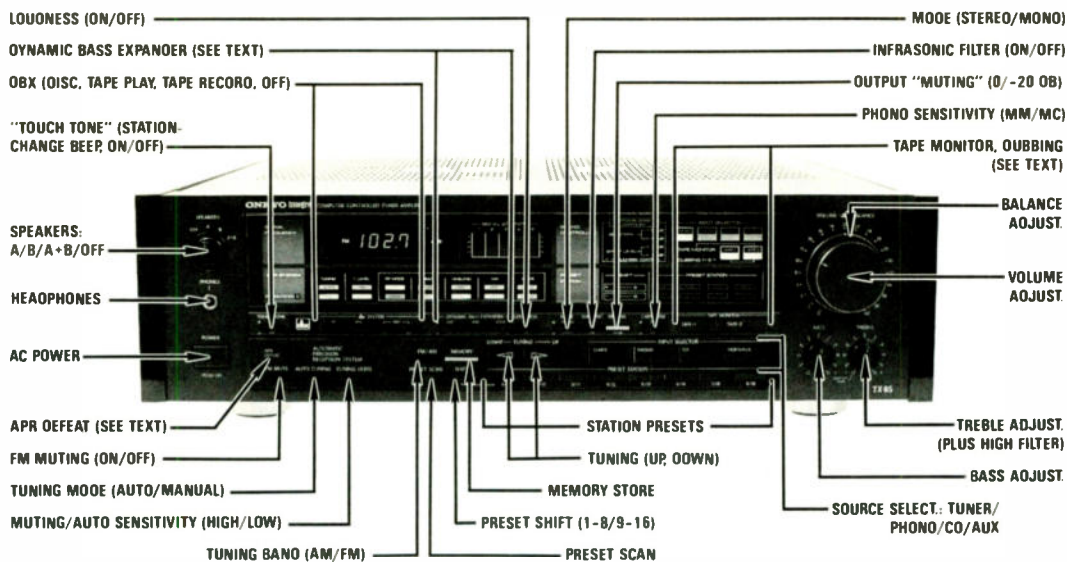
One of our staff members summed up the TX-85 in perhaps the best way possible when he asked, "How do they manage to put in so much for \$620?" How, indeed! Few other receivers can have as much going on inside (at least in the way of dynamic signal processing) at any given moment, but the price of the TX-85, though hardly modest, is by no means commensurately outrageous. And the three most striking features—the bass expander, the level-dependent tone-control system and integral high filter, and the APR (automatic precision reception) FM system—are Onkyo innovations.

Let's begin with the FM tuner,

which is quite complex and is crucial to an understanding of the receiver's operation. It monitors the incoming RF (radio frequency) signal for various characteristics and makes a number of decisions accordingly. Thus, it offers automatic regulation of a number of factors that can be adjusted manually in some other top models—but here this is achieved with neither the need for human intervention nor the added confusion to the neophyte that these extra controls might pose. It is, perhaps, a close analogue to the programmed exposure controls that appear in the latest high-tech 35mm cameras.

Like most tuners and receivers,

Report preparation supervised by Michael Riggs, Robert Long, and Edward J. Foster. Laboratory data (unless otherwise indicated) is supplied by Diversified Science Laboratories.



the TX-85 won't switch to stereo at all unless the RF signal strength is above some threshold value—17½ dBf in Diversified Science Laboratories' bench measurements. At this point, 1-kHz channel separation is only 14¾ dB: enough to qualify as stereo, but not nearly the full separation of which the TX-85 is capable. This high-frequency blend limits the amount of noise from the stereo subcarrier that is passed on to the audio output. In addition, some form of noise reduction (evidently similar to DNR, though Onkyo declines to define it precisely) is at work to cajole extra quieting out of the weak signals. Intermediate-frequency (IF) bandwidth is kept narrow, to minimize interference from strong neighboring stations, and sensitivity is at maximum (DX).

When input signal strength reaches 27 dBf, the noise reduction turns off. At 33 dBf, the IF bandwidth switches from narrow to wide. At 48 dBf, the high blend is switched off, boosting 1-kHz separation from 14¾ to 52½ dB (a figure that varies slightly as signal strength continues to increase). Finally, at 85 dBf, the RF section switches to "local" to avoid overload by stronger incoming signals.

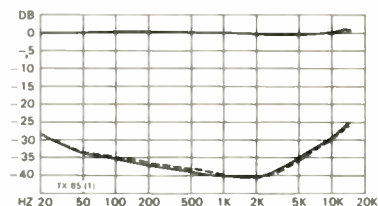
With each of these changes (except the last), the effect is to permit a slight increase in noise in order to gain some performance advantage elsewhere. That is, the various noise-reducing measures are retained only as long as they are needed.

The jumps in noise as they are switched off, though small, introduce discontinuities into the quieting curve, giving it a saw-tooth quality unique among the receivers and tuners we've tested. In practice, changing reception conditions won't actually switch APR functions on and off: They remain as the APR set them the last time you changed stations. But because the system will readjust itself every time you do this, the lab reset it for each measured input level to simulate what will happen when you tune to a station at that signal strength.

You can defeat the APR, which apparently gives you all of the maximum-signal settings (though the indicators that would tell you this go off along with APR). We wouldn't advise it, however, since doing so never seems to improve reception. Strong stations usually sound the same either way, but weak ones become distinctly noisier

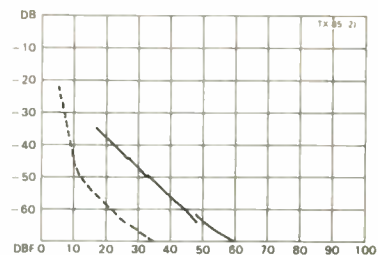
FM TUNER SECTION

STEREO RESPONSE & CHANNEL SEPARATION



Frequency response	
— L ch	+1 - 1/2 dB, 20 Hz to 15 kHz
- - - R ch	+ 3/4 - 1/2 dB, 20 Hz to 15 kHz
Channel separation*	
	> 35 dB, 110 Hz to 4.9 kHz
	> 25 dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz

FM SENSITIVITY & QUIETING*



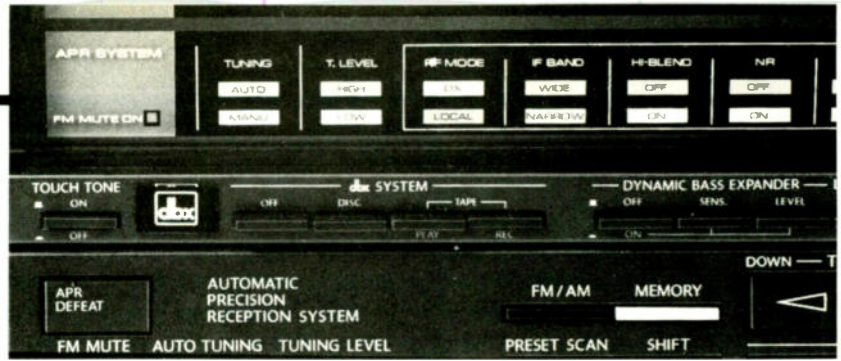
— stereo quieting (noise)	
- - - mono quieting (noise)	
Stereo sensitivity (for 50-dB noise suppression)	
33 dBf at 98 MHz with 0.36% THD + N (34 dBf at 90 MHz, 32 1/4 dBf at 106 MHz)	
Mono sensitivity (for 50-dB noise suppression)	
12 dBf at 98 MHz	
Muting threshold	switchable 18 1/2 or 28 1/2 dBf
Stereo threshold	17 1/2 dBf
Stereo S/N ratio (at 65 dBf)	70 ± 2 dB
Mono S/N ratio (at 65 dBf)	75 1/2 dB

without APR—or disappear altogether if you have the FM muting on (evidently because of the sensitivity change between the DX and local modes). Under these circumstances, defeating the system serves to remind you how much good it does, but the normal operating mode certainly is (as the rather sketchy owner's manual stipulates) with the APR engaged.

The APR's multipronged attack on reception noise bears fruit in the measured sensitivity, even in mono, where the blend is (naturally) ineffective. At the mono 50-dB quieting point (12 dBf), all noise reducers are still engaged; in stereo, the noise reduction proper is turned off and the IF bandwidth is just about to switch from narrow to wide. In fact, you could say that there are two stereo rating points: 33 dBf in the narrow mode and 33½ dBf in wide. In any event, the sensitivity figures are excellent, as are those for suppression of AM, pilot, and subcarrier and for distortion and ultimate signal-to-noise (S/N) ratio.

Capture ratio and selectivity depend upon the IF mode in which they're measured. Normally, capture ratio is checked at 45 dBf, which would presuppose the wide IF mode and an excellent ¾-dB rating; when the lab forced the narrow mode (by starting at a lower signal strength and increasing it after the APR had set the IF bandwidth), the figure measured a still good 1½ dB. Alternate-channel selectivity is respectable, though it improves less than usual in the narrow mode; adjacent-channel selectivity is better than average, increasing dramatically at the narrow setting.

Manual tuning progresses in full-channel steps on both bands: 200 kHz on FM, 10 kHz on AM. A switch marked "tuning level" offers two settings for both the muting threshold in manual tuning and the station lock in automatic-see tuning. There also is a scan mode that samples the presets in sequence. You can enter a total of 16



Front panel shows Onkyo innovations: bass expander and APR FM system.

stations, representing any mix of AM and FM, on the eight preset buttons. Onkyo supplies a loop antenna for AM; back-panel screw terminals accept its leads or a long-wire AM antenna, as well as 300-ohm twinlead or 75-ohm coax for FM.

The other source options are phono (with sensitivity for either moving- or fixed-coil pickups chosen at a front-panel switch), CD, and video. (By now, the Compact Disc option is so well established that the generic "aux" designation is added only to the video input.) The tape connections permit one-way dubbing from 1 to 2, and the TX-85 has a built-in DBX processor that will handle disc playback, tape recording, or tape playback. However, DBX tapes can be made only through the Tape 2 output and be played back only through the Tape 1 monitor.

Impedances and levels are well chosen, and response is very flat through both the high-level and phono inputs. In fact, there is virtually no suppression of infrasonics at the fixed-coil phono setting and only a small amount at the moving-coil position. Given the absence of any significant rolloff below the audible band within the phono section itself, we would prefer a steeper slope for the switchable infrasonic filter to take a bigger bite out of warp signals when they occur.

A high-cut (low-pass) filter is built into the TX-85's unusual tone-control system and is activated by turning the TREBLE to its extreme cut position. It, too, rolls off gently (at about 6 dB per octave); the curve is 3 dB down at 5.2 kHz, but there is some attenuation down almost to 1 kHz. All other treble settings provide shelving curves that flatten

CAPTURE RATIO*	≤ 1 1/2 dB	
SELECTIVITY*	wide mode	narrow mode
alternate-channel	46 1/2 dB	57 3/4 dB
adjacent-channel	3 1/2 dB	11 1/4 dB
HARMONIC DISTORTION (THO + N)		
	stereo	mono
at 100 Hz	0.110%	0.160%
at 1 kHz	0.046%	0.088%
at 6 kHz	0.145%	0.105%
STEREO PILOT INTERMODULATION	0.052%	
IM DISTORTION (mono)	0.060%	
AM SUPPRESSION	66 dB	
PILOT (19 kHz) SUPPRESSION	71.1 ± 4 dB	
SUBCARRIER (38 kHz) SUPPRESSION	93.1/2 dB	

*See text

AMPLIFIER SECTION

RATED POWER	19 dBW (80 watts) channel	
OUTPUT AT CLIPPING (at 1 kHz; both channels driven)		
8-ohm load	20 dBW (100 watts)/channel	
4-ohm load	21.1/2 dBW (140 watts) channel	
DYNAMIC POWER (at 1 kHz)		
8-ohm load	20.1/2 dBW	
4-ohm load	22 dBW	
2-ohm load	23 dBW	
DYNAMIC HEADROOM (re rated power, 8-ohm load)	+ 1 1/2 dB	
HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD; 20 Hz to 20 kHz)		
at 19 dBW (80 watts)	≤ 0.038%	
at 0 dBW (1 watt)	< 0.01%	
FREQUENCY RESPONSE		
	+ 0 - 1.4 dB < 10 Hz to 30.6 kHz	
	+ 0 - 3 dB · 10 Hz to 112 kHz	
RIAA EQUALIZATION		
fixed-coil phono	- 1.4 dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz - 1 dB at 5 Hz	
moving-coil phono	+ 1.4 - 1 dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz - 7 dB at 5 Hz	
SENSITIVITY & NOISE (re 0 dBW; A-weighting)	sensitivity	S/N ratio
aux input	17 mV	80 dB
fixed-coil phono	0.27 mV	75 dB
moving-coil phono	38 μV	74 dB
PHONO OVERLOAD (1-kHz clipping)		
fixed-coil phono	190 mV	
moving-coil phono	27 mV	
INPUT IMPEDANCE		
aux input	44.9k ohms	
fixed-coil phono	48.2k ohms, 235 pF	
moving-coil phono	270 ohms	
OUTPUT IMPEDANCE (to tape)		
from aux input	2,600 ohms	
from tuner section	6,200 ohms	
from phono inputs	3,200 ohms	
DAMPING FACTOR (at 50 Hz)	90	
CHANNEL SEPARATION (at 1 kHz)	58 dB	
INFRASONIC FILTER	3 dB at 22 Hz, 6 dB octave	

out just below 20 kHz. The total adjustment range at 20 kHz (ignoring the filter setting) amounts to about ± 9 dB. The bass adjustment range is even tighter—about $\pm 7\frac{1}{2}$ dB—and shelves below 50 Hz. Unique to Onkyo, as far as we know, is a system designed to prevent amplifier overload by reducing any treble or bass boost progressively as the VOLUME is turned from its 12 o'clock position toward full-on, at which point all boost is canceled. The loudness compensation is a contour (independent of the volume setting) whose boost in the bass and high treble is tantamount to a very broad 5-dB dip centered on about 1.5 kHz.

The dynamic bass enhancer is an expander that introduces a boost centered on about 80 Hz, depending on program content and enhancer setting. In addition to its on/off switch, there are two controls: for sensitivity (+10 or -10 dB) and level (+4 or +6 dB). The first of these

determines how loud the signal's bass content must be before the expander starts punching it up; the latter chooses the degree of enhancement (4 or 6 dB at full expansion) it adds. Our initial impression was that the enhancer is better calculated for pop and rock—or even for jazz—than for the classics, which sometimes derive a rather thumpy quality from it. But even in some classical programming on FM we found its extra viscosity welcome. In any event, the effect isn't extreme.

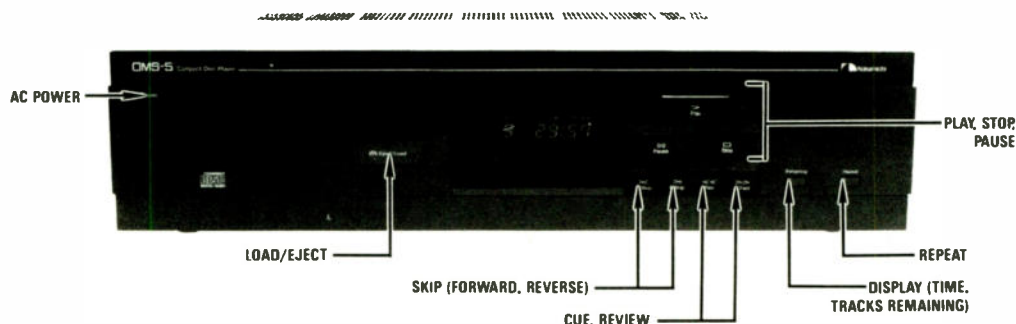
The amplifier section, too, is impressive. Its 19-dBW (80-watt) power rating is substantial for a receiver, but the TX-85 shows no sign of faltering until well above that. Equally important is the fact that its output increases substantially as the load impedance is dropped, suggesting that the amp can drive low-impedance or unusually reactive loudspeakers without difficulty. On the pulsed tones of our dy-

namic power test, which simulates the transient characteristics of music, the amp delivered 23 dBW (200 watts) per channel into 2 ohms. Nevertheless, the manual warns against loads of less than 4 ohms, which would mean never running simultaneously two pairs of speakers rated at less than 8 ohms. Distortion is well contained at both high and low levels.

How does Onkyo do it all for \$620? We still don't know, but we do know that it's a mighty impressive product. And it will take time to digest its innovations fully. Automatic control of FM reception on the basis of signal strength, for example, is an idea that is in the air (though we don't know of any other company that has gone about it just this way). Certainly it improves the sound from weak stations without requiring any intervention from the listener. It will be interesting to see how widely Onkyo's concept is copied to this end. ●

NAKAMICHI OMS-5 COMPACT DISC PLAYER

Dimensions: 17 by 4 inches (front), 12 inches deep plus clearance for connections. Price: \$995. Warranty: "limited," one year parts and labor. Manufacturer: Nakamichi Corp., Japan; U.S. distributor: Nakamichi U.S.A. Corp., 19701 S. Vermont Ave., Torrance, Calif. 90502.



It would be inappropriate to call the OMS-5 Nakamichi's "budget" Compact Disc player. Although the less expensive of the company's two models, its aim (like that of the programmable OMS-7) is to leave no technological stone

untuned in pursuing the most perfect sound CDs can deliver. And some of the means employed to that end don't come cheap. By dispensing with the OM-7's extra ICs, buttons, and so on—and with its wireless remote control and ad-

justable-level headphone output—the OMS-5 keeps the cost of its no-compromise design as low as one might reasonably expect.

Audio circuitry (both digital and analog) in the two models is identical, however. It uses dual 14-bit dig-

ital-to-analog (D/A) converters run at four times the normal speed (for a 176.4-kHz sampling rate). An interpolation algorithm yields groups of four values whose average equals the single digital value from which each was derived, for full 16-bit resolution. Digital and analog filtering are combined to isolate audio information from sampling artifacts with minimal ringing and phase shift in the analog output. Time coherency is further protected by the analog filter characteristic itself (third-order Bessel).

In addition to separate D/A converters, the two channels enjoy independent power supplies and ground systems and are isolated from the purely digital circuitry—all to avoid opportunities for the modulation of one signal by another. Internal wiring is of high-purity oxygen-free copper. The actual drive mechanism is spring-mounted in a diecast subchassis, independent of the disc-loading system, for maximum shock isolation, and it incorporates a cog-free motor. Both of these measures are intended to minimize the stress on the storage buffer and error detection/correction/concealment system.

The controls are fairly standard. If you want to start play somewhere other than at the beginning of a disc, you can step the laser pick-up to any track either before the disc drawer is closed (in which case it closes automatically if you then press PLAY) or after the disc is loaded. Once playback has begun, you can use CUE and REVIEW to sample the music on the disc at high speed in either direction; if you use these buttons from STOP or PAUSE, advance or retreat will occur (at six times normal speed for the first five seconds, ten times normal speed thereafter) without audible output. REPEAT replays the entire disc until you release the button or press LOAD/EJECT. Pressing the display button converts the readout from current track and elapsed time to tracks and time remaining; when you release the button, the display

reverts to its original mode. And Nakamichi's excellent owner's manual says that system remote controls eventually will be available that will connect to the OMS-5.

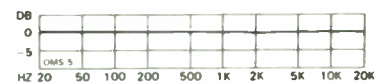
As you might expect, all of the measurements that Diversified Science Laboratories made on the player document performance above reproach—generally equal to that of the best CD equipment we've tested to date. Frequency response remains within 1/4 dB of 1-kHz output right up to 20 kHz, though the very slight ripple in the top range extends down unusually far—to below 2 kHz. (This presumably is a by-product of the filter system.) Ringing in the square-wave and impulse tests is extremely well controlled. The symmetry of the impulse (which shows ringing in advance of the triggering pulse, an impossibility in purely acoustic systems) is characteristic of the Philips-style D/A conversion and digital filtration; its inversion is caused by polarity (absolute phase) reversal within the player's electronics and is of no concern.

We hardly need point out that the OMS-5 performed flawlessly in the tracking and error-correction tests. If CD equipment continues to improve at the present rate, Philips will have to create a more demanding disc for this test, since the best players no longer stumble here. Linearity remains perfect (within the limits of the measurement technique) down to below -70 dB (most other players do so only to -60), though the nonlinearity at -80 and -90 dB (a matter of slight sonic moment) is higher than average.

The sound, too, is superb, although you mustn't expect to hear any radical superiority when you audition the Nakamichi. In fact, some of the matters that Nakamichi has taken pains over (phase shift at very high frequencies, for instance) are of arguable audibility on the basis of much recent testing. And if there is an advantage, it's not the sort that will proclaim itself readily in A/B tests with other top

All data were obtained using the Sony YEDS-7, Technics SH-C0001, Philips 410 055-2, and Philips 410 056-2 test discs

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



--- L ch ± 1/4 dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz
 - - - - R ch ± 1/4 dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz

OE-EMPHASIS ERROR

left channel ± 1/4 dB, 1 to 16 kHz
 right channel ± 1/4 dB, 1 to 16 kHz

CHANNEL SEPARATION (at 1 kHz) > 100 dB

CHANNEL BALANCE (at 1 kHz) ± 1/4 dB

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

without de-emphasis 98 1/4 dB

with de-emphasis 98 dB

HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD+N; 40 Hz to 20 kHz)

at 0 dB < 0.01%

at -24 dB ≤ 0.050%

IM DISTORTION (70-Hz difference; 300 Hz to 20 kHz)

0 to -10 dB < 0.01%

at -20 dB < 0.016%

at -30 dB < 0.042%

LINEARITY (at 1 kHz)

0 to -70 dB no measurable error

at -80 dB + 3 1/2 dB

at -90 dB + 7 dB

TRACKING & ERROR-CORRECTION

maximum signal-layer gap > 900 μm

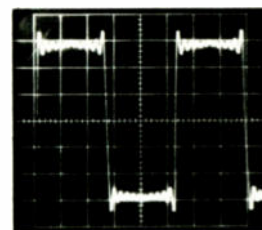
maximum surface obstruction > 800 μm

simulated-fingerprint test pass

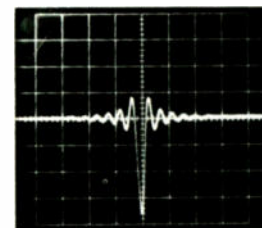
MAXIMUM OUTPUT LEVEL 1.86 volts

OUTPUT IMPEDANCE 110 ohms

SQUARE-WAVE RESPONSE (1 kHz)



IMPULSE RESPONSE

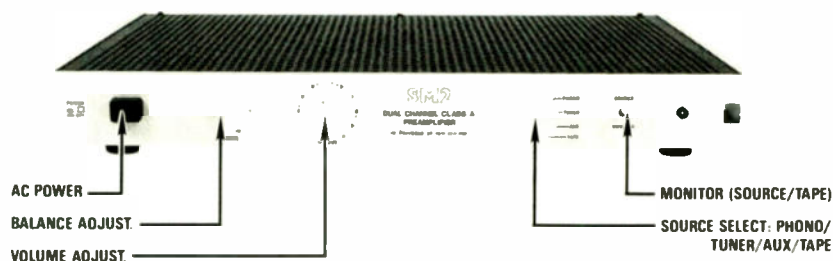


models. Suffice to say that we've never heard better and that, even in theory, Nakamichi has addressed every significant question currently being asked about CD-player design. Tomorrow, there may be new questions and new answers; meanwhile, the OMS-5 stands among those players representing the state of the sonic art. ●

PERREAUX SM-2 PREAMPLIFIER

Dimensions: 19 by 1¾ inches (front panel; feet add ½ inch to height), 12½ inches deep plus clearance for controls and connections. Price: \$1,299.

Warranty: "limited," five years parts, labor, and specifications. Manufacturer: Perreaux Sound, Ltd., New Zealand; U.S. distributor: Perreaux International, 875 Merrick Ave., Westbury, N.Y. 11590.



What's the last thing in the world you would expect to come from New Zealand? High-end audio electronics? Well, think again, because that's where Perreaux Sound is located and that's what it makes. We clearly recall our introduction to the company's amplifiers and preamps: The quality and ruggedness of their construction set them apart from almost everything else on the market. And yet they are not even close to being the most expensive products in their respective classes.

Perreaux says that its products are largely hand-built, allowing a degree of adjustment and tweaking during assembly that would be difficult to accommodate in a more automated setting. All transistors, for example, are individually matched to the others with which they will work in a circuit, assuring optimum performance. The company even makes its own chassis, faceplates, and knobs.

The SM-2 is a low-profile perfectionist preamp in a standard EIA rack-mount case. Because it runs Class A (a very pure, but very inefficient, warm-running mode of operation), the top cover is perforated for ventilation, giving a clear view of the unit's interior. The circuit board is clad in gold-plated copper,

which forms a corrosion-free, low-resistance ground plane for excellent shielding and RFI (radio frequency interference) rejection. (Ferrite beads at the phono inputs also contribute to RFI suppression.) A large, well-shielded toroidal transformer is positioned to the far left of the chassis, next to an extraordinarily hefty bank of filter capacitors. Together with active regulation circuitry, these comprise the SM-2's unusually high-voltage power supply.

The power supply is complemented by high-voltage transistors in the amplification stages (MOS FETs at the main outputs) to assure ample overload margins and linear operation with low feedback. Measurements made by Diversified Science Laboratories demonstrate that Perreaux has succeeded handsomely in this regard. The SM-2's distortion is well below the threshold of audibility through all inputs. Its maximum output is almost 30 volts (most power amps reach full power with an input of less than 2 volts), and the preamp will take more than 10 volts at its line inputs (at least four times what it will ever see from any high-level source, including CD players). Phono overload figures also are impressive at mid and low frequencies, though

Fixed coil phono measurements were made with the preamp set for low gain moving coil measurements with it set for high gain. See text.

OUTPUT AT CLIPPING (at 1 kHz)	28.5 volts
HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD; 20 Hz to 20 kHz)	
aux or phono input	< 0.01%
FREQUENCY RESPONSE	
+0, -1.3 dB, 16 Hz to 46 kHz	
+0, -3 dB, < 10 Hz to 168 kHz	
RIAA EQUALIZATION	
fixed-coil (MM) phono	+ < 1/3 -3/4 dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz -7 1/4 dB at 5 Hz
moving-coil (MC) phono	+ < 1.4 -1.2 dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz -11 1/2 dB at 5 Hz
SENSITIVITY & NOISE (re 0.5 volt; A-weighting)	
	sensitivity S/N ratio
aux	41 mV 90 dB
fixed-coil (MM) phono	0.81 mV 75 dB
moving-coil (MC) phono	110 µV 71 dB
INPUT OVERLOAD (1-kHz clipping)	
aux	> 10 volts
fixed-coil (MM) phono	1.050 mV
moving-coil (MC) phono	140 mV
INPUT IMPEDANCE	
aux	47.6k ohms
fixed-coil (MM) phono	53.3k ohms 125 pF
moving-coil (MC) phono	51.8k ohms
OUTPUT IMPEDANCE	
main output	460 ohms
tape output (from aux)	direct
tape output (from phono)	990 ohms
CHANNEL SEPARATION (at 1 kHz)	80 dB

the SM-2's passive RIAA equalization makes them only about average (though certainly adequate) at very high frequencies.

Another unusual aspect of the phono stage's design bears mentioning: Its sensitivity can be switched at the back panel to accommodate low-output moving-coil pickups without the insertion of an additional gain stage (that is, a head amp or step-up transformer). This keeps the signal path as simple as possible. The only drawback that we can see to this approach is a small increase in noise at the high-gain setting. Jacks on the back panel enable you to insert resistors and capacitors in parallel with the phono circuit's natural input impedance, so that you can match virtually any requirement. Perreaux's gratifyingly thorough manual explains exactly how to do this and even covers in detail such customarily neglected subjects as preventing and eliminating hum and basic troubleshooting.

Other evidence of the company's attention to the fine points is gold plating on all input and output jacks, high-grade passive compo-



All input and output jacks are gold-plated.

nents (metal-film resistors and polypropylene and polycarbonate capacitors) throughout the signal path, and a turn-on muting relay that takes itself completely out of the circuit when it releases. Functionally, the SM-2 is firmly in the minimalist camp. Its front panel sports only a power button, balance and volume controls, a four-position input selector (including phono and tape), a monitor switch for the preamp's single tape loop, and a red pilot LED. If you want additional inputs, tone controls, filters, or the like, you'll have to add a switchbox and appropriate outboard signal processors. Perreaux's only goal in this preamp is to do the essentials very well.

And that it certainly does. DSL's tests turned up very good to superb results in all categories. Response is adequately extended, but not excessively so, and is dead flat across the audible band through the high-level inputs. Phono

(RIAA) response also is quite good, although there is a bump of slightly less than 1/4 dB in the octave between 30 and 60 Hz and a shelved drop of approximately 1/2 to 3/4 dB in the top three octaves, above about 3 kHz. In a critical A/B comparison, this might cause the SM-2's phono reproduction to sound ever so slightly warmer than that of a unit with perfectly flat response, but we were not aware of any such effect in casual listening. Input and output impedances are well suited to use with typical (or even atypical) components, although the tape output is unbuffered from the high-level inputs (aux, tuner, and tape). And channel separation is much more than adequate: 62 dB or greater from 10 kHz down, reaching 86 dB at 100 Hz.

The SM-2 clearly is a luxury component intended for the perfectionist. Everything about it bespeaks quality and fine craftsmanship, from the circuit-board layout to the smooth, positive actions of its controls. If you want a preamplifier in this class, we commend the Perreaux to you for its superior construction and high performance. •

B&O BEOGRAM TX-2 TURNTABLE

Dimensions: 16 1/2 by 13 inches (top), 3 inches high with cover closed; additional 8 inches vertical clearance required to open cover fully. Price: \$340. Warranty: "limited," one year parts and labor. Manufacturer: Bang & Olufsen a/s, Denmark; U.S. distributor: Bang & Olufsen of America, Inc., 1150 Feehanville Dr., Mount Prospect, Ill. 60056.

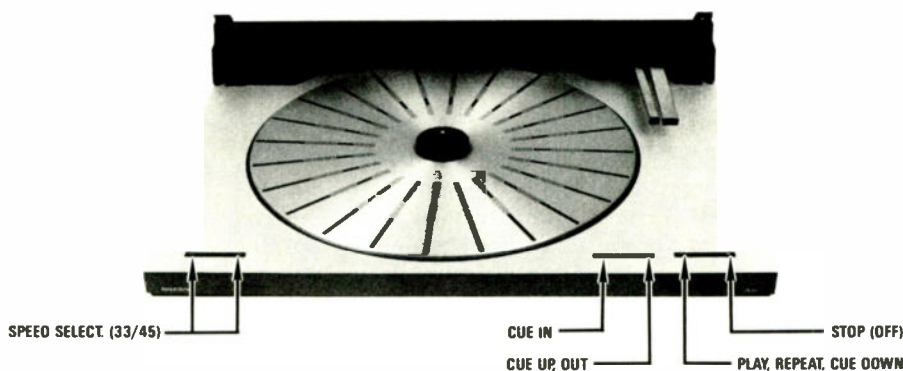
At heart, every Bang & Olufsen product is technology for people who don't want to be bothered with technology. It's rather like the proverbial art that conceals art (something else B&O knows a thing or two about, as witness its representation in the industrial arts collection of New York's Museum of Modern Art). This time around, we're looking at a model whose designation, atypically for B&O, im-

plies no membership in a specific B&O component system (Beosystem, in the company parlance). It's the TX-2, an utterly simple turntable, at least in appearance and use. But that is not to say that simple means were used to obtain this end.

On the turntable's top plate are three long rocker bars that serve as two-way switches. Normally, you won't need to touch the bar at the left, for speed change. The TX-2 sets

SPEED ACCURACY (105 to 127 VAC)	0.5% fast*
WOW & FLUTTER (ANSI weighted peak)	
average	±0.06%
maximum	±0.09%
TOTAL AUDIBLE RUMBLE (ARLL)	≈ -73 dB
EFFECTIVE TONEARM MASS	see text
VTF-GAUGE ACCURACY	
reads 0.1 gram low, 0.9 to 1.9 grams	
TOTAL LEAD CAPACITANCE	435 pF

*At factory setting of speed control. See text.



speed automatically for standard record formats by weighing whatever is placed on a spring-loaded platform in the center of the platter, which also functions as a captive adapter for large-hole 45s. The rocker bar at the extreme right can, alone, do all you may ever need done. If you press the PLAY end, the TX-2 will turn on and check the "scale" to make sure that a record is in place. (If one is not present, it will shut itself off.) The turntable will determine whether the disc weighs more than a 7-incher and, accordingly, cue either to the 12-inch lead-in groove at 33 rpm or to the 7-inch lead-in groove at 45. Then it starts playing the record. If you want the record to repeat, you press PLAY at the outset as many times as you want to hear it (to a maximum of seven). At the end of the side (or the replay sequence) or when you press the opposite end of this control bar, the tonearm homes and the TX-2 shuts off.

In some ways, however, you're better off relying instead on a suggestion in B&O's brief but very useful owner's manual. It advises that you begin by pressing the left end of the middle bar, marked "turn." This starts the platter, looks for a disc, sets the speed, and cues the arm without lowering it. This gives you time both to clean the record with the platter spinning and to assess the turntable's settings and override them, if necessary. If you have 7-inch LPs, you'll need to

change the speed before the stylus is lowered. Worse, 10-inch LPs will leave the stylus cued to the position of a 12-inch lead-in groove, where there's nothing to prevent it from lowering directly onto the platter.

The right end of this cueing bar (marked "lift") serves two functions. It raises the stylus from the groove and, when you press it again, moves the arm out toward the edge of the disc; "turn" moves it in toward the run-out groove. To lower the arm, you must press PLAY. A light at the back-left corner of the top plate shines across the record toward the stylus whenever you're in a cueing mode and goes out shortly after the stylus touches down. We found this feature extremely useful; with it you can cue flawlessly even to very narrow record bands—and under almost any room lighting.

In two salient ways, the TX-2 is among the most advanced turntables available. First, its tonearm tracks the record tangentially, banishing the problems occasioned by pivoted arms: lateral tracking angle error and skating force, neither of which can be designed out of conventional models entirely. And by tailoring the arm specifically for the company's five MMC Series fixed-coil cartridges, B&O was able to avoid the compromises inevitable in an arm that's trying to be all things to all pickups.

The arm assembly is positioned by a servo-controlled motor that re-

REPORT POLICY

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

sponds to small arm motions. There are two "arms" of sorts. One is cantilevered from the drive mechanism, at the back of the top plate, and carries red speed numerals ("33" or "45") at its tip so that they are visible from across the room. (The speed indication flashes when the REPEAT is set.) The other is the tonearm. It has full vertical play (for riding warps, for instance) but just enough lateral give to work the servo, on which it relies for maintenance of groove tangency. Its tip accepts the tiny plug-in pickups of the B&O MMC Series. (They come with adapters for use in conventional arms; see our report on the Beogram 8002 turntable and MMC-1 cartridge, April 1983.) A small plastic slider about halfway along the tonearm sets the tracking force in a range calibrated from 0.8 to 1.8 grams in 0.1-gram increments.

The arm assembly is mounted on a subchassis with the platter, which is isolated from the main motor by a belt drive. In a roughly analogous way, B&O's proprietary Optimum Pivot Point tonearm is designed to reject any vibration created by its servo motor. The whole subchassis is isolated from the turntable base by another proprietary vibration decoupler: a three-point leaf-spring-and-pendulum suspension. We found it extremely efficient: Hard raps on the surface be-

neath the TX-2 produced no audible output through the turntable while a record was playing.

Rumble is very low. The figure shown in our data column is a rounded average of the fluctuating rumble measured by Diversified Science Laboratories at between $69\frac{3}{4}$ and $76\frac{3}{4}$ dB below reference level. That worst-case figure would be very respectable as an average for a turntable in this price class; rumble below -76 dB is unheard of in all but the very finest models. Flutter is less impressive but still about par for a high-quality design.

The lab measured speed (at only a hair on the fast side and unaffected by line voltage) at the as-delivered setting of a bottom-panel adjustment. The actual range of this adjustment in the test sample was from 3.7 percent slow to 32.8 percent fast at 33 rpm and from 13.3 percent slow to 11.1 percent fast at 45. But since the control is both unmarked on the panel and ignored in the manual, it appears to be intended for use in servicing only.

More problematic is the tonearm's effective mass. Normally, this is an important point because it determines what resonant frequency will be created for any given cartridge compliance—and thus whether warp-tracking problems are likely. Here, however, we're dealing with an arm that is to be

used only with the B&O MMC cartridges. And with an MMC-1 in place, the lab found the resonance so well damped as to be almost nonexistent (and, therefore, very difficult to measure precisely). It amounted to a $\frac{3}{4}$ -dB rise at $16\frac{1}{2}$ Hz vertically (that is, in the direction of warps) and a $5\frac{1}{2}$ -dB rise at $14\frac{1}{2}$ Hz laterally.

In practice, we found performance with warped discs remarkable for so short an arm, which must rise through a greater angle than a longer arm would have to for the same vertical excursion, increasing the likelihood of audible "warp wow." In some cases, we judged warp tracking to be significantly better than that of a full-length pivoted arm to which we compared it. Even more remarkable is the TX-2's ability to follow the groove in records pressed so far off-center as to induce a severe wow in playback. Naturally, extreme cases of warping or eccentricity will not play well, but we even cajoled the TX-2 (with a record hold-down weight) into playing the flimsy soundsheets that sometimes are bound into magazines—something many other automated models can't do well. Occasionally we didn't get large-hole 45s seated correctly around the adapter on the first try, but experience bred more consistent success.

TONEARM/CARTRIDGE MATCHING GRAPH

By means of this nomograph, you can determine the compatibility of any cartridge and tonearm we have tested. Ideally, the arm/cartridge resonance frequency (indicated by the diagonal lines) should fall at 10 Hz, but anywhere between 8 and 12 Hz will assure good warp tracking and accurate bass response. (It is usually okay to let the resonance rise as high as 15 Hz, although we don't normally recommend this.)

Begin by looking up the weight and dynamic compliance shown in the cartridge report and the effective mass listed in the turntable or tonearm report. Add the weight of the cartridge to the effective mass of the tonearm to get the total effective mass. Then find the point on the graph where the vertical line for the total effective mass intersects the horizontal line for the cartridge's dynamic compliance. For a good match, this point should fall in the white region, between the 8- and 12-Hz diagonal lines.

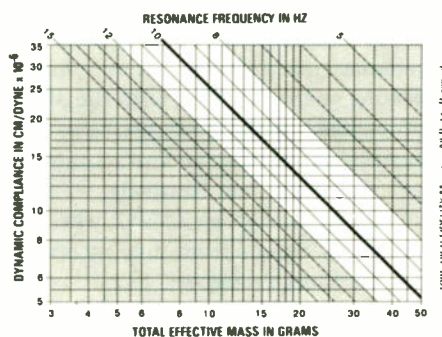
When necessary, you can back-figure compliances and effective masses for cartridges and tonearms tested before we began reporting

these figures directly (in January 1983). For cartridges, look up the vertical resonance frequency (measured in the SME 3009 Series II Improved tonearm) and the cartridge's weight. Add 15 grams (the SME's effective mass) to the car-

tridge weight to get the total effective mass. Then find the intersection of the vertical line representing that mass with the diagonal line representing the measured resonance frequency. Now you can read off the compliance from the horizontal line passing through the point of intersection.

For tonearms, look up the vertical resonance frequency as measured with the Shure V-15 Type III cartridge. Find the intersection of the diagonal line for that frequency with the horizontal line representing the Shure's dynamic compliance of 22.5×10^6 cm/dyne. Reading down the vertical line on which the point of intersection lies will give you the total effective mass of the arm with the Shure V-15 Type III mounted in it. Then subtract 6.3 grams (the weight of the V-15 Type II) to get the tonearm's effective mass.

Because of differences in measurement techniques, manufacturers' specifications for compliance and effective mass often differ from our findings and may therefore yield inconsistent results if used with this graph.



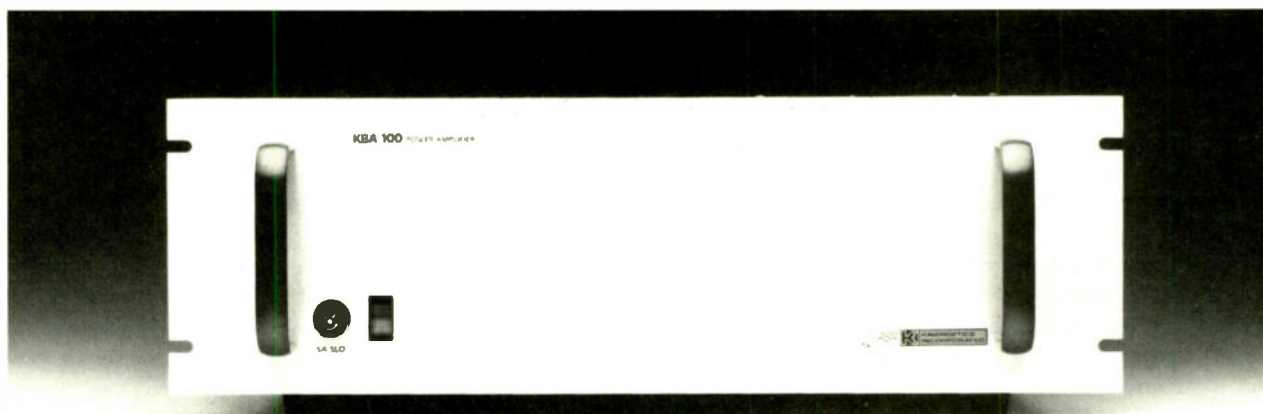
Overall, we are delighted with the TX-2. Making it do all that it's capable of quickly becomes second nature. Its performance will please

audiophiles; its styling will please aesthetes; its unfussy ergonomics will please technophobes; even its "value for money" (as the British

say) will please consumerists, though it's not especially inexpensive. In fact, we don't see anything in it to be displeased about. ●

KINERGETICS KBA-100 POWER AMPLIFIER

Dimensions: 19 by 6 inches (front panel), 9³/₄ inches deep plus clearance for rack-mount handles. Price: \$795. Warranty: "limited," 90 days parts and labor, extended to three years if warranty card is returned. Manufacturer: Kinergetics, Inc., 6029 Reseda Blvd., Tarzana, Calif. 91356.



Skepticism is inevitable when a manufacturer announces that it has discovered a new and essentially unmeasurable form of distortion and that it alone is prepared to combat this distortion through product design. Yet what Kinergetics says about "hysteresis distortion" is similar to what some other manufacturers have been saying for years—though in different terms and leading to different circuitry conclusions. And all analog audio circuitry does contain capacitors or inductors (or at least stray capacitance and inductance between elements) that can store energy and thus introduce nonlinearities into designs that might otherwise seem as nearly perfect as current technology permits.

Hysteresis is most familiar to audiophiles as the double-S curve of coercive force vs. residual magnetic flux by which tape formulations can be characterized. Because of stored energy, this curve doesn't

pass through the graph's origin, but to one side or the other, depending on the direction in which it is moving. Tape heads have their own hysteresis characteristics as well, as do any other inductors, including the coils of magnetic photo cartridges.

This was where Kinergetics began its war on hysteresis nonlinearities. Its first products were designed to undo them by creating the nonlinearity a second time with a comparable inductor and using this signal element to correct the original distortion. The KMP-1 phono processor, for example, is described as containing the body of a real magnetic cartridge to act as a distortion generator that, with the aid of feedback techniques, produces a corrective to your pickup's inherent distortion—an antibody, so to speak. Similarly, the KMP-2, which processes signals from tape recorders, contains a magnetic head.

The company has moved from these add-on products to a pream-

RATED POWER	20 dBW (100 watts)/channel
OUTPUT AT CLIPPING (at 1 kHz; both channels driven)	
8-ohm load	21 3/4 dBW (150 watts) channel
4-ohm load	21 3/4 dBW (150 watts)/channel*
DYNAMIC POWER	
8-ohm load	22 1/2 dBW
4-ohm load	22 1/2 dBW*
2-ohm load	19 3/4 dBW*
DYNAMIC HEADROOM (re rated power, 8-ohm load)	
	+ 2 1/2 dB
HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD, 20 Hz to 20 kHz)	
at 20 dBW (100 watts)	≤ 1.24%
at 0 dBW (1 watt)	≤ 0.287%
FREQUENCY RESPONSE	
	+ 0, - 1/4 dB, < 10 Hz to 195 kHz
	+ 0 - 3 dB, < 10 Hz to 490 kHz
S/N RATIO (re 0 dBW; A-weighted)	74 dB
SENSITIVITY (re 0 dBW)	145 mV
INPUT IMPEDANCE	29k ohms
DAMPING FACTOR (at 50 Hz)	170
CHANNEL SEPARATION (at 1 kHz)	84 1/2 dB

*See text

plifier and power amplifier of its own, incorporating similar feedback circuitry to combat hysteresis of their own creation. In the KBA-100 power amp, the first Kinergetics product we've tested, the specific sources of nonlinearity are said to be capacitors and the junctions of transistors.

Physically, it is all we have come to expect of superamps: a rack-mountable case with heavy handles, a front-panel power fuse and lighting on/off switch, back-panel fuses for each channel, and heavy-duty binding posts for the speaker leads. Fortunately for home users, the inputs are conventional pin (phono) jacks, rather than the 1/4-inch phone type used on some professional equipment. (The fusing doesn't impinge between output and speakers, by the way; if you want this sort of speaker protection—which inevitably compromises damping factor—you'll have to add it yourself.)

We hope the company will make two small construction changes in future production. The binding-post holes for the insertion of bared wires aren't aligned in any particular direction on our test sample. These connections are set between the heat sinks, making them a little harder to see than they might be, so the extra attention to detail would be welcome to those who use bared leads. More important is the omission of lock washers from the four screws that hold the power transformer to the chassis. During shipment, half of the washers fell out of our sample; if the other two (which were loosened) had done so, too, the liberated transformer could have done considerable damage.

Avoidance of inductors and capacitors in the output (presumably to minimize hysteresis) helps keep the frequency response unusually wide and the damping factor both high and almost uniform across the audio band. (Typical amplifiers have relatively high output impedances, and therefore reduced damping factors, at high frequencies.)

However, unless the amp uses an unusually small amount of overall negative feedback, the absence of a stabilizing network at the output could lead to oscillation with certain types of difficult loads, particularly those presented by electrostatic loudspeakers.

There is no doubt about the KBA-100's ability to deliver its rated 100 watts per channel into 8-ohm loads. The figures for lower impedances, with either sine-wave input or the pulsed signal used for the dynamic power tests, is more equivocal, however, because of soft clipping of the positive-going portion of the waveform. Our guess is that this behavior is caused by current-limiting protection circuitry in the amplifier or perhaps by the power supply simply running out of current. Whatever its origin, this sort of waveform distortion creates no well-defined clipping point, making the power figures for 4 and 2 ohms strictly judgment calls.

Kinergetics says that steady-state distortion measurements (the sort almost everyone, including HIGH FIDELITY, prints) are no index of listening quality. This is more than a cop-out. These days, almost any amplifier with sincere aspirations to high fidelity can manage distortion figures that are below the normal thresholds of audibility established by repeated experimental investigations. This is not as obviously true as usual for the KBA-100, whose distortion is considerably higher than average. The figures actually exceed 1 percent at rated power, but only above 10 kHz, where no musical signal could be expected to reach full power and no tweeter could be expected to withstand the current if it did. Diversified Science Laboratories also measured more noise than usual, as reflected in the relatively low signal-to-noise ratio listed in our data. Nonetheless, in our listening we were consistently pleased by the KBA-100 and would willingly use it as part of a permanent installation. ●

ABOUT THE dBW

We currently are expressing power in terms of dBW—meaning power in dB with a reference (0 dBW) of 1 watt. The conversion table will enable you to use the advantages of dBW in comparing these products to others for which you have no dBW figures.

WATTS	dBW	WATTS	dBW
1.0	0	32	15
1.25	1	40	16
1.6	2	50	17
2.0	3	63	18
2.5	4	80	19
3.2	5	100	20
4.0	6	125	21
5.0	7	160	22
6.3	8	200	23
8.0	9	250	24
10.0	10	320	25
12.5	11	400	26
16.0	12	500	27
20.0	13	630	28
25.0	14	800	29

ACOUSTIC RESEARCH CONNOISSEUR 20 LOUDSPEAKER

Type: two-way acoustic suspension "bookshelf" system in particleboard enclosure with walnut-grain vinyl finish. Dimensions: 11¼ by 18 inches (front), 7¾ inches deep plus clearance for grille connections. Price: \$320 per pair; optional SW-1 stands, \$100 per pair. Warranty: "full," five years parts and labor. Manufacturer: Acoustic Research, 330 Turnpike St., Canton, Mass. 02021.



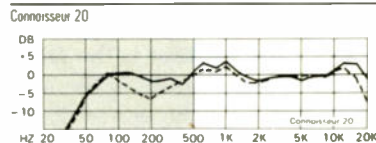
Recently, Acoustic Research added two new product lines above its existing range of loudspeakers: the Research Series, designed to exploit to the hilt the company's most advanced technology (see "Sonic Marvels," June), and the Connoisseur Series, which uses less exotic means to some of the same ends. The Model 20 is in the middle of the Connoisseur line, between a smaller bookshelf system (the Model 19) with a 6-inch woofer and a larger floor-standing speaker (the Model 30) with a 10-inch bass driver; the Model 20 has an 8-inch woofer. All three systems use a newly developed 1-inch dome tweeter and cabinets with rounded front edges and smooth baffle surfaces for minimum diffraction. In the Model 20, the tweeter operates down to 3 kHz, below which the crossover rolls off its response at 18 dB per octave. The woofer's response above the crossover frequency is allowed to roll off naturally (that is, without the assistance of an electrical filter network) at 12 dB per octave.

The Model 20 differs from previous Acoustic Research speakers in a couple of important respects. One is the increased attention that has been devoted to obtaining flat first-arrival response, in addition to smooth integrated room response. The other is that it is not designed for uniformly wide dispersion through the midrange and treble. Running an 8-inch woofer up to such a high frequency causes the speaker's radiation pattern to nar-

row somewhat in the octave just below the crossover, between 1.5 and 3 kHz. Acoustic Research's reason for doing this is to minimize early reflections off the side walls and floor, which can color the sound and interfere with stereo imaging. (No attempt is made to reduce dispersion at higher frequencies, where the ear is less critical, or at lower ones, where the effort would be prohibitively difficult and expensive.) The drawback is that the range of listening positions over which a pair of Model 20s sounds properly balanced is more restricted than it is for more conventionally designed speakers. Indeed, the company strongly recommends toeing the 20s in so that they face your primary seating area—a practice that also serves to further inhibit side-wall reflections. Both imaging and tonal balance deteriorate if the speakers are faced straight out into the room.

The very thorough owner's manual also specifies that the speakers be placed between 18 and 28 inches off the floor, preferably at a height of about 23 inches. Stands for this purpose are available as an extra-cost option. The manual suggests experimentation to find the best position relative to room walls, starting with the speakers close to the wall behind them, moving them out as far as several feet if that yields better results. Diversified Science Laboratories followed these instructions to the letter in testing the Model 20, placing it well away from side walls on one of the Acous-

ROOM RESPONSE CHARACTERISTICS



boundary dependent region
— on-axis response
- - - off axis (30°) response

SENSITIVITY (at 1 meter; 2.8-volt pink noise)

90 dB SPL

AVERAGE IMPEDANCE (250 Hz to 6 kHz)

8.7 ohms

tic Research stands. The lab took room-corrected one-third-octave response measurements with the speaker at several distances in front of the wall behind it, ranging from a few inches to a few feet, finally settling on a distance of 10 inches as providing the smoothest curves (shown in our data column). It used this placement for all further measurements.

As you can see, the response is exceedingly smooth for a loudspeaker, particularly on-axis, where it remains within ± 4 dB from approximately 60 Hz to 20 kHz. And the off-axis results are only slightly less impressive, with a spread of $+2\frac{1}{4}$, $-6\frac{3}{4}$ dB from 50 Hz to 16 kHz. In both cases, the principal anomalies appear to be due more to interactions with room boundaries than to any intrinsic characteristic of the speaker. The Model 20's impedance also is remarkably well controlled, ranging within the audio band from a minimum of 4.9 ohms at 20 Hz to a maximum of 17.7 ohms at 70 Hz (the system's low-frequency resonance point). Apart from these extrema, the usual dip above bass resonance (in this case, to 5.1 ohms at 200 Hz), and a gentle rise to 12.6 ohms at 2 kHz, the impedance meanders placidly between 6 and 8 ohms. This should be a very easy load for any decent amplifier.

The Model 20's sensitivity is about average, and its power-handling ability appears to be very good. In our 300-Hz pulse test, it accepted the full 62-volt peak output of the lab's amplifier (equivalent to $26\frac{3}{4}$ dBW, or 481 watts, into 8 ohms), delivering a calculated output of $116\frac{3}{4}$ dB SPL (sound pressure level). Dynamic range should therefore be more than adequate for domestic listening.

This conclusion is supported by DSL's distortion measurements, which indicate that the speaker should be capable of producing high, but not disco, levels in a normal living room. At 85 dB SPL (moderately loud), total harmonic

distortion (THD) averages just a shade more than $\frac{1}{2}$ percent from 100 Hz to 10 kHz (the upper limit of our testing on speakers). This is a respectable, if not spectacular, figure. It creeps up to a little more than $\frac{3}{4}$ percent at 90 dB SPL and then begins to rise more swiftly, to approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ percent at 95 dB SPL. At 100 dB SPL (which is quite loud), the average THD jumps to a little more than $2\frac{1}{2}$ percent, suggesting that the speaker is running into its steady-state limit. This is fine performance for a system of the Model 20's size.

The speaker is finished in a handsome and convincing walnut-grain vinyl. Amplifier connections are made to color-coded five-way binding posts inset into the back panel. Like DSL, we followed Acoustic Research's placement recommendations, mounting the speakers on their stands, away from side walls but within a few inches of the wall behind them and toed in approximately 45 degrees. The result is superb reproduction, surpassing in all respects except bass extension that of any other Acoustic Research loudspeaker we have tested to date. Although by no means its only strength, what impresses us most is the Model 20's excellent stereo imaging: precise, stable, and exceptionally convincing. Few of its direct competitors can match it in this regard.

Overall, the sound is clean, articulate, and notably lifelike. Tonal balance is unusually good, with none of the excessive warmth characteristic of speakers that have been hyped up in the midbass for effect. As one would expect of a relatively small speaker, the Model 20 pretty much concedes the bottom octave, below 40 Hz or so. However, so little music contains any information in that range that you're not likely to miss it. Everything else is all there. The 20 occasionally sounds a little bright to us, but this happens so often with today's best speakers that we suspect the excess is more in the recordings than in

the reproducers.

In short, the Connoisseur 20 is an outstanding loudspeaker, delivering first-class performance at a near steerable price. It is a bargain in the best sense of the word and certainly deserves your attention if you are seeking very good sound in a reasonably small package. •

COMPLETE GUIDE TO HIGH FIDELITY'S TEST REPORTS

Each year, HIGH FIDELITY evaluates almost 100 audio, video, and car stereo components. To help you understand how we conduct these tests, what characteristics we feel are important, what changes in testing procedures we have made during the past year, and how to use the reports we publish each month in making buying decisions, we offer the 1985 edition of our COMPLETE GUIDE TO HIGH FIDELITY'S TEST REPORTS. This full-size, 16-page primer—including a three-page glossary of technical terms—contains sections on how we test Compact Disc players, video components, cassette decks, preamplifiers, power amplifiers, tuners, phono cartridges, turntables, loudspeakers, car stereo components, and cassette tapes. A list of all lab tests published in 1984 (which are available as separate reprints) is also included. To obtain your copy, send a check or money order for \$3.95 (which includes postage and handling) to High Fidelity's Test Report Guide, HIGH FIDELITY, Dept. DE, 825 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019. Allow 30 days for delivery.

MEDLEY

Edited by
Georgia Christgau
and Ted Libbey



Canadian Club

The Parachute Club is ready for a serious American membership drive. In their native Canada, the septet had little trouble recruiting supporters: After only one month together they got a recording contract with an independent label (Current), and six months later they were signed by RCA. The Club's 1983 eponymous debut went gold, and last year's *At the Feet of the Moon* has gone platinum. They've won Junos (Cana-

da's equivalent of the Grammys), U-Knows (alternative music awards), and Black Music Awards, proving that the band's constituency spans the industry and the public alike.

The band members did a little inadvertent audience development before founding the Club in 1982. Lead singer/guitarist Lorraine Segato (formerly of Toronto's first feminist rock band, Mama Quilla II) joined drummer Billy Bryans and some members of Rough Trade to

form V, a reggae group, and percussionist Julie Masi played dance funk with the Cuban Fence Climbers. So Segato, Bryans, and Masi brought to Parachute a built-in following of blacks and women. Such a colorful history may also account for the band's musical palette, which intermixes rock, jazz, synthesizer, African, and South American influences—without sounding derivative. It's this rhythm-infused ebullience, coupled with from-the-gut vocals by

Segato and Masi, that gives Parachute Club its spunk.

But they really pack a wallop with their intelligent, political, and socially aware lyrics. Those of us who may have overdosed on heavy-handed message music won't become overwhelmed by the urge to take to the streets; Parachute Club simply reminds us of goals we hoped to achieve through antiwar, civil rights, and feminist movements—goals of freedom and equality. At a time when political jargon has opted for the generic phrase "human rights," this band deals in specifics, like disposing of stereotypical sex roles and developing a personal set of values devoid of prejudice. "I saw the writing on the wall/It said equal/Equally" is strong, simple, and seductive. In short, the Club tells us what we'd love to believe.

And they're activists in their own right. The band speaks out at concerts great and small—like the World Youth Festival of Arts held in Jamaica this April and a Toronto benefit for a women's bookstore that had been vandalized. And Segato and Masi, along with keyboardist Lauri Conger, appear frequently at women's concerts as the Pillow Sisters. The Parachute Club's sincerity and vitality are invigorating—a meeting with the band is a musical baptism of the spirit. And there are no restrictions, nor dues required to join.

Susan Galardi

Golden Oldies Coming to CD

With the Compact Disc now a roaring success among classical record buyers, many major labels have begun to issue vintage recordings by great performers of the past in the new format. CBS was among the first to take the plunge when it released a comprehensive collection of Bruno Walter's stereo recordings with the Columbia Symphony and the New York Philharmonic, exceptionally well remastered in Japan. More recently, a sampling of the best from CBS's extensive archive of George Szell/Cleveland Orchestra and Leonard Bernstein/New York Philharmonic stereo recordings has been made available.

London, whose catalog includes much remarkable material from the '50s and '60s, began naturally enough with a CD reissue of Georg Solti's landmark *Ring* cycle. The label

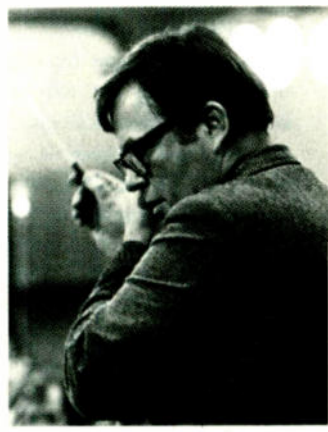
plans in the coming months to release Benjamin Britten's accounts of his *War Requiem* and *Peter Grimes*, both with Peter Pears. Also on the way are *La Bohème* and *Madama Butterfly* with Renata Tebaldi; *Salome* with Birgit Nilsson; *Nabucco* with Tito Gobbi; Kirsten Flagstad's *Wesendonck Lieder* and *Kindertotenlieder*; and excerpts from *Tristan und Isolde*, *Götterdämmerung*, and *Die Walküre* with Nilsson, Hans Knappertsbusch conducting.

As this issue of HIGH FIDELITY goes to press, RCA has announced a new series—which it calls "60+"—featuring material from its Red Seal archive specially selected to provide CD running times in the neighborhood of 60 to 75 minutes. Among the first "60+" CDs, which should be in the stores by the time you read this, are the Tchaikovsky and Grieg piano concertos with Artur Schnabel; a Strauss waltz collection with Fritz Reiner; the Beetho-

ven and Brahms violin concertos with Jascha Heifetz; a Spanish sampler featuring Leontyne Price, Reiner conducting; Schubert's *Unfinished* Symphony, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, and the *Fidelio* and *Coriolan* Overtures with Reiner; and a pairing of the Mussorgsky-Ravel *Pictures at an Exhibition* with Respighi's *Pines of Rome* and *Fountains of Rome*, again led by Reiner.

Angel EMI plans within the next few months to release the Otto Klemperer/New Philharmonia accounts of the Beethoven symphonies, with an additional disc devoted to Beethoven overtures. Also in the works are *Das Lied von der Erde* with Fritz Wunderlich and Christa Ludwig, Klemperer conducting; *Tosca* with Maria Callas, Victor de Sabata conducting; *The Merry Widow* with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf; and Schubert's *Die Schöne Müllerin* with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Gerald Moore.

Ted Libbey



Digestible Fare



Gerhardt (inset) and the National Philharmonic Orchestra arrayed for a session.

Charles Gerhardt and London's NPO undertake a major new recording project.

On a snowy afternoon last January the National Philharmonic Orchestra gathered in London's famed Walthamstow Town Hall for the first of 22 Reader's Digest recording sessions planned

for the winter, with repertoire ranging from Richard Wagner to Leroy Anderson. The first three days were devoted to Ravel (*Le Tombeau de Couperin*, the *Mother Goose Suite*, and *Valses nobles et sentimentales*) and a group of Leopold Stokowski transcriptions, including the love music from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and shorter works by Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, Sibelius, and Chopin. The sessions were produced with the assistance of Joseph Habig, associated with RCA for 30 years and now executive producer for Reader's Digest.

American conductor Charles Gerhardt, a familiar figure to record collectors, was on the podium for the sessions. Gerhardt has been recording for Reader's Digest—sometimes as producer, sometimes as conductor—since 1960, when he produced one of the Digest's initial multirecord sets, *Festival of Light Classical Music*. It was a best seller for more than 20 years before being retired from the catalog. Since that time, Gerhardt has produced and/or conducted more than 5,000 titles for the Digest—ranging from standard classics to background,

by Robert E. Benson

mood, light classical, opera, operetta, children's, popular, and rock music—making him perhaps the most versatile and widely recorded of all present-day musicians. He has found his association with Reader's Digest especially rewarding because of the company's maintenance of high standards, its willingness to take a chance on unusual repertoire, and its total commitment to its listening audience. The focus is on the music, and none of the compromises that plague many other commercial record labels are allowed to interfere.

Fortunately, I caught Gerhardt in one of his few free moments in London; he was otherwise preoccupied with the many details of the recordings. A private person who seldom grants interviews, Gerhardt has no interest in publicity or in giving concerts, which is a bit unusual in today's world of jet-set superstar performers who want to be constantly in the public eye. His views are often controversial and hardly industry-oriented, despite the fact that he has been affiliated with RCA for 30 years. Gerhardt feels that orchestras often do not get enough credit on their releases and that conductors walk off with all the honors. "So-and-so's recording of such-and-such," he says, is how albums are often designated. "And yet it is the *orchestra* that people are listening to, and the fine performance often might be in spite of, rather than because of, the conductor."

The National Philharmonic consists of leading players from the London area and is virtually an orchestra of first-desk musicians. Alan Civil, who has a distinguished career as a soloist, recording artist, and teacher, is principal horn. Sid Sax is concertmaster; he contracts for each session the number of players needed. The NPO was organized in the early '60s and for ten years was known as the RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra. In May 1970 it became incorporated as the National Philharmonic Orchestra and since that time has played countless recording sessions, sometimes as many as fifteen per week, with Gerhardt as well as with Stokowski, Georg Solti, James Levine, Lorin Maazel, and Richard Bonyngé. The orchestra often records for films and can be heard on all of RCA's *Classic Film Scores* series and numerous other film albums. Conductors enjoy working with the NPO; it is one of the most versatile of orchestras, with the ability to sightread difficult scores. This places the NPO in great demand with record producers.

The players particularly enjoy their association with Gerhardt. David Theodore, principal oboist, has been with the orchestra for 12 years (he also plays with the orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden) and says of Gerhardt: "It's a question of mutual respect. He respects us as musicians, and we respect him for his musicianship and his willingness to collaborate on a performance and an interpretation." A friendly mood prevails at Gerhardt-NPO recording sessions. Gerhardt is always willing to try something new and is open to suggestions, feeling that "tradition" generally is little more than the passing down from generation to generation of the mistakes of the past. One example of Gerhardt's receptiveness to innovation came in Ravel's *La Valse*, where the trumpets have an eighth-note tremolo seven bars before the end of the work. When rehearsing with Gerhardt, the first trumpet player said he felt the figure would be more effective if played as a sixteenth-note tremolo. Gerhardt tried it, liked it, and recorded it that way.

Gerhardt dislikes directional microphones and will have no part of overproduced, multichannel remixed recordings. Although the console specially designed for his London sessions has 18 channels, the final mix was determined during the sessions and the two-track digital master made on the spot. Interested in technical developments if they serve music, Gerhardt feels that the digital recording process is a remarkable advancement, but that a poor performance, badly engineered, will only sound worse when recorded digitally. "The digital process is passive," he says. "It will not make any record sound good in itself." Gerhardt's first priority is a performance worth recording. The recording site is also crucial, as are the use of omnidirectional microphones and their placement. He tries to create a recording valid for home listening; the close-up sound favored by many of today's producers is not for Gerhardt, who prefers a spatial sound rather than a spotlighted pickup, although he agrees that clarity must be retained. "I'm not interested in *where* sound comes from, left or right stereo, but in the *quality* of sound. I'm interested in the beauty of sound. This is the atomic '80s, and there's enough ugliness all around us. People need beauty, and a bit of glamour."

A much-sought-after producer, Gerhardt has worked with many of the great conductors of the past. In 1964, a 12-LP set was pro-

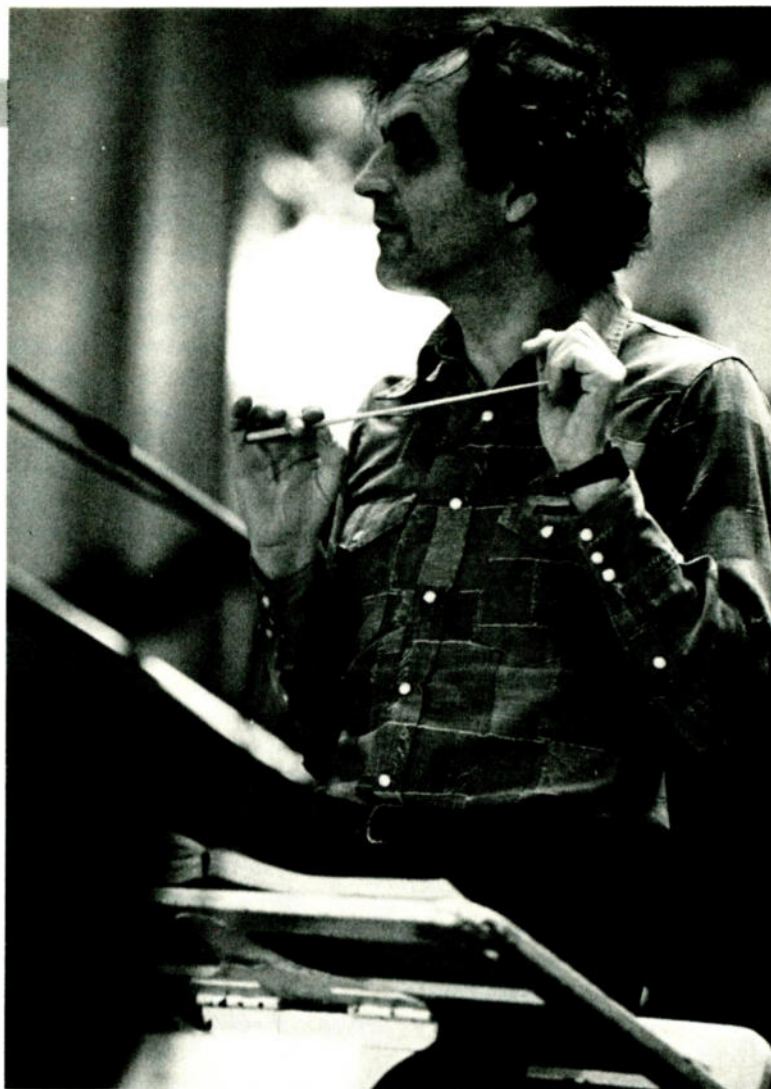
duced with 12 eminent conductors leading the Royal Philharmonic. One of Charles Munch's finest recordings came from those sessions: Bizet's *Symphony in C* coupled with Tchaikovsky's *Francesca da Rimini*. Munch elected to have limited rehearsals, which alarmed some of the players. When told of their concern, Munch simply stated, "I don't want to rehearse too much. That way they *have* to watch me, and then I can do what I want." They did indeed watch, and the result was two near-definitive performances. Another product of those sessions was Sir John Barbirolli's account of Sibelius's *Symphony No. 2*, considered by many to be the finest recording of the music.

"Of course, I also wanted to include Stokowski in that album, and we were all set to go," Gerhardt recalls, "but at the last minute, his association with the American Symphony Orchestra and union problems prevented him from doing so. But I have a great affection for Stokowski and decided to record some of his transcriptions for future release." Following the conductor's death in 1977, Gerhardt was able to obtain the arrangements from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, to which Stokowski willed his immense library with the wish that it would be available to the musical world.

Over the years, Gerhardt and the National Philharmonic have become an efficient team. It is a tribute to them that they are able to rehearse and record the love music from *Tristan und Isolde*—a very demanding sequence lasting almost half an hour—in just one three-hour session. The orchestra for the London recording of the work numbered nearly 100 players; five extra horns and a trombone were used for the off-stage hunting horns, with magical effect. The other Stokowski transcriptions (Shostakovich's *Prelude in E flat minor*, Tchaikovsky's *Solitude*, Chopin's *Prelude in D minor*, Op. 28, No. 24, and the *Berceuse* from Sibelius's incidental music for *The Tempest*) were completed in another three-hour session.

All of the recordings made in this series of tapings are slated for future release on Reader's Digest albums. Reader's Digest recordings are available only by mail from the Reader's Digest Association, Pleasantville, N.Y. 10570. Because sales are direct from the company to the consumer, prices for multi-record albums are considerably lower than for comparable major label products. ●

Chefs d'oeuvre From the Lively Pen Of Chabrier



Charles Dutoit's conducting in *Le Roi malgré lui* is fiery and assured.

CHABRIER: L'Étoile.

Ⓞ *Gautier, Bacquier, Le Roux, David, Alliot-Lugaz, Raphanel, Damonte; Orchestra and Chorus of the Opera of Lyons, Gardiner. Pathé Marconi 2700863 (D, 2). □ EMI (England) TCEX 2700869 (1). (Distributed by International Book and Record, 40-11 24th St., Long Island City, N.Y. 11101.)*

CHABRIER: *Le Roi malgré lui.*

Ⓞ *Hendricks, Garcisanz, Quilico, Jeffes, Lafont, Moor; Chœurs et Nouvel Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Dutoit. Guy Chesnais, prod. RCA Erato NUM 75162 (D, 3). □ (3).*

Those who know Chabrier only through his brilliant *España* or the handful of outstanding piano pieces ignore not only three quarters of his output (all stage works), but his real magnitude and importance as the major creative talent born in France between Berlioz and Debussy. Unexpected as this statement may be, I do not except the more popular (though less boldly innovative) Bizet, nor the exquisite and refined Fauré, whose genius blossomed late in life, after Chabrier's premature death. Chabrier's death at age fifty-three, following a late start in composition, reduced his truly productive period to a mere 15 years. Such a short time in which to create was certainly the greatest of the misfortunes that affected this man, who was by

nature outstandingly suited to happiness and joy. Being largely self-taught and having to eke out his living as a civil servant until the age of forty also gave him the undeserved—and, unfortunately, lasting—reputation for being an amateur in music.

Furthermore, Chabrier's stage works, by far his most important compositions, suffered from mediocre or even detestable librettos, as well as incredible bad luck: When *Guendoline* was finally staged, with great success, in Brussels, after having been turned down in Paris and other French cities, the theater went bankrupt after two performances (through no fault of Chabrier's); one year later, the Opéra Comique burned down a couple of days after the first performance of *Le Roi malgré lui*. As for Chabrier's last and most ambitious opera, *Briséis* (still unrecorded), the composer's final illness prevented him from completing more than the first act (which, however, lasts 85 minutes).

Chabrier was far ahead of his time. His revolutionary harmony, free successions of

dominant ninths, unresolved dissonances, and bold scoring look ahead to Debussy, Ravel, and even Stravinsky, anticipating their idiom by 20 or 30 years. And yet his genius was not taken seriously, because he favored light forms—operettas, comic songs, short piano pieces—at a time when the dying 19th century was wholly engrossed in solemn Wagnerian music dramas, portentous symphonies, and austere string quartets. Chabrier's ideal surroundings would have been the Roaring '20s; indeed, Les Six adopted him as a father figure. Being a progressive, he naturally fraternized with the painters, who have always tended to be ahead of the musicians. He was on intimate terms with the Impressionists, and his collection of paintings included a number of extraordinary works by Manet (whose celebrated *Bar aux Folies Bergère* hung above his piano!), Renoir, Monet, Sisley, Cézanne, and others. Chabrier's music, even more than Debussy's, is the true tonal counterpart to French Impressionism in its prime. But like so many

FORMAT KEY

- Ⓛ LP
- Ⓜ Cassette
- Ⓢ Compact Disc
- Ⓥ Videocassette
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RECORDING INFORMATION

(A) analog original

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Large symbol beneath title indicates reviewed format. Small symbols following catalog number of reviewed format indicate other available formats (if any).

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great French composers, he has been sadly neglected and underrated in his own country (although Debussy and Ravel acknowledged their debt to him), and his music is just now being rediscovered and reappraised.

Whereas commercial recordings of operas by Gounod, Bizet, Massenet, and even far lesser luminaries can be found by the dozen, not a single stage work by Chabrier was available anywhere until a few months ago, except for some pirated versions dubbed from Radio France tapes and fortunately made available to American music lovers on the MRF label. Variable musically and technically, often heavily cut, these re-

cordings at least provided some idea of all that we were missing. But the situation has suddenly changed for the better: We now have brand-new productions of Chabrier's two operatic masterpieces.

L'Étoile, completed and first performed in 1877, was Chabrier's first major work, the one that brought him fame. Though he called it an opéra bouffe, it is actually an operetta with lots of spoken dialogue—but one whose refinement, musical wealth, and outstanding quality are so far above the norm of the genre that at first it seemed unable to find a niche at all. Perhaps Chabrier simply fell victim to the old Romantic prejudice that holds tragedy to be intrinsically superior to comedy; in Mozart's age, of course, this was not so. Though dated (yet in a rather delightful way), the libretto of *L'Étoile* is still amusing, and a good production can give much enjoyment. It is an unflawed creation, albeit a minor one.

Completed ten years later, *Le Roi malgré lui*, though musically Chabrier's greatest work, raises far more problems. This is above all because of a libretto that is a monument to stupidity and confusion. Indeed, it requires quite a special brand of negative talent to get so few leading characters into situations so obscure and inextricable. While *L'Étoile* took place in some amiable fairy kingdom, *Le Roi malgré lui* is based on historical fact, namely on Henri de Valois's short-lived reign as a reluctant King of Poland in 1574, before becoming Henri III of France. Disguises, changes of identity, and various other misunderstandings do nothing to simplify matters, and several attempts to amend the original libretto—a protracted

concoction by several writers, including the composer—have proved unsuccessful. Thus this splendid, sparkling score, containing some of the most entrancing music ever penned by a Frenchman, has led a checkered and rather marginal career, and its productions remain infrequent. Musically vastly superior to *L'Étoile*, it is alas likely never to achieve even that piece's modest celebrity. But here, of course, the phonograph record can and must help.

Examining the two releases at hand, one, *L'Étoile*, is an unqualified success, indeed a sheer delight from beginning to end. It was recorded in Lyons in the spring of 1984 after a number of stage performances, and the excitement and momentum of the limelight can be felt throughout. The spoken dialogue, aptly shortened for the needs of a recording, never slows down the music's exhilarating pace, and these four sides bubble like true champagne. The cast shows no weakness whatsoever, and it is dominated by the exquisite presence of Colette Alliot-Lugaz, one of the leading light sopranos of the younger generation of French singers, in the role of Lazuli. All her partners, both male and female, are worthy of her talent, and so is John Eliot Gardiner's electrifying conducting: What a surprise to find this outstanding specialist in Rameau and Purcell so perfectly at ease with the quite different requirements of Chabrier's music!

For the sake of the extraordinary music, for the wonderful vocal and musical performance of Barbara Hendricks as Minka, for the fiery and assured conducting of Charles Dutoit, for the enthusiastic orchestral playing, I wish I could lavish equally unreserved

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The Portland String Quartet: unfamiliar Strauss and Kreisler, played with verve

praise upon the production of *Le Roi malgré lui*. But this is not possible, the major flaw being the total absence of any spoken dialogue; this makes an already terribly confused story totally unintelligible and kills the dramatic nerve center of the performance. Unlike *L'Étoile*, this production was recorded at Radio France in February 1984 after a public concert, not a stage performance, and it sounds like a wonderful string of concert pieces rather than a live stage work. This is all the more unforgivable because only five sides are actually filled with music, the sixth remaining void. Even though the three records in the set are sold for the price of two, it would have been preferable by far to spread out the performance on six sides, adding 30 or 40 minutes of spoken dialogue. Nor is the musical performance beyond reproach; the energy and enthusiasm of the chorus and orchestra do not always make up for rough patches that betray a lack of rehearsal time.

While not bad, the cast is somewhat uneven in quality. The Spanish soprano Isabel Garcisanz was a last-minute substitution. She copes very well, and her Spanish accent does not disturb me for the part of an exotic princess. But with a little more time, she could have polished her performance. Peter Jeffes, who has a far heavier accent than Garcisanz does, is rather more problematic as Nangis, and Gino Quilico sings Henri's lovely *romance* (one of the real jewels of the whole score) with a tinge of lachrymosity, though he improves later on.

This being said, forget my reservations, for there is little likelihood that another re-

cording of *Le Roi malgré lui* will be released for a number of years to come. And the score—which Ravel said had changed the whole destiny of French music, even going so far as to state that he would have been happier to have been the author of *Le Roi* than of Wagner's complete *Ring*—is pure bliss from beginning to end. Highlights are Minka's and Henri's *romances*, the great scene of the conspiracy, and, above all, the electrifying *Fête polonaise*, one of the supreme waltzes in the whole of music. Like Borodin's *Polotsian Dances*, whose Dionysian intoxication it equals, the *Fête polonaise* only acquires its true dimension when heard with the chorus.

And now let us hope for a complete *Gwendoline*, a complete *Briséis*, a premiere recording (long overdue) of *La Sulamite*, and a revival (equally long overdue) of the exquisite *Ode à la Musique!*

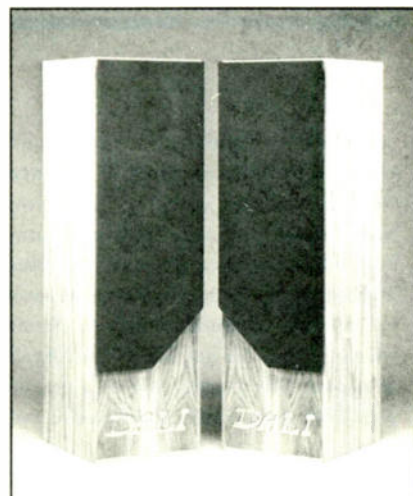
Harry Halbreich

STRAUSS, R.:
Quartet for Strings, in A, Op. 2.

KREISLER:
Quartet for Strings, in A minor.

Ⓞ *Portland String Quartet. Ward Botsford, prod. Arabesque 6521 (D). ☎ 7521. ♪ Z 6521.*

It seems safe to assume that this interesting combination will provide you (as it did me) your first chance ever to become acquainted with these works. Richard Strauss, at the age of fifteen or sixteen still very much the conservative classicist, wrote this quartet in 1879-80; it shows extraordinary talent, un-



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der the circumstances, but it never became exactly famous. Fritz Kreisler, at age forty-four, found himself in 1919 still an "enemy alien" due to his service in the Austrian army as an ally of Germany. Unable to concertize in this country, which idolized him, he spent his enforced vacation composing the String Quartet in A minor and his operetta *Apple Blossoms*. The quartet enjoyed a certain popularity for a while, and Kreisler and

three cohorts even recorded it for HMV, but, like the Strauss, it had long since sunk into oblivion when the enterprising Portlanders (who hail from Maine) undertook their commendable work of excavation and revival.

The two quartets will interest you in direct proportion to your existing interest in their two composers. Kreisler here, certainly for the only time in his life as a composer, rather outshines Strauss. This excellent

young ensemble, whose release of the five Bloch quartets (Arabesque 6511-3) won *The Washington Post's* award for the best serious-music recording of 1983, plays them both with verve and charm, and the Arabesque team has recorded them to perfection.

Paul Moor

DEVienne:

Sonatas for Bassoon and Basso Continuo, Op. 24 (6).

Ⓞ Read, Wilson. Klaas Posthuma, prod. *Et cetera ETC 1024 (D)*. ☐. (Distributed by Qualiton Imports, 39-28 Crescent St., Long Island City, N.Y. 11101.)

With the standards of so-called authenticity being what they are these days, it seems odd that a record company would want to issue a product that pairs a distinctly antique-sounding reproduction of a late 18th-century forte-piano with a very modern-sounding Heckel bassoon. There's really nothing objectionable about the anachronistic timbral combinations, but what's the point? And considering that Read *has* done some performing on original instruments (once upon a time he was a resident fellow at the famous Schola Cantorum in Basel), what's the implication?

Anyway, the fancy key mechanism whose clickety-clack is audible throughout these performances allows Read to play nicely in tune, and the wider bore gives him a dynamic range that François Devienne, writing in 1790, probably never even imagined. Read's playing, more than Wilson's, is of the long-lined, heavily emotive sort, and that, too, seems anachronistic. This is the premiere recording of these sonatas—the engineering is as admirable as Read's virtuosity, but it's not likely that conscientious teachers of performance practice will be referring to the disc's musical content as a model of excellence.

James Wierzbicki

COPLAND:

Old American Songs, Sets 1 and 2.

GRIEG:

Haugtussa, Op. 67.

Ⓞ Hardy, Brunelle. Steve Vining, prod. *Pro Arte PAD 182 (D)*. ☐

If your collection needs this rather recherché Grieg cycle of eight songs, once publicized and even recorded by Kirsten Flagstad, then buy this well-recorded, handsomely packaged disc. If your collection doesn't, forget it. Stone me as sexist if you will, but for me almost all the Copland songs have texts that sound fundamentally wrong sung by a wom-

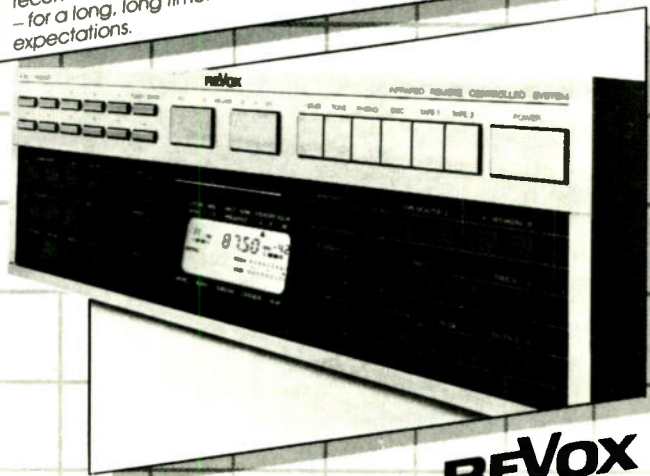
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an. Yes, yes, I know Lotte Lehmann used to risk *Dichterliebe*, *Die schöne Müllerin*, and *Winterreise* before American audiences, but she did missionary work for people largely still ignorant of the music and mostly incapable of understanding the poems as she sang them; certainly she would never have dared sing them before a German-speaking audience, since her performing them turned them, in fact, into same-sex love songs. Furthermore, *no one*, regardless of sex, should attempt to sing these highly colloquial Copland songs who cannot use such words as "calaboose" without sounding, to borrow Ring Lardner's phrase, like a duchess looking at bugs.

Paul Moor

PIAZZOLLA:

Cinco Piezas para guitarra; La Muerte del Angel; Milonga del Angel; Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi; Contrabajando; Jacinto Chiciana.

Ⓞ *Oraison*. Klaas Posthuma, prod. *Etcetera ETC 1023 (D)*. (Distributed by Qualiton Imports, 39-28 Crescent St., Long Island City, N.Y. 11101.)

With the popular success of Nonesuch's *The Tango Project* (D 79030) and Deutsche Grammophon's *Placido Domingo Sings Tangos* (2536 416) still continuing, the potential market for this new Etcetera release is probably much larger now than it would have been, say, a decade ago. Six of the ten selections are propelled at least in part by tango rhythms, and three of the others imitate the melodic patterns typical of the South American "dialogue" song form known as *milonga*.

The liner notes tell us little about Astor Piazzolla other than that he was born in Argentina in 1921 and studied for a while with Nadia Boulanger; nor is he given an entry in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, although the article on the tango mentions him as an important innovator who expanded dance music's orchestration in the '40s and flavored it with the sound of the electric guitar in the '60s. In spite of what must have been a long practical involvement with various forms of the instrument, the 1980 *Cinco Piezas* represent Piazzolla's first effort at writing for solo classical guitar. They're nicely idiomatic pieces, although not very adventurous in terms of sound color or technical demands, and as a group they're not readily distinguishable from Jorge Orason's fluent transcriptions of the dance band numbers.

The music itself emphasizes the guitar's lower register, and so does the engineering. Still, while being seduced by the dusky sonorities and slinky rhythms, a listener might wonder if perhaps the recording sessions took place near an aviary, since almost all the cuts are sprinkled with distant, irregular, high-pitched chirps that most definitely are not a by-product of fingers sliding along guitar strings.

James Wierzbicki

MILHAUD:

String Quartets: No. 2, Op. 16; No. 6, Op. 77; No. 15, Op. 291.

Ⓞ *Arcana Quartet*. *Cybella CY 653 (D)*. (Distributed by Qualiton Imports, 39-28 Crescent St., Long Island City, N.Y. 11101.)

Darius Milhaud is too often dismissed as that sunny composer of the amiable *Sauvages do Brasil* and the silly *Scaramouche*, or derided for his facile Telemann-like output, when in fact his finest works demon-

What has four motors, three heads... and three brains?

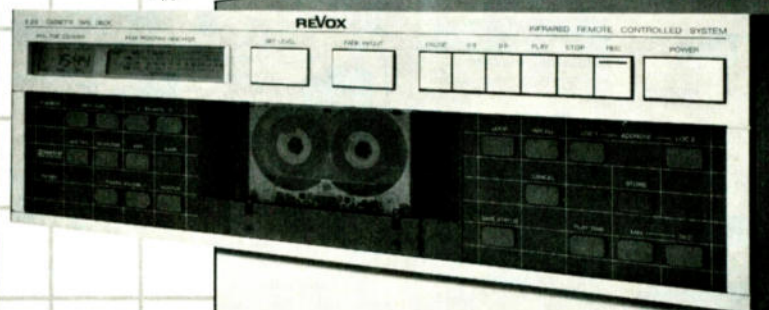
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strate all the unfussy communication and elegiac simplicity we have long esteemed in our own Aaron Copland.

In particular, Milhaud's 18 string quartets, which the French ensemble Arcana has avidly pursued, repay repeated listening. The ones played here span the years 1914 to 1949. The expansive second quartet with its eclectic melodic material (the first movement's good-natured open-fourth tune invokes Americana, and the second's brooding minor theme recalls a Russian march) contrasts nicely with the witty and concise No. 6 and the searching but highly lyrical No. 15.

The Arcana's musicianship is top caliber: The playing on this disc has a vigor that does not slight the details and an infectious expressivity that is never overstated. Sonics are also full and pleasingly realistic. I especially like the reading of Quartet No. 15 (which was composed to be played either alone or simultaneously with No. 14, as an octet). The quick rhythmic changes and canonic and polytonal effects are assayed knowingly here, but are always subordinat-



Artymiw: subjective Schubert?

ed to the music's meaning; the beautiful second movement, a quivering high nocturnal piece, is especially well thought out.

Lesley Valdes

SCHUBERT:

Sonata in G, Op. 78, D. 894;
Fantasy in C ("Grazer"), D. 605a.

Artymiw. Brian Couzens, prod. Chandos
ABRD 1075 (D) (D). (Distributed by Harmonia Mundi, U.S.A., 3364 S. Robertson Blvd., Los Angeles Calif. 90034.)

Lydia Artymiw—a flaxen-haired Philadelphia of Ukrainian parentage, a Philadelphia Orchestra debutante at the age of eight, and for ten years a pupil of Gary Graffman—has made five previous records for this outstanding English label. She plays unusually poetic Schubert, but it has one grave, probably fatal flaw. This release leaves me with the impression that once Artymiw learned this sonata, and learned it well, she set the printed music aside once and for all and permitted what she had memorized to take on a life of its own, in accord with her own highly subjective feelings rather than with what the composer himself demonstrably wanted. She either ignores or turns inside out too many dynamic indications even to begin to list here. In the second movement, at measures 3



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and 21 (and every similar place throughout the movement), she gratuitously ornaments the right-hand F sharp with a turn—a la Mozart or Haydn. Throughout the sonata, she plays the slower sections with an extreme dreaminess, and her tendency to make an almost cadential ritard at each bar line becomes more annoying the oftener it happens.

Rigorous honesty compels me to report that (1) on the pressing sent me, at the start of measure 92 of the Andante, the stylus skipped backward and refused to proceed without assistance, and (2) I have never before encountered a technical flaw of any kind on a Chandos disc.

The pleasant four-part C major Fantasy has a certain musicological curiosity value, for it remained in oblivion until the 1960s, when it turned up in Graz among the papers of Schubert's buddy Joseph Hüttenbrenner. My usually resourceful San Francisco music dealer found it listed in none of the wholesale distributors' catalogs available to him.

Paul Moor

STRAVINSKY (arr. S. Stravinsky and Achatz):

"The Firebird" Suite.

TCHAIKOVSKY (arr. Achatz):

"The Nutcracker" Suite.

© Achatz, Robert von Bahr, prod. BIS LP 238 (D). (Distributed by Qualiton Imports, 39-28 Crescent St., Long Island City, N.Y. 11101.)

Moral: Don't count your firechickens before they hatch.


I confess that I opened this record rather glumly, for when my favorite author reviewed another piano transcription of *The Firebird* Suite in the November 1984 issue of *MUSICAL AMERICA*, he wrote: "... if sheer narcissistic pianistic exhibitionism (with all the clinkers sieved out by modern editing techniques, of course) appeals to your sense of caprice, you may well get a boot out of all these undeniable pyrotechnics." That recording (Orfeo S 044831-A) featured the twenty-two-year-old Bulgarian Emile Naoumoff, coupled with a fine performance of the original orchestral music by the Vienna Symphony under Wolfgang Sawallisch.

You need hear only a few minutes of this new recording to recognize Dag Achatz as not only a formidable technician but also a genuine pianist and musician with an especially fine ear for timbre. In the age of electronic hocus-pocus you never know what sort of witchery behind the scenes has enhanced the original unadorned performance,

but already in the second movement "The Firebird's Dance" (which Naoumoff omits), Achatz displays an iridescent palette of tone colors that reveal him to be an exceptionally sensitive and subtle artist. A rhythmic sense comparable to Gibraltar further reinforces both works.

In spite of all their impressive good points, both these performances, in the final analysis, strike me as really astonishing

high-class parlor tricks, but they do stand out not only for technical fireworks but for musicality and charm. Remember the name of Dag Achatz—half Swedish, half Austrian, trained by Perlemuter, Cortot and Agosti (among others), now a Swiss resident—according to the album notes, he has made seven previous recordings for this label, but I have heard none of them, and he certainly deserves attention. Robert von Bahr, who



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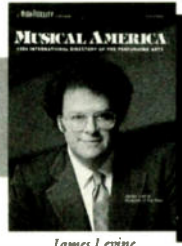
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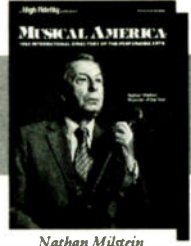
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engineered and digitally edited as well as produced this record, makes Achatz and his Bösendorfer 275 sound like a million good, solid Swiss francs. *Paul Moor*

BARBER:

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 22.

SHOSTAKOVICH:

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, No. 1, in E flat, Op. 107.

Wallfisch; English Chamber Orchestra, Simon. Brian Couzens, prod. Chandos CHAN 8322 (D). © ABFD 1085. Ⓜ ABTD 1085. (Distributed by Harmonia Mundi, U.S.A.)

Barber's seldom-heard Cello Concerto, a work dating from the mid-1940s, with a particularly lovely middle movement, is a welcome addition to the Compact Disc catalog. It is quite typical of the composer's output: songful, fresh, highly listenable, and unjustifiably neglected in the concert hall. Young Raphael Wallfisch's performance is adequate; he has little competition. Raya Garbousova, who played the premiere in 1946 with the Boston Symphony, and Zara Nelsova both recorded it, but only Garbousova's

recording is still available. Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto was written for Mstislav Rostropovich, who premiered it with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1959 and also recorded it with them; the disc is still in the catalog. This concerto is assuming a more prominent place in the cello repertory, and for good reason. Here, Wallfisch is outclassed by Yo-Yo Ma's stunning CD version on CBS (MK 37840), with strong support from Ormandy and the Philadelphians. The Ma release pairs the Shostakovich with Kabalevsky's featherweight Cello Concerto No. 1, a pleasant showpiece of little substance. Chandos's new recording is very well engineered, with the soloist not overly prominent. But if the Shostakovich is a priority, surely the version to get is the CBS.

Robert E. Benson

BACH:

Schemelli Liederbuch.

Augér, Schreier; Gächinger Kantorei, members of the Stuttgart Bach-Collegium, Filling, Andreas Keller, prod. CBS I2M 38972 (D, 2).

I am grateful to an organist/musicologist

friend, who had a copy of Schemelli's *Liederbuch*, for answering some of the questions this recording raised. Georg Christian Schemelli was a German musician approximately contemporary with Bach. In 1736 he published a collection of 69 hymns under the title *Musikalisches Gesangbuch*. Many of them had been selected and harmonized for him by Bach, and studies of their musical style and engraving suggest that Bach himself may have written the 39 recorded here. (Julius Spitta thought that only 29 were by Bach; others think 39 is too small a number. Only one was attributed to Bach at the time of publication.)

The hymns were evidently intended for private devotional use, to be sung alone or in unison by family members to an improvised accompaniment. Only the melodic line and a figured bass were printed with the texts. One can construct two middle parts from the bass, except where the melodic and bass lines converge too closely, but Bach himself never wrote out hymns in this manner when he meant them to be sung congregationally in four-part harmony. Moreover, although

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Bach set a few of these hymns in four parts at other times, in his cantatas he employed the sort of ornaments and elaborate notation found in many of the Schemelli hymns only when writing for solo voices.

In this album, Helmuth Rilling uses soprano Arleen Augér and tenor Peter Schreier for some of the hymns and his choir for others, accompanied variously by cello, bassoon, harpsichord, and organ. The notes do not say that the realizations are his, but one assumes so. The performances are not lively, but even if they were, it is hard to imagine many people wanting to hear a collection of unrelated hymns more than once. Whenever Bach thought his works formed some sort of cycle, his practice was to bind them together for his own library. He did not do that with these hymns, and it is to be supposed that if he saw any unifying element at all, it was to be found in the whole collection.

The recorded sound is good (I did not hear the compact disc). The notes are less so, and the translation from the German is almost unintelligible in places, such as this passage: "We have reason to assume, however, that chorale scores of this sort not only found their way into the collection, but we [were?] also borrowed from it at times (when it is possible that Bach may have made quite a number of changes to the texts)." The words of the hymns themselves are not translated. *Thomas Hathaway*

BERKELEY, M.:
Uprising; The Romance of the Rose.

LEIGHTON:
Concerto for Organ, String Orchestra, and Timpani, Op. 58*.

Rathbone; Southern Pro Arte, Peebles. Hyphenon A 66097 (A). (Distributed by Harmonia Mundi, U.S.A.)

These works have in common the craftsmanship and seriousness of purpose that have characterized the mainstream of British music since the 1950s. They fall in line more with the work of Michael Tippett than with that of, say, Peter Maxwell Davies or Harrison Birtwistle: Their inventiveness has to do less with the sonic material itself than with the way that it is treated, and their structures, like their expressive goals, are conventional and straightforward.

The most compelling of the set is Kenneth Leighton's 1970 *Concerto for Organ, String Orchestra, and Timpani*, a three-movement essay that's more an abstraction than a showpiece. Its somber attitude is

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plainly announced in the initial dark-colored organ vapors that veil the sparse viola and cello melodies. While tempo, texture, and timbre change markedly as the piece unfolds, the basic emotional tone does not: The second movement Toccata is charged with frenzied, agitated energy; the concluding Chorale and Variations is overcast with minor inflections and close-pressed dissonances. The orchestra rarely "accompanies" the organ in the traditional manner. Most of ten one sound mass simply alternates with the other, and when the two are brought together it is usually the organ that takes the supportive role. This is weighty music, with the occasional bright shimmer of the organ always balanced by solid statements from the strings or emphatic punctuation from the timpani. As with a well-written sermon, the discourse flows easily and logically from start to finish, and the listener is never in doubt as to what the unspoken message is.

Michael Berkeley's *Uprising* is supposed to be similarly profound, a one-movement symphony inspired by the political upheavals in Poland and Afghanistan in 1980. Indeed, the liner notes inform us that the first theme represents "rumor," the second "tension, tyranny, and terror." For all its good intentions, this piece, like Leighton's, is best heard in the abstract—the 12-note motifs seem more functional than evocative, and their ultimate meshing is more easily admired as a display of compositional technique than as a dramatic denouement. *The Romance of the Rose*, from 1982, is a set of variations based on tunes Berkeley concocted for incidental music for a BBC radio production of the 13th-century French poem by that title; it runs the genre gamut from fox-trot to fugue, and in all of it the orchestral forces are handled with consummate skill.

I know nothing about the Scottish orchestra called the Southern Pro Arte, but from the sound of these performances one might conclude that it is a highly capable ensemble.

James Wierzbicki

BEETHOVEN:

Quartets for Strings: in D, Op. 18, No. 3; in C minor, Op. 18, No. 4.

⊙ *Gabriel String Quartet, Paul Myers, prod. London 414 080-1 (D).* □

In these well-paced performances, the playing of first violinist Kenneth Sillito has more character than that of the other three musi-

cians. He does not overpower them, but their blandness makes little of the expressive and harmonic significance of the inner and supporting voices. However, it is the cold echo of London's St. Barnabas Church and the brashness of this analog pressing of a digital master that ultimately make other recordings preferable.

Thomas Hathaway

HAYDN:

Concertos for Cello and Orchestra: in C, No. 1; in D, No. 2.

⊙ *Harnoy, Toronto Chamber Orchestra, Robinson, Julian Rice, prod. Fanfare DFL 6001 (D).* □ *(Distributed by Qualiton Imports, 39-28 Crescent St., Long Island City, N.Y. 11101.)*

The young Canadian cellist Ofra Harnoy has become something of an international sensation, at least among cello aficionados. Born in Israel in 1965, she studied with Pierre Fournier, Jacqueline du Pré, and Vladimir Orloff. Her New York recital debut in 1982 and her previous commercial recording (of the Offenbach *Concert Rondo*, on Vox D-VCL 9058) were both greeted with critical acclaim. One could only have high hopes for her newest recording, of the two cello concertos of Joseph Haydn.

Unfortunately, the verdict on these performances must be a mixed one. From the first chord of the C major Concerto, we know that we will be treated to muscular, energetic readings, characterized by conviction and supreme confidence. Though it is always a pleasure to hear performances that are not flaccid and impersonal, Harnoy's very exuberance interferes with her ability to shape these concertos into convincing wholes. The virtuosic passagework is often rough and imprecise, and the intonation—especially in technically demanding sections—is not beyond reproach. It is almost as if Harnoy's youthful fire causes her to throw caution to the wind: Forte phrases are attacked explosively, and tonal sheen is sacrificed to visceral effect.

Yet in the cantabile themes of the slow movements and the more lyric portions of the fast ones, Harnoy displays a natural, unforced musicality. Here the music flows unfettered from her, never marred by the aggressiveness evident in the more dramatic sections. Her hushed pianissimo passages are positively breathtaking, and her dynamic range is wonderfully varied. Even more important, she knows how to shape a phrase, how to communicate the direction of the mu-

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sical line to the listener. She receives sensitive, attentive support from the Toronto Chamber Orchestra, which seems attuned to her every mood. One hopes that greater maturity will temper her aggressiveness without lessening her intensity, so that these concertos will be informed throughout by the graceful, expressive warmth so obvious in the slow movements. *K. Robert Schwarz*

RECITALS and MISCELLANY

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: Orchestral Works.

① *London Symphony Orchestra, Gould. Brian Culverhouse, prod. Varèse Sarabande VCD 47209 (D).*

GINASTERA: Estancia Suite, Op. 8a. GRANADOS: Intermezzo from "Goyescas." RAVEL: Boléro. SHOSTAKOVICH: Festive Overture, Op. 96. TURINA: Danzas fantásticas: Orgia, Op. 22. WEINBERGER: Polka and Fugue from "Svanda Dudák."

This is an attractive orchestral miscellany combining selections from two previously issued Chalfont LPs. Morton Gould may not be the most sophisticated of conductors, but he encourages the orchestra to "play out," and the Londoners certainly do here. Shosta-



Composer/conductor Morton Gould

kovich's brief overture is a prime example of the Russian master in a lighter mood; Ravel's *Boléro* is played slowly, as it should be, reaching a smashing climax. Gould exaggerates Weinberger's Polka and Fugue, but no one can question the vigor of the playing or the rich sound of the organ in the concluding pages. Ginastera's colorful ballet suite also offers many exhilarating sonic moments. The recorded sound is exceptionally fine, with warmth, depth, and impact.

Robert E. Benson

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VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Beverly Hills Cop.

① *Performances by Danny Elfman, Harold Faltermeyer, Glenn Frey, Rick James, Junior, Patti LaBelle, the Pointer Sisters, Rockie Robbins, Shalamar, the System. Various prods. MCA 5547 (A). □ □*

Only half of this predominantly rock anthology has anything to do with the film. That half, however, is a real winner, with some solid rockers by Glenn Frey and Patti LaBelle. Composer-of-record Harold Faltermeyer contributes interesting accompaniments to two of those numbers and provides a breezy instrumental character piece, "Axel F." Book the rest of this album on a 1021-B: Impersonating a soundtrack recording.

Noah André Trudeau

ELIAS:

Children of the Corn.

① *Elias, cond. Scot W. Holton, prod. Varèse Sarabande STV 81203 (A).*

Jonathan Elias breaks no new ground in this score, but he draws so liberally from those who have scored before him that one can enjoy this disc as a sampler of the horror/sym-

C R I T I C S ' C H O I C E

The most noteworthy releases reviewed recently

BACH:

Works for Harpsichord.

Gilbert, Pinnock. □ Archiv 413 103-1, June.

BARTÓK:

String Quartets, Nos. 1-6.

Takács String Quartet. □ Hungaroton SLPD 12502-04, May.

BUSONI:

Turandot Suite, Op. 41; Sarabande, Cortège; Two Studies for "Doktor Faust," Op. 51.

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Gielen. □ Vox Cum Laude D-VCL 9072, April.

FALLA:

El Corregidor y la Molinera.

Berganza Lausanne Chamber Orchestra, López-Cobos. □ Claves D 8405, May.

MENDELSSOHN:

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra; Overtures: "Ruy Blas"; "A Midsummer Night's Dream"; "The Hebrides."

Silverstein; Utah Symphony Orchestra, Silverstein. □ Pro Arte PAD 187, May.

MUSSORGSKY:

Boris Godunov.

Various artists; U.S.S.R. TV and Radio Large Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Fedoseyev. □ Philips 412 281-1, May.

PAGANINI:

Works for Violin and Orchestra.

Accardo; Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Tamponi. □ EMI Angel DS 38127, 38128, June.

SCHOENBERG:

Vocal and Instrumental Works.

Various artists; BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Boulez. □ CBS Masterworks 13M 37863, June.

VARÈSE:

Instrumental Works.

Yakar, Beaugard; Ensemble Intercontemporain, Chorus of Radio France, Boulez. □ CBS Masterworks M 39053, April.

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS:

Overture to "The Wasps"; Serenade to Music.

DELIUS:

Orchestral Works.

London Philharmonic Orchestra, Handley. □ Chandos CD 8330, April.

PARLEY OF INSTRUMENTS:

Purcell's London.

Parley of Instruments, Goodman and Holman. □ Hyperion A 66108, April.

TREVOR PINNOCK:

Baroque Keyboard Works.

Pinnock. □ Archiv 413 591-1, May.

phonic genre. There's a bit of each horror master: a little Jerry Goldsmith in the choral chants, a little Lalo Schifrin in the choral vocalises, a little Pino Donaggio in the lyric moments, and even a little John Carpenter in the electronic sections. Elias does a creditable job of mixing it all together, and Varèse Sarabande does a superb job of putting it all on disc.

Noah André Trudeau

POLEDOURIS:

Making the Grade.

DeMasi, cond. Richard Kraft, prod. Varèse Sarabande STV 81204 (A).

Basil Poledouris achieves some atonement for his *Red Dawn* and two *Conan* scores with this surprisingly successful entry in a surprisingly difficult field. All too often, youth-coming-of-age comedies have jukebox soundtracks with some occasionally original connecting material. To his everlasting credit, Poledouris tackles the problem head-on and winds up with a lightly symphonic, deftly tongue-in-cheek score that is a (gasp!) pleasure to hear. Add this one to the Comic Classics collection, right along such others as Laurence Rosenthal's *Hotel Paradiso*, André Previn's *Irma la Douce*, and Michel Legrand's *The Three Musketeers*.

Noah André Trudeau

KORNGOLD:

Kings Row.

National Philharmonic Orchestra, Gerhardt. George Korngold, prod. Varèse Sarabande VCD 47203 (D). Chalfont SDG 305. Sine Qua Non SQN 79024.

This recording, originally issued in 1979 on Chalfont, must be considered one of the major film soundtrack recordings of all time. It offers the entire score of Erich Wolfgang Korngold's music for the 1942 film documenting the sometimes tragic lives of residents of a fictitious Midwestern community at the turn of the century. The film is a classic, starring, among others, Ronald Reagan, Ann Sheridan, Robert Cummings, Claude Rains, and Maria Ouspenskaya. Korngold composed some of his most glorious music for this movie; who could ever forget the magnificent opening fanfare or the exquisite love theme for Randy and Drake?

The entire score is close to the heart of conductor Charles Gerhardt, who gives a performance of the utmost dedication, with

the National Philharmonic up to its usual high standard. I was somewhat disappointed by the sonic quality of the original Chalfont issue; it lacked the richness and opulence of most of Gerhardt's previously issued RCA Classic Film Score recordings. But this CD version is quite superior to the disc, and of course the CD silent surfaces are a definite plus.

Unfortunately, there are only two bands, corresponding to the two sides of the record. The individual sections should have been banded or indexed. The packaging also is not totally satisfactory; the descriptive narrative is still LP-size, but folded to fit the CD box (not a very effective way to solve the liner-note problem), and the country scene that appeared on both sides of the LP jacket has been replaced with movie stills of Ronald Reagan.

Robert E. Benson

WILLIAMS:

Suites: from "Close Encounters of the Third Kind"; from "Star Wars."

National Philharmonic Orchestra, Gerhardt. George Korngold, prod. RCA RCD13650 (D).

This is one of Charles Gerhardt's finest film score recordings. Produced by George Korngold and recorded in London in a single day (December 23, 1977), it is a remarkable accomplishment. The orchestral playing is stupendous; obviously everyone concerned was having a good time. Here is perhaps a more spacious sound picture than some listeners might wish. The overall richness adds extra luster to the glowing French horn solos, yet there is clarity in heavily scored passages. That spectacular moment at the climax of "The Final Battle" in *Star Wars*, as the taut timpani roar out of the speakers, is even more impressive on Compact Disc, while the soft passages, particularly the *Princess Leia* interlude, are free of the almost inevitable LP surface disturbances. Who would have thought that youth of today would be listening to, and presumably enjoying, music as far-out as that of Williams in some of the earlier episodes of *Close Encounters*, music in which he emulates Berg or Webern? This is an analog recording, with only the faintest trace of tape hiss; still, the reproduction is far superior to that of most digital recordings. This CD has been issued in the U.K.; hopefully by the time you read this it will also be available in the U.S. If not, RCA is passing up a winner.

Robert E. Benson

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Signs of Life In Britain

LONDON—The record companies have been easing out of the lull in opera recording with a number of blockbuster projects, including a new Herbert von Karajan recording from Deutsche Grammophon. It is surprising that Karajan had never before tackled Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, but now he has done it, with the Berlin Philharmonic and a cast headed by Samuel Ramey as the Don, Anna Tomowa-Sintow as Donna Anna, and Agnes Baltsa as Cherubino. The conductor is quoted as being especially impressed by the resonant Russian bass, Paata Burchuladze, who was chosen as the Commendatore. Plans for the sessions were kept vague until the last minute. It was only in the nick of time that Karajan and the orchestra resolved their quarrel.

Decca/London has recorded Bellini's *Norma* with Dame Joan Sutherland in the title role and Montserrat Caballé as Adalgisa. The heavyweight (in every sense) cast also included Luciano Pavarotti as Pollione. As is customary in Sutherland recordings, Richard Bonynge conducted. This time, as in his recent recording of Verdi's *Il Masnadieri*, he led the chorus and orchestra of the Welsh National Opera. This Cardiff-based company has been winning glowing opinions for its many adventurous productions. EMI, planning at high speed, took one of them—Wagner's *Parsifal* conducted by veteran Reginald Goodall—and recorded it with minimum change of cast. Goodall's view of *Parsifal*, like the rest of Wagner, is unusually spacious; as is wise with an octogenarian conductor whose stamina is now limited, the takes were exceptionally long. That presented little problem for either the orchestra or the singers, after intensive opera-house experience. The cast features the American, Warren Ellsworth, as Parsifal, Donald McIntyre as Gurnemanz, Philip Joll as Amfortas, and Nicholas Folwell as Klingsor. Linda Esther Gray, the original Kundry, was ill, and soprano Waltraud Meier was brought in from Germany.

Meier has been used several times lately by EMI, notably as Venus in the label's other Wagner project, a recording of *Tannhäuser*

by Edward Greenfield

in the Dresden version with Bernard Haitink conducting the chorus and orchestra of the Bavarian Radio. As with his EMI recording of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, the sessions were held in the Herkulesaal in Munich using a joint production team with the Bavarian Radio. Klaus Koenig sings the title role, with Lucia Popp as Elisabeth, Bernd Weikl as Wolfram, and Kurt Moll as Hermann.

Blockbusters other than operatic are coming in fair supply. Decca/London has recorded Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* with Riccardo Chailly conducting the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra; the same forces have taped *Romeo and Juliet* as the second installment in a Berlioz series begun with the *Symphonic fantastique*.

Yet another Mahler symphony cycle was begun early this year by the controversial Giuseppe Sinopoli, who recorded the Fifth with the Philharmonia Orchestra (of which he is now principal conductor) immediately after a live performance at the Royal Festival Hall. His is the third Mahler cycle currently in progress from DG. Though it has always been denied that Karajan would ever complete a whole series, Claudio Abbado still plans to do so. The Vienna Philharmonic is now being used for the end of Abbado's series, while the Chicago Symphony did most of the early issues. Latest in the pipeline is Mahler's Seventh with the CSO, following up the recent Vienna account of No. 3. Conducting his other orchestra, the London Symphony, Abbado has now completed his Mendelssohn symphony series with *Lobgesang (Hymn of Praise)*, featuring the LSO Chorus and soloists Elizabeth Connell, Karita Mattila, and Hans Peter Blochwitz.

No plans have yet been made for recording Mahler's Eighth with Abbado—he has not yet conducted it even in concert—and the *Symphony of a Thousand* is also what is holding up completion of EMI's Mahler series with Klaus Tennstedt and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. The problem lies in lining up eight soloists of the right caliber and keeping them together for the full span of the recording sessions. Nonetheless, Tennstedt has continued his recording of



Bernard Haitink at the controls

Mahler with *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, using Lucia Popp and Bernd Weikl as soloists.

The Mozart piano concerto series of Rudolf Serkin and the LSO conducted by Abbado for DG has been continuing happily (Serkin is now about halfway through). Malcolm Bilson and the English Baroque Soloists conducted by John Eliot Gardiner are making headway in the same repertory for Archiv. Meanwhile, Philips is pleased to have started recording Mitsuko Uchida in Mozart concertos with Jeffrey Tate and the English Chamber Orchestra. Tate has now been named principal conductor of the ECO and is recording a whole series of Mozart symphonies for EMI. The first issue, which pairs Nos. 40 and 41, was exceptionally well received and has been followed by sessions to record Nos. 32, 35, 36, 38, and 39. In the coming months, Tate will be recording the Mozart wind concertos for EMI with various European soloists. Such is the Mozart boom prompted by the film *Amadeus* that EMI has also been recording the same symphonies with Neville Marriner and the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields (who earlier did a complete cycle for Philips), starting with Nos. 35 and 41.

The authentic movement has not been forgotten either; John Eliot Gardiner's recording of Bach's B minor Mass is the first of a series of Bach's choral works for Archiv with the English Baroque Soloists and the Monteverdi Choir. Handel's oratorio *Esther* has been recorded for Oiseau-Lyre Florilegium by Christopher Hogwood and the Academy of Ancient Music. Hogwood has also started on a Beethoven symphony series using period instruments and an original-sized orchestra. Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2 were the first completed.



Rock 'n' roll history is being redefined by "Best Of" compilations while deleted classics gather dust. Why?

NOT FADE AWAY

by Wayne King

Rock's past illuminates and informs its present. This is especially true at times when the contemporary music scene is lacking, but even the great rock explosions of 1956, 1964, and 1977 are impossible

to evaluate without considering what preceded them. The Rolling Stones and the Beatles were actually rock's future when they hit these shores in '64, yet you can't listen to those early records without hearing the blues. Supposedly there was a time when Mick Jagger conversed entirely in Jimmy Reed lyrics (probably to Keith Richard, who was equally fanatical). Although punk groups like the Sex Pistols, the Jam, and Generation X were viewed with awe and horror as harbingers of a bleak nonfuture, none were so full of apocalyptic fury that they ignored history: The Jam restyled the Mods,

Generation X paid homage in song to the legendary mid-Sixties British pop TV show *Ready, Steady, Go!*, the Pistols trashed the Monkees affectionately with their cover of "(I'm Not Your) Stepping Stone."

History has to be accessible, though, to have an effect. And rock 'n' roll, unlike the movies, has not been very easy to learn about or from. The aesthetic impact of older films upon critics, filmmakers, and audiences alike has always been powerful because of the medi-

Former assistant editor for Record, Wayne King writes about music and video and lives in New Jersey.

um's pop-cultural preeminence. But in music, as Bette Midler put it so well when emceeing the 1979 Grammys, "you're only as good as your last two minutes and 49 seconds." (That quip has special intensity coming from an archivist whose first hit, "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," recreated a song 40 years old.) The obsolescence of popular music is built in; a genre like bubblegum contributes to a myth of disposability. The obsessive fan, if he does enough digging and spends enough bucks, can usually get his hands on original 78s, 45s, and LPs and on overpriced imports. The rest of us are dependent on a hit-and-miss assortment of compilations and reissues.

Like rock itself, this science of bringing sounds back to life is inexact. Many major labels are indifferent to the treasures they possess. Atlantic, notorious for its callousness toward the music that raised it to conglomerate status, jettisoned virtually all of Aretha Franklin's catalog at the time of the singer's late-Seventies departure from the label. This is a cultural disservice bordering on the criminal. Other companies send out conflicting signals. Polygram, for instance, put out the two-record *Hank Williams: 40 Greatest Hits* (justifiably lauded by John Morthland in the July 1984 issue of HIGH FIDELITY) along with an album of Williams outtakes and radio broadcasts and *George Jones Sings Hank Williams. 40 Greatest Hits* can be a revelation to anyone not familiar with the man's work, but the fact that it's a 1978 anniversary compilation from Polygram's British Mercury label causes one to become cranky. Why didn't the U.S. company celebrate its native artist here in the first place? Or at least offer new packaging? And while the long-out-of-print Jones album sports new liner notes from that almost blue cowboy hisself, Elvis Costello, it chops off a couple of songs in the process, for a total of 25 minutes of music.

Still, the better-than-nothing approach is preferable to the everything-but-the-kitchen-

sink method employed by Motown. The label's '60s catalog has been repackaged so many times it's difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff or avoid needless duplication. (Start with the mid-Seventies, handsomely packaged *Anthology* series, covering all the major artists who created the Sound of Young America, or the early-Eighties reissues of many original albums. Good luck; both series have been discontinued.) And it seems pretty clear how John Fogerty feels about Fantasy's endless spate of Creedence Clearwater revivals.

Probably the most successful repackaginger currently navigating corporate waters is RCA a&r vice-president Gregg Geller. Besides putting together the delightful six-record boxed set *Elvis—A Golden Celebration* [see February review], he also restored Presley's first two LPs and greatest-hits compilations to their original mono sound (they had only been available in the awful, echoey "reprocessed stereo" inflicted upon the public since the late-Sixties industry push toward the new technology). While at Columbia, he and Epic's Joe McEwen put out the Okeh label reissue series: Chicago blues, jazz, Western swing, rhythm & blues, and soul. They also assembled great packages of Big Maybelle, Jackie Wilson, Tyrone Davis, and the Chi-Lites (the latter three were originally on Brunswick Records).

Geller's inspiration is basic: "I happen to love the music." And that affection for the sounds of his youth was enough for CBS to allow him to indulge himself. "I never asked permission. Ninety-nine percent of all reissues are the personal projects of individuals. The company never showed tremendous enthusiasm, but no one really discouraged me either. At times I thought they were humoring me." One advantage Geller had with the Okeh and Brunswick material was that CBS owned the rights to them. (The problem with

many such attempts is licensing; Lenny Kaye's efforts to follow up his epochal double-LP collection of '60s punk, *Nuggets*, with a second volume were thwarted by Elektra's insufficient legwork, compared with that supplied for the original by the relentless archivist Michael Ochs.)

Of course, people at RCA don't merely humor Geller: That's because he's dealing not with a bunch of long-forgotten artists, but with the King of Rock 'n' Roll. "Elvis Presley is a different situation," he acknowledges, "because Elvis Presley continues to sell a lot of records. But even in [his] case, there were doubters." Apparently some executives didn't see the point in resurrecting mono versions of early albums. Geller's view: "I think we owe it to posterity, because [the original sound] can be lost, the tape can decompose. The master tapes were well cared for, but I can't describe the shape some of them were in after 30 years. We managed though."

Geller's attention will soon be focused on an artist deserving of some intelligent care: Sam Cooke. The previously unreleased *Live at the Harlem Square Club, 1963* is out now [see review this issue], and plans call for reconstruction of the catalog by next year. While it is not a critical part of his duties as an a&r exec, Geller sees this kind of labor as an "obligation—culturally, yes, absolutely. Besides, companies owe it to themselves. In some cases there's real money to be made, and a major record company is nothing without its catalog."

Motivated by the same feelings that move Gregg Geller, those wild and woolly folks at Rhino Records, the best reissue label going, couldn't be much further from the corporate world. Operating from an office and warehouse in Santa Monica, California, Rhino has brought out superb anthologies and compilations of mostly '60s music along with its extensive comedy and novelty discs.

(Continued on page 80)

S E L E C T E D D I S C O G R A P H Y

SAM COOKE:

Live at the Harlem Square Club, 1963.
RCA AFL 1-5181; 1985. ☐

ELVIS PRESLEY:

Elvis—A Golden Celebration.
RCA CPM 6-5172 (6); 1984. ☐ (6).

HANK WILLIAMS:

40 Greatest Hits.
Polydor 821 233-1 (2); 1984. ☐ (2).

JACKIE WILSON:

The Jackie Wilson Story.
Epic EG 38623 (2); 1983. ☐ (2).

COLLECTIONS

Bleecker and MacDougal.
Elektra 60383-1; 1985. ☐

Crossroads.
Elektra 60381-1; 1984. ☐

Okeh Chicago Blues.
Epic EG 37318 (2); 1982.

Okeh Rhythm & Blues.
Epic EG 37649 (2); 1982.

Okeh Soul.

Epic EG 37321 (2); 1982.

Okeh Western Swing.
Epic EG 37324 (2); 1982.

Okeh Jazz.
Epic EG 37315 (2); 1982.

All the Things He Was

BILL EVANS:

The Complete Riverside Recordings.

Orin Keepnews, prod. Riverside R 018 (18).
(Distributed by Fantasy.)

The best description of Bill Evans's alchemy is attributed to his onetime employer Miles Davis. Evans doesn't play a chord, Davis remarked; he plays "a sound." Exposure to that sound can be a potent experience; listening to *Kind of Blue* as a teenager was, for me. The pianist was in heavy company—Davis, John Coltrane, and Cannonball Adderley—yet it was Evans who drew me in. His sensibility was the closest to Davis's; both of them seemed most at home with understatement and the small but telling gesture.

Evans was obviously gleaning more from the leader than he was from the formidable sax sidemen. Instead of picking up on their swelling "sheets of sound" outpourings, he was, like Davis, making each note count. I remember being moved not just by the formal beauty of Evans's hushed, moody chords and sparing melodies, but by their stark emotion. To me his was the bittersweet voice of experience; his playing spoke of unavoidable loss, regret, and remorse. This was the sound of Evans's pain, and after sharing it, there was no turning away from him.

Although working with Davis helped Evans evolve into a major talent, the stint lasted only nine months of 1958 (a year later on *Kind of Blue*, Evans was actually an invited guest). His development from promising newcomer to innovator can be more accurately measured by his seven-year tenure as a session leader for Riverside Records (1956–63). At first, *The Complete Riverside Recordings*, an 18-record retrospective, seems out of proportion—a monolithic, imposing tribute to a shy, introspective artist. But as it



An imposing tribute to an introspective talent: Bill Evans

also makes clear, Evans was deceptive. His playing may not have the outward kick of exuberance, but its intelligence and honesty give it lasting strength.

Adding new takes and tracks to previously released material, *The Complete Riverside Recordings* covers Evans's earliest trio dates, the celebrated alliance with bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian, the "second trio" with bassist Chuck Israels, and occasional solo performances; it also finds room for meetings with hornmen Adderley, Freddie Hubbard, and Zoot Sims. The sheer bulk of the set is daunting, but breaking it up into three historical groupings—Evans before, during, and after LaFaro—at least provides a game plan for listening to it.

New Jazz Conceptions, *Everybody Digs Bill Evans*, and an impromptu session from 1959 including Davis rhythm-mates drummer Philly Joe Jones and bassist Paul Chambers make up the first period. Listened to in succession, these tracks reveal Evans's remarkable growth. *New Jazz Conceptions* presents a struggling neophyte sorting through conflicting influences (Horace Silver and Lennie Tristano?); on *Everybody Digs Bill Evans*, he emerges as a mature, interpretive improviser. The missing link, of course, is the Davis stint between the two albums, which seems to have released the unashamedly reflective side of Evans's personality.

In keeping with the hard bop era, though, at least half of this early material was uptempo. It's fun to hear Evans cut loose on numbers like "Woody'n You," "Oleo," and "Our Delight," but it's the ballad masterpieces "Peace Piece," "Some Other Time," and "Young and Foolish" that exhibit his singular harmonic language and inner repose—two traits that have altered jazz piano forever. Evans began changing the rules at his initial encounters with LaFaro and Motian, encouraging these two like-minded instrumentalists to "converse" with him, so that interaction rather than accompaniment became the norm. The trio's first two studio albums are relatively conservative; it was on the classic live Village Vanguard dates that they hit their stride.

Evans's inclination to turn inward and attain a private communion with his instrument was matched by an ability to communicate with his fellow musicians, particularly his brilliant bassist. Time and again—in "Detour Ahead," "Gloria's Step," "Solar"—Evans and LaFaro instinctively react to each other's tiniest nuances of instrumental touch. This was Evans's shining hour: His finely etched harmonic line, economical melodic inventions, masterful use of space and dynamics, and unrushed rhythmic flow were the signs of an artist quietly reaching his peak. The Vanguard sessions are Evans's *Kind of Blue*—epochal, innovative, and

deeply moving. They also mark an artistic conjunction that he would never achieve again, because ten days after these recordings were made, LaFaro died in a car accident. None of the later Riverside sessions are less than excellent. Evans is frequently at the top of his form as a player ("If You Could See Me Now") and as a composer ("Re: Person I Knew," an anagram for his producer) but the achievement is self-contained—alert, but emotionally guarded. Israels could duplicate LaFaro's techniques, but he never shared with Evans the same intimacy: Evans sounds afraid to let him.

More revealing are the four sides of unreleased solo numbers. There are brilliant transformations of dusty chestnuts ("All the Things You Are," "When I Fall in Love," "April in Paris") into highly personal statements, as well as classic performances of trademark tunes ("Sportacus Love Theme," "Nardis," "I Loves You, Porgy"), each pushed to its expressive limits. Anyone who still believes Evans was a lightweight tinkler should listen to these sides. Their intensity is frightening.

Without a strong bassist to contend with, Evans's playing became more assertive and overt. This new bite helps make the Huhhard and Sims sides such surprises. It was the rare session when Evans could balance introspection and interaction within an expanded group setting (the set's session with the spectacularly mismatched Addlerley is unfocused; later encounters with the Lee Konitz/Warne Marsh team and Harold Land were also failures.)

By the end of his life, Evans was an institution. The marked deterioration of his playing during his final decade—the robotic, glossy feel that permeated his improvisations—was an attempt to keep the "sound" and the demons it tapped at bay. In contrast, on *The Complete Riverside Recordings*, Evans

uses intellectualism to reach his feelings, not evade them. *Steve Futterman*

MILES DAVIS:

You're Under Arrest.

☉ *Miles Davis and Robert Irving III, prods. Columbia FC 40023.* ☐

Miles's latest is a very mixed bag, sounding, in fact, like excerpts from three different albums. On four cuts, the trumpeter is presented in a pop setting; on two, he's a participant in programmatic collages; and on the remaining two, he delves into the continuing fusion concerns of such recent releases as *Decoy* and *Star People*.

The collages, which open and close the album, qualify mainly as curios. "One Phone Call/Street Scene" combines a riff from *Jack Johnson*, coke-snorting sounds, synth sirens, screeching tires, and jivey vocal interjections, over a background of energetic funk, in a depiction of Miles getting busted in four different languages. It's a goof, and an only mildly amusing one. "And Then There Were None" is a rather routine and literal antinuke statement, complete with bahies crying and thunderous explosions. If you listen very closely, you can hear Miles whisper a little punch line directed at our President. Good intentions, though, aren't enough, and these extramusical gags sound suspiciously like filler.

Of the pop cuts, two are covers ("Human Nature," a hit for Michael Jackson, and Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time") and two are originals concocted by Miles and his synthmeister, Robert Irving III. Miles has picked a pair of good songs to cover, and they're sincerely rendered with minimum embellishment. Still, while such cross-genre missionary work can be appreciated, one expects more from a musician who is among the world's greatest improvisers. Miles does

stretch some with two pop-ish originals, "Something on Your Mind" and "Miss Morri-sine." But if on the covers Miles sounds comfortable, though overqualified, on the originals the match between the trumpeter's dark and complex vision and the more care-free imperatives of pop sounds somewhat forced.

Would-be Album No. 3 is represented by "Katia/Prelude" and the title cut, a boppish melody by John Scofield played over a fast, twitchy fusion rhythm. The solos on this track are quick and clever, though the piece barely has time to build. "Katia/Prelude," by contrast, seems unending, with Miles and guitarist John McLaughlin soloing intensely over a never resolving "Love Supreme"-type riff. So icily sustained is the piece that the listener sighs with relief even before that heart-tugging melody of the next cut, "Time After Time," is fully under way; this album may be unfocused, but it's obvious that some thought went into its pacing.

The cynically inclined might conclude that much of this material was plucked from the vaults in order to pad out an album that would accommodate the release of the two pop covers. But whatever the motive, the patchwork quality and only sporadic bursts of inspiration make it a lesser effort.

Richard C. Walls

CHARLIE ROUSE:

Social Call.

☉ *Robert Sunenblick, prod. Uptown UP 27.18. (276 Pearl St., Kingston, N.Y. 12401.)*

During the ten years that Charlie Rouse spent in Thelonious Monk's quartet, his precise, down-to-earth solos often seemed rather drab, even though his phrasing reflected and complemented Monk's striking ideas. Rouse left Monk and the music scene in 1970, and returned a stronger and more influential figure. With the formation of Sphere, the

I N T H I S I S S U E

JAZZ

BILL BARRON:
Variations in Blue.

ANTHONY DAVIS:
Middle Passages.

MILES DAVIS:
You're Under Arrest.

BILL EVANS:
The Complete Riverside Recordings.

CHARLIE ROUSE:
Social Call.

POP

THE BEAT FARMERS:
Tales of the New West.

SAM COOKE:
Live at the Harlem Square Club, 1963.

THE DRONGOS:
Small Miracles.

LAURA LEE:
All Power.

LONGHAIR, TOUSSAINT, AND WASHINGTON:
Piano Players Rarely Ever Play Together.

SKIP AND THE EXCITING ILLUSIONS:
Skip and the Exciting Illusions.

quartet that bases its repertoire on Monk's work, Rouse placed himself in a familiar context but changed the circumstances. His own musical personality blossomed, and his playing took on an assurance that, in retrospect, had always been there, hidden. *Social Call* sets him loose in the bop and postbop surroundings of early Miles Davis ("Half Nelson"), Gigi Gryce ("Social Call"), Tadd Dameron ("Casbah"), and his own "Little Chico."

Rouse now has a confident attack that gives more sparkle to his playing; he gets airborne easily and stays afloat. Fast lines are clean and bright, while slower tempos take on deep, breathy tones à la Ben Webster or give an otherwise smooth phrase a touch of color by adding an unexpected puff at the end. Red Rodney makes a breezy, shimmering entrance on "Little Chico," opening into a weaving, dancing solo, but the structure of almost all his solos is so similar—a flowing, seamless line—that they can be anticipated. The one exception is his flugelhorn on "Darn That Dream," a gorgeously mellow bit warmed by Rouse's full, dark, resonant tone.

John S. Wilson

BILL BARRON:

Variations in Blue.

© Bill Barron, prod. Muse MR 5306.

Saxophonist Bill Barron, his pianist brother Kenny, and trumpeter Jimmy Owens aren't names associated with today's jazz vanguard. Their decades were the '50s and the '60s, fertile years when even first-rate players were too easily overshadowed by innovative giants. The '80s finds such mature musicians in a generational booby trap: Too old to be fashionable, too young to be legends, they inevitably retreat into academia, which just makes things worse. On *Variations in Blue*, Barron and company protest this premature neglect by pouncing upon each tune with an up-to-the-moment edge that should be the envy of the brothers Marsalis.

This comment shouldn't be taken as yet another cheap swipe at those overhyped overachievers; the Marsalises are now the best way to measure what is in vogue. But as they have proved, the more things change, the more familiar they begin to sound. Barron and his experienced cohorts cover the same stylistic terrain (what we might call cerebral hard bop) as the Marsalises. Like them, Barron the writer spikes standard forms with compositional twists and turns.

Unlike the forms of his younger colleagues, these remain uncluttered, organic. What validates this quintet's journey to the past is an earned aura of self-conscious authenticity: They learned how to play this way firsthand—not by studying records—and it shows. Barron's originals, especially "The Name of This Is" and the title track, sound as inspired and durable as the LP's only standard, Gigi Gryce's classic, "Minority." The

front line is perfectly balanced. Bill Barron's serpentine lines are contoured and methodical; Owens, with his updated Clifford Brown runs, is brassy and vivacious. With the indefatigable Kenny Barron, bassist Ray Drummond, and Ben Riley on drums blazing from behind, this studio quintet has all the energy and structural smarts of any of today's "young lions."

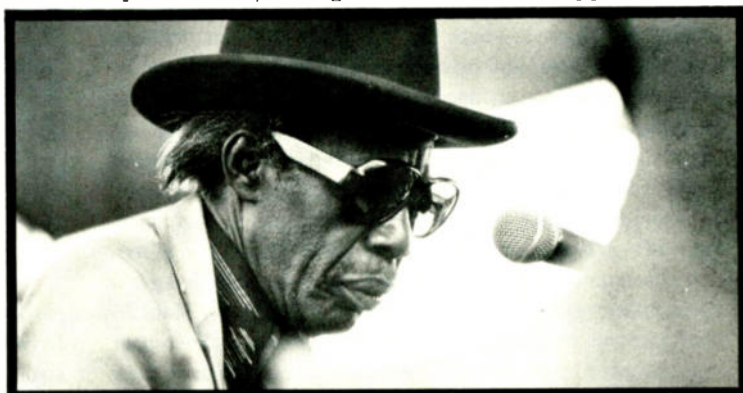
Steve Futterman

(Continued on page 73)

ROCK 'N' ROLL GUMBO

Reissue produced by George Winston and Philippe Rault

Professor Longhair



This re-mixed version of the 1974 album classic brings Fess' totally unique piano style up to the forefront and adds two new unreleased songs. His playing influenced Dr. John, James Booker, and many others, and along with Jerry Lee Lewis, took rock piano to its apogee.

ROCK 'N' ROLL GUMBO includes many of the songs featured in Stevenson Palfi's award-winning documentary "Piano Players Rarely Ever Play Together" and includes the only recording of Professor Longhair with the great blues guitarist Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown.

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Reptilian Rock Redux

by John Piccarella

THE DOORS:

Dance on Fire.

Ray Manzarek, dir.; George Paige, prod. MCA Home Video 80157 (Beta and VHS), \$39.95.

Although their first single, "Light My Fire," went to No. 1, the Doors are probably even more popular today than when Jim Morrison died in 1971 at the age of twenty-seven. Unique among '60s legends—both for the hype and mystery surrounding his death and private burial in Paris and for the legitimate before-his-timeliness of his dark persona—Morrison remains a heartthrob because, in addition to having been one of rock's most gorgeous men, his sex appeal is now enhanced by the death that was its metaphoric edge. The Doors achieved something both clumsy and original in their marriage of real blues, real schlock, and real ersatz poetry. Morrison the bluesman was strengthened by Robbie Krieger's roots/spacey guitar and confounded by organist Ray Manzarek's carnival classicism. Morrison the shaman/street poet was anchored by the band's blues base and catered to by their psychedelic experimentalism. Morrison the pop crooner was ornamented by Manzarek's gothic flourishes and drummer John Densmore's corny jazzisms, but often saved by Krieger's fluid melodicism.

The MCA video *Dance on Fire* shows the band's contradictions in as flattering a light as possible. For new and old fans it's sexy, excitingly paced, charismatic, moving. For critics it reveals undeniable invention and presence, as well as unavoidable indulgence and pretense. It's amazing to watch the live-TV-with-orchestra version of "Touch Me" move from an almost insufferable chorus to a driving, climactic sax solo. Halfway through "The End" (a concert film clip), Morrison spontaneously breaks for an inane, unaccompanied recitation he calls "Ode to a Grasshopper," yet the group pulls off a screaming finale with a powerful dervish-dance improvisation. On balance, *Dance on Fire* is an almost perfectly edited, sequenced, and produced presentation of what the Doors were and weren't.

Except for an occasional striking phrase, the sophomoric poetry voiceovers from the posthumous album *American Prayer* (plus "Horse Latitudes," "The WASP (Texas Radio and the Big Beat)," and parts of "The End") show the limitations of Morrison's writing. Most of the songs are the band's greatest hits, and their visual presentation is both colorful and continuously varied. "Break on Through (to the Other Side)" is an early promo film that looks like a low-budget video; "Peo-



The Doors: clumsy, original, and immensely popular

ple Are Strange," "Love Me Two Times," and "Moonlight Drive" combine '60s film or TV clips with new video footage in strong rhythmic montage. The most unusual settings are reserved for the two best songs. Manzarek's video of "L.A. Woman" features X's John Doe in a murder plot, set off by a *Koyaanisqatsi*-like time-lapse tour of the city—sequences of neon, street murals, and, of course, traffic. "Roadhouse Blues" documents the aggressive peak of the Doors' increasingly confrontational concert appearances: police hostility, audience brawls, and onstage arrests. Morrison, who got more drunk more often, was eventually charged with public obscenity.

The most revealing tracks fully display the paradoxical juxtapositions of Morrison's strength and weakness of vision. The Doors' own amateur film to "The Unknown Soldier" finds Morrison tied to a pier and shot in mock execution, spitting gobs of fake blood onto a bouquet of flowers. Just as you're about to laugh at the art-school technique, you get hit with brutal footage of a Vietnam firefight, which then jump-cuts to VE Day in Times Square. Complete with its famous Oedipal routine, "The End" is an impossible contradiction of silly indulgence and powerful experiment. Morrison's ability to simultaneously evoke horror and desire is unquestionable. In ten-plus minutes of continuous talking, screaming, swooning, dancing, and trancing out, his punk archetype unfolds. The raw sex appeal and blues-based power of Iggy Pop and the stand-up shamanism and improvised poetry of Patti Smith, as well as the crooner sadomasochism of Billy Idol, are all visibly rooted in Morrison's onstage self-invention. MTV can now easily assimilate the death-tripping and ragged desire that Morrison and the Doors accidentally stumbled through in the wild stupor of their youth.

John Piccarella writes about music for *The Village Voice* and *The Boston Phoenix*.

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P O P

ANTHONY DAVIS:
Middle Passages.

Jonathan F. P. Rose and Anthony Davis, prods. Gramavision GFCD 8401. □ □

Once a self-confessed "stone bebop pianist," a disgruntled Anthony Davis reacted against both bebop, which forces a pianist to feed chords to an all-important soloist, and free jazz, which undervalues the role of the composer, and finally found his ideal in Duke Ellington. Davis wants his music to be orderly, but rhythmically exciting, and he wants his piano to sound like an orchestra. The four solo performances on *Middle Passages* are rich, varied, and exuberant, and the recording captures accurately the big, magnificent sound of Davis's Steinway.

That is true on the LP as well as on the Compact Disc, but there are some advantages to the latter format. The first composition, "Behind the Rock," starts with a deep rumble in the bass—a drone that Davis maintains throughout, sometimes varying it by stopping the strings with his hand. This is opposed by some brightly struck figures in the right hand—trills, chords, and occasionally a repeated phrase that skips, rings, and swirls over the somber lower keys. The bright treble notes are more startling in CD, and the switch in the left hand is more dramatic.

At high volume, the title cut, commissioned and first played by Ursula Oppens, suffers from slight ghosting on the LP. Inspired by the late Robert Hayden's poem ("Voyage through death/To life upon these shores"), "Middle Passages" opens moodily and then erupts. Davis plays this difficult piece with characteristic authority and panache. On "Particle W," composed by Earl Howard, he improvises according to "a set of detailed instructions" accompanied by a tape created on the Serge Modular Music System, which yodels, honks, and gurgles melliflously. Davis's conversation with it is lively: They can exchange riffs, drift apart in contrary motion, or glide together toward the treble. Later, with the piano damped and the tape playing low, ping-ponging notes, the two seem to share the same sense of humor.

This is not Davis's first solo piano record; he made *Past Lives* in 1978 and *Lady of the Mirrors* in 1980. But the completeness of its conception and the confidence of its execution make *Middle Passages* a milestone in his flourishing career. *Michael Ullman*

SAM COOKE:

Live at the Harlem Square Club, 1963.

□ RCA AFL 1-5181. □ □

Sam Cooke was a real lady-killer. This is very apparent on *Live at the Harlem Square Club, 1963*, where women do most of the screaming and hollering. In "Bring It on Home," his promises to shower his lover (who just stepped out on him) with lots of money and jewelry, if she'll just do what the title says, are so unnecessary. All he has to do to make her wither back into his arms is scat a few bars with his highly sensuous, gospel-tinged croon.

Although it has been a little over 20 years since Cooke's tragic death at age thirty-three, his legend is alive and well in artists as diverse as Luther Vandross and Steve Perry. And because lesser artists have avoided overworking his songs, none of them have been reduced to clichéd themes nestled exclusively in nostalgia; for me, a ballad like "You Send Me" works as well against the wall of an '80s basement jam as it did at a '60s sock hop.

This is Cooke's second posthumous live set. *Live at the Copa* was slicker and more pop-ish, custom-tailored for the mostly white, highbrow Las Vegas audience. *Harlem Square*, recorded at one of the premier black clubs of the era, is a rougher, rawer soul explosion. Heck, Sam sounds as if he's working to raise the rent money that's due the following morning! One of soul's greatest messengers, he embellishes "Cupid," "You Send Me," "Having a Party," and "For Sentimental Reasons" only slightly. Still, these reworkings come off especially well—a testament to the honesty and spirit he emoted as a studio performer. Although "Bring It on Home" is great, too, Cooke's a little too quick to forgive for my taste; is the lady-killer really a jelly-spined patsy?

The performer and his band share a chemistry that was obviously developed long before this January 1963 date. When the singer pushes, they push back, creating a pleasant tension that works the audience into a frenzy. When he winds his voice around, weaving up and around the underbelly of each verse, the band follows him, never missing a beat. Only the saxophone player takes hold of the melody, blasting off into space; when Cooke's vocals return, it

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sails back to earth, making a smooth, effortless landing in the heart. *Havelock Nelson*

THE DRONGOS:

Small Miracles.

Ⓞ John Holbrook and Tony McMaster, prods. Proteus 29193. ☐. (Distributed by Cherry Lane Music.)

It's a hot spring day in New York City, and a crowd is gathering on the corner of 50th and Broadway to watch the Drongos, a quartet of New Zealand emigrés, tape a video for their live street album, *Small Miracles*. It's not the first time some of these people have wiled away lunch hour listening to this one-woman, three-man band's nimble mix of pop, folk, garage, and roots rock; after the Drongos left the political, satirical Red Mole theater troupe in 1980, they supported themselves for a year entertaining stockbrokers, theatergoers, bag people, and park benches all over town.

Having since raised enough cash to buy club gear and generate a loyal indoor following, the quartet now takes to the pavement "mainly for pure enjoyment," and that's what it sounds like they experienced on *Small Miracles*. Although there's less street flavor here than one might expect, because direct-patch 8-track taping allowed just touches of audience patter and urban noise to come through, the album's still strong on personable, hooky appeal. Like the group's eponymous debut, *Small Miracles* is a sharply crafted, even-keeled delight. Engaging vocal harmonies and concise contrapuntal guitars weave easily over danceable rhythms emanating from a single enterprising snare drum. Lyrically, the Drongos dwell on bohemian sagas of city living ("Substance Abuser," "Standing on the Corner") and good-hearted explorations of unambiguously heterosexual love relationships; "Some Things," in which songwriter/guitarist Jean McAllister's voice takes on a Hynde-ish timbre, and the especially catchy "Don't Touch Me" are at once refreshingly sentimental and matter-of-fact. Covers of Chuck Berry's "Monkey Business" and Johnny Cash's "Get Rhythm" aren't nearly as powerful as the original versions, but the Drongos are more preservationists than innovators. As a CBS songwriter (who happened to be standing next to me that sunny day on Broadway) bopped back to the office humming "Leave Me Alone," I couldn't help but hope this last will be, as they say in New Zealand, one right



The Drongos recall their year of living dangerously on *Small Miracles*.

out of the box for the Drongos

Rosamary Possentine

THE BEAT FARMERS:

Tales of the New West

Ⓞ Steve Berlin and Mark Linett prods Rhino RNLP 853. ☐

Almost every moderate size city, certainly every college town, has a band or three something like the Beat Farmers: roots-fixated nice guys with self-consciously quirky senses of humor. They play to the same clique every night, deal out clubby blues and all-purpose boogie, and almost never leave you wanting more.

So what's the attraction? These four from San Diego are confident enough (and really funny enough) to scrap the cute bit, and they listen to records made since, say, Creedence's last one. Maybe the Beat Farmers sampled one of their own Headeeese Cakes, the recipe for which is found in the *Beat Farmers Almanac* (enclosed in *Tales of the New West*). Or maybe these vets got tired of being in going-nowhere bands. Whatever the case, their debut is no-brakes, not-faked, smart-alecky bar-band rock 'n' roll.

Favored sources include Johnny Cash, rockabilly, and Bruce Springsteen, but that's only scratching the surface of the pimple. And for all the sundry material the Beat Farmers mine, these native sons never cease to accelerate it, garbage it up, or otherwise make the stuff firmly their own. Take a tune like "California Kid," in which a man in black bellies up to the bar and spins a basso profundo yarn about finally meeting his match. A high-in-the-saddle hass sound dominates until the end, when the beat doubles and guitars do to the song what Chinese mustard does to the top of your head. "Bigger Stones" combines a soulful vocal, some Cree-

dent Byrds' good-guitar vibes, and a beat that jumps like crazy making the whole thing rattle.

The keenest trick of *Tales of the New West* is its lack of self-consciousness. The Beat Farmers don't hassle with pondering the distance between themselves and the sounds they like. There doesn't seem to even be all that much distance—they convey a lot of experience in their playing, suggesting they've seen as many trials as anyone this side of Claps von Bulow. "Bigger Stones" weighs living with diminished expectations (though the music rolls away the stone) and "Where Did They Go?" is even more time-worn. This is a smart, sweet record, one with a catholic taste in covers, cameos by the Kinman brothers and a Bangle, and a song about a dead dog. *Tales* is a corker, possibly the greatest album ever made by a band that acknowledges *The Honeymooners* as an important influence. *RJ Smith*

PROFESSOR LONGHAIR, ALLEN TOUSSAINT, AND ISIDORE WASHINGTON:

Piano Players Rarely Ever Play Together.

Ⓞ Stevenson J. Palfi, dir. and prod. Stevenson Productions SP 84 (Beta and VHS), \$85.00. (3227 Banks St., New Orleans, La. 70119.)

Piano Players Rarely Ever Play Together is the exception to its own title. The phrase comes from Allen Toussaint, who points out that there's usually only one piano in any given space; that's why this video footage of him jamming polyrhythmic New Orleans piano with Professor "Fess" Longhair (Henry Byrd) and Isidore "Tuts" Washington is such a rarity. In truth, each typifies his own separate era, starting with his hipster clothes: Tuts (born 1907) in suit, sport shirt, and bowler hat or beret; Fess (born 1918) in

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plaid shirt, military jacket, and fez; Toussaint (born 1938) in cream-colored leisure suit and designer jersey. Or consider the language each uses to describe his music. Jazz classicist Tuts condemns rock 'n' roll as though it has nothing in common with what he plays, while r&b classicist Toussaint loftily discusses Longhair in terms of syncopation and counterpoint, even as Fess himself explains that "it's all mixed into calypso, a certain beat that you put in, it's mixed into the gimmick that I do." But tradition dies hard in New Orleans, one of the last places in America where a music video like this could still be shot: When they do play together, these men are celebrating continuity and what they have in common.

Director and producer Stevenson J. Palfi tells their story through interviews and candid shots, but especially with extensive footage of the trio working out an arrangement of "Junkers Blues." Longhair and Toussaint had played together before, but the addition of a third pianist geometrically increased the problems of coming up with something suitable for the piece. At first, Toussaint—session man, producer/arranger, control freak—takes charge, but he soon yields to the implacable Longhair, who devises a sequence of playing in which each man provides the others with underpinnings that serve as a springboard for soloing; this allows one of them to bubble up out of the mix momentarily and then roll back into it.

Interviews clarify the evolution of New Orleans piano through the three generations. Without citing a particular influence, Tuts declares, "A piano player with no left hand is not a piano player; he's just what you call a one-handed piano player." Fess, meanwhile, notes that Tuts plays with "no smears," that "he has straight, clean fingers." And Toussaint plays a few rhumbalike lines to show how "one could hear me do that and, even if I improvise on it, know it goes back to Fess. But it stops at Fess; he was the inventor."

The austere, diffident Toussaint, reiterating his dislike of performing, recreates recordings of "Yes We Can Can," "What Is Success," and "Southern Nights" in the studio. He explains the call-and-response patterns of "Java," one of his best-known tunes (as recorded by Al Hirt), thusly: "That's about as far as you should go Dixie. . . . Anything more would be too much. Anything less would be . . . forbidden." Tuts sits on his

FORMAT KEY

- ⊙ LP/EP
- Ⓜ Cassette
- Ⓢ Compact Disc
- Ⓜ Videocassette
- Ⓢ Videodisc
- Ⓢ 12-inch single
- Ⓢ Open reel

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front porch, alternately waxing philosophical and talking jive. Longhair decries a ten-year hiatus in his own career caused by the simple fact that "I wasn't gettin' no money; I was gettin' plenty of work."

In documenting these interactions and divergences, Palfi stays out of the way of his subjects, offering little visual pyrotechnics, but none of the usual clichés either; there are, for example, refreshingly few fingers-on-the-keyboards shots. Longhair died in 1980, in the middle of this project, his traditional Dixieland funeral ultimately providing the video with its most emotional reference point. And Washington died in 1984, shortly after *Piano Players Rarely Ever Play Together* was finished and aired nationally on PBS. In the final scene, he and Toussaint perform a duet version of "Junkers Blues" in concert. They sound good, too—but not as good as the three of them do. Maybe that's why, over the credits, Palfi goes back to the original session, where Tuts plays impossibly nimble lines as Longhair calls out the solos. By the end of this video, it's hard to imagine the tune as anything *but* a vehicle for three pianos.

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(Continued on page 79)

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BACKBEAT REVIEWS

(Continued from page 76)

r&b) in the early '70s. In "Guess Who I Saw Today," she spits out the word "lovuh" in a way that sounds like cussing, and her classic from 1972, "Rip-Off" (just hear her screaming that title), enumerates exactly what she wants from her cheating man: "One of these days, girls.../I'm movin' him out, startin' with the sofa, the chairs, and both TVs." That Laura Lee—short-suffering, long-winded, and a pinch militant—was *Ebony's* answer to the Cosmo girl, but the sexual politics went only skin deep; underneath the sassiness and high-heeled swagger was every lonely woman looking for the perfect man.

Following a nearly decade-long illness, Lee's first solo gospel album (slickly produced by Al Green) proved she'd re-found God but lost herself somewhere in the process: She sounded too nice. *All Power* forsakes those warmed-over love songs for the hell-raising affirmations of a new spiritual identity. Back home is the rat's nest of a voice—the finger-pointing punctuation, the unrelenting raunch that can't distinguish between pain and ecstasy—but it's serving a new master, and the change is audible. Though she was never one to waste breath on pear-shaped tones, Lee's instrument is now so splayed she splits britches just getting to the center of a pitch; miraculously, she never sounds out of tune. What does substitute for a beautiful voice, however, is a demonic rhythmic pulse that she knows exactly how to manipulate. On "A Brand New Me" and the title cut, the tempo and the tension rise imperceptibly until you realize, way too late, that there's no getting off this train.

Lee is still fond of enumerating, but the former complaints about men have given way to lists of God's attributes and her own changed habits. The real change, however, is not in the phrases, but between them. Her silences, always ripe with implication, are no longer deadly, scheming, full of backbite; the free-style ballad "Where God Is," for example, aches between the notes with the very sadness it's trying to heal. And Lee's contemplative, yet somehow raucous, version of "God Bless America," adorned with ad libs and melismata, takes on a shade of Americana that Irving Berlin never dreamed of: loneliness, alienation, and a desperate need to belong.

It might seem that for Laura Lee, Jesus

Christ is just a handy stand-in; after all, she'd nailed all her other lovers to the cross. But the dynamics of the relationship are new: She's giving, not taking. Even more important, *All Power* proves you can be yourself and be for God—not an easy fusion in today's secular marketplace. This time around, at least, it doesn't sound like a rip-off.

Pamela Bloom

SKIP AND THE EXCITING ILLUSIONS:

Skip and the Exciting Illusions.

□ Marty Khan, prod. ROIR A 132.

Since this is a cassette-only issue, my immediate impulse was to slap it into a personal portable. The impulse paid off, 'coz bassist Alonzo "Skip" Gardner's debut soon became my street-walkin' hit of the month. With the help of producer Marty Khan, Gardner grafts the eclectic ambitions of avant-garde jazz onto some old-fashioned, ruckus-raising Southern soul—the generic type, you know. There's everything on this two-track recording, from the draggin'-behind-the-beat chords of a medicine show songster like Pink Anderson, oddly metered yet compelling Delta blues (cf. electric guitarist Houston Stackhouse), and chunky, bubbling, low-down Memphis vamps to the lilting ostinatos of Carib-influenced r&b. On paper, this may sound awfully busy, but Gardner cops a few tricks—not to mention chicken-licks, choppy horns, and ratchet rhythms—from consummate arrangers James Brown and Sly Stone. And let's not forget: Skip cut his eyeteeth in trumpeter Olu Dara's Okra Orchestra.

Though *Skip and the Exciting Illusions* carries its influences on its stylistic sleeve, it hardly matters, because the great library of blues and funk is always open to reinterpretation. From the stroll of "Space Age" and the muddy brogan stomp of "All the Way" to the spare, alliterative, scratched-out lines of "Monster," Gardner keeps this date in the pocket, albeit a quirky one. He also pens some clever, moralizing vocals, which he squalls out with the indecipherable enunciation of Charlie Patton, the falsetto of Tommy Johnson, the fervor of a revivalist possessed. In this day of parody and overintellectualized roots music, it's a pleasure to hear something as goofy, raw, salacious, and thigh-high-in-the-funk as Skip and the Exciting Illusions. And now that we have the Son of Olu, could somebody please record the Okra Orchestra? Don Palmer

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NOT FADE AWAY

(Continued from page 68)

According to Rhino's Gary Stewart, the label—now ten years old—began licensing masters for reissues at the turn of the decade, starting with three "Best Of's": the Barbarians, Love, and Ritchie Valens. Timeliness—part of what the Rhino bunch calls "environmental factors"—plays a crucial part in determining how and when the tiny outfit releases its product. The recent outpouring of Everly Brothers albums was instigated by the duo's 1983 comeback. Encompassing all 39 late-Fifties Cadence tracks, the reissue project was grounded in those tools of the trade, luck and perseverance: "We just came across the people who owned the masters." The first of Rhino's three *Wonder Women: History of the Girl Group Sound* records was inspired by Alan Betrock's 1982 book, *Girl Groups*. And, Stewart says, "We're putting out a lot more British Invasion bands, like the Troggs and the Zombies. Even the most recent reissue becomes unavailable. So while it didn't seem right to do a Troggs album a few years ago because that [1976] Sire album was still around—the same thing with the Spencer Davis package on Capitol or United Artists—they're all gone now." Today, along with *Nuggets* (reissued by Sire in 1976 before being split up and added to by Rhino), we might be seeing a second generation of reissues.

Rhino's growth has been steady if not exactly spectacular, and they've done well enough to take over pressing and distribution for Solid Smoke, the San Francisco-based label obsessed with '50s and '60s r&b and soul. Solid Smoke is best known for its James Brown reissues, and therein lies an interesting case that illustrates most of the pleasures and frustrations of trying to reclaim the past.

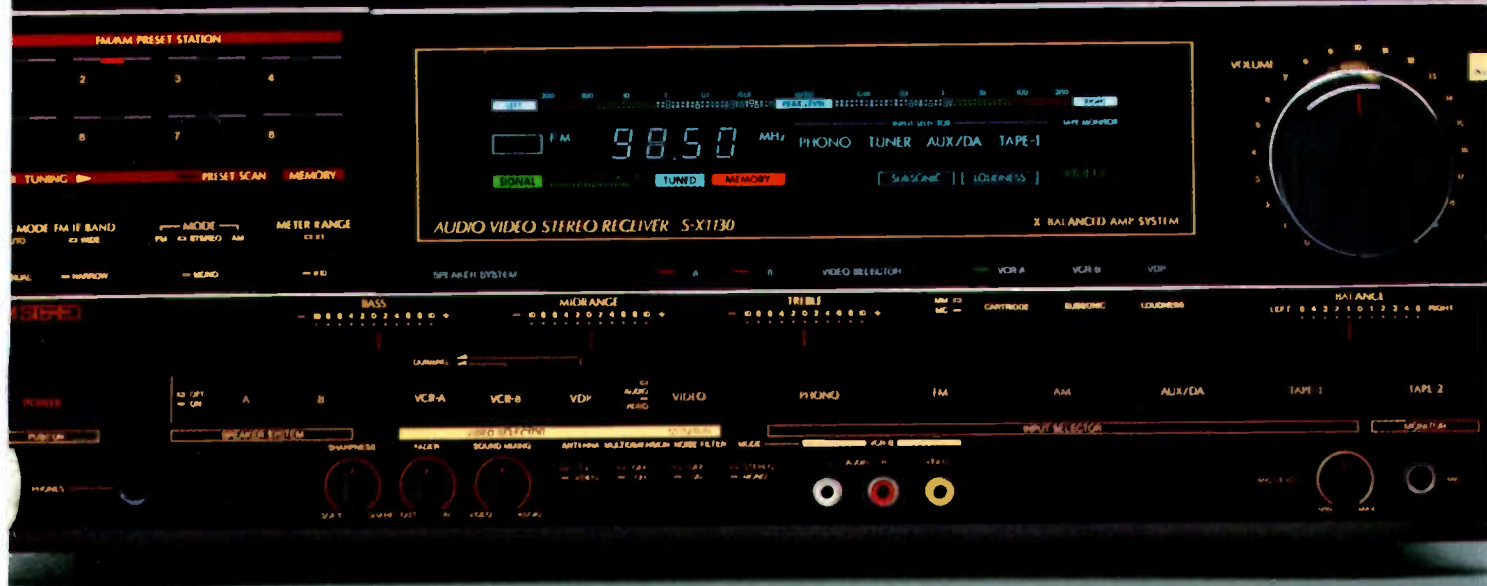
Five years ago the label released Brown's landmark 1962 *Live at the Apollo, Vol. 1* and later a greatest hits album accurately titled *Can Your Heart Stand It?* The music was licensed from Polygram, which owns the rights to all of Brown's vintage recordings and had allowed the man's recorded legacy to fall into disrepair. The Solid Smoke reissues revived the Godfather of Soul's reputation among critics and musicians, who, having finally heard the man in his prime, were able to acknowledge his importance in the development of funk and rap. This reassessment—along with Brown's 1981 hit single, "Too Funky in Here," and his usual

charming and tireless self-promotion—probably led to his cross-generational hookup with Afrika Bambaataa for the anthemic "Unity" single last year.

Polygram then decided to get into the market created for them by Solid Smoke's persistence, launching two separate volumes of *The James Brown Story*, which coincided with Smoke's two-part *The Federal Years* [see November 1984 review]. What had previously been a desert was now a flood district. (Buy *The Federal Years*—if you can find them. These LPs, too, are regrettably out of print.)

The unenlightened selfishness that predominates in these matters has now extended to music video. Sony has dropped plans for a Video 45 with Marvin Gaye called *Transit Ostende*, a portrait filmed while the singer was in Europe in the midst of his self-imposed exile. It seems Motown won't release the rights to a few of the Gaye songs it owns, which means we'll be denied the chance to see and hear him sing a gorgeous rendition of "The Lord's Prayer." And artists aren't exempt from such behavior either. The sorely neglected Ray Charles sits on all his masters from the ABC and Paramount days; Dave Clark supposedly withdrew all DC5 output from the market to enhance its future profitability (sorry, Dave, we'll take the Contours' "Do You Love Me" any day); a five-record boxed set chronicling Bob Dylan's career—including legendary live versions of his '60s hits performed with the Band—is languishing at CBS because Dylan reportedly insisted on releasing the turgid *Live Dylan* instead.

A recent encouraging sign was Lenny Kaye's return to the reissue field at Elektra with multialbum blues and folk sets, *Crossroads* and *Bleecker and MacDougal*. Besides *Nuggets*, Kaye supervised and wrote notes for the United Artists *Legendary Masters* album on Eddie Cochran, and critic Dave Marsh did the same for its Jan and Dean package. Patti Smith used to get pretty emotional about keeping rock 'n' roll in good hands. "We created it—let's take it over!" she would say; her live cover version of the Who's "My Generation" even ended that way. At least, our history should be told by those of us who care most about the music—writers, musicians, the occasional Rhino-level expert brought up to the majors for a worthy cause. For as the Showmen said 30 years ago, when the sound was still dismissed as a fad, "Rock 'n' roll will stand." ●



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