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VIDEO

TEST REPORTS

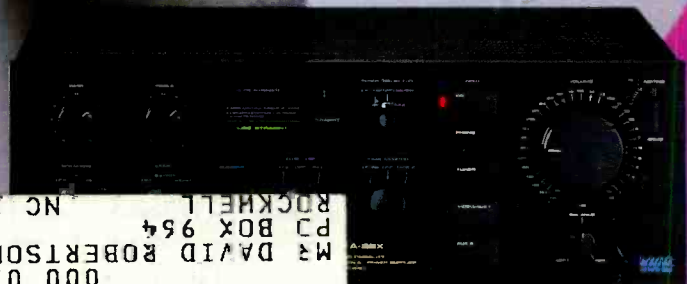
MUSIC

STATE-OF-THE-ART COMPONENTS

What Should You Buy Now?

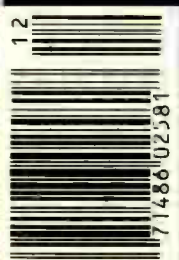
**Which Are Worth
Waiting For?**

**6 Models
Lab Tested**



**1985's
Best Recordings
Rock Lyrics
Ratings Ruckus**

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Finally, you can hear your stereo system in stereo.

When you listen to two conventional speakers, what you hear is mainly the sound from the one speaker that's closest to you. So unless you, your room, and your furniture are precisely arranged around your speakers, chances are that you'll never hear both of them in balance. And you need to hear properly balanced sound from both speakers to hear stereo. *It's that simple.*

Instead of listening to only one of the two speakers that you've paid for, why not listen to a pair of speakers that can play your stereo system in full stereo? All Bose® speakers are designed to put stereo right where it belongs: everywhere. So when you add a Bose speaker system to your stereo system, you'll finally get all of the realism that your stereo is capable of producing—because you'll finally hear your system playing in stereo.

The new Bose Point Two listening system, for example, literally shapes and controls sound, producing a Stereo Everywhere™ music image that you can hear—and almost feel—anywhere in your listening room. In fact, when you listen to a Point Two system, you won't hear sound as if it were coming directly from the speakers. Rather, you hear a complete, lifelike musical soundstage, transforming your music into a three-dimensional sculpture of sound.

The Bose Point Twos are made up of a number of audio innovations integrated into one complete listening system. Each part of the speaker—components,



The Bose 10.2 system

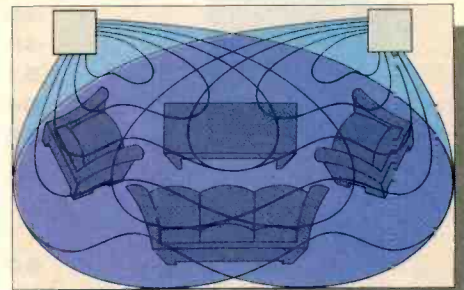
cabinet, and crossover—is part of a system that gives the Point Twos their exceptional control over sound. This Bose Stereo Targeting™ system shapes and directs music into your listening environment, allowing you to hear full stereo anywhere you're sitting or standing—even if it's right next to one of the speakers. To make the system complete, the entire Stereo Targeting system is placed on top of a newly-

designed bass venting system for full frequency realism. Advanced bass tuning gives the Point Two systems both high efficiency and tight, smooth bass—a performance combination not usually found in ordinary ported systems. Finally, Bose uses Syncom® II computer testing and rigid quality control to make sure that all the individual

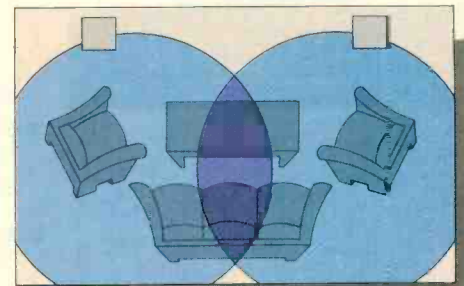
The Bose Point Twos are high technology speakers designed to look as good as they sound.



The Bose 8.2 system



Each half of the Point Two system produces a sound pattern that is distinctly different from the other, as shown in the top diagram. This enables the system to produce a stereo image that you can hear everywhere in the listening area.



Conventional speakers produce full stereo only in a narrow area between them. And since each speaker's performance is identical, listeners mainly hear sound as coming from only one speaker—the one they happen to be nearest.

parts of the Point Two system precisely match and work perfectly together—a very critical factor with speakers that precisely control sound.

The high power-handling and high efficiency of the Bose® Point Twos make them ideal speakers for any system and any software, especially digital compact discs. The fact that the Bose Point Twos are pieces of high technol-

ogy that look as good as they sound make them ideal for *your* system and listening environment as well. With the Bose Point Two listening system, all of your music will take on an entirely new dimension of realism. We invite you to experience Stereo Everywhere™ realism for yourself by auditioning the new

Bose Point Two listening systems at selected dealers. For more information write: Bose Corporation, Department HF, 10 Speen Street, Framingham, MA 01701.

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HIGH FIDELITY

Volume 35 Number 12 December 1985

AUDIO & VIDEO

13 Currents

CD player frenzy: Sony's ultra-ultrasmall Discman, Pioneer's six-CD changer, and new models from ADS and Meridian

24 The New-Tech Quandary

by E. Brad Meyer

Which audio and video technologies should you buy now, and which should you wait for?

TEST REPORTS

60



35 Denon DCD-1800R Compact Disc player

39 Yamaha R-9 receiver

46 Spica TC-50/Servo three-piece loudspeaker system

51 Pioneer A-88X integrated amplifier

54 Nakamichi ST-7 AM/FM tuner

56 Akai VS-603U VHS Hi-Fi videocassette recorder



13

MUSIC

Classical

60 18th Annual High Fidelity/IRCA Awards

by Theodore W. Libbey, Jr.

An international jury selects the best and most significant releases of the past year.

72 1985—A Banner Year in Music: Scarlatti

by Michael Fleming

The final installment in our series of basic libraries of recordings

73 Second Course

by Robert E. Benson

Another sampling of Compact Discs

Popular/Backbeat

74 Rock 'n' Roll Feels the Fire

by John Morthland

When the PMRC asked the recording industry to censor itself, it agreed to—at first.

82 Back in Business

by John S. Wilson

A capsule-review roundup of new old-jazz releases



76

DEPARTMENTS

6 Editor's Page

8 Letters

23 Crosstalk

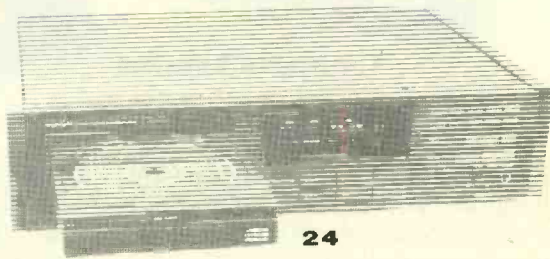
59 Medley

64 Classical Reviews

76 Popular Reviews

80 Jazz Reviews

88 Advertising Index



24

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On the Cover: From top: Sony D-7 Discman portable Compact Disc player, Denon DCD-1800R Compact Disc player, Nakamichi ST-7 AM/FM tuner, Pioneer A-88X integrated amplifier

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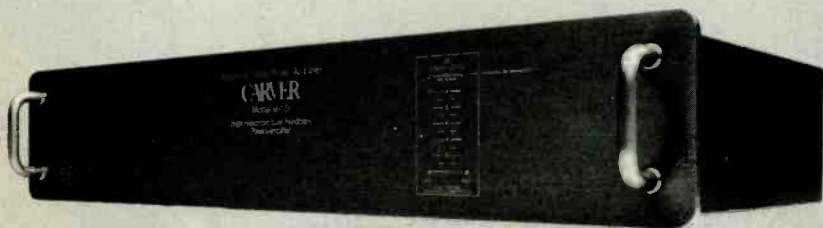
Recent advances in recording and playback technology have made source material with full, real-life dynamic range a reality.

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Peter Aczel, THE AUDIO CRITIC

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Compared to this Technics,
ordinary turntables just scratch the surface.

The Technics turntable with
linear tracking, quartz drive and programmability.

When it comes to accuracy and convenience, most other turntables just scratch the surface. But not the sophisticated Technics SL-L3.

Linear tracking gives you a tonearm that moves straight across the record. The way the record was originally cut. That means there is none of the distortion and tracking error you may experience with an ordinary turntable.

Quartz drive is the most accurate drive system in the world. So with the Technics SL-L3, the wow and flutter that can affect conventional turntables is virtually non-existent.

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So why get a turntable that just scratches the surface, when Technics gives you so much more. Discover the entire line of advanced Technics turntables. At a dealer near you.

Technics
The science of sound



EDITOR'S PAGE

by
*William
Tynan*



Wrapping up '85 and heading for '86

In a few short weeks, the editors here at HIGH FIDELITY will be on their way to Las Vegas for the Winter Consumer Electronics Show, where the latest in audio and video wizardry will be unveiled. As we began planning for the coming year, we realized that consumers currently are faced with a bewildering array of choices—not only of different models, but of different technologies. In the end, we found ourselves addressing the question, “Just because it’s new, is it necessarily better?” Subsequently, we assigned regular contributor E. Brad Meyer the task of sorting out the various audio and video technologies. In “The New-Tech Quandary: What Should You Buy Now?” he cuts a clear path through a tangled forest, delineating which component categories are “mature” and unlikely to see further major evolution and which are liable to undergo rapid change.

As we were planning next year’s technical coverage, our classical music editor, Ted Libbey, was in Montreux, presiding over the 18th Annual HIGH FIDELITY/International Record Critics Awards (IRCA). Again the distinguished panel of judges served up some

surprises as they selected the best classical recordings of 1985—the primary surprise being that none of the major composers whose births are being celebrated this year are represented among the winners.

At the other end of the music spectrum, rock has once again come under the purview of would-be censors. In “Rock ‘n’ Roll Feels the Fire,” contributing editor John Morthland discusses the recently formed Parents Music Resource Center and its powerful friends (and spouses) on Capitol Hill, placing this censorship drive in some historical perspective. And in “Medley,” Caryl Rivers looks at some of the most sexually explicit and violent lyrics and their target: women.

Our next issue will kick off HIGH FIDELITY’s 35th anniversary year, and we’ll have a number of surprises and special features throughout the coming 12 months. For starters, Technical Editor David Ranada will debut a monthly column on digital audio, called “Bits & Pieces.” Our annual index to articles and test reports published in 1985 also will appear in January. ●

Tandberg’s engineers designed the TCD-3014A to be the most musically accurate cassette deck in the world. It is an intelligent interface between electronics, machine and [32K] automation, devoid of visual distractions and gimmicks that impress the eyes and deceive the ears.

The only thing ostentatious about the TCD-3014A is its performance.

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Technics compact disc players. And the digital compact disc. Together they've given you what no conventional audio system can: the perfection of musical reality.

So with Technics, what you hear is not just a reproduction of a performance, but a re-creation of it.

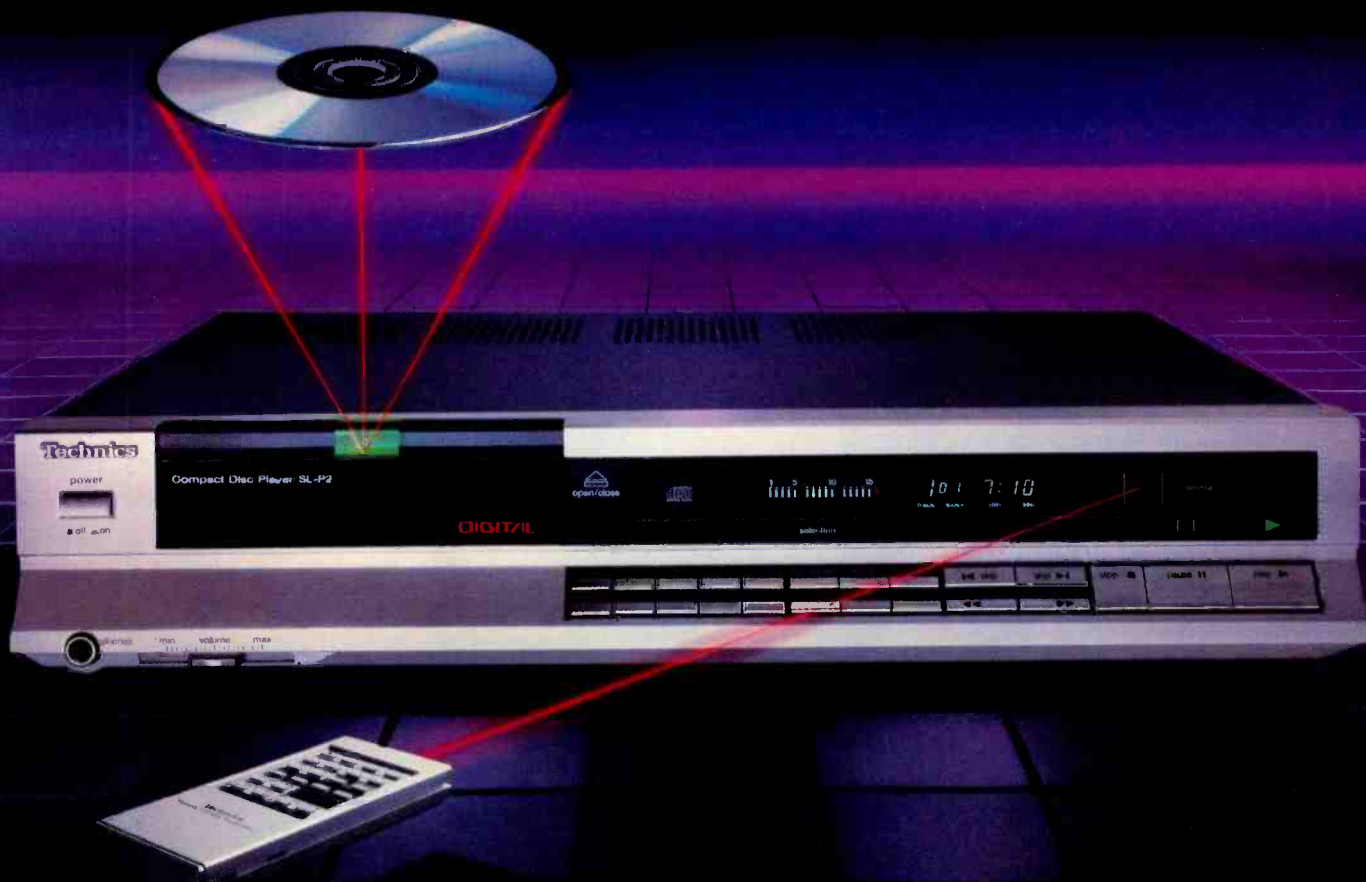
But occasionally even the musical perfection of a compact disc can be marred by fingerprints, dust or scratches. So the Technics SL-P2 compact disc player has improvements like an advanced error correction system, designed to compensate for those imperfections. To help ensure that the sound you hear is still completely flawless.

You also get sophisticated, convenient controls. Such as 15-step random access programming so you can play any selection. In any order. And all of this can be controlled from across the room with Technics wireless remote control.

The digital revolution continues at Technics. Perfectly.

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

Technics
The science of sound



LETTERS

DOUBLE DECKS DEFENDED

Your response to Arthur C. Joy's letter regarding your aversion to testing dual-well cassette decks [May] was that you don't see the point of wasting space on equipment whose basic performance is not good. In July 1983, I bought a Technics RS-M222 double cassette deck. I operate a portable disco, and I supply music to local arenas, theaters, and clubs, put on tape with the Technics. Between me and my wife, it is used an average of three hours per day. If it were to fall apart right now, I would have gotten more than my money's worth and would run out and buy another. I get excellent recordings, and the deck's durability and features are just what the doctor ordered. In short, I hope you'll change your policy on reviewing double cassette decks.

F. J. Hiscock

Sounds Unlimited
Wabush, Newfoundland, Canada

DINING ON "CD SAMPLER"

Bravo on Robert E. Benson's "CD Sampler" [October]. These are exactly the kind of re-

views I need for expanding my collection. I'm especially pleased to see total playing times listed. Personally, I'm boycotting Compact Discs less than 50 minutes long. If all other buyers did the same, perhaps the record companies would get the message.

William Cobb

Honolulu, Hawaii

Robert E. Benson serves up another helping of reviews in this issue.—Ed.

AVOIDING THE ISSUE OF SURROUND-SOUND AUDIO?

Incredibly, "Bringing Home the Movie Experience" [July] leaves the impression that surround-sound video will grow and flourish without affecting the status of surround-sound audio, which, readers are led to believe, died mercifully in 1975. I am convinced that the popular audio press in this country is ignoring entirely every form of surround-sound audio (stereo enhancement, quadraphonics, and ambisonics).


A little more than ten years ago, the audio press was singing the praises of

surround-sound audio. Today, the major publications say nary a word about it, except for an occasional slighting remark. Why the change? Is surround sound better than conventional stereo or not? Did the press alter its appraisal over the past ten years, or is it merely suffering from humiliation and a wounded ego because it originally super-hyped what turned out to be the most financially devastating innovation in the history of the recording and audio industries?

It should be remembered that the Dolby Stereo matrix is highly compatible with any of the 1970s quad matrix schemes: It does the same thing. So how can the press give rave reviews and high exposure to surround-sound video while being fanatically careful not to discuss the merits and future of its audio counterpart? Does it believe that surround sound works better when accompanied by video, or is it simply afraid of giving surround-sound video the kiss of death by associating it too closely with the quadraphonics fiasco of the '70s?

Douglas Steenhulsen

Westfield, N.J.



What other audio tapes fail to hear.

Actually, we've done quite a bit of coverage on surround-sound audio, particularly as abetted by "time delay" systems designed to enhance ordinary stereo recordings. Unfortunately, they and Dolby Stereo video soundtracks are just about the whole ball of wax these days, and the market for delay systems, despite our enthusiasm, is not what you'd call robust. Some audiophiles still have quadriphonic discs and tapes in their collections, but specimens are rare, and except for occasional Ambisonic releases from Britain—which require a special decoder that is not particularly compatible with SQ, QS, or Dolby Stereo—their numbers currently are not growing.

Done right (seldom the case in the old quadriphonic days), surround sound is dramatically superior to ordinary stereo. We said that in the beginning, and our position has not changed. It is our fond hope that home Dolby Stereo decoders intended primarily for extracting the surround channels on the soundtracks of Hi-Fi videotapes will foster a revival of multi-

channel music recording. We've said that before, too. Our motive in focusing the article almost exclusively on the video side was practical, not ideological.—Ed.

CRACKLING COMPLAINT

In your July "Crosstalk," J. H. Askansas complains of a "crackling sound" in his audio system when he walks across the room in his high-rise. Many carpets will generate static charges when someone walks on them. They can be sprayed with aerosol antistatic compounds to cut down on this problem.

Roger Bourne, Jr.

Leominster, Mass.

FAT IS BEAUTIFUL

I find a lot of articles in HIGH FIDELITY very enlightening. In "A Flygirl Fights Back" ["Medley," June], you talk about recording fat drums, handclaps, and scratch effects. How are these sounds generated, and how can I obtain the equipment that makes them?

John Lane

Owensboro, Ky.

Havelock Nelson replies: The scratching heard on "Roxanne, Roxanne" was produced by deejay Ice's ingenious manipulations of a record on a turntable; the handclaps come from a drum-machine chip. "Fat" drums are a little more complicated. Though each engineer has his own moves, the basic technique is to record a drum pattern "hot" (as loud as possible, short of tape saturation) and mix it in or replace it with a preprogrammed sample of another drum sound, triggered by the original. Then you blend the result with an echo track of the first drum, which may also be gated—a process that mixes in the echo track the instant a preset level is reached. The final touch is equalization. You'll need a digital reverb unit (Lexicon 200 or MXR 1000, for example), a drum machine (Linn, Roland, or DMX), and a sampling synthesizer (Fairlight, Emulator, or Synclavier).

TIN-EARED EDITOR?

Am I supposed to take Michael Riggs seriously? I have been reading with moderate in-

One audic tape is so sensitive it can hear a pin drop. Or the full crash of a cymbal.

To no one's surprise, it's made by Sony.

Designed with our widest dynamic range ever, the UCX-S can pick up the softest softs you've never heard.

Or the loudest louds. Without distortion.*

And since we pack smaller, more uniform particles on our tape, you can pack more music in it.

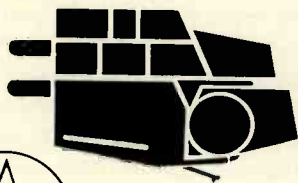
And go from one extreme to the other.

So pick Sony. And hear what you've been missing.



SONY
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The last word in phono cartridges



audio-technica®

terest his series of "Basically Speaking" columns on what can and can't be heard [beginning in April]. And until your July issue, I had found them enjoyable and most of their points reasonable.

Apparently, Mr. Riggs is unaware of the entirely audible advantages of securing a record to the mat. Although my own turntable (an Oracle Delphi) is of above-average performance, I can fully attest to the effect of firmly pressing a record to the mat on a turntable of any quality. I recently auditioned a widely available \$250 turntable on which a vacuum mat had been installed. Without the vacuum, the image was poorly defined and the sound somewhat blurred, though mostly acceptable for casual listening. However, with the vacuum mat activated, the image was more precisely defined and the improvement in sound quality entirely noticeable, if not amazing.

I trust that the next time Mr. Riggs opens his mouth he will first open his ears. Regarding the vinyl-mat relationship, if he finds it "hard to say whether this makes an audible difference in any particular case," I must question his qualifications to write about what I can hear. Meanwhile, I will be taking the column to my audiophile equip-

ment dealer for a good laugh.

Graflin F. Booth
Memphis, Tenn.

Senior Editor Michael Riggs replies: Yes, you are supposed to take me seriously, but I wouldn't begrudge anyone a good laugh. The phrase you quote is perhaps not as clear as it might be, since I did not mean to foreclose entirely the possibility that mats and record clamps have an audible effect. There are plausible mechanisms (cited in the column in question) by which they

The last word in record care



audio-technica®

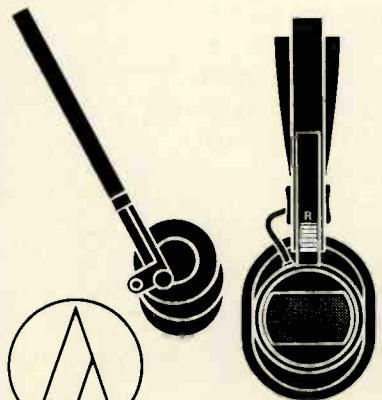
might. However, my own experience so far has been negative. And believe me, I've done a lot of clamping in my time. I have several different mats and hold-down devices at home and have used them regularly—at first to make sure I was getting the best possible reproduction, later to see whether they really made any difference.

Three points bear consideration. First is the question of turntable quality. It may be that mats and clamps do make a difference on models with mediocre isolation

systems or in installations in which the turntable is subjected to a good deal of vibration. Since I am an isolation fanatic, my own system and the one we use here at HF may not be the best test-beds. Second is the way the comparison you describe was conducted. Did the vacuum device remain on the platter throughout? The ones I've seen support the record rather poorly when the vacuum is not on, possibly resulting in colorations that would disappear if the disc were simply laid flat on a conventional mat. And third is the power of suggestion, which is very strong. There have been some interesting experiments in which subjects asked to compare two different components reported sonic differences even when the switches they used were dummies, so that no real change ever was made. This is why double-blind tests are so useful and others are so suspect.

Letters should be addressed to The Editor, HIGH FIDELITY, 825 7th Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019. All letters are subject to editing for brevity and clarity.

The last word in stereophones



audio-technica®



NEC's monitor experience here...

**brings you a better
monitor experience here.**

The computer monitor: the most critical of all picture tube applications. It must be sharp enough for extended viewing from inches away. That's why demanding computer professionals demand monitors from NEC.

Even if you don't run a mainframe computer installation, it's comforting to know that NEC puts much of our computer monitor technology into TV Receiver/Monitors for the home.

Consider the NEC CT-2610A. It uses a full square 26" picture tube for an undistorted image, and a comb filter for picture resolution that's even better than TV broadcasting itself. The CT-2610A receives stereo TV, tunes in 142 channels, and gives you enough inputs and outputs to start your own TV network.

You see, building highly acclaimed computer monitors is not enough for NEC. We feel obligated to take the world's most advanced technology one step further: Into your home.

NEC

We bring high technology home.



JVC Just Did Something About the Great Image of VHS – They Made It Extraordinary



HR-D566U
HQ HI-FI STEREO
VIDEOCASSETTE
RECORDER WITH
MTS DECODER

HQ High Quality VHS

How?

Introducing HQ (High Quality) System technologies. A new way of processing VHS signals with two noise reduction circuits and a higher white clip level.

The result of the HQ System is immediately clear. The picture is sharper. Colors are more natural. Video noise is virtually eliminated.

And, if you record with a new HQ VHS recorder, your recording can be viewed on any existing VHS recorder. JVC ensures that complete compatibility is maintained.

The HR-D566 and HR-D565, JVC's latest Hi-Fi VHS VCRs, are the first to incorporate the HQ System. Proof that HQ pictures are a visual equivalent to Hi-Fi VHS sound is now available at a JVC dealer near you.

HQ System pictures make the VHS advantage clearer than ever before – its quality you'll recognize on sight.



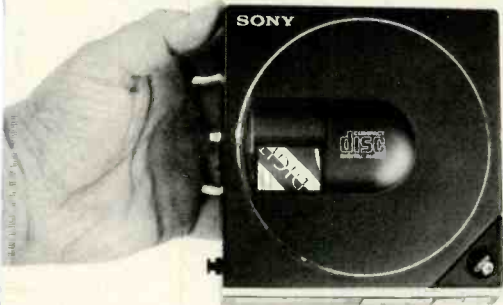
HR-D565U
HQ HI-FI STEREO VIDEOCASSETTE RECORDER

THE GOAL IS PERFECTION.



Hi-Fi VIDSTAR VHS

CURRENTS



The Smallest Compact Disc Player—Again

Sony's engineers, as seems to be their wont, have once more produced the world's smallest CD player: the D-7 "Discman." Like their first portable player, the D-5 (then the smallest, but recently outshrunken by a Technics model), the D-7 in its externally powered mode is little larger than a stack of three CD jewel boxes (about 5 by 5 by 1 inches). Unlike its predecessor and the new Technics, the Discman's battery pack fits snugly and completely beneath the player, turning it into a portable only slightly larger (a half-inch deeper) and heavier than the home configuration. The carrying case included is lightweight, soft, and rubberized—a far cry from the more massive combination battery-pack/case designed for the D-5.

Key to the incredible shrinking player is Sony's application of pulse-width modulation (PWM) to the D-7's laser-pickup controller and power supply. The circuits developed for these functions in the Discman are said to have reduced its parts count by 20 percent compared to that of the D-5. (PWM is not to be confused with PCM digital encoding; it is just an efficient analog

method for converting voltages, most commonly encountered in the "switching" power supplies of computers.) The D-7's total power consumption is said to be 2.6 watts, about the same as an electric clock. That power comes from either house current (via a supplied AC adapter), an optional car-battery adapter, an optional snap-on battery case (holding eight alkaline AA cells for 2.5 hours of playback), or a supplied snap-on rechargeable battery pack (providing 4.5 hours of playback). The battery modules bring the player's weight to 1.8 and 2.3 pounds, respectively—much lighter than the D-5 with its power pack. Another contributor to the size and weight reduction is a new, ultraminiature optical-pickup drive mechanism, which is more immune to vibration as well.

Features do not seem to have been sacrificed in the reduction of bulk. The Discman provides all the usual cueing and search controls, in addition to Shuffle Play (random mixing of track playback order), track-sequence programming, and A/B phrase repeat. Audio specs are similar to those for most other CD players, except for a slightly wider than usual latitude (+1, -3 dB) in frequency response. Analog output filters are used. Headphones are not included (a mini-phone jack is built in), but an adapter cord for connection of the Discman to a home system is. The price hasn't shrunk—at \$300, the D-7 costs the same as the D-5, although it does include a battery pack, which was an extra-cost option for the earlier model. For more information, write Sony Corporation of America, Sony Dr., Park Ridge, N.J. 07656.

(Continued on page 16)



New circuits led to more compact design of Sony's D-7 Discman CD player, which includes battery pack.



THE BEST VIDEO TAPE FOR RECORDING BEETHOVEN, BACH AND THE BEATLES.



Don't waste a great performance on the wrong video tape. JVC uses a newly developed formula that's different from any other HI-FI tape. The quality of the tape is critical in HI-FI VHS because the sound and picture signals are recorded in layers only microns apart. Thanks to the super durability of the titanium oxide particles and film base JVC uses in its HI-FI tapes, you get not only a perfect picture, but high fidelity sound unequaled by any other analog recording method—time after time after time.

Also available in HI-FI Super and Super HI-FI (Studio Use Master).

THE GOAL IS PERFECTION.

JVC



The concert continues with the

Imagine the concert continuing in your car with the ultimate high fidelity music system.

Imagine a car audio system that could deliver music as rich and full as the live concert you just attended. Music that surrounds you with solid basses, crystal clear highs and subtle overtones. A high fidelity audio system that delivers concert hall realism to you and all your passengers.

Ford and JBL have taken this music lover's dream and turned it into a reality. They have combined their efforts and resources to develop a remarkable high fidelity audio system exclusively for Lincoln Continental —

and you.

JBL, the recognized leader in professional loudspeaker design, has been delivering breathtaking sound in concert halls, theaters and movie houses for over forty years. In fact, today, over 70% of the world's top recording studios use JBL loudspeakers.

Ford expertise in electronics and audio engineering speaks for itself with over 50 years of audio design. In addition, Ford maintains one of the most technically advanced audio



new Ford JBL Audio System.

The 1986 Lincoln Continental is shown at the Los Angeles Music Center, both equipped with JBL loudspeakers.

development and test facilities in the world.

Together, they have provided for Lincoln Continental, the Ford JBL audio system which features:

- 12 speakers strategically located throughout the car that have been adjusted and equalized to the surrounding acoustics.
- 140 watts of total system power* that has been designed with extremely low distortion for comfortable listening even at high volume for long periods of time.

*Supplied by 4 amplifiers, each 35 watts per channel into 4 ohms at 1 KHz with less than .07% total harmonic distortion.

- Advanced audio features including full electronic tuning, Automatic Music Search, Dolby® B and DNR® noise reduction systems and automatic tape equalization.

Dolby is a registered trademark of Dolby Laboratories Licensing Corporation.

DNR is a registered trademark of National Semiconductor Corporation.

- Plus a low frequency control computer for continuous loudness compensation and reduced distortion.

All in all, an amazing audio system. But it's still almost impossible to imagine how good it really sounds until you hear it for yourself.

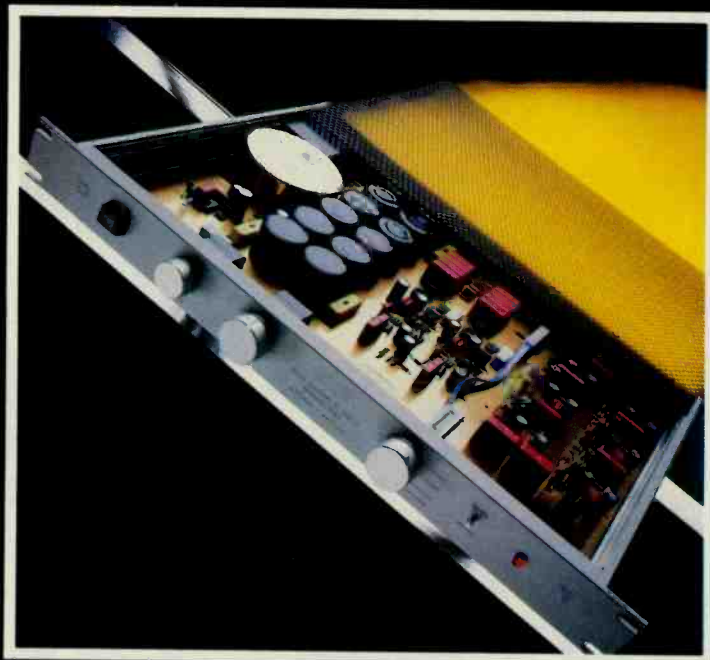


AUDIO SYSTEMS

A Six-Disc Changer



You can program nearly 7½ hours of music on Pioneer's PD-M6 CD changer, which uses magazines that can hold six CDs. Insert a magazine in the slot, and the correct disc is withdrawn and played. A display helps you keep track of discs and cuts.



"...due to Perreaux's verifiable quality, it is likely to be the best value purchase in audio."

Son Hi Fi Magazine, Canada

"The Perreaux SM-2 preamplifier is the synthesis of all you could demand, perfectly accomplished."

Stereo Magazine, Germany

"The Perreaux has the talent for making music become a physical entity within the room."

Hi Fi For Pleasure Magazine, England



TECHPORT LTD., Westbury, NY
1-800-TECPORT

Amplifiers, Preamplifiers, Tuners

Pioneer, taking a different approach to improving Compact Disc versatility and convenience, has introduced the PD-M6, a home CD changer using a small plug-in magazine that can hold as many as six discs in individual protective trays. The disc magazine, which loads like a videocassette into a slot in the player's front panel, is said to provide as much warp and dust protection as the standard CD case. An internal mechanism pulls the selected disc into playing position. Once loaded into a magazine, a disc is handled only by the player, thus reducing the possibility of accidental mistreatment. Pioneer also recommends the user-loaded cartridges for permanent storage, because each one is less than half the thickness of six CD jewel boxes. Each magazine comes with a library-type slipcase with label areas for disc cataloging.

The PD-M6 offers full access to any track on any of the six discs through standard CD cueing and programming functions. Programmed playback is available for as many as 32 selections spread over six discs. And with a touch of the Random Play button, the player will select the tracks itself, for party or background music.

Helping you keep tabs on the nearly 7½ hours of music the PD-M6 can hold is a multifunction fluorescent display panel and a wireless remote control duplicating nearly all the front-panel functions. Audio specifications are typical of today's flagship models, and a subcode output is provided for connection of as-yet-unannounced accessories. Other features include two-speed audible scan and a headphone output with volume control. Size is no greater than that of a normal home player (19½ by 4 by 12½ inches). Price is \$500; extra magazines cost \$10. Additional details are available from Pioneer Electronics (USA), Inc., P.O. Box 1720, Long Beach, Calif. 90801.

(Continued on page 19)

NO OTHER HIGH-BIAS CASSETTE CAN MATCH THESE NUMBERS:

10111001010111001011101



Other Type II (high-bias) cassettes are a long way from home when it comes to reproducing the pure, dynamic sounds of digitally encoded music sources.

But, number for number, TDK HX-S audio cassettes are number one.

Their exclusive metal particle formulation reproduces a wider dynamic range and higher frequency response. This enables HX-S to capture all the crispness and purity of digital performance on any cassette deck with a Type II (high-bias) switch.

With four times the magnetic storage ability of other high-bias cassettes, HX-S virtually eliminates high frequency

saturation, while delivering unsurpassed sensitivity throughout the audio spectrum.

Additionally, HX-S excels in retention of high frequency MOL, which no other high-bias formulation attains.

And HX-S superiority is not just numerical. To maintain its dynamic performance, HX-S is housed in TDK's specially engineered, trouble-free Laboratory Standard mechanism. It's your assurance of unerring reliability and durability, backed by a Lifetime Warranty.

For optimum results with Type II (high-bias)

and digitally-sourced recordings, get TDK HX-S. You'll feel more at home with it, wherever you go.

TDK
THE MACHINE FOR YOUR MACHINE.



BEYOND CONVENTIONAL A/V CONTROL

Onkyo's new TX-RV47 receiver permits the total integration of today's audio and video technologies into one control center. It combines the sonic qualities our audio products are known for with exciting, new features certain to please the most discriminating videophile.

For outstanding video sound, nothing competes with the TX-RV47. For the first time, a true theater experience is possible to achieve at home. Dynamic Bass and Stereo Image Expanders boost low end response and greatly increase sound field spatiality. Monophonic video sound can be dramatically improved with our Simulated Stereo control. Finally, an innovative 4-Channel Matrix Circuit, which when used with two additional rear speakers, effects a "surround sound" experience from any stereo video soundtrack.

Onkyo's acknowledged leadership in amplifier design forms the foundation of the TX-RV47. It features True Low Impedance Drive Capability and Delta Power, insuring maximum dynamic range from any source. Superb FM performance and tuning convenience are Onkyo hallmarks that are also standard.

The TX-RV47 offers full input selectivity. There are 8 in all, allowing connection of 2 stereo VCRs, cable TV/FM, additional audio/video source, and full complement of audio products, all controlled by a full function wireless remote.

The TX-RV47 goes beyond conventional audio/video control to reach a new level in media system performance. Discover the audible—and affordable (under \$500)—difference today at your Onkyo dealer.

Artistry in Sound

ONKYO

200 Williams Drive, Ramsey, N.J. 07446

Better CD Performance?

The features of ADS's second Compact Disc player, the CD-3, aim not so much at operating versatility—though it does carry an impressive complement of convenience controls, most hidden in a pullout drawer—as at performance. For example, the CD-3 has a proprietary “variable” error-correction system designed so that the unit makes as few assumptions as possible about the data to be corrected. The ADS system continuously varies the extent of its error correction to minimize interpolation (concealment). Unlike any other player we know of, the CD-3 uses its control microprocessors in its tracking system as well as for handling the switches on the front panel.

To provide better isolation from external vibration, the CD-3 has a die-cast laser-transport chassis shock-mounted by a four-point suspension system. This is said to keep acoustical or mechanical feedback from triggering the player's error-correction system. Coarse laser positioning is achieved with a direct-drive linear DC servo motor.

The CD-3's output stages contain all the features considered de rigueur in an audiophile Compact Disc player: dual 16-bit digital-to-analog (D/A) converters, a two-times (88.2 kHz) oversampling digital filter system, polystyrene capacitors and metal film resistors at all critical circuit junctions, and a separate, shielded sub-enclosure for the analog circuits. As with other ADS Atelier-series components, both the main chassis and the low-profile outer housing are made of heavy-gauge steel for good shielding. Other features include a 30-track program memory; disc-, track-, and phrase-repeat functions; cueing by track and index numbers; fixed and variable line outputs; and a variable headphone output. The optional RC-1 remote control allows direct keypad selection of any track on a disc in addition to operation of other components in the Atelier series. The CD-3 costs \$895. For details, write ADS, One Progress Way, Wilmington, Mass. 01887.

Ascending another rung on the player price ladder brings one to the Meridian MCD PRO, which, at \$1,400, is among the costliest units on the market. It is basically the standard MCD player with additional



Enhanced performance is the goal of two new CD players, the ADS CD-3 (above) and the Meridian MCD PRO. The CD-3 includes a variable error-correction system; the MCD PRO has a light indicating when digital error-correction is taking place.

Save up to \$25⁰⁰ on the quickest stereo improvement you can make.

Shure's Holiday Savings Rebate on Cartridges and Styli.

A new Shure phono cartridge on the end of your tonearm is the best investment you can make to improve the sound of your stereo system.

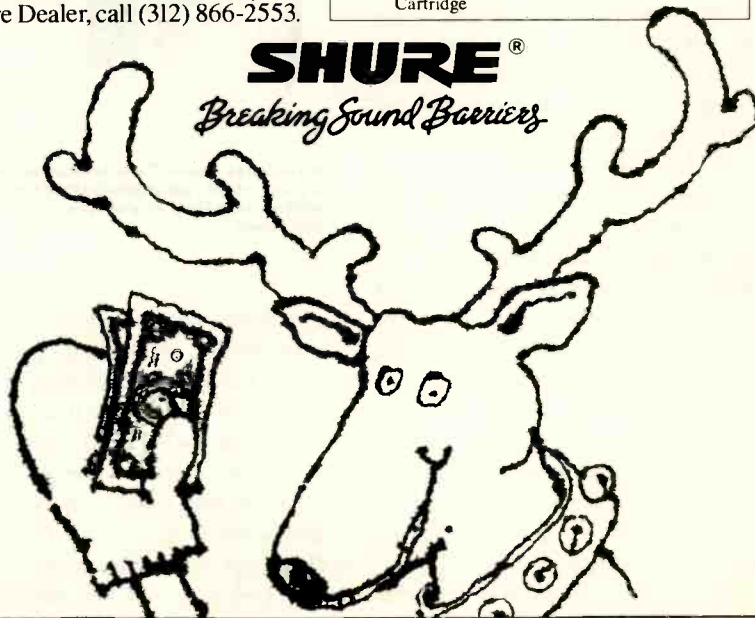
And from now through December 31, 1985, you can receive a cash rebate on a variety of Shure's most sought after cartridges — like the world-acclaimed V15 Type V-MR.

If you already own a Shure cartridge, you can “tune it up” with a genuine Shure replacement — or upgrade stylus, and earn a rebate too.

Whether it's a gift to yourself or someone you love, a new Shure cartridge or replacement stylus can really bring the sounds of the season alive. For the name of your Shure Dealer, call (312) 866-2553.

Cartridge and Stylus Savings

\$25 REBATE V15 Type V-MR Cartridge	\$10 REBATE M111HE Cartridge M110HE Cartridge
\$20 REBATE V15 Type V-B Cartridge	VN5MR Stylus VN5HE Stylus
\$15 REBATE ML140HE Cartridge	\$5 REBATE VN45MR Stylus VN35MR Stylus
ML120HE Cartridge	N97HE Stylus N95HE Stylus N95ED Stylus N91ED Stylus



circuitry added in the lower half of its expanded chassis. This area, electrically and magnetically shielded from the upper mechanism, contains a number of critical circuit elements, including the digital-to-analog converters. The company claims its FET oscillator provides a better clock signal than other circuits, yielding improved resolution of high-frequency information. A switch will invert the absolute phase (polarity) of the MCD PRO's outputs.

Five LEDs are included: an indicator for the phase-inversion circuit, a power lamp, a light showing if a disc is pre-em-

phasized, and two others unique to this player (to the best of our knowledge). One lights when digital errors are being corrected; the other comes on when correction has failed and interpolation or muting is taking place. If these two indicators are properly designed, and the player is of at least average disc-tracking ability, the error light should be flashing almost continuously, but the far more important interpolation LED should hardly ever light up (at least with undamaged discs). The MCD PRO is distributed by Madrigal, Ltd., P.O. Box 781, Middletown, Conn. 06457.

New Concept from Bose!

Out of the blue appeared an ad in a Boston newspaper: "Bose 10.2 New Stereo Everywhere" loudspeakers. "Perfect sound from anywhere in a room," it continued. Our interest prompted the company to release advance information on the first two models in its Point-Two line. In keeping with other recent loudspeaker advances emanating from the Boston area, the designs of the floor-standing 10.2 and 8.2 models concentrate on controlling their radiation patterns, with the goal of providing a stable, convincing stereo image from virtually anywhere in the listening room.

Bose's Stereo Targeting system works by trading off the intensities and arrival times of sounds from the two speakers. Specifically, if you are sitting closer to the left speaker in a conventional stereo pair, the image will be shifted toward the left because sound from that speaker arrives at your ears first. A compensating shift back toward the right can be achieved if the sound from the *right-channel* speaker is made louder. Making a proper stereo image audible from many listening positions involves skewing the radiation patterns of the speakers so that as the listener approaches one of the speakers, its loudness decreases appropriately relative to that of the opposite channel. The main technical challenge in such a system is maintaining a *consistent* skew over a large portion of the audible spectrum. Bose says its Stereo Targeting technology provides the necessary control from 600 Hz to 20 kHz.

Both systems are two-way ported designs, the 10.2 using two 10-inch woofers

and the 8.2 a single 8-inch driver. The 10.2 measures 39 $\frac{3}{4}$ by 12 inches square, while the 8.2 has dimensions of 33 by 16 by 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. The finish of the 10.2 is a Ligum teak veneer; the 8.2 is clad in teak-grain vinyl. Prices per mirror-image pair are \$1,199 and \$949, respectively. One of these models will be reviewed in a future issue. Meanwhile, more information is available from Bose Corp., 100 Mountain Rd., Framingham, Mass. 01701.



Buy any Sony Compact Disc Player and save up to \$200 on 100 great CD titles.

Sony's just found a way to give you a compact disc library on a silver platter.

Starting September 1, when you buy any Sony® home, car or portable compact disc player, you'll be entitled to receive a Sony Compact Disc-Count Coupon Book good for up to \$200 in discounts on your choice of 100 select compact disc titles.*

Each coupon is worth \$2.00 off the regular retail shelf price on select CD titles.**

Just look for the discount certificate inside specially marked Sony cartons. With it, you'll be able to build a complete CD library in no time.

But hurry because this offer is for a limited time only. So see your local Sony dealer or these Sony Compact Disc-Count Centers for details on the best offer in compact discs you've heard in a long time.

DISC-COUNTS AVAILABLE AT ALL LOCATIONS OF THESE PARTICIPATING RETAILERS:

BOSTON COMPACT DISC (Boston Area)	NEW WORLD RECORDS (Buffalo Area)
BUDGET TAPE & RECORDS	ODYSSEY (Las Vegas)
CAMELOT MUSIC	RECORD BAR
DISCOUNT RECORDS	RECORD FACTORY (N. Calif.)
FLIPSIDE (Chicago Area)	RECORD TOWN/RECORD LAND
GOOD VIBRATIONS (Boston Area)	RECORD WORLD/TSS
HARMONY HOUSE (Detroit Area)	RECORDS HAWAII
J & R MUSIC WORLD (New York City)	RENAISSANCE MUSIC MEDIA (Dayton)
KEMP MILL RECORDS (Baltimore/Washington)	SOUND SHOP
LAURY'S RECORDS (Chicago Area)	SOUND WAREHOUSE
LICORICE PIZZA	SPEC'S MUSIC (Florida)
LISTENING BOOTH/WALL-TO-WALL SOUND	STREETSIDE RECORDS (Missouri)
LISTEN UP (Denver Area)	TAPE WORLD
MUSICLAND/SAM GOODY	TURTLE'S RECORDS & TAPES
	VINYL MANIA (New York City)

SONY
THE LEADER IN DIGITAL AUDIO™

*Compact Disc Players must be purchased between September 1 and December 31, 1985.

**All coupons must be redeemed prior to March 31, 1986.

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Sony is a registered trademark of Sony Corporation. The Leader in Digital Audio is a trademark of Sony Corporation of America.



To hear why Stevie Wonder records on Sony Digital equipment, play him back on a Sony Compact Disc Player.

When it comes to capturing the experience of live music, no audio equipment delivers the performance of digital audio.

That's why, for one musician, it's played a critical part in virtually every aspect of the creative process. Stevie Wonder has insisted on this revolutionary digital mastering equipment since 1979. And the name this music industry leader chooses, interestingly enough, is the leader in digital audio. Sony.

Not only has Sony led the way in professional digital recording equipment, we also invented the digital system for playback—the compact disc player. Sony introduced the first home, car and portable CD players. And Sony sells more types of compact disc players than anyone else in the world!

But whichever Sony Compact Disc Player you choose, each allows you to hear everything the artist originally intended.



Shown is the CDP-302, a full-featured, programmable home player that uses Sony's third-generation digital technology.

So why not do what Stevie Wonder does? Play the top-selling compact discs back the same way they were mastered. On Sony Digital equipment.

Once you do, you'll wonder why you listened to anything else.

SONY
THE LEADER IN DIGITAL AUDIO™

**NEC's digital
experience here...**

**brings you a better
digital experience here.**



◆ When you put a satellite in orbit, you want every possible assurance that it will perform. That's why corporations and governments all over the world ask NEC to build their satellites.

Even if you don't launch objects into outer space, it's comforting to know that NEC puts much of our satellite PCM digital technology into our Compact Disc players for the home.

While most high fidelity companies have only two or three years of experience with PCM digital audio, NEC has been at it since 1965. So it comes as no surprise that other manufacturers are now imitating the digital filtration and high-speed switching our CD players have had from the beginning. And it's no surprise that independent critics in America, Europe and Japan have awarded NEC's players top ratings.

You see, building satellites is not enough for NEC. We feel obligated to take the world's most advanced technology one step further. Into your home.

NEC

We bring high technology home.

CROSSTALK



by
Robert
Long

WIDE BANDWIDTH BAD?

One of your buying guides states that [wide] bandwidth isn't needed in a preamplifier and could cause distortion in the amplifier. So would the Harman Kardon Ultrabandwidth receivers and other components have this problem?

Brian Wilder
Glendale, Wash.

A wideband preamp will not cause distortion in the power amplifier, but it may pass infrasonic or ultrasonic signals that could cause distortion in the power amplifier. Such signals can also drive an amp past its output limits, thereby distorting the audible signal. One school sees this as a good reason for bandwidths limited to audible frequencies (20 Hz to 20 kHz or thereabouts). Harman Kardon has traditionally taken the opposite view: that bandpass filtering can change the waveforms of signals within the audible range and is therefore to be avoided. H/K's solution is to take care that its power amplifiers don't distort because of any infrasonic or ultrasonic components passed to them by the preamp.

SPEAKERS ON SHELVES

We need your help to settle an argument. We want to build a stereo/TV/bookcase wall and put our loudspeakers, which measure a little less than 2 by 1 by 1 feet, right in the bookcase section. Where should they be placed: near the floor,

near the ceiling, or somewhere in between—and if so, where?

Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Hershkowitz
Commack, N.Y.

First, some general rules. Putting the woofer near a floor, ceiling, or side wall will emphasize the bass; putting it right in a room corner emphasizes it most. And in general, tweeters should be near ear level and aimed at the listening area.

So ideal placement will depend, among other things, on the sort of bass your speakers produce and how much of it you want. If you put the woofers next to the walls (or floor or ceiling), you'll get noticeable bass reinforcement. If it's too much, you may want to orient the speakers to put their woofers closer to the center of the room, though that may make the treble a little weaker or less smooth because the tweeters may fire less directly at the listening area. Floor or ceiling placement usually should be avoided: Aside from the misdirection of the tweeter sound, many listeners object to the unnatural stereo imaging that tends to result. Be warned, however, that speakers placed so that the tweeters and woofers are horizontally arrayed may cause changes in the stereo image as you move your head from side to side.

HUM HO!

In a back issue [August 1982, "Retsoff's Remedies"], I found a trick that will detect

hum. Low and behold, my three-year-old Dual 508 turntable puts out 4 dB of hum with the tonearm at the lead-in groove and increases to 10 dB at the end of the side. (The numbers come from my spectrum analyzer.) I tried everything in the article, but nothing eliminates the hum. Should I invest in a new turntable, or is this a common occurrence?

Francis J. DiNozzi
Katonah, N.Y.

I couldn't locate the trick you refer to in the Retsoff article, but evidently you were unaware you had this hum until you tried it. So I gather that it's normally inaudible or, at least, not intrusive. If the hum shows up at only the 60-Hz line frequency (however your analyzer may name the band in which this frequency occurs) and not at its harmonics (120 and 180 Hz, in particular, where hum level in some products is even higher than at 60 Hz), that's good, because the lower the frequency, the less noticeable the interference. But no AC-powered audio equipment is totally devoid of hum if you look for it carefully enough. The rise in hum level as the arm moves toward the center of the record strongly suggests that the cartridge or its wiring is picking up hum from the motor windings—for which there usually is no simple remedy except perhaps a cartridge with better magnetic shielding. But if it's not bothering you, there's no reason to get a new turn-

table—which may produce even more hum.

PREAMPS COMPARED

Would you say that in careful listening to a \$4,000 preamplifier (like the Audio Research SP-10) and a \$300 preamplifier (such as the NAD 1020B or the Hafler DH-110) they would be significantly or audibly different, presuming everything else is equal?

Robert Jammer
Milwaukee, Wis.

In the first place, in audio, "audibly different" is "significantly different." In the second, whether there will be a perceptible difference will depend on the nature of the test and the testers. You can get opinions ranging all the way from "no difference at all" to "night and day" from listeners hearing the same comparison. Since double-blind, matched-level tests (the most objective and "careful" sort I know of) tend to produce the former result with preamps, I'd take that extreme as being nearer the truth. It's certainly what I hear in such tests.

The catch is, of course, what you mean by "everything else is equal." For example, if the frequency responses of the compared preamps differ by more than 0.1 dB over a wide frequency range, a subtle difference may be heard (depending on the program material).

We regret that the volume of reader mail is too great for us to answer all questions individually.

THE NEW-TECH QUANDARY

**WHAT
SHOULD
YOU
BUY
NOW...**

**...and which audio
and video technologies
are really worth
waiting for?**



by E. Brad Meyer

New technologies in audio and video always make things more confusing for the consumer. Even after you understand how everything works, what the latest developments mean, and what's coming up and when, you don't always know what to do next—specifically, what to buy next. Most people assume that today's hardware is "better" than last month's, let alone last year's. But as the saying goes, the pioneer is the guy with the arrows

E. BRAD MEYER WRITES FREQUENTLY ON AUDIO AND VIDEO TOPICS.

ENERGY 22

The Energy 22 Pro Monitor has been hailed by critics as one of the major loudspeaker design breakthroughs of the last decade.

In fact, the Energy 22 may well rank as a standard against which other speakers should be judged. Audition either the Energy 22 Pro Monitors or the Reference Connoisseurs and we think you'll agree that they are not only the most exciting speakers you've ever heard, but "a stunning achievement" indeed!



"A STUNNING ACHIEVEMENT"

Top Retail Experts Personal Views About The Energy 22

New York, New York, The Listening Room, Ron Mintz – Owner. "As one of the First dealers in the U.S. to realize the quality of the E-22, we continue to be amazed by the imaging and spaciousness of this speaker of such compact size & price."

Hicksville, Long Island, New York, Designatron, John Thomas – Manager. "Never before have we experienced a speaker system which exhibits the level of realism that the Energy 22 provides. The excitement generated by Energy speakers is only exceeded by the pleasure of owning them. The Energy 22 sets a reference standard by which all other speakers must be judged."

Washington, D.C., Audio Associates, Mike Zazanis – Owner. "The ENERGY 22 is a very musical speaker at a very inexpensive price that easily could cost a lot more money."

Chicago, Illinois, Pro Musica, Ken Christianson, John Schwarz – Co-owners. "The Energy 22 Reference Connoisseur & Pro Monitors simply outperform the competition. Musically satisfying to the most demanding listeners."

Miami, Florida, Audio By Caruso, Don Caruso – Owner. "The REFERENCE CONNOISSEURS are among the most neutral, uncolored, speakers we have found!!! They provide very relaxing listening."

El Paso, Texas, Sound Room, Mark Pearson – Owner. "Energy 22 pro monitor is the most three dimensional speaker ever."

Phoenix, Mesa, Arizona, HI FI Sales, Dave Ross – G. Mgr. "ENERGY 22. One of the most accurate, best imaging speakers we have ever heard."

Los Angeles, California, Christopher Hanson Ltd., Christopher Hanson – Owner. "The Energy 22 is very musically involving – 'Absolutely Brilliant!'"

San Diego, California, Stereo Sound Co., Bob Kokley – Owner. "Over the years we have heard many promises of new breakthroughs in speakers with disappointing results. The ENERGY 22 is one of the only products which performed beyond those promises. A job well done!"

Berkley, California, The Sounding Board, Jeff Smith, Jim Serena Co-Owners.

"The Energy 22 is an outstanding speaker. What's incredible is the value, compact size and its performance level."

THE DEALER'S #1 CHOICE

ENERGY 22

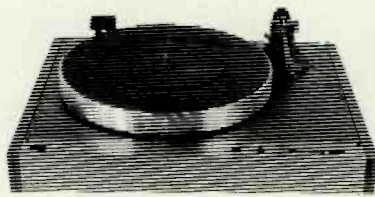
Energy Loudspeakers, 135 Torbay Road, Markham, Ontario
L3R 1G7 – (416) 475-0050 • TLX 06-986689

THE NEW-TECH QUANDARY

sticking out of his back. This is clear to anyone who was the first on the block to own a Cartrivision video recorder, an Elcaset tape deck, a CD-4 four-channel decoder, or even the first Sony Betamax, which had a one-hour maximum recording time and wouldn't play prerecorded software. All were advances, and all failed in the marketplace, partly because they lacked the features or performance necessary for widespread acceptance. In short, they were too little, too soon (or, in the case of the Elcaset, too late).

So let's hear it for mature technologies! The criteria for maturity? An audio or video medium is mature when every recording is compatible with every player, when adults know how to use the equipment as skillfully as their children, and when it would be hard to imagine life without it. A medium is immature when you have to ask what kind of player someone has before trading recordings, when disputes still rage over whether the medium is really better than its immediate predecessor, and when there are no stores devoted exclusively to selling it. By these criteria, the only audio media that qualify as mature are the LP, the 45-rpm single, stereo FM radio, and the Compact Cassette. Although the Compact Disc hasn't made it yet, it has grown faster than anyone expected: Many (not all) players are simple to operate, and the first CD-only stores have just appeared. Note also that there are no mature video media (except broadcast television), though the predominance of the VHS tape format places it in late adolescence.

That said, we must watch out for the still immature areas in audio and video, where



If you choose wisely, your next turntable may be the last you'll ever need.

developments are capable of rendering current equipment obsolete. Stopping at each major product category, I'll try to peer into the future to help you decide whether to buy now or wait a few months for the next newfangled whiz-bang gizmo.

Turntables are easy: If you need one, buy one. After a century of evolution, turntables are a mature technology: The best ones are excellent, and the best of the cheap models are remarkably good. Furthermore, research and development in the lower price categories has ground almost to a halt, though high-end manufacturers are still making minor improvements (usually by rediscovering an older, forgotten design principle, ironically enough). If you choose wisely, your next turntable may be the last you'll ever need, barring total equipment breakdown.

Some people are now asking whether they should even include a turntable as part of a new music system. A few small classical and jazz labels produce only cassettes and

Compact Discs, and new purchasers may hesitate before buying into a technology that, to them, seems to be dying. I still see a turntable as an essential part of any music system. The biggest reason is the vast selection of LPs available, more than 20 times the size of the current CD catalog and greater than that of the prerecorded cassette as well. If you're interested in getting high-quality sonics, don't be misled by the cassette's larger market share, which comes solely from its durability and portability: The average LP still sounds much better. However, if you're interested only in listening to mainstream repertory or the greatest hits of recent years, it's possible that you'll miss nothing with a CD-only system.

Cartridges and styli you also should buy now, especially if your current pickup or stylus is more than two years old. But choose your brand with care: The coming shakeout in the cartridge industry could leave the unwary consumer without a source of high-quality replacement styli. The largest compa-

nies almost certainly will be around many years. They will diversify to survive and will keep on making styli in a back room somewhere.

On the other end of the scale, the makers of esoteric high-end moving-coil cartridges (which don't have replaceable styli anyway) have always served a small, dedicated clientele and will probably find enough loyal analog-disc partisans to keep them going. Unfortunately, those of you who lack faith in the longevity of this high-end market may need to remortgage the house to buy enough \$1,200 cartridges to keep you supplied from here on out.

Particularly useful cassette-deck features, such as automatic tape calibration and quick autoreverse, have steadily become cheaper, more reliable, and more widespread, as have powerful noise reduction systems like Dolby C and DBX and other signal-processing advances like Dolby HX-Pro. Continued rapid improvements in cassette technology will be difficult, however, because the former driving force behind the medium's progress—new tape formulations—has stalled since the introduction of metal tape. What you really need to know is whether analog tape will be obsolete in three or four years, replaced by one of the new digital recording formats: rotary- or stationary-head PCM tape, 8mm video with companded PCM audio encoding, or maybe even recordable Compact Discs.

At this point, you don't need to worry. Digital recorders will be considerably more



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Introducing the Jensen Power Amplified Car Speaker System.

Find out how many watts of power your car stereo receiver puts out. If it's like most standard receivers, it's between 5-10 watts. And that's fine for easy listening. But if you want to hear all the vividness, all the excitement, all the energy of rock and roll, jazz, and classical music, you need the Jensen® Power Amplified Car Stereo Speaker System. Especially if you're using good tapes or plan on adding a compact digital disc player.

The extra power comes from the fact that each Jensen Power Amplified Speaker has a built in 20 watt amplifier. Buy a pair of these

speakers and you get 40 watts of power. Or, buy a system of four and you get 80 watts of electronic fury in your car. The extra power actually helps your system reproduce more of the signal contained on today's better tapes or compact digital discs. You'll hear more realistic sound at low or high volume levels than possible without the extra power.

The crisp, sharp sound is the result of more than 71 discrete electronic components mounted in the base of each speaker. The sound is rich, clear, and perfectly balanced. Yet the low profile design of these speakers allows you to place them

in the doors or side panels of most automobiles without additional modification. As an extra bonus, each speaker can also be tuned during installation to match your taste, or your car's acoustic environment.

Take it from the experts at Jensen, don't buy your car stereo system backwards, buy your speakers first. And now you can buy the speakers with built in digital-ready power amplifiers instead of investing in additional costly components.

The new Jensen Power Amplified Speaker.

The only thing quiet about it is its price!



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THE PERFECT BALANCE BETWEEN ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION AND TECHNICAL ACCURACY

The gymnast, poised on the balance beam, knows that in order to achieve a perfect score, there has to be total attention given to detail in artistic interpretation as well as the mastering of technical accuracy.

While all gymnasts aspire to perform the most intricate of routines, not all have the ability. The same is true of compact disc players. The digital sections of most CD players are similar to compulsory exercises: They're all basically the same and all basically adequate. The analog sections are where the quality of the performance and the differences between competitors are determined. The analog section of the Harman Kardon HD500 compact disc player has been designed with attention to subtle details, using only the most sophisticated circuitry and highest quality discrete components. The result is breathtaking dynamic range, startling realism and a world class performance every time.

Visit your local Harman Kardon dealer and judge for yourself...The HD500 receives a perfect score.



harman/kardon

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expensive to own and operate than their analog counterparts, so the basic \$150 Dolby B deck will be around for a long time. You have probably amassed a pretty big collection of cassettes by this time, and you'll need something durable to play them on. If your present deck is four or five years old, or if it lacks one of the more powerful noise reduction systems, now is a good time to trade up. (Don't forget to try your old tapes on any new machine to ensure compatibility of equalization and head alignment before you get rid of the recorder that made them.) By the time your new cassette deck gives up the ghost, the surviving digital technologies (if there are any) will be cheaper and bug-free.

Prices of basic Compact Disc players will continue to fall, albeit not much lower than the \$160 level they have reached in some retail markets. There are listeners who report hearing significant improvements in the sound of CD players; the lack of agreement among these people on which models sound best (not to mention their inability to distinguish the "good" models in double-blind tests) suggests that any differences are, at most, minor. Compatibility between players and discs is assured by the international CD standard and by the Sony/Philips stranglehold on CD patents. Meanwhile, there have been and will continue to be meaningful improvements in tracking ability, features, and convenience, and companies will offer portable CD players that are smaller and car models that

Whether you should go the CD route depends on your feelings about the sound and the music available on current discs.



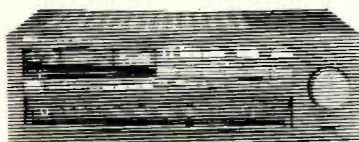
are more shock-resistant.

The next year or so will bring Compact Disc players with facilities for extracting information from the subcodes that on future discs may contain liner notes, librettos, or even still pictures (see "CDs: Report from Japan" in last month's "Currents"). If such multimedia or interactive presentations intrigue you, you may want to wait and see what happens. The CD will also make its long-awaited en-

try as a computer-data storage medium. However, this is only peripherally related to audio, the player required for computer Compact Discs (CD ROMs) being very different from an audio model.

Considering only music playback, whether you should go the CD route depends on your feelings about the sound and the music available on current discs. If you like what you hear, you need not fear that your player will be notably in-

Most progress in FM tuning is being made



in areas where performance was already adequate five years ago.

ferior in sound quality to anything coming a year or two down the road. Major improvements in CD sound are precluded by the medium's digital encoding standard, which probably is good enough for the foreseeable future. But if your musical tastes roam even a little off the beaten path, you may have to wait another year or so before overloaded CD pressing plants can cater to your software needs.

A technique developed by CBS engineers, FMX applies noise reduction to a specially modulated stereo-FM subcarrier. It promises reception as quiet as monaural with only a small increase in tuner cost—less than \$10 in parts. Whether this system will do you any good depends on your location relative to the stations you like. If you often find yourself using the mono button on your tuner, FMX will be worth waiting for. But even though it is said that FMX tuners will be compatible with normal transmissions and that FMX transmissions will be compatible with normal receivers, these claims are hard to verify because there are no FMX tuners available and only a few stations experimentally broadcasting an FMX signal.

Don't expect any real benefits from FMX to accrue until at least a year from now: The system requires modification of both transmitters and receivers. Stations will take a while to change over, and component manufacturers need time to design the circuit into their products. The increased stereo coverage given by FMX will provide a good financial incentive for many

kinds of stations to convert, so you may find that you can receive interesting, newly licensed low-power stations serving specialized markets.

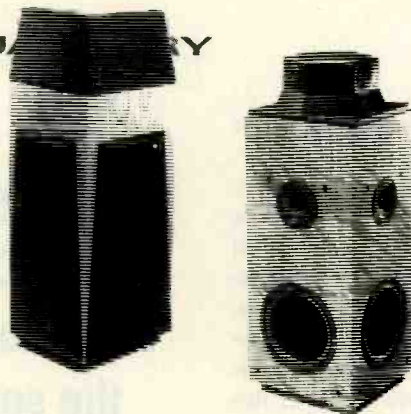
Aside from FMX, there is very little on the FM tuner horizon in the way of substantial improvement, meaning that you can buy today with confidence. Most progress is being made in areas where performance was already adequate five or ten years ago: distortion, separation, and signal-to-noise ratio. And a cost-effective, practical solution to multipath—the oldest, biggest, and most daunting problem with FM—still eludes the best engineers.

Ultimately (in this case, within ten to 15 years), most audio electronics will either handle digital signals exclusively or convert analog signals to digital form for internal computerized signal processing. Sophisticated digital algorithms for equalization, hiss reduction, and the removal of ticks and pops have already been written. To make use of them, products must be reinvented, not just redesigned—a process that will probably take at least three or four years.

Meanwhile, preamplifiers, amplifiers, and signal processors get steadily smaller, lighter, cheaper, and better-sounding, though progress now comes in small increments (in contrast to the pace of the late '70s). If you choose well—concentrating on low distortion, high output power, and a high signal-to-noise ratio—there is no reason to expect that you'll regret your purchase of any present-day equipment for quite a while.

For loudspeakers, the most radical and interesting of recent advances—and they are advances, even if not universally accepted—have been in stereo imaging. Companies like Acoustic Research, Bose, DBX, and Polk (see "Sonic Marvels," June, and "Polk's Super SDA," August "Currents") have begun to use psychoacoustical data and measurement techniques, collected and analyzed with the aid of computers, to create new speaker radiation patterns with improved specificity of localization, depth of image, and rendering of reverberant space. The products emerging from this research are still somewhat experimental, and therefore both complex and expensive. DBX has already announced a second-generation product for about one-half the cost of its initial effort, and many of the other technologies have fallen in price as well (see this month's "Currents").

The sonic and technical differences among even these models remind us that in loudspeaker design there is as much variation around the ideal of perfect reproduction as there is steady progress toward it. More than other audio components, speakers are bought for the overall subjective impression they give, as opposed to the methods used to achieve it. You may like the latest models, or you may find that nothing can take the place of your old favorites. The greatest speakers of the past 30 years are still great. Since nothing can change the sound of a system as much as a new pair of speakers, whether a certain model sounds attractive and convincing is more im-



Whether a certain speaker sounds attractive and convincing is more important than any new technical wrinkle.

portant than any new technical wrinkle.

The recent adaptation to consumer video equipment of wide-bandwidth circuitry developed for computer displays has greatly improved the potential picture quality of video monitors and television sets. The big question for the near future is whether monitors with digital signal processing will bring further upgradings in clarity, apparent resolution, and smoothness of motion through the synthesis of additional scan lines and the cancellation of multipath interference ("ghost" busting). Products using these techniques may appear within the year. At the moment, the word "digital" on a TV monitor betokens only such nonessential features as the ability to display a second picture within the main one or to store text

entered into memory through the remote control, or the presence of a jack on the back accepting the video output from a computer. Because considerable picture-quality improvements may come via outboard signal-processing boxes, it makes sense to ask if a set can accommodate that kind of unit. Some processing will result in a cleaned-up composite-video signal that will be compatible with any monitor's video input; other techniques will require entirely new sets.

Without advanced signal processing, monitor quality has gone just about as far as it can. Wide-bandwidth models already have luminance resolution exceeding the theoretical limits of television broadcasts, not to mention those of VCRs. Improvements are likely to come only in the traditional video battlegrounds: picture brightness and color rendition. Since these are ultimately matters of taste, buy a high-resolution set, if you like it.

(Continued on page 32)

Precision without complication.

At the very pinnacle of Aiwa's technological breakthroughs resides a new standard of performance. A new level of precision. A new achievement in human engineering. It is the Aiwa AD-F990B.

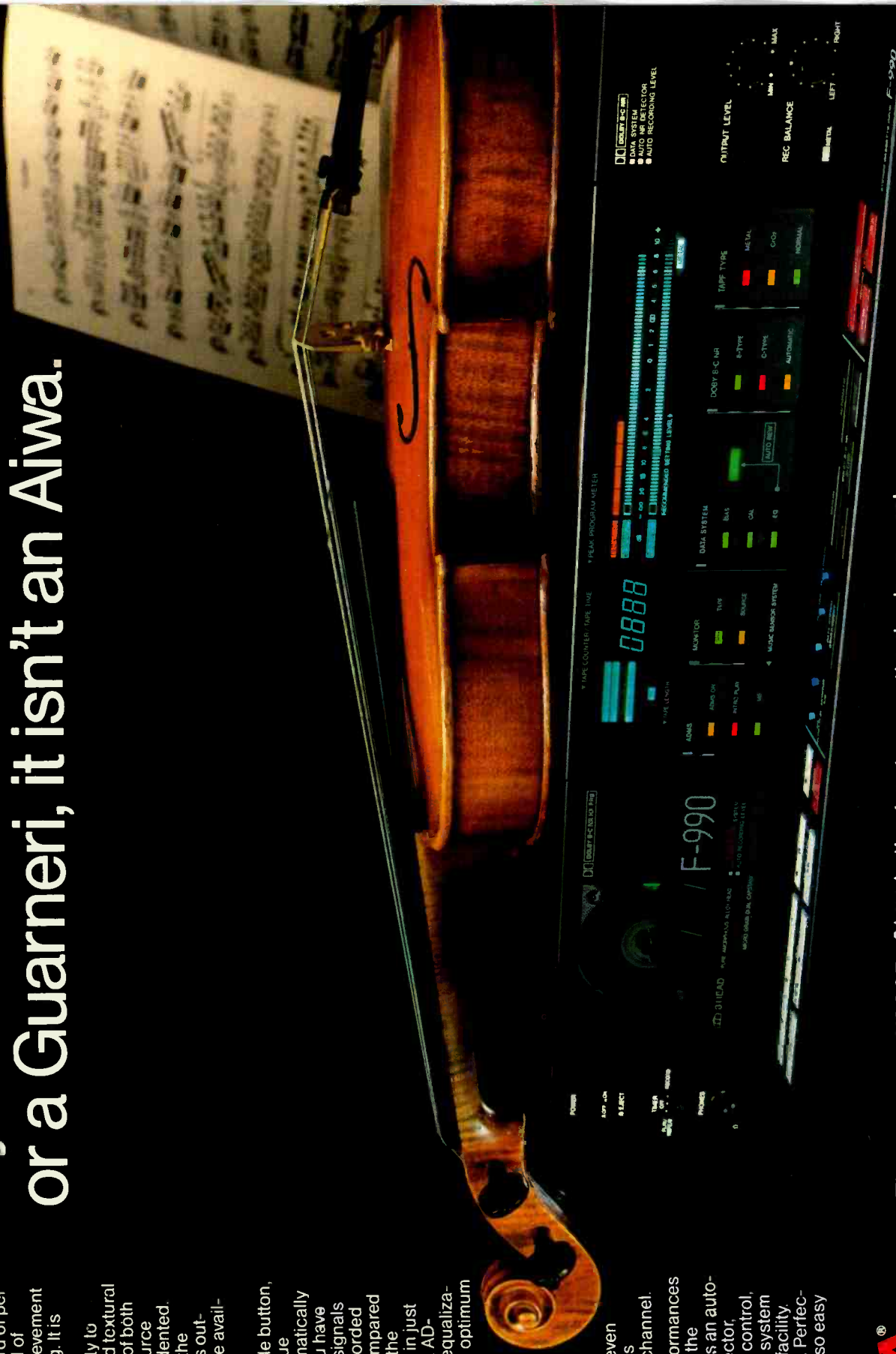
The AD-F990B's ability to meet the dynamic and textural demands of the best of both digital and analog source materials is unprecedented. The ease with which the AD-F990B makes this outstanding performance available is unbelievable.

At the touch of a single button, the AD-F990B's unique D.A.T.A. system automatically analyzes the tape you have selected. Reference signals are automatically recorded and then instantly compared to the original. Once the analysis is complete, in just 16 seconds, the Aiwa AD-F990B adjusts bias, equalization and sensitivity to optimum levels.

Through the use of Dolby HX Pro, the AD-F990B then dynamically adjusts bias levels in response to the music you record. It even adjusts the bias levels separately for each channel.

To make perfect performances even more effortless the AD-F990B also offers an auto-noise reduction detector, auto-recording level control, auto-demagnetizing system and auto-intro-play facility. The Aiwa AD-F990B. Perfection has never been so easy to achieve.

If you can't tell whether it's a Stradivarius or a Guarneri, it isn't an Aiwa.



The Aiwa AD-F990B. Simply the best cassette deck we make.

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THE NEW-TECH QUANDARY

Videocassette recorders are changing fast. Hi-Fi circuitry for Beta and VHS has proven its value to audio-conscious movie renters; the Super Beta machines (and, to a somewhat lesser degree, their VHS counterparts) have noticeably improved picture quality. However, many recent Hi-Fi recorders cannot decode stereo broadcasts because they were designed before the standardization of the stereo TV format.

If you're wondering about buying MTS stereo decoding in your next VCR, your decision will depend less on whether you want to watch music videos or Johnny Carson in stereo than on whether your local broadcasters are willing to invest in the necessary transmitting equipment. Call them to find out. If you have only cable, an MTS-capable VCR or TV tuner probably won't do you much good; you'll be more interested in whether your new machine has an FM-simulcast switch.

The real wild card in VCRs is the 8mm format. The sound of those models with digital audio is very good, but if you need the highest picture quality, stick with Super Beta. (As mentioned above, an 8mm VCR with digital audio circuitry may be a good choice for audio-only applications.) The 8mm recorders are smaller and more convenient than their half-inch cousins, an important advantage if you do a lot of home camera work.

The big disadvantage of 8mm is that prerecorded programs won't become available in any quantity until mid-1986 or later, and even that deadline depends on the timely arrival of two-hour or longer

cassettes (the current maximum being 90 minutes). Confirmed movie-renting addicts should stay with VHS and await the improvements in its picture quality promised for VCR models introduced in 1986.

The latest addition to the videodisc is a digital soundtrack recorded along with the picture. The only videodisc players that can decode it also play CDs, resulting in a massive and expensive component possibly duplicating a function you already have in your music system. If you must have the very best sound from the few digitally encoded videodiscs, either buy a model that will accommodate a soon-to-be-available outboard digital-audio decoder or wait for a more compact video-only player with built-in decoding.

Next year, JVC, in what

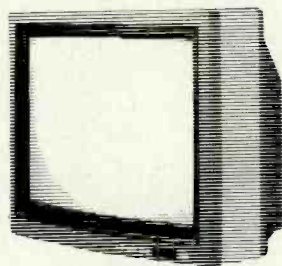
**If you need
the highest picture quality
in a videocassette recorder,
stick with Super Beta.**



many observers see as an incredible attempt to recoup massive development costs, will be re-introducing its stylus-read VHD system to the U.S. market. VHD pressings are much easier and cheaper to make than Laservision's laminated discs, but even this may not help. The videodisc market itself is expanding very slowly, and despite reductions in player cost and complexity, it doesn't look like the medium will catch on in a

big way. Too bad, for true videophiles know that videodisc systems remain the best source of quality pictures.

As we have seen, the maturation of most new audio and video technologies depends not just on the manufacturing of innovative playback or receiving equipment, but also on the simultaneous introduction of new formats and transmission methods. In each case, there is the classic chicken-and-egg problem: Home equipment makers wait for the availability of software or broadcasts, while program producers await the presence of a significant population of users. The key question is whether the new way of doing things will really take hold. That will happen only if the new way is obviously "better" than the old, as exemplified by the success of the Compact Disc vs. the failure of quadraphonics. Of the categories we've examined, only FM tuners, video monitors, videocassette recorders, and videodisc players need give you pause; for the others, the green flag is out. ●



**Without advanced
signal processing,
monitor quality
has gone just about
as far as it can.**



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Escape from the ordinary.
Escape to the realism of Nakamichi Sound.
The Nakamichi CR-7A Discrete-Head Cassette Deck
—the most convenient—and sophisticated—
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It selects equalization automatically—
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It adjusts azimuth, level and bias automatically—
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a recording just before the end—if you'd like.
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Music.

In 1967 we started making loudspeakers in a garage with nothing to guide us but a knowledge of physics and a passion for music. Our first product was an instant classic, a loudspeaker called the Servostatic I, which was considered by many to be the ultimate audio transducer of its time.

Since then we've always had an ultimate loudspeaker in our product line, and we've used these dream systems to showcase

a host of new speaker technologies we've developed. We immediately dubbed these systems Reference Standards — as indeed they must be since many aspects of their designs have been widely copied in the industry.

No company in audio can claim a greater commitment to significant research, developing practical and accurate polypropylene woofers, midranges, tweeters and state-of-the-art EMIT and EMIM planar drivers.

And we've used the results of that research to improve sound reproduction in a multitude of applications and at virtually every price point - from under \$40 a pair for our A32 auto speakers up to about \$35,000 for our finest system, the Infinity Reference Standard. Today we're in the home, the automobile and now in video.

But our research doesn't stop at the laboratory. We still listen to music, and we still get excited by it.

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TEST REPORTS



DENON DCD-1800R COMPACT DISC PLAYER

Dimensions: 18¼ by 4 inches (front panel), 12 inches deep plus 2½ inches minimum clearance at back for heat sink, etc. Price (including RC-1800 wireless remote control): \$949. Warranty: "limited," one year parts and labor. Manufacturer: Nippon Columbia Company, Ltd., Japan; U.S. distributor: Denon America, Inc., 27 Law Dr., Fairfield, N.J. 07006.

The DCD-1800R might be described as a "luxury" Compact Disc player—not only because of its unusually comprehensive wireless remote control, but because of the extra care Denon (typically) has taken with its digital-to-analog (D/A) conversion electronics, which are crucial to obtaining the highest possible audio performance. Many other manufacturers claim extra, proprietary quality here, of course, though Denon perhaps commands a little more credibility than most because of its work as a founder of PCM digital recording. Whether past history really is reflected in present facts, we can't tell for sure; but we can attest to the excellence of the final result.

As Denon explains the design of the DCD-1800R's Super Linear Converter, it gives special handling to the most-significant and second-most-significant bits of the binary PCM code (the two left-hand digits, so to speak), whose nonlinear conversion in more mundane circuitry the company compares to crossover (or

"notch") distortion in Class B amplifier circuitry. Because of cumulative small errors in the derivation of instantaneous analog voltages from the binary numbers that represent them, discontinuities can appear in the D/A transfer function. It is these "glitches" that Denon seeks to smooth out.

On the convenience front, Denon has provided all the standard features (fast cueing in either direction, for instance—audible if you begin in PLAY, inaudible if you begin in PAUSE) and has added a hefty complement of unusual ones. You can program two ways: by using the SKIP to step to each track you want and then put it into memory or by entering track numbers (as many as 15 of them) directly on the keypad. INTRO SCAN will sample the first ten seconds of each track—on the entire disc or, if you've programmed the player, in the sequence. The REPEAT will recycle the entire contents, the complete programmed series, a section of the disc between two "flags" that you insert wherever you want, or (with the end flag

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

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.



set ahead of the beginning one) all of the disc *except* whatever is between the flags.

Two elements in the control scheme struck us as being particularly nice. One is the way most of the functions (CUE, SKIP, INTRO SCAN, and so on) remain available when programmed sequences are played. (There are some oddities, however: You can't cue back into the preceding programmed track, for example.) We also admire Denon's inclusion on the remote of all controls except the headphone level and the drawer open/close. Since the two missing functions require your presence at or near the player in any event, they don't really belong on the remote, which therefore is as comprehensive as any reasonable user could demand.

When we tried programming the three movements of the middle concerto on a disc containing three works, to test for the player's ability to simulate continuous performance from individual tracks, the DCD-1800R responded superbly. When you're operating the controls—programming the player or recuing the pickup, for instance—it produces a series of beeps and clicks that can be heard quite clearly at six feet or more, quiet as they are, in the silences following or preceding the music. But they aren't produced during playback of the programmed sequence itself and therefore don't distract your attention from the music.

Also handy are an index-number readout on the display panel and (if you have any of the growing number of indexed CDs) a stepper for jumping from one index point to the next. You cannot program by index numbers, however, or go directly to a given number without

stepping through the intervening ones, which can be an exceptionally slow process. The display also registers the current track number and elapsed time from its beginning. There are no alternative time modes, but few users will miss them.

Frequency response is up $\frac{1}{4}$ dB through the bass (say, below 100 Hz), and the curve turns up $\frac{1}{2}$ dB at 20 kHz in the right channel, with some very slight rippling (less than $\frac{1}{4}$ dB's worth) above 4 kHz in both. It is thus very flat by normal high fidelity standards, though not exceptionally so for a CD player. The square-wave and impulse photos show approximately average ringing, which, like the small high-frequency response deviations, is caused primarily by the player's steep ultrasonic output-smoothing filter. That the first excursion of the impulse is negative, rather than positive, indicates that the player inverts signal polarity (absolute phase). It is unlikely, however, that either this or the ringing is of any sonic consequence.

The DCD-1800R's Super Linear Converter demonstrated outstanding performance in Diversified Science Laboratories' distortion and linearity measurements. In no case did distortion exceed our 0.01-percent reporting threshold. And linearity was essentially perfect at all but the lowest test level (-90 dB), where the error amounted to a mere 2 dB. We've seldom been able to make comparable statements in past tests of CD players, and we've never before been able to make both about the same model.

The Denon also played all of the tracking and error-correction test tracks without faltering—an important, if increasingly routine, achievement. Also

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

left channel	+ $\frac{1}{4}$, - < $\frac{1}{4}$ dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz
right channel	+ $\frac{1}{2}$, - < $\frac{1}{4}$ dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz

OE-EMPHASIS ERROR

left channel	\pm < $\frac{1}{4}$ dB, 1 to 16 kHz
right channel	\pm < $\frac{1}{4}$ dB, 1 to 16 kHz

CHANNEL SEPARATION (at 1 kHz)	84 dB
-------------------------------	-------

CHANNEL BALANCE (at 1 kHz)	\pm < $\frac{1}{4}$ dB
----------------------------	--------------------------

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

without de-emphasis	97 dB
with de-emphasis	102 dB

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

at 0 dB	< 0.01%
at -24 dB	< 0.01%

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

0 to -30 dB	< 0.01%
-------------	---------

LINEARITY (at 1 kHz)

0 to -70 dB	no measurable error
at -80 dB	+ < $\frac{1}{4}$ dB
at -90 dB	+ 2 dB

TRACKING & ERROR-CORRECTION

maximum signal-layer gap	> 900 μ m
maximum surface obstruction	> 800 μ m
simulated-fingerprint test	pass

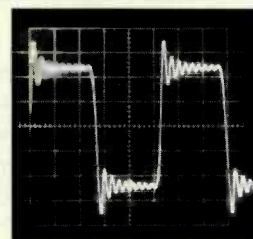
MAXIMUM OUTPUT LEVEL

line output (fixed)	2.01 volts
headphone output (adjustable)	4.08 volts

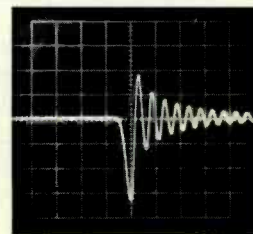
OUTPUT IMPEDANCE

line output	10 ohms
headphone output	110 ohms

SQUARE-WAVE RESPONSE (1 kHz)



IMPULSE RESPONSE



Play the hits. With no errors.

By now, you're probably familiar with the virtues of compact discs. The wide dynamic range and absence of background noise and distortion. And the playback convenience.

Yet as advanced as the medium is, it's still not perfect.

Which is why you need a compact disc player as perfected as Yamaha's new CD-3.

The CD-3 uses a Yamaha-developed tracking servo control LSI to monitor its sophisticated 3-beam laser pickup. This LSI makes sure that horizontal and vertical tracking accuracy is consistently maintained. And that even small surface imperfections like fingerprints or dust will not cause tracking error and loss of signal.

Even more rigorous servo tracking control is provided by a unique Auto Laser Power Control circuit. Working with the tracking LSI, this circuit constantly monitors the signal and compensates for any manufacturing inconsistencies in the disc itself.

Then we use another Yamaha-developed signal processing LSI that doubles the standard 44.1 kHz sampling frequency to 88.2 kHz. This over-sampling allows

us to use a low-pass analog filter with a gentle cutoff slope. So accurate imaging, especially in the high frequency range, is maintained.

We also use a special dual error correction circuit which detects and corrects multiple data errors in the initial stage of signal reconstruction.

So you hear your music recreated with all the uncolored, natural and accurate sound compact discs have to offer.

Another way the CD-3 makes playing the hits error-free is user-friendliness.

All multi-step operations like random playback programming, index search, and phrase repeat are performed with ease. And visually confirmed in the multi-function display indicator.

And the wireless remote control that comes with the CD-3 allows you to execute all playback and programming commands with the greatest of ease.

But enough talk. It's time to visit your Yamaha audio dealer and tell him you want to play your favorite music on a CD-3. You can't go wrong.

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



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These systems combine true component-level technology in tasteful and exciting packages that require a single shopping decision.

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The new level of performance we've engineered into our rack systems can't be explained in one sentence. That's why we've written the Sherwood White Paper on Audio Systems. For your free copy, ask your dealer, or circle the reader service number below, and we'll send you one direct.

At Sherwood, we've always made sound our first priority. It's brought us to Live Performance quality. And isn't that the purest form of sound?

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One of Sherwood's new Live Performance Systems, the SS-1028 features up to 150 watts from its high-resonance amplifier, digital tuner, linear tracking turntable, 18-band equalizer, dual-speed dubbing deck, and four-way tower speaker with ribbon super tweeters. Optional CD player is available. 13845 Artesia Boulevard, Cerritos, California 90701

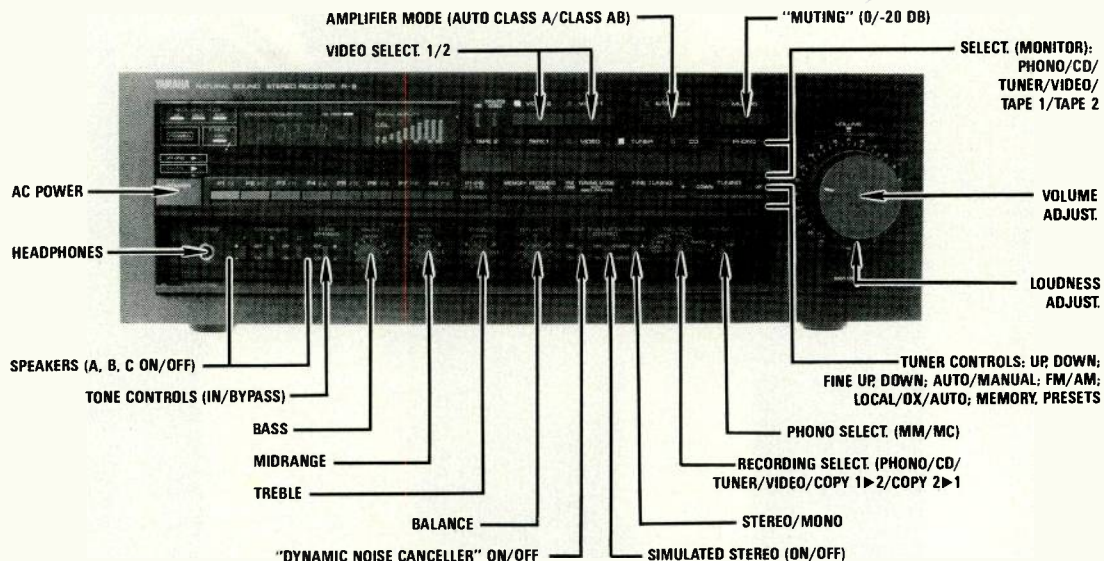
important, but less commonplace, is satisfactory resistance to shock and vibration. The DCD-1800R is very good in this respect, though severe vertical blows (stronger, in our judgment, than it's ever likely to receive in normal use) did cause mistracking.

In listening, two members of our staff, working independently, came to the same conclusion: that the sound of this player may indeed have a perceptible edge over that of many or even most of the models we have encountered recently. If so, however, it is a very subtle ad-

vantage, and the evaluation is a subjective one grounded on aural memory, which is notoriously fallible. But whatever degree of excellence individual listeners may wish to assign the player on that basis, its documentable excellence is beyond question. ●

YAMAHA R-9 AM/FM AUDIO-VIDEO RECEIVER

Dimensions: 17 by 5½ inches (front panel), 15 inches deep plus clearance for controls and connections. AC convenience outlets: two switched (60 watts max. total), one unswitched (200 watts max.). Price: \$799. Warranty: "limited," two years parts and labor. Manufacturer: Nippon Gakki Co., Ltd., Japan; U.S. distributor: Yamaha Electronics Corp., USA, 6660 Orangethorpe Ave., Buena Park, Calif. 90620.



If you're familiar with any mainstream Yamaha receivers of the last few years (there have been a few atypical mutants), or even the company's separates, you should feel right at home with the R-9. The salient innovations are its provisions for video sources, some features specifically designed for TV audio, and wireless remote control. This is not a full-fledged AM/FM/TV receiver, however, as it includes no TV tuner and only enough video circuitry to permit single-switch selection of sources that deliver both sound and pictures (VCRs, for example).

Considering the number of options involved, the layout is excellent both fore

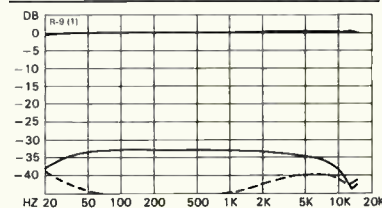
and aft. The line-level audio inputs are ranged in a single vertical row, which also includes jacks for preamp output and main-amp input. You can replace their jumpers with the leads for a speaker equalizer or other processor, which will then be inserted between the source selectors and the volume, mode, tone, and other controls. This is a more sensible place than the usual position after the VOLUME, because the levels at this point in a receiver's circuitry are standardized at roughly 1-volt maxima; the alternative can present an attached processor with a wide range of signal levels, putting a premium on its dynamic range.

To the left is a video group consisting

FM TUNER SECTION

Except as noted, data are for the local reception mode.

FREQUENCY RESPONSE & CHANNEL SEPARATION



Frequency response

L ch	+ 1/2, - 3/4 dB, 20 Hz to 15 kHz
R ch	+ 1/2, - 1 dB, 20 Hz to 15 kHz

Channel separation

	≥ 33 dB, 20 Hz to 15 kHz
--	--------------------------



Television featured:
Mitsubishi CK-3501 R.

 MITSUBISHI

Martin Scorsese On Television.

Martin Scorsese is challenging. Like his pictures. *Mean Streets. Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore. Raging Bull. The Last Waltz. The King of Comedy.*

As a kid, he gobbled up films like popcorn. As an adult, he makes films, collects films, and leads the movement to preserve films.

Preservation. "The idea is to raise the consciousness of the studios, to make them realize that with the advent of cable, they had to start preserving their stuff. Even the stuff they think is no good. You can't make a value judgement. The old pictures that you think are no good, very often are 10 years later the most influential.

Classics like 'Psycho' and 'The Searchers' were panned in their own time. I found out that something like 20 years of Johnny Carson were erased because they needed the space.

The goal is to save everything."

Television. "I have TV on all the time, in every room. I have a library, American directors, obscure films, maybe 4,000 titles. It appears that my own films may have more of life on home video than in the theater. This means that composition, lighting, size of people in the frame will be affected, as will the choice of black and white or color, mono or stereo sound.

You have to be sure what you want to say will have as full an impact on the small screen as on the big screen."

The cinematic visions of filmmakers like Martin Scorsese challenge the manufacturer to offer video equipment capable of capturing the totality of their art in all its subtlety and nuance. Mitsubishi accepts that challenge.

For a detailed look at Mitsubishi telecommunication equipment for the home, send for our brochure, Mitsubishi: The Thinking Inside.



 **MITSUBISHI**

Mitsubishi Electric Sales America, Inc., 5757 Plaza Drive, Box S, Cypress, CA 90630-0007

of pin-jack triplets for left and right audio and for the video itself. Below it are pin jacks for the phono input and spring-loaded connectors for antenna input. The latter work well for the leads from the supplied AM loop antenna, but the 45-degree angle at which the conductors must be inserted makes it rather awkward for 300-ohm FM twinlead. You have to trim one side shorter than the other and simultaneously manipulate the lead with one hand and the two release buttons with the other—a difficult proposition even if this section of the panel were less cramped. There also is provision for stripped 75-ohm coax, but not for direct plug-in of an F connector.

To the right of the inputs are binding posts for three sets of bare-wire loudspeaker leads. If you use all three, speaker pairs B and C will be in series with each other (acceptable for background-music extension speakers) and in parallel with A, which therefore will be the speaker pair of choice for serious listening. If you use only two (A and B), they will be in parallel, with the oddity that pair B will be turned off if you switch on the unused C connections.

The front panel groups the tuner controls at the upper left and along the middle rank, just above the flip-down door, and the main source selectors and some of the major options at the upper right. Behind the door are speaker selectors, tone and mode controls, and the recording selector, which includes options for dubbing in either direction between the two decks for which connections are supplied. Thus, the main selectors serve as monitor switches: You would, for example, switch between TUNER and TAPE 1 to monitor, respectively, source and tape when recording off the air onto Tape 1.

There are provisions for two video inputs, each with a stereo/mono switch for its audio. Video 1 also has a set of outputs so you can use it for a VCR and record from whatever feeds Video 2. Another pin jack serves as the main video output (to a monitor that will accept the signal in this form or to a modulator that will convert it to RF to feed a TV receiver's antenna input). The main outputs for the associated audio are the R-9's speaker terminals. You choose Video 1 or 2 at

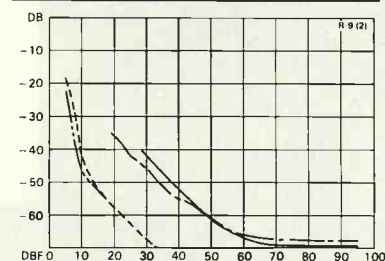
the top of the front panel, and the audio and video outputs from the chosen source become available at the main monitor and recording selectors.

Among the mode options—which do not affect the feed to the tape outputs (straight audio or audio-video)—are a mono/stereo switch, a simulated-stereo option, and what Yamaha calls its Dynamic Noise Canceller. This last is a single-ended noise reducer, apparently similar to DNR in that it's a dynamic filter. On weak FM signals, it can be heard abruptly gating the hiss, but all such circuits exhibit some side effects when the signal is very noisy and presumably are intended as a last recourse. Results usually are better when the signal contains only a small amount of hiss, which can then be completely and unobtrusively removed. The simulated stereo delivers an apparent increase in loudness together with a rather blurry impression of openness—again, about par for this sort of feature.

The R-9's wireless remote control, which is supplied with the receiver, can be used to switch it between on and standby. That is, when you press the remote OFF, the R-9 can be reawakened by pressing the remote ON; if you turn off the receiver at its own front-panel switch, it can't be turned back on remotely. In addition, you can use the remote to adjust the volume control (via a motor drive whose effect can easily be assessed from across the room, thanks to an LED calibration mark on the knob), to switch a 20-dB "mute," and to select Video 1 or 2, any of the main monitor options, and any of the station presets.

Yamaha has provided memory slots for 16 stations, in any mix of AM and FM, on eight buttons, plus a ninth to switch between "banks." As delivered, the R-9 is labeled for FM 1 to 8 on the upper bank and AM 1 to 8 on the lower one. The labels are on a slider that can be withdrawn from the left end of the front panel. Yamaha supplies translucent labels for all U.S. FM station frequencies plus AM 9 to 16 and FM 9 to 16, so that you can substitute them for the premounted ones once you have decided on programming. This is a very appealing feature, available on only a few other tuners and receivers.

FM SENSITIVITY & QUIETING



—	stereo quieting (noise), local mode
- - -	mono quieting (noise), local mode
- · - ·	stereo quieting (noise), DX mode
- - -	mono quieting (noise), DX mode
Stereo sensitivity (for 50-dB noise suppression)	
local	38 dBf at 98 MHz, with 0.48% THD + N (38 1/2 dBf at 90 MHz; 37 1/2 dBf at 106 MHz)
DX	34 dBf at 98 MHz, with 1.3% THD + N
Mono sensitivity (for 50-dB noise suppression)	
local mode	13 1/4 dBf at 98 MHz
DX mode	12 1/2 dBf at 98 MHz
Auto-scan threshold (mono)	21 dBf
Stereo threshold	
local mode	28 1/2 dBf
DX mode	19 1/2 dBf
Stereo S/N ratio (at 65 dBf)	68 1/4 dB
Mono S/N ratio (at 65 dBf)	77 dB

CAPTURE RATIO		
local mode	1 dB	
DX mode	2 dB	

SELECTIVITY	local mode	DX mode
alternate-channel	29 1/4 dB	67 1/2 dB
adjacent-channel	4 dB	13 1/2 dB

HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD+N)		
local mode	stereo	mono
at 100 Hz	0.13%	0.072%
at 1 kHz	0.07%	0.056%
at 6 kHz	0.22%	0.17%
DX mode		
at 100 Hz	1.55%	0.095%
at 1 kHz	0.98%	0.36%
at 6 kHz	4.8%	1.16%

STEREO PILOT INTERMODULATION	
local mode	0.05%
DX mode	0.76%

INTERMODULATION DISTORTION (mono)	
local mode	0.025%
DX mode	0.23%

AM SUPPRESSION	62 3/4 dB
PILOT (19 kHz) SUPPRESSION	47 1/2 dB
SUBCARRIER (38 kHz) SUPPRESSION	78 dB

AMPLIFIER SECTION

Measured in Auto Class A mode: see text.

RATED POWER	21 dBW (125 watts) / channel
--------------------	------------------------------

OUTPUT AT CLIPPING (at 1 kHz; both channels driven)	
8-ohm load	22 dBW (160 watts) / channel
4-ohm load	23 3/4 dBW (235 watts) / channel

DYNAMIC POWER (at 1 kHz)	
8-ohm load	23 dBW
4-ohm load	25 1/4 dBW
2-ohm load	see text

DYNAMIC HEADROOM (re rated power, 8-ohm load)	+ 2 dB
--	--------

HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD; 20 Hz to 20 kHz)	
at 21 dBW (125 watts)	≤ 0.034%
at 0 dBW (1 watt)	< 0.01%

FREQUENCY RESPONSE	
+ 0, -1/4 dB, 18 Hz to 27.6 kHz	
+ 0, -3 dB, 12 Hz to 97.6 kHz	

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Our mid-size component system that's designed to fit into your life, not dominate it. A Teac double cassette deck with high-speed dubbing and continuous playback means the music never stops. On top of that, a Teac stereo tuner/amp with 30 watts per channel, a quartz locked AM/FM tuner with 15 presets remembers your favorite stations. A five-band graphic equalizer lets you shape the sound the way you like it. A fully-automatic turntable rounds out the stack while a pair of 3-way bookshelf speakers provide room-filling sound. It's all the Teacs you need to make beautiful music together.

TEAC

In the manual tuning mode, which switches the tuner to mono, the main up/down control steps by half-channel (100 kHz) increments on FM, full-channel (10 kHz) increments on AM. In addition, there's a fine-tuning control that divides step size by ten: to 10 kHz on FM and 1 kHz on AM. (You're more likely to need this feature to detune a station that's suffering interference from a neighbor than to follow a station's carrier away from its assigned frequency.) Once you've tuned the station, you must switch to the automatic mode to receive it in stereo and store it in memory, because the presets remember the mode as well as the frequency. In automatic, the tuner will progress to the next receivable station at each press of the main tuning bar, though the fine-tuning still responds manually once the receiver has arrived at the nominal center frequency.

Another switch chooses between DX (distant) reception, local reception, and automatic (which switches between the other two modes on the basis of signal strength). Greatest sensitivity and selectivity are achieved in the DX mode, greatest separation and lowest distortion in LOCAL. For tuners with switchable IF (intermediate frequency) bandwidth, we use the wide position as the reference setting because that's what delivers the most perfect reception of good signals. The R-9 evidently does more than vary IF bandwidth from mode to mode, but for consistency we stayed with LOCAL as the reference setting for bench testing. Most of our listening was in DX, however, because we found that the automatic switching chose that mode unless signal strength was very high—higher than it is on most of the stations that we use for testing.

The "signal quality" display lights up pairs of LEDs at intervals of close to 6 dB from 20 to 44 dBf, which is the most important part of the range. For owners of rotatable antennas, this leaves unreported the range above, where many very listenable but not quite optimum stations can be received in most locales, and that below, where antenna orientation is critical to achieving listenable results. The latter can be managed fairly easily by ear, however, and the former

profits relatively little from antenna tweaking. So we'd rather have the display as it is than with bigger steps between thresholds to cover a larger range.

The FM section tested out very well at Diversified Science Laboratories, with excellence most evident just where you'd expect it: the DX-mode sensitivity and selectivity, the LOCAL capture ratio and channel separation, and the frequency response in both modes. Pilot suppression, on the other hand, is only good, but this is a comparatively minor point and certainly does not detract from the tuner's overall high level of performance. And fine as the lab data are, we were, if anything, even more impressed by the results we obtained in the listening room, where borderline stations came in with unusual clarity and freedom from noise.

The phono section can be switched for use with either fixed-coil (moving-magnet or moving-iron) cartridges or low-output moving-coil models. Either way, the sound is protected from warp-frequency interference by a nonswitchable infrasonic filter that rolls off at approximately 14 dB per octave below 12 Hz. The moving-coil setting provides some additional infrasonic rolloff, plus a little at the extreme top of the treble (where many moving-coil models are a little peaky, making the attenuation welcome). Both phono modes introduce a very slight treble emphasis, which extends right to the top of the audio band in the fixed-coil setting. The fixed-coil phono response also shows a very slight increase in the deep bass, before the infrasonic filter takes hold. These rises don't exceed 1/2 dB (relative to 1-kHz output) and therefore lie at the very threshold of audibility, even assuming a relatively "perfect" pickup with no greater colorations of its own.

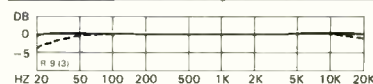
Other measurements of the preamplifier section are fairly typical of what we have come to expect from Yamaha, which means that they are very good. The tone controls—for bass, midrange, and treble—supply a little more than 10 dB of boost or cut at about 35 Hz, 1.2 kHz, and 15 kHz, respectively, in their extreme settings. This is a little more play than is typical of midrange controls,

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

RIAA PHONO EQUALIZATION



fixed-coil	+ 1/4, - 1/2 dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz; -16 3/4 dB at 5 Hz
moving-coil	+ 1/4, -3 dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz; -22 dB at 5 Hz

SENSITIVITY & NOISE (re 0 dBW; A-weighting)

	sensitivity	S/N ratio
aux input	15 mV	82 dB
fixed-coil phono	0.26 mV	75 1/2 dB
moving-coil phono	17 μV	75 dB

PHONO OVERLOAD (1-kHz clipping)

fixed-coil phono	120 mV
moving-coil phono	8.2 mV

INPUT IMPEDANCE

aux input	35k ohms
fixed-coil phono	48.2k ohms; 280 pF
moving-coil phono	220 ohms

OUTPUT IMPEDANCE (to tape)

from aux input	direct
from tuner section	2,700 ohms
from phono inputs	215 ohms

DAMPING FACTOR (at 50 Hz; re 8 ohms)

	105
--	-----

CHANNEL SEPARATION (at 1 kHz)

	67 dB
--	-------

a little less than is usual for the other two. But for most purposes, they should prove quite effective.

The loudness compensation is unusually complex. It is controlled by a ring encircling the volume knob (where the BALANCE usually is), which can be turned only counterclockwise from its 12-o'clock calibration, where it is disengaged. If you want to reduce the volume without a perceived loss of bass, you turn this ring down instead of the volume knob. At the lab's lowest test setting, it produced 39½ dB of attenuation in the midrange, 32½ dB in the high treble, and 14½ dB at 20 Hz. At more useful in-between settings, the relationship between midrange and treble remained about the same, but the extreme setting's upward slope of about 6 dB per octave throughout the bass and even the lower midrange was replaced by shelving in the deep bass, below about 100 Hz.

The power amplifier uses Yamaha's Auto Class A circuit, which runs pure Class A for minimum distortion at low and moderate signal levels and switches into the more conventional Class AB mode only when the signal amplitude exceeds its ability to provide a proportional voltage swing. Because Class A is markedly less efficient than Class AB, drawing essentially the same current at idle as it does at full output, Yamaha gives

you the option of switching to straight Class AB operation.

DSL measured distortion in both amplifier modes. When the R-9 was switched to Class AB, distortion at high frequencies did rise, though it consisted entirely of the second harmonic (the least objectionable form of harmonic distortion) and still didn't push above our reporting threshold of 0.01 percent. At 21 dBW (126 watts), where it presumably is operating Class AB even when switched to Auto Class A, there was no measurable difference between them. Nor could we detect an unequivocal difference in our listening.

The amplifier is powerful enough that, for most purposes, it should be able to operate in Class A virtually without interruption: Only transient peaks are likely to exceed the Class AB threshold. Its 8-ohm dynamic headroom is excellent, permitting the equivalent of 200 watts output in short bursts. Into 4 ohms, it delivered the equivalent of 335 watts. Both figures represent superb performance for a receiver. Results at 2 ohms were less clear-cut. Initially the lab's measurement was compromised by the protection circuitry, which didn't actually clip the waveform but did introduce considerable distortion above about 18 dBW (63 watts). Since this was so much less than Yamaha claims for the R-9, DSL ran the

test again from a cold start and got 25½ dBW (355 watts). But after the receiver was allowed to warm up for a while on a series of tone bursts, the figure dropped to about 20½ dBW (112 watts). Apparently, the action of the protection circuitry depends partly on the temperature of the output transistors. We therefore would suggest that if you run two pairs of speakers simultaneously, neither pair's impedance should drop significantly below 8 ohms at any point.

The R-9 is an excellent receiver of its type. Performance is without significant weaknesses and is, in fact, outstanding in some important respects, particularly in the FM tuner. Even more satisfying, perhaps, is the logic of the design, which makes it unusually easy to use for so complex a product. Admittedly, it is harder to master than many audio-only receivers, but when the relatively esoteric controls are hidden by the front-panel door, the R-9 is not particularly intimidating. And the clarity of the layout makes it possible to figure out most of what is not immediately apparent. When in doubt, there's always the owner's manual, which is above par—especially for beginners, since it avoids unnecessary technical details. (The technically inclined will, however, find the block diagram at the back unusually rewarding.) A fine job all around. ●

SPICA TC-50 LOUDSPEAKER WITH SERVO SUBWOOFER

TC-50 dimensions: 13 by 16 inches (back), 11½ inches deep. Servo subwoofer dimensions: 17½ by 16 inches (top), 14½ inches high. Price: TC-50, \$450 per pair; Servo, \$595 each. Warranty: "limited," five years parts and labor. Manufacturer: Spica, 1601 Paseo de Peralta, Santa Fe, N.M. 87501.

These two products are designed to be used together as a full-range loudspeaker system, though they actually are sold separately. The TC-50 speaker—or satellite, in the full configuration—is triangular in cross section, with the grille running down the slanted front. Behind it are a 6½-inch acoustic suspension woofer and a 1-inch dome tweeter. The Servo is a floor-standing sealed enclosure, whose 8-inch driver, behind the front grille, is powered by a built-in amplifier designed by PS Audio.

Both the TC-50s and the Servo are available in true oak or walnut veneers. The TC-50s can be used alone as full-range speakers, if you like. To extend the bass, you can add either a pair of Servos—one for each channel—or use a single Servo summing the two. We chose the latter option for our tests.

The satellite/subwoofer hookup scheme is much more complex than average. The satellites stay attached to your main amplifier terminals, just as they do when they're used without the Servo.



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one perfectly matched system. Featuring the incredible Super Beta VCR, the best picture and sound in video. A 26-inch color monitor with true stereo broadcast capability and 140 channel tuner. A programmable compact disc player with a remarkable 96dB dynamic range. A fully automatic

turntable, full logic dual cassette deck, and a programmable digital AM/FM stereo tuner, all feeding a 100-watt per channel amplifier with 5-band graphic equalizer. And you hold the controls to every feature, every function right in the palm of your hand. It's enough to give you goose bumps.

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But to derive a bass-only signal for the Servo's amp, and to keep the low frequencies from reaching the satellites, you must insert an adapter (Spica calls it a "passive interface") between your preamp and power amp. If you're using electronics in which preamp and power amp are combined into a single unit, without jumpers, Spica instructs you to have jumper connections added, rather than use tape-monitor connections.

The interface box is fitted with three pairs of pin jacks and a switch calibrated for amplifier input impedances of 22, 32, 47, 75, and 100 kilohms (22,000 ohms, etc.). If your amplifier's input impedance is significantly different from all of these values, Spica tells you how to rewire the box internally.

The catch in all of this is determining your power amp's input impedance; not all manuals list the appropriate specification. Worse, not only does Spica assume that the amplifier input impedance is purely resistive and that the preamplifier output impedance is very low (the only conditions that would make the capacitor-choice graph accurate), but it presumes that you know whether or not your amplifiers invert the polarity of signals that pass through them. In our experience, the large majority do not, but to be sure that the subwoofer and satellites are in phase after hookup, you may have to do some careful listening. If they're not in phase, you can reverse the "hot" and "ground" leads to the satellites. Spica also gives you instructions for reversing polarity of the subwoofer, which shouldn't be necessary unless you have ascertained that the satellites maintain absolute phase and you want to match the subwoofer to them. (The key question here is absolute phase relative to what, since recordings are far from consistent in their maintenance of polarity.) Deciding the correct satellite/subwoofer phase relationship is a problem with many three-piece systems, not just the Spica, but it is exacerbated by the unusual hookup requirements.

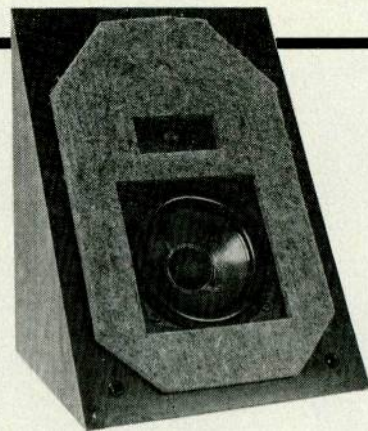
If you keep your electronics at some distance from your speakers, you'll have to run long line-level (pin-jack) leads to hook the Servo into the system. You'll also need AC power for the Servo's internal circuitry, which incorporates a cross-

over, its own amp (including a level control, on the back panel), and the servo feedback circuit after which the model is named. Besides these, the pairs of color-coded binding posts on the backs of the satellites, and electrical test points behind the subwoofer grille, there are no further connections or controls on the speakers.

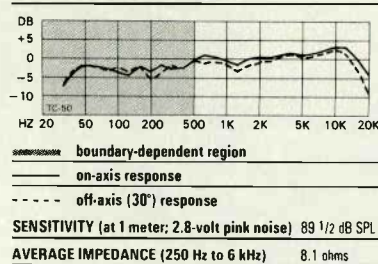
The test points are for use with an AC voltmeter, if you have one, to balance the Servo's output with that of the TC-50s. Spica supplies a cassette recorded with a sine wave at the crossover frequency (88 Hz). You play this tape, measure voltage at one TC-50, multiply it by 0.7, and adjust the Servo's amp to deliver, at the test points, an AC voltage equal to that product. If you don't have a voltmeter, Spica gives you instructions for doing the job by ear, which is how you should do your final balance trim anyway, even after meter-aided adjustment.

Because of the attention paid to phase response in the design of these speakers, Spica has very specific recommendations for their placement. They call for the satellites to be out away from any walls (though not the same distance from the back wall as from the sides) and raised on stands to the listener's ear level. The subwoofer goes between the two satellites. (Some other manufacturers suggest that as long as the crossover is no higher than 100 Hz, a subwoofer can be put just about anywhere in the room without harming the sound balance or stereo imaging, though this doesn't always work well.) The distance from the front edge of the subwoofer to the ideal listening position should be $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches greater than the distance from the front edges of the two TC-50s, which should be equidistant from the stereo seat.

Diversified Science Laboratories observed nearly all these recommendations in setting up for its tests. But DSL put the subwoofer—jumpered to function as one half of a dual-subwoofer setup—directly below the TC-50 used in the measurements. The whole, therefore, represented half of a dual-subwoofer stereo setup. The total system response obviously depends on the balancing procedure; the lower portion of the curve (presumably, below 88 Hz) could have been raised or lowered with respect to the re-



ROOM RESPONSE CHARACTERISTICS

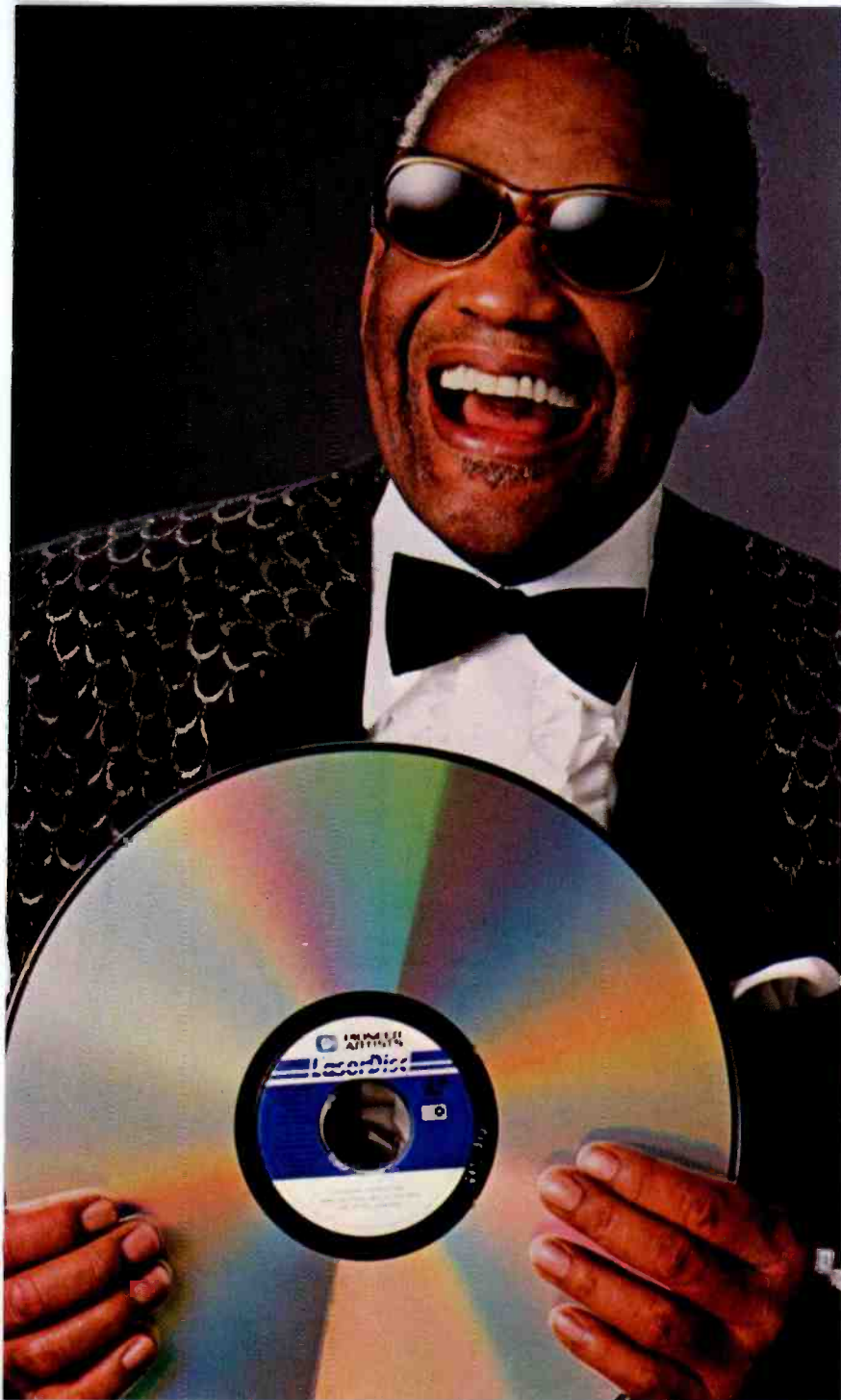


mainder simply by changing the setting of the subwoofer's level control. Though DSL used Spica's voltmeter-assisted procedure, it could be argued that a hair more subwoofer level might have made the curves look a trifle better balanced.

As it is, however, the response is excellent. On-axis, it stays between $+3\frac{3}{4}$ and -4 dB all the way from 40 Hz to 20 kHz, and, except for some evidence of minor tweeter beaming at the very top end, does much the same off-axis. Even the usual floor-reflection dip fails to emerge unequivocally. There is a very gradual rise in response at high frequencies, however, and some listeners considered the sound slightly bright on certain instrumental recordings, though the effect disappeared when we switched to vocal music, which is reproduced very naturally.

Distortion is moderate (averaging about $\frac{1}{4}$ percent through most of the frequency range) when tested at 85 dB SPL (sound pressure level), but begins rising at 95 dB and averages about 3 percent at 100 dB. At lower test levels, however, there is far less distortion in the deep bass than we would expect to find in a conventional (nonservo) three- or four-way system. On 300-Hz pulses, the setup accepted without complaint the test amp's full output—the equivalent of $26\frac{1}{2}$ dBW (450 watts) into 8 ohms.

The TC-50's impedance is relatively constant, lying between 4.1 ohms (at



How to pick a video system with your eyes closed.

by Ray Charles

“I look at video systems a little differently than you. I look with my ears.

And, frankly, since the beginning, video has sounded pretty sad.

Then along comes Pioneer with LaserDisc. And suddenly, my ears get very happy.

The sound of LaserDisc is as good as anything I ever heard on my stereo.

Maybe better.

And while I was impressed with the sound, the video experts were floored by the picture. They tell me nothing else even comes close.

Maybe you've already got a stereo, and maybe you've already got a VCR. You've still got to get LaserDisc. Because whatever you're watching — music or movies — LaserDisc does what no other system can do. For the first time, it brings the best picture and the best sound together.”

The model shown here is the Pioneer® CLD-900. The world's first combination LaserVision and CD player.

Prices start at \$299. Suggested retail price.

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PIONEER®
Video for those
who really care about audio.

EYE-FI



You're looking at what's ahead for the television set. At Proton, we call it "eye-fi."

The Proton 625, above, is a video monitor/receiver. It's the evolution of American TV. Enjoy its absolutely superior performance just as it is. Or enhance its great sound by making it a component part of your present audio system.

A demonstration will convince you of the startling difference between Proton and what you're used to. You'll see deep, rich black, not washed-out gray. You'll see vivid color and true perspective, instead of unreal hues and distorted angles.

And, above all, you'll see the whole broadcast picture, not just the whole edges have been cut off. You'll see the whole picture, not just the edges.

While Proton has features of other sets like infrared remote control, 139 channel tuning range, and a built-in stereo tuner, our monitor/receiver goes beyond any other brand's "state-of-the-art" technology. Even beyond, in resolution capability, the signal quality TV stations presently broadcast.

In short, Proton is what TV should be. But something this superior isn't inexpensive. Just remember what your dad always said... "You get what you pay for." He didn't know that with Proton you get a whole lot more.

See for yourself. Call us for the nearest dealer. Because if we're this careful about making a great TV, we're also careful about who sells it.

Proton, clearly the best.

P R O T O N

around 170 Hz, and again at 8 kHz) and 13.4 ohms at woofer resonance (just below 70 Hz). This should make it a comfortable load for solid-state amplifiers, though its broad 4-ohm minima (particularly the one in the midbass) would argue against paralleling these speakers with another set on a finicky amp. The sub-woofer, being driven at line level, presents no load to the power amplifier; its

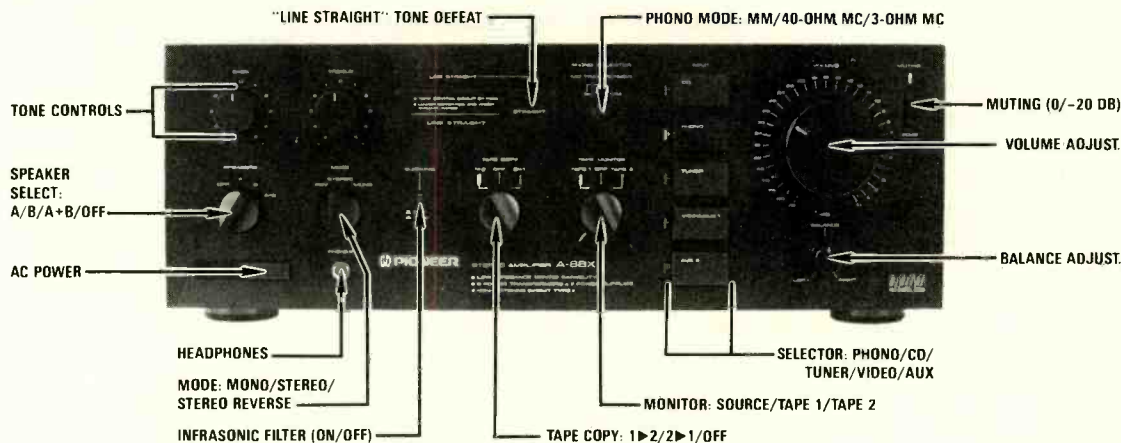
input impedance, which is driven by the interface, measures 100,000 ohms. Sensitivity of the TC-50 is about average among the speakers we test; because it's a small, sealed system, we would have expected it to be lower.

But what really matters where a loudspeaker is concerned is its sound. Despite the hint of brightness that some listeners heard on instrumentals, we

found the balance of the TC-50/Servo very natural. The imaging is excellent, as is the dynamic impact. And its qualities seemed to grow as the listening progressed. Although some will consider the involved setup process an impediment, others doubtless will enjoy it. To the skeptics, we can only say: Listen and see if you don't think the Spicias will be worth the trouble in the end. ●

PIONEER A-88X INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

Dimensions: 16 1/2 by 5 1/2 inches (front panel), 15 inches deep plus clearance for controls and connections. AC convenience outlets: two switched (100 watts max. total), one unswitched (100 watts max.). Price: \$700. Warranty: "limited," two years parts and labor. Manufacturer: Pioneer Electronic Corp., Japan; U.S. distributor: Pioneer Electronics (USA), Inc., P.O. Box 1760, Long Beach, Calif. 90801.



The electronics within the A-88X represent Pioneer's current approach to audiophile amplification, including the Type II version of its Non-Switching output stage, which we reviewed (favorably) in the SX-V90 receiver (December 1984). Like the original, Type II uses automatic variable biasing to stave off the crossover distortion that dogs basic Class B amplifiers, especially (on a percentage basis) at low signal levels. Pioneer says that it also increases thermal stability.

Another purist aspect of the design is its use of three independent power supplies: a small one for the preamp section, to assure that it gets all the current it needs regardless of the demands being

made on the stages that follow; and a much beefier one for each channel of the main amp, to minimize cross-modulation between them. The power amp is, in fact, a dual-mono design that keeps the two channels completely separate.

The preamp offers a generous complement of inputs—very desirable in this time of changing system demands. Six are high-level, including two for tape and four more earmarked for CD, tuner, video (Aux 1), and Aux 2. There are separate switches for tape monitor and tape copy (in either direction). In addition, Pioneer has provided three phono options: a standard input for fixed-coil (moving-magnet or moving-iron) cartridges or for high-output moving-coil models, plus

RATED POWER	20 3/4 dBW (120 watts)/channel
OUTPUT AT CLIPPING (at 1 kHz; both channels driven)	
8-ohm load	21 3/4 dBW (150 watts)/channel
4-ohm load	23 1/2 dBW (225 watts)/channel
DYNAMIC POWER (at 1 kHz)	
8-ohm load	22 1/4 dBW
4-ohm load	24 3/4 dBW
2-ohm load	26 1/2 dBW
DYNAMIC HEADROOM (re rated power; 8-ohm load)	
	+ 1 1/2 dB

two for moving-coil pickups of more traditional design. These two are unconventional in combining a step-up transformer (right at the input) with a head amp; most moving-coil circuits use one or the other, not both.

Phono response is quite flat, despite a minute rise in the region between about 2 and 20 kHz and some bass rolloff for moving-coil pickups. With a test source impedance of 45 ohms and the 40-ohm setting of the MC input, it amounts to a hair less than 1/2 dB at 20 Hz; at the lower-impedance (nominally 3-ohm) setting, the rolloff is greater, but this position presumably is intended for still lower source impedances, even though its input impedance (550 ohms) might appear adequately high in any case. In other words, the bass response probably would flatten out if a pickup having a very low output impedance were used. This dependency, which appears to result from the design of the transformers, may thus be of no real consequence given the typically small impedances of low-output moving-coil cartridges.

The rolloff naturally continues down into the infrasonic range, below 20 Hz, but it is not steep enough to provide adequate attenuation of the unwanted signals that can sometimes be generated by record warps. Pioneer has therefore included a switchable infrasonic filter. Its action is curious in that it is influenced by the "Line Straight" tone-defeat switch. With the tone controls on, response is 3 dB down at 31 Hz and the slope is only moderate, making the filter less effective than we would prefer when using the fixed-coil input (whose inherent response is essentially flat to below 5 Hz). With the tone controls defeated, overall gain increases by about 1/4 dB for some reason, and the infrasonic filter becomes even gentler—rolling off a hair less steeply and beneath a lower cutoff frequency. Part of the difference may be due to a slight rolloff at both ends of the band (-1 dB at 20 Hz and -3/4 dB at 20 kHz) that is introduced when the tone controls are switched on, even when they are at their "flat" detents.

The BASS has maximum effect (some 10 dB of boost or cut) in the region around 70 Hz, though at moderate settings it behaves more like a shelving con-

trol. The TREBLE has most effect near 20 kHz, where the spread is only slightly greater—say, ± 11 dB. There is no loudness compensation, an omission we regret not at all. If desired, it can be supplied to individual taste (the best way, in our opinion) with the tone controls, provided your demands in this respect aren't too specific.

Noise and distortion are impressively low, and the phono overload margin is generous. The tape output impedance is on the high side, but not by enough to cause problems with cable runs of reasonable length. Damping factor is exceptionally high at low frequencies and is well maintained across the band: 160 at 1 kHz, 80 at 10 kHz, and 57 at 20 kHz.

Output is quite hefty and is remarkably undaunted by low load impedances. Pioneer actually gives a 2-ohm dynamic power rating (441 watts per channel), and Diversified Science Laboratories found that the amplifier exceeded it on the test bench, delivering the equivalent of 450 watts with the pulsed waveform used to simulate music in that measurement. That the output continues to rise as the impedance is decreased speaks more volubly than even the substantial power-supply capacitances (20,000 microfarads per channel, in case you're interested) of the way the A-88X is designed. In most other amplifiers, current limiting (whether deliberate, to protect the output transistors, or imposed by a relatively skimpy power supply) keeps 2-ohm capability marginally greater than or, in many cases, considerably lower than that into 4 ohms.

To what extent this unfettered power may contribute to the listening quality of the A-88X is hard to say. We can only comment that we were delighted with the amplifier and are satisfied that it can hold its own sonically against just about any competitor, including audiophile specialist models that can boast much greater mystique—and cost. It also is a nicely finished product, with wood end pieces that you can either mount (with two screws apiece) or leave off, as you choose. And it is equipped with really solid output binding posts (intended for bared wires), instead of the spring clips with which most run-of-the-mill amplifiers are fitted.

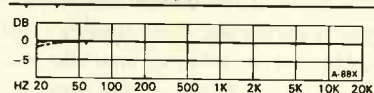
HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD; 20 Hz to 20 kHz)

at 20 3/4 dBW (120 watts)	$\leq 0.026\%$
at 0 dBW (1 watt)	$< 0.01\%$

FREQUENCY RESPONSE

+0, -1/2 dB, < 10 Hz to 26.8 kHz;
+0, -3 dB, < 10 Hz to 71.8 kHz

RIAA PHONO EQUALIZATION



fixed-coil	+ < 1/4, -0 dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz - 1/4 dB at 5 Hz
40-ohm MC	+ < 1/4, - 1/2 dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz; - 4 3/4 dB at 5 Hz
3-ohm MC	+ < 1/4, - 1 3/4 dB, 20 Hz to 20 kHz; -10 dB at 5 Hz

SENSITIVITY & NOISE (re 0 dBW; A-weighting)

	sensitivity	S/N ratio
aux input	13.5 mV	80 1/4 dB
fixed-coil phono input	0.21 mV	77 dB
40-ohm moving-coil phono	21 μ V	77 1/4 dB
3-ohm moving-coil phono	13 μ V	78 dB

PHONO OVERLOAD (1-kHz clipping)

fixed-coil phono	325 mV
40-ohm moving-coil phono	31 mV
3-ohm moving-coil phono	19.5 mV

INPUT IMPEDANCE

aux input	36.3k ohms
fixed-coil phono input	47.8k ohms; 250 pF
40-ohm moving-coil phono	1,350 ohms
3-ohm moving-coil phono	550 ohms

OUTPUT IMPEDANCE (to tape)

	2,300 ohms
--	------------

DAMPING FACTOR (at 50 Hz; re 8 ohms)

	260
--	-----


CHANNEL SEPARATION (at 1 kHz)

	81 3/4 dB
--	-----------

INFRASONIC FILTER

Line Straight mode	-3 dB at 18.5 Hz; ≈ 6 dB/octave
with tone controls	-3 dB at 31 Hz; ≈ 7 1/2 dB/octave

THE NEW JBL "L SERIES" SETS THE STAGE AT HOME



JBL, the most respected name in professional sound for over 40 years, is today's speaker of choice. At live concerts, where 125,000 Watts drive over 600 speakers, and in 70% of the world's recording studios, JBL is the speaker chosen by professionals—performers, engineers and producers—who depend on the highest quality sound and reliability.

Now, for those who demand the same superior performance, JBL introduces the new "L Series." Each speaker in the "L Series" has a direct twin in the JBL professional studio monitor line. For the first time, the speakers relied on by recording engineers to mix the music, are available for your living room.

All of these speakers share the technology that is the cornerstone of JBL's Professional Speaker Systems—all use titanium dome tweeters, filled and laminated polypropylene and Aquaplas drivers, as well as cast frames for sonic accuracy, reliability and power handling.

Visit your local JBL dealer today and listen to professional sound for the home, made in the USA, by the sound professionals...JBL.

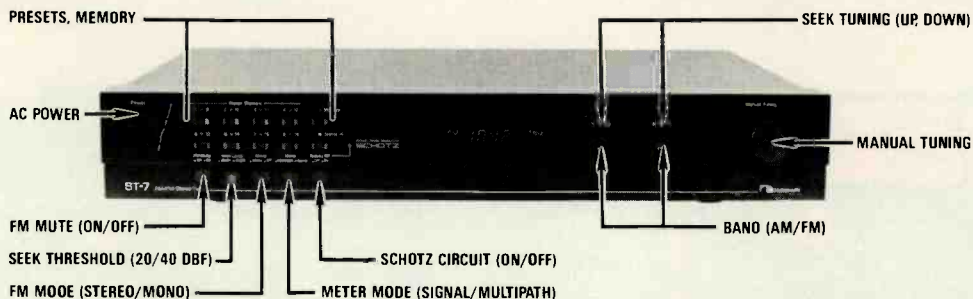
The New JBL "L Series"...Bringing Pro Sound All The Way Home.



NAKAMICHI ST-7 AM/FM TUNER

Dimensions: 17¼ by 2½ inches (front panel), 11½ inches deep plus clearance for tuning knob, AM antenna, and connections. Price: \$595.

Warranty: "limited," three years parts and labor. Manufacturer: Nakamichi Corp., Japan; U.S. distributor: Nakamichi U.S.A. Corp., 19701 S. Vermont Ave., Torrance, Calif. 90502.



Earlier this year, Nakamichi announced that it would become a "full line" manufacturer, including amplifiers and a tuner (as well as cassette decks, Compact Disc players, and auto-sound) among its wares. Two things struck us about that announcement. First, Nakamichi had gone into general electronics once before—without much success, evidently, since the models we tested weren't followed by others until now. Second, there's a significant difference between the way the company proceeded on that occasion and the way it approached the new line. This time, Nakamichi (which has traditionally been a "high end" manufacturer) is offering no receivers or other units that would put it in direct competition with the majority of full-line makers, and it has, in fact, sought the participation of two American specialists to create truly unique products.

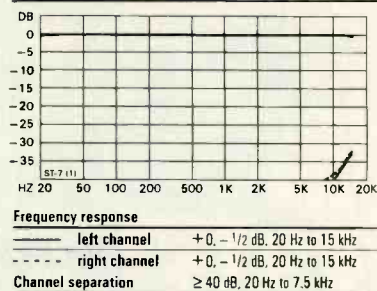
For amplifiers and preamps, it turned to Nelson Pass of Threshold, creator of the Stasis components that enjoy a formidable reputation among audiophiles; for the ST-7 tuner, key elements were developed by Larry Schotz, among whose credits are exceptional FM-tuner designs for Sherwood (his first and, in some ways, most fascinating), Crown, NAD, and Proton.

The ST-7 incorporates the latest version of the Schotz noise reduction circuit, which seeks to trade off some channel separation (starting at the highest fre-

quencies and working down) in return for a reduction of the noise inherent in stereo reception, thereby improving the listenability of marginal stations. It is more sophisticated than other automatic blend circuits in that it senses not only the RF (radio frequency) signal strength of the tuned station, but also the level and spectral content of the modulating audio signal. When the RF input is strong enough for good reception, the Schotz circuit turns off entirely. When it is so weak—and stereo noise products therefore so great—that audible hiss pumping is bound to occur as the separation varies with the audio signal, the circuit latches into its maximum-blend/minimum-noise mode. In between, it is in its glory, continuously adjusting the blend for the greatest separation possible without pushing the noise up to a level that cannot be masked by the current program content. It's a tricky business, but the result is higher effective stereo sensitivity than could be obtained (even theoretically) without signal processing.

To appreciate the care with which this solution has been engineered, look at the stereo quieting curves (since mono reception provides no separation to begin with, it is unaffected by the Schotz circuit). Notice first how gently the Schotz curve pulls away from the unprocessed quieting plot and the consistency of its upward sweep once it has begun. A quick comparison with the stereo quieting curve for almost any autosound tuner

FREQUENCY RESPONSE & CHANNEL SEPARATION



(where the intent of the segue from full stereo to mono is similar) will show just how erratically conventional blend circuitry behaves.

Testing for 1-kHz separation as well as quieting, Diversified Science Laboratories found that (as expected) switching on the Schotz circuit makes no difference until input signal strength falls below what usually is taken as the "full" quieting point: 65 dBf. (Almost any tuner is capable of slightly lower noise at higher inputs, but the difference is negligible in nearly every case.) By the time input has dropped 10 dB (to 55 dBf), the Schotz circuit already has picked up a quieting advantage of almost 6 dB over the unprocessed signal. But 1-kHz separation remains greater than 40 dB until input nears the sensitivity rating point (30 1/2 dBf), where it begins to shrink. By the time input has dropped to 25 dBf, separation with the Schotz circuit engaged is a mere 2 dB, and it remains virtually unchanged down to the stereo threshold.

This tells only part of the story, however, because the degree of blend and the frequency at which it starts taking hold change with modulation level and treble content for RF signal strengths in the middle range. On the test bench, the circuit sees a steady 100-percent modulation at 1 kHz; with a higher test frequency or a lower modulation level, there doubtless would be less measurable separation at the sensitivity rating point. But we can say with confidence that under any reasonable signal conditions, an RF input at this point does produce genuine stereo with the Schotz circuit on—which is not true of some other automatic-blend circuits.

In our auditioning, we listened particularly hard for two potential by-products of such a circuit: unstable stereo imaging and noise pumping. The rapidity with which 1-kHz separation changes as input falls and the influence of instantaneous modulation level on the amount of blend aroused concerns that proved groundless. There may be some specific circumstances under which the imaging becomes intrusively unstable, but other artifacts of weak signals and multipath (which would exacerbate the problem if it existed) proved far more noticeable and annoying. Despite the designer's ef-

forts, we did hear some effects that we chalked up to noise pumping. But invariably, a comparison between unprocessed and Schotz reception quickly convinced us of the latter's considerable advantage.

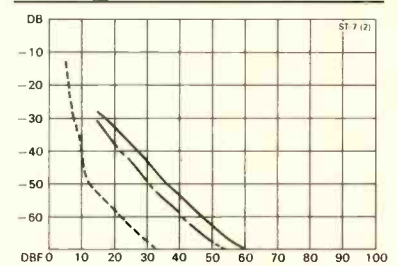
It is truly superlative, in fact. In many instances when we found something to complain of with the Schotz circuit on, the program turned out to be essentially unlistenable with it off. As a result, we ended up listening to stations that we had never tried before—and might never care to again—and enjoying ones that normally we tune only under duress, for test purposes. That experience, even more than the ST-7's superb measured sensitivity with the Schotz circuit engaged, convinces us of the design's virtue.

The engineering finesse that produced the carefully optimized Schotz quieting curve is in evidence elsewhere as well. FM frequency response and channel separation are superb, as are signal-to-noise (S/N) ratios. And when the lab checked the two-position seek-threshold switch, the marked values (20 and 40 dBf) proved to be astonishingly exact. Least impressive among the data are the selectivity figures, capture ratio, and output impedance, though none of these is cause for complaint. The AM section (which we don't measure) seems engineered for good sound (with wider-than-average bandwidth) from strong local stations; the SEEK picked up relatively few with the supplied loop antenna, and some of those suffered from high-frequency noise that a lower-fi audio stage might have tamed a bit.

The ST-7 has a knob for manual tuning. Detents representing half-channels (100 kHz) on FM, full channels (10 kHz) on AM, are spaced tightly enough to cover a considerable portion of the dial at a single twist, but not so closely that you can't step by individual increments with a little care. Presets enable you to store as many as 16 stations (a register shift converts the eight buttons to a second memory bank) in any mix of AM and FM.

The signal-strength indicator lights in five segments: at 5 1/2, 23, 41, 53, and 69 1/2 dBf. This covers an unusually wide range, but, of necessity, leaves large

FM SENSITIVITY & QUIETING



—	stereo quieting (noise), Schotz off	
- - -	mono quieting (noise)	
· · ·	stereo quieting (noise), Schotz on	
- · -	stereo quieting (noise), Schotz on	
Stereo sensitivity (for 50-dB noise suppression), Schotz off		
36 1/2 dBf at 98 MHz, with 0.46% THD + N (36 1/2 dBf at 90 MHz; 38 3/4 dBf at 106 MHz)		
Stereo sensitivity (for 50-dB noise suppression), Schotz on		
30 1/2 dBf at 98 MHz, with 0.64% THD + N (30 1/2 dBf at 90 MHz; 32 dBf at 106 MHz)		
Mono sensitivity (for 50-dB noise suppression)		
12 1/2 dBf at 98MHz		
Muting threshold	14 1/2 dBf	
Stereo threshold	14 1/2 dBf	
Stereo S/N ratio (at 65 dBf)	71 1/2 dB	
Mono S/N ratio (at 65 dBf)	79 1/2 dB	
CAPTURE RATIO	1 1/4 dB	
SELECTIVITY		
alternate-channel	59 1/2 dB	
adjacent-channel	4 dB	
HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD + N)		
	stereo	mono
at 100 Hz	0.15%	0.090%
at 1 kHz	0.10%	0.065%
at 6 kHz	0.19%	0.070%
STEREO PILOT INTERMODULATION	0.075%	
INTERMODULATION DISTORTION (mono)	0.065%	
AM SUPPRESSION	62 dB	
PILOT (19 kHz) SUPPRESSION	90 1/2 dB	
SUBCARRIER (38 kHz) SUPPRESSION	104 dB	
MAXIMUM OUTPUT LEVEL (from 100% modulation)		
2.11 volts		
OUTPUT IMPEDANCE	1,400 ohms	

gaps between thresholds. Perhaps that's better than leaving strong and very weak signals entirely undocumented, as some other displays do, but we would have preferred additional elements with shorter steps between them. A switch converts the display to multipath indication, though quite gross multipath was required to light even the first LED. If you have no antenna rotator, the display

will be of little interest; some fringe-area listeners, however, may find this the ST-7's most disappointing feature.

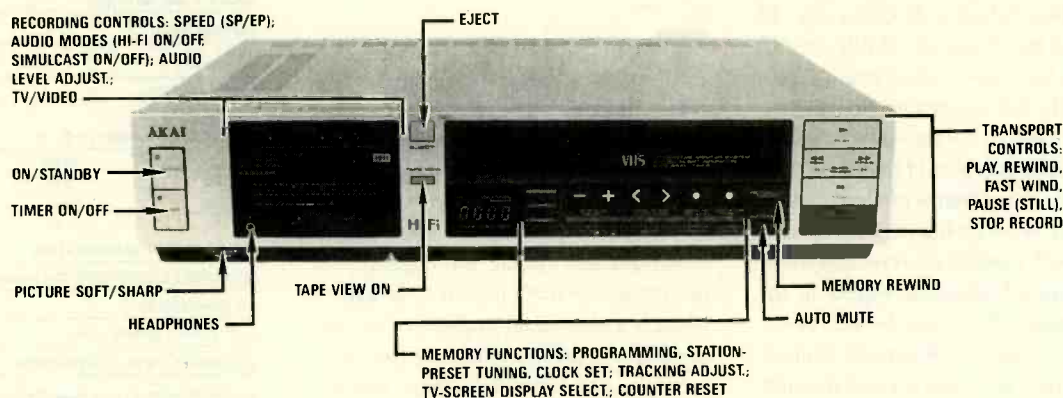
The tuner has back-panel binding-post antenna inputs for AM (including the loop) and 300-ohm FM twinlead, plus an F connector (praise be!) for direct input of 75-ohm FM coax with its standard termination. The output jacks have individual screwdriver level adjustments. A

multipin DIN jack is supplied for connection of a future remote control that will be designed to operate an entire (presumably all-Nakamichi) stereo system.

There are many fine FM tuners on the market, but very few truly stand out against the background of excellence. The Nakamichi ST-7 is a member of this small, elite group. What more can we say? ●

AKAI VS-603U VHS HI-FI VIDEOCASSETTE RECORDER

Dimensions: 17½ by 4 inches (front), 14 inches deep plus clearance for connections. Price: \$895. Warranty: "limited," one year parts, 90 days labor. Manufacturer: Akai Electric Co., Ltd., Japan; U.S. distributor: Akai America, Ltd., 800 W. Artesia Blvd., Compton, Calif. 90224.



When we unpacked our sample of the Akai VS-603U, we were amazed at the owner's manual. It's huge—so big that it won't fit into a standard file cabinet and packed with information seldom found in ordinary manuals. A cartoon "operating instructor" guides you through the deck's features in an amusing and relatively easy-to-follow manner, whether your native tongue is English, French, or Spanish.

The VS-603U is unusual in other ways as well, though not so much in its basic recording and reception features as in how they're operated and displayed. Akai has devoted a good deal of time and money to "computerizing" the VS-603U and making it as "user friendly" as possible. Among the results are a number of capabilities you won't find in run-of-the-mill VCRs.

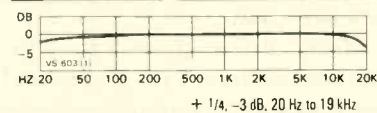
For example, the deck uses on-screen

prompts and instructions as programming aids, leading you through everything from setting the clock, the 16 station memories, and the sleep timer to commanding the 28-day, 8-event automatic recording system. And all of these functions (along with a number of others) are governed by just four master control buttons, which are duplicated on the RC-V603 wireless remote handset, enabling you to program the VCR from your armchair as easily as from the front panel. One of the buttons even serves as a fine-tuning adjustment for the tuner and as the deck's tracking control. In every case, a legend appears on the screen confirming what you are doing. Akai calls its brainchild an Interactive Monitor System. In all, it produces 12 different screen displays, including those mentioned above, transport-mode indicators, and readouts of clock, tape-counter/day/

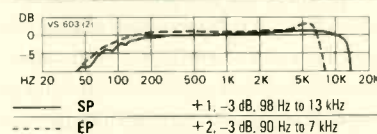
VCR SECTION

Except where otherwise indicated, the recording data shown here apply to both speeds: SP and EP (SLP). All measurements were made at the direct audio and video outputs, with test signals injected through the direct audio and video inputs. The 0-dB reference input level is the voltage required to produce 3-percent third-harmonic distortion at 315 Hz; the 0-dB reference output level is the output voltage from a 0-dB input.

VHS HI-FI RECORD/PLAY RESPONSE (-20 dB)



STANDARD RECORD/PLAY RESPONSE (-20 dB)



AUDIO S/N RATIO (re 0-dB output; R/P; A-weighted)

	standard	VHS Hi-Fi
SP	50 1/2 dB	79 dB
EP	46 1/4 dB	80 dB

clock, and elapsed-time/day/clock.

Most of the front-panel controls are repeated on the remote, and with one exception, all are clearly labeled. The oddball is **FUNCTION**, which turns the VCR on and off. (The VS-603U also turns on automatically when you insert a cassette.) About the only things you can't do from the remote are to eject the tape, enter the clock or station presetting mode, set audio recording level, select recording speed, adjust the **SHARPNESS**, command the deck to take video from the tuner and audio from the line inputs (for simulcast recording), turn the VHS Hi-Fi system on or off, and illuminate the tape well for a visual check of the cassette.

The VS-603U receives midband and superband cable channels (A through W) as well as all the regular VHF and UHF broadcast channels. Antenna connections are via F fittings for VHF and CATV and screw terminals for UHF. There is no decoder loop, so if you have CATV and want to record from scrambled pay channels, you will have to pass the signal through the cable company's converter on its way to the VCR—which means that you can't record one program while watching another or program a sequence of recordings from several different channels. You can get around this limitation (especially if your set is cable-ready), but it will require external switching.

Diversified Science Laboratories reports excellent performance from the tuner. Video frequency response is almost ruler flat to beyond 3.58 MHz (the color-burst frequency), implying a horizontal resolution of approximately 300 lines if the tuner is connected directly to a good monitor (unmediated by tape). Luminance and chroma levels are remarkably accurate, and the uncorrectable chroma phase error is a negligible $\pm 3\frac{1}{2}$ degrees. A slight touch-up of a monitor's tint control is all it takes to bring all color vectors right on target. Gray-scale linearity is about par, as are chroma differential gain and phase.

Audio performance also is outstanding, with response extending well past 15 kHz (the broadcast limit). The signal-to-noise (S/N) ratio is much better than average for a TV tuner, and the horizontal

scan whistle is very well suppressed despite the absence of any filtering. Output level and impedance are well suited for driving an external audio amplifier or receiver. All in all, Akai has done an excellent job on this tuner, which only makes us want more—a pay-TV converter loop and at least some means of patching in a stereo decoder.

The deck records stereo VHS Hi-Fi (from the line inputs, mono from the tuner) as well as a mono edge track (for compatibility with non-Hi-Fi VCRs). Like some other manufacturers, Akai permits recording only at the two outer VHS speeds (SP and EP), but the VS-603U also will play tapes recorded at the intermediate LP speed. VHS Hi-Fi frequency response is within $\pm \frac{1}{2}$ dB from 50 Hz to 15 kHz at 30 and 40 dB below our reference level and almost as good at 20 dB below reference (as plotted in our data column). At -10 dB, the response rolls off below 100 Hz and above 5 kHz, with -3-dB points of 27 Hz and 11 kHz. (The high-frequency rolloff resembles that of an ordinary audio tape deck at similar recording levels.) The VHS Hi-Fi response is identical at both recording speeds, and there is absolutely no sign of mistracking in the noise reduction system (a fault we uncovered in some of the first VHS Hi-Fi decks). However, when we used the VS-603U to play a recording made on an early VHS Hi-Fi machine, the frequency response was substantially worse than that obtained with its own tapes. This is not in itself particularly unusual, but the response also differs from that of other decks on this cassette. Apparently there's a bit of work yet to be done in truly standardizing VHS Hi-Fi.

Flutter is below our reporting limit in VHS Hi-Fi, and the total theoretical dynamic range (from the A-weighted noise floor to the midrange overload point) is more than 90 dB. That's more than you're actually likely to get, however, because the meters are well off-scale by the time the signal reaches saturation level. Even at DSL's distortion test level (10 dB below 3-percent third-harmonic distortion at 315 Hz), the meter reads into the red. And though midband distortion is less than 0.5 percent, it approaches 2 percent at 100 Hz and 6.3 kHz and is well above that at the very bottom of the

INDICATOR CALIBRATION (315 Hz; VHS Hi-Fi)

for 0-dB input	> +8 dB
for -10-dB input	+5 dB

DISTORTION (THD at -10-dB input; 50 Hz to 5 kHz)

	standard	VHS Hi-Fi
SP	$\leq 0.95\%$	see text
EP	$\leq 1.41\%$	see text

CHANNEL SEPARATION (315 Hz; VHS Hi-Fi)

	80 dB
--	-------

INDICATOR "BALLISTICS"

Response time	2.4 msec
Decay time	$\approx 1,600$ msec
Overshoot	0 dB

FLUTTER (ANSI weighted peak; R/P)

	standard	VHS Hi-Fi
SP	$\pm 0.12\%$	$\pm < 0.01\%$
EP	$\pm 0.38\%$	$\pm < 0.01\%$

SENSITIVITY (for 0-dB output; 315 Hz)

VHS Hi-Fi	550 mV
standard	118 mV

AUDIO OUTPUT LEVEL (from 0-dB input; 315 Hz)

VHS Hi-Fi	2.08 volts
standard	0.475 volt

AUDIO INPUT IMPEDANCE (VHS Hi-Fi)

	76k ohms
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VIDEO RECORD/PLAY RESPONSE

	SP	EP
at 500 kHz	+ 1/2 dB	+ 1/4 dB
at 1.5 MHz	-3 1/4 dB	-3 3/4 dB
at 2.0 MHz	-4 1/4 dB	-6 1/2 dB
at 3.0 MHz	-14 dB	-14 dB
at 3.58 MHz	-15 dB	-7 1/4 dB
at 4.2 MHz	-	-

SHARPNESS CONTROL RANGE

at 500 kHz	± 1 dB
at 1.5 MHz	± 3 dB
at 2.0 MHz	+3 1/4, -7 1/2 dB
3.0 to 4.2 MHz	no measurable effect

LUMINANCE LEVEL

	standard
--	----------

GRAY-SCALE NONLINEARITY (worst case)

	$\approx 16\%$
--	----------------

CHROMA LEVEL

SP	1 dB low
EP	1 1/2 dB low

CHROMA DIFFERENTIAL GAIN

	$\approx 20\%$
--	----------------

CHROMA DIFFERENTIAL PHASE

	$\approx \pm 3^\circ$
--	-----------------------

MEDIAN CHROMA PHASE ERROR

SP	$\pm 4^\circ$
EP	$\pm 5^\circ$

* Too low to measure

audible range. Assuming you keep the recording level out of the red (as Akai suggests), your recordings will have acceptably low distortion and still maintain a dynamic range of about 75 dB, which is more than enough for all but the most demanding source material and better than

you can do with a cassette deck and Dolby noise reduction.

In keeping with the VS-603U's micro-processor-based design, the recording level control is a rocker bar that operates a digital attenuator. DSL reports that it steps in increments of approximately 2 dB through the upper 20 dB of its range. The bottom three steps are 3, 4, and 5 dB, respectively, with the lowest position totally off. A bar indicator just below the recording meter suggests where you are in the range.

When you first turn on the VS-603U, the center segment of the bar is lit. This corresponds to 10½ dB below maximum sensitivity and is Akai's suggested setting for recording off the air. It's a nice safety feature if you forget to reset the level before recording a broadcast. The recording indicator responds quickly and has a long decay time, making it easy for the eye to follow. The audio input impedance and sensitivities are well chosen, and channel separation in Hi-Fi is excellent—much more than adequate for good stereo.

The VS-603U's performance is unusually good on the edge track as well. At standard recording speed (SP), response extends to 13 kHz, and even in EP it gets out to 7 kHz. And noise is quite low for edge-track recording. Interestingly, DSL could not find any ALC (automatic level control) action, so apparently you must set recording level manually in both modes. This is not at all difficult, however, thanks to the excellent metering and the automatic level preset when recording from the tuner. Distortion is less than 0.5 percent from 100 Hz to 5 kHz at SP and less than 0.9 percent over that range at EP. At 50 Hz, THD (total harmonic distortion) approaches 1 percent and 1.4 percent, respectively. And edge-track flutter is very respectable for a VCR at either speed.

The VS-603U's video recording performance also is exemplary. Response is down only 4¼ dB at 2.0 MHz at SP and just a trifle more (6½ dB) at EP, implying a horizontal resolution of at least 160 lines. (Although the EP peaking circuit picks up the response at 3.58 MHz, output at that frequency is too unstable to be truly useful.) A three-position sharp-

ness switch enables you to boost high-frequency response (up to about 2 MHz) for increased picture detail.

Reproduced luminance level is right on the money, and the worst-case gray-scale nonlinearity is quite acceptable. Chroma level is a smidgen low (but closer to standard than is typical), and both chroma phase error and differential phase are remarkably small. Chroma differential gain is confined mostly to the brightest scene level, making it inconspicuous on normal program material. The two speeds exhibit little or no difference in any of these qualities: Only in chroma noise is SP clearly superior to EP.

Compared with those of some other VCRs, the VS-603U's special effects are somewhat limited, but they are all that most people will want. There's STILL FRAME when you press PAUSE, FRAME ADVANCE with successive presses, and a "quick finder" that scans the tape at high speed when you press FAST FORWARD or REWIND during playback. These features work very well in SP and EP and generate very few noise bars. If you do see a noise bar in STILL FRAME, you can move it out of the most important part of the picture by pressing one side or the other of one of the master control keys; another can be used to reduce or eliminate any vertical jitter. And if you want to "index" your tapes, you can, at the touch of a button, record the date, time, and channel number ahead of the program. This information will appear in the middle of the screen for approximately seven seconds on subsequent playback.

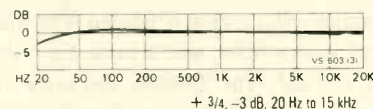
The Akai VS-603U works as well in the living room as it does on the test bench. In most important respects, its tuner is a match for the best separates we've used. Only in high-channel VHF sensitivity (Channels 7 through 13) have we seen better, and then to only a marginal degree and with precious few models. Color rendition is excellent and definition superb.

Recording performance also is first-rate. Multiburst patterns are clean and crisp through 2 MHz, and the SHARPNESS can be used to enhance resolution further without materially increasing noise. Color rendition is very impressive, espe-

TV TUNER SECTION

All measurements were taken at the direct audio and video outputs.

AUDIO FREQUENCY RESPONSE (mono)



AUDIO S/N RATIO (mono; A-weighted)

best case (no color or luminance)	50 1/2 dB
worst case (multiburst signal)	32 3/4 dB

RESIDUAL HORIZONTAL-SCAN COMPONENT (15.7 kHz)

	-59 3/4 dB
--	------------

MAX. AUDIO OUTPUT (100% modulation)

	0.64 volt
--	-----------

AUDIO OUTPUT IMPEDANCE

	115 ohms
--	----------

VIDEO FREQUENCY RESPONSE

at 500 kHz	+ 1/2 dB
at 1.5 MHz	+ 1 dB
at 2.0 MHz	+ 1 dB
at 3.0 MHz	+ 1 dB
at 3.58 MHz	+ 1/4 dB
at 4.2 MHz	-15 dB

LUMINANCE LEVEL

	3% high
--	---------

GRAY-SCALE NONLINEARITY (worst case)

	≈ 13%
--	-------

CHROMA DIFFERENTIAL GAIN

	≈ 25%
--	-------

CHROMA DIFFERENTIAL PHASE

	≈ ±5°
--	-------

CHROMA ERROR

	level	phase
red	+ 1/4 dB	+ 3°
magenta	+ 1/4 dB	+ 5°
blue	+ 1/2 dB	+ 2°
cyan	standard	+ 9°
green	standard	+ 8°
yellow	standard	+ 9°
median error	+ 1/4 dB	+ 5 1/2°
uncorrectable error	± 1/4 dB	± 3 1/2°

cially at the SP speed, which exhibits lower than average chroma noise. All these fine video attributes, combined with superb audio performance, exceptional ease of use, and a moderate price, make the Akai VS-603U a VCR that should be on your "must see" list. ●

MEDLEY

Edited by
Georgia Christgau
and Ted Libbey



Hold Your Nose And Speak Out

The following editorial, excerpted from the Boston Globe, deals with sexual violence in rock music lyrics (see "Rock 'n' Roll Feels the Fire" in *BACKBEAT*). The author teaches journalism at Boston University.

I loved to watch Elvis shake his torso when I was a teenager, and it was even more

fun when Ed Sullivan wouldn't let the cameras show him below the waist. I snickered at the forbidden "Work with Me, Annie" lyrics by Hank Ballard and the Midnighters, which were deliciously naughty. But I am sorry, rock fans, that is not the same thing as hearing about how a man is going to force a woman to perform oral sex on him at gunpoint in a little number called "Eat Me Alive." It is not in the

same league with the AC/DC ballad that details the delights of slipping into a woman's room while she is sleeping and murdering her.

Make no mistake, it is not sex we are talking about here, but violence. Violence against women. Most rock songs are not violent—they are funky, sexy, rebellious, and sometimes witty. Please do not mistake me for a Mrs. Grundy. If Prince wants to leap about wearing only a

purple jockstrap, fine. But when he or anyone else starts singing about garrotting, beating, or sodomizing a woman, that's another story.

Usually only the bad guys commit violent acts against the innocent. And when the good guys retaliate, it's because the bad guys deserve it. In some rock songs, however, it's the heroes who are the aggressors. They are the ones being violent, with women on the receiving end. In a society where rape and assault are endemic, this is no small problem. Rock videos and all-music television channels legitimize countless images of violence against women to countless numbers of American teenage boys, who, of course, identify with their "heroes." Can we blame them if they believe that what they see accurately reflects adult reality, approved by adults and sanctioned by their silence? Do we really want kids to think that rape and brutality are what sex is all about?

Speaking out does not mean censorship, or book or record burning. In a society that protects free expression, we understand a lot of junk will float up out of the sewer. We hold our noses and tolerate it even as we speak out against the values it proffers. Journalists and parents and critics and artists can keep the issue alive. Don't label us bluenoses and book burners. But most of all, don't ignore us.

Caryl Rivers

Alive and Well

On a couple of occasions during the past few months, I have devoted this column to a plea for American artists and American orchestras, seemingly an endangered species on the recording scene of the 1980s. Several days ago, I received a note from Steve Vining at Pro Arte, informing me that "Atlanta, Minnesota, Utah, Houston, and Rochester are happily quite active, as are the Cleveland Quartet, Peter Serkin, Joseph Silverstein, and Russell Sherman." And all, I might add, on Mr. Vining's American Artists Series, newly launched by Pro Arte.

Perhaps the biggest news here is the affiliation of Robert Shaw and the Atlanta Symphony with Pro Arte. The Minneapolis-based firm has wooed the Georgians away from Telarc (which made some splendid recordings in Atlanta) and has just released the first album produced under the new

partnership: Beethoven's Ninth conducted by Shaw, featuring his superbly trained Atlanta Symphony Chorus and a solo quartet of Benita Valente, Florence Kopleff, Jerry Hadley, and John Cheek. Slated for the future are recordings of the two Brahms piano concertos with Peter Serkin as soloist.

Conductor Sergiu Comissiona, the music director of another Southern powerhouse, the Houston Symphony, also has entered into an exclusive arrangement with Pro Arte. A specialist in popular orchestral showpieces, Comissiona made several impressive recordings for the Moss Music Group during his final years in Baltimore. His first sessions in Houston for his new label have resulted in a collection of Tchaikovsky waltzes, an all-American disc, and a grouping of orchestral dances. The four symphonies of Robert Schumann are due for release in 1987.

One more new addition to

the Pro Arte stable is the Cleveland Quartet, which retains its affiliation with RCA, but branches out into some unusual repertory with three discs devoted to the chamber music of Ernst von Dohnányi, one of the most versatile Hungarian musicians of the past century. The group debuts on the label with Dvořák's *American Quartet*, Op. 96, and there are plans for four further releases in the years to come.

Another cheery bit of news concerns the New York Philharmonic, which will be involved in a new traversal of the Mahler symphonies led by Leonard Bernstein for Deutsche Grammophon. The New Yorkers will have to share their former music director with the Vienna Philharmonic and the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam, which recently finished a recording of the Ninth with Bernstein. From Amsterdam, the word is that the account was spectacular.

Ted Libbey

1 8 T H A N N U A L

IRCA

HIGH FIDELITY/INTERNATIONAL RECORD CRITICS AWARDS



Honoring *Médée* (from left): Jury President Pierre Michot, HF Classical Music Editor Theodore W. Libbey, Jr., and Christian Mingué, administrative director of Les Arts Florissants

Of the many remarkable things about IRCA, the International Record Critics Awards, the most remarkable, perhaps, is that one can never say in advance which albums are going to win. Look to other record prizes if you expect the seal of approval to go solely to the year's highly touted major-label releases; the members of the IRCA jury are too independent for that. The one thing that *can* be predicted is that in any year's awards, there will usually be at least one important discovery, one dark horse that turned out to be a thoroughbred.

It happened that way this summer. Meeting during the final week of August in Montreux, Switzerland, at the invitation of the Montreux Festival, the panel chose for the second year in a row to honor a smaller label's first recording of a major work by a "minor" (discographically speaking) turn-of-the-century composer. In 1984 two such awards were granted: one to an integral release of the quartets of Wilhelm Stenhammar on Caprice, one to a new account of

FRANCE VAUTHY

by Theodore W. Libbey, Jr.

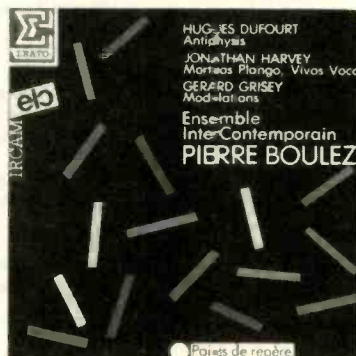
Alberic Magnard's Symphony No. 4 from Pathé Marconi. This year it was the turn of Alexander Zemlinsky (1871-1942), whose startlingly powerful opera *The Birthday of the Infanta*, handsomely recorded on two discs by the German firm Schwann, virtually swept the jury's first ballot.

Two of the remaining three prizes also went to opera albums: Harmonia Mundi's superb production of Marc Antoine Charpentier's *Médée* and Deutsche Grammophon's new recording of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* under the direction of Giuseppe Sinopoli. That left just one nonoperatic venture among the laureates: Angel EMI's single-LP release of Scriabin's 24 Preludes and Sonata No. 4, played by pianist Andrei Gavrilov. While an outsider might have been surprised this year by the scarcity among the nominated LPs, not to mention the winning ones, of the composers who share 1985 as their anniversary (Bach, Handel, Scarlatti, Schütz, and Berg), the judges themselves derived a measure of satisfaction from the fact that the expected had once again *not* occurred.

The Birthday of the Infanta emerged as one of the jury's top choices as much on the strength of the music as on the merits of the recording. Initially, both Edward Greenfield and Ingo Harden noted that the balance of the orchestra and singers (the latter sounding too close; the former, off in the distance) had bothered them. But Bengt Pleijel put his finger on the real issue when he said, "Zemlinsky is music." And Pierre Michot's spirited defense of the record—"In nominating this, it was with the intent to see it win, not to simply have the pleasure of adding it to the list. It *must* get the prize."—ultimately persuaded even those with reservations that the opera *was* a winner. All concurred with Harry Halbreich (whose review of the album and its companion Schwann release, *A Florentine Tragedy*, appeared in our August issue) that the performance could scarcely have been bettered.

When Michot criticized the balances in *Manon Lescaut*, however, he found himself to be a minority of one. Yet he went on to praise Sinopoli's interpretation for "seeing the modernity of the piece," a point seconded by Halbreich. Even the jurors for whom Sinopoli is a problematic musician—myself among them—were forced to agree. Alain Fantapié, after voicing mis-

Serge and Olga Koussevitzky INTERNATIONAL RECORD AWARD



DUFOURT: Antiphysis. Matuz; Ensemble InterContemporain, Boulez. Erato STU 71544 (A).

1985 IRCA PRIZE-WINNERS



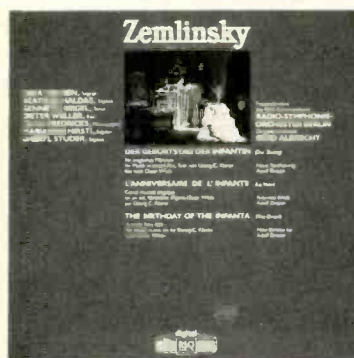
CHARPENTIER: Médée. Les Arts Florissants, Christie. Harmonia Mundi HMC 1139.41 (D, 3).



PUCCHINI: Manon Lescaut. Freni, Domingo, Bruson; Chorus of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Philharmonia Orchestra, Sinopoli. Deutsche Grammophon 413 893-1 (D, 3).



SCRIABIN: Preludes (24); Sonata for Piano, No. 4. Gavrilov. Angel EMI 270090 (D).



ZEMLINSKY: The Birthday of the Infanta. Riegel, Nielsen, Haldas, Weller; Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Albrecht. Schwann VMS 1626 (D, 2).

givings about the conductor's penchant for provoking a listener, especially in his tempos, acknowledged that while that sort of thing might be inadmissible in Verdi, it clearly had worked here, making this "without doubt the best version of *Manon Lescaut* on the market."

The judges' endorsement of the Harmonia Mundi *Médée* was, like that of the Zemlinsky opera, motivated in part by the music. "Like most French *tragédies lyriques*," Halbreich remarked, "it takes a while to get into this one. But once there, from the third act on, it is quite dramatic." Michot called the album "one of the important records of the year," adding that while one "could perhaps imagine a more fulminant figure" than William Christie on the podium, it was still quite a success.

Gavrilov's Scriabin LP met not a single hurdle on its way to the prize. After confessing my disappointment in the pianist's playing at his New York recital debut last season in Carnegie Hall, I had to admit that this disc shows him at his best, which is very good indeed. The jury felt unanimously that this was *the* piano release of the year—if not as important an issue as the others that won the IRCA awards, one at least impressive enough to warrant its inclusion in the final circle.

That the idyllic surroundings of Montreux could give rise to such a flurry of activity was one of the paradoxes of this year's meeting. We should all have been out enjoying the region's extraordinary combination of mountain and lakeside scenery, basking in the late summer sun and letting the Alpine air work its magic. In fact, the weather was so blustery that for two days we had little choice but to stay indoors and devote ourselves to our work. As a result, we finished our deliberations a day ahead of schedule, just in time

JUDGES

Alain Fantapié, France

Edward Greenfield, Great Britain

Harry Halbreich, Belgium

Ingo Harden, Germany

Alfred Hoffman, Romania

Theodore W. Libbey, Jr., United States

Pierre Michot, Switzerland

José Luis Pérez de Arteaga, Spain

Bengt Pleijel, Sweden

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

AUSTRALIA

Ian Woodward, *Spins 'n' Needles*

BELGIUM

Harry Halbreich, *Diapason-Harmonie, Le Monde de la Musique, La Croix, Belgian Radio*

BULGARIA

Dimitar Zenglinov, *Bulgarska Muzika*

CANADA

Ray Chatelin, *The Province, Playback*
Bary Edwards, *Music*
Thomas Hathaway, *Queen's Quarterly*
Rick MacMillan, *Music*

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Leo Jehne, *Artia Foreign Trade Corporation*

FRANCE

Alain Fantapié, *Médias et Langage*
Sergio Segalini, *Opéra International*

GERMANY

Ingo Harden, *Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik*
Stefan Mikorey, *Fono Forum*
Wolfgang Seifert, *Musikmarkt, Die Musikforschung*, West German Radio, RIAS, German Music Council
Gerhard Wienke, South German Radio

GREAT BRITAIN

Edward Greenfield, *The Guardian, Gramophone*

ITALY

Luigi Bellingardi, *Stereoplay, Suono, Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana, Il Mondo della musica*
Mario de Luigi, *Musica e Dischi*

JAPAN

Toshio Oka, *Stereo Sound*
Kenji Tsumori, *Asahi Shimbun*

THE NETHERLANDS

Jan de Kruijff, *Elseviers, HiFi Video Test, Audio & Techniek*

ROMANIA

Alfred Hoffman, *Muzica, România Literară*

SPAIN

José Luis Pérez de Arteaga, *Reseña, El País*, Spanish Radio

SWEDEN

Stig Jacobsson, *HiFi & Musik*
Bengt Pleijel, *Musikrevy*

SWITZERLAND

Pierre Michot, *Journal de Genève, Gazette de Lausanne*

UNITED STATES

R. D. Darrell, *High Fidelity*
Roger Dettmer, *Fanfare*
Michael Fleming, *Boston Globe*
B. H. Haggin, *Yale Review*
Paul Hertelendy, *San Jose Mercury News*
Theodore W. Libbey, Jr., *High Fidelity*
Paul Moor, *High Fidelity*
David Patrick Stearns, *USA Today, Musical America*
Noah André Trudeau, National Public Radio
James Wierzbicki, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Musical America*
Bill Zakariasen, *New York Daily News*

to enjoy the warm spell that came behind the unexpectedly wintery blast. Several of us went up into the higher elevations, which had been dusted with snow, to take advantage of the superb views that abound in this part of Switzerland.

This time around, the conclave was a reunion of sorts, not only because it marked the jury's return to the Montreux Festival—the site of the first IRCA assembly 17 years ago—but because the jury itself was whole again, thanks to the reappearance of Alfred Hoffman, the Romanian delegate, who missed the 1984 session due to visa difficulties. As a relative newcomer to the panel, having heard tales of impassioned arguments and Machiavellian maneuvering in past sessions, I was surprised by the spirit of warm camaraderie and the greater feeling of consensus that prevailed (although these had been clearly foreshadowed last June in Granada). Perhaps it was a function of time, perhaps of improving chemistry among the jurors. One thing is certain about this year's meeting: A good deal of credit for its success must go to Geneva-based juror Michot, who, as the delegate of the host country, was fittingly elected

our president, and whose handling of the proceedings was a model of diplomacy and Swiss efficiency. Additional thanks are owed to Montreux Festival director Yves Petit de Voise and administrator Bernard de Bonnerive, who saw to it that we were comfortably lodged, and superbly well fed, at the Hotel Victoria in Glion, perched high above Montreux.

These two Frenchmen, who took over direction of the festival in 1984, also had a hand in establishing a special prize of 10,000 Swiss francs, given by the City of Montreux Office of Tourism, to be awarded by the IRCA jury in any way chosen. After some healthy discussion, we decided on a double commission—5,000 francs each to the Spanish composer Cristóbal Halffter and the Romanian composer Ștefan Niculescu—for chamber works to be premiered at next year's Montreux Festival, with the proviso that a recording be made at that time.

The names of Halffter and Niculescu had been fairly easily agreed upon, since both are major figures well established in their careers, yet with comparatively few of their compositions recorded. The panel had a somewhat more difficult time choos-

ing a recipient for the Koussevitzky International Record Award (KIRA). This was not because Hugues Dufourt, the composer who finally won the prize, was underserving, but because the level of this year's nominations was extraordinarily high, and the competition exceedingly keen. Dufourt's brilliant *Antiphysis*, a complex and evocative score for a medium-sized ensemble with solo flute, benefited from the peerless performance it received from the Ensemble Intercontemporain under Pierre Boulez, with flute soloist Istvan Matuz (on Erato). But it was given a good run for the money (\$2,000, jointly provided by HIGH FIDELITY and the Musicians Club of New York) by a handful of other entrants, all in one way or another connected with the French (specifically Parisian) contemporary music scene. These included *Magnétiques* by Francis Miroglio (Harmonia Mundi), *Messages de Feu Demoiselle R. V. Trousova* by György Kurtág (Erato), *Ouverture pour une fête étrange* by Michaël Levinas (Adès), and *Méditations* by the Parisian-based Japanese composer Yoshihisa Taïra (Stil).

The awarding of the IRCA and KIRA prizes and of the special grant of 10,000 Swiss francs took place on August 29, the night of a concert by the Pittsburgh Symphony under the direction of Lorin Maazel. The ceremony preceded a formal dinner for approximately 150 at the Montreux Palace Hotel, across the street from the Centre de congrès et d'expositions, site of the concert earlier that evening. Faith Ryan Whittlesey, the ambassador of the United States to Switzerland, was among the guests of honor. Maestro Maazel made a brief appearance, and numerous local and regional officials, including the mayor of Montreux, were present as well. After remarks from the mayor and Ambassador Whittlesey, Jury President Michot spoke briefly about the awards and read the names of the winners.

The prizes were warmly acknowledged by the assembled guests, and Michot's remarks, delivered with impeccable precision and flair, proved to be one of the evening's high points. Next year the jury heads west, across the Atlantic, for its first meeting in the United States. The organizer of that meeting, your faithful correspondent, has his work cut out for him. The Swiss are a tough act to follow. ●

OTHER NOMINEES

IRCA

BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 4, in B flat, Op. 60. Bavarian State Orchestra, Kleiber. Orfeo S 100 841 B (D).

CHABRIER: Le roi malgré lui. Hendricks, Garcisanz, Quilico, Jeffes, Laffont, Moor, Choœurs et Nouvel Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Dutoit. RCA Erato NUM 75162 (D, 3).

DUKAS: La Péri; Symphony in C. Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Jordan. RCA Erato NUM 75175 (D).

HONEGGER: Quartets Nos. 1, 2, 3. Quatuor de Genève. Erato NUM 75101 (D).

HONEGGER: Symphonies Nos. 3, 5. Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Dutoit. RCA Erato NUM 75117 (D).

IVES: Sonata for Piano, No. 1. Henck. Wergo WER 60101 (D).

MESSIAEN: Cinq Rechants; O Sacrum Convivium. XENAKIS: Nuits. Groupe vocal de France, Tranchant. Arion 38775 (A).

MOZART: Requiem, K. 626. Kirkby, Watkinson, Rolfe-Johnson, Thomas; Westminster Cathedral Boys Choir, Academy of Ancient Music, Hogwood. Oiseau Lyre 411 712-1 (D).

PURCELL: King Arthur. Smith, Fisher, Priday, Ross, Stafford, Elliott, Varcoe; Monteverdi Choir, English Baroque Soloists, Gardiner. RCA Erato NUM 75127 (D, 2).

RACHMANINOFF: Preludes (5); Moments musicaux (4); Études-tableaux (2); Élégie, Op. 3, No. 1. Gavrlov. Angel EMI DS 38158 (D).

RAVEL: Ma Mère l'Oye; Pavane; Le Tombeau de Couperin; Valses nobles et sentimentales. Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Dutoit. London 410 254-1 (D).

ROMAN: The Swedish Mass. Bach Choir, Drottningholm Baroque Ensemble, Öhrwall. Proprius PRO 9920 (D).

SCARLATTI, D.: Fandango. RODRIGUEZ: Sonata in F. DE ALBERO: Sonatas in D Dorian; in D; in E Dorian; in E. COURCELLE: Sonata in A. HERRANDO: Sonata in B flat. DE NEBRA: Grave de B' tono; Sonata in G. Galvez. Ensayo ENY-D 2201 (D).

SCHOENBERG: Moses and Aron. Mazura, Langridge; Glen Ellyn Children's Chorus, Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Choir, Solli. London 414 264-1 (D, 2).

SCHUMANN, R.: Symphonic Études, Op. 13; Arabesque for Piano, Op. 18. Pollini. Deutsche Grammophon 410 916-1 (D).

SIBELIUS: Songs. Söderström, Krause, Ashkenazy, Gage, Bonnell. Argo 411 739-1 (D, 5).

STRAUSS: Der Rosenkavalier. Tomowa-Sintow, Baltas, Perry, Moll; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and State Opera Chorus, Karajan. Deutsche Grammophon 413 163-1 (D, 4).

STRAVINSKY: The Rake's Progress. Langridge, Ramey, Pope, Walker, Dean; London Sinfonietta, Chailly. London 411 644-1 (D, 3).

VARESE: Ecuatorial; Déserts; Intégrales; Hyperprism; Octandre; Offrandes; La Croix du Sud; Density 2.1.5. Ensemble Intercontemporain, Boulez. CBS Masterworks M 39053 (A).

VERDI: Il Trovatore. Domingo, Plowright, Fassbaender, Zancanaro; Saint Cecilia Academy Orchestra and Chorus, Giulini. Deutsche Grammophon 413 355-1 (D, 3).

VIVIER: Shiraz; Pulau Dewata; Lonely Child. Pelletier, Parent; Arraymusic, Orchestre Métropolitain du Grand-Montréal, Garant. Centre-discs CMC 1384 (D).

SCHOLA GREGORIANA: Anglo-Saxon Easter. Schola Gregoriana, Berry. Archiv 413 546-1 (D).

KIRA

ADAMS: Shaker Loops. San Francisco Symphony, De Waart. Philips 412 214-1 (D).

ALEXANDRA: Symphonies: No. 2 ("Anthem"); No. 3 ("Diachronics"). Symphony Orchestra of the Romanian Radiotelevision, Iosif Conta*, Liviu Ionescu. Electrecord ST-ECE 02183 (A).

BAIRAKTAROV: Symphony No. 1. Kazakova; Bulgarian National Radio Symphony Orchestra, Kazandjiev. Balkanton BCA 1300/457 (A).

BANCQUART: Symphonie No. 1. Orchestre National de France, Fejerstam. Erato STU 71549 (A).

BOESMANS: La Passion de Gilles. Gottlieb, Farley, Alliot-Lugaz, Oliver; National Opera of Belgium Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Bartholomé. Ricercar RIC 024-25 (A, 2, live recording).

EKLUND: Requiem. Mellnäs, Leanderson; Motett Choir of Stockholm, Choir of the Great Church of Stockholm, Symphony Orchestra of the City of Norrköping, Sjökvist. Phono Suecia PS 18 (A).

GOULD: Burchfield Gallery. American Symphony Orchestra, Gould. RCA Red Seal ARC 1-5019 (D).

JOSEPHS: Requiem. Dawe, Almeida; Adelaide String Quartet, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Measham. Unicorn-Kanchana DKP 9032 (D).

KNUSSEN: Symphony No. 2. London Sinfonietta, Knussen. Unicorn-Kanchana DKP 9027 (D).

KURTÁG: Messages de Feu Demoiselle R. V. Trousova. Ensemble Intercontemporain, Boulez. Erato STU 71543 (D).

LEVINAS: Ouverture pour une fête étrange. Nouvel Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Amy, Soudant. Adès 14.072 (A).

MIROGLIO: Magnétiques. Edinger; Nouvel Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Prin. Harmonia Mundi HM 5144 (A).

OHANA: Livre des prodiges. Chomaka. Erato STU 71548 (D).

PART: Cantus; Tabula Rasa. Kremer, Grindenko, Schnittke; Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra, Sondeckis. ECM 1275 (A).

SCHNITTKE: Concerto for Violin, No. 2. Kremer, Basel Symphony Orchestra, Holliger. Philips 411 107-1 (D).

TAÏRA: Méditations. Orchestre National de France, Soutrot. Stil 1312 578 (A).

ZAPPA: The Perfect Stranger. Ensemble Intercontemporain, The Barking Pumpkin Digital Gratification Consort, Boulez. Angel DS 38170 (D).

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Dvorský's Sparkling Nemorino Enlivens Donizetti's "L'Elisir d'amore"

DONIZETTI:

L'Elisir d'amore.

⊙ Popp, Dvorský, Nesterenko, Weigl, Hobarth; Bavarian Radio Chorus, Munich Radio Orchestra, Wallberg. Theodor Holzinger, prod. RCA ARC 3-5411 (D, 3). □ Eurodisc 6100-097.

Here's an unlikely-looking release that seems to have created no advance interest—a recording of a quintessentially Italian comedy conducted by a German and sung by an east-of-the-Rhine cast that includes an Austrian (Bernd Weigl), two Slovaks (Lucia Popp and Peter Dvorský), and a Russian (Evgeny Nesterenko). At this point in the discussion, the words "idiomatic" and "Italianate" might arise, but that's a road I'd rather not follow: Italian opera doesn't always sound idiomatic these days, even when it's sung and conducted by Italians. So I won't mind if German maestro Heinz Wallberg punches passionate outbursts that might ideally bloom more gently (especially when he accompanies Dvorský in "*Una furtiva lagrima*"); what counts most is that his performance has what I'd claim are the nearly forgotten virtues of spunk and liveliness. His most serious fault—not uncommon in this repertoire, but rarely remarked—is that in the opera's numerous quick ensemble passages he can't keep singers and orchestra precisely together. That makes Donizetti's drollest music less amusing for me. Other listeners, hearing the record in a more carefree mood than a professional can afford, might not notice; in any case, I'd sacrifice precision if in return I were given aural evidence that participants in a recording were actually awake when the tapes began to roll.

The sleepest singer in the cast seems to be Weigl, who as Sergeant Belcore tries hard, but succeeds only in making himself disappear. I won't try to judge who might have been right in the fight he's had with the Metropolitan Opera about whether he can or can't sing Italian roles (he says he can, they say he can't), especially since—with this re-

cording as their only evidence—I've seen two of my colleagues pronounce decisive but opposite verdicts. I'll only say that here, at least, Weigl seems to settle for an imitation of the all too common forced and blustery interpretation of his role, with the result, as I've said, that he seems to wipe himself out. He does sing nimble coloratura in his duet with Dvorský, though.

Lucia Popp might be part of the reason RCA released this set (originally recorded in Germany by Eurodisc) in the United States. She is, after all, a major—and, I might even say, beloved—international star, though not one known (outside Germany, anyway) for performing Italian roles. And here I *will* offer an opinion, though I don't know that I'm taking sides in any actual controversy: She seems to be entirely accomplished as a singer of Italian music, as accomplished as she's been in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, say, or in Richard Strauss's *Daphne*. I'll state two reservations—her voice loses bite in its lower half-octave and her acting seems a bit anonymous—and just as quickly put them away. She might have been recorded carelessly, or she might not have been in her best voice. But listen to her portamentos. She sings Italian music with an unforced authority that makes her a valuable part of the total ensemble. (I'll forgive her Germanic *qv*is and *qv*ellos; the Italian of many American singers is much worse.)

Nesterenko, like all Dulcamaras, starts with a tricky problem. His character, a cuddly quack, is an odd combination of qualities and is not clarified when he makes his first entrance and starts to sell worthless potions—singing, if he believes the Ricordi edition of the vocal score, *con aria di ciarlatano*. "With the air of a charlatan": Does this mean that he acts out his phoniness for *us*, the audience watching him from seats in the theater? Or does it mean that he acts immeasurably worldly and wise, as he'd have to if he were going to fool the peasants he's try-



Dvorský: singing that is personable, alive, and full of conviction

ing to con onstage? The second choice strikes me as both funnier and more realistic, though things aren't made any clearer by a slapstick joke: "I'm known throughout the universe," Dulcamara says, and then, stuck, he stutters for a moment and lamely concludes "throughout the universe, and . . . and lots of other places." The temptation to play this as a gag aimed at the theater audience must be nearly overwhelming; do it that way, though, and Dr. Dulcamara disappears, a shame since he's far more amusing than any ingratiating buffo bass. The key to the joke might be that Dulcamara has a tiny fault that, no doubt, has gotten him in trouble many times before. He talks faster than he thinks, and in this case talks himself into a corner he'd never get out of if he weren't addressing villagers naive enough to believe anything he tells them. Understood that way, the joke then reveals the essence of Dulcamara's character. It sets up the funniest and most touching moment in the role, the good doctor's amazement when his phony love potion actually seems to work. And it bridges the gap between the charlatan who parades for us and the more subtle one who might actually sell enough snake oil to survive. Dulcamara simply has to turn on the power and the charm, overwhelming the peasants with his volubility, appearance of encyclopedic knowledge, and booming voice. This Nesterenko proves easily able to do,

though I'm not certain he's aware of his achievement. Often enough he falls back on wheezing buffo tricks, which amount to nothing more than a generalized portrait of a crotchety old man, and really aren't very funny. Give him time to get moving, though, and—both in his entrance aria and his duet with Poppi—he musters enough self-importance to convince you that if he turned his steps northward he'd succeed in selling cuckoo clocks to the Swiss. I wish he could start out that way, and maintain that level throughout the performance. But by reaching it at all he conveys, if only at moments, a true sense of his character that most other artists couldn't match.

Finally, there's Peter Dvorský, who really is a gem. Yes, he flings his voice around somewhat as Giuseppe di Stefano once did, and can't gracefully sustain a lyric line. It's also true that, like many modern singers, he's far more alert in conversation than in monologues. For these reasons his arias don't come off as well as connoisseurs might demand, but elsewhere his conviction won me over completely. Listen, for instance, to his voice ringing out over the ensemble with entirely credible anguish at the end of the first act, or—best of all—to his disbelief and then growing joy when his beloved admits she just might love him: "Me? . . . You *love* me? . . . *Really?* . . . *REALLY?*" He can be funny, too; he's per-

sonable, alive, and, except in his arias, really *there*. It's fun for anyone who's dreamed of producing opera to see which characters *must* be strongly cast to make a performance work. On the basis of this recording, I'd say that with lively conducting and a wondrous Nemorino, *L'Elisir d'amore* succeeds even with half a Dulcamara, an adequate Adina, and no Belcore at all. Or to put it another way, I might say that every opera recording has its faults, but that the partner-

ship of Wallberg and Dvorský is enough to make this one a smashing success.

RCA has divided the LP version of the opera into bands corresponding to separate musical numbers, a sensible choice that gives record listeners the same access to favorite passages owners of the CD version might enjoy. But in an age of careless libretto booklets, this one wins some sort of prize. You have to see it to believe it. Much of the time the Italian, German, French, and Eng-

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lish texts don't correspond. Stage directions, passages of dialogue, and even stanzas of arias that appear in one language may not appear in any of the others. (Even the Italian isn't complete!) And when the texts *do* match up, they're arranged not as verse—as the Italian, at least, was written—but as indigestible lumps of prose. None of the translations, in other words, are printed as line-by-line renderings of the original; you can't follow them with any hope of connecting what you read to what you hear. As a writer, I know perfectly well that editing takes both time and trouble. But whenever one language has text not translated elsewhere, somebody took care to place large amounts of white space in all the other versions. Couldn't the same effort have gone into making the four translations consistent?

Gregory Sandow

HANDEL: Messiah.

Ⓜ M. Price, Schwarz, Burrows, Estes; Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Davis. Mike Bremner, prod. Philips 412 538-4 (D, 3). © (3). Ⓢ (3).

Twenty years ago, Sir Colin Davis and the London Symphony made a memorable recording of *Messiah* (Philips SC71 AX 300) that startled and delighted listeners with its brisk tempos, chamber-sized forces, and elaborate ornamentation—drastic departures

indeed from the prevailing Handelian orthodoxy enshrined in the ponderous accounts by conductors like Sir Malcolm Sargent. Now Sir Colin has remade *Messiah* in digital sound for Philips, and it's ironic that an approach that for many years represented the last word in stylistic authenticity is now the new orthodoxy from which younger conductors like Christopher Hogwood are currently departing in their use of all-male choruses, original instruments, and scholarly editions that seek to reconstruct in detail specific *Messiah* performances given or supervised by Handel himself.

All of which inevitably begs the question: To what extent has Davis's interpretation of *Messiah* become a period piece? The answer, it turns out, depends on what recording you have in mind. Many fastidious listeners will doubtless find Sir Colin's new solo quartet far too operatic for comfort. (Simon Estes, the worst offender, sounds more like the Grand Inquisitor on a tear than a properly stylish oratorio soloist.) Tempos have grown noticeably slower, often undesirably so, here and there. The playing of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra lacks the consistently enlivening intensity and rhythmic lift of the London Symphony. And the Münchners' choral work, especially when compared with the wonderfully crisp singing and flawless diction of the John Alldis group heard on the 1966 set, generally misses fire.

Needless to say, you're liable to find both performances a bit on the heavy side if you've gotten used to the lucid, slender sound of the period instruments heard on Christopher Hogwood's lovely *Messiah* recording with the Academy of Ancient Music (Oiseau-Lyre D189 D3). Nor has this new *Messiah* audibly benefited from any other post-1966 developments in Handel scholarship; Davis is still delaying the cadences in recitatives, for example, and the frequent alternation of solo strings and full ensemble is based on a common but incorrect reading of the existing source materials.

If you prefer *Messiah* with modern instruments and a mixed chorus, stick with Sir Colin's 1966 account, a superlative performance despite its stylistic anachronisms. If you want a *really* old-fashioned *Messiah*, excerpts from Sir Thomas Beecham's notorious 1959 recording, orchestrated by Eugene Goossens, are available on RCA CRL2-0192: It's full of beans and it features the young

IN THIS ISSUE

BLOCH:
Piano Quintet No. 2.

DONIZETTI:
L'Elisir d'amore.

ELGAR:
Cello Concerto in E minor, Op. 85.

HANDEL:
Messiah.

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Jon Vickers in terrific form. And if you're thinking of buying Sir Colin's new *Messiah* for the sound, don't bother; there are better digital versions to be had. The liner notes supply no information whatsoever on the specific edition used, though ample space is found for a fawning "impression" of Sir Colin's interpretation by producer Mike Bremner. All in all, this is a perfectly serviceable *Messiah*. It just isn't a particularly necessary one.

Terry Teachout

ELGAR:

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, in E minor, Op. 85.

WALTON:

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra.

Ma; London Symphony Orchestra, Previn. James Mallinson, prod. CBS Masterworks IMT 39541 (D). ◉

Sir William Walton's 1956 Cello Concerto, like so much of his later music, is brilliantly scored, harmonically ingenious, and melodi-

cally undistinguished. These qualities are typical of a lot of good movie music, which is exactly what the concerto sounds like at its best: Bernard Herrmann, say, in a recently discovered cue for *Vertigo*. (The first movement also strongly recalls the finale of Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto.) The solo part, carefully tailored for Gregor Piatigorsky, is a showy obstacle course that Yo-Yo Ma negotiates with passionate ease; André Previn and the London Symphony Orchestra accompany beautifully, helping to foster the not unpleasing illusion that there is more to this attractive but rather hollow showpiece than meets the ear.

Ma and Previn are more gainfully employed on the other side of the album, which contains perhaps the most powerful performance of Elgar's Cello Concerto to appear on record since Casals's memorable 1945 collaboration with Sir Adrian Boult and the BBC Symphony. Historian Paul Johnson speaks of the concerto's "unappeasable sorrow," but there are other aspects to this remarkable work; indeed, Sir Donald Tovey's analysis gives no hint whatsoever of the piece's dark emotional tone, concentrating instead on its "lucidity" and "humour." An interpretation single-mindedly focused on the tragic aspect of the Cello Concerto—such as the Jacqueline Du Pré-Daniel Barenboim reading still available on CBS M 34530—can come off sounding neurotic and hysterical. This account, full of masculine vigor and unaffected sentiment, is all the more moving for presenting a balanced view of Elgar's last important composition.

James Mallinson's digital sound is generally realistic, though Ma is brought just a bit too far forward in the mix. Phillip Ramey's perfunctory liner notes, with their distinctly unsympathetic tone and misleading reference to "the strutting, parade-ground rhetoric" of Elgar's introverted, pessimistic Second Symphony, are unsatisfactory.

Terry Teachout

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MONTEVERDI:

Vespro della Beata Vergine (1610).

Kirkby, Rogers; Taverner Consort, Players, and Choir, Parrott. John Fraser and David Groves, prods. Angel EMI 4D2S 3963 (D, 2). ◉ (2). ◉ CDB 47077 (2).

Monteverdi's monumental 1610 *Vespers* (so dated to distinguish the collection from his Venetian Vesper music of 1640) is a work that even connoisseurs tend to honor as a

historical milestone more than as music they want to rehear. This well may be the fate of any Himalayan masterpiece that produces too overwhelming an experience. Otherwise it's hard to understand why a work so universally acclaimed and frequently recorded (at least 17 times before this one, which is by my count the second in digital sound and the eighth using period instruments) is so scantily circulated, so little commercially promoted, and so rarely privately proselytized.

Surely a better fate awaits this recording, the most ambitious, historically authentic, and sonically sumptuous version to date. Andrew Parrott is one of the fast-rising young stars of the period instrument movement: a true scholar (as evidenced by his notes illuminating the musicological complexities involved here), and a conductor who, if occasionally hyperactive, is notable for his ability to infect singers and players with his own fervency. The present soloists, Emma Kirkby and Nigel Rogers, sing more angelically than any nonsainted humans have a right to. The male-voice ensemble that performs the intonations and chants is magnificent, as are the men in the choir in the polyphonic sections. The women are less distinctive—giving purists reason to regret that boys were not used, as they are in most other recorded accounts of the *Vespers*.

The period-instrument players (all identified in the accompanying notes, although information on the specific original or replica instruments they play is lacking) are exceptionally fluent. It is their pungently recorded timbres, and the blazingly reproduced choral and orchestral tuttis, that make this gorgeously scored music a sonic spectacular to awe unbelievers no less than the devout.

R. D. Darrell

SIBELIUS:

Quartet for Strings, in A minor; Quartet for Strings, in B flat major, Op. 4.

Ⓞ Sibelius Academy Quartet. Jaakko Borg, prod. Finlandia FAD 345 (D). (Distributed by Polygram Special Imports, 810 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019.)

Probably because he was a late bloomer, Jean Sibelius already showed a remarkably fully formed individual expression in his initial works. For all its occasionally clumsy musical verbosity, the *Kullervo* symphony from 1892 represents Sibelius in near-complete command of himself, and the same can be said for these two earlier quartets, which

here receive their recorded premieres. Actually, Sibelius composed a third string quartet during 1889–90, but the manuscript appears to have been lost—regrettable, since two of its themes were supposedly adapted later on for use in the 1892 tone poem *En Saga*, and it would have been interesting to compare the germination process in both pieces.

Though Sibelius didn't give an opus number to the A minor Quartet, he considered the one in B flat to be his second in the form; the absence of an opus number for the earlier work was apparently an oversight. When the A minor was composed, the twenty-three-year-old Sibelius was in his last year as a student at the Helsinki Musical Institute. Ferruccio Busoni, then a visiting professor there, sight-read the score at the piano, and, when he finished, praised the quartet for its formidable promise and prophesied that Sibelius would have a great future in composition.

It's easy to understand Busoni's enthusiasm. While the First Quartet occasionally pays marked obeisance to middle/late-period Beethoven, Sibelius gives his model a defi-

nite Northern accent, notably in the pungent mazurka rhythm of the third movement. Moreover, several familiar Sibelian trademarks are in evidence: gruffly lyrical thematic material, pregnant pauses, and often startlingly sudden key changes. Not so surprisingly, there are a few harbingers here and there of the bleakly virile Fourth Symphony (in the same key, coincidentally), which wouldn't be written for another two decades.

The B Flat Quartet is an even more remarkable discovery. Though less extrovert than the A minor, it is more anticipatory of the purified style of such *in propria persona* Sibelius compositions as the *Voces Intimae* String Quartet and the Sixth Symphony. This is music of striking subjectivity and sophistication, especially considering that Sibelius's next work of any stature and length was to be the epic and brawny *Kullervo*. At any rate, these two expansive compositions (running respectively 28 and 31 minutes) are of considerably more value than mere postscripts to the composer's catalog.

The performances by the Sibelius Acad-

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emy Quartet are obviously dedicated and are immaculately played (the cellist is the internationally celebrated Arto Noras), presumably saying the last interpretative words on the subject for some time to come. The recording is rich in tone and wide in dynamics, though the slight excess of resonance occasionally blurs fast passagework.

Bill Zakariassen

MILHAUD:

Le Carnaval d'Aix, for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 83b; Suite française, Op. 248; Suite provençale, Op. 152b.

Ⓞ Béroff; Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra, Prêtre. Angel EMI DS 38121 (D). □

The main advantage in this recording lies in having three major works by Darius Milhaud on a single disc. And what a wondrous travelogue of his beloved France the composer presents here. However grand a travelogue it is, though, on this musical tour bus we are confronted with a driver who is going much too fast (even by the normal standard of reckless French driving) and a pianist that suggests either boredom with the material or a lack of any deep acquaintance with it. Indeed, Michel Béroff plays as though he learned the *Carnaval* the day before recording it and intended to forget it the day after.

In a recent extended interview and discography in a leading French record periodical, conductor Georges Prêtre revealed nothing extraordinary by way of changes in his attitude toward the music of his compatriots, an attitude that in the past has brought us magical performances of much of Francis Poulenc's work. Perhaps both he and the soloist simply had an off day; in any event, these glib run-throughs do not compare with previous recorded efforts by Charles Munch (in the *Suite provençale*) or by Grant Johannessen (in the *Carnaval*).

Thomas L. Dixon

BLOCH:

Piano Quintet No. 2.

LERDAHL:

String Quartet No. 2.

Ⓞ Karp; Pro Arte Quartet. Hirshel Burke Gilbert, prod. Laurel LR 128 (A). (Distributed by Consortium Records, 2451 Nichols Canyon, Los Angeles, Calif., 90046.)

The Second Piano Quintet, composed between February 23 and July 18, 1957, is Bloch's last concerted chamber music piece,

and one of his last works altogether: Only the (still unrecorded) *Two Last Poems (Maybe...)* for flute and orchestra and the solo *Suites* for violin and viola (the latter unfinished) were to follow. Why we should have had to wait nearly 30 years for this recording of a composition that was successfully premiered soon after it was written is indeed hard to understand. For this is vintage Bloch, a concentrated piece of thinking (it lasts just over 20 minutes) brimming with energy, without any trace of the weariness apparent in the Fourth and Fifth Quartets.

Written in the key of E minor, the Second Quintet (unlike the Quartets but like the celebrated First Quintet of 1923) has only three movements—two fast ones of tremendous drive and aggressive, harsh vitality framing a beautiful and passionately yearning slow movement. Nor is the peaceful, conciliatory epilogue missing here: The last bars are among Bloch's most touching and deeply felt, a half-smiling *Abschied*. The performance, by the Pro Arte Quartet, is absolutely magnificent, a worthy addition to the group's outstanding Bloch series that will, I hope, be continued and completed in due course.

I confess the very name of Fred Lerdahl (born 1943) was new to me. On the strength of his Second Quartet, he is a force to be reckoned with in American music. This is a complex and elaborate piece in two interlinked parts, as impressive in its sustained musical thinking as in its mastery of the quartet medium and, last but not least, its expressive power. The idiom is mainstream avant-garde, but it is enlivened by strong expressionistic outbursts and, at other points, wistful and euphonious lyricism. The Pro Arte fully meets the work's daunting demands; the music is on a level of difficulty only slightly below that of Elliott Carter's or Brian Ferneyhough's quartets, but is equally effective and idiomatic.

Such an exciting program leaves me with one slight frustration, however: I would have hoped for a coupling of the two Bloch Quintets in a performance by these formidable artists. (Even though the First has been recorded several times before, only one—admittedly good—version is currently available.) And as for Fred Lerdahl, since he himself considers his Second Quartet to be a sequel to his First (as yet unrecorded), it would have been advisable to couple both of them as well...

Harry Halbreich

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SCARLATTI

To put Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757) alongside the other Baroque composers whose birthdays are being celebrated this year—Bach, Handel, and Schütz—may seem to be stretching a point. After all, his fame rests largely on his more than 500 sonatas for keyboard, and he can claim neither the universality nor the posthumous influence of these other masters.

On the other hand, our picture of Scarlatti is incomplete: In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, the columns listing his secular vocal music are gloomily subheaded, "lost unless otherwise stated." How much our view of Scarlatti would change if we could hear dozens of his operas and cantatas, instead of isolated examples, is open to question.

Even judged by his keyboard sonatas alone, Scarlatti emerges as one of the most visionary composers of his time. In these works, he incorporated virtually all that the high Baroque had to offer: the melodi-

ousness of the operatic aria, the excitement of the concerto, occasionally even the rigors of the fugue.

Working in virtual isolation from the mainstream of European keyboard music, Scarlatti created his own style from the music he heard around him. The rediscovery of his music in the 19th century was the equivalent of finding a treasure trove—and it is hard to imagine the harpsichord revival of the 20th century without him. For the player, his art is both a challenge and a delight. For the listener, he is one of music's originals.

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A recording that won the *Grand Prix du Disque 1983* is

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Philips is releasing the entire Karl Böhm *Ring* cycle recorded live during the 1966-67 Bayreuth Festival, with a cast as fine as could be assembled at the time (Birgit Nilsson, Theo Adam, James King, Leonie Rysanek, Gerd Nienstedt). The sound of the original LP issue was quite congested, but that has been cleared up in the CD version (of which *Die Walküre* is the only part I've heard). The live performance aspect is quite exciting. There are a dozen fewer track numbers here than in Georg Solti's historic recording of *Die Walküre*, also available on CD, but you probably won't have too much trouble finding what you want to hear. Total playing time: 210:24. (Philips 412 478-2.)

Kocsis Plays Rachmaninoff

Excellent value here in playing time, but that's about it. Pianist Zoltán Kocsis and the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Edo de Waart, have recorded all of

Rachmaninoff's works for piano and orchestra, and this is the first CD release in the series. It comprises Piano Concerto No. 3, in D minor, Op. 30, and Piano Concerto No. 4, in G minor, Op. 40. The coupling differs from that on LP, which pairs the first and fourth concertos. The accounts of the final two concertos are highly disappointing: Kocsis has made some fine recordings, but judging from these rushed, prosaic performances, he understands little of the Rachmaninoff idiom. Majestic climaxes are understated, the playing lacks authority, and pianistic fireworks are few. Nor is the reproduction up to par, with an overly prominent piano. London shortly will release a Rachmaninoff cycle with Vladimir Ashkenazy, Bernard Haitink, and the Concertgebouw Orchestra. Surely it is worth waiting for. Total playing time: 62:14. (Philips 411 475-2.)

Muti Conducts Rossini

It's surprising that the overtures of Rossini have been relatively neglected thus far on CD. Angel's 1980 analog recording of the overtures to *William Tell*, *Semiramide*, *The Barber of Seville*, *La Scala di Seta*, *Il Viaggio a Rheims*, and *The Siege of Corinth* played by the Philharmonia Orchestra under Riccardo Muti's direction is now available on CD. It is preferable to London's collection with Riccardo Chailly and the National Philharmonic, containing the overtures to *William Tell*, *La Gazza Ladra*, *L'Italiana in Algeri*, *Il Turco in Italia*, *Il Signor Bruschino*, *Il Viaggio a Rheims*, and *La Scala di Seta* (London 400 049-

2). Angel's analog reproduction is well balanced and more pleasing than London's rather sharp, unresonant digital sonics. Total playing time: 52:13. (Angel CDC 47118.)

Starring Stokowski

Some of the last recordings of Leopold Stokowski are now available—a 1975 collection of ten of his own transcriptions, including an outrageous *Stars and Stripes Forever*, the *entr'acte* from Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* (which has an absolutely stupendous *tam-tam* stroke), Saint-Saëns's *Danse macabre*, and works of Johann Strauss, Ippolitov-Ivanov, Chabrier, Haydn, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, and Berlioz. The National Philharmonic Orchestra is at its best, and the engineers have done a first-class job. Lots of fun indeed. Total playing time: 55:58. (PRT CDPCN 4. Distributed by Compleat.)

Dances from Vienna

A total delight! Here is nearly an hour of captivating mid-19th-century Viennese music played by a small string ensemble—the Ensemble Bella Musica de Vienne, directed by Michael Dittrich—occasionally complemented by flute and guitars. Works of Strohmayr, Lanner, Diabelli (of Beethoven variation fame), Stelzmüller, Mayer, and Johann Strauss Junior and Senior are included on *Vienna Dances 1850*. Performances are spirited, and the sound is brilliant, very close-up, but rich: On occasion you can hear one of the players breathing. Highly recommended. Total playing time: 57:34. (Harmonia Mundi HM 90.1013.)

ROCK 'N' ROLL FEELS THE FIRE

**The PMRC isn't only out to censor sex and violence.
John Denver could be next.**

by John Morthland

We only want to do a better job of parenting. We're not trying to tell artists what they can and cannot say," insists Susan Baker of the Parents Music Resource Center, the group that has been trying to get rock lyrics rated for

obscenity, violence, occultism, and references to drugs and alcohol. "Kids could still buy anything they wanted; we just want them to know *what* they're buying."

"At first I thought [PMRC founder] Tipper Gore was charming and the organization was innocuous," replies Nashville attorney Trip Aldredge, who has debated Gore on television. "But then they began sliding stuff under the table. I disapprove of warning stickers, although they're inoffensive *if* artist and record company agree to them; that's strictly internal corporate politics. What I'm worried about are these subclassifications—for obscenity, violence, or whatever. A general warning is bad enough, but when you try to get specific... A classic question of interpretation is involved here, and when you spread it out among members of a board, you multiply the chances for error. So I have to take a First Amendment line: no prior restraint. The PMRC has a chilling effect on freedom of expression."

As long as there has been rock 'n' roll, there have been movements to censor it. The phrase itself is a sexual euphemism. Rock has been held responsible for sins ranging from illiteracy to brainwashing, from promiscuity and atheism to miscegenation. Even after the music was here to stay and the Rolling Stones were fast becoming superstars, Mick Jagger had to change the lyrics to "Let's Spend the Night Together" to appear on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Meanwhile, the indecipherable words to "Louie Louie," a one-hit wonder from an obscure Northwestern group called the Kingsmen, sparked a debate that raged from junior-high-school locker rooms to the halls of Congress. In the late '60s and early '70s, Vice-President Spiro Agnew led a cru-

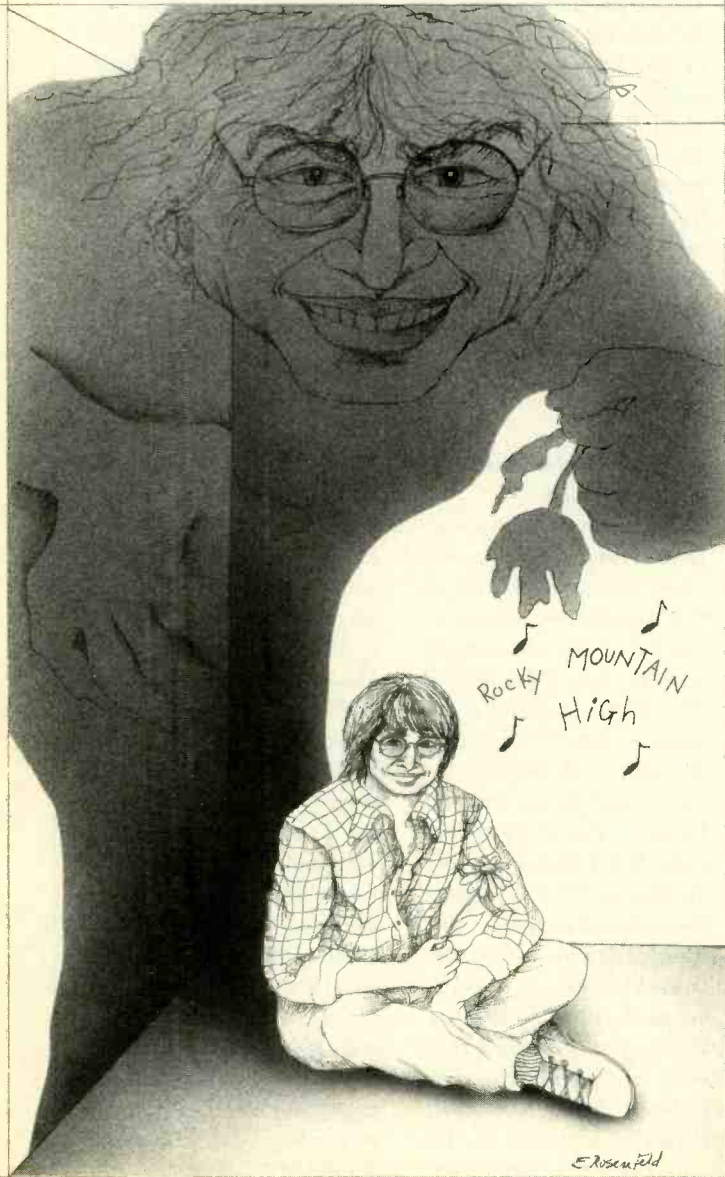


ILLUSTRATION BY EILEEN ROSEFELD

sade against drug lyrics—a crusade that petered out right around the time he was driven from office in disgrace. Such demands for reform have usually been ignored. But this time the recording industry has taken steps to partially accommodate its critics.

Last May the PMRC mailed a proposal to record companies calling for the following rating system: X would stand for profane or sexually explicit lyrics, V for violence, O for occultism, and D/A for drugs/alcohol. The classifications would be applied by a board including producers, songwriters, and deejays, as well as community representatives. Letters shot back and forth between Gore and Stanley M. Gortikov, president of the Recording Industry Association of America, the trade group that represents record companies. Though steadfastly clinging to the position that no ratings (and hence no ratings board) were necessary, members of the RIAA did agree to a general warning sticker, further offering the PMRC a voice in its exact wording, which would be something like "Parental Guidance: Explicit Lyrics." Warning stickers are not uncommon (see Marvin Gaye's *Dream of a Lifetime*), but critics of Gortikov's plan point out that this now binds record companies to a wholesale review of product—i.e., censorship—and leaves the door open for more severe strictures.

(Polygram responded to the scare at once by sticking its next Bar-Kays album. But by fall, three member labels [A&M, MCA, and I.R.S.], as well as Geffen, Island, and Gold Mountain, had disassociated themselves from Gortikov's proposal and pledged support to the Musical Majority, a recently organized anticensorship group headed by Gold Mountain's Danny Goldberg. A&M went even further out on a limb by deciding to *remove* a warning sticker from its new comedy album by Billy Crystal. Despite the fact that this genre traditionally has been sticker-susceptible, A&M felt that Crystal would have been unfairly stigmatized in the current atmosphere.)

It took the PMRC only three months to win concessions that other forces (even some as powerful as the National Parent-Teacher Association) had been unable to bring about after years of pressure. "Our connections certainly helped, no doubt

about it," Baker told me ingenuously. Tipper Gore founded the group—nicknamed The Washington Wives by the press—after she bought Prince's *Purple Rain* for her son, only to discover the masturbation reference in "Darling Nikki." She is married to Senator Albert Gore, Jr., of Tennessee, who serves on the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee—the same committee that would eventually conduct a hearing on the lyrics issue. Baker is married to Treasury Secretary (and former White House Chief of Staff) James A. Baker III, PMRC president Pam Howar to prominent Washington businessman Raymond Howar, and Sally Nevius to attorney (and former D.C. council chairman) John Nevius. Among those also signing the initial May proposal were Georgie Packwood and Nancy Thurmond, wives of senators from Oregon and South Carolina, respectively.

Gortikov was more to the point, however, when he wrote RIAA member companies, "I cannot escape continuing dialogue with this group, particularly in view of its Washington links." He also speculated that the industry might find its antipiracy drive (including a proposed tax on blank tapes to neutralize home taping) "jeopardized" if more attention weren't paid to PMRC demands.

But if the rating system has been at the center of the ruckus, there have been other demands, each of them equally ominous. Supporters have suggested that unusually offensive albums be stocked in separate bins or sold in plain brown wrappers and that record companies "reassess" their contracts with culpable artists. The Washington Wives have called for everything from printing lyrics on album and tape covers to rating concerts to banning "backward masking," or the recording of hidden messages. Gortikov's letter to the PMRC offering generic warning stickers refuted most specific demands on a number of grounds: constitutional (freedom of expression), technical (publishers, not labels, are authorized to print lyrics), practical (record companies can't control what their artists do onstage), and philosophical (child-raising responsibilities rest with parents, not with the record business).

The Senate committee hearing remains the most ominous development in the PMRC's struggle. It drew a consider-

able amount of attention—even though, since no legislation was being reviewed, it was practically designed as a media event by definition. Then again, there *are* some people on Capitol Hill who would like to pass a law or two on behalf of the PMRC: "If I could find some way constitutionally to get rid of this filth, I would," declared Senator Ernest F. Hollings of South Carolina. Frank Zappa and Twisted Sister's Dee Snider testified against censorship, as could have been expected, but the presence of John Denver in their ranks lent some credibility to these two "outsiders"—especially in the eyes of the "general public" that listens to his music and that might otherwise side with the PMRC. Denver said he was speaking from experience: When "Rocky Mountain High" was released, he fought with radio stations who refused to play the song because they thought it had to do with drugs.

Nearly all the songs named by the PMRC are by either black or heavy metal artists, including Prince (author of another target, Sheena Easton's hit "Sugar Walls"), Judas Priest ("Eat Me Alive"), Twisted Sister ("We're Not Gonna Take It"), and the Mary Jane Girls ("My House"). PMRC members tend to cite the same dozen or so songs over and over, but according to Baker, "About five to eight percent of rock songs are objectionable these days, whereas a few years ago only one percent were. And the obscenity is getting more and more mainstream." Her figures, she says, come from the Rev. Jeff Ling, who played in high school rock bands before entering the ministry; he now serves as a consultant to the PMRC. "Rock has always been on the cutting edge," Baker notes, "but there's a huge difference between Elvis wiggling his hips while singing, 'I want you, I need you, I love you,' and something like Berlin's 'Feel the Fire.' A line of decency has been crossed; that's what we're protesting."

Yet Baker's very examples—and one that she didn't mention, Bruce Springsteen's "I'm on Fire" ("even Bruce isn't clean," Howar has charged)—dramatize the obvious flaws in the system. Elvis *was* widely condemned as obscene, according to '50s sexual standards—standards that tumbled in his wake. And though Baker

(Continued on page 87)

Out of Character

TOM WAITS:

Anthology of Tom Waits.

☐ *Bones Howe and Jerry Yester, prods. Elektra 4-60416. ©*

TOM WAITS:

Rain Dogs.

☐ *Tom Waits, prod. Island 790299-4. ©*

Before he released *Swordfishtrombones* in 1983, Tom Waits seemed to be engaged in a variation on the Dorian Gray theme: Although his image remained the same, his voice was disintegrating before our ears. Waits played the perennial nighthawk at the diner, guzzling coffee while rehearsing aloud for the late set at the cocktail lounge in his mind. He portrayed last year's hipster as this year's loser, down on his luck but up on his language, a connoisseur of irony yet a sucker for anything sentimental. Francis Coppola helped him develop this role, employing him as soundtrack composer (*One from the Heart*) and character actor (*The Outsiders*, *Rumble Fish*, *The Cotton Club*).

Waits's voice, meanwhile, suffered from his art-as-lifestyle. On *Anthology*, a collection of the better-known works from his Elektra years, the vocals go from slightly cigarette-stained on the almost ingenuous "Ol' 55" to hoarse whisper on the jazzbo-period "Burma Shave" to battered wheeze struggling valiantly through the "Waltzing

Matilda" chorus of "Tom Traubert's Blues." (Since this volume isn't sequenced chronologically, the health of Waits's vocal cords shifts disconcertingly from track to track.) Reaching the outer limits of his singing ability, he also stretched his last-of-the-beatniks character almost to the point of caricature. But now that he has resumed his recording career in earnest (he's even planning to tour Europe and America), Waits not only seems to have given up smoking and the high—or should I say low—life, he's no longer trying to be typecast.

With *Swordfishtrombones*, Waits turned minimalist in instrumental approach and surrealist in lyrics and general atmosphere, not so much eccentric as artistically ambitious. It was as if he'd imagined Kurt Weill and Captain Beefheart running into each other on an empty Hollywood soundstage while Coppola lurked in his computer-programmed trailer ready to film the encounter in glorious living black and white and Waits himself transcribed the score. *Swordfishtrombones* was more Beefheart; *Rain Dogs* favors Weill. By turns whimsical and sinister, and more than a little weird, *Rain Dogs* is theatrical in mood, a dark picaresque in which Waits's gruff but patched-up voice emerges like a figure from dry-ice fog to invite and warn, "We sail tonight for Singapore/Don't fall asleep while you're

ashore." Waits is Peter Pan with two days' growth of beard, encouraging all the kids who've already left Mom behind to join him on a journey to places more exotic than never-never land. He's accompanied by the hippest New York players this side of a Lou Reed album, and they're made to sound as if they'd lifted their instruments from a dusty kitchen cabinet and learned everything they know from bad wedding bands: lurching tangos ("Tango Till They're Sore"), backroom rumbas ("Jockey Full of Bourbon"), film noir background music ("Midtown"), and some very after-hours rock 'n' roll ("Union Square"). Keith Richard helps out with the rock, affirming that the spirit of *Exile on Main Street*, which *Rain Dogs* recalls, has not been forgotten.

The old Tom Waits hasn't been entirely forgotten either. "Time," with its melancholy accordion melody, is unabashedly sentimental, but the lyrics lend it dignity: "And they all pretend they're orphans/And their memory's like a train/You can see it getting/Smaller as it pulls away." "Downtown Train" is an urban companion piece to "Jersey Girl," an unrequited-love plaint to a girl who takes the same subway home from work. The song that strikes a balance between old and new is "Hang Down Your Head," a sad and simple goodbye from a lover betrayed, co-written with wife Kathleen Brennan. It has the understated quality of the new work, but the vocals have a touch of the wistfulness of "Shiver Me Timbers" (unfortunately overlooked for the anthology). Waits has emerged from the jive alive—and well.

Michael Hill

STEVIE WONDER:

In Square Circle.

☉ *Stevie Wonder, prod. Tamla 6134TL. ☐ ©*

Even though he hasn't released an album of new songs in five years, Stevie Wonder has kept up his side of pop's ongoing argument: a string of singles that brightened up 1982 ("That Girl," "Do I Do," "Ribbon in the Sky"), his presence in the successful fight to gain Martin Luther King a national holiday,



Tom Waits: no longer alone at the cocktail lounge in his mind

the soundtrack to *The Woman in Red*, his outspoken indictments of African famine and apartheid. *In Square Circle* also makes you feel as if he's never left. He settles in with the ease and perverse modesty of a master—and ends up dazzling you anyway. This just might be Wonder's most consistent and durable record, yet it's neither complacent nor pinched. Its autumnal tone comes through in little glances back to past themes, in muted melodic colors, and in the melancholy that threads through its ballads.

Of course, it may seem odd to describe a performer who's just thirty-five with words like "master" and "autumnal," but precociousness has been one of the hallmarks of Wonder's career. His breakthrough albums of the early '70s were testing grounds where he exploded tradition with almost-too-gorgeous melodies, broad rhythmic fusion, virtuosic synthesizer innovation, and vehement social concern. *In Square Circle* is about modulating such explosions. He sneaks gently into "Part-Time Lover," catching the old "You Can't Hurry Love" bass riff by surprise, tossing its rhythm around with an extra crack of drum, a stray scattered vocal. The romantic songs that bleed together on Side 1 are a tour-de-force exposition of what unstuffy adult pop ought to be. Each is triggered by a smooth, complex rhythm (the modified samba of "Never in Your Sun," the gurgling funk of "I Love You Too Much") and sustained by a shapely melody (the slow cry of "Whereabouts," the elegant shifts of "Stranger on the Shore of Love"). Wonder always delighted in reworking chordings from the Ellington songbook; the delicate wordplay here suggests that lately he has absorbed lessons in lyrical tact as well.

His notorious innocence turns to foolishness only once. "Spiritual Walkers," a sequel to "Jesus Children of America," praises reli-

gious followers (better them, I guess, than their privileged leaders) but never considers their ability to be duped. It's even more paradoxical considering the album's finale, "It's Wrong (Apartheid)," a rousing condemnation of South Africa's claim that its racist oppression has divine justification; the message here, phrased as a children's chant propelled by a rich merger of African rhythms, is impossible to resist. Then again, logical consistency has never been Wonder's strong suit, or even his passing interest. Embracing opposites is one of the sources of his power: He reveres tradition while breaking its rules, praises faith while indicting religion. His duplicity is worth more than the dull consistency of a thousand more correct performers. Mark Moses

**NICK LOWE AND HIS COWBOY OUTFIT:
The Rose of England.**

☉ Nick Lowe, Colin Fairley, and Huey Lewis, prods. Columbia FC 39958. ☐

At first, Nick Lowe's sixth album, *The Rose of England*, may not seem much different from its two predecessors, which whittled down the pub-rock eclecticism of his first three records to seasoned-pro formula. But when the bassist and his Cowboy Outfit chase Moon Mullican's barhopping ode "7 Nights to Rock" with their bluesy closing-time instrumental "Long Walk Back," the latter's yawning saxophone giving way to the sound of footsteps echoing down a deserted street, the new LP becomes much more than another dance party; it's an assurance (and a warning) from a good-time guy who has faced his share of mornings-after that life goes on when the music stops. Spurred by an inspired mesh of originals and sympathetic compositions from (among others) Elvis Costello and John Hiatt and by the support of his loose-but-tight band, this is

Lowe's most thoughtful effort since *Labour of Lust*... and it's a lot of fun, too.

The good-time guy up on the stage has his eye on the audience, and he's worried about the confusion he sees: a woman silently suffering a lover's cruelty (the glistening duet from Lowe and Paul Carrack, "Everyone"), young Britons dazzled into military service by slick-sell patriotism (the folkish title track). Then there's Lowe's transformation of his "I Knew the Bride (When She Used to Rock and Roll)" from the punk-paced, loutish boast of 1978's *Live Stiffs* compilation into a melancholy reminiscence, nudged deeper into the past by track producer Huey Lewis's mellow harmonica and the street-corner harmonies of the News. Lowe's wistful vocals suggest more than just disappointment over a thwarted romance; he turns this comical tale of upward mobility into a eulogy for (rock's?) lost nerve and abandoned ideals. Moments like this and the tender "I Could Be the One You Love," where, older and wiser, he tries to settle down a flighty lover by conjuring visions of snugly monogamy, offer glimpses of the hopefulness and romanticism that lurk behind Lowe's wisecracking, cynical facade like a shy boy following his dream girl home from school. This kid, after all, grew up worshipping the Everly Brothers. This man, after all, wrote "(What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace, Love, and Understanding."

Joyce Millman

**JANE WIEDLIN:
Jane Wiedlin.**

☐ George Massenburg, Bill Payne, Russ Kunkel, and Vince Ely, prods. I.R.S. C 5638. ☉

The best songs on *Talk Show*, the 1984 Go-Go's album that proved to be the group's last, were written by rhythm guitarist/singer Jane Wiedlin. Her perky melodies and

I N T H I S I S S U E

POP

THE CUCUMBERS:
Who Betrays Me ... and Other Happier Songs.

KID CREOLE AND THE COCONUTS:
In Praise of Older Women and Other Crimes.

NICK LOWE AND HIS COWBOY OUTFIT:
The Rose of England.

TOM WAITS:
Anthology of Tom Waits.
Rain Dogs.

JANE WIEDLIN:
Jane Wiedlin.

STEVIE WONDER:
In Square Circle.

ZEITGEIST:
Translate Slowly.

JAZZ

BILLY BANG SEXTET:
The Fire from Within.

CLASSIC JAZZ QUARTET.

MARY FETTIG:
In Good Company.

MENGBERG, LACY, LEWIS, GORTER, AND BENNINK:
Change of Season.

JIM PEPPER:
Comin' and Goin'.

LOREN SCHOENBERG ORCHESTRA AND QUARTET:
That's the Way It Goes.

BUD SHANK:
This Bud's for You.

RALPH SUTTON AND VIC DICKENSON:
Blowin' Bubbles.

THE WIDESPREAD JAZZ ORCHESTRA:
Paris Blues.

catchy hooks were grounded in a verbal concision and wit that made you listen, to be sure each twisted pun or stark image was really there. In songs like "Forget That Day" and "Capture the Light," it was.

Wiedlin's solo debut starts off stating the same paradox the Go-Go's did: serious ambition disguised as girl-group fluff. "Blue Kiss," carried along by a lilting melody that belies the melancholy of the lyric, has a simple image that lends itself to a couple of interpretations (blue as a sign of sadness and as a sign of coldness). But the top tracks here display a far wider range of mood and style, too. Listening to the zigzagging melody of "East Meets West," the literary parody of "100 Years of Solitude," or the slamming polyrhythms of "Somebody's Going to Get into This House," it's easy to understand why this woman had to go-go.

If you're looking to resist Wiedlin's charms, chances are you'll say that her voice is a cutesy-poo coo—in the group, after all, she distinguished herself as a performer by (1) being a brunette and (2) acting like a ditz. There's a new hard edge to her voice, though; on "Sometimes You Really Get on My Nerves" (great title), the coo develops a

rasp that's very effective. In short, *Jane Wiedlin* retains all of the braininess that made her earlier songs such pleasant surprises—while leaving that smart-dumb-bunny image far behind. *Ken Tucker*

**KID CREOLE AND THE COCONUTS:
In Praise of Older Women and Other Crimes.**

Ⓞ August Darnell, prod. Sire 9-25298-1. Ⓜ

The fifth album from Kid Creole and the Coconuts doesn't have the eccentric propulsion of *Fresh Fruit in Foreign Places* or *Doppelganger*, which, with their select blends of everything from disco to African juju, felt as fresh as a breeze. Except for the funkified cha-cha on "Dooopsalsarockbop," there isn't an overt Afro-Caribbean influence to be heard. Like the more Americanized *Wise Guy* and its not coincidentally braggadocious hit "I'm a Wonderful Thing, Baby," *In Praise of Older Women and Other Crimes* draws freely on funk from James Brown, MFSB, Stax, and Motown in ways only a magic thinker could devise. It also deviates from August Darnell's scripted epic about setting out in a banana boat to find his love, Mimi, losing his crewmen and his purity

along the way. When that shtick didn't sell, the group concluded that "crime was the only passport, and race music was the only way out." They had to assimilate... kind of, and, invigorating as it was, get the heck out of B'dilli Bay.

Praise is pop that won't lose its fizz. The



No overworked hustle for Kid Creole

butt-kickin' opener, "Endicott," a favorite in the electric-boogaloo outlets, sounds like an outtake from the platinum debut of Darnell's earlier concoction, Dr. Buzzard's Original Savannah Band—before Darnell uncovered the joys of calypso and rock-steady. The horns whip and the drum-beat frisks in pleasant resemblance to "Cherchez La Femme." But don't mistake this for a retrenchment to the deep, dark days of "disco," since Buzzard never copped overworked hustle grooves.

Here Darnell's "mulatto music" concept is pushed even further, hitting on the urban issues of vigilantism ("Dooopsalsarockbop"), juvenile delinquency (the crumping "Caroline Was a Dropout"), and police brutality ("Animal Cop," toned-down and dark). Tinges of the over-the-edge loverboy antics that we've come to expect—and adore—from the Kid are also in evidence on the energized blues of "Particularly Interested," where he professes wholistic adoration, although this particular loverboy also is taunted by a chorus of whining females in "Endicott" and, "at the risk of sounding homosexual," turns down a fast girl ("Take Me"). He even comes close to losing his manly appeal in "Luv Got Me Dancing on My Kneez." But as the closing track majestically pounds home, "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down!"

Havelock Nelson

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THE CUCUMBERS:

Who Betrays Me... and Other Happier Songs.

© Dave Young, prod. *Fake Doom FDR 006*.
(P.O. Box 7295, New York, N.Y. 10116.)

Listening to the Cucumbers is like opening a can of Classic Coke: The packaging may be new, but you know the old reliable soda pop is waiting inside to attack your taste buds. The melodies on their debut LP, *Who Betrays Me... and Other Happier Songs*, are cool, refreshing, and will easily quench the thirsts of those who are numb from overproduced music. The lyrics are equally satisfying. Deena Shoshkes and Jon Fried, the main composers, singers, and guitarists, offer such whimsical fancies as "Buildings never shiver/Just go where you crumble/Some of them smile/Most of them just mumble" ("Everything Goes").

Shoshkes weaves airy vocals in and out of these word pictures as just the right sounds are snugly sewn into the background. The Cucumbers use only two guitars, a bass, and various percussion to create a tropical rhythm in "Want to Talk" and a primitive beat in "Susie's Breakdown." The most unusual assortment of instruments is in "Don't Watch TV," where mysterious grinding noises sound like dinosaurs drowning in prime-time tar pits. These variations allow the group to escape the tediousness of its Mersey Beat influences. Tight beginnings and endings also keep each song an entity, avoiding any unpleasant aftertaste.

In 1982 the Cucumbers were one of the first groups to rekindle interest in clean guitars, clever stanzas, and punchy rhythms. It's a formula that, if blended correctly, can spell longevity for a band. Let's hope they leave the mixture intact. *Diana Schuh*

ZEITGEIST:

Translate Slowly.

© John Croslin and John Viehweg, prods. *DB Records 75*. ☐ (450 14th St., Suite 201, Atlanta, Ga. 30318.)

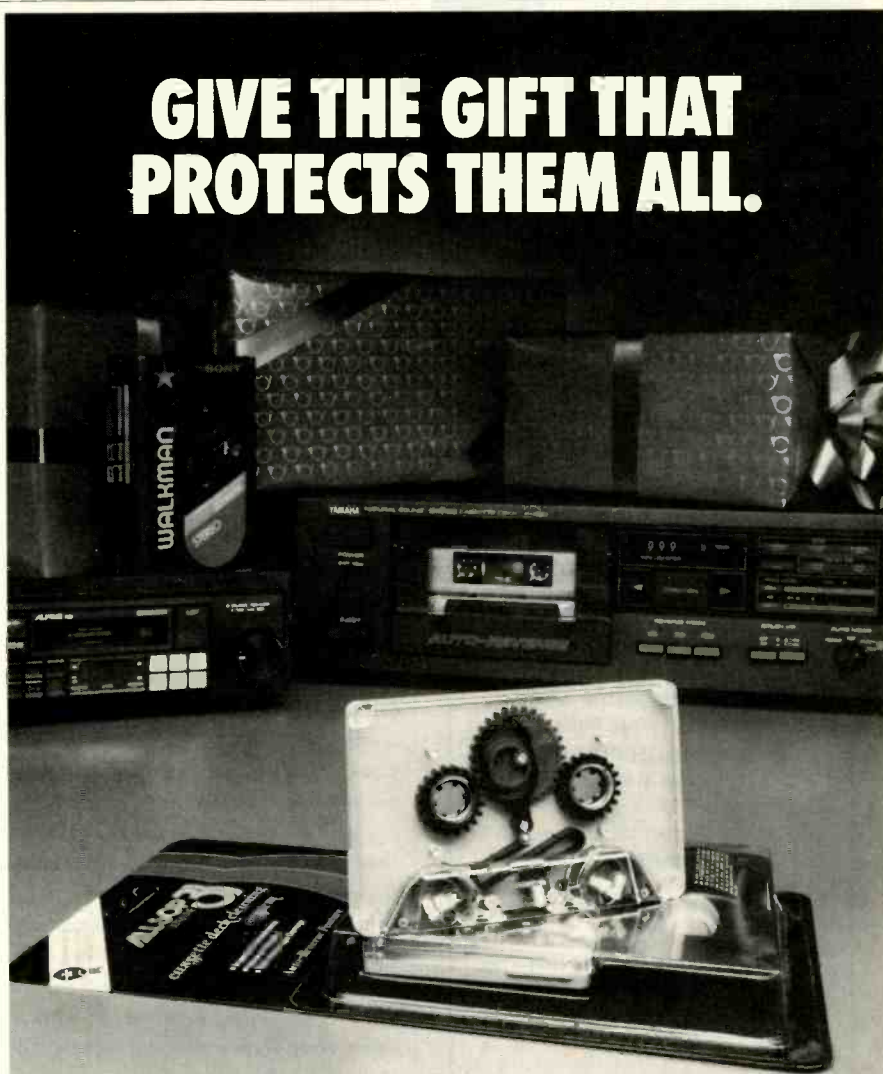
Revising folk rock's a task for the brave or the stupid. The music was full of remorse over what had passed—a love or a redwood or an age—and that was a generation ago. Updates are usually fraught with a sense of expiration, and people who take them on tend to sound like simpy nostalgics. Yet *Translate Slowly* is a surprisingly good record. Zeitgeist has expertly balanced its sense of longing with two fervid guitars; these 12

sweet tunes move on swift wheels.

They're thoughtful, but they also have an itchy jump. "Things Don't Change" kicks like Ed Whitson, and "Sound and the Fury" is full of just that—yet as it barrels along, singer John Croslin stands tall. The band puts a lot into guitar lines, but even when it's at full throttle, the blare is like a summer storm over a plain: You hear the roar, but you get a glimpse of places where it's not thundering, too.

Like most groups from Austin, a scene currently as hot as a mesquite grill, Zeitgeist is a bit weak in the vocal department. There are moments on *Translate Slowly* when Croslin and Kim Longacre intersect—I'm thinking mostly of the beautiful, acoustic "Freight Train Rain"—and his throaty, casual Lou Reedisms and her high, bright voice seem nicely matched. Alone, though, neither has adequate range or force. Unlike most of its Austin sistren, this band writes lyrics

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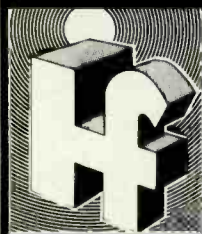
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playful and full of images, songs gentle and sometimes a little drunk on love.

The members of Zeitgeist beat the traps of modernizing folk rock by flooding it with their own ideas. Listen to the way they take a Duane Eddy twangalong and send it to the backwoods on "Hill Country Theme," or the racing rewrite of Willie Nelson's "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain," so changed it takes a few plays to recognize. Most of all, check out the ominous "Things Don't Change"; drums fill the gaps with terse explosions as guitars fan out with roiling blasts and both singers holler on top. Zeitgeist pulls this music up by the roots and turns it into something like an epiphany.

RJ Smith

J A Z Z

**MISHA MENGELBERG, STEVE LACY,
GEORGE LEWIS, HARJEN GORTER, AND
HAN BENNINK:**

Change of Season.

Ⓢ Giovanni Bonandrini, prod. Soul Note SN 1104. (Distributed by Polygram Special Imports.)

Pianist Herbie Nichols has become a legend as much for his tragic life as for the beautiful and unclassifiable music he made. If it could go wrong for Nichols, it did: Neglected by both public and peers, he had few chances to perform or record—he made only three albums during his 20-year career—and died in his late forties of leukemia. A martyr and cult figure, Nichols is the subject of much lip service, yet today he remains as misunderstood as ever, his still vital compositions frozen in reverent isolation.

Two years ago soprano saxist Steve Lacy and trombonist Roswell Rudd released *Regeneration* (Soul Note SN 1054), a delightful and heartfelt double homage to Nichols and to Lacy's main man, the then recently departed Thelonious Monk. This time around, Nichols gets the whole pie: A full album's worth of his music returns to the land of the living. The choice of songs is sterling, among them "House Party Starting," "Terpsichore Spinning Song," and the added treat of the title cut, a previously unrecorded beauty with the plaintive lyricism characteristic of all his ballads.

Nichols wrote full-fledged songs in an era when workmanlike "heads" were the rule; it's easy to understand why Lacy loves them. Like the best of Monk, these compositions are melodic minefields underpinned by

unexpected harmonies and displaced rhythms. It has been argued that they're pianistic by nature, but Lacy, expanding the original trio arrangements for a full ensemble, disproves this. The character of the band has changed considerably since *Regeneration*; namely, the gleefully irreverent Rudd has been replaced by George Lewis, the tailgate intellectual. Where Rudd's rude smears gave the music a playful quality, Lewis's clean articulation and marathon runs lend it a certain formality. But Lacy hasn't lost his sense of humor, and Misha Mengelberg's Monk-on-the-brain stabs keep the proceedings from getting too respectful.

In the past few years, repertory bands have sung the praises of deserving but predictable heavies. The jury is still out on Nichols—it's hard to assess a career built to such a miniature scale. Lacy's celebration is sentimental but clearheaded; there is regret, but never pathos. The contemporaneous readings on *Change of Season* hint strongly that Nichols's meticulously crafted songs will survive. And more albums like it may transform this symbolic figure into a flesh-and-blood musician.

Steve Futterman

BILLY BANG SEXTET:

The Fire from Within.

Ⓢ Giovanni Bonandrini, prod. Soul Note SN 1086. (Distributed by Polygram Special Imports.)

Those who think of violinist Billy Bang mainly as an austere avant-gardist may be encouraged by his recent series of Soul Note albums, of which this is the third. Though the choices made here indicate a desire to reach a wider audience, Bang combines his genres less like an eclectic of dubious motivation who seems to change personalities from piece to piece and more like a neoclassicist who brings a consistent personal vision

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to an investigation of established forms.

Still, the attempt to reach more people can have its pitfalls. With a front line of violin, trumpet, and guitar and a rhythm section of marimba, bass, and drums, Bang's group doesn't have to strain to approximate a sentimental exotica. This is brought home on "The Nagual Julian" and "The New Seers"—repetitious, ostinato-based numbers with a quasi-African feel that linger to the point of tedium. But even these blatant attempts at outreach would enhance the mostly dismal playlists of commercial jazz radio stations.

The rest emphasizes Bang's knack for writing memorably melodic and occasionally playful lines. The spirited joint trumpet/violin improvisation on "The Mold of Man," which Bang accurately describes as "a Bronx-style New Orleans" number, is one of the album's highlights. There are also notable contributions from guitarist Oscar Sandoes, who favors thoughtful but swinging single-note lines, and bassist William Parker, lending his customary strong presence. Bang's playing throughout is a joy; he builds his improv logically, but emotes with abandon. His best spot is on the beautiful free ballad "The Shift Below," where he arrives at several quiet climaxes while maintaining the piece's expansively melancholy mood. This strikingly original voice deserves the wider audience he now cautiously courts.

Richard C. Walls

JIM PEPPER:

Comin' and Goin'.

① Jean-Pierre Weiller, prod. Rykodisc RCD 10001. (400 Essex St., Salem, Mass. 01979.)

Jim Pepper is a husky-toned tenor saxophonist whose credits include Charlie Haden's Liberation Jazz Orchestra. He's also a Kaw Indian, and on *Comin' and Goin'* he tries to integrate this heritage with his jazz background, playing two songs by his father, a couple of chants of his own, and an arrangement of a traditional Sioux piece, "Lakota Song." A set that includes Indian chanting by amateur vocalists, interspersed with occasionally shrieking saxophone solos, and lyrics like "All this speed feeling springing round my head/Makes me feel glad that I'm not dead" may sound forbidding. This one is not, partially because of the talent involved—guitarist John Scofield, for instance, and Codona (Don Cherry, the late Colin Walcott, and percussionist Nana Vasconcelos)—and partially because of the easy-going lyricism of the compositions.

In fact, if I have a complaint about the music here, it's that it's too smooth and occasionally derivative. The chanting on "Witchi Tia To" introduces a memorable but unchallenging theme. Pepper's vocal on "Squaw Song," the only piece that features Cherry, bears an uncanny resemblance to Bob Dylan's "It Ain't Me, Babe," and elsewhere his arrangements sound like Carla Bley's "Malin-yea," written by Cherry and previously re-

corded by Codona, owes something to the original, but Pepper's jaunty, syncopated beat eventually trivializes the tune: When Cherry plays it, it has an edge.

Still, all of Pepper's compositions sing memorably, and the solos—Scofield's countryish choruses on "Comin' and Goin'," Pepper's Pharoah Sanders-like hollers on "Goin' Down to Muskogee," and Vasconcelos's turns in various spots—make up for the campy quality of Pepper's lyrics. The Indian chants may come out of a different world, but those vocals, especially by Jane Lind and Caren Knight on "Lakota Song," have their own attractions. One final word: This disc, engineered by David Baker, has about the best sound I have heard on a jazz CD.

Michael Ullman

Back in Business

RALPH SUTTON AND VIC DICKENSON:

Blowin' Bubbles.

An album's worth of trombone-and-piano duos does not sound very promising, but this particular LP has three things going for it. One is the sentimental value attached to what is probably the last record that featured Vic Dickenson before his death in 1984. The other two are the trombonist's individual flair and the unmistakable drive of stride pianist Ralph Sutton. The disc surveys their rich lode of talent

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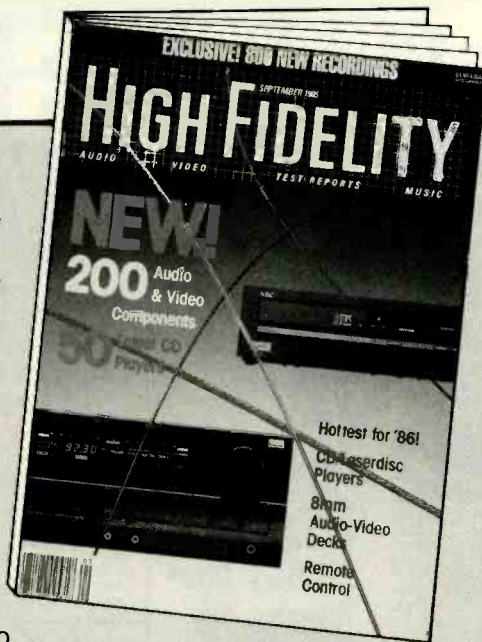
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and also gives each a chance to sing. Vic's vocal style resembles his contemporary Doc Cheatham's. Sutton has a way to go to match him, but his playing enlivens Dickenson's gruffly warm and humorous trombone. (Charlie Baron, prod. Chaz Jazz ☉ 114. ☉ Box 565, North Hampton, N.H. 03862.) *John S. Wilson*

MARY FETTIG: In Good Company.

Mary Fettig raised a few eyebrows when, at the age of twenty, she played baritone saxophone in Stan Kenton's juggernaut band; by 1979 she was performing at the Concord Jazz Festival in Marian McPartland's group. And now, McPartland returns the favor on this impressive debut. Charlie Parker's "Scrapple from the Apple" shows how well Fettig has absorbed an early fascination with Bird. "Some Other Time" is lyrical and imaginative, and "Danza," a fast samba, builds on her alto virtuosity and proves her mettle as a composer. (Concord Jazz ☉ 273. ☐) *J.S.W.*

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big band arrangement of the title cut to the provocative quartet's total revitalization of that battered old Dixieland chestnut, "Royal Garden Blues." And singer Barbara Lea's solo on "I Got It Bad" is a model of controlled, thoughtfully shaded, expressive development. (Jerry Valburn, prod. Aviva © 6005. P.O. Box 156, Hicksville, N.Y. 11802.) *J.S.W.*

BUD SHANK:

This Bud's for You.

When Bud Shank came into jazz in the late '40s, his alto saxophone caught fire in the heat of the bebop fever. Settling in California, he assumed the cool West Coast colorations that became even cooler in his pre-bossa-nova flute-guitar duets with Laurindo Almeida. After more than a decade buried in studio work, he returned to the real world, but this is the first album on which he has been able to cut loose as a re-bebopper. Supported by pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Al Foster, he takes on Bud Powell's "Bouncing with Bud," a dazzling uptempo blues by Walter Norris ("Space Maker"), a bop transformation of "I'll Be Seeing You," and his own hard-nosed bossa nova update of "Cotton Blossom." In other words, he's back in business. (Bob Golden, prod. Muse © MR 5309. ☎ 160 W. 71st St., New York, N.Y. 10023.) *J.S.W.*

THE CLASSIC JAZZ QUARTET.

It's impossible to categorize a program that includes both "Freeze and Melt," first recorded in 1929 by Eddie Lang, and "Mississippi Mud," sung in German and decorated with a bebop passage. All the tunes are wrapped in arrangements that treat the quartet as though it were a full orchestra, and it often manages to sound that way. But sometimes the players are so involved in putting their mosaic together that they have difficulty keeping up with each other. Pianist Dick Wellstood and guitarist Marty Grosz establish and maintain a swinging momentum, underpinning hornmen Dick Sudhalter and Joe Muranyi, who constantly shift relationships and levels. This quartet could create a never-never land of memories, unique on the jazz horizon; just give it a little time to master its charts. (Dick Sudhalter, prod. Jazzology © J 139. 3008 Wadsworth Mill Pl., Decatur, Ga. 30032.) *J.S.W.*

CENSORSHIP

(Continued from page 75)

assured me her group is more concerned with explicit words than with explicit thoughts, "Feel the Fire" has plenty of the latter and none of the former. Precisely what would earn a song an X rating?

Rock, after all, conveys the slang of the day. When Little Richard shrieked "Good golly, Miss Molly/You sure like to ball" nearly 30 years ago, he meant, "You sure like to dance" (as in "go to the ball"); when Marvin Gaye sang "You Sure Love to Ball" 15 years later, he meant something quite different. Would "Good Golly Miss Molly" be X-rated retroactively? Or consider rap music, which developed underground for five years before anyone outside Harlem and the Bronx had heard of it. By the time rap surfaced, it had evolved a street language entirely its own. Who could interpret that language except black teenagers in the know? Might references to non-Western religions wind up being wrongly labeled as "occult"? Would *all* songs be rated for references to alcohol, and if so, where would that leave the country music business, as well as the careers of Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin? How about songs that "glorify" or "romanticize" violence? Couldn't "The Star-spangled Banner" fall under that category? Or a harmless, hallowed kiddie song like "The Ballad of Davy Crockett"? [For another view on the violence issue, see Caryl Rivers's article in this month's "Medley."]

"I know it seems extreme, but if we don't take this group seriously it can lead to things like that," says Aldredge. "I keep hearing that this rating system would be like the one used for movies, but I don't see how that could be. I think a single national lyric-review board would be more like the Hays Commission in the '30s and '40s, which stopped a lot of films from being made at all. A Prince or a Sheena Easton is big enough to do what he or she wants. But a new artist would probably have to let his company dictate lyric changes to him for the sake of sales—for the sake of his career, period."

"We're not telling kids they can't buy these records," Baker reiterates. "We just want the rating out there so parents can see it and say to their children, 'We need to talk about this.' Or they can say, 'Go right

Advertising Index

Aiwa America, Inc.	31
Allsop	79
Ambico	70
API	25
Audio Technica U.S., Inc.	10
Bose	Cover II, 1
Carver Corp.	4
Denon America, Inc.	Cover III
Everest Electronics, Inc.	82
Ford Audio Products	14, 15
Harman Kardon	28
Hitachi Sales Corp.	43
Illinois Audio	72
Infinity Systems, Inc.	34
International Hi Fi	80
JBL	53
J&R Music World	81
Jensen Car Audio	27
JVC Company of America	12, 13
LaBelle Camera & Stereo	83
Mitsubishi Sales Corp.	40, 41
Nakamichi U.S.A. Inc.	33
NEC Home Electronics	11, 22
New York Wholesale Warehouse	78
Onkyo U.S.A. Corp.	18
Perreux	16
Pioneer Video	49
Polk Audio, Inc.	66, 67
Proton	50
Radio Shack	3
Sansui Electronics Corp.	Cover IV
Sanyo	47
Sherwood	38
Shure	19
Sony Corp. of America	8, 9
Sony Corp. of America	20, 21
Studer Revox	65
Tandberg of America, Inc.	6
TDK Electronics Corp.	17
Teac Corp. of America	44
Technics	5, 7
Toshiba	69, 71
Wisconsin Discount	84
Yamaha	37

ahead, kids.' That's their right, too."

"I don't think it's possible to reach an acceptable compromise on this issue," Aldredge concludes. "If there's a sticker at all, it's an affront to artistic integrity. It's funny: Metal bands are *already* an affront to artistic integrity in a lot of ways—but they have as much right to freedom of expression as anybody."

PMRC demands have prompted a flurry of response from radio people and retailers as well. Like Gortikov's sticker plan, most proposals seem to be an attempt to acknowledge, not comply with, the protestors. Dallas and Kansas City radio exec William J. Steding, for example, suggests that the Dallas-based National Music Review Council, which he founded, grant a "seal of approval" to albums with no offensive content. "Deejays would know they should review an album that didn't have the seal," he says. "This leaves discretion in their hands and gets around the whole question of censorship. It's positive rather than negative." Harmony House, an 18-store retail chain in Michigan, has already been refusing to stock albums that have "obscene, really graphically obscene, covers," according to owner Lloyd Welch. Although he adds, "We've never stayed away from albums that contain foul language."

Others have allied themselves directly with the PMRC. Beach Boy Mike Love donated \$5,000 seed money to help the organization get off the ground this spring. Edward Fritts, president of the National Association of Broadcasters (4,500 radio and TV member stations), sent a letter to 45 record companies asking them to include lyric sheets with new releases. Smokey Robinson has spoken out against obscene lyrics (though a song like his own "Cruisin'" might itself come under scrutiny). These actions provoke almost as many questions as the originally proposed ratings board, however. Doesn't the Federal Communications Commission already *have* rules that govern obscenity on the airwaves? If all radio must be acceptable to the ears of a thirteen-year-old, doesn't that violate the rights of adults?

It's not easy to accurately gauge the reaction of the recording industry itself. Few people will discuss the PMRC on the record, but at the same time, the six Artists & Repertory staffers I spoke with in

August said their employers hadn't broached the subject with them either. "I think the attitude is 'Let's not pay any attention to it, but say we do,'" commented one. "You know, like you apologize for something you're not really sorry for; it's no skin off your back."

The New Music Seminar in New York—held, coincidentally, a week after the Senate hearing—witnessed the fact that some people had decided to talk back. The censorship panel included such diverse PMRC opponents as manager Bill Aucoin, RCA's Barry Harris, veteran deejay Scott Muni, and Goldberg. Alluding to Gortikov's letter to the RIAA—which also hinted that the best way to appease the PMRC was with a blacklist—Goldberg concluded on a historically correct and humorously effective note: "I don't think anyone looking back on blacklisting thinks we averted communism because some actor didn't appear on *Perry Mason*."

In early September, when the PMRC rejected the notion of an all-purpose warning sticker, Baker told HIGH FIDELITY that the RIAA had agreed to further discussions on the subject. Yet the trade association's public relations director, Patricia Heimers, was emphatic: "The RIAA immediately recognized PMRC's concerns as responsible. We couldn't comply with many of the specifics of their proposal, but we did address what seemed basic. They said that wasn't enough. We told them that was the way it would be, their request was simply impossible. As far as we're concerned the controversy is over." The PMRC is now asking for just an R rating, with lyric content printed on outside packaging. The RIAA has not been so quick to respond to this counterdemand. Nor has either side spelled out just how warning stickers, should they be agreed upon as a compromise, would be applied. Who would set standards—record companies themselves, an impartial board, or the RIAA?

It's hard to imagine the record business agreeing to anything that might inhibit sales. But can the RIAA hold the line? With the national political drift continuing rightward, the question is not about to go away. Warns Aldredge, "There definitely *is* a mood in this country supporting the PMRC. And rock 'n' roll is used as whipping boy for a lot of things these days." ●

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