

Stereo Review

\$1.25

OCTOBER 1977

AUDIO NOISE REDUCERS:

How (and how well) do they work?

STARSHIP JEFFERSON AIRPLANE:

"We only do things we enjoy..."

George Jellinek's ESSENTIALS OF AN OPERA LIBRARY

Equipment Test Reports

- Hitachi HMA-8300 Stereo Power Amplifier
- JVC KD-75 Stereo Cassette Deck
- Nakamichi 630 Stereo Tuner Preamp
- AMC Model 14 Speaker System
- B&O 4400 Stereo FM Receiver



LAST YEAR'S REVIEWS PRESENTED US WITH A TOUGH ACT TO FOLLOW.

"IT CANNOT BE FAULTED."

SA9500 — Stereo Review

"AS NEAR TO PERFECT AS WE'VE ENCOUNTERED."

TX9500 — Popular Electronics

"CERTAINLY ONE OF THE BEST... AT ANY PRICE."

TX9500 — Modern Hi Fi



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 Stereo Review

PIONEER PRESENTS ACT II.

WE STARTED WITH THE BEST AND MADE THEM BETTER.

Last year, the experts paid Pioneer's integrated amps and tuners some of the highest compliments ever.

The challenge was obvious: to build even better amps and tuners. Amps and tuners that would not only surpass anything we'd ever built before, but anything anyone ever built before.

Here's how we did it.

THE NEW PIONEER TX9500II TUNER. EVEN CLOSER TO PERFECT.

When Popular Electronics said our TX9500 tuner was as "near to perfect" as they'd encountered, they obviously hadn't encountered our TX9500II. It features technology so advanced, some of it wasn't even perfected until this year.

Our front end, for example, features three newly developed MOS FETs that work with our 5-gang variable capacitor to give the TX9500II an incredible FM sensitivity of 8.8dBf. In mono. In English, this means you can pull in beautiful FM reception no matter how far you live from the transmitter.

Where most tuners give you one band width for all FM stations, the TX9500II gives you two. A wide band with a surface acoustic wave filter to take advantage of strong stations, and a narrow band

with five ceramic filters to remove all the interference and noise from weaker ones. (Distortion measured in stereo at one kilohertz is an incredibly low 0.07% in the wide band; and 0.25% in the narrow band. Both well below the threshold of human hearing.)

Where conventional multiplex circuits cut out some of the frequencies that add depth and presence to music, the multiplex circuit in the TX9500II doesn't. It features an exclusive integrated circuit that's far more accurate than anything else around. Plus a multipath switch that lets you align your antenna perfectly without an oscilloscope.

And where you simply have to guess about the proper recording levels off most tuners, the TX9500II provides you with a tone generator that lets you preset the recording levels on your tape deck before the broadcast starts.

So your tapes can sound just as clear and beautiful as your tuner.

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After building one of the world's best tuners, we had no choice but to create an amplifier that could match it.

The result is the new SA9500II. An 80-watt integrated amp that was designed

to let you get everything out of your tuner. Perfectly.

Our output stage, for example, features a new parallel push-pull circuit that reduces total harmonic distortion to less than 0.1%. Again, well below anything you can possibly hear.

To all but eliminate cross-talk, the SA9500II comes with a separate power transformer for each channel, instead of the usual single transformer for both.

And where some amps give you two, or three tone controls, the SA9500II gives you four. Two for regular treble and bass, and two for extended treble and bass. They're calibrated in 2 decibel click stops, which means you have a virtually endless variety of ways to get the most out of your music.

But that's only the beginning. To get the most out of your cartridge, the 9500II has a switch that lets you "tune" the amplifier to the cartridge manufacturer's optimum capacitance. And to get the most out of your records, our three-stage phono equalizer features an incredibly high phono overload level of 300 millivolts. With no more than 0.2 dB variation from the RIAA curve. So even the most complicated passage on one of today's highly engineered records will sound exactly the way it was recorded in the studio.

Obviously, both the SA9500II and the TX9500II are very sophisticated pieces of equipment. But all of the engineering skill that went into making them has also gone into every other tuner and amplifier in our new series II. No matter what the price, no matter what the specifications.

And that's something you don't have to be an expert to appreciate.

	SA9500II TX9500II	SA8500II TX8500II	SA7500II	SA6500II TX6500II	SA5500II TX5500II
POWER* MIN. RMS. 20 TO 20,000 HZ	80	60	45	30	15
TOTAL HARMONIC DISTORTION	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.5%
PHONO OVERLOAD LEVEL	300mV	250mV	200mV	200mV	130mV
INPUT: PHONO/AUX/ TAPE	2/1/2	2/1/2	1/1/2	1/1/2	1/1/1
SIGNAL TO NOISE RATIO	95dB	95dB	95dB	93dB	87dB
FM SENSITIVITY (1HF '58)	1.5uV	1.8uV	not applicable	1.9uV	1.9uV
SELECTIVITY	(wide) 35dB (narrow) 85dB	(wide) 35dB (narrow) 80dB	not applicable	60dB	60dB
CAPTURE RATIO	(wide) 0.8dB (narrow) 2.0dB	(wide) 0.8dB (narrow) 2.0dB	not applicable	1.0dB	1.0dB

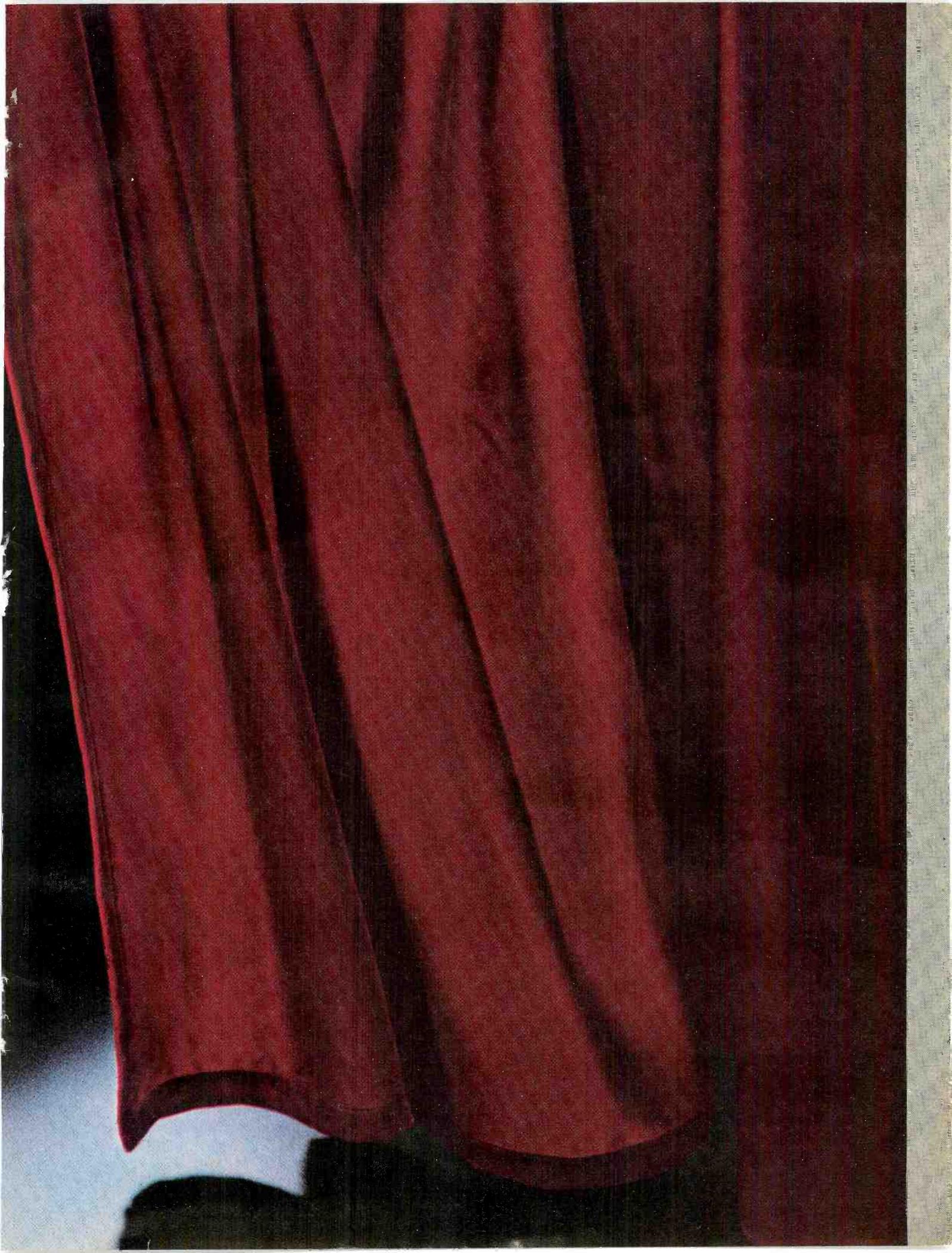
U.S. Pioneer Electronics Corp., 85 Oxford Drive, Moonachie, New Jersey 07074.

* Minimum RMS continuous power output at 8 ohms, from 20 to 20,000Hz, with no more than 0.1% total harmonic distortion.

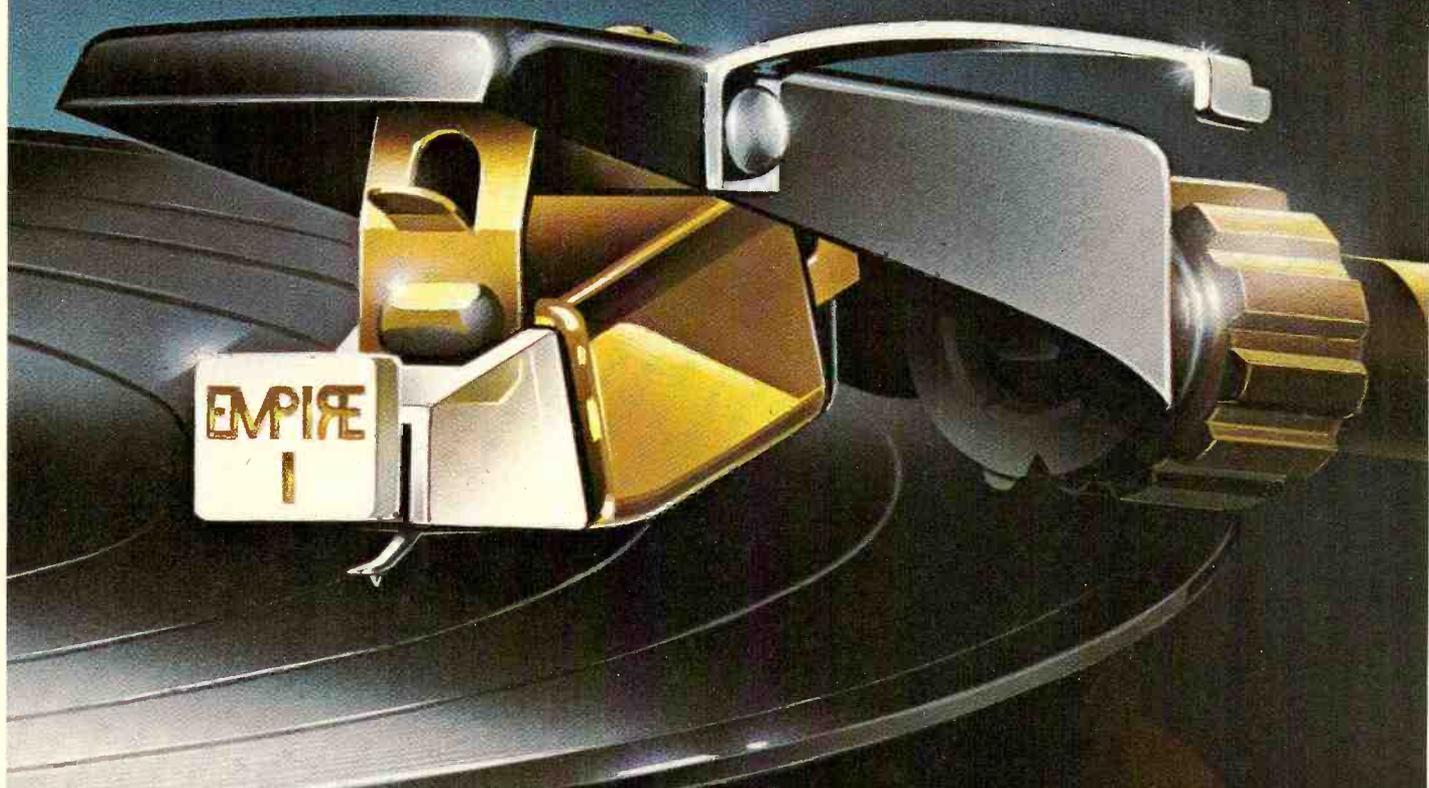


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Here's a tip
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No matter what system you own, a new Empire phono cartridge is certain to improve its performance, three ways.

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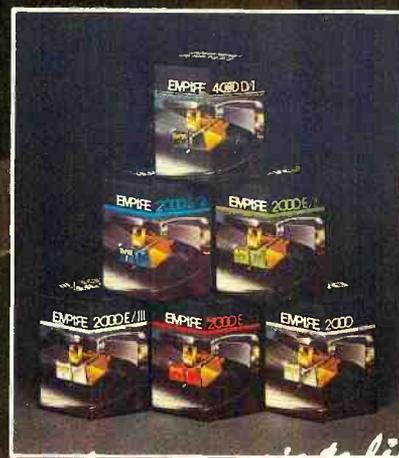
Two, you get better separation. The small, hollow iron armature we use allows for a tighter fit in its positioning among the poles.

So, even the most minute movement is accurately reproduced to give you the space and depth of the original recording.

Three, Empire uses 4 poles, 4 coils, and 3 magnets (more than any other cartridge) for better balance and hum rejection.

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Garden City, N. Y. 11530



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OCTOBER 1977 • VOLUME 39 • NUMBER 4

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COVER: Design by Borys Patchowsky; photo by Bruce Pendleton. Noise-reducer units are, top to bottom: MXR Compaider, Phase Linear 1000 Autocorrelator Noise Reduction System, SAE 5000 Impulse Noise Reduction System, dbx 3BX Dynamic Range Expander, RG Inc.'s PRO-16W Dynamic Processor, and Burwen Research 1201A Dynamic Noise Filter. Pneumatic drill courtesy Pneumatic Tool Sales & Repair Co., Inc., New York City.

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Editorially Speaking

By William Anderson



COTTAGE INDUSTRY: DIRECT-TO-DISC

THE Texas millionaire, you may recall, is that late American folk hero whose exploits include resolving his near-sightedness by having the windshields of his Cadillacs prescription-ground. Somehow, he springs to mind whenever I read of another of those direct-to-disc recording projects that seem to be proliferating all about us like rabbits these days. In this column in August I characterized the d-to-d process as "regressive gimmickry"—to the apparent mystification of at least one reader, who wrote asking me to clarify, and so I will.

"To regress" means to retrace one's steps, to go back—in this case one hundred years, to the very beginning of the recording era, to Edison's primitive little direct-to-tin-foil machine. In other words, the direct-cut process is not some marvelous *new* invention in the recording art, but the oldest one there is. A "gimmick" is a prescription-ground wind-

shield, a bit of done-with-a-wink cleverness that may win our grudging admiration but fail to satisfy any real need. The "real need" of the moment is to reverse the decline in the sound quality of the mass-produced phonograph record, something beyond the limited scope of cottage-industry technology. Some dedicated producers of direct-cut discs may object that this was not their intention; no matter, for that is how it has been generally perceived. It is true that d-to-d technology can produce absolutely fantastic sound (so can tape-to-disc), but it does so at costs that are unacceptable, both monetarily and artistically, at this point in the history of recording.

The dollar cost of a single direct-cut disc (between \$12 and \$16) is the least of it, for the technique can get, on the average, only about 15 minutes per side (the hand of the artisan is no match for a computer when it comes to variable groove spacing). Granted that some

mass-produced pop discs have already come close to that figure, we are generally accustomed to much more—and we need much more to accommodate long classical works (there are quite a few single-disc symphonies that would take two discs if direct-cut). Also, direct-cut discs cannot be pressed in large quantities; even using multiple cutting lathes at each recording session, there is a limit (but none with tape). This means that a hot release would go out of print quickly, giving buyers the choice of paying a scalper \$100 or doing without. This threat is not likely to be a serious one, however, for first-rank entertainers would hardly be silly enough to make their art available only in limited editions—it would be like choosing to play a night in Waukegan when a week in Las Vegas beckons.

The aesthetic limitations of direct-to-disc are even more serious. The success of most pop-music productions these days depends utterly on tape manipulation, the music being literally *created* at the mixing console out of what may be described as raw sonic material (purists will say that ought to stop anyway—but it won't). As for classical music, it is a composer's art, and performance ought to be note-perfect. It seldom is in live situations, but it doesn't matter—mistakes immediately sink, forgotten, into the universal ether. It doesn't matter with tape-to-disc technology either, for bloopers can be edited out. With the direct-cut system they cannot. And since they can't be allowed to remain as nagging imperfections, artists are asked, figuratively, to hold their breath for fifteen minutes. The result is not free, spontaneous music making, but pussyfooting *carefulness*. I'll take a sonically inferior (but musically carefree) disc any day.

DESPITE all this, direct-cut discs do have a function: they are a reproach to the mass industry, a reminder of what is possible. And one final irony: do you know what that Texas millionaire does with his direct-cut discs? He *tapes* them!

Stereo Review

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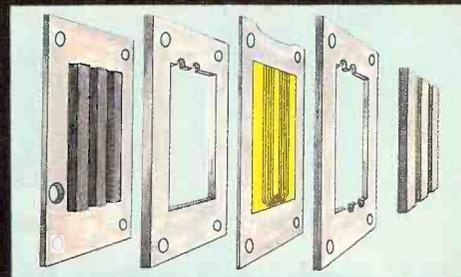
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Most car speakers that are advertised as "true high-fidelity for your car" sound about as convincing as a used-car salesman's pitch. More often than not, the music comes out sounding as if it were recorded in a closet full of winter clothes. The truth of the matter is that if a manufacturer wants to make car loudspeakers sound as good as the ones you hear in your home, he has to make car loudspeakers *as good as the ones you hear in your home.* Which means

no tricks. No short cuts. No nonsense. Which is why the new KLH Model 693 DMSC automotive stereo loudspeakers sound about as good as anything you've ever heard anywhere. Maybe better. Consider the components. We use Controlled Acoustic Compliance[®] Woofers with 30-ounce magnets for extended bass response. Hemispherical soft dome midrange drivers (found in only the most expensive speakers). And the most advanced driver found in *any* loudspeaker system — The Samarium Cobalt Tweeter (an ultra thin Kapton[™] diaphragm with "printed" voice coil suspended between the most powerful magnet material known to man — rare earth Samarium Cobalt!). The 693 DMSC can be driven nicely by the stereo electronics in most cars. (You won't believe the performance if you decide to add a quality power booster.) Now instead of hearing a muffled mess from the back of your car, you can look forward to hearing every nuance of the music — the timbre of the tympany, the bite of the brass, and the sweet, mellow

The Samarium Cobalt Tweeter



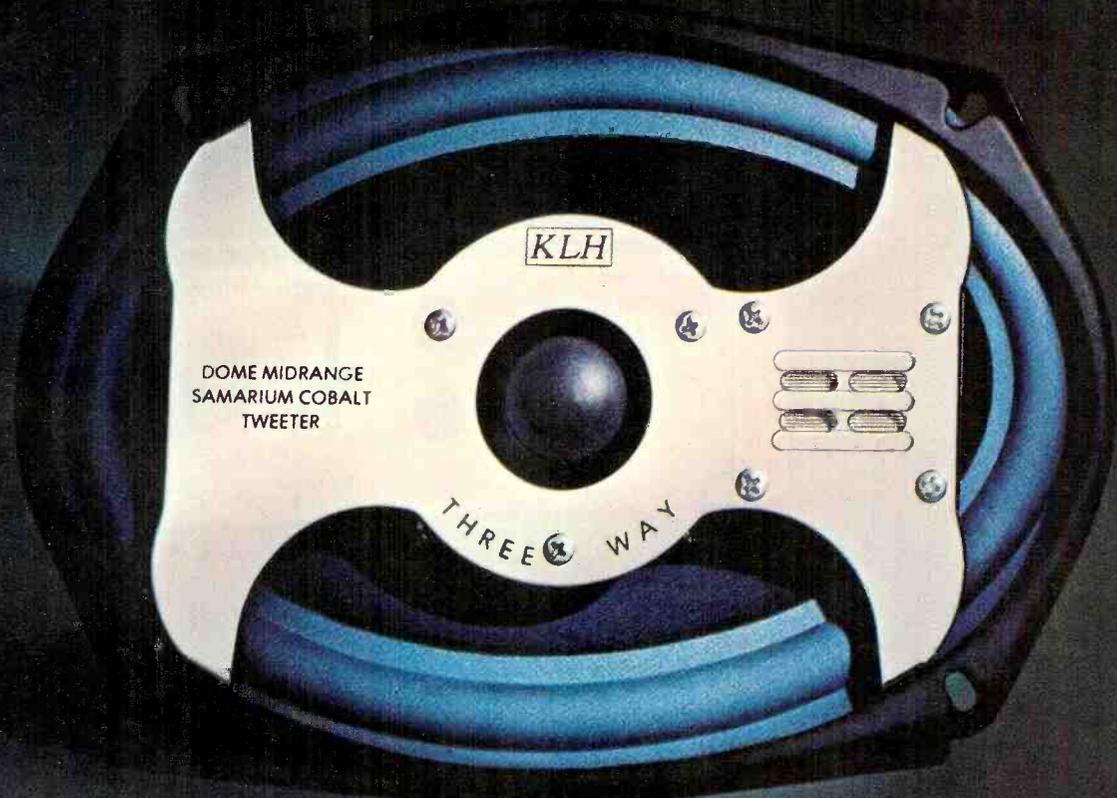
sound of the strings. And when all is said and done, isn't *that* what high fidelity is all about?

For more information on KLH automotive loudspeakers (we also make two-way systems, additional three-way systems, and a totally new concept in automotive sound, The Headliner series), write to Donald Brandt, KLH Research & Development Corp., 30 Cross St., Cambridge, Mass. 02139.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Musical Feast

● Hats off to David Hall! His "Best Recordings of the Centenary" was, for me, a gold mine of newly found treasures. Trouble is, how to find more of the same? STEREO REVIEW's regular classical review pages help us "nonprofessional" music lovers through the new releases, but what of what's gone before? I would welcome other pieces on the lines of Mr. Hall's article that could point the way to discovering some more of the "definitive" classical music recordings of the centenary. While differing tastes may cause disagreement about the indispensable version of a given work, at least Mr. Hall has been able to digest the full range of classical recordings, both new and old.

You've served the hors d'oeuvres. When do we get the entrée?

MARTIN SMITH
Glendale, Calif.

Will this issue do? See George Jellinek's "Essentials of an Opera Library," page 64.

The Beatles Myth

● Steve Simels' "Rediscovered Historical Beatlefacts" in the August issue has just shattered my tolerance for articles overpraising the "Fab Four." Although I was quite young when the Beatles hit big, I remember their recordings and appearances well. They were not as godly as they are considered to be today. Other groups both then and now have been more innovative and have been better at writing, producing, and playing songs. The Beatles were sloppy musicians. The Searchers, the Hollies, and the Escorts were all better than the Beatles, and I would think that a session drummer would sooner cop Keith Moon's or Jim McCartney's style than Ringo Starr's. (For that matter, why did they call Pete Best? His excellent drumming cuts through the awful guitar work on their earliest recordings.) Perhaps if the Beatles had experienced a protracted "downslide" while they were still together ("Let It Be" was a harbinger of this), they would be relegated today to the relatively maligned position of the Kinks, the Dave Clark Five, and others. It's ironic that the Beatles' Hamburg LP's were

recorded by "beat" musician Kingsize Taylor, who fronted a group called the Dominoes. Who knows, if things had worked out differently, we might have been listening today to "Kingsize Taylor and the Dominoes Live at the Hollywood Bowl." Please, Mr. Simels, stick to the Who, the Yardbirds, and the Stones. Don't add to the Beatles "myth."

ALAN V. KARPUSIEWICZ
Flushing, N. Y.

Speaker Kits

● I read with interest the feature article "The Speaker Kit" by William Kanner in the August STEREO REVIEW. Our company, Acusta Craft, Inc., produces a full line (eight models) of preconstructed speaker kits, which we sell by catalog order to eager kit customers. We very much agree with Mr. Kanner that there is a resurgence of interest in kit building.

BURTON D. REYNOLDS
President, Acusta Craft, Inc.
8443 W. 95th St.
Overland Park, Kan. 66212

In addition to Mr. Reynolds' company, several other speaker kit manufacturers have come to our attention: Badger Sound Services, Ltd., 38A St. Andrews Road South, Lytham St. Annes, Lancashire FY8 1PS, England; Rectilinear Corporation, 107 Bruckner Boulevard, Bronx, N.Y. 10454; Soundmove Speakerkits, P.O. Box 236, Jericho, N.Y. 11753.

Premature T-Bird

● While more often than not disagreeing with the opinions of STEREO REVIEW's record reviewers, I am usually impressed by the quality of their prose. However, when Peter Reilly, in his August review of Lou Rawls' "Unmistakably Lou," describes the big-band sound behind Rawls as gliding along "with the silvery purr of a brand-new 1953 T-Bird," I must object. The Ford Thunderbird was first offered in 1955! Could Mr. Reilly be referring to a brand of wine most often consumed with a brown paper bag obscuring the prestigious label? In the interest of preventing muddled

(Continued on page 13)

RECORD

DOLBY NR

TAPE COUNTER
2 1 6



+7dB

+3dB

PEAK

COUNTER RESET

MEMORY

METER

INPUT SELECTOR DOLBY NR (MPX)

OFF ON VU TAPE TIME

LINE MIC/DIN OFF ON (MPX ON)

3 Minute Warning from AIWA

LH BIAS FINE (%)

With the AD-6550's unique new Remaining Tape Time Meter you never have to worry about running out of tape in the middle of recording your favorite music. In the past you monitored your tape visually and hoped that the musical passage and tape would finish together. Now, this extremely easy to use indicator gives you plenty of warning. It shows you exactly how many minutes remain on the tape. So that when you record the "Minute Waltz" it won't end in 45 seconds.

Wow and Flutter: Below 0.05% (WRMS)

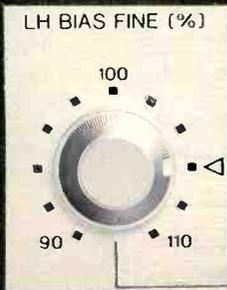
The AD-6550 cassette deck achieves an inaudible wow and flutter of below 0.05% (WRMS) thanks to a newly designed 38-pulse FG servo motor and AIWA's special Solid Stabilized Transport (SST) system. And because we use Dolby* we also improve the S/N ratio to 65dB (Fe-Cr). So you can listen to the music instead of tape hiss. The AIWA AD-6550. Be forewarned.

AIWA

LH BIAS FINE (%)

Bias Fine Adjustment

But there's a lot more to the AD-6550. AIWA has included a Bias Fine Adjustment knob that permits the fine tuning of frequency response to give optimum performance of any brand of LH tape on the market.



*Dolby is a Trademark of Dolby Laboratories, Inc.

Distributed in the U.S. by: **MERITON ELECTRONICS, INC.**, 35 Oxford Drive, Moonachie, N.J. 07074
 Distributed in Canada by: **SHRIRO (CANADA) LTD.**

Most people think only expensive separates can give you wideband response and twin power supplies.

Except for these two receivers, they're right.

\$319.95.



\$419.95.



Harman Kardon's ultrawideband 430 and 730 receivers.

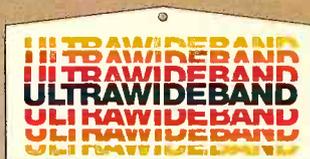
Frequency response: 4-140,000Hz.

Amplifier design: true Twin Power.

Two features you won't find in any other receiver except our own limited-production Citation.

Two features you won't find even in separate components—at anything less than twice the price.

They're there for just one simple reason.



The sound.

In sonic terms, ultrawideband components deliver two important benefits.

Phase linearity and outstanding transient response.

Outstanding transient response is the ability of a component to respond instantly to the onset of a sound. It keeps the reproduced music as open and clear as the original.

Phase linearity describes a component's ability to pass



multiple frequencies without changing their time relationships. It gives you a sound that stays open and accurate, clear on down to the bottom.

Harman Kardon feels so strongly about these benefits that, in a market full of narrowband components, with frequency response from 20 to 20,000Hz, we make only ultrawideband components.

The twin power supplies give you a further benefit. When the music makes extreme dynamic demands on one channel, the other channel simply cannot be affected—so even the loudest

passages remain clear and open. That's why you'll find this feature in the world's finest high fidelity components.

Among which, of course, the Harman Kardon 430 and 730 receivers have been enthusiastically accepted.

Harman Kardon, 55 Ames Court, Plainview, NY 11803.

harman/kardon
wide,
open sound



HS-330

Speakers Woofer: 10"
Sandwiched Metal Cone
Gathered Edge
Midrange: 2½" Metal Cone
Tweeter: 1½" Metal Cone
Frequency Response:
40 - 18KHz (±4dB)

An edge over paper cone speakers.

Hitachi's Metal Cone.

Hitachi has created the Metal Cone Speaker because we believe it is superior to speakers made with paper cones.

Paper cones are fine but they have a tendency to respond partially and not "wholeheartedly" to a signal coming from the amplifier.

In other words, as the voice coil pushes or pulls at the cone center, part of the cones respond correctly while other parts don't.

What is needed is something that can provide the optimum piston movement.

A material with free circumferential elongation and contraction.

The result of extensive research into all possible (and sometimes impossible) cone materials, Hitachi's engineers created the Metal Cone with perfect low resonance characteristics.

Light, rigid, it also possesses a "gathered edge" supporting the metal cone firmly without disturbing piston movement.

Altogether producing far less distortions than conventional paper cones.

It responds "wholeheartedly" and not partially, giving your music full power of expression.

You might even say it gives your music an edge.



HITACHI

**When a company cares,
it shows.**

Audio Component Division, Hitachi Sales Corp. of America, 401 West Artesia Boulevard, Compton, CA 90220, (213) 537-8383, Extension 228

CIRCLE NO. 25 ON READER SERVICE CARD

metaphors I suggest that you suspend Peter Reilly's poetic license for sixty days. This will force him to leave his 1953 T-Bird at home.

EDWARD F. CHRISTIE
Santa Clara, Calif.

Or in the bag.

The Musical End

● Disc quality has been well and illuminatingly addressed in your pages over the months, but I should like to add my addendum as a lifelong music lover and (amateur) musician.

Disc quality has an importance to listeners that transcends their concern with quality in most of the industrial products we deem necessary to our existence. Most human concerns are *means* values, experienced or used as means to something else. But music is an *end* value—experienced of and for itself. It is not a means to anything else; it is a door into a world where a sense of perfection is not only a rational goal but is actually attainable. Anything that frustrates attainment of this perfection—such as a defective disc—becomes an object of anathema, and its manufacturer had best take cover. When we are frustrated by our means we are annoyed, but when we are frustrated in pursuit of our ends we become *enraged!* I submit that this is not irrational: it is the ends in life for which we live. Music is remarkable in its capacity to serve as such an end.

BROOKING TATUM
Healdsburg, Calif.

The Editor replies: I suspect that Mr. Tatum has a good hold on something here. It certainly explains why the same people who merely shrug their shoulders when a \$10,000 car turns out to be a lemon (after all, it's only a means of transportation) are capable of mounting a vendetta over a faulty \$5 phonograph record.

Cassette Peeves

● Your articles about the problems and potential of cassette recordings have not mentioned some of my pet peeves about this recording medium. Why is it that most U.S. labels fail to include the slightest amount of information about the music they release on cassettes? I enjoy and learn from record liner notes, but cassettes usually don't even list the performers. What is especially infuriating is the list of "other recordings you'll want to own" folded into the cassette box. The recording companies don't seem to realize that liner notes can lead people to find other recordings by musicians they like on the album, and with rock and jazz groups spawning "solo" albums regularly, the omission of liner information is a false economy. European labels are generally much better about including this sort of information.

Another major problem has to do with the retail display techniques used for cassettes. Admittedly, the little buggers are easy to "lift." But the practice (in some stores) of locking the cassettes under glass makes it difficult to determine by looking if a particular cassette is one you want. American industry has shown a genius for packaging, and I'd like to see it applied to making cassette purchases easier and more enjoyable.

An article in *Advertising Age* (February 28,

1977) indicates the shape of things to come for the music business world-wide if recording companies fail to take the time and interest to really deal with the cassette market. In 1975 cassette sales in Germany for the first time exceeded sales of LP's, and most of these cassettes were blanks. The German recording companies are calling for legislative help, but copyright laws cannot be enforced on the scale demanded. Better-quality, lower-cost, better-packaged pre-recorded cassettes are the only answer to the growing trend toward home pirating of music.

R. PAT ATHERTON
Chicago, Ill.

The Germans long since discovered another answer: on the theory that anybody buying a

tape recorder will, sooner or later, be pirating something, a tax is levied at time of purchase, the proceeds going to the German performing-rights organization.

Trumpet Partisan

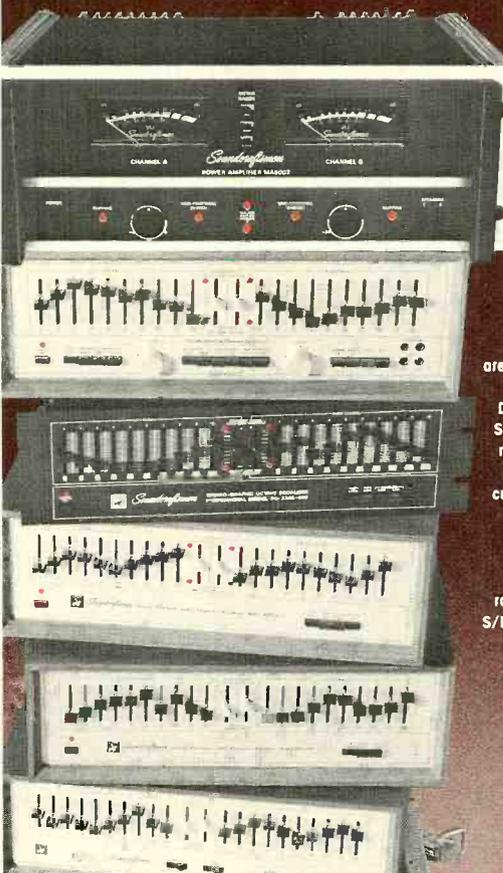
● I must take James Goodfriend to task for what I feel is a serious oversight. His "The Guard Changes" in August contains no mention of the past and present greatest trumpet players in the world: Adolf Scherbaum and Maurice André, respectively. Instead, Mr. Goodfriend mentions fifty-six-year-old Timofey Dokschützer, calling him a "young" virtuoso. Most of the trumpet-playing world

(Continued on page 16)

Soundcraftsmen invents

a new class VARI-PORTRIONAL[®] amp,

with fantastic performance because its revolutionary new Patent Pending VARI-PORTRIONAL[®] system uses Analog Logic Circuitry to anticipate, control and supply only the exact amount of power required for most efficient performance . . . Conventional Class AB amplifiers with **250 watt** power ratings, operating at 1/2 power in accordance with FTC test requirements, **WILL CONSUME OVER 40% MORE ENERGY** than the Soundcraftsmen "NEW CLASS" amplifier . . . Here are just a few "NEW CLASS" benefits: **1.** Greatly reduced average current drain resulting in **SUBSTANTIAL ELECTRICAL ENERGY SAVINGS.** **2.** Reduced heat dissipation for cooler operation assuring trouble-free reliability and no need for noisy fans. **3.** And perhaps the greatest benefit of all, manufacturing cost savings meaning more power, and more features for fewer dollars . . . **SPECIFICATIONS: 250 watts per channel RMS 20Hz-20KHz both channels driven into 8 ohms, less than 0.1% THD. Noise - 105dB, Damping factor 100, Slew rate 50, Frequency response ± 1/4 dB 20Hz-20KHz. Size 7" x 19" x 15" deep. Side panels included. Suggested price \$699.00**



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We INCLUDE all the accessories and features that are a MUST to make equalizing easy, as well as an amazingly rewarding new experience . . . An Environmental Do-it-Yourself TEST RECORD edited and announced by Soundcraftsmen especially for use with the Soundcraftsmen equalizer . . . COMPUTONE CHARTS for making a record of, and resetting in seconds, any desired EQ curve . . . a Full-Channel Frequency SPECTRUM LEVEL CONTROL on each channel for instant "no distortion" in/out balancing . . . LIGHT-EMITTING DIODES for precise visual signal level balancing . . . A Graphic Display of each EQ curve . . . And a minimum 24dB range of adjustment for each octave . . . Specifications: S/N: better than 106dB at full output . . . THD: less than .05% @ 1v . . . Filter type: Toroidal and Ferrite Core. Prices start at \$299.50.

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CIRCLE NO. 64 ON READER SERVICE CARD



Now the world's finest tonearm starts at less than \$135.

Complete with drive system.

You don't have to wait till someday to play your records with the world's finest tonearm. A gimbal-mounted Dual tonearm. You can afford one right now.

We have designed into our lowest-priced turntable, the new 1237, the very same tonearm (and drive system) formerly available only on our highest-priced models.

Advantages of the four-point gimbal suspension.

If you're not familiar with the gimbal, it's understandable. Few other tonearms, at any price, have one — despite its widely acknowledged superiority.

A true four-point gimbal centers, balances and pivots the tonearm mass at the precise intersection of the vertical and horizontal axes. The tonearm maintains the perfect balance in all planes essential for optimum tracking.

The Dual gimbal employs identical pairs of tempered and finely-honed needle-point bearings, each set in miniature ball-bearings. During assembly, each gimbal is individually tested and adjusted to assure that bearing friction will be no more than 0.008 gram vertically and 0.016 gram horizontally. (If there were a cartridge that could track at forces as low as 0.25 gram, this tonearm would do full justice to it.)

Further, the straight-line tubular design (for maximum rigidity and lowest mass) and the settings for zero balance, tracking force and anti-skating are, like the gimbal, identical in every Dual tonearm. The tonearm establishes and maintains the correct cartridge-to-groove geometry, and allows the stylus to trace the groove contours freely, precisely and with the lowest practical force. In short, flawless tracking.

Advantages of the Vario-belt drive system.

Another important inheritance is the Vario-belt drive system. This drive system comprises a high-torque synchronous motor, a precision-machined Vario-

pulley, a precision-ground belt and a machine-balanced, die-cast platter. The Vario-pulley simply expands and contracts for reliable fine-speed adjustments. There are no complicated mechanics or electronic circuitry, which add nothing but cost.

Versatility and reliability too.

We've just described the qualities of the new Dual fully automatic line that will make your records sound better and last longer. But there's more. For versatility, you have fully automatic and manual start and stop, plus provision for multiple play. And cue-control damped in both directions. Plus pitch-control, rotating single-play spindle and multi-scale anti-skating.

Everything we've described applies to the 1237, which is, incredibly enough, our lowest-priced model. And where the 1237 ends, the 1241 and 1245 begin. With an even higher degree of performance. And very handsome, contemporary, low-profile bases.

One further point, all Dual turntables are ruggedly built. They need not be babied, by you or anyone else in your family. As any Dual owner can tell you, they are designed to last for years and years and years.

Now we suggest that you visit your favorite audio dealer and see first hand what Dual engineering is all about. You may then wonder why no other manufacturer puts so much care and precision into a turntable. The answer is simply this. For more than seventy-five years, craftsmanship of the very highest order has been a way of life with the Dual people in the Black Forest. As nowhere else in the entire world.

Dual 1237: less than \$135; base and cover less than \$30 additional.
Dual 1241: less than \$200, including deluxe base and cover.
Dual 1245: less than \$230, including deluxe base and cover.
Other Duals to \$400. Actual resale prices are determined by and at the sole discretion of authorized Dual dealers.



For the life of your records

United Audio, 120 So. Columbus Ave., Mt. Vernon, NY 10553

CIRCLE NO. 50 ON READER SERVICE CARD

considers André, who is forty-four, the reigning "King of the Trumpet." As punishment for his crime, Mr. Goodfriend should be sentenced to listen to all the recordings of Roger "Rotgut" Voisin.

MICHAEL JOHNEN
Fullerton, Calif.

Music Editor James Goodfriend replies: I did not wish to bring negative judgments into a column that was meant to express positive ones, and therefore thought that a simple omission of certain names would be proper. Mr. Johnen's and other similar letters have determined that that shall not be. So: Adolf Scherbaum was omitted because on many of his records he plays out of tune; Maurice André was omitted because he has obviously

been more interested in playing transcriptions of flute and oboe concertos than in expanding the legitimate trumpet repertoire.

I did not call Dokschtzer "young." As the sentence was constructed, that adjective applied only to Edward Tarr and Gerard Schwarz. And as for being "sentenced" to listen to all of Roger Voisin's recordings, I have heard them all already and admire them very much—as do many young trumpet virtuosos.

Buying Quadraphonics

● In replying to the letter from J. R. Thomas in the August issue about the "murder" of quadraphonics, Larry Klein says that "... people haven't been buying quadra-

phonic equipment and software in sufficient quantities to make it worthwhile to keep producing and innovating." My question is, has Mr. Klein ever tried to buy it? "Quad stinks," the audio salesclerk says when I ask for a QS decoder, and walks away from me. "Quad is dead. We sent all ours back to the distributor," says the salesclerk in the record store—even though at least a hundred quad releases are still sitting right there in the bins. "The stereo sound is excellent," the record reviewer says, not even bothering to review a quad release in quad.

It all takes me back to the old days of hi fi (in the Forties and Fifties) when you practically had to force radio-supply stores to sell you hi-fi equipment and when people at the record stores said that "studies by RCA proved people don't want high fidelity records and wouldn't buy them if we stocked them."

PAUL A. ALTER
Birmingham, Mich.

Merrier Wives

● George Jellinek's August review of the new Deutsche Grammophon recording of Nicolai's *Die Lustigen Weiber von Windsor* was excellent. However, it should be noted that the deleted Angel disc of highlights from this enjoyable opera came from a complete (minus a few repeats) EMI/Electrola three-disc set that is still available from time to time in stores offering imports. The EMI set is the equal of the DG version, though it offers a different group of strengths. For example, not only does Fritz Wunderlich sing rings around Peter Schreier as Fenton, but Gottlob Frick offers a much more joyful and humorous Falstaff than Kurt Moll's. On the other hand, Ernst Gutstein's Herr Fluth (on EMI) is a solid performance but in no way equal to Bernd Weikl's remarkable one for DG. EMI's conductor, Robert Heger, gives a warmly romantic interpretation, and the abridged dialogue used is vastly superior to DG's narration. Since the virtues of the EMI set complement the DG version, many collectors may wish to search it out also.

LAWRENCE S. KING
New York, N.Y.

"Useful" Reviews

● After reading many reviews in STEREO REVIEW of such groups and solo performers as Jethro Tull, David Bowie, and Emerson, Lake & Palmer, I feel compelled to point out that—although they may be first-class as reviews—they serve no practical purpose. They are written by critics who simply do not appreciate these artists or their styles, and thus cannot say how a new album ranks in relation to others by the same performers. These artists have millions of fans who must like their stuff and who would probably be very interested in this kind of information. So, instead of burdening Lester Bangs with Jethro Tull or Steve Simels with Bowie, why not let a critic who appreciates them do the job instead? That way a meaningful and useful review can be produced.

RICHARD CASELLI
Bayside, N.Y.

Well, it's a thought, but if everybody is compared only to himself, what becomes of excel-
(Continued on page 20)

Phase Linear 400: The best selling amplifier in the world.

Since its introduction, the Phase Linear 400 Power Amplifier has been hailed internationally as the undisputed "best buy" and best performer among all the super amps available today. And for good reason.

For some time most serious listeners have considered a high powered amplifier a necessary component in a home stereo system. Most high quality speakers are inefficient and demand great reserves of power to play recorded music at realistic levels.

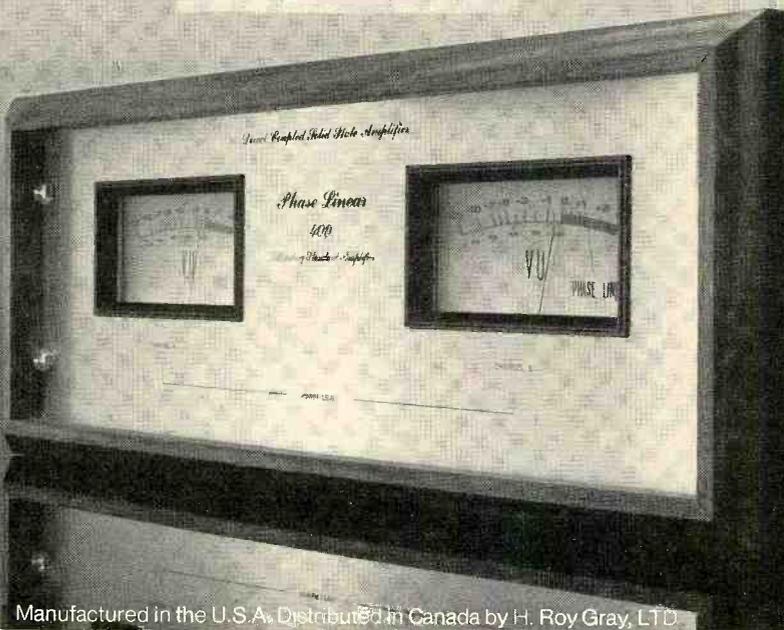
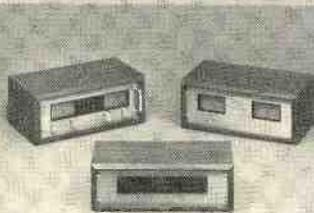
But until the introduction of the 400, this additional power

was an expensive extra few home stereo owners could enjoy. Advanced technology developed by Phase Linear has resulted in a high quality, high performance power amplifier that, at a suggested retail price of \$499, becomes a practical investment for a stereo component system.

The Phase Linear 400, with its tremendous power reserve, enables your sound system to deliver real-life listening levels with extremely low distortion levels without clipping... at a very reasonable price.

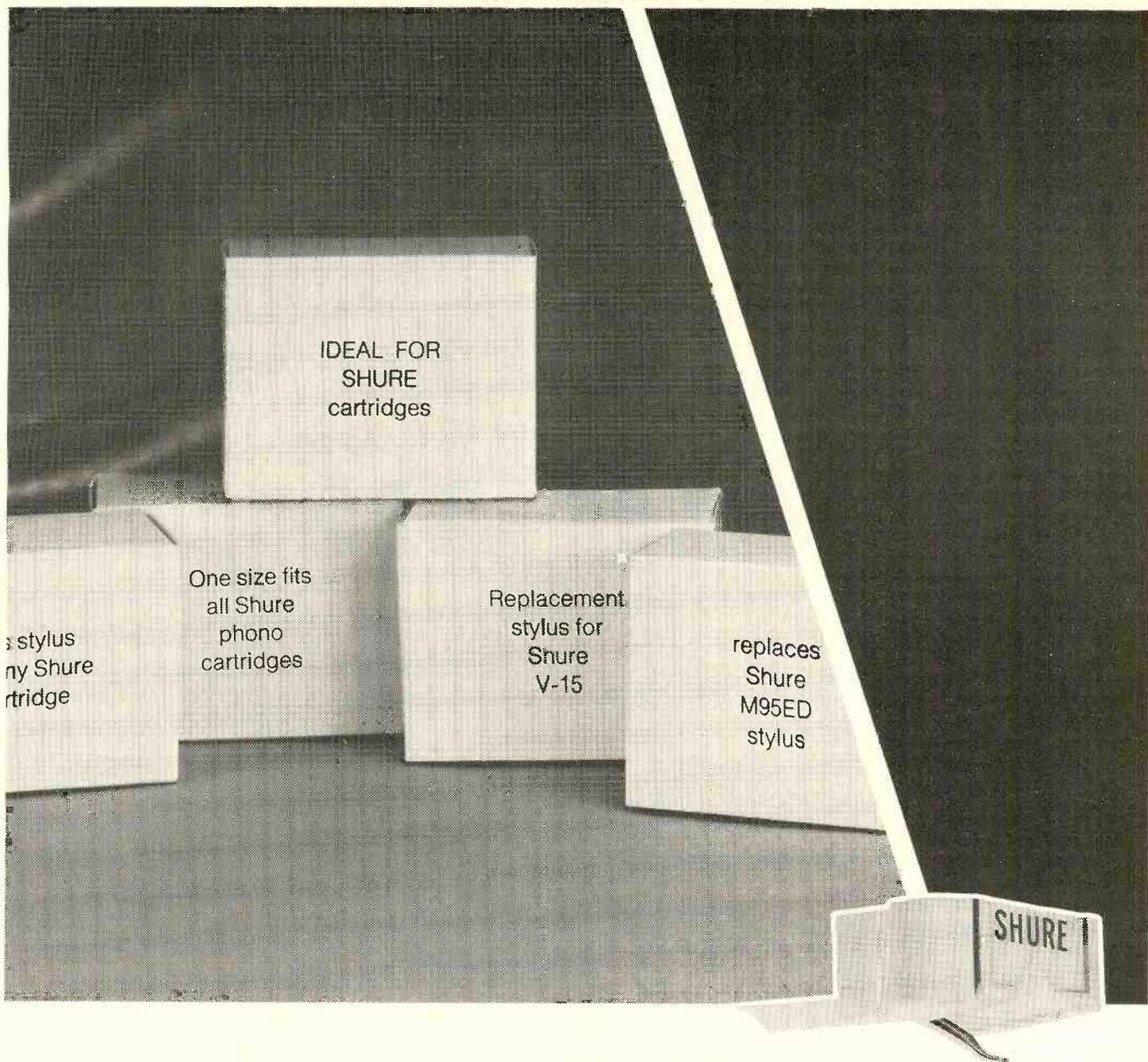
See your dealer for an audition.

Phase Linear
The Powerful Difference



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Needle in the hi-fi haystack.

Even we were astounded at how difficult it is to find an adequate other-brand replacement stylus for a Shure cartridge. We recently purchased 241 random styli that were not manufactured by Shure, but were being sold as replacements for our cartridges. Only ONE of these 241 styli could pass the same basic production line performance tests that ALL genuine Shure styli must pass. But don't

simply accept what we say here. Send for the documented test results we've compiled for you in data booklet #AL548. Insist on a genuine Shure stylus so that your cartridge will retain its original performance capability—and at the same time protect your records.

Shure Brothers Inc.
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TECHNICORNER

The criteria for these tests involved the eight standard production line inspections used for all Shure styli: Visual and mechanical inspection, tip configuration, trackability, vertical drift, 1,000 Hz output level measurement, channel separation at 1,000 Hz, channel separation at 10,000 Hz, and frequency response.

Only genuine Shure styli have the name SHURE on the stylus grip and the words "This Stereo Dynetic® stylus is precision manufactured by Shure Brothers Inc." on the box.



Manufacturers of high fidelity components, microphones, sound systems and related circuitry.

What's 3 years of a man's life worth?

That's what you're looking at. Three years. Because that's how long it took our Katsuzo Hiramatsu to develop the Mitsubishi Logic Control Turntable at the right.

Hiramatsu, you see, didn't just invent a better turntable. He actually created a whole new state of the art. Starting from the ground up. Probing areas that few people had ever looked into before.

First, he investigated basic audio performance. He learned that, with the exception of the cartridge, the tone arm has more influence on sound quality than any other component in a turntable.

So he researched tone arm materials and configurations until he discovered the ideal combination: A tubular stainless steel tone arm isolated from the counterweight by butyl rubber. Thus completely eliminating a phenomenon that plagues nearly all other turntables: counterweight-induced resonance in the 150 Hz range.

Next, he looked at drive systems for the turntable's heavy platter. Here, too, he utilized another ideal combination. A frequency-generator control system for accurate speed — combined with a high-torque, direct-drive motor for fast start-up and virtually undetectable speed fall-off under load. And because the motor operates at 33.3 or 45 rpm instead of the conventional 1500 rpm, vibration is almost nonexistent.

Finally, even the turntable mat came under Hiramatsu's scrutiny. He discovered that the mat has a considerable effect on low-frequency response. And he adjusted thickness, density, and compliance for optimum matching with the low-frequency characteristics of the tone arm.

So, even without the logic control system, Katsuzo Hiramatsu's new turntable would be a superb instrument.

But with the electronic logic control system for automatic speed selection and tone arm operation, it becomes a foolproof instrument as well.

And you should hear it for yourself. You should hear it through our equally impressive Mitsubishi dual-monaural power amplifier and preamplifier, driving one of our five available Mitsubishi high-performance speaker systems.

Your dealer will be happy to audition them for you anytime you ask.

And if you ask that he put a dollar figure on Hiramatsu's efforts, he will tell you that the Mitsubishi DP-EC1 Logic Control Turntable carries a price tag triple that of some lesser turntables.

Which, when you consider what went into it, probably makes the DP-EC1 one of the greatest bargains in the store.



For more information write Melco Sales, Inc., Dept. S, 3030 East Victoria Street, Compton, California 90221.

CIRCLE NO. 42 ON READER SERVICE CARD



Technics SL-1200
SERVO MOTOR WITH TORQUE LIMITER

MADE IN JAPAN

POWER LIMIT
STOP
REVERSE
C-STOP
STOP
REVERSE
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Model AT15Sa/H Dual Magnet Stereo Cartridge pre-mounted in Universal tone arm head shell.

To find out how much better our cartridge sounds, play their demonstration record!

There are some very good test and demonstration records available. Some are designed to show off the capabilities of better-than-average cartridges... and reveal the weaknesses of inferior models. We love them all.

Because the tougher the record, the better our Dual Magnet™ cartridges perform. Bring on the most stringent test record you can find. Or a demanding direct-to-disc recording if you will. Choose the

Audio-Technica cartridge that meets your cost and performance objectives. Then listen.

Find out for yourself that when it comes to a duel between our cartridge and theirs... we're ready. Even when *they* choose the weapons!

What you'll hear is the best kind of proof that our Dual Magnet design and uncompromising craftsmanship is one of the most attractive values in high fidelity. For their records... and *yours!*



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In Canada: Superior Electronics, Inc.

CIRCLE NO. 78 ON READER SERVICE CARD

lence? Would even Bowie, Tull, and ELP prefer it that way?

MOR

● What does "MOR" stand for in the July "Editorially Speaking"? May I suggest that you avoid abbreviations understandable only to insiders and not the general reader?

LUDWIG F. ROEHMANN
Spokane, Wash.

The Editor replies: "MOR" means Middle of the Road music—shall we say Tony Orlando and Dawn, Sonny and Cher, Barry Manilow, Henry Mancini, Burt Bacharach, and, yes, even Barbra Streisand. It is the largest-selling single category of pop music (country only excepted), but by its very nature it doesn't get its share of the publicity—it is too bland, too predictable, too comfortable, too... well... ordinary. If you want attention, be outrageous. But I am surprised that the abbreviation is not in the vocabulary of a STEREO REVIEW reader. I believe that it is no longer merely an "insider's" term—we have been using it in our review pages for years. At any rate, Mr. Roehmann is "inside" now!

Disc Quality

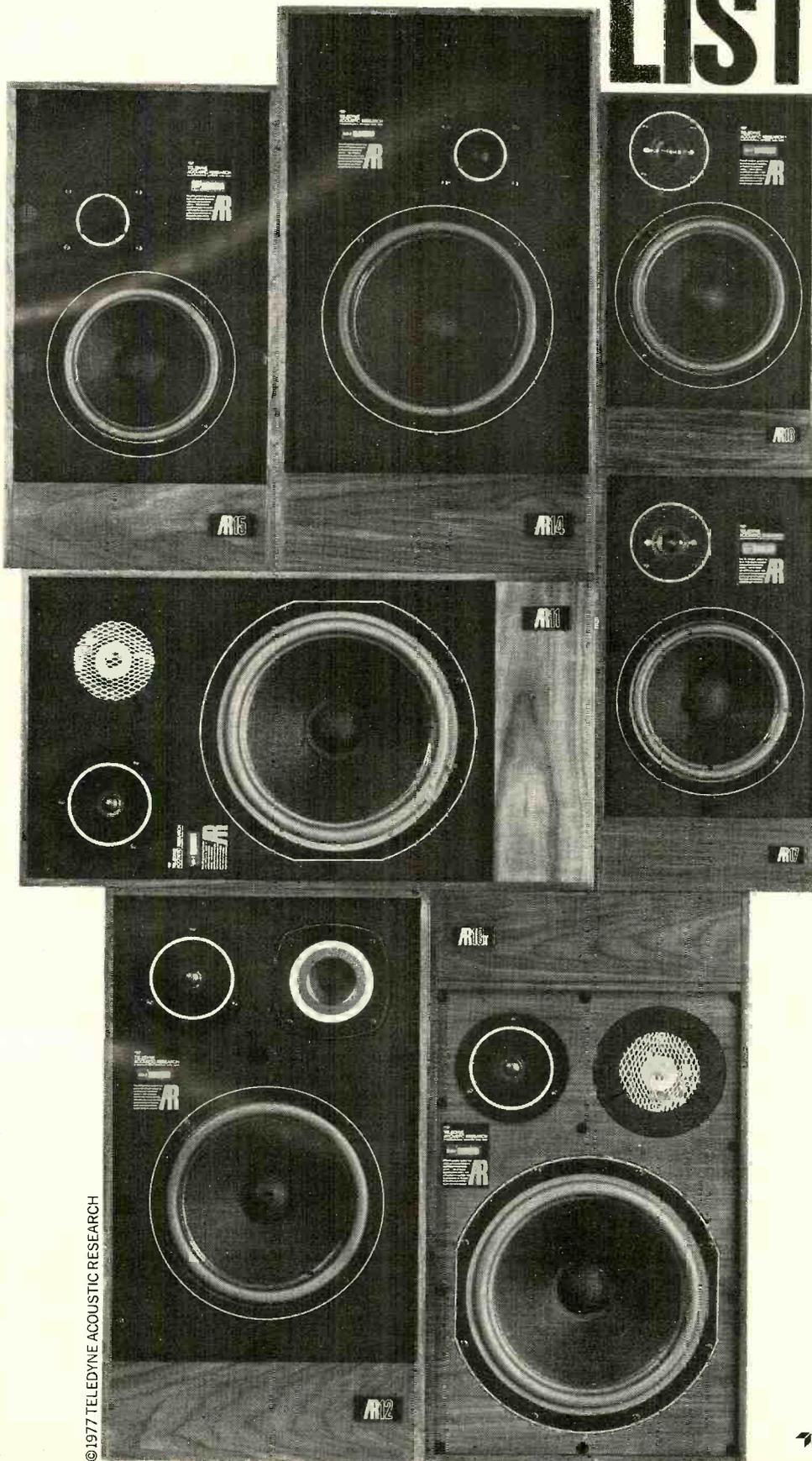
● May I add my comments to the enormous amount of vitriol spilled recently in the pages of STEREO REVIEW and elsewhere over poor disc quality? All of the blame has so far been placed where most of it belongs—on the people who manufacture the things in the first place. However, no consumer can purchase a record directly from the manufacturer. We must depend either on a retail store or some such demolition derby as the U.S. mails. The latter aside, I am convinced that some of the problems of poor discs have been caused by poor handling in retail stores, well after their manufacture. In other words, we are buying damaged discs, not poorly made ones.

Far too many record-store clerks consider their merchandise only as something to be ordered, stacked, inventoried, and sold. I have seen bins stocked so full that the records in front had to be bent over in order to read the covers of those in back—and plenty of couldn't-care-less customers who bend away instead of removing a dozen or so and browsing through the rest more thoughtfully. Some stores stock records bookshelf-fashion with the end one flopped over at a 45-degree angle to hold the rest in place! Clerks have tried to fill out a charge slip using my new records as a desk. Perhaps the worst thing I have seen was when an undisciplined brat, running unsupervised through a store, tripped over a stack of records piled on the floor. He picked himself and them up and ran on. The store later offered for sale four or five records that had literally been sat upon. Record buyers should ask to see the manager and complain whenever they see some such damaging practice or occurrence. The owner of a small store is much more likely to listen to a single customer than is a multi-million-dollar manufacturer. And if he isn't, buy elsewhere.

BILL NABOR
Azusa, Calif.

Yes, and maybe it would help if manufacturers didn't start things off on a belittling foot by calling the music merely "product."

TRUTH IN LISTENING



Call it accuracy.
Or faithful reproduction.
Or flat energy response.
We at AR simply call it
"truth in listening," and when
you think about that you
realize it's what high-fidelity is
all about.

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the hottest new name in
speakers seems to be the one
you've known for so many
years: AR.

Because we've made some
changes, always remembering
that "truth in listening" made
us what we are today.

AR We've refined
styling.
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models so that the
ones you see here
cover the market from about
\$65 to about \$450.

We've improved power-
handling with revolutionary
liquid-cooled drivers.

We've even up-graded
distribution so that now you'll
find AR only in quality high-
fidelity stores.

And if all this sounds good,
ask about the AR warranty on
performance.

You'll like what you hear,
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For information and "specs"
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OCTOBER 1977

WRITE IN NO. 2 ON READER SERVICE CARD

TELEDYNE ACOUSTIC RESEARCH
10 AMERICAN DRIVE, NORWOOD, MASSACHUSETTS 02062
IN CANADA: A. C. SIMMONDS & SONS LTD.

21

New Products latest audio equipment and accessories



Updated Stax Arm Has Carbon Shaft

□ The UA7-CF is the most recent version of Stax's UA7-M tone arm, featuring a new carbon-fiber shaft. The shaft is detachable and available separately so that owners of the older magnesium-arm model may update. The other features of the CF are identical to those of the UA7-M and include tracking-force adjustment by means of a rotating counterweight (calibrated in 0.1-gram increments), sliding-weight antiskating adjustment (calibrated every 0.5 gram), and viscous-damped cueing. Price: \$256.

Circle 115 on reader service card



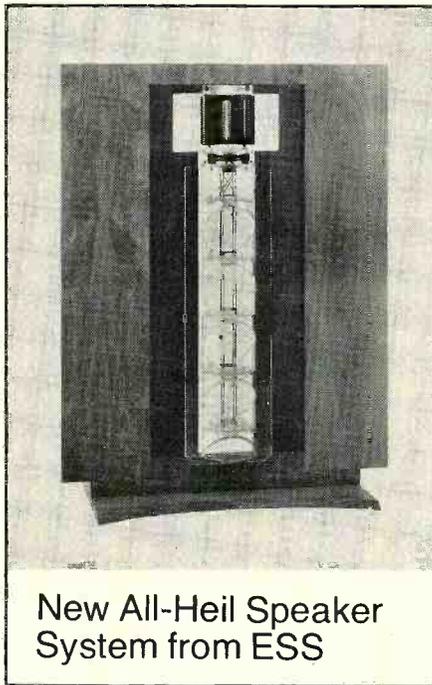
Dave Hafler Returns: First Product Is a Preamp Kit

□ The David Hafler Company's first product is a preamplifier kit, the model DH-101. The front panel has knob controls for volume, balance, bass, and treble and pushbuttons for program-source selection, tape dubbing, mono/stereo mode, tone-control defeat, and power. Discrete transistors are utilized exclusively. All the kit's circuitry is in the form of pre-tested printed-circuit boards that are wired into the chassis by the kitbuilder. A provision is made for the internal addition of a "head amp" for low-output moving-coil phono cartridges.

The phono section of the DH-101 has a frequency response of 2 to 20,000 Hz ± 0.5 dB, with distortion under 0.0006 per cent at 1,000 Hz and rated output (3 volts). Phono overload occurs at 200 millivolts at 1,000 Hz. Hum and noise are 88 dB below a 1-millivolt input at 1,000 Hz (DIN A weighting). The high-level amplifier has a frequency response of 20 to 20,000 Hz ± 0.25 dB, with distortion under 0.001 per cent over the entire frequency range. Input impedance is 25,000 ohms, and hum and noise are 90 dB below a 1-volt input

(DIN A weighting). The slew rates of both phono and high-level amplifiers are 12 volts per microsecond. The DH-101's intermodulation distortion is said to be undetectable. Approximate dimensions are $3\frac{1}{4} \times 13\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Kit price: \$199.50; the unit is also available factory-wired at \$299.50.

Circle 116 on reader service card



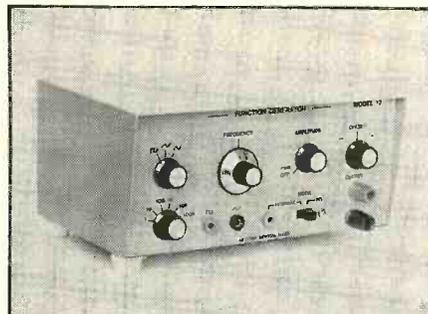
New All-Heil Speaker System from ESS

□ A new speaker system based on a unique low-frequency generator will soon be introduced by ESS. Called the Transar/A.T.D., the system also employs an improved version of the original ESS/Heil air-motion transformer for high frequencies.

The Transar's low-frequency portion consists of five Lexan diaphragms oriented in a vertical line in the center of a large baffle assembly. Wedge-shaped chambers load both sides of the diaphragms, which are driven by a single voice-coil assembly through a rigid system of carbon-fiber drive rods. The rods contact and pass through each diaphragm in four separate places, amounting to a distributed-drive configuration that resists diaphragm break-up or resonance. The low-frequency system radiates equally to front and rear, as does the high-frequency air-motion transformer above it.

To drive the Transar, ESS recommends current-source amplification, which operates most efficiently with the Transar's unusually high impedance at extremely low frequencies. The company will make a suitable amplifier available with the loudspeaker; it will also contain an electronic crossover to enable the high-frequency units to be driven by a separate amplifier. Projected price of a pair of Transar systems together with amplifier and electronic crossover: approximately \$3,000.

Circle 117 on reader service card



Low-cost Function Generator from AE

□ The Model 12 from Advanced Electronics Corporation is a function generator suitable for audio applications. As a signal generator, it provides variable-amplitude sine, square, and triangle waveforms over a frequency range of d.c. to 1 MHz at an accuracy of ± 5 per cent. The unit has a six-position decade switch (from 1 to 100,000 Hz) and a continuously variable control for frequency selection. In addition to its own internal frequency-control circuitry, the Model 12 can be used with external frequency control. The unit is capable of delivering sine-, square-, and triangle-wave signals simultaneously. The Model 12 is available in kit form or fully assembled; it measures $3\frac{1}{2} \times 8 \times 5$ inches. Price of the kit, about \$80; of the assembled unit, about \$125.

Circle 118 on reader service card

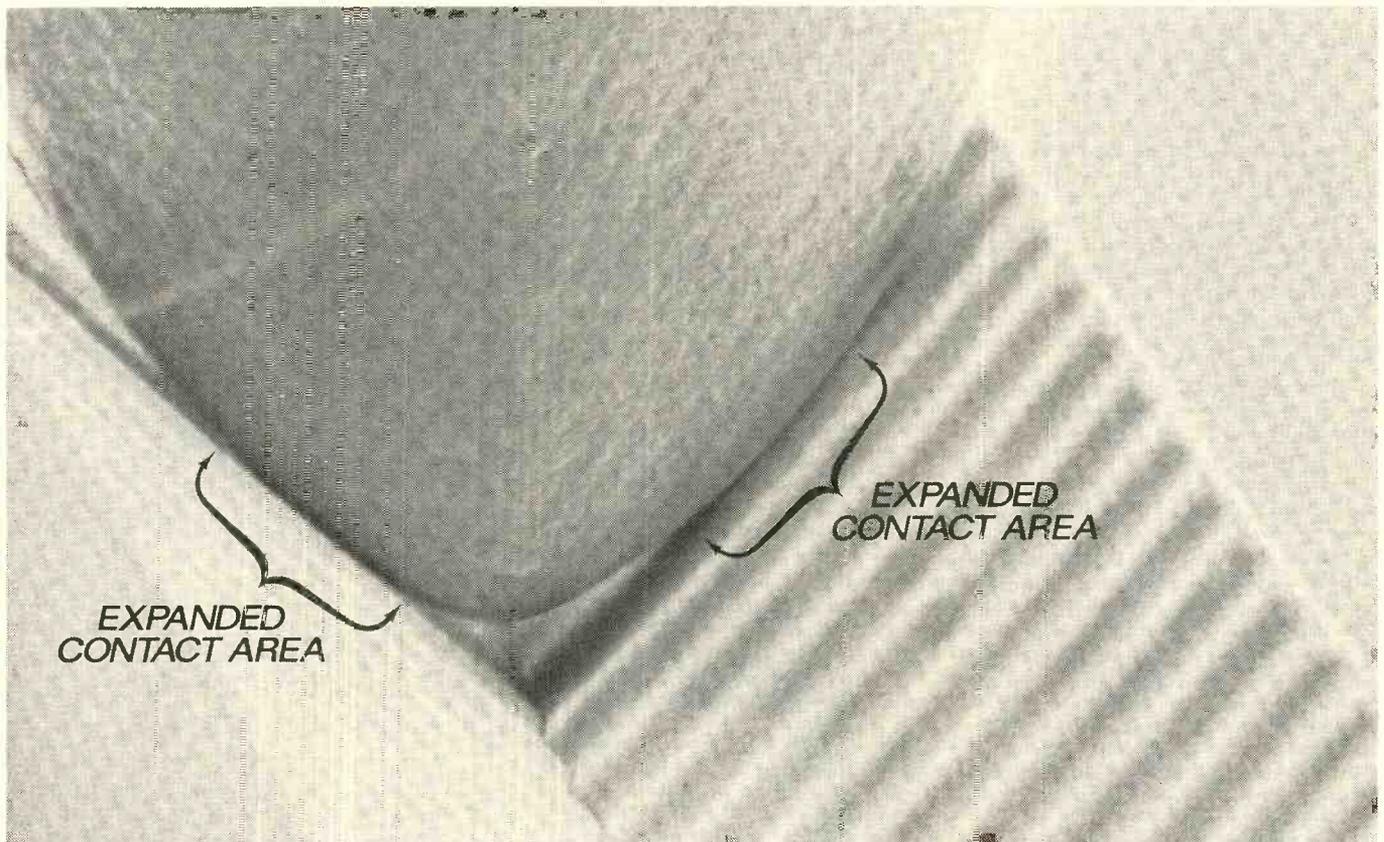


Most Powerful "Class G" Receiver From Hitachi

□ Hitachi's SR 2004 is the most powerful receiver incorporating the "Class G" amplifier circuitry first introduced in the Hitachi SR 903 receiver. Rated at 200 watts per channel continuous power, the unit is capable of delivering up to 400 watts per channel for short peak-demand periods. The front-panel features include separate power meters for each channel (calibrated in watts) as well as a step-type volume control detented at intervals of 3 dB. Three tone controls are provided (bass, mid-range, and treble), and the bass and treble controls have adjustable turnover frequencies: 150 or 300 Hz for bass and 3,000 or 6,000

(Continued on page 24)

Better records are the result of better playback pick-ups



© Stanton Magnetics, Inc., 1977

Scanning Electron Beam Microscope photo of Stereohedron Stylus; 2000 times magnification. Brackets point out wider contact area.

Enter the New Professional Calibration Standard, Stanton's 881S



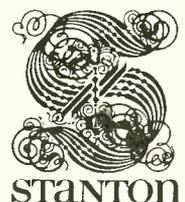
Mike Reese of the famous Mastering Lab in Los Angeles says: "While maintaining the Calibration Standard, the 881S sets new levels for tracking and high frequency response. It's an audible improvement. We use the 881S exclusively for calibration and evaluation in our operation."

The recording engineer can only produce a product as good as his ability to analyze it. Such analysis is best accomplished through the use of a playback pick-up. Hence, better records are the result of better playback pick-up. Naturally, a calibrated pick-up is essential.

There is an additional dimension to Stanton's new Professional Calibration Standard cartridges. They are designed for maximum record protection. This requires a brand new tip shape, the Stereohedron[®], which was developed not only for better sound characteristics but also the gentlest possible treatment of the record groove. This cartridge possesses a revolutionary new magnet made of an exotic rare earth compound which, because of its enormous power, is far smaller than ordinary magnets.

Stanton guarantees each 881S to meet the specifications within exacting limits. The most meaningful warranty possible, individual calibration test results, come packed with each unit.

Whether your usage involves recording, broadcasting or home entertainment, your choice should be the choice of the professionals... the STANTON 881S.



For further information write to Stanton Magnetics, Terminal Drive, Plainview, New York 11803

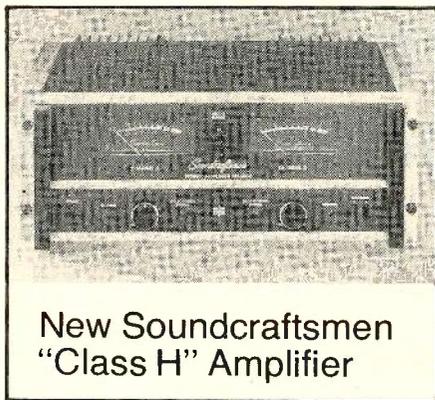
WRITE IN NO. 44 ON READER SERVICE CARD

New Products latest audio equipment and accessories

Hz for treble. A two-level audio muting switch is included, with settings of -20 and -40 dB. The SR 2004 has provisions for two tape decks and for dubbing from one to the other as well as capability for microphone mixing with another program source. Three pairs of speakers are accommodated. The FM facilities include signal-strength and channel-center meters, a multiplex noise filter, and switchable i.f. bandwidth. An AFC circuit for FM is disabled whenever the tuning knob is grasped and reactivated when it is released. LED's show which program source and speakers have been selected.

At full continuous-power output the SR 2004 has less than 0.08 per cent total harmonic and intermodulation distortion. The phono overload point is 500 millivolts and signal-to-noise ratios are 75 dB for the phono inputs, 90 dB for high-level inputs. Key FM specifications include a usable sensitivity of 8.7 dBf (1.5 microvolts) in mono and 15 dBf in stereo and a 50-dB quieting sensitivity of 12.5 dBf in mono and 36 dBf in stereo. The FM frequency response is 30 to 15,000 Hz \pm 1 dB, and distortion at 1,000 Hz is 0.2 per cent in stereo. Capture ratio is 1 dB, and alternate-channel selectivity is 85 dB. Image rejection, spurious response rejection, and AM suppression are 100, 105, and 60 dB, respectively. The i.f. rejection is 115 dB. At 1,000 Hz the FM stereo separation is 50 dB, and the ultimate signal-to-noise ratios are 75 dB (mono) and 70 dB (stereo). The dimensions of the SR 2004 are $7\frac{1}{4} \times 22\frac{3}{4} \times 17\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and the unit weighs about 68 pounds. Price: \$950.

Circle 119 on reader service card



New Soundcraftsmen "Class H" Amplifier

□ Soundcraftsmen's new power amplifier, the Model MA 5002, operates on what is called the "Class H" principle. Two power supplies are provided for each channel. The MA 5002 operates on the lower-voltage supplies for low signals and, as signal levels increase, the higher-voltage supplies are progressively activated. The maximum voltage of the high-voltage supply is $1\frac{1}{2}$ times that of the low voltage. The activation of the high-voltage supply is controlled by a "Vari-portional" circuit that anticipates the requirements of the drive signal, turning on the high-voltage supply before it is actually needed. The main advantage of the class-H circuitry is increased

efficiency, resulting in lower energy consumption and reduced thermal dissipation.

The MA 5002 is rated at 250 watts per channel into 8 ohms at any frequency from 20 to 20,000 Hz. Total harmonic distortion is less than 0.1 per cent, and the signal-to-noise ratio exceeds 105 dB. An input of 1.28 volts is required for full output. The front panel of the MA 5002 features separate power meters, with three switchable sensitivity ranges, for each channel. Separate gain controls are provided for each channel, as well as LED's indicating the onset of clipping, major and minor overload, and the activation of the Vari-portional system. Switches for two pairs of speakers are also included. The dimensions of the MA 5002 are $7 \times 19 \times 12\frac{3}{4}$ inches, and the wood side panels are removable for rack mounting. Price: \$699.

Soundcraftsmen also offers the model PA 5001, similar to the MA 5002 but without a number of the latter's front-panel features. Price: \$599.

Circle 120 on reader service card



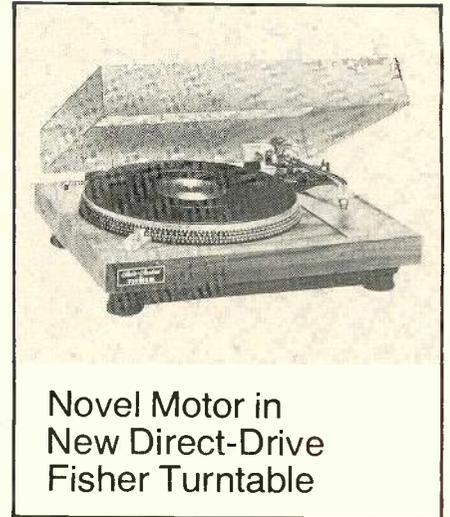
Russound's Control Center for Audio Outboard Devices

□ In response to the proliferation of "add-on" devices in audio systems (noise reducers and equalizers, for example), Russound offers its stereo switching center and patchbay, the SP-1. The SP-1 is essentially a junction box for including multiple tape decks and accessory equipment within the tape-monitor loop of an amplifier or receiver. The rear panel of the SP-1 accepts connections from four tape decks and five add-on devices; jacks are also provided for the addition of other switching boxes that can be master-switched by the SP-1. Four additional jacks complete the connection of the SP-1 with the rest of the audio system. All rear-panel connections utilize standard phono jacks.

The front panel has an array of switches and jacks for "patching in" the various components hooked up to the SP-1. Any program source can be connected to any add-on device. In addition, there are complete switching facilities for recording and dubbing. All front-panel connections utilize miniature phone jacks, for which twelve patch cords are

provided. There is also a twenty-two-page booklet on patching techniques which can be obtained separately. Approximate dimensions of the SP-1 are $5\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$ inches; the cabinet is of walnut-finish vinyl on particle board. Price: about \$150. Four additional patch cords cost \$9.95; an instruction booklet is \$3.00.

Circle 121 on reader service card



Novel Motor in New Direct-Drive Fisher Turntable

□ Fisher's new direct-drive turntable, the MT6225, utilizes a novel design in which the 120-pole rotor is a strip of permanently magnetized material bonded to a ring about $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter on the underside of the 13-inch platter. The stator is composed of three field coils forming an arc around the rotor. Adjacent to the three stator coils are three "sensing" coils. The drive signal is derived from a 60,000-Hz "carrier" (from a built-in oscillator) that is fed to the sensing coils, where it is amplitude-modulated at $33\frac{1}{3}$ or 45 Hz because of the passage of the rotor magnets past the sensing coils. This AM signal is then amplified and demodulated and fed to the stator coils, where it generates the motive force for the rotation of the platter. The back-e.m.f. from the stator coils is used to provide a motional-feedback signal that corrects any speed fluctuations in the platter.

The $33\frac{1}{3}$ - and 45-rpm speeds of the MT6225 are adjustable within ± 3 per cent, and a strobe-light speed indicator is provided. Wow and flutter are 0.03 per cent (weighted), and rumble is -70 dB (DIN B weighting). The "S"-shaped tone arm has a range of tracking forces from 0.6 to 3.5 grams. The maximum lateral tracking-angle error is ± 1.5 degrees. Adjustable anti-skating and viscous-damped cueing are included. The turntable can be operated manually, but it also features automatic stop and reject functions. It is mounted on a wood base and has a hinged dust cover. Dimensions are $6 \times 17\frac{3}{4} \times 14\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Price: about \$200.

Circle 122 on reader service card

(Continued on page 26)



true stereo separation in your car

You ain't got it, and you know it.

But now you can get it - - - with KRIKET® Series 6000™ speakers.

Home stereo speakers valued at hundreds of dollars have sound baffles. So do afs®/KRIKET® Series 6000™ speakers. That's the only way you're ever going to get true stereo separation in your car, truck or van. With baffled speakers.

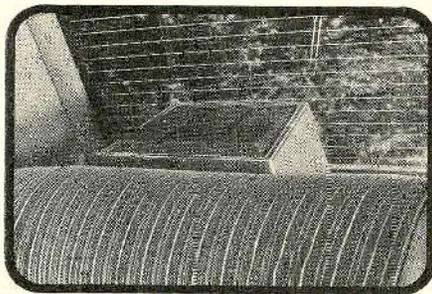
We make a big deal out of baffling because we're the only car stereo speaker makers who have a baffle. In our Series 6000™, Model 6069 speaker. The baffle stops annoying reuerberations and other distortions created by sound bouncing around in the trunk of your car, your door or wherever you have speakers mounted.

We call our baffle the "WORKING WALL"® enclosure. It's patented a bunch of times, so nobody else has it. What it provides is an almost perfect sound stop and some other stuff based on sound polarization principles. What you get is sound so clear, clean and brilliant, you'll think you're back at home with those multi-hundred dollar speakers.

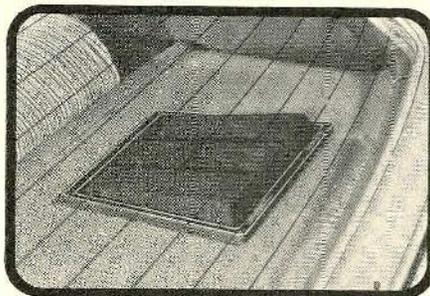
Have trouble believing that? Don't blame you. No scientific testing equipment or silky sounding ad will ever top the most sophisticated devices yet created for sound appreciation. Your ears. If you listen to a KRIKET® Series 6000™ stereo speaker system, you'll buy it.

Series 6000™, Model 6069 has unique, convertible mount design.

Surface mount



Flush mount



innovators in great autosound

afs®/Kriket.

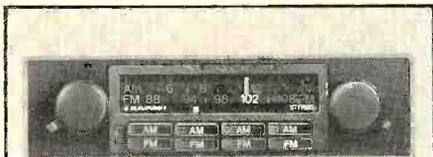
Acoustic Fiber Sound Systems, Inc.
Indianapolis, Indiana

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CIRCLE NO. 6 ON READER SERVICE CARD

New Products latest audio equipment and accessories

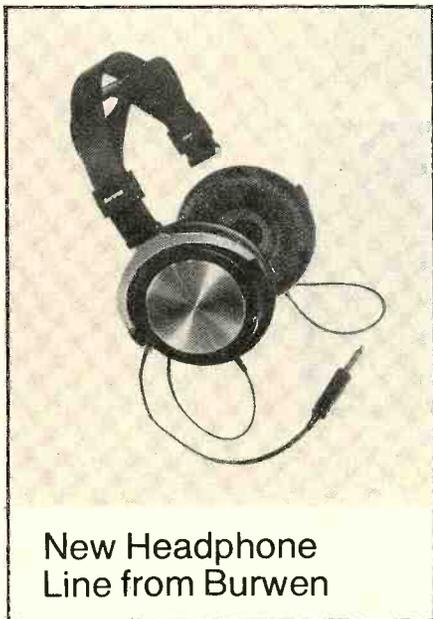


Blaupunkt Auto Radio Has Noise Suppression Unit

□ Blaupunkt has announced a new AM/FM car stereo radio, the Frankfurt US Stereo 2 × 4. The Frankfurt 2 × 4 features eight pushbutton station selectors, four for AM and four for FM. In addition to tone, balance, and volume controls, the unit has a mono/stereo selector switch. An automatic FM noise-suppression circuit, the ASU (automatic suppression unit), is built into the radio. The power rating of the Frankfurt 2 × 4 is 5 watts per channel; the image suppression is 42 dB, and the stereo separation at 1,000 Hz is 23 dB. The signal-to-noise ratio is rated at 26 dB for a 1.8-microvolt input.

The Frankfurt 2 × 4 comes with universal hardware and is adjustable for in-dash mounting; optional kits are available for under-dash mounting, as are custom installation kits for various foreign cars. The unit is also equipped with a DIN jack that takes an accessory stereo cassette player as well as connections for a power automatic antenna. Price: \$185.

Circle 123 on reader service card



New Headphone Line from Burwen

□ Burwen Research has entered the headphone market with a line including three dynamic and two "orthodynamic" models. The top-of-the-line PMB 8 (shown) and the PMB 6

are the orthodynamic models, the former an around-the-ear (isolating) phone and the latter an on-the-ear (non-isolating) design. The orthodynamic driver consists of a lightweight plastic diaphragm suspended between two perforated permanent magnets. The ultra-thin diaphragm, which serves as the voice coil, has spiral conductor windings printed on its surface. When a current is passed through this circuit, the diaphragm acts as a magnetic dipole and accelerates as a result of its interaction with the fixed magnetic field of the permanent magnets. The diaphragm is coupled to the frame of the driver at its edges and at its center; this is said to control resonances and result in flatter response. The PMB 8 has a frequency response of 15 to 26,000 Hz and generates under 0.3 per cent total harmonic distortion. The maximum sound-pressure level is 112 dB at 1,000 Hz. Weight is 12 ounces.

The PMB 4, PMB 20, and PMB 40 are conventional moving-coil designs. Two of them, the PMB 20 and PMB 40, are lightweight non-isolating models; the PMB 4 provides acoustic isolation from outside sounds. The isolating models and the PMB 6 have leatherette-covered foam ear cushions; the PMB 20 and PMB 40 are equipped with one-piece foam cushions. Ten-foot cables are provided on all models. Price of the PMB 8: about \$100. The other models range in price from about \$80 for the PMB 6 to about \$40 for the PMB 20.

Circle 124 on reader service card



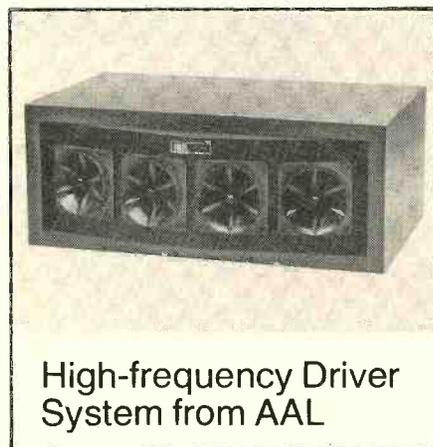
Micro-Acoustics' New Electret Cartridge Is Individually Tested

□ Micro-Acoustics' 530-mp represents a refinement of MA's electret transducer system and has many characteristics in common with the 2002-e cartridge, such as a beryllium cantilever and a built-in impedance-matching and equalizing microcircuit. In addition, the "Micro-Point" stylus of the 530-mp is said to be an exact geometric analog of the widely used disc-cutting stylus manufactured by Micro-Acoustics—a feature intended to improve its tracing of the record groove. Each 530-mp

cartridge released for sale is individually tested, and its frequency-response graph is packed in its carton.

The frequency response of the 530-mp is 5 to 20,000 Hz ±1.25 dB. Nominal channel separation is 30 dB at 1,000 Hz and 15 dB at 10,000 Hz. The 530-mp has an output of 3.5 millivolts per channel at a standard recorded velocity of 5 centimeters per second. The cartridge will meet its specifications operating into any impedance from 10,000 to 100,000 ohms and into any capacitive load from 100 to 1,500 picofarads. The 530-mp weighs 4 grams; it is designed for tracking forces between 0.7 and 1.4 grams. The stylus is user-replaceable. Price: \$200.

Circle 125 on reader service card



High-frequency Driver System from AAL

□ The Add-Array from American Acoustic Labs is a high-frequency driver system consisting of a row of four 3-inch horn-loaded piezoelectric tweeters angled slightly outward. It is intended to be used with a regular full-range speaker system to augment high-frequency output and dispersion. A built-in crossover limits its response to frequencies between 7,000 and 40,000 Hz. The piezoelectric drivers utilized are high-impedance devices, and the absolute impedance of the Add-Array drops from about 50 ohms at 7,000 Hz to about 20 ohms at 20,000 Hz. If the Add-Array is connected in parallel with a full-range speaker system having a nominal 8-ohm impedance, it presents a minimal load to the system amplifier. The Add-Array is a voltage-sensitive device and draws very little power; nonetheless, it can be used safely with amplifiers rated at upwards of 300 watts per channel. Dimensions are 8 x 14 x 10 inches. Price: about \$100.

Circle 126 on reader service card

NOTICE: All product descriptions and specifications quoted in these columns are based on materials supplied by the manufacturer.

Recent fluctuations in the value of the dollar will have an effect on the price of merchandise imported into this country. Please be aware that the prices quoted in this issue may be subject to change.

THE OPTIMUM.



Free maxell tape just for listening to the first cassette deck that finds music automatically.

Now there's a cassette deck that plays it your way.

The Optonica RT-3535 Mark II. It's the only cassette deck with APLD, the Automatic Program Locating Device that lets you select the songs you want to hear automatically, instead of manually searching for each cut.

But that's not all.

This Optonica cassette deck also has the kind of specifications that will impress the most dedicated audiophile.

The high quality tape transport features a 2-motor drive system, and a precision polished capstan shaft. Which results in a wow and flutter of an amazingly low 0.04%. Compare that figure with other top

of the line cassette decks and you'll see why Optonica can honestly call the RT-3535 Mark II, The Optimum.

A built-in Dolby* System means you shouldn't have to worry about hiss and noise ruining the performance of your tapes. And the ultra-hard Permalloy head means you'll have greatly improved frequency response.

We invite you to listen to the optimum cassette deck and in return, we'll give you the Maxell UDC-90 cassette tape absolutely free.

Just call toll-free 800-447-4700 day or night (in Illinois dial 1-800-322-4400) for the name and address of your nearest Optonica™ showroom. Or write Optonica,

Dept. C10A, 10 Keystone Place, Paramus, New Jersey 07652. Then pick up your free copy of our catalog, listen to the RT-3535 Mark II and get your free Maxell cassette tape.

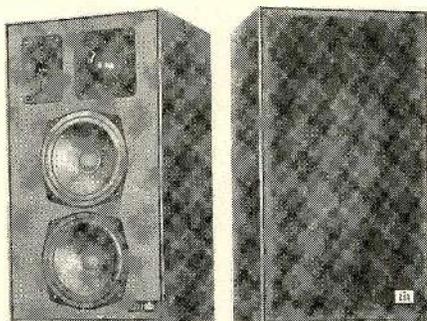
Come in soon... the free tape offer (good only at participating dealers while the supply lasts.) ends September 30, 1977.

From the cassette deck that finds musical selections automatically to the unique turntable built on granite, find out why throughout Europe and Japan, Optonica is one of the fastest selling lines of high fidelity components on the market today.

OPTONICA THE OPTIMUM.

*Dolby is a trademark of Dolby Laboratories, Inc.

THE BEST \$500 SPEAKER FOR UNDER \$265:



ADS 710

An opinion from an expert: "... the end result is a speaker that has superb frequency response without sacrificing the equally important transient characteristics.

Thus, the sound of this system is incredibly open and well defined and the effect is that of listening to music rather than to a loudspeaker."

Thank you, **Martin Clifford!**

What the renowned technical editor has so aptly described is known by audiophiles all over the world as:

The INVISIBLE SOUND of ADS.

We manufacture a complete line of loudspeaker systems, active and passive, for home, mobile and studio applications, priced approximately between \$100 and \$700.

For more information please state your area of interest and send us the coupon below; we promise to have literature and a dealer list on its way to you by return mail.

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I'm interested in:

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CIRCLE NO. 76 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Audio Q. and A.

By Larry Klein



STEREO REVIEW's Technical Director discusses the noise-reduction possibilities for Edison cylinder recordings with Ray Dolby at the latter's San Francisco town house.

TV-audio Receivers

Q. Sometimes I pick up the audio portion of TV programs on the low end of my receiver's FM band. The sound coming out of my stereo speakers is impressive, although it is mono and there is some distortion and noise. How does this happen? And if it isn't a fluke, why don't component manufacturers include a TV band in their receivers in addition to the AM and FM bands? Is anyone exploring this area, assuming it is technically feasible?

TOMAS J. MINOR
Columbia, S.C.

A. The standard 88 to 108-MHz FM broadcast band is located between TV channels 6 and 7. Since channel 6 is assigned 82 to 88 MHz, it's easy to understand why you can tune in its audio at the low end of the FM band. However, channel 7 is in the 174 to 180 MHz range, leaving a 66-MHz-wide gap occupied by various aeronautical and maritime communications and navigation services.

As far as the technical feasibility of designing in a TV-audio function, there are many ways it could be done, but none of them are exactly inexpensive. A TV-sound tuning facility would add perhaps \$50 to the retail cost of a receiver. For anyone who wants TV-audio, the price is reasonable; but for someone who doesn't, it isn't. I'm sure if any manufacturer was convinced that there was a large enough TV-audio hi-fi market out there, he would do his best to stake out his share of it.

Sudden FM Hiss

Q. Not too long ago you answered a question about FM hiss in the stereo mode. I've been having the same trouble recently, and the circumstances are the following: I purchased a receiver in September, and, because I live in a hilly, low-reception area, a friend put an FM antenna on my apartment's roof. He said it would work better than the antenna wire that came with the receiver. It all worked great until the other day, when my favorite FM station started to hiss and crackle. I sent someone up to the roof to see if something had happened to the FM antenna (since everything inside was supposedly connected and positioned correctly). The person came down and said, "that's not an FM antenna—that's a

piece of RG-8U coaxial cable transmission line, unstripped with the end cut square, strung between two supports ten feet apart." Whew! What I want to know is—is the aforementioned object a proper FM antenna? Help!

ELLEN DWORKIN
Glendale, Calif.

A. No, it isn't; somebody cut the wire and stole your antenna. Since there's probably not much of a market for hot used FM antennas, it would probably be safe to put up another one. Why don't you contact your friend, find out which model he originally installed, and have a duplicate put up?

Phono Rasp

Q. I have a constant problem with records that appear to have defects in pressing. The vocal sounds of S, T, and CH are not clean but are harsh and raspy, similar to the sound of an announcer's voice when a station is not quite tuned in. The problem may appear on one cut or on several on any given album, or there may be no problem at all. Is it in fact the discs or something in my system? I would appreciate your help as the record stores do not seem to understand my complaint, and now I hate the experience of buying albums.

EDWARD BAUMAN
Santa Ana Heights, Calif.

A. From your description, it sounds to me as though you have a high-frequency tracking problem. When a disc has loud vocal sibilants (or cymbals, or top-hats, or tambourines), the phono stylus must be able to move very fast and accurately in order to trace the groove and reproduce such sounds without distortion. A large proportion of the cost of today's better cartridges is devoted to making this possible. The factor in phono-cartridge design mostly responsible is its effective tip mass—the lower, the better. Of course, it's possible for any given disc to be "overcut," which will produce a rasp with even the finest phono cartridge. But given today's "normal" high-frequency cutting velocities, any good phono cartridge should be able to track them without problems.

Since tracking is not a simple go/no-go phenomenon and since it depends on both the record and the cartridge characteristics, it

may be that your cartridge is not of high enough quality to do the job (in other words, it suffers from excessive stylus-tip mass) or it may be worn or otherwise defective. Another possibility is that you are attempting to use too low a stylus force. Write to the manufacturer of your cartridge; he may have some helpful suggestions.

Stylus Misorientation

Q. A local audio dealer is advertising his ability to detect an incorrectly mounted stylus tip. Does the problem occur, as he claims, with up to 50 per cent of some manufacturers' production? How serious is it for us as consumers? I can't believe that a manufacturer would bother to use an elliptical stylus tip if there were an element of mere luck in its placement. It seems to me that an elliptical or Shibata-type stylus tip improperly positioned by any large number of degrees is going to damage fidelity, the record grooves, and itself.

TOM VIS
Ann Arbor, Mich.

A. I discussed the matter you raise with several cartridge manufacturers. None have found the kind of prevalent tip misorientation in their own or competitive products that your "local audio dealer" is making so much of. And I have seen some of the complex apparatus manufacturers use to orient and install stylus tips, and there is obviously far more than a "luck" element involved. In addition, Shure states that their research "has determined both theoretically and experimentally that a 5-degree elliptical-tip rotation does not result in additional tip or record wear. It does not degrade the musical information taken from the record, even with the phase-coded matrix quad records, which are most critical in this regard." Any large error in tip mounting would be readily detected during any sort of test and would be immediately audible in use.

I don't know which audio dealer is being referred to, but it should be appreciated that being hypercritical of manufacturers' products could be self-serving in that it could be used to sell replacement styli and also to shift a customer from one product line to another which might be more profitable. On the other hand, the dealer could be acting in good faith but be technically confused.

Safe Speaker Reviews

Q. Assuming that a given speaker system gets a good critical review, is it safe to buy it "sound unheard"?

ANDRE GALLANTE
Madawaska, Maine

A. If you had asked about amplifiers or tuners, you would get a one-word reply: yes! However, my experience has been that there is no speaker on the market so bad that someone won't love it, and none so good that someone else won't hate it. If everyone agreed on which speakers sound the best, of course, there would be no problem. But not only do audiophiles disagree when listening to the same speakers in the same acoustic environment, the same speakers will perform differently (mostly in regard to frequency balance) in different acoustic environments.

It's clear that questions of taste and listen-

ing environment introduce an element of confusion in the use of speaker test reports for buying guidance, but in my view it certainly does not invalidate them. The "taste" of any truly trained ear is for low distortion and flat, wide-range frequency response. Or, to put it another way, *accuracy is preferred*. Accuracy means that the relative strengths of the frequencies of the sounds coming out of the speaker directly correspond to those in the electrical audio signals fed to the speaker. And, of course, the distortions inevitably added by any speaker should be low enough not to be troublesome.

However, there are those who prefer a "mellow" sound (frequency balance tilted toward the bass end) and others who like an upfront, "punchy" sound (mid-range boosted) or a "hi-fi" sound (excessive mid-bass and peaked lower treble.) Reviewers can't do much to cater to such tin ears except to indicate how and where a specific speaker departs from accuracy.

As far as the acoustic effects of the room (and the specific speaker installation in it) are concerned, reviews in general indicate how a speaker will perform under more or less optimum acoustic conditions. This is both helpful and fair in that all any reviewer can do is inform the reader about the potential performance of a speaker, not predict exactly how it will sound in a randomly selected group of environments with unknown characteristics. It is up to the listener to determine the setup that will provide the best results in a particular room. Most manufacturers provide guidance in separate literature or in their instruction manuals.

Tweeter Replacement

Q. One of the tweeters in my speakers has stopped working and I'd like to get it fixed. My problem is that my speakers are over a year old, out of warranty, and the manufacturer is on the East Coast. Is it a good idea to have my speaker repaired locally assuming I can find a reliable service shop?

FRANK MOORE
Monterey, Calif.

A. Your first step is to check the warranty, since it may *not* have run out after a year. Unlike the custom with other components, some speakers are under warranty for up to five years. Assuming that your warranty is still in force, write to or call the manufacturer who will advise you as to your next step. If your warranty has in fact run out, it would still be a good idea to contact the manufacturer. Tweeters are usually quite easy to replace (removal and replacement of four screws and two solder connections may be all the work required), and it may be that the price from the manufacturer of a replacement tweeter will be much less than the cost of shipping your entire system to him.

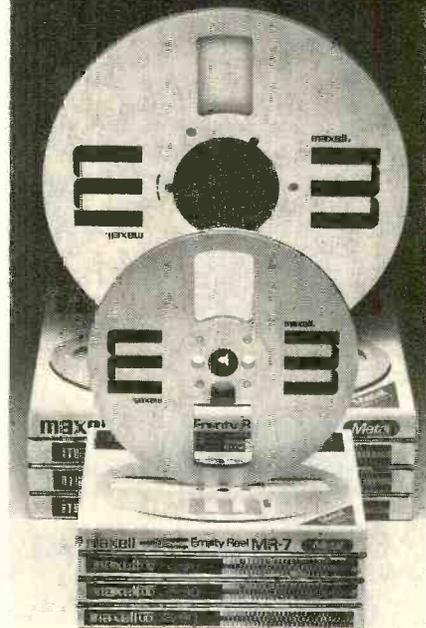
If you don't feel confident about your ability to do the work yourself, ask the manufacturer what to do; he may be able to suggest a factory-authorized repair station in your area. Do *not* take your system into the corner TV, washing machine, and hi-fi service shop. You may end up with a replacement tweeter whose characteristics do not match the overall requirements of your speaker system. In such a case, it will provide poor results, even though the new tweeter, in and of itself, may be a superior unit.

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CIRCLE NO. 38 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Tape Talk

By Craig Stark



The best an open-reel enthusiast can do at present is to get a deck with four heads: erase, record, playback for the format he wants to use most, and a second playback-only head for the other format. Or, of course, he can get a four-channel quarter-track machine and use track 4 for the right-channel pick-up of a half-track tape. But with regular quarter-track stereo playback heads playing a half-track tape, my experience is that the output of the right channel will be 7 to 10 dB below that of the left. And if you bring up the right-channel level enough to compensate, the hiss may become obtrusive.

Noise Reduction

Q. I recently bought a dbx noise-reduction system. Am I right in thinking that because I now have a greater dynamic range (up to a 100-dB signal-to-noise ratio) I no longer need to use a premium cassette tape, and, indeed, that with its greater sensitivity the better tape would be more apt to present problems with print-through?

EARL ALBIN
L.A.F.B., Me.

A. Sorry, but you're wrong on both counts; if anything, your need to use a premium-grade cassette has increased. Unlike the Dolby-B system, whose action is comparatively mild, the dbx system uses a two-to-one compression-expansion scheme which is capable of far greater signal-to-noise enhancement, but is correspondingly more demanding in terms of flat frequency response. This is to say that if, by using an inferior cassette, your recorded frequency response were to drop by 3 dB at some middle-high frequency, by the time it was decoded the frequency error would become 6 dB. Similarly, drop-outs (which are a bad enough problem with inexpensive cassettes) are rendered far worse by the compression-expansion process of the noise-reduction system.

So far as print-through is concerned, while there are cases in which extraordinarily high-output mastering tapes have produced increased print-through problems, with cassettes I would be more concerned with low quality than with high output. A relatively large proportion of broken, unstable oxide particles (characteristic of less-than-the-best cassette tapes) is an invitation to print-through difficulties.

Track Incompatibility

Q. Can a prerecorded half-track reel-to-reel tape be played on a quarter-track tape deck, or would you hear only the left channel? Is there any way to compensate for the track differences?

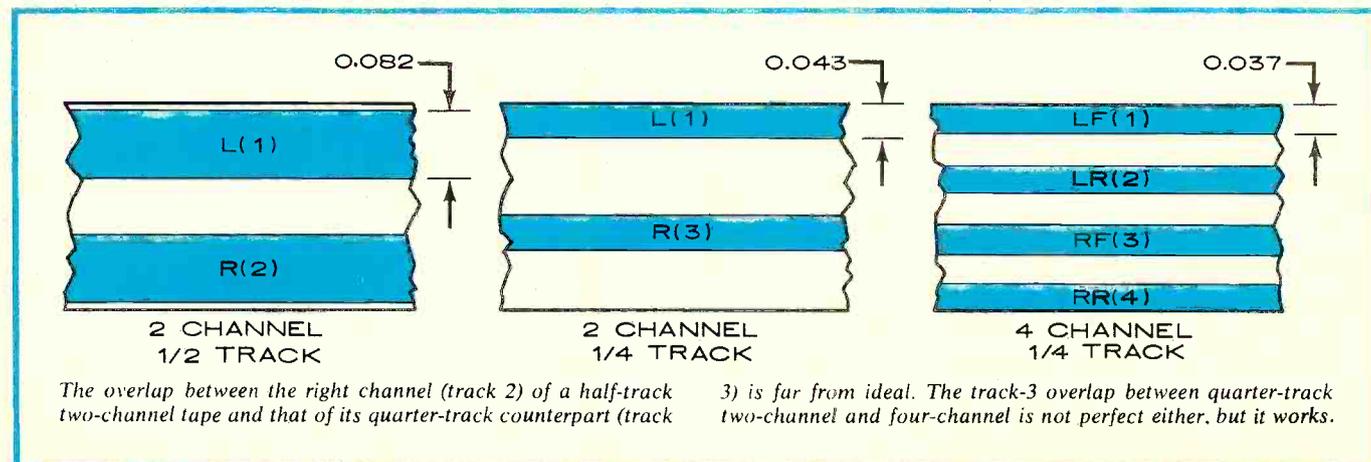
STEVE PAUL
Mandan, N.D.

A. As the wheel turns, the same spoke comes up again! The battle over compatibility between quarter-track and half-track stereo formats was fought back in the late Fifties and early Sixties at a time when tape-head technology was severely limited. The largely incompatible track arrangements that emerged represented the first great break between "consumer" and "professional" formats. Now that the trend in open-reel is back toward the higher-quality half-track system, the forced compromises of yesteryear have come back to haunt us.

The drawings below show the particulars of the problem. In quarter-track stereo, the two channels are not recorded on adjacent tracks of the tape. This is because, in those early days, it was difficult to build heads with adjacent quarter-track elements and still maintain adequate signal separation between channels. Thus, in the quarter-track format the right channel was assigned to track 3, where, as the

diagram shows, there is some—but far from complete—overlap with the right channel of the half-track format. And in four-channel quarter-track machines the width of each track is narrowed a bit more, providing an even wider area of unrecorded tape between tracks to further enhance separation. However, although the two-channel and four-channel quarter-track formats are compatible, neither adequately scans the right channel of a half-track stereo recording with playback-head gap number 3.

When quarter-track was first proposed, there was discussion about the possibility of widening the recorded tracks of the professional half-track format, thus cutting down on the width of the "island" of unrecorded space between them and thus also increasing the degree of physical overlap with track 3 of the one-directional quarter-track format. This possibility exists in some of the European tape standards, but not in the American NAB standard, and the pros back then weren't about to change. So for a while many consumer decks were produced that permitted the user to shift his quarter-track playback head slightly downward so he could play his older half-track tapes. Mechanical head-shifting mechanisms did not prove very satisfactory, however, for they tended to introduce a certain amount of "tilt" (azimuth error) that diminished high-frequency performance.



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Since then, of course, we have developed a sister line of cassette decks. But our first love remains open reel tape recording equipment: the truest method of sound reproduction available today.

Consider the alternatives. If you want top-of-the-line quality, but only need bottom-of-the-line features, the A-2300SX is the buy of the year. From there, you can add DOLBY*, larger 10½" reels, four heads, auto reverse, four-in/two-out mixer, memory stop, 15 ips, four channel Simul-Sync, and variations thereof.

In short, as long as you're getting a tape deck, can you conjure up a single reason it shouldn't be a TEAC?

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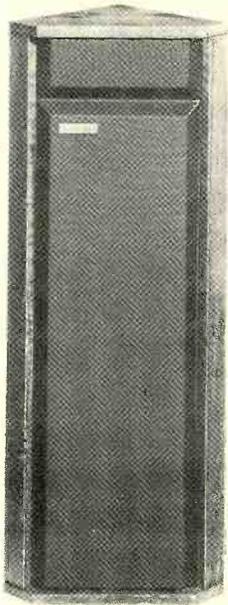


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CIRCLE NO. 67 ON READER SERVICE CARD

ALLISON:THREE Press comment:



STEREO

Vol. 10
No. 2
Spring
1977

"The overall sound quality of the ALLISON:THREE was exceptionally clean and clear, with excellent definition. There were no signs of strain; distortion was very low, even at substantial power levels.

"On our pure-tone tests, the ALLISON:THREE proved to be one of the lowest-distortion bass reproducers that we've come across. There was no evidence of midrange or tweeter buzzing either.

"In its price range, we'd match the ALLISON:THREE with the best systems we've auditioned, and we wouldn't hesitate to compare it favorably with many loudspeakers that are considerably more expensive.

"All drivers are of Allison manufacture and appear exceptionally rugged.

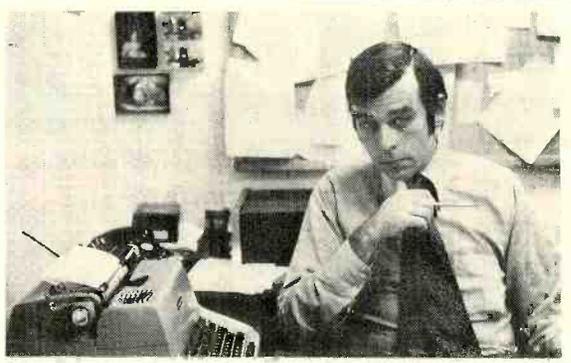
"We'd like to digress for a moment and comment on this manufacturer's literature. Simply stated, it's the best we've seen. Loudspeakers generally come with a paucity of information, and what there is of it is frequently "hyped." This is hardly the case with Allison . . . If we were to give a "consumer-protection" award to a speaker manufacturer, our candidate would be Allison Acoustics."

A reprint of the entire review and our informative product catalog are available on request.

ALLISON ACOUSTICS
7 Tech Circle, Natick, Massachusetts 01760

Audio Basics

By Ralph
Hodges



GETTING THE ROOM RIGHT

ALMOST every month brings at least a few reader letters consisting of the floor plan for a proposed listening room (showing dimensions and prominent furnishings) and a plea for assistance in making the room as "congenial" as possible for music appreciation. Specifically, these letters ask about choice of equipment, speaker location, appropriate subsidiary furnishings, and sometimes even decor. But mostly they are from people who want to find out whether the rooms in question will be "good" or at least usable for high-fidelity listening.

We're glad to see that so many have had their consciousness raised about the considerable importance of room acoustics to satisfactory sound reproduction. But we're sorry to have to reply that the matter of environmental acoustics just isn't simple enough for ready-made slide-rule solutions. If it were, professional sound men could look forward to acoustically perfect studio control rooms and sound-reinforcement systems every time, and trained acousticians could turn out flawless auditorium designs without ever leaving their desks. That, as they say, will be the day.

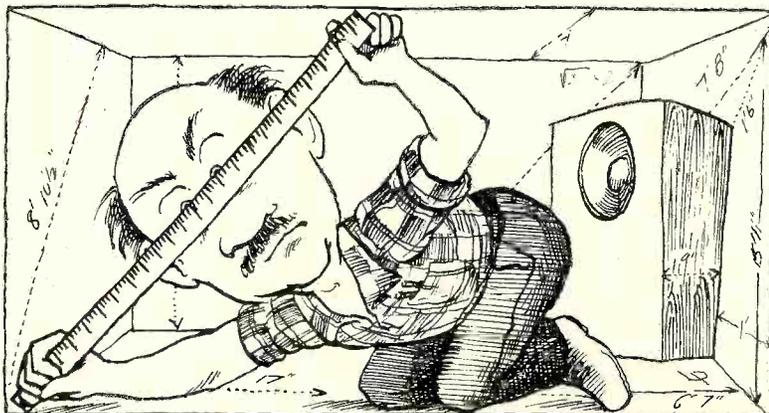
The bitter truth is that rooms, like speakers, are best evaluated ultimately by listening. And since none of us can trust our first impressions absolutely, the listening may have to go on over a protracted period and involve a considerable variety of program material. There may be disruption of room furnishings and even life styles as speakers are shifted hither and yon in search of the acoustically

right spots, and there will often be some mental anguish over the proper adjustment of tweeter and mid-range level controls. Is it worth the effort? Well, we can always hope it will be, but the fact must be faced that some rooms yield their best results (which may turn out to be something less than fabulous anyway) with extreme reluctance.

Obviously, you must formulate a plan of action before undertaking a project of this sort, or chaos will reign almost immediately. The rough guidelines below are not ironclad, but they do outline *sensible* first moves and considerations that work out more often for the best than otherwise:

• *First*, rooms proportioned as squares or near-squares are to be avoided if possible, and cube-like rooms (in which the height is almost equal to the length and width dimensions) are to be shunned like the plague. Fortunately, the living (and listening) rooms in most houses and apartments are longer than they are wide, but even then you should watch out (though not to the extent of getting panicky) for dimensions that are *multiples* of each other (10 by 20, for example).

The reason for these admonitions is that rooms exhibit various acoustic resonances, lending support to sound frequencies with wavelengths that relate mathematically to their dimensions. Suppose all the room's dimensions were about 19 feet, which is approximately the wavelength of 60 Hz in air. You'd get marvelous support for 30 Hz, 60



Hz, 90 Hz, 120 Hz, etc. but none for the in-between frequencies. And you'd end up with a more-or-less severe case of "one-note" bass (or perhaps "four-note" bass would be the more appropriate description). Therefore, it is generally recommended that the dimensions of the room be staggered so as to avoid any simple mathematical relationships (1:1, 1:2, etc.). This is not a necessity, mind you, but it is something to be seriously considered in your preplanning.

● *Second*, any room is likely to have at least one wall that is sturdier and "stiffer" than the others. Perhaps it is an exterior wall and abuts on solid brick. Or it could be an interior wall largely occupied by a fireplace, or one that has been specially reinforced for structural reasons. In any case, nine times out of ten the speakers should be against that stiff wall, which will assist them in propagating all low frequencies with fair uniformity. Put the speakers against the *opposite* wall (which is, say, about 19 feet away) and you're quite possibly right back to the one-note-bass business again.

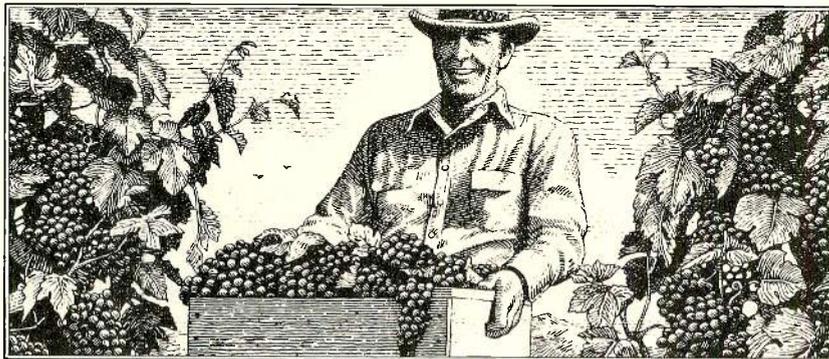
● *Third*, speakers tend to sound best at ear level or even somewhat higher. Acoustically "smothering" them with close proximity to a thick carpet or absorptive pieces of furniture rarely contributes to their best performance. So plan on supports or wall-hanging fixtures for your speakers unless they are of the floor-standing variety, in which case their tweeters will probably be located about at ear level when they're set on the floor. (You can use folding chairs as temporary speaker stands while you work out the final particulars of placement.)

● *Fourth*, experience has taught us that stereo comes off best if imaginary lines drawn directly between the speakers and the listening position form an angle of about 60 degrees. Put the speakers farther apart and stereo-image discontinuities ("hole in the middle") become a risk; put them much closer together and you may as well not have stereo at all.

● *Fifth*, it makes sense to provide *immediate* acoustic environments of rough equality for the speakers. If one speaker is just behind the overstuffed sofa next to the heavy drapes adjacent to the crowded bookcase, it is not likely to sound the same as the one that is on a naked plaster wall right next to the glass door leading to the patio. Ideally, with a mono program source, both (or all four) speakers will sound exactly alike. This is very difficult to achieve in practice, but a good try is usually worth the effort.

STRICT observance of the foregoing rules will narrow your speaker-placement options in a given room down to a very few. If you manage to get your speakers placed at theoretically optimum spots (possibly with great compromise to the room decor and a thorough dislocation of normal traffic) and they *still* don't sound good, you can blame the general perversity of things. Or you can consult this column next month, when I will discuss how you might rebuild a room to suit your speakers and how you might possibly be able to play your speakers loud, late at night, without getting evicted. In the meantime, STEREO REVIEW offers a reprint of a previously published article explaining all these matters in greater detail. Write Room Acoustics Reprint, Stereo Review Information Center, Consumer Service Division, 595 Broadway, New York, N. Y. 10012 and enclose \$1.

The importance of timely harvesting to fine wines.



One of the most important times of the year for any winery is the harvest season.

In order to make the best possible wine, we want to crush our grapes only at the very peak of their maturity. Our experience, of course, tells us approximately when each varietal grape will reach that point, but it is important that we know precisely when the grapes will reach that critical point of maturity.

Field Tests

In order to determine that critical point, about three weeks before estimated maturity, our field men take samples of grapes from the vineyards for testing.

From representative rows of vines, about 200 individual grapes are collected. They are taken from both sides of the row—from the top of the vines, from the bottom, and from both the inside and the outside.

These individual grapes together make up one sample which our field man "juices" on the spot.

He then makes his own sugar test of the juice, puts it in a cold box and sends it to our laboratory for more exact sugar testing, plus acid and pH analyses.

Laboratory Analyses

Some wineries test only in the field, but we feel this is too crucial a time in the making of fine wines to not follow through with as much care as possible.

These on-going analyses are each presented to meetings of the winemaker and the field man for their judgments. They pinpoint the exact time of maturity—that important moment when the complex flavor characteristics of the grape are at their peak.

The Harvest Itself

From the results of these tests, our field men then schedule deliveries from our growers. Because of varying types of soil within a given vineyard certain areas may mature earlier. If the vineyard is a large one, these areas are picked first.

Usually an entire varietal crop is picked within a one to two week period, allowing for differing times of maturity.

Since we believe that, in order to capture the crop's optimum quality, grapes should be crushed within four hours after picking, all our grapes are scheduled for delivery to the winery within three hours of picking.

Final Inspection

When grapes are delivered to any winery, a State Inspector is standing by to check the sugar content and physical defects.

But what is most unusual is that at Gallo we have the winemaker—the man responsible for that particular wine—also standing by to check on quality.

We know of no other winery that does this.

Even though other knowledgeable people have passed a particular load of grapes, if the winemaker for any reason feels that they are not perfectly suited for his wines, he can, and does, reject them.

This is typical of all our efforts to make fine wines. We can never do, or care, too much.

In fact, everyone at the Gallo Vineyards adheres to the credo that has always been our guide: our aim in winemaking is to bring you the finest, highest quality wines our long experience and skills can possibly produce.

Gallo Vineyards, Modesto, California

Technical Talk

By Julian D. Hirsch



● **EVALUATIONS—SUBJECTIVITY AND RFI:** My special thanks go to those readers who write to me, either to complain or to raise questions, since their letters are often the inspiration for one of these monthly columns. (Letters of praise are also welcome, of course, though they are apt to be more ego-inflating than inspirational!) As cases in point, I recently received two reader letters, completely different in their subject matter, which merit answers, although perhaps not to the extent of devoting a full column to either.

One correspondent complains that I do not include enough personal, subjective evaluation in my equipment reports. For example, he is not sure how I *really* felt about a certain product recently reviewed. As many of my readers know, there are several small audiophile publications that specialize in subjective reactions to equipment. Such publications are usually interesting reading for the sometimes idiosyncratic views expressed, but as guides to the objective (as opposed to subjective) properties of the components reviewed, they often leave much to be desired. Frequently a given product will inspire very different reactions in two or more reviewers, even within the same publication, which is a normal result of subjective criticism (consider music, motion picture, and book reviews, for example). A purely subjective reaction to an audio product tells a reader only what that particular reviewer thought of the product when he "heard" it in a given room, with certain associated equipment, at a particular time, and under particular conditions. Such an evaluation is bound to be highly personal and limited in scope. Only after a reader has learned to trust a reviewer—or at least to understand in what respects different reviewers are likely to agree or disagree—are the reviewer's reactions likely to provide real guidance.

Even with objective testing, there is always a possibility—actually, a certainty—of measurement discrepancies, and there are often differences between the various samples of a product tested by different reviewers. However, more often than not all competent test laboratories will come up with fairly similar measurement results on a given product.

To return to the reader whose letter inspired these remarks: he asks if I liked the product in question. Most regular readers have learned to interpret—or read between

the lines—of any particular reviewer's writings with surprising accuracy. This is satisfying to me, since I try not to make a big thing of my personal reactions.

Let me say that if I do *not* like some aspect of a product, it will be mentioned and explained. If in our judgment (mine and that of the technical department of STEREO REVIEW) the product fared really poorly in testing, it's likely that no report will be written. As a result, our test reports concentrate on those products that range from the okay to the excellent. To the superficial reader it may appear that everything "tests good." The truth is that everything reported on has tested at *least* "good," but some of it is "better," and some of it is "best." In every case we try to spell out the objective reasons for our reactions since, on certain matters of use and convenience, opinions may legitimately differ. In the reports I try to identify the subjective component in my reactions clearly. You may feel free to disagree with my feelings, tastes, and speculations, but my facts and test data I will defend vigorously if challenged.

I know that many people would like to read a much more detailed and comprehensive report; that is my preference also. However, it seems more desirable to report on at least five worthwhile products each month, in moderate detail, than to concentrate on fewer products in greater depth. As it is, we can cover only a small fraction of the many new products that appear over a year's time.

ANOTHER reader takes me to task for "ignoring" the susceptibility of a certain high-price preamplifier to radio-frequency interfer-

ence (RFI). He states correctly that our review of the product was quite laudatory, but that the review completely failed to mention that the product is an excellent detector of Citizens Band signals. Why, he wonders, do we not test products for their susceptibility to RF interference?

Those among my readers who have had experience with testing RFI susceptibility already know the answer to *that* question. Simply expressed, it is \$. Measurement of RFI is perhaps the most expensive type of environmental testing. I have had some professional experience in that field and can testify that it is completely beyond the means of any laboratory whose work does not require daily use of the RFI test facilities. The investment of perhaps \$100,000 or more in test facilities for a rather basic installation is only the tip of the iceberg, so to speak. When performed manually, by a skilled technician, a thorough RFI test can take an incredible amount of time, which could translate into a labor cost of some tens of thousands of dollars to evaluate a single product. Nowadays this can be automated and computer controlled, which moves the major cost from the labor column to the equipment-costs column (automatic test setups typically cost hundreds of thousands of dollars).

But, you say, we are only worried about the susceptibility of a product to the CB frequency region (27 MHz), and surely that would not cost so much? No, it wouldn't, but you would then have only a partial evaluation of the situation. Additional interference can come from commercial, broadcast, mobile, police, fire, and amateur stations, whose range of frequencies lies between about 500 kHz and 500 MHz. Regrettably, there is no "free lunch" in the RFI measurement business.

Well, then, if no one individual or publication can afford to test products for RFI susceptibility, why cannot the manufacturer design it to be as insensitive as possible to such interference? He certainly can and should—many do design their products to be reasonably immune to RFI from *legally* operated CB stations. But no manufacturer of products for the home would attempt a *complete* test of their susceptibility. Some calculated risk is unavoidable, since *complete* immunity to interference would result in unacceptably high equipment costs. (Continued on page 36)

Tested This Month

●
Nakamichi 630 Tuner Preamp
AMC 14 Speaker System
B&O 4400 Stereo FM Receiver
Hitachi HMA-8300 Power Amp
JVC KD-75 Cassette Deck

B-I-C VENTURI proudly announces two new speakers, and no big changes.

Twice in the past four years, B-I-C innovations have significantly changed loudspeakers.

In 1973, B-I-C applied the venturi principle to speaker design (U.S. Patent #3,892,288) and introduced B-I-C VENTURI™ Speaker Systems.

That ushered in the high-efficiency era, with many long-time leaders quickly attempting to follow our lead.

In 1976, B-I-C perfected a series of monitor and control functions that equipped speakers to make the entire system perform better, and introduced the System Monitor Speaker.

That gave the loudspeaker a new role in the stereo system, and the user the ability to purify his system's output.

Today, the changes we have to announce are significant in a different sense.

The new Formula 6 and Formula 3 models (on optional bases below) represent no major innovations. But they complete a line of speakers that has already established fundamental new principles of speaker design and performance. Principles that will endure for years to come.

The Formula 6 Spec II brings the number of Monitor Series Speakers to three, and fills a size

and system design position between the 5 and 7. And the new Formula 3 fills a similar slot between the 2 and 4.

Thus, whatever stage of upgrading a music system is in, there's a B-I-C VENTURI Formula to fill that need.

And there's a further significance, we think.

The astute audiophile is fully aware that, in the speaker business, technological exercises abound. And that many yield marginal improvements at very high cost.

At B-I-C, our approach is quite the opposite.

Rather than esoteric speaker designs for a few, our commitment is to fundamental speaker advancement for many. And that is why B-I-C VENTURI speakers remain way ahead without being way out.

For literature on all seven B-I-C VENTURI Formulas, write us at the address below.



B-I-C VENTURI SPEAKER SYSTEMS TOMORROW'S TECHNOLOGY TODAY

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CIRCLE NO. 12 ON READER SERVICE CARD

To return to the reader's question as to why I do not rate the RF susceptibility of audio products: first, I would like to note that I am an amateur radio operator, and thus legally can (and do) use far more transmitting power than any CB station is authorized to use. If I wished, I could make test transmissions and hear for myself how an audio component responded to a rather high RF-signal level. I do not do this for several reasons. For example, I would have no way of knowing the actual field strength to which the product was subjected,

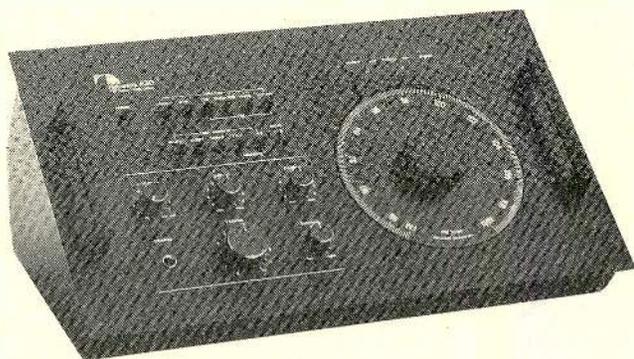
or how and where the interfering signal was getting in. There are literally endless possibilities, and, under the circumstances, it would be most unfair to downgrade a product if it did suffer from interference in a specific situation, or to praise it if it did not. Furthermore, RFI is more likely to be a *system* fault than the fault of any one component alone. To prove my point, I have been using the product my reader complained about for some time within a few hundred feet of several CB stations with no trouble.

I am quite sure that some form of government regulation will eventually be required to bring the situation under control, as happened in the case of radio-frequency radiation from the local oscillators of receivers of all types. There already are legal limitations to the power of transmissions of various categories. When and if some reasonable level of RFI immunity is mandated by law, the onus will be on the manufacturer to build *reasonably* interference-proof products, and that is as it should be.

Equipment Test Reports

By Hirsch-Houck Laboratories

Nakamichi 630 Stereo Tuner Preamplifier



THE Nakamichi 630 is one of the very limited number of FM tuner-preamplifier combinations available to the audiophile. It is styled to match Nakamichi's "600" line of deluxe components, with the same dimensions and flat black finish as the 600 cassette deck, the 610 control amplifier, and the 620 power amplifier. The 630 can be installed on a flat table or shelf, where its slanting panel will make it equally usable at either waist or eye level, or it can be mounted vertically in a special 16-inch component rack available from Nakamichi (the 600 series is not meant for installation in a standard 19-inch rack).

The Nakamichi 630's tuner has a distinctive circular dial plate, 5½ inches in diameter, that bears the frequency calibrations; it is turned by a concentric knob through a gear reduction system. A flywheel mechanism enables the dial plate to be spun from one end of the FM band to the other by a single twist of the knob. The dial is linearly calibrated with marks at 100-kHz intervals.

Instead of the usual tuning meters, the Nakamichi 630 has five tiny LED indicators in a row above the dial. The red center light glows only when a station is tuned correctly. On either side of it is a green LED with an arrow indicating the direction in which the dial should be turned for correct tuning. To the left of the tuning lights is a red LED to indicate stereo broadcasts, and to the right is a red light marked SIGNAL. This takes the place of a signal-strength meter; it glows faintly

when the signal strength is adequate for good reception and increases in brightness with signal strength. A soft green light illuminates the upper edge of the dial scale.

The FUNCTION and TAPE MONITOR switches, grouped at the upper left of the panel, are operated by small black buttons like those on the Nakamichi 600 cassette deck. There is a POWER button followed by PHONO, AUX, and FM selector buttons. The last is grouped with three more buttons for Dolby noise reduction (the unit has built-in Dolby circuits), interstation-noise muting, and a two-position i.f. bandwidth switch.

The five tape-monitor buttons connect the preamplifier circuits to the selected SOURCE or to the playback amplifier of TAPE 1 or TAPE 2 decks, and they cross-connect the two decks for dubbing from either one to the other. The last button, marked L + R, converts the 630 to mono operation.

The control knobs, below the function buttons, include bass and treble tone controls (eleven-position detented types), a balance control with a center detent, and a larger volume-control knob. The Nakamichi 630, instead of linking the loudness compensation to the volume-control setting, has a separate eleven-position contour switch. Fully clockwise (NORMAL), it gives a flat frequency response, and the volume is adjusted by the volume control. If the volume knob is set to give the loudest listening level one expects to use, the contour switch can be used to reduce the

volume and apply a bass and treble boost as it is turned counterclockwise. The last front-panel feature is a headphone jack, driven from its own amplifier, which is capable of supplying up to 300 milliwatts per channel to 8-ohm phones. Plugging in the phones disables the rear line outputs.

Carrying handles are located near the sides of the front panel. On the rear panel surface are the signal inputs and outputs, plus a three-position slide switch for setting the phono sensitivity to 1, 2, or 5 millivolts. The two switched a.c. outlets are rated to handle up to 350 watts. Above the rear panel is a sloping panel section on which is a complete functional block diagram of the tuner and preamplifier sections. Screw terminals are provided for a 300-ohm FM antenna and a coaxial terminal for a 75-ohm antenna.

The Nakamichi 630 is 16 inches wide, 6¾ inches high, and 9¼ inches deep; it weighs approximately 15½ pounds. The suggested list price is \$630, and an optional walnut-finish wooden cabinet is available for \$45.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** We tested the Nakamichi 630 FM tuner section using each position of the i.f. bandwidth switch. The differences—principally in channel separation, capture ratio, distortion, and selectivity—were readily measurable, but it was obvious that the 630 was a very fine performer in either mode.

With the narrow i.f. bandwidth the IHF sensitivity was 12 dBf or 2.1 microvolts (μ V) in mono and 17 dBf (4 μ V) in stereo. The 50-dB quieting sensitivity was 14.5 dBf (2.9 μ V) in mono and 37 dBf (40 μ V) in stereo. The ultimate signal-to-noise ratio (S/N) for a 65-dBf (1,000- μ V) input was 72.5 dB in mono and 66 dB in stereo; the stereo S/N was even greater at higher inputs. Distortion at 65 dBf was 0.1 per cent in mono and 0.13 per cent in stereo. The stereo distortion, with L-R modulation, was 0.39 per cent at 100 Hz, 0.095 per cent at 1,000 Hz, and 0.14 per cent at 6,000 Hz.

The FM frequency response was almost perfectly flat—within ± 1 dB from 30 to 15,000 Hz. The stereo channel separation exceeded 35 dB over most of that range, falling slightly

(Continued on page 41)

Credentials Like These Are Worth Reading



When you're buying speakers, you want to talk specs. And we don't blame you. In fact, we encourage it. Because when you invest your good money in a pair of speakers, you want more than just a pretty cabinet.

Consider the new Jensen Spectrums. These good sounds didn't just happen. They're the result of extensive engineering efforts and exhaustive testing. Testing that ranged from exacting measurements in laboratory "live" rooms and anechoic chambers to in-depth consumer surveys.

Examine our Spectrum Model 540. It's an excellent example of the superb specs you'll find throughout the Jensen Spectrum Series.

The Spectrum 540 is a 3-way, 4 element system that is so efficient it can be driven with as little as 10 watts continuous power. Its maximum power rating is 75 watts continuous.

The woofer is a 12" long-throw, high compliance design. Special acoustic suspension and infinite baffle enclosure give you extremely low distortion. And a high temperature voice coil affords high power handling. Magnet structure weight is a hefty 4½ lbs. with a Gap Flux Density of 10,000 Gauss.

Two 3½" cone midranges give excellent power handling and eliminate break-up in the critical midrange region. Tuned isolation chambers control response at the low end of the midrange spectrum. They also provide acoustic isolation in the cabinet between the midranges and the woofer. An edge damped rim suspension with specially treated molded cone offers sharp, clear, midrange reproduction.

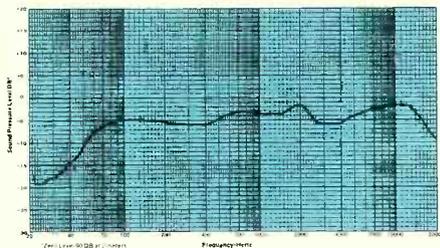
A 1½" Mylar® rear damped hemispherical dome tweeter offers a disper-

sion of 170°. Its large, lightweight voice coil gives high power handling, yet maintains a low mass for good high frequency reproduction.



Tweeter and midrange controls allow you to adjust your Spectrum System to room conditions and listening preferences; controls are front mounted for convenience, continuously variable, calibrated in db attenuation from a maximum, or flat, response.

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



About as flat as you can get... and that's good. The Frequency Response Range is an admirable 25 to 25,000 Hz.

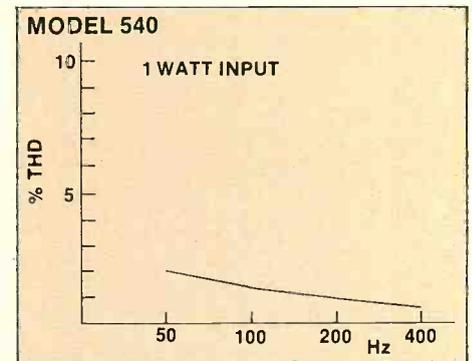
TONE BURSTS



"Blurring" and "Overshoot" are reduced to a minimum in this acid test of transient response. The Spectrum 540 re-

produces each waveform accurately with low distortion.

TOTAL HARMONIC DISTORTION



Distortion is kept to a minimum in Jensen Spectrum Speaker systems.

The cabinet is built with solid walnut front moldings and walnut veneer on wood composition panels. All walnut surfaces are hand rubbed for a rich luster and beauty. The baffle is finished in an attractive, durable black pebble grain.

In short, Jensen Spectrum speakers aren't designed to put out the most amount of bass or the most amount of treble. They're designed to put out the right amount. We consider them to be the best speakers we've produced in 50 years. Simply because when it comes to sound reproduction, they're extraordinarily accurate. And that's what specs are all about.

For further information and name of your nearest authorized Spectrum Dealer, write to: Jensen Sound Laboratories, Dept. SR-1074136 United Parkway, Schiller Park, Illinois 60176.

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SOUND LABORATORIES

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cassette deck.*



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STOP

PLAY

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The Master Series.TM
A Scotch[®] cassette for every
switch position.

Three totally different tapes. Each developed to deliver the truest, clearest sound possible at each tape selector switch position.

Our Master I cassette is for normal bias recording. It features an excellent dynamic range, low distortion, uniform high frequency sensitivity and output that's 10 dB more than standard tapes.

Our new Master II replaces chrome cassettes and is designed for use on hi-fi stereo systems with chrome bias (70 microsecond equalization). It features some spectacular performance characteristics, including a special coating that gives it a 3 dB better signal-to-noise ratio at low and high frequencies than chrome cassettes, yet it's less abrasive.

Our new Master III is for the ferri-chrome setting. It's formulated with the most advanced technology available, giving a 3 dB output improvement at low frequencies and 2 dB at high frequency. And the unique dual layer construction increases both low and high frequency sensitivity over chromium dioxide and ferric oxides.

All this, plus unique inner workings you can actually see. Our new Master line has a special bonus feature. A precision molded clear shell that allows you to monitor the inner workings of the cassettes. You can actually see the recorder head penetration and the unique roller guides in action. Look closely at the transparent shell and you'll see the water wheels which were specially designed to move the tape evenly across the head, reducing friction and noise. And two radially creased shims insure smoother wind, improved mechanical reliability and reduced wow and flutter.

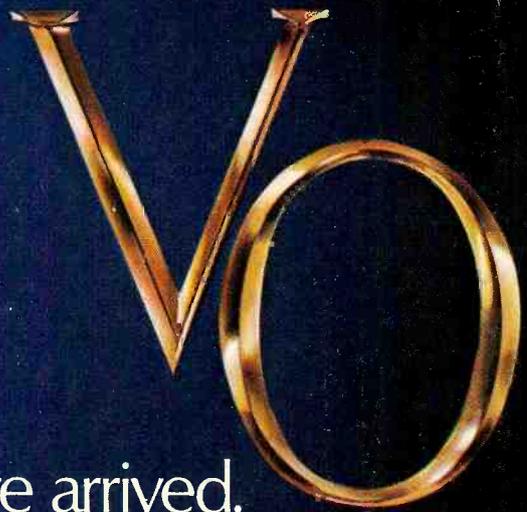
Enough said. Now it's time for you to take the true test. Match up the right Master cassette with the bias you prefer. Then just listen.

You'll find that whichever switch position you use, a Scotch[®] Master is the way to get the most out of it.

Scotch[®] Recording Tape.
The truth comes out.



There are signs that tell you where to go
and how to go.

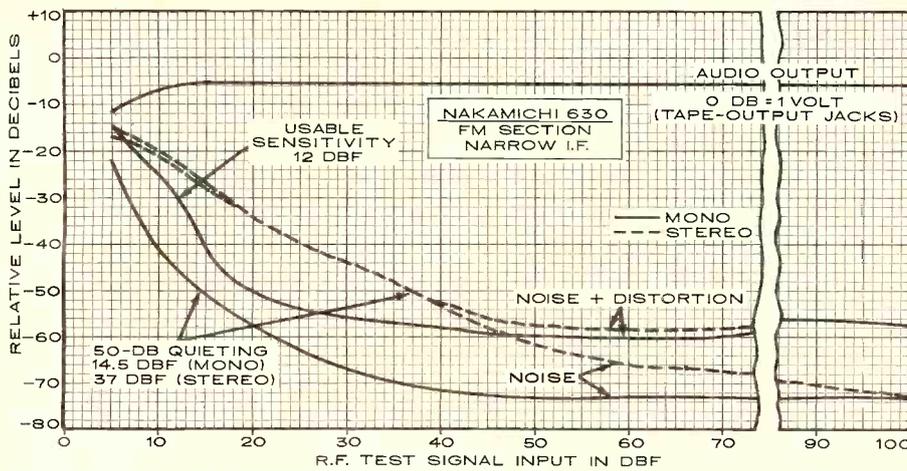


This sign tells you that you've arrived.

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Bottled in Canada. Preferred throughout the world.

CANADIAN WHISKY. A BLEND OF CANADA'S FINEST WHISKIES. 6 YEARS OLD. 86.8 PROOF. SEAGRAM DISTILLERS CO., N.Y.C.



to 31.5 dB at 30 Hz and 28 dB at 15,000 Hz.

The capture ratio was about 1.3 to 1.4 dB, and AM rejection was a good 65 dB at 45 dBf (100 μ V) and 72 dB at a 65-dBf input. The image rejection was a superb 107.5 dB, which is just at the limits of our measurement capability. The alternate-channel selectivity was a very good 75.3 dB, and adjacent-channel selectivity was 8.9 dB. The muting threshold was 23.5 dBf (8 μ V) and the stereo switching threshold was 9.5 dBf (1.6 μ V). Despite the almost perfectly flat frequency response, the multiplex filter of the 630 reduced the 19-kHz pilot carrier leakage to an almost unmeasurable -80 dB. The hum level was -71 dB.

Any FM tuner with the performance just described is clearly one to be reckoned with. In any practical sense, it is difficult to imagine what improvements would be possible. Nevertheless, implicit in the wide i.f. bandwidth mode is a further improvement in performance, and the Nakamichi 630 did not disappoint us.

There was negligible change in sensitivity and ultimate S/N. The distortion was considerably lower, however, measuring 0.064 per cent in mono and 0.1 per cent in stereo for a 65-dBf input. The stereo distortion with an out-of-phase (L-R) signal was now only 0.13 per cent at 100 Hz and 0.063 per cent at 1,000 and 6,000 Hz.

The capture ratio, which is one of the parameters directly linked to i.f. bandwidth, was improved to a nearly unmeasurable 0.9 dB at 65 dBf, but AM rejection was not changed significantly. As would be expected,

the selectivity was reduced, with an alternate-channel measurement of 41 dB and an adjacent-channel figure of 5.4 dB. But the stereo channel separation now measured between 40 and 46 dB over almost the entire audio range, falling to 33 dB at 30 Hz and 32 dB at 15,000 Hz.

The preamplifier section of the Nakamichi 630 delivered 6.2 volts output to high-impedance (50,000 ohms) loads at the clipping point, and 2.65 volts to 500-ohm loads. The headphone-jack output, with an 8-ohm load, was 2.5 volts or 0.78 watt at the clipping point. Not only is this more than adequate for any low- or high-impedance dynamic headphone, but it could actually drive a fairly efficient speaker to a listenable volume.

The input required to develop a 1-volt output was 95 millivolts through the AUX input, and the phono sensitivity was 1.35, 2.6, or 6.5 millivolts, depending on the setting of the sensitivity switch. The S/N was 78 dB (AUX inputs) and 62 dB (phono inputs). The latter overloaded at 82, 160, or 400 millivolts, again depending on the sensitivity-switch setting.

Distortion was virtually unmeasurable. The distortion with a 1,000-Hz test signal was less than 0.003 per cent up to a 1-volt output, 0.005 per cent at 3 volts, and 0.013 per cent at 6 volts just before clipping occurred. At a fixed 2-volt output, the distortion was less than 0.01 per cent from 30 to 20,000 Hz and typically 0.005 per cent or less over much of that range. Intermodulation distortion was 0.007 per cent for a 1-volt output, rising gradually to 0.038 per cent at 6 volts.

The tone controls had a sliding bass-turn-over-frequency characteristic, shifting from about 50 Hz at low settings to almost 200 Hz as the control was advanced. The treble curves were hinged at about 5,000 Hz. The phono equalization was extremely accurate, varying less than ± 0.5 dB from the RIAA characteristic extended over the full 20- to 20,000-Hz range. Measured through the inductance of phono cartridges, the phono response changed less than 1 dB up to 15,000 Hz, but it rose at higher frequencies to about +3 dB at 20,000 Hz.

The contour switch introduced increasing amounts of bass boost at its lower settings, together with a fixed treble boost below about -20 dB. Overall, the control provides a volume range of about 32 dB at mid frequencies.

Comment. The Nakamichi 630 clearly behaved as a first-rate tuner preamplifier. Even in its narrow i.f. mode it outperformed most FM tuners we have tested, to say nothing of being superior to most FM stations in its key parameters. In the wide mode the 630 rivaled most of the "super tuners" we have seen. The preamplifier was also impressively smooth and quiet in its operation. Although our measurements of S/N through the phono inputs do not appear to be unusually good, the subjective effect of the noise was much less than the unweighted measurement we made would suggest.

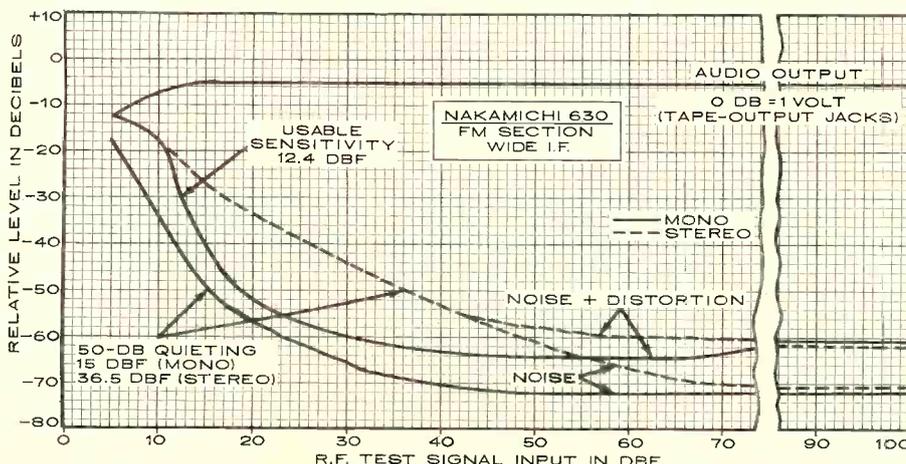
We would not expect the 630 to sound much different from any other tuner. Since almost any component-grade tuner is far superior to any broadcast material in its frequency response, distortion, and noise characteristics, the ultimate sound is determined by factors outside the tuner itself, and this was the case with the Nakamichi 630. However, its control facilities are very different from others, and we suspect that most people will be impressed very strongly by them—either favorably or unfavorably.

The tuning is silky smooth and completely free of backlash, and the calibration intervals of 100 kHz make even the slightest calibration error plainly visible. On our sample we noted that our favorite stations appeared slightly off the expected dial settings. However, the actual tuning error never exceeded 100 kHz and was usually within 50 kHz, which places the Nakamichi 630 at the head of the family of non-digital tuners in this respect. With more conventional tuners the physical width of the dial pointer is equivalent to more than 200 kHz, which renders small errors in calibration almost invisible.

The 630's muting was absolutely perfect.

The audio remained dead silent until the red tuning light came on, at which time the signal was restored with a softness and lack of transient noises that was almost uncanny. The Dolby system worked well on the few Dolby-equipped stations in our area. However, we were less enthusiastic about the tuning-indicator system (the sequence of lights that glow as one tunes the dial). With a conventional tuning meter there is a constant feedback from the eye to the hand as one nears the channel center, so that one can stop at the exact center without a series of approximations. The Nakamichi system gives no warning that the lights are going to change, and typically the red channel-center light glows only within a band of approximately ± 25 kHz from the channel center, requiring very slow tuning. Nakamichi points out that this system obliges

(Continued overleaf)



the user to tune painstakingly, and we would certainly agree.

We also found the use of a LED as a signal-strength indicator to be less than ideal. In the 630, this light does not begin to glow until the signal strength reaches some 50 dBf (150 to 200 μ V), and even then it can be seen only in a dimly lit room. It does get brighter as the signal strength increases, but several thousand microvolts are needed to make it as bright as the other LED's and thus visible in a fully lit room. The black pushbuttons against the black panel created another visibility problem for us. There is no visual contrast, and it is often necessary to run one's fingers across the

buttons to determine their settings, particularly if the light is poor.

Finally, we were somewhat surprised by the 350-watt rating of the switched a.c. outlets. Most of the powerful amplifiers with which this unit would be used draw more power than that (the Nakamichi 620 power amplifier is an exception, of course), and presumably could not be switched by it. We used the 630 with 200-watt-per-channel amplifiers without mishap, but the ratings of the switch were being exceeded by a sizable amount.

As a preamplifier, the 630 sounded first-rate, and the contour control proved very listenable because the degree of its effect could

be adjusted independently of the volume-control setting. All in all, Nakamichi deserves great credit for the tasteful styling and superb construction of this unit and for the literally state-of-the-art performance achieved in so many respects. If we take exception to some of the "human engineering" aspects of the design, this is a personal reaction that will not be shared by everyone. Certainly it does not blind us to the innovations Nakamichi has brought to the design of this product, nor to the thoughtfulness and care that have very obviously been lavished on it throughout. A fine job.

Circle 105 on reader service card

AMC Model 14 Speaker System



THE AMC Model 14 speaker system, manufactured by American Monitor Company, is a three-way, floor-standing system in the columnar format. It measures 37½ inches high, 14½ inches wide, and 12½ inches deep; it weighs 65 pounds. The front and sides of the column are covered by a removable brown grille cloth, and slabs of walnut-veneered wood form its top and bottom.

The 12-inch woofer is located near the bottom of the front panel, with a small (1 by 3½ inches) port just below it. Near the top of the

panel are the 4½-inch mid-range driver and the 2-inch cone tweeter. A foam-plastic ring surrounds the tweeter, presumably for damping purposes. Crossover frequencies are 1,500 and 7,500 Hz, and the system has a nominal impedance of 8 ohms.

Recessed into the rear of the cabinet are the binding-post terminals, separate continuously adjustable level controls for the mid-range and high-frequency drivers, and a reset button for the protective circuit breaker. Amplifier power in the range of 10 to 60 watts per

channel is suggested for the Model 14. Price: \$295.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** Initially, we measured the frequency response of the AMC 14 with its controls set to their mid positions, but, since it was evident that their maximum settings gave the flattest results, the test was repeated with those settings.

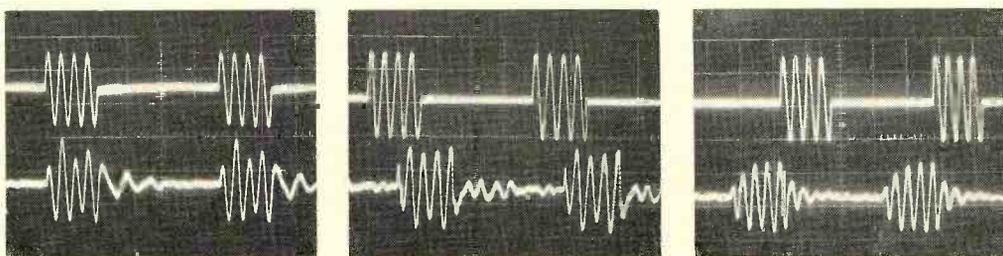
The close-miked response curve for the woofer showed a maximum output at 65 Hz, dropping off at lower and higher frequencies and with some irregularity in the 150- to 200-Hz region. The contribution of the port to the total output was limited to frequencies below 50 Hz.

When the woofer curve was spliced to the integrated room-response curve for higher frequencies, the salient features of the speaker's overall response were moderate peaks at 65, 200, and 2,200 Hz and depressed output between 300 and 2,000 Hz. Above 3,000 Hz the response was exceptionally flat all the way to our upper measurement limit of 15,000 Hz. The overall response was within ± 5.5 dB from 20 to 15,000 Hz. The mid-range level control affected the output at frequencies above 1,500 Hz, with a total range of about 4 dB. The high-frequency control took effect only above 5,000 Hz and had a maximum range of 5 to 10 dB.

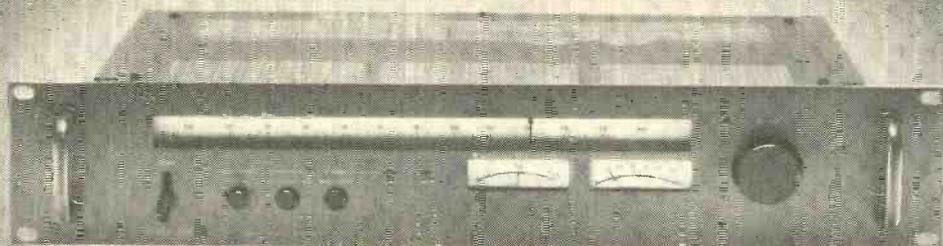
The bass distortion was low down to 50 Hz, where it measured 1 per cent at a 1-watt input and 1.8 per cent at a 10-watt input. At lower frequencies the distortion increased rapidly, with the 30-Hz level being 5.6 per cent at 1

(Continued on page 44)

Tone-burst response of the AMC 14 speaker system at (left to right) 100, 1,500, and 6,000 Hz. The input signal appears above the speaker's output in each case.



Introducing the Technics ST-9030 tuner. Purists would feel better if it cost over \$1,000.



To some, tuners that offer 0.08% THD, 50 dB stereo separation, a capture ratio of 0.3 dB and waveform fidelity should demand a price tag of over \$1,000. But with the ST-9030 this performance can be yours for under \$400*.

That's quite a fact for a tuner. But then the ST-9030 is quite a tuner. It has two completely independent IF circuits: A narrow band, for ultra-sharp selectivity. And a wide band, for ultra-high separation and ultra-low distortion. It even selects the right band, depending on reception conditions, automatically.

Both bands give you the same extended flat frequency response. Because, unlike conventional tuners, the ST-9030 utilizes an electronic pilot cancel circuit that cuts the pilot signal, without cutting any of the high end. It's ingenious. And a Technics innovation.

The Technics ST-9030 has one of the quietest, most sensitive front ends of any tuner. With an advanced linear frequency 8-ganged tuning capacitor and 3 double-tuned circuits, plus dual gate MOS

FETs in the 2-stage RF amplifier and balanced mixer circuit. What's more, there's a servo tuning circuit that locks into the tuned frequency, regardless of minor fluctuations. The result: Negligible drift distortion and maximum stereo separation.

Technics ST-9030. Compare specifications. Compare prices. And you'll realize there's really no comparison.

THD (stereo): Wide—0.08% (1kHz). Narrow—0.3% (1kHz). S/N: 80 dB. FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 20Hz—18 kHz \pm 0.1, \pm 0.5 dB. SELECTIVITY: Wide—25 dB. Narrow—90 dB. CAPTURE RATIO: Wide—0.3 dB. Narrow—2.0 dB. IF, IMAGE and SPURIOUS RESPONSE REJECTIONS (98 mHz): 135 dB. AM SUPPRESSION (wide): 53 dB. STEREO SEPARATION (1 kHz): Wide—50 dB. Narrow—40 dB. CARRIER LEAK: Variable — 65 dB (19 kHz). Fixed — 70 dB (19 kHz—33 kHz). SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$399.95*

Technics ST-9030. A rare combination of audio technology. A new standard of audio excellence.

*Technics recommended price, but actual retail price will be set by dealers.

Technics Professional Series
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watt and 13 per cent at 10 watts. The speaker impedance was unusually uniform, remaining between 8 and 15 ohms from 20 to 20,000 Hz except for the bass resonance rise to 35 ohms at 60 Hz. The tone-burst response of the AMC 14 was fair, with no major ringing, although the burst shape was visibly modified at most frequencies.

The efficiency of the Model 14 was relatively high. When driven at a 1-watt level by an octave of random noise centered at 1,000 Hz, the speaker produced a sound-pressure level of 92.5 dB at a 1-meter distance.

● **Comment.** The simulated live-vs.-recorded test confirmed that the high frequencies were

reproduced very accurately, with only a trace of dulling at the extreme top end (wire brushes on cymbals and similar sounds). In our experience, a speaker must have a slightly rising on-axis response above 10,000 Hz in order to reproduce these sounds faithfully in a normally absorbent listening room (the AMC 14's response is almost perfectly flat in that range).

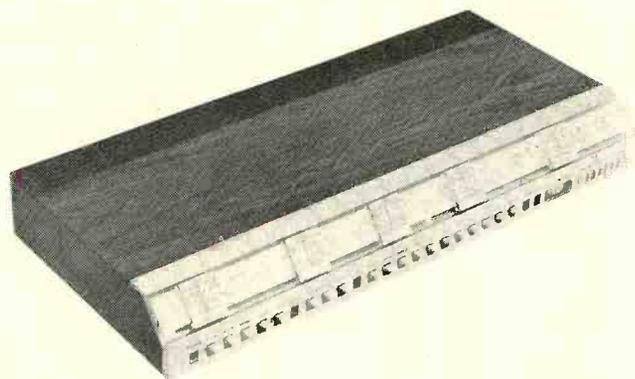
The response bumps in the bass and lower mid-range gave a slight heaviness to male voices, and we noted a trace of "boxiness" in the mid-range, which we assume to be the result of the depressed output in that frequency band. All of these effects, it should be noted, were detected only in a side-by-side compari-

son with the live sound that the speaker was attempting to copy.

In ordinary listening to records or FM radio the sound of the Model 14 was excellent. Comparing it to some other speakers of similar size and price, we heard (as is always the case) differences in tonal color, but these were not of a magnitude that would rank one speaker "better" than another. Individual preferences will play a major part in determining one's response to this speaker—or any other. To us, the AMC 14 sounded a trifle bright in the upper mids, and we feel that for balanced deep-bass output it should be placed against a wall or in a corner.

Circle 106 on reader service card

B&O 4400 Stereo FM Receiver



BANG & Olufsen's distinctive approach to product design and styling is nowhere better illustrated than in the new Beomaster 4400 stereo FM receiver. The top-of-the-line 4400 is a low-silhouette design measuring a mere 3¾ inches high. Its 10¾-inch depth and 22¾-inch width make it equally suitable for shelf or table mounting, and its weight of 22 pounds will not place undue strain on either type of support.

The Beomaster 4400 is a "knobless" receiver, with five horizontal slider controls across the upper portion of its panel and no fewer than nineteen lever switches in a single row below them. Each slider has a clear-plastic setting indicator whose vertical reference line gives it the appearance of a slide-rule cursor. The three center sliders (BASS, TREBLE, and BALANCE) are adjusted directly by hand, while the two outer controls (VOLUME and TUNING) also have small knurled vernier wheels for finer adjustment. The reference scales for the controls are marked in black on the rearward-sloping upper front-panel section. The FM calibrations are linearly spaced from 88 to 108 MHz, with marks at 0.5-MHz intervals.

At the left of the bottom row of controls is the headphone jack, followed by two speaker selectors (an alternate set of outputs for the second pair of speakers drives them with out-of-phase information for simulated quadraphony). The MONO switch parallels the two channels, and LINEAR bypasses all tone con-

trols, filters, and loudness compensation (the latter is applied by a switch marked LOUDN).

A red O.LOAD (overload) light flashes when the amplifiers are overdriven (even momentarily) into distortion. The LO and HI FILTER switches are followed by the TAPE 1 monitor switch and a red pilot light that glows when the receiver is on. Following it is an OFF switch; pressing any of the input selector levers turns the receiver on automatically. These inputs are chosen by the next nine switches: PHONO, TAPE 2, FM, and six preset FM channels identified as P1 through P6. A final switch, marked AFC ST, has nothing to do with stereo: ST means "silent tuning," more commonly known as interstation-noise muting. The AFC is activated simultaneously with the muting function.

Two red lights serve as FM center-of-channel tuning indicators, with arrows showing which way the tuning control must be moved to turn on both lights with equal brightness, signifying correct tuning. A small edge-mounted meter shows relative signal strengths, and a red STEREO light appears above it. Behind a removable plastic cover at the right of the panel are six small thumbwheels that determine the frequencies selected by the corresponding station presets. The wheels are calibrated to show the approximate portion of the FM band to which each is set.

The B&O 4400 comes in a handsome teak-finish wooden cabinet with ventilating slots

over the output transistor heat sinks extending from the rear of the chassis. European DIN connectors are used for almost all the inputs and outputs, including antenna, tape recorders, and speakers. However, the tape connections are duplicated in standard phono jacks, which are also used for the phono inputs. Mating plugs (with solderless connections) are supplied for all the DIN sockets. A "rabbit ears" FM antenna, which plugs into the rear of the receiver, is furnished for use in strong signal areas.

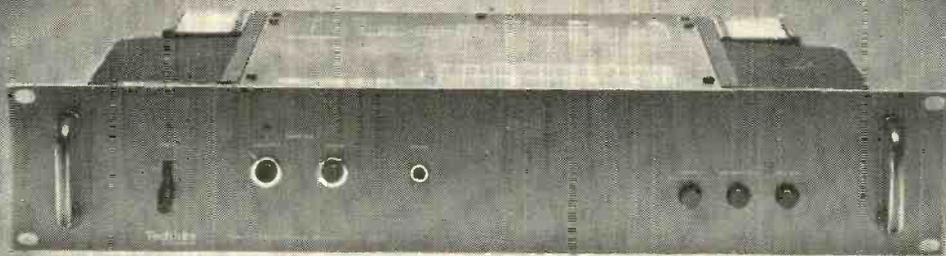
The B&O 4400 is rated to deliver 70 watts per channel to 4-ohm loads between 20 and 20,000 Hz with less than 0.1 per cent total harmonic distortion. It does not carry any 8-ohm rating, but one would expect the 8-ohm performance to be similar, though with a somewhat reduced power-output capability.

B&O has published an informative and interesting booklet explaining the rationale for the design of the 4400. For example, the phono-overload level has been set to 80 millivolts, which is considered to be appropriate for any high-quality phono cartridge and record, since a higher signal-handling ability would degrade the signal-to-noise ratio of the phono preamplifier. The frequency response is rolled off above 20,000 Hz ahead of the power amplifier to prevent transient-intermodulation distortion under any conditions. Although two tape decks can be connected to—and controlled by—the 4400, the TAPE 2 circuit does not provide for monitoring off the tape (it is meant to be used for a cassette recorder or as an auxiliary high-level input). The filters have 12-dB-per-octave slopes, with cut-off frequencies of 60 and 7,000 Hz.

It is in the tuner section that the 4400 departs most noticeably from the typical stereo receivers sold in this country. B&O engineers have not tried to make the 4400 a super-sensitive receiver; as they say, it is not meant for DX reception. The rated usable sensitivity of 18 dBf in mono and 27 dBf in stereo is about 8 to 10 dB less than the figures for most high-quality receivers. Similarly, the signal-to-noise ratings of the receiver are low by current standards: 63 and 62 dB for mono and stereo, respectively. Also specified is a 4-dB capture ratio and an FM distortion rating of

(Continued on page 46)

There are few DC amplifiers in the world
with THD as low as 0.02%.
But there's only one priced under \$400.



Introducing the Technics SE-9060 stereo/mono DC amplifier. Its concept is simple: amplification with inaudible distortion.

How Technics achieved this elusive goal is not quite so simple. Like the difference our newly developed dual FETs make in the current mirror-load differential amplifier. They enable the SE-9060 to achieve the DC stability necessary for the highest gain in the crucial first stage.

Another difference is the constant current load and current feedback used in the voltage amplifier to reduce distortion to a minimum. A minimum so low it is barely detectable with the most advanced measuring equipment.

But inaudible distortion was not the engineers' only goal. That's why Technics SE-9060 is a DC amplifier. Each amp section and the NFB loop is direct coupled without the use of any capacitors. So the SE-9060 not only has inaudible distortion, it also

boasts flat frequency response from DC to 100 kHz with almost nonexistent phase shift.

In addition to all the improvements in the amplifier stages, Technics also eliminated all signs of transient distortion with completely independent power supplies for each channel.

Compare specifications and prices. And you'll realize there's no comparison for the SE-9060.

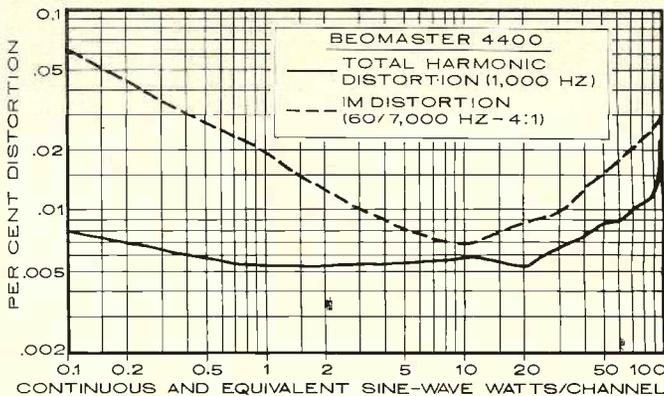
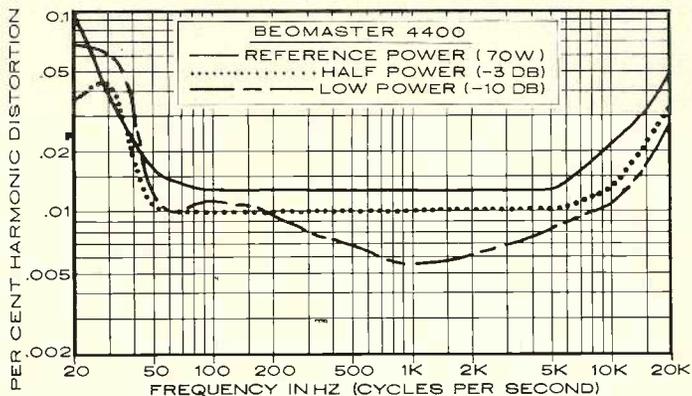
POWER OUTPUT: 70 watts per channel (stereo), 130 watts (mono) min. RMS into 8 ohms from 20 Hz to 20 kHz with no more than 0.02% THD. INTERMODULATION DISTORTION (60 Hz, 7 kHz, 4:1): 0.02%. FREQUENCY RESPONSE: DC-100 kHz, +0 dB, -1 dB. POWER BANDWIDTH: 5 Hz-50 kHz, -3 dB. S/N: 120 dB (IHF A). RESIDUAL HUM & NOISE: 100 μ V. INPUT SENSITIVITY & IMPEDANCE: 1 V/47k Ω . SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$399.95.*

Technics SE-9060. A rare combination of audio technology. A new standard of audio excellence.

*Technics recommended price, but actual retail price will be set by dealers.

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0.7 per cent, in mono or stereo, at 1,000 Hz.

B&O points out that these are "worst-case" specifications, which should be surpassed by any production unit. Price of the Model 4400: \$695.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** When the receiver was operated at one-third of its rated 70 watts output into 4 ohms for one hour, its heat sinks became very hot to the touch. In normal use, they remained completely cool, however. The outputs clipped at about 90 watts into 4 ohms, 58 watts into 8 ohms, and 33 watts into 16 ohms with both channels driven at 1,000 Hz.

The total harmonic distortion (THD) of the receiver at 1,000 Hz was between 0.005 and 0.006 per cent at most power outputs up to 25 watts, reaching 0.01 per cent at the rated 70 watts and 0.02 per cent at 100 watts. The intermodulation distortion, starting at 0.06 per cent for a 0.1-watt output, dropped to 0.007 per cent at 10 watts and rose to 0.021 per cent at 70 watts and 0.031 per cent at 100 watts.

At rated power, the distortion was a constant 0.013 per cent from about 80 to 6,000 Hz, rising to 0.09 per cent at 20 Hz and 0.045 per cent at 20,000 Hz. It was somewhat lower at reduced outputs.

A high-level input of 78 millivolts drove the amplifier to a 10-watt output with a 72.5-dB signal-to-noise ratio (S/N). The phono sensitivity was 0.7 millivolt for a 10-watt output, and its 79-dB S/N was one of the best we have ever measured through a low-level input. The phono stage overloaded at 90 millivolts input.

The tone controls provided a maximum range of ± 12 dB, which is more than adequate and yet not likely to result in overload of

amplifier or speaker if used carelessly. The bass turnover frequency shifted between 100 and 250 Hz and the treble between 2,000 and 4,000 Hz as the controls were varied. The mid-range between 300 and 2,000 Hz was essentially unaffected by the tone controls.

The loudness compensation was very moderate, boosting both low and high frequencies at very low volume-control settings. The -3-dB response frequencies of the filters were 70 and 5,000 Hz, with the rated 12-dB-per-octave slopes. The RIAA phono equalization was well within the ± 0.25 -dB resolution of our test instruments from 35 to 20,000 Hz. The phono preamplifier has a fixed subsonic filter; it reduced the response by only 1 dB at 28 Hz and by 3 dB at 20 Hz. The phono equalization was virtually unaffected by cartridge inductance, varying less than 0.5 dB up to 17,000 Hz and falling 1 dB at 20,000 Hz.

The FM tuner sensitivity, as its rating suggests, was modest by modern standards. The usable sensitivity was 20 dBf (5.5 microvolts, or μ V) in mono and 31 dBf (20 μ V) in stereo, the latter being the factory setting of the muting and stereo-switching threshold, which is adjustable through a hole in the bottom of the receiver. In view of the receiver's sensitivity, we felt that the threshold level had been well chosen.

The input necessary for 50 dB of quieting was 21.5 dBf (6.6 μ V) in mono with 2 per cent THD. In stereo it was 46.5 dBf (115 μ V) with 0.53 per cent THD. The tuner distortion for a 65-dBf (1,000 μ V) input was 0.41 per cent in mono and 0.44 per cent in stereo. The stereo distortion continued to decrease as the signal level was increased, reaching its minimum of 0.2 per cent at the generator's maximum out-

put of 95 dBf (30,000 μ V). The FM S/N performance was considerably better than rated, measuring 73 dB in mono and 66.5 dB in stereo (the latter also improved at higher inputs, to 71 dB at 85 dBf and higher).

The stereo harmonic distortion with out-of-phase (L - R) modulation was 0.8 per cent at 100 Hz, 0.32 per cent at 1,000 Hz, and a very low 0.056 per cent at 6,000 Hz. The pilot carrier leakage was a low -70 dB in spite of the fact that the FM frequency response was virtually ruler-flat (± 0.3 dB) from 30 to 15,000 Hz. The tuner's hum level was -75 dB.

Stereo channel separation was about 43.5 dB in the mid-range and 30 dB at the frequency extremes. The measured capture ratio of 2.2 dB was much better than the 4-dB rating. Similarly, AM rejection (rated 50 dB) was 60 to 80 dB, depending on signal level. Image rejection was a good 72 dB, and the selectivity was considerably better than rated, measuring 65.6 dB for alternate-channel spacing and 9.5 dB for adjacent channels.

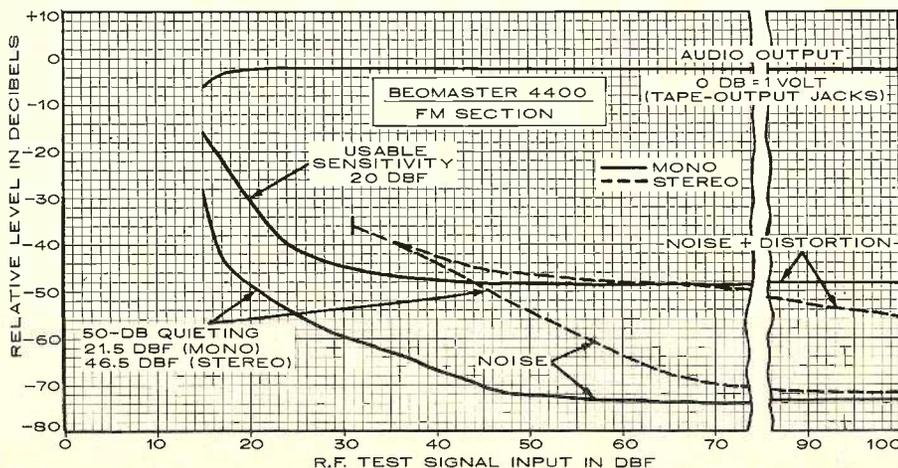
● **Comment.** Our tests of the B&O 4400 show that it has been rated for the most part with exceptional conservatism. Its tuner section should be adequate for most listener locations, and one need have no reservations about the amplifier. Though not a powerhouse by contemporary standards, it is a first-rate performer.

The handling characteristics of the receiver were excellent, in spite of the highly unconventional control layout. The tuning was noise-free, whether done manually or by the preset controls. The tuning lights are a sensitive indicator of center-of-channel tuning, although we found that minimum distortion did not correspond with equal light intensity (this situation is not uncommon, and the error was not serious). However, in our sample, the AFC shifted the correct tuning point on the manual and the preset tuning sufficiently to require retuning each time the receiver was turned off and then on again.

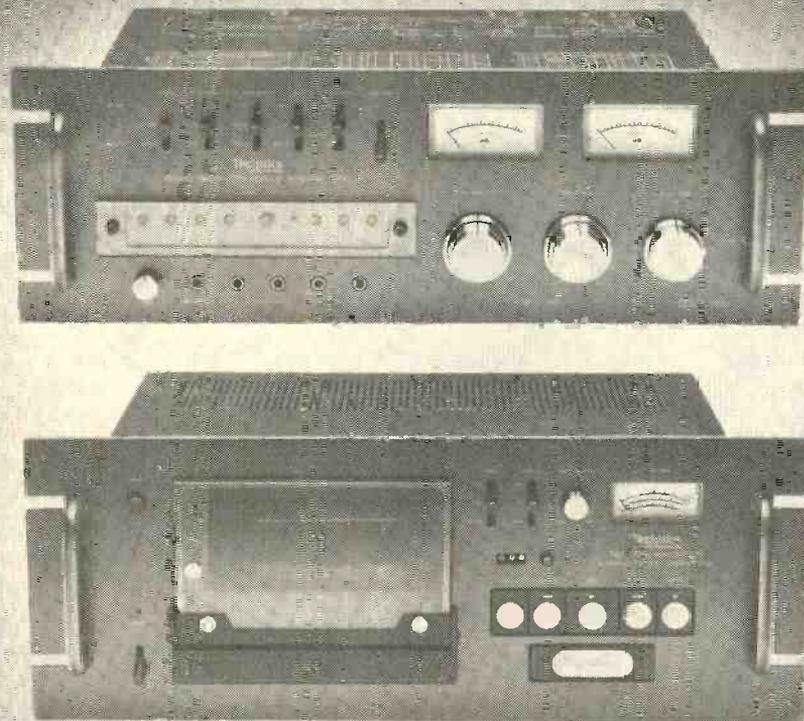
The thumbwheel tuning controls for the preset stations are clumsy to set (it is difficult to move them in the required small increments without disturbing the settings of the adjacent controls), and the only way to tell what station has been set with them is to compare it to the same program you have tuned in manually.

The "bottom line" in this evaluation has to be a judgment of the suitability of the 4400 for meeting the needs of the American audiophile. Although this tuner is about 10 dB less sensitive than most, with a good external antenna, and in most urban and suburban loca-

(Continued on page 48)



Technics designed the RS-9900US in two components for one reason: To outperform all other cassette decks.



That's why, unlike other cassette decks, the Technics RS-9900US is a "cassette system." The world's first separation of a cassette deck into independent transport and amplifier units.

The result is cassette performance that truly epitomizes contemporary cassette technology. And surpasses a number of today's open reel decks in significant areas of performance.

With features in the transport unit like a closed loop, double-capstan, 3-motor drive. A 3-head system. Pitch control variable by 10%. And full IC logic control of all transport functions for absolute freedom and tape safety in switching modes.

With circuit technology in the amplifier unit like a separate direct-coupled record amplifier. DC reproduce amplifier. Headphone amplifier. Four independent Dolby* processors. Complete with separate calibration for record and playback. Continuously variable adjustment of bias and equalization. Head azimuth adjustment. And internal 400 Hz and 8 kHz test signals.

Technics RS-9900US. You've compared features. Now compare specifications. Overall, you'll realize there's no comparison.

TRACK SYSTEM: 4-track, 2-channel record and playback. 3 MOTORS: 1 direct-drive DC brushless capstan motor. 2 DC coreless motors for reel table drive. 3 HEADS: 2 HPF heads for record/playback. 1 ferrite head for erase. FREQUENCY RESPONSE (C/O₂): 25-20,000 Hz (± 3 dB). WOW AND FLUTTER: 0.04% WRMS. S/N RATIO (Dolby): 67 dB. HARMONIC DISTORTION: 1.4% (160 nWb/m 333Hz). SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$1,500†

Technics RS-9900US. A rare combination of audio technology. A new standard of audio excellence.

*Dolby is a trademark of Dolby Laboratories, Inc.

†Technics recommended price, but actual retail price will be set by dealers.

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tions, one could probably not fault the FM performance of the 4400. Its sound is first-rate when it receives a signal of 65 dB or greater strength. On the other hand, the "rabbit ears" antenna furnished with it (or a simple indoor folded dipole) is likely to be unsatisfactory (it was in our relatively crowded reception area). A signal weaker than about 31 dBf (20 μ V)

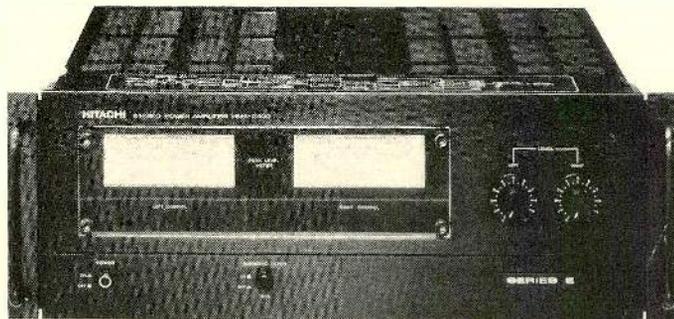
will not even operate the tuning lights, much less produce a usable output. A good antenna is recommended in weak-signal areas.

As B&O puts it, the 4400 is not a DX-er's receiver; it is for a high-fidelity enthusiast fortunate enough to live in a reasonably strong signal area. Within those constraints, it sounds as good as any receiver we know of. If

the 4400 seems to be noncompetitive on a watt- or dBf-per-dollar basis, we suggest that the completely unique styling and operating features of the receiver be given careful attention. There is nothing else quite like the B&O 4400, and this exclusivity has its price as well as its benefits.

Circle 107 on reader service card

Hitachi HMA-8300 Stereo Power Amplifier



LAST year, Hitachi announced the development of a new high-efficiency power amplifier circuit that was variously referred to as Class-G or "Series E." A stereo receiver using the new circuit was the first Class-G product. Now the Hitachi line has been expanded to include a high-power basic amplifier, the HMA-8300.

In effect, the Class-G circuit "stacks" two sets of output transistors one above the other (electrically speaking) so that only one pair operates (working from a relatively low-voltage power supply) at most listening levels. Above a predetermined instantaneous output voltage the first pair of transistors saturates (making them behave like resistors rather than like amplifying devices), and the second pair of transistors, which operates from a separate, higher-voltage power supply, takes over the task of supplying a signal voltage to the load.

By selecting the appropriate transfer point between the two pairs of transistors, Hitachi engineers are able to operate each section of the circuit in its most efficient mode. Since an audio amplifier usually delivers its full power only in brief bursts, the high-level transistors will be "on" only occasionally, and their heat sinks and power supply can therefore be made relatively light and inexpensive. However, since the high-level transistors do contribute to the amplifier's output, the low-level components can also be less bulky and expensive than would be required for a conventional amplifier of the same power rating.

The Hitachi HMA-8300 is rated to deliver 200 watts per channel continuous to 8-ohm loads, from 20 to 20,000 Hz, with less than 0.1 per cent total harmonic distortion. It is a very substantial amplifier, measuring 17 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches wide, 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches high, and 16 inches deep; it weighs some 53 pounds. The amplifier is finished in flat black. The front panel is dominated by two large peak-reading illuminated power meters with relatively slow decay

times; their logarithmic scales are calibrated (based on 8-ohm loads) from 0.1 watt to 600 watts (!). The latter figure is not as extravagant as it might seem, since the Class-G circuit is capable of very high peak-power outputs—comparable to the "music power" amplifier rating that used to appear in some specification sheets before the FTC put a stop to that method of rating power output. At any rate, the HMA-8300 is rated to deliver 400 watts of what is called "peak rms power" per channel, although it would be more accurate to describe it as short-term average power. The output stages are protected by current-limiting circuits and by fast-acting relays that disconnect the speaker loads in the event of failure or a severe overload.

Two continuously adjustable level controls on the panel set gain for the two channels, and a pushbutton switch connects a subsonic filter that attenuates the output at a 12-dB-per-octave rate below 15 Hz. Without it, the amplifier's response extends down to d.c. or close to it.

The rear of the HMA-8300 contains only the input jacks and the spring-loaded speaker terminals. The amplifier is fitted with a heavy-duty line cord, since it draws more than 8 amperes from a 120-volt circuit at full power. Price: \$750.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** An input of 0.225 volt drove the HMA-8300 to a reference output of 10 watts. The unweighted noise level was 84 dB below 10 watts, or 97 dB below rated power.

The amplifier's frequency response was flat within ± 0.3 dB from 5 to 50,000 Hz, and was down 3 dB at 270,000 Hz. The square-wave rise time was 1.3 microseconds, and the slew rate was a relatively high 36 volts per microsecond. At most levels, the meters read about 10 per cent higher than the actual power into 8-ohm loads. Driven by tone bursts of 0.1 second on and 1 second off, the meters read

about 1 dB higher than they indicated for a steady-state input. Shorter pulses with the same duty cycle (10 milliseconds on, 100 milliseconds off) gave readings of about 6 dB less than the steady-state values.

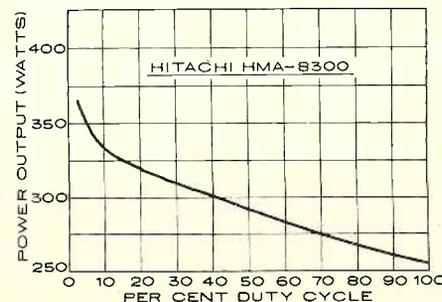
One hour of operation at one-third rated power (the FTC-mandated preconditioning period) caused the top of the amplifier to become very hot—in fact, it could not be touched for more than a second or so. But the amplifier suffered no ill effects and did not shut down. With both channels driven into 8-ohm loads at 1,000 Hz, the waveforms clipped at 255 watts per channel. The 4-ohm output was 206 watts per channel (Hitachi warns against sustained high-power operation with 4-ohm loads), and the 16-ohm output was 172 watts.

At 1,000 Hz, the total harmonic distortion (THD) was less than 0.01 per cent (often less than 0.005 per cent) for all power outputs from 0.1 watt to over 200 watts. The intermodulation (IM) distortion was between 0.005 and 0.02 per cent at most power outputs, and it did not rise significantly at very low power levels (it measured only 0.053 per cent at a 10-milliwatt output).

Across the audio frequency range, the harmonic distortion did not vary greatly with power outputs from the rated 200 watts down to 20 watts per channel. Through the mid-range it was typically about 0.005 per cent, rising to 0.025 per cent at 20 Hz and 0.05 per cent near 20,000 Hz.

We checked the short-term power capabilities of the Class-G amplifier by measuring (on an oscilloscope) its output voltage at the clipping level, with continuous drive, into 8-ohm loads. Then we drove the amplifier to clipping with switched tone-burst signals, alternating

(Continued on page 50)



The short-term maximum output of the Hitachi HMA-8300 increases dramatically as the duty cycle decreases. Refer to text for details.

Up to now you had to choose
between the turntable you wanted
and the turntable you could afford.



Introducing the MKII Series. Three new professional turntables: The SL-1300MKII automatic, the SL-1400MKII semi-automatic and the SL-1500MKII manual. All with a totally quartz-controlled direct-drive system with one big advantage: a moderate price.

So to unparalleled speed accuracy, powerful torque and fast start-up action, Technics MKII Series adds quartz accuracy to whatever pitch variation you desire. In exact 0.1% increments. At the touch of a button. And instantaneously damped by LED.

What's more, all this technology has been compressed into four high-density IC's. So the MKII Series' styling is low, lean and clean.

And our low-mass S-shaped universal tonearm has been made so accurate, friction is an incredibly

low 7 mg. (vertical and lateral). The MKII Series also boasts a double-isolated suspension system and anti-resonant base material to minimize feedback.

Compare specifications. Compare prices. And you'll realize there's no comparison for Technics MKII Series.

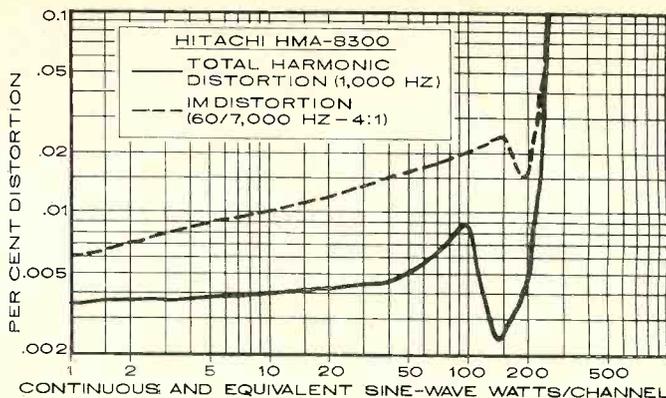
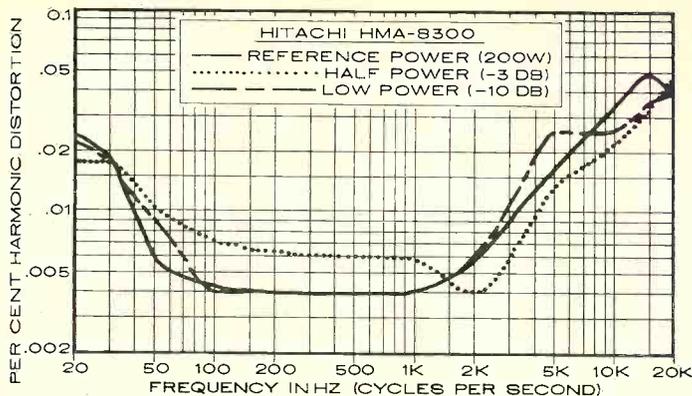
MOTOR: Brushless EC motor, quartz-controlled phase-locked servo circuit. SPEED: 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ and 45 rpm. STARTING TORQUE: 1.5 kg. per cm. BUILD-UP TIME: 0.7 seconds (= 90° rotation) to 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm. SPEED DRIFT: Within $\pm 0.002\%$. WOW & FLUTTER: 0.025% WRMS. RUMBLE: -73dB (DIN B). PITCH VARIATION: $\pm 2.9\%$. SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE*: \$399.95 (1300), \$359.95 (1400) and \$349.95 (1500).

The MKII Series. A rare combination of audio technology. A new standard of audio excellence.

*Technics recommended price, but actual retail price will be set by dealers.

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"on" times of 1 cycle with "off" times of 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, and 32 cycles to give steadily decreasing "duty cycles." The power-line voltage was monitored and maintained at 120 volts during these tests. The amplitude of the single-cycle burst at clipping was used to compute the maximum power output of the amplifier with different duty cycles.

From the continuous output of 255 watts, the available power increased linearly with a reduced duty cycle to 337 watts at 11 per cent, and then more rapidly to 367 watts at a 3 per cent duty cycle. In view of the inherent errors in this measurement method, that figure can be considered as equivalent to Hitachi's "peak rms power" rating of 400 watts. The significance of this measurement lies in the fact that actual peak program levels, with music or speech, are usually of very short duration—often entailing less than the 3 per cent duty cycle of our measurement.

● **Comment.** Aside from its unique circuit features, the Hitachi HMA-8300 is an impressive amplifier when judged on sheer performance. The test results speak for themselves; the amplifier handily met its specifications in all respects.

Although we usually concern ourselves with how well a product performs rather than with the technical details of how that performance was achieved, we were curious about the entire Class-G concept. Considering the amplifier as a "black box" (which it literally is), its performance is similar to that of some otherwise conventional Class-AB amplifiers whose deliberately "soft" or unregulated power supplies give them a very high short-term power capability ("music power") relative to their continuous ratings.

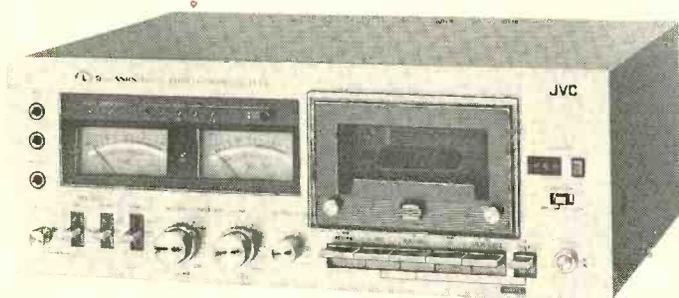
In the purely external aspects of its performance, the Class-G amplifier is difficult to distinguish from a very well executed example of such an amplifier. Its major advantage, as we see it, would be a higher efficiency than was provided by the older "brute force" approach. This we would expect to be manifested in weight, size, and possibly cost savings. However, the HMA-8300 is *not* particularly small, light, or cool in operation. In fact, it is a solid heavyweight like most other fine high-power amplifiers. Therefore, if the Class-G concept as executed in the Hitachi HMA-8300 has any special value to the user, it must lie in its listening qualities, particularly when high peak-power outputs are called for.

We concentrated on that type of operation for the HMA-8300, and were most pleasantly surprised. The peak-reading meters, whose accuracy had been verified by test, frequently read between 350 and 400 watts per channel (corresponding to actual output levels of 385 to 440 watts per channel), which is well beyond what could have been obtained from conventional 200-watt amplifiers. The sound, even at those rather high levels, was clean, transparent, and unstrained (of course, the speakers must be able to handle high peak powers to reap the full benefits).

In other words, the HMA-8300 can deliver the type of listening experience provided by conventional (regulated) power amplifiers rated at 350 watts or more per channel. It won't equal those amplifiers in continuous wattage on the test bench, but it will probably sound as good as they do at equal listening levels. Conversely, when compared with most 200-watt amplifiers, the HMA-8300 will be able to play louder and cleaner. And that, we believe, is what the Class-G amplifier is all about. Judging from our experience with the HMA-8300, it lives up to its promise in full measure.

Circle 108 on reader service card

JVC KD-75 Stereo Cassette Deck



ALTHOUGH conventional in appearance, JVC's new KD-75 cassette deck incorporates a number of features that are exclusive with JVC. First, there is the ANRS (Automatic Noise Reduction System) originally developed for the CD-4 four-channel disc system. It differs in circuit details from the Dolby sys-

tem, but its operating parameters have been chosen to make it as compatible as possible with Dolby noise reduction, and a Dolbyized tape can be played back through it (and vice versa) with generally good results. In addition, the KD-75 has "Super ANRS" to reduce the effects of high-frequency tape saturation,

a basic problem in the cassette medium. Super ANRS works by reducing the high-frequency response at high signal levels during recording and then boosting it later during playback to restore flat frequency response. Since Super ANRS is not completely compatible with standard ANRS or Dolby processing, it can be defeated or changed to standard ANRS by means of a switch on the KD-75.

The KD-75 is also one of the first cassette recorders to use JVC's new "Sen-Alloy" heads, which are claimed to have magnetic properties comparable to—and in some respects better than—permalloy heads combined with a hardness (resistance to wear) almost as good as that of ferrite heads.

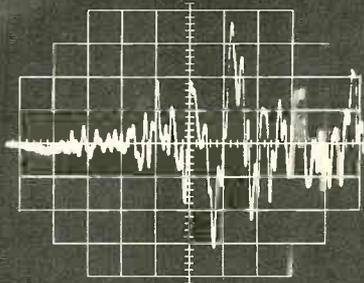
The front-loading KD-75 has a single feedback-controlled d.c. servomotor. The cassette is loaded into a tape guide in the door, which swings open when the STOP/EJECT key

(Continued on page 52)

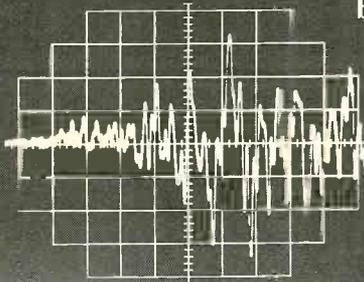
Technics wants you to see what other speakers don't let you hear.

Look at the waveforms. Technics has achieved phase linearity as well as wide frequency response. And that means we've achieved state of the art in high fidelity: virtually a mirror image of music as it was originally played. We call it waveform fidelity. Julian Hirsch, in June *Popular Electronics*, calls the Technics Linear Phase SB-6000A "...one of the better sounding speaker systems we have heard in a long time!"

How did we do it? First by conducting exhaustive amplitude/phase studies in acoustically perfect chambers before designing and manufacturing each of the wide frequency/low distortion drivers. Then by developing a unique new phase-controlled crossover network



Live Piano Waveform



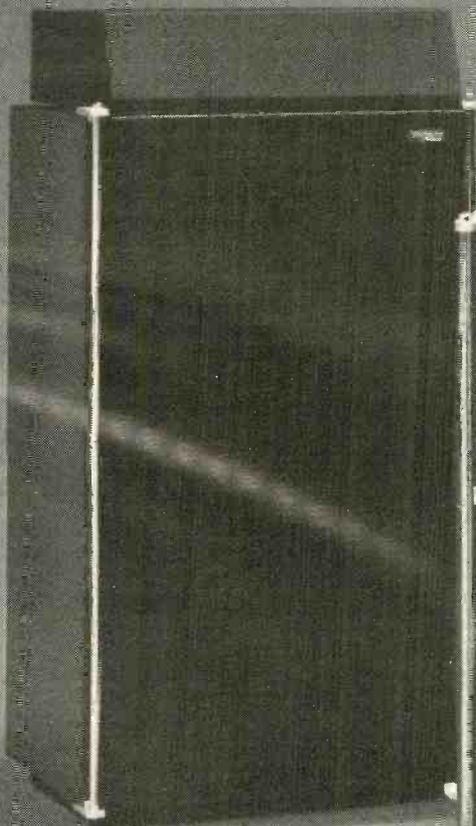
Piano Waveform reproduced by SB-7000A.

that compensates for the time delays caused by the wide range of frequencies in all music. While simultaneously compensating for the different acoustics of the woofer, midrange and tweeter. And finally by aligning each driver unit in the optimum acoustic position for precise linearity.

It's a lot of complicated engineering, but it all adds up to something very simple. Music as it was originally played. Nothing more, nothing less. And that's a lot.

Listen to Technics Linear Phase SB-7000A, SB-6000A and SB-5000A. They're now available for demonstration at selected audio dealers for very selective ears.

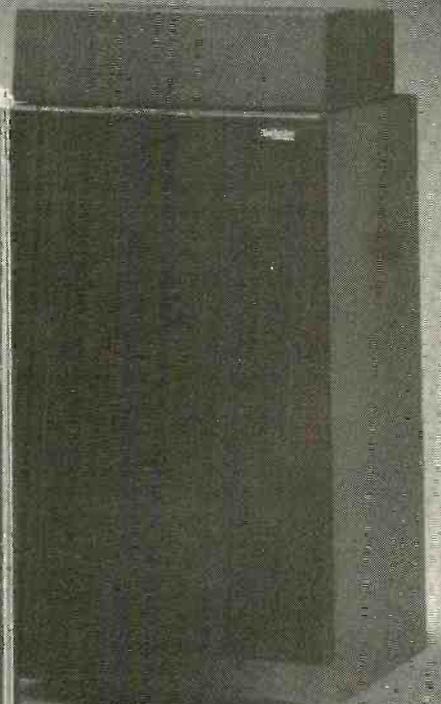
Technics Professional Series
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SB-5000A

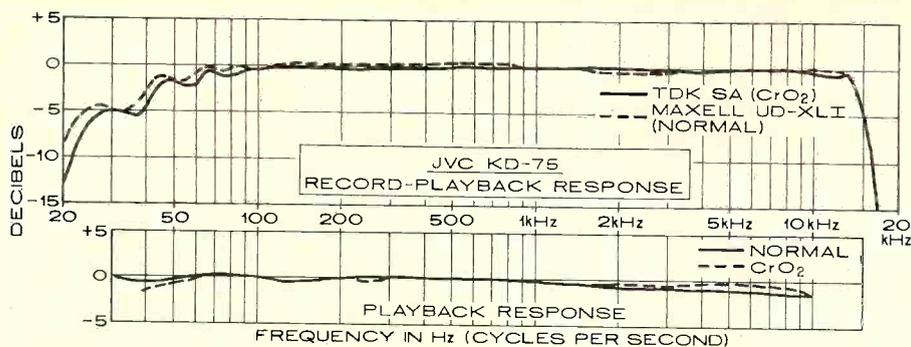


SB-7000A



SB-5000A

CIRCLE NO. 72 ON READER SERVICE CARD



is pressed (if the tape is in motion, the first press of this lever stops it; releasing it and pressing it again opens the door). The transport controls are the familiar "piano keys," and they provide the usual functions. The KD-75 can be set up for unattended operation in record or playback modes using an external clock timer in the a.c. power circuit. When the control levers have been set for the desired mode and the PAUSE lever is depressed, power is removed from the machine though the power switch is left on. When power is re-applied by the timer, the PAUSE releases and the machine goes into the selected mode of operation. There is a memory-rewind function that stops the tape when it has rewound to the previously selected 000 reading of the index counter.

The cassette can be seen almost in its entirety through a transparent window in the door, and it is backlit to show the status of the tape pack. To the left of the cassette compartment are two large illuminated meters with mirror scales for parallax reduction. Between them is a red LED recording indicator. Above the meters is a row of five red LED's that indicate peak signal levels from -10 to +6 dB (a nearby pushbutton shuts them off if desired). Together with the meters, this feature gives an accurate simultaneous indication of average and instantaneous peak levels. Green LED's show when ANRS or Super ANRS is turned on; to their left are two microphone jacks and a headphone jack.

The other operating controls are below the meters. They include separate recording-level controls for the microphone and line inputs, and these can be mixed (each is a concentric pair, so that the channels can be adjusted individually). A separate knob adjusts the playback level. A unique feature of the KD-75 is the REC EQ control, a small knob that operates a five-position switch. This varies the recording equalization over a range of ± 3 dB (relative to the 1,000-Hz level) at 10,000 Hz in steps of 1.5 dB in order to obtain the flattest frequency response from any tape formulation. In addition, there are separate bias and equalization switches, each with settings for "normal," SF, and CrO₂ tapes (the SF apparently stands for "super ferric" or "special ferric," and it is intended for most of the premium-grade tapes made by the major manufacturers). Using CrO₂ equalization with SF bias presumably gives optimum results with ferrichrome (FeCr) tapes. The final control is a three-position switch for ANRS or Super ANRS selection. The KD-75 does not have a 19-kHz multiplex filter, so that stereo FM programs recorded with ANRS should be made from a tuner having effective filtering of the pilot-carrier signal to avoid affecting the ANRS operation.

On the rear of the JVC KD-75 are the line input and output jacks and a DIN socket duplicating their functions. The KD-75 is 16¼ inches wide, 13¼ inches deep, and 6¼ inches high; it weighs just over 17 pounds. Price: \$379.95.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** Our sample of the JVC KD-75 came factory-adjusted for Maxell UD (SF) and TDK SA (CrO₂) tapes, which we used for our basic performance measurements. We also tested it with Scotch Master (SF) and Sony Ferrichrome (FeCr).

A line input of 77 millivolts (mV) or a microphone input of 0.185 mV produced a 0-dB recording level. With the playback-level knob set to JVC's reference mark (8 on a scale of 10), the resulting playback output was 290 mV, and it was 460 mV with the knob set to maximum. The microphone input overloaded at a 45-mV input. The calibration of the recording-level meters was quite good up to 0 dB, but they read about 1 dB low at deflections from 0 to the maximum of +5 dB. The LED peak-indicating lights glowed within 1 or 2 dB of the corresponding meter readings. The meters had perfect VU ballistics, reading 100 per cent of steady state on 0.3-second tone bursts.

The playback frequency response with the

TDK AC-331 test tape was within +0, -1.5 dB from 63 to 10,000 Hz. The CrO₂ (70-microsecond) playback response was tested with a Teac 116 SP tape; it was flat within 0.5 dB over most of the audio range and down 1.5 dB at 40 and 10,000 Hz.

The overall record-playback frequency response was very flat with Maxell UD-XL I, TDK SA, and 3M Master tapes, using the recommended switch settings. The response was typically about ± 1 dB from 45 to 14,000 Hz and even beyond. Sony Ferrichrome tape gave a slightly more extended response, though not quite so flat; it varied over a ± 2 -dB range from 50 to 16,000 Hz.

The "tracking" of the ANRS circuits over the frequency range of the machine, measured at levels of -20 and -40 dB, was excellent. The overall response changed by less than 0.5 dB between the "on" and "off" settings of the ANRS switch at most frequencies up to 12,000 or 13,000 Hz. The effect of Super ANRS could be measured quite clearly when we recorded with it switched on and then played the tape back with both the Super ANRS and standard ANRS settings. With Super ANRS used in playback and recording, the response was almost perfectly flat. When the playback was made with standard ANRS, the output dropped off above 2,000 Hz and was down about 5 dB in the vicinity of 10,000 Hz. This represents the amount of additional high-frequency headroom afforded by the Super ANRS at the -20-dB level used for the recordings; it also shows the degree of incompatibility between the two systems.

The meters read +3.5 dB with a standard 200-nW/meter Dolby test tape. At an indicated 0-dB reading the playback distortion was 0.5 per cent with TDK SA tape, about 0.75 per cent with Scotch Master and Maxell UD-XL I, and 1 per cent with Sony FeCr tape. The 3 per cent reference distortion level was reached at inputs of +6 dB with Master and TDK SA tapes, +5 dB with Sony FeCr, and +8 dB with Maxell UD-XL I tape.

The overall unweighted signal-to-noise



(S/N) measurements, referred to the 3 per cent distortion level, were in the range of 51.5 dB for the Scotch and Sony tapes, 54 dB for TDK SA, and 55.5 dB for Maxell UD-XL I. With IEC "A" weighting the S/N was in the 59- to 60-dB range. Finally, with CCIR/ARM weighting and ANRS, the S/N was 62.8 dB with Master tape and 64 to 65 dB with the others. The noise level through the microphone inputs increased by 10.5 dB at maximum gain, but it was not affected significantly at normal gain settings.

The flutter of the KD-75 was a very low 0.07 per cent with an Aiwa test tape and 0.075 per cent on a combined record-playback measurement. In fast-forward and rewind modes the machine handled a C-60 cassette in about 78 seconds.

● **Comment.** The performance of the JVC KD-75 was definitely up to the highest standards in respect to frequency response, distortion, noise, and flutter. In addition, we found it a very easy machine to operate, and the combination of accurate meters and LED peak indicators makes level setting much less critical than on most cassette recorders (especially in view of the 7 to 10 dB of recording headroom over the 0-dB level).

We must commend JVC for providing one of the most flexible tape-parameter adjustment systems we have seen on a cassette recorder. The REC EQ switch is a feature that we have not seen elsewhere, but it was responsible for many of the fine results we obtained with the KD-75. The table in the trilingual instruction manual shows recommended settings of bias, equalization, and recording equalization for some twenty different tapes, which is certainly a welcome change from the tight security with which most recorder manufacturers guard the identities of the tapes for which their machines are adjusted.

Although it is not generally appreciated, the magnetic characteristics of many tape formulations are changed from time to time, usually with no public announcement. The REC EQ switch gives the JVC KD-75 an almost unique ability to extract the most performance from any tape. The switch is best adjusted with the aid of test instruments, but an excellent approximation can be made by using simple interstation FM-tuner hiss. Record the hiss at a low level (such as -20 dB) and then play it back in an A-B comparison with the original signal. If the recorded hiss seems to be either exaggerated or deficient, set the REC EQ switch appropriately to achieve the best match to the original.

Although we did not use the KD-75 for making live recordings, where the advantages of the Super ANRS should be most apparent, our tests showed that it did everything claimed for it, and we could not detect any undesirable side effects from its use. JVC points out that recordings made with Super ANRS are not compatible for playback through ANRS or Dolby systems, but that standard ANRS and Dolby-B processings are effectively compatible. We would agree with both claims, although with many kinds of program material the ANRS/Super ANRS incompatibility is not as clearly audible as the response curves might suggest.

In our view, the JVC KD-75 represents an impressive combination of performance, versatility, and unique operating features for a cassette machine, especially in the light of its moderate (by today's standards) price.

Circle 109 on reader service card



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Julian S. Martin
HI-FI STEREO BUYERS' GUIDE, March-April, 1976

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The Len Feldman Lab Report
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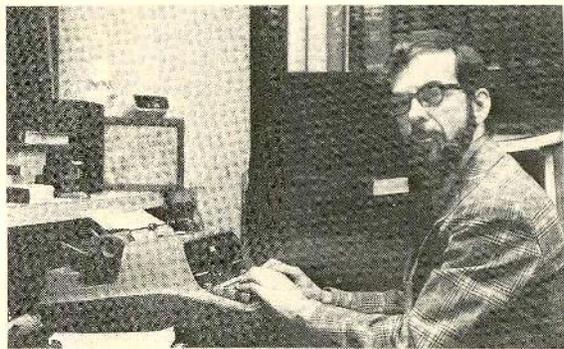
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Going on Record

By James Goodfriend



NONESSENTIALS OF AN OPERA LIBRARY

WITH certain allowances for personal taste and national background, operaphiles pretty much agree on what makes up the basic operatic repertoire (see George Jelinek's "Essentials of an Opera Library" on page 64 of this issue). The problem of defining it is merely one of selecting the specific works to represent the predetermined composers—Mozart, Verdi, Puccini, Wagner, and so on. Which works are left out is determined solely by arbitrary numerical limits set on the list. There are some works, however, that are never included, for no operaphile reckons them as basic and some are not even reckoned as opera. They are, so to speak, opera for the non-operaphile or non-opera for the operaphile, works the latter might have in his record collection the way he has a string quartet or a symphony (if he has one). What I would like to suggest, then, is a few titles that might fit easily into a sort of basic non-basic-opera library.

Certainly the greatest nonessential opera (or non-opera) is Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, six LP sides of French lyrical recitative without a single aria. *Pelléas* fits into none of the traditional operatic genres, offers none of the traditional operatic enticements, and hence makes a terrible "opera" even though it is great music and can be, under the right circumstances, great theater. Theoretically, the success of *Pelléas* on records should depend largely upon the excellence of the recorded sound, for colorations, subtle underlinings, and lyrical whispers are what the work is all about. Strangely, then, I find the most successful recorded performance to be the oldest on LP (that conducted by Desormière, once available on RCA, but no longer), the second most successful the second oldest (Ansermet, now on Richmond M 63013 three discs), and so on up to the orchestrally wonderful (and vocally almost unlistenable) Boulez recording in excellent stereo sound. The pity of this particular paradox is obvious, but I don't see the situation's being bettered very quickly. Stick with the early Ansermet: it's available, it's inexpensive, and it's good.

The classic recording of Ravel's impossible little masterpiece *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* is also an ancient one (conducted by Ernest Bour, once on American Columbia, later available as a Pathé-Marconi import), but here there is a modern recording that is almost as

good (Maazel, Deutsche Grammophon 138 675). *L'Enfant* is an impossible opera for two reasons. First, it is about forty-five minutes long; and second, its protagonist is a child and all its other characters are animals, trees, toys, etc. Obviously, it calls for a soprano with a little-girl (or boy) voice, but there isn't much for an ariaphile to dote on. It just happens to be absolutely magical music.

Frederick Delius' *A Village Romeo and Juliet* is so obviously a work for orchestra with obligato voices and *ad libitum* scenery that it is something of a tour de force when it is



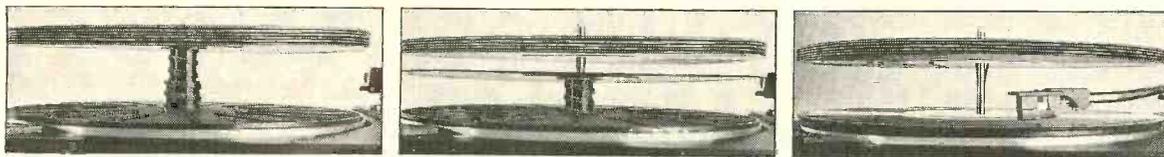
HANSEL AND GRETEL
(Drawing by Henry J. Ford, c. 1891)

staged at all. In large part, the voices carry the words while the orchestra carries the music. Still, there is something very moving about the work, and the music—if one has any sympathy at all for hedonistic chromaticism—is

(Continued on page 56)

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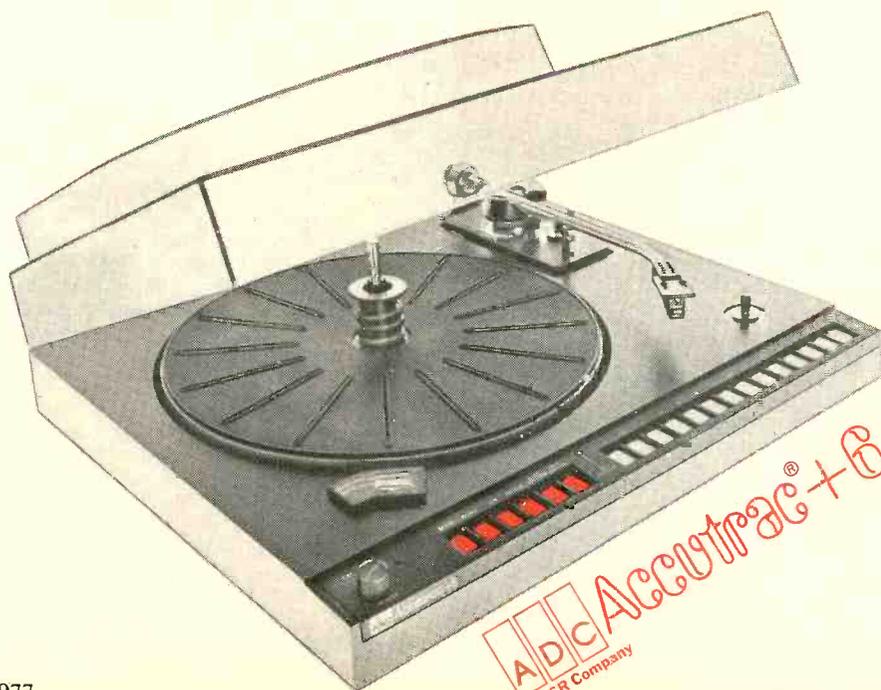
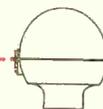
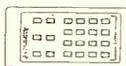
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undeniably beautiful. Angel S-3784X (two discs) offers a loving treatment of the score, and it is blessed with better voices than the music probably requires.

Even Handel did not call his *Acis and Galatea* an opera, for to him an opera was in Italian, and *Acis*, for the most part, was in English. He called it a masque, and that is enough in itself. I suppose, to keep it out of the repertoire. Granted that it is a Baroque work, and that opera houses are not big on Baroque opera these days, there is still a great deal in it with which operaphiles could feel at home. Recitatives and *real arias* abound, and there is both drama and virtuoso vocalism, with a particular plum for coloratura bass. Joan Sutherland and Owen Brannigan supply the top and bottom voices in an early stereo (but still fine) recording led by Sir Adrian Boult on L'Oiseau-Lyre 60011/12 (two discs).

THE operas of Leos Janáček owe little or nothing to Italian, German, French, or English operatic traditions. They are pre-eminently Slavic, and the only Slavic operas that have made it internationally are *Boris*, *Eugene Onegin*, and perhaps *The Queen of Spades*. More's the pity. Janáček further complicates the matter by composing in a very individual idiom built from rather brief lyrical motifs and the language rhythms of his native Moravia. Only one of his operas, *Jenufa*, is currently on an American label (Angel S-3756 two discs), but it is quite an opera in every way except that of conventional set pieces. The performance is in Czech (as it should be), and a libretto is a necessity for the *drama* is intense.

The *size* of a work can keep it out of the repertoire. Berlioz's *Les Troyens* is not a part of it largely because it is too big. Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* is similarly excluded because it is too small (*Dido* at the Met would be like the ping-pong championships at Yankee Stadium). And yet *Dido* has everything an opera needs, and it is in English (pidgin in places) to boot. It remains, despite its modest scope, the greatest opera composed in the English language. There are quite a few fine recordings, but I lean toward Janet Baker's interpretation of the title role on L'Oiseau-Lyre 60047. It makes all the more moving the universality of this seventeenth-century retelling of the tragedy of an ancient Carthaginian queen. Ah, relevance!

As with all such essays of selection, space runs out before ideas. Still, I must add (if in name and number only) the following: Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* (London 1158), Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédict* (L'Oiseau-Lyre S-256/7), Britten's *Peter Grimes* (London 1305 three discs), Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* (RCA ARL2-0637), Prokofiev's *Love for Three Oranges* (Melodiya/Angel S-4109 two discs), Rameau's *Castor et Pollux* (Telefunken 4635048 four discs), Tippett's *Midsummer Marriage* (Philips 6703.027 three discs), and Weill's *Mahagonny* (Columbia K3L-243 three discs).

AND as for what's missing . . . Operaphiles may yearn for a new *Tosca* every month, but I continue to put in my request for records of Fauré's *Pénélope*, Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*, Dukas' *Ariane et Barbe-Bleu*, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sadko*, Chabrier's *Le Roi Malgré Lui*, Henze's *Elegy for Young Lovers*, Holst's *At the Boar's Head*, Vaughan Williams' *Hugh the Drover*, Nono's *Intolleranza*, and so on, and on. I doubt that I'll ever get to hear them in the opera house.



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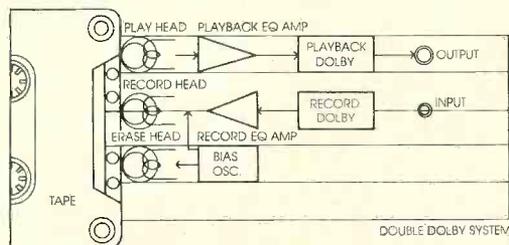
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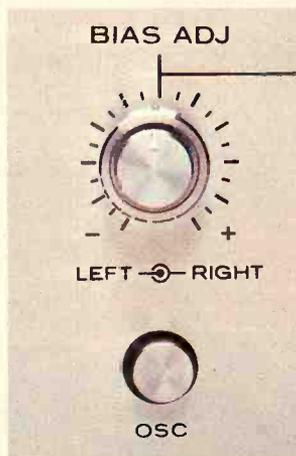
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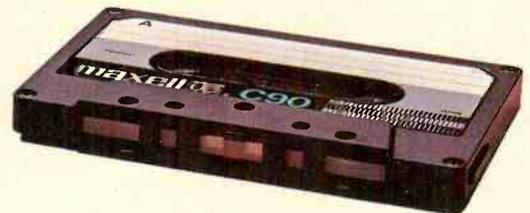
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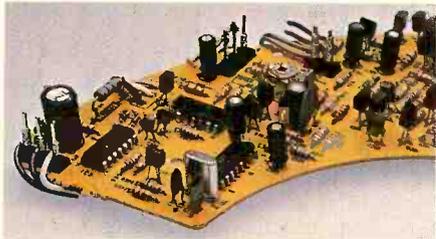
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Good as it is, a traditional servo system has two flaws. When playing a record for a long time, it heats up and you're continually forced to correct for speed drift.



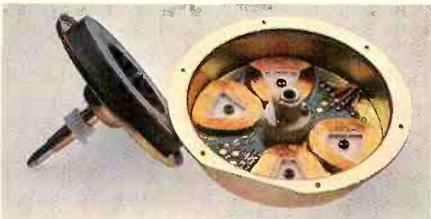
More critically, increased friction between the stylus and record during loud passages can slow down the speed. It will then fall into a range wherein a conventional servo isn't sensitive enough to read. But your ear can.

Sony's X-tal Lock system cannot be accused of any of the above. Its quartz generator serves to regulate the servo. The speed is electronically locked in. Impervious to changes in temperature, load, or voltage.

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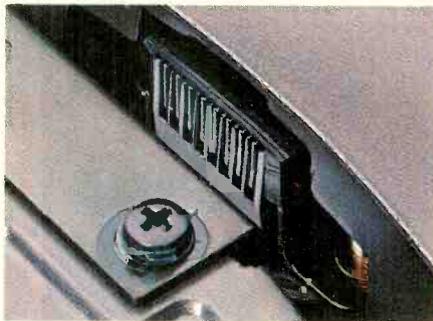
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And on the X7 and X6, an optical sensing system is included. It automatically returns the arm at record's end. (In the X7, a carbon fiber tone arm.)



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Cartridges are not included

SONY

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The Pop Beat

By Paulette Weiss

Entertainer Peter Dean tests a new song on Contributing Editor Rick Mitzi and Popular Music Editor Weiss (photo by Larry Brill).



OLD PROS

THE Saturday-night crowd of more than 13,000 that filled Forest Hills stadium on July 16 had come to hear Frank Sinatra, and though the oppressive humidity of the summer evening may have dampened their brows, it had not damped their spirits. When Sinatra strode on stage at precisely 9:02 and eased into a marvelous, jaunty *I've Got You Under My Skin*, the crowd roared and the skies that had been threatening rain provided a benediction of cool air instead.

Although I consider Sinatra perhaps the greatest popular singer of our time, I had come to the concert with misgivings about this latest stage in his career. I feared that his stature was being compromised not so much by waning vocal abilities as by what seemed to be a faltering instinct for the selection of appropriate material. After his return from retirement in 1974, *Ol' Blue Eyes* made some truly embarrassing recordings (a graceless cover of Jim Croce's *Bad, Bad Leroy Brown* among them), perhaps in an attempt to appeal to a younger audience. But Sinatra's art is best exhibited in songs with a solid lyric line, where his impeccable phrasing, crystal-clear enunciation, and air of casual omniscience can come into play. Most new rock-based pop songs, with their unvarying, heavily accented rhythms and short, simple, lyric lines, leave him with too little room to move in. Like a dancer on a too-small stage, he can't help calling attention to the limitations; even if the performance is good, it looks cramped.

This concert proved to be an exhilarating reassurance that those ill-advised forays into pop/rock were temporary lapses and not signs of irreversible decline. Sinatra was superb in all respects. He had pared down to a slim, youthful silhouette and cut an elegant, assured figure out there on the runway in his black tux. His interpretations of old favorites like *The Lady Is a Tramp* and *My Kind of Town* were familiar but still fresh, and his obligatory "anthem," *My Way*, was strong and gritty. Of the new songs, only *I Love My Wife* (from the Broadway show of the same name) had the kind of meaty, witty lyric worthy of Sinatra. Paul Anka's monotonous *Everybody Ought to Be in Love* was a real clinker, but the crowd simply ate it up when Frank turned it into the singalong number of the evening.

On his Sunday morning broadcast the next day, Frankophile disc jockey Jonathan Schwartz (he is also the son of songwriter Arthur Schwartz) raved about the *pièce de résistance* of the concert, a performance of *One for My Baby*. Half acted, half sung, that song will never—I repeat, never—have a better reading. The lights dimmed, the stadium seemed to disappear, and, like a subject viewed unaware through a two-way mirror, the singer stood there, a drunken, desolate figure, a man alone. The old Sinatra magic still works, and I suspect that, like that mistress of

FRANK SINATRA
Doing it his way



popular song Mabel Mercer (just now home again after a brilliant London engagement), he will continue to enchant audiences long after time has stolen whatever sweetness still remains in his voice.

I have always admired Sinatra's respectful crediting of those who create the material he works with. Lyricist, songwriter, and, where appropriate, arranger are all mentioned in the introduction to each song. And so, when (thinking of a similar saloon song, *Angel Eyes*) he incorrectly introduced *One for My Baby* as written by Earl Brent and Matt Dennis, he was quick to apologize and credit the wronged Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer after the number.

Despite the intense heat that frequently had him mopping the sweat from his face, Sinatra was totally, coolly in control. His patter between numbers was friendly and to the point, his response to the inevitable comments and requests from the audience was admirably restrained—in short, all of the annoying excesses of the past were eliminated. When he left the stage at 10:02, precisely an hour after his entrance, the applause was thunderous, the cheers ecstatic and affectionate. Although his forthcoming Reprise album "Here's to the Ladies" has been put on "indefinite hold," the abundance of Capitol and Reprise discs still in the catalog will keep you busy while you wait for it.

ANOTHER old pro, Charles Aznavour, has recorded some two hundred albums, has composed more than one thousand songs, and, like Sinatra, has displayed a talent for acting, notably in the fine film *Shoot the Piano Player*. Another slim, less-than-handsome, yet charismatic figure, the French performer has less vocal technique than Sinatra, and he consequently depends more on stylized dramatics. His Carnegie Hall engagement in May consisted of a string of sparkling song-stories, each brought vividly to life with mime-like movements. The only flaw in an otherwise satisfying concert was the relentless, souped-up rhythm section added to update his fine old sound.

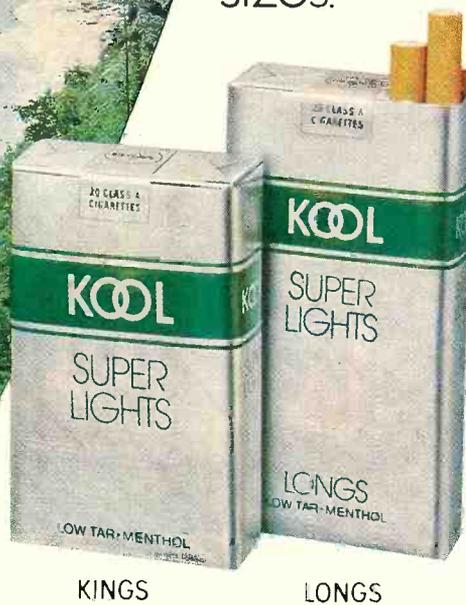
Fine old sounds are also produced by Peter "Snake Hips" Dean, a singer who has been around for a formidable number of years. From the time of his NBC radio program in the Thirties (which introduced Dinah Shore to the public) to a recent appearance at Cleo's, a New York bistro, Dean has performed with undiminished ebullience and consistent taste. His appearances are rare because he has devoted most of his time to managing other performers (Peggy Lee among them), but when he stepped into Cleo's spotlight last June, dapper in white tails, ukulele in hand, he was right at home.

Dean's recordings have been equally rare, for there are only three. My favorite, "Four or Five Times" (Buddah BDS 5613), features vocal accompaniment by none other than Carly Simon, who happens to be Dean's niece. (Is there no end to the musicians in the extended Simon family?) He told me recently that Carly has expressed interest in bankrolling him in his own club, and I'm ready to make reservations right now. What Dean, Aznavour, and Sinatra share is, to quote the disc mentioned above, "... delight/In doing things right/Four or five times." These three have been doing things right repeatedly for years. I hope they continue to do so wherever they can, as often as they can, for as long as they can.

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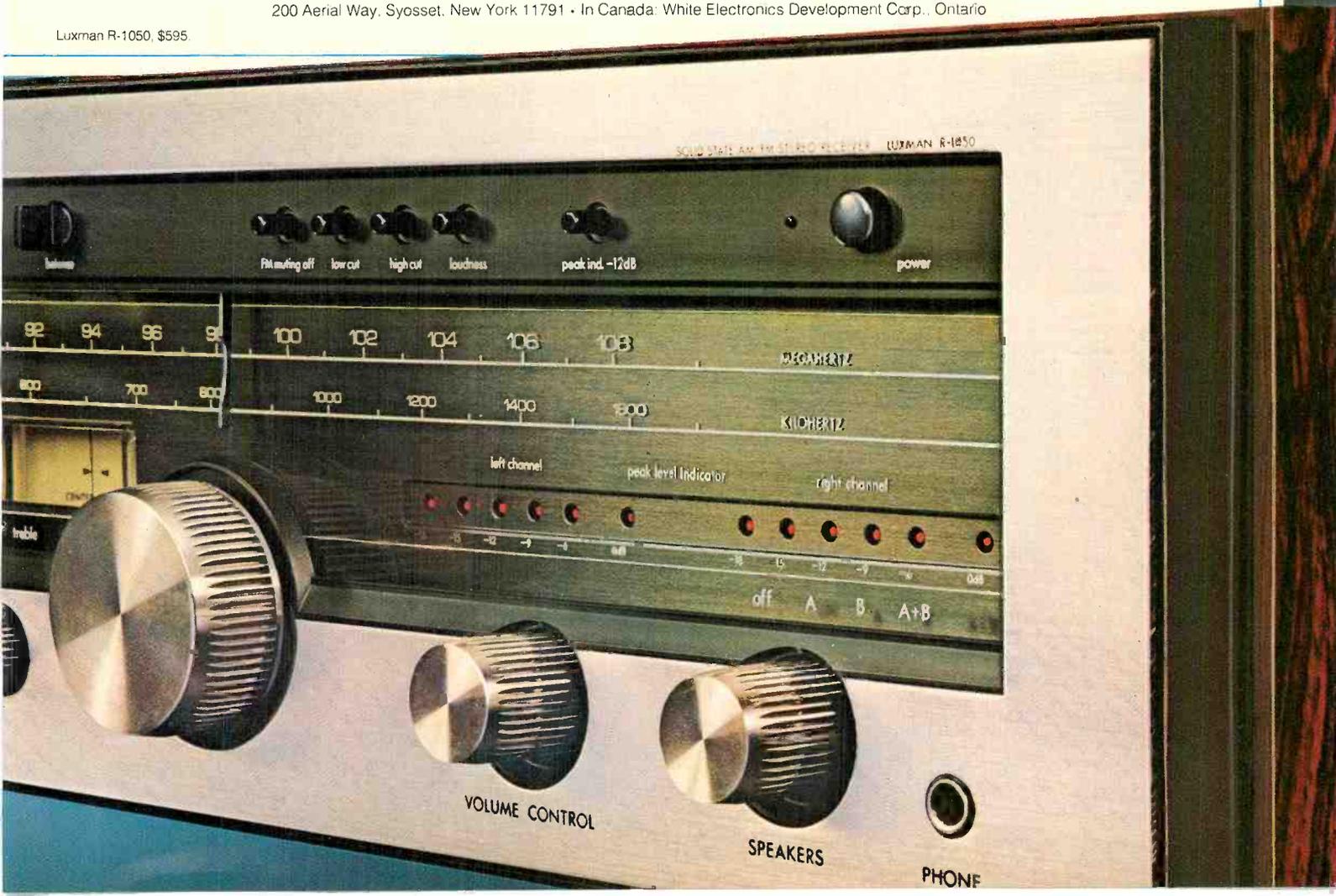
As for how these tuner/amplifiers sound, here's what the British magazine *HiFi at Home* said about the R-1050: "... a high standard of performance ... treble quality was light and delicate—something LUX engineers always seem to achieve ... bass output seemed plentiful and strong, as is often the case with enormous, low impedance power supplies ..."

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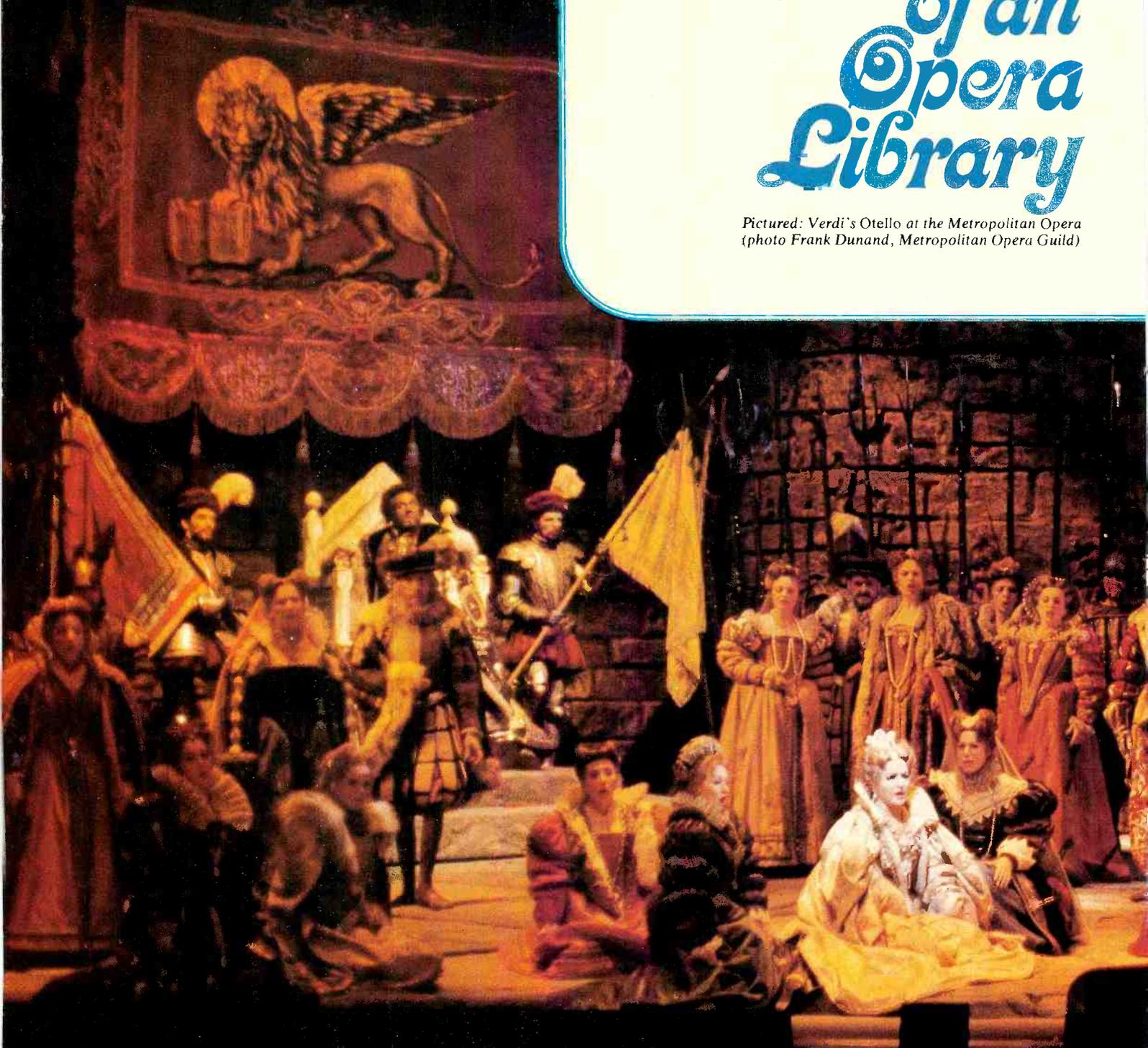
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George Jellinek's
Essentials
of an
Opera
Library

*Pictured: Verdi's Otello at the Metropolitan Opera
(photo Frank Dunand, Metropolitan Opera Guild)*





THE list of works opera lovers consider to be the core of the repertoire, the essential minimum for a representative library of recordings, has changed somewhat over the years. This is the result, first, of changing tastes (mostly over the long run) on the part of those who present operas and those who listen to them, and, second, of the increase in the number of operatic performances available on disc as well as the sudden appearance of works never before recorded—or, at least, never before recorded adequately.

This is the fourth edition in STEREO REVIEW of my "Essentials" list. The first (1963) contained twenty-one operas, the second (1968), twenty-five. The number was raised to thirty in 1973, and it is thirty-five in the present list. That alone should give some indication of what effect the lar-

gesse of the LP era has had on the way we think about the basic operatic repertoire.

The historical span embraced in my earlier opera-library lists was limited to the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Gluck to Strauss). This year, for the first time, it has been extended at both ends to run from Claudio Monteverdi to Alban Berg. The operas included (all of them are in stereo) are more or less part of the standard repertoire as we see it today. Unjustly neglected works and important new discoveries belong to another kind of survey, as do historical mono sets, some of which are, to be sure, still artistically unsurpassed (and some of which are included in the accompanying "Budget Library").

There has been much gratifying activity in the field of recorded opera since 1973. Philips has made major strides toward its praiseworthy goal





London

SIEPI: *Don Giovanni*



Chicago Lyric Opera

PAVAROTTI and SUTHERLAND: *Lucia*



Angel/EMI

CALLAS: *Norma*



Metropolitan Opera

MILNES: *Rigolotto*

PRICE: *Tosca*



Opera ...

of documenting all the heretofore unrecorded Verdi operas, and it has explored the Haydn and Mozart catalogs as well with generally excellent results. London and Angel have labored diligently over productions in the familiar repertoire, but they have also enriched our field of choice with such valued additions as Massenet's *Esclarmonde*, Wolf-Ferrari's *The Secret of Susanna*, Wagner's *Rienzi*, and Weber's *Euryanthe*, to name only a few. Deutsche Grammophon has contributed its share of duplications but has also given us Nicolai's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *May Night*. And while RCA has kept its stable of stars busy in relatively predictable areas, Columbia's return to operatic recording must be saluted as a major step forward, particularly welcome dividends already being returned through the label's association with Eve Queller's Opera Orchestra of New York and with the Russian Melodiya catalog.

However, though the record industry deserves opera lovers' gratitude for its vitality and enterprise, many new recordings of the standard operas (where

the field is very competitive) have fallen short of excellence. Too many ventures seem to be "command performances" of sorts, the command coming from certain powerful stars and the result being releases for which no real demand exists (London's new *Butterfly* with Montserrat Caballé, reviewed in this issue, is the *fourth* version currently available from that label alone!). Following Hollywood's lead, record companies also insist on "bankable" names for their opera releases, planning productions around star personalities who are not always ideally suited to their roles. As a result, some artists have been overexposed while others of the caliber of Margaret Price, Teresa Zylis-Gara, Gundula Janowitz, and Matteo Manuguerra have been unjustly overlooked. Such tenors as Alain Vanzo and Charles Burles, for example, could have provided the essential Gallic style conspicuously lacking in certain recorded French operas, and I find it hard to believe that René Kollo must be cast for virtually *all* the German tenor roles.

The overall picture, however, remains positive. The catalog bulges with a staggering variety of choices, and record collectors have never had it so good. Historical sets also continue to be reissued; the best of these are listed in a "budget" supplement to the "Essentials of an Opera Library" that follows, chronologically, below.

- **MONTEVERDI: *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*.** Helen Donath, Elisabeth Söderström, Cathy Berberian, Giancarlo Luccardi; Vienna Concentus Musicus, Nikolaus Harnoncourt cond. TELEFUNKEN HS 635247 five discs.
- **GLUCK: *Orfeo ed Euridice*.** Shirley Verrett, Anna Moffo, Judith Raskin; Virtuosi di Roma, Renato Fasano cond. RCA LSC-6169 three discs.

Monteverdi's masterpiece, a startlingly "modern" opera for its age, has been enjoying near-repertoire status in recent years. Its excellent libretto projects a passionate drama with flesh-and-blood characters. Musically, *Poppea* is highly problematical because Monteverdi's own orchestration has not survived and because there is no satisfactory modern equivalent for the *castrati* for whom parts of the music were written. Still, there are three praiseworthy versions in the catalog. My preference for Harnoncourt's is based on its adherence to Baroque instrumentation and its virtual completeness. Those not objecting to Raymond Leppard's streamlined and sensuously orchestrated edition (Seraphim S-6073) will find it not only enjoyable but, in some instances, more happily cast as well.

Compared with *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* (1642), Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762) is downright innocent in its subject matter, Furies notwithstanding. No new recordings have been issued since 1973, and my preference still remains the uniformly excellent RCA set, although Marilyn Horne makes a spectacular Orfeo on London OSA 1285.

- **MOZART: *Don Giovanni*.** Cesare Siepi, Suzanne Danco, Lisa della Casa, Hilde Gueden, Fernando Corena, Anton Dermota; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Josef Krips cond. LONDON OSA 1401 four discs.
- **MOZART: *Le Nozze di Figaro*.** Wladimir Ganzarolli, Mirella Freni, Jessye Norman, Ingvar Wixell; BBC Symphony Orchestra, Colin Davis cond. PHILIPS 6707.014 four discs.
- **MOZART: *Die Zauberflöte*.** Evelyn Lear, Roberta Peters, Fritz Wunderlich, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Franz Crass; Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Karl Böhm cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2709 017 three discs.

The *Don Giovanni* set listed above is early stereo, but its cast of eminent Mozartians in

their prime keeps it firmly foremost in my affections. (It would be a different story if Angel S-3605, excitingly led by Giulini and sparked by three outstanding female singers, had a more attractive protagonist.) Most reluctantly I set aside the equally venerable *Le Nozze di Figaro* on London OSA 1402 and now choose the newer Philips set. There is no clear-cut performing superiority in the new version, but Mirella Freni (Suzanna) and Ingvar Wixell (Count) are exceptionally good and the sound is decidedly preferable. As for *Die Zauberflöte*, the DG set was a "first among equals" four years ago. It still is, but the ranks of those "equals" have now been swelled by yet another excellent contender—on Angel □ S-3807 (Sawallisch cond.).

- **BELLINI: *Norma*.** Maria Callas, Christa Ludwig, Franco Corelli, Nicola Zaccaria; Chorus and Orchestra of La Scala, Tullio Serafin cond. ANGEL S-3615 three discs.
- **DONIZETTI: *Anna Bolena*.** Beverly Sills, Shirley Verrett, Stuart Burrows, Paul Plishka; John Aldis Choir, London Symphony Orchestra, Julius Rudel cond. ABC ATS 20015 four discs.
- **DONIZETTI: *Lucia di Lammermoor*.** Joan Sutherland, Luciano Pavarotti, Sherrill Milnes, Nicolai Ghiaurov; Royal Opera House Orchestra, Richard Bonynge cond. LONDON OSA 13103 three discs.
- **ROSSINI: *The Barber of Seville*.** Roberta Peters, Cesare Valletti, Robert Merrill, Giorgio Tozzi, Fernando Corena; Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Chorus, Erich Leinsdorf cond. RCA LSC-6143 four discs.

In 1973, I expressed my preference for the "security of musicianship and special insights that are altogether unique" in Maria Callas' *Norma*. But I also recognize that a large number of vocal connoisseurs have remained (and will remain) unmoved by these qualities because of certain vocal shortcomings. For them, I continue to recommend RCA LSC-6202 (Caballé, Cossotto, and Domingo). *Lucia di Lammermoor* (a new addition to my list) has been recorded by both Sutherland and Sills in eminently recommendable versions. If you are the partisan of one artist, you will not settle for the other, so I am charting a safe course by dividing the Donizetti honors between them, Sutherland for *Lucia* and Sills for *Anna Bolena*. Four years ago, I selected the RCA set of Rossini's *Barber* by "a small margin" over London OSA 1381 and Angel S-3638. The only new version that has emerged since (Angel □ S-3761) is good, but not good enough that it will cause me to change my preference.

- **VERDI: *Rigoletto*.** Joan Sutherland, Luciano Pavarotti, Sherrill Milnes, Martti Talvela; London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Richard Bonynge cond. LONDON 13105 three discs.
- **VERDI: *La Traviata*.** Anna Moffo, Richard Tucker, Robert Merrill; Chorus and

Orchestra of the Rome Opera House. Fernando Previtali cond. RCA LSC-6154 three discs.

- **VERDI: *La Forza del Destino*.** Renata Tebaldi, Mario del Monaco, Ettore Bastianini, Cesare Siepi, Giulietta Simonato; Chorus and Orchestra of Santa Cecilia, Francesco Molinari-Pradelli cond. LONDON OSA 1405 four discs.
- **VERDI: *Don Carlo*.** Montserrat Caballé, Plácido Domingo, Sherrill Milnes, Ruggero Raimondi, Shirley Verrett; Royal Opera House Orchestra and Chorus, Carlo Maria Giulini cond. ANGEL S-3774 four discs.
- **VERDI: *Aida*.** Montserrat Caballé, Fiorenza Cossotto, Plácido Domingo, Piero Cappuccilli, Nicolai Ghiaurov; Royal Opera House Chorus, New Philharmonia Orchestra, Riccardo Muti cond. ANGEL SX-3815 three discs.
- **VERDI: *Otello*.** Renata Tebaldi, Mario del Monaco, Aldo Protti, Fernando Corena; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Herbert von Karajan cond. LONDON OSA 1324 three discs.

My attitude toward Verdi is well known to many readers after my nineteen years of reviewing opera in these pages. Still, the more recent reader is entitled to know that my own library includes *all* the recorded Verdi operas. Happily, few remain unrecorded at this writing, and during the past few years excellent versions of *Un Giorno di Regno*, *I Masnadieri*, and *Il Corsaro* have been added to the catalog. The "standard" Verdi operas have not been treated with similar distinction since 1973, as the list of my preferences indicates. (Reducing the number of "essential" Verdi operas to six for the purposes of this survey may seem like exemplary objectivity, but for me it goes distinctly against the grain!)

My preferences for *La Traviata*, *La Forza del Destino*, and *Otello* have remained the same since 1968. The two new *Traviatas* will no doubt please partisans of Beverly Sills (Angel) and Mirella Freni (BASF), but both are uneven sets, satisfying in part but falling short of total excellence. Except for Mirella Freni's Desdemona, the new *Otello* (Angel SX-3809) has little to commend it, especially in view of Herbert von Karajan's inexcusable cuts. As for *La Forza del Destino*, I regard both of the RCA alternatives (LSC-6413 and ARL4-1864) as more or less on a par with the London set, to which I cling with stubborn devotion nurtured by old memories.

There have been no new *Rigolettos* or *Don Carlos* in recent years, leaving my previous choices in place. There is a new *Aida*, however, with uniformly splendid singing and vibrant, if occasionally erratic, conducting by Riccardo Muti. For me, Muti's pluses outweigh his minuses, but those who think otherwise may continue to find enjoyment in the old RCA LSC-6198, with its excellent cast (Price, Bumbry, Domingo, Milnes) under conductor Erich Leinsdorf, who provides solid leadership.

(Continued overleaf)



TEBALDI: *La Bohème*



SILLS: *Manon*



CHRISTOFF: *Boris Godunov*



RYSANEK, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*

FISCHER-DIESKAU and LEAR: *Wozzeck*



Opera...

- **WAGNER: *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.** Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Caterina Ligendza, Placido Domingo, Christa Ludwig, Roland Hermann, Peter Lager, Horst Laubenthal; Chorus and Orchestra of Deutsche Oper, Berlin, Eugen Jochum cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2713 011 five discs.
- **WAGNER: *Die Walküre*.** Birgit Nilsson, James King, Hans Hotter, Régine Crespin, Christa Ludwig, Gottlob Frick; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Georg Solti cond. LONDON OSA 1509 five discs.
- **WAGNER: *Götterdämmerung*.** Birgit Nilsson, Wolfgang Windgassen, Gottlob Frick, Christa Ludwig, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Georg Solti cond. LONDON OSA 1604 six discs.
- **WAGNER: *Tristan und Isolde*.** Wolfgang Windgassen, Birgit Nilsson, Christa Ludwig, Martti Talvela, Eberhard Wächter; Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, Karl Böhm cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2713 001 five discs.

There are no new catalog entries insofar as the last three operas are concerned, but no fewer than three new *Meistersingers* have been added to tempt the buyer while making his choice more complicated. All four available versions offer good musical leadership. The one on Philips (Varviso cond.) is a Bayreuth production and radiates on-the-scene authenticity, but with the expected sonic intrusions. This set has the best Hans Sachs (Karl Ridderbusch). Angel (Karajan cond.) has the *only* Eva, Helen Donath, who sounds like a major artist. In this respect both London (Solti cond.) and DG (Jochum cond.) are deficient, but otherwise both are strongly cast and excellently recorded. I find Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau's Sachs tonally uneven and mannered to boot, but in his best moments no one can touch him. Placido Domingo is the best Walther of the lot, thereby assuring DG my current preference. But this is by a slim margin indeed—the buyer cannot go wrong with any of the four stereo sets. For that matter, Karajan's recordings of *Die Walküre* (DG), *Götterdämmerung* (DG), and *Tristan und Isolde* (Angel) are also valid alternatives to the choices I have listed.

- **BIZET: *Carmen*.** Tatiana Troyanos, Placido Domingo, José van Dam, Kiri Te Kanawa; London Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Georg Solti cond. LONDON OSA 13115 three discs.
- **GOUNOD: *Faust*.** Victoria de los Angeles, Nicolai Gedda, Boris Christoff; Paris Opera Orchestra, André Cluytens cond. ANGEL S-3622 four discs.

- **MASSENET: *Manon*.** Beverly Sills, Nicolai Gedda, Gérard Souzay, Gabriel Bacquier; New Philharmonia Orchestra, Julius Rudel cond. ABC ATS 20007 four discs.
- **OFFENBACH: *The Tales of Hoffmann*.** Beverly Sills, Stuart Burrows, Norman Treigle; London Symphony Orchestra, Julius Rudel cond. ABC ATS 20014 three discs.

For the first time I am listing a *fourth* French opera. My choice may surprise some. True, Offenbach was no Berlioz, not even a Saint-Saëns, but in my view *The Tales of Hoffmann* is a better opera than either *Les Troyens* or *Samson et Dalila*. It is also better than *Werther*, *Thaïs*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Lakmé*, and other worthy possibilities. The choice of the preferred version brings up the issue of Sills vs. Sutherland once again, which means that partisans of Miss Sutherland will unhesitatingly opt for London OSA 13106. It is a good performance of a *different edition* from the one usually staged, with spoken passages replacing the more familiar recitatives.

I found Solti's *Carmen* a brilliant achievement, surpassing in its totality all recorded rivals. But this does not mean that the memorable interpretations of the title role by Victoria de Los Angeles (Angel S-3613, Beecham), Maria Callas (Angel S-3650X, Prêtre), or Marilyn Horne (DG 2709 043, Bernstein) will or should be forgotten. The Sills-Gedda *Manon* is the only stereo set in the catalog, and it will not easily be surpassed. A good new *Faust* is needed, but the one RCA has upcoming (with Montserrat Caballé, Giacomo Aragall, and Paul Plishka) is not strong enough (I have heard an advance pressing) to replace the Angel set in my affections, a position it has held since my 1968 listing.

- **MOUSSORGSKY: *Boris Godounov*.** Boris Christoff, Evelyn Lear, Dimitri Ouzounov, Anton Diakov; Chorus of the National Opera House, Sofia; Paris Conservatoire Orchestra, André Cluytens cond. ANGEL S-3633 four discs.
- **TCHAIKOVSKY: *Eugene Onegin*.** Teresa Kubiak, Stuart Burrows, Bernd Weikl, Nicolai Ghiaurov; Royal Opera House Chorus and Orchestra, Sir Georg Solti cond. LONDON OSA 13112 three discs.

A new recording of the "original" Moussorgsky edition of *Boris Godounov* is pending from Angel. It should be acquired in addition to, not instead of, the Rimsky-Korsakov edition listed above, which is built around Boris Christoff's overwhelming characterization. Working with a well-chosen cast of international standouts and assisted by superb recorded sound, Solti has surpassed the *Eugene Onegin* led by Rostropovich and featuring Bolshoi stars Vishnevskaya, Atlantov, and Mazurok (Melodiya/Angel S-4115). But the margin is slight, and both sets are sources of immense pleasure. Tchaikovsky's *Pique Dame*, which should be irresistible once you have discovered these two Russian "essentials," is now

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A BUDGET OPERA LIBRARY

MONTEVERDI: *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, SERAPHIM S-6073 (László, Lewis, Cava, Bible; Pritchard).

MOZART: *Le Nozze di Figaro*, TURNABOUT M 4114/5/6 (Domgraf-Fassbaender, Helletsgruber, Rautawaara; Busch). ***The Magic Flute*,** RICHMOND S-63507 (Gueden, Lipp, Simoneau; Böhm). ***Don Giovanni*,** TURNABOUT M 4117/8/9 (Brownlee, Souez, Von Pataky, Baccaloni; Busch).

BELLINI: *Norma*, SERAPHIM M 6037 (Callas, Stignani, Rossi-Lemeni; Serafin).

DONIZETTI: *Lucia di Lammermoor*, SERAPHIM M 6032 (Callas, Di Stefano, Gobbi; Serafin).

ROSSINI: *The Barber of Seville*, RICHMOND M 63011 (Bastianini, Simionato, Corena; Erede).

VERDI: *Rigoletto*, RCA M AVM2-0698 (Berger, Pearce, Warren; Cellini). ***La Traviata*,** VICTROLA M 6004 (Carteri, Valletti, Warren; Monteux). ***La Forza del Destino*,** SERAPHIM M 6088 (Callas, Tucker, Tagliabue; Serafin). ***Don Carlos*,** SERAPHIM M 6004 (Stella, Filippeschi, Gobbi, Christoff; Santini). ***Aida*,** VICTROLA M 6119 (Milanov, Bjoerling, Warren; Perlea). ***Otello*,** RICHMOND M 63004 (Del Monaco, Tebaldi; Erede).

WAGNER: *Lohengrin*, RICHMOND M 65003 (Steber, Windgassen, Varnay, Uhde; Keilberth). ***Die Walküre*,** SERAPHIM M 6012 (Mödl, Windgassen, Frantz; Furtwängler). ***Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*,** SERAPHIM M 6030 (Schwarzkopf, Hopf, Edelmann; Karajan).



ZINKA MILANOV

HILDE GUEDEN



MARIO DEL MONACO

BIZET: *Carmen*, RCA (M) AVM3-0670 (Stevens, Peerce, Albanese, Merrill; Reiner).

GOUNOD: *Faust*, ODYSSEY (M) Y3-32103 (Steber, Conley, Siepi; Cleva).

OFFENBACH: *Tales of Hoffmann*, TURNABOUT (M) 65012/3/4 (Ayars, Grandi, Rounseville, Dargavel; Beecham).

MASSENET: *Manon*, SERAPHIM (M) 6057 (De Los Angeles, Legay, Dens; Monteux).

MOUSSORGSKY: *Boris Godounov*, SERAPHIM (M) 6101 (Christoff, Zareska, Gedda; Dobrowen).

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Eugene Onegin*, RICHMOND S-63509 (Belgrade National Opera; Danon).

MASCAGNI: *Cavalleria Rusticana*, SERAPHIM (M) 6008 (Bruna Rasa, Gigli, Bechi; Mascagni).

LEONCAVALLO: *Pagliacci*, SERAPHIM (M) 6058 (Bjoerling, De los Angeles, Warren, Merrill; Cellini).

PUCCHINI: *La Bohème*, SERAPHIM S-6099 (De los Angeles, Bjoerling, Merrill; Beecham). *Tosca*, SERAPHIM (M) 6027 (Caniglia, Gigli, Borgioli; De Fabritiis). *Madama Butterfly*, RICHMOND (M) 63001 (Tebaldi, Campora, Inghilleri; Erede).

R. STRAUSS: *Der Rosenkavalier*, RICHMOND (M) 64001 (Reining, Gueden, Jurinac, Weber; Kleiber). *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, RICHMOND S64503 (Rysanek, Goltz, Hopf, Schoeffler; Böhm).

BERG: *Wozzeck*, ODYSSEY (M) Y2-33126 (Farrell, Jagel, Harrell; Mitropoulos).

available in two good versions, Columbia M3-33828 and Melodiya/Angel S-4104.

□ **MASCAGNI:** *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Giulietta Simonato, Mario del Monaco, Cornell MacNeil; Chorus and Orchestra of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Tullio Serafin cond. LONDON OSA 1213 two discs.

□ **LEONCAVALLO:** *Pagliacci*. Franco Corelli, Lucine Amara, Tito Gobbi, Mario Zanasi; La Scala Chorus and Orchestra, Lovro von Matačić cond. ANGEL S-3618 two discs.

No new recordings of the fabled "twins" have emerged in recent years—only the prices have changed since my last listing. I may suggest, therefore, as a modest anti-inflationary measure, London OSA 1330, which combines the above *Cavalleria* with a thoroughly acceptable *Pagliacci* (Del Monaco, Tucci, and MacNeil; Molinari-Pradelli cond.) on only three discs.

□ **PUCCHINI:** *La Bohème*: Renata Tebaldi, Carlo Bergonzi, Gianna d'Angelo, Ettore Bastianini, Cesare Siepi; Orchestra of Santa Cecilia, Rome, Tullio Serafin cond. LONDON OSA 1208 two discs.

□ **PUCCHINI:** *Tosca*. Leontyne Price, Giuseppe di Stefano, Giuseppe Taddei; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Herbert von Karajan cond. LONDON OSA 1284 two discs.

□ **PUCCHINI:** *Madama Butterfly*. Victoria de los Angeles, Jussi Bjoerling, Mario Sereni, Miriam Pirazzini; Rome Opera Orchestra and Chorus, Gabriele Santini cond. ANGEL S-3604 three discs.

□ **PUCCHINI:** *Turandot*. Joan Sutherland, Luciano Pavarotti, Montserrat Caballé, Nicolai Ghiurov; John Aldis Choir, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Zubin Mehta cond. LONDON OSA 13108 three discs.

There has been so much action in Puccini recordings that the lack of change in my list since 1973 may prove only that I am either very loyal or very stubborn—probably both. RCA's new *Bohème* (Caballé, Domingo, Solti cond.) is certainly a strong contender, and so is London's excellent version conducted by Karajan with Freni and Pavarotti in the leading roles. How can anyone go wrong when faced with such a choice? As for *Tosca*, there are no fewer than three of post-1973 vintage. One of them (DG) is unevenly sung and erratically conducted; another (Philips) offers excellent singing by Montserrat Caballé and José Carreras but less than fully idiomatic leadership from conductor Colin Davis. That leaves RCA ARL2-0105 (Price, Domingo, Milnes, Mehta cond.), which is a good alternative if for any reason my first choice fails to please you. For the best all-around *Tosca*, however, you still must go back to Angel 3508 (mono), with Callas, Di Stefano, and Gobbi all in peak form and Victor de Sabata conducting matchlessly.

There are no new *Turandots* to write about, nor is any needed. If, for whatever

reason, the combination of Sutherland, Caballé, Pavarotti, and Mehta does not suit you, you may opt for Nilsson, Tebaldi, Bjoerling, and Leinsdorf (RCA) or Nilsson, Scotto, Corelli, and Molinari-Pradelli (Angel) without any argument from me. The Angel *Butterfly* continues to be my choice. For comment on the new RCA set with Caballé, see review in this issue.

□ **R. STRAUSS:** *Elektra*. Birgit Nilsson, Marie Collier, Regina Resnik, Tom Krause; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Georg Solti cond. LONDON OSA 1269 two discs.

□ **R. STRAUSS:** *Der Rosenkavalier*. Régine Crespin, Helen Donath, Yvonne Minton, Manfred Jungwirth; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Georg Solti cond. LONDON OSA 1453 four discs.

□ **R. STRAUSS:** *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. Leonie Rysanek, Christel Goltz, Hans Hopf, Paul Schoeffler; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Karl Böhm cond. RICHMOND 64503 four discs.

The choice of *Elektra* rather than *Salome* is a personal one; those who would opt for the latter instead as a representation of the highly charged earlier operas of Strauss have an equally valid position. If *Rosenkavalier* is viewed as the central fulcrum, a third Strauss opera, one of the later Romantic ones, seems necessary to balance the earlier one. *Ariadne auf Naxos* might appear to be the perfect choice, but its prologue demands too much of the non-German-speaking listener. *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, on the other hand, demands mostly patience. It is a long and, indeed, rather overwritten opera weighted down by the dense symbolism of its text, yet it contains pages of absolutely mesmerizing beauty. A new version is definitely needed; meanwhile, the contributions of Rysanek, Schoeffler, and Böhm make this early stereo set immensely attractive.

□ **BERG:** *Wozzeck*. Evelyn Lear, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Fritz Wunderlich; Orchestra of Deutsche Oper, Berlin, Karl Böhm cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2707 023 two discs.

History tells us that *Wozzeck* predates Puccini's *Turandot* (1924) and Strauss' *Arabella* (1930), but we are not fooled: those two look back, this one looks ahead. So far, in its more than fifty years of performance history, *Wozzeck* has failed to attain commercial success. It may never be popular, nor is it the kind of opera that can be fully enjoyed without the shattering impact of the stage action. Still, a listing of thirty-five "basic" operas must not overlook it. Of the two stereo versions, DG's is the more impressive overall. □

George Jellinek has been reviewing the operatic repertoire for STEREO REVIEW for the past nineteen years. He is music director of radio station WQXR in New York and has conducted his syndicated program The Vocal Scene from there for eight years.

NOISE REDUCERS



Noise reduction units shown above are: 1, the Pioneer RG-1; 2, the SAE 5000; 3, the Burwen 1201 A; 4, the dbx 3BX; 5, the Source Engineering Noise Suppressor; 6, the MXR Componder; 7, the Phase Linear 1000; 8, the RG, Inc. PRO-16B.

Authorities predict that they will be routinely built into all audio components at some time not too far in the future

By Daniel Shanefield

In a surprisingly short time, audio noise reduction has left the realm of laboratory theory and entered that of household practice. Market research shows that the B-type Dolby noise-reduction system is now a "high-priority" feature in cassette decks and enjoys a firm association with quality in the audio consumer's mind. Other, newer devices to "process" noise—to reduce if not entirely eliminate it—have gained respectable followings as well, and still newer products are probing such hitherto unexplored areas as disc "tick" and "pop" suppression.

As noise-reduction developments come to a rolling boil, the interested buyer will have to keep his wits about

him simply because of the operational differences among the products. Each has its own strong and weak points, each tends to be helpful in one application and out of its depth in another. To get what he wants from any noise reducer, the user must first grasp its underlying principles of operation and then deduce from those—either by intuition or experiment—just where its shortcomings lie. He will then have to decide, through listening tests in each application, to what extent the good points outweigh the bad. And it is helpful in every case to understand the sources and types of noise in sound recording and reproduction, for they are what determine which processor to use.

Noise: Types and Sources

Tape noise—especially tape hiss—is particularly troublesome for professional and amateur tape recordists alike, and one of the first aims of noise reduction was to bring it under some measure of control. Another major noise problem is the similar "hissy" disturbance that accompanies many FM broadcasts—rather like the steady "ssshhh" we hear on all but the very best phonograph records. Hum finds its way into a significant number of recordings as well (if it isn't already present in the record-playing system), and so do low-frequency "rumble" noises from studios and other recording sites, from faulty record manufacture, and from turntable vibration. Finally, the sharp, short-duration noises ("ticks," "pops," and "thwacks") that turn up on records for any number of reasons are among the most disagreeable of noises and the hardest to combat.

It is important to realize that, once introduced into a recording, noise cannot be eliminated completely by any means presently at our disposal. This leaves us with two possible plans of action: we can try to prevent the noise from being introduced in the first place (the object of Dolby and similar "pre-treatment" procedures), or we can try to pluck it out *selectively* from the

finished recording. But we cannot yet build electronic circuits clever enough to distinguish noise from music infallibly, much less to separate the two in order to banish one, and so we must rely on certain tricks and stratagems based on what we know about human hearing. Successful noise-reduction devices may hide ("mask") noise behind the music whenever possible, they may replace audibly "objectionable" noises with "less objectionable" ones, and some of them may, when necessary, introduce a subtle (and presumably undetectable) alteration in the musical content to sweep some noise under the rug, so to speak.

It is also important to understand that no single noise reducer is effective against all types of noise. The Dolby-B system can work only against the tape noise destined to be introduced by the tape-recording/playback process. It is helpless against any noise already in the material to be recorded. On the other hand, the Phase Linear Autocorrelator will reduce hiss wherever it finds it—but it ignores disc ticks and pops. The SAE 5000 specializes in ticks and pops (and works well against some of them), but it does nothing at all about problems of hiss, hum, or rumble.

(Continued overleaf)

Daniel Shanefield's interest in audio subjects stems from his work at Western Electric and from his audiophile activities.

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used in moderation, such expanders can provide a rough complement to the compression employed in the recording or broadcasting studios, restoring approximately the original dynamic range of the performance and reducing the noise in the bargain. What the expanders do, of course, is to contribute the second step of a true *componder* action. But the expander must be ad-

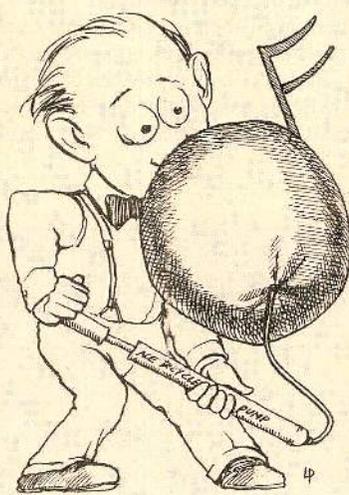
justed—sometimes quite carefully—to match the compression applied to the recording or broadcast or it will be a poor match to the original manipulations of the compressor. This can lead

to grotesque distortions of the musical dynamics, so that some instruments jump up and down in level illogically (unmusically) and may even seem to come forward into the listening room

"horribly." What they *will* do is produce noise or distortion "bursts." For example, phono-cartridge mistracking tends to be a rather loud signal, and many expanders will gleefully step in and make it still louder. The same is true for record noises and FM interference, including multipath distortion. An expander can also overload a power amplifier or disastrously exaggerate any overload distortion in a preamplifier. It's easy to conclude that your new expander is *adding* noise and distortion to your sound system when it's only "magnifying" that which has existed all along.

A type of distortion that expanders and like devices *do* introduce is called "pumping" or "breathing." Think of plucked string basses coming in with moderate vigor under a very soft patina of higher strings carrying a slow and delicate theme. At every string-bass pluck the typical expander will bump up the level of the basses and the level of the diminutive treble line as well. "Pumping" is a good description of the result; it's as if the high strings were suddenly—and unnaturally—inflated with each beat in the bass. It's a weird, almost indescribable effect (some pop producers use it deliberately in their recordings, possibly because it is weird and indescribable). But if you want to get rid of it you'll either have to turn the expansion down or get a "smarter" expander.

Q. Every time Rubinstein plays an arpeggio I get a "swish" sound



through my speakers. Is it the fault of my expander?

A. Yes. This is "noise pumping." Pianos are not much good at masking hiss (the swish), and dynamic noise reducers depend on a certain amount of psychoacoustic masking to hide their manipulations. Thus it's possible to hear the noise level going up and down behind the piano, whereas with a full symphony orchestra it might not be. French horns are also poor maskers, and when they come in solo it's often easy to hear the hiss level being bumped up behind them.

Q. I enjoy listening to opera on FM, but every once in a while Beverly Sills appears to spit at me. What's at fault?

A. Your dynamic filter is at fault. Ordinarily, when a human voice is the program, a dynamic filter will "shut down" the audio system's response at very high frequencies. But when Beverly delivers a very loud sibilant (and sibilants can be quite high in level), the threshold of the filter is exceeded, the filter "opens up," and you get a sudden spitting sound, made all the more obvious because of the contrast with the previous moments when the filter was in effect. If the condition is complicated by phono-cartridge mistracking—disaster! The answer is either less filter to begin with or more fortitude.

THESSE Q's and A's could continue almost indefinitely, but by now the message should be clear: clever as the better noise reducers are, music tends to be cleverer still, and somehow it always seems to find a way to outsmart these devices and make them look somewhat stupid. But we're now in an era of rapid noise-reduction progress. Many of the devices presently available are used and accepted by professional recording people (an important step), and their adoption by quality-conscious consumers is only a matter of time. Many authorities predict that they will be routinely built into all audio components at some time not too far in the future.

NOISE REDUCERS...

(Continued from page 71)

Compressors, Expanders, and Companders

While it is true that present-day recording media have an irreducible noise level already built into them, tape hiss on some sloppily made recordings can get more obtrusive than it ought to be, and it can't be discounted altogether even in the best recordings.

Fortunately, there are two conditions under which the tape noise will either not be heard or be heard so faintly that it will not intrude on a listener's consciousness unless he deliberately focuses on it: (1) if the music is very loud, the phenomenon of "psycho-acoustic masking" effectively buries

the noise in the music, and (2) if the noise is very soft, it may likewise be masked by noise in the listening environment (from traffic, air-conditioning, etc.) What are the implications of these two facts?

First of all, imagine yourself making a tape recording of some musical event. Quite properly, you set your recording levels so that the loudest passages just barely go "into the red" on your tape machine's meters. But suppose, whenever the loud passages die away, that you deliberately increase your recording levels so that even the softest sounds that follow are captured on the tape at close to 0 dB? You will wind up with a recording in which tape noise is rarely apparent because *all* the music in it is very loud. This is the principle of *compression*, so called because the dynamic range (the difference in level between the loudest and the softest musical sound) has been compressed to virtually nothing. The recording will sound quite unnatural musically—but it will be noise-free.

Second, imagine yourself listening to a tape recording in which tape noise is predictably obtrusive during quiet pas-

sages. Suppose that whenever these quiet passages occur you *turn down* the volume control so that they become even quieter. If you turn the volume down far enough, there will come a point when the tape noise falls beneath the level of the environmental noise and, in effect, disappears. This is the principle of *expansion*; you're exaggerating (expanding) the dynamic range by making the soft sounds much softer than they would be if you played the tape without any level manipulations, and you're also reducing the noise on the tape at just the times when it would otherwise become most audible.

Finally, imagine putting these two techniques together. You apply compression when you're making the tape by recording the quiet passages at a high level. Then, when you're playing the tape back, you turn the volume down (and the tape noise with it) at all the right moments to restore "quietness." In audio circles this two-step process is referred to as a *compander* action (*compressor/expander*); it is an extremely potent noise-reduction technique that underlies the operation of the Dolby systems and many of the dbx

LIVING WITH NOISE REDUCERS

ONCE incorporated into your sound system, a noise reducer will do things that no other component you've ever owned has done. If you're like the vast majority of users, you'll have nothing but admiration for the way it works. But if you're one of the unfortunate few, the noise reducer will baffle you with strange occurrences that you won't be able to account for without a pretty secure understanding of what the noise reducer is *intended* to do and how various unforeseen circumstances can foil it.

It would be impossible to describe in detail *all* the anomalies that might crop

his receiver nor his cassette deck had an adequate multiplex filter to eliminate the 19-kHz pilot signal that accompanies all stereo FM. During recording he never heard the pilot signal, but the Dolby circuits in his cassette deck certainly did, and responded accordingly. Then, during playback, the 19 kHz was lost; the playback frequency response of the cassette deck was

simply not capable of reproducing it. Like all companders, the Dolby system must "know" *everything* that took place during recording so that it can undo its processing in playback. In this case a vital piece of information was lost, the Dolby circuits went haywire, and all the highs went away.

Case 2. The playback high-frequency response of the cassette deck had gone to pot, either because of a change of tape, an excessively worn or dirty head (cassette tape heads require faithful and careful cleaning), or an unfortunate electronic misalignment within the machine. Again, the Dolby circuit's left hand didn't know what its right hand had done, and the highs went away. Unfortunately, a compander

NOISE REDUCERS...

(and/or recede from it) in a very distracting manner. When such things happen, the only solution is to decrease the degree of expansion (and of noise reduction).

By contrast, in a carefully controlled compander "loop" (Dolby, dbx, and MXR, to name some of the systems) the action of the mirror-image expander used in playback precisely inverts the action of the compressor used in recording, and no dynamic anomalies occur. [This assumes that the *entire* record-playback process is free of any irregularities that might "confuse" the action of the expander. As this month's "Tape Talk" column points out, such irregularities are not only common but frequently difficult to deal with.—Ed.]

Filters, Simple and Complex

Expanders and companders assume some control over—or at least foreknowledge of—what happens when a recording or broadcast is made. In general, filters (such as the high- and low-frequency ones in your amplifier or receiver) do not. They merely chop out

a band of frequencies in which noise is considered likely to occur, removing whatever musical material exists at those frequencies as well. The trouble with such filters is that you have to choose between music and noise. But how about a filter that turns itself on when there is no music in the frequency band that it controls and turns itself off when there is? The catch-all name for such devices is *dynamic filter*, and the Burwen 1201A is probably the most prominent example.

The Burwen system acts only at high frequencies, and it works by "chasing around" after whatever high-frequency musical content exists in a recording or broadcast. It discriminates between music and noise by means of reference to a *threshold* level. Any information below (softer than) that threshold is assumed to be noise; any information above is assumed to be music. There is no fixed cut-off frequency as there is in a simple high-frequency filter. Instead, the cut-off point slides up and down, so that for a piano it might eliminate all frequencies above 5,000 Hz and for a violin only the frequencies above 12,000 Hz. In common with other "dynamic" devices of this kind, the Burwen has an adjustment to vary the threshold so that your ear can decide on the best compromise between music and noise on each recording.

There are other, more complex ways of employing filters in noise reduction. The Phase Linear "Autocorrelator" uses what is essentially an electronically controlled multiband filter set—a

multiband equalizer, if you will. In response to various threshold levels and other detection circuits within the device (autocorrelation is the principle of assuming the existence of other specific frequencies when one "correlated" frequency appears in the input), the Phase Linear system freely chops away at certain bands of frequencies and leaves others relatively unscathed. It is among the most sophisticated one-step (as opposed to the two-step companders) noise-reduction systems available. Although like other one-step processors it theoretically suffers from lack of "foreknowledge" about what was done in the recording or broadcast studio, its effectiveness has delighted many listeners and astounded not a few.

Signal Interrupters

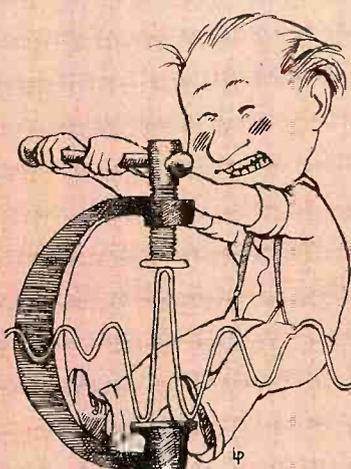
So far we haven't even touched on any system that can deal with "ticks" and "pops" from a phonograph record, often referred to by audio people as *impulse noise*. Impulse noise has several characteristics that an electronic processor would presumably be able to "recognize" and respond to:

- It is not continuous like hiss, but comes and goes with tremendous rapidity.
- It tends to span a broad range of frequencies (on a record scratch you can often hear your woofer go "thump" as your tweeter goes "snap," indicating that almost the whole frequency range of the system is involved).

STEREO REVIEW received its first impulse-noise suppressor (not one of those currently available) well over a year ago, and we immediately submitted it to the acid test: we gouged a violent scratch across the entire side of an LP record with a razor blade and played the result on a good turntable. To our delight, the sonic effects of the scratch were almost completely eliminated by the suppressor in playback. But what we didn't immediately realize was that we were using the wrong "acid test."

It seems that the worst signal you can throw at the impulse-noise suppressors is a continuous *series* of very closely spaced impulses such as you might get from a case of severe non-fill during the molding of a record or damage from phono-cartridge mistracking after a record has been played a number of times. We haven't had the opportunity to evaluate all the very latest suppressors, but those we have tried chop the music up like sausage meat

IMPULSE-NOISE SUPPRESSORS: DO THEY WORK?



under these conditions. Older records with an almost steady overlay of ticks and crackles fare almost as badly, unless the processor is turned down so far that there is very little noise reduction available. In between these extremes of a very nasty but infrequent "whap" and a lot of little willy-nilly "pips" there is a vast middle ground of noise that will determine whether you'll want to use such a suppressor on most of your records, half of them, or only a very few.

We all have a few well-loved records that are badly scratched. In my case, some of these records are also irreplaceable, and an impulse-noise suppressor is my first and best resort. But the need to readjust the suppressor, often several times for one record side, can get to be a chore. And although we can look forward to more sophisticated suppressors in the future, it is unlikely that we'll soon get one that can handle every situation with equal competence.

—Ralph Hodges

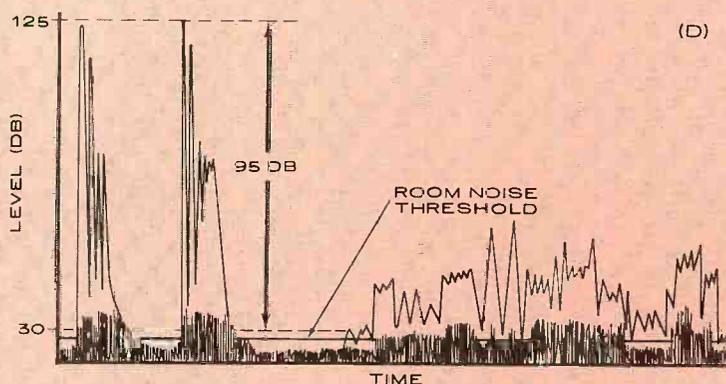
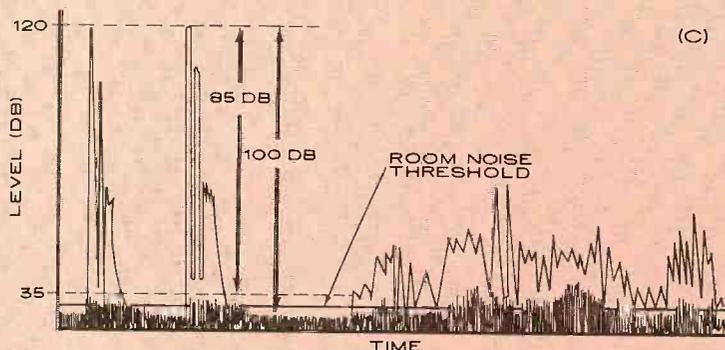
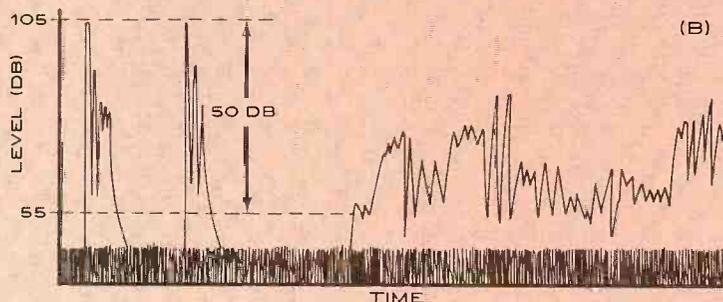
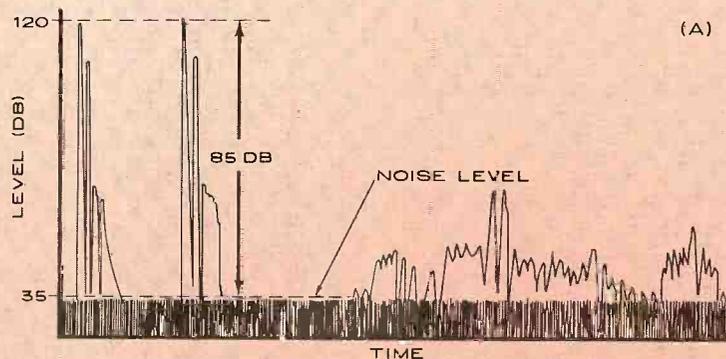
● It is often a very intense noise, far exceeding (for its brief instant of duration) the level of the music upon which it is momentarily superimposed.

Given that there are a number of "cues" by which an electronic processor could detect impulse noise and distinguish it from music, how would it go about combating the noise once it recognized it? All things considered, the best way seems to be "blanking" (turning off completely) the audio signal for an instant—an instant so brief that the ear can't detect the interruption. In a sense, this is a process that substitutes one noise (the discontinuity of the quick turn-off/turn-on action) for another (the original impulse noise). At least one impulse-noise remover, the SAE 5000, stores a voltage derived from the immediately preceding program material to inject into any signal interruptions that exceed 1½ milliseconds in duration, generally undetectable by ear, do not require any such treatment.

Choosing a Noise Reducer

The two-step compander systems are at once the most effective of the noise reducers and the least versatile, for they do nothing about pre-existing noise and can act only on noise introduced after the first (the preprocessing or "encoding") step. And so the user is limited to material that has been appropriately preprocessed at its point of origin (Dolbyized tapes and FM broadcasts, for example, or the small catalog of dbx-encoded phono discs sold by Klavier Records), or to recordings he makes and simultaneously pre-processes himself. Consequently, the companders appeal mostly to active tape recordists.

By contrast, all the other noise reducers are attractive in varying degrees to those who depend principally on commercially prerecorded material and non-Dolbyized FM broadcasts. Since they all have the potential for audibly altering the music as well as the noise level (and in the case of the expanders the alteration is quite deliberate), the user logically makes his choice on the basis of which alterations he finds most pleasing or least distracting. (Of course, it's not unusual for a serious audiophile to own several noise reducers, particularly if they're not redundant—a compander, an expander, and an impulse-noise remover, for example. Table I notes the usual applications for various types of noise processors, and also indicates to what degree their applications overlap.) (overleaf)



Closely miked, a few very vigorous seconds of music could have a dynamic "profile" encompassing a range of 120 dB. Were we able to record these few seconds (without noise processing) using a medium with an 85-dB dynamic range (A), an occasional moment of music would still get lost in the noise "forest." By compressing the music first and then recording it (B) we can keep virtually all the music above the noise level. If we follow that step with an expansion during playback (C), we have a true compander action that restores the original dynamic range and also suppresses the noise of the recording medium. (D) shows the effect a simple playback/expander would have on the unprocessed (A)-recording. (These are not, of course, actual signal traces.)

NOISE REDUCERS...

Table II compares the more important characteristics of the available compander systems, and it should also yield a certain insight into the philosophies that guided their design. The matter of the Dolby system's calibration deserves highlighting because it comes up frequently in discussions of noise reducers. The B-type Dolby system restricts its compander action to the upper ("hiss-prominent") half of the audio-frequency range, as does the functionally similar but operationally different JVC ANRS system (see this month's test report on the JVC KD-75 cassette deck for more details). Lower frequencies are left untouched. There is therefore a chance that high- to low-frequency imbalance may appear

once the companding is all done—unless the calibration of the system is rather carefully carried out. Also, these compressors act only on signals below a certain preset level, and the initial calibration must be correct if the compression threshold and the subsequent expansion threshold are to match exactly. The dbx and MXR systems compress *all* frequencies and do not involve critical thresholds, thus avoiding these problems.

The most immediately impressive thing about compressors such as the dbx system is the ability they give a live recordist to capture almost the full dynamic range of instruments such as a close-miked drum set with hardly an audible trace of tape noise. So far, however, this performance can be obtained only at a cost in compatibility. (Encoding/decoding with *more* than 10 dB or so of treatment produces a tape that is unlistenable *without* decoding. Both Dolby and JVC limit themselves to 10 dB.)

In the one-step noise reducers, such as expanders and dynamic filters, we

encounter not only a variety of fundamental principles but also a wealth of seemingly minor but audibly important functional differences—differences in *thresholds*, *attack* and *release times*, and *expansion rates*, to name only some of the more significant. These operating parameters also apply to compressor systems, but for the designers of expanders they are especially critical. More than anything else they dictate how much expansion (and consequent noise reduction) can be applied by the user before "unnatural" musical effects begin to intrude.

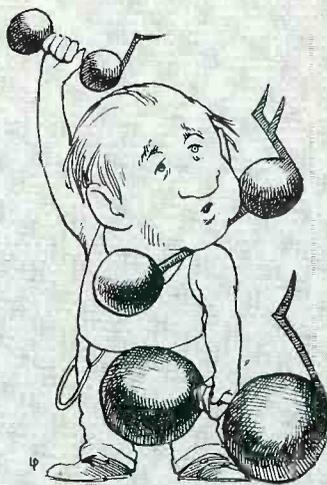
Some expanders expand "upward" only, making any sound loud enough to exceed a certain (almost always adjustable) threshold level somewhat louder. Others expand upward and downward as well (to make soft sounds still softer). Two thresholds may be involved here, in which case medium-level sounds will be left pretty much alone, or a single "transition" level (also adjustable) may be used, above which everything goes up and below which everything goes down.

ALTHOUGH the primary function of an expander designed for consumer use is to enhance the dynamic range of already recorded material, to add a degree of liveliness and "zip" that most listeners appreciate, the noise reduction achieved as a by-product of this process is a readily perceived benefit. Unfortunately, when overdone, expansion leads to noise pumping and other unnatural effects. The idea behind the dbx Model 3BX is to control the worst of these audible anomalies by processing the signal through three completely separate expanders per channel—one devoted to low frequencies, the next to mid-range, and the last to treble.

The past few months have afforded me several opportunities to listen to the 3BX, both by itself and in direct comparison with other highly regarded expanders of a more conventional nature. What I've heard amounts to a textbook explication of the best and the worst that expanders can do.

First of all, the 3BX seems to be exceptionally resistant to noise and music pumping. Many times it was apparent that the 3BX could avoid the noise/distortion bursts on material such as unaccompanied French horn that other expanders persistently introduced, presumably because they weren't able to expand just bass and mid-range and leave the treble alone. Nor was it difficult to find recordings in which conventional expanders had all the instruments popping up and down in level ac-

A UNIQUE EXPANDER



cording to the beat of a strong string-bass and drum line; the 3BX was comparatively unperturbed by these.

On the other hand, the 3BX had a few foibles of its own. For example, hit with some of the excessive sibilants ("s" and "t" sounds) that are all too common in vocal recordings, the 3BX had a tendency to boost just the sibilance, leaving everything else alone (a conventional expander would boost the rest of the voice as well, not making matters any better, but at least not

making them worse). Also, listening to exaggeratedly bright and "bright/noisy" recordings with the 3BX was not always a pleasure, particularly when it was installed in the tape-monitor loop where the tone controls could not get at the signals being fed to it (using tone controls on the output was better than nothing, but not always as good as it might have been).

During these evaluations I became involved in a debate over, of all things, the *stereo imaging* of various expanders. The substance of the discussion was this: given that all currently available consumer expanders are two-channel devices, should the left channel work "in harness" with the right, or should the two channels be allowed to work independently? In the former case, a big cymbal crash or drum roll in the left channel would boost the level of the entire orchestra. In the latter, the drum or cymbal would abruptly "pull" any centrally located instruments (shared in common by the two channels) into the left speaker. (You can appreciate what an interesting dilemma this might present to the 3BX, which could theoretically pull the *fundamental* tones of an instrument in one direction and its overtones in another. It does not, however, because it employs an in-harness approach as the lesser of two evils.)

I am not yet ready to take a stand on this issue myself—at least until I have had experience with a great deal more program material. —Ralph Hodges

Attack time and release time determine (1) how fast the expander acts when the signal level crosses a threshold and (2) how fast it ceases acting when the signal returns from its excursion. An expander may alter its own attack and release times automatically in technically complex ways to suit the musical "conditions," but this is one parameter that is not adjustable by the user. The overall *degree* of expansion is usually user-adjustable, but the expansion *rate* is not. According to the (pre-determined) rate, a signal that barely crosses a threshold may be expanded to the same degree (up or down) as one that really goes to extremes, or it may be expanded only moderately, saving the maximum effects for *extremely* loud or soft signals.

The way these and other parameters are juggled constitutes the designer's "bag of tricks." If your bag is his bag, all is well, but there is some evidence that designers design pretty much for their *own* musical tastes! For example, in dealing with a studio recording of heavy-metal rock he might want extremely rapid attack and release times and a varying expansion rate. For a Brahms symphony he might choose a moderately fast attack and rather slow release accompanied by a constant rate of expansion. You might agree—but, then again, you might not. This is a matter of taste, and in your choice of equipment you should let that taste prevail because the degree of noise reduction available is very likely to be secondary to the degree of musical manipulation you can tolerate.

IN evaluating dynamic filters and impulse-noise removers, aural taste gives way to aural discernment. These devices (Table III lists the more widely distributed units) take real "bites" out of the music when they're adjusted (by you) to reduce excessive noise, but they produce good if somewhat mild results when sensitively handled. They are usually at their best with recordings that have little noise to begin with. You will have to decide which of them reduces that "little" noise closer to nothing without distracting side effects, and you should use your prized recordings rather than your noisiest ones in the evaluation. But don't hesitate to bring along some of your noisiest as well, for they'll give you the opportunity to hear the worst as well as the best. And don't be surprised if at first the best sounds none too improved. Up to 10 dB of noise reduction will not be impressive during five minutes of listening in a noisy store, but if the unit is really consistent and free of unnatural effects it will enrapture you after only a half-hour or so of listening at home. □

TABLE II—COMPANDER CHARACTERISTICS

SYSTEM	PROS	CONS
ANRS, Dolby B	<p>Large amount of commercially preprocessed material available (cassettes, FM).</p> <p>Generally trouble-free interchangeability of recorded tapes and machines.</p> <p>Fair degree of compatibility with non-decoder-equipped users (Dolbyized FM broadcasts sound acceptable even when not decoded).</p> <p>Equipment reasonably priced and widely available either built-in or as add-on modules.</p>	<p>Relatively modest degree of maximum noise reduction available.</p> <p>Initial calibration is fairly critical for best results.</p>
dbx, MXR (two-step models only)	<p>Large degree of noise reduction available.</p> <p>Comparatively noncritical initial calibration.</p> <p>Some significant acceptance by manufacturers and users of semi-professional tape equipment.</p>	<p>Scarcity of commercially preprocessed program-source material.</p> <p>No compatibility with non-dbx/MXR-equipped users.</p>

TABLE III—NOISE REDUCERS

Manufacturer	Model	Price (approx.)	Type	Encode	Decode	One-step Process	Outboard or Built-in	Approximate Dimensions (in outboard) h x w x d (in.)	Remarks
Burwen Research	1201A	\$379	Dynamic filter	—	✓	out	2 ⁹ / ₁₆ x17 ¹ / ₂ x8 ³ / ₄		
	TNE 7000	299	Signal interrupter	—	✓	out	3x17 ³ / ₄ x7 ¹ / ₂		
dbx	117 ¹	175	Expander	—	✓	out	3 ³ / ₄ x5 ³ / ₄ x9		
	118 ¹	219	Expander	—	✓	out	3 ³ / ₄ x7 ¹ / ₄ x10 ¹ / ₂		
	119 ¹	198	Expander	—	✓	out	3 ³ / ₄ x5 ³ / ₄ x9		
	122 ²	275	Compander	✓	—	out	3 ³ / ₄ x11x10 ¹ / ₄		
	124 ²	399	Compander	✓	—	out	3 ³ / ₄ x11x10 ¹ / ₄		
	128 ²	450	Compander	✓	—	out	3 ³ / ₄ x11x10 ¹ / ₄		Combination of dbx 118 and 122. Operates in three frequency bands.
	3BX	650	Expander	—	✓	out	4x18x10		
Dolby Labs	B	See remarks	Compander	✓	—	in	—		Built into the equipment of licensed manufacturers.
Heath	AD-1304	200	Expander	—	✓	out	4 ¹ / ₂ x17 ¹ / ₂ x8 ³ / ₄		Available only as kit.
JVC	ANRS	See remarks	Compander	✓	—	in	—		Built into JVC tape machines.
	Super ANRS	See remarks	Compander	✓	—	in	—		Built into JVC tape machines.
MXR Innovations	Compander	130	Compander	✓	—	out	2x9 ¹ / ₄ x7		
Phase Linear	1000 ³	349	Dynamic filter expander	—	✓	out	5x9 ¹ / ₂ x11 ¹ / ₂		Includes several processors.
Philips	DNL	See remarks	Dynamic filter	—	✓	in	—		Built into Philips tape machines.
Pioneer	RG-1	175	Expander	—	✓	out	5 ³ / ₄ x15 ³ / ₄ x12 ³ / ₄		
RG, Inc.	PRO-16W	275	Expander	—	✓	out	3 ¹ / ₂ x18x12		
SAE	5000	200	Signal interrupter	—	✓	out	3x10 ³ / ₄ x9 ³ / ₄		
Source Engineering	Noise Suppressor	250	Dynamic filter	—	✓	out	4x10x11 ¹ / ₂		

¹dbx Models 117, 118, and 119 have compression capabilities for home taping but they are primarily meant to be used as expanders.

²dbx Models 122, 124, and 128 are full companders (2:1 compression/expansion ratio) and may be used to decode dbx-

encoded discs.

³The Autocorrelator, Peak Limiter, and Downward Expander which make up the Model 1000 are also built into the Phase Linear Model 4000 preamplifier.

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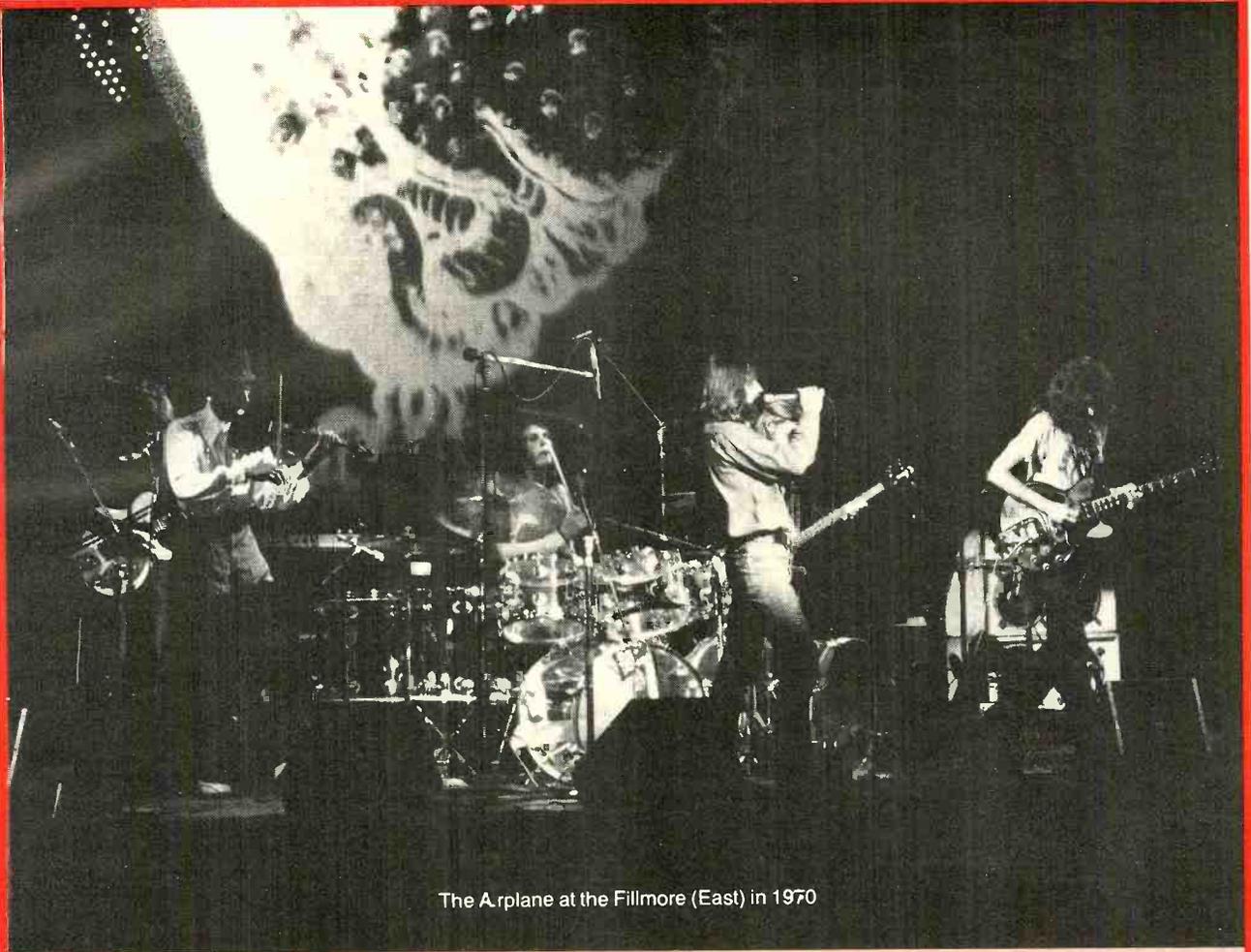
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The Airplane at the Fillmore (East) in 1970

JEFFERSON AIRPLANE/STARSHIP

It has shaped the attitudes of a generation of musicians, of audiences seeking pleasure, and of successful bands seeking a good sound

*A retrospective (with flashbacks)
By Josh Mills*

PAUL KANTNER, eating cookies and drinking milk, sits in a second-floor office in an oddly painted black and gold house opposite San Francisco's Golden Gate Park where, legend has it, Enrico Caruso spent a night during the earthquake of 1906 and where Grunt Records is now headquartered. A founder of Jefferson Airplane and the only member to endure without a break the group's first decade (an anniversary marked this year), Kantner has achieved some *de facto* status as a philosopher-poet of American rock-and-roll. He is explaining why he voted for President Carter, and it somehow sounds odd coming from the leader of a band whose radical sympathies are legendary.

Those who were actively involved in the late-Sixties counterculture/rock explosion are likely never to forget Kantner at the Altamont Festival, yelling into the microphone that his lead singer had just been clubbed by rampaging Hell's Angels. Or Kantner, tripping, greeting the dawn with the Airplane at

STARSHIP AIRPLANE...

Woodstock. Or the initial impact of "Volunteers" (RCA LSP-4238), an album full of up-against-the-wall rhetoric. Yet here he is today, draining off the last of his milk and saying, "I find myself getting dangerously Republican. . . . The Republicans and the



Russell Eliot Reif

"Kung fu!" screams Gracie, jumping out of her seat and assuming a fighting stance . . .

anarchists are close to one another, starting at opposite ends but going over the top and touching, particularly on the issue of human freedom. . . . People are learning, slowly.

"As a band what we've always done is . . ." he fumbles for a minute, wanting to say it right, "is to think of ourselves as a reaction against the sheepish following. We've demonstrated that there are other ways of functioning than what we've all been told."

IT IS 1974: I am backstage in a mid-Manhattan television studio where the pilot show of "Speakeasy," a rock talk show hosted by Chip Monck, "the voice of Woodstock," is being taped. Chip, a lighting man specializing in concerts, has recruited some of his heavy friends—James Taylor, Grace Slick, Dr. John, and Waylon Jennings—to help get the show off the ground.

Ever the gentleman, Chip has sent Gracie a bottle of champagne in advance to thank her for doing the show, and she has shown up drunk, angry, and disruptive.

Cameras roll. Chip asks a question and James Taylor responds, "Carly and I don't want to be the new Ozzie and Harriet."

"Kung Fu!" screams Gracie, jumping out of her seat and assuming an appropriate fighting stance.

Now Waylon is talking about how tired he is of working weekends. Gracie yells, "Don't tell us, tell your manager!"

Chip shakes his head after the taping. "Next time I'll send her champagne after the show."

* * *

Since its debut in 1965, Jefferson Airplane has always had—for the young, of course—a socio-political symbolic value at least equal to its musical influence. It was the first San Francisco band to sign a record contract, and the first to bring East the psychedelic lights of Haight-Ashbury. The Airplane was the first eminent musical lobbyist for free concerts in the parks. It appeared at all the early festivals and in most of the rock films of the time. Wherever it went, part of the Airplane's image was that it did just as it pleased, and bleep the business end of it.

"Bill Graham [their manager] is always asking us to come down and play. And we'll say we've got to rehearse, and Bill says, 'C'mon, you know your songs.' But we don't work that way, and never have. We just can't respond to the pressures of the music business," Paul insists, starting on another cookie. "It's like trying to drive to Mexico if you don't have a car."

"But when you started in the music business . . ." I began.

"I didn't start in the music business," Paul snaps. "I started in music. People liked what we were doing, and it just happened. There was a lot of luck in the timing, as well as good musicians involved. The business just became a necessary part of it."

AIRPLANE, Starship, and—most of all—Paul have always had a good idea of what awaited them if they succumbed to commercial pressures. "Quite simply, you die from going along, and succeed from not going along. I don't mean die physically, though that's there too for some. But you go along and in three years, maybe five, you're gone. That's the story of

the average rock-and-roll man. But you can go beyond that. We have."

And so, in this era of rock megabucks, Airplane/Starship limits itself on the merchandising front.

"We've turned our backs on the t-shirts, lunch boxes, and Starship shoes necessary to make those millions," Paul said. "We've turned down the ballpark concerts. When *Miracles* was a hit, we got booked to do a whole bunch of stadiums, and we pulled out. I would be embarrassed to charge that much money or to play for so many people. It's like watching a pitcher on



Joseph Sta

Marty has become a machismo sex symbol, a provocative rock-and-roll man.

the mound from the bleachers; maybe the first 10,000, even 20,000 people can see and hear okay. The rest just come to a party. By the time we got on, everybody would be sun smashed, drunk, or drugged out. Not for us."

* * *

IT IS 1969: The stage at Tanglewood rises like a pair of wings, the better to radiate the sound out over the crowds on the lawn. Tanglewood, home of the great symphonic concerts of summer. But tonight it's all dif-

ferent, and the employees, from parking-lot attendants to ushers, don't quite know what to do. On the concert bill are B. B. King, the Who, and Jefferson Airplane, a stunning (but typical) program of the Sixties that will be financially impossible in ten years. This is an important night for rock, this wedging open of another door to provide a new environment for rock fans. And it is a memorable show; the performers feed on each other's energy with spectacular results.

* * *

Other Starship members have joined Paul and me in the Grunt office and are discussing the group. Pete Sears, Eng-

many people. But they're wrong. It's a large park and people should be able to use it to enjoy things together. So they make up weird excuses why we can't play. Last time, some horse in a stable two miles away got hit over the head with a soda bottle, and they tried to blame it on us."

More than any other group in pop music, the Starship devotes its time and resources to these much-loved free concerts, but, as Craig says, "They still think of us as outlaws, even though there's probably less illegal parking or disorderly conduct at our functions than at, say, a baseball game in the park."

The group's "outlaw" image remains from the glory days of San Francisco when the "summer of love," now romanticized beyond the furthest bounds of reality, was in full swing.

"No, I don't think we exaggerate it," Paul says. "It really was a magic time. Nothing like it happened before, or has happened since. What happened here was real. Then they tried to copy and mass-produce it, and it was over."

* * *

IT IS 1969: Bright sunlight streams along the ground now, racing down from the hills surrounding White Lake into the cornfields where dozens of kids have bedded down for the night. The corn seems gigantic to us city people who have traveled far from home to attend the Woodstock Festival, and it blocks out the sky from where we are lying. It has an odd effect on the sound, too. We are a half-mile from the stage, but as the sun wakes us, the first thing we hear through the speakers is Grace Slick's powerful voice.

We sit there, transfixed by the music. Paul Kantner looks out at the straggling, mud-covered multitudes and laughs. "Good morning, people! Good morning, sun!" And the Airplane plays on. It is 5:45 a.m. Ugh. Too early to get dressed. I flop back on my sleeping bag and look at the corn as the Airplane plays all of "Volunteers" for the cheering, whooping, ragged army of the counterculture.

* * *

"One of the things I really miss is the kind of club where a lot of musicians just hang out and jam," Pete Sears says. "I remember about fourteen years ago there was this club in London, the Speakeasy Club, where Paul McCartney and Jimi Hendrix—all those people—were always playing together, a million different combinations of people."

"And we don't have clubs like that any more," Craig moans. He's twenty-two, too young to have ever seen one.

Kantner has been thinking about opening such a club to give young musicians a place to perform in public. "It's karma, it's very reciprocal," Paul says. "If you don't nourish the cycle at

its end then there won't be a new beginning. The problem with running a club, though, is that it's such a full-time job that I wouldn't be a musician any more. Some day, when everyone is sick of Jefferson Starship, maybe that's what I'll do. But it can be a real ulcer maker."

END-AND-BEGINNING, end-and-beginning, the collective life of Jefferson Airplane and Starship members has moved in cycles. It began in 1965, when folk-rock was the rage. Marty Balin, who had sung with the Town



Russell Etlick/Reif

Paul: "I would live in a flophouse before putting up with music-business pressure."

lish bass player and occasional keyboard man, says, "Big halls are bad karma. We go out there on stage and give out good energy, positive energy, and we want to be close enough to get that back from our audience."

Craig Chaquico, lead guitarist, nods. "We'd love to do more outdoor concerts, free concerts in the parks, but every time we try to set it up we run into hassles. The last time we played Golden Gate Park people complained: too much noise, too much dirt, too



Joseph Sta

And the audience says, "Let Jack sing." It probably starts as a joke. "Make Jack sing!"

Criers, met Kantner, and the two decided to form a three-guitar band. Just when the Airplane started performing at the Matrix, a local folk-rock club, another San Francisco band, the Great Society, debuted there with singer Grace Slick.

Jefferson Airplane was signed by RCA, and by January of 1966 they had recorded their first album (and the first for any San Francisco group), "Jefferson Airplane Takes Off" (RCA LSP-3584). But the album wasn't re-

STARSHIP AIRPLANE...

leased until September, by which time vocalist Signe Anderson had left to have a baby. Slick took over and drummer Spencer Dryden replaced Skip Spence, who had quit to join Moby Grape. In December the band returned to San Francisco to record "Surrealistic Pillow" (RCA LSP-3766), the album that gave them national exposure with its two hit singles *Somebody to Love* and *White Rabbit*. In January 1967 Airplane came East, bringing the first San Francisco light show and attendant psychedelia to New York.

So far so good. Airplane cruised along, recording "After Bathing at Baxter's" (RCA LSP-4545) and "Crown of Creation" (RCA LSP-4058) with personnel intact. In November 1969 they released "Volunteers," highly celebrated by the political left and full of pungent rock-and-roll. A month later the Airplane performed at the Altamont Speedway Festival organized by the Rolling Stones and were traumatized when the Hell's Angels, hired by the Stones for security, beat up members of the audience and—when he tried to intercede—Marty Balin.

It was symbolic, perhaps, but after Altamont the Airplane plunged into what a more business-oriented group would call decline, but which, reasonably enough, they called a period of re-examination. Spencer Dryden left, and Joey Covington became the drummer. Fiddler Papa John Creach joined. But the band was not recording. Kantner's energies went into an album called "Blows Against the Empire" (RCA LSP-4448), a sci-fi story with political overtones recorded with friends outside the Airplane.

Paul and Grace had a baby girl, born January 25, 1971, and after some thought of naming her "God" they settled instead on "China." A few months later Marty Balin quit the Airplane.

What followed was a period of experimentation that drew few critical raves. Airplane formed Grunt Records and released "Bark" (Grunt 1001), which sold to older fans but enlisted few new converts. Grace and Paul did their own album, "Sunfighter." The band seemed to be falling apart.

In July 1972 Airplane, its most creative days clearly behind, staggered through "Long John Silver" (Grunt FTR-1007), which marked the debut of drummer John Barbata, a former Tur-

tle. A month later, before 50,000 fans at a free concert in New York City's Central Park, the Airplane inducted David Freiberg, formerly with Quick-silver Messenger Service, to sing and to play keyboards and bass. The final blow came a month later when Jorma Kaukonen and Jack Casady retired to devote themselves to their own band, Hot Tuna. Although it contributed to the breakup, it was good for band members to know that they could leave and move on to individual musical endeavors with no bitterness left behind.

But the Airplane itself languished. "Everybody was going off in different directions," Kantner recalls, "and it took us a while to adjust to the fact that we didn't have a group any more."

In mid-1973, Grunt released a collaborative effort from Kantner, Slick, and Freiberg called "Baron von Tollbooth and the Chrome Nun" (Grunt BFL1-10148) to critical boos, followed

February 1974, Jefferson Starship was officially launched, with Craig Chaquico as lead guitarist. Their first performances, oddly enough, were not of new material but were tied into an album called "Early Flight" (Grunt CYL1-0437), a collection of old Airplane material. The tour was hardest on Craig, who had to fill Jorma's shoes.

Starship on tour, at first glance . . . well, the song remains the same. Craig is cuter than Jorma was, and he plays well, more lyrically even than his predecessor. But somehow it seems wrong, it hasn't got the old intensity. Pete Sears and David Freiberg, who alternate back and forth between keyboards and bass, are okay. Jack Casady was the living end for rock bass players, though. There was something about his weird appearance, how he never said a word on stage, never sang, never smiled . . . weird and solemn and intense. . . .



THEN: Jefferson Airplane members left to right, rear, are Marty Balin, Paul Kantner, Grace Slick; front, Jorma Kaukonen, Spencer Dryden, Jack Casady.

in January by Grace's disappointing solo album, "Manholé" (Grunt BFL1-0347). The word most often used by the press to describe Kantner, Slick, and their music was "self-indulgent," and it was an open question if the Airplane would ever fly again.

Pete Sears comments: "I wouldn't exactly say they were over the hill. It was a time of looking about for a fresh view, maybe new people, something to change their sound." There was a cautious feeling-out period during which the current members of the group spent a lot of time playing and writing together in one another's houses. Finally, in

It is 1970: The crowd has danced itself into a frenzy tonight at the Fillmore East. It started slowly, but Gracie has kept at it, urging the crowd to "get up off your asses and shake it." Finally they do, sweating and screaming, and the band plays on and on, and finally someone on stage comes forward and proudly asks the drained audience, "What next?"

And the audience says, "Let Jack sing." It probably starts as a joke. "Make Jack sing!" You still can't see his face behind the shades. Are we imagining it or is he looking for a place to hide? The chant swells to fill the Fillmore, a chant of love and affection. And finally Jack steps forward, to nearly stage center, smiles, and bows his head. And then steps back. Just like that.

Starship now relies solely on Grace and Marty for visual effects. The attraction of the two working together, singing with (and, just occasionally, at) each other, is as startling and powerful as it was ten years ago when they sang at the Monterey Festival. "Dragonfly" (Grunt BFL1-0717) was the album noteworthy for the return, on one song only, of Marty Balin. The song, *Caroline*, was a highlight of the subsequent tour.

The uneasy relationship between Marty and the rest of Starship is the one large source of tension that stands above the group's day-to-day small problems. With him, they've got more intensity—his duos with Gracie are permanently installed in the rock hall of fame—more charisma on stage, and more commercial success. But he lacks a sense of dedication to the group, which worries its other members. The uncertainty over Marty means uncer-

morning to come back to the studio, Grace and Paul were fighting, and we didn't know if the band was going to stay together. We raced down to the studio, and as we walked in the door we could hear them yelling at each other while the rest of the band stood around.

"After that, there was no danger. The break-up turned out to be good for both of them."

"The band is very important to Gracie and me," Paul says. "We were together in the band before we were together as a couple, at home. She's happy now, and I'm happy, and the group works."

STARSHIP'S will to survive, surely embodied most deeply in Kantner, has led the group into its second decade of performing. Not many other rock groups can claim such longevity. To celebrate their tenth anniversary as re-

will be a shortcut to wonderful memories of concerts in the park, perhaps a festival or two, and the excitement of San Francisco revisited. Older fans are still the bulwark of Starship's following. They are the children of the Sixties now grown up. Their musical heroes were Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix, the Beatles, and the Jefferson Airplane headed by Slick, Kantner, and Balin. Today, of all those acts, only the Airplane/Starship remains.

And the fans still await the new albums, still buy them loyally and uncritically, still flock to the concerts. But Starship, unlike some of the other older bands, has also had a peculiar success in developing new audiences. Some groups—the Beach Boys and the Who, for instance—seem to have accumulated, along with their followers from the Sixties, a generation of younger fans who like them for exactly the same reasons the older ones do, including the nostalgic aura of the past that clings to them. Not so with the Starship. They too have younger fans—in fact, it was these younger fans who made the single *Miracles* and "Red Octopus" (Grunt BFL1-0999), the album from which it came, the most successful in Airplane/Starship's history—but the kids follow for slightly different reasons. They are not politicized or attracted to the myths and memories of the Sixties counterculture. Some follow simply because they like the music. More follow because Marty Balin has become a machismo sex symbol, a provocative rock-and-roll man. The kids adore his posturing for interviews, his competing with Grace for stage-center and photo coverage. It may be a superficial reason for success, at least as compared with the Sixties, but it is a reason.

So the Starship endures, continuing to produce enjoyable music if not the ground-breaking stuff of its earlier incarnation. Its influence has been boundless. It has shaped the attitudes of a generation of musicians, of audiences seeking pleasure, and of successful bands seeking a good sound. Consider the recent success of Fleetwood Mac, which added two women and came up with a hit-making sound very much like an English Airplane.

"I can't imagine not enjoying this," Paul Kantner says, "because we only do things we enjoy. If I had no choice, well, I would move down to Market Street and live in a flophouse before putting up with music-business pressure. It makes you sick, disturbs your vitality. You could get an *ulcer*," he solemnly concludes, reaching for another glass of milk and another handful of cookies. □

Grunt Records



NOW: Jefferson Starship left to right, rear, are Peter Sears, Paul Kantner, Grace Slick, John Barbata; front, David Freiberg, Marty Balin, Craig Chaquico.

tainty about the Starship's future, because Starship, whatever else it is, is also a business.

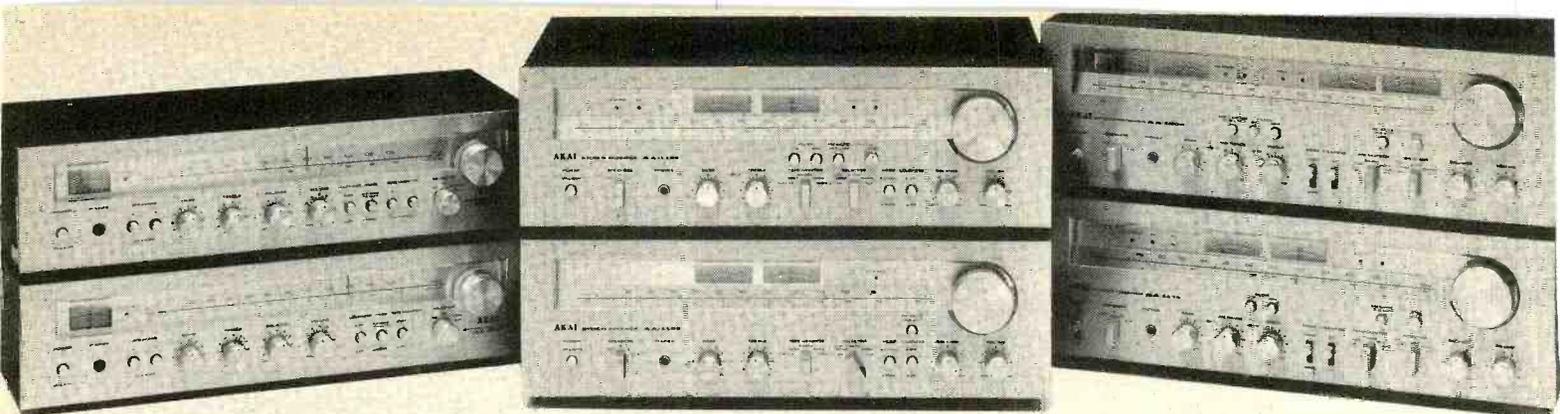
And what of Gracie, possessor of that scorching wit and that powerful, keening voice, who used to be Paul's wife but is now married to somebody else? How did the band survive the pair's marital breakup?

"The first week they split was hard," Pete says, "but they thrashed it right out. Had to, I suppose."

"For about two days everybody was freaked out," Craig remembers. "I was up in Mendocino at Barbata's and we got a call at about seven in the

morning, RCA (which distributes and promotes Grunt) suggested a special anniversary album. At first the band declined, not interested. Finally they gave in, supervising the selection of songs and artwork, and the result was "Flight Log, 1966-1976" (Grunt CYL2-1255), which features a lovely booklet. The two-disc set pulls songs from all the albums, bad ones as well as good, from solo efforts and non-group albums, from Hot Tuna and Airplane and Starship. It is one of those rare albums that transcends its music to become a multimedia documentary.

For Starship's older fans, the album



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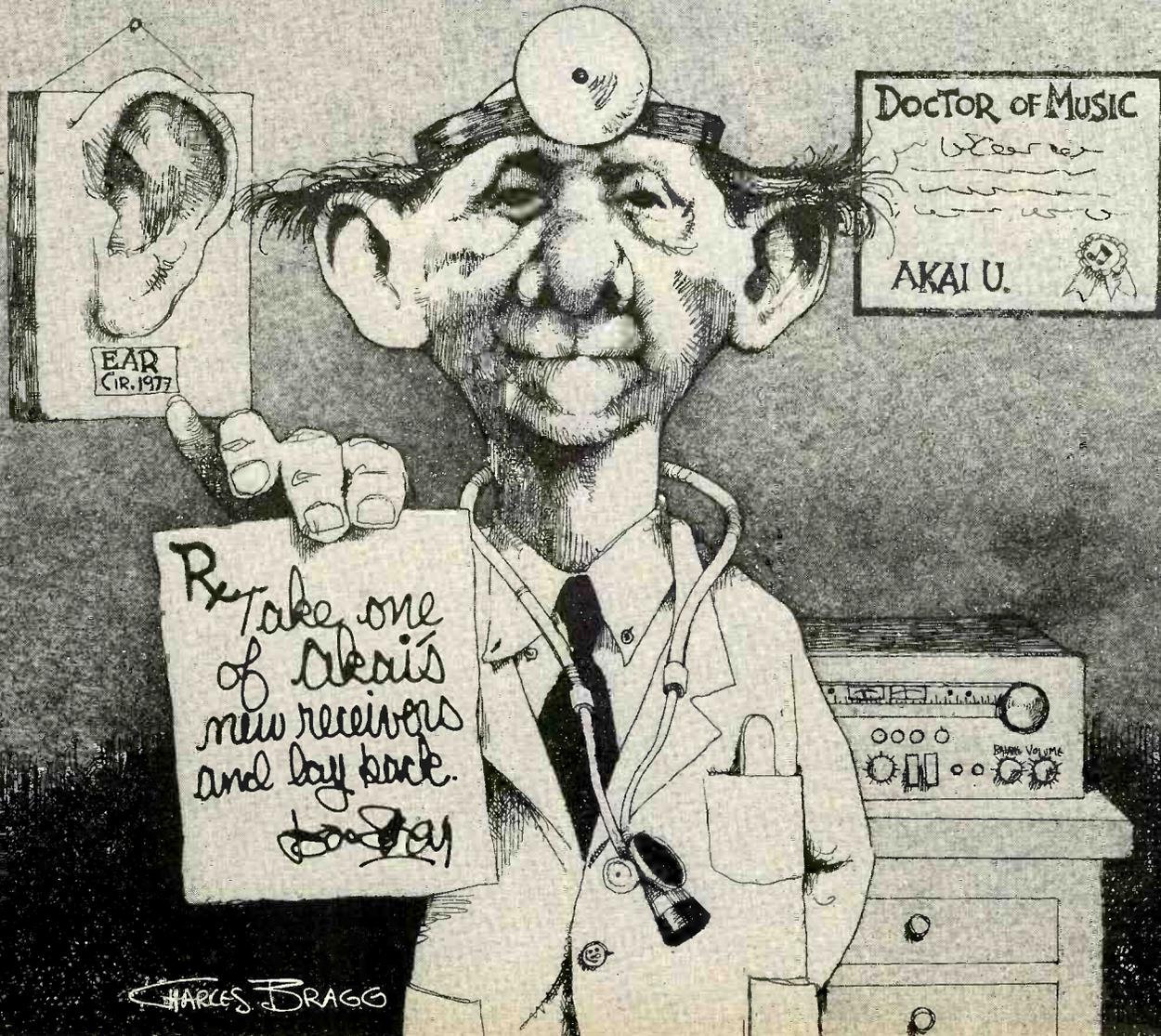
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BEST OF THE MONTH



Al Jarreau: an Innovative, Versatile, and Musically Exciting New Vocal Artist



Warner/Reprise

THE first time I saw Al Jarreau perform, he was making his debut at the Bottom Line, New York's prime showcase for aspiring recording stars and meteorites. It was shortly after the release of his first album, and he was unknown to most in the audience, who had come to hear the top-billed luminary for whom he was only the warm-up act. Applause greeted Jarreau on his entrance, but the rumble of conversation did not subside completely.

A compactly built man of casual grace, he simply strode out onto the stage, wearing what appeared to be old army fatigues, as though he were en route to, say, the corner delicatessen. Then he launched into an aurally stunning set in which his voice created the illusion of an entire orchestra, simulating the sounds of horns, guitar, bass, and even drums. Everything about him was fresh and musically exciting, from the songs (most of which he had written himself) to the acrobatic way he sang them. The standing ovation at the conclusion of his show was a spontaneous salute to excellence. I, for one, had already been convinced that Al Jarreau was the most innovative and versatile singer to emerge from the vinyl jungle in quite some time.

That was about two years ago. His new album, recorded live in Europe early this year, indicates that he must have spent every intervening moment polishing his art to a fine luster, developing a style that draws equally from jazz, soul, and popular traditions. He has achieved a level of mastery that enables him to move within his music with remarkable ease, improvising like the finest of instrumentalists, playing with the lyrics and melody alike, and shifting his phrasing with the grace and agility of an Alvin Ailey dancer. Though he has a relatively small voice with a range not unlike Marvin Gaye's (it also occasionally resembles Gaye's in timbre), he can manipulate it with wonderful precision.

All of these attributes are apparent in "Look to the Rainbow," his consist-

ently interesting new album for Warner Bros. His imitation of musical instruments never lapses into mere gimmickry, for he uses this skill to build complex solos that are completely in the service of the music. There are few singers who would dare tackle the late Paul Desmond's *Take Five* and transform it into a vocal as he does here, and his rendition of *Look to the Rainbow* is rapturously sweet, a standout in an already outstanding double-disc set.

Unlike so many live albums, this one is no warmed-over rehash of familiar stuff. Jarreau has not recorded most of this material previously, and he has written and included some brand-new songs. Furthermore, the presence of an audience is suitably underplayed; perhaps the Europeans realize that it serves no purpose to drown out an artist with either noise or applause. For those who have become weary of the soul train's remorseless pace, with its glut of songs that sound like they were all ground out by the same harried tunesmith, Al Jarreau provides a perfect haven of pleasure. —Phyl Garland

AL JARREAU: *Look to the Rainbow*. Al Jarreau (vocals); Tom Canning (keyboards); Joe Corroero (drums); Abraham Laboriel (bass); Lynn Blessing (vibes). *Letter Perfect*; *Rainbow in Your Eyes*; *Burst in with the Dawn*; *Better Than Anything*; *Look to the Rainbow*; *One Good Turn*; *Could You Believe*; *So Long Girl*; *You Don't See Me*; *Take Five*; *Loving You*; *We Got By*. WARNER BROS. 2BZ 3052 two discs \$8.98, © 2Z8 3052 \$10.97, © 2Z5 3052 \$10.97.

Pierre Boulez's Fresh Look at Bartók's Witty Ballet *The Wooden Prince*

ONE of the enduring results of Pierre Boulez's recently ended sojourn as music director of the New York Philharmonic has been a fresh look at the music of Béla Bartók as set down in an excellent series of Columbia recordings. Bartók is not a composer for whom Boulez would have been expected to have much sympathy, but his music has in fact turned out to be the most successful link between the conductor's own modernism and the taste of the symphony public.

The ballet *The Wooden Prince* is the least known of Bartók's three stage

works (the others are, of course, the opera *Bluebeard's Castle* and the ballet *The Miraculous Mandarin*), all of them written during World War I and sometimes performed as a trilogy. *The Prince's* comparative obscurity is odd because it is easily the most accessible of the three, integrating as it does folkloric elements into a big, post-Romantic context of spirit, beauty, and appeal. Bartók's style had soft, traditional elements as well as hard, modernistic ones; it also had wit and humor as well as expressionist anguish. In both di-



PIERRE BOULEZ: clarity and an affectionate regard

mensions, it is the former that predominate in this ballet, one of the few works by the composer that uses orchestral brilliance and invention as an essential part of what it has to say.

These features are brought out with tremendous clarity and an almost affectionate regard by Boulez and the Philharmonic players in a new Columbia release. This is, it should be added, not the slightly better-known suite but the *complete* ballet score, a rather overwhelming near-hour of mostly unfamiliar music, but it all adds up to a splendid impression—and an important recording. —Eric Salzman

BARTÓK: *The Wooden Prince, Op. 13*. New York Philharmonic, Pierre Boulez cond. COLUMBIA M 34514 \$6.98, © MT 34514 \$6.98.

Roy Buchanan: Electric Guitar Plus Passion for Excellence Equals Awesome Results

ROY BUCHANAN is a name to conjure with among guitarists. Skill, intensity, and audacity are the ingredients of his very personal style, and his ap-

proach is best illustrated by the apocryphal story told by one musician to another: "He's the kind of a guy who goes for a wrong note and makes it."

Buchanan's music is, of course, wholly dependent on the mechanics and wired innards of the modern electric guitar, its amplifier, and the electronic resources of the recording studio. A passion for excellence has driven him to make these machines his allies. Without them, he could not achieve the frantic, sometimes demonic clusters of notes, staccato chords, reverberations, and tremolos that make his playing so exciting.

On "Loading Zone," his new album for Atlantic, Buchanan divides his attentions about equally between jazz-like numbers and cornbread funk. Pian-

ist Jan Hammer and bassist Stanley Clarke are present on several cuts that feature Buchanan playing with a delicate (albeit muscular) restraint he does not always display. There is also a gently satiric song, *Adventures of Brer Rabbit and Tar Baby*, that seems to be a fond take-off on the styles of older guitarists (it may have been inspired by the Chet Atkins/Les Paul duet album of 1976). But the two most powerful items here are of the down-to-earth variety at which Buchanan has always excelled. On both he is joined by the great guitar-

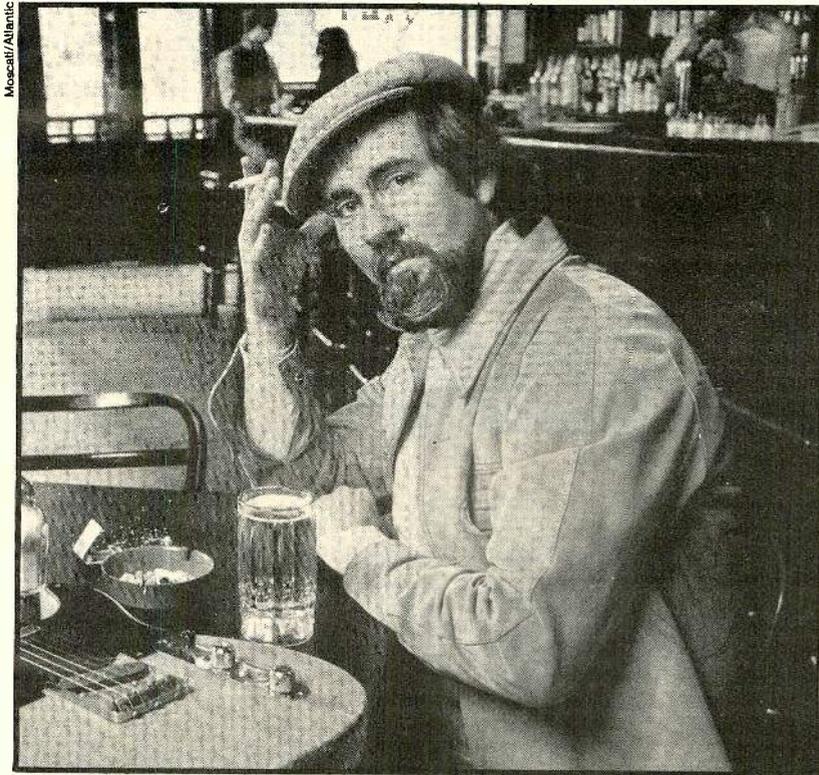
preacher once said, commenting on one of his flock, "A man don't do like he done unless he's seen God or beat the devil."
—Joel Vance

ROY BUCHANAN: *Loading Zone*. Roy Buchanan (guitar, vocals); Steve Cropper (guitar); Jan Hammer (piano); Stanley Clarke, Donald "Duck" Dunn (bass); other musicians. *The Heat of the Battle; Hidden; The Circle; Adventures of Brer Rabbit and Tar Baby; Ramon's Blues; Green Onions; Judy; Done Your Daddy Dirty; Your Love*. ATLANTIC SD 18219 \$6.98, © TP-18219 \$7.97, © CS-18219 \$7.97.

odds with his restless, edgy guitar playing and the sulphurous intent of so many of his song ideas. Plus, the whole album has an Already Arrived class about it that will appeal to the pop snob in all of us. (Some of this sense of class may be created by the packaging. Columbia apparently pulled out all budget stops in welcoming Taylor to the label; the result is that the album is so stunning graphically that "JT" may well become one of the year's chic coffee-table items.)

But James Taylor himself hasn't gone grand on us at all, not at all. He's still in there, lulling us with that intimate, cajoling voice, then jabbing unexpectedly with the left hook of some unpleasant reality. For instance, the heroine of *I Was Only Telling You a Lie* may have to go through a short period of readjustment once she realizes that her new boyfriend has set her up for a one-night stand: "Now baby when I told you that/I love you/I was only telling a lie/I'll be long gone come the crack of dawn/And I believe the word is/Good-bye, bye baby, bye, bye." Sentimental chap, isn't he? But then most of Taylor's protagonists are existential, almost burnt-out cases who seem to accept the world about them rather wearily, from the disdainful bartender of *Bartender's Blues* to the hopeful, horny, but essentially gloomy young man of *Looking for Love on Broadway* (he knows he's not going to find it) and the sexual confidence man of *If I Keep My Heart Out of Sight* ("If I play my role just right/Tonight could be my lucky night/And you could be mine").

Now, all of this unvarnished reality might be a downer if it weren't for the mysterious "X" factor in Taylor's performances. He doesn't seem to be telling these stories to punish, depress, or deflate us, but more to say that this is the way it is, and it's not all *that* bad, is it? And somehow, when he tells it, it isn't. Nor is it all just *Another Grey Morning* (one of his lesser efforts here), because he also does a really unbuttoned, funny *Handy Man*, the old Otis Blackwell/Jimmy Jones gasper, and a slickly bitchy *Honey Don't Leave L.A.*, Danny Kortchmer's caustic little ode to one of those status-conscious L.A. ladies. His own *Terra Nova*, in which Carly Simon had a hand and in which she joins him, is a cloudless, joyful song that expresses a cheerful acceptance of the human condition. It is as spontaneously good-natured and unashamedly romantic as—oh—an Evelyn Waugh description of a country house. The production throughout (by Peter Asher, who has been associated with Taylor almost from the beginning of his career), is suave, sweatless, and



ROY BUCHANAN: goes for a wrong note and makes it

ist Steve Cropper (of the recently reconstituted Booker T. and the M.G.'s). Cropper tends to suggest, persuade, and tease where Buchanan flames and flails, which makes their trading of solos on *Ramon's Blues* and *Green Onions* among the finest musical moments of this or any other year. Buchanan sounds especially *possessed* on *Ramon's Blues*, reaching heights of expression that are so awesome—and scary—that it seems either a string may snap or *he* may snap at any moment.

So great is Buchanan's fervor that the total effect of the album is almost to exhaust the listener. I don't know whether he plays for himself, some other mortal, or an elusive spirit. Whoever (or whatever) it is, he must want to reach him badly. As a Tennessee

"JT": Telling Us How It Is with James Taylor (And the Rest of Us) These Days

THE laconically titled "JT," James Taylor's new release on Columbia, is easily the best thing this singer/songwriter has done since "Sweet Baby James" seven long years—and a pop lifetime—ago. Taylor has always been one of the most persuasive composer/performers around, and he's in top form here. As in the past, his gentle, murmured lyric readings are at striking

generally just about as smooth as it can get.

Taylor remains the single artist in pop who can tell it like it is without sending you off either to the hills with a hatchet, a flint, and a hunting dog or straight to the nearest Disney movie. He is consistently entertaining without once losing sight of the realities of where, unfortunately, quite a lot of us seem to be at emotionally in the late Seventies.

—Peter Reilly

JAMES TAYLOR: JT. James Taylor (vocals and guitar); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Your Smiling Face; There We Are; Honey Don't Leave L.A.; Another Grey Morning; Bartender's Blues; Secret o' Life; Handy Man; I Was Only Telling a Lie; Looking for Love on Broadway; Terra Nova; Traffic Jam; If I Keep My Heart Out of Sight.* COLUMBIA JC 34811 \$7.98, ® JCA-34811 \$7.98, © JCT-34811 \$7.98.

Another Extraordinary Installment in the Prague Quartet's Survey of Dvořák

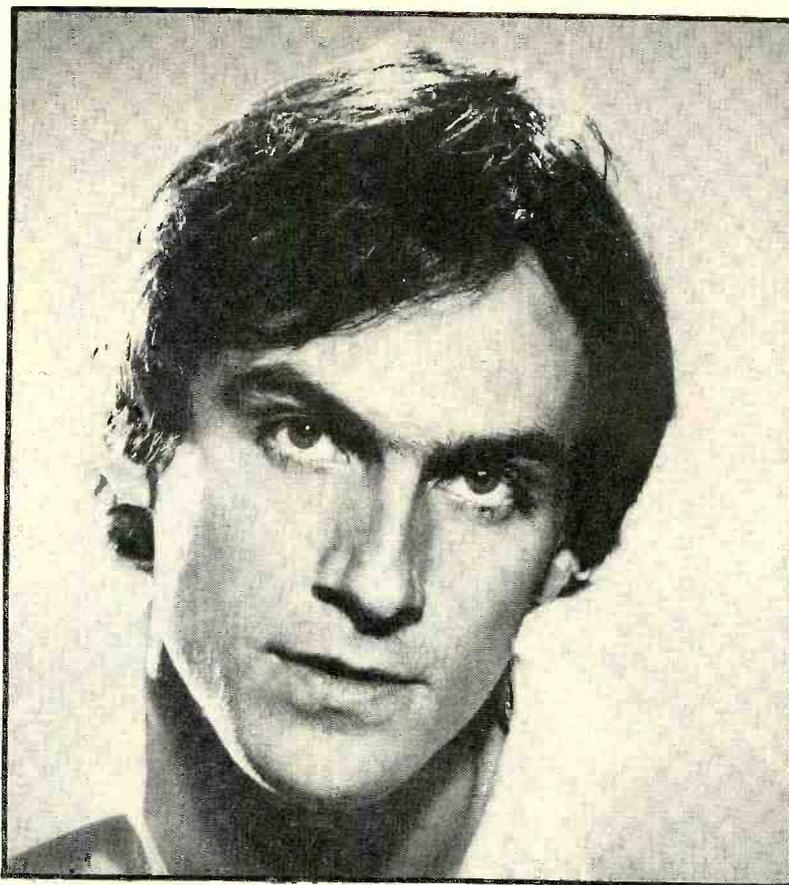
Two years ago Deutsche Grammophon began issuing what will be, on completion, the first integral recording of all the Dvořák string quartets by a single ensemble, the Prague String Quartet. The initial release of the magnificent Quartet in G Major, Op. 106 (DG 2530 480), was followed last year by a similarly glorious pairing of the familiar F Major, Op. 96, and the valedictory Op. 105 in A-flat Major (2530 632). Whether DG is still working on this project or actually has all the quartets on tape but prefers to issue them separately, it is good that these discs appear one at a time for it enables the listener to savor the individual works and performances at a pace that is usually not possible with boxed sets of musical treasures overwhelming in their richness.

In any event, this extraordinary cycle has now reached its third installment, and it is one that nobly sustains the incredibly high standard set in the two earlier ones. The new disc couples the mature Op. 51 in E-flat with the early Quartet in E Major which Dvořák originally labeled Op. 27 and his publisher (who did a good deal of this sort of thing) relabeled Op. 80. These are Nos. 10 and 8, respectively, in the revised enumeration of Jarmil Burghaus-

er, whose authoritative annotations appear on the jacket.

While neither of these two quartets is in the category of overexposed works, both are well known to admirers of

Dvořák's chamber music; the performances recorded here suggest that both works have been undervalued simply because no previous recording has realized their stature and substance quite



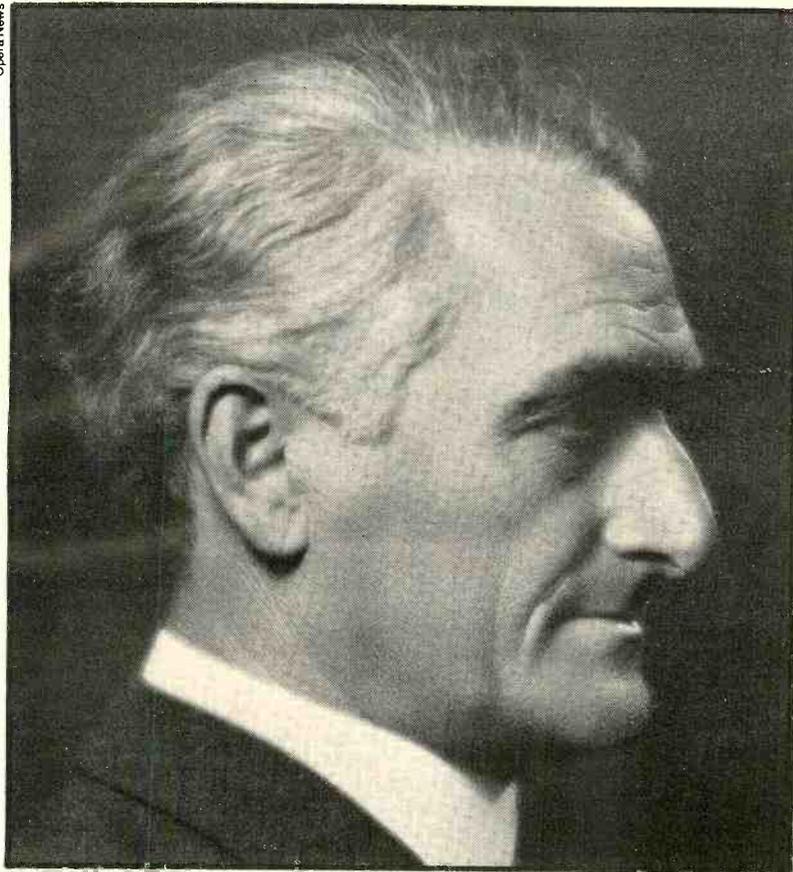
Alexander/CBS

JAMES TAYLOR: *the unexpected left hook of reality*

THE PRAGUE QUARTET: *thoroughly wonderful music making*



Deutsche Grammophon



ITALO MONTEMEZZI: Debussy with an Italian accent

so fully. The opening of Op. 51, like that of Op. 106 in the Prague Quartet's recording of that masterwork, is arresting in its freshness and intensity; it is in the nature of a daring promise—which is grandly fulfilled in what follows. The earlier E Major glows more luminously than ever with a mellowness and profundity that might easily have encouraged Simrock to try to pass it off as a later work. There is really very little one can say about such wholehearted and thoroughly wonderful music making—except to point out that it is perfectly matched to the music itself and is, indeed, so thoroughly “inside” it that our attention is directed to the admiration and enjoyment of Dvořák's inspiration without undue regard for interpretive middlemen. Being thus “ignored,” I would think, is the finest of all tributes to a performing ensemble.

As on the two earlier discs (co-produced with Supraphon in Prague but taped by DG's own engineers), the disc's sound quality contributes to the same effect: it is rich, warm, and extremely well-balanced, giving us every detail of the superb performances without getting in the way. It rather makes one wish that DG would speed up its release schedule a little for the rest of this distinguished series and not contin-

ue to stretch it out at the rate of only one disc a year. —Richard Freed

DVOŘÁK: String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 51; String Quartet in E Major, Op. 27/80. Prague String Quartet. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530-719 \$7.98.

Italo Montemezzi's *Amore dei Tre Re*: A Fascinating Opera With an Aura All Its Own

ITALO MONTEMEZZI (1875-1952) was an effective propagandist for and interpreter of his opera *L'Amore dei Tre Re*, but since his death the work has fallen from the repertoire status it once enjoyed in a number of leading theaters. Many enthusiastic partisans of the opera still recall Ponselle, Bori, or Muzio in the role of Fiora, and their memories did not find a satisfying echo in the two recordings the work has had so far. RCA has now given us a third,

and though this new version may not match those recollections either, it does make for a vivid representation of the opera's considerable riches.

L'Amore dei Tre Re is an eclectic opera. Its vocal writing developed from the continuous melodic declamation Verdi perfected in his *Otello*, while the rich orchestral textures surrounding it show the influence of Wagner. The effect is that of a Debussy-like mysticism, and yet the music is intensely Italian. The opera's initial success is ascribable to such devoted champions as Tullio Serafin (who conducted the La Scala première in 1913) and Arturo Toscanini (who established it at the Metropolitan the following year). Nello Santi, a competent but seldom really inspiring conductor, may not achieve magical results in this new recording, but he serves the opera well. My only real objection is to his lack of intensity in the first-act love scene.

It is good to have Cesare Siepi back on records after a long absence. Except for some strain in the top register, he is in fine vocal form in the role of the blind king Archibaldo, and he invests the part with the proper blend of dignity and menace. The role of Prince Avito suits Plácido Domingo's ardent *spinto* sound perfectly; his is an absolutely gratifying achievement. The same can be said for Pablo Elvira's Manfred, a touching portrayal brought to life in vigorous, cultivated sound.

Anna Moffo has progressed notably on the comeback trail since her disastrous *Thaïs*. She is not yet free of vocal difficulties in her troubled midrange, nor can she summon the full, rich sound the part calls for, especially in the final, defiant confrontation with the vengeful Archibaldo. Nonetheless, hers is an acceptable contribution. Ryland Davies creates a telling cameo as Flaminio, the traitor—or patriot, depending on one's point of view. I subscribe to the theory that the opera's action is symbolic: Fiora is Italy, Avito is the symbol of the rightful, native ruler prevented from possessing her by the foreign invaders (Archibaldo) and their successors (Manfredo).

However we look at it, *L'Amore dei Tre Re* is a fascinating opera, compact, eloquent, and skillful. Influences notwithstanding, it has a distinctive aura all its own—distant trumpets, galloping rhythms, and lush yet transparent orchestral sound. —George Jellinek

MONTEMEZZI: *L'Amore dei Tre Re*. Anna Moffo (soprano), Fiora; Plácido Domingo (tenor), Avito; Pablo Elvira (baritone), Manfredo; Cesare Siepi (bass), Archibaldo; Ryland Davies (tenor), Flaminio; others. Ambrosian Opera Chorus; London Symphony Orchestra, Nello Santi cond. RCA ARL2-1945 two discs \$15.96.



POPULAR DISCS AND TAPES

Reviewed by CHRIS ALBERTSON • NOEL COPPAGE • PHYL GARLAND • PAUL KRESH
PETER REILLY • STEVE SIMELS • JOEL VANCE

ALICE COOPER: *Lace and Whiskey*. Alice Cooper (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *It's Hot Tonight; Road Rats; Damned If You Don't; I Never Wrote Those Songs*; and six others. WARNER BROS. BSK-3027 \$7.98, Ⓜ M8-3027 \$7.97, © M5-3027 \$7.97.

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

Everybody likes to see a bum take a dive, and you'd have to look hard these days to find a bigger bum than Alice Cooper, who once led an estimable hard-rock band and wrote an only marginally dishonest teen anthem called *I'm Eighteen*. That song, relatively ungimmicky by Alice's standards, is the only thing he ever recorded that might possibly stand the test of a few years' passing, but by the time it hit he was already in the process of selling out whatever musical gifts he possessed in favor of a nervous theatricality.

It's been almost a decade since Alice whooshed in with a flash of sequins and falsies, and it may be time for his red and white cane to begin tapping its way toward the exit. One of the many important lessons I learned in my tenure as whimsicality editor of a rock magazine is that children are not stupid. The fripperies they amuse themselves with may look dumb to us, but they still must be offered sincerely, without condescension, or the ven-

dor will destroy his own future in the entertainment business. This album proves the truth of that dictum. *Lester Bangs*

PAUL ANKA: *The Music Man*. Paul Anka (vocals and piano); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Jealous Lady; Second Thoughts; Music Man; Everybody Ought to Be in Love*; and five others. UNITED ARTISTS UA-LA746-H \$7.98.

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

It isn't so much that Paul Anka's recordings disarm critical judgment; they *subvert* it by their sheer super-professionalism. That professionalism is made up of equal parts of an undoubtedly real gift for communicating through the pop song, a performing *chutzpah* unseen since the goriest days of Milton Berle, and production work that drips with tender loving care for the star attraction. This latest *billet doux* to himself and his talents includes Anka singing eleven of his own songs, which, this time out, range from good (*My Best Friend's Wife*, smacking of soap opera but strongly demonstrating his knack of seizing on one of the universal clichés and feeding it back to us as a pop song, as he did with *I'm Having Your Baby*) to abysmal (*A Mexican Night*—gringo gets rolled in Rosario by a senorita he still can't forget). Oh yes, you've heard it all before, but Anka is such a past master of decorative garnishing that he could make a frozen TV dinner look like it just sailed out of a five-star kitchen. *P.R.*

HOYT AXTON: *Snowblind Friend*. Hoyt Axton (vocals, guitar); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *You're the Hangnail in My Life; Little White Moon; Water for My Horses; Funeral of the King; I Light This Candle*; and six others. MCA MCA-2263 \$6.98, Ⓜ T-2263 \$7.98, © C-2263 \$7.98.

Performance: **Loose and personable**
Recording: **Very good**

This one reminds me that a little Axton now and then is good for you, so, for me at least, it

has done its job. Axton relaxes and has a good time, mostly, and the only place where this causes his concentration to suffer is in *Never Been to Spain*, where he tries too hard to come up with something to match the definitive Waylon Jennings version. He doesn't. Otherwise, though, the album, like Axton himself, is very sturdy around the midsection, with a string of good stuff starting with *Water for My Horses*. Tanya Tucker and Axton do a duet of *You Taught Me How to Care*, which has some texture to it, and the album goes out on the upbeat with the infectious *I Don't Know Why I Love You*, written by Mark Dawson. Axton's own songs are the best ones, by and large, but only *You're the Hangnail in My Life* is a real dud among the rest. The spirit he puts into his singing is the thing, though, that makes it *music*. *N.C.*

BILLION DOLLAR BABIES: *Battle Axe*. Billion Dollar Babies (vocals and instrumentals). *Too Young; Shine Your Love; I Miss You; Wasn't I the One; Dance with Me; Rock Me Slowly*; and five others. POLYDOR PD-1-6100 \$6.98, Ⓜ 8TI-6100 \$7.98, © CTI-6100 \$7.98.

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

This is really kind of sad. Billion Dollar Babies, the remnant of the original Alice Cooper band, is fronted by Michael Bruce, who co-wrote most of Alice's good material. There are those of us who have long thought that the Coopers were a potentially brilliant hard-rock outfit sabotaged by their front man's star trip. Critics lucky enough to have heard the band sound-checking before concerts have raved about sizzling versions of old Yardbirds stuff, and certainly the earlier Alice albums, "Killer" in particular, contain moments incandescent enough to justify the claim. So there were high expectations for this return to the arena, but they aren't lived up to.

Everything is as flashy and hollow as the later Cooper albums (Bruce sings eerily like Alice), when each release was merely a frame for a stage show, the music nothing more than background noise. Oh, there are moments

Explanation of symbols:

- Ⓜ = reel-to-reel stereo tape
- Ⓟ = eight-track stereo cartridge
- Ⓢ = stereo cassette
- Ⓛ = quadraphonic disc
- Ⓡ = reel-to-reel quadraphonic tape
- Ⓛ = eight-track quadraphonic tape

Monophonic recordings are indicated by the symbol Ⓜ

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

when real rock madness seems on the verge of breaking through the show-biz veneer—the soaring guitar and synthesizer riff on *Love Is Rather Blind*, for example—but it never quite happens, and you realize that you're listening to old pros trying to clean up commercially and show up their old boss in the process. As I said, it's kind of sad. They could have been contenders. S.S.

ELKIE BROOKS: *Two Days Away*. Elkie Brooks (vocals); Jean Roussel (keyboards); Isaac Guillory (guitar); Steve York (bass); Trevor Morais (drums); other musicians. *Love Potion #9; Spiritland; Honey, Can I Put on Your Clothes; Sunshine After the Rain;* and six others. A&M SP-4631 \$6.98.

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

The surprising and satisfying effects of this album are to be credited as much to veteran writers and producers Jerry Lieber and Mike Stoller as they are to Ms. Brooks, who is a capable singer of the chew-'em-up persuasion. Lieber and Stoller have taken some of their own catalog songs from the Fifties and Sixties, along with those of other writers of the period, and presented them in contemporary, semi-jazz arrangements that show the songs to be adaptable and still strong fifteen or more years after they were written.

It is something of a shock to hear the novelty tune *Love Potion #9* done as a smoky ballad; it is even more revealing to hear Ellie Greenwich's *Sunshine After the Rain* sung with animal passion instead of the gushing and bewildered innocence with which it is usually done. *Do Right Woman, Do Right Man* is drawn from the work of two superior but underrated writers, Lincoln "Chips" Moman and Dan Penn, who were prominent in Memphis musical activities during the Sixties.

Lieber and Stoller have also contributed some new material, written in collaboration with members of Ms. Brooks' excellent back-up band, and, although it is good, it doesn't have quite the same sting as their reworked vintage songs. Ms. Brooks, who appears to have been carefully directed, turns in a set of performances that are nicely balanced, sometimes subtle, and always true to the tunes. All in all, this is an interesting and often impressive album. J.V.

ROY BUCHANAN: *Loading Zone* (see *Best of the Month*, page 86)

ROGER DALTREY: *One of the Boys*. Roger Daltrey (vocals); John Entwistle (bass); Jimmy McCulloch (guitar); other musicians. *Parade; Single Man's Dilemma; Avenging Annie; The Prisoner; Leon;* and five others. MCA 2271 \$6.98, © MCA-2271 \$7.98, © MCAC-2271 \$7.98.

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

I think it was Simon Frith who observed that the stunning thing about watching the Who is realizing that the blonde Adonis of a lead singer strutting stage center is actually the puppet of the gangly, big-nosed guitarist to his right, that Roger Daltrey is actually acting out the fantasies of Peter Townshend. The unpleasant thing about listening to Daltrey's solo albums is realizing that his fantasies are pretty mundane compared to Townshend's and that his singing isn't terribly impressive outside the context of the Who.

"One of the Boys" is probably Daltrey's best solo album, thanks to an all-star band and a reasonably decent selection of songs (although it was a mistake to tackle Andy Pratt's *Avenging Annie*, which was such a personal studio creation in the original that any cover version is bound to suffer by comparison). Still, it resolutely refuses to take off. Oddly enough, the best thing here is a funny, sad, c-&-w pastiche (by Colin Blunstone, of all people) called *Single Man's Dilemma*, in which Daltrey actually cuts it as a barroom weeper; he cries in his beer at least as well as anybody in Nashville. If he must continue to make records on his own, perhaps this is a direction he should pursue further. What the hell, it worked for Ringo Starr. S.S.

KIKI DEE. Kiki Dee (vocals); Davey Johnstone (guitar); Dee Murray (bass); other musi-

cians. *How Much Fun; Sweet Creation; Into Eternity; Bad Day Child; Chicago;* and six others. ROCKET PIG-2257 \$6.98, © PIGT-2257 \$7.98, © PIGC-2257 \$7.98.

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

Kiki Dee is cute as the proverbial newt, and pipes-wise she makes about the prettiest sounds in rock next to Linda Ronstadt. Unfortunately, she makes her albums unlistenable by performing her own compositions and allowing the members of Elton John's new band to back her up. (Come to think of it, Elton has the same problems.) This album does not contain Kiki's last single hit (which makes it distinctly inferior to her two previous efforts), it does not contain even one marginally interesting song, and there is nobody on it (Continued on page 94)



JON CARROLL, MARGOT CHAPMAN, TAFFY AND BILL DANOFF

The Starland Vocal Band Makes Sense

THE Starland Vocal Band, a group of vigorous young singers and musicians whose lyrics make sense and whose music is the real thing, are back in "Rear View Mirror" with a wide-ranging program of ballads in many moods and on a number of modern matters. You know you're in good company from the time Bill Danoff starts singing *Liberated Woman*, a song about women's lib from the masculine point of view. The man in this ballad wants to encourage his wife to enjoy her freedom and is glad to help with the dishes and the household chores, but he's always wondering whether she'll be there when he gets home. Or maybe she'll suddenly decide that she's outgrown him. "Is it as hard," he asks, "to be a liberated woman as it is to be a man?"

In *Mr. Wrong*, Margot Chapman has met

the wrong man but loves him and can't help herself—a theme that goes all the way back to *He's Just My Bill* and beyond, but it's still valid when it's treated as expertly as it is here. Emmylou Harris assists with *Norfolk*, her lusty goodbye to a "hungry sailor town"; *St. Croix Silent Night*, with the lead vocal by Taffy Danoff, is a ballad of sad farewell to the Caribbean in February; the title song is a hitchhiker's lament. And the Starland people certainly do get around: "China to L.A.," sings Jonathan Carroll, "is just a spin/When you get to the state that I'm in."

Nothing could be more contemporary and immediate than the style of the Starland Vocal Band or the subjects they celebrate—yet there's something so *solid* about everything they do, and they do it so well, that one has the feeling this group will still be speeding along sturdily after most of their rivals have run into a tree by the wayside. —Paul Kresh

STARLAND VOCAL BAND: *Rear View Mirror*. Starland Vocal Band (vocals and instrumentals). *Liberated Woman; Mr. Wrong; The Light of My Life; Too Long a Journey; Norfolk; St. Croix Silent Night; Rear View Mirror; Fallin' in a Deep Hole; Prism; Don't Say Forever*. WINDSONG BHL1-2239 \$6.98, © BHS1-2239 \$7.95, © BHK1-2239 \$7.95.

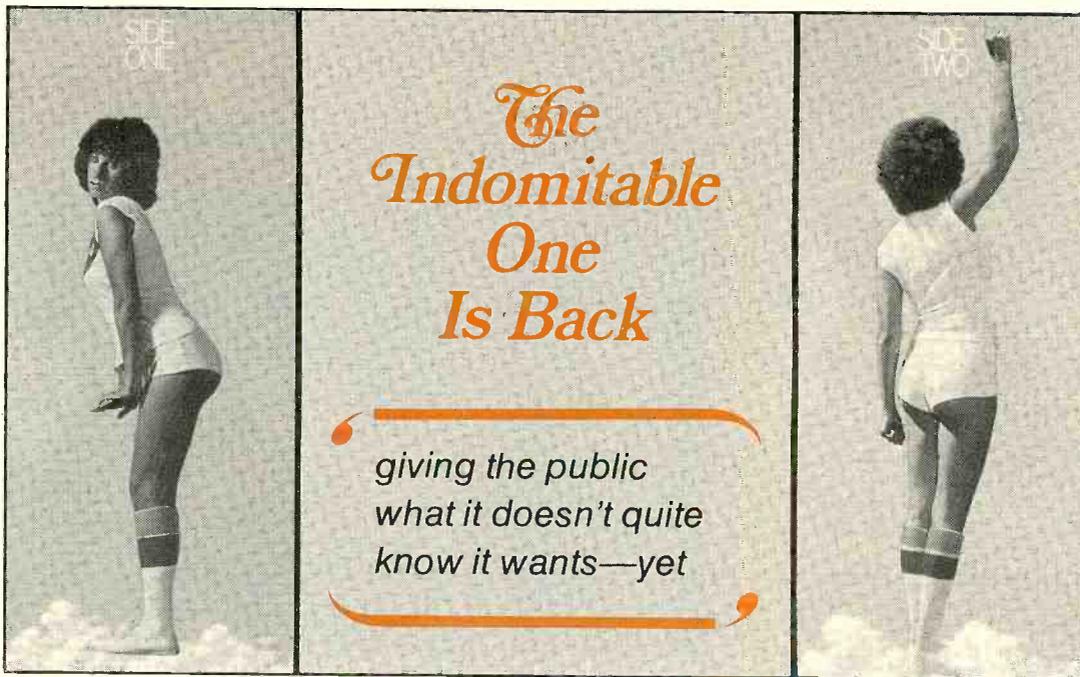
"SUPERMAN," Barbra Streisand's newest. S features, among other goodies, several rear-view photographs of her in an abbreviated track suit that permits an ample display of tushie. And a very pretty and appealing tushie it is too. And also probably aimed directly, for bussing purposes, at the critics (myself included) who were so busy swinging incense, lighting tapers, and tolling bells for a career gone down the tubes after being exposed to her version of *A Star Is Born*. "She's gone too far at last" was the general theme of our dirge, and I recall specifically comparing her *Evergreen* to a wet dream by Brahms. Well, of

wich Observatory. The realization that she has this unanalyzable gift of being able to give the public what it doesn't quite know it wants—yet—dawned on me as I watched her and Kris Kristofferson splash around in that bathtub with all those artfully dripping candles around them, necking and nuzzling and gurgling and getting it on.

Okay, my first reaction was that it looked like a Harvard *Lampoon* version of one of those commercials for honeymoon hotels in the Poconos, the ones with the heart-shaped sunken bathtubs. Then I noticed the enthralled reaction of others in the theater:

character Esther Hoffman] had been with a man but now she's really enjoying living alone. Well . . . for a while anyway." There's another leftover from *Star* called *Answer Me*, which is as mopey and garrulous standing on its own here as it might have been involving and dramatic within the whole score. Roger Miller's *Baby Me Baby* gets a throwaway performance (about all it deserves), and the central joke of *Cabin Fever* (the put-upon American wife) falls fatally flat.

Bad enough, but the worst thing here has got to be *Don't Believe What You Read*, a song Streisand wrote with Ron Nagle and



course, the film made millions, the album is still on the charts, and she picked up yet another Grammy for *Evergreen*.

As usual, most of us show-biz analysts left out one thing in our musings: how the public would react (I still think it rather gross of them to make it such an enormous success). And Barbra herself can't resist a final chortle: her own liner notes for "Superman" start off, "Hi. Just a few things I wanted to tell you about the album, but first—thank you all for your tremendous support on 'A Star Is Born.' You made all the hard work worth it!" Oh, snookums, you can say that again! I could probably live comfortably for the rest of my life on the receipts from its engagement in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, or Klamath Falls, Oregon, alone.

So, the Indomitable One is back, this time with an album that had an immediate chart hit, *My Heart Belongs to Me*, almost from the day of its release. One can't exactly say that Streisand is having a comeback, since she's never been anywhere but at the pinnacle over the last ten years. But she sure as hell is still pushing out blossoms long after most theatrical careers would have had to go through a winter or two. One reason Streisand stays evergreen is that her timing of the public's mood seems to be as accurate and apparently as infallible as the alarm clock at the Green-

mostly under thirty, they were glued to the screen and to each other, experiencing Big Screen Romance for probably the first time in their lives. About their only movie fare for the last ten years or so has been "X"-rated scurf, horror and supernatural tales of the I-love-you-but-you're-strange variety, or the gorilla attacks of the disaster genre. Now here, suddenly, were two reasonably plausible people in square, hokey, corny love with each other! From that point on I let the film carry me, and I saw what those around me were seeing in it: a touching and poignant story of two people who know they are going to be able to make it together for only a little while before one of them self-destructs. Rehearing the album after seeing the picture gave me another clue as to why it sold and keeps on selling: the combination of MOR romanticism and sexy fatalism is hard to resist.

"Superman" and its hit song *My Heart Belongs to Me* are more mining of the MOR vein. There isn't a single song of genuine quality in the album—but it couldn't matter less. Streisand sings *Lullaby for Myself* (a song Rupert Holmes wrote for *Star*; it was dropped because of time considerations) with the burner turned down low, but it is easily the best thing in the album, almost bound to be a classic. "I wanted it to be a defensive, prideful song that would tell you she [the

Scott Mathews. It was inspired, if that be the word, by a stupid item in a gossip magazine about just how many pet birds Ms. S. keeps in her house. Streisand, for some unknown star-like reason, took huge offense and went to the silly bother of writing a song about the horrors of being misunderstood in the public press. (Look, you can't have it all, can you? Murmuring thunder in the background as a familiar voice says, "Wanna bet?")

In any event, "Superman" is already an established success, and by the time you read this its star may even have gotten a gold record for *Don't Believe What You Read*. Matter of fact, she may just have a point in that title, at least as far as critical writing is concerned, for if the phenomenon that is Streisand could be finally explained, wouldn't we be robbing ourselves of a lot of future joy and amazement? Better we shouldn't know.

—Peter Reilly

BARBRA STREISAND: *Superman*. Barbra Streisand (vocals); orchestra. *Superman*; *Don't Believe What You Read*; *Baby Me Baby*; *I Found You Love*; *Answer Me*; *My Heart Belongs to Me*; *Cabin Fever*; *Love Comes from Unexpected Places*; *New York State of Mind*; *Lullaby for Myself*. COLUMBIA JC 34830 \$6.98, ©JCA-34830 \$6.98, ©JCT-34830 \$6.98.

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from Fairport Convention. Other than that, it's a winner. I might also add that the cover, by former Rolling Stones photographer Gered Mankowitz, succeeds in making Kiki look quite as dissipated and degenerate as Keith Richards, a feat that adds a new dimension to the concept of "cheeseecake." S.S.

THE DICTATORS: *Manifest Destiny*. The Dictators (vocals and instrumentals). *Exposed; Heartache; Sleepin' with the T.V. On; Disease;* and five others. ASYLUM 7E-1109 \$6.98, © ET8-1109 \$7.98, © TCS-1109 \$7.98.

Performance: **Best of two worlds**
Recording: **Excellent**

I thought the Dictators' first album, "The Dictators Go Girl Crazy," was one of the two or

three best rock-'n'-roll albums of 1975, and perhaps the last great heavy-metal album ever made. You can listen to Ted Nugent mug idiotically through his ax or Led Zeppelin sink into ever deeper tar pits of mediocrity until your tympanic membranes burst, but the Dictators had (and have) it all: the rhythm-chunk thunder, a straight-razor lead guitarist in Ross "The Boss," a clarion pop sensibility expressed by songwriter Adny (sic) Shernoff, and, most important of all, a sense of humor.

It's no secret that heavy-metal rock as tendered by all the Bad Companies has been growing so tired that it's begun to look like a depleted form. That's why the Dictators were such a breath of fresh air—they reminded you why you loved it in the first place. Their songs were tastelessly teenage without being defen-

sive about it. It was obvious that they were laughing at themselves all the way. Unfortunately, the rest of America didn't see it like that (although the album was a sensation in Europe). To make a painful story short, "Go Girl Crazy" and the Dictators' budding career completely bombed.

"Manifest Destiny" is a strong comeback, but I must admit to certain qualms. This album is the last thing those few people who loved "Go Girl Crazy" would have expected from this group, although the last three songs on side two reprise the heavy-metal style that made "Girl Crazy" such a bone-cruncher and *Disease* (for at least its first half) is a beautifully realized aural cartoon in which lead singer Handsome Dick Manitoba proves himself fully capable of competing bellow to bellow with Foghorn Leghorn (that's a compliment). The other songs, however, are something else entirely: rich, harmony-laden, instrumentally Byrdish epics of teen-age loveache. They render the Dictators more than capable of competing with such acts as Boston and Eric Carmen. Indeed, it's fair to say that there's nobody currently working who plays this kind of music better, and there is probably more than one hit single on this album. This time out, the Dictators are going to make it in the arenas with their live sets and on the airwaves with their records. But I still liked them better before, when they were just grunge-crazed heavy-metal vulgarians. Lester Bangs

ALICE FAYE: *On the Air*. Alice Faye (vocals); instrumental accompaniment. *Hats Off/ Mimi/The Scat Song; Sittin' Up, Waitin' for You; You're Getting to Be a Habit with Me; Gather Lip Rouge While You May; Weep No More My Baby; You've Got Everything; Dinah;* and seven others. TOTEM 1011 \$6.98 (from Kiner Distributing Co., P.O. Box 724, Redmond, Wash. 98052).

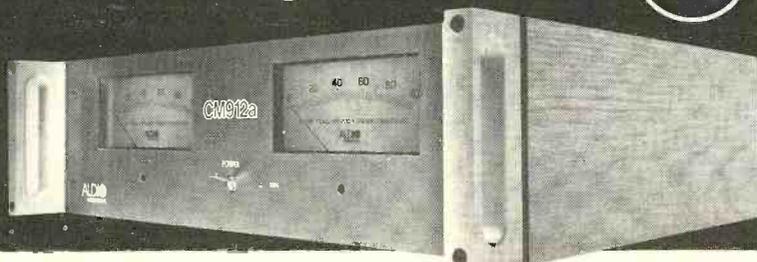
Performance: **Thirties thrills**
Recording: **Fair**

Alice Faye was the big blonde in all those Hollywood musicals who would stand in front of a piano, glance at the score of a song she had never seen before, toss it aside, and simpler her sweet way through it like a candy-box cover come to life. She must have had millions of loyal fans among the radio audiences of the early Thirties, and she never let them down. Faye didn't pay much attention to the lyrics or basic sentiments of a song.

Best suited to such mindless good cheer were the silly items that got so many of us through the Depression years, songs like *You're an Old Smoothie, Young and Healthy,* and *I've Got the World on a String.* They were good tunes too, and they're all here, in dubbings of two old radio broadcasts featuring Miss Faye on the show m.c.'d for so many years by Rudy Vallee (whose bland nasal charms are also very much on hand). There's a particularly bright moment in which Faye joins with the Mills Brothers for a lovely run-through of *Dinah*, but the rest is standard Thirties schlock.

It must, I think, have been Faye's total absence of anything so disquieting as talent that endeared her to her countless admirers. The album itself contains some distressingly noisy cuts on which only a feeble effort seems to have been made in the clean-up department. There are no notes, either, which might have enhanced the album's value as entertainment history. But Faye and Vallee are here, (Continued on page 96)

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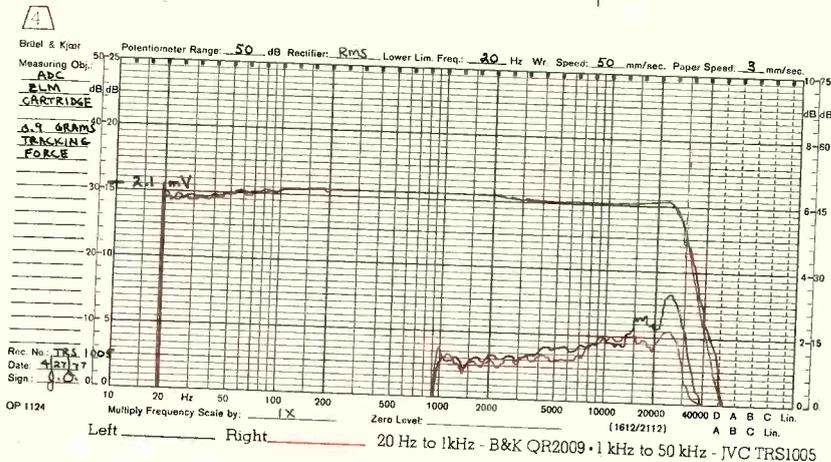
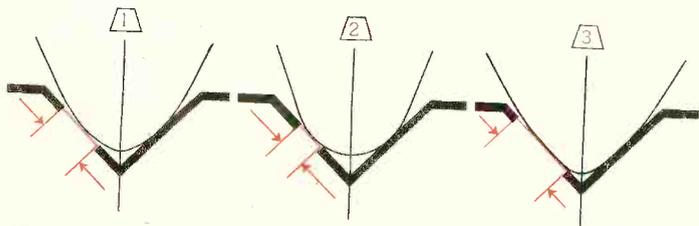
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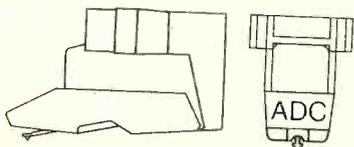
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David Gahr/Atlantic Records

GEILS: could have been the Great American Rock Band

on the air for all they're worth—whatever that might be after nearly half a century. P.K.

THE FOUR SEASONS: *Helicon*. The Four Seasons (vocals and instrumentals). *If We Should Lose Our Love; Let's Get It Right; Long Ago; Rhapsody; Down the Hall;* and four others. WARNER BROS. BS 3016 \$6.98, © M83016 \$7.97, © M53016 \$7.97.

Performance: **Sunny but silly**
Recording: **Very good**

The Four Seasons (there are actually six of them here—Frankie Valli, Bob Gaudio, Gerry Polci, Don Ciccone, John Paiva, and Lee Shapiro) are a high-spirited bunch who meet life half-way with an upbeat, exuberant quality that lets the daylight into everything they tackle. The lyrics of their songs (which they write themselves) are of the soft-brained variety, and the music isn't exactly distinguished either. But the Four Seasons are, in their own words, "high on living," and they prop this flimsy material up with infectious enthusiasm and unshakable conviction. The title of their new record, "Helicon," refers to a mountain in Greece where the Muses are supposed to dwell. I'm sure all nine of *them* would be greatly cheered by a visit from these six anytime. Maybe the Four Seasons might be inspired to whip up some more substantial material for the occasion. P.K.

PETER FRAMPTON: *I'm in You*. Peter Frampton (vocals, guitar, keyboards, drums); Stanley Sheldon (bass); Bob Mayo (keyboards); other musicians. *I'm in You; (Putting My Heart on the Line; St. Thomas; Tried to Love; Rocky's Hot Club; (I'm a) Road Runner;* and three others. A&M SP 4704 \$7.98, © 8T-4704 \$7.98, © CS-4704 \$7.98.

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

Something about this reminds me not of Nils Lofgren, the other "really cute and talented" singer-guitarist with A&M, and certainly not of Django Reinhardt, Peter Frampton's idol according to the liner notes, but of George Harrison. I can't decide whether it's the strained vocals, the know-nothing lyrics, the patience-sapping repetition, or the suspicion that the thing will sell enormously in spite of all that. Oh, well. "Frampton Comes Alive" made a fortune for A&M after the company spent a fortune hyping it, and I suppose this is

a good-enough follow-up. Frampton can now afford to have Stevie Wonder back him on the harp and not even have to boast about it on the outside of the jacket, and he does seem fairly relaxed all through this, so I guess having a huge hit behind you is better than not having one. The title song and *Rocky's Hot Club*, vaguely about his dog, have some charm to them, and Frampton doesn't do too badly—in a fixed-expression sort of way—by *Signed, Sealed, Delivered (I'm Yours)*. But the rest of it is not quite my kind of stuff. Listening to *Won't You Be My Friend, You Don't Have to Worry,* and *(I'm a) Road Runner* got me to thinking about all the *other* time I've wasted in my life (some of it with George Harrison records). It could be the low state of mind that put me into that has me thinking the Frampton phenomenon is the Seventies' answer to beach-party movies. This time there's no Annette Funicello though. Too bad. N.C.

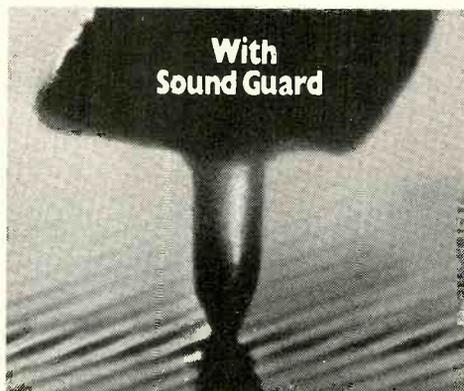
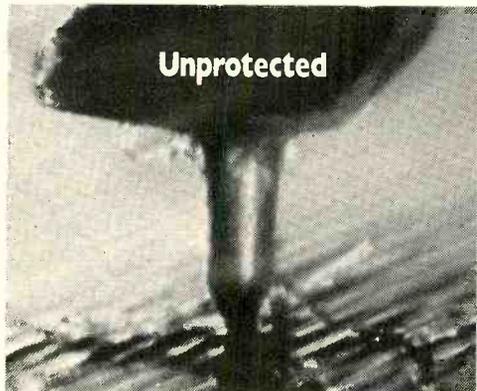
GEILS: *Monkey Island*. Geils (vocals and instrumentals); other musicians. *Surrender; You're the Only One; I Do; Somebody; I'm Falling;* and four others. ATLANTIC SD 19103 \$6.98, © TP-19103 \$7.97, © CS-19103 \$7.97.

Performance: **Much improved**
Recording: **Excellent**

A funny thing happened to the J. Geils Band on their way to superstardom—they never became superstars. Yet, not only did they produce one of the finest debut albums in rock history, they have a great flash stage show and plenty of potential publicity material in front-man Peter Wolf's celebrity marriage to Faye Dunaway (a far more classy business than Cher and Greg Allman). But the sad truth is that, except for some admittedly first-rate singles, their music in the last couple of years has been increasingly strident, repetitive, and unpleasantly monochromatic—not at all what one expects from a group that could have been the Great American Rock Band.

"Monkey Island," fortunately, is an encouraging step in the right direction. There is far more variety of style, far less reliance on worn-out blues/boogie clichés, than I expected, and most of the excesses, particularly in Wolf's singing, have been trimmed. In *You're the Only One*, a lovely and uncharacteristic soul ballad, Wolf actually manages a modicum of sensitivity and restraint. My favorite track at the moment is a Fifties doo-wop
(Continued on page 98)

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workout with big-band horns called *I Do*, in which the whole crew cooks with a youthful vitality they haven't demonstrated since their first live set. But almost all the songs here make it on some level. If, as one critic suggested, Geils (their new, simpler name) is indeed destined to suffer the fate of most bluesmen—namely, commercial failure—it's nice to know that they can take it in stride and turn out albums this unpretentious. S.S.

TOM T. HALL: *About Love*. Tom T. Hall (vocals, guitar); instrumental accompaniment. *Your Man Loves You, Honey; A Whole Lot of Love; And I Love You So; The Little Green Flower with the Yellow on Top; Lovin' Arms; Goodbye Cowgirl; It's All in the Game; The Way We Were*; and four others. MERCURY

SRM-1-1139 \$6.98, ® MC-8-1-1139 \$7.95, © MCR-4-1-1139 \$7.95.

Performance: **About petered out**
Recording: **Very good**

Now, come on, Tom, this isn't about love—it's about love *songs*. Hall didn't even write a good percentage of it, and a good percentage of that calls for a crooner, which is one thing Hall certainly is not (*The Way We Were?* Honestly!). And a good percentage of the stuff Hall did write is in a children's-song style. In other words, the album takes (at least) two styles of veering off from a straight-on adult treatment of love. It takes the stylized groaner's style-over-content dodge (Don McLean's *And I Love You So* and Tom Jans' *Lovin' Arms* could be nudged out of that cate-

gory, but danged if Hall doesn't croon *them* too), and it takes the stylized closing-in-on-baby-talk route. I think Hall copped out on this particular subject, a very rare thing for him to do. *Your Man Loves You, Honey* is the best song he has written for the album, and the most satisfying cut on it. Like the others, it borders on the simplistic, but it conveys some good, graphic images and puts good-resolution pictures in your head. But most of the album seems to have come, speaking of heads, off the tippy top of Tom T.'s. N.C.

ROY HARPER: *One of Those Days in England (Bullinamingvase)*. Roy Harper (vocals, guitar); Andy Roberts (guitar, vocals); Henry McCullough (guitar); David Lawson (keyboards); other musicians. *One of Those Days in England (Parts 1-10); These Last Days*; and three others. CHRYSALIS CHR 1138 \$6.98.

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

I have a friend who says Englishmen's albums have a certain naïveté and innocence that Americans' albums don't have. Could be. Roy Harper, one of the more eccentric of the good English songwriters, does seem to have a "the perfect metaphor will save the world" premise lurking around in the background of his work. He's a real wordsmith, and if you concentrate hard enough to keep up with him you'll find several admirable turns of phrase and so forth—but occasionally it seems more complicated (and just simply *more*) than it needs to be. He uses a lot of warmed-over melodies here, too, although *Watford Gap* and *Naked Flame* still manage to have some charm. Then there's all of side two, a song cycle called *One of Those Days in England* that sounds to me a little too much like the *National Lampoon* parody *Art Rock Suite*. It does have nice touches here and there, but it's overdone here and there too. Harper shows a lot more as a singer than he did on his previous American-released LP, though, and the backing, simpler this time, is still very good. The pet-sounds members of his audience should be satisfied. Others may wish he'd tried a few more subjects and, at least occasionally, more directness. N.C.

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THELMA HOUSTON AND JERRY BUTLER: *Thelma and Jerry*. Thelma Houston and Jerry Butler (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Only the Beginning; It's a Lifetime Thing; I Love You Through Windows; Joy Inside My Tears*; and six others. MOTOWN M6-887-S1 \$7.98, © M8-887-H \$7.98, © M5-887-H \$7.98.

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

The vocal coupling of known male and female singers seldom results in an album as good as what either of them might have done separately at the top of his or her form. Happily, such is not the case here, for this musical marriage shows all the signs of true compatibility. Jerry Butler's rough-edged, blue-serge voice is a fine companion to the bright, burnt-orange sounds projected by Thelma Houston. The Ice Man's cool restraint keeps things from getting out of hand, and Thelma counters with enough flash and verve to keep things rocking joyously forward.

Several of the songs are undistinguished,
(Continued on page 100)



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United Artists Records

Shirley Caesar: "First Lady"

WHEN introducing his Sacred Concerts, Duke Ellington was prone to remind his listeners that everyone prays to God in his own tongue. Quite frequently, in fact, black religious music has strongly resembled such popular forms as blues and r-&-b. This phenomenon dates back even beyond the Twenties, when a pianist called "Georgia Tom" abandoned both that name and his post as accompanist to Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, known as the "Mother of the Blues," and gained renown on his own as Thomas Dorsey, the leading composer of a gospel music that fully retained the funk of basic blues.

This parallel development of gospel and blues accounts in great part for the ease with which black gospel artists—such as Sam Cooke, Billy Preston, and Aretha Franklin—have moved into the popular arena. Meanwhile, others have kept their primary identification with gospel even as they have employed the instrumentation, rhythms, and vocal nuances of contemporary soul music. Foremost among these is Shirley Caesar. Both through the consistent excellence of her output and her ability to inspire the passionate devotion of fans, she has clearly earned the title of "First Lady of Gospel Music."

Often the only difference between Shirley Caesar's songs and current popular fare is in her lyrics, with their frequent references to divine forces. But what counts most is intent, which is the basis of all art. Hers is *intended* to be sacred music, and so it is, as the Duke would be the first to tell us.

Shirley Caesar sings with all the fire-baptized fervor of an angel born, as she was, on Basin Street. She spent her adolescence soak-

ing up the blues in Memphis and on Chicago's South Side, then found her adult footing in the congested urban byways of North Philadelphia and New York's Harlem. She has absorbed the themes and rhythms of this complex socio-musical heritage and fused them into a style that is almost deceptively slick on the surface. But one need only probe a bit beneath to discern its nourishing roots. Caesar's musical ancestors include the late Sister Rosetta Tharpe, whose twanging guitar was a constant reminder of her earthy orientation, and, even more directly, Clara Ward, who always kept her gospel-tuned ear close to the common ground of soul music.

"FIRST LADY" is an excellent introduction to the art of Shirley Caesar. *Faded Rose* is the sort of half-sung, half-preached story-song for which she has become famous, while *How Many Will Be Remembered* is a subtle but haunting reminder of the still unlearned lessons of the social upheavals of the late Sixties. In these and others she displays a sweet, liquid voice that, though less full-bodied than those of such gospel titans as Mahalia Jackson and Bessie Griffin, projects with rare clarity the messages contained in the songs. Highly recommended. —Phyl Garland

SHIRLEY CAESAR: *First Lady*. Shirley Caesar (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Everything but Fail*; *Just a Talk*; *Jesus Is Coming*; *Nobody but Jesus*; *Slow Down*; *How Many Will Be Remembered*; *Faded Rose*; *Jesus Children of America*. UNITED ARTISTS RS-LA744-R \$5.98, © RS-EA744-H \$7.98.

but both artists impose their personalities on the material to such an extent that it seems incidental, a mere vehicle for a display of their style. They weave in and out of each other's vocal lines without cheap attempts at upstaging and outshouting. (*Play the Game of Let's Pretend*, characterized by the perfect meshing of their voices, is the best track here, and Stevie Wonder's *Joy Inside My Tears* is a close runner-up. If you're not an ardent fan of either artist, this album is not likely to bowl you over the first time you hear it. But stick with it. It has a staying quality, and the excitement grows with each listening. P.G.

AL JARREAU: *Look to the Rainbow* (see Best of the Month, page 85)

BRUCE JOHNSTON: *Going Public*. Bruce Johnston (vocals); orchestra. *I Write the Songs*; *Thank You Baby*; *Rendezvous*; *Disney Girls*; *Deirdre*; and four others. COLUMBIA PC-34459 \$6.98, © PCA-34459 \$6.98, © PCT-34459 \$6.98.

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

In this lightweight, thoroughly charming outing, Bruce Johnston's voice is a fragile, expressive croak used so intelligently and so intimately on a collection of his own songs that one is almost seduced into believing something is actually going on. It isn't. *Disney Girls*, *Rock and Roll Survivor*, *Deirdre*—they all roll by lazily and forgettably, distinguished only by Johnston's highly persuasive delivery. As a performer he's got a lot going for him; as a writer-composer, though, he comes across like some recycled Johnny Mercer. I can't resist wondering how Johnston would sound in *By Myself*, *I Guess I'll Have to Change My Plans*, or almost anything that Fred Astaire made famous. Now *there's* a gent who learned how to stretch charm into greatness. Are you listening, Bruce? P.R.

GLADYS KNIGHT AND THE PIPS: *Still Together*. Gladys Knight and the Pips (vocals); Van McCoy (piano); Richard Tee (keyboards); Cornell Dupree, Eric Gale (guitar); other musicians. *Love Is Always on Your Mind*; *Home Is Where the Heart Is*; and six others. BUDDAH BDS 5689 \$6.98.

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

Gladys Knight and the Pips is the contemporary soul group that has most successfully crossed over into the mainstream. Seasoned by twenty-five years of togetherness, the group has combined solid musicianship, a smooth performance style, and a relatively broad repertoire to achieve a personal *élan* that appeals equally to supper-club audiences and devoted consumers of funk.

This album represents their latest effort at commercial expansion, and it unfortunately takes them into the monorhythmic realm of disco. For the most part "Still Together" was produced and arranged by Van McCoy, a master of the disco formula. He also provided much of the far-from-original material. The result of this mismatch is a set so dominated by an overblown rhythm section that the singers seem incidental to the effort. This is indeed a shame, for the group's main asset always has been Ms. Knight's exceptional vocal agility, along with her knack for injecting sensitivity into the most banal of lyrics.

(Continued on page 104)

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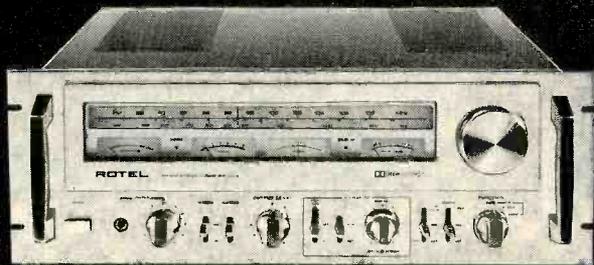
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On the first side of this record, Knight is buried beneath an avalanche of thunderous, repetitious rhythmic configurations augmented by trite string arrangements. She breaks through the tedium twice on the second side when she is permitted to sing McCoy's *Walk Softly*, probably his best ballad to date, and *To Make a Long Story Short*, a similar song of lesser merit. But two good tracks do not a good record make. P.G.

DENNY LAINE: *Holly Days*. Denny Laine (vocals and instrumentals); Paul McCartney (vocals and instrumentals); other musicians. *Heartbeat; Moondreams; Rave On; I'm Gonna Love You Too; Take your Time*; and five others. CAPITOL ST-11588 \$6.98, 8XT-11588 \$7.98, 4XT-11588 \$7.98.

Performance: **Curiously hollow**
Recording: **Good period re-creation**

Well, it was a nice idea: Wings' guitarist Denny Laine doing some lesser-known Buddy Holly songs with Paul McCartney backing him up, the whole thing recorded on a home four-track to simulate the simplicity of the original versions. But it doesn't work. The responsibility is McCartney's, and he has failed for much the same reason his former colleague John Lennon failed with his "Rock and Roll" album—because the songs are approached as museum pieces. When the Beatles recorded a Buddy Holly song, they were reverent all right, but there was also a genuine feeling of "Hey, we can do it even better." On "Holly Days," despite the modernization and the fooling around with various styles, the feeling seems more like "Well, what do we do now?"

Of course, when Paul was a Beatle he was capable of collaboration. Today, though he has made Laine the nominal star of the album, it is clear that these are Paul's arrangements and that he is doing most, if not all, of the instrumental work and making all the creative decisions. Why Laine, a truly gifted musician in his own right (as he demonstrated over and over with the pre-cosmic Moody Blues), continues to allow himself to be placed in the position of session man for McCartney remains one of the more puzzling pop music mysteries. But in the meantime, I do hope the Wings fans who buy this record on the strength of the McCartney name realize that the music of Buddy Holly had none of the sterility of this intended tribute. S.S.

LITTLE FEAT: *Time Loves a Hero*. Little Feat (vocals and instrumentals). *Time Loves a Hero; Hi Roller; New Delhi Freight Train; Old Folks Boogie; Red Streamliner*; and four others. WARNER BROS. BS 3015 \$6.98, M8-3015 \$7.97, M5-3015 \$7.97.

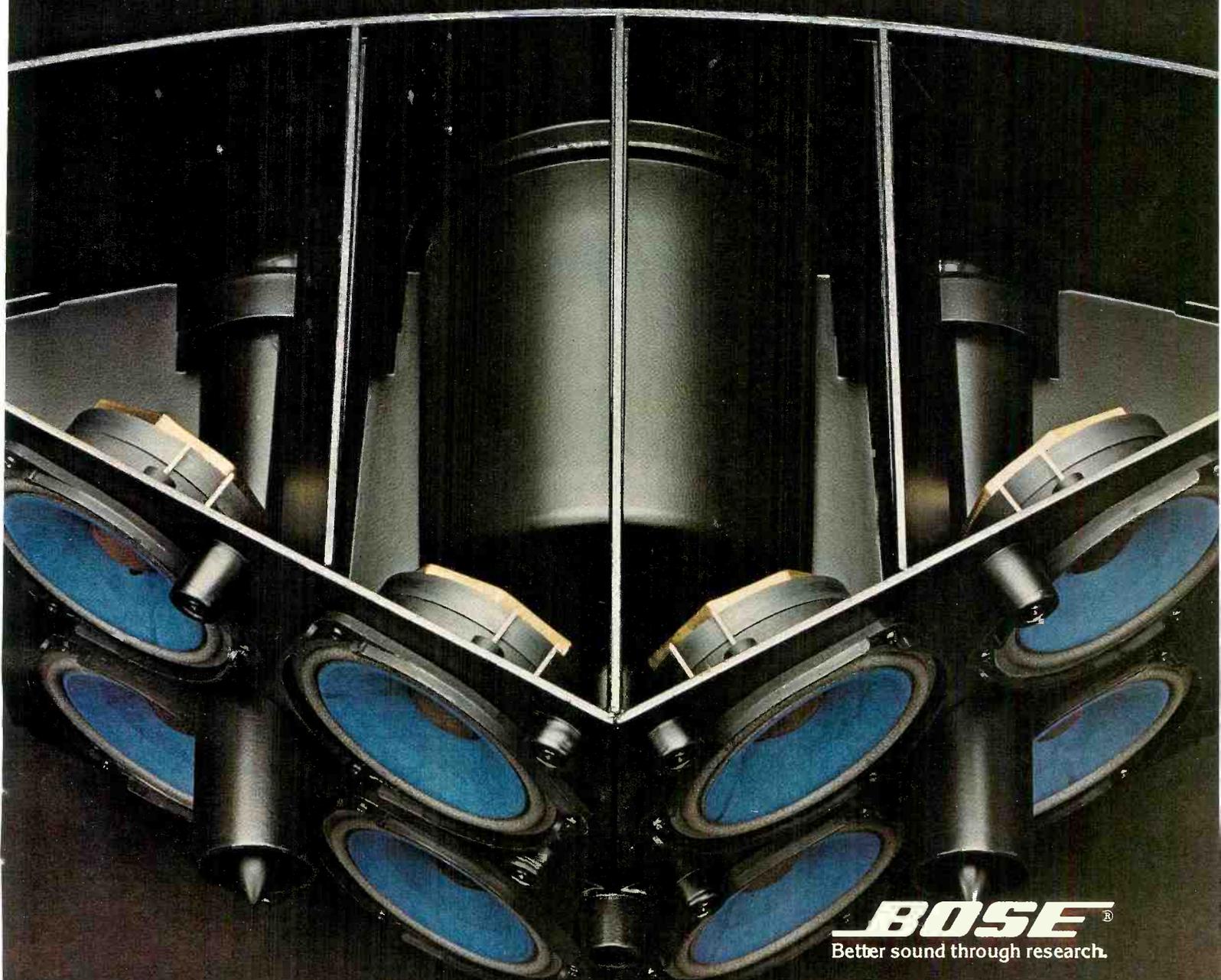
Performance: **So-so**
Recording: **Good**

I consider Little Feat one of today's better rock bands, but the trick in music is to have a tune now and then, and too much of this drones on in a dreary monotone. Meanwhile, of course, the lyrics continue to be a little off-center and suggestive and to need the evocative help a tune could give. They had to go out of the band, to Terry Allen, for the most hummable piece in the whole album, *New Delhi Freight Train*, and Allen's words, like some of Little Feat's, are slightly screwy. If you can stand the way they're chanted, Paul Barrere's lyrics to *Old Folks Boogie* show the

(Continued on page 106)

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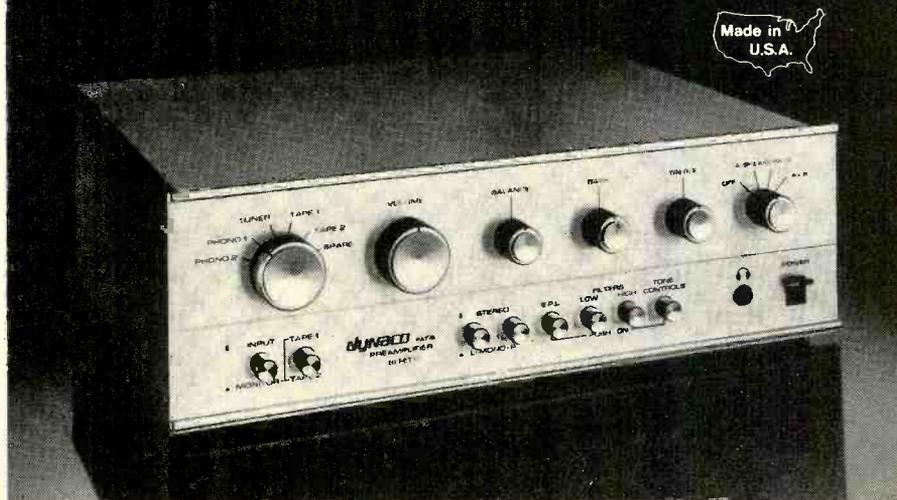
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kind of savage insight this band has sometimes. Lowell George's contribution, *Rocket in My Pocket*, shows how the band's writing can occasionally fizzle out self-indulgently. It starts out as a mindless narrative and slowly dissolves into even more mindless babble. That song aside, the way to handle this album, I think, is to borrow a friend's copy of the lyric sheet, Xerox it, and forget about the music. It's too bad, but good bands *do* make mediocre albums. N.C.

KENNY LOGGINS: *Celebrate Me Home.* Kenny Loggins (vocals, guitar); instrumental accompaniment. *Celebrate Me Home; Lady Luck; I Believe In Love; Why Do People Lie; Daddy's Back; Set It Free; Enter My Dream;* and four others. COLUMBIA PC-34655 \$6.98, Ⓢ PCA-34655 \$6.98, © PCT-34655 \$6.98.

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

I know it's the Seventies, but why does one performer after another have to drift into the Mr. Entertainment schtick? How many of these slicked-down Boz Scaggs types can a society tolerate? Kenny Loggins never got to do his first solo album when he really had an idea for a sound of his own ("producer" Jim Messina "sat in," you'll recall). Now that his time has finally rolled around, he's gone with the flow and played it cool. If he gives a damn about any of these songs, he doesn't let it show. The fact that a load of tacky ornamental glop is deposited on top of several of them doesn't help, but neither does it matter much; between Loggins' delivery and the songs' own weight, they'd have sunk anyway. It sounds like the kind of album you'd expect from a bunch of vice presidents. N.C.

THE STEVE MILLER BAND: *Book of Dreams.* Steve Miller Band (vocals and instrumentals). *Threshold; Jet Airliner; Winter Time; Swingtown; True Fine Love; Wish upon a Star; Jungle Love; Electro Lux Imbroglia;* and four others. CAPITOL SO-11630 \$7.98.

Performance: **Facile**
Recording: **Clean**

There are both pleasing and vexing aspects to this album. What is vexing is Miller's habit of tacking "preludes" onto many of the cuts, using such sound-effect gew-gaws as speed warps, echo-chamber stuff, and synthesizer flapdoodle. I suppose these are intended as cues for the faithful—the folks who consider the Miller outfit Significant, not just a fairly canny rock band.

Once past this claptrap, the songs are occasionally effective. *Sacrifice* and *The Stake* are low-key with jazz-blues arrangements, and *True Fine Love* has a campy arrangement loosely based on a period riff—something you might have heard on an Inez Foxx or Gladys Knight single fifteen years ago. Generally the tunes are interestingly constructed, though the lyrics are often puerile, sometimes vulgar.

While the performances are facile—and sometimes better than that—the album as a whole is spotty. The band plays as if they have a reputation to protect. Trying not to do anything to imperil it, they don't do anything to justify it either. J.V.

VAN MORRISON: *A Period of Transition.* Van Morrison (vocals, guitar); Mac Rebennack (keyboards); Ollie Brown (drums); Jerry
(Continued on page 115)



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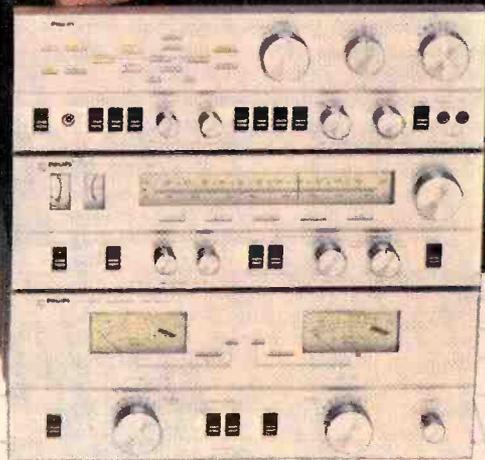
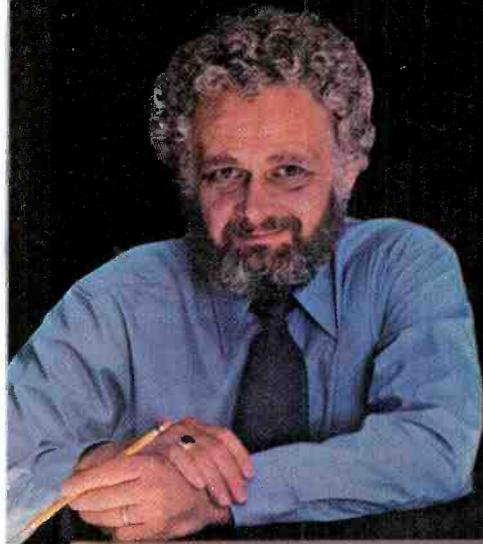
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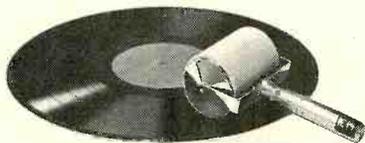
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Marna Swapp

A Party with Comden & Green

IF you don't have an invitation to a party on hand and would like to go to a good one, I suggest that you stay home some evening and invite yourself to an affair just now being given on records by Betty Comden and Adolph Green. The authors and lyricists of such Broadway and Hollywood hits as *On the Town*, *Bells Are Ringing*, *Applause*, *Singing in the Rain*, *The Band Wagon*, *Wonderful Town*, and *Peter Pan* have been throwing this particular party off and on for the past eighteen years, ever since they started it on the stage of the tiny Cherry Lane Theatre in Greenwich Village back in 1959. They have thrown various versions of it at New York's 92nd Street "Y" (as part of a series on lyrics and lyricists), at Lincoln Center (to raise money for the Library of the Performing Arts), at the Arena Stage in Washington (where this two-disc set of the whole entertainment was recorded last May), and, most recently, at the Morosco Theatre on Broadway. It's quite a bash, featuring reminiscences of their dual career in show business (which they make sound more carefree than it probably was) along with the satirical skits and songs that brought them to fame as the Revuers at the Village Vanguard forty years ago and songs from the hits (and flops) they have written through the years for stage and screen.

On the album, Comden and Green first take us back to those dim days in the Thirties when they joined with Judy Holliday and a couple of other talented people to entertain customers at the Vanguard. When they found out they would have to pay royalties to use material by other people, they solved the problem by buying a pencil and inventing their own. We get to hear some of the skits: one about

"culture in a capsule" that reduces the *Reader's Digest* to even less than its actual size; a mini-musical in the spirit of Hollywood's "neo-classic years" (it appalls them to think that those tacky old movies are now the subject of university courses such as "Advanced Ruby Keeler"); a close-harmony number called *The Banshee Sisters* illustrating how two harmonizing Andrews Sisters might have coped with the absence of the third; and a complete spoof of a Lehár-type operetta, *The Baroness Bazooka*, with peasants gamboling on the green and a romantic love affair between a haughty countess and her goatherd.

Updating the act with references to Harold Pinter and James Levine, the pair then entertain us with tales of their later adventures in show business and offer a generous sampling of their marvelous songs, some of the best of which went down with the ship when the shows they were written for failed. Of course there are medleys from the hits, but there are also such witty lesser-known items as *If* and *Catch Our Act at the Met*, from the landmark revue *Two on the Aisle* (Jule Styne supplied the music), and several from *Subways Are for Sleeping*, as well as a ballad about the dismal prospects for language in the future drawn from *Straws in the Wind* (music by Cy Coleman). And there's a clever piece called *Inspiration* from their biggest flop, *Bonanza Bound* (a musical about the Alaskan Gold Rush), dealing with the role of women in the lives of great men ("Behind every Tom, Dick and Sam/Cherchez la femme"), with music by Saul Chaplin. The celebration winds up, inevitably, with *The Party's Over*, the touching tune that brought down the curtain on *Bells Are Ringing*.

IT is a well-known fact that these two can scarcely sing at all, even though they appeared on stage in *On the Town* to bring down the house in *Carried Away*. But what they lack in pure vocal ability they make up for in exuberance, strength of will, and persuasive characterization (not even Cyril Ritchard made a better Captain Hook in *Peter Pan* than Adolph Green does here). And when it comes to telling stories on themselves, there's no team in the industry with a better prose style or more perfectly timed delivery.

What have these two, who consider their entire career "wildly unplanned," done for us lately? Well, they've just completed a new musical based on the classic comedy *Twentieth Century*, to open soon starring Madeline Kahn. Meanwhile, as Rex Reed points out in his liner notes, "They throw the best 'Party' in town."
—Paul Kresh

A PARTY WITH BETTY COMDEN AND ADOLPH GREEN. Betty Comden and Adolph Green (vocals and comedy routines). *I Said Good Morning; The Reader's Digest; The Screen Writers; The Banshee Sisters; The Baroness Bazooka; New York, New York; On the Town Medley; 100 Easy Ways to Lose a Man; Wonderful Town Medley; Capital Gains; If; Catch Our Act at the Met; French Lesson; The Lost Word; Captain Hook's Waltz; Never Never Land; Mysterious Lady; Simplified Language; Inspiration; Bells Are Ringing Medley.* STET S2L-5177 two discs \$9.98 (from Discovery Records Group, 234 West 44th Street, New York, N. Y. 10036).

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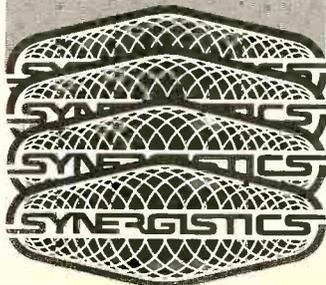
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Jumonville (reeds); other musicians. *You Gotta Make It Through the World; It Fills You Up; The Eternal Kansas City; Joyous Sound*; and three others. WARNER BROS. BS 2987 \$6.98, Ⓞ M82987 \$7.97, Ⓞ M52987 \$7.97.

Performance: **Static**
Recording: **Average**

Van Morrison is one of my favorite singers, yet he hasn't made an album I've liked much since before his last one three years ago. That he is *not* among my favorite songwriters is the catch, and—this time especially—his arrangers (himself, I gather, and Mac "Dr. John" Rebennack) are not among my favorites either. This one starts with *You Gotta Make It Through the World*, a repackaging of the melody of *Keep Your Hand on That Plow*, and it doesn't pick up a hell of a lot tune-wise later on. What's worse is the detached way the instruments back Morrison. Holes are methodically filled by saxes and horns, the occasional back-up singers sound like wind-up dolls, and the rhythm section is about as imaginative as Morrison is when he poses as a lyricist. Here a few simple words try to go a long way, which means dumb phrases are pointlessly repeated until you're about to go up the wall. While Morrison's delivery suggests the songs are saying something important, the songs themselves don't support that insinuation. (Cat Stevens went through a similar phase, you may recall.) Morrison can bring off this sort of thing occasionally, since a Morrison package (including melody, vocal treatment, back-up, and general ambiance) can transcend the nitty gritty of content. It happened in, oh, *Listen to the Lion*. But it doesn't happen here.

N.C.

MICHAEL NESMITH: From a Radio Engine to the Photon Wing. Michael Nesmith (vocals, guitar); Lonnie Mack (guitar); David Briggs (keyboards); other musicians. *Rio; Casablanca Moonlight; More Than We Imagine; Navajo Trail; We Are Awake*; and three others. PACIFIC ARTS ILPA 9486 \$6.98, Ⓞ Y89-9486 \$7.98, Ⓞ ZPC-9486 \$7.98.

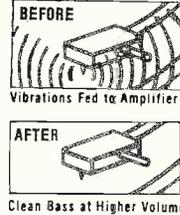
Performance: **Better than the title**
Recording: **Excellent**

Mike Nesmith was, of course, the Monkee who actually had talent. Now, I don't want to get into a shouting match with those of you who still look down your noses at the Monkees, but I should mention here that a lot of their records (regardless of who played on them) are much better than anybody realized, that Paul Butterfield (of all people) covered one of Nesmith's tunes, and that the group's swan song—the film *Head*—may be the best rock movie ever made. I should also mention that Nesmith, after leaving the group, made a series of marvelous, spaced-out, country-rock albums for RCA that you should comb the bargain bins for; one of them in particular ("And the Hits Just Keep On Comin'") is the definitive back-porch folk record.

This new one is similar in approach, a gentle, country-tinged affair that reminds me in spots of Jimmy Buffet's schmaltzy moments. Nesmith is afflicted with the aging hippie's penchant for coffee-house profundity, but he also has a sly sense of humor and a knack for coming up with a good, commercial, melodic hook. The result is an album that, while unlikely to make him a teen idol again, should certainly broaden his already

(Continued on page 118)

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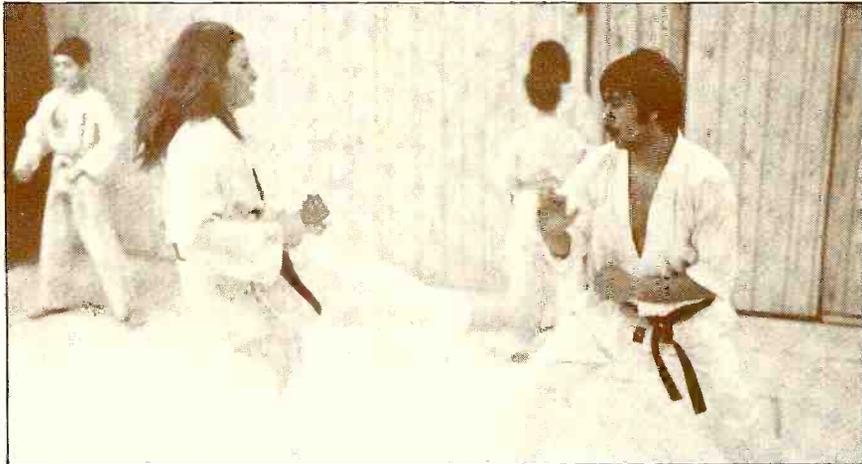
POP FOTOGRAFUR

By Rick Mitz



□ The photographer caught MICHAEL MASSER, who wrote the song *Touch Me in the Morning* popularized by Diana Ross, at work on his latest (*Hit Me in the Evening?*) with the help of a kibitzing fellow poet. Masser also wrote the theme song for Muhammed Ali's movie biography *The Greatest*. George Benson sings on the soundtrack, Arista 7000.

□ What a way to kick off a tour! MARGE RAYMOND, lead singer of Flame (their latest is titled "Queen of the Neighborhood," RCA APL1-2160, and no wonder), is working for her black belt in karate when she's not busy making recordings. Marge, a quiet girl from Brooklyn, was considering going on the road to talk radio-station DJ's into playing Flame's record, but thought better of it. "Anyone want to play our records?" she asks demurely, *Fists of Fury* folded in her lap.



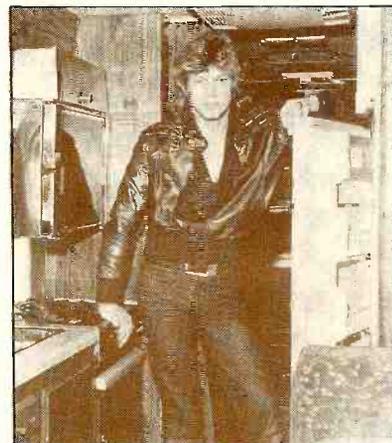
RCA Records

□ The Watergate scandal started with one little bitty piece of tape on a door and ended with reels and reels of the stuff as evidence. Here's further proof that tangling with too much tape can be hazardous to your office. Seems that humorist DICKIE GOODMAN (left) had just completed recording his new album at Chappell Music's New York studios. In what may have

been an attempt to destroy the evidence, Goodman and co-producer Bill Ramal impulsively dumped the finished tapes into engineer Julian McBrowne's lap. Rewound, edited, and released in August, the album, "Dickie Goodman Can't Sing" (Janus JXS 7033), is made up of musical montages and novelty songs not unlike the Goodman hit *Mr. Jaws*.

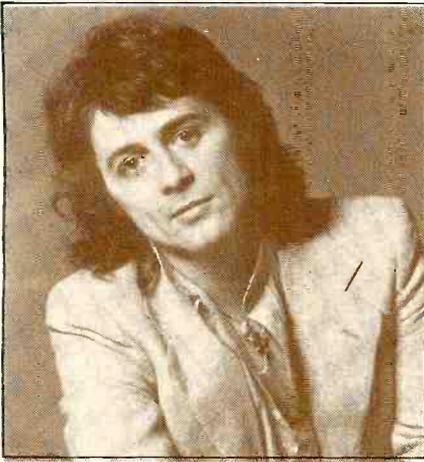


Lee Snider



□ Few things warm the heart quite as much as the sight of a boy and his Winnebago. Ex-Moody Blueser JOHN LODGE shelled out \$40,000 one afternoon to buy himself the American camper (perhaps to get over feeling a bit blue and moody). Then he jumped right in to begin a European tour to promote his latest London Records album, "Natural Avenue" (PS 683). The vehicle is supposed to sleep six, but, as Lodge demonstrates, one of them has to put up in the refrigerator.

Richard Gerstlauer



□ Photo Quiz: It's hard to tell these days, but give it a try—which of these two gentlemen is a rock star? The one on the right, looking pale and tired (after months on the road, perhaps), or the one on the left, looking hale and hearty? Time's up. On the right is Stephen Foster, one of those old folks at home. On the left is rocker BRUCE FOSTER, Stephen's great-great-grand-nephew. Like his famous great etc. uncle, who wrote sentimentally of the Old South in such songs as *Oh, Susannah* and *Beautiful Dreamer*, Bruce (whose new album is called "After the Show" Millennium MNL 8000) is from the south—south Jersey. Uncle Stephen, unfortunately, hasn't had a hit single in about one hundred and thirteen years, but there's been this talk of a comeback.



Bob Gruen



□ Violence! Violence!! Could this be a scene from a forthcoming rock disaster film? No, it's just that, as the BAY CITY ROLLERS were rolling through a recent concert in Chicago, a frenzied fan rushed on stage to give a big hug to her little idol, lead singer Les McKeown. Roller roadies regained their balance in time to get the enthusiastic young woman off McKeown's back, and he escaped unscathed. One would be tempted to say "it's all in the game" if that were not (almost) the title of the new Rollers album ("It's a Game," Arista AL 7004).



John Michael Cox, Jr.

□ No, they're not preparing for the birth of the blues, but by the time you read this, singing star MELBA MOORE will have had her baby, a little girl named Melba Charlie (after the singer and her husband, Charles Huggins). Considering who the attending physicians are in this photo, she just might be giving birth to a hit

single too, which would be a terrific bonus. Pictured with the beaming Ms. M. are (from left) Gene McFadden and John Whitehead, co-producers of her new album "Portrait of Melba" (Buddah BDS 5695), and—playing doctor—super soul-man Teddy Pendergrass, Philadelphia International recording star.

□ French singer-songwriter CHARLES AZNAVOUR took a minute between Carnegie Hall shows this past May to say *bonjour* to LARRY PAULETTE, whose new Vanguard album (VSD 79386) takes its title, "What Makes a Man a Man," from an impassioned Aznavour song about gay rights. Paulette designed his debut album entirely around that theme, including such songs as *Rubber Duckie* and *One Hundred [Easy] Ways to Lose a Man* (sung by Roz Russell in the *Fifties* musical *Wonderful Town*). And Aznavour has a new album, to be released shortly on RCA, which should give us another answer to that old question, "What makes a singer a singer?"



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avid cult following considerably (at least in England). S.S.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

THE PERSUASIONS: *Chirpin'*. The Persuasions (vocals). *Willie and Laura Mae Jones; Johnny Porter; Looking for an Echo; Women and Drinkin'*; *Sixty Minute Man*; and five others. ELEKTRA 7E-1099 \$6.98.

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

The Persuasions have the troubling distinction of being the pre-eminent group, in terms of artistry, in a genre—pop a cappella singing—that has no mass audience, though I wish it did. The interplay of the four voices of group members Jerry Lawson, Joseph Russell, Jimmy Hayes, and Herbert Tubo Rhoad and the passion and majesty with which they express their art (for it is no less than that) are thrilling. Singing a cappella is no easy matter; it requires discipline, consciously crafted technique, and a sure sense of timing, since the absence of instruments means that any holes left in the fabric of a performance will simply go unfilled. But it is obvious that part of this group's passion comes from their real respect for the unaccompanied voice.

All of the songs in this album are inspiring to hear, but I have some particular favorites: Kenny Vance's autobiographical *Looking for an Echo*; the frenzied *Women and Drinkin'*, written by lead singer Jerry Lawson and the album's producer David Dashev; the mildly salacious *Sixty Minute Man* (first recorded by Billy Ward and the Dominoes in the early Fifties); and Lawson's impassioned solo, *To Be Loved*, which is somewhere between a prayer and a howl. Sensational. J.V.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

HELEN REDDY: *Ear Candy*. Helen Reddy (vocals); instrumental accompaniment. *You're My World; One More Night; If It's Magic*; and seven others. CAPITOL SO-11640 \$7.98, © 8X0-11640 \$7.98, © 4XT-11640 \$7.98.

Performance: **Radiantly real**
Recording: **Excellent**

Helen Reddy calls her tenth and latest album "*Ear Candy*," but I think it's more substan-

tial stuff than that. Or does her cool, objective style, shining with intelligence, emotional only when the material calls for it, merely make it *sound* that way? Reddy doesn't really have much of a voice, but she certainly does wonders with the limited instrument at her command.

The singer who made her fame with *I Am Woman* radiates a sincerity that transmutes everything she does into a musical experience rather than just one more show-business exercise. Listen to her turn her quiet attention to Stevie Wonder's wistful *If It's Magic* or Stephen Bishop's *One More Night*, the latter in a mood of longing that Reddy makes seem poignantly real. The songs she herself helped write—*Aquarius Miracle, Midnight Skies, Thank You, and Baby, I'm a Star*—are all perhaps too pretty, but she takes the curse of prettiness off them with her delivery. And even in this group there is something distinguished—a song called *The Happy Girls*, a ballad about Sally, a war bride of the Forties who is abandoned now and rides the subway back and forth under Brooklyn, and about Nancy, who lives alone, left behind by grown daughters and an absent husband whose mind has shattered. "We all get bruised, we all get burned," the sad saga ends. It might have wound up as self-pitying bathos, but Helen Reddy makes you care. P.K.

NEIL SEDAKA: *A Song*. Neil Sedaka (vocals and piano); orchestra. *The Leaving Game; Amarillo; Alone at Last; Hollywood Lady; Sleazy Love; You Never Done It Like That*; and five others. ELEKTRA 6E-102 \$7.98, © ET8-102 \$7.97, © TC5-102 \$7.97.

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

Sedaka's arrangements and George Martin's production on this one are probably state-of-the-art for mainstream commercial pop in 1977. *Anyone* parading down this kind of magnificent theatrical staircase is bound to win a round of applause. That the parader is Neil Sedaka with a new collection of his songs has a nice ironic tang to it. After all, in the first, late-Fifties phase of his career, Sedaka was the epitome of Grub Street in all its most exploitative aspects. He represented—fairly or unfairly to the man and his music—record- (Continued on page 120)

THE PERSUASIONS: real respect for the unaccompanied voice



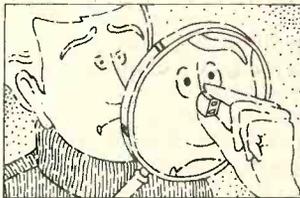
Elektra Records

ARE YOU BLAMING YOUR TAPE RECORDER FOR PROBLEMS CAUSED BY YOUR TAPES?

Every day people all over the country go into hi fi dealers with complaints about their tape recorders.

When in reality what they should be complaining about is their tapes.

Because the fact is, a lot of the problems that plague tape recorders can be attributed to bad tape.



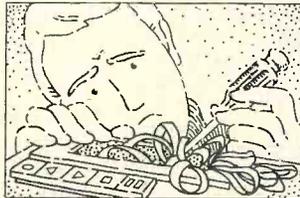
HEAD WEAR IS CAUSED BY YOUR RECORDER. OR IS IT?

If you have to clean your tape heads more than usual, for example, it could be your tape doesn't have a special nonabrasive head cleaner.

Maxell has one.

If your recorder jams, it can be any number of things. Maxell does something to prevent all of them.

We make our cassette shells of high impact polystyrene. And then so they won't crack



JAMMING IS CAUSED BY YOUR RECORDER. OR IS IT?

even after years of use, we finish them to tolerances as much as 60% higher than industry standards.

Inside, we use free rolling Delrin rollers so the tape doesn't stick.

And finally, we screw instead of weld everything together because screws make

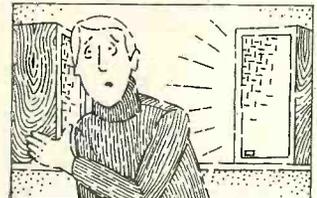
for stronger cassettes.

If your recorder frequently suffers lapses in sound, it could be the tape is of inferior quality. And nobody's bothered testing the tape for dropouts before it leaves the factory.



DROPOUTS ARE CAUSED BY YOUR RECORDER. OR ARE THEY?

Maxell tape is made of only the finest polyesters. And then every



POOR TRACKING IS CAUSED BY YOUR RECORDER. OR IS IT?

step of the way it's checked for even the slightest inconsistencies.

So if you're having problems with your recorder, try a Maxell cassette, 8-track or reel-to-reel tape.

You might find there's really nothing wrong with your tape recorder, just with your tape.



MAXELL. THE TAPE THAT'S TOO GOOD FOR MOST EQUIPMENT.

Maxell Corporation of America, 130 West Commercial Ave., Moonachie, New Jersey 07074

BANG & OLUFSEN. BEOMASTER 4400. What makes it an alternative?



Conceived to satisfy the most critical listener and with power to handle the most difficult musical passages. Ambiophonic circuitry to recreate the richness of the original performance and with the use of a Bessel filter, the elimination of transient intermodulation distortion. All this combined with an ease of operation

that is more and more appreciated with use.

Your Bang & Olufsen dealer will show and demonstrate the Beomaster 4400 as a logical alternative. A dealer list and brochure are available by writing us. If you prefer, enclose one dollar and our full color product portfolio and dealer list will be sent by return 1st class mail.

Bang & Olufsen of America, Inc., Dept. 12, 515 Busse Rd., Elk Grove Village, IL 60007

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

CIRCLE NO. 11 ON READER SERVICE CARD

The Advent Coupon

Dear Advent (Corporation, 195 Albany Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139):

I'd like information on:

- The New Advent Loudspeaker. (The new version of the U.S.A.'s best-selling speaker system.)
- The Powered Advent Loudspeaker. (The radically new integrated speaker-amplifier with bi-amplification.)
- The Advent Model 300 Stereo Receiver. (The receiver with sound that compares directly with that of expensive amp, preamp, tuner combinations.)
- The Advent Model 750 Projection Color Television Set. (Life-size color television with a 6-foot picture.)
- The Advent _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Advent Corporation

195 Albany Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

making sleaze. His comeback in the Seventies was one of those surprises that still has the Great Minds of the Industry a bit puzzled. Part of it was nostalgia, of course, but most of it was that Sedaka was writing good, simple songs that people can feel comfortable with.

And he's still doing just that. *The Leaving Game* ("To run away and run right back again") and *One Night Stand* ("Would you believe that any man/Would go fallin' in love/ On a one night stand?") are the kind of songs that have been running around in the backs of most people's minds for most of their lives. Sedaka writes them down, records them, and we all absorb them instantly because we feel we already know them. There are a couple of high-flown departures from the basics in this album, including *Hollywood Lady* (Norma Desmond at bay again) and *Hot and Sultry Nights* (they've burned down the poppy field in old *Mexico* and the natives aren't taking it lightly at all), but that's okay—the very rich should be allowed their fancies too. P.R.

CAT STEVENS: *Izitso*. Cat Stevens (vocals, drums, keyboards, synthesizers, guitars); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. (*Remember the Days of The Old Schoolyard; Life; Killin' Time; Kypros; Bonfire; (I Never Wanted) To Be a Star*; and four others. A&M SP-4702 \$7.98, Ⓢ 8T-4702 \$7.98, © CS-4702 \$7.98.

Performance: **Dull**

Recording: **Very good**

I have never been able to work up much enthusiasm for Cat Stevens. After nearly ten years his writing and vocals still sound so one-dimensional as to be bureaucratic: he doesn't sing songs so much as implement them, and in most cases his material is claptrap stuff. Though Stevens is a versatile musician (there are two non-vocal cuts on this album in which he plays a variety of instruments), his performances are calculated and anemic. His image is that of a quietly passionate man whose inner frenzy can be understood only by those with sympathetic ears, but I am a registered Republican given to saying "Pshaw!" to such ingenuous suggestions. I find myself in agreement with a disc jockey who commented, after playing the hit single from this album, (*I Never Wanted) To Be a Star*, "Sure you didn't, Cat." J.V.

JAMES TAYLOR: *JT* (see *Best of the Month*, page 87)

DOC AND MERLE WATSON: *Lonesome Road*. Doc Watson (vocals, harmonica, guitar); Merle Watson (guitar, slide guitar, dobro); Karl Himmel (drums); Michael Coleman (bass); other musicians. *I Recall a Gypsy Woman; Minglewood Blues; Mean Mama Blues; My Creole Belle; Blue Railroad Train*; and five others. UNITED ARTISTS LA 725-G \$6.98, Ⓢ EA725-H \$7.98.

Performance: **Very good**

Recording: **Good**

You have to sneak around to hear most of the good stuff Doc Watson plays here, as he's subtle about where and how he's inserted it. What's more obvious is how he's nudging Merle out into the spotlight. Merle plays well, but I'd still rather have an album dominated by Doc. A couple of other little things bother me about this one. I've developed a love-hate relationship with the drums on it. I can't tell

(Continued on page 122)

It's time for everybody else to start playing catch-up. Again.

From the very beginning, experts have acclaimed the performance and feature innovations of Yamaha receivers as nothing less than spectacular.

But now, we've outdone ourselves.

Yamaha is introducing a new line of receivers with such unprecedented performance, it's already changing the course of audio history.

Real Life Rated!™ While traditional laboratory measurements provide a good relative indication of receiver performance, they simply don't tell you how a receiver will sound in your living room in actual operation. So Yamaha developed a new standard for evaluating overall receiver performance under real life conditions. It's called **Noise-Distortion Clearance Range (NDCR)**. No other manufacturer specifies anything like it, because no other manufacturer can measure up to it.

We connect our test equipment to the phono input and speaker output terminals, so we can measure the performance of the entire receiver, not just individual component sections like others do. We set the volume control at -20dB, a level you're more likely to listen to than full volume. We measure noise and distortion together, the way you hear them.

On each of our new receivers, Yamaha's Noise-Distortion Clearance Range assures no more than a mere 0.1% combined noise and distortion from 20Hz to 20kHz at any power output from 1/10th watt to full-rated power.

Four receivers, one standard. On each of our four new receivers, Yamaha reduces both THD and IM distortion to new lows—a mere 0.05% from 20Hz to 20kHz into 8 ohms. This is the kind of performance that's hard to come by in even the finest separate components. But it's a single standard of quality that you'll find in each and every new Yamaha receiver. From our CR-620 and CR-820 up to our CR-1020 and CR-2020.

What's more, we challenge you to compare the performance and features of our least expensive model, the CR-620, with anybody else's most

expensive receiver. You'll discover that nobody but Yamaha gives you our incredibly low 0.05% distortion and -92dB phono S/N ratio (from moving magnet phono input to speaker output).

You'll also discover that nobody else starts out with such a variety of unique features. Independent Input and Output Selectors that let you record one source while listening to another. A Signal Quality Meter that indicates both signal strength and multipath. The extra convenience of Twin Headphone Jacks. Or the accurate tonal balance provided at all listening levels by Yamaha's special Variable Loudness Control.

More flexibility. It's consistent with Yamaha's design philosophy that you'll find the same low distortion throughout our new receiver line. Of course, as you look at Yamaha's more expensive models, it's only logical that you'll find the additional flexibility of more power, more functions, and more exclusive Yamaha features.

For example, there's a sophisticated tuner, with unique negative feedback and pilot signal cancellation circuits (patents pending), that makes FM reception up to 18kHz possible for the first time on a receiver. Plus other refinements like a Built-In Moving Coil Head Amp, Fast-Rise/Slow-Decay Power Meters, and Yamaha's own Optimum Tuning System.

Now's the time to give us a listen. Our new receiver line is another example of the technical innovation and product integrity that is uniquely Yamaha. And your Yamaha Audio Specialty Dealer is an example of uncommon dedication to faithful music reproduction and genuine customer service. It's time you heard them both.

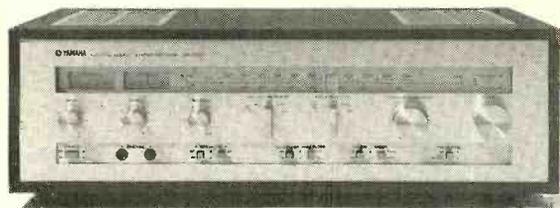
If your Yamaha Audio Specialty Dealer is not listed in the local Yellow Pages, just drop us a line.



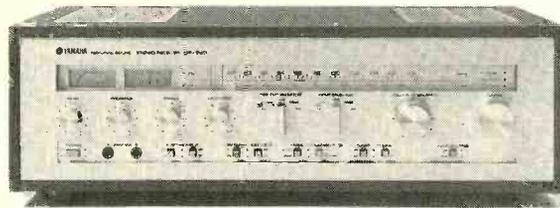
YAMAHA

Audio Division, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622
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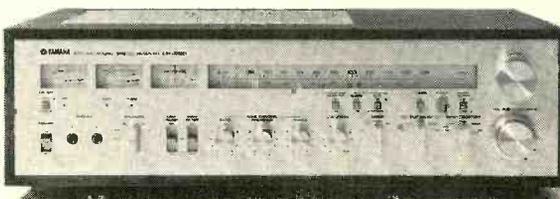
Real Life Rated



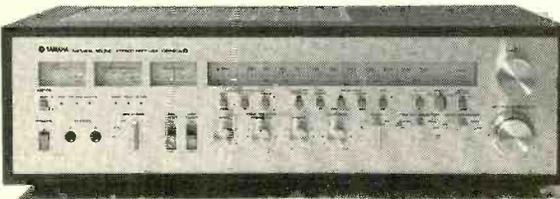
CR-620 0.05% THD 0.05% IM



CR-820 0.05% THD 0.05% IM



CR-1020 0.05% THD 0.05% IM



CR-2020 0.05% THD 0.05% IM

whether I'm crazy or if Karl Himmel is actually in trouble a couple of times. Anyway, on *My Creole Belle* and especially on *I Ain't Goin' Honky Tonkin' Anymore*, the beat seems just ever so slightly amiss. Another small thing that bothers me is how Doc pitched *I Recall a Gypsy Woman* to the key he was determined to play on the guitar rather than to one he'd be comfortable singing in, which would be about a third higher.

Nevertheless, there's some good stuff scattered throughout, and it doesn't hurt that some of it is subtle. There's a dazzling assortment of guitar runs behind Merle, one eventually realizes, and there are some neat songs, such as *Blue Railroad Train* and *Mean Mama Blues*, and some good, honest, mellow singing. Among your Watson albums, this is not

the runt of the litter, but neither is it any match for the robust ones. N.C.

JIMMY WEBB: *El Mirage*. Jimmy Webb (vocals and keyboards); David Paich, George Martin (keyboards, synthesizer); Fred Tackett, Dean Parks (electric and acoustic guitars); other musicians. *The Highwayman; Sugarbird; Mixed-up Guy; Dance to the Radio; Where the Universes Are; Moment in a Shadow*; and five others. ATLANTIC SD 18218 \$6.98, © TP-18218 \$7.97, © CS-18218 \$7.97.

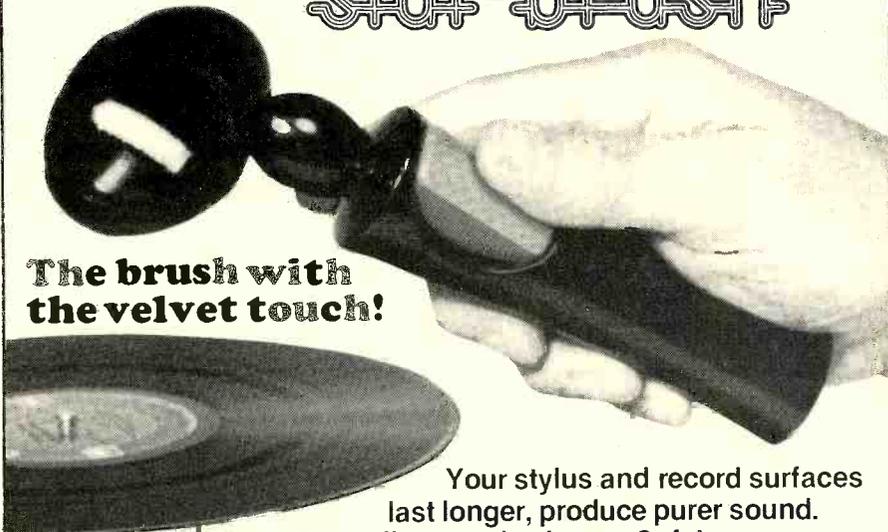
Performance: **Good**
Recording: **Excellent**

Jimmy Webb has a song here that seems to describe fairly well where he's at in his performing career right now. It's called *If You*

See Me Getting Smaller I'm Leaving—"Don't worry, I'm in no hurry/I got a right to disappear/I'm free to fade away." And that's just about what he seems intent on doing, unfortunately, by focusing his attention squarely on his navel and keeping it there. This newest collection of songs is dense with cosmic pretentiousness (*Where the Universes Are* and *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* are two dreary examples).

Webb has always been an artist whom a lot of people find hard to take beyond a certain level; they think there *might* be something to *MacArthur Park*, and his earliest songs *did* have a fresh charm about them, but in general they're happier leaving him in the hands of enthusiastic critics than listening to him. I'm beginning to see their point. I'd always felt that what kept Webb from having a mass audience was his inability to perform his own work well. But for the last two albums I've had the feeling that either he's putting one over on me or he's into a kind of public-bemad ego trip that effectively shuts out the listener. In any event, I hope he gets his act together, because I feel he's basically too good an artist to be content with sending us reports of what he sees in the mirror. P.R.

INTRODUCING THE **LE-BO®**
stat-brush



The brush with the velvet touch!

Your stylus and record surfaces last longer, produce purer sound. Neutralizes static charge. Safely removes dust. Keeps records clean, sound clear.

The LE-BO® Stat Brush uses a piezoelectric discharge brush to neutralize static in a single sweep across the record. Absolutely reliable and safe.

- **Reliable • Durable • Safe**
- **No Batteries Needed**
- **3-year Guarantee**

Suggested retail price
\$24.95

The **LE-BO**
4-in-1 Attache
Not just another pretty case!

- Designer attache or overnight case
- Carrying case for 8-track tapes or cassettes
- Home storage for your tapes or cassettes
- Removable organizer inserts for 32 tapes or cassettes
- Treated with Zepel stain repeller



Suggested list price: **\$40.**

Ask about the TA-230, the Le-Bo 4-in-1 at your audio dealer or record store or write:
Le-Bo Products, 58-60 Grand Ave., Maspeth, N.Y. 11378



DONNA SUMMER: *I Remember Yesterday*. Donna Summer (vocals); orchestra, *Love's Unkind; Back in Love Again; Black Lady; Take Me; I Feel Love*; and three others. CASA-BLANCA NBLP 7056 \$7.98, © NBL8-7056 \$7.98, © NBL5-7056 \$7.98.

Performance: **Summerfest**
Recording: **Slick**

Donna Summer, who's been panting down our necks for most of her career, has apparently decided that the time has come for a change. So in faraway München, where she's been pushing herself to the limits of recorded orgasm for what seems like years, she and her collaborator Giorgio Moroder have come up with the New Sound and New Beat exemplified by the title song of this album—which she sings *twice*, just in case we don't get the point the first time. You aren't going to believe it, but what they've come up with is none other than an updated, sexier version of the ancient Ted Weems hit *Heartaches*. Under the circumstances, it seems appropriate to call it *I Remember Yesterday*. Hmm, don't we all. And we also remember that familiar beat and the royalty checks that must have kept Weems warm and happy for many, many years. It'll all probably be a great new treat for the disco crowd, and I hope that Donna and Giorgio make enough marks that she'll be able to afford to get down to the business of recording the kind of album she's been giving broad hints she's capable of ever since the be-

(Continued on page 124)

MOST COMPANIES VIEW PERFECTION AS A DISTANT GOAL. WE BELIEVE IT'S THE BEST PLACE TO START.

At Setton, for years we've been obsessed with perfection in the reproduction of sound. We're our own toughest critic because we never stop thinking, or re-thinking a problem through. Our line of highest fidelity equipment was developed by a demanding team of men with different, yet complementary disciplines. The result is a degree of perfection worthy of consideration by even the most discerning audiophile.

Perfection is the child of time.

When units arrive from overseas, a grueling, eight-hour heat test reveals any element that might fail under more normal use. Then, in an arduous quality control check of well over an hour, we test power and adjust distortion levels using equipment you'll find only in the most exacting electronic laboratories. We spend time on every piece of electronic equipment so we can provide a full, five-year guarantee for both parts and labor.

We deliver more than we promise.

Figures help tell how equipment will sound. (For example, our RS660 Receiver provides 120 watts per channel with only 0.035 IMD and THD.) But with Setton, you get a listing of the exact specs for each piece of equipment, which are always better than what we promise in our literature. And more important, we start with perfect sound in mind. By balancing IMD and THD we attain an airy, transparent sound, almost as if the electronics were not even there, for everything from the softest sonata to the hardest rock.

Ideas that make us ideal.

The Setton RCS-X 1000 Control Center is a tuner/preamp that also provides remote control

of all basic functions. You can select sources, change speakers and record and transfer on tape. It's beautifully designed on the outside, while a glimpse inside reveals an elegant solution in sophisticated circuitry, with IC's neatly packaged into a startlingly small space. Illuminated digital displays show input selection, FM frequency and \pm dB readings for each of the four tone controls. FM sound is at its best because LED's

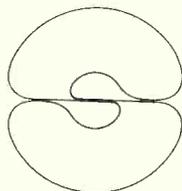
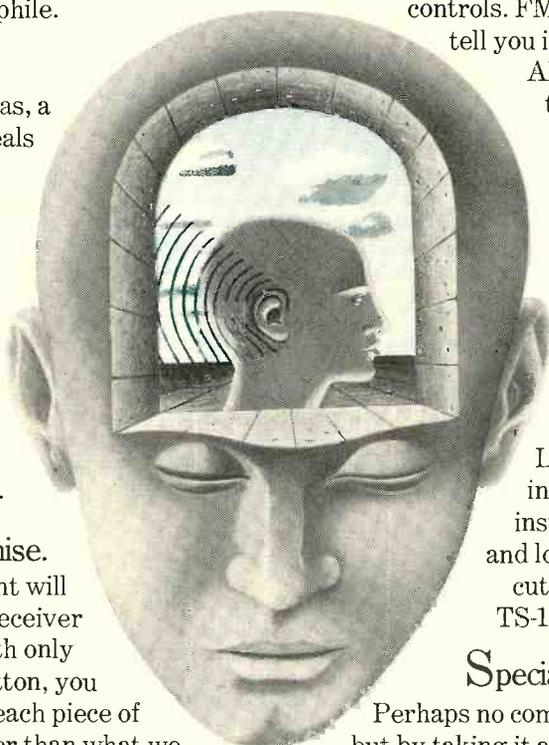
tell you instantly when you're center tuned.

AFC is cancelled when you touch the tuning control so you can find weak stations, but it returns in seconds for drift-free reception. LED's act as instantaneous VU meters so you can see clipping as it occurs. All our electronic gear, including the RCS-X 1000, has a security panel that protects against overheating, distortion and speaker overload.

Our TS-11 Automatic Front Loading Turntable takes a new turn in design. The dustcover slides back, instead of lifting up, so you gain space and lose vibration. And vertical controls cut vibration still more. Taping from a TS-11 assures a clean transfer of sound.

Special equipment for the special few.

Perhaps no company will ever achieve perfection, but by taking it as our starting point, we know we'll never be far away. As you might gather, Setton equipment is not inexpensive. But for its price, it offers uncommon value. We believe there is a relatively small number of customers able to fully appreciate this highest fidelity equipment. If you are interested in learning more about the line that starts with perfection, write Barbara Beachy, Setton International Ltd., 60 Remington Boulevard, Ronkonkoma, N.Y. 11779.



SETTON

Perfection. The best place to start.

CIRCLE NO. 57 ON READER SERVICE CARD

SAY, what are a couple of civilized, intelligent, witty songwriters like Richard Maltby, Jr. and David Shire doing in a slummy place like the MOR pop world? Just lucky, I guess—for all of us. Their new RCA album, "Starting Here, Starting Now," is an original-cast recording of the cabaret-style revue which had a sprightly and successful Broadway run recently. As recorded (and very well too) by producer Jay David Saks, it is an unexpected and delightful feast for those who

yearnings of *Flair*, whose lyric mourns the passing of panache and longs for a style "that is style and not just camp." Again, there's *I Don't Believe It*, a song Maltby completely re-wrote for this show, a brilliant polemic about phoniness—*gut* phoniness—that doggedly and skillfully exposes the glutinous, hypocritical poses of Loving-and-Caring-for-Each-Other-as-Human-Beings that trivialize so many human relationships these days. But these songs are the exceptions; as the liner

beginning of her career. In the meantime, who knows? If you've never heard *Heartaches*, then you'll probably have a ball dancing to this album. P.R.

OTHER RECOMMENDED DISCO HITS

● **JAMES BROWN:** *Mutha's Nature*. POLYDOR PD-1-6111 \$6.98, ⑧ 8T-1-6111 \$7.98, ⑨ CT-1-6111 \$7.98.

● **MICHAEL HENDERSON:** *Goin' Places*. BUDDAH BDS 5693 \$6.98.

● **GIORGIO:** *From Here to Eternity*. CASABLANCA NBLP-7065 \$6.98, ⑧ NBL8-7065 \$7.98, ⑨ NBL5-7065 \$7.98.

● **SPACE:** *Magic Fly*. UNITED ARTISTS UALA 780-G \$6.98.

● **SYLVESTER.** FANTASY F-797-B-D \$6.98.

(List compiled by David Mancuso, owner of the Loft, one of New York City's top discos.)



were beginning to fear that literacy, sophistication, and benevolent irony in popular music were things we'd only be able to read about in biographies of such Golden Age greats as Rodgers and Hart, Dietz and Schwartz, or Harburg and Arlen.

Aside from the fact that all of these teams (and there were many more) wrote wonderfully singable, instantly memorable songs, they also all represented, in their distinctive individual ways, a consistent and unique point of view. Rodgers and Hart epitomized the brittle chic and wry disillusionment of the glittery (and often not so glittery) Thirties generation; Dietz and Schwartz wrote in a broadly romantic, pulse-quickening vein that owed something to operetta but a great deal more to a fantasized, larger-than-life ideal conjured up by the movies or by old-time Broadway at its most lavish; Harburg and Arlen were topical, blues-accented, and hip, as snappy as a pair of Hermès' best silk-moiré suspenders.

It is just such a stylistic center, the ability to see things in terms of certain standard reference points, that distinguishes the work of Maltby and Shire from so much of what is being written for the MOR market today. Briefly, though they seem to have their roots in the Fifties (the time when they attended Yale together), they are working with complete awareness in the Seventies, still reflecting (as we all are) on the meaning of the Sixties revolution that so altered our way of looking at ourselves, so severely tested many of the things we thought we believed in. (I realize that's not very brief, but you get what I mean.)

The Maltby-Shire response to all this is generally a positive one, as is demonstrated in such uppers as *I Hear Bells*, *Song of Me*, *The Word Is Love*, and of course the title song. But occasionally the old "if onlys" peep through, as they do in the John Cheeverish

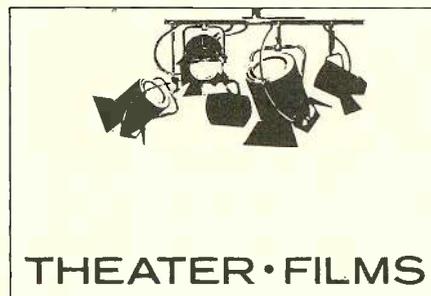
notes aptly put it, "Starting Here, Starting Now" is "a present-tense evening."

It is most satisfyingly that in respect to its young three-member company—Loni Ackerman, Margery Cohen, and George Lee Andrews. All of them have apparently become so habituated to the Maltby-Shire style that they wear it like their own skins, performing the material with the kind of spontaneity, energy, command, and charm one usually associates only with long-established stars. George Lee Andrews, for example, sings the show-stopping *I Hear Bells*, in a magnificent arrangement by Shire, so wonderfully well that I played the same band three times in succession. I was *that* impressed.

But I'm impressed as well by the total accomplishment here. The twenty-one songs that comprise the show were written over a number of years, but all bear the mark of an authentic pair of creators at work within an original style that addresses us on several levels, with real musical and lyrical intelligence, about very real things.

Now if you're standing there waiting breathlessly for the next release of the Sex Pistols, or if you've been hanging around the bins all week expecting the arrival of, say, "Glen Campbell Sings the Collected Works of Marilyn and Alan Bergman," then "Starting Here, Starting Now" isn't exactly going to thrill you to pieces. But if you're like me, if you've been patiently waiting for grace, style, and manner to raise their collective lovely heads again, then you'll find this collection of songs one of the major musical delights of the year. —Peter Reilly

STARTING HERE, STARTING NOW (David Shire—Richard Maltby, Jr.). Original-cast recording. Loni Ackerman, Margery Cohen, and George Lee Andrews (vocals); orchestra. RCA ABL1-2360 \$7.98.



RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

RAGGEDY ANN AND ANDY (Joe Raposo). Original-soundtrack recording. Unlisted vocalists and orchestra, Joe Raposo arr. and cond. COLUMBIA S-34686 \$5.98, ⑧ SA-34686 \$6.98, ⑨ ST-34686 \$6.98.

Performance: **Cute but not cloying**
Recording: **Excellent**

When I was trying to grow up in the Twenties, not only were Raggedy Ann dolls all the rage and the books about her by Johnny Gruelle best-sellers for toddlers, but a whole industry also grew up around the endlessly cheery rag doll with the red wool hair and the shoe-button eyes—including Raggedy Ann dresses, Raggedy Ann haircuts, and even a Raggedy Ann salad. Now, fifty years later, Twentieth-Century Fox has come out with a whole movie devoted to Raggedy Ann and her brother Andy. Billed as a "musical adventure," this record, a spinoff issued by the Bobbs-Merrill Company, is taken from the actual soundtrack of the full-length cartoon about the things that happen to Andy and Ann when they leave the comfort of the nursery to rescue a kidnapping victim. The victim is a gaudy French doll named Marcella, who only wants to go back to Paris but ends up on a pirate ship in the hands of Captain Contagious, who has caught cold from long imprisonment in a snow-filled glass globe on a nursery bookshelf. In the course of the action, Raggedy Ann and her brother meet up with a sorrowing, discarded toy camel, a sugar-addicted monster who is out to eat Raggedy Ann's

(Continued on page 126)

INTRODUCING THE SHARP EYE.™



IT ENDS THE HIT AND MISS METHOD OF FINDING SONGS ON TAPE.

The *Sharp Eye* is an electronic advance developed by Sharp Laboratories. It can automatically find each music selection on an audio tape and play it.

Technically called an Automatic Program Search System, the *Sharp Eye* is many times faster and easier than the manual, imprecise method you have to put up with on even the most expensive audio equipment.

How does it work? In simple terms, it electronically "reads" the short pause, or absence of sound, between songs on the tape.

So if you're in the middle of

one song and want to go on to the next, just hit the *Sharp Eye* button. The machine automatically races Fast-Forward to the next pause and then automatically plays the next song.

If you want to hear any selection over again, it works the same way in reverse.

The *Sharp Eye* is an exclusive feature on all Sharp tape equipment including the RT 1155, shown. This superbly engineered stereo cassette deck with Dolby* noise reduction features a narrow gap Permalloy head for extended high frequency response, servo

controlled DC motor for absolute speed stability and low wow and flutter, and the most advanced circuitry available today.

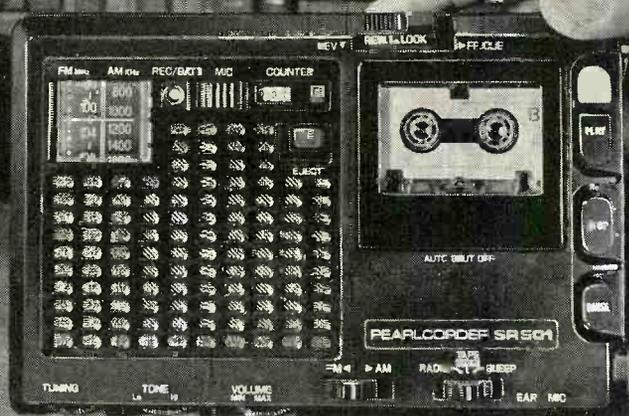
See your Sharp dealer for an exciting demonstration. And while you're there, ask to see the whole Sharp audio line.

They all give you the finest high-fidelity sound you'll find in their price range. As for the *Sharp Eye*, you won't find that on any other equipment at any price.

**THE SHARP EYE
IS QUICKER THAN THE HAND.**

*Dolby is a trademark of Dolby Laboratories, Inc.

Nearly
everything they can do
we can do smaller.



The SR501 is proof that big entertainment doesn't have to be big.

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candy heart, and a practical-joking king who has blown up into a bag of hot air as a result of laughing at innocent people. On the record, all this is covered by a text that is a model of expository clarity, plus a series of songs by Joe Raposo (of Sesame Street fame). Charming songs they are, too. *Raggedy Ann and Andy* may suffer at times from an unrelenting effort to be whimsical and winsome, but the score is also ingenious and ingratiating, the lyrics are nothing if not clever, and the endearing cast deserves better than the anonymity to which the credits have consigned them. P.K.

JAZZ



RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

GARY BURTON: *Passengers*. Gary Burton (vibraphone); Pat Metheny (electric guitar); Steve Swallow (bass guitar); Eberhard Weber (bass); Dan Gottlieb (drums). *Sea Journey*; *Yellow Fields*; *The Whopper*; and three others. ECM ECM-1092 \$7.98, © 8T-1-1092 \$7.98.

Performance: **Excellent**

Recording: **Excellent**

Gary Burton's exceptional talent has never been more in evidence than on this album by his quartet, which is here augmented by fellow ECM star Eberhard Weber. Even guitarist Pat Metheny, whose work on his own album dulled my senses, comes off well in this set of six intense, beautiful pieces. Weber and Burton have, of course, worked together before, and it is an association that I hope will continue, but the man who works best with Burton is Steve Swallow; their collaboration here, as on other occasions, is a study in flawless rapport. Swallow also contributed a composition to this album, the strangely haunting *Claude and Betty*. Check it out. C.A.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BUTTERBEANS AND SUSIE. Jody Edwards, Susie Edwards (vocals); Gene Sedic (clarinet); Benny Morton, Dicky Wells (trumpets); Earl Warren (saxophone); Eddie Heywood, Jr. (piano); other musicians. *Ballin' the Jack*; *Get Yourself a Monkey Man*; *There'll Be Some Changes Made*; *Construction Gang*; *I've Got the Blues for Home Sweet Home*; *A Married Man's a Fool*; and four others. CLASSIC JAZZ CJ 29 \$5.98.

Performance: **Wonderful**

Recording: **Excellent**

Butterbeans and Susie will probably not be familiar names except to classic jazz fans or vaudeville archivists. "Butterbeans" was Jody Edwards and Susie was his wife; they were married on stage as part of their act while still in their teens. Their marriage and careers prospered from the pre-Twenties until

(Continued on page 128)

In the Black II

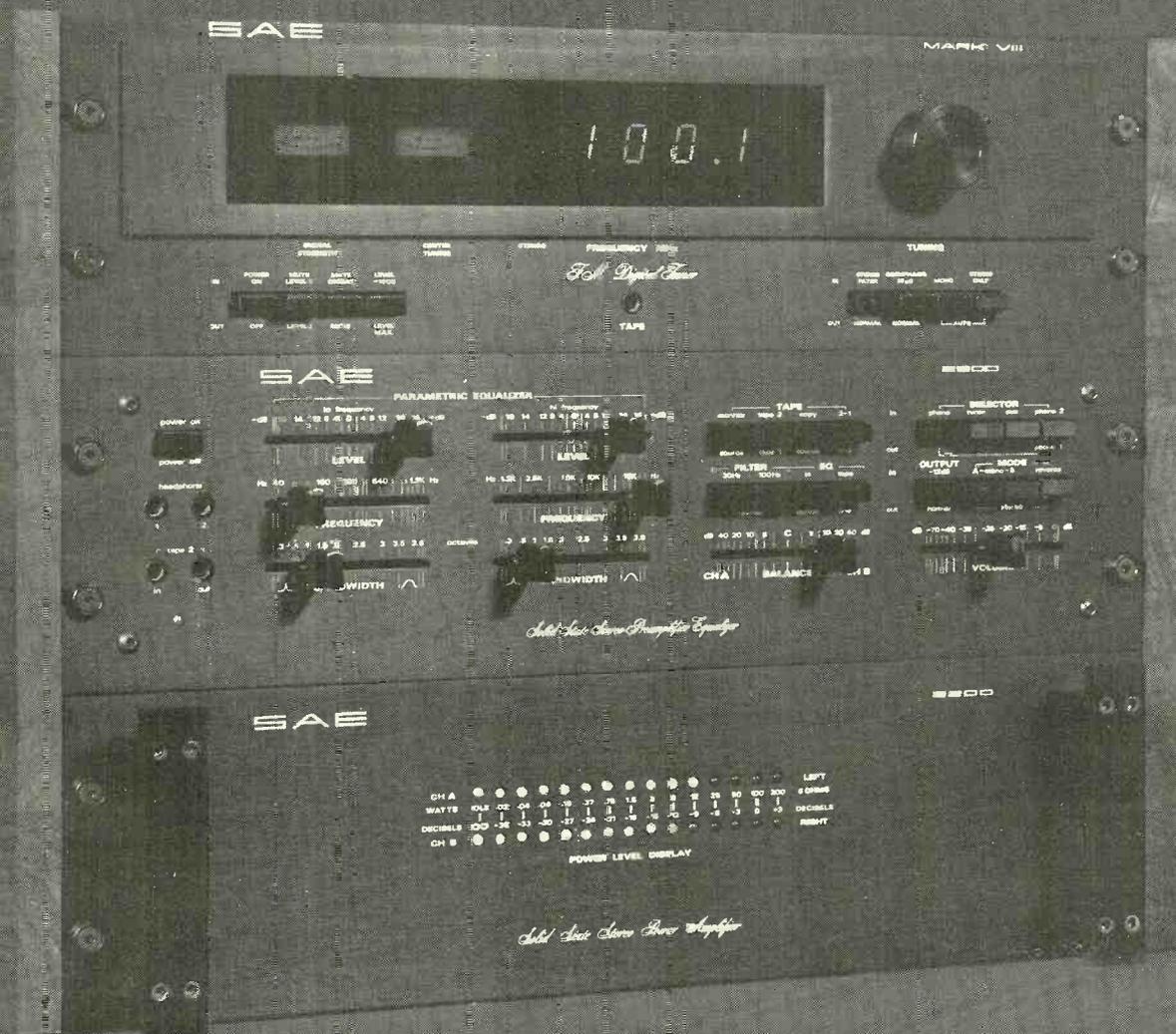
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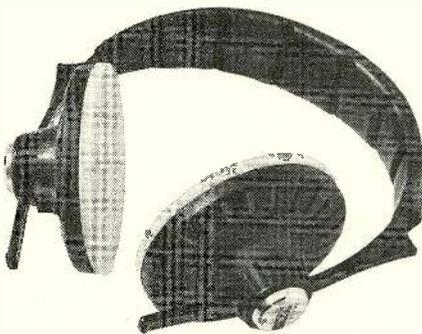
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the early Sixties, when this recording was made. They were often backed on records by jazz musicians, who appreciated their timing.

It is difficult to describe the enormous good humor, professionalism, and superb theatrics of this remarkable duo adequately. Fortunately, their powers were undiminished—even improved—by time and experience when these sessions took place. The musicians present on this date include clarinetist Gene Sedric, a mainstay of the Fats Waller combos, trombonist Dicky Wells, and trumpeter Sidney de Paris. Wells' introductory solo on *Until the Real Thing Comes Along* is absolutely gorgeous, full of emotion but magnificently controlled. De Paris' muted choruses behind Susie's vocal on *I've Got the Blues for Home Sweet Home* are proof positive that he was one of the most underrated lead horns.

Butterbeans and Susie's spoken banter, bravura, and the sense they communicate of having a rousing good time are infectious. *There'll Be Some Changes Made*, which has served countless hot groups well for five decades, was specially written for them, and their version may surprise some people who are nominally familiar with the lyrics. It is fortunate that this 1960 recording has been reissued, not only for the pleasure it provides but for its value as documentation of a now lost vaudeville art form as practiced by two of its most accomplished and likable performers.

J. V.

ORNETTE COLEMAN: *Dancing in Your Head*. Ornette Coleman (alto saxophone); instrumental accompaniment. *Theme from a Symphony (Variations One and Two); Midnight Sunrise*. HORIZON SP-722 \$6.98.

Performance: **It grows on you, but . . .**
Recording: **Very good to poor**

Ornette Coleman keeps a relatively low profile these days, but there was a time—almost twenty years ago—when his radical concept of music made his name synonymous with controversy. Not since the advent of bop had there been such division in the jazz ranks. Freedom of expression had always been one of the virtues of jazz, but Coleman, who once played in a rhythm-and-blues band, startled public and critics alike by ignoring such fundamentals as chord changes and a regular beat. He gave us free form, which his detractors claimed was no form at all, or at least not a form that should be tolerated. We know now, of course, that Ornette Coleman's progressive ideas were not the lunacy some people considered them. They changed the character of the music that sprang from jazz, and free-form music is something even relatively conservative ears have been able to adjust to.

This short (thirty-one minutes total) album is not for easy listening. In fact, unlike some of Coleman's surprisingly temperate recent output, it can be quite grating. But there is something about *Theme from a Symphony*, which takes up all but four and a half minutes of the album, that makes it grow on you. The *Theme* is divided into two "variations" (very slight ones), and it sounds like a rhythm-and-blues band in a North African market—a bit monotonous when Coleman's alto repeats the simple theme over and over again, but intriguing when he takes off on it. *Midnight Sunrise*, which features Coleman with the "Master Musicians of Joujouka, Morocco," was recorded more primitively on location there in 1973. Because of poor balance, Coleman all but drowns out the other musicians, so one



ECM Records

STEVE KUHN
A wonderfully lyrical, sensitive pianist

does not really get the impression of interplay that he presumably sought. This is not one of his best efforts, but it is different from anything I have heard him do before. C.A.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

STEVE KUHN AND ECSTASY: *Motility*. Steve Kuhn (piano); Steve Slagle (flute, soprano and alto saxophones); Harvie Swartz (bass); Michael Smith (drums). *The Rain Forest; Deep Tango; Bittersweet Passages; Catharine; Oceans in the Sky*; and four others. ECM ECM-1-1094 \$7.98, © 8T-1-1094 \$7.98.

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

If this album doesn't double Steve Kuhn's following (which I hope his last two albums have increased by an appreciable number), I suggest that ECM include a pair of Q-Tips with his next release. A wonderfully lyrical, sensitive pianist, Kuhn has found perfect partners in the trio that calls itself Ecstasy. The album is flawless, charged with emotion and stunningly beautiful. I don't know where Steve Slagle, who plays flute and saxophones, came from, but he had better not go away again—he is marvelous. They all are. C.A.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

SAM RIVERS/DAVE HOLLAND: *Volume 2*. Sam Rivers (flute, piano); Dave Holland (bass). *Ripples; Deluge*. IMPROVISING ARTISTS 37.38.48 \$7.98 (from Improvising Artists, Inc., 26 Jane Street, New York, N.Y. 10014).

Performance: **A welcome encore**
Recording: **Excellent**

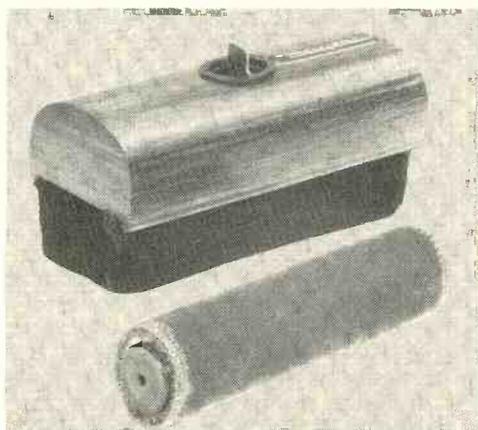
When Improvising Artists, a label owned and operated by pianist Paul Bley, released the first set of duets by Sam Rivers and Dave Holland last year, I was most impressed by what I called "two masterful pieces of impressionistic playing by two uncompromising musicians." Ditto for this follow-up set, which was actually recorded at the same 1976 session, but which features Rivers on flute (*Ripples*) and piano (*Deluge*) instead of soprano and tenor saxophones. Again we have two extended free-form pieces, and if you have the first volume you ought to acquire this one too. Of course, if you have neither, and if you like your music spontaneous, vibrant, and, yes,

(Continued on page 130)

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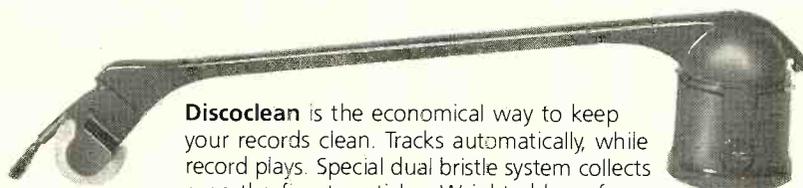
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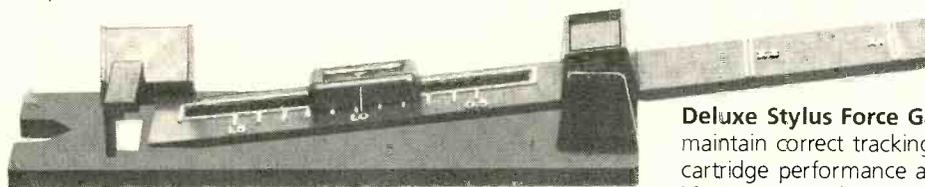
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soulful, then all four dialogues belong in your collection. C.A.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

JORGE LOPEZ RUIZ: *Amor Buenos Aires.* Jorge Lopez Ruiz (bass); orchestra and chorus. *Relatos; Bronca Buenos Aires;* and two others. CATALYST CAT-7908 \$6.98.

Performance: **No tango, this**
Recording: **Very good**

From the country that gave us the tango comes what the notes to this album refer to as "basically a stylized piece—a cantata for choirs, soloists, and jazz orchestras in four movements." The notes go on to say that this work by bassist Jorge Lopez Ruiz "captures the flavor of a city [Buenos Aires] and a country [Argentina]," giving the erroneous impression that this is some sort of south-of-the-border *Manhattan Towers*. But *Amor Buenos Aires* is actually a remarkable work of jazz that totally belies its Argentinian origin. If it captures the flavor of any city, that city is New York, and the country it evokes is most definitely the U.S.A.

Composer Ruiz paints this canvas with generous splashes of Gil Evansesque colors, Kentonian brass, and touches of after-hours Harlem, all set against a rhythmic background that—greatly abetted by his own gloriously swinging bass—matches anything this country has to offer. Tenor saxophonist Horacio "Chivo" Borraro solos prominently throughout, and he is a fine, inventive player with dexterous technique and a good, meaty tone. I don't know if Ruiz and his colleagues have played their last tango in Buenos Aires, but with music like this, who cares? C.A.

WEATHER REPORT: *Heavy Weather.* Weather Report (instrumentals). *Birdland; The Juggler; Harlequin; A Remark You Made;* and four others. COLUMBIA PC-34418 \$6.98, © CA-34418 \$6.98, © CT-34418 \$6.98.

Performance: **Mostly sunny**
Recording: **Very good**

I recently attended a Weather Report concert in New York and was appalled to see bassist Jaco Pastorius acting the buffoon on stage while Joe Zawinul and Wayne Shorter, who obviously take their music seriously, gave memorable performances. I have never thought much of Pastorius as a bass player, and I think even less of him as a clown, but the audience ate it up—proving, I suppose, that pot (the air was full of it) is the inferior performer's best friend. The more Pastorius hopped around, the more they applauded, and when he threw his bass on the floor and jumped over it, I thought the house would come down.

Weather Report has been around for seven years now, and each year has brought a new album. This one is easier on the unadventurous ear than any of the previous ones, but it is by no means bland. *Rumba Mama* is a live track featuring only percussionists Alex Acuna and Manolo Badrena, but Zawinul and Shorter shine brilliantly everywhere else. *Birdland* is already something of a hit, and it's easy to understand why, but my favorite is Shorter's *Palladium*, which is not quite as accessible. This is heavy weather indeed from a group that—these days, at least—should be heard and not seen. C.A.

(Continued on page 132)

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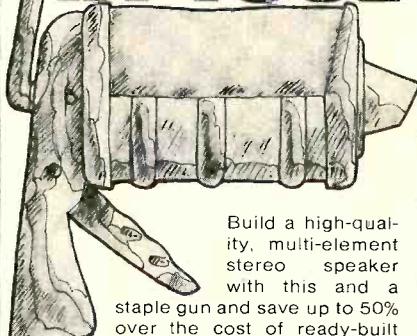
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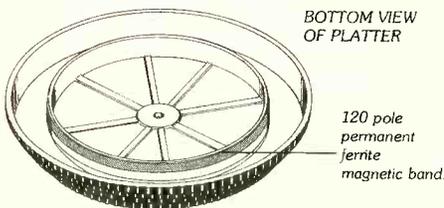
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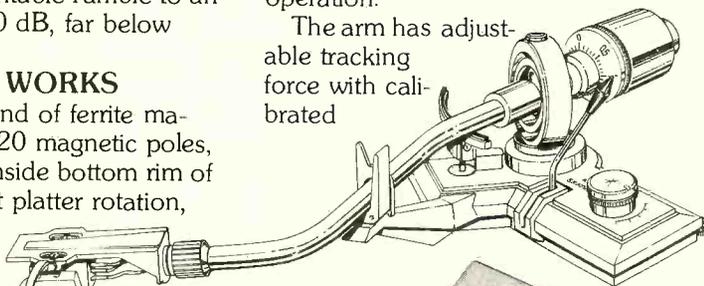
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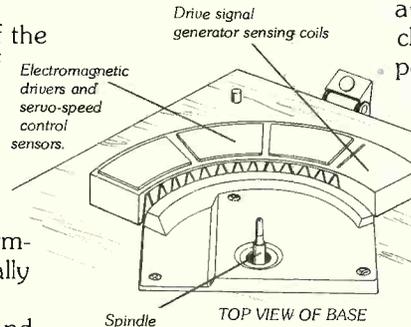
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Ellington, Summer of '45: Eight Discs off the Air



Bettmann/Archive

A SURPRISE Oscar for *Mildred Pierce* was said to have helped Joan Crawford overcome a bout with the flu; Detroit beat Chicago in the World Series; Aaron Copland picked up the Pulitzer Prize for *Appalachian Spring*; the dripping sentimentality of *Laura*, *I Should Care*, and *Love Letters* fed the romantic fantasies of lonelyhearts poring over the worn pages of the previous year's best seller, *Forever Amber*; a horse named Hoop Jr. won the Kentucky Derby, and the Allies won World

War II. It was 1945. On the jazz front it was the year Dizzy Gillespie, in New York, and Ted Heath, in London, formed their first big bands; Woody Herman stomped across the U.S. with his first and most celebrated Herd; inveterate purists (they were called "moldy figs" in those days) resurrected aging New Orleans trumpeter Bunk Johnson, armed him with new teeth and a horn, and brought him to New York to fight in their battle against that dreaded musical disease called bebop. It was

also a year in which the Duke Ellington Orchestra—an institution seemingly unaffected by wars, musical or otherwise—was heard from coast to coast in a series of ABC Saturday afternoon broadcasts called "Date with the Duke."

Today most of us would ask, "Hoop Jr.—who?" Mildred Pierce's padded shoulders semaphore in black and white between late-night TV commercials, and the adventures of the scarlet Ms. Amber pale in comparison with the X-plots of her modern-day counterparts. The radio may still bring us an occasional rendering of *Laura* or *Love Letters*, but big-band remotes are as much a thing of the past as nickel phone calls, Packard cars, and (mercifully) steel phonograph needles. However, thanks to singer Mel Tormé, almost six hours (five hours, forty-eight minutes, and fifty-eight seconds, to be exact) of Ellingtonia, aired between May and October 1945, have been preserved with superb technical quality and issued on eight Fairmont albums.

Tormé was only nineteen or twenty when these broadcasts were made, but he already had an impressive professional background. Since the age of four, he had sung with the Coon-Sanders Nighthawk Orchestra, acted in soap operas, written a song for Harry James, appeared in a film, and led his own group, the Mel-Tones. After hearing *Reminiscing in Tempo*, Tormé became a loyal Duke Ellington fan, so taken by Duke's music that he hired a professional studio to record these weekly performances off the air.

THE eight discs do not contain all that was recorded, which will undoubtedly bother monomaniacal collectors, but not me. Rather—and wisely, I think—the selections were carefully chosen from ten broadcasts; titles are duplicated only when warranted by the performance. Commentary by the announcer has been kept to a minimum, which, as you know if you've ever heard the kind of nonsense these smooth talkers used to indulge in, is a blessing. But we do hear a bit of history: in the middle of *Fickle Fling* (in Volume 7) a special bulletin announces President Truman's appointment of James F. Byrnes as Secretary of State. We also hear a few comments from Duke himself, and, of course, some vocals. Duke inexplicably seemed to prefer bland vocalists (with one or two exceptions), and that penchant is illustrated here by the warblings of Al Hibbler, Joya Sherrill, Marie Ellington, and Kay Davis, so—especially considering what an all-star band Ellington had in 1945—we must be grateful to producer Dave Caughren for placing the accent in this set on instrumentals.

There are excellent versions of such extended works as *New World A-Comin'* and *The Perfume Suite*, excerpts from *Black, Brown and Beige*, and even a couple of mini jam sessions with a looser format than we get on any of Ellington's commercial recordings. Thus we hear Ray Nance, Taft Jordan, Al Sears, Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton, and Jimmy Hamilton romping through *C Jam Blues* (Volume 4) and a lively JATP-ish *Body and Soul* (Volume 6) that must have sent shivers through the matinee crowd at Akron's Palace Theatre. Cornetist Rex Stewart's unique plunger style also prevails (a striking example being *Frantic Fantasy*, in Volume 1), Otto

(Hardwick) delightfully makes that riff staccato a couple of times (Volumes 3 and 7). Cat Anderson's trumpet soars above *Teardrops in the Rain* and quite a few other items. Johnny Hodges takes us to the warmest valley ever. Junior Raglin and Sonny Greer. . . . But what's the use of going on? This is a rich lode, and I can only advise you to haul home as much of it as your budget will allow. I, for one, shall be eternally grateful to Mel Tormé for having had the foresight to preserve this important slice of American music. As he puts it in his notes, "There are fluffs, mistakes—there is occasional raggedness in the playing. Forget it! It's not important!" Amen.

—Chris Albertson

DUKE ELLINGTON: A Date with the Duke, Volumes 1-8. Duke Ellington and His Orchestra. FAIRMONT FA-1001/4, FA-1007/10 eight discs \$6.98 each (from Fairmont Records, P.O. Box 3392, Santa Monica, Calif. 90403).

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VOLUME 2: *Subtle Slough; C Jam Blues; Suddenly It Jumped; Candy; A Friend of Yours; Kissing Bug; Hollywood Hangover; Laura; In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree; Frankie and Johnny; Midriff; My Honey's Lovin' Arms.* FAIRMONT FA-1002.

VOLUME 3: *Mood to Be Wooped; Jack the Bear; Way Low; Blues on the Double; Summertime; Come Sunday/Light (Worksong); On the Alamo; Carnegie Blues; Otto, Make That Riff Staccato; Blue Skies; Things Ain't What They Used to Be.* FAIRMONT FA-1003.

VOLUME 4: *Blue Is the Night; Can't You Read Between the Lines; Hop, Skip and Jump; Solid Old Man; I Ain't Got Nothin' but the Blues; I Miss Your Kiss; Diminuendo in Blue/Rocks in My Bed/Crescendo in Blue; Teardrops in the Rain; My Little Brown Book; C Jam Blues.* FAIRMONT FA-1004.

VOLUME 5: *Back Home Again in Indiana; Blue Serge; Jumpin' Punkins; On the Sunny Side of the Street; Cottontail; New World A-Comin'; Johnny Come Lately; Let the Zoomers Drool.* FAIRMONT FA-1007.

VOLUME 6: *Jump for Joy; All at Once; Koko; I Should Care; Go 'Way Blues; Tootin' Through the Roof; Every Hour on the Hour; Blue Belles of Harlem; Body and Soul; What Am I Here For; Warm Valley; Stompy Jones.* FAIRMONT FA-1008.

VOLUME 7: *Caravan; Fickle Fling; Honey-suckle Rose; Daydream; One O'Clock Jump; Chelsea Bridge; I Want Something to Live For; My Little Brown Book; Otto, Play That Riff Staccato; Carnegie Blues; Old King Doojje; Blue Bells of Harlem; I'm Beginning to See the Light.* FAIRMONT FA-1009.

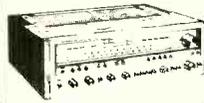
VOLUME 8: *Diminuendo in Blue/Carnegie Blues/Crescendo in Blue; The Perfume Suite—Balcony Serenade/Strange Feeling/Dancers in Love/Coloratura; Hollywood Hangover; Time's A-Wastin'; Every Hour on the Hour; Hollywood Hangover; Autumn Serenade; Hop, Skip and Jump.* FAIRMONT FA-1010.

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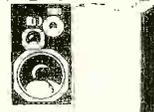
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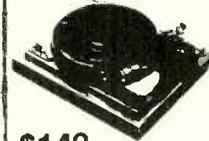
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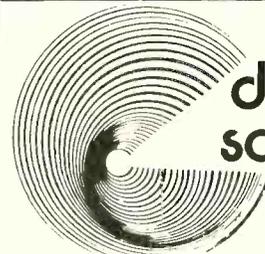
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CIRCLE NO. 39 ON READER SERVICE CARD



CLASSICAL DISCS AND TAPES

Reviewed by RICHARD FREED • DAVID HALL • GEORGE JELLINEK • PAUL KRESH
STODDARD LINCOLN • ERIC SALZMAN

BARTÓK: *The Wooden Prince* (see *Best of the Month*, page 86)

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BENDA: *Concertos for Harpsichord and Strings in F Minor, B Minor, and G Major*. Josef Hála (harpsichord); string quintet. SUPRAPHON 1 11 2138 \$7.98.

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

These three powerful harpsichord concertos will make you sit up and take notice of the all-but-forgotten Bohemian composer Jiří Antonín Benda. Written during the formative years of the Classical era, Benda's music betrays the strong influence of C. P. E. Bach. The outer movements of these concertos are pure *Sturm und Drang*, filled with bold melodies and dashing passage work. The slow movements are the embodiment of the period's sentimentality. The works are constructed on spacious lines and sustain their interest and drive from beginning to end.

Josef Hála is a virtuoso player who brings power and imagination to this music. He whips off difficult figuration with sure direction and exquisitely molds lyric melodies with a sure sense of timing. His imaginative cadenzas and ornamentation perfectly fit into Benda's pre-Classical style.

The difficult problem of balancing harpsichord and strings is not solved here in the usu-

al way, by manipulating microphones and volume knobs, but rather by using a string quintet instead of an orchestra. Although the bass line is sometimes a bit heavy, one hears all the parts in a completely satisfying way. Despite some rough intonation, the quintet itself is stylistically just right. Their tone is clear, melodies are well articulated, and there is effective contrast between detailed figural accompaniment and gruff "orchestral" tuttis. *S.L.*

BRAHMS: *Intermezzos, Op. 117; Six Pieces, Op. 118; Four Pieces, Op. 119*. Dmitri Alexeev (piano). ANGEL S-37290 \$7.98.

Performance: **A young master**
Recording: **Plush**

BRAHMS: *Fantasias, Op. 116; Intermezzos, Op. 117; Rhapsody in B Minor, Op. 79, No. 1*. Ludwig Olshansky (piano). MONITOR MCS 2152 \$3.98.

Performance: **Wan**
Recording: **Mild-mannered**

Dmitri Alexeev is a young Russian pianist of great skill and sensitivity. But the late piano pieces of Brahms are not really a young person's music, and now and again here I sense a certain underlying impatience, as if Alexeev wanted to break out in a little dash and fire. I don't mean to put down this very great music, but there is a lot of psychic wallowing in it—high-class, intellectual, and deeply felt, but wallowing nonetheless. At thirty, it's hard to keep wallowing for very long! Alexeev goes pretty far into it, but he has not quite internalized everything. Still, this is a very fine achievement, set forth with a plush piano sound.

The name Ludwig Olshansky and the Monitor label might suggest another Russian pianist. Olshansky is American, however, and has been noted for other recordings of Romantic piano music, including some of Brahms'. But I find his performances on this disc wan, colorless, and uncommendable. *E.S.*

Orchestra, Issay Dobrowen cond. TURNABOUT ® THS 65071 \$3.98.

Performance: **Outstanding**
Recording: **Good transfer from 78's**

Solomon's later recording of the Brahms D Minor with Kubelik was circulated briefly by RCA in the early 1950's, but I don't believe this one of the B-flat has appeared in this country before in any form. Even with the several fine stereo versions available now, it is most welcome. Trying to verbalize just why Solomon has been a special hero of mine, I found that the blurb on the record jacket said it just about as I would have phrased it myself: "His adherence to the spirit of the music he performs is legendary. He has never imposed himself or any of his own mannerisms on the music. . . ." This is not to say that his playing has no personality, but it is an aristocratic personality, utterly and unselfconsciously at the service of the music; the word for it is "integrity." Dobrowen, a great conductor who ought to have made more records than he did (how good to have his *Boris Godounov* restored on Seraphim last year!), had the same sort of artistic outlook, so it was an ideal partnership. Pianistically, Solomon is dazzling; musically, he and Dobrowen make sublime good sense, balancing the lyrical and the heroic, the grand and the intimate elements of the work in a clean, classical reading that has plenty of thrust but no heaving and churning in the name of Romantic expressiveness, no gestures toward monumentalism. Haydn Rogerson is not encouraged to indulge himself in his cello solo in the slow movement, but plays with the same simple dignity that characterizes the entire performance. It all leaves the listener refreshed instead of exhausted. The transfer from 78's has been accomplished remarkably well, with traces of surface noise wisely unsuppressed so as not to restrict the range. Altogether, an outstanding example of conservation. *R.F.*

Explanation of symbols:

- Ⓜ = reel-to-reel stereo tape
- Ⓢ = eight-track stereo cartridge
- Ⓒ = stereo cassette
- Ⓚ = quadrasonic disc
- Ⓡ = reel-to-reel quadrasonic tape
- Ⓟ = eight-track quadrasonic tape

Monophonic recordings are indicated by the symbol Ⓜ

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

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BRAHMS: *Piano Concerto No. 2, in B-flat Major, Op. 83*. Solomon (piano); Philharmonia

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BRAHMS: *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel, Op. 24; Three Intermezzos, Op. 117; Four Pieces, Op. 119*. Van Cliburn (pi-

ano). RCA ARL1-2280 \$7.98, © ARS1-2280 \$7.98, © ARK1-2280 \$7.98.

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

Brahms has always been one of Cliburn's strengths, and this thoughtful program represents him at his very best. The Handel Variations are enlivened by the most persuasive sort of intensity, reflecting Cliburn's regard for the grand design as well as a most convincing characterization of the individual variations. The final fugue might have done with a bit more robustness, as in Augustin Anievas' highly competitive version (Seraphim S-60049), but there is no lack of either brilliance or depth in Cliburn's sensitive, crisply articulated presentation. The seven shorter pieces on side two, composed more than thirty years later than the Handel Variations, draw the same level of responsiveness, manifested in reflectiveness rather than exuberance. Here Cliburn shows a subtle reserve, ensuring against what must be strong temptations toward excess in the name of expressiveness: Op. 117, No. 1, for example, is stated with a simplicity appropriate to its folk-song derivation and is all the more moving without the gratuitous overlay of emotion so often encountered in performances of this little gem. (The second intermezzo of the Op. 117 set and the third in Op. 119, incidentally, are the same performances released earlier in a different Cliburn Brahms program on RCA LSC-3240.) The clean, realistic piano sound is a major contribution to the pleasure of this disc, but the surfaces of both copies I have heard are gritty. R.F.

BRUCKNER: *Te Deum* (see MOZART)

BUTTERWORTH: *Two English Idylls; The Banks of Green Willow; Rhapsody, A Shropshire Lad* (see HOWELLS)

CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO: *Concerto in D Major for Guitar and Orchestra* (see VILLALOBOS)

COPLAND: *Dance Symphony*. PISTON: *The Incredible Flutist, Suite*. M.I.T. Symphony Orchestra, David Epstein cond. TURNABOUT QTV-S 34670 \$3.98.

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

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Symphony Orchestra? Yes indeed, and judging by this recording it is quite a respectable musical organization. Actually, science and music—or rather *scientists* and music—have always gone well together. In any group of scientists (but especially mathematicians and doctors) you will find a lot of musical talent just itching to show itself. M.I.T. has long had a serious, functioning music department, of which the orchestra, under the capable direction of David Epstein, is only one of a number of excellent spin-off activities.

Copland's *Dance Symphony* is a charming early work drawn from an unperformed ballet score. Just out of the Nadia Boulangerie when he wrote it, Copland was still under a heavy French (or Franco-Russian) influence, and if it lacks the characteristic marks of his mature style, it nevertheless has both freshness and *savoir faire*. Among Walter Piston's serious symphonies, sonatas, and string quartets, the dance score *The Incredible Flutist* stands out for its warmth and appeal. It is certainly the

composer's best-known work and will probably be his most enduring.

How many of the musicians on this recording are M.I.T. faculty and students and how many are outsiders is, of course, impossible to tell. There are a little unevenness and a certain amount of heavy-handedness in the playing, but there is also a generally high level of spirit. The sound is good. E.S.

DAQUIN: *Twelve Noël's*. MARCHAND: *Organ Works*. Arthur Wills (organ). SAGA 5433/4 two discs \$13.96.

Performance: **Stiff**
Recording: **Brittle**

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

DAQUIN: *Twelve Noël's*. Gaston Litaize (organ). CONNOISSEUR SOCIETY CSQ 2125 \$7.98.

Performance: **Warm**
Recording: **Cathedralish**

Daquin's *Noël's* may not be the most profound organ music ever conceived, but they are cer-

tainly among the most charming. They are basically variations on popular French Christmas carols, folk-like melodies with the charm and joy of the season—a charm and joy, it must be pointed out, that can be enjoyed at any time during the year. Both present recordings have their merits, but only one comes off as a *musical* experience.

Arthur Wills, playing on the organ of the Ely Cathedral, is in control of a magnificent machine. His performance is carefully planned: each articulation is perfect, each ornament is accurately executed, registrations are carefully selected, and everything is perfectly caught by the engineers. The album is virtually a textbook of academic perfections.

Turning to the performance by Gaston Litaize, we are faced with one of those paradoxical situations. At first, the sound seems rather echoey, blurring the articulation and rendering the ornaments bubbly. But as one listens one becomes aware that the organist is well aware of this and is treating many passages as just the sonorous fillers they are. The ornaments are part of a line; the passage work

Haydn's Delightful Nocturnes



evening's light entertainment. But the music is deceptively simple. Although one is immediately aware of its charm and joy, a few rehearsals reveal further the consummate skill and conciseness of expression. Haydn disarmingly poured all his mature art into these small works.

The Music Party ensemble specializes in performances on late-eighteenth-century instruments, which have a fresh, clear sonority quite different from that produced by Baroque ones. The instrumentation here is what Haydn himself opted for in a London performance of several of these nocturnes, the orchestra consisting of two violins, two violas, cello, and bass matched by flute, oboe, two clarinets, and three horns. The music is meticulously played, and the resulting sound is one of the most ravishing ever committed to records. Each part is crystal clear, letting Haydn's inner detail be heard in all its glory, and the full ensemble comes together in a unique blend almost unworldly in its limpidity. On hearing it one immediately realizes what the music of Mozart and Haydn was actually like in contemporary performances.

That the Music Party plays old instruments and subscribes to authentic performance practice is, however, in the end a secondary consideration. Their chief merits are their superb musicianship, elegance, simplicity of style, and joyfulness. No apologies are needed for mannerisms offensive to modern musicians. Directed by clarinetist Alan Hacker, the Music Party transcends history and takes a firm place in today's world of music-making. This disc is a positive, absolute, no-fooling-around MUST. —Stoddard Lincoln

COMMISSIONED by Ferdinand IV, King of Naples and the Two Sicilies, the eight nocturnes are among the last works Haydn wrote at Esterháza before his trip to London. The requirements were stringent: they had to feature the *lira organizzata* (a Neapolitan specialty instrument, somewhat akin to a hurdygurdy, upon which the king himself was a virtuoso); they had to be restricted to the keys of C, F, and G; and they had to be short and light. Haydn complied with all of this and produced a group of miniatures filled with profound ease and breath-taking control.

Like Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, Haydn's nocturnes are little multi-movement serenades or divertissements intended for an

HAYDN: *Eight Nocturnes (Hob. II/25-32)*. The Music Party, Alan Hacker cond. L'OISEAULYRE DSLO 521-2 two discs \$15.96.



Drawing by Powys Evans, National Portrait Gallery

ARNOLD BAX (1883-1953)

Arnold Bax's Seventh

is the animation of the harmony. One's attention is focused not on them but on the grand plan of the variations, and one hears the overall structure as Litaize molds the music in large blocks and outlines them with subtle rhythmic changes and satisfying ritards. The *Noëls* probably began as Christmas improvisations for the pleasure of a congregation. Litaize preserves that feeling and offers also a sense of liturgical grandeur tempered by the tenderness of the season.

Compare the performances of the third *Noël*, in *G Major*: Wills gives us an impression of two professional oboists slavishly imitating a musette, but Litaize's reading captures the actual sweetness of the musette and something of the ornamentation a player of that instrument would have indulged in as well. The former is studied brilliance, the latter all simplicity and tenderness. Of course, the Wills recording (which is two discs rather than one) does include some works of Marchand, but I think that the musical qualities of the Litaize disc make it the better value. *S.L.*

DELIUS: *Concerto for Violin, Cello, and Orchestra; Concerto for Violin and Orchestra.* Yehudi Menuhin (violin); Paul Tortelier (cello); Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Meredith Davies cond. ANGEL □ SQ-37262 \$7.98.

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

Frederick Delius' violin concerto is, in my opinion, by far the most successful of his large-scale, non-programmatic works. I have always treasured the 1944 recording done by dedicatee Albert Sammons (now available as an imported LP), while the one by Jean Pougnet with Beecham conducting, which has

SINCE this recording has been in circulation for some time as a Lyrita import from HNH, it is probably unnecessary to discuss again Leppard's powerful performance of Bax's forceful and poetic final symphony, but the outstanding quality of the sound in the transfer to HNH's own label does call for comment—in the most enthusiastic vein. Robert Ludwig, who is doing all the mastering for HNH, has opened out the Lyrita tapes much more effectively than Lyrita's own (or English Decca's) technicians did; where there was constriction on Lyrita SRCS 83 (for instance, the massed brass early in the first movement), all is now gloriously, transparently clear and unconfined. This is sound quality that can be enjoyed for its own sake, but in this case it also enhances the impact of a splendid performance of a splendid work. This little company seems to be out to set new standards for disc quality in the United States, and here is a prime example of how they are going about it. A tasteful and appropriate cover (with a reproduction of Winslow Homer's *Moonlight, Wood's Island Light*) and silent surfaces are part of the package too.

—Richard Freed

BAX: *Symphony No. 7.* London Philharmonic Orchestra, Raymond Leppard cond. HNH 4010 \$7.98 (from HNH Distributors, Ltd., P.O. Box 222, Evanston, Ill. 60204).

been intermittently available in import shops, also has its very fine points. But both are old. Considerably less successful (poor recording balance) is the 1963 Westminster stereo disc with Robert Gerle listed in the current Schwann. This new stereo recording by Yehudi Menuhin, with the sensitive and knowledgeable collaboration of conductor Meredith Davies, is therefore most welcome. Menuhin takes a much more assertive view of the music's utterance than any of his predecessors—but not at the expense of its poetic qualities—and the music can take it. The recording is perfectly lovely, and the four-channel ambience adds a little something for those who have the requisite playback equipment.

However, not even the passionate commitment of Menuhin and Paul Tortelier and the best efforts of Mr. Davies and the EMI engineering staff can make the double concerto work. There are splendid moments in the piece, but there is little of the natural flow that makes the violin concerto the masterpiece it is. Not the least problem with the double concerto is a tonal texture heavily concentrated in the instrumental mid-range, which tends to bury the soloists. *D.H.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

DUKAS: *Symphony in C Major; Ariane et Barbe-bleue, Introduction to Act III.* Orchestre National de l'ORTF, Jean Martinon cond. CONNOISSEUR SOCIETY CS 2134 \$7.98.

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

During his last years Jean Martinon was an especially devoted champion of Dukas' neglected symphony, which he included in his

programs as a guest conductor in this country after making this recording early in 1973. Angel's reluctance to issue the recording is surprising in view of the success of the *really* unknown early Saint-Saëns symphonies under Martinon (charming works, but not to be compared with this mature and strikingly original one—original despite traces of Franck, Chausson, and Chabrier), and it was enterprising of Connoisseur Society to get hold of it. Neither the recorded sound nor the string playing is quite as rich as in Walter Weller's recent Dukas symphony with the London Philharmonic (London CS-6995), but there is more vivid delineation of detail (how the winds tell under the brass in the first movement's big theme, for example) and Martinon's galvanic approach is ultimately the more persuasive. Weller's handsome performance, which I have been enjoying a good deal, doesn't quite take wing as this one does, doesn't achieve the same intensity or the crackling sense of liveness projected by Martinon. While Weller *controls* the music—and beautifully—Martinon seems to abandon himself to it in this remarkably committed reading. His slightly faster pacing of the long slow movement, in particular, ensures a momentum that keeps the music glowing with life even in its longest-breathed ruminations—and what gorgeous phrasing from the hushed strings and muted horn at the end!

Weller's filler is *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, and it is one of the very best versions on records. Martinon's disc affords a rare opportunity to hear an enchanting excerpt from Dukas' marvelous Maeterlinck opera, and it is all the more attractive for that. Unusually informative annotation, too, by our own D.H.

R.F.

DVORÁK: *String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 51; String Quartet in E Major, Op. 27/80* (see *Best of the Month*, page 89)

GIULIANI: *Sonata for Violin and Guitar* (see **PAGANINI**)

HANDEL: *Airs and Arias* (see **A. SCARLATTI**)

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

HINDEMITH: *Sonatas for Organ, Nos. 1, 2, and 3.* George C. Baker (organ of Eglise St. Maximin, Thionville). DELOS FY 026 \$7.98.

Performance: **Expert**
Recording: **First-rate**

The composer-critic Felix Borowski used to remark that he was especially proud of his organ sonatas because they didn't sound like church music; Hindemith could certainly have said the same of his own, which (except possibly in the Third, a sequence of chorale-pretudes on old folk tunes) make no gesture toward either a liturgical feeling or any other tradition with which the instrument is so often identified. This record strikes me as the most pleasurable way of getting to know these works—and they are very much worth getting to know. Baker is a twenty-six-year-old American who studied in Paris with Marie-Claire Alain, Jean Langlais, and Pierre Cochereau after winning various competitions in this country, and he is well embarked on a program of recordings for the French label FY, from whose catalog these Hindemith performances were taken. One might question

(Continued on page 140)

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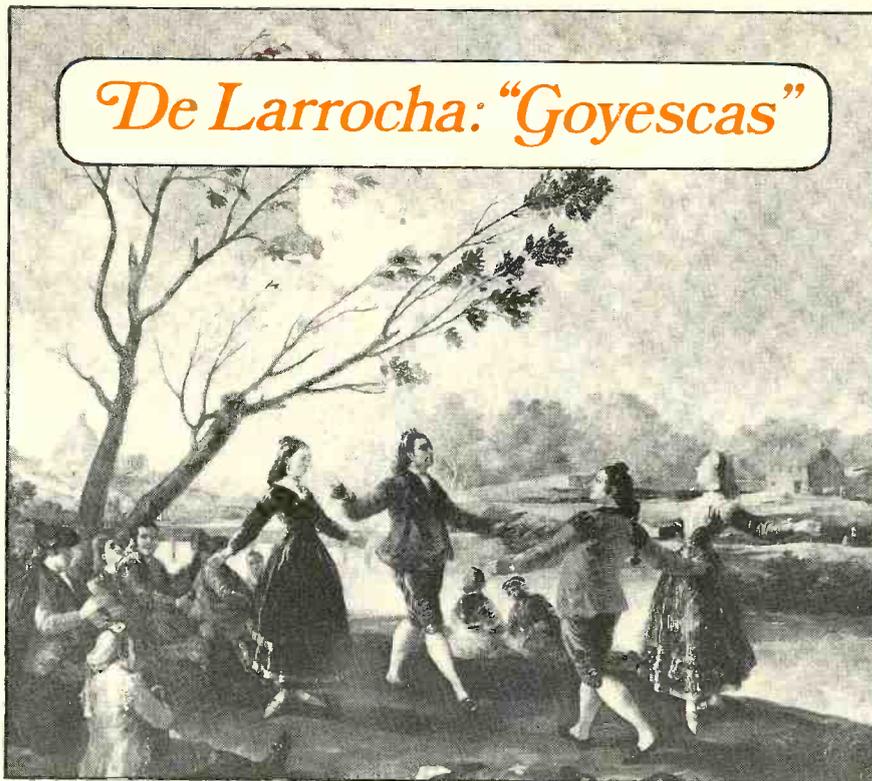
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De Larrocha: "Goyescas"



Prado Museum, Madrid

Francisco Goya's *Dance on the Banks of the River Manzanares*

It is nothing new for Alicia de Larrocha to be recording the *Goyescas* of Enrique Granados, for this is her third time around—with some of the pieces at least. This new London record, admirably recorded, may, however, mark the first time that one can actually hear the full scope of her playing, for the old Decca recording had the ambiance of a telephone booth, and the Hispavox recording, released here on Epic, sounded for all the world as if it had been taped from a public address system. So far as my ears can tell, there is little *interpretive* difference between the latter and this new London release. Certainly, Larrocha lost nothing, and if she seems a trifle brusquer now, she also tosses off those indispensable guitar-sounding figurations with even greater style and flair.

Larrocha is the prime idiomatic interpreter of this music in the world today, for besides her Catalán background and her obvious personal sense of oneness with such music, she studied, years ago, with Frank Marshall, a legendary pianist and the student and associate of Granados himself. There is a special character, though, to Larrocha's playing, not only of Granados, but of most things: she tends to see through the sophisticated elaborations of the music to its folk roots, and her performances take on an elemental, earthy, frequently dance-like quality that is really quite different from what other pianists produce. Obviously, this is going to work better in some compositions than in others, but you might be surprised at some of the places it does work—in the Bach-Busoni *Chaconne*, for example, for the *chaconne*, or *chacona*, was originally a dance believed Mexican (!) in origin and imported into Spain in the sixteenth century. At any rate, this particular characteristic of Larrocha's playing is to be found, cer-

tainly, in her renditions of Granados, where it works superbly in places—though perhaps not quite so superbly elsewhere.

The title "*Goyescas*" comes, of course, from Francisco Goya, and those who know the artist from his brutal *Disasters of War*, his satiric *Caprichos*, or his visionary late paintings and *Proverbios* may wonder just what aspect of Goya Granados had in mind. "I fell in love with the psychology of Goya," both the old Epic and the new London notes quote him as writing. "with his palette, with him and the Duchess of Alba [the nude in his famous *La Maja Desnuda*]; with his women, his models, his battles, loves and conquests; with the pink and white cheeks against lace and black velvet; those tight-waisted bodies, mother of pearl hands, and jasmine on black amber have dazzled me."

the prime idiomatic
interpreter of this
music today . . .

That is certainly an aspect of Goya—the eighteenth-century Goya, rather than the modern man he later became. *Goyescas*, then, both the piano suite and the opera that was later constructed from it, is a Romantic's view of Goya's late-eighteenth-century Madrid. Granados, following the nationalistic precepts of his teacher Felipe Pedrell, based much of the suite on traditional Spanish styles

(northern, not Gypsy) and fragments of popular eighteenth-century song. These elements, without at all dissociating themselves from the whole, come through strongly and idiomatically in Larrocha's performance. The one number of the suite that seems to have no such basis is the most famous one, *Quejas o la Muja y el Ruisenor* (*The Maiden and the Nightingale*), and though the piece has been trumpeted as the clear manifestation of the Spanish soul, there is a more than arguable case that it really belongs to a wider, less national, less reserved and more explicitly sensual tradition (with Liszt's *Sonetto 104 del Petrarca*, for example). Larrocha's earthiness can serve no purpose here. Her performance is musicianly and in keeping with the rest of the suite, which, I suppose, is what it should be under the circumstances, and certainly she does no violence. But for the ineffable extra magic latent in this particular piece, one must look to other performances, heard or unheard. Don't bother looking in the current record catalog, though, for there are none of that quality hiding there.

APART from that understandable letdown, however, I have nothing but praise for this release. *El Pelele*, though not a part of the suite, is included because it was written for the opera and later transcribed for piano, and thus has a legitimate connection to the *Goyescas*. It might better have been placed at the beginning, however. Still, we have here a minor masterpiece of the last century engaged by a major pianist of this one at the height of her powers; that is more than enough reason for owning the record. —James Goodfriend

GRANADOS: *Goyescas*; *El Pelele*. Alicia de Larrocha (piano). LONDON CS 7009 \$7.98.

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CIRCLE NO. 8 ON READER SERVICE CARD

the necessity of retaining French labeling for an American pressing of German music, but otherwise there can be nothing but praise for both the performances and the sumptuous recording of the Kern organ in the Thionville church. The bilingual annotative insert includes information on the instrument as well as the music, but for some reason only the French version gives the year of its construction, 1969. R.F.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

HOWELLS: *Merry Eye; Elegy; Music for a Prince, Corydon's Dance and Scherzo in Arden.* **BUTTERWORTH:** *Two English Idylls; The Banks of Green Willow; Rhapsody, A Shropshire Lad.* New Philharmonia Orches-

song material, are small beer in comparison.

As for the performances, Sir Adrian Boult in his mid-eighties seems to go from strength to strength. In this, his third recording of the Butterworth rhapsody, he achieves the most piercingly poignant reading of all, and he elicits playing of extraordinary verve and brilliance from the New Philharmonia in the two extroverted Howells pieces. The recorded sound from Lyrita is altogether superb, and the transfer by HNH is absolutely A-1. A splendid disc! D.H.

JOPLIN: *Paragon Rag; Maple Leaf Rag; Weeping Willow; Scott Joplin's New Rag; The Cascades; The Chrysanthemum; Elite Syncopations; Pine Apple Rag; The Entertainer; Sugar Cane; The Easy Winners; Original Rags.*



JAMES LEVINE:
may the sun never
set on Scott Joplin's
new day!

Clive Barda/RCA Records

tra, Sir Adrian Boult cond. HNH 4005 \$7.98 (from HNH Distributors, Ltd., P.O. Box 222, Evanston, Ill. 60204).

Performance: **Superb**
Recording: **Stunning**

Herbert Howells (b. 1892) is best known, at least in England, for his masterly church music, represented for instance by the imposing *Hymnus Paradisi* (1951), available on records as an EMI import. But in his younger years, he produced much charming and sometimes poignant small-scale orchestral work, including most notably this album's *Elegy* (for viola, string quartet, and string orchestra), written in memory of a violinist colleague killed in World War I. *Music for a Prince* was refashioned in 1948, from a 1915 orchestral suite, to commemorate the birth of the current Prince of Wales. *Merry Eye* is a *jeu d'esprit* created for one of Sir Henry Wood's summer Proms. But even in a bucolic mood, as in these two works, Howells throws in a bit of the diabolic also, after the fashion of Holst in *Uranus* and *Hammersmith* or Vaughan Williams in the scherzo movements of the later symphonies. Still, it is the *Elegy* that remains the more memorable, a truly haunting work of its kind.

The case is similar with the *Shropshire Lad* rhapsody of Butterworth (1885-1916), a minor masterpiece of its kind that is thematically related to his *Shropshire Lad* song cycle (recently issued in a new recording on Argo ZRG 838). The *Idylls* and *The Banks of Green Willow*, for all their sensitive treatment of folk-

James Levine (piano). RCA ARL1-2243 \$7.98.

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

The music director of the Metropolitan Opera playing Scott Joplin? Why not? May the sun never set on Scott Joplin's new day! (Of course, it would have been nice if the Met had been the opera house to revive *Treemonisha*, but let that pass.)

The notes to this album suggest that the recent ragtime revival was largely due to the New York Public Library's Scott Joplin edition—which isn't true. The notes also emphasize Joplin's own concerns about moderate tempos and accurate renderings of his music, which is odd because Levine tears through these pieces, often without much regard for the composer's clear dynamic markings. But let me quickly add that Levine is a tremendously capable pianist and he plays this music with incredible verve and energy. What is missing from this brilliant playing is lyricism, though there are a few exceptions: *The Entertainer* and one or two others at the end of side two are played more gently, with humor and warmth. Joplin is more like an American Schubert than an American Rossini, but it seems to have taken Levine most of the album to realize it. E.S.

MAHLER: *Symphony No. 5, in C-sharp Minor.* **PETTERSSON:** *Eight Barefoot Songs.* Erik Saedén (bass-baritone); Stockholm Phil-

harmonic Orchestra, Antal Dorati cond. HNH 4003/4 two discs \$15.96 (from HNH Distributors, Ltd., P.O. Box 222, Evanston, Ill. 60204).

Performance: **Good Mahler, superb Pettersson**

Recording: **Excellent**

HNH has until recently devoted its efforts to importing and distributing singularly interesting recorded repertoire on independent Swedish and British labels, but the company has now struck out on its own with U.S. licensing and mastering of materials from the same sources (Peters International in New York has embarked on a similar course). Sweden's Lyssna label recorded this Mahler Fifth and the Pettersson songs in 1973, and I have had the original Swedish pressings in my collection for some time.

The Stockholm Philharmonic, which has gained immensely from the training received during Antal Dorati's Swedish sojourn (1966-1974), is still no match in virtuosity for Karajan's Berliners or Solti's Chicagoans, but this realization of Mahler's demanding Fifth Symphony is nonetheless a fresh and zestful one, notable among other things for the fine pacing and the care given to the celebrated *Adagietto*. And the acoustic ambience of the renovated Stockholm Konserthuset yields splendidly rich and full-bodied sound.

But it is the fourth side of this album, with the marvelously expressive and superbly musical singing of Erik Saeden, that really engages the interest, devoted as it is to excerpts from the set of twenty-four *Barefoot Songs* composed by Alan Pettersson during World War II. Dorati has championed Pettersson before (Symphony No. 7 on London CS 6740), and it was Dorati who orchestrated from the piano originals the accompaniments heard here. *God Walks in the Meadow, Tell Me, Flower, The Maiden and the Lying Wind, While the Flies Buzz, A Fiddler's Journey to Heaven*—the titles seem evocative of Gustav Mahler's youthful *Wayfarer* and *Knaben Wunderhorn* songs, and so too is Pettersson's music, especially in the Dorati orchestrations. The songs are no less touching for that; they go straight from the heart to the heart, and the best are miniature masterpieces of their kind.

D.H.

MARCHAND: *Organ Works* (see DAQUIN)

MONTEMEZZI: *L'Amore dei Tre Re* (see Best of the Month, page 88)

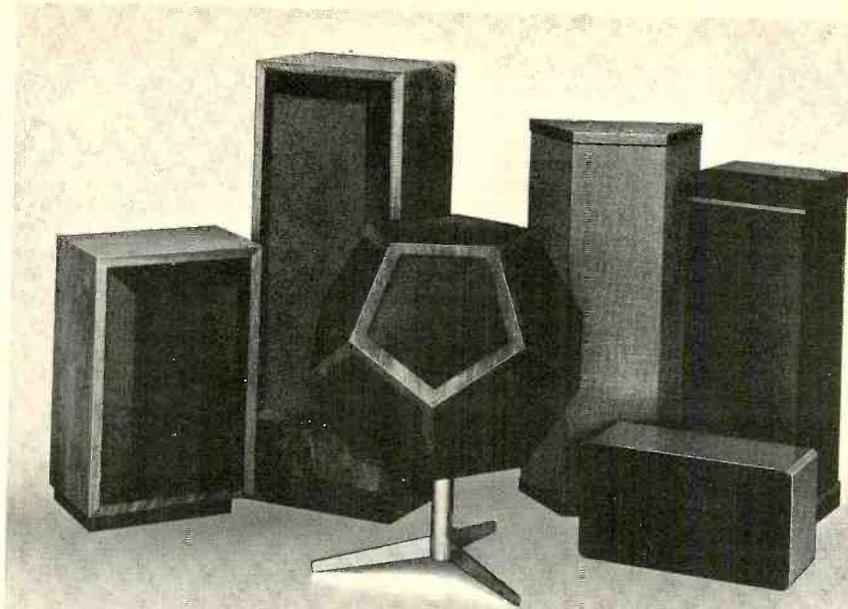
RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

MOZART: *Mass No. 14, in C Major (K. 317, "Coronation")*. BRUCKNER: *Te Deum*. Anna Tomowa-Sintow (soprano); Agnes Baltsa (contralto); Werner Krenn (tenor, in Mozart); Peter Schreier (tenor, in Bruckner); José van Dam (bass); Wiener Singverein; Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Herbert von Karajan cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530 704 \$7.98, © 3300 704 \$7.98.

Performance **Taut Mozart, blockbuster Bruckner**

Recording: **Very good**

Mozart's ebullient and songful K. 317 Mass has always been something of a favorite of mine. It is a testimony to Mozart's particular genius that in this work he somehow juxtaposed elements of the conventionally liturgical, the operatic, and the popular without



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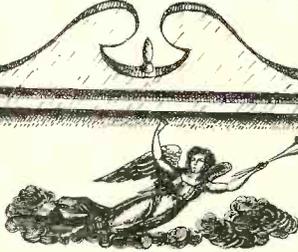
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creating the slightest sense of incongruity—at least not for these twentieth-century ears. Karajan's performance is taut and brilliant, and there is an outstanding quartet of soloists.

However, it is the Bruckner *Te Deum* for which I really would want this particular disc. Karajan and his forces make a shatteringly dramatic experience of it, not only through the efforts of a superbly trained chorus and fine soloists—tenor Peter Schreier in the *Te ergo* especially—but also by way of the astonishing sonorities conjured up by the Berlin Philharmonic in combination with full organ. The terrific outburst on "Aeterna fac cum sanctis Tuis" will put the stoutest audio system to the acid test. But musically the most impressive aspect of the performance is the superbly graduated build-up to the jubilant

close; the effect can only be described as awesome. Awesome, too, is Deutsche Grammophon's brilliant recorded sound. *D.H.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

PAGANINI: *Centone di Sonate, Op. 64, No. 1; Sonata No. 6, in E Minor, Op. 3; Sonata Concertata in A Major; Cantabile for Violin and Guitar.* **GIULIANI:** *Sonata for Violin and Guitar.* Itzhak Perlman (violin); John Williams (guitar). COLUMBIA M-34508 \$6.98, © MT-34508 \$6.98.

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

Mauro Giuliani was a popular guitarist of the early nineteenth century about whom we

know next to nothing. His Sonata for Violin and Guitar lights up side two of this pleasant recording along with the gorgeous *Cantabile* of Paganini. Paganini, who played guitar as well as violin, wrote a fair number of works for this combination, but, judging from the music on side one of this album, they are of mixed quality. Nevertheless, it is impossible to dislike music like this, especially when it is as beautifully played and recorded as it is here. *E.S.*

PETTERSSON: *Eight Barefoot Songs* (see MAHLER)

PISTON: *The Incredible Flutist, Suite* (see COPLAND)

POWELL: *Sonata Teutonica, Op. 24.* Roy Hamlin Johnson (piano). CRI SD 368 \$6.96.

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

Other than the four of MacDowell and the two of Charles Ives, full-scale piano sonatas created prior to World War I by American composers are virtually unknown to us today. There are many American piano sonatas out there, however, as a glance at the entries in William S. Newman's book *The Sonata Since Beethoven* shows.

John Powell (1882-1963), born in Richmond, Virginia, composed three major piano sonatas before World War I, titling them *Psychologique* (Op. 15), *Noble* (Op. 21), and *Teutonica* (Op. 24)—the last-named being almost an hour long in its original form. Powell, a Leschetizky pupil and a top-drawer pianist in his own right, was much admired in Europe, and the *Teutonica* was given its 1914 world premiere in London by no less than Benno Moiseiwitsch. Its title, however, could hardly have helped it get further performances during and immediately after the war, even though the connotation was intended to be metaphysical rather than ethnological.

Unfortunately, the music does not live up to the highflown aims expressed in the composer's program notes for the first performance (excerpted in the CRI liner notes). Idiomatically written for the piano it is, but, except for portions of the tripartite middle movement (variations, scherzo, andante), the content ranges from the uninteresting (first movement) to the banal (third movement). As in most of Powell's works, there are elements of Appalachian and Virginia Tidewater Anglo-American folk song (of which Powell was a close student), but neither these materials nor his developments of them suffice to give the sonata as a whole any genuine substance.

I really had hoped for something a little more stimulating and revelatory from this first stereo foray into Powell's output. But CRI gets full marks for a worthy effort, and pianist Roy Hamlin Johnson, who edited the sonata down to about forty-two and a half minutes playing time (with the imprimatur of the John Powell Foundation, which also financed the recording), gives a dedicated reading backed by first-class recorded sound engineered by David Hancock. *D.H.*

PUCCINI: *Madama Butterfly.* Montserrat Caballé (soprano), Madama Butterfly; Bernabé Martí (tenor), B. F. Pinkerton; Silvana Mazarieri (mezzo-soprano), Suzuki; Franco Bordoni (baritone), Sharpless; Piero de Palma (tenor), Goro; Dalmacio González (baritone),
(Continued on page 144)

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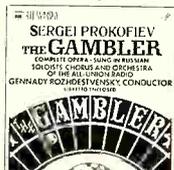
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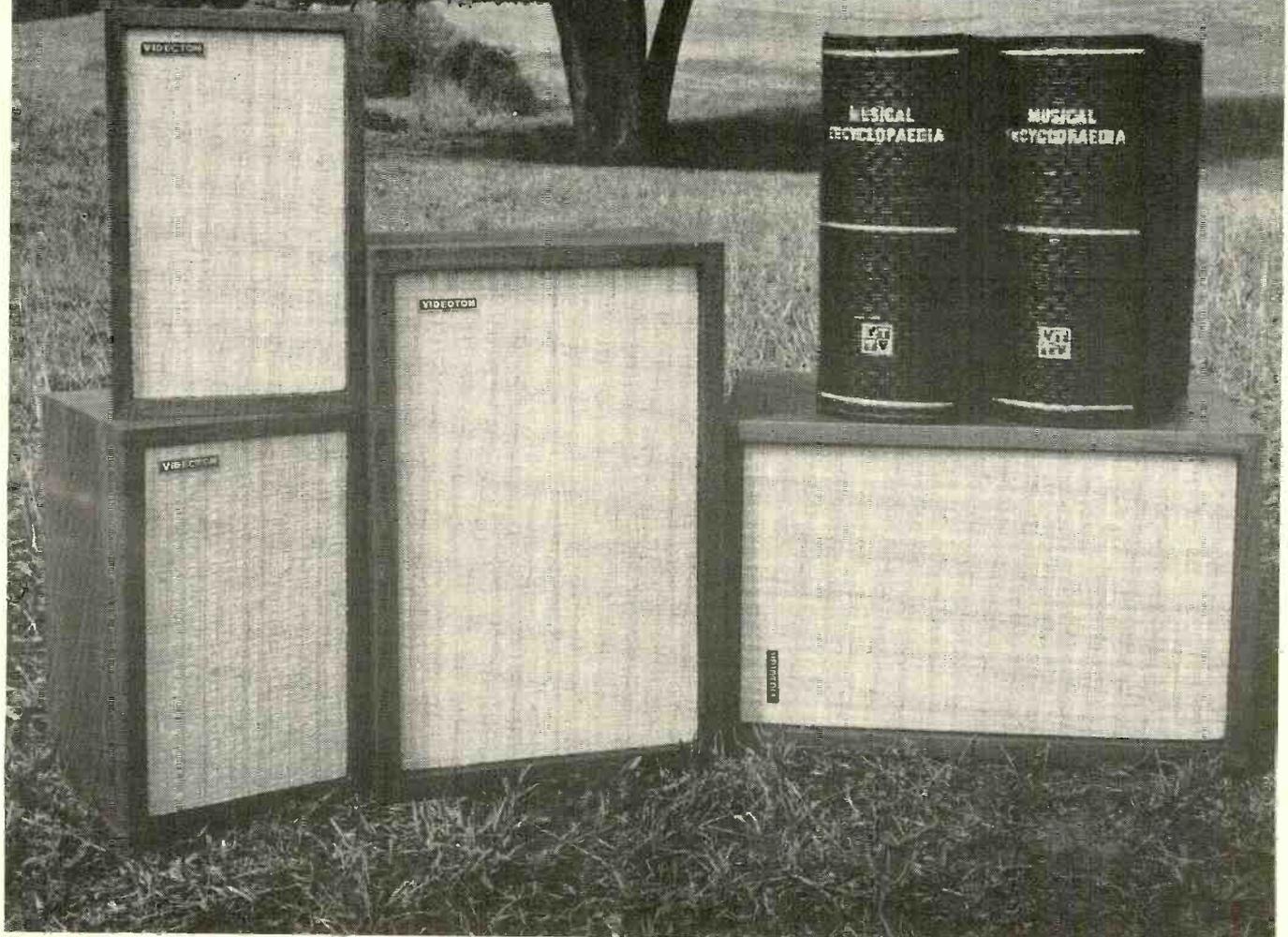
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Performance: **Only Caballé**
Recording: **Good**

Is another *Butterfly* necessary? After all,

there are two fine stereo sets, with, respectively, Renata Tebaldi and Mirella Freni in the title role, on the London label alone. On the other hand, Montserrat Caballé does command an enormous following, and this perhaps explains what many might regard as merchandising overconfidence on London's part.

One thing is certain: the Spanish diva will not let her admirers down on this occasion. In

radiant vocal form, she will dazzle them with a tonal flow that ranges from the merely beautiful to the downright unearthly, with a good measure of ravishing pianissimos thrown in to compound the allure. Not all of these are called for in the score, and, in fact, I find her *Butterfly* rather too studied to be dramatically convincing. The vocal effect obliterates everything else: in the Entrance Scene, for example, the tempo she imposes on the conductor slows the music to a virtual standstill. Hers, then, is a vocally glorious but rather self-serving performance.

It is, however, the only reason for taking this set seriously. Since the other recorded Pinkertons are Bergonzi, Bjoerling, Pavarotti, and Tucker (and Gigli in the historical mono set), I shall not submit Bernabé Martí to the indignity of comparisons. Suffice it to say that he sings all the notes in a thoroughly professional but less than ingratiating manner. In the opening scenes he is virtually upstaged by the excellent Goro of veteran Piero de Palma. The Suzuki and Sharpless are adequate, and so are the *comprimari*, members of the Liceo of Barcelona, where the set was produced. The sonics are good but not startling, and the production is in general devoid of the enlivening touches characteristic of London ventures. Armando Gatto's conducting is discreet and rather unassertive, the orchestral playing creditable. G.J.

Direct-to-Disc: Is It Worth It?



In any event, I hauled out my mint copies of two 1956 Mercury *monophonic* discs, pressed from matrices the tests of which I myself okayed, having supervised the production and editing of the master tape and the tape-to-disc transfer. The room ambiance of the Eastman Theater, where these recordings of Roger Sessions' *Black Maskers* and George Chadwick's *Jubilee* were done, is apparently quite comparable to the Cleveland locale used for the Telarc recording, as was the fairly close-in microphone setup (a single Telefunken 201). I found that the old Mercury recording has a more solid bass line, and the cymbal sound in the Chadwick is of comparable quality to that achieved on the Telarc disc. Playback of the 1959 Mercury *stereo* mastering (which I produced but did not edit or supervise the mastering for) yielded a different sound, since the stereo master tape was half-inch three-channel fed by three Telefunken U-47 microphones. While the end result is not as brilliant as that achieved with the 201 microphone, the bass line is, if anything, *more* solid in body.

All this is by way of saying that if outfits such as Telarc and Sheffield could achieve in their direct-to-disc recordings a *sterec* sound comparable to that of the best Mercury monos of the mid-Fifties as originally mastered and pressed, then I could contemplate with some equanimity the seemingly perverse logic of turning the clock back to direct-to-disc recording procedures. But I don't think I'd pay the \$16 Telarc is asking for its Cleveland Orchestra disc for barely thirty minutes of music, whatever the sound quality. For the present, the Telarc accomplishment impresses me as a courageous stunt, rather like climbing the side of one of New York's World Trade Center towers: fascinating and brilliant in execution—but is it worth it?

I MIGHT also add that what is really wrong with most records today lies not in the area of recording *per se*, but in pressing and post-production handling. The best recording techniques in the world are of no benefit to the listener if their virtues are covered or interrupted by noise derived from mechanical flaws in the record itself. —David Hall

FALLA: *The Three-Cornered Hat: Finale*. **BI-ZET:** *L'Arlésienne, Suite No. 2: Farandole*. **TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Eugene Onegin: Polonaise*. **BERLIOZ:** *Le Corsaire Overture, Op. 21. The Damnation of Faust: Hungarian March*. Cleveland Orchestra, Lorin Maazel cond. TELARC 5020 DD1 \$16.

THE latest Telarc direct-to-disc recording, featuring the Cleveland Orchestra directed by Lorin Maazel in showpieces by Falla, Bizet, Tchaikovsky, and Berlioz, once again raises the question of the value of reverting to the pre-tape technique. The performances themselves need no special comment other than to say that they are neat and stylish, and that Maazel and his players are totally on their mettle for a recording test that allows for no mistakes, since editing simply isn't possible in direct-to-disc recording. There are a few tiny things out of line in the Falla *Three-Cornered Hat* finale, but in the real test, the eight-and-one-half-minute time span of the dazzling Berlioz *Corsair Overture*, I could not detect a single wrong note.

What gain is there in putting a hundred or so expensive musicians over the hurdles in trying to get fifteen continuous minutes of error-free playing onto a 12-inch lacquer? (And remember that the engineer can no more afford an error than the players, for variable groove-spacing—if there is any—must be done by hand; there is no "advance" playback head to tell the feedscrew to widen the area between grooves in order to accommodate a loud, low-bass passage.) The most obvious gain, in this particular disc at least, is the extraordinary *cleanness* of the sound, especially in the upper partials. You won't hear crisper cymbals anywhere than in the Berlioz *Hungarian March* as recorded here. But I'm inclined to ascribe at least part of this result to the fact that the simplified microphone setup used for this recording has also eliminated much of the phase distortion inherent in recordings produced by more complex techniques. What I find missing in this disc is truly full-bodied bass. Whether this is a function of the recording locale, I can't say.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

ROCHBERG: *Songs in Praise of Krishna*. Neva Pilgrim (soprano); George Rochberg (piano). CRI SD 360 \$6.95.

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

George Rochberg's *Songs in Praise of Krishna* were composed in 1970, using translations by Edward C. Dimrock, Jr. and Denise Levvertov. The texts, concerning the love of Krishna and Radha, are at once sensual and spiritual, and Rochberg has captured these qualities, rather unexpectedly, in a late-Romantic/early-Modern idiom that sounds similar to early Schoenberg or late Scriabin. It is curious (to say the least) to hear a highly charged idiom of decadent Europe used in a coolly sensuous way by an American refugee from serialism to express Eastern mystical love poetry!

The music is gorgeously sung by Neva Pilgrim, and Rochberg is his own authoritative pianist. I am a bit put off by certain "arty" qualities in the setting and performance, but the classical-recital atmosphere seems to be what the work requires. E.S.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

SALLINEN: *Chamber Music II for Alto Flute and String Orchestra, Op. 41*. Gunilla von Bahr (alto flute); Stockholm Chamber Ensemble, Okko Kamu cond. *String Quartet No. 3, Op. 19. Voces Intimae Quartet. Quattro per Quattro, Op. 12*. Gunilla von Bahr (flute, alto flute); Ari Angervo (violin); Veikko Höylä (cello); Eva Nordwall (harpichord). *Elegy for Sebastian Knight, Op. 10*. Frans Helmerson (cello). BIS LP-64 \$7.98 (from HNH Distributors, P.O. Box 222, Evanston, Ill. 60204).

Performance: **Authoritative**
Recording: **First-rate**

Aulis Sallinen (born 1935) shares with his teacher Joonas Kokkonen the distinction of

being one of the two most interesting composers active in Finland today. Okko Kamu introduced Sallinen's First Symphony to this country in concerts of the National Symphony Orchestra two years ago, and his recording of that work is one of several Sallinen items offered on earlier Bis releases. *Chamber Music II* was completed only last year, the Third Quartet in 1969, and the other two works on this disc about five years before that. The earliest is the piece for cello solo, inspired by Sallinen's reading of Vladimir Nabokov's *Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Sallinen was still writing twelve-tone music in 1964, but this short piece is more notable as an example of his innate feeling for string instruments; he reused the material later as a movement of his *Metamorphoses* for piano and chamber orchestra.

The flute part in the *Quattro per Quattro* (*Four Movements for Four Instruments*) was originally written for oboe. The work, a sequence of rather austere exchanges between the respective instruments, is in an exploratory vein, with the cello and harpsichord providing a traditional continuo in various neo-Baroque passages. *Chamber Music II*, in the composer's own words, "is more diverting, even burlesque . . . [and] may at some time be considered a sort of *Gebrauchsmusik*." It is playful in parts, but in a way that suggests a view through a cracked lens.

The most immediately appealing of the four works is the String Quartet No. 3, subtitled "Aspects of Peltioniemi Hinrik's Funeral March." The work was commissioned for school concerts, and in it Sallinen uses a familiar Finnish folk tune to demonstrate variation techniques; it is rich in humor, but in a highly subtle and original vein, with no concessions to the youth of the original audiences. I recall the performance of the Finlandia Quartet on a Finnish EMI disc as having a little more bite in its projection of the wry wit of the piece, but the Voces Intimae presentation is a most effective one too. Indeed, all the performances recorded here must be acknowledged as interpretations of great authority as well as skill, and the recorded sound is up to the Bis label's customary standard. This is an opportunity to discover new and worthwhile material in a provocatively individual yet easily digestible vein.

R.F.

A. SCARLATTI: *Su le Sponde del Tebro*.
HANDEL: *Airs and Arias. Ode for Queen Anne's Birthday: Eternal Source of Light Divine. Alessandro: Lusinghe più care. Atalanta: Care selve. Samson: Let the bright Seraphim. A Choice Sett of Aires: Overture; Allegro; Bourée; Aire; March.* Judith Blegen (soprano); Gerard Schwarz (trumpet); Columbia Chamber Ensemble, Gerard Schwarz cond.
 COLUMBIA M-34518 \$6.98.

Performance: **Bright**
 Recording: **Fine**

This is a joyous record of bright, clear, and supple singing and virtuoso trumpet playing. Although there are several recordings of the Scarlatti cantata, this one is, to my knowledge, the first to adhere to the original score, thanks to the scholarly efforts of Kenneth Cooper, who is also responsible for the fine harpsichord playing on the album. One now hears the strings only where Scarlatti wanted them rather than throughout the work, as had been the case in earlier, over-edited versions.

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nal beauty, and the added ornamentation on the *da capos* of "Lusinghe più care" and "Let the bright Seraphim" is especially exciting. I wish only that soprano Judith Blegen's diction were clearer.

Gerard Schwarz has brought his trumpet playing to such a point of musical and technical refinement that the "trumpetness" of the music is lacking. Although the sound is there, it is more like that of a violin or a flute, which takes the excitement out of such brilliant obbligato parts as in "Let the bright Seraphim." And I suspect that his rather elaborate ornamentation, while striking, would have prompted Handel to say, "If I had wanted it that way I would not have written it for the trumpet." S.L.

SOUSA (arr. Kay): Stars and Stripes. SOUSA (arr. Rogers): King Cotton March; El Capitan March; Semper Fidelis March. National Philharmonic Orchestra, Henry Lewis cond. LONDON SPC 21161 \$7.98.

Performance: **Lights up the sky**

Recording: **Splendid**

When George Ballanchine got the idea of building a new work for the New York City Ballet out of music by John Philip Sousa as a memorial tribute to feisty Fiorello LaGuardia (who as Mayor of New York liked nothing better than to lead a band), composer and arranger Hershey Kay (the man who orchestrated Leonard Bernstein's *On the Town* and *Candide*) was right there and ready for him. Kay, who also put together for Ballanchine the delightful scores of *Cakewalk* (out of Gottschalk pieces) and *Western Symphony* (from cowboy songs), came back to the choreographer with a tapestry of material from Sousa marches arranged in five "campaigns." The result was a ballet that goes off as spectacularly as a Fourth-of-July fireworks display. There isn't a single fizzle in the score, either, which is still available in an excellent reissue on RCA as performed by the Boston Pops under Arthur Fiedler, but lends itself even better to the Phase Four sonics here on London, with the National Philharmonic under Henry Lewis. To round out the exercise, Lewis puts the orchestra through its paces in three popular marches Kay didn't find room for—*King Cotton*, *El Capitan*, and *Semper Fidelis*. A real rouser. P.K.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

R. STRAUSS: Also Sprach Zarathustra. Dresden State Orchestra, Rudolf Kempe cond. SERAPHIM □ S-60283 \$3.98.

Performance: **Remarkable**

Recording: **Superb**

Can philosophy be set to music? Perhaps not. In *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, Richard Strauss called on the mighty resources of the modern orchestra in his "tone poem after Nietzsche" not to write "philosophical music" but to celebrate Nietzschean ideas—the "superman" as artist. For a while there was no escaping the staggering passage that opens this tone poem and which served so well in the soundtrack of the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*. It can only be hoped that exposure to these measures encouraged listeners to explore the rest of the piece, with its fugue evoking the sanity and narrowness of science, its waltz celebrating the joys of earthly existence, its somber passages of disgust and satiety, and its climax with the midnight bell

that symbolizes man's longing for eternity and his awakening from a "deep dream" to a new day. Some mighty performances of this sweeping score exist on discs, notably Karl Böhm's with the Berlin Philharmonic, but in terms of sheer muscularity of sound, the quadrasonic version of this album with the Dresden State Orchestra is a remarkable achievement, thrillingly aglow from those magical opening bass throbs to the final ecstatic ode. Kempe sidesteps the temptation to be gaudily spectacular and strives instead for a consistently strong tone that is extraordinarily expressive. A splendid disc. P.K.

R. STRAUSS: Der Rosenkavalier. Evelyn Lear (soprano), Marschallin; Frederica von Stade (mezzo-soprano), Octavian; Jules Bastin (bass), Baron Ochs; Derek Hammond Stroud (baritone), Herr von Faninal; Ruth Welting (soprano), Sophie; Nelly Morpurgo (soprano), Duenna; James Atherton (tenor), Valzacchi; Sophia von Sante (mezzo-soprano), Annina; José Carreras (tenor), Singer; others. Chorus of the Netherlands Opera; Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, Edo de Waart cond. PHILIPS 6707.030 four discs \$31.92, © 7699.045 \$23.94.

Performance: **Good**

Recording: **Very good**

This recording was made in conjunction with a staging of *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Holland Festival in 1976 (pictures taken at the performances are part of the richly annotated album), and it benefits from such circumstances. Its smooth flow bespeaks a well-rehearsed effort. There are other virtues here as well. In fact, were it not for the extraordinary standards set in earlier versions by Karajan, Solti, and (with reservations) Bernstein, the positive tone of this review would be even more emphatic.

Edo de Waart brings great affection to this music, along with a light touch, a great deal of tenderness, and, on the whole, just tempos. He draws beautiful sounds from the orchestra and keeps textural complexities clearly balanced, even in moments of intentional "chaos." His dynamic range, however, is somewhat restricted, possibly because of the limitations of some of the principals. This gives the recording a chamber-opera effect; it is unfailingly refined in orchestral tone but somewhat wanting in passion.

Outstanding among the singers is Frederica von Stade, an Octavian credible in all the guises of her mercurial role, who sings bewitchingly and whose warm, creamy tone soars above the staff with radiant ease. Ruth Welting securely encompasses the teacher's range of Sophie's music. She too projects character in her singing, but in her case I would prefer a warmer, rounder tone.

Evelyn Lear and Jules Bastin, two fine, musicianly singers, may account for the chamber-music quality to which I alluded previously. The American soprano offers a beautifully vocalized Marschallin, plaintively philosophical yet perhaps more consistently muted than she ought to be. I find the character incompletely realized, but I bow to Miss Lear for her exquisite piano singing and many lovely phrases. Mr. Bastin copes with the Viennese dialect better than one has a right to expect from a Belgian. He uses his light, *sec* tone fluently and with a certain elegance that is not misplaced in this context, but his voice does have limitations in range and resonance.

The current fashion is to employ top tenor

stars for the brief glory of the Italian Singer (Gedda, Pavarotti, and Domingo are heard in rival sets), and this set is no exception. José Carreras renders his difficult aria with a refulgent tone but not without some effort on the climactic high C-flat. Derek Hammond Stroud is a good Faninal, and the supporting singers are all adequate or better, though the four servants in the first-act finale cannot summon enough tone for the desired effect. (The composer's authorized option to double their number should have been followed.)

The technical production is realistic in sound, restrained in gimmickry, and altogether praiseworthy. So is the performance, with the stated reservations. It is no match for the Solti-led London set, however. G.J.

TELEMANN: Overture in C Major ("Hamburger Ebb und Fluth"); Overture des Nations Anciens et Modernes; Overture in C Major. Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Neville Marriner cond. ARGO ZRG 837 \$7.98 © KZRC 837 \$7.98.

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

As is so often the case with Telemann, this trio of *ouvertures* features wit, elegance, and ingenuity at the expense of profundity. But wit, elegance, and ingenuity in the hands of a master as he sketches vignettes of river deities and pokes sly fun at fashions can make for delightful music.

Neville Marriner's work with the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields is one of the best things that has ever happened to old music. Possessing a full knowledge of Baroque per-

formance practice, Marriner is selective in the mannerisms he uses. Rather than rigidly adhering to them all—which may be historically correct but frequently destroys the music for the modern listener—Marriner uses only those that enhance the particular music involved and sound natural with it. Thus he conveys the feeling of authentic Baroque performance practice without its potentially alienating elements, a compromise that may not satisfy the purist but is certainly gratifying to the musician and to the listener.

Two other factors that make this a wonderful disc are the sound of the orchestra and the tempos Marriner has chosen. The strings and winds are so evenly balanced that the sound is rather windier than we are used to today, though illustrative of our forefathers' preferences. Too often Telemann's glibness leads performers to take movements at whirlwind tempos—brilliant, perhaps, but also giddy and skittish—but Marriner's tempos are solid, and rhythmic verve comes from the music itself rather than sounding forced. S.L.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

VILLA-LOBOS: Concerto for Guitar and Small Orchestra. CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO: **Concerto in D Major for Guitar and Orchestra, Op. 99.** Narciso Yepes (guitar); London Symphony Orchestra, Garcia Navarro cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530 718 \$7.98, © 3300 718 \$7.98.

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

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FREDERICA VON STADE, JULES BASTIN
A credible Octavian, a fluent Ochs

includes the engaging one of Villa-Lobos, written for Segovia in 1951, and the delightful neo-Classical (not, as the notes for this record have it, neo-Romantic) concerto of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco. The latter was written in 1939, the year of the composer's forced emigration from his native Italy to this country. It is courtly, old-fashioned, and—in this elegant performance—very charming. The Villa-Lobos work too comes off extremely well here. Deutsche Grammophon has certainly widened its horizons these days! E.S.

(Continued on page 148)

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CIRCLE NO. 29 ON READER SERVICE CARD

VIVALDI: Concertos for Cello, Strings, and Continuo in G Major (RV 414, P. 118), A Minor (RV 418, P. 35), G Minor (RV 417, P. 369), and A Minor (RV 420). Christine Walevska (cello); Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, Kurt Redel cond. PHILIPS 9500.144 \$7.98.

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

These four concertos find Vivaldi in a profound mood working the cello to its fullest technical capacity. Christine Walevska plays them in a simple, straightforward manner with a thoroughly modern approach to the instrument; she is a fine musician, turns an elegant phrase, and produces a consistently ravishing tone. The strings of the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra match her sound beautifully, offer her rich support, and propel the music on its breathtaking course in superbly executed ritornellos. It is wonderful to hear such honest music-making in which the focus is on music instead of history. S.L.

COLLECTIONS

MICHAEL ASPINALL: The Surprising Soprano. Schubert: *Der Erlkönig*. Brahms: *Vergebliches Ständchen* (in Italian). Lehmann: *The Cuckoo*. Besly: *Two Little Fairy Songs*. Beach: *The Year's at the Spring*. Puccini: *Tosca: Vissi d'arte*. Verdi: *La Traviata: Ah, fors'è lui*. Leoncavallo: *Aprile*. Millöcker: *I und Mei Bua*. Fraser-Simon: *Love's Cigarette*. Seven other songs. Michael Aspinall (soprano); Courtney Kenny (piano). LONDON OS 26537 \$7.98.

Performance: **Very funny**
Recording: **Fine**

Take-offs on concert and opera singers are funny to vocal fans only when they are done by someone who knows the music intimately. Michael Aspinall, who has written excellent critical essays on the recordings of Adelina Patti and Nellie Melba, is an expert on vocal styles and technique, and his knowledge of the subject makes his work as a performing musical satirist quite pointed. Suitably costumed, he has given "prima donna" recitals in England and Italy, and although he lacks the vocal endowment of a natural soprano, Aspinall uses a well developed falsetto to produce some soprano sounds that are not just surprising but startling.

The well balanced program for his debut album on London includes groups of German lieder, Italian art songs, Victorian ballads, operetta excerpts, and a couple of arias. It is, Aspinall says in the notes, "affectionately dedicated to the follies and foibles of great singers past and present." His heavily decorated rendition of "Ah, fors'è lui" brings to mind many sopranos who have been overly fond of embellishments. His "Vissi d'arte," a catalog of vocal sins, is the worst performance of an operatic aria I have ever heard on records—and one of the funniest. An easy target for him is the penchant Dame Clara Butt and other large divas used to have for coy songs about babies, such as Joan Trevalsa's *My Treasure* ("Only two cherry lips, one chubby nose/Only two little hands, ten little toes").

Aspinall has remarkable agility, and his performances are very carefully detailed. No tricks have escaped him—the exaggerated contrast between head and chest voice, the inappropriate *coup de glotte*, the white hoot, the prolonged high note or trill, and so forth. I

like him best as the opera star slumping in operetta, and my favorite band is the Tyrolean song *I und Mei Bua* from Carl Millöcker's *Drei Paar Schuhe* (shades of Ernestine Schumann-Heink!), but I have to report that in the wodeling section he fakes like crazy.

I never found Florence Foster Jenkins' records funny because she didn't know enough about singing, and my threshold of tolerance for drag shows is very low, but Aspinall won me over completely. This is a superb party record that you will want to share with your opera-loving friends, those who enjoy Anna Russell's *Ring* parody and "Cathy Berberian at the Edinburgh Festival." Although "The Surprising Soprano" was recorded live before an appreciative audience, their laughter and applause are not obtrusive. The sound is good, but for complete accuracy it should probably have been recorded acoustically, direct-to-cylinder. William Livingstone



London Records

MICHAEL ASPINALL
Not surprising, but startling

HEINZ HOLLIGER: Oboe Concertos. Bellini: *Concerto in E-flat Major*. Molique: *Concertino in G Minor*. Rietz: *Konzertstück in F Minor, Op. 33*. Moscheles: *Concertante in F Major for Flute, Oboe, and Orchestra*. Heinz Holliger (oboe); Aurèle Nicolet (flute, in Moscheles); Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, Eliahu Inbal cond. PHILIPS 9500.070 \$7.98, © 7300.515 \$7.95.

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

Most oboe concertos seem to come from either before or after the nineteenth century, but exceptions are being assiduously dug up by Heinz Holliger, who has now recorded the tiny concerto by Bellini no fewer than three times on as many labels. The one before this latest, made a dozen years ago with Peter Maag and the Bamberg Symphony (Deutsche Grammophon 139152), is part of an attractive program that is filled out with works of Donizetti, Cimarosa (a concerto arranged by Arthur Benjamin from keyboard pieces), and Salieri. Here, though, one waits in vain through the quarter-hour pieces by Julius Rietz and Bernard Molique for a single interesting idea; both works are well crafted and, it

(Continued on page 150)

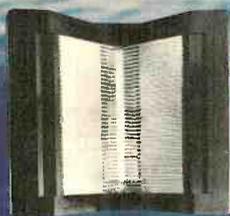
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need hardly be said, elegantly played, but in terms of content they represent barrel-scraping in the name of novelty. Ignaz Moscheles' *Concertante*, on the other hand, is a more than ingratiating piece, comprising an *Adagio Patetico* filled with Berliozian pronouncements from the orchestra and a rondo in the lighthearted and altogether adorable style of Weber. The listener exposed to the Moscheles may well find the disc irresistible, even if the other portions of it go unplayed after the first hearing. The recording itself is just fine.

R.F.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

MARGARET PRICE: Italian, German, and Welsh Songs. Bellini: *Almen se Non Poss'io*. Donizetti: *La Conocchia*. Verdi: *Ave Maria*. Rossini: *L'Invito*. Schubert: *Du Bist die Ruh*; Heidenröslein; *Gretchen am Spinnrade*; *Die Forelle*. Trad. (arr. E. T. Davies and Grace Williams): *Five Welsh Songs*. Margaret Price (soprano); James Lockhart (piano). L'Orseau-Lyre SOL 345 \$7.98.

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

In all likelihood this recital was taped before Margaret Price's two RCA releases of Mozart arias were, but it is on the same high level of excellence. Compliments are in order for the program, too: the sequence shows care, imagination, and a sense of adventure.

Vocally, Miss Price is in stunning form, producing tones of golden hue, warm, rounded, and even throughout the range. Her technique is assured, and the exquisite effects she achieves—floated pianissimos in *Du Bist die Ruh*' and neatly articulated *foriture* in the Bellini song—sound totally effortless. Only in the climax of *Gretchen am Spinnrade* does she fail to sustain her admirable level of tonal refinement. I would prefer a less solemn approach to Bellini and a more relaxed-sounding *Die Forelle*, but these are minor reservations.

Welsh songs are almost as rare on records as artists who can sing them with the melting beauty they have here. But why did somebody assume we are all familiar with this strange though beautiful language? There are no texts at all, and the liner notes are unusually poor. Among the many things they do not tell us is that Verdi's rarely heard *Ave Maria* (1880) is a setting of Dante's text and a musical foreshadowing of the famous one from *Otello*, that *La Conocchia* is one of Donizetti's Neapolitan-type songs, and that *L'Invito* comes from Rossini's *Soirées Musicales*.

But never mind the notes. This is a lovely disc, and the technical quality—balances, surfaces, etc.—is worthy of the performance.

G.J.

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JONATHAN WOODS: *Battle Imperial*. Cabanilles: *Batala Imperial*. De La Torre: *Alta*. Cabezón: *Pavana con su Glosa*; *Diferencias Sobre la Gallarda Milanese*; *Diferencias Sobre el Canto Llano del Caballero*. Olagüe: *Xácara*. Bassa: *Minué*. Soler: *Sonatas in B Minor and D Minor*; *Fandango*. Anon: *Minué*; *Xácara*. Jonathan Wood (harpsichord). LONDON CS 7046 \$7.98, © 5-7046 \$7.95.

Performance: **Proud**
Recording: **Brilliant**

In an age when most harpsichordists slavishly play according to the latest musicological opinions about authentic performance practice and perform only on historical instruments or copies thereof, it is refreshing to hear Jonathan Woods unabashedly continue the Landowska tradition on a magnificent Rutkowski and Robinette instrument that is equipped with every stop imaginable. Woods makes no bones about using the instrument to its fullest extent: his orchestral concept ranges from booming sixteen-foot registers to fours, from pithy nasal sounds to bell-like lute stops. Although all these rapid changes are out of favor today because of the fashion for historical instruments lacking such facilities, they are thrilling to hear again, especially in the hands of a performer who uses them not only dramatically but also with great taste and imagination.

From the very first notes of Cabanilles' *Batala*, it is obvious that this performer is an artist of the highest caliber. Woods is armed with an awesome technique, a tremendous sense of projection, great individuality, and, his strongest asset, rhythmic control. He can batter you blue with a steady, driving beat, but he also knows exactly when to use an *accelerando*, a *ritardando*, or a shattering pause. His playing exhibits pride without arrogance (Cabezón's *Pavana* and Soler's B Minor Sonata) as well as tenderness without sentimentality (Cabezón's *Diferencias Caballero* and Soler's D Minor Sonata). In short, here is a superb artist whose playing has the impact of Landowska's or the early Valenti's. Let us hope such recordings will turn the tide away from the arid history-mongering that is so often passed off as harpsichord playing today.

S.L.



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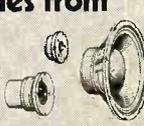
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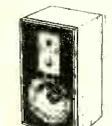


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