ASHFORD & SIMPSON: a levelheaded pair of singer/songwriters

EQUIPMENT TEST REPORTS: B&W DM2/II Speaker System
Mitsubishi DA-F20 FM Tuner • Nakamichi 582 Cassette Deck
Onkyo A-7070 Integrated Amplifier • Ortofon Concorde 30 Phono Cartridge

BEAUTIFUL BABIES: listening tests on nineteen minispeakers

THERE ARE A LOT OF WAYS TO BUILD A RECEIVER THAT SELLS FOR UNDER $400.
It seems that our competitors think they've mastered the art of building a moderately priced receiver. Unfortunately, most of them appear to be the work of cost reduction engineers, rather than high fidelity engineers. People whose jobs depend on the cost of what goes into a receiver, not the sound that comes out of it.

At Pioneer, on the other hand, we build a receiver that sells for under $400 with the same care given to a receiver that sells for over $1000. A perfect example is the SX-780. It offers the kind of features, value and sound you won't find in any other comparably priced receiver.

A STRONG CASE FOR THE METAL BOTTOM.

If you turn over our SX-780, for instance, you'll notice the bottom is made of heavy gauge metal. It's designed to shield the tuning section from spurious noise and keep CB interference from getting in the way of your music.

Equally important is the fact that our bottom has a special ventilating system that allows air to circulate freely around the heat sinks. This not only reduces FM drift due to overheated tuning elements, but increases the life expectancy of the circuitry.

A DC AMPLIFIER WITH THE POWER TO ELIMINATE DISTORTION.

The SX-780 features the same DC power configuration found in today's most expensive receivers.

A PILOT SIGNAL CANCELING SYSTEM THAT'S UNHEARD OF IN THIS PRICE RANGE.

All stereo FM stations in America broadcast their music over a pilot signal of 19,000 hertz. If not eliminated, this signal tends to create an extremely high pitched sound when combined with lower audible frequencies. Most of our competitors use a standard high band filter to cancel out this signal. Unfortunately, it also cancels out some of the music.

Pioneer created a special integrated circuit that eliminates this pilot signal without affecting the music. Which means that you're assured of hearing everything the musicians had intended you to hear. Nothing more. And nothing less. Obviously, the SX-780 is the only receiver that gives you this feature in this price range. The others give you the noise.

WATTAGE METERS THAT LET YOU SEE WHAT YOU'RE HEARING.

When a receiver has wattage meters, it lets you see exactly how much power is going through your speakers. So that it not only helps prevent unnecessary damage due to overloading, it helps you make cleaner FM recordings. Of course, the SX-780 has other virtues conspicuously absent from our competitors' models. Like a built-in wood grain cabinet. Which is something others give you the option of paying extra for.

But what really separates Pioneer's SX-780 from others is more than just a matter of wood cabinets, wattage meters, metal bottoms, DC power, or even price. It's our commitment to giving you a quality hi-fi receiver, no matter how much, or how little, you plan to spend.

So if you're planning to spend less than $400, you couldn't ask for more than the SX-780.

POWER: 45 watts per channel min. at 8 ohms from 20-20,000 hertz with no more than .05% total harmonic distortion.
FM SENSITIVITY: Stereo; 37.0 dB.
S/N RATIO: Stereo; 72 dB.
CAPTURE RATIO: 1.0 dB.
POWER METERS: 2.
SPEAKERS: A, B, AB.
TONE CONTROLS: Dual.
TAPE MONITORS: 2.

YOU CAN LEAVE OUT DUAL WATTAGE METERS LIKE MARANTZ DID.

YOU CAN INSTALL AN INEXPENSIVE PRESS BOARD BOTTOM LIKE TECHNICS DID. INSTEAD OF A METAL ONE.

YOU CAN USE A CONVENTIONAL POWER AMPLIFIER LIKE KENWOOD DID. INSTEAD OF AN ADVANCED DC AMPLIFIER.

YOU CAN USE STANDARD HIGH BAND FILTERS LIKE YAMAHA DID INSTEAD OF SPECIAL INTEGRATED CIRCUITS TO CANCEL THE UNWANTED FM PILOT SIGNAL.
INTRODUCING THE EMPIRE EDR.9 PHONO CARTRIDGE.
IT SOUNDS AS GOOD ON A RECORD AS IT DOES ON PAPER.

It was inevitable...

With all the rapid developments being made in today's high fidelity technology, the tremendous advance in audible performance in Empire's new EDR.9 phono cartridge was bound to happen. And bound to come from Empire, as we have been designing and manufacturing the finest phono cartridges for over 18 years.

Until now, all phono cartridges were designed in the lab to achieve certain engineering characteristics and requirements. These lab characteristics and requirements took priority over actual listening tests because it was considered more important that the cartridges “measure right” or “test right”—so almost everyone was satisfied.

Empire's EDR.9 (for Extended Dynamic Response) has broken with this tradition, and is the first phono cartridge that not only meets the highest technological and design specifications—but also our demanding listening tests—on an equal basis. In effect, it bridges the gap between the ideal blueprint and the actual sound.

The EDR.9 utilizes an L. A. C. (Large Area Contact) 0.9 stylus based upon—and named after—E. I. A. Standard RS-238B. This new design, resulting in a smaller radius and larger contact area, has a pressure index of 0.9, an improvement of almost six times the typical elliptical stylus and four times over the newest designs recently introduced by several other cartridge manufacturers. The result is that less pressure is applied to the vulnerable record groove, at the same time extending the bandwidth—including the important overtones and harmonic details.

In addition, Empire's exclusive, patented 3-Element Double Damped stylus assembly acts as an equalizer. This eliminates the high “Q” mechanical resonances typical of other stylus assemblies, producing a flatter response, and lessening wear and tear on the record groove.

We could go into more technical detail, describing pole rods that are laminated, rather than just one piece, so as to reduce losses in the magnetic structure, resulting in flatter high frequency response with less distortion. Or how the EDR.9 weighs one gram less than previous Empire phono cartridges, making it a perfect match for today's advance, low mass tonearms.

But more important, as the EDR.9 cartridge represents a new approach to cartridge design, we ask that you consider it in a slightly different way as well. Send for our free technical brochure on the EDR.9, and then visit your audio dealer and listen. Don't go by specs alone.

That's because the new Empire EDR.9 is the first phono cartridge that not only meets the highest technological and design specifications—but also our demanding listening tests.

Empire Scientific Corp.
Garden City, N.Y. 11530
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COVER: Design by Borys Patchowsky; photo by Bruce Pendleton.
The first high-technology record cleaner was the Discwasher System. Four scientific revisions later, the Discwasher is literally years ahead of all other devices.

WITH PRIORITY TECHNOLOGY:
Discwasher D3 Fluid is proven by lab tests to be the safest active cleaning fluid for record care. But a good fluid is not enough. The Discwasher System is also a precision removal system that uses capillary action with slanted micro-fibers to lift dust, dirt, and dissolved debris off the record, rather than pushing them around like "dry" and "constant humidity" methods. The real dimensions of record care are safety plus integrated function.

WITH PROVEN VALUE:
The uniquely styled Discwasher handle is constructed of hand-rubbed walnut which will long outlast "plastic wonders". This easily held handle is lightweight because of an integral cavity which conveniently holds the D3 Fluid bottle. A special brush to clean the directional-fiber Discwasher pad is included without charge, and also fits inside the handle cavity.

WITH GENUINE SATISFACTION:
Only Discwasher gives immediate performance, long-term record safety, pleasing physical characteristics and a price that hasn't changed in five years.

Seek out the Discwasher System, by name. Only Discwasher delivers technology, value and satisfaction.

CIRCLE NO. 19 ON READER SERVICE CARD

YOUR RECORDS DESERVE SUPERIOR CARE: SEEK OUT THE DISCWASHER® SYSTEM
IMPROVED TELEVISION SOUND is a feature of sets being introduced by three major manufacturers. This trend is thought to reflect both the wider audio bandwidth now practicable in television transmissions and the increasing aural sophistication of American audiences. GTE will offer their Supersound (a higher-power amplifier with separate bass and treble controls and a two-way speaker system) on three 25-inch color sets. Magnavox has introduced two sets with Super Sound (a three-way speaker system, separate tone controls, and a 12-watt power amplifier). RCA's Dual Dimension Sound system, available on six of their current models, divides the audio spectrum into three parts and feeds them to different drivers to achieve a pseudo-stereo effect.

A 91-PAGE CATALOG OF ALL FOUR-CHANNEL DISCS AND TAPES commercially released in the United States has been published with the title Quad Incorporated. Listed are nearly 2,200 recordings released between 1969 and 1979. Available from Quad Incorporated, P.O. Box 19, Capron, Virginia 23829, for $4.00 plus 50¢ postage in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico (add $2.50 postage elsewhere).

AMERICA'S FIRST RADIO "SUPERSTATION" will be Chicago's WFMT, which offers fine-arts FM programming twenty-four hours a day. Pending FCC approval, United Video of Tulsa, Oklahoma, will use satellite transmission to make WFMT's stereo signal available throughout the United States (including Alaska and Hawaii) to any cable TV system that wants the service.

CONDUCTORS, A TO Z: Claudio Abbado has signed an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon. Maurice Abravanel, for thirty-two years music director of the Utah Symphony, retires on August 16. No successor has been named. At the beginning of the 1980-1981 season Riccardo Muti will become music director of the Philadelphia Orchestra, succeeding Eugene Ormandy, who will have held the post for forty-four years. Also in 1980-1981, Pinchas Zukerman will become music director of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.

AUTO RADIOS WILL AGAIN BE OPTIONAL accessories rather than standard items on most General Motors cars as a result of settlement of an antitrust suit brought against GM by the Custom Automotive Sound Association (CASA), a group of independent autosound equipment manufacturers. CASA had alleged that including radios as standard equipment was an anticompetitive practice that forced car buyers to pay for an accessory they might not want and also limited the size of the autosound aftermarket.

MEZZO-SOPRANO MARILYN HORNE received the Palcoscenico d'Oro (Golden Stage) award for excellence in singing in Mantua, Italy, on May 17. After celebrating Marilyn Horne Day on June 19 in her home town, Bradford, Pennsylvania, she returned to Europe for her Salzburg Festival debut.
Look inside any tape recorder and you'll find the parts that really matter. The parts that define the ultimate quality of your sound. The transport mechanism.

Transports must work in a world of micro-tolerances. A millionth of an inch error can ruin your audio quality. Because when the transport errs, no amount of electronic wizardry can replace the lost fidelity.

Consider the TEAC transport. Capstans formed on computer-controlled lathes and perfected on industrial micro-grinders. Massive flywheels, inertially balanced. Solenoids typically twice the size and power of those used in other decks. Belts that are tested for dimensional stability under the most severe temperature, humidity and atmospheric conditions.

The results of this specialized design and manufacturing technology are unusually high levels of accuracy, stability and durability. Proven qualities that make a TEAC sound better initially and maintain its sonic integrity after years of use.

Often, to reach these performance criteria, we've found current state-of-the-art concepts lacking. So, through the years, we've introduced new technologies.

Like the first cassette deck with integral Dolby* noise reduction in 1971. And the first cassette transport to break the 0.1% wow & flutter barrier in 1973. Designs that helped make the cassette deck a respectable high fidelity component.

Today, we're producing cassette components with instrumentation drive systems. Mechanisms taken right out of our own data recorders. These transports are built to withstand continuous read/write use in computer installations. Where mega-dollars are at stake. And reliability is everything.

Soon you'll see the first popularly priced cassette decks with integral dbx** noise elimination. Originally designed for open reel recorders in professional recording studios, the dbx system gives you sound so quiet, so noise-free, it's scary.

Twenty-five years of specialization has taught us that design balance is critical for quality sound reproduction. So you'll find that balance in every TEAC. The proof is in the results. That's why more professional recordists rely on TEAC machines than any other make in the world.

So next time you're distracted by an Astro-this, Fluoro-that or Spectro-something else, remember: a tape recorder is a machine.

How well it works depends on how well it's made. Look into a TEAC, and you'll find that we've got the guts. To show you what's inside. To let you evaluate our performance. To make you the final judge. To us, it's a matter of craftsmanship. To you, a matter of decision. Because when you peel away the bells and whistles, you find the real measure of every tape recorder. Especially ours.

For more information, see your TEAC Audio dealer. Or write us at Dept. M-8.

*Dolby is a registered trademark of Dolby Laboratories.
**dbx is a registered trademark of dbx, inc.
We have no Prix de Rome, nor of Chicago or even Kalamazoo in these United States, but we do have our annual "Tony" awards. Stephen Sondheim's musical-theater piece Sweeney Todd won eight of them this year, so there is no dodging the fact that it is, for 1979, a kind of Official Art and that it ought therefore to be suspected of harboring some insight into the intellectual fashion of our time.

The melodramatic tale of Sweeney, the murderous barber who supplies the unspeakable raw material for the meat pies of Mrs. Lovett, his equally unspeakable confederate, is an old one. Sondheim based his musical version on a recent London stage play, and it is a positive feast (!) for English majors. There are traces of Jonathan Swift (his icily ironic Modest Proposal), of the Beggar's Opera, and of Hogarth's prints, France's Grand Guignol theater of horror, and even I Remember Mama (the culinary secret of her meatballs).

The stage setting is an enormous cage of machinery, a factory interior laced with iron girders, bridges, and ladders, filled with humming gears and pulleys, a steam whistle that screams at horrors no human throat could address itself to, and wheels, wheels everywhere, even on the two-deck mechanical marvel pie/barber shop. The relentless misanthropy ("The history of the world... is who gets eaten and who gets to eat"), the lowness, the venality, and the scatological language of the play are relieved only by the blackest of comedy—a scene in which a preposterous Eve (Mrs. Lovett) tempts an improbable Adam (Sweeney) to a second Fall with an assortment of meat pies ("'Ave a little priest") instead of an apple.

Wild horses couldn't drag me to see this depressing spectacle again, and I mightily resisted listening to the original-cast album. All I can recall of the music is a rising three-note figure of yearning on the name Johanna ("I feel you, Johanna") in young Anthony's love song, and that probably because it echoes a similar phrase in West Side Story's Maria.

But what is the message? Why, simply what Utopian pastoralists from William ("dark Satanic mills") Blake to the latest anti-nuke Luddites have tried to tell us for years: the Industrial Revolution Was a Big Mistake, for it has brutalized all mankind. They may very well be right, but it is a considerable irony that this message is addressed to and (if understood) endorsed by (eight Tours, remember) an urban audience that wouldn't know the difference between a manure spreader and a butter churn and that would rather die or pay $5 a gallon (whichever comes first) than empty their three-car garages. There's a Zeitgeist for you!
THE DIGITAL READOUTS ON THE NEW SANSUI RECEIVERS ARE NOT WHAT COUNT.
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Collecting Mania

- Paul Kresh's "The Passionate Collector" (June) caught the mania nicely, and many of us wish we could follow the excellent advice given at the end of the article. But I, for one, have never been truly convinced that you can never get everything in your chosen field. Deep down, of course, I know you can't, but I remain unconvinced emotionally.

Joe Pearce
New York, N.Y.

- It's a pity Paul Kresh didn't have space to tell more collector stories in his accurate and relatively kind article on the slightly (and not so slightly) loony world of the diehard record collector. For instance, Tom Clear made three trips to Canada in search of the late Healey Willan's piano concerto (released on 78s by Canadian Victor), then found a mint copy in a junkshop in New York City!

I must take issue with one item of Mr. Kresh's otherwise good advice for prospective collectors: "Do go to dealers rather than waste time at secondhand stores." For one thing, dealers (rightly) charge whatever the traffic will bear. More important, for many collectors (not only record collectors) the chase is nearly as much fun as the prize. Most collectors can tell you where they found almost every record in their collection and what they paid for each one. Who knows what treasures the next junkshop or Salvation Army or Goodwill store may hold?

Fred M. Kleber
New York, N.Y.

- Thanks to Paul Kresh for his sympathetic and wonderfully witty exposé of those of us addicted to collecting records. I did not buy the Quintet in C Major played by the Budapest String Quartet and Pablo Casals. I purchased the private recording of the Schubert Octet in A Major. I must correct his account of how I acquired the record. He said I had had occasion to enjoy visits to Will Lerner's shop Music Masters. Mr. Lerner's knowledge of drama, however, doesn't match his musical acumen. The character he calls "that lady in The School for Scandal" is in The Rivals (same author, Richard Brinsley Sheridan). Her name is Mrs. Malaprop, hence the word "malapropism."

Jerry James
New York, N.Y.

Zappa's Satire

- I agree 100 per cent that you cannot separate the review from the reviewer, but I disagree with the prudishness shown by Peter Reilly in his June review of Frank Zappa's "Sheik Yerbouti." I suspect he did not listen to the album but read the lyrics on the inner sleeve instead.

Angel M. Rosado
Bronx, N.Y.

- Frank Zappa must have had people like Peter Reilly in mind when he stated in a recent People magazine article that "Producing satire is kind of hopeless because of the literacy rate of the American public." Zappa's "Sheik Yerbouti" is strictly for laughs and no more hate-filled than anything by Elvis Costello.

Jerry James
Springfield, Mo.

Remastering

- Like many other New Yorkers, I have had occasion to enjoy visits to Will Lerner's shop Music Masters. Mr. Lerner's knowledge of drama, however, doesn't match his musical acumen. The character he calls "that lady in The School for Scandal" is in The Rivals (same author, Richard Brinsley Sheridan). Her name is Mrs. Malaprop, hence the word "malapropism." I'm sympathetic, but I call 'em as I hear 'em.

James Goodfriend

- Just to set the record straight: Prof. Alessandro Moreschi of the Sistine Choir was not in his seventies when he recorded (as claimed by Editor William Anderson in his reply to a letter about Ervin Nyireghyhazi in the May issue). According to Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians, Moreschi was born in 1858 and died in 1922. In 1903 he would have been forty-five.

Philip L. Miller
New York, N.Y.

Hair

- I never thought I'd write in to praise one of Steve Simels' reviews (Noel Coppage maybe), but his "Hair and the Hippie Revival" in the June issue is a masterpiece. It is one of the best pieces written in the Seventies about the Sixties on any subject. The Eighties are less than seven months away as I write this, and I hope the next decade produces no more Hair-like media events or any repeat of the Sixties' atrocities. Death to excess nostalgia.

Carl P. Schmitt
Menlo Park, Calif.

Amazing Rhythm Aces

- In October 1978 James Goodfriend reviewed Ervin Nyireghyhazi's first Columbia release, saying that "his performances 'work' in a natural if idiosyncratic way that is light years beyond the most carefully thought-out intellectual approach to the written score." In the June 1979 issue Mr. Goodfriend reviewed the pianist's second Columbia release and pointed out various "unsuccessful results" that "would 'throw anyone off.'" Maybe I am a diehard, but I think that the grand manner and widened dynamic possibilities that set Nyireghyhazi apart from all other living pianists are still present in his second Columbia album to a degree that merits more than the trivialization of shortcomings that Mr. Goodfriend offered. Many who did not see the earlier review need to be told that Nyireghyhazi means more to us than this.

James Neher

- I have never been truly convinced that you can't, but I remain unconvinced emotionally. Deep down, of course, I know you can't, but I

FLORIDA MUSIC MASTERS

- Florida Music Masters is now on tape. I have had occasion to enjoy visits to Will Lerner's shop Music Masters. Mr. Lerner's knowledge of drama, however, doesn't match his musical acumen. The character he calls "that lady in The School for Scandal" is in The Rivals (same author, Richard Brinsley Sheridan). Her name is Mrs. Malaprop, hence the word "malapropism." I'm sympathetic, but I call 'em as I hear 'em.

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The ADS 10
digital time delay system
Beyond fidelity into reality

While the reproduction of sound has evolved dramatically over the past two decades, even the best two channel stereo sound still provides a limited illusion - a sonic painting between two front speakers. Stereo cannot produce the feeling of "BEING THERE" in the same acoustic space as the musicians.

Now you can experience the impact of hearing sound in THREE DIMENSIONS with the ADS 10 Acoustic Dimension Synthesizer. The ADS 10 brings the concert hall to your home by extracting and recreating the "ambient" sound field which surrounds the listener in any real acoustic space. Critics and reviewers agree there is nothing you can add to a decent stereo system for approximately $1000 which will improve the realism of music reproduction as much as the ADS 10 digital time delay system. As stated in Esquire recently, "it has been a long time since there was a new development in hi-fi. Clad systems weren't it. The new perfected time delay units are the ADS 10 is the first complete time delay system ever offered to the public that encompasses all components for ambient extraction and synthesis and, for rear channel amplification. It also includes a matching pair of ultra compact, high performance speakers for unobtrusive placement in your room.

The ADS 10 is fully optimized and offers not only highly advanced circuitry on the most natural ambience basis also the most flexible and most logically designed time delay system available. It has overcome all the problems of earlier time delays through unique proprietary circuits and it is easier to install and operate than a cassette recorder.

Design of operating controls was human engineered to allow you to easily select the size of the hall (from a small club to a large cathedral), the depth of the stage, the location of your seat, and the acoustic properties of the hall itself.

For more information, write ADS, Dept 3F8, or call 1-800-824-7888 for Operator 483. Or, better yet, take your favorite records to your selected ADS dealer and experience how the ADS 10 can bring the sound of a concert hall to your home.

Where technology serves music

ADS, Analog & Digital Systems, Inc. One Progress Way Wilmington, MA 01887 (617) 668-5100
As might be expected, after the announcement of the Grammy awards we at the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) received some criticism, especially from those who may have disagreed with the results of our membership's votes. In the May Stereo Review, Steve Simels expressed such displeasure, and even though we may not agree with him, or at times even follow his reasoning, we fervently defend his right to disagree. Though we may not agree with him, or at times even follow his reasoning, we fervently defend his right to disagree.

But we do not defend, in fact we take extreme exception to, his accusation that the Grammy awards are "spectacularly corrupt." Ever since the inception of these awards twenty-one years ago, one of the Academy's major concerns has been to maintain and protect their absolute integrity. To help us achieve this, we have assigned all tabulations of our members' ballots to the highly respected international accounting firm of Deloitte Haskins and Sells. Once our members have mailed their ballots directly to that firm, nobody except those within their organization who attend to the tabulating ever sees them, and we in the Academy never know what the winners are until the night of the Grammy awards presentations when the envelopes are opened.

I should also point out that we have always restricted the privilege of voting specifically to individual Academy members (no company membership is available) who contribute creatively to the field of recording, and to no one else. Moreover, we have consistently stressed to these members that the only criterion they should consider when voting is artistic excellence and that nothing else, including sales, should count.

J.WILLIAM DENNY
Past President, NARAS
Burbank, Calif.

Steve Simels replies: I apologize to Deloitte Haskins and Sells, the Academy, and any individual members of NARAS who may have been offended by the careless phrase "spectacularly corrupt," which flew out of my typewriter while I was suffering a fit of disappointment over the choices for this year's Grammys.

Quick! Who has two ears full of rock and nothing in between? Shame on you, Steve Simels. Your sarcasm went a bit too far in "Simels Contemplates the Grammys" (May) when you called Billy Joel's Just the Way You Are a "musky ballad." The rest of the article was right on, but to condemn a song simply because it doesn't rock the walls is rather narrow-minded. What would have happened to our beloved rock-and-roll if everyone in the Fifties had condemned it simply because it did shake the walls?

MICHAEL FISHER
Enid, Okla.

- Since reader Norman Bremer (May "Letters to the Editor") and Technical Editor Ralph Hodges are concerned with metric lessons, why not be totally correct? The word "micron" is now archaic. The exact and correct scientific term is "micrometer." "Millimicron" has been changed to "nanometer.

RICHARD C. KLOSEK
Rutherford, N.J.

or was any of last month.

Toni K.

- Steve Simels' excellent review (April) of Toni K.'s "Life in the Foodchain" has not only relieved my most complex anxieties about the future of rock in the Eighties but has given my mind nourishment that should last well into the twenty-first century. But please, who is George Metesky?

DANNY C. LAIL
Shelby, N.C.

Steve Simels replies: George Metesky was, of course, the so-called "Mad Bomber" who terrorized the people of New York City for well over a decade with a series of strategically placed explosive devices. Comparing Toni K. with Metesky was my idea of a joke, son.

- Has Simels gone mad? "Life in the Foodchain," while certainly a good, great, maybe chain," while certainly a good, great, maybe, while certainly a good, great, maybe, was better than 0.1% THD. T.I.M. better than 0.02%. NON-PORTIONAL® circuit with AUTO-CROWBAR protection circuit, input level controls, adjustable range meters, main and remote speaker selection, clipping indicators, VARI-PORTIONAL® indicators and speaker protection. 250 watts RMS minimum 20-20 KHz 6 ohms, less than 0.1% THD. T.M. better than 0.02%. NON-LIMITED output assures crisp clean peaks. 3 mfd.

Toni K.

Calabasas, Calif.
You can now own every record or tape that you may ever want...at tremendous savings and with no continuing purchase obligations. You can get valuable free dividend certificates, you can get quick service and all the 100% iron-clad guarantees you want.

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"This speaker doesn't pretty up or muddy up the sound. I like sound that's bright and natural. That's what the System B gives me."

The reason the sound is "natural" is because we've done everything possible to minimize distortion and provide smooth, broad, frequency response.

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We've carefully selected each crossover frequency to isolate the resonance of each driver at least a full octave below its crossover region. This together with our Impedance Compensated Crossover Network, completely eliminates distortion at the critical crossover frequencies. As a result, the sound comes through "bright" and "natural."

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The System B has the power handling capacity to produce an incredible 115 dB of sound pressure at its 150 watt rating.

Normally, high efficiency goes hand-in-hand with insufficient bass response.

That's not the case with System B.

It blends extremely efficient drivers with a vented enclosure.

The vent works closely with the low frequency driver to extend the bass response downward to the limit of recorded music.

There's much more to this amazing speaker system than it's possible to describe in detail here.

That's a good reason for you to go to your Jensen Home Audio Dealer for a demonstration.

After all, your ears are the ultimate test.

But one more word from the master, Stan Getz.

"I like to hear sound as it is. I don't like prettied-up sounds where you put everything through a powder puff. These speakers give me accurate sound."

Listen to the Jensen System B in person.

Stan Getz did. He liked what he heard.

So will you.

Listen with the professionals.

Listen to JENSEN speakers.
Electronic Subwoofer (ESW), which operates by boosting the signal sent to the loudspeaker near its 1,500-Hz crossover point than a larger driver would have. The system's passive radiator is 10 inches in diameter and becomes the dominant sound source at frequencies below 66 Hz. Recommended amplifier power is 3.6 watts minimum, 250 watts maximum. Frequency response is specified as 47 to 18,000 Hz ±3 dB, sensitivity is 92 dB output for a 1-watt input (measured at 1-meter distance), and nominal impedance is 8 ohms. The enclosure weighs 25 pounds, is finished in a walnut-grain vinyl, and has dimensions of 24 x 13 x 4-3/4 inches. Price: $290.

The tweeter is housed in a roughly cube-shaped enclosure and has an internal 6-dB-per-octave high-pass filter network that operates at 7,000 Hz. It is thus suitable for use as an accessory tweeter or as part of an integrated speaker-system design.

Specifications of the unit include a sensitivity of 88 dB for a 4-watt input (measured at 1 meter), a nominal impedance of 8 ohms, and dimensions of 4 x 4 x 5-3/4 inches. Price: $199.50. For further information write to Rocelo, Inc., Dept. SR, 669 Flint Road, Downsview, Ontario M3J 2J7, Canada.

Design Acoustics' D-4A, the successor to that company's earlier floor-standing D-4, is a three-way acoustic-suspension system designed to achieve flat power response over a broad area. In the D-4A this is accomplished through the use of three treble drivers (two 1-1/2-inch cone units and one 1-inch dome type) positioned on three faces of the speaker's cabinet and two 8-inch woofers mounted on the cabinet's side panels as a means of reducing mid-bass reflections from room-wall surfaces. A single 5-inch cone midrange is positioned on the speaker's front panel; crossover frequencies are 700 and 2,000 Hz. System impedance is a nominal 4 ohms; level controls that attenuate bass and treble outputs by 3 dB are included on the cabinet's rear panel.

Specifications of the D-4A include a power response of 35 to 18,000 Hz ±3 dB, a minimum power requirement of 20 watts per channel, a system resonance frequency of 41 Hz, and a sensitivity of 92 dB for a 1-watt input measured at a 1-meter distance. The enclosure, whose side faces are angled inward somewhat, has an oiled-walnut veneer finish, black-fabric grille material, and dimensions of 38 x 16-1/2 x 11 inches. Price: $297.

(Continued on page 20)
The first choice of those who refuse to settle for second-best.

The true audio perfectionists are those who demand state-of-the-art performance from every part of their system. For these trend setters, second-best just won't do.

At TDK we consider ourselves perfectionists, too, so it's gratifying to know that TDK SA is the number one selling cassette to these critical listeners.

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The next step up.

Despite the almost daily claims of revolutionary breakthroughs, loudspeaker design is basically an evolutionary process. Consider the new B&W DM2/II, for example. When its predecessor, the original DM2, was introduced several years ago, it was widely acclaimed as a classic of impeccable design and outstanding performance.

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Since that time, however, B&W's unparalleled research and development program has yielded new and fascinating insights into virtually every aspect of speaker design and performance. From these uniquely innovative studies has emerged a completely new design of surpassing accuracy, the B&W DM2/II. Each driver of the DM2/II has been designed for exceptionally smooth response over its entire operating range. The crossover is a computer calculated nineteen element network employing true third order Butterworth filters that result in significantly lower intermodulation distortion and exceptional phase and amplitude characteristics.

Listening. The final proof.

Listening to the B&W DM2/II is, quite simply, a revelation. It produces completely natural, uncolored sound of extraordinary clarity and depth. Moreover, its modest size and elegant appearance permit advantageous placement in almost any listening area.

As with all B&W loudspeakers, each DM2/II is individually tested and shipped with its own proof of performance chart recording. However, the ultimate proof of performance is in the listening. Your B&W dealer invites you to audition this classic contribution to the evolution of speaker technology and decide for yourself.

For additional information write:
Anglo-American Audio Co., Inc., P.O. Box 653, Buffalo, N.Y. 14240. In Canada: Remcron Electronics Ltd.

B&W Loudspeakers.

The next step up.

CIRCLE NO. 12 ON READER SERVICE CARD

New Products
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Fried Speaker Has Laminated Driver Cones

The Fried Model W is a three-way vented loudspeaker that uses bass and midrange drivers having cones made of a synthetic laminated paper. This type of construction is said to reduce coloration and the incidence of cone resonances. The Model W's treble driver is a 1-inch dome tweeter also treated with a synthetic coating. Crossover frequencies for the system are 750 and 3,000 Hz. The speaker has a 2-ampere fuse, corresponding to a continuous power-handling capacity of 32 watts. Power handling on musical peaks is 300 watts, according to the manufacturer.

Frequency response of the Model W is 40 to 20,000 Hz ±3 dB, nominal impedance is 8 ohms, and sensitivity is 90 dB for a 1-watt input measured at a 1-meter distance. Recommended minimum power is 25 watts per channel. Dimensions of the speaker, which is finished in oiled walnut, are 25 x 14 x 10 inches. Price: $320, optional stands are $20 each. For further information write Fried Products Co., Dept. SR, 7616 City Line Ave., Philadelphia, Pa. 19151.

KLH Speaker Achieves Extended Bass

The KLH 3 two-way loudspeaker system uses an unusual design involving a signal-processing device and a 61/2-inch bass driver to derive extended bass performance (to 40 Hz at normal listening levels) from a vented enclosure with an internal volume of only 1/4 cubic foot. The signal-processing device, which KLH calls an Analog Bass Computer, is installed in the tape-monitor circuit or between the preamplifier and power amplifier. The unit tailors the frequency response of the speaker, adding low-frequency boost and filtering out infrasonic signals. It also monitors the low-bass output and attenuates the bass input when necessary to prevent excessive excursion of the woofer cone at high output levels.

The low-frequency driver of the KLH 3 has a cone formed of polypropylene, an acoustically inert plastic material said to have lower intrinsic coloration than conventional paper cone materials. The woofer is crossed over at 2,000 Hz to a 1-inch fabric-dome treble unit. Both drivers have cast frames for structural rigidity; an acoustically absorptive material on the speaker's front panel surrounds the treble unit as a means of reducing diffraction effects.

Sensitivity of the speaker is 85 dB for a 1-watt input, measured at a 1-meter distance. Recommended power is 40 watts minimum and 200 watts maximum. The speaker's dimensions are 121/2 x 81/2 x 6 inches, and those of the Analog Bass Computer control module are 101/2 x 21/2 x 6 inches. The module includes a facility to replace the tape-monitor circuit lost when it is connected to an integrated amplifier or receiver, plus a room-position compensation control. Cabinet finish is oiled-walnut veneer. Price: $420 per pair, including Analog Bass Computer.

Circle 123 on reader service card

Linear-phase Speaker From Technics Uses Radial-horn Tweeter

The Technics SB-L300 is a three-way vented speaker system of the "linear-phase" type. As with many speakers using this design (Continued on page 22)
Yours to examine for 15 days.

Be our guest. Examine the AUDIO CYCLOPEDIA for 15 days. You'll find out why it is considered the most comprehensive and authoritative book ever written on the subject. And you'll get a FREE $3.50 bonus book to keep no matter what!

The AUDIO CYCLOPEDIA is literally a one-book audio library. It has long been considered "the bible" by amateur stereo buffs as well as professional technicians. That's why you'll find it in constant use not only in home workshops and at stereo centers, but also in recording studios, broadcast booths and concert halls.

This giant reference book is over 3" thick, and packed with 1,757 illustrated pages. It features 3,645 questions and answers and a 50 page "instant-find" index for subject identification. It is truly the big one in audio electronics and it puts all the information you'll ever need right at your fingertips, chapter by chapter.

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approach, its front baffle is stepped in order to assure that the output from each driver reaches the listener's ears simultaneously. The SB-L300's driver complement consists of a 12-inch, cast-frame bass driver fitted with a rubber damping ring at the voice coil, a 4-inch cone-type midrange driver also having a cast frame, and a metallized-polyester tweeter dome fitted to a radial-profile horn. Crossover frequencies for the system are 1,600 and 4,500 Hz, and there are individual level controls on the speaker's front panel for both the midrange and treble drivers. The controls permit 10 dB of level adjustment and are calibrated in 1-dB increments. Two re-settable thermal relays are also provided, one for the tweeter and one for the midrange and woofer, to protect the speakers from excessive input power.

Specifications of the speaker include a frequency response of 39 to 22,000 Hz, ±4 dB, a nominal impedance of 8 ohms, power handling of 90 watts as measured by DIN standards, and a sensitivity of 90 dB for a 1-watt input measured at a 1-meter distance. Dimensions of the speaker, which has a dark walnut finish and a black stretched-fabric grille, are 28⅞ x 14⅝ x 12½ inches. Weight is 40 pounds. Price: $250.

Circle 124 on reader service card

The RF-5's driver complement consists of a 12-inch roll-surround bass driver, a 1¾-inch soft-dome midrange unit, and a 1-inch soft-dome treble unit. Manhattan Pacific also makes the speaker available with a planar-dynamic plastic-film tweeter instead of the 1-inch dome. This version, called the RF-5R, is said to have a somewhat different sound character. Crossover frequencies of this system are 700 and 3,500 Hz, for the planar-dynamic driver, and the crossover slopes differ for each driver. All crossover capacitors are of the plastic dielectric type, and coils are air-core units.

Nominal impedance of the system is 8 ohms, minimum recommended power is 10 watts, and maximum input power is 150 watts continuous. Sensitivity as measured at a 1-meter distance is 90 dB or greater for a 1-watt input. Dimensions of the enclosure, which has an oiled-walnut finish and an integral base, are 45 x 17 x 12 inches. Prices: RF-5, $439; RF-5R, $499. For more information write to Manhattan Pacific Audio Industries, Dept. SR, 11710 Santa Monica Boulevard, West Los Angeles, Calif. 90025.

EPI Updates
Three Speakers

□ EPI has announced evolutionary changes in three of their loudspeakers. The updated speakers are the 70C, 120C, and 200C. All three are two-way systems and all utilize the EPI inverted-dome "air-spring" tweeter.

The 70C (right) retains the same driver complement as the older Model 70—a 6-inch, long-throw bass driver and a 1-inch tweeter. The magnetic circuit of the bass driver and the enclosure size have been altered, however, resulting in improved efficiency, according to EPI. Specifications of the 70C include a frequency response of 60 to 20,000 Hz, ±3 dB, an 8-ohm nominal impedance, a crossover frequency of 1,800 Hz, and a recommended minimum power of 10 watts. The enclosure is finished in walnut-grain vinyl, with a black fabric grille and has dimensions of 16 x 10⅝ x 7⅞ inches. Price: $79.

(Continued on page 24)

Manhattan Pacific
Loudspeaker Features
Low Distortion

□ Manhattan Pacific Audio, a California company, has introduced their Model RF-5, a floor-standing acoustic-suspension system with a distortion specification of less than 2 per cent (second and third harmonics only) at a 3-watt input level (corresponding to a sound-pressure level of about 95 dB at a 1-meter distance).
Scott puts out.

Because Scott puts more in.

Deeper, richer lows. Crisper, clearer highs. And an accuracy across the entire tonal spectrum that's second to none. That's what you get with Scott Controlled Impedance speakers.

No matter what your listening preference, Scott speakers will make your whole sound system sound better.

At Scott, there's no such thing as an "off-the-shelf" component. Unlike many other makers, Scott custom designs and acoustically tailors every speaker component to give you accurate frequency response, high efficiency, and extra power handling capacity. After all, the sound you get out depends on what we put in.

But listen for yourself. And you'll hear just how much Scott speakers really put out.

For more information on Scott speakers, or on our entire audio line, see your nearest Scott dealer or write H.H. Scott, Inc., Corporate Headquarters, 20 Commerce Way, Dept. HS, Woburn, Massachusetts 01801. In Canada: Paco Electronics, Ltd., Quebec, Canada.
The speaker shown above is the New Advent Loudspeaker—a new version of the system that has been this country's best-selling and most imitated speaker for several years.

If you have been thinking of getting, or improving on, a stereo system, the New Advent Loudspeaker can give you performance that's clearly in the "best" category for the price you would normally pay for "something pretty good." Its price is $155 to $190, depending on cabinet finish and how far we have shipped it.

For full information, including a list of Advent dealers, please send us this coupon at the address below. Or call (toll-free) 800-225-1035. (In Massachusetts, the non-free number is 617-661-9500.)

Thank you.

Audioanalyst Speaker Uses Sound-absorbing Grid on Baffle

The Audioanalyst M4v-II, a two-way vented loudspeaker, uses a sound-absorbing panel (called a PhaseMatrix) around its treble driver to reduce diffraction effects.

The M4v-II's speaker complement consists of an 8-inch bass driver with a curvilinear cone profile and a 1-inch dome tweeter. The crossover frequency is 2,000 Hz and nominal impedance is 8 ohms. Frequency response is rated as 40 to 20,000 Hz ±4 dB, sensitivity is 89 dB for a 1-watt input measured at 1 meter, and recommended amplifier power is 10 watts minimum, 75 watts maximum. Audioanalyst notes that the speaker's maximum output level (as measured at a 2-meter distance) is 106 dB peak.

The speaker enclosure is finished in a walnut-grain vinyl with black fabric grille and has dimensions of 24½ x 14½ x 11 inches. Price: $139. For further information, write to Audioanalyst, P.O. Box 33, Terryville, Conn. 06786.

The 120C (left) uses a 10-inch woofer in place of the older 120's 8-inch bass driver and incorporates voltage control mounted on the front panel. Frequency response is 38 to 20,000 Hz ±3 dB, minimum recommended power is 25 watts, nominal impedance is 8 ohms, and the crossover frequency is 1,800 Hz. Dimensions of the speaker are 25 x 15 x 11 inches; cabinet finish is walnut-grain vinyl with black fabric grille. Price: $159.

The EPI 200C (center) retains its 8-inch bass driver, 1-inch tweeter, and 12-inch passive radiator. Power handling of the bass driver has been improved through the use of new voice-coil materials, and the passive radiator has been changed from a conventional paper cone to an inert foam block suspended by two surrounds. The new material is said to reduce midrange coloration caused by radiation of enclosure reflections through the passive radiator's cone. Frequency response is 36 to 20,000 Hz ±3 dB, recommended minimum power is 15 watts, nominal impedance is 8 ohms, and the crossover point is 1,800 Hz. Dimensions of the system are 32½ x 17 x 11 inches, and the cabinet finish is oiled-walnut veneer with black grille fabric. Price: $275.

Fisher's AirDyne MS145 speaker system is one of a growing number of speaker systems that use a passive radiator and a large active woofer (in this case 10-inch diameter) to reproduce bass frequencies. Two other drivers, a 5-inch cone midrange and a 3-inch cone tweeter, constitute the remainder of the driver complement. Crossover frequencies are at 1,000 and 5,000 Hz, and the speaker's nominal impedance is 8 ohms. Fisher recommends a minimum of 6.5 watts of power and specifies the maximum input power as 45 watts. Maximum acoustic-signal output is given as 104 dB sound-pressure level (measured at a 1-meter distance). Total system frequency response is 55 to 17,000 Hz, sensitivity is 91 dB for a 1-watt input (also measured at 1 meter), and the enclosure, which is finished in walnut-grain vinyl with a sculptured translucent grille, has dimensions of 24½ x 14½ x 11 inches. Price: $139.95.

NOTICE: All product descriptions and specifications quoted in these columns are based on materials supplied by the manufacturers. Domestic inflation and fluctuations in the value of the dollar overseas affect the price of merchandise imported into this country. Therefore, please be aware that the prices quoted in this issue are subject to change.
The most powerful argument for our new receiver is not just power.

True, it's tempting to be swept up by our power.

150 watts per channel minimum RMS at 8 ohms, from 20Hz to 20kHz, with no more than 0.07% Total Harmonic Distortion, is nothing to sneeze at.

But raw power means nothing. What's important is how that power is delivered. In the case of the STR-V7, it's brought to you by Sony in a very classy package.

You get a combination of features and controls that are impressive on their own—but almost unheard of in a single machine.

To start with, we've built in a Dolby system, for decoding Dolbyized FM broadcasts.

The advantages of our tuner, though, need no decoding. They include a normal and narrow FM IF bandwidth selector. It makes life simple for people in areas where their signals are crowded together elbow to elbow.

In our preamp section, the V7 comes equipped with a special phono EQ circuitry. Thanks to Sony's high IQ, it allows for direct connection of a low-output, moving coil cartridge phono source. Without calling for an external step-up transformer or pre-preamp.

When you're gifted with as much power as the V7, you need a way to keep track of it. This receiver keeps tabs with two power-output meters, monitoring the power being fed to the speakers. So overload can't result from oversight.

And all that power comes from our direct coupled DC power amp. And our power is stable, thanks to a high-efficiency, high regulation toroidal-coil transformer.

There's a lot more to the STR-V7 than power. This receiver takes the best that contemporary technology has to offer, and offers it in a single machine.

Other manufacturers may have the power to bring you power. But only Sony has the power to bring you more than just power.

SONY AUDIO

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What's in a name?

that when Braun created the first superlative design and flawless performance. Therefore, it's hardly surprising that when Braun created the first high performance miniatunized speaker system, it immediately attracted an army of admirers and a host of imitators.

In fact, hardly a week goes by without another "look alike" trying to stake a claim in the market. However, in spite of or, perhaps, because of the sincerity of these flatterers, Braun has gone on to become the standard of reference for miniature loudspeakers.

And for a very simple reason...they sound better. Nor is this surprising, for Braun literally created, what amounts to, a new speaker technology. And that cannot be surprising, for Braun literally created, what amounts to, a new speaker technology. And that cannot be

Therefore, it's hardly surprising that the name Braun is synonymous with museum quality design and flawless performance. However, when a kettle drum is struck, it generates a significant amount of high-frequency transients at the moment of impact. It is these fleeting sounds that provide the directional clues. In addition, low-frequency tones produced by nonpercus- sive musical instruments are very rarely pure sine waves, which means that they have substantial harmonic content. It is these harmonics (which are of higher frequencies) that enable one to localize low-frequency sound sources whose fundamental tones are below the frequencies that permit localization.

Speaker Sound

Q. I understand that many experts hold that frequency response is the major factor that differentiates the sound of one speaker system from another, yet other listeners (whom I assume to be equally knowledgeable) talk about "coloration," "warmth," "grittiness," and so forth. Which group is right?

A. Both. Deviations from a "flat" or "even" audio-frequency response are translated by the ear into a wide variety of subjective sonic experiences. Confusion arises because many of these subjective reactions seem unrelated to frequency response per se. For example, some listeners are puzzled by the fact that a speaker's—or amplifier's—midrange control (which affects frequencies at about 1,000 Hz or so) will cause vocal or instrumental solos to be projected with greater "presence" when set in the boost position. The mystery vanishes once you appreciate that most frequencies within the human voice are concentrated in the midrange. A boost in that area therefore results in a voice that is emphasized relative to the background music.

Music spans a wide range of frequencies, and any emphasis or de-emphasis introduced by the reproducing system anywhere in that range is usually going to be heard as some sort of tonal coloration. You can demonstrate this for yourself if you have a three-way speaker system. Bring your ear close to the midrange driver and you'll hear the nasal coloration that results from an excess of midrange energy. When you back off to a normal listening distance, the octave-to-octave frequency balance is restored and the nasal coloration disappears. You can demonstrate the same effect with an equalizer by boosting the 1,000- to 3,000-Hz range. When the boost is excessive, a honky, nasal quality is heard in addition to a center-stage "presence" effect.

It is important to understand that many other "mysterious" subjective effects—warmth, muddiness, openness, shrillness, roughness, a metallic, glossy, veiled, or nontransparent quality (but not inevitably) result from frequency-response irregularities somewhere in the system (or in the room acoustics) rather than some mysterious characteristic intrinsic to a specific component.

For example, some systems sound harsher or grittier than others, yet measurements of the components in the system reveal a normally low level of harmonic and intermodulation distortion. This has led some audio critics (and manufacturers) to invent or postulate the existence of "new" distortion mechanisms to account for what they hear. However, a "harsh" or "gritty" quality frequently results from a slight peak in the upper midrange—because that is where many normal high-frequency harmonics fall. When the frequency balance of a system is such that those normal harmonics of the musical material are reproduced with disproportionate loudness, the ear interprets the sound as "gritty," "harsh," "glassy," or whatever. Other examples could be given of the quantity of sound in a specific frequency band being interpreted by the ear as a difference in the quality of sound.

A boost in that area therefore results in a voice that is emphasized relative to the background music. A boost in that area therefore results in a voice that is emphasized relative to the background music.

It seems to me that a scientific approach to such matters requires that one first exhaust all the conventional technical-evaluation techniques before inventing new distortions and...
Evaluation by Equalizer

Q. I understand that it's possible to use an equalizer for speaker evaluation. How does one go about it?

S. Eban
St. Louis, Mo.

A. My procedure is as follows: I set the equalizer controls so that they make the pair of speakers under test sound as much like my reference system as possible. The difference in response between the two pairs of speakers during A-B switching can then be read directly from the equalizer settings. I'm assuming (1) that my reference speakers have a reasonably flat frequency response in my listening room (pink noise and a real-time analyzer have shown this to be the case) and (2) that the most significant difference between a good speaker and a mediocre one is frequency response.

In defense of the second assumption, I have found that, by manipulating the equalizer's controls, any reasonably good speaker can be made to sound very much like my reference speaker. Or, conversely, I can equalize the frequency response of the reference speaker to sound like the systems under test. It is important that such comparisons be made from a normal listening location since the variations in high-frequency dispersion can cause narrow-dispersion speakers to seem short on highs (compared with a wide-dispersion reference) if judged off-axis. (There are also other questions having to do with choice of program material, speaker positioning, and the reflectivity of the room that are too complicated to deal with here.)

In addition, an equalizer has a special virtue that I was not aware of until I incorporated one into my system about seven years ago: it is a great ear-training device. I switch back and forth between the two speakers, judge that the sample unit has more (or less) energy in a certain frequency area, and reach for the appropriate knob(s) on the equalizer. If I've "guessedimated" the frequency areas of the differences correctly, the adjustment makes the loudspeakers sound much more alike. With the equalizer's help, I've become fairly good at localizing even minor frequency aberrations by ear.

Because the number of questions we receive each month is greater than we can reply to individually, only those letters selected for use in this column can be answered. Sorry!
JUDGING SPEAKER QUALITY

THE final tallies for the minispeaker evaluation this month (see page 58) reflect something that should not come as too great a surprise: namely, that all the listeners did not fully agree on the merits (or demerits) of all the speaker systems involved.

What is the significance of such differences of opinion? Do some of us not measure up as the keen-eared judges of reproduced sound we like to think we are? Have we been unable to rise above certain prejudices and preconceptions about brand names and operating principles? Or were we confused or deceived by the differences in program material and speaker placement that we individually adopted (in many, if not most, cases the reviewers preferred to listen alone without reference to others’ impressions until the evaluations were complete)?

I don't think we can rule out absolutely the possibility of a “maybe” answer to any or all of the above questions, but I think there is a more obvious and fundamental reason for such disagreements: they are simply a matter of variations in taste.

For many years now this magazine has championed the idea that taste should play no part in the evaluation of a high-fidelity loudspeaker. If a live source of music is immediately compared with the sound of a speaker playing a perfect recording of that source, the speaker either sounds exactly like it or it doesn't. If, in the opinion of any given listener, the sound of the speaker is “better” than that of the live source, it makes no difference; the speaker is still wrong. Given a perfect recording, the perfect high-fidelity speaker system will sound indistinguishable from what it is trying to reproduce, and taste should play no part in such a judgment. Unfortunately, the operative word in the above statement is “should.” We do not yet live in a world in which perfect high-fidelity loudspeakers are available. Nor am I aware of any means of making a perfect recording with which the existence of a perfect speaker could be discovered. Consequently, no speaker I know of will stand up to direct comparison with any live sound source under all circumstances. A few speaker systems are good enough to be difficult to catch out, and I have heard of live vs. reproduced comparisons in which blindfolded listeners, while able to hear some difference, could not say with assurance which was which. But a way can always be found to reveal a loudspeaker as a contrivance for creating a mere imitation of reality and not reality itself.

So how does a particular, inevitably imperfect speaker system get to be singled out by a critical listener as “best” amongst a universe of imperfect systems? Moreover, how does another get singled out as “second best,” one “third best,” and so on? Ultimately, there’s only one way: by the introduction of taste—personal taste—into the judgment. Note, however, that this doesn’t mean that taste determines all. Far from it. In a group of speaker systems in a showroom there are bound to be several that are so far from being accurate reproducer that any experienced listener could detect their deficiencies with almost any program material. Then comes the process of distinguishing the exceptionally accurate from the merely fairly accurate. Listening experience and long acquaintance with the program material used are probably the best guides here. Finally, the ranks are winnowed down to perhaps three or four serious contenders for the crown. At this point, and only at this point, does taste become a significant factor.

Inevitably, none of the few elect is perfect, all falling short of the ideal to just about the same degree though in different ways. One may have a little too much high treble, another a little too little, a third a touch of mid-bass heaviness, and so on. You must decide which of these shortcomings is most tolerable to you, and which least, and that is purely and simply a matter of taste. There is no reason to expect your fellow reviewers to agree or disagree, and there is usually no valid objective basis on which they could do so either. It’s a matter of your preferences versus theirs.

In the middle ground of any group to be evaluated, where reproduction accuracy is at best mediocre, the spread of listener opinions is likely to be at its widest; objective accuracy cannot be a consideration if it really isn’t present, so taste becomes a major factor in the choices. At the bottom of the rankings, taste is just about the only criterion. Here will be clustered the speakers that are truly unpleasant to listen to. Surprisingly (or unsurprisingly), reviewers rarely disagree on just where that point sets in.

Judgments customarily fall into this general pattern whenever a group of reviewers is called upon to rank any high-fidelity product category. With experience one learns not only to be unsurprised by it, but also to expect it. (I don’t think it exceeds the bounds of journalistic or professional discretion to note that none of us use the same speaker systems at home, and yet all of us have no difficulty respecting the choices of the others.) Consumers new to the high-fidelity experience have a tendency to agonize over the choice of a speaker system, believing that there must be some ideal “best”—or at least some “best” for the money—that could be unearthed if only the right “objective” guidance and information were available. We’re sorry to say that we think otherwise. For any listener, the best speaker system first makes a reasonably close approach to objective accuracy, then proves its ability to accommodate well to the acoustic environment you’ll use it in and to your taste in reproduced sound. It is worthwhile cultivating (educating) this taste to the point where you are fully aware of it. The classical-music listener in particular has a choice of the same repertoire on any number of different labels, and many of these labels have a distinctive sonic approach—close-up or distant perspectives, bright or subdued high frequencies, etc. From these you can learn what your listening preferences are, and these can moreover be confirmed by experimenting with different seats in auditoriums and concert halls. This should simplify your choice of a loudspeaker considerably. In our view, taste is not the most important criterion in that choice, nor even the most sensible. But when dealing with products that are all in the same “goodness” ballpark, it is certainly the final one.
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Signal-to-noise Ratios

Q. What is the difference between a "weighted" and an "unweighted" signal-to-noise ratio? Also, what are "A" weighting and "CCIR/ARM" weighting, and which is the better?

BARBARA FINCH
Decatur, Ga.

A. Measuring the signal part of a tape deck's signal-to-noise ratio is a fairly straightforward procedure. You record a mid- or low-frequency tone at the highest level possible before the tape starts to distort the tone excessively, and then read off the playback output level on a high-quality laboratory meter. ("Excessive" distortion is usually taken to mean 3 per cent in this country, while 5 per cent is common elsewhere, but the difference in output level between the two readings is not very great.)

Measuring the noise is somewhat more complicated. Leaving all the recorder's controls unchanged from the previous measurement, you record on the tape again, but this time with no input signal. The "tape hiss" you hear when you play back this zero-input "recording" represents the noise part of the signal-to-noise ratio, but neither the ear nor the meter responds in quite the same way. For one thing, the signal measurement uses a single frequency (typically between 315 and 1,000 Hz), whereas noise usually contains an enormous range of frequencies (normally extending both above and below the range of human audibility) whose instantaneous values vary widely. Tape noise (which has been compared to white noise) has more energy per octave above 1,000 Hz than it has below. This fact, combined with the finding that the ear is more sensitive to low-level high frequencies than to low frequencies, is why we speak of tape "hiss," not "roar" or "rumble."

In an unweighted noise measurement the usual "average-responding" lab meter treats each frequency within the noise spectrum as an equal contributor to a kind of quasi-rms (root mean square) average of the whole. In a weighted noise measurement, on the other hand, a filter is inserted between the tape deck and the meter so that the frequency response of the noise-registering instrument will more accurately reflect what the ear hears.

The pioneer research into the "frequency response" of the ear at various volume levels was done many years ago by Fletcher and Munson, and the widely used A-weighting curve reflects their findings at a low (30 phon) sound level. As shown in the accompanying graph, A-weighting "discounts" very low-frequency noise components (at 30 Hz, for ex-
ample, the noise would have to be some 40 dB higher in level than noise centered at 1,000 Hz to provide the same meter reading.

More recent research by the European CCIR standards organization into the "annoyance value" of noise at various frequencies suggests weighting by the other curve shown in the graph, and this system (used with the typical average-responding meter—hence "CCIR/ARM") has been vigorously advocated by Dolby Laboratories. As can be seen, the CCIR curve gives a higher proportionate "weight" to noise components in the 2,500- to 12,000-Hz range and an even lower significance to noise in the 45- to 2,500-Hz area than does A-weighting.

As to which is better—A-weighting or CCIR/ARM weighting—the question cannot only be resolved by an enormously costly and time-consuming investigation into psychoacoustics using statistically significant population samples throughout the world. In any case, A-weighting is accepted as significant by a host of national and international standards organizations (JIS, IEC, IEEE, NAB, etc.) and is so widely used that if you see a recorder's signal-to-noise ratio expressed as "so-and-so many dB (wtd.)," it is safe to say that the "wtd." involved is A-weighting. At the same time, the CCIR/ARM method of noise measurement is certainly gaining in popularity and international acceptance, and, given the typical noise spectrum of tape, my instinct would be to go with the CCIR/ARM weighting curve. Either is vastly more significant than an "unweighted" noise measurement, however.

Open-reel Metal Tape

Q. Recently I've been considering the purchase of one of the better open-reel decks—in the $1,000 to $1,500 class. Do you think the development of metal tape for open-reel machines will make such a unit obsolete in the near future?

A. The introduction of metal-particle tapes in the open-reel format—if it comes about at all—is likely to be a number of years down the road. There is currently available at least one open-reel machine in your price bracket that has been designed to accept the metal-particle tapes if and when they become available, but not even that manufacturer has so far been able to get 1/4-inch metal-particle tape samples for testing and design purposes! Part of the problem, of course, is the relatively low level of open-reel sales generally, but another part of the problem is that it seems quite certain that when metal comes to open-reel, the equalization standards will have to be changed, and standard changes are always a slow business. (Metal cassettes use the same 70-microsecond playback equalization as CrO₂ tapes, so no standard changes are needed—only improved record and erase heads and more powerful bias oscillators.) If you're concerned for the very long term, however, you might either get the metal-compatible deck or at least inquire whether retrofit kits will be made available for the other open-reel decks you're considering. My guess is that in your elevated price class they probably will, especially since it's easier to modify an open-reel machine than a cassette deck.

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I recently had the opportunity to see how the research division of Acoustic Research (AR) uses computers to gain insight into loudspeaker performance that would have been pure conjecture in the past. This is not really a "new" technique, having been used for some time by several speaker manufacturers, but what is extraordinary in AR's application of it is its use of a low-cost "personal" computer to perform some tasks which until recently could be handled only by AR's standard large computer costing perhaps twenty or thirty times as much.

I watched the frequency response of a speaker being plotted under the equivalent of anechoic conditions, in a normally "live" room, in a few seconds. The measurement concept is based on the relationship that exists between the response of a system in the frequency domain (what we usually think of as its "frequency response") and in the time domain (what we see on an oscilloscope display of its acoustic output as picked up by a microphone).

When a speaker is driven by a single very short impulse, its output (which is heard as a simple "click") contains all the information needed to extract not only its frequency response but even its group-delay and phase-shift characteristics. A mathematical process known as the "fast Fourier transform" (FFT) is employed to convert the data from one form to the other. Although this computation is relatively easy for a computer—even a fairly small one—it would be impossibly complex and time-consuming for a human being. The effect of the transformation is to convert the single pulse (with any attendant overshoots or other distortions), as picked up by the microphone, into a frequency-response curve that is equivalent to what would be measured in a very large anechoic chamber. A "perfect" pulse from the speaker would be possible only with a perfect speaker having infinite bandwidth and no phase or time-delay distortions.

The demonstration I saw at AR was conducted in the office of the company's director of research, Robert Berkovitz. (A similar demonstration later took place in Stereo Review's listening room in its New York office.) The computer, an Apple II, was connected to a video-monitor display and a "floppy-disc" memory that contained the AR-designed program for the FFT operation. The computer itself generated a 10-microsecond pulse that was passed through an external amplifier and drove the speaker. A microphone was placed a few feet in front of the speaker, and its output was returned to the computer for processing.

When the system was first turned on, the computer's video readout asked a number of questions about the test conditions, such as the number of pulses to be averaged. (In a quiet room, a single pulse is sufficient, but averaging a dozen or so pulses improves the signal-to-noise ratio.) When the instructions had been given, the computer sent out a sequence of identical pulses, each of which sounded like a sharp "click." With each click, the pulse response on the monitor emerged more distinctly from the background noise, resembling what one would see on a storage oscilloscope (which is effectively what the computer and monitor were simulating at the time).

A couple of additional operations moved the pulse (which was now stored in the computer's memory) to the left edge of the screen and established the time interval during which the FFT process would take place. Finally, the computer went into full operation, and in about 3 seconds the pulse display on the screen was replaced by a frequency-response curve, complete with calibrated frequency and amplitude scales (Figure 1). An interesting variation on this display can be obtained by having the computer make a sequence of frequency-response plots at successive time intervals after the initial pulse. The monitor then displays an equivalent number of response plots which together take on a three-dimensional appearance and give an overall view of the relationship between frequency, time, and amplitude. Ringing, resonances, and various diffraction effects in the speaker system can be seen quite clearly in this type of presentation (Figure 2).

Similar measurements have been used by AR, KEF, B&W, and others for some time, and they have been presented at technical meetings in papers dealing with some of the findings the technique has led to. Until now, the ability to make these measurements has been limited to those organizations able to invest perhaps $50,000 to $100,000 in a computer with sufficient accuracy and speed. The fact that it can now be done with a home-type computer about the size of a portable typewriter and costing only a few thousand dollars is mind-boggling, to say the least.

This development, moreover, turns out to be a particularly timely one. Preliminary work by the IHF Loudspeaker Standards Committee (on which Stereo Review's Technical Director Larry Klein and I both serve) makes it apparent that a universally available standard test environment will be needed in order to specify the performance of a speaker system. For many practical reasons, this will probably have to be anechoic (a reverberant chamber would be preferable in many re-
Frequency-response curves of a miniseaker as photographed from the video monitor of an inexpensive computer speaker-performance analyzer developed by Acoustic Research. Fig. 1, near right, shows the speaker's on-axis frequency response. "Three-dimensional" Fig. 2, far right, shows the response as it changes over a period of a few hundredths of a second.

spects, but a suitable one is large and costly and leaves much to be desired in calibration accuracy). Although most speaker manufacturers have anechoic chambers, they are rarely as large as one would like to use for measuring a full speaker system, and, in any case, no independent reviewer has a suitable chamber, or is likely to have one.

Therefore, the possibility of simulating the results otherwise obtainable only with a large anechoic chamber under normal live-room conditions and for a relatively modest investment is most attractive to a reviewer as well as to most speaker manufacturers. The work of the standards committee is in an early stage, and whatever form the final standard takes it will not be in effect for some time. Nevertheless, it is becoming clear that the time is coming, and fairly soon, when we can no longer avoid moving our heretofore analog measurement world into the digital computer realm. Judging from what I have seen of the potential, the major problem we will face with computerized speaker testing will be the interpretation of the incredible amount of information it makes available in such a short time—a true embarrassment of riches!

In closing, I would like to mention that on my visit to Bang & Olufsen in Denmark (discussed last month) I saw how they use a computer to model phono-cartridge parameters and in effect design a cartridge in moments. Including a plot of its frequency response and other characteristics. They also use FFT processing to generate a "three-dimensional" plot of the cartridge output (exactly analogous to the FFT speaker plots) derived from a simulated impulse signal and hypothetical cartridges (or real cartridges whose mechanical and electrical parameters had been entered into the computer memory). I suppose that if a suitable impulse test record were available, it would be simple to obtain nearly instantaneous phono-cartridge response plots in the same manner one would for speakers. The possibilities for computerized audio testing are obviously endless.

The Nakamichi Model 582 is the first of the new generation of "metal-ready" cassette decks we have been able to test in a genuine production-line (rather than prototype) version. But even without the ability to use the new tape, its many innovative design and performance features, attractive styling, and remarkable ease of operation would make it one of the finest cassette recorders we have tested.

The 582 is a front-loading deck that uses three d.c. motors in a dual-capstan, fully logic-controlled transport and has three separate heads (erase, record, and playback) to provide complete facilities for monitoring from the tape. The 582's PLL (phase-locked-loop) d.c. servomotor and dual-capstan drive system are not unusual in a high-priced deck, but the 582 goes a step further, using capstans of different diameters and flywheels of different sizes and masses to prevent the reinforcement of low-frequency "wow." Similarly, flutter is reduced through the use of what Nakamichi calls a "diffused-resonance" transport construction, in which metal and plastic parts are combined in such a way as to decouple and damp vibrational modes. The transport itself is not actuated either by mechanical levers or by electrically operated solenoids. Rather, the pushbuttons activate an entirely separate motor-and-cam system whose rotation is determined by a logic-controlled, integrated-circuit operational amplifier. In this way the release of the brakes, application of take-up torque, and movement of the head assembly against the tape are achieved without the noise and jarring that often accompany solenoid controls. A third d.c. motor is used to supply the drive to the tape hubs.

The head configuration is no less unique. The recording and playback heads are made of crystal permalloy and are housed in entirely separate cases, but they have been miniaturized to the point where both can fit within the center opening of the cassette, which Phil...
ESS Wins... Again

U.C.L.A. experiment repeated: in comparative tests, students attending the University of Wisconsin judge ESS speakers superior to Bose, Pioneer, JBL, Infinity, AR and Cerwin Vega.

Hundreds of students participating in a series of blind listening tests at two separate universities have now judged ESS speakers superior in performance to other top brands by increasingly significant margins. The controlled direct comparison tests, conducted under the supervision of an independent national testing laboratory, were designed to simulate home listening conditions. Loudness differences were electronically equalized, and all speakers were positioned for optimal performance.

Without knowledge of speaker brands, the students listened in groups of 30 or less to the same musical material on each of the speakers. They were then asked to choose which speaker sounded best in terms of clarity, accuracy and freedom from distortion. "Of particular significance is the fact that the pairings on the two campuses were not identical," report ESS technicians. "Even though different speaker matchings were made, the participants still chose ESS in 13 out of 14 comparison situations at both universities. And the 14th test at each campus was too close to be statistically valid." In many cases, as the graph reveals, ESS speakers were chosen over far more expensive competing loudspeakers by significant margins.

ESS speakers differ from all other conventional speakers because they alone incorporate the ESS Heil air-motion transformer midrange-tweeter (invented by Dr. Oskar Heil, creator of the FET), licensed exclusively to ESS. This unique principle of sound reproduction has been called by one reviewer "the first real breakthrough in loudspeaker design in over 50 years." By squeezing air like a bellows instead of pushing it, the Heil achieves virtually "instant acceleration." This increased velocity permits the Heil to provide a degree of clarity, spaciousness and freedom from distortion unattainable by conventional drivers.

ESS will be conducting similar comparison tests on college campuses across the nation. Watch for the dramatic results from Georgia Tech. Or better yet, visit your local ESS dealer and take the ESS Listening Test yourself. See if you can't appreciate the difference.

Take the ESS Listening Test yourself!

* Suggested Retail Price

CIRCLE NO. 23 ON READER SERVICE CARD
ips originally intended to house only a combination record/playback head. The close proximity of the two heads, combined with a playback head shield that protrudes sufficiently to push the cassette's pressure pad out of the way completely, provides several advantages, according to Nakamichi. First, excessive wear, scrape-flutter modulation noise, and high-frequency skewing errors introduced by the pressure pad are eliminated. Second, the design compromises inherent in a so-called "sandwich" head, in which separate record and playback elements are housed in the same case, are eliminated without introducing the inconvenience (normally associated with separate cassette record and playback heads) of having to readjust the azimuth (perpendicularity) of the record head each time a new cassette is inserted.

To minimize the effects of normal head wear, the record and playback heads on the 582 are slotted (by means of an exclusive etching process) at the top and bottom edges where the tape passes across them. This type of construction, unique (to our knowledge) among cassette decks, harks back to earlier professional open-reel days; it prevents the development of a "wear groove" on the surface of the head that can prematurely end its useful life. And the double-gap ferriate erase head of the 582, utilizing what Nakamichi calls the "direct-flux" principle, produced, in our tests, the highest degree of erasure on metal tape (a potential problem for some machines) that we have either measured or even heard claimed.

A touch of the EJECT button smoothly opens the lid of the illuminated cassette well on the left side of the 582, so that the cassette can be inserted, tape downward, into slides on the back of the lid. The front portion of the lid is made of clear plastic, affording a complete view of the label area and tape remaining on a side, and it is easily removed for access to the heads for routine cleaning and demagnetizing operations. Beneath the removable section of the cassette-well door are well-marked openings for adjustments to the tape guide and the height of the record and playback heads, as well as for record- and playback-head azimuth alignment. While most of these should be left to the technically advanced user, a supplementary instruction sheet gives clear guidance on adjusting the record-head azimuth (using the 582's built-in test-tone generator) to compensate for the possible effects of any jarring during ship-

pushbuttons and a series of twelve screwdriver-adjustable controls to optimize the bias and record levels (for Dolby-calibration purposes) of the left and right channels for ferric, high-bias (CrO₂-type), and metal tapes. Three large knobs on the right side of the front panel set the overall playback level, the overall record level, and the balance between channels. There are no separate microphone-level controls, though a suitably high-quality microphone mixer, powered from a socket on the rear panel, is available as an accessory.

Also on the right side of the front panel is a series of seven switches plus the on-off switch. One is used to set the memory-rewind feature or to activate the deck (using an external timer) in either the play or record mode. The second and third set the bias and equalization to suit the type of tape chosen. Next is a switch for the built-in test-tone oscillators of the 582, which operate at either 400 or 15,000 Hz and are used to optimize the bias and Dolby-system levels for the particular tape being used. The Dolby noise-reduction switch has three positions: out, in, and mx, the last of which inserts a sharp cutoff filter (above 15 kHz) to prevent interference with proper Dolby decoding that might arise from FM's 19-kHz multiplex pilot signal. Finally, there is a small switch that permits monitoring either in the "source" or the "tape" mode. The peak-reading meters located above these switches are calibrated from -40 to +7 dB.

On the rear panel are the customary phono-jack input and output connectors, a DIN-type connector, and an accessory socket for powering a microphone mixer or a wired remote-control device. The 582 measures approximately 19⅝ inches wide, 5½ inches high, and 13⅛ inches deep; it weighs a little under 18½ pounds. Suggested retail price: $890.

**Laboratory Measurements.** We measured the playback frequency response of the Nakamichi 582 using both TDK AC-337 ferric and BASF DIN-standard CrO₂ tapes. Both showed a slightly rising characteristic in the very high frequencies, which we have found in previous Nakamichi recorders and which Nakamichi explains by arguing that the test tapes themselves are manufactured to compensate for the treble losses in wider-gap playback heads. In any case, the rise is not significant, and it can easily be compensated for, if necessary, by a slight adjustment of the amplifier treble control. What we found astonishing, however, was that this was the first deck we have measured in which the response was identical (within ±0.1 dB) whether the test tapes were played in the normal forward direction or turned over and played on the reverse. Test tapes recorded across the full width of the tape, and so should give the same response in either direction, but there is usually a discrepancy of a couple of decibels in the high-frequency response, indicating skewing error within the cassette. By eliminating the usual reliance on a pressure pad, the 582 has helped to eliminate the differences in our calibrated alignment tapes with greater accuracy.

Overall record-playback frequency response, distortion, and signal-to-noise ratios were measured using the samples of Nakamichi SX, SX (CrO₂-equivalent), and ZX (metal) supplied with the machine, through checks with other premium-grade tapes in each category showed similar results. Our tests of the metal-particle tape would indicate that our early samples were slightly overbiased by the 582, as indicated by a slight rise in the high frequencies. The high-speed winding, the tape speed is reduced considerably, without going through the stop position, thanks to the logic circuitry.

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CIRCLE NO. 42 ON READER SERVICE CARD
CCIR/ARM weighting, these improved to 65.4, 67.1, and 69.4 dB, which are among the best figures we have measured for a cassette deck.

Wow and flutter measured 0.038 per cent (weighted rms) and 0.065 per cent (DIN peak-weighted) using a TDK AC-341 test tape, and we suspect that this is the residual error on the tape. Using a record-rewind-playback technique, the two figures read 0.052 per cent and 0.08 per cent, respectively.

The Dolby (0-dB) marking on the meters of the 582 read +1 for both channels, but even without any readjustment the overall record-playback Dolby tracking was within ±0.5 dB. The slightly slow peak-reading meters registered perfect results (within our measurement capabilities) on the 300-millisecond tone bursts used to check VU characteristics, though they tended to under-read slightly with shorter tone bursts. Headphone volume was more than adequate with nominal 8-ohm phones, though it was a bit low with 600-ohm models. An input voltage of 54 millivolts was required for a 0-dB meter indication and provided an output of 0.67 volt. Fast-forward and rewind times for a C-60 cassette were a fast 51 seconds in either direction. The ability to erase metal tape, a potential problem, measured 70 dB at 100 Hz, and it was beyond our spectrum analyzer's measurement limits at 1,000 Hz and above.

**Comment.** It was evident after all this that the Nakamichi 582 is one of the finest cassette decks we have tested, and subsequent listening evaluations reinforced that judgment. Using high-quality ferric or chromium-dioxide-type cassettes, we found no audible degradation, in direct A-B comparison, with any FM broadcast and its copy, and we detected only the slightest discernible high-frequency loss when using the most demanding direct-to-disc and master-tape material at our disposal. With the metal tape we could not detect even this loss, though we could detect an inconsequential difference when using “pink-noise” test signals whose record level was slightly above -10 dB on the meters. By no means cheap at $890, the Nakamichi 582 is plainly, however, one of the finest cassette recorders currently available.

**B&W DM2/II**

The British-made B&W DM2/II is a compact, three-way speaker system designed to deliver exceptionally smooth, uncolored sound under normal home-listening conditions. The woofer has an 8-inch-diameter cone, made of Bextrene, whose long-throw suspension allows an excursion of 0.8 inch. It is housed in a vented (ducted-port) enclosure. There is a crossover at 400 Hz to a 4-inch Bextrene-cone midrange driver. The midrange is in an acoustically isolated compartment within the cabinet, and its rear radiation is absorbed by a tapered section filled with wool. The second crossover, at 3,000 Hz, is to a 1-inch soft-dome tweeter. The three drivers are aligned vertically, with the midrange unit at the top and the tweeter between it and the woofer.

The crossover network of the B&W DM2/II is a relatively sophisticated design, using third-order Butterworth filters in all sections. It has a total of nineteen elements. The balance of levels among the three drivers is set by the system and driver design, and there are no user-adjustable controls. A subpanel, set into the rear of the cabinet, contains the connectors and a protective fuse.

The B&W DM2/II system has a nominal 8-ohm impedance and is rated to deliver a 95-dB sound-pressure level (SPL) at 1 meter with a 9-volt input (equivalent to about 10 watts). The frequency response is specified as 50 to 18,000 Hz ±3 dB, and the polar response of the system is rated at ±2 dB over 40 degrees horizontally and ±1 dB over 10 degrees vertically. The DM2/II is recommended for use with amplifiers rated to deliver 25 to 200 watts into 8-ohm loads.

The wooden cabinet (available in walnut, teak, or black-ash finish) is 28 inches high, 10 3/8 inches wide, and 13 inches deep. An optional stand raises the bottom of the cabinet about 7 inches above the floor. The speaker weighs about 48½ pounds; with the stand, its weight is nearly 60 pounds. Price: DM2/II, $425; optional stand, $40.

**Laboratory Measurements.** The integrated frequency response of the B&W DM2/II in the reverberant field of our test room agreed very closely with the individual frequency-response curves enclosed with the speakers. Although the latter were presumably made under anechoic conditions, the small response variations occurred at approximately the same frequencies and with the same amplitudes we measured.

The overall response was impressively smooth, within ±3.5 dB from 40 to 20,000 Hz. There was a slight low-frequency rise (about 1 to 1.5 dB in the 100-Hz region), and we found a small high-frequency emphasis in the uppermost audible octave—at its maximum, +4 dB at about 15,000 Hz. The only other deviation occurred at approximately the same frequencies and with the same amplitudes we measured.

(Continued on page 40)
The Klipsch Cornwall® makes one thing perfectly clear. Sound. Pure and unadulterated. Backed into a corner or up against the wall, the Cornwall comes through loud and clear.

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parture from a straight-line response was a slight down-and-up "jog" of about 2 dB between 1,000 and 2,000 Hz in the operating range of the midrange driver. The bass distortion, measured with constant input levels corresponding to 1 and 10 watts into 8 ohms, was very low down to 50 Hz, where it measured about 1 per cent at 1 watt and less than 3 per cent at 10 watts. It rose fairly rapidly at lower frequencies, setting the effective lower limit of the system response at about 35 to 40 Hz.

The impedance reached a minimum of 5 ohms at 120 Hz, but at most audio frequencies it was at least 8 ohms, with the maximum impedance of about 20 ohms occurring at 50 and 3,300 Hz. The system sensitivity was exactly as rated, with 2.83 volts (1 watt) of random noise in the midrange producing an 85-dB SPL at a 1-meter distance. The tone-burst response was uniformly good, with no sign of extended ringing at any frequency.

- **Comment.** The B&W DM2/II has the smooth and uncolored sound quality that is consistent with its measured performance. The quality was one of naturalism, with none of those spectacular or flashy characteristics that can cause one to sit up and take notice but which prove to be irritating after a time. There was a lack of bass heaviness, and as a result voices were reproduced with a very natural quality. However, there was no lack of bass itself (except in comparison to some very much larger speakers); the DM2/II was able to shake the room in much the same way we expect speakers twice its size to. The stereo imaging, for those who consider this to be a critical part of speaker performance, was excellent. Indeed, with the exception of the very deepest bass in the octave below 40 Hz, we found the DM2/II systems to be a match in every way for the best large speakers we had on hand for testing—all of which were much larger and more expensive than the B&W DM2/II.

**Circle 141 on reader service card**

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**Ortofon Concorde 30 Phono Cartridge**

The appearance of the new Ortofon Concorde 30 phono cartridge immediately explains its unusual name. The slender, downward-sloping shape of this unique cartridge is strongly reminiscent of the nose of the Concorde aircraft. The Concorde 30 is one of a rapidly growing number of cartridges designed to plug directly into the end of a tone arm having the universal four-pin socket with locking ring.

However, its shape and other design details are only incidentally determined by styling considerations. In this case, form follows function. The Concorde 30 and its junior partner, the Concorde 20, are the first of a "new breed" of cartridges that Ortofon calls their LM (low-mass) series. Recently, a considerable amount of long overdue concern has been focused on the problems of tracking warped records (just about every record ever made, that is) with the usual pairing of a high-mass tone arm and a highly compliant stylus. The resonance of such a combination often occurs at frequencies of 8 Hz or less, and these can be excited easily by record warps—causing mistracking of the record.

The problem is being attacked on at least two fronts. A number of record-player manufacturers have been working to reduce arm mass, although the widely used (and undeniably convenient) plug-in shell inevitably places additional weight at the end of the arm, where it contributes most to the effective mass "seen" by the stylus. The few tone arms which have achieved substantially reduced effective mass have invariably employed other means of cartridge mounting.

For a variety of reasons, magnetic cartridges have tended to be rather heavy, and of course their mass is concentrated at a point where it contributes most to lowering the arm/cartridge resonance frequency. Although a few cartridges have been produced which were lower than the average in mass, they frequently had to be weighted so that they could be balanced by the counterweights of available tone arms. The result has been a vicious circle that has been difficult to break.

However, Ortofon has taken a strong step toward breaking it. The LM-series cartridges are miniaturized and intrinsically very light (1.5 grams, compared with the usual 5 to 9 grams for conventional magnetic cartridges). Internally, they are moving iron cartridges, based on the variable-magnetic-shunt (VMS) principle of most other Ortofon cartridges. In the Concorde design, the cartridge is combined with a plug-in fixture (with finger lift) for the universal four-pin bayonet arm fitting. The mass of the complete Concorde cartridge assembly is only 6.5 grams, roughly the mass of either a conventional cartridge or an empty low-mass head shell. A miniature set screw on top of the cartridge can be loosened with a supplied tool, allowing the stylus-overhang dimension to be varied by about 4 millimeters, which encompasses the adjustment range required for practically every tone arm fitted with this type of cartridge mount. An azimuth gauge is also supplied with the cartridge so that its stylus can be oriented to be perpendicular to the record surface, as viewed from the front.

Although the Concorde cartridge will fit any arm having the standard four-pin socket, it cannot be balanced properly in most arms, which were designed for cartridge and headshell combinations weighing more than twice as much as the Concorde. Typically, the counterweight will reach its forward limit of adjustment before the arm reaches balance. To deal with this situation, Ortofon packages a low-mass counterweight with each cartridge (weighing 70 grams compared with the usual 120 to 150 grams).

So that it will fit any tone arm, the center hole of the Ortofon counterweight is made relatively large (9/16 inch diameter), and the weight is fixed in position with a set screw instead of the usual threaded mounting. This may prevent use of the arm's tracking-force scale, normally a part of its counterweight, so a small balance gauge is supplied with the cartridge for making this adjustment.

The Ortofon Concorde 30 is identical to the Concorde 20 in size and appearance, but the two models differ in effective stylus tip mass, compliance, tracking force, and tracking ability as well as price. The more expensive Concorde 30 is available as the LM30 or the LM30H, the latter with a standard mounting for use in other types of tone arms.

The Concorde 30 has a "nude" fine-line diamond stylus shaped for extended linear contact with the groove wall. It tracks at forces from 1.2 to 1.8 grams, with 1.5 grams being the recommended force. Like other Ortofon moving iron cartridges, it should be loaded by a relatively high capacitance of 400 picofarads in parallel with a 47,000-ohm resistance for flattest frequency response. Price: $165.

- **Laboratory Measurements.** We installed the Concorde 30 in the tone arm of a typical moderate-price record player. The arm's (Continued on page 44)
A SPEAKER FOR THOSE WHO FEEL THAT LOUD IS VERY MUCH A PART OF LIVE.

To experience most modern music performed live is to be totally engulfed in sound. Therefore, to re-create such an event, sound must not only be technically accurate, the intensity has to be there as well. And that's where the EPI Model 500, like no speaker before it, comes through loud and clear.

EPI MODEL 500

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Critical to the Model 500's performance is a 10" woofer that offers tremendous power handling capability and a specially designed magnetic circuit that assures linear response and low distortion.

Our specially designed, sealed 4" midrange driver handles the most critical region of the musical spectrum with ease, reproducing clear, well-defined vocal and instrumental passages at all volume levels.

Our 1" air-spring tweeter was chosen because it reproduces high frequencies smoothly and disperses them evenly into the listening room, thereby re-creating a precise, well-defined "stereo image" regardless of listener position.

In addition, the Model 500's Butterworth crossover uses air core inductors and operates at 12 db per octave at 750 cycles between woofer and midrange and 18 db per octave at 3000 cycles between midrange and tweeter.

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Because of the way the woofer and midrange are integrated with our air-spring tweeter, the Model 500 can deliver clean, linear, well-dispersed sound from as little as 15 watts RMS per channel receivers.

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The midrange unit of this remarkable speaker produces smoother sound with better transient response, less distortion and higher power handling... thanks to its large 2.3 magnet structure.

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CIRCLE NO. 29 ON READER SERVICE CARD
In the graph at left, the upper curve represents the smoothed, averaged frequency response of the cartridge's right and left channels; the distance (calibrated in decibels) between it and the lower curve represents the separation between the two channels. The inset oscilloscope photo shows the cartridge's response to a recorded 1,000-Hz square wave (see text), which indicates resonances and overall frequency response. At right is the cartridge's response to the intermodulation-distortion (IM) and 10.8-kHz tone-burst test bands of the TTR-102 and TTR-103 test records. These high velocities provide a severe test of a phono cartridge's performance. The intermodulation-distortion (IM) readings for any given cartridge can vary widely, depending on the particular IM test record used. The actual distortion figure measured is not as important as the maximum velocity the cartridge able to track before a sudden and radical increase in distortion takes place. There are very few commercial phonograph discs that embody musical audio signals with average velocities much higher than about 15 cm/sec.

When we made a second response measurement employing a lower load capacitance (150 picofarads) to judge the effect, there was a slightly depressed output in the range from 3.0 to 12,000 Hz and a 2-dB rise from 18,000 to 20,000 Hz. It was clear that the recommended higher capacitance was necessary for best response from the cartridge. The square-wave response from the CBS STR 112 record showed a single small overshoot.

Channel separation was measured with the previously mentioned records and with an Audio-Technica test record having spot-frequency bands. All the records gave very similar results at high frequencies, with average readings of 23 dB at 15,000 Hz and 18 dB at 20,000 Hz. At 1,000 Hz there was more diversity in the measurements, with the CBS and B&K records giving a midrange separation of 20 to 22 dB and the JVC and A-T records giving 25- and 32-dB readings, respectively.

The output of the Concorde 30, playing a recorded velocity of 3.54 cm/sec at 1,000 Hz, was 3.75 millivolts with a channel imbalance of 0.5 dB. The measured vertical stylus angle was 24 degrees. The tracking distortion was extremely low—intermodulation distortion, measured with the Shure TTR-102 record, was at least as low as we have ever measured with a phono cartridge, increasing linearly from not more than 0.8 per cent below 13 cm/sec to 2.7 per cent at 27 cm/sec. The high-frequency distortion, playing the shaped tone bursts of the Shure TTR-103 record, also increased linearly from a mere 0.7 per cent at 15 cm/sec to 1.2 per cent at 30 cm/sec. Apart from the low measured distortion using both records, we were struck by the fact that the distortion increased very gradually and smoothly, with none of the usual discontinuities or sudden increases that indicate the onset of mistracking.

Tracking tests with 30-cm/sec tones at 1,000 Hz showed slight symmetrical clipping, indicating that the amplitude was beyond the cartridge's linear limits, but high-level 32-Hz tones were tracked cleanly. The German Hi Fi Institute test record was played cleanly up to the 70-micron level (as rated by Ortofon). The subjective tracking tests, using Shure's Audio Obstacle Course records, confirmed the excellent tracking ability of this cartridge. The ERA III record could be played to its maximum levels on every band. The ERA IV record evidenced slight mistracking on level 5 of all the bands except the flute and harp solos, but the mistracking was in every case mild, and we never heard any signs of severe distortion.

Comment. In recent months we have tested a number of new cartridges, from different manufacturers, typically priced about the same as the Concorde 30. Each has been a very fine product, with no disappointing "lemons" among them. Although there were minor differences in their sound qualities, it would be very hard to single out any one as being clearly superior in all areas.

Putting aside for the moment any fine distinctions based on listening quality (which is (Continued on page 46)
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CIRCLE NO. 7 ON READER SERVICE CARD
in any case completely subjective), it is apparent that the Concorde 30 excels technically in more areas of performance than most of its peers. Its tracking ability (at 1.5 grams, which is a reasonable force in view of its stylus shape) is good though not really outstanding. However, the distortion we measured from this cartridge was lower than any we can recall having found in recent years—if ever.

The frequency response of the Concorde 30 was as flat as one could desire, and its channel separation was greater over a wider range of frequencies than that of most other delux cartridges on the market. The mass of the cartridge and its mounting is much lower than that of any other available cartridge. All of these are substantial "pluses" and certainly qualify the Concorde 30 for a high ranking.

We do have some doubts about the wisdom of substituting the Ortofon counterweight, as now constructed, for a tone arm's regular counterweight. Apart from the clumsiness in tracking-force adjustment, any looseness of the weight could contribute to undesirable resonance modes in the arm system. (As we go to press we have been informed by Ortofon that the counterweight has been redesigned to provide a more secure mounting.)

The sound of the Concorde 30 was as good as its measured performance implies. Frankly, we would not be able to make a choice between this cartridge and any of several others at the same or higher prices solely on the basis of sound quality. Considering that the Concorde 30 is one of the least expensive models in that category, this can be taken as a considerable compliment.

Circle 142 on reader service card

Mitsubishi DA-F20 FM Tuner

The Model DA-F20, which heads the Mitsubishi tuner line, is an FM-only unit featuring quartz-locked synthesized tuning, two i.f. amplifiers offering selectable wide or narrow bandwidths, and a digital frequency display as well as a conventional tuning dial.

In designing the DA-F20, Mitsubishi has combined the familiar, easy-to-use analog tuning system with the absolute accuracy and noncritical adjustment of synthesized tuning. Although the tuning "feel" of the unit is exactly like that of any nonsynthesized tuner, its frequency actually jumps in discrete 100-KHz steps instead of varying continuously as the knob is turned. The actual frequency is continuously shown on the 1/2-inch-high red numerals of the frequency readout.

Below the digital display (which is behind a "blackout" window at the left of the panel) is a row of red SIGNAL lights. The LEDs light up in sequence as the signal strength increases, forming a horizontal line proportional to signal level. They are operated by level-comparator circuits that make the readout completely unambiguous, since each LED is either fully on or off, with no intermediate state. To their right are three TUNING lights and a green LOCK indicator flanked by red lights identified by arrows. One or the other of the red lights comes on to show the direction in which the tuning knob should be turned to reach the center of the tuned channel. The green light comes on only when the tuner is set to the exact frequency of the broadcast signal.

To the right of the digital display is a similar window containing a circular tuning dial calibrated over the FM band at 1-MHz intervals. Although it seems redundant, considering the legibility and accuracy of the digital display, Mitsubishi evidently felt that many people would feel more comfortable watching an analog dial as they tune the DA-F20. In addition to the tuning displays and a large tuning knob, the front panel contains only five square pushbuttons for POWER, MODE (auto stereo/mono or mono only), IF BAND (selecting either the wide- or narrow-band i.f. amplifiers), and interstation-noise muting. A REC LEVEL CHECK button, when pressed, replaces the tuner's normal audio outputs with a 440-Hz tone (its amplitude corresponds to that of a 50 per cent modulated FM signal) intended for setting tape-recording levels.

On the rear apron of the tuner are two sets of audio outputs, fixed and variable, with a level-adjustment control for the latter. There are also V and H outputs for use with an oscilloscope multipath-distortion display (the instruction manual describes a simple method of using these outputs for an audible multipath check if no oscilloscope is available). There are inputs for 300- and 75-ohm antennas, with the latter having both binding-post and coaxial terminals.

The DA-F20 has a pale silver-grey front panel and a black metal cabinet. It is equipped with sturdy handles and closely matches the appearance of other Mitsubishi audio components. The tuner measures 16¾ inches wide, 6¾ inches high, and 10¾ inches deep. It weighs 14¼ pounds. Price: $430.

Laboratory Measurements. Since many FM-tuner performance characteristics are functions of i.f. bandwidth, we tested the DA-F20 twice, using both its WIDE and NARROW bandwidth settings.

The sensitivity and signal-to-noise ratio (S/N) were not affected significantly by bandwidth. The IHE usable sensitivity was 13 to 14 dBf (2.4 to 2.7 microvolts, or µV) in mono and 17 dBf (4 µV) in stereo. The 50-dB quieting sensitivity in mono was 14 to 15 dBf (2.7 to 3 µV) and in stereo it was 37 dBf (38 µV). The S/N at a 65-dBf (1,000 µV) input was 73.5 to 74.5 dB in mono and 68 to 70 dB in stereo.

However, measured—if not audible—distortion was greatly affected by the i.f. bandwidth. In the WIDE mode, the mono and stereo readings for total harmonic distortion plus noise were respectively 0.09 and 0.13 per cent in NARROW the readings increased to 0.38 per cent in mono and 0.46 per cent in stereo.

The stereo frequency response was flat within ±0.4 dB from 30 to 8,000 Hz, rising to about +1.8 dB at 15,000 Hz. The rise was apparently due to the low-pass filters used to remove pilot-carrier components from the audio. The filters were quite effective for that purpose, since the 19-KHz leakage was 65 dB below 100 per cent modulation. The stereo channel separation was, to our surprise, affected only slightly by the bandwidth, and only at frequencies below about 300 Hz. In the NARROW mode, the separation was 26 dB at 30 Hz, and it increased to 33.5 dB in WIDE. Through the midrange, the separation was better than 45 dB, and it was no worse than 30 dB at 15,000 Hz.

Other specifications that were affected by i.f. bandwidth include capture ratio, AM rejection, and selectivity. The capture ratio was an excellent 1 dB in WIDE and 2 dB in NARROW. AM rejection was an acceptable 54 to 56 dB (depending on the signal level) in NARROW and an excellent 68 to 70 dB in WIDE. The alternate-channel selectivity was about 42 dB in WIDE and 78 dB in NARROW, and the adjustable bandwidth was 46 MHz.
How Audio History is made.

A lot of speakers claim to be audio breakthroughs. Our new Model 14 really is. In fact, it's so unique, that before we could create it, we first had to invent a whole new family of components.

We began with a new type of horn. The Mantaray™ It's the first “constant directivity” horn ever created. Conventional horns, cones and domes (including so-called omnidirectional and reflective speakers) tend to “beam,” that is, narrow their angle of sound radiation at higher frequencies. This effect causes the stereo image to lose strength off the center axis and to actually wander.

Mantaray, on the other hand, delivers a clearly-defined sound wedge that keeps its strength regardless of the music's changing frequencies. You get the full spectrum of sound and the most solid three-dimensional stereo image you've ever heard. And since the sound doesn't diminish off center axis, the Model 14 enlarges your listening area, your “stereo sweet spot.”

As an extra benefit, Mantaray's precise sound focusing means your music goes in your ears—not in your drapes, walls and ceilings. Consequently, it's more likely than other speakers to sound the same in your home as it does in your dealer's showroom.

Then to give you even higher highs, we developed the first radial phase plug, the Tangerine™ In contrast to conventional phase plugs with two equidistant circular slots that block some frequencies, the Tangerine's tapered slots permit a free flow of high frequencies to beyond 20 KHz.

Equally important to all this is our new Automatic Power Control System. Unlike fuse-type devices or circuit breakers, the system keeps track of the power pumped into the speaker, lets you know with a blinking light when power exceeds safe limits, and then reduces overloads automatically, but without shutting the speaker off. It's quite a system.

In addition, the Model 14 offers you super-efficiency, high-power handling capacity and exceptional dynamic range, plus a new vented enclosure with a 12-inch bass driver for a tighter, crisper low end. So that's how audio history is made. And it's all yours at a price that means the best sound value available for your home today.

For a free brochure and the name of your local dealer, write: Altec Lansing International, 1515 South Manchester Avenue, Anaheim, CA 92803.
Yamaha, the industry

When we set out to improve on our industry-acclaimed receivers, we knew we had a tough task ahead of us. How do you top being the first in such precedent-setting developments as built-in moving coil head amps, negative feedback MPX demodulators, pilot signal cancellation circuits, and the same amazingly low distortion throughout our entire line? After much continuing research, effort and unique care in design, we have the answer. It's called the CR-2040, the first in Yamaha's new line of receivers that does what only Yamaha could do. Outdo ourselves.

Unique continuously variable turnover tone controls. This unique Yamaha innovation gives you the tonal tailoring characteristics of both a parametric and a graphic equalizer. Without the added expense of having to purchase either. For instance, in addition to boosting or cutting the bass control ± 10dB, you can also vary the turnover frequencies between 100 & 500 Hz to compensate for speaker deficiencies, room anomalies, etc., for unparalleled tonal tailoring flexibility.

Built-in moving coil head amp. More and more listeners are discovering the beautiful experience of music reproduced with a moving coil cartridge, such as Yamaha's newly introduced MC-1X and MC-1S. Discover this exquisite pleasure for yourself with the CR-2040's built-in moving coil head amp. This ultra-low noise head amp provides an ultra-quiet 86dB S/N ratio to assure you of capturing all the high-end detail and imaging the MC experience affords. All you'll miss is the extra expense and added noise of an outboard head amp or step-up transformer.

Independent input and record cut selectors. If you're a tape recording enthusiast, this feature is something you won't want to be without. It lets you select the signal from one program source to send to the REC OUT terminals for recording while you listen through your speakers to an entirely different program chosen on the INPUT selector. You can also dub from one tape to another even while listening to an entirely different program. It's another example of why Yamaha is the industry leader. We build in what the others can't even figure out.

Continuously variable loudness contour. This control compensates for the ear's decreased sensitivity to bass and treble tones at low volume levels. And you're not just limited to compensation at only one specific volume setting as with other manufacturers' on/off-type loudness switches. The Yamaha continuously variable loudness contour assures you of full, accurate fidelity at any volume setting you choose. Another Yamaha exclusive!

Automatic operation. Without a doubt, the Yamaha CR-2040 is one of the most automated receivers in audio history. Instead of fiddling with dials and meters, you can sit back and let the automatic circuits do the work. Or, if you choose, manually override the circuits. Take the AUTO-DX circuit, for instance. We developed IF bandwidth switching for our world-acclaimed CT-7000 tuner. Now we've gone even further by improving this circuit so the receiver automatically chooses the correct bandwidth (local or DX) for the least noise. Working with this circuit is the AUTO BLEND circuit which eliminates annoying FM hiss to make previously unlistenable stations more clearly audible. All without your lifting a finger. And Yamaha's exclusive OTS (Optimum Tuning System) automatically locks in and holds the desired station when you release the tuning knob.
**Advanced circuitry.** All these advanced features are backed by the most advanced internal circuitry imaginable. Like the auto tracking pilot signal canceller. Yamaha invented pilot signal cancellation and now we've improved it further. A special circuit not only senses the incoming 19kHz pilot signal (which is a part of FM broadcasts), it also automatically tracks any signal fluctuation which might occur. This assures you of complete pilot signal cancellation for interference-free FM listening. Yamaha does it again!

The all DC power amp section pours out a massive 120 watts per channel, both channels driven into 8 ohms, from 20Hz to 20kHz, with THD and I.M an astronomically low 0.02%. That's a new low, even for Yamaha. And to keep tabs on all this pure power there's a twin LED power-monitoring system—green to indicate half power, red to indicate an overload condition.

The tuner section has a Yamaha-exclusive Direct Current-Negative Feedback—PLL MPX IC providing excellent phasing of the high frequencies for superb stereo separation and clearer sound. Our efforts to bring you the finest sound possible know no limits.

**Human engineering.** As incredibly advanced and complex as the CR-2040 is, it is incredibly simple to operate. The front panel is arranged in a clean and logical manner with the larger primary operational controls located on the central forward panel, and the smaller tone-tailoring controls located on the lower panel. It takes a minimum of effort to set up the CR-2040 for maximum listening pleasure.

The functionally beautiful front panel is complemented by the beautifully functional ebony grain veneer cabinet. The elegant appearance of ebony is the perfect finishing touch to the extraordinary CR-2040.

And the CR-2040 is just one of a whole new line of receivers from Yamaha. Each one offers, in its class, the ultimate in features, performance and pure musical pleasure. Visit your local Yamaha Audio Specialty Dealer and see and hear for yourself how we've outdone ourselves. He's listed in the Yellow Pages. Or write us: Yamaha, Audio Division, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622.

From Yamaha, naturally.
cent-channel selectivity improved from 5.5 to 12.6 dB when the bandwidth was narrowed. In use, we always found the wide mode perfectly satisfactory for interference-free reception. The image rejection, which was independent of bandwidth, was a good 86 dB.

The muting threshold was 15.5 dBf (3.2 µV), and the automatic stereo-switching threshold was 14.8 dBf (3.5 µV). The threshold of operation for the tuning-lock system was 16 dBf (3.5 µV). Although signals below that level did not turn on the LOCK light, the tuner and its frequency display functioned properly on signals of any level. The muting, which took place with an almost imperceptible time lag, was completely noise-free yet positive (it is apparently accomplished with reed relays). The tuner hum level measured ~76 to ~77 dB, which is about as low as we have ever measured and quite possibly the residual level of our signal generator.

The REC LEVEL CHECK tone (a somewhat distorted 440-Hz waveform) had a level corresponding to 45 per cent modulation. This was distorted 440-Hz waveform) had a level corresponding to 45 per cent modulation. This was distorted 440-Hz waveform) had a level corresponding to 45 per cent modulation. This was distorted 440-Hz waveform) had a level corresponding to 45 per cent modulation. This was distorted 440-Hz waveform) had a level corresponding to 45 per cent modulation. This was distorted 440-Hz waveform) had a level corresponding to 45 per cent modulation. This was distorted 440-Hz waveform) had a level corresponding to 45 per cent modulation. This was distorted 440-Hz waveform) had a level corresponding to 45 per cent modulation. This was distorted 440-Hz waveform) had a level corresponding to 45 per cent modulation. This was distorted 440-Hz waveform) had a level corresponding to 45 per cent modulation. 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This was distorted 440-Hz waveform) had a level corresponding to 45 per cent modular distortion.

Since the tuning jumps in discrete steps, one is never faced with the problem of a flickering or changing last digit on the display (which can happen when the readout is a frequency-synthesizing digital tuner). If the wide bandwidth is used, it is possible to detune the tuner by one step (100 kHz) without any audible degradation of the program if the signal is fairly strong. This attests to the bandwidth and linearity of the discriminator, but of course one will normally tune to keep the green LOCK light on so as to enjoy the fullest measure of the tuner's performance.

The DA-F20 is "different" in many ways, both internally and externally, from most of the FM tuners on the market. This distinctive quality has not been obtained at the sacrifice of any utility or performance quality (quite the contrary), nor has the cost of the unit been significantly affected. Although it is not cheap, its performance is commensurate with the cost, and in many respects it can hold its own against some of the most expensive "state of the art" FM tuners. It is not only handsome and tastefully styled but is one of the least "fussy" FM tuners we have used. We can recommend it without reservation.

Circle 143 on reader service card

Onkyo A-7070 Integrated Amplifier

Onkyo's new Model A-7070 is an integrated stereo amplifier rated to deliver 70 watts per channel into 8-ohm loads from 20 to 20,000 Hz with no more than 0.02 per cent total harmonic or intermodulation distortion. As in many recent amplifiers, the power-amplifier section of the A-7070 is direct-coupled throughout (and isolated from the preamplifier by a capacitor). Negative feedback from the outputs is applied conventionally to the power-amplifier inputs through resistors, which establish the overall gain of the power-amplifier section.

In the A-7070 there is also a second, parallel feedback path through separate low-frequency and inverting amplifiers (both using ICs). The passband of this auxiliary circuit (referred to by Onkyo as "Super Servo") is limited to frequencies below about 3 Hz and extends to d.c. Its effect is to roll off the frequency response of the amplifier below about 1 Hz, simultaneously reducing infrasonic intermodulation distortion and helping to maintain the amplifier's low source impedance at infrasonic frequencies. The effect of the Super Servo circuit cannot be readily measured by tests in the audio range, but data supplied by Onkyo indicate that it radically reduces intermodulation distortion in the frequency range from about 0.1 to 1 Hz. The company claims that this technique also gives improved amplifier stability (Continued on page 52)
Right to the finish, its Canadian spirit stands out from the ordinary. What keeps the flavor coming? Super lightness. Superb taste. If that's where you'd like to head, set your course for Lord Calvert Canadian.

The unique spirit of Canada: We bottled it.
at very low frequencies (presumably when compared with a conventional d.c.-coupled amplifier whose infrasonic response is rolled off by filters not included within the negative feedback loop).

Externally, the A-7070 is compact and handsomely styled. At the right of its silver-colored front panel is a large volume control that is detented at forty-one positions and surrounded by a concentric balance ring. Across the top of the panel is a horizontal array of green LEDs, resembling the dial scale of a tuner, that indicates the instantaneous power output from each channel, based on 8-ohm loads. A red LED in the center of the display serves as a pilot light, and the green LEDs (shaped like short bars) light up at power levels corresponding to outputs of 0.6, 1.8, 6, 12, 23, 45, and 70 watts. There is also a "140-watt" red LED, but since the amplifier cannot deliver that much power, it glows when the outputs are severely clipped or when the protective circuits have been activated. A pushbutton near the display increases its sensitivity by ten times, making it usable at the more usual low listening levels.

Below the power indicators are the bass and treble tone controls, each having eleven detented settings. Between them are two pushbuttons that bypass the tone-control circuits in their "out" positions. Other knobs along the lower part of the panel switch two pairs of loudspeakers and select the input source (PHONO 1, PHONO 2, TUNER, and AUX). A monitor knob controls the operation of two tape decks; it channels either the selected source program or the playback output from either tape deck to the amplifier’s circuits and can cross-connect the two tape decks for dubbing from one to the other.

Pushbuttons across the upper part of the control panel control power, low and high filters, stereo/mono mode, loudness, and muting (a 20 dB volume reduction). On the rear apron of the A-7070 there are insulated binding posts for the speaker outputs and three a.c. outlets (one switched) in addition to the signal connectors. The Onkyo A-7070 is 16% inches wide, 5 inches high, and 15% inches deep. It weighs about 23 pounds. Price: $429.95.

Laboratory Measurements. Preconditioning of the A-7070 by operating both channels at 23 watts per channel into 8-ohm loads for one hour, followed by five minutes at the full 70 watts, left its top only moderately warm and the remainder of the exterior entirely cool to the touch. With a 1,000-Hz test signal, the outputs clipped at 85 watts per channel into 8 ohms, 111 watts into 4 ohms, and 65 watts into 16 ohms. The HF clipping-headroom rating was 0.84 dB. The HF dynamic headroom (8-ohm) was 1.42 dB, corresponding to a 97-watt short-term output.

The distortion of the A-7070 was extremely low. At 1,000 Hz, it was between 0.002 and 0.004 per cent from 0.1 to more than 50 watts output, reaching 0.01 per cent at 80 watts. The intermodulation distortion was about 0.01 per cent at most power levels, varying from 0.007 to 0.02 per cent over the power range of 0.1 to 80 watts. The distortion did not change markedly over the full audio-frequency and power range. At the rated 70 watts output it was about 0.003 per cent at most frequencies and was less than 0.005 per cent from 20 to 7,000 Hz. The distortion rose slightly at higher frequencies, to 0.015 per cent at 20,000 Hz. The distortion was similarly low at half and one-tenth power.

The A-7070 required a high-level (Aux) input of 18 millivolts (mV) or a Phono input of 0.26 mV for a reference output of 1 watt. The respective A-weighted signal-to-noise (S/N) measurements, referred to 1 watt, were 81.4 and 77.2 dB, both excellent figures. The phono inputs overloaded at a fine 220 mV or higher over the full 20- to 20,000-Hz range (referring all measurements to the 1,000-Hz gain level). The measured input impedance of the phono preamplifier was 50,000 ohms in parallel with 50 picofarads.

The tone-control curves were typical of the Baxandall type, with the bass turnover frequency shifting from about 100 to 400 Hz as the control was varied and the treble-response curves hinged at 2,000 Hz. The loudness compensation boosted both low and high frequencies moderately. The filters both had desirable 12-dB-per-octave slopes, with the -3-dB response frequencies being at 60 and 6,000 Hz. The RIAA phono equalization was ruler-flat (less than ±0.25 dB variation) from 30 to 20,000 Hz and down 1.2 dB at 20 Hz. The response was affected by less than 0.7 dB at frequencies in the 10,000- to 20,000-Hz range when measured through the inductance of typical phono cartridges.

The accuracy of the power indicators was checked at 1,000 Hz. Except for the lowest reading (in the milliwatt range), the error was less than 1 dB, which is perfectly adequate for their purpose. The LEDs responded rapidly to program peaks. Severe overdriving or short-circuited outputs caused the protection circuit to trip, disconnecting the speaker outputs and leaving all the power-indicator lights on until the amplifier was turned off and re-started. Normal overloads occasionally tripped the protection circuits, but they reset themselves automatically a few seconds after the overload had passed.

Comment. There were no unexpected or unwanted surprises in the operation of the A-7070. Switching transients of any kind were completely absent, the turn-on delay blocked...
You're looking at three small sonic wonders that prove components no longer have to be big and bulky to sound big and beautiful. The Micro Series by Technics.

Take our power amp, the SE-C01. It has a high-speed switching power supply with filter capacitors that recharge 40,000 times a second instead of the usual 120. That's just one reason for the SE-C01's low distortion and clean, tight bass response. Direct coupling is another. With it, bass response goes all the way down to DC (0 Hz).

With an amplifier like this, you want power meters that measure up to it. SE LED's provide true peak-power indication with extremely fast attack time.

Another big surprise is the SU-C01 preamp. It's one preamp but it works like two. Because it has a built-in preamp for moving coil cartridges. It also has gold-plated connections to maximize signal transfer.

To add the finishing touch, there's the ST-C01 tuner. It gives you great FM specs and great FM sound. And that's a big achievement considering its small size.

It's also a breeze to tune. Instead of conventional separate tuning meters, the center-of-channel indicator is on the tuning dial, where it's easy to see. Two LED arrows point you in the right direction for fine tuning.

Experience the Micro Series. Once you do, you'll agree. The big thing about them is definitely not their small size.

With performance this big, the last thing you expect is components this small. The Micro Series by Technics.

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<tr>
<th>SE-C01</th>
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<th>ST-C01</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Continuous power per channel into 8 ohms, 20 Hz - 20 kHz</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total Harmonic Distortion</strong></td>
<td><strong>Signal to Noise Ratio</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>40 watts</td>
<td>C0.2%</td>
<td>110 dB</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Total Harmonic Distortion</strong></th>
<th><strong>Phono Signal to Noise Ratio</strong></th>
<th><strong>Frequency Response</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>C0.05% (phono)</td>
<td>70 dB (MM, 0.5 mV)</td>
<td>3 Hz - 30 kHz</td>
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<td>0.00% (aux)</td>
<td>78 dB (MC, 250 μV)</td>
<td>3 Hz - 100 kHz</td>
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<th><strong>FM Sensitivity</strong></th>
<th><strong>FM Selectivity</strong></th>
<th><strong>Stereo Separation (1 kHz/10 kHz)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Total Harmonic Distortion (stereo)</strong></th>
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<td>38.3 dB</td>
<td>75 dB</td>
<td>45/35 dB</td>
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McIntosh C 32

“More Than a Preamplifier”

THE generalists in music have never had an easy time of it. Friedrich Gulda’s jazz was rarely taken seriously by most listeners, particularly in this country, and while André Previn’s perhaps was, his pop-jazz career added years to the probationary period before he was fully accepted as a “serious” conductor. Leonard Bernstein is forever besieged with criticisms that suggest he spend all his time writing symphonies, or all his time writing shows—or all his time conducting, or playing the piano.

It is a bit of a shock to discover, then, that just across the Atlantic that seemingly most reconductive of performing organizations, a madrigal group—an all-male madrigal group with countertenors, yet—is enjoying the eleventh year of a career that has spanned the repertoire from Thomas Tallis’ Lamentations of Jeremiah to Lennon and McCartney’s She’s Leaving Home, from Krzysztof Penderecki’s Ecloga VIII to G. & I. Gershwin’s The Half of-It-Dearie Blues. The group is called the King’s Singers, and if they are known at all to the American record-buying public it is through a single Angel record (S-37025) of straightforward madrigal repertoire that quietly won a couple of awards and gave no indication of the repertorial avalanche behind it.

The King’s Singers will be invading the United States in person(s) this fall, however, and in advance of their landing the Moss Music Group (Vox/Turnabout/Candide) has dropped a dozen of their EMI (EMI/ Columbia/His Master’s Voice) records onto the American market. Some of these will bear Vox/Turnabout numbers, some their original British garb, and not all of them will be available everywhere (the situation is a bit confused), but there is something for almost everyone, all of it well worth the hearing.

Those who have not heard that single Angel record or any of the British releases should know first off that the King’s Singers are a crack madrigal group, in the tradition of the fabled English Singers and the London Madrigal Group, and probably the best such organization around today. Their collection of English and Italian madrigals (with Banchieri’s Contrappusso Bestiale), their “French Collection” (which includes not only such expected delights as Jannequin’s La Guerre and Passepau’s Il Est Bel et Bon, but the vocal original of Arbeau’s Pavane, familiar to many from its arrangement in Peter Warlock’s Capriol Suite, and all of Poulenc’s music for male-voice ensemble), their “Continental Collection” (German and Spanish part songs), and their “Concert Collection” (Turkish songs, Renaissance motets, French chansons, Greg part songs, etc.) all demonstrate flair and style and solid musicianship.

A step away from madrigals in one direction brings us to a charming record of fifteen German “folk songs” (including works by Schubert, Hasler, Siche, and Bach), and a step in the other direction finds the “Contemporary Collection” (works by Penderecki, Peter Dickinson, Richard Rodney Bennett, and Paul Patterson, plus Malcolm Williamson’s delightful Musicians of Bremen) and Volume I of the Singers’ Tenth Anniversary Concert, which presents Renaissance madrigals, Poulenc hymns, and a contemporary work on Zulu (!) themes, all in live performance.

But it is Volume II drawn from that concert that introduces the truly unexpected—In the Mood, You’re Getting to Be a Habit with Me, Dayton Ohio, 1903, Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da— together with some folk songs, a barbershop ballad, and some other novelties. From there it is no step at all to such complete pop collections as “Out of the Blue” (Girl Talk, Half-of-It-Dearie Blues, Here’s That Rainy Day, and a couple of folk songs as ringers), “The King’s Singers Swing” (It Don’t Mean a Thing if . . .), and “The King’s Singers Collection” (I Love You Samantha, She’s Leaving Home, Ask Yourself Why, etc.).

What does a madrigal group sound like singing pop? Truthfully, it sounds very much like the Hi-Los—if you remember them. The King’s Singers may not have quite the same harmonic adventurousness (nor would anyone mistake them for the Beatles in that repertoire), but there is music-making of real quality going on virtually all the time. One last disc to mention: Flanders and Swann songs on one side, Noel Coward songs on the other. There is more bite in the originals, but it’s a sweet record all the same. The point is that the King’s Singers seem to be able to cross all repertoire lines with courage and skill. The question is, are we, in the fragmented states of America, ready for this?
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JINGLES ALL THE WAY

Whether your favorite music be rock or jazz, Beethoven symphonies or Yugoslavian folk songs, there's another kind of music you probably hear just as often: the commercial jingles on radio and television. You may consider them aural fluff, sonic air pollution, or a form of pop art, but there's no denying that these damnable hummable tunes root themselves as firmly in the brain as dandelions in the lawn.

The first singing commercial was probably General Mills' Have You Tried Wheaties? in 1929, but Walter Mack is generally credited with popularizing the form as we now know it in 1938. When Mack became president of Pepsi-Cola that year, radio was America's primary entertainment medium. The 'Andy Andy show was hot, but its long, hard-sell, all-talk Pepsi commercials left the public cold. Mack thought short, entertaining ads would get better results. When two songwriters hit on the same idea and walked into his office with 'Pepsi-Cola hits the spot/Twelve full ounces, that's a lot' sung to the tune of an English nursery rhyme, Mack devised a campaign of thirty- and sixty-second spots, and advertising history was made.

Singing commercials have even greater impact today than when they were first conceived because the eighteen- to thirty-four-year-old consumers who form the current prime market have grown up all but saturated with popularizing the form as we now know it. Woloshin did. Manilow merely sang it, but his version in his famous medley of Motown and BC records out and Touch Someone (AT&T), and the MacDonald's jingle. Kevin Gavin and Sid were in demand ever since.

The cost of presenting a commercial on national television is about $1,000 a second, and since so much money is at stake, advertisers seeking sure-fire jingles for their products stick with writers of past hits. Besides Lucas and McFaul, they frequently tap Steve Kar

Although the financial rewards for success as a jingle supplier are enticing and the actual creation of thirty seconds of catchy music may look easy enough, Lucas and McFaul warn beginners that the competition in this tight market is stiff and appearances are deceiving. Weeks of work go into those brief thirty seconds—finding the all-important hook (the catch phrase or hummable melody that lies at the heart of a good jingle), selling the idea, and setting up and producing the recording session. And they advise persistence if you want to get into this field and succeed. Assuming that you've got the musical ability, they suggest you get into the music business in any way you can and ply jingle houses, such as Susan Hamilton's, with your work. Ginny Redington was a session singer when she came up with You, You're the One, and she's been in demand ever since.

Who knows? With a little luck you may parlay your knowledge of Yugoslavian folk songs into the toilet-cleanser tune that will bowl over the executives on Madison Avenue. You just might be the one.

CIRCLE NO. 21 ON READER SERVICE CARD
Why have millions of Americans bought Sanyo car stereo?

Just listen.
nineteen minispeakers

Stereo Review's three technical editors (plus two invited panelists) practice what they preach, demonstrating that it is possible to choose speakers by means of listening tests

By Gary Stock
As artist Louis Comfort Tiffany no doubt would testify, small, gleaming objects of great delicacy and precision fascinate most people. It may be that they represent the observable limits of human manual skill, or that they appear as tiny islands of perfect, multifaceted order in a chaotic world. Whatever the reason, the fascination is timeless: our museums are filled with the jeweled Easter eggs, the miniature statuary, the music boxes, salt cellars, and ship models of earlier eras, and they continue to enchant.

This fascination has come to extend, in the twentieth century, to small devices having more practical purposes—cameras, watches, pocket recorders, and, recently, two categories of audio components: cigarbox-size electronic units (the “minicomponents” of STEREO REVIEW’s April 1979 cover story) and very small bookshelf loudspeakers. It is not yet clear whether American buyers are going to be sufficiently intrigued by miniature preamplifiers and tuners to make such technological “jewelry” the darlings of the market, but in the four or five years that very small loudspeaker systems have been available, they have enjoyed an extraordinary growth in popularity.

Small loudspeakers with good sonic performance have been available in Europe for more than a decade. Older audiophiles may remember the English Goodmans Maxim and the superbly finished blond Braun speakers as early examples of the genre. But the typical American buyer resisted, until quite recently, the very idea of the small loudspeaker in favor of the classic American bookshelf system, with its volume of 1 to 3 cubic feet, its emphasis on bass performance, and its ability to play at high power levels.

It has remained for larger changes in the style of American life to begin breaking down this bias. Oil shortages and the resulting lower national speed limit, some observers believe, have helped touch off a boom in automotive high fidelity. This in turn led to the first large-scale introductions of miniature loudspeakers to the United States—as automotive loudspeakers. In addition, a less “rooted” style of life, coupled with a growing number of apartment dwellers and the ever-shrinking size of the average apartment, has been instrumental in focusing interest on small speakers. And, too, an increasing number of female buyers of audio equipment, astutely less concerned, perhaps, with size for its own sake, see the small speaker as a rational solution to the problem of filling a moderate-size room with music.

Clearly, though, one major reason for the minispeaker’s popularity is simply its versatility. Small speakers find uses as primary speakers in automobiles, vans, and boats, as remote speakers in offices, bedrooms, and garages, in the tiniest of dormitory rooms and studio apartments, in vacation homes, as rear-channel speakers in four-channel and time-delay systems, and even as the “satellite” speakers in some esoteric systems (see box below). Within the constraints imposed by their power-handling capabilities and bass response, they permit high-performance audio to be placed in virtually any enclosed space.

STEREO REVIEW’s decision to undertake a comprehensive review of these smaller loudspeakers was prompted by a number of reasons, chief among them being the popularity and utility of this type of component and the dearth of criticism and comment on them available. We...

Facing page: Messrs. Stock, Klein, and Hodges
minispeakers...

were also curious about the level of performance that could be packed into such small enclosures. And finally, only one of the members of the listening panel had had extensive experience with very small speakers, and a large-scale comparative listening program would offer us all the opportunity to walk in the shoes of the prospective speaker buyer, to evaluate a variety of competing products of the same type through listening evaluation rather than laboratory testing and measurement. (A number of the listening-panel members were prospective buyers literally, in that they were planning to purchase small speakers for remote or rear-channel use.) Given the fact that the performance of these minis was likely to be less than the state of the art for larger speakers, and that the departures even from that somewhat elastic standard would be in different directions, taste obviously would be a significant factor in the judging.

In the first stages of our preparations for the tests, it became apparent that some decision as to what, for our purposes, constituted a “small” speaker would be necessary. Preliminary checking had turned up hundreds of products described as “bookshelf” or “compact” speakers. We eliminated many of them by pegging the longest dimension of the units to be tested at 12 inches, basing that figure on the maximum spacing one would encounter in most shelf systems. We also imposed a price limit of $150 per speaker to preclude pointless head-to-head comparisons of products having widely disparate prices. (This eliminated a number of the fairly expensive English-oriented “location monitor” speakers, such as those made by Chartwell and Spendor, but it is our feeling that these specialty products fall into a fundamentally different category.)

Listening sessions were conducted over a period of about two weeks in Stereo Review’s own listening room, whose proportions and acoustical damping yield good frequency-balance and reverberation characteristics. A loudspeaker switching system with line-level attenuation (to prevent any reduction in damping factor caused by L or T pads) had been built for the room and was used throughout the tests. The switching system permitted instantaneous switching between several pairs of loudspeakers. Each pair of speakers was adjusted by means of the switching system for an acoustic output level approximately equal to the others (as determined with the aid of an Ivie pink-noise generator and real-time analyzer) before critical listening began.

The first sessions brought out not only the expected comments and criticism of individual models under test, but also some observations on the test group as a whole. The comment most consistently heard alluded to the generally high level of sonic performance of the small speakers. They were, to put it simply, much more musical and sonically detailed than many of the panel members had

THE LISTENING PANEL
Backgrounds and Listening Styles

- Larry Klein, Stereo Review’s Technical Director, has been involved in speaker-evaluation sessions (frequently with designers) for over twenty years. He favors frequent, rapid-fire switching among several speakers rather than prolonged listening to any one pair. His reactions to and analyses of individual units are derived quickly, possibly because for many years he has done such comparisons with a switching system built into his home setup. His preferred program material for critical listening is in the popular vein, Joni Mitchell’s Miles of Aisles (Asylum AB-202) being frequently used in his evaluations. His usual listening level is a moderate one, around 90 dB.

- Ralph Hodges, Technical Editor and also a veteran of countless “speaker battles,” prefers longer listening periods with less frequent switching, and he counts heavily on the realistic depiction of acoustic space as an indicator of speaker quality. His program material for speaker evaluation runs primarily toward selected classical recordings made with simple, straightforward microphone arrays. His power-handling and dynamic-range testing were conducted using the formidable deep-bass passages of “Organ Music from Westminster” (Ark 10251-S). Listening levels during his power-handling evaluations were higher than for some of the other participants, several replacement fuses being required.

- Gary Stock, Assistant Technical Editor, used conventionally recorded discs from his own collection for the tests, with a combination of frequent and longer-term A-B switching techniques. His listening levels, like those of Bob Ajaye and Larry Klein, tended to be moderate. Particular favorites during the testing included an English recording of Scheherazade (EMI SXL 30253), with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Thomas Beecham, and the Judy Collins album “Living” (Elektra EKS-75014).

- Bob Ajaye is a video and motion-picture sound technician who has been a participant in previous Stereo Review listening tests. His ears tend toward the analytical, having been honed by his work in the early Seventies as the final test and adjustment technician for a high-end speaker manufacturer. His listening procedures were oriented toward picking out the specific strong points and faults of a speaker. Among the dozen or so discs used during his listening were a direct-to-disc Japanese RCA recording of Vivaldi’s Four Seasons (RCA RDCE-501-2) and the Leontyne Price Tosca (RCA LDS 7022). His listening levels were quite moderate, dictated by his judgment of what actual concert-hall levels would have been, and he prefers to listen in complete darkness.

- Arnis Balgalvis, a data communications consultant, has participated in past Stereo Review articles on both disc and component quality (see the July 1978 “Direct-to-Disc Records”). He also used records from his personal collection for the sessions. He favors moderate levels, infrequent switching, and frequent changes of program material as a means of checking out different characteristics. He believes that undistorted recordings of the human voice are most effective in revealing loudspeaker colorations and other faults.
expected. Almost all of us live with large, technically complex speaker systems, and one initial fear had been that the small speakers would be so far removed in sonic quality from our home units that we would be put off by their audible inadequacies. This concern was quickly dispelled. For example, Arnis Balgalvis (who owns an exotic full-range electrostatic system) noted in the margin of his comments sheet that he was “astounded by the quality and loudness of the minis as a group”; other panelists agreed.

Another salient, though less surprising, characteristic of the small speakers was their rather modest efficiency. In accord with a natural law of speaker design, many of the designers have evidently traded efficiency for reasonable bass performance from small-enclosure volumes. Consequently, most of the speakers were no more efficient than conventional, medium-size acoustic-suspension systems (which generally have an 85- to 88-dB output level, measured at a 1-meter distance, for a 1-watt white-noise input). Therefore, in a typical 2,500-cubic-foot living room, most of these speakers will require an amplifier with fair output power—certainly no less than 30 watts per channel—in order to achieve reasonable sound levels without noticeable amplifier clipping. This is not quite so serious a problem as it might appear, because the most common applications for small speakers place them in rooms of moderate size, thus reducing (frequently by 50 per cent or more) the power needed to drive them properly.

Each of the reviews that follows includes an initial description of the speaker’s physical features and technical characteristics, followed by what might be called a consensus view of the speaker’s sonic qualities based on the conclusions of the participants. There is also a section for Remarks, made up of some of the more interesting quotations culled from panelists’ notes, and one for Ratings, giving letter grades for the speaker’s performance in the areas of bass extension, power-handling and dynamic-range capability (encompassing not only the ability of the speaker to reproduce high-level passages without breakdown, but also the capacity to do so without high distortion—generally, the point at which a speaker begins to exhibit high distortion is just short of the point at which it will destroy itself), and general listening quality.

When reading over the reviewers’ remarks, bear in mind that we have, in most cases, applied the same rigorous standards we use for larger speakers to these evaluations. Although the comments may therefore seem a bit blunt or even severe in some cases, they reflect our intention to use the comparative-listening approach as a means of providing the most incisive, valuable analysis.

One final note: not every speaker meeting our preliminary criteria was tested. There were simply too many to be thoroughly and fairly evaluated in a reasonable length of time, and we were therefore forced to limit the survey to nineteen units that we felt were both widely available and represented a cross section of the present small-speaker market. The speakers range from those roughly the size of a small loaf of bread, which we have termed “2-liter” (that being their approximate internal volume), to units about as big as a good-sized shoebox, which we call “6-liter.” In many cases, manufacturers of one of the larger (shoebox) speakers tested also make smaller (breadloaf) units that, in our experience, usually have similar sonic characteristics.
minispeakers...

put measured at 1 meter, and the panel’s comments are in line with this rating. Power handling and dynamic range were also about average for the group. Aside from an absence of deep bass, the MTS 1 earned high marks from the panel, particularly with respect to its imaging properties and degree of definition. At very high levels it acquired a somewhat strained character, and several reviewers mentioned a very slightly recessed upper mid-range. On balance, it distinguished itself as one of the best of the 2-liter speakers, capable of reproducing complex musical selections with excellent detail and accurate instrument placement.

Remarks: “Solo voices and choruses natural sounding but a bit distant...lacking the bass authority to be more convincing...use of bass tone control would help.” “Pink noise sounds very smooth...open, and pleasant.” “Good, decently balanced job.” “Quite alive, perhaps slightly bright...good localization.”

Ratings: bass extension, C; power handling, C+; general listening quality, B+.

Audioanalyst M2: Like its larger brethren in the Audioanalyst line, the M2 has the front-baffle area around its 1-inch fabric-dome treble driver covered with a grid made of sandwiched layers of plastic sheet and foam. This grid is said to absorb energy from the tweeter that would otherwise be reflected from the baffle and cause coloration. The M2 has a wooden enclosure, finished in a dark walnut veneer, and a grille of knit fabric. It is a two-way system, with a 5-inch bass driver that appears to have been specially treated on its cone surface. The inputs to the speaker are recessed, color-coded press terminals. Above them in the rear...

ACS 300: The ADS 300 was among the larger of the units tested, with an internal volume in the 6-liter range. Its sealed enclosure houses a 5-inch bass driver and a 1-inch fabric-dome treble unit. The metal enclosure is available with either a matte-black or a brushed-silver finish with a matching perforated-metal grille. Rather small recessed input terminals and four arrowhead-shaped cutouts are found on the rear panel, which is made of an acoustically inert nonmetallic material. The cutouts can be hooked over nail or screw heads for wall mounting. Price: $145.

The efficiency of the ADS 300 was considerably above average, as might be expected with the larger internal cabinet volume. Power handling of the system was slightly better than in most of the speakers tested, though not superior to that of some of the other larger units in the survey. The test group’s opinion of the ADS 300 was a very positive one, with numerous references to its bass extension, efficiency, and smoothness. One reviewer thought it, overall, the best speaker tested. The speaker’s bass performance was influenced to some slight extent, however, by a mid-to-upper-bass emphasis which added a bit of “chestiness” to voices and some “oomph” to orchestral selections. This frequency balance was overly warm in the view of some of the panelists, but others felt that it added a welcome solidity and foundation that they found lacking in many of the smaller speakers.

Remarks: “Low end goes quite low.” “Slight bass peak...a colored sound, a la cupped hands.” “Resonance in the upper bass...power handling a bit above average.” “Excellent bass extension, quite efficient...but perhaps a bit of mid-bass warmth on male voice.”

Ratings: bass extension, B; power handling, B; general listening quality, A.

Akai SW-7: The SW-7 is of medium dimensions, with a cabinet volume of about 4 liters. Its wooden enclosure is finished in a satin black, with silver and white front-panel accents. The speaker uses a 5-inch bass driver and a 2-inch conical-horn treble driver. The drivers are protected by two round, dome-shaped perforated metal covers rather than by a conventional grille frame. The input terminals are of the press-and-insert type and are recessed; this, in combination with the mounting bracket on the rear panel, permits wall mounting. Price: $80.

The SW-7 is a relatively efficient speaker. Akai’s efficiency rating of 92 dB for a 1-watt input agreed with the panel’s listening judgment of its sensitivity. The panel found the speaker’s power-handling capability somewhat better than average. The reviewers also found the Akai SW-7 to have a rather projected, “honky” coloration and to be lacking deep bass, its designers apparently having chosen efficiency and power handling over flat response. The speaker may therefore appeal to the devotee of highly processed electronic music, though the panel found it less than appealing on most other forms of music.


Ratings: bass extension, D; power handling, C; general listening quality, D.
The reviewers found the M2 to be an open-sounding loudspeaker with a smooth frequency balance and better-than-average efficiency. Its dynamic range was limited to some extent by the value of the fuse included with it; high-level listening blew the fuses on one occasion. In general, the panel liked it, citing its high-end clarity, convincing stereo imaging, and natural, uncolored bass reproduction.

Remarks: "The bass is very good, as is solo male voice texture of chorus is muffled." "Smooth good imaging . . . upper midrange is shrill." "Needs more high-frequency energy, but otherwise inoffensive fairly efficient . . . power handling limited by fuse selection." "Open, good clarity on percussion a little warm quite respectable."

Ratings: bass extension, B; power handling, C+; general listening quality, B.

Bang & Olufs en C-40: Bang & Olufs en products are noted for their unusual styling and technical design, and the C-40 is no exception. Instead of an acoustic-suspension or even a passive-radiator-equipped system approach, the C-40's 4-inch bass driver is loaded by a "log-line" similar to the folded transmission lines used in some large, floor-standing systems. The log-line in the C-40 consists of a folded path within the cabinet (which is filled with a fibrous damping material), terminating in a series of vertical slots on the rear panel. As with a transmission line, one purpose of this arrangement is to absorb energy from the rear of the cone that might otherwise be reflected back through it, causing coloration. The speaker's treble driver is a 1-inch fabric dome mounted in a recess on the front baffle. The enclosure of the C-40 is a heavy aluminum assembly available in either brushed-silver or black finish with a black fabric grille. The input connector is a two-pin DIN connector deeply recessed into the rear panel. Bare-wire connections cannot be made to the C-40; rather, the manufacturer supplies a cable fitted with the matching DIN connector. Price: $145.

The panel concluded that the sonic performance of the Bang & Olufs en speaker was not as impressive as might have been expected from a speaker of such sophisticated design. By comparison with the other speakers of the test group, it was rather inefficient, and its power-handling capacity was also below that of many other speakers tested. All of the panelists made note of a midrange coloration that was readily audible on reproduced voices. Although the speaker's deep-bass performance was cleaner than that of many other units tested, the midrange coloration and the general lack of openness and imaging capability contributed to the lukewarm reaction to the C-40 on the part of the five panelists.

Remarks: "Upper midrange a bit nasal . . . mid-bass prominent." "Colored, especially on applause typical 'cupped-hands' sound early overload." "Power handling poor hokey, and inefficient to boot."

Ratings: bass extension, B; power handling, C-; general listening quality, D.

Braun L-200: Another of the larger, 6-liter-volume speakers in our test, the Braun L-200 has a 51/4-inch bass driver and a 3-inch fabric-dome treble unit. Its sealed enclosure is a "sandwich" with a shell of high-impact plastic around a wooden core; it is available in either matte black with a black perforated-metal grille or in white with a silver-colored grille. The input terminals are recessed press-and-insert types. A single hole of about 3/8 inch diameter, located on the rear panel, can be used for wall mounting. Price: $144.50.

The L-200 was as well regarded by the panel as any speaker in the test group, with two participants awarding it "best of test" status. Efficiency, power-handling capability, and dynamic range were all well above average. The frequency balance of the speaker was slightly bright in the view of some panel members, but the L-200's level of definition, smoothness, and uncolored bass performance were highly praised.

Remarks: "Midrange a bit forward; adds slight color to voices." "Detailed, coherent smooth, with some brightness." "The best of the group prominent in upper register, but has least objectionable coloration of any . . . overloads gracefully . . . a sophisticated device." "Very clean yet extended bass open voice reproduction . . . steel percussion textures are very good."

Ratings: bass extension, A; power handling, A; general listening quality, A.
minispeakers...

The speaker supplied for our tests was beautifully made and finished in a European light walnut. The rounded corners were inlaid strips of solid wood, the finish a smooth lacquer. Several panelists commented on the speaker’s appearance, which was clearly among the most attractive in our survey group. Efficiency of the GLE-40 was above average, as might be expected from a 6-liter enclosure; dynamic range was not exceptional, however.

The reviewers noted a number of different types of coloration in their comments on this speaker: a mid-bass warmth on voice, a reticent character in the upper treble, and a generally confined quality, particularly on orchestral selections. Definition was not exceptionally good, although several panel members found the frequency balance of the speaker appealing on certain popular-music selections.


Ratings: bass extension, C++; power handling, C; general listening quality, C.

Circle 157 on reader service card

MINISPEAKERS AS SATELLITES

One of the more intriguing speaker formats of the not-too-distant past to have reappeared during the Seventies is the satellite format system. This is an arrangement in which two relatively small “satellite” speakers reproduce the conventional left-and-right stereo information at frequencies above, say, 100 Hz while a single subwoofer reproduces a combined left-plus-right signal at low frequencies—say, below 100 Hz—where stereo information is theoretically unimportant to the ear’s sound perceptions.

This configuration has at least one inherent advantage over the more common format of two full-range speaker systems: the non-directionality of deep bass permits considerable freedom in subwoofer placement (the woofer can take the form of a low commode that can be used as an end table or sideboard and located almost anywhere), and the small size of the satellites gives them greater placement flexibility as well.

Satellite systems have recently become popular with apartment dwellers and interior designers bent on assembling an “invisible” music system having good sound and extended bass response. A number of the small-speaker manufacturers in our survey—Audioanalyst, Dahlquist, General Sound, and Visaton—make subwoofers that can be used with their small speakers in a satellite arrangement, as do a number of other companies not involved in the small-speaker market.

But the audiophile community has never quite come to grips with the notion of using two relatively inexpensive miniature speakers as the primary transducers in a system, although this unease may be related more to questions of prestige than of actual sonic performance. We decided, therefore, to investigate the satellite approach during the listening sessions by staging a direct comparison between a pair of excellent three-way floor-standing systems (the KEF 105a) and a satellite system. We set up a number of different pairs of small speakers, using them in conjunction with the newly available Audio Pro B2-50 ($795) subwoofer, a cube-shaped Swedish-made system that has an internal electronic crossover and equalizer amplifier. After some testing with pink noise to set the output level and crossover frequency of the subwoofer, we settled in for some critical listening.

The results of the experiment raised a few eyebrows. With the exception of some differences in the depth and lateral sweep of the stereo image (our large reference system is justly noted for its superb imaging qualities) and a very minor alteration of voice quality, the satellite systems stood up beautifully against the floor-standing reference in every regard. Bass response from the satellite-format system was smooth and seamless, betraying little evidence of the low-frequency crossover from satellite to subwoofer. The slightly dry, thin character that the small speakers had sometimes evinced when heard alone vanished, as did some of the other problems produced by lack of octave-to-octave balance within the minis. Midrange definition, detail, and undistorted output capability were all very much in the same league as those of the reference speaker—or, indeed, of most larger speakers. In all, we found the satellite-format system a highly listenable, musically satisfying alternative to the conventional two-speaker arrangement. Any doubts as to the validity and level of performance of the satellite concept were put to rest.

To our minds, these conclusions suggest not only that satellite-format systems are worth considering even in audiophile-grade music systems, but also that they offer those buying a first system on a tight budget the opportunity to assemble a high-performance speaker system in two stages: first the small speakers, used initially as full-range reproducers, and then the subwoofer and (if required) an electronic crossover/amplifier package. This type of “trade-in-free” approach to speaker acquisition was offered by firms such as Bozak and JBL in the early days of hi-fi as a way of reducing the ante for the consumer just starting out. It made sense then, and, given the inflation-prone Eighties we are about to enter, it would seem to make as much sense now.
road noise. Speaker-lead in-line fuse holders are also supplied with the ALS 3. Price: $125.

The speaker was listened to in the horizontal position with the rear-panel switch set for home listening. The efficiency of the ALS 3 was about average for the smaller speakers of the group, though power handling was somewhat below average. Bass performance impressed the panel favorably, particularly given the small (2-liter) enclosure volume. The speaker seemed to be somewhat lacking, in the opinion of several panelists, in a sense of "air" and openness, but its frequency balance and level of definition were both very well regarded by the panel, as was its relative lack of coloration. On balance, it was among the best liked of the smaller speakers tested.

Remarks: "Unusually deep bass extension." "Nice, full sound...sonorous." "Not bad on the whole, but seems to have a little too much in lower midrange." "Very good bass extension...good sense of instrumental color on strings." "A bit colored and opaque." "Quite efficient...a hands-cupped-over-mouth sort of coloration, but not too severe and often unnoticeable." "Good power handling and efficiency, with clarity retained even under conditions of high-level punishment...bass extends as deep as any speaker in the group."

Ratings: bass extension, B; power handling, C; general listening quality, B+.  

Polk Mini-Monitor: The Mini-Monitor is considerably different in appearance from any of the other units tested. Its long, slender profile and triangular cross section resemble a musician's on-stage monitor, although the speaker is not intended for such an application. The enclosure is finished in either a pebble-grain black-vinyl laminate or a walnut-grain vinyl, with a black foam grille held in place by Velcro tabs. The drivers consist of a 4½-inch bass unit with a treated cone, a 4½-inch passive radiator, and a 1-inch fabric-dome tweeter. A plastic plate inset on the rear panel holds two binding-post input connectors and a "pincher"-type fuse clip wired in series with the speaker's input. There are, understandably, no provisions for wall mounting, although optional U-shaped brackets for automotive use are available. Price: $100.

The efficiency of the Mini-Monitor was quite high. Power handling was also good, in the view of the panelists, with reproduction of orchestral crescendos unstrained and natural. The frequency balance of the speaker was very smooth, with some slight traces of mid-bass coloration noted on vocal selections. Aside from this minor effect, the speaker displayed good definition and reproduction of detail, although the imaging was not as precisely localized as with the best speakers of the group. Deep-bass reproduction was clean and rather extended.

Remarks: "Rather confined...character...nasal voice quality...not terribly open." 

Ratings: bass extension, C; power handling, C; general listening quality, C.  

Hitachi HS-1: The HS-1 has a die-cast, sealed-aluminum, 2-liter cabinet housing a 4-inch bass driver and a 1-inch metallized plastic-dome tweeter. The speaker's exterior finish is matte black with a black wire-mesh grille and a cast silver-colored front trim plate fastened to the enclosure with four Allen-head bolts. The rear-panel input connectors are two recessed, color-coded push terminals. A keyhole fitting permits wall mounting of the speaker. Price: $99.98.

Hitachi specifies the sensitivity of the HS-1 as 85 dB for a 1-watt input, which agrees with the panel's judgment of its efficiency as average. Power-handling capacity was also fairly typical. The sound of the speaker was characterized by the panel as fair, but with the octave-to-octave balance tilted in favor of the treble region. Coloration in the upper midrange was mentioned by all of the panelists in their notes.

Remarks: "Lower treble emphasis...harsh, especially on strings...sibilant." "Colored in upper midrange." "A bit overblown and colored in midrange...power handling average." "Rather confined...character...nasal voice quality...not terribly open." 

Ratings: bass extension, C; power handling, C; general listening quality, C.  

JVC s-M3: Another member of the 2-liter-enclosure category, the JVC s-M3 has a 4-inch bass driver and a 1-inch fabric-dome tweeter. The hefty cast-aluminum enclosure is finished in a smooth gun-metal grey with a wire-mesh grille and a polished black vinyl, with a black foam grille. Trim is matte black with a black wire-mesh grille and a polished cast silver front trim plate fastened to the enclosure with four Allen-head bolts. The input connectors are screw terminals recessed into the rear panel, which also has a keyhole aperture for wall mounting and a vertical groove running from the terminal recess to the cabinet edge to accommodate the input wire. This groove permits the speaker to be mounted flush to a wall surface. Price: $84.95.

The panel found the efficiency of the s-M3 average among the smaller speakers, confirming its 85-dB/1-watt sensitivity rating. Dynamic range and power handling were also average among the 2-liter speakers. The frequency balance of this speaker was tilted
minispeakers

toward the treble end of the spectrum, in the view of the panel, with a modest bass extension and a somewhat forward, bright overall sound. While not exceptionally open, the s-M3 sounded fairly smooth and uncolored, with a credible level of definition. The panelists judged it, all in all, a good but not extraordinary musical reproducer.

Remarks: "On most voices, not bad, but lacking openness...weak bass." "Could be more open, treble strident...not 'big' sounding." "Midrange emphasis extending down to upper bass...reasonably smooth sounding otherwise." "Not terribly open...bass shy." 

Ratings: bass extension, C; power handling, B; general listening quality, C+.

Circle 161 on reader service card

Lafayette Pip-Speak

- Lafayette Pip-Speak: The Lafayette Pip-Speak uses a conventional two-way acoustic-suspension design approach. Its small, matte-black metal enclosure contains a 4-inch bass driver and a 1-inch fabric-dome treble unit with a crossover network that operates at 2,500 Hz. Rear-panel terminals are of the push-and-insert type and are recessed. Five threaded holes on the rear panel can be used to mount the speaker on a wall. Price: $49.99.

The Pip-Speak was of about average efficiency, the panel's judgment agreeing with Lafayette's sensitivity rating of 83 dB for a 1-watt input; power-handling capacity was also quite typical for a 2-liter speaker. With respect to sound quality, the panel found the Pip-Speak a reasonable music reproducer, particularly considering its modest price. Although its bass extension was limited to about the same degree as most of the small speakers tested, octave-to-octave balance was smooth, with detailed, well-defined reproduction of even complex musical passages.

Remarks: "Slight hollowness on voices but less than most...a bit of lower treble color...pretty good little speaker!" "Reasonable image, transparent highs...upper-midrange brightness." "A decent-sounding speaker without any disturbing coloration...a bit of mid-bass heaviness, however." "Slightly confined on voice, but surprisingly listenable overall...a competent job at an attractive price." 

Ratings: bass extension, C; power handling, C+; general listening quality, B+.

Circle 162 on reader service card

Micron 500 Series by General Sound: The 500 Series encompasses three different finish options: the Model 521 (walnut enclosure with brown fabric grille), the 522 (matte-black enclosure with black fabric grille), and the 523 (white enclosure with white fabric grille). All have a sealed wooden cabinet and use the same 5¼-inch bass driver and a 1-inch fabric-dome tweeter. General Sound notes that the 500 Series uses a proprietary "time-align" technique. The tweeter is slightly recessed into the enclosure. The rear-panel input terminals are also recessed, although no provisions for wall mounting are provided. Price: $150.

Although the frequency balance of the 500 Series speaker was reasonable, the panel commented on a number of different types of coloration that affected its overall level of accuracy. In particular, a steely quality in the treble and a bit of artificial mid-bass warmth were noted. Efficiency was slightly above average, confirming the manufacturer's rating of 87 dB for a 1-watt input. Dynamic range was average.

Remarks: "Metallic top end." "Could be more open...lower-register resonance, sizzly top...reasonable imaging." "Ragged-sounding midrange...changes instrumental tone color on piano...a bit tizzy on percussion...coloration on strings." 

Ratings: bass extension, C+; power handling, C; general listening quality, C.

Circle 163 on reader service card

Realistic Minimus 7: The Minimus 7's black, 2-liter metal cabinet, perforated metal grille, and 4-inch bass driver with 1-inch fabric-dome treble unit are all typical of the smaller units tested, as are its recessed push terminals, rear-panel keyhole for wall mounting, and acoustic-suspension design. In fact, the Minimus 7 was so similar in appearance and dimensions to the Acutex and Lafayette units tested that we made inquiries to determine if the three were produced in the same factory. Indeed they are, but although the speakers use the same cabinet and input connectors,
their drivers and crossover networks (and therefore their sound characters) differ. Price: $49.95.

The panelists found the Minimus 7 to be one of the best of the 2-liter speakers and very much a bargain, considering its price. Although it was, like most of the speakers of its size, a bit thin in the bass, its sense of openness, level of definition, reproduction of musical detail, and stereo imaging were all quite good. Power handling was slightly above average, and efficiency was typical.

Remarks: "Not bad... a bit of presence, a bit of color in the upper midrange." "Open, reasonable imaging, but no lows, although sound is 'tight'." "Closest of the group to the estimable Braun, although not quite as open and clean... power handling above average." "Good imaging and definition... a good buy."

Ratings: bass extension, C; power handling, B+; general listening quality, A--.

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**NINETEEN MINISPEAKERS: COMPARATIVE SPECIFICATIONS**

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<tr>
<th>Speaker Make and Model</th>
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<th>Sensitivity, decibels, for 1 watt input, 1 meter distance</th>
<th>Music Power-handling Ability, watts</th>
<th>Mounting Brackets: 0 = optional, S = standard</th>
<th>Price (per speaker)</th>
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*with Model 300C, $150  † 80 dB for 2.25 watts, 3-meter distance  ‡ data supplied by manufacturers

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**Sansui J11:** The J11 was one of two speakers tested that used a passive radiator. This type of bass-loading arrangement can be used to achieve the benefits of a vented-enclosure format in a small cabinet where an actual port might not be practical. The J11 uses a bowl-shaped 4-inch passive radiator, a 4-inch active bass driver, and a centrally positioned 1-inch fabric-dome tweeter. The brushed-aluminum enclosure is tall, slender, and quite distinctive; electrical connections are made through slotted screw terminals, and a single keyhole-shaped aperture on the rear panel can be used to mount the speaker cabinet on a wall. Price: $145.

The most salient characteristic of the J11, as noted by the listening panel, was its clean bass response, which was as uncolored and as extended as that of any speaker in the test series. The balance of the speaker was a bit forward in the midrange, giving it a breathy, rather close sound that seemed most natural on popular music but slightly projected on orchestral selections. Dynamic range was judged to be somewhat below average, however; driving the speaker hard quickly brought on audible distortion. The J11's sensitivity was about average, confirming its rating of 85 dB output for a 1-watt input. Another intriguing capability of this speaker, one which was mentioned independently by no fewer than three of the panelists, was its excellent solo-piano reproduction.

Remarks: "Bass abounds!... for rock, jazz, or disco fans, it can swing." "Smooth, open midrange and bass... could have more 'air'" "A bit forward in midrange... power handling is close to average, but overdriving gives rise to sounds of some distress." "Excellent deep-bass definition... fairly open on piano."

Ratings: bass extension, A; power handling, C++; general listening quality, B.
minispeakers...

Sony SS-5GX

- **Sony SS-5GX**: The most intriguing feature of this speaker is its use of a "heat-pipe" arrangement to cool the bass driver's voice coil. A fluid-filled pipe connects both driver elements to a large finned heat sink on the speaker's rear panel. In practice, the system acts roughly like an automobile radiator: heat is transferred from the fluid in the bass driver to the heat sink, which dissipates it by radiation into the air. The treble driver of the SS-5GX is a 1-inch fabric dome. The enclosure is finished in a handsome dark walnut with a cast-metal front trim plate and a black wire-mesh grille. Connections are made to two recessed, knurled-metal binding posts located on the rear panel. Price: not available at press time.

The efficiency of the SS-5GX was somewhat above average, placing it in the same general category, with respect to sensitivity, as the ADS 390. Power-handling and dynamic-range capabilities were not exceptionally high despite the use of a cooling system; both were about average for the test group. The panelists characterized the sound of this speaker as smooth and open, with a tendency toward mid-bass prominence that gave the speaker a warm quality. A slightly withdrawn midrange was mentioned by several reviewers as inducing a rather distant atmosphere. The treble was not exceptionally high despite the use of a cooling system; both were about average for the test group. The panelists agreed that the balance took on a somewhat artificial character when used to reproduce voices or orchestral selections. Its level of definition and its imaging qualities were not as well regarded as those of several other speakers of its size and price.

Ratings: bass extension, C+; power handling, C+; general listening quality, B.

Visonik D-6000

- **Visonik D-6000**: The D-6000 is available in two distinctive cabinet finishes: a matte chocolate brown and a matte grey, both with matching perforated-metal grille. The speaker is a two-way acoustic-suspension design with a 4-inch bass driver and a 1-inch fabric-dome treble unit. It is equipped with a LED indicator, located in the upper-right corner of the front baffle, that glows red when the input capability of the system is exceeded. The rear-panel input terminals are of the push-and-insert type and are mounted flush with the panel surface. A keyhole slot can be hooked over a screwhead in order to mount the speaker on a wall. Price: $150.

The dynamic range of the D-6000 was somewhat limited, in the opinion of the panel, with distortion rising rapidly at high listening levels; the speaker could accept a high-level input without breakdown, however. In an effort to light the speaker's overload indicator it was operated at peak levels of 100 watts and more. Efficiency of the system was about typical for the smaller speakers in this survey. The D-6000 struck the panel as a smooth, well-balanced speaker with a rising high-frequency response. Stereo imaging was detailed and voice reproduction, for both soloists and groups, was satisfyingly realistic. A slightly warm mid-bass emphasis was noted by some of the reviewers.

Ratings: bass extension, C; power handling, B; general listening quality, B.

Ultralinear M16

- **Ultralinear M16**: The Ultralinear M16 is a two-way acoustic-suspension system, available in either walnut-grain vinyl or pebble-grain black-vinyl finishes, using a 4½-inch woofer with a treated cone and a 1-inch fabric-dome tweeter. The speaker uses a circuit breaker (with a reset button mounted in the same recess as the input press-terminals) to protect the drivers from overload. The grille of the M16 is a perforated plastic molding. Two small plugs, one located on the top and one on the bottom surface of the speaker, can be removed to reveal flush-set nuts that permit the speaker to be mounted in an automotive bracket. Price: $135 per pair.

The Ultralinear M16 speaker had typical efficiency relative to other units of its size and above-average power-handling capability (although the circuit breaker tripped a number of times during high-level testing). It also had a definite sonic flavor of its own, characterized by considerable emphasis of the mid-treble region. Although this balance was agreeable to some members of the panel for reproducing popular music, all of the listeners agreed that the balance took on a somewhat artificial character when used to reproduce voices or orchestral selections. Its level of definition and its imaging qualities were not as well regarded as those of several other speakers of its size and price.

Ratings: bass extension, C; power handling, B; general listening quality, C.
JBL's new L150: ITS BOTTOM PUTS IT ON TOP.

JBL's new L150 takes you deeper into the low frequencies of music without taking you deeper into your budget.

This short-tower, floor-standing loudspeaker system produces bass with depth, power and transparency that comes incredibly close to a live performance.

A completely new 12" driver was created for the L150. It has an innovative magnetic assembly, the result of years of research at JBL. It uses a stiff, heavy cone that's been coated with an exclusive damping formulation for optimum mass and density.

And it has an unusually large 3" voice coil, which aids the L150's efficiency and its ability to respond to transients (peaks, climaxes and sudden spurts) in music.

There's even more to the L150's bottom—a 12" passive radiator. It looks like a driver but it's not. We use it to replace a large volume of air and contribute to the production of true, deep bass. Bass without boom.

If you're impressed with the L150's lows, you'll be equally impressed with its highs and mids. Its powerful 1" high-frequency dome radiator provides wide dispersion throughout its range. And a 5" midrange transducer handles high volume levels without distorting. The maximum power recommended is 300 watts per channel.

The L150's other attributes include typical JBL accuracy—the kind that recording professionals rely on. Maximum power/flat frequency response. High efficiency. And extraordinary time/phase accuracy.

Before you believe that you can't afford a floor system, listen to an L150. While its bottom is tops, its price isn't.
Nick Ashford and Valerie Simpson sink into the spacious sofa in the living room of their West Side brownstone and sip their morning cups of coffee—until one o’clock in the afternoon. He sprawls, propping one elbow on a pillow. She perches on the sofa’s edge. Both are remarkably alert for folks who, until six this morning, have seen nothing but the inside of a recording studio for fifteen hours. But then, they’re used to it. Ashford and Simpson are currently cutting two albums back to back, so life, lately, has been a string of sleepless nights.

Diana Ross’ album came first. For two months Ashford and Simpson renewed the collaboration that started when the two were a songwriting-producing team turning out solid gold hits for Motown’s hottest “girl group,” Diana Ross and the Supremes. Now Diana’s album is finished, she’s on the road, and Ashford and Simpson are cutting their own sixth release since leaving Motown in 1974 for Warner Bros. Records. They’re not only songwriter/producers now, but recording artists and performers.

Valerie worries that she’s spending too much time in the studio: “Sometimes I have to tell George, our manager, when he comes with our schedule, ‘George, you haven’t left any time for the creative process—these things don’t just happen.’ I mean, we could fill our hours with, goodness knows, lots more interviews,” she flashes a nothing-personal smile, “lots more personal appearances, but then when would we write?”

Nick elaborates on her levelheaded approach to their careers. “If we were solo artists like Diana Ross, we could do those things with ease. A single artist who doesn’t write has time to get around—all he has to do is sing the song. But when you write it and produce it, you don’t have much time to play.”

Nick and Val, as their friends know them, talk the way they sing—not in unison, voicing the same ideas word for word, but in a tightly interwoven harmony. Like rock-and-roll, rhythm-and-blues, words-and-music, they’re salt-and-pepper complements—separate entities, one enhancing the other. They do not, in other words, have the obnoxious habit of completing one another’s sentences. But there’s the distinct impression that some kind of invisible force exists between them and that one’s thoughts tend to stimulate the other’s.

Even their looks complement each other’s: he’s tall, she’s short; his hair is long soft curls, hers a million tiny shoulder-length braids; his skin cocoa brown, hers caramel. He speaks with a slow, smoky Southern accent; her voice is a crystal-clear New York staccato. And when they go into the second-floor piano room, shut the door, roll up their sleeves, and get down to work, there too the lines are pretty clearly drawn: he’s words and she’s music.

“We write spontaneously,” Valerie says, watching Nick as she speaks. “Generally we’ll start clean. I start to play. He’ll start to sing. We take a song only as far as it’ll go naturally; when we get stumped with one we just stop. Maybe we’ll have only a little piece, but we go right on to the next. We don’t force them. I’ll keep changing and he’ll just fall in. It just happens. And when it really happens it all comes together at once.”

“Yeah.” Ashford segues in with a variation on the theme. “In the beginning we just melt together. We just let it fall. Sometimes when we start, Valerie will play something—and Valerie can play—that leaves no holes for lyrics. I won’t bother her because she’s got to get that out before she can get in tune with me—or I have to cough, scream, and just get mine out. Then we settle and it comes. It’s best when it comes very naturally. We know when we hit on something. I look at her and she looks at me and the sparks start flying.”

But there are sparks—and then there are sparks. Neither Nick nor Val wants to get burned, and both know that premature infatuation with their product is a pitfall for any producer/performer, so they’re sharply self-critical. Val likes it that way.

“I like being able to tell the truth and push. I can do that better with Nick than I can with anybody,” she laughs, “there’s no limit to how far I can go. It takes years of knowing a person to be able to push him all the way; the wrong thing closes him up and stifies him and he won’t be able to per-

form for you any more. That’s not what you want to do.”

“I used to be sensitive, very sensitive,” Nick chimes in, revealing a disarmingly self-assuredness as he explains that he’s become known to clam up at the first sign of criticism. “Sometimes it’s not the criticism but how it’s put to you. At that time, very, very early, Val used to just say, ‘I don’t like that.’” Nick mimics her, screwing up his face and slamming his hand down on the coffee table.

“There was no little touch or a tender, ‘Honey, you know that wasn’t very good.’ Criticism cuts pretty deep if you think you’ve got what it takes.” He leans toward her, laughing.

Both Nick and Val like what now appears to be a trend: the resurgence of duos. “I love it, but it can also be confounding. Usually duets do the love theme, but that’s not all we want to write about. We don’t push just love, love, love,” Ashford says, making the words sound like Cream of Wheat. “We are individuals too, and we have different statements we have to make. I’m all for the duet, but I wouldn’t want to always be thought of as part of a unit. I like our albums to represent two people together and two people as individuals.”

When Nick and Valerie met she was a member of Harlem’s White Rock Baptist Church choir and he was new to the big city. Ashford, who was born in South Carolina, had just hopped off the Greyhound bus from Willow Run, Michigan, with $57 to his name. He spent a couple of weeks sleeping on park benches, then landed a job as a busboy, rented a room, and started going to church figuring some nice girl would invite him over for a home-cooked meal.

Valerie heard that he wrote gospel songs and invited him to join a small group from the choir that was singing gospel in a little night spot called Sweet Chariot. After about two months the gig was over, but they were dazzled; not only did they enjoy themselves but they’d gotten paid for singing for the first time in their lives. When someone asked them to write some pop songs they paused a beat to weigh the pros and cons, seriously concerned that they might be going against “something sacred.” But finally decided to try it.

After about a year and a half, they had their first commercial success when Ray Charles’ recording of their Let’s Go Get Stoned hit the charts. It came not a minute too soon, and it kept them out of the cold until their big break. Holland-Dozier-Holland, Motown’s hot in-house songwriting trio,
ASHFORD & SIMPSON

hit town on a talent hunt. A friend gave H-D-H some of Ashford and Simpson's demo tapes. All three were impressed, and they invited the couple to Motown.

It was one of those once-in-a-lifetime fairy-tale transitions. Suddenly, there they were, plopped down in the giddy, gaudy, growing center of music's Land of Oz. Nick and Valerie admit that even now they miss the aura that surrounded Motown when it was the record industry's Wonderland. "You had creative people in key positions who could give you valid feedback on your material," she says nostalgically.

Motown was turning out hits by the truckload, exploiting a successful formula saved from tediousness only by the skill of its talented songwriter/producers. Though there was an unmistakable "Motown sound," each producer had his own trademark variation on it. Ashford and Simpson embedded their gospel-like lyrics in lush orchestral settings. Their songs—Ain't No Mountain High Enough, Ain't Nothin' Like the gospel—like melodies were saved from tediousness only by the skill of its talented songwriter/producers.

THERE'S success went stale when Ashford and Simpson realized the claustrophobic dimensions of the songwriter/producer pigeonhole Motown had filed them in. For both of them, the decision to sign with Warner Bros. was a good move. "On the one hand," Valerie says without sentimentality, "'Warner Bros. is really an executive kind of thing. They're not really creative people, they're business people. But on the other hand, Motown today is just not what it was back in the Sixties and early Seventies."

"Gimme Something Real," their debut album for their new label, was a critical success. In fact, with the exception of the second album (which some suspected was a rush job designed to capitalize on the momentum created by the first), each of the others, including their latest, "Is It Still Good to Ya?", has been better than the last. The same is true of their development as live performers. At first it was all potluck, with no polish and little pizzazz. They sang their songs glued to one spot (Valerie says they were paralyzed by fear). Then George Faison, a friend and former principal dancer with the Alvin Ailey company as well as Tony award-winning choreographer for Broadway's musical The Wiz, took them in hand and taught them a few moves. Now there's not the faintest trace of stage fright.

"We're getting better as performers; I think each time it's gotten a little better," Valerie says modestly. At first she was thrown off balance by audience feedback that let them know whether they were getting over or falling flat on their faces. "Now," she beams, "it's fun. I enjoy it. I even miss it when I don't do it for a long time."

And, like many performers who measure their days by the mile, she and Nick can engage in lengthy discourse on minute distinctions between audiences in different parts of the country. Valerie likes the Baltimore-Washington area. While New York is fun, she still gets butterflies in her stomach the minute she steps onstage in the Big Apple.

Ashford, on the other hand, loves New York. "New York gets all I have and more," he gleefully explains. "I think the album portrays Diana as the women's view, not the men's view. The women were the ones who were really the ones who were dressing themselves and having good hair and make up and everything."

"I think the album portrays Diana as a woman who has her life together, who is in control of her life," Valerie insists. "It's a good song for a woman, and the way the song ends, 'It's my house but it was built for love,' I guess it is pretty good."

Diana liked It's My House. "I knew she would," Valerie beams. "It's not a heavy song. It came off really light, which was what we were after. It's the kind of thing a woman likes to say, you know, after she's gotten her own apartment. She might say, 'It's my house and I live here . . . but it's all for love.' But she still wants to be able to say, 'It's mine.' You can say that lightly and nicely."

TALKING about Diana's album, because it's finished, is obviously easy. Their new album, still in the works, is a whole other story. The mere mention of it brings conversation to a screeching halt. Valerie manages a terse response: "It's difficult to talk about."

Nick smoothly steps in: "I think it's too soon to say anything, really. I feel good about what we've started, but a lot of that changes, so till we actually get into the studio and get ready to cut the sides, it's difficult to say what it's actually going to be. We're fooling around with a lot of new ideas."

Valerie warms to the subject: "We get very picky about it . . . satisfying ourselves. We really want to try new things and yet we don't want to shock our audience by changing too much too soon. It's a funny kind of balance you have to strike, one which allows for some growth."

It's obvious that the distracting demands for interviews and management's other elaborate, helpful, but time-consuming career-boosting activities have Valerie worried. When they're working on an album, both Ashford and Simpson go into semi-seclusion. She explains that often their minds are someplace else altogether. "You have to pretend to not care sometimes, even when you're not. Your manager or publicist really doesn't understand, and often they may catch you at the wrong time. All they know is that you've done something all these years; they don't really know how you've done it, how the songs manage to get written."

Actually, Ashford explains, smiling, neither do they. But they do know one important thing: since the creative impulse doesn't always come when called upon, the best they can do is make room for it.
The Fisher CR5150 cassette deck. Gorgeous up close. Even better from a distance.

Great styling and state-of-the-art performance are two things this new Fisher cassette deck has plenty of.

But it's got something even more exciting: full-function remote control — without wires! It's the first tape deck ever to offer this sensational feature.

Think of it: by touching a button on the remote infrared transmitter, you can control Play, Record, Pause, Stop, Fast Forward, and Rewind modes — from up to 20 feet away! You can record, edit, search, and listen to cassettes — without leaving your easy chair.

And the CR5150 is just plain fun to operate.

Wireless control would probably make the CR5150 a big seller even if its performance was only average. But Fisher went all out, and gave it 3 heads for 30-19,000 Hz response, dual-process Dolby** for 68dB S/N ratio, and a servo-controlled transport with 0.04% wow & flutter (WRMS). Superb specs that only a handful of ultra-high priced cassette decks can match.

Feature-wise, there's a built-in digital clock that will turn on the CR5150 deck (or your receiver) to record anything you want at a preset time, whether you're home or not. The clock display doubles as an electronic tape counter with memory rewind. Silky-smooth, feather-touch buttons control the solenoid tape mechanism.

But considering the prices of other decks with similar performance and far less features, the Fisher CR5150 at $650* has to be one of the greatest values in high fidelity today. No matter how you look at it.

Available at better audio stores or the audio departments of fine department stores.

*Manufacturer's suggested retail value. Actual selling price determined solely by the individual Fisher dealer.

Send $2 for Fisher Handbook, with name and address to Fisher Corp., Dept. H, 21314 Lassen St., Chatsworth, CA 91311.

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Installation of the Month

Our "Installation of the Month" feature does not usually concern itself with music supersystems put together by audio-industry professionals. However, when Alistair Robertson-Aikman, managing director of SME Ltd., gave a slide show and talk on his music room and its equipment at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show, we found it much too interesting not to share with our readers. Simply put, the system exhibits a level of technical sophistication, craftsmanship, and attention to detail that would be quite at home in, say, the Winter Palace of Czar Nicholas or the seat of the Esterhazys.

Mr. Robertson-Aikman's primary musical interest is opera, and his intent in the design of his music room was to suggest, both aurally and visually, a small theater with stage, curtain, and proscenium. The room has a volume of about 8,500 cubic feet; it is of brick-wall construction, roughly trapezoidal in shape, and has a solid concrete roof weighing about 30 tons. The non-parallel room surfaces and heavy construction, in conjunction with various absorbent materials (including more than two tons of wool in the carpeting and draperies), do much to eliminate undesirable room resonances.

Musical sources (tuner, recorder, player, etc.) and most of the other electronic components are grouped in two hand-carved oak cabinets. The console in the photo shown at left contains two Technics SP-10 Mk 2 turntables (top), both equipped with SME Series III tone arms and Shure V-15 type IV cartridges. The bases of the turntables (and the undersides of the platters) are filled with a clay compound that damps mechanical resonances. The turntable mats have been replaced by fluid-filled pads to provide further proof against resonances occurring in the platter or the record itself. The turntables sit on a 1-inch-thick layer of foam, beneath which there is a polyethylene-film "lozenge" filled with 50 pounds of fine industrial sand. Furthermore, the front compartment of the console is filled with an additional 200 pounds of sand. "These measures are important," notes Robertson-Aikman, "to reduce coloration as far as possible." The cabinet also holds two Luxman C-1000 preamplifiers (right), a Phase Linear 1000 autocorrelator for high-frequency noise suppression (lower left), a dbx 3BX dynamic range expander (upper left), and a Luxman moving-coil cartridge pre-preamplifier (lower extreme left).

The second cabinet, shown at right, contains two Studer B62 professional open-reel recorders (upper right) operating at 15 ips; they are connected to share a two-channel...
A301 professional Dolby-A noise-reduction module. A Nakamichi 1000 (upper left) is used for cassette recording and playback; the system's tuner is a Luxman 5T50.

In order to make the theater illusion even more convincing, Robertson-Aikman uses a total of four loudspeaker arrays, two front units driven directly and two rear-channel units powered through a delay network. The front loudspeakers each consist of eight Quad full-range electrostatic panels stripped of their grilles and fitted into tubular steel frames; the hollow frames are filled with lead to reduce resonance. The panels are acoustically damped from the rear with horsehair mats, and they cover the 50- to 20,000-Hz frequency range. They are driven by two Luxman Model 6000 power amplifiers. The total weight of each panel is about 800 pounds.

Two 18-inch subwoofers, driven by two SAE power amplifiers connected by means of a servo-loop feedback circuit, reproduce frequencies below 50 Hz. The enclosures for the subwoofers consist of plywood cubes built within larger cubes, the intervening 3-inch space being filled, once again, with industrial sand. The two subwoofer cabinets have a total weight of about 3½ tons. A Crown electronic crossover divides the signals routed to the subwoofers and to the panels, and each system is separately equalized by a UREI professional one-third-octave equalizer.

The rear-channel speakers are identical arrays of Quad electrostatic panels fed through two Lexicon Delta-T lines which provide a delay of 55 milliseconds. The frames of the rear speakers pivot horizontally to permit focusing the rear panels for listening groups of various sizes.

As Robertson-Aikman candidly noted in his talk, "In the quest for realism, there is still a long way to go before what is already possible [with a system of this scale] can be provided within the normal commercial and domestic restraints." This is true, but systems such as this one serve in the meantime not only as sources of listening pleasure for a fortunate "unrestrained" few but also as benchmarks against which the improvements constantly being made in more affordable systems can be measured.

Is your system an Installation of the Month? To find out whether it is, send a clear snapshot and a brief description of its components to STEREO REVIEW, Dept. IOTM, One Park Ave., New York 10016.
Jon Vickers as Peter Grimes
(Photo: James Heffernan, courtesy Metropolitan Opera)
Peter Grimes: One of the Great Operas of Recent Times

The Colin Davis/Jon Vickers Peter Grimes is not exactly an unknown quantity; it has been performed to notable acclaim at the Met and La Scala as well as at Covent Garden. Its appearance in recorded form is an equally notable event.

Much has been made of the fact that neither Davis nor Vickers was close to Benjamin Britten or to Aldeburgh (the composer's home territory, and not only the scene of his yearly music festival but the setting for this opera). Britten's own recording featuring Peter Pears, for whom the part of Grimes was written, has, of course, long been considered definitive. But, as it turns out, there is more than enough room for another: this new Philips recording is Grimes powerfully universalized and revealed as one of the few really great operas, in any language, of recent times.

Peter Grimes is quite unlike Britten's other operas, which deal with a very different class of characters looked at from a rather ambiguous, modern, even sophisticated point of view. Grimes, written during World War II and Britten's first opera, uses all the devices of a conservative, more-or-less neo-Classical modernism, but these are transformed in the white heat of inspiration, made personal through the exercise of compassion. It is sometimes described as Britten's only verismo opera, but that term is misleading, for it refers only to the "realistic" subject. Britten's treatment is actually quite formal, with a delicate and wonderful balance between through-composition and set pieces, between the expression of feelings and the depiction of dramatic movement, between scene setting and emotional impact, between orchestral and vocal expression, choral or crowd scenes and solo writing. This may be the only major, successful English-language opera written for and produced in the opera house (nearly all the others, from Dido to Porgy and beyond, first appeared somewhere else). The handling of the forces—large cast, chorus, and orchestra—is masterly. There is never a moment that is less than clear and precise, not one effect that is not deeply felt.

Another superlative: I think this is Jon Vickers' greatest role. I've always had problems with his "hot-potato" enunciation, and certain of his artistic and vocal mannerisms are grating rather than grateful to my ear. But there is something extra, something beyond mere singing, going on here. Vickers has totally absorbed not only the music but the very character itself—his vocal sound has become the sound of the tormented Grimes. There are two particulars of interest in this: Vickers is forced to sing in his native language (something he rarely does, I think), and he is forced to sing light lyric lines written for Peter Pears, a very different kind of singer. This requires him to put his voice in a slightly different place, to control that raw power, to sing softly, to inflect, to probe dramatic and musical character, not just in generalities but in the specifics of a single word or phrase. If I were Jon Vickers I would rethink every other role in my repertoire along just these lines, for as Peter Grimes he shows far more of his potential as one of the really great vocal artists and stage interpreters of our time than he has in the German and Italian repertoire.

Heather Harper, not quite in Vickers' class here, is nonetheless affecting as Ellen Orford, and the supporting cast is strong and lively. The biggest weakness is the misplaced elegance of the opera-house diction—unlikely speech for the Aldeburghians and mostly incomprehensible in any event. Vickers, however, sings an extraordinary form of English absolutely his own and not to be compared with that of anyone else. Somehow, this oddity can be accepted as Grimesian—but it, too, truth to tell, is incomprehensible. Incomprehensibility is, of course, only the expected hazard of opera-house opera in English; the usual remedy, a complete libretto, is dutifully provided with the set.

Like Vickers, conductor Colin Davis has taken this score (and story) and lifted it up to the level of a truly moving universality. The clarity, power, and excitement of this performance are marvelous, and the recorded perspectives of solo voices, chorus, and instruments are exemplary. —Eric Salzman
Hubert Laws: An All-around Musician Keeps It In the Family

THERE are enough Laws on Columbia’s new “Land of Passion” to enchant a French bureaucrat. Aside from its flutist star, the remarkable Hubert Laws, the album also features Hubert’s celeb brother Ronnie on saxophone, his celeb sister Eloise pitching in on background vocals in support of brother Johnny and sister Debra, who do all of the solo vocal work, and finally there is sister Blanche (“a staff singer and organist at a Los Angeles funer-al home”), who also contributes to the vocals. All in the Family, indeed! Hubert is the center of attraction, however, not only because he composed, arranged, and conducted everything here (with the exception of We Will Be by Ronnie), but because he’s a phenomenally gifted artist who, like all great instrumentalists, can rivet or lull, excite or pacify, draw you in or leave you dozing off. Aside from his playing, there’s not much that’s “correct” or what isn’t; he simply chooses what works as opposed to what doesn’t, so that you are likely to hear a sustained, lyrical passage that would do credit to M. Rampal himself, closely followed by the sharp, staccato jazz attack of someone playing extemporaneously on the beach at Malibu. You can hear both his exquisitely formed (and formal) musicianship and his equally dazzling free-form approach within the space of a couple of minutes.

As for the repertoire Laws has provided himself, what with the vocal overlays, the extraneous pop sound he seems to be reaching for, and the general air of indecision in some of the arrangements, most of it seems only to stand in the way of his playing. Fortunately, there is more than enough of that to be heard here to make the album very much worth your while. But as for the album cover, Columbia Records’ idea of “passion”—flowers photographed to look like Genitals on Parade—is enough to make Georgia O’Keefe’s work seem Victorian, to make a gynecologist blush, a priapist go limp, and the average record buyer hide the thing from the kids.

—Peter Reilly

JENNIFER Warnes: Shot Through the Heart. Jennifer Warnes (vocals); instrumental accompaniment. Shot Through the Heart; I Know a Heartache When I See One; Don’t Make Me Over; Sign on the Window; ‘I’m Restless; Tell Me Just One More Time; When the Feeling Comes Around; Frankie in the Rain; Hard Times, Come Again No More. ARISTA AB 4217 $7.98.

Jennifer Warnes: A New Recruit For the Ranks of Intelligent Singers

As often as the hit single Right Time of the Night was thrust at me by all the radio stations I could tune in down here in Kentucky where I’ve been living lately, I couldn’t quite tell from it whether Jennifer Warnes was a singer or not. She had some fine tones, intelligent phrasing, and a little soul. But add to those qualities the kind of taste that goes far beyond the needs of such as Right Time of the Night and you will be talking about her new Arista album, “Shot Through the Heart.”

She seems, in this album, to have the folkie’s commitment to singing only what she can identify with, and the result is that there’s not one dumb song in the whole album—a neat trick for 1979. There is even one great one, Bob Dylan’s Sign on the Window (1970 vintage), and a pretty nifty one in the title song, written by Warnes herself. Let me remind you, in case you’ve forgotten, that this is not the way it usually goes at all. Usually, singers with really good voices sing dumb songs or those blank-stare songs of the Love Walked In variety, leaving it to the gravel-voiced non-singers to show any kind of folkie commitment.

Well, it’s about time we had another intelligent woman who can actually sing to put in the ranks alongside Anne Murray and Bonnie Raitt and Linda Ronstadt and Emmylou Harris. Even the slightly overproduced way Warnes is backed won’t keep a lot of sensitive listeners from seeing (hearing) that, with this album, she makes her bid. She co-produced it (with Rob Fraboni), which speaks well for how much and how well she is running her own show. There’s a hint of the authority that takes in her singing, a sound of independence and individuality, of taking charge—but there’s also in that voice an identification with silly and pained vulnerability ... which is only a small part of why you’ll take to this fine voice on this neat recording.

—Noel Coppage

HUBERT LAWS: Land of Passion. Hubert Laws (flute, alto flute); Debra Laws, Johnny Laws, Eloise Laws, Blanche Laws (vocals); Ronnie Laws (saxophones); orchestra. Music Forever: Land of Passion; We’re in Ecstasy; Heartbeats; The Key; We Will Be. COLUMBIA JC 35708 $7.98. © JCT 35708 $7.98.
Minnie Riperton: A Sputtering Career Is About to Ignite At Last

It’s been about ten years since I first heard Minnie Riperton. Back then, she was known mainly as the possessor of that wonderful, high, bird-like voice that soared so gracefully above the stylings of a Chicago soft-soul group called Rotary Connection. Since that time, her career has continually been on the verge of taking off—only to get stalled somewhere along the runway. Full flight seemed most likely back in 1974 when she signed with Columbia’s Epic label. Stevie Wonder (not so mysteriously disguised as “El Toro Negro”) gave her a well-deserved boost by collaborating on her excellent “Perfect Angel” (Epic KE 32561). Two subsequent Epic albums sold well and built on that initial success, but then she was stricken with illness, dropping out of the business for a while to undergo a mastectomy.

Over the past year or so, she has taken big steps to capture at last the success that has so far eluded her. “Minnie,” her new album on the Capitol label, should provide the necessary impetus, for it is a delightfully eclectic offering, embracing her considerable interpretive ability as well as the remarkable range of her voice. The songs vary from the playful disco-paced “Dancin’ and Actin’ Crazy” to the quietly lyrical “Return to Forever.” But the outstanding track is “It Never Existed Before,” one of the most immediately captivating songs to whirl around my turntable in recent months: it simply vibrates with a summery inner freshness (Riperton had a hand in writing it, along with several other selections here). The set concludes with José Feliciano joining Minnie for a sensual reworking of Light My Fire, the song that ignited his career. Let’s hope this fine album can do the same for Minnie Riperton.

—Phyl Garland

MINNIE RIPERTON: Minnie. Minnie Riperton (vocals); other musicians. Memory Lane; Lover and Friend; Return to Forever; Dancin’ and Actin’ Crazy; Love Hurts; Never Existed Before; I’m a Woman; Light My Fire. CAPITOL SO-11936 $7.98, © 4XT-11936 $7.98.

A Recording First: Edvard Grieg’s Thirty-two-piece Peer Gynt Complete

Like his Lyric Pieces for piano, Grieg’s music for Ibsen’s Peer Gynt is a series of miniatures, stamped with a strong national character, which occupied him, on and off, for many years. When he first took on the assignment in 1874, he felt it to be “unmanageable,” and remarked that the music he wrote for the scene in the hall of the Troll King “smacks so much of cow-dung, ultra-Norwegianism, and self-satisfaction that I quite literally cannot bear to listen to it.” Over the years, however, he came to think better of his score, as well he might. If the sixty-six Lyric Pieces, written between 1867 and 1901, add up to a whole greater than the sum of its parts, Peer Gynt is nothing less than Grieg’s magnum opus; but the true dimensions of this work were not even suspected by most of us until the release of the new two-disc Unicorn set conducted by Per Dreier, whom we must thank not only for a splendid performance, but for editing more than half the material, nearly twenty pieces that were never recorded before.

While the two familiar concert suites from Peer Gynt comprise a total of eight pieces for orchestra, and while we have had an occasional disc (such as the fine recent one under Herbert Blomstedt—Angel S-37535) offering twelve numbers (including Solveig’s two songs and choral pieces) as the “complete score,” Grieg actually produced no fewer than thirty-two pieces for the drama before he was through with it. After the successful 1876 premiere there were new productions, in Norway and elsewhere, for which additional music was requested. As late as 1892 (a year after the second concert
suite was published), when Grieg showed reluctance to add to his score for a new production in Oslo, the wily impresario in charge threatened to go to another composer for a whole new score, and Grieg gave in. In the process of making additions from time to time, Grieg also orchestrated some of the original pieces, though he continued to use colleagues' orchestrations of a few of his earlier piano pieces—Johan Halvorsen's celebrated setting of the Norwegian Bridal Procession and Robert Henriques' orchestration of the first three of the four Norwegian Dances. A year after Grieg's death, Halvorsen published a score comprising twenty-three numbers; for this recording Dreier had to sift back through the materials used in the original production and various subsequent ones during Grieg's lifetime and make emendations of his own.

Early in the sequence there are enchanting settings of two folk dances (Nos. 3 and 4) which call for a Hardanger fiddle, a folk instrument with four metal strings and four more sympathetic ones (rather like the viola d'amore in that respect). There was, in the early Fifties, a Mercury disc on which an Oslo ensemble performed a good deal of the Peer Gynt music, with Alfred Maurstad playing some of Peer's lines and playing the Hardanger fiddle. There are no spoken lines in the Unicorn set, but there are songs for Peer (a most intriguing Serenade, No. 23) as well as for Solveig and Anitra, and some of the most exciting portions of the score are those that call for the chorus. Here, especially, this presentation shines. Fine as the Leipzig Radio Chorus is in the Blomstedt recording (singing in Norwegian rather than the German favored by Beecham and Barbirolli), the Oslo Philharmonic Chorus brings a more immediate sense of freshness, a vivid wild abandon where appropriate, and an all-round deeper feeling for the mystique of the work. The episode called “Peer Gynt Being Chased by Trolls” (No. 14) is a stunning example, the “Night Scene” (No. 30) presents a chilling picture of Peer's confrontation with the button-molder to meet him down as punishment for wasting his life, and the women alone, in “Peer Gynt and the Mountain Girls” (No. 7), suggest the Rhine Maidens running into a collective Herd Girls' Sunday.

There are, in fact, more than a few evocations of Wagner, Liszt, and especially Berlioz, not only in the use of Leitmotive throughout the score, but in Grieg's magnificent use of orchestral color, which goes quite beyond what he achieved in any of the music by which he is so well known and loved. These resemblances, though, are never strong enough to detract from Grieg's individual style or the great originality of this marvelous score, which as presented here might be said to constitute a grand dramatic cantata—a very Norwegian counterpart, if you will, to The Damnation of Faust.

Per Dreier, whose name was new to me, is a Norwegian, apparently about fifty, who has been most active in Denmark and Germany and, according to the liner information, has performed in the U.S.A. He has also recorded a two-disc set of contemporary Norwegian music with the Royal Philharmonic (Unicorn 2-75028). His achievement in Peer Gynt is a grand one, earning our respect and admiration for a superb performance as well as our gratitude for simply making all the music available. The London Symphony Orchestra plays with all-out fervor and no little brilliance, as if its members, like those of the chorus, had the music and the poem in their blood. Knud Buen's playing of the Hardanger fiddle is all one could ask. Asbjörn Hansli is a splendid singing Peer, and Toril Carlsen is touching in her handling of Solveig's material. The recording itself, vivid, rich, and well-balanced on the silent-surface discs, is even more stunning on tape (all on one reel). The only cause for complaint is the failure to provide full texts: words to the major vocal numbers are printed only in English, and those to the lesser ones are not given at all. But Øystein Gaukstad gives a comprehensive, if concise, background of the work, and Unicorn's John C. Goldsmith has provided a very helpful synopsis of the respective numbers. All in all, this is a major event—and it has been brought off with a great deal of distinction. On discs or on tape, it is a recording no one should miss.
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Gary Brooker (vocals, keyboards); other musicians. Savannah; Pilot; No More Fear of Flying; Get Up and Dance; Give Me Something to Remember You By; and five others.

CHRYSALIS CHR 1224 $7.98.

Performance: Good
Recording: Good

Summary: This album is a transitional work from the Procol Harum era to Gary Brooker's solo career. The songs are by and large fascinating, and the performances by all the musicians are beyond thorough professionalism. The one exception is Savannah, a moving wrong-side-of-the-tracks romantic melodrama that Brooker sings with the pants off. Unfortunately, one song does not an album make. S.S.

DAVID ALLAN COE: Spectrum VII. David Allan Coe (vocals, guitar); instrumental accompaniment. Rollin' with the Punches; On My Feet Again; Fall in Love with You; What Can I Do; Sudden Death; and four others.

COLUMBIA KC 35789 $7.98, ® CA 35789 $7.98, ® CT 35789 $7.98.

Performance: Good
Recording: Good

Summary: This is a transition album (from rhinestone cowboy to rhinestone pirate) for David Allan Coe, who reminds record reviewers on the sleeve that Jimmy Buffett doesn't live in Key West any more. It is also his seventh album, and he says there are seven musicians in it, although I count nine in the credits, and it contains a song called Seven Mile Bridge (which is not bad, by the way) that is seven minutes and seven seconds long and was recorded on the seventh day of the month. Coe calls the first side, which starts with a pretty good song about how hard life is, the "Land-side," and the second, which augments the cover picture, the "Ocean-side." The Ocean-side sounds like the labor of a pseudo-cowboy playing pseudo-pirate, though, and the album's problematic in a few other ways as well. Coe is trying to write quiet love songs and only making halfhearted attempts to revive his old band for satire ("I lost my heart in San Francisco/And found it on the streets of Baltimore."). And his attempt at rock in Sudden Death is a jumble of clichés and inanities. So the transition isn't going smoothly at this point, and if you compare this to his best album so far, "David Allan Coe Rides Again," it may seem he has a long way to go. But if there's one thing Coe is good at, it's selecting an image and then playing it. If you hear this one you can say you were there when this phase started. For what it's worth. N.C.

LOWELL GEORGE: Thanks I'll Eat It Here.
Lowell George (vocals, guitar); instrumental and vocal accompaniment. What Do You Want the Girl to Do?; Honest Man; Two Trains; Can't Stand the Rain; and four others.

WARNER BROS. BSK 3194 $7.98, ® M8 3194 $7.98, ® M5 3194 $7.98.

Performance: Okay
Recording: Good

Summary: Lowell George's relatively inept first take-and-out approach didn't, and the result, compared with the debut, is a curiously empty sound. Still, the songs are by and large fascinating, and when everything jells, as on the atmospheric (what an understatement) Portobello Belle or the deliberately driving Angel of Mercy, you know you're in the presence of a really major band. Give "Communique" an A — and wait for their next one.

S.S.
Dyke Parks' lyrics. George's past moments with Little Feat, and so forth. Truth is, though, I have trouble concentrating on this all the way through. The title track, 'Hummer's Ring,' turns out to be a throwaway, too cute to begin with and made even cuter by George's preening delivery. And 'Check to Cheek,' the one involving Parks (or perhaps an aspect of his steel-band phase), is another throwaway, with the added distraction of its use of the harp as a pseudo-Latin instrument; having already been one-upped in Jackson Brown's superior 'Linda Paloma.' In general, the vocals are quite palatable, the instrumentals are intelligent if a little slick—oddly enough, they are most effective when they are full and horned and jazz-influenced, as in 'Easy Money.' Even the thing has a lot of good moments in it. 'Two Trains,' by George, probably the simplest song in the album, and 'Find a River,' the quietest, suggest how good the album could have been if the rest weren't less than the sum of the parts. It's as if George, given a finite amount of space, put in elements to prove he's bright at the expense of elements to prove he's musical.

**N.C.**

**DYKE PARKS:** In the context of this album, with our time and place, it's not a sure-fire gimmick. But there are moments when the melody is stripped down to its core, the harp adds a touch of nuance, and the horns add a layer of richness. It's a throwaway with the added distraction of its throwaway status, but there's a flicker of intelligence that might carry it through the noise of theinant.
concerned, as he does about everything. And he plays a mean guitar.  

P.K.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

MILLIE JACKSON: A Moment’s Pleasure. Millie Jackson (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. Never Change Lovers in the Middle of the Night; Seeing You Again; Kiss You All Over; Rising Cost of Love; and four others. Spring SP-1-6722 $7.98, ® 8T-1-6722; $7.98. © CT-1-6722 $7.98.

Performance: Clever raunch

Recording: Good

Millie Jackson’s ability to deliver those deliciously dirty innuendoes has gained her a notoriousness that all but obscures her talent as a singer. But she is above all a singer, a descendant of the old-time blues women who were masters of sexual innuendo.

This time around, Jackson’s emphasis is on singing rather than rapping, and “A Moment’s Pleasure” has a trace more subtlety than some of her other outings have had. The outstanding tracks here, Never Change Lovers in the Middle of the Night and Once You’ve Had It, make it on the basis of her ability to project a powerful funk flavor through sheer vocal interpretation. More than any singer out there today, she recalls the cackily dirty innuendoes has gained her a no-less-impious admirer. And he does about everything. And he plays a mean guitar.

N.C.

RICKIE LEE JONES. Rickie Lee Jones (vocals, guitar, keyboards); instrumental and vocal accompaniment. Chuck E.’s in Love; On Saturday Afternoons in 1963; Night Train; Young Blood; Easy Money; The Last Chance Texaco; and five others. Warner Bros. BSK 3296 $7.98, ® M8 3296 $7.98, © M5 3296 $7.98.

Performance: Wayward

Recording: Good

Having heard her album and seen her rather strange performance on television, I can only conclude that Rickie Lee Jones is one of those crooners who is making a private career of going off into corners, telling themselves jokes, and giggling appreciatively.

She has a limited vocal range which she dangerously—nay, calamitously—extends on some selections, much as Melanie used to do on her early albums. Jones’ shrillness may be excused (and even praised) on the grounds that she is being sincere. I don’t doubt her sincerity, but mere candor is not an excuse for public amateurism.

As a writer, she’s not much on melody, but she is an excellent lyricist. Like Tom Waits, she is fascinated by losers, bombs, and the other flotsam of society, and she seems to take a special delight in the futility of human endeavors. The promotional push on the album—and its reception by the audience—indicates that both label and listeners aren’t welcoming a new talent so much as they are a merchandisable cult figure—that is, this year’s merchandisable cult figure. J.V.

ALBERT KING: New Orleans Heat. Albert King (vocals, guitar); instrumental accompaniment. Born Under a Bad Sign; The Very Thought of You; I Got Evil; Angel of Mercy; I Got the Blues; and four others. Tomato TOM-7022 $7.98, ® 8553-7022H $7.95, © 5353-7022H $7.95.

Performance: Very good

Recording: Very good

Albert King has always been a warm, entertaining, easy-to-enjoy bluesman. Al Green and Toussaint’s production on this outing is designed to make King more accessible to an American pop audience without making him blatantly commercial, but I also suspect that this album was made primarily for consumption in Europe, where the audience is worshipful of the blues and takes its musical form and correspondingly adoring of black American blues singers.

Toussaint appears on several of the cuts as keyboardist, along with George Porter, Jr. and Leo Nocentelli, bassist and guitarist, respectively, for the Meters, a New Orleans group that Toussaint and his partner Marshall Sehorn have touted and produced since the late 1960s. The remake of Born Under a Bad Sign, which King first cut when he was on the Stax Records roster, is less than the original, as is Get Out of My Life Woman, which Toussaint wrote and produced for Lee Dorsey in the 1960s, and The Feeling Is Gone (Albert and B.B. have been, for many years, reticent about whether they are cousins). The high point of the album, however, is King’s smooth and convincing vocal on the decidedly non-blues crooner ballad The Very Thought of You, complete with tasteful strings. It reveals a new aspect of King’s talent and one that I hope he’ll continue to show in subsequent albums. Gentlemen—to the King’s health! J.V.

THE KING’S SINGERS (see Going on Record, page 54)

CHERYL LADD: Dance Forever. Cheryl Ladd (vocals); instrumental accompaniment. Dance Forever; Better Days; Still Awake; On the Run; Teach Me Tonight; and five others. Capitol ST-11927 $7.98, ® 8XT-11927 $7.98, © 4XT-11927 $7.98.

Performance: Unmemorable

Recording: Very good

Cheryl Ladd’s version of Charlie’s Angels fame, decked out in a stripped-down version of a cowgirl outfit complete with leather boots (Continued on page 86)
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It is class or is it gall? And whichever it is, who'd have enough of it to let the whole front of his album jacket be the international distress “Oscar” flag for “man overboard”? James Taylor, that’s who, he can get an album identified with nothing more than a little lettering on the spine. This seems to fit with the almost reverential deference he’s shown in such pop-culture showcases as Saturday Night Live. If you get the feeling he’s a con-

almost reverential deference he’s shown in James Taylor, that’s who; he can get an album distress “Oscar” flag for “man overboard”? front of his album jacket be the international RA 1.117.1, Clit

besides Randy Newman and Tom T. Hall try autobiographical), and not too many people (aside from the indirect way that all writing is probably nothing here that is autobiographical nothing/But an awful boring job.” There’s ain’t easy/Millwork ain’t hard/Millwork ain’t

over cuckolding his best friend. The hero of I Will Not Lie for You is agonizing about the way it uses trucker clichés. Is That the Way You Look is a weird little number, too, although not necessarily unpleasant. It almost works as a satire of a type of song, but the lyrics are so monotonous they get in the way. Its sound almost bails it out; there is no lead instrument in the backing, just bass and drums and overdubbed vocals.

whether you’re holding out for Neil Young to be the first grey eminence of the Baby Boom or you’re trying, like Taylor, to make your own individual adjustment to the Seventies, it’s hard to resist a lot of “Flag” because of its stories. It understands, as did the TV program Mary Hartman Mary Hart-

man before it, that you never outgrow your vagueness or to most of us. The only thing that really bottoms out, though, is Brother Trucker, which has that fatal secondhand sound about the way it uses trucker clichés. Is That the Way You Look is a weird little number, too, although not necessarily unpleasant. It almost works as a satire of a type of song, but the lyrics are so monotonous they get in the way. Its sound almost bails it out; there is no lead instrument in the backing, just bass and drums and overdubbed vocals.

PHIL GILL: “Flag” works extremely well when Taylor is able to show empathy, as in Millworker.

The backsliding comes when he doesn’t find either the empathy (Brother Trucker) or a rational new way to sing an old song (Day Tripper). And Carole King’s Up on the Roof is of marginal use to most of us. The only thing that really bottoms out, though, is Brother Trucker, which has that fatal secondhand sound about the way it uses trucker clichés. Is That the Way You Look is a weird little number, too, although not necessarily unpleasant. It almost works as a satire of a type of song, but the lyrics are so monotonous they get in the way. Its sound almost bails it out; there is no lead instrument in the backing, just bass and drums and overdubbed vocals.

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man before it, that you never outgrow your vagueness or to most of us. The only thing that really bottoms out, though, is Brother Trucker, which has that fatal secondhand sound about the way it uses trucker clichés. Is That the Way You Look is a weird little number, too, although not necessarily unpleasant. It almost works as a satire of a type of song, but the lyrics are so monotonous they get in the way. Its sound almost bails it out; there is no lead instrument in the backing, just bass and drums and overdubbed vocals.

First the good news. Taylor doesn’t sound like a man overboard but like a man who’s been at work writing songs, and he has four or five here that will grab you. The narrator of Johnnie Comes Back (Johnnie is a girl) could be a pimp or a pusher: “Me, I’m just an evil demon/I’m playing on her weakness.” The hero of I Will Not Lie for You is agonizing over cuckolding his best friend. The hero of Sleep Come Free Me is in jail. And Millworker has a female protagonist who says, “Millwork ain’t easy/Millwork ain’t hard/Millwork ain’t nothing/But an awful boring job.” There’s probably nothing here that is autobiographical (aside from the indirect way that all writing is autobiographical), and not too many people besides Randy Newman and Tom T. Hall try this imaginative-writing stuff in the pop field. “Flag” works extremely well when Taylor is able to show empathy, as in Millworker.

The backsliding comes when he doesn’t find either the empathy (Brother Trucker) or a rational new way to sing an old song (Day Tripper). And Carole King’s Up on the Roof is of marginal use to most of us. The only thing that really bottoms out, though, is Brother Trucker, which has that fatal secondhand sound about the way it uses trucker clichés. Is That the Way You Look is a weird little number, too, although not necessarily unpleasant. It almost works as a satire of a type of song, but the lyrics are so monotonous they get in the way. Its sound almost bails it out; there is no lead instrument in the backing, just bass and drums and overdubbed vocals.

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Imagine the scene. Nick Lowe, emaciated Limey poseur, bon vivant, and general wise guy, spends his first night at the Nashville home of his sweetheart, Carlene Carter. The next morning they're having coffee in the kitchen, both of them a little bleary-eyed, when suddenly the door swings open and in walks a imposing figure dressed in black. Nick rubs his eyes, and the figure extends a hand in his direction. "Hi," he intones, "I'm Johnny Cash."

That's a true story, by the way. I bring it up because of the sense of dislocation and culture shock it invokes, since Nick Lowe's music, at its best, has about the same effect: he's a master of the incongruous and the slightly warped. Last year's "Pure Pop for Now People" pretty much established him as the Champ in that regard, and even some savant in its unlikely merger of adorable melodies and lyrics about castrating Castro the beginnings of a whole new genre: Non Sequitur Rock.

Those people will probably be a tad disappointed with this year's model, since it is in no way a mere reprise of the last. The reason for that is simple: it's not really a Lowe solo album at all, but the second installment of the collaboration with Dave Edmunds and Rockpile begun on Edmunds' "Tracks on Wax 4," and Edmunds has slightly more conventional musical concerns, such as reworking genre cliches and searching for the ultimate Chuck Berry riff. None of this bothers me in the slightest, however, because the overall sound of the thing is reminiscent of what both men were doing in their pub days—whipping blues, rock, and pop into a heady confection—and because Edmunds' guitar is nicely up front throughout and as always quite brilliant: just listen to the way he opens up Mickey Jupp's otherwise unremarkable Switch Board Susan. Further, there are some songs here that will make you swoon the way all those old Hollies and Searchers 45s did in the Summer of Your Teenage; American Squirm, in fact, may be the best British Invasion tune written in 1979, and Cruel to Be Kind isn't far off the mark, either.

Let us not mince words. "Labour of Lust" is everything fluff should be and rarely is; artless, sly, and quite sublime. Rarely has so little been said so exquisitely.

S. S.

**MANFRED MANN'S EARTH BAND: Angel Station.**

Manfred Mann's Earth Band (vocals and instrumentals). Don't Kill It Carol; You Angel You; Hollywood Town; "Belle" of the Earth; Platform End; and four others. WARNER BROS. BSK 3302 $7.98, © M8 3302 $7.98, © M5 3302 $7.98.

Performance: Weak

Recording: Good

Something has been bothering me about Manfred Mann for quite a while: how is it that a talented fellow with fifteen years of experience in the music business has had only three real hits (Do Wah Diddy, The Mighty Quinn, Blinded by the Light), two near hits (Pretty Flamingo, Living Without You), and never a follow-up single? Since he formed the Earth Band some seven years ago, Mann has put out several albums that are mostly rococo binges on the synthesizer in support of meandering tunes with opaque lyrics. But he is capable of succeeding commercially without compromising his artistic integrity—both Dylan's The Mighty Quinn and Springsteen's Blinded by the Light had mediocre melodies, but Mann's arrangements and performances of them were great. So why doesn't he do it more often?

Mann's new album is a barrage of flippodoodle that attempts to compromise between commerciality and his personal musical preferences, but it is a weak compromise. The Dylan item this time out (it is traditional for Mann to include a Dylan piece on each album) is You Angel You, a cutey-poo ditty from Our Bob's later period. The only other cut on which Mann sounds serious is Resurrection, an attack on the commercialization of Christ. No hit here. Is Manfred Mann running away from success? Judging from "Angel Station"... I'd say yes.

**FRANK MARINO & MAHOGANY RUSH: Tales of the Unexpected.**

Frank Marino (vocals, guitar, synthesizers); Paul Harwood (bass); Jim Ayoub (drums). Sister Change; All Along the Watchtower; Norwegian Wood; Tales of the Unexpected; Down, Down, Down; and three others. COLUMBIA JC 35753
Performance: Dry competence squared
Recording: Good

This half-live, half-studio effort seems mostly Frank Marino's trip. He produced it, wrote everything but the Dylan song and the Beatles song, sings lead, plays lead, runs the synthesizers, and appears alone in the cover painting with a heavenly light shining down on him. The painting is a blue monochrome, and let that tip you off, blue being a cold color. Marino reminds me of Jimi Hendrix if Hendrix had had an on-off button and a volume knob on him. Forty minutes—or forty hours—into the title song you realize there ain't gonna be anything unexpected, just more speed for the sake of speed and practically no heed paid to such elements of music as texture, contrast, and dynamics. Marino's "writing" is mostly quick-sketch, elemental frameworks for instrumental breaks, although Woman wouldn't be bad if you took his wah-wah pedal away from him and gave him some kind of pill that would enable his ears to keep up with his hands. Mahogany Rush is kind of a nice, quaint name, a throwback to the psychedelic era. Too bad they had to take it so literally. N.C.

Mickey Newbury: The Sailor. Mickey Newbury (vocals); orchestra. Blue Sky Shinin'; Long Gone; The Night You Wrote That Song; Let It Go; A Weed Is a Weed; and four others. ABC HB44017 $7.98.

Performance: Very good
Recording: Good

As good as he often is as a writer and performer, Mickey Newbury has an odd habit of refusing to deliver the follow-through, knock-out punch. A Weed Is a Weed is a case in point. It's outright c-&-w, and very good c-&-w: he sets up a strong and interesting situation in which the protagonist-narrator tells of growing up ashamed of his father, deliberately creating trouble for the sheer hell of it, being angry and lazy, and meeting a girl in a bar who is drawn to him because "she likes misfits." (Novels have been built on less; at least one very good one, The Magnificent Ambersons, deals with the same theme as Newbury's song.) But after all of the careful, concise exposition, Newbury is content to drop it there with a pulpy thud. His conclusion that "Earth and water can create most anything/But a weed is a weed" doesn't exactly take one's breath away, nor does it satisfy any of the interest he's aroused. In the straight-on commercial stuff, such as Let It Go or Let's Have a Party, he remains the MOR pro he's always been. But he could be a lot more than MOR. P.R.

No Dice: 2 Faced. No Dice (vocals and instrumentalists). Momma Do Stop Your Children Watching What Your Momma Do; Angel with a Dirty Face; Shooting in the Dark; I Keep It to Myself; No Stone Unturned; and four others. CAPITOL ST-11925 $7.98. © 4XT-11925 $7.98, © 8XT-11925 $7.98.

Performance: Good
Recording: Good

No Dice is a British group, and the British younger generation seems forever obsessed with American rhythm-and-blues. Well, why (Continued on page 92)
The story of Sweeney Todd, the "demon barber" of London's Fleet Street who cut the throats of his customers and delivered their corpses to his accomplice, Mrs. Lovett, for processing in her meat-pie manufactory below his shop, may be rooted in historical reality or it may be little more than a legend. In any case, the "musical thriller" based on it, with a book by Hugh Wheeler (drawn from a play by Christopher Bond) and music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, has become something of a show-business legend since it opened on Broadway in March.

The show, which won the Drama Critics Circle award as best musical of 1979 and eight Tony awards, offers Sondheim's most complex score to date, brilliantly orchestrated by Jonathan Tunick. Sweeney Todd also boasts two superb, justifiably extolled performances: one by Len Cariou as Sweeney, the other by Angela Lansbury, a living cartoon as Nellie Lovett the pie maker, who displays on stage an expression at once droll and incorrigibly amoral.

Lansbury supplies a leavening of outrageous comedy to a production otherwise relying more on the Grand Guignol gruesomeness of Harold Prince's elaborate staging than on the sort of dark political humor that distinguishes the Brecht/Weill Three-penny Opera, with which it has been compared. Sondheim's score, containing some twenty-five songs, seems at first, despite the Gilbertian rhymes that pile up in those ingenious cat's cradles of lyrics we have come to expect of him, closer to opera than to the Broadway musical (there are rumors that Beverly Sills has her eye on it for the New York City Opera). Yet one wonders how it would fare in that category, grand opera in general being judged by humanistic standards more severe than those applied to Grand Guignol. The terrifyingly talented Sondheim may be a giant among pygmies in today's musical theater, but, as John Lahr pointed out in a recent article in Harper's, even his "appetite for blood is bloodless."

But what if Sweeney Todd is only heard, not seen? I got a chance to discuss just this question when I spoke with Miss Lansbury herself during a pause in last March's recording session at the RCA studios. "What," I asked, "is the difference between preparing Sweeney Todd for discussion doing the show on stage?"

"You have to assimilate the character that you're playing with your voice," Miss Lansbury explained. "You no longer can depend on visual appearance. It's simply a matter of bringing all those qualities that you have on stage through the voice. Yet we're working on a stage here too, as you can see. It's almost the same position in relation to the orchestra except that they're spread out. We're able to project because the mikes are high enough, just as we do on stage—the same technique."

This works, I think, insofar as the characters played by Lansbury and Cariou are concerned, but it does not serve to communicate anything of the show's overwhelming visual elements, and they are sorely missed. Originally, producer Tom Shepard wanted to record the entire production, dialogue and all, but that would have run over the two-record limit, and some of the dialogue was cut. As Miss Lansbury pointed out, though, "seventy to eighty per cent of the show is actually sung" and there would be little difficulty in retaining the continuity of the story with brief bridges of dialogue.

On records, stripped of the pricey "production values" of iron girders, Victorian machinery, and trap doors in and around the little meat-pie-and-barber-shop building where most of the action takes place, and minus the eerie lighting, the choreographed movements, the human fingernails turning up in Mrs. Lovett's dreadful pies, and the glitter of fine-honed razors, how does the much-heralded Sweeney Todd hold up for the ear alone? One might say that it is one of the most intelligent original-cast recordings ever put together. A complete libretto of the recorded version (which even includes one song, Johanna, cut from the show during try-outs) is supplied, fleshed out (so to speak) with brief descriptions of the omitted portions of talk, making the whole thing as easy to follow and as effective as it is on stage, if not more so.

Never for an instant does the action drag, and without the Guignol effects to distract, it is possible to appreciate more readily the impressive structure of the score, framed by the mournful, rather haunting Ballad of Sweeney Todd, the hilarity of Mrs. Lovett's The Worst Pies in London, and the fleeting sweetness of Sweet Finch and Linnet Bird, sung by Sarah Rice as Johanna, one of a pair of young lovers in the somewhat slighted subplot. Then there is the circusy elan of Miracle Elixir (in which Joaquin Romaguera, complete with comic Italian accent, portrays the montebank Pirelli whom Sweeney is to supplant as the "king of the barbers" on Fleet Street), the jaunty music-hall airiness of Lansbury's big number By the Sea in the second act, the expertly crafted cantata-like passages for chorus, the atmosphere of murky mystery and melodrama generated through Tunick's tingling orchestrations, and the exceptionally alive, spacious recorded sound.

The album is, in short, a meticulously wrought tribute to Sondheim's almost incredible skill—he does so many things so well, so conscientiously, and with such style, taste, and elegance. Nonetheless, I found myself wondering more than once whether he might not be willing to trade all his sophisticated skills, even the whole complex, hair-raising contrapuntal that is Sweeney Todd, for one singable, simple, warmhearted song from the pen of, say, Irving Berlin.

—Paul Kresh


Angela Lansbury (Mrs. Lovett) and Len Cariou (Sweeney)
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PLAY PINK NOISE
BEFORE PINK FLOYD.
not? The Rolling Stones started as a white blues band and became an institution. Paul McCartney could scream a neo-Little Richard vocal better than anybody, Eric Burden declared himself a worshiper of black American music, Van Morrison sang jazz and blues and cut tunes like Don't Start Cryin' Now, the obscure B-side of Slim Harpo's regional American blues hit Rainin' in My Heart, and the Moody Blues took their name from a tune cut by Slim Harpo.

So the wheel of rock history turns in tighter and tighter concentric circles. It is unlikely that any British blues band will ever break as big as the Stones did, but, Lordy, they do keep trying. No Dice are impressive for their verve and dedication, but listening to more than a few cuts is anticlimactic.

ORLEANS: Forever. Orleans (vocals and instrumentals). Love Takes Time; Don't Throw Our Love Away; Keep On Rollin'; and five others. AN 7071 $5.98.

Performance: Swell, but . . .
Recording: Very good

Roomful of Blues takes as models the late-Forties recordings—usually made on a local or regional basis—of black rhythm-and-blues combos. The most famous and successful of these combos was the one captained by Dave Bartholomew in New Orleans with Fats Domino on piano and vocals, but there were many others, among them the stable of musicians and singers Johnny Otis arranged for and produced in Los Angeles. These early rhythm-and-blues combos were almost interchangeable in style and instrumentation, but they had a lot of entertainment value—boy, what fun they were! Roomful of Blues' emulation of them is well-nigh perfect, and this album has a clean sound and aggressive bite thanks to producer Joel Dorn (he produced Roberta Flack's The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face). But, while "Let's Have a Party" is almost a museum band. Their sound is not so much captured in vinyl as it is preserved in amber; it has a captivating past but, alas, no future.

BIFF ROSE: The Messiah Album Live at Catskill. Biff Rose (vocals, piano). He Had His Fling; Take a Stand; Japanese Transistor; Leviathan; and four others. PAC7-127 $7.98.

Performance: Funny once or twice
Recording: Good

This is the first I've heard of Biff Rose since about 1969, but he seems to be having a good time singing "I don't want to be a star" and doing a good enough comic monologue to become one, maybe, here in the comedy-crazy Seventies (while they last). Rose, who spends most of the first side of 'The Messiah Album' on monologues, is more cerebral than the average comic, and most of this is based on the vicissitudes of language—and the renderings of it; he has a good ear and easily slips from one of this country's dialects to another. The second side is mostly his own songs, which are mostly comic in the making-you-think-way—in the tradition of Mort Sahl, Mark Russell, Russell Baker, et al.—that Americans seem to find structurally comfortable, even though the evidence suggests that they mostly think about thinking and don't actually go through with it. The problem with the record is the problem with spoken-word records: they just don't bear repeated playing the way music does. Rose has a good live act.

THE RUBINOOS: Back to the Drawing Board! The Rubinoos (vocals and instrumentals). Fallin' in Love; I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend; Promise Me; Hold Me; Ronnie; and six others. Berserkley JBZ-0061 $6.98, © 8380-0080 $7.95, © 5380-0080 $7.95.

Performance: Good
Recording: Good

JONATHAN RICHMAN & THE MODERN LOVERS: Back in Your Life. Jonathan Richman (vocals, guitar); instrumental and vocal accompaniment. Abdul and Cleopatra; (She's Gonna) Respect Me; Lover Please; Afection; Buzz Buzz Buzz; Back in Your Life; and six others. Berserkley JBZ-0060 $6.98, © 8380-0060H $7.95, © 5380-0060H $7.95.

Performance: Cockeyed
Recording: Good

Berserkley, a label located in Berkeley, California (didja get the neat-o play on words, gang?), specializes in recording groups that play traditional pop-rock styles of the late Fifties and the early to middle Sixties. Contemporary groups playing pastiches of everyone from Fabian to Herman's Hermits induce nostalgia for a time when, it is supposed, things were simpler, the world was better, and rock was young. In other words—Brigadoon.

Near-clone groups like the Rubinoos are fun to listen to for a while, just as a good new Dixieland jazz band is entertaining until you get to the point where you'd rather go home and play records by the masters. The Rubinoos are in the Beatles/Herman's Hermits style, with catchy riffs and cute lyrics, and they do a good job of re-creating the sounds of the early 1960s. Jonathan Richman, however, is as much a puzzle as ever. He sings off-key and in a quavering baritone. I still can't figure out whether he knows he can't sing, as I suspect, in which case the performances are deliberately funny, or he thinks he can sing and he's just embarrassingly funny. Either album is worth a couple of spins, but not much beyond that.

SQUEEZE: Cool for Cats. Squeeze (vocals and instrumentals). Slap & Tickle; Revue; Touching Me, Touching You; It's Not Cricket; It's So Dirty; The Knock; Hop Skip & Jump; and five others. A&M SP-4759 $8.98.

Performance: Very good
Recording: Good

Squeeze used to be known as "U.K. Squeeze" but dropped the prefix when confusion resulted in their being mistaken for a group called "U.K." In any event, the two groups are quite different: U.K. wallows in "university" type stews and gloom-and-doom lyrics, but Squeeze, rather than searching for spiritual values, takes it for granted that the human race is a pack of contemptible damned fools. The outer limits of British humor sometimes come as a shock to Americans, who are not used to the explicit sexual frankness...
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In the late Forties, after the grim days of the Second World War, U.S. audiences developed a seemingly insatiable appetite for the "frothy little British comedy" at the movies and the "witty little satirical revue" in the theater. Clever skits and insouciant ballads, with lyrics featuring multiple internal rhymes and aimed at such vulnerable targets as the hostesses at Schrafft's and noisy garbage cans, were the order of the day both on Broadway and off. Sometime in the middle of the Fifties, however, the witty revue as a form retreated to the basements of night clubs and later more or less died. As smugly arch and knowing as their humor was, at their best such shows provided delightfully lighthearted entertainment, and their virtues are still evident in "Make Mine Manhattan and Great Revues Revisited," the latest revival record from that intrepid archeologist of the American musical theater, Ben Bagley.

Side one is almost entirely devoted to ten numbers from Richard Lewine and Arnold Horwitt's Make Mine Manhattan, arranged, as are all the selections on the disc, by Dennis Horwitt's Make Mine Manhattan, arranged, as are all the selections on the disc, by Dennis Deal and Judd Woldin. This popular hit of the 1948 season starred a newly discovered comedian named Sid Caesar, and producer Max Liebman eventually converted it into NBC's celebrated TV series, Your Show of Shows. Just about every song here is a winner, and especially winning is Arthur Siegel as the garbage man in Noises in the Street, which includes sound effects reproducing such early-morning bane of big-city life as rattling trash cans, jackhammers, and slow-starting cars. Siegel also does well by The Subway Song, originally a solo by Caesar; it details the woes of a boy in the Bronx who has to take the IRT originally a solo by Caesar; it details the woes of a boy in the Bronx who has to take the IRT, and later more or less died. As smugly arch and knowing as their humor was, at their best such shows provided delightfully lighthearted entertainment, and their virtues are still evident in "Make Mine Manhattan and Great Revues Revisited," the latest revival record from that intrepid archeologist of the American musical theater, Ben Bagley.

Carleton Carpenter: the Abba-Dabba Honeymooner returns

BEN BAGLEY'S MAKE MINE MANHATTAN AND GREAT REVUES REVISITED.

BEN BAGLEY'S MAKE MINE MANHATTAN AND GREAT REVUES REVISITED.

Nancy Andrews, Carleton Carpenter, Helen Gallagher, Dolores Gray, Estelle Parsons, Lynn Redgrave, Arthur Siegel, Elaine Stritch (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. Anything Can Happen in New York/Manhattan in the Spring; Gentleman Friend; Noises in the Street; My Brudder and Me: I Fell in Love with You; The Subway Song; Phil the Fiddler; Schrafft's; Saturday Night in Central Park; Civilization; After Hours/When Someone You Love Loves You and Mr. Henderson, the latter the saga of a blighted love affair that begins at a late-night bistro; Carleton Carpenter's jaunty delivery of The Show-off, with its shrewd insights into the drawbacks of exhibitionism; Nancy Andrews' singing of Miss Platt Selects Mate, with witty lyrics by Walter and Jean Kerr; and Dolores Gray as Saturday's Child, with equally witty lyrics by Phyllis McGinley. The whole record makes one almost wish that the "witty little satirical revue" could stage a comeback, archness and all.

BEN BAGLEY'S MAKE MINE MANHATTAN AND GREAT REVUES REVISITED, Nancy Andrews, Carleton Carpenter, Helen Gallagher, Dolores Gray, Estelle Parsons, Lynn Redgrave, Arthur Siegel, Elaine Stritch (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. Anything Can Happen in New York/Manhattan in the Spring; Gentleman Friend; Noises in the Street; My Brudder and Me: I Fell in Love with You; The Subway Song; Phil the Fiddler; Schrafft's; Saturday Night in Central Park; Civilization; After Hours/When Someone You Love Loves You and Mr. Henderson, the latter the saga of a blighted love affair that begins at a late-night bistro; Carleton Carpenter's jaunty delivery of The Show-off, with its shrewd insights into the drawbacks of exhibitionism; Nancy Andrews' singing of Miss Platt Selects Mate, with witty lyrics by Walter and Jean Kerr; and Dolores Gray as Saturday's Child, with equally witty lyrics by Phyllis McGinley. The whole record makes one almost wish that the "witty little satirical revue" could stage a comeback, archness and all.

SUSAN: Falling in Love Again. Susan (vocals and instruments). Takin' It Over; I Was Wrong; Marlene; A Little Time; Power; Too Bad; and five others. RCA BXL1-3372 $7.98, © BXSI-3372 $7.98, © BKX1-3372 $7.98.

Performance: Promising

Recording: Good

A wise veteran of the contemporary music-publishing business said recently that rock sounds change but that the construction and attitude of rock songs do not, pointing out that teen-pop items like I Think We're Alone Now, cut in 1967 by Tommy James and the Shondells, could easily be done today by a new group if their vocals were harsher and their guitars mixed louder. A look at the printed lyrics of Susan's music might suggest that, and to a listener to a song that I Think We're Alone Now. The Package/Small Wonder is more successful as a ballad, and When Someone You Love Loves You and Mr. Henderson, the latter the saga of a blighted love affair that begins at a late-night bistro; Carleton Carpenter's jaunty delivery of The Show-off, with its shrewd insights into the drawbacks of exhibitionism; Nancy Andrews' singing of Miss Platt Selects Mate, with witty lyrics by Walter and Jean Kerr; and Dolores Gray as Saturday's Child, with equally witty lyrics by Phyllis McGinley. The whole record makes one almost wish that the "witty little satirical revue" could stage a comeback, archness and all.

THE TARNEY/SPENCER BAND: Run for Your Life. Alan Tarney (guitar, bass, key-
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CIRCLE NO. 20 ON READER SERVICE CARD
New Lost City Ramblers: 20 Years

When I first saw the new two-disc "20 Years/Concert Performances" by the New Lost City Ramblers on my review list, I looked forward to hearing it with all the anticipatory thrill of, say, getting a free ticket to "Billy Carter Live! At the New School!" For I am a variety of snob, you see. It is the innocent result of a semi-heavy to light, classical education at a school where (as a schoolmate of mine recently described it) "our generation was the last gasp of tweed" and where "folk music" was something only precociously political grinds listened to. Then, too, there are my carefully tended sartorial prejudices: space shoes, tie-die, altered blue jeans, worn-to-death western hats, spoon-handle rings, and seed-bead necklaces all turn me off. If I ever come across a pair of space shoes, I'll never hear on the seven o'clock news. Then there are such songs as Soldier's Joy, The Democratic Donkey, and the remarkable The Battle of Maine (the story of a country boy forced into the idiosyncrasies of the Spanish American War) that eerily echo events that have taken place more recently in our history.

But most of all there are the deeply felt, urgently expressed songs about life and death that tower effortlessly above anything we have in today's pop culture. Songs such as the old Carter Family gem Worried Man Blues, the haunting, solo-voice The Unquiet Grave, the rags, and their scriptural message of everyday courage, are accurate reflections of a people, a time, and a way of life that future historians can legitimately use as a basis for understanding the kind of society that made them. Who knows what they'll ever be able to puzzle out from the funereal urban pop—have you ever met anyone in real life even remotely like any character in a Kiss or even a Stones song?

—Peter Reilly

THE NEW LOST CITY RAMBLERS: 20 Years/Concert Performances. Tom Paley, John Cohen, Mike Seeger, Tracy Schwarz (vocals and instruments). Soldier's Joy; Down in the Willow Garden; Brown's Ferry Blues; Too Tight Rag; Little Birdie; Darling Corey; The Democratic Donkey; Poor Ellen Smith; On Some Foggy Mountain Top; Cackling Hen; The Battleship of Maine; Worried Man Blues; The Unquiet Grave, Lady of Carliste; Daniel in the Den of Lions; The Arkansas Traveller; Ain't No Bugs on Me; Sally Goodin; Country Blues; Little Maggie; The Little Girl and the Dreadful Snake; Keep Moving; Turkey in the Straw; She Ticks Me; Black Bottom Strut; Saddle Up the Grey; Mister White's Hand's Hard to Leave You; Sweet Love; Dark Holler Blues; Locks and Bolts; Wildwood Weeds; Milk 'Em in the Evening Blues; Madeleine. Flying Fish 102 (two discs) $14.98.

boards, vocals); Trevor Spencer (drums). Live Again; Run for Your Life; Lies; No Time to Lose; The Race Is Almost Run; I'm Alive; A Heart Will Break Tonight; Far Better Man; and two others. A&M SP-4757 $8.98, © CS-4757 $8.98.

Performance: Okay
Recording: Good

This "band" is actually a duo. Guitarist-bassist-keyboardist-vocalist Alan Tarney and drummer Trevor Spencer are also responsible for all but one of the songs, which are okay but not much better than that. The theme of the album is "It Is Important to Live" (now that's news), and the opening cut actually contains the slogan 'go with the flow,' which conjures up visions of aging hippies reading well-thumbed copies of Alan Watts' books on Zen.

Poor programming compounds my problem with this disc. Side one of any album should be the freest and best cut of the label. No one even remotely like any character in a Kiss or even a Stones song?

—Peter Reilly

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The Ohm L is a highly accurate reproducer of music recorded test, the Ohm L proved to be a highly accurate reproducer of music...The coherent sound produced by this speaker is clear, full, and undistorted.
Linda Clifford has a solid voice—strong, interesting, and fully controlled through an impressive range—and she uses it with uncommon skill in an unusually varied set of songs. Just compare the disco-arranged opener, Hold Me Close, with the soul-belted title song, Let Me Be Your Woman, that follows it.

For those fans who came to Clifford through disco (her knockout version of Cy Coleman's If My Friends Could See Me Now remains one of the best disco translations of a pop standard ever released), the album's second record is the one. It contains all ten minutes and twenty-two seconds of her sensational dance version of Paul Simon's Bridge over Troubled Water, backed up with nearly twelve minutes of Will Holt's sing-along standard One of Those Songs. Both of these are big numbers heavily orchestrated with major horn sections, climbing strings, and chorus back-ups. But Linda Clifford is a big singer. She soars through, around, and above these arrangements, with every word audible and every note perfectly balanced with the music. Bridge is my favorite of the two. The arrangement is considerably richer (the long introduction, for example, skillfully builds tension either on the dance floor or off), and the song itself is better. Clifford sings it with wonderful freedom as a straight gospel number. I can't say that disco adds anything to Bridge over Troubled Water, but in her very capable hands the song has certainly added something to disco.

Performance: Promise fulfilled
Recording: Sparkling

LINDA CLIFFORD: Let Me Be Your Woman.
Linda Clifford (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. Hold Me Close; Sweet Melodies; Bridge over Troubled Water; Don't Give It Up; One of Those Songs; and three others. RSO RS 2-3902 two discs $11.98, 87-2-4003 $11.98, CT-2-3902 $11.98.

Ah, Easy to Be Hard is easily the album's best track. Vicki Sue Robinson's vocal work is very, very good, the lush strings have bite and work well against the doubled beat, and there's engineering magic aplenty. Almost as good is Where Do I Go?, with an extended instrumental middle-section just right for dreamy dancing. On the debit side, Good Morning, Starshine isn't disco at all but straight cha-cha-cha. This album is not the "Disco spectacular" the jacket says it is, but the novel idea is well developed. It's a good record for um...Sunday afternoon dancing.

MADLEEN KANE: Cheri. Madleen Kane (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. Forbidden Love/Fire in Your Heart; Secret Love Affair; Don't Leave Me Now; and four others. WARNER BROS. BSK 3315 $7.98, MB 3315 $7.98, MS 3315 $7.98.

Performance: Half hit, half miss
Recording: Terrific

The front cover of this album spells out "Madleen Kane" in great big letters, and the back sports no fewer than five affectionate snapshots of this dynamite blonde who looks like a combination of Cheryl Ladd and Britt Ekland. But the real star of this half wonderful dance record is the production team, which includes engineer, arranger, and mixers who have been instrumental in the phenomenal development of disco. With all the expertise of Thor Baldursson, Jurgens Kopppers, Jim Burgess, and others supporting MS. Kane's vocalism, you'd think there'd be no way she could miss.

On side one she doesn't. The unbroken medley begins with Kane's very successful Forbidden Love/Fire in Your Heart pairing and ends with a smile-filled, arm-flailing delight called Secret Love Affair. It's recorded in a seamless style that calls for close back-up vocal harmonies and dramatic musical shifts that continually refresh the mood without breaking it. The ride-out picks up the opening theme, which returns like an old friend and makes for a satisfying dance trip indeed. As always with European engineering, the sound is bright, clear, and spacious.

I wish I could be as enthusiastic about the rest of the album, which spotlights Kane in a series of sappy ballads over-arranged for a back-up chorus worthy of Diana Ross and shot through with typical Europop electronic effects. There's one exception, a charming soft-shoe number, Retro (I Long for Long Ago), all about Garbo, Chaplin, Monroe, and the good old days. The mood, the arrangement, and the voice match beautifully. But the rest is uninspired songs sung in an uninspired little-girl voice. As a plain singer of songs, Madleen Kane doesn't rise to any where near the heights she hits as a doer of disco.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT
EVELYN "CHAMPAGNE" KING: Music Box. Evelyn "Champagne" King (vocals); (Continued on page 102)
Rich Lights
from Viceroy

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During his 1959 tour of England, Buddy Holly was asked by reporters what he thought of jazz, which they took for granted was America's national music. Holly grinned and said, "Oh, jazz is for the stay-at-homes."

He was right, of course. For thirty years jazz and jazz musicians have had the same problem: having lost a mass audience, how to regain it? In recent years, one attempt to solve the problem has been so-called "fusion" music, with jazz performers playing pop and rock tunes in search of a happy compromise. But most fusion has been unsuccessful, for a variety of reasons, the most common of which is that the musicians aren't happy compromising their styles. Established, bona-fide wall-bangers may feel their souls are being peddled like pizzas when they are called on to render a Barry Manilow hit in twelve tones (I think they've got a case).

Now, however, there is a new generation of musicians that is primarily interested in and committed to jazz but has grown up with pop and rock; its members are more amenable to compromise than their elders, provided the results have some integrity. At this point what's needed to make fusion really work is a simpatico record producer who understands both the demands of the marketplace and also, for lack of a better word, funk. By chance, two fusion albums featuring keyboardist Richard Tee have recently been released, both boasting knowledgeable producers. Listening to Tee's own "Strokin'" (Columbia/Tappan Zee) and Stuff's "Stuff It!" (Warner Bros.) gives a good idea of what happy compromises jazz can make to survive outside the realm of purists and, not so incidentally, bring the musicians some bread for their efforts.

When I first heard the Stuff album I was struck by how much it reminded me of Booker T. and the MGs circa 1968. There was the same laid-back, comfortable playing, the same kind of exchanges between keyboards and lead guitar, even a Stuff version of Baby, Baby, Sweet Baby, a cut on the MGs' "Soul Limbo" album (originally on Stax and reissued on the Fantasy label after it acquired the old Stax catalog). A quick look at the credits explained all: "Stuff It!" was produced by Steve Cropper, who was lead guitarist for the MGs. Richard Tee is cast here in the role of Booker T. Jones, and guitarist Cornell Dupree and Eric Gale are Cropper's stand-ins. Despite the new de rigueur horn section and FBC (Foxy Black Chicks) background vocals, "Stuff It!" fondly recalls the days when the MGs invented chamber rock.

"Strokin'," Tee's solo album (again with Gale and drummer Steve Gadd among the back-up musicians), was produced by Bob James. Unlike Cropper, James is an established jazz producer and himself a keyboardist, since his sympathies are with Tee he gives him his head. James has a more resolute approach to fusion than Cropper (he even includes disco boom-boom elements on this disc), but he is just as concerned with providing enough jazz to keep the players happy as with trying to please a wide pop audience. Not that Cropper doesn't keep his musicians happy too; the difference is that James aims to please a wide pop audience while James is more clinical and intense. Cropper's more sensual.

Both albums have many satisfying moments. You'll find your own if you listen to them—and you should—but my preferences on the Stuff LP are Gordon's Theme, which has the same opening as Love Nest, and Do It Again, with an infectious um-pum-pum shuffle rhythm. On Tee's solo album the standouts are Every Day, by Tee and Bill Withers, I Wanted It Too, with a harmonica solo by ace session guitarist Hugh McCracken, and Tee's Arabic Nights version of Ellington's Take the "A" Train.

These are important albums, not only because they contain first-rate performances but also because their "club-date" style may help overcome the "stay-at-home" syndrome that has plagued jazz for too long. The fusion they represent may be able to return jazz to the mass audience it has so long missed and needed. Here's hoping.

—Joel Vance

STUFF: Stuff It! Richard Tee (keyboards); Cornell Dupree, Eric Gale (guitars); Steve Gadd, Chris Parker (drums); Gordon Edwards (bass); other musicians. Mighty Love; Dance with Me; Since You've Been Gone (Baby, Baby, Sweet Baby); Always; Stuff It; Love Having You Around; Rainbows; Gordon's Theme; Talkin' About My Love for You; Do It Again. WARNER BROS. BSK 3262 $7.98, ® M8 3262 $7.98, © M5 3262 $7.98.

RICHARD TEE: Strokin'. Richard Tee (keyboards); Eric Gale (guitar); Steve Gadd (drums); Chuck Rainey (bass); Hugh McCracken (harmonica); Mike Brecker (saxophone); Tom Scott (lyricon); other musicians. First Love; Every Day; Strokin'; I Wanted It Too; Virginia Sunday; Jesus Children of America; Take the "A" Train. COLUMBIA/TAPPAN ZEE JC 35695 $7.98, ® JCA 35695 $7.98, © JCT 35695 $7.98.
vocal and instrumental accompaniment. Step-
pin' Out; I Think My Heart Is Telling; Music Box; and five others. RCA AFL1-3033 $7.98, 0 AFS1-3033 $7.98, 0 AFK1-3033 $7.98.

Performance: Intoxicating
Recording: Good

I like what Evelyn "Champagne" King does with a song, but I cannot imagine why she latched onto such an incongruous nickname. Instead of tickling the nose and creeping into one's sensibilities the way champagne does, she comes on with the heat-generating power of a double bourbon straight up. What she sings is quality disco in which the beat never covers up the content of the songs. And in this case, they happen to be better than aver-
age songs, conveying a sense of goodhearted night-time fun rather than the frantic pursuit of illusion so common to this genre. The title track sets the pace and tone for a set that will please even disco detractors. P.G.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT
SYLVESTER: Stars. Sylvestor (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. Stars; I (Who Have Nothing); and two others. Fantas-
vy F-9579 $7.98.

Performance: Star-trip
Recording: Sensational

First of all, I want to elevate a female trio called Hodges, James, and Smith to co-star billing on this dynamite LP. (The group's own solo career seems to have become secondary to their excellent back-up work for other artists.) Sylvestor has sense enough to use them brilliantly in both songs on side one, alternately pushing them front and center and taking the background for himself, then pulling them way back to harmonize with his own remarkable high tenor voice.

But that's only one of the good things about this record. The title song is a compendium of disco effects: crystal-clear sound, constant shifts in dynamics, soaring arrangements, and a driving, stomping finale to the repetition of "You are a star, you are a star." You feel like a star too, out there on the dance floor, and it feels wonderful.

Body Strong is shorter—too short, in fact—but it too is special. For example, there's a startling set of string chords suddenly intro-
duced in the middle that sounds like some-
thing from the soundtrack of an epic Western. It's different, and it works. I Need Somebody to Love Tonight is a lesson in disco diversity. The lyric is delivered in a measured, ballad style, almost crooned; behind it the beat chal-
lenges, teases, and sweeps the dancer away into the battle.

From the very first time you play a rec-
ord, a process of decay takes place. The
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VILLAGE PEOPLE: Go West. Village People (vocals and instrumentals) In the Navy; Get Away Holiday; Manhattan Woman; and three others. CASABLANCA NBLP 7144 $8.98, 0 NBL5 7144 $8.98.

Performance: Awful
Recording: Okay

Here are some more noisy, driving, un-
relievedly monotonous arrangements from the Village People. And more monster hits. Some things you don't even try to explain.

Not everything here is so successful, but
you can still chalk up a big, big hit for an
innovative and welcome new disco voice. E.B.

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© VENUS DODSON: Night Rider. RFC RCD 8824 disco disc $3.98.

© AL HUDSON: Happy Feet. MCA MCA-1136 $7.98, © MCA-1136 $7.98, © MCAT-1136 $7.98.

© THE PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: Turn the Music Up. VANGUARD VSD-79421 $7.98, © 8V-79421 $7.98, © CV-79421 $7.98.

© POUSSEZ. VANGUARD VSD-79412 $7.98, © 8V-79412 $7.98, © CV-79412 $7.98.

(List compiled by John Harrison.)
In this album we have one and a half hours of music made on the night of November 7, 1955, when Clifford Brown, Max Roach, and bassist George Morrow jammed at Chicago's Bee Hive club with saxophonist Sonny Rollins and three local musicians. The album contains some very fine music, but the sound is hard to take and I wish the material had been trimmed somewhat. Roach is credited with producing the album, and the trimming could have started with his own solos, the drums being particularly distorted by what sounds like a case of an excessively high recording level. A good example of a bad spot is the last nine minutes of Cherokee: it is one long, grating rumble of broken sounds through which one discerns (at times, barely) a guitar and drum solo capped by a fragmented ensemble close. If they issue recordings of this quality, the record companies should print a warning on the cover.

To sum it up, Clifford Brown devotees will not be disappointed by what he does here, but this album is only for the very dedicated jazz fan who has heard enough to know what these recordings would have sounded like if properly made.

C.A.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

DON BYAS/BUD POWELL: A Tribute to Cannonball. Don Byas (tenor saxophone); Bud Powell (piano); Idrees Suleiman (trumpet); Pierre Michelot (bass); Kenny Clark (drums). Just One of Those Things; Cherokee; Woody'n You; and two others. COLUMBIA JG 35965 two discs $7.98.

Performance: Beggars can't be choosers, but... Recording: For callous ears

In 1946, Don Redman's band gave European audiences their first postwar taste of live American jazz. One of the stars of that orchestra was tenor saxophonist Don Byas, and I still remember the thrill of hearing him play How High the Moon on a September night in Copenhagen's KB Hall. He could not have had a more receptive audience, which may be why he chose to remain in Europe rather than return with Redman. This album was recorded in Paris in December 1961 under the supervision of Cannonball Adderley, who would have thought the title quite inappropriate. Cannonball was very much aware of his roots; this album was his tribute to Byas and Powell, and a fine tribute it is.

Though pianist Bud Powell's mental illness often devastatingly affected his playing, he was, happily, in good form for these recordings. But it is Byas who really shines. A veteran of the Andy Kirk, Lucky Millinder, and Count Basie bands, he was steeped in the swing tradition, but he had an open mind and a keen interest in bop, which had led him to an association with Dizzy Gillespie before joining Redman for the European tour. Here, against a solidly swinging background and with boppish support from Suleiman, Byas' smooth, full-bodied horn runs effortlessly through a varied repertoire. A fine balladeer, he sails through Hampton Hawes' Jackie and Benny Golson's I Remember Clifford. Of the faster numbers, the most outstanding is Cherokee, the old Ray Noble tune that became a major vehicle for bebop exhibitionists; Byas' Cherokee is a tour de force that reminds us how versatile a musician this swing veteran was.

C.A.

LORRAINE FEATHER: Sweet Lorraine. Lorraine Feather (vocals); Scott Hamilton (tenor saxophone); Ted Nash (saxophone, flute); other musicians: Skylark; Wave; Four; All Blues; Moondance; and five others. CONCORD JAZZ CJ-78 $7.98.

Performance: Expert Recording: Good

Here is Lorraine Feather, daughter of famed jazz critic and writer Leonard Feather, in an expert, stylish recital. It's all sharp, snappy, glossy stuff, and Ms. Feather is on her toes throughout. She sings with a clear-voiced musicianship in that almost letter/note-perfect international style that has inevitably developed since American jazz roots were so successfully transplanted after World War II. Although Lorraine Feather can boast Billie Holiday as her godmother, the influences she seems to reflect most are Annie Ross and Cleo Laine—two not bad influences when you come to think of it. Her most glittering work here is Skylark, but perhaps her best is Deep in the Night, in which she lets fly with a broadside emotional performance that's uncharacteristically compelling. There's still something very much of the jazz debutante about her, but I think that once she peels the white gloves off and gets down to it she'll be a very interesting singer indeed.

P.R.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

CHICO FREEMAN: Beyond the Rain. Chico Freeman (flute, tenor saxophone); Hilton Ruiz (piano); Juniech Booth (bass); Elvin Jones (drums); Jumma Santos (percussion). Two over One: Excerpts; My One and Only Love; and two others. CONTEMPORARY S7640 $7.98.

Performance: Excellent Recording: Very good

Chicago-born saxophonist Chico Freeman has worked with such vocal groups as the Isley Brothers and the Chi-lites, and with fellow members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), a musicians' cooperative based in his home town. Such wide-ranging experience has given him a very interesting perspective, and Chico Freeman is the kind of musician whose mind combines the art of composition with a wealth of ideas that are distinctly his own.

CIRCULAR NO. 43 ON READER SERVICE CARD

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man scope, but that would have little meaning to him as a musician if he did not also have good command of his instruments. He has. His style can be funky, florid, or free-form; it doesn’t seem to matter to him. 

"Beyond the Rain" was recorded two summers ago for the Contemporary label, the future of which was in doubt following the death of owner Lester Koenig (who co-produced this album with his son). It is artistically a very successful set and most appropriate for inclusion in the premiere release by this born-again jazz label. Let’s hope Contemporary will be able to continue and to thrive under its new leadership.

Two of the tracks—Two over One and Excerpts—are compositions by pianist Muhal Richard Abrams, a co-founder of AACM whose teaching profoundly influenced Free- man’s musical thinking and, one supposes, direction. Freeman plays both with ominous sonority, injecting Coltrane-ish curlicues here and there but staying on his own path. Beyond the Rain and Pepe’s Samba are Freeman’s own compositions, quite different from each other in both mood and texture. Rain is a delicate, gentle excursion for flute; Pepe’s brings back the tenor in yet another role that develops from hard bop to something that borders on hard-to-take, but what in lesser hands could become a tonal wilderness makes perfect sense when Freeman is in charge. And if you don’t think this man knows the ground rules, listen to My One and Only Love; Freeman’s ballad style can make you blush.

Except for pianist Hilton Ruiz, whose Tyn erish tinkles leave me cold, the rhythm section is hot. Bassist Junieeh Booth is delightfully prominent throughout; Elvin Jones is, well, Elvin Jones, thank goodness; and percussionist Jumma Santos keeps up with Jones, which is no mean feat.

C.A.

HUBERT LAWS: Land of Passion (see Best of the Month, page 78)

ABBEY LINCOLN: People in Me. Abbey Lin- coln (vocals); David Liebman (flute, soprano and tenor saxophones); Hiromasa Suzuki (pi- ano); Kunimitsu Inaba (bass); Al Foster (drums); James Mtume (conga); Living Room; You and Me Love; Africa; Kobjih-No-Tsuki; and four others. INNER CITY IC 6040 $9.78.

Performance: Honest, overdue Abbey Recording

Very good

This is the closest we have come to having a new Abbey Lincoln album since the very ear- ly Sixties, when she went from the Riverside label to Candid, but “People in Me” is not re- ally new—it was recorded during a trip to Jap- an in the summer of 1973. She appears regu- larly in Los Angeles and San Francisco clubs, but she remains unrecorded in this country. Perhaps that is to be expected in a society that often treats mediocrity as art and art as some- thing prestigious but boring and unmarket- able. “People in Me” is neither mediocre nor boring.

Ms. Lincoln either wrote or had a hand in writing all eight songs in this album. Her ly- rics, which are printed on the inside cover, speak of such things as love, national/racial heritage, and woman’s vanity. Some are hu- morous, some naive, and others are eminent—no your run-of-the-mill you are-the-pas- try-of-my-life variety, but not near-poetry ei- ther. Very much on the plus side are You and Me, Love and Living Room (the latter a col- laboration with former husband Max Roach), and, for its whimsy, Naturally also gets a few merits. I don’t know what Natas is all about (the clue might be in the reverse spell- ing), and I care less for it because the double- tracked vocal is so much out of sync. I would have liked John Coltrane’s Africa better if the lyrics hadn’t been so naïve and if there had been less screaming at the end. But I am real- ly nit-picking now. This is a good album by a singer who rises above her material but could go even higher.

C.A.

THELONIOUS MONK: Always Know. Thelo- nious Monk (piano); Thad Jones (trumpet); Charlie Rouse (tenor saxophone); Phil Woods (alto saxophone); Steve Lacy (soprano saxo- phone); others. East Street: Monk’s Dream; Epistrophe; Bye-Ya; Honeysocke Rose; Played Twice; Criss Cross; Introspection; and five others. COLUMBIA JG 35720 two discs $9.98. © JGA 35720 $9.98. © JGT 35720 $9.98.

Performance: Scavenger hunt

Recording: Very good

Columbia’s recently launched Contemporary Masters Series sounds like a great idea whose time actually came long before the first re- leases hit the country’s record bins, but, un- fortunately, not everything on the first re- leases sounds as good as the concept that fos- tered them. We can’t expect every record to

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STereo Review
be a winner, but, in their zeal to fill the series with the household names of jazz, the reissue producers have scraped the vaults to bring us what the original producer (Teo Macero) and, presumably, the artist(s), themselves thought we should not hear.

In this Monk release, as in the Mingus set, edited parts have been restored to previously issued selections, but reissue producer Terry Adams (pianist with the group NRBO) has also included some material that was originally rejected in its entirety. Shuffle Bop falls into the latter category and also all but falls apart as it offers the album's strongest case for destroying poor performances on the spot; Adams admits, in his notes, that "Shuffle is slightly out of control" and suggests that we "in all fairness" check out the version released on "It's Monk's Time."

Isn't it a bit late to be talking about fairness? Honeysuckle Rose fades in on Charlie Rouse's tenor solo and fizzes out to Ben Riley's drums; it was recorded at two o'clock on a November morning in 1964—a throwaway that should have been left. The opening track, This Is My Story, This Is My Song, is actually Blessed Assurance, an old hymn which Monk plays unaccompanied and in such a lulling, faltering way that had it been anyone else at that keyboard, it would never have been preserved, much less issued.

I don't want to sound too negative, for "Always Know" also has some good and interesting tracks, such as Criss Cross from the 1963 Newport Jazz Festival. But this is not an album of which Monk can be proud, nor should we hold it against him. This is middle-of-the-road jazz, and three others. West 54 WLW 818 $7.98.

JOE TURNER: Everyday I Have the Blues. Joe Turner (vocals); Sonny Stitt (alto and tenor saxophones); Pee Wee Crayton (guitar); rhythm section. Lucille; Stormy Monday; Shake, Rattle and Roll; and three others. Pablo 2310818 $8.98.

Performance: Pedestrian
Recording: Good

How Sonny Stitt ever got railroaded into participating in this blues session is something I will never understand. I hope he isn't that desperate for work. Now, I know Joe Turner has a healthy following and that critics have been known to treat his singing as art, but I'm going to tell you like it is: Turner sounds like someone who has had one too many. The band? Lethargy is its name. The drummer? Plays like a critic. The repertoire? Something Turner has on the tape loop of his mind. The record? I don't like it.

WARREN VACHE: Jillian. Warren Vache (cornet, flugelhorn); Marshal Royal (alto saxophone); Nat Pierce (piano); Cal Collins (guitar); Phil Flanigan (bass); Jake Hanna (drums). Love Locked Out; Too Close for Comfort; 'S Wonderful; It's You or No One; More Than You Know; and five others. Concord Jazz CJ-87 $7.98.

Performance: Dessert
Recording: Excellent

If you are aware of the purity and general excellence that has become the hallmark of the no-longer-so-little Concord Jazz label, and if the music of any two of these six men has nudged your ears on other occasions, you already know that "Jillian" is a generous serving of smooth, easy conversation on a feather-light swing bed. Warren Vache—who has played on more than one occasion with tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton—does not have an instantly recognizable style, but he's still in his twenties, so give him time for that. But he does have a well-oiled imagination and what it takes to translate that into well-constructed, fluent trumpet playing. Marshall Royal (who spelled his first name with two l's when he was with the bands of Louis Armstrong, Lionel Hampton, and Count Basie years ago) is heard only on I Only Have Eyes for You and Little White Lies, but both appearances are to everybody's advantage. The rhythm section, with Nat Pierce leading it on all but one selection, is appropriately bouncy. This is middle-of-the-road jazz (some would call it mainstream) of the highest, if not the most original, order. C.A.

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Ed Dorothy Louden finds small outlet for her comic prowess in numbers like A Terrific Band and a Real Nice Crowd, or even Fifty Percent, in which she rhapadizes on the merits of compromise in affairs of the heart, or I Wish You a Waltz, the sentimentally sessmanent finale. Vincent Gardenia plays the mailman Al Rossi, whom Bea meets at the Ballroom. A fine actor but no singer, he is heard in only one duet—which is just as well. The major part of the singing is left to Lynn Roberts and Bernie Knee as the ballroom vocalists, whose medoisery they matchlessly embody. A tepid bath of musical nostalgia.

BOYS OF THE LOUGH: Wish You Were Here. Boys of the Lough (vocals and instruments). The Barrmaid; The Larks March; The Red Haired Man’s Wife; On Board of the Victory; The Resting Chair/Leaving Glenurquhart/The Fairy Dance; The Glasgow Police Pipers/The Curlew; and six others. FLYING FISH FF-070 $7.98, ® FLF 8359-070 (H) $7.98, ® FLF 3559-070 (H) $7.98.

Performance: Sprightly Recording: Very good

The media claim that the Scottish people demand a musical diet of schmaltz, the Boys of the Lough say in their liner notes here, adding that “taint so. This was recorded during the highlands and islands tour of Scotland they make every August, and it contains more Irish than Scottish music, probably because the former is livelier. The Boy of the Lough who is best known in America, Aly Bain the fiddler, propels much of the album, and his solo spot is the focal point here, as it is of the Boys’ concerts. The music, as usual, is traditional Scottish-Irish, precursor to bluegrass, acoustic-rapsy, and all that, but this particular band plays it without dogmatic stiffness and yet without much compromising. The selections include some originals and some rewriting of traditions, and, while it is little heavy on jigs, there’s real music in it, in addition to the folk process in action. N.C.

THE CHIEFTAINS: 8. The Chieftains (instruments). The Session; Dr. John Hart; Sein Sa Chio; The Fairies’ Hornpipe; Sea Image; If I Had Maggie in the Wood; and five others. COLUMBIA JC 35726 $7.98, ® JCA 35726 $7.98, ® JCT 35726 $7.98.

Performance: Endearing Recording: Excellent

The Chieftains have made so many albums that they finally ran out of titles; they called their last record “7” and this one is “8.” But who’s counting? As always these players, as indomitable a group of middle-aged instrumentalists as you’re likely to find in the whole of Eire, are irresistible as they trot on their uilleann pipes and flutes and tin whistles, pluck their “neo-Irish” and medieval harps, and scrape their fiddles to the tunes of jigs, reels, strathspeys, hornpipes, and polkas—with some slow airs so you can catch your breath between the energetic outbursts. There’s also a tone poem this time, called Sea Image, in which the pipes and fiddles evoke “the vast expanses of water surrounding the Gaels.” Kevin Connell’s bodhrán suggests a “giant breaker,” and the music moves out on a voyage to “new fishing pastures.” Then a storm builds and something unspeakable happens to one of the boats. All ends happily, though, with a double jig called The Rolling Wave.

P.K.

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CIRCLE NO. 59 ON READER SERVICE CARD
Mehta provides an orchestral backing that is rich in detail and full in texture, and the London engineering staff has captured it admirably with a fairly close microphone setup. Of the two dozen or so Emperor Concerto performances currently in Schwann, this one ranks among the top five.

D.H.


Performance: Distinguished Recording: Very good

As might be expected, Alicia de Larrocha’s interpretation of the Beethoven Emperor is no routine affair. Together with Zubin Mehta and the Los Angeles players, she achieves here a remarkable balance between the proto-Lisztian elements in the concerto and its more essentially Beethovenian qualities. The very opening provides a striking case in point: in stead of overwhelming the listener with cascades of piano sound, Larrocha gives the opening cadenza a feeling of inspired improvisation. Throughout the first movement, her phrasing is extraordinarily free, yet wholly within the bounds of the musical notation and its grand architectural framework. In short, this is a remarkable exhibition of classical rhetoric at its finest, and the result is altogether persuasive. The adagio becomes a reverie of touching serenity, marked by the most subtle phrasing is extraordinarily free, yet wholly within the bounds of the musical notation and its grand architectural framework. In short, this is a remarkable exhibition of classical rhetoric at its finest, and the result is altogether persuasive. The adagio becomes a reverie of touching serenity, marked by the most subtle

DAVID HALL  GEORGE JELLINEK  PAUL KRESH • STODDARD LINCOLN  •  ERIC SALZMAN
Something About Berners

GERALD TYRWHITT-WILSON (1883-1950), the fourteenth Baron Berners, was a diplomat, a collector, a writer, a painter, and, most important, a composer (Stravinsky called him "the twentieth-century English composer"). He was also, not incidentally, one of the great eccentrics of his time. Eccentrics take root in the social soil of England, where they provide living examples of the rights of the individual. There's also, of course, a deep national suspicion that there's something just a bit odd about any sort of creative work. As Lord Berners shrewdly commented in one of his novels, "...in Anglo-Saxon countries, art is more highly appreciated if accompanied by a certain measure of eccentric publicity."

In Berners' case, the publicity came by the barrel full. Between the wars, Berners' bizarre lifestyle became as familiar to readers of the British popular press as that of any movie star then or rock singer today. At his country house, Faringdon, he built Faringdon Folly, a hundred-and-forty-foot tower capped by an enormous octagonal lantern, and at the entrance posted this notice: "Members of the Public Committing Suicide from This Tower Do So at Their Own Risk." Pigeons dyed in several colors flew over the estate, and whipped with diamond collars darted across the grounds. Berners' Rolls-Royce had a spinet piano in it, and he had an idiot mask, designed for him by Oliver Messel, through which he peered at passers-by. And virtual parades of famous guests did pass by at Faringdon and Berners' other houses in London and Rome, where all that went on was avidly reported to a public that had probably never heard a note of his music.

Bomers' music, however, is now ours to hear on a new Unicorn release, "A Portrait of Lord Berners," that includes wonderful performances of thirteen of his songs and piano pieces. These are often teasing comments on the drearily conventional, cliché-strewn "serious" music produced during the first half of this century, German and French particularly, and it is the kind of spontaneous, truthful satire that carries a weight well beyond that of its objects. For instance, "Valse Brilliant" is Berners' take at Germanic sentimentality in three songs "in the German manner" on texts by Heine. The first of these, "Du Bist Wie eine Blume," exploits Berners' discovery that its inspiration was not, as previous composers who set it had assumed, that blue-eyed, golden-haired maiden who slogs through the lieder repertoire like an invincible bill collector, but rather a pig—a white pig. "Thou art like a flower" indeed! Berners' use of dissontant, staccato chords in the accompaniment adds just that tinge of swinish gritting I've often been tempted to provide at lieder recitals myself. In three songs on texts by Georges Jean-Aubry, on the other hand, Berners emphasizes the glacial elegance and bitter sophistication that characterize so much of French intellectual life.

The three-part Valses Bourgeoises is a Franco-German mélange that seems intended to destroy the waltz as a musical form. The opening Valse Brillante is a devastating swipe at the brilliantinfed French manner that Ravel brought to its apotheosis in his suavely glamorous (and safely decadent) La Valse. Valse Caprice is a perverse little gem that in the end seems to cannibalize itself right before your ears. And Strauss, Strauss et Strauss is a dubious reference to Johann, Richard, and Oscar that reminds me of Margot Asquith's remark to H. G. Wells, "I expect that you go to The Mikado a lot."

LORD BERNERS' unique music is just as delightful when he turns away from foreign sources, as in the music-hall roundness of Come On Algernon, so English you can almost smell the chips; the funny, poignant Le Poisson d'Or, a piano piece prefaced by his own poem about a lonely goldfish; and the utterly hilarious A Long Time Ago, the last of his three sea charlotes. There can be little doubt that Berners was a composer of great talent, though how an individual reacts to his strange mixture of art and parody is a personal matter. Perhaps his work, and his attitude toward it and life in general, is best summed up in the epitaph he wrote for himself:

Here lies Lord Berners, One of the learners. His great love of learning May earn him a burning. But praise to the Lord He never was bored!

Nnor will you be by this lovely, funny album.
—Peter Reilly

BERNERS: Songs and Piano Music. Polka; Lieder Album—Three Songs in the German Manner; Fragments Psychologiques; Dialogue Between Tom Fairer and His Man; By Ned the Dog Stealer; Three Songs; Le Poisson d'Or; Red Roses and Red Noses; Trois Petites Marches Funèbres; Trois Chansons; Valses Bourgeoises; Dispute Entre le Papillon et le Criquet; Three Sea Shanties; Come On Algernon. Meriel Dickinson (mezzo-soprano); Bernard Dickerson (tenor); Peter Dickinson, Susan Bradshaw, Richard Rodney Bennett (pianos). UNICORN UN1-75029 $8.98.
LISTENERS accustomed to a virtuoso, richly characterized brand of Beethoven symphony performance—be it Karajan's or Solti's or even Toscanini's—may be disappointed in Lorin Maazel's new cycle with the Cleveland Orchestra on Columbia. The reason is not, I hasten to explain, that the Cleveland Orchestra is today anything less than a first-class ensemble; it's every bit as disciplined and precise as it was in the Szell era. It's just that Maazel's view of Beethoven is relatively neutral and uncolored, and his readings are not exactly brimming with the big, resonant, emotional climaxes many of us have come to expect in the Third, Fifth, Seventh, and Ninth, or with the good humor one might associate with the other five. Maazel isn't inclined toward potent dramatic emphases; throughout the set things proceed in an efficient, even-handed manner. Perhaps as a result, the orchestra sounds somewhat attenuated. The violins and violas have a lean, fluid sound, but there's little generosity in their tone. The lower strings haven't much body or spatial focus, merely lurking as a sort of presence in the right channel. The winds generally seem thin, seldom being allowed really to blossom, and the brass sections play quite alertly but have none of the splendor of, say, their Chicago or Berlin counterparts.

Nonetheless, at its best, Maazel's Beethoven is very refreshing indeed. The Fifth Symphony and the Pastoral are the set's triumphs—insightful, original performances that should go close to the top in any Beethoven discography. Both shine like newly buffed silver, and I'd even venture to say that in terms of clearing away preconceptions Maazel's Fifth is the most important since Carlo Kleiber's. Just as the ferocity of Kleiber's recording caused many people to reassess this overly familiar symphony (a function of music-making not to be overlooked), Maazel's rational temper and sense of classical proportion place it in another new perspective. For example, Maazel lends an untypical character of restraint to the first movement, but, remarkably, with no loss of dramatic tension or muscularity. His interpretation actually seems to reveal hitherto unexplored aspects of Beethoven's music. It's an ideally Apollonian Fifth, aristocratic and thoughtful.

Similarly, Maazel's Sixth is substantially less outgoing than the norm. There's a kind of transparent sensuousness to it, though the view is an essentially unemotional one. The first movement isn't a stroll but a brisk, bracing walk, rhythmically alert and lithe. The violins in the second movement sound as bright as sunlight, and when the storm breaks it isn't needlessly wild; Maazel's thunderbolts shed more light than heat. This is the most clearly sourced, finely articulated Pastoral I've ever heard—a reassuring breeze of clean country air.

The first three movements of the Ninth here are quite splendid, with a display of orchestral virtuosity on a par with Chicago or Berlin. But things go wrong in the finale, which is vocally rather top-heavy. Lucia Popp, Elena Obraztsova, Jon Vickers, and Martti Talvela are, of course, marvelous singers with an abundance of vocal horsepower, but here they seem too much of a good thing. When all four are going full blast, they just about cover the entire orchestra and swallow Schiller's text whole. It seems to me poor judgment to highlight the vocal quartet so vividly; a more realistic balance would have made the finale as musically satisfying as the other movements.

Though noticeably short on wit and vivaciousness, the performances of the Second and Eighth Symphonies are still both excellent. The Second gets big, topflight orchestral playing that achieves great articulation and agility while sacrificing a bit in weight of sound. The Eighth is likewise trim and quick, with just enough presence to make an appropriate impression (such as in the taut first-movement development).

The Eroica and the Seventh are severe disappointments. The former is a "heroic" symphony with little passion, power, or color, anemasculated, sanitized reading. Try to imagine the funeral march as being detached and cerebral and you'll have its measure; even George Szell's own drumhead-tight recording of the Eroica seems almost Furtwänglerian in comparison with Maazel's. The trouble with the Seventh is failure to achieve a consistent character: it isn't dancierly, it isn't lyrical, it isn't particular jovial. In the first and third movements what it is is musclebound and overblown—Schwarzenegger imitating Barryshnikov. The second movement is altogether too glum, and the finale is slack and indifferent, hardly the "triumph of Bacchic fury" Sir Donald Tovey called it. The First and Fourth Symphonies and the three overtures included as fillers also have little to recommend them. The symphonies are overdriven, with an unflattering, sibilant sound, and the overtures evidence no real potency.

NOWADAYS a Beethoven symphony cycle on a full-price label is a considerable investment, and even at Columbia's special price for Maazel's integral set it doesn't offer serious competition for those by Karajan and Solti, whose recordings are better sounding and more consistently effective. But when Maazel's Fifth and Sixth are issued separately here (as they have been already in Europe), they should be included in any comprehensive record library. They, at least, are classics.

—D. R. Martin

BEETHOVEN: Symphonies Nos. 1-9; Fidelio Overture; Egmont Overture; Leonore Overture No. 3. Lucia Popp (soprano); Elena Obraztsova (mezzo-soprano); Jon Vickers (tenor); Martti Talvela (bass); Cleveland Orchestra Chorus; Cleveland Orchestra, Lorin Maazel cond. Columbia M8X 35191 $47.98.

CHABRAN: Violin Sonata in G Major, Op. 1, No. 5 (see TARTINI)

CHOPIN: Piano Concerto No. 2, in F Minor, Op. 21 (see SCHUMANN)


Performance: In the spirit
Recording: Off-beat sounds

George Crumb is the master of the mystery of life as expressed in music. Every sound is bathed in the light of mystery and mysticism. Lux Aeterna, for soprano, bass flute and soprano recorder, sitar, and two percussionists, is to be performed in black masks and robes with light provided by a single candle! Its repeated refrain for sitar is a "Masked Dance: Elegy for a Dead Prince." Wisps and fragments of floating, luminous sound are to be played and sung slowly, "very slowly, with a sense of meditative time; pregnant with mystery." The Dream Sequence, for violin, cello, piano, percussion, and seven tuned glass goblets, is to be played "poised, timeless, 'breathing,'" as an afternoon in late summer. The goblets play a sustained chord ("quasi subliminal") throughout the entire work while fragments of instrumental music, often unconventionally produced (bowed piano clusters, sheets of paper on the piano strings), fit about evocatively.

There are in effect two kinds of minimalism holding center stage in modern music today: pulsed and unpulsed. Both are concerned with timelessness, mysticism, and inner purity; together they have turned the avant-garde away from experimentation, ferment, and reaching out and toward a very conservative, inward-looking art. Crumb is a leader of the unpulsed school and the most evocative of them all, but for all the strangeness and surrealism of this music, it is a very static, reflective, and conservative art. The performances and recordings are as evocative as the music.

E.S.

Performance: Emphatic
Recording: Fine

The Tokyo Quartet has been doing a good deal of label-hopping of late—from Deutsche Grammophon to RCA to Vanguard, and now to Columbia for one of the most popular pairings in the chamber-music discography (the fourth of eight such pairings on this label alone). I was disappointed a few months ago by this group’s live performance of the Ravel quartet, which struck me as rather aloof and uncommunicative, but such an impression is hardly possible from this disc, both sides of which glow with the most fervent commitment and gorgeous playing on the part of all four musicians. Interpretively, the performances might be described as emphatic rather than particularly subtle. Each of the respective moods is thrown into high relief without damage to continuity, generally by means of tempo—a little brisker than usual to offset the undercurrent of tension, rather than lingering on phrases. This is especially effective in the slow movement of the Ravel, in which the white-heat intensity might have been unbearable at a slower pace. Nothing is understated, certainly, and this unrestrainedly voluptuous and sensuous approach to these voluptuous and sensuous works may not be to everyone’s taste. I can only report that I found both performances extremely compelling.


Performance: Dramatic
Recording: First-rate

After establishing himself as the outstanding pianist of his generation, Vladimir Ashkenazy has shown impressive credentials as a conductor in several recent recordings. This new Mozart disc is the second on which he appears in the dual role of soloist and conductor, and it is a much more successful effort than the performance of the Schumann Konzertstück on London CS 7082. Indeed, except for an occasional hint of self-consciousness in orchestral entries, these are, as one might expect, among the most persuasive recordings of either concerto issued in recent years, performances of such style and spirit that any attempt at evaluation must be a matter of personal response to interpretive details.

In the popular K. 467, Ashkenazy’s cadenza, expanded to encompass its first movement strikes me as a little heavy in its allusions to the G Minor Symphony, and I might not always wish to hear the slow movement at the pace he favors—rather drawn-out for a Mozart andante, with heavy, “soulful” emphases and extended notes in the string passages. But this extremely romantic-expressive version is a stimulating alternative for my favorites of the moment, Haebeler/Rowicki (Philips Festivo 6570 077) and Lupu/Segal (London CS 6894). In the G Major Concerto the orchestral playing seems reticent compared with the very alert playing of Alexander Schneider gets from the Columbia Symphony in his recording with Rudolf Serkin (Columbia MS 6814), but I know some listeners find Schneider’s string phrasing a little too pointed in the finale, and for them Ashkenazy’s more restrained version may be just

MOZART: Piano Concerto No. 17, in G Major (K. 453); Piano Concerto No. 21, in C Major (K. 467); Piano Concerto No. 23, in A Major (K. 488).

Performance: Marvellous
Recording: Excellent

MOZART: Piano Concerto No. 20, in D Minor (K. 466); Piano Concerto No. 25, in A Major (K. 585); Piano Concerto No. 27, in B-flat Major (K. 595).

Performance: Dramatic
Recording: First-rate

Something—someone? a singer perhaps?—seems to have inspired Mozart to a lyrical outburst of a kind never repeated in his work.

In spite of my ardent admiration for Elly Ameling—and these songs are sung to perfection in all matters of pitch, phrasing, clarity and beauty of tone, character, and meaning—I have some reservations about this set. Put bluntly, Dalton Baldwin’s playing lacks backbone. The Am-Too-Loud school of song accompaniment reaches its apotheosis when a forte introduction of almost orchestral dimensions is reduced to a limp mezzo-forte. When Ameling is singing, Baldwin is a model accompanist, of course, but in many important places he lacks the strength that she everywhere provides.

The recording is fine, but I would suggest to Philips that they make available the best of these songs in a single-album format. For most listeners the better half of these songs would be quite enough.

VESTER: Lied. Elly Ameling (soprano); Dalton Baldwin (piano). Philips 6747 483 two discs $17.96.

Performance: Exquisite singing
Recording: Excellent

The German lied in Mozart’s day was a distinctly minor popular art in which sentimental, pastoral, and cheerful satiric verse was set in a kind of pseudo-folk manner. Mozart knew the style well and used it in his German operas and later in such popular character types as Pa- pageno, Pedrillo, Blondchen. Most of his songs are in a similar vein. The scope is small, the musical invention limited (for Mozart), but everything is always perfectly and wittily expressed. There are also a few Italian and French songs, and these adopt the appropriate operatic and opéra-comique styles.

Beyond these, however, are a handful of songs that transcend the genre piece and give us a glimpse of what Mozart might have done if he had lived on into the golden age of the lied. The best-known of these is a setting of Goethe’s Lenz and then, but there are a few others, notably the Amendeundlindung and a couple of minor-key songs about unhappy love. Curiously, these songs, along with a few other charmers, were all composed within a very short period in May and June 1787.
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Performance: Very good
Recording: Excellent

We are accustomed to getting a new recorded edition of Tosca every year, and 1979 seems to be London’s turn. Luciano Pavarotti’s name in the cast list established the new set on the best-selling charts even before I received my review copy, so what further justification is needed for its release? But enough grumbling: this is a good Tosca, definitely superior to both the 1978 (Philips/Davis) and 1977 (DG/Rostropovich) models. In overall sound qualities, 1979 (RCA/Mehta) and scores a few points over the 1963 (London/Karajan), so it ranks very high among the stereo entries in the catalog—though that 1953 mono Model C (Callas) Angel/De Sabata is still the classic one.

The new performance is conducted with warmth and transparent clarity by Nicola Rescigno, who judiciously interrelates tempos to sustain a flow of continuity that eludes some of his colleagues. Tosca is paced more deliberately nowadays than it was in the past, and Rescigno’s version is no exception, but his approach seems considerably accommodating rather than dray.

Mirella Freni, an enchanting lyric soprano, here takes the fashionable upward step toward the dramatic repertoire. Her is not a natural voice for Tosca, but Rescigno’s fastidious leadership helps her turn in a convincing account of the role: passionate, intensely feminine, and immensely affecting in the lyrical moments. I have similar reservations about Luciano Pavarotti’s admirable Cavaradossi: the tones are beautiful, the style persuasive, but his, too, is essentially a lyric voice. In some of his early roles Pavarotti is unique; as Cavaradossi he is certainly above reproach, but not really memorable.

Sherrill Milnes offers a solid, intelligently drawn Scarpia. This is his second go at the role, and his pointed, biting enunciation and insinuating use of mezzo-voice indicate that this scene he is more deeply involved in the character. There is, as always, a generous tonal vigor in his singing, but the top notes are neither pure nor effortless, and “Se la giurata fedele,” with its high tessitura, is roughly vocalized. Italo Tajo manages a vivid Sacrictan despite his faded tones; all the other compatriots are satisfactory, and the engineering is truly outstanding.

G.J.

RAVEL: String Quartet in F Major (see DEBUSSY)

OREM: A Quaker Reader, Leonard Raver (organ). COMPOSERS RECORDINGS, INC. CRI SD 396 $7.95.

Performance: Splendid
Recording: Very good

In his notes for A Quaker Reader, Ned Orem points out that music is specifically excluded from Quaker worship. “Myself, raised in Quaker silence,” he writes, “I craved Catholic sound. . . . Yet, though I have set to music all manner of profane and sacred texts . . . never in any professional way have I felt the Quakerism to music partly . . . because there is no singable Quaker literature. But if there exists no Quaker music, there can be music by a Quaker.”

(Continued on page 115)
A few years ago—as a result of circumstances too complicated to detail here—I found myself in a Vermont pine grove with a bunch of young 'uns lustily bawling out (no other expression will do) a collection of wonderful old American “shape-note” hymns—traditional sacred music printed in curious square, diamond, and triangle as well as round-note shapes. These bawlers were the Word of Mouth Chorus, and they were reviving an ancient New England tradition which, although it had long since disappeared from the land of its origin, had in fact survived an amazing century and a half by "migrating" to the rural South.

The New England singing masters of the eighteenth century—William Billings, Daniel Read, and many others—created an authentic body of music, largely for the singing schools they founded, which were as much community social institutions as they were religious ones. Their hymns traveled with itinerant preachers and musicians to what was then the West (Kentucky and Ohio) as well as to the rural South, where a whole new body of freshly composed and folk-derived hymns was added on. As New England became more sophisticated, the "crude" old hymns were dropped like a bad habit. When the Vermont singers wanted to get in touch with the tradition, all they had to do was travel south to a Georgia Singing Convention, where they were warmly received into this venerable musical fellowship—of the most ancient and authentic surviving in the West. A new Nonesuch album drawn from this tradition includes music composed between 1785 and 1950 (!), and while there are obvious differences between, say, a fuguing tune of 1785 or 1804, a folk hymn of the Civil War period, and a revivalist, gospel-influenced one of the 1930s, they are all clearly members of the same family.

There are, of course, many Southern groups active today, and some might argue that Nonesuch would have been better advised to go to the source. Perhaps. But the virtuosity of the performances here is simply their own integrity. First of all, there is the vocal ensemble: a wonderfully real, earthy, harmonizing sound. Something about those open, flat vowels and pure intervals makes a difference. Second, there is the crux of this tradition from the American heartland, and this is where they were warmly received into the tradition, all they had to do was travel south to a Georgia Singing Convention, where they were warmly received into this venerable musical fellowship—one of the most ancient and authentic surviving in the West. A new Nonesuch album drawn from this tradition includes music composed between 1785 and 1950 (!), and while there are obvious differences between, say, a fuguing tune of 1785 or 1804, a folk hymn of the Civil War period, and a revivalist, gospel-influenced one of the 1930s, they are all clearly members of the same family.

Eric Salzman


Sacred Harp Alive

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Eric Salzman


Sacred Harp Alive
Schubert's Eight—Times Two

The release of two such sets, though—one of Franz Schubert by the same orchestra and conductor would be a sufficiently historic event to make the still-continuing observance of the sesquicentennial of the composer’s death in 1828 phonographically memorable. The release of two such sets, though—one from Angel, with Herbert von Karajan conducting the Berlin Philharmonic, the other from Philips, with Wolfgang Sawallisch leading the Dresden State Orchestra—not only provokes the competition and comparison that inevitably accompany duplication but also the dissatisfaction that is a not infrequent result of unexpected richness.

Neither Karajan nor Sawallisch seems to have approached his recording project with a specifically musical purpose. True, both of them observe nearly all the repeats (Sawallisch even takes the first-movement repeat in the “Unfinished,” which is like a suitor repeating his marriage proposal after the girl has consented), but they seem uninterested in presenting the symphonies—particularly the first five, which Schubert wrote between the ages of sixteen and nineteen—in anything like a historical perspective. Both conduct all the symphonies as if they were intended for the modern concert hall, even though the First was written essentially as Hausmusik and the next four were designed for the student orchestra of which Schubert was a member. I am not petitioning for recordings by an amateur ensemble trying to re-create the original circumstances of these works; Schubert’s spirit was in the empyrean wherever his mind happened to be focused. But to perform the D Major Symphony of 1813 (No. 1) on a scale of sonority suitable for the C Major of 1828 (No. 9) is to imply that Schubert learned little and grew not at all between them. The opposite is the case, of course, but that could not be proved by either of the new sets.

Since both conductors share basically the same approach to the symphonies, one must look elsewhere for distinctions between their offerings—and they are not long in making themselves apparent. My procedure was to listen to each symphony, starting with the First, in both recorded performances (altering precedence between Dresden and Berlin) before going on to the next. Even before I finished hearing both Firsts it was unmistakably clear that as a set the Karajan would be superior overall. The Berlin Philharmonic is, to my taste, the greatest chamber-music ensemble among major orchestras. The players interact with each other to a degree almost unknown elsewhere (though the Cleveland Orchestra came close in its last years under the late George Szell). Consequently, even though the overly prominent timpani (with their light, tight drum heads) are popping out cannon shots in Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2, under Karajan’s impassively impersonal direction the interplay of strings and woodwinds is pure delight. Measured by any other standard, the performance of the Dresden soloists in the andante of the First would call for high compliments, but flute for flute, oboe for oboe, bassoon for bassoon, the stars shine brighter over Berlin.

Throughout the sequence, Karajan plays his cards with more finesse than Sawallisch does his, but the latter nevertheless takes game No. 4 hands down. By way of explanation, let me recall Arthur Rubinstein’s answer to my questioning why, having recorded the complete mazurkas, polonaises, waltzes, and preludes of Chopin, he bypassed the etudes: “There were eighteen I always played and six that I didn’t, and I never got around to learning the other six.” In this case, my feeling is that Schubert’s Fourth is a work that Sawallisch has “always played” but Karajan has not. Sawallisch’s greater familiarity with the music shows up in details of shaping and styling (such as the long-breathed woodwind phrases in the andante), the kind of affectionate touches here and there that suggest the conductor is doing far more than merely giving the work a run-through.

Karajan’s and Sawallisch’s Fifth and Sixth are of about equal merit, though neither reaches the level of quality achieved by others in these works. Both pairs receive well-turned-out performances from conductors who were apparently not turned on. There is, of course, no Seventh in either set, since the score has never been found, and the theory that the work is no more than an orchestration of the Grand Duo for piano is not universally accepted. Both Eighths, I’m very glad to say, do great credit to conductors and orchestras alike. Karajan is a little misericord about the low-string opening, and thereafter he leans toward a “my Schubert” treatment that is not all that convincing—but it is marvelously played. Sawallisch, for his part, achieves one of the best recording mazurkas of the B Minor Symphony: straightforward, strongly lyrical, with no excessive lingering as if to make points in a musical debate. The Andante con moto is played with real conviction, recalling for me the pleasure (still “unfinished”) I have derived from the pre-electronic recording of this music under the direction of the great Eduard Mörike.

The Symphony No. 9 (Schubert’s “Great” C Major, as opposed to his Symphony No. 6, the “Little” C Major) is notoriously a wrestling match for titans, to be attempted by anyone else only on an exceptional day. Neither Karajan nor Sawallisch shows himself to be a musical “titan” here. For one of the first qualifications for that title is being able to wrestle down one’s temptation to exaggerate in music like this while still getting everything out of it that it has to give. Sawallisch’s reading is solid, but it is also stolid. Karajan clearly seems to have gone into training for this match, but he is overcome by his apparent ambition to conquer Schubert’s exuberant score when all that is required is to measure up to it.

A single conductor performing all eight Schubert symphonies is like a Shakespearean actor playing Petruchio, Romeo, Richard III, Hamlet, Antony and Cleopatra, Macbeth, and Hamlet on the way to Prospero. Since we have no musical Olivier at the moment, my recommendation for the collector interested in acquiring an ideal set of the symphonies is to select among the various individual recordings. In terms of both quality and availability, my own choices would be as follows: Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2—István Kertész and the Vienna Philharmonic (London STS 15473); Symphonies Nos. 3 and 5—Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic (London CS 7020); Symphony No. 4 (“Tragic”)—Wolfgang Sawallisch and the Dresden State Orchestra (when released by Philips as a single LP); Symphony No. 6 (“Little C Major”)—Karl Böhm and the Berlin Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon 2530 422, with the Rosamunde music); Symphony No. 8 (“Unfinished”)—Benjamin Britten with the English Chamber Orchestra (London CS 674); with Mozart’s Symphony No. 38; Symphony No. 9 (“Great C Major”)—Wilhelm Furtwängler and the Berlin Philharmonic (DG Privilege 2535 808).

—Irvig Kolodin

SCHUBERT: Symphonies (complete); Overtures in the Italian Style in D Major (D. 590) and C Major (D. 591). Dresden State Orchestra, Wolfgang Sawallisch cond. PHILIPS 6770 015 five discs $49.90, © 7650 014 three cassettes $26.94.

SCHUBERT: Symphonies (complete); Die Zauberharfe, Overture (D. 644); Rosamunde Ballet Music (D. 797, Nos. 2 and 9). Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Herbert von Karajan cond. ANGEL ⊙ SE-3862 $39.90.

STEREO REVIEW
Over the years, new generations of wind players have tackled the work as a rare and important contribution to their limited repertoire, and gradually this music has been battered down into some kind of recognizable musical shape. Each new version of the work has improved the situation to the point now that this Dutch ensemble is actually able to play the music in the spirit of the notes. The signs of struggle are not entirely erased (they are, in part, the composer's own obvious creative sweat), but they have been rather passed on to the listener. Grasp it, enjoy it, struggle with it, emote with it, luxuriate in it if you can. This is as good a chance as you're ever likely to get.


Performance: Enlivening
Recording: Good

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

Performance: Enlivening
Recording: Good

Paul Badura-Skoda and Jörg Demus once recorded virtually all of Schubert's four-hand music for Westminster, then remake a good deal of it for Harmonia Mundi and Deutsche Grammophon; their collaboration yielded what might well be regarded as "definitive" results, but all those records are now long gone, and there has been little to fill the gaps left by their disappearance. Emil Gilels and his daughter Elena—who gave us a fine version of the "Lebensstürme" a few years ago (DG 2530 456, with Böhm and the Vienna Philharmonic)—must have played these works frequently in the same sort of intimate setting in which Schubert himself first presented them, and they must have enjoyed polishing them up for public presentation. The playing is elegant, poised, and without a trace of the condensation or casualness so often allowed to pass in the name of Gemütlichkeit; they show their affection for Schubert's music by respecting its integrity, and DG has recorded their Bosendorfer piano with great character.

There is less clarity, perhaps, but surely greater warmth in the Hungarian recording, in which the two twenty-five-year-old pianists seem to me to approximate still more closely the spirit of these works by a composer hardly older than themselves. There is no condescension or glossiness in these performances, either, but they are indeed gemütlich, both more enlivening and more outreaching. In a sense, the Gilels might be said to be playing for their own pleasure, while the young Hungarians seek to share their delight with their unseen listeners. Their program is a rather more substantial one, too. The famous Lebensstürme is a more interesting piece than
the Andantino Varie (a movement from the Divertissement à la Française), and the Marches Caractéristiques are far more consequent, as well as nearly nine times longer, than the six Écossaises (from a set of nine originally for piano solo). This program, in fact, duplicates the last three Badura-Skoda and Demus gave us, on DG 139107, except that we have only one addition, Bextrene (which should be revived on Privilege) also included the celebrated Marche Militaire in D Major. It was a very nice touch on Hungarian's part, by the way, to get Demus to annotate this attractive record, a gesture that might be interpreted as a sentimental passing of the torch.

R.F.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT


Performance: Fiery.
Recording: Very good.

One can sense almost instantly from the expressive weight and intensity that conductor Mstislav Rostropovich brings to the usually perfuntorily played orchestral introduction to the Chopin concerto that this will be an ordinary run-through. Martha Argerich's high-strung style of pianism has on occasion been too strong, but here, as in this case, and we have here an artistic collaboration that is decidedly more than the sum of its parts. Only in the very sharply contrasted phrases of the initial solo-piano entry did I sense the possibility of the soloist's taking the bit in her teeth, but from there on the performance remains beautifully proportioned: intense, but without bursting through the music's modest frame. Argerich's technique is elegant and precise, and, as always, her playing here shows great rhythmic alertness. Rostropovich keeps his orchestra on its toes, giving here shows great rhythmic alertness. Rostropovich keeps his orchestra on its toes, giving the lovely horn-call episode in the finale a special aura of bucolic majesty.

I was even more surprised by the performance of the Schumann concerto, since this is the first reading of the work stressing its fiery and nervous aspects that I have found sufficiently furnished to conduct. Schumann's high-strung style of pianism has on occasion been too strong, but not so in this case, and we have here an artistic collaboration that is decidedly more than the sum of its parts. Only in the very sharply contrasted phrases of the initial solo-piano entry did I sense the possibility of the soloist's taking the bit in her teeth, but from there on the performance remains beautifully proportioned: intense, but without bursting through the music's modest frame. Argerich's technique is elegant and precise, and, as always, her playing here shows great rhythmic alertness. Rostropovich keeps his orchestra on its toes, giving the lovely horn-call episode in the finale a special aura of bucolic majesty.

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CIRCLE NO. 27 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Colin Davis cond. PHILIPS 9500 508 $8.98, © 7300 704 $8.98.

Performance: Sprightly and spirited
Recording: Very good

None of Tchaikovsky's operas could be described as lighthearted, but the ballet music he composed for them is hardly gloomy. The Opèrchen, for example, is a tragic tale about Ivan the Terrible, but the heroine Natalya, whose father has treated her unspeakably, finds consolation as her maids dance for her. It's a similar situation with the other dance interludes on this record: any of the music could be lifted out of its particular operatic context and slipped into any of the others, or even into Sleeping Beauty or Swan Lake. But it is charming music, every note of it, and it is all played here to jeweled perfection. P.K.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT


Performance: Brilliant
Recording: Smooth

Considering the limitations of the idiom and the almost stubborn use of the sonata da chiesa format for each work, Telemann achieved a remarkable variety of moods and textures in these six packed little pieces. They are unabashedly lightweight but engagingly clever and charming. The performances by Messrs. Debost and Galway are perfection itself. The sound is silvery, the technique virtuosic. A fine record.

S.L.

TURINA: Songs (see Collections—Montserrat Caballé)

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

VERDI: Rigoletto. Richard Tucker (tenor), Duke of Mantua; Renato Capecechi (baritone), Rigoletto; Gianna d’Angelo (soprano), Gilda; Ivan Sardi (bass), Sparafucile; Miriam Pirazzini (mezzo-soprano), Maddalena; Vito Susca (baritone), Monterone; Giorgio Giorgetti (baritone), Marullo; Vittorio Pandano (tenor), Borsa; others. Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro di San Carlo di Napoli, Francesco Molinari-Pradelli cond. FESTIVO 6770 016 two discs $13.98. © 7650 016 $13.98.

Performance: Very good
Recording: Early and uneven

This is a most welcome reissue on Philips' mid-price label of a twenty-year-old recording once briefly available on Columbia. I remember liking it then, and, having observed a parade of routine Rigolettos marching in and out of the catalog in the intervening years, I like it even more now.

It is true that Francesco Molinari-Pradelli's leadership was neither particularly insightful nor really exacting, but he was knowledgeable, reasonably vital, and always considerate of his singers. And this particular group deserves his consideration. The Duke of Mantua is one of Richard Tucker's most successful recorded achievements: lighthearted, elegant, and splendidly vocalized. The duet "E l' insol dell'anima," in which he is joined by the lovely Gilda of Gianna d’Angelo, displays rare inspiration. Elsewhere, too, the soprano's singing is unaffectedly girlish-sounding.

(Continued on page 122)
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Angel's 45s

Twelve-inch 45-rpm discs are not exactly new on the market. Concert Hall Society marketed a short-lived series in the 1950's, Connoisseur Society employed the format for its first releases in 1962, and one of Walter Toscanini's private issues of his illustrious fa- ther conducting the NBC Symphony (in Bach and Respighi) was also at the 45-rpm speed. The technical virtues of the 45-rpm format are well known—and so are its com- mercial drawbacks. Now, in 1979, it seems to be the turn of Angel Records to try to make a go of it.

I can say straight off that the best items in Angel's initial ten-disc release fully live up to the manufacturer's claims of extended frequency and dynamic range, improved definition of sonic texture, and so on. Certainly, the difference between Angel's standard LP prod- uct and these 45-rpm discs is clearly audible. How much of this difference is due to the faster playing speed and shorter playing time (16 minutes per side) and how much simply to greater care in the tape-to-disc mastering and subsequent pressing may be open to some argu- ment, but the best of these records, all made from conventional analog tapes, do come close in quality to some of the direct-to-disc and digital items recently put on the mar- ket. I would recommend the Boult march al- bum and (if you can stand the kitschy musical substance) the Ketèlèby disc as the best dem- onstration items, with the Karajan Wagner, the Respighi Pines, the four-sevenths of Holst's Planets, and the Janáček Sinfonietta not far behind in terms of sonic excitement.

For the most part, the performances are musically good or better than good. One may take exception to Previn's Europeanized Gershwin, to Karajan's mannered moments in The Blue Danube, and to the less than flaw- less orchestral execution in the finale of The Pines of Rome. But one can take pleasure in the color and precision Previn brings to the excerpts from The Planets, to the fact that Karajan does play Bolero at the proper tempo and not only avoids the vulgar Humperdinck ending to the Lohengrin Act III Prelude, but gives us a splendid Meistersinger Prelude and a deeply moving Prelude to Act III of Parsi- fal. Likewise, one can marvel at the polish and precision of the Chicago Symphony un- der Giulini in the Firebird Suite.


The original recordings for these discs were made from 1970 onwards, and in listening to the discs in close succession one becomes aware not only of the differences wrought by time and development but also of the differences in recording style favored by the various producers involved. For me, for example, the splendidly vital Rostropovich readings, especially of the Capriccio Espagnol, are marred by what seems like a forest of microphones being brought into play. An excessively reverberant recording ambiance occasionally becomes annoying in Karajan's Wagner disc (four-channel playback definitely helps here). And in the instance of the two Chicago Symphony recordings, one notices how flat the stereo depth perspective seems in comparison with that of most of the London and Berlin productions.

Interestingly, I found the single most annoying defect to be obtrusive tape hiss, obviously a consequence of the extended frequency range and dynamics employed in the tape-to-disc mastering. This was minimal in the Respighi, Gershwin, Janáček, Wagner, Elgar/Walton, Rostropovich, and Ketèlbeý, but it was distinctly audible and annoying in the Holst, the Ravel Boléro, and the Firebird. The very heavy hiss I encountered in La Valse I am inclined to ascribe to faulty processing of the disc itself—probably in the plating step. Indeed, the quality of the pressings was variable in terms of swish and scattered ticks and pops, though it was definitely an improvement over the general run of Angel product. If these problems could be brought more consistently under control, the series as a whole (rather than just selections from it) would doubtless be well worth the $8.98 per disc price tag.

In conclusion, it is worth noting the average price-per-minute of sound (very roughly estimated) of current records: standard product is 15 to 20 cents; Angel 45-rpm Sonic Series, 30 cents; direct-to-disc and digital records, 40 cents. You pays your money and you takes your choice. —David Hall

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CONSTANTLY BETTER


KETèLBEY: In a Persian Market; The Clock and the Dresden Figures; In a Monastery Garden; In a Chinese Temple Garden; In the Mystic Land of Egypt. Vernon Midgley (tenor); Leslie Pearson (piano); Ambrosian Singers; Philharmonia Orchestra. John Lanchbery cond. ANGEL 45-rpm SS-45012 $8.98.
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AFFIX OLD LABEL

(Tape) brass ensemble, Robert Henderson cond. CRYSTAL 5392 $7.98.

Performance: Astonishing Recording: Good

What a curious record this is! With a remarkable boldness, Roger Bobo has mixed the far-out and the fin-de-siècle canon of new music for his instrument. Bobo is not only a superior tuba player but also one of those musicians who have helped call a whole new repertoire of works into being. The composers are as disparate as William Kraft (multiphonic—playing and singing chords for one player—are used in his work) and Alec Wilder. Well, diversity is the spice of a tuba player’s life, and even a Roger Bobo cannot afford to be too snobbish or exclusivist. It is, in any case, the destiny of the player—the man is, no doubt, the Heifetz of the tuba—that carries our attention.

E.S.


Performance: Very good Recording: Good

Montserrat Caballé’s exceptional vocal gifts are attractively displayed in this album of very congenial material. Except for the fruitlessly evocative La Maja y el Ruiseñor (from Goyescas), the Granados and Turina items are quite unfamiliar and interesting in their different probing of the Iberian soul: folkloric and rhapsodic in Turina, poetic and sentimental in Granados. Three of the Granados songs, incidentally, are settings of Catalan texts.

Some of the Turina songs, with their unusually high tessitura, are not (and perhaps cannot be) negotiated effortlessly, but Caballé offers generous compensation for this with several exquisitely turned pianissimo phrases. Among the Granados and Turina, the virtuoso piano writing is impressively met by Miguel Zenatti, but the recorded sound is only average. G.J.

THE KING’S SINGERS (see Going on Record, page 54)

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT


Performance: Wow! Recording: Good


Performance: Competent Recording: Okay

Ruggiero Ricci is in absolutely dazzling form all through the violinistic hurdles, minefields, and thickets thrown up by these operatic-fantasy fireworks displays, with the celebrated Paganini piece serving as a fitting climax. And, unlike some of his recent European-derived recordings on the same label, this disc is nothing but pure Ricci with first-rate orchestral backing and solid recorded sound. The Sarasate piece is the only warhorse on the disc; the Ernst and Wieniawski fantasie appear to be new to the American catalog, and the latter is a really substantial piece of music comparable to Liszt’s better operatic paraphrases for piano. A fine record, and top value at the price.

Unhappily, the same cannot be said for Diana Steiner’s Orion record, which offers competent but hardly inspired virtuoso fiddling. What’s more, the Wieniawski, Ernst, and Sarasate pieces definitely suffer from the lack of their original orchestral accompaniment. The sound is reasonably good. D.H.

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Performance: Enchanting

Recording: 1926-1938 vintage

This is a generous program of mementos of a beloved artist. Collectors should be delighted with it, for many of the selections were rare enough in the 78-rpm days and have not been part of previous LP reissues. The varied fare presents the soprano in her fields of strength: Bach, Mozart, Schubert, and operetta. The tone quality has all the freshness and purity to justify the critical praise bestowed upon her during her long career, and even the top notes (A to B-natural) have a characteristic sweet-edge.

The Mozart excerpts are less successful. The aria from Il Re Pastore is nearly sung but suffers from the unavoidable cuts to accommodate a 78-rpm record side, and the florid line in the Alleluia is not accurate enough. Nor is the rendition of Schubert’s Der Hirten auf dem Felchen on the technical level of the best modern versions. But what is exceptional is the enduring charm Elisabeth Schumann communicates, and that quality makes the disc treasurable.

G.J.


Performance: Sensitive

Recording: Superb

One’s back is bound to go up on a bit even in these inflationary times at the news of a record that costs $15.95 and plays for hardly half an hour. Yet, listening to the Japanese guitarist Kazuhito Yamashita in this direct-to-disc recording made at the Ginza Yamaha Hall in Tokyo is an arresting experience. Yamashita, a three-year-high school student born in Nagasaki, has taken many prizes at international contests and plays with marked sensitivity and insight. The program consists of the traditional Romance de Amor and two time-honored works by Fernandez Sor, with side two holding only Benjamin Britten’s twelve-minute Nocturnal, Op. 70, his sole work for guitar and one of the most exquisite ever composed for that instrument. But the big thing here is the crystalline sound of Yamashita’s Ramerez guitar, which is captured with truly startling clarity. At sixteen, Yamashita is a most promising player, and he couldn’t have asked for a more carefully prepared debut on records. Ironically, though, after all that care in the recording, the sound on my copy was marred by some distracting surface noise, which the direct-to-disc method is just as susceptible to as others. P.K.
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