BUILDING AN A/V SYSTEM

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TESTED
Sony Digital Preamplifier
NSM Speaker
Mondial Acurus Amplifier
Altec Lansing Speaker
INTRODUCING

A new digital future. Take a good look at the letters DCC. Because if you love music, they'll soon be as common as the letters CD. Created by Philips – the inventor of Compact Disc – the Digital Compact Cassette gives you crystal clear CD quality, along with all the advantages of a cassette.

You're the recording artist.

Even better than playing music with CD clarity, DCC records with the same digital sound quality. That means you can make a digital copy of your favorite CD. There's no loss of sound. Zero hiss. After all, it's fully digital.

Music on command. With DCC, you can directly access your favorite tracks. All you have to do is enter the track number, and the player automatically locates and plays it for you. But Philips DCC also has features even a CD player can't match.

See what you hear. Beyond track numbers and elapsed track time, prerecorded DCCs show the song title, album title and the artist's name. Searching for your favorite selection has never been easier.

Built to survive. Just look at

YOUR MUSIC WILL N
the cassette and you can see the future in it. It's beautifully sleek, with the entire top side devoted to album art. All of the openings are concealed under a metal slider to keep it free of dirt and dust. Best of all, both the cassette and its case are built to survive. And there are more coming every day.

**Your favorite artists are here.** Already there are literally hundreds of titles available on DCC.

From all your favorite artists, in every style, from metal, pop, rap and jazz to country, oldies, classical and swing.

Don't throw it all away.

Because you weren't born yesterday, you probably have hundreds of conventional cassettes — the ones we invented over twenty years ago — so Philips designed the DCC900 to play them as well. Imagine — a system that doesn't expect you to simply dismiss the past. Get in touch with the future.

Call **1-800-982-3737** for the Philips Dealer near you, because the DCC900 is here, now.

Another First From Philips

**PHILIPS**
FORGET ABOUT US FOR 12 HOURS.

FISHER'S NEW SHELF SYSTEM was conceived to give you a lot more music with a lot less bulk. The 10 CD changer offers you up to 750 minutes of uninterrupted pleasure, while the four speaker Dolby® Surround Sound wraps you in your own musical world. Of course it's got the usual complement of other components: digital AM-FM tuning with presets, a double cassette deck with Dolby® B and C, even a multi-function remote control. In case you change your mind. Or forgot something.

CIRCLE NO 30 ON READER SERVICE CARD
Cover
Equipped for home theater: Atlantic Technology's Model 151 LR satellite speaker, 153 C center-channel speaker, and 152 PBM powered subwoofer (see page 44 for more on these speakers), a 27-inch Zenith TV set, Panasonic LX-900 combi-player, a Pioneer VSX-D901S A/V receiver, and a Mitsubishi HS-U82 Super VHS Hi-Fi VCR. See page 52 for how to put together an A/V system.

Photograph by Roberto Brosan

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A roundup of the latest decks by Glenn Kenny

MUSIC

Esa-Pekka Salonen
“In Los Angeles we think music belongs to everybody” by David Patrick Stearns

Best Recordings of the Month
Guy Clark, Schnitke and Schumann Cello Concertos, Jimmy Scott, Shostakovich Symphony No. 8
When We Celebrate
You Save.

For a limited time, save on the RM3000, the 3-piece speaker system that 1800 audio experts picked as best for the second straight year!

Once again Polk's RM3000 walked away with another Grand Prix. Not only was it the top choice in the annual poll conducted by AudioVideo International magazine, but it won despite the fact that the competition had a whole year to catch up.

Stereo Review called us "...the best example of a three-piece speaker system that we have yet heard...try listening to the RM3000. It might eliminate some common misconceptions about how large (and expensive) a speaker has to be to provide plenty of high quality sound."

But big performance from this system is only half the story. Because the RM3000 really knows how to play hide and seek. As handsome as the satellites are to look at, in black granite matrix, gloss white or piano black, they neatly disappear into any size room or decor.

Even our bandpass subwoofer can easily be placed out of sight. Only its powerful, musical bass performance says it's in the room. That's the way it should be in this discrete 3-piece system.

This is the best time to make our cause for celebration your opportunity to save. Choose the RM3000, now and for a limited time, while they're specially priced at all participating Polk dealers.

Nothing else measures up to the size of the RM3000's sound or savings. And you can be the expert on that at your Polk dealer.

The RM3000, from the speaker specialists of Polk Audio

For deep, well-defined bass, Polk uses twin drivers coupled with a sub-bass radiator. This bandpass technology produces greater low frequency performance and smooth response.

For the location of your nearest Polk Audio Dealer, call 1-800-992-2520. In Canada, call 1-416-847-8888.

**RM3000 Celebration runs from November 20 to January 18, 1992.**
Blaupunkt Cheyenne

We were pleased to see such a positive review of our Cheyenne CM422 cassette receiver in November, but we were surprised at Ken Pohlman's comments on its ergonomics. For decades, Blaupunkt has employed leading design authorities, doing research with off-the-street volunteers along with man-machine studies, in order to consistently design products that are extremely user-friendly.

The faceplate of a car stereo head unit is a limited piece of real estate. The design objective is to maximize access to functions used on a day-to-day basis. Our multifunction four-way cursor allows for seek and manual tuning while doubling up to allow disc- and track-selection and cue/review functions when a CD changer is connected. The SRC (source) button, which allows one-touch toggling between the three possible audio sources, is dominant-placed in the upper right-hand corner. The loudness button is also easily accessible for activation/deactivation when changing between music and speech. Other buttons are used less frequently or set only once.

Frank Hognol
Manager, Car Audio Planning
Blaupunkt Car Audio
Broadview, IL

American Music

In “Discovering American Music” in November, William Livingstone spoke of obviously familiar composers with some insight, but his complete omission of the American avant-garde struck me as both unrealistic and inappropriately bucolic. Sadly, in a year that marked the passing of America’s most original “inventor” of music, there was nary a mention of John Cage. I disagree with Mr. Livingstone’s assertion that Americans are “some-what romantic, somewhat sentimental people who like pretty melodies.” Heaven forbid. We are a nation of pioneers. We prize what romantic, somewhat sentimental people call “bad poetry,” leading to “predictable results.” In fact, Fish has kept with the style that resulted from our Cheyenne CM422 cassette receiver in November “Quick Fixes” of the AMERICAN MUSIC. I enjoy Ian Masters’s writing, but in his November, William Livingstone spoke of obviously familiar composers with some insight, but his complete omission of the American avant-garde struck me as both unrealistic and inappropriately bucolic. Sadly, in a year that marked the passing of America’s most original “inventor” of music, there was nary a mention of John Cage. I disagree with Mr. Livingstone’s assertion that Americans are “some-what romantic, somewhat sentimental people who like pretty melodies.” Heaven forbid. We are a nation of pioneers. We prize what romantic, somewhat sentimental people call “bad poetry,” leading to “predictable results.” In fact, Fish has kept with the style that resulted from our Cheyenne CM422 cassette receiver in November “Quick Fixes” of the AMERICAN MUSIC. 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You listen to other speakers without an active equalizer. So why does the 901 speaker system have one?

Have you ever listened to your favorite music performed live, then heard a recording of it that didn’t sound anywhere near the same? Like something was missing?

That may have been due to your speaker’s frequency response – the range of high-to-low frequencies and how well balanced they are. Maintaining smooth response is critical to the lifelike sound the Bose 901 speaker system is designed to deliver.

But designing the 901 system to sound so lifelike wasn’t easy. It involved hundreds of decisions incorporating dozens of technologies. Including a completely different approach to equalizing frequency response.

Conventional technology tries to balance response by connecting many types of speakers together with passive crossover components in the enclosure. Unfortunately, these speaker components never have a completely smooth response. What’s more, they often rob power from the amplifier. So their sound is compromised.

The 901 system, on the other hand, recognizes that what’s good for frequency response is often bad for efficiency and power handling. So the 901 active equalizer is completely separate from the speakers. Precisely tailored to work only with the 901 system, it acts like a very sophisticated parametric equalizer to smooth out even the slightest acoustic bumps and dips.

Meanwhile, since the speakers don’t have to handle this critical task, there’s no compromise of efficiency or power handling. So the 901 system delivers a more lifelike performance with virtually no distortion, even at full volume.

The Bose 901 Direct/Reflecting Speaker System

The 901 speaker system is the best sounding speaker Bose® makes. And the most highly acclaimed speaker in the world, regardless of size or price.

Why? Because it sounds so much like a live performance, where you hear mostly reflected sound. Conventional speakers produce mostly direct sound, so they cannot achieve the realism of a live performance.

Bose Direct/Reflecting® speaker technology delivers a balance of reflected and direct sound. Combined with other proprietary technologies (such as active equalization, an Acoustic Matrix™ enclosure, and HVC drivers), this gives you sound very much like that of a live performance.

But nothing is as convincing as hearing the 901 yourself. Listen to it at your Bose dealer. Then, to hear what the 901 can really do, take a pair home.

To read more about the Bose 901, ask for an informative brochure, and names of Bose dealers near you. Call toll free:

1-800-444-BOSE, Ext. 212

Engineered to be the closest you can get to the sound of a live performance without leaving home.

Bose®
Better sound through research™

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Surround-channel response of a Dolby Surround receiver, amplifier, or processor is typically pretty flat at the low end, with a gentle high-frequency rolloff starting at about 7,000 Hz. Signals below 100 Hz in the surround channel will be in the front channels, too, so restricted low-frequency response in surround speakers is not a fatal flaw. Also, surround hardware with a subwoofer output normally derives the signal for it by summing the left- and right-channel input signals before surround decoding, so if you use a subwoofer, it will usually reproduce the deep bass for all output channels, including surround.

Jazz Greats

Calling Louis Armstrong “the greatest jazz musician of all time,” as Chris Albertson did in his November review of “The California Concerts,” is enormously to overvalue a man who was charming, affable, accessible, infectious, and predictably solid when he performed. But even to rate him among the top ten “greatest jazz musicians” would be presumptuous. In order of importance, I would say that Art Tatum and Charlie Parker were probably the greatest all around. A smidgen

The Laughing Mikado

In reviewing the Telarc CD of Gilbert and Sullivan’s The Mikado (November), Robert Ackart said that Donald Adams’s performance in the title role is “tarnished only by bursts of demonic laughter in ‘My object all sublime.’” Every performance of The Mikado that I have heard since the 1936 D’Oyly-Carte recording has included maniacal laughter in that aria. Indeed, it’s such a tradition that I wouldn’t consider buying a recording without it.

Rule Breaker?

After all, the woofer faces down. The tweeter is mounted below the mid-range. The cabinet has five sides. Does this new DA900 break the rules?

No way! Instead of conventional thinking, the DA900 uses the rules of acoustics in fresh new ways to create better sound in any room, for any kind of music.

Deep, powerful bass. Crystal-clear highs. And pin-point imaging that reveals the full texture of music. Plus, the slim shape and video-shielded drivers of the DA900 are ideal for the most elegant home video theater. That’s the promise and the reality of the new DA900.

Hear the unique DA900 at your Design Acoustics dealer. Write or call (800) 933-9022 today for complete information.

Corrections

Our test report on the Optimus DCT-2000 DCC recorder in December erroneously stated that the deck could not find the shortest path to a track selected on the opposite side of the tape from the one being played. We seem to have been misled by a faulty table of contents on the tape we initially used to test this feature.

In the “Dealer’s Choice” article in December, the price given for the Definitive Technology BPIO loudspeaker should have been $1,100 a pair. Also, the name of one of the dealers, Ford Montgomery of Chelsea Audio/Video in Beaverton, Oregon, was misprinted.

The caption for the Yamaha integrated amplifier pictured on page 53 in the August issue misstated the model number, price, and power rating. The model shown is the DSP-A1000, which lists for $1,499 and is rated for up to 80 watts in each of the three front channels.
FOR THE DISCRIMINATING MOVIE FAN.

The Addams Family  *0009000
Bugsy  *0834008
The Sound Of Music  *0039005
Backdraft  *0599005
Alien  *0020028
Aliens  *0880909
The Abyss  *0831102
Die Hard  *0367007
Die Hard 2  *0041806
Ghost  *0826008
E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial  *0681106
The Silence Of The Lambs  *0805009
Batman (1989)  *0642004
The Godfather  *0000802
The Godfather: Part III  *0842302
Back To The Future  *0921109
Back To The Future Part II  *0921304
Back To The Future Part III  *0409007
Predator  *0364901
Predator 2  *0143007
Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves  *0976800
Home Alone  *0104006
Scarface (1983)  *0216004
Goodfellas  *0969008
The Blues Brothers  *0211706
Dune  *0211102
Kindergarten Cop  *0523407
Lethal Weapon  *0630806
Lethal Weapon 2  *0642702
National Lampoon's Animal House  *0215508
The Man Who Would Be King  *0085803
The Hunt For Red October  *0825000
The Bible  *0747008
Jaws  *0100008
Edward Scissorhands  *0146004
The African Queen  *0511002
Bettlejuice  *0630308
American Graffiti  *0213000
Blue Velvet  *0515007
Hard To Kill  *0923505
The Prince Of Tides  *0984703
Waynes World  *0835705

The Commitments  *0691303
Fried Green Tomatoes  1005404
North By Northwest  *0844209

Hearts Of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse  *0025000
Harry Connick, Jr.: Singin' & Swingin'  *0968107
Star Trek: The Motion Picture  *0203505
Star Trek II: The Wrath Of Khan  *0201301
Star Trek III: The Search For Spock  *0201608
Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home  *0430603
Star Trek V: The Final Frontier  *0448605
Superman: The Movie  *0010305
Superman II  *0615000
Born On The Fourth Of July  *0489104
Field Of Dreams  *0920306
Presumed Innocent  *0962100
Road Warrior  *0628005
Chinatown  *0202507
Bird On A Wire  *0479305
Beverly Hills Cop  *0205302
Beverly Hills Cop II  *0419008
Henry V (1990)  *0040030
Henry & June  *0499301
The Goonies  *0383000
Bugs Bunny Classics  *0297005
Conan The Barbarian  *0202009
The Empire Of The Sun  *0633206
Dangerous Liaisons  *0638700
Reversal Of Fortune  *0969009
Always  *0921502
Dirty Harry  *0610708
Memphis Belle  *0983502
Big  *0378409
New Jack City  *0971507
Fatal Attraction  *0493907
Charlito's Off Fire  *0501401
All Dogs Go To Heaven  *0289702
It's A Wonderful Life (45th Anniversary Ed.)  *0392708
The Last Boy Scout  *0779108
The Naked Gun 2½: The Small Of Fear  *0842609
Pattin  *0789703
2001: A Space Odyssey  *0844308
The Wizard Of Oz  *0001404

Here's a great way to build a collection of your favorite movies-on laserdisc! Just write in the numbers of the 3 laserdiscs you want for $1.00 each, plus shipping and handling, in exchange, you simply agree to buy two more laserdiscs in the next year, at regular Club prices, within the coming year. You have a 10-Day Risk-Free Trial. We'll send details of the Club's operation with your introductory package. If not satisfied, return everything within 10 days for a full refund and no further obligation.

For fastest service, use a credit card and send us these 3 laserdiscs For $1.00 each plus $1.50 each shipping and handling (boat $7.50)

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had a tracking force of ¾ to 1½ grams. He also put Concord's Model 880 portable stereo tape recorder through its paces, concluding that the $400 unit was "excellent in many respects," although he recommended that buyers carefully check it to "ascertain that the hum level is not too high for comfort."

Huh? A back-cover ad for Audiotape open-reel recording tape contained the oddly unsettling observation, "Those crunching noises reverberating through your head are exciting."

A feature on the history of the Metropolitan Opera on radio uncovered a strange response to the broadcasts' long-time announcer, Milton Cross. "I'm not fond of Milton Cross's voice," one Met listener was quoted as saying, "but my dog loves it. As soon as I turn on the radio and Cross comes over the airwaves, the pooch becomes glued to the set. When the music starts, he leaves."


Technical Talk: Julian Hirsch reviewed the Shure M222 Stereo Dynetic integrated tonearm and cartridge, which

BY STEVE SIMELS

30 years ago

In the January 1963 issue, Furman Hebb's editorial noted that the acoustics of New York's new Philharmonic Hall [now Avery Fisher Hall] were being discussed in terms usually reserved for high-fidelity components. One critic, he observed, "wished he had a bass control handy so he could have turned it up."

The People's Choice: Twelve albums were picked by Stereo Review's readers as the best of the previous year. Among them were Igor Stravinsky's own version of The Firebird, the soundtrack of West Side Story, Billie Holiday's "The Golden Years," and Judy Garland's "Judy at Carnegie Hall," which was described as "mesmeric." Later in the issue, the editors chose the best album covers of the year, including John Coltrane's "Ole," the Modern Jazz Quartet's "The Comedy," and a best-selling (NOT!) Caedmon spoken-word LP of Beowulf.

20 years ago

The Basic Repertoire: Contemplating versions of Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini on the hundredth anniversary of Rachmaninoff's birth, the critic Martin Bookspan recommended the composer's own performance on RCA, a London LP featuring Vladimir Ashkenazy, a Gary Graffman/Leonard Bernstein version on Columbia, and the RCA Arthur Rubinstein/Fritz Reiner collaboration, which he thought "makes much of the music's wit and fancy."

New products noted this month included the Thorens TD-125 Mk II turntable (available in a version able to play 16-inch transcription discs); the Sylvania AS85W speaker system, an acoustic-suspension design with an 8-inch woofer and 1½-inch dome tweeter; and the Arp Odyssey music synthesizer, complete with white-noise generator (price: $1,295 without stand).

10 years ago

Bill, Meet Herb: After presenting a Record of the Year Award to the conductor and early digital audio enthusiast Herbert von Karajan, Editor in Chief William Livingstone pondered Karajan's claim that eventually all recordings would be video. "PolyGram is promoting the compact disc with the slogan 'Hear the Light,' " he noted, "but will we always want to see the source of the sound?"

Best of the Month: George Jellinek, acknowledging that a perfect performance of Mozart's Le Nozze di Figaro was "elusive," nonetheless gave high marks to London's digital recording featuring Samuel Ramey and conducted by Georg Solti. On the pop side, Mark Peel was cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs over "Ice Cream for Crow," a Captain Beefheart album that proved to be his last. Elsewhere in the review section, Eric Salzman made a case for Alois Haba's quarter-tone opera The Mother ("Strangely, it works"), Steve Simels hailed Tonio K.'s "La Bomba" as "the greatest EP since the Rolling Stones' Five X Five," and Noel Coppage, unaccountably turned off by Don Henley's seemingly inoffensive "I Can't Stand Still," dismissed the ex-Eagle's latest album as "derivative as Milton Berle's jokes."

Thanks a lot: In "Audio Q. And A.," reader Larry Weiss, of Boston, asked Technical Director Larry Klein if it was a good idea to get an equalizer for his car stereo. Klein's response: "It all depends."
Listen. There is a time for hard-driving rock. This is not one of those times. Now you want something a little softer, a little more sensual.

And you want speakers that are as comfortable with rich, crooning voices as they are with screaming metallica guitars.

So, here's what you do: ask to listen to the new KLH Premier Series. Bring along a few Frank or Sarah CDs. Bring your girlfriend. Then, politely, ask the salesman for a little privacy.
Since 1976, Coustic has consistently created and manufactured some of the highest quality equipment on the car audio market.

From its introduction in 1978, the memorable RX-3000 has drawn incredible consumer demand. In the early eighties, the unforgettable EQ-8370 maintained strong popularity for an amazing stretch of seven years. Then, of course, there was the AMP-500/300 power amplifier series with its superb sonic reproduction capability.

The HZ Shaper™ (U.S. Pat. D302,556 & D302,695) speaker series was invented to solve inherent acoustic problems created within the automobile interior, while the highly successful RX-500 radio series achieved legendary status. Continuing in Coustic's tradition of quality and innovation...

Selected as "one of the most innovative consumer products of 1986" at the Innovations '86 Design & Engineering Exhibition event held at the 1986 International Summer Consumer Electronic Show. The EQ-1030, a programmable 7-band EQ designed with pink noise generator, microphone and detachable electronic crossover, is the first and only product of its kind ever to be created for the automotive environment.

The first of Coustic's Power Logic Component automotive power amplifier line, the AMP-460 was honored as "one of the most innovative consumer products of 1990" at the Innovations '90 Design & Engineering Exhibition. "It offers an excellent design, quality construction, reliable operation, and great sonic performance while avoiding the distraction of useless bells and whistles... in short, this is a very cost-effective but still hi-fi amplifier."

Utilizing DSP technology, the RTA-33 represents a major breakthrough in precision instrumentation. "The 33 is an excellent RTA. In terms of design, Coustic's engineers have stepped up to the plate and hit a home run. No other RTA offers this combination of small size, versatility, special features, precision, and price... The RTA-33 simply rewrite the rules."

Ken C. Pohmann
User's Evaluation,
CAR STEREO REVIEW
Jan/Feb 1992

An evolutionary improvement, Coustic's new 1992 series of full-featured Car Radio/Cassette Players is a fusion of technological ingenuity, functionality and dynamic ergonomics.

XM-7 Multi-Function Mobile Electronic Crossover (Patent Pending)

The "reference standard" for electronic crossover design technology, the XM-7 was recognized as another "one of the most innovative consumer products of 1990" at the Innovations '90 event.

The world's smallest, most powerful and amazingly accurate Real Time Analyzer, the RTA-33, earned Coustic yet another honor as "one of the most innovative consumer products of 1991" at the Innovations '91.

4260 Charter Street
Vernon, CA 90058-2596 USA
Phone: 213-582-2832
Fax: 213-582-4328
**NEW PRODUCTS**

**SOUNDSTREAM**
The DAC-1 digital-to-analog converter from Soundstream features what the company calls Dual Process conversion, which is said to yield low noise and excellent linearity, a discrete Class A analog output section, and three separate, isolated power supplies. Price: $695.

Soundstream, Dept. SR, 120 Blue Ravine Rd., Folsom, CA 95630.
- Circle 120 on reader service card

**SOTA**
Sota's newest Time Domain loudspeaker, the three-way, 40-inch-high Model 2 (left in photo), uses the same Kevlar drivers as the Model 4 (right) and the Panorama "midi-monitor" (center). Rated response of the Model 2 is 37 to 22,000 Hz ± 3 dB. Price: $3,000 a pair in rosewood or ebony finish, $2,200 in oak. Sota, Dept. SR, 1318-B Marquette Dr., Romeoville, IL 60441.
- Circle 121 on reader service card

**BANG & OLUFSEN**
The 43¼-inch-high Beolab 6000 powered loudspeaker system from B&O is magnetically shielded for use in home theaters. It features Adaptive Bass Linearization, which reduces bass output at high volumes to limit distortion. Price: $2,000 a pair. Bang & Olufsen, Dept. SR, 1150 Feehanville Dr., Mount Prospect, IL 60056.
- Circle 122 on reader service card

**QUAD**
The Quad 66FM FM-only tuner is designed to match the Quad 66 preamplifier and to be operated with the preamp's remote control. Features include nineteen station presets and auto-search in 25- or 50-kHz steps. Capture ratio is rated as 1.5 dB; 50-dB quieting sensitivity as 28 dBf in stereo, 8 dBf in mono, and image rejection as 100 dB. Price: $1,200. Quad U.S.A., Dept. SR, 111 South Dr., Barrington, IL 60010.
- Circle 123 on reader service card
NEW PRODUCTS

▲ HAFLER
The MSE 88tm four-channel car power amplifier, rated for 22 watts per channel, features Hafler’s TransNova circuitry, which uses grounded-source MOSFET output transistors for a wide bandwidth, low distortion and noise, and thermal stability. Price: $329. Hafler Mobile Electronics, Dept. SR, 613 S. Rockford Dr., Tempe, AR 85281.
• Circle 125 on reader service card

▲ AVALON ACOUSTICS
Avalon’s two-way Avatar speaker system has a 1-inch titanium-dome tweeter and a special long-throw, 8-inch Nomex/Kevlar cone woofer. The cherrywood-finish cabinet is 34 inches high. Price: $3,950 a pair. Avalon Acoustics Inc., Dept. SR, 2800-B Wilderness Pl., Boulder, CO 80301.
• Circle 126 on reader service card

▲ JVC
The JVC XL-P30 portable CD player can play while its lid is open. It also features twenty-two-track programming and Compu-Link compatibility with JVC home receivers. Accessories include a carrying bag, AC adaptor, rechargeable batteries, and headphones. Price: $220. JVC, Dept. SR, 41 Slater Dr., Elmwood Pk., NJ 07407.
• Circle 124 on reader service card

▲ PIONEER
The CT-WM70R, Pioneer’s latest dual-well, autoreverse cassette changer, can play up to seven tapes nonstop or dub a sequence from up to six tapes. Price: $510. Pioneer, Dept. SR, 2265 E. 220th St., P.O. Box 1730, Long Beach, CA 90801-1720.

▲ EVEREADY
The compact 5 Hour Charger from Eveready recharges four AA or AAA batteries in 5 hours, giving users of battery-operated portables an environment-friendly alternative to throwing away batteries. Other Eveready chargers can handle up to eight batteries. Prices: $12 to $18. Eveready Battery Company, Dept. SR, Checkerboard Sq., St. Louis, Missouri 63164.
• Circle 127 on reader service card
FINALLY, AN INNOVATION IN AUDIOTAPE TECHNOLOGY THAT CAN BE SEEN.

Starting this fall, Maxell audiotapes will appear in packaging designed to revolutionize audiotape selection. While you probably know that the different bias levels in today’s audiotapes are meant for different recording requirements, you may not be sure which one to choose for each taping need. To simplify the selection, we created a coding system as easy as 1-2-3.

- Tape with a blue dot denotes the first category of bias level: “Normal.” It’s great for general taping purposes. Like music off portable audio equipment or clear FM broadcasts. Even a spoken lecture.

- A red square stands for the second and most popular category of our tapes: “High” bias. It includes XLII and XLII-S, which has Black Magnetite, and is the perfect choice for capturing the high energy music of CDs.

- The purple triangle symbolizes the third and final category of bias level: “Metal.” It’s excellent for recording powerful, full-spectrum digital source music, live or studio. Before buying one make sure your tape deck has a “Metal/Type IV” setting.

When you make audiotapes with the sound clarity of Maxell, there’s no sense in covering them with packaging that’s unclear.

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TAKE YOUR MUSIC TO THE MAX.
**NEW PRODUCTS**

**YAMAHA**
Yamaha's DSP-E200B surround processor/amplifier features a large number of digitally generated ambience modes as well as decoding for Dolby Pro Logic surround sound. It can deliver 25 watts each to one center and two surround speakers. Price: $499. Yamaha, Dept. SR, P.O. Box 6660, Buena Park, CA 90622.
- Circle 131 on reader service card

**MITSUBISHI**
Mitsubishi says the HTS-100 Dolby Pro Logic decoder/amplifier provides "Instant Home Theater." It connects to a TV set and can deliver up to 50 watts to left and right front speakers, 25 watts each to one or two center speakers, and 25 watts each to two surround speakers. Price: $499. Mitsubishi, Dept. SR, 5665 Plaza Dr., Cypress, CA 90630-0007.
- Circle 128 on reader service card

**CERWIN-VEGA**
The VS-120 from Cerwin-Vega, next to the top of the new VS Series, has a 12-inch woofer, a 4-inch midrange, and a 1-inch dual-magnet tweeter. The 32-inch-high cabinet is finished in walnut-grain vinyl. Price: $345 each. Cerwin-Vega, Dept. SR, 555 E. Easy St., Simi Valley, CA 93065.
- Circle 130 on reader service card

**ADCOM**
The Adcom GFP-565 preamplifier features three sets of outputs so speakers can be easily bi- or triamplified. It has five high-level inputs, a phono input, and a processor loop. Price: $800 in black, $850 in white. Adcom, Dept. SR, 11 Elkins Rd., East Brunswick, NJ 08816.
- Circle 129 on reader service card

**GENEVA**
- Circle 132 on reader service card
The Record (Columbia)

Barbra Streisand

Boston (Epic)

Hell (Epic)

Meat Loaf

Bat Out Of (Asylum)

Eagles

Hotel California

Vol. 1 (Elektra)

Jethro Tull

Aqualung

Bros.)

Van Morrison

Greatest Hits (Atlantic)

Aretha Franklin

30 (Motown)

(Rykodisc)

David Bowie

David Live

Not Your Girl? (Chrysalis)

Vince Gill

1 Still Believe

Hits. Vol. 1 (Warner Bros.)

Randy Travis

Greatest

Great White

Psycho City (Capitol)

Duran Duran

Your Illusion I (Geffen)

Musiquarlum I (Tamla)

Stevie Wonder's Orig.

Hi -Five -Keep On Goin'

(Sire/Wamer Bros.)

Story (Geffen)

Pat Metheny

Secret To Extinction (Capitol)

Megadeth

Countdown To Extinction (Capitol)

For Love (Capitol)

Freddie Jackson

Time (Columbia)

Onginal Soundtrack (Epic)

"Honeymoon In Vegas" 

Original Soundtrack (Epic)

"Honeymoon In Vegas" -Original Soundtrack (Epic)

Alice In Chains

Dirt (Columbia)

Suzanne Vega

99 9 F (A&M)

Collin Raye

In This Life (A&M)

Alice In Chains

DIRT (Columbia) 444-933

Suzanne Vega

99 9 F (A&M) 447-516

Collin Raye

In This Life (Epic) 447-609

Honeybun In Vegas -Original Soundtrack (Epic) 414-019

Bad Company

Here Comes Trouble (ATCO) 446-203

Brandford Marsalis

Hear You Twice The First Time (Columbia) 445-860

Freddie Jackson

Time For Love (Capitol) 445-262

George Thorogood

And The Destroyers- The Baddest Of The Bad Hits (EMI) 446-905

Vegaceli-Countdown To Extinction (Capitol) 444-489

Pat Metheny

Secret Story (Geffen) 444-622

Morrissey- Your Arsenal (Sire/Wamer Bros) 444-396

He-Five -Keep On Going On (live) 444-331

Steve Wonder's Orig.

Musiquarlum I (Capitol) 314-997/396/996

Guns N' Roses- Use Your Illusion I (Geffen) 442-087

Travis Tritt

T FOUR O-U B L-E (Warner Bros.) 446-767

Sonic Youth

Defy (Geffen) 442-083

Ricky Van Shelton

Greatest Hits Plus (EMI) 444-067

FOREIGNER

The Very Best And Beyond (Atlantic) 447-524

YES-Yesstony (ATCO) 446-219359-218

Steelie Dan

Gold-Grt Hits (MCA) 435-693

Steppenwolf- Born To Be Wild (MCA) 430-678930-974

The Allman Brothers Band -A Decade Of Hits 1969-79 (Polydor) 430-429

Rod Stewart-Downtown

Train/Selections From The Storyteller Anthology (Warner Bros.) 425-322

Rush-Chronicle (Mercury) 423-186793-978

Journey's Greatest Hits (Columbia) 375-279

But Of The Doors (El- extra) 352-457168/2747212

The Police-Every Breath You Take-The Singles (A&M) 349-318

The Steve Miller Band- Gt. Hits. 1974-77 (Capitol) 290-171

Eagles-Grt. Hits. 1971-75 (Asylum) 387-003

Loggins & Messina

The Best Of Friends (Columbia) 269-605

Santana's Gt. Hits (Columbia) 244-459

Jimi Joplin's Gt. Hits (Layla) 231-760

Simon & Garfunkel's Greatest Hits (Columbia) 219-477

Bob Dylan's Gt. Hits (Columbia) 138-868

The Very Best Of The Righteous Brothers- Unchained Melody (Verve) 423-772

Trisha Yearwood

Hearts In Armor (MCA Nashville) 444-042

Too Short-Shorty The Player (live) 443-788

"Mo Money"-Orig.

Sndtrk. (Perspective/ A&M) 443-739

Guns N' Roses- Use Your Illusion II (Geffen) 442-038

Temple Of The Dog (A&M) 442-780

Marty Stuart-This One's Gonna Hurt You (MCA) 442-418

E P M D - Business Never Personal (Rat/DeJam/Chaos) 442-244

Wilson Phillips- Shadows And Light (SBK) 440-271

The Steve Miller Band- Gt. Hits. 1971-75 (Capitol)

INXS-Welcome To Wherever You Are (Atlantic) 445-023

Firehouse-Hold Your Fire (Epic) 439-448

Kathleen Battle & Wynton Marsalis- Baroque Duet (Sony Classical) 439-372

The B-52's-Good Stuff (Reprise) 439-281

Al Jarreau-Makin' Love And Earth (Reprise) 439-240

Bob James & Earl Klugh -Cool (Warner Bros.) 439-232

Miles Davis-Doo-Bop (Warner Bros.) 439-224

David Sanborn-Up front (Elektra) 438-994

The Cure- Kiss Me (Electra) 438-655

DAS EFX-Dead Serious (westcoast) 438-630

Beastie Boys-Check Your Head (Capitol) 438-499

Celine Dion (Epic) 438-672

Sophie B. Hawkins- Torque & Tales (Columbia) 436-402

Indigo Girls- Rites Of Passage (Epic) 436-394

Shabba Ranks- Dough & Ready (Epic) 436-385

Tears For Fears- Tears Roll Down (MCA) 436-005

Tom Cochrane- Mad Mad World (Capitol) 435-685

ZZ Top- Gt. Hits (Warner Bros.) 438-010

Kris Kross—Totally Krossed Out, Warm It Up, Jump; etc (RuffHouse/Columbia) 435-743

Eric Clapton—Unplugged. Layla: Tears In Heaven; plus more (Reprise/Duck) 446-187

Michael Bolton—Timeless (The Classics) Yesterday, Only A Dream; plus more (Columbia) 445-549

Billy Ray Cyrus—Some Gave All. Achy Breaky Heart; Could've Been Me, more; (Epic) 441-551

Bobby Brown—Bobby, Hump'er Around. Two Can Play That Game; more (MCA) 445-803

Pearl Jam—Ten. Even Flow, Jeremy: Once; plus many more. (Epic/Assoc.) 429-333

Extreme—18 Sides To Every Story. Rest In Peace; and more. (A&M) 447-040

Mariah Carey—MTV Unplugged. I'll Be There; Emotions; others. (LaFace) 445-035

Genesis—We Can't Dance. Tilt Cut plus Joshua Knows 1992; more. (Atlantic) 448-936

"Boomerang"-Orig. Sndtrk. Featuring Boyz II Men, Johnny Gill; others. (LaFace) 445-033

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See details on other side.
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Wayne's World&quot; (Sniff)</td>
<td>Jim Carrey/Mike Myers</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Hello, Goodbye&quot; (EP)</td>
<td>The Rolling Stones</td>
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<td>&quot;Saturday Night Fever&quot;</td>
<td>John Travolta/Boyd Guggenheim</td>
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<td>&quot;The Longest Time&quot;</td>
<td>Billy Joel</td>
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<td>&quot;The River, Papa Loved Mama&quot;</td>
<td>James Taylor</td>
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<td>&quot;The One, Title Cut plus Runaway, Train (with Clapton)&quot;</td>
<td>Elton John</td>
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<td>&quot;Simply The Best&quot;</td>
<td>Tina Turner</td>
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<td>&quot;Finally&quot;</td>
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**Extra Bonus Offer:** Send one more CD now, for which I am enclosing an additional $6.95.

**THE COLUMBIA HOUSE COMPANY**

COLUMBIA HOUSE, 1400 N. Fruitridge Ave.

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Please accept my membership application under the terms outlined in this advertisement. I am enclosing check or money order for $15.98—that’s 1¢ for your first 8 CDs plus $1.85 for shipping and handling.

If you'd prefer an alternate selection, or none at all, just mail the response card always provided with the date specified.

You always have 10 days to decide; if not, you may return the selection at our expense. I (check one):

- [ ] New "Buy More—Pay Less" Bonus Plan. If you continue your membership after fulfilling your obligation, you’ll be eligible for our generous bonus plan. It lets you get a single CD for as little as $3.99 (or a single cassette tape) for each CD you buy at regular Club price.
- [ ] 10-Day Risk-Free Trial. We’ll send details of the Club’s operation with your introductory package. If not satisfied, return everything within 10 days for a full refund and no further obligation.
- [ ] Extra Bonus Offer: you may take one additional CD right now at the super-low price of only $6.95—and you are then entitled to take an extra CD as a bonus FREE! And you’ll receive your discounted CD and your bonus CD with your 8 introductory selections—a total of 10 CDs in all.

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**Extra Bonus Offer:** you may take one additional CD now, for which I am enclosing an additional $6.95.
MB QUART

The QM 160KN/S universal coaxial car speaker from MB Quart is designed to fit in a 61/2-inch factory cutout with a mounting depth of 2 1/2 inches. It has a 6 1/2-inch woofer that crosses over at 4,000 Hz to a 3 1/4-inch titanium-dome tweeter.


DIGITAL SYSTEMS AND SOLUTIONS

The MusicMat and MusicMat Gold dampers are said to improve CD playback. Prices: $50 and $80 (Gold). Digital Systems and Solutions, Dept. SR, 9220 Lavell St., La Mesa, CA 91941-5638; telephone, 1 800-748-5792.

BRIGHTON INTERNATIONAL

Brighton's Vivace line of A/V furniture includes the Model 2043 cabinet. Measuring 43 1/4 x 20 x 20 inches, it has two storage drawers and space for at least three components. The top can hold a 35-inch TV. Finished in matte or glossy laminate, white or black.


JENSEN

The Jensen A432BBE multichannel car stereo amplifier features BBE processing, which is said to recover harmonics that may lose definition between amp and speaker. In four-channel mode, it is rated to deliver 50 watts per channel rms, 100 watts peak.

Art and Science

Last week I visited a hi-fi shop that prides itself on its very analytical approach to audio. A discussion arose concerning a new CD player. I was describing the technical perks embodied in the design of the digital-to-analog converters, and a saleswoman was enthusiastically cataloging the signal-to-noise ratio, harmonic and intermodulation distortion, and other specifications. Finally, an exasperated customer, trying to get a word in edgewise, burst out, "Yes, but what does it sound like?"

That question triggered a serious reality check. In our haste to describe the player's technical merits, neither of us had actually listened to it. So we did, and eventually we agreed that it sounded great. Meanwhile, the customer was long gone. I started thinking: Here we were, gloating because there was only 0.1 dB of nonlinearity at -90 dB and excited because the distortion was only 0.0025 percent, but did any of that really make any difference?

Twenty or thirty years ago, measured specifications were supremely important because the performance of audio equipment was relatively poor. Most equipment could be meaningfully evaluated, and improved, by means of measurements. But time and technology have chipped away at their importance, and with the advent of digital audio, some specifications are routinely so much better than they have to be for sonic transparency that there's seldom any reason to be concerned about them. For example, is it reasonable to say that one CD player is better than another because its total harmonic distortion is 0.0005 percent lower?

Sitting down in a quiet corner of the showroom, I contemplated what this change might imply. Have we now mastered the basic problems of audio design? Can we begin to leave the numbers behind and strive to accomplish something more? Instead of mass-producing products that all measure great, and sound the same, can we (or should we) try a different, more creative, more artistic approach? For example, should a D/A converter or power amplifier be designed to be as linear as possible, to sound as transparent as we can make it? Or should it introduce its own signature to the sound? In other words, is distortion necessarily a bad thing? Does today's linear equipment sound too sterile? Vacuum tubes can introduce significant distortion and are beloved by some because of it. Should we design new signal-processing circuits to mimic the distortions of tube amplifiers? Or would that design approach simply lead us to wallow in pure subjectivity, trapped in the fantasy world of the golden ears?

For an alternative and possibly unconventional view on these thoughts, I whipped out my cellular phone and called Michael Yee, the designer of Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab's new UltrAmp audio components. When he designed the UltrAmp D/A converter, line amplifier, and power amplifier, he worked primarily by listening to the results instead of measuring them. The connection went through.

"Hi, Michael. Do you consider audio designing to be an art or a science?"

"It's both. It's an art in the sense that it takes much more than simple specs to come up with something musical. The science is trying to understand what you hear and translating that into objective technical decisions."

"When you're designing, which takes precedence?"

"Well, here's one example. The TDA 1541 multibit D/A converter chip in our UltrAmp converter was used in place of 'more linear' 1-bit chips strictly for its sonic characteristics, even though 1-bit chips would have provided better specs."

"In other words, instead of being linear, it's okay for a component to introduce sonic characteristics of its own?"

"Tonally, we try to make the units as neutral as possible. For example, we put three line amps in series, listen for an exaggeration of sonic signature, and try to eliminate it. However, our components do have sonic characteristics in that they create a very visual soundstage with great imaging and depth. Most opponents of sonic signatures are referring to tonal characteristics. Those should be avoided."

"It sounds like you rely on your ears as your primary test instruments."

"We focus our efforts on specs for real music, rather than specs based on test waves. Personally, I love opera. I find it impossible to make a direct correlation between a great soprano and a simple sine wave. Consequently, we use complex test waves, rather than simple ones. In order to reproduce these effectively, we use all discrete circuits. Although integrated circuits could bring us better specs for less money, we don't think they sound as good."

"Is it okay for a product to sound great and measure poorly?"

"That depends on how you define 'poorly.' In my experience, while great specs do not guarantee good sound, any design that sounds very good will have reasonable specs."

"Apparently you tip your scales in favor of art over science. But what about the people who tip them too far? In other words, how do we guard against wacky, purely subjectively designed audio products?"

"If something wacky ends up sounding extremely good, it ends up telling us our science is not good enough."

"Thanks, Michael. I have to reflect on all this."

I pocketed my phone and left the hi-fi shop. People who reject all methods of component evaluation not based on purely subjective criteria form the lunatic fringe of audio. On the other hand, progress in high fidelity depends ultimately on how technological advances are used to shape the listening experience, which has never been something that could be determined solely by the numbers. And as we move into second-generation digital audio products such as MiniDisc (MD), Digital Compact Cassette (DCC), and digital audio broadcasting (DAB)—technologies founded on perceptual encoding and psychoacoustic principles—the reliability of conventional measurements as a guide to sound quality will decrease, making critical listening more important than ever before.
Rule #23
All drivers are not created equal.

The speaker on the left is designed with Injection-Molded Polypropylene (IMPP) cone technology. The speaker on the right is paper. The speaker on the left offers cleaner, richer bass. The one on the right doesn't. The one on the left can handle extraordinary amounts of power without distortion. The one on the right can't. The one on the left is from a full line of new high-performance component speakers from Pioneer. The one on the right isn't. To find out more, call 1-800-421-1604, ext. 444.
Amplifier Distortion

Q I decided not to buy a particular amplifier because its rated total harmonic distortion was a very high 0.5 percent. Then I read a review that praised the same model for its very low distortion. Why the disparity? Is it due to different measuring techniques, and if so, why would the manufacturer stick with such unflattering numbers? 

Christopher M. Vidovic
Park Ridge, IL

A Reverse snobbery, perhaps. In any event, the way amplifier manufacturers specify their products’ output is determined by a set of rules laid down a number of years ago by the Federal Trade Commission. In the dear dead days of 1970’s audio, the shadier companies tended to add the channels together, devise unrealistic peak outputs, and generally come up with inflated numbers. To combat that, the FTC required that power specifications include considerable detail as to how the numbers were arrived at. The rated output had to include things like the frequency range over which it applied (the lowest and highest frequencies being the toughest to deal with), the impedance driven, the fact that both channels were operating and over a reasonably long period of time, and the distortion level for which the numbers applied. But as long as the details were laid out, the manufacturers could say what they liked.

Distortion rises as an amplifier approaches its rated output and goes beyond overload, so it’s possible to claim unrealistically high output levels for an amplifier as long as you’re willing to put up with high distortion. Somewhere in between, an amplifier could claim 0.5 percent distortion (virtually inaudible, actually) in order to present a high-output face. It’s marketing rather than science, to be sure, but no big deal. In most situations, such an amplifier would be operating at a fraction of its “rated” output, and its distortion levels would drop to the vanishing point.

Which D/A Converter?

Q My CD player contains a 1-bit digital-to-analog converter (DAC), and I am also considering buying an integrated amplifier with its own built-in DAC, which uses 18-bit conversion. Will I still be able to get the benefits of the 1-bit system with this combination?

Matthew Stafford
El Paso, TX

A If you feed the CD player’s digital output to the appropriate input on the amplifier, the player’s internal DAC will be bypassed, and the amplifier’s 18-bit converter will function. The only way to circumvent this is to feed the player’s analog output to a line-level input on the integrated amplifier, in which case the conversion will still take place in the player.

Which option is preferable is open to debate. A 1-bit converter is not necessarily better than a 16- or 18-bit converter, except that it is possible to get very good performance at low signal levels more cheaply and consistently with 1-bit converters, and without need of any critical adjustment during manufacture. Assuming, however, that the multibit converter in the amplifier is well made and properly adjusted, there is little advantage to using the 1-bit DAC in your player, and there may be a benefit to using the amplifier’s converter if it eliminates the need for converting the incoming signal to digital to feed digital processing circuits in the amplifier.

Combi Quality

Q I am considering upgrading my system by replacing my old CD player with a 1-bit combi-player that can handle laserdiscs as well. I’m not sure what trade-offs are involved in the combined unit, however. By buying one, am I likely to create a “weak link” in my system?

Dale Decker
Spring, TX

A That’s very improbable. At the most refined level, a premium CD-only player may outperform a combi-player, at least on paper, but not in any way you are likely to hear. Typically, combined units are used for CD’s much of the time, and all of them are fine in the audio-only mode.

Record Cleaning

Q Recently I have been compiling tape collections from some of my 3,000 LP’s. My experience with liquid record-cleaning systems has been that they occasionally degrade the sound and increase noise. Considering that I have taken relatively good care of my vinyl records, could I expect to get a sonic improvement if I were to clean them with a mechanical device such as the Nitty Gritty record cleaner?

David M. Cline
Greenville, NC

A My rule is to do as little cleaning as possible, on the theory that a clean record won’t get any better by further cleaning (nor will a permanently damaged one). If you have maintained your records properly over the years, most of them will need only a dry brushing before you play them, to get rid of loose dust that has settled on the record since the last time it was played. By all means use a machine for this purpose if you can justify the cost; in most cases a simple carbon-fiber brush will do the trick just as effectively.

As for liquids, they should be reserved for truly filthy records and probably only need to be used once. Even then, it sometimes helps to wait for a day or so after wet-cleaning before you commit a record to tape. Although I’ve never received a satisfactory explanation for the phenomenon, I have often heard a definite fuzziness on just-washed LP’s. The first couple of times I experienced it, I actually went out and replaced the records before realizing that the effect was temporary.

Speaker Tone Controls

Q My speakers include built-in controls for tweeter levels. Should I use these controls to achieve a crisp sound, or leave them in the flat position and adjust tonal balance with the amplifier’s treble control?

Clem Kaye
Amityville, NY

A Either way will do the job, but I’d be inclined to use the controls on the speakers themselves as long as they provide adequate high-frequency output. The treble control in your amplifier works by boosting the signal sent to the speakers, and this runs the risk of frying your tweeters’ delicate voice coils. The control on the speaker itself is passive—it works by reducing the high-frequency signal—and is therefore probably a safer bet, especially if you like to listen at high levels.

If you have a question about hi-fi, send it to Q&A, Stereo Review, 1633 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. Sorry, only questions chosen for publication can be answered.
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Join the Revolution.
THE young Scottish percussionist Evelyn Glennie has a new recording on RCA Victor featuring twentieth-century works for marimba and orchestra. Among them is the world-premiere recording of Richard Rodney Bennett’s Percussion Concerto, which was composed for Glennie. The album, titled “Rebounds,” also contains concertos by Milhaud, Ney Rosauro, and Akira Miyoshi, all performed by Glennie with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra led by Paul Daniel. This is the twenty-six-year-old percussionist’s third album in her exclusive contract with RCA. Previously released were “Rhythm Song” and “Light in Darkness.” A 1993 U.S. tour is planned.

THE eighty-four-year-old composer, bandleader, and inventor Raymond Scott is receiving a long-overdue tribute with the Columbia release of “The Music of Raymond Scott: Reckless Nights and Turkish Twilights.” Scott had many hits in the late Thirties and the Forties. His unique style was not quite jazz and not quite pop, and he was notorious for his wacky titles, such as Dinner Music for a Pack of Hungry Cannibals. He also did pioneering work in multitrack recording and built electronic music synthesizers and sequencers as early as 1949. Warner Bros.’ house composer, Carl Stalling, licensed many Scott themes for his own classic cartoon scores. More recently, Scott’s recordings with his Quintette (despite the name a six-man group) have been heard on the soundtracks of the hit animated TV show Ren & Stimpy. “Turkish Twilights” includes recordings Scott made for CBS between 1937 and 1940.

Pierre Boulez’s first recordings in over twenty years with the Cleveland Orchestra—where he made his American professional conducting debut in 1965—are part of a new contract with Deutsche Grammophon that calls for him to record a wide variety of twentieth-century masterworks. The first Cleveland release, last October, was devoted to Stravinsky’s Le Sacre du Printemps and Petrouchka. The second, scheduled for February, will offer Debussy’s Images for Orchestra, Prélude, and Prélude à l’Après-Midi d’un Faune. And in November DG came out with Boulez’s recording with the Chicago Symphony Chorus and Orchestra of Bartók’s The Wooden Prince and Cantata Profana.

Dan Baird, the former leader of the Georgia Satellites, is back with his first solo album, “Love Songs for the Hearing Impaired,” on Def American (reviewed by Parke Puterbaugh on page 81)
Red Hot Chili Peppers: Blood Sugar Sex Magik (Warner Bros.) 11127

Bobby Brown: Bodylight & Light (SBK) 40763

Pat Metheny: Secret Story (Caffon) 35649

Guns N' Roses: Use Your Illusion I (A&M) 35419

Guns N' Roses: Use Your Illusion II (A&M) 25534

Wilson Phillips: Shadows & Light (SBK) 40763

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of this issue). It features contributions by the former Satellite drummer, Mauro Magel- lani, Benmont Tench of Tom Petty’s Heartbreakers, and country fiddle legend Byron Berline. Baird acknowledges that the album may not exactly break new ground, but to his way of thinking that’s irrelevant: “You’re dealing with twelve tones, 4/4 time, and the English language. Those are your tools. No matter how original you consider what you’re doing, it’s [already] been done either by Stockhausen, Bach, or Chuck Berry.”

Admiration for the songs of Stephen Foster is what brought together the baritone Thomas Hampson and the composer/arranger Jay Ungar. Hampson, best known for opera and lieder, and Ungar, the Grammy-winning composer of the soundtrack for the PBS documentary The Civil War, seem well suited to the bittersweet melodies of Foster’s ballads. Their album “American Dream Songs Companion,” have released their first-ever video laserdisc, “Who Killed That Bird Out on Your Window Sill—The Movie.” Clocking in at 90 minutes, it features assorted music videos, clips from TV appearances, interviews with band members, concert performances (a version of Stare It Cold filmed live in Moscow), and heretofore-unseen behind-the-scenes footage. A VHS videotape version is also available.

The jazz pianist Billy Taylor received the National Medal of Arts, the highest award for artistic excellence the United States offers, at a White House ceremony last August. Only two other jazz artists, Ella Fitzgerald and Dizzy Gillespie, have previously received this honor. Taylor has just signed with GRP, and a new album is expected early this year.

The violinist Midori has established a foundation with the goal of bringing music closer to children by providing free lecture - demonstrations by performing artists. In an effort to bridge the cultural gap left by cutbacks in basic arts education, the Midori Foundation plans to establish residency programs at selected primary and secondary schools and also to produce music education/appreciation videos for school use. For more information, write to the Midori Foundation, 850 Seventh Ave., Suite 705, New York, NY 10019, or call 212-767-1300.

The Black Crowes: gone video

The cable music channel VH-1 and the Chicago PBS station WTTW have joined forces for a new live pop music series called Center Stage. Concerts will be taped before audiences and will air first on VH-1, starting in February, and later on PBS stations around the country. Artists scheduled to appear include Neil Young, Keith Richards, k.d. lang, Lindsey Buckingham, and Michael Bolton.
SONY's new TA-E2000ESD is a second-generation successor to its TA-E1000ESD digital preamplifier, which we reviewed in October 1989. In size, appearance, panel controls, and general operating characteristics, the two are almost identical.

Like its predecessor, the TA-E2000ESD is a remarkably versatile stereo and video control center employing Sony's proprietary digital integrated circuits to process the audio signals on their way from its inputs to its output terminals. It can simulate a number of acoustic environments in a listening room, including two different concert halls, an opera house, a jazz club, a disco, a stadium, and two types of movie theaters. Ten of these acoustic environments are factory preset, and another ten can be programmed by the user and stored for recall at the touch of a button. The TA-E2000ESD also provides all-digital Dolby Pro Logic decoding for use with Dolby Surround movie soundtracks.

Despite its apparent similarity to its predecessor, the TA-E2000ESD offers a number of major improvements. The Dolby Pro Logic decoder employs digital circuitry for its signal-steering "logic" and its noise-reduction and delay functions. It can also be used in conjunction with any of the other nine factory preset ambience modes. For example, a concert video encoded with Dolby Surround can be decoded in another mode, such as Stadium, to make the music performance more consistent with the visuals.

The built-in digital parametric equalizer can be used in conjunction with the Dolby circuitry to equalize the front, center, and surround channels, either independently or together. Sony points out that such equalization can be advantageous if you use a center speaker that's not identical to the left and right front speakers. The equalizer itself provides unique adjustment capabilities, with three bands and ninety-one selectable center frequencies. At any of those frequencies, the boost or attenuation is adjustable over a 12-dB range in 0.1-dB steps, with a choice of sixteen "Q" (bandwidth) values—a total of more than a million possible EQ settings. Sony claims that no perceptible noise, phase shift, or distortion is added by the digital circuitry. As in the earlier model, the EQ response is shown graphically in the display window (which is slightly larger in the new model).

A ten-step digital channel-separation control permits optimizing the separation for any room and speaker placement. Another control varies the dynamic range of the preamp's output,
Turn Your Stereo Into An All-Out Dolby Surround Pro-Logic System.

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Our new PL100 Dolby Pro Logic decoder with 3-channel amplification; magnetically shielded Center Channel speaker; The Surround II dipole radiating surround speakers. Factory-direct price, $799.

Until now, adding Dolby Surround to a stereo system has been complex and expensive. Add-on decoders were inadequate, costly, and often required separate amplifiers. We've changed all that with our affordable, high performance Pro Logic Add-On Systems.

Both systems are centered around our new PL100—a Dolby Pro Logic decoder with three channels of amplification (40 watts to the center channel, 15 watts to the surround channels) and a wireless remote. Its built-in signal generator enables precise balancing of the left, center, right and surround speakers. The signal delay applied to the surround channel is selectable for room size. Other controls include master volume, rear and center level, and a Phantom mode enabling the use of the PL100 without a center speaker. Purchased separately, the factory-direct price of the PL100 is $399.

$799 Dolby Pro Logic Add-On System.

The center channel speaker in our $799 Dolby Pro Logic Add-On System is our new magnetically shielded Center Channel (see ad on following page). The rear/side speakers are a pair of The Surround™ II. Unlike any other surround speaker in its price range, The Surround II uses advanced dipole radiator technology. Properly mounted on the side walls of a listening room, their high frequency drivers direct out-of-phase sound signals towards the front and rear of the room. The sound then reflects off the surfaces in the room, finally reaching listeners from all directions, "surrounding" them with sound.

Because the drivers are out of phase with each other, they create a null area directly in front of the speakers, so listeners can't pinpoint the source of the sound. The result is surround sound the way it was meant to be heard.

$999 Dolby Pro Logic Add-On System.

Our $999 Dolby Pro Logic Add-On System combines the PL100 with our new low-profile Center Channel Plus speaker and our highly acclaimed surround speaker, The Surround. Center Channel Plus is a magnetically shielded speaker with four 3" long-throw woofers and a ring radiator tweeter. Because of its wide, low profile (25" wide, 4" high, 6½" deep), it is ideal for placement directly on top of, or with optional support unit, beneath a TV. The frequency range of the outer pair of 3" woofers is intentionally limited to maintain proper dispersion. We don't know of any speaker, at any price, that outperforms Center Channel Plus.

The surround speakers in this system are The Surround, a dipole radiating speaker with higher volume level capability than The Surround II. We feel The Surround is one of the very best surround speakers made, despite the fact that it costs hundreds less than competing models.

So if you already own a fine stereo system, TV and VCR, why not create an all-out home theater with one of our Dolby Pro Logic Add-On Systems?

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compressing or expanding the range as desired. Advanced Sony 1-bit digital-to-analog (D/A) converters and 32-bit digital processing are said to provide the highest possible linearity.

The TA-E2000ESD's operating parameters are set by several front-panel buttons and two knobs; the buttons select the parameter to be adjusted, and the knobs adjust the setting. Small red LED's on the panel identify the selected parameter, and the display window shows the setting during adjustment. A few seconds after an adjustment is made, the display changes to show only the information pertinent to the operation of the system—principally the program source, selected acoustic environment, and the equalized frequency response.

Although some of these adjustments are easily made with the front-panel controls (the knobs are especially convenient for this purpose), it is usually desirable to be at the listening location when changing parameters of the acoustic environments or setting the levels of the auxiliary speakers. The remote control furnished with the TA-E2000ESD duplicates all the essential front-panel controls, replacing the knobs with up/down pushbuttons. It also has sections labeled for controlling source components, including a CD player, laserdisc player, tuner, TV, and up to four VCR's. It can learn the commands for these components, and it comes preprogrammed for Sony components.

The TA-E2000ESD has analog inputs for phono, tuner, and CD, a digital-audio input with both coaxial and optical connectors, and a set of optical digital recording and playback connectors. Signals entering at the analog inputs pass through the preamp's internal oversampling analog-to-digital (A/D) converters before being processed, while incoming digital signals go directly to the digital signal processing (DSP) circuits. Before the output stage, D/A converters translate the processed signals back to analog form.

Other analog audio inputs are designated for TV, laserdisc, and auxiliary video sources and for four VCR's. S-video input and output connectors are also provided for two of the VCR's, and there are two composite-video outputs and one S-video output for video monitors. One set of VCR inputs (VIDEO 5), including audio, composite video, and S-video, is intended for use with a camcorder and is located on the front panel, behind a hinged section concealing some less frequently used controls.

All input/output connectors except those for VIDEO 5 and the front-panel headphone jack are on the rear apron. These include tape-recording in/out jacks for the various video sources, outputs for the video monitors, and the usual audio tape recording and playback jacks.

The rear apron carries separate line-level audio outputs for the front, center, and rear (surround) channels and two subwoofer outputs with an 80-Hz cutoff at 18 dB per octave. Three of the four AC outlets are switched, and the total capacity is 720 watts.

The TA-E2000ESD is a handsome component equipped with woodgrain side plates that can be removed to reduce its width to a conventional 17 inches. The interior of the black metal cabinet is densely packed with circuit boards, and the unit weighs a solid 18 7/8 pounds.

This is such a complex component, with so many combinations of operating parameters, that it would be impossible (and unnecessary) to measure and verify all of its performance qualities, or even a significant fraction. Our measurements were necessarily limited to verifying the characteristics of the most commonly used features in its basic role as a control amplifier in an audio/video system. Even such a straightforward matter as measuring its input sensitivity for a standard 0.5-volt output was complicated by the presence of a small input-level control (behind the front-panel LED). The control's setting has a major effect on sensitivity and overload characteristics. We set it so that the analog output of a CD player could not overload the A/D converters (as indicated by a front-panel LED) and left it there for most subsequent measurement and listening tests. Otherwise, we tried to adhere to EIA measurement standards for audio preamplifiers.

We made some measurements, such as frequency response and distortion, using both analog and digital sources. The most convenient digital source was a CD player's digital output. Accordingly, we fed the digital output of a Denon DCD-15001I player through its optical output and a fiber-optic cable to the optical digital input of the Sony preamp, effectively replacing the CD player's D/A converters with those of the TA-E2000ESD.

The TA-E2000ESD has a Source Direct button that bypasses its parametric-equalizer, dynamic-range, and surround (Pro Logic) circuitry. It also disconnects the rear- and center-channel outputs, leaving only the main front and subwoofer outputs active. We measured the frequency response with this feature active and with it disengaged. The difference was insignificant (less than 0.2 dB at 20,000 Hz)—response was extremely flat at either setting and through any input. The subwoofer-output response was flat within 5 dB from 10 to 70 Hz, falling 3 dB from 70 to 85 Hz and 10 dB at 100 Hz.

MEASUREMENTS

All figures for main front channels only except as noted

Sensitivity (for a 0.5-volt output)
CD/tuner 54 to 295 mV (sec text)
phono 0.7 to 4 mV

A-weighted noise
(taken with a 0.5-volt output)
tuner -87 dB
phono -81 dB
CD -86 dB

Distortion (THD at 1.000 Hz) 0.007%

Phono-input overload
(1000-Hz equivalent levels)
20 Hz 101 mV
1.000 Hz 94 mV
20.000 Hz 45 mV

Phono-input impedance
50,000 ohms in parallel with 57 pF

RIAA phono-equalization error
(20 to 20,000 Hz)
+0.015 dB

Maximum output at clipping 6.4 volts

Channel separation (1000 Hz)
(analog CD output) 52 dB
digital CD output 105 dB

Frequency response
main 20-20,000 Hz, +0.02 dB
subwoofer output
3 dB at 85 Hz, -10 dB at 100 Hz

28 STEREO REVIEW JANUARY 1993
NEW FROM CAMBRIDGE SOUNDWORKS

Our new Center Channel and Center Channel Plus speakers are magnetically shielded, so they won't cause video interference, even when placed very near a TV screen.

Our New Center Channel Speakers Deliver Optimum Pro Logic Performance At Factory-Direct Prices.

We're pleased to announce two new speakers designed by Henry Kloss specifically for use as center channel speakers in Dolby Surround Pro Logic systems—the Center Channel and Center Channel Plus. Our experience with Dolby Surround Pro Logic systems has shown that the center channel is very important. A significant portion of movie soundtracks is directed to the center channel; it's very important to use a speaker that reproduces that material accurately, with the proper volume level and dispersion pattern.

Center Channel by Henry Kloss.
Center Channel is a compact, two-way acoustic suspension speaker with a 4" woofer and a ring radiator tweeter. Because of its compact size (8 3/4" x 5 3/4" x 4"), it's simple to place Center Channel directly on top of or below your TV screen, so that dialog and sound effects will seem to emanate from their on-screen source.

Center Channel is well shielded magnetically so that it can be placed very close to your TV without causing video interference. Acoustically identical to our Ensemble satellite speakers, it's ideal for center channel use in a Pro Logic system. The factory-direct price of Center Channel is $149.

Center Channel Plus by Henry Kloss.
The Center Channel Plus is a larger speaker recommended for achieving theater-like playback levels in the most sophisticated and powerful home theater systems. It uses four 3" long-throw woofers and a tweeter that perfectly matches the acoustics of our Ensemble® and Ensemble II systems. The frequency range of the outer pair of 3" woofers is intentionally limited to maintain proper dispersion characteristics.

Because of its wide, low profile (25" wide, 4" high, 6 1/2" deep), Center Channel Plus is ideal for placement directly on top of or uniquely for a product of its type, beneath a TV—with optional support unit, it can act as a base for your TV. We don't know of any speaker, at any price, that outperforms Center Channel Plus. The factory-direct price of Center Channel Plus is $219.

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We plotted the frequency response of the parametric equalizer at a single frequency, 1,000 Hz. Its maximum boost or cut was exactly as rated, and the Q of the response curve was adjustable between values of 0.5 and 20. With the lowest value, the boost affected almost the full audio range, from 100 to 10,000 Hz, but with the highest Q setting it modified the response only between 800 and 1,200 Hz. Since the center frequency of the boost or cut, as well as its magnitude and Q, are adjustable over wide ranges, and three independent corrections may be applied, this feature offers limitless possibilities for correcting system or recording response deficiencies—provided that you have equally limitless patience.

SECOND OPINION

Although it is functionally a very complex product, the Sony TA-E2000ESD is relatively easy to use thanks to the large, bright, and informative display, which is readable from at least 15 feet away. The display's layout and messages take some getting used to, especially since some messages change while you're activating certain controls and then revert to something else when you're not pushing buttons.

Because of the limited display space, the names and settings of the adjustment parameters are necessarily highly abbreviated. Also, the ability to switch video and audio signals independently can create confusion both on the display and in your head. Reading the manual is thus absolutely required to get the most out of this product.

As for the performance of the digital features, it was excellent on the whole. Combining the adjustability of a parametric equalizer with the frequency readout of a graphic equalizer makes this feature extraordinarily versatile. The equalizer's 0.1-dB adjustment increments are unheard of in the analog world. Equally unusual is for such precision to match exactly between audio channels, with consequent benefits to the stereo image. Also useful is the equalizer's ability to independently alter the response of front, center, and rear channels in a surround-sound system. In particular, it can equalize the center channel in a Dolby Pro Logic surround setup to help compensate for the all-too-common response differences between a center speaker and the left and right front speakers.

But as usual with DSP-based components, I have quibbles about some of the default settings in the sound-field ambiance modes. With some program material, the two Concert Hall modes and the Church mode gave a throbbing quality to the reverberation. (This effect is easily audible if you interrupt the music with a pause control and listen to the decay of the synthesized reverb.) Altering the default parameters can diminish this throbbing effect, however.

Although the manual doesn't mention it, the Jazz Club mode is useful for a very wide range of music, from classical chamber groups to all varieties of pop. I found the two Theater modes relatively useless, however, as I have found similar modes in other devices. Their purpose is to make a surround-sound movie sound as if it were being shown in a real movie theater by applying a simulation of theater acoustics to the decoded surround-sound information. I prefer movies to sound like they did in the dubbing studios where they received their final mixdowns, and dubbing studios are usually small and acoustically dead compared with movie theaters. The ideal is to experience the ambiance of the setting of the movie, not of a movie theater. If I wanted the latter, I'd pour popcorn around my listening room and make sure that my floor was good and sticky. I did enjoy the manual's description of the Theater modes, however. Theater! is recommended for movies "with many spectacular scenes," Theater2 for films "with many silent and emotional scenes" (the Ingmar Bergman mode, in other words). I also have some philosophical reservations about the coupling of equalization and preset ambiance modes.

Equalization and ambiance synthesis are two completely separate aspects of sound reproduction and should not be linked as they are here.

The Disco mode, in particular, offers a preset equalization curve that can be positively dangerous to other components in your system. The compression—meant to add "thickness" to the sound—as well as the large upper-bass and low-treble boosts applied by this mode can not only surprise the hell out of you if you switch to it by mistake but can also overload your amplifier, speakers, and your ears if the volume is set too high. I recommend altering the Disco mode to more reasonable settings, storing the results in a user preset, and thereafter using that version only. Besides, I thought disco sound was meant to have "punch," which can come from a slight dynamic-range expansion. The sound in the best discos here in New York City may be loud, but it is definitely not "thick."

Otherwise, the TA-E2000ESD was a joy to work with, having no untoward or unexpected behavior such as switching transients or thumps when changing modes or DSP features. The Dolby Pro Logic mode is a fine example of digital processing at its best. I do wish, however, that instead of relatively useless features like the digital compressor, Sony had seen fit to include a digital click-and-pop suppressor for those of us who have been unwilling or unable to unload our huge collections of LP's. Maybe we'll get our wish with the next model, but in the meantime the TA-E2000ESD offers a unique combination of features, with digital versatility and sound quality to match.

—David Ranada
The Powered Subwoofer That Has The Audio And Video Press Jumping Out Of Their Seats.

A jet roaring in *Top Gun*. The heavy-footed killer robot in *Robocop*. A semi-hitting concrete after a 20 foot fall in *Terminator 2*. These are examples of the substantial, very low-frequency effects on the soundtracks of today's movies. Such frequencies are rare in music, and are beyond the capabilities of most speakers designed for music.

The new Cambridge SoundWorks Powered Subwoofer by Henry Kloss was created to reproduce those ultra-low, ultra-strong bass signals with the power and impact you would experience in movie theaters with the very best sound systems. It's designed to **supplement** (not replace) the subwoofer(s) of Ensemble or Ensemble II. It will also work with speakers from other companies.

**Remarkable bass performance.**

The Powered Subwoofer consists of a heavy duty, 12 inch long-throw acoustic suspension woofer integrated with a 140 watt amplifier—all in a high-pressure black laminate cabinet. Its control panel includes a bass level control and an 18dB per octave, four-position electronic crossover frequency selector (to match the subwoofer to your other speakers).

Additionally, an optional electronic crossover* will provide 18 dB per octave, high-pass, line-level filters for the main and center amplifiers. These filters allow you to keep strong, low frequencies of sound effects out of the front speakers. These signals can cause distortion, even in speakers designed for full-range music.

The Powered Subwoofer's bass performance is simply **awesome**. It reproduces accurate bass to below 30 Hz. You'll hear soundtracks the way they were meant to be heard. In fact the bass is better than most theaters! At the press event when we introduced our Powered Subwoofer, we had startled members of the audio and video press literally "jumping out of their seats" during demonstrations of movie soundtracks. The factory-direct price of the Powered Subwoofer is $599.

**NEW FROM CAMBRIDGE SOUNDWORKS**

Optional "slave" subwoofer.

For all-out home theater performance, you can add our optional Slave Subwoofer, which is identical to our Powered Subwoofer except that it lacks the amplifier and controls. It uses the amplifier and controls built into the Powered Subwoofer. Amplifier output jumps from 140 to 200 watts when the Slave Subwoofer is connected.

The combination of the two speakers can reproduce a 50 Hz signal cleanly to a sound pressure level of over 100 dB in a 3,000 cubic foot room! That's enough clean, deep bass for the largest home theaters, and the most demanding listeners. The factory-direct price of the Slave Subwoofer is $299.

No compromises. No apologies.

The combination of our Ensemble speaker system, Center Channel Plus speaker, The Surround rear/side speakers, Powered Subwoofer and Slave Subwoofer (see photo at left) creates a home theater speaker system that we believe is the best of its kind.

Although you can spend thousands more on competing systems, we don't know of any that outperform this $1,999 package. If you'd like more information, a free catalog or our new booklet, "Getting The Most From Your Dolby Surround System," call our toll-free number any time.

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° Cambridge SoundWorks is a registered trademark of Cambridge SoundWorks. Prices and specifications subject to change without notice. *Available late Fall, 1992.
Cambridge SoundWorks changed the audio world when we began direct-marketing Ensemble® by Henry Kloss. Ensemble is a revolutionary dual-subwoofer/satellite speaker system offering all-out performance, without cluttering up your room with huge speaker cabinets. Available only factory-direct from Cambridge SoundWorks, with no expensive middle-men, Ensemble is priced at hundreds less than it would have sold for in stores. *Audio* magazine says Ensemble "may be the best value in the world."

**And Then There Were Two.**

Now Cambridge SoundWorks has introduced Ensemble II, a more affordable version of Ensemble using only one cabinet to hold both subwoofer drivers. Ensemble II has joined Ensemble in the ranks of the country's best-selling speakers. We believe Ensemble II is a better system than the new Bose® AM-5 Series II. And because we sell it factory-direct, it's half the price. *Stereo Review* said "Ensemble II performs so far beyond its price and size that it can be compared only with much larger speakers at substantially higher prices." We agree with the writer who said, "It's hard to imagine going wrong with Ensemble." The question is, which Ensemble system is right for you?

**The Same Satellite Speakers.**

When you listen to either Ensemble system, almost 90% of the music you hear is being reproduced by the satellite speakers. Both Ensemble and Ensemble II use satellite speakers that are virtually identical. Unlike many competing systems, Ensemble's satellites are true two-way speaker systems, each containing a high performance tweeter and a 4-inch woofer. *Stereo Review* said, "The Ensemble satellites delivered a smoother output than..."
many larger and more expensive speakers."
Small (8¼" x 5½" x 4") and unobtrusive, they'll fit into the decor of any room. They're available in scratch-resistant gunmetal grey Nextel, or primed so you can paint them any color you wish.

The Same Overall Sound.
In many rooms, Ensemble II sounds virtually the same as Ensemble, especially when Ensemble's two subwoofers are placed right next to each other. The real difference between the two systems is that Ensemble, with its two ultra-compact subwoofers (12" x 21" x 4½"), gives you ultimate placement flexibility.

The Same Attention To Detail.
Ensemble and Ensemble II are constructed with the very best materials and no-compromise workmanship. Their subwoofers use heavy-duty woofers in true acoustic suspension enclosures. The satellites are genuine two-way systems with very high quality speaker components. Individual crossover networks are built into every cabinet for maximum wiring flexibility. Robust construction is used throughout, featuring solid MDF cabinets and solid metal grilles.

Stereo systems featuring Ensemble and Ensemble II speakers with Pioneer or Philips electronics start at only $799, including CD player. Dolby Surround Sound systems start at only $999.

in your own home. You get to listen for hours without a salesman hovering nearby. If within 30 days you're not happy, return your speaker system for a full re-

The Same 30-Day Total Satisfaction Guarantee.
Choosing a loudspeaker after a brief listen at a dealer's showroom is like deciding on a car after one quick trip around the block. So we make it possible to audition our speakers the right way—

The Real Difference: The Ultimate Placement Flexibility Of Dual Subwoofers.
Placement of bass and high-frequency speakers in a room—and how those speakers interact with the acoustics of the room—has more influence on the overall sound quality of a stereo system than just about anything. As an alternative to spending hundreds (or thousands) of dollars on this or that "latest" amplifier or CD player design, you should invest some of your time experimenting with various speaker positioning schemes. Ensemble's two ultra-slim (4½") subwoofers give you more placement flexibility than any speaker system we know of (including Ensemble II), and is most likely to provide the performance you want in real world...in your room.

How To Order.
The dual-subwoofer Ensemble system is available in two versions. With handsome black-laminate subwoofers for $599. Or with black vinyl-clad subwoofers for $499. Ensemble II is priced at $399. For more information, a free 48-page catalog, or to order...

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Audio Hall of Fame member Henry Kloss. Cambridge SoundWorks products are designed by our co-founder, Henry Kloss, who created the dominant speakers of the '50s (AR), '60s (KLH) and '70s (Advent).

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Five year limited parts and labor speaker warranty. All of our speakers are backed by a five year parts and labor warranty. In some cases, we'll even send you a replacement speaker before we've received your defective unit.

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We Know How To Make Loudspeakers.
NSM Model 25
Loudspeaker System

JULIAN HIRSCH
HIRSCH-HOUCK LABORATORIES

NSM Loudspeakers manufactures its speakers in matched pairs for more accurate stereo imaging in the home listening room. Since this requires preserving and recreating the symmetry of the recorded program, NSM has gone to considerable lengths to control production tolerances in its drivers and crossover-network components.

NSM says it carefully matches every resistor, capacitor, inductor, and driver in each loudspeaker system to the corresponding part in the other speaker of the pair. High-quality components and drivers are used throughout, including metallized polypropylene and Mylar capacitors and air-core inductors. The speakers have 14-gauge internal wiring, and the drivers are mounted flush with the panel to minimize diffraction.

Like other NSM speakers, the Model 25 has a narrow (9-inch-wide) cabinet for optimum dispersion and imaging as well as high rigidity. It is constructed of 1-inch and 1/4-inch-thick fiberboard, tuned with open-cell foam and Dacron fiber, and finished in wood veneer. The cloth grille, retained by plastic snaps, is easily removable.

Recessed into the rear of the cabinet are two pairs of gold-plated five-way binding posts on standard 3/4-inch centers. These are normally strapped together; removing the jumpers enables the system to be driven in either a biwired or biampified mode.

The Model 25 is a two-way acoustic-suspension system using a 61/2-inch plastic-cone woofer constructed on a die-cast magnesium basket and a 1-
in speakers on 26-inch stands and positioned them as recommended by the manufacturer. Their room response was exceptionally flat and smooth, varying only ±4 dB from 65 to 20,000 Hz. A close-miked measurement of the woofer response showed a maximum output between 70 and 170 Hz, falling off at 12 dB per octave at lower frequencies and more gradually at higher frequencies.

Our composite response curve, formed from these two sets of data, was flat within ±3 dB from 50 to 20,000 Hz. For most of that range the response was extremely flat, although there were some minor irregularities between 150 and 1,000 Hz.

Response measurements with a stepping one-third-octave band of pink noise were quite similar, within ±3 dB from 58 to 20,000 Hz. The tweeter’s horizontal directivity was excellent; the on-axis and 45-degree off-axis responses diverged only 2 dB at 7,000 Hz, 3 dB at 10,000 Hz, and 10 dB at 20,000 Hz.

We also attempted frequency-response measurements using the quasi-anechoic MLS program of our Audio Precision System One test instrument. These confirmed the essential features of the midrange and high-frequency response we had measured previously (±2 dB from 1,000 to 20,000 Hz), but they also showed a reduced and irregular output from 500 to 2,000 Hz that was completely inconsistent with what we found in the room-response measurement (or in listening tests), although a somewhat similar effect could be seen in the close-miked woofer measurement. We have no good explanation for this apparent discrepancy, but we are inclined to accept the verdict of our ears and the room measurements, which were consistent with each other.

The speaker’s impedance characteristics were quite unusual. For one thing, the minimum impedance, at 138 Hz, was about 9.6 ohms. At other frequencies the impedance varied between 10 and 38 ohms. The woofer’s resonance frequency was at 60 Hz. Overall, the phase angle of the impedance varied smoothly between +30 and -45 degrees, with no evidence of the sharp jogs, indicating resonances in drivers or the enclosure, that we’ve seen from many speakers in this measurement. The acoustic phase linearity was also good, with a group-delay variation of ±250 microseconds from just over 1,000 Hz up to 20,000 Hz.

The NSM Model 25’s sensitivity was (as rated) very low, with an output SPL of 81 dB at 1 meter from a 2.83-volt input of pink noise. Since our woofer-distortion measurements are based on a nominal 90-dB SPL, we measured distortion at 8 volts input. It was very low, rising from 0.3 to 0.5 percent between 120 and 2,000 Hz to 1 percent between 70 and 100 Hz and 4 percent at 50 Hz. At the system’s rated lower limit of 35 Hz, the output was down 10 dB from the upper-midrange average (instead of 3 dB), and the distortion was 20 percent.

The Model 25 was able to handle large input levels in our single-cycle tone-burst tests. At 1,000 and 10,000 Hz, the amplifier clipped at 220 to 240 watts into its 30-ohm impedance. At 100 Hz, the woofer began to sound hard well before its cone reached the suspension limits, and to avoid possible damage to the speaker, we did not attempt to go higher than about 265 watts into its 11-ohm impedance.

The NSM Model 25 is not a product that follows all the usual patterns of loudspeaker design. It is one of the few speakers we have tested that gave seemingly irreconcilable results with some of the very different measurement techniques we use (which one would expect to yield fairly similar data). It is also an exception in its low sensitivity, which makes the 50- to 150-watt amplifier power recommendation one to be taken seriously. The Model 25 requires four to eight times as much power as most other speakers to achieve the same output level.

The Model 25 sounded very easy, clean, and smooth. There was no apparent excess or deficiency in any part of the audio spectrum, and its soundstage was superb. You could not ask for a more listenable speaker, although it is not one that can be used to generate life-like sound levels.

It also did not achieve any miracles in the bass range. The 35-Hz claimed lower limit is unrealistic; a 50-Hz limit would be more accurate and more consistent with the size of the woofer and enclosure. Indeed, NSM makes a subwoofer for those who want or need more volume or deeper bass.

But within the limits of what it can do, the NSM Model 25 is a first-rate speaker whose sound justifies its price. To our ears it sounded as flat and uncolored as our measured response curve implied, which places it in the ranks of some far more expensive, very highly regarded speakers.
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The ultimate in sight and sound, it comes 60% closer to reality than ordinary videotape. And features the superiority of digital sound.

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**Altec Lansing Model 115 Loudspeaker System**

**JULIAN HIRSCH**

**HIRSCH-HOUCK LABORATORIES**

Altec Lansing's Model 115 is a two-way acoustic-suspension bookshelf speaker. Seventeen inches high and weighing only 18 pounds, it is attractively finished on all surfaces in an oak woodgrain vinyl veneer, with almost all of the front panel normally covered by the snap-on black grille. It is identical to the more expensive Model 105 except for its cabinet finish (the Model 105 uses wood veneer).

The Model 115's woofer operates in a sealed enclosure. Its 6-inch cone features the textured, woven-carbon-fiber construction used in most of the company's other home speakers, including higher-price models. The crossover, at about 2,500 Hz, is to a 1-inch titanium-coated polyamide dome tweeter with ferrofluid cooling. As with the woofer, the tweeter's design is widely used in the Altec Lansing line.

The speaker's specifications include a usable bandwidth of 40 to 22,000 Hz, with the -3-dB points occurring at 50 and 20,000 Hz. Its power handling is specified as 50 watts nominal, 100 watts maximum, and it is recommended for use with amplifiers rated as low as 10 watts nominal output up to a maximum of 300 watts peak output. Sensitivity, with a 1-watt input, is rated as 91 dB sound-pressure level (SPL) at 1 meter, and the impedance rating is 8 ohms.

We placed the Altec Lansing Model 115 speakers on stands, about 26 inches high, for our room-response measurements. The averaged response,

- **Dimensions**: 9½ inches wide, 17 inches high, and 9 inches deep
- **Finish**: Oak-grain vinyl veneer
- **Price**: $137.50 each
- **Manufacturer**: Altec Lansing, Dept. SR, P.O. Box 277, Milford, PA 18337-0277

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![Pioneer advertisement](image)

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measured on the axis of the left speaker, was within 5 dB overall from 800 to 11,000 Hz. There was a slight high-frequency rise, to about 5 dB above the average midrange level at 15,000 Hz, and a return to the reference level at 20,000 Hz.

Below 800 Hz, room-boundary reflections affected the response, although it showed only a 7-dB overall variation down to 120 Hz. The close-miked woofer response was a maximum between 100 and 200 Hz, falling at 12 dB per octave below 100 Hz and more gradually at higher frequencies.

The composite frequency response varied only 5 dB overall from 65 to 11,000 Hz, and the high-frequency rise previously mentioned added only about 2 1/2 dB to that variation. The shape of the curve was a little swayed-backed, with the range from 500 to 3,000 Hz slightly depressed relative to the bass and treble octaves.

Our quasi-anechoic response measurements (valid above a few hundred hertz) agreed approximately with the room-response measurements. The output rose about 4 or 5 dB from 2,500 Hz to 4,000 Hz and remained within a decibel or two of that level up to 15,000 Hz, where there was an additional 2-dB peak.

The tweeter's horizontal dispersion was good up to about 6,000 Hz (where the response 45 degrees off-axis had dropped less than 3 dB relative to the on-axis response), but the spread increased rapidly at higher frequencies, to 7 dB at 10,000 Hz and 13 dB at 20,000 Hz.

The system's impedance curve was good, with a minimum of 6 ohms at 200 Hz and maximum readings of 30 ohms at the 70-Hz bass resonance and about 20 ohms in the 1,000- to 3,000-Hz range. The impedance was safely above 8 ohms over most of the audio range.

Sensitivity measured a very good 92 dB, slightly better than rated. With an input of 2.26 volts (corresponding to a 90-dB SPL), woofer distortion was between 0.3 and 0.5 percent from 150 to 1,000 Hz. It rose slightly at higher frequencies, to about 0.8 percent at 2,000 Hz. At low frequencies the distortion rose linearly from 1 percent at 100 Hz to 4 percent at 50 Hz and 9 percent at 30 Hz. The 6-inch woofer handled one-cycle tone bursts of 180 watts at 100 Hz into its 10-ohm impedance before it began to sound hard.

The group delay in the tweeter range (2,500 to 20,900 Hz) varied less than 100 microseconds overall. There was a jump of 200 microseconds at 2,000 Hz and a second peak of about 600 microseconds at a much lower frequency, in the woofer range. These low group-delay variations indicate very good phase linearity.

The Altec Lansing 115 sounded clean, balanced, and musical, as would be expected from its measured performance and its kinship to some of the company's much more expensive speakers. Although it is too small to do full justice to the really low bass, it never sounded thin or lacking in those frequencies. The highs were crisp, probably as a result of the slight peak above 8 ohms over most of the audio range, but they were never shrill.

One of the best demonstrations of the Model 115's capabilities was when we teamed the test pair with a couple of Hsu Research subwoofers, whose output is principally below 50 Hz, and played organ recordings that extended to about 20 Hz. The change in sound when we cut off the drive to the subwoofers was unmistakable, but also unmistakable was the manner in which the diminutive Model 115 speakers managed to convey a sense of real bass in their output, without obvious distortion or any of the thinness often associated with small speaker systems. They didn't shake the room or rattle the windows, but they always sounded musical and believable. All in all, the Altec Lansing 115 is a first-rate small speaker system at a very reasonable price.

The diminutive Altec Lansing Model 115 speaker managed to convey a sense of real bass without obvious distortion.

The Altec Lansing 115 sounded clean, balanced, and musical, as would be expected from its measured performance and its kinship to some of the company's much more expensive speakers. Although it is too small to do full justice to the really low bass, it never sounded thin or lacking in those frequencies. The highs were crisp, probably as a result of the slight peak above 8 ohms over most of the audio range, but they were never shrill.

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In only a few years, the Acurus brand of audio components from Mondial Designs, Ltd., designed and built in the U.S., has earned a reputation for high quality at reasonable prices.

The Acurus A250 power amplifier exemplifies the design philosophy behind the whole line. The amplifier circuitry is fully discrete and completely symmetrical, with relatively little global negative feedback. Precision 1-percent metal-film resistors and metalized-polypropylene capacitors are used to achieve close circuit tolerances, and high-quality circuit boards contribute to a professional look and feel.

The Acurus A250 was designed to drive low-impedance loudspeaker loads safely at high continuous power levels. Its power supply has a 1,000-VA toroidal transformer capable of delivering the high currents required for driving some of today's loudspeakers. To dissipate the considerable heat generated in a powerful but relatively compact amplifier without resorting to a noisy fan, it is equipped with finned aluminum heat sinks on both sides of its chassis, amounting to more than 6 square feet of radiating surface.

The A250 is rated to deliver 250 watts per channel into 8 ohms, or 350 watts into 4 ohms, from 20 to 20,000 Hz with no more than 0.06 percent total harmonic distortion (THD). Its input impedance is 20,000 ohms, and its A-weighted signal-to-noise ratio (S/N) is specified as 110 dB.

The all-black front panel contains only a large rocker power switch, with a green light to indicate that the amplifier is operating. The rear panel has five-way binding-post speaker outputs, compatible with dual banana plugs as well as wires and lugs, and phono-jack input connectors. Since the input (and output) connectors for the left and right channels are 12 inches apart, some dual-signal cables may not be suitable. The amplifier weighs 35 pounds.

Although the Acurus A250 ran quite cool under normal listening conditions (never more than faintly warm), it became very hot during the mandated 1-hour preconditioning at one-third rated power into 8 ohms and during subsequent high-power testing. In fact, no part of the exterior could be touched for more than a second or two, and the heat sinks were hot enough to cause burns. That should not be a problem in any reasonable home listening situation, however. Although most amp's run their hottest at one-third power, average power levels during even loud music are considerably lower.

We have never before tested an amplifier that became as hot as the A250 did without being damaged in some way, but the A250 never shut down, blew a fuse, or otherwise indicated its displeasure at our rather se-
The Acurus A250 amplifier never shut down, blew a fuse, or otherwise indicated displeasure at our severe treatment of it.

were treatment. Clearly, it was designed to deal with low-impedance loads, and it did that with ease.

The A250's frequency response was very nearly a demonstration of the overworked term ruler-flat. From 20 to 20,000 Hz, the output varied a mere ±0.02 dB, falling (if that is the word) to -0.5 dB at 110 kHz and -1.5 dB at 200 kHz. Noise measurements also showed impressive performance.

Our power measurements highlighted the amplifier's conservative ratings. The clipping-level output at 1,000 Hz into 8 ohms was 300 watts per channel, and into 4 ohms it was 480 watts. With only one channel driven, those numbers increased to 350 and 600 watts, respectively. We did not make continuous power measurements into 2 ohms because of concern about possible damage to the amplifier (which became far too hot to touch on any part of its surface) and because it was not rated for use with 2-ohm loads. But the dynamic power output into 8 and 4 ohms was 400 and 700 watts, respectively (for dynamic headrooms of 2 and 3 dB), and into 2 ohms it was 485 watts.

A spectrum analysis of the distortion at 250 watts into 8 ohms, covering all harmonics up to the twentieth but excluding noise, yielded a figure of 0.012 percent. At 350 watts into 4 ohms, distortion rose to 0.023 percent. The amplifier's single-channel maximum power at 0.1 percent THD is 300 watts into 8 ohms and 400 watts into 4 ohms. A spectrum analysis of the distortion at 250 watts into 8 ohms, covering all harmonics up to the twentieth but excluding noise, yielded a figure of 0.012 percent. At 350 watts into 4 ohms, distortion rose to 0.023 percent. The amplifier's single-channel maximum power at 0.1 percent THD is 300 watts into 8 ohms and 400 watts into 4 ohms.

The Acurus A450 is an enormously powerful amplifier. Even without considering its modest cost, its quality, no matter how defined, is equally impressive. Clearly, its electrical performance was topnotch, and there were no unexpected glitches or anomalous characteristics to diminish our highly favorable impression.

To gain some idea of the energy storage capacity of its power supply, we switched it off while playing music at a normal room level. For almost 30 seconds, the volume and quality of the sound did not diminish.

Considering the A250's power capabilities and current reserves, we would expect very few loudspeaker loads to present any serious challenge to its performance. And although it was one of the hottest-running amplifiers on the test bench that we have ever evaluated, it was also one of the coolest in normal operation.

Almost $900 for a power amplifier may not seem inexpensive, but one could pay many times that sum and not get any more performance than from the Acurus A250, if even as much. Not everyone needs to have several hundred watts on tap, but if you are one who does, this is an amplifier to look at, and listen to, closely. It is an outstanding product in terms of both performance and value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEASUREMENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Output at clipping (1,000 Hz)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 ohms</td>
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<td>4 ohms</td>
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<td><strong>Clipping headroom</strong> (relative to rated output)</td>
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<td>2 ohms</td>
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<td><strong>Dynamic headroom</strong> (relative to rated output)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 ohms</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 ohms</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency response (20 to 20,000 Hz)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>±0.02 dB</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Maximum distortion (THD + N at 1,000 Hz)</strong></td>
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<td>into 8 ohms</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Noise</strong> (A-weighted, referred to 1-watt output)</td>
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<tr>
<td>-100 dB</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sensitivity</strong> (for 1-watt output into 8 ohms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89 mV</td>
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"Definitive Technology Has Hit the Bull's Eye."

— Julian Hirsch, Stereo Review

Experience the Miracle of Bipolar Technology with Definitive's Revolutionary BP10 & 20!

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Anyone wishing to explore the joys and mysteries of home theater has always faced two complex problems: selecting speakers and integrating them with an existing stereo system. Atlantic Technology has attacked these problems with its new System 150, whose components are available either separately or in various combinations to complement a wide range of audio/video systems.

The System 150 HT combination, intended for users starting home theater systems from scratch, comprises six components: a powered subwoofer (Model 152 PBM, $499), two front-channel satellite speakers (Model 151 LR, $149 a pair), a center-channel speaker (Model 153 C, $139), and two surround speakers (Model 154 R, $149 a pair). The system price is $899, slightly less than the $936 cost of buying the components separately.

By far the most intriguing of the System 150 HT components is the powered subwoofer, which is more than just a subwoofer with built-in amplification. Its internal amplifiers can be configured to drive the subwoofer alone (with 70 watts of power, no less), to drive the subwoofer and two satellites (30 watts each), or to drive the subwoofer and a center-channel speaker in a setup lacking a center-channel amplifier.

The subwoofer has two operating modes: powered and passive. In passive mode, the input terminals on the back panel serve only as connection points for your main receiver or amplifier's front-channel speaker signals. You connect the main speaker outputs to the subwoofer and connect the subwoofer's passive, push-connector speaker outputs to the satellite speakers. Your system's receiver then drives the satellites directly, and the subwoofer's amplifier derives its bass signal from the music passing through on the way to the satellites. No significant load is placed on the receiver by the subwoofer.

In powered mode, instead of speaker-level signals, the subwoofer takes line-level signals through a set of back-panel phono connectors. Its internal amplifiers are then used to drive the two satellites as well as the subwoofer itself. This mode can be extremely useful, depending on your system requirements. It forms the basis of a music-only subwoofer/satellite system that can be driven from, among other things, the output of a portable CD or tape player. Or if you have a separate surround-sound decoder with built-in amplification for center and surround speakers, the powered mode will supply the amplification for the front speakers and the subwoofer—you wouldn't even need a main amplifier or receiver. (This versatility enables the subwoofer/satellite combination to be sold separately as the System 150 A.)

The molded-plastic subwoofer module, which measures 14½ x 11 x 12¾ inches and weighs 25 pounds, has vent holes on the back panel that should not be obstructed. Otherwise, the manufacturer says, placement of the module is not very critical. It contains an 8-inch woofer, and, in addition to the multipurpose amplifier, a dynamic bass-equalization circuit providing as much as 9 dB of boost at 35 Hz. This circuit is said to adjust itself by "constantly monitoring the level and frequency content of the program's lower octaves." There's also an overload-protection circuit that's claimed to have no audible side effects.

Aside from the input and output connectors, the subwoofer's back panel holds the powered/passive switch and a switch to change the crossover frequency from 80 to 120 Hz— I left it in the 80-Hz position for most of my testing. There's no power switch, but the subwoofer consumes only 12 watts when idling. The front panel has dial controls for bass, treble, and volume. In powered mode, the bass control adjusts the level of the subwoofer relative to that of the satellites while the volume control adjusts the level of the subwoofer and the satellites together. In passive mode, the volume control serves as the subwoofer's level control.
and the bass control should be left at its twelve o’clock setting. The treble control is conventional and operates only in powered mode.

The rest of the components in the System 150 HT are far more orthodox than the subwoofer. Each of the magnetically shielded Model 152 LR satellites measures 5 x 7 1/2 x 4 3/4 inches and contains a 4-inch polypropylene woofer and a 1/2-inch soft-dome tweeter. The owner’s manual suggests that the satellites can also be used as computer-system speakers or as near-field monitors. The Model 153 C center-channel speaker has two 3 1/2-inch polypropylene woofers and a 1/2-inch soft-dome tweeter. This magnetically shielded speaker can be placed either above or below a video screen, and its horizontally arrayed drivers can be aimed up or down by loosening some adjustment screws on the bottom of the 10 1/2 x 5 x 5 3/4-inch cabinet.

Surround speakers are meant to be heard but not localized: You shouldn’t be able to tell precisely where their sound is coming from. To that end, the Model 145 SR surround speakers, which have the same enclosure size as the Model 152 LR satellites, contain instead two 3 1/2-inch “mid-woofer” drivers aimed 105 degrees apart for widest dispersion. Through a “cross-over” network each driver receives a slightly different frequency balance, and the drivers are also driven out of phase with each other, all to increase brilliance and decrease localization.

Physically, the System 150 HT was easy to set up. The only problem I encountered was that the stands for the surround speakers required two different Allen wrenches for assembly, one for the bolt holding the stand to the base and another for the bolt holding the speaker on the stand. The speaker cable, if it isn’t too thick, can be fed from the buck of the speaker down through the hollow stand to emerge at the base. The same stands are also suitable for elevating the main front speakers.

The manual for the subwoofer was the only one to give instructions and diagrams for hooking up the system as a whole. Four hookups are shown, and I tried three of them: one music-oriented setup using just the subwoofer in passive mode (that is, with its internal...
We wish to thank Mom; our 3rd grade music teacher; the members of the Academy…

The Multi-Channel GFA-2535: yet another award-winning amplifier from Adcom.

A pattern appears to be taking shape here: Adcom introduces a new power amplifier, Adcom wins an award. The GFA-535, GFA-555, GFA-555II, GFA-565, and now the GFA-2535 — every single one has earned the immediate praise and plaudits of the industry’s most respected authorities…perhaps because Adcom packs more performance and innovative technology into its amplifiers than you’ll find in components that cost twice as much or more.

The innovative GFA-2535 is a worthy new standard-bearer. The GFA-2535 is really two GFA-535’s in one case, with the flexibility to drive three or four channels. With individual level controls for precise control of each amp’s volume, it’s the ideal foundation for an authentic, ultra-realistic surround-sound theater system, or for a multi-room or multi-speaker audio system.

The Versatility of 3 Channels or 4.

A single switch on the GFA-2535’s rear panel lets you select 4-channel operation, or bridge two of the channels for a 3-channel configuration. In the 3-channel mode, the GFA-2535 brings your home theater to life, delivering 200 watts of clean, distortion-free sound to the center channel, and 60 watts to each of the rear channels. Add it to your existing 2-channel amp, and you’ll be at the center of a superbly balanced, awesomely powered stage with sound so real, you can practically touch it.

For audio applications, the GFA-2535 in the 4-channel mode acts as a pair of 60 watts-per-channel amps to drive two sets of speakers. With two of the channels bridged, it delivers 60 watts each to a pair of satellites, and 200 watts to a single subwoofer for an incredible display of musical strength so real, you definitely can feel it.

Three channels or four…home theater, home audio…the award-winning Adcom GFA-2535 gives you twice the versatility of ordinary amplifiers…and twice the value that has made Adcom famous.
amplifiers driving it alone) and the two satellites, and two full-blown six-speaker surround-sound setups. In the first of the surround setups, an audio/video receiver drove all five satellite speakers directly, with the subwoofer operating in passive mode. In the second surround-sound setup, the subwoofer, in its powered mode, drove the center-channel speaker. There is one difficulty with the latter hookup: You won't get any bass from the subwoofer if you don't also use some sort of surround decoder with a center-channel output—or, at best, you'll get only one channel's worth of bass. Consequently, this arrangement is best reserved for systems used exclusively for video soundtracks.

In my listening tests, however, I relied at least as much on music recordings as on movie soundtracks, because music remains the most critical program material for any high-fidelity system, surround-sound or otherwise. Besides, most movies contain music, some of it even well recorded. The System 150 HT performed well with both types of material. In the "music-only" setup, with the center and surround speakers inactive, the sound from the subwoofer and satellites was a little forward, though not excessively so, and exhibited a hint of nasality on voices. I missed a sparkle in the extreme high frequencies, but on the whole the sound was good from the midrange up. The very low bass was also quite solid, even with organ pedal notes. Imaging was very good, as is typical of subwoofer/satellite systems when the satellites are well away from any walls, though it deteriorated somewhat when I listened from off-center.

I found setting the subwoofer balance rather tricky, partly because of the acoustical properties of the listening room. The action of the dynamic bass equalizer probably played a role as well, but I assume that most of the level-setting problem came from the ear's sensitivity to small changes in bass balance. Altering the bass level by 1 dB has a much greater impact on overall sonic balance than a similar change in the midrange. It took a lot of listening with a wide variety of program material before I settled on both a setting of the appropriate subwoofer controls and a placement for the subwoofer box. Consider yourself lucky if you decide on settings and placement in one listening session. Even after I had achieved the best subwoofer/satellite balance I could, there were slight remnants of a sonic

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In case you missed our preamp/tuner reviews, here's a few highlites.

**PRODUCT REVIEWS**

"High quality... extremely low distortion and noise... FM frequency response among the best I have ever seen."


"Carver demonstrates brilliant technological innovations... ACCD tuning delivers FM signals with stunning effect."


"Qualifies as the control center of any music system... impressively compact... a full array of Carver innovations."


Why separate components and not a receiver? How about cleaner FM reception, more power, and far superior sound.

Why Carver separates? How about Sonic Holography®, ACCD tuning, and in our flagship CT-17, Dolby Pro Logic and the ability to play two different music sources in two different rooms, **simultaneously**. Whew! That's enough.

You'll have to hear the rest for yourself. Check out our full range of separates at your Carver dealer.
gap between the low end of the satellites and the high end of the subwoofer. These were not eliminated by changing the subwoofer's crossover frequency from 80 to 120 Hz—that just made the sound boomy. The principal effect of the gap was a loss of body and richness in low male voices and cellos, which cover the same frequency range. I have encountered this type of gap many times in subwoofer/satellite speaker systems—it's hard to avoid.

Finding a good orientation for the surround speakers—one that produced neither excessive localization nor weird phase effects from their deliberately out-of-phase drivers—also required some experimentation. I settled on placing them to the sides of the room just slightly behind my listening position and aimed toward the front rather than at me. Mounting them high on the walls might provide good results more quickly.

The System 150 HT was at its best in full six-speaker surround-sound playback of movie soundtracks, with especially clear reproduction of dialogue. The tonal balances of the satellites and the center speaker were better matched than in many other surround systems, especially those in which a new and different center speaker is added to an existing pair of main front speakers. Frontal imaging was therefore solid and precise. There seemed to be low-bass oomph to spare from the subwoofer, even in its powered mode, and most of the time that more than made up for the lack of bass response from the surround speakers.

The lack of bass from the surrounds was more evident when playing music through a five-speaker (no center) setup by way of a multichannel digital ambience enhancer. Although you may not absolutely need wider-range response from the surround speakers when listening to movie soundtracks, good low-end performance from the surround speakers is highly desirable when listening to music.

In sum, Atlantic Technology's System 150 HT is a very good speaker system for playback of surround-sound movies, and it does a pretty good job with music as well. And while you might be able to get similar basic speaker performance for slightly less by shopping around, you won't get the versatility of that powered subwoofer and its wealth of hookup possibilities in the same package.

Atlantic Technology, Dept. SR, 343 Vanderbilt Ave., Norwood, MA 02062.
VALUABLE PRIZES!

The Ninth Annual Rodrigues Cartoon Caption Contest

JANUARY! Ah, yes—post-holiday blahs, self-examination, and New Year's resolutions. But cheer up. January also brings our annual Rodrigues Cartoon Caption Contest, which offers you yet another crack at fame and (in a very small way) fortune. Once again the editors of STEREO REVIEW have asked the artist Charles Rodrigues to supply a drawing, and we invite the readers to submit funny captions for it.

The person who sends in the caption judged to be the most amusing will receive the original drawing shown here, a cash prize of $100, and the distinction of seeing his or her name published along with the winning caption when the contest results are announced. If you win, all your audiophile friends will see your name in the same magazine as Madonna, Luciano Pavarotti, Wynton Marsalis, George Strait, Daniel Barenboim, and—who knows?—maybe even Marky Mark. That ought to put your friends' noses permanently out of joint.

Anyone may enter, and there is no limit to the number of times you may enter, but each caption submitted must be on a separate sheet of paper that also contains the clearly legible name and address of the person who submits it. Entries that have more than one caption will be disqualified. All entries must be received by STEREO REVIEW no later than March 1, 1993.

In addition to members of the editorial staff of STEREO REVIEW and Rodrigues himself, the distinguished panel of judges will include the winners of the eight previous contests: Thomas Briggle (Akron, Ohio), Michael Binyon (Weaverville, California), Bruce Barstow (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), Matt Mirapaul (Evanston, Illinois), Marc Welenteychik (Richmond, Virginia), Douglas Daughhetee (Birmingham, Alabama), Kelly Mills (Raleigh, North Carolina), and Diane Sullivan (Grand Falls, New Brunswick). Entries will be judged on the basis of originality, appropriateness, and humor, and the decision of the judges will be final.

Now, take a look at the drawing. What is that serviceman doing to those inflatable speakers, and what do the salesman and customer think about it? And what's so funny about that? Youth wants to know, inquiring minds want to know, Rodrigues wants to know. He's been making you laugh since this magazine's first issue, February 1958. Now it's your turn. Make him guffaw! Make his day! Make his thirty-fifth anniversary year!

The winning caption (and a selection of runners up) will be published in the June or July issue. Every January we resolve to finish the judging by June, but we haven't made that deadline yet. For our thirty-fifth anniversary year we may get this contest act together faster. The usual restrictions are printed below.

Send entries to:
Stereo Review
Rodrigues Contest
1633 Broadway
New York, NY 10019

No purchase is necessary. Anyone may enter except the staff of Stereo Review and its parent company (Hachette Magazines, Inc.) and their immediate families. All entries become the property of Stereo Review, and none will be returned. If you wish to be notified of the results of the contest by mail, send a stamped self-addressed envelope to the above address. In the likely event of duplicate entries, the one first received will be considered the winning entry. The names of the winner and perhaps a dozen runners-up will be published in Stereo Review and may appear in promotional literature for the magazine. Submitting an entry will be deemed consent for such use. Stereo Review will arrange the delivery of the prize: any tax on it will be the responsibility of the winner.

50 STEREO REVIEW JANUARY 1993
For over eighty years Denon has *lived* the definition of high fidelity—producing sound faithful to the original. Whether recording and pressing records or Compact Discs, making the world's first commercial digital recording; building professional recording and broadcast equipment; or producing the CD Players ranked Number One in Consumer Satisfaction (Verity Research, 1991) the Denon name has been synonymous with high fidelity.

Denon's AV Receivers give dramatic new direction to high fidelity.

By digitally controlling signal placement, Denon has redefined high fidelity for Audio Video Surround Sound—accurate sound that is more faithful to the director's vision of the cinematic experience than any other AV Receivers in the field.

Unlike so many so-called AV products, Denon AVR Receivers deliver audiophile signal quality (wide dynamic range, high signal-to-noise, outstanding phase linearity and immeasurably low distortion) and address what the others overlook: low level steering, rear channel fidelity and precise digital delay.

Through the application of highly advanced Digital Signal Processing (DSP), Denon enables you to tailor the sound first to your listening room and then to vary the acoustics to recreate new environments. After all, before you can create sounds that differ from the original, first you must be able to recreate the original.

DENON
The first name in digital audio.
I thought I was being avant-garde. My family thought I was nuts.

On a Saturday night years ago, my nearest and dearest gazed in some dismay as I wrestled our Brobdingnagian TV set from its usual location in the bowels of the house up into the living room and maneuvered it into position between the speakers of the stereo system.

Like practically everyone in those days, I had considered high fidelity and television to be separate—and mutually exclusive—activities. Typically, the stereo and the TV set were in different parts of the house, the former serving Bach (or Brubeck or Moby Grape) to the adults in the living room, the latter Bullwinkle to the kids in the family room. Of course, the grownups watched a lot of TV as well, but they indulged in a sort of locational slumming to do so. TV was definitely a low-status pastime.

Even so, there were timid predictions from some quarters that the two major branches of consumer electronics would merge into a single unified form of home entertainment at some time in the future. And even while remaining skeptical, some of us wanted to get a taste of what that future might be like.

Hence my furniture rearrangement: I was about to enter the world of audio/video, and I was taking my not-too-willing loved ones with me. The occasion was the teaming up of a local FM station with its television counterpart to broadcast the same musical program. Such “simulcasting” was never very common—it presented a major technical challenge to broadcasters, and few listeners were willing to go to the lengths necessary to enjoy it. But for those of us who did, the experience foreshadowed what has since become one of the growth areas in home entertainment: the audio/video or home theater system.

It may be natural to recoil a bit at the phrase “home theater.”
The initial wedding of audio and video is a relatively simple task. After placing your television monitor/receiver in between your stereo speakers, connect the stereo audio outputs of a hi-fi VCR to the auxiliary inputs of your audio system's receiver or amplifier. (It's also possible to feed the audio outputs to the inputs of a TV set, then to feed the TV set's audio into the amplifier or receiver.) Hook the VCR's video output to the monitor/receiver's direct video input and you're in business. (If your TV set doesn't have such an input, use an antenna connection.)

After all, to march into your local audio shop and pick up a major Home THX system can set you back several grand even before you buy any video equipment. And we've all drooled over pictures of the art-deco extravaganzas the monied classes tend to erect in their basements so they can watch Terminator 2 in appropriate style. But though it's easy to equate A/V systems with megabucks, you don't have to blow zillions to assemble something that will give you an immensely satisfying experience. And, fortunately, you can build an A/V system gradually, starting with your present equipment and adding more as your budget permits.

The Right Place

Before you turn your attention to equipment matters, however, it's important to consider carefully where you are going to put everything—it does have to be all in one room, as I found out all those years ago. The constraints imposed by your listening/viewing area may profoundly affect not only what you will buy in the future but also what components you can use that you already have.

In any audio system, the positioning of the loudspeakers is vital, but it gets much more complicated when they have to be integrated with a video display. Chances are that your video watching will rarely be done alone, so the locations of both the audio and video equipment must be chosen so as to give everybody in the room at least a reasonably coherent audio/video experience. If you're using a conventional two-channel stereo system for the audio, that may be harder than it seems. Ideally, the TV screen should coincide with the position of the phantom center image produced by the two speakers, but that is really possible for only one listener. The best solution is a center speaker that actually places the sound source for dialogue and other sounds tied to the video image close to the screen. Until you're ready to go that route, all positioning will be a compromise to some extent.

The age of your speakers may have an effect as well. Magnetic fields can severely disrupt a television image, and all dynamic speakers abound in stray magnetism. Current models are often shielded so they can be placed right beside or on top of your monitor, but older speakers rarely offer such protection and thus must be kept a safe distance from the TV. If that isn't possible in your present listening/viewing room, you may have to put your A/V system elsewhere—or get new speakers.

Although even two-channel stereo can enhance your video enjoyment considerably, you may want extra channels for surround sound in the future. The speakers for these channels can be large or small, but their positioning will be important and should be taken into account at the very start. Also, the complexity of the audio/visual experience usually means that you spend a fair amount of time adjusting things, so it only makes sense to place your electronic components where the infrared beams from the remote controls can reach them.
Upon its introduction, the Adcom GFA-555 power amplifier was considered a breakthrough in audio technology. Rated superior to amplifiers costing two and three times as much, some critics had difficulty in naming a better component at any price.

Now, after years of using the GFA-555 as their model of superior performance and value, Adcom engineers announce another breakthrough. The new, upgraded GFA-555II, rated at 200 watts per channel*, offers greater stability, superior heat dissipation and less distortion. It is everything which made the GFA-555 "...one of the best selling amplifiers of all time,"** and more.

With the GFA-555II, Adcom begins a new generation of amplifiers, designed to set a new standard for performance at a reasonable price... giving more and more music lovers the opportunity of experiencing the thrill of sonic perfection without the shock of exorbitant costs.

Visit your Adcom dealer and listen to the new GFA-555II. Then ask its price. You'll hear how good this new breakthrough sounds.

*Power output watts/channel, continuous both channels driven into 8 ohms, 20 Hz - 20 kHz at less than 0.04% THD.

**Stereophile, October 1990.
without your having to move from your chair or go into contortions.

You may, on the other hand, choose to forgo an outboard audio system for video use and live with what's built into the TV set. This is a more attractive option than it once was, as the best sets now boast quite decent audio, but it means that the placement of your video monitor should be done with audio considerations as much in mind as video ones. Specifically, the acoustic environment should be as similar as possible on both sides of the TV set, and the set should be close enough to your viewing position for you to be able to hear the stereo effect when there is any.

**Sources**

The very simplest way to tie your audio and video systems together is to plug the audio line output of your VCR into a high-level input on your audio receiver or amplifier. With old video recorders the line output will be mono, but the sound may still be a considerable improvement over what you're used to, particularly if your TV set has the sort of tiny speaker that was universal until quite recently (and is still pretty common in inexpensive sets). Broadcast and cable signals will come to life, and even prerecorded tapes will sound fairly respectable.

Probably the most effective early equipment upgrade, however, would be to switch to a hi-fi VCR, which will provide a much improved audio signal, and in stereo whenever the tape was recorded that way. Practically all rental tapes today have hi-fi soundtracks, and being able to take advantage of them is a relatively inexpensive way to improve your system. Most recent hi-fi VCR's also include MTS receivers for stereo TV programs.

If you record things off the air (or cable) and keep them for posterity, it may be sensible to consider a Super VHS recorder. Prices for these are fairly high, and it takes a good TV set to derive all the benefit of the improved bandwidth, but eventually you may be glad you recorded your treasures in close-to-broadcast quality. If you intend to watch only rental videos, however, forget S-VHS for the time being—there's practically nothing recorded in the system available commercially.

What are available in increasing profusion are laserdiscs, which offer not only the best video quality available to consumers but in most cases CD-quality digital audio as well. A laserdisc player is a very worthwhile addition to any A/V system, and almost all new laserdisc players can also play regular CD's, so you need not duplicate equipment.

It is also possible to feed sound from your TV set to your stereo system if the set has audio outputs. Under most circumstances this would be unnece-
I CAN RECORD ON A DISC!
Now this is news: A 2½-inch disc that you can record on over a million times with no wear or loss of sound quality. That stores up to 74 minutes of digital sound and lets you find any song in a second. That comes in its own protective cartridge for durability. That virtually eliminates skipping from shock and vibration, so you can go wherever you go and have your music flow uninterrupted. Meet the digital, recordable, instantly accessible, virtually unshockable, portable MiniDisc from Sony. It's the biggest step yet in personal music entertainment for people who never stop moving.
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One solution is an outboard video switcher, which accepts a number of video and audio sources and directs them to various destinations, controlling both signals together. For extremely complex systems, switchers probably offer the best solution, but the A/V receiver is becoming an ever more attractive option. The most elaborate receivers can accept half a dozen A/V inputs and let you control dubbing and other functions from the infrared remote unit. Since many A/V receivers also include surround-sound processors of various degrees of sophistication, they are able to serve as all-in-one centers even for quite complex A/V setups.

Here, There, Everywhere

While an audio/video system can certainly be built around a conventional stereo, or even mono, audio system, these days most of us associate audio/video with multichannel surround sound. The popularity of surround sound grew out of the practice of using Dolby Stereo-encoded movie prints to master the videocassette and laserdisc versions. When people realized that there was all that extra information on their tapes and discs, they naturally wanted to extract it. Consumer Dolby Surround decoders were the result. The original versions simply added outputs for an extra pair of speakers to be placed behind or, preferably, beside the listening area, to reproduce ambience information added to the soundtrack out of phase (although two channels are usually used, the surround signal is actually mono). If certain conditions were met—a minimum delay and high-frequency rolloff in the ambience channels—a decoder could be labeled Dolby Surround. Some surround decoders complied with Dolby specs, others didn’t, but all produced a
dramatic sense of space in the reproduced soundtracks.

The main flaw of four-channel surround systems was that for anyone sitting off-axis, the dialogue seemed to come from the nearest front speaker rather than the TV screen. To correct that, Dolby Pro Logic "steering" circuits were added to many consumer decoders (such circuits had always been part of the Dolby Stereo systems in movie theaters). This technique extracts a center-channel signal—anything recorded in phase and at equal levels in both front channels—and directs it to a dedicated speaker located as close as possible to the TV screen, thus keeping dialogue and other on-screen sounds firmly anchored there for all listeners, wherever they may be sitting. Pro Logic also improves the separation between the front and surround channels.

At first, Pro Logic decoding was available only in the most sophisticated and most expensive add-on decoders, but even advanced digital Pro Logic can now be found in some A/V receivers, and analog decoders have become common even in inexpensive models. Elaborate outboard decoders do still exist, however, and some of these are distinguished by the addition of advanced digital signal processing (DSP) circuitry to enhance the ambience of unencoded material such as music. More modest versions of ambience enhancement are commonly found in receivers as well, but usually with fewer control options than outboard processors offer.

Dolby Pro Logic decoders offer a number of configurations to accommodate different speaker setups. Pro Logic's "normal" mode feeds full-range signals only to the main left and right front speakers; information below 100 Hz in the center channel is split out to the main left and right speakers, facilitating the use of a smaller speaker for the center. A delayed mono ambience signal, rolled off below 100 Hz in the center channel is split out to the main left and right speakers, facilitating the use of a smaller speaker for the center. A delayed mono ambience signal, rolled off below 100 Hz in the center channel is split out to the main left and right speakers, facilitating the use of a smaller speaker for the center.

While Dolby Pro Logic is really meant to drive five speakers, there is a "phantom" mode that leaves the center-channel information in the main channels for systems without a center speaker. There is also a "wide" setting for systems where the center speaker has the same bandwidth as the main channels, and the Dolby 3 Stereo option can be used where there is a center speaker (plus left and right) but no surround speakers. Thus, it's possible to build a system gradually without having to change decoders.

**Speakers Large and Small**

An A/V system is similar to other audio systems in that it is the speakers that mainly determine the overall sound; it just needs more of them. For those with capacious budgets and living rooms, the best approach is probably to find speakers you like—and buy more of them. Certainly some elaborate home theater systems are based on that premise, but it is possible to obtain the benefits of surround sound without going to such lengths.

Increasingly, manufacturers are offering satellite/subwoofer systems for A/V use because they offer both economy and unobtrusiveness.

Using three to five small speakers for the treble and midrange, where directionality is important, enables them to be placed where their effect will be optimal without unduly cluttering up the room. All A/V sub/sat systems have at least one shielded satellite speaker, so that the center speaker can sit right on top of the TV set, or just below it, and in some even the left and right front speakers can nestle up against the monitor's sides if necessary. The low-frequency modules can be hidden out of sight, under a table or behind a couch—anywhere that will not cause resonance problems.

At the other end of the scale is the Rolls-Royce of home theater configurations: Home THX. Derived from a set of audio standards developed by Lucasfilm for movie theaters, Home THX equipment must meet certain minimum specifications and have certain patterns of operation enabling it to simulate in the home what you are likely to hear at the local movie palace (assuming it's a good movie palace). Home THX systems can be fairly compact, but most tend toward the upper end of the home theater range.

**Sights and Wonders**

Once you know what's available in terms of surround sound and the like, putting together the audio portion of an A/V system should hold few terrors. For many of us, however, the video aspect is more or less uncharted territory, especially if we haven't gone TV shopping in the past few years.

For one thing, you don't buy just a television set anymore, but a monitor/receiver, which is the same thing but with inputs and outputs. Then you have to choose between a direct-view set (using the familiar old cathode-ray tube) and a projection TV. The former now come in sizes up to 40 inches (measured diagonally); beyond that you're into projection. The most convenient projection units look like normal TV's, only bigger, and cast the image from the rear of the screen. There is a practical limit to how big such units can get, however, so for really big pictures, two-piece front-projection systems are often chosen. These can create images up to 10 feet in diagonal measurement.

Direct-view TV's tend to be brighter than their projection equivalents, although the gap has been narrowing of late. The screen size of a good projection set can create a truly impressive experience, particularly with letterboxed movies, which tend to get lost on small screens. One enterprising manufacturer has announced a direct-view monitor specifically designed for a 16:9 aspect ratio (width to height), close to that of wide-screen movies, rather than the 4:3 ratio of conventional TV, and there will no doubt be more wide-screen sets in the future—and all high-definition TV sets, when they arrive, will have a 16:9 aspect ratio.

Whatever sort of display device you choose will come with some sort of built-in audio. It's tempting to ignore it, on the assumption that all your listening will be done through external audio components, but that's not the way it usually happens. For day-to-day viewing—news and soaps and the like—we probably won't bother firing up the sophisticated audio stuff and will listen through the set's own speakers. So do yourself a favor when you shop for a TV set and pay enough attention to its built-in sound system to avoid driving yourself crazy later with one that produces outstanding pictures and worse-than-mediocre sound.

It's been a long time coming, but the home theater experience is here to stay. Putting together an audio/video system to enjoy it takes some patience and understanding, but it need not be intimidating.

Well... not that intimidating.
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To truly recreate the theatre experience at home, you need true theatre-like dynamics. It's more than just selecting speakers. It's selecting speakers that put sound in the right places.

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If you already own Klipsch speakers, adding a center channel will start the transformation of your home audio/video system into true home theatre. If you don't own Klipsch speakers, ask your authorized dealer how you can create incredible home theatre with world class speakers.
Remember the first time you heard a CD? It sounded so good, you hoped the music would never stop.

Which is the whole idea behind the CD changer.

Unfortunately most companies, in their rush to produce one, neglected to isolate the disc that's playing from the changer platform. A big mistake. (Not as big as the Hubble telescope, but pretty darn serious.)

One that transfers internal and external vibrations to the playing disc. Creates resonance. Distorts the sound. And defeats a primary reason for buying a CD player in the first place.

Fortunately Yamaha avoided this common problem by developing an entire line of CD changers that are virtually vibration-free. A pretty amazing feat in itself.

How they do it is something called PlayXchange. A unique design which not only isolates the playing disc from the loading tray, providing vibration-free playback, but also allows you to change four CDs without disturbing the one that's playing.

And because you're supposed to spend your time listening to your CDs and not the machine that plays them, Yamaha's developed a new changing mechanism that's exceptionally quiet, quick and reliable.

But you can't judge a superior CD player merely by its changing mechanism. What makes the difference between a good player and a great one has to do with attention to details.

Take Yamaha's new CDC-835 for example. With Yamaha's S-Bit Plus Technology, twin balanced D/A converters and Class A amplification at every stage, the CDC-835 outperforms most single disc CD players on the market.

Its fluorescent display can be dimmed or set to automatically shut off during playback, eliminating any chance of interference.

And the CDC-835 is equally impressive in the convenience department.

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And to give your favorite kind of music even more presence, there's a built-in equalizer with five digital presets.

In fact, the CDC-835 can remember your favorite songs on up to 100 discs and play them back in any sequence. It even remembers EQ settings.

Then there's 5-Disc Tape Edit. A useful recording feature that arranges the tracks you select so they fit neatly on two sides of your tape.

By now, if you're not quite sold on the CDC-835, you only have two options. You can drop by your nearest Yamaha dealer and let your ears make up your mind.

Or you can buy another changer. Which when you stop to think about it, would be a total shock to your system.

Or buy one of Yamaha's new CD changers.
"In Los Angeles we think music belongs to everybody."

ESA PEKKA SALONEN isn’t above some shameless provocation. Having always planned to be a composer before unexpectedly falling into an international conducting career, the thirty-four-year-old Salonen, the new music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, has a healthy skepticism for the flashier aspects of the music world. So it was hard not to think of him as being behind enemy lines when he and the orchestra arrived last summer at the capital of classical-music glitz, the Salzburg Festival, to perform Olivier Messiaen’s massive opera St. Francis of Assisi and several concerts.

Salonen didn’t stay undercover long. Nobody would have mistaken him for a bright young talent eager to respect Salzburg tradition when he began his first concert there with Johann Strauss’s “Emperor” Waltz. Some people booed at the notion that a Finnish conductor and his orchestra from America’s junk-culture wasteland would dare to play Strauss on such hallowed Austrian soil. And the critics were vicious. Salonen was not surprised at the reaction.

"The bottom line was, they made it clear that to them all music is not public domain. And I think that’s completely wrong," the diminutive, reserved conductor told me a few days later at one of the town’s outdoor cafés. "If we start developing this idea that music belongs to the nations and races that composed it originally, we’re in trouble. That means that Mahler can only be played by Austrian Jewish conductors and orchestras, for instance. But in Los Angeles we think music belongs to everybody. It was
good to make this statement by playing the Strauss.”

And Salonen backed it up with a lot of talent. A few days later at the première of St. Francis, anti-Salonen/L.A. sentiment was scarce amid the resounding applause at the end of the five-hour opera. Clearly, Salonen was the new star of the festival, but strictly on his terms. And that’s the way it has always been for him.

Rather than starting with discreet forays into Beethoven and Haydn, Salonen leapt flat out into his recording career with Messiaen’s sprawling Turangalila and Lutoslawski’s Symphony No. 3. Not until this season is he finally getting around to his first Beethoven Ninth. His obvious willingness to try a fresh approach seems appropriate for the job of redefining the symphony orchestra for Los Angeles’s increasingly multiethnic population.

“T’s the hottest seat in the States because it’s in a vanguard situation,” said Salonen of the L.A. post. “Maybe the social, racial, and cultural problems are closer to the surface than anywhere else at the moment. We can’t rely on the WASP cushion for the arts any longer. We need to see if there’s a wider audience there, and I’m sure there is one. We just need to get rid of the prejudiced thinking from both sides. Maybe for a Korean family in L.A., it’s complicated to come to the Los Angeles Music Center and listen to Beethoven, because of not feeling comfortable. So we should go to them and make the first contact. This kind of music is not socially or culturally or racially charged. You don’t listen to Beethoven as music by someone living in Vienna writing for the emerging middle class. Now it’s something else. It’s a universal message in the same way that Shakespeare is. It can be a source of healing.”

Realizing such ideals would seem to be nearly impossible. But Salonen has already survived near-impossible odds by rising to the top of the conducting world with little training. When he had his first big success in 1983 in London, where he filled in for an ailing Michael Tilson Thomas in conducting Mahler’s Symphony No. 3, he had only a few years’ experience as a French horn player and had conducted a few contemporary-music concerts. Thus, he had little repertoire for the flood of conducting offers that suddenly came his way. “I had one Mahler symphony, and the rest of it was Rituel by Boulez, Contrapunkt by Stockhausen, and maybe a Sibelius symphony. I wouldn’t want to go through those first years again. It was like going through a food processor,” he said.

He learned thirty to forty major pieces a year, and though there were moments of brilliance, as evidenced by his early recordings, there were some failures, too. The Los Angeles Philharmonic was the first American orchestra he conducted, and some of the players remember him with longer hair and speaking broken English, conducting a performance of Schoenberg’s Transfigured Night that didn’t make much sense.

“A few years ago,” he admitted, “I always thought, ‘Here we go, a serial composer who grew up with Boulez and Stockhausen conducting Beethoven.’ I saw myself as a ski jumper in the Sahara—somebody who is undoubtedly a professional but in the wrong place. I did a very bad Schubert Fifth Symphony a couple of years ago on tour, for instance.

“One of the major problems for everybody who starts this young and has a visible career at the age of thirty is that a statement is expected of you, and some things aren’t ready to be seen as statements. A few years ago I thought I’d try my hand at a Mozart opera with the Swedish Radio Orchestra in a concert version of Così Fan Tutte. I was trying it out, essentially, not like doing it at La Scala. But when this project was mentioned at the European Orchestra Union meeting, so much interest was expressed that it turned into a direct broadcast to twelve European countries.”

And was it a “statement”? “Well, I worked very intensely on it
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for a long time," he said. "I was quite satisfied."

Despite such pressures, Salonen's professional life these days has become remarkably simple. His engagements are narrowed down to a handful of favorite orchestras—Los Angeles, London's Philharmonia, and the Swedish Radio Orchestra, where he has been principal conductor since 1985. Repertoire decisions are simple, too: He doesn't play anything he doesn't want to, though he isn't rigid about it. While Rachmaninoff isn't central to his repertoire, for instance, he was happy to record two of the concertos for Sony Classical because he's so fond of the pianist Yefim Bronfman. He jokes that he'd even be willing to conduct Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture—on the condition that Peter Sellars, who has been engaged as the L.A. orchestra's artistic consultant, would stage it.

Obviously, though, Salonen is much more excited about a disc of music by his Finnish contemporary Kaija Saariaho that will come out on the Finlandia label. He also wants to record some of the avant-garde music from the 1950's and 1960's, such as works by György Ligeti and Bernd Alois Zimmermann. And what does Sony Classical think of that idea? "Let's put it this way," he said, "we're still discussing it. The dream is to record St. Francis. It won't happen now, but maybe in the future."

There will be more recordings of Stravinsky, whose music Salonen conducts with razor-sharp swiftness, and of Sibelius, whose work he performs in the grand manner, with spacious tempos, big gestures, and elemental power. His recent Mahler Fourth recording also seems to recapture the grand manner of early twentieth century conductors. It's full of rubato, each section having its own individual tempo. I was reminded of Willem Mengelberg's famous, freewheeling 1940 recording with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, but that wasn't Salonen's intention at all.

"Mengelberg is a very dangerous point of reference," he said. "His recording is a masterpiece of pulling and stretching the music to the point where it's a miracle that it's still together. My starting point was to find an ideal tempo for each section. The difficult thing is figuring out how to get from one to the next."

Salonen dismissed the notion of recording a complete Mahler symphony cycle, or even the Third Symphony, saying that it would appear he was trying to cash in on what he calls "the Cinderella story" of his debut. "Maybe a little later, when Mahler is completely out of fashion and there is an intense Meyerbeer wave manipulated by DG, Sony, and Decca with complete cycles conducted by Placido Domingo—maybe then I'll record a Mahler cycle," he joked.

He's more concerned about taking more time off in future seasons to compose. Now that he's thrown out his serial methodology, uncharted territories are opening up to him, as illustrated by his 1988 piece Floof, for soprano and orchestra, which could be an allegory about serialism in its story of a machine that learns to be a poet.

"It's as if Salonen's partly reclaiming the life he would have had if Michael Tilson Thomas hadn't hurt his back in 1983. A few years ago he fell in love with Jane Price, a violinist with London's Philharmonia Orchestra, with which he has been principal guest conductor since 1985. Price had to leave her post or they could never have spent any time together. Now they're married and have a baby girl. Salonen is catching up with mundane matters as well, such as getting a driver's license—essential to L.A. living. "The most difficult thing was going to a driving school and sharing this experience with eighteen-year-old boys and girls," he recalled. "They looked at me with pity."

Again reflecting on that 1983 concert, Salonen commented on how strange it was that one incident could have had such an impact on his life. Leonard Bernstein would probably have become a famous conductor even if he hadn't filled in for Bruno Walter. But not Salonen if he hadn't stepped in for Thomas. "I recently had this odd experience," he said. "Radio France had a music festival where they played music by young composers from all over the world, and they played my Saxophone Concerto. I stayed in a hotel booked for the composers, and it was lousy. I was complaining to my wife, Jane, and she said, 'Look, you're being treated like a composer. Aren't you learning something from this experience?' And I was. The guys who are the very focus of all of musical life, the ones who write the stuff, are treated like dirt! And the conductors—who are very suspect people anyway—are treated ten times better. "There's definitely something fishy about that!"
RONALD CLYNE knows how to retire. Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at two o'clock, the former graphic designer pops open a bottle of Citra Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, calls in his cat, Spot, and strolls around his Brooklyn, New York, living/listening room until 7 p.m. serenaded by Bruckner, Bach, and the blues.

Clyne says he doesn't have to worry about staying in a sweet spot thanks to the 180-degree dispersion of his Soundwave Grand Soliloquy main speakers, which are biwired with cables that disappear into the walls. If he closes his eyes he could be in any number of places, from a cathedral to a jazz club, depending on the setting of his JVC XP-A1010 digital ambience processor. Helping to create the delay and reverb effects are two pairs of ProAc Mini Tower speakers mounted on the side walls and covered with loose-weave fabric grilles. Filling out the low end are four custom-made Melos subwoofers: two hidden under the desk, one under an end table, and the other in a cabinet next to the electronics.

All of the components were carefully chosen for sound quality, brand reputation, and looks. "I don't buy any piece of equipment if it's not aesthetically well designed," says Clyne, who designed almost all of the Folkways album covers from 1950 to 1986. He built a closet between the living room and kitchen for his equipment so that the black boxes and nest of wires wouldn't show. He mounted the components on a rack in the closet and cut holes in the wall to expose their faceplates.

On the rack are two Tandberg Model 3009 mono amplifiers for the Soundwave speakers; three Tandberg Model 3006 stereo amps, two for the ambience speakers and one for the subwoofers; a Coda Model 01 preamplifier; a Sumo Delilah electronic crossover that cuts off the Soundwave Grand Soliloquy main speakers at 50 Hz; a Tandberg Model 3001 FM tuner; the JVC processor; and a JVC XL-Z1050 CD player. All the amplifiers plug into a Tice Power Block and Tice Titan, an AC power supply Clyne says provides a "more natural, fuller sound."

Clyne has gone to great lengths to get his system to sound as good as it possibly can. He chose MasterLink interconnects and Supra speaker wire, and he clamped TDK Digital Noise Absorbers around all the leads to rid the signals of radio-frequency and other electromagnetic interference. "The biggest improvement is on the speaker leads," he says. "I've got 30- to 40-foot runs of wire that are like an antenna."

His attention to acoustic detail didn't stop with the equipment. Hardwood floors, glass, and drywall make for very bright acoustics, so Clyne paved the ceiling with six rows of perforated acoustic tile to absorb high frequencies, alternating with five rows of Sonex spiked tile to break up standing waves. On two walls he hung his own "acoustic paintings," large wooden canvasses with different angles and surfaces to provide "acoustical relief." Interspersed among his own works are pieces of tribal art from two visits to New Guinea.

There's also a dinosaur in the room—Clyne's turntable, a Michell Gyrodec with an Audio-Technica Model 1100 tonearm and AT-ML170 cartridge. Although he would never buy a CD changer ("they're silly"), he's hard-pressed for a reason to play an LP these days. "CD's are cleaner, there's no surface noise, and the bass is better. They're better than LP's in almost every department," he says.

Clyne doesn't envision any more major changes in his system. "I've had fifteen to twenty different systems in my life," he says, "because the quality of equipment is always improving, and I'm always looking for ways to make the music sound better. But this system is so good that improvement is going to be very difficult now."

—Rebecca Day
These days "home theater" is a term liberally applied and widely advertised.

But having defined the category in the first place, we reserve the right to redefine it. So here goes: True home theater must rival or exceed the very best movie theaters.

Not just in the quality of picture but in the quality of sound. As does the extraordinary system pictured here.

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Actual on-screen image.
A round-up of the latest decks shows that convenience and quality are compatible.

A LASERDISC player may be the source component of choice in a home theater system, but a VCR is its workhorse. It's used to record programs you can't watch at the time of broadcast, to play back rented movies (videodiscs are seldom available for rental), and to edit and watch home movies you've made with a camcorder.

The most important feature of a VCR that is to be used in a home theater system is the ability to record and play back hi-fi stereo soundtracks. In VCR-speak, "hi-fi" means audio-frequency-modulation (AFM) recording, which was developed to overcome the limitations of the "linear," or "edge-track," recording system used in all early home VCR's. Linear recording operates on the same principle as an ordinary audio cassette deck, with a very narrow strip at one edge of the half-inch videotape creeping past a fixed, single-channel audio head. (A handful of VCR's have supported stereo linear recording, but none like this are being made anymore.) Although the results are decidedly low-fi, many inexpensive VCR's still record and play linear soundtracks only.

In AFM recording, however, a two-channel soundtrack is laid down across the entire width of the tape by audio heads spinning at high speed on the same drum as the video heads, yielding a wider bandwidth, greater dynamic range, and lower flutter and distortion. In fact, some enthusiasts use hi-fi VCR's for making audio-only.

BY GLENN KENNY
Samsung's XD3500 8mm VCR ($750), slightly over 4 pounds and measuring 9 x 2½ x 8 inches, is almost in the portable category. It features a flying erase head, on-screen programming, and one-year/eight-event timer capability.

Panasonic's PV-4262 ($499) comes with a second remote control, called the LCD Program Director (not shown), designed to facilitate timer programming. The conventional VHS deck can play back S-VHS tapes but with standard resolution.

Zenith's VR2420 ($449) gives on-screen programming instructions in English and Spanish. The otherwise identical VR2424 offers English and French messages. Both models feature automatic head cleaning and a multibrand remote control.

Mitsubishi's Super VHS HS-U67 ($999) features the company's ViewPoint on-screen operating system and audio enhancements such as Dynamic Range Improvement, said to extend low-level response by as much as 15 dB.
Before the advent of DAT, many argued that—aside from a professional-quality open-reel tape deck—a hi-fi VCR was the best audio recorder around. It's still one of the most affordable options for high-quality recording. An added advantage is the generous recording time it affords. Although picture quality goes down noticeably when you switch from the SP speed (standard play, 2 hours on a T-120 tape) to EP (extended play, 6 hours on a T-120), no such falloff occurs in hi-fi audio recording. (EP tapes may not play back as reliably as SP tapes on machines other than the one they were recorded on, however.)

The 8mm format offers even more audio options. All 8mm machines have mono AFM audio, and some support stereo AFM or even a form of digital recording (one 8mm deck introduced several years ago, but no longer available, had a mode in which it could record and play back up to 24 hours of digital audio without video).

The VCR's shown on these pages combine hi-fi sound with various programming options and special features at a variety of prices. For years manufacturers have been trying to make their VCR's easier to operate and to program for unattended recording off the air. Many VCR makers have developed fairly intuitive operating systems using on-screen menus, and several have started incorporating Gemstar's VCR Plus+ technology, which lets the user set a VCR to record a scheduled program simply by keying in a number from published listings.

Picture quality is important, too, of course, especially in a home theater setup. The Super VHS format, introduced in 1987, boasts exceptional resolution, though it's still confined mainly to homemade tapes. But even the conventional VHS and 8mm formats have been refined to the point where they're about as good as they can get, and all but the cheapest VCR's should yield images ranging from acceptable to very good.

The value of other features depends on how you use your VCR. If you have trouble sticking to just one program at a time, for instance, you might want picture-in-picture (PIP). If you have trouble deciding what to watch, you might appreciate another digital nicety: multichannel monitoring, which puts stills of up to twelve programs on screen at the same time. And if you're interested in making home movies, a host of models offer sophisticated editing tools.

Happy hunting.
The four-head Memorex Model S3 ($450) offers VCR Plus+ programming, a one-year/six-event timer, blank search, automatic head cleaning, front A/V inputs, and automatic turn-on/play/rewind/turn-off when you insert a tape.

Toshiba's M-658 ($530) with a universal remote control, VCR Plus+ programming, front-panel A/V jacks, and digital tracking control, automatically changes to a slower speed during programmed recording if the tape is running out.

The Intelligent Control System in JVC's HR-D910 ($550) offers automatic digital tracking and five different playback modes (Normal, Enhanced, Tape Dub, Soft Pix, and Sharp Pix) to optimize video performance even with rental tapes.

The RCA VR667HF ($549) features VCR Plus+ programming and RCA's own Pro-Tect Plus system to prevent accidental changes to preset recording instructions. The remote can operate thirty different brands of TV set.
Sony's SLV-696HF ($650) offers advanced editing features such as a flying erase head and both audio and video insert recording. It also features a shuttle control, VCR Plus+ programming, and a multibrand remote control.

The Philips VR6615 ($500) features shuttle-controlled picture search at speeds varying from still-frame to seven times normal, plus a real-time counter, automatic head cleaning, front A/V inputs, and automatic tracking control.

The Artificial Intelligence Picture System in Sharp's VC-H95U ($570) includes automatic head cleaning and tracking control and a noise-reduction system said to improve the picture from old, partially demagnetized tapes.

GoldStar's GVR-A485 ($500) has special circuitry to improve the pictures from rented tapes, front-panel and remote jog/shuttle search dials, a flying erase head, automatic head cleaning, and a title maker for home movies.
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Guy Clark Shapes Some Classics

Any song that starts out with ‘Ramblin’ Jack Elliot saying “I got these lines in my face tryin’ to straighten out the wrinkles in my life” already has a lot to live up to. But Guy Clark knows how to shape a classic, and ‘Ramblin’ Jack & Mahan’, about the rowdy friendship between the Brooklyn cowboy and the rodeo star Larry Mahan, is certainly that, even if nobody knows it yet. “The room smelled like bulls / And the words sounded like songs,” he writes. And that’s ample reason why Clark, who’s put out only seven albums since 1975, is so revered a figure in the Texas school of singer-songwriters.

Using heart and humor to balance the load, Clark, a former carpenter and guitar maker, pulls out his craftsman’s tools, constructing durable and affecting music with economy of language, clarity of thought, and efficiency of beat and melody. “Boats to Build,” his first album since 1988, contains two songs about the importance of pride in quality handwork, and, like the boat builders of his title song, Clark knows how to make a “fair curve from a noble plan,” embellishing it with only the sparsest of details—the exquisite filigreed trim of Vernon Thompson’s acoustic guitar, for instance, or the fanciful spirit of Sam Bush’s mandolin.

If the philosophical whimsy of Too Much and the ode to life’s little pleasures of Baton Rouge fit the typical Guy Clark mold, there are some surprises here, too. In Picasso’s Mandolin Clark mixes his painterly and musical instincts with funny rhyme (“He was born in Spain / And died in France / He was not scared of baggy pants”). But not even that is preparation for How’d You Get This Number, a Mark Knopfler-like ironic blues where Clark uncharacteristically displays a less-than-sympathetic side in his disdain for his title song. Clark knows how to make a "fair curve from a noble plan," embellishing it with only the sparsest of details—the exquisite filigreed trim of Vernon Thompson’s acoustic guitar, for instance, or the fanciful spirit of Sam Bush’s mandolin.

…Clark shouldn’t feel too bad about that, though. He’s created an album of dignified, involving songs. No technical lapse could possibly stem the flow of his emotions. The rest, as he says, is merely details.

Guy Clark: Boats to Build
Baton Rouge: Picasso’s Mandolin; How’d You Get This Number; Boats to Build; Too Much; Ramblin’ Jack and Mahan; I Don’t Love You Much Do I; and three others
ASYLUM/AMERICAN EXPLORER 61442 (34 min)

The Burning Ballads of Jimmy Scott

I first heard Jimmy Scott back in 1970, when Atlantic released an album titled “The Source.” I had never heard a voice quite like his—it had an oddly plaintive quality as singular as the sound of Miles Davis’s horn. Piercingly high and plangent, it was mysteriously androgynous. Scott all but disappeared during the more than twenty years between “The Source” and “All the Way,” his exceptional new Sire album, which says as much about the obstacles an artist must overcome in the music world as it does about the vicissitudes of his life. A diminutive, boyish-looking man, he found his first following when he was billed as “Little” Jimmy Scott and appeared with Lionel Hampton’s band back in the Forties. While the list of his recording credits is long, including a number of hits, after the Fifties he largely faded into obscurity. Today, at sixty-seven, Jimmy Scott is being presented for the first time by a major label in settings that do justice to his artistry, with a star back-up including Kenny Barron, Ron Carter, and Grady Tate.

His forte is the heartfelt, burning ballad, and he sings the musical gems in “All the Way” as if he’d reached down to the bottom of his soul and dredged up every iota of feeling. But there’s none of the sweaty, overwrought shouting and grunting of modern soul singers. The
Jimmy Scott:

intensity and control feeling goes far deeper than that. It is so intense that it must be restrained, and it is this element of control, fused with an impression of shattering pain, that makes his performances so compelling.

To understand exactly how much of himself this man puts into his music, you have to see him perform in person. He closes his eyes, leans his head back to one side, and sings as though he's placing his very heart in your hands, trusting you not to break it. Preferring slow tempos, he's always far back behind the beat, yet his phrasing is so flawless that each song, no matter how familiar, is fully recreated through his variations on the basic melody. The effect is riveting, and once you see him on a night when he is in good form, you never forget him—he haunts you.

While no recording could capture the full effect of Jimmy Scott live, this one comes close enough. Though some of the control has been eroded by age, his voice retains its plangent quality, and the heart is still there, the soul, the artistry. That should be enough for anyone.

Phyl Garland

JIMMY SCOTT: All the Way
All the Way, Embraceable You, Angel Eyes; At Last: Someone to Watch over Me; Every Time We Say Goodbye; I'll Be Around; My Foolish Heart; I'm Getting Sentimental over You
SIRE 26955 (47 min)

Natalia Gutman Plays Schnittke and Schumann

The growth of Alfred Schnittke's discography in the last half-dozen years has been almost as remarkable as the Russian composer's own productivity. The Bis label alone has accounted for nearly three dozen titles, there have been several on Melodiya, and now celebrated Russian champions of Schnittke's music are recording his works in the West. Following up on the Sony release of the Second Cello Concerto with Mstislav Rostropovich, for whom that work was written barely more than two years ago, EMI has brought out his former pupil Natalia Gutman's second recording of the First Concerto, which was written for her five years earlier. With the music now more thoroughly in her fingers and more deeply engraved in her spirit, Gutman, this time with the London Philharmonic under Kurt Masur, surpasses her own Moscow performance (with Gennady Rozhdestvensky conducting) as well as the two recordings by other cellists. Masur responds to the Schnittke idiom every bit as wholeheartedly as Gutman herself, in terms of both passion and precision. The solo and orchestral elements seem to build on one another throughout the performance, achieving a stunning level of exaltation in the Mahlerian extended finale. The LPO's playing and EMI's demonstration-class recording leave nothing wanting in respect to either power or clarity.

The Schnittke is preceded on the disc by the familiar Schumann Cello Concerto, to which Gutman takes a pervasively warmhearted but somewhat reserved approach that seems a little fussy here and there. While Masur is renowned for a more enlivening way with the Schumann symphonies, he is fully supportive of his soloist here, and there is again much to admire in the fine orchestral playing. In any event, the superb account of the Schnittke makes this an important issue.

Richard Freed

SCHNITTKE: Cello Concerto No. 1
SCHUMANN: Cello Concerto
Gutman; London Philharmonic, Masur
EMI CDC 54443 (65 min)
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**Rostropovich's Gripping Shostakovich Eighth Symphony**

MSTISLAV ROSTROPOVICH, the National Symphony, and Teldec have come through with a realization of Shostakovich’s terrifying World War II masterpiece, the Symphony No. 8, that can stand with the previous recordings by Rostropovich’s former colleagues Yevgeny Mravinsky and Kiril Kondrashin, who also bore witness to what the painter Goya called “the disaster of war.”

The strings perform with white-hot intensity throughout the nearly 23-minute opening movement, and the woodwinds slog through the following movement with all the brutality inherent in the score. The second half of the symphony, a triptych consisting of a toccata-scherzo, passacaglia, and finale, with its compassionate closing benediction, is conveyed with a fervor stemming from the wartime experience itself, memories of which still haunt the survivors.

Not only is this release the finest performance in Rostropovich’s cycle of Shostakovich symphonies, it is also the most effectively recorded. The fairly close-miked sound from Washington’s Kennedy Center carries with it ample body and warmth without seeming cramped or overloaded. Elements of the two Russian recordings of the Eighth may be superior to this one, but as a totality of musicmaking and sonics, the new Teldec version comes out ahead in my book.

**David Hall**

**SHOSTAKOVICH:** Symphony No. 8
National Symphony Orchestra, Rostropovich
TELDEC 74719 (61 min)

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- **The Yardbirds:** Little Games Sessions & More. EMI 98213. The final studio album (starring Jimmy Page on guitar) by the influential psychedelic blues band, plus alternate takes and the group’s commercial for Great Shakes drink mix.

**CLASSICAL**
- **Granados:** Goyescas; other piano works. De Larrocha. EMI CMS 64524 (two discs). Alicia de Larrocha’s earliest recordings, now reissued on EMI, were made in the early 1960’s for Spain’s Hispavox. Other discs offer music of Albéniz, Falla, and Turina.
- **Honegger:** Le Roi David. Eda-Pierre, Collard, Tapp); Dutoit. ERATO 45800. “...a compelling performance of an utterly gorgeous work” (May 1973).
- **Joplin:** Treemonisha. Balthrop, Allen, Rayam, White; Schuller. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 435 709. “The choral writing is remarkable, but the ragtime numbers are still the highlights...Schuller’s direction, the orchestral playing, the recording...are all exemplary” (May 1976).
- **Placido Domingo:** Sings Caruso. Decca VICTOR 61356. An early collection of arias by Cilea, Donizetti, Verdi, Puccini, and others, performed with the London Symphony under Nello Santi. “Domingo has gifts that promise the brightest possible future” (August 1972).
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**ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT**

3 Years, 5 Months and 2 Days
In the Life of...
CHRYSLIS 21929 (57 min)
Performance: Arresting
Recording: Good

These fast-tongued Southerners have made the most inventive rap album of 1992. Working in the message-filled, musically savvy style of such neo-flower-power rap acts as De La Soul and PM Dawn, Arrested Development eschews the trivial and tunes into issues. Led by rapper/writer Speech, they hold forth on the tribulations of motherhood (Man's Always on Stage) and divisions in the black community (People Everyday), while calling for self-awareness and peaceful revolution among the downtrodden (Give a Man a Fish, Raining Revolution). Speech speed-raps through U, a common-sense spiel about marriage and the family (“I want, not need, a companion to feed the knowledge I read and the lovin' I've received”), and finds wisdom in the ways of a homeless bum in Mr. Wendel.

Musically, the group paints with a large and colorful palette—everything from Buddy Guy and Junior Wells to Sly and the Family Stone, combined with enough turntable tricks and artfully antic samples and asides to keep your ears spinning for weeks. This is an album whose greatest triumph is not just that it owns up to the problems facing America, but that it leaves you feeling those problems can be solved with conviction and a right-minded spirit.

**DAN BAIRD**

Love Songs for the Hearing Impaired
DEF AMERICAN 26999 (42 min)
Performance: Rock solid
Recording: Good

Aside from deserving an award for album title of the year, “Love Songs for the Hearing Impaired” is nothing more nor less than a foot-stomping, rude, good-time rock-and-roll record. Wisely, Dan Baird avoids the self-conscious attempts at mythologizing the South that clouded the final album by his old band, the Georgia Satellites, and comes back swinging with a set of songs about love, lust, and getting rowdy. There’s a great tale about the misadventures of a couple on the lam in Julie + Lucky, and Knocked Up is a timeless hard-luck story about a reckless lad who gets marched to the altar by an unforgiving dad. Baird and company cook up a Creedence-style voodoo groove in Lost Highway and kick Seriously Gone so hard and fast you’ll have to put a splint on your foot when it’s all over. Then there’s I Love You Period, a hots-for-rock soundtrack, and the combination of cover tunes: Patsy Cline’s country-as-country-can-get Walking After Midnight and Little Feat’s polyglot-rock Dixie Chicken. But Brooks goes beyond these obvious homages, blending elements of country and rock into a highly appealing exploration of real-life issues confronting baby boomers.

Somewhere Other than the Night is about an overworked man who, by chance, rediscovers the passion he’s been overlooking in his marriage. The song is about a farmer, but the same Type A obsessions apply to big-city yuppies, suburban heads of households, and maybe even an overworked country-pop singer with a fondness for hats. Here, as elsewhere, Brooks is doing what country does best: talking to regular people about regular life. But “The Chase” adds a new wrinkle to country populism by injecting a little rock liberalism. In the album’s first track, We Shall Be Free, Brooks goes against Nashville’s conservative Republican grain by confronting the baby boomers. Although I hear all but the Thomas songs and maybe the two sides of his stylistic coin in his choice of cover tunes: Patsy Cline’s country-as-country-can-get Walking After Midnight and Little Feat’s polyglot-rock Dixie Chicken.

**GARTH BROOKS**

The Chase
LIBERTY 98743 (38 min)
Performance: Down to earth
Recording: Very good

No wonder Garth Brooks sells so many records. He pours out the hard-scrabble stories of country music to a Seventies soft-rock soundtrack, and the combination is mighty potent. In “The Chase,” he displays the two sides of his stylistic coin in his choice of cover tunes: Patsy Cline’s country-as-country-can-get Walking After Midnight and Little Feat’s polyglot-rock Dixie Chicken. But Brooks goes beyond these obvious homages, blending elements of country and rock into a highly appealing exploration of real-life issues confronting baby boomers.

Somewhere Other than the Night is about an overworked man who, by chance, rediscovers the passion he’s been overlooking in his marriage. The song is about a farmer, but the same Type A obsessions apply to big-city yuppies, suburban heads of households, and maybe even an overworked country-pop singer with a fondness for hats. Here, as elsewhere, Brooks is doing what country does best: talking to regular people about regular life. But “The Chase” adds a new wrinkle to country populism by injecting a little rock liberalism. In the album’s first track, We Shall Be Free, Brooks goes against Nashville’s conservative Republican grain by supporting racial equal-

ity, gay rights, and environmental protection. Even if the song seems like a 3-minute, 47-second civics lesson, Brooks has to be admired for taking his music to another level. At a time when the politics of change is in the wind, Garth Brooks is creating a fair breeze of his own.

**JOHN CALE**

Fragments of a Rainy Season
HANNIBAL 1372 (71 min)
Performance: Live and unplugged
Recording: Front-row quality

This twenty-song retrospective of John Cale’s post-Velvet Underground career, performed accompanied only by his own piano and guitar, at least clues you in to which of his musical periods he values most. No surprise that at least half the songs hail from his fertile late-Seventies stint on Island, particularly the incomparable “Fear.” He also appears enamored of the Dylan Thomas poems he set to music in the album “Songs for the Dying.”

Although I hear all but the Thomas songs with a band in mind, recalling the diabolical frenzy of numberless Cale gigs at CBGB and elsewhere in New York City during his mad reign as a kind of punk-era elder statesman, this unplugged solo program is really a fan’s dream. While “Fragments” does, in spots, bear the musty, reverent air of a recital, Cale breaks out of that straitjacket with dark, corrosive versions of Guts, Fear (Is a Man’s Best Friend), and Heartbreak Hotel—a definitively Gothic one. And Buffalo Ballet, Ship of Fools, and Paris 1919 remain as lovely and evocative as ever. If Cale’s voice has lost some of its fierceness, his performances still manage to project lurking danger or capacious lyricism.

**HOLLY DUNN**

Getting It Dunn
WARNER BROS. 26949 (35 min)
Performance: Unfortunate detour
Recording: Okay

Nashville songstress Holly Dunn long ago abandoned the retro-Dolly Parton stance she began with Daddy’s Hands, a tune of country realism that flashed “Bright Future
Ahead. Now she settles mostly for sexy country-pop that allows her to hike up her skirt and flex a little calf muscle, if not a little thigh. In the process, she's lost her genuine-from-the-heart delivery and replaced it with radio-ready angst that is no angst at all. Compare her version of Verlon Thompson and Beth Nielsen Chapman's You Say You Will with Trisha Yearwood's. The difference—in spunk, in conveyance of frustration, and in production values—is the difference between a spittleball and a comet. Dunn does better with the romantic ballads I've Heard It All and A Simple I Love You, but otherwise she sounds as if she's followed her once-promising vision to the end of the road.

**Tales from the Vaults**

**The Monterey International Pop Festival**

Given the genuine talent involved—the Who, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, The Byrds, Otis Redding, and Jefferson Airplane, among many others—it's no wonder legend has it that the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival was the greatest-ever all-star rock event. But on the basis of this new Rhino album documenting the concerts, it seems that... well, maybe you had to be there. From the eccentrically recorded evidence on these four CD's, almost all the bands were ragged, out of tune, and kind of lame. The Byrds, for example, are painful to listen to, and they're far from the worst here. In fact, with the exception of the Hendrix and Redding sets, which have long been available and remain brilliant, most of these performances are probably best appreciated as a cautionary argument against the legalization of drugs.

**The Troggs**


The protopunk greatest hits of the Wild Thing guys are the nominal attraction here, and they remain as endearingly doopy as ever. But the real reason to get this set is the bonus disc, a screamingly funny, often-bootlegged recording of the band trying to perform a moronically simple song—and failing repeatedly, provoking a nonstop barrage of f-word insults. Honest, it's like This Is Spinal Tap rewritten by David Mamet.

**Brian Eno**

Nerve Net

OPAL/WARNER BROS. 45033 (64 min)

Performance: Zzzzz...

Recording: Muffled

Brian Eno's "Nerve Net" is a colossally boring aural snooze, despite the industrial sounds, android voices, and comic-relief synth squiggles presumably meant to confer a stamp of rave-culture currency upon it. Eno's probably got a Ph.D. dissertation's worth of theories to explain this neurasthenic cruise to nowhere, but all you need to know is that it sounds like the browned-out, contaminated antithesis of "Another Green World." R.P.

**Extreme**

III Sides to Every Story

A&M 31454 0006 (76 min)

Performance: Ambitious

Recording: In yer face, dude

Fronted by Nuno Bettencourt, a poll-winning, Berklee-trained guitarist who could play rings around Saturn. Extreme aims a lot higher than the crotch-level fantasies of most lumphead metal bands. Their new concept album, "III Sides to Every Story" is divided into three sections—"Yours," "Mine," and "The Truth"—and runs near the recordable limit for a CD. Much of it is solid and enjoyable, pleasing even this show-me metal skeptic. Okay, the six "Yours" tunes are a bit over the top, aimed at the hair-shaking, air-guitar-playing faithful, although a few of the songs, like Warheads, are buffered by a refreshingly cartoonish, Cheap Trick-style sensibility. The "Mine" section's five songs, though, are surprisingly melodic, benefiting from Bettencourt's restrained virtuosity on guitar and keyboards, plus knockout four-part vocals. "The Truth" finds Extreme at the extreme, incorporating orchestration into a suite of longish songs that aim at the pomposity grandeur of Queen and early Genesis, with mixed results.

Whatever this album's flaws, be it showoffish excess in the beginning or progressive-roc overreach at the end. Extreme has welded soul-searching lyrics to varied, ambitious music. Even so, I'll probably never listen to it again. Why? Too much of an okay thing. P.P.

**Sinéad O'Connor**

Am I Not Your Girl?

CHRYSALIS 21952 (42 min)

Performance: Vampy

Recording: Very good

Sinéad O'Connor has taken the all-covers plunge after only two albums. If this release is all that an artist supposedly in the prime of a strikingly original career has to show for the past several years—save for some barbed and highly publicized ranting—then maybe her resourcefulness was overestimated in the first place. In any case, "Am I Not Your Girl?" is not the place you'll want to go to hear torch songs and show tunes identified with the likes of Peggy Lee (Why Don't You Do Right?), Sarah Vaughan (Black Coffee), and Billie Holiday (Gloomy Sunday). Maybe singing these numbers has helped put O'Connor in touch with an inner self that's more feminine, vulnerable, and conventional than the one she publicly projects. Even so, it's hard to square two sides of a personality as disparate as the...
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Joe Grushecky is the sort of rocker we could use more of. He’s an anti-star whose tough-minded songs cast a jaundiced eye at 1990’s America: the erosion of values, the economic disequilibrium that makes it hard to hold families together, the thin veneer of lies that keeps politicians afloat. Grushecky himself is a paragon of family values that those in elected office would do well to emulate. A husband and father of two, he teaches the face of hard times—the central, populist theme of Grushecky’s career, when you get right down to it.

Joe Grushecky

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Paradigm
R.E.M.

Automatic for the People
WARNER BROS. 45055 (49 min)
Performance: Emotionally rich
Recording: Excellent

R.E.M.’s “Automatic for the People” is one of the most profoundly sad and emotionally involving albums of this or any other year. It depicts a very different R.E.M. from the group that made its debut ten years ago with “Murmur.” In contrast to the involuted impressionism and tantalizing obscurity of that album, the cards are on the table here. Singing with urgent clarity, leader Michael Stipe unburdens his soul regarding various aspects of death.

Stipe revisits and canonizes several real-life figures: Montgomery Clift in Monty Got a Raw Deal, Andy Kaufman in the brilliant and touchingly funny Man on the Moon. He evokes the physical suffering of someone staring death in the face in Try Not to Breathe (“I will hold my breath till all these shivers subside,” he sings). Everybody Hurts counsels strength in the face of unrelenting adversity with an almost shocking candor, and Stipe’s sweet, dulcet delivery recalls Art Garfunkel (no lie!). With calm, prescient wisdom, Sweetness Follows offers assurance of what lies beyond the grave, with Stipe’s ghostly voice hovering in the churchy glow of Mike Mills’s organ and the funereal sawing of a cello. “Automatic for the People” is a remarkably honest, ineffably sad, and thoroughly moving piece of work.

10,000 Maniacs:
uneasy words, well-tempered music

WORDS & MUSIC

Two new combinations of CD and coffee-table book crossed our desk recently—one intriguing, the other this side of useless. Ferrington Guitars (HarperCollins, $50), is a collection of gorgeous color photos of the custom guitars that celebrity luthier Danny Ferrington has made for some of the best-known players in country, pop, and rock—everybody from Phoebe Snow and Rodney Crowell to Richard Thompson and Nirvana’s Kurt Cobain. Even if you don’t play guitar yourself, it’s hard not to appreciate these instruments on the level of really magnificent craftsmanship, and the accompanying twenty-track CD, featuring instrumental solos by some of Ferrington’s clients (pick hit: the Don Was medley of Home Sweet Home and the Supremes’ Baby Love), is really terrific.

On the other hand, My Twenty-Five Years with Fleetwood Mac (Hyperion, $35) by Mick Fleetwood with Stephen “Hammer of the Gods” Davis is, to put it charitably, a snooze. This band has washed so much of its dirty linen in public over the years that Fleetwood doesn’t have any heretofore unpublished sleaze to wallow in (why else would you read a book about this bunch?), so what’s left is the usual and-then-we-did-this-in-the-studio stuff familiar from a million other band bios. As for the accompanying CD, it merely contains two previously unreleased tracks from the group’s Jeremy Spencer-imitating-Elvis phase in 1967, and as such will be of no interest whatsoever to the Stevie Nicks fans who are the book’s ostensible target audience. Save your money.

—Steve Simels

SOUL ASYLUM

Grave Dancers Union
COLUMBIA 48898 (45 min)
Performance: Eccentric
Recording: Good

Just listen to the thick, syrupy bass in this album if you want to hear what a serious producer and a serious engineer can do to a woollen alternative band. Soul Asylum has never sounded this good, which is pretty much a positive thing. Songs like Somebody to Shove, Black Gold, and Runaway Train—which get the album off to a tough-going-jaded start—are musically straightforward, so the greater clarity and heft of the recording make the beefy sound soarier and the weary sound wearier. But when the band tries to play it loose, or wants to meander in and around an epiphany, the arrangements are so tight that they begin to pinch. “Grave Dancers Union” would have been better if Soul Asylum had trusted its looey-gooey instincts.

10,000 MANIACS

Our Time in Eden
ELEKTRA 61385 (49 min)
Performance: Pensive
Recording: Very good

The aura of 10,000 Maniacs’ music recalls Indian summer: You feel the late-season warmth of the sun but sense its inevitable dimming toward autumn. Tinged with frustration, anger, and resignation about the human species’ despoilation of the earthly Eden we’ve inherited, the lyrics by vocalist Natalie Merchant for “Our Time in Eden” tackle
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AC/DC
Live. ATCO 92215 (71 min).
An extremely loud album by perhaps the best really dumb band in rock history. This is meant as a compliment.
S.S.

THE COWBOY ALBUM
KID RHINO 76403 (36 min).

DEVO
Live—The Mongoloid Years.
RYKO 20209 (76 min).
Okay, okay, so ultimately they were just Kiss for College kids, but this above-ground bootleg proves that Devo was also a pretty interesting live band before they ran their de-evolution high concept into the ground. Nice bonus: drily amusing liner notes by the group's Gerry Casale. S.S.

DARRYL AND DON ELLIS
The Group's Gerry Casale.

KITARO
Dream. GEFFEN 24477 (57 min).
With a vocal assist from Jon Anderson of Yes, Kitaro has come up with a mix of New Age, world music, light classics, pop, rock, film soundtracks, natural sounds, and greeting-card lyrics that gives a new dimension to the word "eclectic." Some of it's pretty, some of it's touching, and much of it's trite. Less would have been more.
William Livingstone

MANHATTAN RHYTHM KINGS
We Three. CABARET 5003 (36 min).
Combining the tightly knit playfulness of the 1950's Kingston Trio with the relaxed congeniality of the 1930's Three Smoothies, the Manhattan Rhythm Kings adroitly alternate here between tongue-in-check and straightforward vocal harmonies. It's a snappily varied program, ranging from Gershwin to Leiber and Stoller, and the Kings get a sly assist from the radio humorist Garrison Keillor in the title track and that old Gracie Allen chestnut Snug as a Bug in a Rug.
R.H.

ROY ORBISON
King of Hearts. VIRGIN 86520 (42 min).
Most of this material was unfinished at Orbison's death, and it's been polished up after the fact by the likes of T-Bone Burnett, Don Was, and Jeff Lynne. As a whole, the album's not as good as "Mystery Girl," but none of it sounds like grave robbery, and the remake of Crying with k.d. lang is worth the price by itself.
S.S.

PATTY SMYTH
MCA 10633 (45 min).
Smyth's sorry-babe-I-gotta-dump-ya duet with Don Henley, Sometimes Love Just Ain't Enough, has been a big hit for a simple reason: Everybody knows the feeling. Nevertheless, the album is mainstream corporate rock at its most routine and faceless—well produced (by Springsteen associate Roy Bittan) but still overflowing with canned emotion and as spontaneous as a Swiss watch.
S.S.

MARGARET WHITING
Then and Now. DRG 91402 (56 min).
Never content just to recycle her old hits, Margaret Whiting gives a fresh, contemporary slant here to Moonlight in Vermont and It Might As Well Be Spring. She's also in top form for some other great standards—herself a member of the grandeur and unity of a symphonic poem. Two songs are punched up by James Brown's horn section, but for the most part the album derives its strength from its even, deliberate pacing and consistent tone. It is, in short, quietly stunning.
P.P.

TOM WAITS
Bone Machine
ISLAND 314 512 580 (54 min).
Performances: Not for the faint of heart
Recording: Good

Tom Waits used to be a beat storyteller of the seamy underground—his wry, the street poets, the homeless crazies. But judging from his soundtrack to the Jim Jarmusch movie Night on Earth and this new album, he's become the advance man for the real underground—as in Beelzebub, Lucifer, and the Prince of Darkness. Make no mistake about it: "Bone Machine" is minimalist music from hell, played on the bones of sinners and sung through the rusty, ravaged, and perhaps even channeled voice of the devil, who shovels coal through Waits's dreams. Obsessed with death—peaceful suicide and tortured hide-aside alike—Waits gives these musical mini-movies titles like Earth Died Screaming, Murder in the Red Barn, and Dirt in the Ground, as in the futility of that-how-we're-all-end-up-someday. The lyrics often dip into the surrealistically obscure, but the mood is always right out front—you know we're not talking moon-and-June when Waits rasps, "Bring me some water / Put it in this skull.
Jesus figures in here occasionally, as does Judgment Day (All Stripped Down). But while Waits ponders the larger picture of the physical vs. the spiritual, he likes to entertain with thrills and chills. Try on Goin' Out West, which sounds like something Charlie Manson might have written while contemplating a career in the movies, or In the Colosseum, where "The
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women all control their men / With razors and with wrists / And the princess squeezes grape juice / On a torrid bloody kiss." Happy hallucinations, my sweet. Pop music doesn't get more serious—or creepier—than this. A.N.

TRISHA YEARWOOD
Hearts in Armor
MCA 10641 (38 min)
Performance: Powerful
Recording: Very good

Trisha Yearwood has made one of the best albums to come out of Nashville in 1992, but it doesn't sound all that country. Oh, sure, you can hear a little pedal steel and fiddle here and a little dobro and mandolin there. And she knows her way around a backwoods moan as well as a honky-tonk throb. But "Hearts in Armor," her second album, seems to use just as many pop-rock accents as pop-country accents while delivering its considerable emotional wallop. In fact, Yearwood sings with far fewer country inflections and mannerisms than, say, the Linda Ronstadt of twenty years ago. She doesn't have to push her naturally tender vibrato to make us feel her desperation in Nearest Distant Shore or to make us understand her I'll-get-you determination in Oh Lonesome You. So when she really turns on the afterburners in Down on My Knees, the searing edge of her hurtful need nearly raises welts. Even if some of the tunes here seem a little generic, Yearwood makes us feel them as if she were telling our own stories. R.G.

JAZZ

STAN GETZ
At the Shrine
VERVE 513 753 (70 min)
Performance: Suave
Recording: Good remote

Many jazz musicians have recorded as prolifically as Stan Getz, but only a few others can match the consistently high quality of his output. The first eight tracks of this CD reissue document the Getz quintet's participation in a 1954 Los Angeles concert that also featured the Gerry Mulligan and Dave Brubeck quartets and the Duke Ellington orchestra; in fact, Ellington introduces Getz in the opening track. The two additional tracks here were made in a studio the following day. This was Getz's first concert recording, and it's a flowing and—to use the day's "hip" buzzword—cool set of performances by a group that benefited greatly from the presence of the valve trombonist Bobby Brookmeyer and a solid rhythm section led by the pianist John Williams.

At the time of this recording, Getz had been through a drug ordeal, which included a six-month prison stay, but it certainly hadn't left any marks on his music. The strong rapport between him and Brookmeyer is a joy to hear, and the overall sound is clearly rooted in a style Mulligan perfected several decades ago: the aloof yet seething approach that gave the West Coast its first jazz identity. C.A.

DIZZY GILLESPIE
Dizzy's Diamonds:
The Best of the Verve Years
VERVE 513 875 (three discs, 223 min)
Performance: Dizzying diversity
Recording: Very good

It doesn't seem like so many years ago that Dizzy Gillespie was a young man with a horn that had something very different to say. But 1992 saw him turn seventy-five, and the tributes poured in all year. Record companies know a good hook when they see one, so some of these homages weren't exactly altruistic, but when the music is good, reissues benefit us all, and this new Verve set is about as beneficial as they get.

Gillespie was a pivotal figure in the postwar development of American music. He personified bebop, which he performed with dazzling dexterity and to which he brought a sense of humor that certainly helped it gain wider acceptance. He was called the "Clown Prince of Bop," and some felt that his antics detracted from the music. Behind the humor, though, was a serious musician who not only helped to define modern jazz but also performed a successful marriage between jazz and Latin American music, and that aspect of his artistry is well represented here.

"The Best of the Verve Years" is actually a misnomer, for besides tracks that originally appeared on Norman Granz's Norgran and Verve labels, this collection of forty performances includes nine taken from Philips and

The Set Of A Lifetime

The long-awaited compilation from the creators of the Chess Box Sets and Billie Holiday: The Complete Decca Recordings (winner of two Grammy Awards) paints the definitive portrait of a living legend. * 77 tracks for 5 hours of classic blues, including his first-ever recording, 1949's "Miss Martha King" * 30 tracks on compact disc for the first time ever * B.B.'s greatest hits, 19 rarities, including 7 previously unreleased * 72-page color booklet featuring rare photos, liner notes and a first-person commentary by B.B. on his life and music

It's nothing less than the royal treatment. MCA.
its subsidiary label, Limelight. Spanning the years 1950 to 1964, the set is divided into three categories, each taking up a disc: “Big Band,” “Small Groups & Guests,” and “In an Afro-Cuban, Bossa Nova, Calypso Groove.” To borrow that expression, it’s all a “groove.” Here is Dizzy Gillespie with the Duke Ellington Orchestra, Ella Fitzgerald, Oscar Peterson, Stan Getz, Stuff Smith, Bud Powell, James Moody, Wynton Kelly, Thelonious Monk, Coleman Hawkins, Charlie Parker, and Roy Eldridge (the trumpeter who so influenced Gillespie’s style in the early days that one could hardly distinguish between the two). There is even a recording with gospel singer Sister Rosetta Tharpe singing and playing the piano. Need I say more? “Dizzy’s Diamonds” sparkles gloriously.

C.A.

LINCOLN CENTER JAZZ ORCHESTRA
Portraits by Ellington
COLUMBIA 35145 (58 min)
Performance: Fine
Recording: Good remote

New York City’s Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts has often given its stages over to jazz, but in the late Eighties it gave the idiom a serious hug, and what started as an embrace seems to have blossomed into a veritable love affair. One result of this mating is the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, a chameleon band whose mission is to spread the music and leave no style unplayed. “Portraits by Ellington” features the orchestra in Duke’s corner, performing a program of his tributes to people and places that have had an impact on what we might call the African-American experience. It includes shorter pieces, such as the portraits of Bill Robinson (Bojangles, 1940), Coleman Hawkins (Self Portrait of the Bean, 1962), and Bert Williams (Portrait of Bert Williams, 1940), as well as vital snippets from the New Orleans Suite (1970) and the Liberian Suite, commissioned by the government of Liberia to mark its 1947 centennial.

Sure, there are recordings of these compositions by Ellington himself, and if this were a studio session I would question its value, but this concert was not a slavish recreation of Ellington’s performances—the solos by Wynton Marsalis, Todd Williams, Bill Easley, Michael White, and others are their own. While this CD is no substitute for the Ellington versions, if it makes you want to explore the originals, it has served its purpose. The Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra is doing a splendid job of bringing jazz to ears that might otherwise not hear it, and such efforts must be encouraged.

C.A.

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Jack English, Stereophile, Vol. 15, No.7 (July, 1992)

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SHOSTAKOVICH: Violin Concerto No. 1
Chung: Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, London Philharmonic, Tennstedt
EMI 54072 (70 min)
Performance: Very good
Recording: Warm

S
ome fifteen years ago Deutsche Grammophon issued a recording of the Beethoven Violin Concerto by Pinchas Zukerman with Daniel Barenboim and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Zukerman and Barenboim were frequent collaborators, and their Beethoven gloved with the noblest sort of intensity. Since that recording has been out of print for some time, Zukerman's new one with Zubin Mehta, another long-time collaborator, should be assured an eager welcome, but to my ear it doesn't measure up to its predecessor. It hardly needs saying that there is beautiful solo playing here. The orchestral playing is tidy, clean and full in sound. He does not go in for embellished, stretched, or phrased expressivity, but his playing and directing are rhythmic and decorative. E.S.

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BARBER: Violin Concerto
SHOSTAKOVICH: Violin Concerto No. 1
Salerno-Sonnenberg, London Symphony.
M. Shostakovich
EMI 54314 (65 min)
Performance: Warm, brilliant
Recording: Suavely shaped

T
he Barber Violin Concerto, written in 1939 when the composer was still in his twenties, is a replay of late Romanticism, with long and wistful allegro and andante movements only partly contradicted by a short, fast, troubled finale. The Shostakovich Concerto No. 1, written during the dark days of Stalinism and then put aside until after Stalin's death, is less conventional, alternating two big, slow, introspective sections, an opening nocturne and a somber passacaglia, with two short, fast, bitingly satirical movements, a scherzo and a tenderly slow allegro and andante movements. It offers an early glimpse of the composer's son Maxim, and along with the London Symphony, they make a very strong team for both the warmer Barber and the harder edges of the Shostakovich. E.S.

BEETHOVEN: Violin Concerto
Violin Sonata No. 10
Zukerman, Neikrug: Los Angeles Philharmonic. Mehta
RCA VICTOR 61219 (73 min)
Performance: Not quite a mesh
Recording: Good

"BRIDGE: Suite for String Orchestra; There is a Willow Grows Aslant a Brook; Cherry Ripe; Sir Roger de Coverley"
"DELIUS: Sonata for String Orchestra"
New Zealand Chamber Orchestra, Braithwaite KOCH INTERNATIONAL 3-7139-2HI (69 min)
Performance: Beguiling
Recording: Very good

F
rank Bridge's relatively early and very listenable Suite for String Orchestra here makes its fourth CD appearance in an elegant and intimate-scale reading by the New Zealand Chamber Orchestra under Nicholas Braithwaite. Equally enjoyable are his settings of the traditional English song Cherry Ripe and the dance Sir Roger de Coverley. But by far the finest of the Bridge offerings on this CD is the hauntingly desolate 1927 work for winds, harp, and strings, There Is a Willow Grows Aslant a Brook (the title comes from the Queen's words in Hamlet upon being told of Ophelia's suicide by drowning). The Delius work is Eric Fenby's string-orchestra arrangement of the 1916 String Quartet. He did the poignantly nostalgic slow movement, "Late Swallows," in 1963, the other three movements in 1977. If the music is not as consistently inspired as the contemporaneous Violin Concerto, it still makes for a pleasing listening experience either in its original guise or in Fenby's sensitive and altogether knowledgeable arrangement. All told, a very attractive disc, beautifully recorded. D.H.

DEBUSSY: Prelude a l'Apres-Midi d'un Faune; La Boheme; La Boite a Juoux; Jeux
London Symphony Orchestra, Thomas SONY SK 48231 (63 min)
Performance: Expansive
Recording: Sumptuous

P
relude to the Afternoon of a Faun, written in 1894, was Debussy's first important work for orchestra; Jeux was his last. The link here is Diaghilev, who in 1912 brought out...
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Nijinsky's choreographic treatment of the Faun and commissioned Jeux, which had its premiere the following year. The balletic and chronological links, without Diaghilev, extend to La Boîte à Joujoux, which Debussy undertook in 1913; in this case the orchestration was taken in 1913; in this case the orchestration was

...and had the work produced after Debussy's death.

Michael Tilson Thomas has the London Symphony Orchestra in splendid form here, and his commitment to the music is beyond question. But for all the links in terms of chronology and category, there is more in these three pieces to distinguish each one from the others—in terms of both character and textures—than is evident in these performances. Thomas's expansive approach, which works so beautifully in the Faun, tends to homogenize the two more extended pieces. La Boîte à Joujoux loses a good deal of its pretentious childhood essence, veering into the world of Pelleas, and Jeux, one of the pivotal tentious childhood essence, veering into the world of Pelleas, and Jeux, one of the pivotal

...and sumptuously recorded.

The familiar suite from Copland's Billy the Kid does not receive quite that strong a performance, but it is a good, solid one, and Mata reaches another high point in Roy Harris's magnificent Third Symphony. Here, as in the Bernstein, he succeeds in combining a clear-eyed focus on the music's substance with a fully sympathetic response to its emotional content—and receives similar commitment from every section of the orchestra. It is a beautiful realization that transcends any real or imagined parochial limitations, just as truly great readings of Nielsen or Shostakovich do.

The album title, "An American Panorama," strikes me as being at once blustery and trivializing, but the musicmaking is something to cheer about, and so is the exceptionally natural sound. Richard Freed
more sensitive “authentic” approach enables the work, as a whole, to bloom. Any semblance of the old “big bow wow” Handel would be the death of this extremely personal, intimate music. McGeegan's clean, transparent sonorities show just how daringly austere, and startlingly direct, the scoring is.

Hast is so well matched, the oratorio seems all of a piece, though the singers are also wonderful individually, especially the honey-voiced countertenor Drew Minter and the soprano Lorraine Hunt, who seems to have a special identification with Theodora, the early Christian martyr who was imprisoned by the Romans. In more dramatic passages, Hunt’s voice seems to have greater resources of amplitude and color than her previous recordings suggested. Among McGeegan’s long string of Handel recordings, this is the best yet (even better than his much-lauded Susannah), reflecting the accumulated wisdom of his own years of work with the same singers, orchestra, and composer. D.P.S.

HAYDN: Trumpet, Oboe, and Harpsichord Concertos
Goodwin, Bennett, Pinnock; the English Concert. Pinnock
ARCHIV 431678 (56 min)
Performance: Good
Recording: Good
Haydn, who was not a performer himself, was not particularly enamored of the work, as a whole, to bloom. Any sem-
inative cumulative impact as the individual elements interact like characters in a play. Despite a more extreme dynamic range, the Fifth Symphony is a less sprawling and more viscerally compelling work, with a greater economic impact on the individual elements interact like characters in a play. Despite a more extreme dynamic range, the Fifth Symphony is a less sprawling and more viscerally compelling work, with a greater economy of musical material and more austere scoring. Both symphonies are well worth investigating. D.P.S.

The Fourth Symphony, which carries the enigmatic subtitle “In memory of Michelange-
lo,” seems to have been written under the influence of the splintered first movement of Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 15. The themes are fragmented by snatches of lula-
byes, martial-sounding brass, and wistful-sounding chimes, all set against each other with a dreamy, polytonal weightlessness. Kanchei masterfully maintains tension through-
out the movement, which builds to an impres-
sive cumulative impact as the individual elements interact like characters in a play. Despite a more extreme dynamic range, the Fifth Symphony is a less sprawling and more viscerally compelling work, with a greater economy of musical material and more austere scoring. Both symphonies are well worth investigating. D.P.S.

KANCHEI: Symphony No. 4 (“In memorla
Michelangelo”); Symphony No. 5
Georgian National Orchestra, Kakhidze
ELEKTRA NONESUCH 79290 (51 min)
Performance: Gripping
Recording: Vivid

Giya Kancheli, born in Tbilisi, Georgia, in the then Soviet Union in 1935, has composed seven symphonies, among other orches-
central works. This authoritatively performed, well-engineered 1978 recording by the Geor-
gian National Orchestra under Jansug Kakhidze, now released for the first time in the West, offers his Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, which respectively date from 1975 and 1977 and are both cast in single, 25-minute move-
ments marked largo. Kanchei’s “voice” isn’t easy to identify at first, partly because he uses bits of ideas from other composers in a collage-like counterpart. The results lack traditional symphonic logic but have much of the spiritu-
ality of Part and Gorecki, the orchestral brilli-
ance of Prokofiev, and the narrative thrust of Schnittke.

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MARTINU: Fresques de Piero Della Francesca; Sinfonietta La Jolla; Toccata a Due Canzoni
Orchestre National de France, Conlon
ERATO 2292 45794 (62 min)
Performance: Very good
Recording: Attractive

In many ways this is the best recording yet of Martinu's richly orchestrated tone poems inspired by the Piero Della Francesca frescoes. Though James Conlon doesn't quite have the authority of Charles Mackerras on Supraphon or the luxurious expansiveness of James DePreist on Bis, the performance is taut, alert, and well played. The music is flattered by the orchestra's French accent, and the infrequently heard accompanying works are welcome, particularly the Toccata, which suggests what George Gershwin's music might have sounded like if he'd lived another fifteen years. D.P.S.

SCHUBERT: String Quintet in D Major
Emerson String Quartet; Rostropovich
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 431 792 (53 min)
Performance: Intense
Recording: Bright

This is the third recording of Schubert's late masterpiece with Mstislav Rostropovich as "visiting" cellist. There is no question in my mind that his presence with the Emerson Quartet is responsible for the blinding intensity of the reading, which is emphasized by a decidedly bright church acoustic. What you hear on this CD will probably either get your adrenaline flowing, or put you off altogether. The ferocious introduction sets the tone, and even in the episodes of lyrical repose there is no escaping the sense of a breathless performance on the razor's edge. The intensity is, if anything, enhanced in the slow movement by the subtle touches of portamento from the first violin. The scherzo verges on the manic at times, with the somber trio almost oppressive in its relentless quality. Nor is there any letup in the Magyar-tinted finale. I felt out of breath by the end.

If all that seems a bit much, the Cleveland Quartet with Yo-Yo Ma on CBS provides a lovely and altogether more ingratiating alternative. Then, of course, there is the touchstone reading of them all, the 1952 recording by Isaac Stern, Alexander Schneider, Milton Katims, Pablo Casals, and Paul Tortelier (now available only in a four-CD set on CBS/Sony set celebrating Stern's life in music).

TCHAIKOVSKY: Pique Dame
(The Queen of Spades)
Freni, Atlantov, Leiferkus, Forrester, Hvorostovsky, others; Tanglewood Festival Chorus; Boston Symphony, Ozawa
RCA VICTOR 60992 (three discs, 156 min)
Performance: Exciting
Recording: Excellent

The Boston Symphony Orchestra, with its shimmering sound and precise rhythmic execution, sets a new performance standard for this opera under Seiji Ozawa's dynamic and firmly controlled leadership. By and large the singers, too, measure up to their tasks, though superlatives come in short supply. As Herman, the obsessive and self-destructive gambler, the tenor Vladimir Atlantov displays seasoned mastery. His palette may lack some subtlety, but he finds exciting ways to bring Herman to life. At this stage of her distinguished career, Mirella Freni cannot suggest Lisa's girliness, but she offers a convincing portrayal of a deeply wounded and desperate woman in tones no longer radiant but possessing great emotional power. The two baritones are effectively contrasted: Sergei Leiferkus, a vigorous Tomsky with his powerful, grainy, and not perfectly focused instrument, and Dimitri Hvorostovsky, with his smooth and elegant delineation of the noble Yeletsky. Maureen Forrester makes a commanding Countess, tender in her nostalgic French aria and utterly realistic in her death scene.

In the minor roles, Katherine Ciesinski's heavy vibrato intrudes on Pauline's exquisite song, and while some of the officers (Chekalinsky and Chaplitsky) are adequately done, Julian Rodescu's Surin is toneless. The soprano Dominique Labelle, however, does a nice turn as Chloe in the pastoral scene of Act II. The live recording has been accomplished on the highest plane, without intrusive applause, and the accompanying booklet is complete with multilingual texts. While this is the best-recorded Pique Dame, vocally it's not an all-out improvement over the earlier Philips and Sony sets.

VERDI: Quartet in E Minor
SIBELIUS: Quartet in D Minor
("Voices Intimae")
Juilliard String Quartet
SONY SK 48193 (54 min)
Performance: Splendid Sibelius
Recording: Sibelius better

I have an abiding fondness for Verdi's lone string quartet, composed just before his Requiem, but the Juilliard foursome makes heavy going of the score for my taste. The Vogler Quartet on RCA has the true measure of the music's volatility and Italianate lyricism. On the other hand, the rugged Juilliard approach works just fine with Sibelius's single mature string quartet. The music can take it—especially the two outer movements. The violin section movement seems to ride on the wings of the wind, and the dance-rhythm finale is done with a ferocity that recalls the late pages of En Saga. What the central slow movement, whose introspective quality gives the work its title ("Intimate Voices"), may lack in intimacy here is compensated for by a quietly relentless intensity. I can live with this reading. The recording, from the Library of Congress's Coolidge Auditorium, is decidedly more satisfying to the ear than the rather cramped, close-up sound of the Verdi, done at Princeton University's Alexander Hall.

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Walton: Violin Concerto; Suite from "Henry V"; "Spitfire" Prelude and Fugue; Capriccio Burlesco

Rosand: Florida Philharmonic; Judd
HARMONIA MUNDI HMU 907070 (60 min)
Performance: Excellent concerto
Recording: Good

Heading the menu in this varied selection of music by William Walton is the brilliant and passionate Violin Concerto from the late 1930's. The soloist, Aaron Rosand, does a first-rate job on both the musical and virtuoso levels, even compared with such illustrious recorded competitors as the work's dedicatee, Jascha Heifetz (with Walton conducting), or Kyung Wha Chung and Nigel Kennedy (both with André Previn). The conductor James Judd, most of whose recordings have been from his native England, has whipped the decade-old Florida Philharmonic into yet another formidable regional orchestra. Besides providing fine support in the Violin Concerto, the players also show their mettle in the sparkling and elegantly crafted 1968 Capriccio Burlesco. The Spitfire and Henry V film music is creditably done, and the lovely movements for strings, "Death of Falstaff" and "Touch her soft lips, and part," are played with great sensitivity. The sound is closely focused but clean and well balanced.

D.H.

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ALBENIZ: Suite Espanola.

TURINA: Guitar Works.
Manuel Barrueco. EMI 54382 (65 min).
The Albéniz is Manuel Barrueco's guitar arrangement of the eight piano pieces in the enlarged edition of the famous suite—neatly played, to be sure, but more conventional sounding on the guitar than in the (admittedly, guitar-inspired) piano original. Turina is represented by his five original guitar pieces—Pandanguilla, Sevillana, Ráfaga ("gust of wind"), Homenaje a Tárrega, and a flamencoesque Sonata. They're all charmers, especially in these suave performances and recordings. E.S.

BRUCKNER:
Symphonies No. 0 and No. 8.
Israel Philharmonic, Mehta.
SONY 45864 (two discs, 123 min).
This appears to be the first Bruckner recording to emanate from Israel. Zubin Mehta brings plenty of vitality to the early Symphony No. 0, redolent of late Schubert, but the titanic Eighth, heard here in the Nowak edition with its cuts in the slow movement and finale, is no match for the readings by Günter Wand (RCA) or Karajan (DG). The Israeli orchestra doesn't have enough heft, or perhaps lung power, which may account for Mehta's lightweight and sometimes hurried reading. D.H.

MENDELSSOHN:
A Midsummer Night's Dream.
Rotterdam Philharmonic, Tate. EMI 54348 (two discs, 117 min).
This recording of Mendelssohn's incidental music to Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream includes lots of the original dialogue, performed by actors of the Peter Hall Company, in order to present the music in its dramatic context. But for repeated listening, it's perhaps best to program out the somewhat anemic dramatic performances and leave only Jeffrey Tate's fresh, lithe interpretations of the familiar music. Musically, this is one of the best recordings of the work available. D.P.S.

SIBELIUS:
Lemminkäinen Legends; En Saga.
Los Angeles Philharmonic, Salonen.
SONY SK 48067 (63 min).
The last two of the four Lemminkäinen Legends, the magically poetic Swan of Tuonela and the brilliant Lemminkäinen's Return, are justifiably the best known; Lemminkäinen and the Island Maidens and Lemminkäinen in Tuonela are second-drawer in comparison. Esa-Pekka Salonen's readings here have theatricality but little genuine poetry, and his En Saga strikes me as hasty and superficial. The sound is excellent, but I'd recommend Järvi on Bis or Gibson on Chandos for the Legends.
D.H.

TCHAIKOVSKY: Symphony No. 1 ("Winter Dreams"); Nutcracker Suite.
Chicago Symphony, Abbado.
SONY SK 48056 (66 min).
Claudio Abbado here concludes his traversal of the Tchaikovsky symphonies with the Chicago orchestra. The First Symphony is warm in sentiment throughout the first half, by turns delicate and brilliant in the second half. A neatly played Nutcracker Suite fills out this spaciously recorded CD. Like most conductors, Abbado lets the horns overpower in the reprise of the slow movement's big theme. Andrew Litton's recording on Virgin is the only one I've heard that has it right. D.H.

MATT HAIMOVITZ:
Suites and Sonatas for Solo Cello.
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 431 813 (54 min).
The twentieth-century pieces for solo cello here all refer to the Bach cello suites. The early sonatas by George Crumb (1955) and György Ligeti (1948/1953) are not insubstantial, but Max Reger's Suite in G Major (1915) is little more than a condensation of Bach. The meat of the recital is Benjamin Britten's Suite, Op. 72 (1964). Although Matt Haimovitz softens its rugged profile with his creamy tone and legato, which are emphasized by the resonant recording, his performances throughout are as intelligent as they are delicious.
D.P.S.

STRING FEVER: Fever Pitch.
KOCH 37150 (61 min).
String Fever, founded by Marin Alsop in 1981, is a superb classical string orchestra largely made up of women players. The mostly original pieces here are by David Kimelis, Billy Ver Planck, George Bogatko, and Michael Sahl. One of the extraordinarily engaging features of both the music and the musicians is how easily they all cross over from rock to ragas to reggae to jazz to gypsy to blues to Bach. String Fever manages to sound completely natural, at home, and at the same time unique and, well, groovy.
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The Last Great Romantic

Singers, pianists, and conductors are the most glamorous and charismatic musical performers, and they inspire intense devotion and loyalty in their fans. I can't say that I have a favorite conductor, but the singer who inspired my deepest devotion and loyalty was Maria Callas (1923-1977). She was such a gifted interpreter that her performances really moved me and made me feel that I had surrendered to her the control of my emotions.

Many pianists have touched me, delighted me, and given me pleasure, but the only one who has stirred me so deeply was the Cuban-American Jorge Bolet (1914-1990). Whether with thunderous power or delicate filigree, he could make me feel taken out of myself to some other mental and emotional world. That ability and his large, singing tone have led me to describe him as the Callas of the keyboard.

Born in Havana, Cuba, Jorge Bolet (pronounced George bo-LETT) started piano lessons at the age of seven. When he was twelve, he went to the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where he studied with David Saperton and Josef Hofmann. His New York recital debut in 1937 prompted Samuel Chotzinoff to describe him in the New York Post as "an artist of prodigious technique and unmistakable musical powers... a virtuoso in the noble sense of the word, a pianist who strives for the heroic in tone, sonority, and emotion." And that's the way he played for the rest of his life.

With talent like that and reviews like that, Bolet might reasonably have expected an immediate international career, but somehow worldwide fame eluded him in his youth. I first heard him in 1970 at a benefit concert for the International Piano Archive at which he appeared with Alicia de Larrocha, Bruce Hungerford, Guinoma Novaes, Raymond Lewenthal, and I don't know who all. He played Liszt's Reminiscences of Lucia di Lammermoor and Concert Paraphrase on Rigoletto, and I have not been the same since. I had never heard playing like that.

The next day the New York Times proclaimed that Bolet had played the best at the benefit. Soon RCA signed him, released a couple of Liszt records he had made in Spain, and recorded his Carnegie Hall recital in 1974. Belatedly recognition seemed to be coming his way, but celebrity did not follow. In the United States he remained almost a cult figure, adored by loyal fans waiting for something we called the Romantic Revival, which never came. Despite rave reviews for his recordings, RCA dropped him.

In his sixties, however, he found a devoted following in Europe, where many music lovers realized that the greatest living Romantic pianist was not Claudio Arrau or Vladimir Horowitz, but Bolet. During the 1980's British Decca (London Records) made a series of remarkable recordings with him in concertos and solo piano works by Chopin, Debussy, Rachmaninoff, and most notably Liszt, his specialty.

These recordings captured Bolet well, but his artistic legacy will not be permanently available to collectors. Only two years after his death some of his recordings have been deleted from the catalog. Fortunately, some have been reissued at midprice (about $10), and I suggest that piano lovers buy a few before they drop from sight.

The coupling of the Grieg and Schumann concertos with Riccardo Chailly and the Berlin Radio Symphony is now available at midprice (London 430 719). So is a 75-minute compilation with different orchestras and conductors that includes the Rachmaninoff Concerto No. 2, Liszt's Totentanz, and his seldom-performed orchestration of Schubert's "Wanderer" Fantasy (London 430 736). If you are new to Bolet's work, start with one of his Liszt performances—Années de Pélerinage, the Sonata in B Minor, Venezia e Napoli, or the transcriptions of Schubert songs, all of which show up in different combinations on CD. In his Liszt performances I hear not only passages of great beauty, but also the seductive hedonism that was a Bolet hallmark and his irresistible combination of manly strength and tenderness. "Jorge Bolet Live at Carnegie Hall" (RCA Victor 7710) contains much of his 1974 recital—the Bach—Busoni Chaconne, the Chopin Preludes, and the Wagner—Liszt Tannhäuser Overture. It is a major recorded document. The two Liszt recordings that RCA released in the early 1970's are now on the Dutch label Ensayo, and Allegro Imports (1-800-288-2007) keeps them in stock. The one of the Transcendental Etudes (Ensayo 3401) is treasurable—listen to Ricordanza!—but still more treasurable is "The Virtuoso Piano Paraphrases" (3406). It contains the ones of Rigoletto and Lucia, the first pieces I heard Bolet play.

The music world has not been the same since Callas died, and I expect to miss Bolet as long as I live. I don't know whether I've accumulated enough merit in this life to deserve a ticket to Heaven. They say it's a musical place, but I'm not so big on harps and church choirs. I'd want to spend eternity in a place where I could always hear Callas and Bolet.
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