

solid beat in the swinging numbers, too. The stereo sound is agreeably warm and well balanced, and the channel separation is not overaccentuated.

**"Yesterday's Hits, Today's Classics, Tomorrow's Hi-Fi."** George Liberace and His Orchestra. Carlton 12100, \$3.98 (LP); STLP 12100, \$4.98 (SD).

The Liberace orchestra here weaves its way through a program of items that all qualify for the first third of this triple-titled recording. I doubt, however, that even the most ardent admirers of *Roses of Picardy*, *Wonderbar*, and *Will You Remember* would consider them to be "Today's Classics." The Richard Hayman arrangements lean heavily towards the strings, with an occasional interpolation of the accordion; and the performances often sound a little tight, though this may be the fault of the razor-sharp quality of the Carlton sound. I found it extremely difficult to bring the strings into proper focus. The monophonic version was slightly less prone to this fault than the stereo. JOHN F. INDOX

## Foreign Flavor

**"L'Air de Paris."** Jacqueline François; Orchestra. Columbia CL 1200, \$3.98 (LP).

Smooth, sophisticated vocalise from the finest chanteuse of present-day Paris. It is now more than ten years since Mlle. François cut her famous recording of *La Seine*—a Grand Prix du Disque winner—and the decade has enriched both her voice and her style. With the exception of the folklike *Chant des Moissons*, the selections on this disc are in the mood of suave sadness where she is at her best. No boulevardier should be without this one.

**"Continental Visa."** Raoul Meynard and Orchestra. Warner Bros. BS 1215, \$5.98 (SD).

Warner Brothers should, in all justice, send their annotator to the Continent. "And when you were across town in Montparnasse," he gushes of Paris, "surrounded by artists and writers at *La Coupole*, was it *Autumn Leaves* being sung by that misty-eyed chanteuse?" Well, *mes frères*, it's *La Coupole*, and no chanteuse has ever graced its terrace: in fact, the only voice you are likely to hear there is one raising hell over the addition.

The musical front fares better. Maestro Meynard and his men are evocative, if not breathtaking, in an excellent group of melodies such as *April in Portugal*, *The Third Man Theme*, and *Delicado*. Stereo definition, depth, and channel separation are of the highest order.

**"Die Engelkinder from Tyrol."** Die Engelkinder and Engel Family. Vox VX 25650, \$3.98 (LP); STVX 25650, \$4.98 (SD).

Like the Trapp Family, whom they closely resemble in their musical approach, the seven Engel children and their parents are gifted both as instru-



Family gathering: the Engels from Tyrol.

mentalists and vocalists. While they acquit themselves nobly in the art songs that they essay, their great affinity is for the folk melodies of their native Tyrol, generously represented on the present release. *In die Berg bin I Gern*, for instance, is a thing of plastic beauty in their hands. The Engel art is rather intimate and small-scale. As a result, in purely musical terms, the stereo version has no advantage over the monophonic, particularly in view of the latter's sonic excellence.

**"Fiesta Tropical."** Bettini and His Orchestra; Singers. Vox VX 25690, \$3.98 (LP); STVX 25690, \$4.98 (SD).

Solidly focused on carnival time in Rio de Janeiro, Bettini unfolds a lush panorama of Latin favorites. His interpretations, distinguished by a controlled languor, provide a happy and listenable contrast to the *freuci* that generally grips South American maestros in the presence of such music. Fine monophonic sound, but the stereo disc, with channels neatly separated, offers the same in a brighter, broader setting.

**"The Girl from Budapest."** Erwin Halletz and His Orchestra. Decca DL 8797, \$3.98 (LP).

The only female figuring in *The Girl from Budapest* is she who graces the album sleeve in four colors. Erwin Halletz and his ungypsylike musicians thrum persuasive and—in bland, cosmopolitan fashion—attractive arrangements of standard Hungarian popular fare. The general run of selections is familiar but unbackneyed, and the engineering is superb.

**"The Gypsy Wanderlust."** The Phantom Gypsies. Everest LPBR 5012, \$3.98 (LP); SDBR 1012, \$5.98 (SD).

The Phantom Gypsy who leads his phantom colleagues of this string assemblage has elected to conceal his identity—unfortunately, for the mystery man is a first-class fiddler who makes his way through *Dark Eyes*, *Two Guitars*, *Hora Staccato*, etc. with genuine beauty. In fact, he brings new colors and new shadings to this cruelly overworked genre, making the tunes once more fresh and lilting. The monophonic sound is clear, precise, full-bodied. Stereo spreads the music across a broader stage, but I found the monophonic disc somewhat richer in sound.

**"Jungle Echoes."** Chaino and His African Percussion Safari. Omega OSL 7, \$5.95 (SD).

Chaino, a Central African native now improbably domiciled in Philadelphia, moves to the head of the percussion class with this virtuoso performance on a battery of timpani. His repertoire—scored to screams, bellows, pants, grunts, and an occasional chant—is another matter. The shrieks of the tormented victim of *Torture of the Mau Mau* and the baritone and soprano gasps (meticulously channeled through different speakers) of a native and his mate fleeing a lion in *The Jungle Chase* may or may not spell entertainment to you. I, for one, was not regaled. Still, Chaino is a gifted performer; his less orgiastic *Jungle Drum Variations* is an enthralling essay on African rhythm. Omega's crisply articulated stereo sound provides a brilliant sonic frame.

**"The Magic Carpet."** Music of the Middle East, Vol. IV. Mohammed El-Bakkar and His Oriental Ensemble. Audio Fidelity AFLP 1895, \$5.95 (LP); AFSD 5895, \$6.95 (SD).

With this recording composer Bakkar offers a dozen songs smacking of the Middle East. While he preserves the intense emotional pitch and flashing rhythm characteristic of Arabic song, he also recognizes the inroads being made in the traditional musical forms by Western influences: as proof he offers an eyebrow raiser called *Cha Cha Pharonic*, or *Cha Cha of the Pharaoh*, that is pure fun. Vocalist Bakkar, on the monophonic version, seems somewhat distant from the mike, and even his most strenuous efforts are shaded by those of his cohorts. This flaw is less pronounced in the richer, fuller-sounding stereo disc.

**"Mexico: Its Sounds and People."** Capitol T 10185, \$3.98 (LP).

This release embodies the usual virtues and defects of similar documentaries. There is both nostalgia and charm in the voices of women selling *tacos*, Mexican schoolchildren at their English lesson, the bittersweet strains of a *cilindro*, or street organ. But some of the sequences are drawn out to painful lengths, and others demand an undue knowledge of colloquial Spanish. For example, a long transcription (in Spanish) from a broadcast describing an international football game is clearly lost on the average gringo. In the same vein we are treated to another transcription (in Spanish) of a beginning-to-end account of a single bullfight. Even the two ears awarded the matador is small compensation to the non-Spanish-speaking listener.

Capitol merits only half an ear for this disc, but I fancy that those who have visited *Distrito Federal* will probably find it irresistible.

**"The Oud."** Aram Arakelian Ensemble. Carlton LP 12109, \$3.98 (LP); STLP 12109, \$4.98 (SD).

The oud is a twelve-stringed, guitarlike instrument whose origins are lost in Near Eastern antiquity. Although oud soloist