

4 TRACK CLASSICS

▲ **GERSHWIN**—Rhapsody in Blue; An American in Paris. Warner Bros. Orchestra, Heindorf cond. with Bert Sheffer (piano). Warner Bros. BST 1234 \$7.95

Interest: Gershwin masterworks
Performance: Glittering, cold
Recording: Ice-clear
Stereo Directionality: Razor-like division
Stereo Depth: Quite close-up

This Warner Bros. release on four-track stereo tape is brilliantly engineered and played carefully, perfectly—and coldly. The liner boasts that in the opinion of Warner Bros. this release is "the definitive recording" of the famous pairing; and while it is good and competent, it is also too slick, too proper, too impeccable. What is missing is spontaneity, vitality, energy. The conductor has read both scores as though he were more interested in precision and ensemble perfection than in breathing life into the music. Sheffer is a routine performer, who certainly does not possess the talent of Katchen (London) or List (Mercury). Still in all, he plays the *Rhapsody* with skill, if not much imagination. *American in Paris* has received a much more muscular performance on Mercury with Dorati conducting the Minneapolis ensemble, and Gould on RCA Victor gets a great deal more out of the score too. J. T.

▲ **SHOSTAKOVICH**—Symphony No. 5, Op. 47. The Stadium Symphony Orchestra of New York, Leopold Stokowski cond. Everest STBR 43010 \$7.95

Interest: 20th century masterpiece
Performance: Uneven
Recording: Good, not super
Stereo Directionality: Well spread
Stereo Depth: Excellent

Leopold Stokowski has a magical way with music of the type encountered in the Shostakovich *Fifth Symphony*. The inherent drama of the work, the suspenseful pages of the first and third movements, is given a special luminosity under his direction that no other conductor can quite match. Where the reading is weak is in the Scherzo and Finale. The former is too heavy-handed, while the opening and closing pages of the cyclonic last movement sound turgid instead of brilliant. It is surprising that Stokowski would allow the sound of percussion in the fierce opening measures of the last section to be buried, for the timpani give the whole movement its essential momentum. However, in the rhapsodic song of the Largo, Stokowski is matchless. He can make string bodies give forth an unearthly "color" and his penchant for the long-line is very evident throughout. As to the over-all engineer-

ing, there are moments of high-frequency distortion in climactic bars of the first and last movements as tested on two tape decks). But otherwise all is top-quality sound. J. T.

4 TR. ENTERTAINMENT

▲ **A TOAST TO TOMMY DORSEY**—BAY BIG BAND. Opus No. 1; Daybreak; Love For Sale; Hawaiian War Chant; I'll Never Smile Again (Lowe); On the Sunny Side of the Street; Morie; Daybreak Special & 12 others. Omega ST 4006 \$9.95

Interest: Dorsey delectables
Performance: Sizzling
Recording: Exciting
Stereo Directionality: Sharply divided
Stereo Depth: Close miking

One of several tapes featuring the "sound" of the Dorsey tradition as produced by Omegatapes, this one has all the strong beat and sizzling brass sound associated with the Dorsey style, but it is somewhat weak in its arrangements. The Sy Oliver numbers come off much the best, and the treatment accorded "Yes, Indeed" is worth the price of the whole package.

The vocal department deserves another demerit. It takes a better group than this, or at least better vocal writing, to compete with the charged emotion of the band. Of the eighteen numbers, all brilliantly recorded, "Daybreak Special," "This Love of Mine," and "Sentimental Over You," as well as the aforementioned "Yes, Indeed," lift the tape above the merely excellent class and put it into a superior bracket. The four-track production is free from "crosstalk" and the sound is solid. J. T.

▲ **SWING LOW GREAT CLARINET**—BAY BIG BAND. Begin the Beguine; Dancing in the Dark; Temptation; 'S Wonderful; Stardust; Frenesi; Wang Wang Blues; I Found a New Baby; Airmail Special & 11 others. Omega ST 4008 \$9.95

Interest: Irresistible tunes
Performance: "Groovy"
Recording: Top quality
Stereo Directionality: Too divided
Stereo Depth: Close-up

Combine nineteen well-known numbers associated with Artie Shaw, Benny Goodman, Eddie Sauter, Ziggy Goodman, Gordon Jenkins, and others, you add the Bay Big Band, include the spice of top grade engineering, shake well, and you come up with an outstanding four-track tape! Here's great musical entertainment, especially in the arrangement and delivery of "Dancing in the Dark," "Stardust," "Moon-glow," and "Jersey Bounce."

The brasses and reeds of the Bay Big Band are wonderful, and so are the strings

when they are treated as accompaniment. This should be required listening for every fan who remembers the great days of Goodman and Shaw, and for those who won't remember but who reap the benefits of a solid tradition. J. T.

▲ **SYMPHONY OF THE SEA; SYMPHONY OF THE BLUES**—The Brussels International Orchestra. Ebb Tide; Harbor Lights; How Deep is the Ocean; Sleepy Lagoon; St. Louis Blues; Basin Street Blues & 7 others. Omegatape ST 4009 \$9.95

Interest: Fine old favorites
Performance: "Sea" Symphony fine, "Blues" awful
Stereo Directionality: Divided sharply
Stereo Depth: Good

From "Ebb Tide" to "Chant of the Sea," the Brussels International Orchestra plays neatly and appealingly, with an amusingly arranged version of "Asleep in the Deep," and a nostalgic presentation of the last ocean number which turns out to be a two-part invention on "Blow the Man Down" and the "Sailors' Hornpipe."

From that point on, the orchestra is awful. Perhaps the Brusselsmen don't understand American Blues. Or perhaps it was just a bad day for all. At any rate, the difference is so glaring, it doesn't even sound like the same orchestra. If you have no great convictions about Blues tradition and just want a nice, lazy background sound at reduced volume, you can buy this tape and be content with a finely contrived and well-produced first half. J. T.

▲ **LIKE SOMEONE IN LOVE**—ELLA FITZGERALD. There's a Lull in My Life; More Than You Know; I Never Had a Chance; Then I'll Be Tired of You; Like Someone in Love & 9 others. With Frank DeVol and his Orch. Verve VST 4-201 \$7.95

Interest: Nostalgic love calls
Performance: This is the better Fitzgerald
Recording: Excellent
Stereo Directionality: OK
Stereo Depth: Balanced and full

Verve's release of fifteen "love songs" starring Fitzgerald is a great deal better all around than the Rodgers and Hart tape reviewed on p. 116. In the first place, Ella seems much more at home with the mood of this repertoire. In the second place, the orchestra under DeVol provides a much more attractive accompaniment. The lack of a good orchestra in Rodgers and Hart is a prime weakness, but this album's superiority cannot be attributed wholly to the difference in ensemble. It's simply that Fitzgerald puts more of her personality and ability into these selections. Fifteen love songs in one bundle would seem a bit too much, except for those bitten by the bug, but Ella goes through the whole lot with plenty of style. In "More Than You Know" and "We'll Be Together