

JUNE 1981 • \$1.25

Stereo Review[®]

HIGHWAY HI-FI: The Music You Take with You

CAR STEREO

Ivan Berger's Guide for Buyers

NEW AUDIO PRODUCTS

At Las Vegas CES: Car Stereo, Accessories, Headphones, Video

EQUIPMENT TEST REPORTS

- Allison: Six Speaker System
- Audio Pro TP-150 Tuner-Preamplifier and A4-14 Speaker System
- Bang & Olufsen Beogram 8000 Turntable with MMC 20CL Phono Cartridge
- Sansui AU-D11 Integrated Amplifier
- Technics RS-M270X Cassette Deck

DISC SPECIALS

Emmylou Harris • Juice Newton • The Who
Hank Williams, Jr. • Leon Ware • Miles Davis
Willie Nile • Rick Springfield

STRAVINSKY: *A Digital Firebird*

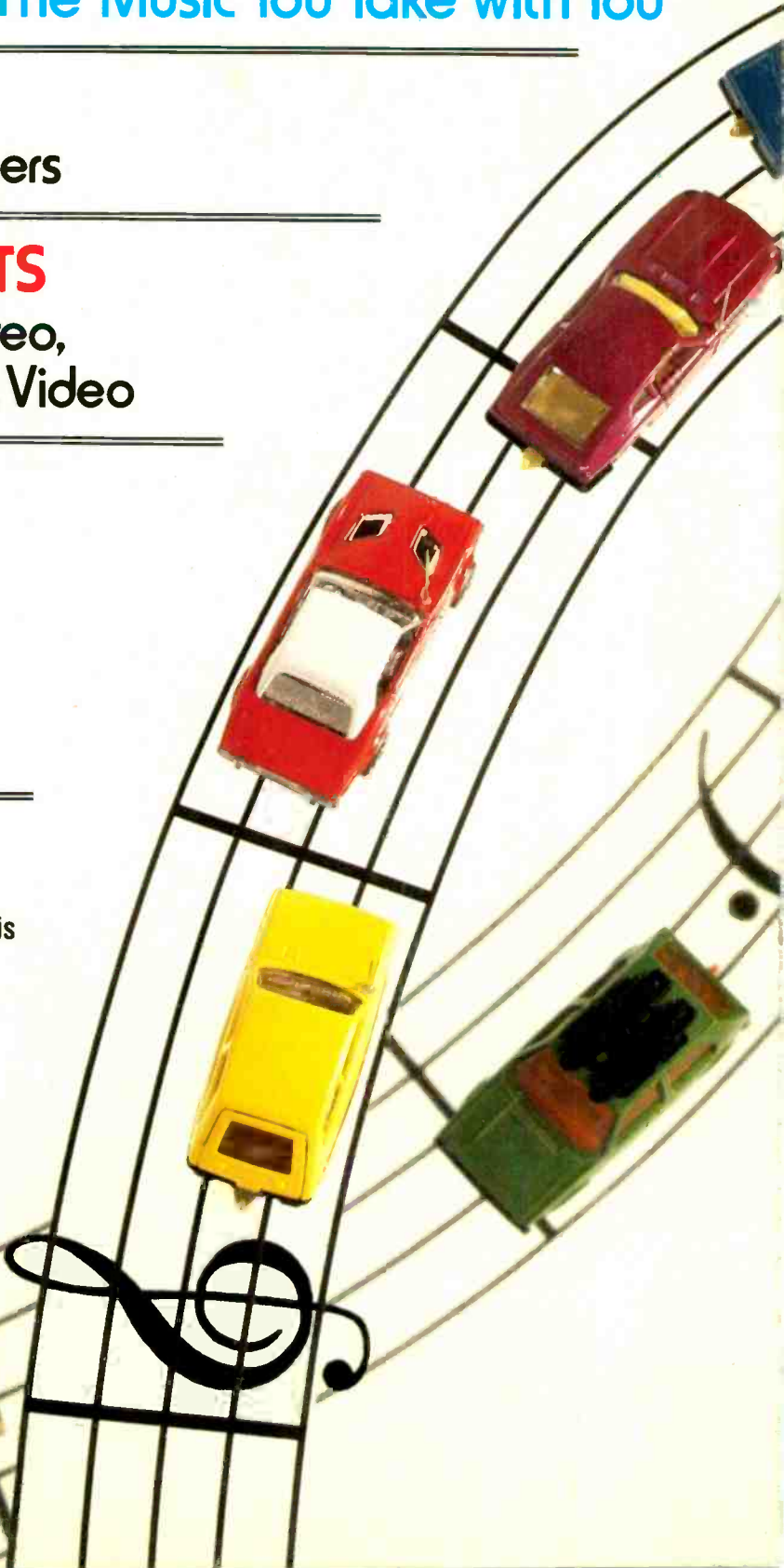
WEBER: *Der Freischütz*

SCHUBERT: *Stabat Mater*

BACH: *The Partitas*



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graphite cone.



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At Pioneer we've developed our new HPM speakers with Polymer Graphite cones instead of paper. This new material sets new lows in speaker distortion and new highs in speaker technology.

What good are low distortion components when you have high distortion speakers.

Most people believe that to get the most out of a recording all they need is components that give them the least amount of distortion.

But expensive components mean little when attached to conventional speakers. Even components with an amazingly low level of distortion can't be appreciated when you're listening to them on speakers that most likely have ten times the amount.

So Pioneer engineers created Polymer Graphite, a new speaker cone material that gives you up to three times less distortion than paper.

Polymer Graphite reproduces sound. Paper and metal create it.

The perfect cone material should be rigid enough to significantly reduce distortion. It should be lightweight. And high in internal loss. So it sustains no vibrations and allows no artificial coloring to your music.

Unfortunately, these three attributes are not commonly found in any one speaker.

Paper cones are not rigid enough to keep from flexing. They tend to break up at high listening levels. As they alter their shape, they alter your music. What's more, over the years, their performance can deteriorate.

Metal cones, on the other hand are rigid enough to lower distortion. And can be light enough for quick response. Unfortunately they tend to ring and add their sound to your music.

Pioneer's new HPM speakers have woofer, tweeter and midrange made of Polymer Graphite.

Because Polymer Graphite is rigid, the wave that comes out of your speaker cone is virtually identical to the signal that went into it.

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And because it's acoustically dead you'll hear nothing more and nothing less than music the way it was intended to be heard.

But that's not all. Pioneer's new HPM Polymer Graphite speakers have a horn loaded, High Polymer supertweeter that expands frequency response an additional octave to 50,000 hertz. A computer designed bass reflex cabinet. And much more.

So if you're in the market for high fidelity speakers, you can buy a paper speaker and get kazoo technology. Or you can buy a Polymer Graphite speaker and get Pioneer technology.

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We bring it back alive.

CIRCLE NO. 62 ON READER SERVICE PAGE



Pioneer

Conventional
kazoo has
paper
cone.



**WHAT'S GOOD
FOR A KAZOO
IS BAD FOR
A SPEAKER.**





Conventional
speaker has paper cone.



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Stereo Review®

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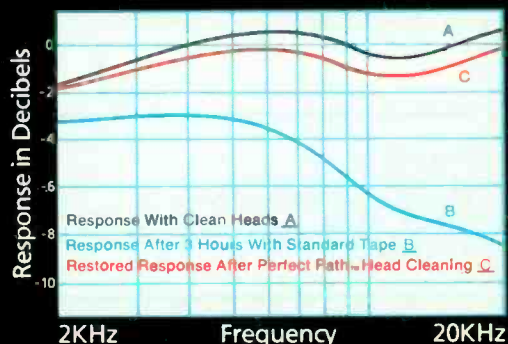
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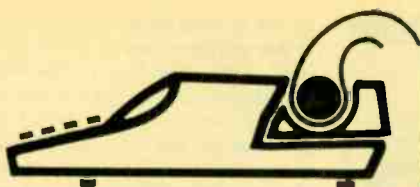


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CIRCLE NO. 21 ON READER SERVICE CARD



Edited by William Livingstone

- **N.A.B. URGES U.S. TO OPPOSE 9 KHZ.**
On behalf of its nearly 4,800 member stations, the National Association of Broadcasters has urged the government of the United States to join Canada in supporting retention of 10-kHz spacing between radio stations on the AM dial. According to N.A.B. president Vincent Wasilewski, reducing the spacing to 9 kHz is not in the public interest and U.S. government officials who favor it adopted the position without adequate study. In announcing Canada's support of retaining 10 kHz, Communications Minister Francis Fox said, "...the financial costs and operational disruptions that would result from conversion outweigh the benefits." The matter is to be voted on by all nations in the Americas in November of this year at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- **THE FIFTH ANNUAL SONGWRITER EXPO** will be held at Beverly Hills High School in Los Angeles on June 6 and 7. Industry professionals and established songwriters will teach classes on the art, craft, and business of writing songs. Subjects of panel discussions include country, pop, and religious music, how to make and sell your own record, and contract negotiations with publishers and record companies. The expo is sponsored by BMI, and college credit for attending it is granted by some schools. For information write to L.A. Songwriters Showcase, 6772 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood, Calif. 90028, or call (213) 462-1382.
- **VIOLINIST ISAAC STERN TURNED SIXTY** on July 21, 1980, with celebrations that spanned three continents and went on well into 1981. As president of Carnegie Hall, Stern announced that Exxon is contributing funding for a series of Festival Concerts there from May 28 to June 11. Stephen Stamas, an Exxon vice president, commented that Exxon will have its one-hundredth anniversary next year and will turn to Stern for advice on how to celebrate a birthday so well and so extensively. Said Stern: "Better oily than late." For a review of the CBS recording of Stern's birthday concert see page 132.
- **ARISTA ENTERS THE CLASSICAL MARKET** this month with the release of twenty to thirty classical albums produced in Germany by the label's parent company Ariola-Eurodisc, an arm of Bertelsmann Verlag, which is one of the world's largest communications conglomerates. The new line, due in stores in June, will retail for \$9.98 a disc.
- **THE NEW YORK CITY OPERA COMPANY'S** spring season will be broadcast on National Public Radio stations on thirteen Saturdays beginning June 6. The repertoire includes such standard fare as Puccini's Madama Butterfly and La Bohème and Mozart's Don Giovanni plus many seldom-heard works including Verdi's Attila, Bizet's Pearl Fishers, Thea Musgrave's Mary Queen of Scots, and Prokofiev's Love for Three Oranges. Check local NPR stations for time.
- **FOGERTY'S BACK AND ASYLUM'S GOT HIM!** After a six-year hiatus, John Fogerty, creative mainstay of the much-missed, chart-topping Creedence Clearwater Revival, will deliver a solo album to Asylum this year. Fogerty's timing is impeccable: his former band has a current hit album, and cover versions of his Creedence tunes are springing up all over. Emmylou Harris has just done Bad Moon Risin' and Rick Nelson, the Searchers, and Dave Edmunds have all just remade Almost Saturday Night. Edmunds' version is a hit in England.
- **A DIMITRI MITROPOULOS CONCERT ALBUM** is the first of a series of historic recordings to be issued annually by the New York Philharmonic. A two-disc set, the album contains Strauss' Death and Transfiguration and Mahler's Symphony No. 5 in performances by the Philharmonic and Mitropoulos that have not been released before. The Strauss dates from 1956, the Mahler from 1960. The set was created as a premium in the orchestra's Radiothon fund-raising drive in April, but it will continue to be available by mail from: New York Philharmonic Album, Avery Fisher Hall, 132 West 65th Street, New York, N.Y. 10023. Price: \$22 postpaid. The album is not sold in stores.

Speaking of Music...

By William Anderson



FAME

WINNER of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Best Song award for the year 1980 was *Fame* (from the movie of the same name), a stirring little hymn to immortality (show-biz division) whose uninhibited lyrics ("I'm gonna live forever/Baby, remember my name") offer perhaps more insight into the matter than we really have need of. Though the clumsier, Pal Joey-ish manifestations of the lust for fame may be pathetic, embarrassing, or worse, the way in which individual performers handle this universal human impulse has a lot to do with the quality of our entertainment. Take, for example, Dame Joan Sutherland, Marilyn Horne, and Luciano Pavarotti, three outstanding candidates for anybody's vocal Pantheon, who appeared in concert at New York's Avery Fisher Hall

(and on many of the nation's TV screens) March 23 in the Great Performers at Lincoln Center Series. Dame Joan, after better than twenty-five years of singing professionally, has come to terms with Fame—has, in fact, made it a mere ornament of a serene artistic domesticity. Her struggles behind her, she looks out from her seat on Parnassus secure and unruffled, a gracious *prima donna assoluta*. Time has naturally tempered the startling vocal prodigality of a decade or so ago, but prudent, musicianly management of a still glorious instrument guarantees audiences that all vocal challenges will be thrillingly, unstintingly met.

Marilyn Horne gives the impression, in her brisk platform demeanor at least, that she is indifferent to Fame. She would have to be a paragon of saintly humility, howev-

er, not to have been affected by the response to her performance of the aria "Mura Felice" (from Rossini's *La Donna del Lago*) last March: the entire audience surged to its feet as one, with a roar that might have punched out the rear wall of the house had it not been anchored in concrete. Miss Horne is incredibly, after a quarter-century before the public, at the very peak of her art, and perhaps a concentration on singing rather than the demands of Fame has something to do with it. Her voice is simply sublime, its surpassing beauty matched by an unexampled musicianship. She has no *bel canto* peer today; it is hard to imagine there has ever been one.

And Luciano Pavarotti? It might reasonably be argued that he has been seduced by Fame to the detriment of his art. Now probably the best-known musical figure in the world, he has become a phoenix too frequently in the process, thrust upon us almost daily on TV talk shows, peddling his autobiography on radio and TV, appearing (rather presumptuously) as a "presenter" on the Academy Awards show, and quite likely singing too much. He seems, in fact, almost in a hurry to get his career over with. It is difficult to say whether vocal resources have been squandered without knowing just what those resources were—and tenor voices are made of fragile stuff anyway—but Pavarotti's singing was the least impressive in the March concert. The famous *piano* became a croon, the controlled thrust of youthful power an undisciplined shout, and there was little left of what was once a kaleidoscope of vocal color. Mightn't a short rest do both singer and audience a world of good?

Signs of the times: Everyone I queried about the broadcast told me they *watched* on TV but *listened* to the FM simulcast through their stereo systems. The Era of Shared Hardware is already upon us. □

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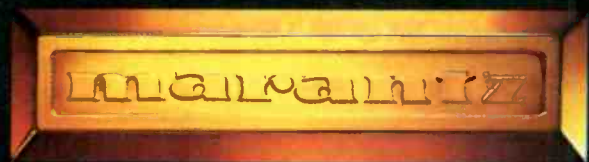
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stereo TV

● As a STEREO REVIEW reader of many years, and an ex-broadcaster, I was more than delighted to read the "Stereo TV" articles in the April issue. This is popular technical journalism at its best, and I only wish you could insist on this kind of hard-hitting, factual news reporting from your contributors in the *audio* field. I know there is the usual long time lag, with a monthly magazine, from event to delivery, but the April video articles showed that it can be done. You are going to need all the means you can gather to get through these difficult transition days from pure audio to audio/video. But you are already 'way out front and, in my opinion, moving in the right direction at the right pace.

GUSTAV GENSCHOW
Montreal, Quebec

Basic Repertoire

● I would like to see the following monthly series in STEREO REVIEW:

- Great Composers and/or
- Great Works and/or
- Great Conductors, etc.

When the series is done, offer it in pamphlet form. Do it!

THOMAS J. ANSELMO
Wharton, N.J.

We did. It's called The Basic Repertoire, and it's now available in its 1981 edition (the seventeenth, by the way). See page 114 for ordering information.

Rodriguez Fan

● I enjoy STEREO REVIEW very much and appreciate the balance of the contents. I'm also an avid fan of Charles Rodriguez, having first enjoyed his work in *Playboy*. I have cut out almost a hundred of his cartoons from STEREO REVIEW, and only once did I find two of them printed back to back. Nearly always they're backed by advertisements. Could it be that your layout department also consists of Rodriguez fans?

I would also like to thank Julian Hirsch for his slaughter of some of the sacred cows of "salon" audio. I'm sure that some of his "Technical Talk" columns have caused consternation in a few quarters.

HOWARD FRY
Huntsville, Ala.

Don McLean

● Thank you for the very appropriate and fitting April "Best of the Month" review of Don McLean's latest album, "Chain Lightning." Peter Reilly's article paid proper homage to a truly great artist. However, I was surprised to see Buddy Holly's *It Doesn't Matter Anymore* attributed to Paul Anka. I must really be getting old when music reviewers start making such trivial mistakes.

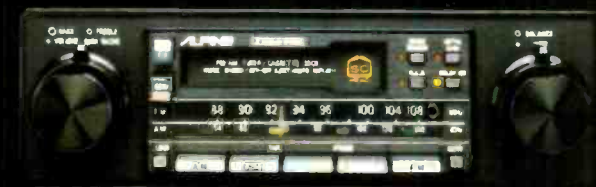
JERRY M. HOSMER
Sikeston, Mo.

Popular Music Editor Paulette Weiss replies: It Doesn't Matter Anymore was written for Holly by a very young Paul Anka. Anka was on Holly's last tour and, as a junior member of the show, was assigned to a bus instead of to the plane that crashed and took Holly's life.

Aaron Copland

● Eric Salzman's article on our Aaron Copland in the February issue was great; however, the photograph by Ebet Roberts said as much and as well. This is the photograph of the composer of *Appalachian Spring*. (Please, Columbia Records, grab this one for a cover.) I owe a lot of respect to a man who can capture the essence of a day in my life when I'll open my front door and say, "Oh God, look at this day"—and automatically know that the *only* music to hear is the Copland of the *Spring* or of *Rodeo* in the summer or *The Red Pony* in the fall. (I have not, as yet, known him to be a part of the winter. Only Vaughan Williams has been, to me, the composer of the misty, foggy, cold, and rainy day.) Your photograph

(Continued on page 10)



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is a perfect manifestation of the man with the communications of, and from, nature, and I wish to say thank you to him for being kind enough to write it down for us to hear again and again.

JAMES K. MAASKE
Los Angeles, Calif.

Digital Primer

● Thank you for "Digital Audio: A Primer" in the February issue. This is the finest article I can recall in *STEREO REVIEW*, and I've been a subscriber for eleven years (remember *Hi-Fi and Stereo Review*?). Please keep the serious audio (and video) articles

coming. I don't need to read about music personalities, but I do appreciate the hard technical stuff.

ANDREW POLON
New York, N.Y.

Firebrand on Disc

● Regarding Peter Reilly's reply to Donald E. Clark's April letter about Weill's *Firebrand of Florence*: besides the Lotte Lenya recording of one song from the show that Mr. Reilly mentioned, there was a two-record set, "Ira Gershwin Loves to Rhyme," issued by Mark 56 Records in 1975 (#721) that contains transfers from

the fragile acetate originals of demo recordings from Ira Gershwin's private collection. Nine cuts are from *Firebrand*, with Gershwin doing the vocals and Kurt Weill himself on piano. (Also on the album are demos from the films *Where Do We Go from Here?* and *Give a Girl a Break*.) And on Ben Bagley's "Ira Gershwin Revisited" (Painted Smiles PS-1353), Charles Rydell sings *A Rhyme for Angels* from the show.

DAVID HUMMEL
Grawn, Mich.

Another Columbus

● For the record (see May "Letters"), the Christopher Columbus story was also musicalized by Meredith Willson (composer-lyricist of *The Music Man*). Titled *1491* and starring John Cullum and Jean Fenn, the musical bombed in Los Angeles in 1969.

DAVID R. KEHS
Waltham, Mass.

Mike Lipskin

● I want to point out a small error in Joel Vance's April review of the Waller/Johnson disc by the Smithsonian Jazz Repertory Ensemble. Mike Lipskin *did* record Johnson's *Snowy Morning Blues*, once for Flying Dutchman (FD-10140) in 1971 and then for Eubie Blake Music (#8) in 1974.

CHARLES B. DAVIS JR.
Midway Park, N.C.

Looking Backward

● All I can say regarding the March "Bulletin" item on record and tape sales losses due to home taping is goody, goody! In the 1890s John Philip Sousa refused to record his band and told Thomas Edison that recordings would be a disaster for the professional musician. How prophetic! These parasitical recording companies and the radio stations that spin the recordings have displaced thousands and thousands of competent professional performers. Musicians were some of the very first to be displaced by technology. May tapes and home recorders bankrupt the whole bunch! Then maybe when people want to listen to music they will have to buy it from live performers. If this is reactionary, so be it!

LOWELL LITTLE
Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

Well, it is a point of view.

Furtwängler Society

● It may be of interest to some readers of *STEREO REVIEW* to know that a worldwide Wilhelm Furtwängler Society was founded in 1973. We average four newsletters annually, usually with two to four supplements and occasionally a picture of the conductor, and are currently preparing our twenty-fifth issue. Membership costs \$10 per year.

HANS A. ILLING, *President*
Wilhelm Furtwängler Society
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Los Angeles, Calif. 90045

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TEAC.



V-9 3-Motor Cassette Deck

New Products latest audio equipment and accessories



**Audio-Technica's
Lightweight Phones**

□ Audio-Technica's ATH-0.3 ("Point 3," left) and ATH-0.5 ("Point 5") headphones have been designed for portability and fatigue-free listening at home. Suitable for use with low-power portable radios and tape players while jogging, biking, and skiing, both units employ samarium-cobalt magnets, which make possible lightweight drivers with high sensitivity. A polyester-film diaphragm (0.00063 inches thick) is said to improve frequency response while maintaining low distortion. A unique pivot system permits easy adjustment to any head size without the use of slide-bar-type headbands. Frequency response for the Point 3 is given as 30 to 20,000 Hz; for the Point 5 it is 25 to 20,000 Hz. At 1,000 Hz, a 1-milliwatt input will generate a 100-dB sound-pressure level. Matching impedance is 4 to 16 ohms. Weight is 1.9 ounces. Prices: Point 3, \$49.95; Point 5, \$79.95.

Circle 120 on reader service card



**Sony Cartridge with
Diamond Cantilever**

□ Said to be the first cartridge incorporating an integrated stylus-cantilever cut by a laser from one diamond, the Sony XL-88D moving-coil unit features a new magnetic circuit using a high-energy samarium-cobalt magnet. For low distortion the moving coil is wound in a figure-eight shape.

Output with a 5-centimeters-per-second groove velocity at 1 kHz is 0.4 millivolt; frequency response is 10 to 50,000 Hz. Channel separation at 1 kHz is greater than 33 dB; channel balance is better than 1 dB. Compliance at 100 Hz is 20×10^{-6} centimeters per dyne. Recommended tracking force is 1.5 grams. Price: \$1,000.

Circle 121 on reader service card



**All-in-one Mitsubishi
Audio System**

□ Mitsubishi's X-10 Interplay System combines a vertical straight-line-tracking turntable, a two-head cassette deck, an amplifier, and an AM/FM tuner with six station presets. The belt-driven turntable clamps the record firmly in position. Speed and disc size are automatically selected. All automatic and cueing functions are fully electronic. Rated wow and flutter is 0.06 per cent (wrms), and the turntable's signal-to-noise ratio (S/N) is 66 dB (DIN B).

The cassette deck has a music-program selection system that operates with pauses in the recorded program. Other features include Dolby-B noise reduction, timer actuation, soft-touch controls, and a back-panel switch that shifts the deck's bias oscillator frequency to minimize "whistles" when recording broadcasts. The unit has a wow-and-flutter spec of 0.07 per cent (wrms), a S/N of 64 dB (Dolby circuits on), and a frequency response of 30 to 16,000 Hz (with metal tape).

Rated at 25 watts per channel into 8 ohms from 50 to 20,000 Hz with no more than 0.8 per cent total harmonic distortion, the amplifier section has separate bass and treble controls, fast-acting, self-resetting speaker-protection relays, microphone mixing, and switching for two pairs of loudspeakers. The tuner section offers a mono S/N of 77 dB and a usable sensitivity of

11.2 dB. Price: \$690. An optional cabinet is \$65.

Circle 122 on reader service card



**Magnetic-fluid
Tweeter in Avid
Speaker System**

□ The driver complement of the Avid 232 is a 10-inch woofer, a 2-inch fabric-dome midrange, and a 1-inch fabric-dome tweeter. The tweeter is treated with magnetic fluid for improved power handling. Nominal system impedance is 6 ohms, minimum actual impedance 5 ohms. Minimum recommended amplifier power is 15 watts. Frequency response is given as 45 to 20,000 Hz ± 3 dB. Crossover frequencies are 850 and 5,000 Hz. Distortion is 0.2 to 0.3 per cent at a 90-dB sound-pressure level from 45 to 20,000 Hz. The front panel has midrange and tweeter balance controls along with a tweeter-fuse holder. Cabinet dimensions are 25 x 15 x 10 inches; finish is walnut-grain vinyl over particle board. Weight is 44 pounds. Price: \$275.

Circle 123 on reader service card



**Optonica's
Two-cassette Deck**

□ Optonica's RT-6605 contains two separate tape drives: one with a recording and erase head, the other with a playback head only. The recording section's triple-layer Sendust head has a 3-micrometer gap and a

(Continued on page 14)

TDK CREATES SA-X.

Now you can explore the far reaches of high bias.

TDK has added a new dimension to high bias recording. It's called SA-X.

SA-X emerges from the Super Avilyn technology that has set the reference standard for high bias cassettes. Beyond that, TDK engineers saw new worlds of high bias to explore. By taking two layers of Super Avilyn with different coercivities and optimally matching them, TDK creates a formulation that raises high bias to a higher level. One that approaches the sound quality of metal.

You will hear rock and jazz soar to new heights. Classical, with more of its wide dynamic range. A clarity that even the best bias couldn't give you before. With every kind of music, SA-X brings you closer to the richness of a live performance. And it will keep you there, with its flawless mechanical construction. TDK has given SA-X the Laboratory Standard Mechanism for optimal interfacing with cassette deck heads. You'll hear its consistently superior performance for years to come.

SA-X performs like no other cassette. Expect it to cost a bit more. You can also expect it to take you further into high bias than you've ever been.



The Amazing Music Machine

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Now you can add
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Sonic Holography
to your system
three different ways.



The C-4000 Control Console includes Sonic Hologram Generator, full-function stereo pre-amplifier, time-delay system with built-in 40 watt (total) power amplifier, Autocorrelator System that reduces noise up to 8 dB, a peak limiter/downward expander that nearly doubles dynamic range.



The C-1 combines the Sonic Hologram Generator with a full-function preamplifier.



The C-9 Sonic Hologram Generator allows you to add Sonic Holography to any system, including one with a receiver.

And when you do, you'll hear what these audio experts heard in their systems:

Hal Rodgers, Senior Editor of Popular Electronics: "When the lights were turned out we could almost have sworn that we were in the presence of a real live orchestra."

Julian Hirsch of Hirsch-Houck Labs: "The effect strains credibility—had I not experienced it, I probably would not believe it... the 'miracle' is that it uses only the two normal front speakers."

Larry Klein, Technical Director of Stereo Review: "... it brings the listener substantially closer to that elusive sonic illusion of being in the presence of a live performance."

High Fidelity put it this way: "... seems to open a curtain and reveal a deployment of musical forces extending behind, between and beyond the speakers... terrific."

And now, whatever components you own, you can hear what all the audio experts have heard and acclaimed: Sonic Holography by Carver.

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specially designed recording amplifier. The playback-head gap is 0.8 micrometer to ensure good high-frequency response. Other features include an output-level control, a peak/peak-hold display, a four-position tape-type selector, bias adjustment, two sets of Dolby noise-reduction circuits, metal-tape capability, and timer-standby mechanisms. A single control puts both tapes in motion. Wow and flutter is rated as 0.045 per cent (wrms), frequency response 20 to 21,000 Hz with metal tape. Price: \$550.

Circle 124 on reader service card



Receiver/Cassette Unit with Digital Readout from Sanyo

□ Featuring a digital frequency display that doubles as a quartz clock, Sanyo's FTC 12 AM/FM receiver and cassette-player unit for the car also incorporates an FET FM-tuner front end, local/distant switch, separate volume, balance, and tone controls, and tape-play and stereo-FM indicators. The cassette player has an auto-reverse mechanism as well as locking fast-forward and rewind. The rated power output of the FTC 12 is 4.5 watts per channel. An automatic up/down control for motorized antennas is included. Dimensions are 6 1/4 x 2 x 4 3/4 inches. Price: \$149.95.

Circle 125 on reader service card



Teac's Modular Mixing System for Home Recordists

□ The Teac Tascam System 20 operates much like an electronic patch bay: the oper-

ator has access to all signals at all important points along the signal path and connections are made with patch cords, not switches. The basic unit in the system is the Master Module (MM-20, center). It has six inputs (including two transformer-isolated microphone inputs), six output lines, and provisions for four-channel monitoring. The PE-20 equalizing unit (right) consists of four channels of parametric equalization. Each channel has two sliding-frequency bands (60 to 1,500 Hz and 1,500 to 8,000 Hz) with a fixed high-frequency control at 10,000 Hz. Each control has a range of ± 12 dB. Additional transformer inputs are available in groups of four with the EX-20 (left). A meter unit (MU-20, center top) completes the system. Prices: MM-20, \$395; PE-20, \$350; EX-20, \$350; MU-20 \$150.

Circle 126 on reader service card

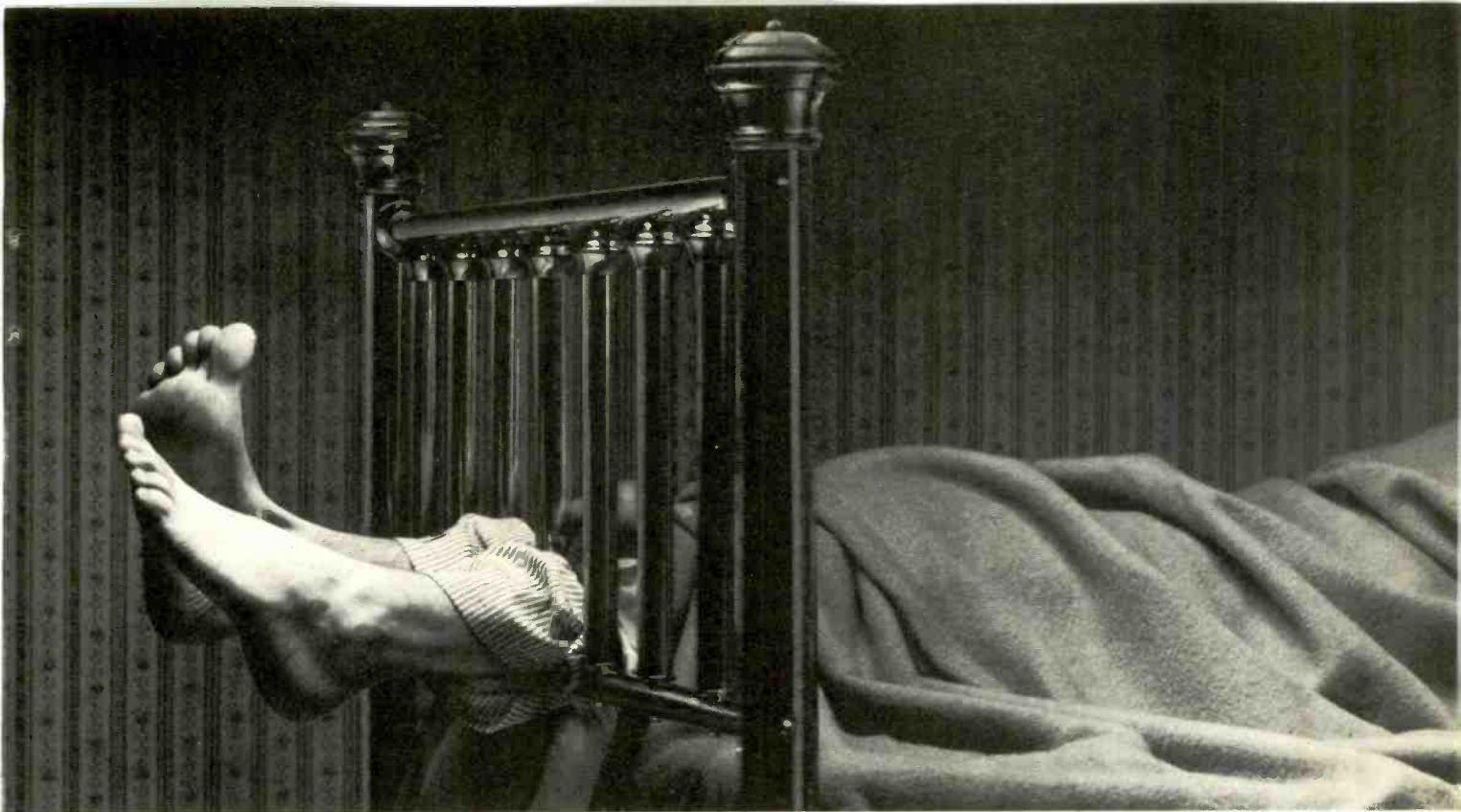


Floor-standing H. H. Scott Speaker

□ The 199T three-way floor-standing acoustic-suspension speaker system from H. H. Scott uses a 12-inch extended-voice-coil woofer, a 4 1/2-inch midrange driver, and a 1-inch wide-dispersion dome tweeter. Crossover frequencies are 800 and 3,500 Hz. The midrange is mounted in a tuned isolation chamber said to eliminate certain speaker-interference effects. The system includes three-position tweeter and midrange attenuation controls. Stated frequency response is 38 to 20,000 Hz ± 4 dB. The speaker will produce a 92-dB sound-pressure level at 1 meter when driven by 1 watt. System impedance is 6 ohms minimum. Recommended minimum amplifier power is 15 watts. Dimensions are 35 x 15 x 11 1/8 inches; weight is 50 pounds. Finish is hickory over particle board. Price: \$330.

Circle 127 on reader service card

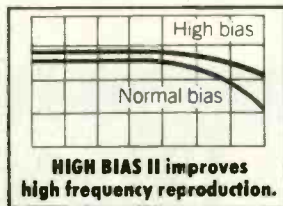
(Continued on page 16)



If you think "high bias" is discrimination against tall people, you're not ready for New Memorex.

High bias tape is specially formulated to deliver remarkably improved sound reproduction, particularly in the higher frequencies.

And no high bias tape does that better than totally new Memorex HIGH BIAS II.



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HIGH BIAS II has 4 to 5 dB lower noise. Which means dramatically reduced tape hiss.

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WE ASK: IS IT LIVE, OR IS IT**

MEMOREX



Realism.



ALLISON: ONE® loudspeakers were used by Diversified Science Labs in reviewing nine "audiophile discs." The reviews were published in a special section of the Winter, 1980 issue of *Stereo* magazine. Here are some excerpts:

"Stereo imaging has excellent width and depth and is rock stable . . . What we

heard was as *real* a piano as we have ever heard on a recording. . . . percussion is crisp and clean and even the triangle stands out clearly in the presence of the full orchestra. Brass is excellent in all registers; cellos and basses are clearly defined. . . . Undoubtedly, this is one of the most sonically thrilling recordings we've ever heard. . . . super-solid kick drum, magnificent transients, scintillating cymbals. . . . contains a truly perfect transcription of the sound of a bass drum. . . . The imaging, dynamics, and accuracy are so perfect that the three musicians seem to be performing in your living room."

These words are from record reviews. But the sounds described were not created by the records alone; they had to be reproduced by loudspeakers before the reviewers could hear them and judge their realism.

The loudspeakers were Allison One systems, with the Electronic Subwoofer™ to extend response flat to 20 Hz.

One reason why Allison® systems reproduce original sounds so accurately is that they have flat bass power response in real rooms. Conventional loudspeaker systems are affected by reflections from room surfaces; Allison Room-Matched® design avoids these effects. A series of technical papers on the room-boundary problem and its solution is available, along with our catalog and other literature, free on request.

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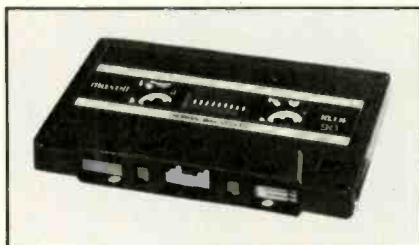
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Maxell's New Improved Cassettes

□ Maxell's new top-of-the-line cassettes, XL I-S and XL II-S, each feature a new epitaxial formulation for greater sensitivity and dynamic range. They also have an improved cassette housing. The XL I-S tape has a 1.5-dB greater dynamic range than its predecessor XL I, and the XL II-S has a 2-dB greater dynamic range than XL II. Both have higher signal-to-noise ratios, wider bias latitudes, lower intermodulation distortion, and lower print-through characteristics. The XL II-S is for use in cassette decks with high bias or CrO₂ bias and equalization; XL I-S is for decks with normal bias and EQ settings. Prices for either type: C-60, \$5.10; C-90, \$6.99.

Circle 128 on reader service card



Onkyo Turntable Has Horizontal Cueing Feature

□ The Onkyo CP-1130F turntable has a microcomputer-controlled tone arm with search and memory functions that can be operated from the front without opening the dust cover. In the search mode the tone arm can be moved back and forth over the record surface for location of selections and accurate cueing. The Memory Repeat feature allows repetition of any part of the record.

The tone arm itself is a straight, low-mass unit with adjustable antiskating and a detachable ADC-type low-mass headshell. The turntable has a brushless direct-drive

motor with electronic-servo speed control. A pitch control can vary the turntable speed by ± 3 per cent. Weighted-rms wow and flutter is given as 0.025 per cent, signal-to-noise ratio as 72 dB (DIN B). Effective arm length is 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches. A cable-connected remote control is available. Dimensions are 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 15 inches. Weight is 13 pounds. Price: \$239.95.

Circle 129 on reader service card



Small Orpheus Speaker Has Passive Radiator

□ The Orpheus S505 speaker uses a long-throw 5-inch woofer with a rear-mounted 5-inch passive radiator and a 1-inch Mylar-dome tweeter. Stated frequency response is 65 to 20,000 Hz ± 3 dB. Crossover frequencies are 125 and 2,000 Hz. The system's nominal impedance is 9 ohms; it will produce an 80-dB sound-pressure level at 1 meter with a 1-watt input. The amplifier-power recommendation is 15 watts per channel minimum. Finished in oiled-walnut veneer, the Orpheus S505 measures 10 x 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 6 inches and weighs 7 pounds. The grille is black cloth. Price: \$325 per pair. Orpheus Loudspeakers, Dept. SR, 87 S. Sixth Street, Locust Valley, N.Y. 11560.



Craig's New Portable Cassette Player

□ Craig's "Soundalong" portable stereo cassette player measures 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches and weighs 17 ounces. Designed for

(Continued on page 18)

SOUND UNLEASHED



You may not realize it, but you've only been listening to music in two dimensions. In fact, owners of the most sophisticated systems utilizing the latest enhancement techniques are also only hearing two-dimensional sound, totally lacking the missing third dimension. Omnisonic Imagery™. Even owners of the most modest stereo systems will recognize the 801 Omnisonic Imager™ as one of the most significant improvements in music reproduction in years. This advance, available after extensive research by Omnisonic in the field of psychoacoustics, is intended to provide the enjoyment and feeling of live musical performance. To vastly upgrade the performance of your stereo system, simply connect the 801 to the tape or preamp input/output jacks and listen to clear, distinct sound images that seem to surround you, even while moving about. In fact, the impact is so great that the sound seems to come from outside the

speaker plane, often overhead and to the rear. Your home virtually becomes a concert hall.

Hearing Is Convincing

To experience the dramatic presence and detail that have been missing from your records, digitally recorded discs, and pre-recorded tapes, take a few of your favorites to an Omnisonic dealer for a demonstration; you are in for a musical delight. And amazingly enough, any tape you record through an Omnisonic Imager will retain the Omnisonic quality when it is played back on a conventional stereo system. The 801 Omnisonic Imager also adds a dimension to FM, monophonic AM and TV sound, with a simple adjustment.

Highway Imagery

The new Imager 801-A™ does for your car stereo what the 801 does for your home music system. It raises the sound from the floor level to the ear level. The variable

imager control allows you to vary the image to any auto environment.

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Join the growing thousands of music listeners who have found it completely affordable to enjoy the delight of Omnisonic Imagery and discover what they had been missing with conventional stereo.

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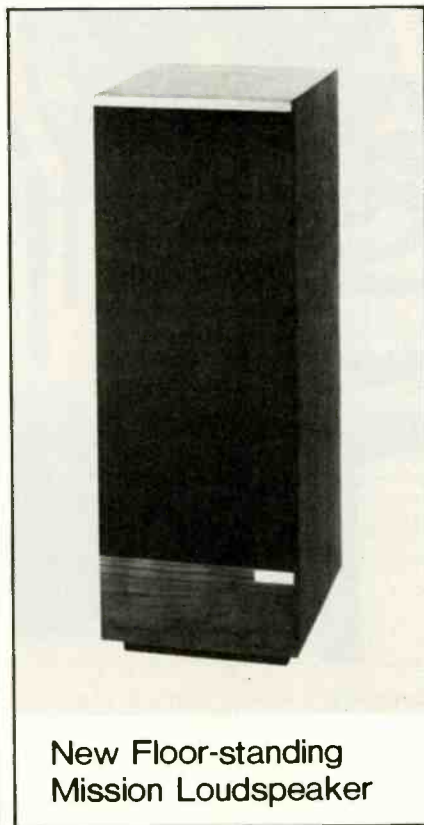
latest audio equipment and accessories

"people on the move," the unit has outputs for two stereo headphones, switchable high/low tone control, separate left and right volume controls, and a built-in condenser microphone for communication between two headphone users. The unit is powered by four AA batteries or by an external source. The Soundalong package contains the player, one set of lightweight headphones, a waist belt with safety strap, adjustable shoulder/neck strap, and a case that can hold three cassettes. Price: \$99.99; extra headphone set, \$24.99.

Circle 130 on reader service card

pounds, finish is walnut. Price per matched pair: \$1,350. Mission Electronics, Dept. SR, 89 Galaxy Boulevard, Rexdale, Ontario, Canada M9W 6A4.

Circle 131 on reader service card



New Floor-standing Mission Loudspeaker

□ Mission Electronics' Mission 730 floor-standing speaker uses a 1-inch soft-dome tweeter, a 4 1/4-inch plastic midrange, and a 10-inch Plastiflex-cone woofer. The tweeter in this system is damped with ferrofluid while the vented bass unit incorporates "dynamic damping" for extended low-frequency response without ringing or doubling. Drivers and crossovers are matched in each pair of speakers.

Frequency response is given as 40 to 20,000 Hz ± 3 dB. Minimum recommended amplifier power is 30 watts per channel; sensitivity is 84 dB sound-pressure level at 1 meter with a 1-watt input. Nominal impedance is 8 ohms. Dimensions are 35 1/2 x 12 1/2 x 12 1/2 inches, weight is 38



Low-frequency Speaker System From Polk Audio

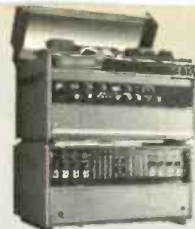
□ Polk's "Reference Monitor" Low-Frequency System (L.F. 14) is an add-on modular bass loudspeaker. A built-in low-pass network allows the L.F. 14 to be added easily to any system either as a single "dual-channel" woofer or as one of a stereo pair of bass modules. The L.F. 14 uses two trilaminate polymer drivers coupled to a massive, low-resonance (16-Hz), 12-inch foam-laminate planar sub-bass passive radiator. When the system is used as a single dual-channel bass module, the stereo signal from each channel is fed to a separate driver. The crossover filter network uses air-core copper coils and can be adjusted for rolloff frequency and efficiency. The system's -3-dB point is 25 Hz. Maximum output at 32 Hz is a 105-dB sound-pressure level. Dimensions are 28 x 16 x 11 1/2 inches. Price: \$279.95.

Circle 132 on reader service card

NOTE: All product descriptions and specifications quoted in these columns are based on materials supplied by the manufacturers, who will respond directly to reader requests for further information.

Domestic inflation and fluctuations in the value of the dollar overseas affect the price of merchandise imported into this country. Please be aware that prices quoted in this issue are therefore subject to change.

- 1939...FIRST DIRECT-DRIVE TURNTABLE SYSTEM.**
- 1951...FIRST MOVING-COIL CARTRIDGE.**
- 1972...FIRST DIGITAL (PCM) RECORDING.**



Direct drive. Moving-coil. Pulse Code Modulation. All synonyms for technological innovation in the high-fidelity field, these phrases fill the pages of the audio magazines and the conversations of serious music enthusiasts. But aside from being major breakthroughs in audio engineering, they have one other element in common. They are all innovations developed by one company. Denon.

While other companies have just begun to offer products incorporating these new technologies, Denon originated them. And only Denon has had 41 years to refine direct-drive turntables, 29 years to perfect moving-coil technology, and almost a decade to further develop their invention of PCM digital recording.



1981... DENON DRA-600. THE FIRST RECEIVER FROM A TRUE AUDIOPHILE COMPANY

The Denon DRA-600, a synthesis of Denon's greatest technological strengths.

From our thirty years of experience with moving-coil cartridges, we gave it a moving-coil preamplifier stage sonically as transparent as our renowned separate head-amps.

From our fifty-plus years of electronics design experience, we powered the DRA-600 with a proprietary Denon Class-A power amp, a design that delivers unparalleled definition and openness, yet avoids the excessive heat, size and cost of traditional Class A amplifiers.

And, from our decade of experience since our invention of commercial digital recording (PCM), we equipped the DRA-600 with a digitally synthesized tuner stage for the most precise station tuning with the lowest distortion. Plus, we added the convenience of eight AM and eight FM presets with automatic station scanning.

Denon. 70 years of audio design experience. An extraordinary history of technological firsts and advances in the state of the high-fidelity art. All embodied in the surprisingly affordable DRA-600. A most important first from Denon, where innovation is a tradition.

CIRCLE NO. 18 ON READER SERVICE CARD

DENON
*Imagine
 what we'll
 do next.*

Denon America, Inc.
 27 Law Drive, Fairfield, N.J. 07006

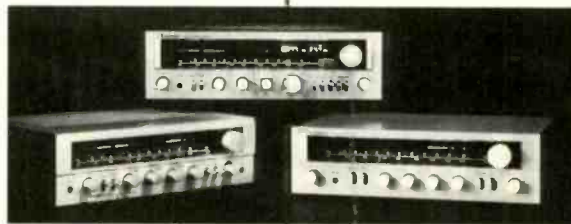


There is a truism in the marketplace that few of us ever question. It says, you get what you pay for. What it really implies is that more is better, but it will cost you, brother.

In the area of high fidelity stereo equipment, that point of view has been raised to dizzying new heights. And somewhere between the state-of-the-art technology and the state-of-shock prices, a sense of value seems to be slipping away.

We're not playing that game at Sherwood.

Our design engineers employ proven advances in technology to produce superb sound. Our marketing department helps keep them on planet earth. It's a philosophy that works. Sherwood equipment has been quietly snapped up by critical listeners for more than twenty-five years.



Changes are not welcome.
Improvements are.

Early this year a panel of scrupulously honest reviewers examined fifteen mid-priced stereo receivers. The results were published in America's leading consumer research magazine. Sherwood was rated #1, ahead of names that are probably more familiar to you. We tell you that reluctantly, because a short time later we discontinued that superb model. And replaced it with the S-8600CP. It's better. It's more

Sherwood: For fuss

powerful, more flexible, and has more finesse. And thankfully the price has barely budged.

The new S-8600CP offers 60 watts RMS per channel with no more than 0.06% total harmonic distortion. It's clean power you can monitor with an eight segment logarithmic LED power output display for each channel.

The pre-amplifier has a discrete FET phono section for better cartridge performance, three position tape monitor and copy switching for two decks, and filters and treble squelch to weed out the undesirable little glitches that pop up in even the best of records.

The FM section is remarkable for its clarity and convenience: 1.7uV usable

sensitivity, 70dB stereo signal-to-noise ratio.

There is

Touch Lock Tuning that senses your touch and automatically fine tunes and locks in your station selection. And a digital display shows the frequencies in 0.1 MHz increments.

The S-8600CP is a statistician's dream. But more importantly, it's for music lovers. Whether your choice is Polonaises or the Pretenders.

We don't brag. We swear.

Most manufacturers spot check a few

receivers along the assembly line.

Sherwood is different. We test each and every one. Then we fine tune it and check it again. And again. Until with the final tweaking we know that every receiver not only meets our published specifications, but in most cases exceeds them. You can tell, because the key test results are recorded on a certificate and affixed to that unit's shipping carton. That's Certified Performance - our guarantee that what you see is what you get.

Now more than ever.

Careful production means limited production. But this year we do offer a greater variety of Sherwood than we have in the past.

In addition to our receivers and separates, there are two superb tuners, three semi-automatic turntables, and three metal capable cassette decks. We also have three new speaker systems, from a two-way bookshelf to a three-way time compensated floor system.

Our apologies in advance.

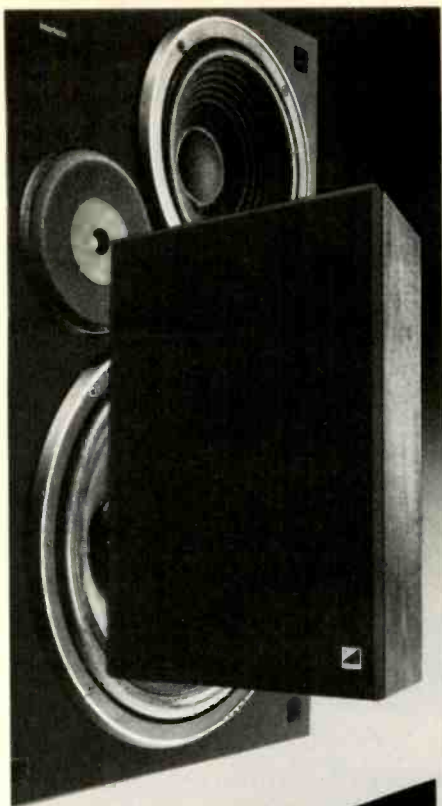
Sherwood just isn't as easy to find as you might like. Well engineered stereo equipment that draws critical praise and remains reasonably priced doesn't hang around on shelves gathering dust.

For the moment, we don't have an acceptable solution. So hurry.



17107 Kingsview Ave, Carson, CA 90746

pots and skinflints.



There is no true accuracy without high efficiency.

The "power war" is over. High-powered receivers and amplifiers are going the way of the "gas guzzler" in this era of energy consciousness and inflation. Yet technological advancements in source material such as direct-to-disc and digitally-mastered recordings demand far more from your system than ever before.

To accurately reproduce this state-of-the-art material you need efficient loudspeakers that literally allow your amplifier to idle during normal listening levels and respond with its rated capabilities only to reproduce the sharp transients and increased dynamic range typical of today's source material.

The Interface: A was designed to answer the high-efficiency challenge. Highly efficient, truly accurate, yet capable of handling a lot of power when necessary, without the sonic coloration found in so many loudspeakers.

Listen to your music the way it was intended. Audition the Interface: A at your nearest Interface dealer.



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Series III

Interface: A

Audio Q. and A.

By Larry Klein

Technical Director Klein checks out an assortment of computer-matched loudspeaker drivers at KEF's British plant.



Ellen Milhan Klein

Dynamic Range

Q. *I recently purchased a "master" recording of "Abbey Road." When I played the album on my system one of the first things I noticed was that the recording level of the album was noticeably lower than that of my regular recording of "Abbey Road." The vinyl was very quiet, but shouldn't the recording level have been higher on the master recording to allow for wider dynamic range?*

THOMAS VITA
Port Chester, N.Y.

A. The average recording level (which is what you are referring to) is not necessarily related to dynamic range, except that anyone attempting to record a very soft musical passage must keep in mind the anticipated level of the disc's background noise. If the background noise is very low, as it is on your new "Abbey Road," then the average recorded level cut into the groove can also be reduced, thus leaving more room for the music to get loud when the score calls for it.

The term "dynamic range" describes the range from the very softest sounds to the very loudest. Obviously, the quieter the soft sounds can be without being buried in surface noise then the greater the possible spread between loud and soft signals. To repeat: dynamic range does not simply describe how loud something is, but rather the spread between soft and loud.

To return to the question, if the overall dynamic range can be expanded downward (as a result of quieter surfaces), then the average recorded signal is logically going to be lower in level also. The result is a wider—and more natural—dynamic range.

Stylus Replacement

Q. *I have been told that when a stylus needs replacement the whole cartridge should be replaced rather than just the stylus—because the magnets in the cartridge undergo magnetic losses that cause the cartridge to perform poorly even with a new stylus. Is this true?*

TONY WALECKA
Glen Burnie, Md.

A. There's a very small grain of truth in the advice you've been given. First of all, many if not most of the cartridges sold today are moving-magnet types in which the magnet is replaced when you replace the stylus. In the other types (induced-magnet, moving-coil, etc.) the magnets are stable enough that one can expect no significant flux losses over any reasonable time period. (Speaker magnets do have a problem since they may be subject to the potentially demagnetizing effects of large voice-coil currents. Cartridge magnets have no equivalent difficulty.)

The grain of truth I referred to has to do simply with the rapid advance of the art of cartridge design. If you have a cartridge more than six or seven years old, a new model may provide enhanced record playback (flatter frequency response and improved tracking ability on demanding recorded passages). On the other hand, a few manufacturers have actually upgraded the performance of their styli over time, and a replacement stylus may provide better overall cartridge performance than the original did. Check this with the manufacturer of your cartridge, not your dealer.

Beginners' Problems

Q. *There are plenty of hi-fi beginners in your audience every month. I rank myself among them, and half the time I do not understand anything that you are writing about. How do you expect us to know what "frequency-synthesized tuning" or "integrated amplifiers" are? Beginners are your future readers, and none of us are mind readers.*

ROGER LASMITH
Philadelphia, Pa.

A. All of us at one time or another have faced the problem of being a beginner, either in a job, in an organization, or in a special-interest hobby such as hi-fi. In respect to a hobby, it is a mistake to believe that any monthly magazine will consistently provide beginners with all the basic information and terminology needed for a full understanding of the field. If we were to try, half of our hi-fi editorial content would

(Continued on page 24)

WITH SOME TAPE YOU CAN'T TELL YOUR BRASS FROM YOUR OBOE.

When the oxide particles on recording tape aren't of a uniform size and shape, you can end up listening to distortion as well as music. The sounds of different instruments get blurred together, and your music loses its clarity.

At Maxell, every inch of our tape is checked and rechecked to make sure the oxide particles are perfectly uniform. Which means when you listen to music on Maxell tape, every instrument will sound perfectly clear.

So if you can't tell your brass from your oboe, try using our tape.



IT'S WORTH IT.

Maxell Corporation of America, 65 Oxford Drive, Mahanoch, N.J. 07074.

CIRCLE NO. 37 ON READER SERVICE CARD

How to get 50% more sound without turning up the volume.

There's a whole range of sound in a live performance that you never hear from your stereo system. And it's not a question of turning up the volume.

The problem is in the records you play.

When recording engineers master a record, they electronically eliminate up to half the music. They literally compress the sound to make it "fit" on the vinyl record.

Fortunately, there's one solution to the problem: dbx Dynamic Range Expanders.

A dbx Dynamic Range Expander in your system restores most of the lost music. And it reduces annoying record surface noise by as much as 20 dB. So instead of a compressed 50 or 60 dB of dynamic range, you get a full 75 to 90 dB. The loud passages begin to thunder. The softs are truly subtle. All your music comes to life.

And you can use a dbx Dynamic Range Expander not only with your records, but also with tapes and FM broadcasts.

Visit your authorized dbx retailer for a demonstration of the 1BX, 2BX and 3BX Dynamic Range Expanders. Then select the model that's best for your system.

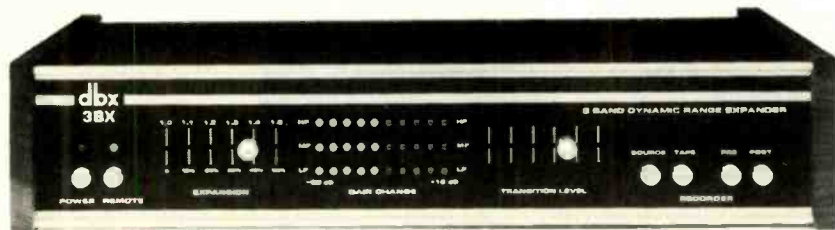
Because there's a lot more to music than has been reaching your ears.

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Making good sound better



CIRCLE NO. 15 ON READER SERVICE CARD

consist of a technical dictionary and the other half would be articles starting "When the electrons revolve around the nucleus . . ." My point is that the basic information Mr. LaSmith is seeking is best found in *books* aimed at the newcomer, *not* in monthly magazines. In general, STEREO REVIEW assumes that the majority of our readers already have some fundamental hi-fi understanding. Our aim is both to broaden that understanding and to introduce, as simply and clearly as possible, new technical concepts as they emerge.

What should a beginner do? Simply read everything that comes his way and, if possible, build a small library of basic reference material. Check the catalogs of TAB Books (Blue Ridge Summit, Pa. 17214), Howard W. Sams and Co. (4300 West 62nd Street, Indianapolis, Ind. 46268), and Gernsback Publications (200 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10003), or send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to STEREO REVIEW, Dept. BB, One Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016 for basic-book suggestions.

EQ Phase Problems?

Q I have read articles in your magazine that support the use of equalizers in improving the sound of a home music system. There was, however, no mention of the phase shift introduced by such devices, which causes a "flattening" of the stereo image and loss of ambiance. When using a good-quality equalizer to correct (by ear) the response of a friend's system, I noted a similar effect. Equalization did enhance the system's frequency response, which outweighed the loss of ambiance, but it was far from a success overall. Is this effect typical of equalizers?

G. WILLIAM MCKINLEY
Bound Brook, N.J.

A I turned Mr. McKinley's comments over to Dan Shanefield, the author of the equalizer articles cited. He responded:

"Side effects such as phase distortion are indeed associated with equalization. However, it must be realized that there already are many, many equalizations incorporated in commercial recordings, so one more corrective action in a home playback system is not going to make things significantly worse. For example, almost all master tapes are made with an equalizer adjusted to please the recording engineer's ears. Then there are the various low-frequency filters applied to remove air-conditioning noise and disc-cutter rumble. The master tape recorder has its own NAB equalization in addition to the usual Dolby-A bandsplitting filters and noise-reduction equalizations, and lastly there is the disc cutter's RIAA pre-emphasis equalization. You might be shocked to see measurements of the amount of phase distortion that each of these adds—and yet, careful scientific tests have shown that these distortions are *not audible* in home listening circumstances!

"'Ambiance,' 'definition,' 'air,' and other such difficult-to-pin-down subjective perceptions are easily influenced by equipment performance variations other than phase distortion. For instance, very slight changes in *frequency response* are frequently heard as changes in 'ambiance,' so it is necessary to be *very* careful when trying to decide which objective phenomenon is responsible for any specific subjective effect." □

Morning Concert



You've driven to the end of the world. Alone.
The engine is still warm.

Amid the roar of the waves and the cries of the gulls, you fire up your mobile high-fidelity system for a morning concert.

What will it be? Bach? Mozart? Perhaps some Keith Jarrett.

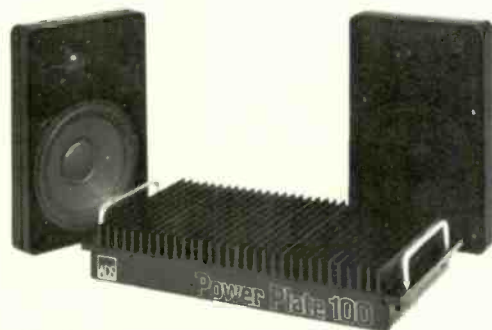
Whatever you choose, your system is equal to the task because you've chosen ADS.

The ADS Power Plate 100 Automotive Amplifier and the ADS 300i Automotive Loudspeaker System deliver the kind of power it takes to be heard above road noise, engine noise, and ocean waves. And it's not just brute power, but power with performance, subtlety and nuance — qualities collectively known as musical accuracy.

Easily the most sophisticated automotive audio components available today, the Power Plate 100 amplifier and 300i speakers are exactly what you'd expect from ADS, the company that literally invented mobile high-fidelity.

To find out more about putting an ADS system in your automobile, write ADS, Department SR23, or call 1-800-824-7888 (California 1-800-852-7777) toll free and ask for Operator 483.

The more time you spend with your automobile, the more you owe it to yourself to listen to ADS.



Audio for the critically demanding

Tape Talk

By Craig Stark



TDK brings two new standards to open reel.

TDK now announces two breakthroughs in open reel. TDK GX Studio Mastering tape: an ultra refined particle lets it handle the critical demands of live music mastering. And TDK LX Professional Studio tape, with a super refined particle that gives it a performance ideal for professional and audiophile use.

A unique polishing and binding process makes dropouts practically a thing of the past. A special graphite and carbon backcoating on all GX and some LX reduces friction for smooth winding while preventing static and diminishing wow and flutter. At last your music is heard the way you intended to hear it.

Listen to TDK GX and LX. They could open up a whole new standard of recording excellence.



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CIRCLE NO. 56 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Taping for Car Stereo

Q. My car-stereo system has a seven-band equalizer but no bias switch and no Dolby noise reduction. When taping programs for the car, should I use Dolby? Will using high-bias tapes hurt the deck in any way? My biggest problem is with tape hiss, and I want to use my equalizer most advantageously.

JOHN MATERA
Willowdale, Ontario

A. While your car's cassette player is not designed for high-bias tapes, you will certainly not hurt it (or the cassette) by playing a high-bias tape on it. What you will be doing, however, is providing a treble boost of 4 to 4.5 dB. This will "improve" the high-frequency playback through a low-cost automobile player, but it will "add" tape hiss. By turning down the treble with your equalizer you'll cut back on the hiss—but also on the "improved" high-frequency response. If hiss is your biggest problem, then, I recommend using a high-quality ferric-oxide ("normal"-bias) cassette.

Your equalizer will *not* serve as a Dolby-B decoder, but you may wish to record with Dolby-B anyway. The Dolby system operates (during record) by boosting the *soft* high frequencies—that is, the highs that would otherwise tend to get lost in the hiss. Playing back a Dolby-encoded tape without Dolby decoding will, again, not hurt anything. Although I find undecoded Dolby sound "bright" or "edgy" when heard on a wide-range cassette deck playing through a home system, many readers prefer it this way for use in cars. So, try it and see.

Dolby Test Tapes

Q. Where can I purchase a cassette tape prerecorded with the Dolby-B calibration tone? I've tried several sources in my area and come up empty.

KEVIN H. C. MOORE
Santa Maria, Calif.

A. I know of three sources that make Dolby-B calibration tapes available to the consumer: TDK Electronics Corp., 755 Eastgate Boulevard, Garden City, N.Y.

11530 (the tape is sold as AC-317); Teac, 7733 Telegraph Road, Montebello, Calif. 90640 (MTT-150A); and Nortronics, 8101 Tenth Avenue North, Minneapolis, Minn. 55427 (AT-200).

Cleaning Open-reel Tapes

Q. A number of tapes I bought overseas while in the military some years ago shed so much oxide during use as to be unplayable. There are record cleaners, tape-head cleaners, and, I believe, tape cleaners for computer tapes, but do you know of any audiophile tape cleaners?

P. EMELDA WALLEN
Miami, Fla.

A. I recall that many years ago—back in the late Fifties and early Sixties—several tape-accessory manufacturers offered little wick-like devices you could mount on your deck in the tape path that would collect loose oxide particles. Improvements in tape binders (the "glue" that holds the oxide particles on the polyester backing of the tape) have since made such devices unnecessary, with the result that—to the best of my knowledge—they have entirely disappeared from the market. If such a device is still available, both reader Wallen and I would be glad to hear of it.

Cassette Storage

Q. Having recently turned from open-reel to cassettes, I wonder whether the same storage precautions apply? Specifically, should I always leave them in a "played" (head-in) condition, and will rewinding them before playing reduce print-through?

ALVIN VAN PELT HART
New York, N.Y.

A. The chief reason for leaving open-reel tapes in a "played" position is that high-speed winding (forward or backward) normally results in uneven tensions (and a slightly uneven tape pack) throughout the reel. When a tape is stored in this condition over a period of time the uneven stresses can

(Continued on page 28)

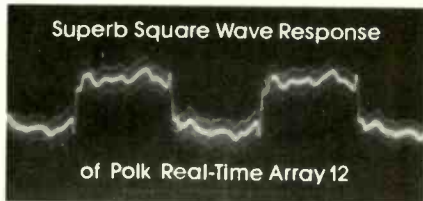
The Polk Principle:
High Technology Delivers...

Incredible Sound Affordable Price



"Polks are vastly superior to the competition."

Musician Magazine



Lab and listening tests prove Polks measure and sound better.

Experts agree Polk speakers will give you the highest quality sound and the most listening pleasure for your money. They will deliver amazingly life-like, box-less, three dimensional sound with breathtaking clarity and detail in your listening room from your hifi system.

"Polk speakers are so vastly superior to the competition..." a remarkably well integrated and coherent sound that adapts itself ideally to all kinds of music... the kind of open, un-colored, perfectly imaged sound we thought began at twice the price...

Polk Tri-Laminate Polymer Driver
For Life-Like Clarity and Detail



Sound quite magnificent with a good mid-powered popular brand receiver... They make the popular speakers in their price range seem dim, colored, boxy and just plain insufficient. **Our advice is not to buy speakers until you've heard the Polks."**

Musician Magazine

"Exceptionally pleasing sonic balance..." transient response is absolutely first rate... hemispherical dispersion is superb... frequency response covers the entire audible range with commendable flatness... **Open, box-less, three dimensional quality**... sensitivity is adequate for use with a 10 watt amplifier, yet it could absorb the full output of a 200 watt amplifier without damage... certainly a very fine speaker.

Polk's key design goals have definitely been realized."

Stereo Review

Polk Isophase Crossover Network
For Greater Transparency & Realism



Better sound in your home Polk Audio loudspeakers will give you more listening pleasure and greater long term satisfaction from your music, your records and your hifi system. They offer you the best sound for your money and are affordably priced from less than \$125 each to less than \$400 each.

Simply use the free reader service card to receive detailed information, copies of the expert's rave reviews and the location nearest you for auditioning the **Incredible Affordable Polks.**

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Monitor Series Loudspeakers

CIRCLE NO. 46 ON READER SERVICE CARD

NEW HIGHS. The 500ID defines hard-to-get high frequencies because it comes with a cantilever that doesn't easily distort them.

It's boron-vapor hardened to track under "G" forces that would buckle ordinary cantilevers.

NEW FIDELITY. In addition to hearing more highs, you're going to hear less noise from a 500ID.

There's nothing complex about the benefits of Samarium-Cobalt magnets. They are simply less massive and higher in output than conventional ones.

So, if we had to give a reason for our signal-to-noise ratio being better than most, it's because the materials we use are better than most.

NEW TECHNOLOGY. Because the 500ID features Empire's inertially damped tuned stylus system, its performance is consistent—even when the capacitance varies from one system to the next.



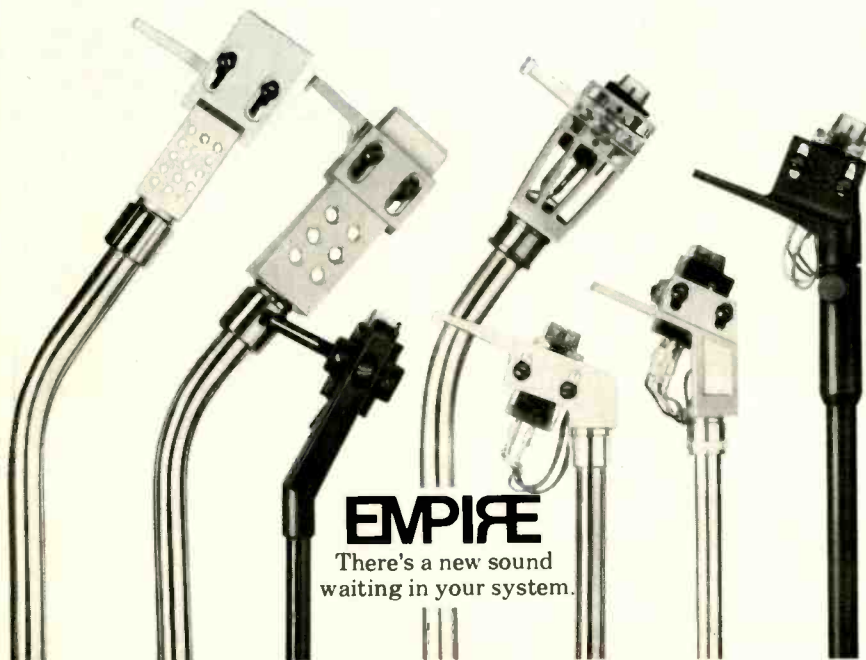
Which means, the performance we monitor in our lab is the performance you're likely to hear at home.

NEW SECURITY. Empire's two-year limited warranty is 365 days longer than the one-year limited warranty offered by many other manufacturers.

An extra year in no uncertain terms.

NEW SOUND. The Empire 500ID. You're an arm's length away from a new listening experience.

EVERYONE WHO WANTS THEIR OLD SYSTEM TO SOUND LIKE NEW, RAISE YOUR ARM.



EMPIRE
There's a new sound
waiting in your system.

CIRCLE NO. 32 ON READER SERVICE CARD

occasionally result in physical deformation of the tape or in edge damage, resulting in erratic playback. Further, as you suggest, some of the print-through (pre-echo and post-echo) to which open-reel tapes are susceptible can be lessened by immediately rewinding them (slowly or quickly) before playing.

Because the fast-winding tensions are considerably less in the case of cassette tapes and because they are equipped with graphite- or silicon-impregnated "slip sheets" that even up the pack, this precaution is much less important. Further, without getting into the physics of the matter, cassettes are not nearly as likely to suffer from audible print-through as open-reel tapes are.

In sum, to rewind just before playing is still *theoretically* better even with cassettes, but unless the feed and takeup tensions in your deck are seriously out of line, I suspect you wouldn't be able to notice any audible difference.

Bulk-erase and Reuse

Q. I frequently tape programs on my open-reel deck and then dub them onto cassette. I then use a bulk eraser on the original so I can reuse the tape. Is there any limit to the number of times I can bulk-erase tapes this way without their losing some of their capabilities?

HENRY G. LAGERWAY
Monticello, N.Y.

A. So long as the oxide coating doesn't start to fall off—which, after hundreds of passes through your machine (not your eraser), it may—your procedure is perfectly sound. Bulk erasing a tape doesn't harm it for future use any more than washing a blackboard hurts it.

Cassette Demands

Q. How do you record program materials with a very high transient content on a cassette deck? If I set the record level low enough to avoid turning on the "peak overload" light on drums and trumpets, the rest of the recording is low enough so that hiss is a problem. If I set it high enough to overcome the hiss, the transients are distorted. I use top-quality tape on my \$300 five-year-old deck.

STEPHEN ROSE
St. Louis, Mo.

A. Welcome to the club! Cassette decks in general simply don't have the transient-overload margin of a good open-reel deck, and the wonder is that they can do as well as they do, not that certain types of musical material (especially live recording) demand more than they can give.

In your case, however, there may be a satisfactory answer. In the five years since you bought your deck, signal-to-noise ratios for equivalently priced machines (now \$500 or so) have improved 6 to 8 dB. Some are available with Dolby HX or with other improved circuitry specifically designed to handle the transients that are giving you difficulty. A "metal-ready" tape deck would also help in this regard. □

The Guard is America at its best.



You can't train somebody to be a hero. And the Army Guard people on this page would be the last to label themselves that.

But it was Army Guard people like these who helped put a town and its families back together after a tornado had slammed through the countryside. And it's Army Guard people like these, working in their own communities, who have helped neighbors and friends survive everything from floods to blizzards to tornadoes.

Put Army Guard people in situations like those and they

perform at their flat-out best.

In the Army Guard, you're ready to meet any kind of challenge head-on. The training is geared to develop important human skills that work hand-in-glove with military readiness.

And you'll join your friends and neighbors who train at home.

But it won't just happen. You've got to do something first. Rip out the attached postcard, fill it out and mail it in. Better yet, call us right now. It's toll-free and won't cost you a penny. The number is 800-638-7600.* Or see

your Army Guard recruiter. He has the whole story. Ask about the benefits that can last a lifetime and the money you'll earn.

Then get on the Guard team. And be your best.

*In Hawaii: 737-5255; Puerto Rico: 723-4550; Virgin Islands (St. Croix): 773-6438; Maryland: 728-3388; In Alaska: consult local phone directory.



Technical Talk

By Julian D. Hirsch



• How Well Built Is It? •

ONE aspect of reviewing hi-fi components that has always concerned me is the question of the construction quality, as opposed to the listening quality, of a product. It would be nice if it were possible to determine how long any specific unit is likely to continue working properly before requiring service. This is comparable to the MTBF ("mean time between failures") rating used in specifying the probable service life of military and aerospace electronic equipment.

The MTBF rating is difficult to determine even if one knows the complete history of every part used in the product and its electrical operating conditions. There are formulas into which such data as the quantities and types of each basic component (resistors, capacitors, semiconductors, etc.) can be "plugged" together with their individual, separately determined reliability ratings as modified by their operating voltages and temperatures. The result is defined as the MTBF of the complete product or system. Statistically, this sort of computation probably gives a fair picture of product reliability, from which can be derived the optimum quantities of each replaceable part to be stocked for future maintenance.

This sort of calculation is laborious enough for the designer of the product (I have been through the process and found it just a shade less enjoyable than preparing my income-tax returns!), but, fortunately or otherwise, it is quite impractical for evaluating consumer products on a regular basis. Even if we had all the necessary information (and it is hard enough to obtain speci-

fications or even a block diagram on some products, let alone complete design information), there is not enough time to go through the calculations for the number of products we review each month.

Furthermore, the results, like most statistical averages, would have meaning only in the aggregate. They would be helpful for the manufacturer or for his service personnel to know (and most of them do know, even if not through this precise method of calculation), but to the individual consumer it matters little whether an amplifier has a theoretical MTBF of 1,000 or even 10,000 hours if the unit he has failed in 100 hours or was "DOA," as sometimes happens.

It has been suggested to us that a visual inspection of the inside of the product might provide useful guidance to how well it is likely to stand up in service. This is akin to door slamming and tire kicking when shopping for a car, and it is just about as valid an indicator of quality. As it happens, I do open up most products that I test just to see how they are put together (not necessarily how well, but how). Obviously, a neat layout with well-constructed glass-epoxy circuit boards plugging into a mother board is preferable to a tangled nest of wires, but I have learned that neatness is no guarantee of superior reliability or performance, while the "rat's nest" description could apply to some superb products that have given me years of trouble-free service.

This situation differs markedly from the "strip down" study of a camera that forms a part of the product-testing program in our sister publication *Popular Photography*. A

camera is basically a mechanical device, and its service life is closely related to its mechanical construction and the materials out of which it is made. An experienced technician can draw valid inferences from such details of construction when a camera is reduced to its component parts. But such conclusions would be much more difficult to arrive at through visual examination of an electronic instrument. The manufacturers of most of the parts are little known in this country, and most of us would be hard pressed to evaluate individual electronic parts (resistors, capacitors, etc.) with a purely visual inspection.

SOME judgments of mechanical quality are possible, however. Flimsy metalwork that bends under such normal actions as inserting or removing a phono plug may have no bearing on how well or for how long a product will work, but it certainly does not inspire confidence. A noisy or "sloppy"-feeling potentiometer or switch is not likely to give good service, and this sort of characteristic can be identified easily. Unfortunately, if a product works well during our tests this does not mean that it will do so indefinitely. Normally, we keep products on hand for several months, with at least occasional use, just to see if any trouble develops. It rarely does in that short a time span. At times we have received a scathing letter or two from readers whose experience was less fortunate than ours in regard to a specific product. In any case, a *single* failure does not a universal problem make—only one for its victim!

Tested This Month

Technics RS-M270X Cassette Deck • Sansui AU-D11 Integrated Amplifier
Audio Pro TP-150 Tuner-Preamplifier and A4-14 Speaker System • Allison:Six Speaker System
Bang & Olufsen Beogram 8000 Turntable with MMC 20CL Phono Cartridge

The only way we can begin to judge the design conservatism—and from that *perhaps* the lasting qualities—of a product is to overstress it deliberately in a manner that is usually contrary to the manufacturer's recommendations. Operating a power amplifier into 2-ohm loads is one example of this, for it has a direct relationship to the possible sound of the amplifier with certain speaker loads, and it can also verify the effectiveness of the amplifier's protective system. If an internal fuse blows to protect the output devices but is located in such an inaccessible place that a major disassembly of the amplifier is required to replace it (this has actually happened to us with some *very* expensive amplifiers), we are naturally less enthusiastic than if a simple relay shuts the unit down until the fault is removed and turns it on again without further attention when it is safe to do so. In other words, we are concerned with how much the user is inconvenienced by aspects of the design that were presumably meant to be beneficial.

I happen to be a strong believer in "zero inconvenience." A consumer product of any type should do just what it is claimed to do, with absolutely no fuss, and preferably it should not only be foolproof but idiot-proof. In this less than perfect world of ours, so happy a condition is rarely attained, but sometimes it is closely approached. And, contrary to popular opinion, there is no *necessary* connection between that state and high prices. Usually the reverse is true; the simpler a device, the more reliable and trouble-free it is likely to be.

I have already mentioned that there are people who know, with great accuracy, how reliable a product is and in what respects it is most likely to give trouble. These are the manufacturer's service people, but, not surprisingly, they are rather close-mouthed with their knowledge—which they accumulate only *after* the product has been subject to the rigors of the marketplace for several months. Not far from them in knowledge of the subject (actually ahead in some respects, since they handle many different brands instead of specializing in one) are the dealers, back through whose hands the items are returned for warranty service. Dealers, too, are not a reliable source of specific reliability information; some of them, in fact, are not above "bad mouthing" a perfectly good product on the grounds of alleged unreliability in order to sell a competitive product on which they may make a higher profit.

To the best of my knowledge, the only reasonably valid information on consumer-product reliability comes from Consumers Union, but even then only in a few categories such as major household appliances and automobiles. With many thousands of users supplying them with service-problem information via an annual questionnaire, this organization has a unique data source on the overall reliability of the surveyed products. Unfortunately, by the time this information has been amassed, analyzed, and published, many of the products reported on may be discontinued and the information therefore

nearly worthless. Major exceptions are the automobiles, where long-term service data become increasingly valuable because of the used-car market.

Nothing like this situation exists in the hi-fi field, however. Products are introduced and replaced with dizzying frequency, so that reliability data (even if available) on last year's items are of no help in judging this year's. We acknowledge that Hirsch-Houck Labs cannot offer *meaningful* reliability information on anything we test. (Nor, in our view, can any other hi-fi test lab.) Even if the first sample is defective and we test a second unit, that fact tells us next to nothing about the overall merit of the product design (unless the defect is quite clearly a design flaw in an early sample, which is a rare occurrence and usually rectified anyway by the time the unit reaches the marketplace). If the second example is also defective, we generally do not test a third, but this is largely because of time and schedule limitations. Even two failures do not mean that later production models cannot be of good quality. In other words, sweeping inferences about a product's long-term reliability, either positive or negative, cannot be drawn from small samplings of a large product population.

We can close on a cheery note, however. The quality level of almost every legitimate hi-fi component sold today is impressively high. Failures still occur, but they are rare indeed. If our cars and major appliances were all as good as our hi-fi equipment, the consumer's life would be a lot easier! □

Equipment Test Reports

By Hirsch-Houck Laboratories



Technics RS-M270X Cassette Deck

THE Technics RS-M270X is a two-head, two-motor cassette deck incorporating both the Dolby B *and* the dbx II noise-reduction systems. Its solenoid-operated tape transport is controlled by light-touch

pushbuttons, with an IC logic system that makes it possible to press the buttons in any sequence without risking damage to the machine or to the tape. The transport controls can also be operated through a wired re-

mote-control accessory that plugs into the rear of the recorder.

The tape-drive capstan is part of a direct-drive servo-controlled d.c. motor, with a
(Continued overleaf)

second d.c. motor turning the tape hubs. The combination record/playback head (called the SX head by Technics) is made of permalloy and Sendust. Together with the Sendust-alloy erase head and high-power bias/erase oscillator, it makes the recorder fully compatible with metal-alloy tapes.

Tape selection is made by a small front-panel knob with positions marked NORMAL, FeCr, CrO₂, and METAL. The cassette is loaded into guides within the well door, which slides out in a vertical position when the EJECT button is pressed. Most of the cassette can be seen through the glass window in the door. The pushbutton power switch is located just below the EJECT button.

The display area at the upper center of the panel contains two horizontal rows of fluorescent light segments that serve as lev-

el indicators for the two channels. The level indicators then display the incoming-signal levels as set by the input-level knobs (in PLAY, they show the playback level ahead of the front-panel output control). To start recording, the PLAY button is touched. During recording, the input signal appears at the LINE OUT jacks in the rear of the machine. It is not processed by any of the internal circuits unless the machine is set for dbx DISC operation, in which case the signals are processed by the dbx expansion circuits before reaching the LINE OUT jacks.

The PAUSE button halts the tape without releasing the recording mode (to put the tape in motion again, a touch on the PLAY button is required). Near the PAUSE control is the REC MUTE, which when held in re-

cord-ready mode and lighting a red LED above the button. The level indicators then display the incoming-signal levels as set by the input-level knobs (in PLAY, they show the playback level ahead of the front-panel output control). To start recording, the PLAY button is touched. During recording, the input signal appears at the LINE OUT jacks in the rear of the machine. It is not processed by any of the internal circuits unless the machine is set for dbx DISC operation, in which case the signals are processed by the dbx expansion circuits before reaching the LINE OUT jacks.

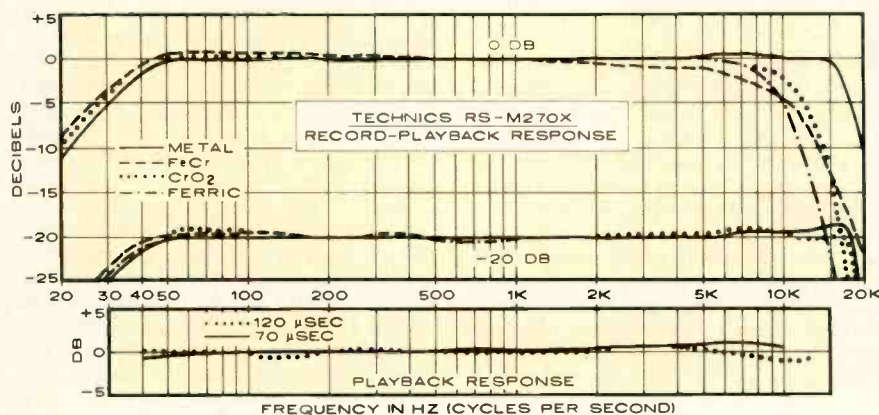
The third-harmonic distortion at an indicated 0-dB recording level was only 0.56 per cent from the XL-1S and MX tapes, 1 per cent from the Duad tape, and 1.4 per cent from the XA-II tape. In order to obtain the reference 3 per cent third-harmonic distortion in playback, we had to record at a high +6 dB with all the tapes except the MX, which required +7 dB.

The unweighted noise relative to the playback from those recording levels was between -59 and -60.5 dB for all the tapes except XL-1S, which gave a -53-dB noise level. With the Dolby system in use and with CCIR weighting, the noise level from XL-1S tape was -62.3 dB, the XA-II and MX tapes gave readings of about -64.5 dB, and the lowest noise was measured with Sony Duad at -66.3 dB. The noise increased by 8.5 dB through the MIC inputs at maximum recording gain.

When we used the dbx system, the entire behavior of the recorder was radically altered. For example, the playback distortion from a 0-dB recording was reduced to 0.3 per cent for XL-1S and XA-II tapes, 0.4 per cent for MX, and 0.56 per cent for Duad tape. In order to reach the reference condition of 3 per cent distortion, we had to record at a +17-dB level for all the tapes. We never did reach 3 per cent third-harmonic distortion with XL-1S tape, since the recorder's electronic circuits overloaded before the tape saturated, and there was evidence that with all the tapes the maximum level was set by the electronics rather than by the tapes (the playback output was nearly 10 volts from the +17-dB input). In each case, the playback noise was not really measurable, since it was at or below the minimum 100-microvolt reading of our meter and at that level seemed to be composed largely of external-noise pickup rather than actual tape noise. All we can say is that the S/N was better than 80 dB, a fantastic figure for a cassette deck.

The noise reduction could be seen more clearly on our spectrum-analyzer screen. The Dolby system reduced the noise by about 10 dB at all frequencies between 5,000 and 10,000 Hz and by even more at higher frequencies. The dbx system dropped the playback noise floor by about 22 dB (compared to no noise reduction) over the full audio range. An even more dramatic demonstration was to play a blank tape at maximum volume settings of the recorder and amplifier. With no noise reduction the hiss was, of course, loud and disturbing. Dolby reduced it substantially, but it was still plainly audible at the system gains we used. Switching on the dbx silenced the system—totally! With an ear close to the speaker, we could hear a faint

(Continued on page 36)



el indicators for the two channels. They are calibrated from -20 to +8 dB, with the bars being blue-white below 0 dB and red above that point. The fluorescent indicators respond almost instantaneously to level changes and have a "peak-hold" feature that retains the highest reading for a second or two after the program level has dropped, making even short peaks visible to the operator. To the left of the level display is a three-digit index counter and its reset button.

The noise-reduction selector has a center off position, and its counterclockwise position turns on the Dolby system. A clockwise rotation turns on the dbx TAPE mode for recording and playback, and a further rotation to dbx DISC enables dbx-encoded discs to be decoded for listening. Such discs can also be dubbed directly to tape without decoding, and in playback the tape will be heard with correct frequency response and dynamics when decoded by the recorder's dbx circuits.

Recording levels are adjusted by two large concentric knobs (they are coupled by a slip clutch) at the upper right of the panel. The playback level is set by a small knob at the bottom of the panel next to the tape selector. A pushbutton switch selects either the MIC or LINE inputs (but not both simultaneously). Another button prepares the recorder for timer-controlled operation. It can be set for either recording or playback, coming on automatically when power is applied by an external timer switch.

To set the recording levels, the REC button is touched, placing the machine into a

moves the recording signal from the tape without removing the erase and bias signals, stopping the tape, or affecting the signal at the LINE OUT jacks. This is convenient for editing out extraneous noises such as the thump of a stylus contacting a record. The other buttons control the fast-forward and rewind modes and stop the transport.

The "chassis" of the Technics RS-M270X is a large plastic molding (its circuitry is on printed boards) with the necessary shielding provided by the metal cabinet and bottom plate. In the rear of the machine there are only the LINE IN and LINE OUT jacks and a DIN socket for the optional remote-control accessory. The exterior of the recorder is finished in silver gray. It is approximately 17 inches wide, 13 3/4 inches deep, and only 4 inches high. It weighs 14 pounds, 5 ounces. Price: \$500.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** Our test sample of the Technics RS-M270X was supplied with the tapes for which it had been adjusted, and we used them for our measurements. The "normal" tape was Maxell XL-1S, and Technics XA-II was used for "CrO₂" (it appears to be a high-bias ferric-oxide tape). The "FeCr" tape was Sony Duad, and the "metal" tape was Technics MX. Apparently the Technics-brand tapes are similar to the TDK and Maxell formulations.

For a 0-dB recording-level indication, a line input of 60 millivolts (mV) was required at 1,000 Hz. The line input overloaded at a satisfactory 3.5-volt input. The

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nate feedback. Result? Wow and flutter reduced to 0.015% and a 78dB signal-to-noise ratio.

Our mid-priced FR-D55 shares many of the outstanding features of the XR-Q11, including direct drive, sequence programmer, and the straight-line, DynaOptimum-Balanced (DOB) tonearm with a separate motor to control its fully automatic operation. The arm tracks only the record, not nearby footsteps or speaker-transmitted vibrations.

Like the FR-D55, the modestly priced FR-D35 has a direct-drive motor, platter and strobe indicator, with $\pm 3\%$ pitch control. Impressive 0.025% wow/flutter and 72dB S/N ratio. And all upfront operating controls, so you don't need to raise the dustcover.

That's only half the Sansui turntable story — there are three other models to choose from:

the XR-Q9, FR-D45 and the FR-D25.

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XR-Q11



FR-D35



FR-D55

Sansui

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Sansui Electronics Co., Ltd., Tokyo, Japan

CIRCLE NO. 27 ON READER SERVICE CARD

hiss from the external amplifier, but there was hardly any change when the recorder was shut off entirely.

The playback equalization was measured with TDK AC-337 (120-microsecond) and Teac 116SP (70-microsecond) test tapes. Both were played back flat within ± 1 dB over their full ranges (40 Hz to 12,500 and 10,000 Hz, respectively). The overall record/playback frequency response was measured, with each of the tapes supplied, at levels of 0 dB and -20 dB (without noise reduction). The -20 -dB curves were almost identical for all the tapes. The low-bass response was down by about 9 dB at 20 Hz but reached the midrange level by about 40 Hz. From 50 to at least 12,000 Hz the response was flat within ± 0.5 dB. There were minor fluctuations at higher frequencies, followed by a sharp cutoff above 17,000 or 18,000 Hz. The rated frequency-response variation of ± 3 dB over a range of 30 to 15,000, 16,000, or 17,000 Hz (depending on the tape) was met easily, most of that variation resulting from bass rolloff rather than high-frequency effects.

As expected, there were some differences between the tapes in their response at 0 dB. The XL-1S tape response began to roll off above 7,000 Hz, intersecting the -20 -dB curve at 14,000 Hz. With the XA-II tape, the intersection was at 16,500 Hz. Although the response from Duad tape began to roll off at about the same frequency as the others, the slope was more gradual and remained above the -20 -dB curve all the way to our 20,000-Hz upper measurement limit. The metal tape really showed its mettle (!) in this measurement, with the 0-dB

response curve being virtually identical to the -20 -dB curve (± 0.5 dB from 50 to 15,000 Hz).

The apparently very large upward extension of dynamic range afforded by the dbx system led us to measure the record/playback response of the metal tape (with dbx) at levels of -20 , 0, and $+10$ dB (the last level would be unthinkable with any ordinary cassette recorder, and with most non-professional open-reel decks as well). There was little difference between the three curves up to 10,000 Hz, although the $+10$ -dB response began to droop at higher frequencies. There was a slight peak in the response at 15,000 Hz for the 0-dB response at -20 -dB levels as well as a shallow depression in the midrange between 500 and 5,000 Hz. The depression was only about 1 dB deep, and the peak was less than 2 dB at ± 20 dB and 1 dB at a 0-dB recording level, so it is clear that we are talking about very good response in every case.

The final frequency-response measurement was made, also with MX tape, at levels of -20 and -30 dB with and without the Dolby system. The "tracking" of the record and playback Dolby characteristics was excellent, as shown by the fact that at either level the two curves (with and without Dolby) differed by no more than 0.5 dB up to 15,000 Hz or higher.

The Technics RS-M270X carries some other rather impressive specifications, such as a flutter rating of 0.035 per cent (wrms). We measured the flutter as 0.033 per cent, both in playback of a TDK AC-342 test tape and in a combined record/playback measurement. The weighted peak (CCIR)

flutter was only ± 0.06 per cent in a combined record/playback measurement and ± 0.05 per cent from the test tape. The flutter spectrum was broad and decreased smoothly with frequency, with small but distinct peaks at 20 and 35 Hz. The tape speed was about 0.7 per cent fast.

In fast-forward and rewind modes, a C-60 cassette was handled in 82 to 88 seconds. The level indicators were calibrated with their Dolby-reference level at about $+2.5$ dB (the nature of the display makes it difficult to determine its readings closer than about 1 dB). A standard Dolby-level tape (200 nW/meter) gave indications about 1 dB higher than the indicated marks. The fluorescent display responded very rapidly, with no loss of accuracy on tone bursts as short as 40 milliseconds. The error was -1 dB at 20 milliseconds and -5 dB at 10 milliseconds. The peak-hold time was about 1 second. The volume through the headphone jack was fine, even with 200-ohm phones.

● **Comment.** When we recorded interstation FM-tuner hiss and compared the playback with the original signal, the results were about what one would expect from the measurements we had made. At low levels (-10 dB or so) all the tapes gave nearly perfect reproduction of the random noise. At 0 dB, the XL-1S sounded slightly dull, the MX tape was still essentially perfect, and the rest fell between those extremes.

Even though the response curves we had measured with the dbx system should have prepared us for its behavior, it was still startling to find that the setting of the input-level knob had very little to do with the final sound quality when using dbx. We deliberately turned it to maximum, so that the FM broadcasts and records we were taping kept the level indicators at and beyond their maximum readings through the entire recording. Both FM hiss and a variety of musical programs were recorded and reproduced with audibly undiminished quality under these highly unorthodox conditions. For all practical purposes, it seemed to be impossible to saturate the tape or cause the machine to distort when using dbx.

At first we found it necessary to look carefully at the controls of the RS-M270X to be sure what we were doing, but in time their use became almost automatic. In any case, we would have liked to see more physical distinction—spacing, size, shape, or some other characteristic—between the various transport-control buttons. We also noted that the large illuminated dbx logo on the panel confusingly has nothing to do with whether the dbx system is in use or not.

Nit-picking aside, the Technics RS-M270X is one of the most impressive cassette decks we have seen in some time. Performance is exemplary, especially for a two-head machine. With the RS-M270X, the improved high-frequency headroom of metal tape is a reality rather than a promise, and the ability to use the dbx circuitry for disc decoding in addition to tape recording is both a money-saver and a welcome convenience.

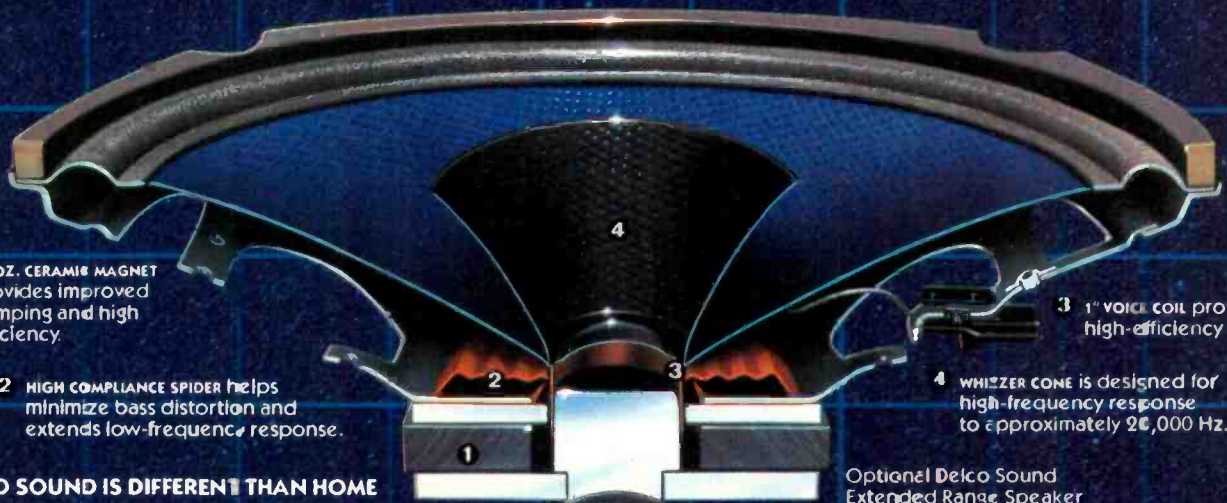
Circle 140 on reader service card

(Continued on page 38)



"... Let's say a guest touches the turntable without your permission. That gun fires a laser beam at his wrist—from then on he'll keep his hands off."

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Simulated LED readout

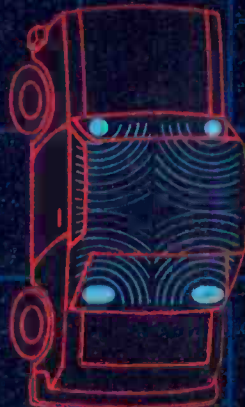
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**Bang & Olufsen
Beogram 8000
Turntable**

**with MMC 20CL
Phono Cartridge**



THE Beogram 8000, currently the top-of-the-line Bang & Olufsen record player, is a direct descendant of the 4000 Series record players produced by B&O for a number of years. However, although it shares some basic design concepts with the 4000 Series, the Model 8000 is a completely new product.

The B&O 8000 features the same type of low-mass, tangential-tracking, servo-driven tone arm used in all previous 4000 Series units. The arm looks like two parallel arms on a single sliding carriage. One carries a light source and detector to sense the presence or absence of a record on the turntable, and the other carries the cartridge. The cartridge supplied with the Model 8000 is the top-ranking B&O MMC 20CL (reviewed in the June 1979 issue), which has a sapphire cantilever and a line-contact diamond stylus that tracks at a 1-gram force.

The turntable, unlike the belt-driven types used in the 4000 Series, is a quartz-locked direct-drive type whose drive system is totally unlike any of the other direct-drive turntables on the market. It uses what B&O calls a "magnetic-drive servo-controlled d.c. motor," which appears to be an eddy-current drive system similar to that used in an electric-utility watt-hour meter to rotate a disc that operates its counters.

The driven section (or rotor) of the turn-

table is a stamped metal disc that measures about 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter and has a rim about 1 inch wide. The two fixed drive coils are located opposite each other with their pole pieces close to the inside and outside surfaces of the rim of the disc. Evidently the eddy currents induced in the disc by the currents through the drive coils create a magnetic field that reacts with the stationary field to turn the platter (a thin, flat aluminum disc that rests on the rotor disc). The combined weight of the rotating parts is about 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ pounds. Unlike conventional direct-drive multi-pole motors, which have a pulsating torque characteristic, the B&O motor appears to deliver a constant torque to the turntable.

An optical tachometer wheel under the rotor interrupts a light beam and supplies pulses to the servo system at a frequency proportional to the turntable speed. The microcomputer which controls all functions of the B&O 8000 compares these pulses with a reference frequency derived from a quartz-crystal oscillator, and a correcting signal is supplied to the drive coils to lock the turntable speed to the desired value.

The B&O 8000 is entirely controlled by pushbuttons on a sloping panel at the right front of the player. After a record has been placed on the turntable, a touch of the PLAY button puts the turntable into operation.

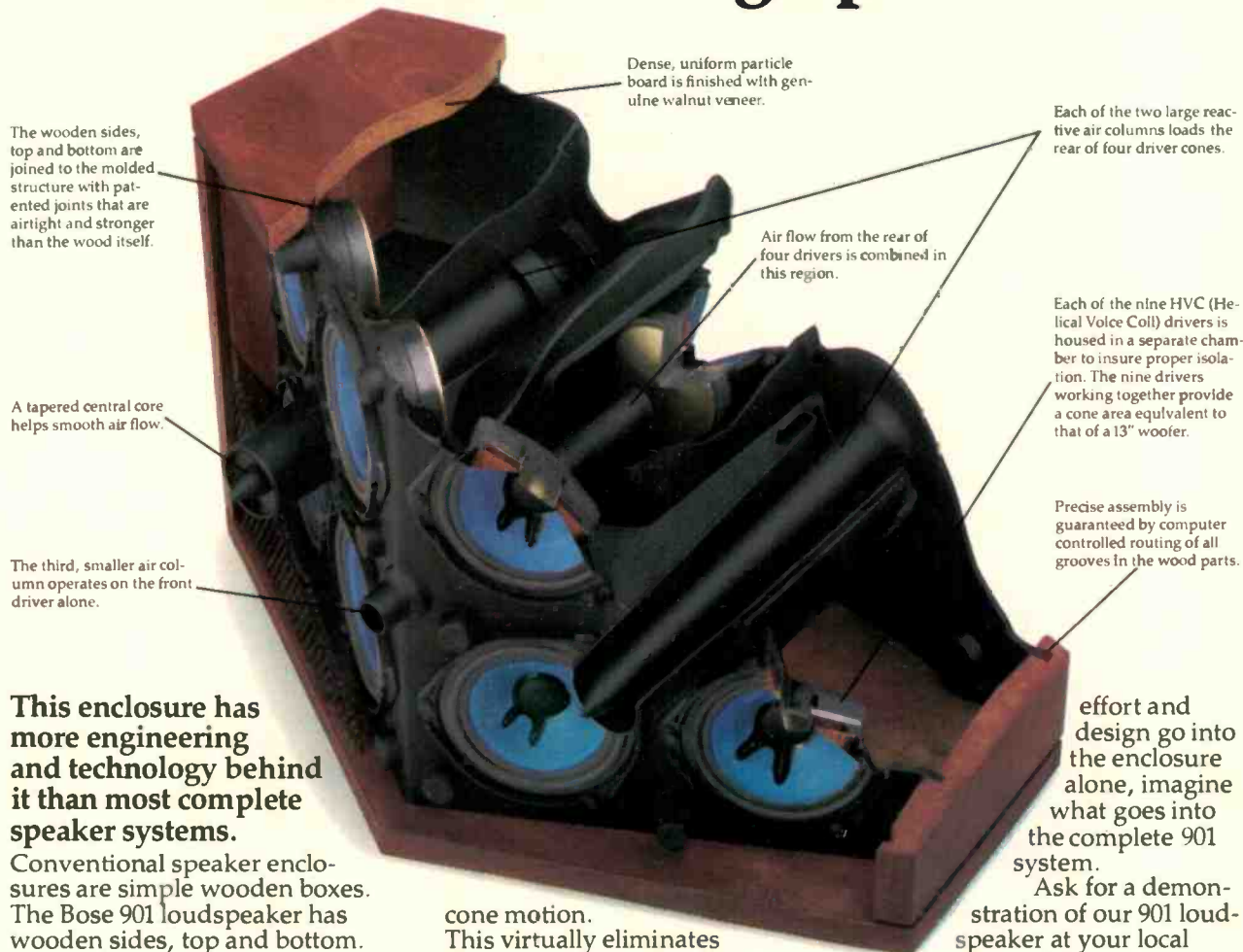
The actual speed is shown by a four-digit readout on the control panel (normally at 33.33 rpm). Pressing small "+" or "-" buttons below the display changes the speed in steps of 0.05 rpm over a range of about ± 3 per cent (at 45 rpm, the steps are 0.07 rpm).

The tone-arm carriage moves out from the concealed compartment where it remains at all times when not playing a record. As the light sensor passes over the outer radius of a 12-inch record, the absence of light reflected from the black surface of the disc signals the system that a record is in place. The arm moves in sufficiently to place the pickup stylus over the lead-in groove and stops. The arm descends and play begins. The arm has limited free movement, and any departure from tangency is sensed optically and used to generate a corrective signal in the servo amplifier which moves the carriage to reduce the arm's tracking error toward zero.

If no record is on the platter or if a 7-inch disc is in place, the arm sensor picks up the interruptions in reflected light from the radial ribs on the platter, and these tell the microprocessor that no record is present. The arm continues to slew inward, with the pickup safely above the platter surface. At the outer radius of a 7-inch disc (if such a

(Continued on page 42)

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A tapered central core helps smooth air flow.

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Precise assembly is guaranteed by computer controlled routing of all grooves in the wood parts.

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cone motion. This virtually eliminates distortion while increasing low-frequency power output. Critical surfaces are aerodynamically shaped to control and smooth air motion.

The characteristics of this enclosure accurately complement the full-range drivers and Active Electronic Equalization of the Bose 901 system. Together, they can reproduce even the lowest bass notes with clarity and power unmatched by any speaker of conventional design. *Regardless of size or price.*

The Acoustic Matrix™ enclosure is just one of hundreds of improvements developed since the introduction of the original 901 speaker. If so much thought,

effort and design go into the enclosure alone, imagine what goes into the complete 901 system.

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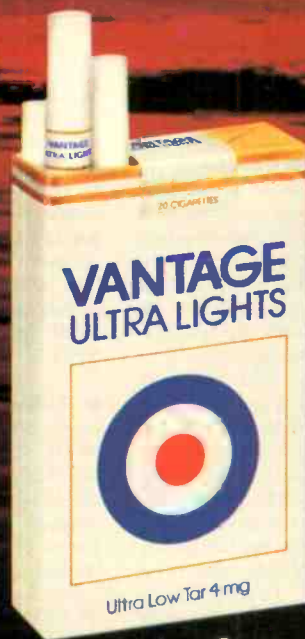


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4 mg



9 mg



VANTAGES

you want good taste and low tar, too.

disc is present to interrupt the light reflections) the turntable speed automatically changes to 45 rpm, the arm is correctly indexed, and the record is played. If no record is encountered by the time the arm reaches the label area, the arm returns to its hidden storage position and the player shuts off.

Other combinations of record size and speed (such as 12-inch 45-rpm or either 7- or 10-inch 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ -rpm) can be played with manual selection of turntable speed, and the arm will always index automatically to the record diameter. If the speed set by the player is not appropriate, either speed can be selected at any time by the "33" or "45" buttons above the digital display.

The tone arm cannot be moved manually, but it can be slewed in either direction by

pressed, but it does not initiate the arm-operating cycle. This is useful for cleaning a record with a brush or other device meant to be used on a rotating record.

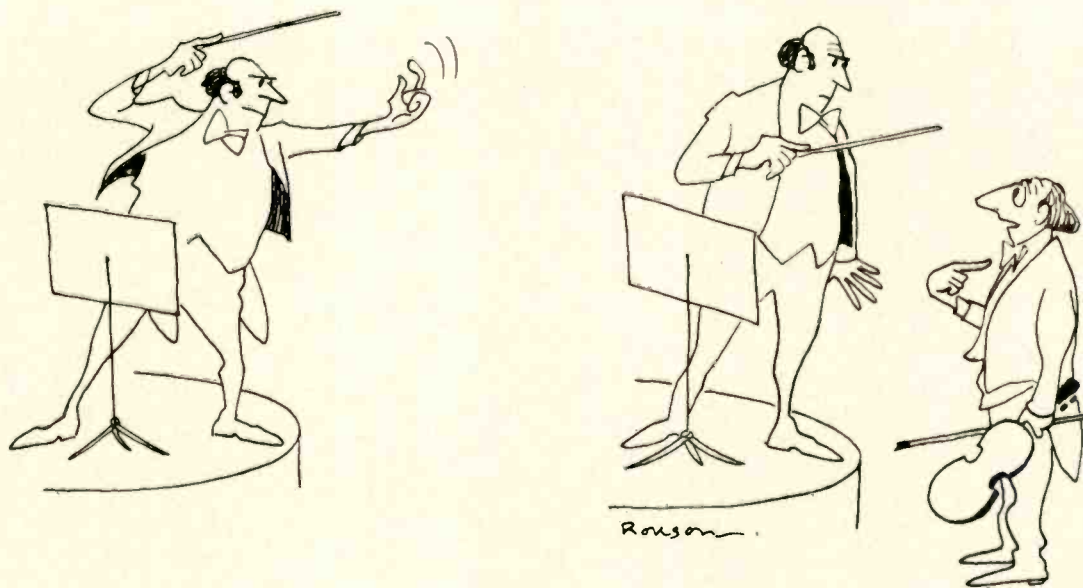
Lifting the hinged aluminum cover on the right side of the B&O 8000 reveals the tone arm in its rest position, plus a 45-rpm disc center-hole adapter in its storage compartment. A soft brush is permanently installed near the arm-rest position so that the stylus is cleaned of lint every time the arm enters or leaves the storage area.

The B&O MMC 20CL cartridge supplied with the Model 8000 plugs directly into the end of the square-cross-section arm tube. There are no balance or other adjustments to be made except for setting the force scale on the side of the arm to 1 gram.

response curve supplied with the cartridge showed a flat response (within 1 dB or better) up to 20,000 Hz. However, this was made with a special test record of B&O design in a computer-controlled measurement and cannot be compared with results obtained using a different record.

We also made an extended frequency-response measurement, up to 50,000 Hz, with the JVC TRS-1005 test record. The -3-dB response frequency was about 30,000 Hz, and the high-frequency resonance at about 25,000 Hz was very well damped. The 15- to 20-dB channel separation was maintained up to 30,000 Hz.

Large changes in the load capacitance had little effect on the frequency response of the cartridge. Increasing the load to 440



holding down one of the two arm-slew buttons. A light pressure moves the arm slowly; more pressure increases the speed of movement across the record. The arm lifts off the record when either slew button is touched, and it remains lifted until the PLAY button is touched. The lift and descent are very rapid—almost instantaneous, in fact—but the cartridge outputs are muted whenever the stylus is off the record, so there are no thumps or other sounds from the speakers when the pickup is lifted or lowered.

The PAUSE button also lifts the arm, which is lowered by touching PLAY. If it remains lifted for more than 10 seconds, the arm returns to its rest position and the motor stops. But the exact position from which the pickup was raised is stored in the computer memory for up to 30 minutes; touching PLAY during that time brings the pickup to the same groove it had left, and it resumes play at that point. Touching PLAY while a record is playing sets the unit up for repeating the record after it has been completed; the arm, instead of returning to its rest, merely slews to the beginning of the disc and repeats it (once only, unless PLAY is pressed again). A red light on the end of the light-sensor arm blinks when the machine is in its REPEAT mode. A button marked TURN causes the record to rotate while it is

Since the tangential-tracking arm has no skating-force problem, there is no need for antiskating compensation.

The B&O 8000 is styled in brushed aluminum and black, with rosewood trim and a hinged clear-plastic cover over the turntable portion. Other finishes (oak, teak, and white lacquer) are available on special order. The unit is about 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches wide, 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches deep, and only 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches high. The 8000 weighs just under 20 pounds. Price: \$995.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** Although we have previously reported on the B&O MMC 20CL cartridge (June 1979), that test was of a very early sample in a universal mounting bracket. We therefore made frequency-response and other measurements of the cartridge in the Model 8000 turntable.

With the cartridge outputs terminated by 47,000 ohms and 70 picofarads, the response to a CBS STR 100 test record showed a broad dip in the upper midrange. Relative to the 1,000-Hz level, the overall response was +0, -3 dB from 40 to 20,000 Hz. The channel separation was at least 15 to 20 dB up to 20,000 Hz and typically better than 20 dB in the midrange. It should be noted that the individually run frequency-

picofarads (about as large as is likely to be encountered with modern amplifiers) raised the cartridge output slightly between 5,000 and 15,000 Hz, but the maximum change was no more than 1.5 dB. This shows that the performance of the MMC 20CL, in this record player, is essentially independent of the amplifier's input capacitance.

The arm mass could not be measured directly since the tone arm is clamped when not on a turning record. The low-frequency resonance with the MMC 20CL cartridge was at about 14 Hz with an amplitude of 6 dB. The resonance was rather broad and produced a boost of about 1 dB at 25 Hz but also cut off the phono response sharply below 9 Hz.

The cartridge output was about 2.9 millivolts, with the channel unbalance only 0.25 dB; vertical stylus angle was 24 degrees. Subjective tracking tests showed that the cartridge could play our high-level low- and middle-frequency test records and the 70-micrometer level of the German Hi Fi Institute Record #2 at its rated 1-gram force. With the Shure ERA III record, there was a trace of "sandpaper" quality on the highest level of the sibilance test, and there were signs of mistracking on the two highest levels of the flute and bell sections of the ERA

(Continued on page 44)

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IV record. Other tests yielded results similar to those of the 1979 sample.

The turntable rumble was -38 dB unweighted and -61 dB with ARLL weighting, with most of the rumble energy being at 5 and 14 Hz. The flutter was 0.05 per cent wrms (JIS) and ± 0.06 per cent DIN. The principal flutter rates were 3, 10, and 14 Hz. The turntable speeds were constant with time and line-voltage changes and could be adjusted slightly more than ± 3 per cent about each nominal speed.

The isolation of the record player from its surroundings was exceptional, matched by only one of the hundreds of turntables we have tested over the years, and that one had transmission modes at 100 Hz and higher frequencies whereas the single response of the B&O 8000 was at 30 Hz. It is clearly the champion in this respect. Compared with even the better-isolated direct-drive or belt-driven turntables currently on the market, the B&O offers 10 to 20 dB more isolation, and compared with more typical units its advantage was more like 30 to 40 dB. These figures apply only to the audio range above 20 Hz, but handling and jarring the B&O 8000 while it was playing a record showed that it is as resistant to infra-

sonic excitation as it is to acoustic feedback. The platter, its drive system, and the tone arm are suspended as a unit from the mounting base by leaf springs whose characteristics have obviously been carefully designed to isolate the record player from its environment.

The cycle time, from pressing of the PLAY button to touchdown of the stylus, was only about 4 seconds, and the only sound heard before the recorded program started was a faint whir as the arm slewed inward. At the end of play, about 6 seconds was required for the arm to return to its rest area. Manual slewing over the full surface of a 12-inch record took only about 4 seconds. We would have appreciated more lighting on the record surface as an aid to cueing, but the arm-positioning accuracy is about as close to perfect as one would care to have it. The pickup does not shift laterally when it is raised or lowered, and it will return to the identical spot it left. Furthermore, the PAUSE memory seems to be equally accurate, so that the arm returns, rather uncannily, to the point on the record it had left up to 30 minutes earlier. Because of the muting system, no extraneous sounds are heard from the unit while it is in operation.

● *Comment.* The audiophile who *must* have the cartridge (or arm, or turntable) of his own choice will certainly not be happy with the totally integrated B&O 8000. The phonophile who prefers to "do it himself" may not be willing to trust the cueing of the pickup to an invisible mechanism, even one that is far more precise and sure in its actions than any human hand. And anyone on a limited budget will probably be reluctant to spend \$1,000 on a record player (although he could spend that much and more on many other hi-fi components that would bring him far less convenience and audible benefit).

However, anyone who is interested in playing records with the assurance of the finest reproduction quality, ease of use, and gentlest handling, plus having a beautifully styled award-winning piece of hi-fi furniture in his home, need look no further than the B&O Beogram 8000. In one stylish package it combines the best of turntable and cartridge engineering with total simplicity of operation. We know of no finer piece of record-playing machinery currently available for home use.

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Audio Pro TP-150 Tuner-Preamplifier and A4-14 Speaker System

THE Audio Pro Model A4-14 speakers are self-powered and biamplified three-way systems featuring the unique "ACE-Bass" woofer design that is also used in the company's B2-50 subwoofer. The TPA-150 tuner/preamplifier (which Audio Pro refers to as a "preceiver") is essentially identical to the TA-150 receiver reviewed in the December 1979 issue except that it lacks a power-amplifier section. Audio Pro products are designed and made in Sweden.

The A4-14 is a compact bookshelf-size speaker that can be installed almost anywhere in the room with equal effectiveness. Its bass section consists of two 5-inch long-throw woofers operating in a vented enclosure whose volume is only half a cubic foot. The woofers are driven by a specially designed amplifier that permits them to develop high undistorted sound levels at the lowest audio frequencies (the "ACE-Bass" nomenclature stands for Amplifier Con-

trolled Euphonic Bass). There is an electronic crossover at 300 Hz to a second amplifier that drives a more conventional 4 1/2-inch midrange cone speaker, and there is a second crossover at about 2,500 Hz to a 1-inch soft-dome tweeter.

The two woofers face downward, are located near the rear of the cabinet, and radiate through openings in the metal grille around the base of the enclosure. When the

(Continued on page 46)

BASF Chrome. The world's quietest tape is like no tape at all.

Today, only one high bias tape is able to combine outstanding sensitivity in the critical high frequency range with the lowest background noise of any oxide tape in the world.

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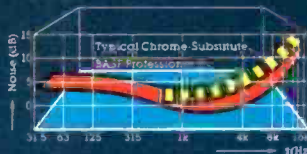
Professional II is like no other tape because it's made like no other tape. While ordinary high bias tapes are made from modi-

fied particles of ferric oxide, Professional II is made of pure chromium dioxide. These perfectly shaped and uniformly sized particles provide a magnetic medium that not only delivers an absolute minimum of background noise, but outstanding high frequencies as well.

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system is placed near a wall, the woofers are so close to the reflecting boundary surfaces that there can be no response cancellations in their operating range. The front-facing midrange driver is so far from any reflecting surfaces that similar cancellations cannot affect its response. The result is an exceptionally smooth acoustic output through the entire bass and mid-frequency range.

The black metal base of the speaker, perforated on four sides for ventilation and sound radiation, houses its electronic circuits, including the two power amplifiers and their power supply and the crossover-network components. The input connectors and a number of controls are on the rear of the base and include DIN sockets for input and output cables, pushbutton switches to connect the speaker to the left or right pro-

blems permit connection to any signal source through phono jacks or terminals designed to accept wire ends (such as most speaker outputs).

There are three knobs on the rear of the A4-14 speakers. The SENSITIVITY control, with a calibrated range from 0.1 to 50 volts, sets the input voltage required to give a sound-pressure level of 96 dB measured at a 1-meter distance from the speaker. The more sensitive settings are used with low-output preamplifiers; the less sensitive settings make it possible to drive the speakers from the output of any power amplifier (the 20,000-ohm input impedance of each speaker amplifier allows it to "bridge" the normal speaker output of any amplifier without loading or matching problems).

The other knobs are ROOM MATCHING

sinks have thermal sensors that shut down the system if the heat sink becomes too hot.

The mid- and high-frequency drivers of the Audio Pro A4-14 are mounted flush with the front board to minimize the effects of diffraction on the polar response of the system. A black foam-plastic grille, retained by plastic fasteners, covers the drivers and extends around the sides of the front board. The top, sides, and rear of the wooden enclosure are walnut finished, and, except for a single horizontal piece of wooden trim, the front of the speaker is black. The Audio Pro A4-14 speaker is 20 1/4 inches high, 12 1/8 inches wide, and 10 1/2 inches deep. It weighs 35 pounds.

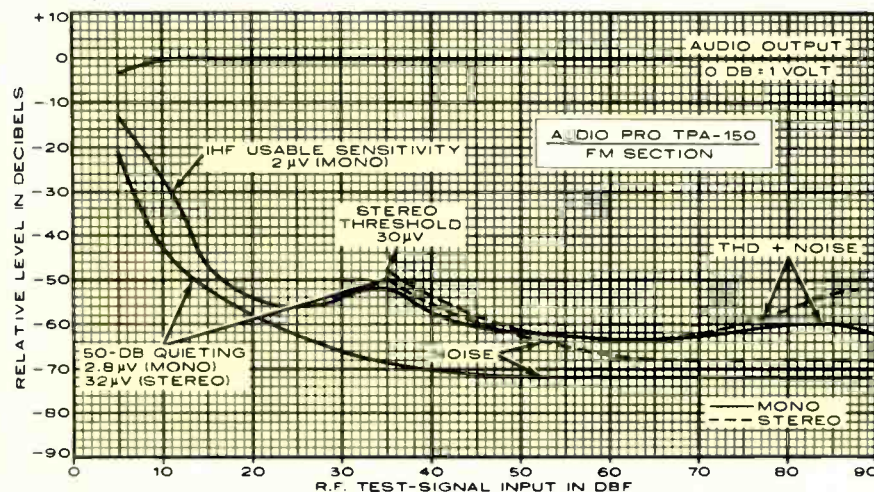
WE used the speakers with the Audio Pro TPA-150, another innovative product from the same design team. We will not describe it here in detail other than to point out that it is the first—and so far the only—receiver designed fundamentally around a microprocessor. Almost every function, including tone control, filter and equalization responses, and signal switching, is controlled by the central microprocessor. As a result, this receiver has only a single large knob, switchable by pushbuttons, to perform the functions of volume, balance, tuning, and bass, midrange, and treble tone control.

The various input sources, including five preset FM channels and two preset AM channels, two tape decks, two magnetic phono inputs, and an AUX input, are selected by light-pressure, positive-action pushbuttons, and pressing any of the input buttons also turns on the power to the receiver (there is a separate OFF button). The tuner frequency is shown on a large red digital display, which becomes a clock readout when the receiver is switched off (or if the TUNING button is pressed twice). The volume-control setting is shown by a horizontal row of red LEDs. The settings of the balance and tone controls are indicated by the positions of a pair of lights relative to the center of the volume display. FM tuning is aided by two red lights that glow with equal brightness when tuning is correct (an AFC system sets the tuner to the station frequency a few seconds after one comes close to the correct point by hand). A green LED is the stereo indicator for FM reception.

The large knob of the TPA-150 operates an optical wheel that sends pulses to the computer to signal the direction and amount of change of the selected control function, but it has no direct mechanical connection to circuitry in the receiver. The all-black TPA-150 (a wooden cabinet is available as an option) is 19 1/2 inches wide, 10 1/4 inches deep, and 4 1/2 inches high. It weighs 25 pounds. The price of the Audio Pro A4-14 speakers (sold in pairs) is \$1,750 per pair. The Audio Pro TPA-150 tuner-preamplifier is \$1,045.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** The audio performance of the TPA-150 was comparable in most areas to that of the TA-150 we measured last year. The RIAA phono equalization was accurate within ± 1 dB from 20 to 20,000 Hz, and it was not affected measurably by the inductance of a

(Continued on page 48)



gram channel, and a BASS BLEND switch that sums the left and right channels below 100 Hz. This reduces power-wasting, out-of-phase response to turntable rumble or record warps without loss of audible bass response. In the AUTO position of the AUTO/ON button, a signal-sensing circuit turns on the amplifiers when an audio signal reaches the speaker. Five minutes after all signals have ceased, the speaker amplifiers automatically shut off. In the ON position, the speaker amplifiers are powered whenever the system is plugged into an a.c. socket. Small pilot lights visible from the front of each speaker show its operating status; green shows that it is plugged into the a.c. line, and red indicates that it is fully powered and operational.

Each A4-14 speaker is supplied with a 20-foot cable, fitted with DIN connectors at both ends, and two 9-inch adaptor cables. When the speakers are driven from a receiver or preamplifier with DIN outputs (such as the Audio Pro TPA-150), the cable is simply plugged into the DIN socket on the receiver and into the IN socket of either of the speakers. The cable from the other speaker plugs into the OUT socket of the first speaker, and the channel-assignment buttons of the two speakers are set for the desired left-right orientation. If the speakers are to be used with receivers or preamplifiers lacking DIN outputs, the adaptor ca-

controls. The bass control adjusts the woofer output relative to the other drivers to provide uniform overall frequency response with different speaker locations. The calibrations refer to the solid angle into which the speaker radiates: the 2π setting is used for wall mounting, which is the preferred placement, whereas 4π is used in a free-standing placement and $\pi/2$ when the speaker is in a corner. The treble control tilts the frequency response at frequencies above 2,500 Hz to suit room conditions or personal taste. It provides a maximum variation of ± 6 dB at 20,000 Hz referred to the "0-dB" or nominal flat setting.

Audio Pro does not publish power specifications for the speaker amplifiers since they would convey no useful information. More to the point, the company states that the A4-14 is capable of generating sound-pressure levels as high as 110 dB (above 100 Hz) at a 1-meter distance. Many full-size speakers driven by the most powerful amplifiers cannot surpass that output rating. The drivers and amplifiers are protected by circuits that sense the energy in the high- and mid-frequency ranges over a period of time and shut down the high-frequency amplifier for 10 seconds if a potentially unsafe condition is detected. Operation is restored automatically after that time. The bass drivers are protected by fuses (inside the base of the speaker), and the amplifier heat



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phono cartridge. The tone-control curves were somewhat unconventional. They tended to affect a large part of the audio-frequency range even when used in moderation, a characteristic that may or may not appeal to some users. The loudness contours boosted only the low frequencies to a moderate degree, and the two filters had 6-dB-per-octave slopes with -3-dB frequencies of 50 and 9,000 Hz.

The audio distortion through the AUX input at 1,000 and 20,000 Hz rose linearly from about 0.0015 per cent at a 0.5-volt output to 0.02 per cent at 4 volts, and the output waveform clipped at 5.4 volts. At 20 Hz the distortion was slightly higher, reading between 0.008 and 0.02 per cent from 0.1 to 5 volts output. The input sensitivity for a 0.5-volt output was 55 millivolts (mV) through the AUX input and 1.8 mV through the phono input. The corresponding overload limits were 5.5 volts and 180 mV. The A-weighted noise level was 72 dB below 0.5 volt through either input. The phono-input impedance was 46,000 ohms in parallel with 80 picofarads.

The FM-tuner section had an IHF usable sensitivity (mono) of 11 dBf or 2 microvolts (μV). The stereo threshold was a rather high 35 dBf (30 μV), which also corresponded to the 50-dB stereo quieting sensitivity. In mono, the 50-dB quieting sensitivity was 14.3 dBf (2.8 μV). The tuner signal-to-noise ratio at 65 dBf (1,000 μV) was 71.5 dB in mono and 68 dB in stereo, and in both modes the distortion at that level was 0.068 per cent.

The stereo frequency response of the FM-tuner section was +1.6, -0 dB relative to the midrange output level from 30 to 15,000 Hz. The channel separation was better than 36 dB over that full range and was typically 42 to 46 dB over most of it. The 19-kHz pilot-carrier leakage measured -35 dB, indicating relatively ineffective

filtering of this frequency from the tuner outputs. The power-line hum was a good -70 dB. Since the tuner's AFC could not be defeated, we could not measure the capture ratio or selectivity. The muting threshold was between 9.8 and 16 dBf (1.6 to 3.8 μV), with the audio level changing smoothly through that range instead of cutting on or off abruptly.

The smoothed and integrated room response of the A4-14 speakers was impressively smooth and flat, with excellent dispersion of the highest frequencies (the response curves from on-axis and 30-degree-off-axis measurements did not begin to diverge until above 10,000 Hz). The speaker's treble control produced roughly the indicated change in output (+5 to -6 dB at 20,000 Hz), with its effect becoming measurable at about 2,500 Hz.

To measure the woofer response, we had to place the microphone at the rear grille opening in the base of the speaker, as close to the cones as we could get without removing the base. The result was an amazingly flat response curve, within ± 0.5 dB from 45 to 225 Hz. There was no sign of the usual woofer resonance peak, and the output dropped off rapidly (apparently at 36 dB per octave) beyond those limits.

To splice the bass curve to the mid- and high-frequency curve, we had to resort to subjective judgments based on the sound of the speaker since the woofer response rolled off so rapidly beyond the crossover frequency that we could not use an overlap of several octaves as a guide to the correct transition between the curves. The final result was a frequency response that was flat within ± 1.5 dB from 36 to 2,000 Hz. When the treble control was turned down to -6 dB, the total response variation was only ± 1.5 dB from 36 to 20,000 Hz, something of a record in our experience with measuring speakers in this manner. However, the

measurement method does not really warrant such a fine distinction, and we also tended to prefer the sound with the "0 dB" treble setting in our listening room (the manufacturer says this is the anechoically flat condition). This produced a smoothly rising high-end response, increasing about 5 dB from 2,000 to 20,000 Hz.

These figures were obtained with the 2π bass-control setting, since the speakers were mounted against a wall about 30 inches above the floor. When we measured the woofer response with the other settings of the control, we found that the $\pi/2$ (corner) setting reduced the bass output by 5.5 dB and the 4π (free-standing) setting increased it by about 3 dB relative to the 2π setting. There were only minor changes in the shape of the bass-response curve near its lower cutoff frequency.

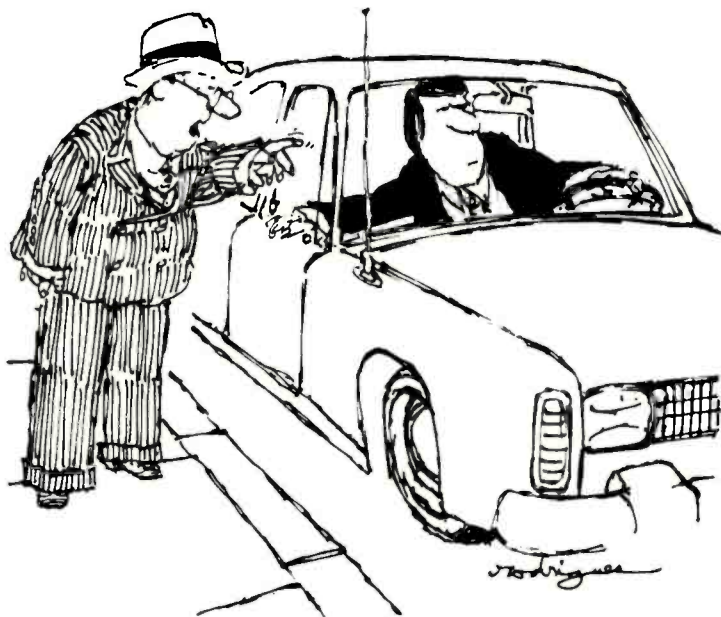
The woofer's distortion measurements also produced some surprises. According to the manufacturer, the ACE-Bass system tends to replace the physical properties of the woofer (its mass, compliance, damping, and voice-coil resistance) with effective values determined by the amplifier design, and to the extent that the basic properties of the speaker have been altered to the synthesized values, its distortion is also reduced.

We measured the bass distortion with a drive level of 0.5 volt at a 1-volt sensitivity setting. The result corresponded to a nominal acoustic output of 90 dB sound-pressure level, one that would require an input of about 2 watts with more conventional speakers. The distortion was not unusually low in the upper part of the bass range, but it remained nearly constant as we lowered the frequency. It measured between 1.4 and 2.8 per cent from 100 Hz down to 25 Hz, increasing to 7.9 per cent at 20 Hz. Of course, the acoustic output at the very lowest frequencies was far below the levels reached at 45 Hz or higher frequencies, but, in contrast to almost every other speaker we have tested, it remained basically undistorted. The speaker sensitivity was approximately as rated, with a 1-volt input giving a 95-dB sound-pressure level at 1 meter.

To verify the claims for the maximum acoustic-output capability of the speaker, we played music through the A4-14s, increasing the drive level and monitoring the sound-pressure level at a point in the room about 10 to 12 feet from the speakers. We obtained readings of 104 to 105 dB, more or less sustained during loud passages, without significant audio distortion. The peaks, which were too brief to register on the movement of the sound-level meter, were at least 10 dB higher than the average readings. Except for its deafening volume, the music was unstrained and perfectly listenable. After a minute or so of this operation, the thermal cutouts of both speakers shut them down, but in a couple of minutes they had cooled sufficiently to resume normal functioning.

● **Comment.** We felt much the same about the TPA-150 as we did about the TA-150 when we tested it last year. Although its FM tuner performance is, for the most part, not exceptional, and the tone controls and filters leave something to be desired, this is

(Continued on page 50)



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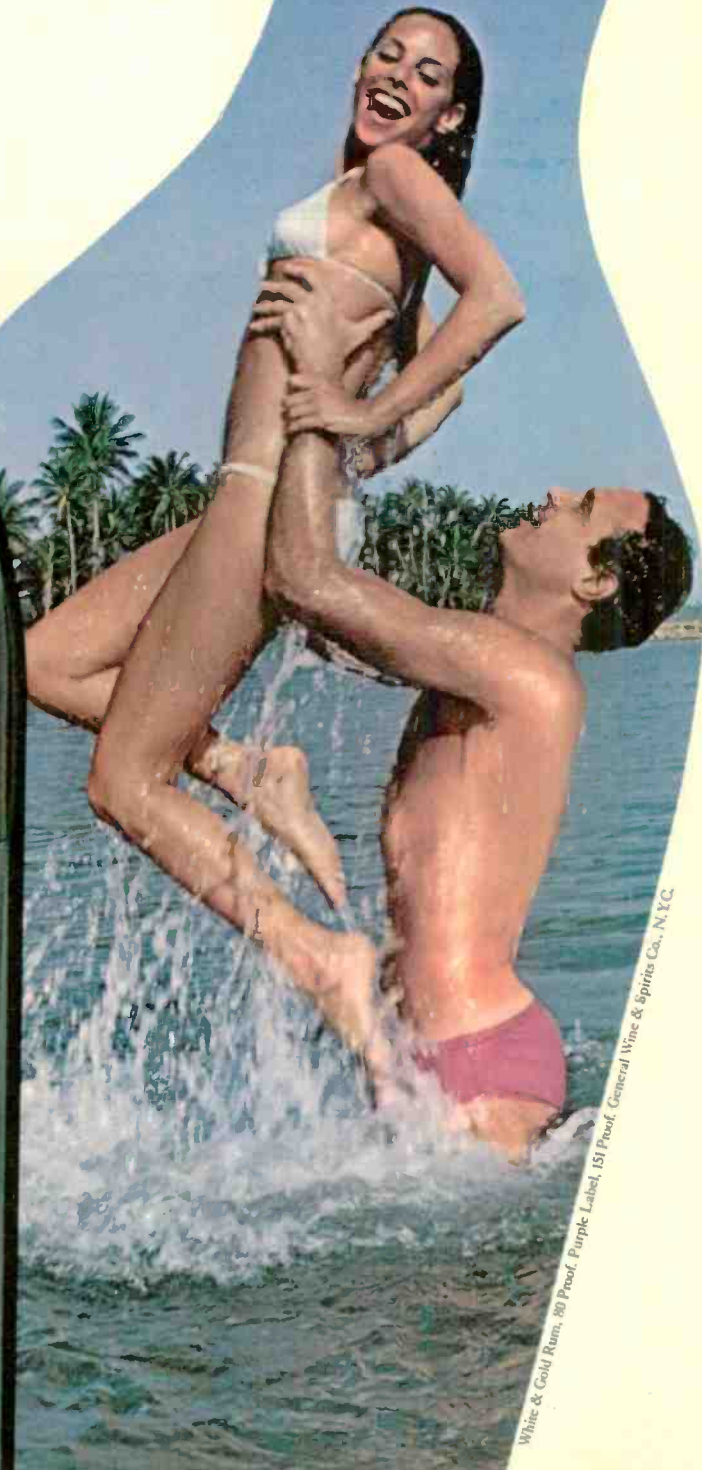
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(in our opinion) one of the most intelligently designed hi-fi receivers on the market.

The Audio Pro TPA-150 is an exception to the prevalent pattern of control illegibility or functional obscurity. Its one large, easily grasped knob leaves the user in no doubt as to which control to turn. The buttons and lights next to the knob similarly leave no doubt as to the function being performed by the knob, and the lights on the panel display give positive indications of the actual settings of each control function even when viewed at a considerable distance. Since the unit steps automatically through the full control sequence each time the receiver is turned on, the operating status of the TPA-150 is clearly displayed whenever it is put into service. The only operating aid we missed was some form of FM signal-strength indication.

The Audio Pro A4-14 speakers were new to us, although we had previously read much about the ACE-Bass design. This is *not* a motion-feedback speaker, nor is it simply a conventional speaker with built-in amplifiers and electrical equalization. The design of the bass amplifier enables it, rather

than the physical characteristics of the drivers, to determine the effective mass and compliance (and hence the resonance frequency) of the system. And because of the amplifier's control of the effective speaker resistance (using a synthesized negative resistance), the usual resonant rise in output is completely eliminated. The use of a ported enclosure (the design follows Thiele's criteria) makes the ACE-Bass design much more efficient than the typical acoustic-suspension configuration normally used in powered speakers, and this helps give it a low-bass output capability that one has to experience in order to appreciate fully.

The sound of the A4-14 is about as uncolored as that of any speaker we know of. The speaker does not emphasize or diminish any part of the audio band relative to any other part. The sound is obviously "all there" from the first moment one hears it, but only with continued exposure does one begin to appreciate how "invisible" these speakers are in an acoustic sense as well as being relatively unobtrusive visually.

We put the A4-14's protective system

through its paces during our tests by playing the speakers as loud as we dared, and then a bit louder. As we mentioned earlier, before any of the drivers or amplifiers can be damaged they shut off for a while to let things cool down. Barring their use by a hard-of-hearing rock-music enthusiast, we cannot imagine that these speakers would protectively shut down in a normal home installation. Our ears were ready to give up long before the speakers showed any signs of distress.

These Audio Pro components are expensive indeed, but in our view they provide solid value both in sound quality and in ease of use. Only time will tell if a completely electronic, nonmechanical receiver will prove to be more reliable than conventional designs. We took a close look at the electronic sections of the speakers, and their quality and workmanship were manifest; in addition, the speakers themselves are nothing less than magnificent in their sound. The overall combination is hard to beat, even though it will leave little change from \$3,000.

Circle 142 on reader service card



Allison:Six Speaker System

THE Allison:Six is the newest, smallest, and lowest priced addition to the Allison Acoustics speaker line. The half-cubic-foot Allison:Six is just large enough to enclose its 8-inch woofer, which faces upward and radiates frequencies up to 2,000 Hz. The dome tweeter, which faces forward, is identical to those used on all other Allison speakers, with a proprietary dome design that gives it exceptional dispersion. Like the other Allison models, the Six is meant to be installed against a wall, in which position the woofer output is most uniform because there are no cancellations of its output from wall reflections within its frequency range.

A two-position switch in the rear of the cabinet provides either a "flat" frequency response at high frequencies or a "slope" response in which the tweeter output is reduced by 3 dB. According to Allison, the latter response curve produces a more natural balance in most home environments.

The Six has the moderately low efficiency typical of a small acoustic-suspension system, but it can be driven satisfactorily by amplifiers rated at 15 watts or more output. It will handle that much power continuously at any frequency in its operating range, and at most audio frequencies it can withstand peaks of 350 watts for 0.1 second, or

60 watts for up to 10 seconds, without damage to the drivers.

The nominal impedance of the Allison:Six is 4 ohms, with a minimum rating of 3.5 ohms. The system's bass-resonance frequency is 59 Hz. The speaker enclosure is a cube 11¼ inches on a side. It is finished in walnut-grain vinyl (optional white or black lacquer finishes are available), and each speaker weighs 17 pounds. The Allison:Six is sold only in pairs at \$250 per pair.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** The Allison:Six speakers were installed against a
(Continued on page 52)

A man with a mustache, wearing a light-colored cowboy hat and a blue denim jacket over a white shirt, is shown from the chest up. He is holding a lit cigarette in his mouth. The background is dark and out of focus.

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17 mg "tar," 1.1 mg nicotine av. per cigarette. FTC Report Dec. '79

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wall of the listening room at approximately the ear height of a seated listener. When the speaker was driven by 2.83 volts of pink noise in an octave band centered at 1,000 Hz, the sound-pressure level at a 1-meter distance from the front (tweeter) grille was 86 dB. This voltage corresponds to 1 watt into 8-ohm loads or 2 watts into the lower impedance of the Allison:Six.

The measured system resonance was 60 Hz, where the impedance rose to 10 ohms. There was a rise to about 12 ohms centered around 2,000 Hz, and in the 100- to 300-Hz range the impedance was about 4 ohms. At 20 Hz and in the vicinity of 10,000 Hz it fell to about 3 ohms.

The frequency response measured in the reverberant field of the room and corrected for room absorption was exceptionally flat from 2,500 to 20,000 Hz, varying only ± 1 dB over that range. The high-frequency level was about 3 to 5 dB higher than the average midrange level in this measurement, but setting the HF switch to SLOPE brought the two bands into close agreement. The response curves obtained from the left and right speakers (about 30 degrees apart as seen from the microphone position) were very similar, diverging significantly only at frequencies above 10,000 Hz. This confirms the broad dispersion claimed for this tweeter. The close-miked woofer response was within ± 1.5 dB from 60 to 1,000 Hz, falling off at the expected 12 dB per octave below the bass resonance. Splicing the low- and mid/high-frequency curves together gave an overall frequency response (with the SLOPE HF switch setting) of about ± 2 dB from 60 to 20,000 Hz.

The woofer distortion was very low at a moderate input level of 2.83 volts (the level used for the sensitivity measurement, which corresponds to 1 watt into 8 ohms or 2 watts into 4 ohms). The distortion was under 2 per cent (and typically less than 1 per cent) from under 40 Hz to the 100-Hz upper limit of our measurement. A 10-dB power increase produced considerably higher second- and third-harmonic distortion, but the woofer cone did not "bottom" or produce any harsh sounds. The harmonic distortion at the higher level increased smoothly from 1 per cent at 100 Hz to about 8 per cent at 35 Hz.

● *Comment.* The frequency-response measurements we made on the Allison:Six did not differ materially from those we have obtained from many other good-quality speakers. Our experience has been that these measurements can identify significant aberrations in a speaker's response, such as driver-to-driver unbalance or crossover cancellations, but do not provide any firm guidance to its reproduction qualities (only the ear can do that). In other words, speakers that measure alike in this sort of measurement do not necessarily sound alike.

The sound of the Allison:Six was quite extraordinary in view of its size (we did most of our listening before making any measurements). If this had been our first experience with an Allison speaker, it would have been even more impressive. Although we did not have any other Allison speakers on hand for comparison, it is apparent from our experience and from Allison's design philosophy that the Six sounds pretty much

like the larger Allison speaker models.

One of the key qualities of the sound from this little box (Allison refers to it as "Le Cube") is its superb balance. The change in the high-frequency sound was clearly audible when we moved the HF level switch, but we preferred the FLAT setting in our rather well-damped listening room. In A-B comparisons against other speakers with considerably greater bass capability, the Allison:Six held its own easily. This is simply a reflection of the fact that most musical program material has very little energy content below 60 Hz. One could hardly ask for a more listenable speaker, or one more completely unobtrusive both visually and aurally, and at a price compatible with the smallest high-fidelity budget.

If one desires, the Allison:Six can be electronically equalized to extend its flat response down to 30 Hz or so at moderate volume levels. The Allison "Electronic Subwoofer" (reviewed in October 1979) will do that very nicely, although it is a bit costly as an extender for such low-price speakers. Other, similar equalizers can be used if they have the requisite response and a steep infrasonic cutoff filter to protect the woofer cone against excessive excursions. Keep in mind that, equalization or not, many amplifiers will not take kindly to driving two pairs of these speakers, or even one pair in combination with another pair of speakers, because of their rather low impedance. However, no added equalizers are really needed to get a full measure of sonic pleasure from the Allison:Six speakers.

Circle 143 on reader service card



Sansui AU-D11 Integrated Amplifier

THE AU-D11 is Sansui's finest integrated amplifier. It features the company's "super-feedforward" design, com-

binning the properties of feedback and feed-forward circuits to achieve extremely low distortion without the potential problems

incurred by the use of very large amounts of negative feedback. The amplifier's rating of 120 watts per channel into 8-ohm loads

from 10 to 20,000 Hz with no more than 0.005 per cent total harmonic distortion speaks eloquently for its design refinement. Few, if any, other amplifiers carry such a low distortion rating over that wide a frequency range. While the audible advantages of such vanishingly low distortion levels are arguable, the achievement is nevertheless noteworthy.

Feedforward is a distortion-reduction technique that has been known for some time but is rarely applied in practice. Like feedback, it involves a comparison between the input and output waveforms of an amplifier. Any difference between the two is, by definition, the distortion, which is used as the "error signal" for a corrective circuit. In a feedback amplifier, the error signal re-enters the amplifier at its input and passes through the stages together with the input signal but *reversed in phase* so as to cancel

outputs, with a rated response from zero frequency (d.c.) to 300 kHz, flat within +0, -3 dB at a 1-watt output level, and a corresponding rise time of 0.8 microsecond. The slow rate of the amplifier is specified at a very high 250 volts per microsecond.

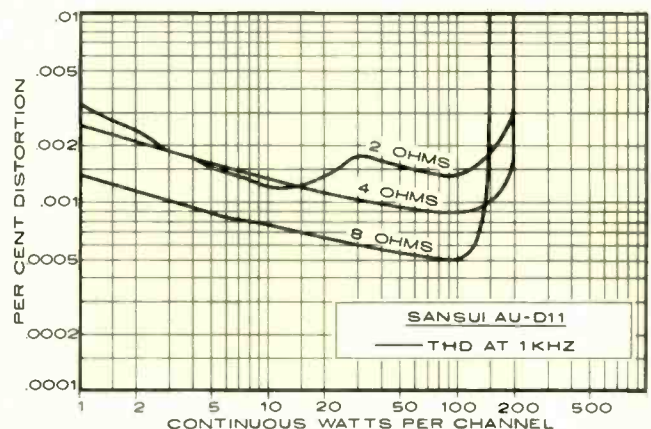
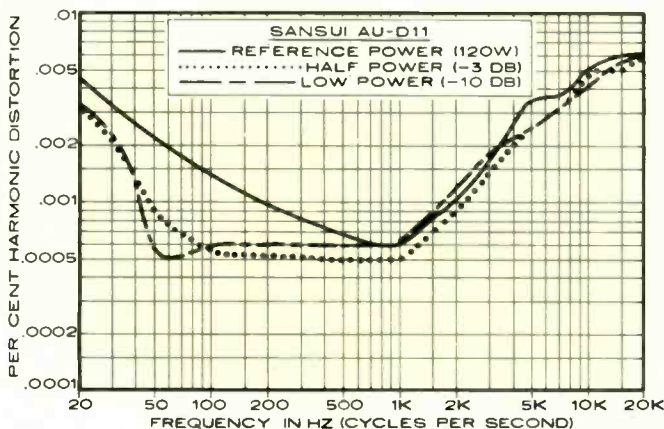
The Sansui AU-D11's front panel is finished in flat black, with black knobs and control buttons and clearly contrasting white markings. Red LEDs show the engagement of any of the unit's pushbutton switches and the setting of the input-selector knob. The inputs include two high-level sources (marked AUX and TUNER) and two phono sources. A small button below the selector knob converts the normal phono moving-magnet (MM) input to a high-gain moving-coil (MC) input, and a second button gives a choice of two gain values for MC cartridges of different outputs.

The AV-D11's output to a tape recorder

until the start-up transients have stopped. The light then remains on and the speakers are connected. Whenever the amplifier's internal protective circuits are activated due to excessive load current or an internal failure, the speakers are silenced and the light begins to blink. To restore operation, the power must be shut off for a few seconds and reapplied.

Four slender pushbuttons, each with its own status LED, complete the amplifier's front-panel controls. The tone button connects the tone-control circuits, which are otherwise completely removed from the signal path. Two filter buttons, marked 16 Hz and 20 kHz, introduce 6-dB-per-octave slopes in the amplifier response at the indicated frequencies. Finally, the muting button reduces the amplifier gain by 20 dB when it is engaged.

On the rear of the Sansui AU-D11 there



part of the distortion in the output. The more of the output one feeds back, the lower will be the final distortion (and the lower will be the gain of the amplifier as well, to say nothing of the possibility of introducing stability problems).

In a feedforward system, the error signal is amplified in a separate, extremely low-distortion error amplifier whose output is combined with the main-amplifier output at the point where it drives the load. By careful adjustment of the level and phase of the fed-forward error signal, it is theoretically possible to reduce all distortions to zero. This is unlikely in practice because of the extreme precision required of the error amplifier and the signal-combining circuits.

Sansui therefore has incorporated the best parts of both methods in the AU-D11, using only enough negative feedback to reduce distortion substantially without posing a risk of transient or slewing-response problems. In addition, a separate error signal is passed through a special feedforward amplifier to cancel the remaining distortion when it is combined with the main-amplifier signal at the output. This being a less-than-perfect world, Sansui does not achieve zero distortion, but 0.005 per cent is certainly close to that mark!

The low distortion has been achieved without any sacrifice of bandwidth. The AU-D11 is a fully direct-coupled amplifier from its high-level inputs to the speaker

can be selected independently of the input selector if one wishes. The REC SELECTOR connects the tuner output or other selected source to the amplifier's tape outputs or interconnects two tape decks for dubbing from either one to the other. It also has an off position that completely disconnects the tape outputs so that the input impedance of the tape decks cannot load a program source. A tape-play button near the REC SELECTOR replaces the regular program source with the playback from one of the tape decks (two small buttons near it select either TAPE 1 or TAPE 2 sources). There is no stereo/mono switch.

The largest control on the front panel of the Sansui AU-D11 is the volume knob, a continuously variable control calibrated from 0 to -70 dB with a fully off position at its counterclockwise limit. Below it is a smaller balance knob with a center detent. The bass and treble tone controls (also center-detented) are near the left of the panel, and each has two buttons near it that give a choice of turnover frequencies (3,000 or 6,000 Hz for the treble, 300 or 150 Hz for the bass). The remaining knob is the speakers switch, for connecting either or both of two sets of speaker outputs or for silencing both for headphone use via the front-panel jack.

When the amplifier is first turned on by the power button, the outputs are silenced and a red LED blinks for several seconds

are phono jacks for the signal inputs and the recorder connections, plus insulated binding posts for the speaker outputs. One of the three a.c. convenience outlets is switched. The amplifier provides no access to the junction between its preamplifier and power-amplifier sections nor any means of interrupting the signal path at that point. The AU-D11 is supplied in a rosewood-grain wooden cabinet. It is about 17½ inches wide, 17½ inches deep, and 6½ inches high; weight is 38½ pounds. Price: \$1,000.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** Because of its large size and weight in relation to its power rating, the Sansui AU-D11 got only moderately hot over its power-transistor heat sinks (which are within the cabinet) during a 1-hour preconditioning period and remained cool elsewhere on its exterior. With both channels driving 8-ohm loads at 1,000 Hz, the output waveform clipped at 153 watts per channel for an IHF clipping-headroom rating of 1.06 dB. The AU-D11 is not specifically rated for other load impedances, but we measured power outputs at clipping of 210 watts per channel into 4 ohms and 200 watts into 2 ohms (the latter was not the actual clipping level, since the amplifier's protective circuits shut it off at 200 watts). When we used a 20-millisecond tone-burst signal for dynamic-power measurements, the clipping point was 135 watts

(Continued on page 55)



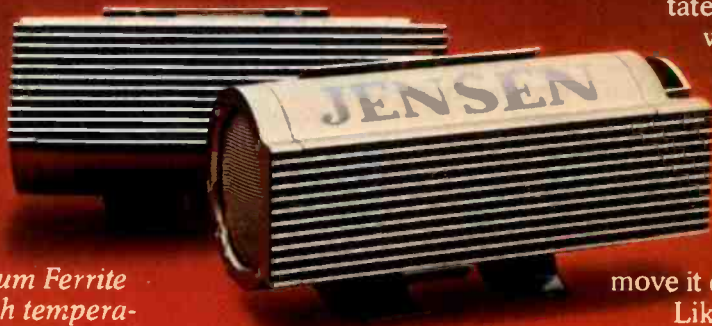
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CIRCLE NO. 22 ON READER SERVICE CARD

into 8 ohms, 257 watts into 4 ohms, and 304 watts into 2 ohms (this, too, was the point at which the protection circuit operated).

The ultra-low distortion of the Sansui AU-D11 was demonstrated by its performance into 8-ohm loads at 1,000 Hz, where the distortion was between 0.0005 and 0.001 per cent for power outputs up to 140 watts. When the AU-D11 was driving 4-ohm loads, the distortion did not change very much, reading less than 0.0014 per cent up to 190 watts. Many amplifiers, over the limited power range through which they can drive 2-ohm loads, have substantially higher distortion driving such impedances than they have with higher ones. Not so with the AU-D11, whose distortion was under 0.0032 per cent into 2 ohms from 1 to 200 watts.

The distortion across the full audio-frequency range was measured into 8 ohms at full power, half power, and one-tenth power. At most power levels and frequencies, the distortion was under 0.001 per cent, reaching 0.0045 per cent at 20 Hz and full power, 0.006 per cent at 20,000 Hz and most power levels. Although the latter seems to be slightly above the amplifier's rating of 0.005 per cent, measurement er-

ror; it measured 55,000 ohms at 1,000 Hz. Measurements were made through the MM input only, although we used the MC mode in listening tests and found it to be perfectly satisfactory.

We made other amplifier measurements that strongly confirmed the exceptional linearity, even at high frequencies, of the AU-D11. A two-tone intermodulation-distortion measurement using equal-amplitude signals at 19,000 and 20,000 Hz, having a combined peak output equal to that of a 120-watt sine wave, showed third-order distortion (18,000 Hz) at -92 dB relative to 120 watts and second-order distortion (1,000 Hz) at -96 dB. The latter is the residual level of our spectrum analyzer; the former is the lowest IM reading we have ever measured in this test.

The IHF overload-recovery test showed a negligible recovery time of 10 microseconds. The IHF slew factor was greater than our measurement limit of 25, and the rise time was about 1 microsecond. When driving a complex simulated speaker load, the amplifier showed no signs of instability, and only a slight ringing on a square wave differentiated the complex load from a resistive load. It is worth noting that all our

high frequencies. But even in the worst case (using a high-inductance Shure M91 cartridge), the response change did not exceed 1 dB up to 15,000 Hz. The "16-Hz" filter began to affect the response at about 100 Hz and was down 2.5 dB at 20 Hz. The "20-kHz" filter began to roll off above 3,000 Hz and was down 3 dB at 13,000 Hz and 5 dB at 20,000 Hz.

● **Comment.** On the test bench, the Sansui AU-D11 proved to be everything its manufacturer claimed. It is an extremely low-distortion, wide-band, low-noise, stable amplifier with almost all the control functions that might be desired by a serious audiophile. In our view, the excellent tone controls, flexible input and tape-recording facilities, and built-in MC head amplifier more than compensate for the amplifier's ineffective filters. The absence of separate preamplifier outputs and power-amplifier inputs did not disturb us, since it is perfectly possible to use the AU-D11 as a power amplifier alone by driving its AUX inputs with the tone controls bypassed. The AU-D11 has no loudness control, but its tone controls can do a far more effective job of correcting for hearing changes at low volume levels than any conventional "loudness control."

One might legitimately wonder why this amplifier carries such a high price tag, and taking off the handsome wooden cabinet provides at least some of the answers. It is a far cry from some of the starkly "basic" amplifiers we have seen and from the thrown-together look of some low-price products. It has an impressive number of components, with no evidence of skimping anywhere, and its internal construction would do credit to the most respected "high-end" manufacturer's standards. All the metal surfaces are copper plated. The massive power supply occupies most of the center of the amplifier, and we counted more than 65,000 microfarads of filter capacitance in its power supply (far above the average for amplifiers of this power rating). Furthermore, the "wiring" between the filter capacitors and from them to the rectifiers is not wire at all: these connections are made with "U"-shaped metal channels, no doubt in the interest of achieving minimum power-supply impedance.

To assess the Sansui AU-D11 properly, one should think of it as a state-of-the-art amplifier built for the most discriminating audiophile, rather than just another high-price product from a large Japanese manufacturer. Assuming that its power is adequate for the intended use and that no serious objections are raised to any of its control features (or lack thereof), we believe that there is no better amplifier to be had today. Naturally it sounds as good as an amplifier *can* sound. This flagship of the Sansui line is an amplifier whose performance, combined with full protection for itself and the speakers, may possibly be equaled (though not cheaply) but is not likely to be surpassed. If something better came along we doubt that it could be measured with today's instruments, since ours were operating at or beyond their design limits during our tests of the AU-D11.

Circle 144 on reader service card



rors at these very low distortion levels are difficult to isolate and avoid, so our readings do not really contradict the manufacturer's ratings.

For a reference output of 1 watt, the required line-level (AUX) input was 26 millivolts and the phono (MM) input was 0.21 millivolt at maximum volume setting. The respective A-weighted noise levels, referred to 1 watt, were -84 and -81 dB, both very low figures. The phono preamplifier overloaded at 200 millivolts at low and mid frequencies, and at 178 millivolts at 20,000 Hz (converted to the equivalent 1,000-Hz level). The phono-input impedance could not be modeled by a simple parallel R-C combi-

measurements were made through the AUX inputs with the tone controls bypassed and under IHF standard gain conditions.

The tone-control frequency response characteristics were good, though quite conventional. Especially when using the 6,000- and 150-Hz turnover frequencies, we were able to apply considerable modification at the frequency extremes, where it is usually needed, with no effect on the midrange response. The RIAA equalization was accurate to within ± 0.25 dB from 20 to 20,000 Hz (this is the limit of our measurement accuracy). When the inductance of a phono cartridge was inserted into the signal path, the frequency response changed slightly at

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Going on Record

By James
Goodfriend



LITTLE THINGS

NEW YORK'S Metropolitan Opera had quite a surprising success this season with a triple bill presented under the overall title "Parade" and comprising a ballet on Satie's *Parade*, Poulenc's little opera *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, and Ravel's operatic masterpiece *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*. The surprise was actually threefold: that the Met conceived the idea at all and then had the courage to go through with it; that, as Donal Henahan of the *New York Times* pointed out, the fireworks on stage were being produced by some of the same performers who have invariably sleepwalked through the standard repertoire; and that the audience response was as enthusiastic as it was and the production sold out.

Such a bill is certainly not what the Met is noted for doing, but, beyond that, it is the sort of thing that, according to established wisdom, the Met is not even supposed to try to do. Its correct area, conventional wisdom says, is really grand opera with international stars, and the experiments, the entertainments, the charming "little" things should be left to somebody else.

Granted, there's a thin line between doing something like this and doing Gilbert and Sullivan or Leonard Bernstein's *Mass* or (to take the final step) *South Pacific*. The temptation to do popular entertainment and get popular acclaim is a strong one. But I think the line is well worth drawing and the usable territory that it encloses is well worth defining. The tripartite idea, though convenient, is not necessarily a must, nor is the combination of opera and ballet. But the conjunction of short, unrelated works is (the Met made a halfhearted and wholly unnecessary attempt to tie the three together); the point of the whole thing is to perform works of real value that are generally not performed.

Accordingly, I have a little list (oops) for the Met's consideration. I don't pretend to have worked out all the problems or even to have established and added up all the timings involved, and it is more than possible that some of these selections may work in different conjunctions than I propose. But my record-listening experience, aided and abetted by concert going and occasional score reading (I am quite conscious of the

irony of that statement), leads me to believe that these are operas (and ballets) that, given sympathetic production, could be theatrically viable for the Met.

I begin with a triple bill in English. Gustav Holst's Shakespearean one-acter *At the Boar's Head* coupled with Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Riders to the Sea*, the two preceded by Sir Arthur Bliss' ballet *The Miracle in the Gorbals*. A French and Spanish evening beginning with either Debussy's *Lindaraja* or Darius Milhaud's *Le Boeuf sur le Toit* (a little Brazilian there) and going on to Manuel de Falla's *Retablo de Maese Pedro* and Ravel's *L'Heure Espagnole* (the most obvious of all choices). Neither national unity nor cultural alliances need be maintained; sometimes a little rough contrast is desirable. And so I suggest an outrageous double bill of Thomas Arne's *Comus* and Igor Stravinsky's *Mavra* (which could be touted around as Co-Mav or Mav-Com, as you wish, to parallel that other double bill).

I would dearly love to see productions of Milhaud's three "opéras-minutes"—*L'Enlèvement d'Europe*, *L'Abandon d'Ariane*, and *La Délivrance de Thésée*—complete operas of molecular size lasting about ten minutes each. This, of course, is barely enough for a third of an evening, but if they were preceded by the same composer's *La Création du Monde* and followed with Erik Satie's *Socrate*, one might have an evening that balanced movement and stillness, fun and feeling in quite a new way.

Do you yearn for a singing evening and hang the action? Try a pairing of Monteverdi's *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (with a little dancing on the side) and George Frideric Handel's *Acis and Galatea*. And what about a Schubert opera (*Die Verschworenen* is a one-acter with beautiful tunes), or Chabrier's *L'Étoile* with its sneezing aria, or Richard Strauss' exquisite *Daphne*? Really, the possibilities are enormous. The Met, I am happy to say, realizes this. Without even consulting me, for next season they have come up with "An Evening of Stravinsky," a triple bill of the ballet *Le Sacre du Printemps* and two short operas, *Le Rossignol* and *Oedipus Rex*. □

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All in all, a pretty substantial package of components that measures a fashionably lean 10 7/8" wide. Incredible.

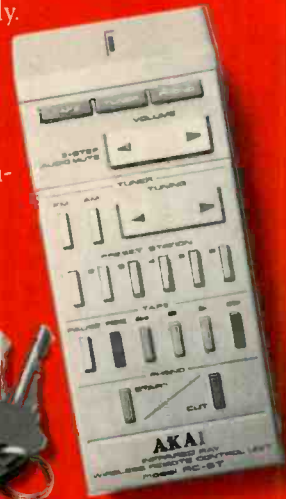
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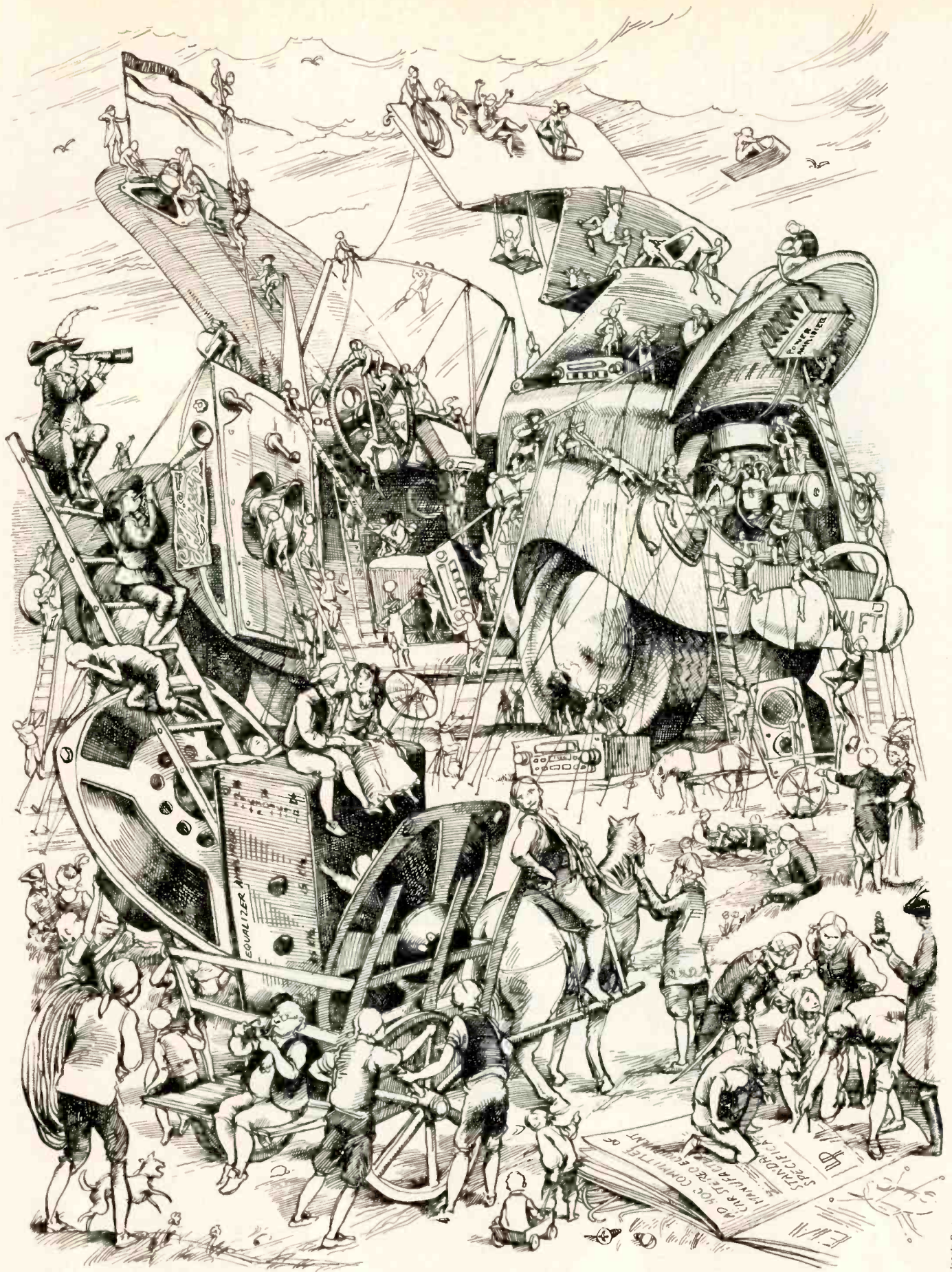
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Lincoln Perry

GUIDE TO BUYING CAR STEREO

A shopper's best friend may be his tape measure

WHEN you set out to buy stereo components for your home, your three main concerns are performance, features, and price. But when you are shopping for a stereo system for your car, your main concern is a simple one: what will fit? In the home, even when space is tight, you can usually juggle things—move furniture, take books off shelves, and so on—to make room for the equipment you want. In the car, you have certain options too: under-dash accessory mounts, accessory or custom-built consoles, back-seat installations (usually in limousines), and so on. But, for most people and most cars, the “radio” hole in the middle of your dashboard or built-in console is usually the only practical place to put a radio/cassette player.

Your first step in shopping, then, is to slim down your list to only those units you can actually shoehorn into your car. Your local car-stereo dealers should know which of the models they sell are likely to fit. The best single guide I've seen is the mail-order catalog put out by Crutchfield (P.O. Caller 1, Charlottesville, Virginia 22906), which lists everything on wheels from Alfa Romeo to Volvo and tells which of the available units fit or can be made to fit in each.

You also have to decide whether you're going to install your system yourself or have it done professionally. Unless you're already used to working under dashboards—and are comfortable making connections while flat on your back with your feet hanging out the car window—you're better advised to leave things to the pros. It's possible to install your own (I've done it a few times myself), but it's *not* easy. If you do intend to put it in yourself, pay special attention to the instructions that come with any set you may consider

buying as well as to the special installation kits available—and necessary—for many cars. Some manufacturers make it easier for you than others.

Next consider what basics you'll want in your system. Like most people, you'll probably want FM, AM, and cassette facilities. But it pays to question yourself a little, even about that. For example, if there are no radio stations in your area that you care to listen to and you seldom travel to other broadcast areas, a tape player may be all you need. (If so, it will probably end up under the dash, because few tape-only systems are designed to fit within it.) If, on the other hand, you never listen to tape, then you may prefer a radio alone. Even if you use eight-track tapes at home or have some left over from a previous car installation, resist the temptation to install an eight-track player in your new car. Since eight-track tapes have an inherently limited playing life, it's time to join the cassette mainstream rather than install a system on its way to obsolescence. Cassettes take up less space in the car, and cassette players are usually higher in fidelity, too, if you need additional arguments.

Radio/Tape Features

When it comes to the question of radio features, understand that the smaller your dashboard's radio-space allotment, the more limited your choice will be in respect to the features available to you. Your listening habits will likely have the greatest effect on the particular tuning facilities you choose. If you rarely listen to the radio or listen to one station all the time, a plain old manual tuning knob will do perfectly. If you

have several favorite stations, then you'll want pushbutton “preset” tuning. But make sure the radio section you choose has enough station settings for you. Some pushbutton setups are restricted to three AM and two FM stations, or vice versa, and some have only one button each for AM and FM. Models with separate AM/FM band-selector switches usually allow one AM and one FM station per button for a total of ten or twelve (or fourteen, as on Fujitsu's seven-button Dashboard Wizard). Each button on Pioneer's KEX-20 can select one AM and two FM stations for a total of fifteen. Sony's XT-1 component tuner provides ten FM stations but no AM ones. And Clarion's PE-959A not only brings in ten AM and FM stations, but brings them in “on schedule,” if you like, with a built-in, programmable timed switcher. You should also be aware that there are several models that have an array of pushbuttons—but none of them are used as station-selection presets.

If you listen a lot to the radio but have no favorite stations, or if you travel often to areas where the stations are unknown, you may want a radio with “scan-and-see.” In the scan mode, the radio tunes its way along the dial (usually in only one direction) and stops for five seconds or so at each; when you hear one you like, you press the scan button again to stop the process. In the seek mode, the radio just tunes to the next station and stops there. These are not only great conveniences but safety features too: you can watch the road, not the radio tuning dial.

You're far more likely to find the scan-and-see function on car stereos with digital tuning. Whether or not you *want* digital tuning is largely a matter of taste—some people find it easier to remember a station by its position on

By Ivan Berger

CAR STEREO===

"The only really useful listening room is a car—*your car, preferably . . .*"

the dial, others by its frequency. Digital has some real advantages, though: since the dial can be small yet still be readable, it leaves more room for other features and controls, and digital synthesis tuning (as opposed to the no longer common analog tuning with a digital display) is less finicky—you're either right on station or way off.

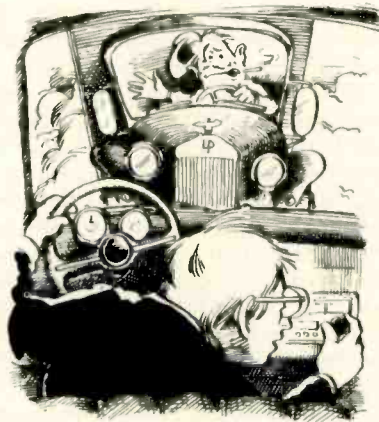
More and more radio sections nowadays have built-in signal-clarifying circuits of one kind or another, such as Clarion's SASC, Craig's Signal Stabilizer, Kenwood's ANRC, Marantz's AIR, Mitsubishi's SRC, Pioneer's Super-tuner Two, and Sanyo's SNC. All of these systems fade gradually (rather than switch abruptly) from stereo into mono as the signal weakens, and they fade back to stereo when it improves. Some, however, do still more: they vary audio bandwidth with changes in signal strength (Craig, Clarion, Sanyo) and even vary tuner sensitivity and selectivity (Marantz).

A few systems go even farther: they switch automatically to another station when a signal gets too bad to listen to. Sony's XT-1 tuner, for example, switches to the next station in a preselected sequence (handy for long trips if you know the order and frequencies of stations along the way); Kenwood models with the ABSS feature find the next strong station and switch over to that, and those with "cassette standby" cue up and play a previously inserted tape when the radio signal fades out.

These features are designed to cope with conditions you don't find in the home—your living room usually (unless you live in a trailer) has a stable physical relationship to a station's transmitting antenna. There are other in-car conditions that might change the emphasis you'll want to put on those features car-stereo units do have in common with home systems. While interstation muting is good in both home and car, muting-defeat switches are a bit less useful in the car since stations weak enough to be muted are usually so marginal that they fade in and out annoyingly as you drive. But a stereo/mono switch is even more important in the car, since you can't readjust your antenna to bring the signal in more clearly, and signal conditions may also

deteriorate in mid-program as you drive behind obstacles or further from the station.

Some tape-deck features shift in relative importance in the car too. Decks that eject the tape automatically when it ends are good to have when your eyes should be on the road and your hands on the wheel. Decks that eject (or buzz a warning) when you turn off the ignition with a tape in place help you keep your deck and your cassettes in better shape. An auto-reverse mechanism doesn't change in importance, but the reasons for it do: at home it's a convenience, but in the car it's also a safety factor that cuts down on distractions. If you listen to tapes of short selections (as most listeners to popular music, folk music, jazz, or even German lieder do),



you may appreciate the automatic program finders that seek out and stop at the pauses in between selections on the tape.

Tape playback-equalization switches are becoming more necessary as more and more recordings are made on chrome, chrome-equivalent, or metal cassettes. Any playback deck with such an equalization switch is "metal-ready" (though having adjustable equalization in a deck that doesn't also have Dolby seems a trifle odd). Any deck can play any of the new tape types reasonably well if you're willing to turn down the treble tone control a bit when necessary to compensate for the boosted high-frequency response.

Dolby is becoming more and more common in car tape systems—and about time, too, since it's virtually universal in home cassette decks and pre-recorded tapes today. It's a little too soon for Dolby C to show up in a mobile unit, but add-on dbx car units are due soon from Rockford/Fosgate and Roadstar (there are no signs yet of in-

dash units with dbx built in). The Dolby circuits in some car-stereo units work on FM too; on others, they don't. And don't believe people who say that the difference Dolby makes is not significant in a noisy moving car—now that I've heard it in mine I wouldn't be without it.

Sound Controls

Many other controls affect both tape and FM listening: volume, loudness, balance, front-rear faders, tone controls, and equalizers. You'll probably use the balance control a lot more in the car than you do at home, setting it to the left to get good stereo-channel balance at the driver's seat when you're alone, centering it when you have a passenger. Cars with speakers in both front and rear need faders to control the front-rear balance as well. The best reason for having full-range speakers front and back is that they make it possible to set the balance so that the sound can be audible at both ends of the car simultaneously without being so loud at either end that it deafens passengers. If you feed those rear-deck speakers from a delay device (available from Sound Concepts, Alpine, and Fujitsu), the car sounds acoustically larger too—a big virtue with today's smaller cars.

Tone controls are needed more in the car than in the home, and equalizers even more yet, for car stereo has to contend with many special sonic problems: road noise, weird acoustics, peaky speakers (or good speakers in poor locations or housings), FM multipath, AM static (a high proportion of all AM listening occurs in the car), and so on. You can, of course, add equalizers to your car stereo later, but you'll find more and more in-dash units with equalizers already built in. The slide controls on built-ins (and most add-ons, for that matter) are short enough to make precise adjustment tricky, though.

Performance

It's almost impossible to get a meaningful demonstration of how a car-stereo system will sound before you buy it. The only really useful listening room is a car—*your car, preferably*—and while a dealer may have a few systems installed in cars for you to listen to, there's no way he can give you an in-car demonstration of each *combination* of car stereo and speakers he sells. That leaves you with the specifications, alas, and those will give you only a very general indication of how well things will sound in addition to being compromised by a woeful lack of standardization.

There's some progress on the standards front, however. The Ad Hoc Committee of car-stereo equipment manufacturers, which had attempted to set voluntary specification standards, has now become part of the Electronics Industry Association, and the EIA has reissued the original Ad Hoc proposal as an interim standard of its own. I've seen the Ad Hoc standards acknowledged only on spec sheets and catalogs from Alpine, Clarion, Craig, Jensen, Mitsubishi, Pioneer, and Sanyo—seven out of the original twenty-two Ad Hoc committee members. I've also seen the same acknowledgments on sheets from Linear Power and Sony, who were not on the original committee. But there's been an impact on many other companies: they don't follow these recommendations all the way, but they increasingly run specifications showing a definite Ad Hoc influence. And there were some companies furnishing meaningful specs (Pioneer, for example, whose latest catalog includes a long explanation of the Ad Hoc standards) long before the committee was formed.

The snake oil runs thickest among the specs for power output. The Ad Hoc/EIA standard specifies that rated power should be the continuous power for one channel, with both channels driven, and that the bandwidth and maximum distortion for that power level must be stated. Some companies still ignore this. Others fudge it by stating power, bandwidth, and distortion separately, with no guarantee that the latter two are measured at the rated power level. Stating output power and distortion together and frequency response (or bandwidth) separately is more meaningful and, thank goodness, more common.

Many manufacturers, though, list power only at a stated (or unstated!) 10 per cent distortion level, but since this has long been the unspoken standard for car-radio and tape equipment, it's a sign of progress that manufacturers now sometimes do at least state it. Many show power both at 10 per cent distortion (to compete on equal footing with competitors who state it *only* that way) and at 1 per cent or less (to satisfy their audiophile customers). There are two things to bear in mind here: first, ultra-low distortion that *may* be significant in a home system will not be meaningful in a car simply because road noise is likely to mask distortion at levels below 1 per cent or so; second, most car speakers are, for sound technical reasons, rated at 4 ohms impedance, so a car amplifier's power specs will probably be for operation into 4-ohm loads (power specs in home hi-fi are almost always for 8-ohm loads).

FM-tuner sensitivity specifications can be read just like home tuner specs—as long as you're reading them in dBf. Figures in microvolts are illusive, since car-radio antenna inputs are 75 ohms, not 300 ohms as those in most home tuners are. That means a car-stereo unit with a rated sensitivity of 2.5 microvolts (or μV) would be only as sensitive as a home tuner with a 5- μV sensitivity—though both would be properly rated at 19.2 dBf.

Other specifications, if you can find them, are stated the same way as those for home equipment. AM rejection is more important in the car than in the home, both because it affects multipath rejection (you can't orient your car's antenna to get rid of multipath) and because your car stereo is sitting just a



few feet from your engine, a potent AM interference generator. (Interference, by the way, is another reason to use a professional installer—he's more likely to know how to minimize the problem.) In practical terms, I consider a power of 20 watts per channel about optimum—high enough to sound good, low enough to be affordable. Anything below 10 watts per channel sounds a little "skimpy" to my ears, and anything above 40 or 50 is pure luxury.

Paradoxically, the higher-power systems are sometimes easier to fit into a smaller car than the medium-power units. The larger amplifiers always come as separate boxes connected by cables to the unit in the dashboard slot—which means that the in-dash unit can be comparatively small. If you're planning on high power, get a system with preamplifier-level (line) outputs and an amplifier with line inputs; the sound will be slightly cleaner than if you feed a low-power system's amplifier output into a higher-power "booster" amp (though even a booster

will usually clean your sound up noticeably). If your budget dictates that you start with a low-power unit, look for one with both amplifier and line-level outputs (what Alpine calls "bi-level") so you can add true amplifiers later.

Speakers

Fitting speakers into your car is both easier and harder than fitting the electronics in. It's easier because there's always *someplace* you can put some type of speaker; it's harder because the spots available aren't always the ones you'd pick to get the best sound. Where the car manufacturer does provide specific spots, they're increasingly likely to take small and unusual speaker sizes, such as 3½ inches in diameter, or 4 by 10. Again, a good installation man should know where speakers can go in most cars and where to seek new spots in those he's not familiar with.

Speakers are available in a wild variety of configurations (a good thing, too, considering the wild variety of environments they have to be installed and operate in). There are naked speakers to be flush-mounted in holes, open-backed baffles to be screwed onto surfaces, and minispeaker boxes on swiveling brackets. There are full-range, single-driver systems, single drivers with "whizzer" cones attached for somewhat improved treble, and multiple-driver systems ranging from two- to five-way. Multi-driver systems are available as separate drivers, coaxial units, or combinations such as Jensen's "Triax" (coaxial mid-range/tweeter in a surface-mount enclosure, plus a flush-mounting woofer). There are also add-on tweeters and a variety of subwoofers.

From the systems I've heard, I'd say the best compromise between sound and cost is the two-way system. The single-driver "whizzer-cone" types are a step down but still good, and three-way systems are naturally a step up. Subwoofers make a difference too—if you've the space and money for them.

Picking the right speaker isn't easy. Take my car, for example: at the moment, I have a different speaker system in each of my doors. One brand has greater clarity, the other has better bass—and because its tweeter is separate, I can mount it where my body (or a passenger's) won't block the highs. I've been riding around like this for months now, and I still haven't decided which set to remove and replace with a system to match the other. About the time I finally do make a decision, someone will probably lend me another set with different virtues that I'll like just as much. . . . Well, I never said the decisions would be easy. □



Rouson's





Notes



Preview for Buyers: **AUDIO PRODUCTS AT LAS VEGAS CES**

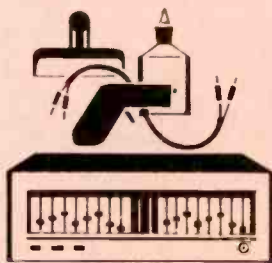
Part 2: Concluding the survey,
begun last month, of the
Winter 1981 Consumer Electronics Show

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A report by
Ivan Berger
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What's New in



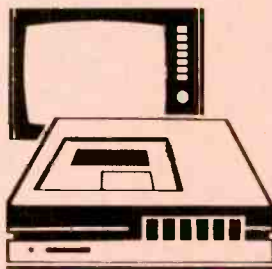
CAR STEREO



ACCESSORIES



HEADPHONES



VIDEO

Car Stereo

The autosound exhibits inside the Las Vegas Show have always been supplemented by others outdoors: cars with super-stereo systems installed (usually involving a trunk full of amplifiers) are parked in the lot between the main exhibit hall and the additional exhibits in the Hilton. This year there were more such cars than ever.

Cheek by jowl with half their competition, several of these exhibitors evidently could not resist the temptation to turn the gain up full. And once a few of the cars were thumping like pile-drivers (for some reason nobody ever does this with classical music) the others had to turn their gain up too or not be heard at all. The resulting din was like living on a city block full of discotheques, so I scuttled off to sonic safety.

But I did notice, as I left the car-fi lot, a moderately posh commuter van equipped with a reasonably but not unconscionably loud system. The exhibitor, Lew-Mark of Tucson, isn't actually in the audio field, but rather offers such vans on a subscription basis to commuter groups. Lew-Mark says they'll use computers not only to match drivers and passengers by routes but by similarity of interests, so they can, if they like, converse. The car-stereo, I presume, is for groups that haven't been successfully matched—or for those sharing musical tastes, taciturnity, or laryngitis.

Another way to get car stereo without buying a car was pointed out by Craig, whose systems will be installed in exotic cars (Clenets, Rollses, and the like) available from Budget-Rent-A-Car. That's the Beverly Hills branch, naturally, though the rental prices (up to \$400 per day) might make it more economical to install a stereo system in your own car.

Judging from what there was on view inside the show, however, there isn't much that's terribly new to choose from. This spring's crop struck me as all too similar to last fall's, and the reason is probably the current economic crunch. The most visible trend was that toward building five-band equalizers into in-dash stereo systems instead of offering them only as separates. Last year, only Panasonic and a few others had such units. This year they're available from American Audio, Audiobahn, Audiovox, Blaupunkt, Fujitsu (not new with them), Kraco, MetroSound, Roadstar, Sparkomatic, and possibly a few more that I missed.

Panasonic's newest such model is the latest version of their overhead Cockpit system, the 710. From the human-engineering standpoint it's the best of the Cockpits, too: the tape slot and digital tuner dial, up/down tuning controls, and power switch are on a downward-slanting panel that faces the driver instead of being out of his line of vision as they've been on some prior versions. Then, as we move back from the windshield, there are the six station-preset buttons, the controls for station scanning and band select, the volume up/down switch (I think it would be better up front, where the Dolby and tape EQ switches now are), a ball-type four-way balance control, the equalizer, and an overhead light. All controls are as flat as possible for crash safety,

and the enclosure's sides are padded. And, though there is a LED-string level indicator, it's way back where it can't distract the driver, though it might amuse back-seat passengers.

Blaupunkt showed the latest version of their Berlin; only the tape slot is in the dash, the other controls being on a stalk which can be adjusted to the most convenient position (in a car with bucket seats, one could even pass control to rear-seat passengers). The Berlin also has "SALS" (a circuit which senses ambient noise levels and adjusts its sound output accordingly), Dolby, short- and long-wave reception as well as AM and FM, and night illumination of all functions. The Berlin costs \$1,300, which may limit its appeal. So Blaupunkt also offers the 3001 (\$630), which also has nighttime illumination (illuminated collars surround the major function buttons) and a remote station-scan and cassette-reverse control mountable on your dash or steering column. Roadstar has a stalk, too, but it controls only a five-band equalizer and booster amp ("60 watts"—no further details).

Three-way face plates are available on some models of the newly restyled Roadstar line, offering a choice of black or brushed-aluminum finishes plus the option of concealing the Roadstar logo for those who prefer to keep the system anonymous. Kraco's Designer series and Marantz's new CAR-330 (which fits small cars such as GM's X-car series) also had reversible face plates. Kraco's had individually reversible center and outer sections for all-black, all-silver, or two-tone effects; Marantz's was wood-grain on one side, a plain dark color on the other.

There was increased emphasis this year on ease of installation. Audiovox was making much of their new Flex and Super Flex installation systems (as well as "Audiolok"—a circuit sounding rather like AFC), Kraco had Dashmaster, Sanyo had its EZ and EZ-C systems, and so on.

ONE trend that I had hoped to see accelerate seems instead to be grinding to a halt: the use of the industry's Ad Hoc Committee specifications for amplifier power (see "Audio News," January 1980). I did, however, notice the specs used on many catalogs and product sheets, including some from Alpine, Clarion, Jensen, Linear Power (amplifiers), Mitsubishi, Pioneer (whose new catalog includes a long explanation of the Ad Hoc specs), Sanyo, and Sony—pretty much the same line-up as last year. There was, however, an encouraging trend toward the use of more detailed—if not quite Ad Hoc—specifications by the makers of some in-dash units and many amplifiers and boosters. But still unspecified by most of the manufacturers who don't follow the Ad Hoc standard are the frequency limits within which rated power and distortion apply.

Under-dash units are growing less common, though both Alpine and Clarion showed new ones. Alpine's 5400 was the more unusual of the two, having a built-in, five-band equalizer/booster amp (preamp outputs, too) with a relay box available to feed an existing radio's output through the system. Both the Alpine and Clarion units had Dolby.

There's also much less emphasis on separate-component systems, Kraco's Stackmaster separates being the only new ones I saw. With cars getting smaller, such a trend would seem predictable. Smaller cars may be one of the reasons for the growing popularity of systems with separate amplifiers, though. Audiovox's new Dyna-Mini (a \$200 system for X-cars and the like) is built that way, and it's just one of many.

Other new in-dash units, though not pointing out new trends, were worth a second look. Jensen introduced its first two electronically tuned receivers, the RE-518 (\$400) and the X-sized RE-512 (\$370). Both have digital scan, ten-station preset tuning, and auto-reverse (a far cry from the days when Jensen stereos lacked even push-button tuning). The 518 also has Dolby, loudness compensation, and a tape-equalization switch. (Some other makers' press releases called such controls "bias" switches—a total misnomer, since playback-only units do not use bias.)

Kraco's new KGE-801 includes weather-band reception, and their KR-1255 converter adds weather, VHF-TV, and FM reception to AM radios. Some of the new models in Panasonic's Supreme series have broadened coverage to pick up traveler's advisory broadcasts (available in some national parks and other areas) at 530 and 1,610 kHz.

While they still make true components, Mitsubishi exemplified the trend away from such units by labeling their in-dash units with separate amplifiers as "Auto Modules/In-Dash Component Systems." Mitsubishi units also feature "pinch-off," a device that retracts the tape drive's pinch-roller when the power is shut off. Pioneer had new models in the Supertuner II series: the KE-2100, KE-5100, KE-6100, and KEX-50. All have electronic tuning and circuits that gradually blend from stereo to mono for reduced noise as reception grows more difficult. And Sanyo now has a "Plus Series" for the car as well as for the home. The series includes new models (and several of last year's) whose performance meets the (unspecified) Plus Series standards.

In sound add-ons, the biggest news was either the first showing of an Omnisonic Imager for car use or the first showing of dbx decoders from Rockford-Fosgate and FAS. The latter are especially timely since dbx-encoded tapes were announced at the show too.

In equalizers, nothing much was new. MGT Magtone had a "parametric" five-band equalizer (actually only *semi*-parametric, since only the center frequencies of each band, not their widths, can be changed) for \$240. Mobile Audio Development showed a ten-band equalizer/booster and a seven-band preamp-level equalizer with reversible face plate; Blaupunkt again showed the BEA-200 equalizer/amp with built-in delay/reverb circuitry; Sanyo showed a seven-band preamp-level equalizer; and Tancredi showed a seven-band equalizer booster, with and without output-level meters (less distracting than the more common LED arrays).

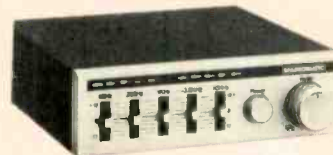
In amplifiers there were two opposing trends. One ran toward high power (100 × 2 or 50 × 4 watts from MGT Magtone, 100



Blaupunkt BEA-100
equalizer/power amplifier



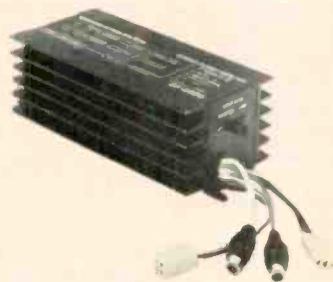
Sanyo EQZ 6210
graphic equalizer



Sparkomatic GE 50
equalizer/booster



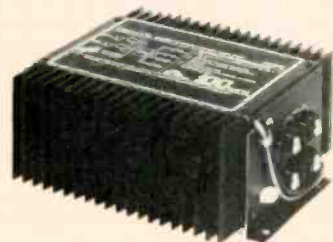
Jensen A-30 power amplifier



Marantz SA-2020
power amplifier



Pioneer GM-4 power amplifier



Sanyo PA611G power amplifier

× 2 watts from Mobile Audio Development, 75 × 2 watts from Linear Power and from Spectron, to mention only some that specify distortion ratings along with their watts), the other toward small size (Mini-Amp's Mini-Mac, only 3/4 inches thick, and Pioneer's new downsized GM-2 and GM-4 amps, which replace larger amps having the same specifications). There is also a growing tendency to include slew-rate among the standard specifications—at least Linear Power, Sanyo (with a 70-volt-per-microsecond rating on their new PA6110), and Spectron did.

I noted no new speaker trends, though some recent ones continue. Many new systems resembled the front of a typical mini-speaker but without the enclosure behind. The rectangular panel of such a system holds a small long-throw woofer and a dome tweeter, while its raised rim allows the system to stand out a bit from the door panel of the car, minimizing the mounting depth needed for the woofer's protruding magnet. Among those with such systems this year were ADS, Avid, Blaupunkt, EPI, Magnum (a three-way version), Audiosource, Visonik, and others.

Another trend is that toward speakers designed for very shallow mounting—a necessity in many current cars. ADS, for example, showed a subwoofer system whose two 7-inch drivers can be reverse-mounted (beneath a suitably distended grille) where space forbids normal mounting. Pioneer's TS-X5 speakers try a different shallow-mounting tack: their surface-mount enclosures face the speakers forward while the enclosure bases open down into the 4 × 10-inch speaker holes in the new "X" cars; similar systems have been seen before, but not, as far as I know, designed to fit specific speaker holes.

STILL another trend was toward higher power-handling capacity to match the trend to higher-powered amps. A.R.A.'s Pow* R*Handler II series, for example, is rated up to 100 watts maximum program power. Clarion's new modular systems have polypropylene woofers with Kapton voice coils, plus tweeters with Nomex coils, to withstand higher heat and other environmental factors. Craig's twenty-one new speakers all have hefty power-handling ability, as does Kraco's new Turbo series. Matrecs points out that they've used ferrofluid (as does Craig) for four years to increase power-handling capacity; Pioneer says their new TS-X11 has a perforated, glass-fiber coil bobbin to improve heat resistance; Sparkomatic uses vented pole pieces; and so on. Heppner, meantime, stresses its high sensitivity—104 dB out for 1 watt of pink noise in, measured 18 inches from the cone—a figure few car-speaker makers quote (with high speaker efficiency, less amplifier power is needed, of course).

The Matrecs Domeplex and the Clarion Modular series have something in common besides heat resistance: removable tweeters. The Matrecs is basically a coaxial unit

whose tweeter can be removed to a better location when required. The Clarions have a sealed tweeter/midrange module that can be installed in the grille of either 6 × 9 or 6 1/2-inch woofers or mounted separately, in which case grille inserts are added to the woofers.

Panasonic may not have a removable tweeter, but it does have one that retracts, a "periscope" tweeter which, like the one on Pioneer's TS-1600 speaker introduced last year, projects above the grille for forward firing when the speaker is mounted in a rear deck. Unlike Pioneer's, however, Panasonic's tweeter also folds down so the speak-

er can be mounted in a door or other panel. The AFS Kriket line offers the option of coaxial, triaxial, or completely separate tweeters.

And if you're not satisfied merely to reproduce music, Antenna Electronics Company lets you make some yourself with their "Whoopie Horn," which can play any of sixty-four selected tunes. These include patriotic, school, country/Western/folk, and pop/traditional themes. Of the twenty school songs included, incidentally, only one (Cornell's *High above Cayuga's Waters*) is from the Ivy League; there may be a message in that.



Audiovox AVX 615 radio/cassette



Jensen RE 518 radio/cassette



Pioneer KE-5100 radio/cassette



Sanyo FT30 radio/cassette



Panasonic RM-710 Cockpit



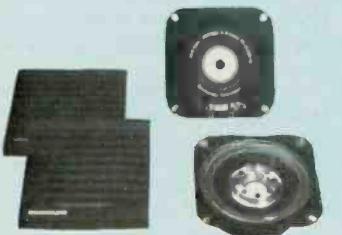
Blaupunkt Berlin 8000 radio/cassette



Pioneer TS-X5 speakers



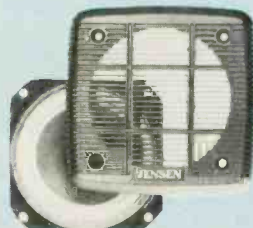
Craig R861 speaker



Sparkomatic SK 400



Panasonic EAB-080



Jensen 4" ThinMount



Altec Lansing AL1 speaker system

Accessories

Accessories have the same relationship to the major products at CES as a sideshow has to a circus' three big rings. Unfortunately, the accessory sideshows are scattered throughout the CES and often hard to spot.

For once, the pile of literature I collected for tape accessories was almost as high as that for phono accessories. Demagnetizers and head cleaners were, unsurprisingly, most common. There's a definite trend toward demagnetizers built into cassette shells—in part, perhaps, because these are easy to use with mobile and portable systems. Hitachi introduced its AD-091 (\$25) and Maxell its HE-44 (\$24). There were demagnetizers in other formats too. Maxell introduced its hand-held illuminated head demagnetizer, an a.c.-powered model selling for \$17. Like the Calibron demagnetizer introduced last year, it has a plastic light pipe to channel light to the demagnetizing tip, and it is long and narrow enough for use with 8-track or slot-loading cassette decks.

There were probably as many devices to clean heads as to demagnetize them. Discwasher (now a division of Jensen) showed its new Perfect Path cassette-shell head cleaner using a dry, non-abrasive fiber-grid cleaner. Osawa's Nagaoka QC-209 head-cleaning cassette (\$8) was also announced.

Panasonic unveiled a battery-powered table-top cassette eraser, the BH-645E, which winds the tape quickly past an erase head. This makes it perhaps the only eraser that can delete one track of a recorded tape while leaving the other intact. Robins showed a new cordless eraser of the pass-through, permanent-magnet type.

Panasonic also showed a cassette winder, the BH-652E, which rewinds a C-60 tape in 60 seconds; Osawa introduced a similar device, the Nagaoka CW-402 winder (\$20) with a 35-second rewind time. Both shut off automatically at the tape's end.

Osawa introduced a few other tape accessories at the show. The PC-507 cassette repair and maintenance kit (\$25) includes a splicing block with 60- and 90-degree cutting slots, scissors, tweezers, small screwdrivers, replacement pressure pads, and replacement screws, as well as a jig on which one can mount the pieces of a disassembled cassette and various replacement parts, including a replacement hub with cassette leader tape already fastened to it.

Phono accessories continue to hold their own as well. Record cleaners, though receiving less emphasis than last year, still got their share: Hitachi showed its first such cleaner, the AD-093 (\$30), a battery-powered brush that fits on the turntable spindle and sweeps itself around the record. Discwasher introduced its new D4 record-care system (\$17) with a reformulated fluid and a new fabric covering on the familiar walnut handle. It's also available as part of a new DiscKit (\$55) containing a pad cleaner for the D4, a Zerostat antistatic gun, the SC-2 stylus cleaner, and space for additional headshells or accessories, all organized in a walnut base with a plastic dust cover.

Osawa had a new kit, too, the QR-202, which includes both a QR-201 cleaning brush and EX-202 care fluid. Adcom re-in-



Signet SK305 stylus cleaner

Beyer M 818 LM matched microphones

Koss "Sound Partner" headphones

Bang & Olufsen U-70 headphones

Audio-Technica's lightweight headphones

Mura Red Set VII headphones

troduced its wet/dry record-care system with a new fluid. The system has two stacked, tubular brushes with a one-way pile, one of which is dipped into a fluid reservoir before use. Canton introduced a number of record-care accessories too, including a carbon-fiber brush that opens like an old-fashioned straight razor.

Sound Guard introduced a new version of its record preservative which is said to furnish increased antistatic protection (charges reduced from 20,000 to 0 volts even after 100 plays) and to lower stylus wear by 30 per cent.

Both Hervic and Signet showed battery-powered vibrating-pad stylus cleaners for \$35 and \$30, respectively. Signet's is long and thin, roughly the size and shape of a fat fountain pen, while Hervic's Pro model is triangular.

Getting into slightly more exotic record-playing accessories, there seems to be a boom afoot in special turntable mats. There's no great agreement about the way they're constructed, however. Some mats, like Discwasher's D'Stat II, Empire's Audio Groome, Sound Saver's Omega One, 3M's accessory mat, and the new mat from

Transcribers, are designed primarily to reduce static charges.

Other mats, such as Marcof's Glass Mat and Micro Seiki's new CU-180 copper mat (\$150), are claimed to provide better sound thanks to their mass and rigidity. Still others—such as Eon's Tripad, the new Platter Pad II (distributed by Monster Cable), and the Platter Matter—take the opposite approach, using soft materials with high damping characteristics. Platter Matter demonstrated its damping ability clearly and simply by placing a salt-covered record on its own and several other pads, then tapping it to show how much less the salt danced when the record was on the Platter Matter.

Dennesen's Isolation Base is a 50-pound granite slab suspended on three pneumatic "isolator pods"; the platform is leveled by adjusting each pod's pressure independently with a bicycle pump. Vibration isolation is said to extend down to 3 Hz. Dennesen also introduced the Pivotram, a gauge to simplify accurate tone-arm installation by showing where to drill the mounting hole. The Dennesen Soundtractor, for setting overhang after the arm is installed, is now avail-

able in a less expensive plastic version. The Elite EEI alignment gauges, introduced last year, are now being distributed here by Platter Matter; two gauges (one to fit in place of a universal headshell, one to fit in place of a cartridge in any shell) are packaged together for \$20.

As another aid to proper arm alignment, Dennesen introduced the Geotractor, a universal headshell that can be adjusted sideways for offset angle, rotationally for azimuth setting, up and down for rake angle, and fore and aft for overhang. Orsonic (distributed by Monster Cable) showed two other interesting headshells. The AV-1 resonance-canceling universal shell consists mainly of two frame rods along which the cartridge mounting plate can be adjusted fore and aft. The SC-2 is an antiskating calibration gauge that fits in place of a conventional cartridge and universal shell. ADC introduced a new stylus-force gauge that uses LEDs behind a transparent panel to indicate the tracking force.

To help snare the wild goose of absolute fidelity, there were special wires and cables for every application. Audio-Technica's AT609 (\$8) replaces wires in "universal" headshells with silver Litz wires (said to have improved high-frequency response) and non-corroding gold-plated connectors. The same company offers the gold-connected AT622 (\$25), a low-resistance cable assembly for rewiring standard Japanese tone arms, as does Peterson Audio Engineering. For component interconnection, Audio Interface offers Missing Link cables (\$25) made of oxygen-free copper Litz wire (and covered in a deep and classy blue); Audio-Technica has the AT610A (\$11) and the AT620 (\$30), also in Litz wire; Discwasher has its Gold-ens (also available in DIN-to-RCA, female/female, and other special configurations); Mendota Research has MR11 Litz cables; Monster Cable has its Interlink; Peterson has Audio Link cables; and Sound Connections has special interconnect wires. All of the above have gold-plated connectors and braided, rather than twisted, shielding.

Monster Cable's gold-plated Phonolink RCA plugs, used on its Interlink cables, are also sold separately and incorporate several good ideas. The plugs' center pins are split and spread to maintain firmer contact. The hard outer case surrounds the ground-terminal "skirt" so it won't spread and lose contact. The center pin is shortened so the positive connection will break before the ground one does when the plug is removed; this will prevent speaker-blowing transients for those who accidentally or forgetfully unplug components while the power is on.

Special speaker cables are more common yet. AudioQuest has its low-inductance LiveWires at prices ranging from \$9.95 to \$4.25 per foot, the most expensive versions being Litz wire. DiscWasher showed Smog-Lifters II, at prices of \$20 to \$36 per pair according to length. Marcof's Megastrand has separately insulated strands. Oracle cable, from Canada, has 770 tiny filaments of

99.99 per cent pure copper per lead. Rus-sound/FMP introduced SC-20 cables made of No. 10 copper wire. Saxton's "Super Sound" is a conventional appliance-type "zip cord," but with clear vinyl jackets and—more important—heavier weights (No. 12 and No. 10 AWG) than most such speaker wire. Sound Connections International has a "bi-metal" cable, claimed to create eddy currents which prevent time shifts caused by different frequencies' traveling at different speeds.

Monster Cable gave the only A-B comparison of its wire, switching between adjacent but not identically placed speakers. The Monster Cable line has also broadened well beyond the original product. There's now a heavier cable (the Power Line) designed to "allow currents flowing in opposite directions to cancel their own magnetic fields."

Speaker stands as well as speaker cables made a showing. Thunderfoot Engineering showed ten new models, eight selling for less than \$22. Best introduced isolating speaker stands covered with elastomeric damping material. Audio Illusions showed Underalls speaker stands (\$40 per pair) and Dress-Ups—acoustically transparent screens, available in four colors, that "visually blend speakers into their listening environment." And Sound Suspenders offered slings to support speakers from a ceiling.

The Soundstick is a new directional-antenna design for FM, a compact rod with a built-in signal amplifier. Its gain is adjustable from 8 to 28 dB. An automotive version will be forthcoming. And Royal American Marketing introduced a combination AM/FM/TV antenna and track light, the Ramco Omnitrak, in kits priced from \$50, bulbs included.

Headphones

The biggest (and possibly the best) headphone news of the show was the continued, almost fevered popularity of the new lightweight models that plug into wearable cassette players or stereo FM radios—a trend evidently fired by the U.S. introduction of Sony's quaintly named Walkman (which was originally, and more aptly, called the Soundabout).

Koss, for one, has just introduced the Sound Partner; it will plug into all these portable devices, afford a special degree of comfort by applying clamping pressure not to the ear but to the bone structure above it, and finally fold up into a palm-size package thanks to ingenious hinging. A small denim tote bag and two plug adaptors are supplied for \$35. Mura also introduced several lightweight models.

Headphones meant to be worn in repose, so to speak, were present but not numerous at the show. Beyer presented three of what it calls "semi-open" designs; they fully enclose the ear with a circular cushion but provide some contact with the outside world through perforations on their outsides. The models are the DT-330 (\$43), DT-550 (\$80), and DT-880 (\$125). All weigh close to 200 grams and all are conventional electrodynamic designs.

Denon, on the other hand, has been working with electrodynamically driven film diaphragms and will shortly introduce the AH-7 and AH-9 (600-ohm impedance, and therefore appropriate for professional studio work) headsets with uniquely shaped ear housings (and a gold-plated plug in the case of the AH-9). The film material is a polypropylene formulation that is claimed to have superior acoustic characteristics.



Video

The impact of new video technology at the Winter CES was evident even from outside the Convention Center building, where a cluster of satellite down-link antennas gave the parking lot a space-age look. Third Wave Communications, Stargazer, Satelec, Hustler, and Downlink were among those shown.

Inside the hall, however, the videodisc was the big item. Of the established Laser-Vision manufacturers, Magnavox was present, Pioneer was not. But Fisher showed a prototype LaserVision player with wireless remote control like Pioneer's, Gold Star showed another, and Marantz and Advent announced that they would have LaserVision next year.

Disc players based on RCA's CED system made a bigger splash—appropriately, since the show came less than ninety days before RCA's units were scheduled to go on sale. In its first CES appearance in years, RCA had eighty-four SelectaVision CED players, set in eight 14-foot towers, simultaneously demonstrating the variety of program material they'll have available. Other CED players were shown by Hitachi, Sharp, Sanyo, and Toshiba. Hitachi's new player had two fast-visual-search speeds (RCA's has one), an optional remote control, and provision for a stereo-sound adapter. Sanyo's player also had dual-speed search and optional remote. Both Sanyo and Hitachi mentioned "still-frame" capability, obtainable by simultaneously pressing both forward and reverse fast-search buttons. The RCA machine has the same ability, but RCA doesn't mention it, possibly because the picture isn't really still; it keeps repeating a four-frame sequence that looks frozen only if there isn't much motion in those frames.

The VHD system, due this fall, was shown by JVC, Panasonic, Quasar, and Sansui. Yamaha demonstrated an AHD digital audio disc player based on the VHD system (and using a compatible player) at a press conference just before the show. Since then, however, Matsushita (which means Quasar, Technics, Panasonic, and quite possibly JVC as well) has joined Sony and officially espoused the Philips Compact Disc system as their digital sound disc, so AHD may conceivably not appear.

In video recorders, Akai's VPS-7350 portable is still the only stereo-sound VCR to reach the market, though others are sure to follow. The general trends in higher-priced VCRs are toward high-speed visible search (the greatest convenience in VCRs since fast-forward, in my opinion) and more elaborate remote controls than the simple remote pause controls of earlier machines. Hitachi, JVC, Magnavox, Panasonic, and Sanyo all showed such machines, and Toshiba showed a Beta portable with seventeen-times fast search (faster than any VHS machine can boast).

The coming trend in low-price VCRs, however, is toward "no-frills" models designed to compete in price with the new videodisc players (currently priced at \$500 to \$750). Quasar showed one such model with a list price of \$695, and others are due soon.



Clockwise from top left: Magnavox's Magnavision videodisc player, Panasonic's VHD videodisc player, Sansui's VHD videodisc player, Gurdorf's Model 1935 home entertainment center, and RCA's SelectaVision videodisc player.

Other new video products were audio-oriented. There was an announcement that Variable Speech Control (already used by JVC) is now also licensed to Aiwa, GE, Panasonic, and Sony. With VSC, videotapes played at speeds faster than those they were recorded at can still be understood. That's more than a convenience: VSC claims that learning from material heard at twice normal speed is both easy and efficient.

For cable viewers, there were several converters to bring in special cable channels. Magnavox's \$27.50 model switches mid-band channels A through I and super-band channels J through W onto UHF frequencies. Magnavox's CTC5R remote converter has its own wireless remote controller. Bruce Instruments, Marshall Electronics, and Guardian Electronics showed similar converters.

With video systems beginning to include regular and projection-screen receivers, videotape and videodisc, games, and computers, some way to select and route signals is needed for the complex setups. Switchers of varying complexity were shown by Distri-vid, Amco, HMS, Superex, VideoMate, Marshall, and others. These switchers route signals from antennas and cable systems as well as radio-frequency signals from other video sources; HMS Electronics, in fact, showed a switcher for both video and audio signals.

Like audio, video is spawning signal-pro-

cessor accessories, a few of which will also be familiar to audiophiles. The KLH DNF 1201A Dynamic Noise Filter is now being promoted for video-sound noise reduction too. Superex showed their GEM-100 video equalizer, used to enhance luminescence, color, and contrast by boosting various video-signal frequencies.

In receivers, Advent came up with one of those "why didn't I think of that?" solutions to the problem of fitting a projection set into a room: the screen of their new \$2,500 VBT 100 simply folds down to form a table top. RCA announced its first projection system, a 50-inch model. Fisher showed a video and TV line, including a rear-projection system. Hitachi introduced a \$3,300 front-projection system with a 50-inch screen and a pair of two-way speaker systems. MGA/Mitsubishi showed a similar model, a \$4,500 unit with doors that cover the screen when it is not in use; its two sets of speakers each have separate amplifiers for, of course, stereo use.

Panasonic introduced the CT-5511, a 5-inch color set with direct video and audio input and output jacks that permit it to be used as a video monitor (or, for that matter, as a TV tuner) for about \$430. Most interesting to audiophiles, perhaps, will be the prototype TV sets shown by Fisher. A 26-inch console had stereo sound with two-way speakers and a speaker defeat switch, presumably in case you want to route the sound to your audio system's speakers. □

STEREO REVIEW'S SELECTION OF RECORDINGS OF SPECIAL MERIT

BEST OF THE MONTH



● Emmylou Harris' "Evangeline": Inspired Programming ●

BOY, howdy! The first side of "Evangeline," Emmylou Harris' new effort for Warner Bros., is simply awesome music making, the most impressive half of an album I've heard—honestly—since side two of "Abbey Road." It starts with *I Don't Have to Crawl*, a fine mood piece by Rodney Crowell, and shifts niftily into *How High the Moon* (!), with Albert Lee (electric guitar), Tony Rice (acoustic guitar), and Ricky Skaggs (mandolin) taking turns paying homage to those great licks Les Paul invented so that Jerry Douglas can make a summary statement on the *dobro*, of all instruments. Beautiful. (If Mary Ford could've sung the way Emmylou sings here, my whole childhood would have been different.) Then comes *Spanish Johnny*, a truly haunting (and seldom played) old Paul Siebel song in a version even better than Ian Tyson's (which I have on a much-cherished Canadian album I've about worn out). If Emmylou, with Waylon Jennings singing a larger-than-life harmony, doesn't raise hairs on the back of your neck with this one, you're just dead. And then another surprise: John Fogarty's *Bad Moon Rising*, one of the best examples of Creedence Clearwater's simplicity and goodness. The side ends with the fine, countrified title song by Robbie Robertson.

The second side was, I thought at first, a letdown. But then I listened some more. It is, in fact, the other half of a yin-yang proposition. Where the first side comes out and grabs you so that you have to just sit there and dote on it, the second side wants you to have

a little patience and do a little work. Songs like James Taylor's *Millworker* and Rodney Crowell's *Ashes By Now* (I like this version better than Rodney's own) aren't about to grab anyone, but they will reward your purposeful involvement. *Mister Sandman* (!) might easily be considered a repertoire goof, but it's given such a classy treatment that older listeners may even forget how lousy the McGuire Sisters were. (All is forgiven! Silly old song, come home!) I still have trouble with the melody of Bill Payne's *Oh Atlanta*—the use of interval seems a bit whopper-jawed—but even there you get exem-

EMMYLOU HARRIS: *Evangeline*. Emmylou Harris (vocals, guitar); Frank Reckard (guitar); Albert Lee (guitar, piano); Ricky Skaggs (guitar, mandolin, fiddle); Emory Gordy (bass); John Ware (drums); other musicians. *I Don't Have to Crawl*; *How High the Moon*; *Spanish Johnny*; *Bad Moon Rising*; *Evangeline*; *Hot Burrito #2*; *Millworker*; *Oh Atlanta*; *Mister Sandman*; *Ashes By Now*. WARNER BROS. BSK 3508 \$7.98, © M5 3508 \$7.98, © M8 3508 \$7.98.

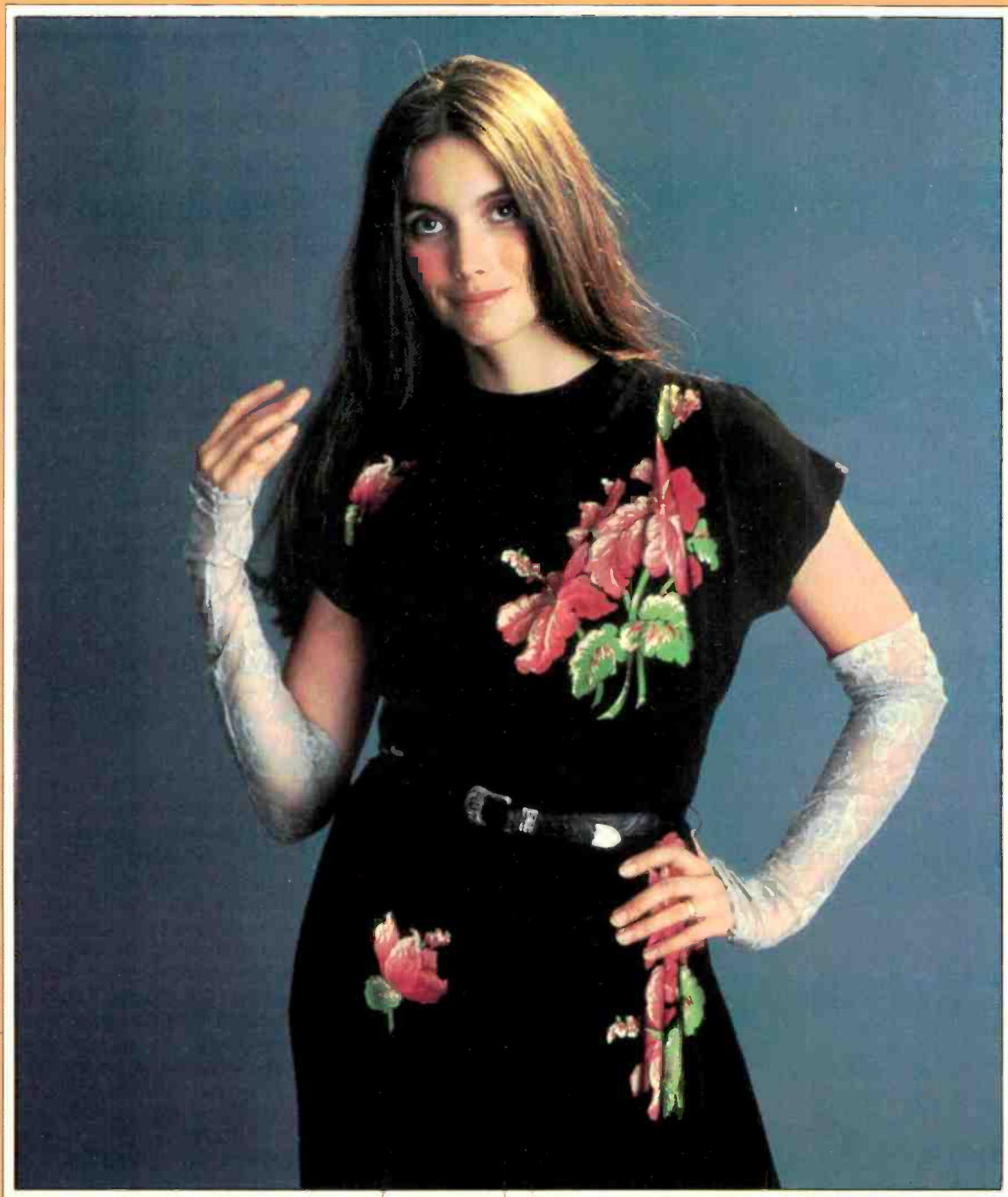
plary singing and playing. I do wonder a bit just what it is Emmylou sees in such songs to inspire her to include one of them in each of her albums, but her other programming choices are so in-

spired and turn up so many pleasant surprises that it would be crazy to quarrel with her methods (the influence of the folk-song/troubadour ethos that prevailed in her formative years probably lies behind them). In any event, she is one of the few singers around now who give the (probably accurate) impression that they won't do songs they don't identify with, let alone don't like, even if it means going without hits.

Having chosen the songs, one still has to sing them, of course. Harris does not have the so-called "rock voice" to the degree that, say, Linda Ronstadt does, but she seems to know what a song needs, recognizing, for example, that a tune like *Bad Moon Rising* is a workout for an ensemble, not a showcase for a singer. Even so, like Jerry Lee Lewis, she is adept at slipping in a useful nuance on the fly in such songs. And in something such as *Spanish Johnny*, which has more melody, more options for the singer, she has superb equipment to draw upon. Along with textual identification and fine musical instincts, she has a lovely tone and delicious phrasing that make such songs seem to be written for her.

And too, she continues to front one of the best ensembles going. In addition to Skaggs, the all-round instrumentalist, this new album features no fewer than five of my favorite guitar players: Frank Reckard and Albert Lee, who worked such understated wonders in Roseanne Cash's first album, Elvis luminary James Burton (on the opening cut), Tony Rice on acoustic, and (on *Ashes By Now*) Ian Tyson's former

"She is one of the few singers around who . . . won't do songs they don't identify with."



Emmylou Harris

(Photo courtesy of Warner Bros. Records)



Carlbert Artists Management

CHRISTOPH VON DOHNÁNYI: responding to the coloristic

STRAVINSKY: *The Firebird (Complete Ballet, 1910)*. Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Christoph von Dohnányi cond. LONDON ① LDR 10012 \$10.98, © LDR5 10012 \$10.98.

Kubelik's *Freischütz*: Lovingly Conducted Realization of a Glorious Score

It is hardly surprising that Carl Maria von Weber's opera *Der Freischütz*, thoroughly steeped as it is in German traditions and folklore, has never become part of the international standard repertoire. Further, since the work was introduced 160 years ago (June 18, 1821), we might as well face the fact that it never will. But at least we have several recorded versions—all of German origin, of course—to remind us more than once that *Der Freischütz* abounds in gorgeous, frequently virtuosic orchestral writing, in inspired atmospheric tone painting of nature, and in beautifully laid-out arias and ensembles. Even the libretto, taken on its own terms, is quite decent. All in all, then, a masterpiece.

The excellence of nearly all the previous recorded versions is proof of the esteem in which the opera is held in Europe. The latest version comes from London; lovingly conducted by Rafael Kubelik and (with one exception) splendidly sung, it is perhaps the best of them all. Right from the start, in the justly famed overture, Kubelik captures the aura of ominous tension that hangs over much of this opera. His leadership never fails to bring out the rich orchestral sonorities, the ingenious details of the instrumentation, the incisive instrumental underlining of the recitatives, or the Beethoven-like power of the dramatic scenes. Though he does not quite match the hair-trigger precision Carlos Kleiber achieves in his rival set for Deutsche Grammophon (2709 046), he avoids his colleague's occasional tempo extremes and his overall view is warmer, more human. His orchestra supports him splendidly: the important flute, viola, and cello solos are impressive, the horns nothing short of magnificent.

Laudably, the troublesome "tradition" of having actors supply the spoken dialogues is dispensed with here. Sensibly reduced (as they usually are),

sideman, Amos Garrett. But there's no showing off in the "Evangeline" instrumentals, no lick that does not serve a purpose. There are, in fact, a number of dazzling runs that serve very good purposes indeed, and they lead me to think that musicians are going to like this album as much as normal people will. If I could afford only one album released so far in 1981, this would be it.

—Noel Coppage

become all but palpable in the recording, so rich is it in detail and sensual sonic ambiance. It is, in fact, to the coloristic and sensual elements in this work that Dohnányi seems to respond most, and not, thank goodness, at the expense of rhythmic vitality. He neither dawdles nor plays with the music, with the result that the *Firebird* has never soared and fluttered more seductively, nor have Kastchei and his minions with their haunted carillon ever seemed quite so eerie and so terrifying as they are here.

Beyond all these atmospherics, Dohnányi pays loving attention to melodic content, giving the heady Russian-folk-song flavor that permeates this score a pleasurable prominence it seldom enjoys. Appropriately, there is dynamic range aplenty and at every point, separately and collectively, in the spectrum, but, as always in the best digital mastering (and superior pressing), it is the fine detail in the sound of the percussive and plectral overtones that adds that vital something extra. It's all here, presented in the most opulent fashion by the Vienna Philharmonic in peak form. I won't throw out my Stravinsky and Boulez recordings of the music, but this new London disc I'll certainly keep. And for the Stravinsky fan who is also a sound buff, the record is simply a must.

—David Hall

Stravinsky's *Firebird*: Its Rich Sonic Detail Is a Natural for Digital Recording

WITH all its orchestral bangles, baubles, and beads, the complete 1910 *Firebird* score is a natural for digital mastering, as is gorgeously evident from the very opening of London's new version with Christoph von Dohnányi and the Vienna Philharmonic. The darkness and the "fancy lights" of the mysterious introduction

they are instead handled by the capable cast. Hildegard Behrens, a fine Agathe, lacks the radiance of Gundula Janowitz in the Deutsche Grammophon version, but she communicates a more evident emotional involvement. Her appealing timbre is properly contrasted with that of the charming Ännchen of Helen Donath, who displays a nice sense of humor in her third-act aria. The evil Kaspar comes vividly to life in the solid tones and assertive villainy of Peter Meven, and the superb contributions of Wolfgang Brendel (Ottokar) and Kurt Moll (the Hermit) make the opera's finale unforgettable. René Kollo's sense of the role of Max is well conceived, but his tonally charmless and frequently labored singing falls below the admirable standard set by the rest of the ensemble. The recorded sound, though analog, is superior to that in London's digital release of Janáček's *From the House of the Dead* (reviewed on page 118), and the annotations by Rodney Milnes are excellent.

All three currently available versions of *Der Freischütz* do justice to Weber's glorious score. The Deutsche Grammophon set has much to recommend it, but its Max (Peter Schreier) is less than perfect too, and its Kaspar is inferior to Meven's here. The Angel version (S-3748) has the best Max (Nicolai Gedda) and a very good Kaspar (Walter Berry), but the role of Agathe (Birgit Nilsson) is miscast. All this may add up to a pleasant puzzle for the buyer, but the new London set perhaps has the overall edge. —George Jellinek

WEBER: *Der Freischütz*. Hildegard Behrens (soprano). Agathe: Helen Donath (soprano). Ännchen: Peter Meven (bass). Kaspar: René Kollo (tenor). Max: Kurt Moll (bass). Hermit: Hermann Sapell (baritone). Kilian: Raimund Brumbach (baritone). Kuno: Wolfgang Brendel (baritone). Ottokar: Rolf Boysen (speaker). Samiel; others: Bavarian Radio Chorus and Orchestra. Rafael Kubelik cond. LONDON OSA 13136 three discs \$29.94, ©OSA5 13136 \$29.94.

Leon Ware Steps Out: "Rockin' You Eternally" Is a Fine Showcase For a Fine Songwriter

Leon Ware is an artist whose name always rings a bell somewhere at the back of my mind, but the little tin-



RAFAEL KUBELIK: capturing the aura of ominous tension

kle has never swelled to an outright jangle of recognition. No wonder: his most outstanding rhythm-and-blues contributions to date have usually been recorded by the Isley Brothers, Kim Weston, Johnny Nash, Ike and Tina Turner, the Righteous Brothers, and Michael Jackson. Ware himself remained mostly in the background until 1974, when he was featured on Quincy Jones' excellent album "Body Heat" (A&M SP-3617) singing his *If I Ever Lose This Heaven* in a memorable duet with the late Minnie Riperton. This fine composition became a pop standard when it was picked up by the Average White Band and others, but, though acclaim was lavished on the song, its creator remained in the shadows, the albums he made under his own name never quite catching fire.

There may in fact have been some little tendency on Ware's part to avoid the limelight, as the story of Marvin Gaye's 1976 hit "I Want You" (Tamla T6-342S1) suggests. Ware was then working for Motown, and the album had been designed to showcase all his talents—composing, singing, and producing. The tracks had indeed already been laid down with Ware's vocals, but at the last minute he decided it would be more beneficial to his career if a star of Gaye's stature sang his songs. Ware's vocals were erased and Gaye

went on to chalk up another best seller.

Now, however, the time has evidently arrived for Leon Ware to step out as his own man. His new album, "Rockin' You Eternally," is a worthy vehicle to do it with, for it fully captures his gift for composing buoyant songs with engaging melodies and imaginative shifts of key. An accomplished producer, he knows how to manipulate all the aural elements to achieve a rich, harmonious balance, but the real treat is his vocal performances: he is quite likely the most sensual and original male singer to emerge since Marvin Gaye packed up his sack of woes and sought seclusion in London.

Though Ware has suffered in the past from comparison with Gaye, he might well benefit now from that superstar's continuing absence from the recording scene. Like Gaye, he has a keenly discriminating ear for nuance and inflection, and he uses it to tease us with the pauses, the slurred spaces between notes, building up an almost palpable tension. Unlike Gaye, who is a master of the taut falsetto style of singing, Ware most often stays in his natural register to produce a roundly masculine sound. Thus, though there are intermittent suggestions of Gaye in timbre and in texture, Ware actually sings in a voice of his own.

(Continued on page 76)

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8 mg. "tar", 0.8 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.

Although the songs in this new release seldom achieve the high level of *If I Ever Lose This Heaven*, they are well within that quality range, especially *Baby Don't Stop Me Now*, *Sure Do Want You Now*, and *In Our Garden*, the last being a message song reminiscent of Gaye's *What's Going On*. Yes, I think it is clearly time for Leon Ware.

—Phyl Garland

LEON WARE: *Rockin' You Eternally*. Leon Ware (vocals); instrumental accompaniment. *A Little Boogie (Never Hurt No One)*; *Baby Don't Stop Me*; *Sure Do Want You Now*; *Our Time*; *Rockin' You Eternally*; *Got to Be Loved*; *In Our Garden*. ELEKTRA 6E-332 \$7.98. © TCS-332 \$7.98. ©ET8-332 \$7.98.



Ann Meurer/Philo Records

Jean Redpath

sides of the time), also supplies much fascinating information about Burns and his period (1759-1796) set down in a highly entertaining style, plus complete texts of everything. As for Miss Redpath, she has long since earned her just reputation as the foremost traditional singer of Scotland, and she confirms it again here. She is, quite simply, wonderful. This is a worthy successor to Volume One; may there be many more like it.

—Paul Kresh

JEAN REDPATH: *The Songs of Robert Burns*. *Had I the Wye*; *Nine Inch Will Please a Lady*; *Beware o' Bonnie Ann*; *The Cooper o' Cuddy*; *Sweetest May*; *A Parcel of Rogues in a Nation*; *Auld Lang Syne*; *Hey How Johnie Lad*; *Mary Morison*; *The Dusty Miller*; *Steer Her Up*; *It Was A' for Our Rightfu' King*; *Sae Flaxen Were Her Ringlets*. Jean Redpath (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. PHILO PH 1048 \$7.98.

Jean Redpath Sings Robert Burns: Mostly Sweet, but Sometimes Salty

THAT Robert Burns! What a gifted and complicated fellow he was! They never told us in school that the man who wrote all those bright, boring little ballads about the "bonnie green braes" was also a bit of a rip who could make the ears of eighteenth-century listeners burn with double-entendres and ribald references to their unreferables. Not to worry, however, for we are given

another opportunity to fill in the blanks with a second volume of songs by Burns put together by Jean Redpath. She gamely sings them all, innocent plaints of love such as *Sweetest May*, patriotic ditties like *It Was A' for Our Rightfu' King*, verses that could be sung "before ladies," such as *Sae Flaxen Were Her Ringlets*, and others that could not (one is called *Nine Inch Will Please a Lady*, but the poet also supplied a more "delicate" set of lyrics for the same air), and even the familiar *Auld Lang Syne* set to an unfamiliar traditional tune.

The album, which bursts with infectious music (the poet found his melodies everywhere, in tune books, in the street ballads of Edinburgh, in broad-

João Carlos Martins Is Back with a Dazzling Recording of Bach's Partitas

WELL, the art of playing Bach on the piano is not dead. Quite the contrary, it is alive and extraordinarily lively in the hands of the Brazilian pianist João Carlos Martins who, with a sensational new recording of Bach's

LEON WARE: *the most sensual and original male singer since Marvin Gaye*



Jack Sallow



JOÃO CARLOS MARTINS: *personal and expressive tempos*

partitas (the first album of a projected set of the complete Bach for clavier), caps a remarkable comeback to active performance. Martins, who made his initial impact almost twenty years ago with *The Well Tempered Clavier*, injured his arm playing soccer in 1970 and was inactive for several years. His rumored return is obviously a fact, and, to judge by this recording, he has lost none of his old ability to startle and move us.

On the technical side—both playing and recording—this Arabesque set is impressive. The digital sound is excellent, and what it reproduces is the clearest, most articulated and vital keyboard playing you have ever heard. This accomplishment is not *purely* technical, of course: Martins' powers of articulation and phrasing, as great as those of any pianist around today, are everywhere exercised in the service of his compelling musical conceptions.

I am not always in agreement with those conceptions. The basic idea of a strong, articulated, (mostly) strict eighth-note movement is unarguable, even though some of Martins' variations within a tempo do seem capricious. (Only popular and folk musicians seem to have mastered the trick—widespread in the Baroque period and in any dance-derived music—of playing rubato or articulating phrases across the

barline.) My objection is rather that the dance origins of much of this music are mostly ignored. A slow *Gigue*, for example, is a contradiction in terms. All the partitas have an *Allemande* followed by a *Courante* as their second and third movements (essentially a medium four meter followed by a fast, flowing three). But Martins is completely capricious about which is the medium dance and which is the fast-moving one. In other words, his decisions in matters of tempo are personal and expressive and not based on any historical authority or kinetic feeling about the movement of this music.

Having said this, however, I must add that even the most arbitrary of these decisions do not seem to lie outside the possibilities of the notated music, and they are rendered powerful by the tremendous abilities and sensibilities of this remarkable musician. In other words, historicity is beside the point here; insight and feeling and the ability to carry them off with the greatest precision and dynamism are everything. If you are going to play Bach on the piano you might as well make the most of it—and Martins does.

—Eric Salzman

J. S. BACH: *The Six Partitas*. João Carlos Martins (piano). ARABESQUE 6501-3 three discs \$26.94, ©7501-3 \$26.94.



BEST OF THE MONTH: RECENT SELECTIONS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

CLASSICAL

- Corigliano: *Clarinet Concerto*. Barber: *Third Essay for Orchestra*. NEW WORLD NW 309. "New creations that magnificently celebrate the New York Philharmonic." (May)
- Dvořák: *Piano Quartets, Opp. 23 and 87*. CBS MG 35913. "Superb chamber music in splendid performances and immaculate recording." (May)
- Franck: *Les Djinns; Symphonic Variations; Prelude, Choral, and Fugue*. BIS LP-137. "Infectious spontaneity, superb sound." (April)
- Handel: *Messiah*. L'ŒISEAU-LYRE D189K33. "The most moving performance . . . ever." (March)
- Heinz Holliger: *Chamber Music for Oboe and Strings*. DENON OX-7185-ND. "Splendid performances by a simply wonderful oboist; superb digital recording." (April)
- Luciano Pavarotti: *Verismo Arias*. LONDON LDR 10020. "Every selection represents rich-toned, committed, exceptional vocalism." (March)
- Rossini: *William Tell*. LONDON OSA 1446. "An operatic masterpiece gets the all-star cast it deserves." (April)
- Verdi: *Falstaff*. PHILIPS 6769 060. "Karajan's control is absolute; the ensembles are polished to perfection, the orchestral tone is luxuriant." (May)

POPULAR

- Roy Acuff: *Sings Hank Williams (For the First Time)*. ELEKTRA 6E-287. "One master pays tribute to another. . . should become a collector's item." (March)
- Blondie: *Autoamerican*. CHRYSALIS CHE 1290. "An album of good tunes, stylish lyrics, and impressive performances." (April)
- Fleetwood Mac: *Live*. WARNER BROS. 2WB 3500. "All in all . . . a first-class way to go." (May)
- Don McLean: *Chain Lightning*. MILLENIUM BXL1-775E. "A triumphant return . . . filled with wondering delight in musical discovery." (April)
- Tantra: *The Double Album*. IMPORTE/12 MP-310. "Fiendishly designed to get you on your feet and dancing." (May)
- Toots and the Maytals: *Live at Hammersmith Palais*. ISLAND MLPS-9647. "Reggae of a very special kind for people who like blues, soul, and r-&-b." (May)
- Neil Young: *Hawks & Doves*. REPRISE HS 2297. "Back to basics with one of the originals." (March)
- Warren Zevon: *Stand in the Fire*. ASYLUM SE-519. "The first great live album of the Eighties. . . could annihilate your house plants." (April)

Popular Music Briefs



REMEMBER when they used to let you listen to records before you bought them? Probably not, it's been so long. The "Soundbar," a new merchandising display island, will make it possible for as many as twelve customers to sample (or "preaudit") a dozen different albums simultaneously through earphones at the point of sale. There is no wear and tear on the discs because the Soundbar is strictly a "hands off"

demonstration tool. The customers do not handle the actual records, but select stereo tapes of what they wish to hear by pushing buttons. The unit can be programmed to play an entire album repeatedly or to play a promotional message read by an announcer who then introduces shorter preselected cuts. The manufacturer, New York's Media Communications, Inc., hopes to place Soundbars in stores beginning in July. □

INNER CITY RECORDS has just inaugurated a line of jazz cassettes for audiophiles. Selected releases from its catalog are now available on chromium-dioxide tapes, duplicated at a speed ratio of eight to one from the original masters, for a list price of \$8.98. Among the artists represented in the initial release are such jazz notables as Stéphane Grappelli, Jean-Luc Ponty, Stan Getz, Helen Humes, Dizzy Gillespie, and Gerry Mulligan. Hedging its bet a little, In-

ner City is also marketing CrO₂ tapes of a New Wave pop band (the Sneakers) and the even more seductive sounds of actress Cybil Shepherd warbling such old favorites as *Mad About the Boy*. □

BAD news for the President's inflation fighters: bearded country star **Kenny Rogers** recently purchased a thirty-five-room house on ten acres of land in Beverly Hills. The price?

The highest ever paid for a single-family residence in the United States—a staggering \$14.5 million. Formerly owned by movie producer Cino DeLaurentiis, the modest little shack has nine bedrooms, eight baths, and seven servants' rooms. Not to mention an elevator, a wine cellar, a gun room, a heated pool, a screening room, and a thirteen-car garage. □

Grace Slick (who has rejoined Jefferson Starship yet again) was in New York recently promoting her new solo album, "Welcome to the Wrecking Ball." STEREO REVIEW caught up with everybody's favorite hippie dream-date outside a storage room at RCA ("I've been with this outfit for fifteen years," she said, "and I still don't know my way to the bathroom.")

The new album is a 180-degree turnabout from the orchestral lushness of her previous "Dreams," a heavy-metal excursion that suggests Pat Benatar on overdrive. The idea

for the disc came to her in Houston: "I saw a wrecking ball there and had a religious experience. They were knocking down a building that was only eight years old, and I thought, what a stupid thing, knocking down things just to make way for more stupid things. The wrecking ball itself had the kind of indifferent, massive power that this country exhibits. It was also like rock-and-roll."

Most of the music was written by her current guitarist, Scott Zito: "It's more Scott's record than anybody else's. I don't want to do an album where I write all of it, because I'm limited. And the kind of music I want to write I can't sing very well. I grew up listening to two records at home, the *Peer Gynt* Suite and Miles Davis' 'Sketches of Spain,' so what I do is sort of a cross between semiclassical piano music and Spanish stuff."

Asked if she thought that the album, like the recent Starship product, was more blatantly commercial than her Sixties material, she couldn't agree. "I've tried writing AM lyrics, and I can't. I've tried like crazy. I tried just this morning to write a song Mickey Thomas [Starship's new lead singer] and I could sing, but it's dirty. I'm still doing the *double-entendre*. I'd love to be able to know what it is to write a regular song everybody could understand, but I just don't think straight."

Other one-liners included comments on her daughter China ("At the moment she wants to be a singer, tomorrow she might want to be a nurse"), her days with the Airplane ("We enjoyed being peculiar-looking people that people were afraid



RCA Records

to talk to"), and a potential film career ("I think I'd be perfect as Darth Vader's wife in the next *Star Wars* movie, and I know what I'd say to George Lucas if I had the guts to call him up").

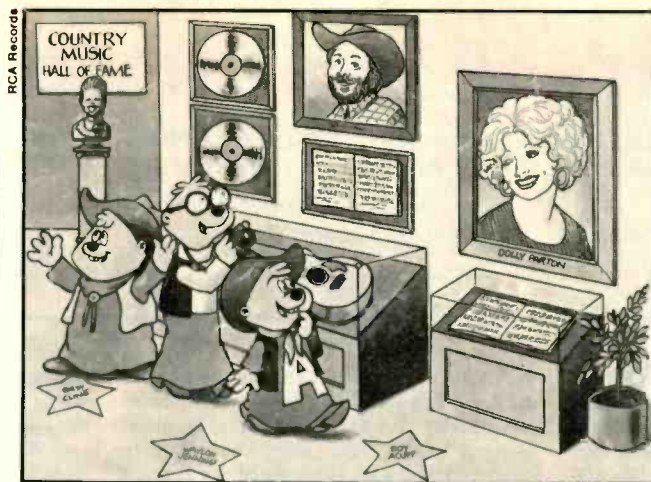
—S.S.

MAKING a rare TV appearance, **Pete Townshend** showed up recently on a BBC talk show hosted by Michael Parkinson to hype the Who's new "Face Dances" album. He was slotted alongside actress Shelley Winters, who apparently is not much of a Who fan. She turned to Pete at one point and asked, "You're not the one who was engaged to Princess Margaret, are you?" Ms. Winters was referring to Royal Air Force Group Captain Peter Townsend, a former beau of Her Royal Highness, and no, he isn't. □

"**S**t. Giles Cripplegate," one of the most sought-after cult albums of the Seventies, has been reissued on Initial Recordings (IRC 006), an English classical label. The work of producer/arranger **Jack Nitzche**, who has been associated with acts ranging from Phil Spector and the Rolling Stones to Mink DeVille and Graham Parker, the album is a series of orchestral sketches, performed by the London Symphony, that sound rather like the score to a movie that was never filmed (Nitzche did, in fact, score Jack Nicholson's *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*). "St. Giles," along with John Cale's "The Academy in Peril," was part of Warner Bros.' brief, odd fling with the classics and has been out of print (rumor has it that only 1,300 copies of the original were pressed) since 1972. □

FRENCH singer/songwriter **Enrico Macias**, in New York on the first stop of his spring coast-to-coast U.S. tour, was honored by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) with a reception and a citation. Macias is the latest artist to donate all the royalties from one of his songs to UNICEF. The song, *Malheur à Celui Qui Blesse un Enfant* (*Bad Luck to Him Who Hurts a Child*) is on Philips and EMI albums in Europe, and Macias is rerecording it for the Trema label to be distributed here by Audio Fidelity.

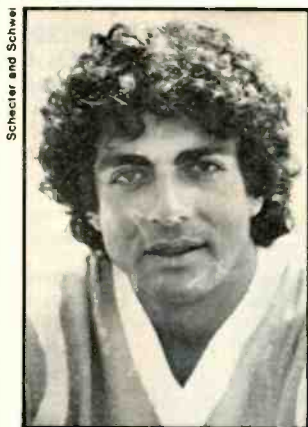
Macias' Pathé album "*Douze Nouvelles Chansons*" was featured in STEREO REVIEW's "Best of the Month" section way back in July 1967. He gave



THE **Chipmunks** (Alvin, Simon, and Theodore), who have just followed up their platinum-selling album of "Chipmunk Punk" with the somewhat more down-home "Urban Chipmunk," are apparently dead serious about the sudden change in their musical direction. RCA, their new label, has teamed them with one of Nashville's hottest producers, Larry Butler, and there is a good chance their next LP will be "The Chipmunks Sing Hank Wil-

liams." Why the switch from safety-pins to Stetsons? According to their management, the furry trio realize that "country is the root of American music and the basis for rock-and-roll. They hope to emulate the success of the Clash, with its version of the Sonny Curtis song *I Fought the Law*, and other rock acts that have cut country records." Also, we're told, "Alvin has a crush on Dolly Parton and this is the closest he can get to her." □

concerts in the United States annually in the late Sixties and early Seventies, but failed to reach a mass audience here. [Continental singers, no matter how good, seldom do Edith



Piaf was a notable exception, but Macias, Mireille Mathieu, Nana Mouskouri, and Nati Mistral, all big stars in Europe, have attracted only small (though intense) cult followings in the U.S.]

The Music for UNICEF program began in 1979, the International Year of the Child, with the Gift of Song concert at the U.N. General Assembly. Income from that concert alone in record sales and royalties from donated songs has brought

UNICEF \$3.5 million. The **Bee Gees** donated all future royalties on the song *Too Much Heaven*, which accounts for half a million dollars of the total, and royalties are still coming in. **Rod Stewart** donated the royalties to *Do You Think I'm Sexy*, and **ABBA** donated *Chiquitita*, a big international hit. Other artists participating in the Music for UNICEF project include **John Denver**, **Earth, Wind and Fire**, **Fleetwood Mac**, **Cat Stevens**, and **Roger Whittaker**.

The latest Music for UNICEF activity is the two-record set "Concerts for the People of Kampuchea," which is now in stores. (Kampuchea is the new name for Cambodia.) The album, featuring performances by the **Clash**, **Elvis Costello**, the **Pretenders**, **Paul McCartney and Wings**, **Queen**, the **Who**, and others, is being pressed and distributed by Atlantic, but proceeds go to UNICEF's work for the Kampuchean people. List price, \$13.98. □

THE famous Verve catalog of jazz recordings made during the 1950s and 1960s is being rereleased by London Records, a division of PolyGram Classics (no less). The discs will be pressed in Japan on "high-definition, virgin vinyl."

and the original Verve cover art will be reproduced. The first release, which should be available by the time you read this, includes twenty-five titles. Among the artists recorded by Verve are such important performers as Ella Fitzgerald, Stan Getz, Billie Holiday, Gerry Mulligan, Charlie Parker, and Oscar Peterson. List price: \$9.98 each. □

GRACENOTES: The mysterious "Johnson" whose name appears on the writing credits of *Are You Gonna Be the One*, title tune of Robert Gordon's latest RCA album, is none other than **Mark Johnson** of the Wild Alligators (profiled in these pages in March 1980). Johnson, a perennial on the same Greenwich Village scene that produced Steve Forbert, Carolyn Mas, Willie Nile, and more lately Eve Moon, may have his own album out by the end of the year. . . . The legendary **Blues Project** reformed for a one-shot concert recently at New York's Bond's Casino, and, despite receding hairlines and advancing paunches, they were playing better than ever. Among the highlights: a spirited version of their classic bit of pop-psychodelia *No Time Like the Right Time*, a blues tribute to the late Mike Bloomfield, a sprightly new flute instrumental from crowd-favorite Andy Kulberg, and, most surprising, an Al Kooper tune from the first Blood, Sweat & Tears LP. Kooper reminded the audience at one point that the members of the Blues Project were "the original punks"; we tend to agree. Here's hoping the Ramones age anywhere near as gracefully. . . . Fans of the late country-rock pioneer **Gram Parsons** will want to know about the Gram Parsons Memorial Foundation (GPMF) recently established in Tampa, Florida. Founded by two Norwegian (!) Parsons enthusiasts, the foundation is involved in cataloging interviews, magazine articles, and the like, as well as locating unreleased Parsons tapes. Those wanting further information can contact the GPMF through Mark Holland, 3109 Ola, Tampa, Florida 33603. . . . Guitar wizard **Jimmy Page**, formerly of Led Zepelin, joined old pal **Jeff Beck** on-stage recently at a London Beck show, marking the first public appearance of the duo since, as members of the Yardbirds, they smashed their guitars in Antonioni's 1967 film *Blow Up*. Aren't you sorry you weren't there? —S.S.

Disc and Tape Reviews

By CHRIS ALBERTSON • IRV COHN • NOEL COPPAGE • PHYL GARLAND
PAUL KRESH • PETER REILLY • STEVE SIMELS • JOEL VANCE

Ⓢ = stereo cassette

Ⓜ = eight-track stereo cartridge

● = digital-master recording

Ⓛ = direct-to-disc

Ⓛ = quadraphonic disc

Ⓜ = monophonic recording

The first listing is the one reviewed; other formats, if available, follow.

BADFINGER: Say No More. Badfinger (vocals and instrumentals). *I Got You; Rock and Roll Contract; Hold On; Three Time Loser; Crocodile; No More*; and four others. RADIO RR 16030 \$7.98, Ⓢ CS 16030 \$7.98, Ⓜ TP 16030 \$7.98.

Performance: **Very good**

Recording: **Good**

Badfinger's comeback album last year on Elektra was pallid, but this time out the re-constituted group—original members Joey Molland and Tom Evans, plus Tony Kaye, Richard Bryans, and Glen Sherba—has opted for an aggressive sound, and it works. It isn't the same as the Badfinger sound of the late 1960s; when original member Pete Ham took his own life in 1975, distraught over bad management and the collapse of the Beatles and Apple Records (under whose auspices Badfinger first appeared), he took that special sound with him. I suggested in my review of the Elektra album that since Badfinger was trading on memories of a sound they could no longer produce, the name should be retired. I'm not so sure about that now; this album may signal a second identity worthy of the first.

None of the melodies on "Say No More" approach those of the old Badfinger, but there is an attractive renewed confidence and assertiveness. Molland and Evans are writing, playing, and singing hard, and most of the time I can accept them on their own new terms. The most interesting cut is *Rock and Roll Contract*, a cynical, pained, and painful horror story about what can happen to a band. Some of the guitar passages paraphrase the George Harrison/Eric Clapton duet on *While My Guitar Gently Weeps* from the 1973 Bangladesh Concert (for which the original Badfinger served as the rhythm section), and there are oblique references to Pete Ham's suicide and a spoken interjection in a bogeyman voice: "We have a five-year agreement until death do us part . . . or I pick up the option—heh heh heh." If this is exorcism, I hope it works. J.V.

THE BOOMTOWN RATS: Mondo Bongo. The Boomtown Rats (vocals and instrumentals). *Mood Mambo; Straight Up; This Is My Room; Another Piece of Red; Go Man Go; Under Their Thumb (Is Under My Thumb)*; and six others. COLUMBIA JC 37062 \$7.98, Ⓢ JCT 37062 \$7.98, Ⓢ JCA 37062 \$7.98.

Performance: **Nothing to say**

Recording: **Good**

It's hard not to like the Boomtown Rats. Their lead singer, Bob Geldof, is one of the great bigmouths of our age, they put on a

wonderful, energetic stage show, and they've made a couple of really terrific singles. Unfortunately, now that they're international stars (huge everywhere but in America) they have succumbed to Creeping Significance, and their music is clearly suffering. This new album is an aural Cecil B. DeMille epic: trashy, overproduced, gimmicky, and mannered, it strains for the Big Statement in a really embarrassing way. There's attempted social commentary (*Another Piece of Red* chronicles the decline of the British Empire, no less), lots of sound effects, lots of less than fully baked ideas (*Mood Mambo* features Geldof doing off-the-cuff stream-of-consciousness Beatnik poetry, which is hardly my idea of a good time), but precious little of the blues roots or pop smarts that made the Rats' first two albums memorable. If you're looking for tunes or genuine feeling, I'd advise you to look elsewhere. S.S.

JIMMY BUFFETT: Coconut Telegraph. Jimmy Buffett (vocals, guitar); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *It's My Job; The Good Fight; Growing Older but Not Up; Stars Fell on Alabama; Little Miss Magic*; and four others. MCA MCA-5169 \$7.98, Ⓢ MCAC-5169 \$7.98, Ⓢ MCAT-5169 \$7.98.

Performance: **Good**

Recording: **Good**

I'm a fan of Jimmy Buffett's, but even fans can become bored with their idols if they never change. Buffett's new album finds

him lazily coasting in almost every way. While it's true that he created a musical mini-genre (which some have called Gulf-and-Western) in his songs about the care-free, laid-back life of the denizens of the Florida Keys, his work is beginning to sound mechanical and pat instead of charmingly familiar.

Not that he doesn't still have a striking ability to bend the language delightfully, because he does. He wryly comments on the death of John Wayne in *Incommunicado*, and such lines as "So let the winds of change blow over my head/I'd rather die while I'm living than live while I'm dead" (from *Growing Older but Not Up*) and "There's no place like home when it's this far away . . ." (from *The Weather Is Here, Wish You Were Beautiful*) are pure gold. But too much of the rest is not so much laid-back as shopworn. Vocally Buffett does an interesting job on the Mitchell Parish classic *Stars Fell on Alabama*, apparently in an attempt to sound like a variety of old-time American crooners. With typical Buffett twitchiness, though, he ends up sounding most like Al Bowlly, the great Thirties crooner with the Ray Noble Orchestra. I think Buffett needs to get out of that hammock, and the sooner the better. P.R.

BURRITO BROTHERS: Hearts on the Line. Burrito Brothers (vocals and instrumentals); instrumental accompaniment. *That's When You Know It's Over; She's a Friend of a Friend; Family Tree; Oh, Lonesome Me*; and five others. CURB JZ 37004 \$7.98, Ⓢ JZT 37004 \$7.98.

Performance: **Possible sleeper**

Recording: **Good**

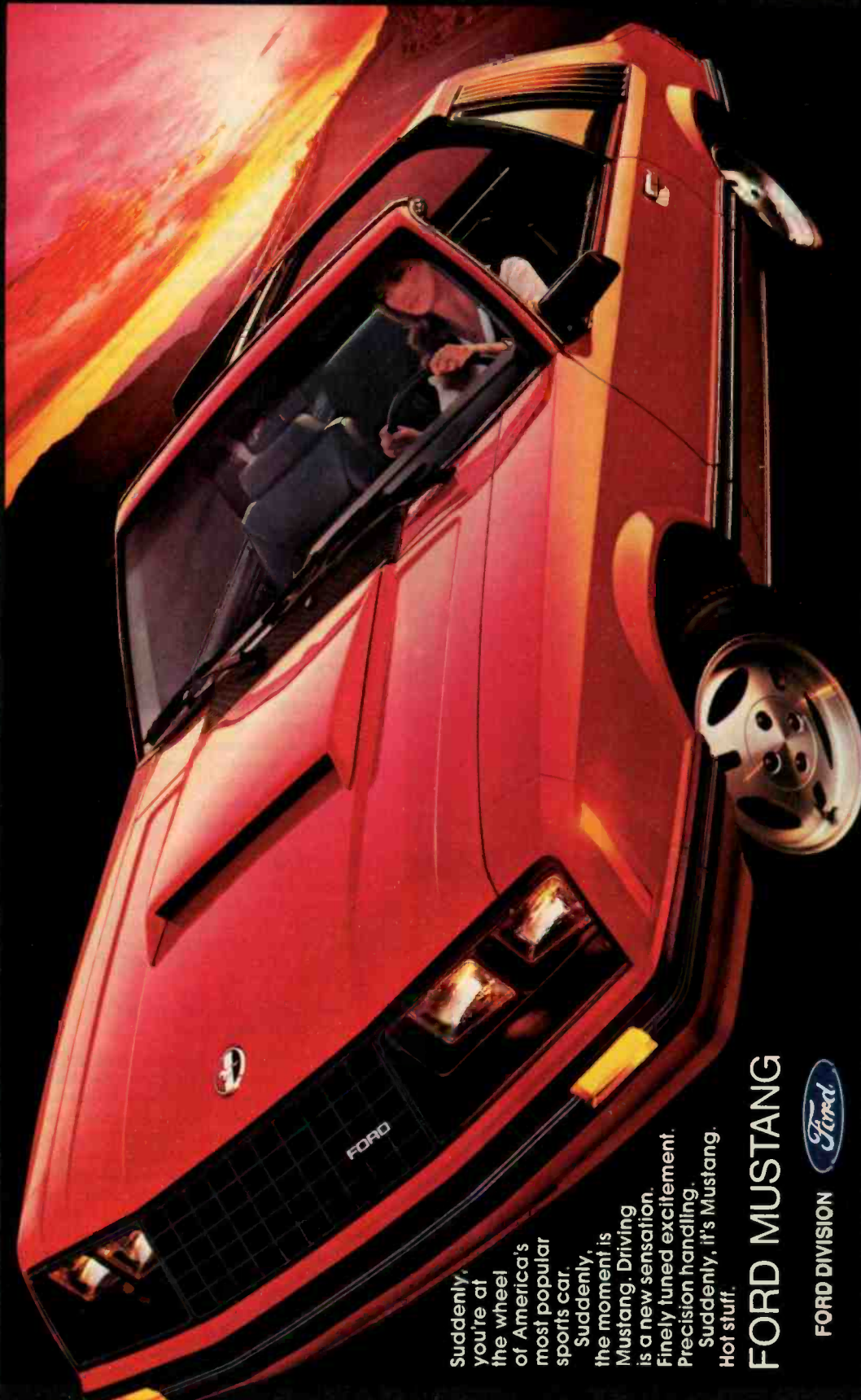
Through the years the Burrito Brothers (once known as the *Flying Burrito Brothers*) have been loved a lot, but not by a lot of people. They've lain dormant at times and have seldom maintained the same personnel for two straight albums. For this one they've tried to "broaden their musical base," a move that has killed off many a cult favorite, but this time it just might work. New member John Beland has a softening—and broadening—influence on them, especially as a songwriter. And if *She's a Friend of a Friend* is the only good example of an old-time Burrito song—smartly paced and heavily country-influenced—the others, the new-type material, have their own good points. The band apparently still doesn't have a drummer (the studio drummer used here isn't credited), but the instrumentals are nicely adapted to the new stuff without losing all the old identifying marks. My present im-

(Continued on page 82)

JIMMY BUFFETT: coasting



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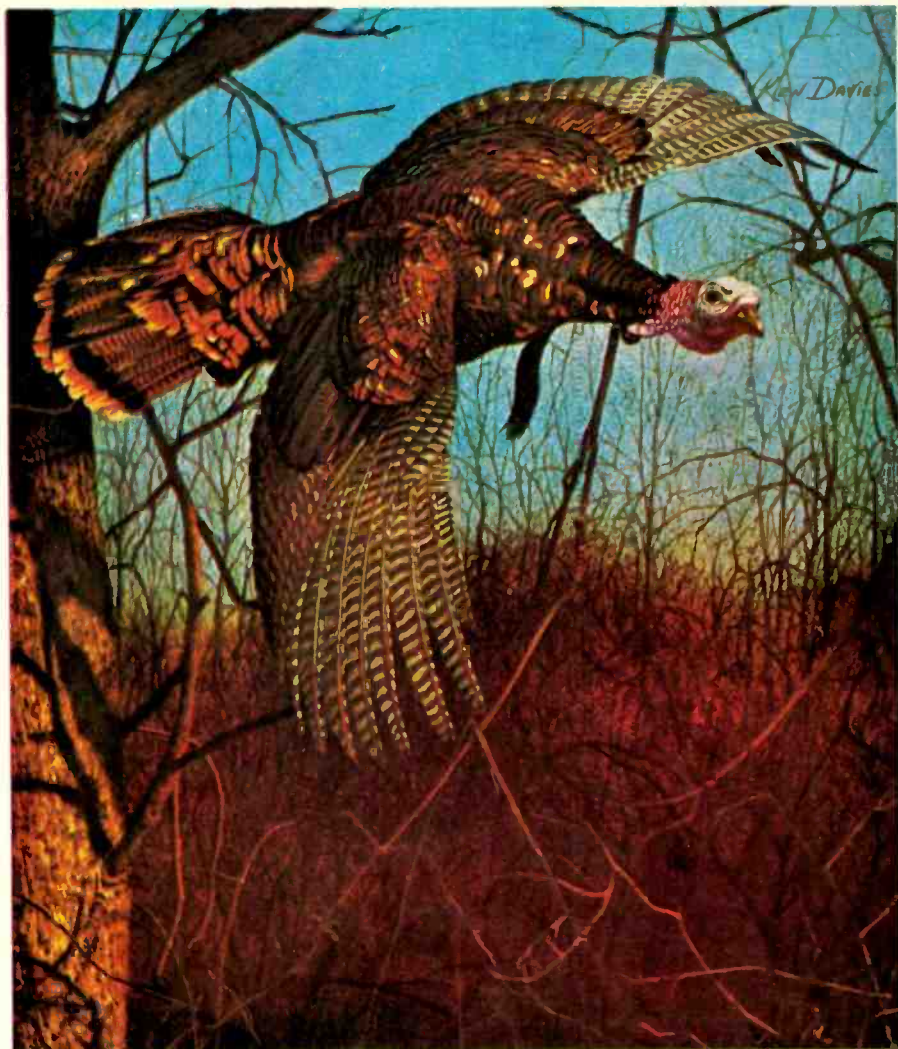
34 EST. HWY. MPG  23 EST. CITY MPG

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pression is that this is fine minor work. If enough people hear it, it may turn out to be liked a lot by a lot of people. N.C.

PAUL BUTTERFIELD: *North South*. Paul Butterfield (vocals, harmonica); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Bread and Butterfield*; *Get Some Fun in Your Life*; *Footprints on the Windshield Upside Down*; *Living in Memphis*; *Baby Blue*; and four others. BEARSVILLE BRK 6995 \$7.98, © M5 6995 \$7.98, © M8 6995 \$7.98.

Performance: **Very good**

Recording: **Very good**

Paul Butterfield has been around since the early Sixties, when white blues harmonica players were a novelty. The novelty has long since worn off, but Butterfield has survived and is still visibly earning a living while his contemporaries, such as Charlie Musselwhite, have become nearly invisible.

Butterfield is still rough and ready, but he's made some minor concessions to current styles. *Get Some Fun in Your Life* is near-pop, with a joking reference to disco. *Bread and Butterfield* is a mood instrumental with a string section behind it, but *Footprints on the Windshield Upside Down* is classically raunchy blues humor. *Living in Memphis*, very much influenced by Albert King, has a backing horn section, led by Wayne Jackson, that recalls the great days of the Stax-Volt Records house bands. The one outright failure on the album is *Baby Blue*, a pop tune written by Neil Sedaka; Butterfield, in a vacuous arrangement, tries to convert it into a blues, but he misses. Mostly, though, this is a very pleasant and accomplished album by a fellow who nearly always knows what he's doing. J.V.

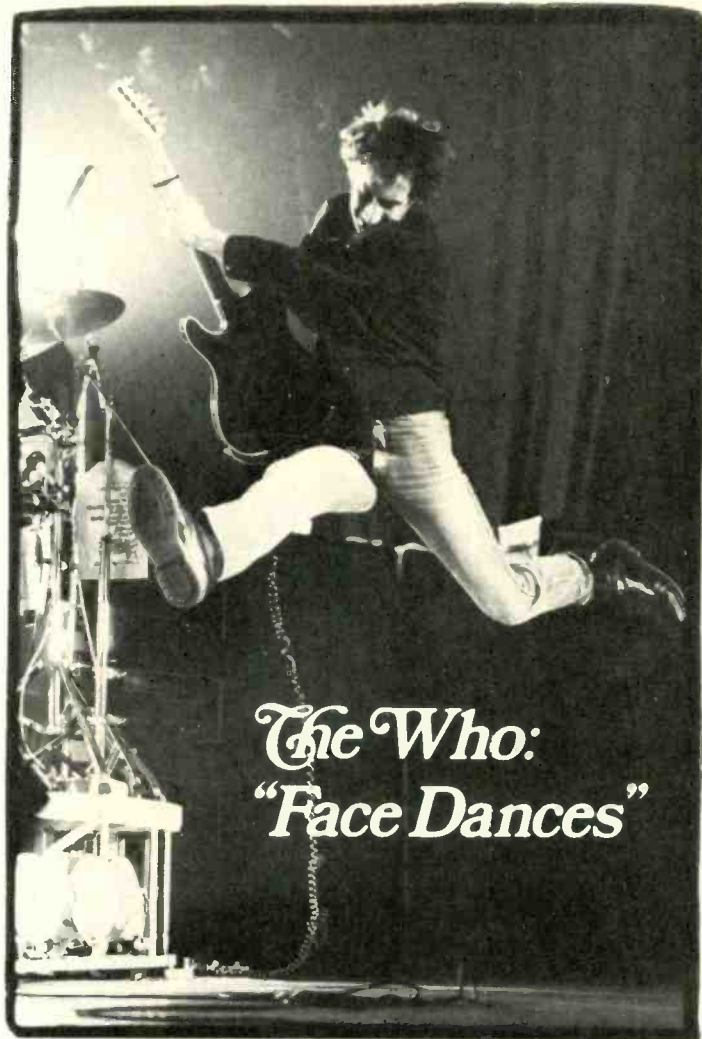
DOUG AND THE SLUGS: *Cognac and Bologna*. Doug and the Slugs (vocals and instrumentals). *To Be Laughing*; *Just Another Case*; *Too Bad*; *Chinatown Circulation*; *Advice to a Friend*; *Stay with Me*; and five others. RCA AFL1-3887 \$7.98, © AFK1-3887 \$7.98.

Performance: **Paunch 'n' roll**

Recording: **Very good**

A novelty band from Canada, Doug and the Slugs were formed on a dare in a Vancouver bar. They like to indulge in such stage tricks as dressing up and performing their own opening act, and rotund leader Doug Bennett claims to be the "father of paunch 'n' roll." That sounds as if they're an offshoot of Monty Python, whose Canadian tours were almost national events, and maybe they are. Certainly Bennett's material, literate and sardonic, is close to that of Neil Innes, the musical director of the Pythons, though Bennett never quite embraces lunacy and doesn't have the delicious viciousness of Innes at full tilt. His writing is along the more genteel lines of Ray Davies, and his vocals remind me of the Troggs' Reg Presley. This musical stew includes all kinds of styles—reggae, rhythm-and-blues, Tex-Mex, rock, swing, and calypso—but the flavors never meld. Neither sophisticated nor vulgar enough, Doug and the Slugs wind up sounding too polite. A little more raunch and these boys might have something. J.V.

(Continued on page 86)



Michael Pulland/Retna

The Who: "Face Dances"

As you probably already know, the cover of the Who's new "Face Dances" carries portraits of the band members by various well-known artists. Some advertising copywriter has already run the idea into the ground in the British press by proclaiming that the album will "change the face of rock." Well, to be blunt, it won't (though that's a claim this band could once have made with some justice), and there's not even any indication in the music that anything of the sort was seriously attempted.

Despite the obvious need for change in pop music, I'm not convinced that the Who really needs to prove anything any more. They have made enduring music, changed a lot of lives, and through it all remained the most brutally honest rock band ever. It's hardly fair, at this point, to expect every note Pete Townshend writes to have the fresh impact of *Substitute* or *My Generation* or *Pictures of Lily* or whatever your favorite Who song is at the moment. All we can ask is that he and the rest of the band continue to speak truthfully about their lives and about how they see rock-and-roll. Whatever else one might say about "Face Dances," that's exactly what it does.

I'm not suggesting that the new album is any masterpiece, but it is a big step in the

right direction after the whiney boredom of "Who Are You." In a way, it's tempting to view "Face Dances" as a debut, since any edition of the Who without Keith Moon has to be considered a new band. Indeed, some of the pleasure of "Face Dances" comes from hearing how Kenny Jones has (perhaps unconsciously) altered the Who's old style. Jones is an excellent but thoroughly conventional drummer, sane and solid where Moon was mad and brilliant; there's no denying that there is a loss in overall excitement and energy, but I have to admire the way his playing fits in with the more grown-up slant of Townshend's current songwriting.

The other important change in the new Who is, surprisingly, in Roger Daltrey's singing. His work over the last few years, though technically superior to anything he could have done earlier, has been verging on the mannered, unfeeling posturing of a typical heavy-metal front man—sort of a cross between a bad Bob Seger and the interchangeable belters in such ghastly dinosaur bands as Judas Priest. But his performances on "Face Dances" are close to being revelatory; he reaches levels of feeling and delicacy and nuance that I had thought were

beyond him. He seems truly to identify with Townshend's songs again, and the passion and wit with which he sings them can't, for once, be explained in the usual way as a Svengali act by Townshend. If for no other reason than Daltrey's vocal renaissance, "Face Dances" bodes well for the Who's future.

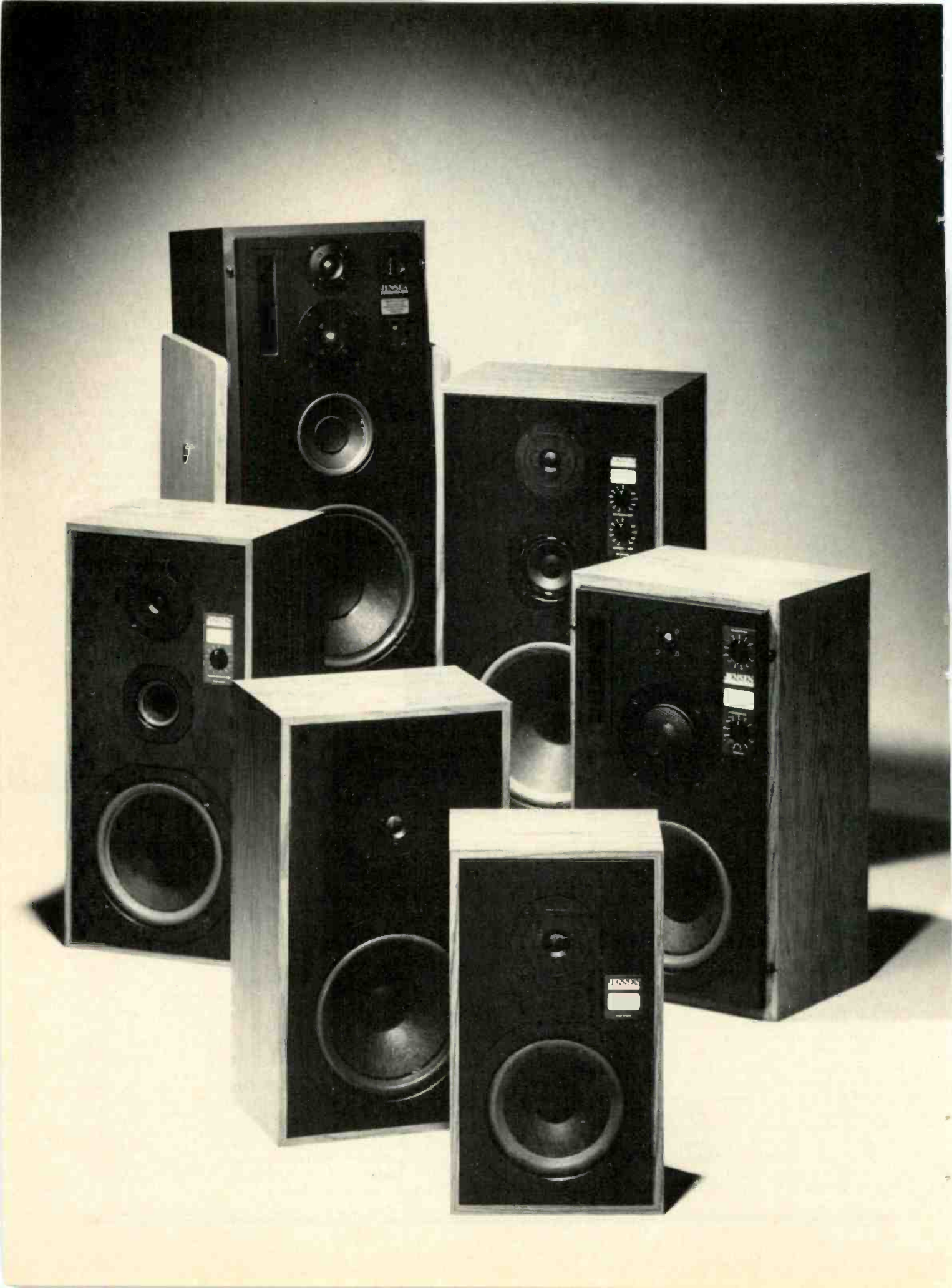
As for the songs themselves, I have to say that too many are either too long, too vague, or underdeveloped. The two by John Entwistle, in fact, are flat-out disasters. *The Quiet One* is based on a riff so banal I can't believe anybody thought it was good enough for a Who record, and although the sexual paranoia of *You* is somewhat more compelling, the song is still a turgid, unlistenable mess. Entwistle's material used to be weird and funny; these tunes seem to be by someone else altogether.

Townshend's songs are variable, but even the worst have an inventiveness and insight that make one overlook their glaring weaknesses. The best—and they are very good indeed—are the first and last. The opener, *You Better You Bet*, is not only a classic Who single but one of the best attempts in rock history at setting a mid-life crisis to music. It shows the Who striking a genuinely new posture: adult frustrations are brilliantly expressed in a poignant and funny vocal by Daltrey, the tune's a honey, the back-up harmonies are gorgeous, and the band gives an explosive yet controlled performance. In short, it's great stuff. The closer, *Another Tricky Day*, is almost as good. Besides being an exciting piece of rock-and-roll, it has some pointed and valuable things to say about the dangers of letting one's personal demons serve as a metaphor for the state of the world (an insight I hope will not be lost on, say, the Clash).

Brief takes on the rest: *Don't Let Go the Coat* is the prettiest love song the Who has given us in quite a while; *Cache Cache* and *Did You Steal My Money* have good ideas but don't go anywhere with them; *How Can You Do It Alone* is a potentially heartbreaking conceit that simply wears out its welcome; and *Daily Records* is appealingly tuneful but is memorable chiefly for the great line, "When you're eleven the whole world's out to lunch."

In sum, "Face Dances" is an uneven album that nonetheless shows the Who is very much alive and well. If rock-and-roll needs elder statesmen (an arguable proposition), we couldn't ask for better ones. After "Who Are You" I was prepared to write the band off, and Townshend's solo album was such a strong statement that it seemed perhaps he felt the same way. The nicest thing about "Face Dances," then, is that, flawed and inconsistent though it is, it makes it okay to like the Who again. —Steve Simels

THE WHO: *Face Dances*. The Who (vocals and instrumentals). *You Better You Bet*; *Don't Let Go the Coat*; *Cache Cache*; *The Quiet One*; *Did You Steal My Money*; *How Can You Do It Alone*; *Daily Records*; *You*; *Another Tricky Day*. WARNER BROS. HS 3516 \$8.98, © M5 3516 \$8.98, © M8 3516 \$8.98.



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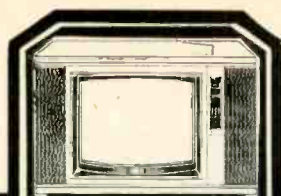
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Millennium Records

FRANKE AND THE KNOCKOUTS: klutzy name, but good theatrics

FRANKE AND THE KNOCKOUTS: *The Main Event*. Franke Previte (vocals); the Knockouts (vocals and instrumentals). *Come Back; Sweetheart; She's a Runner; You're My Girl; One for All; Running into the Night*; and four others. MILLENNIUM BXL1-7755 \$7.98, © BXK1-7755 \$7.98, © BXS1-7755 \$7.98.

Performance: **Very good**

Recording: **Thick**

Despite its klutzy name this is a highly professional band. Franke Previte, son of an opera tenor, sings in the rock tradition of Johnny Maestro and Eddie Brigati—with full tones, respect for the melody, good interpretation of texts, and a bit of theatrics. The line between this kind of singing and hambone is sometimes thin, and, though Previte is careful not to cross it, he does sometimes forget a lesson he learned fronting a heavy-metal band called Bull Angus: "I realized I wasn't singing anymore... I was yelling."

But Previte in good form is someone to hear, especially on such cuts as *Sweetheart*, an appealing example of the who-loves-you-better? song plot, and *She's a Runner*, an example of an even older plot (she is more sinned against than sinning) that goes back to vaudeville. Rock itself, in addition to its folk, blues, and jazz origins, owes quite a lot to vaudeville in terms of material and stage antics, and Previte is a worthy trouper. This is a fine debut. *J.V.*

EMMYLOU HARRIS: *Evangeline* (see **Best of the Month**, page 70)

MILLIE JACKSON: *I Had to Say It*. Millie Jackson (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *I Had to Say It; Loving Arms '81; The Rap '81; Stranger; I Ain't No Glory Story; It's Gonna Take Some Time This Time*; and five others. SPRING SP-1-6730 \$7.98, © CT-1-6730 \$7.98, © 8T-1-6730 \$7.98.

Performance: **Censored**

Recording: **Satisfactory**

The Moral Majority must have invaded Spring Records and clamped a hand over the dirtiest mouth in town. Perhaps the idea

is to gain more airplay for Millie Jackson's records. Either that, or some smartass has arbitrarily sabotaged her latest album. Instead of the penetrating, funny, and utterly vulgar raps and lyrics that are Jackson's stock in trade, we now have bleeps. The result is that some of the best parts of this record have been censored. It's a shame, for this prudishness lays a pall on the work of one of our most enjoyable, freewheeling r-&-b performers.

Fortunately, the saboteur permits Jackson to use the word "bed," enabling her to explore the consequences of casual sex on *The Rap '81* and *Stranger*. There's still enough of the essential Millie left to make the title track, *I Had to Say It*, one of those head-bobbing "Amen" numbers for which she is famous. Here she aims her fire at black men who prefer white women and overweight people who collect food stamps. The second side consists of fairly straight r-&-b songs with no rapping. I have to say it: I'm disappointed. *P.G.*

THE JAM: *Sound Affects*. The Jam (vocals and instrumentals). *Start!; Going Underground; That's Entertainment; Scrap Away; Set the House Ablaze; Pretty Green*; and six others. POLYDOR PD-1-6315 \$7.98, © CT-1-6315 \$7.98, © 8T-1-6315 \$7.98.

Performance: **Very good**

Recording: **Very good**

"Sound Affects" is the Jam's sixth album, and while it is a musical portrait of Britain's current social, economic, and political woes, it is also in its way quite patriotic. Lost and idle people, the fatuousness of politicians, hysterical spending, social jealousy, and urban decay are the subjects of the songs, and much of the music is gloomy, dry, and spare. But Shelley's exhortation to Englishmen to "Rise like lions after slumber" graces the back cover, and there are inflections of hope and confidence in the music as well.

It must be sweet for the British to remember when the Beatles not only ruled the world but almost reversed the island's negative balance of payments, so it's not surprising that the Jam's music feeds on and

(Continued on page 88)



Moss Music Group

Barbara Cook

BARBARA COOK's latest album, "It's Better with a Band," was recorded live with digital equipment by the Moss Music Group at her Carnegie Hall concert last September. The overflow audience evidently responded to her with the kind of rapturous attention and appreciation very few performers can command. They were hers from the first note of Irving Berlin's *I Love a Piano* to the last chord of *Sweet Georgia Brown*, alive to every lyric lilt, unexpected mood change, and musical shading Ms. Cook brought to her varied repertoire. It all sounds a lot like love—and flowing from both sides of the proscenium.

Ms. Cook rewarded her loyal audience, and the disc enables us to share that reward, by being absolutely brilliant. At least two tracks here—one a Leonard Bernstein medley, the other Noël Coward's *If Love Were All*—are just plain exquisite. The only misstep, I think, is the inclusion of *The Ingenue* and the title song, both of which strike me as a bit "twice" (a useful British neologism meaning just too painfully precious). But

the audience obviously didn't think so, for they loved everything, and certainly everything here *sounds* splendid thanks to the digital recording.

If your only acquaintance with Barbara Cook is through her memorable work in such historic Broadway-cast albums as those of *Candide*, *The Music Man*, and *She Loves Me*, then you owe it to yourself to hear her newer, mellow incarnation. As a cabaret singer, she's well on her way to becoming a cross between Mabel Mercer and Lotte Lenya.

—Peter Reilly

BARBARA COOK: *It's Better with a Band.* Barbara Cook (vocals); Wally Harper (piano and cond.); other musicians. *I Love a Piano; It's Better with a Band; Remember; Chant la Vie; Them There Eyes; Bernstein Medley—Simple Song/One Hand, One Heart/Some Other Time/I Can Cook, Too; I Never Meant to Hurt You/I Never Knew That Men Cried; The Ingenue; If Love Were All; Sweet Georgia Brown.* MOSS MUSIC GROUP ◊ D/MMG 104 \$10.98.

paraphrases the Beatles'. The song *Start!*, a hit in England, uses the *Taxman* riff, and *But I'm Different Now* is a variation on *Getting Better*. Some of the more vituperative lyrics, as in *Scrape Away*, recall John Lennon's hostile songs from the beginning of his 1970-1975 solo period.

The Jam may not be as critical a resource as North Sea oil, but they're doing their bit, and I wish them well. If the Queen's smart, she'll invite them to the wedding. J.V.

GARLAND JEFFREYS: *Escape Artist.* Garland Jeffreys (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Christine; 96 Tears; Jump Jump; Mystery Kids; Modern Lovers; Ghost of a Chance; R.O.C.K.;* and

seven others. EPIC JE 36983 \$7.98, © JET 36983 \$7.98.

Performance: **Drivel**
Recording: **Very good**

Garland Jeffreys has long been touted as "a poet of the urban street experience" and a cult figure who needs only one more "landmark" album (or possibly two or three) to bring him to a general audience. It may happen; relentless bores sometimes succeed.

Jeffreys doesn't have enough to say and takes too long to say it; he isn't gifted, he's garrulous. His attempts to portray street people aren't half as effective or literate as Tom Waits'; his efforts to write cosmopolitan material like Stevie Wonder's lack not

only Wonder's brilliance but his naïve charm; and his vocal style, taken from Mick Jagger's circa 1965, is simply irritating. Who else would try to rhyme a mispronunciation of *Les Miserables* ("lay mizzer-obles") with "It's one of my favorite novels," throw in other references to French artists to prove he has culture, and then, as a trendy afterthought in the liner notes, dedicate the song to John Lennon?

The only successful cut here is Jeffreys' carbon copy of *96 Tears*, a 1967 hit by Question Mark and the Mysterians, in which he indulges his Jaggerisms to the full. At least Jeffreys has made one person happier—Rudy Martinez, who wrote *96 Tears*, will be receiving some royalty money. J.V.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

KLEEER: *License to Dream.* Kleecer (vocals and instrumentals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Running Back to You; Hypnotized; Get Tough; Say You Love Me;* and four others. ATLANTIC SD 19288 \$7.98, © CS 19288 \$7.98, © TP 19288 \$7.98.

Performance: **Solid music**

Recording: **Not up to standard**

Despite some virtuoso noodling on guitar, percussion, and all manner of electronic instruments, what Kleecer's music is all about is the beat. "License to Dream," their third album, is the most ambitious yet, for though the beat is still king, it's syncopated, toyed with, and made to yield a wider range of effects than it does even in their impressive previous "Winners" album.

Running Back to You is a case in point. A dozen distinct instrumental voices, from an electronic squeak-squeak to conga drums, are artfully juggled as a quirky back-up to a soul ballad. The rest of the cut leaves something to be desired, but the effect is powerful. *Sippin' and Kissin'*—sung with hushed Sergio Mendes charm by Kleecer's frequent guest artist Isabelle Coles—dramatically shifts the mood to straight bossa nova. The group's disco beginnings are recalled by the energetic *Get Tough*, a real ripper that's enhanced by a sense of humor. Kleecer is still a solid group, and I highly recommend their new album.

J.C.

LAKESIDE: *Fantastic Voyage.* Lakeside (vocals and instrumentals); instrumental accompaniment. *Fantastic Voyage; I Need You; Strung Out; I Love Everything You Do;* and four others. SOLAR BXL1-3720 \$7.98, © BXK1-3720 \$7.98, © BXS1-3720 \$7.98.

Performance: **Nothing special**

Recording: **Fine**

When Lakeside swings into the chorus of their Top-40 hit *Fantastic Voyage* ("We just want you to feel/Nothing but pleasure, musical pleasure"), it is one of the more delightful dance moments of the year. The song is a true disco-funk hybrid and a fine lead-in for the album. But it's all downhill from there. The group's members write, arrange, and perform their own music, and they even produced this second album themselves, so I have to assume the end result is pretty much what the guys wanted. It's too bad so much of it is mediocre. They do wring considerable feeling out of a me-

andering soul ballad called *I Need You*, and reggae influences perk up *Eveready Man*; they also hang some sweet harmonies here and there. But the songs and the arrangements are basically uninspired, and this album will be easily lost in the increasingly crowded r-&-b field. I.C.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

DEBRA LAWS: *Very Special*. Debra Laws (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *On My Own; Meant for You; Very Special; Long As We're Together; All the Things I Love*; and three others. ELEKTRA 6E-300 \$7.98, © TC5-300 \$7.98, © ET8-300 \$7.98.

Performance: **Sparkling**
Recording: **Very good**

This is Debra Laws' debut album, so you've probably never heard of her, but she belongs to a very special musical family whose members also include Hubert, Ronnie, and Eloise Laws. All are recording artists of some standing whose activities range over the classical, jazz, and pop fields. From the sound of this set, Debra specializes in a kicking kind of progressive r-&-b with energetically punched-out rhythms and melodies that have a built-in strutting quality. Her high, clear, youthful voice summons up images of lighthearted dancers rather than heavy sentiments, and there's a touch of Stephanie Mills and a dash of Deniece Williams in her sound.

The songs and instrumentals here are several cuts above most of what one hears these days, possibly because brothers Hubert and Ronnie produced the album and used some of the better studio musicians around, including synthesizer specialist Larry Dunn of Earth, Wind & Fire. Among the best tracks are *Very Special*, which sounds like a natural hit, *Meant for You*, and *Be Yourself*, though there's not a dog or even a puppy in the lot. A most promising beginning. P.G.

ELOISE LAWS. Eloise Laws (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Let's Find Those Two People Again; Strength of a Woman; Almost All the Way to Love; Moment to Moment; Got You into My Life; You Are Everything*; and three others. LIBERTY LT-1063 \$7.98, © 4LT-1063 \$7.98, © 8LT-1063 \$7.98.

Performance: **Waste of talent**
Recording: **Satisfactory**

Eloise Laws used to be one of the handful of younger female singers with enough talent, taste, and musical sensibility to be modern jazz stylists. But lately she has plunged into pop (as have Dee Dee Bridgewater and Jean Carn, who once showed similar promise). On this album Laws' voice is clearly superior to the stuff she's singing, mediocre ballads we've all heard more times than we can remember (if under different titles). It is a terrible waste of talent, for she takes the tritest sliver of a song and invests it with all the passion and concentration worthy of a major opus. A few things here do manage to transcend the trivial. *Let's Find Those Two People Again* and *Moment to Moment*, which open the first and second sides, respectively, are almost worthy showcases, and *Almost All the Way to Love*, produced

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by brother Ronnie Laws, bounces along to a beguiling gospel beat. **P.G.**

M: *The Official Secrets Act*. M (vocals and instrumentals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Transmission: Working for the Corporation; Official Secrets*; and five others. SIRE SRK 6099 \$7.98, © M55 6099 \$7.98.

Performance: **Provocative**

Recording: **Terrific**

I suppose we should have been tipped off by the "k" in M's successful rock-disco hit *Pop Musik*. Such spellings have long been a code for those who see fascism under every corporate rock and behind every star in the Amerikan flag. But I was nonetheless startled by the agit-pop theme of M's new album. The group's innovative electronic-pop-rock fusion energy is put to the service of material that ticks off the corporate state (*Working for the Corporation*), racial and political strife (*Join the Party*), the waste of war (*Your Country Needs You*), and the drugged society (*Relax*).

It works only intermittently. *Join the Corporation* weds a pretty embroidery of whistles to a lyric that becomes the very image of desperate drudgery simply because of its repetition. The flow that seeps into the muscular percussion of *Keep It to Yourself* becomes almost romantic. And lyrics like "Sweethearts and lovers don't breathe a word/Everything you say is about to be heard" make the title track a truly ominous and distressing, if paranoid, commentary on the ultimate corruption of ultimate power.

But much of the time I felt (as I did in the Sixties, when this sort of thing was more common) that I was being lectured at or warned rather than entertained—even in the broadest possible meaning of that word. **I.C.**

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BARBARA MASON: *A Piece of My Life*. Barbara Mason (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Let Me Give You Love; I'll Never Love the Same Way Twice; On and Off; So in Love with You; Yes I'm Ready; Love Having You Around; Playing with My Feelings*; and three others. WMOT JW 37060 \$6.98. © JWT 37060 \$6.98. © JWA 37060 \$6.98.

Performance: **A good comeback**

Recording: **Good**

Although Barbara Mason has released several previous albums, I can remember only one of her songs, *Yes I'm Ready*, which she composed and recorded when she was about thirteen years old. Maybe the memory is so strong because that was her first and biggest hit, or maybe it's because so many of the items she waxed after that just didn't take hold. Maybe she wasn't packaged right or produced properly. Whatever the reason may have been, she didn't click, and it's been about five years since she was last heard on disc.

"A Piece of My Life" is a fine comeback, surpassing in quality most of what Mason has done before. For good luck, she has included an updated version of *Yes I'm Ready*, nestled among other selections that

(Continued on page 94)

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Capitol Records

Juice Newton

PEOPLE have been calling country music conservative as long as I can remember, thinking they had it safely pegged. It's not all that easy. While the genre's concerns have been the basic emotions of love, hate, jealousy, compassion, and so forth—the stuff that William Faulkner said in his Nobel acceptance speech ought to be the concerns of the writer—rather than, say, the width of neckties and lapels, country music has always been alert to and influenced by the outside world.

Even before it had a name, the emerging "hillbilly" music in 1900 met a man named Frank Ferera and borrowed some of his Hawaiian guitar sound. It was "crossover"—conscious at least as early as the Twenties, when it provided a forum for a trained singer named Vernon Dalhart, whose recording of *The Prisoner's Song* became a national hit. Through the years it has rubbed elbows with Dixieland (remember the Firehouse Five Plus Two?), cowboys (Gene Autry *et al.*), jazz (Bob Wills), and the blues (Jimmy Rodgers) among other things, in addition to dealing lyrically with current events ranging from the Berlin Wall to women's liberation. Right now, a good-sized portion of country music is responding to, and as-

simulating influences from, its meeting with a seemingly unlikely and patently non-conservative bunch called the hippies.

Before me is Juice Newton's latest album, "Juice," a good example of that assimilation and another of several signs coming at us lately that "crossover" may not turn out to be so bad a word after all. Rodney Crowell, who definitely is in on it, calls this sort of thing "second-generation country." Use whatever term you're comfortable with, but be aware that we're talking more about an attitude than a sound. In Grandpa Jones' terms, Newton's second album doesn't sound very "country" (neither did her first), but then neither did Eddy Arnold's immersions in strings nearly thirty years ago. But where that kind of crossover attempted to merge two equally provincial realms—the one inhabited by Grandpa Jones with the one inhabited by Andy Williams, both steadfastly unhip—the country/hippie blend is evolving organically. The elements of country that are not reactionary are curling up with a world-view that says formality is no longer all that necessary, to hell with neckties altogether, and if you like something, it doesn't matter what other people have named it.

"Juice" is, of course, presented by people who don't have to think all this through for themselves. Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson and Gram Parsons and other country/hippie pioneers have taken care of that part. An artist like Newton—or Gail Davies, or Lacy J. Dalton, or Con Hunley—now can just do his or her thing, which makes for a dearth of a certain kind of self-consciousness that gave the Eddy Arnold-style crossover its lack of grace.

NEWTON has a sweet, moist vocal style, good range, and a folksinger's need to identify with the song. The program she and producer Richard Landis selected includes two monster pop hits of yore, *Angel of the Morning*, written by Chip Taylor, and the Everly Brothers' ticket to stardom, *All I Have to Do Is Dream*, by Boudleaux Bryant. Also familiar are Elton John's fair-sized pop hit that paid tribute to the country life, *Country Comfort*, and Paul Davis' minor country success of a few years back, *Ride 'Em Cowboy*. That's maybe a little more "familiar" material than some of us want in a new album, but Newton does do some exciting new things with *Angel*—which is welcome back in my house in any case—and the pieces serve as landmarks to help guide you to some worthy stuff you may not have heard before, such as Bob McDill's *Shot Full of Love* (McDill was one of the first to get the hang of country/hippie songwriting) or Hank DeVito's *Queen of Hearts*.

Newton does not whine like the traditional "pure" female country singer, nor does she affect the casual gloss of the traditional crossover singer; her delivery is natural and artless, yet her phrasing and subtle use of ornamentation suggest she has an excellent ear for the patterns of both melody and speech. There's nothing arch about the backing either, for it is as far from hard rock as it is from hard country; it, too, is organic and natural-sounding, seemingly based more upon what a particular song needs than on formal ideas about what kind of song it is.

"**J**UICE" is not the best album someone this talented can make, but it's a good example of how free her head is of preconceptions about how *this* has to sound *thus* because it's named *that*. I look for country/hippie to blossom in the next few years, and for a goodly percentage of the known world to discover and—as they say in the country, in their understated but not necessarily conservative way—become partial to Juice Newton. —Noel Coppage

JUICE NEWTON: *Juice*. Juice Newton (vocals, guitar); Rich Shlosser (drums); Neil Steubenhaus (bass); Otha Young (guitar); Dan Dugmore (steel guitar); Brad Feltton (dobro, banjo); other musicians. *Angel of the Morning*; *Shot Full of Love*; *Ride 'Em Cowboy*; *Queen of Hearts*; *River of Love*; *All I Have to Do Is Dream*; *Headin' for a Heartache*; *Country Comfort*; *Texas Heartache*; *The Sweetest Thing (I've Ever Known)*. CAPITOL ST-12136 \$7.98, © 4XT-12136 \$7.98, © 8XT-12136 \$7.98.

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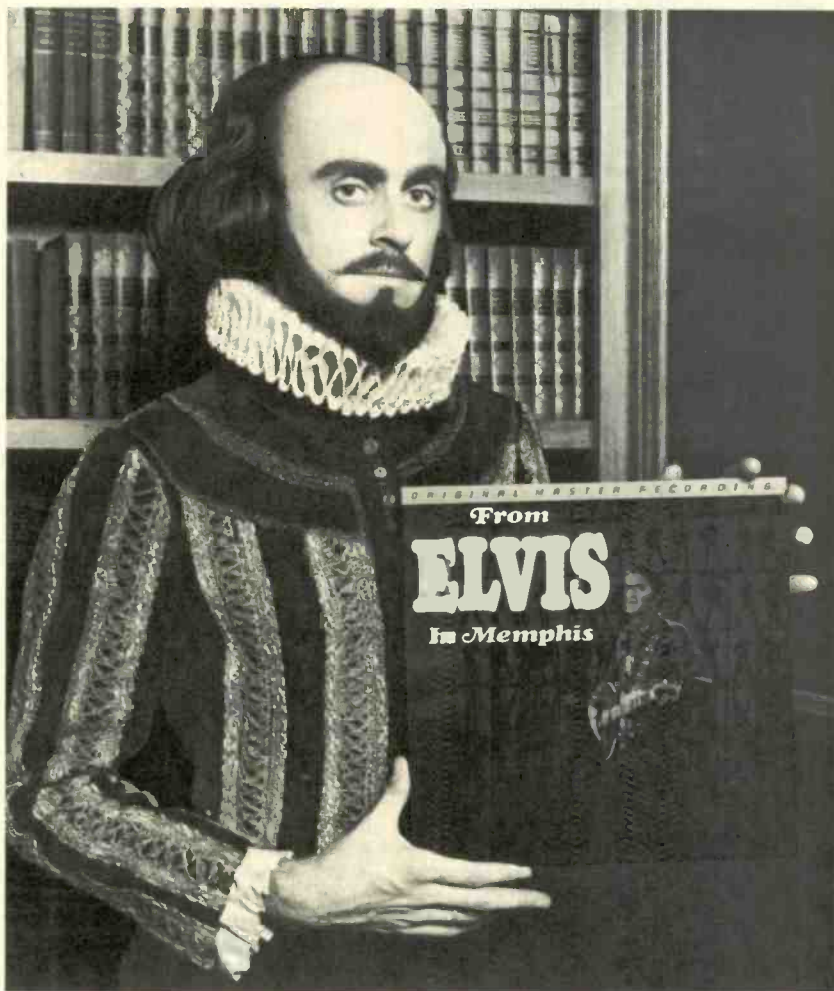
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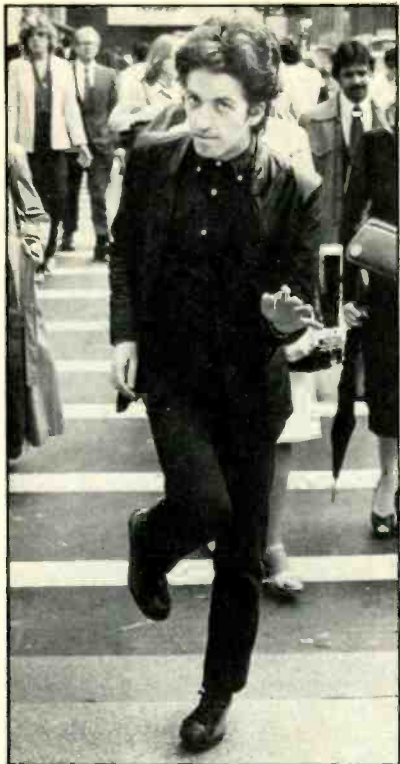


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Ebet Roberts

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"SON," my grandfather used to say to me, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Now, granted, at a later stage in his life the old boy used to say such things as "Where ever you go, there you are," but his failing faculties hardly invalidate the earlier aphorism. Fact is, one of life's most overwhelming biological drives, surpassing even hunger and sex, is the need to improve things whether they need improving or not. Ask any editor. Ask the guys who design weapons systems for the Pentagon. Or, better still, ask Willie Nile, whose second album, "Golden Down," is just out on Arista.

Somebody has "improved" Willie's music almost beyond recognition, and it's a damn shame, because his first album was one of the real pleasures of 1980. That was partly creditable to the shock of hearing an unadorned, pre-metal guitar band recorded as clean and live-sounding as Willie's obvious models from the Sixties, a neat combination of folk-rock roots and New Wave energy. But mostly it was because of Willie himself: the man is a singularly gifted songwriter with a solid grasp of structure, a good eye for detail, and a flair for fresh-sounding pop melody. Moreover, he strikes a nice, welcome balance between the amusingly cynical and the cornball romantic. And he has one of those expressive, instantly recognizable voices, a cross between Bob Dylan, Buddy Holly, and a wounded ferret. To

quote my grandfather again, what was not to like?

Unfortunately, despite a bunch of rave reviews, a STEREO REVIEW Record of the Year award, and respectable airplay, the album's sales were only okay. And so the Big Fix was perhaps inevitable. Enter the smart guys at the record company, who—like their counterparts at the networks, the studios, and, to a lesser degree, the publishers—are made deeply uncomfortable by anything that isn't an obvious clone of some recent success. I can guess what the conversation was like. "Willie, babe," said the aging hippie in the satin Arista baseball jacket, "you gotta make one for AOR, for the kids. Get one of those big-deal producers who'll make you sound like Springsteen." Or maybe Willie said it himself, though I doubt it.

But somebody must have said it, because that's exactly what happened with "Golden Down." The stark simplicity of Willie's first record has been replaced with a Wall of Sound approach so blatantly derivative it verges on parody. The arrangements have been tricked out with all sorts of unnecessary keyboard overdubs, Willie's voice has been EQ'd for minimum personality, and at every turn the thing sounds as much like Springsteen as humanly possible given the physical limitations of all concerned. It gets embarrassing—every third song or so you expect Willie to break into *Backstreets*, and you're almost surprised when he doesn't.

Of course, there are some songs underneath all the pointless Asbury Park flourishes, and they're pretty wonderful when you can hear them through the Foggy Day on the Boardwalk murk of the overproduction. Lyrically, they often ring changes on a sort of *Down in the Boondocks*, wrong-side-of-the-tracks fatalism, but they're terrific stories, and for all I know they may even be true. My personal favorite is *Les Champs Elysées*, a small comic masterpiece sullied only by a gutless, ersatz Chuck Berry piano break, but just about everything else is tightly crafted and melodically fetching. *Shine Your Light* and *Shoulders*, in fact, are among the more touching love songs I've heard in a while, but it's a real effort to get into them, the fussiness and falseness of the accompaniments are so intrusive, so inappropriate. We're no longer on Dylan's Highway 61, the territory of most of the first album; it's more like being trapped on a Los Angeles freeway at rush hour, which is not particularly inspirational. I'm still a Willie Nile fan, and I'd still go see him and his hot little band bash these songs out in person. But as for listening to "Golden Down" on a regular basis, well . . . in the immortal words of Rick Nelson, I'd rather drive a truck. —Steve Simels

WILLIE NILE: *Golden Down*. Willie Nile (vocals, guitar, piano); instrumental accompaniment. *Poor Boy; Shine Your Light; Grenade; I Can't Get You Off of My Mind; I Like the Way; Golden Down; Hide Your Love; Les Champs Elysées; Shoulders.* ARISTA AB 4284 \$7.98, © ATC 4284 \$7.98, © AT8 4284 \$7.98.

also sound like refurbished items from the Sixties, eight of them her own compositions. This "new oldie" approach, whether intentional or not, gives the album a strong center and an off-beat charm. But then, Barbara Mason has an off-beat voice, sometimes sounding as if she's going flat as she squeezes out the notes, though the effect works well in her cool-funky kind of music. This is a cozy album all around, and *So in Love with You* is hauntingly lovely. Welcome back, Barbara. P.G.

MIDNIGHT FLYER. *Midnight Flyer* (vocals and instrumentals). *Hey Boy; Love Games; French Kisses; In My Eyes; Over & Over; Last Resort; Rough Trade*; and four others. SWAN SONG SS 8509 \$7.98, © CS 8509 \$7.98, © TP 8509 \$7.98.

Performance: **Middling plus**
Recording: **Pretty good**

Ninety-nine and forty-four one-hundredths per cent of the interest in this album is the reappearance as vocalist of Maggie Bell, a singer I haven't heard since the middle or early Seventies but never forgot. You won't either. If you've never heard Maggie, imagine a voice somewhere between a lyrical Janis Joplin and a moistened Tracy Nelson, and then add a few points for classy phrasing and impeccable taste. Unfortunately, the band behind her is capable but undistinguished, and the songs themselves are somewhat short of inspired or inspiring. The album isn't *bad*; it just doesn't measure up to what Maggie can do. It rocks pretty hard, but neither the tunes nor the lyrics rise above garden variety, though things do pick up at the very end with *Midnight Love* and *Rough Trade*. But give a listen anyway; the important thing is to keep Maggie Bell on the scene. The rest of the group will probably loosen up and depend less on standard rock turns if and when their material improves. And with Maggie on hand, consider where we'll be *then*. N.C.

ESTHER PHILLIPS: *Good Black Is Hard to Crack*. Esther Phillips (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Crazy; Reaching Out with Love; Cry to Me; You Can't See Thunder; We've Got a Good Thing Going*; and four others. MERCURY SRM-1-4005 \$7.95, © MCR4-1-4005 \$7.95, © MC8-1-4005 \$7.95.

Performance: **Spicy style, bland songs**
Recording: **Satisfactory**

If Esther Phillips had been around a few decades ago, she might have been one of the great blues singers. But she was born too late. Now she has been cast adrift in today's commercial floodtide, where sameness is valued more than true individuality. So "Good Black Is Hard to Crack" presents the anomaly of Little Esther, one of the all-time r-&-b greats, trying to sound like one of the innumerable popular nonentities who have a mere thimbleful of her talent and nothing comparable to her biting salt-and-vinegar voice.

What made Phillips' previous Atlantic and Kudu albums special was her basic affinity for the blues. Unfortunately, that wonderful quality is buried here. This Esther Phillips is cute and inappropriately
(Continued on page 96)

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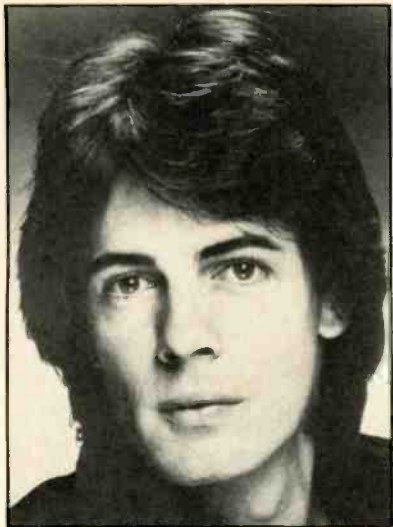
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Rick Springfield

RICK SPRINGFIELD is an Australian singer and actor who's been bouncing back and forth between the recording studio and the television camera for the past decade. His primary focus has always been on pop music, but in the early Seventies his good looks earned him an unfortunate teen-idol reputation. When that type-casting barred his securing a steady postpubescent audience, he turned to acting. But with his new RCA album, "Working Class Dog," Springfield at last proves himself to be a

pop performer of some substance. His voice is robust and flexible, his material is often very funny, and his band is muscular.

Hole in My Heart has a catchy off-time chorus in tight harmony, *Red Hot & Blue Love* is a charming parody of late-Forties rhythm-and-blues, and *Inside Sylvia* (can it possibly be based on Shakespeare's lyric "Who Is Sylvia?") is a gentle stylistic mockery of the late-Sixties Manfred Mann group. The prime cut, though, is *Jessie's Girl*, which takes the traditional rock-song premise of a guy in love with his best friend's woman, discards the melodrama, and hilariously skewers the hypocrisy of sexual jealousy in such a situation: "You know I feel so dirty/When they start talkin' cute./I wanna tell her that I love her/But the point is prob'ly moot/'Cause she's watchin' him with those eyes/And she's lovin' him with that body/I just know it."

KEITH OLSEN, who has also steered Fleetwood Mac and Foreigner, produced *Jessie's Girl* as well as *I've Done Everything for You*, another of Springfield's tunes about love's bubble bursting. Springfield and Bill Drescher produced the rest of the album. Since we seem currently to be going through a vogue for Australian films, I hope that the hoopla will extend to other Aussie exports, of which Rick Springfield is a notable example. —Joel Vance

RICK SPRINGFIELD: Working Class Dog. Rick Springfield (vocals, guitar, bass); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Love Is Alright Tonite; Jessie's Girl; Hole in My Heart; Carry Me Away; I've Done Everything for You; The Light of Love; Everybody's Girl; Daddy's Pearl; Red Hot & Blue Love; Inside Sylvia.* RCA AFL1-3697 \$8.98, © AFK1-3697 \$8.98.

coy; she sings well but is trapped by the limited material. She manages to overcome the limitations on several cuts, including *Cry to Me*, *You Can't See Thunder*, and—the best of the lot—*City Lights*, which is delightfully funky. But I wish someone would set her free to really sing the blues. P.G.

WILSON PICKETT: Right Track. Wilson Pickett (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Back on the Right Track; If You Can't Beat 'Em, Join 'Em; Ain't Gonna Give You No More; Maybe This Time;* and three others. EMI/AMERICA SW-17043 \$7.98, © 4XW-17043 \$7.98, © 8XW-17043 \$7.98.

Performance: **Lusty**
Recording: **Very good**

Back in the Sixties, when James Brown carried the art of screaming to new heights of international popularity, Wilson Pickett was known as Soul Brother No. 2; he was less famous and slightly more subdued in style. Today, when performance energy is usually generated through electronics rather than physical effort, Pickett is a fascinating throwback. The years have tempered him, and rather than relying on screaming,

he now dishes out a healthy portion of straight-ahead r-&-b singing. While none of the songs here really jump out and grab you, they should find favor with lovers of basic, uncontrived funk. P.G.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

ELVIS PRESLEY: Guitar Man. Elvis Presley (vocals); instrumental accompaniment. *Guitar Man; After Loving You; Too Much Monkey Business; Just Call Me Lonesome; Loving Arms; You Asked Me To;* and four others. RCA AAL1-3917 \$7.98, © AAK1-3917 \$7.98, © AAS1-3917 \$7.98.

Performance: **First-class remake**
Recording: **Good**

The Las Vegas regulars won't understand this album at all, which is just one of several good things about it. As his last project, the late Felton Jarvis, Elvis' producer for eleven years, took the vocal tracks from various records and hired some Nashville sidemen—including Larrie Londin, David Briggs, and Jerry Shook—to play along with them. (In most of the originals the King's voice was buried under considerable strings-and-chorus mush.) Jerry Reed, who

wrote the title song, was brought in here to play lead guitar on that cut, and he fairly tears up the pea patch. The album raises the question of why they didn't usually accompany Elvis this way and let Jerry Vale and Wayne Newton have Las Vegas, but if you can avoid thinking about that too much, you'll have a good time. N.C.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

PRETENDERS. Pretenders (vocals and instrumentals). *Message of Love; Talk of the Town; Porcelain; Cuban Slide; Precious.* SIRE MINI 3563 \$5.98, © MM55 3563 \$5.98.

Performance: **World class**
Recording: **Good**

Prejudices up front: for my money, Chrissie Hynde is (1) the greatest white girl singer in the history of rock-and-roll; (2) the first female rock composer worthy of mention together with any of the immortals; and (3) the leader of the most interesting mainstream rock outfit to debut since Bruce Springsteen's. This new "mini" release (LP format but only eighteen minutes long) of Pretenders material is, therefore, an indispensable purchase. Of course, it's supposed to be a bridge into the all-new studio album due out in a couple of months, and, musical merits aside, this is a marketing ploy I wish other groups would emulate, for it makes good sense both economically (cheaper than buying the separate singles) and in terms of fan fun.

The songs? Well, they range from the merely terrific to the sublime. *Talk of the Town* is a quintessential twelve-string pop tune featuring Chrissie at her most authoritatively winsome. *Cuban Slide* mates a Bo Diddley beat with Beatles guitar figures and is one of the sexiest pieces of music ever committed to vinyl. *Message of Love* is a Wilson Pickett update, modern soul music that takes a few listenings to hit—but oh! when it does! *Porcelain* is a delightful throwaway in which the band plays a game of Guess Where We Stole the Riffs. Finally, *Precious* is a spunky live version of the tune from the first album in which Chrissie discourses on the relative merits of Howard the Duck and what my mother used to call X-E-S. In short, this is a bargain that is at once sweaty, hauntingly melodic, and defiantly intelligent. Get it. S.S.

LEON REDBONE: From Branch to Branch. Leon Redbone (vocals, guitar); instrumental accompaniment. (*Mama's Got a Baby Named*) *Te Na Na; A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight; Step It Up and Go; Your Cheatin' Heart; Seduced; Why; Extra Blues;* and four others. EMERALD CITY EC 38-136 \$7.98, © CS 38-136 \$7.98, © TP 38-136 \$7.98.

Performance: **Pleasantly demented**
Recording: **Very good**

If Dr. Demento's still around, Leon Redbone is still making the kind of records the DJ prefers for his zany show. Redbone has added instruments—a quiet Dixieland complement here and there, occasionally some even quieter strings—but his style hasn't changed much, nor the impression he makes. It's hard to describe that impression. If you're familiar with his stuff—the

growly voice, the supple fingerpicking, the Forties songs—he might remind you here of a one-joke comedian, though not unpleasantly. But if you've had your head stuck in rock-and-roll or jazz or any other one thing, he could be a refreshing change of pace. I still think Redbone works best as a warm-up act in a small concert hall. He won't steal the thunder of the main act or make the patrons edgy to get on with the proceedings. As an Added Attraction, in small doses, he complements practically anything. He makes me wish they still ran the cartoon before the feature at the movies. *N.C.*

JEAN REDPATH: *The Songs of Robert Burns* (see Best of the Month, page 76)

ROCKET 88. Rocket 88 (vocals and instrumentals). *Roll 'Em Pete; St. Louis Blues; Roadhouse Boogie; Talking About Louise;* and three others. ATLANTIC SD 19293 \$7.98, © CS 19293 \$7.98, © TP 19293 \$7.98.

Performance: **Shallow fun**
Recording: **Fair**

In the notes for this album, pianist/producer Ian Stewart describes it as a "straight-forward, mainly instrumental blues album with boogie woogie as its foundation." So it is, but I am sad to report that Rocket 88, for all the celebrities it harbors (Charlie Watts, Jack Bruce, and Alexis Korner among them), makes only a pale English copy of American music. Blues of the jumping, honking style Rocket 88 seeks to emulate has never thrived in the hands of Europeans. Not even the presence of Hal Singer—whose tenor sax was a part of the original scene in the Forties and Fifties—can lend credence to this attempt at doing the impossible.

I should point out that, even diluted as it is, the album does have moments when it stimulates a body response. But these bones have very little meat on them, and the whole thing becomes downright embarrassing when guitarist Alexis Korner and bassist Jack Bruce do vocal impressions of old, uneducated black men. The whole thing seems to have gone over big at Hanover's Rotation Club, where it was recorded, but it's a big mystery why Atlantic chose to issue this imitative import instead of drawing from its own multitudinous stock of r-&-b goodies. *C.A.*

THE ROLLING STONES: *Sucking in the Seventies.* The Rolling Stones (vocals and instrumentals); instrumental accompaniment. *Shattered; Everything Is Turning to Gold; Hot Stuff; Time Waits for No One; Fool to Cry; Mannish Boy;* and four others, ROLLING STONES COC 16028 \$7.98, © CS 16028 \$7.98, © TP 16028 \$7.98.

Performance: **Inconsistent**
Recording: **Good**

What the world needs now is emphatically *not* another Rolling Stones repackaging, but as these things go, "Sucking in the Seventies" is a decent enough job with a nice balance between the unexpected and the ubiquitous. I would have programmed it differently, though. *Mannish Boy* is one of the weaker cuts from "Love You Live"; *Cracking Up* from the same album would have made a lot more sense. Room should

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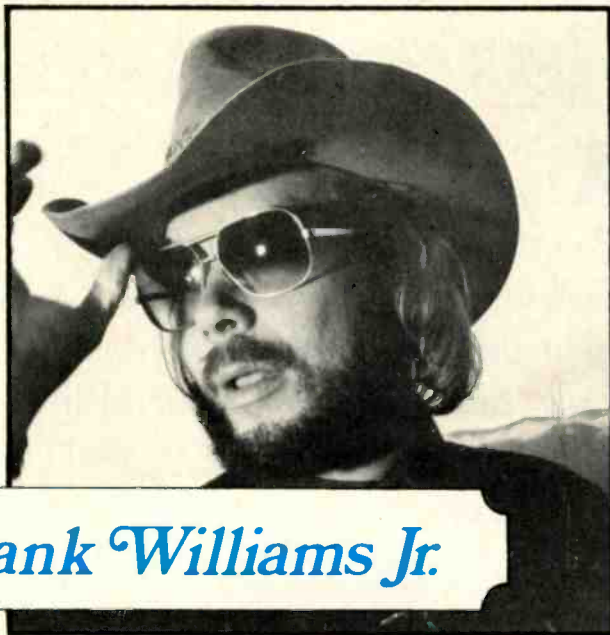
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Hank Williams Jr.

COME on, urban cowboys, get with it. Hank Williams Jr. has made a string of brilliant albums and you're still messing around with Johnny Paycheck? "Rowdy," the latest, may be his best yet; in fact, I think it's the best country-rock album I've heard since Waylon Jennings' "I've Always Been Crazy." Hank Junior wrote all the songs on the first side and used the work of such people as Merle Haggard, Dickey Betts, and Waylon (a song that's obliquely about Hank Senior, *Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way*) on the second side, which starts with his father's neglected but haunting *Ramblin' Man*. And I like his own songs even more than I like the fine guest batch.

Hank Senior's fiddler, Jerry Rivers, is among the sidemen, who include horn players as well as steel-guitar players and who are all robust—there's nothing tentative about *this* record—but never overplay.

Williams' voice (like George Jones', it is capable of imitating a lot of others) has settled into an easily recognized sound, with some of the nerves-exposed intensity of his father's and some subtle qualities his father's didn't have. If you go about wearing a Stetson—or even if you don't—and don't know about this guy, you've got a great new experience ahead of you. —Noel Coppage

HANK WILLIAMS JR.: *Rowdy*. Hank Williams Jr. (vocals, guitar, dobro); Larrie Londin (drums); Joe Osborn (bass); Reggie Young (guitar); other musicians. *Dixie on My Mind; Texas Women; You Can't Find Many Kissers; Give a Damn; Ain't Much More; Ramblin' Man; I Got a Right to Be Wrong; Footlights; Tennessee River; Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way.* ELEKTRA 6E-330 \$7.98, © TCS-330 \$7.98, © ET8-330 \$7.98.

also have been found for the remixed single version of *Before They Make Me Run*, which is not only vastly superior to the "Some Girls" version but is currently selling for \$50 in specialty stores; for the great live *Let It Rock*, currently languishing on the Spanish "Sticky Fingers"; for the studio takes of *Drift Away*, *Shame Shame Shame*, and the scandalous *Claudine*, which fans have been clamoring for; and for *Through the Lonely Nights*, a gorgeous 1974 B-side.

Still, this is a pleasantly listenable set. *Everything Is Turning to Gold*, a great, churning, funk excursion from the "Some Girls" sessions, makes a welcome first album appearance; the new version of *Dance* is an interesting curio; and *Hot Stuff*, which was much maligned in 1976 for daring to verge on disco, seems remarkably up to date—compare it with the recent *Magnificent Seven* by the Clash and you'll hear

what I mean. The major disappointment is the live runthrough (from the 1978 tour) of *When the Whip Comes Down*, which lacks even a hint of the fury and menace of the original. Overall, this set doesn't prove what the Stones probably intended it to—that their Seventies output has been generally underrated—but it does help to put things in perspective. S.S.

TODD RUNDGREN: *Healing*. Todd Rundgren (vocals, synthesizer, percussion, production, engineering, etc.). *Flesh; Golden Goose; Compassion; Healing*; and two others. BEARSVILLE BHS 3522 \$8.98, © W5 3522 \$8.98, © W8 3522 \$8.98.

Performance: **More like repairing**
Recording: **Very good**
Really, now. I'm sure Todd Rundgren is a decent sort, and I mean him no harm, but I

still can't find the slightest hint of a connection between what he does and music. I would call his stuff Future Schlock, but schlock is too human a word for it, implying as it does grubbiness and other attributes of flesh and blood. For this release Rundgren has done *everything* singlehanded, with a bonus "single" disc thrown in for good measure, and it's another engineering *über alles* trip. He calls his publishing company Humanoid Music and takes off from there. But it does not necessarily follow that an age that has the ability to produce computers and robots will turn over the making of—and the listening to—music to computers and robots.

Rundgren's "tunes" go nowhere, his synthesizer accompaniment is to playing music as typing is to writing, and though his lyrics—what you can catch of them—mention "flesh" and "pulse" and "compassion," in this cold, garishly lit setting those words don't even work as irony. The perfect engineer (or the perfect typist) might in time be a robot, but I don't think the world will turn music over to cybernetics. If it does, and the results sound anything like this, I say to hell with the world. N.C.

RUSH: *Moving Pictures*. Rush (vocals and instrumentals). *Tom Sawyer; Red Barchetta; Limelight; Witch Hunt*; and three others. MERCURY SRM-1-4013 \$7.95, © MCR4-1-4013 \$7.95, © MC8-1-4013 \$7.95.

Performance: **Plodding**
Recording: **Very good**

Ordinarily there is at least one cut on a Rush album that rises above their usual razzle-dazzle—either a sly, slow-tempo sleeper in which the lyrics and melody merge into something approaching a real song or else one with a catchy arrangement that propels the esoteric lyrics past one's ears. No such luck this time. If I hadn't heard Rush before I'd say this album was by a mediocre group trying to sound like a heavyweight. As it is, Rush seems to have fallen into a dry period. J.V.

SISTER SLEDGE: *All American Girls*. Sister Sledge (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *All American Girls; Next Time You'll Know; Happy Feeling; Ooh, You Caught My Heart; Music Makes Me Feel Good*; and five others. COTILLION SD 16027 \$7.98, © CS 16027 \$7.98, © TP 16027 \$7.98.

Performance: **Mixed blessing**
Recording: **Fine**

The title song here, a kind of pro-ERA anthem, is another big commercial success for the four sisters Sledge. It's in their charmed style and strongly reminiscent of their previous big hit *We Are Family*. Yet it's one of the least interesting cuts on this new album, which is mostly hot, fast, and (yes, I'll say it) disco. Unfortunately, the singers come out second to the production. Both blame and praise should go to Narada Michael Walden, Sister Sledge's new producer. Unlike Bernard Edwards and Nile Rodgers, who worked with them on their earlier album, Walden drowns out their vocals. Only in the charming chorus to *If You Really Want Me* and the ballad *Next Time You'll* (Continued on page 100)

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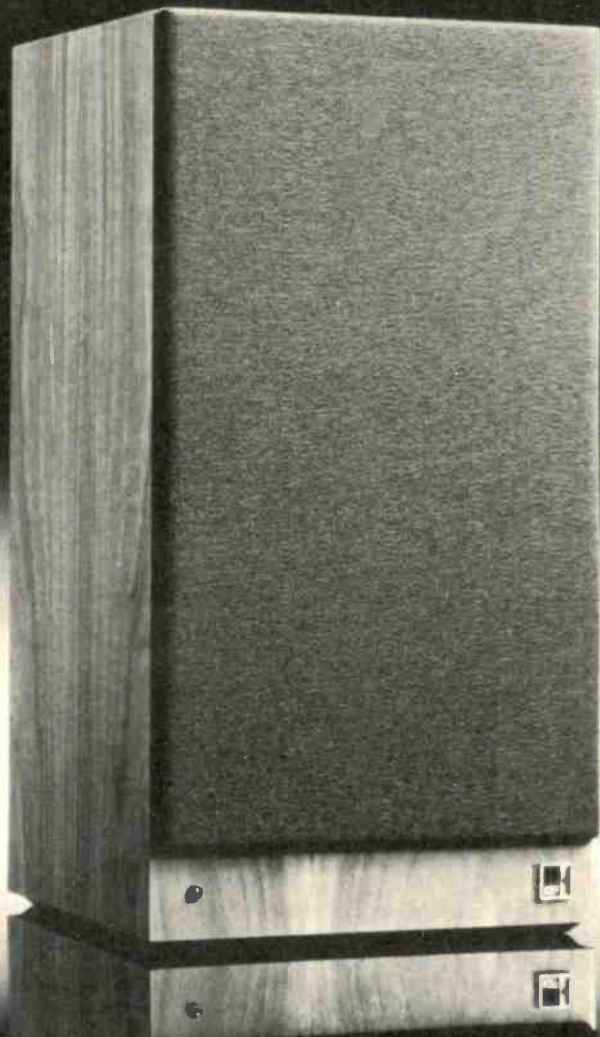
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Hidden Talent: Derek Smith

DEREK SMITH is an English pianist who spent six years not being heard in the *Tonight Show* band and subsequently played with Benny Goodman and Mel Tormé, among others. Carson and company ought to be awarded some kind of prize for managing to keep a talent of Smith's dimensions hidden from the public on a major national show. Of course, Smith has probably developed his talent further since those days, but the pianistic flower that blooms on his new "Love for Sale" album from Progressive Records did not grow overnight—*somebody* has been keeping this man's love affair with the piano from us. With a trio completed by bassist George Duvivier and drummer Bobby Rosengarden, Smith bursts forth with *Love for Sale*, which is nothing short of a tour de force, then moves

us through one delightful performance after another. Combining brilliant technique with solid swing and a fertile musical imagination, Smith delivers the goods in glorious gift wrapping, and the pleasure is doubled because Progressive, a Georgia-based label, has also released a splendid quartet album featuring Smith.

Everything I said about the trio release also applies to "The Man I Love," which adds Scott Hamilton's now-so-familiar fluid-drive tenor saxophone to a smooth trio consisting of Smith, George Mraz, and Billy Hart. Don't think of this as just a trio with saxophone, however, for in these capable, mutually sympathetic hands it is a cohesive unit.

You might be a bit confused by the mixed-up titles on the trio album's labels, but Smith's playing more than makes up for such production errors, and as you enjoy the music you can take additional delight in the fine cover art by David Stone Martin. Despite a catalog that includes such artists as Howard McGhee, Lee Konitz, Buddy DeFranco, Chris Connor, and Chuck Wayne, I had not previously heard of Progressive Records, but if their other releases match these two Derek Smith albums in quality, the label should go far. —Chris Albertson

DEREK SMITH: *Love for Sale.* Derek Smith (piano); George Duvivier (bass); Bobby Rosengarden (drums). *Love for Sale; Summertime; Tristessa; Too Close for Comfort; One to Warm Up On; Autumn Leaves; Sweet Lorraine; A Day in the Life of a Fool (Carnival).* PROGRESSIVE 7002 \$8.98, © C7002 \$8.98 (from Progressive Records, P.O. Box 500, Tifton, Ga. 31794).

DEREK SMITH: *The Man I Love.* Derek Smith (piano); Scott Hamilton (tenor saxophone); George Mraz (bass); Billy Hart (drums). *The Man I Love; Yesterdays; Topsy; There's a Small Hotel; These Foolish Things; Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea; I'm in the Mood for Love.* PROGRESSIVE 7035 \$8.98.

Know does the singers' special harmony dominate.

Still, there is some real excitement here. Walden uses the most basic disco elements (handclaps, piles of strings, strutting percussion), but he uses them well, building *Music Makes Me Feel Good* and, especially, *If You Really Want Me* into fine dance cuts and shifting *He's Just a Runaway* into dramatic overdrive. For Sister Sledge fans, then, "All American Girls" is a mixed blessing. It dances rather well, but it only fleetingly showcases the girls as vocalists and personalities in their own right. Oh, well, maybe next time. I.C.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

STARPOINT: *Keep On It.* Starpoint (vocals and instrumentals); instrumental accompaniment. *I Just Want to Be Your Lover; For You; Baby Let Me Do It; We're into*

Love; and four others. CHOCOLATE CITY CCLP 2018 \$8.98.

Performance: **Cool and clever**
Recording: **Terrific**

This is an album of cool, clear, almost jazz-intense rhythm-and-blues. It thumps more than it has to, but Starpoint has enough pluses to compensate. For one thing, the group has vocalist Renée Diggs, who has a thrilling range and a good soul sense as well. She sings the pants off *For You*, an otherwise slight piece of work, and does an outstanding job on the high-energy bouncer *I Want You Closer*, where she is superbly supported by the back-up vocals. Starpoint also has a seven-man band of good musicians. Their instrumental arrangements have a combo-like sparseness to them; whether the sound is soul or disco-funk, you can hear just what Gene Phillips is doing on the keyboards, what Orlando is doing on

bass, and so on. The overlapped, over-dubbed vocal arrangements are also well thought out. They lift weaker songs, such as *We're into Love* and *Baby Let Me Do It*, to the level of artistry. "Keep On It" is an ambitious, varied winner. I.C.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

JAMES TAYLOR: *Dad Loves His Work.* James Taylor (vocals, guitar); Dan Dugmore (guitar, steel); Waddy Wachtel (guitar); Leland Sklar (bass); Rick Marotta (drums); other musicians. *Hard Times; Her Town Too; I Will Follow; Stand and Fight; Only for Me; Summer's Here; and five others.* COLUMBIA TC 37009 \$8.98, © TCT 37009 \$8.98, © TCA 37009 \$8.98.

Performance: **Dad's a pro**
Recording: **Good, but see below**

The second half of this is particularly impressive, some of it vintage James Taylor. The first side may initially seem a little short on melodies, in the manner of "Mud Slide Slim," but listen a couple more times and you'll probably start calling them minimalist melodies, as I did. It's of no great concern, as Taylor's such an intelligent lyricist and is in good form here, and he and his backers are such pros that they keep a thing moving along just right and you with it. The last three songs—starting with *Sugar Trade*, a collaboration with Jimmy Buffett—are exceptionally good.

The album isn't so much about how Dad regards his work as about how he regards his life (and those who've affected it), but *London Town* has him associating the setting of his early work (where he was discovered by the Beatles) with the passions he had then: "...when my fires have all burned out/I'd like to think I can still think about/The things I used to sing about." And *That Lonesome Road* is memorable for its sound, with a seven-person choir (in which the lovely voice of Jennifer Warnes is prominent) and minimal backing from a piano. The backing is clean and intelligent throughout, with a nice sense of space around the instruments and holes where there should be holes. The engineering seems fine too, but my review copy is a little funky: there's intermittent static in the left channel and sometimes pre- or post-echo as well. That doesn't keep me from playing it though, and on my own time. N.C.

TOTO: *Turn Back.* Toto (vocals and instrumentals). *English Eyes; Live for Today; Turn Back; Gift with a Golden Gun; and four others.* COLUMBIA FC 36813 \$8.98, © FCT 36813 \$8.98, © FCA 36813 \$8.98.

Performance: **Anonymous amalgam**
Recording: **Very good**

Toto is currently a "hot" band of the type that tends to flourish for a few years and then go into prolonged decline or disappear with little general mourning. Other examples at present are Foreigner, Aerosmith, Chicago, Kiss, Black Sabbath, Vanilla Fudge, Iron Butterfly, and the Average White Band. Toto attempts an amalgam of the styles of all those named—some blues here, some jazz there, pop everywhere—in a buckshof approach to audience demographics. The result, while not unpleasant, is slick, cautious, and forgettable. J.V.

FRANKIE VALLI/THE FOUR SEASONS: *Reunited Live*. Frankie Valli (vocals); the Four Seasons (vocals and instrumentals); instrumental accompaniment. *Who Loves You; Our Day Will Come; Rag Doll; Dawn; Can't Take My Eyes Off of You; Fallen Angel; Slip Away; Workin' My Way Back to You; Sherry; Walk Like a Man; Big Girls Don't Cry; December 1963 (Oh, What a Night)*; and twelve others. WARNER BROS. 2WB 3497 two discs \$13.98, © J5A 3497 \$13.98.

Performance: **Could be worse**
Recording: **Good remote**

I knew something like this would happen. One of the shakedown concerts preparatory to this reunion album was wiped out by a tornado last summer. I'd been saying for years that Frankie Valli's falsetto was going to ruin our weather, and there it was. Probably *Big Girls Don't Cry* (aye-aye) was what did it—at least that's the one that always unpeels my wallpaper. Guess you can tell I regard this as a novelty act, but it's one I'm glad to have around. I was looking forward, actually, to having a fresh version of *Rag Doll*, one of my all-time favorite songs, but unfortunately the boys give it perfunctory, live-concert, middle-of-a-medley treatment. Same thing happens to *Workin' My Way Back to You* (*Sherry* fares a little better). Worse, throughout most of the program Valli panders to the crowd to an annoying degree—exhorting it to clap hands and say it's feelin' good and so forth—and the plastic and insufferable *Grease* is drawn out over eight minutes. But there are some examples of what's good about the Four Seasons' sound here and there. A less expensive studio album might have got this reunion off to a better start, but since the Eighties are going to have novelty acts anyway, this one is a relief from the Plasmatics. At least it's got tunes. Of course, you can look for Mount St. Helens to blow again if Valli and company catch on. N.C.

LEON WARE: *Rockin' You Eternally* (see Best of the Month, page 73)

EDGAR WINTER: *Standing on Rock*. Edgar Winter (vocals, keyboards, saxophone); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Star Garbage; Standing on Rock; Love Is Everywhere; Rock and Roll Revival*; and four others. BLUE SKY JZ 36494 \$7.98, © JZT 36494 \$7.98, © JZA 36494 \$7.98.

Performance: **Professional**
Recording: **Good**

Edgar Winter has settled into a pattern of more or less programmed music, standardized jumpers and ballads without real content but presented with his customary—and considerable—skill. *Star Garbage* rejects the trappings of fame in favor of domestic bliss (Winter has dedicated this album to his wife, and all the ballads here are gee-whiz honeymoon items). *Standing on Rock* and *Rock and Roll Revival* are jittery pep talks about the future of the music by which Winter makes his living. Cast in different language, they could serve as the closing paragraphs of a corporate report. All I can say is, stockholders beware. J.V.

(Continued overleaf)

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JAZZ



RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

CLIFFORD BROWN: *The Paris Collection, Volume 2.* Clifford Brown (trumpet); Gigi Gryce (alto saxophone); other musicians. *Minority* (three takes); *Baby* (two takes); *Salute to the Band Box* (two takes); *Strictly Romantic*. INNER CITY® IC 7011 \$7.98, © PRS 8-24020 \$7.98, © PRS 5-24020 \$7.98.

Performance: **Precious**
Recording: **Good mono**

I remember Clifford when he was twenty-two and full of fresh ideas that flowed from his horn on a chilly November night; like kernels of popping corn, the notes came bursting forth, splitting the smoke-filled air, blending with the clang of beer-bottle traffic, and rendering inconsequential the efforts of those who performed with him that night. That the local musicians should pale alongside this young American was not startling, but even Gigi Gryce, Quincy Jones, Anthony Ortega, and Jimmy Cleveland—fellow members of the touring Lionel Hampton band—lost some glitter beside this newcomer. The occasion was an all-night jam session I helped arrange in Copenhagen almost thirty years ago, an event time might well have blurred but for the extraordinary display of originality by a player we had not heard of before. Almost a month earlier, Clifford Brown made some recordings in Paris—for the French Vogue label—and some of these now make up the second Clifford Brown release in Inner City's Jazz Legacy series.

Like the earlier Brown release (IC 7001), the second volume features several alternative takes, including two that have never previously been made available. I have always felt that listening to take after take of a selection is a bore unless one is making a study of the music, but there is justification for it in Brown's case; he had the ability to generate a fresh approach each time. At any rate, all of his recordings are precious, for he died—in an automobile accident—less than three years after making his recording debut as a leader.

The sextet, co-led by Gigi Gryce and featuring a European rhythm section, yielded the best of Brown's output during that Hampton tour; as he outshone even those eminent professionals, he treated the jazz world to a marvelous preview of things to come. What came, of course, was the collaboration with drummer Max Roach, but just as the Brown/Roach recordings have earned a niche in jazz history, so have these precursors taken on a significance of their own. You may not, as I do, remember Clifford from personal experience, but you are robbing yourself of some extraordinary per-

formances if you don't lend this batch from Paris an ear. C.A.

CODONA: *Codona 2.* Codona (instrumentals and vocals). *Again and Again, Again; Drip-Dry; Malinye*; and three others. ECM ECM-1-1177 \$8.98, © M5E-1177 \$8.98.

Performance: **Singularly haunting**
Recording: **Excellent**

This is the second album by Codona, the group that gets its name from the first names of its three players, Collin Walcott, Don Cherry, and Nana Vasconcelos. The first release ("*Codona*," ECM-1-1132) mainly featured Cherry's horn against a mural brushed with strokes of jazz and raga; "*Codona 2*" tends to be a reflection of the disparate cultural backgrounds and experiences of these three men. The result is easier to enjoy than to define, a surrealistic collage of postcards from exotic places, all crisp and clear, the way ECM likes to capture things with its sound cameras. C.A.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

CHRIS CONNOR: *Sweet and Swinging.* Chris Connor (vocals); Mike Abene (piano); Mike Moore (bass); Jerry Dodgian (alto saxophone, flute); Ronnie Bedford (drums). *The Sweetest Sounds; Where Flamingos Fly; I've Got You Under My Skin; I Wish You Love; Just in Time*; and six others. PROGRESSIVE 7028 \$8.98, © C-7028 \$8.98 (from Progressive Records, P.O. Box 500, Tifton, Ga. 31794).

Performance: **Lovely**
Recording: **Good**

Chris Connor is an exquisite jazz singer whose gift for projecting lyrics with lucid delicacy and innate musicianship makes her the leader of any ensemble she performs with. She's surrounded here by some very fine musicians, and they seem to be taking their cues from her, not because they're "supporting" or "spotlighting" the star but because that's the only way the phrase or chord can play. This certainty, this absolute control over material and sound, is a Connor trademark that shows to lovely advantage in such familiar material as *Just in Time, I Wish You Love*, and *Any Place I Hang My Hat*. All of them re-emerge as distinct musical entities, not mere hooks on which the average jazz singer hangs his or her "inventive" cloth. Ms. Connor's respect for the material she works with is always apparent. A lovely, elegant album. P.R.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

WILD BILL DAVISON WITH EDDIE CONDON'S ALL STARS: *Live! Miami Beach 1955.* Wild Bill Davison (cornet); Lou McGarity (trombone); Pee Wee Russell (clarinet); Gene Schroeder (piano); Walter Page (bass); George Wettling (drums). *Beale Street Blues; Judy; I'm in the Market for You; Rockin' Chair; Singin' the Blues*; and five others. PUMPKIN® 111 \$7.98 (from Pumpkin Productions, P.O. Box 7963, Miami, Fla. 33155).

Performance: **Very good**
Recording: **Very good**

Well, you can't ask for much more: an Eddie Condon hot-jazz commando squad in

a comfortable setting, recorded live in 1955, with excellent sound and an appetizing program of warhorses and obscure gems. Of special interest is a ballad medley containing Hoagy Carmichael's gorgeous and nearly forgotten *Judy*, every facet of which pianist Gene Schroeder gently polishes, followed by the very obscure *I'm in the Market for You*, played very close to the melody by the incomparable Pee Wee Russell, and capped by Wild Bill Davison's slightly screechy but passionate lead on *Rockin' Chair*, a still-water tune that runs deep.

Condon, by the way, did not play in this session, but as entrepreneur and personality he dominated the many small groups that either appeared at his New York club or were called on the road for dates such as this one. Hank Bredenberg's detailed notes are entertaining and welcome, if at times somewhat frenzied. Davison was never my first choice as a hot cornet—he maintained a precarious balance between damn-all zeal and cheap vulgarity—but he was a commanding lead. Trombonist Lou McGarity has trouble getting started on this occasion, but he later warms up and shows considerable confidence. Russell always managed to be on intimate terms with perfection, and the rhythm support of Schroeder, bassist Walter Page, and drummer George Wettling is a fusion to be treasured. The album ends with *I Want to Be Happy*, by which time every listener should be.

J.V.

DIZZY GILLESPIE: *Digital at Montreux, 1980*. Dizzy Gillespie (trumpet); Toots Thielemans (guitar); Bernard Purdie (drums). *Christopher Columbus; Manteca; I'm Sitting on Top of This World*; and two others. PABLO LIVE ● D2308226 \$8.98, © K08226 \$8.98.

Performance: **Delicious Dizzy, but...**
Recording: **Utter unbalance**

There is no question about it, Dizzy Gillespie plays superbly on this album, but I do wish we could hear him better. It's an odd trio consisting of Dizzy with Belgian harmonica player Toots Thielemans on guitar and drummer Bernard Purdie. Purdie is a New York studio musician who has performed on countless forgettable sessions. If you never noticed him before, you will on this set, but for the wrong reasons—he is terribly miscast and excruciatingly over-recorded. It is as if all the microphones had been placed in front of the drums, and when Dizzy wanders off mike—as he does throughout the first track and for most of the second—the joy of hearing him play so magnificently is lessened considerably. Thielemans does a fine job on guitar, often managing to come through Purdie's percussion barrier better than the leader, but those of us who were not present could do without *Get That Booty*, which has Dizzy playing a jew's harp and was obviously of more visual than musical interest. This album is a very mixed blessing.

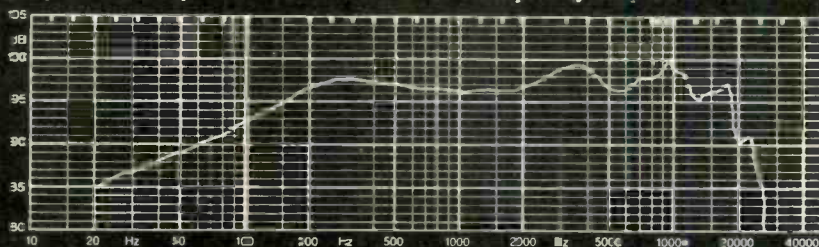
C.A.

BOB JAMES: *All Around the Town*. Bob James, JoAnne Brackeen, Richard Tee (piano); Tom Scott, Mark Colby (saxophone); Eddie Gomez, Gary King (bass); Wilbert Longmire, Earl Klugh, Hiram Bullock (guitar); Jim Pugh (trombone); Mike Lawrence, Ron Tooley, Tom Browne (trumpet); George Marge (flute); Mike Lawrence (flu-

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gelhorn); Idris Muhammad, Jimmy Maelen, Steve Gadd, Billy Hart (drums). *Touch-down; Stompin' at the Savoy; Angela (Theme from "Taxi"); We're All Alone*; and four others. COLUMBIA/TAPPAN ZEE C2X 36786 two discs \$11.98, © CTX 36786 \$11.98, © CAX 36786 \$11.98.

Performance: **Good**
Recording: **Very good**

In December 1979 Bob James appeared in a series of New York concerts (Town Hall, the Bottom Line, Carnegie Hall) with various musicians, some from his own Tappan Zee label and others out-of-town jobbers who flew in for the bash. There wasn't any special reason for the series, the recordings

aren't cultural milestones, and James himself is still some distance from legendary status. But James is a prolific and facile pianist, and there are some first-rate musicians here. The eight selections are all lengthy, so everyone has room to stretch out. The two Town Hall performances give the marvelous JoAnne Brackeen and Richard Tee a chance to share the spotlight with James on piano. The best performances are on *Stompin' at the Savoy* (identified, in a colossal misprint, as a James original), *Fandole* (James' arrangement of a movement of Bizet's *L'Arlésienne* music), and Boz Scaggs' *We're All Alone*. The musicians and audiences were enthusiastic, and listeners should also have a good time. *J.V.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

EDDIE JEFFERSON: *There I Go Again*. Eddie Jefferson (vocals); Joe Newman, Clark Terry, Dave Burns, Bill Hardman (trumpet); Jimmy Cleveland (trombone); James Moody, Johnny Griffin (saxophone); Wynton Kelly, Junior Mance, Sadik Hakim, Barry Harris, Joe Zawinul (piano); other musicians. *Body and Soul; Dexter Digs In; There I Go, There I Go Again; So What; Filthy McNasty; Old Shoes; A Night in Tunisia; Now's the Time; Mercy, Mercy, Mercy; Come Along with Me; Baby Girl; Letter from Home*; and eleven others. PRESTIGE P-24095 two discs \$8.98.

Performance: **Excellent**
Recording: **Good**

It was two years ago that singer Eddie Jefferson was fatally shot as he emerged from a club engagement in Detroit. It happened just as the sixty-one-year-old master of "vocalese" (as his art of setting lyrics to instrumental solos has been called) was enjoying a surge in popularity with a style that was embraced as warmly by the avant-garde as it was by those to whom it represented a nostalgic slice of the Fifties. The latter group should be particularly receptive to "There I Go Again," a two-record reissue that combines material from the Prestige and Riverside labels recorded between 1953 and 1969 and features supporting work by some of the celebrated instrumentalists of the period.

The set starts with two selections from Jefferson's first Prestige session (he had made four sides for Hi-Lo in Pittsburgh the previous year), continues with some sides recorded at a James Moody big-band date, takes us through the 1961-1962 Riverside sessions, and concludes with ten selections from two late-Sixties Prestige sessions. It is as representative a slice of Jefferson's work as we are ever likely to get in one release, a wonderful collection that in itself represents a chapter in modern jazz, and it is made all the better by Ira Steingroot's fine, informative notes. *C.A.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

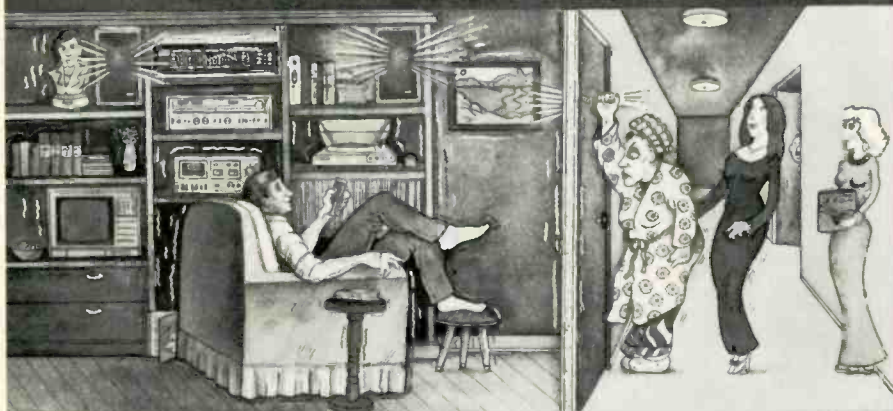
TEO MACERO: *Teo*. Teo Macero (alto and tenor saxophones); Art Farmer (trumpet); Al Cohn, Phil Woods, Pepper Adams, Lee Konitz (saxophones); Bill Evans (piano); Charles Mingus (bass); orchestra. *St. Louis Blues; I'll Remember April; Blues for Amy; Mitzi; Out of Loneliness; Thou Swell*; and six others. AMERICAN CLAVÉ 1002 \$6.50 (plus \$2 postage and handling charge from New Music Distribution, 500 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012).

Performance: **Excellent**
Recording: **Good**

Teo Macero has been composing and arranging jazz-oriented music since the early Fifties, but he is more widely known for his work as a producer for Columbia Records. His work in that field includes many of the albums that document the development of such stars as Miles Davis but relatively few recordings featuring his own music.

"Teo," a new release on a new label called American Clavé, is not an album of new music, but Macero has always been somewhat of an experimenter, so even the

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1953 tracks, described as "slightly reprocessed mono," don't show their age. There are six selections of that vintage, taken from a session that originally appeared on a Debut EP (remember jazz EPs?) and included Charles Mingus on bass and cello. Also on that session—but nowhere mentioned in this album's personnel listing—was one Lenny Dijay, whose accordion lends a unique voice to the proceedings. If you really want proof of Macero's advanced musical thinking, listen to *Explorations*, and bear in mind that it was recorded some six years before the emergence of Ornette Coleman.

Macero himself produced this set, which made all the more puzzling the sloppiness of the accompanying discographical information until I found the enclosed slip of paper containing apologies for the errors on this "limited first pressing." On the next run, Addison Farmer (Art's late brother) will not be listed as "Edison," and Lenny Dijay will be credited properly for his accordion work throughout. Some changes are still called for, though: two 1959 Columbia tracks (*St. Louis Blues* and *Blues for Amy*) are listed as having been originally released in 1957, and no dates are given for five of the selections. Let that not deter you, however; what really counts is in the grooves, and that's worth hearing. C.A.

MAX ROACH: *M'Boom*. Max Roach, Ray Mantilla, Freddie Waits, Roy Brooks, Kenyatte Abdur-Rahman, Omar Clay, Joe Chambers, Fred King, and Warren Smith (percussion). *Onomatopoeia; The Glorious Monster; Epistrophy; Morning/Midday*; and five others. COLUMBIA ● IC 36247 \$14.98. © HCT 36247 \$14.98.

Performance: **Ho hum dum-de-dum**
Recording: **Good**

I don't care if Max Roach is one of the greatest jazz drummers of all time (and he is), nor will I allow my opinion of this album to be influenced by his being joined here by some other extraordinary rhythm men. "M'Boom" makes very boring listening, totally devoid of the kind of spirit that quickens the heartbeat on encounters with the African and Balinese music that seems to have inspired it. These are all accomplished, skilled players, but it appears that technique has edged out soul, at least this time around. The result sounds like the rhythm track for one of Cal Tjader's Sixties commercial ventures. This sort of thing will give digital recording a bad name. C.A.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

LENNIE TRISTANO: *Requiem*. Lennie Tristano (piano); Lee Konitz (alto saxophone); Gene Ramey, Peter Ind (bass); Art Taylor, Jeff Morton (drums). *You Go to My Head; C Minor Complex; Line Up; Love Lines; East Thirty-Second; These Foolish Things; If I Had You*; and nine others. ATLANTIC SD 2-7003 two discs \$13.97, © CS 2-7003 \$13.97, © TP 2-7003 \$13.97.

Performance: **Superb**
Recording: **Good mono and stereo**

Considering his stature as a musician and the influence he exerted on modern jazz, Lennie Tristano made remarkably few recordings in his fifty-nine years. Because he

was never granted full recognition from the recording industry, he himself was in large measure responsible for his meager representation in the catalog. A man who took his music very seriously, Tristano was loath to have others hear performances that "did not seem to him to speak well enough of what he had seen and heard," according to Barry Ulanov, whose excellent notes—both old and new—accompany Atlantic's reissue, in one set, of two outstanding albums ("Lennie Tristano" and "The New Tristano"). The old releases, from 1955 and 1961, appear intact (with Ulanov's original notes as well as an update) except that a 1955 quartet session has now been mastered in stereo as originally recorded.

That session features alto saxophonist Lee Konitz, bassist Gene Ramey, and drummer Art Taylor at the Sing Song Room of New York's Confucius Restaurant. It is a quartet quite different from the groups Tristano had been heard with in earlier years, and the relatively unadventurous approach to five standard ballads surprised many followers at the time. Not quite orthodox are the four Tristano originals that precede the quartet tracks; two—*Requiem* and *Turkish Mambo*—are layers of piano solos overdubbed by Tristano, while *Line Up* and *East Thirty-Second* feature his piano dubbed over "adjusted" rhythm tracks by bassist Peter Ind and drummer Jeff Morton. If you have not heard these tracks

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Miles To Go



MANY people would like to know what happened to Miles Davis, why he removed himself from the jazz scene in the mid-Seventies, suddenly aborted a comeback recording session in the late Seventies, and so far shows no signs of making a return in the Eighties. Miles' enigmatic ways must be particularly frustrating to those for whom he generates income, but even though they cannot book past performances, they can still issue them on records. Columbia (the label Miles has recorded for since the mid-Fifties) is particularly fortunate in having a wealth of unissued Miles material in its vault.

Unissued recordings often translate into undesirable albums, but that is not always true in the case of Miles Davis, as "Directions," Columbia's latest Davis release, splendidly proves. A two-record set of performances, hitherto kept under wraps, it covers the most productive and interesting decade of the trumpeter's career, from a late Gil Evans collaboration (1960) to the early electric period (1970), when Miles donned boutique garb, plugged into the nearest outlet, aimed a stony face and tinted horn at the Fillmore audience, and fused his music with electronic rock.

Miles was able to move toward rock and still retain in his music all the elements of jazz, but the ominous thump of disco began to grow louder as the decade wore on. While That Beat was clearly the signal most of the young "in" people heeded, it offered Miles no stimulus. There was still fusion, the very genre he himself had been so instrumental in developing, but he was already its high priest and its most popular exponents were his disciples. So perhaps the answer to the

question "What happened to Miles Davis?" is that he had reached an impasse. Not being one to stand still, he opted to retire rather than turn back. Whether or not that's the reason, I still hope his retirement is only temporary; after all, he did return to the studio once, however briefly, a couple of years ago. What happened to the recordings made at that time is another burning question, but they will surely appear once Columbia has exhausted its stock of pre-retirement Miles Davis tapes.

"DIRECTIONS" is a must album for any Davis fan, but its appeal should go well beyond that. The music is glorious. Miles (whose approval of this release Columbia claims to have) is still communicating, and it would behoove such erstwhile disciples as John McLaughlin, Herbie Hancock, and Chick Corea—all present on this release—to listen to it carefully, for many of their own recent efforts are mere dilutions of the brew they helped Miles concoct.

—Chris Albertson

MILES DAVIS: Directions. Miles Davis (trumpet); Hank Mobley, Wayne Shorter, Bennie Maupin, George Coleman, Steve Grossman (reeds); Wynton Kelly, Joe Zawinul, Keith Jarrett, Victor Feldman, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea (keyboards); Ron Carter, Paul Chambers, Buster Williams, Dave Holland (bass); Billy Cobham, Tony Williams, Jimmy Cobb (drums); other musicians. *Round Midnight; So Near, So Far; Directions I; Directions II; Limbo; Fun; Konda; Song of Our Country; Water on the Pond; Ascent; Duran; Willie Nelson.* COLUMBIA KC2 36472 two discs \$13.98.

before, a treat awaits you, especially if you like the kind of rhythmic games Tristano delighted in playing.

Apropos rhythmic games, sides three and four of this set are full of them. Recorded by Tristano himself (presumably in his home, where he frequently recorded and—one surmises—erased tapes), these are piano improvisations on original themes, done without any overdubs or speed manipulations. Stunning, that is all I can say. This music does not all fall into the category of jazz, but when music is as sophisticated and beautiful as this, who cares about categories? It's good to have these recordings back. C.A.

COLLECTION

THE COMPLETE ARTIE SHAW: Volume IV/1940-1941. Anita Boyer (vocals), with Artie Shaw and His Gramercy Five: *Cross Your Heart; Dr. Livingstone, I Presume?; When the Quail Come Back to San Quentin.* Artie Shaw and His Orchestra: *If It's You; Temptation; Love of My Life; Who's Excited?; The Calypso; Concerto for Clarinet; Dancing in the Dark; I Cover the Waterfront; Moonglow;* and fifteen others. RCA/BLUEBIRD © AXM2-5572 two discs \$11.98, © AXK2-5572 \$11.98.

Performance: **Must for collectors**
Recording: **Remarkable remastering**

Here is another of those almost 100 well-documented collections of big-band tunes, complete with a comprehensive discography and treated with the reverence that used to be accorded the discovery of a forgotten opera by Monteverdi. It is true that in his heyday Artie Shaw played one terrific clarinet and led a band that helped keep things swinging on the nation's dance floors, but is he really ready for sainthood? On the other hand, some of the music here—recorded with such distinguished jazz musicians as Billy Butterfield (trumpet), Ray Conniff (trombone), Nick Fatool (drums), Jerry Jerome (tenor sax), and Johnny Guarnieri (piano and harpsichord)—is certainly worth hearing again. Shaw's own *Concerto for Clarinet* may not be ready for the Berlin Philharmonic, but it's intriguingly constructed and stunningly played. The blues movement from the *Lenox Avenue Suite* that black composer William Grant Still wrote for the band, though here attenuated and simplified for commercial purposes, is another item of interest. So are the treatments of such landmark hits as Hoagy Carmichael's *Star Dust*, Duke Ellington's *Pyramid*, and Vernon Duke's *What Is There to Say?* plus Shaw's own exciting *Dr. Livingstone, I Presume?* and his lovely *When the Quail Come Back to San Quentin*. The playing is polished (especially when the Gramercy Five chamber-jazz unit is featured), the sound of the band is always a little different from anyone else's, and the remastering of the original recordings is very well done. On the debit side, the seven vocals by Anita Boyer are so deadpan and spiritless (no overwrought Edith Piaf she) and so many of the cuts are so banal that listening to the whole program at one sitting can grow a bit wearisome. Still, as annotator Burt Korall points out, it is obvious that there was much more to Artie Shaw than *Begin the Beguine*. P.K.

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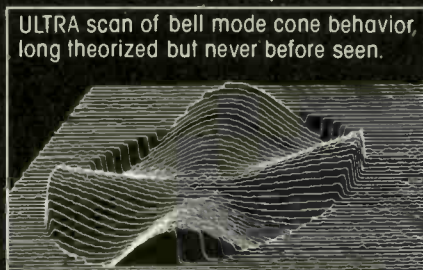
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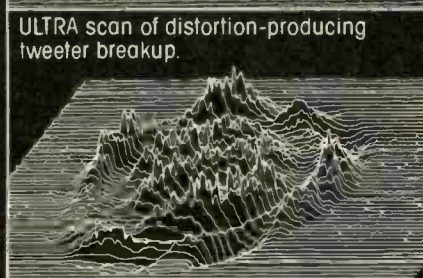
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Classical Music Briefs



Left to right, Cohen, Pressler, Greenhouse

Apte Press Photograph

FOR one admirer at least, it is exceedingly difficult to admit that the **Beaux Arts Trio** has passed its twenty-fifth anniversary. It is not that I question the stability of such a *ménage à trois*, but it just does not seem that long ago that Menahem Pressler flew here from Israel to enter a Debussy competition, learned a portion of the repertoire on the piano, and took first prize. And also not that long since he embarked on the project of recording "everything," known and unknown, for MGM Records, some of it with a fine ensemble called the Guilet Quartet. Yet a 1959 Schwann catalog (the oldest that comes easily to hand) lists recordings of the Ravel and Fauré trios by the "Beaux-Arts Trio"—Pressler, Daniel Guilet, and Bernard Greenhouse—and so it must be true. Isadore Cohen replaced Guilet in 1969, and the ensemble has remained immutable since.

All three present members of the Beaux Arts Trio were soloists of standing before their

conjunction, and all three continue to play solo roles as well as an ensemble one. And all three teach. But mostly they continue to play together. They have a broad view of the basic repertoire for an ensemble of violin, cello, and piano, and they have performed and recorded most of it. They also have an interest in new music, and there are a number of new works that have been written for them. "The problem with new music," says Pressler, "is time. Do we really have the time to learn it properly and still fulfill all our other commitments? And then, is it always worth it? Sometimes we have the feeling with a contemporary piece that when we have mastered the notes and the playing indications we have come to the end of the thing. That's all there is. With Beethoven and Schubert and Mozart, when we have mastered the score that's only the beginning. People ask us how we can return to a piece again and again. The answer is, because every time it's different."

And so the Beaux Arts Trio, which has played Beethoven and Schubert and Mozart (and Haydn, Brahms, Ravel, Fauré, Ives, Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, Schumann, Dvořák, and others) from the beginning, continues to perform them and to record them and even, sometimes, to rerecord them. Because every time they are different. Obviously, there is something scandalous about this.

"Menahem, say something scandalous."

"We love the music."

"That's not so scandalous. There are lots of people who love the music."

"Ah, yes. But we even get paid for loving it. That's the scandal."

—J.G.



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THE American conductor **David Zinman** was honorably mentioned earlier this year in *STEREO REVIEW*'s Record of the Year awards for his Philips recording of Delibes' *Coppélia* with the Rotterdam Philharmonic, of which he is the music director. Since then Zinman has won a Grand Prix du Disque for

his recording (same orchestra, same label) of music for *Pelléas et Mélisande* by Fauré, Sibelius, and Schoenberg, reviewed here in April.

Zinman is also music director of the Rochester Philharmonic, and when he was in New York with that orchestra this season he talked with *STEREO REVIEW*. A native New Yorker, he has lived in Holland for the last seventeen years, but when his current contract with the Rotterdam orchestra runs out next year, he will not renew it and will return to the United States to live. "There are many reasons, both professional and personal," he said. "One is that I have a son who will be ready for the first grade in a year and a half. I'd like him to grow up an American, and I simply couldn't drag him back and forth between this country and Europe."

On the subject of the plight of American conductors, Zinman said: "I think they cry too much, though maybe Americans do have to prove themselves elsewhere. When the subject was discussed at the American Symphony Orchestra League meeting last year, Ernest Fleischmann [executive director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic] made the point that James Levine, Lorin Maazel, Leonard Slatkin, Michael Tilson Thomas, Calvin Simmons—and David Zinman—along with many others were not there to join the discussion because we were too busy working."

"Leonard Bernstein has observed that there are too few training orchestras. I had a wonderful opportunity to learn from Pierre Monteux as an apprentice with a professional orchestra, which is quite different

from conducting amateurs. Music is a gift, but not every gifted musician makes a great career. If you have talent, however, you at least get an opportunity.

"My interest in music isn't limited to conducting important orchestras. I can enjoy myself playing chamber music at home or teaching, and it can be rewarding to work with amateurs. There is a pleasure in drawing music out of stones. I want to go as far as I can, of course. Everybody wants—at least a little bit—to grab the brass ring. But I don't begrudge Mehta the New York Philharmonic or Giulini the Los Angeles."

About his prize-winning records, Zinman said: "You have to record standard, salable things like *Coppélia* for companies in return for the opportunity to do more challenging projects like the *Pelléas et Mélisande* album. It's interesting, I think, that all three composers' pieces on the subject are in the key of D Minor. I've always loved the Fauré, but I didn't think much of the Schoenberg piece until I was asked to prepare it for a guest-conducting engagement in Sydney, Australia. Then I fell in love with it and realized that it's Schoenberg's *Tristan*. I've never felt much affinity for Sibelius, and I learned his *Pelléas et Mélisande* music just to round out the album. It has given me greater respect for him, and now I'd like to program more Sibelius.

"Making records is a fantastic teacher for musicians. You learn what precision is, what line, detail, and pacing are in ways that often have little to do with live performance. You also learn about expression. We as artists become enamored of the physical feelings we have while playing, and they often give a false impression of what we are really communicating. Frequently, therefore, listening to their playbacks is surprising to musicians. It takes experience in making records to learn how to come to terms with the recording medium and strike the proper balance between perfection of playing and relaxed music making." —W.L.

CHICAGO'S fine-arts radio station WFMT, which has been on the air since December 13, 1951, has given itself a thirtieth birthday present of twelve specially commissioned musical fanfares. They require up to five players each and vary in length from two to four minutes. There is one for each month of this anniversary year, and during its month on the air a fanfare is

played once daily at a different time each day.

All twelve commissions went to composers in the Chicago area who know the station, its sound, and its program format. Heard so far are the fanfares by Hans Wurman (January), Robert Lombardo (February), Ralph Shapey (March), Raymond Wilding-White (April), and William Russo (May). Yet to come are those by Easley Blackwood, M. William Karlins, Richard Manners, Albert Payson, Shulamit Ran, Leon Stein, and Alan Stout. Release of the whole set on disc is being considered, says station program director Norman Pellegrini.

WFMT is a "superstation," which means that it has a national audience in addition to its listeners in the Chicago broadcast area. The station's twenty-four-hour-a-day programming is made available by the satellite service of United Video Inc. to TV cable subscribers nationwide, reaching an additional 500,000 homes. □

BACK in Angel's Los Angeles studios after a four-year sabbatical from recording is classical guitarist **Christopher Parkening**, whose album "Parkening Plays Bach" is still among Angel's top-selling rec-



Columbia Artists Management, Inc.

ords every year after more than a decade in the catalog. The album he is now working on is a collection of religious music. It is his first digital recording, and he is, so far, "very pleased with the sound." □

THE latest in a rash of books by or about singers is **Birgit Nilsson's My Memoirs in Pictures** (Doubleday, \$19.95). Now in her early sixties and still going fairly strong, the Swedish dramatic soprano has documented her phenomenal career with a collection of photographs. These include the usual childhood snapshots, pictures of herself in her best roles (such as Salome, Elektra, Brünnhilde,

and Turandot), and more formal portraits with royalty and heads of state.

The captions are generous and at times surprisingly candid: she speaks of being poorly prepared for her operatic debut as Agathe in Weber's *Der Freischütz* at the Royal Opera in Stockholm in 1946. Despite good reviews, she says, the Royal Opera put her on ice, labeled "unmusical and untalented." She writes with pride of her greatest triumphs, such as fifty-nine curtain calls following an *Elektra* in Berlin (apparently she always counts them), singing both Venus and Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser*, and holding the world's record several times over for the number of performances of the title role in *Turandot* ("For the last fifteen to twenty years I have had the part pretty much to myself, at least on the major operatic stages").

She tells again of the historic performance of *Tristan und Isolde* at the old Met in which she had a different Tristan in each act. The tenors Ramon Vinay, Karl Lieb, and Alberto da Costa all felt too ill to attempt the whole opera, but each agreed to sing one act. Rudolf Bing, then general manager of the Met, told Nilsson he put the fattest one (Da Costa) in the last act so that when Isolde collapsed on Tristan's lifeless body, she would have something soft to fall on.

Curiously, recordings get short shrift in the book although Nilsson has made many. She describes recording sessions as among her "worst ordeals" and includes a picture of herself receiving a Grammy award for her first complete *Turandot* (RCA), but the book strangely contains no reference to her vital contribution to London's landmark recording of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, which is ranked among the greatest achievements in the history of the phonograph.

In *Ring Resounding* (Viking, 1967), an account of that seven-year recording project, John Culshaw, who produced the London *Ring*, wrote of Nilsson: "I have the deepest admiration for her voice, her artistry, her intelligence, her sense of humor, and her incredible stamina, but I still don't know, after all the success she has had in our *Ring*, whether she thinks the records are any good or not." Culshaw died last year. Perhaps it is just as well that he was spared the thunderous silence that appears to be Nilsson's only comment on the records. —W.L.



Merianne Barcellona

RATINGS for the triple concert by **Marilyn Horne, Luciano Pavarotti, and Dame Joan Sutherland** on PBS last March were among the highest in the six-year history of Exxon's "Live from Lincoln Center" series. The enthusiastic audience response has prompted London Records to race to get its two-disc "live" recording into stores and into your hands. Considering all that is involved, if they do so by the target date

of early June, they'll have to work at the speed of light. Those home recordists who made video or audio tapes of the concert, which was carried by the Public Broadcasting Service and simulcast on FM stations in many areas, do not have the encore which was sung after the concert but not broadcast. A trio from Bellini's *Beatrice di Tenda*, it was recorded by London, however, and will be in the album. □

Disc and Tape Reviews

By RICHARD FREED • DAVID HALL • GEORGE JELLINEK • PAUL KRESH
STODDARD LINCOLN • ERIC SALZMAN

Ⓢ = stereo cassette

Ⓢ = eight-track stereo cartridge

Ⓛ = digital-master recording

Ⓛ = direct-to-disc

Ⓛ = quadraphonic disc

Ⓛ = monophonic recording

The first listing is the one reviewed; other formats, if available, follow.

AUBER: *Manon Lescaut*. Mady Mesplé (soprano), Manon Lescaut; Peter-Christoph Runge (baritone), Marquis de Hérogny; Jean-Claude Orliac (tenor), Chevalier Des Grieux; Yves Bisson (baritone), Lescaut; Emmy Greger (mezzo-soprano), Marguerite; Gérard Friedmann (tenor), Gervais; Alain Duverry (baritone), Sergeant Renaud; others. Lyric Orchestra and Chorus of Radio France, Jean-Pierre Marty cond. ARABESQUE 8059-3L three discs \$21.94, © 9059-3L \$21.94.

Performance: **Idiomatic**

Recording: **Good**

During his long career, Daniel-François Auber (1782-1871) wrote more than forty operas. *Manon Lescaut* (1856) is neither the most historically significant among them nor the most successful in terms of international fame. Those honors belong, respectively, to *La Muette de Portici* and *Fra Diavolo*. What *Manon Lescaut* does bring to mind is that Auber frequently anticipated other composers with his settings of good operatic subjects: Massenet and Puccini in this instance, Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore* with his *Le Philtre* (1831), and Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* with his *Gustave III* (1833).

Since Auber's *Manon Lescaut* had the indefatigable Eugène Scribe as its librettist, we should not be surprised that the plot departs from Abbé Prévost's original to follow Scribe's fancy. It is, in fact, a rather inconsistent and uneasy mixture of light and tragic elements. The same is true, in a way, of Auber's music; it is charmingly sentimental but without undertones of real tragedy in the final scene (where Manon dies in Louisiana), though it is decidedly more inspired in the first two acts, which are reminiscent of Rossinian sparkle and anticipate Offenbach's insouciance.

We owe the present recording, which has been circulating as a French import for several years now, to conductor Jean-Pierre Marty's happy thought of presenting the opera on Radio France back in 1974. Mady Mesplé's girlish timbre aptly suggests Manon's eternal immaturity, and she can ascend to an F above high C with lightness and agility. Jean-Claude Orliac is an agreeable light tenor, and Peter-Christoph Runge's smooth baritone handles his graceful music with ease. All the voices are somewhat undersized, but they are uniformly so, and this too adds to the overall homogeneity of the performance. Auber's score is attractively melodious and thoroughly uncomplicated. I suspect that some of its less-familiar tunes will grow on the listener on repeated hearings (*Manon's* catchy "Laughing Song" is already familiar). Considering the

paucity of *opéra comique's* recorded representation, *Manon Lescaut* is a nice addition to the catalog. *G.J.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

J. S. BACH: *Hercules auf dem Scheidewege* (BWV 213). Carolyn Watkinson (alto), Hercules; Edith Mathis (soprano), Lust; Peter Schreier (tenor), Virtue; Siegfried Lorenz (bass), Mercury. Berlin Soloists and Chamber Orchestra, Peter Schreier cond. ARCHIV 2533 447 \$9.98.

Performance: **Lusty**

Recording: **Super**

Hercules at the Crossroads is a typical eighteenth-century allegory: encountering the personifications of Lust and Virtue, Hercules must choose between them. As expected, he opts for Virtue, upon which choice Mercury appears and likens Hercules to the potentate for whose birthday celebration Bach wrote the cantata in the first place. This bit of fancy is expressed musically in an opening chorus, arias for the allegorical figures, Hercules' consultation with Echo, a duet with the winner, a recitative explaining the allegory, and a concluding chorus extolling the potentate. What comes as a surprise, however, is that six of the seven numbers here also found their way into the Christmas Oratorio, a work quite a bit more familiar to most listeners than *Hercules*. Thus, music we usually associate with the holy Nativity is heard here in a purely secular context. It is a bit unsettling to hear, for example, the Blessed Virgin's lullaby to the infant Christ as Lust's admonition to seek ease and to "follow the enticements of impassioned thoughts."

Realizing this transformation of moods or "affections," Peter Schreier as singer

and conductor brings a lustiness of interpretation to the music here that would be most inappropriate in the oratorio. This is no mean achievement, and he deserves full praise for having the insight and musical will to carry it off so effectively. The role of Hercules is boisterously sung by Carolyn Watkinson, and considering the excellent singing of both Edith Mathis and Schreier her choice between them seems a difficult one indeed. Siegfried Lorenz makes an impressive Mercury, and the chorus' jubiliations are splendid. In short, this is music of great interest performed in the finest modern manner, with a keen but not overbearing recognition of past performance practices, and it's well recorded too. *S.L.*

J. S. BACH: *Keyboard Works* (see Collections—Glenn Gould)

J. S. BACH: *The Six Partitas* (see Best of the Month, page 76)

BERLIOZ: *Symphonie Fantastique, Op. 14*. Cleveland Orchestra, Lorin Maazel cond. CBS M 35867 \$9.98, © MT 35867 \$9.98.

Performance: **Exceptionally musical**

Recording: **Very good**

What a beautiful work this is!... or, at least, what beautiful music Berlioz put into its first three movements! That is not a thought that strikes me very often in listening to the *Symphonie Fantastique*, but this release offers an exceptionally musical reading in which Lorin Maazel seems happy enough to show us the beauty of the music, confident that if he simply follows Berlioz's instructions the drama will take care of itself, as it does indeed in those first three movements. Maazel includes the added corncop part in the second movement, and, like Sir Colin Davis (Philips 6500 774), he proceeds from the "March to the Scaffold" to the "Dream of a Witches' Sabbath" without pause. In those latter two movements, however, Maazel is somewhat less convincing than in the preceding ones, perhaps because he himself is less convinced by their thinner musical substance. In any event, the March comes off as a rousing march, but without its special terror, and the big statement of the *Dies Irae* in the finale is rather perfunctory, as are what ought to be the hair-raisingly exciting concluding bars of the work. The orchestra plays splendidly, and CBS has come through with one of its finest recordings in years, but the excitement quotient in the last two movements is so low that I would hesitate to recommend this for one's only recorded version. The most exciting *Fantastique* I have heard is

(Continued on page 112)

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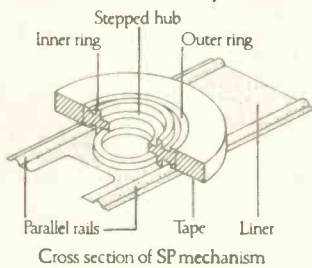
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the one with Carlos Paita and the London Symphony Orchestra. It was released by French Decca in 1978 and last year transferred to the new Swiss label Lodia, but it has yet to make its way to our shores; it's time it did. *R.F.*

BRAHMS: String Quartets: No. 1, in C Minor, Op. 51, No. 1; No. 2, in A Minor, Op. 51, No. 2; No. 3, in B-flat Major, Op. 67. **SCHUMANN: String Quartets: No. 1, in A Minor, Op. 41, No. 1; No. 2, in F Major, Op. 41, No. 3; No. 3, in A Major, Op. 41, No. 3.** Guarneri Quartet. RCA ARL3-3834 three discs \$29.94, © ARK3-3834 \$29.94.

Performance: **Schumann better**
Recording: **Mostly good**

BRAHMS: String Quartet No. 1, in C Minor, Op. 51, No. 1; String Quartet No. 2, in A Minor, Op. 51, No. 2. LaSalle Quartet. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2531 255 \$9.98, © 3301 255 \$9.98.

Performance: **Intense**
Recording: **Good**

The Guarneri Quartet has always responded well to the Romantic masterpieces of the chamber-music literature, as witness their early RCA discs of Smetana, Dvořák, and Grieg. It is to the gentler muse of Schumann that they are attuned most closely in this new release. Occasionally, as in the slow movement of No. 1, the first violin's vibrato seems a bit heavy, and I would prefer more rhythmic bite in the finale of No. 3, but on the whole I'd call the Guarneri

Schumann series successful. When it comes to the Brahms Op. 51 quartets, however, the Guarneri Quartet and the RCA producers seem to have erred on the side of caution. Compared with both the new LaSalle recording and the older one by the Budapest Quartet, this one by the Guarneri seems to have a decidedly limited dynamic range, and there is no real sense of presence. Oddly enough, these drawbacks are even more striking in what is normally the easiest of the Brahms quartets with which to cope both musically and sonically, the lovely Op. 67 in B-flat. For me, the wonderfully gutsy Budapest reading leaves the Guarneri players standing at the post.

The LaSalle Quartet's readings of Brahms' Op. 51 suffer from no such inhibitions or restrictions of either dynamics or presence. If anything, the C Minor's opening movement here verges on the febrile, but all goes well on the rest of the disc, especially throughout the A Minor, whose finale comes off as gloriously fierce. *D.H.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BRAHMS: Viola Sonatas, Op. 120: No. 1, in F Minor; No. 2, in E-flat Major. Bernard Zaslav (viola); Naomi Zaslav (piano). GASPARO GS-215 \$7.98.

Performance: **Excellent**
Recording: **Excellent**

It is a bit surprising that only two previous recordings of the viola versions of Brahms' Op. 120 sonatas are listed in Schwann now

(and not many more of the clarinet versions, by the way), but both are genuinely distinguished: Pinchas Zukerman with Barenboim in the Deutsche Grammophon three-disc set with the violin sonatas (2709 058), and an older, and far less costly, mono version by William Primrose and Rudolf Firkušny on Seraphim 60011. Bernard Zaslav, late of the Fine Arts Quartet and now a member of the Vermeer Quartet, and his wife Naomi have been performing as a duo for twenty years, and in this repertoire they are by no means outclassed by their stellar competitors. That their grasp of the material is complete is not surprising, for these are the very works such a duo would surely perform most frequently, but the gorgeous tone, affectionate commitment, and enlivening give-and-take in evidence here are factors that can never be assumed or taken for granted, no matter how long any performers may have worked together. The sound itself is exceptionally rich and well balanced. *R.F.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BRAHMS: Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 77. Ulf Hoelscher (violin); North German Radio Symphony Orchestra, Klaus Tennstedt cond. ANGEL DS-37798 \$10.98.

Performance: **A-1**
Recording: **Splendid**

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masters. Klaus Tennstedt is a major factor here, for this performance is very much a *collaboration*; in its strength and vitality, it recalls for me the historic Josef Szigeti/Hamilton Harty version of 1928 (still available in Columbia M6X 31513).

Ulf Hoelscher's tone is very pure and imbued with a fascinating nervousity. His intonation is unerring, and he has complete command over both the structural and virtuosic aspects of the solo role. Tennstedt from the very start establishes a powerful and spacious orchestral sound, and the digitally mastered recording allows us to hear orchestral voices that sometimes get lost in the shuffle. This is, of course, a hallmark of Tennstedt's recordings, but he also sees to it that the balances are maintained in proper proportion. The slow movement here is extraordinarily eloquent, and special credit is due the first-chair oboe. Of more than usual interest is the soloist's choice of the elaborate Kreisler cadenza for the first movement instead of the one by Joachim—for whom Brahms wrote the concerto. *D.H.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BRUCKNER: *Symphony in D Minor ("Die Nulle")*. Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Daniel Barenboim cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2531 319.\$9.98.

Performance: **Dramatic**
Recording: **High-powered**

Bruckner's so-called Symphony No. 0, though never included in the official series

of nine and published only in 1924, is fascinating not only in its own right but for what it reveals of the composer's stylistic roots in Schubert and in the Beethoven of the Ninth Symphony. For example, the very opening is almost like one of Schubert's "walking" motifs, but the ensuing musical events are more Beethovenian in character. The slow movement anticipates in less fully defined character the quasi-ecclesiastical evocations of the late adagios. I find the scherzo, though spirited, the least interesting part of the score, but the brilliant finale is full of striking music, especially in the brass.

All told, this is an absorbing and unusual work, and Daniel Barenboim and the Chicago Symphony respond to it with great warmth and enormous zest. The recording is altogether stunning in both brilliance and massive power. Bernard Haitink's more reflective interpretation on his 1967 Philips disc has much to recommend it, but the dynamism of Barenboim's performance and the superior sound of this Deutsche Grammophon release capture more honors. *D.H.*

FOERSTER: *Cyrano de Bergerac, Op. 55*. Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Václav Smetáček cond. SUPRAPHON 1110 2456 \$9.98 (from Qualiton Records, Ltd., 39-28 Crescent Street, Long Island City, N.Y. 11101).

Performance: **Committed**
Recording: **Good**

The name of the long-lived Czech composer Josef Bohuslav Foerster (1859-1951) turns

up more often in the context of his friendship with Mahler than in connection with any of his own music. We never hear Foerster's works in our concert halls, and even on records there has been little to sample. Only three titles besides this release are available here now: his *Easter Symphony* (Nonesuch H-71267), a wind quintet (Orion ORS 76254), and the very late *Sonata Quasi Fantasia* included in Josef Suk's survey of Czech violin sonatas (Supraphon I 11 2341/2). The sonata struck me as "highly romantic... with an emphasis on sweetness and nostalgia," and *Cyrano de Bergerac* makes a similar impression, though this descriptive suite composed in 1903, forty years earlier than the sonata, is far more overtly dramatic, its five substantial movements being character studies of the hero at crucial points of Rostand's play. The writing everywhere shows a master hand as well as a sympathetic response to the literary inspiration. The scoring is sumptuous but extremely tasteful, the organization cogent and well-proportioned; listeners weary of the Strauss tone poems may find this refreshing, though the meditative sections of this longish (forty-minute) work appear to overbalance the active ones in the second half, and none of the well-wrought themes is especially memorable. *Cyrano* may be an acquired taste, but it is certainly worth a hearing. Václav Smetáček's performance is a committed one, and the recording itself is quite adequate. *R.F.*

(Continued overleaf)

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RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

HANDEL: *Israel in Egypt*. Jean Knibbs, Marilyn Troth, Daryl Green, Elisabeth Priddy (sopranos); Christopher Royall, Ashley Stafford, Brian Gordon, Julian Clarkson (countertenors); Paul Elliott, William Kendall (tenors); Stephan Varcoe, Charles Stewart (basses); Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra, John Eliot Gardiner cond. MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY MHS 824273 two discs \$13.90, © MHS 826273 \$15.50 (plus \$1.25 postage and handling charge from the Musical Heritage Society, 14 Park Road, Tinton Falls, N.J. 07724).

Performance: **Grand**
Recording: **Excellent**

In most of his oratorios, Handel presents a single main personage whose character is developed by supporting personalities and comments by the chorus. *Israel in Egypt* is unique in that the hero of the work is not a single character but an entire nation, Israel, which is portrayed by the chorus. The structure of the work is also unique: in the first part, "Exodus," the various plagues, the departure of the Israelites from Egypt through the Red Sea, and their arrival in the land of Canaan are graphically depicted; in the second part, "Moses' Song," the same events are reviewed in a gigantic song of praise. The listener is thus given one story from two points of view: first as the Israelites experienced it and then as their leader contemplates it after the fact. All in all, the work celebrates a great nation's throwing off bondage for liberty.

The music is as grandiose as the theme it celebrates, and in the first part is some of the greatest tone painting to be found in all music. Scholars, however, are troubled because Handel "borrowed" so much of the material. Almost an entire Stradella serenade, in fact, is incorporated here. But who furnished this routine music with insects, fire, hail, and thunder? Who turned an insipid pastorella into a glowing picture of the land of milk and honey? Handel brought his own vitality and imagination to Stradella's material and transformed it. As Handel's contemporary William Boyce so neatly put it, "He takes pebbles and converts them into diamonds."

Conductor John Eliot Gardiner stresses the epic nature of this work. He underscores the dramatic contrasts of tempo and volume by a pacing in the grand manner so often denied large Baroque works these days. Each section is scaled to fit into an overall plan that climaxes in the final triumph and fierce rejoicing of Israel.

The real hero of the recording is the Monteverdi Choir. Its sound is voluptuous, and clarity of line and precision of rhythm lend the choral passages unlimited vigor, which is the essence of the work. The soloists too are all excellent. Especially fine are the soprano duet "The Lord is my strength" and the countertenor aria "Thou shalt bring them in." Nor should the stylish and well articulated orchestral playing be overlooked. The full sound of modern instruments is successfully adapted to Baroque performance practices. This is surely one of the best recordings of a Handel oratorio available today.

S.L.

(Continued on page 117)

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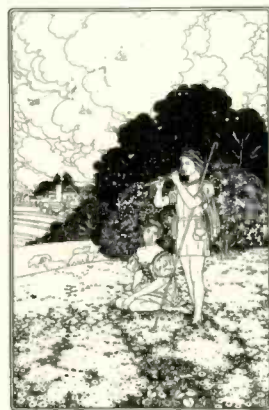
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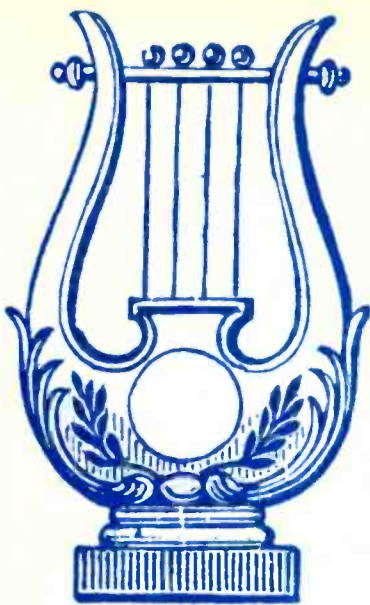
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HAYDN: Trios for Piano, Violin, and Cello in G Major (Hob. XV:25) and D Minor (Hob. XV:23); Trios for Piano, Flute, and Cello in G Major (Hob. XV:15) and D Major (Hob. XV:16). Mozartean Players. ARABESQUE 8123-2 two discs \$13.96, © 9123-2 \$15.96.

Performance: **Spirited**
Recording: **Excellent**

The identification of the Mozartean Players' Rebecca Troxler and Richard Luby on the jacket of this record as, respectively, "Classical flutist" and "Classical violinist" might suggest nothing more than a repertoire different from that of Herbie Mann or Stéphane Grappelli. The point, however, is that Troxler plays an eighteenth-century wooden flute, Luby and cellist Myron Lutzke perform on instruments with gut strings, shorter necks, and lower bridges than are in general use now, and Steven Lubin plays an enchanting-sounding fortepiano—all the sort of instruments in use when Haydn wrote this music. Most regrettably, no information is given on the specific instruments used here or on their makers, and there is little on the music itself, the entire inner liners of the gatefold container being devoted to a listing of the Arabesque catalog. The performances, though, are more than ingratiating and should appeal even to collectors who already have these works in the Beaux Arts Trio's fine series on Philips, for the sound here is quite different. In Hob. XV:15 and 16, of course, the conspicuous difference is the flute in place of the violin; Haydn actually specified the flute in both of these trios, though it was surely assumed that the violin could and often would be substituted. How fetching this music sounds on the old wooden flute, and what charm is lent to all these performances by the sweet character of the fortepiano and the warmth of the gut strings!

I have not had an opportunity to hear the Telefunken series of the complete Haydn trios performed on similar instruments, but I have for some time enjoyed the Musical Heritage Society set of the last sixteen trios played by keyboardist Huguette Dreyfus, violinist Eduard Melkus, and cellist Elisabeth Vogt (MHS 1522/1525). That four-disc set is laid out economically with two works on each side, and the Carl Schneider Hammerklavier that Dreyfus plays is fitted with a device that enables her to embellish the famous "Gypsy Rondo" in Hob. XV:25 with "Turkish music." But the performances on the Arabesque set are more winning, for the Mozartean Players are not simply demonstrating their period instruments but digging into the music with obvious affection and enthusiasm. That same celebrated rondo is here informed with a real gypsy flavor such as I have never before heard attempted: the fortepiano actually suggests a cimbalom in a way no modern piano could, the strings manage to sound fiery without sacrificing their warmth, and the rhythmic inflection on the part of the whole beautifully integrated ensemble captures the *Zigeuner* spirit with a zestful flair that really strikes sparks. This is the sort of record that is bound to get a lot of broadcast exposure, and it could convert a lot of listen-

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Litho Joe Tellecher (1893?)

A Discovery: Schubert's "Stabat Mater"

GOD, how genius will out! Franz Schubert's *Stabat Mater*, just released by Musical Heritage Society, is a virtually unknown work written when the composer was nineteen, modeled on Pergolesi, incorporating remembered passages of Mozart (*O Isis and Osiris*) and Haydn (the *Emperor's Hymn*), technically primitive in places, probably too lightweight for the text and often disassociated from it, and crammed with more gorgeous stuff than most composers can come up with in a lifetime.

Any third-year counterpoint student could point out the ineptitudes of the work's fugues. Any commercial arranger could point out the inefficient use of orchestral re-

sources. Any church musician could tick off the various unsuitabilities for church performance. But it is still a work of genius—which is not to say that it is an unflawed masterpiece, but that it has in it, willy-nilly, music that only a genius like Schubert could have written. Actually, you can hear Schubert maturing as a composer right through the piece (apart from the final fugue, that is, which just lies there like a dead elephant), from tentative if promising beginnings and short breath through folksy lyricism to some really commanding writing in the penultimate trios. Truly, the *Stabat Mater* is a *discovery*. With great performers it might make a really startling impression. The Vocal Ensemble and Chamber Orchestra of Lausanne in this recording are very good rather than great performers, but they deserve all credit for a clean, musicianly, and sympathetic rendition.

THE record is filled out with two other relatively unfamiliar works. The *Magnificat* (also available on an Odyssey recording) dates from later the same year as the *Stabat Mater*. I find it more of a throw-away piece than the latter, but it too has its moments. The Offertory *Intende Voci* (for tenor solo, chorus, and orchestra), on the other hand, is a work of Schubert's full maturity—indeed, it was composed the month of his death—a gorgeous efflorescence that in typical late Schubert style goes on to heavenly lengths and almost makes you wish it would never stop. What a gift the man had!

—James Goodfriend

SCHUBERT: *Stabat Mater* (D. 383); Offertory *Intende Voci* (D. 963); *Magnificat* (D. 486). Sheila Armstrong (soprano); Hanna Schaefer (alto); Alejandro Ramirez (tenor); Philippe Huttenlocher (baritone); Philippe Corboz (organ); Vocal Ensemble and Chamber Orchestra of Lausanne, Michel Corboz cond. MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY MHS 4239 \$6.95 (plus \$1.25 postage and handling charge from the Musical Heritage Society, Inc., 14 Park Road, Tinton Falls, N.J. 07724).

ers who may feel that chamber music is too "stuffy." The recorded sound is just about ideal, the surfaces silent. R.F.

JANÁČEK: *From the House of the Dead*. Jiří Zahradníček (tenor). Filka Morozov; Ivo Židek (tenor), Skuratov; Václav Zitek (baritone), Shishkov; Dalibor Jedlička (baritone), Goryanchikov; Antonín Švorc (baritone), Commandant; Jaroslava Janská (soprano), Alyeya; Vladimír Krejčík (tenor), Tall Prisoner; Richard Novák (bass), Short Prisoner; Beno Blachut (tenor), Old Prisoner; others. Chorus of the Vienna State Opera; Vienna Philharmonic, Sir Charles Mackerras cond. LONDON O LDR 10036 3 weeks \$21.96.

Performance: **Committed**
 Recording: **Orchestra brilliant**

Based on a Dostoyevsky novel inspired by the author's own observations of prison life,

From the House of the Dead was Janáček's last opera, completed shortly before his death in 1928. It presents a bleak panorama of Siberian prisoners haunted by their dark past, bitter, humiliated, and clinging to the last shreds of human dignity. Some of the prisoners relate their past crimes and sufferings in some detail, and the composer skillfully built the opera's rather unconventional "action" around these narratives. The prisoner Goryanchikov is freed at the opera's end, and at the same time a wounded eagle that was captured by the prisoners in the opening scene takes wing. But this is no sign of optimism: we know that prison life with its relentless routine will continue after the final curtain.

Dostoyevsky tells a gloomy tale, and Janáček made no effort to sweeten it. Lack of action is not the only problem. Not much happens in *Pelléas et Mélisande* or *Bluebeard's Castle* either, but Debussy and Bar-

tók compensated with orchestral writing of sensuous beauty. Besides, it is nearly impossible not to be involved with Bluebeard's aching loneliness, Mélisande's helpless suffering, or Golaud's profound despair. The plight of these Siberian prisoners does not leave us unmoved either, but there is little in Janáček's quirky and fragmentary writing to engage our emotions and bring us closer to the opera's characters. That *From the House of the Dead* can make a strong impact in the theater is evident from the reviews of the 1965 Sadler's Wells production. But on the basis of recordings alone I have not been able to respond favorably to this opera, my admiration for Janáček's skill and originality notwithstanding.

For this new recording, Sir Charles Mackerras, a longtime champion of the composer, provides propulsive leadership, though without overlooking the lyrical elements that at times leap out of the music with surprising effect. The singers are prominent Czech artists, probably the best that can be assembled for such a project. Ivo Židek repeats the interpretation he gave in the opera's previous (1965) recording, while the veteran Beno Blachut, the Filka Morozov of that earlier version, is now relegated to a supporting role. This is not an opera full of shining vocal opportunities, so let us be content with skill and competence, virtues evident here in all the participants except perhaps the acidulous interpreter of Alyeya. The Vienna Philharmonic is in top form, but the digital recording favors the orchestra and keeps the voices in an unrealistic perspective. *G.J.*

JANÁČEK: *Sinfonietta; Taras Bulba.* Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, David Zinman cond. PHILIPS 9500 874 \$9.98, © 7300 874 \$9.98.

Performance: **Impressive Taras**
Recording: **Stunning!**

David Zinman's reading of *Taras Bulba* is unusual and highly intriguing. He focuses on the score's coloristic and lyrical aspects, bringing out the cinematic dimension of Janáček's tone poem based on Gogol's tragic novel. His performance of the well-known *Sinfonietta*, however, is disappointing. It lacks tension in the first movement and intensity in the second, and the tempos seem to me misjudged—on the fast side—in the third and fourth. Of the two other currently available recordings of this same coupling, I still prefer the one by Rafael Kubelik on Deutsche Grammophon (2530 075).

But the playing by the Rotterdam Philharmonic is altogether splendid, and the analog-mastered sound equals, in my opinion, anything that digital recording has to offer in the present state of the art. In terms of pinpoint localization and the wonderful antiphonal spread of the brass choirs in the end movements of the *Sinfonietta*, the stereo imaging is a sound buff's dream. *D.H.*

MASSENET: *Cigale; Valse Très Lente.* National Philharmonic Orchestra, Richard Bonyngé cond. LONDON CS 7163 \$9.98.

Performance: **Perfection**
Recording: **Excellent**

Cigale, a "divertissement-ballet," had a brief stand at the Opéra-Comique in 1904. (Continued on page 121)



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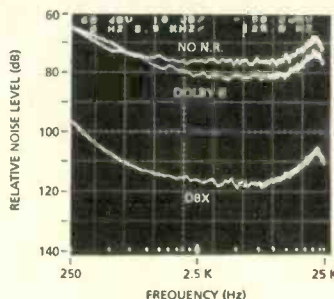
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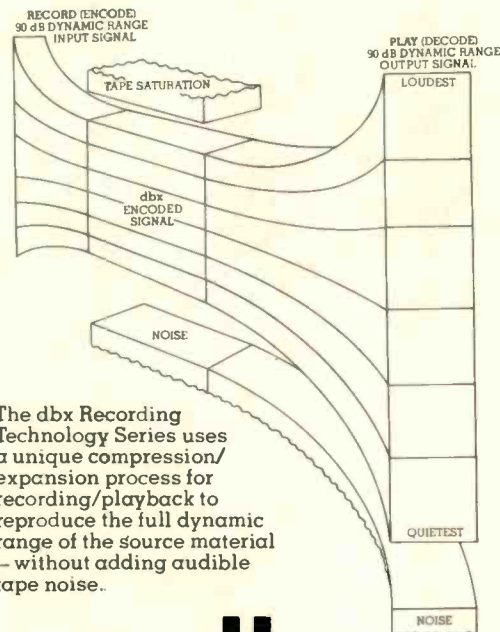
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Etienne Carjat photo; collection James Goodfriend

Rossini's Overtures

THREE recent Rossini overtures packages feature conductors who are attached to both a major American orchestra and one in London, and in all three cases they are leading their London ensembles: Riccardo Muti (music director of the Philadelphia Orchestra) with the Philharmonia on Angel, Claudio Abbado (principal guest conductor of the Chicago Symphony) with the London Symphony on RCA, and Neville Marriner (music director of the Minnesota Orchestra) with the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields on Philips. All that is needed to complete the coincidental survey is a similar disc from Sir George Solti (music director of the Chicago Symphony) and the London Philharmonic.

Muti and Abbado offer the same four familiar overtures—*The Barber of Seville*, *La Scala di Seta*, *Semiramide*, and *William Tell*—plus two different, less-familiar ones each. Abbado's choices, *Il Turco in Italia* and *Tancredi*, are perhaps even more engaging than Muti's *The Siege of Corinth* and *Il Viaggio a Reims*. Marriner's disc is made up entirely of still other unfamiliar overtures (*Otello* may be the only one of the six that has been recorded before).

Muti's performances are all well drilled, well paced, and pretty high powered. *Semiramide* comes off with real eloquence, and

there is a fine swagger to *Il Viaggio a Reims*. There is also a more prominent oompah accompaniment than I have noticed in these pieces before, and in several of them I get an impression more of efficiency than of charm—which may be caused, or at least exacerbated, by the rather hard-sounding acoustic. The raucous effect of the two fast sections in *William Tell* is, I think, a consequence of injudicious balance in the close-up recording. In RCA's warmer, more transparent, and more happily balanced sonic frame there is a bloom on the strings and a sparkle to the wind playing that are just not suggested on the Angel disc. Also, Abbado gives the music more of a chance to breathe in *La Scala di Seta*.

It was just five years ago that both Abbado and Marriner gave us their first Rossini overture collections (reviewed here in July 1976), the former on Deutsche Grammophon, the latter on the same label as his new release (which is actually Volume III in a series to be completed with a fourth installment). It seems curious that Abbado would repeat *The Barber of Seville* from his earlier package, but, in any event, his new assortment is more fetching than its predecessor: these performances, one might say, simply *smile* more. In the famous finale of

William Tell the theme is not always clearly articulated owing to Abbado's fast tempo, but otherwise there is an abundance of elegant style in these readings and outstandingly fine playing from the various orchestral soloists, especially the cellos at the opening of that same piece and the winds in both *La Scala di Seta* and *Tancredi*.

RCA's notes do not mention that for *Tancredi* Abbado used a new performing edition by Philip Gossett, the American co-editor of the Rossini Foundation's Complete Edition; Gossett himself provided the annotation for the new Marriner record. Listening to the latter disc, I find two obvious reasons why the selections are not part of our concert repertoire: they are simply not as cleverly wrought as Rossini's best overtures, and they are not entirely unfamiliar after all, for some of them share common material with better-known overtures—tunes from *Cenerentola* in *Torvaldo e Dorliska*, from *Il Turco in Italia* in *Otello*, from *The Siege of Corinth* in *Bianco e Faliero*, etc. But if these pieces are not Rossini at his most inspired, they are quite enjoyable in their own right. *Ermione*, whose big tune is shared with *Bianco e Faliero*, has the unusual feature of including choral passages. Marriner's second Rossini overtures disc, with the big pieces on it (9500 349), was a bit of a disappointment, but this one is a winner all the way, exuding all the peculiarly Rossinian virtues and presented in Philips' characteristically warm, handsome sound.

THE new Marriner issue does not, of course, come into competition with any other Rossini overtures package, but the Muti and Abbado offerings do, and they leave some of the popular titles unaccounted for. Perhaps the economical London disc by Peter Maag (STS 15030) and Marriner's Volume I (Philips 6500 878) together constitute the happiest way to acquire all the well-known overtures and a few of the gems among the lesser-known ones. There is not a single duplication in these two discs, and the only drawback is the nasal tone of the Conservatoire Orchestra's horns in Maag's otherwise stunning *Semiramide*.

—Richard Freed

ROSSINI: Overtures. *The Barber of Seville; La Scala di Seta; Semiramide; William Tell; The Siege of Corinth; Il Viaggio a Reims.* Philharmonia Orchestra, Riccardo Muti cond. ANGEL SZ-37750 \$9.98, © 4ZS-37750 \$9.98.

ROSSINI: Overtures. *The Barber of Seville; La Scala di Seta; Semiramide; William Tell; Il Turco in Italia; Tancredi.* London Symphony Orchestra, Claudio Abbado cond. RCA ARL1-3634 \$9.98, © ARK1-3634 \$9.98.

ROSSINI: Overtures. *Ermione; Torvaldo e Dorliska; Bianca e Faliero; Otello; Demetrio e Polibio; Edoardo e Cristina.* Ambrosian Singers (in *Ermione*); Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Neville Marriner cond. PHILIPS 9500 886 \$9.98, © 7300 886 \$9.98.

at which date it must already have seemed incredibly old-fashioned. It is the old fable of the grasshopper and the ant, slightly updated to favor the grasshopper: mean old Madame Ant lets the goodhearted and generous grasshopper die in the snow. According to the old poster or sheet-music cover reproduced on the album cover, Mlle. Grasshopper was a bosomy young lady whose worldly possessions consisted of a lute and a very scanty tutu that scarcely began to cover her ample figure against the cold. They don't make ballet dancers that way any more. It's almost worth buying the record for that picture. Is it worth buying it for the music? Yes, if obscure French Romantic ballet kitsch—complete with orchestrated old carols, variations on *Au Clair de la Lune*, and angelic female voices—is your style. You also get a fashionable slow waltz for an encore.

This is the kind of music that one of our New York "good-music" stations plays during afternoon drive time interspersed with ads for restaurants. For whatever they're worth, *Cigale* and its companion waltz are played and recorded to perfection. *E.S.*

MENDELSSOHN: Violin Sonata in F Major (see SCHUMANN)

MERCADANTE: Flute Concerto in D Major; Flute Concerto in E Major; Variations for Flute and Strings in A Major. Jean-Pierre Rampal (flute); English Chamber Orchestra, Claudio Scimone cond. RCA ARLI-3727 \$9.98, © ARKI-3727 \$9.98.

Performance: **Virtuosic**
Recording: **Excellent**

Saverio Mercadante was an Italian opera composer (1795-1870) whose work was praised by his contemporaries, including Rossini, but who was criticized more than once for composing "too fast." Until recently, only the best-informed of today's music lovers even knew his name. But, like many other composers of Italian opera, Mercadante, who played flute and violin, wrote instrumental music too, including funeral symphonies for Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, and Pacini and some orchestral fantasies. The two concertos on this new disc are both shapely works that start out like operatic overtures but later feature spectacular solo passages that seem to be tailor-made for the tireless Jean-Pierre Rampal, who makes the most of them, flawlessly backed by the English Chamber Orchestra under Claudio Scimone. The set of thirteen elegant variations for flute and string orchestra, exploiting the composer's thorough knowledge of the instrument, is a virtuoso showpiece with each variation more difficult than the one before it. Yet it all *sounds* easy as Rampal breezes through. *P.K.*

MOZART: Piano Sonata No. 12, in F Major (K. 332); Piano Sonata No. 13, in B-flat Major (K. 333). Malcolm Bilson (fortepiano). NONESUCH N-78004 \$8.98, © N1-78004 \$8.98.

Performance: **Polished**
Recording: **Crisp**

MOZART: Piano Sonata No. 12, in F Major (K. 332); Piano Sonata No. 13, in B-flat Major (K. 333). Steven Lubin (fortepiano). SPECTRUM SR-125 \$4.50 (plus \$1.50 post-

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age and handling charge from Spectrum Records, Harriman, N.Y. 10926).

Performance: **Warm**
Recording: **A bit fuzzy**

Now that the fortepiano, especially the Viennese instrument of Mozart's day, is becoming increasingly popular, we can begin comparing instruments and performers. Such an opportunity is afforded by these discs of the same Mozart sonatas played by Malcolm Bilson and Steven Lubin. Bilson's fortepiano was built by Philip Belt and based on a copy of an Anton Walter instrument of about 1780. Lubin's was constructed from a design by Philip Belt based on a 1784 instrument by Johann Andreas Stein. Both capture accurately the essential differences between the products of the original builders: Bilson's "Walter" produces a dry, crisp tone; Lubin's "Stein" has a richer, singing sound. Mozart himself preferred Stein's instruments but, ironically, could afford only a Walter.

Both Bilson and Lubin are faithful to the musical qualities of their respective instruments. Bilson's playing is crisp, and his expression is achieved through the detailed articulation indicated by Mozart. Much of his playing is on the staccato side, and the pedal is sparingly used. Lubin achieves his expression more through rubato, very often overlooking Mozart's articulation and ignoring rests as the sound carries through. He applies the pedal much more generously than Bilson does, and the effect is more like that rendered by performers on modern pianos today. Bilson's style is probably closer to Mozart's, but Lubin's more romantic approach has its points and is equally rewarding. Both pianists (or is it fortists?) are fine musicians and play beautifully. *S.L.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

MOZART: Sinfonia Concertante in E-flat Major (K. 297b). Idomeneo: Ballet Music (K. 367). Randall Wolfgang (oboe); Jane Hamborsky (clarinet); Frank Morelli (bassoon); William Purvis (horn); Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. NONESUCH O D-79009 \$11.98.

Performance: **Poised**
Recording: **Excellent**

Less frequently heard than the corresponding piece for violin and viola, the Sinfonia Concertante for Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, and Horn is one of Mozart's mellowest works, a lyrical work in which the four soloists weave a subdued tapestry of exquisite melodies. And the soloists of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra are accomplished weavers. Their precise ensemble and spacious tempos lend Mozart's poised phrases a wonderful feeling of repose and utter contentment. The group plays without a conductor, and to play the ballet music from *Idomeneo* that way is indeed a tour de force. The work is a single structure built on the rondo principle; each episode is preceded by a curious link that sets a new tempo. The episodes themselves range from lyric adagios to furious prestos. Many a conductor has failed to hold the work together; the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra holds it together with unflinching control. The concepts never waver, and when the basic character theme returns, it is always at the

same tempo. This ensemble's work deserves high praise, as does this album. *S.L.*

PROKOFIEV: Sonata No. 6, Op. 82; Sonata No. 3, Op. 28; Sarcasms, Op. 17. Staffan Scheja (piano). Bis LP-155 \$10.98 (from Qualiton Records, Ltd., 39-28 Crescent Street, Long Island City, N.Y. 11101).

Performance: **Excellent**
Recording: **Okay but shallow**

Staffan Scheja is a Swedish pianist who has studied at the Juilliard School and who knows how to play the stuffing out of Prokofiev. These three works—the *Sarcasms* of 1912-1914, the Third Sonata (originally from 1907 but entirely rewritten in the year of the revolution, 1917), and the Sixth Sonata of 1939-1940—all belong to Prokofiev the Romantic Rebel, the character that originally made the composer famous but that has given way to the more popular, bucolic, public Prokofiev, the good boy of the *Classical Symphony* and the ballets. Actually, in spite of the first impression of anger and unsettled virtuosity, there are strong neo-Classical elements in all these works, even in the free-form *Sarcasms*, and Scheja, who is always in control, is really as much of a classicist as he is a Serge Thump-the-Keys. In any case, I find these performances beautifully modulated but still exciting and deep in feeling, and they are only slightly marred by the shallow piano sound of the recording. *E.S.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

RACHMANINOFF/KRIESLER: Liebesfreud; Liebesleid. RACHMANINOFF: *Études-Tableaux: F-sharp Minor, Op. 39, No. 3; E-flat Major, Op. 39, No. 5; D Major, Op. 39, No. 9. Préludes: C-sharp Minor, Op. 3, No. 2; E-flat Major, Op. 23, No. 6; C Minor, Op. 23, No. 7; B-flat Minor, Op. 32, No. 2; G Major, Op. 32, No. 5; B Minor, Op. 32, No. 10; B Major, Op. 32, No. 11; G-sharp Minor, Op. 32, No. 12.* Jeffrey Siegel (piano). DENON O OX-7189-ND \$15.

Performance: **Superb**
Recording: **Echoey**

This is one of those Denon Nippon Columbia Studio No. 1 digital specials. It isn't the digital recording that is most impressive here, though, but the playing of Jeffrey Siegel. Rachmaninoff's piano music is coming into its own—especially the works he wrote in the old country before his departure in 1917. The *Études-Tableaux*, composed just before the Revolution, and the *Préludes* contain some of the composer's best music—characteristic, expressive, superbly written for the instrument, poetic and balladic, and almost without a false note of tone or style. The Kreisler arrangements are something else; they are merely encore pieces, quite out of place at the head of a perfectly serious collection like this one.

The best measure of Jeffrey Siegel's success with this music is his wonderful performance of the C-sharp Minor Prelude; he makes even this pompous, overworked piece of Romantic fustian moving and powerful. The level of his playing is everywhere as high, technically and spiritually.

To tell the truth, I don't think the ideal in recorded piano sound has been reached here; this recording is too echoey and hollow

for my taste (although it is impressively wide-ranging and quiet). But the music is of great interest, and the performance is strong and sensitive. *E.S.*

REGER: Concerto in A Major for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 101. Suzanne Lautenbacher (violin); Berlin Symphony Orchestra, Günther Wich cond. INTERCORD INT 160.817 \$10.98 (from Brilly Imports, 155 North San Vicente, Beverly Hills, Calif. 90211).

Performance: **Touching**
Recording: **Okay**

Max Reger's violin concerto is just what you would expect—solid, stolid, serious, craftsmanlike in the late-Romantic mode. The surprise here is Suzanne Lautenbacher. Her fine recordings of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music have endeared her to many listeners, but who would have thought she would do so well in music of the nineteenth century? Actually, this concerto was written in this century—1904 to be exact—but it is inescapably one of the codas to old-fashioned Romanticism and very much in the high tradition.

Perhaps the finale could have used a lighter touch in performance. And the recorded orchestral sound could have been lighter as well; the violin is strongly featured in a rich ambiance. But, finally, the piece is effectively represented and affecting in a curious way. There is a note of nostalgia behind the serious façade that makes it quite touching. *E.S.*

SATIE: Socrate. Hugues Cuenod (tenor); Geoffrey Parsons (piano). NIMBUS □ 2104 \$13.98 (from Brilly Imports, 155 North San Vicente, Beverly Hills, Calif. 90211).

Performance: **Curious but effective**
Recording: **Piano not great; voice okay**

This is a curious version of a curious work. *Socrate* is a setting of passages from three Platonic dialogues intended for four sopranos and chamber orchestra. It is said that Satie once performed it on the piano—in someone's salon, no doubt—with a tenor, a story that provides a slender precedent for this version. In fact, this setting can in no sense be called authentic, but it has one advantage: it sounds good. Hugues Cuenod, even in the twilight of his career, has the right declamatory style and elegant simplicity of phrase. And Satie's music sounds good on the piano. In many ways the work, especially the death of Socrates, is more satisfying and touching in this form than the way the composer intended! *E.S.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

SCHUBERT: Piano Trio No. 1, in B-flat Major, Op. 99 (D. 898); Piano Trio No. 2, in E-flat Major, Op. 100 (D. 929). Jean-Claude Pennetier (piano); Régis Pasquier (violin); Roland Pidoux (cello). HARMONIA MUNDI HM 1047/48 two discs \$21.96 (from Brilly Imports, 155 North San Vicente, Beverly Hills, Calif. 90211).

Performance: **Suave**
Recording: **Gorgeous**

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which might be compared with Karajan's handling of the Schubert symphonies. That is to say, these able French musicians take the music at its own worth and, rather than attempting quaint sound-portraiture, give it all-out, serious, highly polished readings in accordance with the composer's vision. If the performances are characterized by a certain objectivity, they are by no means aloof and least of all cold. The playing is extremely suave, subtle, mature in outlook, beautifully paced, exquisitely balanced. Both string players produce warm, sumptuous tone, and an especially careful regard for dynamics keeps Jean-Claude Penner's modern grand piano from seeming out of character in this music. The emphasis on clarity and a tendency toward understatement contribute to an impression of aristocratic intimacy throughout both works, particularly in the otherworldly slow movement of the E-flat. That trio, I'm sure, is here given as convincing a performance as it has had since the uniquely dramatic Horszowski/Schneider/Casals one (which surely ought to be made available again). There are several highly attractive current versions of the more amiable B-flat, but the overall fluency and refinement of these French performances, together with gorgeous recording on absolutely silent surfaces, puts this new set in a very special class. Although full repeats are taken in the first movements, both of the second sides are short enough to have allowed fillers (other recordings include the Notturmo, D. 897, and/or the Trio Sonata, D. 28), but I can't imagine that anyone who invests in this set will feel shortchanged. **R.F.**

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

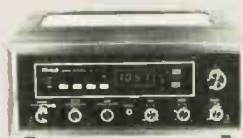
C. SCHUMANN: *Three Romances, Op. 22.* R. SCHUMANN: *Violin Sonata No. 1, in A Minor, Op. 105.* MENDELSSOHN: *Violin Sonata in F Major.* Sergiu Luca (violin); Anne Epperson (piano). NONE-SUCH ● D-79007 \$11.98.

Performance: **Entirely winning**
Recording: **Full-bodied**

Clara Schumann's *Three Romances*, composed in 1853, prove to be altogether too attractive to have suffered the neglect they have heretofore, and they are short enough to make up a nice, full side with Robert's A Minor Sonata. Some collectors may have preferred the second of Robert's two violin sonatas to complete such a package, but the still barely known Mendelssohn sonata of 1838 ("rediscovered" by Yehudi Menuhin only about thirty years ago) is another piece we are not too likely to encounter in the recital hall, and thus it is especially welcome from such able and committed advocates as Sergiu Luca and Anne Epperson. All three works are given entirely winning performances; the familiar Op. 105 is brought off with all the composer's characteristic fervor and impetuosity and yet without the minutest sacrifice in terms of sheer beauty of tone. Handsome and full-bodied as the digital recording is (and it does enhance the radiant quality of the playing), I can't help wishing Nonesuch had put this release in its lower-priced regular series so it would have been within easier reach of a greater number of listeners. But, economics aside, it is certainly a winner. **R.F.**

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RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

SHOSTAKOVICH: Symphony No. 7, Op. 60 ("Leningrad"); The Age of Gold, Ballet Suite, Op. 22. London Philharmonic Orchestra, Bernard Haitink cond. LONDON LDR 10015 two discs \$21.96, © LDR5 10015 \$21.96.

Performance: **Impressive**
Recording: **Very impressive**

Bernard Haitink's new reading of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony attempts, very successfully I think, to place both the structure and content of the work in a different perspective from the usual militant-propagandistic one. It will be interesting to hear how this approach fits into Haitink's complete Shostakovich symphony cycle.

The opening movement of the *Leningrad*, with its infamous march-crescendo (the banality of evil?), gets its dramatic due here, but loving care is also evident in the many lyrical episodes, in particular in the lamentation of the last pages. The second movement is a gem, and the digital mastering shows to fine advantage this music's many delicate touches, especially the big soloistic episode for bass flute, contrabass clarinet, and harp. The adagio never fails to move me, and this reading is no exception. Haitink makes the most of the tautly constructed themes of the finale without neglecting to deliver all the terrifying rage inherent in the central portion. An aura of bitterness hangs over the elegiac passage just before the coda's metamorphosis of the basic theme into a major-key chorale. Here too, Haitink manages to keep the musical aspect at maximum and the bombast to a reasonable minimum. I don't regard the Seventh as the most successful of Shostakovich's orchestral symphonies (No. 10 holds that spot for me), but neither is it the inferior piece that some have made it out to be. Haitink and his players make a strong case for its value.

In the early, predominantly satirical and raucous *Age of Gold* music, Haitink does not pass lightly over the reflective adagio but plays it as music anticipatory of the mature composer to come. All told, this is a thoroughly commendable album. *D.H.*

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Performance: **Excellent**
Recording: **Excellent**

Bernd Weigl is an eminent operatic baritone, and on the evidence of this recording he must now be counted among the top lieder recitalists as well. His warm and malleable voice is used with insight and a wide range of dynamic shadings. There are no weaknesses in the even scale of his extension

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Pencil sketch by Hilda Wiener (1937)

Formidable Rachmaninoff

LAST October I was somewhat critical in these pages of Andrei Gavrilov's wild-man approach to the Tchaikovsky B-flat Minor Piano Concerto on Angel. A recently released CBS/Melodiya disc presents him

from top to bottom, no audible effort in his tone production. His pronunciation is admirable, and my only reservation concerns his occasional tendency to go sharp in loud high passages.

Actually, I admire the beauty of the singing here more than I do the music. Recitals devoted *only* to Strauss lieder invariably expose the unevenness of the composer's song output. Too many of these songs lack the magic of intimate communication, and a long sequence of ecstatic climaxes can eventually grow tiresome. But there are some undeniable gems among these nineteen songs (*Morgen, Die Nacht, Traum Durch die Dämmerung*, and a few more), and they receive model renditions from this outstanding baritone and from Cord Garben, his excellent pianist partner. G.J.

STRAVINSKY: *The Firebird* (see Best of the Month, page 72)

WEBER: *Der Freischütz* (see Best of the Month, page 72)

COLLECTIONS

CASTELLANI-ANDRIACCIO DUO. *Guitar Recital.* Galles: *Sonata in E Minor*. D. Scarlatti: *Sonata in E Minor (K. 9)*; *Sonata in E Major (K. 380)*. Granados: *Goyescas: Intermezzo*. Brouwer: *Micro Piezas*. Albé-

in a recording he made five years earlier, and on his home territory, of the Rachmaninoff Third Concerto. It is as formidable a performance as I have ever heard of the composer's most difficult and sophisticated work for piano and orchestra.

The score is uncut, and Gavrilov plays the long cadenzas with consummate virtuosity and dash. Indeed, the ferocity and brilliance with which he attacks the one in the first movement suggests nothing less than Josef Hofmann in his prime. Also shattering is the initial piano entry in the slow movement, which here carries the burden of a relentless tragedy. The recitative episode is singularly eloquent, the waltz section is a real dazzler—and so it goes all the way to the triumphant final pages. If it appears that the soloist dominates the proceedings, that reflects no discredit on the noble and spirited collaboration of conductor Alexander Lazarev and the USSR State Academic Orchestra.

THE sonics indicate a rather close but by no means discomfiting microphone setup. Though not state-of-the-art, the sound is actually very decent—a welcome change from the blowiness that afflicts a good many big-scale Soviet recordings. I would rate this disc among the top three recorded realizations to date of the Rachmaninoff D Minor. —David Hall

RACHMANINOFF: *Piano Concerto No. 3, in D Minor, Op. 30.* Andrei Gavrilov (piano); USSR State Academic Orchestra, Alexander Lazarev cond. CBS/MELODIYA M 36685 \$9.98, © MT 36685 \$9.98.

niz: *Cantos de España, Op. 232, No. 3 (Bajo la Palmera) and No. 4 (Córdoba).* Joanne Castellani, Michael Andriaccio (guitars). ICARUS 1002 \$7 (from Icarus Records, 8710 Glasgow Road, Fredonia, N.Y. 14063).

Performance: **Deft**
Recording: **Excellent**

The four tiny pieces by the contemporary Cuban guitarist-composer Leo Brouwer—rhythmically and melodically appealing, with some rather mild dissonances for spice—constitute the only portion of this program actually composed for guitar duo. All the other pieces are transcriptions of keyboard or (in the case of the Granados) orchestral originals prepared by Emilio Pujol, Miguel Llobet, or the performers themselves. Various listeners will have various attitudes toward such transcriptions, but there could hardly be a negative response to these deft, occasionally poetic performances, in which the two players (who are married to each other) seem to breathe as one. The recording itself is of demonstration quality. R.F.

PLACIDO DOMINGO/VIENNA CHOIR BOYS. Bach/Gounod: *Ave Maria*. Schubert: *Ave Maria*. Franck: *Panis Angelicus*. J.-B. Faure: *Crucifix*. Handel: *Largo ("Ombra mai fu")*. Bizet: *Agnus Dei*. Kienzl: *Der*

Evangelium: Selig sind, die Verfolgung leiden. Eybler: *Omnes de Saba Veniunt*. Herbeck: *Pueri Concinite*. Luther: *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*. Trad.: *Adeste Fideles*. Placido Domingo (tenor); Vienna Choir Boys; Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Helmuth Froschauer cond. RCA ARL1-3835 \$9.98, © ARK1-3835 \$9.98.

Performance: **Festive**
Recording: **Good**

This is a recorded by-product of a German film, processed—judging by the spelling errors and the absence of any useful notes—in haste. There are several familiar and beloved selections here, plus a few pleasant novelties that are not further identified on the jacket. Placido Domingo is in outstanding form. I do not find the settings (chorus with or without organ) irresistible, but if you have a passion for treble voices you may respond to this offering more enthusiastically than I did. G.J.

GLENN GOULD: *Silver Jubilee Album*. D. Scarlatti: *Sonatas in D Major (L. 463), D Minor (L. 413), and G Major (L. 486)*. C. P. E. Bach: *Württemberg Sonata No. 1, in A Minor*. Scriabin: *Two Preludes, Op. 57*. Beethoven (arr. Liszt): *Symphony No. 6, in F Major, Op. 68, First Movement*. R. Strauss: *Ophelia Lieder, Op. 67, Nos. 1-3*. Glenn Gould (piano); Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (soprano, in Strauss). Gould: *So You Want to Write a Fugue?* Glenn Gould (piano); Elizabeth Benson-Guy (soprano); Anita Darian (mezzo-soprano); Charles Bressler (tenor); Donald Gramm (baritone); Juilliard Quartet; Vladimir Golschmann cond. *A Glenn Gould Fantasy*. Glenn Gould (voice, piano). CBS M2X 35914 two discs \$11.98.

Performance: **Excellent**
Recording: **Effective**

GLENN GOULD: *The Little Bach Book*. J. S. Bach: *Aria (BWV 988)*. *Six Little Preludes: Nos. 1 and 2 (BWV 933, 934)*. *Two-part Inventions: No. 1 (BWV 772); No. 3 (BWV 774); No. 4 (BWV 775); No. 6 (BWV 777); No. 8 (BWV 779); No. 10 (BWV 781); No. 13 (BWV 784); No. 14 (BWV 785); No. 15 (BWV 786)*. *Partita No. 1, in B-flat Major (BWV 825): Minuets I and II; Gigue, English Suite No. 2, in A Minor (BWV 811): Bourées I and II; Gigue, English Suite No. 3, in G Minor (BWV 808): Gavottes I and II, French Suite No. 3, in B Minor (BWV 814): Minuet, Trio, French Suite No. 5, in G Major (BWV 816): Gavottes; Bourée; Gigue, French Suite No. 6, in E Major (BWV 817): Minuet; Bourée; Gigue, Fughetta in C Minor (BWV 961)*. *Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1: Preludes and Fugues No. 1, in C Major (BWV 846); No. 5, in D Major (BWV 850); and No. 21, in B-flat Major (BWV 866)*. *Nine Little Preludes: No. 1, in C Major (BWV 924)*. Glenn Gould (piano). CBS M 36672 \$9.98, © MT 36672 \$9.98.

Performance: **Arch**
Recording: **Fine**

In his "Silver Jubilee Album," Glenn Gould presents himself not only as a pianist, but also as a composer, actor, and writer, facets of a kind of multiple career rarely encountered in this (or any other) country. As a soloist he gives wonderful performances of

Scarlatti and Scriabin, makes pianistic sense out of an obtuse C. P. E. Bach harpsichord sonata, and is bold enough to play a Liszt transcription of the first movement of Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony. Concerning the last, I wished there had been room for the entire work (it is better for orchestra, of course, but Liszt's solutions to various textural problems are fascinating). To show himself as an accompanist, Gould has included a stunning performance of the first three of Strauss' *Ophelia Lieder* that he recorded with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf in 1966. *So You Want to Write a Fugue*, released in its first incarnation by STEREO REVIEW (April 1964 issue), is a devastating parody of a Bach fugue in which all of the master's devices are exploited together with a few musical quotes.

The second disc in the set contains *A Glenn Gould Fantasy*, which is a self-conducted interview in which Gould faces such noteworthy, if nonexistent, critics as Sir Nigel Twitt-Thornwaite, Karlheinz Klopweisser, Theodore Slutz, and Márta Hortaváni. Despite the broad satire, Gould eloquently defends the playing of Bach on the piano and his preference for restricting his performances to highly edited recordings. There is also a discussion of and excerpts from two of his radio documentaries, *The Idea of the North* and *The Latecomers*. The session terminates as Gould plays his transcription of *La Valse* to the board of directors of "Geyser Petroleum" on a storm-ridden oil rig in Hudson's Bay. Although much of this is hilarious, there are also moments of profundity, and the entire *Fantasy* tells us a great deal about Glenn Gould and his controversial career.

Turning to "The Little Bach Book," I found most of it charmingly played, but, as usual, Gould's acute sense of articulation is often misapplied and some of the tempos will cause eyebrows to rise and hairs to stand on end. S.L.

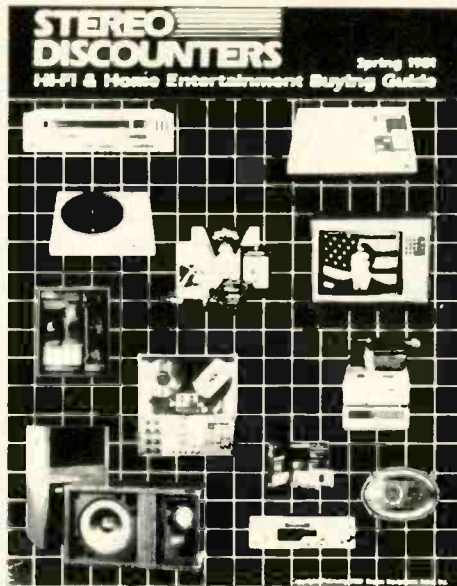
VLADIMIR LEYETCHKISS: *Russian Piano Music. Taneyev: Prelude and Fugue in G-sharp Minor. Schubert/Prokofiev: Suite of Waltzes. Scriabin: Twelve Etudes, Op. 8.* Vladimir Leyetchkiss (piano). ORION ORS 80378 \$8.98.

Performance: **Big virtuoso style**
Recording: **Lacks brilliance**

Vladimir Leyetchkiss is the sort of big-style emigré Russian pianist who, if not for the heavy competition, would probably be a lot better known. As it is, we are the beneficiaries, for instead of competing in the standard repertoire he has chosen to emphasize lesser-known music. Sergei Taneyev (1856-1915), whose impressive opera *Oresteia* was released in this country by Deutsche Grammophon not too long ago, was an early neo-Classicist—before Stravinsky, that is. The Prelude and Fugue in G-sharp Minor was the required piece at the First Tchaikovsky Competition (Van Cliburn), but it does not appear to have been previously recorded. It is a serious, brilliant, difficult work, very well played here.

The rest of this record is even more attention-getting. The Prokofiev settings of Schubert waltzes are, at the very least, charming. And the Scriabin Op. 8 Etudes are from the full flower of that composer's Romantic first period. One or two of them

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are known independently, but the entire set is not often encountered. This is fresh, youthful music full of ardor and passion. Leyetchkiss' performances are on a big scale, but they are, I think, a little understated—he plays with almost too much ease and thus submerges the signs of inner struggle in the music. The piano sound, though mellow and full, lacks brilliance. *E.S.*

WILLIAM PARKER: An American Song Recital. Griffes: *Das Ist ein Brausen und Heulen; Wo Ich Bin, Mich Rings Umdunkelt; Des Müden Abendlied; Zwei Könige; The First Snowfall; An Old Song Resung.* Hoiby: *Summer and Smoke; Anatomy Lesson; Scene.* Evett: *Billy in the Darbies.* Rorem: *Mourning Scene.* Bacon: *Billy in the Darbies.* Niles: *Evening; Love Winter When the Plant Says Nothing; For My Brother, Reported Missing in Action, 1943.* William Parker (baritone); William Huckaby (piano); Virgil Blackwell (clarinet); Columbia String Quartet. **NEW WORLD NW 305 \$8.98.**

Performance: **Top-drawer**
Recording: **Excellent**

The American art song deserves the kind of attention it gets in this carefully produced album. It's too bad that there was no room in the recital for songs by such major composers as Carpenter, Ives, Thomson, and Barber, but what is included is fascinating. Moreover, baritone William Parker, with his strong voice, superbly controlled style, and long experience both in the concert hall and on the operatic stage, was certainly a fine choice for most of this repertoire.

Charles Tomlinson Griffes (1884-1920) studied in Berlin at a time when most other aspiring American composers were drawn to Paris, and he wrote his early (unpublished) songs to German texts by such poets as Heinrich Heine. Mr. Parker's own studies in German and performing experience in Vienna and Strasbourg serve him well here, and you could swear that what he's singing is Brahms or Schumann—rather good Brahms and Schumann at that. The altogether lovely *The First Snowfall* (published in 1912) and the 1918 setting of John Masefield's nautical *An Old Song Resung* show us the more familiar Griffes, first among American musical impressionists.

Parker sounds a bit wooden in the "Anatomy Lesson" from Lee Hoiby's opera *Summer and Smoke* (based on the Tennessee Williams play), yet he is moving in the scene in which, as the young man who loves her, he warns Alma against encroaching spinsterhood. He is also effective—with strong help from clarinetist Virgil Blackwell and the Columbia String Quartet—in the late Robert Evett's setting of Melville's *Billy in the Darbies* (the epilogue to *Billy Budd*) and even better in Ernst Bacon's more straightforward treatment of the same text for voice and piano. Coached by the composer, Parker is perfect in Ned Rorem's early work for baritone and string quartet based on the Biblical passage about the death of Jonathan. After all this real emotion, however, John Jacob Niles' three songs on religious texts by Thomas Merton are something of a letdown. Niles was among the best of this century's American folk singers, but there's nothing especially memorable in these settings. *P.K.*

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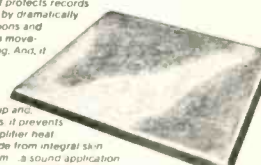


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LAST September 24 marked the gala opening-night concert of the New York Philharmonic's 1980-1981 season, Zubin Mehta conducting. As it happened, it was doubly a gala event because it was also Isaac Stern's sixtieth birthday celebration, and Avery Fisher Hall was filled with the sounds of fiddling from Stern, Pinchas Zukerman, and Itzhak Perlman. And what more natural way is there to celebrate a musical birthday than by playing music? The event was recorded, and three major concerted works appear on CBS' just-released documentation of the event (*Happy*

known for any particular sensitivity to historical style; they play pretty much as they play—big tone and vibrato, slashing attacks, long-line phrasing, and so on—regardless of the repertoire. Mehta is not very historically oriented either. And so, though there is a harpsichord in the Vivaldi and the Bach, the music is rather thick and out of scale, there are odd and out-of-place orchestral crescendos, trills are played sometimes right-side-up and sometimes upside-down, and every now and then one or the other of the soloists cannot resist a gypsy grace note or a Russian sob. The digitally mastered re-



CBS Records

Birthday to You is not included, in case you wondered).

Obviously, the disc is a must for anyone who was at the concert and probably for many of those who watched and listened to the Exxon "Live from Lincoln Center" presentation on PBS stations across the nation. For the rest of us, it has, as all such "occasional" recordings do, its ups and its downs. The first thing on the positive side is that a real sense of fun comes through. These musicians (Mehta included) *enjoy* playing together. Second, of course, there is some fabulous playing here. Stern's tone and his intonation go off a bit toward the end of the Mozart Sinfonia Concertante, but he is still every inch a great violinist. Zukerman's combination of tone (enormous) and agility (Olympic) on the viola is nothing short of startling. Perlman is simply a beautiful player. The three of them together in the Vivaldi provide passages as exquisite as any to be found on disc. The orchestra, in its somewhat impersonal way, plays like the great orchestra it is but does not always seem to be.

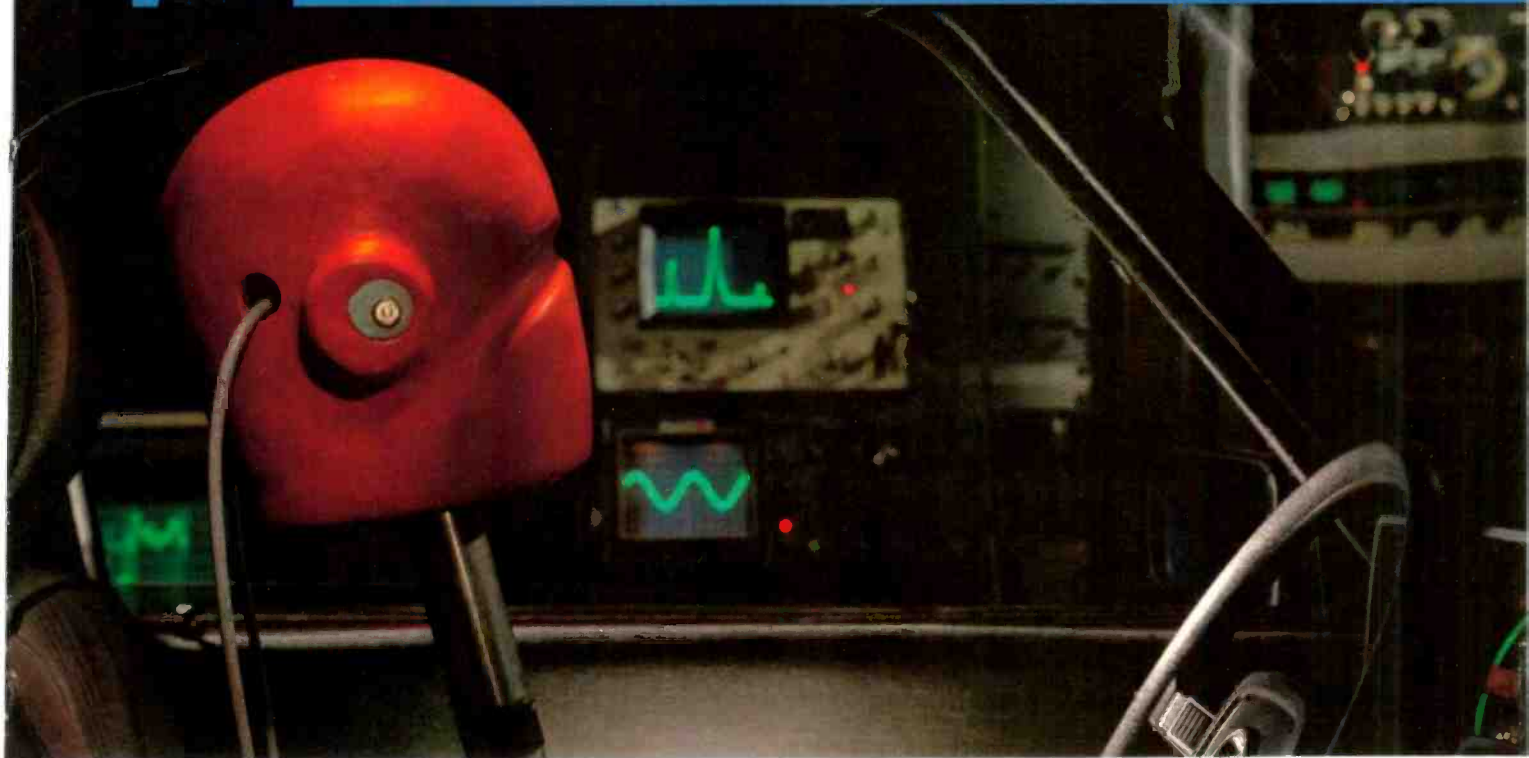
On the negative side, there is, principally, the matter of style. None of the three soloists, gifted as they all are, has ever been

recording is very well managed for the circumstances, and the applause has mercifully been faded out quickly after each selection. Technical perfectionists, however, will notice a dropout close to the end of the first movement of the Bach concerto. Something of an accurate perspective on the record's place in the scheme of things can be gained from the album package itself: in its double-fold space, it offers pictures, comments on the telecast, biographies of the artists, and newspaper quotations—all in three languages—but not one word, beyond the listings, about the music.

—James Goodfriend

ISAAC STERN: Sixtieth Anniversary Celebration. J. S. Bach: Concerto in D Minor for Two Violins and Orchestra (BWV 1043). Vivaldi: Concerto in F Major for Three Violins and Orchestra (F. 1, No. 34; P. 278). Mozart: Sinfonia Concertante in E-flat Major for Violin, Viola, and Orchestra (K. 364). Isaac Stern (violin); Itzhak Perlman (violin in Bach and Vivaldi); Pinchas Zukerman (violin in Vivaldi; viola in Mozart); New York Philharmonic, Zubin Mehta cond. CBS MASTERSOUND ● IM 36692 \$14.98.

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