

Stereo Review

US \$2.50 • UK £1.95 • CANADA \$2.95 • JULY 1992

5 TO GO
HOW DO THE NEW
CD PORTABLES
STACK UP?

GETTING THE
MOST OUT OF
YOUR OLD
RECORDINGS

TELEVISION'S
TOM
VERLAINE

TEST REPORTS
JBL Loudspeakers
Sherwood A/V Receiver
Hafler Tuner/Preamp
... And More



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MR DAVID S BUCHANAN
8900 YELLOW WOOD PL
LOUISVILLE KY 40242-7772
#Y307
V602
APR 94

#BXBDHMY*****5-DIGIT 40242
#BCH8900Y091 9#430492 1J



Beauty is in the e

Serious music appreciation involves more than just your sense of hearing.

It involves your individual sense of taste.

Which is why we created a revolutionary new



DSP car audio unit. One that, when added onto your current system, lets you fine-tune your sound with a level of accuracy never before possible.

So that now you can hear music in a completely new way. The way *you* like it.

Introducing the Premier™ DEQ-7500 Digital Signal Processor from Pioneer.®

While most DSP units just let you choose different sound field options, the DEQ-7500 does something radically different. It actually corrects the deficiencies in your sound, caused by an imperfect car interior environment (everything from poor speaker placement to

plush seats, which absorb sound waves). The result: our new DEQ-7500 gives you the premium sound performance your car's interior has been depriving you of.



This is all made possible thanks to Pioneer's dual-chip Digital Signal Processor—high-powered integrated circuitry that carries out thousands of complex functions, all in a unique three-step process.

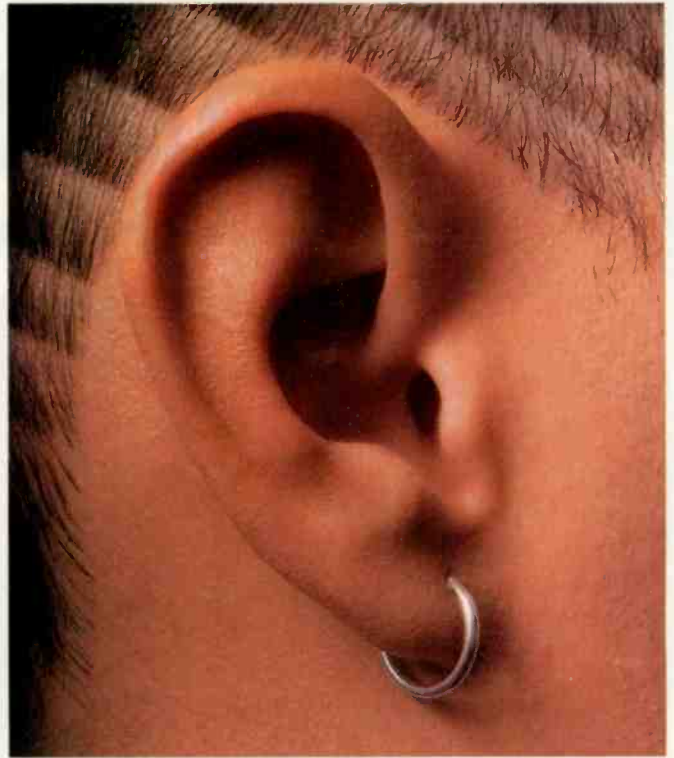
Step one: Correcting your existing sound.

The DEQ-7500 lets you choose between four-band, 1/3 octave parametric EQ or seven-band graphic EQ, to dial in the best overall sound characteristics for your particular car environment.

You can then add parametric bass and treble for even further refinement. And when you're all finished, save these critical adjustments with six user presets.

Step two: Having corrected your sound, you





ear of the beholder.

can then use the Listening Position Selector to move the center stage image around your car. So that no matter where you're sitting, it'll always sound like the best seat in the house. Once you've chosen the position you want, you can use the Image Focus Control for ultraprecise imaging and staging, particularly in vocals.



Step three: At last, you can start enhancing your



sound. Choose from any of five listening environments: Studio, Jazz Club, Concert Hall, Cathedral and Stadium.

You can then further fine-tune your sound field, by adjusting the delay time and intensity within each of these particular venue modes.

Of course, while it's nice to sit here and read about the DEQ-7500, it's even

better to sit behind the wheel and experience it for yourself. Which reminds us of one final step: visiting your nearest Premier dealer. He's part of a network of expert craftsmen who install and design sound systems with the utmost care and attention to detail.

PREMIER

If you'd like more information regarding the DEQ-7500, as well as the name and address of the Premier dealer located closest to you, simply give us a call at 1-800-421-1601, extension 904.

And discover how nice it is to have an audio unit that adapts to your ears. Instead of the other way around.

PIONEER
The Art of Entertainment



**OUR SPEAKERS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN KNOWN
FOR THEIR GREAT VALUE.
NOW WATCH US TAKE THIS CONCEPT
TO NEW HEIGHTS.**



Though we're known for value at Advent, you might assume even we had to draw the line at our New Vision Series.[™] Speakers as technologically advanced as these must surely be priced up in the stratosphere. Not so.

Yet they achieve incredibly rich bass and unsurpassed imaging. Each one, the 500, the 350 and the new 250, is the product of three years of meticulous research.



ADVENT

Sound as it was meant to be heard.

Take our bookshelf-size 250 model, for instance. Its Hemholtz resonator band pass subwoofer is ingeniously mounted horizontally to achieve astonishing sonic performance from such a small cabinet.

In fact, just one listen to our New Vision Series will convince you that, finally, high-end sound doesn't have to mean high-end price.

For your nearest dealer and free literature, call 1-800-477-3257.

N E W V I S I O N S E R I E S B Y A D V E N T



Cover

If you're looking for music to go, see Ken Pohlmann's tests of five portable CD players on page 42, including the JVC XL-P90.

Photograph by Roberto Brosan
Racket courtesy of Prince Manufacturing,
Princeton, NJ

Stereo Review

INCORPORATING HIGH FIDELITY®

EQUIPMENT

Hirsch-Houck Labs Equipment Test Reports 26
 Sherwood RV-6010R Audio/Video Receiver, page 26
 JBL L3 Loudspeaker System, page 32
 Hafler Series 945 Tuner/Preamplifier, page 34
 SSI Powerflex V Multichannel Power Amplifier, page 38

CD Portables: The Beethoven Test 42
 Five of the newest, smallest CD players are taken through their paces in the city of Beethoven • by Ken C. Pohlmann

BULLETIN 4
UP FRONT 6
LETTERS 10
TIME DELAY 12
NEW PRODUCTS 15
RODRIGUES CONTEST 20
AUDIO Q&A 22
TECHNICAL TALK 24
POPULAR MUSIC 67
CLASSICAL MUSIC 80
THE HIGH END 96

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Page 49

All About Subwoofers, Part 2 49

There's more than one way to get deep, clean bass from a subwoofer • by Peter W. Mitchell

Fair Play 56

How to coax the last smidgen of fidelity from your soon-to-be-irreplaceable analog recordings • by Ian G. Masters



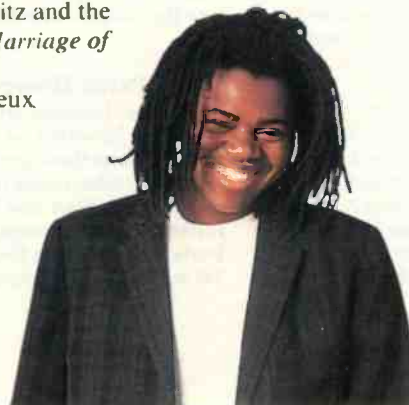
Page 15

MUSIC

András Schiff 53
 The pianist speaks out on authentic instruments, "star" conductors, Glenn Gould, and more • by Shirley Fleming

Tom Verlaine 60
 After fourteen years, can the original New Wave guitar hero get the commercial respect he deserves? • by Steve Simels

Best Recordings of the Month 63
 Lyle Lovett, Wayne Horvitz and the President, Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, and Tchaikovsky conducted by Pierre Monteux



Page 67

BULLETIN

by William Livingstone
and Glenn Kenny



Yo, Columbus!

Spain's observances of the 500th anniversary of Columbus's first voyage to the Western Hemisphere include Expo '92, a world's fair, in Seville this summer and the Olympic Games in Barcelona from July 25 to August 9. Among the recordings released to commemorate the anniversary is Alberto Franchetti's opera *Cristoforo Colombo* (Koch Schwann 3-1030-2, three CD's) with Renato Bruson in the title role and Marcello Viotti conducting the Frankfurt Radio Symphony. . . . Paramount Home Video offers the Olympiad Series, twenty-two videocassettes (\$14.95 each) that survey different aspects of the history of the games. An *Olympic Symphony* (Paramount 12642) shows great moments from games of the past without spoken narration but with a musical soundtrack made up of compositions by Handel, Beethoven, Glière, and Glazunov. Other programs focus on African runners, women medalists, the marathon, etc.

What Price Classical Music?

The Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki has received this year's Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition. Administered by the University of Louisville in Kentucky, the award consists of \$150,000. . . . The Cleveland Orchestra is suing Michael Jackson, his production company, and Epic Records for \$7 million, alleging that about a minute's worth of its recording of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was wrongfully appropriated and used in Jackson's album "Dangerous." . . . The Philadelphia Orchestra, which recorded the soundtrack for the Walt Disney film *Fantasia* (1940), is suing Disney for half the profits generated by the highly successful release of *Fantasia* in home video. Said to be the largest-selling videocassette of all time, with more than 14 million units sold, *Fantasia* is estimated to have earned Disney a profit of between \$120 and \$150 million.

Telecast Music

PBS music specials this month will include *A Capitol Fourth* (1992), the annual Fourth of July concert on the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol in Washington. The National Symphony

Orchestra will be conducted by its music director, Mstislav Rostropovich, and by Henry Mancini, and the flutist James Galway will appear as soloist. . . . The popular summer series *Evening at Pops*, featuring the Boston Pops Orchestra conducted by John Williams, resumes on July 12 with John and Bonnie Raitt as guests. Anne Murray will be the soloist on July 19, and Tony Bennett and Michel Legrand will perform with the Pops on July 26. . . . In the American Masters series, the documentary *Ray Charles, Genius of Soul* will be repeated on July 17. Check local listings for exact times.

CD + Graphics

A few years ago Warner New Media created a number of Compact Disc + Graphics musical albums that made it possible to view lyrics, photographs, or other visual elements on a TV set while listening to music from a CD. (The display requires a Graphics-compatible player like the models offered by

What Price Romance?

When the classical-music radio station WQXR in New York polled its listeners recently and asked them to name their favorite selections for setting a romantic mood, Ravel's very popular *Boléro* came in third (after the *Liebestod* from Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* and Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*). When the manuscript for *Boléro* came up at auction in Paris this year, the French government acquired it for 1.8 million francs (about \$327,000).

Philips, JVC, and other manufacturers.) Those albums featured such popular performers as Laura Brannigan, Ella Fitzgerald, Fleetwood Mac, Jimi Hendrix, Bonnie Raitt, and Lou Reed, and most of them are still available in stores or from Time Warner. Now Warner New Media has added about twenty new classical titles to its CD + G catalog, including Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion*, Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, operas by Purcell and Mozart, and symphonies by Beethoven, Berlioz, Mahler, and Mendelssohn. These new titles can also be ordered from Time Warner (price: \$19.98 plus shipping) and charged to Visa or MasterCard. Call (800) 634-7400, and have your credit card handy. Ask about the free newsletter *Newness*.

Tandy's Big Bang

Best known for its Radio Shack chain of stores, Tandy Corporation, of Fort Worth, Texas, has other retail outlets named Computer City, McDuff, and Video Concepts, and it is planning new stores to be called Incredible Universe. In large, mall-like settings, the new stores will permit customers to "test drive" products while making buying decisions.

The Incredible Universe stores will offer appliances and computers as well as entertainment electronics for the home and car. Employing about three hundred people, each new store will have approximately 100,000 square feet of selling-floor space. Each will contain a restaurant, parking, and child-care facilities, and each will have a large rotunda for big-screen displays, educational programs, manufacturers' demonstrations, and entertainment. Scheduled to open this fall, the first two incredible Universe stores will be in Arlington, Texas, and near Portland, Oregon.

Japanese Miniatures

In Japan, Sony has introduced two new audio products of extraordinarily small size—but smallness isn't their only attraction. One is a recorder, no larger than a pack of cigarettes, that can fit 2 hours of digitally recorded audio onto a cassette tape the size of a postage stamp. Its limited dynamic range (it's a 12-bit system) makes it less suitable for music than for recording interviews and press conferences, hence its rather journalistic nickname: Scoopman. Japanese retailers started selling the Scoopman at about \$750.

Sony's other small introduction is a portable CD-I player ("I" for "interactive") called the Intelligent Discman, complete with a 4-inch LCD screen. Priced at around \$1,500, the product is aimed only at the business and industrial market.

Perhaps the most Important feature of all in Compact Disc Players.

In a category where manufacturers try to convince you of their superiority with digital theory and laboratory specifications, Denon adds an all-important new criterion: *Overall Consumer Satisfaction*.

In the most exhaustive research ever conducted, Verity Research, the nation's leading independent Consumer Electronics research firm, ranked Denon CD Players Number 1 in Overall Consumer Satisfaction.

This honor, determined by interviewing hundreds of thousands of people across America, takes into account the many factors that make someone fully satisfied with their purchase.

Denon is especially proud to win in this category, because CD Players, more than any other component, challenge a company's abilities in the electro-mechanical, analog *and* digital domains.

Denon is even prouder, because the ultimate judge in this unprecedented competition was not a reviewer or a magazine editor, but someone just like you.

DENON

The first name in digital audio.

Denon America, Inc., 222 New Road, Parsippany, New Jersey 07054 (201) 575-7810

CIRCLE NO. 20 ON READER SERVICE CARD



Change and Conspiracy

STEREO REVIEW will be thirty-five years old next February. It's been an eventful thirty-five years.

In the first issue of the magazine, called *HiFi & Music Review*, the hot topic was whether stereo sound would be "a magnificent new medium for the home" or "a fiasco like color TV."

Stereo technology changed the way music was recorded and the way we listened, and the idea caught on so quickly that the young magazine was renamed *HiFi/Stereo Review* less than two years later and eventually dropped the "HiFi" from its name altogether. In the background, though, there were rumblings about a "stereo conspiracy" of greedy record companies forcing everyone to replace all their mono recordings and greedy loudspeaker manufacturers forcing everyone to buy two speakers instead of one.

Other changes came thick and fast. The 1960's brought stereo FM radio and the tape cassette. In the 1970's integrated circuits entered the picture, making possible miniaturization and economies of manufacturing, after-market car stereo gave us options for the road, and in 1980 Sony revolutionized our listening habits with the Walkman. It was not a period of very great industrial investment in the U.S., but Japanese companies fought fiercely for market share and kept consumer prices low. There were rumblings about a conspiracy of ruthless Japanese electronics manufacturers to put American companies out of business.

Then, in 1982, the digital compact disc was introduced, and we began to hear recorded music with a clarity and range the stereo pioneers of the 1950's only dreamed of. There were rumblings about conspiracies of greedy record companies forcing us to replace all our recordings and greedy equipment manufacturers forcing us to replace our stereo components.

Ten years later, in 1992, the

Electronic Industries Association estimates that CD players are in 35 percent of U.S. households, and the Recording Industries Association of America reports that we are now spending more on CD's than on any other form of recorded music. The CD revolution continues—at home, in the car, in portable players like the ones Ken Pohlmann compares in his article on page 42 in this issue. How many more choices we have now, how much better we can hear now, than we could in 1958.

Where do we go from here? More and more of us will combine our audio and video systems in home theaters where even the movies we watch will benefit from digital sound. And two exciting new audio formats will be introduced before the year is over. Both digital, both recordable, the Digital Compact Cassette and the Mini Disc will provide us with more options still. Do these developments mean that the CD is headed toward obsolescence? No, at least not for a very long time. Everyone I talk to in this industry expects the new formats to supplement the CD, not to supplant it.

But we can expect more change, more choices, and we can expect the same old rumblings of conspiracy, which are just as silly now as they were in 1958. We, the consumers, make decisions about the market, about whether one product succeeds and another fails, not manufacturers who conspire to manipulate us.

This month we have made some changes in STEREO REVIEW. One of them is a new column, called "Time Delay," that had something to do with the idea for *this* column. And we have redesigned the music sections to make space for more record reviews and more color photographs. These changes reflect a conspiracy among the editors, the graphic designers, and management to bring you a better magazine. We hope you like it. □

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Editor in Chief

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Henry Kloss Does It Again. And Again.



"Henry Kloss has demonstrated a rare talent for spotting important new concepts and incorporating them into readily affordable consumer products. His new models have stemmed from a deeply rooted desire to move audio technology forward and provide buyers with previously unavailable benefits." *Audio Magazine, February 1992*

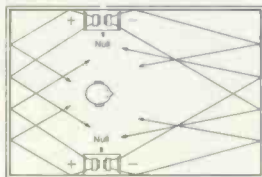
Audio Hall of Fame member Henry Kloss created the dominant speakers of the '50s (AR), '60s (KLH) and '70s (Advent). Now he's created a new kind of audio company with factory-direct savings... Cambridge SoundWorks.

The Surround™ II. Price Breakthrough In Dipole Radiator Surround Speaker.

The Surround II is specifically designed for use as a rear/side speaker in Dolby Surround or DSP systems. They "surround" the listener with *non-directional* ambient sounds, unlike conventional speakers that are designed to create a precise stereo "stage."

The Surround II is a dipole radiator. Mounted on the side walls of your listening room, the sound is directed towards the front and rear of the room, using

The Surround II delivers dipole radiator, surround sound performance at a fraction of the cost of competing speakers using similar technology.



phase cancellation to create a null in the direction of the listener. The sound then reaches the listener from *all* directions, the way it was meant to be heard. The acoustic performance of The Surround II is essentially identical to that of our original surround speaker, The Surround*. At \$249 pr., The Surround II is *the* value on the market.

Introducing The In-Wall Ambiance™ Speaker System.

Ambiance In-Wall provides overall performance (particularly deep bass response) unmatched by its competitors. Unlike many in-wall speakers, Ambiance In-Wall uses a true acoustic suspension enclosure. We know of no other system like it that can match its bass performance.

Henry Kloss designed Ambiance In-Wall with

Our Ambiance In-Wall speakers use a true acoustic suspension sealed cabinet for optimum bass response.

a wide dispersion tweeter delivering accurate response over a wide area. Place Ambiance In-Wall where it *looks right* in your wall (or your ceiling), and still have it *sound right* no matter where you are in the room.

Stereo Review said Ambiance "easily held its own against substantially larger, more expensive speakers." Ambiance In-Wall is also very simple to install—it's a custom installer's and do-it-yourselfer's delight.† At \$329 a pair (\$165 each), direct from the factory, it's an outstanding value.

Turn your TV into a home theater! In our catalog you'll find complete Dolby Surround Sound systems starting at under \$1,000.



CALL 1-800-FOR-HIFI.

24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We'll send you our 48-page color catalog with components from Cambridge SoundWorks, Pioneer, Philips, Denon and others.

We Know How To Make Loudspeakers.

CAMBRIDGE SOUNDWORKS

© 1992 Cambridge SoundWorks. Ensemble is a registered trademark of Cambridge SoundWorks. Ambiance and The Surround are trademarks of Cambridge SoundWorks. AR & Advent are trademarks of Jensen Laboratories. *Except for overall power-handling capability. †For those who want all our bass response, it is also compatible with our Ensemble subwoofer systems.

CIRCLE NO. 6 ON READER SERVICE CARD

The Critics Love Ensemble And Ensemble II. What's The Difference, Anyway?

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

And Then There Were Two.

Now Cambridge SoundWorks has introduced Ensemble II, a more affordable version of Ensemble using only one cabinet to hold both subwoofer drivers. Ensemble II has joined Ensemble in the ranks of the country's best-selling speak-



The real difference is in the subwoofer.

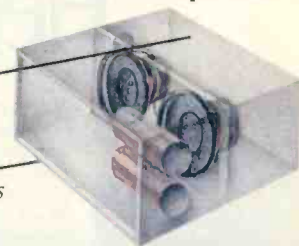
ers. We believe Ensemble II is a better system than the new Bose® AM-5 Series II. And because we sell it factory-direct, it's half the price. *Stereo Review* said "Ensemble II performs so far beyond its price and size that it can be compared only with much larger speakers at substantially higher prices." We agree with the writer who said, "It's hard to imagine going wrong with Ensemble." The question is, which Ensemble system is right for *you*?

The Same Satellite Speakers.

When you listen to either Ensemble system, almost 90% of the music you hear is being reproduced by the satellite speakers. Both Ensemble and Ensemble II use satellite speakers that are virtually identical.* Unlike many competing systems, Ensemble's satellites are true two-way speaker systems, each containing a high performance tweeter and a 4-inch woofer. *Stereo Review* said, "The Ensemble satellites delivered a smoother output than

True acoustic suspension, sealed subwoofer cavity.

Cavity acts as acoustic band-pass filter.



"Ensemble may be the best value in the world!"
Audio



many larger and more expensive speakers."

Small (8½" x 5¼" x 4") and unobtrusive, they'll fit into the decor of any room. They're available in scratch-resistant gunmetal grey Nextel, or primed so you can paint them any color you wish.



Ensemble satellite speakers are available primed for painting, so they can match your decor exactly.

The Same Overall Sound.

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

The Same Attention To Detail.

Ensemble and Ensemble II are constructed with the very best materials and no-compromise workmanship. Their subwoofers use heavy-duty woofers in true acoustic suspension enclosures. The satellites are genuine two-way systems with very high quality speaker components. Individual crossover networks are

built into every cabinet for maximum wiring flexibility. Robust construction is used throughout, featuring solid MDF cabinets and solid metal grilles.

The Same Factory-Direct Savings.

Cambridge SoundWorks products are available *only* factory-direct. By eliminating the middle-men, we're able to sell Ensemble and Ensemble II for hundreds less than if they were sold in stores.

The Same 30-Day Total Satisfaction Guarantee.

Choosing a loudspeaker after a brief listen at a dealer's showroom is like deciding on a car after one quick trip around the block. So we make it possible to audition our speakers the *right way*—



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

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

fund. We even reimburse original UPS ground shipping charges in the continental United States.



The only difference in satellites is that the original Ensembles use gold-plated connectors that allow use of even the heaviest gauge wire.

The Real Difference: The Ultimate Placement Flexibility Of Dual Subwoofers.

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

How To Order.

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

CALL 1-800-FOR-HIFI

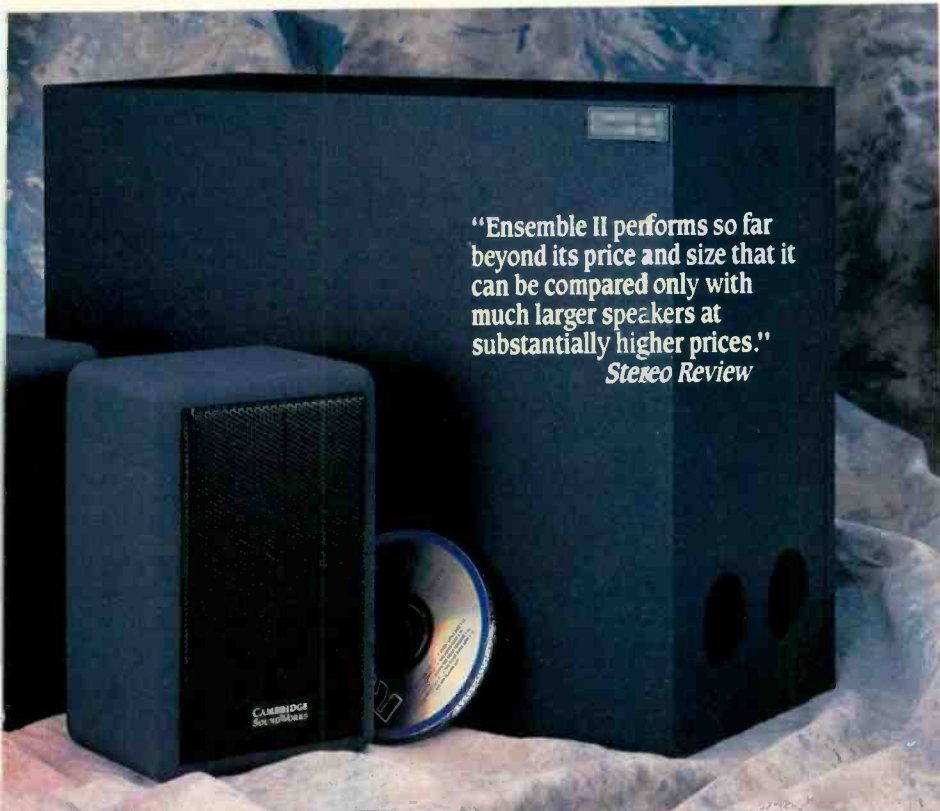
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We Know How To Make Loudspeakers.

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CIRCLE NO. 6 ON READER SERVICE CARD



"Ensemble II performs so far beyond its price and size that it can be compared only with much larger speakers at substantially higher prices."
Stereo Review

Why Other Loudspeaker Companies Can't Run This Ad.

There are almost 400 speaker companies in the United States.
But none of them can offer you all this...



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



We eliminated the expensive middle-men.
By selling factory-direct to the public, we eliminate huge distribution expenses. Don't be fooled by our reasonable prices. Our products are very well made.



High performance portable system.
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LETTERS

The High End

As chief design engineer for Clearfield Audio, the speaker division of Counterpoint Electronics, and an audio engineer for seventeen years, I must reply to Ian G. Masters's "Buying Time" in May ("The Powers That Be"). Mr. Masters states that "toroidal transformers, odd-ball capacitors," etc. have no justifiable use in modern amplifier design, as the costs outweigh any audible difference in sound quality, and that "tubes have been abandoned by most of the electronics industry, for good reason."

Mr. Masters does your readers a great disservice in not qualifying his opinions. He leaves the casual reader with the opinion that inexpensive receivers or rack systems sound as good as American high-end electronics and, by implication, that high-end audio equipment is a waste of money.

This bothers me no end. Shall we tell the public that fine wines are a poor value and that cooking sherry or cheap port are good enough for the unwashed masses? How about spreading the news that prime-rib steaks taste no better than burgers and that grinding your own coffee beans has no more reward than drinking instant?

I fear a world where consumers have no choices. What incentives do manufacturers have to develop better sounding and more reliable equipment if your publication insists that there is no reason to buy anything other than the bottom of the line? Who are you serving when you indoctrinate first-time buyers with the concept that high end is basically an overpriced rip-off?

ALBERT VON SCHWEIKERT
Vista, CA

We do not mean to suggest that people should simply buy the cheapest equipment they can find or that high-end components are unworthy of consideration. Mr. Masters's point was just that rather fanciful claims are sometimes made for the sonic benefits of various design and construction techniques and that it is not usually necessary to buy costly, exotic electronics to get good sound.

Audio Answer

My subscription to STEREO REVIEW has proved to be invaluable with a single "Audio Q&A." I had been unable to use my Kenwood power amplifier until I read "Driving a Subwoofer" in the May Q&A column. Endless thanks to Ian G. Masters.

MARCUS MCCONNELL
Yucaipa, CA

NSM CD Changer System

Thank you very much for Julian Hirsch's very thorough review in June of the NSM CD 3101 compact disc changer system. We do have a few points to make, however.

NSM America in Chicago was listed as the distributor. Although we do consolidate all shipping, spare parts, and service functions in our Chicago facility, NSM America distributes NSM's coin-operated equipment. Our consumer products are marketed in the U.S. by EuroSon Ameri-

ca. Consumers and dealers should direct their inquiries to NSM Consumer Electronics, Euro-Son America, Inc., 694 Ft. Salonga Rd., Northport, NY 11768; telephone (516) 261-7700.

Mr. Hirsch stated that "the shut-down process requires opening and closing the single-play drawer of the control unit." It is correct that opening the drawer stops play and returns the disc to its storage location in the CD Library, but during play of any disc in the Library, pressing the STOP/CM (Clear Memory) button once will stop the program, and pressing it again returns the current disc to its tray location. Opening the single-play drawer has the same effect as pressing STOP/CM twice, because we assume that doing this means you want to play a single disc and therefore would like to stop the disc playing from the Library.

Finally, it was mentioned that in many installations it would be desirable to place the CD Library at a greater distance from the controller than the supplied 6-foot cables allow. The control cable is a standard RS-232 connection, which can be up to 150 feet in length. And since the CD Library has optical and coaxial digital outputs and left/right analog outputs, connection of the audio cable over this length is rather easily done with available high-quality cables from numerous suppliers.

KEVIN BYRNE
President, NSM Consumer Electronics
Northport, NY

Nuclear Valdez

Parke Puterbaugh's May review of "Dream Another Dream" by Nuclear Valdez was very biased. This is a band brimming with soul and emotion, as well as being excellent in live performance. Mr. Puterbaugh downed the drummer's laid-back style as being too predictable, missing the point that his style adds a distinct flavor to the band's music, along with a variety of other subtle percussion instruments.

How in the world did Mr. Puterbaugh come up with the comparison to the band Ambrosia? I'm familiar with that 1970's sound, and Nuclear Valdez is far removed from it. They reflect the sound of today, one which cries out for freedom of expression on the FM airwaves.

And by the way, the band is from Miami, not New York.

DANIEL H. CARLSON
West Palm Beach, FL

More on DAT

While I agree with most of Ken Pohlmann's April "Signals" column on "How DAT Went Wrong," the implied criticism of digital audio tape as a recording medium seems unfair. I have used a DAT machine for many months now, and I am very pleased with it. I, too, wondered whether the average consumer had a need for such a thing. The answer is still no, but that doesn't take away from the merits of the format or make it a bad idea. As Richard Thompson said, "I asked you for a race horse, now don't hand me no mule." We shouldn't fault the racehorse for being what it is.

CRAIG OMELAN
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Car CD Compression

In May the "Signal Processing" article discussed dynamic range compression and "Heads First" discussed desirable features for car stereo head units. It seems that dynamic range compression would be a highly desirable feature in a car CD player, especially to enjoy classical CD's. Are there CD head units available with this feature?

W. HATCH
Brigham City, UT

According to the comprehensive buyer's guide in the July/August issue of Car Stereo Review, the only CD head units available with dynamic range compression are Yamaha's YCDR-1020 CD receiver and YCDT-720 CD tuner, but Pioneer offers the feature in its CDX-FM38 trunk-mounted changer.

Albert Ayler

Chris Albertson's contention, in his review of Albert Ayler's "Love Cry" in April, that Ayler's music is now "forgotten" is belied by the very existence of the reissue under review and by the fact that there are more of Ayler's discs available now than during his lifetime. And the preposterous suggestion that Ayler's career was a "dastardly clever" hoax by a "lucky amateur" is sickening. Lucky? He couldn't find work and committed suicide.

BRIAN RITCHIE
Bassist, Violent Femmes
Milwaukee, WI

Laser Turntable

I did not see the laser turntable from Japan's ELP Corporation (one was recently acquired by the Canadian National Library) in your February 1992 "Equipment Buying Guide." Perhaps this is because you do not consider it to be a consumer product, but its existence is certainly newsworthy. Is it related in any way to the U.S. development that never seemed to reach fulfillment?

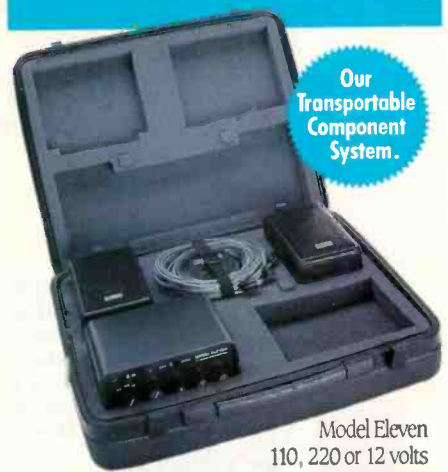
DONALD POUNDER
Ottawa, Ontario

The ELP product is a second-generation version of the Final laser turntable that never quite made it to market. The patents were acquired by ELP, which reworked the design. In any event, the ELP unit is intended primarily for use by record archivists.

Correction

Our review of Nakamichi's CassetteDeck 1.5 in May mistakenly indicated that the deck's recording and playback heads are held in fixed alignment to one another by a shared housing. As in previous three-head Nakamichi tape decks, the heads are completely separate. □

We welcome your letters. Please address correspondence to Editor, Stereo Review, 1633 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. You should include your address and telephone number for verification. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.



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TIME DELAY

by Steve Simels



30 years ago

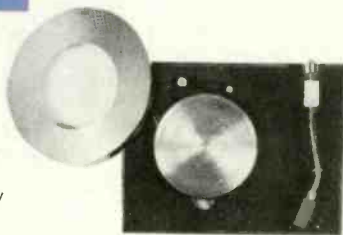
Plus ça change: In the July 1962 issue, Editor Furman Hebb categorizes most television audio as "far below high-fidelity standards."

Installation of the Month: Sidney Freedman, of Forest Hills, New York, has Tannoy speakers concealed in a credenza, a Harman Kardon Citation I and II preamp and amp, a Citation III-X stereo tuner, a Thorens TD-124 turntable with an Empire 98 tonearm and an Ortofon cartridge, and a Berlant-Concertone Series 20-20 tape deck. All this equipment generates enough heat that the system must be cooled by a small fan.

Best of the Month: Critic David Hall salutes Bruno

Walter's Mahler Ninth as "definitive," and Ralph Bates rates Erich Leinsdorf's Schubert Mass in E-flat as a great performance with a "thrilling" stereo perspective. Elsewhere, reviewer Joe Goldberg dismisses an early Aretha Franklin album as portending "little staying power," and jazz/folk critic Nat Hentoff hails Bob Dylan's first album as the work of "a major folk talent."

On the back cover: An ad for the original (now legendary) AR turntable. List price: \$58.



turntable, a Pioneer SX-727 receiver, and an Audio Dynamics ADC-XLM phono cartridge, which Hirsch says is capable of tracking almost all records at 0.4 gram.

Critical mass: On the classical side, Eric Salzman finds the sound on a Clifford Curzon recital inexplicably "squishy," and harpsichord virtuoso Igor Kipnis has some thoughts on a Jorge Bolet piano record and the Romantic Revival. In the pop reviews, dedicated rock hater Rex Reed unaccountably waxes enthusiastic over "The History of Eric Clapton," Noel Coppage is disappointed by Paul Simon's first post-Garfunkel effort, and Joel Vance (who apparently has not read Joe Goldberg's 1962 review) opines that Aretha Franklin has already made more good records in a few years than most artists make in a lifetime.

From the high (priced) end: Marantz advertises a tuner/preamp/power amp combination priced at over thirteen hundred pre-Arab-oil-embargo/inflation dollars.

counters by noting recent reviews of Cavalli, Tippett, and Schnittke.

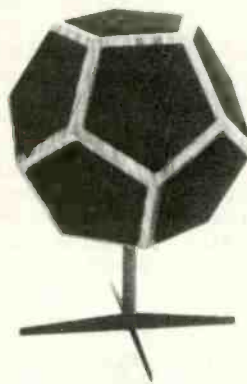
Test Reports: Julian Hirsch recommends JBL's L46 speaker system, at \$165 list, as the first speakers from the company that audiophiles can purchase "without financial strain." Elsewhere on the tech front, contributor Len Feldman notes that high-



20 years ago

On the cover the STEREO REVIEW staff models fifteen of the thirty-three different stereo headphones reviewed inside. Julian Hirsch declares the Sennheiser GD-414 "the lightest we have ever worn."

Among the new products is the dodecahedral D-12 speaker system from Design Acoustics. Components tested by Hirsch-Houck laboratories include a BSR McDonald automatic



10 years ago

Letters, we get letters: Reader Edward G. Macomber accuses us of trying to "dumb down" the record-buying public with too many reviews of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. Editor William Anderson

quality stereo audio for TV awaits only an FCC decision, a bit of news sure to gladden Furman Hebb.

Best Recordings of the Month include Van Morrison's "Beautiful Vision" and Edita Gruberova's "French and Italian Opera Arias" on Angel. Over in the classical section, David Hall gets excited by a Philip Fowke recording of the Bliss Piano Concerto and George Jelinek endorses a Lauritz Melchior reissue disc on Pearl. In pop, Noel Coppage is more enthusiastic about Simon and Garfunkel's "Concert in Central Park" than he had been about Simon solo, and Mike "Tubular Bells" Oldfield tells Mark Peel in an interview that he built his recording studio "like a large bathroom."

Who's That Girl? A tall, toothy model wearing Sennheiser phones on the front cover turns out to be Carly *You're So Vain* Simon. □



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A new audio and video entertainment and communications system will soon enable passengers on Northwest Airlines' jumbo jets to play video games, select movies, make phone calls, receive flight information and order merchandise while aloft. Called Worldlink by the airline, the interactive system will be available at every seat in the aircraft to provide a new level of in-flight passenger entertainment and conveniences. It will be installed on Northwest's Boeing 747s beginning this fall under a \$70 million contract with Hughes. The contract also marks the entry of Hughes into the business of airborne merchandising; the company will establish merchandising centers around the world to maintain inventories of in-flight sales items and fill customer orders.

Hughes is now producing the world's first interactive entertainment simulators which offer the excitement of a true simulation environment through integrated real-time control of vision, motion, and CD quality sound. These simulators use many of the same technologies Hughes developed for sophisticated flight simulators used in training pilots of Boeing 747-400s and military aircraft. The Commander simulator capsules are hydraulically operated as you steer through the computer image-generated screen experience. Because the graphics are generated as the adventure is experienced, you can go wherever you want in the scenario. The Commander includes a variety of safety features and will be located at arcades, shopping malls, bowling alleys, leisure centers, amusement/theme parks, as well as airports and museums.

Now, public address announcements can be made clearly intelligible despite high ambient noise, with new audio technology from Hughes. This unique circuitry, called Voice Intelligibility Processor™ (VIP), improves the listener's ability to understand an audio signal in a high-noise environment, without an appreciable increase in the volume of the transmission. Initially, this system is expected to find use in places such as airport terminals, shopping malls, and hotel meeting rooms.

Magellan program leaders were awarded the 1992 Goddard Memorial Trophy for the remarkable performance of the Hughes-built synthetic aperture radar aboard the orbiting Venus Magellan spacecraft. The trophy is presented annually to individuals or groups that have contributed significantly to U.S. leadership in rocketry and astronautics. Thanks to this radar, the sole scientific instrument on Magellan, a map of Venus is nearly complete. Now in its third 8-month cycle around the planet, the Magellan radar mapper has delivered images of the Venusian surface with resolution 10 times better than any previously made. Scientists hope that by studying the surface of Earth's near-twin, they can learn more about processes that formed this planet.

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◀ BOSE

The Bose 301 Series III, the latest upgrade of the popular direct/reflecting bookshelf speaker, features one forward-firing 8-inch woofer and two 3-inch tweeters. It's rated to handle inputs of 10 to 150 watts a channel. Dimensions are 17 x 10½ x 9½ inches. Price: \$318 a pair. Bose Corporation, Dept. SR, The Mountain, Framingham, MA 01701-9168.

• Circle 121 on reader service card



▲ INLINE DESIGNS

The CD Storage Tower holds fifty-five CD's. It stands about 49 inches high and is illuminated from behind with red or blue neon. Several finishes are available. Price: \$275. Inline Designs, Inc., Dept. SR, 1353 Wabash Ave., Suite 209, Chicago, IL 60605.

• Circle 120 on reader service card

▲ NAD

The NAD Model 208 is a 250-watt-per-channel stereo power amplifier said to be capable of driving speakers that present difficult loads or are inefficient. Its power supply has a massive

toroidal transformer and storage capacitance of more than 100,000 μ F. Price: \$1,199. Distributed by Lenbrook, Dept. SR, 633 Granite Ct., Pickering, Ontario L1W 3K1.

• Circle 122 on reader service card



◀ CLIF DESIGNS

The new Clif Designs car tweeters include the swiveling CD-5, CD-7, and CD-9 and the nonswiveling CD-1 and CD-3. All feature neodymium magnets, ferrofluid-cooled voice coils, and thermal-protection devices. Prices: from \$99 to \$149 each. Clif Designs, Dept. SR, 1602 Babcock St., Costa Mesa, CA 92627.

• Circle 123 on reader service card

NEW PRODUCTS



▲ JVC

The HA-W70 infrared cordless headphones from JVC use neodymium magnets and polymer-film diaphragms to achieve high performance in a lightweight headset. Price: \$250. JVC Company of America, Dept. SR, 41 Slater Dr., Elmwood Pk., NJ 07407.

• Circle 124 on reader service card

▼ COUNTERPOINT

The Solid 2 from Counterpoint is a solid-state power amplifier rated to deliver 200 watts per channel into 8 ohms and nearly double that into 4 ohms. It uses a Class A field-effect-transistor (FET) input stage and a high-current bipolar

output stage. Dimensions are 19 x 6 1/2 x 19 inches, and weight is 65 pounds. Price: \$1,995. Counterpoint Electronic Systems Inc., Dept. SR, 2610 Commerce Dr., Vista, CA 92083.

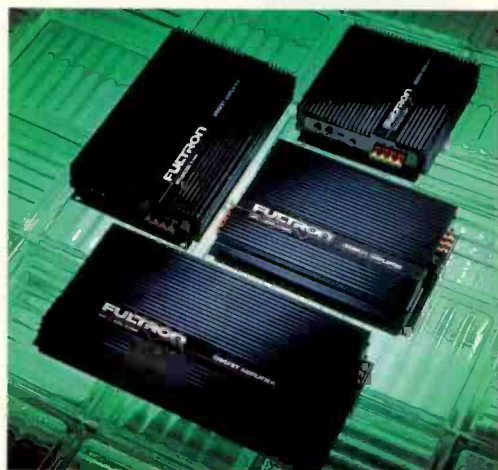
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◀ AUDIOSOURCE

The AudioSource Model 3001 surround-sound system features the company's SS Three/II processor with built-in amplification for the included center-channel and rear speakers. Price: \$580. AudioSource, Dept. SR, 1327 N. Carolan Ave., Burlingame, CA 94010.

• Circle 126 on reader service card



▶ SENNET CONCEPTS

The SH200 from Sennet Concepts is a three-piece stereo clock-radio/loudspeaker system. The AM/FM tuner, clock, and controls are built into one of the satellite speakers, and the foot-wide bass module has an antenna input. Price: \$200. Sennet Concepts, Dept. SR, P.O. Box 1630, Old Millford Rd., Millford, PA 18337-2630.

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▲ FULTRON

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Lover Beside Me
(Columbia) 429-225

Ned's Atomic Dustbin —
God Fodder
(Columbia) 428-516



Prince And The New
Power Generation—
Diamonds And Pearls
(Paisley Park) 427-419

Red Hot Chili Peppers
—Blood Sugar Sex Magik
(Warner Bros.) 428-367

Dire Straits—On Every
Street (Warner Bros.)
428-359

Fourplay—(James,
Ritenour, East, Mason)
(Warner Bros.) 428-334

Public Enemy—
Apocalypse 91 (Def Jam/
Columbia) 428-003

Lou Reed—Magic & Loss
(Sire/Warner Bros.)
427-427

PM Dawn—The Utopian
Experience (Gee Street/
Island) 430-207

Bryan Adams—Waking
Up The Neighbours
(A&M) 429-779

Pearl Jam—Ten (Epic/
Associated) 428-433

Bell Biv DeVoe—WBBD-
Bootcity! (MCA) 429-217

Basia—Brave New Hope
(Epic) 428-722

The Rippingtons—Curves
Ahead (GRP) 426-874

Chick Corea Electric
Band—Beneath The
Mask (GRP) 426-866

Seal (Sire/Warner Bros.)
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(Modern) 425-694

Aaron Neville—Warm
Your Heart (A&M) 425-611

Carreras/Domingo/Pava-
rotti—Favorite Arias
(Sony Master.) 425-470

Sling—The Soul Cages
(A&M) 424-440

"Phantom Of The Opera"
Highlights (Orig. London
Cast) (Polydor) 424-333

Roger Waters—The
Wall/Berlin 1990 (Mercury)
423-855/393-850

Tears For Fears—Songs
From The Big Chair
(Mercury) 423-848

"Saturday Night Fever"
Orig. Sndtrk. (Polydor)
423-806/393-801

Bon Jovi—Slippery When
Wet (Mercury) 423-392

John Williams—I Love A
Parade (Sony Class.)
422-717

Travis Tritt—It's All About
To Change (Warner Bros.)
422-113

Bernstein Favorites—
Orchestral Dances (Sony
Class.) 421-610/391-615

Marc Cohn (Atlantic)
421-552

EMF—Schubert Dip
(EMI) 421-487

James Taylor—New
Moon Shine (Columbia)
429-209

Soundgarden—Badmo-
torling (A&M) 428-250

DJ Jazzy Jeff & Fresh
Prince—omebase
(Jive/RCA) 421-024

Spyro Gyra—Collection
(GRP) 420-950

Midori—Live At Carnegie
Hall (Sony Class.) 420-570

Crusaders—Healing The
Wounds (GRP) 419-952

Roxette—Joyride (EMI)
419-556

Jesus Jones—Doubt
(SBK) 417-691

Yellowjackets—Green-
house (GRP) 416-198

The "Amadeus" Mozart
(CBS) 416-123

Big Audio Dynamite II
The Globe (Columbia)
414-649

Madonna—The
Immaculate Collection
(Warner Bros./Sire)
414-557

Firehouse (Epic) 414-318

Paul Simon—The
Rhythm Of The Saints
(Warner Bros.) 412-809

George Benson—Big
Boss Bard (Warner Bros.)
412-478

George Michael—Listen
Without Prejudice, Vol. 1
(Columbia) 411-181

L.L. Cool J—Mama Said
Knock Ycu Out (Del
Jam/Columbia) 411-165

AC/DC—The Razors'
Edge (ATCO) 410-662

Brahms: Violin Sonatas.
Perلمان/Barenboim
(Sony Class.) 409-367

Michael Franks—Blue
Pacific (Reprise) 408-328

Jane's Addiction—
Ritual De Lo Habitual
(Warner Bros.) 407-098

"Beauty & The Beast"—
Orig. Soundtrack (Walt
Disney Records) 432-690

Enya—Shepherd Moons
(Warner Bros.) 431-718

Larry Carlton—Collection
(GRP) 407-825

Dan Fogelberg—Grt. Hits
(Full Moon/Epic) 317-149

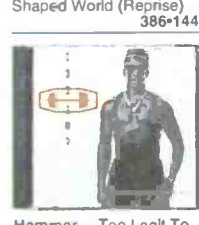
Wilson Phillips
(SBK) 406-793

Diane Schuur—Pure
Schuur (GRP) 415-331

Vladimir Horowitz
—The Last Recording
(Sony Class.) 405-985

Damn Yankees
(Warner Bros.) 405-886

Chris Isaak—Heart
Shaped World (Reprise)
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Hammer— Too Legit To
Quit (Capitol) 433-094

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(Sire/Reprise) 405-423

Eddie Money—Grt. Hits:
Sound Of Money
(Columbia) 403-428

Nine Inch Nails—Pretty
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Grind (Atlantic) 422-220

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Comin' (Elektra) 431-130

Janet Jackson—Rhythm
Nation 1814(A&M)
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Michael Bolton—Soul
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Bonnie Raitt—Nick Of
Time (Capitol) 381-087

The Dave Grusin
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(Island) 354-449

The Police—Every Breath
You Take—The Singles
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Jimmy Buffett—Songs
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The Cars Greatest Hits
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Best Of Elvis Costello &
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(Columbia) 340-596

Bob Marley & The
Wailers—Legend (Island)
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Billy Joel—Greatest
Hits, Vols. 1 & 2
(Columbia)
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ZZ Top—Eliminator
(Warner Bros.) 319-624

Foreigner—Records
(Atlantic) 318-055

Squeeze—Singles
(A&M) 317-974

Stevie Ray Vaughan &
Double Trouble— Sky Is
Crying (Epic) 429-258

The Cult—Ceremony
(Sire/Reprise) 428-300

Social Distortion—
Somewhere Between
Heaven And Hell (Epic)
433-631

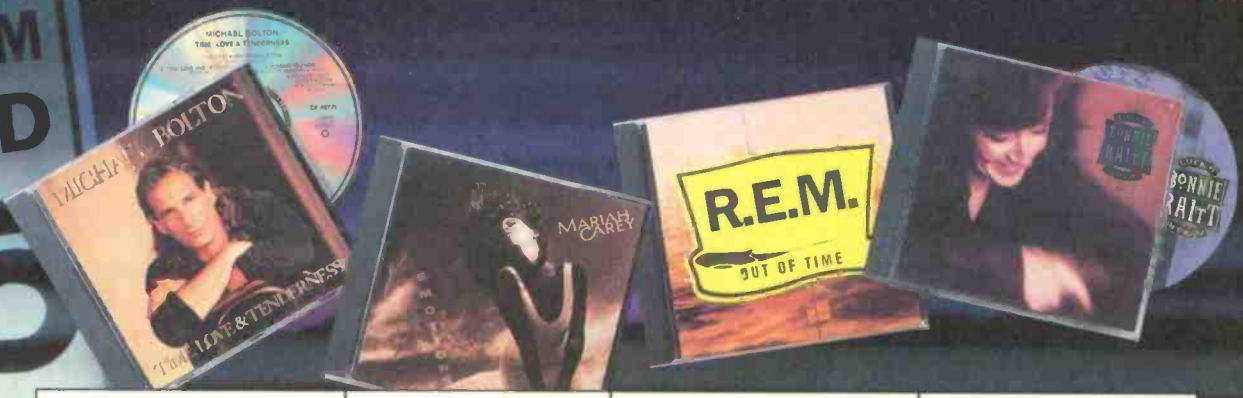
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 Van Halen—For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge (Warner Bros.) 420*273

Amy Grant—Heart In Motion (A&M) 424*457
 Peter Dinklage—Frampton Comes Alive! (A&M) 262*311/392*316

Garth Brooks—No Fences (Liberty) 411*587
 Bruce Springsteen—Born To Run (Columbia) 257*279

Extreme—Pornograffiti (A&M) 409*003
 Jim Croce—Photographs & Memories—His Grt. Hits (Saja) 246*868

Luther Vandross—Power Of Love (Epic) 418*848
 James Brown—CD Of JB (Polydor) 425*025
 Linda Ronstadt's Grt. Hits (A&M) 286*740
 Meat Loaf—Bat Out Of Hell (Epic) 279*133
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Richard Elliot—On The Town (Manhattan) 433*771
 John Mellencamp—Uhhuh (Riva) 423*574
 Various Artists—Two Rooms—Songs Of Elton John & Bernie Taupin (Polydor) 430*421
 Paula Abdul—Spellbound (Virgin) 420*257

Vanessa Williams—The Comfort Zone (Wing) 426*510
 Harry Connick, Jr.—Blue Light, Red Light (Columbia) 429*191
 Tom Petty—Full Moon Fever (MCA) 382*184

Creedence Clearwater Revival—Chronicle—The 20 Grt. Hits (Fantasy) 308*049
 The Jimi Hendrix Experience—Smash Hits (Reprise) 291*641
 James Taylor's Grt. Hits (Warner Bros.) 291*302

Best Of The Doobies (Warner Bros.) 291*278
 The Steve Miller Band—Grt. Hits 1974-78 (Capitol) 290*171
 Eagles—Grt. Hits, 1971-75 (Asylum) 287*003

Best Of ZZ Top (Warner Bros.) 279*620
 Chicago—Greatest Hits (Columbia) 260*638
 Janis Joplin's Greatest Hits (Columbia) 231*670
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All The Best Of The Lovin' Spoonful (Special Music Co.) 371*872
 Hollies—Epic Anthology (Epic) 409*730
 John Mellencamp—Whenever We Wanted (Mercury) 430*231

Lynyrd Skynyrd—Skynyrd's Innards/ Their Grt. Hits (MCA) 381*129
 Roy Orbison—The All-Time Hits, Vols. 1 & 2 (CSP) 377*945
 The Who—Who's Better, Who's Best (MCA) 376*657

Fleetwood Mac—Grt. Hits (Warner Bros.) 375*782
 Best Of The Doors (Elektra) 357*616/397*612
 Buddy Holly—From The Original Master Tapes (MCA) 348*110

The Beach Boys—Made In The U.S.A. (Capitol) 346*445
 A Decade Of Steely Dan (MCA) 341*073
 David Bowie—Changes-bowie (Rykodisc) 412*247
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The Monster Standard line of audio and video interconnects and speaker wire are Monster Cable's first budget products. Above are the 1-meter F-pin (\$11.95) and RCA-jack (\$9.95) video interconnects. Monster Cable, Dept. SR, 274 Wattis Way, South San Francisco, CA 94080.

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◀ THIEL

The 1-inch dome tweeter of Thiel's SCS Coherent Source bookshelf speaker is mounted coaxially with the 6½-inch woofer to achieve proper time alignment for accurate imaging and tonal balance. The -3-dB bandwidth is rated as 64 to 20,000 Hz. Nominal impedance is 4 ohms, and power handling is 50 to 150 watts. Dimensions are 8½ x 16 x 9 inches. Finish is black piano lacquer. Price: \$1,090 a pair. Thiel, Dept. SR, 1042 Nandino Blvd, Lexington, KY 40511.

▼ SAUDER WOODWORKING

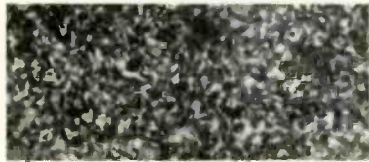
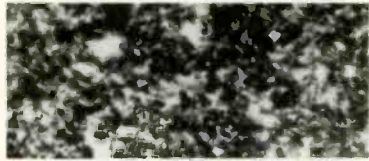
The Model 5059 Home Entertainment Center is one of Sauder Woodworking's many pieces of ready-to-assemble A/V furniture. Its television shelf accommodates a 35-inch direct-view monitor/receiver; the three adjacent shelves can hold audio or video components. Cabinets on the top and bottom can hold CD's,

cassettes, and laserdiscs. Made of particleboard with a simulated black oak finish, the unit is 47½ inches wide, 48½ inches high, and 15½ inches deep. Price: \$133. Sauder Woodworking, Dept. SR, 502 Middle St., Archbold, OH 43502; telephone (800) 523-3987.

• Circle 131 on reader service card



A warning to those with toupees, small vulnerable house pets, and a fear of flying: Maxell has taken high bias tapes to an even higher level of performance.



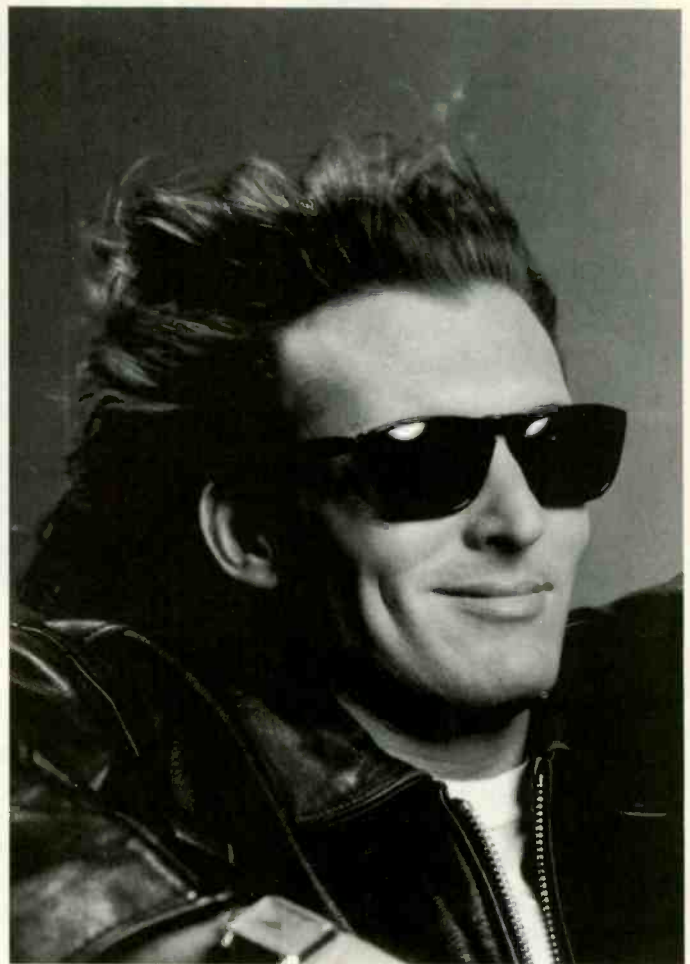
Compared to other tapes, XLII-S has a higher density of magnetic particles.

The tape is XLII-S. The power behind it is Black Magnetite—a unique magnetic material recently

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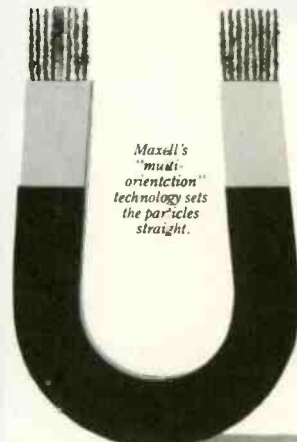
With 13% greater power than the magnetic coating on all other high bias tapes, Black Magnetite helps XLII-S deliver higher maximum output levels and wider dynamic range.

Black Magnetite's tiny magnetic particles are not only more powerful than conventional gamma ferric oxide particles, they're smaller and more uniform in shape. This enables us to pack more particles more densely onto the surface of the tape.

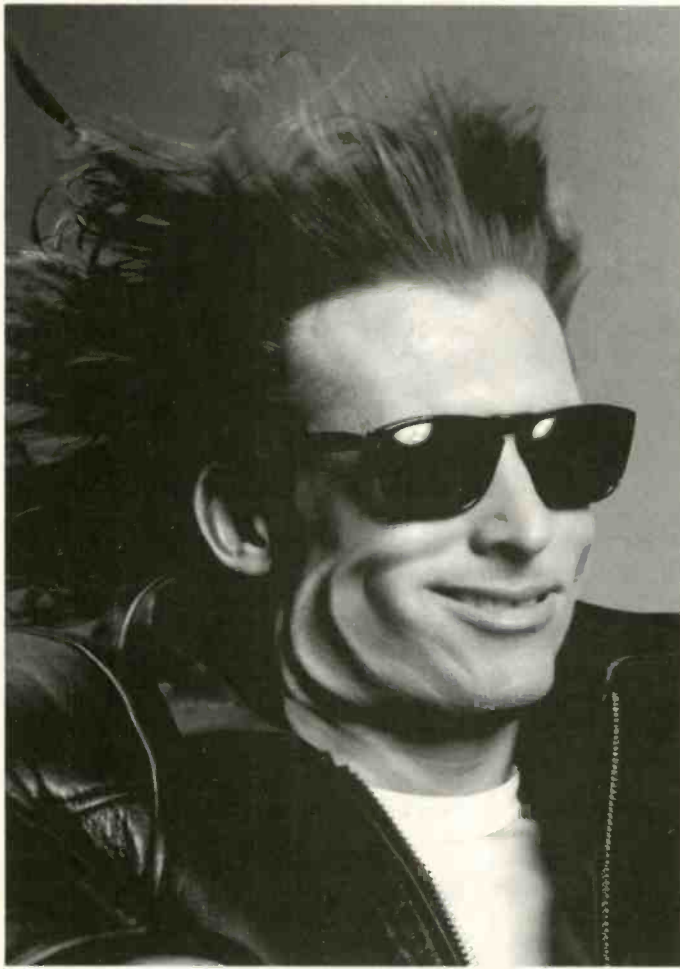


HIGH BIAS

During manufacture, conventional tapes run through a magnetic field where many of the magnetic particles adhere any-old-which-way. Like flies on flypaper.



But at Maxell, we employ a complex process called “*multi-orientation*” to set the particles straight. The result is a



BLACK MAGNETITE

smoother magnetic coating, which produces less AC bias noise.

Unwanted noise is further reduced by our patented *dual-surface base film*. One side of the film is super-smooth for closer tape-to-head contact. The other is rough, deliberately so, for a stable ride through your transport mechanism with the least possible friction and tape jitter.

These innovations, however, are no

more remarkable than the cassette shell that houses them.

More rigid and weightier than standard cassettes, the XLII-S *high resonance-damping cassette* has been precision en-



XLII-S vibration-damping cassette shell has five support points for increased rigidity and durability.

gineered to reduce modulation noise. By making the window smaller, for instance, we were able to build in more anti-resonant material and five support points instead of three.

All of which helps XLII-S maintain phase accuracy as well as an extremely low noise threshold.

You can feel a difference in XLII-S just by picking up the cassette. Of course, it's nothing compared to what you'll feel the moment you press 'play'.



TAKE YOUR MUSIC TO THE MAX.

THE WINNER OF

The 8th Rodrigues Cartoon Caption Contest

CONGRATULATIONS to Diane Sullivan of Grand Falls, New Brunswick, Canada! Miss Sullivan is the winner of this year's Rodrigues Cartoon Caption Contest, and her winning entry is printed under the cartoon below.

As we did in previous years, in our issue of January 1992 we published a drawing by our regular cartoonist, Charles Rodrigues, and invited readers to submit proposed captions for it. The prize for the one the judges considered to be the funniest is \$100 and the original Rodrigues drawing.

The editors of STEREO REVIEW wish to thank Miss Sullivan and the thousands of other readers who submitted captions. This year we had a noticeably larger number of entries from women readers and from U.S. military personnel across North America and in Europe and Asia. We had a great

many entries from Sheboygan, Wisconsin, plus entries from word-processing students in Sonoma, California, and from students at the J. R. Nakogee Elementary School in Attawapiskat, Ontario.

We also thank the seven previous winners—Thomas Briggle (Wadsworth, Ohio), Michael Binyon (Weaverville, California), Bruce Barstow (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), Matthew Mirapaul (Evanston, Illinois), Marc Welenteychik (Richmond, Virginia), Douglas Daughhetee (Augusta, Georgia), and Kelly Mills (Raleigh, North Carolina)—who generously served as judges.

Among the entries there were quite a few variations on the "name-that-tune" theme, but the one from Jennifer Zingarelli listed among the runners-up had the earliest postmark. Barry Manilow, Milli Vanilli, New

Kids on the Block, Roseanne Barr, and Metallica were among the most frequently mentioned musicians, but a few entries contained the names of such nostalgia figures as Tiny Tim, the Village People, and Zamfir.

Miss Sullivan, our first female winner and our first Canadian, comes from a fairly musical family, but she is modest about her own abilities. "I pick on the guitar a little," she says, and she describes her stereo system modestly. "It's basically a Yamaha system with a Realistic add-on and some extension speakers that belong to my brother. But I have a really big record collection. I listen to all kinds of music—mainly to rock-and-roll, but I'm also interested in country." Although she is not working in music at present, Miss Sullivan has been employed as a DJ.

In past years our readers have told us they liked the winning entry less than some of the runners-up. We hope the ten listed below will give you a few extra laughs, and if your entry is not among them, we wish you better luck next time. Look in the January 1993 issue for the announcement of next year's contest. —William Livingstone

RUNNERS-UP

"Careful, Baxter, the heat sinks are exposed, and she's been driving 2-ohm loads."

—Jeffrey R. Hartman, Leola, PA

"All right, maggot! Name that tune!"

—Jennifer Zingarelli, Bay St. Louis, MS

"All right, private! We've got an unstable stereo image and low Wife-Acceptance-Factor here!! What are you going to do about it!!?"

—Dennis Francis, Akron, OH

"You go in, you change the presets, you get out."

—Jan Gahagan, San Jose, CA

"Now price this system in 10 seconds or yer outta retail."

—Wes Thorn, Houston, TX

"Holler up! Real wood or veneer?"

—Eugene Althen, Sheboygan, WI

"IM distortion! Find it! Kill it!"

—John Rollason, Tempe, AZ

"A tempo, Murphy. Allegro vivace! Presto! Con bravura!!!"

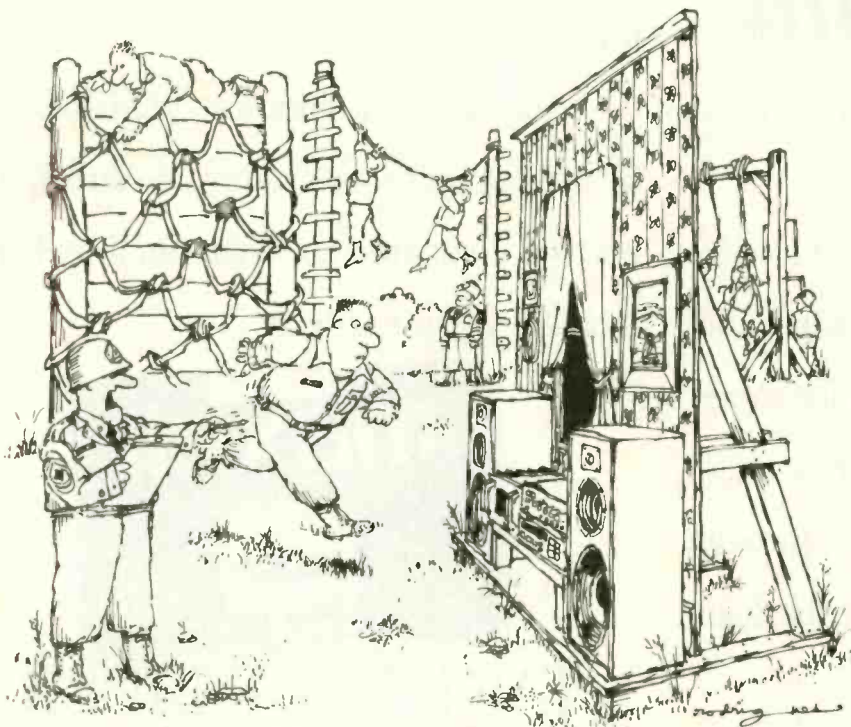
—John D. Durrant, Allison Park, PA

"Back in my day we went over white-hot tube amps."

—Philip Tallick, Phoenix, AZ

"Rewire, soldier, and set to Noriega volume."

—John Rollason, Tempe, AZ



"I have an LP of Lawrence Welk, and I'm not afraid to use it!"

Philips Presents CD-Interactive

When the engineers from Philips invented CD audio, they knew they were at the forefront of a remarkable new technology.

Naturally, they continued to evolve their idea.

The result of their effort is the

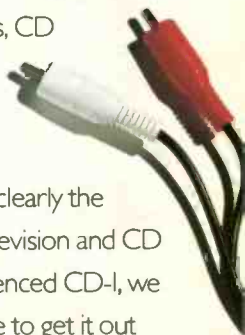
The Hardware

latest Philips innovation: CD-Interactive.

The Philips CD-Interactive player connects quickly and easily to both your television and stereo system. By simply inserting a CD-I title into the player, you can then use the special "thumbstick" remote to chart your own course along the CD-I disc, controlling everything you see and hear.

And because CD-I is a global standard, the Philips CD-Interactive player will be compatible with all forthcoming CD-I titles. It is also backwards compatible with 3" and 5" audio CDs, CD Graphics, CD ROM-XA "bridge" discs, and forward compatible with the new Photo CDs.

Philips CD-Interactive is clearly the next generation of both television and CD audio. Once you've experienced CD-I, we think you'll find it impossible to get it out of your system.





AUDIO Q&A

BY IAN G. MASTERS

Warped LP's

Q During a recent move, most of my vinyl recordings became slightly warped. Is there any method of reversing the damage?

ALLEN ODELL
Dayton, OR

A There are a few tricks that may help, but before you try them, it's worth taking some time to determine which LP's, if any, really need treatment. Most good tonearms can cope with a certain amount of warpage without audible ill effects, so you should go through your collection record by record, putting aside only those that your equipment really can't handle. Slight warps sometimes even themselves out if you store your records packed fairly tightly (but not crammed onto the shelf) and leave them alone for a while.

If you still have a large number of damaged discs, it might be easier and cheaper to upgrade your equipment than to try to correct hundreds of warped LP's. Denon, for instance, has several turntables with servo-driven arms that are remarkable in their ability to track even severely warped discs.

But if all else fails, a last-resort technique is to place a record between two pieces of glass with a weight on top and put this "sandwich" in the oven under very low heat long enough for the worst of the bumps to subside. Don't go for perfect flatness, as the amount of heat required could damage the grooves. For more on vinyl maintenance, see "Fair Play" on page 56.

Back-to-Front Surround

Q I plan to convert my audio system to a home-theater setup, but because of the special configuration of my listening room, the main speakers must be placed in the rear and the ambience speakers in front. Will this arrangement seriously affect the tonal balance or the imaging of the system?

LEO ALFASSY
New York, NY

A If you set up the system normally, but facing the wrong way, you are likely to get some fairly weird effects: screen action moving left to right with right-to-left audio for instance, and actors on screen in front of you sounding as though they're speaking behind you. Depending on what equipment you use, however, it may be possible to accommodate the constraints of your room and still achieve reasonable surround sound.

I assume you want to use your present speakers as the main stereo pair but that they are at the opposite end of the room from your video monitor. If you were to use them for the surround channels instead, a modest-size satellite/subwoofer system could be installed at the video end of the room, with or without a center-channel speaker. The satellites would take very little space, and the subwoofer could be placed almost anywhere—even at the end where your present

speakers reside. With such an arrangement, there would be no reason not to install a simple switch to restore your existing speakers to their prime role when you just want to listen to music without surround sound or video.

Simulated Berlioz

Q I recently attended a performance of the Berlioz Requiem in which, as Berlioz intended, two of the four brass choirs were located not on the stage but farther back in the hall. Since digital signal processing just adds simulated reverberation to a recording, I wondered if there were any way for a two-channel stereo system to reproduce Berlioz's effect. Has anybody ever tried?

MINGCHANG JIANG
Waltham, MA

A The antiphonal arrangement of the Berlioz Requiem can't be reproduced exactly by any of today's ambience-enhancement systems, although it might be possible to get some of the effect by using Dolby Surround encoding to put the two rear choirs behind the listener in the surround channel. But as far as I am aware, no such recording is on the market. Back in the dear, departed days of quadraphonic sound, however, when the aim was to produce two signals in front and two behind, at least one four-channel LP of the work was issued.



There are several good reasons for storing CD's with their labels upward.

CD Storage

Q Should a compact disc be stored in its jewel box with the data side facing up or with the label side up?

MIKE STIGALL
Taft, CA

A Actually, the label and the data are on the same side of a CD, although the digital information is in fact read from the other side, through the transparent layer. Nitpicking aside, there are several good reasons for storing CD's with their labels upward. First, it lets you read the label so that you can program your player with a minimum of handling. Second, it

makes it less likely that you'll get fingerprints on the playing surface—the other side—when removing or replacing the disc. Perhaps the most important benefit, however, is that if you scratch a disc slightly with the spindle in the center of the box, which is very easy to do, the damage will be minor. A scratch on the label side runs the risk of penetrating the thin coating that seals in the reflective aluminum layer, which could result in oxidation and the eventual destruction of the disc's playability.

Unequal Levels

Q My receiver has a "CD Direct" switch that bypasses most of the input electronics and feeds the signal directly to the power-amplifier stages. When I use this feature, the level is so much greater from CD's than from other sources that I have to remember to adjust the receiver's volume whenever I switch sources. If I use the CD player's output volume control to match it to other sources, will I degrade its sound quality?

GARY G. JONAS
Santa Clara, CA

A Not at all: That's one reason it has an output level control. If your player had no such feature, however, I would have suggested that you simply forgo the CD Direct switch. It is very unusual for the electronics in a decent receiver to cause any audible signal degradation. If they do change the sound, the most likely reason is that the tone controls do not deliver exactly flat response when they are in their centered positions. In that case, and assuming that the alteration is bothersome, you could try adjusting them for more pleasing results or engaging the tone-control defeat switch, if there is one separate from the CD Direct feature.

Persistent Hiss

Q My speakers are driven by a good receiver, connected by high-quality cables, and yet I can still hear a very slight high-frequency noise when I put my ear to a speaker. Is there some way I can correct this, or will the subtle noise always be there?

MATTHEW STAFFORD
El Paso, TX

JEFFREY KREIN

A The component has yet to be made that doesn't produce some noise, but if you have to put your ear right up to the speaker to hear it, it's not much of a problem. If you can hear the noise across the room, on the other hand, you might have some cause for concern. That's extremely unlikely, however, as today's electronic components—amplifiers in particular—routinely boast noise levels approaching the vanishing point.

If you have a question about hi-fi, send it to Q&A, Stereo Review, 1633 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. Sorry, only questions chosen for publication can be answered.

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The Software





TECHNICAL TALK

BY JULIAN HIRSCH

Audio/Video Ergonomics

ONE of the fastest-growing segments of the high-fidelity audio industry is the combination of audio and video applications usually referred to as home theater. The synergy between sound and vision often gives the combination of video and audio components an effect greater than the sum of the parts. Furthermore, the spatial enhancement afforded by home-theater systems is not limited to audio/video applications, since the different simulated acoustic environments they can usually provide may also add greatly to one's enjoyment of recorded music even without the accompaniment of a video program.

An A/V system, which can be assembled for as little as \$1,500, can be as simple as a small-screen TV combined with a VCR and an inexpensive A/V receiver with a simple Dolby Pro Logic decoder (or even a basic Dolby Surround decoder, although these have pretty much disappeared from the marketplace) and four or five modestly powered amplifier channels driving inexpensive speakers.

At the other end of the scale, a deluxe system combining a large-screen projection TV with a highly sophisticated digital signal processor, seven channels of powerful, audiophile-grade amplification, and speakers of comparable quality can easily top \$20,000. You get what you pay for, more or less, but incremental improvements soon become unreasonably costly.

One thing that both systems, the basic and the deluxe, will likely have in common is operating complexity. Such complexity seems to be typical of the key electronic components in home-theater systems, and especially the complete audio/video receivers that seem to be dominating today's receiver market.

A growing percentage of the receivers tested by Hirsch-Houck Laboratories in recent months seem to be of the A/V variety. All are relatively com-

plex, with many more control functions than were typical of earlier stereo receivers. With the increasing availability of affordable digital signal-processing (DSP) chips, even relatively inexpensive receivers can provide a choice of four or five simulated acoustic environments plus Dolby Pro Logic decoding.

All but the most basic models provide some degree of user adjustment of these environments, involving selection (or modification) of a number of parameters for each one (Hall, Theater, Stadium, etc). Typical parameters include levels for all the speakers, initial delay in the surround outputs, reverberation level and echo density, and frequency response (not necessarily the same for all channels). Many of these adjustments can be left alone once the best values have been determined, but the audible effects of trying different settings is a strong inducement to experimentation, and it is usually necessary to play with them some initially.

A/V receivers differ widely in their ease of adjustment and, at least as important, in the clarity and completeness of their instruction manuals. The process is further complicated, perhaps unavoidably, by the digital nature of today's signal-processing circuitry. In pre-digital times, most adjustments were done with knobs, whose settings could at least be estimated visually. A modern A/V receiver with DSP uses pushbuttons almost exclusively for its adjustments, and sometimes for normal receiver opera-

tion as well. Usually the parameter settings can be seen only in a small display window on the front panel of the receiver or on the screen of the TV monitor.

My own experience with a number of today's A/V receivers and some DSP accessories makes me wonder how the general public will fare as these products expand into a mass market, as seems likely if one extrapolates past and current experience into

Audio/video surround-sound receivers differ widely in their ease of adjustment and, at least as important, in the clarity and completeness of their instruction manuals.

the future. Many people have never succeeded in programming their VCR's for timer recording. How will they be able to deal with the setup and operation of an immeasurably more complex A/V receiver? This situation is not entirely caused by excessive complexity in the product design but also reflects the fact that most Americans simply do not read instruction manuals for *anything* they buy, whether it be a digital clock, an automobile, or a sophisticated piece of electronics.

As much as I admire the talent and ingenuity of the designers of today's A/V components, whose capabilities boggle the mind, I wonder whether they will be able to simplify the operation and setup of future products to make them usable by a larger segment of their potential market without sacrificing too much performance and versatility. Perhaps they already have simplified versions waiting for the time when audio/videophiles are no longer their major market. I certainly hope so. □

TESTED THIS MONTH

Sherwood RV-6010R
Audio/Video Receiver

JBL L3
Loudspeaker System

Hafler Series 945
Tuner/Preamplifier

SSI Powerflex V
Multichannel Power Amplifier

All in all I am confident that CD-I will play a dramatic role in the future...I give CD-I a thumbs up!

Harry Somerfield
San Francisco Chronicle

This technology may well signal the start of a new era of interactive entertainment and education.

Brent Butterworth
Kenneth Korman
Video

Philips CD-I system is one of the year's 100 greatest achievements in science and technology.

"Best Of What's New"
Popular Science

Children can reap the benefits of CD-I, too. Titles based on Sesame Street characters and Mother Goose rhymes, along with interactive coloring books and other educational games, stress the value of CD-I as a learning tool.

Frank Vizard
Rolling Stone

**YES, IT SINGS! IT DANCES!
IT TELLS YOU STORIES AND
TAKES YOU PLACES YOU'VE
NEVER BEEN BEFORE!**

Johnathon Takiff
Daily News

CD-I also includes a photo CD standard which was jointly developed by Philips and Kodak for storing photos on CD. The image quality is as good or better than anything you'll see on cable TV.

Tom Malcom
Info Magazine

The Reviews

Okay. So we've told you that the Philips CD-Interactive is

the next generation of both television and audio.

And we've gone on and on

about our amazing selection of CD-I titles.

But because our opinion is, admittedly, more than a little biased, we wouldn't dream of asking you to settle for our word on it.

We would, however, like you to consider the opinions of electronics writers from coast to coast who've had the chance to see the Philips CD-Interactive system in action.

Review after review heralds CD-I as the future of home entertainment and a format that's here to stay.

Popular Science even went so far as to call it one of 1991's 100 greatest achievements in science and technology.

Of course, the opinion that matters most is, ultimately, yours. So we'd like to encourage you to take your own CD-I test drive. For the name of the Philips dealer nearest you, call **1-800-223-7772**.



PHILIPS

TEST REPORTS



Sherwood RV-6010R Audio/Video Receiver

JULIAN HIRSCH,
HIRSCH-HOUCK LABORATORIES

THE RV-6010R, Sherwood's most powerful stereo receiver, was designed to serve as the center of an audio/video system. Its basic stereo features include an AM/FM tuner, a preamplifier, and power amplifiers rated to deliver up to 105 watts per channel into 8-ohm loads from 20 to 20,000 Hz with no more than 0.05 percent total harmonic distortion (THD).

In addition, the RV-6010R contains a pair of rear-channel amplifiers rated at 18 watts each and a center-channel amplifier rated at 30 watts as well as signal-processing circuitry. It provides several surround-sound modes, including simulation of stadium or theater acoustics and Dolby Pro Logic decoding for movie soundtracks re-

corded with the Dolby Surround system. There is also a three-channel Dolby mode, in which the rear-channel signals are played through the front speakers when a full five-speaker Pro Logic playback configuration is not available.

The RV-6010R has audio inputs for phono, CD, tape/DAT, and auxiliary sources plus audio and video inputs for two VCR's and a videodisc player. The video program of a selected source is available at a rear output jack for connection to an external video monitor. The second set of VCR input jacks is on the front panel, and the outputs to the first VCR (on the back panel) can be fed from the front-panel inputs, from the videodisc inputs, or from a selected audio source.

Groups of pushbuttons select the program sources and control the various surround-sound adjustments, such as center- and rear-channel levels and delay time. Others set the center-channel mode (normal, wide, or phantom) and activate random-noise test signals that sequence through the different channels to aid in setting their levels. Small round buttons select Stadium, Theater, three-channel Dolby, or Dolby Pro Logic surround. Other pushbuttons select AM or FM reception and frequency. The FM tuner can be set for mono operation or automatic stereo/mono switching, and tuning intervals can be set for the next channel or the next receivable signal. A source-direct button can be used to bypass the tone-control circuits for flattest frequency response.

A row of ten buttons can be used to select from up to thirty preset station memories, each assignable to either an FM or AM channel. The tuner can also scan the preset channels automatically, remaining on each one for about 5 seconds.



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CIRCLE NO. 28 ON READER SERVICE CARD

TEST REPORTS

FEATURES

- Digital frequency-synthesis AM/FM tuner with thirty presets
- Auto-scan and manual-step tuning
- Selectable automatic stereo/mono switching or mono-only operation
- Inputs for CD, auxiliary, phono, audio tape deck, two VCR's, videodisc player
- Video-monitor output
- Volume knob motor-driven in remote operation
- Bass and treble tone controls
- Source-direct switch to bypass tone-control circuits
- Switchable loudness compensation
- Separate amplifiers for front channels, rear channels, center channel
- Separate preamplifier outputs and power-amplifier inputs for all channels, joined by removable links
- Connections and switching for two pairs of front speakers
- Line-level output for subwoofer amplifier
- Digi-Link interface for controlling compatible Sherwood cassette decks, CD players
- Surround-sound signal processing with Stadium, Theater, Dolby Pro Logic, three-channel Dolby modes
- Infrared remote control operates most receiver functions, also controls compatible Sherwood cassette decks and CD players
- Display shows status of most functions
- Sleep feature to shut off receiver automatically after 10 to 90 minutes
- Inputs for 75-ohm FM antenna (wire antenna supplied) and AM loop antenna (supplied)
- Three AC outlets, two of them switched

LABORATORY MEASUREMENTS

• **Tuner Section** (all figures for FM only except frequency response; measurements in microvolts, or μV , referred to 75-ohm input)

Usable sensitivity: mono, 12.1 dBf (1.1 μV)

50-dB quieting sensitivity: mono, 17 dBf (2 μV); stereo, 40 dBf (28 μV)

Signal-to-noise ratio at 65 dBf: mono, 61.5 dB; stereo, 60 dB (see text)

Harmonic distortion (THD + N) at 65 dBf: mono, 0.084%; stereo, 0.64% (see text)

Capture ratio at 65 dBf: 1.1 dB

AM rejection: 64 dB

Pilot-carrier leakage: 19 kHz, -65 dB; 38 kHz, -32 dB

Hum: -61.4 dB

Stereo channel separation at 100, 1,000, and 10,000 Hz: 42, 53, and 38.5 dB

Frequency response: FM, +0.8, -0.6 dB from 20 to 15,000 Hz; AM, +0.2, -6 dB from 49 to 3,100 Hz

• **Amplifier Section** (front channels unless specified)

1,000-Hz output at clipping: 124 watts into 8 ohms, 118 watts into 4 ohms

Clipping headroom (relative to rated output): 8 ohms, 0.72 dB; 4 ohms, 0.51 dB

Dynamic power output: 8 ohms, 162 watts; 4 ohms, 153 watts

Dynamic headroom (relative to rated output into 8 ohms): 1.88 dB

Frequency response (auxiliary input): tone controls bypassed, ± 0.1 dB from 20 to 20,000 Hz; tone controls active, +0.1, -0.8 dB from 20 to 20,000 Hz

Distortion at 1,000 Hz: front channels, 8-ohm setting, 0.05% at 121 watts; front channels, 4-ohm setting, 0.05% at 115 watts; rear channels (8 ohms), 0.5% at 16.1 watts; center channel, 0.05% at 24.9 watts

Sensitivity (for a 1-watt output into 8 ohms): auxiliary, 19 mV; phono, 0.3 mV

A-weighted noise (referred to a 1-watt output): auxiliary, -78.2 dB; phono, -68.5 dB

Phono-input overload (1,000-Hz equivalent levels): 141 to 212 mV from 20 to 20,000 Hz

Phono-input impedance: 45,000 ohms in parallel with 92 pF

Tone-control range: bass (100 Hz), ± 10 dB; treble (10,000 Hz), ± 10 dB

Loudness-compensation range (relative to 1,000-Hz level): +10 dB at 20 Hz, +3.5 dB at 20,000 Hz

The RV-6010R has four knob-operated controls: volume, bass, treble, and balance. The large volume knob, which is motor-driven under remote control, contains a red LED index marker. Near it are small buttons to mute the audio and activate the loudness-compensation circuit.

Several pushbutton controls at the left of the panel control power, activate the two sets of front speaker outputs, and operate the sleep function, which sets the receiver to play for up to 90 minutes (selectable in 10-minute steps) before shutting off automatically. There is also a front-panel headphone jack.

One of the most prominent front-panel features of the RV-6010R is its display window. The multicolor display shows the status of almost every operating feature of the receiver.

As might be expected from the RV-6010R's many features, its rear apron is well populated by the various signal input and output connectors. In addition, the input to each of its power amplifiers is connected to the corresponding output from the preamplifier or surround-decoder section by a removable link. This enables any of the amplifiers in the receiver either to be replaced by a separate external unit or to be used for a different purpose, which provides for exceptional flexibility in upgrading or expanding an A/V system, with minimal chance of obsolescence. There is even a line-level output, from the center channel, that is intended to drive a subwoofer through a separate power amplifier.

The front speaker outputs are insulated binding posts that also accept single or dual banana plugs. The other speaker outputs use spring-loaded clips that accept only stripped wire ends. Three jacks are provided for integrating the RV-6010R with compatible Sherwood components or a multiroom installation via Sherwood's Digi-Link system. A switch reduces the power-supply voltage for safely driving 4-ohm speakers with the front-channel amplifiers, which are designed primarily for 8-ohm loads. Two of the three AC outlets are switched. A detachable wire-loop AM antenna and a relatively short (39-inch) wire FM antenna are provided. The FM antenna jack is an unbalanced coaxial type for a 75-ohm feed.

The supplied remote control is actually a system control for several other

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TEST REPORTS

Sherwood components as well as the RV-6010R. Many of its fifty-seven buttons are not used with the receiver, being designed to operate a CD player and a cassette deck, but the remaining buttons control almost all the receiver's functions. The Sherwood RV-6010R is a large, fairly heavy receiver. It measures 17 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches wide, 15 inches deep, and 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches high, and it weighs just under 29 pounds. Price: \$450. Sherwood, Dept. SR, 14830 Alondra Blvd., La Mirada, CA 90638.

Lab Tests

The front-channel amplifiers delivered about 123 watts per channel into 8-ohm loads from 70 to 20,000 Hz at 0.1 percent total harmonic distortion (THD) plus noise. The power dropped to 111 watts at 20 Hz but always comfortably exceeded the 105-watt rating. With the rear-apron switch set to 4 ohms, the output at 0.25 percent THD + N was about 100 watts from 80 to 20,000 Hz, falling to 93 watts at 20 Hz. Although it is not a recommended practice, we also made this measurement with the 8-ohm impedance setting (into 4 ohms) and measured 150 watts per channel at 0.1 percent distortion from 50 to 8,000 Hz, falling to 138 watts at 20,000 Hz and 131 watts at 20 Hz. Since this does not represent a significant (or audible) increase over the output with the recommended switch setting, we would not suggest using 4-ohm speakers without changing the impedance setting accordingly. Dynamic power measurements of the front channels produced burst outputs of 162 watts into 8 ohms (headroom = 1.88 dB) and 153 watts into 4 ohms.

The rear channels delivered 16.5 watts into 8 ohms from 100 to 20,000 Hz, falling to 7 watts at 20 Hz. The center-channel output (at 0.1 percent distortion) was 26 watts from 100 to 20,000 Hz, falling to 12 watts at 20 Hz. These measurements apply to the power amplifiers alone (unlike the front channels, which we tested through the preamplifier section).

Front-channel frequency response, through the preamplifier but with the tone controls bypassed, was within ± 0.1 dB from 20 to 20,000 Hz. With the source-direct switch off (sending the signal through the tone controls), the response was slightly degraded to $+0.1$, -0.8 dB from 20 to 20,000 Hz.

Tone-control characteristics were very good, with the bass inflection



The remote control that comes with the Sherwood RV-6010R is actually a system control.

point (± 3 -dB response change) shifting between 100 and 400 Hz as the control was varied. The treble-control curves were hinged at about 3,000 Hz. The loudness contours began to boost the bass at volume settings below -20 dB and stayed constant from -30 dB to -60 dB, with a maximum boost of 10 dB at 20 Hz and 3 dB at 20,000 Hz.

The RIAA phono equalization was accurate within ± 0.2 dB from 100 to 20,000 Hz, falling off at lower frequencies to -3 dB at 22 Hz. The phono-input stage overloaded at 1,000-Hz-equivalent inputs ranging from 212 millivolts (mV) at 20 Hz to 141 mV at 20,000 Hz.

The FM tuner section's distortion (THD + N) at 65 dBf was 0.084 percent in mono and 0.64 percent in stereo. The stereo distortion figure does not represent actual distortion but mainly large levels of inadequately filtered 38- and 76-kHz components from the stereo demodulator, which masked the actual distortion components. Stereo channel separation was good, with minimum readings of about 35 dB at 30 and 15,000 Hz and a maximum of 52.5 dB from 400 to 1,000 Hz.

The FM capture ratio was excellent, and AM rejection was good. Selectivity was only fair but probably adequate for most situations, and image rejection was undistinguished. The only measurement we made on the AM tuner section was of its frequency response, which was typically narrow.

Comments

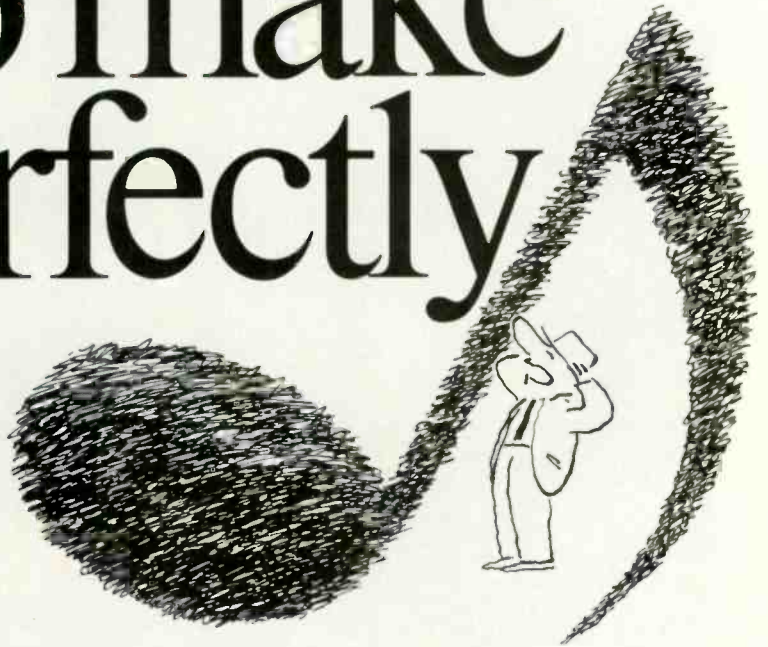
For our listening tests, we installed the Sherwood RV-6010R in a basic four-speaker surround installation and used both the Theater and Stadium modes. The sound quality was very good, largely depending on the specific program material.

More extended listening to FM radio and CD's showed that this is a very good stereo receiver. Its FM tuner, using only the supplied wire antenna, seemed to produce better quieting and cleaner sound than most tuners we have used with conventional indoor antennas, both passive and active. Apparently the short vertical antenna is far less prone to multipath distortion than any of the indoor dipoles or amplified antennas that we have used previously.

We found the RV-6010R to be a highly listenable receiver, with more power than most people will ever need and enough operating features to satisfy a confirmed button-pusher and knob twister. Every feature that we used worked well. A couple of unconventional characteristics of the receiver are worth mentioning, however. When you select a preset radio channel, there is a disconcerting 2-second delay after you press the button before the tuning change takes place. Another oddity, not unique to this receiver but happily rare, is the arrangement for driving two pairs of front speakers. Most receivers simply connect the two sets of speakers in parallel, but this one (presumably to safeguard the output transistors against a very low load impedance) puts them in series. That means that if only one set of speakers is connected, pressing both selector buttons will silence the receiver. You could waste a lot of time troubleshooting this effect if you fail to read the instruction book carefully.

Nonetheless, these are not serious flaws, and with its many features and moderate price, the Sherwood RV-6010R is a lot of receiver for the money. Few people will need more than it can deliver. \square

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Again, The Critics Agree

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—Ken Pohlman, *AUDIO*, November 1987.

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—Lewis Lipnick, *Stereophile*, Vol. 11 No. 4, April 1988.

Recommended accessory in *Stereophile*, Vol. 12 No. 4, April 1989.

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TEST REPORTS



JBL L3 Loudspeaker System

JULIAN HIRSCH
HIRSCH-HOUCK LABORATORIES

THE four L Series loudspeakers from JBL, the L1, L3, L5, and L7, were designed to bring many of the special qualities of the company's professional speakers to the home audio market. Their drivers have cast-aluminum frames and cones made of composites of felt, fiberglass, and other materials to provide optimum performance for each application. The tweeter domes, including their diamond-patterned surrounds, are each formed of a single piece of titanium film.

The L Series enclosures all have sloping speaker panels so that the outputs of their drivers will arrive at the listening position in the correct time relationship. All except the shelf- or stand-mounted L1 are narrow, floor-standing columns made of internally

braced high-density fiberboard. The bass drivers are back-loaded through tuned ports on the rear of the cabinets.

The L3 is a two-way system with an 8-inch woofer crossing over at 3,000 Hz to a 1-inch tweeter. Its frequency response is rated as 35 to 27,000 Hz ± 6 dB, and it is recommended for use with amplifiers rated between 35 and 250 watts. Nominal impedance is 8 ohms, and sensitivity is rated as 89 dB sound-pressure level (SPL) at 1 meter at an input of 2.83 volts (1 watt into 8 ohms).

The JBL L3 is finished in black ash, with a removable black cloth grille whose shape conceals the rearward slope of the speaker panel. The bass port and the input terminals are on the rear, near the bottom. The enclosure is supported on a black plastic base flush

with the column at front and back and extending about 2½ inches on each side. The L3 measures 32¾ inches high, 9¾ inches wide, and 12 inches deep, and it weighs 30 pounds. Price: \$425 each. JBL, Inc., Dept. SR, 240 Crossways Park W., Woodbury, NY 11797.

Lab Tests

JBL recommends that the L3 be installed about 3 feet in front of a wall and 3 feet from the side wall, although these distances are not critical. We were able to locate the pair within a foot or so of the recommended positions.

The averaged room response of the two speakers was exceptionally free of the large peaks and dips that typically appear in live-room measurements. Even the usual floor-bounce irregularity in the 250- to 500-Hz region was insignificant. This result was almost certainly due to the angled speaker board, and it makes a strong case for that design feature.

The low bass was also strong and relatively smooth. In fact, merely by averaging the responses of the left and right speakers in our room (using a one-third-octave warbled, swept sine-wave signal), we could describe the L3's frequency response as ± 5 dB from 20 to 20,000 Hz. Nevertheless, we followed our usual practice of measuring the bass response with a close microphone spacing to simulate an anechoic environment. The combined outputs of the port and cone, corrected for their respective diameters, was within ± 2 dB from 24 to 500 Hz. This curve spliced easily to our averaged room curve, producing a composite frequency response of ± 3 dB from 23 to 20,000 Hz.

Other frequency-response measurements, using the MLS (quasi-anechoic) capability of our Audio Precision System One, confirmed the midrange and treble characteristics revealed by our live-room swept-sine-wave measurements. The on-axis response at 1 meter was ± 2.5 dB from 300 to 20,000 Hz. At 45 degrees off the speaker's horizontal axis, the response was down about 3 dB (relative to its on-axis level) from 1,000 to 7,000 Hz, falling to -5 dB at 10,000 Hz and -8 dB at 20,000 Hz. This dispersion is typical of 1-inch dome tweeters.

The L3's impedance was at its minimum of 4.3 ohms at 260 Hz and

INXS: Live Baby Live (Atlantic) 52528
Paula Abdul: Spellbound (Virgin) 73320
Paul Simon: Negotiations And Love Songs 1971-86 (Warner) 20461
Jody Watley: Affairs Of The Heart (MCA) 53144
PIL: That What Is Not (Virgin) 05610
The Harper Brothers: You Can Hide Inside The Music (Verve) 25020
Erasure: Chorus (Reprise/Sire) 92228
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R.E.M.: Eponymous (I.R.S./MCA) 00701
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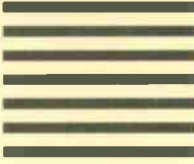
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reached peaks of 20 ohms at 22 Hz, 32 ohms at 60 Hz, and 50 ohms at 2,200 Hz. It averaged 8 ohms or better over most of the frequency range except from 100 to 500 Hz, where it was between 4 and 5 ohms.

Sensitivity was 89 dB, as rated. The woofer distortion with a 3.18-volt input (equivalent to 90 dB in a sensitivity measurement) was very low, about 0.3 percent from 90 to 800 Hz and rising to 1 percent at 65 Hz, 4 percent at 40 Hz, and only 8 percent at 20 Hz.

The L3's phase linearity was as good as its other qualities, producing a group-delay variation of less than ± 0.1 millisecond over the tweeter range (3,000 to 20,000 Hz) and only a 0.3-millisecond increase in the woofer's range (down to a couple of hundred hertz).

Single-cycle pulse power tests produced the usual results: At middle and high frequencies the amplifier clipped before there was evidence of overloading from the speaker. At 100 Hz, however, the woofer's output distorted audibly at 132 watts into its 5.5-ohm impedance.

Comments

Not only did the JBL L3 deliver above-average performance for a two-way system in its size and price range in just about every respect, but its sound was completely consistent with its measured performance. Smooth-

ness and balance were its most striking attributes. In particular, the bass was audibly flatter than that of the vast majority of speakers we have tested. That means no boom and no artificial heaviness on voices (the usual byproducts of a bass output peaked in the 100- to 200-Hz range to give an *illusion* of true bass).

The L3's bass was *real*, manifesting itself as a solid foundation to orchestral music rather than tubbiness or muddiness. This characteristic is uncommon in speakers as small and modestly priced as the L3. As is usually the case, however, a measured response down to the bottom octaves does not necessarily mean that those frequencies will be reproduced with full *impact*, which is one reason large speakers and subwoofers are still on the market.

Nevertheless, our experience with the JBL L3 indicates that its deep bass is not likely to be improved significantly by a subwoofer in more than a few cases. If your musical tastes run to pipe-organ recordings or heavy-metal rock with substantial output below 30 Hz (the kind that gives you a massage and shakes the walls), there is no economical substitute for a good subwoofer. Otherwise, the L3 will do a first-rate job on its own, making it clearly one of the best values available today in a moderately priced speaker system.



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Hafler Series 945 Tuner/Preamplifier

JULIAN HIRSCH
HIRSCH-HOUCK LABORATORIES

ONE of Hafler's new line of audio components is the Series 945, a combined tuner/preamplifier. This combination of functions, though not new, has never enjoyed the popularity it deserves. The widespread availability of excellent separate power amplifiers in all power and price brackets has now made the tuner/preamplifier an especially attractive approach to a flexible system design that allows easy updating with minimum obsolescence and expense.

The Hafler 945 is a compact, low-profile unit measuring only 2½ inches high (excluding the mounting feet). The all-black enclosure is 17 inches wide and 11¾ inches deep, and the unit weighs 10¾ pounds. It is also available with a rack-width (19-inch) silver-colored panel.

The front-panel controls consist of knobs for volume, balance, bass, and treble and a number of small, round, gray pushbuttons, which operate with light pressure, a positive action, and a short throw. The seven input selectors are identified as CD, TUNER, A/V1, A/V2,

A/V3, TAPE 1, and TAPE2/EPL (for an external signal processor or a second tape deck). A green light in the center of each button indicates its selection. The POWER ON/READY switch displays an amber light when it is in standby mode (off), changing to green when it is on.

In addition to selecting the indicated audio programs, the three audio/video (A/V) selectors simultaneously switch the video portions (if any) of their respective sources between the corresponding video input and output jacks on the rear of the unit.

When the tuner input is selected, a small display window on the panel shows the band (AM or FM) and frequency in bright green/blue characters. If one of the eighteen available station presets (each assignable to either an AM or an FM channel) is selected, its number also appears in the window. A small TUNED indication appears (in dark red) when a station is tuned in, together with the word STEREO if a stereo subcarrier is present in the signal.

The ten preset-selector buttons are numbered 1 to 9 and +10 (there is no No. 10 button). Other buttons select AM or FM, mono or stereo mode for the tuner and other input sources, and automatic or manual tuning mode (automatic seeks the next receivable station, and manual steps to the next channel with each press of a tuning button). A MEMORY button is used to store station frequencies, and TONE IN activates or bypasses the tone-control circuits. The tuning control is a center-pivoted rocker that shifts the tuned frequency up or down depending on which side is pressed. There is also a front-panel headphone jack.

The Hafler 945 is supplied with a wireless remote control that duplicates its key pushbutton control functions, including input selection, preset selection, and tuning. It also controls volume (driving the front-panel knob with a small motor), switches power on and off, and mutes or unmutes the audio (a feature not provided on the front panel).

Program-selection functions (both audio and video) are performed by CMOS-FET electronic switches located close to the portions of the circuit involved. The front-panel buttons control only the DC voltage required to operate the switches.

The line amplifier of the preamplifier section is a Class A differential



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JFET design using four active devices per channel. The tone-control network is inserted in this portion of the amplifier, and it is completely removed when switched out by the front-panel button. When power is first applied, or if the AC line voltage becomes very low, the audio is muted by a gold-contact relay that disconnects the output and grounds the output jacks. During muting, a green light in the volume knob flashes, lighting continuously when the amplifier has returned to service.

The FM tuner section's front end has dual-gate FET's and digital frequency-synthesis phase-locked-loop tuning. There are binding-post terminals on the rear apron for an AM antenna (a loop antenna is supplied) and a 300-ohm FM antenna and a coaxial connector for a 75-ohm FM antenna.

The Hafler 945 has one unswitched AC outlet and three switched outlets, rated to handle a total of 800 watts (one of the switched outlets is a three-pin type, the others two-pin polarized sockets). The heavy-duty line cord plugs into a recessed socket on the rear apron. Price: \$600 with either front panel. Hafler Division, Rockford Corporation, Dept. SR, 613 S. Rockford Dr., Tempe, AZ 85281.

Lab Tests

The Hafler Series 945's FM tuner section had a 50-dB quieting sensitiv-

ity of 16 dBf (3.5 microvolts, or μV) in mono and 39 dBf (49 μV) in stereo. The signal-to-noise ratio (S/N) at 65 dBf was 75.5 dB in mono and 71 dB in stereo. The corresponding distortion levels were 0.15 and 0.35 percent.

The tuner frequency response was down 0.5 dB at 30 Hz and 1.1 dB at 15,000 Hz, and it was flat within ± 0.1 dB between 50 and 10,000 Hz. Channel separation was 47 dB through the midrange but narrowed to 39 dB at 30 Hz and 32 dB at 15,000 Hz. The 1.4-dB capture ratio, 73-dB AM rejection, 64-dB alternate-channel selectivity, and 66-dB image rejection were all better than average readings. The AM frequency response was typical of AM tuners, within ± 2 dB from 20 to 1,700 Hz and down 6 dB at 2,500 Hz.

The preamp section's sensitivity, for a reference output of 0.5 volt, was 46 millivolts (mV). The output clipped at about 7 volts. Frequency response was flat within ± 0.05 dB from 20 to 20,000 Hz (with tone controls bypassed), falling to -3 dB at 150 kHz. We noted that the channel gains differed by 0.6 dB with the tone-control circuits bypassed and the balance control at its center-detent setting. The A-weighted noise level, referred to 0.5 volt, was -87 dB.

The tone controls had excellent characteristics. The range between 200 and 1,500 Hz was not affected significantly by the control settings.

The bass control shifted the turnover frequency between 200 Hz and less than 50 Hz, and the treble control's frequency response was hinged at about 2,000 Hz.

We measured the distortion by spectrum analysis to exclude noise from the readings. For 1,000-Hz output levels between 0.5 and 5 volts, total harmonic distortion (THD) ranged between 0.004 and 0.01 percent.

Comments

The Hafler Series 945 is a versatile, easy-to-use, and attractive stereo control center. We found no idiosyncrasies in its operation, which is about as intuitive and straightforward as one could hope for. Credit is also due to the excellent manual, which leaves nothing to the imagination and provides an informative description of the unit's circuitry as well as how to install and use it.

The FM tuner section is above average in the aspects of its performance, such as interference rejection, that have a close relationship to listening quality. We appreciated the fact that the display window was active only when the tuner section was selected, unlike those of most receivers, whose full displays are confusingly active at all times. The dark-red STEREO and TUNED indications were difficult to see at a glance from a distance, however.

The Series 945, like several other recent audio control components we have seen, acknowledges the dominance of digital media and the diminishing number of phonophiles by omitting a phono preamplifier. Concurrently, it accepts the audio/video linkage, at least in part, by including simultaneous audio and video signal switching. Although its video-related functions appear to be limited to controlling one or more VCR's or video-disc players, surround-sound capabilities can be added through an external processor.

The Hafler Series 945 is one of the most attractive solutions we have seen to the problem of setting up a high-quality sound system with a minimum of visibility. Power amplifiers (especially some of the compact ones currently available) can be located inconspicuously or concealed, and the compact tuner/preamplifier is a most attractive and economic choice for the system control center. □

LABORATORY MEASUREMENTS

• Preamplifier Section

1,000-Hz output at clipping: 7 volts

Maximum distortion (0.5 to 5 volts output, 1,000 Hz): 0.01%

Sensitivity (for a 0.5-volt output): 46 millivolts

A-weighted noise (referred to a 0.5-volt output): -87 dB

Tone-control range: 100 Hz, $+8$, -9 dB; 10,000 Hz, $+12$, -14 dB

Frequency response (tone controls bypassed): ± 0.05 dB, 20 to 20,000 Hz

• **Tuner Section** (all figures for FM only except frequency response; measurements in microvolts, or μV , referred to 300-ohm input)

Usable sensitivity: mono, 11.8 dBf (2.1 μV)

50-dB quieting sensitivity: mono, 16 dBf (3.5 μV); stereo, 39 dBf (49 μV)

Signal-to-noise ratio at 65 dBf: mono, 75.5 dB; stereo, 71 dB

Harmonic distortion (THD + N) at 65 dBf: mono, 0.15%; stereo, 0.35%

Capture ratio at 65 dBf: 1.4 dB

AM rejection: 73 dB

Pilot-carrier leakage: 19 kHz, -70 dB

Mum: -73 dB

Stereo channel separation at 100, 1,000, and 10,000 Hz: 45, 47, 36 dB

Frequency response: FM, $+0.12$, -1.1 dB from 30 to 15,000 Hz; AM, $+2$, -6 dB from 20 to 2,500 Hz



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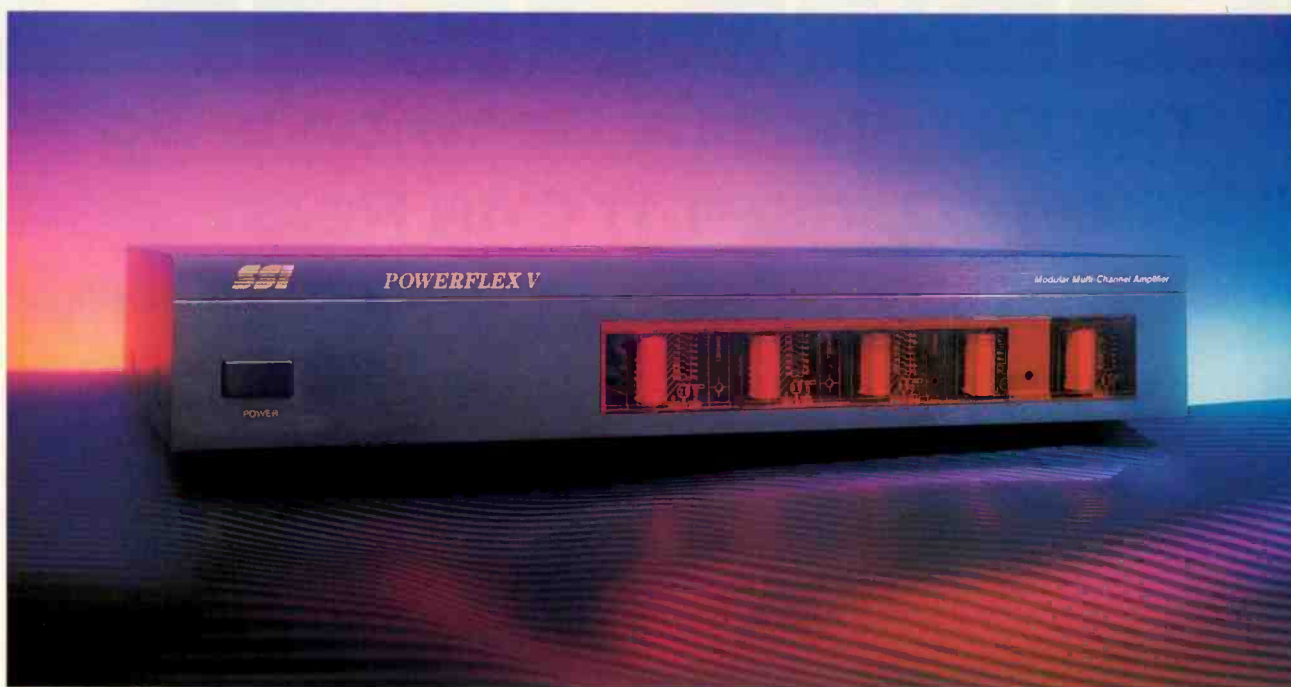
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CIRCLE NO. 18 ON READER SERVICE CARD

TEST REPORTS



SSI Powerflex V Multichannel Power Amplifier

JULIAN HIRSCH
HIRSCH-HOUCK LABORATORIES

THE rising popularity of multichannel audio/video systems has brought many music lovers face to face with the problem of supplying four or more channels of amplification where formerly only two were needed. Updating an existing stereo system usually involves either replacing a perfectly good two-channel amplifier with a four-channel unit or adding another amplifier, frequently a different make or model.

It is not always easy to add a new power amplifier to an existing system without complications in placement and wiring. The problem can be even worse if the new system is to provide the full surround-sound capability of Dolby Pro Logic or Home THX, which can involve five or more discrete channels.

A neat, practical, and affordable solution is the Powerflex V from SSI Products, a modular power amplifier of one to five channels rated to deliver 32 watts each into 8-ohm loads. The dealer-installable modules are housed

in a compact, lightweight case and run off a common power supply with a toroidal transformer.

The SSI Powerflex V measures 17¼ inches wide, 9½ inches deep, and 3 inches high, and it weighs 15½ pounds. The front panel contains a pushbutton power switch and a large display window. Each amplifier module has a ten-segment, bright-red, fluorescent output-level indicator that provides a highly visible indication of its status.

The other end of each amplifier module contains its input and output phono jacks, two speaker-output binding posts that accept dual banana plugs as well as wire ends, and a screwdriver level adjustment. The output jack provides a signal at the same level as the input for driving a separate amplifier in multiroom installations. The Powerflex V is protected by a single, user-replaceable line fuse accessible from the back panel. Price: \$299 with one amplifier module, plus \$79 for each additional module; \$499 for full five-channel configuration. SSI Products,

Inc., Dept. SR, 11836 Clark St., Arcadia, CA 91006.

Lab Tests

The manual for the Powerflex V stresses that its amplifiers must not be used with speakers having impedance ratings lower than 8 ohms. For this reason, we did not attempt our usual power measurements into lower load impedances other than a dynamic-power measurement into 4 ohms.

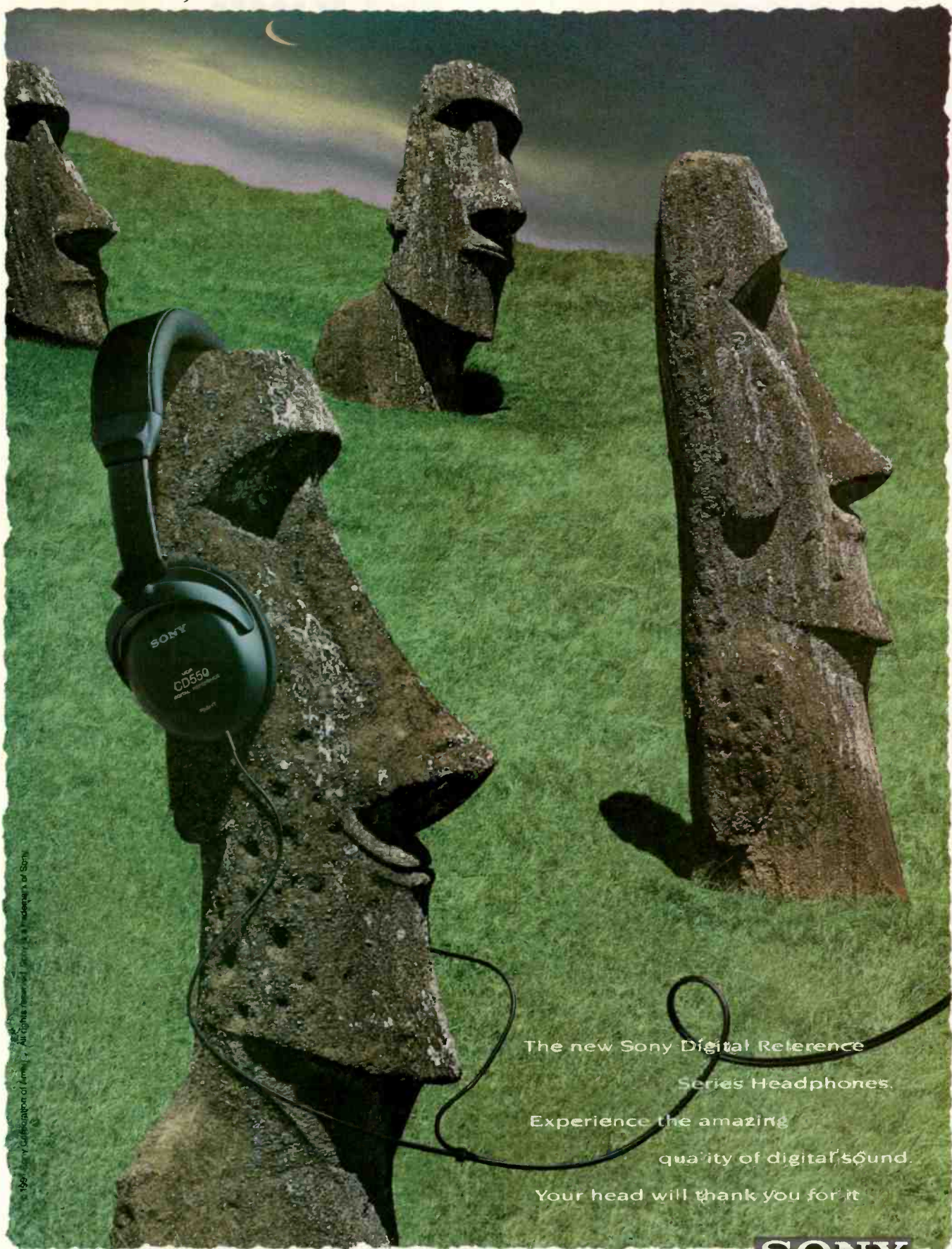
Test data provided with the sample amplifier (a prototype with five modules installed) included measurements, made on one channel at a time, of power output vs. frequency at 0.1 percent total harmonic distortion plus noise (THD + N). We made similar measurements, driving one channel or two channels simultaneously, to verify the manufacturer's data.

With one channel driven at 1,000 Hz, the output at 0.1 percent distortion was about 38 watts into 8 ohms over almost the entire audio frequency range, decreasing to 37.5 watts at 20 Hz and increasing to 39 watts at 20,000 Hz. When two channels were driven simultaneously, the output was between 34.5 and 35.5 watts from 20 to 20,000 Hz. Dynamic power was 39 watts into 8 ohms (for a dynamic headroom of 0.86 dB). With a 4-ohm load, dynamic power was 63 watts.

Frequency response was +0, -0.2

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TEST REPORTS

dB from 20 to 6,000 Hz, falling to -1.7 dB at 20,000 Hz. The THD + N at 1,000 Hz (one channel operating) reached its minimum of 0.015 percent from 20 to 35 watts. At a constant 20 watts output, THD + N was 0.0145 percent from 150 to 1,000 Hz, rising slightly to 0.04 percent at 20 Hz and 20,000 Hz.

To measure 1,000-Hz harmonic distortion without including amplifier noise, we used spectrum analysis at power outputs of 1, 20, and 30 watts. The combined rms distortion was between 0.008 and 0.009 percent at any power level.

The maximum amplifier sensitivity for a 1-watt output was 100 millivolts (mV). The line output was exactly the same as the input level. A-weighted noise was -93.6 dB referred to 1 watt.

Comments

We installed the Powerflex V in a system with a high-quality surround-sound processor. In contrast to the problems of physical placement and cabling involved when setting up a surround system using separate stereo amplifiers, there was little more involved than would have been required for a standard two-channel installation. We used only four channels, although merely another speaker and cable would have been required to create a five-channel system.

The Powerflex V was more than powerful enough for the system requirements; a few watts per speaker can create a surprisingly high sound-pressure level when you have four speakers in operation. The amplifier ran only slightly warm during extended operation.

It is worth mentioning that a surround-sound system does not place

equal *simultaneous* demands on all of its channels. When the two front channels are in phase (monophonic), there is virtually no surround-channel output. When the surround outputs are driven to their highest levels, the front channels are actually out of phase, slightly reducing their load on the power supply. Also, the rear channels ordinarily operate at lower levels than the main channels. All of this suggests that huge amplifiers are not normally required for a well-balanced surround-sound system. The 32-watt-per-channel Powerflex V is quite capable of producing a room-filling sound field without strain, as we proved during our listening tests.

The *very* bright flashing level indicators on the amplifier's front panel can be distracting, especially when all channels are being driven. Of course, this is of no importance if the amplifier is out of sight during operation, and its small size makes that fairly easy to achieve.

The SSI Powerflex V appears to have arrived at the right time. It meets a genuine need at a very moderate price. In its present form, it has only one significant weakness—the inability to drive low-impedance loads safely. The manufacturer indicates that the 8-ohm limitation was necessary in the prototype we tested because of overheating and that production units will be much better ventilated. But since even “8-ohm” speakers often dip to much lower impedances at some frequencies, an amplifier should be able to cope with loads as low as 4 ohms (and preferably even lower) without risk of damage or impaired performance. If that is achieved, the Powerflex V will be truly ideal for surround-sound systems. □

LABORATORY MEASUREMENTS

1,000-Hz output power at 0.1% THD + N: one channel driven, 38 watts; two channels driven, 34.8 watts

Dynamic power output: 39 watts into 8 ohms, 63 watts into 4 ohms

Dynamic headroom (relative to rated output): 0.86 dB into 8 ohms

Frequency response: +0, -1.7 dB from 20 to 20,000 Hz

Total harmonic distortion at 1,000 Hz: less than 0.009 percent from 1 to 30 watts

Sensitivity (for a 1-watt output into 8 ohms): 0.1 volt

A-weighted noise (referred to a 1-watt output): -93.6 dB

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CD



PORTABLES :

THE BEETHOVEN TEST

THE Viennese customs inspector was not amused. He looked bored when I pulled out the Kenwood. He smiled when I produced the Denon. He frowned when the Technics and JVC hit the counter. Then his eyebrows danced when the Sony joined the pile. What was this American up to? Smuggling portable compact disc players into Austria?

I quickly explained to him that I was conducting an important test for STEREO REVIEW, that although many reviewers test portable players while sitting in front of their word processors or perhaps while walking their dogs, I was attempting something a good deal more significant. I explained that I was bringing five of the best CD portables to Vienna to challenge them with her demanding resident: Ludwig van Beethoven. I would study them in his old haunts, pound them the way he pounded his pianos, and listen to them with his music. It would be the ultimate cultural, physical, and sonic test. The inspector pondered all that, perhaps considered calling airport security, then waved me through.

Denon DCP-150 on Probusgasse 6

I boarded the bus to the City Air Terminal at Landstrasse, and half an hour later I caught the U4 subway line to Heiligenstadt. Beethoven moved eighty times during his thirty-five-year stay in Vienna. He was constantly in flux because of landlords nagging him about money or noise, but most of all because of his own restless, temperamental nature. The house on Probusgasse 6 probably stood etched in his memory, however, because it was there, despairing over his encroaching deafness and continuing poverty, that he poured out his pessimistic emotions in the *Heiligenstadt Testament*. Sitting in the courtyard of the house where Beethoven lived and suffered in the summer of 1802, and wrote the Second Symphony, I reached into my knapsack, pulled out the first player, the Denon DCP-150, and loaded in a disc of the Second Symphony.

The DCP-150 is the bulkiest among the five

portables I tested, but it offers several unique features, such as a built-in remote-control receiver. The top surface contains a button to mechanically release the clamshell lid and buttons for forward and reverse track skipping (fast search in forward or reverse when held down), play/pause, and stop. The front of the chassis sports a versatile Mode button that sequences through eight modes of operation: track repeat, disc repeat, random track playback, disc repeat with random tracks, track programming (up to thirty-two tracks), disc repeat with programmed tracks, random playback of program tracks, and disc repeat with random programmed tracks. A Set button changes the time display from elapsed time in the track to remaining time in the track to total remaining time. Volume control is handled with a rotary potentiometer.

The liquid-crystal display shows track numbers and timings and has indicators for battery strength, track programming, random playback, and other functions. A shortcoming: The display is unlighted even when the unit is powered via AC. Nestled beside the display is the sensor window for the integral remote-control receiver. The chassis itself is finished with a suede-like material that has a nice feel and helps you keep a secure grip on the player.

The right side of the DCP-150 has a headphone jack and a three-way slider for tone control: flat, bass boost, or bass and treble boost. Another three-way switch selects normal playback, a hold function that disables transport controls, or a resume function that returns the laser pickup to where it was when the unit was last switched off. Around back is a 6-volt DC input jack.

The left side of the chassis contains jacks for analog and digital audio output. The coaxial digital output employs a mono mini-jack connector (an adaptor cable would be required to change it to a standard phono-jack connector). Optical digital outputs are more common on home CD players, but many portables have started using this kind of coaxial

Ken Pohlmann takes five of the newest, smallest CD players through their paces in the city of Beethoven.





Denon DCP-150 (\$400): Its wireless remote-control receiver is built in.



JVC XL-P90 (\$450): Barely over a half-inch thick, it's the smallest of the five.



output. Underneath the chassis are not one but two battery compartments, each holding a rechargeable battery, and they can be used singly for 2 hours of playing time or together for 4 hours.

The wireless remote control has twenty-five buttons. There are buttons to control the transport, select operating modes (such as random track playback), adjust the volume, and switch the power on, along with an eleven-key numeric keypad. When you use the remote, the display changes accordingly; for example, the timing display changes to show a numeric volume setting.

THE DCP-150 employs an eight-times-oversampling digital filter with dual 18-bit digital-to-analog (D/A) converters. The converters are made by Analog Devices and are the same ones found in some expensive home CD players. The DCP-150's power supply senses whether battery or AC power is being used. When you're using batteries, the maximum output level is reduced to conserve power. (A high output is needed to maximize signal-to-noise ratio in the output to a home system, when you would be using AC power, but it's not needed to drive headphones directly in portable use with batteries.)

The DCP-150 comes with a soft vinyl-and-fabric carrying case, a stereo connecting cable, and an AC adaptor/charger. One rechargeable battery is supplied, and more are available as optional accessories. A stand-alone recharger is also available.

I liked the Denon player's human engineering (ergonomics). All the transport buttons are grouped together on top, and when they're pressed they respond with a nice tactile click. The Mode button nicely consolidates the functions of many different buttons—it is a simple matter to sequence through them to find the one you want. I also liked the textured case, which is practical and pleasant to hold.

Although the DCP-150's metal construction makes it quite heavy (at 24 ounces it's almost twice as heavy as the next heaviest player in our test group, the Sony), it imparts a solidity that is aesthetically more pleasing than the lightness of plastic, and it also makes the player more immune to damage from accidental drops. The label on the top of the player calls it a "Precision Audio Component," and that's not an exaggeration.

Best of all was the solidity of the

CD PORTABLES: LABORATORY MEASUREMENTS

(HAMMER LABORATORIES)

	DENON DCP-150	JVC XL-P90	KENWOOD DPC-721	SONY D-515	TECHNICS SL-XP5900
Maximum output level (volts)	0.833	0.878	0.752	1.03	0.744
Frequency response (decibels, 20 to 20,000 Hz)	+0.13, -0.04	+0.01, -1.12*	+0.05, -3.07*	+0.09, -0.52	+0.0, -2.30*
Channel separation (decibels)					
1,000 Hz	54.9	49.8	49.3	57.7	48.1
20,000 Hz	43.2	37.1	37.8	45.7	44.5
Dynamic range (decibels, A-wtd.)	94.2	93.2	94.4	96.3	99.7
Signal-to-noise ratio (decibels, A-wtd.)	96.2	93.8	101.2	95.7	99.9
Distortion (THD + noise)					
at 0 dB and 1,000 Hz	0.040%	0.041%	0.046%	0.009%	0.010%
at -20 dB and 1,000 Hz	0.39%	0.089%	0.12%	0.077%	0.051%
Low-level linearity (decibels, at -90 dB)	-0.6	+1.5	+0.1	-5.4	+8.8
Interchannel phase error (degrees, at 20,000 Hz)	0.1	0.1	0.8	0.2	0.1
De-emphasis error (decibels, at 16,000 Hz)	+0.02	-0.07	-0.25	-0.09	-0.30
Defect tracking (micrometers)	2,500	1,500	2,500	4,000	1,500
Size (inches)	6.5 x 1.5 x 5.2	5.0 x 0.6 x 5.8	4.9 x 1.1 x 5.6	5.0 x 1.1 x 5.6	5.0 x 0.7 x 5.0
Weight (ounces)	24	13	9.5	14.1	12.2

All measurements were made with the players powered by freshly charged batteries.

* highest deviation at 20,000 Hz.

sound quality. As I listened to the Second Symphony, gazing into the window where Beethoven must have gazed out, I felt that the DCP-150 was delivering everything that Beethoven intended us to hear. Who knows, if he had owned a DCP-150, perhaps that summer of 1802 might have been a happier one for him.

JVC XL-P90 On Hauptstrasse 92

From Heiligenstadt it is only a short uphill walk to the Döbling district and the house on Hauptstrasse 92 where Beethoven lived in 1803. It was a charming house in Beethoven's time, owned by a vinegar maker, and set in a row of small houses; a narrow meadow separated it into two parts. He worked on his Third Symphony while living there, and I put a compact disc of it into the JVC XL-P90, the smallest of the players I tested. It measures a mere 3/8 inch thick, with an overall size approximately equal to two stacked jewel boxes.

There are eight buttons on the top cover. One pops the clamshell lid, one starts and pauses playback, and one stops playback, turns off the player,

and clears the track memory. A Memory button is used to program sequences of up to twenty tracks, a Random/Intro button selects either random track playback or plays the first 15 seconds of each track, a repeat button repeats either a track or an entire disc, and a pair of forward/backward buttons provide either track skipping or two-speed audible fast search. The front of the chassis contains a thumbwheel for volume control. The display on top shows track numbers and timings and has indicators for low battery, repeat, random playback, and so on. The display is lighted when the unit is powered through its AC adaptor.

THE right side of the chassis has connectors for audio line output, DC power input, and headphone output. There is also a three-way slide switch for flat response and two levels of bass boost, which affects only the headphone output. The left side has connectors for a coaxial digital output (using a minijack) and for JVC's proprietary Compu Link-1 remote-control system. There is also a slide switch to

turn the resume-playback function on and off or to select both resume-playback and a hold function. There are no user controls on the back of the unit, but there is a screw mount and two mounting pins for attaching an external battery pack. A battery compartment on the chassis's underside holds two flat rechargeable batteries, providing about 1½ hours of playback time.

The clamping spindle has three spring-loaded plastic tabs to secure the disc, and these undoubtedly provide a firmer grasp and greater impact immunity than the usual loading system. The output section contains a pair of 1-bit D/A converters.

Although I left most of the accessories at home in Miami, several come with the XL-P90: a DC adaptor for powering the player from a car's cigarette lighter, an audio adaptor for playing it through a car's cassette deck, two rechargeable batteries, an AC battery charger/adaptor, a stereo audio cable, an external AA battery case, a soft vinyl carrying case, and a pair of earphones. Optional accessories include a wireless remote control and a "home audio station unit," a docking



Kenwood DPC-721 (\$249): The lightest and lowest priced of the five players, it has three sleep-timer modes.



Sony D-515 (\$500): Electronic Suspension keeps the music flowing even when the player is bounced around.



Technics SL-XP5900 (\$369): Lightweight yet sturdy, it can play continuously for up to 10 hours on batteries.

chassis that contains a wireless remote receiver, a battery recharger, and phono-jack outputs and other input, output, and power connectors.

As I boarded the U4 subway for the quick ride back to Schottenring, I examined the XL-P9. It is a handsome player with robust yet lightweight metal construction. The quality of its manufacture is apparent, but its small size presents some problems. In particular, the buttons are quite tiny. Often-used buttons such as forward and backward track skip are difficult to push without pressing nearby buttons as well. That makes the player awkward to use, particularly when you are on the move. The sound quality was good but somehow did not particularly impress me. Still, if small size is your paramount concern, the JVC is about as small as a CD player will ever get.

Sony D-515 Discman On MÖlkerbastei 8

At Schottenring, I switched to the U2 subway and took a quick ride to Schottentor. The apartment building I was looking for, on MÖlkerbastei street, was only a block away from the subway station. Beethoven returned to the apartment at MÖlkerbastei 8 again and again, and he occupied it for longer periods than any of his other residences. While living there he worked on the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, *Fidelio*, the Violin Concerto, and a host of other compositions. I loaded the Fifth Symphony into the Sony D-515 Discman as I walked through a low corridor and climbed the hundred steps to his fourth-story apartment.

From a styling standpoint, the D-515 is a radical departure from earlier Sony CD portables. Gone are the squared corners and silver edge trim, replaced by rounded contours and a hand grip. In short, the D-515 looks like no other Sony CD player and, indeed, seems to represent an entirely fresh approach to the design of portable CD players. The sides and bottom are made of a rubbery plastic that provides a firm, no-slip grip; this is enhanced by a contoured hand grip across the back of the case. The top of the case is shiny metal, with a striking finish.

There are six buttons on top of the player. The Play Mode button sequences through four modes: Intro mode, which plays the beginning of each track on a disc; I mode, which repeats one track; Shuffle mode, which plays all tracks in random order; and RMS mode, which is used to

program up to twenty-two tracks. The repeat/enter button is used to repeat a whole disc, and in the RMS mode the same button is used in conjunction with the forward and backward track-skip buttons to select and program tracks. The track-skip buttons are also used for audible search when they're held down. The two remaining buttons are play/pause and stop.

On the right side of the case are a minijack for headphone output and a four-pin connector for the wired remote. The DSP Mode button selects either bass boost or delay; the nearby Effect button selects one of three levels for each of those functions. Only one DSP effect can be used at a time, and it affects only the headphone output. A rotary knob handles volume control.

On the front of the case is a hold switch that disables other front-panel controls to prevent their accidental use. A mechanical slide switch is used to release the clamshell's top lid. As I climbed the circular stone staircase to the apartment, I switched on the ESP (electronic suspension) feature, a buffer memory that holds almost 3 seconds of audio (thanks to 4 megabits of memory tucked inside the chassis). The player bounced merrily against my side during the climb, but the music was never interrupted.

THE left side of the case has minijacks for audio line output, input for an optional wireless remote-control receiver, and 9-volt DC input. The display shows track numbers, elapsed time, battery strength, and other information. A special display represents the contents of the ESP memory, showing the relative amount of data in it. When the unit is AC-powered, the display is self-lighted. Underneath, the nonslip case contains a hinged door for the insertion of two AA batteries or one rechargeable battery.

The wired remote control has very unusual, organic styling but makes perfect ergonomic sense. A thumbwheel controls volume, and buttons for play, pause, and forward and reverse track skipping (fast forward and reverse when held down) control the disc transport. The DSP button selects either bass-boost or delay modes, and the hold button guards against accidental button pushing. The remote's display shows track number, DSP mode, and, just for fun, an animated symbol when a disc is playing. The earphones that come with the player use a proprietary stereo connector

that plugs into the remote unit. A tie-clasp on the back of the remote shows that it is meant to attach to your clothing—in fact, the earphones' cable is so short (about 1 foot) that if you *don't* attach the remote to your clothing, it will dangle annoyingly.

Inside the clamshell, the spindle contains three metal ball bearings on its circumference to help secure the disc. There is also a resume switch inside the clamshell; when it is on, interrupted playback begins again at the point where it left off. The D-515 employs 1-bit D/A converters. With the rechargeable battery, playing time is 2 hours with ESP off, 1½ hours with ESP on (2½ and 2 hours, respectively, with AA batteries).

In addition to the earphones and wired remote control, the D-515 comes with a soft vinyl carrying case, an AC adaptor, one rechargeable battery, a stereo output cable, and a vehicle mounting plate with a 12-volt DC adaptor.

As usual, Sony engineers have made a CD player that approaches the aesthetic ideal of design and manufacture. The instant you pick up the D-515, you know you're holding something of the highest quality. And its sonic fidelity was absolutely first-rate, neither adding nor subtracting anything from the music. As I strolled through the museum in the M \ddot{o} lkerbastei apartment, looking at Beethoven's clock, music stand, piano, and other objects, I realized that the D-515 might have been his player of choice—out of necessity. His pianos were bird's nests of broken hammers and strings because he pounded them so hard. Only the D-515, with its electronic suspension, could have been placed on his piano and withstood that kind of bouncing without missing a beat.

Kenwood DPC-721 On Schwarzspanierstrasse 15

Schwarzspanierstrasse 15 is just a short walk away from M \ddot{o} lkerbastei 8, past the Votivkirche church. The office building there is a new structure, and the only artifacts left from Beethoven's time are now housed in the museum on M \ddot{o} lkerbastei. But Schwarzspanierstrasse 15 is an important address: It is where Beethoven died. Folk history says that a hailstorm raged over Vienna, and in his last moment Beethoven raised himself from his bed, shook his fist at the heavens, then fell dead.

The Kenwood DPC-721 is the lightest of the portables in our test group, and perhaps the most ordinary-look-

ing, but beneath its unassuming plastic skin lurk several unique features. There are nine buttons on the sloping front face of the chassis. The open button releases the top clamshell. The repeat button provides a variety of functions depending on the number of times it is pressed: one-track repeat, all-track repeat, random playback, scan playback (the first 20 seconds of each track), and normal playback. The forward and reverse track-skip buttons (which also provide audible search when they're held down) are on the right side of the face, along with the play/pause and stop buttons. Just below them, a thumbwheel potentiometer is used to adjust the headphone volume.

THE remaining buttons, on the left, include PGM, AI Timer, and AI Auto/Charge. The PGM button is used to program sequences of up to twenty tracks by using the track-skip buttons to select track numbers. The AI Timer button is used to select three different timer modes: Mode 1 is a sleep timer in which the audio signal fades out at the end of the programmed time and the unit shuts itself off. Mode 2 is a wake-up timer in which the audio signal plays at a low volume until the wake-up time, when the volume increases (nap time is limited, of course, to the duration of the CD). Mode 3 works as an audition function: The beginnings of all tracks on a disc are played, with smooth fade-outs to the next track. In each mode, timing is set with the track-skip buttons. The AI Auto/Charge button automatically selects one of three preset equalization curves (pop, rock, or fusion) by auditioning several seconds of music from the disc. This button is also used when charging the batteries.

The right side of the chassis has connectors for headphone output, line output, and DC voltage input. A three-position switch on the left side selects normal playback, resume playback, or hold (which disables other controls). In addition, there is a coaxial minijack for digital output. The player also has an automatic power-off feature: If no buttons are pressed in 3 minutes when it's in the stop mode, it turns itself off to save the batteries. Underneath is a compartment for two AA cells. The DPC-721 employs dual 1-bit D/A converters.

The display is backlit when the AC or car-battery adaptor is used, and the front-panel buttons are illuminated as well. The display uses numerals for

track numbers and timing and indicators for battery charge and modes such as repeat, scan, programming, etc.

The wired remote control duplicates the player's front-panel controls. Because it does not derive its power from the player, a separate battery is provided. The remote also contains its own minijack headphone output. Playing time is 2 hours with the rechargeable batteries, 3 hours with alkaline batteries.

The DPC-721 is also supplied with a credit-card-size wireless remote control. Its tiny surface sports an eleven-key numeric keypad and buttons for forward and back track skip, stop, play/pause, programming, repeat, AI Auto, and AI Timer.

The DPC-721 comes with a number of other accessories: a soft vinyl carrying case, an adaptor for playing CD's through your car's cassette deck, earphones that plug into the wired remote control, a stereo connecting cable, an AC adaptor, and two rechargeable AA batteries.

AS I strolled down Schwarzschanerstrasse, I turned the DPC-721 over in my hands. The lightest of the five players, it is made entirely of plastic—thin plastic at that. This makes the player look cheap, and it is more vulnerable to damage from dropping than the others. The lightweight construction, combined with the use of AA batteries, makes it more a utilitarian player than a piece of elite electronics. I was also less than thrilled about the control buttons, which are small and surprisingly hard to use. For example, the open button is recessed, and I had to dig my fingernail into the recess to reach it. Trivial, perhaps, but over time things like that become very annoying.

Still, the DPC-721 is an unassuming, affordable player, a player for everyone, not just the elite. Beethoven would have appreciated that: Throughout his life he championed democracy and the common man. He had no taste for luxury and usually selected common products for his own use. But given the way he pounded his pianos, how long would this Kenwood portable have lasted?

Technics SL-XPS900 At the Zentralfriedhof

The wind blew colder in Vienna, and a drizzling rain started to fall from the amassing clouds. I caught the U2 subway to Landstrasse, then switched to the U3 line, rode it to Schlachthaus-

gasse, and waited for the No. 72 trolley. I rode it for several miles, then got off at the second gate of the Zentralfriedhof. The guard told me that Group 32A was ahead and to the left. I pulled my jacket close against the cold rain and put Beethoven's Ninth Symphony into my last player, the Technics SL-XPS900.

The Technics is not only the long-distance champion among the tested players but the longest-playing CD portable now available. Its two internal rechargeable batteries provide 2½ hours of playing time, and a snap-on pack holding two alkaline AA batteries provides 7 hours. If both sets of batteries are used, total playing time is an amazing 10 hours.

The primary operating controls, and the display, are located on the top of the chassis. An open button pops the clamshell lid, and there are play/pause, stop, and forward and reverse track-skip buttons as well (these provide audible fast search when held down). In addition, a repeat button provides track or disc repeat, an A-B button repeats a selected segment, and a Memory/Recall button is used to program up to twenty-four tracks. The display shows track numbers and elapsed time and has indicators for battery strength, repeat, random play, and so on. When the AC adaptor is used, the display is green-lighted.

The front of the chassis has a hold button to defeat other buttons; when other buttons are pressed, the display conveniently flashes HOLD to remind you that the function is engaged. A Play Mode switch selects normal playback, resume playback (in which interrupted playback resumes from the point where it left off), or random playback. A Live switch engages a digital delay and phase-shifting circuit to impart more presence to the music. Another slide switch selects normal playback, S-XBS (Super Extra Bass System) bass boost, or bass boost with a high-cut filter. One application of the high-cut filter is for courtesy: It attenuates high-frequency headphone leakage so that others in the room won't be annoyed. A rotary potentiometer is used to control headphone volume.

The right side of the chassis contains the headphone jack, and the rear has connectors for digital output (optical), analog output, and 4.5-volt DC input, as well as pins that mate to the external battery pack. The right side has a connector for a supplied remote sensor. When this pod-like device is attached, the supplied wireless remote control can be used. About the size of

three credit cards stacked up, the remote has buttons for play/pause, stop, track skip (or fast search) in forward and reverse, volume, music scan (to play the first 15 seconds of each track), and programming. There's also a twelve-key numeric pad for direct track access. Underneath is a compartment for the two rechargeable batteries. A wired remote, built into the cable of the supplied earphones, contains a multifunction button for stop, skip, and repeat, a hold switch, and volume control.

The SL-XPS900 employs a pair of MASH 1-bit D/A converters. It comes with a soft vinyl carrying case (essentially a slip cover), an AC voltage adaptor/charger, and a stereo connecting cable. A car-lighter power adaptor and car cassette-deck audio adaptor are available as options.

The SL-XPS900's construction is lightweight yet very strong. It accomplishes this by using plastic carefully reinforced with metal plates where needed. The result is a feeling of real solidity. The buttons are nicely raised above the chassis surface, are easy to press, and respond with a reassuring click. You could operate this player in the dark, purely by touch. Its outstanding feature, of course, is its 10-hour playing time—enough to listen to all nine of Beethoven's symphonies—when its full complement of batteries is in place. The combination of extended playing time, small size, light weight, low cost, diverse features, and excellent sound quality makes the Technics SL-XPS900 a very, very remarkable CD player and a triumph of digital audio technology.

GOLD rain continued to fall from the darkening skies. I walked through the Zentralfriedhof, Vienna's main cemetery, listening to the finale of the Ninth Symphony. Presently I came to Group 32A, where Beethoven is buried. His grave was covered with flowers, their colors vividly fresh in the cold air. There were more flowers than usual because it was March 26, exactly 165 years after Beethoven died. The world has changed a good deal since then—the CD portables in my knapsack were testament to that—but the emotion conveyed through music, and the way a musical genius can enrich our lives, thanks in part to technological genius, continues. I left a handful of lilies and began the journey home. □

ALL ABOUT SUBWOOFERS



PART 2:
There's more
than one way
to get deep,
clean bass
from a
subwoofer.

GETTING clean, satisfying deep bass has been a challenge for as long as there have been hi-fi enthusiasts, and the difficulties have sparked the imaginations of many designers. Last month we discussed *why* a subwoofer can be a good solution. This month we turn to the practical side—to the question of *how*.

There have been many interesting and worthwhile approaches to subwoofer design. Here are some that have worked to achieve either deeper bass, more compact size, or freedom from box resonance.

Infinite baffle. To get a really big volume of air behind the woofer, you don't have to use a big box. Instead, mount the woofer in a wall (with the back of the cone firing into the space between the walls, the next room, or the basement) or

in a closet door. Even a small closet is a big box for a woofer, but the door must be very rigid so as not to flex or rattle, and it must be tightly closed, with a gasket around the edge to seal it airtight. You can buy a bare woofer with a free-air resonance below 20 Hz from a car-stereo dealer.

Corner horn. A horn in front of a speaker acts as an acoustic transformer, boosting its output. But for low bass the mouth of the horn must be very large. One practical solution, invented a half-century ago, is to install the speaker in a corner so that the walls of the room become extensions of the horn's mouth. In a large room this can yield impressive bass. Klipsch is the leading speaker manufacturer using this method.

Bass-reflex enclosure. This is the most popular tactic in a

ILLUSTRATION BY HENRIK DRESCHER

BY PETER W. MITCHELL



Canton's Plus E subwoofer (\$1,000), shown here with Karat 920 satellites (\$750 a pair), has a 12-inch driver.



The NHT SW2 (\$350) uses a long-throw 10-inch driver mounted in a 16-inch vented cube for flat response to 22 Hz.



M&K's MX-70 powered sub (\$795) incorporates two 12-inch drivers in push-pull configuration and a 125-watt amp.

speaker-designer's handbook. Pressure waves off the back of the cone vibrate an air mass in a port, producing low-bass output that augments the waves generated by the front of the cone. The result is 3 dB more output in the octave above the system's cutoff frequency. That may not seem like much, but a small boost may bring previously inaudible bass fundamentals up to a level you can enjoy. Drawbacks: The response rolls off rapidly below the cutoff frequency, and phase shift may alter the character of bass transients.

Transmission-line enclosure. This is a cross between a bass-reflex enclosure and an internal horn—a widening tunnel that strengthens lows and brings them out through a port. It's more complicated and costly to build, but at least two manufacturers, Fried in the United States and TDL in England, have used this method to make speakers with exceptionally fine low-bass performance.

Low-Q sealed box. If an acoustic-suspension woofer is severely overdamped (that is, has a low "Q" factor, a measure of damping), it won't have flat response down to some cutoff frequency and then roll off sharply. Instead, its response will decline very gradually from the midbass all the way down to 20 Hz. In many rooms the bass will sound thin, but if the room has a very rigid floor and walls, the room's "acoustic gain" may offset the woofer's gradual rolloff, yielding flat overall response. Subjectively, if the low bass is loud enough to hear, the result is a wonderfully taut, deep sound. A few full-range audiophile speaker systems work this way—the Celestion SL-700 (\$3,299 a pair), for example.

Equalization. Any acoustic-suspension woofer, even without a low-Q design, rolls off rather gradually below its cutoff frequency, and the spring-like air pressure in its sealed enclosure controls the cone motion for low distortion. With the room's acoustic gain, fundamental tones in the bottom octave may be just a few decibels below the threshold of audibility. With a little help from an equalizer you might bring them up to an enjoyable level.

If your present speakers have 8-inch woofers or larger, it might be worthwhile to try equalization before investing in a subwoofer. The Allison Electronic Subwoofer, no longer in production, was a high-quality equalizer made specifically for this purpose. The similar KUBE equalizer from KEF (\$400) extends the response of

that company's large speakers down to 20 Hz, and a simple bass equalizer is included in amplifiers from NAD and a few other companies. You can also experiment with an ordinary graphic equalizer, but if you set the 30-Hz band at +8 dB, you should also set the 60-Hz band at -4 dB to compensate for the overlap between the bands and prevent midbass boominess.

Free-air dipole. Those who own flat-panel dipole speakers (electrostatic or planar-magnetic) often yearn for subwoofers with the same dipole radiation pattern and freedom from box resonance. If you simply mount a naked woofer in a large board, it will work fine above the frequency where the wavelength equals the size of the board, but at lower frequencies the front and back waves tend to cancel each other, rolling off the response at 6 dB per octave. If you offset this loss with a 6-dB-per-octave boost circuit, a boxless dipole woofer can produce very clean (but probably not thunderous) bass.

Dynamic EQ. Simple equalization works until a really loud bass fundamental comes along. Then the bass boost may overload everything, causing your amplifier to clip and the woofer's voice coil to clatter against its magnet, possibly damaging it beyond repair. For this reason some manufacturers use "dynamic EQ," which automatically reduces the boost when bass signals are strong. Since the equalization must be matched to the specific woofer and amplifier, this approach is found only in complete systems in which the woofer is driven by its own internal amplifier. Example: Atlantic Technology's Pattern subwoofer/satellite systems (Pattern 200, \$1,200; Pattern 100, \$479).

Cylindrical tube. If you want lots of very deep bass, the Iron Law of woofers—according to which you can't have high efficiency, extended low-bass response, and a small enclosure size all at the same time—leads to big woofers in large boxes, which are costly to build because they require extensive internal bracing to reduce panel vibration. If you can't hide the big box in a corner or put a plant on it and use it as an end table, its size could prove awkward. But there is a simple, low-cost alternative: Use a tube.

A tube 15 inches in diameter and 6 feet long, with a woofer at one end, encloses a volume of 6 cubic feet—enough for efficient low-frequency operation. But standing on end in a corner, it uses only 1 square foot of floor space. A tube is naturally rigid and

needs no internal bracing; even a lightweight cardboard tube can be an excellent subwoofer enclosure. Hsu Research and Genesis Technologies make cylindrical subwoofers for home use, and many companies produce short tube woofers for cars.

Isobaric enclosure. Isobaric (constant-pressure) design skirts the Iron Law, enabling the enclosure to be small without sacrificing bass. Two similar woofers are wired in parallel and mounted in the same enclosure, one just behind the other. Since the rear woofer pushes against the air pressure in the box, the front woofer behaves as if it were in an infinite baffle. The only drawbacks are the cost of the two woofers and the need to drive both, using twice as much amplifier power as a single woofer.

Bandpass enclosure. In a bandpass system, the woofer is entirely concealed within a dual-chamber box. The chamber behind the woofer is the normal "enclosure," either sealed or vented. A second chamber in front of the woofer functions as an acoustical filter, allowing only low frequencies to emerge through a port. The principal advantage of this approach is that it eliminates the need for a large and expensive crossover inductor in series with the woofer, saving money and enabling the woofer to be connected directly to the amplifier for better

damping. A bandpass enclosure can also dramatically reduce emission of harmonic distortion.

BANDPASS enclosures were popularized by Bose with its Acoustimass three-piece speaker systems. Since their introduction, many other companies have followed with similar designs that are distinguished mainly by their various ways of loading the *backs* of the drivers. A lot of car-stereo hobbyists are building dual-vent bandpass boxes—with one port behind the woofer to provide bass-reflex loading and one in front to provide the low-pass filtering.

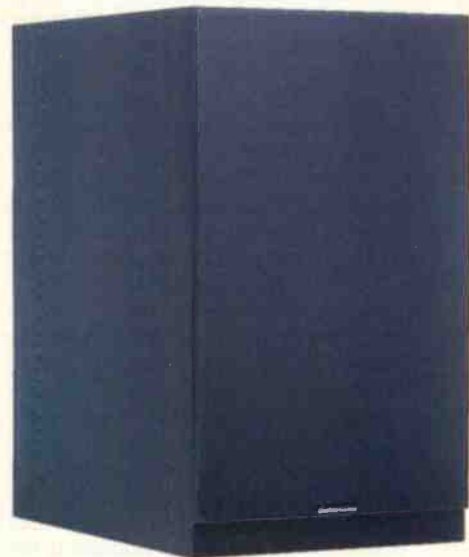
Acoustic Wave. This Bose invention could be thought of as a very specific and carefully balanced type of bandpass system. It uses a small woofer firing in both directions through a convoluted tube that is folded into a small box. Careful juggling of the resonating air masses in the tube enables the woofer to outwit the Iron Law and produce extraordinarily ample bass over a range of two or three octaves. This design was first used in the Bose Acoustic Wave Music System, a one-piece portable system including a radio and cassette deck—the latest version has a CD player instead of tape (\$997)—that delivers a surprising amount of bass from a single 4-inch cone. It has also been used in one of the Bose audio systems built into some Zenith TV sets, in a sound system for the Mazda RX-7 sports car, and, much enlarged, in a professional product called the Acoustic Wave Cannon designed for sound reinforcement in theaters and auditoriums.

YST. Another way to subvert the Iron Law is to alter the normal voltage/current relationship between the amplifier and speaker. By incorporating a model of the speaker's behavior in an amplifier servo circuit, the amp can be made to have a negative output impedance, force-feeding the speaker with current to cancel the normal effects of the woofer/cabinet resonance. Invented by AudioPro in Sweden and licensed to Yamaha, YST is a servo technology that enables a woofer/amplifier package to generate effective bass from an unusually small cabinet.

Accelerometer servo. Using an accelerometer to measure a woofer's actual cone motion, and comparing that motion with the amplifier input, a servo circuit generates a corrective signal that dramatically reduces distortion and also extends response to below 20 Hz. This method, which can deliver superb performance, is used in



The Hsu Research SW12 (\$950) uses a long-throw 10-inch driver in a ported cylindrical enclosure for high output and flat response to 19 Hz.



The Boston Acoustics SW10 (\$600), a powered subwoofer with a 10-inch driver in a vented enclosure, has a built-in electronic crossover and 100-watt amplifier.

THE IRON LAW

Hoffmann's Iron Law, described by Henry Kloss in the mid-1950's and later turned into exact mathematical form by the engineers Thiele and Small, governs the behavior of woofers. Essentially, it says that a woofer's efficiency is proportional to the volume of its cabinet and to the cube of its cutoff frequency. For example, suppose you have a woofer whose response is flat down to 40 Hz in a 2.0-cubic-foot box. To make its response flat down to 20 Hz, you must either increase the cabinet volume by eight times (to 16 cubic feet) or use eight times as much amplifier power to achieve the same listening volume.

This, in a nutshell, is why flat loudspeaker response down to 20 Hz is rare.

home subwoofers from Velodyne and Genesis Technologies and in car woofers from Linear Power.

Crossing Over

If you buy a complete three-piece subwoofer/satellite system from one manufacturer, the transition from the bass to the main speakers should have been managed correctly by its designer. But if you are adding a separate subwoofer to an existing pair of stereo speakers (even of the same brand), that transition is your responsibility.

The low-cost approach uses a passive crossover network, driving the subwoofer from the same amplifier that drives your stereo speakers. Many subwoofers have dual voice coils that simplify this connection, enabling a single woofer to be driven from both amplifier channels at low frequencies while signals above 100 Hz or so are fed to your main (satellite) speakers. This method is effective because the bass in most recordings is monophonic anyway.

The principal limitation of this approach is that the interaction between the crossover network and the impedance of your speakers is somewhat unpredictable. (In general, the passive crossover network is likely to cause a response peak at the frequency of your satellite speakers' woofer resonance.) You may have to experiment with wiring polarity and speaker placement to achieve a smooth transition, and a passive network has only a limited ability to keep low-frequency power out of your main speakers.

Another drawback of a passive crossover is that it usually rolls off the subwoofer signal at a relatively gradual 6-dB-per-octave rate. Such a transition is "ideal" in terms of phase response, but it means that a woofer with a 100-Hz crossover may still be producing audible output as high as 400 Hz or so. One reason for the recent popularity of bandpass woofers is the steep low-pass cutoff they provide without resorting to a complex and expensive crossover network.

The best bass performance is provided by an "active" subwoofer driven by its own power amplifier and using an electronic crossover that precisely controls the allocation of signals. The crossover is connected to the output of your preamplifier and splits each channel's signals into low- and high-frequency portions that are amplified separately (a biampified system, in other words). The crossover and woofer amp may be included in the woofer cabinet or bought sepa-

ately. Velodyne subwoofers, for example, include not only built-in amps and crossovers but also distortion-reducing servos that detect and correct nonlinear cone motion. The result is strong, clean fundamental output to below 20 Hz.

A separate electronic crossover gives you maximum flexibility, often enabling you to select crossover frequencies, rolloff slopes, and the phasing of the woofer relative to the main speakers. Such flexibility may help you achieve the best match between unrelated woofers and satellites, but it also gives you the greatest freedom to produce a bad-sounding system.

If you're going to install a subwoofer without expert assistance, you should buy or rent two aids that will help you achieve the smoothest transition from the woofer to the main speakers. One is the Pierre Verany "Compact Test" (PV-784031, available in some audio and record stores or from Allegro Imports, 800-288-2007), a test CD on which Track 20 is a sequence of warbling test tones at one-third-octave intervals from 16 Hz up. The warbling (rapid variation in frequency) minimizes the effect of standing waves in the room, enabling you to judge by ear whether your system has uniform response without a large peak or suckout at the crossover frequency. (A suckout can be fixed by reversing the connections to the subwoofer, inverting its polarity.)

The other aid is a real-time spectrum analyzer (RTA), a gadget that continuously displays the frequency response of an audio system on a grid of light-emitting diodes (LED's) while you adjust the subwoofer's crossover and its physical placement. Most car-stereo installers use RTA's made by Ivie, Audio Control, or Gold Line, and they may be willing to rent the device to you. If not, perhaps you could hire an installer to bring an RTA to your house and help you fine-tune your setup.

The dimensions of a room are comparable to the wavelengths of low-frequency sound. As a result, bass energy is not distributed uniformly—standing waves produce alternating zones of high and low sound pressure at certain frequencies. The fundamental, or lowest-frequency, standing wave on each room axis is the most troublesome, because it produces a pressure maximum near the room's boundary surfaces and a low-pressure null midway between them.

For example, if your left and right speakers are equally distant from the left and right walls, when you listen at

a point midway between the speakers your head is midway between the side walls—in the null for a major standing wave. When you sit in a chair your head may be halfway from the floor to the ceiling, in the null for a vertical standing wave. In any room the low bass is likely to be weakest in the middle of the room and strongest near the floor and walls.

Because of the close spacing of the loudness curves, modest changes in actual bass level may have large subjective effects. Bass that seems over-rich near a corner may be completely inaudible in the center of the room. After you invest in a subwoofer you'll probably need to experiment with its location—and that of your chair—to obtain satisfying results.

One Sub or Two?

Many subwoofers are so large and costly that buying more than one seems a silly extravagance. A single subwoofer is a practical solution since the low bass in most recordings is monophonic anyway. Still, there are real advantages to doubling up:

- A second subwoofer provides a 6-dB increase in low-bass levels. Thanks to the close spacing of the loudness curves, this is a substantial boost in perceived bass power.

- When sound waves are injected into a room from two sources instead of one, wave-interference effects diminish the severity of the standing waves. Result: a more uniform distribution of bass energy, especially if the second woofer is located along a different wall from the first. Four sources would be even better, if arrayed around the room. Dolby Surround encoding puts no deep bass in the surround signal, but with concert-hall ambience-simulation systems the use of full-range speakers (or even subwoofers) in the rear can produce noticeably greater realism.

- When an orchestra or pipe organ is recorded with widely spaced mikes the bass is *not* monophonic, and stereo woofers increase the realism of the playback at even the lowest frequencies. In the realm of subtle rather than spectacular pleasures, the reverberant ambience of a concert hall or cathedral contains a large random-phase component of low-frequency energy that, if recorded and reproduced with two or four channels, genuinely enhances the illusion of hearing an acoustical event in a real environment—imparting a quality of you-are-there realism that is difficult to appreciate until you experience it. □

ANDRÁS SCHIFF

The pianist speaks out on authentic instruments, "star" conductors, Glenn Gould, and more

"ONE must become tough, but remain sensitive." András Schiff was speaking of his schooldays, during which he seems to have taken a psychological battering, but in a sense the dichotomy can still be applied to him. Of his sensitivity there is no question. At thirty-nine, the Hungarian-born pianist has stirred critics and audiences to the highest praise for the translucence, intelligence, and tonal beauty of his musicmaking.

The toughness comes out in other ways and arises from the very nature of Schiff's musical character. He has been firm in following his truest artistic inclinations in exploring the quieter, nonbravura repertoire, concentrating on the music of Scarlatti, Bach, Mozart, and Schubert. And in the teeth of the movement toward authen-



PHOTO: LONDON RECORDS

BY SHIRLEY FLEMING

tic instruments, he has held steady in his conviction that Bach can be played successfully on the modern piano—an argument that his recording of the Goldberg Variations, among much else, should settle once and for all.

That is not to say Schiff shuns the blockbusters entirely. He has, for example, recorded the Tchaikovsky First Piano Concerto with Solti and the Chicago Symphony, and Chopin and Schumann with the Concertgebouw, all for London, with which he has an exclusive contract. But the intellectual rigors of earlier styles remain the focus of his attention, and in this he has often been compared to such pianists as Murray Perahia, Richard Goode, and Peter Serkin, none of whom show much interest in the virtuosic dazzle that makes headlines.

This seriousness of outlook is reflected in Schiff himself, who speaks with extreme quietness even when expressing some “tough” opinions—which he has no hesitation in doing. In appearance he is invariably described as “cherubic,” an adjective I would have found it hard to quarrel with as I sat down with him not long ago in his midtown New York hotel suite a couple of blocks from Carnegie Hall, where he was to play the next night with the Takács Quartet. Typically, Schiff counts chamber-music performances among his top priorities; he has recorded the Dohnányi Sextet and Quintet No. 1 and the Brahms Quintet with the Takács and the Schubert “Trout” with the Hagen. But his most celebrated recording collaboration to date is his series with fellow-Hungarian Sándor Végh and the Camerata Academica of Salzburg, with whom he is traversing the complete Mozart piano concertos. The partnership with Végh, the noted violinist and former quartet leader, is obviously a close one.

“A relationship either clicks immediately or gradually or not at all,” he said, “and I’ve found that not all chemistries work. When I first met Végh it was a revelation. There was something—a warmth—that touched my heart. He studied at the Liszt Academy in Budapest fifty years before I did. He is of a completely different generation, but it made no difference at all.”

Was their shared Hungarian birth a contributing factor? “Of course it was. Your roots stay with you. Being brought up in the Hungarian language means that our pulse is on the same wavelength. We feel the same about breathing and phrasing and tempos, about what to articulate rhythmically.



**“I played on
Mozart’s piano, in
the room where
he was born. . . .
The instrument
was wonderful,
and I decided to
record there.”**

But I’ve played with other Hungarians and didn’t get along well at all.”

A hint of Schiff’s toughness had emerged, it seemed, when the concerto series was in the planning stage. “The record company asked about my ideas for a conductor, and they didn’t like my answer. I definitely did not want to play Mozart with a star conductor. Star conductors don’t play chamber music, they don’t know a thing about the chamber-music attitude, about the delicate balancing of winds, strings, and piano. Végh is unconventional. He takes a lot of rehearsal, and he never continually beats time—he will sort of suggest the pace and let the music flow.” London will release the final disc in the series this fall.

SCHIFF, who has also recorded the complete Mozart piano sonatas, has gone on record with some fairly tart comments on the authentic-instrument movement, which he has viewed skeptically as primarily a search for novelty in a sea of indistinguishable performances. But, he said, a funny thing happened one day about two years ago in Mozart’s birth house in Salzburg. “I played on Mozart’s piano, in the room where he was born. It was a very moving experience, and

the instrument was wonderful. The touch is different, the sound is different, and you work the pedals with your knees. The colors are not at all like the modern piano’s—the bass is much better defined, not the cushioned sound we are accustomed to, and to make the instrument sing is very difficult. But the sound is gorgeous in that room, and I decided to use the piano to record there.”

So taken was he with the instrument, in fact, that he is rerecording some works already released in the London cycle (the sonatas K. 545 and K. 570 were issued last February). Schiff adds that he plans to make one recording a year in the Mozart House, some of which will be devoted to the violin sonatas, with his wife, Yuuko Shiokawa, playing Mozart’s violin. The first of these discs is already taped and will come out early this fall.

The path leading from Schiff’s childhood in Budapest in the 1950’s to his present eminence on the world’s concert stages suggests not toughness but a decisiveness in determining the course of his own life. The starting point was an unhappy period in his teens, when it was already clear that his was an extraordinary talent. The signs were visible at a very early age.

“I was an only child,” he said, “and though my mother had once thought of becoming a concert pianist, she never played after the war [both of Schiff’s parents lost close family members in concentration camps]. I could sing before I could speak, but I was naughty and restless, and my mother thought the piano would discipline me, so I began lessons when I was four or five. I had no patience for practicing, but I loved to play the radio and then improvise on what I heard. Mainly I liked to play soccer, and my mother never forced me to practice. My father, who was a gynecologist, played the violin and had a good collection of 78-rpm recordings of Hubermann and Szigeti. He died when I was six.”

At fourteen Schiff won what he terms “a silly competition—like all competitions” and appeared on television. It made him an overnight celebrity in Hungary “and gave me a lot of self-confidence.” He was immediately accepted at the Liszt Academy, where the normal entrance age was eighteen, and there, he says, his “self-confidence disappeared. It was obvious that I didn’t know much—a few Chopin nocturnes—and there was a lot of hostility toward me because of the television appearance. I didn’t feel very much liked, by either colleagues

or teachers, and at exams, for example, I felt *great* hostility. They were really very nasty to me, but it was good training. And it was the beginning of a slow process of study. I was not allowed to go on stage for many years, and rightly so."

But vistas were opening. Each summer Schiff visited relatives in England, and "being there was a great stimulation—living in a wonderful free Western country, with a flourishing cultural life, hearing music, going to the theater and museums." Musically it was a turning point: He met the distinguished harpsichordist and pianist George Malcolm, "who always treated me as an equal, not as a child," and who opened up the world of the Renaissance and Baroque—"virginal music, most of Bach, and Scarlatti. I am very grateful to him." And Schiff realized that it was important to expand his horizons beyond the limits of his "small country, very isolated."

At nineteen he entered the Leeds competition and did not progress beyond the first round (Murray Perahia was the winner). In 1974 he took fourth prize in the Tchaikovsky—the first Hungarian ever to get past the first round—and the next year entered the Leeds again, where he was among the finalists and garnered praise for a televised performance of Bach. Eventually, at twenty-six, he made a clear break from Hungary, turning his back on a reasonably comfortable life there and a secure position on the faculty of the Liszt Academy. Home today is divided between a flat in London and a house in Salzburg.

If Malcolm was a major influence on Schiff, Glenn Gould was another—to a point.

"Gould was a fascinating musician, and not just because of the eccentricities. I met him only the year before he died, but on my trips to England I had been buying his records to take home with me, and they were like fresh spring water. Gould liberated us from taking Bach academically. Pianists before him tended to play lugubrious fugues that went on and on and on, with no life, deadly and dead. But Gould showed us that this was living music, dancing and full of energy.

"What he did was wonderful. But then I began to ask questions. Why is there never legato? Why is every note detached? He sings aloud while he plays, but why does the piano never sing? And then I heard his recordings

of Mozart and Beethoven, and they were horrible. Interesting but crazy. He played the opposite of what the composer wrote, legato instead of staccato, that sort of thing, and I thought, my God, this man is pulling our leg. He was a very wonderful performer who had a lot of hang-ups. He always tried to prove a point. He could turn the music upside down and get away with it—and he could get away with it because there are a lot of stupid people out there.

"Take the playing of Edwin Fischer, whom I admire very much. Fischer is just the opposite of Gould. *The Well-Tempered Clavier* by Fischer is a great religious experience, like going to church. Bach's music is abstract, but not so abstract when you understand it within the German Protestant tradition. By knowing this whole culture, as Edwin Fischer certainly did, one knows how to characterize Bach's works. Gould either did not understand or did not care. Take the E-flat Minor Prelude and Fugue in Book I. It is a deeply religious piece, like a scene of the Crucifixion. Gould gives you a parody. It's like a Broadway show. If there is blasphemy in music, this is blasphemy. I'm not dogmatic—you can play it many different ways, but not the way Gould plays it."

With his commitment to the works of Bach and the Classical masters, it is

probably not surprising that Schiff professes little affinity for contemporary music. Even so, he designs the late-summer Austrian music festival at Mondsee, of which he is artistic director, around the music of a Classical composer and a twentieth-century figure—this year, Mozart and Debussy. "Of course, Debussy is not so contemporary," he admits, "but eventually I will get to the music of our time." In doing so he will doubtless have to fight a temptation to detour around the Second Viennese School.

"The music of Schoenberg—I cannot come close to it. That may be my problem, but if music remains so unaccessible to the public after sixty or seventy years, a long time, I wonder. . . . I don't find Berg, either, a healthy being. There is something unbelievably disturbed about him. I do play his Chamber Concerto, which is more pleasant to perform than to listen to. It's like a crossword puzzle—a feast for the intellect. But you get nothing of this from one hearing."

A glance at Schiff's discography, which numbers about forty discs, reveals one glaring gap. "Beethoven? I'm nowhere *near* ready to record Beethoven. I am learning the sonatas, a long process, and so far I have played half of them in concert. But they have been recorded by so many great masters. You must have something to say about them, or it's just another record. Eventually, of course, Beethoven is a must, if you are a serious musician. With Haydn, the situation is different. His sonatas—there are sixty-two—are not done at all, and they are fabulous. Perhaps I'll do them on the forte-piano." Schiff's immersion in Haydn has already come to fruition in two Haydn chamber-music festivals, the first in London, the second in New York City at the Metropolitan Museum in 1991. Both were warmly received.

For U.S. audiences, the most immediate focus is on Schubert: Schiff will play the complete sonatas next March at New York's 92nd Street Y. He has yet to record them (though a disc of impromptus will be out early next year), but it is a safe assumption that they will come in due course. "I want to be very careful not to overrecord," the pianist says. It is hardly likely, however, that he will wear out his welcome. □

Shirley Fleming was for many years the editor in chief of *Musical America* and is now in charge of live-music coverage for *American Record Guide*.

RECENT RECORDINGS BY ANDRÁS SCHIFF

BACH

Clavier Concertos, BWV 1052-1058

Chamber Orchestra of Europe

LONDON 425 676-2

● BRAHMS

Piano Quintet, Op. 34;

String Quartet, Op. 67

Takács Quartet

LONDON 430 529-2

● MOZART

Piano Sonatas K. 545 and 570;

Rondos K. 486 and 511;

Fantasy, K. 475

(fortepiano)

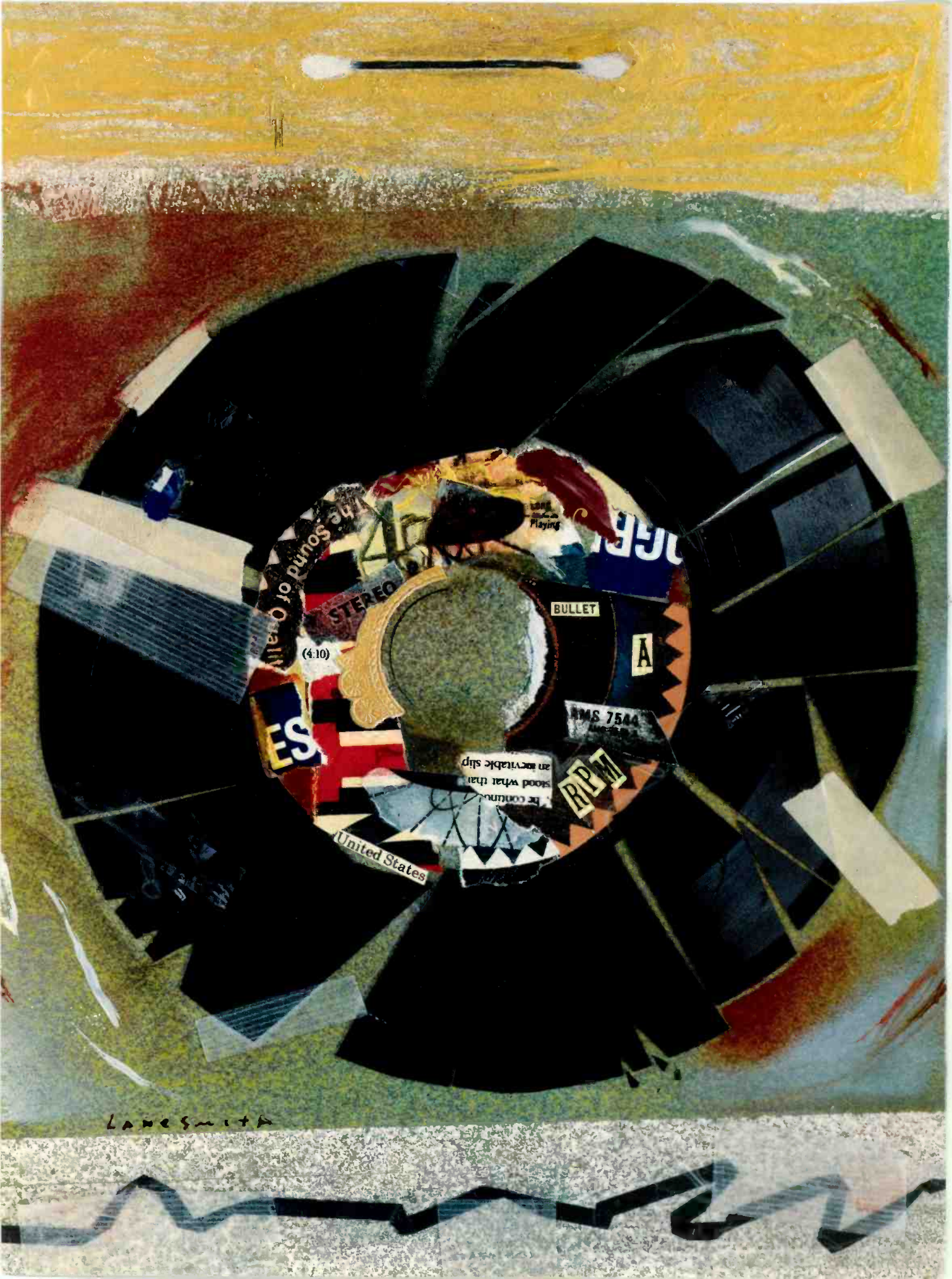
L'OISEAU-LYRE 433 328-2

● MOZART

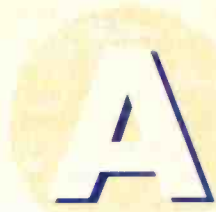
Piano Concertos Nos. 20 and 21

Camerata Academica, Salzburg; Végh

LONDON 430 510-2



LAMESMITA



AUDIO'S entry into the post-analog age has prompted some peculiar responses. For instance, after years of deriding digital sound, a salesman

of my acquaintance, whose main stock in trade was high-end turntables, unexpectedly embraced digital audio tape (DAT) as the savior of audio. As it turned out, he was figuring that scores of audiophiles would end up transferring their LP's to digital tape, and he wanted to sell them their last turntables. The scheme brought to mind a correspondent of mine who was concerned about preservation—not of his recordings, but of the *five* turntables he intended to buy before they disappeared from the market. He intended to use each one until it wore out, then drag a new one out of storage, but he was worried that the back-up units might deteriorate over time.

Few people go to these extremes, but there is a growing feeling that we must take positive steps if we are to continue enjoying the record collections we have built up over the years. It's already getting difficult to replace favorite vinyl recordings, and it will become impossible before very long. Analog tapes are likely to be around somewhat longer, but not forever, especially if one of the digital recording formats really takes hold. Some material has been rereleased in digital formats, to be sure, but it tends to be of recent vintage; many of those 1950's and 1960's records we cherish will never show up on compact disc or anywhere else.

Planning Ahead

There are two approaches to future enjoyment of your LP's and tapes, and chances are you will want to combine them to some extent. One approach is just to insure that you can still play the records or tapes themselves. The other, especially for music you'll want to hear often or for extremely rare, definitely irreplaceable recordings, is to copy the material to a less vulnerable medium: digital tape or a high-quality analog cassette. Not only vinyl can benefit from dubbing; many commercial cassettes were made with inferior tape stock and less-than-solid cassette shells. Copying these to better tape will keep them from deteriorating further.

However you plan to enjoy your recorded music in the future, there are

FAIR PLAY

How to coax

the last smidgen

of fidelity from

your soon-to-be-

irreplaceable

analog recordings

by Ian G. Masters

several steps you should take right now. The most important is to minimize the deterioration your recordings will suffer from now on. Look, for instance, at how they are stored: LP's should be stored on edge and packed tightly enough that they will stay that way, but not so tightly that the plastic is deformed. Both the position and packing will reduce the possibility of dust entering the sleeves and settling on the surfaces. Make sure each disc has its own plastic inner sleeve (available from audio dealers and record stores that still carry vinyl). Before you store your records for the future, a good wash with an appropriate record-cleaning product is advisable.

As for tapes, make sure each one has a box, and if you don't anticipate listening to it for a long time, play it through at normal speed and put it away without fast winding. The tape pack will be much smoother that way, reducing the likelihood of physical deformities. It's usually most convenient to have your tapes ready to go at the beginning of the recording, so winding the tape to the end of the first side and playing the second will leave the tape "head out." Storage is not all that critical as long as the tapes are kept away from extremes of heat and humidity and there are no stray magnetic fields to disrupt the recordings. Amplifier transformers, speaker magnets, television sets, and the like should be kept at a distance; even more destructive are magnetic door fasteners.

Pay some attention as well to the equipment you intend to play the recordings on. Although you can still upgrade or replace analog equipment, and no doubt you will be able to for some time to come, the selection *will* become smaller in the future, especially of turntables and cartridges. You should consider now what will probably be your last upgrade.

Unless it's a real cheapie, your present turntable is probably adequate for future use, but it may be advisable at least to check out its installation. A table that's slightly uneven, for instance, may not actually cause records to skip, but it might cause uneven wear that could become unpleasant in the future. Place a small spirit level on an LP on the stationary platter to help you level things up. Check the cables as well for oxide buildup on the connectors or intermittent discontinuities (if wiggling the cable makes crackling noises or creates hum, it should be replaced). Make sure also that the tonearm is properly adjusted in terms of both tracking force and antiskat-

ing—these can creep gradually out of alignment. And now is definitely the time to upgrade your cartridge; if there is significant mileage on your current one, it will have suffered some wear that can damage your vinyl. Replacing the stylus alone is an option, but replacing the whole cartridge usually costs just a bit more and could pay definite sonic dividends if you upgrade or buy a newer model.

With a cassette deck, it is even more important now to develop good habits with regard to cleaning and demagnetization. A magnetized head or capstan can gradually erase a tape, a little bit each time you play it, and that's a serious problem if the tape can't be replaced. Demagnetization kits are inexpensive and effective.

To Save or Copy

Proper maintenance of both your equipment and your recordings will insure that you will be able to enjoy them for years to come, so it's important to keep up good habits. Always clean records before using them, always store tapes without fast winding, and check your equipment now and then to make sure things haven't drifted out of alignment or become dirty.

Even with all these precautions, though, you'll probably decide that some of your recordings simply have to be copied. Favorites that you anticipate playing often (but can't find on CD) will definitely benefit from dubbing. Even if the copy is damaged, a new dub can be made; in the meantime, the possibly deleterious effects of repeated playing will not affect the original. The other circumstance in which copying is desirable is with recordings that are already damaged or worn: It may be possible to "cheat" one or two good plays from these, just enough to preserve them on tape.

The Working Copy

One basic rule in either case is to use the best recording equipment you can find. A DAT deck is ideal, but it would probably be overkill in the case of damaged recordings. (The half-speed, slightly lower-fidelity mode offered on some DAT recorders is very attractive, though, for dubbing old recordings that don't have a great deal of very high-frequency information; you could fit up to 4 hours of material on a single tape.) Even quite modest conventional cassette decks make superb recordings, but only if you take care to use tape that is matched to the recorder and the noise reduction that is adequate for the material at hand. And if

you are copying one tape onto another, use separate cassette decks rather than a two-transport dubbing deck. These decks are convenient, but they tend to offer lower performance than ordinary decks, especially in their high-speed dubbing modes.

Chances are, you are already proficient at making tapes, but when you make archival recordings it is even more important than usual to observe the rules with respect to level setting and to keep audible glitches at a minimum. Always listen to what you have done before you move on to the next stage; errors in level or false starts left uncorrected will bother you for years.

Vinyl Fixes

The LP is a mechanical medium and is subject to a number of problems that are purely physical in origin. Dirt can lodge in the grooves and be ground into the surface as the stylus passes over it; even when the offending material is removed, the audible damage remains. If the tracking force is set too low, the stylus may leave the surface for a moment, crashing back down and taking bits of vinyl with it. The soft plastic disc may become deformed in one way or another, causing noise or speed irregularities. There are techniques for dealing with all of these problems, and it's tempting to employ them all the time, just in case.

Don't. The record should be played as straight as possible, being doctored only as necessary. In most cases, repairs will cause some compromise in audio quality, and these compromises can quickly add up to a significant degradation.

Before you begin copying an LP, listen to it critically to find out what, if anything, needs fixing. It may simply need a good cleaning, or several if dirt has been building up over the years. You may never get it perfect, but a full-fidelity recording with a small bit of noise or a few ticks is probably better than a heavily processed one.

If cleaning still leaves unacceptable noises behind, try playing the disc in mono. That will effectively cancel out-of-phase information, including much of the noise caused by physical problems, which tends to be random in phase. It is also a very effective cure for rumble. The sacrifice of a stereo sound stage might be acceptable in the interest of noise reduction (and you should *always* dub in mono if the original was recorded that way).

If mono playback does seem to clean up a particular recording, you may have to do some juggling to re-

cord it that way—merely switching your amplifier or receiver to mono has no effect on what is fed to the tape deck. You will probably have to use a pair of Y-connectors back-to-back, or an audio mixer, to combine the left and right channels into one signal and feed it to both inputs of the tape recorder.

Another way to minimize physical noise is to play the record wet. Applying a thin layer of record-cleaning fluid or distilled water to the surface of a record can quiet things down wonderfully, but it does have its drawbacks. For one thing, once an LP has been played wet it must always be played wet. Also, the liquid tends to combine with residual dirt on the surface and deposit it as a rock-like substance on the stylus unless it is cleaned off immediately, before it has a chance to dry and harden. And the record must be allowed to dry thoroughly before it is returned to its sleeve.

There are hardware solutions to the problem of surface noise as well. One of the simplest is using an equalizer. Most noise is in the highest frequencies, where there is usually relatively little musical information, so knocking off the top octave or so can often make a dramatic difference in noise level, especially if equalization is combined with one of the other techniques. The resulting sound may seem a bit dull, but that may be preferable to the noise; if not, the portion of the spectrum just below the rolloff can be boosted a bit to enhance brightness.

Two kinds of specialized devices can be very effective at cleaning up noisy discs. Both have been off the market for a number of years, but used models show up in the classified ads now and again. The best-known example of one type is the SAE Model 5000 Impulse Noise Reduction system—the "click and pop machine." This and similar devices produced in the 1970's, such as the Burwen or KLH TNE-7000, sample a signal and cancel out sharp transients over a certain level. As long as such devices are set very carefully, so as not to clip off music peaks, they are effective in eliminating major scratches. The other type of device, introduced about the same time, is Phase Linear's Autocorrelator, which filters out all noise that is not harmonically related to the music—again, very effective if adjusted carefully.

For the professional and the truly

dedicated amateur, Packburn Electronics currently offers its Model 323A Audio Noise Suppressor, which combines features of the SAE 5000 and the Autocorrelator with several other techniques to perform transformations on the worst of recordings, including old 78's. Unfortunately, its \$2,650 price tag may deter all but the most dedicated or affluent archivists.

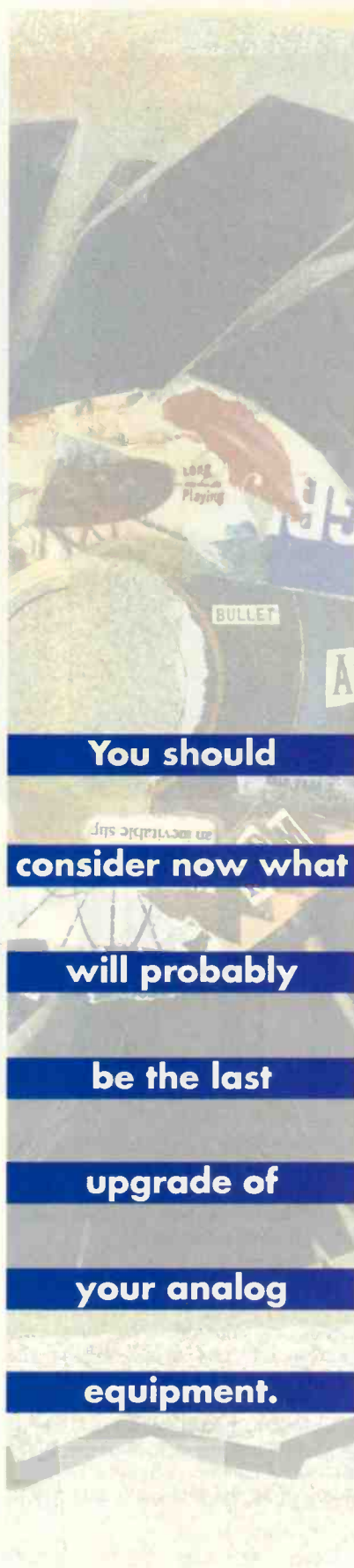
Vinyl deformations take two forms: warps and off-center pressings. Off-center pressings are mostly restricted to 45-rpm singles and can often be corrected by carefully removing the large center adaptor and adjusting the record's position on the turntable so that the tonearm no longer wavers back and forth. This is a tricky procedure, but it can result in a real sonic benefit for the patient singles fan. LP's that suffer from eccentricity are unusual, but unless the spindle in your turntable is removable, your only recourse is to enlarge the record's hole and try to line things up properly.

Slight warps can often be dealt with by means of special clamps or weights that are sold by several companies for that purpose. Alternatively, a record can sometimes be leveled by sliding bits of paper under the lower edge of the disc to bring it up to the height of the opposite side, or the edges can be temporarily bent down to platter level by small bits of strapping tape. If all else fails, placing a disc between two sheets of glass, weighted down, in a warm oven for a few minutes can sometimes flatten it enough to play. Let it cool down totally before putting it on the turntable, and don't be too surprised if there are a few audible "swishes" as the record turns.

Mending Tapes

Cassettes are prey to somewhat different problems from those of LP's. Ticks and pops are not a problem, for instance, nor are rumble and warps. But tape can become deformed in various ways, and the interaction of tape and shell can sometimes have audibly obnoxious effects as well.

Many problems with cassettes, however, have to do with how they were recorded, particularly if they were homemade, and some detective work may be necessary before you set out to make a dub. For instance, there's the issue of which noise-reduction system was used (if any). Few amateur recordists bother to mark on their tapes whether or not Dolby encoding was applied, let alone *which* Dolby system, and so you may have to deduce this by listening. That's not



You should

consider now what

will probably

be the last

upgrade of

your analog

equipment.

always easy, as the noise reduction may have been misadjusted during recording, or the tape may have been ill-matched to the recorder. There may even have been alignment problems with the recorder.

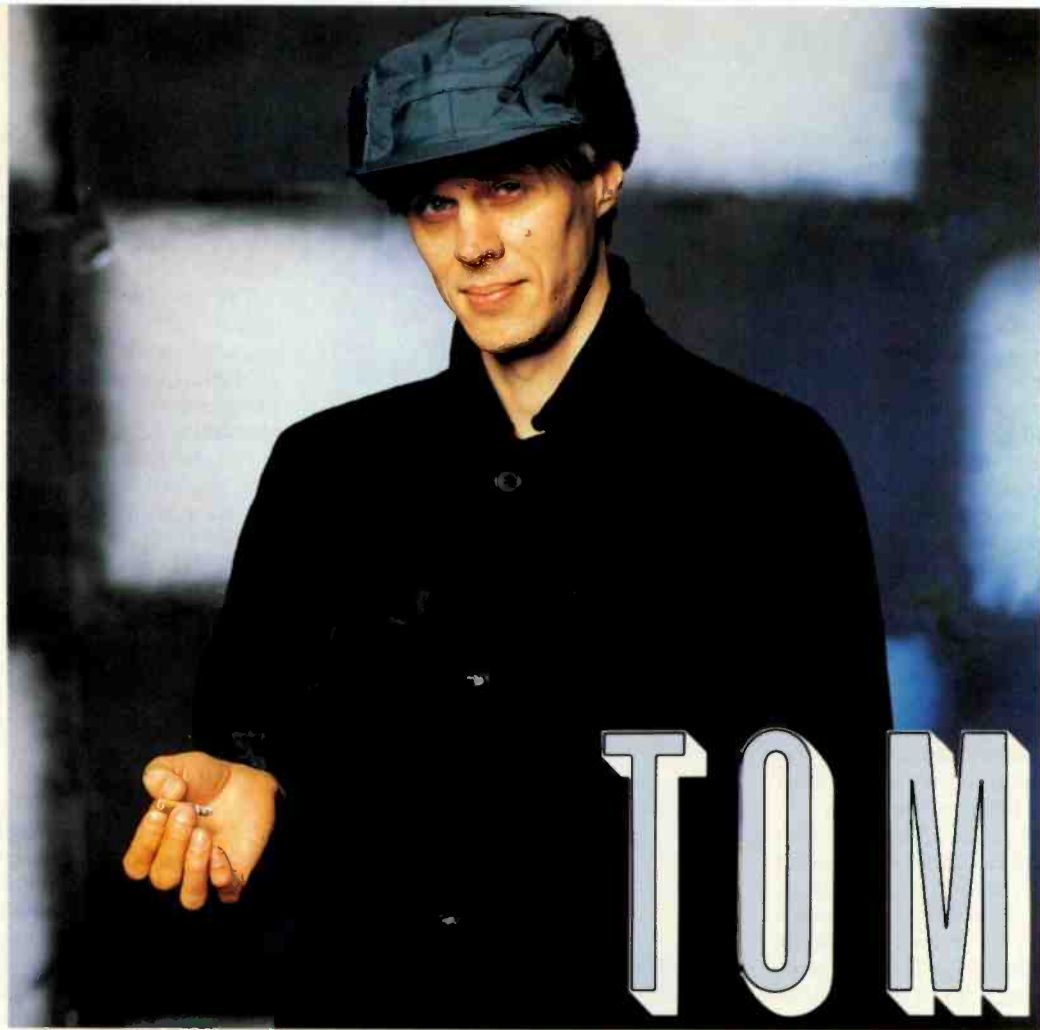
The best approach is to try all your options on playback and decide which sounds best. You may even be better off canceling all noise reduction and using a graphic equalizer to create a pleasant spectral balance. An equalizer can also help you handle some of the tape hiss that sneaks into some recordings even with noise reduction.

Whatever you use for the dub—Dolby B, Dolby C, your own equalization, or nothing—don't try to bypass a decode/encode cycle by playing a tape for dubbing without properly decoding the original noise reduction. It's almost impossible to get levels right without decoding, and you will almost always end up with worse sound than you started with.

Tapes can often be deformed at the edges because of winding problems in the past, and this sometimes results in poor tape-to-head contact with the outer (left) track, which in turn can wreak havoc with the stereo image and create other unpleasant effects. One solution is to use a closed-loop dual-capstan deck to play the tapes, as this usually offers a more intimate contact between head and tape than a single-capstan mechanism. Sometimes, using a toothpick to fluff up the pressure pad inside the cassette shell behind the tape will improve contact as well. If none of this works, playing the tape in mono is a last resort.

A very common problem with old tapes is a persistent squeal that develops over time. This may simply be a fault in the shell mechanism, in which case dubbing to a new tape will get rid of it, or it may affect the signal being fed to the rest of the system. Both the use of a dual-capstan deck and fluffing up the pressure pad are sometimes effective in curing tape squeals, but more drastic measures are often required. One of these is to buy a replacement cassette shell and transfer the tape to it. That's not an easy operation, but it's often the only way to correct the problem. Once the tape is transferred, you would be well advised to copy it and take advantage of a better grade of tape.

The techniques for reviving, restoring, and preserving your precious recordings do take time and dedication, but they're a small price to pay for the continued enjoyment of your favorite music. □



TOM VERLAINE

**After fourteen years,
can the original
New Wave guitar hero
get the commercial
respect he deserves?**

THE only time I ever met Tom Verlaine was back in 1973, thanks to a classified ad in the *Village Voice*: "Narcissistic rhythm guitarist wanted—minimal talent okay."

At that point in history, the twenty-four-year-old, New Jersey-born Verlaine was living in Manhattan's then highly unfashionable East Village under his real last name (Miller) and hanging around with Richard Myers, a pal since their late-Sixties days at a Delaware boarding school and in a short-lived band called the Neon Boys. As for me, I figured I was as narcissistic and minimally talented as

the next guy, so I decided to call him.

Consequently, one afternoon I showed up at Verlaine's roach-infested apartment and jammed briefly with the duo. Both guys were laconic in the extreme and had a certain (shall we say) attitude, but as I was leaving they said they were auditioning an old friend over the weekend, and if he didn't work out they'd get back to me.

They never did, of course. The friend was the great guitarist Richard Lloyd, and after that Verlaine, Myers (who soon changed his name to Hell and became notorious for inventing the punk look), Lloyd, and drummer

PHOTO BY FABIO NOSOTTI/AGI

B Y S T E V E S I M E L S

Billy Ficca (another school chum) started performing around the Bowery as Television. By the time they released their debut (independent) single, *Little Johnny Jewel*, in 1975, they had essentially created the entire CBGB scene, and they went on—with Fred Smith replacing Hell on bass—to become one of the most popular and influential of the first generation of New Wave bands, along with Blondie, the Ramones, Talking Heads, and Patti Smith.

Television folded in 1978 after two brilliant but only modestly successful albums on Elektra. Verlaine then embarked on a solo career, became a guitar hero to countless alternative and college-radio bands, and generally refined his image as the moody poet laureate of Eternally Disaffected Bohemians, Downtown Division.

So when I chatted with him by phone this spring—to discuss his latest solo album (his seventh) as well as the eagerly awaited Television reunion on Capitol—I was flattered and relieved that the first words out of his mouth were, “We met years ago, didn’t we? You answered our ad?” Reputation notwithstanding, he seemed like a thoroughly regular Joe, an unpretentious working musician rather than a tortured, mystical artiste.

“Warm and Cool,” Verlaine’s new solo album on Rykodisc, is all instrumental and thus something of a departure for a guy celebrated as much for his symbolist-influenced lyrics as for his guitar prowess. But Verlaine said he would have done it a long time ago, except that “no record label I was on was ever interested.

“It was like, ‘It’s a nice idea, but it’s not really worth it for us to issue it even if you pay for it yourself,’” he recalled. “So when I got off Phonogram, I figured, here’s a chance to do it for the fun of it and then sell it.”

Recorded with Ficca, Smith, and old CBGB chum Jay Dee Daugherty, “Warm and Cool” has a kind of Beatnik Jazz Meets Duane Eddy ambience. It’s moody rather than intense, and short on guitar pyrotechnics.

“I knew somebody would point that out,” Verlaine laughed. “But it’s not really a rock record. It’s kind of bluesy. There’s also something Fifties about it, and something—not in terms of sound but concept—sort of Oriental, in the sense of keeping it incredibly simple and leaving lots of space.”

Keeping it simple, apparently, involved having few rigid structures in place prior to making it. “The thing was recorded in two nights, and then

we spent about five days editing,” Verlaine said. “Basically a lot of it—maybe half, actually—is edited bits out of much longer things. They were all sort of ‘Oh, let’s try something’ [sessions]. It was strictly luck that everybody got the idea.”

Recording the new Television album, on the other hand, was a less improvisatory affair. It is, after all, the punk/New Wave equivalent of a Buffalo Springfield reunion, and consequently a lot of people have high expectations. Verlaine, however, professes not to be intimidated.

“I don’t have any image of the band,” he said. “To me it’s two guitars, bass, and drums; that’s always what it was. The second record was different from the first record, stylistically, and this will be different from both of them. Luckily we still have the same guitars.”

The album, due out in July but still untitled when we spoke, seems to have been motivated in part by a certain frustration with the industry.

“I had piles of unrecorded stuff,” Verlaine noted, “because I had such trouble with Phonogram. I signed with them in England around 1985, and I did one record, and they didn’t put it out. Then I did another one, and it came out two years later, and I did another one that

came out three years after it was recorded. In the meantime I wound up with this enormous pile of material, and I just thought it might be fun to do this again. Plus, I had played with Billy now and then, and Fred’s worked with me for the last ten years or so, so it’s not really such a big move even though a lot of people think it is. We were never estranged.”

Interestingly, given prevailing industry practice, the band members are producing the recording themselves. “Capitol seems really great to me,” Verlaine said about the label that also markets Garth Brooks. “They seem like the last record company that leaves you alone, whereas the new breed, all the new companies, seem to have remix mania.”

One of the reasons so many people still love Television is that it conjured up the excitement of New York City at

a moment of great artistic ferment. Verlaine, however, seemed unaffected by such Big Apple nostalgia.

“I lived in Europe off and on from 1984 to 1988, and I didn’t miss New York at that point, not at all,” he said, “although when I came back I noticed that a lot of places I used to go had disappeared. It’s funny how [that period] is perceived. I suppose it’s a part of history for many people. But I never look back at it, and I always do the same sort of things.”

One of those things is dabbling in prose, as witness the “extract from *Forty Monologues*” on the inner sleeve of his 1984 solo album “Cover.” And there’s a long-rumored Verlaine book in the works.

“Somebody approached me on it in 1985, and I still haven’t finished it,” he laughed. “Basically, it’s a box full of notebooks. I think it’s going to take having six months off and having a nice place to live. It seems like I never get enough time in a block away from

doing music. I’m always thinking I can, but it’s hard because you’re working in the studio or you’re rehearsing. It’s different from sitting down and just writing.”

Given Television’s schedule for the foreseeable future (“This is not a one-shot reunion,” Verlaine said emphatically), we probably won’t see

his book any time soon. The band plans to tour extensively, both in the States and overseas, where it had significant chart success in the early days. There may even be a video or two in the works, however odd that may seem considering the group’s old image as the Ice Kings of Rock.

The big question that remains is whether the general pop audience will finally connect with Television’s visionary brand of guitar-driven music. Post-Nirvana, of course, perhaps the time is right, but Verlaine dismisses the idea that he and his colleagues may have been the most influential guitar ensemble since the Yardbirds.

“The whole reputation of being a rock guitar player, I could really care less about it,” he said. “Still, when I hear new groups today I do occasionally hear something where I think . . . ahh, I’ve heard that lick before.” □

VERLAINE ON CD

TELEVISION: *Marquee Moon*. ELEKTRA.
Strangled vocals, great surrealist pop songs (*Venus de Milo*), and the guitars that (nearly) conquered the world.

TELEVISION: *Adventure*. ELEKTRA.
More of the same, except the songwriting’s even better and the ensemble playing is more focused.

TOM VERLAINE: *Warm and Cool*. RYKODISC.
Though none of Verlaine’s six previous solo efforts are available domestically, this all-instrumental hipster jam session suffices.

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reason not to
buy an Onkyo
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antiques.

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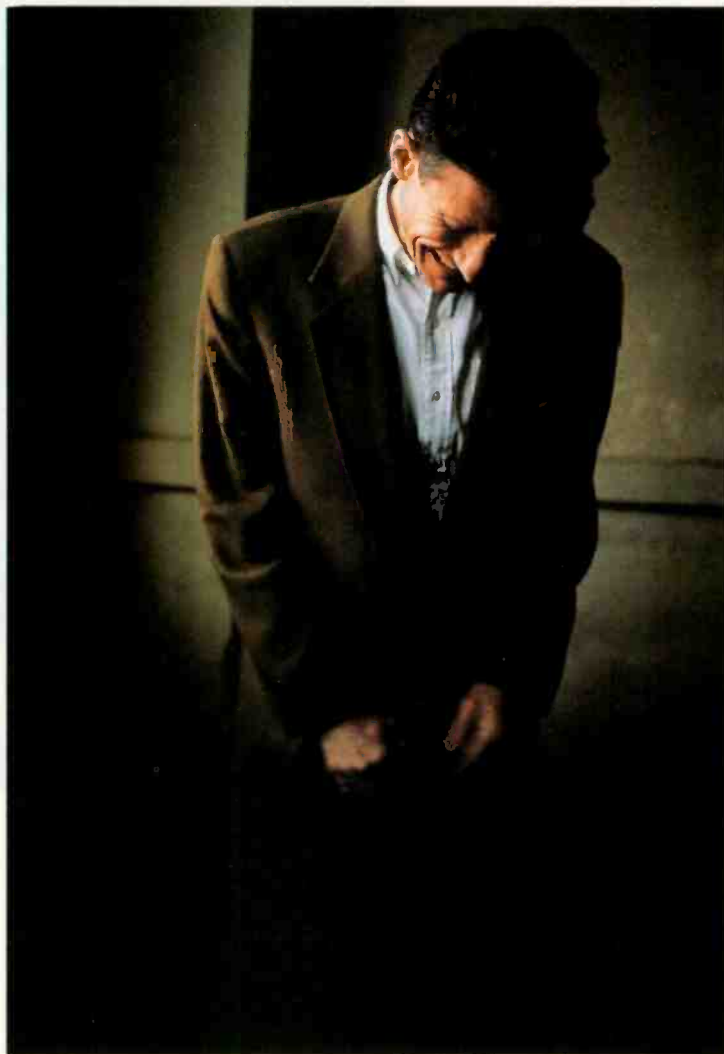
Lyle Lovett's Great American Album

To hang a label on Lyle Lovett's latest album, "Joshua Judges Ruth," would mean stringing together a bunch of categories with hyphens—you know, pop-soul-country-blues-folk-rock-gospel-etc. But doing so would miss the effortless and unbounded way Lovett has broken down the barriers. Like a sprawling novel by Twain or Dos Passos, the album roves across the American landscape with wit and perspicuity, the lyrics couched in a folksy vernacular while a sophisticated cultural commentary runs between the lines. Is "Joshua Judges Ruth" the Great American Album? Lovett himself is too down to earth for such hyperbole, but there's enough homespun wisdom and food for thought in this modest masterpiece that it has to be considered one of the nominees for that title.

The album takes its name from three successive books of the Bible, and a good portion of it is steeped in the holy-rolling atmosphere of the charismatic church. Sins and misdeeds battle it out in a timeless showdown with the will to lead a clean and decent life, and the specters of death and an eternal reckoning are never very far out of sight or mind. The ever-present temptation to stray from a right path is defined most forthrightly in *You've Been So Good Up to Now*, a feverish blues about one man's downfall. It's a classic slice of hard-driving Southern rock that could have come from the Allman Brothers Band.

Lovett dwells on death, with a spectral quiver in his voice, in a trio of songs: *Since the Last Time* (scenes from a funeral, both funny and sobering), *Baltimore* (about cycles of life and death, with the city standing for the restlessness that steals young ones away from family ties), and *Family Reserve* (wherein Lovett resurrects a gallery of friends and relatives who have died.) Comedy and sadness intermingle, especially in *Since the Last Time*, with its priceless opening verse, "I went to a funeral / Lord it made me happy / seeing all those people I ain't seen / since the last time somebody died." After a raucous sendoff full of tears and laughter, the last verse is sung by the deceased: "Thank you, you've been so nice / All my friends, they came / Now close the lid down tightly and quit cryin'."

In *Church* Lovett takes a good-humored poke at the earthly preoccupations of God's flock. When stomachs start growling after the preacher has



sermonized long past the dinner hour, the choir takes up a chant: "To the Lord let praises be / It's time for dinner now, let's go eat." Behind them, the band launches into a wicked second-line groove. Lovett's churchy brand of country-funk also turns up in *I've Been to Memphis*, a song whose rhythmic ingenuity does that town proud, and *She Makes Me Feel Good*, which adds a touch of good-time swing.

On the quieter side, Lovett slips into a folk mode for *She's Already Made Up Her Mind*, which vividly details a lover's decision to leave, and *All My Love Is Gone*, an angrily simmering song delivered with exquisite bluesy locution.

Nashville cats will love *She's Leaving Me Because She Really Wants To*, a lively, pedal steel-filled country-and-western workout that would ennoble any barroom jukebox. On the evidence of "Joshua Judges Ruth," Lyle Lovett is arguably the finest songwriter working in any pop genre right now, and the album is a must-own. *Parke Puterbaugh*

LYLE LOVETT: *Joshua Judges Ruth*

I've Been to Memphis; Church; She's Already Made Up Her Mind; North Dakota; You've Been So Good Up to Now; All My Love Is Gone; Since the Last Time; Family Reserve; and four others
(CURB/MCA)

Wayne Horvitz's "Miracle Mile"

SOMEWHERE north of rock and west of jazz sit Wayne Horvitz and his six-man band, the President. But don't confuse their musical approach with your common, garden-variety fusion. This isn't simply jazz hitched to a rock-and-roll sensibility, or jazz gone funky or soulful for r-&-b ears, or jazz pasteurized and prettified for the fern-bar set. You can hear little snippets of music in their new album, "Miracle Mile," that point in all these directions and more. Horvitz & Co. are willing to use any riff, any texture, any sound-bite, as long as it gets the point across. The performances here summon up visual images and emotional nuances of an amazing variety.

Take the first cut, *The Front*. At the start, you hear what sounds like a coyote yelping and a cricket chirping (or maybe it's a synth loop and a guy growling). Then, on top of that, comes a tinkly repeating synthesizer riff and some tinkly percussion. Then, on top of that, come some sustained electric-keyboard chords and a tenor sax playing what seems to be a somber lullaby. Then, over all that, wash some more cymbals. Once all of these musical motifs are introduced, everything changes. The various elements begin to drop out and return in various patterns. The tune becomes a bleak, constantly shifting aural landscape, broken up only by nasty bursts of electric-guitar distortion, much like radio static, and tiny, sharp, keyboard twangs and swoops. To listen to this performance is to understand that something, whatever it is, has gone terribly wrong.

The other compositions on the album are the same, only different. Most of them start out with a keyboard pattern and then carefully add exquisite, tightly controlled layers of other sounds. You might describe this as minimalism because of the repetitive nature of the building-block riffs. But sometimes, unexpectedly, a blowing session erupts, as



ELEKTRA NONESUCH

in *Shuffle*, where the rhythm section swings along with a hopping tenor sax, or *Yuba City*, where a garbage-can backbeat, some pneumatic electric guitar, and a ululating tenor sax shift into a full-bore, unstructured rave-up.

The music in "Miracle Mile" has an almost narrative quality. Even better, you never quite know where things are headed. It's almost impossible to know where the compositions leave off and the

improvisations begin. Nothing is obvious; everything is mysterious. You must keep listening, if only to learn how these audio narratives end. *Ron Givens*

WAYNE HORVITZ AND THE PRESIDENT: *Miracle Mile*

The Front; *Variations on a Theme by W.C. Handy*; *I'm Downstairs*; *An Open Letter to George Bush*; and four others (ELEKTRA NONESUCH)

The Met's Model "Figaro"

IN the Deutsche Grammophon recording of the Metropolitan Opera production of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, the company emerges as a true world-class ensemble in what must surely be one of the best recent versions of this peerless opera. James Levine's unhurried and loving treatment recalls Erich Kleiber's exemplary Viennese recording of three decades ago in its

meticulous attention to Mozart's delicate scoring and its overall flexibility. The model pacing of the duet "*Crudel, perché finora*," with subtle rubatos and firm yet accommodating treatment of the singers, is a good example of Levine's leadership, and he never fails to secure a glowing orchestral sound from the Met musicians.

The principals are all seasoned inter-

preters of their roles. Dawn Upshaw's lively and irresistible Susanna finds a good foil in Ferruccio Furlanetto's darkly resonant Figaro. Furlanetto is relentlessly jovial throughout the opera, and his "*Se vuol ballare*" overflows with jollity. A dash of menace would make for a fuller portrayal, but what is offered is substantial and entertaining.

In contrast with this earthy pair, both



WINNIE KLOTZ/METROPOLITAN OPERA



Thomas Hampson and Dawn Upshaw

Almavivas are suitably aristocratic. The role of the Countess suits Kiri Te Kanawa's silken tone and gorgeous legato to perfection. If Thomas Hampson's youthful-sounding Count suggests more impulsiveness than authority, he has some excellent moments. Anne Sofie von Otter is not the liveliest of Cherubinos, but she is vocally impeccable. The cast is rounded out with the luxurious contributions of Tatiana Troyanos as a rich-toned Marcellina and Paul Plishka as a ripe and properly morose Bartolo, and there are no weak links in the other roles.

Appoggiaturas are sparingly employed, and a few *fermatas* could have

used some embellishment, but Upshaw is allowed a lovely interpolated cadenza in her "*Deh vieni, non tardar.*" Marcelina's and Basilio's oft-omitted (and dispensable) arias are retained and decently sung; Craig Rutenberg is the restrained but imaginative forte pianist. The set is richly annotated, too. Compliments all around. *George Jellinek*

MOZART: *Le Nozze di Figaro*

Thomas Hampson, Kiri Te Kanawa, Dawn Upshaw, Ferruccio Furlanetto, Anne Sofie von Otter, Tatiana Troyanos, others. Metropolitan Opera Chorus and Orchestra, James Levine (DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 431 619-2 three discs)

Monteux's Tchaikovsky: A Happy Discovery

THE belated discovery and release on CD of a 1963 all-Tchaikovsky concert recorded by Pierre Monteux, then eighty-eight, with the London Symphony Orchestra at the Vienna Festival brings us a musical experience of the very first order. Amazingly, the twenty-nine-year-old recording has extraordinary presence and tonal body.

The tapes of the concert were mislaid, and many years went by before they were discovered, still in mint condition. Nothing is known about why the tapes were made, but presumably they were for Monteux's private use, not for release by Vanguard. When Vanguard closed its Vienna recording studio in 1968, the tapes turned up in a shipment of company material to the U.S. office, but no one had any notion of their significance until two years ago.

The first piece is *Romeo and Juliet*, which Monteux never recorded for commercial release. From the very first measures, one is aware of the utterly just pacing and the superb phrasing and articulation. There is both volatility and weight in the reading, and the love music has genuine passion and tenderness without one whit of sentimentality. A great performance.

The First Piano Concerto is another first on record for Monteux. The soloist is the British virtuoso John Ogdon, and the performance ranks with the best. The piano has tremendous body without in any way overpowering Monteux's rock-steady yet subtly flexible accompaniment. There is power aplenty from both soloist and orchestra, and tenderness, too, in the slow movement, where Ogdon does a dazzling job with the central scherzando episode. Like the *Romeo and Juliet*, the concerto performance suggests a wonderful feel for the music's organic ebb and flow, with the soloist,

conductor, and orchestra working as one.

The final work is the Fifth Symphony, the most balletic of Tchaikovsky's "big three," which seems made to order for Monteux. Again, the utter rightness of the pacing and the tempo relationships is apparent throughout the first movement. While the great solo-horn melody may be the most memorable element of the slow movement for some listeners, what stands out for me is Monteux's handling of the woodwind dialogue midway through. The waltz movement features flawless articulation by the strings and winds of the tricky episode in sixteenth

notes. The finale is splendid, with irresistible momentum (no vulgarity but plenty of vital juice) and always the sense that orchestra and conductor know exactly where the music is headed.

All in all, this is a wonderfully satisfying record, and its release at this late date is a minor miracle. *David Hall*

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Romeo and Juliet*; Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 23; Symphony No. 5, Op. 64

John Ogdon; London Symphony Orchestra, Pierre Monteux (VANGUARD CLASSICS OVC 8031/2 two CD's)



The conductor Pierre Monteux in 1950, at the age of seventy-five

PHOTO: RCA VICTOR

At a time when many of today's recordings are assembled in a sterile, paint-by-numbers fashion, producer Jeffrey Weber prefers to take a much more adventurous approach: He puts the musicians in a room, lets them cut loose, and captures the entire performance live on a two-track recorder.

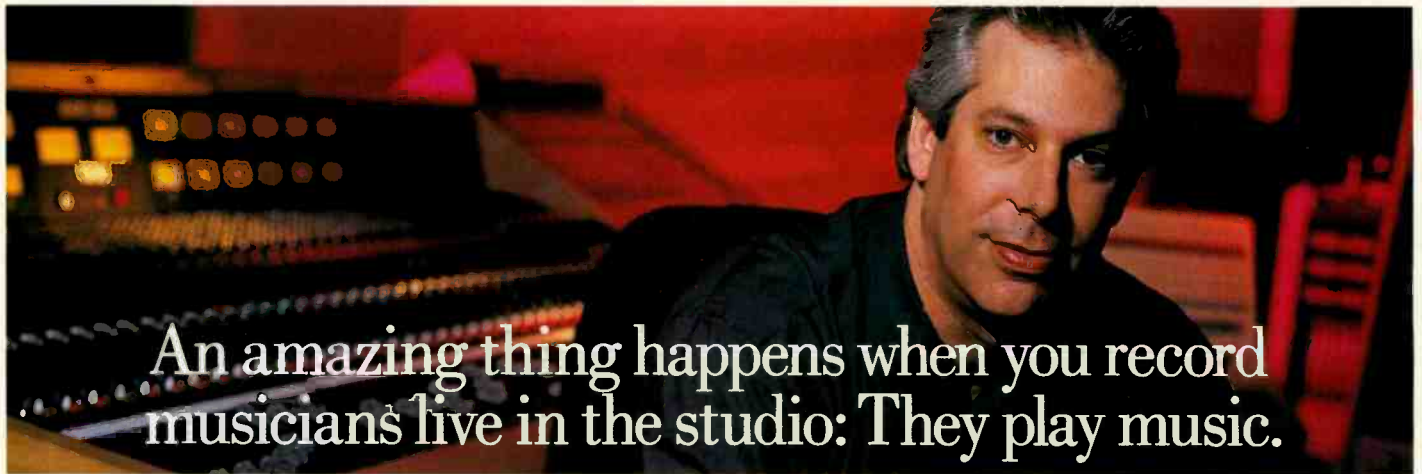
It's a way of working that can strike terror into even the most seasoned session

improvisation is weaved together with the majesty of African vocals from the 31-member L.A. Mass Choir.

You can actually feel the musicians swaying in time to the music on this incredible session. This is due to the clarity of live to two-track recording, the dedication of the performers, and the



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An amazing thing happens when you record musicians live in the studio: They play music.

players, but the results often border on magical. Take *Evolution*, featured on *The Usual Suspects* from Sheffield Labs.



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As this infectious, seven-minute tribute to rhythm builds, listen carefully, and see if you can detect where the metamorphosis takes place from ancient tribal chants to a contemporary hip-hop groove. Then pay close attention to the way that the ensuing progression to jazz

painstaking amount of preparation that Jeff puts into his sessions.

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BLACK SORROWS

Harley & Rose

COLUMBIA

Performance: Rooty and real

Recording: Very good

The Black Sorrows is an Australian group that's more like an old-style troupe or revue than a rock band. The eight members, representing both genders and several races, make folkish barroom rock-and-roll spiced with soul, country, and ethnic idioms. The result in "Harley & Rose" is a thirteen-song delight that will alternately have you dancing jigs and crying in your beer.

Stateside recognition has been a long time coming for head Sorrow Joe Camilleri, a Malta-born musician who led Australia's homeland faves Jo Jo Zep and the Falcons until 1982 and then recorded on his own label before assembling the Black Sorrows. He has chosen and assimilated his influences well—everything from "Basement Tapes"-era Dylan and vintage Rod Stewart and Van Morrison to early Dire Straits, Graham Parker, and Elvis Costello. To say Camilleri now belongs in that company is no exaggeration. Co-composing all but one of the songs here with one N. Smith (neither a band member nor credited anywhere else on the album), Camilleri has written a batch of solid roots-rock selections and a couple of outright stunners: *Hold It Up to the Mirror*, which rises from a soulful simmer to a boil, closing with a knockout blast of a *cappella*, and *Cannonball Cafe*, a horn-stoked, rootsy slab of outback rhythm-and-blues that's a pure joy to hear. Guitarist Wayne Burt contributed the closing number, *Calling Card*, a country-flavored tune about renewal that's reminiscent of the rustic, rolling cadences in the Band's version of *Wheel's on Fire*.

The Black Sorrows sing about roustabouts, rounders, and down-on-their-luck characters who

OPENING ACTS

UGLY KID JOE

As Ugly as They Wanna Be (STARDOG)

How did this slumming-but-funny California band manage the first debut EP to crack the Top 10 album charts in memory? Simple: with wise-guy, melodic, postpunk pop metal that could be the Replacements with less distinctive chops and a more likable juvenile attitude. C'mon—you think it was an accident their adolescent hostility anthem *Everything About You* (as in "I hate") was featured in *Wayne's World*? S.S.



MERCURY/POLYGRAM



POPULAR MUSIC

Discs and tapes

reviewed by Chris Albertson,
Phyl Garland, Ron Givens,
Roy Hemming, Alanna Nash,
Parke Puterbaugh, and
Steve Simels

don't quite win but never give up. They flavor their trad-rock musical stew with violin and twelve-string (check out the starburst intro to *Love Goes Wild*) as well as horns and Hammond organ. Aside from one dubious bit of programming—putting *Never Let Me Go*, an over-the-top soul number with screeching female vocals, second—"Harley & Rose" is well-nigh perfect. P.P.

RUTH BROWN

Fine and Mellow

FANTASY

Performance: Sweet

Recording: Good

Listening to this new Ruth Brown album is like taking a stroll down memory lane and on into the kind of crowded, smoke-filled club where countless organ-and-vocal combos delighted weekend crowds in bustling urban centers three and four decades ago. The music being played was rhythm-and-blues, and back then nobody sang it better than Ruth Brown. Nobody sings it better today, either.

Of the three albums Brown has made since her return to regular studio work four years ago, including the Grammy-winning "Blues on Broadway," this new one may be the best. In "Fine and Mellow" she presents a selection of classic blues, swing-era evergreens, and pop songs associated with male r-&-b singers. One of the most satisfying is her rendition of *It's Just a Matter of Time*, which was a hit for Brook Benton a few decades ago. Brown gives it a feminine twist that lends it a fresh luster.

She's in fine voice throughout, and her interpretations are all so surefooted that they remind us how accomplished an artist she has always been. Frank Owens has supplied arrangements that fully capture the flavor of an earlier era, and Bobby Forrester's organ work is first-rate. Highly recommended. P.G.

DAVID BYRNE

Uh-Oh

SIRE

Performance: Byrne at his best

Recording: Full-bodied

David Byrne's first real solo album, "Uh-Oh," successfully integrates his consuming interest in Latin music with the ironic, song-oriented persona he developed with Talking Heads. It's an undertaking superficially similar to Paul Simon's pancultural synthesis but funnier, more naturalistic, and less self-consciously arty. Rhythmically, it's got the jittery feel of vintage Heads sewn in among a rich fabric of Latin polyrhythms. His core band includes three percussionists joined by a horn section of mambo-size proportions and other instruments that range from the exotic to the unpronounceable. Nevertheless, "Uh-Oh" is so seamless and flowing it's easy to overlook the tremendous amount of craft that went into it.

The dark, sarcastic lyrics to the songs amount to an unrestrained indictment of a world that's sinking into a morass of dirty politics and ecocatastrophe. Ironically, they're carried by chipper, percolating tunes that provide buoyant beats for dancing in the ruins. Byrne elaborates here on many of the same themes of crisis and collapse he developed in "Naked," Talking Heads' bleakest album, but the musical focus has shifted from Africa to Brazil.

Twistin' in the Wind lambastes Washington's political establishment with a venomous contempt that accurately expresses the national mood and then assails the aimless preoccupations of the American family. *She's Mad* poses the rhetorical question, "If sex is a weapon, who's winning this war?" The music takes a forlorn, angry turn on *Monkey Man* while Byrne cheerlessly outlines a de-evolutionary, apocalyptic future: "Monkey man, DNA and evolution / Slide on down / Say goodbye, civilization." In *Somebody* he raises the specter of evil lurking on the fringes of everyday life with ghostly, ethereal vocals, until the song changes tempo with the cry, "We gotta start all over!"

He's right, you know.

P.P.

TRACY CHAPMAN

Matters of the Heart

ELEKTRA

Performance: Preoccupied

Recording: Very good

Tracy Chapman could never be confused with some chatty airhead making casual conversation at happy hour, but there are times she's so



JEFFREY SCALISE/ELEKTRA

damned solemn you want to scream, "Lighten up, girl!" Her third album is a case in point—ten downer songs about isolation, romantic frustration, feminist anger, the socialization of violence, and capitalist exploitation. Chapman produced it herself, with the help of Jimmy Lovine and the backing of guests Vernon Reid of Living Colour, Roy Bittan of the E Street Band, and Mike Campbell of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, and it is a finely textured record, with mandolin, percussion, and violin over chiming guitars. And some of the songs are fine work, most notably *Bang, Bang, Bang*, the story of a deprived ghetto youth destined to grow up with a gun in his hand, and *The Love That You Had*, where her deep, dusky alto probes every corner of her lover's psyche: "Tell me, who hardened your heart / Who turned it to stone?" But too many of these songs, such as the nautical *I Used to Be a Sailor*, just float by without making much of an impression.

Chapman would do well not to co-produce next time and to listen more to someone else's ideas of how to flesh out her emotive wanderings. Confessions, as well as passionate convictions, are always good for the soul. But to work as art, they often need more substance and form than Chapman offers here. **A.N.**



CHIC
Chic-ism
ATLANTIC
Performance: Funky but Chic
Recording: Stellar

The chant of "something you can feel" recurs in a song of the same name in "Chic-ism," and they're not kidding. Chic makes dance music that matters, laying down irresistibly pleasurable grooves that establish a connection with the ears as well as the feet. "Chic-ism" offers a chance to discover one of the few acts that transcended and outlasted the disco phenomenon of the Seventies. It almost defies the listener *not* to get caught up in its sleek, alluring web of sound and rhythm. The instrumental end is defined by the sternum-rattling bass playing of Bernard Edwards and the agile, clear-toned rhythm guitar of Nile Rogers. Add tart female voices, a whomping (but not monotonous) beat, and kinetic, sparing orchestration, and you've got the ingredients in Chic's recipe for high-gloss soul.

They prefer to call it *Chic Mystique* in the opening and closing track, and it's based on the notion of a musical quick fix for the traumas of urban life: "Forget your problems / The groove will solve them / Dance with me." The rest of "Chic-ism" rarely lets up in quality or intensity. *Chic Mystique* segues with a taut, bubbling bass line into *Your Love*, a swirling maelstrom of a song that just might be Chic's finest, rivaling even the classic *Good Times*. And don't fail to check

out the title cut, a quick-tongued throwdown that outfunks Prince at his own game.

With their manicured but funky black-tie grooves, Chic is somewhat out of step with current trends—polish being reserved mainly for balladry and driving tempos for more ragged funk and hip-hop on today's charts. But faddishness scarcely seems to matter when you're confronted with music of such liberating energy and power. In other words, Chic is still chic. **P.P.**

DEF LEPPARD
Adrenalize
MERCURY

Performance: Pop goes the metal
Recording: Okay

Some people make music for the space between their ears. Some people make music for a living room full of friends. Some people make music for a grungy club of punks. Def Leppard makes music for a football stadium filled to overflowing. Every over-the-top guitar snarl, every simple-enough-to-shout-along catchphrase is gauged to keep the interest of that kid in the black T-shirt who's wobbly from vertigo in the top row of the end zone.

"Adrenalize," the Leppards' fifth album, is just as catchy as their previous work, if not catchier, and will likely become dodeca-Platinum as easy as kidney pie. And why not? The world has enough serious, mature, angry rockers. Def Leppard would rather keep it simple, with quick, punchy guitar riffs and a straight-from-the-crotch philosophy. These songs are devoted to one adolescent fantasy after another—*Let's Get Rocked*, *Make Love Like a Man*, and *I Wanna Touch U* are just what you think they are—with music that pounds their hormone-heavy attitudes home. It's rarely more than 6 inches deep, but even mindless fun is still fun. **R.G.**

RODNEY DILLARD
Let the Rough Side Drag
FLYING FISH
Performance: Past prime time
Recording: Good

As part of the Dillardards, Rodney Dillard appeared in numerous episodes of *The Andy Griffith Show*, pickin' and grinnin' behind ol' Ange. Later he gained respect in bluegrass circles when he and his brother, Doug, plugged in their instruments and recorded material that crossed over to a rock audience. Now fifty, Rodney Dillard long ago split from his brother and embarked on a series of solo releases. "Let the Rough Side Drag" contains both old-style country (Jim-

mie Rodgers's *Blue Yodel #4*) dressed up in a rollicking tempo and traditional bluegrass (Reno and Smiley's *Sawin' on the Strings*), as well as a pale rendition of *Last Thing on My Mind* and a rocking version of the Jesse Winchester title tune.

Dillard does his best to sound lively and contemporary, but too often his colorless tenor sounds caught in a time warp. His version of *Sawin' on the Strings*, with Beverly Cotten Dillard's driving clawhammer banjo, burns like a house afire, but it also seems left over from decades ago. And his *Daddy Was a Mover* would be an effective country-rocker in the hands of someone who knew how to deliver the evocative images with real punch—someone like, say, Marshall Tucker. As it is, Dillard will probably pack everything up and head for the little town where this album was recorded—Branson, Missouri, a haven for acts who haven't had a hit record since Porter Wagoner had Dolly Parton. Elephants always seem to know how to find their burial ground, but with a few dozen decent songs, Dillard could delay that final move for a while. Here's hoping he does. **A.N.**

AL GREEN
Love Is Reality
WORD/EPIC

Performance: Pop gospel
Recording: Satisfactory

In the recordings Al Green has made since he was ordained a minister, he has recreated his gospel selections by investing them with the same controlled energy and smoldering passion that marked his earlier secular work. Everything he sings has an edge of the sensual to it, no matter what the words are saying. In his new "Love Is Reality," he has set aside almost all the divisions between the sacred and the secular; at times singing of the Almighty and at others appealing to what seems to be some far more mundane entity. Often the beat is so propulsive, as in the opener, *I Can Feel It*, that there is no hint of religious intent until the lyrics begin (in this case we learn that the song is about a young boy learning about Jesus from his mother).

This would have been a better album if the gospel flavor were stronger, but Green pulls it all off with his customary aplomb. He is most appealing in *Just Can't Let You Go*, a love song with a lovely, lilting melody that shifts into high gear when he works over the phrase "Hold on," and in numbers like *You Don't Know Me*, where a choir helps to generate the excitement of true gospel (Green even incorporates a little religious rap into this one). Recommended. **P.G.**

Def Leppard: playing to the cheap seats



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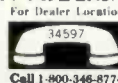
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THE JAZZ BUTCHER

Condition Blue

SKY

Performance: Worth checking out

Recording: Fair

The Jazz Butcher has recorded prolifically for a variety of labels, in any number of contexts, with a shifting cast of musicians. Hard to pin down but easy to enjoy, he enters his second decade with this set of clever, insightful songs that could have come from the singer/songwriter side of early-Eighties New Wave. His voice recalls the dry, conversational sing/speak of Lloyd Cole, and he knocks out tunes with a literate folk-punk cast to them, favoring guitars. One moment he's leading a spunky six-string jamboree with a Bo Diddley beat and the head-scratching chorus. "I've had a thing about Shirley Maclaine since I was so high." The next he's slipped into a Velvet Underground-style rumination, titled *Racheland*, with a gentler, more serious center. "Harlan says we're not alone," he sings in the moody *Harlan* (named after the science-fiction writer Harlan Ellison), a song that's typical of his wandering, bittersweet muse. There are slightly more pensive songs than ravers here, as "Condition Blue" lives up to its downcast title. But there's much to savor, and this is a fine place to make the Jazz Butcher's acquaintance.

P.P.

DAVID ROTH/ATLANTIC



King's X: God is in the details

KING'S X

King's X

ATLANTIC

Performance: Rock and soul

Recording: Good

Praise King's X! On their fourth album, this power trio again demonstrates why they stand out in the hard-rock crowd. Musically, they manage to seem heavy and light at the same. Ty Tabor's guitar ripples with metal muscularity, while Doug Pinnick's bass and Jerry Gaskill's drums are, at times, downright bouncy. Like the best of rock trios, these guys are light on their feet. King's X can hit the brakes or step on the gas and no one gets left behind. They enthusiastically go wherever their musical instincts take them.

The lyrics here are just as intense as in the past, seriously probing the problems of life. *Lost in Germany*, for example, captures the helpless frustration of a fracturing relationship: "Shooting at a target that eludes me / Hammering on a nail that just won't go in / Biting on a tongue that wants to speak out / Searching for a light that I can't shine." King's X finds answers to many of their questions in religion, but they're never heavily-handed about it. They testify, but they never preach. You don't have to believe in God to believe in King's X.

R.G.

WAYNE KRAMER

Death Tongue

PROGRESSIVE

Performance: Very loud

Recording: Appropriately murky

In which the former MCS guitarist/noisemonger Wayne Kramer discovers drum machines, collaborates with ex-Pink Fairy and rock journalist Mick Faren, and cons the now incredibly famous Don Was into producing a song about gangster Dutch Schultz, a move that apparently had nothing whatsoever (honest) to do with the success of Warren Beatty in *Bugsy*. Some of the tracks here sound suspiciously like unfinished demos, and nothing here could accurately be described as high fidelity, but for my money all that just adds to the album's scruffy charm. Pick hit: a metal/punk assault on Jimmy Webb's *MacArthur Park*, which richly deserves it.

S.S.



LEON REDBONE

Up a Lazy River

PRIVATE MUSIC

Performance: Somnabulistic

Recording: Good

Leon Redbone's shtick of old-timey jazz, blues, and vaudeville wore thin a long time ago. It really worked best live, when you could see his waxy, deadpan face surrounded by a haze of cigarette smoke. On record, without any accompanying visuals, a little goes a very long way, and the more uptempo tunes the better. Frankly, he sounds like a poseur.

In his new album, Redbone generally sounds so laid-back that he might as well be dead—in the future, his survivors could have him stuffed with his guitar under his arms and simply play real 78's through his head. *At the Chocolate Bon Bon Ball*, a bizarre and whimsical cartoon of a song about cocoa candies getting together and getting it on, perks things up a bit, as does the arrangement of the traditional good-time *Gotta Shake That Thing*. The sidemen, especially cornetist Scott Black and bass-sax player Vince Giordano, do their best to dress things up for public consumption. But for the most part, this album is not only up a lazy river but pretty much up the creek.

A.N.

RISE ROBOTS RISE

Rise Robots Rise

TVT

Performance: Deadly serious

Recording: Okay

Rise Robots Rise isn't just the name of this group and album. It's also an exhortation to those of us who haven't fully absorbed the critical state of the world around us, from the soul-leaching horrors of drugs to the suicidal implications of pollution and militarism. These problems are laid out for us here in instant vignettes, apocalyptic mini-epics, and garbled abstractions—all rapped to a variety of catchy dance-music shuffles spiced by soul-diva choruses and fiery guitar solos. Fetching as this hybrid can be, Rise Robots Rise doesn't want us to have fun unless we're being converted at the same time. This is politically correct music for a do-good rally.

R.G.

SOUL II SOUL

Just Right Volume III

VIRGIN

Performance: Enticing

Recording: Satisfactory

The British-based group Soul II Soul has been a refreshing presence in dance music, for they have broken away from stultifyingly formulas. Perhaps their most welcome innovation has been to employ a variety of rhythmic patterns, drawing from jazz, African music, and reggae and other

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VIRGIN RECORDS

Soul II Soul's Jazzie B

Caribbean beats, as well as African-American pop, to provide a richly varied foundation for their carefully crafted vocals.

"Just Right Volume III" is delightful from start to finish, especially the first three cuts: the buoyant *Joy: Take Me Higher*, which showcases the crystalline vocals of Caron Wheeler; and the pensive instrumental *Storm*, with a solo flute floating above an undulating background. Producer Jazzie B, who has played a major role in shaping this group, raps in three other tracks, but the words are integral to the music, and the pace remains coolly reflective.

Soul II Soul unobtrusively integrates the main elements of current pop sounds into their work without strain or contrivance. To do it so well, and to make it sound so easy, is quite an accomplishment. **PG.**



SPINAL TAP Break Like the Wind

MCA

Performance: Dudes can rock
Recording: Excellent

You can look at heavy metal either as a rich motherlode for satire or as a parody-proof genre. Since metal is self-parodistic to begin with, and the audience is not exactly attuned to the subtleties of satire, it is not impossible to imagine a Spinal Tap song like *Bitch School* being accept-

ed with a straight face. It's not that outrageous an exaggeration of the sort of grinning misogyny routinely churned out by metal acts (*Cherry Pie*, anyone?), so the joke may wind up being on Spinal Tap, as it was on Blue Oyster Cult, when the audience overlooks the intended irony and just rocks out.

Despite the obvious, sophomoric pun, the title track, *Break Like the Wind*, culminates in a whale of a serious guitar orgy featuring Jeff Beck, Slash, and Joe Satriani. Steve Lukather, late of Toto (he, funny?), also turns up here and there, and Cher (she, funny?) actually duets with David St. Hubbins (Michael McKean) in the Queenly (poor timing) ballad *Just Begin Again* ("Life is a wheel," Hubbins philosophizes in falsetto, "if it's even real"). The funniest stuff has less to do with metal than pomp-rock, such as *The Majesty of Rock*, a pricelessly platitudinous ode to rock's manifest destiny that sounds like an overearnest cross between the Moody Blues and Jethro Tull.

Nigel Tufnel (Christopher Guest) issues a hilarious mock-dramatic plea for euthanasia for a dying, comatose, incontinent old man in the mysteriously untitled and unlisted thirteenth track. But the album's best moment is the group's satiric contribution to seasonal music, *Christmas with the Devil*, containing these nontraditional images: "The elves are dressed in leather and the angels are in chains/The sugarplums are rancid and the stockings are in flames." On balance Spinal Tap sidesteps the sophomore jinx with "Break Like the Wind," but they'd better be careful not to cross the line beyond which parody becomes unrecognizable as such. Next thing you know, they'll be moving the umlaut over the vowel. **P.P.**

TRACY ULLMAN, JEAN LUC PONTY Puss in Boots

KID RHINO

Performance: Cute but not icky
Recording: Excellent

Tracy Ullman is a legitimate comic genius, so one expects her reading of the old fairy tale about the peripatetic feline to be charming. And, unsurprisingly, it is. What is a surprise, though, is the equally charming New Age-ish score supplied by the usually obnoxious fusioner Jean-Luc Ponty. Which means, against the odds, that this is one kids' record that won't give parents the fidgets. **S.S.**

RICKY VAN SHELTON Don't Overlook Salvation

COLUMBIA

Performance: Déjà vu
Recording: Good

Ricky Van Shelton, he of the sonorous baritone and too-slick repertoire, says he wanted to make an inspirational album for his parents, who are getting on in years, and he told his record company that if they didn't want to release it he'd pay for it himself. Columbia supposedly replied that, no, they'd put it out, even though albums like this have about a snowball's chance in, well, you know, of charting.

Now it's here, and the surprise is how much it sounds like Elvis's old gospel records. It not only *sounds* like them, with a searching voice rising above what is often a sparse piano accompaniment, but it captures Elvis's intense innocence and his devout passion for serious spiritual communion, though Shelton can't touch Presley for emotional and spiritual depravity. *Don't Overlook*

TALES FROM THE VAULTS

THE BRITISH INVASION

The History of British Rock, Volumes 1-9
(RHINO)

No Stones, Who, or Dave Clark Five to be found here, for the usual contractual reasons, but otherwise this retrospective look at mid-Sixties British pop is thoroughly fab. Rhino offers it as a boxed set, but those of us on more realistic budgets can also buy the CD's individually—and should.



LOU REED Between Thought and Expression

(RCA)

If you think Reed's Seventies work is as important as his Sixties stuff with the Velvettes or his recent efforts on Sire, then this intelligently programmed three-album boxed set should be just the thing. If you don't, at least the remastering job (Reed participated) is aces.

MICHAEL STANLEY BAND Right Back At Ya (1971-1983)

(RAZOR & TIE)

The greatest almost-hits of a band that's world famous only in Cleveland. Some of it sounds dated, as Stanley admits in his amusing liner notes, but some of it—*My Town, He Can't Love You Like I Love You*—is heartland rock on a par with Springsteen or Mellencamp.

Steve Simels

Salvation may be as hoary as they come—don't be a sinner. "How awful if He should turn you away!"—but anyone who can listen to *Supper Time*, a song of a mother-son bond that survives even death, and not be moved is simply not breathing. Shelton runs out of steam by the bottom of the second half of the program, but before he gets there he'll have you on your knees a time or two. Only figuratively, of course. Then again, maybe not. **A.N.**

JAH WOBBLE'S INVADERS OF THE HEART Rising Above Bedlam

OVALEAST WEST

Performance: Multicultural
Recording: Very good

What do you get when you mix throbbing reggae bass, a panoply of rhythms from North Africa and elsewhere, Arabian-flavored vocal swoops, diverse instrumentation, and a contemporary postpunk sensibility? Jah Wobble, one-time bassist for Public Image Ltd., likes to call it Fourth World music. Whatever you call it, it represents fearless, open-minded cultural pluralism in the era of mass communication. Too much of what passes for "world music" is mere musical mongrelization, but Wobble has a pretty solid grasp of his multicultural building blocks

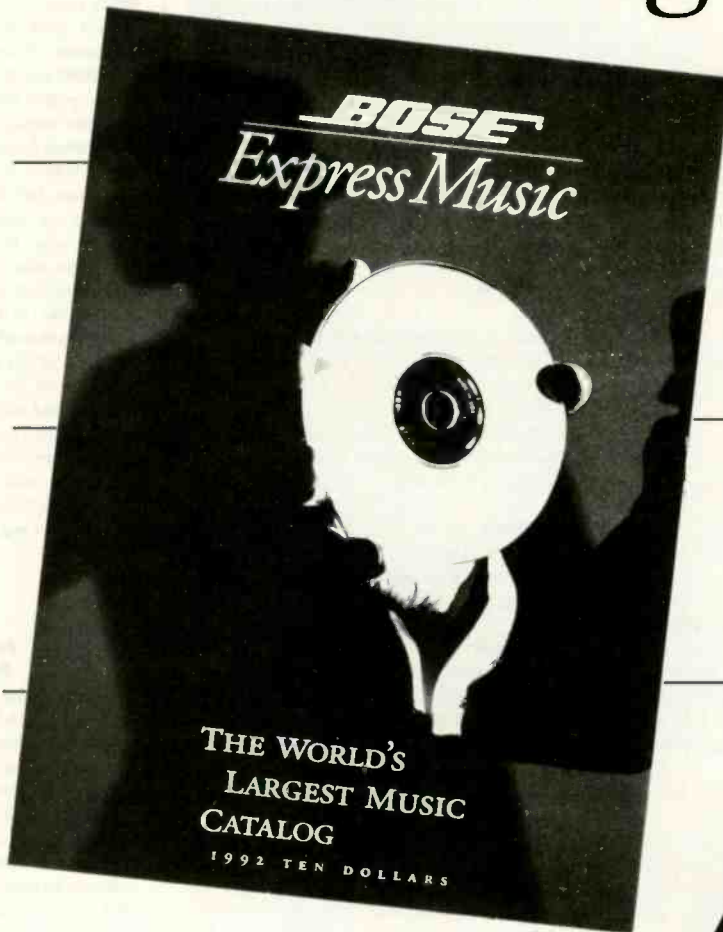
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Thelonious Sphere Monk—Dreaming of the Masters Vol. 2 (DIW/COLUMBIA)
The Art Ensemble of Chicago, which has been around for three decades but is as silly as ever, dedicated this album to Thelonious Monk. It's a tribute we can all do without. *C.A.*

BEDLAM
Into the Coals (MCA)

Ever wondered how the Replacements would have sounded if they'd come up in Nashville's postpunk scene rather than the wilds of Minneapolis? If so, "Into the Coals" provides an intriguing answer: It's powerful modern guitar rock with the haunted country soul of the late Gram Parsons. Inspirational verse: "Her name was Rather Loosely." *S.S.*



CHRIS BELL
I Am the Cosmos
BIG STAR
Big Star Live
Sister Lovers (RYKODISC)

Big Star's 1974 "Sister Lovers," now making a domestic CD debut, deserves its rep as a pop masterpiece. But the real finds in this batch are the spunky Big Star concert set from 1973 and the haunting solo album by the band's late co-founder, both previously unreleased. Alternative rock begins here. *S.S.*



THE BLOOD ORANGES
Lone Green Valley (ESD)

Stinging guitar leads, Celtic harmonies by a hauntingly real girl singer, fatalistic love songs... no, this isn't "Shoot Out the Lights, Vol. 2," but it's worthy of the comparison. In fact, this stunner of an EP might be the best Richard and Linda Thompson record those two never got around to making. *S.S.*

GOSPEL HUMMINGBIRDS
Steppin' Out (BLIND PIG)

This splendid group demonstrates the close link between gospel and rhythm-and-blues. Lead singer Rob Tyler—who wrote some of the most interesting material here—has a fine voice, and the whole album is just great, a breath of fresh air in an era when rhyming passes for music. *C.A.*

COL. BRUCE HAMPTON & THE AQUARIUM RESCUE UNIT
(CAPRICORN)

Take a jazz-fusion rhythm section, add a hot Southern guitarist, throw in the Allman Brothers' old keyboardist, and cap it all with Col. Bruce Hampton, one of the strangest products of the South since pickled pigs' feet. Result? A strong, original album by a band that didn't get its deal because it was easy to market. *P.P.*



NAKED LUNCH
(MILAN)

This original-soundtrack album is another reason David Cronenberg is one of the few North American directors on a par with Martin Scorsese: He really knows how to use music, in this case a spooky Bernard Herrmannesque score by Howard Shore with some glorious sax solos by Ornette Coleman. Great stuff. *S.S.*

YOKO ONO
Onobox (RYKODISC)

Hey, I feel sorry for Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, but I wouldn't listen to her albums either. *S.S.*

GWIL OWEN & THE THIEVES
Phoenix (RAMBLER)

Owen, an authentic country-rock natural last glimpsed on a Capitol CD produced by Marshall Crenshaw, returns with a self-produced cassette overflowing with mordant wit, cool tunes, and "Exile on Main Street" guitars. A genuine find (\$9 postpaid from Rambler Records, P.O. Box 90685, Nashville TN 37209). *S.S.*

KENNY ROGERS
Back Home Again (REPRISE)

For the first time in a long while, Rogers sounds as if he means what he sings. There's some filler here, and a honky-tonk tune he can't handle, but when he is faced with strong material Rogers nails his notes and shares his soul. Will wonders never cease? *A.N.*

THE WENDYS
Gobbledygoo (EAST/WEST)

Paint-by-numbers alternative pop by a sort of Flock of Seagulls for the Nineties. It sounds thin on first listening, but it grows on you in spite of itself. *P.P.*

NANCY WILSON
With My Lover Beside Me (COLUMBIA)

Wilson is in fine voice here, and she makes a generally emphatic case for eleven songs with lyrics by Johnny Mercer and new music composed by Barry Manilow. Manilow's settings are all likable, and Eddie Arkin's silky arrangements are first-rate. *R.H.*

and what he wants to build with them. His bass lines are mesmerizing, and while his voice is little more than a gruff croak, he defers to his female back-up singers (including Sinéad O'Connor) much of the time. This record certainly won't be everyone's cup of tea, but it follows an interesting trajectory. *P.P.*

WYNONNA
Wynonna
CURB/MCA

Performance: Strong
Recording: Very good

She used to be one of the Judds, but now she's just plain Wynonna. So you don't forget, "Wynonna" is the name of her solo debut, too. The album pretty much fulfills all the great expectations people have had for her ever since they heard her singing with her mom, Naomi.

Wynonna has a powerful alto, rich enough to bloom with a little sass or melt with a little tenderness. In *What It Takes* she makes you want to jump out of her insouciant way before she flattens you. In *My Strongest Weakness* she makes you want to give her a shoulder so she can weep away all the hurt from that skunk who dumped her. In fact, the tunes here have been carefully selected and arranged to bring out all of the facets of her personality. Unfortunately, that also includes the sort of maudlin sentimentality she exhibited with Mama. *It's Never Easy to Say Goodbye* and *All of That Love from Here* ooze with the same kind of emotional overkill that characterized the Judds at their worst. But that's only two songs out of ten, and the others are a state-of-the-art showcase for country music. *R.G.*

XTC
Nonsuch
Geffen

Performance: Odd
Recording: Good

There's a fine line between the charmingly eccentric and the just plain weird. In "Nonsuch," XTC tromps all over both sides of the boundary. When Andy Partridge or Colin Moulding—the two writers—keep at least one foot on the ground, their hyperimaginative songs can be one-of-a-kind gems. Partridge's *Dear Madam Barnum*, for example, is about a circus clown who suspects he's being two-timed by Ms. Barnum: "If I'm not the sole fool / Who pulls his trousers down / Then Madam Barnum / I resign as clown." And even the overindulgent allusion or the numbingly naive insight is often redeemed by its springy, theatrical soundtrack. XTC hasn't broken new ground this time around, but its peculiar pleasures are still there for the taking. *R.G.*

XTC: hyperimaginative



KEVIN WESTENBERG/GEFFEN

JAZZ

DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER

In Montreux

VERVE

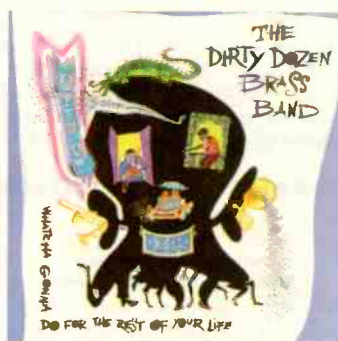
Performance: Vibrant

Recording: Live and good

Dee Dee Bridgewater, who once sang with the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra and recorded with talents like the trumpeter Charles Sullivan, settled in France in 1986. There, like jazz musicians of earlier generations, she found a greater appreciation than in the U.S. for her gifts and the music she represents. Yet she has maintained a presence here by hosting a program, *Le Jazz Club*, on public radio.

"In Montreux" is the second album she has released in the States since she became an exile. It captures her live at the 1990 Montreux Jazz Festival, and from the very first notes it's obvious that she was in fine form. She launches into the standard *All of Me* with exuberance, scatting with the fleetness and authority of a master of improvisation. She is just as impressive with the Brazilian balladry of *How Insensitive*, and she serves up a taut rendition of the Billie Holiday classic *Strange Fruit*. But Bridgewater is at her best in an amazing interpretation of Dizzy Gillespie's *Night in Tunisia*, where she mixes up the rhythms, shifting suddenly from sensual indolence to fiery insistence. Similarly remarkable is her display of blistering verbal virtuosity in *Sister Sadie*.

For those who lament the passing of Sarah Vaughan and the aging of Ella Fitzgerald, Dee Dee Bridgewater is a welcome reminder that jazz singing is still very much alive. *PG.*



THE DIRTY DOZEN BRASS BAND Open Up—Watcha Gonna Do for the Rest of Your Life

COLUMBIA

Performance: Good clean fun

Recording: Very good

I have been aware of the Dirty Dozen Brass Band for about ten of its fourteen years, and it has been a pleasure to hear this New Orleans group grow. When I first heard them, they were somewhat raucous and engagingly undisciplined, but I was immediately won over by their energy and spirit, which reflected a joyous New Orleans tradition. In 1961, when I was in New Orleans producing a series of albums for Riverside, the trumpeter Kid Thomas told me, "I want to feel happy when I'm playing, and you can't have fun unless you're entertaining the people." It sounds

like the band shares that thought, although their new album, "Open Up," is much smoother than previous efforts—the old aura of reckless abandon is barely audible. Instead, the band truly demonstrates their high degree of musicianship, explores wonderful rhythmic and harmonic effects, and loses no entertainment value in the process. Kirk Joseph's remarkably buoyant sousaphone lends strong character to the DDBB's sound, and I would be remiss if I didn't also point out the saxophonists Roger Lewis and Kevin Harris, who contribute some of the most interesting solos. Enough said—the whole band is sparkling. *C.A.*

BILL EVANS

The Solo Sessions, Volume 2

MILESTONE

Performance: Worthy

Recording: Excellent

Just when it looked as if Bill Evans had won his bout with heroin twelve years ago, he died. Since then nearly all of his recordings have been rereleased, including the solo performances here. Actually, the source for both volumes of "The Solo Sessions" is one 1963 date that did not find him in the best of health. In fact, the session remained unissued until many years later, when it appeared in a rather expensive twelve-CD "complete" boxed set on Riverside. Still, this is not one of those albums I wish they had kept in the can—it has a lot going for it. Evans was one of the most lyrical musicians jazz has fostered, but he didn't just play pretty for the people. He approached



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JAZZ

even the most banal tune with extraordinary sophistication, weaving it into a pattern of compelling complexity—*Santa Claus Is Coming to Town* in this set is a good example. There are many other excellent illustrations here of Evans's introspection. And even when he seems to falter, he does it with uncommon grace. C.A.

STAN GETZ AND KENNY BARRON

People Time

VERVE

Performance: Enduring

Recording: Excellent remotes

This album captures the last public performances of Stan Getz, on four chilly March nights in 1991 at Copenhagen's Café Montmartre. Getz had been ill for some time, and it showed in his face, but there is not a hint of frailty in the performances. As pianist Kenny Barron—the other half of this duet—observes in his excellent liner notes, "The music is real, honest, pure and beautiful in spite of the pain or perhaps because of it." Barron himself had a great deal to do with that; he is, of course, a superb pianist, but rarely have I heard him as inspired. Only two days before they opened at the Montmartre, a Boston concert had served as a rehearsal, but from the intricate weave of tenor and keyboard here you'd think these men had spent years building up a rapport. They had played together before, and toured Europe in the summer of 1990, but even lengthy associations rarely result in such cohesiveness. Getz and Barron have separately expressed themselves eloquently over the years, but there is something special about these exquisite dialogues. C.A.

JOE HENDERSON

Lush Life

VERVE

Performance: Sublime

Recording: Excellent

In the Sixties, when most young tenor players followed in Coltrane's giant steps, Joe Henderson chose an alternate route. There's a good deal of Sonny Rollins to be heard in his playing, but Henderson has his own way of expressing himself. "Lush Life" is Henderson's first studio recording in twelve years and it's obviously long overdue. It also marks the saxophonist's debut as a leader on Verve, and I suspect it's the start of a new career on that label.

The album offers an instrumentally diverse collection of superb tunes written by Duke Ellington's alter ego, Billy Strayhorn. Henderson surrounds himself with fresh talent, and the result is among the finest jazz recordings I have heard in the past year.

The program, over an hour long, opens gently with *Isfahan*, a duet with Christian McBride, a superb bassist who was still in his teens at the time of this recording, then jumps into a fitting bounce for *Johnny Come Lately*, the first of three quintet tracks featuring Wynton Marsalis in inspired form. It's a great start that sets the tone for the wonderful interpretations that follow: a hauntingly ethereal, deeply introspective *Blood Count* by Henderson and the rhythm section; a truly original duet reading of *Lotus Blossom* that bodes very well for the future of pianist Stephen Scott; a Rollinsesque *Rain Check* with McBride and drummer Gregory Hutchinson; a solo trek into the title tune. . . I'd better stop before I get carried away by my enthusiasm for this release. Listen to it, then listen again and again. It's a gem. C.A.

SHIRLEY HORN

Shirley Horn with Strings

VERVE

Performance: Pleasant, but . . .

Recording: Quite good

People are going gaga over Shirley Horn these days, but I must confess that I have let that bandwagon pass me by. This is an old-fashioned ballad album, the kind record companies used to spit out every month back in the Fifties. The arrangements are by Johnny Mandel, who is very skilled at this sort of sweeping-strings affair, and there is the obligatory guest appearance by Wynton Marsalis. The result is nice, but it sends no chills down my back. Horn's delivery is stylish, and her piano playing is okay though uneventful. But there's a bit too much whispering here for my taste, and when her tiny voice gets lost in the high-budget accompaniment, my attention wanders off, too. C.A.

LOUIS JORDAN

Five Guys Named Moe

CEDAR

Performance: The real thing

Recording: Excellent transfers

The Broadway musical *Five Guys Named Moe*, imported from London last April, was panned by leading critics, but don't let that deter you from discovering the joyous sounds of the real Louis Jordan and his Tympany Five. This Stash CD offers a generous 74 minutes of World War II V-Disc sessions and broadcasts featuring the mixture of hokum, wit, and solid jump-style jazz that made Jordan one of the most popular entertainers of the Forties.

Although he straddled the fence between jazz and pop, with a heavy emphasis on novelty, Jordan was essentially a jazz artist, the undisputed king of jumping jive. This album presents his many sides in a wonderful, nostalgic collection of performances recorded between 1943 and 1946. Also included is some typical Forties banter by



Joe Henderson: a new career?

WILLIAM CLAXTON/VERVE

JAZZ

Ernie "Bubbles" Whitman, take-offs on Super Suds commercials, and a marvelous version of *Rose Room* featuring the rich New Orleans clarinet of Barney Bigard. Jordan's fondness for topical songs is demonstrated by *Reconversion Blues* and *Ofay and Oxford Grey*, a somewhat naïve song about racial integration that was never recorded commercially. It all adds up to a savory stew from days beyond recall. Highly recommended. C.A.

GROVER MITCHELL

Hip Shakin'

KEN MUSIC

Performance: Beyond Basic

Recording: Excellent

Grover Mitchell spent more than ten years playing lead trombone in Count Basie's orchestra, so it is not strange to find that his own big band at times has a Basie-ish sound. This is not the Basie band, however, and it is high time that we considered Mitchell on his own merits. "Hip Shakin'" is a blazing orchestral excursion led by Mitchell and featuring some of the finest big-band players on the scene today. The compositions and arrangements come mainly from within the band, although there are familiar sounds, too: Duke Ellington's *In a Mellotone* and *C Jam Blues*, Billy Strayhorn's *Isfahan*, and the perennial *Danny Boy*. This is a well-polished band aided by a good variety of intelligent arrangements and a fine array of solos. It deserves your ears. C.A.

SONNY ROLLINS

Alternatives

BLUEBIRD

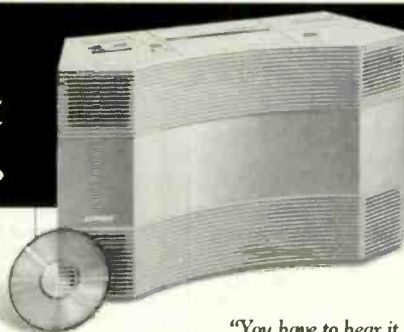
Performance: Generally excellent

Recording: Solid to so-so

One way to get a return on jazz recordings is to reissue them or to unearth and package unreleased alternate takes. "Alternatives" follows that strategy, combining performances that were originally left in the can with previously released selections. In this case the unreleased selections are different recordings of tunes that originally appeared in the Sonny Rollins album "Now's the Time," made at another session with a different combination of players. That makes them interesting, at least to the scholarly ear, but they are not without flaws—after all, they were shelved for a reason. So what we have here are pairs of very different approaches to four tunes from 1964.

Remember Clifford, which ended up in trio form with Rollins, bassist Bob Cranshaw, and drummer Roy McCurdy, was originally conceived as a quartet selection with trumpeter Thad Jones—both versions are appealing. The same quartet did make it to vinyl with *52nd Street Theme*, which we now also hear in a version that runs 10 minutes longer and has a couple of the day's newcomers, Herbie Hancock and Ron Carter, joining Rollins and McCurdy. This is a hot track that boils over, then breaks down briefly, simmers, and starts cooking again. The "new" version of *Four*, which also features Hancock and Carter, moves smoothly until the end, when it begins to fall apart. This group was also responsible for the released version of *St. Thomas*, whose alternate version features Rollins and McCurdy only—here I prefer the alternate. The album is rounded out by a couple of obvious fillers, *Jungoso* and *Bluesongo* from the "What's New" album, that feature Candido on congas as the only percussionist. Reissue producer Orrin Keepnews is not known for his keen ear, but he could have found better tracks to fill out the CD. C.A.

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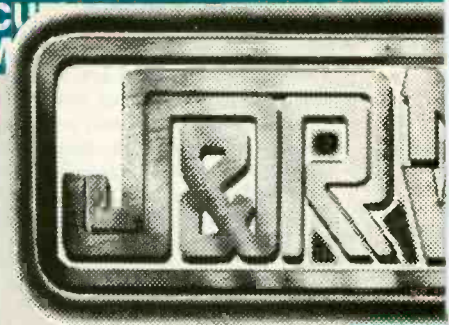
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**BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 1;
Symphony No. 3 ("Eroica")**

San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, Blomstedt
LONDON 430 515-2

**Performance: Beautifully poised
Recording: Top drawer**

If Herbert Blomstedt is embarked on a complete Beethoven symphony cycle, this initial installment bodes well indeed for what may follow. The First Symphony gets an elegantly Classical reading, but it is Classicism with muscle and finely honed dynamics. The *con moto* indication in the slow movement is properly heeded, and the *cantabile* is a joy to the heart. The trio section of the so-called menuetto is a model of gracefully nuanced phrasing. Particularly enjoyable in the finale are the dynamic gradations in the introduction. The balance of the movement goes "like oil," to use Mozart's phrase. Repeats are generous throughout.

The "Eroica" is wonderfully satisfying for heart and mind alike. The opening movement, with exposition repeat, has a classic monumentality. The *Marcia funebre* is all of a piece from beginning to end, the monumentality shot through with poignant compassion. The scherzo is a true return to life, with the famous central horn episode assuming an almost unworldly aspect. The great variations finale is a magnificent virtuoso display, every strand of its intricate polyphony set out with unerring clarity and brilliance. The recording ranks with the best from San Francisco's Davies Symphony Hall. *D.H.*

BERLIOZ: Symphonie Fantastique

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Davis
PHILIPS 432 151-2

**Performance: Poetic
Recording: Very good**

Curious that it's taken till now for Philips to launch a digital Berlioz cycle with Colin Davis, but his admirers are sure to welcome this new *Symphonie Fantastique*. In general outlines and proportions, it varies little from his earlier versions with the London Symphony and Concertgebouw orchestras, which were not the most exciting performances but were among the most musical. The Vienna Philharmonic, which has not always been a happy choice for recording this work, comes through splendidly in this case. Its own mellow input, I imagine, helped to produce the noticeably "Classical" textures that seem to place the music in its own time and thereby actually enhance its forward-looking qualities. As before, the repeat is taken in the first movement, the optional cornet part is included in the second, and the overall view is more elegant, even poetic, than overtly dramatic. The clarity throughout is remarkable, and the fine recording job strikes me as calculated specifically for the unique qualities of this performance. *R.F.*

**CHOPIN: Scherzos Nos. 1-4; Berceuse,
Op. 57; Barcarolle, Op. 60**

Maurizio Pollini
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 431 623-2

**Performance: Intellectual
Recording: Fine**

Those who have firmly made up their minds against Maurizio Pollini's approach toward the Romantic composers are likely to have their impressions confirmed by these Chopin performances. He hasn't exactly become warm and expansive in his maturity. He is still not interested in any sort of pathos, which in Chopin can be

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shocking—at first. Yet once you suspend your expectations, it is possible to enjoy what Pollini has to offer here, such as his impeccable taste in tempos and phrasing or the infectious energy with which he builds to climaxes.

Those qualities are particularly welcome in the scherzos, which can seem big, noisy, and diffuse. Pollini keeps good control of them despite occasional lapses into colorless, opaque sonorities. The *Berceuse* has some wonderful moments of playfulness and particularly blooms with Pollini's clear fingering. Emotion is missed in the *Barcarolle*, however, though the imagery—the piece could be interpreted as Chopin's portrait of a decaying Venice—has rarely been revealed in such sharp focus, right down to the tiniest ripples in the canals. Conceived from the neck up, these interpretations can't help but be one-sided, but they explore that one side with more artistry than many better-rounded pianists have brought to the music. *D.P.S.*



CORELLI: Concerti Grossi, Op. 6

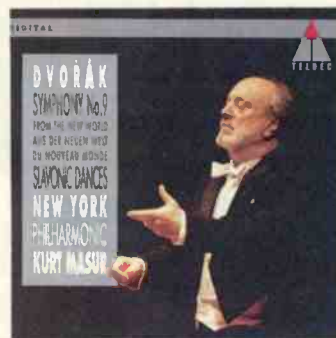
Guildhall String Ensemble
RCA VICTOR 60071-2 two discs

**Performance: Elegant but unvarying
Recording: Smooth**

The twelve Op. 6 Concerti Grossi of Arcangelo Corelli, published after his death in 1714 but mostly dating from the last decades of the previous century, mark the beginning of the high Baroque. The harmonic, contrapuntal, and instrumental style of composers like Bach and Handel is already full-blown in this collection.

which set the fashion for more than half a century. Except for the "Christmas Concerto" (No. 8), these works have never achieved quite the popularity of, say, the Bach Brandenburgs or Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, but they are, in fact, among the great masterpieces of their age.

The Guildhall String Ensemble is a traditional, London-based chamber ensemble of eleven string players and two keyboardists. Except for the relatively small size of the ensemble and the use of both harpsichord and organ for the continuo parts, there is no special orientation to an early-music performance style either in the instruments or the musical approach. The playing is solid and attractive, with the requisite alternation of vigor and lyricism, but it lacks a full measure of dramatic shadows and highlights: those swells and dying falls, great articulated arches, and elaborate lyric ornaments that are so essential to Baroque style and that can make this music so effective. The individual performances are elegant, but the concertos—each movement, almost every phrase—are too much alike in the way they are approached. The overall sameness does not do justice to the richness of these works. *E.S.*



**DVORAK: Symphony No. 9 ("New
World"); Slavonic Dances Nos. 6, 8, & 10**

New York Philharmonic, Masur
TELDEC 73244-2

**Performance: With loving care
Recording: Very good**

Kurt Masur takes neither a Teutonic, Brahmsian approach to the "New World" Symphony nor one like that of those Czech conductors who view the music in terms of Dvořák in the wilds of America longing for his Bohemian homeland. The program notes cite Dvořák's 1893 newspaper interview, given the day before the symphony's world premiere, in which he mentions the slow movement and scherzo as being evocative of Longfellow's poem *Hiawatha*. Masur appears to be conjuring that legendary atmosphere in this reading, with particular emphasis on the lyrical aspects of the score. One notes the pregnant pauses in the introduction, but it is the bucolic melodic material that stands out. The celebrated largo is deeply poignant but never lapses into bathos. The "nature" episode, when it arrives, is magical. The scherzo, which can become bumptious in some hands, here is brisk in its main body and beguilingly delicate in the lyrical sections. And Masur lingers lovingly over the melodic riches of the finale. The Philharmonic players are with him all the way—special kudos to the first-chair flute, Jeanne Baxtresser.

In the three Slavonic Dances, Masur searches out the music's fetchingly lyrical character rather than its elements of Czech nationalism, at least in Nos. 6 and 10. In the popular No. 8, he does let

loose with a fierce *furiant* quality. The live recording is altogether superb in its full-bodied quality and its lateral and depth imaging. *D.H.*

**KURKA: The Good Soldier Schweik
MILHAUD: La Création du Monde
WEILL: Kleine Dreigroschenmusik**

Atlantic Sinfonietta, Schenck
KOCH INTERNATIONAL CLASSICS 3-7091-2H1

Performance: Laid-back, innocent
Recording: Close, clear

Here are three chamber-orchestra pieces taken from stage pieces: Robert Kurka's suite from his opera *The Good Soldier Schweik*, a major, neglected American work; Milhaud's wonderful *La Création du Monde*, often said to be the first symphonic work to incorporate jazz; and Kurt Weill's *Little Threepenny Music* for twelve winds and rhythm section.

Kurka, who died tragically young of leukemia, based his opera on the classic satirical writings of Jaroslav Hasek; among its ingenious idiosyncrasies is the scoring for wind band. The delightful suite reflects the wit and humor of a score that deserves to be revived on the stage.

Weill's *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* was put together for a 1929 Opera Ball in Berlin. It gets a performance that is measured and almost unbearably innocent, dry and yet at the same time sweet. No bite. The Milhaud, though also laid-back, has a little more energy. The Kurka is easily the album's high point—the freshest musically and the most sympathetically interpreted. The recorded sound is close and tightly focused. *E.S.*



LISZT: Piano Sonata in B Minor; Nuages Gris; La Notte; La Lugubre Gondola II; Funérailles

Krystian Zimerman
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 431 780-2

Performance: Uneven
Recording: Excellent

**LISZT: Piano Sonata in B Minor
SCRIABIN: Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 19**

Ivo Pogorelich
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 429 391-2

Performance: Electric
Recording: Good

Both of these new recordings justify themselves, though there are moments when Krystian Zimerman's is surprisingly marginal. Usually best in smaller-scale pieces, in a big-boned work like the B Minor Sonata Zimerman often seems like a lyric tenor singing Lohengrin. In general, the more lyrical second theme group comes off better, with a fine sense of poetry, as well as the more contrapuntal passages. Yet there are plenty of other moments when Zimerman's sound loses all color amid the labored fortissimos,



COVER PHOTO: CHRISTIAN STENER/DCG

THERE is a lot of wonderful vocal music with violin obbligato in Bach's choral works, and somebody had the good idea of selecting a generous handful of arias for this record, mostly from the cantatas but also two from the Mass in B Minor. Musical sense was then coupled with commercial judgment in pairing the attractions of Kathleen Battle and Itzhak Perlman. A project like this simply cannot fail.

And it doesn't. Battle's diction is rarely crystal clear, but her limpid and effortless tones radiate the fervor, joy, and exaltation the texts ask for. Perlman sensibly adjusts his customary "Romantic" violin sound to Baroque discipline as he weaves his delicate ornamentations around the vocal lines. The blending of voice and violin is ideal.

The full Orchestra of St. Luke's, conducted by John Nelson, is called upon in only two of the thirteen excerpts. For the rest, the principals are backed up by a full continuo (double-bass added to the cello and harpsichord or organ) with additional contributions by trumpet, oboe, and cello—all excellent.

Although this is a delightful disc, I recommend listening to it a little at a time. These are excerpts from major works. If you listen to them in uninterrupted sequence, a certain monotony is likely to set in, no matter how great the music or the interpreters. *G.J.*

**KATHLEEN BATTLE AND
ITZHAK PERLMAN
The Bach Album**

(DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 429 737-2)

leaving the impression of "empty noise" Clara Schumann spoke of on first hearing the piece.

Ivo Pogorelich's performance of the sonata occasionally has some noisy moments, too, but none of them are empty. He has a big, blazing sound, a sense of theatricality, and an appetite for the music's demonic aspect. Wisely, he doesn't attempt the kind of big rubatos that his fingers couldn't really pull off. His tempos are on the slow side—the performance is a full 3 minutes longer than Zimerman's, which isn't exactly fast—and he is more likely to embrace the music's vulgarity than to minimize it. In almost any other work, these characteristics would seem self-indul-

gent, but here they seem to reflect a deep sympathy for the music's idiom. This may rank among the best modern recordings of the sonata.

Some buyers may be attracted by the couplings. Pogorelich illustrates one branch of Liszt's influence in Scriabin's deftly colored Sonata No. 2. Zimerman's fillers are more generous, and some with a taste for late Liszt may be drawn to his CD for that reason. But *Nuages Gris* and *La Lugubre Gondola* are duplicated on Maurizio Pollini's fast, clean CD of the sonata, and Pollini also takes a stronger (though very different) point of view on them than Zimerman's. *D.P.S.*

**MARTIN: Petite Symphonie
Concertante; Six Monologues from
"Jedermann"; Concerto for Seven
Winds, Timpani, Percussion, and Strings**

Cachemaille; Suisse Romande Orchestra, Jordan
ERATO 45694-2

Performance: First-rate
Recording: First-rate

Although these works by the French-Swiss composer Frank Martin (1890-1974) are surprisingly well represented on CD by reissues of historic recordings, including the composer's own of the first and last of them, there is room for this first-rate modern recording with Armin Jordan conducting and the baritone Gilles Cachemaille in the *Jedermann* songs.

Ernest Ansermet, the Suisse Romande's illustrious founding conductor, was an ardent champion of Martin's music and recorded a good deal of it. But Jordan has not simply carried on a tradition; the new performances bear his own stamp. They are a bit more expansive than his predecessor's, most noticeably in the more deliberate pacing of the slow sections. One feels great care being given to developing the sonorities Martin created with his unusual instrumentation, but not at the expense of momentum—the music breathes comfortably and convincingly.

Jedermann (*Everyman*), the morality play by Hugo von Hofmannsthal that became a tradition of the Salzburg Festival, moved Martin to create one of his finest works—the Six Monologues alone might have sustained any composer's reputation. While they have had some distinguished interpreters in the past, I have found none more persuasive than Cachemaille. His feeling for the meaning of the words, the weight and texture of his dark voice, and his rapport with the conductor are all impressive, and he is recorded in ideal balance with the orchestra. Indeed, the sound throughout the disc is exceptionally good. *R.F.*

MAHLER: Das Klagende Lied

Soloists; Chorus; Berlin Radio Symphony
Orchestra, Chailly
LONDON 425 719-2

Performance: Fresh, dramatic
Recording: Clear, glowing

Mahler began *Das Klagende Lied* in 1878, when he was still a student, and finished it two years later, but it had to wait until 1901 for its première. By then he had removed the first movement, the "*Waldmärchen*," or "Forest Fairy Tale," which only reappeared in 1969 and is here reunited with the other two movements, "The Minstrel" and "Wedding Scene."

The story is one of those classic German fairy tales about a pair of very grim brothers, one of which kills the other to steal the princess. In this case a wandering minstrel makes a flute from the murdered boy's bones and plays it at the wedding,

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Classical Music

whereupon it—the flute, that is—tells the whole bloody tale to the assembled guests, causing the entire castle to collapse in horror. The End.

Here is the youthful Mahler, his musical and emotional style already fully developed but still in its first bloom. Technically, he was probably right to remove the first section, which is almost as long as the last two put together. But having heard it, who would want to be without it? The atmosphere of far-off days, of tragedy and magic, beauty and blood, is so unfailingly exquisite that true lovers—of Mahler, of medieval legend, of Central European nature romanticism—will not begrudge a single measure. Quite the contrary. The missing movement helps turn a lyrical cantata into a magnificent, epic fresco.

The performance here has a lot going for it. Riccardo Chailly has assembled an excellent cast, which includes Susan Dunn, Brigitte Fassbaender, and Werner Hollweg. Both the singing and the playing have a fresh-voiced quality and a clear, dramatic vitality that suit the romanticism of the score, but without any false sentiment. The recording, made in a Berlin church, has a beautiful ruddy glow. I can't imagine anything better, nor can I imagine anyone doing this work again without the "Waldmärchen." *E.S.*

**MOZART: Divertimento, K. 563;
Adagios and Fugues, K. 404a,
Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 6**

L'Archibudelli
SONY CLASSICAL SK 46497
Performance: **Gutsy, moving**
Recording: **Full, evocative**

L'Archibudelli means (I kid you not) bows 'n' guts, or, if you prefer, the gut-string players, and the string trio with that name from the Netherlands plays historical instruments with, yes, guts and gusto. The divertimento, Mozart's only composition for this combination, is a big six-movement work in the composer's best late style. The

album is filled out with a group of oddities: four three-voiced Baroque fugues—three by Johann Sebastian Bach, one by his son Wilhelm Friedemann—transcribed for string trio and preceded by Mozart's own earnest, intense adagios.

The members of L'Archibudelli—Vera Beths (violin), Jürgen Kussmaul (viola), and Anner Bylsma (cello)—are among the strongest early-instrument string performers around, and together they produce a vigorous and highly articulated sound that evokes the period in a distinctive way while making the music jump to life. The divertimento emerges as not merely diverting but a major work, and the adagios and fugues are, in their mixture of Baroque and Rococo/Classical styles, quite moving. A fine album. *E.S.*



MOZART: Requiem

Soloists; Vienna State Opera Chorus; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Solti
LONDON 433 688-2

Performance: **An Event**
Recording: **Reverberant but clear**

This is the ceremonial performance, already seen by millions on television and soon to be offered in video formats, that took place in St. Stephen's Cathedral, Vienna, just after midnight

last December 5 to mark the bicentenary of Mozart's death. The Requiem was performed in H. C. Robbins Landon's new edition, based on the version completed just after Mozart's death by Süssmayr, Eybler, and Freystädler. Since the performance was part of an actual church service, portions of the liturgy are spoken, with responses following the *Offertorium* and *Benedictus*, and the entire presentation is framed by the tolling of the cathedral's bells.

It is probably not a recording most listeners would choose as their only one of the work, but it is one that many may want, both as a vivid souvenir of the occasion and for the power and the glory of the performance. There is nothing "ceremonial," in the pejorative sense, in the music-making. Large forces are employed, and the reverberant quality of the cathedral makes them sound larger still—though with little or no loss in clarity, the production team having done its job superbly. Georg Solti's is, to be sure, a large-scale interpretation, dynamic and driven rather than consolatory, with the drama maintained at an unremitting level of intensity. Within that enlivening operatic concept, the orchestra and chorus are at the top of their form, and one could not imagine a more elegant quartet of soloists, individually or in ensemble, than Arleen Augér, Cecilia Bartoli, Vinson Cole, and Rene Pape. In all, a memorial tribute worthy of its subject. *R.F.*

**PROKOFIEV: Alexander Nevsky;
Scythian Suite ("Ala and Lolly")**

Watkinson; Latvia Choir;
Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Masur
TELDEC 73284-2

Performance: **Relaxed**
Recording: **Beautiful clarity**

A*la and Lolly*, written for the Diaghilev Ballets Russes on a suitably barbaric Russian subject, was the young Prokofiev's attempt to emulate Stravinsky. Lightning did not strike twice in the same place, however, and Prokofiev had more success with his concert version of the music under the title of *Scythian Suite* (the prehistoric Scythians—who were not Russians—were the protagonists of the ballet). On the other hand, the score for the Sergei Eisenstein film *Alexander Nevsky* was successful in both its original and concert forms and remains one of the composer's most perennially popular works. Although they are superficially very different, the two scores are recognizably by the same composer, and once you get past the obvious parallels with *Sacre du Printemps*, the *Scythian Suite* emerges as an energetic and atmospheric work with a lot of its own personality.

This new recording of the two comes not from Russia but from Eastern Europe. Musically, the performances are rather *gemütlich*—homey, almost relaxed, very clear and classical in dynamic. We are used to much more energetic and virtuosic performances in the hard-hitting Bernstein manner, so this takes some getting used to. The provocative and dissonant drive of the *Scythian Suite* and the folk/epic swing of *Nevsky* are perhaps not really Kurt Masur's strong points, but the lyric and impressionistic sections—especially of the earlier work—are crystalline. The English mezzo Carolyn Watkinson gives a version of *Nevsky's* "Song of the Dead" that is also not particularly Russian in style but nonetheless a high point, and the recording, made in the very historic and slightly noisy precincts of the Gewandhaus itself, has a beautiful clarity. *E.S.*

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Buon Compleanno, Gioachino!

This year we celebrate the two-hundredth birthday of a giant whose first important opera was produced when he was only twenty-one. No new operatic recording has appeared to herald Gioachino Rossini's birthday, but we are fortunate in having three new recital discs that reveal many of the qualities of his music.

Of the three, Marilyn Horne's offers the most original glimpse of Rossini's art. Ably accompanied at the piano by Martin Katz, the mezzo-soprano abandons the breathtaking fluidity usually associated with his works and her performances of them to offer twenty-two songs rendered with simplicity and close attention to musical substance. The recital is well contrasted in mood and melody, though the greater number of songs are on melancholy subjects. *La Francesca da Rimini* creates, in just over 2 minutes, a synthesis of that unhappy lady's misfortune. *Bolero*, one of over fifty settings Rossini made of a four-line verse by Metastasio (Horne sings seven of them here), provides effective contrast to *La Petite Bohémienne*, with its impression of loneliness. Each selection is interpreted with insight and sound musicianship.

Samuel Ramey's "Rossini Arias," conducted with spirit by Gabriele Ferro, also offers a varied program. The most successful is Lord Sidney's Scene and Aria from *Il Viaggio a Reims*. Of quite different emotional persuasion is the reverent "Pro peccatis" from the *Stabat Mater*. I regret that the bass, whose voice is surely one of the richest, smoothest, and most flexible before the public today, is apparently unable to sing with humor or, indeed, much characterization. Dandini's Cavatina from *Cenerentola*, for example,

is admirably executed—the coloratura is tossed off with commendable accuracy and conspicuous fluency—but the scene is delivered virtually without humor. On the other hand, Assur's long passage beginning "Il di già cade," from *Semiramide*, is movingly sung and ranks with Lord Sidney's apostrophe to seemingly hopeless love as the most effective offering in the album.

Finally, we have Cecilia Bartoli's "Rossini Heroines." Here is a young singer (she is not yet thirty) who follows in the way pioneered by Marilyn Horne. No vocal ornamentation seems to bewilder her by its intricacy. Her voice commands liquidity of movement throughout its range. Runs, trills, staccati—all are in place and sung with ease. Only very occasionally, at the top of her register, does she evince a slight steeliness—not unpleasant, but simply not of the same carefully matched tonal flow as her lower voice, up to the high middle range. At the same time, and despite the florid musical line, she brings a sense of character to everything she sings. The arias here are all in the *opera seria* vein, but Bartoli has already proved herself a charming comedian in an earlier complete recording for London Records of *Il Barbiere*.

These three discs are a happy commemoration of Rossini's birthday. Each is heartily recommended.

Robert Ackart

MARILYN HORNE Rossini Recital, 22 Songs

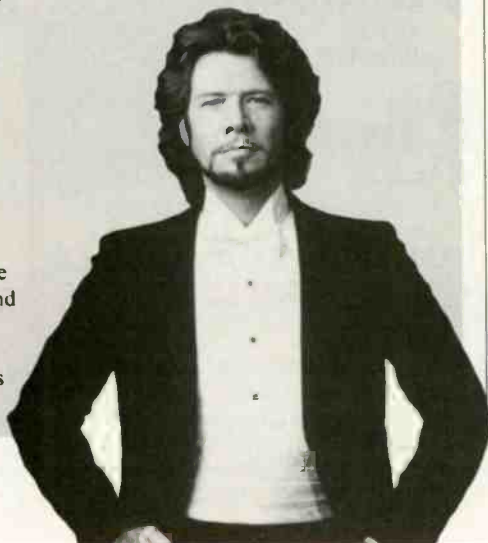
Martin Katz (RCA VICTOR 60811-2)

SAMUEL RAMEY Rossini Arias

Chorus and Orchestra of the Welsh National Opera, Gabriele Ferro (TELDEC 73242-2)

CECILIA BARTOLI Rossini Heroines

Orchestra and Chorus of the Teatro Fenice, Venice; Ion Marin (LONDON 436 075-2)



RACHMANINOFF: Monna Vanna, Act I

Milnes, McCoy, Walker; Icelandic Opera Chorus; Iceland Symphony Orchestra, Buketoff
Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 40

Black; Iceland Symphony Orchestra, Buketoff
CHANDOS CHAN 8987

Performance: Okay
Recording: Okay

Rule No. 1 in the music-theater business. Operatic or otherwise: Never work on a property to which you do not have the rights. Poor Rachmaninoff! In 1906-1907 he set an entire act of *Monna Vanna*, a play by Maurice Maeterlinck (the author of *Pelléas et Mélisande*), only to discover that Maeterlinck had given the rights to someone else. The story came to light in the 1970's when Rachmaninoff's sister-in-law asked Igor Buketoff to orchestrate and perform the fragment. The first performance, with Sherrill Milnes in the lead, was by the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1984. This recording, sung in English and recorded in the improbable precincts of Reykjavik, Iceland, is also a first.

It's hard to know what to make of it. The work dates from what is certainly Rachmaninoff's most prolific and popular period, but the subject matter and style are very dated, and this is, alas, one of those cases where the work is not served by translation. There is some beautiful music, especially as heard from the golden throat of Sherrill Milnes. For the rest, Buketoff had less than first-class forces to work with, but he is certainly an earnest and authentic interpreter of obscure Rachmaninoff. Take that for what it's worth. The work remains an unsatisfactory fragment.

The case of the Fourth Piano Concerto, the least known and least popular of Rachmaninoff's concertos, is almost equally odd. The work was started before World War I, completed in the 1920's, and then drastically cut and revised in 1941. Buketoff quite rightly regards the "final" version as much inferior to the 1927 "original," which, like certain fixers of lost or worn master paintings, he then overrestores, redoing the orchestration. The performance, with William Black as soloist, is good in a relatively modest way. The case for the superiority of the 1927 version is well made, but Rachmaninoff enthusiasts will wish for a more convincing restoration (the same goes for the opera). E.S.

RAVEL: Gaspard de la Nuit; Pavane pour une Infante Défunte; Ma Mère l'Oye; Boléro

Orchestre Symphonique Français, Petitgirard
ADDA 590047

Performance: Fresh, dignified
Recording: Attractive

Ravel, perhaps the classiest orchestrator of the twentieth century, and certainly one of the most imitated, hardly wrote any original orchestral music at all. *Boléro* was a dance score for Ida Rubinstein; the rest of the works on this CD were originally piano music. Ravel's most famous orchestration was Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, but he was also constantly orchestrating his own music, such as the popular *Pavane* and the ingenious *Mother Goose*, originally for two and four hands. Even so, he seems never to have thought of orchestrating such a quintessentially pianistic piece of piano music as *Gaspard de la Nuit*. Where angels have trod, it would seem easy to make oneself foolish. But Marius Constant has done a dazzling job with it (he's best known in this country for the theatrical version of *Carmen* he

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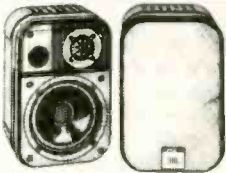


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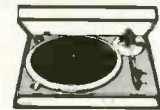
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QUICK FIXES



BEETHOVEN: Overtures (complete).

Vienna Philharmonic, Abbado (DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 429 762-2 two discs). Rhythmic vitality and a feel for lyrical essences rather than Teutonic weightiness are the distinguishing elements of Claudio Abbado's readings. The poignantly tragic coda to *Coriolan* lingers in my memory together with the luxuriant reading of the most elaborate of the opera overtures, the *Leonore* No. 2. The Vienna Philharmonic players are their ever-responsive selves. *D.H.*

BERNSTEIN: Symphony No. 2 ("The Age of Anxiety"); Candide Overture; Fancy Free. Kahane; Bournemouth Symphony, Litton (VIRGIN 91433-2).

The highlight of this recording is the very sympathetic and youthful performance of *The Age of Anxiety*. Written as a kind of concerto for Bernstein himself to play, the symphony is probably his best large-scale orchestral work, yet it only rarely comes off as well as it does here. The other pieces are also performed with ample spirit and spunk. *E.S.*

GLIÈRE: Symphony No. 3 ("Ilya Murometz"). San Diego Symphony, Talmi (PRO ARTE CDS 589).

This 1911 blockbuster, very much in the Slavico-nationalist vein, has its stirring, even overwhelming moments, but it also has its pompous longeurs. Yoav Talmi and the orchestra give a remarkable account of themselves, and the recording, made with Shure HTS Stereosurround equipment in San Diego's Symphony Hall, is unusually effective in terms of depth imaging even without a surround decoder. *D.H.*

MOZART: Idomeo. Rolfe Johnson, Von Otter, McNair, Martinpelto, others. Monteverdi Choir; English Baroque Soloists, Gardiner (ARCHIV 431 674-2 three discs).

The vigorous and incisive manner in which John Eliot Gardiner propels the overture establishes a pattern that remains constant throughout. The soloists form a well-functioning ensemble, the orchestra plays in a manner that does not call attention to its "authentic instruments" but simply sounds right, and the chorus delivers its crucial contribution with a fine tone and discipline. The sonics are remarkably untroubled in this live recording. *G.J.*

MOZART: Sonatas for Violin and Piano, K. 27, 303, and 454; Variations in G Major, K. 359. Zukerman, Neikrug (RCA VICTOR 60740-2).

This second installment in the Pinchas Zukerman-Marc Neikrug survey of Mozart's violin sonatas confirms the strongly positive impression

made by the first. The performances focus on the richness and variety of the music rather than using it as a mere "vehicle," and the recording itself is notable for its warmth and balance. *R.F.*

POULENC: La Voix Humaine. Migenes; Orchestre National de France, Prêtre (ERATO 45651-2).

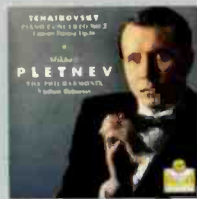
In spite of its limited palette, Poulenc's single-character "opera" *La Voix Humaine* has had a certain currency as an intense showcase for a charismatic singing actress. And certainly Julia Migenes is that. The recorded sound for both voice and orchestra is up-front—the musical equivalent of a close-up. *E.S.*

SIBELIUS: Scaramouche; Wedding March for "The Language of the Birds." Gothenburg Symphony, Järvi (BIS CD-502).

This first complete recording of Sibelius's two half-hour sets of incidental music for a 1911 Commedia dell'Arte-style pantomime about a hunchback viola player reveals gossamer textures, a melodic tenderness, and the muted quality one might expect given a viola as the lead instrument. Neeme Järvi rises to the music's challenges with subtle gradations in timbre, making it seem more substantial than it is. *D.P.S.*

R. STRAUSS: Don Juan; Aus Italien. Cleveland Orchestra, Ashkenazy (LONDON 425 941-2).

Vladimir Ashkenazy and the Cleveland Orchestra bring plenty of dash, color, and erotic lyricism to *Don Juan* (the tragically shuddering conclusion is the high point) and make the most of *Aus Italien*. Spacious, wide-ranging sonics. *D.H.*



TCHAIKOVSKY: Piano Concerto No. 1; Concert Fantasy. Pletnev; Philharmonia, Fedoseyev (VIRGIN 91190-2).

I thoroughly enjoyed these performances. There's plenty of blood and thunder at the opening of the concerto, the slow movement has an engaging simplicity, and the finale is swift and volatile. The Concert Fantasy, too, offers plenty of challenges for the piano soloist, and Mikhail Pletnev makes the most of them. Good sound and fine orchestral collaboration. *D.H.*

SAMUEL RAMEY: French Opera Arias. Ambrosian Opera Chorus: London Philharmonic, Rudel (PHILIPS 422-080-2).

This recital album has much to offer: the full, sonorous richness of Samuel Ramey's admirably controlled bass, the attention he brings to the texts, solid work by the assisting soloists and chorus, tasteful accompaniment by Julius Rudel and a responsive orchestra, and a well-engineered recording. *R.A.*

made for Peter Brook, though his best-known music is the theme from the *Twilight Zone* TV series, which few people are aware he wrote). He almost out-Ravels Ravel. His arrangement never sounds "arranged," it hardly ever betrays its pianistic origins, and it makes explicit what the original only implies. Purists can object if they like; they don't have to listen. Fortunately, we don't need their permission to enjoy this recording.

The Orchestre Symphonique Français is the only full-time, non-state-supported orchestra in France. It is a young orchestra (both in age and in the age of its players), and it earns its keep by putting itself up for hire, in the English manner, and getting corporate and foundation support, American style. The enterprise is promising. The quality of the playing is high, the orchestral ensemble excellent, and the recording has a nice balance between clarity and ambience. Even this umpteenth recorded version of the silly *Boléro* achieves a rare dignity, with a measured tempo said to be the exact one specified by the composer. It's a little too earnest, perhaps, to raise anyone's diastolic pressure but is a nice and sober display of the composer's bag of orchestral tricks—and what a bag it is! *E.S.*

SCHOENBERG: Pierrot Lunaire; Kammer-symphonie, Op. 9

Pousseur; Ensemble Musique Oblique, Herreweghe

HARMONIA MUNDI 901390

Performance: Contemporary
Recording: Illuminating

Pierrot Lunaire, that crazy old avant-garde work of Arnold Schoenberg, is eighty years old. Here is a *Pierrot* for the Nineties. The conductor, Philippe Herreweghe, thinks the work is "a descent into the inferno of the subconscious." I wouldn't argue.

Ensemble Musique Oblique is an excellent Belgian new-music ensemble. There is a logic to a fresh view of Schoenberg's most famous work coming from an outpost of French culture at the edge of the Germanic world. Schoenberg himself was very influenced by French art, particularly symbolist poetry, early in his career. *Pierrot* is a setting of a German translation of a cycle by the French symbolist poet Albert Giraud, and it was written in a tradition that owes as much to the French avant-garde cabaret as it does to German expressionism.

These performers are not intimidated by Schoenberg's formidable-looking score, and they are not afraid to "interpret" it in the best sense of that word. Marianne Pousseur finds a declamatory or acting style for each of the twenty-one poems; her German is idiomatic, in constant flux, phrased and colored just like the music and perfectly apt. Each poem becomes a dramatic as well as musical vignette, perfectly self-sufficient but part of the whole.

The Chamber Symphony of 1909 is one of those pioneering Schoenbergian juggernauts that command respect but not love. It is a Mahler symphony boiled down to one intense 21-minute movement that constantly struggles with the limitations of the chamber-orchestra form. Strangely enough, the Anton Webern arrangement for five instruments used here is very appealing. The big dimensions of the work never have to be realized literally but only implied. That approach works particularly well in this recording, which goes for—and achieves—subtlety and finesse. Strongly recommended. *E.S.*



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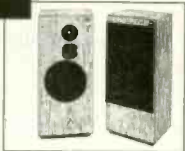


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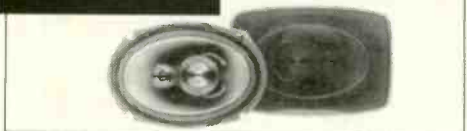
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—	Columbia House CD Club	16a,b
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—	Crutchfield	33
20	Denon	5
13	Hughes	14
—	Illinois Audio	87
15	J&R Music World	78-79
—	Maxell	18-19
17	Mobile Fidelity	71
18	Oldsmobile	37
—	Onkyo	62
—	PARA	40
21	Paradigm	69
—	Philips	21, 23, 25
—	Pioneer Car	C2, 1
—	Pioneer Home	C4
—	Polk Audio	C3
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July

SCHUBERT: Symphony No. 5; Five German Dances; Five Minuets with Six Trios
 Moscow Virtuosi, Spivakov
 RCA VICTOR 60452-2
Performance: Elegant
Recording: Very good

Here is Schubert at age sixteen in the dances and at an almost mature age nineteen in the symphony, writing for an ensemble made up of family and neighbors—true *Hausmusik*. The dances flank the symphony on the disc, which adds up to an enchanting listening experience. Thanks to the small size of the superbly trained ensemble, the performances convey something of the intimacy of a Schubert "at home."

The dances are for the most part charmingly naïve, the exception being the longest, the third in the set of minuets, which provides a telling glimpse of the Schubert to come. The familiar Symphony No. 5 gets an affectionate performance, with lots of polish but no attempt at flash until the finale, when Vladimir Spivakov sends his Moscow colleagues off at a lively clip. The recording, done in the spacious Herkulessaal in Munich, is also surprisingly intimate. *D.H.*

SHOSTAKOVICH: Symphony No. 15
 London Symphony Orchestra, Rostropovich
 TELDEC 74560-2
Performance: Mixed bag
Recording: Uneven

This last of the Shostakovich symphonies, a haunted and haunting affair, receives an eloquent reading from Mstislav Rostropovich, the composer's devoted friend in his later years. At times, however, there are small imprecisions of intonation and attack, particularly from the solo instruments, which play such a large and relentlessly exposed role in the first two movements. I also found the inner balance of the chucking and chiming percussion in the closing pages slightly off for my taste. The recording, furthermore, is at a rather low level, certainly as compared with the one by Neeme Järvi and the Gothenburg Symphony on Deutsche Grammophon, which has far better presence. And except for a somewhat stodgy treatment of the sardonic *danse macabre* third movement, which Rostropovich has just right, the Järvi performance has more snap and tension. Last but not least is the short playing time for a full-price CD, only 45 minutes. I fear this Teldec issue is for "Slava" buffs only. *D.H.*

Collections

MIECZYSLAW HORSZOWSKI
Bach: French Suite No. 6. Schumann: Papillons, Op. 2. Chopin: Preludes, Op. 28, Nos. 13 and 15; Mazurka, Op. 24, No. 4.
 ELEKTRA NONESUCH 79264-2
Performance: Incomparable
Recording: Very good

Mieczyslaw Horszowski had to cancel the New York City recital this past March that was intended to celebrate his hundredth birthday, but this timely disc comes as his own present to us. It actually marks two significant anniversaries, for this year Horszowski also completes a half-century on the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where these performances were recorded in January of last year.

Though his public career now spans more than nine decades, he has never recorded enough, especially as a solo player. The few recordings he has made for Nonesuch in the last few years have been well received for the same reason his recital audiences are notable for the number of eminent keyboard colleagues in attendance: because he still has a good deal to tell us about making music. He gives us a singing line, great beauty of tone, and, perhaps more conspicuously than any other single factor, a sense of purity that draws the listener into a very special world, radiant and uncluttered. You will not likely encounter a more loving and illuminating account of Schumann's *Papillons* or a more clarifying and enlivening one of the Bach suite. The Chopin pieces reveal a certain diminution of physical dexterity, but they are touching encores, and all are beautifully reproduced. *R.F.*



KRONOS QUARTET
Pieces of Africa
 NONESUCH 79275-2
Performance: Spirited
Recording: Excellent

The Kronos Quartet's happy inspiration to commission a diverse group of African composers has resulted in this completely engaging record. The range is enormous: Hassan Hakmoun and Hamza El Din come from Moslem North Africa. Kevin Volans is South African, and the others come from Zimbabwe, Gambia, Uganda, and Ghana. One or two of the pieces are for plain old string quartet, but the rest mix in African instruments—drums, plucked strings, thumb piano, etc.—and sometimes even vocals, mostly performed by the composers themselves. The level of sophistication varies greatly. El Din's *Escalay (Waterwheel)* is an intense, 12-minute fantasia on Arabic material extended out to epic dimensions. Volans's *White Man Sleeps* is a suite of five pieces that combines African and Western minimalism.

Among the shorter, sweeter pieces, Obo Addy's exciting *Washishijay (Our Beginning)* is the kind of West African piece that makes you think of the roots of jazz. The two pieces by Dumisani Maraire—*Mai Nozipo (Mother Nozipo)*, in memory of his mother, and *Kutambarara (Spreading)*, a kind of tribute to the resurgence of African culture—have charm and spirit in the simplest of styles.

How do you judge performances of music like this? By the amount and quality of spirit. The Kronos Quartet scores very high on both counts, and these recordings—made over a period of two or three years, presumably when the composer/performers were available—are of a piece and always both edifying and entertaining. These days you don't often find material as consistently original, fresh, and well presented as this. *E.S.*

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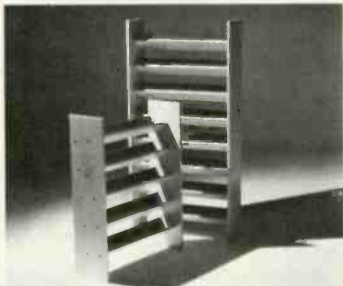
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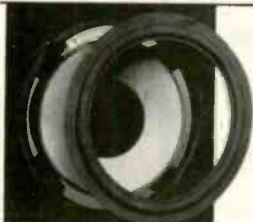
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THE HIGH END

BY RALPH HODGES

The Real High End

OFTEN I'm asked which attributes identify a "high-end" product: quality, performance, price, philosophy, religiosity, obscurity? I'm not comfortable with the question. However well intentioned, spiky feet and magic green markers don't fit any of my tentative criteria. But from time to time a few unquestionably high-end products emerge to define the breed. This spring brought two.

Dan D'Agostino of Krell favors Class A power amplifiers, and he is not pleased that some manufacturers claim Class A output-stage operation without achieving it. He built himself a pure Class A amp just to see what it would take, and as soon as it appeared in public he got requests for it despite its size, weight, and cost. It was time to get serious about a real product.

Sound by Singer, a Manhattan-based high-end retail organization, hosted the U.S. debut of the Krell Audio Standard, a prodigious monoblock amplifier about the size of a large window air conditioner but having the opposite effect on the indoor temperature. It is a characteristic of a true Class A amp to draw as much energy from the wall socket at idle as when it is driven full bore. When the amplifier is not using it, this power can do only one thing: generate heat. Hence the tendency of amplifiers with Class A biasing to be lightweight in output capability. No matter how good the reproduction, you can't fully enjoy music in equatorial temperatures that also pose a risk to your other equipment and your recordings.

In the Krell Audio Standard, D'Agostino has provided a choice of three distinct bias settings, selected according to input and load requirements. All three insure true Class A operation; this large amplifier simply pretends to itself that it's a smallish amplifier when the input and load don't require very much work from it. The bias conditions are self-latching, remaining in effect for some 90 seconds after demand triggers them. The amp's response to changing demands is said to

be much faster than changes in the music that triggers them. In a fourth operational condition, called Extended Mode, the power-supply voltage is actually ramped up to deliver increased power (perhaps 400 watts, depending upon load characteristics) for a period of about 7 seconds. Making use of this feature, should you ever acquire the K.A.S. amplifier (a stereo pair costs \$28,000), will probably require modifying your house wiring. That is the way of the true high end.

A week later the Sound by Singer folks married the K.A.S. to David Wilson's (Wilson Audio Specialties) seventh version of his Wilson Audio Modular Monitor system, or WAMM. This is a loudspeaker that somewhat resembles a large industrial drill press, although exquisitely matched veneers and careful routing of thumb-thick cables afford it a certain balletic grace. A sturdy base assembly embraces a low-frequency cabinet (two KEF oval woofers) and extends tall upright rods to which are clamped higher-frequency modules whose own horizontal mounting rods enable them to be slid forward or back relative to each other. The modules contain both dynamic and electrostatic drivers.

Outboard electronic crossovers and equalizers complete the basic system, but optional coffin-sized subwoofer systems can be added, extending the effective response limit from 27 Hz down into the low teens.

Wilson's claim that the WAMM is the only speaker system that can be comprehensively adjusted in both the frequency and time domains is justified, as far as I know. The suggestion that it is the highest-resolution loudspeaker available is also worth entertaining. The directivity characteristics of the ensemble are somewhat tight, probably to avoid the middle of sidewall and ceiling reflections, and this approach, when well executed, can certainly lead to superior definition. One potential liability is a lack of sonic diffuseness that can make the projected sound sources seem pretty constricted in space as well as quite forward. When this occurs, one should try listening to a large-scale presentation, like a big symphony orchestra, to be sure it is reproduced with appro-

priate spread, scope, and distance.

In this and in previous encounters, Wilson has not seemed too eager to demonstrate the system using recordings of performances that could not have physically taken place in the playback space employed. His one concession in the Singer room was a transcription of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* for large pipe organ that was enormously powerful spectrally but rather constricted spatially. This is not to say that the fidelity wasn't of the highest. By most criteria the reproduction was as flawless as a fine May morning. But the instrument and the space around it did not have enough "room." I did not consult with other auditors to gather their impressions, and I again emphasize that what I heard might well have been the most accurate playback of the recording

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possible under the conditions. As a rule, acoustic presentations that seem to make your room's walls go away involve elements of artificiality. But then so do most recordings. Wilson's own recordings do not (he originally assembled the WAMM to let him hear them as faithfully as could be contrived), and the WAMM system does them gratifying justice.

All serious audiophiles should hear the WAMM Series VII. Unfortunately, according to Andy Singer, his shop is the only authorized dealer in the western hemisphere, so travel to New York City will be required for many. Then again, should you decide to part with the \$125,000 that buys the ensemble, travel will be required for David Wilson as well. He personally installs all his WAMM systems. □



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