

\$6.95 US  
\$8.50 CAN

# The audiophile voice™

Volume 3, Issue 5

"...by audiophiles for audiophiles."

**INTERFERENCE**

Cleaning Up  
Your System

**PIERRE HANTAÏ**

Profile of a  
Harpsichordist

**Bob Dylan:  
Time Out of Mind**

Still the Master  
Of Lyric

**Reviews: Millennium DTS, Von  
Schweikert VR, Shure V15VxMR, PSB  
Century 1000i, and more!**



SONY

**LEGENDARY PERFORMANCE** The Sony DVP-S7000 player has already been hailed as "the reference standard" for DVD performance. Now, thanks to our Dolby® Digital ES receiver with Digital Cinema Sound™ and a Trinitron® XBR® television with component video technology, the S7000 delivers even greater color clarity and stunning sound quality. It all adds up to the ultimate home entertainment experience. It's just another way Sony makes great things happen.



**MAXIMUM TELEVISION.** ONLY FROM SONY



©1997 Sony Electronics Inc. All rights reserved. Sony, Digital Cinema Sound, Trinitron, XBR and Maximum Television are trademarks of Sony. Dolby is a trademark of Dolby Laboratories Licensing Corporation. Legends of the Fall. ©1994 TriStar Pictures, Inc. All rights reserved. Legends of the Fall now available on DVD.

World Radio History



# Purist Audio Design



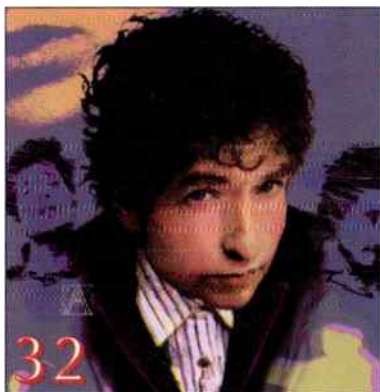
*Some people believe in white magic, Others believe in black magic, But the only real magic exists in Purist Audio Design's cables and products.*

P.O. BOX 125 CLUTE, TX 77531 PHONE (409) 265-5114 FAX (409) 265-1211  
E-MAIL: PURIST@PURISTAUDIODESIGN.COM DEALER AND DISTRIBUTOR  
WEBSITE: WWW.PURISTAUDIODESIGN.COM INQUIRIES WELCOMED.

# C O N T E N T S

## COLUMNS

- 6 New Products
- 8 Letters
- 14 The Library - "The Home Theater Companion" by Howard Ferstler
- 18 Editorial - Eugene Pitts III
- 80 Ad Index



**Getting Rid of Interference:**  
Consumer Electronic Manufacturers Assn. and International Radio Relay League **20**

**Philadelphia Audio Society Celebrates 10th Anniversary:** Frank Alles **25**

**Portrait of Pierre Hantai:** Benjamin Ivry **28**

## RECORDINGS

**Rock**  
Bob Dylan: *Time Out of Mind* **Mark Block** **32**

Led Zeppelin: *BBC Sessions* **Jon Tiven** **34**

Jack Russell: *The Long Way Around* and *Song of the West*; Ramblin' Jack Elliott: *Kerouac's Last Dream* **Michael Tearson** **36**

**World Beat**  
Tuva: *Deep in the Heart of Tuva* and *If I'd Been Born an Eagle* **Les Berkley** **38**

**Classical**  
Nicholas McGegan: *Vivaldi for Diverse Instruments* **Roger Oyster** **40**

Ronn McFarlane, lute: *A Distant Shore* **Arthur Paxton** **42**

**Jazz & Blues**  
Art Tatum: *Group Masterpieces*; Bill Holman: *Brilliant Corners* **Jack Skowron** **44**

Carl Weathersby: *Looking Out My Window*; Melvin Taylor & the Slack Band: *Dirty Pool* **Jon Tiven** **47**

**EQUIPMENT**  
Millennium 2.4.6 DTS Decoder Preamp **Ralph Glasgal** **48**

Monster Cable Polarity Analyzer **Ralph Glasgal** **55**

Assemblage DAC-2 HDCD Converter **Ron Nagle** **61**

PSB Century 1000i Loudspeaker **Jerry Walsh** **66**

Shure V15VxMR Phono Cartridge **John Gatski** **70**

Von Schweikert VR4 Speaker **Clement Perry** **72**

Musical Fidelity Discsolution CD Cleaner **Mark Block** **77**

# See Bob Rock.

The new Sunfire *True Subwoofer* by Bob Carver has received reviews that are redefining the subwoofer industry.

*There has never been a subwoofer like it!  
There will never be a subwoofer like it!\**

*It's a small eleven inch square  
bass cube, and it shakes the  
walls and rattles the  
rafters. It has its  
own built-in two  
thousand, seven  
hundred watt amp!*

**Trust Bob.  
It Rocks!**

SUB REVIEWS



"The True Subwoofer is an achievement on par with the space shuttle and the twinkie."

—Al Griffin

Home Theater, Feb, 97



"Talk about floor shaking bass...turned up to maximum level, I don't think there was anything in the house that wasn't shaking, including the concrete foundation!"

"Don't, I repeat, don't even think about purchasing another subwoofer without giving the Astonishing True subwoofer a listen."

—Joseph M. Cierniak

The Sensible Sound, Issue # 60



"The lowest, flattest, deepest bass I have EVER heard or measured."

—Julian Hirsh

Stereo Review, Dec. 96

**\*Strictly speaking: for 20  
years until patent expires**



<http://www.sunfirelabs.com>

*Bob Carver's*  
**Sunfire**  
*from his mind ... and soul*

# CARVER



AV-505 multichannel amplifier.  
80 Watts x 5, more than  
130 Watts with Power Steering  
AV-705x multichannel amplifier.  
126 Watts x 5, more than  
200 Watts with Power Steering

**Without Power Steering™, they'd be just another pair of pretty faces.**

**"Perhaps pitting an \$1199 amp against one seven times its cost is unfair... Anyway, the Carver acquitted itself rather well in this uneven match-up."**

*Steven Stone, Stereophile Guide to Home Theater, Summer 1997*

The Carver AV-705x and AV-505 start out life already at the top of their curve with five independent modular amplifiers precision-crafted from mil-spec components. If they were based on conventional amplification technology alone, the Carvers could easily dominate their class in performance, price and power.

**"...the AV-505 produces, literally and figuratively, enough power to blast many of its rivals out of contention."**

*David Ranada, Stereo Review, January 1997/AV-505 amplifier*

More important, the new Carvers also pack the unique ability to use their power more intelligently. It's accomplished through an exclusive Carver smart amp technology called *Power Steering*.

**"The benefits of Power Steering in a home theater product are so obvious, it's surprising the idea didn't surface sooner. But it always takes someone to be first, and the Carver people seem to have a knack for not missing the forest for the trees...the Carver AV-705x is a great amplifier...a terrific bargain."**

*Edward J. Foster, Audio, September 1996/AV-705x amplifier*

**"If I were prone to hyperbole, I could easily go overboard describing the Carver AV-705x's attributes. This is one fine amplifier."**

*Steven Stone, Stereophile Guide to Home Theater, Summer 1997 AV-705x amplifier*

The sound quality noted by the critics is due to another technical advance called Total Direct Coupling, which maintains absolute audio signal neutrality through the principle of *load-independent design*. It's a lesson learned from developing our critically-acclaimed Lightstar Research amplifier.

**"Love the price; love the amp...high powered, imaginatively designed and compact."**

*Lawrence B. Johnson, Audio Video Interiors, March 1997 AV-705x amplifier*



With Lightstar-inspired musicality and Power Steering muscle, small wonder why so many reviewers are impressed with the new Carver multichannel amplifiers. The AV-705x and 505 are proof that price does not have to be an obstacle to perfection.

**"Congratulations, Carver. Not only have you made it that much easier for videophiles to get superior sound without taking out a second mortgage, you've also upped the ante for what should be expected from a \$1200 multichannel amplifier."**

*Steven Stone, Stereophile Guide to Home Theater, Summer 1997 AV-705x amplifier*

P.O. Box 137, Woodinville, WA 98072-0137  
Phone (425) 482-3400 Fax (425) 482-3401  
For authorized dealer locations, call  
1-800-521-4333 [www.carver.com](http://www.carver.com)

## the audiophile voice

Editor/Publisher Eugene Pitts, III  
Executive Editor Arnis Balgalvis  
Senior Editors Mark Block  
Paul Lupie  
Cover Artist George Angelini  
Additional Art Sharon Pitts  
Robert Rose

### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Frank Alles, Bill Brassington, Ron Carlen, James Dowd, Jim Frane, John Hellow, Ron Nagle, David Nemzer, Arthur Paxton, Inel Schumer, Earle Stevens, Rick Taylor, Michael Tearson, Jon Tiven, Les Turoczi, Ross Wagner, Jerry Walsh, and Bill Wells.

### MARKETING & ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Chris Noblet, 800/671-4030  
From Canada: 310/375-2843  
FAX: 310/375-8724

### THE AUDIOPHILE SOCIETY OFFICERS

Founder	Hv Kachalsky
President	Arnis Balgalvis
Vice President	Bill Brassington
Treasurer	Mike Kates
Recording Secretary	David Nemzer

Inquiries regarding reviews should be made to the Editor at the production offices for the following review coordinators: **Equipment & Audiophile Recordings** Arnis Balgalvis, 214 Linden Ave., Glen Ridge, NJ 07028; 201/748-7230. **Equipment & Classical Recordings** Paul Lupie, 333 W. 57th St., Apt. 811, New York, NY 10018; 212/586-2986. **Equipment & Pop/Rock Recordings** Mark Block, 86 Woodland Ave., Maplewood, NJ 07040; 201/763-3491.

### SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE

Postmaster, please send change of address to P.O. Box 43537, Upper Montclair, NJ 07043. Please allow one issue for address change to take effect, but also notify publisher if a replacement copy needs to be sent. Subscribers should send an old address label together with the new address. Please notify the Publisher of subscription difficulties by writing to P.O. Box 43537, Upper Montclair, NJ 07043 or FAX-ing 201/509-2032.

U.S. subscriptions are \$30 for six issues and \$55 for 12 issues; Canadian subscriptions are \$39 (U.S. dollars) for six issues and \$65 for 12 issues; overseas subscriptions are \$66 (U.S.) for six issues and \$110 for 12 issues.

The Audiophile Voice Vol. 3, No. 5; publication date, Dec. 23, 1997. Dewey decimal number 621.381 or 778.5; is published bimonthly by Guts & Elbow Grease Publishing Ltd., P.O. Box 43537, Upper Montclair, NJ 07043. Printed in U.S.A. by Northeast Graphics, Providence, RI. Film by Satellite Image Center, Montclair, NJ.

The Audiophile Voice is a registered trademark of Guts & Elbow Grease Publishing Ltd. © 1997 Guts & Elbow Grease Publishing Ltd. All rights reserved. The Editor assumes no responsibility for manuscripts, photos, or artwork. The Publisher, at his sole discretion, reserves the right to reject any advertisement.

### PRODUCTION OFFICES

215 Glenridge Ave., Lower Level  
Montclair, NJ 07042  
201/509-2009  
FAX: 201/509-2032

# WHO IS ROTEL?



Compact Disc Players



Tuners



Preamplifiers



Power Amplifiers



Integrated Amplifiers



Surround Sound Processors



Multiroom Controllers

## Perhaps a few references are in order:

### Stereophile Magazine (USA), Recommended Components:

- 1996: RCD950BX CD Player  
RB980BX Power Amplifier  
RB985 Power Amplifier  
RSP960AX Surround Processor  
RT990BX Tuner
- 1995: RP900 Turntable  
RSP960AX Surround Processor  
RT990BX Tuner  
RHT10 FM Tuner
- 1994: RCD955BX CD Player  
RCD965BX CD Player  
RB980BX Power Amplifier  
RHT10 FM Tuner
- 1993: RCD955BX CD Player  
RCD965BX CD Player  
RB980BX Power Amplifier  
RB960BX Power Amplifier  
RHT10 FM Tuner
- 1992: RCD955BX CD Player  
RCD965BX CD Player

### Sound & Vision Magazine (Canada), Critics Choice:

- 1995: RB970BX Power Amplifier  
RB985 Power Amplifier  
RA985BX Integrated Amplifier  
RSP960AX Surround Processor  
RTC940AX Tuner Preamp  
RT940AX Tuner  
RCD930AX CD Player
- 1995: RC980BX Preamplifier  
RB980BX Power Amplifier  
RSP960AX Surround Processor
- 1994: RC970BX Preamplifier  
RB980BX Power Amplifier  
RB990BX Power Amplifier  
RA980BX Integrated Amplifier  
RT950BX AM/FM Tuner  
RTC940AX Tuner/Preamp  
RX940AX Receiver  
RX950AX Receiver  
RCD945AX CD Player  
RCC940AX Carousel CD Player  
RSP960AX Surround Processor
- 1993: RX950AX Receiver  
RC960BX Preamplifier  
RB960BX Power Amplifier  
RB990BX Power Amplifier  
RA980BX Integrated Amplifier  
RT930AX FM Tuner  
RT950BX AM/FM Tuner  
RCD965BX CD Player

### Hi Fi Choice Magazine (UK), Hi fi Choice Awards:

- 1996: RA920AX Integrated Amplifier
- 1993: RA960BX Integrated Amplifier  
RA935BX Integrated Amplifier  
RT960BX Tuner
- 1992: RA930AX Integrated Amplifier  
RC960BX Preamplifier  
RB960BX Power Amplifier
- 1991: RCD965BX CD Player

### What Hi Fi? Magazine (UK), What HiFi Awards:

- 1993: RCD945AX CD Player
- 1992: RT950BX AM/FM Tuner  
RA920AX Integrated Amplifier  
RCD965BX CD Player
- 1991: RCD965BX CD Player  
RA930AX Integrated Amplifier

### Audio Video Intl, (USA), Hi Fi Grand Prix Awards:

- 1996: RCD950 CD Player  
RA985BX Integrated Amplifier  
RX950 AM/FM Receiver  
RCC945 CD Changer  
RSP980 THX® Surround Processor  
RC995 CD Player  
RT940AX Tuner
- 1994: RB980BX Power Amplifier
- 1993: RCD965BX CD Player  
RB980BX Power Amplifier

### Consumer Electronics Show (USA), Innovations Awards:

- 1997: RSP980 THX® Surround Processor
- 1995: RMB100 Monoblock Amplifier
- 1992: RB980BX Power Amplifier

### Audio Magazine (Germany), Golden Ear Awards:

- 1994: RB980BX Power Amplifier  
RC980BX Preamplifier
- 1993: RB980BX Power Amplifier  
RC980BX Preamplifier
- 1992: RB980BX Power Amplifier  
RC980BX Preamplifier

### Consumers Digest (USA) Best Buys:

- 1996: RX950AX AM/FM Receiver  
RA970BX Integrated Amplifier

### Home Cinema Choice (UK) A/V Power Amp of the Year:

- 1997: RB985 Power Amplifier

For more of what the critics say, ask your dealer or call (508) 664-3820 for our Critical Acclaim review booklet.

## AUDIO ADVENTURE'S MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR 1996

ROTEL OF AMERICA • 54 CONCORD ST. • NORTH READING, MA 01864 • TEL 508-664-3820 • FAX 508-664-4109

World Radio History

ROTEL®

# New Products

## The Perreaux SM6 Preamplifier and Model 350 Power Amplifier

offer superb quality and accuracy of musical reproduction through the firm's extensive research into circuitry advances, particularly in integral components, power supplies, and grounding. The SM6 is their top-line reference preamp with fully balanced circuitry utilizing premium-grade components, volume control via a digitally controlled analog resistor ladder, IR remote control of all functions, four discrete Class-A line stages, and input switching via DIL relays. Model 350 features balanced and unbalanced inputs, dual binding posts for biwiring, very high current capacity, and multiple protection system. SM6, \$2,995.00; Model 350, \$4,995.00. Data: 317/849-5880.



## The Ruark Excalibur Speaker System

addresses the aspirations of many high-end enthusiasts for the return of a "true no-compromise British reference monitor." The three-way, five-unit system uses two separate enclosures per side with extensive multiple bracing. The load presented is an easy 4 ohms, while sensitivity is specified as 90 dB SPL for 1 watt, 1 meter. Both enclosure sections use dual-layer damping, 40 mm on the sides, 30 mm rears, to almost totally do away with coloration. \$15,000.00. Data: 973/764-8900.



## The Philips CDR870 CD Recorder

is able to record digital audio on both CD-R (write-once) and CD-RW (reusable) Compact Discs. This breakthrough product may be the first, outside a lab, to combine both functions in a single unit and also features a one-bit A/D converter, CD-Sync auto-start recording, automatic and manual track numbering, digital and analog inputs and outputs, and integrated sampling rate conversion from 32 and 48 kHz to the CD-standard 44.1 kHz. \$649.00. Data: 770/821-2400.



## The Sennheiser RS4 Wireless Headphones

utilize three 900-MHz bands for an extended, noise-free transmission range of up to 250 feet. Other features include lightweight supra-aural ear cups, environmentally friendly nickel metal hydride (NiMH) rechargeable battery which provides three hours of operation, an automatic gain control, automatic on/off switch on the T4 transmitter, and mini plug with quarter-inch adapter. \$159.95. Data: 860/434-9190.





D

id you actually consider

naming your *first born*

**Ringo, Wolfgang, or Miles?**



PARASOUND

You live for it. That moment when the violins are soaring and the drums are pounding, and you suddenly realize you've been holding your breath. It's this transcendent moment that keeps us working here at Parasound. That keeps us combining ground-breaking circuit designs with premium audiophile parts. Take, for example, our four most affordable high-current amplifiers. With independent power supplies and direct-coupled inputs, they pull you deep inside the music one moment, and then launch you out of your seat the next. And now they even turn themselves on whenever they receive a 12 volt control signal. They're all part of our obsession to create great sounding audio components that are so well-built you'll be able to hand them down to your son Thelonius.



# L ETTERS

## Re-Tube Trap

Dear Editor:

I just finished reading Ralph Glasgal's article in Vol. III, No. 4 of *The Audiophile Voice* titled, "Acoustic Sciences Tube Trap." At ASC, we appreciate how difficult it is to step up and address the room acoustic, the last link in the audio chain and certainly the ugly duckling of hi-fi. This is especially true when tackling the low frequency problem. I want to take a little space to comment on your article from the manufacturer's point of view.

The black Cube Trap is no longer in production; it was our introductory model. It met with such success that we revamped it in all regards and now have the Cube Trap II. I think we only produced 100 of the original black model, mainly for the WCES in Las Vegas. It's rumored to be something of a collector's item now.

The changes to the Cube are both internal and external. Let me bring you up to date. On the aesthetic side, the look of the Cube has been greatly improved. We still make the black model but with nicer fabric and black-stained, wood-grain end caps. Our crinkle-finish painted end caps were unpopular with the ladies. The present and more popular look has oak end caps and any choice of color fabric. The feet on the original Cube Trap were small plastic skids, which were functional but not good on some floors. We changed to

Sorbothane hemispheres, which offer a self-leveling feature, while providing for additional mechanical damping of the overall structure.

The internal design is greatly changed. The absorbing surface area has been increased by nearly 50 per cent, and the internal cavity is compartmentalized for more efficiency. The absorbing panels are laminated with alternating sections of fiberglass and wood to achieve a resonance-free panel for a smoother frequency response. The body of the Cube is much stronger and more durable. The damper feet absorb shock, but the integral frame and body construction eliminate any relative movement between the exterior of the cabinet and the interior components.

The reflector in the Cube Trap is one of those "forest for the trees" kind of things. The reflector is built into the framework of the unit. The old reflector was built into the rounded corner, but in the newer model, the diffuser panel is located where you would expect, in the middle of the flat sides.

There were so many changes, we had to acknowledge it with a model change. It is now the Cube Trap II and the old model, essentially a show special, has been discontinued.

Like all Tube Traps, the Cube Trap is designed to go directly into the corner behind each speaker. Our company is rooted in the fact that just two good bass traps, one in each corner

behind each speaker, makes a tremendous improvement in low-end articulation. With stereo, it's two speakers per system, and that is why we decided to package and price the Cubes in pairs (now at \$739 retail).

What was interesting to me is that in this article Glasgal discovered a use for Cube Traps that we have not heard of previously. He describes blocking the sides and back of the listening position with Cube Traps. This will wipe out a lot of room presence, as well as lateral- and rear-wall reflections, and is an interesting idea. We usually get so much flack about having Traps even in the corners of a room, we generally don't allow ourselves to imagine placing them out into the main floor area of the room. However, this suggestion is getting close to the ASC MASS System (Modular Acoustic Sub Space), a big hit in recording studio acoustics.

As I read the article, I felt that Glasgal has experienced and demonstrated exactly what we like to see, and have come to expect from our customers: Innovation, creativity, and acoustic exploration. The Tube Trap product line is very well suited to the experimenting listener. Just think, Glasgal was only working with one of our products, did not have the benefit of using our Musical Articulation Test Tone signal, which is available on *Stereophile's Test CD II*, and look how much he has done. Where could he have gone if he

# INTRODUCING THE INCREDIBLE NEW WAY TO LISTEN TO MUSIC AND MOVIES FOR ONLY \$699!

"...the Millennium delivers bass of earth-shattering potency, along with an incredible sense of space and atmosphere....it sounds simply amazing"

*What Hi Fi, August 1997*

"How does the world's least expensive DTS decoder sound?  
In a word, spectacular."

*Jeff Cherun, Home Theater, August 1997*

"No matter how many films I viewed, DTS did a much better job...  
Make no mistake: DTS is the best shot we've had yet for adding the hall,  
the audience, or even the studio."

*Ken Kessler, Hi Fi News and Record Review, June 1997*



## **dts** is the future of quality audio.

With over 10,000 cinemas worldwide now equipped with **dts** 5.1 digital surround sound systems, it is likely that you have already experienced this amazing new audio technology. "Jurassic Park" and "Apollo 13", along with hundreds of new films annually, are released with **dts** 5.1 digital surround soundtracks. Now, you can enjoy movies and music CDs this way in your home, automobile, or office.

## Perfect for home theater and music

**dts** is one of two 5.1 digital formats now available. However, it is the only truly discrete 5.1 multi-channel digital format, and this alone, coupled with its astounding transparency, makes **dts** ideally suited for all music and high quality audio requirements. Movies will come alive in a way that rivals even the best cinema sound, and music will simply immerse you, leaving you breathless. This is the breakthrough that comes along only once every generation, and it is here today for your very own listening pleasure.

## Millennium Technologies makes it affordable.

The feature-packed Millennium Technologies Model 2.4.6 **dts** decoder preamp provides 20-bit resolution for 5.1 channels of digital sound from a new generation of laserdiscs and music CDs. With **dts** soundtracks, you experience a truly holographic soundfield with awesome clarity, imaging, and dynamic range. No noise. No distortion. Just absolute transparency. It must be heard to be believed.

You can order your Millennium 2.4.6 direct from 5.1 Marketing and Sales for just **\$699.00**, plus shipping and handling. Or, you can buy it at a select group of audio/video specialists nationwide. We accept VISA and Mastercard only, no CODs. The Millennium comes with a one year limited warranty.



**888.551.6789**  
CALL TOLL FREE TO ORDER

MARKETING & SALES



Post Office Box 8359, Incline Village, Nevada 89452-8359  
Tel: 888.551.6789 Fax: 888.515.0123  
Tel: 813.323.2311 Fax: 813.327.0717  
email: info@5point1.com  
Visit our Web site at: www.5point1.com

had even more tools to work with? On the other hand, many of our customers are not so pioneering-minded. For them, we maintain a very strong applications support group. That no-charge service comes as part of the Cube Trap purchase. We work hard to help people get the most out of their systems with

our products. By this, we hope to promote ongoing interest in the acoustic upgrade for audio.

Thanks for the review, keep up the good work, and I look forward to your next project.

Arthur Noxon  
President

Acoustic Sciences Corp.

## Erratum: Sony DVP-S7000

*Due to an error in laying out Bill Brassington's "Brass-Bound DVD" sidebar to the review of the Sony DVP-S7000 DVD player in Vol. III, No. 3, two essential paragraphs were unreadable because copy was truncated. The original manuscript from which the paragraphs were taken was a White Paper published by Encore Performance Recordings in their website: [www.eprgoldcds.com](http://www.eprgoldcds.com). The two full paragraphs follow:*

Research conducted by EPR, in cooperation with an international CD manufacturer, and independent research by Harmonic Hall Optical Disc Ltd., Tsuen Wan, Hong Kong, both show that the problem lies in the very physical manufacturing processes associated with the CD itself. An article by Franky K.L. Fan and Dr. Sam M.S. Yeung in the March 1997 issue of One to One, a CD manufacturing industry publication, provides an excellent and detailed description of the exact mechanisms involved. However, the article attributes the sonic differences to digital noise generated inside the CD player, as a byproduct of the disc-related manufacturing issues that affect tracking servo-mechanisms. EPR, based on several year's worth of research using comparisons of their recordings on master DATs against manufactured CDs and CD-Rs, believes the cause of the problem to be reconstructed clock inaccuracies related to both jitter and absolute timing errors in the data stream as a byproduct of the disc manufacturing processes. These errors are due to CD transport servo-mechanism design inadequacies with respect to the current Red Book Standard, the lack of capability



Model FPR-72

*For those who seek  
a high level of  
"musical realism®"*

**YANKEE** 

FULL-RANGE, SINGLE DIAPHRAGM  
CROSSOVERLESS, PLANAR RIBBON  
LOUDSPEAKERS

P.O. BOX 1575, FALLBROOK  
CALIFORNIA 92028 USA

TEL (619) 728-4488  
FAX (619) 941-3516

R e v e a l i n g   t h e   N a t u r e   o f   M u s i c .

# BiFocal

L O U D S P E A K E R   C A B L E

**BiFocal** series loudspeaker cables allow music to run pristine, essentially untouched by external or internal influences.

The heart of our new BiFocal loudspeaker cables is a unique vibration damping material. This special compound locks the inner conductors in place aggressively reducing resonances. The inner "high frequency" conductors are interwoven, intersecting at precise angles with positive conductors counter rotating the negative. The "low frequency" conductors are precisely interwoven on the outside of the cable. Electrical isolation of the two circuits is accomplished via geometry only, no semi-conductive or metallic screens are used. An additional layer of highly compliant damping material mechanically isolates "high" and "low" circuits.

**BiFocal** cables represent twenty years of loudspeaker cable development and are a major step forward in bi-wire cable design - technically and musically.

 **KIMBER KABLE**

2752 South 1900 West • Ogden UT 84401 • Phone 801-621-5530 • Fax 801-627-6980  
[www.kimber.com](http://www.kimber.com)

World Radio History

to accurately determine the location (and therefore the exact time) of each pit/land transition. Either the CDs had to be made differently or the CD transport mechanisms had to be better. The correct digital data at the wrong time makes the wrong music, just like a musician playing the right note at the wrong time is really playing a wrong note.

When it was determined that improvements to the CD manufacturing process could not address the basic issue of pit/land transition structure, EPR postulated that a dual-laser DVD player, capable of tracking the higher density structure of DVD, could be the answer. A method now exists to verify which mechanism is at work. The new Sony DVP-S7000 dual-lens and dual-laser DVD player, used as a CD transport, reveals itself as THE new performance benchmark for CD playback, with per-

formance significantly better than any known current audio transport. The better tracking algorithms for DVD are working with a laser and optics optimized for CD! That is a magic combination! When coupled with a high-quality D/A converter (including quality cabling, amplification, and speakers), the full potential of today's CD standard can now be recognized. Artifacts of "digital sound" are nearly completely removed, although limitations of the sampling rate and word length are still in place. The actual recording engineer's or producer's work can now be heard. As expected, different label's CDs are now easier to distinguish, since the recording techniques as well as inner detail of each recording now can be more easily recognized. Future potential DVD audio standards (and there are at least half a dozen on the table, (despite Joel Brinkley's

inaccurate story in *The New York Times* of July 28, 1997) hold more promise for extending audio performance further, but only if implementation trade-offs (DVD disc quality, signal-to-noise ratio in the optical read channel, and the servo performance) are carefully balanced with observations made using only the very most revelatory CDs available."

### Convert

Dear Editor:

I received and read through the issue of *The Audiophile Voice* that I asked for. I like what I see, direct-to-the-point reviews, no dumb pointless profanity, great quality printing with quality paper and reproductions, and a comfortable physical size. I hope the magazine continues as such. Thanks again for the issue and your faith in me.

Sal Todisco  
Yorktown Heights, NY



*"And the Music Goes Round"*

Shown (without) Acrylic Platter  
\$2995 with 0.5 Tonearm (pictured) \$1995 with WB300 Tonearm

## The Circle

by

Wilson benesch

- Music First
- Unique Carbon Fiber/  
Polymer Suspension
- NEW 0.5 Carbon Fiber Tonearm
- 2-Speed Belt Drive

Distributed by ProAudio Ltd.  
111-South Dr., Barrington, IL 60010  
PH 847-526-1660 • 847-526-1669 FAX  
e-mail: proaudio@aol.com  
web-site: www.wilson-benesch.com

# Soliloquy<sup>TM</sup>

**“O wonderful music, that can so  
astonish a music lover”**



Introducing the intensely exciting new loudspeakers from Soliloquy.

Share with us our enthusiasm and dedication to producing superior home audio loudspeaker systems. Speakers that are compatible with a variety of music lover's interests.

Dedicated to those with a love affair for low power, triode tube amplifiers...to rock-crushing surround sound video enthusiasts.

Soliloquy speakers are designed to produce a huge sound stage and an intoxicating midrange to say nothing of the tight tuneful bass. We invite you to audition and experience the Soliloquy sound at an authorized Soliloquy dealer.



**“O, from this time forth let the music  
be heard from Soliloquy loudspeakers”**

High Fidelity Loudspeaker Co.  
2613 Discovery Dr. • Bldg. A • Raleigh, NC 27616 • (919) 876-7554 • Fax (919) 876-2590  
e-mail: [info@solspeak.com](mailto:info@solspeak.com)

# FREE High-End Audio Catalog!



**Get This Catalog – Before You Make Your Next High-End Audio Purchase!**

### Huge Selection At Low Prices.

Hundreds of high-end audio products including hard-to-find accessories, speakers, analog and digital audio, audio cables, power conditioners, acoustic treatments, equipment racks, and more!

**Learn What You Need To Know Before You Buy.** Get complete information—product descriptions, specifications, buying tips, colorful images, detailed comparison charts, revealing cut-away illustrations, profiles of the manufacturer and designer, and more!

**How To Get Your FREE Copy Of The Catalog.** Call us toll-free, 1-800-451-5445—the call is free, and so is the catalog. This catalog request hot-line is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call anytime.

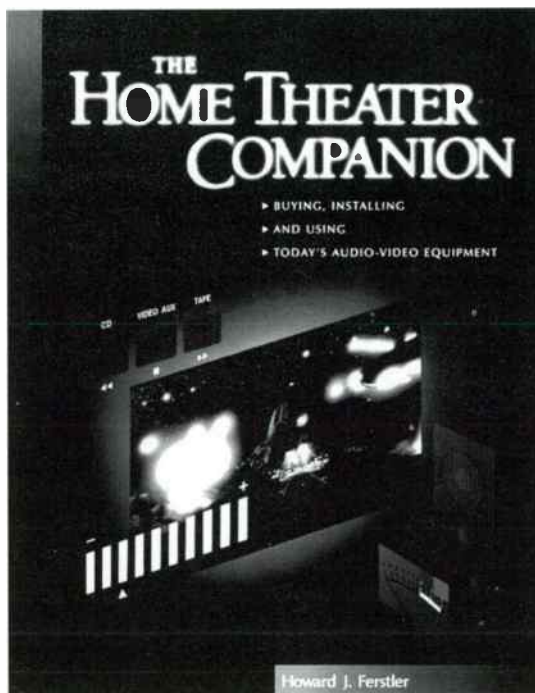
**Call Now!  
1-800-451-5445**



Audio Advisor, Inc., the world's largest seller of high-end audio gear by mail. Street Address: 4649 Danvers Drive S.E., Kentwood, MI, 49512. Phone: 616-975-6100. Fax: 616-975-6111

© Copyright 1996 Audio Advisor, Inc.

# The Library



**Ralph Glasgal**  
[www.ambiophonics.org](http://www.ambiophonics.org)

***The Home Theater Companion Buying, Installing, and Using Today's Audio-Visual Equipment*** by Howard Ferstler, Schirmer Books, [www.mlr.com/schirmer](http://www.mlr.com/schirmer), 456 pages, price \$40.00.

Howard Ferstler, who has written for *Stereo Review*, *Fanfare*, and other prominent audio journals, has produced a quite comprehensive and even courageous review of the state of the art in audio and video reproduction. I certainly commend both his book and him. But this is one title that surely will never make *Stereophile Magazine's* "Recommended List." While Ferstler's *Home Theater Companion* is primarily and

even exhaustively concerned with how various audio and video components of home stereo or surround systems work, and how a neophyte can choose intelligently among the myriad options available and get the best visual and sonic bang for a buck, the author also espouses a forthright, down-to-earth, anti-vooodoo view of high-end audio products that probably will not endear him to the subjectivist fraternity. For exam-



# A Revelation In High-End Sound!

**"I was floored by the Paradigm Active/20 ...this is hands down the best sounding two-way 6-incher I've heard at any price...highly recommended!"**

*- Corey Greenberg, Audio Magazine*

**"this particular system is...ten leaps forward in terms of performance ...destined to become a legend."**

*- Ian Neustaine, Video Magazine*



Active/450-LR • Active/450-C



Active/20



Active/450-ADP

World Radio History

**P**aradigm Reference fully powered speakers are highly advanced Integrated Active Systems designed to deliver breathtaking high-end sound!

At the heart of these incredible speakers are highly sophisticated electronic crossover/amplifiers. These are matched to high precision drive units in a closed system that utilizes both active frequency and phase optimization. The result is unprecedented spectral and phase coherent accuracy.

*We invite you to visit your nearest Authorized Paradigm Reference Dealer and experience these stunning Reference Active speaker systems for yourself!*



PARADIGM® REFERENCE

*Active*

THE ULTIMATE IN HIGH END PERFORMANCE FOR MUSIC AND HOME THEATER™

For more information visit [www.paradigm.com](http://www.paradigm.com) or call 1-800-368-7222. Paradigm Reference Dealer network:  
In Australia: MPO Box 2110, Niagara Falls, NY 14302-0905, 412 0180  
In Canada: Paradigm, 301 Harlow Rd., Woodbridge, ON L4L 3P3, 905-830-2000

© Paradigm Electronics, Inc. • Brevan Corp.

website: [www.paradigm.ca](http://www.paradigm.ca)

ple, in the section on enhanced a.c. power cords he writes, "Substituting an expensive and exotic replacement for a component's existing power cord makes about as much sense as putting a rope-sized power cord on a table lamp or vacuum cleaner and expecting it to work better. It will not."

On the subject of tube amplifiers, Howard has similarly strong opinions and pulls few punches, "... there is absolutely no rational justification for spending money on a tube amplifier. The so-called 'tube sound' that some rave about is mostly the result of the high output impedance that is a prime

characteristic of the design." He also roundly condemns audio system demagnetization, digital clocks, harmonic tuning dots, spikes, contact enhancements, stands, bricks, springs, and, of course, what he calls compact-disc placebos, such as edge treatment, disc magnetizing, disc spinners, and gold CDs. Commenting on a review of one such product Ferstler writes, "After reading this review, I did not know whether to call the Better Business Bureau, the FBI, or the American Psychiatric Association." Fun reading, whatever your ideas about the equipment.

While you may never agree with the opinions expressed, it is remarkable that his book is so all encompassing. Many, many topics are covered, each in enough technical depth, that a reader can make a decision on these controversial issues for himself. For audio or video mavens on a budget, Ferstler has provided buying guide information that I think would do credit to Consumers Union. There is even advice on what components are safe to buy as used equipment. He might have entitled the book, "Home Theater on \$5 a Day."

However, in some areas the book's coverage and layout are so basic that the title "Home Theater For Dummies" would apply. Even if some parts of it are likely to be old-hat to advanced audiophiles, they will certainly find the long appendices of great value. First, there is one of the most extensive bibliographies I have ever seen anywhere (119 books and 465 articles, about 75 per cent of which are audio rather than video related). Then there are lists of hundreds of recommended music recordings, a shorter list

**The new Ohm Walsh 300 Mk-2s  
were reviewed by James T. Frane  
in the audiophile voice.  
Here's what he said:**

"Perhaps the most impressive characteristic of these speakers is that they produce very deep bass without boosting the mid- to upper-bass frequencies... I measured output at 25 Hz within 1 dB of the 1-kHz output in my room, with very little variation between!

"The 300s displayed excellent dynamics; a case in point was Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture"... cannon had a sonic impact with no apparent distortion although the amplifier meters were registering past the 400 watt/channel marks.

"The 300s recreated an extremely involving orchestral spread... The placement of the instrumental sections was correct and the balance of frequencies was very good. The 300s did not call attention to themselves as specific sound sources, but evenly distributed the sound across the space between them.

"The sound of 'I'm Confessin'" from *Jazz at the Pawnshop* (Prophone PRCD 7778) was as if I was looking through a wide doorway, defined by the width of the speakers, into the performance space. The ambience and the sense of the room size were marvelous. The vibes seemed just a few feet away. Janis Joplin's soulful voice and her marvelous back-up instruments and singers were only a few yards in front of me.

"They are a pleasure to listen to."

**120-Day Home Trial Offer: Your Satisfaction Is Guaranteed**

You must hear the Walsh Mk-2s in your own home to experience how natural and lifelike sound reproduction can be. Audition a pair for four months; if you are not completely satisfied, return them for a full refund of your purchase price (\$1398-\$4500/pair)

Free freight to readers of **the audiophile voice**. Mention this ad when you call and Ohm will pay freight to you (within the US and Canada). This can be up to a \$450 savings!



Call us at (800) 783-1553 to get a pair on the way to you.  
(718)783-1555 FAX (718)857-2472  
e-mail: [www.OhmSpeaker@AOL.com](mailto:www.OhmSpeaker@AOL.com)

of top-grade LD or DVD videos, and a super list of test discs and samplers, including nice descriptions of what each test disc is for. There are also lists of publications and websites.

There is in-depth material on such topics as ideal speaker dispersion characteristics; ambience synthesis versus ambience extraction; Dolby, DTS, and THX surround-sound methods; TV aspect ratios, and, surprisingly, VCRs and videotape. On the downside, his brief review of room treatment methods ignores the new fiberglass materials and products; he seems deliberately skimpy in this section based on an assumption that his readers

---

**Not just about  
home theater,  
this book is a  
data gold mine.**

---

can't afford these items. Systems, such as Q-sound, SRS, Spatializer, and ambisonics, are not really given a fair writing, to my mind. In the case of ambisonics, a statement that frequency-response contouring is used to simulate ear pinna and head shadow effects will come as a surprise to most ambisonicists, even if it is a good idea. The author has also pointed out, via personal e-mail, his inadvertent error in asserting on page 294 that DVD requires an r.f. demodulator to decode AC-3 sound.

There is certainly nothing else in print today that comes close to offering this kind of complete, hokum-free, technically documented, practical overview of the state of the affordable home video or music theater art.

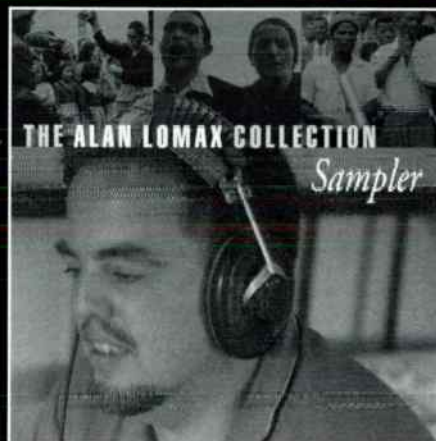
## THE ALAN LOMAX COLLECTION



**"... a quiet shaper of 20th-century culture..."**  
—THE NEW YORK TIMES

**". . . the most ambitious and important series of roots recordings ever to be issued."** —FOLK ROOTS

**"Lomax was capturing the human spirit in song... The music moves us... it lives and breathes anew each time it is heard."** —DAVID GREENBERGER,  
NPR'S ALL THINGS CONSIDERED



### The Alan Lomax Collection Sampler

Rounder 1700

Over the next five years, Rounder Records will release 100 titles encompassing sixty years of Alan Lomax recordings. This special CD sampler contains 37 tracks from *Southern Journey*, *Deep River of Song*, the international collections, *Portraits* and *The Ballad Operas*. Also included is a 1991 interview with Alan by Charles Kuralt, and a 76-page booklet chronicling the life and times of this musical and cultural historian.

#### Currently Available:

##### **Southern Journey**

V. 1: <i>Voices from the American South</i>	ROUN 1701
V. 2: <i>Ballads and Breakdowns</i>	ROUN 1702
V. 3: <i>61 Highway Mississippi</i>	ROUN 1703
V. 4: <i>Brethren, We Meet Again</i>	ROUN 1704
V. 5: <i>Bad Man Ballads</i>	ROUN 1705
V. 6: <i>Sheep, Sheep, Don'tcha Know The Road?</i>	ROUN 1706
V. 7: <i>Ozark Frontier</i>	ROUN 1707
V. 8: <i>Velvet Voices</i>	ROUN 1708

##### **Prison Songs**

V. 1: <i>Murderous Home</i>	ROUN 1714
V. 2: <i>Don'tcha Hear Poor Mother Calling?</i>	ROUN 1714

##### **Portraits**

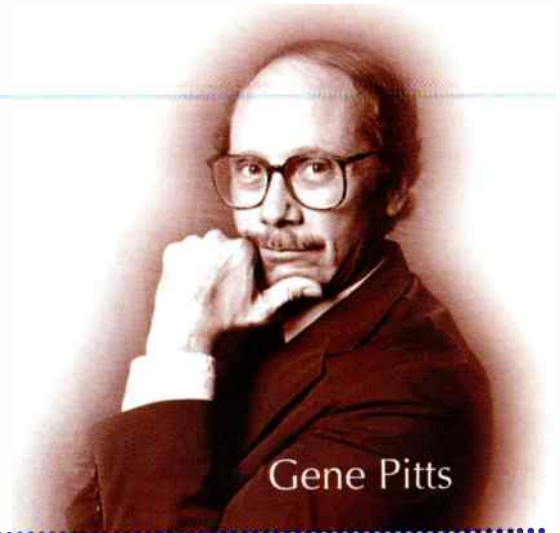
<i>Mississippi Fred McDowell</i> <i>The First Recordings</i>	ROUN 1718
---	-----------

##### **Caribbean Voyage**

<i>Brown Girl in the Ring</i>	ROUN 1716
-------------------------------	-----------

Available wherever fine music is sold. For mail-order call 1-800-44-DISCS.  
Visit the Rounder Records website at <http://www.rounder.com>

## Time Lines



Gene Pitts

**W**ELL, IT'S FINALLY happened. We've become an Underground Magazine.

However, we're "underground" only in an odd sense of the word and perhaps a sense that free-lancer and fellow-editor (of *The Absolute Sound*) Harry Pearson would not immediately understand. I'm certain, however, that he would chuckle over my "strained usage" when he caught the pun.

Harry and I crossed *bon mots* several years ago while I was Editor of *Audio Magazine* concerning whether *TAS* was "an underground magazine." I was at that time of the opinion that the only true underground magazines were being issued in Poland by the associates of a fellow named "Lech." Harry had at that time a somewhat "us vs. them" approach to the questions surrounding *TAS* and other publications, as if we all were not in the same boat.

In my view of things, all of that water has passed under the bridge, so long ago in fact that it's probably evaporated from the ocean by now.

So, why is *The Voice* an "underground magazine"?

Because we've moved to 215 Glenridge Avenue, and we are on the Lower Level, which makes us an underground publica-

tion. I hope that you will forgive this awful pun, but you know how editors are. And besides, I wanted to make the joke before anyone else did.

### Second Anniversary

As I write this editorial, we are just about two years down line from my acquisition of this publication from The Audiophile Society. I must say out loud and in public that I am very happy that I did the deed. I have been forced to learn many, many things, as well as work out efficient time leveraging techniques, but that simply goes to show that you can teach an old dog new tricks.

I have also had my sanity and wisdom questioned (mostly by myself, well after midnight), but I think that something that gives me so much pleasure is either very right or immoral, fattening and addicting. My wife says that I appear to think editing is better than sex. I don't but then I am able to edit for eight or more hours at a stretch (as well as leap tall manuscripts with a single bound).

So, thanks readers and advertisers, for your support over the past two years. *The Voice* has come a very long way toward my dream of being *the alternative publication* by audiophiles and for audiophiles.

# swans



## Swans M1

M1 brings you holographic imaging and transparent effortless reproduction that unveils the nuances and richness of live sound. What makes these small speakers such remarkable performers, is the synergy of our hi-tech isodynamic tweeter and high-resolution bass-midrange driver, top grade dedicated crossovers, and meticulous cabinet craftsmanship. Recent studies showed that there is still useful acoustic energy at higher frequencies far beyond the threshold of human hearing that affects overall perception of sound. The extremely light moving system of M1's tweeter reproduces these signals revealing the true dynamics of musical instruments.



*M1*



Acoustic Technology International Inc. 15 West Pearce Street Unit 2&3, Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 1H6 Canada  
Canada:905-889-7876 Fax:905-889-9296 China:0756-8875889 Fax:0756-8875898 [www.dulcet.com](http://www.dulcet.com)

©1997 Acoustic Technology International Inc. Canada(ATII) All rights reserved.Dulcet Swans and Hi-Vi Research are registered trademarks of ATII



# Interference

## What To Do If You Have It

As our lives become filled with more technology, the likelihood of unwanted electronic interference increases. Every lamp dimmer, hair dryer, garage-door opener, radio transmitter, micro-processor-controlled appliance or remote-con-

trolled new technical "toy" contributes to the electrical noise around us. Many of these devices also "listen" to that growing noise and may react unpredictably to their electronic neighbors.

*This is a self-help guide for the consumer published jointly by the American Radio Relay League (ARRL), an organization representing Amateur Radio operators, and the Consumer Electronics Manufacturers Association (CEMA).*

### Interference: What Is It?

Complex electronic circuitry is found in many devices used in the home. This creates a vast interference potential that didn't exist in earlier, simpler decades. Your own consumer electronics

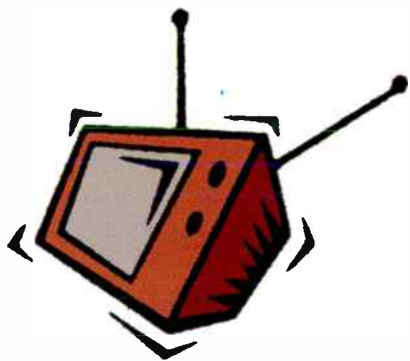
Art: John Freedman

equipment can be a source of interference, or can be susceptible to interference from a nearby noise source. Interference can also result from the operation of nearby amateur, citizens band, police, broadcast or television transmitters.

The term "interference" should be defined without emotion. To some people, it implies action and intent. The statement, "You are interfering with my television" sounds like an outright accusation. It is better to define interference as any unwanted interaction between any electronic systems, period! No fault. No blame. It's just a condition.

### Personalities

You can't overestimate the importance of personal diploma-



cy when you're trying to solve a problem that involves two or more people! The way you react and behave when you first discuss the problem with other individuals, such as a neighbor, utility or cable company, or manufacturer, can set the tone for everything that follows. Everyone who is involved in an interference problem should remember that the best solutions are built on cooperation and trust. This is a view shared by electronic equipment manufacturers, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the

AmericanRadio Relay League (ARRL).

### Responsibilities

No amount of wishful thinking (or demands for the "other guy" to solve the problem) will result in a cure for interference. Each individual person has a unique perspective on the situation—and a different degree of understanding of the technical and the personal issues involved. On the other hand, each person may have certain responsibilities toward the other and should be prepared to address those responsibilities fairly.

Any individual who operates a radio transmitter, either commercial or private, is responsible for the proper operation of the radio station. All radio transmitters or sources are regulated by the FCC. The station should be properly designed and installed. It should have a good ground and use a low-pass filter, if needed. If consumer electronics equipment at the station is not suffering the effects of interference, you can be almost certain that the problem does not involve the radio station or its operation. However, if the interference is caused by a problem at the station, the operator must eliminate the problem there. Manufacturers of consumer electronics equipment are



competing in a difficult marketplace. To stay competitive, most of them place a high priority on service and customer satisfaction. For example, many manufacturers have service information that can be sent to a qualified service dealer. Most manufacturers are willing to assist you in resolving interference problems that involve their products. Over recent years, manufacturers have built up a good track record designing equipment that functions well in most electrically noisy environments.

The FCC will do what it can to help consumers and radio operators resolve their interference problems. They expect everyone involved to cooperate fully. Experience has taught them that solutions imposed from the outside are not usually the best solutions to local problems. Instead, they provide regulatory supervision of radio operators and manufacturers. To help consumers, basic information concerning interference solutions is now available on the Internet through the FCC Compliance and Information Bureau Home Page. This basic information includes

*CIB Interference Handbook* (<http://www.fcc.gov/cib/Publications/tvibook.html>) and the *CIB Telephone Interference Bulletin* (<http://www.fcc.gov/cib/Publications/phone.html>). The *CIB Interference Handbook* includes



a list of equipment manufacturers who provide specific assistance with interference problems. The list also is available through the Commission's Fax on Demand at 202/418-2830. You should request document number 6904.

Finally, the consumer has responsibilities too. Cooperate with the manufacturer, the radio operator, and, if necessary, the FCC as they try to determine the cause of the problem. They need your help to find a solution.

### What Causes Interference?

Interference occurs when undesired radio signals or electromagnetic "noise" sources are picked up by consumer electronics products, most often telephones, audio equipment, VCRs or TVs. It usually results in

the result of a dangerous arc in electrical wiring or equipment and may provide warning of an unsafe condition that should be immediately located and properly corrected.

(2.) Overload: Even if a nearby radio signal is being transmitted on its assigned frequency, if it is strong your equipment may be unable to reject it. Your telephone, radio, stereo or TV should be able to separate the desired signal or sound from a large number of radio signals and electrical noises. This is shown in Fig. 1. Consumer electronics equipment manufacturers have worked in cooperation with government regulators to set and meet voluntary standards of interference immunity. Modern equipment usually includes enough filtering and

These signals are called "spurious emissions." FCC regulations concerning spurious emissions are very clear. If interference is caused by spurious emissions, the operator of the transmitter must take whatever steps are necessary to reduce the spurious emissions as required by FCC regulations. Fortunately, modern transmitting equipment is manufactured to meet stringent regulations, and many radio operators are examined and licensed by the government. These federally licensed operators often have the technical skill to resolve interference problems that originate from their radio stations.

With all of these possibilities, it is difficult to guess which type of problem is causing your interference. Usually, only a technical investigation can pinpoint the cause and suggest a solution. This is where a spirit of cooperation and trust will pay off! If you believe that your equipment is picking up signals from a nearby radio transmitter, the operator may be able to help find a solution to a mutual problem.

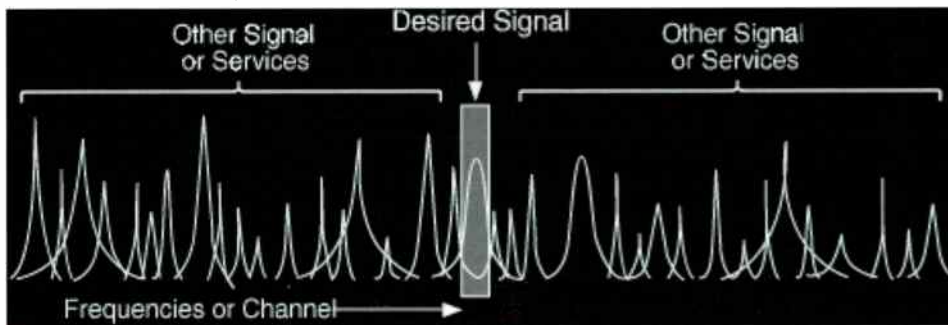


Figure 1—How a modern piece of receiving gear, such as your FM tuner, looks at the signals available to it.

noise, unwanted voices or distorted TV pictures. In most cases, the source is nearby.

There are three common types of interference:

(1.) Noise: Interference can be caused by an electromagnetic noise source. Defective neon signs, bug zappers, thermostats, electrical appliances, switches or computer systems are just a few of the possible sources of this type of interference.

Both you and your neighbors may be suffering from its effects. In some cases, the noise may be

shielding to ensure proper performance under average conditions. Older equipment may not meet these standards, however, and even modern equipment can be affected if the interfering signal is particularly strong. In these cases, your equipment is working as designed, but it may need some additional filtering or shielding to function properly.

(3.) Spurious emissions: A nearby radio transmitter could be inadvertently transmitting weak signals on a frequency not assigned to that transmitter.

### How to Find Help

Most consumers do not have the technical knowledge to resolve an interference problem. Even so, it's a comfort to know that help is available. Gather information about interference. The FCC and ARRL have self-help information packages or books. If the problem involves an electrical-power, telephone or cable-television system, contact the appropriate utility company. They usually have trained personnel who can help you



and your neighbor pinpoint the cause of the problem.

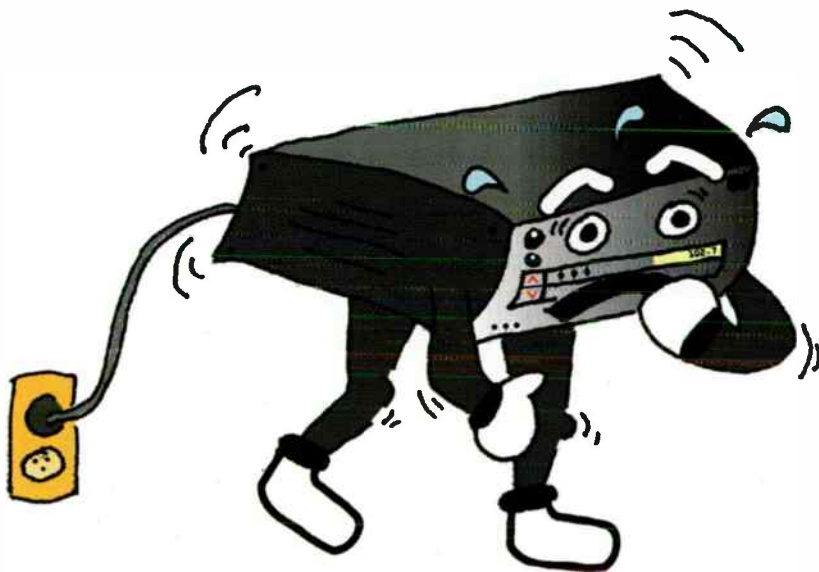
Most consumer electronics manufacturers are willing to help you. Your owner's manual, or a label on your equipment, may give you information about interference immunity or tell you who to call about interference problems. If not, the Consumer Electronics Manufacturers Association will be able to give you the address of your equipment manufacturer's general customer service personnel. The manufacturers know their equipment better than anyone else and will usually be able to help you.

Operators of licensed amateur or commercial transmitters usually have some technical ability. These operators are the nearest source of help. Remember, the station operator may also be a neighbor! Use a polite approach to ensure that the relationship stays "neighborly." Licensed Amateur Radio operators have access to volunteers (Technical Coordinators and local interference committees) who are skilled at finding solutions for most interference problems.

### Testing One, Two, Three . . .

If you think a neighbor's radio transmitter might be involved, you and your neighbor should arrange a test. It's important to determine whether the interfer-

ence is (or is not) present when the radio station is "on the air." Your neighbor may want to ask another operator friend to participate in the test at your home. By the same token, you may want to invite a friend to attend the test at the radio operator's station. Having impartial wit-



nesses will make you and your neighbor more comfortable with the outcome—whatever it may be. Be sure to choose your witness carefully. Select someone who is diplomatic and tactful. The tests must be thorough. The transmitter operator must try all normally used frequencies, antenna directions and power levels. All results must be carefully written down.

More than one set of tests may be needed. Once you and your neighbor have determined which frequencies and power levels cause the problem, you'll be one step closer to finding a solution.

### Try the Easy Things First

Sometimes, the easiest solutions are the best. Many cases of interference can be resolved without the need for technical

investigations or knowledge. As first steps, you might check your wiring for damage, for open outer wire shields, or for loose terminal connections. Try removing any added devices, such as video games, or even relocating the equipment or re-orienting the device's antenna and power cord.

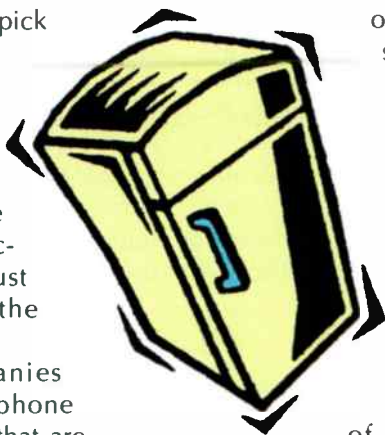
If you suspect that the problem is caused by electrical noise, check for overloaded circuits, frayed wires, loose sockets, etc. These types of problems should be fixed no matter what! Have your electrician

shut off one breaker at a time, noting if this has any effect on the interference. If so, determine which devices are connected to that particular line, then remove the suspect devices one at a time. When the interference goes away, you've found the "culprit." Your electric utility company service department will offer assistance if the interference is coming from defective equipment on the power lines or distribution equipment.

Interference filters for your consumer electronics equipment can be purchased locally or by mail order. These filters usually eliminate unwanted interference if they are used properly on the equipment that is in need of additional filtering.

According to the FCC's *Interference Handbook*, telephones and the many other

audio devices that pick up radio signals are improperly acting as radio receivers. This type of interference can usually be cured, but the necessary filtering must be applied to the affected device.



Several companies sell modular telephone interference filters that are very effective. Your telephone company service department also may be able to help.

A high-pass filter may reduce interference to an antenna-connected television or VCR. A common-mode filter should be tried first on TVs or VCRs connected to a cable system. An AC-line interference filter may help with electrical or radio interference. These items can be purchased locally or by mail order.

Some interference cures must be applied to the internal circuitry of the affected equipment. This should always be done by authorized service personnel.

The ARRL has an information package called *RFI Tips* (available on the Internet at <http://www.arrl.org/tis/info/rfi-gen.html>). They also sell a book, *Radio Frequency Interference—How to Find It and Fix It*, that provides additional guidance and technical information. Although it was written for Amateur Radio operators, the book may be helpful to you, too. Contact ARRL for information about their products and membership services.

### Self-Help Cures

In some cases, when all else fails, you may need to resolve the problem yourself, or by

obtaining the skilled help of some electronic service person.

It's impossible to use the remaining space to

outline all of the possible cures for interference

problems (the subject is quite complex). However, a few simple cures using commonly available parts can eliminate most problems. The self-help packages supplied by the ARRL and the FCC explain these cures in more detail.

### Interference Can Be Cured!

Remember, most cases of interference can be cured! It takes cooperation between the consumer, the manufacturer and the radio operator. With a little bit of work, you and your neighbor can both enjoy your favorite activities in peace.

### For More Information . . .

The ARRL and the FCC have self-help packages available to help you resolve interference problems.

**American Radio Relay League, Inc.**, RFI Desk, 225 Main St., Newington, CT 06111; 860/594-0214; Internet Web Site: <http://www.arrl.org>; e-mail: [rfi@arrl.org](mailto:rfi@arrl.org).

**Federal Communications Commission, Compliance & Information Bureau**, 1919 M Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20554; 202/418-0200; Internet Web Site: <http://www.fcc.gov>.

**Consumer Electronics Manufacturers Association,**

2500 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201-3834; 703/907-7600; Internet Web Site: <http://www.cemacity.org>.

**For copies of U.S. Government publications**, contact: U.S. Government Printing Office, North Capitol & H Streets, N.W., Washington, DC 20401; tel (202) 512-1800.

The address of the Printing office's internet web site is <http://www.access.gpo.gov>.

### Filter Sources

*High-pass filters:* Industrial Communication Engineers, RadioShack catalog #15-579, 15-577 (FM Trap), and TCE Labs.

*Common-mode filters:* Industrial Communication Engineers and TCE Labs.

*Telephone-interference filters:* Industrial Communication Engineers, K-Com, RadioShack 43-150, and TCE Labs.

### Contacts:

Industrial Communication Engineers, P.O. Box 18495, Indianapolis, IN 46218-0495; 800/423-2666.

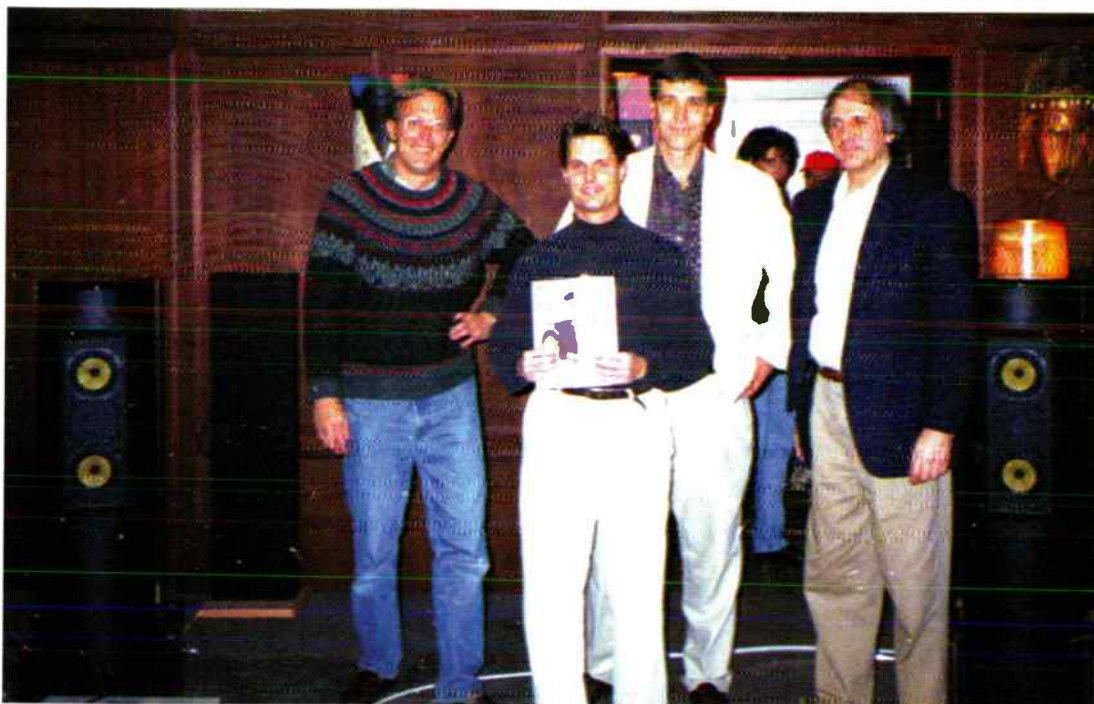
K-Com, P.O. Box 83, Randolph, OH 44265; 216/325-2110

TCE Labs, 2365 Waterfront Park Dr., Canyon Lake, TX 78133; 210/899-4575.



# Philadelphia Audio Society Celebrates Its 10th Anniversary With a Few Surprises . . .

Frank J. Alles



Peter Breuninger, Clayton Shaw of Evett & Shaw, Mark O'Brien of Rogue Audio, and David Goldstein of Timbre Technology.

In the summer of '86, Philly audiophile Peter Breuninger placed a tiny ad in *The Absolute Sound*, calling for local hi-fi addicts to gather together in the camaraderie of their mutual interest and form an audio club. Peter's thinking was that members would be free to share their own knowledge and experiences without commercial influence or prejudice. Five men responded to that first ad and they met in Peter's dingy basement to begin an audio society that at its peak would swell to 220 members. Due to practical considerations, Peter has trimmed the flock back to fewer than 100 in recent times, and the Philadelphia Audio Society is much more manageable and offers greater flexibility in selection of meeting sites.

So here it was, October 26, 1997, the club's 10th anniversary and things were going awry. For

one thing, it was a damp rainy Sunday afternoon and for the other, the people at from the amp maker who had been scheduled backed out of their appearance at the very last minute, about 10:30 p.m. of the night before.

Being the former president of the New Jersey Audio Society, I know what it's like to deal with such a situation and could empathize with Peter and this dour turn of events. After all, in his house that Sunday afternoon, were about 40 crazed audiophiles, all expecting nirvana. And they were right, what with the \$35,000. Evett & Shaw Milano loudspeakers being the featured attraction, despite the fact that there was not as yet suitable amplification to drive these "perfect beasts." (Far be it from me to imply that any electro-mechanical loud-speaking assemblage could be "perfect".

However, tipping the scales at a robust 400 pounds per side, and considering the level of performance, we were able to extract by late afternoon, "perfect beast" is a fairly accurate oxymoron.)

When we started our little experiment, I had high hopes for the sound of the system. Lloyd Walker (of Walker Audio) was good enough to lend his ARC Classic 60 amplifier for the occasion, which was mated to a Convergent Audio Technology preamp. The digital source units were a new D/A converter from Timbre Technology, the TT-1 DAC-2000 (\$4,800.); which was used with a TT prototype transport and a jitter reduction unit. Not bad stuff, one would think, but this combination just wasn't making it. The bass was mushy and there was a general lack of focus accompanied by an annoying hardness on loud vocal passages. Not a pretty picture!

However, while Peter was muttering something like #^&%\*! amp company under his breath, Mark O'Brien, President of Rogue Audio, seized the opportunity to substitute the Rogue Sixty-Six tube preamplifier (\$1,195, with phono section and outboard power supply) and the Rogue Eighty-Eight stereo power amp (\$1,395). The power amp uses four KT-88s and yields 70 watts of tube-power per channel. Aesthetically, these are very handsome pieces of gear, with machined gold-anodized aluminum faceplates and knobs and aircraft aluminum chassis (none of that ferrous stuff!).

Sonically, no one expected all that much from the Rogue duo, but I've got a news-flash for you! Right from the start, it was apparent that this new company had made all the correct choices in designing these feisty gems. There was universal agreement (rare in itself among those listening) that the Rogue pair sounded decidedly better than the CAT/ADC combo when driving Evett and Shaw's flagship Milanos. The bass appeared to go deeper, have much better control and agility, while the mid-top seemed a bit more coherent and better focused. The Rogue gear enjoyed a captivating synergy, not only with one another, but in the context of the complete system.

From that point on, things continued to improve as yet another audiophile present donated Nordost interconnects and speaker cables to the cause. After this change in wiring, I noted

many jaws agape at the further improvement in the Milanos sonics. Now, somehow, the dollar figure that had been somewhat steep initially became a reasonable price.

Clayton Shaw's words on the Milano design were beginning to ring true. These speakers were not only incredibly dynamic and well balanced, but they presented a wonderfully wide and three-

dimensional soundstage. What's more, they could play at very loud levels (efficiency was stated to be 92 dB SPL at 1 meter for 2.83 volts input) without a hint of strain or break-up. Listening to a soprano belt out an aria at high levels on most other systems usually makes my head hurt, as the distortion and hard-

ness levels tend toward the extremely prominent. With the Milanos, this did not occur, they just continued to get louder!

Thirty-five G's will buy you some pretty authoritative bass, too. With four eight-inch woofers per speaker, each in its own damped and reinforced subenclosure, these brutes can do the bass boogie with the best of 'em. Shaw claims that this woofer design is user-friendly in that using the multiple-woofer approach should help circumvent standing-wave problems in most rooms. Whatever about that, I say, just don't try hefting those brutes without a cherry picker!

Meanwhile, in an adjoining room, a pair of Cary 845 SE amps were busy providing juice for a new near-field monitor recently developed at Evett & Shaw. These desk-top minis, when listened to at a distance of about four feet, provided an incredible amount of immediacy and nuance with surprisingly good bass for such tiny woofers (two per enclosure). Their presentation reminded me a lot of my Stax electrostatic headphones, but with much better soundstaging and perspective. List price is expected to be \$1,000 for the pair.

I'd be remiss in my duty as a journalist, and even more so as a music lover, if I didn't mention some of the software we were using for reference. For my part, this boiled down to two CDs, the first being *Handel Opera Arias* available exclusively through *BBC Music Magazine* but recorded on the Harmonia Mundi label and the second being the soundtrack from the motion picture *Dead Man Walking* (Columbia CK 67522). The last contains songs from many contemporary artists including Bruce Springsteen, Johnny Cash, Michelle

---

Philly's 10th anniversary meeting went well, despite a last minute scramble to round up equipment for demonstration.

---

Shocked, Tom Waits and several others. This recording is also available on vinyl and boasts kick-ass sonics. Highly recommended!

All in all this turned out to be a most impressive sonic showcase for the good folks of Evett & Shaw and for newcomer Mark O'Brien of Rogue Audio who proved to the group that there are still bargains to be had amid the skyrocketing prices of tube electronics. It also served as a sobering

reminder that an audio system is only as good as the synergy between its various components.

I very much enjoyed my afternoon with the Philadelphia Audio Society. Many thanks to Clayton Shaw and Steve Burgess of Evett & Shaw, Dave Goldstein of Timbre Technology, Mark O'Brien of Rogue Audio, and Lloyd Walker of Walker Audio for being on hand to save the day.

My very best wishes go out to Peter Breuninger and all the members of the Philadelphia Audio Society on this auspicious 10th anniversary for continued success and camaraderie. [TAV's good wishes and congratulations to the Philly Society, too.—Gene Pitts, Editor]

On a related topic, I wish to congratulate photographer Steve Burgess on his innovative technique. With the camera in his right hand and half-empty beer bottle hinged by his left thumb and index finger, he created an ultra-stable platform from which to snap the shutter. I believe the "half-empty" bottle held a key ingredient to his success!

## NOTES

**Evett & Shaw**, 5088 Amelia Earhart Drive, Salt Lake City, Utah 84116; Phone:(801) 328-9666, Fax: (801) 328-9526; E-mail: clayton@evettandshaw.com

**Rogue Audio**, 2827 Avery Road, Slatington, PA. 18080; Phone: (610) 760-1621, Fax: (610) 760-8319; E-mail: mobrien@fast.net Web site: www.rogueaudio.com

**Timbre Technology, Inc.**, P.O. Box 566, 1600 Gypsy Hill Road, Gwynedd Valley, PA. 19437-0566; Phone: (215) 540-9812, Fax: (215) 540-9823.

**Walker Audio**, 1139 Thrush Lane, Audubon, PA. 19403; Phone: (610) 666-6087, Fax: (610) 666-5057.

dealers, distributors, press and show attendees

the International

# High End Show

NEW for '98 ... now in 2 venues! **High End Show** 'lemons' take you to IHS & CES venues. Our 'unique all venue' directory allows you to plan your agenda correctly. Come and visit the **High End Show** first! For details phone **IHS**:

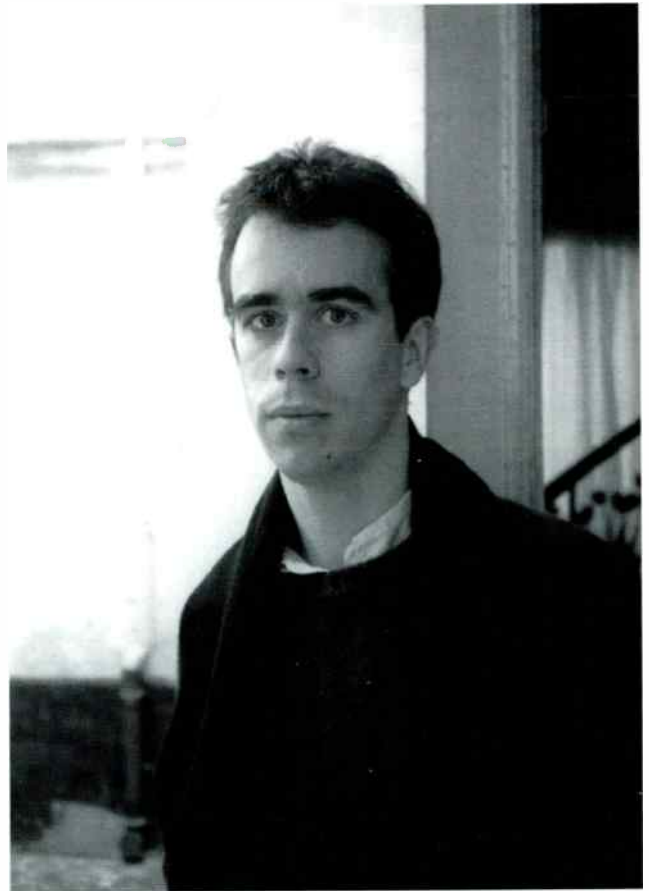
8, 9, 10 & 11 Jan 98  
Las Vegas



**760 / 432 - 6666** International High-end Society

# Sounds of the Harpsichord

France's great young keyboard virtuoso Pierre Hantaï makes a stunning New York début with his old warhorse  
*Bach's Goldberg Variations*



Benjamin Ivry

As harpsichordists go, the young Frenchman Pierre Hantaï looks physically unforbidding—he has a vague resemblance to a reedier version of Tom Hulce, the actor who played Mozart in the film *Amadeus*. But Hantaï is so obsessed with sound quality and the sound landscapes of each concert that he can be a demon on the subject. He has reaped prizes, such as the *Gramophone* award for his recent recording of the *Goldberg Variations* on the Opus 111 label (distributed by Harmonia Mundi in the USA) which many listeners place among the greatest. A new

CD of Frescobaldi offers similar thrills. His New York debut was in September 1997 at the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, sponsored by Douglas Dunn's stellar Gotham Early Music Foundation in coordination with the Smithsonian Institution's Chamber Music series. At the after-concert reception when the sustained cries of "bravo" had finally died down, a woman, clearly not a sound specialist, approached the young harpsichord, asking if he used amplification on his instrument. Amazed, Hantaï politely denied the charge, but it is easy to see where the lady might have been deceived by Hantaï's bright-sounding instrument and amazingly incisive finger technique. His trills are so energetic and invigorating that they somehow *do* sound amplified, if only amplified by the genius of his playing.

One of the hallmarks of a Hantaï recital or CD is a fresh sense of improvisation, and a natural feel for the music that transcends mere virtuosity and the national schools that seem to have developed of harpsichord players. Among his near-contemporaries, the German Andreas Staier, a stunning virtuoso, sounds quite German in his CDs, whereas the excellent Bob van Asperen, from Holland, sounds ineffably Dutch when he plays.

Hantaï, born in France of Hungarian ancestry, and a student of the Dutchman Gustav Leonhardt, escapes nationalistic influences, and just sounds universally musical. So sensitive is Pierre Hantaï to the way his instrument sounds and records that he has sometimes crossed swords with concert organizers who don't want to accord him enough time to rehearse in a given hall, so that he can familiarize himself with a new instrument and the individual acoustics of the performance space. By

contrast, he thrives in the ideal atmosphere of the recording studio, but is not likely to become another Glenn Gould, retiring entirely from the concert platform. Still, during concerts, he has been known to give out ironic glances or grimaces when audiences make noise. At the Weill Recital Hall, he glared at a bejeweled woman in the front row who started fanning herself with her program. He also did a few doubletakes at other audience noises, without however losing a note in the music or even apparently dropping any of his concentration. It was rather as if the audience were

guests at his house who had rudely interrupted his train of thought, and instead of stopping, he simply plowed ahead, but not without pointing out their impossible rudeness. If Hantaï is exacting about audience noise, he is also a ruthless critic of his own performances.

This may be because, like many young musicians of his generation—he was born in Paris in



1964—

he grew up on recordings and the pristine ideal they represent. At age two he moved with his family to a little village outside Fontainebleau. His father, Simon Hantaï, is a French abstract painter born in Hungary whose art has been shown at the Pompidou center. He left that country, with Pierre's mother, also Hungarian, in 1948. Pierre's two brothers, Jérôme and Marc, are also well-known players of baroque music, on the viol and flute respectively. The Hantaï brothers used to spend time in their father's art studio, and became interested in music only around the age of 10 or 11, which is rather late for professional musicians. They started with the recorder. At one course at the local school, the teacher was a former student

of Frans Brüggen. But mostly they had no contact with any kind of musical activity in their isolated little village. Hantaï recalls soberly,

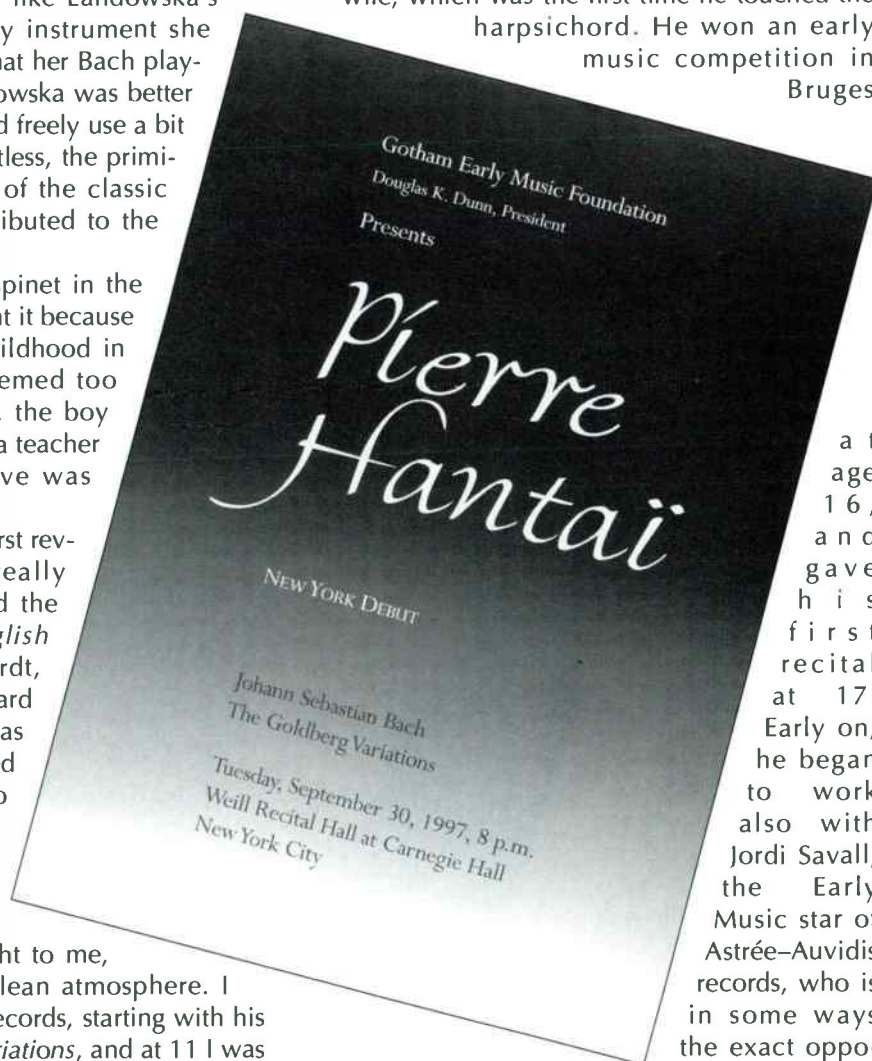
"Sociologically, I didn't have any context for music. I just listened, and some things pleased me. In rural Hungary, my father was accustomed to hearing the works of Bach and Schütz sung in choirs of farm workers, but no such tradition existed in rural France. So we made do with records at home, notably of Bach. We owned three different versions of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, by Sviatoslav Richter, Glenn Gould, and Wanda Landowska. I didn't much like Landowska's Bach, because of the ugly instrument she played and because I felt that her Bach playing lacked humanity. Landowska was better in Scarlatti, where she could freely use a bit of venom and acid." Doubtless, the primitive recording conditions of the classic Landowska versions contributed to the boy's rejecting them.

The family also had a spinet in the house. Pierre's father bought it because it reminded him of his childhood in Hungary; a big piano seemed too bourgeois for him. At 10, the boy started piano lessons, with a teacher whose one and only love was Bach. Pierre states,

"That's when I had my first revelation, of music that really changed my life. I heard the recording of Bach's *English Suites* by Gustav Leonhardt, when I was 11. When I heard that, I felt that everything was decided. I was sure I wanted to do as Leonhardt did, to use an instrument that was admirably suited to the music in order to give an admirable interpretation. It sounded indubitably right to me, recorded in a light and clean atmosphere. I bought all of Leonhardt's records, starting with his version of the *Goldberg Variations*, and at 11 I was certain I wanted to be his student. My favorite of Leonhardt's records was his version of three Bach violin partitas transcribed for harpsichord, which was the summit of his playing, where he really inhabits Bach and himself at the same time. I feel that Leonhardt is the greatest spokesman for Bach since the death of Bach. It's even difficult to play after him. I was convinced for a long time that what he did was simply the truth. But in fact,

Leonhardt is the first to admit that he doesn't know anything for sure. Since we never heard baroque musicians play, we can't really say that one approach or another is absolutely true."

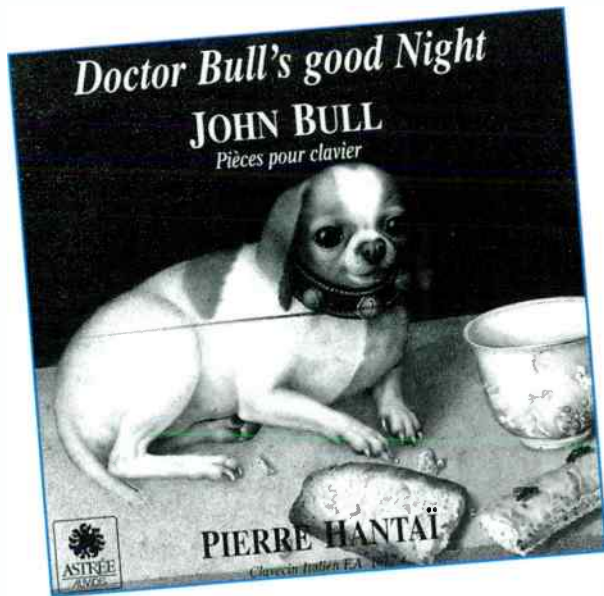
Nevertheless, while remaining open-minded, Hantaï has firm ideas about sound quality, which are satisfied by the veteran French producer Yolanta Skura, who founded the small high-quality French label Opus 111, which has a choice list of artists and repertoire. His notions were ingrained early on; at 13, he studied in a master class in Toulouse given by Marie Leonhardt, Gustave's wife, which was the first time he touched the harpsichord. He won an early music competition in Bruges



site of Leonhardt. He starts with the same notes and winds up with something entirely different in movement, phrasing, and dynamics. Hantaï comments,

"To work with both of them, you have to be very flexible. That's when I realized that there is no sole way of playing baroque music. I admire both Savall and Leonhardt. Lately, I've been expanding my listening. I've become a passionate





fan of Sviatoslav Richter, and I listen to everything he did. For a few years, I didn't accept jobs in June, in order to be able to attend Richter's music festival near Tours. Richter makes everything sound so evident, so pure, from Chopin to Schumann. Even when he plays the *Fifth Piano Concerto* of Saint-Saëns, *The Egyptian*, which is horrible music, he transforms it and you weep at the music's simplicity and purity."

In his listening, Hantaï has been more wary of singers, staying away from them mostly, because there are few singers who correspond to his ideas about early music. He has always admired the

Dutch baritone Max van Egmond in Bach recitatives, for his way of humbly serving the text. He feels that singers who really put themselves behind the text are rare and that most singers put the vocal line first, at the expense of the words. But another ideal exception was Alfred Deller, who was the complete performer; he never just did a vocal exercise. Unlike his obsessive care with the way an instrument sounds and the way it is recorded, Hantaï says, "The quality of the voice per se doesn't interest me. The human importance of the voice is what counts, the way we react to a close relative's voice, our mother or father. But finally, no singer sings as well as Sviatoslav Richter. He is really the perfection of song."

Music lovers will have plenty of chance to hear Hantaï's own special brand of singing. After the commendable initiative of the Gotham Early Music Foundation, aided and abetted by the French Consulate's Music Advisor Magali Traynard, Hantaï's next visit to the States will probably not be far away. When not fulfilling the constant demand across Europe for concerts and recitals at early music festivals, Hantaï lives in a tiny house in a small courtyard in a fearsome Paris neighborhood near the Gare du Nord, with his wife and baby son. Hantaï's new CD of Frescobaldi sonatas is out, but he has not forgotten the *Goldbergs* and has recently played them on tour in Geneva, Brussels, at the Festival des Cathédrales near Perpignan, and at the festival "Symphonia en Périgord." A great lover of English music by Byrd, Gibbons, and Bull, he also performed the harpsichord part in Elizabethan Masques at the Sablé Festival in France.

## Pierre Hantaï's Favorite CD Sounds

Gustav Leonhardt: *Bach, Art of Fugue, Italian Concerto, Partita in B Minor, Prélude, Allegro and Fugue in E flat*; Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, BMG GD 77013

Sviatoslav Richter: *Schumann, Abegg Variations, Fantasiestücke, Novellette, Waldszenen*; Deutsche Gramophon 435 751-2

Wanda Landowska: *Scarlatti Sonatas*; EMI CDH 7 64934

Max van Egmond: *Bach's St. Matthew Passion*; Warner-Teldec 2292-42509-2

Alfred Deller: *Anthology*; Vanguard 08.8026 71



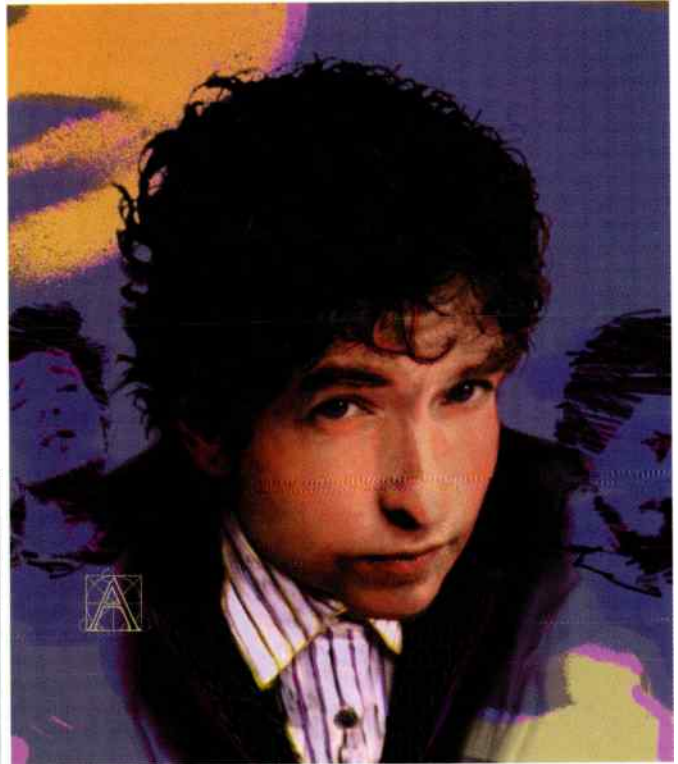
# RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Mark Block

ROCK

Bob Dylan  
Time Out of Mind

Columbia  
CK 68556



Leave it to Bob Dylan, the supreme chronicler of his generation's rebellious young soul, to lead the way in contemplating its inevitable flight into the easy chair of life before death. A generation forever young can fight its wars with old age, but the task is like rolling a stone up a hill: Eventually gravity has its say and the stone rolls back over you.

So the Stones and Dylan release albums on the same day, and while Mick Jagger continues his bad boy act, preening, posturing, singing, "They'll never make a saint of me," Dylan confronts his mortality: "When the

last rays of daylight go down / Buddy you're old no more / I can hear the church bells ringin' in the yard / I wonder who they're ringin' for." An amusing irony: In the same song, "Standing in the Doorway," Dylan sings the words "cherry red" and faithfully replicates Jagger's inflection from "Can't Always Get What You Want." We get from Mick what we want; from Bob what we need.

Dylan used to ask, "Can this really be the end?" At 56, after his brush with death last May (from a viral infection of the heart), he—and his fans—know that yes, it really can be, any-

time. *Time Out of Mind*, Dylan's first album of new material in six years (he's made 40 some-odd since 1963), is a dark, brooding, and (in his words) spooky work, equal parts ugliness and beauty. Ugliness: the voice; the loose, seemingly improvisational playing; the lyrics. Beauty: the lyrics; the typically atmospheric production of Daniel Lanois; the voice.

The ugliness is a good ugliness—a rawness that becomes an acquired taste. Drummers Jim Keltner and Brian Blade set uneasy tempos that the other musicians don't so much follow as pick at. And the picking is

often sublime. "Trying to Get to Heaven" and the previously mentioned "Standing in the Doorway" are as tuneful and mellifluous as any song in the Dylan canon. The lyrics, however, are more direct than usual, adding a perfectly blended sweet/sour kick. Dylan's words have always been allusions built on allusions, but many songs on the new album have great lines that go for the gut and require no interpretation: "I eat when I'm hungry, drink when I'm dry / And live my life on the square / And even if the flesh falls off my face / I know someone will be there to care." A lovely thought, expressed in a repulsive image.

"Trying to Get to Heaven" has made me forget the undistinguished platitudes of "Knockin' on Heaven's Door," my least favorite of Dylan's hits. "When you think that you've lost everything / You find out you can always lose a little more / I'm just going down the road feelin' bad / Tryin' to get to heaven before they close the door." The song revolves around references to old blues and gospel tunes, and to Woody Guthrie's "Bound for Glory," but it's all bondage and no glory.

One other supremely beautiful song here, "Not Dark Yet," is up there with "Every Grain of Sand" and "Blowin' in the Wind" as one of the most hauntingly exquisite melodies Dylan has ever composed. Taking off from a Talmudic reference (spotted by Martin Grossman and posted on the internet), Dylan sings, "I was born here and I'll die here, against my will / I know it looks like I'm movin', but I'm standing still / Every nerve in my body is so naked and numb / I can't even remem-

ber what it was I came here to get away from / Don't even hear the murmur of a prayer / It's not dark yet but it's getting there." When I read these lyrics on the page I get a little sad and misty eyed; when I hear Dylan sing them I get a big smile. As thousands have said before, no one can sing a Dylan song like Dylan.

Speaking of his singing, it has never been more grating. I've heard of "good dissonance like a man," but this is getting into (and going beyond) Howlin'

---

**The sound on *Time* is not pretty, but it *must* be heard on a good system to appreciate it.**

---

Wolf territory. That's what Dylan wants. I remember the old days of muddy mixes, with me and my friends wearing out *Blond on Blond* by dropping a heavy tonearm on the cuts over and over until we could get all the words, and that's just not an issue here: CDs would make the replay job easy, but the lyrics on *Time Out of Mind* are actually not hard to decipher. I have a strong feeling that Dylan is hard of hearing—who wouldn't be after a career in rock?; he still gives over a hundred concerts a year, for chrissake!—and his production goal is simply to hear himself. The last song on the album, "Highlands," a 16-minute-long first person ramble (perhaps meant to answer "Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands") has Dylan singing "I'm listening to Neil Young, I gotta turn up the sound / Someone's always yellin' turn it down." Dylan must be dangerous at a mix. He apparently asked Lanois to EQ his voice with the cutting punch

of a Little Richard vocal. *Newsweek's* cover story mentioned that Lanois treated Dylan's voice as "a harmonica when you overdrive it through a small amplifier."

That's a scary thought for an audiophile, but on an artistic level (as opposed to an audiophile one) it sort of works. Against Lanois' minimalist background of tentative, interlocking guitar solos, dripping wet keyboards and reverberant percussion, Dylan's voice stands out from the mix as nakedly as the emotions he portrays. The Lanois technique turned EmmyLou Harris' more delicate instrument into an unlistenable travesty on *Wrecking Ball*, but Dylan's voice is so weird that it seems to be "studio

proof." The sound here is not pretty, but there are pretty things in the mix, and you simply *must* hear this recording on a good system (or headphones) to appreciate it. High-enders should not reject it out of hand.

The album—the music, the lyrics, the production—is one big dialectical contradiction, but with a sense of resolution. Thesis, antithesis, synthesis. It's a very adult mix of conflicting yet clear-eyed visions, and I can see it putting off young people. After all, son Jakob Dylan has sold more copies of his Wallflowers album, *Bringin' Down the Horse*, than father Bob has of even his all-time best seller, *Blood on the Tracks*. Maybe *Time Out of Mind* will change that, but I doubt it—and it doesn't really matter to those of us who appreciate Bob Dylan as the greatest singer/songwriter of his or any other generation.

"I just don't see why I should even care / It's not dark yet, but it's getting there."

# R RECORDINGS



ROCK

BBC Sessions  
Led Zeppelin

Atlantic  
83061

Out of the British Blues Boom was born Led Zeppelin, a collection of studio and Birmingham psychedelic musicians who in one fell swoop dominated a field full of contenders such as Ten Years After, Savoy Brown, and Fleetwood Mac. The appearance was one of contrivance (a group that was put together by ex-Yardbird

Jimmy Page to capitalize on the trend) but in fact the music they made was remarkable all the while. These two discs capture the group in not quite infancy, but well before they got bogged down in the concerns of whether what they were doing was critically acceptable. It was a given that the critics would hate them and that the kids

would love them, but of course audiences always matter most. History has proven the critics to be well behind the curve on this particular group, which not only became the dominant musical force of the Seventies but was quite influential for the two decades to follow.

In its inception, Led Zeppelin was tagged as a cynical ripoff of

The Jeff Beck Group by most rock critics, receiving very negative reviews or totally ignored by *Rolling Stone* and "respectable" music papers. Despite this, the group managed to garner an immense following. It was only with the mass-market appeal of "Stairway To Heaven" that critics realized that there was no fighting or turning the tide, and suddenly Led Zeppelin was embraced by the media that previously scorned them.

The records that followed were decidedly different from those which preceded them, far less reliant upon the blues-based riffing on which they built the first four albums. Robert Plant moved from being an inspired vocalist, who sang from instinct, to a self-aware performer who thought about every move. Jimmy Page's guitar style embraced musical forms aside from the blues, rock, and folk traditions which had usually grounded him earlier. John Bonham's drumming seemed to encompass a bigger and bigger space, while John Paul Jones played a multitude of new instruments.

There were benefits to the new Zeppelin, but when they played the old material, it was more for the chuckle than to move the spirit. These two discs, culled from Zeppelin's earlier stages (pre-"Song Remains The Same") shows exactly how wrong *Rolling Stone* was. Granted, the Rod Stewart/Jeff Beck combo did lay the groundwork for the Plant/Page approach, but there's no ignoring the intensity and power that the early Led Zeppelin had with songs like "You Shook Me," "Communications Breakdown," and "How Many More Times."

Although Beck was the greater guitar technician, Page grasped the potential of the format and with a more muscular rhythm section took it into new territory. One must remember that Page's origins were as a session guitarist, where the chordings and rhythm patterns are more crucial than soloing abilities. In that milieu he was able to learn the tricks of the trade from producers like Bert Berns and Andrew Loog Oldham. Beck, on the other hand, cut his

---

**Led Zeppelin stand  
as being authentic  
and exceptional, creating  
great rock-blues  
for all the right reasons.**

---

teeth strictly as a group member, where he was forced to deal with singers and producers on an adversarial basis. His history as a group leader emphasizes this, as Beck has continually shown his contempt for both frontmen and record producers as necessary evils, and thus his career suffered.

As for this record, it's pretty much a chronological history that covers the period between the release of the first album and the making of Led Zeppelin II (on disc one), and the period between the third and fourth albums (on disc two), previewing "Stairway" to an audience that doesn't know quite what to make of it. There's still plenty of grit in the second disc, but the first disc is really the meaty one. Guitar tone set to stun, Plant playing with the lyrics, Jones tasty bass and keyboards, and Bonham hitting like Mike Tyson in his prime; simply put, an unbeatable combination. There is no subtlety. The versions of

unrecorded material like Eddie Cochran's "Something Else" (cribbed from The Move's version) and Sleepy John Estes' "The Girl I Love" (set to the lick of "Watch Your Step" a.k.a. "Moby Dick") are simply fabulous. There are some fade endings (a highly unusual move on a "live" broadcast), and there can only be two explanations. One would be that what followed had some bum notes or some sort of flaws (technical perhaps) that producer Page didn't want audiences to suffer through. The other, and more cynical, would be that the group segued into another song and didn't want to have to pay any more publishing dollars to outside writers.

And, given Zeppelin's previous publishing hijinx, this explanation should not to be discounted. But one must be cheered that Willie Dixon is given co-writing credit for "Whole Lotta Love" this time around, and I hope his heirs make plenty of dough from it. By the way, since much of this material was originally broadcast on British radio, there have been bootlegs floating around of some tracks. However, Page has remixed much of it, and several tracks included are that have previously not been available.

Some may say that releasing this now is simply milking a dead cow, but nothing has spoiled here. Everything is as fresh as when it was originally created, and compared to much of the poseurs who are currently praised for their ripoff music, Led Zeppelin stand as being authentic and exceptional, wide-eyed innocents creating *great rock-blues for all the right reasons*. And you've simply got to love them for it.

# RECORDINGS

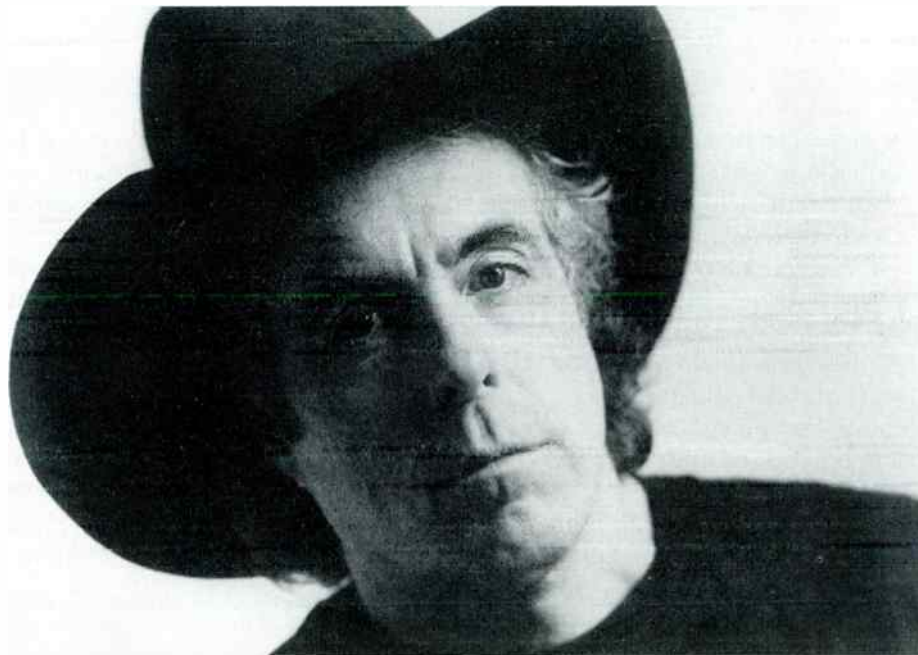


Photo: Ebet Roberts

## Rock

Tom Russell: *The Long Way Around*, Hightone HCD 3081; *Song of the West*, HMG, Hightone UNG 2501  
Ramblin' Jack Elliott: *Kerouac's Last Dream*  
Appleseed 1021

Tom Russell's been knocking around for about 20 years, writing some of the best, most-vivid storytelling songs around. He has a knack of crystallizing both plot and characters, so that they become real and unforgettable. He also has a gift for bringing out the best in collaborators. His two new albums constitute an excellent career retrospective for those who know hiim, while for

the uninitiated, they a wonderful introduction to Tom's fine, but usually underrated performances. Both were recorded in the same stretch of studio recordings and for the live selections at the same set of dates at Off Broadway in St. Louis.

*The Long Way Around* includes 17 songs, nine of them live takes. His best-known songs are all here, among them the

Suzy Bogguss' country hit "Outbound Plane" sung with co-writer Nanci Griffith who also sings on "St. Olav's Gate" which she recorded over a decade ago. There's the oft-covered "Walkin' on the Moon" sung with Tom's frequent collaborator Katy Moffatt and the great corrida about a fighting chicken "Gallo Del Cielo." Katy and Dave Alvin both appear throughout the live

cuts, while other studio guests include Jimmie Dale Gilmore for "Beyond the Blues" and Iris DeMent for both "Box of Visions" and the new song "Big Water."

Tom's great personal passion has always been cowboys and

electricity by the bravura guitar of Tom's long-time sidekick, Andrew Hardin.

Speaking of Ramblin' Jack Elliott, he endorses Tom's cowboy album with a blurb on the cover. And he has an excellent new release of his own in



things Western. Songs of the West gathers his cowboy songs together for a themed set. The 13 selections include a couple new songs ("The Banks of the Musselshell," "The John Bull Tin," and "Hallie Lonnigan") plus a clutch of older ones that sound authentic enough to be traditional ("Alkali," Navajo Rug," "The Sky Above, the Mud Below," "Rayburn Crane," and the ballad of the modern outlaw "Claude Dallas"). "Gallo Del Cielo" appears here, too, the only repeater. He also throws in some well-chosen covers in Fraser and DeBolt's "Dance Hall Girls," Mary McCaslin's "Prairie in the Sky," and Lillian Bos-Ross' "South Coast" which is best-known from Ramblin' Jack Elliott's singing.

Both albums are loaded with great songs and spirited performances, which are given added

*Kerouac's Last Dream*, a 1980 solo session in Germany that in 17 selections covers a lot of material Jack has done for decades. From Woody Guthrie come "Pretty Boy Floyd," "1913 Massacre," and "Talking Fishing." Bob Dylan's covered with an incredible "Don't Think Twice" and "I Threw It All Away," while from traditional sources come "Roving Gambler," "Cuckoo," "Buffalo Skinners," and "Nightherring Song." Plus he does C&W gems like "Detour," "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain," and "Soldier's Last Letter" plus his two originals, "Cup of Coffee" and the ever changing "912 Greens." It is an excellent album. Jack even admits this in his notes. Really, if you are going to have only one Ramblin' Jack Elliott album, *Kerouac's Last Dream* will do you very, very well, thank you.

**Enjoy Warm Sweet Sound From CD's, DVD, DSS and FM Tuners**



The ASE eliminates excessive brightness in the audio from digital sources. Connects to RCA outputs of a CD, DVD, DSS or FM Tuner.

"Z-Man Strikes (Sonic) Gold...  
The difference was simply astounding!  
The soundstage opened wide and the music sounded warm and sweet..."  
CLASSICAL disCDigest

"Those of you unfamiliar with the specific character of classic tube coloration can't even imagine how well it works to improve the listenability of thin or edgy equipment..."  
Positive Feedback

"We recommend that anyone who owns CD players in price ranges from \$350 to about \$2,100 try the ASE..."  
The Inner Ear Report

"...music reproduced through this little magical device just flat out sounds more musical. Buy it! You will love it..." Jazz Now

"...it's worth having..." the absolute sound

The Audio Signal Enhancer From Z-Man  
Only \$198.00 • 30 Day Satisfaction Guarantee  
Call 1-800-478-9727 • <http://www.z-man.com>

**BITE MY TWEETER!**  
Now that we've got your attention...

**Jon Tiven** (guitar)  
has produced and written songs for Frank Black, Robert Cray, B.B. King, Chrissie Hynde and Alex Chilton and has played with John Belushi, The Jim Carroll Band, Arthur Alexander and Lucinda Williams.

**Sally Tiven** (bass)  
has had her songs recorded by Huey Lewis & The News, The Jeff Healey Band and Son Seals to name but a few.

**Alan Merrill** (vocals)  
wrote "I Love Rock 'N' Roll" for Joan Jett.

**Todd Snare** (drums)  
has played with Me! shelle Ndegeocello, P.M. Dawn and Tori Amos.

The cream of the crop. Together they are Jon Tiven's Ego Trip.

debut album Blue Guru out now on Fountainbleu Records.  
local record store or by mail from...

# RECORDINGS



## WORLD BEAT

Deep In The Heart of Tuva (Cowboy Music From the Wild East) Ellipsis Arts 4080 (CD)  
 Huun-Huur-Tu: If I'd Been Born an Eagle Shanachie 64080 (CD)

Somewhere in the middle of what is now the Former Soviet Republic of Tannu Tuva, a nameless, eccentric Victorian Englishman erected a monument at what he believed to be the center of Asia. Geographically, he was off by about 500 miles, but symbolically, he nailed it pretty well. The Tuvans are a semi-nomadic Siberian people who inhabit the remote steppes north of Mongolia. Over the centuries, they have been sub-

ject to numerous invasions, which began in the depths of time and ended with the Stalinist armies. From one of these invaders, the Scythians, they received a gift that altered their history forever, the horse. So well did these Siberian herds-men take to the horse that Genghis Khan (allegedly) recruited his elite cavalry units from among them. Alone in the saddle for long hours, they absorbed the rhythm of their

mounts into their music, and with no one nearby to sing harmony with them, they learned to do it by themselves.

The essence of Tuvan music lies in the technique called "höömei," which is pronounced as though Robin Leach were saying "her-may." This is usually translated "throat-singing," and is a method in which the singer, by constricting the muscles of the throat, is able to simultaneously produce not only a funda-



mental tone but also selected overtones and subharmonics. The effect is sometimes funny (as the Tuvans themselves will admit), sometimes eerie and often strangely haunting and beautiful, even to Western ears.

For those interested in this esoteric corner of World Music, the Ellipsis Arts CD is a perfect introduction. Compiled from a number of sources, the selections include examples of the three main styles of *höömei*, both in solo performance and combined with traditional Tuvan instruments. One of these latter, the *igil*, a two-stringed fiddle, has a wonderfully plaintive and expressive sound which blends perfectly with the sound of throat-singing. Also present are frame drums, the Tuvan jaw-harp or *homus*, and a number of other stringed instruments. Many of the songs on the disc are traditional, but there are also some modern compositions, and the performance finishes with a couple of tunes by San Francisco bluesman Paul "Earthquake" Pena, who sings a mean *kargy-*raa** himself, managing to sound like Wolfman Jack with a severe asthma attack. (I *think* I got two notes going for about three seconds myself. It is scary!)

For sheer beauty though, you have to listen to the combination of Tuvans Huun-Huur-Tu and the Bulgarian Womens' Choir (a/k/a *Le Mystère de la Voix Bulgares*). Their collaboration, in beautifully recorded sound, is almost enough to make me board former Soviet Airlines for Kyzyl, the Tuvan capital city (population 80,000). If you are at all hesitant about buying this CD, ask your friendly store clerk to play track 15 for you. Listening to it should cer-

tainly whet your appetite for our next Tuvan disc.

Huun-Huur-Tu is the most famous group of musicians to have traveled from Tuva to the outside world. (Their recent concert in Philadelphia was sold out!) Although they produce a sound that may be more acceptable to Western ears than much of what is on *Deep in the Heart of Tuva*, bringing in ethnic

---

**This is the *real* world beat music, so if you have a sense of musical adventure, try these CDs.**

---

Russian influences and even a touch of pop styles, they never stray all that far from the "center of Asia." Even if many of their songs are new, the themes are traditional Tuvan, horses and girls and endless steppes. If you ride (or go to harness meetings), you will appreciate "*Dadyr-Todur*" (track 3) in which the principal rhythm is that of a trotting horse. Other tunes are very definitely foreign, reflecting the Soviet occupation, but the presence of Russian guest artists indicates that perhaps post-Communist cooperation has spread even to the remoteness of Tannu Tuva, at least for the moment. One of the Russians, German Popov, has even gone so far as to revive the *shoor*, a type of indigenous flute that had disappeared in Tuva itself.

There is plenty of throat-singing on Huun-Huur-Tu's record, but there are also a number of instrumentals along with modern styles of harmony vocals (another legacy of the Russians which Tuvan singers have made their own). For my part, I intend to make sure I

have tickets the next time the *höömei* singers come to town.

Curiously, the sound on both of these discs is a bit variable. This is to be expected on the Ellipsis Arts, which is after all a compilation of sounds ranging from fairly basic field recordings to some excellent performances in the Pasadena city hall, an acoustic that responds beautifully to the singers. I was surprised to find some variation in the quality of the Shanachie, which was recorded in a Dutch studio. At its best though, this is an excellent studio job, with real soundstage depth and realistic imaging. Try track 13 for pow-

erful drum sound and natural string tone. The important thing, however, is that both discs manage to capture the unique sound of Tuvan vocals with clarity and honesty.

Credit should also go to Ellipsis Arts for the wonderful liner notes which accompany *Deep in the Heart of Tuva*; this label tends to include what they call "books" with their releases, in many cases these simply amount to traditional liner copy, but here the "book" designation definitely applies. Thorough, lively and well-written, these notes are models of their ilk; read them and you come away actually knowing a bit about Tuva and its culture.

All right, I admit to some enthusiasm here; my wife and stepson have even accused me of "going Tuvan" on them. (Nonsense, kid, but pass the blood sausage, will you?) This is seriously ethnic stuff, the *real* World Music, and as such, it is probably not for everyone, but if you have a sense of musical adventure, Tuva is a worthwhile destination.

# RECORDINGS



*Classical*

Vivaldi for Diverse Instruments  
Nicholas McGegan, Conductor; Philharmonia  
Baroque Orchestra  
Reference Recordings RR-77CD

You will definitely want this recording if:

You're a Vivaldi nut, or you're a baroque addict, or you have a real thirst for novelty repertoire, or you play one of the featured solo instruments and simply must own every recording of every solo for your instrument on the market, or your craving for audiophile recordings transcends all other considerations, like what's actually been recorded, or the sound of gut strings makes you break out in a sweat.

Now, what about the rest of us?

There are many fine strengths on this disc, not the least of which is the high integrity of the ensemble playing. The Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra is a Bay Area group that specializes in original instrument performances of this repertoire. Not every group of this kind generates a sound that registers a "marvelous"; most peter-out at "academically curious." In addition, many groups play this repertoire with a kind of pallid reverence that drains out any inherent passion and leaves the result about as appetizing as an attractively arranged

bowl of wax fruit. However, the playing here is done with energy and commitment. I assume at least some of this is due to Mr. McGegan, but both musicians and conductor deserve a pat on the back for making this recording sound like everyone really cared.

The quality of the individual playing is similarly excellent. Playing early instruments, especially wind instruments, takes a real commitment of time and resources. You just don't expect to pick up a baroque oboe and expect it to do anything but engender a few laughs. These

folks know what they are doing. Special kudos to the horn players R.J. Kelley and Paul Avril. The few quibbles I had were with the, well, eh, the oboe playing on the middle movement of the "Concerto in G, RV 577" (a few pitch mishaps) and the middle movement of the "Concerto in F, RV 568" (ornamentation that sounded, to my ear a little hurried), but I'm being really picky here. All in all, the soloists on this disc do a beautiful job and the accompaniment is sensitive and gracious.

The sonics of the recording are just plain excellent. The sound of the gut strings, natural horns, and original woodwinds are captured in an honest and flattering way. If you're a dedicated audiophile, this HDCD recording by Prof. Johnson will float your boat.

The only fly in the ointment is the repertoire. Although Stravinsky's comment that Vivaldi "wrote the same concerto several hundred times" is not quite fair (Stravinsky never met a composer he didn't like . . . to

---

**The sonics on this CD are excellent! You can thank Prof. Johnson for that. The playing is fine, too.**

---

trash), but "breadth" is not the first adjective that comes to mind when you think of Vivaldi's music. The first concerto on the disc should be subtitled "the self-referential"; I caught material from both the "Concerto for Two Trumpets" and "The Seasons." The others were a little more engaging, and I especially liked the last piece on the disc, the "Concerto in D,

RV562," for violin, two oboes, two horns, two organs and strings, which had some real drama. But I find this repertoire something rather like aural Chinese food, better for short-term sustenance than long-term nourishment, however well it is prepared.

There are a good many reasons to recommend this disc. Chief among them is the very high quality of the playing and the equally fine sonics. Personally, however, this repertoire is way down my "can't live without" list, and I'm not sure any new ground has been broken by putting these concertos on disc, even in this very admirable fashion. Perhaps the thing this recording does best is show the depth of musicianship in this fine American ensemble. That, I think, is the reason for the rest of us to buy this disc.

**AUDIO SYNERGY 98**

Dynaco Stereo 80

Dynaco CD-V2

ASW Beta

Dynaco PAT 6 Serie 2

Standesign 5 Chrome

**ASW**  
hochwertige HiFi-Lautsprecher

**BRISTON**  
Professional and Consumer Amplifiers

**dynaco**  
High-End HiFi

**HEYBROOK**  
Amplifiers and Loudspeakers

**STANDESIGN**  
Audio Rocks and Stands

**LAB ELECTRONICS**  
AUDIO FOR THE TRUE AUDIOPHILE  
Ghiesstrasse 22  
CH-9242 Oberuzwil  
Tel. 071 951 36 24, Fax 071 951 77 66

**LAB-USA**, Las Vegas  
Tel (702) 247-1994 Fax (702) 247-4030  
**LAB Hong-Kong (China)**  
Tel/Fax (00852) 299 20858

Vertrieb in Deutschland:  
ASW Lautsprecher GmbH  
Bentlmalerskamp 26  
48891 Vreden  
Tel. 02567/34 34 Fax 633

Stop in @ Alexis Park, Suite 2354, CES '98, Las Vegas



Classical

Ronn McFarlane, Lute  
*A Distant Shore* Music of Bach, Weiss and  
 Kellner  
 Dorian Recordings DOR-90242

If you have ever thought of the lute's sound as small, inadequate, or distant, consider Dorian's larger-than-life depiction of Ronn McFarlane's lute. Spacious, yet closely detailed, this recording brings the ancient instrument into the here and now, sounding as if you are situated inside the instrument's curvaceous resonating belly. The resonance may be in part the echo of Ozawa Hall, Tanglewood, but just as likely it results from the lute's ample wooden resonating chamber or even its 11 strings eager to vibrate in sympathy with any plucked tones. While the lower tones of McFarlane's 1991 Rutherford lute, have a warm somewhat dampened quality, the upper strings tend to sound with a bit of a banjo's twang. Actually, the brighter more

metallic sound may be the voice of the chanterelle, the only single string. This instrument has shades and aspects to its sound that blend into a characterful voice familiar in parts, yet fresh overall. Often a phrase rings out with a bright piquancy only to be answered with an earthy warm-toned reply. And throughout, the sounds of fingers working strings create a counterpoint of chirpings, squeaks, and whistles. I hope I am not alone in finding these "extraneous" sounds a large part of the charm and character of this disc. In a sense they extend the upper range of the instrument and are beautifully captured by Douglas Brown and Brian Peters manipulating their minimal microphony, custom electronics, and one-of-a-kind 20-bit analog-to-digital converters.

The title, *A Distant Shore*, refers not to spatial lengths so much as our distance in time from the heyday of the lute. This disc features music by Bach, Weiss, and Kellner, late-Baroque composers, to whom the lute's golden age was also a distant shore. First appearing about a thousand years ago, this intimate instrument with its pear-shaped body, bent-back pegbox, and double strings, became the popular hearth-side recreation throughout Europe in the 15<sup>th</sup> through the 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries, but had largely lost the attention of 18<sup>th</sup> Century composers who sought more assertive voices for their increasingly public musical statements.

Of the three pieces by Bach, two, the "Suite in E Major," BWV 1006a, and "The Fugue in G Minor" are drawn from violin

works, while the "Prelude in C Minor," BWV 999 was probably originally written for lute but is best known as a keyboard piece. The "Suite" transcription survives in Bach's own hand, notated on two staves, keyboard style (not in lute tablature), raising questions as to the composer's intent (Bach may have transcribed it for his favorite *Lautenwerk*, essentially a harpsichord with gut strings that mimic the sound of the lute). At any rate, the solo violin part has been taken down an octave, with a bass line and inner parts added. Recycling spans the generations: Bach reused the violin/lute "Prelude" in two different cantatas as well, and the success of this transcription, as well as his arrangement of the "Suite No. 5 in C Minor" for solo cello, has inspired several 20<sup>th</sup> Century lutenists to arrange all of Bach's violin and cello works for the lute. McFarlane, like others, has transposed the suite to F Major to "more comfortably accommodate the Baroque lute." Bach made few concessions to comfort, and since he was not himself a lutenist, set many passages that are downright awkward to play. I take on faith the technical difficulties referred to in the notes, and know I should feel McFarlane's pain, yet I must point out that this is about the most "comfortable" Bach I expect to ever hear. The original setting for violin often sounds edgy, particularly when a modern instrument digs into the double and triple stops. Here the characteristic sound is warm, ringing, and effortlessly lyrical.

With David Kellner and Sylvius Leopold Weiss, we are hearing lute music written by

lutenists. Kellner is best known as a Stockholm-based organist and the carillonneur (talk about instruments lost in the mists of time), yet his works display an intimate understanding of lute technique. McFarlane brings an

---

### **This wonderful Dorian CD features music from the golden age of the lute.**

---

almost rhapsodic sensibility to this music, phrasing his "Campanella" and "Sarabanda" with a degree of rubato few keyboard players would allow themselves today, but which sounds perfectly natural on such a personal instrument. The faster movements of Kellner's "Suite" bring back the more metallic tone colors and rollicking rhythms.

What a wonderful quandary: Is Weiss such a fine composer or is McFarlane's affecting performance of the "Ciaccona" an act of magical transformation? The more I listen, the more I savor the intense lyricism that at first was taken as the composer's achievement. Maybe it's both. After all, Weiss, the father, son, and brother of lutenists, had apparently once duked it out with Bach. Actually, the competition involved improvisation of fantasias and fugues, Weiss wielding his lute, Bach likely hewing to his keyboard. Weiss was the ultimate virtuoso of his instrument, composing many works rich in counterpoint but with the lute's legato style. McFarlane is fortunate to have found an idiom so suitable to his liquid sense of line.

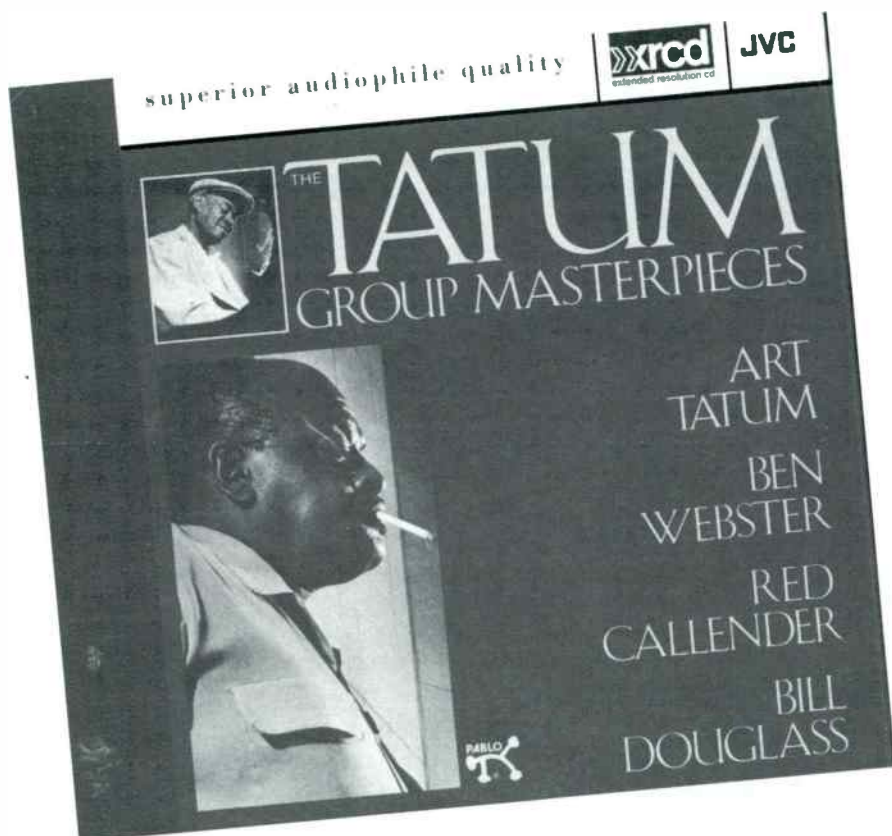
A good measure of the laid-back eloquence of these perfor-

mances comes from such basic lute technique as the characteristic slur to a new note. This music abounds in appoggiaturas, sweetly dissonant notes resolving stepwise, that are handled as slurs. Whereas in a keyboard work, each note is struck anew, here, the appoggiatura is plucked and the resolving note is fingered on the same string as the tone is fading, a particularly graceful effect.

The booklet's notes by Kevin Bazzana are illuminating and engaging, but I would have appreciated more information on such basics as the tuning of this lutes' 11 strings (many have 13). Yet, since this is McFarlane's fifth solo CD on Dorian, that information has probably already been published. Among his other Dorian releases are (at least) four discs of lute songs (three with Julianne Baird, one with Frederick Urrey) and nine discs with the Baltimore Consort. (If you enjoy artful, pure-toned singing without operatic vibrato and heft, listen to Custer LaRue along with the Baltimore Consort including McFarlane. The ballads of *The Daemon Lover* are sung without a hint of stridency, however woeful or macabre the story. A deep tradition is tapped, and the resulting CD is seductive and easy to live with. Incidentally, *The Art of the Bawdy Song* has earned a parental advisory, so don't seek it out at your local Walmart.)

This luxuriant recording brings an American spaciousness of sound and spirit to an instrument whose comet just may have come full circle. Ronn McFarlane's playing brings home the age-old pastime of making poetry on taut strings.

# RECORDING OF THE MONTH



The Tatum Group Masterpieces JVCXR-0034-2  
Brilliant Corners-The Bill Holman Band JVCXR-0028-2

**M**ove over HDCD, GAIN, SBM, SDS, here comes JVC's XRCD to compete for the audiophile's \$30. A long treatise on HDCD opens each CD booklet (very nicely packaged, by the way). but there's no super technological fix involved. Rather, it's just careful attention to details, from master tape to A-D

conversion to mastering, with much critical listening at all stages. (They claim that, in listening tests, aluminum, which they used, sounded better than gold CDs).

Tatum recorded a series of "Group Masterpieces" with different mainstream musicians. Here, the pianist, likened to God

by Fats Waller, is teamed with Ben Webster, with bassist Red Callender and drummer Bill Douglas, the supporting cast. The under-rehearsed nature of the date is obvious in that all these standards are played in a framework that can be diagrammed thus; Tatum (unaccompanied intro)/ Tatum (solo)/

Webster (melody or solo)/ Tatum (solo)/ Webster (solo)/ both to end.

Tatum was difficult to play with. He could play anything, had unparalleled chops and harmonic sophistication (Charlie Parker, on first coming to New York, is said to have washed dishes in a club Tatum was playing in, soaking up his harmonic ideas) and had no inclination to sublimate these in collaboration or accompaniment. Webster and Tatum meshed perfectly. In the latter part of his career, Webster shifted stylistic gears. Having started out as a Hawkins-influenced fire-breathing tenor powerhouse, he was now Gentle Ben, master of subtle inflection and tone. His tone became softer, richer, with notes sent out in a coating of air, while his phrasing was now laconic, behind the beat, and, while he still improvised, even melody statements were pure jazz. His assured, uncluttered, voluptuous style was never cowed by Tatum's unrelenting musical onslaught, creating a perfect balance.

Highlights include "Gone with the Wind," with Webster offering a creamy chocolaty melody, and Tatum dazzles with speed and invention. Two alternative takes, wisely placed at the end of the CD so as not to break the momentum, are also fine (picking a master must have been difficult) and give insight into the approaches of the soloists (Tatum, for example, has some set parts, but creates new lives around them).

"Night and Day" is taken uptempo, Ben looser and less laid back, playing an impassioned solo, while Tatum is his knuckle-breaking

self (he plays more while accompanying than most pianists do soloing).

My favorite is "Where or When," a lovely ballad whose melody and chords build a drama and tension, released at

---

### Both the classic Tatum and the modernist Holman are great jazz and great demo CDs.

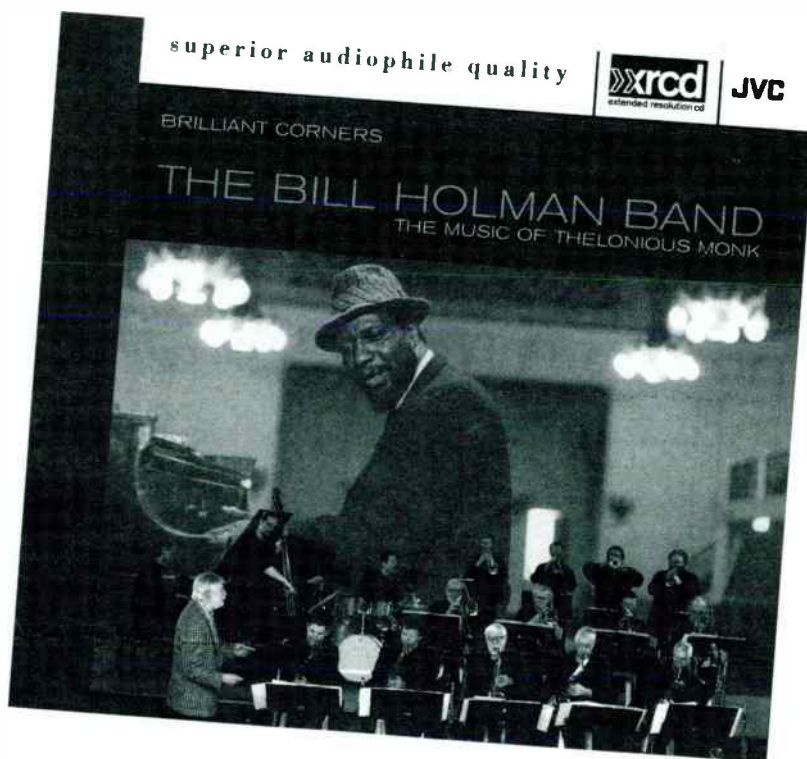
---

the very end. Tatum allows the melody to peek through the pyrotechnics, making his own breathtaking statement, and you wonder, "Who could follow this?" Then Webster, playing mostly melody, just steals it away, his soulful entreaty touching the heart, peaking with the last few notes. Perfection.

Have I said the (mono) sound is great? Instruments have rich-

ness, vitality, and velvety smoothness, with appropriate snap and bite, as needed. Have I said Webster's chocolate souffle-like tone is to die for (I gained five pounds each play)? Bass and especially drums are recessed in the mix, which reflects a slight softening of the transients, but is partly due to their trying to stay out of Tatum's way. I didn't have a Pablo for comparison (sob), though some of these tracks were reissued on Time-Life's early '80's anthologies, and this CD bests those tracks in almost every way.

The Bill Holman CD, unlike most XRCDs, is a new recording rather than a reissue. Holman has arranged these classic Monk melodies for a big band, and from the first notes, it's obvious that his is an original conception. "Straight, No Chaser" starts with bits of the melody strewn about by unaccompanied brass in a



hazy tonality. Next, the orchestra offers rhythmically related variations on the melody, with the tune only surfacing toward the end, even then slightly harmonically altered (Doug Ramsey, in his excellent notes, points out a Bartok influence, which I'll have to take his word for).

"Mysterioso" is Monk's distillation of blues, with a simple melody of ascending 6ths, with a jarring last note, and a stiff rhythm that contrasts with the liquid blues accompaniment. Holman accentuates this rhythmic friction by setting triplets against the melody (think of the piano in "Blueberry Hill") and highlights that harsh harmony in behind soloists and in ensemble passages. After a fine trumpet solo (Bob Summer), saxes enter with a single unaccompanied note,

then brass offers a harmonically thorny counterpoint. The sections diverge, Dave Carpenter solos on bass, the triplets return and the theme is recapped, ending an exhilarating journey

---

**The Tatum/Webster CD is a well-done rerelease, while Holman's Monk tribute is more modern in sound.**

---

through transfigured Monk.

While the soloing is fine (Summer's trumpet, Rich Eames' piano which avoids aping Monk, and Bill Perkins' sax work are notable), the orchestra and the compositions plus their arrangements are the true focus. These arrangements are original, involving, and swing like mad (I could do without another version of "Round Midnight").

Sonically, this Holman CD is another fine disc, with a WIDE, WIDE soundstage, good imaging, and exciting dynamics. Timbres are realistic, trumpets sounding brassy, though it doesn't quite capture the complex texture of saxophones.

The Tatum/Webster disc is richer, warmer, with more of those overtones rendered.

The Holman, in comparison, is (slightly) dry, instrumental color is (very slightly) bleached, especially when contrasted with the wet, succulent ambience of the Tatum/Webster. (The difference between "live to two track" digital and a tube-era recording?) Not to put too fine a point on this, as the Holman is a fine sounding, demo-quality CD.

JVC's XRC D group has two winners here, and both of them are highly recommended.

Placete Audio Preamps are the most transparent available today. We use only Vishay® S-102 resistors in all signal paths, including the 128 step volume control.

Passive or buffered. Dual-mono. 5 line inputs plus 2 tape loops. Full IR remote control. Custom built for your system. From \$2000.

**Placete Audio**  
Dual Mono Line Stage Preamplifier  
208-342-6141 • Placete@aol.com



# RECORDINGS



Carl Weathersby *Looking Out My Window*  
Evidence, LCD 26089-2

Melvin Taylor & The Slack Band *Dirty Pool*

Just when you think that there will be no more “new” blues players of note, and the older generation seems to be passing on without passing on the torch, a new blues player comes along who seems to further the tradition with authentic style.

Carl Weathersby is no youngster, but for all intents and purposes he is a newcomer to the blues scene, because this is only his second album. So if he can match the intensity of his performances here with first-rate material (and do we *really* need another version of “Feel So Bad?”), perhaps Evidence Records will become the next Hightone Records and be a legitimate launching pad for the careers of many new blues musicians.

Weathersby seems greatly influenced by the work of Albert King, with a guitar tone slightly more distorted. But unlike Albert, Carl is responsible for writing the bulk of his material,

some of which is pretty damn good.

Bassist Lee Zeno drives the rhythm section with his distinctive lines, giving a feel to some of the songs which is reminiscent of the Allman Brothers; it’s a short hop from Georgia to Louisiana, musically speaking. The weakest tracks are the covers, primarily because the songs either don’t suit Weathersby all that well or are so familiar through other versions that their inclusion on this disc seems unhappily inappropriate.

Melvin Taylor’s previous work has been impressive but unfocused, and here he seems to have taken a deliberate misstep in what should be seen as an unfortunate direction. Although his last recording saw him in a context that wasn’t exactly traditional, for this record his style is wholly dependent upon the parameters set by Stevie Ray Vaughan, covering two of Stevie’s compositions and play-

ing in a style that seems overtly Vaughanesque. On Taylor’s last album, there was a polite tip of the hat to Jimi Hendrix, but this disc is far too obvious in its indebtedness. Taylor also has the handicap of not being a writer, as none of the material on *Dirty Pool* is his. The rhythm section doesn’t come close to having the pocket that *Double Trouble* was famous for, particularly on the shuffles. Again, the song choices are poor: “I Ain’t Superstitious,” “Kansas City,” and “Born Under A Bad Sign” are cliches unless you can really do something new with them.

Melvin Taylor is undoubtedly a strong talent both as a singer and guitarist, but he and his producer must find better songs and a more creative direction for his talent in the future.

Being a retread of a well-known blues legend is below Taylor’s obvious ability, and one would hope he’ll do better than this on future albums.

# Millennium 2.4.6 DTS Decoder/Preamp

Ralph Glasgal  
www.ambiophonics.org



*IN THE BEGINNING, there was monophonic recording, and Edison saw that it was good.*

*In the middle, there was stereophonic recording, and Blumlein saw that it was good for the records.*

*In the living end, there was 5.1 recording and Dolby saw that it was good for the movies and for videos,*

want something better than stereo, something that is truly useable even by non-do-it-yourselfers, something not too difficult to set up and no more unfriendly to decor concerns than

ment and the immediacy that movie sound



*and spake thus, "Be earfull and multi-mike."*

But is 5.1 really worthy and ready to be canonized as the Holy of Holies for *pictureless*, music-only reproduction, for the next decade anyway?

Well, yes, if you are not too immensely fussy but definitely

In my experience, going from two to any number of meaningfully functional additional loudspeakers in a music reproduction system is only slightly less exciting than was the first step of going from one to two speakers, or mono to stereo.

The coming of surround sound for movies has led to a realization that music reproduced in stereo lacks the excite-

5.1 already is for video, something ready right now.

now routinely provides. It is also astonishing that many of the same pundits of yesteryear, who insisted that stereo could only be perfected by improving equipment, increasing the sampling rate and expensive exotic tweaking, have now embraced such replacements for stereo as Dolby Digital and Digital Theater Systems (DTS), despite the compromises these paradigms impose in actual practice.

## So, What's this Box?

The Millennium 2.4.6 decoder is a small black box that allows an already existing

# How do your cables measure up?

Do you know that measurements such as the capacitance and inductance of your cables can dramatically affect what you hear from your audio or home theatre system.



Nordost SPM Reference interconnects and speaker cables

Chances are the cables you purchased did not have this information printed on the package. Why do most cable manufacturers keep their customers in the dark about their product specifications. The truth is most of the products on the market do not have the specifications of Nordost Flatline Cables. In most cases our cables have capacitance and inductance specifications that are at least two or three times lower than our competitors. This is a difference you can hear. You will hear more controlled bass, better midrange and sparkling highs. Our cables also transmit signals at over 95% the speed of light while most other cables have a performance level of about 60 to 70%.

Nordost Super Flatline speaker cables and Magic 1 Interconnect



## How do we do it?

The answer is precision. At our state of the art cable factory in the U.S.A. we make the finest audio cables in the world as well as the most advanced cables used in the aerospace industry. Nordost is the only cable manufacturer in the world which makes Extruded Teflon cables. No other cables are made with such tight tolerances and such a high degree of concentricity.

## Hear is what some leading reviewers had to say about our products...

"Just a single run of Nordost Flatline outperformed every other cable I've tried in term of sheer musical involvement, as well as all the usual audiophile sonics." "If you ask me, the Nordost Flatline is great stuff and you should investigate it without delay"  
Art Dudley LISTENER USA



Nordost Moonglow digital interconnect cables

"Flatline trades not one iota of sonic prowess for its convenience. It is simply one of the most entrancing cables we've ever come across."  
★★★★★ 5 Stars WHAT HI-FI? UK

"Nordost cable products are among the best we have ever used and we highly recommend them for all high definition audio applications."  
John E Johnson Ph.D. SECRETS OF HOME THEATRE AND HIGH FIDELITY USA

# Hear how music should really sound.

**NORDOST**

Call us, write or E Mail us. **Nordost Corporation**, 420 Franklin Street. Framingham, MA 01701 U.S.A.

Tel: 1-800-836-2750, 508-879-1242 Fax: 508-879-8197 E Mail: nordostflatline@msn.com

<http://www.nordost.com>

World Radio History

home theater system to decode DTS sources. The input to the box must be digital, either Toslink or coax. The decoder can accept up to two inputs from a CD transport, DVD player or LaserDisc player provided one is coax and one is Toslink. One digital coax output allows the selected input to be daisy-chained to another device such as a DAC or DAT. Basically, the decoder is a six-channel switch with a DTS six-channel unscrambler. When a DTS signal is detected, the outputs of the home theater preamp or Dolby unit are intercepted on their way to the power amplifiers and the decoded DTS analog signals automatically substituted. In my tests, I used the Millennium as my sole preamp since it has volume controls for all channels. Connecting a Toslink optical cable and four

cables to the power amplifiers were all it took to install this item and start enjoying discrete Quad (4.0) music.

My evaluation of the Millennium decoder is, of auditory necessity, really a review of DTS, which in turn is really a review of 5.1 microphoning techniques and speaker placement. A decoder can only affect

---

**Millennium's 2.4.6 is essentially a six-channel DAC dedicated to DTS sources.**

---

the quality of the sound if it introduces amplitude or frequency differences not already present on the CD or inherent in the encoding process. There are those who feel that DTS compression is deleterious. As represented by DTS via CD, where

plenty of bits are available because of the absence of video and the usual use of only four channels, I heard no DTS compression artifacts. DTS compression starts with a 20-bit sample, so you gain some and maybe you lose some when the psychoacoustic masking algorithm is not adequate. However, I certainly heard no such instances.

The Millennium decoder is essentially a six-channel DAC, and to my ears, it performed this function as well as any other late generation DAC I have auditioned. Unfortunately, it cannot decode the standard CD PCM stream, and so a direct comparison between an ordinary CD and a DTS CD was not practical.

#### **A Bit of History**

To review briefly, 5.1 is a de facto six-speaker layout standard initially designed to reproduce

Voted "Best Value in Loudspeakers" for 1997

The members of the Academy for the Advancement of High End Audio vote each year for designers and products of special merit.

The Magneplanar® MG3.5/R was selected by the leaders of High End Audio to receive recognition as the "Best Value in Loudspeakers" for 1997.

"The Maggie 3.5s represent the maximum sonic value per buck in loudspeakers in the here and now."\*

Harry Pearson  
*The Absolute Sound Magazine*  
Issue 107, 1996

\*Quoted with permission of The Absolute Sound

Visit our website at [www.magneplanar.com](http://www.magneplanar.com)

**MAGNEPAN** 1645 Ninth Street, White Bear Lake, MN 55110 1-800-474-1646 • Fax 1-612-426-0441

# THE END OF THE ICE AGE.



Conrad-Johnson melts away all doubt of whether digital can achieve the musical results of analog reproduction. The DR-1 transport, D/A-2b tube dac and D/A-3 solid-state dac offer stunning musical performance starting at the affordable price of just \$1195.

**conrad-johnson** It just sounds right.

2733 Merrilee Drive Fairfax VA 22031 phone 703-698-8581, fax 703-560-5360

the soundtracks of movies and video programs. The 5.1 system employs three loudspeakers at left-, right- and center-front positions, plus one speaker each at the left- and right-rear sides, and one low-frequency effects (LFE) channel whose location is not critical.

Dolby Digital and Digital Theater Systems are basically two competing digital-packing methods for delivery of these signals to the six loudspeakers via such media as HDTV, LaserDisc, VHS, DVD, CD, etc. Again, depending on the number of bits available for audio, Dolby or DTS will compress and encode the audio so as to provide the six 5.1-style discrete signals at the best quality possible for that storage medium. Compared to the very audible difference between stereo and 5.1, the ongoing fuss between

Dolby and DTS amounts, to this observer, to sound and fury signifying nothing necessarily audible, at least to humans.

The 5.1 speaker arrangement, optimized as it is for movies, is feasible, but to me, it is not truly ideal for the most realistic reproduction of musical performances by orchestras, vocalists, jazz

---

**The sound fields from DTS sources aren't realistic, but they are exciting, fun, and better than stereo.**

---

combos, choirs, etc. Furthermore, recording engineers have their own ideas about how to record live performances and mix them for presentation over a 5.1 speaker array, whose response charac-

teristics and precise positions in the home will be relatively unknown.

The DTS-encoded CDs lent to me for testing with the Millennium DTS decoder were the first-generation 4.0 discs. Almost none of them had output in the low-frequency effects channel, which makes sense since few musical selections include earth-quaking or "Star Wars" rumble. Additionally, the best of the selections on the sampler CD that came with the decoder did not include a signal for the front-center speaker.

According to record producer and recording engineer Brad Miller, (also founder of Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab), four speakers placed 45 degrees front-left and front-right and 45 degrees rear-left and rear-right anchors a phase and frequency coherent soundfield. The center-

## *Clayton Audio*



Reference Quality  
Pure Class A  
Power Amplifier

S40  
Stereo Power Amplifier  
40 watts per channel

M70  
Monaural Power Amplifier  
70 watts per channel

8151 Stratford Ave., Clayton, MO 63105  
Tel: (314) 862-6017 Fax: (314) 862-0765 e-mail: Claytonamp@aol.com

front and LFE channels provide agumentation, or the frosting on the cake

Following Brad's advice, I did all my DTS listening without a center speaker and never missed it, even for a moment, since there was never a hole in the middle or movie dialog needing an anchor to a screen.

If you are old enough to have a sense of deja-vu about all this, it is not paranormal. Yes, the difference between most of today's DTS music CDs and the SQ, QS, UHJ quadraphonic LPs of yester-year is that DTS does not use matrixing and so the separation between channels is inherently excellent. The addition of the center channel and the LFE signal seems of little import in this "live music recording" context. Indeed, the bulk of the DTS-on-CD titles available stem from the quad era. Unfortunately, the truly spectacular CD-4 discrete-channel classical recordings, mostly from RCA in that era, have not yet made their way onto DTS or Dolby CDs. Interestingly, RCA, like Brad Miller, also called for speakers in the four corners of the listening room.

### Use and Listening

The Millennium and DTS are fun. The improvement over straight stereo is immediately obvious especially when you momentarily turn off the rear speakers. The lack of a remote control is pesky, particularly for reviewers, but I don't miss the few pounds lost doing the getting ups and sitting downs. However, the 2.4.6 does have a clever level-matching arrangement that lets you use the remote control of any DAC, pre-amp, receiver, Dolby Digital decoder, etc. (that has at least its main channel analog outputs

switched by the 2.4.6), to adjust the master volume of the six DTS output channels as a group. It works, only if the DTS digital data stream still goes into the

receiver (and it is turned on) when the DTS sources are played. The idea is that the non-DTS DAC in the processor will output white noise when pre-

## D T S D I S C O G R A P H Y

These DTS-format CDs, all of which are 5.1 active channel mixes (instead of 4.0), contain music and special effects and are available from selected dealers or 5point1 Marketing at the address in the "Notes." List price is \$25.00 except where noted.

*Jasmine Nightdreams*: Edgar Winter, #4420

*Beck, Bogert & Appice*: Jeff Beck, #4421

*Crazy Eyes*: Poco, #4422

*Stills*: Steve Stills, #4423

*The Big Picture*: Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, #1005

*Sol To Soul*: Freddie Ravel, #1007

*Rivers*: Pat Leonard, #1008

*High Lonesome Sound*: Vince Gill, #1009

*Road Tested*: Bonnie Raitt (2 CDs, \$28.00); #1010

*American Landscape*: David Benoit, #1011

*Surround Sound for the Millennium*: Sampler, #4400

*Venus & Mars*: Wings, #4401

*Stormy Memories*: Mystic Moods, #4402

*Band on the Run*: Paul McCartney, #4403

*Honey*: Ohio Players, #4404

*Once Upon a Time*: Joey Curtain, #4405

*Fly Like an Eagle*: Steve Miller, #4406

*Highway One*: Mystic Moods, #4407

*Erogenous*: Mystic Moods, #4408

*Not Fragile*: Bachman-Turner Overdrive, #4409

*Live at Fillmore East*: Allman Brothers Band, #4410

*The Storm & The Sea*: Environments/relaxation, #4411

*Steel Rails Under Thundering Skies*: Specialty, #4412

*Movie Tracks*: Dynamic Sound Effects (3 CDs, \$30.00); #4413

*On Air*: Alan Parsons, #4414

*Modena 96*: Pavarotti & Friends, "Live!"; #4415

*Bright Side of the Moon*: Mystic Moods, #4416

*Cosmic Force*: Mystic Moods, #4417

*Days of Future Passed*: Moody Blues, #4418

*461 Ocean Boulevard*: Eric Clapton, #4419

*II*: Boyz II Men, #1001

*Forever Yours*: Marvin Gaye, #1002

*Come On In This House*: Junior Wells, #1003

*Tribute to Bud Powell*: Chick Corea, #1004

*Hell Freezes Over*: The Eagles, #1006

*Digital Surround Collection*: dmp, #2801

*Glenn Miller Project*: dmp Big Band, #2802

*Duke Ellington Project*: dmp Big Band, #2803

sented with a DTS-encoded digital stream. The level of this white noise reaching its main analog inputs can then be monitored by the Millennium and used to adjust its own master output levels to match.

Is the sound field realistic? Well, not really. Exciting, different, better than stereo, yes. But you still can't reach out and touch the musicians. There is only a slight cocktail party effect, whereby one can concentrate on one sound source to the exclusion of others. This is not surprising since just four speakers, or 5.1 for that matter, shouldn't be expected to produce a concert-hall caliber field in the home. Both Yamaha and Lexicon, among others, are already including DSP processors in their products that convert 5.1 to 7.1 and feed eight speakers.

While I don't think there is any way that the 5.1 speaker and recording arrangement is ever going to recreate a truly realistic concert, opera or jazz venue, they are great at allowing recording engineers to use all the studio DSP gear available to pop record producers to generate sound fields and spaces that Beethoven never dreamed of. In this context, high fidelity has little meaning. Electronic instruments and their placement in space by knob twirlers have no counterpart in the minimalist acoustic recording world. That said, DTS 5.1 CD really works, with jets, trains and racing cars zipping all around my audio room and rain storms, waterfalls and ocean surf lapping against my listening shore.

Getting back to DTS classical music, using a Yamaha DSP A3090 processor and feeding just the front DTS signals into it, I was able to synthesize signals

for four of my normal surround loudspeakers and produce a quad sound quite similar in effect to the sense of space produced by the DTS decoder.

I found that this was particularly easy to do for the Delos "1812 Overture" track on the DTS music demonstration and set-up disc that was supplied to me with the decode. This CD also includes several quite effective pop music samples from HDS, ZTT/Warner, David Frangioni, and Telarc.

This may imply that many recording companies now or will at some time in future find it much easier to electronically fabricate the two, three or four extra channels than actually use microphones to record them, much like reverb is added to sound tracks today or sound effects and music are produced after filming is completed. A dmp Records Compact Disc of their big band doing the Glenn Miller big band arrangements, produced by Tom Jung, was very involving and arguably the best of the discs at hand, with great presence, air, and effortless localization, even at the extreme sides.

Whether DTS will weather the Dolby cyclone and find its niche is still unknown, but as of

this writing there is more DTS music on CD than Dolby Digital music on DVD or CD combined, and this decoder can also be used for the many DTS-encoded movies coming soon.

However, DTS may not be a viable financial option for confirmed advanced subjectivist stereophiles. The cost of digital and RCA interconnects, as well as speaker cables, for a 7.1 system, plus eight single-ended triode amplifiers and seven matched high-end speaker systems, plus subwoofer, Tip-Toes, power conditioners, etc., could move the cause of audio purism to compromise itself into oblivion. However, as practioners of the pure stereo art experience for themselves well-recorded music via multi-loudspeaker reproduction, their subjective benchmarks will surely change. Just as a picture is worth more than 1,000 words, reproduction via six (or better yet eight) high-definition speakers is worth more than all the two-speaker fixer-uppers.

*Prepare thyself and thy system now for the coming century and the advent of multi-channel sound; consider a bridge into the future by means of this very affordable Millennium 2.4.6 now.*

## NOTES

**Millennium 2.4.6 DTS Decoder/Preamp**, \$699.00. Sold through select dealers or direct by Millennium Technologies, P.O. Box 8359, Incline Village, Nevada 89452-8359, phone 888/551-6789, e-mail info@5point1.com, www.5point1.com.

### Associated Equipment

Sunfire power amplifier (front), Soundlab Ultimate 1 speakers (front), Carver AL-1 speakers (rear), PS Audio Lambda CD Player, and Radio Shack's Best Cables.



## Monster Cable Polarity Analyzer

Ralph Glasgal  
<http://www.ambiophonics.org>



**Y**es, THE Monster Cable. The Monster Car Audio division of Monster Cable has come up with a tester for absolute polarity that they market primarily to the auto sound market. Their sales brochure states, "Ensuring wire polarity can be a difficult task that involves removal of car door panels or removal of the dashboard. Visibly checking speaker connections for polarity accomplishes little except verifying the factory labels on the voice coil terminals." I would have thought that at this

moment in audio history, the surround-sound field's demand for a tester like this would be even more substantial than that of the auto sound market, since, to paraphrase, ensuring absolute polarity of a multi-speaker, multi-driver, multi-channel surround-sound system can be a difficult task that involves the removal of speaker grills and speaker panels to obtain access to crossover network and speaker terminals. Unless you connect a battery or use a test signal, at this juncture, just visibly check-

ing speaker and crossover connections for polarity accomplishes little except verifying the factory labels on the speaker or other inside terminals. I have not used this tester in any of my cars, but as an audiophile, I can't imagine stationary sonic life without it anymore.

### Psycho-Polarity Background

Have you ever wondered whether you yourself can hear absolute polarity (see sidebar) when listening either to just one

speaker or two? Are you really sure that your woofer, sub-woofer, midrange driver and even the tweeter all jump in the same direction in response to a steeply rising musical waveform? How about your amplifiers or preamps? Do you know if they invert inadvertently? How about CD decoders or microphones? How about your surround-sound system? Do all six speakers (and their amplifiers) move in and out in unison, at least when they are supposed to? In the non-electrical, natural world, there is no mechanism that can cause a sound's polarity to invert. The leading edge compression of a trumpet's first utterance is still a compression when it reaches your ears, and so are all the early reflections from walls and floors that follow. The initial attack of the kettle drum can only be a rarefaction unless the percussionist is inside the kettle. If you yodel in

the Alps, what goes out and then comes back may be delayed, but it is still right-side up.

However, in the modern world where analog electrical waveforms represent sound, it is all too easy to turn things upside down either deliberately or in ignorance, and for audiophiles, this ignorance is not blissful. Two differing considerations involved with sonic polarity must be addressed. The first is the determination of absolute polarity. That is, do we know, from the kettle drum to your ears, that the leading edge of each beat is still a rarefaction? There are those who maintain that this is not important and that the kettle drum will sound the same even if the diaphragm first moves out instead of in when a recording of the drum is played. The second is determining that, where more than one channel or sound transducer is involved, that all sound-produc-

ing elements in a system are putting out sound of the same polarity even if that polarity may be wrong. While absolute polarity is probably inaudible to most individuals, relative polarity inversion among sound-producing elements clearly is audible.


### Can You Hear Absolute Polarity?

The Monster Cable Polarity Analyzer consists of a compact disc containing two types of test signals and some verbal tutorial discussions on using the tester, particularly in cars. The other half of the tester is the hand-held analyzer, which is about the same size as a remote control and is battery powered. It contains a microphone, pulse detection circuitry, one red LED, and one green LED. Recorded on this CD are two 20-minute bands of pulse trains, one high in pitch and one low. The first or high band is for determining the

## AudioPrism

1998 International  
**CES**  
Alexis Park Suite 2504

*Introduces the Mana Reference Monoblock Amplifiers...*



*...and the affordable Antares Dual Monaural Amplifier*

1420 NW. Gilman Boulevard • Suite 2593 • Issaquah, WA 98027 • voice (425) 641-7439 • facsimille (425) 644-5485

polarity of the higher frequency drivers of multi-way speaker systems or full-range electrostatics and ribbons. The test signal consists of three narrow but rounded positive pulses followed by a single negative pulse. When one places the hand-held acoustic sensor in front of the driver being tested, an LED blinks each time a pulse is reproduced. The green LED lights for positive acoustic pulses and the red lights for the negative pulse. If the polarization of your sound system is correct, every driver in every speaker should produce a three-green, one-red pattern. Note that this tester cannot be used to directly check the polarity of only an amplifier, since it has no input jack. However, once you have a small speaker whose polarity you know is correct, you can use it as part of the test kit for amplifiers, and once you have an amplifier you are sure of, you can use it and your speaker to test just about anything in the chain except phono cartridges. You can even check microphone chains by playing the CD through one correctly polarized speaker placed directly in front of the microphone and the listening with the analyser to a second previously checked monitor.

For those who want to see if they can hear absolute polarity under these circumstances, they need to try to identify which of the four pulses is the one that is reversed. This experiment uses a speaker with just a single driver and then speakers with multiple drivers and finally with stereo speakers. This is a true double-blind test because the pulses are evenly spaced, and there is no way you can keep track of which pulse is which without using the analyzer. I, myself, can hear no difference but that

doesn't mean you won't. Please try this and e-mail your results to [ralphglasgal@webtv.net](mailto:ralphglasgal@webtv.net) or the editor at [Epitts@ix.netcom.com](mailto:Epitts@ix.netcom.com) or post them on [rec.audio.high-end](http://rec.audio.high-end).

### Testing Subwoofers

The high-band pulses are only about a half millisecond wide and repeat at about a half-second rate. Such pulses are too

short to influence a woofer, and so a second band of pulses about twice as wide is provided to test the polarity of middle-range woofers. Checking the polarization of woofers and even subwoofers turned out to be a cinch. The pulse provided is actually too narrow to be a good test signal for a deep subwoofer, so it is a good idea  
(Continued on p. 60)

### Tutorial:

## Polarity vs. Phase vs Time Delay

Unfortunately, we live in an age where loose lips sink scholarship. Thus, much if not most of the audio establishment uses the word phase when they really mean polarity. Such pedantry on my part is probably worthy of contempt but the distinction between polarity, phase shift and time delay can be significant for those struggling to get the best out of their equipment or weighing the claims made by manufacturers of time-aligned speakers or phase compensated cables, for example.

The difference between these wavetrain parameters is best thought of in terms of ordinary music. A musical sound, after conversion by a microphone into an electrical voltage, can be seen as a series of positive and negative spikes of varying widths and amplitudes. If we look at a particular positive spike on its way to a loudspeaker, and delay its arrival time at our ears by moving further away from the speaker, the delayed spike will still be positive although it is attenuated and rounded, since it passes through more air. If we reverse the leads to the speaker, the positive

spike becomes a negative spike and so by definition its polarity has been inverted. Note that polarity, like the concept of up and down, is a defined attribute and not a relative one. Knowing the definition (in this case rarefaction or compression), one can determine the polarity of a single speaker without comparing it to any other speaker, signal or time reference. Time delay and phase shift, by contrast, are relative parameters and require an answer to the question: Delayed or shifted from what? In both the time-delay and polarity-inversion case, the musical series of spikes remains unaltered in shape even if upside down.

If we sort or group the musical signal on the basis of its pulse width and steepness, to feed a multi-way speaker, for example, it is possible to end up with a different polarity at each driver or a different time delay to each driver. This will have audible consequences which make evaluating such speakers an art rather than a science and explain why polarization and controlling delay are important (continued on p. 58)

# Atma-Sphere ... Authentic!



**M-60 Mk. II - \$3795**  
 60 Watts of OTL Purity  
 Freq. Resp. 1Hz-200KHz  
 Power Band. 1Hz-75KHz  
 Authoritative, Tuneful Bass  
 Graceful Highs & Midrange

*"For once, the buzz surrounding a new hi-fi product is very much deserved, and the Atma-Sphere M-60 offers a combination of strengths that simply couldn't be had until now. Drive like hell to the nearest Atma-Sphere dealer..."*

--Art Dudley - Listener Spring '97

**CALL NOW for information on our kits and full line of factory-built Class A, All Triode, Zero Feedback, OTL Amps & Preamps!**



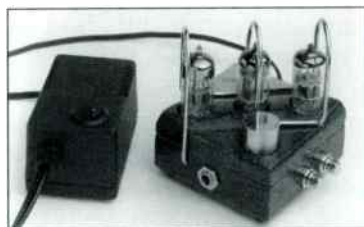
*The World's Finest Audio Gear!*

**Atma-Sphere Music Systems, Inc.**

The OTL Leader, featuring Balanced Differential Design™

160 So. Wheeler, St. Paul, MN 55105 • Phone 612-690-2246 • Fax 612-699-1175  
[www.atma-sphere.com](http://www.atma-sphere.com)

*EarMax*



### HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER

"...out of the tubes into your ears!"

EARMAX, now almost into its 5th year, has conquered the hearts of so many music lovers around the world. Why? Because of its superb sound, miniature size and, with PAKMAX (battery & carrying case) freedom from AC outlets. EARMAX gives you the best for your ears: smooth, detailed, non-fatiguing sound.

Call or write for details on EARMAX, headphones, accessories, attractive package pricing, demo pieces and what's coming down the pike during the remainder of this century!

Our EARMAX systems (including head-phones) range from \$600.00 to \$4,800.00.

- vacuum tube
- o.t.l.
- class A
- triode
- 100 mW/ch
- 15 ounces
- 2 colors
- 3.75" x 3.50"
- 2.5 or 5 hour battery
- float charger
- accessories

**AUDIO ADVANCEMENTS**

PO Box 100

Lincoln Park NJ 07035 • USA  
 973 633 1151 • Fax 973 633 0172

No matter how exotic your audio system may be, its success will depend on your room's ability to allow the recreation of the original acoustical space.

Echo Busters will help you realize the full potential of your system with our complete line of treatment packages.



Echo Busters (Absorption) 9 pc. pkg. \$439  
 Bass Busters (Bass Control, Diffusion) 1 pair \$379  
 Double Busters (Diffusion, Absorption) 1 pair \$279

Custom sizes, colors and designs available.

**ECHO BUSTERS**

DECORATIVE ACOUSTICAL TREATMENTS

Check with your local dealer or call 516-643-6895

2 Vauxhall Ct., Melville, NY 11747

Fax: 516-253-0298 Email: Mike A Roe@aol.com

## Phase

(continued from p. 57)

tant to listeners and designers.

If, instead of music, one considers a continuous, pure, single tone (i.e. a sinewave), then it is convenient to speak of a relative phase angle between two such identical waves rather than a time delay. Since sinewaves are smooth, it is pretty hard to find a distinguishing mark from which to measure a delay, and one can only see polarity inversion if one has simultaneous access to both waves so as to compare them. When the time delay between two sinewaves is half the period of the tone, or, in other words, when the phase angle between them is 180 degrees, one sinewave looks like the polarity inversion of the other (but looks are deceiving since polarity inversion posits no time delay) and thus the misnomer "phase inversion" was born.

Any pulse waveform, including music, can be thought of as a summation of innumerable waxing and waning sinewaves of differing frequencies, starting and ending times and phases. This is a useful tool for mathematicians and physicists. But when someone in high-end audio uses the word "phase," they almost invariably mean either polarity or time delay. The term phase or phase angle is singular and is normally applied only to single-frequency continuing waveforms. However, for diehards, it is true that if you phase shift every sinewave component of a complex musical signal by 180 degrees, you will invert the polarity of (as well as slightly advance or delay) the entire signal. But then one should use the plural as in inverting the phases of a loudspeaker input signal.

# Audio for your animal instincts.

Celebrating 15 years in business with over 70 brands of hi-end equipment, listed below is a sampling of what we offer:  
(for a complete listing please call or visit our website)

*The Best Deals On Von Schweikert in the US*

We have a huge assortment of accessories and many more brands to choose from. We also offer a large inventory of used equipment.



- Quad
- Cal Audio
- Alon
- OCM
- Magnum dynalab
- Spendor
- Von Schweikert
- Kimber
- Cardas
- Epos
- Creek
- B&K
- Accuphase
- Air Tight
- Sonic Frontiers
- Coda
- Quadrature
- Totem
- Roksan
- Platinum Audio
- VPI Industries
- Audio Note
- Acrotec
- Benz Micro
- Acoustical Panel Systems
- Discovery Cable
- Grado
- Joule Electra
- Vampire Wire
- MIT
- Kinergetics Research
- Chiro
- Micro Mega
- Ensemble
- Wilson Benesch
- Woodside

## Hi-Fi Farm

**Call For Information Toll Free: 1-800-752-4018**

616 Plaza, Suite 5, Moneta, VA, 24121

Or Order On Line At:

**<http://www.hififarm.com>**

**Monster** (from page 57) to momentarily change the crossover frequency to something over 80 Hz to be sure there is enough of a pulse edge for the detector to reliably sense.

This raises a weakness of this method. When nice pulses like these go through a crossover network and then into a complex load like a tweeter, the pulse may be differentiated, producing two pulses of opposite polarity, ringing, or other radical alteration. Thus, with some electrostatic speakers I tested (admittedly driven by some very complex digital signal processors), I could detect no negative pulse at all. However, one could argue that a system that cannot accurately reproduce this simple series of pulses is not of audiophile caliber. Really complex four- or five-way systems should also be checked by placing the tester at the listening position, so that the transient acoustical

responses of the different drivers have a chance to add up correctly at the proper distance from the speaker array. One can hope that at some point the Monster will provide a CD with a real cornucopia of even more useful pulse trains.

### One Man's Results

Since in the past I used a battery and my hand or an oscilloscope to check all new additions to my system, I was pleased to confirm that all 20 drivers in my system were in lock-step relative to each other. Imagine my surprise then to find that my CD decoder was upside down! Fortunately, it has a polarity inversion switch, and so I didn't have to move to Australia. On the other hand, how can one tell if a CD is of the correct polarity? Again, throwing the absolute polarity switch is inaudible to me and may make no difference to you, but having it right makes

it easier to keep track of the other relative polarity things in the system, and you may have friends who can hear absolute polarity just as some musicians have absolute pitch. On the relative polarity side, having one element upside down in a multi-channel system will cause quite audible, diffuse, imaging problems or loss of bass response.

The bottom line is that Monster Cable has provided a really useful gadget for determining the absolute polarity of almost any speaker or amplifier and speaker combination at a quite reasonable price of \$120 dollars from any Monster Cable dealer; that includes a rather hefty black carrying case if you decide to make house calls to doctor sick systems. It is a godsend for installing subwoofers or surround-sound systems particularly where the speakers or amplifiers are from different manufacturers.

SOUND CONNECTIONS INTERNATIONAL, INC.

**Vampire™**

AUDIBLE RESULTS WITH THE FINEST IN CONNECTING COMPONENTS

203 FLAGSHIP DRIVE/LUTZ, FL. 33549  
PHONE: 813/948-2707 ♦ FAX: 813/948-2907  
E-MAIL: SCI@VAMPIREWIRE.COM

Ron Nagle

## Assemblage DAC-2 HD/CD Converter



It was early December '94 when I constructed, evaluated and reviewed the predecessor of this review subject the DAC-1. Unfortunately that literary effort never made it into print in part because that debut product cut across the audio firmament like a shooting star, shone brightly for a moment and was gone.

### Why?

Follow along for awhile as I tell you a Darwinian type of tale, the better to understand the events that prevail.

Long ago in a far north place rising up from the primordial ooze that came to be Ontario

(Canada), two nice fellows named Chris, one Jensen and one Johnson, purveyed parts to impoverished audio hobbyists like moi.

In time this enterprise, Sonic Frontiers, proffered a kit-built tube amplifier which was named the SFM-75. This first component was the progenitor of several others and in time the two guys named Chris evolved into an O.E.M. company and became well established in the audio high end.

And so, with their original base as a super-quality audio parts purveyor intact, they took the next evolutionary step. They begat The Parts Connection and as before a new species of D.I.Y.

kit products sprang into existence bearing the Assemblage name.

## The Evolutionary Ladder of DAC

Take a moment and regress with me and I'll tell a didactic tale of the lineage, and how the DAC-2 came to be.

In the beginning, the Assemblage DAC-1 (at \$450.00) had—nay, founded—the sonic hallmark of all the line. The DAC-1 had that particular pristine midrange sound, which extended up into the ultra sonics and was composed of quality dynamics and definition; it possessed speed, low grain, clarity and control.

My notes speak of the expansion of the sound field, listening first to an A/B comparison of my Magnavox CDB-624 and then the same Dorian-90116 *Pictures at an Exhibition* processed through the DAC-1.

At the time, I wrote that the cathedral-like reverberant interior assumed a shape, now the

description. And here's where we run into a big snag.

The two kilobuck components, the British Fidelity Digilog and the Monarchy Audio M22A Converter, alter the story.

About two years ago, I was using another reference disk, *Alexander Nevsky*, Chandos 8584, to play through these DACs and the Assemblage DAC-1. I had an audience of audiophiles sitting in and I sat with note pad in hand. To cut to the chase, the difference was in the bass. Words pass about, "extended", "much deeper," "greater sense of power and warmth." The 'philes' verbal vote was unanimous.

The reason jumps out for you to see, once you remove the top covers of the Monarchy and Digilog units. In the right half of both resides a wire doughnut. It's a toroidal power transformer three maybe four times larger than the Assemblage DAC-1 transformer.

So is that it? The extra money buys a bigger power supply that

## The Missing Link

The DAC-1.5 was a DAC-1 with a Pacific Microsonics HDCD-capable PMD-100 chip grafted in. I have some doubt that this was ever a viable consumer product. It was rather more like an engineering feasibility study. It had the PMD-100 integrated circuit mounted on a daughter board stacked above the single mother board.

This interim product rose above its predecessor by virtue of that PMD-100 chip. Beyond any doubt, even when playing non-encoded discs, the digital filter residing on this integrated circuit lent a greater sense of quiet resolution above and beyond the DAC-1. With an encoded HDCD silver disc, the boundaries of the soundscape expand wider and deeper, a window thrown open, a tantalizing step toward reality.

## Survival of the Fittest

The DAC-2 followed close on the heels of the DAC-1.5. At last, this is the completed rework of the original. In addition to the across-the-sonic-spectrum improvements the Pacific Microsonics circuit has accomplished.

The missing element that completes the equation has been factored in. It is the power that drives the bass and the emotions.

Once upon a time, my investigations into the problems of the original DAC-1 lead me to double the capacitance of the original power supply by soldering two additional caps in parallel with the original pair.

Back then in a phone conversation with The Parts Connection, I related my concerns and the favorfull result of my little experiment. Low and



wooden clicks of the organ pipes surfaced through the music. Remembering back then I schlepped that original DAC-1 around with me because I didn't have anything at its price point to run it with.

But so be it, the next "chock-full of DACs" market slot is at a kilobuck level. And I was able to obtain two units that fit that

delivers more bass. Yep, that's it, now you've got it, pal! It works like this, anytime music contains low frequency information, it draws more current from the power supply. Ergo, the bigger the transformer, the larger the current capacity, and therefore the greater the ability to reproduce those all-important low frequencies.



behold, in this latest iteration of this unit, they have taken it a big step beyond my preliminary efforts. Now you will find the storage and filter capacitance of the power supply is 10.8K microfarads instead of the original 4.4K microfarads. The local decoupling caps are now 47microfarads instead of 10 microfarads. In addition, they've added three more voltage regulators for a total of eight to stabilize this new circuit topology.

Now, what of the sound of music? Better; no, I should say "far better" in every way. With each and every silver disc, the first thing I noticed was a lack of confusion. Yes, that's the phrase, as it describes the higher resolution of music, expanded and layered over a deeper quieter background.

And finally the Assemblage, now in DAC-2 form, took the final test. Once more I schlepped it to an audio society

presentation and meeting. The DAC-2 replaced my host's Monarchy Audio M22A. This is the same kilobuck unit that trounced the original DAC-1. And now in a direct comparison, the Assemblage unit surpassed its old nemesis.

One and all, we sensed that special quality, coherence, which summarizes its presentation. This elusive quality can be described as a spatial panorama of low-grain sound that reveals the venue and substance of the original event. Subjectively, the sound was not as rounded, but it better defines the space around each individual instrument, giving more of a vision into the quiet reality where the music was originally made. The "Bass? What bass?" problem is no longer an issue.

Finally, the DAC-2 has a deep solid bottom end that not only reaches down into the low frequencies but does so in a man-

ner that is completely consistent with the sonic character of the DAC-2 (that was the tricky part).

To put it another way, the fine detail you hear throughout the midrange and treble extends into the low frequencies in equal measure. By comparison, the Monarchy unit has bass as deep but less defined and, as a result, is not as revealing.

### **Build it and They Will Come**

The DAC-2 kit is a novice's dream, easy to build. You only need to solder and wire RCA connectors and an IEC-style filter and line cord socket onto the board and rear panel. Even for a meticulous guy like me, about two hours ought to do it.

Inside the DAC-2, you'll find a redesigned printed circuit board that supports a very impressive array of high quality (expensive) circuit components, not the least of which is the

## **SOUND ANCHOR ROUND POST MONITOR STANDS**

**SIMPLY ELEGANT.....HIGHLY MUSICAL**

If you have compact monitor speakers in the popular six to fifteen hundred dollar price range and have been looking for attractive high performance stands to place them on, **Look No Further.**

**Sound Anchor Round Post Monitor Stands** are the stands that you have been looking for.. They are designed to satisfy your eyes as well as your ears. Your speakers will sound clearer, more alive and more musical. As an added bonus they will look as harmonious as they sound. And isn't that what your music system is all about in the first place.

**TAKE A LISTEN, TAKE A LOOK, SMILE**

**SOUND ANCHORS INC 2835 KIRBY AVE PALM BAY, FL. 32905**  
phone. (407) 724-1237 e-mail snd-anch@web4u.com



addition of a Pacific Microsonics PMD-100 HDCD IC chip.

A picture-and-text manual takes you through the assembly step by step. You get a 30-day satisfaction guarantee, and an assembly guarantee if it doesn't work after you build it (they will get it running).

In addition, you can call a toll-free help line (800/769-0747) and finally TPC provides a limited two-year product warranty. With all that as a safety net, what do you have to lose? The answer to that, Dear Reader, lies with your priorities and expectations, so read on.

Once done, there is a sense of satisfaction and bonding that you derive as you sit back and admire your creation. This is the way it used to be in the distant past when audio truly was a hobby, before a sterile, lazy, button-pushing, consumeristic mentality laid us low.

## NOTES

**Assemblage DAC-2 HDCD Converter, \$499.00.** The Parts Connection, 2790 Brighton Rd., Oakville, Ontario, Canada L6H 5T4; phone 905/829-3838, toll free order line 800/769-0747 (U.S. and Canada only), fax 905-829-5388; e-mail is TPC@Sonicfrontiers.com.

### Associated Equipment

**Analogue:** Sota Sapphire II with electronic flywheel and custom high current power supply, Grado Signature tone arm, Sumiko Bluepoint Special or Monster Alpha One moving-coil cartridges, Sota clamp and acrylic mat, Adcom GFT-1A tuner, BIC FM antenna.

**Digital:** Magnavox CDB-624 player digital out to Sonic Frontiers Ultra Jitterbug to Assemblage DAC-1 and 2 processors, Audio Research SP-9 MKIII preamplifier feeding Audio Research Classic 60 power amp, to Quad ESL-63 speakers with Crosby grills on lead-filled Arcici stands.

**Accessories:** Arcici Deadhead turntable stand and Airhead isolation platform., VPI 16.5 record cleaner, Radio Shack SPL meter, Esoteric Ultra Path speaker cables, Monster M1000 II and Audio Research Litzline interconnects, Islatrol a.c.-line filter, VPI bricks.

What you get with the DAC-2 is a black box 8.5 inches wide by 7 deep by 2 thick, fronted by an impressive quarter-inch thick,

## THE RETURN OF A LEGEND



**THE SHURE V15**  
PHONO CARTRIDGE

Your devotion to your records has been justified: The Shure V15 has returned.

Featuring a remarkably thin, yet rigid beryllium MICROWALL/Be™ cantilever and an ultra-fine Micro-Ridge diamond tip, the V15 Type VxMR combines the truest, most expressive sound with incredibly low record wear. You'll hear purer highs, more forceful bass, and richer audio detail than you ever imagined your records could provide.

And you'll hear them for longer, since the V15 provides all this sound quality with just one gram of tracking force—compared to the 2 grams required by other high performance cartridges.

Reintroducing the V15. *Treat your ears—and your records—to the sound and quality they deserve.*

Call 1-800-25-Shure for the V15 dealer nearest you.

**SHURE®**

black-anodized aluminum face plate that sports two LEDs and two toggle switches.

At the left is a toggle switch that controls phase or signal polarity. There are two positions, in phase or reverse phase. To the right, the second toggle has three positions that allow you to switch to the type of rear-panel input connection you are using. You can choose RCA Coax cable, BNC cable or TOS-optical.

Remaining are two LED indicator lights. The left is red and is relay activated by a HDCD-encoded compact disc. The right lamp is green and is labeled "Lock" and activates in the presence of a digital input signal.

### Gen(ius)etic Engineering

In the final analysis, I am very well pleased with the Assemblage DAC-2 and the evolution wrought by The Parts Connection.

The internal board-mounted components are impressive, and at this price point the quality is amazing.

I would be derelict if I didn't tell you that the HDCD technology improves the sound of compact disc beyond any amount of gold plating or skatey eight-times oversampling, and in the here and now, the filter betters other kinds of trick algorithmic digital decoding. Without reservation, it is well worth the additional cost.

Also, it should interest you to know that there is a small underground movement or let's call it a following of committed tweek-o-philos (a subspecies) purchasing Assemblage DACs to transform into DAC giant killers.

In fact, I had a guy from Utah on the phone tantalizingly close to telling me what type of (plug in) op-amps he uses to transform the Assemblage, any version, into the proverbial sonic silk

purse. But his lips were sealed and he couldn't be threatened.

At \$500.00, the Assemblage DAC-2 is simply the best D-to-A converter in this market niche. As a matter of fact, I can think of a few kilobuck units that it spans and sends to bed without supper. Go listen.

P.S. I just received a Parts Connection DAC upgrade kit, a \$150.00 bag full of super-quality board components. A peek inside the bag reveals metal-film Chadock resistors, high speed signal diodes, chassis damping material, and plastic-film bypass caps, etc. And so the evolution continues. I will do a follow-up report in a future issue and let you know.

P.P.S. What will evolve in the future? Look for a balanced version of the DAC and eventually, on an even higher rung, a 40-watt tube kit power amp similar to an existing Sonic Frontiers Anthem amplifier.

## HERE'S WHAT THE CRITICS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE SHURE V15!

### STEREOPHILE (US)

July 1997

Cold out of the box, the V15 sounded warm. Over time it got even warmer, though the bass tightened up a bit. By any definition, the new V15VxMR is a warm, sweet-sounding cartridge. Its basic nature, coupled with its superb tracking ability, yielded a completely grain- and etch-free sonic picture that was never fatiguing or hard-sounding.--*Michael Fremer*

### STEREOPHILE PRODUCTS OF THE YEAR

December 1997

#### BUDGET COMPONENT OF THE YEAR RUNNER-UP

Shure V15VxMR - Only cartridge selected - Category winner was a loudspeaker

#### ANALOG SOURCE COMPONENT OF THE YEAR RUNNER-UP

Shure V15xMR - One of two cartridges selected - Category winner was a turntable

### STEREOPHILE RECOMMENDED COMPONENTS: Class C—HIGH QUALITY, BUT STILL AFFORDABLE

October 1997

If you're looking for music with a reasonably honest portrayal of the harmonic structure, you'll get it from the V15.--*Michael Fremer*

### HI-FI WORLD (UK)

February 1997

As pick-up cartridges go, it's one of the best I've heard—and very different from the V15's that have gone before... There were few areas where the new V15 could be questioned, in image, construction, ambiance retrieval, bass power and control it is dramatic. It combines breathtaking speed with incisive precision on transients... For warm, dynamic rendition of music with great detail and impact, the V15VxMR is hard to beat.--*Noel Keywood*

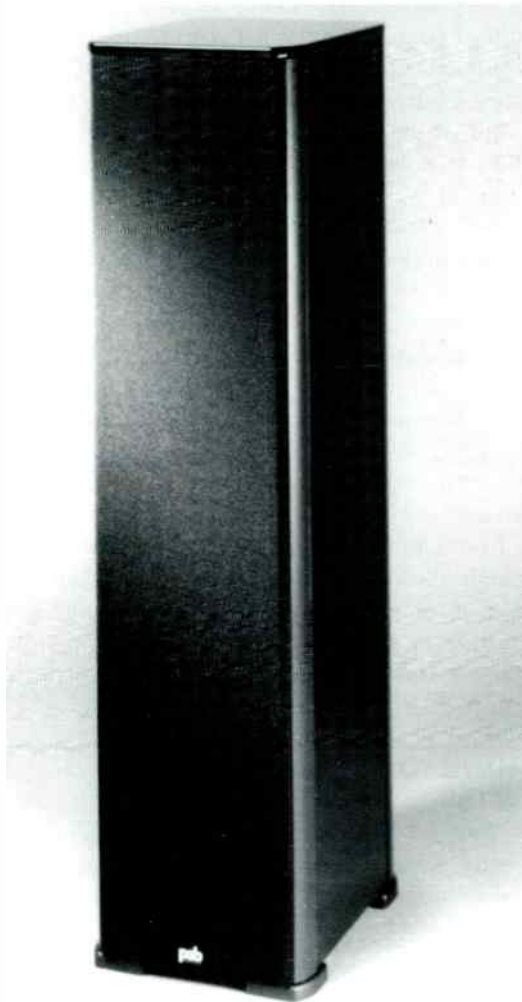
### STEREO SOUND (Japan)

December 1996

Playing Count Basie's "Lester Leaps In," the driving rhythm, horn solo and sound color of Basie's piano are very clear and transparent. The music never sounded lean; the energetic bass was firmly expressed. This is the Jazz only Shure can reproduce.--*Shinji Hosoya*

# PSB Century 1000*i* Speakers

Jerry Walsh



**S**omebody up there (in Jersey) heard my "Audiophile Voice!" When I heard I was slated to review a brand spankin' new pair of PSB's Century 1000*i* towers, who was I to object?

Seems for lo these many neurotic years as an audiomaniac, I've had a hankerin' to have a pair of the wares of this formidable Canadian giant of value in my system, and soon opportunity (aka Fed Ex) would be knockin' at my door!

With only the matter of a few wires swapped here and there and a little system warm up, I'll be able to tell (and to tell you) whether the anticipation was well-founded.

While I'm fiddlin' and twiddlin' with those connections, always with all components switched "off" of course, let me regale you with some facts about this well-regarded loudspeaker manufacturer PSB, which was founded a quarter of a century ago.

The "P" and the "B" are the first letters of the first and surname of founder, creative impetus and concert violinist Paul Barton, while the "S" in the middle honors wife Sue as the center of his life. (His own middle monicker is David, and he told me that he didn't cotton up to the ring of "PDB" anyway.)

The PSB enterprise was launched back in '72 with two partners, but they left and in 1985 Barton took his act to Lenbrook Industries, a diversified Ontario-based conglomerate operating in several fields including professional and personal communications and photovoltaics, in addition to being the Canadian representative for NAD, Marantz, Bang & Olufsen, and other consumer electronic manufacturers.

This Century 1000*i* speaker rules the roost atop the eight-model (includes two center-channel units) Century series which in turn represents the center tier of PSB products, the entry level being the various incarnations of Alpha mini-speakers with the firm's ultimate aspirations embodied by the sweet Stratus models.

All told, PSB badges over 20 different speakers. Introduced just last year as the PSB 1000, it was quickly converted to the present "i" status when the entire series was designated the Century line, and received an extensive "face lift" including upgraded drivers for certain models, cabinet size adjustments, newly radiused port tubes, radiused grille covers, gold-plated binding posts and new finish options.

A floorstanding model provided with Stratus-like plastic feet for bare floors and spikes for carpet, the nearly 38-inch tall Century 1000*i* won't bust your floor with its 39 pounds, but should make solid and balanced contact.

The approximately 9-inch wide by 13-inch deep cabinets are decked out on the sides, back and top with a textured vinyl of which Paul Barton is quite proud, manufactured over in England by FORBO-COVA. The flavors are dark cherry or black ash. Kick in an extra two hundred bucks (\$999/\$1199), and you can see yourself smile in a gloss-black finish made in Kentucky.

A standard black-fabric over chipboard grille runs over the full front of the speaker, save for the very top half-inch, comprised of the rounded top board of the cabinet, jutting out about 3/4th of an inch. PSB's logo, in silver and red plastic, resides

at the extreme bottom of the grille -and hence the speaker, where it could be knicked by passing feet or vacuum cleaners and catch floor dust. It's a minor quibble, but if I were the designer, I'd have moved that logo up about an inch, for the reasons mentioned as well as from the standpoint of pride of ownership.

Rather unconventionally, the "FASTEX" fasteners which hold the grille to the baffle are mounted on the baffle itself, and in routine use, small bits of chipboard did indeed live up to the name and "chipped" off the grille frame assembly near the fastener holes.

Near the bottom of the back of the speaker is the usual plastic-housed terminal area, in this instance boasting a very impressive-looking, solid-feeling twin pair of hexagonal, gold-plated, five-way binding posts, angled down. Barton confided that, while he always strives to select high-quality components for his transducers, including binding posts and internal wiring, he purposely doesn't choose exotic "name" brands, which, while they may be *de rigueur* in some audio circles, could also cause rifts.

In other words, store owner "A" might like wire brand "B" while store owner "B" might like wire brand "A." Extrapolate that on to audio reviewers and audiophiles at large and soon hard feelings could be abundant. Therefore, Paul prefers to select hardware he knows to be good and up to his standards, regardless of what it may be stamped. Good is good. Makes sense to me . . . .

Now, on to some meatier stuff! The two 6½-inch woofers flank the one-inch tweeter, all of these occupying roughly the top half of the black baffle. While this configuration (woofer, tweeter, woofer) visually smacks of D'Appolito, in this application it isn't.

Instead, we have here a "two and one-half way" design, with both treated-felt cone woofers handling the lowest frequencies for the best sound foundation, one trailing off in the midrange spec-

## By The Numbers

("1" = "needs help", "10" sez "top shelf.")

<b>Bass Performance:</b>	8
<b>Treble Performance:</b>	9
<b>Imaging:</b>	9
<b>Cosmetics &amp; Construction:</b>	7
<b>Electronic Self-Transcendence:</b> (Ability to touch source)	9
<b>The Forest Effect:</b> (Getting lost in the music)	8
<b>Value At Price:</b>	10

trum at about 500Hz, with the remaining one rising to the tweeter junction at 2,000Hz.

That one-inch tweeter is a newly-developed composite textile design including some silk, which these days is all the rage with some audio cognoscenti, for its ultra-smooth sound and decay characteristics. All drivers are custom-made and supplied to PSB by Vifa.

Posted system frequency response, on axis (+/- 3db), is 40 to 21,000 Hz, with the 10-dB bass cut-off at 29Hz, while an amplifier rated at 15 to 200 watts per channel rms is recommended.

### Sonics? What Sonics?

Now we get to the delicate and crucial matter of how they sound, or what magic these can perform to convince us they're not simple wooden boxes, filled with foam and wires and magnets, but rather music itself.

We audiophiles, some of us naive, others plain persnickity, expect to summon a world-class orchestra or a driving rock band into our living rooms at the mere and arrogant push of a component's button. Using standards we set with the "help" of audio writers who convince us the musicians are routinely attainable without qualification or variation, it's just too easy to ignore the daunting series of woofers, tweeters, crossovers, transistors, wires, cables, solder, electrical transformers, recording consoles, mixers, engineering decisions, microphones, musical instruments, and the very skin of the artist standing between our easy chairs and his or her soulful innards back those months or years ago in some concert venue or studio.

As if those aren't enough "cow pies" hurled to royally muck up your window on the music, I'm not very technically minded, so likely there are a few other random "bird droppings" that eluded my "radar."

But don't give up on audio and start mounting stamps or butterflies just yet, because it so happens that there's good news after all from these PSBs!

Indeed, what we have here are celebratory speakers: Celebrating the joy of music that comes from making it a tingling, accessible force, and celebrating anew that you can afford to keep both the speakers and the roof over your head while you enjoy them!

In fact, since I plagued you with cow pies and bird droppings, let's get all the waste matter evacuated and flush the . . .

So, here's everything negative about the Century 1000i system:

Hmmm (scratching head, dandruff showers, make mental note, "try new shampoo"), let's see. Well, I already told the folks about the poorly located PSB logo badge and the minor flaking of the grille board. I mentioned that the standard speaker is vinyl clad, which is no fault, in that I'd rather use the resources of a chemical lab than a tree. Visually, my dark cherry samples looked wonderful, but texturally, the laminate was a little "gummy" and thus gave itself away as other than genuine solid wood or veneer. And perhaps my pair had a touch of osteoporosis, because they measured a full inch shorter ("sans feet and spikes") than the 37.79 inch height from the literature.

Note that these are all minor, picky quibbles, and so far none revolve around the sound.

However, they don't get off Scot-free in the sonics department. Just almost . . .

Compared against some other speakers I've lived with in the same system in the same environment, I detected a slight but perceptible loss of "air" around instruments with slightly less sound-stage depth. Overall, the music came across a bit "fatter" and perhaps consequently a hair "slower" than other speakers which may have excelled in one or more of those categories.

Two points should be made quickly. Most of the other loudspeakers excelling the PSBs marginally in some aspect of performance, also exceeded the PSBs in retail price, by as much as \$800 or more.

## CD SOFTWARE

Jana Alayra: *There Will Come a Day...*, JMA 03 (CD \$16.50 ppd direct; P.O. Box 57033-405, Irvine, CA 92619).

Mary Black: *Shine*, Curb 02-77888.

John Fogerty: *Blue Moon Swamp*, Warner 9 45426-2.

Alison Krauss & Union Station: *So Long So Wrong*, Rounder CD 0365.

Sergei Rachmaninoff by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Jascha Horenstein, cond., *Concerto No. 2 in C minor for Piano & Orchestra, Opus 18; Isle of the Dead, Opus 29*, Chesky Gold Series CG902.

Sweethearts of the Rodeo: *Beautiful Lies*, Sugar Hill SHCD-3857

Second, and here's the biggie, what I've reported just now came MOSTLY in the nature of frame of reference to other speakers to cross my ears, NOT for the most part any letdown in enjoying MUSIC through THESE speakers.

An easier way to set the record straight is to state that most music lovers listen to only one pair of speakers at a time, and even owning more than two pair of speakers per audio system probably indicates a (however joyful) "disease."

Furthermore, unless your stereo hardware and software are uniformly state of the art, with top-notch electric company service and perhaps custom audiophile-specified listening room electrical outlets, speakers that have minor faults conspiring to a slightly added sense of euphonic warmth probably are doing you a favor. Although not an acoustician and likely no more versed in psychoacoustics than you are, I will nevertheless venture that more "bleeding ears" and listener fatigue are triggered by harmonically "thin" systems than by "plump" ones.

Naturally, I do understand that if a speaker leans toward "porker" too much, with a platterful of bloat and a "closed-in" sonic signature, it will just as readily have you hitting the system's "off" switch on account of being dull and uninvolving. You need to know these PSBs don't come anywhere close to that!

Rather, they strike me as being the quintessential "crossroads" speakers, poised at the very peak of "mid-fi" yet with enough sonic "steam" left to be suitably versatile and valid as a solid entry point to serious "long-hair" audiophile use.

Thus, whether you are a casual party animal with a decent receiver, or a blooming hard-core

audio nut case, christening your first rack of separates, these PSB 1000*i*s will always reward and draw you deeper into the web of the music, stinging your ears silly with the serum of pleasure.

While Lenbrook headquarters likely wouldn't remind one of the Sistine Chapel, Barton must be counted as something of a Michelangelo of sound, especially as related to the art of value, for his speakers render a full and sweeping palate of glorious, vibrant music, quite masterfully capturing the heft of the sound, with its continued three-dimensional notes, proper weight, believable timbre and realistic decay, all at a price level where floor-standing speaker choices aren't abundant, and making the mistake of choosing a lesser speaker would be as easy as choosing nearly anything else.

That's not to infer that you can't do better. In fact, recently, I auditioned at a dealer a pair of very well-regarded \$4,000+ speakers from another Canadian producer. Since the system and the environment were different, absolute comparisons would be unfair, but I will say that I didn't perceive that I was hearing speakers four times better.

That's the point. Somewhere, probably around halfway between the \$1,000 babies under consideration here and the \$4+ grand pair I just mentioned, you careen hard into the wall of diminishing returns.

So, I suggest a good, hard listen to these speakers with your own CDs or LPs. Be sure all equalization is "off" during the demo, taking you as close to the behavior of the speakers themselves as possible.

Then you decide. Will Bill Gates float you a loan? Did your horse come in first? Is that the Prize Patrol out on the driveway?

If the answer to all of those questions is "No," maybe you ought to consider these PSBs as nearly a gift, or at least as "keepers" until your system or your options evolve significantly.

For in this, our corner of the world, where music is the prey and we are the hunters and our systems are our weapons, I have found that these PSB loudspeakers will help "bag the limit" nearly every time.

If Barton & Company are hunting for new meaning behind their acronym, "Pretty Startling Boxes" comes to mind!

## NOTES

**PSB Model 1000*i* stereo tower loudspeakers**, serial nos. 601010 & 601088 (non-sequential), price, US, \$999.00, standard; \$1199.00, high-gloss black finish; five-year part and labor warranty. Manufactured by PSB Speakers, 633 Granite Court, Pickering, Ontario, Canada L1W 3K1; phone 888/772-000; [www.psbSpeakers.com](http://www.psbSpeakers.com).

### Associated Equipment

Bryston 28 amplifier, Audio Research SP-5 preamplifier, California Audio Labs DX-1 CD player, Wire-World Oasis II interconnect, Prisma interconnect, van den Hul "The Clearwater" speaker cable alternated with Monster Cable M 1.2S speaker cable.

John Gatski

# Shure V15VxMR Phono Cartridge



When I was in college as a struggling audiophile wanna-be in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the ultimate phono cartridge for me was the Shure V15. Of course, my limited college-life budget meant having to settle for a Shure M95ED. The M95 was a good cartridge for my turntable, but it was no V15. That cartridge inadequacy was always in the back of my mind.

The V15 still remains *the* moving-magnet cartridge standard; the phonograph record world cannot live without it—but it had to do just that for about two years. After producing the V15 for nearly 30 years, Shure ceased producing the venerable magnetic pickup in 1994. You know the story: The rise of the CD, dwindling vinyl sales, and the near extinction of good-quality, low-cost turntables. These factors put the pressure on all cartridge manufacturers including Shure.

But those ardent Shure fans demanded the V15's return. The company's higher ups, noting a vinyl record resurgence of sorts

in the mid 1990s and continued sales of replacement styli, brought back the V15 in August 1996. The new model is now named the V15VxMR.

Designed in the U.S. and assembled in Mexico, this cartridge has a retail list price of \$300.00. The V15 VxMR sports a Micro-Ridge design stylus (0.00015 by 0.003 inch) with beryllium cantilever that the Shure engineers say provides better tracking. As with the previous V15 designs, the new model can track with as little as 1 gram of stylus force.

Shure rates the cartridge's frequency response from 10 Hz to 25 kHz (no tolerance listed) and the channel balance is claimed to be within 1.5 dB. Channel separation is -25 dB at frequencies up to 10 kHz and -18 dB above 10 kHz. Improvements for the Shure V15VxMR include a coil design with fewer wire turns, which they claim, produces high output with less sensitivity to capacitance and resistive loading.

The V15VxMR continues to use the dynamic stabilizer/destaticizer brush, which performs like a shock absorber, reducing feedback, maintaining tracking on warped records, and siphoning off static from LPs, put there by the LP manufacturing process, your record cleaning brush or the album liner. The Side-Guard stylus protector is a great feature in that in the presence of excessive side motion, the stylus withdraws out of harm's way.

The Shure V15VxMR comes in an attractive, velvet case and includes instructions; a screw driver; mounting screws, nuts, and washers, and an alignment gauge.

## Set Up and Audition

I installed the V15VxMR on my "antique," 1981 Luxman PD-264 turntable. In its day, this turntable was highly regarded as a reasonably priced, basic, direct-drive LP record player



with a nice 'arm and a heavy, stable platter. (I've seen used ones going for quite a bit more than I paid for it). I added a Sorbothane plattermat a few years ago, and it has been reliable and a good performer over the years.

However, I always dread trying new cartridges in the Luxman. The headshell is part of the arm, which makes attaching the cartridge and plugging in the tiny pick-up wires a difficult task. But the V15 went on without incident and in only about 15 minutes.

Using the Shure-supplied alignment gauge, I put the cartridge in position and balanced the arm. I dialed in 1.75 grams of tracking force. Since the stabilizer brush absorbs half a gram of tracking force, the resulting force on the stylus tip was 1.25 grams. I set the anti-skate accordingly.

I tried out the Luxman/Shure combo with several combinations of gear. First, I used the Bryston BP-20 class-A line preamp with Parasound discrete phono preamp. Later, I used my Audio by Van Alstine EC hybrid tube/FET preamp. Amplification was via a 200-wpc Legacy Amplifier, and a retubed Dynaco ST-160 triode/utlralinear (75 wpc); the speakers were Legacy Classics and Apogee

Acoustics Ribbon Monitors. All interconnects were Goertz Alpha-Core silvers. Since I already owned a highly regarded Audio-Technica ML 150 moving-magnetic cartridge, I had a sonic comparison. (But the A-T's impressions should be considered in their proper context, since it took several minutes to install each cartridge,

---

### The king of cartridges, Shure's mighty V15, has been resurrected. All hail the King!

---

making A/B listening less precise).

For listening, I picked out a few choice LPs including some recent Mobile Fidelity reissues: Stan Getz and Jao Gilberto's *Getz/Gilberto with Antonio Carlos Jobim*, Muddy Waters' *Folksinger*, and John Hiatt's *Bring The Family*. The LP assortment also included some direct-to-disc recordings from the late 1970s and early 1980s that I have managed to keep in good shape: Crystal Clear Records' *San Francisco, Ltd.* and on the Japanese Three Blind Mice label, Suzuki Isao's Trio and Quartet LP *Blow Up*.

After trying out several combinations of components, I settled on the Bryston preamp with Parasound phono preamp and Legacy amplifier with the Legacy Classic speakers. Overall, I would describe the sonic characteristics of the V15VxMR as mostly neutral with a slightly more subdued top end than the Audio-Technical ML 150 and a touch more midrange presence. For instance, the Muddy Waters *Folksinger* LP showcased the

intimacy of Muddy's guitar with a very live flavor. The saxophone on the Getz/Gilberto LP came across in extreme accuracy with all the miked breathiness intact. I actually like the LP version better than the CD. Bass drum whacks were deep, though slightly plumper than with the AT, but the cymbals sounded live and were reproduced without excessive splashiness. Voices were prominent, but not overly so.

The rest of the records sounded fine via the V15 as well and, even when playing an extremely difficult to track big-band direct-to-disc LP, which has an intense trombone passage, no strain was revealed at the 1.25-gram tracking force.

I also noticed that upon cleaning records with a dry brush, the Shure did not pick up the static pops that I normally hear. It seems that the destaticizer system does its job.

#### Summary

For the LP fans, the Shure V15VxMR should be a welcome product. LP production is only a fraction of what it used to be, and the end result is that the other necessary ingredients, such as cartridges, turntables, and accessories, are no longer available in the abundance they once were.

The resurrection of the mighty V15 means that Shure is assured that the LP record market is at least stabilizing and perhaps even growing somewhat. And that is good news for those LP owners who want to enjoy audiophile quality at a reasonable price.

The V15 is the king of the hill once again. All hail the king!

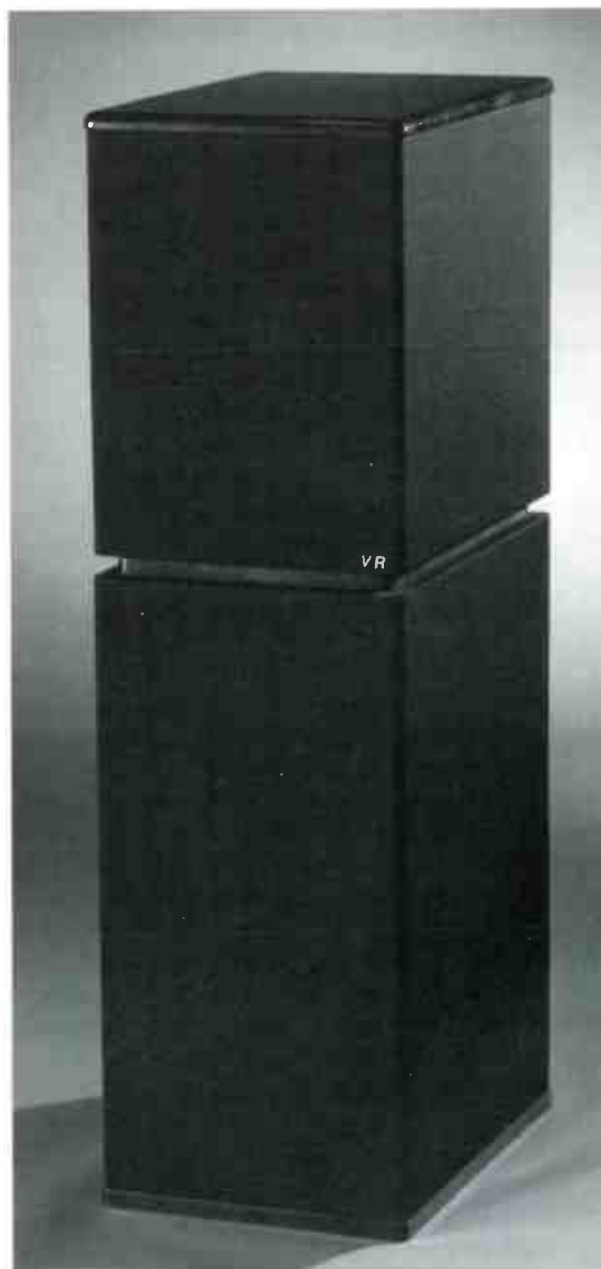
## NOTES

**Shure V15VxMR phono cartridge**, \$300.00 suggested retail price. Shure Bros., Inc., 222 Hartrey Ave., Evanston, IL. 60204; phone 847/866-2200.

# Von Schweikert VR4 Loudspeaker

Clement Perry

**E**ver felt victimized by your own biases? I certainly have, and I bet it has happened to you, too. So, answer this very short questionnaire: Have you ever decided not to buy something because it's too cheap? How about refusing to audition equipment because it's not some magazine's "Class A recommended," or worse, that it only received a Class B rating? How about the fact that it just is not big enough a deal in the circle you frequent. Maybe you're just the type who cannot cope with what others may think when you own speakers that have



not received the ultimate accolades. Certainly, most of you can agree with me on at least one of these examples, but whether anything can be done to change this is the question. Audiophiles seem to thrive on owning the most expensive products. It is depressing to see the price of so-called reference loudspeakers going up and up, at a faster rate each year. The consensus seems to be that "if it costs more, it's better!" Confusing quantity of dollars with quality of sound, ranking price over performance, complexity over simplicity; yeah, yeah that's the ticket. It's no wonder that most non-audiophiles refer to us as a sick breed and refuse to get involved with our hobby.

Well, there is a loudspeaker on the horizon that sells for \$3,500.00 and competes with the big guns in every single area that audiophiles crave: Soundstage, three dimensionality, and focus. This speaker simply has no competition in its price class when it comes to coherency, dynamics, sense of ease, sheer power capability, and versatility.

Welcome to the world of virtual reality.

### The Man

Albert Von Schweikert is a person of many distinctions, having designed many excellent speaker systems and crossover networks for many companies. Believe me, this individual has an incredibly impressive background. At ESS, Albert worked closely with Dr. Oscar Heil, inventor of the Heil Air Motion Transformer (a folded-ribbon tweeter with some of the finest measurements ever recorded). He also assisted on the first plasma loudspeakers way back when, and in the late 1980s introduced the Vortex Screen loudspeaker. This first design under his name was sold by mail order and became an instant classic. After experimenting with spherical- and line-source radiation patterns, as well as with dipole and bipole directivity patterns, Albert concluded that a spherical source sounded more like a live instrument, or more importantly, like the recording microphone in reverse.

Discussing his theory with me on the phone, Von Schweikert went further and stated,

"Your ear/brain hearing mechanism can tell how the sound radiated from the original instrument, and can also determine if the loudspeaker system is radiating the sound in the same manner.

If the radiation pattern does not match, you can easily tell you are listening to 'canned' music. Localization of sources is determined by such psychoacoustic cues as timing, phase, and frequency response differences heard at each ear. These differences are then stored in the brain for later recall from the memory. I did several years of research on these phenomena, and have found that several leading researchers have come to similar conclusions."

Von Schweikert went about creating the VR 4 loudspeaker by first designing his patented crossover network, the Global Axis Integration Network (G.A.I.N.) network. However, this review is about the sound of the product he designs, not so much the design itself. So let me go on record and say right here, this speaker is so damn good that it challenges

much more expensive loudspeakers for sound supremacy and will run with virtually any speaker for top to bottom coherency.

### The Speaker

One day after listening to the system belonging to The Brass Ear, my fellow Audiophile Society member, I decided to try out some new loudspeakers. I mean, after all, The Brass Ear seems to get great sound no matter what he throws into that listening room of his. I thought of all the speakers I would like to try, basically limiting myself to the ones I might be able to afford. Unfortunately, I could only think of one that I could afford and not miss too many car payments, but what the hell, I live for this. I got a good deal from a friend of mine who owns a store in Queens. Dragged those 150-lb. babies home with a lot of sweat and muscle. These are some very handsome loudspeakers and very pleasing to have in your listening room. My moded Maggies resembled upturned furniture by comparison.

Standing 46 inches high and a very slender 13½ inches in width, the VR4 has a tall appearance. It looks deep, too, and measures 20 inches from front to back. Because the cabinet has a minimum-baffle build, you can look at the midrange/tweeter enclosure and see what I at first thought was wood behind the grille cloth, but upon closer inspection you will find only your own real estate. Sitting on the baffle, behind the black grille cloth, is a carbon-fiber, 5¼-inch

---

## Von Schweikert's VR4 speaker challenges much more expensive systems for sonic supremacy.

---

Audax midrange driver with a custom-made, 1-inch Vifa tweeter above it. Another 2-inch driver is used on the back of the midrange/tweeter enclosure to insure true reproduction of the ambiance from the recording space. Truly, this is a five-way speaker system designed to perform like a one way. Absolute, total integration was the goal here.

### Kick the Ballistics....Gee

One thing about us Maggie owners, it's very hard to get them to go back to any dynamic speaker unless it has that particular sound that only another Maggie lover could fully appreciate and understand. Maggies have a way of getting the mids perfect like no other speaker I have heard yet. I still do not think there is a better sounding top end than the planar/ribbon combo employed in the Magnepan MG3.5/R.

So you can imagine the work the Von Schweikert VR 4s had cut out for them. A planar lover is someone who enjoys music spread out across the entire back wall of his listening room. There is a sense of air in the planar tweeter's reproduction that, to me, makes dynamic loudspeakers sound dry and brittle. The sound achieved by planar speakers, when coupled with tube amps, is just impossible to duplicate with dynamic speakers, with or without tubes. With dynamics, you just do not get the air or the liquidity in the voices. Planar speakers, to be sure, are not perfect, but I had no problem living with these tradeoffs. What are they? You know, the typical "no dynamics," "no bass below 35 Hz," and "you have to sit perfectly still to keep the images between the loudspeakers." Most of these planar speakers are very big and wide and they can take up some serious amounts of real-estate. But hey, I loved them, and whenever I was confronted with their shortcomings, I would get a call from Ol' Uncle Denial. He would say, "We don't need that much bass, and what recording do you listen to that's going that low anyway? This is real bass." Or Uncle might say, "Dynamics! You have great dynamics." To convert a flat-out planar-head back to liking dynamic cones and woofers is no easy task, to say the least. Von Schweikert's rather audacious claim is that he has brought the virtues of both planar designs and dynamic loudspeakers into the VR 4s; so let's see what the VR4 brings to the table.

### Setup

"Virtual reality? Give me a break." That's what I thought when I found out what the VR emblem on the front of the speaker meant. I thought it was for Von Schweikert Research, and I just couldn't see the "S." "What nerve," I thought, "to go with a claim like that." My listening room is about 15½-feet wide and 13 feet across, with an 8-foot ceiling. I listen against the long wall with my Maggies about five feet out from the back wall. Well, this leaves me with only about 7 feet from the speakers with my head, which has 12 inches behind it to the rear wall. I do not have the option of choosing a listening location.

By virtue of my living condition, I am a near-field listener, like it or not.

Moving my Maggies out of the room and setting the VR 4s up in the exact same position, I put

---

**As a confirmed lover of Magnaplanars, I was not prepared to like a dynamic system as much as I did.**

---

on track 7, "I'm Tired of These Blues," from Give It Up To Love by Mighty Sam McClain on an AudioQuest CD (AQ-CD1015). I sat back and hit the remote on my Sony DVP-S 7000 DVD player/transport, and my jaw just dropped. I could not believe the sense of smoothness, focus and transparency I was getting from a dynamic loudspeaker. It became apparent to me in a matter of minutes that I was sitting in front of a great loudspeaker. If you ever have planar speakers and are used to that bass performance, make sure you're sitting down when you first hear the VR4s, because the bass will startle you. You will pull out, as I did, CD after CD in disbelief at the amount of low end extension you were missing and most importantly, the very importance of those frequencies in setting the foundation for the music.

Next in importance is the level of dynamic range; in short, these speaker kick. I pulled out Stevie Ray Vaughn and Double Trouble, threw the CD in the Sony, went straight to track 5, "Tin Pan Alley," and just could not believe what I was hearing come out of these speakers. The focus these babies possess is downright scary; the images become so locked in between the speaker, it's sometimes unsettling. Three dimensionality is really where these babies go to work. They bring together all their attributes in one gigantic illusion of being at the live event.

I have had plenty of speakers in my place, but never have I had such an experience as I am hav-

ing with the VR 4s. I will confidently put these speakers up against speakers costing many times the VR4's sticker price because they do nothing wrong as far as I have been able to tell in the three months I have been using them. Believe me, they're the real deal. Now, this does not mean that I did not have any problems at all. I had a never had such a powerful bass in the room with the Maggies, so on certain CDs, like Keb Mo's Just Like You (Epic/OKey), there was a noticeable amount of port noise coming into the room from the two tuned ports located at the rear of the 8-inch bass drivers. After a while, my friend, this become a problem, not so much to me, but to all my audiophile associates. But after living with planers, I will take all the bass, please. ("Ah, I love the smell of napalm in the morning.")

But my friends (whose ears, I admit, I trust more than I trust with my bank card), believe it or not, did not put one vote on keeping the VR4s over the Maggies in side-by-side comparisons. The Maggies are just that good in my listening room and I must say they do something magical there. But I personally had a very

strong inclination that these VR4s could still, at least to me, be better sounding there. I knew I had more work to do in getting them better integrated in my room. I am almost certain these guys thought I was out of my mind when I chose to keep the VR4s over the Maggies (except the dude who bought my Maggies, he wouldn't talk about how loony I've become until he got the Maggies safe and secure in his listening room).

I now had to tame the VR4s' woofers, and this was going to be a job if I wanted to leave the speakers in the same position as the Maggies. I called up Von Schweikert Research, spoke with David Kersh, their Marketing Director, who, by the way, seems to know quite a bit about setting up the VR4s properly. Most importantly, he put me in touch with Stu McCreary, who is a Von Schweikert expert and was first to put to press ink the virtues of this speaker. What a blessing it was to get in touch with him and utter this very word, "HELP!" What a blessing it is to talk to someone who has had all the problems I had and fix them. He gave me the antidote; stuff the ports with a foam or stuffing and amazingly it worked like a charm. When I played the Keb Mo track again, it sailed right through without a hitch. The bass

articulation and tautness turned magical right before my ears.

One interesting feature of these loudspeakers is that the rear ambiance driver is adjustable in level. If, for example, you like a smaller stage and tighter focus, merely turn them down. For a Maggie owner like myself, there seems to be an acclimation period whereas you simply cannot live without this control turned all the way up, which keeps the top end sounding similar to the Maggies and with exceptional focus.

### **A Perfect Speaker?**

#### **I Don't Think So . . . Homey Don't Play Dat!**

I'll hire Homey, the Clown, to bong on the head anyone who thinks his speaker is perfect. Nothing is perfect down here on the ground, and so after living with the VR4s for a few months, I found a few things about them that I thought I'd like to have different. Again, these are two things I observed after many hours of listening and are more matters of preference than of being problems. The first thing that the speakers are simply too big for my listen-

ing room, which is 16 by 13 by 8 feet. These speakers are generally larger than anything else you'll find in your local hi-fi showroom, and I think they are larger than most everything else in the price class. However, I love the size and scale of music these speakers bring to my listening room, and besides after looking at my very tall Maggie 3.3s for a long time, at least now I can see my back wall. So, Albert, is there some way you can put that tremendous sense of dynamics and the soundstaging into a smaller package?

The second thing, and this is much more difficult than the first thing, is that I'd like to see these babies act like true point-source monitors.

I have been looking for something to accuse these speakers of not doing. Do I sound as if I adore these babies? Got that right! They do for me what I always wanted in a loudspeaker like the Maggies without their shortcomings: Seamless midrange, tweeter, and bass integration, soundstaging, and both width and depth that envelops you.

These speakers seem to possess a level of palpability in the midrange that not even the famous Maggies could better. I am referring to that sense of focus and transparency which combine togeth-

---

**The VR4s aren't perfect,  
but neither am I.  
They just give everything  
else a run for the money.**

---

er to float a huge soundstage in the center of the space between the speakers, giving the ultimate illusion of the performers actually being in the room.

When you hear this loudspeaker, you too will wonder just how someone can create like something like this and sell it for just \$3,500.00. As far as I can remember, I have not heard a speaker in this price class that can compete top to bottom. Put to the max SPL test with a pair of Balanced Audio Technology VK 1000 monoblocks no less, reaching levels that can cause instant eviction, is simply to invite hearing damage, and there are no sonic difficulties. I think this is one of the finest loudspeakers you can buy regardless of cost. Because VR4 lists for \$3,500.00, it's downright stupid not to audition them. I cannot give a higher praise than that.

The funny thing is, while writing this review, I realized just how good this speaker is

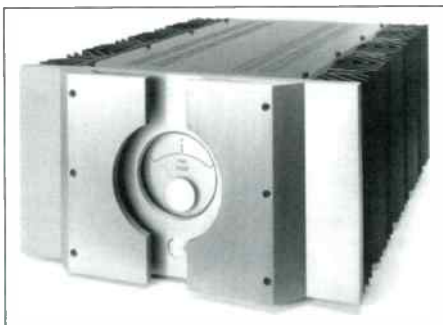
because you may have noticed that I have nothing negative to report. I wish all reviews were this way. Unfortunately, they are not. Reviewers are the eyes and ears of you readers. Our job is to report what you should take out of the show room and what should stay there, regardless of cost. Regardless of cost, the VR 4s are one of the best loudspeakers I have heard period.

## NOTES

**Von Schweikert VR4 Loudspeaker System**, \$3,500.00 per pair. Von Schweikert Research, 800 Starbuck Ave., Watertown, NY 13601; phone 315/779-8448, FAX 315/786-3020.

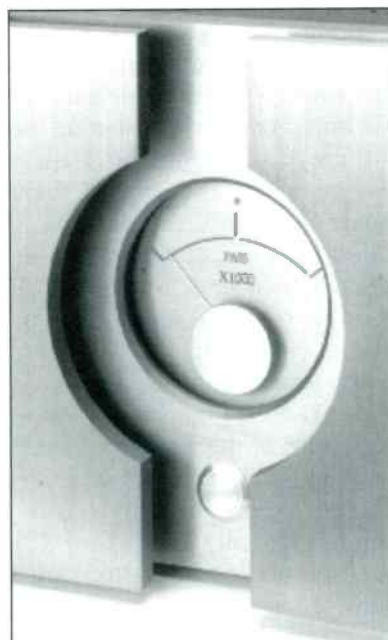
### Associated Equipment

Balanced Audio Technology VK 200 (2), VK 1000 monos, VK 31 preamp, Museatex BIDAT DAC, Sony DVP-S7000 transport, Theta Gen Va DAC, Theta Casablanca Surround Sound Processor, Toshiba TW40F80 Widescreen Projection TV, Electra Glide A/C Powercords, Alpha Core Interconnects and Speaker Wire, Custom Connections Speaker Cable and Powercords, ASC Tube traps, Echo Busters, Symposium Roller Balls, Seismic Sinks, Shakti Stones and Onlines, VPI Bricks, etc.



# PASS LABS

CES '98  
Alexis Park  
Room 2316



## X1000

1000 Watts into 8 ohms

2 Stage Patented Super Symmetric Design

Networked to 32,000 Watts

[www.passlabs.com](http://www.passlabs.com)

Pass Laboratories, 24449 Foresthill Rd, PO Box 219, Foresthill, CA 95631

## Musical Fidelity Discsolution CD Cleaning and Enhancing Fluid

Mark Block

I struggled into the house after a long day at work with my two most precious possessions nestled safely in my shoulder bag: A PowerBook 1400 and a dog-eared copy of the latest *Skeptical Inquirer*. (The hi-fi system comes third; my family is also precious, but I don't own them—I just borrow them at night and on weekends.) Waiting for me in the entrance hall was my four year old, eager to open a newly delivered box that looked like it could contain a toy. Sorry kid, daddy toys inside: It was a care package from editor (and arch skeptic) Gene Pitts containing a few new CDs and a little bottle of . . . something to clean them

with. (Editor's Note: I even loaned co-skeptic Mark my patented B.S. Detector for the CDs whose maker claimed to be using rodents to gnaw the "wholistic" pits in the CD masters.—Gene Pitts)

Gene was suggesting a review of a new CD treatment from Musical Fidelity (not to be confused with the British firm of the same name), and I was just the guy to do it. Being both a confirmed skeptic and a semi-tweaky audiophile requires a

high tolerance for ambiguity and an ability to live with cognitive dissonance. It also allows one to approach this kind of product with a skeptical attitude but also with an open mind.

I firmly believe in the skeptics dictum: Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. And Musical Fidelity does make



extraordinary claims for this product: "Discsolution is a unique, gentle, zero residue cleaner created for CD's, laser discs, and DVD's. [sic] Removing all contaminants decreases light scatter, allows the laser to properly focus, and therefore read all [bold-face theirs] the data on the CD. This decreases inherent noise, and allows for more detail, imaging, and improved inter-transient silence. Seemingly clean discs will have contaminants on them that cannot be seen with the naked eye and can be improved with the application of Discsolution."

Let's put aside the syntax and think about the substance of this statement, and let's make one thing very clear: No reasonable mechanism has yet been proposed by which a "treated" CD—and I would include treatments such as Shun Mook pucks, demagnetizers, and cleaning fluids—can sound audibly different from an otherwise identical untreated one. All the explanations I've heard can be filed under one heading: "Junk Science."

Giving Thomas Kuhn his due, let's stipulate that nothing in science is ever proven. Experiments produce results that tend to falsify or fail to falsify hypotheses; they don't *prove* anything. But scientific methodology is the best thing we have at getting at the truth, and I strongly object to the "anything is possible—trust your ears" philosophy of most high-enders. In the case of digital audio, engineers have an obligation to investigate anomalies—that is, observations that don't fit neatly into current theory. The problem is that most audiophiles aren't

capable of investigating anything more complex than, in the words of fellow Audiophile Society member Len Schneider, "a bath sponge."

Musical Fidelity's Gary Garfield had called me before I used his Discsolution to feel me

---

### **Discsolution does its main job, cleaning CDs, very well.**

---

out and "prep" me. This is standard stuff; it's known as good salesmanship, and it usually creates a positive bias in the reviewer. I must admit that his call did leave a good impression, because Mr. Garfield did not resort to BS or Junk Science. He claimed only that Discsolution did a very effective job of cleaning discs, and admitted that he had no good explanation for why it should make CDs sound better (even though most users felt it did). I wanted to give his goop a fair shot.

#### **The Discs**

Scrounging around in my pile of relatively new CDs, I located a few duplicates: Sometimes I buy a disc only to have another copy show up in the mail, sent by a record company (or magazine editor) with the (dim) hope of getting a review out of me. (Mark: That is dim hope, and not dim editor, right?—Gene Pitts) The following proved particularly useful:

1) The JVC remastering of *Groove Yard* by Wes Montgomery and his brothers (JVCXR-0018-2). The XRCD mastering process is the best in digital audio right now, so I knew I had to include one of

these high-resolution discs in my test.

2) The "One Step Gold Master" release of *Fabio Bidini in Recital* (EPR-9510). The discs I used were not simply the commercial gold pressings, but actual CD-Rs made by engineer Ron Meyer from the edited takes on a computer hard drive. Digital mastering doesn't get any more pure than that.

3) *House on Fire, Volume Two* (RHR CD 100P), a collection of recent recordings on the Red House label. The particular cuts I focused on were Greg Brown's "Small Dark Movie," Chuck Brodsky's "The Ballad of Eddie Klepp," and Cliff Eberhardt's "This Old World." Red House puts out good sounding recordings and great music. I've been listening to this disc a lot lately, so it was a natural to include here.

#### **The Procedure**

Discsolution was supplied to me in two different types of bottles: dropper and spray. (The spray bottle is sold in stores; the reviewer-only dropper bottle was, I believe, a dispenser which is not going to be for sale. A small amount of fluid (one or two sprays, which is about six or seven drops) is applied to the "data" side of the CD, then wiped off with a Kim-Wipe or similar lint-free towel. Simple. I treated one disc of each pair and marked it with a small dot of ink on the pit side. The dot was not visible unless I turned the disc over and looked hard for it. I was ready to conduct blind A/B tests. By the way, the discs looked perfectly clean before and after the cleaning.

Just for fun, I treated a few duplicate JVC releases with



other treatments that had come free with my *Hi-Fi News and Record Review* subscription. I also tried cleaning a disc with plain dishwashing detergent. I did all this work at one cleaning session (save for the Red House sampler, which came along later), making notes as to which JVC CD got which treatment. I then put the everything away for a few days, so that by the time I got around to listening I couldn't remember which CD had been treated with the Musical Fidelity gunk and which with the competition.

As I listened to the pairs of discs, my skepticism was at first confirmed; I could not, for the life of me, hear any differences in the first three pairs of CDs. Then I got to the Montgomery Brothers CD. Hmmmm. One disc had more air and detail. I peaked underneath. [Mark—You did what underneath? Sure it wasn't "peeked?" — Gene Pitts] It was the disc treated with Discsolution. I then shuffled the two discs and tried it again. And again I picked out the treated disc as sounding better. More shuffling. Again I picked out the treated CD. I was three for three and on a roll. Although this was hardly statistically significant, I thought, "Hey, this is getting interesting."

I grabbed the Bidini discs—according to my notes, one of them had been treated with Discsolution. After a few careful listens, I felt one of the discs sounded leaner and cleaner, the other a bit richer but fuzzier and less detailed. It turned out the "leaner" disc was the one treated with Discsolution. After more shuffling, I was able to identify the treated disc in two more

blind trials. Feeling a bit "wind-ed" in the ears, and not wanting to push my luck, I gave up on the A/B tests for a few days.

Playing the two Bidini discs for a group of audiophiles at fellow Audiophile Society member Ross Wagner's house netted mixed results. Everybody thought the sonic differences were obvious, and yet we couldn't agree on how the two discs sounded different. Russ Novak and I thought one of the discs (which turned out to be the treated one) sounded more transparent. Other Society members, Herb Wolfe, Bob Serino and George Bischoff, thought the other disc evinced more transparency and realism. This is the kind of result that suggests the differences were all in our heads. A red flag popped up in the back of my brain.

Back on home turf, where the sonics were more familiar, a

---

**Does Discsolution improve sonics? Hard to tell. But there is no question it is an effective cleaner of CDs and laserdiscs.**

---

final round of testing ensued with the Red House CD. After going through the regular test routine—clean one disc, mark it, shuffle both and play 'em—I was quite certain I could identify the sonic characteristics of the Discsolution treatment: More air and detail, less midbass bloat and fuzz. However, in five blind trials, I made the correct identification only twice. Pure chance. Did the treatment do anything? I thought so, but clearly it was, as the Temptations said, just my

imagination (running away with me). I didn't want to believe it, but my clear-cut results had been thrown into a ball of confusion (that's what the world is today).

It was a perfect example of why those who say "listen and trust your ears" are just plain wrong. The biases in our brains can overwhelm the nerve receptors in our ears. I was primed to hear differences, and my psyche wasn't about to let my ear drums get in the way.

Some would say the pressures of the test situation could have gotten in the way of my ability to make subtle differentiations. I don't think so. May Mr. Heisenberg rest in peace, but I felt quite loose and confident, all neurons firing, all electrons bouncing around free and easy. No pressure, no problem.

[Editor's Note: Let me put in a word here, about the misapplication of scientific principles: To wit, whenever I hear the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle applied to the statistics of Blind A/B testing, I want to throw up. Really, it makes my stomach turn. This isn't merely bad science, but parading one's ignorance and insulting your intelligence, Gentle Reader, and mine. Bluntly, there never was any special "pressure of the test situation" and the whole is an obvious and transparent excuse for the results of a "put up or shut up" blind A/B test not matching one's pre-announced desire. And that's okay, just like it's okay for someone to have reasons, other than sonics, for buying a piece of gear. All I say is that we shouldn't confuse the results of one sense with those of another, i.e. the wine's nice color *is* a reason to buy, but it

doesn't affect what happens on one's tongue. And no amount of misunderstood or misapplied scientific principles—and Mark does NOT do either here—will change that.—Gene Pitts]

Others might chime in that my system isn't revealing enough. Admittedly my room/system isn't perfect, but I think the Sonic Frontiers electronics and Platinum Reference 1 speakers are about as neutral, detailed and transparent as you can get without descending into ruthlessly revealing, fatiguing, unmusical hi-fi hell. And if a system worth \$25 grand (not counting the room treatment and dedicated house wiring) isn't good enough, then there's not much market for this treatment, is there?

### Conclusion

Does Discsolution work? Maybe. Although the effect was subtle, I thought I could hear an improvement after cleaning. My blind trials were inconclusive, however, so I remain agnostic.

As a cleaner, Discsolution is unquestionably effective. With an old desktop Mac in the hands of a small child (my four year old has been using it for a year and a half) and a laserdisc player freely accessible to his younger brother, we have quite a collection of CD ROMs and laserdiscs smeared and encrusted with everything that can possibly come into contact with a kid's hands. I successfully cleaned a few balky CD ROMs

and glitchy laserdiscs with Discsolution. A few inconsequential light scratches resulted from over-buffing one of the laserdiscs, but otherwise the cleaning process went without a hitch. Of course, prior to having Discsolution around, I cleaned dirty discs just as I would clean dirty wine glasses—in the sink with some detergent and warm water. Without the use of a microscope, I can't say whether one method is more effective than another.

By the way, some audiophiles have recommended using products such as Discsolution to clean the lenses of digital transports. [Editor's Note: Both Musical Fidelity and I strongly recommend that this type of cleaning NOT be performed at home, but rather left to competent technical types, if needed and it usually isn't. It's just too easy to knock the laser lens out of alignment.—Gene Pitts] Beneficial sonic results are said to be similar to—or even more powerful than—treating the CDs. If the lens is clean enough to function properly in the first place, then I can't see how this can possibly have a sonic effect, but it can't hurt (assuming that you don't screw up the innards of the CD player). If you're so inclined, go ahead and try it. I did, and thought I heard an improvement. Without two identical transports, however, I had no way of doing an A/C comparison.

Keep in mind that anytime

you disconnect cables, remove a component from the system, take the top off, play around with the insides, then put everything back together, you have the possibility that a change occurred having nothing whatsoever to do with the tweak itself. Furthermore, you have way too much labor invested to evaluate the tweak impartially. *Of course*, you'll think things sound better—a smart guy like yourself wouldn't waste a precious hour of time on something stupid and inconsequential! That's called cognitive dissonance, and it's another reason you just can't trust your ears.

### AD INDEX

Acoustic Technology	19
ATMA-Sphere	58
Audio Advancements	58
Audio Advisor	14
Audio Prism	56
Audio Stream/Paradigm	15
AudioQuest C-IV	
BAT CIII	
Carver	4
Clayton	52
conrad Johnson	51
DTS	9
Echo Busters	58
Hi-Fi Farm	59
Kimber	11
Lab Electronics	41
Magnegan	50
Nordost	49
Ohm	16
Parasound	7
Pass	76
Placette	46
Pro-Audio	12
Purist	1
Rotel	5
Rounder	17
Shure	64, 65
Sililoquey	13
Sony C-II	
Sound Anchors	63
Sound Connections	60
Sunfire	3
Yankee Audio	10
Z-Man	37

## NOTES

**Discsolution**, about \$29.95 retail with 300 wipes. Musical Fidelity Group, 5183 Overland Avenue, Suite D, Culver City, CA 90230. Phone 888/828-DISC toll free or 310/558-0037 in California; web site at [www.aerospace.net/discsolution](http://www.aerospace.net/discsolution).

# A N T I C I P A T I O N

A great musician brings the fire of inspiration to the flawless execution of fundamentals.

The VK-D5 CD player brings Balanced Audio Technology innovation to digital design.



▲ The VK-D5 is fully balanced in both the digital and analog domains. Even the current-to-voltage converter employs a differential Flying I-V circuit using discrete Vishay resistors. Six plate-loaded triodes in the analog stage deliver up to ten times the current of typical buffered outputs.

▲ A proprietary servo controls the Phillips transport. A unique BAT-designed reconstruction filter preserves signal purity. No buffers. No followers. No op-amps. No hype. Just exacting engineering in the service of music.

▲ Hear why the VK-D5 has been so eagerly awaited, and why so many knowledgeable listeners have placed advance orders. Visit your BAT audio specialist today.

## B a l a n c e d A u d i o T e c h n o l o g y

26 Beethoven Drive    800.255.4228    302.999.8818 fax  
Wilmington DE 19807    302.999.8855    info@balanced.com

Visit us online at <http://www.balanced.com>



## TERRY EVANS *COME TO THE RIVER*

"On this moving album from an enormously gifted singer, Terry Evans offers a vision of a river where healing, cleansing, salvation, and plenty of amazing music take place." -*Living Blues*

"You'll be swept away by Terry Evans." -*Billboard*

"Here is one blues singer who climbs the mountain, goes to the river, drowns and floats out to sea. And *Cooder* absolutely kills." -*LA Weekly*

AQ1044



## ROBERT LUCAS *COMPLETELY BLUE*

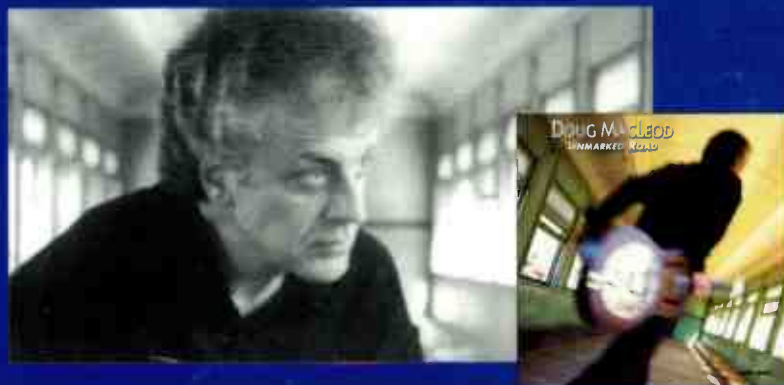
"Robert Lucas sounds as if he is on a one man mission to resurrect the vintage post war sound and make it relevant to contemporary music." -*Living Blues*

"Robert Lucas is a knock out. One of the best CDs of the year." -Tom Cullen, WRTI, Philadelphia, PA

"His voice remains a rich, grainy wonder, full of authority yet naturally playful and convincingly vulnerable." -*Los Angeles Times*

"Lucas plays the blues with deep conviction and from vast experience. Lucas' new album is *Completely Blue* and thoroughly captivating" -*Blues Print*

AQ1045



## Doug MacLeod *Unmarked Road*

"MacLeod is one of the vibrant voices that will keep this sound alive into the next century." -*Blues Revue*

Multiple Handy Award nominee Doug MacLeod's last album for AQM was named one of the ten best albums of 1996 by the managing editor of *Pulse* magazine. Doug makes a breakthrough on this, his third AudioQuest Music release. The songs are deeply personal, the soulful observations of a man steeped in the blues but unafraid to cross boundaries of style. MacLeod is beautifully supported by a stellar group of players from the west coast blues scene as well as the gospel vocal group "Black Cherry".

AQ1046



## Bruce Katz Band *Mississippi Moan*

"I'm tellin' ya, he's down-home and uptown all at once and that's a winning combination." -*Boston Phoenix*

Keyboard wizard Bruce Katz has jaw dropping technique, and something else - a whole lotta soul! Following dues paying stints with Big Mama Thornton, Albert Washington and Mighty Sam McClain, Bruce Katz has been tearing it up and gathering widespread acclaim in recent years with *Ronnie Earl* and the *Broadcasters*. This is the blues drenched album Katz' fans have been waiting for. Features special guest vocals by *Mighty Sam McClain*.

AQ1047

P.O. Box 6040, San Clemente, CA 92674 TEL 714-498-1977 • FAX 714-498-6223

e-mail: aqm@audioquest.com web: <http://www.wvwmusic.com/audioq>

Also available from: Justice Audio in Canada 514-641-8601, May Audio in USA 423-966-8844

AudioQuest Music Order Line 800-474-1977 Music distributor: DNA 916-661-6000

World Radio History

audioquest  
MUSIC

State of the Art Music/State of the Art Sound