For the High-Fidelity Stereo Perfectionist
Audible Wallpaper

We're not really sure who coined the term—it is usually attributed to Alistair Cooke, former host of the "Omnibus" TV program—but "audible wallpaper" is an apt term for something that is more than passing concern for the serious music listener.

Audible wallpaper is broadly defined as background music—any music that is introduced into any place for the purpose of setting a mood or preventing lapses of conversation from becoming lapses into silence. Most people like to hear music when they shop or dine or stroll on the mall, so why not give it to them at every opportunity? Simply because the enjoyment of music, like the enjoyment of anything else, can become dulled through over-indulgence.

How many of us, who remember the days when music was scarce, can recall the genuine thrill of hearing a pleasant tune on the radio, or the hair-raising experience of a live orchestra concert? Now consider, by contrast, how rarely we react this strongly to music today?

Music itself is no longer a source of intense delight for the listener. Now, it is only certain kinds of music, or certain moments in some works, that can elicit the kind of deep pleasure that people used to experience from virtually any kind of music.

We could argue, of course, that this is all to the good; that it is just a sign that people have become more discriminating in their taste. Indeed, this has been the case to a great extent. But much of what passes for sophisticated taste today stems, not from enhanced appreciation, but from downright boredom out of satiety.

The phonograph has made it possible to hear a work as often as we wish, and the wish will be there as long as we like the music. But if we succumb to the inclination to play a record to death, boredom eventually sets in, the excitement of the music is gone, and so is the enjoyment of it—probably forever.

The ubiquity of audible wallpaper tends to have the same effect, but for all music. Like wall-type wallpaper, the ideal audible variety is intended to be decorative without being intrusive. It should contribute to the environment without calling attention to itself, and that is exactly why it can be so detrimental to one's enjoyment of all music.

Marshall MacLuhans observed that we tend to base today's values on yesterday's standards, and this couldn't be more true in the case of wired music. In the days before radio or recordings, music was of great value because it was scarce. The average person dined in silence at home (when he wasn't conversing), so the restaurant that could provide some appropriate dining-type music could attract a high-class and affluent clientele. And because music with the meal was something out of the ordinary, it was thoroughly enjoyed, even though it may not always have been listened to with rapt attention.

In today's noisy world, with music on instant call at home and virtually inescapable in public places, silence has become scarcer than music. The most expensive restaurants are frequently those that have no music of any kind, but it is only the restaurateur of rare perception who has recognized the enhanced value of silence in an age of noise. Most proprietors still believe they are doing a great favor for their customers by bathing them in unending music.

The long-term effects of this continuous musical massaging are hard to predict, but some trends are already discernible. Increasing numbers of people, inured to the "conventional" forms of music, are having to seek their musical enjoyment in more and more extreme or violent forms—psychedelic rock at 120 decibels, or the excruciatingly ugly dissonances of "serious" experimental music. Like the sex maniac who can get all the "normal" sex he wants, the jaded music listener must seek evermore-bizarre forms of perversion in an attempt to retain the same level of enjoyment he used to derive from normal sources.

The fact that audible wallpaper is already having this deadening effect on listeners is further illustrated by their almost total lack of conscious awareness of it as anything except

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A Stereophile View of

The New York Audio Show

Thanks to a combination of fortuitous circumstances, Ye Editor was able to make the scene at this year’s New York Hi-Fi Fiesta, and presents herewith his first-hand reactions thereto.

If I were asked to make a generalization about this year’s New York hi-fi show, I’d say that the big gimmick this year was the concealed program source. You walked into a demo room for, let’s say, a loudspeaker manufacturer, and you saw loudspeakers. And that’s all you saw. Often, the sound was fantastically good, and you wondered what wonders had been wrought. And then, being uncontrollably curious, you started lifting drapes and peering behind closed doors, and you suddenly realized that you were listening to Marantz amplifiers and, of all things, 15-ips two-track stereo tapes.

On investigation (i.e., asking questions) I found that the 15-ips tapes had been supplied by various record companies, and had been duplicated directly from their master tapes. We can’t really blame an exhibitor for wanting to get the best possible sound from his equipment, but on the other hand, the magnificent sound from these 15-ips tapes is hardly typical of what Joe Blow is going to get from his eight-track cassette player.

Most exhibitors had at least the good grace to put their tape players out where everyone with the wit to notice could see that the reels were spinning rather unusually rapidly. But KLH had all their tape equipment in a little cubicle in the corner, completely closed off from public view, while listeners in the display area were shown neatly labeled signs stating that they were listening to a Capitol, Columbia, RCA Victor or what-have-you recording. Of course, this was true in essence; the recordings had been made by the companies in question, but I couldn’t help wondering how many visitors to the KLH rooms would assume that they were hearing the same kind of recordings they could buy in their local discount mart.

And speaking of eyebrow-raisers, I noticed a doozy of a set-up in the James B. Lansing exhibit. JBL occupied two adjoining rooms, with an open door between them. One room exhibited the large JBL systems (plus a few of the medium-sized ones), while the other room contained mainly the smaller “Lancer” systems, which have always struck me as being irksomely shrill and thin-sounding. This time, though, when I walked into the room where the Lancers were playing, I was astounded to hear tremendous, deep, floor-shaking lows offsetting their usual hard high end. What, I asked myself, had happened to the Lancer sound? The JBL “Paragon” in the other room, that’s what had happened.

It seems that JBL was using the same signal source to feed both demo rooms, which was no doubt convenient but it was also rather misleading.

Incidentally, I cannot recall when I have ever been so impressed by the JBL “Paragon.” It was still too heavy in the mid-bass to suit me, but one demonstration (of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the Philadelphia Orchestra) literally stood my hair on end, not only because of the tremendous, effortless power of the sound but also because of a degree of actuality and aliveness that I have rarely heard. Perhaps it’s time we took another extended listen to one of these, under less hectic conditions.

On the other hand, Bozak’s speakers sounded less agreeable to me this year than usual, possibly because of poor room acoustics (an uncontrollable variable that every show exhibitor must put up with) or a malfunctioning associated component. The large Bozaks had their usual big, fat sound, but the highs were a trifle piercing and the low end sounded like a battery of mis-tuned kettle drums.

The reason for this may have been partly explained, inadvertently, by an enlightening demonstration in the CM Labs exhibit. CM, which makes some very impressive-looking amps and preamps, had a pair of Bozak B-4000 systems rigged up to a switching system that allowed the speakers to be connected in the normal manner to a dual-100-watt CM 911 amplifier, or connected in a biamplifier arrangement with a 911 amp driving the woofers and a dual-50-watt Model 350 amplifier driving the mid-range speakers and tweeters, via an electronic crossover. In the conventional mode, the speakers sounded like B-4000’s. With the biamplified hookup, the bass became noticeably tighter and deeper, with much less boom, and the whole high end seemed smoother, sweeter and better-defined. The fact that the biamplifier arrangement provided an additional 100 watts of amplifier power may have accounted for some of the improvement, but I doubt that it would have made all that much difference.

This was the first audio show in which I really had an opportunity to listen at some length to Hartley Loudspeakers’ “Concertmaster” system (with its 24-inch woofer), and I must say I was immensely impressed. Hartley was playing that famous Reiner/Chicago Symphony recording of R. Strauss’s “Also Sprach Zarathustra,” with the deep organ pedal notes that
never quite came through properly. I've heard other systems reproduce them strongly enough, but always to an accompaniment of some boominess in the upper bass registers. Suffice it to say that, this time, there was no boom at all, yet the deepest organ pedals were literally shaking the floor. We've been promised a couple of these systems for testing in a later issue. (Anyone who points out that this issue is about as late as an issue can get may be dismissed from class!)

There were several new items in this year’s lineup that I promised myself in advance I would get to hear, or see. One of these that I was particularly interested in was Acoustic Research’s first effort in the amplifier field, an integrated control amplifier with dual-60-watt output and bass tone controls that are designed to follow the Fletcher-Munson loudness curves at advanced settings (to do away with the need for, and the disadvantages of, a loudness-compensated volume control). It looked good, albeit somewhat austere in styling, and it sounded about as good as any amplifier is likely to sound under hi-fi show conditions, but I'll reserve further judgment until we test one.

One interesting thing I did hear in AR’s room was the new AR-3a speaker system, an improved version of the AR-3. A pair of the new systems were set up next to two AR-3s, and signal sources were switched from one pair to the other at intervals. My reaction: The “improvement,” like previous AR improvements, is just that. Middles were much less hollow, somewhat less forward, and better detailed. This looks like yet another new product we should test.

I was particularly curious to see a new record changer introduced by ELPA Marketing as the PE-20-20, whose descriptive pamphlet claimed it to be “the only automatic turntable that can track every record at the 15-degree vertical stylus tracking angle during manual or automatic play.” I had visions of an ingenious stepping arrangement that would raise the tone arm pivots, bit by bit, as each record dropped onto the platter. I was wrong. There is a tracking angle adjustment, but it is preset manually before the stack of discs, so the best it can do is reduce the range of vertical tracking error from the bottom to the top of the stack. It’s a definite improvement over other changers in this respect, but it does not come up to its claim of tracking every record at 15-degree vertical angle during automatic play. On the other hand, assuming that its other performance characteristics are up to the competition, it should produce cleaner sound than any of the others, which is a step forward.

Who had the best sound at this year’s New York show? For once, the decision wasn’t all that easy to make. There was a stupefying sameness in the sound at most exhibits, and the sound might aptly be described as Howard-Johnson Hi-Fi—not terribly good and not very bad, but tailored to the public “taste” in hi-fi. Bass boomed, highs were shrill, and middles were bland and colored in countless ways. And practically every exhibit was proving for the nth time that amplifier power capabilities that may be fine in the home are hopelessly inadequate for creating the kind of sound levels that exhibitors maintain are absolutely necessary to attract crowds at a hi-fi show.

But out of my confused recollections of endless rooms of cacophony, I can recall a few exhibits that really managed to convey the sense of realism that, in theory at least, is what high fidelity is supposed to be all about. I already mentioned one of them: James B. Lansing’s “Paragon” system which, despite its overly heavy bass, nonetheless managed to convey an almost shockingly convincing illusion of “being there.” Another was Grado Labs’ room, where two ridiculously small speaker systems, each comprised of an AR1 woofer, a Janszen two-element tweeter (as a mid-range speaker), and an Ionovac “blue-glow” tweeter, made a jazz band sound as alive as I’ve ever heard. The Hartley “Concertmaster” demonstration was magnificent at the bottom, but did not impress me overly at the time with its upper ranges, while Electro-Voice seemed to have room or equipment troubles; even their Patrician 800 sounded sodden and shrill. I was impressed with the new Janszen Z-600, but since their Z-600’s didn’t even sound as good as they do in The Stereophile’s listening room, I wasn’t surprised that the 960’s didn’t bowl me over with realism.

But the one exhibit that took my breath away more consistently than any other (through several different visits to the room) was the Acoustech Model X full-range electrostatic system. It was the only system at the entire show that sounded as if I was listening through it instead of to it, and which really made every instrument sound the way I have heard music at live performances. It did not have the impact of the “Paragon” or the floor-shaking bass of the Hartley “Concertmaster” or the immediacy of the triple-threat assemblages in the Grado room. But every time I heard it, I found myself breathing a sigh of relief, and listening to the music instead of to the sound.

As for the worst sound at the show, it would be presumptuous and unfair to single out any one exhibit for this honor because there were so many contenders. There were exhibits at the 1967 New York show that would have been laughed off the premises at a hi-fi show ten years ago. Many manufacturers were showing ultra-miniature radios and phonographs, with speakers to match, whose excruciating shrillness and distortion were almost beyond belief, and in some rooms there were two or three of these little horrors going simultaneously, all at ear-shattering volume, and all playing different program material. One glassy-eyed salesman we talked to started to explain the features of an FM radio on a display table and then disappeared abruptly, looking sheepish. We saw him later, officiating in a competitor’s room, across the hall. Evidently, he’d been in the wrong room, and didn’t know it until we asked about one of the products. I can understand why.—J. G. H.
Ortofon RS-212 Tone Arm

MSR’S SPECS—Over-all length: 12 inches. Base- to-stylus distance: 3 inches, from pivot center.


The RS-212 is one of the most impressive-looking tone arms we’ve seen in many a moon. Our first re- action to it, in fact, was much the same as our reaction to the first big, professional Ampex tape recorder we ever saw: it reminded us of one of those precision-engineered and cleanly-styled electronic devices you see in hospitals and industrial laboratories—devices which make no attempt to cater to the current fashion in interior decorating or depth-researched consumer prefer- ences, but which are designed sim- ply to do a job neatly and efficiently. This arm, in short, is practically guaranteed to impress your Magna- vox-oriented friends with the qual- ity of your phono system, no matter how oblivious they may be to its actual sound.

A price tag of $90 did not seem to us to be out of line for an arm like this, but we did take note of the fact that another arm, which has been the recognized standard of quality for the past five years or so (the Shure/SME 3009), sells for $100.50, so we couldn’t help but think in terms of direct comparis- ons between the two. Certainly anyone who could lay out $90 for an arm should be able to scrape up $10.50 more for a better one, if in- deed it were that much better. So, that became our secondary aim in preparing this report: to determine not only how good the Ortofon RS-212 was, but also how much more quality, if any, could be bought for an additional $10.50.

The RS-212, as originally sup- plied, is carefully adjusted to ac- cept, without further adjustment, an Ortofon SI5M pickup. To use one of these, you simply mount the arm, install the pickup, plug in the cables and the pickup shell, adjust the arm height to suit the turntable you’re using, turn a knurled wheel to select the proper tracking force, and play your records. And if you happen to own a Thorens turntable with removable mounting boards, you can purchase the RS-212 with its own precut board for $95 and make the job that much easier.

If you prefer to do it yourself, the arm is supplied with detailed instructions as well as a predrilled metal strip (for setting tangency), a plastic template for locating the mounting holes, and even a sharp nail for holding the template temporarily in place. We’re not too happy about Ortofon’s method for setting tangency, though. The metal strip fixes the distance be- tween the turntable spindle and the arm base, which is okay as long as the pickup you use has its stylus the same distance in front of its mounting holes as in Ortofon’s pickups. But in other cases, the tangency will not be correct. A better way would be to set tan- gency according to stylus overhang or to actual observed tangency in inner grooves.

Like other Ortofon arms, the RS- 212 uses a fine spring adjustment for setting stylus force, while the counterweight is used solely to pro- vide exact static balance for the pickup. And in case some readers have prejudices against spring-type force adjustments, we wish to em- phasize the point that a properly- designed spring system is basically no better or no worse than a count- erweight system, while it does offer the advantages of allowing the counterweight to provide absolute static balance, which makes precise leveling of the phono unit unnec- essary. (Spring-type force adjust- ments earned their lousy reputation through their use in record changers, where the tracking force would change drastically from the bottom to the top of a stack of records).

In the RS-212, the spring serves a dual function. In other Ortofon arms, one end of the force-adjusting spring is fastened to the top of the arm base, directly above the axis of the horizontal pivot assembly, so that the spring’s pull is always exerted in a line parallel with the arm tube, insuring that all the pull is vertical. In the RS-212, though, there is a knurled- screw adjustment that allows the anchor point of the spring to be shifted slightly to one side of the pivot axis, so that the spring applies some lateral as well as ver- tical pull on the arm. And if you hadn’t already guessed, this lateral pull is applied in the correct direc- tion to provide a source of adjusta-
ble bias compensation. It's a clever idea, but it does have one shortcoming in the RS-212: The spring tension increases slightly as the arm swings toward the center of the record, and this tends to increase the tracking force. (The bias force does not increase correspondingly, because the tension angle of the spring diminishes as the arm swings inwards.) With the bias scale set to 1% and the tracking force adjusted for 1½ grams in outer grooves (a typical setup), we measured a bit over 1½ grams of tracking force in inner grooves. This is far from being a drastic change, but ½ gram can make the difference between a pickup's tracking cleanly and not quite cleanly.

On the other hand, if the stylus force is to change at all, it is better for it to increase in the inner grooves than to decrease, because inner grooves are the hardest to track cleanly. When adjusting stylus force on the RS-212, we would advise setting it for optimum inner-groove tracking and letting the outer grooves take care of themselves. (If you're operating near the pickup's safe maximum force, remember that the actual force in inner grooves will be roughly 15% higher than the value indicated by the arm's force adjustment.)

In outer grooves, or with the bias compensation set at zero, the stylus force adjustment in our RS-212 was found to be very accurate — to within less than ½ gram of the indicated value, so a force gauge is not needed when setting up the arm.

The range of counterweight adjustment on the RS-212 is very wide, accommodating the standard Ortofon pickups at one extreme or the lightweight ADC, Shure and Pickering pickups and Ortofon's SL-15 at the other extreme. To use a lightweight pickup in the arm, there is a removable weighting plug that unscrews from the rear of the main counterweight, thus lowering the effective mass of the arm as well as its counterbalancing force. The only pickup we found that could not be properly balanced in the RS-212 without adding additional weight to the head shell was the Euphonic, and the necessary weighting slug is supplied with the arm.

The RS-212 is equipped with a damped lifter assembly that functioned smoothly and positively, and lowered the pickup very gently into the groove when released. Remember, though, that any bias compensation you use will cause the pickup to drift very slightly toward the right when it is being lowered, so don't blame the lifting mechanism if the pickup fails to land in exactly the same groove it was lifted from. If you want precise groove spotting, use as little bias compensation as you can get away with. This, by the way, is one of the few tone arm lift systems we've seen that didn't throw the arm up in the air when lifted rapidly. The lifting height is fairly small (less than a half an inch), but with the arm height adjusted as recommended in the instructions, it is entirely adequate.

The arm's output cables are supplied prewired to standard phono plugs at one end and a small 7-pin plug at the other end that fits a socket under the arm base. The output circuits are totally isolated from one another, to eliminate the possibility of hum-inducing ground loops, and a separate insulated wire is brought out with the output cables to permit grounding the tone arm at the preamp chassis. There is no grounding strap for the turntable unit itself, so this may be grounded either by bridging a short length of wire from the motor to one of the tone arm mounting screws or by running a separate lead all the way from the turntable to the same lug that is used to ground the arm at the preamp.

Two minor criticisms: The output plugs on our sample arm were not identified as to left and right. If this hasn't already been remedied, it should be; it's an inexcusable oversight. Also, the cable plug, that fastens to the underside of the arm, does not go all the way into its socket, so although the electrical connections are properly made, it was very easy to yank the plug out accidentally.

Now, the crucial consideration: How does the RS-212 function as a pickup carrier? And how does it compare with the SME 3009? Long-time readers of The Stereophile will have learned that we are categorically skeptical of tone arm pivots that require adjustment when the arm is assembled at the factory, not because they're basically poor, but because the required precision of adjustment is too strict to lend itself to the usual mass-production procedures.

The RS-212 has adjustable vertical pivots, and since we cannot anticipate how carefully these will be set up in average production samples, we can only report that the adjustment in our sample was for all intents and purposes perfect. It was possible — barely possible — to detect some play in them by feel, but there was no trace of rattle under any conditions of actual use.

Because of the heavy loading on the SME arm's knife-edge pivots, there should be less tendency toward rattle in them. But in direct comparisons, it was impossible to tell from the sound of any pickup whether it was in the SME or the Ortofon arm. Both arms were equally susceptible to acoustic feedback and rumble, when the right (or wrong) conditions presented themselves, but then the only arms we have found that were not susceptible to these potential problems are ones having...
a high degree of pivot damping, like the Audio & Design.

How does the Ortofon compare with the SME in other respects? Craftsmanship: Superb, and second to none, but no better than the SME, either. Design: Also superb, but again, we doubt that we'd rate the design as basically superior to, or inferior to, that of the SME.

Appearance: This is more of a personal judgment, but again we'd deem it a tossup. Both arms have that very businesslike look that inspires confidence in the arm's ability to do what it is supposed to do.

Pivot friction: Extremely low in both pickups, with the balance slightly favoring the Ortofon.

Ease of installation: The Ortofon comes out on top here, too, requiring only one large round hole, a smaller round hole, and three small ones (to the SME's large elongated hole and four small ones). In addition, the Ortofon has fewer adjustments and they are somewhat easier to make. On the other hand, it has no tangency adjustment, which will only be a consideration if you plan to switch pickups from time to time.

The Ortofon is slightly more immune to jarring than is the SME, probably because of its static balance.

So, what do you get for $10.50 more if you buy an SME 3009 instead of an RS-212? You get somewhat less ruggedness, somewhat lower mass, and somewhat greater flexibility (in the adjustable tangency). If you change pickups frequently, the SME is probably your best choice. If you don't, we'd advise simply choosing the arm whose appearance appeals to you the most. They are both close enough to theoretical perfection in an undamped arm to make a quality distinction very difficult, providing Ortofon can maintain the necessary precision of pivot adjustment on the production line. This is one thing that is not a consideration in the SME; it is up to Ortofon to see that it is no more of a consideration in the RS-212.

Shure M75E Hi-Track Pickup

MFR'S SPECS: Type: Moving-magnet, elliptical stylus. Frequency response: 10 to 20,000 Hz. Output: 1.5 mV. Separation: 80 dB at 1 kHz. Recommended load: 47 k ohms. Inductance: 720 mH. Weight: 6 grams. Stylus radii: 0.2 mil by 0.7 mil.


This is one of Shure's new generation of pickups with "trackability" that grew out of research on the Type II V-15 pickup. At first glance, the V-15-II and the M75E are physically identical. They're the same size, the same shape, and almost the same weight (the M75E weighs 0.8 grams less), and both of them have the same neat little hinged cover that flips down to protect the stylus when the pickup's not in use.

Closer examination, though, shows that they aren't quite the same. The M75E is sided with plastic instead of aluminum, its stylus armature is much more rugged (and higher in mass) than that of the V-15-II, and the replaceable stylus assemblies are quite different. On the M75E, only the stylus mount is removable; the hinged guard is a part of the cartridge body. On the V-15-II, the guard is part of the stylus mount, and comes off with it. So, if you're thinking how clever it would be to buy the $39 M75E and convert it to a V-15-II just by buying another stylus, forget it. The stylies aren't interchangeable, and even if they were you wouldn't be saving money anyhow, because an M75E and a stylus for a V-15-II add up to more than the cost of a V-15-II alone.

The results of our measurements on an M75E are shown below. Although we don't normally show separate curves for both stereo channels, we are doing so this time simply because, in our sample M75E, there was a marked difference between them. It is most important, though, to note that these differences occur mainly in the extreme upper range, where they will either be barely audible or not audible at all, depending on the high-end performance of your system, including your ears. For all practical purposes, the two charts may be considered virtually identical in performance.

The same can be said for the separation curves. Even though the stereo separation becomes quite poor at the high end, it is in fact excellent over the entire useful audio range, for there is practically nothing above 12kHz on most discs except distortion products.
As usual, though, the tests don’t tell the whole story. The response curves suggest that the M75E would have a very slightly dull sound, due to the mild dip between 2 and 12k Hz. In fact, the pickup is, if anything, a shade on the bright side when reproducing musical material. It is quite “alive” sounding, with a slight crispness at the high end that adds some hardness to strings, high percussion, and other overtone-ric instruments. We are not at all sure what causes this disagreement between the objective and subjective performance of the pickup, but suspect that it may be a result of a somewhat under-damped stylus assembly. Other pickups we have tested (the Decca Mark 1I, for example) that had little or no stylus damping have shown a similar tendency to sound more forward and “alive” (not to be confused with shrill) than their measured response curves would indicate.

So, what about the M75E’s trackability? According to its spec sheet, its trackability at 1 gram is just a shade under that of the V-15II at ¾ of a gram, and Shure states that the trackability will be improved by upping the tracking force toward the stated limit of 1½ grams. Significantly, though, the recommended force ranges are identical for both pickups, although it is obvious that the M75E must have higher stylus mass.

We found, though, that the point of optimum force was indeed virtually identical for both pickups. In an SME arm, the M75E did its best job on “difficult” discs, including Shure’s Trackability test record, at just a shade under 1½ grams. Further increase afforded no improvement, and is not recommended anyway. So, we used the just-under-1½ figure.

Despite the slightly hard sound, which added some edge to tracking distortion when this occurred, we found the M75E to have truly phenomenal tracking ability. High-level tracking was perceptibly better than that of the Decca Mark II, not quite as good as that of the Shure V-15II or the Ortofon SL-15, and about equal to that of a good Decca C4E.

Over-all naturalness was judged to be a bit less than that of the Decca Mark II and comparable to that of the Ortofon SL-15, but the Ortofon was felt to be somewhat sweeter at the top while the M75E was a bit more solid at the low end and perhaps a shade less transparent throughout the entire range. Please note, however, that the competing pickups cost around $30 to $40 more than the M75E, and that the M75E has none of the magnetic pull and hum-sensitivity problems of most of the competition. It is, in fact, one of the least “problematical” pickups we’ve tested for a long time. And for the price, it’s the best pickup we’ve ever tested.

KLH Model Twelve Loudspeaker System

**KLH Model Twelve**

**MFR’s SPECS—Type:** Three-way dynamic system with adjustable response contour control.

**Speakers:** 12-inch acoustic-suspension type woofer, two 5-inch cone mid-range speakers, 1½-inch cone-type tweeter. **Impedance:** 8 ohms. **Power capacity:** 100 watts program. **Dimensions:** 29 inches H x 22½ W x 15 D. **Price:** $275. **MFR:** KLH Research & Development Corp., 30 Cross St., Cambridge, Mass.

The idea of a loudspeaker system whose frequency response could be tailored to suit room acoustics and/or personal taste is one that has always appealed to the high-fidelity perfectionist. Ideally, such a loudspeaker would allow you to raise or lower the level of any part of the audio spectrum to correct for, say, a sharp 370-Hz room resonance or a mild absorptive condition that weakens, say, the 800-to-3,000-Hz range. Obviously, though, this kind of flexibility would require an infinite number of band-pass networks, each with its own volume control—which is an obvious impracticality.

In the past, the closest approach to this “ideal” that has been reached was in multi-way speaker systems with level-control pots on each upper-range speaker, and in bi-amplified systems using electronic crossover networks that allowed for some variation in crossover points. The KLH Twelve combines some aspects of both approaches, and provides more flexibility than either one alone.

The Model Twelve is a three-way, four-speaker system with a 12-inch acoustic-suspension-type woofer, two mid-range cone speakers (connected in parallel), and a single cone-type tweeter. Thus, there are two crossover frequencies involved—between the woofer and the mid-range speakers, and between the mid-range speakers and the tweeter.

In a conventional speaker system, this would call for a crossover network having four reactive elements: a low-pass (treble cut) filter for the woofer, a high-pass filter for the bottom of the mid-range speaker’s range, another low-pass filter of higher frequency to set the upper limit of the mid-range speaker, and another high-pass filter to feed only the very highest frequencies to the tweeter.

Assuming the loudspeakers to be uniform in response and efficiency, the smoothest over-all frequency response would be obtained when the crossover filters between two speakers are tuned to the same frequency. If, however, the woofer’s low-pass filter is tuned to 500 Hz and the mid-range’s high-pass filter is tuned to 1,000 Hz, the woofer will start to die out before the mid-range speaker starts to take over fully, and the result will be a dip in their combined output between 500 and 1000 Hz. On the other hand, if the woofer is allowed to function out to 1000 Hz and the mid-range is allowed to extend down to 500 Hz, the speakers will tend to reinforce one another through the overlapping crossover range, and there will be a rise in response from 500 to 1000 Hz.

If we adjust both crossovers upward by an octave, moving the overlap range to between 1000 and 2000 Hz, we can produce an equivalent response hump at a higher frequency. Or, we can produce a dip at this higher frequency by crossing the woofer at 1,000 Hz and the tweeter at 2,000 Hz. In this way, we can use the crossovers between two speakers to vary the over-all frequency response over two different parts of the audio spectrum—above and below the “center” crossover point. And with two “center” crossovers to work with (the woofer-to-mid-range one and the mid-range-to-tweeter one), we can provide some measure of
control over the system's response over four different frequency ranges.

In the KLH Twelve, the crossover network has been so designed that the four controllable ranges are of equal subjective width. (Each is about 1½ octaves wide.) As usual, there is no level adjustment for the bottom part of the woofer's range. The four contour controls cover the ranges of 300 to 800, 800 to 2500, 2500 to 7000, and 7000 to 20,000 Hz, and instead of continuously-variable pots, three-position rotary switches are used. Each switch selects flat response or 2.5 db of boost or cut—not a wide range of adjustment, but quite immediately audible to a critical listener, and quite adequate for most purposes. As a matter of fact, KLH informs us that the adjustment range was limited intentionally to prevent tin-eared users from fouling up the sound of the system by grossly misadjusting the controls.

These contour controls, by the way, could be an education in themselves for anyone wishing to train his evaluative ear, for they make it easy to learn the subjective effects of a mild response hump or dip in various different frequency ranges. As a matter of fact, we would like to urge anyone with preconceived notions about the inaudibility of small response deviations to spend an evening or two fooling with the Model Twelve's controls and, perhaps for the first time, listening.

The Model Twelve's crossover components and the four contour controls are contained in an attractive, walnut box of about the same size, shape and weight as a desk dictionary. It is connected to the speaker system via a four-wire cable (with color-coded spade lugs), and two cable lengths are supplied. A short cable is for use when the control center is to be located at the speaker system itself, while a 40-foot cable allows the control center to be placed within easy reach of the listening location in the room.

An ingenious innovation here is the use of Velcro hook-and-pile fabric swatches to enable the contour control center to be fastened to the back of the speaker enclosure, out of sight but with all controls still accessible. Velcro fabric, by the way, is the same stuff that's used to fasten the arm band on those barometer-like devices that doctors use for checking blood pressure. The fabric comes in two mating varieties, one with a surface of fine, fuzzy closed loops of stiff thread, the other with regular rows of tiny plastic hooks. You press one against the other, the hooks get caught in the loops, and the two surfaces adhere tenaciously. If you want to separate them you just pull, and the hooks straighten out and let go with a horrendous tearing sound. The nice thing about it is that neither fabric is damaged when they're pulled apart, so they may be joined and separated countless times without losing their grip.

In the Model Twelve, the looped fabric strips are on the bottom of the contour control box, where they also prevent the box from scratching finished surfaces, while the hooked strips are at the back of the speaker cabinet.

We received a pair of Model Twelves for testing, but the initial tests were made on a single unit, located in a spot in the listening room that has proven suitable for most other speakers of equivalent size. All contour controls were initially set for Flat response.

Sweeping an audio oscillator through its range, we found the Model Twelve to be extremely smooth in subjective response from well beyond audibility (appreciably above 16kHz) down to about 70 Hz. At 70, there was a sharp drop in output, a leveling-off at around 60 Hz, and then the response continued flat but at significantly reduced level down to a healthy, floor-shaking 35 Hz. Fundamental output was still faintly audible at 25 Hz, and when the signal finally disappeared, the speaker went silent. There was no audible trace of distortion or flutter until much greater amounts of power were fed to it at 20 Hz. (At 1,000 Hz, ½ watt of RMS power input sounds very loud; it took 5 watts at 20 Hz to produce flutter.)

Treble dispersion was very wide (about 90 degrees) but somewhat irregular, evidently because of interference effects between the two fairly widely-spaced mid-range speakers (which carry the ranges up to around 5kHz.) Moving from one side of the speaker to the other, we detected two distinct areas (about 20 degrees on each side of axis) where the mid-highs were slightly weakened. The upper high-end range, coming from the single tweeter, was unaffected.

Over-all efficiency was similar to that of most other acoustic suspension systems; we estimated it to be about 1½ per cent.

Predictably, the single Model 12 sounded well balanced, with no boominess nor marked thinness, but it was felt to be noticeably lacking in deep foundation. The deeper notes were there, but significantly reduced in level; usable bass extended little below about 60 Hz.

Moving the speaker into a corner of the room (where bass output is at maximum) brought up the entire bottom range to some extent, but the over-all sound was still felt to be a shade bottom-shy. We did find, though, that because of the speaker's power-handling ability at low frequencies and the nature of its bass characteristic, it was easy to provide almost perfect correction via a small amount of bass boost from the main system's tone controls, and this extended the usable low end to a deep, firm 35 Hz.

Apart from the shelf in the lower-bass range, the Model Twelve's low-frequency performance was superb—deep, tight, exceedingly well-defined, and without a trace of heaviness or boominess, even with the addition of tone control correction. Our reaction to the system's over-all sound, though, was oddly ambiguous, even after several weeks of listening on a wide variety of program material. Our first reaction was that the speaker was a wee bit shrill, and we are still aware of a certain subtle hardness from the speaker. But we have also been forced to the conclusion that much of the hardness we hear is directly attributable to the recordings themselves.

Early LP discs (before the record manufacturers started getting
self-conscious about hi-fi), 78-rpm discs, and tapes that we have made ourselves have none of this harshness. As a matter of fact, the Model Twelve has shown itself to be one of the most natural-sounding speaker systems we have heard. It neither favors nor disfavors woodwinds, brasses, strings or percussion instruments, and sonorities are there in abundance without being exaggerated in the manner of some other speaker systems with tipped-up or peaky highs.

The Model Twelve does very well reproducing voice, too—either speaking or singing. Male voice has none of the boominess or heaviness that is all too common in modern "hi-fi" loudspeaker systems, and some of the original tapes we have of singers whose "live" voices we have heard frequently reproduce with startling similarity to the real thing.

And yet, paradoxically, for all of its naturalness of timbre, there is something missing from the Model Twelve. Perhaps we have just been spoiled by the extraordinary transparency of electrostatics, but the impression we get from the Model Twelve is that of a faint haze or curtain over the sound. There is just not the feeling of aliveness—of the lack of an intervening loudspeaker—that we have heard from some systems that are often more colored than is the Model Twelve. The Janszen Z-600, for example, does not sound as smooth in the middle-high-end range, it does not quite match the Twelve's superb bass detail, and it is not quite as convincing a reproducer of the human voice and the larger brass and woodwind instruments. But its ability to convey an illusion of actuality—a feeling that the instruments are right there behind a clear window—is unmistakably better than that of the KLH Twelve.

We can't explain why this might be the case. Perhaps it is a result of the very thing that makes the Model Twelve so flexible: the relatively complex crossover network, which may tend to decouple the speakers (electrically) from the amplifier, thus sacrificing some degree of feedback control over their cone movement. And then again, perhaps not. We can only say that, for whatever the reason, this was the way the Model Twelve sounded to us.

How is the Twelve as a stereo speaker? In view of the wide dispersion and the uniform response throughout the audio range, it is not surprising that a pair of Twelves should yield an immensely broad and cohesive stereo field, with excellent localization and a superb sense of depth and perspective. Stereo pairing also helps to strengthen the deep bass response, too, although not quite enough to obviate the need for at least a small amount of tone control correction.

In terms of the competition, the Model 12 is an extraordinarily good loudspeaker, and is better in many respects than the great bulk of systems costing well over $400. It is easy to live with, and provides a degree of flexibility that is not to be found in any other available speaker system. If you're shopping for speakers in or about this price range, we'd put this at the top of the list of candidates for your consideration. You may find you are less aware of the slightly hard, yet veiled quality than we were, and frankly, you'll hunt for a long time before you find another one that sounds as natural.

REVIEWER'S ADDENDUM: Our observations about the sound of the Model Twelve were based on a consensus of several listeners, who heard the speakers on a number of different occasions, in varying room locations and on a variety of program sources, including souped-up tapes. We plan, though, to continue our tests for some weeks in the future, and if prolonged listening proves to revise our opinions of the Twelve (in stereo) we'll have a follow-up report in the next issue.

Once Over Lightly

Acoustic Research XA Record Player

A couple of changes have been made in late models of this turntable, including the elimination of the separate starting motor (the new-style drive motor encloses the starter) and a further improvement in the already-excellent vibration isolation system. There's also an XA Universal model available, with provision for easy changeover from the usual 60-Hz 120-volt operation to the 50-Hz 240-volt requirements for use in most European countries; a godsend for members of the armed forces who plan to take their high-fidelity systems with them.

Unfortunately, there do not appear to have been any improvements made on the tone arm, which has always been the XA's weakest point. Units tested recently have shown the same pivot problems as in earlier models tested.
Scott 348 FM Stereo Receiver
(Report in High Fidelity magazine)

Tuner: Very sensitive, very selective, with extremely good separation. Overall sound from tuner section: a bit bright but very clean. Generally, an excellent tuner.

Amplifier: A bit shy at extreme bottom end, with fairly good high-end detail but a slightly hard overall sound and a mild tendency to exaggerate record tracking distortion. Low end would be tight and well controlled. Not as good an amplifier as the tuner that goes with it.

Heathkit AD-16 Tape Recorder
(Reports in Audio and HiFi/Stereo Review)

Over-all sound: From pre-recorded tapes, almost perfectly neutral, with very subtle zippiness at the top and full, deep low end. From its own tapes: High end virtually indistinguishable from original material (at 7%), low end a shade thin at the extreme bottom (below 50 Hz). At 3%, lows virtually indistinguishable from original, highs very slightly hard but with subtle loss of detail and sheen.

Long-term speed accuracy very good, but probably not good enough to allow splicing between takes at beginning and end of reel without audible change of pitch.

Wow and flutter very low, but high enough for an acute ear to perceive on sustained test tones or on certain flutter-prone musical sounds (piano, reed instruments, etc.).

No difficulties reported in construction from kit parts.

Signal-to-noise measurements differed markedly between the two published reports. HiFi/Stereo Review measured extremely low noise—comparable to that of a big professional Ampex; Audio’s measurements suggested that noise might be just a shade lower than that of other high-quality home machines like the Ampex F-44 or the Beocord 2000.

Bias frequency of 80 kHz suggests that sound will be quite transparent, at least at 7½ ips.

For $399 in kit form, this looks like a “best buy.” But regardless of the ads, and the reports, it is not a professional-type recorder. It won’t match professional line inputs, and it won’t accept either low-impedance microphones or professional-type Cannon microphone plugs.

Sony VC-9E Pickup
(Report in High Fidelity magazine)

Frequency response: Pickup would sound somewhat bright, very sizzly at the top, with considerable emphasis of surface noise and high musical overtones, as from strings and brass. Low-end rise is probably not inherent in the pickup, but is due to undamped resonance between compliance of pickup and mass of arm and pickup. This could well cause somewhat heavy, muddy bass and a tendency toward acoustic feedback.

Channel separation quite good through most of the range, but the extreme bottom (below 50 Hz). At 3%, lows virtually indistinguishable from original, highs very slightly hard but with subtle loss of detail and sheen.

Don’t Write to Us
at Box 187, Wallingford. We aren’t there any more. We’ve changed our mailing address to Box 49, Elwyn, Pa, 19063. Write to us there.

Wallpaper (from page 2)

noise. If the background music in a public place goes off suddenly, practically everyone is aware that something has changed, but they usually don’t know just what. And let the record player get stuck in a groove, and it can sit there and repeat itself dozens of times before anyone starts to suspect that he’s heard that phrase before.

“Conventional” music is hardly ever considered to be music any more. It is simply pleasant noise, and anyone who has come to accept music—any kind of music—in this blase manner has been deprived of one of the more pleasurable aspects of life: the enjoyment of music as music.

To the person who thoroughly enjoys the sound of music, audible wallpaper poses a tangible threat to his enjoyment, simply by denying him the contrast between music and silence that makes music the more enjoyable. But what can he do to prevent this? Well, there are several things to be done, depending on how strongly he feels about the situation and how much of an individualist he is willing to be.

For one thing, he might make the effort, whenever practical, to avoid places that feature background music. For another thing, he can take to wearing ear plugs in public places. This isn’t as silly as it sounds, for the protection that ear plugs afford from audible wallpaper also applies to other, noisier noises in our environment that have been shown to cause permanent loss of hearing acuity. Don’t use the kind of plugs designed for underwater swimming, though; these are of little sound-stopping value. Use one of the varieties designed specifically for noise reduction. They don’t suppress all sounds, but merely attenuate them by about 20 db, which will still allow you to hear normal speech clearly. Don’t drive a car with the window shut while wearing them, though; you might not hear a warning horn beep or an approaching train whistle.

If he has the necessary self-confidence, he might also lodge occasional complaints with the managers of establishments that try to drown him in sound, perhaps also pointing out,
politely, that the loud music gives the place an atmosphere of cheapness and he’s sure that isn’t the intended impression.

He can also help to preserve his own musical enjoyment by trying to refrain from playing a favorite work too often. Once a day is too much; once per hour will ruin the average work for him in a few evenings. Certainly, liking something is an excellent reason for listening to it, but with a little self discipline, he can like it for a lot longer than he could otherwise. And his life will be just a little bit more enjoyable for doing so.

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**Record Reviews**

**Brahms: Symphonies #3 and 4**

*Berlin Philharmonic Orch., von Karajan. DGG tape DGK8927.*

These are not our cup of tea. The performances are rather stolid, and the recording of the 3rd Symphony has an odd hollowness and murkiness that helps matters not at all. There are better available versions of both.

**Chopin: The Nocturnes**

*Arthur Rubinstein. RCA Victor LSC-7050 (two discs).*

If these Nocturnes are never played better than this, we couldn’t care less. These are exquisite performances!

The recording, via RCA Victor’s Dynagroove process is a far cry from the earlier excesses that gave Dynagroove its horrid reputation among perfectionists. One is simply not aware of the recording at all, as long as it is played at the right volume, which is about what you would hear from a good first-balcony concert-hall seat. (Or what you might hear from the patio on a warm summer night when someone is playing in the conservatory.) At higher levels, the sound becomes twangy and slightly boomy.

We haven’t heard the tape, but we doubt that it could be as good as the disc. RCA Victor isn’t EX+ing their tapes yet.

**Dvorak: Piano Quintet in A. Op. 81**

**Francaix: Trio for Violin, Viola and Cello**

*Jacob Latriner (piano), Jascha Heifetz (violin 1), Israel Baker (violin 2), Joseph di Pasquale (viola), Gregor Piatagorski (cello). RCA Victor Dynagroove disc LSC-2985.*

Dynagroove, indeed! This doesn’t sound even remotely like the sonic monstrosities visited upon us by the early Dynagroove releases. The sound, generally, is superb. The only criticism we might make of it is that it is just a bit too slickly pretty, like a color photo that has all the right colors in the right balance but has just a mite too much color.

The performances of both works seems somewhat the same way, too. They are played with absolute technical perfection, with all the right notes and tempos in the right places, but with little real feeling for the music. Too many retakes, perhaps?

**Schubert: Symphonies 1 and 2**

*South German Philharmonic Orch., Karl Ristenpart. Checkmate disc C-76005.*

Technically, these checkmate recordings from Elektra have everything going for them. They’re Dolbyized, they’re cut directly from the original master tapes, and they’re cut at half speed (so that the cutting equipment will be dealing with frequencies only half as high as those in the original program material). The result is a disc that has less “disc sound” than any we’ve heard for a long, long time—one that sounds in fact very much like an original master tape, and a very quiet one at that.

The performances, despite some slightly rough playing, are buoyant, lyrical and animated with much of the spontaneity of a live performance. Unfortunately, most of the potential flavor of realism is lost through a recording technique that presents an orchestra having breadth but hardly any depth, center fill, or hall acoustics. It’s not that the instruments are too close; they all sound the same distance away, as though there were no front or rear of the orchestra.

We cannot commend Elektra too enthusiastically for their perfectionist approach to disc processing, but we sincerely hope they’ll give some second thoughts to their original recording technique for future releases.

**Verdi Spectacular**

*Camaraata and the Kingsway Symphony Orch. London Phase-4 tape LCL75012 or disc 21012.*

Ampex sent us two tape versions of this, identical in every respect except that one had been duplicated in the usual way while the other had been made using Ampex’s new noise-reducing EX+ process. The comparison just confirmed our earlier reaction to EX+; it does reduce tape hiss dramatically, and it does so without adding any audible distortion.

Even apart from this, “Verdi Spectacular” is one of the best Phase-4 recordings we’ve heard yet. The mikes have been backed off far enough to provide some nice sense of blending and perspective, there’s a minimum of audible gimmicking during the recording, and the strings, for once, are sweet and rich—a refreshing change from the usual Phase-4 shrillness. Directionality is exaggerated, but at least there’s some center fill.

We found the program of Verdi orchestral excerpts thoroughly enjoyable—much more so in fact than we usually find Verdi’s operas.

Except for the unusual lack of screech and the remarkable depth, there are few sonic surprises on this, though. Balance is good, bass is full but not very deep, brass sounds are natural and the cellos are gorgeously rich. The only real blooper we noted was a tape splice where the musical pitch changed by a good semitone.

Our disc was quieter than the tape (Dolby?), but we actually found that we preferred the sound from the tape, thanks to EX+.

**Watch for the EX+**

If we read our tea leaves properly, it seems that Ampex is now using their EX+ duplicating process for all of their new tapes, including new copies of previously-released tapes. They are also, conveniently, putting the EX+ symbol on the outer wrapper of every EX+ tape. The point should be obvious; if you have a choice when buying tapes, pick the one with the EX+ mark.
Miscellany

Ortofon SL-15 Follow-Up

We haven't changed our mind about the performance of the new SL-15 pickup, but we have encountered a potential problem with it that is not mentioned in Ortofon's instruction sheet. It seems that tone arms that don't provide complete isolation of their output ground circuits may hum with the SL-15.

Normally, the ground connections at the output of a pickup should be kept separate from one another until they connect to the system ground, right at the preamp inputs. If the ground circuits are connected together elsewhere too, as in the tone arm leads, a ground loop will be set up and will induce hum into the pickup input circuits.

With most pickups, the resulting hum will usually be below audibility (depending on the preamp, among other things). But in the case of the SL-15, what would normally be inaudible hum is fed to the pickup's output step-up transformer. The output leads from the latter are quite short, and may place it close enough to the power transformer in a preamp or receiver to cause inductive hum. If this happens, orienting the transformer in a different direction may clear up the trouble. Otherwise, you can add short extension cables between the transformer and the preamp inputs. Keep these less than 2 feet long, to avoid resonant peaking.

Thorens Tilt

We're happy to report that it is a simple matter to correct the rather severe tilt that we observed in some of the tone arms supplied as part of the Thorens TD-150 turntable.

Remove the counterweight, and lift the arm as high as it will go, to expose two small screws on the underside of the arm tube, just in front of the pivots. Loosen these disconnecting one ground circuit at the preamp. This can be done by inserting that plug part way into its socket, so that only the inner conductor makes contact, or by bending open the grounding tabs on the input plug. Usually, disconnecting the left-channel ground will give lowest hum, but try both and pick the best.

Another potential source of hum in the SL-15 is a power transformer too close to the pickup's step-up transformer. The output leads from the latter are quite short, and may place it close enough to the power transformer in a preamp or receiver to cause inductive hum.

Shure V-15-II Follow-Up

Those who read our Stereophile report on the Shure V-15-II in the last issue will recall our complaint about the pickup's dull-sounding high end, and Shure's explanation that the pickup needed a certain amount of capacitive loading (of 400 to 600 pF total) in order to yield a flat high-end response. We verified this in our own subsequent experiments, arriving at a total optimum value of around 600 pF per channel. (With an SME arm and Dyna preamp, this meant connecting a 400-pF capacitor across each pickup input, but other arms and other preamps will require different amounts of extra capacitance. The optimum value can be determined only through the use of a good frequency test record and an audio voltmeter connected to the preamp's Tape Output. Attempting to measure the pickup's response with the VTVM directly at the pickup outputs will add the meter's cable capacitance to the total, giving misleading readings.)

The flattest response we were able to obtain is shown in the response curve below. The slight rise at the extreme high end is small enough to ignore in most cases, but can be remedied if desired through judicious use of treble tone controls.

With the response curve shown below (and without further treble correction), the pickup sounded just a bit less clean on very loudly recorded passages, but was still judged to be the cleanest-tracking pickup we have heard. Its sound was noticeably less "alive" and transparent than that of a Decca Mark II, but markedly cleaner.
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14
Irma discs.
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Mylar?) also mentions, seemingly casually, the
advantages of using polyester (Mylar?) base material. And since all our
in immunity to induced hum pickup
radiate rather badly, so check for
head cleaner, but it will do the job
No Back Issues
In answer to the numerous requests
we get for back issues of The Stereophile, we are sorry to say that none
are available. We print only as many
copies as are needed to supply our
subscribers, plus a few extra to send
out to new subscribers as these sign
up.
If you wish to delve into some
back issues, we suggest placing an
ad in our "Audio Mart" column asking
to buy or borrow the needed issues
from other subscribers.

Ampex Goes Polyester
At last, it's official. The little brochure that Ampex tapes (formerly
UST) encloses with its EX+ releases also mentions, seemingly casually, the
advantages of using polyester (Mylar?) base material. And since all our
recent pre-EX+ review tapes have been on polyester, too, it seems safe
to assume that polyester will be the
rule from now on, at least on Ampex's prerecorded tapes.
We must say, "It's about time," and we will also say "Huzzah!" because it
will now be possible to expect at least as long a life from tapes kept in
storage as we have gotten all along from discs.

The Face Is Familiar
Well, it seems we're not the only "regular" publication that has troubles
with its regularity. The following is quoted, verbatim, from a recent issue
of Langevin's entertaining and informative "Engineering Letter."
"The Langevin Engineering Letter
began as a monthly publication, and
we had every intention of keeping it
that way. However, as with the best
laid schemes of mice and men, the
dates gang aft a-gley.
"Beginning with this issue, we
(Langevin) will use a consecutive
numbering system. This somehow
seems more fitting for a sheet that
appears at irregular intervals."

Somehow, that has a familiar ring
to us.

Emergency Capstan Cleaner
If you're ever on the verge of tape-
something, or are part-way through
a taping, and suddenly find (by feel
or by sound) that the capstan has
picked up a clump of gunk and you
don't have the head cleaner and Q-tips
on hand, don't despair. Just lick the
tip of your index finger and hold it
against the capstan until the hunk of
gunk is gone. Saliva isn't as quick as
head cleaner, but it will do the job
in a pinch, and without making the
capstan moist enough to cause tape
slippage.

Olfactory Appeal
We were intrigued to note that a
sample pre-recorded tape cassette
sent to us by Ampex (we don't even
have a player - yet) was neatly
wrapped in some clear plastic mater-
ial that smelled distinctly like some
inexpensive perfumes. Since the tape
was of Leopold Stokowskis Phase-4
arrangement of "Scheherazade," we
couldn't help but wonder if the per-
fumed tape is to be the next Won-
drous Innovation inflicted on us un-
suspecting consumers by the Depth
Psychology Researchers on Madison
Avenue.
We can see it, or smell it, now -
the Chopin Preludes redolent of vio-
lets, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony
with a whiff of Bond Street after-
shave lotion, and maybe one of the
newer bluegrass folk singers set off
with a delicate amalgam of old socks
and stale sweat.
The mind boggles.

Shaky Schedule
Despite appearances, we still do
have a four-issue-per-year publishing
schedule. We're just rather badly be-
hind on it.
For the edification of those who've
been wondering, this is officially Issue
Number 2 of 1967. (Note the expiration
code on your mailing label; this
may be the last issue due you on your
subscription.) There will be two more
issues dated 1967, which will follow
in fairly close succession early in 1968.
By the end of '68, we expect to have
captured up on our schedule, which
means that subscribers should actually
get their 4-68 issue before the end of
'68. (We can hear cynical sneers in
the background. Okay, just wait and
see!)

No Back Issues
In answer to the numerous requests
we get for back issues of The Stereophile, we are sorry to say that none
are available. We print only as many
copies as are needed to supply our
subscribers, plus a few extra to send
out to new subscribers as these sign
up.
If you wish to delve into some
back issues, we suggest placing an
ad in our "Audio Mart" column asking
to buy or borrow the needed issues
from other subscribers.
No Recommendations

Our list of Recommended Components is undergoing a complete revision, in view of recent developments in the component field, so has been omitted from this issue. It will appear as usual in the next issue, which will be out a lot sooner than you'd think on the basis of our tardiness with this issue.

Quad Dependability

Some time ago, we knocked the Quad electrostatic speaker system out of our list of "Recommended Components" because of an alarming number of complaints we had received from readers whose Quads had suffered power-supply failures. Since then, we have been led to believe that Quad eliminated this particular vulnerability, and that subsequent Quads have proven to be extremely reliable. We would like to be able to reinstate the Quad in our list of Recommendations, because it is one of the most natural-sounding loudspeakers available today, but before we do so, we'd like to take a quickier-type reader please let us know what your experiences have been with recent production, or repaired, Quad electrostatics? We'd appreciate any comments, however brief.

Universalized Marantz

We were more than just a little bit interested to hear, via a letter from Marantz to a customer (who forwarded it to us), that the Marantz SLT-12 turntable is to be made available in a universal model, the SLT-12U, which will accommodate "most of the fine cartridges now available with the exception of Ortofon and Decca cartridges."

We presume that refers to the old heavy-weight Ortofon and the original-style plug-in Deccas, for Ortofon now has a small, lightweight pickup (the SL-15) and Decca now has a universal pickup, the CAE. Which means the new Marantz table will practically any modern pickup.

We were interested in testing one of these tables when it first came out, but hadn't been able to borrow one. Now we'll just have to get hold of one of the new models for testing. Marantz, please note.

Up for Expiration?

If your expiration code (on your address label) says 2-67 or 2-5, your subscription has expired with this issue. We hope you'll renew; now that we're starting to get organized, we'd hate to lose your support.

Oh, and don't forget our address change when mailing in your renewal. We are now at Box 49, Elwyn, Pa. 19063. And the subscription cost is still $4 for 4 issues.

Ad Quote

"You Make More Money With McIntosh." (From an ad in the 1967 "Sound Industry Directory.")
First things first, we always say.