

RECORD WEAR

14276

Stereo Review

JULY 1976 • ONE DOLLAR

A LOOK AT RECORD WEAR: CAUSES AND CURES
★ TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF AMERICAN MUSIC ★



It would be foolish to create
a new line of speakers
and not overcome these obstacles...

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We think you'll end up agreeing that a good new idea beats a good old idea every time.

U.S. Pioneer Electronics Corp.,
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CIRCLE NO. 43 ON READER SERVICE CARD

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Pioneer HPM-100
4-way 4-driver system

Pioneer HPM-60
4-way 4-driver system

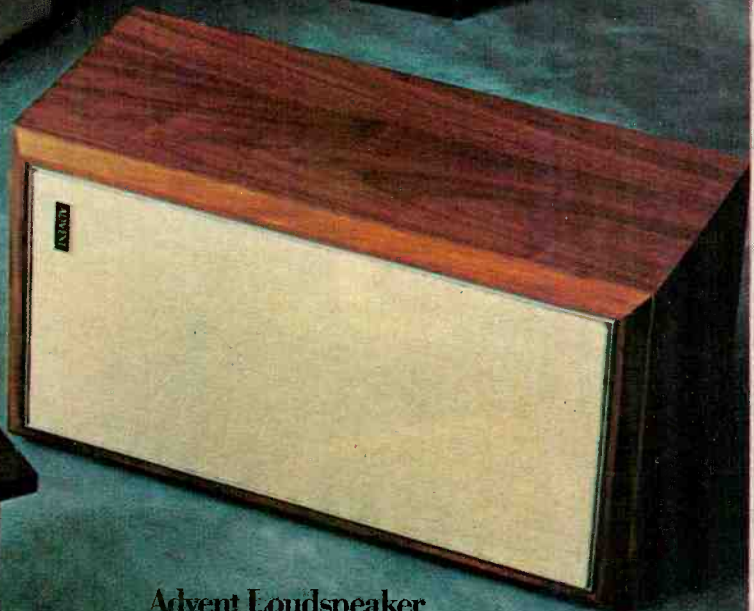
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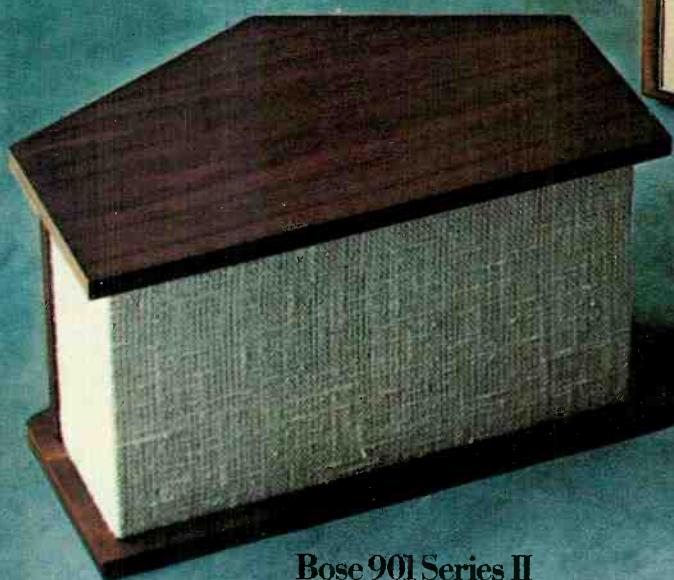
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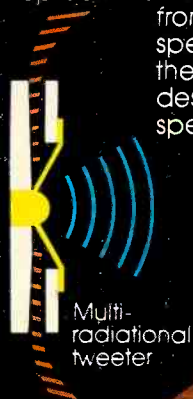
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LM 110



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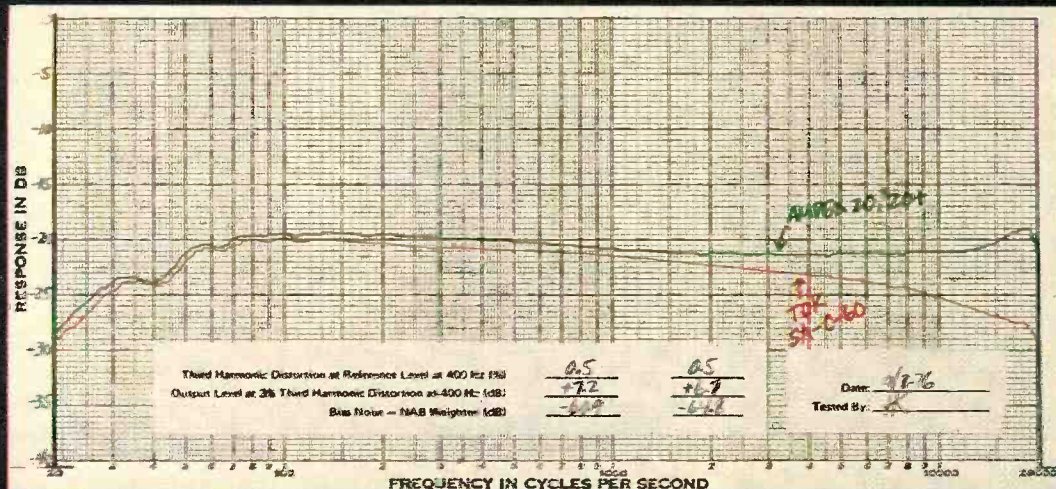
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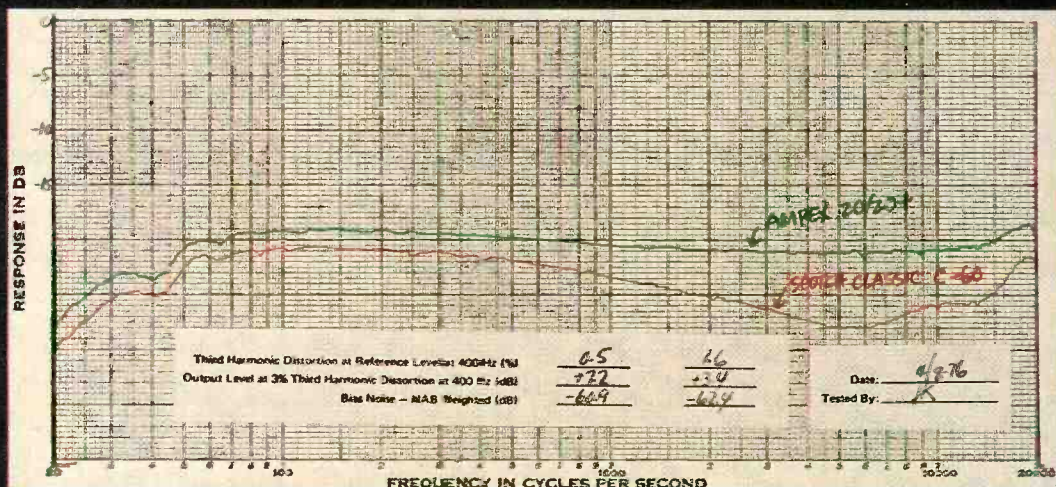
*PATENT PENDING
 Cabinets finished in simulated walnut grain.

THE PREMIUM CASSETTE PLAY-OFFS.



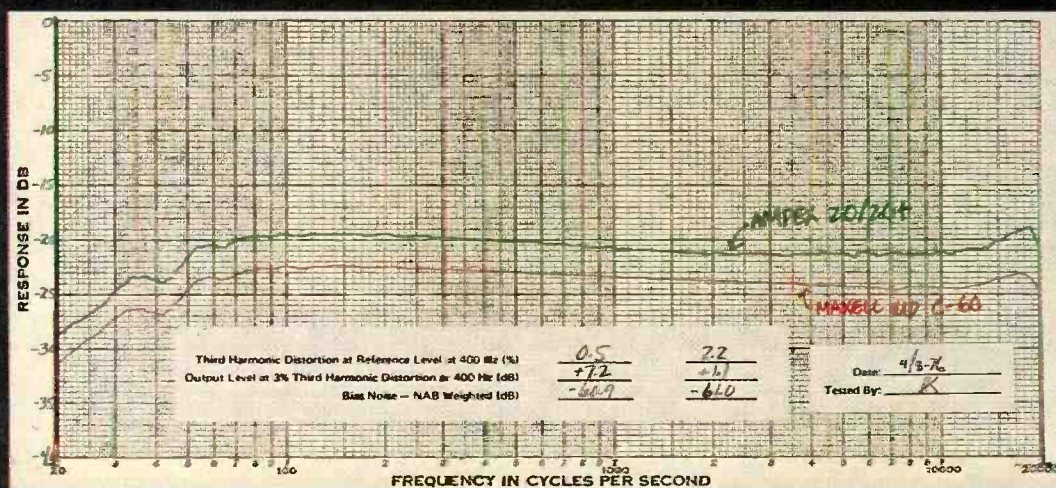
AMPEX 20/20+ VS. TDK SA.

THE WINNER: AMPEX.



AMPEX 20/20+ VS. SCOTCH CLASSIC.

THE WINNER: AMPEX.



AMPEX 20/20+ VS. MAXELL UD.

THE WINNER: AMPEX.

THE WINNER.



Play-offs were held April 8, 1976, in the Ampex Magnetic Tape Research Laboratory at Redwood City, California, using a Nakamichi-1000 cassette deck at standard factory bias setting. We measured frequency response at a record level 20 dB below 200 nwb/m, third harmonic distortion at zero dB (200 nwb/m, 400 Hz), output at 3% third harmonic distortion (400 Hz), and N.A.B. weighted noise. C60 cassettes were used. The photos are unretouched chart recorder output. You can see why Ampex 20/20+ is the best quality cassette you can buy.

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Ampex 20/20+ cassettes, 8-track cartridges and open reel tape. If you haven't been using Ampex tapes, you haven't been using the best.

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CIRCLE NO. 3 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Editorially Speaking

By William Anderson



THEY'RE ALL SINGING OUR SONGS

YOU might think that someone working every day with anything as prose-packed as the average issue of STEREO REVIEW would find something to do with his spare time other than reading—particularly reading about music. Let me, however, observe in passing that a reader is a reader, that an editor has as much right to a busman's holiday as any other poor toiler—and then get on with recommending a fascinating book on an American musical subject any observer will agree has more often been kicked under the rug than given a serious treatment. The book is William W. Austin's "Susanna," "Jeanie," and "The Old Folks at Home" (subtitled *The Songs of Stephen C. Foster*), and it has given me more to think about than any two books I have read this year. London Editor Henry Pleasants, who agrees with me on the book's importance, reviews it on page 18, and I feel strongly enough about it to add my thumb to the scales.

If you are one of those who read magazines from front to back (rather than vice versa) you will have reached this page via the double

metaphor of our cover and the splash of patriotic color on the Table of Contents and will already know that this is our American Music issue, a salute to the Republic on its two-hundredth birthday. You will also have noticed that it is somewhat smaller than the average telephone directory and may therefore be wondering how we managed to fit so large a subject into so small a package. We didn't, of course; anybody who knows anything at all about the subject knows that would be impossible. Henry R. Cleveland, for example, knew it. Writing in *North American* magazine in 1840, he observed (I quote from Austin):

"... American music, if it ever exists in the true sense of the word, must be as various, as copious, and as comprehensive, as the character of the people growing up under such widely differing influences. . . ."

Things certainly haven't gotten any less various or copious since then, and so, secure in the knowledge that we have for some time been celebrating American music through our perseverant championing of Billings, Joplin,

Gottschalk, and a whole slew of other native voices, we have contented ourselves with offering a group of articles intended to symbolize American music's variety and copiousness. James Goodfriend's comprehensive (but not complete) "Calendar of American Music" can be taken as the centerpiece of this effort; even a quick glance at its contents should be enough to convince an iconoclast that if he is proud of nothing else this year he can at least be proud of American music. Bernard Jacobson's "Basic Library of American Music" translates this general statement into particulars: a choice handful of recordings which should be as impressive to the ear as the Calendar is to the eye. Then there is Chris Albertson's "A Word About Jazz"—and surely a word will suffice, for who in the world does not know that jazz is one of our principal—and most popular—exports? The world has, indeed, always valued our popular music, often higher than we have ourselves, and to symbolize that fact we have chosen Elvis Presley (this year marks his second decade of pop stardom), without whom there would likely have been no rock-and-roll, no Beatles, no Stones, no Jones—one wonders sometimes what might possibly have taken their place. Those disposed to groan at that alternative will appreciate this continuation of the Cleveland quotation begun above:

"... In America, music must be in a considerable degree popular . . . [it] must be surrendered to the people, must be domiciled among them, must grow up among them, or it cannot exist at all. . . . *Music must be made popular, not by debasing the art, but by elevating the people.*" [Italics mine.]

Cleveland, you see, was kidding all along, and, Lord help us, such kidders are with us yet. It may be that even two hundred years is not enough time to grow up in, but Mr. Austin's book on Foster is to me a little light of hope on the far side of the birthday cake. It is heartening not only that an American musicologist has had the temerity to approach such a debased subject, that he knows they have all been singing our songs from Tokyo to Santiago and from Helsinki to Sydney for years, but that *it's nothing to be ashamed of.*

Stereo Review

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STANLEY NEUFELD

Editorial and Executive Offices
Ziff-Davis Publishing Company
One Park Avenue, New York, New York 10016
212 725-3500

Eastern Advertising Manager: Richard J. Halpern

Midwestern Office: The Pattis Group
4761 West Touhy Ave., Lincolnwood, Illinois 60464
312 679-1100
Arnold S. Hoffman

Western Office
9025 Wilshire Boulevard
Beverly Hills, California 90211
213 273-8050; 272-1161

Western Advertising Manager: Bud Dean

Japan: James Yagi
Oji Palace Aoyama, 6-25, Minami Aoyama
6-Chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan
Telephone: 407-1930/6821, 582-2851

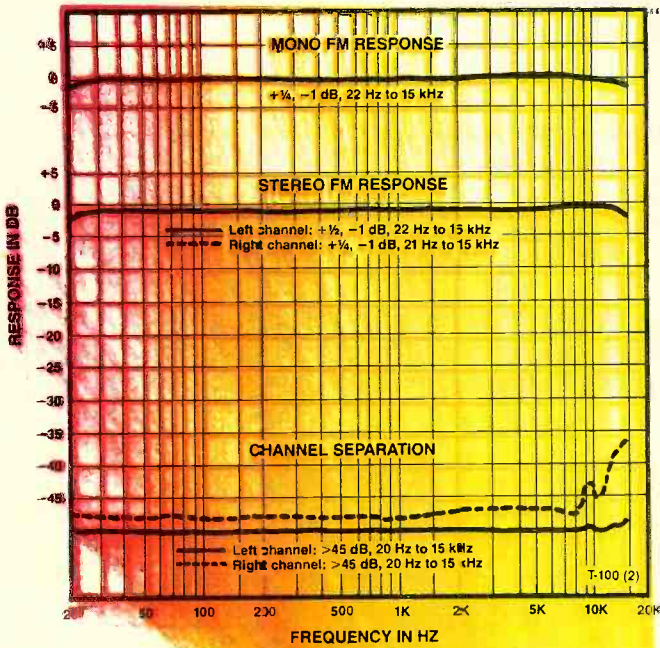
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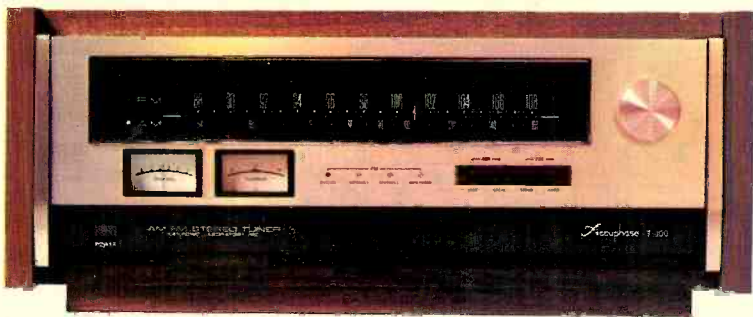
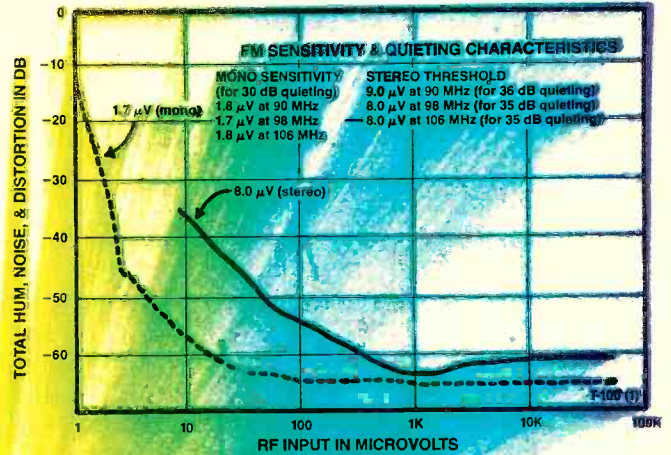


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"There is no doubt that its stereo channel separation and distortion characteristics surpass anything in our previous experience. Its AM frequency response was not only, by far, the flattest and widest we have ever measured on an AM tuner, it is sufficiently free of distortion and noise to make it a truly useful program source even for high fidelity listening."*



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The Dual tonearm.

Some of the ways that "precision makes the difference."

The essential beauty of a tonearm is not in its appearance, but in the performance of its critical role in the interaction of stylus and record. The conversion of groove modulations into music—as well as the life of one's records—is significantly influenced by every aspect of tonearm design: geometry, balance, mass, resonance, bearing friction and the application of stylus pressure and anti-skating.

Serious music lovers know this. And some who are now Dual owners tell us they wish they had understood more about tonearms hundreds of dollars in ruined records earlier.

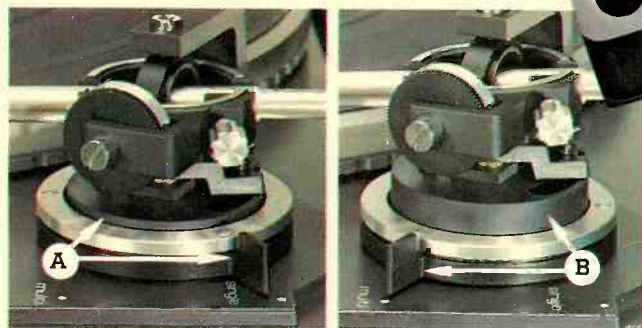
If you are uncertain about the quality of your present tonearm, here are some guidelines to consider. They are the design principles that allow every Dual tonearm—even on Dual's least expensive model—to produce optimum performance from today's finest cartridges and maximum longevity from all records.

Why a straight line is the preferred shape

The effective length of any tonearm is the distance between the pivot and the stylus tip. A straight line—the shortest distance between these two points—achieves maximum rigidity and lowest mass. Both highly desirable characteristics.

(A) Made Selector of Dual 1249 parallels tonearm to record in single-play for perfect vertical tracking.

(B) Tonearm moves up to parallel center of stack in multi-play.



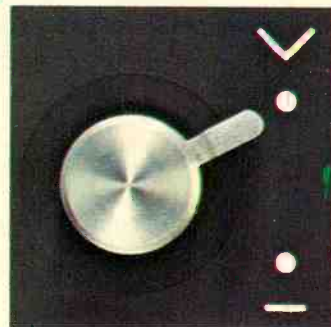
Tonearms whose shape deviates from the straight and narrow may appear interesting, but their unnecessary mass and hence increased resonance can only detract from the quality of music reproduction.

Why stylus force must be applied perpendicular to record.

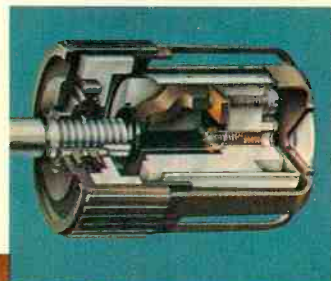
Stylus force should be applied in such a way that there is equal pressure on each groove wall. This balanced pressure should then be maintained throughout play, independent of groove velocity, location, or turntable leveling. Further, tracking force should be constant even under (all-too-frequent) record-warp conditions.

All these requirements are met by Dual's technique for applying stylus force: a long coiled spring centered around the vertical pivot. With this system, the tonearm tracks flawlessly even under such extreme conditions as the chassis being tilted 45° or more.

Mechanical sensor indicates when Dual 510 semi-automated tonearm is positioned precisely over 12" or 7" lead-in groove.



Unique counterbalance of Dual CS701 houses two separately tuned anti-resonance filters which absorb resonant energy in the frequency ranges of the tonearm/cartridge system and the chassis to minimize acoustical feedback.





Tonearm of Dual 1249 pivots in four-point gyrosopic gimbal, suspended within a rigid frame. Each gimbal is hand-assembled, and special gauges assure that each will conform to Dual's stringent specifications. Other Dual models with gimbal-mounted tonearms: 1228, 510, 601 and 701.

Dual's anti-skating system also contributes significantly to maintaining equal stylus pressure on both groove walls. In addition to the three separate precise calibrations for conical, elliptical and CD-4 styli, there is automatic adjustment during play for the inherent change in skating force that occurs as the stylus moves toward the record center.

Why bearing friction should be both low and consistent.

Dual uses the best (and most costly) way to manufacture precision low-friction bearings. The metal is first hardened, then honed; a process which

produces microscopically smooth surfaces. All pivots are hand-assembled and individually checked with gauges specially designed by Dual. The extremely low bearing friction thus achieved is compatible with the finest cartridges, which are usually designed for ultra-light tracking. Further, the high standards of production consistency in unit after unit assure highly accurate stylus pressure and anti-skating calibrations.

Dual owners who know the difference

These are a few of the reasons why serious music lovers—record reviewers, hi-fi magazine editors and their readers—own more Duals than any other turntable. This may be all you need to know in order to select a Dual. But which Dual?

Until recently, all Dual turntables were fully automatic and could be used in both single-play and multi-play. There are now four such models. Three other Duals are single-play only (two fully automatic, one semi-automatic). Dual also employs all three types of drive systems: belt, rim, or direct.

There's no need to decide on a specific Dual model right now. The best time and place for that is when you're at your United Audio dealer, where you can have demonstrated all the differences that Dual precision does indeed make.



The Dual 1225.

Fully automatic, single-play/multi-play. Viscous damped cue-control, pitch-control, 10 3/4" platter, less than \$140.00, less base. Dual 1226, with cast platter, rotating single-play spindle, less than \$170.00. Dual 1228 with gimbaled tonearm, synchronous motor, illuminated strobe, variable tracking angle, less than \$200.00.



The Dual 1249.

Fully automatic, single-play/multi-play. Belt-drive, 12" dynamically-balanced platter, less than \$280.00, less base. Full-size belt-drive models include: Dual 510, semi-automatic, less than \$200.00. Dual 601, fully automatic, less than \$250.00. (Dual CS601, with base and cover, less than \$270.00)



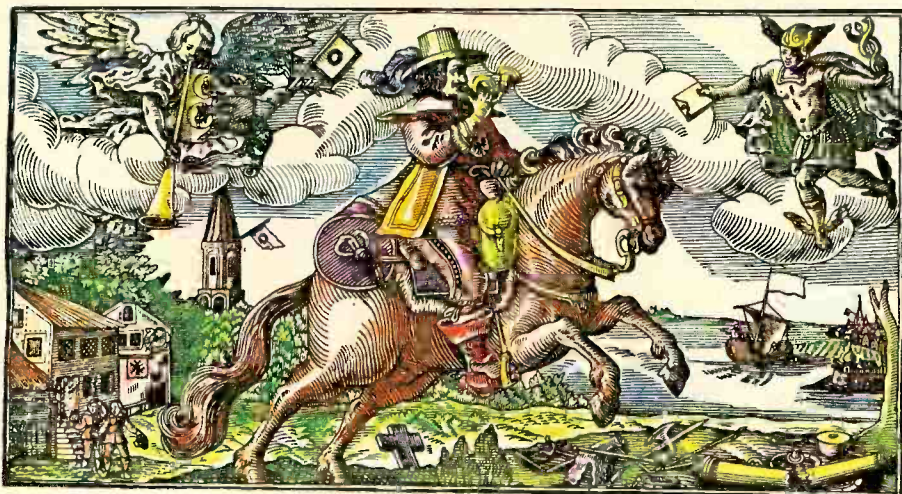
The Dual CS701.

Fully automatic start and stop, single-play. D.C. brushless, electronic direct drive motor, tuned anti-resonance filters. Electronic pitch-control (8% for each speed (33 1/3 and 45 rpm) with illuminated strobe, less than \$400, including base and cover.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

English Spring

● I was very grateful for James Goodfriend's remarks and recommendations about modern English composers (May) and thought that he might be interested in a recommendation of mine: William Alwyn. Lyrita has magnificently recorded Alwyn's five symphonies (conducted by the composer himself with the London Philharmonic). The Third Symphony, a really stunning, beautiful, and original work, is available, along with two other discs by Alwyn, through the Musical Heritage Society. In addition, Mr. Alwyn's strange and haunting song cycle, *Mirages*, his subtle chamber music, and his Elizabethan Dances are well worth knowing. Unfortunately, his great film scores (*Odd Man Out*, for instance) have eclipsed Alwyn's other music—music which is extraordinarily original and inventive, and, most of all, passionate and moving.

BRIAN MURPHY
Birmingham, Mich.

● I was gratified to read James Goodfriend's column in the May issue about lesser-known English composers. So often in the musical world the truly talented people are less concerned about their press releases than the quality of the music they produce. One such man, Dr. Herbert Howells, was my composition professor at the Royal College of Music in London. He was decorated by the Queen with the C.B.E., a very special honor accorded to few individuals. Dr. Howells is a fascinating man whose music was shaped by his life's fortunes. He loved to share his reminiscences about George Gershwin ("a charming, friendly chap who lit up a room"), Elgar ("a rather frightening, unapproachable man"), and others such as Ravel, Bartók, Vaughan Williams, "Willy" Walton, and Holst (a close personal friend). It is our good fortune that some Howells recordings are finally available in this country; they are a must-hear for the curious, quixotic music lover.

DAYLE RUGG
Franklin Square, N.Y.

Bidú

● When I received the May issue of STEREO REVIEW, I was brought up short by seeing the name Bidú Sayão in William Livingstone's "The Opera File." The delightful Miss Sayão was perhaps my first great love among the

many opera stars I have heard and seen over the years. I first heard her on a broadcast that memorable afternoon of February 13, 1937, when she sang *Manon* at the Metropolitan. I had not quite turned seventeen and I was already hooked on the Met broadcasts, and I can remember the voice of Milton Cross telling us all about the petite Brazilian soprano who was making a most auspicious debut that afternoon. The next week I bought my first recording of Miss Sayão's voice, the two arias from *Il Guarany*. From then on I never missed an opportunity to hear her sing, and she is well represented in my record collection today. Thank you for those kind words on behalf of my early vocal love.

WILLIAM SCHARF
Louisville, Ohio

● I enjoyed your article on Bidú Sayão very much. It made me dig out what records I have of her and play a few numbers. In such a far-out place as Billings, Montana, my chances of seeing many of the great singers of the Forties were limited, but I did see Miss Sayão in 1945 when I was able to spend a furlough of a couple of weeks in New York. I went to all the radio broadcasts I could get into, and I saw her as a guest on a James Melton show. I can even remember that she sang *Estrellita* and a *Traviata* duet with Melton. I've always felt lucky to have seen her that one time, and I also feel very fortunate that I am still able to hear her on records.

THOMAS H. HUGHES
Billings, Mon.

Pregnant Pause

● This afternoon "Music to Get Pregnant By" (May) added just the right essence of mirth to what would otherwise have been a very banal solo lunch. Your graphic changes in the regular columns in this issue are also welcome and appreciated.

This is my first letter to you in over ten years. Let's keep growing together. It wouldn't be bad for either of us if I find something worth writing about every ten years for the next eighty years (that'll put me at 101). I'll do my part to keep the bargain.

RONALD J. GOMBACH
New York, N. Y.

● The Mike Royko piece about rock music in the May issue was great. Our household

still hasn't stopped laughing. There are chilling ramifications, however. I'm referring to what may turn out to be the most "dangerous" music of all: the German lied. I shudder to think of all the innocent college girls who not only listen to, but study (presumably under the guidance of dirty old professors) such composers as Wolf, Schumann, Brahms, etc. And what about Wagner's music dramas? Tons of syncopation. Is that why he was such a rake, or was it the other way around?

DANA MATHEWSON
Getzville, N. Y.

Joni

● Your beautifully illustrated April cover captures the "innocence" of my favorite performer. However, the "J" in Joni and the "I" in Innocence look exactly the same in the copy on the upper left-hand corner of the picture. This form is correct in Latin but nevertheless STEREO REVIEW publishes in English!

TIM DOWNS
Chicago, Ill.

Yes—but then have you ever heard a Swede try to pronounce a "J"?

● Noel Coppage's patterning of Joni Mitchell on a biblical archetype—Joni as a modern Eve—was sheer genius (April). His tasteful and effective references to her song lyrics and his handling of the romanticism-realism balance in Ms. Mitchell's work with Joni as prairie girl transformed into a Los Angeles canyon lady resulted in a highly informative, thought-provoking essay.

GRALIN H. KNIGHT
Elmira, N. Y.

Critics' Critic

● For Noel Coppage, have done with your cloying syntax and concentrate on expressing your ideas. For Linda Frederick, concentrate on cloying syntax and have done with your ideas.

DARRYL HATTENHAUER
Sacramento, Calif.

Got that, you two?

Treemonisha

● The jaunty Atlanta premiere of Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha* was orchestrated by T. J. Anderson, not by William Bolcom as Eric Salzman indicates in the May issue. (Mr. Bolcom later did the Wolf Trap Farm Park performances.) It was Mr. Anderson's version of *Treemonisha* that was first broadcast in this country by National Public Radio. His orchestral work is represented on CRI, Nonesuch, and in the Black Composers Series on Columbia.

WILLIAM MYERS
Nashville, Tenn.

● A few points in Eric Salzman's cogent review of the first complete recording of Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha* (May) need clarification. In the late 1960's composer T. J. Anderson orchestrated Joplin's opera with editorial help from William Bolcom and aid from a Rockefeller Foundation grant. Anderson's orchestration was used when *Treemonisha* was performed at the Atlanta Symphony Hall on January 28 and 29, 1972. For the presentation of the opera at Wolf Trap Farm later that year William Bolcom was commissioned to make a new orchestration. Like the 1975 Houston Grand Opera production of *Treemonisha*,

which was taken to Broadway and was recorded, the one in Atlanta had some "heavy guns." Robert Shaw conducted members of the Atlanta Symphony, and Katherine Dunham was the director and choreographer. The music department of Morehouse College and Atlanta University's Center for African and African-American Studies also participated.

Norman Lloyd of the Rockefeller Foundation, who set the Anderson orchestration of *Treemonisha* in motion, also played a pivotal role in launching Vera Brodsky Lawrence's important publication *The Collected Works of Scott Joplin*, which, though copyrighted in 1971, did not appear until 1972. The publication did not precede the Atlanta production. The two were concurrent manifestations of the Joplin revival.

ROBERT KIMBALL
New York, N.Y.

Advent's Trumpets

● The April review of "A Festival of Trumpets" fails to mention the album's availability on Advent cassette D1039. I was first informed of the Advent cassette catalog through STEREO REVIEW, so I expect you to keep up with their ever-expanding list and include them in your reviews as appropriate. "A Festival of Trumpets" is outstanding on cassette.

HARRY R. MCKINLEY
Southampton, Mass.

Davis' Gottschalk

● I felt prompted to purchase the Ivan Davis and both of the Leonard Pennario recordings after reading Robert Offergeld's Gottschalk review in the April issue. Mr. Davis' edifying and electrifying performances have rekindled my interest in Gottschalk, and, from what I have read, Louis Moreau himself may have played as well as Mr. Davis!

Mr. Pennario's approach pales in comparison. In some numbers he is either trying to avoid any semblance of a "corny" interpretation or he is simply anxious to read through it and get on to the next number. The major drawback for Mr. Pennario, however, was the piano supplied by Capitol Records. It had a woody quality below mid-keyboard; close-in miking served only to emphasize this, and artificial reverb did not alleviate it. The result: audible intermodulation distortion. London Records, on the other hand, supplied Mr. Davis with a much better instrument and gave him the benefit of a concert-hall pickup.

Let's all hope Mr. Davis will offer more of his highly listenable interpretations, including some lesser-known Gottschalk works.

PHILIP C. ERHORN
Stony Brook, N. Y.

Music's Majesties

● Aram Bakshian's piece on musical royalty in your May issue was very well assembled and presented, splendidly researched, and marvelously illustrated. I was surprised only that he did not include our present cello-playing Prince Charles. And didn't the Duke of Windsor, in his salad days, sit in on drums with jazz bands?

STEVEN CANNON
London, England

Yes, indeed he did, and the performances, as far as we know, were mercifully not recorded. And then, of course, there was former Prime Minister Edward Heath, who took a considerable ragging for his organ playing, the dowa-

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ger Queen Liliuokalani of Hawaii, who composed Aloha Oe, and on and on.

● I noticed a slight sin of omission in "The Music of Their Majesties" that you might like to correct. While it is true that the Vienna Concentus Musicus' recording of "Music at the Court of Leopold I" has been out of print as Bach Guild BGS-70690 for several years, the same recording has been available since last summer from the Musical Heritage Society as MHS 3154. It was released as part of a seven-disc set of Vienna Concentus Musicus recordings, most (if not all) of which were formerly on the Amadeo/Vanguard-Bach Guild labels. The set also includes: "Baroque Music in Salzburg," formerly BG 652/BGS 70652 and now on MHS 3151 (works by Biber and

Muffat); "Instrumental Music of the Year 1600," formerly BG 626 and now on MHS 3153 (works by Morley, Tomkins, Scheidt, G. Gabrieli, and others); and "Purcell: The Fantasias for Three to Seven Viols," formerly BG 676/BGS 70676 and now on MHS 3155.

ROBERT W. SCHIRMER
Stow, Ohio

● I enjoyed the article on royal composers and would like to add two: Alfonso X, "The Wise," and Don Carlo Gesualdo di Venosa. Alfonso the Wise (1221-1284), the Spanish king of Castile and Leon, was the leader of music of his time and place. His *Cantigas de Santa Maria* has had a number of recordings and is at present available on Musical Heritage Society OR 302 and Vanguard 7175. Ge-

sualdo (c. 1560-1613), a prince of Venosa, was a leader in Italian polyphony. His music is quite poetic and has a strangely modern sound. I recommend his *Responsoria* with the Prague Madrigalists directed by Miroslav Venhoda on Valois MB 785.

RONALD PATAKI
Jersey City, N.J.

Bergonzi's Verdi

● I thoroughly enjoy William Livingstone's column "The Opera File" and consider it a most welcome addition to STEREO REVIEW. I hope Mr. Livingstone will bring an unfortunate situation to the attention of his readers. About a year and a half ago I learned that Carlo Bergonzi was recording all of Verdi's tenor arias on three discs for Philips Records. As an operaphile, a Verdi buff, and a great admirer of Bergonzi, I was delighted and eagerly awaited the release of the records. I think Bergonzi is the finest tenor in Italian opera today, the best since Jussi Bjoerling, and three discs of Verdi tenor arias from *Oberto* to *Falstaff* is a most adventurous recording project.

To my dismay, the records were eventually released in Europe but never in the United States. I learned from Phonogram Limited in New York that one of the Bergonzi discs might be released here on Philips, but nothing has materialized. Bergonzi fans should write to Phonogram/Mercury, 110 West 57th Street, New York, N.Y. 10019, and perhaps the situation will be corrected.

THOMAS R. WILSON
Downers Grove, Ill.

Mr. Livingstone replies: No need to write. Thinking there would be insufficient demand for the Bergonzi set in the United States, Philips decided not to release it here, but numerous inquiries from collectors have already persuaded the company to change its mind; the album will come out here later this year.

Dandy Candide

● The "Hot Platters" article (April) was somewhat remiss in the quadraphonic department, overlooking one of the very best recordings, the original-cast album of *Candide* (Columbia Q2S 32923). If you hear it in full-logic decoding, you are right in the middle of the play and all sense of listening to a reproduction vanishes. Columbia apparently forgot to use its high-pass filter, for there's some window-rattling bass when the volcano erupts. And, although Bernstein's *Planets* does have a fine sense of ambiance, it also has some of the rawest, harshest sounds I've ever heard from Columbia.

WILLIAM SOMMERWERCK
Baltimore, Md.

Reissue Request

● In a recent issue you asked readers to submit the titles of musical works they would like to see issued or reissued on records. I would like to see Ferde Grofé's *Mississippi Suite* reissued. It's hard to believe there is no available recording of such a fine piece of music. I used to own a Mercury recording of the *Mississippi Suite* in the early Sixties and would enjoy having it reissued. And since Grofé was an American composer, it would be a nice idea to give him some recognition during our Bicentennial by recording some of his other compositions.

LADIMER J. YUNGER
San Diego, Calif.

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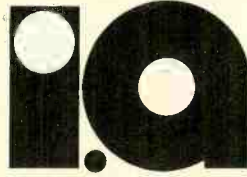


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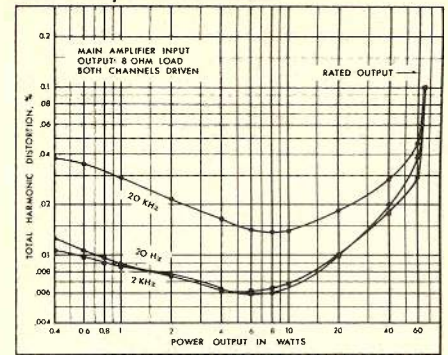


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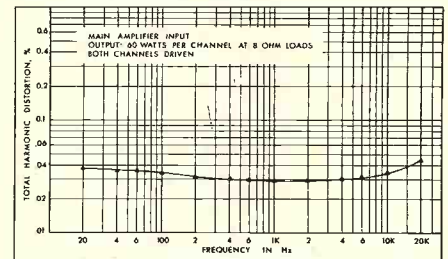
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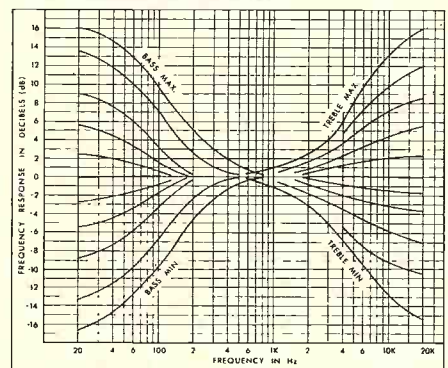
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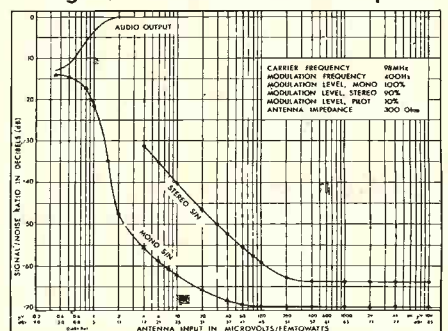
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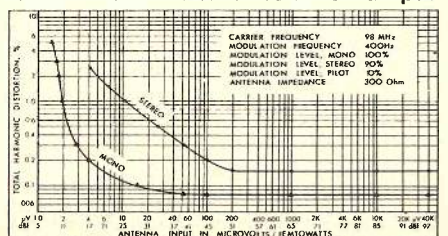
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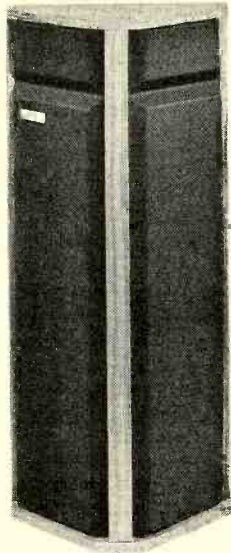


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STEPHEN COLLINS FOSTER is the most famous American songwriter of the nineteenth century. He is more famous now than he was during his brief lifetime: 1826-1864. But even today little is generally known about him beyond his name. In his recent book, *Susanna, Jeanie and The Old Folks at Home*, William W. Austin, Goldwin Smith Professor of Musicology at Cornell University, puts it aptly: "The 20th century public that knows *Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair* knows the name of Foster. It knows that he lived unhappily, dreaming of an ideal Victorian woman in the intervals between his listening to black



Foster Hall Collection, Univ. of Pittsburgh

A Biography of Stephen Foster

Reviewed by Henry Pleasants

singers. The public has heard that he drank a lot and died alone, penniless. Just where and when he lived is hard to remember."

This is certainly a curious state of affairs with an American of whom Professor Austin can say just as truthfully, noting the flattering attention paid to Foster by creative musicians as diverse in idiom and appeal as Anton Dvořák, Charles Ives, Ray Charles, Ornette Coleman, and Pete Seeger, that "no musical audience of the 20th century can come so close to representing a whole society as can the huge population that knows Foster's songs."

As the title suggests, it is Foster's songs, and especially the unique universality of their appeal, rather than straight biography, that are the central subject of the book and the fascinating object of its author's widely ranging curiosity. He cannot, of course, escape biography, if only because we do not know Foster as we know, for example, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, and Cole Porter and can-

Susanna, Jeanie and The Old Folks at Home: The Songs of Stephen C. Foster from His Time to Ours, by William W. Austin. Macmillan, New York (1976), 420 pp., \$17.95.

not, therefore, relate the songs to the personality, the life, and the life style of the man who wrote them. Nor can we, as we can with them, determine precisely what social circumstances prompted the songs or be adequately aware of what they meant to those who sang them, heard them, learned them by heart, altered them, and loved them.

It is not that the bare biographical facts are unknown. It is rather that the several biographies, the most recent dating from 1934, pose more questions relative to the facts than they answer. So, for that matter, does Austin, whose work abounds in questions and conjecture. But, failing to find satisfactory answers in the "life," he looks for them in the "times," examining the songs in the musical, poetical, and social context of their own and subsequent eras. The examination has yielded clues, and these Professor Austin investigates with the insatiable curiosity of a Roman haruspex inspecting the entrails of a sacrificial lamb.

THERE is, to begin with, the beguiling phenomenon of a writer of "plantation songs" who never set foot on a plantation and almost certainly never heard a slave sing. Foster was born and brought up in reasonably comfortable middle-class circumstances in the suburbs of Pittsburgh. Aside from a short stint as bookkeeper for a brother's shipping firm in Cincinnati between 1847 and 1850, and a brief holiday excursion by boat to New Orleans in 1852, he spent most of his life in and around Pittsburgh and some of it in New York, where he died. Even the presumed Old Kentucky Home (once the property of a cousin of Foster's father, now a state museum in Bardstonsville, Kentucky) he would seem to have known only fleetingly, if at all.

Foster's plantation songs were, in fact, minstrel songs, written for and sung by white men in blackface parodying blacks imitating—or parodying—whites. As the music of black Americans they were spurious. Even other minstrel songwriters, as Professor Austin points out, wrote songs more distinctively indigenous than Foster's.

Paradoxically, it may have been just this spuriousness that accounted for, or at least facilitated, their popular acceptance. They drew upon a nostalgic vision of the plantation not as it was or had been, but as it appeared and appealed to popular fantasy. And Foster gave to his subjects and his texts, probably unwittingly, an ambiguity that made it possible for the songs to serve the propagandistic fervor of both abolitionists and those who defended slavery. The use of dialect—also spurious—gave an indigenous flavor to melodies, rhythms, and harmonies that were essentially European and, therefore, both familiar and acceptable to the white audiences for whom they were intended.

That was not the reaction of the musical establishment. However slight the suggestion of an indigenous Afro-American idiom may have been, it was enough at the time to arouse the furious indignation of the leading music critics, expressed in scathing language. Foster was hurt. He responded by concentrating on the type of sentimental ballad then fashionable. Most of his 200-odd songs belong to that category, *Jeanie* being a familiar prototype. But they did not catch on as his plantation

songs did, and it was this failure, probably, that broke him. As Professor Austin puts it in an admirably pithy summary: "He was swept along by what happened to *Susanna*, and baffled by what failed to happen to *Jeanie*."

If the plantation songs fared better than the others, it may have been because the minstrel show was then, and would continue to be for another fifty years, the principal form of low-brow entertainment in America, giving the songs a wider and more flattering exposure and the benefit of accomplished and popular performers. And if the plantation setting was phony, the music essentially European, and the poems ambiguous as to just who was supposed to be singing to whom about what, the sentiments were genuine and very eloquently expressed.

Professor Austin is at pains to relate those sentiments to the facts of Foster's life—a sheltered, even pampered boyhood as the youngest of a large family, financial and probably emotional inadequacy as husband of a wife he loved, the economic vicissitudes of the profession of songwriting in pre-ASCAP days, etc. Most of all this is hardly more than plausible conjecture, but it matters little. What mattered was—and still is—Foster's knack of evoking sensations, especially of melancholy and nostalgia, which he as an amiable loser certainly experienced, and which are common to all mankind.

Books Received

● *William Billings of Boston*, by David P. McKay and Richard Crawford, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J. (1975), 304 pages, \$16.00. We are a country foolishly careless of its past, William Billings being an excellent case in point. This rather slender volume brings together perhaps all we shall ever know of the life of America's first, best native composer, an instinctive musician of unforgettable power and originality. I nominate this valuable book as the basis for a TV documentary on a lost, but still viable, musical tradition, and I nominate Billings' heart-pounding, hair-raising music, all three hundred or so pieces of it, as the fittest of celebratory anthems for our Bicentennial year. W.A.

● *Sing Your Heart Out, Country Boy*, by Dorothy A. Horstman. E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., New York (1975), 394 pages, \$12.95. "Write your heart out" would be more accurate, as Dorothy Horstman is concerned with who wrote what country songs under what conditions. But it is a good and useful book, anyway, providing the lyrics of more than three hundred famous or once-famous country songs, with a paragraph above each one quoting the songwriter or a friend of the songwriter on where the idea for the particular ditty originated. Remember *Pistol Packing Mama*? *Molly Darling*? *Silver Dew on the Blue Grass Tonight*? All here. N.C.

● *The Definitive Biography of P.D.Q. Bach*, by Peter Schickele, Random House, New York (1976), 239-odd pages, \$8.95. P.D.Q. is,

of course, the *American* Bach whose career seems likely to have been the most remarkably sustained flight of *Witzelsucht* in the history of music. Prof. Schickele does that career full textual and iconographical justice in a book that tries hard to answer the question "Why?" W.A.

● *Nashville's Grand Ole Opry*, by Jack Hurst. Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York (1975), 404 pages, \$35. This is a colossal, fifty-year history of one of the most colorful, persevering, and hard-working institutions in America. It includes everything about the Opry—the inner workings of management, past and present stars, the diverse styles of country music, the people who have supported it, and Nashville itself. Mr. Hurst has taken much of his information from old books and documents in the Country Music Hall of Fame Library; the bold pictures (and there are lots of them) in his book speak for themselves. If you ever laughed with Minnie Pearl, cried with Roy Acuff, or foot-stomped and fingersnapped to Bill Monroe, you will love this book. Diane Nakamura

● *Charles Ives and His America*, by Frank R. Rossiter, Liveright, New York (1975), 420 pages, \$15. Perhaps the composer himself inspires it, but when the subject is Ives most musician-writers seem to sink immediately into a swamp of personalities, claim-staking, old scores, and petulant polemics. Historians can afford to be more dispassionate—Mr. Rossiter (who is one) therefore concentrates on Ives' particular *historical* problem, the frustrations of a creative artist caught at the tempestuous interface between the genteel tradition and the avant-garde. Seen in this way, Ives is less a composer than a political thinker who attempted to carry nineteenth-century transcendental philosophy into the twentieth using music as a vehicle. Pity he failed. W.A.

● *Stars of Country Music*, edited by Bill C. Malone and Judith McCulloh. University of Illinois Press, Evanston (1975), 476 pages, \$10. The lives and music of nineteen of the more important country-and-western performers are described and analyzed by various writers between a foreword by folklorist D. K. Wilgus and a long piece on country music since World War II by editor Bill Malone. There is considerable useful information here, and the influence of those who broke ground for the nineteen featured performers is duly noted. Ralph Rinzler's piece on Bill Monroe, forerunner to a biography in the works, is especially good. N.C.

● *Scott Joplin and the Ragtime Era*, by Peter Gammond, St. Martin's Press, New York (1975), 223 pages, \$8.95. Mr. Gammond, music editor of England's *Hi-Fi News and Record Review*, has produced a useful handbook for amateurs that describes the fascinating American musical tradition of which Joplin was a part and places it in history. There is an introduction by—who else?—Eubie Blake, a long quote from Charles Ives, excellent illustrations, and, best of all, an extensive discography of ragtime past and present, including the influencers (Gottschalk) and the influenced (Stravinsky). W.A.

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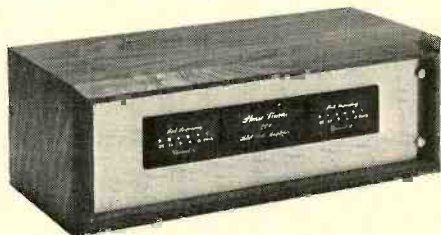
ZIP

CIRCLE NO. 7 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Phase Linear 200 Stereo Power Amplifier

A new addition to the Phase Linear power-amplifier line is the Model 200, a 105-watt-per-channel unit (from 20 to 20,000 Hz into 8 ohms) with less than 0.25 per cent total harmonic distortion at rated power output. Hum and noise are at least 95 dB below rated output; 1.5 volts into the amplifier's 18,000-ohm input impedance drives it to full power. The Model 200 has a damping ratio of 100. Internal protective circuits limit current within the amplifier when a potentially hazardous input signal is present, while a relay at the amplifier's outputs protects the speaker systems. In addition, a switch-selected modification of the Model 200's internal circuitry reduces the negative feedback of the amplifier for those users who are concerned about the effects of high feedback on audio quality.

The Model 200 features six front-panel LED's per channel to indicate instantaneous power output. They are marked -20, -12, -9, -6, and -3 dB, with a final LED designated PEAK (full output). The front panel is 19



x 5½ inches and is suitable for rack mounting. The amplifier is 8¾ inches deep. Price: \$398. An optional walnut cabinet costs \$36.

Circle 115 on reader service card

Yeaple "Stereopillow"

The latest product to make use of the so-called "near-phone" effect is the "Stereopillow" from the Yeaple Corp. The device (shown disassembled) consists of a full-size polyurethane decorator pillow containing a pair of 4-inch long-excursion cone drivers mounted on individual baffles, passive equalization networks for the drivers, and an integral 30-foot cable for connection to the amplifier or receiver. When in use, the pillow positions one driver close to each of the listener's ears (the actual distance to the ear is approximately 1½ inches). The Stereopillow can be used while reclining, or it can easily be strapped to the headrest of a lounge chair according to instructions supplied.

The "near-phone" effect on which the Stereopillow is based predicts that when a listener's ear is significantly closer to the front of a speaker cone than to the back, normal front-to-back acoustical cancellation of lower frequencies will be much less pronounced than for a remote listener. Therefore, satisfactory

low-frequency response can be obtained with a simple flat baffle rather than a full enclosure for the driver.

Frequency response for the Stereopillow is rated at 30 to 16,000 Hz, with a sound-pres-



sure level of 95 dB achieved for a ½-watt input. Ordinary headphone jacks will not adequately drive the pillow, which should be connected to the speaker terminals of an amplifier or receiver. The nominal impedance of each driver plus network (which boosts low and high frequencies to provide flat response) is 28 ohms. Power-handling capability is 10 watts continuous per channel. The standard casing for the pillow is gold velour fabric, which can be removed for washing. Custom-fabric cases can easily be substituted. Rough dimensions of the Stereopillow are 27 x 20 x 6 inches; weight is 8 pounds. Price: \$79.95.

Circle 116 on reader service card

Fons CQ 30 Turntable

Audio Dimensions is importing the CQ 30 turntable from the Scottish firm of Fergus Fons, Ltd. It is a belt-driven unit with a servo-regulated d.c. motor that can continuously vary the platter speed over a range of 29 to 100 rpm. The three basic speeds of the turntable (33⅓, 45, and 78 rpm) are selected by means of pushbuttons on the motorboard. Fine-tuning controls for each speed achieve the variable settings. The turntable employs a 12-inch anodized aluminum platter supported



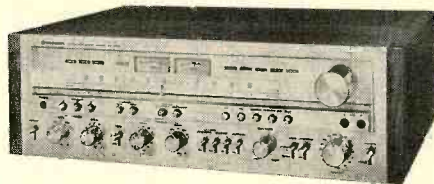
by a precision bearing. A suspension system built into the base isolates the mechanism from external shock and vibration. Rumble is said to be less than -79 dB; wow and flutter are under 0.03 per cent. The unit has a walnut

base and a hinged dust cover. Dimensions are 17½ x 13¾ x 6½ inches. The basic turntable is supplied without a tone arm at a price of \$300. With a factory-installed SME tone arm the CQ 30 costs \$465.

Circle 117 on reader service card

Pioneer SX-1050 AM/Stereo FM Receiver

A new line of stereo receivers introduced recently by U.S. Pioneer includes the SX-1050 as an intermediate model. For the rated continuous power output of 120 watts per channel into 8 ohms from 20 to 20,000 Hz, harmonic and intermodulation distortion are 0.1 per cent or less. Signal-to-noise ratios are 75 dB (phono) and 90 dB (high-level). The IHF FM sensitivity is 10.3 dBf (1.8 microvolts) in mono and 15.7 dBf (3.35 microvolts) in stereo, with 50-dB quieting specified at 14.5 dBf (2.9 microvolts) in mono and 36 dBf (34.5 microvolts) in stereo. The FM signal-to-noise ratios are 78 dB (mono) and 73 dB (stereo). The SX-1050 has a capture ratio of 1 dB, 80-



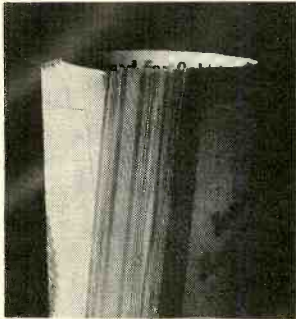
dB alternate-channel selectivity, 100-dB spurious-response and i.f. rejection, 85-dB image rejection, and 55-dB AM suppression. Frequency response on FM is 30 to 15,000 Hz +0.3, -1 dB, and stereo separation is 30 dB across this frequency range.

The program sources for the SX-1050 are pushbutton-selected and include two phono inputs (one pair of which is usable for microphones) and one high-level AUX input. Pushbuttons also switch between up to three pairs of speakers, engage the low- and high-frequency filters (12 dB per octave below 30 and above 8,000 Hz) and the FM interstation-noise muting, and activate an unusual circuit (intended to facilitate antenna orientation) that enables multipath distortion to be heard independent of the main broadcast signal.

The SX-1050 has Pioneer's twin tone-control system, consisting of conventional bass and treble controls supplemented by an additional set that affects only the frequency extremes. The volume control is a precision step-type attenuator covering a range of 70 dB in various calibrated increments. Other controls include balance, an audio muting switch, loudness-compensation and tone-control defeat switches, stereo/mono mode, an in/out switch for any external signal processor that might be connected to the receiver, and complete tape-monitor and tape-duplication switching for two tape decks. The SX-1050

(Continued on page 22)

ONCE AGAIN, THE EPI 100 HAS RECEIVED TOP RATINGS FROM THIS PRESTIGIOUS PUBLICATION.



In its February issue, the leading independent consumer testing magazine rated the EPI 100 the best speaker for the price among medium-priced speakers.

That's the good news.

The bad news is, because of its policy of strictly enforcing the copyright laws, we

can't name the magazine or quote it directly.

But we can tell you this: This is the third time running the EPI 100 has been so rated by the publication. And no wonder.

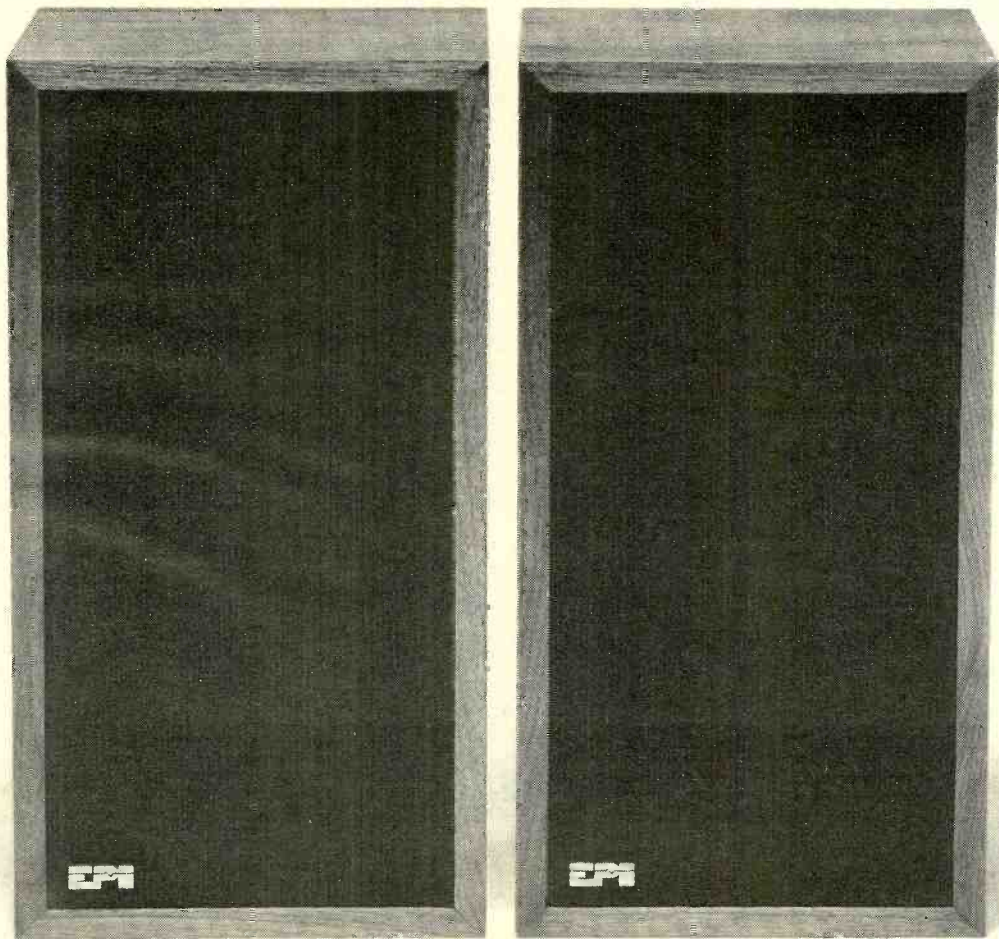
The EPI 100 offers EPI's celebrated Linear Sound: a pure, uncolored, natural sound from top to bottom. With no artificial boosting of the bass to impress the innocent. And all the nuances at the treble end that, on most speakers, just fade away.

The Model 100 doesn't just deliver the Linear Sound of EPI straight ahead, either. In fact, up to 15,000 Hz, the speaker's off-axis dispersion is down an average of only 3 db.

With its excellent dispersion and EPI's Linear Sound, we'd say the EPI 100 is clearly the finest speaker you can get for the money.

But don't take our word for it.

Take s.



The Model 100 is available in a hand-rubbed walnut veneer or a vinyl finish (Model 100v).

THE LINEAR SOUND OF EPI

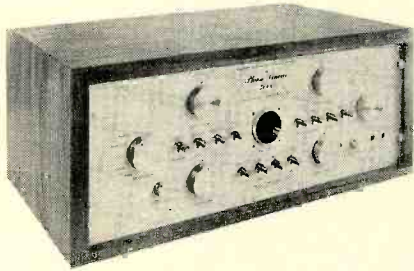
EPI is a product line of Epicure Products Inc., Newburyport, Mass. 01950

CIRCLE NO. 11 ON READER SERVICE CARD

QUIET, PLUS

We made the Phase Linear 4000 Preamplifier dead quiet, but we didn't stop there. We added several revolutionary features that make music sound obviously better than any other control console:

- A **Peak Unlimiter** that restores dynamics lost in recording to closely approximate the original.
- A **Downward Expander** that reads "gainriding" and expands dynamics down to precisely the intended level.
- An **AutoCorrelator** that makes record/tape hiss and FM noise virtually vanish without affecting musical content.
- An **Active Equalizer** that gives you flat energy distribution over the full audio spectrum.



Hirsch-Houck Labs put it this way in *Stereo Review*: "A good preamplifier should have no sound of its own and many (including this one) meet that qualification easily. What we can say is that the Model 4000 makes any program played through it sound better than through any other preamplifier we have ever used, by virtue of its unique control features, and most particularly its AutoCorrelator and Peak Unlimiter. Altogether it is a most impressive technical achievement, one bound to influence equipment to come." Tell your dealer you want to hear Phase Linear's "Incredible" Preamp.

Phase Linear 4000

The Powerful Difference

Phase Linear Corporation
20121 48th Avenue West
Lynnwood, Washington 98036

Manufactured in the U.S.A.
Distributed in Canada by H. Roy Gray, Ltd.

CIRCLE NO. 26 ON READER SERVICE CARD

New Products the latest in high-fidelity equipment and accessories

has tuning meters to indicate channel center and signal strength; illuminated legends identify program source and mode as they are selected. A stereo headphone jack and two microphone inputs are provided on the front panel.

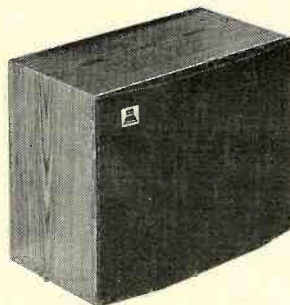
The receiver measures 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 17 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches and weighs 51 $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds. Its top and sides are enclosed by walnut-veneer panels. Approximate price: under \$700. Two other models in the new Pioneer line, the SX-1250 and the SX-950, have rated power outputs of 160 and 85 watts per channel, respectively, and otherwise similar performance specifications and features.

Circle 118 on reader service card

Celestion UL Speaker Systems

Rocelco Inc., North American distributor for the English Rola Celestion and Ditton products, has announced the introduction of the UL series of Celestion speaker systems. The three UL models comprise one three-way and two two-way systems, with the two-way designs employing passive radiators to augment low-frequency response. The smallest, the UL6 (shown), has a 1-inch dome tweeter, a 6-inch woofer, and a 6-inch passive radiator. The crossover frequency is 2,500 Hz, and overall frequency response is rated as 80 to 20,000 Hz ± 3.5 dB. Power-handling capability is 20 watts continuous.

The Model UL8, next in the line, employs the same tweeter plus an 8-inch woofer and passive radiator, with crossover occurring at 2,000 Hz. Frequency response is 70 to 20,000 Hz ± 3 dB, and power-handling capability is 25 watts continuous. Finally, the three-way Model UL10 has a 10-inch woofer in a sealed cabinet, along with a 2-inch dome mid-range



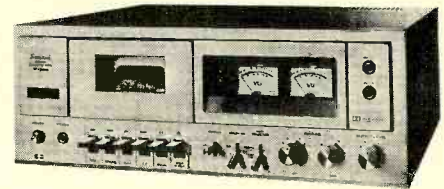
driver for frequencies from 700 to 5,000 Hz and a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch dome tweeter for the range above that. Its frequency response is specified as 40 to 20,000 Hz ± 2 dB, with a power-handling capability of 50 watts continuous. All three systems have impedances ranging from 4 to 8 ohms. Enclosure dimensions, including the removable shaped grilles, are 16 x 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches (UL6), 23 x 11 x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches (UL8), and 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 15 inches. All cabinets are finished in walnut veneers. The UL6 is well suited to horizontal shelf placement, while the UL8 and UL10 are

more appropriate for vertical free-standing installation. Prices, in the above order: \$179.50, \$249.50, and \$349.50.

Circle 119 on reader service card

Sansui SC-3000 Stereo Cassette Deck

The SC-3000 is Sansui's first front-loading cassette deck. The single-motor design holds a cassette upright in an illuminated compart-



ment with a large window that permits the entire label area to be viewed. The motor is an electronically controlled d.c. device. Six levers, including a pause function, control the transport, which is equipped with a memory-rewind feature working in conjunction with the three-digit index counter. Switching between any transport modes can be accomplished rapidly without first stopping the tape. The two large recording-level meters have VU characteristics; they are augmented by a peak-indicating LED that flashes on recording signals higher than +6 dB. Other LED's show when the deck is in the record mode and when the built-in Dolby noise-reduction facilities (based on the new Dolby integrated circuits) are in use. A tape-selector switch has positions for low-noise/high-output and chromium-dioxide bias and equalization. Other controls consist of separate recording-level knobs for the two channels and a playback-level knob. A stereo headphone jack and the two microphone inputs are located on the front panel.

Wow and flutter for the SC-3000's transport is 0.09 per cent or better. Frequency response is 35 to 11,000 Hz with low-noise/high-output tape and 35 to 13,000 Hz with chromium dioxide and similar formulations, both ± 3 dB. The signal-to-noise ratio with chromium dioxide exceeds 50 dB without assistance from the Dolby circuits. Total harmonic distortion for a 1,000-Hz, 0-dB recorded signal is less than 2 per cent. In fast-forward or rewind a C-60 cassette is handled in approximately 75 seconds. The deck employs a specially hardened permalloy record-playback head that is said to be unusually resistant to wear. Dimensions of the SC-3000 are approximately 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Approximate price: \$360.

Circle 120 on reader service card

PUBLISHER'S NOTICE: Recent fluctuations in the value of the dollar will have an effect on the price of merchandise imported into this country. So, please be aware that the prices quoted in this issue may be subject to change.

One reason you may be looking for new speakers could be the phase distortion present in those you listen to now.

Phase Distortion Explained. Phase distortion is heard as a blurred sound picture and prevents accurate localization of instruments. It is most noticeable in the lower mid-frequency range at higher volumes. It occurs in most conventional, multi-way loudspeakers at the crossover point, when the same note is being reproduced by two drivers. Because today's high quality loudspeakers have virtually solved the problems of frequency response as well as harmonic and intermodulation distortion, the study and correction of phase distortion is all the more important if you are to literally recreate the original performance.

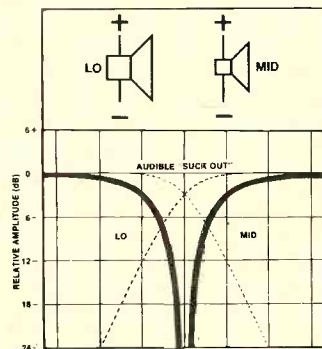


Diagram A. When drivers are placed in-phase, a problem of audible "suck out" is created.

Our Research. At the 1973 AES convention in Rotterdam, two Bang & Olufsen engineers, Madsen and Hansen, presented a paper on audible phase distortion. This paper represented three years of concentrated research within which they developed an electronic crossover, tri-amplified loudspeaker that allowed them to demonstrate three important facts: 1. Phase distortion did indeed exist in loudspeakers. 2. That it was audible. (Hundreds of hours of critical listening tests confirmed this.) 3. That it could be effectively eliminated through sophisticated technology.

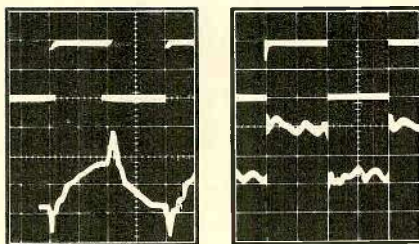


Diagram B. A high quality conventional loudspeaker (left) and our new Phase-Link loudspeaker (right) reproducing a square wave. What happens to the square wave is what happens to music.

Our Product. The experimental speaker developed by Madsen and Hansen was far too expensive to consider for distribution to the audio consumer. A practical solution had to be found.

At this point, Bang & Olufsen engineer E. Baekgaard began his work with mathematical computer simulation. He discovered that the fixed phase shift, present in most conventional speakers (drivers alternated 180° out-of-phase) could be "cured" by placing all drivers in-phase. However, when this was done, an audible amplitude "suck out" was created (See diagram A.). It was to solve this problem that an additional narrow band filler driver—the Phase-Link™ Driver— was developed. Its compensat-

ing signal cured the amplitude "suck out" and the variable phase shift. It made the audible output of the loudspeaker virtually identical to the input—the square wave, for example.

Another Refinement. Phase-Link™ loudspeakers have their drivers mounted on a common acoustic axis so that the sound from each driver will reach your ears simultaneously. That is the reason for our slightly canted grill.

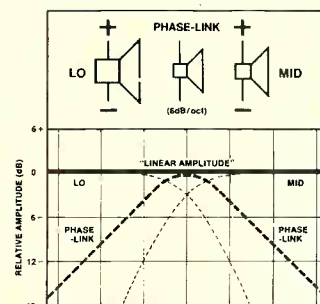
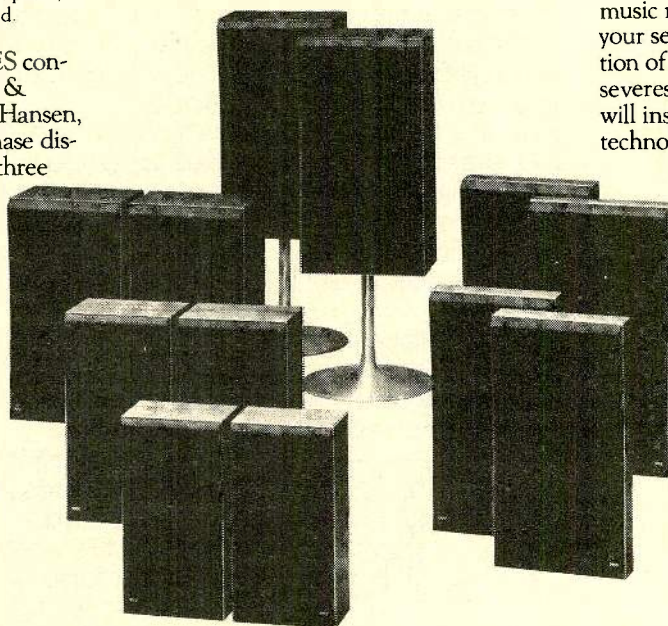


Diagram C. Our new Phase-Link filler driver provides a compensating signal to eliminate "suck out" and variable phase shift.

Your Listening Experience. The importance of our new Phase-Link™ technology and square wave tests is of course determined by the fidelity of the music recreated by our speakers. It is your sensitivity to the accurate reproduction of music that will give them their severest test. It is our technology which will insure they pass, for rarely has technology served music so well.



Because the ear is sensitive to phase distortion mainly in the lower mid-frequencies, Phase-Link is used between the low-frequency driver and the mid-range unit in the high power, 3-way systems (M-70, S-60) but not between the mid-range and tweeter. In medium-power, 2-way systems, one Phase-Link driver is used in 12dB/oct filter combinations (S-45, P-45). Low-power, 2-way systems (S-30, P-30) do not utilize a Phase-Link driver but instead eliminate phase distortion through a sophisticated 6dB/oct. filter technique.

Bang & Olufsen speakers include the M-70, shown on trumpet stand (supplied), three bookshelf models, the S-60, S-45, and S-30, and two wall panel speakers, the P-45 and P-30.

Bang & Olufsen

Bang & Olufsen of America, Inc., 515 Busse Road, Elk Grove Village, Illinois 60007

THE TAPE THAT FOR MOST

Maxell tapes are not cheap.

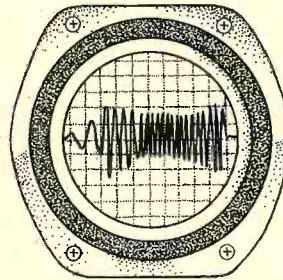
In fact, a single reel of our most expensive tape costs more than many inexpensive tape recorders.

Our tape is expensive because it's designed specifically to get the most out of good high fidelity components. And unfortunately, there's not much to get out of most inexpensive tape recorders.

Second, we're very careful.

Nothing gets into our tape until it's been tested out.

For example, every batch of magnetic oxide we use gets run through an electron microscope before we use it. This reveals the exact size and proportions of individual particles of oxide. Because if they're not perfect, the tape won't



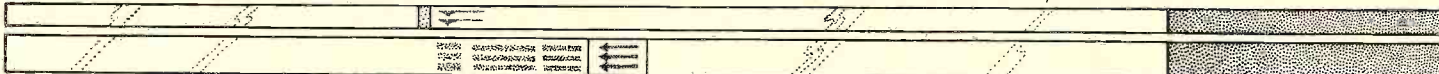
We know how good our tape will sound because we've listened to it every Maxell tape for magnetic characteristics, frequency response, noise, dropouts, sensitivity. Then we listen to it: totally

our cassettes and reel-to-reel tapes. Which is something no other tape company bothers to do.

Our cassettes are put together as carefully as our tape.

Many people don't realize it, but a cassette is actually a part of a tape recorder's drive mechanism.

So we make our cassettes better than we have to.



So it makes no sense to invest in Maxell unless you have equipment that can put it to good use.

No other tape sounds as good as ours because no other tape is made as carefully as ours.

It's not difficult to make tape.

What is difficult is making great tape. Tape that's absolutely quiet, has no dropouts, is free of distortion and covers the entire audio spectrum flawlessly.

We've found the only way to make that kind of tape.

First, we only use the best quality materials. (Not only the best polyester, but even the best screws, hubs and pressure pads.)

sound perfect.

And since even a little speck of dust can put a dropout in tape, no one gets into our manufacturing area until he's been washed, dressed in a special dust-free uniform and vacuumed. (Yes, vacuumed. From the top of his head to the soles of his shoes.)

Unlike most tape-makers, we don't test our tape every now and then. We test every inch of



Every employee, vacuumed.

No other tape starts off by cleaning off your tape recorder.

blank, unrecorded tape. (And if we hear anything, you never get to hear the tape.)

Which is why every Maxell tape you buy sounds exactly the same. From end to end. From tape to tape. From year to year. Wherever you buy it.

It's also the reason why you can't buy three Maxell tapes in a plastic bag for a dollar.

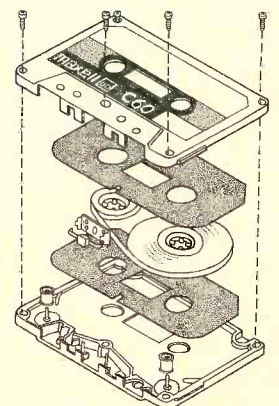
We clean off the crud other tapes leave behind.

After all the work we put into our tape, we're not about to let it go to waste on a dirty tape recorder head. So we put non-abrasive head cleaning leader on all

So they'll take years of abuse, we put more polystyrene in our shells than other companies. For precision, we finish them to tolerances as much as 60% higher than the standards call for.

And we spot-check over 200 separate spots on our cassette shells

Every cassette screwed, not welded.



'S TOO GOOD EQUIPMENT.

before we release them.

Other companies are willing to use wax paper and plastic rollers in their cassettes. We're not. We use carbon-impregnated material. And Delrin rollers. Because nothing sticks to them.

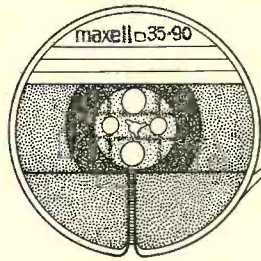
A lot of companies weld their cassettes together. We use screws. Screws are more expensive. But they also make for a stronger cassette. They act like steel reinforcing rods. (They also give you a way to get inside in the event that you ever need to.)

And before any cassette gets a Maxell label, it gets hit with a heat and humidity test that you couldn't tolerate. This is to make sure you'll never get stuck with a Maxell cassette that sticks.

Our \$7.50 tape comes with a better take-up reel than most \$400 tape recorders.

There are those who buy their first reel of Maxell tape just to get their recorder a better take-up reel.

That's because we've put more time, effort and polystyrene into our reels than other companies. Which has made our reel stronger, more rigid and less likely to warp than



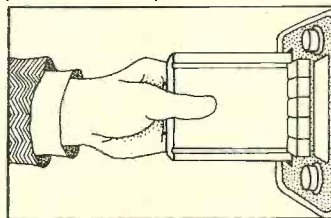
There's no way dust is going to get in here.

others.

Also, unlike other take-up reels, ours has no holes in it. This not only keeps dust from getting on our tape, it keeps the tape more accurately centered on the reel.

Our 8-track tape can get more performance out of any 8-track player.

We've found that many of our 8-track tapes end up in underpowered 8-track automobile players. So our top-of-the-line 8-track cartridges come with high-output tape. It has a bigger signal, and a better high end than any other 8-track tape. Which means any 8-track player you put it in will put out a



A quick way to upgrade your 8-track player.

higher sound level, at a lower volume setting.

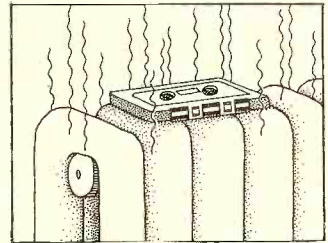
Our tape comes with a better guarantee than your tape recorder.

Nothing is guaranteed to last forever. Nothing we know of, except our tape.

We figure, if you've invested in the kind of equipment that can properly use our tape, you're not apt to misuse it.

So anytime you ever have a problem with any Maxell cassette, 8-track or reel-to-reel tape, you can send it back and get a new one.

Give our tape a fair hearing.



Our guarantee even covers acts of negligence.

You can hear just how good Maxell tape sounds at your nearby audio dealer. (Chances are, it's what he uses to demonstrate his best tape decks.)

You may be surprised to hear how much more music good equipment can produce when it's equipped with good tape.

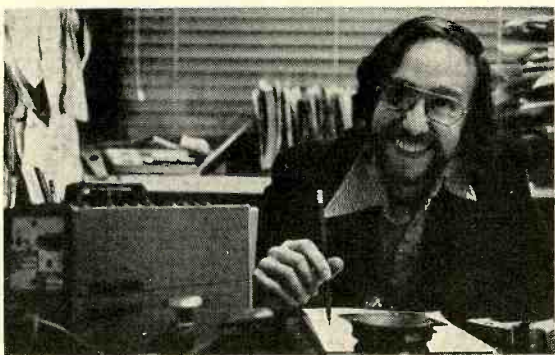


Maxell Corporation of America, 130 West Commercial Ave., Moonachie, N.J. 07074

Audio Q. and A.

By Larry Klein

Technical Editor



Femto . . . What?

Q. Now that we have been stuck with (or blessed with—depending upon the viewpoint) femtowatt FM sensitivity ratings, could you provide a conversion chart of microvolt-dBf equivalents? Two additional questions: Why the change from microvolts? And what does “femto” mean?

ALFRED NEWBURG
Bronx, N.Y.

A. You’ll find a dBf-to-microvolts—and vice versa—conversion chart below; it is reprinted from Julian Hirsch’s discussion of the new IHF tuner standard in his “Technical Talk” column last December. As to the why of the conversion: there has always been some confusion in the use of microvolt FM-tuner sensitivity ratings because of the need to specify the load seen by the generator as well. This included the network that coupled it to the tuner’s antenna terminals plus the impedance of the antenna-input circuit. (Tuners sold in England always seemed to have twice the sensitivity of their U.S. counterparts simply because they were rated using a 75-ohm FM input impedance rather than the U.S. standard of 300 ohms. The situation was somewhat analogous to specifying the voltage output at an amplifier’s speaker terminals rather than the power in watts produced across the load resistor.) The new standard refers all input-signal levels to a 0-dB reference of 10^{-15} watts, or 1 femtowatt. Before I researched the question, I thought “femto” might be a coined term, possibly derived from the femlin—the female companion of W.W. II’s gremlin. It is not. Femto is based on a Scandinavian root (rather than the more usual Greek and Latin ones that give us *micro-*, *nano-*, *mega-*, *pico-*, etc.) meaning “fifteen.”

Components—Far and Near

Q. I’m told that when installing separate components you should leave a certain physical distance between units. What can happen to the sound reproduction if the spacing is wrong?

MICHAEL MULLER
APO New York

A. Lots of different things. The problems that can occur—but probably won’t—are these: (1) hum, (2) loss of highs, (3) overheating, and (4) acoustic feedback. Let’s look at hum first. Power transformers and motors radiate hum fields; phono cartridges, tape

heads, and high-gain (preamplifier) stages pick up hum fields. Therefore, you may run into hum problems if your record player, tape deck, or preamp is installed very close to your power amplifier—including above or below it. Wooden shelves are *not* hum shields. If you suspect that the physical setup of your components is the source of hum, the way to find out for sure is to rearrange the units temporarily to see if things quiet down.

Loss of highs is an easy one to solve—don’t run long shielded cables (“long” is defined as being much over 6 feet) between components unless the manufacturer’s instruction manual says you can. This is particularly true of phono leads—and the manufacturer to check with is the one that produced the phono cartridge, *not* the turntable.

To check the effect of cable length on your sound, temporarily place the units close enough for use with 3- or 4-foot cables and listen to interstation FM noise or recorded pink noise. Then, without repositioning the com-

ponents, substitute the longer cable lengths. Do the high ssss’s disappear from the sound? If you can get them back to their original strength by resetting the speaker’s tweeter-level control or the amplifier’s treble control then you have one solution at hand. It’s also possible to use low-capacitance shielded coaxial antenna cable (with phono plugs attached) to eliminate a lot of capacitance. (Don’t do as I once did and use square waves as a signal source to judge high-frequency rolloff. My oscilloscope did, in truth, show that there wasn’t any high-frequency loss in the signal reaching the speakers. However, since I blew out my tweeters while making the test, there was a subsequent severe high-frequency acoustic loss.)

These days overheating is likely to come about only as a result of inadequate ventilation—usually of the power amplifier (or integrated amplifier). Keep the amplifier’s heat sinks clear of obstructions to allow whatever heat is produced to get out and away. As a rule of thumb (your forefinger will serve, however), simply touch the heat sink. If it’s too hot to touch, it’s too hot, period! It could be that the amp’s internal bias setting has drifted off, or that you have been driving it too hard, or that there simply isn’t enough opportunity for air flow—or all of the above. You can check the bias setting by leaving the amplifier on but with no signal going through it. If it still overheats, drop a note to the factory asking how hot a product they’ve got. Describe the ventilation available to your amplifier to provide them with some frame of thermal reference.

Acoustic feedback has been discussed at length in these pages and occurs because the sound vibrations from the speaker(s) is somehow shaking the record player. This can happen if, for example, the player and speaker are installed on the same shelf or furniture surface even though separated by 6 or 7 feet. The solution is better isolation achieved by physical separation—or the use of an isolating sub-base under the player, or foam rubber under the speakers, or both.

In general, I suspect that common sense will prevent most of the above problems from ever happening. But if you do run into trouble, consult the instruction manual. There may be some words of wisdom relating to your particular problem concealed within the oft-times plodding prose.

Playback-only Decks

Q. Could you please send me information on any company that makes playback-only open-reel tape decks?

SEBASTIAN CARBORIOUS
Wyandanch, N.Y.

A. As far as I know there aren’t any. It seems that in this day of solid-state circuits, the additional cost of the electronics and other parts necessary to convert a playback-only deck to a record/playback deck is a small enough percentage of the overall cost of the product that, in consideration of the sales that may be lost by omission of the recording function, it makes no sense to leave it out.

Because the number of questions we receive each month is greater than we can reply to individually, only those letters selected for use in this column can be answered. Sorry!

SENSITIVITY RATING EQUIVALENTS (dBf to microvolts—and vice versa)

dBf	Microvolts	Microvolts	dBf
0	0.55	1	5.2
5	0.97	2	11.2
10	1.7	3	14.7
15	3.1	4	17.2
20	5.5	5	19.2
25	9.7	10	25.2
30	17	20	31.2
35	31	30	34.7
40	55	100	45.2
45	97	300	54.7
50	170	1,000	65.2
55	310	3,000	74.7
60	550	10,000	85.2
65	970	30,000	94.7
70	1,700		
75	3,100		
80	5,500		
85	9,700		
90	17,000		
95	31,000		
100	55,000		

If you're surprised to learn that tubes solve some amplifier problems best, you have something to learn about amplifiers.

And about LUX.

It may seem courageously retrogressive for a company to introduce a *tube* amplifier—even a highly advanced type—to the semiconductor audio world of 1976. Especially for a company only recently established in the U.S. market with a comprehensive line of solid-state amplifiers and tuners. But for LUX, it is simply consistent with our philosophy: whatever path may lead to improvement in the accuracy of music reproduction will be explored by our audiophile/engineers. Whether it leads to transistors or tubes.

Certainly, transistors are not about to be obsoleted by tubes. However, there are some amplifier problems that tubes still handle better than transistors. Overloading is one such problem.

When a solid-state amplifier is driven beyond its rated power, it clips abruptly. Engineers call it "hard" clipping. The term is apt, as the sound from the spurious high-order odd harmonics is raspy and irritating. Further, if the overall circuitry is not stable, and the protective circuits not very well-designed, the distortion is extended in time beyond the moment of overload. Drive a tube amplifier beyond its rated power and it too clips the waveform, but gently and smoothly. This "soft" clipping introduces much smaller amounts of odd harmonics. The distortion is far less irritating, hence less noticeable.

Notch (or crossover) distortion, present in many transistor amplifiers, is another source of spurious high-order odd harmonics. It occurs when the transistor output circuits are not able to follow the musical waveform accurately at the points where it changes from positive to negative and back again. Since notch distortion, unlike clipping, is at a constant level regardless of the power the amplifier is delivering, the ratio of this distortion to signal is worse at lower power. The gritty quality heard from many transistor amplifiers, particularly when they are playing at low levels, is usually due to crossover distortion.

Of course, tubes also have *their* limitations. Especially

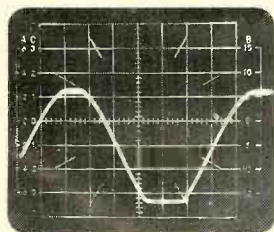
conventional tubes. The only tube previously capable of high-power amplification—the pentode—has inherently higher levels of distortion than the triode. Existing lower-distortion triode tubes cannot deliver sufficiently high power as a simple push-pull pair. But LUX, together with NEC engineers, has developed the first of a new breed of triode tube, the 8045G, which with other related technological advances, makes possible a high-power, low-distortion triode amplifier—the Luxman MB-3045. Among the differences in this new triode: the plate-electrode uses a special bonded metal with high heat-radiation characteristics. Also, the fin structure further aids heat dissipation.

LUX also developed a low-distortion high-voltage driver tube, the 6240G, capable of delivering over 200 volts of audio signal to the output triodes. Also, a new output transformer (LUX's long-time special area of expertise) has been designed to take optimal advantage of the triode configuration feeding it. The quadrifilar winding and core technology of this transformer represents another breakthrough. Overall, from input to output, the use of advanced design direct-coupled and self-balancing differential amplifier stages ensures stability and minimum phase shift.

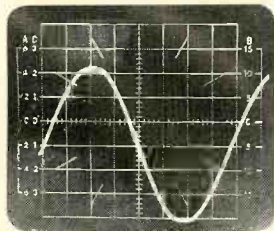
The MB-3045 produces a minimum of 50 watts continuous power into 4, 8, or 16 ohms, at any frequency from 20 to 20,000 Hz, with total harmonic distortion no more than 0.3%. As the MB-3045 is monophonic, a pair of them connected to a stereophonic preamplifier will not be subject to stereo power-supply interaction.

Now, we don't expect the MB-3045 to become the world's best-selling amplifier, any more than our highest-power solid state power amplifier, the M-6000 priced at nearly \$3000.

You'll find both at our carefully selected LUX dealers who will be pleased to demonstrate them for you. And any of the other dozen or so LUX models. It's why they're LUX dealers in the first place.



When a typical transistorized amplifier tries to deliver more power than it can, the top and bottom edges of the waveform "clip" sharply and abruptly...and not always symmetrically. Result: high-order harmonic distortion raspy and irritating.



When a tube amplifier, such as the Luxman MB-3045, is driven into overload, the "clipping" is softer, with more rounded edges to the waveform. The resulting distortion is much less audibly bothersome.



Luxman MB-3045 monophonic tube power amplifier. 50 watts minimum continuous power into 4, 8, or 16 ohms, 20-20 kHz; total harmonic distortion no more than 0.3%. Frequency response: 10 to 40 kHz, ± 1 dB. Signal to noise ratio: 95 dB. Variable sensitivity control for matching gain to any preamplifier. \$445.00 each. ■ Luxman CL-35 III stereo tube preamplifier. Total harmonic distortion: 0.06% at 2.0 V, 20-20 kHz, all

output signals. Frequency response: 2-80 kHz, ± 0.5 dB. RIAA equalization: ± 0.3 dB. Features include: tape monitoring and dubbing, 6 selectable turnover frequencies, twin high and low noise filters, switchable phono-input impedance (30, 50, 100 kohms), variable input sensitivities. \$745.00.

LUX Audio of America, Ltd.

200 Aerial Way, Syosset, New York 11791

In Canada: AMX Sound Corp. Ltd., British Columbia; Gentronic Ltd., Quebec

The \$900 Sony Turntable.



Study this page, because we don't want the price to suck you in.

It would be a shame.

People responding to something because it costs \$900*. Not because it's worth \$900.

People captivated by price, not performance.

We at Sony don't want anyone spending good money for a great turntable for a bad reason like an impressive price tag.

Especially because there's so much technology in the PS-8750 for you to fall back on. After you spring for the \$900.

So before you spend a lot of money on us, spend at least a little time with us.

Total speed accuracy is our speed.

Speed accuracy can be a problem for turntables because the stylus continually puts pressure on the record (and, in turn, on our engineers.)

In fact, as little as one gram of stylus pressure can cause a slow-down in record speed. A slow-down that is particularly noticeable in loud passages.

Up till now, most good turntables achieved accuracy with a direct drive motor and a servo-system to control speed variations.

It was fine for most people. And it still is.

But for those with more elegantly attuned hearing, it's just not good enough.

That's because the servo-system will not serve when it comes to small, low-frequency speed variations. It is not sensitive enough, and the result is there to be heard — if you have the discernment to hear it.

To get around this, Sony took the conventional servo-system and revolutionized it by adding a quartz reference and a phase lock circuitry.

That mouthful is really easy to digest. The stable quartz generator emits a constant frequency. Any variations in speed monitored by the magnetic head are converted to changes in the phase of the signal. This is then compared against the quartz generator's phase signal.

If they do not match, our Xtal-Lock corrects the speed variation instantly.

A conventional servo-system has to wait for the error to appear as a change in frequency, and then it takes time to correct it.

Sony can make the corrections 10 times faster. And within one cycle. All because Sony uses the phase difference as a source of information on speed error, rather than using the angular velocity.

Chart A dramatically illustrates the dramatic difference.

Why our tone-arm costs an arm and a leg.

After conquering the drive system, Sony sped along to the tone-arm. The problem: constructing a light, strong tone-arm that has a low resonance quality.

A high resonance quality means the tone-arm vibrates — performing a duet with whatever record is playing.

Sony wrestled with the arm problem and

ating both the drive system and the return mechanism. Meaning that the turntable is linked to the tone-arm. And very often, this linkage produces a drag on the arm.

The PS-8750, however, proves that two motors are better than one. The motor that runs the tone-arm is totally isolated from the other motor that runs the turntable.

This eliminates the drag, particularly the drag at the very end of the record. This drag is really a drag, because the return mechanism is preparing to activate itself, and the friction is therefore increased.

Sony further innovates by designing pick-up and return cues that are optically activated. Like the doors in a supermarket, if you will.

With the PS-8750, you get the best of the direct drive manual and the best of the semi-automatic. With none of the worst of either.

Does your turntable give you bad vibrations?

The same sound waves that travel from your speakers to your ears also travel to your turntable.

This transference excites the equipment. Becoming acoustic feedback, or IM distortion. And the louder you play your record, the more of it you get. There's cabinet resonance. Caused by sound waves.

And there's something called record resonance. Caused by the friction of the stylus in the groove of a warped record.

Sony, however, deals resonance a resounding blow.

We have built the PS-8750's turntable base of an inorganic material that is acoustically dead.

We have also undercoated the platter with an absorbing material that prevents it from transferring any bad vibrations to the good vibrations on the record.

And we cut down on record resonance by pumping a silicone damping material into the record mat itself. By having contact with the entire record surface, it offers more support.

Not for people who want the latest. But the greatest.

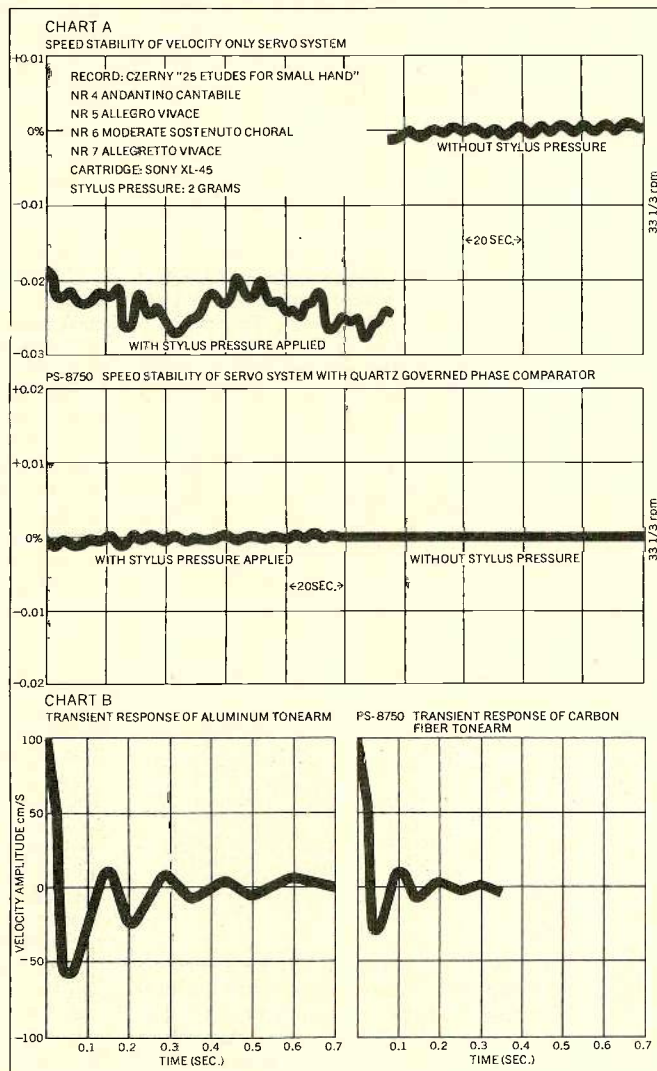
The PS-8750 represents a tonnage of innovation and a couple of real breakthroughs.

It is not for those who want to spend \$900 so they can say they spent it.

It is for those who want to spend \$900 so they can hear they spent it.

SONY®

©1976 Sony Corp. of America, Sony, 9 W. 57 St., N.Y. 10019 SONY is a trademark of Sony Corp.



came up with a different material: a carbon fiber of enormous strength and equally enormous lightness. Moreover, it has a much smaller resonance peak than the aluminum alloy commonly used. (See Chart B, where the difference is demonstrated.)

The carbon fiber worked so well that it was even incorporated into the head shell of the PS-8750. But Sony didn't stop at the tone-arm's construction. Next came the actual operation of it.

Most turntables have one motor, oper-

*Cartridge sold separately.

Audio Basics

By Ralph
Hodges



THE NEW LONDON CASSETTES

LONDON RECORDS was one of the conspicuous casualties when Ampex Corporation brought a virtual end to its production of pre-recorded cassettes. Prior to then, all of London's cassette offerings in the U.S. had been manufactured and distributed by Ampex. Given the technical quality typically achieved in those tapes, many would argue that the real casualty occurred when London first entrusted Ampex with its distinguished catalog. In any case, Ampex's retreat from this market created a vacuum where before there had been mere chaos, and people began to wonder when or if there would ever be any more London cassettes.

Early this year those doubts were put to rest when a team of engineers and coordinators from Decca, London's parent company in England, arrived in New York with the first production samples of Decca-produced London cassettes. They also arrived with high-quality 15-ips open-reel dubs of the original master tapes, and they challenged members of the press to see if they could hear the difference between them and the cassettes. I attended the first day of the Decca demonstration, and I must confess that, except in a single instance, I could not; nor did anyone else in the room seem to be scoring much better.

Although the demonstration convincingly showed that the cassettes and the "master" open-reel tapes used could easily be mistaken for one another, there was one aspect to it that gave me pause: open-reel and cassette had indeed sounded practically equivalent, but neither had sounded overwhelmingly good. I therefore looked forward to a rematch, and when I learned some time later that Decca/London had high hopes for the cassettes as out-and-out replacements for discs, it seemed that good grounds for a new contest had been established. After a quick shuffle through our available recordings at STEREO REVIEW we managed to match four of the new cassette releases with their corresponding London disc versions. They were: Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* (Lorin Maazel with the Cleveland Orchestra); the Chopin Etudes Opp. 10 and 25 (Vladimir Ashkenazy); Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloé* (Maazel with the Cleveland again); and Puccini's *Turandot* (Sutherland, Caballé, Pavarotti, Ghiaurou, Krause, Pears, and Mehta with the London Philharmonic).

The cassette deck I used was a brand-new Advent 201, carefully adjusted for precise Dolby tracking and playback response and hand-delivered by Advent expressly for this comparison. The disc-playback system was similar to one that had distinguished itself in our "Hot Platter" record evaluations that appeared in the April 1976 issue. To permit instantaneous switching between the two program sources, levels were matched—as closely as is possible with program material, which



is probably not very close—by ear and by oscilloscope. As a matter of interest, this level matching had to be readjusted frequently during the comparisons, for reasons that will be explained a little later on. My reactions, case by case, were as follows:

1. *Porgy and Bess*: In this instance, the cassette version was one of the most disappointing of the lot. At first the sound seemed oppressively dull and lacking in high frequencies, but, astonishingly, it improved after subsequent playings until it was acceptable to listen to by itself, although still not quite the equal of the disc in direct comparison. The improvement I'd attribute either to a change in azimuth alignment as the tape pack within the cassette adjusted itself to the machine (I might note that during the Decca demonstration an engineer realigned the cassette ma-

chine for each and every cassette side played—a procedure not practical or appropriate for my comparisons) or to some kind of wearing-in process (better tape-to-head contact?) taking place in the cassette tape or the machine itself. But, even at its best, the cassette often lacked clarity, immediacy, and "liveness" in comparison with the disc. Most of this I'd blame on small differences in the frequency response of the two recordings, but other factors certainly played a part too, as we shall see.

2. *Chopin Etudes*: This promised to be a fascinating comparison, because I've found that well-made prerecorded cassettes of piano music can often beat disc recordings hands down, and in a surprising area of performance: wow and flutter. Any serious lack of speed stability on piano music is audible as a wavering of pitch or a thickening and blurring of the instrument's tonal quality. In this area, you might expect a good turntable, with its excellent wow and flutter specifications, to outperform a typical cassette deck easily, but this does not take into account possible phono-cartridge/tone-arm resonances. My tone arm and cartridge were not as well matched in respect to damping as I would have liked, which resulted in some flutter-like effects. Plus, a slightly off-center record contributed to wow.

Overall, the cassette sounded slightly "brighter" (more abundant in higher frequencies) than the disc in this comparison, although this may have been due in part to the flutter's blurring effect. And for the most part it had more clarity, although on extremely loud notes and chords (reading 0 dB and above on the Advent's meter) the disc generally prevailed. On the debit side, the cassette was not able to provide the deep, rolling bass of the disc in busy left-hand passages—undoubtedly because of the low-frequency equalization used in recording the cassettes.

3. *Daphnis and Chloé*: Here again the cassette version sounded a bit brighter than the disc, except at the loudest moments. *Daphnis and Chloé* was the one cassette I was able to distinguish from the open-reel recording at the Decca demonstration, and only because the cassette's susceptibility to high-frequency tape saturation caused a moderate dulling of vigorous cymbal crashes and similar sounds. The same phenomenon cropped up in this comparison, and in addition I felt I noted some reduction in dynamic range, as if a little tasteful gain-riding had been used in preparing the cassette. But otherwise, except for the omnipresent hiss, the cassette was a highly satisfactory alternative to the disc, particularly since the latter was not devoid of various surface defects.

4. *Turandot*: For me, this was the comparison that showed up all the cassette's strong and weak points. First of all, the disc was slightly brighter than the cassette, but in this case that meant *too* bright. The cassette sounded exactly right in tonal balance except, again, when the going got very rough. The raging percussion of Act I proved to be the severest test, and the cassette fell down (as it did in *Porgy*) in reproducing the power of the bass drum and the flash-powder violence of the big cymbal crashes. At those moments the cassette seemed distinctly inferior to the disc in terms of frequency response and dynamic range; elsewhere I once more got the impression that careful gain-riding had been employed in the cassette version. But, to give the cassette its due, I never detected any evi-

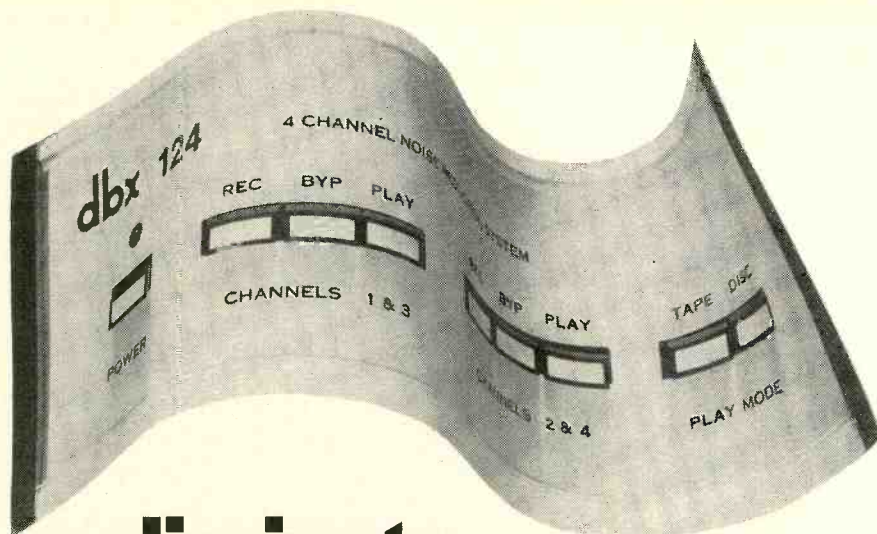
dence of peak limiting or other more insidious forms of dynamic-range compression (in comparison with the disc, that is).

So much for the specifics; now for the generalizations. The biggest problem I found with these cassettes is hiss, and if any gain-riding has in fact been used on them, it was probably to combat this unremitting plague. All the cassettes were hissier than their disc equivalents, but the interesting thing is that the difference was not solely due to *tape* hiss. Decca states that the cassettes are made with quality ferric-oxide tape stock, and I can see no reason to disbelieve it. However, this kind of tape requires the "standard" 120-microsecond playback equalization, which involves more high-frequency boost than the 70-microsecond equalization specified for chromium dioxide and a few of the "super" ferric-oxide formulations. What is sometimes not realized is that the accentuation will also emphasize *electronic* noise from the tape machine's playback preamplifiers. The Advent 201's noise figures are at state-of-the-art levels, but even so, the noise from its playback electronics when playing the unrecorded *leader* of a cassette was frequently as great or greater than that heard from a disc in the middle of its play. (I should point out that switching the Advent to its 70-microsecond characteristic made this noise virtually vanish.) The recorded tape added its own increment of noise, so that I came away with the impression (which may change with further evidence) that a cassette recorded with standard equalization could not possibly be quieter, hiss-wise, than even a mediocre disc recording. A sobering consideration, if true.

THE other shortcomings of the London cassettes—high-frequency saturation and restricted bass response—could certainly be dealt with effectively if the hiss went away. As for the gain-riding (if indeed there was any), that could be eliminated too. (I have brought up the gain-riding issue because I got a sense of diminished dynamic range on some of the cassettes, and also because of the difficulty I encountered in matching disc and cassette levels from moment to moment. However, it is true that audible effects similar to gain riding could also be produced by frequency-balance differences, variations in production, or even problems with Dolby tracking. But for the time being I'll stick with my original assessment.)

Ultimately, if I were asked for my format preferences among these recordings, I would pick the Chopin cassette for its lack of wow, flutter, and low-frequency record noise; the *Daphnis and Chloé* cassette for its lack of surface noise; the *Porgy and Bess* disc for its superior high- and low-frequency response and subjective clarity; and the *Turandot* disc for its lack of nothing and presence of almost everything. In short, I feel that cassettes are not the prerecorded format of preference unless the disc versions (or the equipment used to play them) have some appreciable defects. But, at the same time, let me be among the first to applaud London/Decca for its achievement. A score of two out of four ain't bad for a format that couldn't have won one out of a hundred only a few years ago. There is, in short, no reason to believe we have yet reached any necessary limitation in the cassette's possibilities. Who knows what prodigies of performance might be possible if the industry as a whole would only, like London, keep trying?

JULY 1976



eliminate noise in your tape recording

For the first time in tape history, you can record live music on your audiophile recorder and achieve better signal-to-noise performance than professional studio recorders.

The new dbx 120 tape noise reduction system provides about 40 dB noise reduction with reel-to-reel, cartridge or cassette recorders. For live recordings, tape hiss and background noise are completely eliminated. For taping off-the-air or dubbing from records or tapes, no noise is added beyond the noise content of the material being copied. (We do not attempt to remove noise present in the original input signal, however.)

dbx 120 units also decode the newly released dbx encoded "noiseless" discs which offer over 100 dB dynamic range with no audible surface noise at any listening level.

Model 122 is a two-channel tape noise reduction system, switchable to record or play, with a dbx disc decode feature, priced at \$259.00.

Model 124 is a four-channel tape noise reduction system, switchable to record or play, which will also provide simultaneous record and play for two-channel recording, with a dbx disc decode feature, priced at \$379.00.

Words cannot adequately describe the experience of listening to recorded music with over 100 dB dynamic range. We don't expect you to believe it possible until you hear it for yourself.

For the most dramatic recorded music demonstration of your life, hear the dbx encoded "noiseless" disc at your demonstrating dbx dealer.

For complete product information and dealer list, circle reader service number or write to:



dbx

Incorporated, 296 Newton Street
Waltham, Massachusetts 02154

CIRCLE NO. 1 ON READER SERVICE CARD

You're looking at our attitude about cassette decks. The HK2000.

harman/kardon

We make only one cassette deck. We certainly are capable of making more. Perhaps some day we will. But it's unlikely—unless there are compelling mechanical or sonic reasons for doing so.

We have an attitude about high fidelity instruments: to give the finest expression to every function of music reproduction. And wherever we feel we have something to contribute, to do so without compromise. The HK2000 (with Dolby*, of course), represents our attitude about cassette decks.

Its predecessor (the HK1000), was evaluated by High Fidelity Magazine as, "the best so far." When our engineering explorations suggested that improvements were feasible, we replaced it. With the HK2000.

We consider that the cassette deck has a definite and honorable utility as a means of conveniently capturing, retaining and reproducing material from phonograph records, tapes or radio broadcasts.

With one major caveat. It must perform on a level equivalent to the source.

The HK2000's specifications offer measurable evidence of its quality. For example, Wow and flutter: 0.07% NAB WRMS. Frequency response: 20Hz-16kHz.

But performance specifications are only one influence on sound quality. Just as in all Harman Kardon amplifiers and receivers, the wide-band design characteristic of the HK2000 produces sound quality that transcends its impressive specifications.

It utilizes narrow gap, hard-faced, permalloy metal heads (the only heads used in professional studio tape machines) for extended-frequency response and low distortion. Low frequency response is so linear that the HK2000 required the incorporation of a sub-sonic filter control that can be used to remove signals issued by warped discs.

These few factors, not individually decisive in themselves, indicate the attitude with which we conceived, designed and built the HK2000.

There is, of course, a good deal more to say. Please write *directly* to us. We'll respond with information in full detail: Harman Kardon, 55 Ames Court, Plainview, New York 11803.

*Dolby is a registered trademark of Dolby Laboratories, Inc.



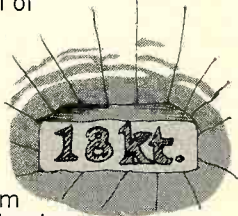
THE GOLD-PLATED RELIABILITY FACTOR.

In this age of planned obsolescence, unreliable performance and shoddy workmanship are almost taken for granted. But there are still a few exceptional products that are built to last and one of them is the Revox tape recorder.

Revox dependability is a combination of many factors, but perhaps the most important of them is advanced engineering. Borrowing from space age technology, Revox gold-plates all of the electrical contacts on its plug-in circuit boards, relays and rotary switches. The result: every one of these movable contacts, the ones that usually cause most of the problems, can be depended upon to perform well for the life of the machine. Obviously, gold plating is considerably more expensive than conventional tinning, but Revox thinks it's worth it.

Because Revox engineers demand margins of performance and reliability that far exceed ordinary production standards, you can own a tape recorder that will work perfectly the first time you use it and for years to come.

And that's why Revox is the only one to back its A77 machines with a lifetime guarantee.



REVOX DELIVERS WHAT ALL THE REST ONLY PROMISE.

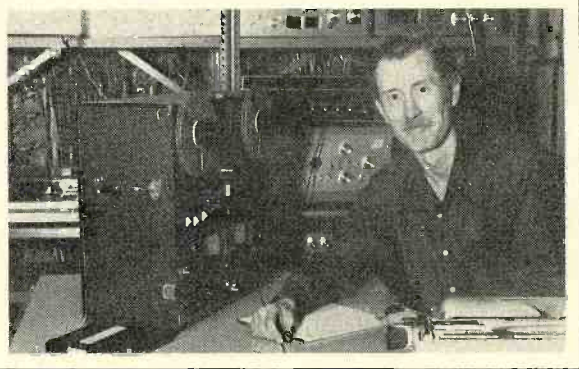
Revox Corporation
155 Michael Drive
Syosset, N.Y. 11791

The illustration contains optional extras.

CIRCLE NO. 29 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Tape Horizons

By Craig Stark



LOST IN THE GAP

LAST month, in discussing playback equalization curves, we saw that beginning with a specified upper-middle "turnover" frequency (ranging from 1,326 Hz for ferric-oxide cassettes to 3,183 Hz for 7½-ips open-reel) the inherently rising frequency response of the playback head was permitted to reassert itself. This is at the cost of increased amplification of tape hiss, but it is necessary to help offset some of the severe treble losses involved in the recording process. Unfortunately, at the very highest audio frequencies playback heads often can't provide their "natural" 6-dB-per-octave treble boost—they don't keep doubling their output for each doubling of the frequency (given equal signal levels on the tape). To see why this is so we must explore the relationship between the playback-head gap and the "wavelength" of the signals it must pick up.

Simply defined, the recorded wavelength (conventionally designated by the Greek letter λ) of a signal is equal to the tape speed divided by its frequency. Thus, at 15 ips a 15,000-Hz tone has a wavelength (λ) of 0.001 inch—that is, one "mil" (a thousandth of an inch) or 1,000 microinches. At 7½ ips the same one-mil λ represents a frequency of 7,500 Hz; at 3¾ ips it is 3,750 Hz; and at 1⅞ ips the one mil λ is only 1,875 Hz. The troubles begin, however, when one wants to keep the same maximum high frequency—20,000 Hz, for example—and obtain it at successively slower speeds, for now the wavelengths involved become progressively shorter. At 7½ ips, a 20,000-Hz λ is a moderately easy 0.375 mil (375 microinches). More formidable but still achievable is the 20,000-Hz wavelength at 3¾ ips: 0.1875 mil. To get to 20,000 Hz with cassettes, however (and a tiny handful of super machines can do it), the playback head must resolve a wavelength of 0.09375 mil. That's only 93.75 millionths of an inch for each full cycle of a sine-wave tone.

The fact that we're dealing with signal wavelengths in the vicinity of 100 microinches brings significant playback-head "gap losses" into the picture. The formula for calculating gap losses is rather complex, but why they arise can be intuitively understood by considering the following point. When a playback head's magnetic gap length (which is always somewhat longer than its physical measurement) is exactly equal to one wavelength of the recorded signal, both poles of the head "see" exactly the same magnetic potential as the tape moves across them; that is to say, they "track" each point on the waveform in unison. The result is that there is never any magnetic differential between the two pole pieces, so no electrical signal is generated in the head at all, and an infinite "gap loss" takes place. From this it follows that the absolute maximum playback voltage the head can produce will occur when its magnetic gap length is one-half the recorded wavelength. (Even here the head's output has fallen below a pure 6-dB-per-octave rising response by 3.9 dB.) The head's magnetic gap, then, should always be a small fraction (never more than one half) of the wavelength it must reproduce from the tape.

Putting this into practical terms, only a few years ago a head with a gap length as short as 250 microinches was a rarity. Today, the typical physical gap on a high-quality open-reel machine is likely to be about 100 microinches, and the approximate magnetic gap length would run about 120 microinches. At 7½ ips, gap loss on a 15,000-Hz tone would amount to an insignificant 0.8 dB. At 3¾ ips, the loss would be up to 3.6 dB, which is easily made up in the playback equalization. At 1⅞ ips, however, the 15,000-Hz loss from that head would be 27.6 dB! The solution lies in narrower gap heads for cassettes. Manufacturers have proved that they can be produced, but it is not easy.

Blueprint for Flat Frequency Response

In the graph below, frequency response was measured using the CBS 100 Test Record, which sweeps from 20-20,000 Hz. The vertical tracking force was set at one gram. Nominal system capacitance was calibrated to be 300 picofarads and the standard 47K ohm resistance was maintained throughout testing. The upper curves represent the frequency response of the right (red) and left (green) channels. The distance between the upper and lower curves represents separation between the channels in decibels. The inset oscilloscope photo exhibits the cartridge's response to a recorded 1000 Hz square wave indicating its resonant and transient response.

Smooth, flat response from 20-20,000 Hz is the most distinct advantage of Empire's new stereo cartridge, the 2000Z.

The extreme accuracy of its reproduction allows you the luxury of fine-tuning your audio system exactly the way you want it. With the 2000Z, you can exaggerate highs, accentuate lows or leave it flat. You can make your own adjustments without being tied to the dips and peaks characteristic of most other cartridges.

For a great many people, this alone is reason for owning the Z. However, we engineered this cartridge to give you more. And it does. Tight channel balance, wide separation, low tracking force and excellent tracking ability combine to give you total performance.

See for yourself in the specifications below, then go to your audio dealer for a demonstration you won't soon forget.

The Empire 2000Z.

Already your system sounds better.

Frequency Response—20 to 20K Hz \pm 1 db using CBS 100 test record
Recommended Tracking Force— $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ grams
(specification given using 1 gram VTF)

Separation—20 db 20 Hz to 500 Hz
 30 db 500 Hz to 15K Hz
 25 db 15K Hz to 20K Hz

I.M. Distortion—(RCA 12-5-105) less than .08% .2KHz to 20KHz @ 3.54 cm/sec

Stylus—0.2 x 0.7 mil diamond

Effective Tip Mass—0.2 mg.

Compliance—lateral 30×10^{-6} cm/dyne
 vertical 30×10^{-6} cm/dyne

Tracking Ability—0.9 grams for 38 cm per sec @ 1000 Hz
 0.8 grams for 30 cm per sec @ 400 Hz

Channel Balance—within $\frac{3}{4}$ db @ 1 kHz

Tracking Angle—20°

Recommended Load—47 K Ohms

Nominal Total System Capacitance required 300 pF

Output—3mv @ 3.5 cm per sec using CBS 100 test record

D.C. Resistance—1100 Ohms

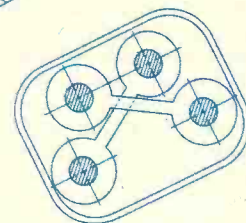
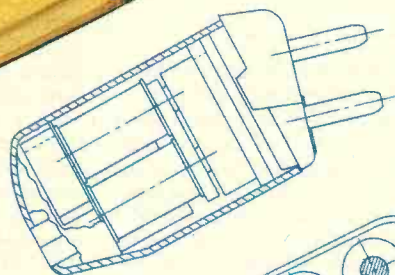
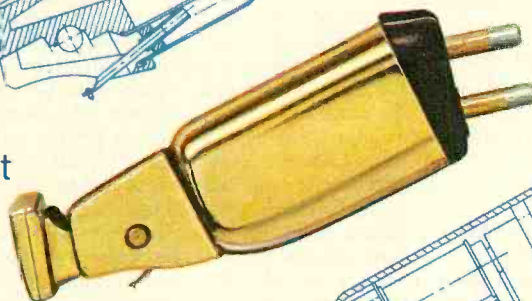
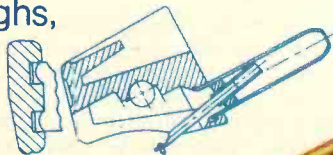
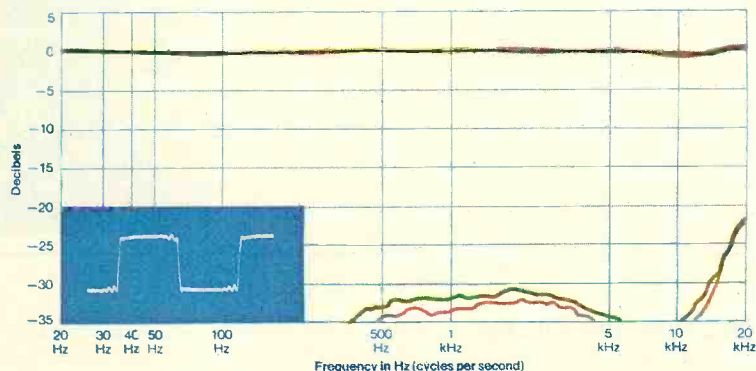
Inductance—675 mH

Number and Type of Poles—16 Laminations in a 4 pole configuration

Number of Coils—4 (1 pair/channel—hum cancelling)

Number of Magnets—3 positioned to eliminate microphonics

Type of Cartridge—Fully shielded, moving iron



Technical Talk

By Julian D. Hirsch



● **SPEAKER TESTING AGAIN:** Subsequent to examining in last month's column the testing philosophy behind Consumers Union's recently published speaker ratings, I received the following communication from Roy Allison, President of Allison Acoustics, Inc. He outlines, in somewhat greater detail than I did, how CU arrives at its numerical accuracy ratings, and he includes his perception of some of the flaws in their procedures as well.

CONSUMERS UNION's latest report on loudspeakers (*Consumer Reports*, February, 1976) demonstrates a problem common to all equipment reviewers: that of making valid measurements of loudspeaker performance. The problem is uniquely difficult and controversial for loudspeakers among the hi-fi components, because the output signal to be measured is not electric but acoustic, and it is sent outward into three-dimensional space. Sound-pressure output vs. frequency varies not only with the direction of radiation but also with time. The acoustic energy produced is strongly influenced, over a wide range of frequencies, by the loudspeaker's working environment (the listening or test room). Finally, after modifying the energy output, the room redistributes this energy in resonance-mode patterns. Without question, it is a complex situation.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the particular aspects of a loudspeaker's performance which correlate best with what we hear are a matter of dispute. CU's test engineers believe that the most important characteristic of a loudspeaker is its total acoustic-power output vs. frequency. Many share that opinion (as do I). Where, then, did CU go wrong? The answer lies partly in measurement technique and partly in an oversimplified criterion of accuracy.

CU uses an anechoic chamber to measure the total acoustic power produced by a loudspeaker. Such a test chamber has walls that absorb sound energy almost completely. With no reflections from the room boundaries, there can be no resonance modes and the test microphone is not confused by room effects; it responds only to the direct radiation from the loudspeaker. The measurement procedure is thereby simplified. Unfortunately, the

room's influence on the loudspeaker's power output (which can be as much as 20 dB) is also eliminated. Here is a classic case of throwing out the baby with the bath.

Using a sophisticated computer-aided procedure [described in this column last month], CU obtains a very accurate measurement of power output vs. frequency in an anechoic environment and proceeds to analyze the data by $\frac{1}{3}$ -octave frequency bands within the range from 110 to 14,000 Hz. The computer adjusts the overall loudness level to an arbitrary but reasonable value, then assigns the appropriate *sones* value (a loudness unit) to the relative output of the loudspeaker in each $\frac{1}{3}$ -octave band. For each band it divides the *sones* value of the test loudspeaker by the *sones* value a theoretically perfect loudspeaker (one having perfectly flat power response) would have in that same band if played at the same overall loudness level. If the test loudspeaker matches the ideal in a given $\frac{1}{3}$ -octave band, the quotient of this division process is 1.00; if it is 1 dB up or down in level, the quotient is approximately 1.08 or 0.92; and if it is off by 9 or 10 dB in that band, the quotient turns out to be about 2.00 or 0.5, signifying double or half loudness.

Computing the "accuracy score" is then a simple process. The absolute amounts of the deviations from perfect-match quotients of 1.00 are averaged for all the twenty-one bands, the result is subtracted from 1.00, and the remainder is expressed as a percentage. Thus, if the average deviation from flatness of power response were 1 dB, the average loudness difference from the ideal would be 0.08 *sones*, and the accuracy score would be $1.00 - 0.08 = 0.92 \times 100 = 92$ per cent. The fact that an average difference of 1 dB represents eight

percentage points also explains CU's caveat about an eight-point ambiguity in the ratings: in theory, the average listener can just detect 1-dB differences.

This system has at least two grave flaws. The first has to do with the unqualified premise that a perfectly flat power response is necessary for accuracy. STEREO REVIEW has published discussions of this point in the past, and I will not pursue it now. But let us postulate two loudspeakers, A and B, with quite different characteristics. Speaker A has a very smooth power-response curve, straight but tilted down at the high-frequency end, with the tilt easily corrected (if desired) by means of a treble tone control. Speaker B has a power-response curve that averages flat from 110 to 14,000 Hz, but it has a big hole in the output at 1,000 Hz and a nasty peak at 3,000 Hz. There is no doubt as to which will be the better-sounding loudspeaker, but, in the CU computer's eyes, they may well be equal because the average deviation in loudness from the "ideal" is the same.

The other major problem is at the low-frequency end of the range. CU claims "very high" correlation between their accuracy-score ratings and listening tests in their music room, provided the program material fed to both the reference and test speakers is limited to the range above 110 Hz. They do not include any data below 110 Hz in the accuracy score because, they say, they cannot predict the effect of a listening room on the bass output of a loudspeaker.

What CU does not point out is that this very high correlation is obtained with the speakers positioned at least $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 feet away from any surface of their listening room, which puts the adverse effects of boundary reflections nicely below 110 Hz. But I have yet to see a living-room setup with loudspeakers that far away from the floor and walls, and I doubt that many exist. A more practical spacing is 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet from woofer to wall. If CU were to put the loudspeakers within this more realistic distance from their listening-room wall, their anechoic accuracy scores would not correlate with listening tests below about 400 Hz. In terms of representing what loudspeakers will deliver to real rooms in practical circumstances, anechoic tests are invalid below that frequency, and so are CU's accuracy scores. In case you think that may not be important, consider: 40 per cent of the audible frequency range lies below 400 Hz.

Tested This Month

Akai GX-325D Cassette Deck
Stax SR-5 Stereo Headphones
Design Acoustics D-2 Speaker
Lenco L-85 IC Turntable

CU—and other organizations in the business of reporting on loudspeakers, as well—really should abandon anechoic chambers, at least for tests below the middle range, and assess loudspeaker performance in an environment more nearly representing reality. That is to say, the test room should contain at least three intersecting hard surfaces and the loudspeaker should be placed in a typical position with respect to these surfaces. Then a sufficient number of response curves must be taken in the far field of the room so that, when integrated, the power output is obtained for a practical operating condition of the loudspeaker. Only in that way can a valid low-frequency measurement be made.

—Roy F. Allison

MR. ALLISON'S point about the conditions necessary for close correlation between the numerical accuracy rating and the subjective rating accorded to a speaker by a listening panel is well taken. This is also one of the major limitations of the simulated "live-vs.-recorded" test that I perform, which is useful only above 200 Hz. It is possible (though rare) for a test speaker to be literally 100 per cent accurate in this test, yet have a

plainly audible and even objectionable lower-mid-range or bass coloration that makes it a far from "perfect" speaker when used to play wide-range program material.

In regard to Mr. Allison's final suggestion, I would agree in principle that anechoic chambers are of little value for establishing the "accuracy" of a speaker to be used in a normal home environment. In fact, at middle and high frequencies, my own test procedure is not very different from that proposed by Mr. Allison. Fortunately, a simple technique exists for measuring the bass output of a speaker independent of room characteristics. A paper presented by D. B. Keele of Electro-Voice to the 45th Convention of the Audio Engineering Society shows that it is possible to obtain the equivalent far-field response of a woofer by a near-field pressure measurement. The test room plays no part in the measurement, so that it neither degrades nor enhances the bass-response measurement.

Mr. Allison's suggestion that low-frequency response be determined by multiple measurements in a "live" room is, I

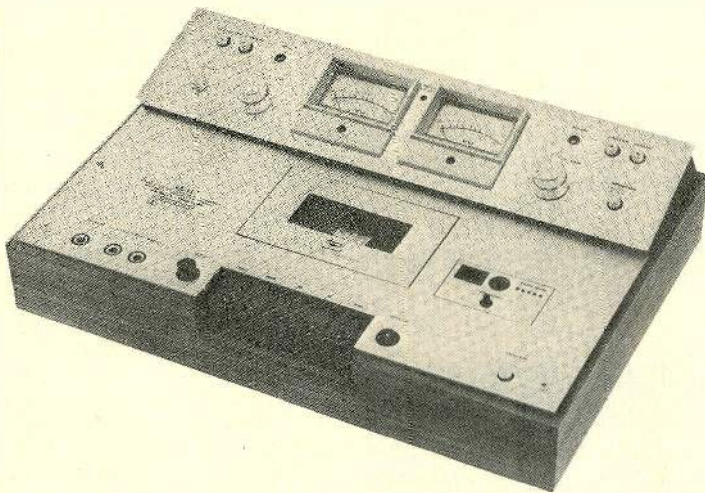
feel, quite impractical, aside from the considerable time necessary to make such measurements. Although some speakers, such as the Allison models, are designed to make use of room boundaries to deliver a flat bass response, and thus would appear to best advantage when tested in that manner, others probably would not. It could reasonably be claimed that another room might give very different results. This is equally true of the Keele method, or any other except a measurement in your own room. Let us be careful not to confuse (1) the actual performance of a speaker with (2) our measurement of that performance, for they are two very different things! However, the Keele test, which we use, does show a *capability* or *potential* performance of the speaker, which is of course subject to modification by its operating environment.

In conclusion, I would like to remind the reader of an unfortunate fact of hi-fi life: the only way to find out what a speaker sounds like in your own home is to set it up there and listen to it. Sorry—there are no short cuts!

Equipment Test Reports

By Hirsch-Houck Laboratories

Akai GXC-325D Stereo Cassette Deck



● THE Akai GXC-325D is a new member of the slowly growing ranks of three-head cassette recorders. Like some other moderately priced three-head machines, it combines the separate recording and playback heads in a single unit which fits through the single cassette opening originally intended only for a dual-purpose record/playback head. The two heads of the GXC-325D are physically separate, mounted as a unit with a ferrite shield between them to prevent electrical coupling which could dilute the effectiveness of the off-tape monitoring afforded by separate heads.

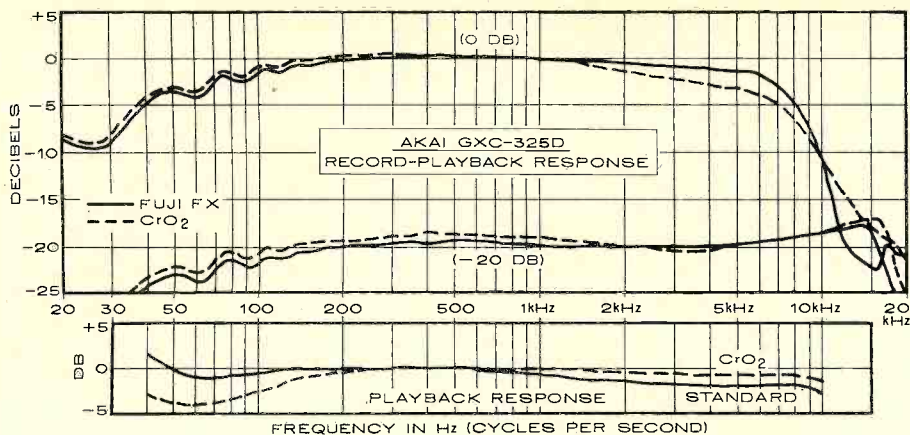
The alignment between the crystal ferrite heads is fixed at the factory, and because they are so closely spaced there is no likelihood of tape skew between them. The recording-head gap width and playback-head gap width are respectively 4 microns and 1 micron, each optimized for its function. Like other three-head recorders, the GXC-325D has separate electronic sections for recording and playback functions. Since it is Dolby-equipped, there are separate Dolby circuits for the two functions as well as for the two channels—four in all. The electronic circuits are based on dis-

crete components, and the machine has an imposing semiconductor complement of sixty transistors, four FET's, fifty-one diodes, and one integrated circuit (used in its automatic-stop system).

Externally, the Akai GXC-325D is a conventional top-loading machine with the cassette opening in the center of its satin-finish aluminum top panel. The five major transport controls are dished "piano-key" levers along the center front edge of the panel, plainly marked for their functions of stop, play, fast forward, rewind, and record. They are flanked by two round pushbuttons for EJECT and PAUSE functions.

Also located near the front of the panel are the headphone jack, two microphone jacks, and the pushbutton power switch. To the right of the cassette is the index counter, which has a "memory" feature that automatically stops the tape in rewind when the counter returns to a "zero" setting. Next to it is a row of five small amber dots, behind which a moving light indicates tape motion. At normal playing speed, the light travels slowly from left to right, and in the fast speeds it moves rapidly in the direction of tape motion.

In the center of the sloping rear panel section are two large illuminated VU meters with a red PEAK light between them. This is designed to flash on when momentary peaks of +7 dB or greater occur in either channel. The recording-level controls for the two channels are located to the left and right of the meters.



Each is a concentric control for separate adjustment of the mixing MIC and LINE inputs. At far left is a single playback-level control affecting both channels. At far right is the MONITOR switch, which drives the line outputs with the input signal or the signal from the playback head.

Along the rear of the sloping panel are two pushbuttons to set bias and equalization for "low noise" (LN) or chromium-dioxide (CrO₂) tapes. When both are engaged simultaneously, the recorder is said to be adjusted for ferrichrome (FeCr) tapes. Two more buttons activate the recording-level limiter and the Dolby system. All four buttons have small lights in their centers which glow when engaged. Amber and red lights on the panel show when the PAUSE and RECORD functions are in use.

The tape transport is completely solenoid-operated, and the keys can be pressed in any sequence without going through STOP. The capstan is driven by an a.c. servomotor with a closed-loop, double-capstan system that maintains the tape under constant tension as it passes over the heads. If the tape stalls, ends, or breaks (or if power is interrupted), the transport shuts off and disengages mechanically. The line inputs and outputs, including a DIN socket, are recessed into the rear of the wooden base. The Akai GXC-325D is about 17½ inches wide x 11¾ inches deep x 5½ inches high and weighs 19 pounds. Price: \$475.

⊗ **Laboratory Measurements.** The playback frequency response of the Akai GXC-325D varied ±2 dB from 40 Hz to the 10,000-Hz up-

per limit of the test tape. According to the manufacturer, the machine was biased for Fuji FX tape, which we used as the "normal" tape in our tests. For chrome tape we used TDK KR, and the ferrichrome tape was Sony FeCr. At a -20-dB recording level, the Fuji FX tape gave a response with ±2 dB from 80 to 14,500 Hz, with the lower frequencies dropping off slightly. The overall response of ±3 dB from 40 to 17,000 Hz was slightly better than the Akai specifications of 30 to 15,000 Hz. At a 0-dB recording level, tape saturation caused the response to drop rapidly above 7,000 Hz, the -20-dB curve being intersected at 11,500 Hz.

With chrome tape the overall response was ±3 dB from 38 to 19,000 Hz (rated 30 to 16,000 Hz). The 0-dB and -20-dB response curves intersected at 14,000 Hz. The ferrichrome frequency response was emphasized in the frequency range below 1,000 Hz and generally depressed in the 2,000- to 10,000-Hz range before rising slightly at higher frequencies. Within the ±3-dB tolerance used by Akai to set their specification of 30 to 19,000 Hz, we measured a 37- to 20,000-Hz response with Sony FeCr tape. The 0-dB curve sloped down steadily above 1,000 Hz but remained well above the -20-dB curve all the way to the test limit of 20,000 Hz.

We also made frequency-response measurements with a number of other high-quality tapes in order to judge how critical the match was between recorder and tape. To our pleasant surprise, the GXC-325D delivered excellent performance with almost any good tape. For example, Maxell UD and UDXL and Na-

kamichi EX II tapes gave almost identical frequency-response curves, similar to the Fuji FX except for a rise of one or two decibels between 10,000 and 15,000 Hz. The TDK Audua tape was slightly "hotter" at the high frequencies, but not so much as to audibly color the sound. Akai states that a "normal" tape for this machine is a "low-noise" or premium type, and this was confirmed by the slight roll-off of response above 10,000 Hz with TDK SD and the new 3M Master tape (again, this was not audibly significant).

We do have some reservations about the use of ferrichrome tapes with this recorder, however. Although Sony FeCr tape meets the manufacturer's specifications, the response with it is by no means as flat as with straight ferric (or cobalt/ferric) tapes or with CrO₂ tape. The "other" ferrichrome tape, 3M Classic, gave unacceptable results with the recorder's "ferrichrome" switch settings. The average response below 1,000 Hz was some 8 dB higher than the average above that frequency. It was essentially an exaggerated form of the response with Sony FeCr. When the "normal" settings were used with Classic, its frequency response was very similar to that of CrO₂ tape.

The "tracking" of the Dolby circuits was acceptable, though not quite optimum. At recording levels of -20 and -30 dB, the Dolby system produced an increased playback output of up to 2.5 dB at various frequencies between 1,000 and 10,000 Hz.

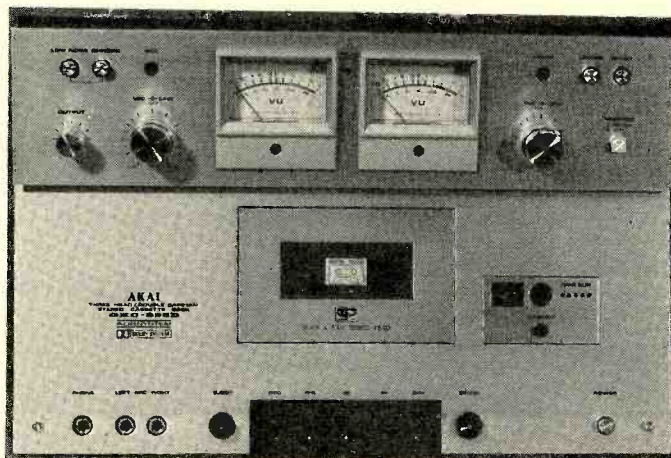
To reach a 0-dB recording level on the meters, a LINE input of 85 millivolts (mV) or 0.35 mV at the MIC input was needed. The microphone inputs overloaded at a reasonably high 62 mV input. The playback output (maximum) was 1 volt with FX and KR tape and 0.83 volt with FeCr. The headphone volume, which was fixed, was too low to be usable with 200-ohm phones. The Dolby calibration mark on the meters was at +2 dB; however, a standard 200-nW/m Dolby tape drove the meters to +3 dB. The meter ballistics were fairly close to VU standards, with a 10 per cent overshoot on 0.3-second tone bursts. The limiter began to come into action at -1 dB and was fully effective above 0 dB in preventing distortion due to excessive recording levels. The PEAK light began to glow at +7 dB.

At a 0-dB recording level, the playback distortion with a 1,000-Hz signal was a very low 0.72 per cent with Fuji FX tape, 2.1 per cent with TDK KR, and 2 per cent with Sony FeCr. The recording levels for 3 per cent playback distortion were +5, +2, and +1.5 dB, respectively. The unweighted signal-to-noise ratio (S/N) referred to that level was 52.5, 52, and 49.5 dB. With IEC "A" weighting, the S/N figures were 57.5, 58, and 56 dB. Finally, adding the Dolby system improved the S/N to 66, 64, and 63 dB. The noise increased by an insignificant 1.5 dB through the microphone inputs at maximum gain.

The combined wow and flutter (almost all in the flutter-frequency range) was a very good 0.09 per cent (unweighted). In a record-playback measurement it was even lower—0.07 per cent, presumably due to some cancellation occurring between the recording and playback processes. In fast forward and rewind, a C60 cassette was handled in approximately 72 seconds.

⊗ **Comment.** The handling properties of the Akai GXC-325D left little to be desired, the transport controls and "feel" imparting a
(Continued on page 40)

The GXC-325D presents a markedly "clean" appearance, with all controls isolated and clearly distinguished.



Garrard. The Automatic Choice.

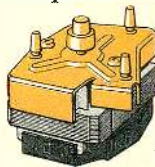
Rolls Royce. Burberry. Wedgwood. Classic British trademarks of our time. There is another. Garrard. No other brand in the world is as instantly associated with turntables.

The reason is simple. An emphasis on fundamentals has shaped all progress at Garrard. Precision and mechanical integrity have always held high priority over "glamour" and pizzazz. Any model change means an indisputable improvement in performance or durability, not just a new sales "promotion."

The new 990B belt-driven, multiple-play turntable is an excellent example of Garrard's basic design philosophy. We believe it to be the best value Garrard has ever offered in its quarter century of designing and producing high fidelity turntables. That's a pretty strong claim. But the 990B's superiority to competitive record players anywhere near its price (\$169.95) is readily apparent.

The 990B is belt-driven. An idler mechanism provides an inventive method of controlling speed as well as an additional stage of isolation between the motor and platter. It has a full size, 5 lb., die-cast, dynamically balanced platter which smoothes out even the tiniest fluctuations of speed. Cueing is continuously damped in both directions. Records are supported at the center hole *and* edge and the release mechanism operates at both points to ensure complete protection for all

your records. The Synchro-Lab motor incorporates both a 4-pole induction section for high starting torque and a synchronous section for constant speed.



The stylus force and anti-skating adjustments use no springs for absolute, unchanging precision. The newly designed S-shaped tonearm boasts impressively low tracking error plus low mass and bearing friction.

True, *some* competitors have *some* of these features. The 990B has them *all*.

As for specifications—Rumble: -64dB. Wow: 0.06%. Flutter: 0.04%.

Finally, the 990B is fully automatic. The arm indexes, lifts at the end of play, returns to the arm rest and shuts off the motor.

The result is exceptionally gentle handling of your valuable record collection. And since the automatic mechanism is completely disengaged during play, you get the convenience of automation and multiple-play without compromising performance.

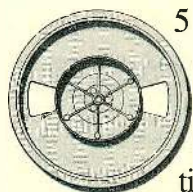
When you purchase the new 990B, you buy two things: a company that has earned a superlative reputation over many years of design and manufacture *and* a turntable demonstrably superior to anything in its price range.

For your free copy of the New Garrard Guide, write: Garrard, Div. of Plessey Consumer Products, Dept. A, 100 Commercial St., Plainview, N.Y. 11803



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sense of precision that was confirmed by the performance. When we compared the input and output programs using the MONITOR button, we were surprised to find that the playback sounded brighter and noisier than the input signal. This was not consistent with our measurements (even when the Dolby system was not used). However, when the switch was left in its TAPE setting and the amplifier's tape-monitor switch was used for the comparison (as would normally be done), the re-

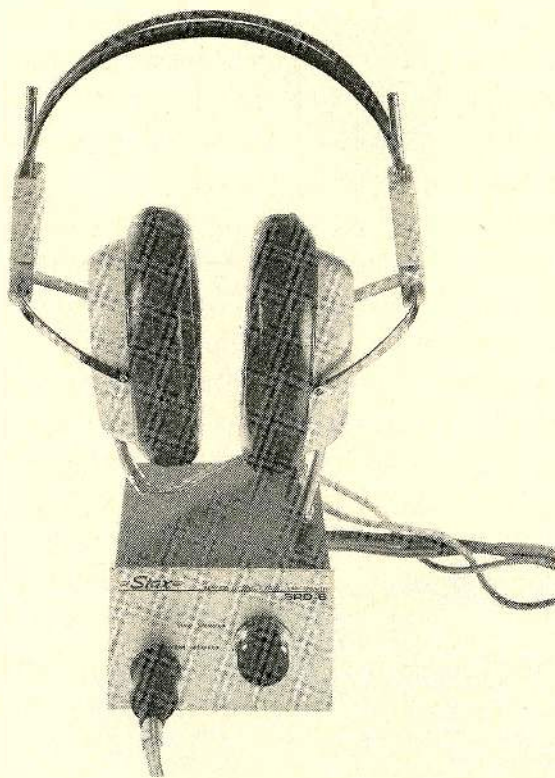
sults were essentially perfect, no difference being heard between the incoming program and the tape playback. The reason for the apparent discrepancy was the slight increase in output level from the recorder (about 1.5 to 2 dB) when switching to TAPE with its own MONITOR switch; this accentuated the residual noise and made the program sound bright.

Although the GXC-325D works well with any good tape, our tests clearly show that it is at its best with a good ferric tape such as Fuji

FX (or the others we tried). These tapes not only produce the flattest frequency response and lowest distortion, but give a substantially better S/N as well. The added recording "headroom" afforded by the Fuji tape makes the PEAK light a useful feature, since any level that flashes the light only occasionally will be within the machine's dynamic range. This is not necessarily true with chrome tapes, which may saturate before the light flashes.

Circle 105 on reader service card

Stax SR-5 Stereo Headphones



● **Laboratory Measurements.** As measured on a modified ANSI headphone coupler or "artificial ear," the Stax SR-5 phones had an extremely smooth and flat response through the important bass and mid-range—within ± 1 dB from 67 to 600 Hz. The output was "shelved" at lower frequencies, so that the 20- to 45-Hz response was about 7 dB below the mid-range level. Above 1,000 Hz there was a moderate amount of irregularity in the response curve, though less than we have observed with most phones. Since in this frequency range the coupler dimensions can have a profound effect on the response measurement, it is not easy to determine how much of the irregularity is due to the phones themselves. However, the output remained strong all the way up to the 20,000-Hz test limit, and the overall variation of $\pm 7\frac{1}{2}$ dB from 20 to 20,000 Hz is excellent for a headphone. The electrical impedance at the input to the SRD-6 was between 15 and 28 ohms from 20 to 8,500 Hz, falling to 7 ohms at 20,000 Hz.

With an input of 2.8 volts to the SRD-6, (corresponding to a 1-watt amplifier output into an 8-ohm load), the SPL from the phones was 102 dB through the flat mid-range region. We measured total harmonic distortion (THD) at several frequencies, with nominal drive levels of 1 watt and 10 watts. At 1,000 Hz, the THD was between 0.2 and 0.25 per cent, varying little with power (the SPL with 10 watts input was a very loud 115 dB). In spite of the extended high-frequency response of the phones, driving them with a 10-watt level at 10,000 Hz produced only 0.23 per cent THD. In the bass region, the larger diaphragm excursion results in greater distortion just as it does with a loudspeaker. At 50 Hz, the THD was 1.6 per cent at 1 watt and 13 per cent at 10 watts.

● **Comment.** As with a loudspeaker, a headphone's sound can best be judged by listening (although its measured response can give some clues as to what it will sound like). The Stax SR-5 listening qualities were completely consistent with our measurements. The sound had the almost indescribable smoothness and clarity that has long been a hallmark of good electrostatic sound, whether from a speaker or a headphone. Although we had no difficulty driving them to very comfortable listening levels from a moderately powerful amplifier (25 watts or more), these phones cannot be

(Continued on page 42)

● **STAX**, one of the major brands of electrostatic headphones sold in this country, is imported by American Audiopoint of Columbia, Mo. The Stax models range in price from very moderate to very expensive, and the SR-5 phones fall in the middle of the price range.

For electrostatic headphones, the SR-5's are atypically light and compact: they weigh a mere 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces and rest lightly on the ears with their soft, fluid-filled cushions. Although they are circumaural phones (completely covering the ears), they offer little blockage to outside sounds.

Like other electrostatic phones, the SR-5's require a polarizing power supply and step-up transformer driven from the amplifier's speaker outputs. These functions are included in the SRD-6 adapter, a small box measuring 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches high, and 7 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches deep, which consumes only 0.1 watt from the 120-volt a.c. power line and can be left energized at all times. If the adapter displaces a pair of normally used speaker out-

puts on the amplifier, the speakers can be connected to terminals in the rear of the SRD-6, and a switch on its panel activates either the speakers or the phones.

SR-5 phones have a braid-covered cord about 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, with a special plug that mates with a socket on the SRD-6 panel. They cannot be driven from the usual headphone output jacks of an amplifier or receiver. The performance of the SR-5 system is specified separately for the headset and the adapter, but the most important rating (for the user) is the maximum continuous input of 8 watts at 1,000 Hz (momentary peaks should not exceed 30 watts). Caution is suggested if the phones are to be connected to a high-power amplifier, since they could be damaged by continuous power levels exceeding 15 watts. The maximum rated sound-pressure level (SPL) from the SR-5 phones is 110 dB, and their frequency response is stated to be 30 to 25,000 Hz. Price: \$125, including the SRD-6 adapter.

DYNAMIC DUO

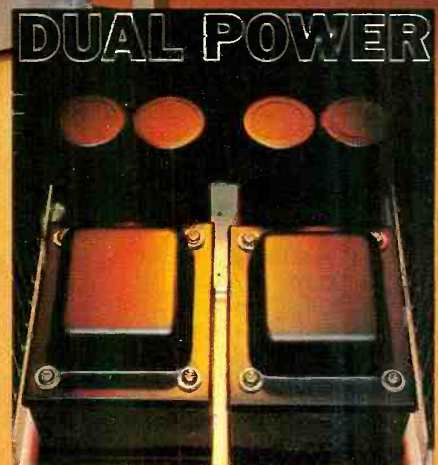
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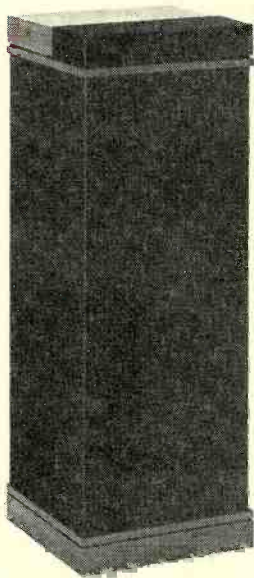
expected to produce the ear-shattering levels possible with some dynamic phones. Not only would this require the use of an amplifier capable of at least 100 watts per channel, but the phones would probably be destroyed in the attempt to drive them to those levels.

Aside from their sound, which is unexcelled, the most striking feature of the SR-5 phones is their comfort. We have often found some of the best headphones (from an acoustic standpoint) to be unwearable for any length of time because of weight or spring pressure

on the ears. The featherweight Stax, in sharp contrast, can hardly be felt; the result is a much more realistic musical listening sensation than we have experienced with most circumaural phones.

Circle 106 on reader service card

Design Acoustics D-2 Speaker System



● FROM all indications, the loudspeakers made by Design Acoustics, Inc. have been engineered to generate a flat power response through the audible frequency range and to radiate more or less omnidirectionally or at least hemispherically. The company's first product, the dodecahedral (twelve-sided), eleven-driver Model D-12, certainly met those goals. So, too, did the subsequent Model D-6, despite its conventional-looking floor-standing cabinet.

Next came the D-4, a column-shaped speaker that managed to retain much of its predecessors' open, dispersed sound quality. In our published evaluations of these three models (January and September 1973 and January 1975, respectively) we found that they set very high standards for "natural" sound quality. Now Design Acoustics has introduced the D-2, the first of its products that does not employ multiple tweeters. It is a two-way system with a single 10-inch long-throw woofer and a 1-inch dome tweeter, crossing over at 1,500 Hz. Like the D-4, the D-2 is also columnar, standing 34 inches high and 12¼

inches square; it weighs 35 pounds. Three of its sides are covered with a black grille cloth; the top is walnut, with a piece of acoustically transparent black foam plastic covering the top-mounted tweeter, which is angled forward and upward at 30 degrees to the vertical. A rocker switch next to the tweeter reduces its output (from a designated flat setting) by 3 dB to adjust the system for use in acoustically bright rooms.

The woofer is in a fully sealed enclosure. It has a free-air resonance of 23 Hz, which is increased to 41 Hz by the air load in the cabinet. The nominal impedance of the D-2 is 8 ohms, and it is recommended for use with amplifiers rated at 20 to 50 watts per channel. Instead of the more usual loosely defined frequency specification, the D-2 carries a power-response rating of 40 to 18,000 Hz ± 3.5 dB.

According to Design Acoustics, the tweeter delivers an essentially flat power response throughout its operating range. Since any single radiator of conventional design becomes directional at high frequencies, the tweeter response on axis has a rising high-frequency

characteristic. However, the tweeter's pressure response 60 degrees off axis (that is, in a horizontal plane around the speaker) is flat and matches the shape of the overall system power-response curve. Angling the tweeter upward provides a more uniform sound field for a listener, and without the "hot spots" that often occur directly in front of a speaker. Price: \$150.

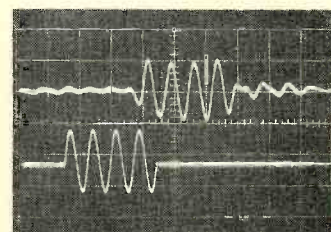
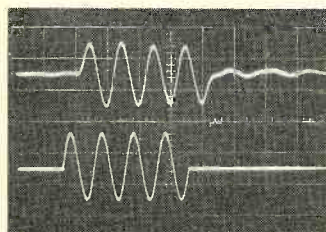
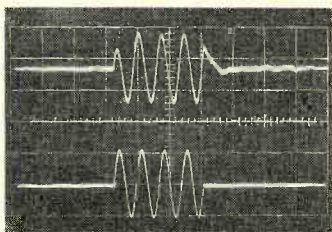
● **Laboratory Measurements.** Since our live-room test method is intended to approximate a total power-response measurement, we were interested to see how closely the D-2 lived up to the claims made for it. With the tweeter level set to "flat," our composite frequency-response curve was strikingly flat and smooth, with a variation of only ± 2 dB from 40 to 15,000 Hz. The extraordinary agreement between our measurements and those used by Design Acoustics to establish their ratings was gratifying, needless to say, especially since they were made under completely different test conditions. It is clear that the D-2 system has a remarkably flat response—not only compared with others in its price class, but at any price.

The D-2 has fairly low efficiency, delivering a sound-pressure level of 87 dB at a distance of 1 meter from the front of the cabinet when driven by one watt of mid-range random noise. The woofer distortion, though not excessive, was not particularly low. It measured 1.5 to 2.5 per cent down to 50 Hz at a 1-watt drive level and increased smoothly to 10 per cent at 30 Hz. With a 10-watt input the distortion was appreciably higher. It measured 6 to 8 per cent down to just below 50 Hz, and 17 per cent at 30 Hz. When not overdriven, the woofer sounded as clean as any we have heard. Tone bursts were reproduced cleanly at all frequencies, with virtually no ringing or start-up delays.

The tweeter-level switch began to attenuate the highs above 1,500 Hz, with a shelved response drop of about 3 dB at most frequencies above 2,000 Hz. The system impedance was 8 to 15 ohms over most of the frequency range, with a broad minimum of about 7 ohms

(Continued on page 44)

The consistently fine tone-burst response of the D-2 is illustrated in these oscilloscope photos taken at (left to right) 100, 1,000, and 10,000 Hz.



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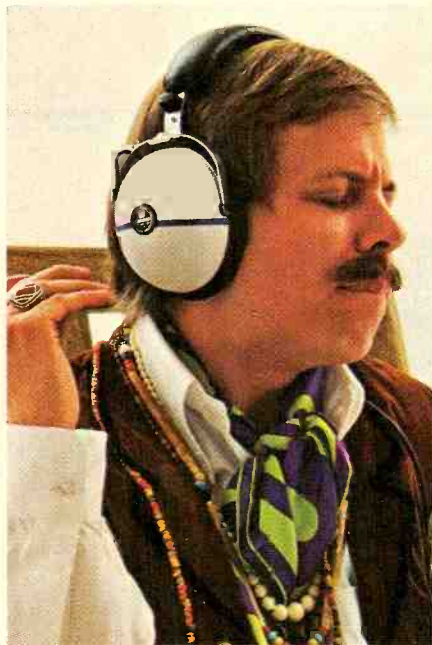
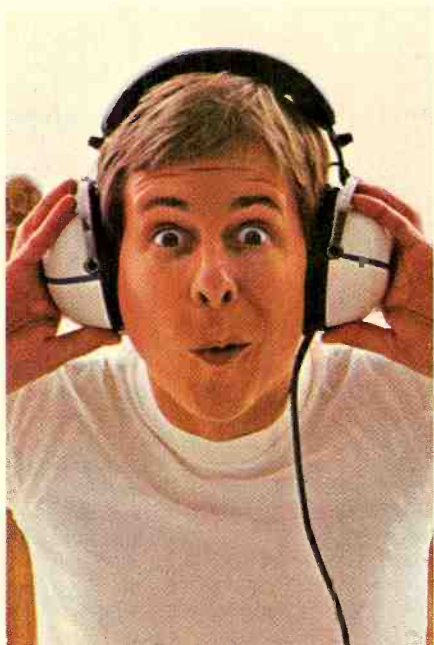


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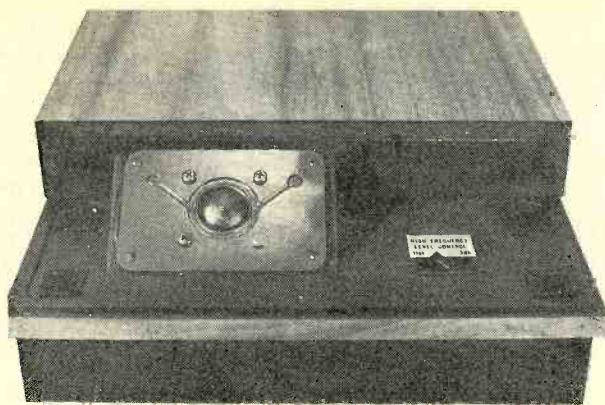
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The angled dome tweeter, visible when the foam grille is removed, provides uniform horizontal dispersion of the higher frequencies. The tweeter-level switch is at right.



above 6,000 Hz and a bass-resonance peak of almost 40 ohms at 41 Hz.

● **Comment.** In the simulated live-vs.-recorded test, the Design Acoustics D-2 was a virtually perfect imitator of the original sound. Usually the results were more accu-

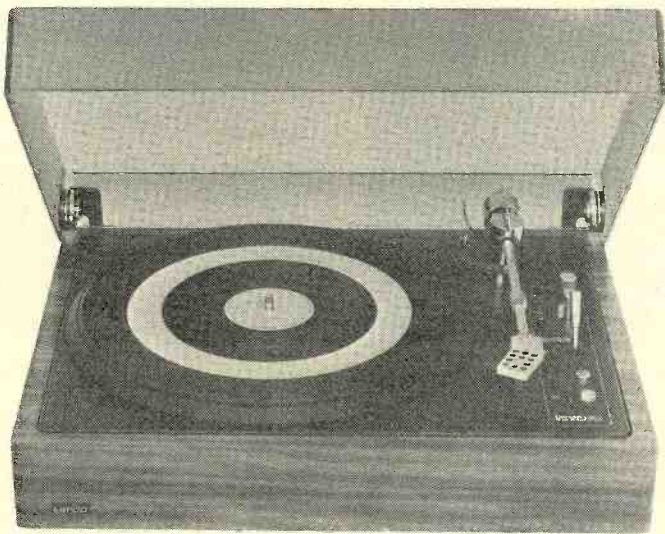
rate with the highs flat, but sometimes we felt that the -3-dB setting was more accurate. Throughout the test we were pleased to find that there was no lower-mid-range heaviness to color the sound (a common flaw that frequently prevents a speaker from achieving a top rating in this test).

From this, and from our measurements, we would expect the D-2 to be a very smooth, neutral-sounding speaker. It was all of that. We preferred to place it well away from the room walls to minimize any tendency toward heaviness that might result from the bass enhancement of such placement. The woofer response is inherently so flat well into the low-bass region that such augmentation could only reduce the natural quality of the sound.

We found that the speaker is, for all practical purposes, omnidirectional in the horizontal plane (the hemisphere into which it faces), and there is no audible vertical directivity unless one stands so close as to approach the tweeter axis. We also found it so easy to listen to (probably because of the lack of coloration) that we speedily forgot that we were listening to a speaker. In our view, the D-2 is certainly one of today's real speaker bargains, and it deserves the most serious consideration if you are interested in a good-sounding, good-looking system that takes up no more than a square foot or so of floor space.

Circle 107 on reader service card

Lenco L-85 IC Turntable



● **THE** Swiss-made Lenco L85 IC is a manual record player that automatically lifts the tone arm and shuts off the motor at the end of a record. The 40-ounce, nonferrous platter is belt-driven at 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ or 45 rpm by a slow-speed (450 rpm) synchronous motor. Although the speed change is mechanical (accomplished by shifting the belt on a stepped shaft), the motor is driven and controlled electronically and its speed can be trimmed electrically over a range of -3 to +7 per cent. The "IC" nomenclature refers to the use of integrated circuitry in the motor-drive/control system.

The tubular tone arm has a lightweight removable cartridge shell with adjustable cartridge position. A template is supplied so that the stylus overhang can be set for minimum tracking error near the inner grooves of a rec-

ord. Two counterweights make it possible to balance the arm with cartridges of almost any weight. Anti-skating force is applied by a weight hanging on a thin nylon cord. The position of the cord on a notched bar on the arm adjusts the amount of outward torque applied to the arm, and two anti-skating weights are provided to match any reasonable tracking force (recommended settings are given in the instruction manual).

After the arm is balanced, the tracking force is set by sliding a small weight along the arm tube. There are calibration marks at 1-gram intervals from 0 to 5 grams.

The operating controls of the Lenco L-85 IC are grouped at the right side of the motorboard. At the front are the on and off pushbuttons, which operate with a very light pres-

sure. Behind them is the cueing lever, which lowers the pickup when it is pulled forward against a slight spring pressure. When it is released, either by a slight push or automatically at the end of a record, it moves abruptly to the rear and the tone arm is lifted.

A small knob shifts the belt on its drive pulley for speed selection, and behind it is a vernier speed control. Stoboscope markings on the beveled edge of the platter are illuminated from below and can be used to monitor or adjust speed while playing a record. The rubber mat has three narrow rings that support the record only at its edge.

The entire record-player mechanism is suspended from its finished wooden base on viscous-damped spring mounts. The springs can be adjusted individually for turntable leveling. The smoky-plastic dust cover is hinged to remain open at intermediate angles, and it can be removed easily.

The L85 IC, complete with base and cover, is 18 inches wide, 14 inches deep, and 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches high; it weighs 21 pounds, 10 ounces. Price: \$299.50.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** With a good high-compliance cartridge installed in its shell, the arm resonance of the L85 IC was at 8 Hz with an amplitude of 6 dB. The mass of the arm is evidently low enough that almost any currently manufactured cartridge can be used effectively. The actual stylus force was about 0.2 gram higher than indicated at most settings (an insignificant error). The tracking error was less than 0.5 degree per inch at radii from 2.5 to 6 inches, and it was essentially zero over the inner half of a 12-inch record. The arm wiring and cable capacitance was 235 picofarads per channel, which is about right for most stereo cartridges but too high for CD-4 cartridges.

The turntable speed was independent of a.c. line voltage. The vernier range was from -3 to +9 per cent. The turntable was one of the quietest belt-driven units (from a rumble standpoint there was absolutely no audible acoustic noise) we have tested, and in fact surpassed many direct-drive turntables in its freedom from vibration at any frequency. The unweighted rumble was -36 dB including vertical components, -40.5 dB with vertical rumble canceled out, and a very low -60 dB with ARLL weighting. Wow and flutter were each 0.035 per cent, giving a combined reading of 0.05 per cent at either speed.

As so often happens, the anti-skating had to be set about 0.75 gram higher than the tracking force. The cueing lift behaved quite differently from most we have used. On the L-85 IC, the descent appeared to be well damped and drift-free, but the lift was abrupt and bounced the arm clear of the lift bar, which caused the arm to move toward the outside of the record by a visible amount. A slow movement of the cueing lever did not help, since the mechanism is spring-loaded and operates abruptly when triggered.

The 7-, 10-, and 12-inch index notches on the lift bar worked very well—in fact, *too* well: we found it difficult to cue the arm to points in close proximity to the notches without having it slip into them. However, the supplied lift-bar covering clip solved that particular problem.

The viscous-damped isolating springs were highly effective against external vibration that could cause acoustic feedback. At frequencies between 20 and 100 Hz, the isolation was 10 to 30 dB better than that of most turntables we have tested. Because of the damping, the unit is not, in the least sensitive to ordinary handling shocks, so that we were able to operate it without the "kid gloves" approach needed with some softly sprung but undamped record players.

● **Comment.** We must confess to having a mixed reaction to the Lenco L-85 IC. On the plus side of the ledger, it is an outstandingly fine record player. The arm is low in mass, has low bearing friction, and is easy to handle (though the finger lift comes off too easily when used to push the arm into its rest clip). The turntable itself is superb—certainly the best belt-drive unit we've seen from the standpoint of rumble (only a couple of direct-drive models have measured slightly better in our tests)—and we have already commented on the outstanding base isolation.

Most of the minor annoyances we have mentioned would not in themselves detract seriously from the fine qualities of the L-85 IC. Our real reservations concerning the turntable relate mostly to quality control. We have tested two units (one was the earlier L-85, sans "IC", but it was essentially identical to the latest version in its performance). As received, both had the same fault—an inoperative cueing and arm-lift system. Examination revealed that the control linkage had come apart, and a certain amount of delicate bending was necessary to restore it to operation. Also, in both samples a small coil spring was found hanging from a portion of the mechanism—and with no clue to where its other end belonged.

To put the matter into perspective, and to leave no doubt as to our feelings, if the buyer of a Lenco L-85 IC checks out the unit at the dealer's to be sure that the cueing device functions properly, and if the cartridge can be mounted and positioned by the dealer or someone with a good assortment of mounting screws (the ones supplied are not usable with many cartridges) and a very fine screwdriver (essential for the cartridge-overhang adjustment), he can put the unit into service with the knowledge that he owns one of the best-performing record players on the market.

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The Simels Report

By Steve Simels



TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF ROCK?

As you are probably aware by now, just about every Rilly Big (as Ed Sullivan used to say when he wasn't performing questionable acts with little Topo Gigio) rock-and-roll artist in the world is touring the U.S.A. this year. Paul McCartney and Wings, Elton, the Who, the (surprise!) Stones, the Beach Boys, Dylan, Zeppelin, Bad Company . . . they've all been here or soon will be. Even the talk about the Beatles' reunion is beginning to sound serious. As a staunch supporter of the "Ban the Bicentennial" movement, though, I can't help but wonder whether this unprecedented flurry of rock activity will be enough to divert our attention from such obnoxious topical phenomena as Schmidt's Historic Beer Can Series and the Republican and Democratic conventions, or whether there will instead be so much music available that ultimately it will cancel itself out, leaving us only with enough red-white-and-blue bunting to choke on.

The whole thing has set me to brooding. You see, my colleagues around here, specifically those in the classical music areas, will have no trouble at all coming up with a quintessentially American composer to represent us as birthday time rolls around. Oh, Ives and Copland and Ellington and Billings and Joplin and whoever will all be slugging it out for the honor, but that's the point—in "serious" music, at least, *there's a field to choose from*. Me, I'm stuck with rock-and-roll, and that's a little limiting. I can't think of much mainstream pop dealing with America either, unless we're going to drag in Stephen Foster or George M. Cohan. But if my colleagues are equal to the task, then so, by gum, am I; there has to be a Bicentennial rock group and, further, a Bicentennial rock song *somewhere*.

AND of course there is; on any album by The Band. Didn't someone once describe them as the only rock act that could have warmed up the crowd for Abraham Lincoln? Didn't Guy Peelaert depict them as Civil War soldiers out of a Matthew Brady photograph in his comic book *Rock Dreams*? And don't many of their best songs deal with American history and American themes? Yup, they do, which makes them ideal—except for one small problem: they're Canadians. Somehow, I don't think we can have our neighbors to the North filling in for us at a time like this, espe-

cially with everyone so touchy about the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Hmm. Well, then, how about the Beach Boys? They're good California lads, and what with *Spirit of America*, *Be True to Your School*, and all those car songs, who else ever reflected the American Post-War Urban Reality as accurately as Brian Wilson and Company? They are, for that matter, among the very few rockers who have ever reflected it *positively*, and that is certainly what we're looking for. But I've got my reservations about them as well, beginning with the fact that the Boys are actually staging their own Bicentennial Tour, even going so far as to schlep along the *group America* (who, despite the name, has *never* made a statement about this country—or anything else, for that matter). We don't want to be too obvious about this thing either (I keep thinking of those beer cans).

Okay, okay! I've got it! Send Arlo Guthrie over to the White House and have him sing his father's *This Land Is Your Land*. No, that's no good; the song has already been bought up for an airline ad, and we can't have crass commercialism impinging on the dignity of the occasion. Waitaminit . . . the White House! Jack Ford had a rock band when he was in high school (think of the *President's* having to deal with all that noise coming out of his garage!), and a fellow critic who has heard him jam assures me he's quite a hot guitar player. But no, it's an election year; Dad would never let Jack make such a spectacle of

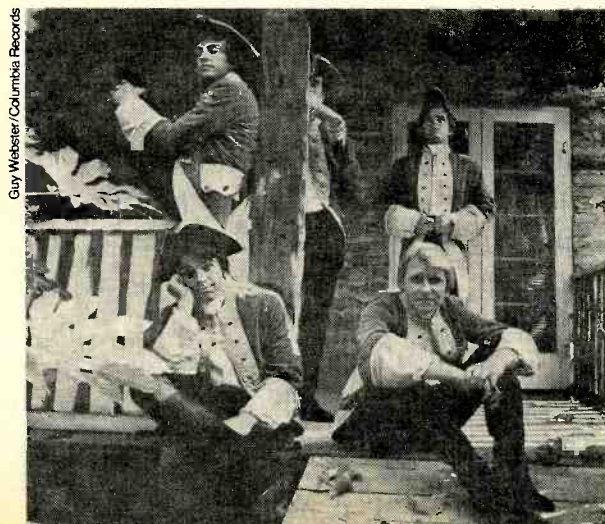
himself. One Ron Nessen in the family is quite enough.

Goodness, what a muddle. But hold on, now . . . what was it the man said about obvious solutions being the best ones? Of course! 1976 also happens to be the two hundred and *first* anniversary of the Midnight Ride of . . . Paul Revere! *Paul Revere and the Raiders*!! Now I know this is hardly the time or the place for me to bore you with such bits of trivia as the fact that Paul and the boys were into outrageous costumes and pop theatrics when Bowie was still in *diapers*, or that they were smashing pianos into smithereens in teen clubs before Peter Townshend even *owned* a guitar, much less demolished one. That's unimportant. What *is* important, it seems to me, is that every patriotic American rock-and-roll fan sit right down and *demand* that the Raiders back into those ridiculous Revolutionary War outfits they used to cavort in on *Where the Action Is*, and that they then petition Columbia to reissue, original cover intact, the perfect Bicentennial rock album: the Raiders' "Midnight Ride." (It might be a good symbolic gesture to throw a shipment of Janis Ian records off a boat into Boston Harbor at the same time.) We might even make a hit of the group's new single *The British Are Coming* (well, the Queen is) if we're feeling feisty; it chronicles the events of April 18, 1775, while the band plays *Louie Louie* in the background.

That takes care of finding the right group. Now how about the right song? That's much, much easier—in fact, there are only two logical choices, so I'm willing to let someone else make the final decision. For the Fifties fans out there, what could be more appropriate than Chuck Berry's *Back in the USA*, with its immortal lines "I'm so glad to be back in the USA, where the hamburgers sizzle on the open grills night and day"? And for the younger rockers in the audience, Bruce Springsteen's *Fourth of July, Asbury Park (Sandy)* just couldn't be topped (so what if the song mentions the holiday only in the title?).

And there we have it: the right group, the right songs. If we can get them all together we should be able to Rock the Bicentennial in a style at least a bit more amusing than another round of Kate Smith singing *God Bless America*. If we can't, I have one last suggestion: go see the *Woodstock* movie again, but this time stand up when Jimi Hendrix plays his unaccompanied, feedback-ridden version of everyone's favorite Golden Oldie, *The Star-Spangled Banner*. Second best, but not bad.

Ah, if reviewing were only as easy as this a-&-r work!



Paul Revere and the Raiders holding up somebody's front porch on the jacket of their second album, "Just Like Us." That's Paul at lower right.

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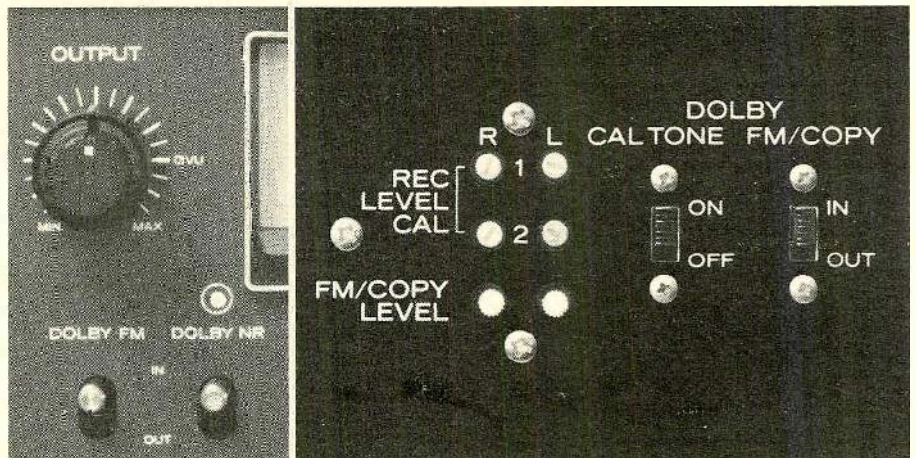
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The Opera File

By William Livingstone



OPERA AND THE BICENTENNIAL

AMERICA'S severest critics have usually been Americans themselves, and there are those among us who feel that we should spend 1976 not in celebrating two hundred years of independence, but in examining our collective conscience and repenting for our nation's sins. Abroad we have exploited other countries and meddled in their affairs. At home we have failed to provide equal rights to all our citizens. We have raped our continent. We have permitted our cities to decay. Indeed, our critics say, we have just been too bad for too long to deserve a birthday party.

Well, perhaps. But I think our national ego has taken such a beating lately that we must consciously look for sources of self-esteem if we are going to have the strength to cope with our very serious problems. How can we hope that the children growing up today will correct the errors of previous generations if we don't give them some sense of pride in their own country?

Although I am not unmindful of this country's shortcomings, I am not wearing sackcloth and ashes this year. Among other things, I'm enjoying the role opera is playing in the Bicentennial celebrations. West Germany has sent the Deutsche Oper to Washington to sing for us on our anniversary, and France is sending the Paris Opera in September. (Italy had planned to send La Scala from Milan, but ran out of money.)

My little project for the Bicentennial was to make a survey of American opera—it turned out to be a much bigger job than I realized. According to the Central Opera Service, approximately 1,500 American operas have been composed since 1930 (almost all have been performed!), and there will be about one hundred world premières this year, many of them Bicentennial commissions.

Last summer I went to Kansas City for the première of Jack Beeson's *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines* (the first opera commissioned for the Bicentennial by the National Endowment for the Arts), but I just haven't been able to keep up since. Premières have been coming too thick and fast and in far away places—Thomas Pasatieri's *Inés de Castro* in Baltimore, Roger Sessions' *Montezuma* in Boston, and Dominick Argento's *The Voyage of Edgar Allan Poe* in Saint Paul.

In addition to all the new operas being presented this year, many companies are reviv-

ing older American works, and those with native subject matter are especially popular now. The New York City Opera chose two of this type for its spring season, Beeson's *Lizzie Borden* and Douglas Moore's *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, both based on the lives of nineteenth-century Americans.



Susanne Faulkner-Stevens/Exxon

FRANCES BIBLE
Simply magnificent in Baby Doe

Although a Massachusetts court acquitted Lizzie Borden of the ax murder of her father and stepmother, Beeson and his librettist Kenward Elmslie present her as guilty in a work of considerable dramatic power. I found the vocal line rather angular, but tolerable even to an ear as conservative as mine, and the orchestral score is exciting. It's rather like an American *Elektra*. Premiered by the New York City Opera in 1965, *Lizzie Borden* was recorded soon after by Desto with Brenda Lewis in the title role and Ellen Faull, Ann Elgar, Herbert Beattie, Richard Fredericks, and

Richard Krause. That recording is still available and I recommend it.

The Ballad of Baby Doe is probably the most popular contemporary American opera. Since its première at Central City, Colorado, in 1956 there has been only one season when it was not in the repertoire of at least one company. It is the story of Horace Tabor, who made a fortune in Colorado and divorced his wife Augusta to marry the beautiful young Baby Doe. The opera has some structural weaknesses, but the melodious score is pleasant, and Baby Doe's final aria is beautiful enough to raise goose pimples (I've been humming it for weeks).

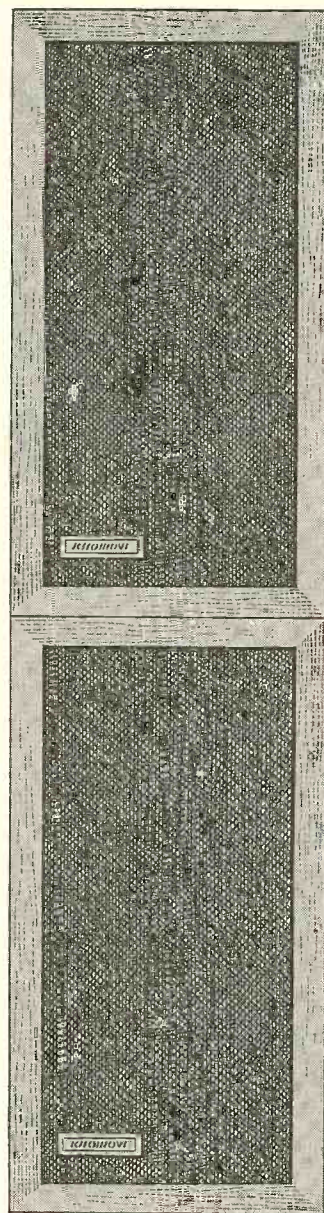
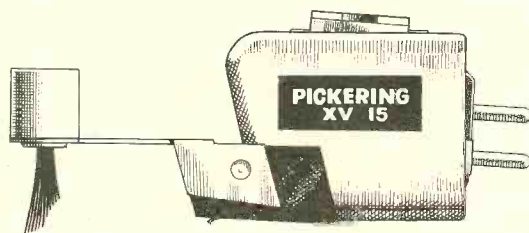
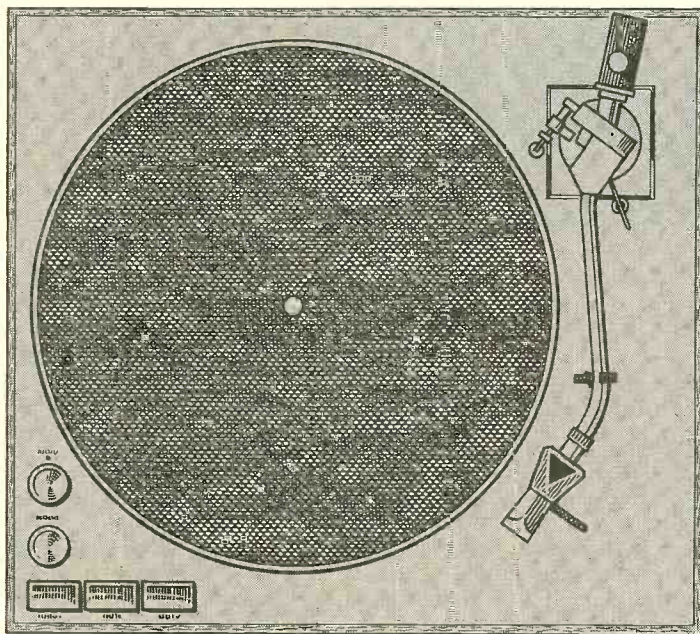
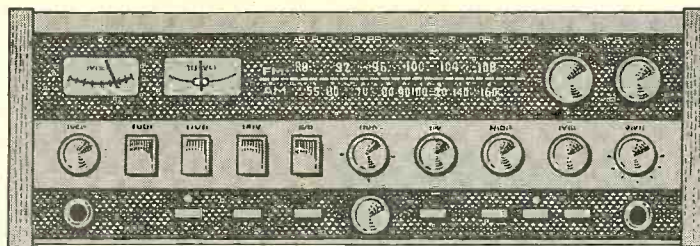
The recording of *Baby Doe* made by the NYC Opera in 1959, available for a time on MGM and later on Heliodor, has been out of print for years. Deutsche Grammophon is re-releasing it in July, thus celebrating the Bicentennial, the Colorado centennial, and the twentieth anniversary of the opera's première. It features strong performances by Walter Cassel as Horace, Frances Bible as Augusta, and Beverly Sills as Baby Doe. A rather small-scale work, *The Ballad of Baby Doe* gains something from the intimacy of the recording medium.

I gained similarly from the intimacy of TV when a performance at the NYC Opera was telecast this April in the distinguished Live from Lincoln Center series. The performance was good, and I found it an important operatic event. Ruth Welting as Baby Doe and Richard Fredericks as Horace made better impressions on television than they had in the opera house the week before, and Frances Bible, who has been singing the role of Augusta since the first production, was simply magnificent. She sang well, acted well, and projected a completely rounded characterization. The audience loved her, and so did I.

Half a dozen microphones and four specially developed cameras able to work at low light levels were placed in the theater so unobtrusively that they did not disturb the audience there. The results on the TV screen were excellent, and so was the sound, which was broadcast simultaneously in stereo on FM radio stations. The largest "simulcast" attempted in this country, the show went to more than sixty cities and was available to more than half the TV households in the country.

A wonderful sense of the excitement of going to the opera was communicated to the home viewer, and I'm convinced this is the way opera should be presented on TV—as a theatrical experience with stage scenery, a real audience, and high-quality sound. It's expensive, of course, and the costs of this broadcast were paid in the good new American way with contributions from a government agency, a foundation, and a private company. They were the National Endowment, the Charles A. Dana Foundation, and Exxon Corporation.

Among the finest things I've ever seen on television are the Martha Graham episode in Exxon's Dance in America series and *The Ballad of Baby Doe* in the Live from Lincoln Center series. Such television projects have taken giant steps forward in "nationalizing" the resources of our most important performing arts organizations by making them available free to literally millions of Americans across the country. That's something I think we can all be proud of. I am—I'm really glad this country was founded and that I was lucky enough to be born in it.



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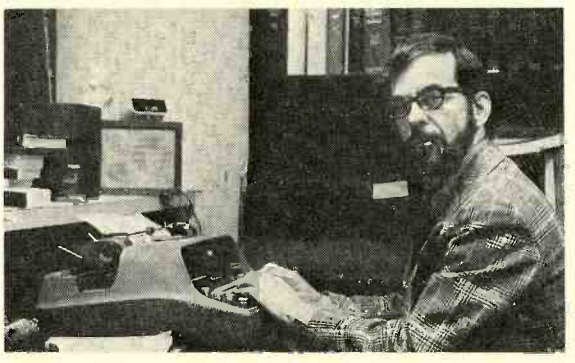
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Going on Record

By James
Goodfriend



THE HALL OF THE HOUSE OF FISHER

LINCOLN CENTER for the Performing Arts held a press conference in New York the other day and handed out a press release: Avery Fisher Hall is to be gutted. Well, they didn't put it exactly *that* way, but that is definitely what they meant. The outer walls, the staircases, and presumably the hanging sculpture out front will remain, but the auditorium itself will be "demolished and totally reconstructed," and that means not just the seats and the stage, but the very walls, ceilings, and floors. The reasons for this are not hard to find: the place has been an acoustical—and therefore musical—disaster since opening night.

Philharmonic Hall, which was its name until 1973, was a product of its time, the time of what was even then called the "edifice complex." It was designed to be "different," to knock your eyes out, to be luxuriously comfortable—and to hold a lot of people. Acoustical problems (and it was conceded there might be some) were to be ironed out by "tuning" the hall with specially designed "acoustical clouds" which covered the ceiling.

But, in actual experience, sitting in Philharmonic Hall was rather like sitting in the mouth of a large horn tweeter. The curving walls and ceiling gave a perspective view of the orchestra way down the throat of the horn, and the sound was (as we in the audio game put it) peaked in the high mid-range and definitely rolled off in the bass. The clouds did not perform their intended miracle, and when they were removed—as they were during one of many later alterations—the ceiling itself offered little improvement. Despite some fairly extensive (and expensive) renovations, each of which offered hope and provided disappointment, it began to be apparent that nothing short of gutting the structure and starting all over again was going to make much difference. Some of us, with the sound of the Philharmonic Hall organ in our minds, even thought it ought to be made into a skating rink.

At any rate, this time they are going to give it the works. Following the last concert (May) of the current season, the inside of the hall will be demolished, stripped, and rebuilt, to be finished, it is hoped, in time for the Philharmonic's Pension Fund Concert on October 19. The architect for the new hall is Philip Johnson, and the acoustician (Johnson has al-

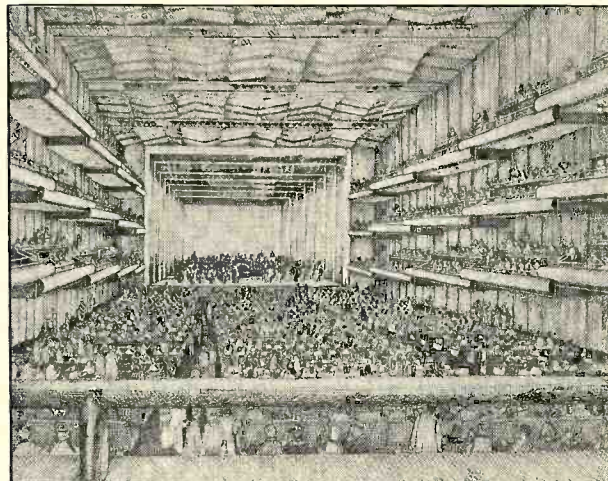
ready referred to him as "my boss," showing that he is aware of what the *real* problems are) is Cyril M. Harris, who was acoustical consultant for the Kennedy Center in Washington, the Krannert Center in Urbana, Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis, and Powell Symphony Hall in St. Louis. The man who put up most of the money for the work is Avery Fisher, the founder of Fisher Radio, for whom the hall was renamed three years ago on the occasion of his initial huge gift to Lincoln Center. Dare we say that here is one more example of the recording and audio-component industry leading the concert business by the nose? There is a certain poetic justice in that, for the old Philharmonic Hall reminded one of nothing more than a cheap, ersatz high-fidelity set.

The primary thing that Harris and Johnson expect to do is to get rid of Fisher Hall's curves and make it into a rectangular room with the ceiling roughly parallel to the floor. This is dispensing with artificial "modernism" and going back to the classical concert-hall shape of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The present streamlined curvature of the boxes and balconies will be replaced by three tiers of boxes facing laterally into the hall and three tiers of balconies (of five to six rows of seats each) in a straight line in the back of the hall, overhanging comparatively few of the orchestra seats and presumably

making the sound considerably more equal throughout the hall than is presently the case. The enlarged stage will be framed by a proscenium, the walls will be faced with random-width wood panels, and the ceiling, of painted plaster, will have undulations to provide further break-up of sound. Even the fronts of the boxes will be convex to reflect sound. In other words, no new, experimental techniques are being considered, only designs that have proved effective elsewhere. I note the absence of the carvings and the statuary that are such a noticeable part of many great European concert halls, but, should all else fail, I dare say it would be easy enough to cobble up three dozen miscellaneous wood and plaster nymphs to drop in here and there.

The question is still whether all this will *work*, for Avery Fisher Hall is quite a gigantic place (the new seating capacity will be 2,726), rather larger than most of the great European halls. Dr. Harris seems quietly confident. He refused to be pinned down to any prediction of what the final acoustics might be like, whether they might resemble those of Carnegie Hall, Boston's Symphony Hall, or even, God forbid, Royal Albert Hall in London. He expressed the wish that everyone at the press conference come to hear the results when the project is finished and make up his own mind, and there is little doubt that that wish, at least, will certainly be granted.

THE New York Philharmonic is one of the world's great orchestras. It is virtually criminal that for fourteen years it has not had a home that was acoustically worthy of it. Visiting orchestras, great instrumental virtuosos, and the best of the world's recital singers have likewise been forced to undergo musically degrading experiences in New York, and the hall's effect on its audiences can only be termed insulting. It is time that things were changed, and one must sympathize with those who are endeavoring to change them and be grateful to those who have made it possible. I think that even Mr. Johnson and Dr. Harris must agree, though, that acoustics is a tricky business, that there may be some sort of spiritual element in it that undercuts the physical. If in fact the devil has spat on the site, or if those in charge forgot to bury the proper artifacts under the cornerstone of the building, there may be nothing left to do but turn it into the aforementioned skating rink, and, properly invoking the blessings of the gods of music, start all over again elsewhere in town. Say, Central Park North.



Artist's rendering of the proposed new interior of Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center

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The Basic Repertoire

By Martin Bookspan



GERSHWIN'S RHAPSODY IN BLUE

IF the Fourth of July, 1776, marks the start of American independence, then the 1924 anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birthday, February 12, might well be considered the start of the independence of American concert music. It was on that date, near the end of a very long program given in New York's Aeolian Hall by Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra, that the *Rhapsody in Blue* by George Gershwin was given its first performance. The significance of the event was not lost on some in that first audience. Carl Van Vechten, the distinguished novelist and writer about music, wrote to Gershwin after the concert: "Quite as a matter of course the concert was a riot; you crowned it with what I am forced to regard as the foremost serious effort by an American composer."

These words have about them the ring of prophecy. For in the *Rhapsody in Blue* Gershwin quite spontaneously and innocently created a whole new concert vocabulary for the American composer, one that literally changed everything. The *Rhapsody in Blue* was the musical shot that was heard round the world. All at once the rhythms and tempo of American life became translated into a musical expression instantly recognizable as uniquely and unmistakably American. No more influential work had ever before been written by an American composer, and there has been nothing in the half-century since the *Rhapsody* that has had anything like its effect on American concert music.

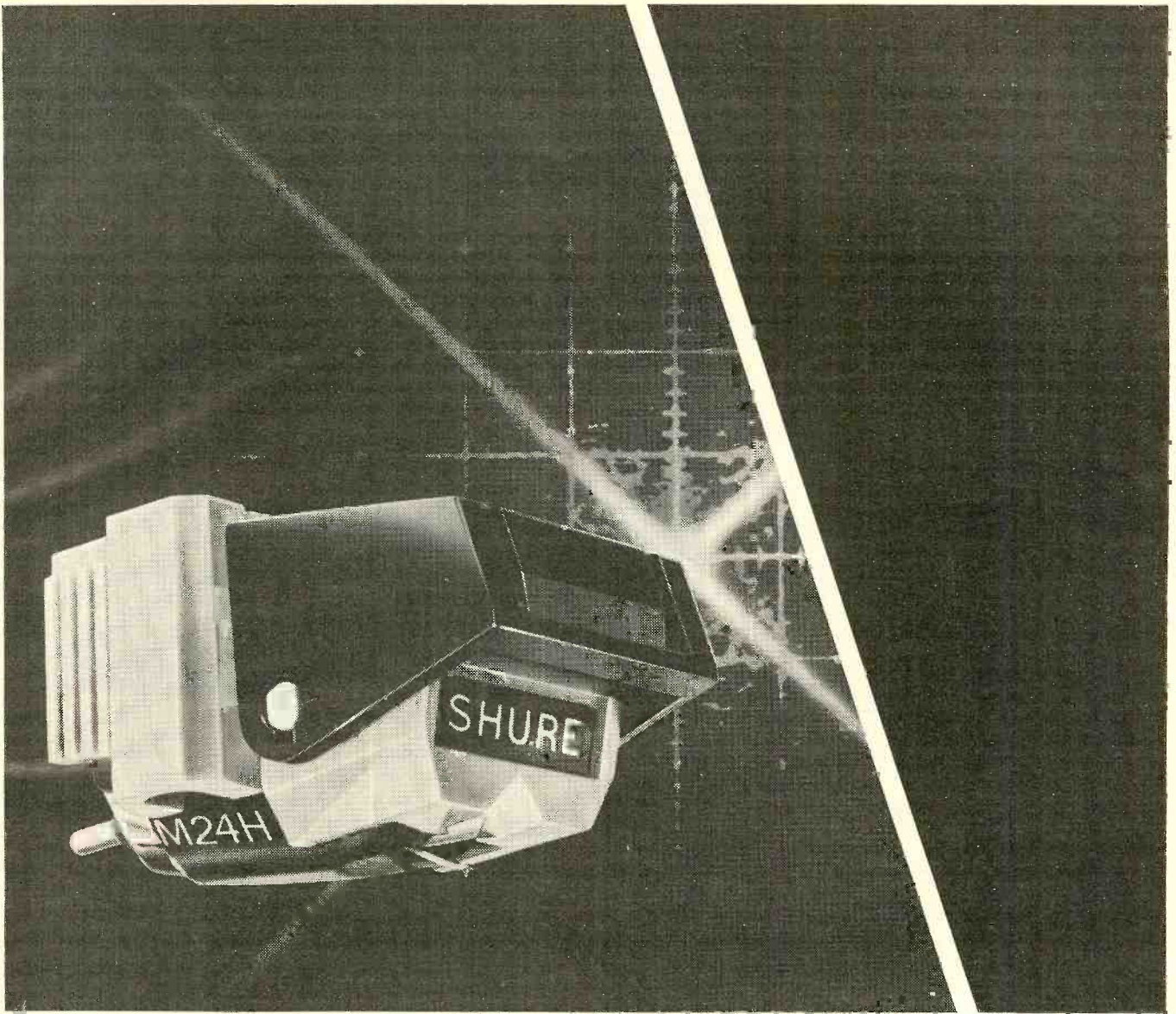
When the year 1924 dawned, Gershwin was an enormously successful composer of pop tunes and Broadway shows, a twenty-five-year-old at the full flood of his bursting genius. The circumstances of the creation of the *Rhapsody in Blue* were so casual as to be ludicrous. Whiteman had asked Gershwin to write something for him for the Lincoln's Birthday concert; Gershwin had said "Sure," and then promptly forgot about it. It was only when an announcement about the concert appeared in the paper, promising a new work by George Gershwin, that he was reminded of his commitment to Whiteman. This was in early January, and Gershwin was putting the finishing touches on his score for the Broadway-bound musical *Sweet Little Devil*. The plan and substance for the *Rhapsody in Blue* came to him on a train ride between New York and Boston, where *Sweet Little Devil*

was in its tryout run. "I heard it as a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America," Gershwin wrote, "of our vast melting-pot, of our incomparable national pep, our blues, our metropolitan madness." Since time was so short before the scheduled concert, Gershwin and Whiteman agreed that a piano score would suffice: the details of the orchestration would be tended to by arranger Ferde Grofé.

For that first performance, Grofé naturally arranged the *Rhapsody* specifically for the Whiteman Band. Later came Grofé's scoring for piano solo and symphony orchestra, the setting in which we usually hear the music today. But there is something that seems *right* about the scoring for piano and band, which lends the music its most natural sound and expression. Fortunately, an excellent performance and recording of the *Rhapsody* in this form exists—Eugene List's, with Samuel Adler conducting the Berlin Symphony Orchestra (Turnabout TVS 34457). Included also are List performances of the three Gershwin Preludes for Piano and a List-Adler collaboration on the Gershwin Piano Concerto. All the works receive splendidly idiomatic treatment.

OF the piano-with-symphony-orchestra recordings, my choices remain those by Leonard Bernstein (Columbia M 31804, cartridge MA 31804, cassette MT 31804) and Earl Wild with Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops (RCA LSC 2367, included on cartridge CRS2-0783 and cassette CRK2-0783). Bernstein plays and conducts the performance from the keyboard—as he has been doing with the New York Philharmonic on its recent tour in this country and abroad. The recorded performance has its excesses, to be sure, but the conviction and commitment of the playing sweep aside any criticisms as far as I am concerned. The Wild-Fiedler collaboration plays the music straighter, but it is tremendously effective and joyously exuberant nonetheless.

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WEAR, whether of diamond stylus or of vinyl disc, is very likely something that most of us think of, at least fleetingly, every time we put a valued recording on our turntables. Dirt, dust, finger oils, stylus-tip geometry, stylus-assembly design, anti-skating, and even the plastic composition of the disc itself can be seen to play their various roles. Today's best record-playing systems permit unprecedentedly low tracking forces, but wear of the record groove and stylus tip are nonetheless still with us, along with their resulting noise, loss of crispness and clarity, and general distortions of the sound signal.

Though it might seem that the root causes of record and stylus wear should be rather easy to pin down if not entirely eliminate, many extensive studies of the stylus/groove relationship have failed to yield a complete understanding of the wear process and the factors that contribute to it. We do know this much, however: wear is a process acting mutually on the stylus tip and the record; it begins with the very first play and continues with every play thereafter. The *rate* of wear may change as the condition of tip or record changes, but the *process* of wear is always present.

Causes of Wear

Friction is clearly one basic cause of wear. When any two surfaces rub together, a frictional force is present between them, and the surfaces of the stylus tip and the record-groove wall are no exception. Since neither of these two surfaces is perfectly smooth, microscopic particles of both tip and record can be dislodged when the stylus moves along the groove walls. Some of this debris may be temporarily trapped between the tip and the groove wall, and other particles may become embedded in the vinyl and contribute a bit more to the abrasive action. The heat generated by the friction also probably acts to accelerate the wear rate. One suggested way to reduce both friction and heat is to play records with a liquid or other coating (there are several products on the market designed for this). A liquid coating may act as a friction-reducing lubricant and also absorb part of the heat that otherwise would have gone into the vinyl. "Wet" playing may have some merit if the coating doesn't leave a stylus- or groove-clogging residue on the record or accelerate the deterioration of the vinyl. The new "dry" lubrication technique may also help, but more data are needed on all these questions.

Another cause of wear (it of course has a greater effect on the record than

on the stylus) is permanent (as opposed to "elastic" or temporary) deformation of the vinyl groove. At a 1-gram tracking force, the average pressure on the groove wall in the area of stylus contact has been estimated at 30,000 to 66,000 pounds per square inch. The vinyl deforms under this pressure, and it does not spring back into its original shape completely. Even on the very first play, therefore, there is going to be some permanent modification of the record-groove wall. With additional plays, the groove wall cracks and material is torn away.

Both aspects of the wear process—friction and deformation—occur simultaneously and continuously at every point along the groove wall contacted by the stylus tip. Anything affects wear that either directly or indirectly affects the tip friction of the stylus or the deformation of the record groove wall. Let us examine these potentially destructive factors one by one:

- **Disc Material:** The various blends of vinyl compounds and additives used to manufacture records have different physical properties. In addition to wear resistance, the raw material must have properties that fulfill requirements having to do with processing, warpage, time and temperature stability, and, of course, economy. Raw material of good quality does not by itself assure a favorable wear rate; it must be properly processed at the molding (pressing) stage. Molding temperatures, the tim-

ing of the pressing cycle, the handling and the cleanliness of the record mold or "stamper"—all these must be under careful control.

- **Stylus Tip:** Several features of the stylus tip can influence not only the length of its working life but the damage it can do over that time to the records it plays. Diamond stylus tips are manufactured, first of all, in a variety of basic shapes. Probably the most common is the "spherical" tip. Other shapes are the "biradial" (or "elliptical") and the more recently introduced "long-contact" designs (Shibata, Pramanik, Hyperbolic, etc.). Each presents a differently shaped surface to the groove wall, and therefore each probably has its unique influence on wear rates. One design hypothesis has it that a tip with a large groove-contacting surface spreads the force acting on the wall over a greater area, thereby

Figure 4a. After ten plays with the Shure V-15 Type III cartridge, a difficult record groove shows little change (see page 59)

record

Research can tell us a lot, but not yet everything, about how record and stylus wear takes place and how to prevent it

Figure 1. After forty plays of the same test record, the cartridge under examination shows an apparent rise in frequency

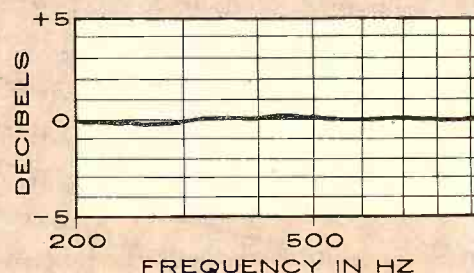


Figure 4b. The same groove played ten times with the older V-15 (Type I) has been altered and even gouged in some places.



BY SCOTT MASTRICOLA

ducing the force per unit of surface area on the groove wall. But, although pressure is lower, friction may be higher and the groove area affected greater, somewhat nullifying the possible benefits. In addition, other factors such as the dynamic characteristics of a given stylus assembly can easily offset any advantages that result from having a larger contact area.

Other properties of the tip may also influence wear—the degree of polish on the tip surface in the groove-contact region, for example. A rough, coarse surface increases friction and probably the rate of wear on both tip and record. Tips in high-quality cartridges are made of highly polished natural diamond, and they last *at least* two to four times as long as sapphire tips. But there are degrees of excellence even among diamonds, and microscopic impurities and imperfections in the crystal structure can affect tip life significantly.

• **Tracking Force:** It is perhaps self-evident that tracking force is one of the more important factors affecting wear rates. Higher tracking forces stress the groove walls more, increasing the amount of permanent groove deformation. And since friction is related to tracking force, higher forces tend to accelerate tip *and* record wear.

• **Signal and Stylus:** Not quite as evident is the fact that the recorded signal and the manner in which the stylus responds to that signal (the dynamic characteristics of the stylus assembly) have a significant effect on wear. The recorded signal varies over a wide range of frequencies and amplitudes, and to reproduce this signal accurately the stylus must be capable of following the very complex path presented by the modulated groove. In less than ideal circumstances the stylus may not be able to accelerate quickly enough to follow the rapidly changing high-frequency modulations, while at low frequencies it may not have sufficient compliance to cope with large amplitudes or high velocities. At these difficult points along the signal path the vinyl can be severely deformed if the stylus misbehaves, and the stylus tip itself may be subjected to significantly higher frictional forces.

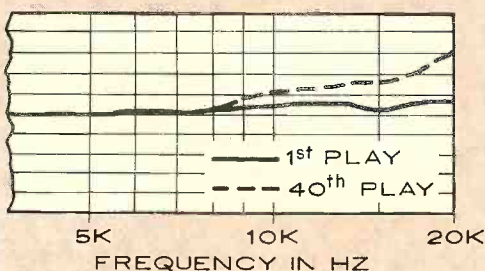
As the stylus proceeds along the groove, the force acting on the tip and the groove wall is continuously changing. Note that this “instantaneous” force must be distinguished from the

stylus *tracking* force; the instantaneous force, which is related to the signal, reaches values both higher and lower than the stylus tracking force. The combination of good tracking ability and low tracking force minimizes the contribution of the instantaneous force and therefore the rate of wear. Sometimes the stylus mistracks—that is, it loses contact with the groove walls because of its inability to follow the difficult twists and turns of the signal path. Mistracking can frequently be eliminated by increasing the tracking force, a measure that may actually be the lesser of two evils, since the damage the record sustains when the tip bounces along the groove wall is likely to be greater than that resulting from the wear higher tracking force brings. It follows from this that the better the tracking ability of a cartridge at a given tracking force, the less the groove damage. Considering the influence of mistracking and similar factors, it should be clear that tip geometry alone does not guarantee long tip or record life.

Any stylus assembly tends to resonate mechanically at some high frequency, and such resonances can also be a source of record damage. If the stylus is not well controlled it may distort recorded signals at and near the frequency of resonance by driving the tip deeply into the troughs of the modulation, causing the groove wall to be permanently deformed more in these regions than in others. Figure 1 illustrates the effect of this type of record damage. When a frequency-response test record was played forty times with the same stylus, the output level of the cartridge appeared to increase by 2.5 dB at 20,000 Hz. Retesting the cartridge on a new record produced the original curve, proving that the measured frequency-response change resulted from a change in the test record and not in the cartridge. Some stylus assemblies that are not so well controlled produced a similar signal-level change in only a few plays.

• **Contaminants:** The effect of contaminating materials in the record grooves is difficult to ascertain quantitatively, but experience has shown that many types of small particles, in addition to those worn off the tip and groove walls, can shorten record life. Contaminants can be airborne or they may be the residue of improper record-cleaning techniques. Should the particles, whatever their origin, become pinned between the tip and the groove wall, they can either gouge the wall or become embedded in it. In either case, the result is a permanent increase in the number of pops and ticks. Since some accumulation of particles is inevitable,

response by over 2 dB at 20,000 Hz. But what is really responsible is groove-wall damage occurring at high frequencies.



record wear

especially if static-electricity charges are present on the record to attract and hold them, periodic cleaning of records and the stylus tip is a must!

• **Skating Compensation:** Any tone arm that offsets the cartridge (which includes almost all of them) requires some form of anti-skating compensation to counteract the natural tendency of such arms to apply a larger force to the inner (or left-channel) than to the outer (right-channel) groove wall. An improperly set skating-force compensation (either too low or too high) results in higher average forces on one of the groove walls, causing that wall and the side of the tip tracing it to wear somewhat faster than the other side.

• **Tone Arm:** The characteristics of the tone arm can significantly affect the rate of tip and record wear. The tone arms on lower-quality record players generally require higher tracking forces that will enable them to overcome friction in their bearings. And, of course, higher tracking forces tend to accelerate wear.

• **Electrostatic Problems:** Electrostatic discharges between the record and the stylus (they are often heard as snapping sounds through the speakers) may also have an effect on tip and record wear. One theory suggests that the heat produced by the discharge may burn minute craters in the vinyl that will be heard as pops and ticks during subsequent playback. Another possibility is that these discharges may not literally blast a hole, but simply cause a slight deterioration in the vinyl structure in the region of the discharge. At the moment there are little, if any, published data on the relationship between electrostatic discharge and wear.

As the preceding list of contributing factors shows, stylus-tip and record wear is a process of considerable complexity. While there is evidence that some are more important than others, the interrelated nature of many of the factors means that we cannot secure a large reduction in wear simply by "fixing" any one of them: all must be considered together if wear is to be effectively reduced.

In addition, given all the factors that influence tip and record wear, one can readily see that the number of possible test conditions is very large. Thus the first step in wear testing must be to define exactly what information is de-

sired and for precisely what playing conditions: first, is wear on the tip, wear on the record, or wear on both to be evaluated?; second, are the test conditions realistic?

Usually the values selected for tracking force, tip size, and so on are obvious if the intent of the test has been clearly defined. For example, we may want information on the wear of spherical tips with a 0.7-mil contact radius tracking at 1.5 grams. A large quantity of stylus assemblies must be tested in order to obtain meaningful results. All must be thoroughly checked in advance for similarity in such performance characteristics as frequency response and tracking ability, and they must then be tested under conditions as close to identical as possible. To minimize the effects of test-record variability, several pressings of the same record must be used. If tighter control of the records or the use of special test signals are desirable, it may be necessary to specially master and press the records intended for the wear test.

ANOTHER problem with wear testing is the considerable time it takes. To shorten a wear test, particularly when *relative* comparisons of wear rates will suffice, styli can be played continuously for days rather than only a few hours a day as in normal usage. And sometimes one record will be played continuously, allowing little time for recovery of the deformed vinyl. Records may be played by different styli in the test, or one record may be played by only one stylus. (The latter would be done when information concerning groove damage from a particular tip and stylus assembly is desired.) All these, and other, variables are important: tests have indicated, for example, that the life of a tip is reduced if it plays the *same* record continuously several hundred times rather than separate discs for the same total number of plays but each no more than twenty or so times.

Once the details of the test have been worked out, the problem of evaluating the results—the wear data—still remains. For example, at what point can we say that the "end of life" of a given tip or record has been reached?

There are several criteria for evaluating tip and groove wear. An increase in pops and ticks resulting from permanent groove damage is one. Another is an increase in "hissing" or background noise caused by a roughened groove wall. Permanent groove damage may cause measurably greater distortion. A severely worn portion of a transient signal may create a sound similar to that produced by stylus mistracking. Changes in frequency response can

also arise from record damage; the high frequencies may be wiped away in places, or other frequencies near stylus resonance may be exaggerated. Observation of the record groove under a microscope can be particularly helpful in evaluating the specifics of record wear.

Stylus-tip wear can be detected under lab conditions by the increased distortion in a test-record signal. The worn tip can't trace the signal accurately. Loss of high-frequency output is another symptom of tip wear. This occurs because the tip may actually bridge across the peaks of short-wavelength (high frequency) signals when the radius of curvature contacting the groove walls becomes broader

Wear-Test Programs

TESTS have been conducted for many years at Shure to evaluate the effect of various wear factors in an on-going effort to improve phono-cartridge performance. Space does not permit describing all these studies, but a few specific test examples will provide some provocative insight into the wear phenomenon.

One test was designed to study wear on the tip with changes in tracking force. Spherical diamond tips of 0.7-mil contact radius were selected for the test. All tips were measured prior to the test to insure that they were equivalent in size, shape, and polish. The tips were set in stylus shanks of the same model cartridge, one capable of playing at tracking forces of 0.75 to 1.5 grams. Five styli were tested for each set of conditions so that data pertaining to the variability of the rate of wear among similar tips could be collected. A test rack housed ten high-quality automatic turntables, all of the same

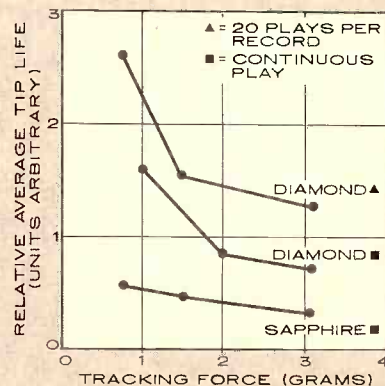


Figure 2. The average lives for diamond and sapphire tips under different playing conditions are compared. Tip lives, given in arbitrary instead of absolute units, are for comparison only.

and flatter with wear. Actual measurements can be made of the "flat" area created on either side of a seriously worn tip with photographs.

Figure 5 (page 60) shows one method of examining stylus tips. Light from a circular source surrounding the tip strikes the surface of the tip and is reflected. With the lens of the microscope positioned to look directly down at the point of the tip and with the light source positioned as shown, only light reflected from the surface at a 45-degree angle is seen. These illuminated points, further, are at the level of the tip's contact with the record groove, since each groove wall is at a 45-degree angle with respect to the vertical axis

of the tip. The image produced in the microscope is seen in the photos that follow (page 60): it represents the perimeter of the tip at the level of contact with the groove. Figures 6 and 7 are photographs of the top views of spherical and biradial tips at various stages of wear.

In evaluating either tip or record wear, one (or some combination) of the various wear indicators must be selected to evaluate the wear rate. Since there is no standard criterion or definition of tip or record life, widely varying conclusions can be drawn depending on the criterion chosen. For example, a given test may show that *no* significant increase of pops and ticks occurs for

two hundred plays on a record—but that second-harmonic distortion begins to rise rapidly after only fifty plays. It should be evident that it is impossible to select a single criterion for determining tip or record life that is applicable to *all* playback situations and *all* listeners. For this reason manufacturers, with the best will in the world, cannot specify tip or record "life."

As the accompanying discussion of various wear-test programs indicates, there are *many* variables effecting tip and record wear, and it is not reasonable to generalize too widely regarding the longevity to be expected from either in a home user's system. However, in spite of the complicated as-

model. Records used in the tests were pressings of the same musical selections made by one of the major record companies and each record was limited to twenty plays on a side, all by the same stylus. Tests were run in a clean, air-conditioned room and both tips and records were carefully cleaned daily. Records were wiped with a dry, velvet-plush pad. Tips were cleaned with a brush moistened with a solution of ethyl alcohol and distilled water. The skating compensation was adjusted to the changer's recommended setting for a given tracking force.

Based on photographs of the tips at high magnification, the results showed that decreasing the tracking force from 1.5 to 0.75 gram extended tip life by approximately 70 per cent. Figure 2 is a graph of relative average tip life vs. tracking force. This graph also illustrates the average difference in tip life between diamond tips when the same record is played continuously and when records are limited to twenty plays. Another curve shows the average relative difference in life between sapphire tips and natural diamond tips. It is interesting to note that the wear rates of individual tips varied significantly, even with all of the precautions that were taken to conduct a controlled test—which illustrates the importance of testing a significant quantity of styli. Possible variations among the records or differences in the crystalline structure of the diamonds were assumed to be responsible.

In another test, styli were evaluated as before, but *without* use of skating compensation. Because of the skating force, one would expect that the inner groove wall (the left channel) would be subjected to a higher force than the right channel. Results varied, but the average of the tips did exhibit more wear on the left-channel side. An example of a spherical tip worn on one side because of the absence of skating compensation is shown in Figure 3.

Tests to investigate record wear

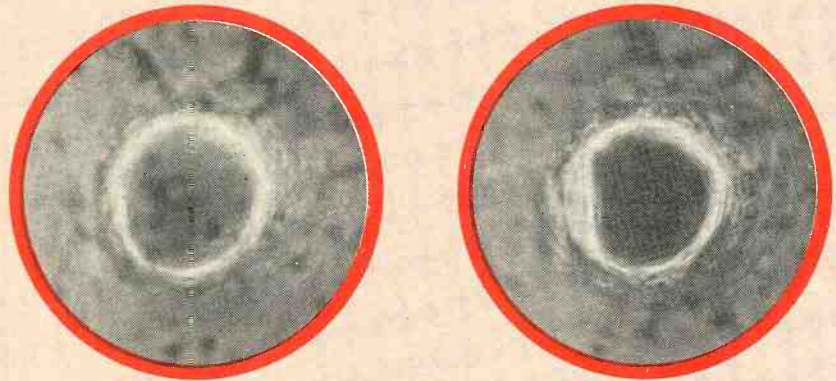


Figure 3. The two 0.7-mil styli shown have been subjected to equal use, but the one on the left was used with properly adjusted skating compensation, the one on the right not.

have also been conducted. One procedure involved repeated playing of a test disc by a given stylus and measuring the increase in second-harmonic distortion of a particular signal. In this case a top-quality stylus with a bi-radial tip played a record with a 6,000-Hz test signal at a given radius one hundred times at a tracking force of 1.5 grams. After one hundred plays the average distortion of both channels increased by approximately one-third of the original value. However, the distortion was still not audibly apparent. Again, variation among individual styli and records was significant, possibly because of slight differences in tip shape and dimensions, or of variations among the records.

Another consideration when record damage is examined is the amount of time allowed for recovery of the deformed vinyl. In our tests, distortion levels were inconsistent when several minutes of rest were allowed after several consecutive plays of a given signal. Although rather firm statements have been made on the matter, not enough data are available at this time to determine whether repeated plays of a given groove area in a brief period of

time significantly shorten record life.

Tests were also conducted to observe the difference in record damage between groove modulation that was tracked and modulation that was mistracked because of cartridge inadequacies. For this test V-15 Type III and the older V-15 (Type I) styli played the musical bells selection on Shure's "Audio Obstacle Course—Era III" test discs. The styli had bi-radial tips of the same size, and they were tested on the same turntable and tone arm. Listening to the selection as it was played by each type of stylus revealed that the V-15 Type III cleanly tracked the entire selection, but the V-15 (Type I) mistracked several passages. The records, which were new and examined prior to the first play, were re-examined following the tenth play. Figure 4 (page 56) shows the right-channel groove wall of a record played by a V-15 Type III and one played by a V-15 (Type I). The V-15 (Type I) had severely mistracked this region of the groove, inflicting considerable damage as the tip literally bounced along the groove wall. The record played by the V-15 Type III had not been significantly modified.

record wear

pects of wear there are a few important points that should be kept in mind.

First, wear of the record and stylus tip begin with the first play and progress with every play thereafter. No critical number of plays or number of hours exists for which the record or tip suddenly becomes unacceptable. The

rate of wear may vary during the life of a particular stylus tip or record, but the wear process is *always* present during playback.

Second, when the stylus produces consistently poorer sound quality than it did originally on relatively unworn records, the time to replace the stylus has probably long since passed. Because changes in the tip occur gradually, the listener doesn't usually detect a difference until the tip is *badly* worn. It is therefore important not to wait until

wear on the tip causes audible deterioration, because it may by then be causing serious permanent damage to any disc it plays, and a new stylus will *not* restore the sound quality lost. Because of the many aspects of wear and the variability of tip life, no one can be sure just when a particular stylus ought to be replaced because of wear, but keeping a tally of the approximate number of hours of playing time on the stylus along with periodic examinations (perhaps every one hundred hours of use) of the stylus tip under the proper type of microscope by a reputable dealer should be an effective means of monitoring tip wear.

Third, even though the stylus may have been replaced before the tip was badly worn, records may still incur significant playing damage for reasons other than tip wear. Mistracking can cause severe groove damage within a few plays, even if the tracking force is low. Furthermore, although a stylus tracks a certain signal without audible distortion, that signal may be worn significantly more than if it were played at the same tracking force by a stylus with better trackability. Paradoxically, upgrading the cartridge (or stylus) may cause worn records to sound *worse*, but the upgrading is achieving only what was intended—that is, more accurate reproduction of the signal on the record, which now unfortunately includes the damage.

Fourth, there is no one-shot panacea for eliminating wear. No single factor, by itself, can solve all wear-related problems. The entire stylus system along with all of the factors that influence wear must be considered collectively to arrive at some combination of factors that yields a net reduction of tip and record wear.

TODAY, the audiophile can minimize wear on his stylus tip and his records with little difficulty if he uses quality record-playing equipment, including a cartridge capable of good tracking ability at low tracking forces; exercises care in the handling and cleaning of his records; and has the stylus tip inspected periodically for wear by a qualified dealer, replacing it with the manufacturer's recommended stylus when necessary. Stylus and record wear is a complex but not a totally mysterious business. The diamond can be the record's best friend if enough precautions are taken to assure their proper playing relationship. □

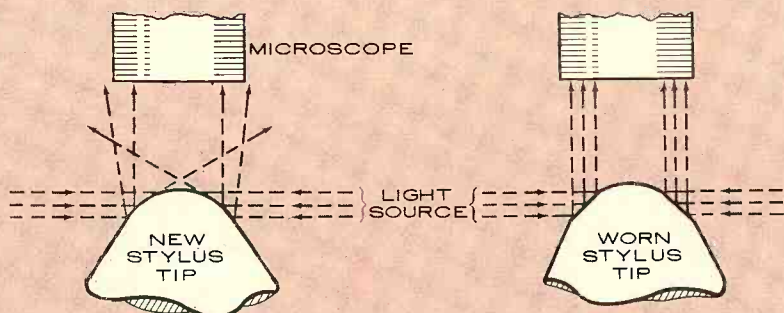


Figure 5. When a stylus is illuminated under the microscope by a light source impinging from all sides, light is reflected toward the microscope's objective lens. The rounded contours of the unworn stylus (left) diffuse the light. However, the 45-degree "flats" of a worn stylus (right) reflect light directly into the lens.

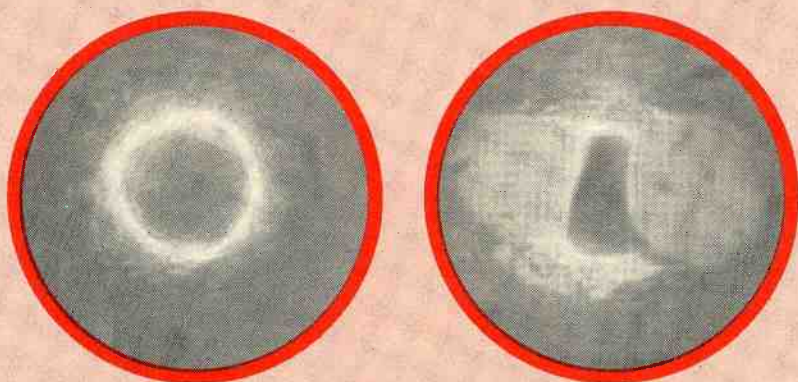


Figure 6. View of the stylus as seen through the microscope. An unworn conical (spherical) tip is shown at left; a severely worn spherical tip is shown at right.

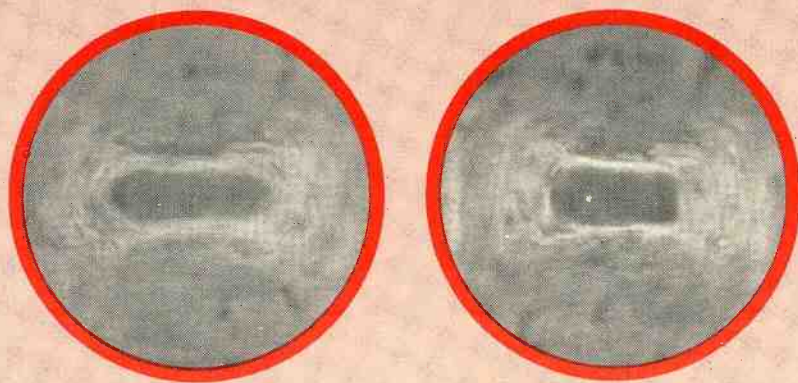


Figure 7. The elliptical (biradial) tip shown at left is in good condition. The evident flattening of the ellipse's ends (right) clearly indicates that the tip is worn.

Scott Masticola, a development engineer in the Electromechanical Development Department at Shure Brothers, Inc., holds a degree in electrical engineering from Northwestern.



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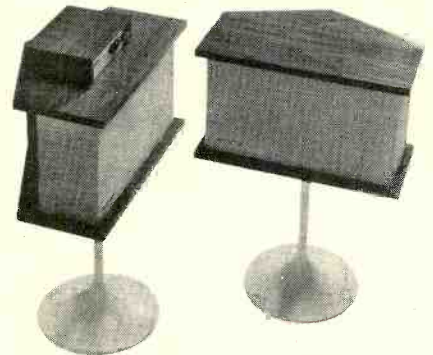
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A FEW WORDS ABOUT

JAZZ

By CHRIS ALBERTSON

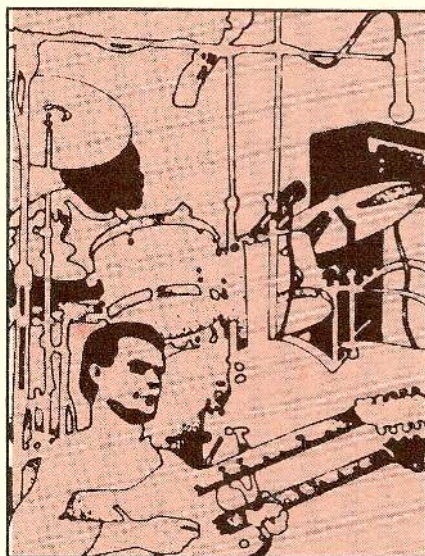
It is said that a lady once asked the late Fats Waller what jazz was. "If you have to ask," his reply allegedly went, "you'll never know." For many years, it was widely believed that jazz was conceived in Africa, born in New Orleans, weaned in the brothels of Storyville, and—in 1917, when the U.S. Navy closed down that infamous district—chased north by way of the Mississippi River to reach puberty in Chicago.

While there is a grain of truth in the old up-the-river-from-New Orleans story, it is, to put it mildly, a romanticized oversimplification. True, the term jazz (originally spelled jass) was first applied to a musical form that almost certainly took shape in New Orleans, but that music is as far removed from some current forms—which continue to be called jazz—as the works of Varèse are from those of Vivaldi. If the term jazz is to cover all music that is traceable to the traditional New Orleans form of three-horn polyphonic improvisation, why should it not also be applied retroactively to cover the various forms of music from which the New Orleans style sprang? After all, ragtime, which seems to have had its origin in Missouri or Illinois, and the blues, which might well have originated in the Delta area of Mississippi, not only preceded and greatly influenced the New Orleans style, but they also bear a closer relationship to it than, say, the music of the Jazz Composer's Orchestra. The New Orleans musicians obviously heard ragtime and blues, and who is to say that they didn't also hear an early *out-of-town* band playing something akin to what we call New Orleans jazz? Real documentation did not begin until long after the form had been established, and we know that it all started in the Crescent City only because the people there told us so.

In recent years, many musicians, backed by some critics, have objected to the use of the term jazz, either because it did not seem relevant to the music they played or because of its alleged sexual connotation, or both. Some have started calling the music Afro-American, but that, too, is a misnomer: a major ingredient of early jazz was European music (marches and quadrilles); many of the music's innovators were white, and when you think of it, is not the music of *Brazilian* blacks also Afro-American? The fact is that, though the forefathers of the earliest jazz pioneers most assuredly were conceived in Africa, the influence of African music on the music first known

as jazz is hardly measurable; the field hollers and worksongs of the South—which predate New Orleans-style jazz—can without argument be traced to Africa, but the rhythmic patterns of the early New Orleans jazz bands so lack the complexities of African rhythmic patterns that any comparison is simply laughable. It is only in recent years that black American musicians have begun to assimilate anything approaching African rhythms, with the result that much of today's so-called jazz is, in fact, closer to African music than was the music of New Orleans some sixty or seventy years ago, and it should also be noted that the influence of European music on black American music has *not* waned.

Whether conducted by himself, Ernest Ansermet, or anyone else, Stravinsky's music is listed in the composer section of the Schwann catalog. On the other hand, Edward Kennedy Ellington's music appears in the composer section only when conducted by Gunther Schuller; Mr. Ellington's own recordings are listed in the jazz section. Furthermore, Benny Goodman's recordings of Stravinsky's *Ebony Concerto* are listed in the composer section, and Ornette Coleman's *Skies of America*—recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra—is in the jazz section. Obviously the Schwann people are either making some kind of discrimination invisible to me, or they are simply confused. I suspect it's a bit of both, but when the world's leading recorded music catalog doesn't know what jazz is, how can anyone else be expected to? Perhaps we would all do best to discard the terminology, enjoy the music, and bear in mind the reply Big Bill Broonzy gave to Studs Terkel when asked if the blues is folk music: "It's *all* folk music, 'cause horses don't sing." □



Ethelbert Nevin 1862-1901
 Horatio Parker 1863-1919
 Henry F. Gilbert 1868-1928
 Scott Joplin 1868-1917
 Edward Burlingame Hill 1872-1960
 Harry Von Tilzer 1872-1946
 William C. Handy 1873-1958
 Daniel Gregory Mason 1873-1953
 Charles Ives 1874-1954
 Arnold Schoenberg 1874-1951 (U.S. 1933)
 John Alden Carpenter 1876-1951
 Carl Ruggles 1876-1971
 Ernest R. Ball 1878-1927
 George M. Cohan 1878-1942
 Rudolf Friml 1879-1972
 Ernest Bloch 1880-1959 (U.S. 1917)
 Béla Bartók 1881-1945 (U.S. 1940)
 Charles Wakefield Cadman 1881-1947
 Percy Grainger 1882-1961 (U.S. 1914)
 John Powell 1882-1963
 Igor Stravinsky 1882-1971 (U.S. 1939)
 Edgard Varèse 1883-1965 (U.S. 1915)
 Charles Tomlinson Griffes 1884-1920
 Jerome Kern 1885-1945
 Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton 1885-1941
 Joseph "King" Oliver 1885-1938
 Wallingford Riegger 1885-1961
 James Scott 1886-1938
 Sigmund Romberg 1887-1951 (U.S. 1909)
 Ernest Toch 1887-1964 (U.S. 1935)
 Irving Berlin 1888-
 Huddie "Leadbelly" Ledbetter 1888-1949
 Max Steiner 1888-1971 (U.S. 1914)
 Farde Grofé 1892-1972
 John Jacob Niles 1892-
 Leo Ornstein 1892-
 Cole Porter 1892-1965
 Douglas Moore 1893-1969
 Robert Russell Bennett 1894-
 Walter Piston 1894-
 Dimitri Tiomkin 1894- (U.S. 1925)
 Paul Hindemith 1895-1963 (U.S. 1940)
 Bessie Smith 1895-1937
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 Lou Harrison 1917-
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 Jack Deerson 1921-
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 Lukas Foss 1922- (U.S. 1937)
 Peter Mennin 1923-
 Ned Rorem 1923-
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 Earle Browne 1925-
 Morton Feldman 1926-
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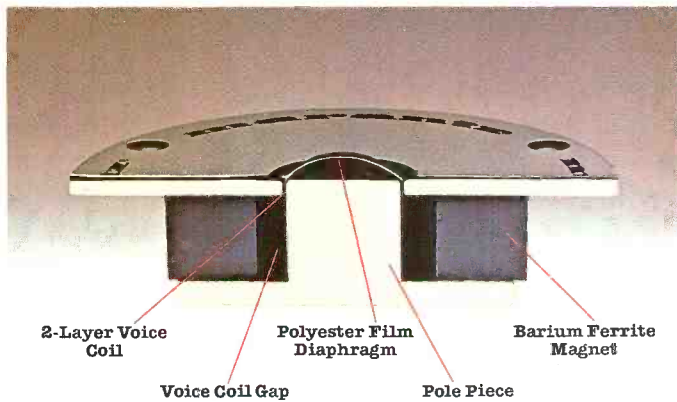
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- 1612 The *Ainsworth Psalter* (Pilgrim Psalmbook) printed in Amsterdam
- 1640 The *Bay Psalm Book* printed in Cambridge, Mass.
- 1707 Isaac Watts: *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* printed in England
- 1720 Founding of the Ephraïm Cloister in Pennsylvania
- 1744 Establishment of Moravian Collegium Musicum in Bethlehem, Pa.
- 1746 Wesley and Lampe's *Hymns of the Great Festivals*
- 1762 Founding of the Saint Cecilia Society, Charleston, South Carolina
- 1767 First American ballad opera, Barton's *The Disappointment* (première 1766)
- 1769-1823 Founding of the California Missions
- 1794 Publication of William Billings' *The Continental Harmony*
- 1796 First performance of the French Opera in New Orleans
- 1810-13 Wyeth's *Repository of Sacred Music* (primary source of American folk hymnody)
- 1815 Founding of the Handel and Haydn Society, Boston
- 1832? Invention of the modern banjo
- 1842 The Christy Minstrels organized in Buffalo, N.Y.
- 1842 Founding of the New York Philharmonic Society
- 1843 Violinist Ole Bull (1810-80) visits America
- 1843 The Virginia Minstrels (with Dan Emmett) give first organized minstrel show in N.Y.
- 1844 Publication of *The Sacred Harp*, by B.F. White and E.J. King (shape-note hymns)
- 1845 Founding of the Southern Musical Convention
- 1845 First American grand opera, William Henry Fry's *Leonora*, presented in Philadelphia
- 1848 Composition (anonymous) of the Shaker hymn *Simple Gifts*
- 1850 Jenny Lind (1820-87) comes to the United States under sponsorship of P. T. Barnum
- 1851 *Old Folks at Home* composed by Stephen Foster
- 1852 First publication of *Dwight's Journal of Music* (first American music criticism)

- 1853 American debut of pianist Louis Moreau Gottschalk in New York on February 11
- 1853 Establishment of Steinyay and Sons, piano makers, in New York
- 1855 Bristow's *Rip Van Winkle*, first opera on an American subject, given in New York
- 1867 Publication of *Slave Songs of the United States*, edited by Allen, Ware, and Garrison
- 1873 Publication of Moody and Sankey's *Sacred Songs and Solos* (revival hymns)
- 1877 Edison invents the phonograph
- 1881 Founding of the Boston Symphony
- 1883 Opening of the Metropolitan Opera House, New York
- 1892-95 Antonin Dvořák visits America
- 1899 Scott Joplin writes *Maple Leaf Rag*
- 1909-11 Gustav Mahler conducts the New York Philharmonic
- 1912-38 Leopold Stokowski leads the Philadelphia Orchestra
- 1915 Charles Ives completes *Concord Sonata* (begun 1909)
- 1917 First commercial recording of Dixieland Jazz (Original Dixieland Jazz Band)
- 1918 Cecil Sharp publishes *English Folksongs from the Southern Appalachians*
- 1923 League of Composers founded
- 1924 Paul Whiteman's February 12 premiere of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*
- 1924-43 Serge Koussevitzky conducts the Boston Symphony
- 1930- Arthur Fiedler conducts the Boston Pops
- 1931 First Metropolitan Opera radio broadcast
- 1937-54 Arturo Toscanini conducts the NBC Symphony
- 1940 Establishment of Berkshire Music Center, Tanglewood, Mass.
- 1940 Walt Disney's film *Fantasia*
- 1946-70 George Szell conducts the Cleveland Orchestra

Benjamin Franklin 1706-1790

James Lyon 1735-1794

Francis Hopkinson 1737-1791

John Antes 1740-1811

William Billings 1746-1800

Johann Peter 1745-1813 Colonies 1770)

Andrew Law 1748-1821

Supply Belcher 1751-1836

Alexander Reinagle 1756-1809 (U.S. 1786)

James Hewitt 1770-1827 (U.S. 1792)

Anthony Philip Heinrich 1781-1861 (U.S. before 1818)

Howard Hanson 1896-

Roger Sessions 1896-

Virgil Thomson 1896-

Henry Cowell 1897-1965

Erich Wolfgang Korngold 1897-1957 (U.S. 1934)

Jimmie Rodgers 1897-1933

George Gershwin 1898-1937

Roy Harris 1898-

Vincent Youmans 1898-1946

Hoagy Carmichael 1899-

Edward "Duke" Ellington 1899-1974

Randall Thompson 1899-

George Antheil 1900-1959

Louis Armstrong 1900-1971

Aaron Copland 1900-

Otto Luening 1900-

Kurt Weill 1900-1950 (U.S. 1935)

Alfred Newman 1901-1970

Harry Partch 1901-1974

Ruth Crawford Seeger 1901-1953

Richard Rodgers 1902-

Stefan Wolpe 1902-1972 (U.S. 1938)

Leon "Bix" Beiderbecke 1903-1931

Vernon Duke 1903-1969 (U.S. 1929)

Thomas "Fats" Waller 1904-1943

Harold Arlen 1905-

Marc Blitzstein 1905-1964

Paul Creston 1906-

Miklós Rózsa 1907- (U.S. 1939)

Lowell Mason 1792-1872

Daniel Decatur Emmett 1815-1904

William Henry Fry 1815-1864

George F. Bristow 1825-1898

Stephen Collins Foster 1826-1864

Louis Moreau Gottschalk 1829-1859

Henry Clay Work 1832-1884

John Knowles Paine 1839-1906

Sidney Lanier 1842-1881

Arthur Foote 1853-1937

James Bland 1854-1911

George Whitefield Chadwick 1854-1931

John Philip Sousa 1854-1932

Victor Herbert 1859-1924 (U.S. 1886)

Charles Martin Loeffler 1861-1935 (U.S. 1881)

Edward MacDowell 1861-1908

Carrie Jacobs Bond 1862-1946

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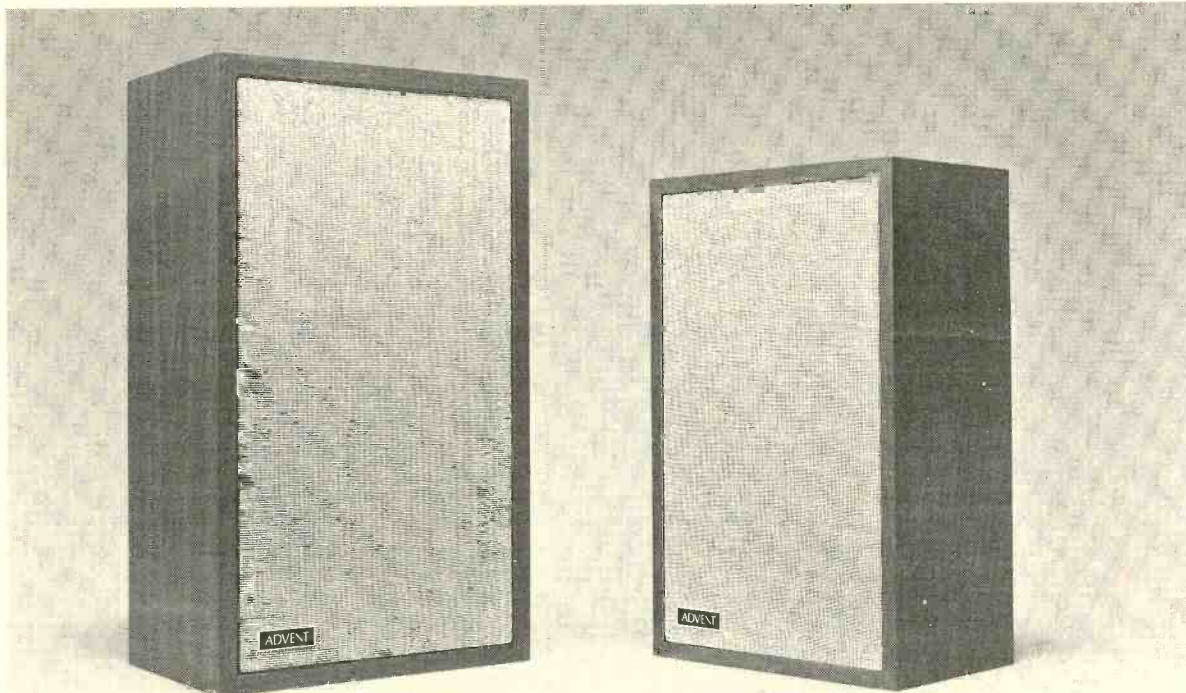
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A Calendar of American Music

by James Goodfriend

The illustration above (courtesy the Moravian Music Foundation) is a birthday greeting given to Moravian Bishop Jacob van Vleck in 1795. He is pictured accompanying a group of girls, probably from the Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, School for Young Ladies, of which he was principal.

IN contemporary business terminology, American music would be referred to as a conglomerate rather than a company or a corporation, for, like business conglomerates, American music deals with a multiplicity of unrelated products rather than with a traditional "line" of one kind of product.

We are, for the most part, an immigrant nation, and there are an incredible number of musics that can all, with relatively equal justification, be called "American."

Rationalizing what ought to be the limits of the field, then, is a tricky business. (Continued on page 69)

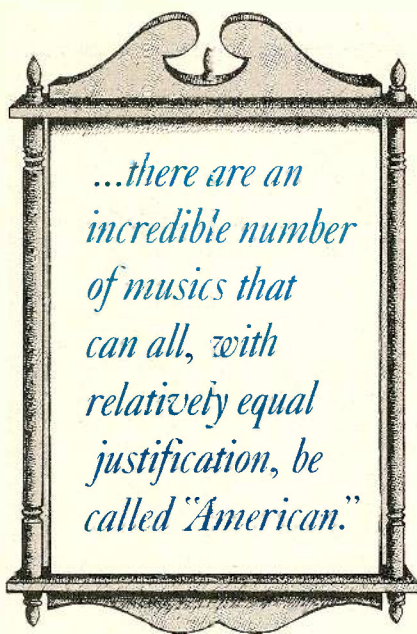


ness, and an attempt to create some sort of historical ordering of American musical manifestations leads to no more than a simple chronology. The succession of clear-cut stylistic periods and the obvious influence of one composer on another characteristic of European musical history are largely absent here. It may be interesting to know that the lives of Carrie Jacobs Bond and Elliott Carter overlap by almost forty years, but nothing significant about either of them can be drawn from that bit of information. What *is* significant about it is the pairing itself, that such polar opposites are frequently coincident in American music. He who would put together a calendar of the subject, therefore, can have no single criterion for inclusion, but must constantly weigh apples against oranges and tangerines, not to mention the lemons. Still, how appropriate! Pragmatism *is* an American philosophy.

THIS calendar, then, cannot really stand on its own, for it needs some defense, some account of why certain people and things were included and others, equally or even more worthy, were not. To begin with, the numerically-minded viewer will see that there are precisely fifty events mentioned and that the time span from 1600 to 1976 has been marked off into thirteen artificial periods, thus making the whole calendar an analog for the American flag. This, I hasten to add, was not intentional but purely unconscious, and, though it will do nothing else, it should serve as testimony to the author's inherent patriotism in putting the thing together at all.

So far as the specifics go, the selection of events fairly well explains itself. Each "event" (some of them are durations) is something of *musical* importance in the history of the United States. Some are unique; some are representative of other, similar events that occurred contemporaneously or subsequently. Some refer to music important in itself; some refer merely to types of music, or to the earliest or most famous examples of whole genres of music. But virtually all are included because they had an impact, in one way or another, on music in America—its composition, performance, style, taste, popularity—even though the "event" itself may not have been American in origin.

The names require a different explanation. In general, this is a chart of composers and creative musicians rather than of performers, theoreticians, critics, teachers, or others who might have been influential in their own ways on American music. Therefore, few of the idols of American pop music are represented, though in a calendar drawn on other grounds they would be



prominent. American classical performing musicians are likewise absent, even though in many cases their names are more familiar than those of some composers included. Conflicting demands become particularly severe in jazz. The rule is bent a little here, but the nod still goes to the creators over the interpreters (Billy Strayhorn rather than Cootie Williams). Such inventive geniuses of improvisation as Louis Armstrong, however, despite minor outputs of actual written compositions, just have to be included.

Many of the names before the twentieth century will be unfamiliar to the reader, and he will simply have to take the calendarer's suggestion that there *are* significance and interest there and perhaps look into the matter for himself. Anthony Philip Heinrich ("the Beethoven of Kentucky") and Supply Belcher ("the Handel of Maine") may not equal their namesakes, but they were talented men who tried to make an individual music for their neighbors,

the American people. The inclusion of such other names as Daniel Decatur Emmett and James Bland becomes perfectly clear when we know that they composed, respectively, *Dixie* and *Carry Me Back to Old Virginny*, among other "hits." The big names justify themselves with no trouble. Of the smaller names, one can make only a representative selection, and so the composer of *I Love You Truly* (Carrie Jacobs Bond) serves also to represent the composer of *Oh, Promise Me* (Reginald de Koven), and Huddie Ledbetter stands for a host of creative black bluesmen.

Although, as Bernard Jacobson mentions elsewhere in this issue, the line between the classical and the popular is extremely difficult to draw in American music, this calendar is directed generally toward classical composers and generally toward men who have either completed their lives' work or who have already established their reputations as important figures. That will explain why the youngest man represented is a thirty-eight-year-old classical composer and why younger men, in all fields, are not. It will also explain—although it may not excuse it to some readers—why some fairly obscure composers are here in relative abundance, while jazz, pops, country-and-western, and film music are represented only by a comparatively few outstanding names. Still, those areas of music *are* represented.

IF there is one particular emphasis of this calendar, it is the continuing importance to American music of immigrants and visitors from abroad. Peter, Reinagle, and Hewitt in the eighteenth century, Heinrich, Herbert, and Loefler in the nineteenth, Grainger, Bloch, Schoenberg, Bartók, Hindemith, Varèse, and Stravinsky in the twentieth, among others, all influenced the course of American music as the idea of America influenced *their* music. Though music in America is not the derivative European thing it once was, the continuing admixture of influences from outside, as well as the recombination of all the different musical elements already present in our musical culture, is an intrinsic part of musical development here. Whatever else the world may say about it, no one could ever accuse American music of being inbred. □

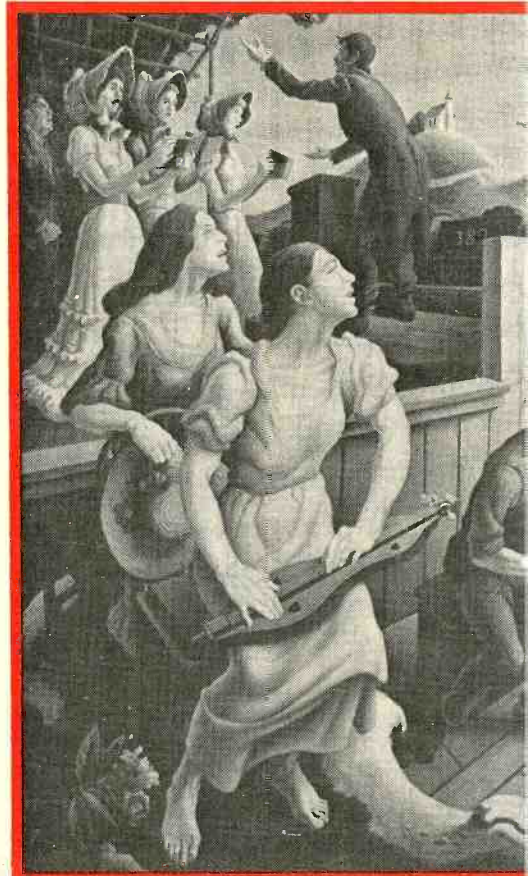
A (Basic) Librarian of American Music on Records must give careful thought to defining just what his title implies. Even if he ends by deciding he can get along without a simple answer to the question of what is meant by "American" and "Music," at the very least the question of whether the question needs to be asked needs to be asked.

First of all, the two halves of the question are inextricably linked, since the sheer variety of musical creation and experience in the United States is itself a phenomenon unparalleled else-

So far, so flexible. But even when you have sorted out roughly how many purely *musical* genres you are prepared to admit to your list, the awkward puzzle remains: where to draw the line on "American"-ness. Thomson, again, argues that to write American music "All you have to do is to be an American and then write any kind of music you wish." But though that may be unanswerable on its own terms, it is not of much practical help for our present purposes. For *who*, ladies and gentlemen, is an American? Just how young and unformed did Stravinsky and

A Basic Library of American Music

By Bernard Jacobsen



where. "Only here," said Virgil Thomson, "do composers write in every possible style and does the public have access to every style." As the music I have chosen for this Basic Library shows, the consequence for a foreign critic like myself, whose prime concern is what we fatuously call (for want of a better word) "serious" music, is that he must take far greater account of the sounds made at revival meetings and by marching bands and along Tin Pan Alley and in Civil War-epoch drawing rooms and turn-of-the-century Saint Louis brothels than he would of any comparable popular or quasi-popular emanations in the music of any other countries.

Schoenberg and Hindemith and Varèse and Block and Milhaud and Martinů and Křenek (or, for that matter, James Hewitt, Gian Carlo Menotti, and Lukas Foss) have to be when they reached your shores in order to qualify as "American composers"?

I have sidestepped the difficulties by taking the philosophically more dubious line that American music is not simply music by Americans, but a certain *kind* of music (by Americans). As may be seen from the listings below, such an approach permits a sort of fundamental anatomy of musical Americanism to emerge. It embraces three qualities: physical exuberance, largeness of gesture, and a tendency toward

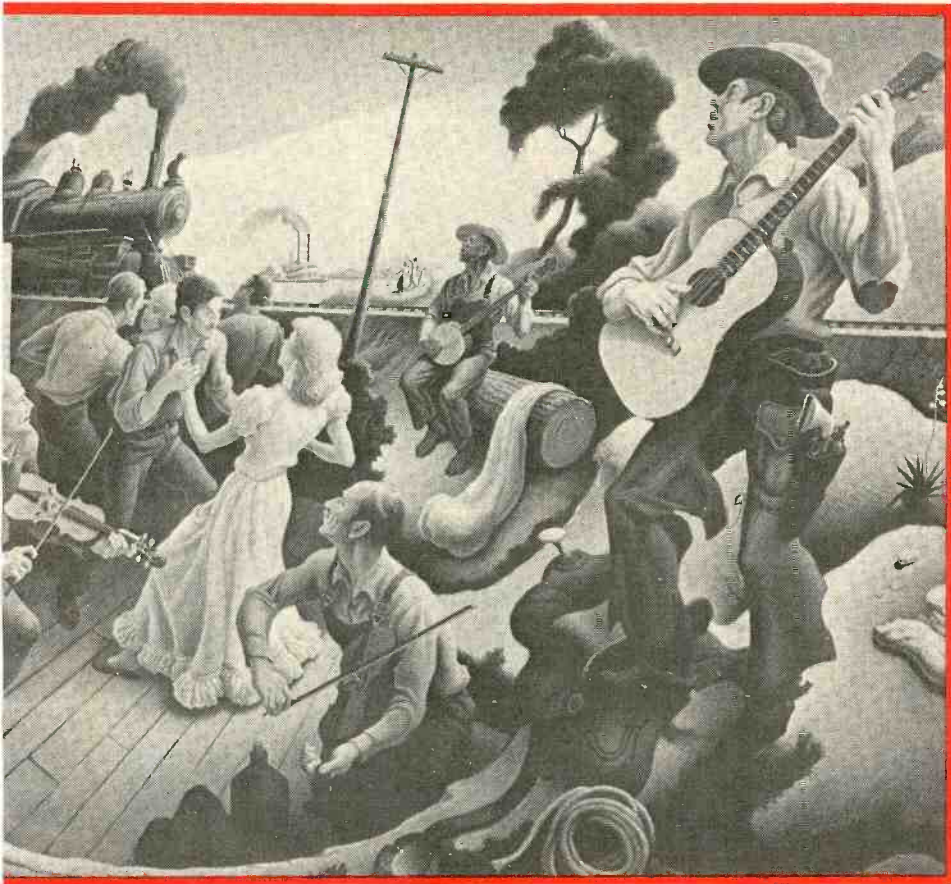
kitsch (the last of these, as any connoisseur of Berlioz, Mahler, or Strauss will immediately recognize, is of course neither exclusively American nor in any necessary sense a negative value).

This characterization is advanced with some diffidence. Critics like Thomson have, I know, put forward lists of much more detailed and scientific-sounding criteria for Americanism, running to such items as the non-accelerating crescendo and the prevalence, even when not explicit, of a constant underlying eighth-note

cannot perhaps be characterized by the three qualities with absolute conviction (though it can be argued that the grandeur, physical immediacy, and occasional deliberate raucousness of his orchestral writing set him apart in a thoroughly American fashion from his European linguistic models), and something of the same reservation might be expressed about John Cage and Milton Babbitt.

But those three strands are evident in the others from the very beginning. For example, you don't have to wait for Bernstein, or even Gottschalk, to en-

death has come to be widely regarded as a standard-bearer for American composers, is typical of them in this respect. Even his most loftily conceived works resemble nothing so much as a glorious gallimaufry of physical movements, march and quickstep and barn dance and ragtime and galop. The rich patrimony of New England hymnody is there too. And all the diverse elements, like the hundreds of ethnic groups in contemporary America, coexist—with degrees of tension, certainly, but also with a new, exciting, and unique celebration of multifariousness over and



There is no painter more American than the late Thomas Hart Benton, and it is unlikely that any painting more ably characterizes American music than his mural, "The Sources of Country Music," which graces (with the help of grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Tennessee Arts Commission) Nashville's Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. In it can be found intimations of everything from William Billings' fugal tunes to George Crumb's Echoes of Time and the River—a title borrowed, of course, from Thomas Wolfe, most American of novelists.

pulse. Thomson on American music, of which he is himself one of the foremost practitioners, is a writer of vast knowledge and brilliant perception. Yet I cannot help feeling, on the evidence, that his formulations admit of too much qualifying and demand too much expecting to be cogent. The three vaguer attributes I have named apply more firmly, I submit, to almost all the composers listed below, however diverse their aesthetics and their spheres of activity.

Almost—but not quite—all, for it would not be really British of me to follow my own rules with complete consistency. Roger Sessions, whom I didn't think it reasonable to exclude,

counter kitsch in the music of America. It is right there in Billings, along with a propensity to skip and jump at the slightest provocation that would be incongruous in most European religious music. Skipping and jumping, and a variety of other overtly physical acts, characterize the whole range of American musical experience—which suggests why so large a proportion of the nation's music has taken on theatrical means of expression, and why, in particular, America has perfected the loose-limbed Broadway musical and made the greatest single contribution of any country to the art of dance in this century.

Charles Ives, the man who since his

under all. For American music, like America itself, though it may exalt the Idea of Order, also accepts the Reality of Chaos, greeting it in a way the ancient Stoics would have understood: by singing—and dancing—in the teeth of the gale. For example:

□ **EARLY AMERICAN VOCAL MUSIC:** *New England Anthems and Southern Folk Hymns.* Law: Bunker Hill. Read: Newport. Morgan: Judgment Anthem: Amanda. Billings: I Am Come into My Garden; I Charge You; I Am the Rose of Sharon; O Praise the Lord of Heaven. Ingalls: Northfield. White: Power. Lower: Fidelia. Robison: Fidelity. Dare: Baylonian Captivity. Chapin: Rockbridge. Anon.: Washington; Triumph;

A Basic Library of American Music

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Messiah; Canaan; Springhill; Concert; Lonsdale; Animation; Pilgrim's Farewell. Western Wind Vocal Ensemble, with guest artists. NONESUCH H 71276 \$3.96.

□ **BILLINGS:** *I Am the Rose of Sharon; David's Lamentation; The Bird; Kittery; Hopkinton; When Jesus Wept; The Lord Is Risen; A Virgin Unspotted; Boston; The Shepherd's Carol; Creation; Connection; Consonance; Jargon; Modern Music; Cobham; Morpheus; Swift as an Indian Arrow Flies; Chester; Be Glad Then America.* Gregg Smith Singers, Gregg Smith cond. COLUMBIA MS 7277 \$6.98.

□ **THE ORGAN IN AMERICA.** Anon.: *Captain Sargent's (Light Infantry Company's) Quick March; The London March; The Unknown.* Phile: *The President's March.* Billings: *Chester.* Selby: *Fugue or Voluntary, in D Major.* Moller: *Sonata in D Major.* Hewitt: *The Battle of Trenton.* Michael: *Six Movements from the Instrumental Suites.* Brown: *Rondo in G Major.* Yarnold: *March in D Major.* Shaw: *Trip to Pawtucket.* Ives: *Variations on "America."* E. Power Biggs (organ). COLUMBIA MS 6161 \$6.98.

A tanner by trade and a composer by passionate avocation, William Billings (1746-1800) may not have invented the vein of salty humor often thought of as a Yankee characteristic, but he was the first musician to express it with a touch of quirky genius. A sort of musical Will Rogers, Billings ranged from down-home sentiment in his Biblical settings to a blend of religious and patriotic fervor in the famous hymn-tune *Chester*. The reach-me-down but effective flights of contrapuntal fancy in the so-called fugging tunes are irrepressibly juxtaposed with cheerful jigs, and the wrong-note dissonance of the satirical *Jargon* inaugurated the American tradition of snook-cocking effrontery exemplified more than a century later by the notorious final "chord" of Ives' Second Symphony. The Gregg Smith

Singers biff out their attacks a touch too heftily for my taste, but their performances are otherwise admirably fresh and unaffected.

If I had to limit myself to a single disc featuring Billings, I think I would choose Nonesuch's multi-composer anthology. In the one work common to both records, *I Am the Rose of Sharon*, the Western Wind performers (singing one voice to a part) delightfully evoke the innocence of the music where Smith stresses its vigor, and the collection also includes several non-Billings pieces of scarcely lesser charm and, in the case of Justin Morgan's fine *Judgment Anthem*, of an equally arresting idiosyncrasy.

The Biggs collection is a pleasantly personal exploration of early American keyboard pieces, played on tracker-action instruments in New England, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina, set off by a diverting excursion into the late nineteenth century with Ives' iconoclastic *Variations on America*. The whole is accompanied by a well-illustrated leaflet. One of the musicians represented, David Moritz Michael, was a member of the American Moravian school of composers, to which another Columbia record, *Odyssey 32 16 0340*, is devoted. Though the music sounds more eighteenth-century European than American, there are some attractive pieces to be found in the collection, including an imposing anthem by Johann Friedrich Peter and a string trio by the gifted Pennsylvanian John Antes sympathetically played by members of the Fine Arts Quartet. The choral performances conducted by Thor Johnson are, however, impossibly inflated.

□ **FOSTER:** *Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair; There's a Good Time Coming; Was My Brother in the Battle?; Sweetly She Sleeps, My Alice Fair; If You've Only Got a Moustache; Gentle Annie; Wilt Thou Be Gone, Love?; That's What's the Matter; Ah! May the Red Rose Live Alway; I'm Nothing but a Plain Old Soldier; Beautiful Dreamer; Mr. and Mrs. Brown; Slumber My Darling; Some Folks.* Jan DeGaetani (mezzo-soprano); Leslie Guinn (baritone); Gilbert Kalish (piano, melodeon); Robert Sheldon (flute, keyed bugle); Sonya Monosoff (violin). NONESUCH H 71268 \$3.96.

□ **GOTTSCHALK:** *The Banjo; The Dying Poet; Souvenir de Porto Rico; Le Bananier; Ojos Criollos; The Maiden's Blush; The Last Hope; Suis Moi; Pasquinade; Tournament Galop; Bamboula; La Savane; Grand Tarantelle for Piano and Orchestra (arr. Hershey Kay); Symphony, "A Night in the Tropics."* Eugene List (piano, in the solo pieces); Reid Nibley (piano, in the *Grand Tarantelle*); Utah Symphony Orchestra, Maurice Abravanel cond. VANGUARD VSD 723/24 two discs \$6.98.

□ **JOPLIN:** *Maple Leaf Rag; The Entertainer; The Ragtime Dance; Gladiolus Rag; Fig Leaf Rag; Scott Joplin's New Rag; Euphonic Sounds; Magnetic Rag; Elite Syncopations; Eugenia; Leola—Two-Step; Rose Leaf Rag—A Rag Time Two-Step; Bethena—A Concert Waltz; Paragon Rag; Solace—A Mexican Serenade; Pine Apple Rag.* Joshua Rifkin (piano). NONESUCH HB 73026 two discs \$7.92.

The Foster is Stephen and the Joplin is Scott. It is the music of such composers as these and Louis Moreau Gottschalk that makes the line of demarcation between "classical" and "popular" in American music impossible to draw with any exactitude. The music in

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this group ranges from minor classical in the Foster songs to major popular in the Joplin piano rags. And it is worth noting that the popular tradition is by no means the weaker in purely musical value: Foster's songs, though charming in their sentimental manner and undeniably an essential segment of any history of American music, are small beer next to the formally circumscribed but marvelously varied and often surprisingly profound Joplin pieces.

It is particularly instructive in this musical investigation to compare the best of ragtime with what "serious" American composers had achieved in the preceding one hundred years. Alan

Mandel's superbly played but compositionally thin three-record anthology of American piano music on Desto DC 6445/47 comes to life only when it reaches Joplin and his colleagues Paul Pratt, Joseph Lamb, and Artie Matthews, and with the exception of Virgil Thomson (of whom more later) the twentieth-century composers that follow are nothing like so striking.

Jan DeGaetani and her colleagues catch Foster's cozy but genuine Schubertian grace to a nicety in the Nonesuch collection. Not everyone likes Joshua Rifkin's magisterial way with Joplin, but in my judgment it enhances the music by treating it exactly as seriously as the composer did.

Gottschalk was a curious figure, not unlike the virtuoso half of Liszt in the dazzling career he pursued as composer-performer-showman. His penchant for exploring ethnic musical styles led to some engaging results in his solo piano pieces and again in the samba rhythms of *A Night in the Tropics*. The occasional whiff of Chopin or even Berlioz may remind us of Gottschalk's lesser stature, but there is nonetheless a real composer behind the razz-matazz, and the Vanguard set is a useful compendium of his best work.

It would, I suppose, have been appropriate to include some Sousa on this nineteenth-century shelf of the Basic Library. For my taste, an entire side of the March King's relentless energy is as hard to listen through as several sides of Joplin are easy, so I will simply mention the brilliantly efficient discs of the stuff made some years ago by (1) Paul Lavalle and the Band of America (MGM SE 3976) and by (2) Frederick Fennell and the Eastman Wind Ensemble (Mercury 75004) and leave it at that.

□ **GERSHWIN:** *Porgy and Bess*. Willard White, Leona Mitchell, McHenry Boatwright, Florence Quivar, Barbara Hendricks, Barbara Conrad, François Clemmons, others; Cleveland Orchestra, Chorus, and Children's Chorus, Lorin Maazel cond. LONDON OSA 13116 three discs \$20.94.

□ **BERNSTEIN:** *Music for the Theater*. *Dances from "West Side Story"*; *Facsimile; Overture to "Candide"*; *Three Dances from "On the Town"*; *Fancy Free*; *Two Meditations from "Mass."* Orchestra from the opening of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (in *Mass*), New York Philharmonic (in all other works), Leonard Bernstein cond. COLUMBIA MG 32174 two discs \$7.98.

□ **ELLINGTON:** *Latin American Suite*. Duke Ellington and His Orchestra. FANTASY 8419 \$6.98.

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ries in our own century. Gershwin did it, I think, less convincingly than the other two, for I find his "symphonic" works, and most glaringly the Piano Concerto, stiff and unnatural: he really did think of the classical forms as mere molds, sitting around waiting to have music poured into them. *Porgy and Bess*, by contrast, is Gershwin at his inspired and unforced best, and my immediate impression of Lorin Maazel's sumptuous new set—the first uncut recording of the opera, and the first in true stereo—is that it effortlessly leaves such competition as there is trailing far behind.

Ellington's inclusion under this heading may at first blush be questioned, since he does his category-straddling without any superficial emulation of classical styles and forms. He was, however, a composer of symphonic scope and possibly classic stature. The work of his great 1940 band is, oddly, more skillfully handled in some European releases than in the U.S. catalogs, and for the American collector I have therefore selected instead one of the most colorful of his last works.

Bernstein has an equally comfortable foot in both musical camps—or at least he did before he became too "serious" to write musicals like *Candide* or *West Side Story* any more. A sample of his symphonic work is listed later on, but this theater collection sums up his most individual contribution to American music. (Incidentally, few critics would rate the "serious" Bernstein anywhere near Aaron Copland, but some of the slower sections of *On the Town* successfully speak the same harmonic and atmospheric language as Copland's ballet *Appalachian Spring*, which had its première a matter of weeks before the Bernstein work.)

One other piece of American musical theater I cannot resist mentioning is *The Cradle Will Rock*, by that underrated composer Marc Blitzstein, who carried a banner for American leftism in its golden age of innocence, the Thirties. The work is available in a two-disc CRI set, S 266.

□ **THE EARLY STRING QUARTET IN THE USA.** Mason: *Quartet in G Minor, Op. 19* (based on Negro Themes). Griffes: *Two Indian Sketches*. Franklin: *Quartet for Three Violins and Cello*. Foote: *Quartet in D Major, Op. 70*. Chadwick: *Quartet No. 4, in E Minor*. Hadley: *Piano Quintet in A Minor*. Loeffler: *Music for Four Stringed Instruments*. Kohon Quartet; Isabelle Byman (piano, in the Hadley). Vox SVBX 5301 three discs \$10.98.

Returning to the path of strictly classical duty, I can find no clearer picture of American chamber music around the turn of the last century than that pre-

A Basic Library of American Music

"the music of such composers makes the line of demarcation between 'classical' and 'popular' in American music impossible to draw with any exactitude."

sented by this well-engineered Vox Box. The Franklin—much earlier in date than all the others—is Benjamin, no less, and this quaint suite of dances, played entirely on specially tuned open strings, may well be genuinely his. The Foote and Hadley works are academic in the boring sense, the Loeffler inflated in the manner of an American Chausson (though not, perhaps, quite so soupy), and the Griffes no more than an atmospheric hint of its composer's real talent. But Daniel Gregory Mason handles his spirituals with scarcely less than Dvořákian skill, and the quartet written by George Chadwick in 1895 is a real find—genial, witty, and endowed, in its third movement, with a positively peachy trio section. The Kohons are not always perfectly in tune, but they have this music in their bones, and they play it with irresistible zest.

□ **IVES: *Three Places in New England.*** Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy cond. *Washington's Birthday.* New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein cond. *Robert Browning Overture.* American Symphony

Orchestra, Leopold Stokowski cond. COLUMBIA MS 7015 \$6.98.

□ **IVES: *Piano Music (complete).*** Alan Mandel (piano). DESTO 6458/61 four discs \$27.92.

□ **VARÈSE: *Amériques; Ecuatorial; Nocturnal.*** Ariel Bybee (soprano, in *Nocturnal*); Bass Ensemble of the University-Civic Choral, Salt Lake City (in *Ecuatorial* and *Nocturnal*); Utah Symphony Orchestra, Maurice Abravanel cond. VANGUARD SRV 308SD \$3.98.

Ives and Varèse were the two great originals of modern American music—the one as native an American as you could find, assembling his language from the raw blocks of American experience, aural and otherwise, wherever he found them, the other an immigrant (he arrived in 1916 at the age of thirty-one), inventing an entirely abstract yet poetically evocative vocabulary out of thin air and rivaling Stravinsky in freshness of ear and time-scale.

The Ives discography is now extensive, yet still, to my mind, oddly unsatisfactory. For, rather than the symphonies, which perhaps make the biggest immediate impact, I find that the piano music, violin sonatas, and songs offer the more lasting Ivesian rewards, and only in Alan Mandel's comprehensive set of the piano music does the phonograph deal adequately with any of these sections of his output. Paul Zukofsky is unimpeachably scholarly but pinched of expression and surprisingly sour of intonation in the Nonesuch set of the violin sonatas (no match for the sweet-toned Rafael Druian/John Simms set that used to be available on Mercury). And I would pick John Langstaff as the likeliest man to remedy the present patchy representation of the songs—he was the first and last singer I have heard do a really worthy *Charlie Ruitage*, maybe the best of the *114 Songs* and suggestive of a twentieth-century Charles Dibdin (to

choose a very British parallel) in its circumscribed but touching truth of expression. Pending improvement in these areas (a worthy Bicentennial task, I would have thought, for any American company), the Mandel set, together with the colorful orchestral anthology on Columbia, provides the best all-round picture of Ives. There is also an attractive Nonesuch disc (H 71306) of the two string quartets played by the Concord String Quartet.

The catalog listings of Varèse are more concentrated but also, on balance, better. The Vanguard record I have chosen, coupling the large-scale *Amériques* with two mysterious, dramatic, often Messiaenic vocal pieces, won by a short head in a contest among several good and variously coupled collections by Cerha on Candide, Weisberg on Nonesuch, Simonovitch on Angel, and Craft on Columbia.

There was, by the way, another celebrated "great original" on the American scene in the shape of Carl Ruggles. I am afraid I find him original but not great. There is a striking parallel here with the Englishman Havergal Brian: both men were born in 1876, lived into their nineties largely neglected, and have subsequently been "revived" amid much fanfare about the uncompromising sparseness and integrity of their music. On inspection, the sparseness and the integrity sound to me more like roughness of technique—or, to put it plainly, sheer clumsiness. But if you want to investigate Ruggles at his best, try the succinct *Angels*, a brass piece conducted by Lukas Foss on Turnabout TV 34398S and coupled with attractive short works by Ives and Copland and the Mason quartet listed in the previous section.

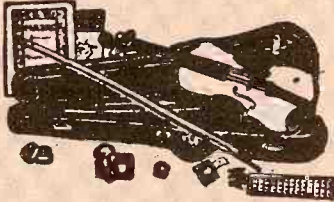
□ **THOMSON: *Suites from Film Scores. The River; The Plow That Broke the Plains.*** Symphony of the Air, Leopold Stokowski cond. VANGUARD VSD 2095 \$6.98. [See also: Best of Month, page 83.]

□ **COPLAND: *El Salón México; Billy the Kid—Suite; Rodeo—Suite; Appalachian Spring—Suite.*** New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein cond. COLUMBIA MG 30071 two discs \$7.98.

□ **HARRIS: *Symphony No. 3.*** BERNSTEIN: "*Jeremiah*" *Symphony.* Jennie Tourel (mezzo-soprano, in the Bernstein); New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein cond. COLUMBIA MS 6303 \$6.98.

□ **CARTER: *String Quartets Nos. 1 and 2.*** Composers Quartet. NONESUCH H 71249 \$3.96.

□ **BARBER: *Knoxville, Summer of 1915; Antony and Cleopatra (excerpts).*** Leontyne Price (soprano); New Philharmonia Orchestra, Thomas Schippers cond. RCA LSC 3062 \$6.98.



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□ **AMERICAN STRING QUARTETS, 1900-1950.** Gershwin: *Lullaby*. Copland: *Two Pieces*. Ives: *Scherzo*. Thomson: *Quartet No. 2*. Sessions: *Quartet No. 2*. Piston: *Quartet No. 5*. Hanson: *Quartet in One Movement, Op. 23*. Mennin: *Quartet No. 2*. Schuman: *Quartet No. 3*. Kohon Quartet. Vox SVBX 5305 three discs \$10.98.

Here we launch ourselves into the twentieth-century American mainstream. The grouping above might easily be summed up as "The *Boulangerie* and Friends": nearly half of the composers included were students of Nadia Boulanger in Paris, and almost all of them write music marked by open textures, eupeptic vigor, skilled craftsmanship, and a vein of frank American sentiment often related in musical terms to the nation's still-pervasive hymnody.

Leaving out of account Gershwin and Ives, who are here represented only by filler-size miniatures, the two biggest talents, in my view (and I am aware that this will surprise many Americans), are Virgil Thomson and Elliott Carter. The two could hardly be more different. Thomson has taken the cult of musical simplicity to its extreme, reacting deliberately—in a way that some find intellectually suspect—against the saturation point of complexity and dissonance reached by much modern music. But he is no primitive. The mastery of contrapuntal and other techniques, for all that they are unemphatically deployed, is complete, in sharp contrast to the tonic-and-dominant-thumping brutism of such other minimalist figures as Carl Orff. The lack of modern recordings, or in most cases any recordings at all, of Thomson's songs and operas urgently needs to be remedied.

Carter, on the other hand, might be taken as an exemplar of modern complexity, preoccupied as he has been with the temporal element of music and with sometimes rather pretentious quasi-metaphysical concepts. He is at his eloquent best in his First Quartet. But the Nonesuch disc somewhat cruelly demonstrates how, in the eight years that separate it from the Second, theory took over from inspiration: indeed, most of Carter's later works seem to me to add up to very little more than paper-music.

Roy Harris (represented at his peak by the Third Symphony) and Samuel Barber are others who have suffered a sad decline, Harris into fuzzily sentimental modal moonings and Barber, after the small pure flame of *Knoxville*, into the apotheosis of kitsch (to be found in its least agreeable form in *Antony and Cleopatra*).

For the rest, the oddest man out is Roger Sessions, whose stylistic affini-



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ties are Austro-German rather than French or, in any specific way, American. He is included here rather than in a more appropriate place because the discography is, again, woefully inadequate—no recordings of the operas *Montezuma* and *The Trial of Lucullus* or of any but one of the weaker of the late symphonies, and only an antique electronic stereo disc of the best of the early ones, No. 2. Elsewhere in the Vox quartet set, the Hanson is undistinguished neo-Romantic mush, but Piston (whom I generally find a rather cold fish), Mennin, and Schuman are all in excellent, inventive form.

And that, apart from Bernstein the composer, who has already been discussed, leaves Copland. Give or take a touch or two of romanticizing in the performances, this much-loved composer's best works are usefully assembled in the Columbia "Copland Album." Supplemented by the sumptuously vulgar *Salón México* (kitsch at its most enjoyable), these ballet suites breathe the authentic American combination of lyricism, brashness, and innocence; they are utterly genuine in feeling where such intellectually more ambitious Copland works as the *Piano Variations* and the tedious orchestral *Connotations* and *Inscape* seem contrived. (The complete original score of *Appalachian Spring* for chamber orchestra has, by the way, been recorded under the composer's direction on Columbia M 32736, but Copland, though a fun pianist, is not much of a conductor, even of his own works.)

□ **CAGE:** *Concerto for Prepared Piano and Chamber Orchestra*. FOSS: *Baroque Variations*. Yuji Takahashi (prepared piano, in the Cage); Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Lukas Foss cond. NONESUCH H 71202 \$3.96.

□ **BABBITT:** *String Quartet No. 3*. WUORINEN: *String Quartet*. Fine Arts Quartet. TURNABOUT TV-S 34515 \$3.98.

□ **CRUMB:** *Ancient Voices of Children*. Jan DeGaetani (mezzo-soprano); Michael Dash

(boy soprano); Contemporary Chamber Ensemble, Arthur Weisberg cond. NONESUCH H 71255 \$3.96.

This may seem a sparse representation for America's almost frenetically productive avant-garde, but the reason is simply that I cannot yet recognize many of its creations as basic. Foss, unlike most of this company, has a telling wit: his *Baroque Variations*, three essays in recomposition (of Handel, Scarlatti, and Bach) that can still stir a New York audience to walk noisily out of the concert hall, show him at his most mordant. The prepared piano, its strings garnished with screws, bolts, and other assorted bits of metal, plastic, and wood, its overall effect surprisingly gentle and peace-evoking, was John Cage's most valuable invention—of much greater interest, I think, than his later abdications of creative control in favor of aleatoric noise-making. The listed works by Milton Babbitt and Charles Wuorinen are probably not classifiable as avant-garde in any real sense. They are both superbly skillful and, yes, beautiful vindications of the continuing validity of this traditional medium. In comparison, the final entry by the thirty-seven-year-old George Crumb is avant-garde in every sense. In *Ancient Voices of Children*, as in another of his best works, *Echoes of Time and the River* (recorded by the Louisville Orchestra under Jorge Mester on Louisville S 711), there is a tiresome surrounding apparatus of mystical and numerological abracadabra. It does the music little harm; and if, rather as with Messiaen, you can either swallow it or ignore it, the rewards available from Crumb's tortuous, feeble imagination and exquisite ear are substantial. □

Bernard Jacobson, an Englishman born and bred, was for a time music critic of the *Chicago Daily News* and *Contributing Editor* of *STEREO REVIEW*. He now lives in England but still keeps tabs on American music.

**Some two decades ago
in the year
1956
there took place a
REVOLUTION
in
AMERICAN
POPULAR MUSIC**

The upheaval had been preceded by signs,
portents, harbingers, and even precursors,
but hardly anyone today doubts that the
man who really started it all was

ELVIS PRESLEY



Photostia

ELVIS—did you ever hear of anyone else named “Elvis”?—was born in Tupelo, Mississippi, in 1935. The rural South tends still to cherish names that have gone out of fashion elsewhere—Vernon, Gladys—and others that are unique, exotic originals—Vester, Cletis, Elvis.

Elvis’ farm-worker father Vernon ran off at seventeen with Gladys Smith, twenty-one, a sewing-machine operator in a garment factory. They “ran” five miles, got married, and returned to Tupelo. A few years later Vernon’s brother Vester married Gladys’ sister Cletis, giving Elvis a double aunt and a double uncle—simple generational arithmetic makes this a not unlikely event in small communities. Father Vernon was fair, mother Gladys dark. Both worked hard and attended the First Assembly of God church. When Gladys became pregnant, the couple rented their first home: two rooms on a cement-block foundation straddling the mud when it rained and puddles when, as it often did, it flooded. Identical twins were born to the Presleys there on January 8, 1935. Elvis Aaron was born first; Jesse Garon was born dead.

Elvis Presley grew up during the Depression and World War II. He was blonde, polite, and apparently not greatly memorable to anyone but his kin. At some point during those years, Elvis recalls, he asked for a bicycle; his parents bought him a guitar because it was cheaper. He grew up listening to country music and blues and singing white gospel in church. When he was thirteen, the family—his world—moved to Memphis. They were poor, cooking on a hotplate in one room, lat-

a year, he was driving a truck for \$42 a week, and he was interested in music, cars, and girls, in no particular order.

THERE should be some kind of small fanfare right here to mark the entrance of Sam Phillips of Sun Records; he got Scotty Moore and Bill Black to provide back-up for Elvis at his recording studio after Elvis had done a solo demo there as a birthday present for his mother. The result was the singer’s first officially released record: *That’s Alright (Mama)* on one side and *Blue Moon of Kentucky* on the other. It was a local success in Memphis. The second effort (*Good Rockin’ Tonight* and *I Don’t Care If the Sun Don’t Shine*) did less well, and the third (*Milkcow Blues Boogie/You’re a Heartbreaker*) simply flopped. So did a performance at Nashville’s Grand Ole Opry.

Another, and considerably louder, fanfare, then, for the entry of Colonel Tom Parker, a middle-aged ex-carnival barker and public relations veteran (a typical stroke: he once hired extras from the *Wizard of Oz* cast to parade through Los Angeles as “The Elvis Presley Midget Fan Club”). Colonel Parker got Elvis’ career in his—you name it—grasp, pocket, jurisdiction, guidance just as the Big Money started to roll. Or maybe the Big Money started to roll only because of the Colonel; nobody will ever know. Either way, by 1956, the year Elvis Presley attained his legal majority, the Colonel had already sold his Sun contract to RCA and signed him to appear on network TV with Steve Allen, the Dorsey brothers . . . and Ed Sullivan. Almost overnight Elvis the Pelvis became a na-

plished musician who strongly influenced the young singer’s development. Counting Elvis, that’s three “right” people so far, and it’s only 1954 in Memphis. Add now the Colonel, the enigmatic huckster with an uncanny ability to recognize marketable talent and a whiz at the actual marketing as well (for example, he sold young Presley’s contract to RCA for what was then the unbelievably high figure of \$40,000, and he got Ed Sullivan to pay triple the largest amount he had ever paid anybody for an appearance on his show). All of which is a roundabout way of saying that Sam Phillips, Scotty Moore, and Colonel Parker were critical elements in the development of Elvis Presley and therefore in the rise of rock-and-roll.

Parker and Phillips were, like Elvis, “hicks” by Northern, urban standards, but both had music-business experience and knew what they were doing. Except that they *couldn’t* have, really, for Elvis just wasn’t Elvis yet. His voice was good, but not great. He wasn’t movie-star gorgeous, just sexy. He wasn’t a musical prodigy either, not ace guitarist, accomplished actor, or even—especially—any kind of songwriter. Nonetheless, all the imperfect pieces somehow fitted together and added up to a unique musical style, a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

But Elvis was not invented; the strange thing is that it all *had* to happen just as it did. Once the diverse musical and cultural elements had come together in Elvis, once he was exposed to Phillips, Moore, and Parker, the whole thing meshed, and rock-and-roll was inevitable. Elvis had to be a poor white

A brief music-history lesson by Asheley R. and Kerrin L. Griffith

er moving into a federally subsidized housing project.

Elvis sang a bit in high school, but nobody seems really to have noticed. He liked shop class and R.O.T.C., wore unusually long (for the time) hair with sideburns and tight pink and black clothes. He liked to go to carnivals and movies. He had grease in his hair and pimples on his cheeks. He was, in the sartorial sense at least, a kind of homemade, farm-club “hood”—except that he adored his indulgent parents, especially his mother. He held factory and movie-ushering jobs, he had girl friends, and he punched a few people for various unimportant reasons. In 1954 he had been out of high school for

tional sensation with hordes of young (mostly female) worshipers and as many older detractors. In the next two years over 28,000,000 Elvis Presley records were sold. How did it happen? What did it all mean?

Confluences are what made it happen. It was not merely a case of the right person, the right place, and the right time, but a whole *series* of right people, places, and times. There was, first of all, Sam Phillips, who specialized in molding singers without much prior performance experience (some of his later finds were Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison, and Jerry Lee Lewis). Phillips supplied Elvis with guitarist Scotty Moore, an accom-

fundamentalist Southerner, and something of a hood. He had to be poor, and he had to have grown up listening, on radio and in the flesh, to the necessary kinds of music—especially Mississippi hillbilly, Memphis blues, and gospel. He had to be white, or superstardom in benighted 1956 would have been impossible, but he also had to be close enough to black performers that he could absorb their techniques. He needed to have acquired the juvenile-delinquent machismo of the mid-Fifties and he needed the experience of tent-show evangelism to teach him how to arouse an audience to frenzy and even hysteria. He had to be handled by people experienced in the already subtle

ELVIS



arts of c-&-w and r-&-b, people skilled in the mechanics of popularization. And he had them: Phillips had specialized in supervising little-known black vocalists, and the Colonel, even before Elvis came along, had packaged and promoted a number of country-music figures.

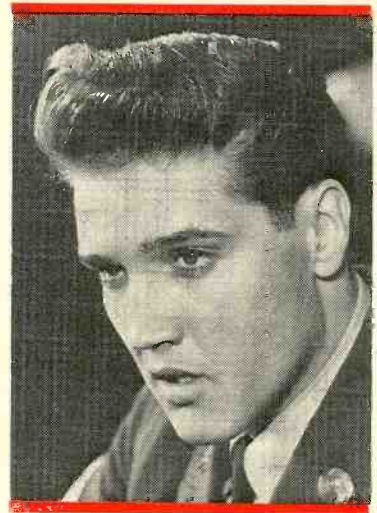
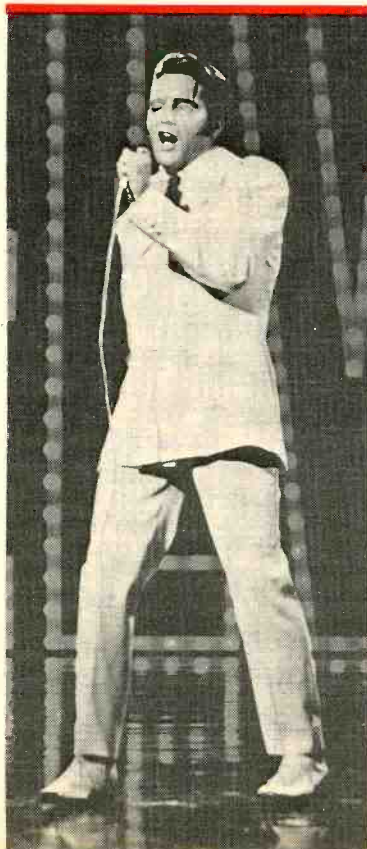
Yet that's not all. Pop music, always more of a grab bag than the narrow disciplines of country and rhythm-and-blues, habitually borrowed freely from both, and as a result Elvis became a star in all three categories with a synthesis that required the coinage of the unlikely word "rockabilly." What counted most was the simple power, the authority with which Elvis joined previously separate characteristics of music and style. He wasn't the first to do it, and perhaps he wasn't even the best, but the product he cooked up and served was the one that sold, the one that was physically conspicuous, aurally arresting, and satisfying, as they say, in spades.

WHAT Elvis did twenty years ago was to set off a revolution, no less, and its reverberations are still being felt today musically, socially, and culturally. Rock-and-roll is that revolution's name. It had been a long time in coming, but it was born in 1956 and personified in Elvis. This is not to deny

the very real importance of Little Richard, Chuck Berry, or any of the other vanguard artists; they were great, but in the light of Elvis' success they were merely candles. *Heartbreak Hotel*, Presley's first RCA single, was released in January of 1956. By that same June Elvis' sales accounted for fully half of RCA's pop product.

For those who can't, won't, or don't remember the attendant avalanche of publicity, comparisons with two other phenomena are apt. First, the Beatles: they too kidnaped all the adolescents in the land, piping them away to the tune of television exposure, movies, and saturating record marketing. Second, think of the Kennedy assassination and particularly of the funeral. It is of course absurd to consider the two events as being parallel in any historically significant way, or of having a like emotional weight. What is comparable is the overall impact and scope of the media events themselves, each—the death of a President, the birth of rock-and-roll—a kind of watershed marking a distinct shift in the nation's political attitudes, in its cultural sensibilities. In both cases, we simply haven't been the same since.

Just why rock-and-roll should suddenly emerge from the lips—and loins—of Elvis Presley is a question that takes us far deeper than the rutted roads of Tupelo or the sound studios of Memphis. Ripeness, as *King Lear* had it, is all. In 1956 the music—or, more accurately, several overlapping musics—were primed for integration. The



youthful audience was just as ripe, already strong enough to make it possible for *Maybelline* and *Rock Around the Clock* to infiltrate the Patti Page-Land of the adult pop charts. And the industry was ripe too, technically and bureaucratically, for new kinds of music and new ways of selling it—more sophisticated studios, more up-and-coming independent labels, the switchover from fragile 78's to casual 45's and almost-rugged LP's. Even the media power was relatively new—don't forget, it wasn't until the middle Fifties that practically everyone had TV, and transistor radios were only about to become as ubiquitous as the six-pack is today. Above all, however, *Elvis* was ripe, physically, vocally, professionally. The juices were flowing.

SOME believe that his Sun records are the best Elvis ever cut. Others use those same records to gravely demonstrate obvious to possible influences: Jimmie Rodgers, Otis Spann, Muddy Waters, Roy Acuff, Arthur Crudup, and, yes, even Dean Martin. Such cataloging is fascinating—and ultimately unrewarding. Elvis took from a lot of places, and the taking was probably as often deliberate as it was unconscious. What emerged, however, was Elvis, not undigested scraps. When you listen to the sources, it is impossible not to wonder at what the King (the nickname his fans gave him as opposed to the Pelvis, a mere media tag of the Fifties) accomplished. What comparisons illustrate is mostly what he *didn't* borrow, for the range of what he did incorporate is enormous: bluegrass, cocktail piano, hiccups, yodels, panting, echo chambers that sound like aural halls of mirrors, wailing saxophones, cloying background vocals, hoofbeats, spoken asides. The songs themselves vary from candid black blues to whiny white

ballads. Who else ever moved so easily between raunchiness and bathos? Who else ever *wanted to*?

Elvis made Sun records for only sixteen months. *That's Alright (Mama)*, the first, is also perhaps the best. It's a blues, and for once he is singing slightly against the back-up band rather than wallowing in its mush. The voice is young-sounding, resonant, full of sap; Bill Black and Scotty Moore are perfect without making any virtuoso intrusions. The words become ambiguous, the singer both pleading and reassuring ("that's alright, mama, anyway you do") so that it sometimes sounds like "anyway you do it" and other times like "anyway you'll do." His hurry seems to come from desire, not lack of control.

Blue Moon of Kentucky and *I Don't Care If the Sun Don't Shine* are of interest primarily for the funny country voices (and the rhythms) he uses. An altogether different story is *Good Rockin' Tonight*, a real rockabilly tune that set the vocal pattern Elvis was to use (and overuse) so many times: a high introductory phrase followed by a low response. It also has full stops, another trick he came to rely on (as in *Treat Me Nice*). Like *That's Alright*, it is full of declarations and questions, announcements and desires. And the phrasing really *is* good, the line "Tonight she'll know I'm a mighty, mighty man" runs headlong into "I heard the news [breath] there'll be good rockin' tonight."

Most of the other Sun sides are period relics: *You're Right*, *I'm Left*, *She's Gone* prefigures the Johnny Cash style



and introduces drummer D. J. Fontana to the trio—not always a boon; one version of *I Love You Because* has a spoken interlude prophetic of perfectly dreadful things to come. By and large, however, the remaining things Elvis did at Sun are of only moderate interest, with the possible exception of *Mystery Train*—it's all promise, wonderful but frustrating.

Most of his old RCA singles, alas, don't hold up well either; they have a vintage sound but little real stature. *Heartbreak Hotel* is curious and not unpleasant, and *Hound Dog* isn't all that great any more—but both can still pack quite a wallop if you're old enough to remember their first time around. The best, probably, are *Don't Be Cruel* and *All Shook Up*. The former makes Elvis' formula clear: get the girls to listen, sound ardent, and then beseech. It's all mood; the words of *Don't Be Cruel* are relatively so unimportant that when he sings "Let's walk to the preacher" it doesn't sound so much like "wa . . . to . . . prea . . ." as it does "one . . . two . . . three." The lyrics are, if anything, improved by such destruction; they are not, in any event, where the message lies.

He had better lyrics to work with in *All Shook Up*, so he makes them all comprehensible, and even his interjected "unhs" are perfect—not too loud, as they can be, not too forced. And for once he shows all his personalities in a single verse: first the black rhythm man ("She toucha mah han' an' what a thrill ah got"), and then, without a pause, the country boy ("Ah'm proud to say that she's mah . . . buttercup") and the horny city slick ("Unh. I'm all shook up").

A few of the ballads manage to show off Elvis' voice. *Love Me Tender* is the most memorable as well as the most instructive about his technique. The

mouth takes over suggestively, fascinatingly, here for the bodily twitches that would accompany a rocker: on the key words "dear," "tender," and especially "fulfill," the jaw moves provocatively—you can hear it.

Finally, there is his all-time great production number, *Jailhouse Rock*, which shows rock-and-roll already full grown, already stylized, mannered, and insular, settling for volume and spectacle rather than innovation or "departures" of any sort.

How was Elvis consistently able to unite opposing worlds, white and black, country and urban? Well, like any good American athlete, he showed prudence on the opposition's turf and daring on his own. He expressed both, without hypocrisy, because his style was two styles. He was respectful, modest, humble, charitable, and wide-eyed. He was also outrageous, flashy, cocksure, hungry, and heavy-lidded. He performed both ways and he lived both ways, and since he was never aware of any contradictions between the two, he never projected any complications. Ambiguity, yes; complexity, no. He sang sentimental ballads and hymns with a straight face and hard-edged fast songs with simpering sneers and grinding thrusts.

The lyrics of his early songs reflect this duality. The ballads were sweet and direct and oozed abject devotion; as a result they don't sound false today, just syrupy. But the rock songs have different words, nonsense syllables



ELVIS

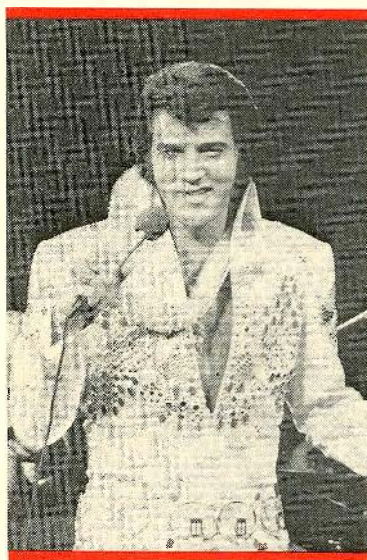
bles, innuendos, and usually some innocent unifying element—a dog, say, or shoes. A lot of puddle-deep nonsense has been written about the Fifties “fixatiōn” on clothes and emblems, *Blue Suede Shoes* often being used as a typical example. But that song, as Elvis sings it, isn’t *about* a pair of shoes. It is a list, a series of invitations to assault: do violence to me, honey. You can do this, you can do that. This too, umm hmm. But no, honey, there’s one thing you *can’t* touch—my blue suede shoes. . . .

Elvis may never have understood what he was singing, nor the kids what they were hearing. It was almost as if all those duck’s ass, ponytail (now *there* are some symbols for you!) heads wanted something, but they didn’t want to identify it too exactly. They just wanted it dirty and they wanted it fast; Elvis delivered—ambiguously. Unsympathetic older folks thought Elvis’ sensuality was physical; they found him visually crude and lascivious, which he was. But that was only part of it. Elvis could deliver his bump and grind even over the radio, indicating that his power really lay in the music and what he did with it.

It would be surprising if a performer as popular and as durable as Elvis had not inspired a host of out-and-out imitators and more subtle borrowers—and he has, not the least of them being such latter-day pop saints as Bob Dylan and the Beatles. Although practically every garage band in Christendom tithes (spiritually of course) to the King, his influence on Bob and the Mop Tops is perhaps the most clearly documented, not only in living memory but in the rock press, which has always been preoccupied with “roots.”

Dylan’s debt to Elvis is alternately acknowledged and denied in the best “I’ll-go-your-way-and-call-it-mine” tradition. According to Anthony Scaduto’s biography, Elvis was Bobby Zimmerman’s idol/ideal in 1958; by 1960 Bob Dylan was “somewhat disdainful of Elvis and the *Blue Suede Shoes* stuff.” In 1961 (the Woody Guthrie period) Bob claimed to have played session piano with Elvis; the following year Dylan reported that John Hammond had predicted he’d be “bigger than Presley!”

The Beatles’ *Love Me Do* hit the British Charts in 1963, and rock’s star rose again. The Fab Four made their first appearance some time later on the Sullivan Show, and there was John Lennon, pumping his thin legs, curling his thinner lips, and wailing through *Twist and Shout*. According to Hunter Davies, the Beatles’ original goal was to be bigger than the songwriting team of Goffin and King, but by the time they were scuffling, leather-jacketed, through the cellars of Hamburg their ambitions were loftier: they too wanted to be “bigger than Presley,” the daddy of them all. Theft is flattery: on “Rub-



ber Soul,” the Christmas album of 1965, Lennon stole directly (he admitted it only years later) from the Sun session tune *Baby Let’s Play House*.

A new rock star of Elvis’ magnitude has yet to appear in the Seventies, but almost all who have attained success during his reign credit his influence. Songs associated originally with him have been recorded by artists as disparate as Joe Cocker, the Flying Burrito Brothers, and Bryan Ferry. Alvin Lee, who named his band Ten Years After because he formed it ten years after Elvis appeared, blames the end of his performing career on his Woodstock rendition of *Goin’ Home*, a pastiche of various bits from *Blue Suede Shoes* and *Baby Let’s Play House*. According to Lee; when kids who had never seen Elvis saw Alvin do Elvis, that was all they wanted to see—Alvin Lee as Elvis P. End of Ten Years After, ten years after. Further, Elvis achieved such legendary status that imitators began “doing” him on the cocktail-lounge circuit the way they did Judy Garland—and Elvis didn’t even have to die! He just

became, for a period, relatively inactive (thanks to Army duty) on the entertainment front.

Through it all, however, Elvis has remained more essentially “American” than almost anyone (or any *thing*) around in this Bicentennial year. Mom, for instance, has left the kitchen and gone back to school, Apple Pie is made by a factory that calls itself Sara Lee, the Girl Next Door is pregnant and unmarried, and the Flag now adorns alarm clocks and beer cans. Presley, however, has changed hardly at all. Oh, he’s put on a little weight, and he’s gotten (rather quietly) divorced. But, for the rest, he has lived a real-life Horatio Alger story. He is religious, he adored his mother, and he served two years in his country’s service cheerfully. He doesn’t smoke or drink. He is a stupendous commercial success, makes tons of money, and pays his income taxes fully without dodges, loopholes, shelters, or complaints. He contributes to charity and gives generously to friends.

MUSICALLY, he offers something for all but the most resolute of culture snobs. *You* may not care for the hymns and ballads he is given to singing, but millions of others do. And for those who don’t there are the old rockabilly numbers he still performs and occasionally even new rockers that work—1972’s *Burning Love*, for example, or his current success *For the Heart*. And although it may be stretching the point to say that he was the *cause* of certain cultural changes, it is not too much to say that he symbolized them, some of them profoundly important. He spearheaded a cultural movement that broke barriers, and though the breakdown of racism in commercial music comes most immediately to mind, that is but a part of it. Elvis—and rock-and-roll—heralded major demographic changes that have deeply affected how this country lives and how it sees itself. It wasn’t just that country-and-western and rhythm-and-blues flowed together; rural and urban populations have had their visions of themselves and each other radically altered, there is greater communication between them, less insularity, less tension and bigotry. If all that seems to be a bit too much to lay at the door of a popular music, just try to imagine those changes taking place without the pulsating undercurrent of that powerful music. And then try to imagine that music without Elvis. □

Asheley and Kerrin Griffith are sisters and rock-and-roll fans. Their ambitions, in no particular order, are to (1) finish their PhD’s and (2) become Miss Subways.

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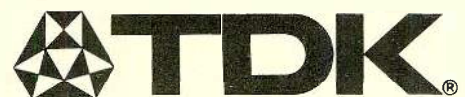
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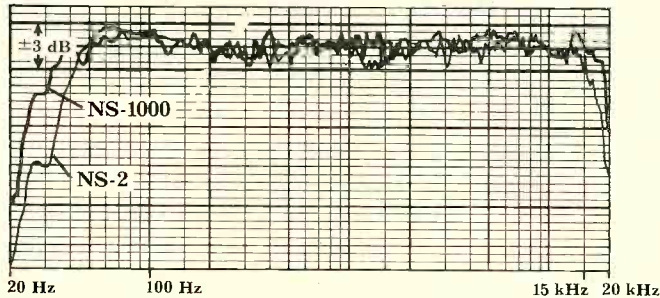
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A Spacious New Recording of Virgil Thomson's Down-to-earth, Contemporary-sounding Film Scores

*Above, caught in the act:
a respecter of the old-fashioned
American tradition of dunking.*

VIRGIL THOMSON's film scores ring with a sassy, outdoorsy vigor that goes well beyond the call of mere background-music duty to become entities in themselves. Indeed, the scores date better than some of the films do. A documentary such as *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, for example, might seem a little pompous now with its sententious narration/oration by director Pare Lorentz about the "treeless wind-swept continent of grass" and "the most tragic chapter in American agriculture" prelude ghastrly scenes of ruined Depression-era farms. Thomson's score, however, is down-to-earth and contemporary-sounding, smoothly blending, in a very American way, passages from the doxology hymn ("Praise God from whom all blessings flow"), cowboy songs, and the moan of the blues.

His score for *The River*, though more ambitious, is rooted in the same underlying simplicity: a hint of *Dixie*, a hymn tune, and such old favorites as *A Hot Time in Old Town Tonight* are woven with dissonances suggesting factory sounds and, later, jazzy echoes of a high-spirited Saturday night—homely tunes, homely instruments. No wonder that Aaron Copland, after hearing this score, wrote Thomson that the music for *The River* was "a lesson in how to treat Americana." Indeed, Copland himself apparently took the lesson to heart, for he followed a similar line when he composed his ballet scores *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo*.

These two Thomson film scores are so good that I rather wish, perhaps selfishly, that Angel had rounded out its just-released Thomson disc with one of the suites from the music for the movie *Louisiana Story*. As it is, there is *Autumn*, a concertino for harp, strings, and percussion drawn from material in some of the composer's earlier works. Even in this comparatively minor piece, however, there are a winsome freshness, Thomson's typical sturdiness of structure, and exquisite passages for the admirably played harp of Ann Mason Stockton.

The music for *The River* and *The*



DIETRICH FISCHER-DIESKAU:
at a recent playback
with Daniel Barenboim

Plow That Broke the Plains is available on an earlier disc (Vanguard 2095) with Leopold Stokowski molding everything to his usual compelling will. Conductor Neville Marriner is more relaxed in this Angel recording, yet he somehow manages to make more of the big moments. The sound is remarkably spacious, especially in SQ-matrix quadraphonic, and Richard Freed's well-researched notes, along with passages excerpted from the narration for *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, add to the value of an album both excellent and timely.

Paul Kresh

THOMSON: *Music for the Films. The Plow That Broke the Plains; The River; Autumn (Concertino for Harp, Strings and Percussion).* Ann Mason Stockton (harp, in *Autumn*). Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Neville Marriner cond. ANGEL □ S-37300 \$6.98.

An Unusual Coupling By Fischer-Dieskau: Mahler's *Wayfarer Songs*, Martin's *Jedermann*

IT was an inspired notion on the part of somebody at Deutsche Grammophon to juxtapose two slightly unusual repertoire items on one disc: Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau's *second* recorded interpretation of Gustav Mahler's highly emotional *Wayfarer Songs* (a new re-

recording) and his interpretation of Frank Martin's brooding set of *Monologues* based on Hugo von Hofmannsthal's version of the German morality play *Jedermann* (a reissue—the original release, which took place about a dozen years ago, was DG 138 871).

Fischer-Dieskau sings the first and fourth Mahler songs with mellow tonal beauty and an apparently inexhaustible range of colors and dynamics that seem to be always *right*. But the high tessitura of the second song ("Ging heut morgens übers Feld") is uncomfortable for him now, and he cannot resist overdramatizing the third ("Ich hab' ein glühend Messer") to the serious detriment of the musical line. The overall effect of the cycle, therefore, is rather uneven, but conductor Rafael Kubelik provides a beautifully detailed framework with his loving treatment of Mahler's flavorful scoring.

The singer's voice was in a healthier youthful estate when he recorded the *Martin Monologues*, and more responsive therefore to his superb musical and intellectual command. The music, midway between operatic utterance and *parlando* dramatic expression, is of the kind designed not for mass popularity but for those whose special delight is that arena in which singer meets song. I find it unceasingly compelling, brilliantly orchestrated, and exceptionally masterful in word-setting. Fischer-Dieskau, moreover, makes every syllable ring with meaning. With the composer conducting an exemplary performance and the engineers producing a technically beautiful recording, we have something as close to definitive as we can ever hope to get in music.

George Jellinek

MAHLER: *Songs of a Wayfarer. MARTIN: Six Monologues from "Jedermann."* Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (baritone); Bavarian Radio Orchestra, Rafael Kubelik cond. (in Mahler); Berlin Philharmonic, Frank Martin cond. (in Martin). DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530 630 \$7.98.

Indecent Burial: National Lampoon's "Good-bye Pop, 1952-1976"

FUNNY—not funny ha-ha but funny curious—how the various *National Lampoon* enterprises such as *Lemmings*, the *Radio Hour*, the sneaky influence they're having on television, and so on, are usually funnier than their granddaddy, the magazine itself. *NatLamp* seems to be particularly strong in treating the radio medium, and the strengths carry over well into their new album. "Good-bye Pop, 1952-1976" takes up where *Lemmings* left off with the business of giving rock (here broadened to "pop"—you of course heard that little slap-in-passing at the Randy Newman song *So Long Dad*) a fitting (which is to say indecent) burial.

This is satire, first and foremost, and there's no way to compare it to the zany cutting up of Monty Python, whose medium is television, or the convoluted, unclassifiable surrealism of



AL GREEN: easy cajoling tone and nervous grace

the Firesign Theatre. Take a subject and lampoon it; it works that directly. Hard satire has to bypass a lot of throwaway laughs in order to stay on the point, so it can't be counted on to break you up every *minute* or so. But, on the other hand, there are some tangled, concentrated parts you can stand to hear several times—you can't do that with the ordinary comedy record—and even the music is decently played.

Kung Fu Christmas is a slashing parody of the "politics" in soul music ("Lavender Caddy and Super Fly clothes . . . Kung Fu fightin' under mistletoes . . ."), and then there's an accurate send-up of the self-pitying country sanger ("I've never had a bullet on the hit-parade of life . . . and clap is just the B side of love"), plus a very interesting study of a women's lib song being recorded, one some of our more militant sisters are sure to label purest MCP (although it does remind me that Mary Travers, bless her, re-

fused to record *I Am Woman* because she just couldn't get by the line "I am invincible" without cracking up). There's more: Neil Young is done up brown with a "Neil Young song" by Tony Scheuren that sounds so much like *all* Neil Young songs that some radio stations mistook it for the real thing. *Art Rock Suite* ("Fall with me up the staircase to a blue electric room . . .") grows a bit tedious by sticking to its silly subject, but *Down to Jamaica* redeems simply *everything* with an imitation of an old hero of ours going out on some reggae scat-singing: "Oh, guava jelly! Filé gumbo natty lox!" Well put, *NatLamp*, well put, but you forgot the violin. *Noel Coppage*

NATIONAL LAMPOON: *Good-bye Pop, 1952-1976*. Paul Jacobs (vocals, guitars); Gloria Radner (vocals); Christopher Guest (vocals, other things); Sean Kelly (editor—?—and various tasks); other musicians and satirical individuals. *Good-bye Pop; Kung Fu Christmas; The B Side of Love;*

I'm a Woman; Old Maid; Art Rock Suite; Down to Jamaica; and some stuff between selections. Epic PE 33956 \$6.98, © PEA 33956 \$7.98.

How to Have Just As Good a Time as "Full of Fire" Al Green Does

IF Al Green's new release "Full of Fire" on the Hi label doesn't make you feel good, then I'm afraid nothing short of a lobotomy probably ever will. It's an album full not only of the "fire" of Green's slam-bang vocal style but of life, high spirits, and a kind of dancing, joyful boisterousness over being able to perform as well as he does. From the opening *Glory, Glory* track, which he races through with the sure-footed, ground-covering ease of a greyhound cold-nosing a mechanical rabbit, to the final cloudburst of vitality called *Let It Shine*, Green is pure entertainer all the way. He wrote most of the songs himself, and they aren't really up to much—except that they are the perfect outlines for him to fill in with the special tricks and effects of which he is a master. *(Continued overleaf)*

TALENTED PAUL JACOBS: looks like Leon Russell—ever see them together?



Take as an instance *Always* (not the Berlin classic): the easy, cajoling tone and the nervous grace are the performer's and not the song's; they could only come from a singer who understands that his audience looks to him for assurance that, whatever he's doing, he *knows what he's doing*, that it will always come out right in the end. Another might be *There's No Way*, on the face of it as solemn a piece of soap-opera claptrap as you're likely to tune in on any Wednesday afternoon, a hymn of unrequited devotion. Green's approach is a whiney, metronomic complacency that tells us the poor object of his sticky affections has about as much chance of getting rid of him as a case of chronic psoriasis. Uriah Heep in *Love* is what it really is, but if you want to take it as passion undying, that's all right too. Either way you'll be superbly entertained.

There are lots of other good things here, including the title song and a hugely energetic, completely satisfying *Soon As I Get Home*, a title that perhaps needs no further elucidation. Green's been around quite a while, and it shows in the best ways possible: intelligence, style, humor, and, above all, craft. He knows how to give the listener a good time every time. How many others are there around right now who can make the same claim?

Peter Reilly

AL GREEN: *Full of Fire*. Al Green (vocals); orchestra. *Glory, Glory; That's the Way It Is; Always; There's No Way; I'd Fly Away; Full of Fire; Together Again; Soon As I Get Home; Let It Shine*. Hi SHL 32097 \$6.98, © SHL8 32097 \$7.98, © SHL5 32097 \$7.98.

Bill Wyman "Stone Alone": A Guitarist Steps Out of the Shadows

My interest in the Rolling Stones is, I confess, limited, tending to falter after their 1969 recordings. I further found Stones bassist Bill Wyman's solo essay "Monkey Grip" to be pleasant, unassuming, and, in all, no great shakes. But wow, what a dandy his latest effort "Stone Alone" is! I haven't been able to take it off the turntable since I first heard it.

The arrangements (terrific) are Wyman's own, as are most of the songs:



BILL WYMAN: holding a lot of good cards

Rolling Stone Records

Soul Satisfying uses reggae tastefully, *Apache Woman* has an ominously sexy combination of blues and something approaching a cha-cha-cha, and *No More Foolin'* features late-Twenties New Orleans jazz instrumentation. The vocals are a happy compromise between what Wyman's heart wanted and what his tonsils could deliver—he often sounds like Ringo Starr hyperventilating—but what his voice lacks in timbre and technique is made up for by his sly, shy delivery.

It is the funny, catchy, genial songs, however, that make the album a winner. Wyman's earthy humor runs through them all, sex being for him only a comedy turn in the whole vaudeville of life. Another bassist, John Entwistle of the Who, writes this kind of material as well, but where he is gleefully salacious Wyman is all bruised innocence.

Of the three selections Wyman didn't write, two are reprises of oldies: Jimmie Soul's *If You Wanna Be Happy* and U. S. Bonds' *Quarter to Three*. The third is by Danny ("Kootch") Kortchmar, a longtime sidekick of James Taylor. Without taking anything away from Wyman's accomplishments, the lyrics to Kortchmar's *Feet* are the best in the album, among the best, indeed, of the year. An excerpt:

Feet, down in my shoes
I'm depending on youse
To walk away from my baby
Mind, stop changing back and forth
Stop blowing South to North
Stop coming up with "maybe"

See? A little Randy Newman, a little Tom T. Hall, and a dash of Ogden Nash. Classy.

Two other aspects of the album are noteworthy: The first is that "Stone Alone" is a rare *successful* example of a type of disc common nowadays and nearly always a failure: a sideman from a well-known band making a solo at-

tempt supported by all-star pals. The sideman is usually uninteresting or even incompetent as a soloist, and the buddies play mechanically. But Wyman appears, on this recorded evidence, to be an inspiring leader, and Kortchmar, Pointer Sisters Ruth and Bonnie, Van Morrison (on sax), Dr. John, Nicky Hopkins, Al Kooper, Joe Walsh, Ronnie Wood, and assorted other notables all play like they mean business.

The second aspect is that, hearing "Stone Alone," you're likely to say "That's real rock-and-roll, just the way it ought to be." But a good deal of it is *not*, in fact, rock: most of Wyman's ideas for his arrangements come from Latin, jazz, c-&-w, Caribbean, or English music-hall sources. It is therefore certainly not "rock" as we have known it for these last six dreary years; *parts* of it are, in the sense that they recall the muscular charm of the form when it was young and adventurous. And it may not be an accident that the bassist for the Rolling Stones pays no more than token attention to "rock" when he steps out front to declare himself an individual.

"Stone Alone" is, in short, a personal artistic triumph for Bill Wyman. There was much speculation not long ago about who the Stones would pick to replace guitarist Mick Taylor; they may soon have to start looking again. This album makes it clear that Wyman can either have two careers simultaneously or go permanently solo. It's his deal, and he's holding a lot of good cards. *Joel Vance*

BILL WYMAN: *Stone Alone*. Bill Wyman (vocals, bass, piano, guitars); other musicians. *A Quarter to Three; Gimme Just One Chance; Soul Satisfying; Apache Woman; Every Sixty Seconds; Get It On; Feet; Peanut Butter Time; Wine & Wimmen; If You Wanna Be Happy; What's the Point; No More Foolin'*. ROLLING STONES COC 79103 \$6.98, © TP 79103 \$7.98, © CS 79103 \$7.98.

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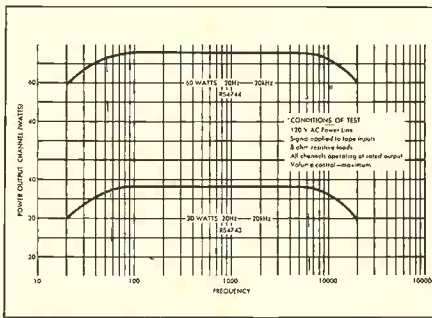
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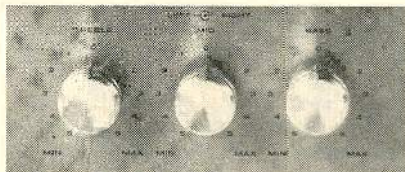
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Signal/noise ratio 100% mod.	67 dB

Typical specifications

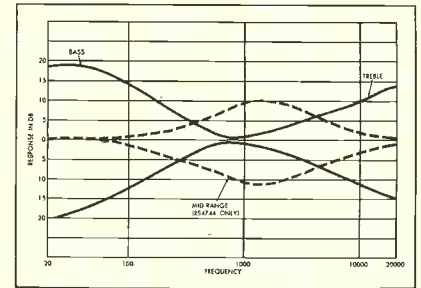


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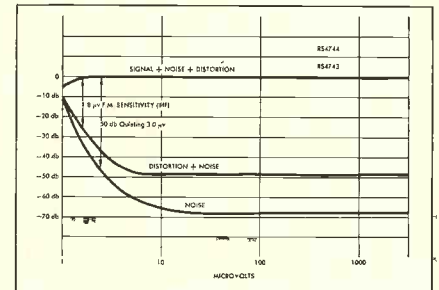
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GTE SYLVANIA

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POPULAR DISCS AND TAPES

Reviewed by CHRIS ALBERTSON • NOEL COPPAGE • PAUL KRESH • PETER REILLY • JOEL VANCE

MAC DAVIS: *Forever Lovers*. Mac Davis (vocals); instrumental accompaniment. *The Good Times We Had; I'm Just in Love; Forever Lovers; Tears in Baby's Eyes; I'm a Survivor*; and five others. COLUMBIA PC 34105 \$6.98, © PCA 34105 \$7.98, © PCT 34105 \$7.98.

Performance: **Relaxed and affable**
Recording: **Excellent**

After hearing his latest album, I caught the Mac Davis show on television one evening just to get a look at him. There he was, all white teeth, wearing the last word in tuxedos, grinning away, blue eyes sparkling under the mop of curly black hair as he danced along a kind of bridge pursued by a group of gorgeous girl admirers. Then he traded gags with his guests, sang some of the songs he likes to sing about the pleasures and pains of love, and struck me as just about the most affable entertainer I had seen on the air in years. Then Bob Hope came along in a golf-cart and I had to turn off the set.

Admirers of the Mac Davis vocal approach will not be disappointed in his new album, recorded in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, where life is rumored to be a relatively relaxed affair. Here he is, with his honest drawl, his caressing baritone, and a kind of glow of health in his voice that belies the more melancholy moods of most of the songs themselves. When he sings the more cheerful *The Good Times We Had* or *I Don't Want to Own You*, he sounds much more at home. Yet his biggest hit is the title song of this album, *Forever*

Lovers, the sad saga of a bride at a motel on her wedding night whose groom never returns from his walk to the corner liquor store. Anyhow, this is Mac: he's up there, he's hot, he has his own fan club, this is his fifth record, his personality comes across pleasantly throughout—and his voice is easy to take.

P.K.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

JONATHAN EDWARDS: *Rockin' Chair*. Jonathan Edwards (vocals, guitar, harmonica); Glen D. Hardin (piano); David Grisman (mandolin); Emory Gordy (bass); Emmylou Harris (backing vocals); other musicians. *How Long; Hearts Overflowing; Favorite Song; White Line; Ain't Got Time; Hello*; and four others. REPRISE MS 2238 \$6.98, © M8-2238 \$7.98, © M5-2238 \$7.98.

Performance: **Smooth and steady**
Recording: **Very good**

This album seems to have grown on me. It is similar to such a growth as an appendix—it doesn't do anything much that needs to be done, but then there's a certain luxury in that. It is congenial, almost to the point of being smug, so cheered up itself it can't be bothered with cheering up listeners. But the *sounds* are so pleasant, so harmonious, so unpretentious in the matter of big ideas and yet so rich in nice, small, folkie-evolving ideas, that one tends to come around. *Rockin' Chair (Gonna Get You)* got me. I had to listen to it about four times before it did, which is another nice thing: the album keeps sounding better. Would that we all did.

N.C.

ETCETERA STRING BAND: *The Harvest Hop*. Etcetera String Band. *Doc Brown's Cakewalk; Georgia Echoes; With Fire and Sword; Some Pumpkins; Iola; Twinkles*; and six others. MOON 200 \$5.25 (from Moon Records, P.O. Box 4001, Kansas City, Kan. 66104).

Performance: **The way it was**
Recording: **Good**

We take you now to a barn dance in Kansas City, Missouri, at the turn of the century. From 1899 to 1909, evidently, the city was a

veritable hotbed of talented ragtime, cakewalk, and march composers. There was Charles Leslie Johnson, who liked playing baseball better than the family piano but grew up to write the best marches, polkas and cakewalks in town. There was Edward Harry Kelly, who haunted the local Elks clubhouse to compose two-steps on the piano at odd hours of the night. There was Ed Kuhn, who sold sheet music and later published pop tunes as well as composing them. And there was Arthur Willard Pryor of St. Joseph, the son of bandleader Samuel Pryor. Arthur eventually made a name for himself with a famous band of his own, became recording director at Victor Records, and lived to renounce the ragtime tunes he had composed and recorded, calling the whole genre a disease from which he was glad America had recuperated.

You can hear the tunes composed by the members of this colorful musical school, from Johnson's *Doc Brown's Cakewalk* to Pryor's *A Coon Band Contest*, on this unusual disc from Moon Records. The boys in the Etcetera String Band are rather young for the assignment, but they are dedicating their careers to preserving and performing music by Missouri's early composers. Their twangy style is rather relentless and never varies much, making it a bit difficult to distinguish a two-step from a march; apparently that's how the stuff is supposed to sound. There's nothing here to threaten the reputation of Scott Joplin, but it is an interesting, off-beat concert, with notes and photographs galore supplied in the booklet that accompanies the disc.

P.K.

GALLAGHER AND LYLE: *Breakaway*. Benny Gallagher (vocals, guitar, keyboards); Graham Lyle (vocals, guitar); Billy Livesay (keyboards); Alan Hornall (bass); Ray Duffy (drums); other musicians. *Breakaway; Stay Young; I Want to Stay with You; If I Needed Someone; Storm in My Soul; Rockwriter; Northern Girl*. A&M SP-4566 \$6.98.

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

Gallagher and Lyle are capable of making bright, freewheeling music, but they are also given, I think, to lapses in concentration that

Explanation of symbols:

- Ⓜ = reel-to-reel stereo tape
- Ⓢ = eight-track stereo cartridge
- Ⓒ = stereo cassette
- Ⓛ = quadraphonic disc
- Ⓡ = reel-to-reel quadraphonic tape
- Ⓢ = eight-track quadraphonic tape

Monophonic recordings are indicated by the symbol Ⓜ

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

allow one thing or another to break up right in front of you. Here, both things happen. The trouble, when it occurs, has almost entirely to do with the words. The boys obviously put some stock in lyrics; they mix their albums so one can hear them, and here they've printed them, hand-lettered, on the sleeve. But punches keep getting pulled, programs keep getting announced that aren't carried out. *Sign of the Times* makes a good enough start—"I'm a multi-media man, I scoop anything I can"—setting up a premise worth exploring, but then it just slides off sideways without landing a good punch. *Rockwriter*, meaning the types who review rock, sets up a juicy target, but the harpoon, flung casually, glances off harmlessly; the best lines they come up with are such as "His pen is mightier than the song" and "He is much too cool to sigh." (That last one isn't even true, is it?) You just can't keep letting them get away like that and still call yourself a word man. The other parts, though—the tunes, the arrangements, the solos, the harmonies—are all just short of dandy. And there is one song that's inordinately charming, *Heart on My Sleeve*, incorporating choice parts from reggae. There isn't enough, though, to make me like this one as much as I liked their earlier album, "Seeds." N.C.

JERRY GARCIA: Reflections. Jerry Garcia (vocals, guitar, keyboards, percussion); Phil Lesh (bass); Bob Weir (guitar); John Kahn (bass, keyboards); other musicians. *Might as Well; Mission in the Rain; They Love Each Other; I'll Take a Melody*; and four others. ROUND RX-LA565-G \$6.98, © RX-EA565-H \$7.98, © RX-CA565-H \$7.98.

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

This is as dry as the dust on the toys in the attic. Garcia seems to be saving his strength, and he's singing as if all songs had approximately the same words. In my darker moments I read it as a suggestion that he has caught something from all those anemic vocalists in the cowboy-rock bands who have been imitating him. The songs, mostly from Garcia and phantom Grateful Dead member Robert Hunter, aren't necessarily that bad, or at least they aren't that even, that uniformly low in profile. You can perhaps do a more animated kind of speculating on all this if you're familiar with the older song, *Catfish John*, by Bob McDill and Allen Reynolds, especially if you're familiar with a superior version of it, such as Mac Wiseman's. It is a decently quirky little number when played the way it actually goes, but Garcia has treated it the way *Readers' Digest* editors treat prose, cutting the corners off the tune and self-indulgently wah-wahing away whatever traces of individuality might have survived his vocal. Hunter's *It Must Have Been the Roses* receives a similar treatment, or lack of treatment. All in all, it sounds as if Garcia would really rather have gone fishing than to have done all this. However, I'd still rather listen to it than go fishing myself—it's not that dull.

N.C.

AL GREEN: Full of Fire (see Best of the Month, page 85)

LED ZEPPELIN: Presence. Led Zeppelin (vocals and instrumentals). *Achilles Last Stand; For Your Life; Royal Orleans; Nobody's Fault but Mine*; and three others. SWAN SONG

"blithe spirits make the best company..."



ABC Records

Jimmy Buffett: Lovably Unique, Uniquely Lovable

I WOULD imagine that one of the nicest things about being Jimmy Buffett is not having any Image Problem. He seems quite content to go his own way, doing pretty much what he pleases, on and off records. That what he does pleases so many, so often, so much is pleasant testimony to the fact that blithe spirits do make the best company. There is certainly pleasure aplenty in that company in "Havaña [sic] Daydreamin'," his latest disc for ABC/Dunhill.

I confess that I find it hard to resist anyone who spends so little time trying to impress me, who seemingly cares no more for the world's opinion than does the hero of his *My Head Hurts, My Feet Stink and I Don't Love Jesus*. It is the tale of a boozy reveler with a hangover so horrific that The End Seems Near—but he's nevertheless ready to give it another try next weekend. Buffett handles the role with all the raspy authenticity of a chicken-shack *bon vivant* leaning across the oil-cloth of a kitchen-table confessional, unshaven, unwashed, and unrepentant. Another example of this out-front candor is the ramshackle, dusty pathos of *Woman Goin' Crazy on Caroline Street*. It's about one of those Blanche du Bois types one can find in almost any bar, the ghostlike aura of once splendid good looks still hovering about her, drinking too much and talking too much and flirting

with a desperate, lonely urgency. It is a very sad song and a very moving one, but Buffett doesn't allow it to become stagey or melodramatic, balancing along the razor edge of a lyric that is half unblinking observation, half understanding compassion. He's writing about the world as he sees it, and at times it isn't a very pretty place.

But Buffett can celebrate the up side of life as well as the down—as in the sweetly elegiac *The Captain and the Kid*, an autobiographical ballad, radiating sunlit grace and tenderness, about his own warm relationship with his grandfather, a sailor who passed on his love of the sea and a sense of its mystical pull for those who journey upon it. Or, again, there is *This Hotel Room*, Steve Goodman's hilarious inventory of the mechanical conveniences—from TV to the "Magic Fingers" in the mattress—that are inadequate substitutes for homelier comforts.

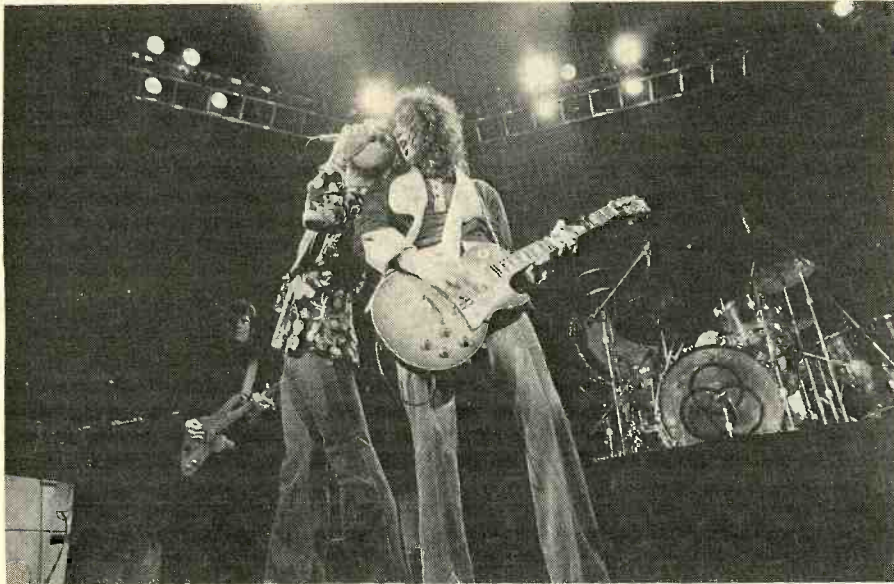
Perhaps the best here is the title song, *Havaña Daydreamin'*, an ambiguous trip into B. Traven (you remember him—*Treasure of the Sierra Madre, Death Ship*) territory. The story of a mystery man, apparently a Cuban exile, waiting—waiting—to contact some equally mysterious person who will pay him a large amount of money to do . . . what? Go back to Cuba to form yet another revolutionary army? To commit some sort of terrorist act? One is not quite sure, but the song, the lyrics, and the performance all have that kind of slumbering—daydreaming—menace under the blinding Caribbean sun that Traven, and Graham Greene as well, slipped so credibly between the lines of their novels.

THERE are a few Buffett bagatelles too—*Clichés*, for example, a frumpy little song with practically no entertainment value beyond Buffett's performance of it; the one-joke-strung-out-too-long called *Something So Feminine About a Mandolin*; and the ambitious but grossly overproduced *Big Rig*. This last is not by Buffett, by the way, which may explain why it sounds so effortful and chart-straining, huffing and puffing like a winded Claude Akins. In effect, he stops being Jimmy Buffett—and what a mistake that is!

When he is being Jimmy Buffett he is an enormously ingratiating entertainer who can amuse and touch and gently lead his listeners through his ideas and his feelings. What's important about him is his total lack of self-importance; he needs an Image about as badly as Tatum O'Neal needs a face lift. That in itself is enough to make anyone lovably unique and uniquely lovable on today's music scene.

—Peter Reilly

JIMMY BUFFETT: Havaña Daydreamin'. Jimmy Buffett (vocals and guitar); orchestra. *Woman Goin' Crazy on Caroline Street; My Head Hurts, My Feet Stink and I Don't Love Jesus; The Captain and the Kid; Big Rig; Defying Gravity; Havaña Daydreamin'; Clichés; Something So Feminine About a Mandolin; Kick It in Second Wind; This Hotel Room.* ABC ABCD-914 \$6.98, © 8022-914H \$7.98, © 5022-914H \$7.98.



Svan Song Records

LED ZEPPELIN

An old-line, chugging hard-rock band with personality

SS 8416 \$6.98, © TP-8416 \$7.98, © CS-8416 \$7.98.

Performance: **Variable**
Recording: **Good**

A few years ago, I had reason to believe Led Zeppelin might be the solution to the crab-grass problem—which, as everyone knows, is America's number one problem in this Bicentennial year, easily outranking the heartbreak of psoriasis. I was doing research on the effect of music on houseplants, and the shrinking, gnarling, turning-ugly rate of my "hard-rock-listening" plants had me dreaming and scheming, I can tell you. But it turned out it was Vanilla Fudge, not Led Zeppelin, that was killing the lion's share of the plants, and now they tell me it was me, not the music, the plants were responding to, anyway.

Nevertheless, this was and still is one of your old-line, ponderous, *chugging* hard-rock bands, and, in view of the fact that hundreds of bands have tried to make that kind of sound, it seems rather extraordinary that Led Zeppelin has such a definite sound of its own. That's tribute to Robert Plant and Jimmy Page, I suppose; they do the writing and provide the two main sounds, so it must be they who keep a force of personality coming through. It comes through again here, in another album that seems to me—as their albums usually do—uneven. The worst of it may be *Candy Store Rock*, which sounds at most like an inane tribute to Gene Vincent, but then *Achilles Last Stand* surely does go on a lot. *For Your Life* and *Nobody's Fault but Mine*, though, have that good, old-time Led Zep crunch to them, reminding me that a lot of us are quite fond of this band in spite of ourselves. N.C.

McKENDREE SPRING: *Too Young to Feel This Old*. McKendree Spring (vocals and instrumentals); Warren Bernhardt (keyboards). *Too Young to Feel This Old*; *I'm in Love*; *(She's a Housewife) No More Rock 'n' Roll*; *Take It from the Heart*; *Clown*; and five others. PYE 12124 \$6.98.

Performance: **Split personality**
Recording: **Very good**

This contains a couple of almosts, a smatter-

ing of if-only's and several don't-call-us-we'll-call-you's. The trouble seems to be that McKendree Spring imposes a higher standard on itself in the playing of music than it does in the writing or choosing of it. There's a degree of musicianly dryness, cases where the chord patterns are interesting enough but the melodies are not, and that sort of thing, and many of the lyrics seem to patronize the TV-addicted (not into words, man) beginning teenager. One of the almosts is *(She's a Housewife) No More Rock 'n' Roll*, by Clifford T. Ward, which is almost touchingly empathetic (coming from a man) but in the end fears to go beyond what we all already knew. The playing is fairly clean and clear and as sprightly as these tunes will allow; the violins and violas of Michael Dreyfuss are integrated, not tacked on the way fiddling usually is with rock groups, and style is not one of McKendree's problems. But it seems to me that the people who would attend to such subtleties would be put off by songs that don't say anything. N.C.

MELBA MOORE: *This Is It*. Melba Moore (vocals); orchestra. *Free*; *One Less Morning*; *Lean on Me*; *Brand New*; *Blood Red Roses*; and four others. BUDDAH BDS 5657 \$6.98, © 8320-5657 H \$7.98, © 5320-5657 \$7.98.

Performance: **Strained**
Recording: **Good**

It's been five years or so since Melba Moore broke through as the ingenue lead in "Purlie." Stardom seemed certain for a while there, but through a series of managerial miscalculations, a premature arterial hardening of style (she began to look, act, and sing like a fortyish Vegas veteran almost immediately after she left the show), and garish overproduction of her recordings, her TV spots, and her club dates, she seems to have drifted into that peculiar limbo of being an occasional "guest" on the tube and a "star" at second-class night clubs. Her records have always been poorly done—the wrong repertoire, blasting vocal shrieks that seem to be intended as frenzied excitement, an inability to get down to the meaning of her material, and, of course, that same insensitive overproduction that mars her every appearance. This newest release is yet another attempt to dazzle, but it

does that about as effectively as an old pair of sequined jeans and is as strained as the second try of a high-wire walker. The arrangements and conducting by Van McCoy only add to the air of disaster. P.R.

ELLIOTT MURPHY: *Night Lights*. Elliott Murphy (vocals and guitar); other musicians. *Diamonds by the Yard*; *Deco Dance*; *Rich Girl*; *Lady Stilletto*; *Isadora's Dancers*; and four others. RCA APL1-1318 \$6.98, © APS1-1318 \$7.98, © APK1-1318 \$7.98.

Performance: **Affected**
Recording: **Good**

This is, without a doubt, a perfectly terrible album. Elliott Murphy's lyrics sound as if they'd been breaded in old *Vogue* magazines and then deep-fried in the social oil of one of the parties thrown by the record-biz Smart Set. His performances have all the grisly panache of Lou Reed doing a Dylan imitation and his songs are thick with a muddy romanticism that sounds like a Klassik Komix version of Scott Fitzgerald at his silliest. Such cardboard characters as the starlet who is hell-bent-for-destruction (*Deco Dance*) and the *Rich Girls* ("White fox delivers/A moment and an eyelash") seem to fascinate him.

Perhaps Murphy's masterpiece is *Lady Stilletto*, his ode to Patti Smith. "They say she's got no shame/And as she screams about some factory/Her eyes burn with Rimbeau's [sic] rage. . . ." She "writes with a stilletto in mind/She's got just a touch of Bonaparte/She's Jack the Ripper's kind/Her wounds are open for the sake of art. . . ." Pretty classy stuff, eh? All this album really needs is a cover photo of Marisa Berenson and a short appreciation of Murphy's work by, say, Gloria Swanson or Paul Lynde (y'know, one of those intellectual types) to make it *the* album of the year. P.R.

OUTLAWS: *Lady in Waiting*. Outlaws (vocals and instrumentals). *Prisoner*; *Breaker-Breaker*; *Stick Around for Rock & Roll*; *Freeborn Man*; *South Carolina*; and four others. ARISTA 4070 \$6.98, © 8301-4070H \$7.98, © 5301-4070H \$7.98.

Performance: **Good**
Recording: **Clean**

Good solos and solid ensemble playing mark the work of the Outlaws, a country-rock band with jazz overtones. The best track on this, their second album, is *Prisoner*, an interestingly constructed tune written by lead guitarist Billy Jones, which contains the fine tagline: "You'll be Madame Fortune, I'll be your prisoner." Set in a light jazz arrangement, *Prisoner* is given an exceptional performance by the band and features accomplished singing by Jones. If the rest of the material were as good as *Prisoner*, this would be an album to holler about. But it's perfectly respectable as it is. J.V.

PILOT: *January*. Pilot (vocals and instrumentals). *January*; *Love Is*; *Call Me 'Round*; *55° North 3° West*; *To You Alone*; *Do Me Good*; *Dear Artist*; and five others. EMI ST-11488 \$6.98, © 8XT-11488 \$7.98.

Performance: **Mixed**
Recording: **Good**

Being both a cat lover and an airplane buff, I was intrigued by this album's cover illustrations. The back cover, done in muted blues
(Continued on page 93)

The Bicentennial Corner

ALISTAIR COOKE, that indefatigably articulate journalist who is so adroit at explaining English life to Americans and American life to Englishmen, may well go down in the annals of letters, as well as of broadcasting, as the Great Clarifier of our age. Not only can he make plain the most complicated of plots on Masterpiece Theater, telescoping What Has Happened So Far in the episodes of the *Forsyte Saga* or *Upstairs, Downstairs* with an almost exasperatingly relaxed, urbane aplomb, but he is probably the only commentator in the business who could sum up the entire history and geography of the "U.S.A." in nineteen minutes and then, with the disarming tact that is his hallmark, do the same for the South—as almost a separate nation—in precisely the same amount of time. These exercises in instant yet insightful clarification bring the nature and problems of the still uneasily joined halves of our republic into better focus than many a laboriously compiled textbook on the topic could, and they account for the first two sides of an album called "Talk About America" just released on the Pye label.

But the two-disc set, based on chapters in the book *Alistair Cooke's America* published by Knopf, on Cooke's BBC broadcasts, and in part on his TV series *America*, has even more to offer. The second disc deals with a

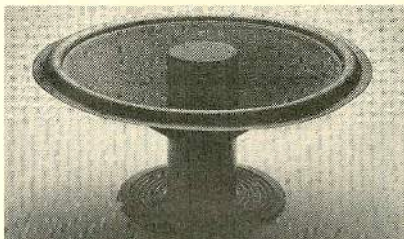


Alistair Cooke on America

visit Cooke made to Alcatraz in the prison's last days before it became a national park; with an attempt—earlier than Oswald's—on the life of John F. Kennedy; with a letter the author wrote to the Governor of Idaho which resulted in that state's yielding its uniqueness as the only one in the Union not acknowledging Washington's Birthday as a legal holiday; with a visit to a home "just above the smog line" to portray a gadget-happy, chauvinistic "new Californian" in a manner rivaling Aldous Huxley's satiric forays in the same territory. Cooke's voice, the tone of which twits even as it informs, is matched so well to the style of his writing, the pace is so swift, and the wit so keen and free of malice that the entire album is over before you're quite willing to permit the visitor on your turntable to sign off and take his departure. That is a reaction evoked by mighty few spoken-word recordings. "Talk About America" was a nominee for a Grammy Award this year. It didn't win, but it should have. —Paul Kresh

ALISTAIR COOKE: *Talk About America.* Alistair Cooke (reader). *The U.S.A.; The South; From "Letter from America"; Alcatraz; The New Californians; The Non-Assassination of John F. Kennedy; A Tiny Claim to Fame; A Ruined Woman.* PYE 2-701 two discs \$7.98.

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hearing it reminded me of the '49 Ford I drove in those days. Most of it is not really music in today's terms but history of some sort. The worst of it has you thinking "The Great Man Clears His Throat, Volume One" may be next. Well, whatever turns you on. N.C.

PRETTY THINGS: *Savage Eye*. Pretty Things (vocals and instrumentals). *Under the Volcano*; *My Song*; *Sad Eye*; *Remember That Boy*; *I'm Keeping*; and four others. SWAN SONG SS 8414 \$6.98, © TP 8414 \$7.98, © CS 8414 \$7.98.

Performance: **Fairly mindless**
Recording: **Fairly good**

Oh, this is a genuine rock band, all right. Just look at the pictures: two of the six boys pose

with their shirts off and two others with theirs unbuttoned. One even looks a little like Roger Daltrey. Fair enough; the band sounds a little like the Who—and almost exactly like a couple of dozen others that sound a little like the Who. It isn't terrible, just another round of teenager-views-his-world. You'll live through it, and so, like as not, will they. N.C.

LAVADA ROBERTS: *Lavada*. Lavada Roberts (vocals and piano); orchestra. *Neighbors*; *The Wizard*; *Watching You*; *Grin and Bear It*; *Into My Own*; and five others. PVE 12126 \$6.98.

Performance: **Stagey**
Recording: **Good**

Writer-composer Lavada Roberts seems to

have bitten off considerably more than she can comfortably chew here. Her songs lean heavily on the irony of it all, as in *Neighbors* and *Grin and Bear It*, both efforts filled more with a kind of reportorial malice than with satire. She also has a habit of pounding the devil out of the piano, so that it's often difficult to decipher what she's yowling about. It all comes to a noisy, chaotic head in the last track, *I'm Coming Out*, one of those emerging-as-a-human-being ditties, in which she makes more passionate racket than a Roumanian evangelist being evicted from her apartment on a morals charge. In other words, there's a lot of sound and fury, but not too much conviction. P.R.

BOZ SCAGGS: *Silk Degrees*. Boz Scaggs (vocals, guitar); instrumental accompaniment. *Lowdown*; *It's Over*; *What Do You Want the Girl to Do*; *Lido Shuffle*; *Jump Street*; *What Can I Say*; and four others. COLUMBIA PC 33920 \$6.98, © PCA 33920 \$7.98, © PCT 33920 \$7.98.

Performance: **More like polyester**
Recording: **Very good**

Boz Scaggs is a talented vocalist. He knows jazz phrasing, and at his best he can create a sense of intimacy with the listener. At his least he can be ingratiating. But there's always something missing from his performances. He is skillful but unemotional, a fair actor rather than a singer. After hearing three Scaggs albums I'm not looking forward to a fourth. The present effort suffers from weak songwriting (his) and noisy, burdensome arrangements. Worst of all, he mauls a fine, delicate Allen Toussaint tune, *What Do You Want the Girl to Do*, by taking it at a pepped-up tempo.

Scaggs' admirers consider him "special." I find him clever rather than special, and I've always had the sneaking suspicion that he's trying to pull a fast one, to convince the listener that his performances have an artistic merit they don't in fact possess. Remember what Andy said to the Kingfish: "You always bamboozlin' me. Well, I am here to tell you that you have bammed your last boozle." J.V.

SILVER CONVENTION. Silver Convention (vocals and instrumentals). *Play Me Like a Yo-Yo*; *San Francisco Hustle*; *No No Joe*; *Thank You Mr. D.J.*; and five others. MIDLAND INTERNATIONAL BKL1-1369 \$6.98, © BKS1-1369 \$7.98, © BKK1-1369 \$7.98.

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

This is, I guess, a nice enough album for those who like to dance. *Get Up and Boogie* and *San Francisco Hustle* are intriguing enough to cajole even a few spavined movements out of me as I listened to it. There's no real musical interest here, but it's just fine for the limber amongst us. P.R.


ROSALIE SORRELS: *Always a Lady*. Rosalie Sorrels (vocals, guitar); Roma Baran (guitar); Jay Ungar (fiddle, mandolin); Tony Markellis (bass). *Mehitabel's Theme*; *Baby Rocking Medley*; *Song for David*; *Hey Little Girl*; *Apple of My Eye*; *The Moth*; and five others. PHILO 1029 \$5.98.

Performance: **Tough, touching**
Recording: **Adequate**

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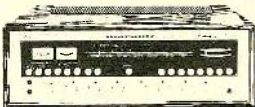
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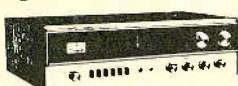
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and I go back a long way, but I hadn't made the connection between Mehitabel's philosophy and the latest stuff of Woman's Consciousness Raised until Rosalie Sorrels pointed it out in this album. Years ago, I think it was Sorrels who showed me the other side of this same coin of relevance, fooling me into thinking *Rock Salt and Nails* was as old as *Barbara Allen*, when in fact it had just been written by Bruce U. Utah Phillips. Today, she endures: a plain-speaking woman, a young grandmother, an old folkie, a connection between the old ballads salted away in Appalachia and this here Modern Life. Here, among other things, she pinpoints the social need (which has not died out) for "the hostile baby-rocking song," a useful substitute for belting the little beggar in the chops. Her tune for *Baby Tree* (words from Olive Wooly Burt), the first half of a substitute for one-two punchouts of babes, sounds every bit as old and mountain-inbred as the traditional refrain, "This is the day we give babies away," etc. Her singing still sounds amateurish—as, say, Jean Ritchie's still does—folk in the old sense of the word. It's her personality, how tough and humane and, one comes to believe, trustworthy she is, that seems to matter. The low-budget sound of the recording (clean, but the stereo imaging is vague) just seems to enhance all that. It isn't great music, but it is approachable and personal, and it has its own something. N.C.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

DONNA SUMMER: *Love to Love You Baby*. Donna Summer (vocals); orchestra. *Pandora's Box*; *Whispering Waves*; *Full of Emptiness*; *Need-a-Man Blues*; and two others. CASA-BLANCA OCLP 5003 \$6.98.

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

Love to Love You Baby, in which Donna Summer seems to be having the most strenuous sort of orgasm set to music, has been a big pop hit. It made a most indelible impression on me—and I'm sure on anyone else within hearing distance—when it came on the car radio one night as I was sitting in a MacDonald's parking lot eating a cheeseburger while Ms. Summer's cries and moans of ecstasy wafted out through the open window into the dark. On this album, *Love to Love You Baby* has been prolonged into a sixteen-minute cut that takes up all of side one, an exercise that tests not only credulity but patience. One can only wonder how long it took her to recover for side two.

Thankfully she does recover, and let me be among the first to break the good news that Donna Summer is a very, very fine performer indeed. If aural sex was the only way to bring her to our attention, then so be it, but the real point is that she is the possessor of a large, well controlled, stylishly flexible voice that can create and maintain mood and communicates wonderfully well. She does a really bang-up job (sorry about that) on *Whispering Waves*, sung in a high, wistful soprano that is as moving as it is lovely to listen to. In *Pandora's Box*, she shifts gears effortlessly into a gospel-blues style that is full of vitality and urgency.

Her next album should be the test. On that one, all of the snickering will be a thing of the past and we'll have a chance, perhaps, to enjoy her in material that she can give herself to without self-exploitation. She's an artist who


just might be dynamite. Okay, let's all join hands and make a wish. P.R.

WINGS: *Wings at the Speed of Sound*. Paul McCartney (vocals, bass, keyboards); Denny Laine (vocals, guitar); Jimmy McCulloch (vocals, guitar); Joe English (drums, vocals); Linda McCartney (vocals, keyboards). *Let 'Em In*; *The Note You Never Wrote*; *Silly Love Songs*; *San Ferry Anne*; *Warm and Beautiful*; *Beware My Love*; and five others. CAPITOL SW-11525 \$6.98, © 8XW-11525 \$7.98, © 4XW-11525 \$7.98.

Performance: **Tricky**
Recording: **Excellent**

Here is an album of occasionally brilliant nonsense presided over by a master of dazzle.

With one exception, the material is weak and Paul McCartney's vocals are lazy or self-indulgent. Yet, somehow, the thing is almost marvelous. The opening cut, *Let 'Em In*, is a pointless tune with lyrics that must have taken Paul about two minutes to write (they include a reference to Phil and Don Everly, from whom Lennon and McCartney got many of their ideas about vocal harmony) and an arrangement featuring a razz-ma-tazz horn section. The presentation is designed to be charmingly amateurish, with just enough mystery about it to tantalize you. *Beware My Love* is an excuse for some high-toned blues hollering, as was *Oh! Darling* on the Beatles' "Abbey Road" album. *The Note You Never Wrote*, the only standout tune on the album, could have been sensational if Paul had sung



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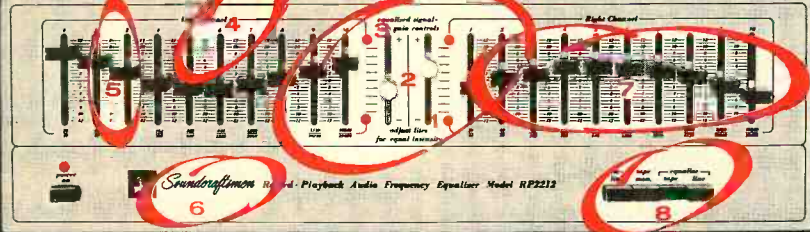
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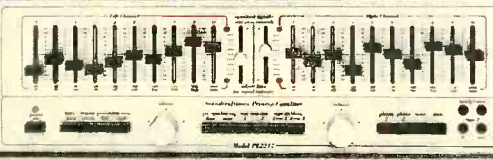


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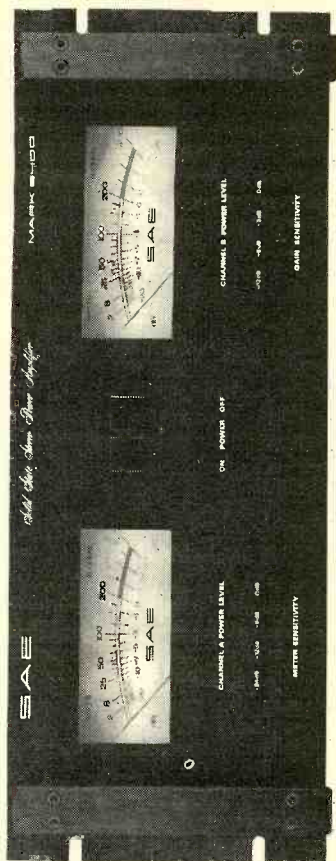
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it, but he inexplicably assigns the vocal to group member Denny Laine.

Why, then—since Paul is merely rewriting his inferior later-period Beatles material and singing songs not suited to his voice—why is the album *almost* marvelous? Because, Beatle mystique aside, McCartney is a jim-dandy arranger and orchestrator. He is the only one of the ex-Beatles to possess such skills, and he can rely upon them when his songwriting lags. You may have heard all this before, and it was 'way better the first time around, but the McCartney magic still works. J.V.

JOHNNY WINTER: *Captured Live!* Johnny Winter (vocals and guitar); orchestra. *Bony Moronie*; *Roll with Me*; *It's All Over Now*; and three others. BLUE SKY PZ 33944 \$6.98, © PZA 33944 \$7.98, © PZT 33944 \$7.98.

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

Johnny Winter's live performances here actually do capture some of the tremendous amount of excitement he can whip up when he's in the mood. He's definitely in the mood in both *Bony Moronie* and *Sweet Papa John*, where he brings himself and his audience to such a wired-up pitch that the only possible encore would probably be self-immolation. Fine, gutsy, exciting stuff—for what it is. But what it is, let-it-all-hang-out frenzy, is yesterday's roses. The times have changed but Winter refuses to. The result is a very dated, yet often entertaining, album. P.R.

BILL WYMAN: *Stone Alone* (see Best of the Month, page 86)

COLLECTIONS

THIS IS REGGAE MUSIC, VOLUME 2. George Dekker: *Time Hard*. Peacemakers: *Run Come Sharp*. Scotty and Lorna Bennett: *Skank in Bed*. Augustus Pablo: *King Tubby Meets the Rockers Uptown*. Arthur Louis: *Knockin' on Heaven's Door*. Burning Spear: *Marcus Garvey*. And four others. ISLAND ILPS 9327 \$6.98.

Performance: **Variable**
 Recording: **Not fancy, not bad**

The delightful musical culture of Jamaica as expressed through reggae is represented by ten different artists on this sampler album. Unsurprisingly, it is wildly variable in quality. George Dekker's *Time Hard*, the Peacemakers' *Run Come Sharp*, Scotty and Lorna Bennett's *Skank in Bed*, and Burning Spear's *Marcus Garvey* are the best tracks. *Time Hard* complains "Every day things are getting worse," but sets the protest against a pixie arrangement; it's a pleasing, slightly puzzling study in contrasts. *Run Come Sharp*, sung in a thick island accent, is about a lively party and recalls the Maytal's *Sweet and Dandy* from the soundtrack album of *The Harder They Come*—which is still the definitive collection of reggae. *Skank in Bed*, also heavy on the accent, is loaded with josh and bluster and fun. *Marcus Garvey* is based on the preachings of that Twenties advocate of black pride about whom history is still confused: was he martyr and prophet, a well-meaning loony, or a con man?

The other six selections are no great shakes. The Heptones' *Country Boy* is a fair variation on the Slickers' great *Johnny Too Bad*; Rudie Mowatt's *Love You, Baby* and Third World's *Freedom Song* are undistin-

guished; Augustus Pablo's *King Tubby Meets the Rockers Uptown* is a mediocre instrumental despite an intriguing title; Arthur Louis' slightly rewritten version of Bob Dylan's wheezer *Knockin' on Heaven's Door* is still another variation on the theme of *Johnny Too Bad*; and Desi Young's *I Don't Know Why I Love You*, an early Stevie Wonder tune (also recently revived by the Stones) is a surprisingly poor song. All in all, however, this is a moderately entertaining album. J.V.

SPOKEN WORD



GOON SHOW CLASSICS, VOLUME 2. Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe, Spike Milligan (comedians); A. E. Matthews (guest); Max Geldray (vocals); Ray Ellington Quartet (instrumentals); orchestra, Angela Morley cond. *The Jet-Propelled Guided NAAFI*; *The Evils of Bushey Spon*; *All God's Chillun Got Rhythm*; *Three-Handed Woman*; *Lulu's Back in Town*; *You'd Better Know It*. PYE 12122 \$6.98.

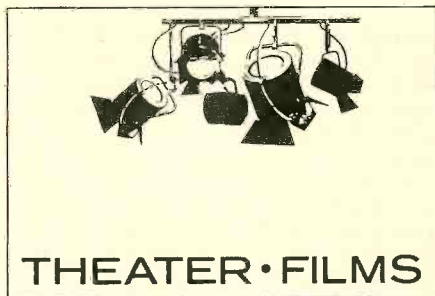
Performance: **Boisterously British**
 Recording: **Good**

The *Goon Show*, in case you've forgotten or have had other things on your mind, was a weekly comedy program on the BBC which held all Great Britain in thrall for years. Progeny of its style in television include the *Monty Python Show* and, to a certain extent, the once-popular *Laugh-In*. The formula for a typical *Goon Show* consisted of a satirical sketch or series of sketches that frequently disintegrated into *non sequiturs* and asides that were hilarious to listeners in England acquainted with the frames of reference, but remain rather puzzling to the rest of us. The antics of the cast, headed up by Peter Sellers, Spike Milligan, and Harry Secombe (Milligan turned out most of the scripts) were relieved by stretches of bland popular music of—in this case—the Fifties, which have dated rather more severely than the comedy routines.

Volume 2 offers two broadcasts first heard, respectively, in 1956 and 1958. The first deals with NAAFI, the British equivalent of the USO. The plot, if so strict a term can be applied to so loose a structure, concerns the launching by the British government of a guided NAAFI missile carrying 60,000 gallons of tea and twelve tons of buttered crumpets to inspire British servicemen on active duty. About half the jokes in this one (responded to with astonishingly un-English outright guffaws from the studio audience) were comprehensible to this New Yorker. Side two, dealing with a proposed lamp post for a town in the hinterlands called Bushey Spon, makes merry with provincial politics. It is a bit easier for the American mind to grasp, but much of this one, too, went by me. For consolation, in *The Jet-Propelled Guided NAAFI* Mr. Sellers does his celebrated Indian accent in a scene that is somehow rung in during a worldwide

search for fresh tea sources. I am still bemused by a reference to a mince-spy covered in mince (mints?); I hope to figure it out before Volume 3 arrives on the market. P.K.

NATIONAL LAMPOON: *Goodbye Pop, 1952-1976* (see Best of the Month, page 84)



THEATER • FILMS

BERNARD HERRMANN: *Psycho*. Complete motion-picture score. National Philharmonic Orchestra, Bernard Herrmann cond. UNICORN RHS 336 \$7.98.

Performance: **Atmospheric**
Recording: **Excellent**

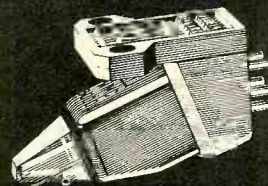
The passage of time seems to bring into sharper focus the difference between the film scores of Bernard Herrmann and those of other Hollywood composers. Although not a great melodist, Herrmann was a master at calling into play the tones and timbres necessary to cast the right mood over a movie episode. He was always experimenting with new ways to heighten the drama of a scene by musical means. Often his scores catch the psychological mood of a story so well that you can recognize the movie—even the scene it was meant to underline—just from hearing the music. He never was content to cover a soundtrack with musical “wallpaper” or to pile one effect on another to beat an audience into submission by sheer excess.

By the time he wrote the score for Hitchcock’s *Psycho*, Herrmann had been doing the music for Hitchcock movies for five years. *Psycho*, with its brutal story of a bloody murder in a motel shower, was done in black and white, and Herrmann chose to score it for strings alone to emphasize the starkness of the photography. The score enwraps the action in dense and gloomy melodramatic passages, enhances the eeriness of the atmosphere, and adds to the sense of something primitive, tribal, and dangerous set loose in the world by the arresting sharp strokes on the strings that occur during the murder scene and in the climactic moments of the crime’s unmasking.

The music has been recorded before, but shortly before he died last year the composer made this album of the entire score. This was perhaps overdoing it. Herrmann was a composer more resourceful in finding ways to make music work in a movie than in composing the sort of full-fledged score that stands on its own. The big moments of *Psycho* remain hair-raisingly effective, but for long stretches it is just amorphous atmospheric stuff when minus the movie action it was meant to reinforce. As complete movie scores go, however, this one holds up better than most, and the playing by the National Philharmonic is sensational. P.K.

(Continued on page 99)

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“... his defense was to savage dopey lyrics with buffoonery ...”



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The Complete Fats Waller

RCA's current reissue program is centered on the revived Bluebird label, which originally began back in the Depression era as a low-price vehicle for country blues and became a prime label for both jazz and dance bands. It ended its first incarnation in 1946; by the Fifties it was serving as a children's record label. Now brought back to something like its original intent by Frank Driggs, who is in charge of the new program, the Bluebird logo will in some cases appear on material from RCA's Vintage reissue program of the Sixties. One of the most tantalizing items in the Bluebird series is the project titled "The Complete Fats Waller."

Thomas "Fats" Waller (1904-1943) made something like four hundred recordings for RCA during his career. This first package in the ambitious program to release all of the Waller material in RCA's vaults presents the terrific "stride" pianist and carousing entertainer in 1934-1935, when the popularity derived from his CBS radio show got him an exclusive Victor contract. Waller had spent the previous twelve years as a songwriter, sideman, contributor to black musicals presented in elegant Harlem night clubs, and a touring vaudevillian.

The musical difference between his dozen struggling years and the nine years left to him before his early death was that in the latter period he concentrated more on being an entertainer, since that was what the public wanted. His sound became more standardized, divid-

ed into about equal parts of clowning camaraderie and tight small-band swing. He remained a brilliant popular composer and a superb pianist, and his sparkling combos were consistently energetic and creative. But Fats' stardom—and it was no less than that—was based on his personality and his music, not on his music alone. By 1934 he had already written most of his greatest tunes—*Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Honeysuckle Rose*, *Black and Blue*, and *I've Got a Feeling I'm Falling*, to name only four. He had foolishly sold the copyrights to them in 1929 for a lump sum. In his new role as star entertainer he didn't need to promote his songwriting in order to make a living, so he became less prolific.

The charm and verve of the sides made after 1934 under the designation "Fats Waller & His Rhythm" are infectious. Guitarist Al Casey was a first-rate musician, along with reedman Eugene "Honeybear" Sedric; trumpeter Herman Autry was always dependable and resolute, and sometimes inspired. The embracing spirit of rowdy goodfellowship in the "Rhythm" sides makes them irresistible. There are tasty chunks of fine jazz, and Waller's spoken interpolations are often hilarious.

But there is also a good deal of fool's gold along with the true in these recordings. As mentioned, Waller was not as prolific a composer after 1934, and labels of that era were almost entirely dependent on music publishers for material. Publishers' agents—"song pluggers"—were like Fuller brush men, mak-

ing the rounds of labels and peddling whatever the front office wanted hawked. Much of the submitted material was, in a word, junk. Waller recorded his share. He had little or no control over the material he performed; his method of defense was to savage dopey lyrics with sometimes abrasive buffoonery in his vocals and spoken asides. It was a sure sign when Waller overacted on a tune that he didn't like it.

In this first Waller package, however, there are few out-and-out duds and many fine nuggets. *A Porter's Love Song to a Chambermaid* has music by James P. Johnson, Waller's mentor and patron, and lyrics by Andy Razaf, who was also Waller's principal collaborator. *Don't Let It Bother You* and the absolutely delightful *Have a Little Dream on Me* are period pieces from the Thirties that battled Depression reality with brave and endearing optimism. *Dream Man*, *I'm Growing Fonder of You*, *I Believe in Miracles*, and the wonderful *Breakin' the Ice* all deal with innocence, which is why Waller—who, for all his thirty-nine years, was a soul of teardrop-pure innocence bulkily wrapped in blustering sensuality—handles them relatively gently. *Mandy*, by Irving Berlin, gets a rough and ready treatment which surely would have perplexed that lady, with Autrey playing growl-mute choruses suggesting that the wedding the song talks about is likely to be a rather pagan ceremony. As Waller goes into his piano chorus he yells, "Awwwww, the ticklin's so terrific—stop it, now!" But he doesn't stop it, which is our good fortune.

ALL in all, this first package in the Waller reissue project is most welcome, and it is great fun. The second volume, due to be released next fall, will contain all his piano solos, most of which were made in 1929, including the astonishing *Handful of Keys* and *Numb Fumblin'*. I heartily recommend this current set for an appreciation of Fats as performer, and I suggest you pounce on the second set as soon as it comes out for the superb piano playing and composing it is bound to contain. In his own words—though he didn't know he was describing himself—Fats Waller was "that fine stuff that your dreams is made of."
—Joel Vance

FATS WALLER: *The Complete Fats Waller, Volume 1, 1934-1935.* Fats Waller (piano, vocals, organ); other instrumentalists. *A Porter's Love Song to a Chambermaid; Do Me a Favor; Don't Let It Bother You; Have a Little Dream on Me; Serenade for a Wealthy Widow; Mandy; Honeysuckle Rose; You're Not the Only Oyster in the Stew; Dream Man; I'm Growing Fonder of You; Breakin' the Ice; I Believe in Miracles; I Wish I Were Twins; Armful of Sweetness; Georgia May; Then I'll Be Tired of You; How Can You Face Me; Sweetie Pie; Let's Pretend There's a Moon; Believe It Beloved; It Isn't Love; I'm a Hundred Per Cent for You; Baby Brown; Night Wind; Because of Once Upon a Time; You Fit into the Picture; Louisiana Fairy Tale; I Ain't Got Nobody; Whose Honey Are You.* BLUEBIRD © AXM2-5511 two discs \$7.98.

JAZZ



KENNY BARRON: *Lucifer*. Kenny Barron (keyboards, cowbell); Charles Sullivan (trumpet); Bill Barron (soprano saxophone); James Spaulding (alto saxophone, bass flute); Carlos Alomar (guitars); Chris White (electric bass); Billy Hart (drums). *Hellbound; Spirits; Oleo*; and three others. MUSE MR 5070 \$6.98.

Performance: **Alternating current**
Recording: **Very good**

Kenny Barron has begun to tinker with electronic keyboards, but if I understand the notes to this album correctly, he has ambivalent feelings about going electric. I hope it's just a passing fancy. The acoustical pianist who translates well into the electronic language has yet to be found. Or is it that an electronic keyboard with character has yet to be found? Whatever it is, there ain't nothin' like the real thing, and, fortunately, we do get some of that here. *Ethereally Yours*, a brooding duet featuring Kenny Barron on acoustic piano and James Spaulding on bass flute, is the highlight of side one, despite the very fine soprano work by the leader's brother (Bill) on *Spirits*. *Hellbound* is a trio number performed by Kenny Barron via multitracking; combining acoustic and electrical keyboards, it very graphically illustrates the limits of the latter, but the result is nevertheless quite listenable. Bubbling over a four-note figure, the Barron brothers acoustically cook through *Lucifer*, the title selection, leading up to the five minutes and three seconds that—in the form of Sonny Rollins' *Oleo*—make this an album you simply owe it to yourself to hear. *Oleo* is Kenny Barron racing unaccompanied across the keys of an acoustic piano, reminding us of Bud Powell, nodding in the direction of Mal Waldron, and reaching the end of the record long before we want him to. I hope we hear a whole album of solo work by Barron, and I hope its producers look to ECM for technical inspiration. C.A.

MARION BROWN: *Afternoon of a Georgia Faun*. Marion Brown (alto saxophone, zomari, percussion); Anthony Braxton, Bennie Maupin (reeds, flutes, percussion); Chick Corea (piano, percussion); Andrew Cyrille (percussion); others. *Afternoon of a Georgia Faun; Djinji's Corner*. ECM 1004 \$6.98.

Performance: **For the head**
Recording: **Excellent**

Marion Brown was active in New York's avant-garde jazz underground movement of the mid-Sixties. He recorded for the Impulse label with Archie Shepp and John Coltrane during that time, and he has had several albums of his own since this one was recorded six years ago. With Anthony Braxton, Bennie Maupin, Chick Corea, and Andrew Cyrille in the lineup, the cover promises a spectacular treat within, but there's actually less than meets the eye in this case. Banging, scratch-

ing, moaning, and whooping characterizes the two sides as Marion Brown and his friends—including several admitted nonmusicians—engage in a mostly percussive free-for-all sufficiently unorthodox to delight any ISCM audience of the Sixties. This, however, is no longer the Sixties; even then, the sort of thing we hear here bordered on the pretentious, and now it has almost become old hat. Though this album does not reflect it, Marion Brown is a musician of considerable talent, and it is only a matter of time before he receives wide recognition. C.A.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

DUKE ELLINGTON: *The Afro-Eurasian Eclipse*. Duke Ellington and His Orchestra.

Chinoiserie; Didjeridoo; Afrique; Acht O'Clock Rock; Gong; Tang; True; Hard Way. FANTASY F-9498 \$6.98.

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

Among Duke Ellington's considerable talents was his way with words, and among his many attributes was a keen sense of humor, both of which are brilliantly displayed in his spoken introduction to this remarkable eight-part suite recorded in 1971. Just for whom the recording was originally made—Ellington, the original label-hopper, was at it again in 1971—is not explained in Stanley Dance's otherwise informative notes, but the important thing is, of course, that it was made, and it is heartening to know that, vast as the library of issued

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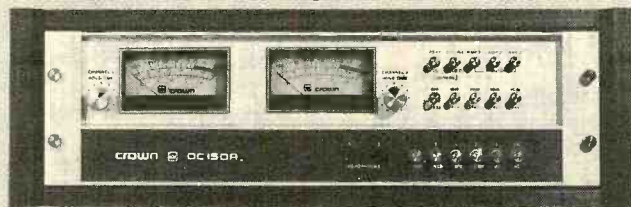
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Ellington material is, there still remains a great deal to come.

Jazz suites and other extended works written in the idiom are fairly commonplace today, but the concept started with Ellington. *The Afro-Eurasian Eclipse* is but one in a long series of multi-part compositions that includes *Deep South Suite*, *Harlem*, *The Perfume Suite*, *The Liberian Suite*, and the famous *Black*, *Brown and Beige*, none of which could be imagined in performances by any other orchestra than Duke's own. Ellington did not write for instruments alone, he wrote for individual musicians, and so gradual were the changes in its personnel over fifty years that the Ellington Orchestra could change with the times without ever losing its stamp of individuality. Most members of this 1971 orchestra were relatively recent additions to Duke's band, but baritone saxophonist Harry Carney had come aboard in 1926, trumpeter Cootie Williams had originally replaced Buster Miles in 1929, Russell Procope had been in the reed section since 1945, and tenor man Paul Gonsalves' association dated back twenty-one years.

Personalities within the orchestra so lent their own character to its overall sound that it was hard to imagine their absence, but Duke was always able to come up with a satisfactory replacement, like Norris Turney, who here has taken over for the then recently deceased Johnny Hodges. I suppose the fact that Hodges was still around when Turney joined the band made the transition easier, but the similarity between the two is nevertheless remarkable, especially on *Hard Way*.

Like many of Ellington's extended works, *The Afro-Eurasian Eclipse* is a tone poem inspired by peoples and cultures he encountered during the course of his many travels; it jumps geographically from Australia to Africa, soaring smoothly and propulsively with many happy landings along the way. Where the album should ultimately land is, of course, on your record shelf. C.A.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BILL EVANS: *Symbiosis*. Bill Evans (keyboards); Eddie Gomez (bass); Marty Morell (drums); orchestra, Claus Ogerman cond. MPS/BASF MC 22094 \$6.98.

Performance: **Symbiotic**
Recording: **Excellent**

Symbiosis, a work for piano trio (piano, bass, and drums, that is) and orchestra, was written by German-born Claus Ogerman specifically (I assume) for Bill Evans. It was recorded over two years ago, and the original release, so echoed up that Ogerman described it as sounding like "bad Mantovani," was recalled after a threatened lawsuit by the artists. Good for them, and, as it turns out, good for us too.

Bill Evans is simply one of the finest, most consistently interesting pianists around. Whether he goes it alone, with his rhythm men Gomez and Morell, or within an orchestral frame such as the thirty-five pieces assembled for this recording, his piano inventions are dazzling, personal statements that command and hold the attention of the most sophisticated listener. Ogerman's work gives Evans plenty of room for improvisation and reflects the composer's affinity for the music of Gil as well as Bill Evans. The orchestra includes numerous artists with successful careers of their own, but their roles here are

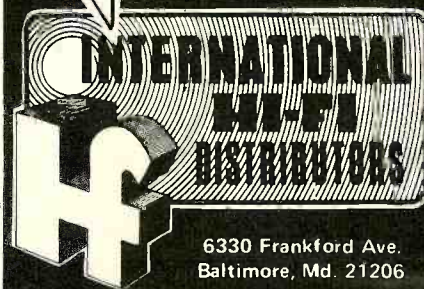
(Continued on page 103)

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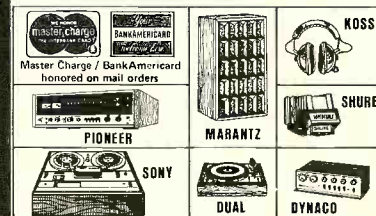
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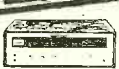


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JULY 1976

those of renderers, and the quality of what they had to render is such that I'm sure nobody minded taking a back seat. Symbiosis comes from the Greek and denotes a living together—it's certainly an appropriate title for this collaboration. C.A.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

ELLA FITZGERALD/OSCAR PETERSON: *Ella and Oscar*. Ella Fitzgerald (vocals); Oscar Peterson (piano); Ray Brown (bass). *Mean to Me; April in Paris; Midnight Sun;* and six others. PABLO 2310-759 \$7.98, © S10-759 \$7.98.

Performance: **Superb**
Recording: **Excellent**

In my opinion, Norman Granz has gone overboard in recording Oscar Peterson, but this is an album I am very happy to add to my collection. Ella Fitzgerald made her first recording forty-one years ago with Chick Webb; she stayed with Decca for twenty years, then signed with Granz in 1955 (their association actually goes back to 1946, when Ella joined Jazz at the Philharmonic). There have been a few albums on other labels, some disastrous ("Brighten the Corner" on Capitol), some delightful ("Carnegie Hall 1973" on Columbia), but the bulk of Ella's output over the past twenty years has been on Granz's Verve label, and most of it has been fine. She looks like a schoolmarm these days, but Ella still swings, and, like Sarah Vaughan, she doesn't need a lot of musicians behind her to get across. In fact, side one of this set, which has her accompanied only by Peterson's piano (bassist Ray Brown—her former husband—is added on side two), has a wonderful intimacy about it, and, with all due respect to Brown's considerable talent, I would have preferred the entire album without bass. Peterson contributes some compelling solos, but I am more impressed with his accompaniments, which are simply excellent. The choice of material shows a lack of imagination, indicating that someone isn't aware of the fact that today's songwriters are turning out some excellent compositions just right for Ella's style, but that is a small complaint. C.A.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

DAVID SANCIOUS: *Transformation (The Speed of Love)*. David Sancious (keyboards, guitars, bells, vocals); Gerald Carboy (bass guitar, wind chimes); Ernest Carter (drums, percussion, vocals). *Transformation; Piktors Metamorphosis; Sky Church Hymn #9; The Play and Display of the Heart*. EPIC PE 33939 \$6.98, © PEA 33939 \$7.98.

Performance: **Exciting**
Recording: **Excellent**

When David Sancious' debut album reached my ears last year, I was impressed. Double that now. Still in his very early twenties (I believe he's twenty-two), Sancious is a first-generation synthesizer player, and a very exciting one. He also plays the acoustic keyboard with enviable dexterity and precision. The sound that characterized his first album is the sound we hear again here, with associates Gerald Carboy and Ernest Carter contributing in equally splendid fashion. How do I describe it? Well, it is the sound of King Crimson fully grown, an organ fugue by Bach ricocheting through the Carlsbad Caverns, the Vienna Choir Boys goosed by as many fingers. C.A.

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Choosing Sides

By Irving Kolodin



LATE, LATER, LAST BEETHOVEN

IN a time when it has become simple semantic habit to think of world political influence in terms of "powers" and "superpowers" it may not be entirely unreasonable to speak, when the subject is chamber-music proficiency, of quartets and superquartets. Almost all the string quartets that have attained sufficient reputation to record at all can compete with each other in the standard repertoire of Mozart and Haydn, of Schubert and Dvořák, plus much of Beethoven, Brahms, and others. Superiority on these lower slopes of the literature rests largely on temperamental affinity, stylistic awareness, and interpretive finesse, in addition to the kind of plain hard work that (all other considerations aside) has given, say, the Tokyo Quartet dominance in Mozart, the Melos Quartet leadership in Schubert.

There are, of course, some works among those mentioned above that can separate mature musical men from the still-aspiring boys. But there are also a particular few in the whole of the literature whose requirements put total fulfillment beyond the reach of all but the superquartets, Beethoven's Opp. 127, 130, 131, 132, and 135 being perhaps the best examples. The latest to run this five-part gauntlet in recordings and expose their credentials in all their nakedness are the Smetana Quartet of Prague (Supraphon 111 1151/4) and the Végħ Quartet (Telefunken 251113-T/1-4), whose origins are Hungarian.

The five works are usually referred to as the "late" quartets. The term is defensible, but still a little generalized. As the period of composition extended from 1824 almost to the month of Beethoven's death in 1827, so the breadth of compositional content, intellectual energy, and spiritual substance they embody defies any adequately inclusive terminology. For myself, I think of them not collectively as "late," but individually as late (E-flat), later (A Minor, B-flat, and C-sharp Minor), and last (F Major). In my view, Op. 127 in E-flat has more affinity with the works that preceded it (especially those of Opus 59) than with those that followed, and Op. 135 has only a dangling

connection with what Beethoven might have written thereafter but never did.

In their own determined way, Jiří Novák, Lubomír Koatecký, Milan Škampa, and Antonín Kohout, the foursome who together bear the name of Czechoslovakia's greatest composer, share not only a high sense of purpose but an abiding love for these Beethoven works. They are excellent craftsmen whose ensemble playing has been fired to the gloss of fine porcelain in a kiln whose only fuel is perspiration. They are, in every way, what the Germans mean by the praiseful word *Musikanten*—musical men who can be trusted to abide by all the canons of the musical faith, to give themselves wholly to the composer's purpose. Their performance of the E-flat Quartet has much to be said for it: fluid, enormously earnest playing which lets down only in the middle phase of the *Adagio*. Either they misconstrue what Beethoven meant by the tempo change from *Adagio* to *Andante con moto* by playing what follows almost at a jog, or else everyone else does—playing these passages as if they have a greater depth than that implied by the surface.

WHAT excludes the Smetana Quartet from the higher echelon of Beethoven players takes clearer form in their reading of the A Minor (the next chronologically, though not published until after the B-flat and the C-sharp Minor). It comes to light with the second theme of the first movement, the one that gives the attentive listener a sense that he has heard something like it somewhere before: he probably has, for it is an outgrowth of the "Pacem dona nobis" of the same composer's *Missa Solemnis*. Perhaps it is unreasonable to expect a quartet leader to have that specific likeness in his mind as he plays the A Minor Quartet and thus give the phrase a little extra thrust of meaning. But I do not think I am being unreasonable in expecting the leader of a quartet that aspires to high marks in the greatest works in its literature to have an appreciation of the intellectual substance of the B-flat Quartet's first movement.

It should be evident that a high sense of purpose and an abiding love for the music are not enough to insure a successful performance of these works. By the time the *Grosse Fuge* is reached (it is played in its proper, original place as the finale of the B-flat Quartet) the intellectual limitations of the Smetana Quartet are joined by some technical ones. In all, I get the impression that leader Novák and his associates have striven mightily to equal or surpass only what their immediate predecessors in Czechoslovakia were capable of doing in Beethoven. They are a little rustic in their musical culture, which is essentially intuitive rather than reflective, and they may be convinced that the *Grosse Fuge* cannot be played clearly and cleanly. That this issue has been resolved elsewhere in the world has apparently escaped their attention.

SÁNDOR VÉGH is another kind of musician, a poet on his instrument who divines things in Beethoven's music that cannot be put into words (a prime reason why these quartets are the treasures they are). The majestic, *maestoso* opening chords of the E-flat Quartet bear plentiful promise of what is to come, not only in the richness of the resonance based on the solid E-flat/B-flat double-stop in the deepest range of Paul Szabo's cello, but in the creeping ascent to the rhapsodic sixth measure which sends the work on its way. Note how each succeeding chord in the rising sequence is slightly prolonged, as though the leader were pondering just how much emphasis the next should have. What this means is that we are in the midst of an event taking place, rather than merely witnessing a performance so



THE VÉGH QUARTET: left to right, Végħ, Szabo, Janzer, and Zöldy

carefully rehearsed that every aspect of it sounds calculated and prearranged. I will be the first to agree that the very expectation of the unexpected has to be carefully prearranged, but Végħ holds the control of his group so tightly in hand that they must look to him for a possibly unpremeditated direction on every occasion, they must be ready to re-

"...works that separate musical men from still-aspiring boys"

spond as the mood moves him. The situation recalls the remark of another great Hungarian, Artur Nikisch, after he had become conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1889, a time when its standard was higher than that of any other orchestra in the world: "Their playing is so perfect, all I have to do is poetize."

Végh has a few more things to do than "poetize" in his supervision of these performances, but it is out of the imaginative impulse he provides that Sándor Zöldy (second violin), Georges Janzer (viola), and cellist Szabo evoke the hushed, reverential quality in the opening of the A Minor; the measured sense of importance in the next note (at the beginning of the B-flat) that is the essence of what is meant by "phrasing"; and the heaviness of heart that permeates the C-sharp Minor—until it is suddenly transformed into the lightest of feet for "the World's own dance," as Wagner called the allegro with which the work ends.

It is in the last of these moments that the Végh Quartet reaches the zenith of its accomplishment, for fast movements are by no means the most comfortable kind of music for them. The scherzo of the E-flat does not have quite the bite and sting it should; the *Alla Marcia* of the A Minor is less than *assai vivace*; and the *Grosse Fuge*, if better in all respects than the version by the Smetana group, is steadier in its grip on the episodes than on the fugal framework that supports them.

What all this means to me is that, just as there is a sequence of late, later, and last in the quartets, so there is a hierarchy of good, better, and best in the playing of them. Truly comprehending and compelling performances of the *Grosse Fuge*, for example, are not to be gotten from even the best of the "better" quartets: the Amadeus is too light, the Italian too brittle, the La Salle lacking in resonance, the Hungarian deficient in drive and vitality, the Fine Arts cautious where it should be assured. Even the version by the Berlin Philharmonic Strings under the direction of Herbert von Karajan is lacking in personality (the composer's). No, the compelling renditions are to be heard only from the *superquartets*, and there are only two of these, both American: the next-to-newest Juilliard and the one-and-only Guarneri. Whether the Cleveland is entitled to stand in this company I cannot say, for I have not yet heard its qualifications for admission to this most exclusive of clubs.

THERE remains still in Beethoven one challenge that not even the two superquartets have resolved to my satisfaction. When asked, near the end of his life, whether the B-flat was his greatest quartet, the composer replied: "Each in its own way. Art demands of us that we shall not stand still." No statement's truth was ever so totally sustained in action. In the F Major Quartet Beethoven's art was so far from standing still that even the superquartets have not yet caught up with it, and they tread, I find, rather heavily in its wake. The temptation remains to question the written evidence of his intent, to seek for a significance a "last" quartet should have—and supply it if it is lacking. To me, it was Beethoven's last and greatest joke, after invoking his tortured spirit to produce the sublime *Lento*, to rejoice his ailing body with the divine foolery of the "Muss es sein" riddle. I am still waiting for the *super superquartet* capable of playing late, later, and last Beethoven equally well.

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CLASSICAL DISCS AND TAPES

Reviewed by RICHARD FREED • DAVID HALL • GEORGE JELLINEK • PAUL KRESH
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ARGENTO: *To Be Sung upon the Water*. John Stewart (tenor); Charles Russo (clarinet, bass clarinet); Donald Hassard (piano). **ROREM: *King Midas*.** Sandra Walker (mezzo-soprano); John Stewart (tenor); Ann Schein (piano). DESTO DC-6443 \$6.98.

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

These are provocative works by two American composers, Dominick Argento and Ned Rorem, who know how to write for the singing voice—a gift not shared by many of their contemporaries. Argento's contribution is a sequence of eight "Barcarolles and Nocturnes for High Voice, Piano and Clarinet (or Bass Clarinet)." The texts, all by William Wordsworth, are in praise of nature, dealing with rivers, lakes, and seas. The title is Schubert's, to whom Argento pays tribute in subtle musical ways as well. There are plenty of interesting ideas here, though the verbal richness of some of Wordsworth's lines sometimes gets in the way of singability.

More fluent, for musical purposes, are the ten poems by Howard Moss which make up the Rorem cantata. The musical setting is done with the composer's oft-praised skill and sensitivity. One of the songs (*The Princess' Speech*) sounds exceptionally inspired to me. I cannot say that the cantata abounds in similar melodic felicities, however, and I am not impressed by Mr. Argento's essentially declamatory statements.

The performances, however, are praiseworthy. The singing of tenor John Stewart is warm, expressive, and projected with remarkable textual clarity. Sandra Walker is adequate, and the instrumentalists are excellent in their rewarding assignments. The sound is clear, the stereo in the Argento work is far-spread, but there is considerable surface noise on my review copy. *G.J.*

J. S. BACH: *Brandenburg Concertos (BWV 1046-1051)*. Virtuosi of England, Arthur Davison cond. EVERYMAN SRV 313/4 SD two discs \$7.96.

Performance: **Pithy**
Recording: **Clarion clear**

J. S. BACH: *Brandenburg Concertos (BWV 1046-1051)*. English Chamber Orchestra, Raymond Leppard cond. PHILIPS 6747 166 two discs \$13.96.

Performance: **Homogenized**
Recording: **Velvety**

Bach is indestructible. His music can be played on piano, harpsichord, mandolins, or kazoos, and it still comes off. In that respect, it takes real talent to ruin him, for his music *always* works. But there are degrees of working. The real problem with Bach is that the surface effect is magnificent whether or not we understand or even hear the inner detail. The inner detail, however, is Bach's thing, and it is up to the performer to judge how much of it should be brought out and just how much of it can be absorbed by the listener (Bach often gives more than can be taken in by anybody's ear).

Both of these recordings are excellent—the tempos are well chosen and they are technically superb. There is one difference, however, and it is a question of taste as to which one prefers. Raymond Leppard is an editor, and an excellent one. Through his efforts alone we are enjoying Cavalli's operas for the first time in several centuries. He makes no bones about the fact that he has edited them in terms of orchestration and rearranged the works to suit what he believes a modern audience is accustomed to. In many cases he is

right, but there are many listeners who have heard old music performed more "authentically" and prefer it that way. Leppard's tendency to edit comes out in this disc in that he chooses what we are to hear: His choice rests heavily on a silky string sound at the expense of the detail Bach has lavished on the other parts.

Davison, on the other hand, has by some miracle given all the parts equal footing so that we can hear them. This is accomplished by an individual articulation for each part and by careful if not bold balancing of the parts. The result is stunning; it is a thrill to hear, for example, the bizarre juxtaposition of hunting calls played by the horns with a layer of snarling oboes and busy strings ricocheting their motives back and forth in the first movement of the First Concerto. The sound is a pithy one, but all is audible, and you can do your own editing without a middleman. If then, your ears are capable of accepting the facts and putting them together, take Davison. But if your ears need a good editor, Leppard is your man. *S.L.*

BAKER: *Le Chat Qui Pêche*. Linda Anderson (soprano); Jamey Aebersold (alto and tenor saxophone); Dan Haerle (piano and electric piano); John Clayton (bass and electric bass); Charlie Craig (drums); Louisville Orchestra, Jorge Mester cond. **GOULD: *Symphonette No. 2*.** Louisville Orchestra, Jorge Mester cond. LOUISVILLE FIRST EDITION RECORDS LS-751 \$6.98.

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

I've always enjoyed Morton Gould's Latin-American Symphonette, and I have been curious about the three American Symphonettes that preceded it—curious in particular about the outer movements of the Symphonette No. 2, whose slow movement is the famous Pavane. Here is the entire work at last, all ten minutes of it, and if it failed to impress me it may well be that the performance is a little too self-consciously jazz-inflected; the Pavane here does not compare with the old recordings conducted by Arthur Fiedler and by Gould

Explanation of symbols:

- Ⓜ = reel-to-reel stereo tape
- Ⓢ = eight-track stereo cartridge
- Ⓒ = stereo cassette
- Ⓛ = quadrasonic disc
- Ⓡ = reel-to-reel quadrasonic tape
- Ⓟ = eight-track quadrasonic tape

Monophonic recordings are indicated by the symbol Ⓜ

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

himself—though we are assured in the annotative folder that it is “a first rate performance.” The notes are by David Baker, the composer of *Le Chat Qui Pêche*, a half-hour suite that calls for a soprano (vocalizing) and jazz quartet with the orchestra, and what he has written about his own work is so self-congratulatory that one proceeds with the greatest reluctance either to read or to listen. Like so much that is written about “serious” jazz and “Thirdstream” music, the notes are stuffy, pretentious, and not encumbered by too great a regard for the English language. Mr. Baker does not reveal the significance of his title (which presumably derives from the tiny street in Paris’ Latin Quarter, the Rue du Chat qui pêche, made famous in Elliot Paul’s *The Last Time I Saw Paris*); he does tell us he no longer feels it “possible to combine material of high ethnic content with sophisticated compositional techniques and arrive at a via-

ble synthesis,” and he allows as how one passage is “in effect a written improvisation in the best manner of Sonny Rollins and Charlie Parker replete with turns, shifting accents and dazzling double time runs.” (The annotation serves also as a review of both the work and the performance.) I was not dazzled. To my perhaps irremediably unsympathetic ear the whole business sounds like so many “stage band” clichés.

The Louisville series has given us so many really fascinating recordings, and Mr. Baker is held in such high regard as a pedagogue in jazz circles, that I would earnestly like to be able to respond more positively. But I can’t, and I only wish the entire disc had been devoted to Morton Gould’s symphonettes. *R.F.*

BEETHOVEN: String Quartets Nos. 12-16, Opp. 127, 130-132, and 135 (see Choosing Sides, page 104)

BEETHOVEN: Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 61. Isaac Stern (violin); New York Philharmonic, Daniel Barenboim cond. COLUMBIA □ MQ 33587 \$7.98, M 33587 \$6.98, © MT 33587 \$7.98.

Performance: **Amiable**
Recording: **Good**

Were it not for the exceptionally sympathetic collaboration of Barenboim and the New York Philharmonic, I could see little justification for Columbia’s replacing Stern’s still excellent Beethoven Concerto performance with Leonard Bernstein and the same orchestra, its fifteen years in the catalog notwithstanding. Though the sound of the four-channel pressing produces a pleasing and spacious “surround” ambiance, the music itself is not exactly a distinctive vehicle for quadrasonic playback.

In my opinion, Stern’s solo performance

The Bicentennial Corner



Defense Dept. Photo

Albany, New York, 1888: United States Marine Band, John Philip Sousa conducting

FIRST GLANCE at the contents of a Department of Defense (!) production called “Broad Stripes/Bright Stars” would lead one to believe that here is a dandy, fun collection of martial Americana adequately covering the two hundred years of the nation’s history. Well, parts of it are fun, much of it is enjoyable, and the performances of the bands of all four major armed services are certainly impressive in their pageantry.

But, having traversed the four sides of this collection, I must warn you that your reaction to it will depend on your attitudes toward the music and its authentic performance. I confess to being something of a puritan in such matters. Accordingly, my own reaction was extremely mixed. The first side, through the fife and drum stuff, I enjoyed—though some might take exception to the unauthentic use of harmonization for the fifes. But William Bil-

lings’ great *Chester* is a total disaster of malapropos harmonization, and I did not enjoy James Hewitt’s picturesque *Battle of Trenton* in cut form after having heard it in full.

There is some good choral singing by the Navy Sea Chanters in *Shenandoah* on side three, and I’m always glad to hear a spirited rendition of Grafulla’s *Washington Greys* march, which is done here by the U.S. Marine Band. Likewise, I enjoyed the Bagley and Fillmore hardy perennials with the Navy Band and the Army Band, respectively. On the other hand, I don’t care for the updating of Sousa’s famous *U.S. Field Artillery* march, not to mention the Hollywood treatment it is given, and the Navy Hymn, *Eternal Father*, is marred here by off-pitch solo singing.

In short, the things I like best in the album are those done in the most simple and straightforward way, without fancy new har-

monizations or tricky instrumental effects. *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* takes the prize for hokee treatment here, with *God Bless America* and *America the Beautiful* not too far behind.

I am sure there will be many who do not have my reservations about this album as a souvenir of the United States Bicentennial. I prefer my musical patriotism essentially straight and unadorned. Nevertheless, the production is splendid—the Department of Defense has never been particularly notable for doing things by halves—and it is unlikely that all the musical forces assembled here will have much occasion to be so collected together again. So, if you love a parade . . .

—David Hall

BROAD STRIPES/BRIGHT STARS. *Ruffles and Flourishes; Hail to the Chief; The Star-Spangled Banner; Yankee Doodle; The White Cockade; The World Turned Upside Down.* **Billings:** *Chester.* **Hewitt:** *The Battle of Trenton.* **Phile:** *Hail Columbia.* **Root:** *The Battle Cry of Freedom.* **Emmett:** *Dixie.* **Lambert:** *When Johnny Comes Marching Home; Long Time Ago; Shenandoah; Blow the Man Down.* **Grafulla:** *Washington Greys.* **Howe:** *The Battle Hymn of the Republic.* **Bagley:** *National Emblem.* **Fillmore:** *Americans We.* **Sousa:** *The Army Goes Rolling Along; The Stars and Stripes Forever.* **Dykes:** *Eternal Father; The Marines’ Hymn.* **Cohan:** *Over There; You’re a Grand Old Flag; Yankee Doodle Boy.* **Berlin:** *God Bless America.* **Zimmerman:** *Anchors Aweigh.* **Crawford:** *The Air Force Song.* **Boskerck:** *Semper Paratus.* **Gershwin:** *Strike Up the Band.* **Ward:** *America the Beautiful.* United States Army Band and Chorus, Col. Samuel R. Loboda cond.; United States Navy Band and Sea Chanters, Lt. Commander Ned E. Muffley cond.; United States Marine Band, Lt. Col. Jack T. Kline cond.; United States Air Force Band, Col. Arnauld T. Gabriel cond. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BICENTENNIAL EDITION 50-1776 two discs \$7.95 (available at Radio Shack stores throughout the U.S.).

throughout most of the first movement is rather dispassionate and altogether lacking in the lambency of tone and vitality of phrasing that have distinguished most of the *great* performances of this work (Grumiaux/Davis, Heifetz/Munch, Menuhin/Furtwängler, Szeryng/Thibaud). Only when he gets to the cadenza (Kreisler's) does Stern's playing begin to catch fire. Happily, from then on, through an exquisitely played slow movement and a delectably lilting rondo-finale, all is wine (Vienna vintage) and roses. Here too, Barenboim's conductorial teamwork is unerring.

A glance at the catalog shows that there is a recording of this music for all tastes, ranging from the most intense to the most lyrically relaxed. This one falls somewhere toward the latter end of the spectrum, and, for myself, I see no reason here either to change or to add to my current holdings. *D.H.*

RÉGINE CRESPIN:
in regal form
as Cassandra
and as Dido



San Francisco Opera Company

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BERLIOZ: *Les Troyens* (excerpts). Régine Crespin (soprano); Guy Chauvet (tenor); Gerard Dunan (tenor); Jane Berbié (soprano); others. Chorus and Orchestra of the Théâtre National de l'Opéra, Paris, Georges Prêtre cond. SERAPHIM S-60263 \$3.98.

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

About ten years ago, Angel released a two-disc set (S-3670) of highlights from *Les Troyens*. This single-disc reissue contains all that material with the exception of the Royal Hunt and Storm and Aeneas' final scene ("Inutiles regrets!"). All in all, we get more than fifty-four minutes of music including the ravishing love scene ("*Nuits d'ivresse*") and Dido's final farewell. Régine Crespin is the central figure here, and she is in absolutely regal form both as Cassandra in the first part of the tragedy and as Dido in the second. Her colleagues offer excellent support, the orchestral playing is expert, and the chorus sounds fine.

There is, of course, a very good complete recording of *Les Troyens* on Philips, but for those who do not find this awesome and per-

haps cumbersome (though undeniably beautiful) opera irresistible *in toto*, I recommend this well-recorded and attractively priced reissue very highly. I should also add that neither Cassandra nor Dido is interpreted in the complete set with Crespin's brand of sumptuous vocalism. *G.J.*

BOLLE: *Oleum Canis* (Oil of Dog). Neva Pilgrim (soprano); Jan Curtis (mezzo-soprano); Jerrold Siena (tenor); Donald Miller (bass); Richard Fithian (tenor); children's chorus; the Committee (male quartet); the New Hampshire Sinfonietta, James Bolle cond. SERENUS SRS 12060 \$6.98.

Performance: **Capable**
Recording: **Good**

James Bolle's *Oleum Canis* (Oil of Dog) is a brief two-act opera based on one of those cru-

clude a committee of righteous citizens, a chorus of children, and the Bings family to which has been added a "jolly" Aunt Mathilda. The "collage" of word-patterns recited and sung by the cast was intended to point up the hypocrisy and greed of the 1880's, which Bolle sees as the lesson of Bierce's satire. The result, however, comes across more as an anthology of period clichés than a libretto, a cantata stuffed with paraphrases and quotations more than an opera. The score, full of murky musical mockery and shuttling between the influences of Arnold Schoenberg and Benjamin Britten, is certainly not exciting enough in itself to relieve the opacity of a rather academic exercise in quotations and allusions.

On the record, Jerrold Siena is good in the role of Boffer as narrator, and the rest of the cast sing spiritedly under the composer's direction. The results of their efforts, however, are neither scary enough nor sufficiently scathing in either dramatic or musical terms to add up to a memorable experience. A text, some of which is performed and some of which isn't, is provided. *P.K.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BORODIN: *String Quartet No. 1, in A Major.* Borodin Quartet. ODYSSEY/MELODIYA Y 33827 \$3.98.

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

While it boasts neither the remarkable tunes nor the conciseness of Borodin's justly famous Second Quartet (in D Major), the First is possibly an even more substantial work. Surely it is broader in scope, and the actual writing is almost as polished. In any event, the work is a joy; it seems incredible that it is never programmed by our resident ensembles, and more incredible still that there has been no recording of it since the retirement of the old Westminster mono disc by the Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet. The Viennese players made a very strong case for this quartet; the Russians justify the name they have taken by making a stronger one still, and they benefit from more up-to-date sonic treatment (one of the finest recordings yet from Melodiya, in fact). Since Columbia has been generous enough to issue the recording on Odyssey instead of its full-price label (and to commission notes from the authoritative Boris Schwarz), I can't imagine what excuse there might be for denying oneself the very considerable pleasure this music affords. *R.F.*

BRAHMS: *Piano Concerto No. 2, in B-flat Major, Op. 83.* Bruno-Leonardo Gelber (piano); Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Rudolf Kempe cond. CONNOISSEUR SOCIETY □ CSQ 2088 \$6.98.

Performance: **Highly refined**
Recording: **Good**

This recorded performance of the Brahms B-flat Concerto tends to confirm my impression of young Bruno-Leonardo Gelber as I heard him "live" in a 1973 London Proms concert with Boulez in the D Minor Concerto. Here, as in the live performance, Gelber is heard to best advantage in the lyrical portions of the music, which he plays quite freely though not to the point of outright sentimentality. His handling of the dramatic elements is, for me, a good deal less convincing when stacked up against the likes of Rubinstein, Serkin, or Gi-

el, satiric, and weird stories Ambrose Bierce wrote before he disappeared into Mexico in 1913. The story, set in the nineteenth century, is about a boy named Boffer Bings who is nothing if not helpful. He helps his father make dog-oil medicine out of dead or powerless dogs. He helps his mother dispose of the unborn, unwanted babies that are the waste product of her thriving abortion practice. One day Boffer drops one of the "small superfluous" foetuses into the dog-oil vat instead of into the river. The resultant oil turns out to be such a superior product that pretty soon the family is busy collecting all the human flesh they can get hold of to use in their formula. The people in their town don't care for these "raids upon the population" and warn of reprisals. The business fails, and Boffer's frustrated parents fall upon one another and drown in a vat of boiling dog-oil.

A composer with such a story to set to music would seem to have his hands full enough to begin with, but Bolle has further complicated matters for himself by writing his own libretto ornamented with endless quotations and homilies. There are lines from Matthew Arnold, from children's games of the period, from newspaper doggerel. The characters in-

els—or, for that matter, even Richter, whose reading also tends toward the freely lyrical. A definite plus here is the solid and rightly textured orchestral collaboration of Kempe and the Royal Philharmonic. The recording seems a bit bass-heavy when heard in two-channel playback, but the additional ambiance provided by the rear channels in SQ opens things up to yield a considerably more effective result.

D.H.

BRAHMS: *Symphony No. 1, in C Minor, Op. 68.* Chicago Symphony Orchestra, James Levine cond. RCA ARL1-1326 \$6.98, © ARS1-1326 \$7.98, © ARK1-1326 \$7.98.

Performance: **Brisk**

Recording: **Good**

This is only the second time the Chicago Symphony has recorded the Brahms C Minor, the previous recording, which I produced, having been done under Rafael Kubelik for Mercury in 1952. The old Mercury, with its single-microphone setup, still sounds very decent, but the new recording offers considerably more brilliance and tonal projection in the violin department—all told, a clean and solid job of recording.

The performance, though, lacks the sumptuousness brought to the work by such conductors as Stokowski, Karajan, and Steinberg. This reflects conductor Levine's own view of the score, which appears to be akin to that of his mentor, George Szell, and to some extent Toscanini, though the latter was much more intense in the end movements. I find Levine's reading musically sound, brisk in pacing, but not terribly interesting or moving. The rather dispassionate opening disappoints me, and all the careful attention to details of texture and balance, particularly felicitous in the middle movements, are not enough to make of the whole a stirring experience. It will be interesting to hear what Levine does with this music in another ten years, but for the time being I pass.

D.H.

BRITTEN: *Sinfonia da Requiem, Op. 20; Peter Grimes—Four Sea Interludes and Passacaglia, Op. 33 a/b.* London Symphony Orchestra, André Previn cond. ANGEL □ S-37142 \$6.98.

Performance: **Good**

Recording: **Altogether superb**

It was with Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem* that André Previn made his debut on records as symphonic conductor, leading the St. Louis Symphony in a fiery performance still available on *Odyssey*. The fire is still very much present in this new performance, but it is tempered with greater feeling for the lyrical values of the work. Effective as the music is as an instrumental evocation of portions of the Requiem Mass, this work of a composer still in his twenties strikes me as a bit "uncooked" and stronger on rhetoric than substance.

Strange as it may seem, there has been no listing in Schwann-1 for some years of the Four Sea Interludes and the Passacaglia from *Peter Grimes* other than what was extracted by London directly from the composer's recording of the opera. Thus this André Previn recording of the music in its concert version, minus the distracting fades of the London disc, is most welcome. I'd like a bit more ferocity in the storm sequence and in general a more impulsively poetic spirit in the other sea pieces, but in the great Passacaglia Previn and his players do themselves proud, musically and dramatically.

Unquestionably, the best thing about this entire disc is the recorded sound achieved under the supervision of Christopher Bishop, whose previous E.M.I. productions of Elgar's *The Kingdom* and Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony I* consider paragons of the recording art. Not only are brilliance and complete clarity of texture achieved throughout this latest disc, but the room tone and sense of depth are exactly right for the music, and the bass transients, especially in the timpani variations of the Passacaglia, are quite literally floor-shaking. SQ four-channel playback reveals a properly enhancing ambiance. Given a quiet pressing, sound buffs will find this disc a superb demonstration vehicle.

D.H.

GERSHWIN: *Rhapsody in Blue* (see *The Basic Repertoire*, page 54)

GLINKA: *Trio Pathétique in D Minor.* New American Trio. *Nightingale Variations; Waltz in G Major; Nocturne in F Minor; Mazurka in C Minor; Mazurka in A Minor; Barcarolle in G Major.* Thomas Hryniv (piano). MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY MHS 1973 \$2.95 (plus 95¢ handling charge, from Musical Heritage Society, Inc., 1991 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023).

Performance: **Handsome**

Recording: **Good**

The only recordings of Glinka's *Trio Pathétique* available in the last few years have been of Johann Hřimalý's transcription for violin, cello, and piano; the work is effective in both versions, but it is good to have the original instrumentation of clarinet, bassoon, and piano. The Trio is played handsomely, and so are the more ingratiating piano pieces on side two; these may be slight, but they are far too attractive to remain virtually unknown for so long. The Nocturne is an especially lovely thing, anticipating to a degree "The Old Castle" in Moussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* while reminding us—as do the two mazurkas and the less-than-a-minute waltz—that Glinka was Chopin's contemporary and a pupil of John Field. There are some inaccuracies in the annotation, but what you read is not likely to get in the way of what you hear: music of great charm, played with affection and style and smoothly recorded.

R.F.

GOULD: *Symphonette No. 2* (see BAKER)

GRIEG: *Violin Sonatas: No. 1, in F Major, Op. 8; No. 2, in G Major, Op. 13; No. 3, in C Minor, Op. 45.* Henri Temianka (violin); James Fields (piano). ORION ORS 75193 \$6.98.

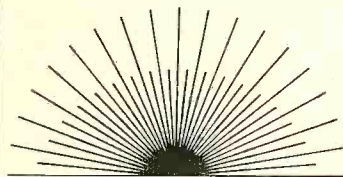
Performance: **Good**

Recording: **Violin left, piano right**

Of the three Grieg violin sonatas, only the C Minor Sonata, in my opinion, is anywhere near the level of the other major violin sonatas of the Romantic age (those of Brahms, Fauré, and Franck, for example). The first two sonatas antedate the famous Piano Concerto, and, except in the slow movements, they display little of the true Grieg personality, not to mention Norwegian flavor. The music is never less than pleasing, but only in Op. 45 is Grieg consistently in top creative form.

Henri Temianka's readings bring just the right combination of virility, delicacy, and sentiment to the music at hand—if not quite the ineffable "bouquet" of Kreisler and Rachmaninoff—and he is well accompanied

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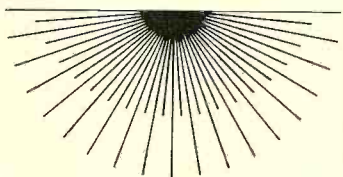
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by James Fields. The recording as such is full-bodied and pleasing in its acoustic surround, though I am disconcerted by the division of violin and piano between the left and right channels. Judicious use of blend control where available, however, or straight mono playback will alleviate this problem. A good record for confirmed Griegians. *D.H.*

HENRY VIII: *Songs and Consorts.* *Pastyme with good companye; Without discord; Adew madam et ma mastres; Whoso that wyll all feattes optayne; Whoso that wyll for grace sew; Gentil prince de renom; Thow that men do call it dotage; En vray amour; Helas madam; If love now reynyd; Alac, alac what shall I do; O my hart; Alas what shall I do for love; The Tyme of youth; Taunder naken; Lusti yough shuld us ensue;* and twelve consorts. St. George's Canzona. John Sothcott cond. ORYX EXP 57 \$6.98.

Performance: **Sterile**
Recording: **Good**

The artistic endeavors of royalty must be treated with a certain diffidence. Suffice it to say that good King Henry's musical language is somewhat limited and that once you have heard two or three of these vignettes your interest is apt to flag. Nor does the St. George's Canzona help the situation. The singers perform with rhythmic verve, but their deliberate archaic and expressionless sound soon becomes tiring. The instrumental playing is also good, but the use of the various consorts is unimaginative. This disc, then, is really of more historical interest than genuine musical worth. *S.L.*

HERRMANN: *Symphony.* National Philharmonic Orchestra, Bernard Herrmann cond. UNICORN RHS 331 \$7.98.

Performance: **Superb**
Recording: **Very fine**

The late Bernard Herrmann's symphony is very much a work of its time (1941), cut from much the same cloth as the contemporary symphonies of Walton, Shostakovich, and, to some extent, Arnold Bax. The tonal rhetoric of its four movements is that of tragedy and conflict, with occasional episodes of repose and a forthrightly affirmative conclusion. The symphonic craftsmanship here is by no means inferior to that of the contemporary works mentioned, and the orchestral scoring is brilliant, especially in the satanic scherzo. As to overall substance and impact, it would be stretching things to call this music of major consequence, but it is very well crafted and effective within its own aesthetic frame of reference. The recorded performance is altogether superb. *D.H.*

IVES: *Piano Trio.* **KORNGOLD: *Piano Trio, Op. 1.*** Pacific Art Trio. DELOS DEL 25402 \$6.98.

IVES: *Piano Trio.* **SHOSTAKOVICH: *Piano Trio No. 2, in E Minor, Op. 67.*** Beaux Arts Trio. PHILIPS 6500 860 \$7.98.

Performances: **Both very good**
Recordings: **Philips excellent, Delos dry**

The piano trios of Charles Ives and Erich Wolfgang Korngold were completed within a year of one another; the Korngold, written in 1910, is actually the earlier of the two.

The contrast is fascinating. The New Eng-



BEAUX ARTS TRIO: outstanding, as usual, in Ives and Shostakovich

land Yankee was, of course, working in his own individual, isolated way, largely ignored by the world of music. On the other hand, no composer of any period attracted as much attention and fuss as Korngold, a prodigy of Mozartian dimensions. Korngold wrote his First Piano Trio when he was all of twelve, and its first performance was given by a trio consisting of Bruno Walter, Arnold Rosé, and Friedrich Buxbaum. It is an astonishingly mature work and quite original in its late Romantic style. It also seems to me quite decadent in a *fin-de-siècle* sort of way—as if this twelve-year-old were writing in the manner of an old post-Tristan roué! Apparently Korngold started out having his third period first and then had nowhere to go but backwards.

Maybe I just don't like the music. I do like the Pacific Art Trio, an excellent group consisting of Alice Shapiro, violinist Israel Baker, and cellist Edgar Lustgarten. And I love the Ives trio, one of that composer's quirkiest and most lyrical works and one of the few works of chamber music that successfully break out of the domination of Central European tradition.

Perhaps as much could be said for the Shostakovich, although actually the traditional elements are strong. I have never been a fan of Shostakovich—least of all of his chamber music—but this is a strongly felt work without any of the pomposity or saber-rattling that one finds in the symphonic works.

The Beaux Arts Trio is possibly the outstanding organization of its kind around today, and they are extremely well served in both Ives and Shostakovich by a very attractive recording. The Delos recording is, unfortunately, dry and studio-ish, which may limit its appeal. *E.S.*

KHACHATURIAN: *Concerto for Flute and Orchestra.* Jean-Pierre Rampal (flute); National Orchestra of the O.R.T.F., Jean Martinon cond. ODYSSEY Y 33906 \$3.98.

Performance: **Pretty but skin-deep**
Recording: **Excellent**

When Jean-Pierre Rampal asked Aram Khachaturian to write a flute concerto for him back in 1960, the Armenian composer unabashedly suggested that the flutist content himself with his Violin Concerto, rearranging the solo part. Rampal did just that, also writing in an elaborate flute cadenza for the first movement. Despite the astonishing adroitness

of Rampal's performance—with superb backing from the late Jean Martinon and his orchestral forces—the piece still sounds better as a concerto for violin. Pipe and purl as it will, even the magic flute of Jean-Pierre Rampal cannot make the sentimental solo passages flow in the swooning gypsy way of a master fiddler dealing with the same material. But it's an amazing performance all the same, another tour de force from one of the best flute players in the world. *P.K.*

KORNGOLD: *Piano Trio, Op. 1* (see IVES)

LISZT: *Dante Symphony.* Orchestra and Chorus of the Bolshoi Theater, Boris Khaikin cond. COLUMBIA/MELODYIA M 33823 \$6.98.

Performance: **Reasonably good**
Recording: **Full-blooded**

None of the various recordings of the Liszt *Dante Symphony*—SPA, Urania, and Decca in mono, Candide in stereo—have managed to persuade me that this is music of convincing substance. Striking gesture there is aplenty, particularly in the opening *Inferno* movement, and there are pages of remarkable harmonic daring for the mid-1850's. But the *Purgatorio* I find something of a drag, and the brief concluding Magnificat with female chorus I find more saccharine than exalting.

Boris Khaikin and his Bolshoi forces certainly offer the most dramatic and best-recorded realization I have heard thus far of the *Dante Symphony*, but I think it would take someone with the genius of the late Sir Thomas Beecham to bring it off. *D.H.*

MAHLER: *Songs of a Wayfarer* (see Best of the Month, page 84)

MARTIN: *Six Monologues from "Jedermann"* (see Best of the Month, page 84)

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

MOUSSORGSKY: *Khovantchina.* Dimitar Petkov (bass), Prince Ivan Khovanski; Todor Kostov (tenor), Prince Andrei Khovanski; Ljubomir Bodourov (tenor), Prince Golitsin; Stoyan Popov (baritone), Shakloviti; Nikola Gyuzelev (bass), Dosifei; Alexandrina Milcheva-Noneva (mezzo-soprano), Marfa; Maria Dimchevska (soprano), Emma; Milen Paounov (tenor), Scribe; Dimitar Dimitrov (bass), Varsonovyev; others. Svetoslav

Obretenov Chorus; Orchestra of the Sofia National Opera, Atanas Margaritov cond. MONITOR HS 90104/7 four discs \$15.92.

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

Like *Boris Godounov*, Moussorgsky's *Khovantchina*, his last opera, was also left unfinished. It was Rimsky-Korsakov who saved it for posterity by orchestrating the vocal score with certain condensations. He has not been called to task for his efforts in this instance, possibly because no orchestrating sketches by Moussorgsky are known to have survived—it was a case of Rimskification or nothing. In any case, it is in this manner that posterity has gained another mighty panoramic epic of turbulent history, barbarous cruelty, great choral scenes, sketchily drawn yet memorable characters, and much magnificent music. *Khovantchina* is not without flaws, but it is unquestionably a masterpiece.

This Monitor set was originally issued on the Bulgarian Balkanton label and promptly won the Montreux International Record Award for 1974. On the American market it was preceded by Melodiya SRDL-4125, which, though not consistently cast with top-rank Bolshoi performers, is on the whole musically stronger and dramatically more vital. The margin, however, is not wide. Several of the Bulgarian principals are of comparable merit, and even the chorus and orchestra stand up to the highly touted Bolshoi forces.

Nikola Gyuselev, in the role of Dosifei, head of the Old Believers and marked for extermination by the young and unrelenting Czar Peter the Great, is the vocal standout. The role is a sort of Russian Sarastro, though his music is more dignified than memorable. In any case, Gyuselev serves it eloquently with his rock-solid, majestic singing. It was for the fanatical seeress Marfa that Moussorgsky reserved the most haunting melodies of this opera. In the Melodiya set, Irina Arkhipova established a superb standard that Monitor's Milcheva-Nonova cannot quite equal, but the Bulgarian mezzo interprets the part commandingly and is always pleasing to listen to. As the villainous, Iago-like Shakhloviti, Stoyan Popov unfurls a dark and firm baritone that lacks color variety but is impressive in its sinister sound and unremitting power.

It is rather a pity that Dimiter Petkov is so unsteady in the colorful role of the elder Khovanski (his Melodiya counterpart is also unsatisfactory), for he has interesting ideas about the character. Tenor Bodourov does rather well with the part of Golitsin, the slippery Regent, despite limited vocal resources. The soprano interpreters of Emma and Susanna are good, and tenor Paounov brings color to the richly drawn cameo part of the Scribe. The remainder of the cast is undistinguished.

In all, however, this is a creditable account of an opera that deserves to be better known. The full libretto appears to be a photocopy, but the historical notes with it are valuable in understanding this episodic but compelling drama. *G.J.*

ROCHBERG: *Music for the Magic Theater; Chamber Symphony for Nine Instruments.* Oberlin Orchestra, Kenneth Moore cond. DESTO D-6444 \$6.98.

ROCHBERG: *String Quartet No. 1.* Concord String Quartet. *Duo Concertante.* Mark Sokol (violin); Norman Fischer (cello). *Ricordanza,*

Soliloquy for Piano and Cello. Norman Fischer (cello); George Rochberg (piano). COMPOSERS RECORDINGS, INC. CRI SD 337 \$6.95.

Performances: **Good**
Recordings: **Good**

These recordings document a notable development over a period of twenty years by one of the most serious and intense American composers, George Rochberg. Rochberg's earliest work, represented here by the string quartet of 1952, and the latest, the *Ricordanza* for cello and piano of 1972, are both highly eloquent, expressive, and melodic, although one is completely tonal, the other thoroughly atonal and expressionistic. This in itself might not seem remarkable except that it is the *early* work that is atonal and the *later* that is tonal!

Rochberg's reverse pilgrim's progress took him from that early free atonality to twelve-tone intensity (the rather unpleasant Chamber Symphony and the intense Duo, both from 1955) to an obsession with quotations (*Music for a Magic Theater* of 1965) and then to the tonal neo-Romanticism of the recent works. *Music for a Magic Theater*—the title and concept come from Hesse's *Steppenwolf*—incorporates an only slightly reworked chunk of a Mozart serenade as well as references to Varèse, Webern, Mahler, and Beethoven "in which the past haunts us with its magic beauty." The effect is odd and disturbing, but it is also quite moving. Quoting old music has become a fad, but Rochberg was among the very first to do it and his artistic motives are genuine. The *Ricordanza* takes us to yet another plane. The entire piece is cast as a commentary on a fragment from a Beethoven cello sonata, but it is essentially a full-blown piece of romantic chamber music without a trace of collage, commentary, camp, or nostalgia. Whatever one thinks of it, there is no doubt that Rochberg has followed the logic of his own inner development with extraordinary fidelity and honesty.

Both recordings and all performances are good, but particular honors go to the CRI disc. *E.S.*

ROREM: *King Midas* (see ARGENTO)

ROSSINI: *Overtures: Il Barbiere di Siviglia; L'Italiana in Algeri; Il Signor Bruschino; La Cenerentola; La Gazza Ladra; L'Assedio di Corinto.* London Symphony Orchestra, Claudio Abbado cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530 559 \$7.98; © 3300 497 \$7.98.

Performance: **Good**
Recording: **Fine**

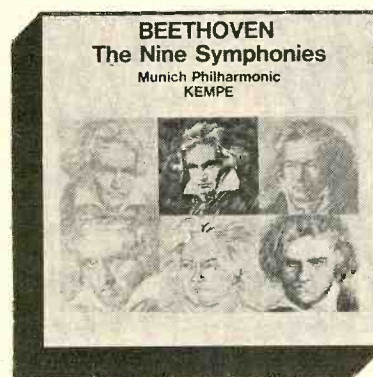
RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

ROSSINI: *Overtures: Il Barbiere di Siviglia; L'Italiana in Algeri; Il Signor Bruschino; La Cambiale de Matrimonio; La Scala di Seta; Tancredi; Il Turco in Italia; L'Inganno Felice.* Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Neville Marriner cond. PHILIPS 6500.878 \$7.98, © 7300.368 \$7.98.

Performance: **Sparkling**
Recording: **Crisp**

The Deutsche Grammophon disc is annotated by Alberto Zedda, co-editor of the Rossini Foundation's new complete edition. Claudio Abbado has recorded Zedda's editions of both *Cenerentola* and *Barbiere* in full, and the overtures to those two operas (possibly extracted from the complete recordings?) happen to be the ones that come off best here;

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MARTHA ARGERICH: almost demonic intensity

Ravel's Piano Works

ALTHOUGH Maurice Ravel was one of the century's great orchestrators, much of his musical personality and originality is connected with the piano keyboard. From the early *Menuet Antique*, the *Habanera* (which turns up later in the *Rapsodie Espagnole*), *Pavane pour une Infante Défunte*, and the brilliant *Jeux d'Eau* to the *Tombeau de Couperin* of 1917 and the odd, modernistic *Frontispiece*, Ravel's solo piano style oscillated between classicism and impressionism. In between are the large-scale masterpieces: the neo-Classical *Sonatine*, the extraordinary, unclassifiable *Miroirs*, and *Gaspard de la Nuit*—more like musical equivalents of art nouveau and symbolist poetry than impressionism in the narrow sense.

To a degree, it can be said that if a pianist can play this music at all, it will make its effect. In other words, it might be argued, Ravel wrote things out pretty much the way he wanted them to go, and niceties of interpretation are not going to be as significant as they are in the music of Beethoven or Chopin. Perhaps. And yet, the centenary flood of Raveliana makes it obvious that Ravel interpretation is becoming a notable indoor sport somewhat beyond mere dilettantism. Some play it better, some worse. Janine Dacosta's *Gaspard de la Nuit* for Musical Heritage Society is pedestrian—notes, notes, notes without any real coming together into anything larger. On the other hand, when Martha Argerich plays the same music in a new Deutsche Grammophon recording, it is full of mystery and poetry. *Miroirs*, one of the great fantasy pieces of all time, is merely dull as played by Pascal Rogé (a genuine Frenchman) on the London label, while it is beautifully calli-

graphic as played by Kun Woo Paik (a U.S.-trained Korean pianist recording for a German label).

Kun Woo Paik made something of a splash in New York in 1972 with a full evening of Ravel's piano music. He now lives and performs mostly in Europe, where he has also made the Ravel program his calling card. There is easily enough quality and variety both in the music and in the playing to justify such a big dose of Ravel as Paik gives us in his recent three-disc set on the European ACM label. One can find more than a dash of Eastern influence in Ravel, who was a master of what might be called the brush-stroke technique of musical composition, and Paik is the ideal interpreter to bring out this side of Ravel's work. He is an extraordinarily sensitive keyboard poet who ranges across this music conveying the most delicate tints with mastery and sensitivity. His recording is available in the United States through the distributor listed below.

The Janine Dacosta recordings also originated in Europe. The set has the advantage of including the four-hand as well as the two-hand piano music (most of this is not, as the album notes would have it, two-piano music but music for one keyboard, four hands). However, the performances are modestly capable at best. Ironically, the same must be said of the other French entry: volume three of Pascal Rogé's series for London.

IN my opinion, the outstanding Ravel performances in this group of recordings are Martha Argerich's readings of *Gaspard*, the *Valses*, and the *Sonatine*. In contrast with Kun Woo Paik, who is an artist of gentle poetic feeling, Argerich brings an extra measure of fantasy and passion even to a restrained and essentially classical work like the *Sonatine*. Her *Valses* are almost demonic in their intensity, and her *Gaspard*—the musical equivalent of the poetry of Baudelaire or the paintings of Redon—is positively spine-chilling. Ms. Argerich's Deutsche Grammophon recording is terrific—in the original as well as the current slang meaning of that word.

—Eric Salzman

RAVEL: The Complete Works for Piano, Two Hands. Kun Woo Paik (piano). ACM 10 002-4 three discs \$19.89 (from Ruth Uebel, 205 E. 63rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10021).

RAVEL: Complete Works for Piano. Janine Dacosta (piano); Maria Antoinette Pictet (piano, in four-hand pieces). MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY MHS 3083/4/5 three discs \$8.85 (plus 95¢ handling charge from the Musical Heritage Society, Inc., 1991 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023).

RAVEL: Miroirs; Jeux d'Eau; Ma Mère l'Oye. Pascal Rogé (piano); Denise Rogé (piano, in *Ma Mère l'Oye*). LONDON CS 6936 \$6.98.

RAVEL: Gaspard de la Nuit; Sonatine; Valses Nobles et Sentimentales. Martha Argerich (piano). DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530 540 \$7.98.

evidently Zedda's editions were not followed in the other four. The tricky syncopated business in *La Gazza Ladra*, brought out with emphasis when Zedda conducted the opera in Rome in 1973, is managed brilliantly in Peter Maag's recording (London STS-15030) and somewhat less so in George Szell's (Columbia MS-7031), but it is not even attempted by Abbado. (It wasn't by Toscanini, either, and I'm sure every conductor has his reasons, but I think it adds to the appeal of the piece.) In the main, Abbado's performances are longer on efficiency than on charm, but they are very well played and recorded.

The Philips package is more lively, more stylish, a delight in every respect. Neville Marriner avoids the big "symphonic" overtures and offers a generous, imaginative collection of familiar and unfamiliar ones that must have been played by a pit orchestra about the size of his Academy. *La Cambiale di Matrimonio* here may lack the ultimate finesse of the unforgettable Beecham version (with the solo horn played by Dennis Brain), but it can hardly fail to enchant, while the almost equally neglected *Turco in Italia*, *Tancredi*, and *L'Inganno Felice* exude all the sparkle and wit one could want. Neither Marriner nor Abbado thought of encouraging his oboist to emulate the embellishment in *L'Italiana in Algeri* that made Previtali's version so memorable (now on Everest SDBR-3186/2), but this crisply recorded Philips release is one of the very finest entries in Marriner's discography—and in Rossini's as well. This and the Maag disc cited above, with no duplications between them, constitute an unbeatable stereo assortment.

R.F.

SHOSTAKOVICH: Piano Trio No. 2, in E Minor, Op. 67 (see IVES)

SMETANA: My Fatherland, Symphonic Cycle; The Bartered Bride (excerpts). St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. Walter Susskind cond. TURNABOUT □ QTV-S 34619/20 two discs \$7.96.

Performance: **Warmly vital**
Recording: **Spacious**

Born and trained in Czechoslovakia, Walter Susskind is warmhearted and sure-handed in his readings of Smetana's epic cycle and of the effervescent *Bartered Bride* highlights, and he pays particular attention, with telling effect, to lyrical values. It's just a shame that the St. Louis Symphony, capable and well-trained as it is, does not measure up to the Chicago or Boston orchestras or the Czech Philharmonic, all of which are represented in Schwann-1 by recordings of *My Fatherland* under Czech conductors Rafael Kubelik (Chicago and Boston) and the late Karel Ančerl. It is the mighty climaxes of *Blaník*, combining the Hussite hymn (brass) with the bardic opening motif of the cycle (strings) that separates the men from the boys in this work, for Brucknerian lung power and expansiveness is called for here, and only a dozen or so of the world's top orchestras have it.

Were it not for the brilliance of the Ančerl performance, currently available in Vanguard's Supraphon series, I would still recommend Susskind's recorded performance as the best of the three budget-price versions, and the bonus *Bartered Bride* excerpts and a very pleasing QS four-channel ambient recording may prove a decisive factor for some in a purchase decision. Turnabout has achieved a satisfyingly warm sound, wholly

appropriate to the music, spacious enough to allow plenty of acoustic elbow room for the big moment, yet with the kind of presence that reveals felicitous musical detail without being surgical about it. *D.H.*

TELEMANN: *Sinfonia in F Major for Recorder, Viola da Gamba, and Orchestra; Overture in C Major for Three Oboes and Strings; Concerto in B-flat Major for Three Oboes, Three Violins, and Continuo; Triple Concerto in E Major for Flute, Oboe d'Amore, Viola d'Amore, and Strings.* German Bach Soloists, Helmut Winschermann cond. ORYX C3 306 \$6.98.

Performance: **Crisp**
Recording: **Clear**

Telemann and Vivaldi are the bane of the record bins and shelves; one never knows what to expect. When they are good they are very good, and when they are bad they are very bad indeed. Be ye advised, then, that this disc contains very good Telemann that ranges from the seriousness of the *Sinfonia in F Major* to a giddy *Harlequinade* in the Overture in C Major. The performance, done on mostly modern instruments and in a clean, crisp twentieth-century style, is also very good. It would be nice, though, if the jacket identified the fine soloists for us. *S.L.*

THOMSON: *Music for the Films* (see Best of the Month, page 83)

WAGNER: *Lohengrin.* Franz Crass (bass), King Henry; Jess Thomas (tenor), Lohengrin; Anja Silja (soprano), Elsa; Ramón Vinay (baritone), Telramund; Astrid Várnay (soprano), Ortrud; Tom Krause (baritone), Herald; others. Chorus and Orchestra of the Bayreuth Festival, Wolfgang Sawallisch cond. PHILIPS 6747 241 four discs \$31.92.

Performance: **Above average**
Recording: **Good**

Wieland Wagner's memorable Bayreuth production of *Lohengrin* has been repeatedly reincarnated on the world's stages; now at last it is perpetuated on records as well in a taping that dates back to 1962, its last season in Bayreuth. While these tapes were resting in the vaults, three complete studio-made *Lohengrins* have been released; led by Rudolf Kempe (Angel), Erich Leinsdorf (RCA), and Rafael Kubelik (DG), all incorporated valuable qualities but none was fully satisfying in totality. The same summation applies to this Bayreuth product.

LOHENGRIN: a scene from the Bayreuth production



It is conducted effectively by Wolfgang Sawallisch, a sensible and reliable musician who may not look for too much poetry or mystery in this opera but can be depended upon for a well-organized performance with sufficient impetus and drama to avoid dullness. The orchestral playing is generally fine, and the chorus is superb.

It is good to encounter the Jess Thomas of 1962: a youthfully heroic Lohengrin, with the bloom still on his healthy, ringing tones. On the whole, he surpasses his later effort (Angel) on this occasion, though Sándor Kónya's lyrical view (RCA LSC 6710, now deleted) is more to my liking. There is no rival to Franz Crass' King Henry among the other recorded interpreters—it is a pleasure to hear his flowing and effortless singing in this high-lying part with no lapse from tonal strength or steadiness anywhere. The firm yet mellow-sounding Herald of Tom Krause is another positive element in the Philips cast.

Anja Silja, whose position in the Bayreuth hierarchy rose steadily after her 1960 debut there, was a relative beginner in 1962. Some thrusting high notes and generally dependable intonation commend her Elsa, but her phrasing is frequently awkward and the passages of soaring lyricism leave her very much wanting. In contrast with Silja's novice achievement stand the contributions of Astrid Várnay and Ramón Vinay, two veteran artists of long experience, whose vital dramatic projection is compromised by waning vocal resources. Várnay is an effortful and unsteady Ortrud, Vinay a frayed and often toneless Telramund.

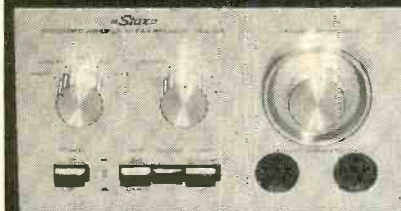
Surprisingly for a Bayreuth performance, there is a sizable traditional cut following the Grail Narrative, but I hasten to add that, in my view, this is no serious drawback. As on-the-scene recordings go, this is a decent if unspectacular effort technically, with reasonable balances and more than the usual share of audience noises, particularly some insistent coughing during the opening of the second act. Philips now has all of Wagner's music dramas on records in time for the Bayreuth centenary. *G.J.*

COLLECTIONS

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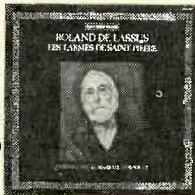
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Columbia Records

BEVERLY SILLS,
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Paper Reeds. J. Berger: Snake Baked a Hoe-cake; The Frisco Whale. Adler: A Kiss; Strings in the Earth. Chorbajian: Bitter for Sweet. The King Chorale, Gordon King cond. ORION ORS 75205 \$6.98.

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

This is an interesting assortment of mostly recent material, fetchingly sung and well recorded, with all texts printed in full. My only complaint is that one has to check the disc labels to see who composed what, since on the liner the composers' names and the titles and texts are kept quite separate from one another. Even on the label, the title *Reincarnation* does not appear, and the three songs in Barber's cycle are listed as if they were separate works. That cycle, incidentally, is more persuasively presented by the Gregg Smith Singers on Everest SDBR-3129. R.F.

GREGORIAN CHANT: Vespers of the Holy Trinity; Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Dom Claude Gay (organ); Choir of the Monks of Saint-Pierre de Solesmes Abbey, Dom Jean Clair cond. LONDON OS 26431 \$6.98.

Performance: **Reverent**
Recording: **Resonant**

GREGORIAN CHANT: Gallican Responses and Chants. The Deller Consort, Alfred Deller cond. HARMONIA MUNDI HMD 234 \$7.98 (from HNH Distributors Ltd., P.O. Box 222, Evanston, Ill. 60201).

Performance: **Studied**
Recording: **Dry**

PLAINCHANT AND POLYPHONY FROM MEDIEVAL GERMANY: Twelve Chants for Advent, Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. Schola Antiqua (voices and instruments), R. John Blackley cond. NONESUCH H-71312 \$3.98.

Performance: **Cautious**
Recording: **Fine**

Although the interpretation of Gregorian chant is still much disputed, the basic approach offered by the monks of the Solesmes Monastery, near Le Mans, France, during the last years of the nineteenth century is generally considered to be the most convincing artistically, and is used for all three of these records. A recording by the Solesmes monks themselves, though, has a special quality about it which is lacking in many other performances. No vocal ensemble, no matter how excellent the individual singers may be, can capture the spirit of mystery and devotion

of this group of monks whose very life is the liturgy. Thus the Solesmes recording breathes the life of the Church—we experience the reality of an actual service, which is enhanced by the use of the organ for an entrance (Sweetlinck's *Praeludium Pedaliter*), an interlude between the Vespers and the Benediction (a sixteenth-century fantasy by Tomas de Santa Maria), and an exit (Couperin's *Chaconne in G Minor*).

The Deller Consort, more familiar to us for its performance of polyphonic music than for monophony, brings us a precision of ensemble seldom encountered in this repertoire. Drawing from the rarely heard Gallican liturgy, the Consort presents one set of chants grouped around the entrance of Christ into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and a contrasting set taken from the liturgy of Good Friday. The distinctive sound of the Deller Consort, of course, is achieved through the use of counter-tenors, a sound not usually associated with chant. It is extremely effective here, especially in the contrast between ensemble and soloist. But, despite the Deller Consort's beauty of sound and precision of ensemble, one occasionally longs for a more robust delivery.

The Schola Antiqua disc is based on chants interspersed with anonymous German polyphonic settings of texts grouped around Advent, Passiontide, Easter, Pentecost, and Pannousia. The unaccompanied chant is sung very carefully indeed by subdued male voices. The interesting polyphonic settings make use of women's as well as men's voices and bring us the added timbres of the vielle, recorder, and tabor, but caution is the motto of the day and the music as a consequence remains basically colorless. S.L.

ANDRÉ KOSTELANETZ: Spirit of '76. Ives/Schuman: Variations on "America." Hovhanness: Meditation on Orpheus. Grofé: Trick or Treat. Gershwin: Concerto in F. Rodgers: Lagoon. Cowell: Twilight—Texas. Creston: Midnight—Mexico. Griffes: The White Peacock; The Pleasure-Dome of Kubla Khan. Barber: Intermezzo from "Vanessa." André Previn (piano, in Gershwin only); orchestra, André Kostelanetz cond. COLUMBIA MG 33728 two discs \$7.98.

Performance: **Mostly good**
Recording: **Good**

A statement in the liner of this economical package reminds us that Kostelanetz has been responsible for introducing, and even commissioning, a good deal of American music. This assortment, from which the Gershwin and Barber were issued several years ago in

different combinations, includes some of his discoveries. Rodgers' *Lagoon*, inspired by Herman Melville and James Michener, was written for him; it is overlong and unremarkable. The uncharacteristically commercial-sounding pieces by Cowell and Creston make me wince in awareness that the former's *Tales of Our Countryside* and the latter's *Third Symphony* continue to be passed by. Ferde Grofé's little Hallowe'en fantasy is an innocuous take-off on Tchaikovsky's pizzicato classic. Of the more substantial items, the Hovhanness gets by far the best performance in the package—highly evocative and highly communicative. *The White Peacock* goes well, too, and if Kostelanetz's way with *The Pleasure-Dome* does not efface memories of the old Ormandy and Hanson versions, he at least makes the piece available again. The Gershwin performance is quite good, though there are several more enticing ones, but the handling of the Ives/Schuman showpiece strikes me as crude, lacking the punch and snap as well as the polish of Morton Gould's version with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (RCA LSC-2893). I can't help feeling this package would have had greater appeal if the Gershwin had been omitted and the other pieces offered on a single LP (they would fit)—despite the special price of the two-disc set. **R.F.**

BEVERLY SILLS/ANDRÉ KOSTELANETZ: *Plaisir d'Amour*. Lenoir: *Parlez-moi d'amour*. Bizet: *Ouvre ton coeur*. Liszt: *Oh, quand je dors*. Gounod: *Mireille: Waltz*. Koechlin: *Si tu le veux*. Delibes: *Les Filles de Cadix*. Poulenc: *Les Chemins de l'Amour*. Martini: *Plaisir d'amour*. Dell'Acqua: *Villanelle*. Beverly Sills (soprano); Page Brook (flute, in Dell'Acqua); Columbia Symphony Orchestra, André Kostelanetz cond. COLUMBIA M 33933 \$6.98, © MA 33933 \$7.98, © MT 33933 \$7.98.

Performance: **Spirited and charming**
Recording: **Good, with reservations**

This is the second recorded collaboration of Beverly Sills and André Kostelanetz, two warm and endearing personalities, each with throngs of devoted followers. Together they make a dream package to bolster sagging sales. What unites them here is the affection and special affinity they both have for the French repertoire.

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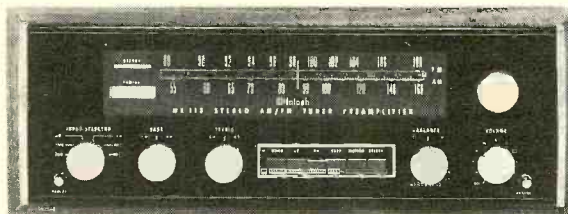
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When a personal opinion, particularly a publicly expressed one, grates on our nerves, one of the commoner responses is to ask, either under or at the top of our voices, just who that so-and-so thinks he or she is. The question is asked of STEREO REVIEW with respect to our regular contributors and staff many times each month, and in this column we endeavor to supply the answers. —Ed.



Contributing Editor

Richard Freed

"WHEN I was a kid in Tulsa," Richard Freed recalls, "I contrived to work in the school office so I could be excused from music class, but before I left for the University of Chicago I had persuaded my high school English teacher to let me mix record reports with my book reports. What got me hooked was, first, *The Lone Ranger*, and then Disney's *Fantasia*. I liked the Lone Ranger's impeccable speech habits (I can't say as much for Tonto's), and I was intrigued by the music played between the scenes—a good deal more than just *William Tell* at the beginning and end and *Les Préludes* around the intermission commercial (someone ought to package a *Lone Ranger Suite*). I expected *Fantasia* to be two hours of Mickey Mouse, but the music I heard prompted me, at age twelve, to ask for a phonograph, and from then on whenever I had any money it went into records. Most of my reading then was about music and records, too, and my bible was the 1941 Victor catalog, a six-hundred-page encyclopedia for twenty-five cents!"

While still an undergraduate, Freed be-

gan a bizarre sequence of newspaper jobs, then found himself managing a travel agency. That is what he was doing when he began writing for *Saturday Review* in 1959, and the job enabled him to report on musical events in Budapest, Tokyo, and other exotic locales in addition to turning out his frequent record pieces. In 1962, Irving Kolodin invited him to join the staff at *Saturday Review*, where he helped edit the program magazine for Philharmonic Hall (now Avery Fisher Hall) at Lincoln Center. Freed subsequently worked as a critic for the *New York Times* and put in four years on the administrative staff of the University of Rochester's Eastman School of Music before he settled on full-time free-lancing.

While he is more interested in the phenomenon of music than in the individuals who make it, Freed treasures his brief but close acquaintance, mostly through correspondence, with the late Karl Ristenpart. "He was a luminously beautiful man who, despite his chamber-orchestra associations, based so much of his life on what he found in the music of Mahler. I'm grateful, too," Freed says, "for the opportunity to get to know Walter Susskind during the months I served as consultant to the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra: I learned so much from him about the meaning of professionalism—which (in his case, anyway) has a lot to do with commitment and selflessness and simply nothing at all to do with self-aggrandizement or stuffiness."

In addition to writing and broadcasting about music on records, Freed is program annotator for the Philadelphia and Saint Louis Symphony orchestras, a consultant to various organizations, and executive secretary of the Music Critics Association, the professional society of critics in the U.S. and Canada. He recently began a series of nationally circulated broadcasts of Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra concerts. His annotative activity includes liner notes, too—about two hundred of them so far. He works in a subterranean chamber in one of Washington's Maryland suburbs, where a frog trapped in a windowwell has been his only full-time companion, and he buys a lot of lottery tickets in hopes of having real windows some day.

ASIDE from music and records, Freed likes hot dogs (of the robust kosher variety he says are virtually impossible to find now), English film comedies of the early Fifties, and *Putney Swope*. "My wife and thirteen-year-old daughter think my passion for hot dogs is 'gross,' but that's because the really good ones have vanished. I'd go as far as El Paso to introduce them to *Laughter in Paradise* (Alastair Sim, Joyce Grenfell, *et al.*), which I've seen more than thirty times." His literary ambitions were more or less abandoned when he learned that all the novels he wanted to write had already been written by Aldous Huxley, but he still cherishes the dream of writing an opera libretto entirely in limericks in collaboration with Alec Wilder, who has kept him supplied with waffle-type ice cream cones for years.

—Priam Clay

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(Stereo Review, February, 1975)

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