

THE JINGLE COMPOSERS

AUGUST 1979 • \$1.25

Stereo Review®

• **SPECIAL SPEAKER ISSUE** •

ASHFORD & SIMPSON: a levelheaded pair of singer/songwriters

EQUIPMENT TEST REPORTS: B&W DM2/II Speaker System
Mitsubishi DA-F20 FM Tuner • Nakamichi 582 Cassette Deck
Onkyo A-7070 Integrated Amplifier • Ortofon Concorde 30 Phono Cartridge

BEAUTIFUL BABIES: listening tests on nineteen minispeakers



THERE ARE A LOT
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A RECEIVER THAT SELLS
FOR UNDER \$400.

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08

PIONEER DID IT THE RIGHT WAY.

INTRODUCING THE SX-780.

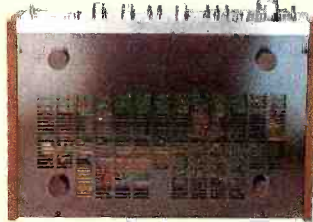
It seems that our competitors think they've mastered the art of building a moderately priced receiver.

Unfortunately, most of them appear to be the work of cost reduction engineers, rather than high fidelity engineers. People whose jobs depend on the cost of what goes into a receiver, not the sound that comes out of it.

At Pioneer, on the other hand, we build a receiver that sells for under \$400 with the same care given to a receiver that sells for over \$1000.

A perfect example is the SX-780.

It offers the kind of features, value and sound you won't find in any other comparably priced receiver.



Metal shields our SX-780 from spurious noise.

It provides cleaner sound and richer, more natural bass because it eliminates feedback and something called TIM (transient intermodulation). Transient intermodulation is a form of distortion that can keep you from hearing the subtle overtones in your music.

Which interestingly enough is why receivers with a conventional power amplifier might possibly be able to match the specs of the SX-780, but never the sound.

A PILOT SIGNAL CANCELING SYSTEM THAT'S UNHEARD OF IN THIS PRICE RANGE.

All stereo FM stations in America broadcast their music over a pilot signal of 19,000 hertz.

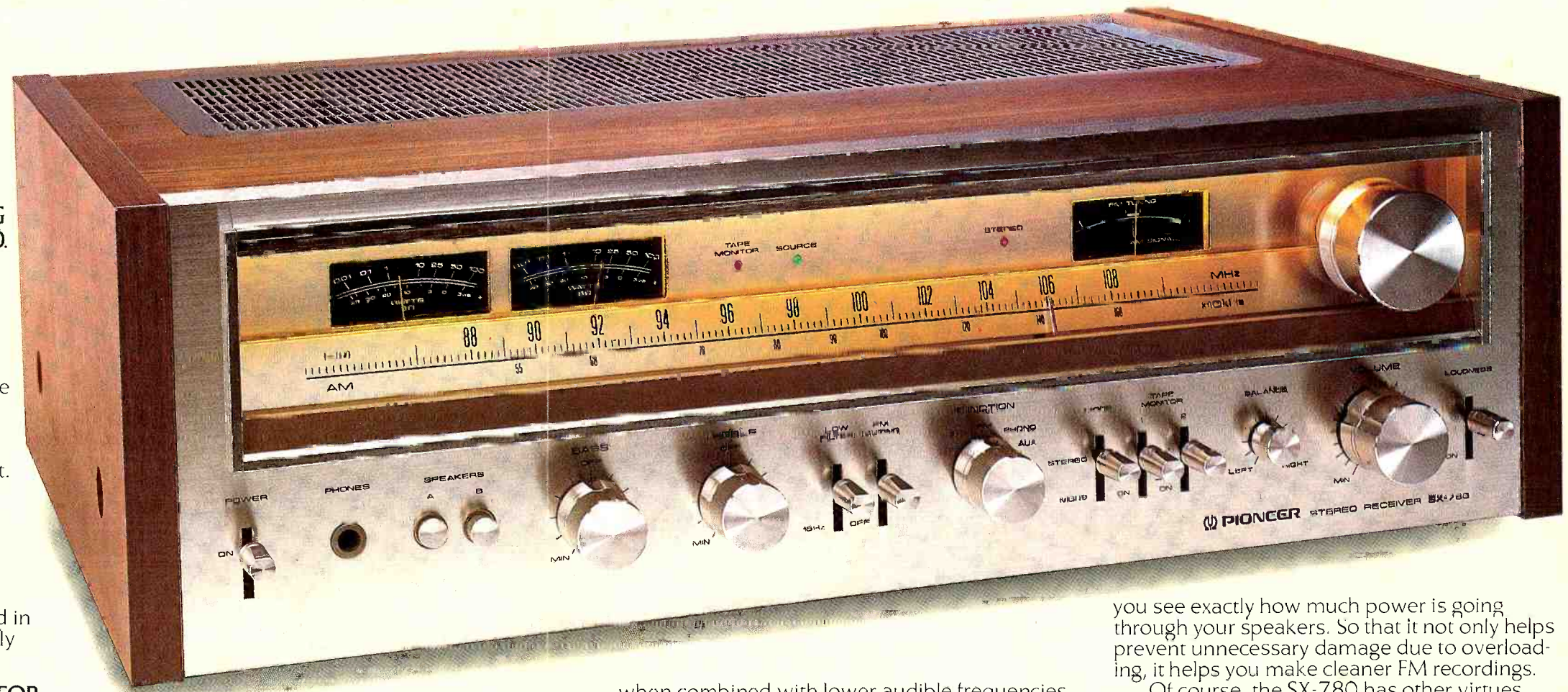
If not eliminated, this signal tends to create an extremely high pitched sound



DC power supply found on the most expensive receivers.

A DC AMPLIFIER WITH THE POWER TO ELIMINATE DISTORTION.

The SX-780 features the same DC power configuration found in today's most expensive receivers.



A STRONG CASE FOR THE METAL BOTTOM.

If you turn over our SX-780, for instance, you'll notice the bottom is made of heavy gauge metal.

It's designed to shield the tuning section from spurious noise and keep CB interference from getting in the way of your music.

Equally important is the fact that our bottom has a special ventilating system that allows air to circulate freely around the heat sinks. This not only reduces FM drift due to overheated tuning elements, but increases the life expectancy of the circuitry.

when combined with lower audible frequencies.

Most of our competitors use a standard high band filter to cancel out this signal. Unfortunately, it also cancels out some of the music.

Pioneer created a special integrated circuit that eliminates this pilot signal without affecting the music.

Which means that you're assured of hearing everything the musicians had intended you to hear. Nothing more. And nothing less.

Obviously, the SX-780 is the only receiver that gives you this feature in this price range. The others give you the noise.

WATTAGE METERS THAT LET YOU SEE WHAT YOU'RE HEARING.

When a receiver has wattage meters, it lets

you see exactly how much power is going through your speakers. So that it not only helps prevent unnecessary damage due to overloading, it helps you make cleaner FM recordings.

Of course, the SX-780 has other virtues conspicuously absent from our competitors' models. Like a built-in wood grain cabinet. Which is something others give you the option of paying extra for.

But what really separates Pioneer's SX-780 from others is more than just a matter of wood cabinets, wattage meters, metal bottoms, DC power, or even price.

It's our commitment to giving you a quality hi-fi receiver, no matter how much, or how little, you plan to spend.

So if you're planning to spend less than \$400, you couldn't ask for more than the SX-780.



A pilot signal canceling circuit that lets you hear only music and nothing more.



An accurate picture of what you're listening to.

PIONEER
We bring it back alive.

POWER: 45 watts per channel min. at 8 ohms from 20-20,000 hertz with no more than .05% total harmonic distortion.
FM SENSITIVITY: Stereo, 37.0 dBf

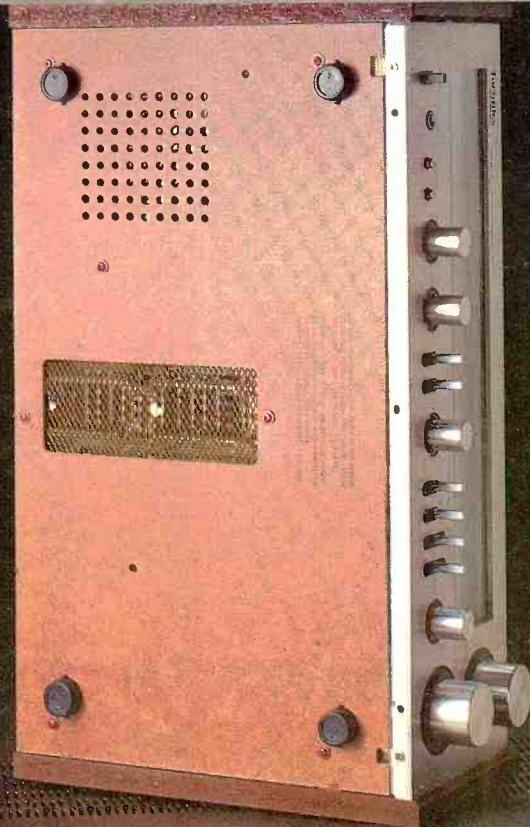
S/N RATIO: Stereo: 72 dBf
CAPTURE RATIO: 1.0 dBf
POWER METERS: 2
SPEAKERS: A, B, AB
TONE CONTROLS: Dual
TAPE MONITORS: 2

CIRCLE NO. 1 ON READER SERVICE CARD

YOU CAN
LEAVE OUT
DUAL WATTAGE
METERS LIKE
MARANTZ DID.



YOU CAN INSTALL
AN INEXPENSIVE
PRESS BOARD BOTTOM
LIKE TECHNICS DID,
INSTEAD OF
A METAL ONE.

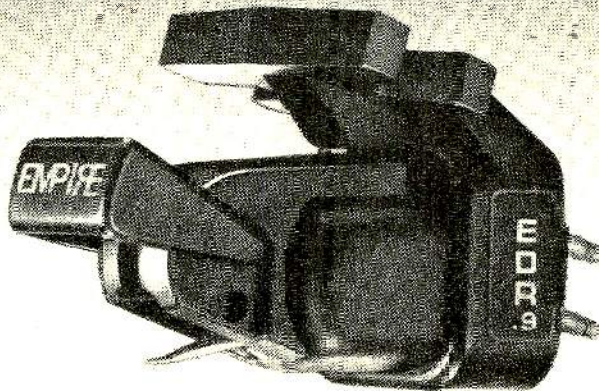


YOU CAN USE
A CONVENTIONAL POWER
AMPLIFIER LIKE
KENWOOD DID,
INSTEAD OF
AN ADVANCED
DC AMPLIFIER.



YOU
CAN USE
STANDARD
HIGH BAND
FILTERS LIKE
YAMAHA DID,
INSTEAD OF SPECIAL
INTEGRATED CIRCUITS TO CANCEL
THE UNWANTED FM PILOT SIGNAL.

PHOTOGRAPH BY [unreadable] FOR [unreadable] ADVERTISING AGENCY



INTRODUCING THE EMPIRE EDR.9 PHONO CARTRIDGE. IT SOUNDS AS GOOD ON A RECORD AS IT DOES ON PAPER.

It was inevitable . . .

With all the rapid developments being made in today's high fidelity technology, the tremendous advance in audible performance in Empire's new EDR.9 phono cartridge was bound to happen. And bound to come from Empire, as we have been designing and manufacturing the finest phono cartridges for over 18 years.

Until now, all phono cartridges were designed in the lab to achieve certain engineering characteristics and requirements. These lab characteristics and requirements took priority over actual listening tests because it was considered more important that the cartridges "measure right" or "test right"—so almost everyone was satisfied.

Empire's EDR.9 (for Extended Dynamic Response) has broken with this tradition, and is the first phono cartridge that not only meets the highest technological

and design specifications—but also our demanding listening tests—on an equal basis. In effect, it bridges the gap between the ideal blueprint and the actual sound.

The EDR.9 utilizes an L. A. C. (Large Area Contact) 0.9 stylus based upon—and named after—E. I. A. Standard RS-238B. This new design, resulting in a smaller radius and larger contact area, has a pressure index of 0.9, an improvement of almost six times the typical elliptical stylus and four times over the newest designs recently introduced by several other cartridge manufacturers. The result is that less pressure is applied to the vulnerable record groove, at the same time extending the bandwidth—including the important overtones and harmonic details.

In addition, Empire's exclusive, patented 3-Element Double Damped stylus assembly acts as an equalizer. This eliminates the high "Q" mechanical resonances typical of other stylus assemblies, producing a flatter response, and lessening wear

and tear on the record groove.

We could go into more technical detail, describing pole rods that are laminated, rather than just one piece, so as to reduce losses in the magnetic structure, resulting in flatter high frequency response with less distortion. Or how the EDR.9 weighs one gram less than previous Empire phono cartridges, making it a perfect match for today's advance, low mass tonearms.

But more important, as the EDR.9 cartridge represents a new approach to cartridge design, we ask that you consider it in a slightly different way as well. Send for our free technical brochure on the EDR.9, and then visit your audio dealer and listen. Don't go by specs alone.

That's because the new Empire EDR.9 is the first phono cartridge that not only meets the highest technological and design specifications—but also our demanding listening tests.
Empire Scientific Corp.
Garden City, N.Y. 11530 **EMPIRE**

Stereo Review®

AUGUST 1979 • VOLUME 43 • NUMBER 2

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The first high-technology record cleaner was the Discwasher System. Four scientific revisions later, the Discwasher is literally years ahead of all other devices.

WITH PRIORITY TECHNOLOGY:

Discwasher D3 Fluid is proven by lab tests to be the safest active cleaning fluid for record care. But a good fluid is not enough. The Discwasher System is also a *precision removal system* that uses capillary action with slanted micro-fibers to lift dust, dirt, and dissolved debris off the record, rather than pushing them around like "dry" and "constant humidity" methods. The real dimensions of record care are safety plus integrated function.

WITH PROVEN VALUE:

The uniquely styled Discwasher handle is constructed of hand-rubbed walnut which will long outlast "plastic wonders". This easily held handle is lightweight because of an integral cavity which conveniently holds the D3 Fluid bottle. A special brush to clean the directional-fiber Discwasher pad is included without charge, and also fits inside the handle cavity.

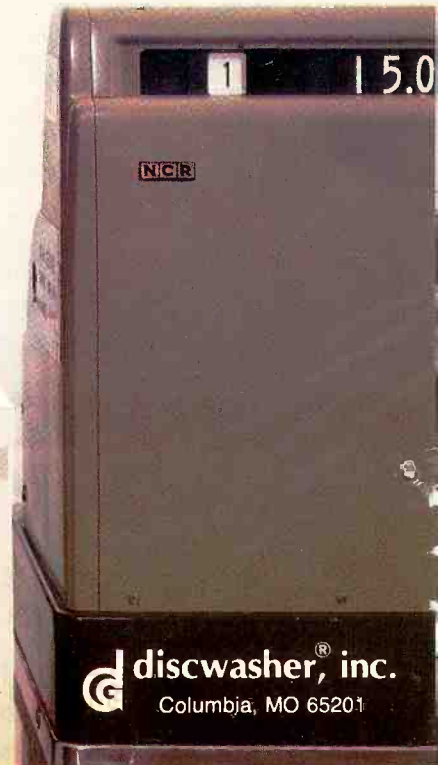
WITH GENUINE SATISFACTION:

Only Discwasher gives immediate performance, long-term record safety, pleasing physical characteristics and a price that hasn't changed in five years.

Seek out the Discwasher System, by name. Only Discwasher delivers technology, value and satisfaction.

CIRCLE NO. 19 ON READER SERVICE CARD

YOUR RECORDS DESERVE SUPERIOR CARE: SEEK OUT THE DISCWASHER® SYSTEM



discwasher, inc.
Columbia, MO 65201



Edited by William Livingstone

- IMPROVED TELEVISION SOUND is a feature of sets being introduced by three major manufacturers. This trend is thought to reflect both the wider audio bandwidth now practicable in television transmissions and the increasing aural sophistication of American audiences. GTE will offer their Supersound (a higher-power amplifier with separate bass and treble controls and a two-way speaker system) on three 25-inch color sets. Magnavox has introduced two sets with Super Sound (a three-way speaker system, separate tone controls, and a 12-watt power amplifier). RCA's Dual Dimension Sound system, available on six of their current models, divides the audio spectrum into three parts and feeds them to different drivers to achieve a pseudo-stereo effect.
- A 91-PAGE CATALOG OF ALL FOUR-CHANNEL DISCS AND TAPES commercially released in the United States has been published with the title Quad Incorporated. Listed are nearly 2,200 recordings released between 1969 and 1979. Available from Quad Incorporated, P.O. Box 19, Capron, Virginia 23829, for \$4.00 plus 50¢ postage in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico (add \$2.50 postage elsewhere).
- AMERICA'S FIRST RADIO "SUPERSTATION" will be Chicago's WFMT, which offers fine-arts FM programming twenty-four hours a day. Pending FCC approval, United Video of Tulsa, Oklahoma, will use satellite transmission to make WFMT's stereo signal available throughout the United States (including Alaska and Hawaii) to any cable TV system that wants the service.
- CONDUCTORS, A TO Z: Claudio Abbado has signed an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon. Maurice Abravanel, for thirty-two years music director of the Utah Symphony, retires on August 16. No successor has been named. At the beginning of the 1980-1981 season Riccardo Muti will become music director of the Philadelphia Orchestra, succeeding Eugene Ormandy, who will have held the post for forty-four years. Also in 1980-1981, Pinchas Zukerman will become music director of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.
- AUTO RADIOS WILL AGAIN BE OPTIONAL accessories rather than standard items on most General Motors cars as a result of settlement of an antitrust suit brought against GM by the Custom Automotive Sound Association (CASA), a group of independent autosound equipment manufacturers. CASA had alleged that including radios as standard equipment was an anticompetitive practice that forced car buyers to pay for an accessory they might not want and also limited the size of the autosound aftermarket.
- MEZZO-SOPRANO MARILYN HORNE received the Palcoscenico d'Oro (Golden Stage) award for excellence in singing in Mantua, Italy, on May 17. After celebrating Marilyn Horne Day on June 19 in her home town, Bradford, Pennsylvania, she returned to Europe for her Salzburg Festival debut.

TEAC

WE'VE GOT THE GUTS.

Look inside any tape recorder and you'll find the parts that really matter. The parts that define the ultimate quality of your sound. The transport mechanism.

Transports must work in a world of micro-tolerances. A millionth of an inch error can ruin your audio quality. Because when the transport errs, no amount of electronic wizardry can replace the lost fidelity.

Consider the TEAC transport. Capstans formed on computer-controlled lathes and perfected on industrial micro-grinders. Massive flywheels, inertially balanced. Solenoids typically twice the size and power of those used in other decks. Belts that are tested for dimensional stability under the most severe temperature, humidity and atmospheric conditions.

The results of this specialized design and manufacturing technology are unusually high levels of accuracy, stability and durability. Proven qualities that make a TEAC sound better initially and maintain its sonic integrity after years of use.

Often, to reach these performance criteria, we've found current state-of-the-art con-



cepts lacking. So through the years, we've introduced new technologies.

Like the first cassette deck with integral Dolby* noise reduction in 1971. And the first cassette transport to break the 0.1% wow & flutter barrier in 1973. Designs that helped make the cassette deck a respectable high fidelity component.

Today, we're producing cassette components with instrumentation drive systems. Mechanisms taken right out of our own data recorders. These transports are

built to withstand continuous read/write use in computer installations. Where megadollars are at stake. And reliability is everything.

Soon you'll see the first popularly priced cassette decks with integral dbx** noise elimination. Originally designed for open reel recorders in professional recording studios, the dbx system gives you sound so quiet, so noise-free, it's scary.

Twenty-five years of specialization has taught us that design balance is critical for quality

sound reproduction. So you'll find that balance in every TEAC.

The proof is in the results. That's why more professional recordists rely on TEAC machines than any other make in the world.

So next time you're distracted by an Astro-this, Fluoro-that or Spectro-something else, remember: a tape recorder is a machine.

How well it works depends on how well it's made.

Look into a TEAC, and you'll find that we've got the guts. To show you what's

inside. To let you evaluate our performance. To make you the final judge.

To us, it's a matter of craftsmanship. To you, a matter of decision. Because when you peel away the bells and whistles, you find the real measure of every tape recorder. Especially ours.

For more information, see your TEAC Audio dealer.

Or write us at Dept. M-8.

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Speaking of Music...

By William Anderson



SWEENEY AND THE ZEITGEIST

THE Prix de Rome, I learned from a recent adventitious browse through a volume of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, is the prize the French Académie des Beaux-Arts awards in its annual competitive examinations for painting, sculpture, engraving, architecture, and music. It has always been a prestigious award, but after listing the winners in music for the years 1803 to 1951, the author of the entry comments: "It is ... somewhat depressing to note how many names this list contains of composers whose careers came to nothing.... On the other hand the absence of many of the most distinguished French composers is equally striking." All too true, but not, I think, precisely to the point. It is not the business of such competitions to legislate for the ages, but to put the stamp of official approval on the art of the time, to typify the spirit of a particular age by consensus.

We have no Prix de Rome, nor of Chicago or even Kalamazoo in these United States, but we do have our annual "Tony" awards. Stephen Sondheim's musical-theater piece *Sweeney Todd* won eight of them this year, so there is no dodging the fact that it is, for 1979, a kind of Official Art and that it ought therefore to be suspected of harboring some insight into the intellectual fashion of our time.

The melodramatic tale of Sweeney, the murderous barber who supplies the unspeakable raw material for the meat pies of Mrs. Lovett, his equally unspeakable confederate, is an old one. Sondheim based his musical version on a recent London stage play, and it is a positive feast (!) for English majors. There are traces of Jonathan Swift (his icily ironic *Modest Proposal*), of the *Beggar's Opera* (the Brecht version, not the life-celebrating John Gay original), of Charles Dickens' pestilential nineteenth-century London, of

Hogarth's prints, France's Grand Guignol theater of horror, and even *I Remember Mama* (the culinary secret of her meatballs). The stage setting is an enormous cage of machinery, a factory interior laced with iron girders, bridges, and ladders, filled with humming gears and pulleys, a steam whistle that screams at horrors no human throat could address itself to, and wheels, wheels everywhere, even on the two-deck mechanical-marvel pie/barber shop. The relentless misanthropy ("The history of the world... is who gets eaten and who gets to eat"), the lewdness, the venality, and the scatological language of the play are relieved only by the blackest of comedy—a scene in which a preposterous Eve (Mrs. Lovett) tempts an improbable Adam (Sweeney) to a second Fall with an assortment of meat pies ("'Ave a little priest") instead of an apple.

Wild horses couldn't drag me to see this depressing spectacle again, and I mightily resisted listening to the original-cast album. All I can recall of the music is a rising three-note figure of yearning on the name Johanna ("I feel you, Johanna") in young Anthony's love song, and that probably because it echoes a similar phrase in *West Side Story's Maria*. And significantly, no music from *Sweeney* was quoted in a current-Broadway-show medley in the extravaganza that marked the gala opening of Radio City Music Hall on May 31.

But what is the message? Why, simply what Utopian pastoralists from William ("dark Satanic mills") Blake to the latest anti-nuke Luddites have tried to tell us for years: the Industrial Revolution Was a Big Mistake, for it has brutalized all mankind. They may very well be right, but it is a considerable irony that this message is addressed to and (if understood) endorsed by (eight Tonys, remember) an urban audience that wouldn't know the difference between a manure spreader and a butter churn and that would rather die or pay \$5 a gallon (whichever comes first) than empty their three-car garages. *There's a Zeitgeist for you!*

Stereo Review

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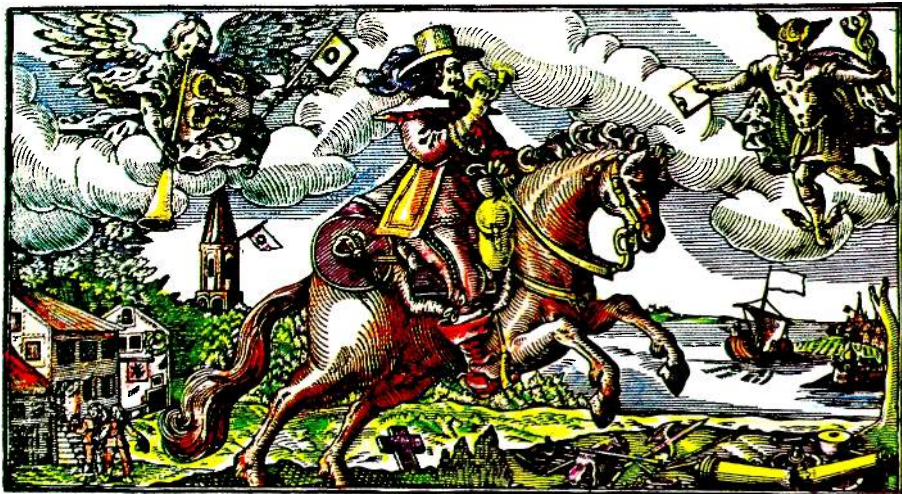
G-4700



G-5700



G-6700



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Collecting Mania

● Paul Kresh's "The Passionate Collector" (June) caught the mania nicely, and many of us wish we *could* follow the excellent advice given at the end of the article. But I, for one, have never been truly convinced that you can never get everything in your chosen field. Deep down, of course, I *know* you can't, but I remain unconvinced emotionally.

JOE PEARCE
New York, N.Y.

● It's a pity Paul Kresh didn't have space to tell more collector stories in his accurate and relatively kind article on the slightly (and not so slightly) loony world of the diehard record collector. For instance, Tom Clear made three trips to Canada in search of the late Healey Willan's piano concerto (released on 78s by Canadian Victor), then found a mint copy in a junkshop in New York City!

I must take issue with one item of Mr. Kresh's otherwise good advice for prospective collectors: "Do go to dealers rather than waste time at secondhand stores." For one thing, dealers (rightly) charge whatever the traffic will bear. More important, for many collectors (not only record collectors) the chase is nearly as much fun as the prize. Most collectors can tell you where they found almost every record in their collection and what they paid for each one. Who knows what treasures the next junkshop or Salvation Army or Goodwill store may hold?

FRED M. KLEEBERG
New York, N.Y.

● Thanks to Paul Kresh for his sympathetic and wonderfully witty exposé of those of us addicted to collecting records. However, I feel I must correct his account of how I acquired the private recording of the Schubert Quintet in C Major played by the Budapest String Quartet and Pablo Casals. I did not buy it from David Rockefeller, though I have reason to believe the recording was made at a performance at David Rockefeller's townhouse in Manhattan. The disc was sold to me by a fellow collector whom I had met at Music Masters.

TERI NOEL TOWE
New York, N.Y.

● Like many other New Yorkers, I have had occasion to enjoy visits to Will Lerner's shop Music Masters. Mr. Lerner's knowledge of drama, however, doesn't match his musical acumen. The character he calls (page 76 of June STEREO REVIEW) "that lady in *The School for Scandal*" is in *The Rivals* (same author, Richard Brinsley Sheridan). Her name is Mrs. Malaprop, hence the word "malapropism."

JERRY JAMES
New York, N.Y.

Zappa's Satire

● I agree 100 per cent that you cannot separate the review from the reviewer, but I disagree with the prudishness shown by Peter Reilly in his June review of Frank Zappa's "Sheik Yerbouti." I suspect he did not listen to the album but read the lyrics on the inner sleeve instead.

ANGEL M. ROSADO
Bronx, N.Y.

● Frank Zappa must have had people like Peter Reilly in mind when he stated in a recent *People* magazine article that "Producing satire is kind of hopeless because of the literacy rate of the American public." Zappa's "Sheik Yerbouti" is strictly for laughs and no more hate-filled than anything by Elvis Costello.

JIMMY SMITH
Springfield, Mo.

Perhaps someone should explain that to the Anti-Defamation League?

Nyiregyházi's Retreat

● In October 1978 James Goodfriend reviewed Ervin Nyiregyházi's first Columbia release, saying that "his performances 'work' in a natural if idiosyncratic way that is light years beyond the most carefully thought-out intellectual approach to the written score." In the June 1979 issue Mr. Goodfriend reviewed the pianist's second Columbia release and pointed out various "unsuccessful results" that would "throw anyone off." Maybe I am a diehard, but I think that the grand manner and

widened dynamic possibilities that set Nyiregyházi apart from all other living pianists are still present in his second Columbia album to a degree that merits more than the itemization of shortcomings that Mr. Goodfriend offered. Many who did not see the earlier review need to be told that Nyiregyházi means more to us than this.

JAMES NEHER
Philadelphia, Pa.

James Goodfriend replies: I'm sympathetic, but I call 'em as I hear 'em.

● Just to set the record straight: Prof. Alessandro Moreschi of the Sistine Choir was not in his seventies when he recorded (as claimed by Editor William Anderson in his reply to a letter about Ervin Nyiregyházi in the May issue). According to *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, Moreschi was born in 1858 and died in 1922. In 1903 he would have been forty-five.

PHILIP L. MILLER
New York, N.Y.

Remastering

● Perhaps *digital* remastering of analog master tapes would be futile, as Editor William Anderson pointed out in his reply to John Niessink's letter in the June issue, but remastering analog tapes by conventional methods should continue to be encouraged. Anyone who has compared the remastered reissues of records from various labels by Mobile Fidelity Labs or the discs in Angel's 45-rpm Sonic Series with the originals knows that there is much to be gained from careful remastering. The results, for the most part, are noticeably cleaner, more transparent sound, greater dynamic range, and a more natural overall tonal quality (less boominess or screechiness).

RUSSELL S. LOW
Berkeley, Calif.

Hair

● I never thought I'd write in to praise one of Steve Simels' reviews (Noel Coppage maybe), but his "Hair and the Hippie Revival" in the June issue is a masterpiece, one of the best pieces written in the Seventies about the Sixties on any subject. The Eighties are less than seven months away as I write this, and I hope the next decade produces no more Hair-like media events or any repeat of the Sixties' atrocities. Death to excess nostalgia.

CARL P. SCHMITT
Menlo Park, Calif.

Amazing Rhythm Aces

● Joel Vance should be commended for praising the Amazing Rhythm Aces' new album in the June issue, but I almost choked on my lunch when he referred to the LP as their "debut album." Even we folks here in the Canadian backwoods know that Russell Smith and his band have put out four previous albums, starting with the characteristically fine "Stacked Deck" in 1975.

BOB LANGMAID
Brooklin, Ontario

(Letters continued on page 14)

The ADS 10 digital time delay system

Beyond fidelity into reality



While the reproduction of sound has evolved dramatically over the past two decades, even the best two channel stereo sound still provides a limited illusion—a sonic painting between two front speakers. Stereo cannot produce the feeling of “BEING THERE” in the same acoustic space as the musicians.

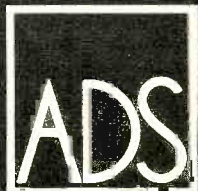
Now you can experience the impact of hearing sound in THREE DIMENSIONS with the ADS 10 Acoustic Dimension Synthesizer. The ADS 10 brings the concert hall to your home by extracting and recreating the “ambient” sound field which surrounds the listener in any real acoustic space. Critics and reviewers agree there is nothing you can add to a decent stereo system for approximately \$1000 which will improve the realism of music reproduction as much as the ADS 10 digital time delay system. As stated in Esquire recently, “It has been a long time since there was a new development in hi-fi. CD systems weren’t it. The new perfected time delay units are”

The ADS 10 is the first complete time delay system ever offered to the public that encompasses all components for ambient extraction and synthesis and for rear channel amplification. It also includes a matching pair of ultra compact, high performance speakers for unobtrusive placement in your room.

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Grammy Awards

● As might be expected, after the announcement of the Grammy awards we at the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) received some criticism, especially from those who may have disagreed with the results of our membership's votes. In the May STEREO REVIEW, Steve Simels expressed such displeasure, and even though we may not agree with him, or at times even follow his reasoning, we fervently defend his right to disagree.

But we do not defend, in fact we take extreme exception to, his accusation that the Grammy awards are "spectacularly corrupt." Ever since the inception of these awards

twenty-one years ago, one of the Academy's major concerns has been to maintain and protect their absolute integrity. To help us achieve this, we have assigned all tabulations of our members' ballots to the highly respected international accounting firm of Deloitte Haskins and Sells. Once our members have mailed their ballots directly to that firm, nobody except those within their organization who attend to the tabulating ever sees them, and we in the Academy never know what the winners are until the night of the Grammy awards presentations when the envelopes are opened.

I should also point out that we have always restricted the privilege of voting specifically to individual Academy members (no company

membership is available) who contribute creatively to the field of recording, and to no one else. Moreover, we have consistently stressed to these members that the only criterion they should consider when voting is artistic excellence and that nothing else, including sales, should count.

J. WILLIAM DENNY
Past President, NARAS
Burbank, Calif.

Steve Simels replies: I apologize to Deloitte Haskins and Sells, the Academy, and any individual members of NARAS who may have been offended by the careless phrase "spectacularly corrupt," which flew out of my typewriter while I was suffering a fit of disappointment over the choices for this year's Grammys.

● Quick! Who has two ears full of rock and nothing in between? Shame on you, Steve Simels. Your sarcasm went a bit too far in "Simels Contemplates the Grammys" (May) when you called Billy Joel's *Just the Way You Are* a "mushy ballad." The rest of the article was right on, but to condemn a song simply because it doesn't rock the walls is rather narrow-minded. What would have happened to our beloved rock-and-roll if everyone in the Fifties had condemned it simply because it did shake the walls?

MICHAEL FISHER
Enid, Okla.

Metrics

● Since reader Norman Bremer (May "Letters to the Editor") and Technical Editor Ralph Hodges are concerned with metric lessons, why not be totally correct? The word "micron" is now archaic. The exact and correct scientific term is "micrometer." "Millimicron" has been changed to "nanometer."

RICHARD C. KLOSEK
Rutherford, N.J.

Or was as of last month.

Tonio K.

● Steve Simels' excellent review (April) of Tonio K.'s "Life in the Foodchain" has not only relieved my most complex anxieties about the future of rock in the Eighties but has given my mind nourishment that should last well into the twenty-first century. But please, who is George Metesky?

DANNY C. LAIL
Shelby, N.C.

Steve Simels replies: George Metesky was, of course, the so-called "Mad Bomber" who terrorized the people of New York City for well over a decade with a series of strategically placed explosive devices. Comparing Tonio K. with Metesky was my idea of a joke, son.

● Has Simels gone mad? "Life in the Foodchain," while certainly a good, great, maybe even swell album, can't possibly be the greatest album ever recorded. "James Brown Live at the Apollo" is. This can be substantiated with actual documentation, so don't argue with me. And what about the Seeds' first album? And is the cat still in the freezer?

TONIO K.
Calabasas, Calif.



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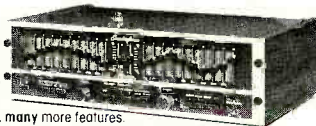
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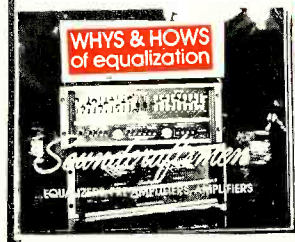
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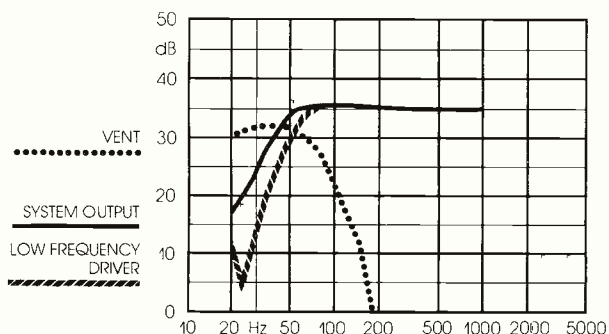
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That's a good reason for you to go to your Jensen Home Audio Dealer for a demonstration.

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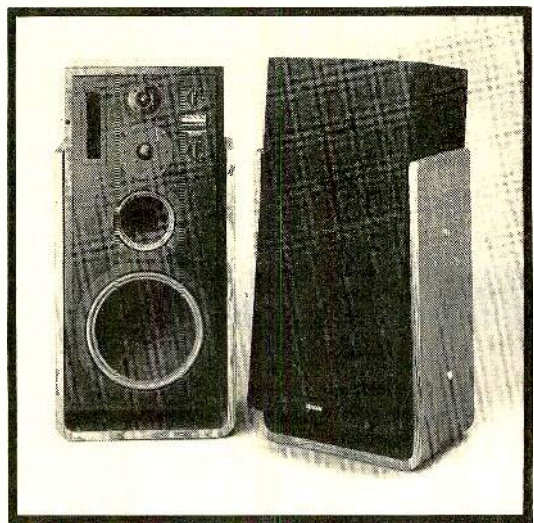
But one more word from the master, Stan Getz.

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Listen to the Jensen System B in person.

Stan Getz did. He liked what he heard. So will you.

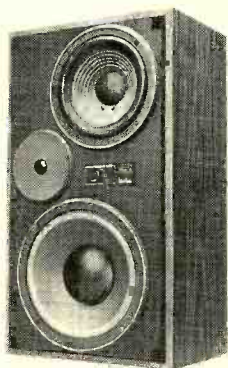
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Accent on Dispersion In Electro-Voice Speaker System

□ The Electro-Voice Interface:2 is a two-way passive-radiator-equipped speaker system designed with an eye toward broad dispersion throughout the audible range. It uses Electro-Voice's new "Super-Dome," a soft-dome tweeter of 1½-inch diameter fitted with a doughnut-shaped acoustic-foam lens that maintains broad dispersion at high frequencies. The bass driver of the Interface:2 is an 8-inch roll-surround unit with better dispersion near its 1,500-Hz crossover point than a larger driver would have. The system's passive radiator is 10 inches in diameter and becomes the dominant sound source at frequencies below 66 Hz. Recommended amplifier power is 3.6 watts minimum, 250 watts maximum. Frequency response is specified as 47 to 18,000 Hz ± 3 dB, sensitivity is 92 dB output for 1 watt input (measured at a 1-meter distance), and nominal impedance is 8 ohms. The enclosure weighs 25 pounds, is finished in a walnut-grain vinyl, and has dimensions of 24¼ x 13¾ x 10¾ inches. Price: \$169.

Circle 120 on reader service card



Allison's New ESW Electronic Subwoofer

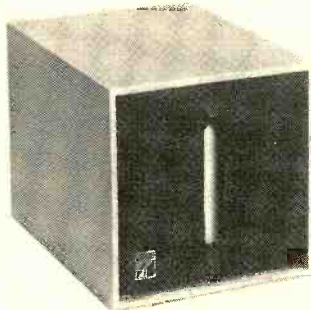
□ Allison Acoustics has developed an electronic bass-augmentation device called the Electronic Subwoofer (ESW), which operates by boosting the signal sent to the loudspeakers at frequencies between 20 and 50 Hz. Below 20 Hz and above 20,000 Hz the ESW has a rapid cutoff (18 dB per octave). According

to Allison, this design format permits the listener having loudspeakers and an amplifier of sufficient dynamic capability to obtain the benefits of a conventional subwoofer/electronic-crossover system at low cost and without the electronic and placement problems engendered by additional speakers. The unit installs between a preamp and power amp or in the tape-monitor loop.

Frequency response of the device is controlled by a four-position switch on the front panel; it has three boost positions, corresponding to turnover frequencies of 41 Hz, 35.5 Hz, and 48 Hz. Allison notes that these curves are complementary to the bass-rolloff characteristics of Allison loudspeakers and most acoustic-suspension loudspeakers of conventional bookshelf size. The fourth position inserts the below-20-Hz and above-20,000-Hz filters without any bass boost. The company cautions that the Electronic Subwoofer is suitable only for acoustic-suspension systems with suitable power-handling and excursion capabilities. Vented, passive-radiator-equipped, transmission-line, and planar-radiator systems cannot tolerate the level of low-bass boost applied and may be damaged.

Specifications of the device include a total harmonic distortion of less than 0.1 per cent, a signal-to-noise ratio of 93 dB (A-weighted) referred to a 1-volt output, and dimensions of 14¾ x 1¾ x 4¾ inches. Price: \$290.

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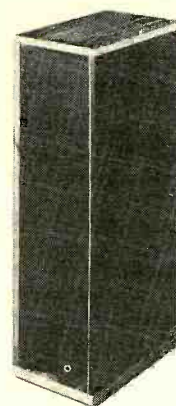


Decca "Super Tweeter" Uses Ribbon Principle

□ The Decca Super Tweeter is an add-on high-frequency driver designed to cover the 7,000- to 30,000-Hz range. Its radiating surface is a single corrugated, electrically conductive aluminum ribbon suspended longitudinally in a slot-shaped magnetic field. This configuration is said to have exceptionally accurate transient response and wide frequency response because of the low moving mass (10 milligrams) of the ribbon and the high force-to-mass ratio of the total assembly. The tweeter is housed in a roughly cube-

shaped enclosure and has an internal 6-dB-per-octave high-pass filter network that operates at 7,000 Hz. It is thus suitable for use as an accessory tweeter or as part of an integrated speaker-system design.

Specifications of the unit include a sensitivity of 88 dB for a 4-watt input (measured at 1 meter), a nominal impedance of 8 ohms, and dimensions of 4 x 4 x 5½ inches. Price: \$199.50. For further information write to Rocelo, Inc., Dept. SR, 669 Flint Road, Downsview, Ontario M3J 2J7, Canada.



An Improved Design Acoustics Floor Speaker

□ Design Acoustics' D-4A, the successor to that company's earlier floor-standing D-4, is a three-way acoustic-suspension system designed to achieve flat power response over a broad area. In the D-4A this is accomplished through the use of three treble drivers (two 1½-inch cone units and one 1-inch dome type) positioned on three faces of the speaker's cabinet and two 8-inch woofers mounted on the cabinet's side panels as a means of reducing mid-bass reflections from room-wall surfaces. A single 5-inch cone midrange is positioned on the speaker's front panel; crossover frequencies are 700 and 2,000 Hz. System impedance is a nominal 4 ohms; level controls that attenuate bass and treble outputs by 3 dB are included on the cabinet's rear panel.

Specifications of the D-4A include a power response of 35 to 18,000 Hz ± 3 dB, a minimum power requirement of 20 watts per channel, a system resonance frequency of 41 Hz, and a sensitivity of 92 dB for a 1-watt input measured at a 1-meter distance. The enclosure, whose side faces are angled inward somewhat, has an oiled-walnut veneer finish, black-fabric grille material, and dimensions of 38 x 16½ x 11 inches. Price: \$297.

Circle 122 on reader service card

(Continued on page 20)



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Since that time, however, B&W's unparalleled research and development program has yielded new and fascinating insights into virtually every aspect of speaker design and performance.

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Each driver of the DM2/II has been designed for exceptionally smooth response over its entire operating range. The crossover is a computer calculated nineteen element network employing true third order Butterworth filters that result in significantly lower intermodulation distortion and exceptional phase and amplitude characteristics.

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As with all B&W loudspeakers, each DM2/II is individually tested and shipped with its own proof of performance chart recording.

However, the ultimate proof of performance is in the listening. Your B&W dealer invites you to audition this classic contribution to the evolution of speaker technology and decide for yourself.

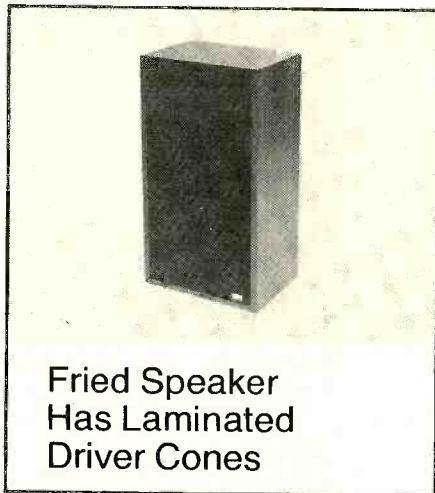
For additional information write: Anglo-American Audio Co., Inc., P.O. Box 653, Buffalo, N.Y. 14240. In Canada: Remcron Electronics Ltd.

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Fried Speaker Has Laminated Driver Cones

□ The Fried Model W is a three-way vented loudspeaker that uses bass and midrange drivers having cones made of a synthetic laminated paper. This type of construction is said to reduce coloration and the incidence of cone resonances. The Model W's treble driver is a 1-inch dome tweeter also treated with a synthetic coating. Crossover frequencies for the system are 750 and 3,000 Hz. The speaker has a 2-ampere fuse, corresponding to a continuous power-handling capacity of 32 watts. Power handling on musical peaks is 300 watts, according to the manufacturer.

Frequency response of the Model W is 40 to 20,000 Hz ± 3 dB, nominal impedance is 8 ohms, and sensitivity is 90 dB for a 1-watt input measured at a 1-meter distance. Recommended minimum power is 25 watts per channel. Dimensions of the speaker, which is finished in oiled walnut, are 25 x 14 x 10 inches. Price: \$320; optional stands are \$20 each. For further information write Fried Products Co., Dept. SR, 7616 City Line Ave., Philadelphia, Pa. 19151.



KLH Speaker Achieves Extended Bass

□ The KLH 3 two-way loudspeaker system uses an unusual design involving a signal-processing device and a 6½-inch bass driver

to derive extended bass performance (to 40 Hz at normal listening levels) from a vented enclosure with an internal volume of only ¼ cubic foot. The signal-processing device, which KLH calls an Analog Bass Computer, is installed in the tape-monitor circuit or between the preamplifier and power amplifier. The unit tailors the frequency response of the speaker, adding low-frequency boost and filtering out infrasonic signals. It also monitors the low-bass output and attenuates the bass input when necessary to prevent excessive excursion of the woofer cone at high output levels.

The low-frequency driver of the KLH 3 has a cone formed of polypropylene, an acoustically inert plastic material said to have lower intrinsic coloration than conventional paper cone materials. The woofer is crossed over at 2,000 Hz to a 1-inch fabric-dome treble unit. Both drivers have cast frames for structural rigidity; an acoustically absorptive material on the speaker's front panel surrounds the treble unit as a means of reducing diffraction effects.

Sensitivity of the speaker is 85 dB for a 1-watt input, measured at a 1-meter distance. Recommended power is 40 watts minimum and 200 watts maximum. The speaker's dimensions are 12½ x 8½ x 6 inches, and those of the Analog Bass Computer control module are 10½ x 2½ x 6 inches. The module includes a facility to replace the tape-monitor circuit lost when it is connected to an integrated amplifier or receiver, plus a room-position compensation control. Cabinet finish is oiled-walnut veneer. Price: \$420 per pair, including Analog Bass Computer.

Circle 123 on reader service card

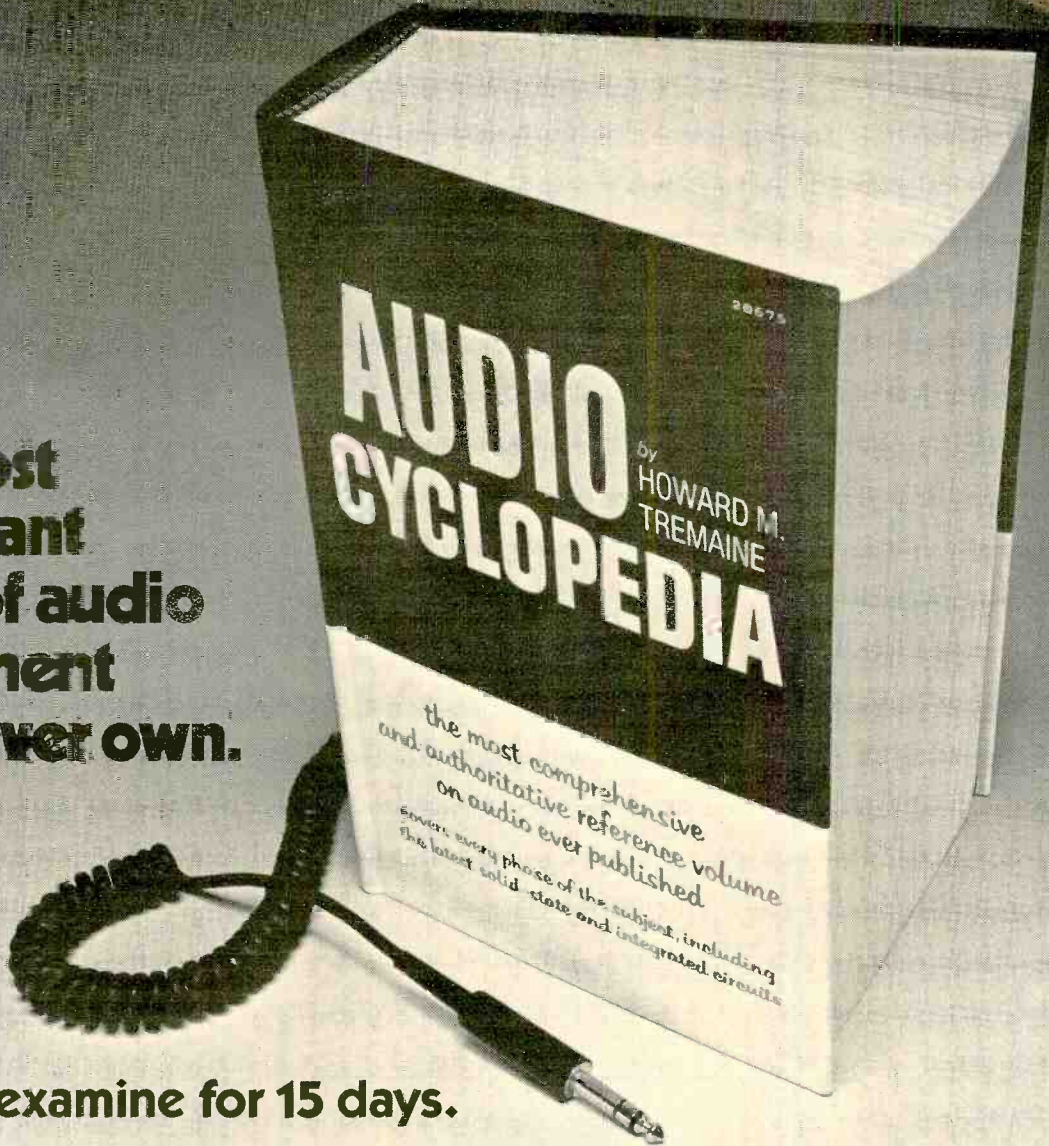


Linear-phase Speaker From Technics Uses Radial-horn Tweeter

□ The Technics SB-L300 is a three-way vented speaker system of the "linear-phase" type. As with many speakers using this design

(Continued on page 22)

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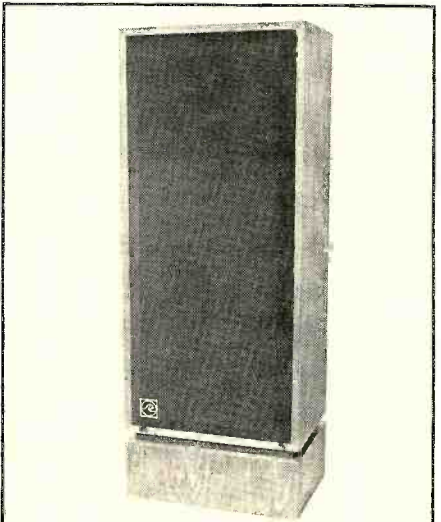
approach, its front baffle is stepped in order to assure that the output from each driver reaches the listener's ears simultaneously. The SB-L300's driver complement consists of a 12-inch, cast-frame bass driver fitted with a rubber damping ring at the voice coil, a 4-inch cone-type midrange driver also having a cast frame, and a metallized-polyester tweeter dome fitted to a radial-profile horn. Crossover frequencies for the system are 1,600 and 4,500 Hz, and there are individual level controls on the speaker's front panel for both the midrange and treble drivers. The controls permit 10 dB of level adjustment and are calibrated in 1-dB increments. Two resettable thermal relays are also provided, one for the tweeter and one for the midrange and woofer, to protect the speakers from excessive input power.

Specifications of the speaker include a frequency response of 39 to 22,000 Hz ±4 dB, a nominal impedance of 8 ohms, power handling of 90 watts as measured by DIN standards, and a sensitivity of 90 dB for a 1-watt input measured at a 1-meter distance. Dimensions of the speaker, which has a dark walnut finish and a black stretched-fabric grille, are 28 3/8 x 14 3/8 x 12 1/2 inches. Weight is 40 pounds. Price: \$250.

Circle 124 on reader service card

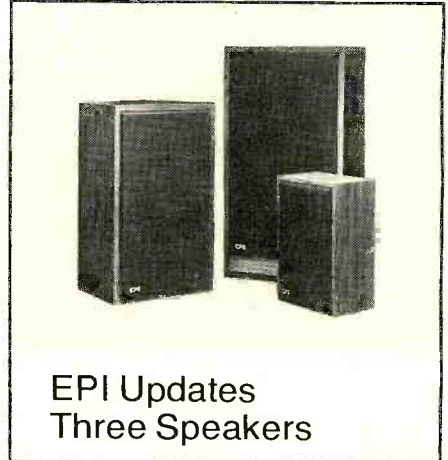
The RF-5's driver complement consists of a 12-inch roll-surround bass driver, a 1 3/4-inch soft-dome midrange unit, and a 1-inch soft-dome treble unit. Manhattan Pacific also makes the speaker available with a planar-dynamic plastic-film tweeter instead of the 1-inch dome. This version, called the RF-5R, is said to have a somewhat different sound character. Crossover frequencies of this system are 700 and 3,500 Hz (7,500 Hz for the planar-dynamic driver), and the crossover slopes differ for each driver. All crossover capacitors are of the plastic dielectric type, and coils are air-core units.

Nominal impedance of the system is 8 ohms, minimum recommended power is 10 watts, and maximum input power is 150 watts continuous. Sensitivity as measured at a 1-meter distance is 90 dB or greater for a 1-watt input. Dimensions of the enclosure, which has an oiled-walnut finish and an integral base, are 45 x 17 x 12 inches. Prices: RF-5, \$439; RF-5R, \$499. For more information write to Manhattan Pacific Audio Industries, Dept. SR, 11710 Santa Monica Boulevard, West Los Angeles, Calif. 90025.



Manhattan Pacific Loudspeaker Features Low Distortion

Manhattan Pacific Audio, a California company, has introduced their Model RF-5, a floor-standing acoustic-suspension system with a distortion specification of less than 2 per cent (second and third harmonics only) at a 3-watt input level (corresponding to a sound-pressure level of about 95 dB at a 1-meter distance).



EPI Updates Three Speakers

EPI has announced evolutionary changes in three of their loudspeakers. The updated speakers are the 70C, 120C, and 200C. All three are two-way systems and all utilize the EPI inverted-dome "air-spring" tweeter. The 70C (right) retains the same driver complement as the older Model 70—a 6-inch, long-throw bass driver and a 1-inch tweeter. The magnetic circuit of the bass driver and the enclosure size have been altered, however, resulting in improved efficiency, according to EPI. Specifications of the 70C include a frequency response of 60 to 20,000 Hz ±3 dB, an 8-ohm nominal impedance, a crossover frequency of 1,800 Hz, and a recommended minimum power of 10 watts. The enclosure is finished in walnut-grain vinyl with a black fabric grille and has dimensions of 16 x 10 1/2 x 7 1/4 inches. Price: \$79.

(Continued on page 24)

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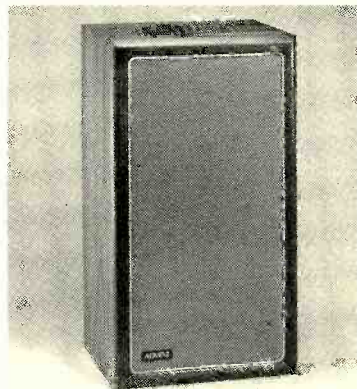
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The 120C (left) uses a 10-inch woofer in place of the older 120's 8-inch bass driver and incorporates a three-position tweeter-level control mounted on the front panel. Frequency response is 38 to 20,000 Hz \pm 3 dB, minimum recommended power is 25 watts, nominal impedance is 8 ohms, and the crossover frequency is 1,800 Hz. Dimensions of the speaker are 25 x 15 x 11 inches; cabinet finish is walnut-grain vinyl with black fabric grille. Price: \$159.

The EPI 200C (center) retains its 8-inch bass driver, 1-inch tweeter, and 12-inch passive radiator. Power handling of the bass driver has been improved through the use of new voice-coil materials, and the radiating surface of the passive radiator has been changed from a conventional paper cone to an inert foam block suspended by two surrounds. The new material is said to reduce midrange coloration caused by radiation of enclosure reflections through the passive radiator's cone. Frequency response is 36 to 20,000 Hz \pm 3 dB, recommended minimum power is 15 watts, nominal impedance is 8 ohms, and the crossover point is 1,800 Hz. Dimensions of the system are 32 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 17 x 11 inches, and the cabinet finish is oiled-walnut veneer with black grille fabric. Price: \$275.

Circle 125 on reader service card



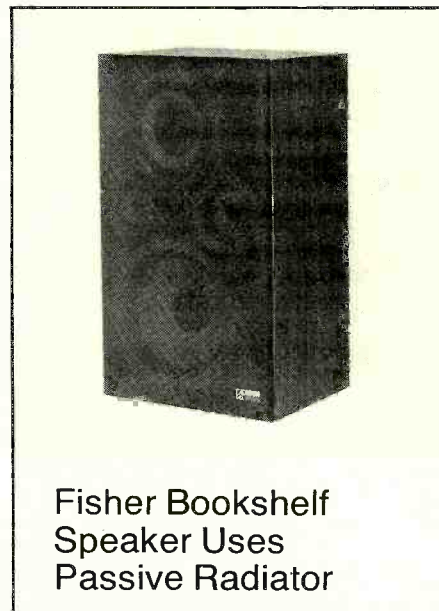
Audioanalyst Speaker Uses Sound-absorbing Grid on Baffle

□ The Audioanalyst M4v-II, a two-way vented loudspeaker, uses a sound-absorbing grid (called a PhaseMatrix) around its treble driver to reduce diffraction effects.

The M4v-II's speaker complement consists of an 8-inch bass driver with a curvilinear cone profile and a 1-inch dome tweeter. The crossover frequency is 2,000 Hz and nominal impedance is 8 ohms. Frequency response is rated as 40 to 20,000 Hz \pm 4 dB, sensitivity is 89 dB for a 1-watt input measured at 1 meter, and recommended amplifier power is 10 watts minimum, 75 watts maximum. Audioanalyst notes that the speaker's maximum output lev-

el (as measured at a 2-meter distance) is 106 dB peak.

The speaker enclosure is finished in a walnut-grain vinyl with black fabric grille and has dimensions of 21 x 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Price: \$139. For further information, write to Audioanalyst, P.O. Box 33, Terryville, Conn. 06786.



Fisher Bookshelf Speaker Uses Passive Radiator

□ Fisher's AirDyne MS145 speaker system is one of a growing number of speaker systems that use a passive radiator and a large active woofer (in this case 10-inch diameter) to reproduce bass frequencies. Two other drivers, a 5-inch cone midrange and a 3-inch cone tweeter, constitute the remainder of the driver complement. Crossover frequencies are at 1,000 and 5,000 Hz, and the speaker's nominal impedance is 8 ohms. Fisher recommends a minimum of 6.5 watts of power and specifies the maximum input power as 45 watts. Maximum acoustic-signal output is given as 104 dB sound-pressure level (measured at a 1-meter distance). Total system frequency response is 55 to 17,000 Hz, sensitivity is 91 dB for a 1-watt input (also measured at 1 meter), and the enclosure, which is finished in walnut-grain vinyl with a sculptured translucent grille, has dimensions of 24 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 14 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 11 inches. Price: \$139.95.

Circle 126 on reader service card

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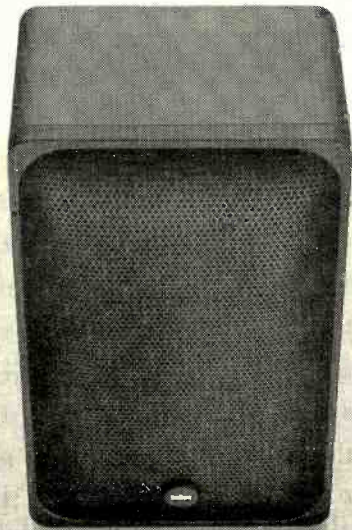
Other manufacturers may have the power to bring you power. But only Sony has the power to bring you more than just power.

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CIRCLE NO. 46 ON READER SERVICE CARD

What's in a name?



Braun L200.

Plenty. If the name is Braun, Worldwide, the name Braun is synonymous with museum quality design and flawless performance.

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In fact, hardly a week goes by without another "look alike" trying to stake a claim in the market.

However, in spite of or, perhaps, because of the sincerity of these flatterers, Braun has gone on to become the standard of reference for miniature loudspeakers.

And for a very simple reason ... they sound better. Nor is this surprising, for Braun literally created, what amounts to, a new speaker technology. And that cannot be imitated.

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Audio Q. and A.

By Larry Klein



Technical Director Klein inadvertently upsetting the calibration of a speaker test station on the Koss production line.

Nondirectional Bass?

Q. *It is frequently stated that bass frequencies are nondirectional, yet it seems to me when listening to my system that the sound of a kettle drum, for example, can be localized on the "stereo stage" as easily as the sound of a piccolo. Can you clarify this for me?*

ARNOLD KATZ
Scranton, Pa.

A. Bass tones whose frequencies are below 200 Hz or so are nondirectional, and a speaker producing a pure sine wave at or below that is almost impossible to localize by ear in a normal room. However, when a kettle drum is struck, it generates a significant amount of high-frequency transients at the moment of impact. It is these fleeting sounds that provide the directional clues. In addition, low-frequency tones produced by nonpercussive musical instruments are very rarely pure sine waves, which means that they have substantial harmonic content. It is these harmonics (which are of higher frequencies) that enable one to localize low-frequency sound sources whose fundamental tones are below the frequencies that permit localization.

Speaker Sound

Q. *I understand that many experts hold that frequency response is the major factor that differentiates the sound of one speaker system from another, yet other listeners (whom I assume to be equally knowledgeable) talk about "coloration," "warmth," "grittiness," and so forth. Which group is right?*

SUSAN ALISON
New York, N.Y.

A. Both. Deviations from a "flat" or "even" audio-frequency response are translated by the ear into a wide variety of subjective sonic experiences. Confusion arises because many of these subjective reactions seem unrelated to frequency response per se. For example, some listeners are puzzled by the fact that a speaker's—or amplifier's—midrange control (which affects frequencies at about 1,000 Hz or so) will cause vocal or instrumental solos to be projected with greater "presence" when set in the boost position. The mystery vanishes once you ap-

preciate that most frequencies within the human voice are concentrated in the midrange. A boost in that area therefore results in a voice that is emphasized relative to the background music.

Music spans a wide range of frequencies, and any emphasis or de-emphasis introduced by the reproducing system anywhere in that range is usually going to be heard as some sort of tonal coloration. You can demonstrate this for yourself if you have a three-way speaker system. Bring your ear close to the midrange driver and you'll hear the nasal coloration that results from an excess of midrange energy. When you back off to a normal listening distance, the octave-to-octave frequency balance is restored and the nasal coloration disappears. You can demonstrate the same effect with an equalizer by boosting the 1,000- to 3,000-Hz range. When the boost is excessive, a honky, nasal quality is heard in addition to a center-stage "presence" effect.

It is important to understand that many other "mysterious" subjective effects—warmth, muddiness, openness, shrillness, roughness, a metallic, glossy, veiled, or nontransparent quality—usually (but not inevitably) result from frequency-response irregularities somewhere in a system (or in the room acoustics) rather than some mysterious characteristic intrinsic to a specific component.

For example, some systems sound harsher or grittier than others, yet measurements of the components in the system reveal a normally low level of harmonic and intermodulation distortion. This has led some audio critics (and manufacturers) to invent or postulate the existence of "new" distortion mechanisms to account for what they hear. However, a "harsh" or "gritty" quality frequently results from a slight peak in the upper midrange—because that is where many normal high-frequency harmonics fall. When the frequency balance of a system is such that those normal harmonics of the musical material are reproduced with disproportionate loudness, the ear interprets the sound as "gritty," "harsh," "glassy," or whatever. Other examples could be given of the *quantity* of sound in a specific frequency band being interpreted by the ear as a difference in the *quality* of sound.

It seems to me that a scientific approach to such matters requires that one first exhaust all the conventional technical-evaluation techniques before inventing new distortions and

ways of measuring them. This is not to say that every unpleasant sound produced by a hi-fi system has a frequency-response aberration as its source; it would be silly to deny the occurrence of other forms of nonlinear distortion. But perhaps 90 per cent or more of the subtle effects that trouble the sound of hi-fi systems can usually be traced to frequency-response variations of sometimes less than 1 dB. Those audible differences—either positive or negative in their effects—that can be wiped out by the twitch of an equalizer knob (or a volume control) are not differences that I, for one, can get terribly excited about. Such differences, however, are the life's blood of devout audiophiles.

Evaluation by Equalizer

Q. I understand that it's possible to use an equalizer for speaker evaluation. How does one go about it?

S. EBAN
St. Louis, Mo.

A. My procedure is as follows: I set the equalizer controls so that they make the pair of speakers under test sound as much like my reference system as possible. The difference in response between the two pairs of speakers during A-B switching can then be read directly from the equalizer settings. I'm assuming (1) that my reference speakers have a reasonably flat frequency response in my listening room (pink noise and a real-time analyzer have shown this to be the case) and (2) that the most significant difference between a good speaker and a mediocre one is frequency response.

In defense of the second assumption, I have found that, by manipulating the equalizer's controls, any reasonably good speaker can be made to sound very much like my reference speaker. Or, conversely, I can equalize the frequency response of the reference to sound like the systems under test. It is important that such comparisons be made from a normal listening location since the variations in high-frequency dispersion can cause narrow-dispersion speakers to seem short on highs (compared with a wide-dispersion reference) if judged off-axis. (There are also other questions having to do with choice of program material, speaker positioning, and the reflectivity of the room that are too complicated to deal with here.)

In addition, an equalizer has a special virtue that I was not aware of until I incorporated one in my system about seven years ago: it is a great ear-training device. I switch back and forth between the two speakers, judge that the sample unit has more (or less) energy in a certain frequency area, and reach for the appropriate knob(s) on the equalizer. If I've "guesstimated" the frequency areas of the differences correctly, the adjustment makes the loudspeakers sound much more alike. With the equalizer's help, I've become fairly good at localizing even minor frequency aberrations by ear.

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!

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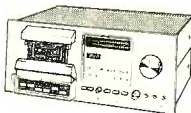
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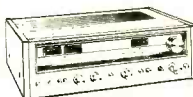


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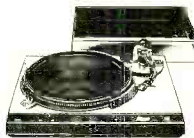


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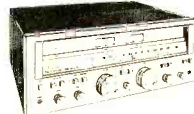


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Audio Basics

By Ralph Hodges



JUDGING SPEAKER QUALITY

THE final tallies for the minispeaker evaluations this month (see page 58) reflect something that should not come as too great a surprise: namely, that all the listeners did not fully agree on the merits (or demerits) of all the speaker systems involved.

What is the significance of such differences of opinion? Do some of us not measure up as the keen-eared judges of reproduced sound we like to think we are? Have we been unable to rise above certain prejudices and preconceptions about brand names and operating principles? Or were we confused or deceived by the differences in program material and speaker placement that we individually adopted (in many, if not most, cases the reviewers preferred to listen alone without reference to others' impressions until the evaluations were complete)?

I don't think we can rule out absolutely the possibility of a "maybe" answer to any or all of the above questions, but I think there is a more obvious and fundamental reason for such disagreements: they are simply a matter of variations in taste.

For many years now this magazine has championed the idea that taste should play no part in the evaluation of a high-fidelity loudspeaker. If a live source of music is immediately compared with the sound of a speaker playing a perfect recording of that source, the speaker either sounds exactly like it or it doesn't. If, in the opinion of any given listener, the sound of the speaker is "better" than that of the live source, it makes no difference;

the speaker is still *wrong*. Given a perfect recording, the perfect high-fidelity speaker system will sound indistinguishable from what it is trying to reproduce, and taste *should* play no part in such a judgment.

Unfortunately, the operative word in the above statement is "should." We do not yet live in a world in which perfect high-fidelity loudspeakers are available. Nor am I aware of any means of making a perfect recording with which the existence of a perfect speaker could be discovered. Consequently, no speaker I know of will stand up to direct comparison with any live sound source under *all* circumstances. A few speaker systems are good enough to be difficult to catch out, and I have heard of live-vs.-reproduced comparisons in which blindfolded listeners, while able to hear some difference, could not say with assurance which was which. But a way can always be found to reveal a loudspeaker as a contrivance for creating a mere imitation of reality and not reality itself.

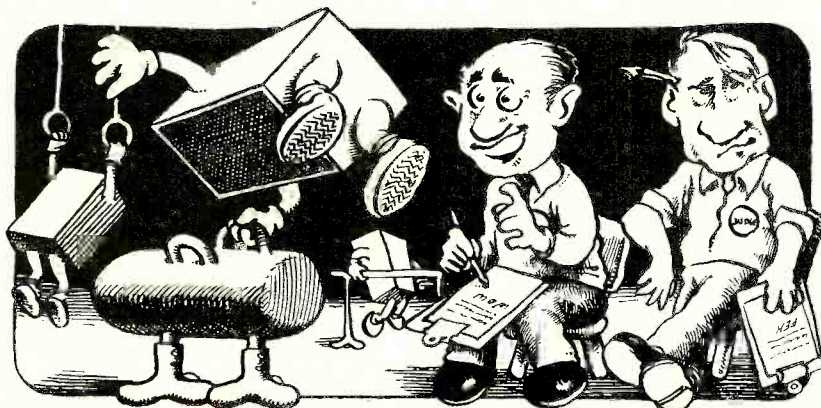
So how does a particular, inevitably imperfect speaker system get to be singled out by a critical listener as "best" amongst a universe of imperfect systems? Moreover, how does another get singled out as "second best," one "third best," and so on? Ultimately, there's only one way: by the introduction of taste—*personal* taste—into the judgment. Note, however, that this doesn't mean that taste determines all. Far from it. In a group of speaker systems in a showroom there are bound to

be several that are so *far* from being accurate reproducers that any experienced listener could detect their deficiencies with almost any program material. Then comes the process of distinguishing the exceptionally accurate from the merely fairly accurate. Listening experience and long acquaintance with the program material used are probably the best guides here. Finally, the ranks are winnowed down to perhaps three or four serious contenders for the crown. At this point, *and only at this point*, does taste become a significant factor.

Inevitably, none of the few elect is perfect, all falling short of the ideal to just about the same degree though in different ways. One may have a little too much high treble, another a little too little, a third a touch of mid-bass heaviness, and so on. You must decide which of these shortcomings is most tolerable to *you*, and which least, and that is purely and simply a matter of taste. There is no reason to expect your fellow reviewers to agree or disagree, and there is usually no valid *objective* basis on which they could do so either. It's a matter of your preferences versus theirs.

In the middle ground of any group to be evaluated, where reproduction accuracy is at best mediocre, the spread of listener opinions is likely to be at its widest; objective accuracy cannot be a consideration if it really isn't present, so taste becomes a major factor in the choices. At the bottom of the rankings, taste is just about the only criterion. Here will be clustered the speakers that are truly unpleasant to listen to. Surprisingly (or unsurprisingly), reviewers rarely disagree on just where that point sets in.

JUDGMENTS customarily fall into this general pattern whenever a group of reviewers is called upon to rank any high-fidelity product category. With experience one learns not only to be unsurprised by it, but also to expect it. (I don't think it exceeds the bounds of journalistic or professional discretion to note that *none* of us use the same speaker systems at home, and yet all of us have no difficulty respecting the choices of the others.) Consumers new to the high-fidelity experience have a tendency to agonize over the choice of a speaker system, believing that there must be some ideal "best"—or at least some "best" for the money—that could be unearthed if only the right "objective" guidance and information were available. We're sorry to say that we think otherwise. For any listener, the best speaker system first makes a reasonably close approach to objective accuracy, then proves its ability to accommodate well to the acoustic environment you'll use it in *and* to your taste in reproduced sound. It is worthwhile cultivating (educating) this taste to the point where you are fully aware of it. The classical-music listener in particular has a choice of the same repertoire on any number of different labels, and many of these labels have a distinctive sonic approach—close-up or distant perspectives, bright or subdued high frequencies, etc. From these you can learn what your listening preferences are, and these can moreover be confirmed by experimenting with different seats in auditoriums and concert halls. This should simplify your choice of a loudspeaker considerably. In our view, taste is not the most important criterion in that choice, nor even the most sensible. But when dealing with products that are all in the same "goodness" ballpark, it is certainly the *final* one. □



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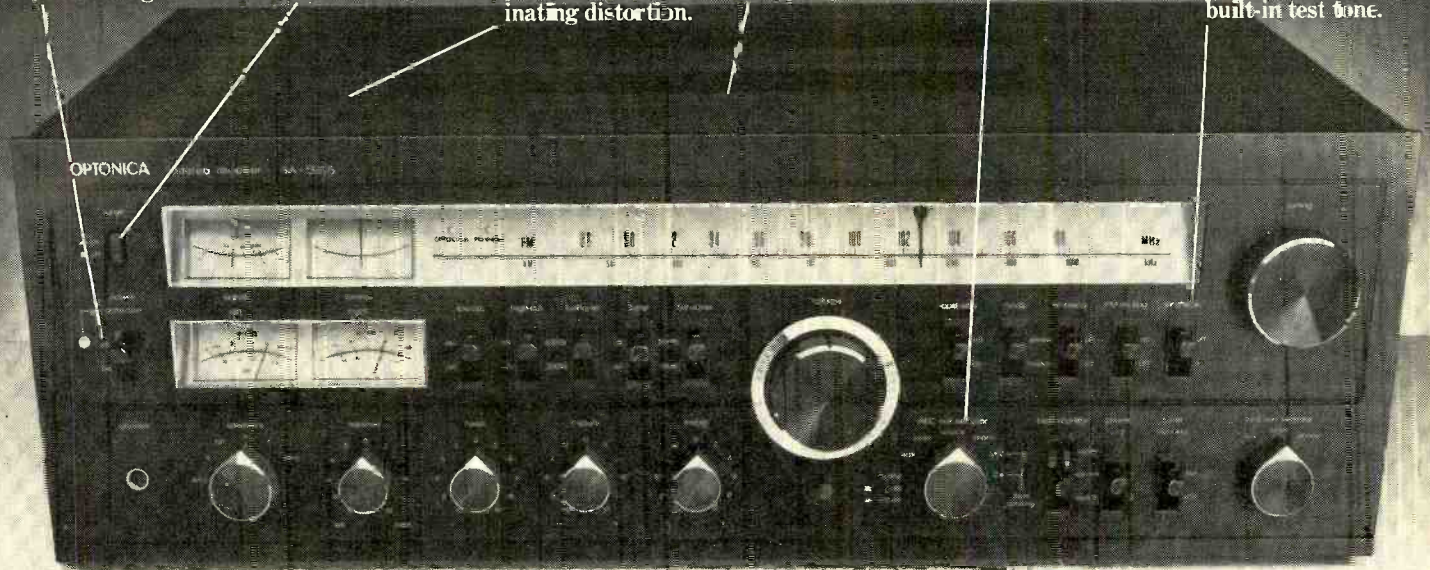
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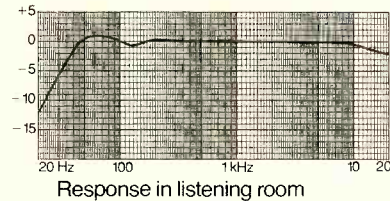
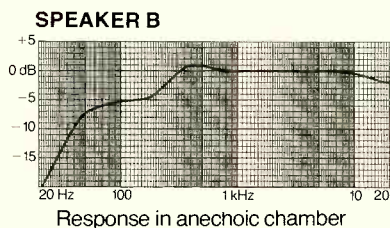
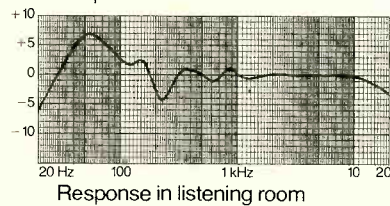
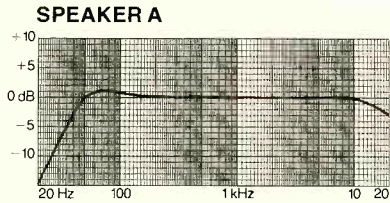
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Tape Talk

By Craig Stark



Signal-to-noise Ratios

Q. What is the difference between a "weighted" and an "unweighted" signal-to-noise ratio? Also, what are "A" weighting and "CCIR/ARM" weighting, and which is the better?

BARBARA FINCH
Decatur, Ga.

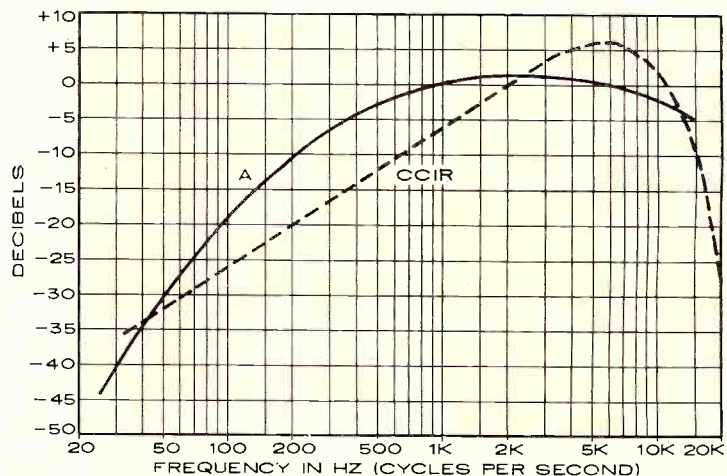
A. Measuring the signal part of a tape deck's signal-to-noise ratio is a fairly straightforward procedure. You record a mid- or low-frequency tone at the highest level possible before the tape starts to distort the tone excessively, and then read off the playback output level on a high-quality laboratory meter. ("Excessive" distortion is usually taken to mean 3 per cent in this country, while 5 per cent is common elsewhere, but the difference in output level between the two readings is not very great.)

Measuring the noise is somewhat more complicated. Leaving all the recorder's controls unchanged from the previous measurement, you record on the tape again, but this time with *no* input signal. The "tape hiss" you hear when you play back this zero-input "recording" represents the *noise* part of the signal-to-noise ratio, but neither the ear nor the meter responds in quite the same way. For

one thing, the signal measurement uses a single frequency (typically between 315 and 1,000 Hz), whereas noise usually contains an enormous range of frequencies (normally extending both above and below the range of human audibility) whose instantaneous values vary widely. Tape noise (which has been compared to white noise) has more energy per octave above 1,000 Hz than it has below. This fact, combined with the finding that the ear is more sensitive to low-level high frequencies than to low frequencies, is why we speak of tape "hiss," not "roar" or "rumble."

In an *unweighted* noise measurement the usual "average-responding" lab meter treats each frequency within the noise spectrum as an equal contributor to a kind of quasi-rms (root mean square) average of the whole. In a *weighted* noise measurement, on the other hand, a filter is inserted between the tape deck and the meter so that the frequency response of the noise-registering instrument will more accurately reflect what the ear hears.

The pioneer research into the "frequency response" of the ear at various volume levels was done many years ago by Fletcher and Munson, and the widely used A-weighting curve reflects their findings at a low (30 phon) sound level. As shown in the accompanying graph, A-weighting "discounts" very low-frequency noise components (at 30 Hz, for ex-



Compared with the long-established A-weighting curve, the CCIR/ARM curve accents the "hissy" part of the spectrum and de-emphasizes lows.

ample, the noise would have to be some 40 dB higher in level than noise centered at 1,000 Hz to provide the same meter reading).

More recent research by the European CCIR standards organization into the "annoyance value" of noise at various frequencies suggests weighting by the other curve shown in the graph, and this system (used with the typical average-responding meter—hence "CCIR/ARM") has been vigorously advocated by Dolby Laboratories. As can be seen, the CCIR curve gives a higher proportionate "weight" to noise components in the 2,500- to 12,000-Hz range and an even lower significance to noise in the 45- to 2,500-Hz area than does A-weighting.

As to which is better—A-weighting or CCIR/ARM weighting—the question could only be resolved by an enormously costly and time-consuming investigation into psychoacoustics using statistically significant population samples throughout the world. In any case, A-weighting is accepted as *significant* by a host of national and international standards organizations (JIS, IEC, IEEE, NAB, etc.) and is so widely used that if you see a recorder's signal-to-noise ratio expressed as "so-and-so many dB (wtd.)," it is safe to say that the "wtd." involved is A-weighting. At the same time, the CCIR/ARM method of noise measurement is certainly gaining in popularity and international acceptance, and, given the typical noise spectrum of *tape*, my *instinct* would be to go with the CCIR/ARM weighting curve. Either is vastly more significant than an "unweighted" noise measurement, however.

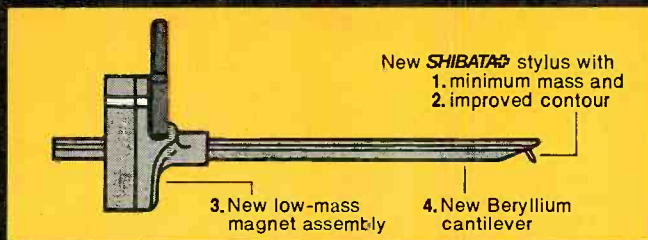
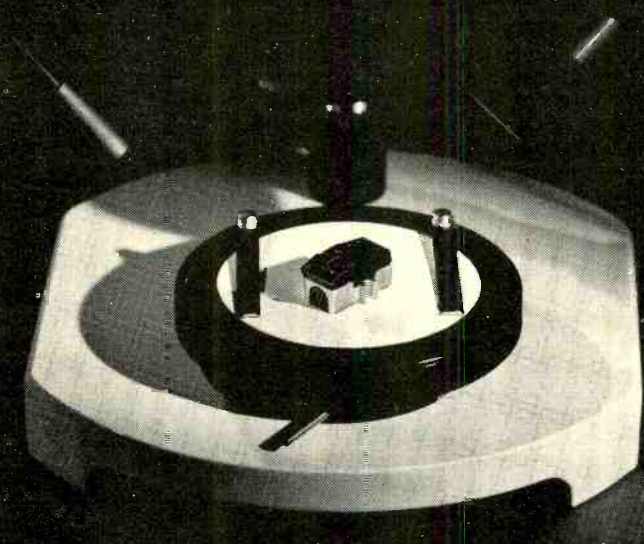
Open-reel Metal Tape

Q. *Recently I've been considering the purchase of one of the better open-reel decks—in the \$1,000 to \$1,500 class. Do you think the development of metal tape for open-reel machines will make such a unit obsolete in the near future?*

DONALD ROSEN
Las Vegas, Nev.

A. The introduction of metal-particle tapes in the open-reel format—if it comes about at all—is likely to be a number of years down the road. There is currently available at least one open-reel machine in your price bracket that has been designed to accept the metal-particle tapes if and when they become available, but not even that manufacturer has so far been able to get ¼-inch metal-particle tape samples for testing and design purposes! Part of the problem, of course, is the relatively low level of open-reel sales generally, but another part of the problem is that it seems quite certain that when metal comes to open-reel, the equalization standards will have to be changed, and standard changes are always a slow business. (Metal *cassettes* use the same 70-microsecond playback equalization as CrO₂ tapes, so no standard changes are needed—only improved record and erase heads and more powerful bias oscillators.) If you're concerned for the very long term, however, you might either get the metal-compatible deck or at least inquire whether retrofit kits will be made available for the other open-reel decks you're considering. My guess is that in your elevated price class they probably will, especially since it's easier to modify an open-reel machine than a cassette deck.

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Technical Talk

By Julian D. Hirsch



Larry Klein

• Computerized Speaker Measurement •

I RECENTLY had the opportunity to see how the research division of Acoustic Research (AR) uses computers to gain insight into loudspeaker performance that would have been pure conjecture in the past. This is not really a "new" technique, having been used for some time by several speaker manufacturers, but what is extraordinary in AR's application of it is their use of a low-cost "personal" computer to perform some tasks which until recently could be handled only by AR's standard large computer costing perhaps twenty or thirty times as much.

I watched the frequency response of a speaker being plotted under the equivalent of anechoic conditions, in a normally "live" room, in a few seconds. The measurement concept is based on the relationship that exists between the response of a system in the frequency domain (what we usually think of as its "frequency response") and in the time domain (what we see on an oscilloscope display of its acoustic output as picked up by a microphone).

When a speaker is driven by a single very short impulse, its output (which is heard as a simple "click") contains all the information needed to extract not only its frequency response but even its group-delay and phase-shift characteristics. A mathematical process known as the "fast Fourier transform" (FFT) is employed to convert the data from one form to the other. Although this computation is relatively easy for a computer—even a fairly small one—it would be impossibly complex and time-consuming for a human being. The effect of the transformation is to convert the single pulse (with any attendant overshoots or other distortions), as picked up by the microphone, into a frequency-response curve that is equivalent to what would be measured in a

very large anechoic chamber. A "perfect" pulse from the speaker would be possible only with a perfect speaker having infinite bandwidth and no phase or time-delay distortions.

The demonstration I saw at AR was conducted in the office of the company's director of research, Robert Berkovitz. (A similar demonstration later took place in STEREO REVIEW's listening room in its New York offices.) The computer, an Apple II, was connected to a video-monitor display and a "floppy-disc" memory that contained the AR-designed program for the FFT operation. The computer itself generated a 10-microsecond pulse that was passed through an external amplifier and drove the speaker. A microphone was placed a few feet in front of the speaker, and its output was returned to the computer for processing.

WHEN the system was first turned on, the computer's video readout asked a number of questions about the test conditions, such as the number of pulses to be averaged. (In a quiet room, a single pulse is sufficient, but averaging a dozen or so pulses improves the signal-to-noise ratio.) When the instructions had been given, the computer sent out a sequence of identical pulses, each of which sounded like a sharp "click." With each click, the pulse response on the monitor emerged more distinctly from the background noise, resembling what one would see on a storage oscilloscope (which is effectively what the computer and monitor were simulating at the time).

A couple of additional operations moved the pulse (which was now stored in the computer's memory) to the left edge of the screen and established the time interval during which the FFT process would take place. Finally,

the computer went into full operation, and in about 3 seconds the pulse display on the screen was replaced by a frequency-response curve, complete with calibrated frequency and amplitude scales (Figure 1). An interesting variation on this display can be obtained by having the computer make a sequence of frequency-response plots at successive time intervals after the initial pulse. The monitor then displays an equivalent number of response plots which together take on a three-dimensional appearance and give an overall view of the relationship between frequency, time, and amplitude. Ringing, resonances, and various diffraction effects in the speaker system can be seen quite clearly in this type of presentation (Figure 2).

Similar measurements have been used by AR, KEF, B&W, and others for some time, and they have been presented at technical meetings in papers dealing with some of the findings the technique has led to. Until now, the ability to make these measurements has been limited to those organizations able to invest perhaps \$50,000 to \$100,000 in a computer with sufficient accuracy and speed. The fact that it can now be done with a home-type computer about the size of a portable typewriter and costing only a few thousand dollars is mind-boggling, to say the least.

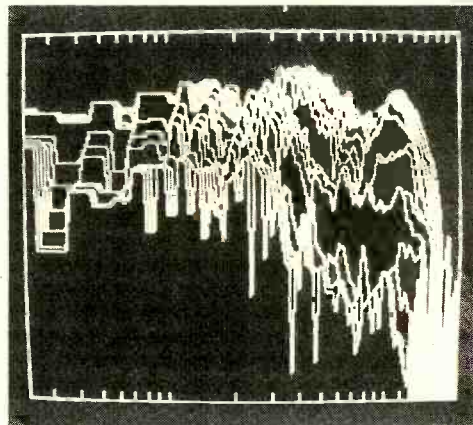
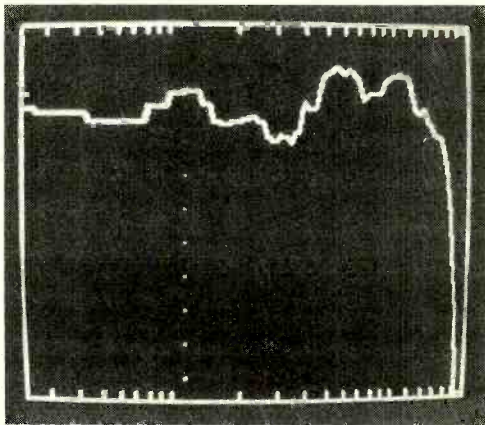
This development, moreover, turns out to be a particularly timely one. Preliminary work by the IHF Loudspeaker Standards Committee (on which STEREO REVIEW's Technical Director Larry Klein and I both serve) makes it apparent that a universally available standard test environment will be needed in order to specify the performance of a speaker system. For many practical reasons, this will probably have to be anechoic (a reverberant chamber would be preferable in many re-

Tested This Month

Nakamichi 582 Cassette Deck • B&W DM2/II Speaker System
Ortofon Concorde 30 Phono Cartridge • Mitsubishi DA-F20 FM Tuner
Onkyo A-7070 Integrated Amplifier

Frequency-response curves of a minispeaker as photographed from the video monitor of an inexpensive computer speaker-performance analyzer developed by Acoustic Research.

Fig. 1, near right, shows the speaker's on-axis frequency response. "Three-dimensional" Fig. 2, far right, shows the response as it changes over a period of a few hundredths of a second.



spects, but a suitable one is large and costly and leaves much to be desired in calibration accuracy). Although most speaker manufacturers have anechoic chambers, they are rarely as large as one would like to use for measuring a full speaker system, and, in any case, no independent reviewer has a suitable chamber, or is likely to have one.

Therefore, the possibility of simulating the results otherwise obtainable only with a large anechoic chamber under normal live-room conditions and for a relatively modest investment is most attractive to a reviewer as well as to most speaker manufacturers. The work of the standards committee is in an early stage, and whatever form the final standard

takes it will not be in effect for some time. Nevertheless, it is becoming clear that the time is coming, and fairly soon, when we can no longer avoid moving our heretofore analog measurement world into the digital computer realm. Judging from what I have seen of the potential, the major problem we will face with computerized speaker testing will be the interpretation of the incredible amount of information it makes available in such a short time—a true embarrassment of riches!

In closing, I would like to mention that on my visit to Bang & Olufsen in Denmark (discussed last month) I saw how they use a computer to model phono-cartridge parameters

and in effect design a cartridge in moments, including a plot of its frequency response and other characteristics. They also use FFT processing to generate a "three-dimensional" plot of the cartridge output (exactly analogous to the FFT speaker plots) derived from a simulated impulse signal and hypothetical cartridges (or real cartridges whose mechanical and electrical parameters had been entered into the computer memory). I suppose that if a suitable impulse test record were available, it would be simple to obtain nearly instantaneous phono-cartridge response plots in the same manner one would for speakers. The possibilities for computerized audio testing are obviously endless.

Equipment Test Reports

By Hirsch-Houck Laboratories



Nakamichi 582 Cassette Deck

THE Nakamichi Model 582 is the first of the new generation of "metal-ready" cassette decks we have been able to test in a genuine production-line (rather than prototype) version. But even without the ability to use the new tape, its many innovative design and performance features, attractive styling, and remarkable ease of operation would make it one of the finest cassette recorders we have tested.

The 582 is a front-loading deck that uses three d.c. motors in a dual-capstan, fully logic-controlled transport and has three separate heads (erase, record, and playback) to provide complete facilities for monitoring from the tape. The 582's PLL (phase-locked-loop) d.c. servomotor and dual-capstan drive system are not unusual in a high-priced deck, but the 582 goes a step further, using capstans of different diameters and flywheels of different

sizes and masses to prevent the reinforcement of low-frequency "wow." Similarly, flutter is reduced through the use of what Nakamichi calls a "diffused-resonance" transport construction, in which metal and plastic parts are combined in such a way as to decouple and damp vibrational modes. The transport itself is not actuated either by mechanical levers or by electrically operated solenoids. Rather, the pushbuttons activate an entirely separate motor-and-cam system whose rotation is determined by a logic-controlled, integrated-circuit operational amplifier. In this way the release of the brakes, application of take-up torque, and movement of the head assembly against the tape are achieved without the noise and jarring that often accompany solenoid controls. A third d.c. motor is used to supply the drive to the tape hubs.

The head configuration is no less unique. The recording and playback heads are made of crystal permalloy and are housed in entirely separate cases, but they have been miniaturized to the point where both can fit within the center opening of the cassette, which Phil-

(Continued on page 36)

ESS Wins... Again

U.C.L.A. experiment repeated: in comparative tests, students attending the University of Wisconsin judge ESS speakers superior to Bose, Pioneer, JBL, Infinity, AR and Cerwin Vega.

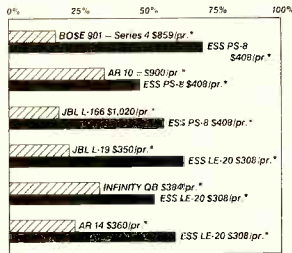
Hundreds of students participating in a series of blind listening tests at two separate universities have now judged ESS speakers superior in performance to other top brands by increasingly significant margins.



The controlled direct comparison tests, conducted under the supervision of an independent national testing laboratory, were designed to simulate home listening conditions. Loudness differences were electronically equalized, and all speakers were positioned for optimal performance.

Without knowledge of speaker brands, the students listened in groups of 30 or less to the same musical material on each of the speakers. They were then asked to choose which speaker sounded best in terms of clarity, accuracy and freedom from distortion.

"Of particular significance is the fact that the pairings on the two campuses were not identical," report ESS technicians. "Even though different speaker matchings were made, the participants still chose ESS in 13 out of 14 comparison situations at both universities. And the 14th test at each campus was too close to be statistically valid." In many cases, as the graph reveals, ESS speakers were chosen over far more expensive competing loudspeakers by significant margins.



ESS speakers differ from all other conventional speakers because they alone incorporate the ESS Heil air-motion transformer midrange-tweeter (invented by Dr. Oskar Heil, creator of the FET), licensed exclusively to ESS. This unique principle of sound reproduction has been called by one reviewer "the first real breakthrough in loudspeaker design in over 50 years." By squeezing air like a bellows instead of pushing it, the Heil achieves virtually "instant acceleration." This increased velocity permits the Heil to provide a degree of clarity, spaciousness and freedom from distortion unattainable by conventional drivers.

ESS will be conducting similar comparison tests on college campuses across the nation. Watch for the dramatic results from Georgia Tech. Or better yet, visit your local ESS dealer and take the ESS Listening Test yourself. See if you can't appreciate the difference.



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sound as clear as light

*Suggested Retail Price

ips originally intended to house only a combination record/playback head. The close proximity of the two heads, combined with a playback head shield that protrudes sufficiently to push the cassette's pressure pad out of the way completely, provides several advantages, according to Nakamichi. First, excessive wear, scrape-flutter modulation noise, and high-frequency skewing errors introduced by the pressure pad are eliminated. Second, the design compromises inherent in a so-called "sandwich" head, in which separate record and playback elements are housed in the same case, are eliminated without introducing the inconvenience (normally associated with separate cassette record and playback heads) of having to readjust the azimuth (perpendicularity) of the record head each time a new cassette is inserted.

To minimize the effects of normal head wear, the record and playback heads on the 582 are slotted (by means of an exclusive

ment. We did not find any such adjustments necessary.

The headphone jack is located to the left of the cassette opening, and on its right are six touch buttons, each with a built-in LED indicator, that perform the transport-control functions: PAUSE/CUE, REC, F.FWD, REW, STOP, and PLAY. Each of these buttons has a light but positive "feel," and the PAUSE/CUE can be used in the two fast-wind modes as well as to interrupt PLAY and RECORD. When the PAUSE/CUE button is depressed during high-speed winding, the tape speed is reduced and the heads are brought nearly into contact with the tape so that one can hear the actual recorded material (though at a much higher pitch) and so find the exact beginning of a selection. All modes except record can be entered directly, without going through the stop position, thanks to the logic circuitry.

Immediately above the transport-control buttons are the EJECT and COUNTER RESET

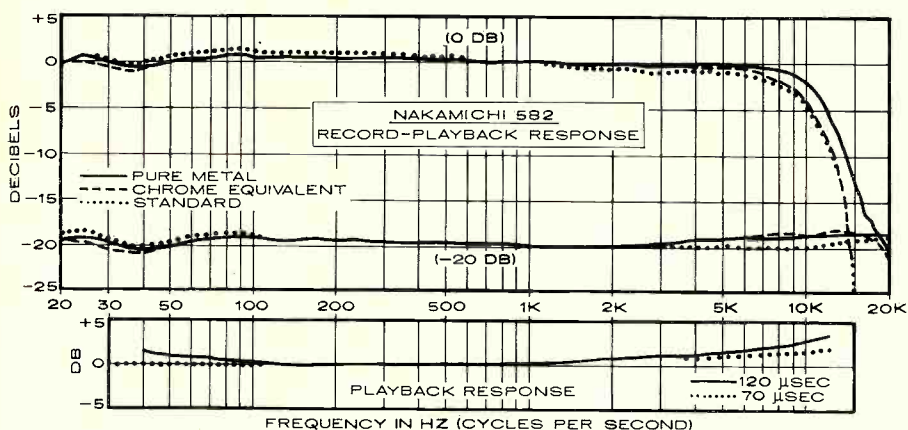
connector, and an accessory socket for powering a microphone mixer or a wired remote-control device. The 582 measures approximately 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide, 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches high, and 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches deep; it weighs a little under 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds. Suggested retail price: \$890.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** We measured the playback frequency response of the Nakamichi 582 using both TDK AC-337 ferric and BASF DIN-standard CrO₂ tapes. Both showed a slightly rising characteristic in the very high frequencies, which we have found in previous Nakamichi recorders and which Nakamichi explains by arguing that the test tapes themselves are manufactured to compensate for the treble losses in wider-gap playback heads. In any case, the rise is not significant, and it can easily be compensated for, if necessary, by a slight adjustment of the amplifier treble control. What we found astonishing, however, was that this was the first deck we have measured in which the response was identical (within ± 0.1 dB) whether the test tapes were played in the normal forward direction or turned over and played on side two. Test tapes are recorded across the full width of the tape, and so *should* give the same response in either direction, but there is usually a discrepancy of a couple of decibels in the high-frequency response, indicating skewing error within the cassette. By eliminating the usual reliance on a pressure pad, the 582 has helped us to calibrate the differences in our calibrated alignment tapes with greater accuracy.

Overall record-playback frequency response, distortion, and signal-to-noise ratios were measured using the samples of Nakamichi EX-II (ferric), SX (CrO₂-equivalent), and ZX (metal) supplied with the machine, though checks with other premium-grade tapes in each category showed similar results. (Our tests of the metal-particle tape would indicate that our early samples were slightly overbiased by the 582, as indicated by a slight falloff in the highest frequencies, but this was easily corrected with the deck's bias control. As the accompanying graph indicates, the frequency response at the usual -20-dB measuring point was within +1.5, -1 dB throughout the 20- to 20,000-Hz range with all three tape types, which is truly extraordinary performance. At a 0-dB level, the advantage of metal-particle tape appears to begin at approximately 7,000 Hz, increasing progressively above that point. At the low end of the frequency spectrum the Nakamichi 582 exhibited virtually no trace of the "head-bump" effects present in almost every other tape recorder we have encountered, and its response was almost perfectly flat down to 20 Hz.

Record-playback distortion at 0 dB, which corresponds to the Dolby-level marking on the peak-reading indicators, was 0.45 per cent for the ferric EX-II and 0.36 per cent for the SX and metal ZX tapes; the 3 per cent third-harmonic distortion point on the three tape types was not reached until the input levels indicated +8, +7.7, and +9 dB, respectively. (All of these, being above the maximum +7-dB indication of the 582's meters, were read on an external laboratory voltmeter.) Referred to the 3 per cent distortion point, signal-to-noise ratios (unweighted and without Dolby noise reduction) were 52.4, 54, and 55 dB for the ferric, CrO₂-type, and metal tape, respectively. Using the Dolby system and

(Continued on page 38)



etching process) at the top and bottom edges where the tape passes across them. This type of construction, unique (to our knowledge) among cassette decks, harks back to earlier professional open-reel days; it prevents the development of a "wear groove" on the surface of the head that can prematurely end its useful life. And the double-gap ferrite erase head of the 582, utilizing what Nakamichi calls the "direct-flux" principle, produced, in our tests, the highest degree of erasure on metal tape (a potential problem for some machines) that we have either measured or even heard claimed.

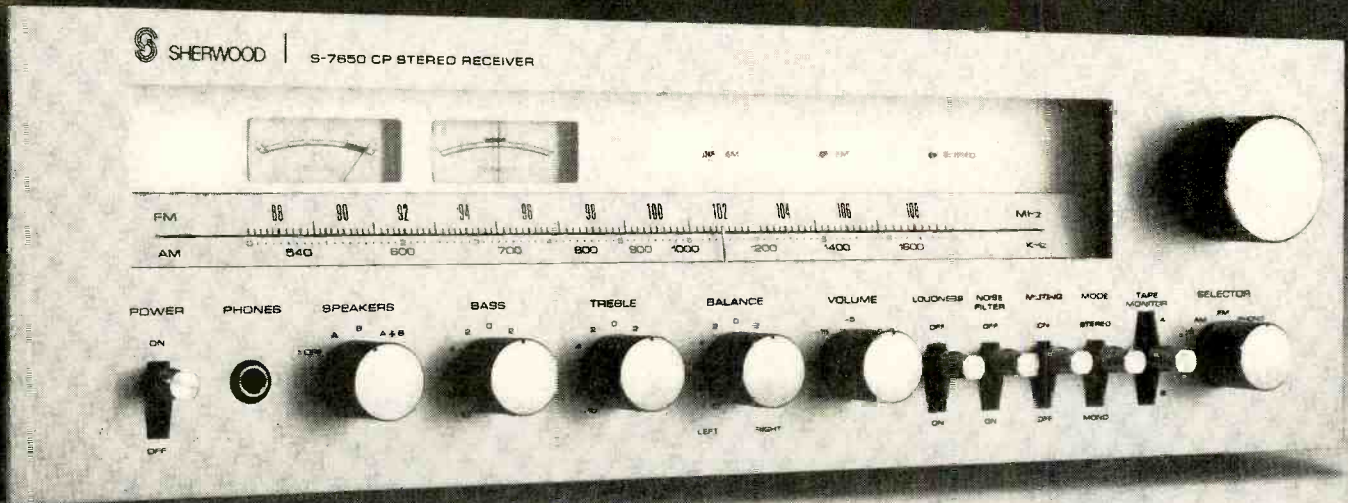
A touch of the EJECT button smoothly opens the lid of the illuminated cassette well on the left side of the 582, so that the cassette can be inserted, tape downward, into slides on the back of the lid. The front portion of the lid is made of clear plastic, affording a complete view of the label area and tape remaining on a side, and it is easily removed for access to the heads for routine cleaning and demagnetizing operations. Beneath the removable section of the cassette-well door are well-marked openings for adjustments to the tape guide and the height of the record and playback heads, as well as for record- and playback-head azimuth alignment. While most of these should be left to the technically advanced user, a supplementary instruction sheet gives clear guidance on adjusting the record-head azimuth (using the 582's built-in test-tone generator) to compensate for the possible effects of any jarring during ship-

pushbuttons and a series of twelve screwdriver-adjustable controls to optimize the bias and record levels (for Dolby-calibration purposes) of the left and right channels for ferric, high-bias (CrO₂-type), and metal tapes. Three large knobs on the right side of the front panel set the overall playback level, the overall record level, and the balance between channels. There are no separate microphone-level controls, though a suitably high-quality microphone mixer, powered from a socket on the rear panel, is available as an accessory.

Also on the right side of the front panel is a series of seven switches plus the on-off switch. One is used to set the memory-rewind feature or to activate the deck (using an external timer) in either the play or record mode. The second and third set the bias and equalization to suit the type of tape chosen. Next is a switch for the built-in test-tone oscillators of the 582, which operate at either 400 or 15,000 Hz and are used to optimize the bias and Dolby-system levels for the particular tape being used. The Dolby noise-reduction switch has three positions: out, in, and MPX, the last of which inserts a sharp cutoff filter (above 15 kHz) to prevent interference with proper Dolby decoding that might arise from FM's 19-kHz multiplex pilot signal. Finally, there is a small switch that permits monitoring either in the "source" or the "tape" mode. The peak-reading meters located above these switches are calibrated from -40 to +7 dB.

On the rear panel are the customary phono-jack input and output connectors, a DIN-type

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* Rated @ 45 watts per channel, minimum RMS, into 8 ohms, from 20 to 20,000 Hz, with no more than 0.2% Total Harmonic Distortion, and with no more than 0.2% Intermodulation Distortion.	
Total Harmonic Distortion at rated output:	
20 Hz - 0.5%	1 kHz - 0.2%
20 kHz - 0.65%	
Power at rated intermodulation distortion:	60 watts
Phono Preamp (for Total Harmonic Distortion @ 100 milliwatts, 1 kHz input):	0.002%
Phono Preamp (for Input Overload @ 15,000 Hz):	98 dB
Signal necessary for 100 dB quieting in stereo:	45 dB
Speaker operation at 1 kHz:	80
<small>I certify that these are the results of my actual measurements, made on the above referenced unit. All measurements were made with a line voltage of 120 VAC, a load speaker impedance of 8 ohms and an antenna input impedance of 300 ohms. All amplifier measurements were made with the antenna disconnected and an average of the two channels in the reported figure.</small>	
Technician: <i>[Signature]</i> Date: <i>[Date]</i> Sherwood Audio Products	

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CCIR/ARM weighting, these improved to 65.4, 67.1, and 69.4 dB, which are among the best figures we have measured for a cassette deck.

Wow and flutter measured 0.038 per cent (weighted rms) and 0.065 per cent (DIN peak-weighted) using a TDK AC-341 test tape, and we suspect that this is the residual error on the tape. Using a record-rewind-playback technique, the two figures read 0.052 per cent and 0.08 per cent, respectively.

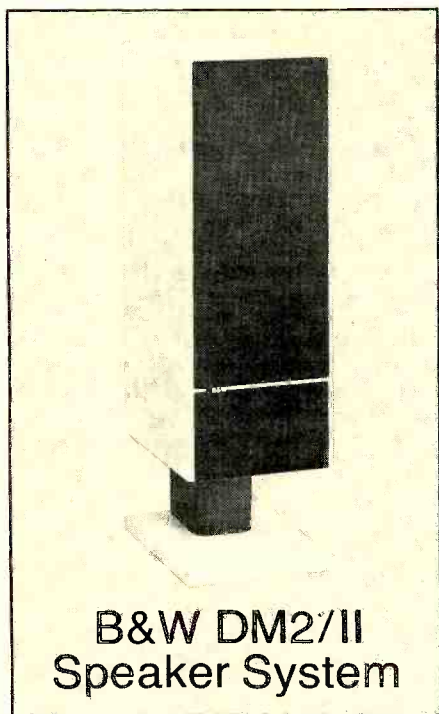
The Dolby (0-dB) marking on the meters of the 582 read +1 for both channels, but even without any readjustment the overall record-playback Dolby tracking was within ± 0.5 dB. The slightly slow peak-reading meters registered perfect results (within our measurement capabilities) on the 300-millisecond tone

bursts used to check VU characteristics, though they tended to under-read slightly with shorter tone bursts. Headphone volume was more than adequate with nominal 8-ohm phones, though it was a bit low with 600-ohm models. An input voltage of 54 millivolts was required for a 0-dB meter indication and provided an output of 0.67 volt. Fast-forward and rewind times for a C-60 cassette were a fast 51 seconds in either direction. The ability to erase metal tape, a potential problem, measured 70 dB at 100 Hz, and it was beyond our spectrum analyzer's measurement limits at 1,000 Hz and above.

● **Comment.** It was evident after all this that the Nakamichi 582 is one of the finest cassette decks we have tested, and subsequent listen-

ing evaluations reinforced that judgment. Using high-quality ferric or chromium-dioxide-type cassettes, we found no audible degradation, in direct A-B comparison, with any FM broadcast and its copy, and we detected only the slightest discernible high-frequency loss when using the most demanding direct-to-disc and master-tape material at our disposal. With the metal tape we could not detect even this loss, though we could detect an inconsequential difference when using "pink-noise" test signals whose record level was slightly above -10 dB on the meters. By no means cheap at \$890, the Nakamichi 582 is plainly, however, one of the finest cassette recorders currently available.

Circle 140 on reader service card



**B&W DM2/II
Speaker System**

THE British-made B&W DM2/II is a compact, three-way speaker system designed to deliver exceptionally smooth, uncolored sound under normal home-listening conditions. The woofer has an 8-inch-diameter cone, made of Bextrene, whose long-throw suspension allows an excursion of 0.8 inch. It is housed in a vented (ducted-port) enclosure. There is a crossover at 400 Hz to a 4-inch Bextrene-cone midrange driver. The midrange is in an acoustically isolated compartment within the cabinet, and its rear radiation is absorbed by a tapered section filled with wool. The second crossover, at 3,000 Hz, is to a 1-inch soft-dome tweeter. The three drivers are aligned vertically, with the midrange unit at the top and the tweeter between it and the woofer.

The crossover network of the B&W DM2/

II is a relatively sophisticated design, using third-order Butterworth filters in all sections. It has a total of nineteen elements. The balance of levels among the three drivers is set by the system and driver design, and there are no user-adjustable controls. A subpanel, set into the rear of the cabinet, contains the connectors and a protective fuse.

The B&W DM2/II system has a nominal 8-ohm impedance and is rated to deliver a 95-dB sound-pressure level (SPL) at 1 meter with a 9-volt input (equivalent to about 10 watts). The frequency response is specified as 50 to 18,000 Hz ± 3 dB, and the polar response of the system is rated at ± 2 dB over 40 degrees horizontally and ± 1 dB over 10 degrees vertically. The DM2/II is recommended for use with amplifiers rated to deliver 25 to 200 watts into 8-ohm loads.

The wooden cabinet (available in walnut, teak, or black-ash finish) is 28 inches high, 10 5/8 inches wide, and 13 inches deep. An optional stand raises the bottom of the cabinet

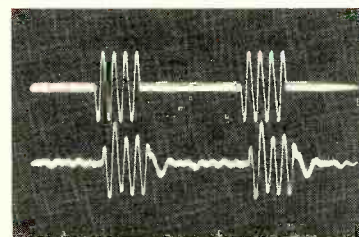
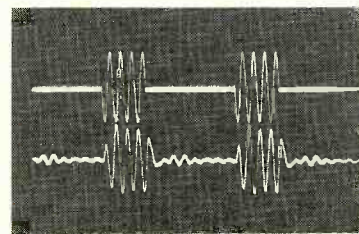
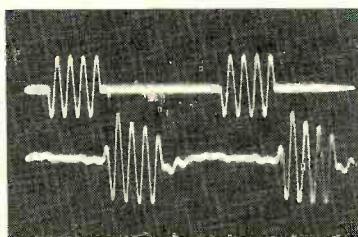
about 7 inches above the floor. The speaker weighs about 48½ pounds; with the stand, its weight is nearly 60 pounds. Price: DM2/II, \$425; optional stand, \$40.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** The integrated frequency response of the B&W DM2/II in the reverberant field of our test room agreed very closely with the individual frequency-response curves enclosed with the speakers. Although the latter were presumably made under anechoic conditions, the small response variations occurred at approximately the same frequencies and with the same amplitudes we measured.

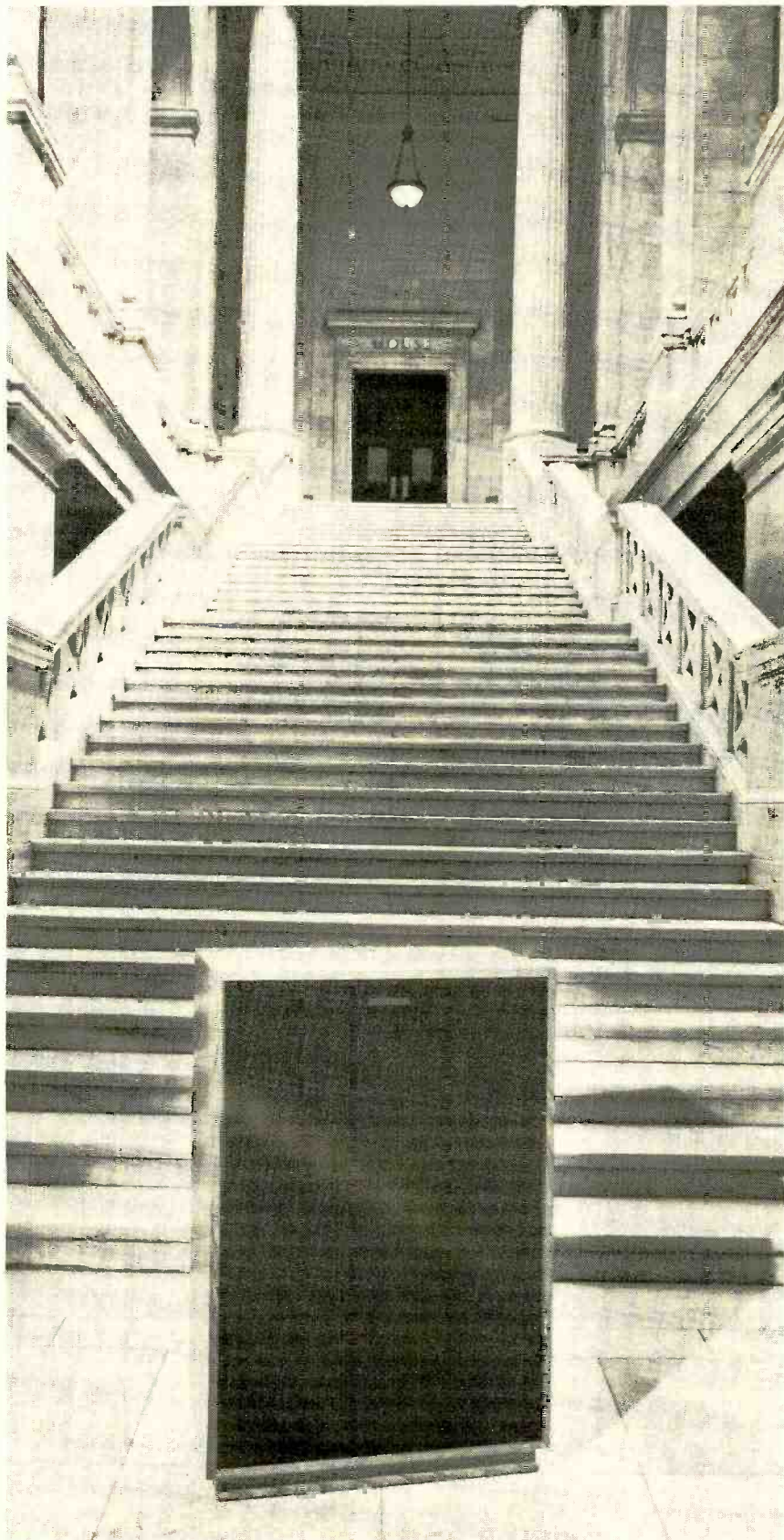
The overall response was impressively smooth, within ± 3.5 dB from 40 to 20,000 Hz. There was a slight low-frequency rise (about 1 to 1.5 dB in the 100-Hz region), and we found a small high-frequency emphasis in the uppermost audible octave—at its maximum, +4 dB at about 15,000 Hz. The only other de-

(Continued on page 40)

Tone-burst response of the DM2/II was uniformly good, as shown by oscillograph photos at (clockwise) 100, 1,000, and 10,000 Hz. Upper traces are the input signals, lower traces the speaker output.



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parture from a straight-line response was a slight down-and-up "jog" of about 2 dB between 1,000 and 2,000 Hz in the operating range of the midrange driver.

The bass distortion, measured with constant input levels corresponding to 1 and 10 watts into 8 ohms, was very low down to 50 Hz, where it measured about 1 per cent at 1 watt and less than 3 per cent at 10 watts. It rose fairly rapidly at lower frequencies, setting the effective lower limit of the system response at about 35 to 40 Hz.

The impedance reached a minimum of 5 ohms at 120 Hz, but at most audio frequencies it was at least 8 ohms, with the maximum impedance of about 20 ohms occurring at 50

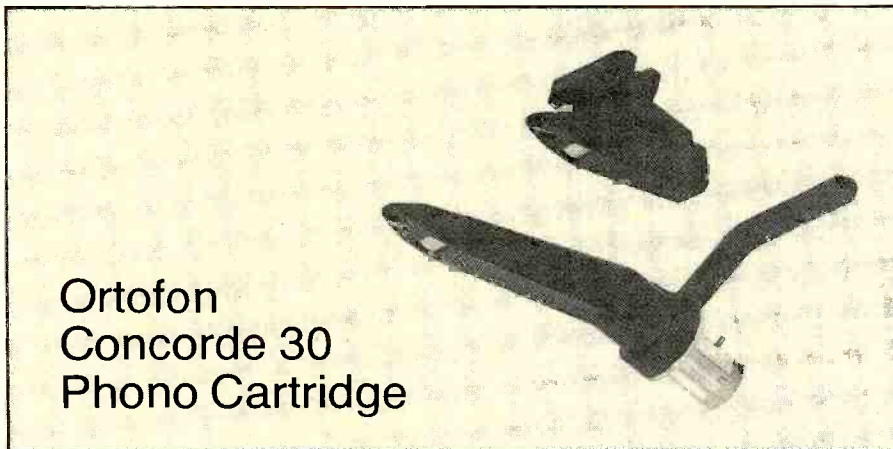
and 3,300 Hz. The system sensitivity was exactly as rated, with 2.83 volts (1 watt) of random noise in the midrange producing an 85-dB SPL at a 1-meter distance. The tone-burst response was uniformly good, with no sign of extended ringing at any frequency.

● **Comment.** The B&W DM2/II has the smooth and uncolored sound quality that is consistent with its measured performance. The quality was one of naturalism, with none of those spectacular or flashy characteristics that can cause one to sit up and take notice but which prove to be irritating after a time.

There was a lack of bass heaviness, and as a result voices were reproduced with a very

natural quality. However, there was no lack of bass itself (except in comparison to some very much larger speakers); the DM2/II was able to shake the room in much the same way we expect speakers twice its size to. The stereo imaging, for those who consider this to be a critical part of speaker performance, was excellent. Indeed, with the exception of the very deepest bass in the octave below 40 Hz, we found the DM2/II systems to be a match in every way for the best large speakers we had on hand for testing—all of which were much larger and more expensive than the B&W DM2/II.

Circle 141 on reader service card



Ortofon
Concorde 30
Phono Cartridge

THE appearance of the new Ortofon Concorde 30 phono cartridge immediately explains its unusual name. The slender, downward-sloping shape of this unique cartridge is strongly reminiscent of the nose of the Concorde aircraft. The Concorde 30 is one of the rapidly growing number of cartridges designed to plug directly into the end of a tone arm having the universal four-pin socket with locking ring.

However, its shape and other design details are only incidentally determined by styling considerations. In this case, form follows function. The Concorde 30 and its junior partner, the Concorde 20, are the first of a "new breed" of cartridges that Ortofon calls their LM (low-mass) series. Recently, a considerable amount of long-overdue concern has been focused on the problems of tracking warped records (just about every record ever made, that is) with the usual pairing of a high-mass tone arm and a highly compliant stylus. The resonance of such a combination often occurs at frequencies of 8 Hz or less, and these can be excited readily by record warps—causing mistracking of the record.

The problem is being attacked on at least two fronts. A number of record-player manufacturers have been working to reduce arm mass, although the widely used (and undeniably convenient) plug-in shell inevitably places additional weight at the end of the arm,

where it contributes most to the effective mass "seen" by the stylus. The few tone arms which have achieved substantially reduced effective mass have invariably employed other means of cartridge mounting.

For a variety of reasons, magnetic cartridges have tended to be rather heavy, and of course their mass is concentrated at a point where it contributes most to lowering the arm/cartridge resonance frequency. Although a few cartridges have been produced which were lower than the average in mass, they frequently had to be weighted so that they could be balanced by the counterweights of available tone arms. The result has been a vicious circle that has been difficult to break.

However, Ortofon has taken a strong step toward breaking it. The LM-series cartridges are miniaturized and intrinsically very light (1.5 grams, compared with the usual 5 to 9 grams for conventional magnetic cartridges). Internally, they are moving-iron cartridges, based on the variable-magnetic-shunt (VMS) principle of most other Ortofon cartridges.

In the Concorde design, the cartridge is combined with a plug-in fixture (with finger lift) for the universal four-pin bayonet arm fitting. The mass of the complete Concorde cartridge assembly is only 6.5 grams, roughly the mass of either a conventional cartridge or an empty low-mass head shell. A miniature set screw on top of the cartridge can be loos-

ened with a supplied tool, allowing the stylus-overhang dimension to be varied by about 4 millimeters, which encompasses the adjustment range required for practically every tone arm fitted with this type of cartridge mount. An azimuth gauge is also supplied with the cartridge so that its stylus can be oriented to be perpendicular to the record surface, as viewed from the front.

Although the Concorde cartridge will fit any arm having the standard four-pin socket, it cannot be balanced properly in most arms, which were designed for cartridge and head-shell combinations weighing more than twice as much as the Concorde. Typically, the counterweight will reach its forward limit of adjustment before the arm reaches balance. To deal with this situation, Ortofon packages a low-mass counterweight with each cartridge (weighing 70 grams compared with the usual 120 to 150 grams).

So that it will fit any tone arm, the center hole of the Ortofon counterweight is made relatively large (9/16 inch diameter), and the weight is fixed in position with a set screw instead of the usual threaded mounting. This may prevent use of the arm's tracking-force scale, normally a part of its counterweight, so a small balance gauge is supplied with the cartridge for making this adjustment.

The Ortofon Concorde 30 is identical to the Concorde 20 in size and appearance, but the two models differ in effective stylus tip mass, compliance, tracking force, and tracking ability as well as price. The more expensive Concorde 30 is available as the LM30 or the LM30H, the latter with a standard mounting for use in other types of tone arms.

The Concorde 30 has a "nude" fine-line diamond stylus shaped for extended linear contact with the groove wall. It tracks at forces from 1.2 to 1.8 grams, with 1.5 grams being the recommended force. Like other Ortofon moving-iron cartridges, it should be loaded by a relatively high capacitance of 400 picofarads in parallel with a 47,000-ohm resistance for flattest frequency response. Price: \$165.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** We installed the Concorde 30 in the tone arm of a typical moderate-price record player. The arm's
(Continued on page 44)



A SPEAKER FOR THOSE WHO FEEL THAT LOUD IS VERY MUCH A PART OF LIFE.

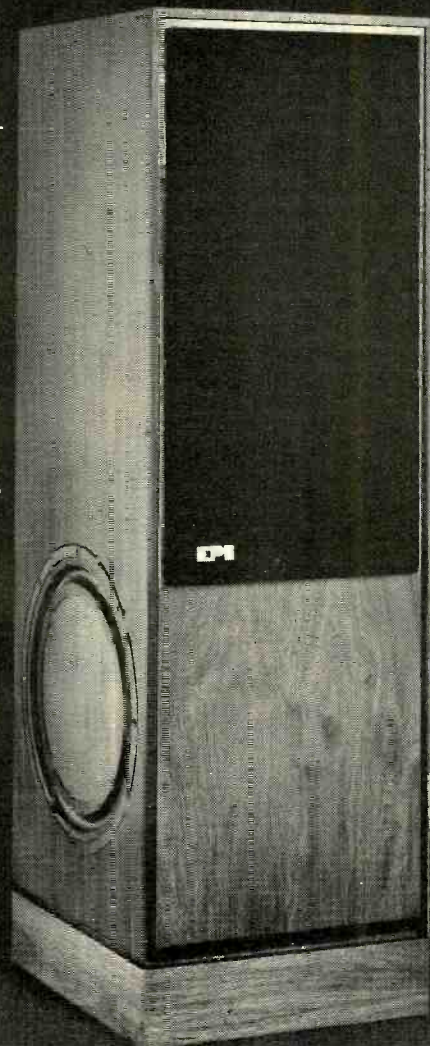
To experience most modern music performed live is to be totally engulfed in sound. Therefore, to re-create such an event, sound must not only be technically accurate, the intensity has to be there as well. And that's where the EPI Model 500, like no speaker before it, comes through loud and clear.

EPI MODEL 500

This exceptional speaker is capable of handling 100 watts RMS or up to 500 watts of peak power with virtually no distortion. If you like your music loud, just crank it up — the Model 500 can handle it. And since there's virtually no distortion, there's very little listener fatigue — even after long periods of listening at high levels.

Critical to the Model 500's performance is a 10" woofer that offers tremendous power handling capability and a specially designed magnetic circuit that assures linear response and low distortion.

Our specially designed, sealed 4" midrange driver handles the most critical region of the musical spectrum with ease, reproducing clear, well-defined



vocal and instrumental passages at all volume levels.

Our 1" air-spring tweeter was chosen because it reproduces high frequencies smoothly and disperses them evenly into the listening room, thereby re-creating a precise, well-defined "stereo image" regardless of listener position.

In addition, the Model 500's Butterworth crossover uses air core inductors and operates at 12 db per octave at 750 cycles between woofer and midrange and 18 db per octave at 3000 cycles between midrange and tweeter.

EXCEPTIONALLY EFFICIENT

Because of the way the woofer and midrange are integrated with our air-spring tweeter, the Model 500 can deliver clean, linear, well-dispersed sound from as little as 15 watts RMS per channel receivers.

In fact, all in all, no other accurate speaker system offers such efficiency and extraordinary power handling capability.

It's our most advanced achievement in linear sound.

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CIRCLE NO. 22 ON READER SERVICE CARD



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Power is right! 100 watts! Now, all the energy and intensity that went into the original performance comes through the Jensen Triax II 3-way speaker.

This incredible 100 watt capability gives the Triax II an unparalleled clarity of sound throughout the entire spectrum.

What gives the Triax II its great power handling and sound reproduction? For starters, the piezoelectric solid state tweeter with low mass and incredible power handling capabilities. It starts reproducing crystal clear high frequency signals at 6,000 Hz...and keeps going well past the range of human audibility.

The 6" x 9" woofer of the Triax II boasts a new large diameter barium ferrite 20 oz. magnet. Which means better heat dissipation and more efficiency for clearer, truer sound at higher listening levels.

A new high power 1½" voice coil on the Triax II translates into less distortion and the ability to achieve higher sound pressure levels.

The midrange unit of this remarkable speaker produces smoother sound with better transient response, less distortion and higher power handling...thanks to its large 2.3 magnet structure.

And the Triax II is fully compatible with the advanced bi-amplified power sources for outstanding clarity and separation.

So go to the concert. Hear the Jensen Triax II. That's the thrill of being there.

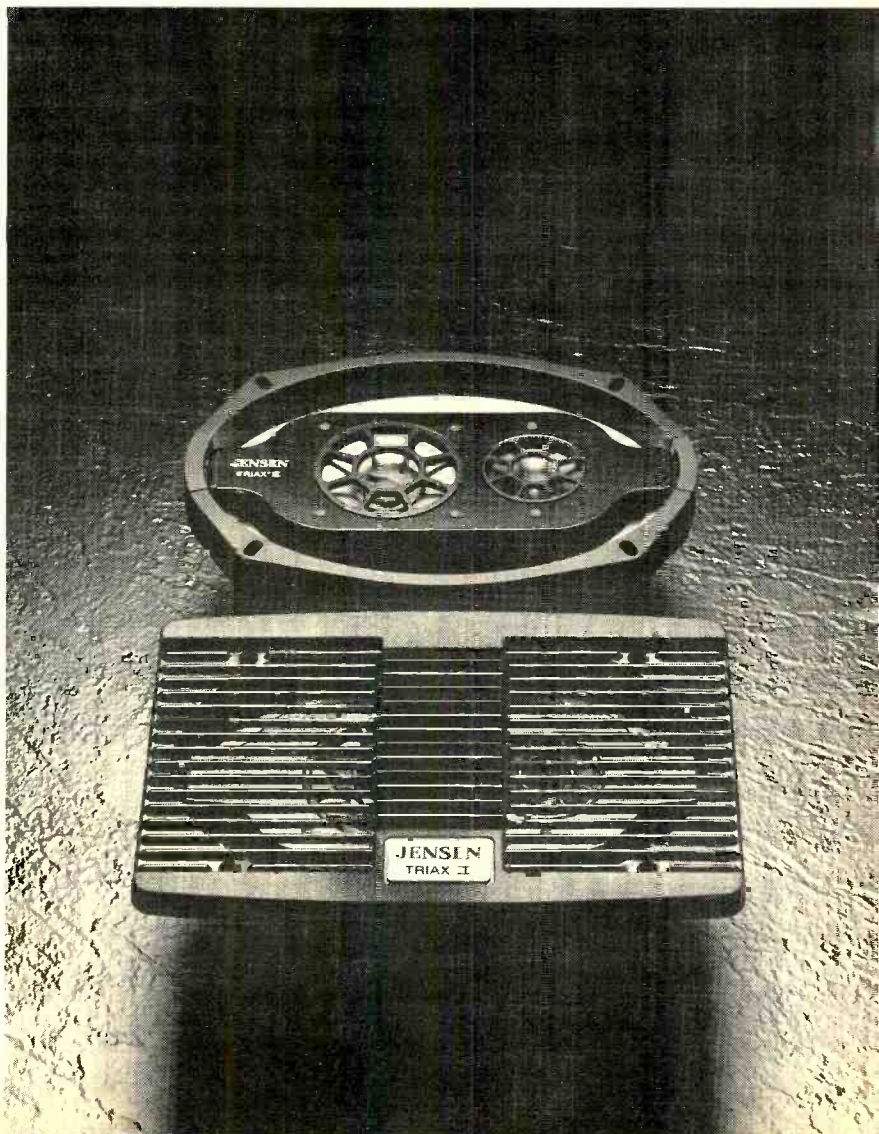
JENSEN

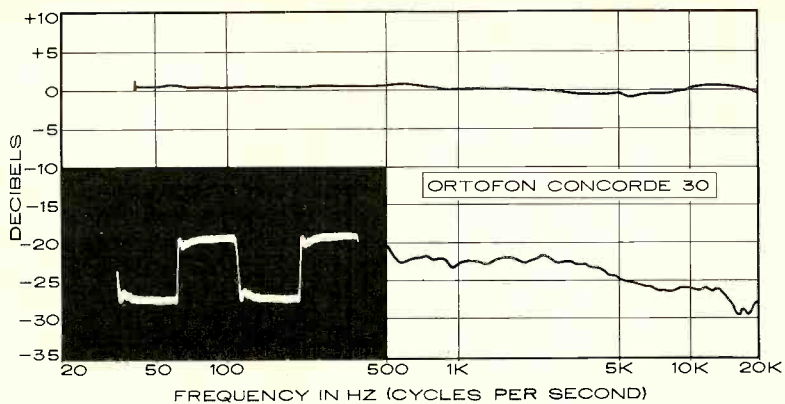
The thrill of being there.

For more information, write Jensen Sound Laboratories,
4136 N. United Parkway, Schiller Park, Illinois 60176.

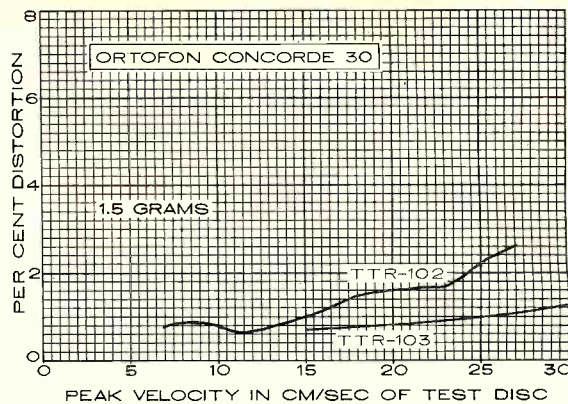
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CIRCLE NO. 29 ON READER SERVICE CARD





In the graph at left, the upper curve represents the smoothed, averaged frequency response of the cartridge's right and left channels; the distance (calibrated in decibels) between it and the lower curve represents the separation between the two channels. The inset oscilloscope photo shows the cartridge's response to a recorded 1,000-Hz square wave (see text), which indicates resonances and overall frequency response. At right is the cartridge's response to the intermodulation-distortion (IM) and 10.8-kHz tone-burst test bands of the TTR-102 and



TTR-103 test records. These high velocities provide a severe test of a phono cartridge's performance. The intermodulation-distortion (IM) readings for any given cartridge can vary widely, depending on the particular IM test record used. The actual distortion figure measured is not as important as the maximum velocity the cartridge is able to track before a sudden and radical increase in distortion takes place. There are very few commercial phonograph discs that embody musical audio signals with average velocities much higher than about 15 cm/sec.

effective mass (including a 6-gram cartridge of conventional design) had previously been measured as 26.5 grams; with the Concorde 30 installed, the total effective mass was 18 grams. The low-frequency resonance of the combination was at 9 Hz, with a 6- to 8-dB amplitude.

As expected, we had to replace the arm's counterweight with the one supplied by Ortofon. Adjustment was awkward but not difficult, and all tests were made at the recommended tracking force of 1.5 grams. The cartridge load was set at 47,000 ohms and 400 picofarads as recommended. Although there were minor differences in the measured frequency response when we used different test records (CBS STR 100, JVC 1005, and B&K 2009), the major differences between them were in the channel separation. The frequency response (with the STR 100) was ± 1 dB up to 20,000 Hz.

When we made a second response measurement employing a lower load capacitance (150 picofarads) to judge the effect, there was a slightly depressed output in the range from 3,000 to 12,000 Hz and a 2-dB rise from 18,000 to 20,000 Hz. It was clear that the recommended higher capacitance was necessary for best response from the cartridge. The square-wave response from the CBS STR 112 record showed a single small overshoot.

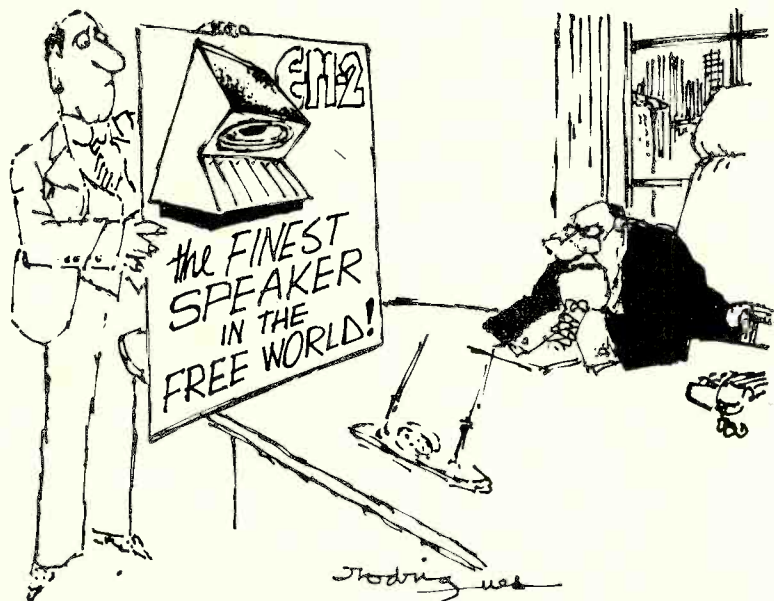
Channel separation was measured with the previously mentioned records and with an Audio-Technica test record having spot-frequency bands. All the records gave very similar results at high frequencies, with average readings of 23 dB at 15,000 Hz and 18 dB at 20,000 Hz. At 1,000 Hz there was more diversity in the measurements, with the CBS and B&K records giving a midrange separation of 20 to 22 dB and the JVC and A-T records giving 25- and 32-dB readings, respectively.

The output of the Concorde 30, playing a recorded velocity of 3.54 cm/sec at 1,000 Hz, was 3.75 millivolts with a channel imbalance of 0.5 dB. The measured vertical stylus angle was 24 degrees. The tracking distortion was extremely low—intermodulation distortion, measured with the Shure TTR-102 record, was at least as low as we have ever measured with a phono cartridge, increasing linearly from not more than 0.8 per cent below 13 cm/sec to 2.7 per cent at 27 cm/sec. The high-frequency distortion, playing the shaped tone bursts of the Shure TTR-103 record, also increased linearly from a mere 0.7 per cent at 15 cm/sec to 1.2 per cent at 30 cm/sec. Apart from the low measured distortion using both records, we were struck by the fact that the distortion increased very gradually and smoothly, with none of the usual discontinuities or sudden increases that indicate the onset of mistracking.

Tracking tests with 30-cm/sec tones at 1,000 Hz showed slight symmetrical clipping, indicating that the amplitude was beyond the cartridge's linear limits, but high-level 32-Hz tones were tracked cleanly. The German Hi Fi Institute test record was played cleanly up to the 70-micron level (as rated by Ortofon). The subjective tracking tests, using Shure's Audio Obstacle Course records, confirmed the excellent tracking ability of this cartridge. The ERA III record could be played to its maximum levels on every band. The ERA IV record evidenced slight mistracking on level 5 of all the bands except the flute and harp solos, but the mistracking was in every case mild, and we never heard any signs of severe distortion.

● **Comment.** In recent months we have tested a number of new cartridges, from different manufacturers, typically priced about the same as the Concorde 30. Each has been a very fine product, with no disappointing "lemons" among them. Although there were minor differences in their sound qualities, it would be very hard to single out any one as being clearly superior in all areas.

Putting aside for the moment any fine distinctions based on listening quality (which is
(Continued on page 46)



"... What are you trying to say, Bultzer—that the Commies have a better one?"

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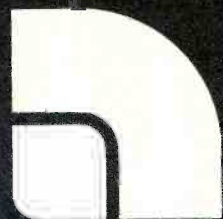
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in any case completely subjective), it is apparent that the Concorde 30 excels technically in more areas of performance than most of its peers. Its tracking ability (at 1.5 grams, which is a reasonable force in view of its stylus shape) is good though not really outstanding. However, the distortion we measured from this cartridge was lower than any we can recall having found in recent years—if ever.

The frequency response of the Concorde 30 was as flat as one could desire, and its channel separation was greater over a wider range of frequencies than that of most other de luxe

cartridges on the market. The mass of the cartridge and its mounting is much lower than that of any other available cartridge. All of these are substantial “pluses” and certainly qualify the Concorde 30 for a high ranking.

We do have some doubts about the wisdom of substituting the Ortofon counterweight, as now constructed, for a tone arm’s regular counterweight. Apart from the clumsiness in tracking-force adjustment, any looseness of the weight could contribute to undesirable resonance modes in the arm system. (As we go to press we have been informed by Orto-

fon that the counterweight has been redesigned to provide a more secure mounting.)

The sound of the Concorde 30 was as good as its measured performance implies. Frankly, we would not be able to make a choice between this cartridge and any of several others at the same or higher prices solely on the basis of sound quality. Considering that the Concorde 30 is one of the *least* expensive models in that category, this can be taken as a considerable compliment.

Circle 142 on reader service card



Mitsubishi DA-F20 FM Tuner

THE Model DA-F20, which heads the Mitsubishi tuner line, is an FM-only unit featuring quartz-locked synthesized tuning, two i.f. amplifiers offering selectable wide or narrow bandwidths, and a digital frequency display as well as a conventional tuning dial.

In designing the DA-F20, Mitsubishi has combined the familiar, easy-to-use analog tuning system with the absolute accuracy and noncritical adjustment of synthesized tuning. Although the tuning “feel” of the unit is exactly like that of any nonsynthesized tuner, its frequency actually jumps in discrete 100-kHz steps instead of varying continuously as the knob is turned. The actual frequency is continuously shown on the ½-inch-high red numerals of the frequency readout.

Below the digital display (which is behind a “blackout” window at the left of the panel) is a row of red SIGNAL lights. The LEDs light up in sequence as the signal strength increases, forming a horizontal line proportional to signal level. They are operated by level-comparator circuits that make the readout completely unambiguous, since each LED is either fully on or off, with no intermediate state. To their right are three TUNING lights and a green LOCK indicator flanked by red lights identified by arrows. One or the other of the red lights comes on to show the direction in which the tuning knob should be turned to reach the center of the tuned channel. The green light comes on only when the tuner is

set to the exact frequency of the broadcast signal.

To the right of the digital display is a similar window containing a circular tuning dial calibrated over the FM band at 1-MHz intervals. Although it seems redundant, considering the legibility and accuracy of the digital display, Mitsubishi evidently felt that many people would feel more comfortable watching an analog dial as they tune the DA-F20. In addition to the tuning displays and a large tuning knob, the front panel contains only five square pushbuttons for POWER, MODE (auto stereo/mono or mono only), IF BAND (selecting either the wide- or narrow-band i.f. amplifiers), and interstation-noise MUTING. A REC LEVEL CHECK button, when pressed, replaces the tuner’s normal audio outputs with a 440-Hz tone (its amplitude corresponds to that of a 50 per cent modulated FM signal) intended for setting tape-recording levels.

On the rear apron of the tuner are two sets of audio outputs, fixed and variable, with a level-adjustment control for the latter. There are also V and H outputs for use with an oscilloscope multipath-distortion display (the instruction manual describes a simple method of using these outputs for an audible multipath check if no oscilloscope is available). There are inputs for 300- and 75-ohm antennas, with the latter having both binding-post and coaxial terminals.

The DA-F20 has a pale silver-grey front

panel and a black metal cabinet. It is equipped with sturdy handles and closely matches the appearance of other Mitsubishi audio components. The tuner measures 16¾ inches wide, 6¾ inches high, and 10¾ inches deep. It weighs 14½ pounds. Price: \$430.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** Since many FM-tuner performance characteristics are functions of i.f. bandwidth, we tested the DA-F20 twice, using both its WIDE and NARROW bandwidth settings.

The sensitivity and signal-to-noise ratio (S/N) were not affected significantly by bandwidth. The IHF usable sensitivity was 13 to 14 dBf (2.4 to 2.7 microvolts, or μV) in mono and 17 dBf (4 μV) in stereo. The 50-dB quieting sensitivity in mono was 14 to 15 dBf (2.7 to 3 μV) and in stereo it was 37 dBf (38 μV). The S/N at a 65-dBf (1,000 μV) input was 73.5 to 74.5 dB in mono and 68 to 70 dB in stereo.

However, measured—if not audible—distortion was greatly affected by the i.f. bandwidth. In the WIDE mode, the mono and stereo readings for total harmonic distortion plus noise were respectively 0.09 and 0.13 per cent; in NARROW the readings increased to 0.38 per cent in mono and 0.46 per cent in stereo.

The stereo frequency response was flat within ± 0.4 dB from 30 to 8,000 Hz, rising to about +1.8 dB at 15,000 Hz. The rise was apparently due to the low-pass filters used to remove pilot-carrier components from the audio. The filters were quite effective for that purpose, since the 19-kHz leakage was 65 dB below 100 per cent modulation. The stereo channel separation was, to our surprise, affected only slightly by the bandwidth, and only at frequencies below about 300 Hz. In the NARROW mode, the separation was 26 dB at 30 Hz, and it increased to 33.5 dB in WIDE. Through the midrange, the separation was better than 45 dB, and it was no worse than 30 dB at 15,000 Hz.

Other specifications that were affected by i.f. bandwidth include capture ratio, AM rejection, and selectivity. The capture ratio was an excellent 1 dB in WIDE and 2 dB in NARROW. AM rejection was an acceptable 54 to 56 dB (depending on the signal level) in NARROW and an excellent 68 to 70 dB in WIDE. The alternate-channel selectivity was about 42 dB in WIDE and 78 dB in NARROW, and the adja-

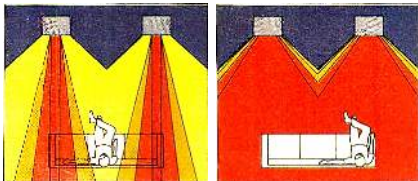
(Continued on page 50)

How Audio History is made.



A lot of speakers claim to be audio breakthroughs. Our new Model 14 really is. In fact, it's so unique, that before we could create it, we first had to invent a whole new family of components.

We began with a new type of horn. The Mantaray™* It's the first "constant directivity" horn ever created. Conventional horns,



Conventional beaming narrows listening area. Mantaray expands listening sweet spot.

cones and domes (including so-called omnidirectional and reflective speakers) tend to "beam," that is, narrow their angle of sound radiation at higher frequencies. This effect causes the stereo image to lose strength off the center axis and to actually wander.

Mantaray, on the other hand, delivers a clearly-defined sound wedge that keeps its strength regardless of the music's changing frequencies. You get the full spectrum of sound and the most solid three-dimensional stereo image you've ever heard. And since the sound doesn't diminish off center axis, the

Model 14 enlarges your listening area, your "stereo sweet spot."

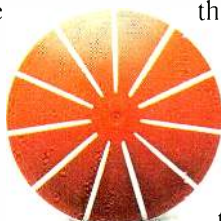
As an extra benefit, Mantaray's precise sound focusing means your music goes in your ears — not in your drapes, walls and ceilings. Consequently, it's more likely than other speakers to sound the same in your home as it does in your dealer's showroom.



Power Control

Then to give you even higher highs, we developed the first radial phase plug, the Tangerine®**

In contrast to conventional phase plugs with two equidistant circular slots that block some frequencies, the Tangerine's tapered slots permit a free flow of high frequencies to beyond 20 KHz.



Tangerine

Equally important to all this is our new Automatic Power Control System.

Unlike fuse-type devices or circuit breakers, the system keeps track of the power pumped into the speaker, lets you know with a blinking light when power exceeds safe limits, and then reduces overloads automatically,

but without shutting the speaker off. It's quite a system.

In addition, the Model 14 offers you super-efficiency, high-power handling capacity and exceptional dynamic range, plus a new vented enclosure with a 12-inch bass driver for a tighter, crisper low end. So that's how audio history is made. And it's all yours at a price that means the best sound value available for your home today.

For a free brochure and the name of your local dealer, write: Altec Lansing International, 1515 South Manchester Avenue, Anaheim, CA 92803.



* U.S. and foreign patents pending
**U.S. Patent No. 4050541

Yamaha, the industry

When we set out to improve on our industry-acclaimed receivers, we knew we had a tough task ahead of us. How do you top being the first in such precedent-setting developments as built-in moving coil head amps, negative feedback MPX demodulators, pilot signal cancellation circuits, and the same amazingly low distortion throughout our entire line? After much continuing research, effort and unique care in design, we have the answer. It's called the CR-2040, the first in Yamaha's new line of receivers that does what only Yamaha could do. Outdo ourselves.

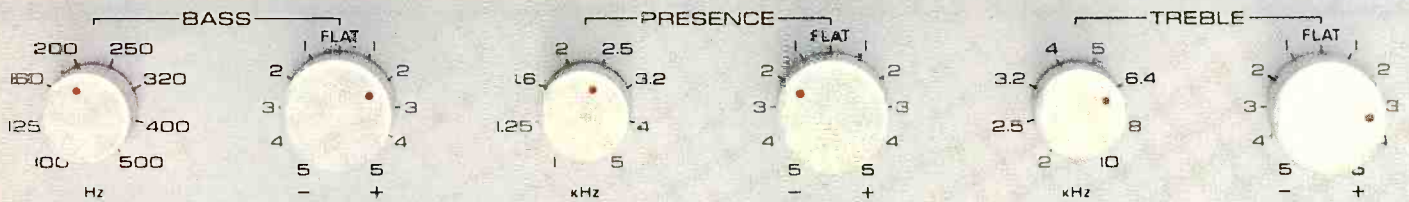
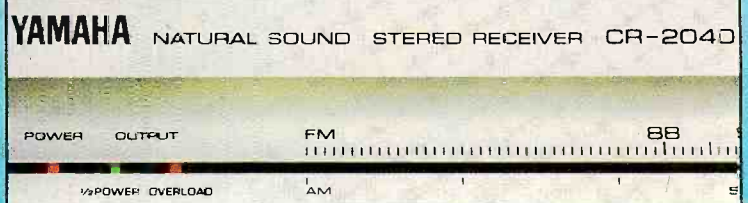
Unique continuously variable turnover tone controls. This unique Yamaha innovation gives you the tonal tailoring characteristics of both a parametric and a graphic equalizer. Without the added expense of having to purchase either. For instance, in addition to boosting or cutting the bass control ± 10 dB, you can also vary the turnover frequencies between 100 & 500 Hz to compensate for speaker deficiencies, room anomalies, etc., for unparalleled tonal tailoring flexibility.

Built-in moving coil head amp. More and more listeners are discovering the beautiful experience of music reproduced with a moving coil cartridge, such as Yamaha's newly introduced MC-1X and MC-1S. Discover this exquisite pleasure for yourself with the CR-2040's built-in moving coil head amp. This ultra-low noise head amp provides an ultra-quiet 86dB S/N ratio

Continuously variable loudness contour.

This control compensates for the ear's decreased sensitivity to bass and treble tones at low volume levels. And you're not just limited to compensation at only one specific volume setting as with other manufacturers' on/off-type loudness switches. The Yamaha continuously variable loudness contour assures you of full, accurate fidelity at any volume setting you choose. Another Yamaha exclusive!

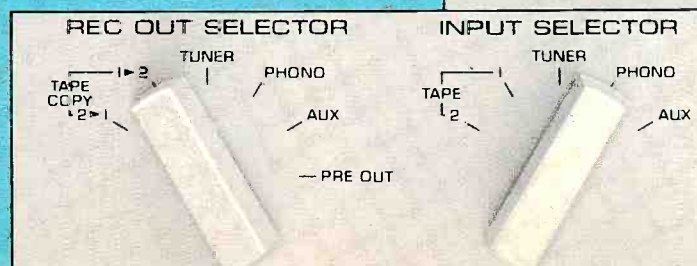
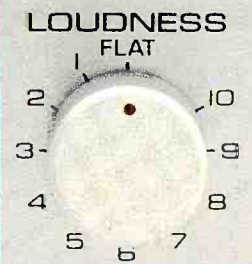
Automatic operation. Without a doubt, the Yamaha CR-2040 is one of the most automated receivers in audio history. Instead of fiddling with dials and meters, you can sit back and let the automatic circuits do the work. Or, if you choose, manually override the circuits. Take the AUTO-DX circuit, for instance. We developed IF bandwidth switching for our world-acclaimed CT-7000 tuner. Now we've gone even further by improving this circuit so the receiver automatically chooses the correct bandwidth (local or DX) for the least noise. Working with this circuit is the AUTO BLEND circuit which eliminates annoying FM hiss to



to assure you of capturing all the high-end detail and imaging the MC experience affords. All you'll miss is the extra expense and added noise of an outboard head amp or step-up transformer.

Independent input and record cut selectors. If you're a tape recording enthusiast, this feature is something you won't want to be without. It lets you select the signal from one program source to send to the REC OUT terminals for recording while you listen through your speakers to an entirely different program chosen on the INPUT selector. You can also dub from one tape to another even while listening to an entirely different program. It's another example of why Yamaha is the industry leader. We build in what the others can't even figure out.

make previously unlistenable stations more clearly audible. All without your lifting a finger. And Yamaha's exclusive OTS (Optimum Tuning System) automatically locks in and holds the desired station when you release the tuning knob.



leader...leads again!

Advanced circuitry. All these advanced features are backed by the most advanced internal circuitry imaginable. Like the auto tracking pilot signal canceller. Yamaha invented pilot signal cancellation and now we've improved it further. A special circuit not only senses the incoming 19kHz pilot signal (which is a part of FM broadcasts), it also automatically tracks any signal fluctuation which might occur. This assures you of complete pilot signal cancellation for interference-free FM listening. Yamaha does it again!

The all DC power amp section pours out a massive 120 watts per channel, both channels driven into 8 ohms, from 20Hz to 20kHz, with THD and I.M. an astronomically low 0.02%. That's a new low, even for Yamaha. And to keep tabs on all this pure power there's a twin LED power-monitoring system—green to indicate half power, red to indicate an overload condition.

The tuner section has a Yamaha-exclusive Direct Current-Negative Feedback—PLL MPX IC providing excellent phasing of the high frequencies for superb stereo separation and clearer sound. Our efforts to bring you the finest sound possible know no limits.

Human engineering. As incredibly advanced and complex as the CR-2040 is, it is incredibly simple to operate. The front panel is arranged in a clean and logical manner with the larger primary operational controls located on the central forward panel, and the smaller tone-tailoring controls located on the lower panel. It takes a minimum of effort to set up the CR-2040 for maximum listening pleasure.

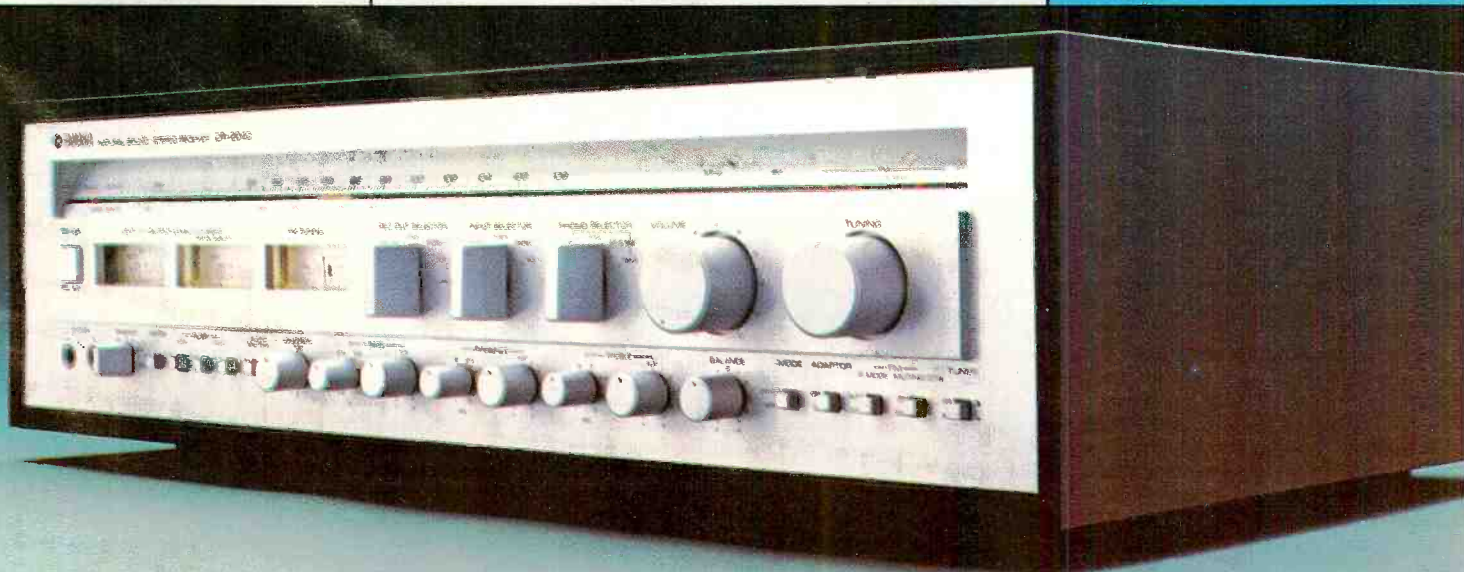
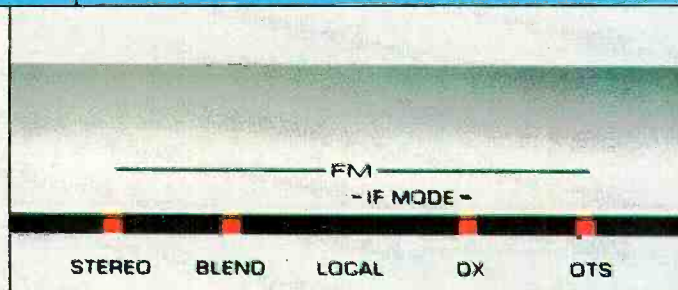
The functionally beautiful front panel is complemented by the beautifully functional ebony grain veneer cabinet. The elegant appearance of ebony is the perfect finishing touch to the extraordinary CR-2040.

And the CR-2040 is just one of a whole new line of receivers from Yamaha. Each one offers, in its class, the ultimate in features, performance and pure musical pleasure. Visit your local Yamaha Audio Specialty Dealer and see and hear for yourself how we've outdone ourselves. He's listed in the Yellow Pages. Or write us: Yamaha, Audio Division, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622.

From Yamaha, naturally.



0.02% THD



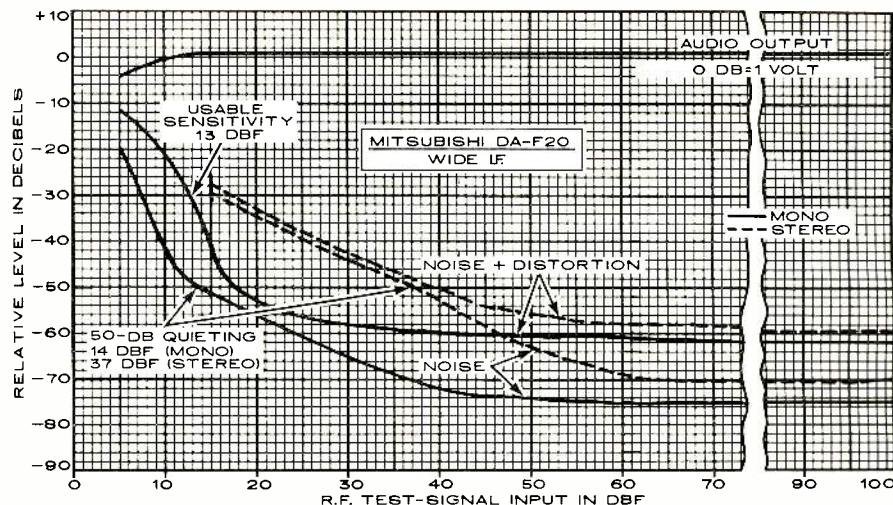
cent-channel selectivity improved from 5.5 to 12.6 dB when the bandwidth was narrowed. In use, we always found the WIDE mode perfectly satisfactory for interference-free reception. The image rejection, which was independent of bandwidth, was a good 86 dB.

The muting threshold was 15.5 dBf (3.2 μ V), and the automatic stereo-switching threshold was 14.8 dBf (3 μ V). The threshold of operation for the tuning-lock system was 16 dBf (3.5 μ V). Although signals below that level did not turn on the LOCK light, the tuner and its frequency display functioned properly on signals of any level. The muting, which took place with an almost imperceptible time lag, was completely noise-free yet positive (it is apparently accomplished with reed relays). The tuner hum level measured -76 to -77 dB, which is about as low as we have ever measured and quite possibly the residual level of our signal generator.

The REC LEVEL CHECK tone (a somewhat distorted 440-Hz waveform) had a level corresponding to 45 per cent modulation. This was sufficiently close to 50 per cent to be used for setting up a Dolby decoder or for setting tape-recording gain before making off-the-air recordings. The SIGNAL lights came on at inputs of 29, 39, 48, 62, and 69 dBf (15 to 1,600 μ V). The instruction manual recommends that at least the third light be on for good mono reception and the fourth light for stereo, but we found the quality perfectly satisfactory with one less light in each case.

● **Comment.** The Mitsubishi DA-F20 tuner was a very smooth, clean-sounding, and quiet unit whose sound quality was limited only by the FM broadcasts themselves. There were no unexpected "bugs" or idiosyncrasies in its performance or handling.

We found that one could tune easily and accurately with either the digital or the analog display. It was somewhat surprising, given



the 1-MHz dial-calibration intervals, to find that they were accurate enough that one could easily tune to any desired channel with almost complete assurance that when the set was turned on the station would be right there. Not many purely analog tuning receivers we have used could do as well! Nevertheless, we tended to use the digital display as our primary tuning aid.

Since the tuning jumps in discrete steps, one is never faced with the problem of a flickering or changing last digit on the display (which can happen when the readout is a frequency counter driven from a conventional free-running oscillator rather than from a true frequency-synthesizing digital tuner). If the wide bandwidth is used, it is possible to detune the tuner by one step (100 kHz) without any audible degradation of the program if the signal is fairly strong. This attests to the band-

width and linearity of the discriminator, but of course one will normally tune to keep the green LOCK light on so as to enjoy the fullest measure of the tuner's performance.

The DA-F20 is "different" in many ways, both internally and externally, from most of the FM tuners on the market. This distinctive quality has not been obtained at the sacrifice of any utility or performance quality (quite the contrary), nor has the cost of the unit been significantly affected. Although it is not cheap, its performance is commensurate with the cost, and in many respects it can hold its own against some of the most expensive "state of the art" FM tuners. It is not only handsome and tastefully styled but is one of the least "fussy" FM tuners we have used. We can recommend it without reservation.

Circle 143 on reader service card



Onkyo A-7070 Integrated Amplifier

ONKYO's new Model A-7070 is an integrated stereo amplifier rated to deliver 70 watts per channel into 8-ohm loads from 20 to 20,000 Hz with no more than 0.02 per cent to-

tal harmonic or intermodulation distortion. As in many recent amplifiers, the power-amplifier section of the A-7070 is direct-coupled throughout (and isolated from the preamplifi-

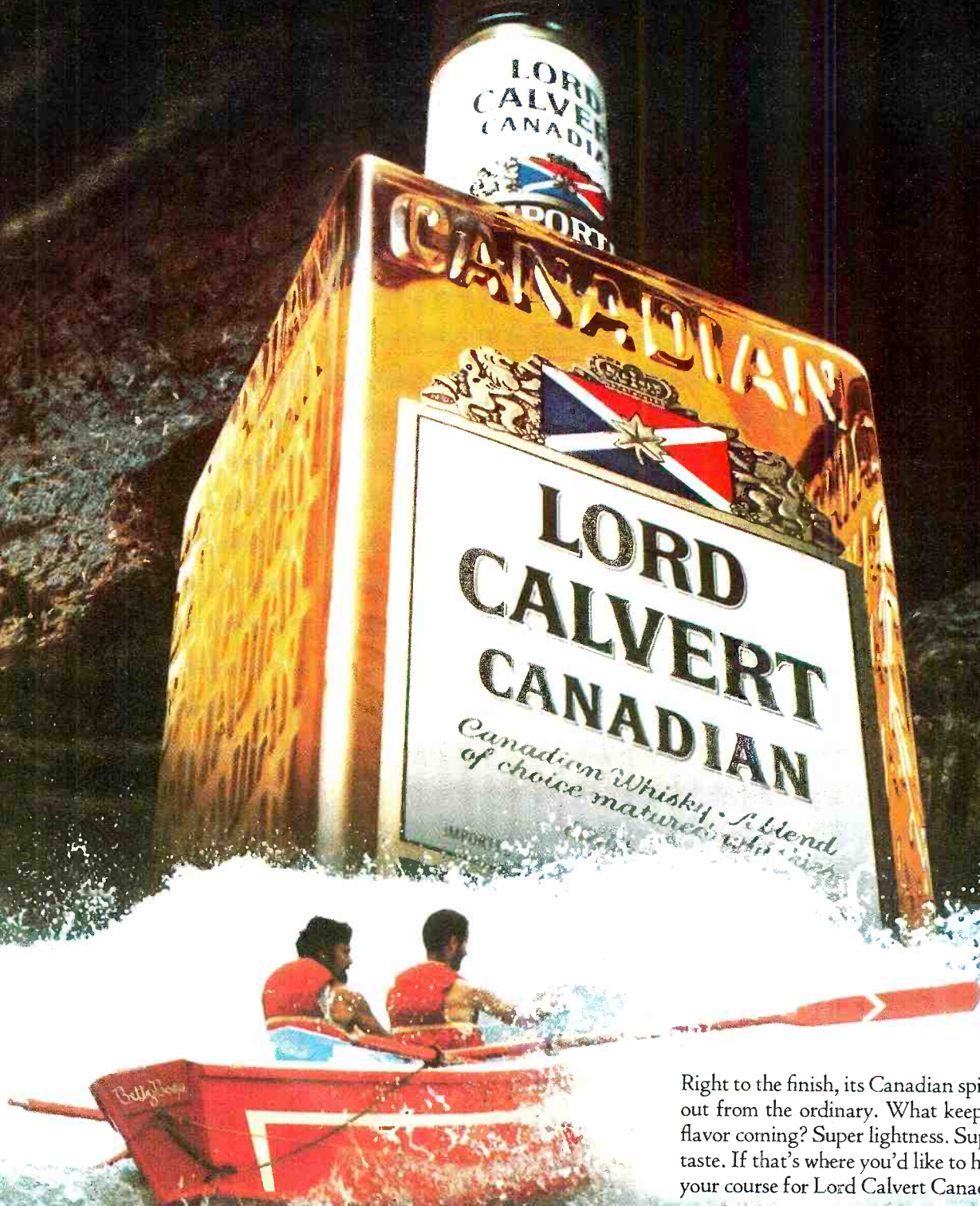
er by a capacitor). Negative feedback from the outputs is applied conventionally to the power-amplifier inputs through resistors, which establish the overall gain of the power-amplifier section.

In the A-7070 there is also a second, parallel feedback path through separate low-frequency and inverting amplifiers (both using ICs). The passband of this auxiliary circuit (referred to by Onkyo as "Super Servo") is limited to frequencies below about 3 Hz and extends to d.c. Its effect is to roll off the frequency response of the amplifier below about 1 Hz, simultaneously reducing infrasonic intermodulation distortion and helping to maintain the amplifier's low source impedance at infrasonic frequencies.

The effect of the Super Servo circuit cannot be readily measured by tests in the audio range, but data supplied by Onkyo indicate that it radically reduces intermodulation distortion in the frequency range from about 0.1 to 1 Hz. The company claims that this technique also gives improved amplifier stability

(Continued on page 52)

IMPORTED CANADIAN WHISKY - A BLEND - 80 PROOF - CALVERT DIST. CO., N.Y.C.



Right to the finish, its Canadian spirit stands out from the ordinary. What keeps the flavor coming? Super lightness. Superb taste. If that's where you'd like to head, set your course for Lord Calvert Canadian.

The unique spirit of Canada:
We bottled it.

at very low frequencies (presumably when compared with a conventional d.c.-coupled amplifier whose infrasonic response is rolled off by filters not included within the negative feedback loop).

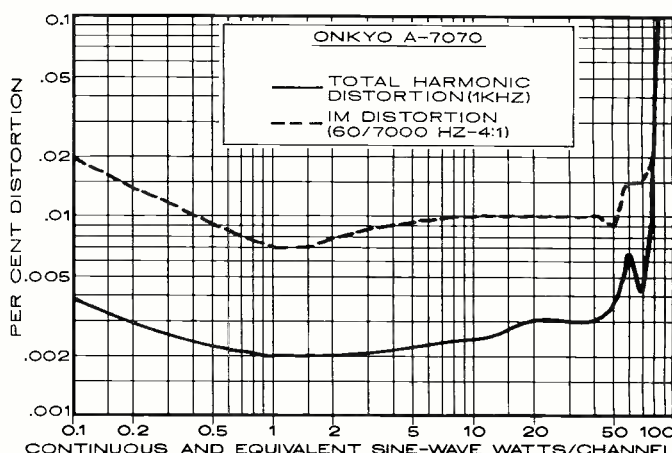
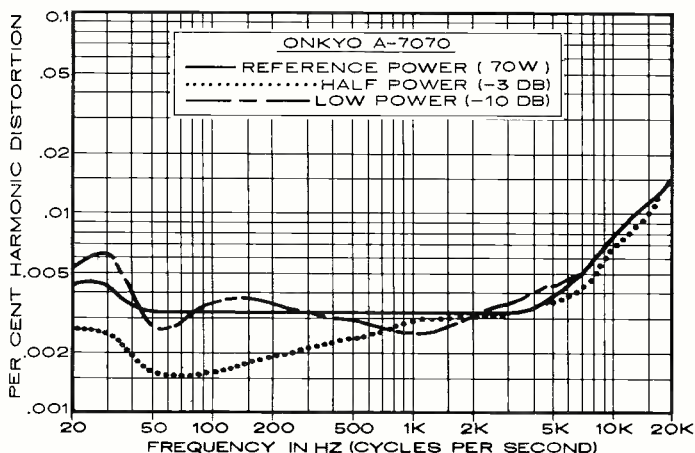
Externally, the A-7070 is compact and handsomely styled. At the right of its silver-colored front panel is a large volume control that is detented at forty-one positions and surrounded by a concentric balance ring. Across the top of the panel is a horizontal array of green LEDs, resembling the dial scale of a tuner, that indicates the instantaneous power output from each channel, based on 8-ohm loads. A red LED in the center of the display serves as a pilot light, and the green LEDs (shaped like short bars) light up at power levels corresponding to outputs of 0.6, 1.8, 6, 12, 23, 45, and 70 watts. There is also a "140-

one hour, followed by five minutes at the full 70 watts, left its top only moderately warm and the remainder of the exterior entirely cool to the touch. With a 1,000-Hz test signal, the outputs clipped at 85 watts per channel into 8 ohms, 111 watts into 4 ohms, and 65 watts into 16 ohms. The IHF clipping-headroom rating was 0.84 dB. The IHF dynamic headroom (8-ohm) was 1.42 dB, corresponding to a 97-watt short-term output.

The distortion of the A-7070 was extremely low. At 1,000 Hz, it was between 0.002 and 0.004 per cent from 0.1 to more than 50 watts output, reaching 0.01 per cent at 80 watts. The intermodulation distortion was about 0.01 per cent at most power levels, varying from 0.007 to 0.02 per cent over the power range of 0.1 to 80 watts. The distortion did not change markedly over the full audio-frequency and

The accuracy of the power indicators was checked at 1,000 Hz. Except for the lowest reading (in the milliwatt range), the error was less than 1 dB, which is perfectly adequate for their purpose. The LEDs responded rapidly to program peaks. Severe overdriving or short-circuited outputs caused the protection circuit to trip, disconnecting the speaker outputs and leaving all the power-indicator lights on until the amplifier was turned off and re-started. Normal overloads occasionally tripped the protection circuits, but they reset themselves automatically a few seconds after the overload had passed.

● **Comment.** There were no unexpected or unwanted surprises in the operation of the A-7070. Switching transients of any kind were completely absent, the turn-on delay blocked



watt" red LED, but since the amplifier cannot deliver that much power, it glows when the outputs are severely clipped or when the protective circuits have been activated. A pushbutton near the display increases its sensitivity by ten times, making it usable at the more usual low listening levels.

Below the power indicators are the bass and treble tone controls, each having eleven detented settings. Between them are two pushbuttons that bypass the tone-control circuits in their "out" positions. Other knobs along the lower part of the panel switch two pairs of loudspeakers and select the input source (PHONO 1, PHONO 2, TUNER, and AUX). A MONITOR knob controls the operation of two tape decks; it channels either the selected source program or the playback output from either tape deck to the amplifier's circuits and can cross-connect the two tape decks for dubbing from one to the other.

Pushbuttons across the upper part of the panel control power, low and high filters, stereo/mono mode, loudness, and muting (a 20-dB volume reduction). On the rear apron of the A-7070 there are insulated binding posts for the speaker outputs and three a.c. outlets (one switched) in addition to the signal connectors. The Onkyo A-7070 is 16½ inches wide, 5 inches high, and 15½ inches deep. It weighs about 23 pounds. Price: \$429.95.

● **Laboratory Measurements.** Preconditioning of the A-7070 by operating both channels at 23 watts per channel into 8-ohm loads for

power range. At the rated 70 watts output it was about 0.003 per cent at most frequencies and was less than 0.005 per cent from 20 to 7,000 Hz. The distortion rose slightly at higher frequencies, to 0.015 per cent at 20,000 Hz. The distortion was similarly low at half and one-tenth power.

The A-7070 required a high-level (AUX) input of 18 millivolts (mV) or a PHONO input of 0.26 mV for a reference output of 1 watt. The respective A-weighted signal-to-noise (S/N) measurements, referred to 1 watt, were 81.4 and 77.2 dB, both excellent figures. The phono inputs overloaded at a fine 220 mV or higher over the full 20- to 20,000-Hz range (referring all measurements to the 1,000-Hz gain level). The measured input impedance of the phono preamplifier was 50,000 ohms in parallel with 50 picofarads.

The tone-control curves were typical of the Baxandall type, with the bass turnover frequency shifting from about 100 to 400 Hz as the control was varied and the treble-response curves hinged at 2,000 Hz. The loudness compensation boosted both low and high frequencies moderately. The filters both had desirable 12-dB-per-octave slopes, with the -3-dB response frequencies being at 60 and 6,000 Hz. The RIAA phono equalization was ruler-flat (less than ±0.25 dB variation) from 30 to 20,000 Hz and down 1.2 dB at 20 Hz. The response was affected by less than 0.7 dB at frequencies in the 10,000- to 20,000-Hz range when measured through the inductance of typical phono cartridges.

any start-up sounds from a tuner or other signal source, and everything worked with smoothness and precision.

We were puzzled by the lack of separate preamplifier outputs and power-amplifier inputs, especially since this facility involves practically no expense or complication. And we also must admit that the rationale for the "Super Servo" feedback system baffled us. While it is undoubtedly one way to reduce infrasonic output, this could have been achieved more simply by a conventional high-pass filter. Apart from the difficulty of measuring intermodulation distortion in the band from 0.1 to 1 Hz (which in Onkyo's curves is the only region improved by the Super Servo), we cannot imagine the audible significance of such distortion, or even how it could occur, since a well designed preamplifier would exclude such frequencies from the power amplifier in the first place. However, aside from our theoretical questions, we certainly could find no fault with the way the A-7070 actually performed in any part of the audio range.

Perhaps it need not be pointed out, but the measured performance of the Onkyo A-7070 is obviously state-of-the-art. The expression is overworked, but how else can one describe an amplifier whose distortion levels in normal operation are so low that they can be measured only by the most sophisticated test equipment?

Circle 144 on reader service card

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Another big surprise is the SU-C01 preamp. It's one preamp but it works like two. Because it has a built-in preamp for moving coil cartridges. It also has gold-plated connections to maximize signal transfer.

To add the finishing touch, there's the ST-C01 tuner. It gives you great FM specs and great FM sound. And that's a big achievement considering its small size.

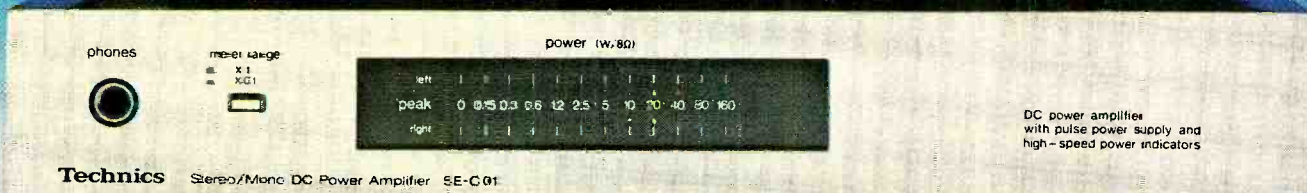
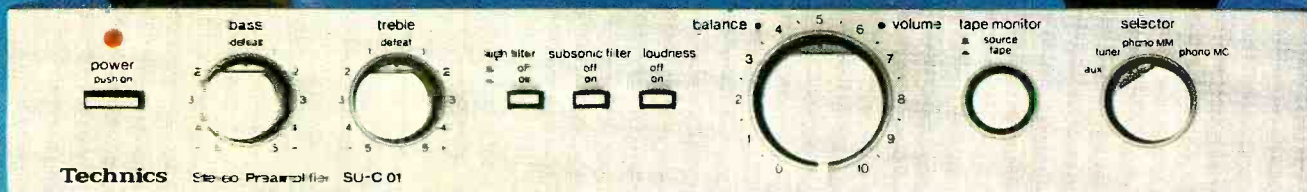
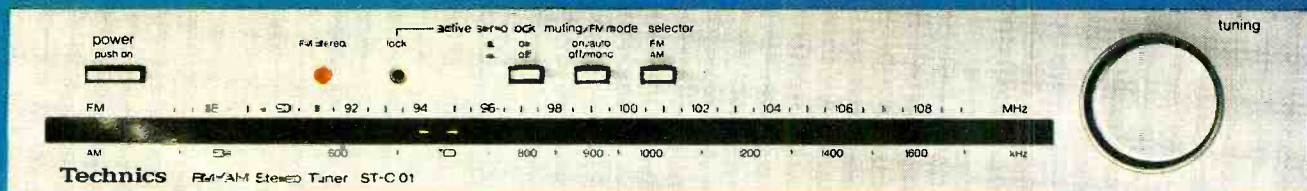
It's also a breeze to tune. Instead of conventional separate tuning meters, the center-of-channel indicator is on the tuning dial, where it's easy to see. Two LED arrows point you in the right direction for fine tuning.

Experience the Micro Series. Once you do, you'll agree: The big thing about them is definitely not their small size.

Technics micro series

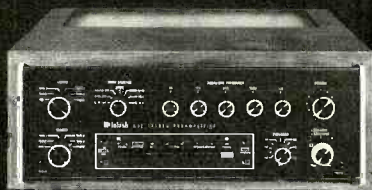
SE-C01			SJ-C01			ST-C01			
Continuous power per channel into 8 ohms, 20 Hz - 20 kHz	Total Harmonic Distortion	Signal to Noise Ratio	Total Harmonic Distortion	Phono Signal to Noise Ratio	Frequency Response	FM Sensitivity 50 dB (stereo)	FM Selectivity	Stereo Separation (1 kHz/10 kHz)	Total Harmonic Distortion (stereo)
40 watts	0.03%	110 dB	0.005% (phono) 0.003% (aux)	90 dB (MM, 2.5 mV) 78 dB (MC, 250 μ V)	3 Hz - 100 kHz, -1 dB	38.3 dB	75 dB	45/35 dB	0.15%

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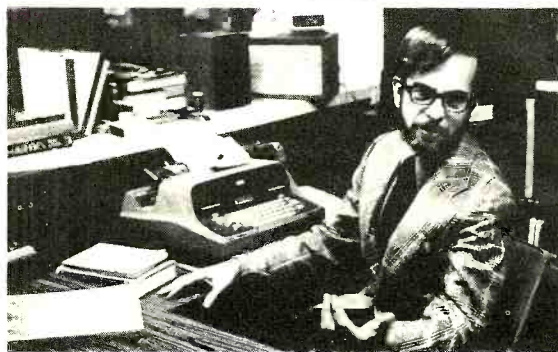
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Going on Record

By James
Goodfriend



FIT FOR A KING

THE generalists in music have never had an easy time of it. Friedrich Gulda's jazz was rarely taken seriously by most listeners, particularly in this country, and while André Previn's perhaps was, his pop-jazz career added years to the probationary period before he was fully accepted as a "serious" conductor. Leonard Bernstein is forever besieged with criticisms that suggest he spend all his time writing symphonies, or all his time writing shows—or all his time conducting, or playing the piano.

It is a bit of a shock to discover, then, that just across the Atlantic that seemingly most recondite of performing organizations, a madrigal group—an all-male madrigal group with countertenors, yet—is enjoying the eleventh year of a career that has spanned the repertoire from Thomas Tallis' *Lamentations of Jeremiah* to Lennon and McCartney's *She's Leaving Home*, from Krzysztof Penderecki's *Ecloga VIII* to G. & I. Gershwin's *The Half-of-It-Dearie Blues*. The group is called the King's Singers, and if they are known at all to the American record-buying public it is through a single Angel record (S-37025) of straightforward madrigal repertoire that quietly won a couple of awards and gave no indication of the repertorial avalanche behind it.

The King's Singers will be invading the United States in person(s) this fall, however, and in advance of their landing the Moss Music Group (Vox/Turnabout/Candide) has dropped about a dozen of their EMI (EMI/Columbia/His Master's Voice) records onto the American market. Some of these will bear Vox/Turnabout numbers, some their original British garb, and not all of them will be available everywhere (the situation is a bit confused), but there is something for almost everyone, all of it well worth the hearing.

Those who have not heard that single Angel record or any of the British releases should know first off that the King's Singers are a crack madrigal group, in the tradition of the fabled English Singers and the London Madrigal Group, and probably the best such organization around today. Their collection of English and Italian madrigals (with Banchieri's *Contrappun...o Bestiale*), their "French Collection" (which includes not only such expected delights as Jannequin's *La Guerre* and Passereau's *Il Est Bel et Bon*, but the vocal

original of Arbeau's *Pavane*, familiar to many from its arrangement in Peter Warlock's *Capriol Suite*, and all of Poulenc's music for male-voice ensemble), their "Continental Collection" (German and Spanish part songs), and their "Concert Collection" (Tudor songs, Renaissance motets, French chansons, Grieg part songs, etc.) all demonstrate flair and style and solid musicianship.

A step away from madrigals in one direction brings us to a charming record of fifteen German "folk songs" (including works by Schubert, Hassler, Silcher, and Bach), and a step in the other direction finds the "Contemporary Collection" (works by Penderecki, Peter Dickinson, Richard Rodney Bennett, and Paul Patterson, plus Malcolm Williamson's delightful *Musicians of Bremen*) and Volume I of the Singers' Tenth Anniversary Concert, which presents Renaissance madrigals, Poulenc hymns, and a contemporary work on Zulu (!) themes, all in live performance.

But it is Volume II drawn from that concert that introduces the truly unexpected—*In the Mood, You're Getting to Be a Habit with Me, Dayton Ohio, 1903, Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da*—together with some folk songs, a barbershop ballad, and some other novelties. From there it is no step at all to such complete pop collections as "Out of the Blue" (*Girl Talk, Half-of-It-Dearie Blues, Here's That Rainy Day*, and a couple of folk songs as ringers), "The King's Singers Swing" (*It Don't Mean a Thing if . . .*), and "The King's Singers Collection" (*I Love You Samantha, She's Leaving Home, Ask Yourself Why*, etc.).

WHAT does a madrigal group sound like singing pop? Truthfully, it sounds very much like the Hi-Los—if you remember them. The King's Singers may not have quite the same harmonic adventurousness (nor would anyone mistake them for the Beatles in that repertoire), but there is music-making of real quality going on virtually all the time. One last disc to mention: Flanders and Swann songs on one side, Noël Coward songs on the other. There is more bite in the originals, but it's a sweet record all the same. The point is that the King's Singers seem to be able to cross all repertoire lines with courage and skill. The question is, are we, in the fragmented states of America, ready for this? □

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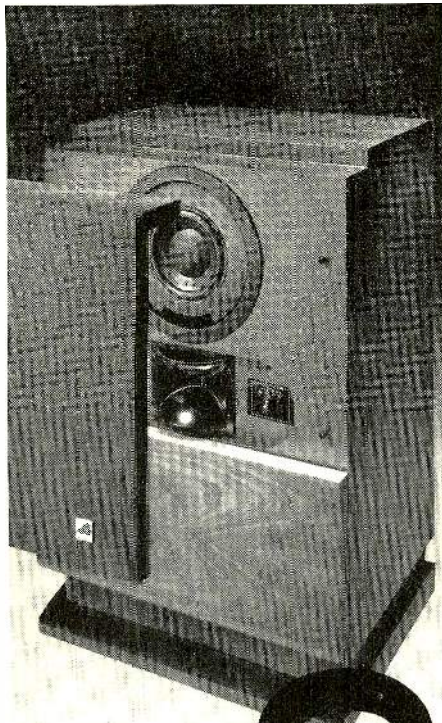
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The Pop Beat

By Paulette
Weiss



JINGLES ALL THE WAY

WHETHER your favorite music be rock or jazz, Beethoven symphonies or Yugoslavian folk songs, there's another kind of music you probably hear just as often: the commercial jingles on radio and television. You may consider them aural fluff, sonic air pollution, or a form of pop art, but there's no denying that these damnably hummable tunes root themselves as firmly in the brain as dandelions in the lawn.

The first singing commercial was probably General Mills' *Have You Tried Wheaties?* in 1929, but Walter Mack is generally credited with popularizing the form as we now know it in 1938. When Mack became president of Pepsi-Cola that year, radio was America's primary entertainment medium. The *Amos 'n' Andy Show* was hot, but its long, hard-sell, all-talk Pepsi commercials left the public cold. Mack thought short, entertaining ads would get better results. When two songwriters hit on the same idea and walked into his office with "Pepsi-Cola hits the spot/Twelve full ounces, that's a lot" sung to the tune of an English nursery rhyme, Mack devised a campaign of thirty- and sixty-second spots, and advertising history was made.

Singing commercials have even greater impact today than when they were first conceived because the eighteen- to thirty-four-year-old consumers who form the current prime market have grown up all but saturated with music. Several of today's top jingle composers once performed or produced pop tunes, and several current pop stars—such as Barry Manilow, Melissa Manchester, and one of this month's featured artists, Valerie Simpson—started out working with jingles. To set the record straight, Barry Manilow did *not* write *You Deserve a Break Today*, the first MacDonald's jingle. Kevin Gavin and Sid Woloshin did. Manilow merely sang it, but his including the tune in his famous medley of commercials led to the confusion.

David Lucas and Tom McFaul, two of the country's most successful jingle composers, feel that jingle suppliers (as they refer to themselves) form a breed apart. The jingle supplier, they say, is *more* than a songwriter because he must also be knowledgeable in the fields of film and advertising. He often acts as his own producer, conducts his business relations with Madison Avenue, and performs his

own tunes as well. For creating such immortal jingles as *Give Your Cold to Contac*, *Reach Out and Touch Someone* (AT&T), and the Meow Mix theme, Lucas and McFaul generally receive a one-time creative fee of \$5,000 to \$10,000. However, for caroling like a drunken cat or a chicken underwater, the *singer* on these commercials collects a residual fee each time one of them is broadcast, and he or she consequently earns more each year than the composer. The Society of Advertising Music Producers, Arrangers, and Composers (SAMPAC) was formed recently to correct this appalling inequity.

The cost of presenting a commercial on national television is about \$1,000 a second, and since so much money is at stake, advertisers seeking sure-fire jingles for their products stick with writers of past hits. Besides Lucas and McFaul, they frequently tap Steve Karmen, the King of Jingles (*I Love New York*), Ginny Redington (*You, You're the One* for MacDonald's), Susan Hamilton (not a songwriter herself, but the producing arm of a conglomerate of songwriters), Tom Dawes (*Plop, Plop, Fizz, Fizz* for Alka-Seltzer), and a few others.

ALTHOUGH the financial rewards for success as a jingle supplier are enticing and the actual creation of thirty seconds of simple, catchy music may look easy enough, Lucas and McFaul warn beginners that the competition in this tight market is stiff and appearances are deceiving. Weeks of work go into those brief thirty seconds—finding the all-important hook (the catch phrase or hummable melody that lies at the heart of a good jingle), selling the idea, and setting up and producing the recording session. And they advise persistence if you want to get into this field and succeed. Assuming that you've got the musical ability, they suggest you get into the music business in any way you can and ply jingle houses, such as Susan Hamilton's, with your work. Ginny Redington was a session singer when she came up with *You, You're the One*, and she's been in demand ever since. Who knows? With a little luck you may parlay your knowledge of Yugoslavian folk songs into the toilet-cleanser tune that will bowl over the executives on Madison Avenue. You just might be the one. □



**Why have millions of
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nineteen minispeakers

Stereo Review's three technical editors (plus two invited panelists) practice what they preach, demonstrating that it is possible to choose speakers by means of listening tests

By Gary Stock



As artist Louis Comfort Tiffany no doubt would testify, small, gleaming objects of great delicacy and precision fascinate most people. It may be that they represent the observable limits of human manual skill, or that they appear as tiny islands of perfect, multifaceted order in a chaotic world. Whatever the reason, the fascination is timeless: our museums are filled with the jeweled Easter eggs, the miniature statuary, the music boxes, salt cellars, and ship models of earlier eras, and they continue to enchant.

This fascination has come to extend, in the twentieth century, to small devices having more practical purposes—cameras, watches, pocket recorders, and, recently, two categories of audio components: cigarbox-size electronic units (the “minicomponents” of *STEREO REVIEW*’s April 1979 cover story) and very small bookshelf loudspeakers. It is not yet clear whether American buyers are going to be sufficiently intrigued by miniature preamplifiers and tuners to make such technological “jewelry” the darlings of the market, but in the four or five years that very small loudspeaker systems have been available, they have enjoyed an extraordinary growth in popularity.

Small loudspeakers with good sonic performance have been available in Europe for more than a decade. Older audiophiles may remember the English Goodmans Maxim and the superbly finished blond Braun speakers as early examples of the genre. But the typical American buyer resisted, until quite recently, the very idea of the small loudspeaker in favor of the classic American bookshelf system, with its volume of 1 to 3 cubic feet, its emphasis on bass performance, and its ability to play at high power levels.

It has remained for larger changes in the style of American life to begin breaking down this bias. Oil shortages and the resulting lower national speed limit, some observers believe, have helped touch off a boom in automotive high fidelity. This in turn led to the first large-scale introductions of miniature loudspeakers to the United States—as automotive loudspeakers. In addition, a less “rooted” style of life, coupled with a growing number of apartment dwellers and the ever-shrinking size of the average apartment, has been instrumental in focusing interest on small speakers. And, too, an increasing number of female buyers of audio equipment, astutely less concerned, perhaps, with size for its own sake, see the small speaker as a rational solution to the problem of filling a moderate-size room with music.

CLEARLY, though, one major reason for the minispeaker’s popularity is simply its versatility. Small speakers find uses as primary speakers in automobiles, vans, and boats, as remote speakers in offices, bedrooms, and garages, in the tiniest of dormitory rooms and studio apartments, in vacation homes, as rear-channel speakers in four-channel and time-delay systems, and even as the “satellite” speakers in some esoteric systems (see box below). Within the constraints imposed by their power-handling capabilities and bass response, they permit high-performance audio to be placed in virtually any enclosed space.

STEREO REVIEW’s decision to undertake a comprehensive review of these smaller loudspeakers was prompted by a number of reasons, chief among them being the popularity and utility of this type of component and the dearth of criticism and comment on them available. We

◀ Facing page: Messrs. Stock, Klein, and Hodges

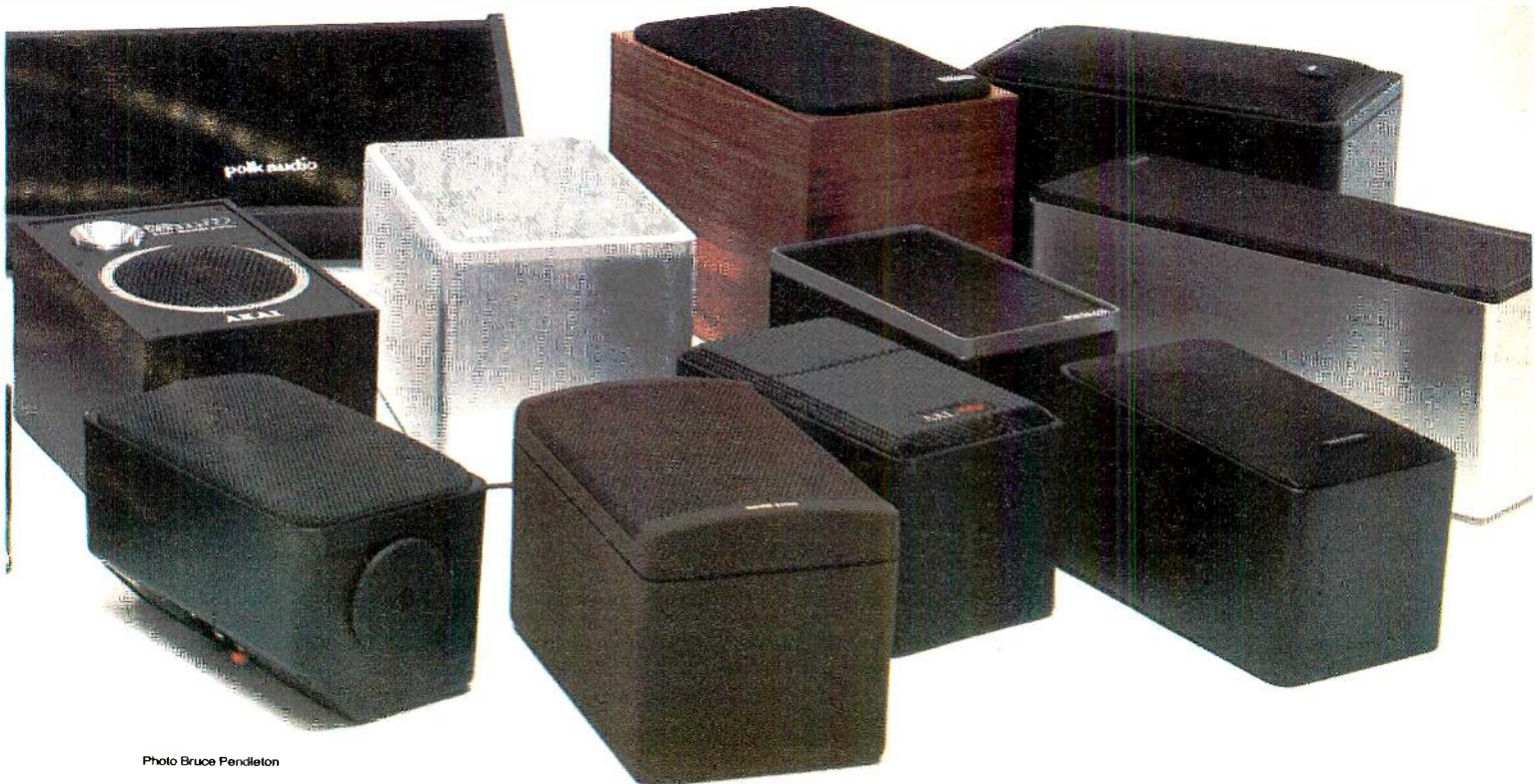


Photo Bruce Pendleton

minispeakers...

were also curious about the level of performance that could be packed into such small enclosures. And finally, only one of the members of the listening panel had had extensive experience with very small speakers, and a large-scale comparative listening program would offer us all the opportunity to walk in the shoes of the prospective speaker buyer, to evaluate a variety of competing products of the same type through listening evaluation rather than laboratory testing and measurement. (A number of the listening-panel members were prospective buyers literally, in that they were planning to purchase small speakers for remote or rear-channel use.) Given the fact that the performance of these minis was likely to be less than the state of the art for larger speakers, and that the departures even from that somewhat elastic standard would be in different directions, taste obviously would be a significant factor in the judging.

IN the first stages of our preparations for the tests, it became apparent that some decision as to what, for our purposes, constituted a "small" speaker would be necessary. Preliminary checking had turned up hundreds of products described as "bookshelf" or "compact" speakers. We eliminated many of them by pegging the longest dimension of the units to be tested at 12 inches, basing

that figure on the maximum spacing one would encounter in most shelf systems. We also imposed a price limit of \$150 per speaker to preclude pointless head-to-head comparisons of products having widely disparate prices. (This eliminated a number of the fairly expensive English-oriented "location monitor" speakers, such as those made by Chartwell and Spondor, but it is our feeling that these specialty products fall into a fundamentally different category.)

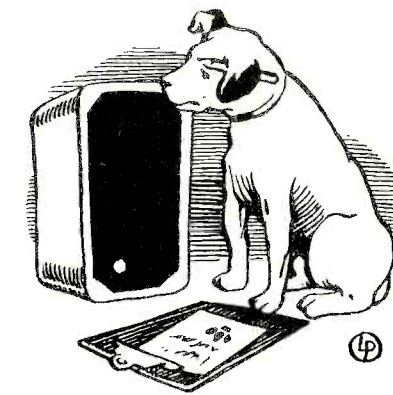
Listening sessions were conducted over a period of about two weeks in STEREO REVIEW's own listening room, whose proportions and acoustical damping yield good frequency-balance and reverberation characteristics. A loudspeaker switching system with line-level attenuation (to prevent any reduction in damping factor caused by L or T pads) had been built for the room and was used throughout the tests. The switching system permitted instantaneous switching between several pairs of loudspeakers. Each pair of speakers was adjusted by means of the switching system for an acoustic output level approximately equal to the others (as determined with the aid of an Ivie pink-noise generator and real-time analyzer) before critical listening began.

The first sessions brought out not only the expected comments and criticism of individual models under test, but also some observations on the test group as a whole. The comment most consistently heard alluded to the generally high level of sonic performance of the small speakers. They were, to put it simply, much more musical and sonically detailed than many of the panel members had

THE LISTENING PANEL Backgrounds and Listening Styles

● **Larry Klein**, STEREO REVIEW's *Technical Director*, has been involved in speaker-evaluation sessions (frequently with designers) for over twenty years. He favors frequent, rapid-fire switching among several speakers rather than prolonged listening to any one pair. His reactions to and analyses of individual units are derived quickly, possibly because for many years he has done such comparisons with a switching system built into his home set-up. His preferred program material for critical listening is in the popular vein, Joni Mitchell's *Miles of Aisles* (Asylum AB-202) being frequently used in his evaluations. His usual listening level is a moderate one, around 90 dB.

● **Ralph Hodges**, *Technical Editor* and also a veteran of countless "speaker battles," prefers longer listening periods with less frequent switching, and he counts heavily on the realistic depiction of acoustic space as an indicator of speaker quality. His program material for speaker evaluation runs primarily toward selected classical recordings made with simple, straightforward microphone arrays. His power-handling and dynamic-range testing were conducted using the formidable deep-bass passages of "Organ Music from Westminster" (Ark 10251-S). Listening levels during his power-handling evaluations were higher than for some of the oth-



er participants, several replacement fuses being required.

● **Gary Stock**, *Assistant Technical Editor*, used conventionally recorded discs from his own collection for the tests, with a combination of frequent and longer-term A-B switching techniques. His listening levels, like those of Bob Ajaye and Larry Klein, tended to be moderate. Particular favorites during the testing included an English recording of *Scheherazade* (EMI SXLP 30253), with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Thomas Beecham, and the Judy Collins album "Living" (Elektra EKS-75014).

● **Bob Ajaye** is a video and motion-picture sound technician who has been a participant in previous STEREO REVIEW listening tests. His ears tend toward the analytical, having been honed by his work in the early Seventies as the final test and adjustment technician for a high-end speaker manufacturer. His listening procedures were oriented toward picking out the specific strong points and faults of a speaker. Among the dozen or so discs used during his listening were a direct-to-disc Japanese RCA recording of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* (RCA RDCE-501-2) and the Leontyne Price *Tosca* (RCA LDS 7022). His listening levels were quite moderate, dictated by his judgment of what actual concert-hall levels would have been, and he prefers to listen in complete darkness.

● **Arnis Balgalvis**, a data communications consultant, has participated in past STEREO REVIEW articles on both disc and component quality (see the July 1978 "Direct-to-Disc Records"). He also used records from his personal collection for the sessions. He favors moderate levels, infrequent switching, and frequent changes of program material as a means of checking out different characteristics. He believes that undoctored recordings of the human voice are most effective in revealing loudspeaker colorations and other faults.

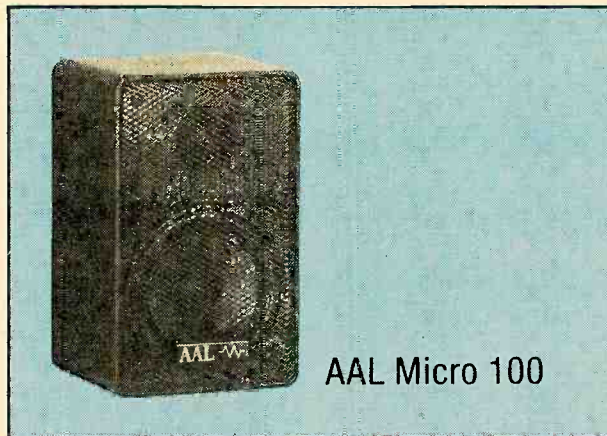
expected. Almost all of us live with large, technically complex speaker systems, and one initial fear had been that the small speakers would be so far removed in sonic quality from our home units that we would be put off by their audible inadequacies. This concern was quickly dispelled. For example, Arnis Balgalvis (who owns an exotic full-range electrostatic system) noted in the margin of his comments sheet that he was "astounded by the quality and loudness of the minis as a group"; other panelists agreed.

ANOTHER salient, though less surprising, characteristic of the small speakers was their rather modest efficiency. In accord with a natural law of speaker design, many of the designers have evidently traded efficiency for reasonable bass performance from small-enclosure volumes. Consequently, most of the speakers were no more efficient than conventional, medium-size acoustic-suspension systems (which generally have an 85- to 88-dB output level, measured at a 1-meter distance, for a 1-watt white-noise input). Therefore, in a typical 2,500-cubic-foot living room, most of these speakers will require an amplifier with fair output power—certainly no less than 30 watts per channel—in order to achieve reasonable sound levels without noticeable amplifier clipping. This is not quite so serious a problem as it might appear, because the most common applications for small speakers place them in rooms of moderate size, thus reducing (frequently by 50 per cent or more) the power needed to drive them properly.

Each of the reviews that follows includes an initial description of the speaker's physical features and technical characteristics, followed by what might be called a consensus view of the speaker's sonic qualities based on the conclusions of the participants. There is also a section for **Remarks**, made up of some of the more interesting quotations culled from panelists' notes, and one for **Ratings**, giving letter grades for the speaker's performance in the areas of bass extension, power-handling and dynamic-range capability (encompassing not only the ability of the speaker to reproduce high-level passages without breakdown, but also the capacity to do so without high distortion—generally, the point at which a speaker begins to exhibit high distortion is just short of the point at which it will destroy itself), and general listening quality.

When reading over the reviewers' remarks, bear in mind that we have, in most cases, applied the same rigorous standards we use for larger speakers to these evaluations. Although the comments may therefore seem a bit blunt or even severe in some cases, they reflect our intention to use the comparative-listening approach as a means of providing the most incisive, valuable analysis.

ONE final note: not every speaker meeting our preliminary criteria was tested. There were simply too many to be thoroughly and fairly evaluated in a reasonable length of time, and we were therefore forced to limit the survey to nineteen units that we felt were both widely available and represented a cross section of the present small-speaker market. The speakers range from those roughly the size of a small loaf of bread, which we have termed "2-liter" (that being their approximate internal volume), to units about as big as a good-sized shoebox, which we call "6-liter." In many cases, manufacturers of one of the larger (shoebox) speakers tested also make smaller (breadloaf) units that, in our experience, usually have similar sonic characteristics.



AAL Micro 100

● **AAL Micro 100:** The AAL Micro 100 uses a sealed metal enclosure (in this case it is a hefty 3/16 inch thick) containing a 4-inch bass driver and a 1-inch treble unit. The enclosure, though of conventional size and shape, has an unusual black Wrinklelex finish with much more texture than a normal matte finish, plus a grille of black expanded metal. The total effect is such as to give the Micro 100 a no-nonsense, industrial appearance. Three threaded holes, one on the speaker's rear panel and one each on the top and bottom surfaces, accept machine screws either for mounting the speaker to a wall or for attachment of the optional U-shaped automotive bracket. Input terminals are recessed, color-coded, press-and-insert types. Price: \$100.

Both the efficiency and the power-handling capability of the AAL speaker were average, in the panel's judgment. Sonically, it impressed the participants as an acceptable, if not superior, reproducer. Comments focused on the speaker's bright, somewhat bass-shy character and on its lack of openness and depth.

Remarks: "Simplifies complex inputs . . . emphasis makes treble edgy." "Upper frequencies are forward . . . muddled in overall character." "Some mid-bass coloration."

Ratings: bass extension, C+; power handling, C; general listening quality, C.

Circle 150 on reader service card



Acutex MTS 1

● **Acutex MTS 1:** The Acutex MTS 1 has the same basic internal configuration and exterior appearance as several of the other speakers tested: it is a two-way, acoustic-suspension system with a 4-inch bass driver and a 1-inch fabric-dome tweeter, both drivers centered on the front baffle. The metal enclosure is finished in matte black with a black perforated-metal grille. Five small threaded holes on the rear panel, one roughly centered and the remaining four near the cabinet corners, can be used to attach the speaker to a wall or other surface. The input terminals are of the press-and-insert type and are recessed. Price: \$99.95.

Efficiency of the MTS 1 was about average for our test sampling. Acutex specifies sensitivity as about 83 dB for a 1-watt in-

minispeakers...

put measured at 1 meter, and the panel's comments are in line with this rating. Power handling and dynamic range were also about average for the group. Aside from an absence of deep bass, the MTS 1 earned high marks from the panel, particularly with respect to its imaging properties and degree of definition. At very high levels it acquired a somewhat strained character, and several reviewers mentioned a very slightly recessed upper mid-range. On balance, it distinguished itself as one of the best of the 2-liter speakers, capable of reproducing complex musical selections with excellent detail and accurate instrument placement.

Remarks: "Solo voices and choruses natural sounding but a bit distant . . . lacking the bass authority to be more convincing . . . use of bass tone control would help." "Pink noise sounds very smooth . . . open, and pleasant." "Good, decently balanced job." "Quite alive, perhaps slightly bright . . . good localization."

Ratings: bass extension, C; power handling, C+; general listening quality, B+.

Circle 151 on reader service card



ADS 300

● **ADS 300:** The ADS 300 was among the larger of the units tested, with an internal volume in the 6-liter range. Its sealed enclosure houses a 5-inch bass driver and a 1-inch fabric-dome treble unit. The metal enclosure is available with either a matte-black or a brushed-silver finish with a matching perforated-metal grille. Rather small recessed input terminals and four arrowhead-shaped cutouts are found on the rear panel, which is made of an acoustically inert nonmetallic material. The cutouts can be hooked over nail or screw heads for wall mounting. Price: \$145.

The efficiency of the ADS 300 was considerably above average, as might be expected with the larger internal cabinet volume. Power handling of the system was slightly better than in most of the speakers tested, though not superior to that of some of the other larger units in the survey. The test group's opinion of the ADS 300 was a very positive one, with numerous references to its bass extension, efficiency, and smoothness. One reviewer thought it, overall, the best speaker tested. The speaker's bass performance was influenced to some slight extent, however, by a mid- to upper-bass emphasis which added a bit of "chestiness" to voices and some "oomph" to orchestral selections. This frequency balance was overly warm in the view of some of the panelists, but others felt that it added a welcome solidity and foundation that they found lacking in many of the smaller speakers.

Remarks: "Low end goes quite low." "Slight bass peak . . . a colored sound, à la cupped hands." "Resonance in the upper bass . . . power handling a bit above average." "Excellent bass extension, quite efficient . . . but perhaps a bit of mid-bass warmth on male voice."

Ratings: bass extension, B; power handling, B; general listening quality, A.

Circle 152 on reader service card



Akai SW-7

● **Akai SW-7:** The SW-7 is of medium dimensions, with a cabinet volume of about 4 liters. Its wooden enclosure is finished in a satin black, with silver and white front-panel accents. The speaker uses a 5-inch bass driver and a 2-inch conical-horn treble driver. The drivers are protected by two round, dome-shaped perforated metal covers rather than by a conventional grille frame. The input terminals are of the press-and-insert type and are recessed; this, in combination with the mounting bracket on the rear panel, permits wall mounting. Price: \$80.

The SW-7 is a relatively efficient speaker. Akai's efficiency rating of 92 dB for a 1-watt input agreed with the panel's listening judgment of its sensitivity. The panel found the speaker's power-handling capability somewhat better than average. The reviewers also found the Akai SW-7 to have a rather projected, "honky" coloration and to be lacking deep bass, its designers apparently having chosen efficiency and power handling over flat response. The speaker may therefore appeal to the devotee of highly processed electronic music, though the panel found it less than appealing on most other forms of music.

Remarks: "A pinched, nasal quality." "Nasal, tubby, enclosed." "Power handling above average." "Rather poor imaging . . . fairly efficient."

Ratings: bass extension, D; power handling, C; general listening quality, D.

Circle 153 on reader service card



Audioanalyst M2

● **Audioanalyst M2:** Like its larger brethren in the Audioanalyst line, the M2 has the front-baffle area around its 1-inch fabric-dome treble unit covered with a grid made of sandwiched layers of plastic sheet and foam. This grid is said to absorb energy from the tweeter that would otherwise be reflected from the baffle and cause coloration. The M2 has a wooden enclosure, finished in a dark walnut veneer, and a grille of knit fabric. It is a two-way system, with a 5-inch bass driver that appears to have been specially treated on its cone surface. The inputs to the speaker are recessed, color-coded press terminals. Above them in the rear-

panel recess is a fuse holder housing a 1-ampere slow-blow fuse. There are no provisions for wall mounting. Price: \$149.

The reviewers found the M2 to be an open-sounding loudspeaker with a smooth frequency balance and better-than-average efficiency. Its dynamic range was limited to some extent by the value of the fuse included with it; high-level listening blew the fuses on one occasion. In general, the panel liked it, citing its high-end clarity, convincing stereo imaging, and natural, uncolored bass reproduction.

Remarks: "The bass is very good, as is solo male voice . . . texture of chorus is muffled." "Smooth . . . good imaging . . . upper midrange is shrill." "Needs more high-frequency energy, but otherwise inoffensive . . . fairly efficient . . . power handling limited by fuse selection." "Open, good clarity on percussion . . . a little warm . . . quite respectable."

Ratings: bass extension, B; power handling, C+; general listening quality, B. *Circle 154 on reader service card*



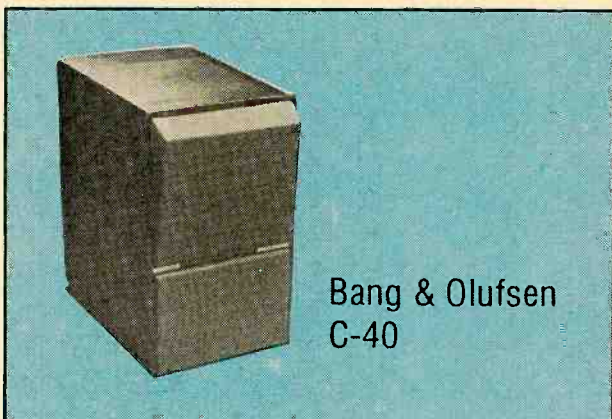
Braun
L-200

● **Braun L-200:** Another of the larger, 6-liter-volume speakers in our test, the Braun L-200 has a 5¼-inch bass driver and a 1-inch fabric-dome treble unit. Its sealed enclosure is a "sandwich" with a shell of high-impact plastic around a wooden core; it is available in either matte black with a black perforated-metal grille or in white with a silver-colored grille. The input terminals are recessed press-and-insert types. A single hole of about ¾ inch diameter, located on the rear panel, can be used for wall mounting. Price: \$144.50.

The L-200 was as well regarded by the panel as any speaker in the test group, with two participants awarding it "best of test" status. Efficiency, power-handling capability, and dynamic range were all well above average. The frequency balance of the speaker was slightly bright in the view of some panel members, but the L-200's level of definition, smoothness, and uncolored bass performance were highly praised.

Remarks: "Midrange a bit forward; adds slight color to voices." "Detailed, coherent . . . smooth, with some brightness." "The best of the group . . . prominent in upper register, but has least objectionable coloration of any . . . overloads gracefully . . . a sophisticated device." "Very clean yet extended bass . . . open voice reproduction . . . steel percussion textures are very good."

Ratings: bass extension, A; power handling, A; general listening quality, A. *Circle 156 on reader service card*



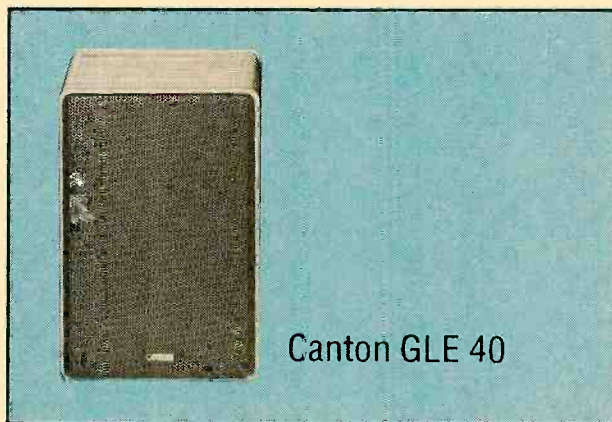
Bang & Olufsen
C-40

● **Bang & Olufsen C-40:** Bang & Olufsen products are noted for their unusual styling and technical design, and the C-40 is no exception. Instead of an acoustic-suspension or even a passive-radiator-equipped system approach, the C-40's 4-inch bass driver is loaded by a "log-line" similar to the folded transmission lines used in some large, floor-standing systems. The log-line in the C-40 consists of a folded path within the cabinet (which is filled with a fibrous damping material), terminating in a series of vertical slots on the rear panel. As with a transmission line, one purpose of this arrangement is to absorb energy from the rear of the cone that might otherwise be reflected back through it, causing coloration. The speaker's treble driver is a 1-inch fabric dome mounted in a recess on the front baffle. The enclosure of the C-40 is a heavy aluminum assembly available in either brushed-silver or black finish with a black fabric grille. The input connector is a two-pin DIN connector deeply recessed into the rear panel. Bare-wire connections cannot be made to the C-40; rather, the manufacturer supplies a cable fitted with the matching DIN connector. Price: \$145.

The panel concluded that the sonic performance of the Bang & Olufsen speaker was not as impressive as might have been expected from a speaker of such sophisticated design. By comparison with the other speakers of the test group, it was rather inefficient, and its power-handling capacity was also below that of many other speakers tested. All of the panelists made note of a midrange coloration that was readily audible on reproduced voices. Although the speaker's deep-bass performance was cleaner than that of many other units tested, the midrange coloration and the general lack of openness and imaging capability contributed to the lukewarm reaction to the C-40 on the part of the five panelists.

Remarks: "Upper midrange a bit nasal . . . mid-bass prominent." "Colored, especially on applause . . . typical 'cupped-hands' sound . . . early overload." "Power handling poor . . . honky, and inefficient to boot."

Ratings: bass extension, B; power handling, C-; general listening quality, D. *Circle 155 on reader service card*



Canton GLE 40

● **Canton GLE 40:** The GLE 40 is a fairly large (6-liter volume) acoustic-suspension system available in three finishes: a light-walnut-veneer cabinet with a bronze metal grille, matte black with a black metal grille, and white with a silver-colored grille. The system uses a 6-inch bass driver (the largest among the tested units) and a ¾-inch fabric-dome treble unit (the smallest among the samples) with a 1,400-Hz crossover frequency. Connections are made via press-and-insert terminals set flush with the rear panel. Two small holes on the rear panel can be used for wall-mounting purposes. Price: \$125. *(Continued overleaf)*

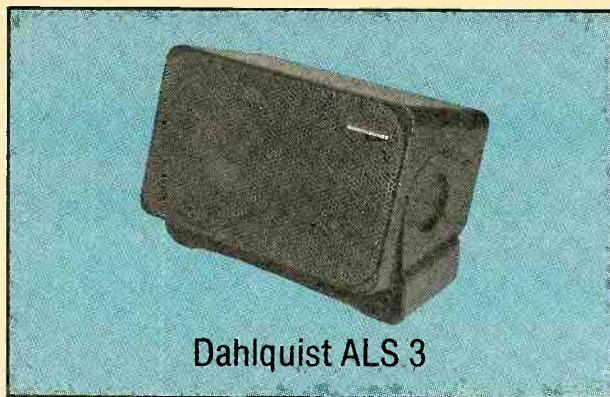
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The speaker supplied for our tests was beautifully made and finished in a European light walnut. The rounded corners were inlaid strips of solid wood, the finish a smooth lacquer. Several panelists commented on the speaker's appearance, which was clearly among the most attractive in our survey group. Efficiency of the GLE-40 was above average, as might be expected from a 6-liter enclosure; dynamic range was not exceptional, however. The reviewers noted a number of different types of coloration in their comments on this speaker: a mid-bass warmth on voice, a reticent character in the upper treble, and a generally confined quality, particularly on orchestral selections. Definition was not exceptionally good, although several panel members found the frequency balance of the speaker appealing on certain popular-music selections.

Remarks: "Somewhat colored . . . beautiful appearance." "Highs down . . . honky and closed-in." "A somewhat heavy, muffled quality . . . power handling average." "Very efficient . . . coloration on voice . . . slightly dim in extreme treble . . . lovely cabinet finish."

Ratings: bass extension, C+; power handling, C; general listening quality, C.

Circle 157 on reader service card



Dahlquist ALS 3

● **Dahlquist ALS 3:** The ALS 3 was the only three-way system in the test group. It uses a 4-inch bass driver, a 1.5-inch cone midrange, and a 1-inch plastic-dome tweeter, all housed in a matte-black metal enclosure with a black perforated grille. The enclosure has removable round end caps that act as clamps for the U-shaped automotive brackets supplied with the speaker. The input terminals have been recessed into a cutout on the rear panel. Next to them is a two-position "home/automotive" switch that boosts the high-frequency output of the speaker in the automotive position to compensate for the masking effects of

MINISPEAKERS AS SATELLITES

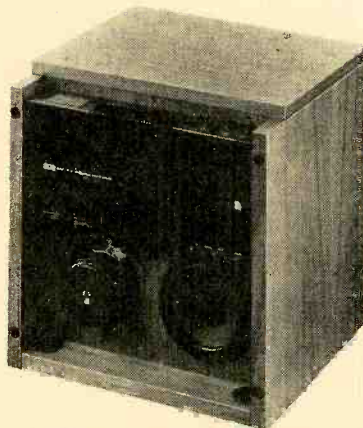
ONE of the more intriguing speaker formats of the not-too-distant past to have reappeared during the Seventies is the satellite-format system. This is an arrangement in which two relatively small "satellite" speakers reproduce the conventional left-and-right stereo information at frequencies above, say, 100 Hz while a single subwoofer reproduces a combined left-plus-right signal at low frequencies—say, below 100 Hz—where stereo information is theoretically unimportant to the ear's sound perceptions.

This configuration has at least one inherent advantage over the more common format of two full-range speaker systems: the non-directionality of deep bass permits considerable freedom in subwoofer placement (the woofer can take the form of a low commode that can be used as an end table or sideboard and located almost anywhere), and the small size of the satellites gives them greater placement flexibility as well.

Satellite systems have recently become popular with apartment dwellers and interior designers bent on assembling an "invisible" music system having good sound and extended bass response. A number of the small-speaker manufacturers in our survey—Audioanalyst, Dahlquist, General Sound, and Visonik—make subwoofers that can be used with their small speakers in a satellite arrangement, as do a number of other companies not involved in the small-speaker market.

But the audiophile community has never quite come to grips with the notion of using two relatively inexpensive miniature speakers as the primary transducers in a system, although this unease may be related more to questions of prestige than of actual sonic performance. We decided,

therefore, to investigate the satellite approach during the listening sessions by staging a direct comparison between a pair of excellent three-way floor-standing systems (the KEF 105s) and a satellite system. We set up a number of different pairs of small speakers, using them in conjunction with the newly available Audio Pro B2-50 (\$795) subwoofer, a cube-shaped Swedish-made system that has an internal electronic crossover and equalized amplifier. After some testing with pink noise to set the output level and crossover frequency of the subwoofer, we settled in for some critical listening.



Audio Pro B2-50 subwoofer

The results of the experiment raised a few eyebrows. With the exception of some differences in the depth and lateral sweep of the stereo image (our large reference system is justly noted for its superb

imaging qualities) and a very minor alteration of voice quality, the satellite systems stood up beautifully against the floor-standing reference in every regard. Bass response from the satellite-format system was smooth and seamless, betraying little evidence of the low-frequency crossover from satellite to subwoofer. The slightly dry, thin character that the small speakers had sometimes evinced when heard alone vanished, as did some of the other problems produced by lack of octave-to-octave balance within the minis. Midrange definition, detail, and undistorted output capability were all very much in the same league as those of the reference speaker—or, indeed, of most larger speakers. In all, we found the satellite-format system a highly listenable, musically satisfying alternative to the conventional two-speaker arrangement. Any doubts as to the validity and level of performance of the satellite concept were put to rest.

To our minds, these conclusions suggest not only that satellite-format systems are worth considering even in audiophile-grade music systems, but also that they offer those buying a first system on a tight budget the opportunity to assemble a high-performance speaker system in two stages: first the small speakers, used initially as full-range reproducers, and then the subwoofer and (if required) an electronic crossover/amplifier package. This type of "trade-in-free" approach to speaker acquisition was offered by firms such as Bozak and JBL in the early days of hi-fi as a way of reducing the ante for the consumer just starting out. It made sense then, and, given the inflation-prone Eighties we are about to enter, it would seem to make as much sense now. —G.S.

road noise. Speaker-lead in-line fuse holders are also supplied with the ALS 3. Price: \$125.

The speaker was listened to in the horizontal position with the rear-panel switch set for home listening. The efficiency of the ALS 3 was about average for the smaller speakers of the group, though power handling was somewhat below average. Bass performance impressed the panel favorably, particularly given the small (2-liter) enclosure volume. The speaker seemed to be somewhat lacking, in the opinion of several panelists, in a sense of "air" and openness, but its frequency balance and level of definition were both very well regarded by the panel, as was its relative lack of coloration. On balance, it was among the best liked of the smaller speakers tested.

Remarks: "Unusually deep bass extension." "Nice, full sound . . . sonorous." "Not bad on the whole, but seems to have a little too much in lower midrange." "Very good bass extension . . . good sense of instrumental color on strings."

Ratings: bass extension, B; power handling, C, general listening quality, B+.

Circle 158 on reader service card



● **Polk Mini-Monitor:** The Mini-Monitor is considerably different in appearance from any of the other units tested. Its long, slender profile and triangular cross section resemble a musician's on-stage monitor, although the speaker is not intended for such an application. The enclosure is finished in either a pebble-grain black-vinyl laminate or a walnut-grain vinyl, with a black foam grille held in place by Velcro tabs. The drivers consist of a 4½-inch bass unit with a treated cone, a 4½-inch passive radiator, and a 1-inch fabric-dome tweeter. A plastic plate inset on the rear panel holds two binding-post input connectors and a "pincer"-type fuse clip wired in series with the speaker's input. There are, understandably, no provisions for wall mounting, although optional U-shaped brackets for automotive use are available. Price: \$100.

The efficiency of the Mini-Monitor was quite high. Power handling was also good, in the view of the panelists, with reproduction of orchestral crescendos unstrained and natural. The frequency balance of the speaker was very smooth, with some slight traces of mid-bass coloration noted on vocal selections. Aside from this minor effect, the speaker displayed good definition and reproduction of detail, although the imaging was not as precisely localized as with the best speakers of the group. Deep-bass reproduction was clean and rather extended.

Remarks: "A bit colored and opaque." "Quite efficient . . . a hands-cupped-over-mouth sort of coloration, but not too severe and often unnoticeable." "Good power handling and efficiency, with clarity retained even under conditions of high-level punishment . . . bass extends as deep as any speaker in the group."

Ratings: bass extension, B+; power handling, B; general listening quality, B+.

Circle 159 on reader service card



● **Hitachi HS-1:** The HS-1 has a die-cast, sealed-aluminum, 2-liter cabinet housing a 4-inch bass driver and a 1-inch metallized plastic-dome tweeter. The speaker's exterior finish is matte black with a black wire-mesh grille and a cast silver-colored front trim plate fastened to the enclosure with four Allen-head bolts. The rear-panel input connectors are two recessed, color-coded push terminals. A keyhole fitting permits wall mounting of the speaker. Price: \$99.98.

Hitachi specifies the sensitivity of the HS-1 as 85 dB for a 1-watt input, which agrees with the panel's judgment of its efficiency as average. Power-handling capacity was also fairly typical. The sound of the speaker was characterized by the panel as fair, but with the octave-to-octave balance tilted in favor of the treble region. Coloration in the upper midrange was mentioned by all of the panelists in their notes.

Remarks: "Lower treble emphasis . . . harsh, especially on strings . . . sibilant." "Colored in upper midrange." "A bit overblown and colored in midrange . . . power handling average." "Rather confined character . . . nasal voice quality . . . not terribly open."

Ratings: bass extension, C; power handling, C; general listening quality, C.

Circle 160 on reader service card



● **JVC s-M3:** Another member of the 2-liter-enclosure category, the JVC s-M3 has a 4-inch bass driver and a 1-inch fabric-dome tweeter. The hefty cast-aluminum enclosure is finished in a smooth gun-metal grey with a wire-mesh grille and a polished front trim plate fastened with heavy Allen-head bolts. The input connectors are screw terminals recessed into the rear panel, which also has a keyhole aperture for wall mounting and a vertical groove, running from the terminal recess to the cabinet edge to accommodate the input wire. This groove permits the speaker to be mounted flush to a wall surface. Price: \$84.95.

The panel found the efficiency of the s-M3 average among the smaller speakers, confirming its 85-dB/1-watt sensitivity rating. Dynamic range and power handling were also average among the 2-liter speakers. The frequency balance of this speaker was tilted

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toward the treble end of the spectrum, in the view of the panel, with a modest bass extension and a somewhat forward, bright overall sound. While not exceptionally open, the s-M3 sounded fairly smooth and uncolored, with a credible level of definition. The panelists judged it, all in all, a good but not extraordinary musical reproducer.

Remarks: "On most voices, not bad, but lacking openness . . . weak bass." "Could be more open, treble strident . . . not 'big' sounding." "Midrange emphasis extending down to upper bass . . . reasonably smooth sounding otherwise." "Not terribly open . . . bass shy."

Ratings: bass extension, C; power handling, B; general listening quality, C+.

Circle 161 on reader service card

Lafayette Pip-Speak

(see front cover)

● **Lafayette Pip-Speak:** The Lafayette Pip-Speak uses a conventional two-way acoustic-suspension design approach. Its small, matte-black metal enclosure contains a 4-inch bass driver and a 1-inch fabric-dome treble unit with a crossover network that operates at 2,500 Hz. Rear-panel terminals are of the push-and-insert type and are recessed. Five threaded holes on the rear panel can be used to mount the speaker on a wall. Price: \$49.99.

The Pip-Speak was of about average efficiency, the panel's judgment agreeing with Lafayette's sensitivity rating of 83 dB for a 1-watt input; power-handling capacity was also quite typical for a 2-liter speaker. With respect to sound quality, the panel found the Pip-Speak a reasonable music reproducer, particularly considering its modest price. Although its bass extension was limited to about the same degree as most of the small speakers tested, octave-to-octave balance was smooth, with detailed, well-defined reproduction of even complex musical passages.

Remarks: "Slight hollowness on voices but less than most . . . a bit of lower treble color . . . pretty good little speaker!" "Reasonable image, transparent highs . . . upper-midrange brightness." "A decent-sounding speaker without any disturbing coloration . . . a bit of mid-bass heaviness, however." "Slightly confined on voice, but surprisingly listenable overall . . . a competent job at an attractive price."

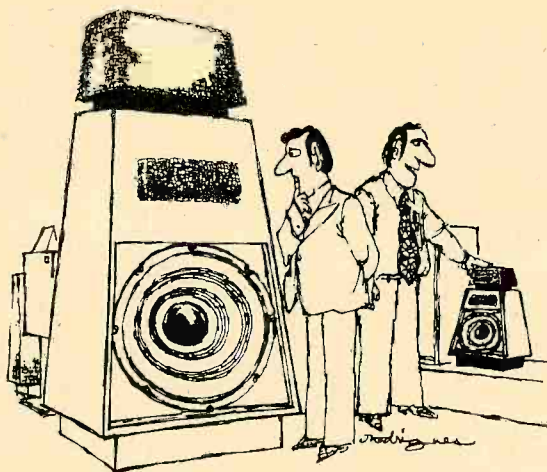
Ratings: bass extension, C; power handling, C+; general listening quality, B+.

Circle 162 on reader service card

Micron 521



● **Micron 500 Series by General Sound:** The 500 Series encompasses three different finish options: the Model 521 (walnut en-



"... However, if you think you'd like the same thing in a somewhat smaller version . . ."

closure with brown fabric grille), the 522 (matte-black enclosure with black fabric grille), and the 523 (white enclosure with white fabric grille). All have a sealed wooden cabinet and use the same 5¼-inch bass driver and a 1-inch fabric-dome tweeter. General Sound notes that the 500 Series uses a proprietary "time-align" technique. The tweeter is slightly recessed into the enclosure. The rear-panel input terminals are also recessed, although no provisions for wall mounting are provided. Price: \$150.

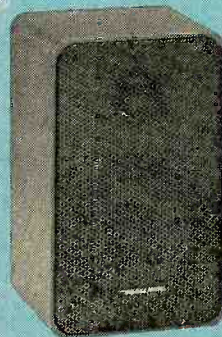
Although the frequency balance of the 500 Series speaker was reasonable, the panel commented on a number of different types of coloration that affected its overall level of accuracy. In particular, a steely quality in the treble and a bit of artificial mid-bass warmth were noted. Efficiency was slightly above average, confirming the manufacturer's rating of 87 dB for a 1-watt input. Dynamic range was average.

Remarks: "Metallic top end." "Could be more open . . . lower-register resonance, sizzly top . . . reasonable imaging." "Ragged-sounding midrange . . . changes instrumental tone color on piano . . . a bit tizzy on percussion . . . coloration on strings."

Ratings: bass extension, C+; power handling, C; general listening quality, C.

Circle 163 on reader service card

Realistic Minimus 7



● **Realistic Minimus 7:** The Minimus 7's black, 2-liter metal cabinet, perforated metal grille, and 4-inch bass driver with 1-inch fabric-dome treble unit are all typical of the smaller units tested, as are its recessed push terminals, rear-panel keyhole for wall mounting, and acoustic-suspension design. In fact, the Minimus 7 was so similar in appearance and dimensions to the Acutex and Lafayette units tested that we made inquiries to determine if the three were produced in the same factory. Indeed they are, but although the speakers use the same cabinet and input connectors,

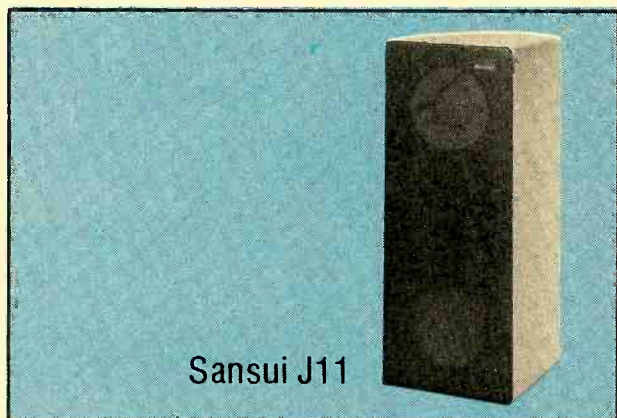
their drivers and crossover networks (and therefore their sound characters) differ. Price: \$49.95.

The panelists found the Minimus 7 to be one of the best of the 2-liter speakers and very much a bargain, considering its price. Although it was, like most of the speakers of its size, a bit thin in the bass, its sense of openness, level of definition, reproduction of musical detail, and stereo imaging were all quite good. Power handling was slightly above average, and efficiency was typical.

Remarks: "Not bad... a bit of presence, a bit of color in the upper midrange." "Open, reasonable imaging, but no lows, although sound is 'tight'." "Closest of the group to the estimable Braun, although not quite as open and clean... power handling above average." "Good imaging and definition... a good buy."

Ratings: bass extension, C; power handling, B; general listening quality, A—.

Circle 164 on reader service card



Sansui J11

● **Sansui J11:** The J11 was one of two speakers tested that used a passive radiator. This type of bass-loading arrangement can be used to achieve the benefits of a vented-enclosure format in a small cabinet where an actual port might not be practical. The J11 uses a bowl-shaped 4-inch passive radiator, a 4-inch active bass driver, and a centrally positioned 1-inch fabric-dome tweeter. The brushed-aluminum enclosure is tall, slender, and quite distinctive; electrical connections are made through slotted screw terminals, and a single keyhole-shaped aperture on the rear panel can be used to mount the speaker cabinet on a wall. Price: \$145.

The most salient characteristic of the J11, as noted by the listening panel, was its clean bass response, which was as uncolored and as extended as that of any speaker in the test series. The balance of the speaker was a bit forward in the midrange, giving it a breathy, rather close sound that seemed most natural on popular music but slightly projected on orchestral selections. Dynamic range was judged to be somewhat below average, however; driving the speaker hard quickly brought on audible distortion. The J11's sensitivity was about average, confirming its rating of 85 dB output for a 1-watt input. Another intriguing capability of this speaker, one which was mentioned independently by no fewer than three of the panelists, was its excellent solo-piano reproduction.

Remarks: "Bass abounds!... for rock, jazz, or disco fans, it can swing." "Smooth, open midrange and bass... could have more 'air'." "A bit forward in midrange... power handling is close to average, but overdriving gives rise to sounds of some distress." "Excellent deep-bass definition... fairly open on piano."

Ratings: bass extension, A; power handling, C+; general listening quality, B.

Circle 165 on reader service card

(Continued overleaf)

NINETEEN MINISPEAKERS: COMPARATIVE SPECIFICATIONS

Speaker Make and Model	Dimensions, inches	Rated Impedance, ohms‡	Weight (approx.), pounds	Sensitivity, decibels, for 1 watt input, 1 meter distance‡	Music Power-handling Ability, watts‡	Mounting Brackets: O = optional S = standard	Price (per speaker)
AAL Micro 100	7¼ x 4½ x 4½	4	5	n/a	50	O	\$100.00
Acutex MTS 1	7½ x 4½ x 4¾	8	5.5	83	40	O	99.00
ADS 300	8½ x 5¾ x 5¾	4	6.8	91	75	*	145.00
Akai SW-7	8¾ x 5½ x 5¾	8	5.3	92	40	—	80.00
Audioanalyst M2	9¾ x 6 x 7	4	8	89	50	—	149.00
Bang & Olufsen C 40	7¾ x 4¼ x 7¾	6	7.7	n/a	50	—	147.50
Braun L-200	10 x 6¾ x 6	8	9.3	86	50	—	144.50
Canton GLE-40	10¾ x 7 x 6	8	7.2	†	60	—	125.00
Dahlquist ALS-3	7½ x 4¾ x 4½	4	6.5	n/a	30	S	125.00
Hitachi HS-1	7¼ x 4¾ x 4¾	8	5.5	85	80	—	99.98
JVC s-M3	7¾ x 4½ x 4½	8	4.9	85	50	—	84.95
Lafayette Pip-Speak	7½ x 4½ x 4¾	8	5.5	83	40	S	49.99
Micron 500 by General Sound	9 x 5¾ x 7¾	4	7.3	87	up to 120	—	150.00
Polk Mini-Monitor	15 x 6½ x 4½	6	8	89.5	35 to 40	O	100.00
Realistic Minimus 7	7½ x 4½ x 4¾	8	4.5	83	40	O	49.95
Sansui J11	11¾ x 4¾ x 5½	5	6.4	85	60	—	145.00
Sony SS5GX	9¾ x 6¼ x 8¾	8	8.4	n/a	100	—	n/a
Ultralinear M16	7¾ x 5¼ x 4¾	4	5	86	50	S	69.98
Visonik D 6000	7¾ x 5 x 5¼	4	6	84	60	—	150.00

* with Model 300C, \$150

† 80 dB for 2.25 watts, 3-meter distance

‡ data supplied by manufacturers

minispeakers...



Sony SS-5GX

● **Sony SS-5GX:** The most intriguing feature of this speaker is its use of a "heat-pipe" arrangement to cool the bass driver's voice coil. A fluid-filled pipe connects to both the magnetic structure of the 5-inch bass driver and a large finned heat sink on the speaker's rear panel. In practice, the system acts roughly like an automobile radiator: heat is transferred by the fluid from the bass driver to the heat sink, which dissipates it by radiation into the air. The treble driver of the SS-5GX is a 1-inch fabric dome. The enclosure is finished in a handsome dark walnut with a cast-metal front trim plate and a black wire-mesh grille. Connections are made to two recessed, knurled-metal binding posts located on the rear panel. Price: not available at press time.

The efficiency of the SS-5GX was somewhat above average, placing it in the same general category, with respect to sensitivity, as the ADS 300. Power-handling and dynamic-range capabilities were not exceptionally high despite the use of a cooling system; both were about average for the test group. The panelists characterized the sound of this speaker as smooth and open, with a tendency toward mid-bass prominence that gave the speaker a warm quality. A slightly withdrawn midrange was mentioned by several reviewers as inducing a rather distant sound on both orchestral and vocal selections.

Remarks: "Mid bass prominent . . . midrange recessed." "Quite open, detailed . . . good imaging." "Smooth sounding, but midrange coloration . . . power handling average despite heat sinking." "Some mid-bass coloration on piano."

Ratings: bass extension, C+; power handling, C+; general listening quality, B. *Circle 166 on reader service card*



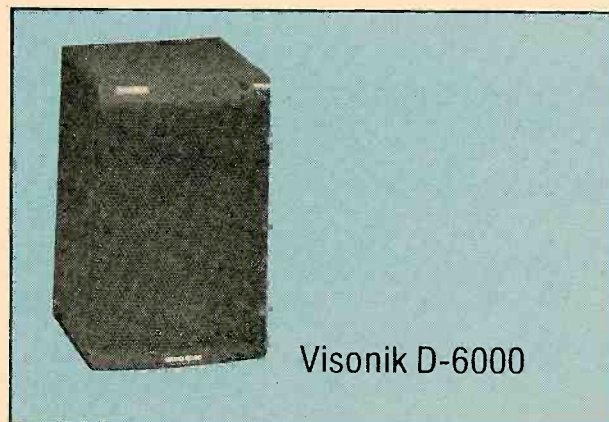
● **Ultralinear M16:** The Ultralinear M16 is a two-way acoustic-suspension system, available in either walnut-grain vinyl or pebble-grain black-vinyl finishes, using a 4½-inch woofer with a treated cone and a 1-inch fabric-dome tweeter. The speaker uses

a circuit breaker (with a reset button mounted in the same recess as the input press-terminals) to protect the drivers from overload. The grille of the M16 is a perforated plastic molding. Two small plugs, one located on the top and one on the bottom surface of the speaker, can be removed to reveal flush-set nuts that permit the speaker to be mounted in an automotive bracket. Price: \$135 per pair.

The Ultralinear M16 speaker had typical efficiency relative to other units of its size and above-average power-handling capability (although the circuit breaker tripped a number of times during high-level testing). It also had a definite sonic flavor of its own, characterized by considerable emphasis of the mid-treble region. Although this balance was agreeable to some members of the panel for reproducing popular music, all of the listeners agreed that the balance took on a somewhat artificial character when used to reproduce voices or orchestral selections. Its level of definition and its imaging qualities were not as well regarded as those of several other speakers of its size and price.

Remarks: "Hot and sizzly . . . sound is clear if you can listen around the treble quirk." "A midrange depression . . . may be attractive to the disco market . . . power handling is good." "Colored on noise . . . a little dim and confined."

Ratings: bass extension, C; power handling, B; general listening quality, C. *Circle 167 on reader service card*



● **Visonik D-6000:** The D-6000 is available in two distinctive cabinet finishes: a matte chocolate brown and a matte grey, both with matching perforated-metal grille. The speaker is a two-way acoustic-suspension design with a 4-inch bass driver and a 1-inch fabric-dome treble unit. It is equipped with a LED indicator, located in the upper-right corner of the front baffle, that glows red when the input capability of the system is exceeded. The rear-panel input terminals are of the push-and-insert type and are mounted flush with the panel surface. A keyhole slot can be hooked over a screwhead in order to mount the speaker on a wall. Price: \$150.

The dynamic range of the D-6000 was somewhat limited, in the opinion of the panel, with distortion rising rapidly at high listening levels; the speaker could accept a high-level input without breakdown, however. In an effort to light the speaker's overload indicator it was operated at peak levels of 100 watts and more. Efficiency of the system was about typical for the smaller speakers in this survey. The D-6000 struck the panel as a smooth, well-balanced speaker with a rising high-frequency response. Stereo imaging was detailed and voice reproduction, for both soloists and groups, was satisfyingly realistic. A slightly warm mid-bass emphasis was noted by some of the reviewers.

Remarks: "Very happy with sopranos, baritones, and orchestra . . . it got kinda loud, too." "Highs prominent . . . good imaging . . . loss of male voices on choral groups." "Fairly decent balance, with a touch of prominence in the highs . . . overall, better than average on undemanding material." "Warm in mid-bass . . . very clear on choral voices . . . loses definition on certain bass passages."

Ratings: bass extension, C; power handling, B-; general listening quality, B. *Circle 168 on reader service card*

JBL'S NEW L150: ITS BOTTOM PUTS IT ON TOP.

JBL's new L150 takes you deeper into the low frequencies of music without taking you deeper into your budget.

This short-tower, floor-standing loudspeaker system produces bass with depth, power and transparency that comes incredibly close to a live performance.



A completely new 12" driver was created for the L150. It has an innovative magnetic assembly, the result of years of research at JBL. It

uses a stiff, heavy cone that's been coated with an exclusive damping formulation for optimum mass and density.

And it has an unusually large 3" voice coil, which aids the L150's efficiency and its ability to respond to transients



(peaks, climaxes and sudden spurts) in music.

There's seven more to the L150's bottom—a 12" passive radiator. It looks like a driver but it's not. We use it to replace a large volume of air and contribute to the production of true, deep bass without boom.

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FIRST 
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PROS.**



ASHFORD & SIMPSON

By Zita D. Allen



NICK ASHFORD and Valerie Simpson sink into the spacious sofa in the living room of their West Side brownstone and sip their morning cups of coffee—at one o'clock in the afternoon. He sprawls, propping one elbow on a pillow. She perches on the sofa's edge. Both are remarkably alert for folks who, until six this morning, have seen nothing but the inside of a recording studio for fifteen hours. But then, they're used to it. Ashford and Simpson are currently cutting two albums back to back, so life, lately, has been a string of sleepless nights.

Diana Ross' album came first. For two months Ashford and Simpson renewed the collaboration that started when the two were a songwriting/producing team turning out solid gold hits for Motown's hottest "girl group," Diana Ross and the Supremes. Now Diana's album is finished, she's on the road, and Ashford and Simpson are cutting their own sixth release since leaving Motown in 1974 for Warner Bros. Records. They're not only songwriter/producers now, but recording artists and performers.

Valerie worries that she's spending too much time in the studio: "Sometimes I have to tell George, our manager, when he comes with our schedule, 'George, you haven't left any time for the creative process—these things don't just *happen*.' I mean, we could fill our hours with, goodness knows, lots more interviews," she flashes a nothing-personal smile, "lots more personal appearances, but then when would we write?"

Nick elaborates on her levelheaded approach to their careers. "If we were solo artists like Diana Ross, we could do those things with ease. A single artist who doesn't write has time to get around—all he has to do is *sing* the song. But when you write it *and* produce it, you don't have much time to play."

Nick and Val, as their friends know them, talk the way they sing—not in unison, voicing the same ideas word for word, but in a tightly interwoven harmony. Like rock-and-roll, rhythm-and-blues, words-and-music, they're salt-and-pepper complements—separate entities, one enhancing the other. They do not, in other words, have the obnoxious habit of completing one another's sentences. But there's the distinct impression that some kind of invisible force exists between them and that one's thoughts tend to stimulate the other's.

Even their looks complement each other's: he's tall, she's short; his hair is long soft curls, hers a million tiny shoulder-length braids; his skin cocoa

brown, hers caramel. He speaks with a slow, smoky Southern accent; her voice is a crystal-clear New York staccato. And when they go into the second-floor piano room, shut the door, roll up their sleeves, and get down to work, there too the lines are pretty clearly drawn: he's words and she's music.

"We write spontaneously," Valerie says, watching Nick as she speaks. "Generally we'll start clean. I start to play. He'll start to sing. We take a song only as far as it'll go naturally; when we get stumped with one we just stop. Maybe we'll have only a little piece, but we go right on to the next. We don't force them. I'll keep changing and he'll just fall in. It just happens. And when it *really* happens it all comes together at once."

"Yeah." Ashford segues in with a variation on the theme. "In the beginning we just melt together. We just let

"I'm all for the duet, but I wouldn't want to always be thought of as part of a unit. I like our albums to represent two people together and two people as individuals."

it fall. Sometimes when we start, Valerie will play something—and Valerie can *play*—that leaves no holes for lyrics. I won't bother her because she's got to get that out before she can get in tune with me—or I have to cough, scream, and just get *mine* out. Then we settle and it comes. It's best when it comes very naturally. We know when we hit on something. I look at her and she looks at me and the sparks start flying."

But there are sparks—and then there are *sparks*. Neither Nick nor Val wants to get burned, and both know that premature infatuation with their product is a pitfall for any producer/performer, so they're sharply self-critical. Val likes it that way.

"I like being able to tell the truth and push. I can do that better with Nick than I can with anybody, 'cause," she laughs, "there's no limit to how far I can go. It takes years of knowing a person to be able to push him all the way; the wrong thing closes him up and stifles him and he won't be able to per-

form for you any more. That's not what you want to do."

"I used to be sensitive, very sensitive," Nick chimes in, revealing a disarming mix of shyness and self-assurance as he explains that he's been known to clam up at the first sign of criticism. "Sometimes it's not the criticism but how it's put to you. At that time, very, very early, Val used to just say, 'I don't like that'," Nick mimics her, screwing up his face and slamming his hand down on the coffee table. "There was no little touch or a tender, 'Honey, you know that wasn't very good.' Criticism cuts pretty deep if you think you've got what it takes." He leans toward her, laughing.

Both Nick and Val like what now appears to be a trend: the resurgence of duos. "I love it, but it can also be confining. Usually duets do the love theme, but that's not *all* we want to write about. We don't push just love, love, love," Ashford says, making the words sound like Cream of Wheat. "We are individuals too, and we have different statements we have to make. I'm all for the duet, but I wouldn't want to always be thought of as part of a unit. I like our albums to represent two people together *and* two people as individuals."

WHEN Nick and Valerie met she was a member of Harlem's White Rock Baptist Church choir and he was new to the big city. Ashford, who was born in South Carolina, had just hopped off the Greyhound bus from Willow Run, Michigan, with \$57 to his name. He spent a couple of weeks sleeping on park benches, then landed a job as a busboy, rented a room, and started going to church figuring some nice girl would invite him over for a home-cooked meal.

Valerie heard that he wrote gospel songs and invited him to join a small group from the choir that was singing gospel in a little night spot called Sweet Chariot. After about two months the gig was over, but they were dazzled; not only did they enjoy themselves but they'd gotten *paid* for singing for the first time in their lives. When someone asked them to write some pop songs they paused a beat to weigh the pros and cons, seriously concerned that they might be going against "something sacred," but finally decided to try it.

After about a year and a half, they had their first commercial success when Ray Charles' recording of their *Let's Go Get Stoned* hit the charts. It came not a minute too soon, and it kept them out of the cold until their big break. Holland-Dozier-Holland, Motown's hot in-house songwriting trio,

ASHFORD & SIMPSON

hit town on a talent hunt. A friend gave H-D-H some of Ashford and Simpson's demo tapes. All three were impressed, and they invited the couple to Motown.

It was one of those once-in-a-lifetime fairy-tale transitions. Suddenly, there they were, plopped down in the giddy, gaudy, growing center of music's Land of Oz. Nick and Valerie admit that even now they miss the aura that surrounded Motown when it was the record industry's Wonderland. "You had creative people in key positions who could give you valid feedback on your material," she says nostalgically.

Motown was turning out hits by the truckload, exploiting a successful formula saved from tediousness only by the skill of its talented songwriter/producers. Though there was an unmistakable "Motown sound," each producer had his own trademark variation on it. Ashford and Simpson embedded their gospel-like lyrics in lush orchestral settings. Their songs—*Ain't No Mountain High Enough*, *Ain't Nothin' Like the Real Thing*, and *You're All I Need to Get By*—were not only recorded by Motown artists but snatched up by other producers.

THEIR success went stale when Ashford and Simpson realized the claustrophobic dimensions of the songwriter/producer pigeonhole Motown had filed them in. For both of them, the decision to sign with Warner Bros. was a good move. "On the one hand," Valerie says without sentimentality, "Warner Bros. is really an executive kind of thing. They're not really creative people, they're business people. But on the other hand, Motown today is just not what it was back in the Sixties and early Seventies."

"Gimme Something Real," their debut album for their new label, was a critical success. In fact, with the exception of the second album (which some suspected was a rush job designed to capitalize on the momentum created by the first), each of the others, including their latest, "Is It Still Good to Ya?," has been better than the last. The same is true of their development as live performers. At first it was all potluck, with no polish and little pizzazz. They sang their songs glued to one spot (Valerie says they were paralyzed by fear). Then George Faison, a friend and former principal dancer with the Alvin Ailey company as well as Tony award-winning choreographer for Broadway's musical *The Wiz*, took

them in hand and taught them a few moves. Now there's not the faintest trace of stage fright.

"We're getting better as performers; I think each time it's gotten a little better," Valerie says modestly. At first she was thrown off balance by audience feedback that let them know whether they were getting over or falling flat on their faces. "Now," she beams, "it's fun. I enjoy it. I even miss it when I don't do it for a long time." And, like many performers who measure their days by the mile, she and Nick can engage in lengthy discourse on minute distinctions between audiences in different parts of the country. Valerie likes the Baltimore-Washington area. While New York is fun, she still gets butterflies in her stomach the minute she steps onstage in the Big Apple.



Mark Weiss

Ashford, on the other hand, loves New York. "New York gets all I have and more," he gleefully explains, launching into one of those marvelous rags-to-riches stories that formed the backbone of Forties musical flicks. "When we played at the Palace I was thrilled 'cause I used to sleep on the park bench practically around the corner in Bryant Park when I first came to New York and didn't have a place to stay. Then there I was on Broadway, my name in lights. Playing the Palace was too much!"

Of course, while performing is fun, it still doesn't top their list of priorities. Songwriting, clearly, does; performing is merely its vehicle. When Diana Ross asked them to produce and write for her new album they didn't hesitate. It was a perfect opportunity to do what they like most.

"I think the album portrays Diana as an independent woman. It makes a statement about independence, freedom, and equality. I objected to a song on the album called *It's My House* at first; maybe I was being a bit of a male chauvinist, but I hate to hear a woman

say that. Valerie insisted that it might be a good song for a woman, and the way the song ends, 'It's my house but it was built for love,' I guess it is pretty good."

Diana liked *It's My House*. "I knew she would," Valerie beams. "It's not a heavy song. It came off really light, which was what we were after. It's the kind of thing a woman likes to say, you know, after she's gotten her own apartment. She might say, 'It's my house and I live here . . . but it's all for love.' But she still wants to be able to say, 'It's mine.' You can say that lightly and nicely."

TALKING about Diana's album, because it's finished, is obviously easy. *Their* new album, still in the works, is a whole other story. The mere mention of it brings conversation to a screeching halt. Valerie manages a terse response: "It's difficult to talk about." Nick smoothly steps in: "I think it's too soon to say anything, really. I feel good about what we've started, but a lot of that changes, so till we actually get into the studio and get ready to cut the sides, it's difficult to say what it's actually going to be. We're fooling around with a lot of new ideas."

Valerie warms to the subject: "We get very picky about it . . . satisfying ourselves. We really want to try new things and yet we don't want to shock our audience by changing too much too soon. It's a funny kind of balance you have to strike, one which allows for some growth."

It's obvious that the distracting demands for interviews and management's other elaborate, helpful, but time-consuming career-boosting activities have Valerie worried. When they're working on an album, both Ashford and Simpson go into semi-seclusion. She explains that often their minds are someplace else altogether. "You have to pretend to be normal sometimes, even when you're not. Your manager or publicist really doesn't understand, and often they may catch you at the wrong time. All they know is that you've done something all these years; they don't really know *how* you've done it, how the songs manage to get written."

Actually, Ashford explains, smiling, neither do they. But they do know one important thing: since the creative impulse doesn't always come when called upon, the best they can do is make room for it. □

Zita D. Allen, formerly on the staff of Rolling Stone, has contributed to New York's Amsterdam News, among other publications.

The Fisher CR5150 cassette deck. Gorgeous up close. Even better from a distance.

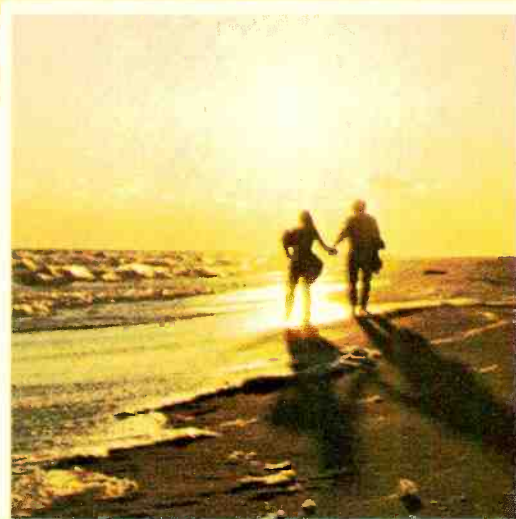
Great styling and state-of-the-art performance are two things this new Fisher cassette deck has plenty of.

But it's got something even more exciting: full-function remote control—without wires! It's the first tape deck ever to offer this sensational feature.

Think of it: by touching a button on the remote infrared transmitter, you can control Play, Record, Pause, Stop, Fast Forward, and Rewind modes—from up to 20 feet away! You can record, edit, search, and listen to cassettes—without leaving your easy chair.

And the CR5150 is just plain fun to operate.

Wireless control would probably make the CR5150 a big seller even if its performance was only average. But Fisher went all out, and gave it 3 heads for 30-19,000 Hz response, dual-



process Dolby** for 68dB S/N ratio, and a servo-controlled transport with 0.04% wow & flutter (WRMS). Superb specs that only a handful of ultra-high priced cassette decks can match.

Feature-wise, there's a built-in digital clock that will turn on the CR5150 deck (or your receiver)

to record anything you want at a preset time, whether you're home or not. The clock display doubles as an electronic tape counter with memory rewind. Silky-smooth, feather-touch buttons control the solenoid tape mechanism.

But considering the prices of other decks with similar performance and far less features, the Fisher CR5150 at \$650* has to be one of the greatest values in high fidelity today. No matter how you look at it. Available at better audio stores or the audio departments of fine department stores.

*Manufacturer's suggested retail value. Actual selling price determined solely by the individual Fisher dealer.

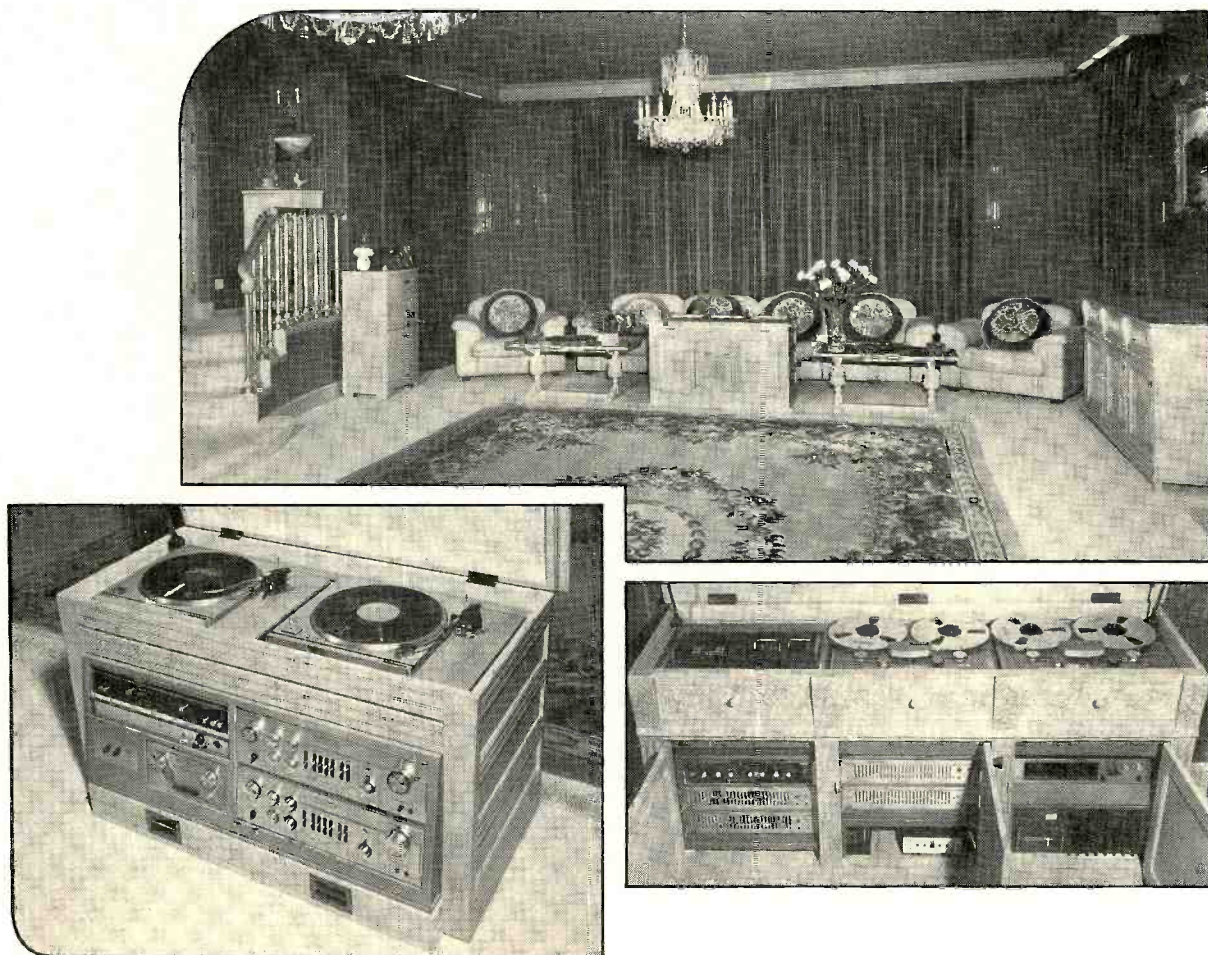
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CR5150

Installation of the Month



OUR "Installation of the Month" feature does not usually concern itself with music supersystems put together by audio-industry professionals. However, when Alistair Robertson-Aikman, managing director of SME Ltd., gave a slide show and talk on his music room and its equipment at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show, we found it much too interesting not to share with our readers. Simply put, the system exhibits a level of technical sophistication, craftsmanship, and attention to detail that would be quite at home in, say, the Winter Palace of Czar Nicholas or the seat of the Esterházy.

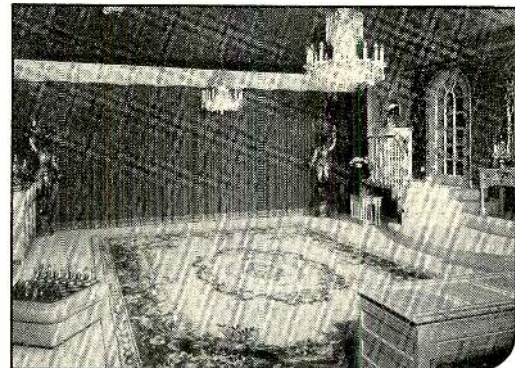
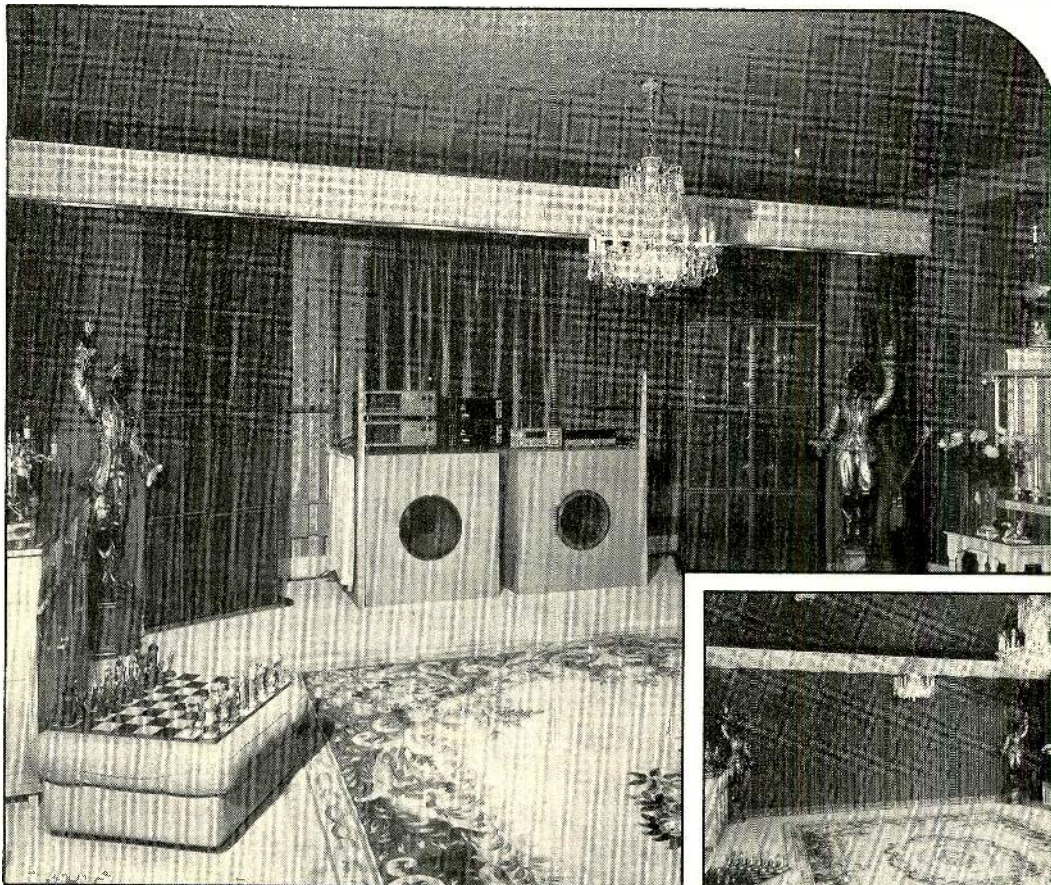
Mr. Robertson-Aikman's primary musical interest is opera, and his intent in the design of his music room was to suggest, both aurally and visually, a small theater with stage, curtain, and proscenium. The room has a volume of about 8,500 cubic feet; it is of brick-wall

construction, roughly trapezoidal in shape, and has a solid concrete roof weighing about 30 tons. The non-parallel room surfaces and heavy construction, in conjunction with various absorbent materials (including more than two tons of wool in the carpeting and draperies), do much to eliminate undesirable room resonances.

Musical sources (tuner, recorder, player, etc.) and most of the other electronic components are grouped in two hand-carved oak cabinets. The console in the photo shown at left contains two Technics SP-10 Mk 2 turntables (top), both equipped with SME Series III tone arms and Shure V-15 type IV cartridges. The bases of the turntables (and the undersides of the platters) are filled with a clay compound that damps mechanical resonances. The turntable mats have been replaced by fluid-filled pads to provide further

proof against resonances occurring in the platter or the record itself. The turntables sit on a 1-inch-thick layer of foam, beneath which there is a polyethylene-film "lozenge" filled with 50 pounds of fine industrial sand. Furthermore, the front compartment of the console is filled with an additional 200 pounds of sand. "These measures are important," notes Robertson-Aikman, "to reduce coloration as far as possible." The cabinet also holds two Luxman C-1000 preamplifiers (right), a Phase Linear 1000 autocorrelator for high-frequency noise suppression (lower left), a dbx 3BX dynamic range expander (upper left), and a Luxman moving-coil-cartridge pre-preamplifier (lower extreme left).

The second cabinet, shown at right, contains two Studer B62 professional open-reel recorders (upper right) operating at 15 ips; they are connected to share a two-channel



A301 professional Dolby-A noise-reduction module. A Nakamichi 1000 (upper left) is used for cassette recording and playback; the system's tuner is a Luxman 5T50.

In order to make the theater illusion even more convincing, Robertson-Aikman uses a total of four loudspeaker arrays, two front units driven directly and two rear-channel units powered through a delay network. The front loudspeakers each consist of eight Quad full-range electrostatic panels stripped of their grilles and fitted into tubular steel frames; the hollow frames are filled with lead to reduce resonance. The panels are acoustically damped from the rear with horsehair mats, and they cover the 50- to 20,000-Hz frequency range. They are driven by two Luxman Model 6000 power amplifiers. The total weight of each panel is about 800 pounds.

Two 18-inch subwoofers, driven by two

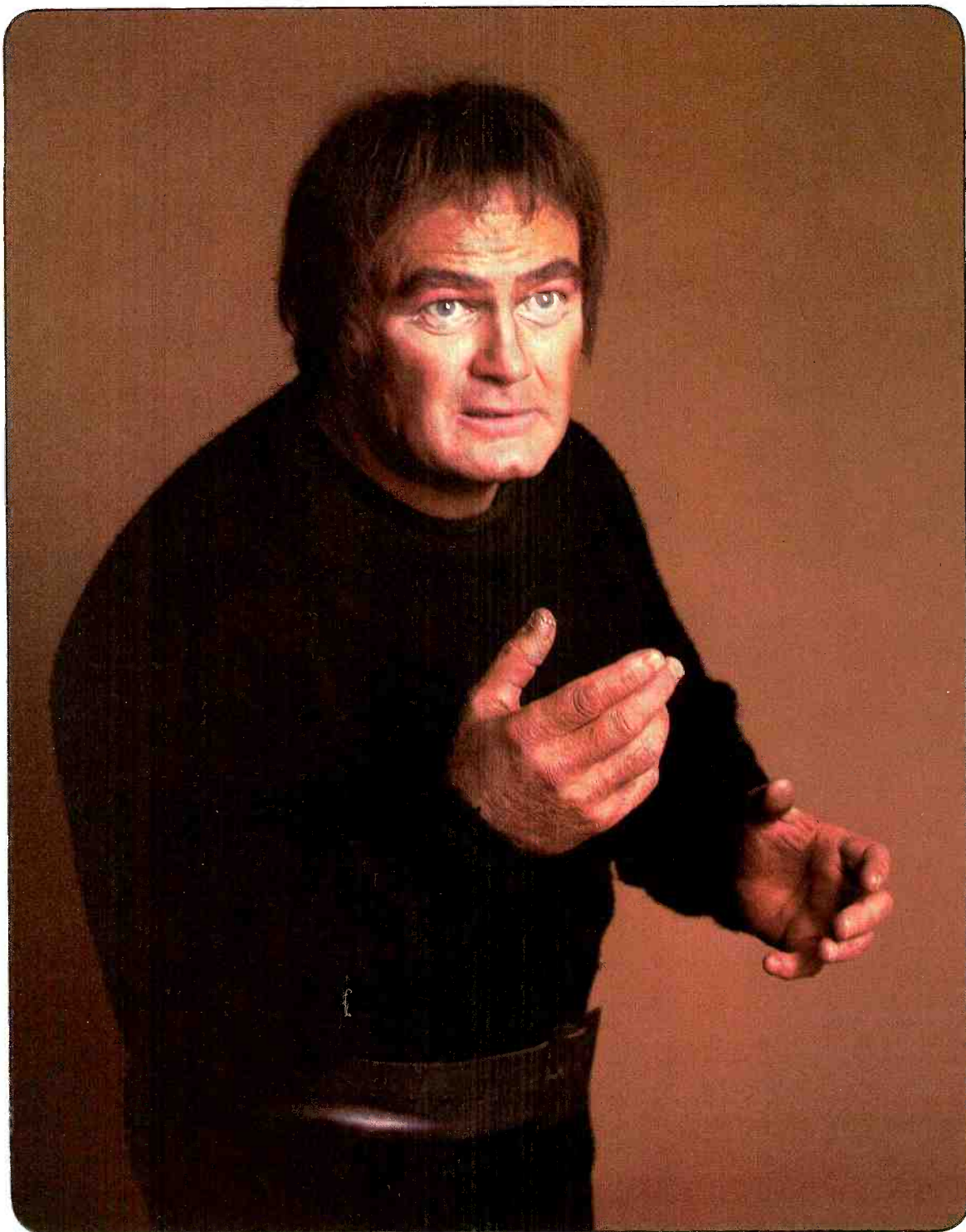
SAE power amplifiers connected by means of a servo-loop feedback circuit, reproduce frequencies below 50 Hz. The enclosures for the subwoofers consist of plywood cubes built within larger cubes, the intervening 3-inch space being filled, once again, with industrial sand. The two subwoofer cabinets have a total weight of about 3½ tons. A Crown electronic crossover divides the signals routed to the subwoofers and to the panels, and each system is separately equalized by a UREI professional one-third-octave equalizer.

The rear-channel speakers are identical arrays of Quad electrostatic panels fed through two Lexicon Delta-T lines which provide a delay of 55 milliseconds. The frames of the rear speakers pivot horizontally to permit focusing the rear panels for listening groups of various sizes.

As Robertson-Aikman candidly noted in his

talk, "In the quest for realism, there is still a long way to go before what is already possible [with a system of this scale] can be provided within the normal commercial and domestic restraints." This is true, but systems such as this one serve in the meantime not only as sources of listening pleasure for a fortunate "unrestrained" few but also as benchmarks against which the improvements constantly being made in more affordable systems can be measured. □

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Jon Vickers as Peter Grimes
(Photo: James Heffernan, courtesy Metropolitan Opera)

STEREO REVIEW'S SELECTION OF RECORDINGS OF SPECIAL MERIT BEST OF THE MONTH



Peter Grimes: One of the Great Operas of Recent Times

THE Colin Davis/Jon Vickers *Peter Grimes* is not exactly an unknown quantity; it has been performed to notable acclaim at the Met and La Scala as well as at Covent Garden. Its appearance in recorded form is an equally notable event.

Much has been made of the fact that neither Davis nor Vickers was close to Benjamin Britten or to Aldeburgh (the composer's home territory, and not only the scene of his yearly music festival but the setting for this opera). Britten's own recording featuring Peter Pears, for whom the part of Grimes was written, has, of course, long been considered definitive. But, as it turns out, there is more than enough room for another: this new Philips recording is *Grimes* powerfully universalized and revealed as one of the few really great operas, in any language, of recent times.

Peter Grimes is quite unlike Britten's other operas, which deal with a very different class of characters looked at from a rather ambiguous, modern, even sophisticated point of view. *Grimes*, written during World War II and Britten's first opera, uses all the devices of a conservative, more-or-less neo-Classic modernism, but these are transformed in the white heat of inspiration, made personal through the exercise of compassion. It is sometimes described as Britten's only *verismo* opera, but that term is misleading, for it refers only to the "realistic" subject. Britten's treatment is actually quite formal, with a delicate and wonderful balance between through-composition and set pieces, between the expression of feelings and the depiction of dramatic movement, between scene setting and emotional impact, between orchestral and vocal expression, choral or crowd scenes and solo writing. This may be the only major, successful English-language opera written for and produced in the opera house (nearly all the

others, from *Dido* to *Porgy* and beyond, first appeared somewhere else). The handling of the forces—large cast, chorus, and orchestra—is masterly. There is never a moment that is less than clear and precise, not one effect that is not deeply felt.

Another superlative: I think this is Jon Vickers' greatest role. I've always had problems with his "hot-potato" enunciation, and certain of his artistic and vocal mannerisms are grating rather than grateful to my ear. But there is something extra, something beyond mere singing, going on here. Vickers

has totally absorbed not only the music but the very character itself—his vocal sound has *become* the sound of the tormented Grimes. There are two particulars of interest in this: Vickers is forced to sing in his native language (something he rarely does, I think), and he is forced to sing light lyric lines written for Peter Pears, a very different kind of singer. This requires him to put his voice in a slightly different place, to control that raw power, to sing softly, to inflect, to probe dramatic and musical character, not just in generalities but in the specifics of a single word or phrase. If I were Jon Vickers I would rethink every other role in my repertoire along just these lines, for as Peter Grimes he shows far more of his potential as one of the really great vocal artists and stage interpreters of our time than he has in the German and Italian repertoire.

Heather Harper, not quite in Vickers' class here, is nonetheless affecting as Ellen Orford, and the supporting cast is strong and lively. The biggest weakness is the misplaced elegance of the opera-house diction—unlikely speech for the Aldeburghians and mostly incomprehensible in any event. Vickers, however, sings an extraordinary form of English absolutely his own and not to be compared with that of anyone else. Somehow, this oddity can be accepted as Grimesian—but it, too, truth to tell, is incomprehensible. Incomprehensibility is, of course, only the expected hazard of opera-house opera in English; the usual remedy, a complete libretto, is dutifully provided with the set.

Like Vickers, conductor Colin Davis has taken this score (and story) and lifted it up to the level of a truly moving universality. The clarity, power, and excitement of this performance are marvelous, and the recorded perspectives of solo voices, chorus, and instruments are exemplary. —Eric Salzman



Wide World Photos

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913-1976)

BRITTEN: *Peter Grimes*, Op. 33. Jon Vickers (tenor), Peter Grimes; Heather Harper (soprano), Ellen Orford; Jonathan Summers (baritone), Captain Balstrode; Elizabeth Bainbridge (contralto), Auntie; Teresa Cahill (soprano), First Niece; Anne Pashley (soprano), Second Niece; John Dobson (tenor), Bob Boles; Forbes Robinson (bass), Swallow; Patricia Payne (mezzo-soprano), Mrs. Sedley; John Lanigan (tenor), Rev. Horace Adams; Thomas Allen (baritone), Ned Keene; Richard Van Allan (bass), Hobson. Orchestra and Chorus of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Colin Davis cond. PHILIPS 6769 014 three discs \$26.94. © 7699 078 \$26.94.

Hubert Laws: An All-around Musician Keeps It In the Family

THERE are enough Laws on Columbia's new "Land of Passion" to enchant a French bureaucrat. Aside from its flutist star, the remarkable Hubert Laws, the album also features Hubert's celeb brother Ronnie on saxophone, his celeb sister Eloise pitching in on background vocals in support of brother Johnny and sister Debra, who do all of the solo vocal work, and finally there is sister Blanche ("a staff singer and organist at a Los Angeles funer-

Suite. Name the kind of music, and ten to one Laws has, at one time or another, played it. He's an all-around, working, involved musician. And it shows. In this album he never bothers about what is "correct" or what isn't; he simply chooses what works as opposed to what doesn't, so that you are likely to hear a sustained, lyrically pure passage that would do credit to M. Rampal himself, closely followed by the sharp, staccato jazz attack of someone playing extemporaneously on the beach at Malibu. You can hear both his exquisitely formed (and formal) musicianship and his equally dazzling free-form approach within the space of a couple of minutes.

As for the repertoire Laws has provided himself, what with the vocal overlays, the extraneous pop sound he



al home"), who also contributes to the vocals. All in the Family, indeed! Hubert is the center of attraction, however, not only because he composed, arranged, and conducted everything here (with the exception of *We Will Be* by Ronnie), but because he's a phenomenally gifted artist who, like all great instrumentalists, can rivet or lull, excite or pacify, draw you in or leave you dangling with the musical sounds he produces.

Laws has been active in practically every field of music for all of his young life: playing with the Jazz Crusaders, spending four years at Juilliard, playing tenor sax with several pop groups, substituting at the New York Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera, recording several innovative and interesting albums for CTI Records, concertizing with the great classical flutist Jean-Pierre Rampal, figuring prominently on the soundtrack of the movie *California*

seems to be reaching for, and the general air of indecision in some of the arrangements, most of it seems only to stand in the way of his playing. Fortunately, there is more than enough of that to be heard here to make the album very much worth your while. But as for the album cover, Columbia Records' idea of "passion"—flowers photographed to look like Genitals on Parade—is enough to make Georgia O'Keefe's work seem Victorian, to make a gynecologist blush, a priapist go limp, and the average record buyer hide the thing from the kids.

—Peter Reilly

HUBERT LAWS: *Land of Passion*. Hubert Laws (flute, alto flute); Debra Laws, Johnny Laws, Eloise Laws, Blanche Laws (vocals); Ronnie Laws (saxophones); orchestra. *Music Forever: Land of Passion; We're in Ecstasy; Heartbeats; The Key; We Will Be*. COLUMBIA JC 35708 \$7.98, © JCA 35708 \$7.98, © JCT 35708 \$7.98.

Jennifer Warnes: A New Recruit For the Ranks of Intelligent Singers

As often as the hit single *Right Time of the Night* was thrust at me by all the radio stations I could tune in down here in Kentucky where I've been living lately, I couldn't quite tell from it whether Jennifer Warnes was a singer or not. She had some fine tones, intelligent phrasing, and a little soul. But add to those qualities the kind of taste that goes far beyond the needs of such as *Right Time of the Night* and you will be talking about her new Arista album, "Shot Through the Heart."

She seems, in this album, to have the folkie's commitment to singing only what she can identify with, and the result is that there's not one dumb song in the whole album—a neat trick for 1979. There is even one great one, Bob Dylan's *Sign on the Window* (1970 vintage), and a pretty nifty one in the title song, written by Warnes herself. Let me remind you, in case you've forgotten, that this is not the way it usually goes at all. Usually, singers with really good voices sing dumb songs or those blank-stare songs of the *Love Walked In* variety, leaving it to the gravel-voiced non-singers to show any kind of folkie commitment.

Well, it's about time we had another intelligent woman who can actually sing to put in the ranks alongside Anne Murray and Bonnie Raitt and Linda Ronstadt and Emmylou Harris. Even the slightly overproduced way Warnes is backed won't keep a lot of sensitive listeners from seeing (hearing) that, with this album, she makes her bid. She co-produced it (with Rob Fraboni), which speaks well for how much and how well she is running her own show. There's a hint of the authority that takes in her singing, a sound of independence and individuality, of taking charge—but there's also in that voice an identification with silly and pained and vulnerable humanity . . . which is only a small part of why you'll take to this fine voice on this neat recording.

—Noel Coppage

JENNIFER WARNES: *Shot Through the Heart*. Jennifer Warnes (vocals); instrumental accompaniment. *Shot Through the Heart; I Know a Heartache When I See One; Don't Make Me Over; Sign on the Window; I'm Restless; Tell Me Just One More Time; When the Feeling Comes Around; Frankie in the Rain; Hard Times, Come Again No More*. ARISTA AB 4217 \$7.98.

Jennifer Warnes:
running her own show



Minnie Riperton: A Sputtering Career Is About to Ignite At Last

It's been about ten years since I first heard Minnie Riperton. Back then, she was known mainly as the possessor of that wonderful, high, bird-like voice that soared so gracefully above the stylings of a Chicago soft-soul group called Rotary Connection. Since that time, her career has continually been on the verge of taking off—only to get stalled somewhere along the runway.

Full flight seemed most likely back in 1974 when she signed with Columbia's Epic label. Stevie Wonder (not so mysteriously disguised as "El Toro Negro") gave her a well-deserved boost by collaborating on her excellent "Perfect Angel" (Epic KE 32561). Two

subsequent Epic albums sold well and built on that initial success, but then she was stricken with illness, dropping out of the business for a while to undergo a mastectomy.

Over the past year or so, she has taken big steps to capture at last the success that has so far eluded her. "Minnie," her new album on the Capitol label, should provide the necessary impetus, for it is a delightfully eclectic offering, embracing her considerable interpretive ability as well as the remarkable range of her voice. The songs vary from the playful disco-paced *Dancin' and Actin' Crazy* to the quietly lyrical *Return to Forever*. But the outstanding track is *It Never Existed Before*, one of the most immediately captivating songs to whirl around my turntable in recent months: it simply vibrates with a summery inner freshness (Riperton had a hand in writing it, along with several other selections here). The set concludes with José Feliciano joining Minnie for a sensual reworking of

Minnie Riperton:
summery and sensual



Light My Fire, the song that ignited his career. Let's hope this fine album can do the same for Minnie Riperton.

—Phyl Garland

MINNIE RIPERTON: *Minnie*. Minnie Riperton (vocals); other musicians. *Memory Lane; Lover and Friend; Return to Forever; Dancin' and Actin' Crazy; Love Hurts; Never Existed Before; I'm a Woman; Light My Fire*. CAPITOL SO-11936 \$7.98, © 8XT-11936 \$7.98, © 4XT-11936 \$7.98.

A Recording First: Edvard Grieg's Thirty-two-piece *Peer Gynt* Complete

LIKE his *Lyric Pieces* for piano, Grieg's music for Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* is a series of miniatures, stamped with a strong national character, which occupied him, on and off, for many years. When he first took on the assignment in 1874, he felt it to be "unmanageable," and remarked that the music he wrote for the scene in the hall of the Troll King "smacks so much of cow-dung, ultra-Norwegianism, and self-satisfaction that I quite literally cannot bear to listen to it." Over the years, however, he came to think better of his score, as well he might. If the sixty-six *Lyric Pieces*, written between 1867 and 1901, add up to a whole greater than the sum of its parts, *Peer Gynt* is nothing less than Grieg's magnum opus; but the true dimensions of this work were not even suspected by most of us until the release of the new two-disc Unicorn set conducted by Per Dreier, whom we must thank not only for a splendid performance, but for editing more than half the material, nearly twenty pieces that were never recorded before.

While the two familiar concert suites from *Peer Gynt* comprise a total of eight pieces for orchestra, and while we have had an occasional disc (such as the fine recent one under Herbert Blomstedt—Angel S-37535) offering twelve numbers (including Solvejg's two songs and choral pieces) as the "complete score," Grieg actually produced no fewer than *thirty-two* pieces for the drama before he was through with it. After the successful 1876 premiere there were new productions, in Norway and elsewhere, for which additional music was requested. As late as 1892 (a year after the second concert



Arthur Rackham illus. / Granger Collection

Peer Gynt before the King of the Trolls

suite was published), when Grieg showed reluctance to add to his score for a new production in Oslo, the wily impresario in charge threatened to go to another composer for a whole new score, and Grieg gave in. In the process of making additions from time to time, Grieg also reorchestrated some of the original pieces, though he continued to use colleagues' orchestrations of a few of his earlier piano pieces—Johan Halvorsen's celebrated setting of the *Norwegian Bridal Procession* and Robert Henriques' orchestration of the first three of the four Norwegian Dances. A year after Grieg's death, Halvorsen published a score comprising twenty-three numbers; for this recording Dreier had to sift back through the materials used in the original production and various subsequent ones during Grieg's lifetime and make emendations of his own.

Early in the sequence there are enchanting settings of two folk dances (Nos. 3 and 4) which call for a Hardanger fiddle, a folk instrument with four metal strings and four more sympathetic ones (rather like the viola d'amore in that respect). There was, in the early

Fifties, a Mercury disc on which an Oslo ensemble performed a good deal of the *Peer Gynt* music, with Alfred Maurstad speaking some of Peer's lines and playing the Hardanger fiddle. There are no spoken lines in the Unicorn set, but there are songs for Peer (a most intriguing Serenade, No. 23) as well as for Solvejg and Anitra, and some of the most exciting portions of the score are those that call for the chorus. Here, especially, this presentation shines. Fine as the Leipzig Radio Chorus is in the Blomstedt recording (singing in Norwegian rather than the German favored by Beecham and Barbirolli), the Oslo Philharmonic Chorus brings a more immediate sense of freshness, a vivid wild abandon where appropriate, and an all-round deeper feeling for the mystique of the work. The episode called "Peer Gynt Being Chased by Trolls" (No. 14) is a stunning example, the "Night Scene" (No. 30) presents a chilling picture of Peer's confrontation with the button-molder come to melt him down as punishment for wasting his life, and the women alone, in "Peer Gynt and the Mountain Girls" (No. 7), suggest the Rhine Maid-

ens running into a collective Herd Girls' Sunday.

There are, in fact, more than a few evocations of Wagner, Liszt, and especially Berlioz, not only in the use of *Leitmotiven* throughout the score, but in Grieg's magnificent use of orchestral color, which goes quite beyond what he achieved in any of the music by which he is so well known and loved. These resemblances, though, are never strong enough to detract from Grieg's individual style or the great originality of this marvelous score, which as presented here might be said to constitute a grand dramatic cantata—a very Norwegian counterpart, if you will, to *The Damnation of Faust*.

Per Dreier, whose name was new to me, is a Norwegian, apparently about fifty, who has been most active in Denmark and Germany and, according to the liner information, has performed in the U.S.A. He has also recorded a two-disc set of contemporary Norwegian music with the Royal Philharmonic (Unicorn 2-75028). His achievement in *Peer Gynt* is a grand one, earning our respect and admiration for a superb performance as well as our gratitude for simply making all the music available. The London Symphony Orchestra plays with all-out fervor and no little brilliance, as if its members, like those of the chorus, had the music and the poem in their blood. Knud Buen's playing of the Hardanger fiddle is all one could ask, Asbjørn Hansli is a splendid singing Peer, and Toril Carlsen is touching in her handling of Solvejg's material. The recording itself, vivid, rich, and well-balanced on the silent-surface discs, is even more stunning on tape (all on one reel). The only cause for complaint is the failure to provide full texts: words to the major vocal numbers are printed only in English, and those to the lesser ones are not given at all. But Øystein Gaukstad gives a comprehensive, if concise, background of the work, and Unicorn's John C. Goldsmith has provided a very helpful synopsis of the respective numbers. All in all, this is a major event—no hyperbole, surely, in calling it a revelation—and it has been brought off with a great deal of distinction. On discs or on tape, it is a recording no one should miss.

—Richard Freed

GRIEG: *Peer Gynt*. Toril Carlsen (soprano); Vessa Hanssen (mezzo-soprano); Kåre Bjørkøy (tenor); Asbjørn Hansli (baritone); Knud Buen (Hardanger fiddle); Oslo Philharmonic Chorus; London Symphony Orchestra, Per Dreier cond. UNICORN UN2-75030 two discs \$15.96, © UNC M 0361 \$16.95 (tape available from Barclay-Crocker, 11 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10004).

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POPULAR DISCS AND TAPES

Reviewed by CHRIS ALBERTSON • EDWARD BUXBAUM • NOEL COPPAGE • PHYL GARLAND
PAUL KRESH • PETER REILLY • STEVE SIMELS • JOEL VANCE

GARY BROOKER: *No More Fear of Flying*. Gary Brooker (vocals, keyboards); other musicians. *Savannah; Pilot; No More Fear of Flying; Get Up and Dance; Give Me Something to Remember You By*; and five others. CHRYSALIS CHR 1224 \$7.98.

Performance: **Elegant but empty**
Recording: **Excellent**

Gary Brooker just may be the best blues-oriented vocalist ever out of England. In his Procol Harum tenure, the contrast between his intense, impassioned singing and the formal, almost literary lyrics Keith Reid gave him to sing provided a fascinating counterpoint to the band's equally eclectic mix of Bach and Ray Charles. When Procol ran out of things to say, Brooker disappeared for a while, and "No More Fear of Flying" is his first effort (discounting some production work for Stiff, of all labels) in several years.

On paper it all looks good: a crack session band, a new lyricist, and a George Martin production job. But the songs are mostly dismal, the kind of portentous filler that litters Roger Daltrey's albums, and the performances by all concerned have little to recommend them beyond thorough professionalism. The one exception is *Savannah*, a moving wrong-side-of-the-tracks romantic melodrama that Brooker sings the very pants off of. Unfortunately, one song does not an album make. *S.S.*

Explanation of symbols:

- Ⓜ = open-reel stereo tape
- Ⓢ = eight-track stereo cartridge
- ⓐ = stereo cassette
- Ⓚ = quadraphonic disc
- Ⓝ = digital-master recording
- Ⓛ = direct-to-disc recording

Monophonic recordings are indicated by the symbol Ⓜ

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

DAVID ALLAN COE: *Spectrum VII*. David Allan Coe (vocals, guitar); instrumental accompaniment. *Rollin' with the Punches; On My Feet Again; Fall in Love with You; What Can I Do; Sudden Death*; and four others. COLUMBIA KC 35789 \$7.98, ⓐ CA 35789 \$7.98, Ⓛ CT 35789 \$7.98.

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

This is a transition album (from rhinestone cowboy to rhinestone pirate) for David Allan Coe, who reminds record reviewers on the sleeve that Jimmy Buffett doesn't live in Key West any more. It is also his seventh album, and he says there are seven musicians in it, although I count nine in the credits, and it contains a song called *Seven Mile Bridge* (which is not bad, by the way) that is seven minutes and seven seconds long and was recorded on the seventh day of the month. Coe calls the first side, which starts with a pretty good song about how hard life is, the "Land-side," and the second, which augments the cover pictures, the "Ocean-side." The Ocean-side sounds like the labor of a pseudo-cowboy playing pseudo-pirate, though, and the album's problematic in a few other ways as well. Coe is trying to write quiet love songs and only making halfhearted attempts to revive his old hand for satire ("I lost my heart in San Francisco/And found it on the streets of Baltimore"). And his attempt at rock in *Sudden Death* is a jumble of clichés and inanities. So the transition isn't going smoothly at this point, and if you compare this to his best album so far, "David Allan Coe Rides Again," it may seem he has a long way to go. But if there's one thing Coe is good at, it's selecting an image and then playing it. If you hear this one you can say you were there when this phase started. For what that's worth. *N.C.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

DIRE STRAITS: *Communiqué*. Dire Straits (vocals and instrumentals); Barry Beckett (keyboards). *Once Upon a Time in the West; News; Where Do You Think You're Going?*;

Communiqué; Lady Writer; Angel of Mercy; and three others. WARNER BROS. HS 42779 \$8.98, Ⓢ W8 42779 \$8.98, Ⓛ W5 42779 \$8.98.

Performance: **Possibly great**
Recording: **Good**

Well, what do you do after you've made the most insinuating debut album of the Seventies? The first Dire Straits disc was, frankly, almost too good to be true: a complete, fully rounded stylistic statement from a young band that sounded as if it had been woodshedding for years. This new one isn't so much disappointing as elusive, and my reactions to it seem to change with every playing. One moment I'm sitting with my jaw down around my ankles, awed by the almost magical logic of Mark Knopfler's compositions or the gorgeously layered guitar work and effortless precision of the band; the next moment I'm shaking my head and thinking, well, we've heard all that before, haven't we? Jerry Wexler and Barry Beckett's production seems to be a factor here: in resisting the temptation to tinker with the Straits, they seem to have closeted the band in a way that Muff Winwood's relatively inept first-take-and-out approach didn't, and the result, compared with the debut, is a curiously empty sound. Still, the songs are by and large fascinating, and when everything jells, as on the atmospheric (what an understatement) *Portobello Belle* or the delicately driving *Angel of Mercy*, you know you're in the presence of a really major band. Give "Communiqué" an A- and wait for their next one. *S.S.*

LOWELL GEORGE: *Thanks I'll Eat It Here*. Lowell George (vocals, guitar); instrumental and vocal accompaniment. *What Do You Want the Girl to Do?; Honest Man; Two Trains; Can't Stand the Rain*; and four others. WARNER BROS. BSK 3194 \$7.98, Ⓢ M8 3194 \$7.98, Ⓛ M5 3194 \$7.98.

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

I don't know what I expected, too much perhaps, with a Jimmy Webb song, some Van

Dyke Parks lyrics, George's past moments with Little Feat, and so forth. Truth is, though, I have trouble concentrating on this all the way through. The Webb tune, *Himmeler's Ring*, turns out to be a throwaway, too cute to begin with and made even cuter by George's preening delivery. And *Cheek to Cheek*, the one involving Parks (or perhaps an aspect of his steel-band phase), is another throwaway, with the added distraction of its use of the harp as a pseudo-Latin instrument having already been one-upped in Jackson Brown's superior *Linda Paloma*. In general, the vocals are quite palatable, the instrumentals are intelligent if a little slick—oddly enough, they are most effective when they are full and horned and jazz-inflected, as in *Easy Money*—and the thing has a lot of good elements in it. *Two Trains*, by George, probably the simplest song in the album, and *Find a River*, the quietest, suggest how good the album could have been if the rest weren't less than the sum of the parts. It's as if George, given a finite amount of space, put in elements to prove he's bright at the expense of elements to prove he's musical. N.C.

MICKEY GILLEY: *The Songs We Made Love To*. Mickey Gilley (vocals, piano); instrumental and vocal accompaniment. *The Song We Made Love To; Bye Bye Baby; Jr. P. Jones; Lonely Wine; I Don't Feel Like No Hero Tonight*; and five others. EPIC KE 35174 \$7.98, © EA 35174 \$7.98, © ET 35174 \$7.98.

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

Mickey Gilley's cousin, Jerry Lee Lewis, made his best album in years just before this, and maybe a little cross-family competition is what it takes, as this is the best one Gilley's done in a while. I doubt if anyone made love to all these songs, especially the one about the bus driver, *Jr. P. Jones*, but at least—with the exception of *Lonely Wine*—they are not recycled chestnuts, which formerly were about all you got from Gilley. He also seems more comfortable with his own style. He's still a rock-'em, sock-'em, piano-hitting rockabilly, just like his cousin, and not one to have much truck with nuance, but there's creeping mellowness and amiability here. A right friendly record, in fact. N.C.

VERN GOSDIN: *You've Got Somebody*. Vern Gosdin (vocals, guitar); Kenny Malone (drums); Steve Schaffer (bass); Reggie Young (guitar); other musicians. *You've Got Somebody, I've Got Somebody; All I Want and Need Forever; He Must Be Lovin' You Right; The Rock I'm Leaning On; She's Gone*; and five others. ELEKTRA 6E-180 \$7.98, © ET8-180 \$7.98, © TC5-180 \$7.98.

Performance: **Juke-boxy**
Recording: **Likewise**

Vern Gosdin has been plying his trade for a long time and suddenly got recognized—inside the country-music market area—in the last two or three years. I don't know why it happened that way; he has not unleashed a sure-fire gimmick or pinned his hopes on one extraordinary song or created a new sound (most of this one is that Nashville Sound with strings that Chet Atkins and Billy Sherrill polished over the years). He's just a good, solid singer, and a fair number of the songs he chooses to record sound good on a juke box in a country place, truck stop, beer joint, or

whatever. There aren't many songs here you'd want to take seriously, but several—notably *Till I'm Over Gettin' Over You, She's Gone*, and the title song—are easy enough to take on the box. Gosdin does what he does more honestly than most. Maybe people are picking up on that. N.C.

JOHN HALL: *Power*. John Hall (vocals, guitar); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Cocaine Drain; Home at Last; Power; Heartbreaker; So*; and four others. COLUMBIA JC 35790 \$7.98, © JCA 35790 \$7.98, © JCT 35790 \$7.98.

Performance: **Persuasive**
Recording: **Excellent**

This is John Hall's second solo album, and no trouble has been spared in putting it together. When Hall, who used to be the lead singer for

the band called Orleans, wants back-up vocalists, what he gets is James Taylor, Carly Simon, Jon Pousette-Dart, and John Troy. His musicians are among the most expert in the business, and the whole elaborate production sounds like it was mixed from at least thirty-six original tracks. His own voice is a fairly light, folksy instrument as voices go, but he works into it a touch of desperation that makes songs like *Home at Last* and *Cocaine Drain* seem perhaps more urgent than they intrinsically are. Hall and his wife Johanna, who write all his songs together, were friends of the late Janis Joplin, and there is a hint of her reckless despair in his approach to a ballad. The Halls wrote *Half Moon* for her, and he sings it persuasively here. The title song is about the energy crisis, but *Power* left this listener with no clear idea as to what Hall wanted done about it, though he certainly sounds



Doug Young

Donna Reasserts Herself

DONNA SUMMER was the first true superstar to emerge from disco; she pushed the form beyond its original limits, though always keeping the needs of dancers in mind. But then just about everybody got into the act, and her uniqueness was threatened. After all, if Rod Stewart, the Beach Boys, and Ethel Merman do it, can Streisand be far behind? Donna Summer had to do something to re-establish her supremacy. What she did is "Bad Girls."

The title of the new album—with its echo of the Stones' "Some Girls," its bow to black slang, its tie-in to raunchy chic, the late Seventies' hottest cultural cliché—tells us right

off to expect some tougher, harder music than we've had from Summer in the past. And it certainly starts out tough with *Hot Stuff*. She sings it straight on, without the electronic embellishments of her classic cuts, but, though the back-up is rock hard instead of trance soft, Summer's sexiness and energy are still there. It's still disco (try dancing to it and you'll see); there's just more of a sense of a singer at work than disco usually permits.

The same crossover rock-disco sound continues through the first half of the two-disc album, with such other highlights as the bluesy *Love Will Always Find You*, sung with astonishing subtlety, and *Dim All the Lights*, which has "super-smash single" etched into every driving line. And if you still think disco singing is all yelling, just two minutes of the opening of *Can't Get to Sleep* will forever change your mind.

Side three contains four weak, over-ranged ballads, but they show off Summer's impressive vocal range (the most impressive, I think, of any female singer now active). Her voice can clearly handle anything she wants it to. The three-song set on side four is a return to the familiar, trippy "elektrik" sound of the Munich Machine. The middle one, *Lucky*, pulses and throbs wonderfully with a doubled and tripled staccato background; purely as disco, it's far and away the album's high point.

"**B**AD GIRLS" is something of a hodge-podge, intended more to show the range of a big, big talent than to explore a particular style in depth. It is not, as some have claimed, "a rocker's disco album," though there is that element to it. But whatever it is, it is a terrific achievement. —Edward Buxbaum

DONNA SUMMER: *Bad Girls*. Donna Summer (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Hot Stuff; Love Will Always Find You; Walk Away; Dim All the Lights; Journey to the Center of Your Heart; One Night in a Lifetime; Can't Get to Sleep at Night; On My Honor; There Will Always Be a You; All Through the Night; My Baby Understands; Our Love; Lucky; Sunset People*. CASABLANCA NBLP2 7150 \$13.98, © NPL8 7150 \$13.98, © NPL5 7150 \$13.98.



Tomato Records

ALBERT KING: a warm, easy-to-enjoy bluesman

concerned, as he does about everything. And he plays a mean guitar. P.K.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

MILLIE JACKSON: *A Moment's Pleasure.* Millie Jackson (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Never Change Lovers in the Middle of the Night; Seeing You Again; Kiss You All Over; Rising Cost of Love;* and four others. SPRING SP-1-6722 \$7.98, © 8T-1-6722 \$7.98, © CT-1-6722 \$7.98.

Performance: **Clever raunch**
Recording: **Good**

Millie Jackson's ability to deliver those deliciously dirty innuendoes has gained her a notoriety that all but obscures her talent as a singer. But she is above all a singer, a descendent of the old-time blues women who were masters of sexual innuendo.

This time around, Jackson's emphasis is on singing rather than rapping, and "A Moment's Pleasure" has a trace more subtlety than some of her other outings have had. The outstanding tracks here, *Never Change Lovers in the Middle of the Night* and *Once You've Had It*, make it on the basis of her ability to project a powerful funk flavor through sheer vocal interpretation. More than any singer out there today, she recalls the golden r-&-b days of Memphis, when folks like Sam & Dave would shout out about holding on because they were coming.

Yet it is all but impossible for Millie to practice restraint. She just has to get some of her own kind of sassiness into the set. *What Went Wrong Last Night*, which runs for two tracks, is an amusing song-story about a woman who pulls herself out of the doldrums by "gettin' fine" and going down to the disco. Then there are those familiar Jackson offhand comments, usually hitched onto love-making songs that are "so good . . . I could almost squeeze water out of my wig." Raunchy, yes, but combined with a special cleverness and robust singing. Don't miss this one. P.G.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BERT JANSCH: *A Rare Conundrum.* Bert Jansch (vocals, guitar, banjo); Rod Clements (mandolin, guitar, bass); other musicians. *Daybreak; One to a Hundred; Pretty Saro; Doctor, Doctor; 3 A.M.; The Curragh of Kildare; Poor Mouth; Lost Love;* and six others. KICKING MULE KM302 \$7.98.

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

Bert Jansch, the old Pentangler, released this one in Britain two years ago; it'll probably sell all of twelve copies in the States, but I like it. Jansch's delicate finger-picking style on acoustic guitar is the main attraction, and he has put together quite a variety of traditional and original-that-sound-traditional songs to show how that style communicates in various "languages" . . . except they're all quiet; the whole album is quiet. Jansch's vocals are, as always, nasal, tending toward lazy, but pleasant in the way they fit with the lacy guitar work, and despite the spartan production there's actually quite a bit going on, most of it at the tips of Jansch's fingers. Some fingers. N.C.

RICKIE LEE JONES. Rickie Lee Jones (vocals, guitar, keyboards); instrumental and vocal accompaniment. *Chuck E.'s in Love; On Saturday Afternoons in 1963; Night Train; Young Blood; Easy Money; The Last Chance Texaco;* and five others. WARNER BROS. BSK 3296 \$7.98, © M8 3296 \$7.98, © M5 3296 \$7.98.

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

Having heard her album and seen her rather strange performance on television, I can only conclude that Rickie Lee Jones is one of those folks who make public a private career of going off into corners, telling themselves jokes, and giggling appreciatively.

She has a limited vocal range which she

dangerously—nay, calamitously—extends on some selections, much as Melanie used to do on her early albums. Jones' shrillness may be excused (and even praised) on the grounds that she is being sincere. I don't doubt her sincerity, but mere candor is not an excuse for public amateurism.

As a writer, she's not much on melody, but she is an excellent lyricist. Like Tom Waits, she is fascinated by losers, bums, and the other flotsam of society, and she seems to take a special delight in the futility of human endeavor. The promotional push on the album—and its reception by the audience—indicates that both label and listeners aren't welcoming a new talent so much as they are a merchandisable cult figure—that is, this year's merchandisable cult figure. J.V.

ALBERT KING: *New Orleans Heat.* Albert King (vocals, guitar); instrumental accompaniment. *Born Under a Bad Sign; The Very Thought of You; I Get Evil; Angel of Mercy; I Got the Blues;* and four others. TOMATO TOM-7022 \$7.98, © 8353-7022H \$7.95, © 5353-7022H \$7.95.

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

Albert King has always been a warm, entertaining, easy-to-enjoy bluesman. Allan Toussaint's production on this outing is designed to make King more accessible to an American pop audience without making him blatantly commercial, but I also suspect that this album was made primarily for consumption in Europe, where the audience is worshipful of the blues as a musical form and correspondingly adoring of black American blues singers.

Toussaint appears on several of the cuts as keyboardist, along with George Porter, Jr. and Leo Nocentelli, bassist and guitarist, respectively, for the Meters, a New Orleans group that Toussaint and his partner Marshall Sehorn have touted and produced since the late 1960s.

The remake of *Born Under a Bad Sign*, which King first cut when he was on the Stax Records roster, is less than the original, as is *Get Out of My Life Woman*, which Toussaint wrote and produced for Lee Dorsey in the 1960s, and *The Feeling* is a rewrite of B. B. King's *The Thrill Is Gone* (Albert and B. B. have been, for many years, reticent about whether they are cousins). The high point of the album, however, is King's smooth and convincing vocal on the decidedly non-blues crooner ballad *The Very Thought of You*, complete with tasteful strings. It reveals a new aspect of King's talent and one that I hope he'll continue to show in subsequent albums. Gentlemen—to the King's health! J.V.

THE KING'S SINGERS (see *Going on Record*, page 54)

CHERYL LADD: *Dance Forever.* Cheryl Ladd (vocals); instrumental accompaniment. *Dance Forever; Better Days; Still Awake; On the Run; Teach Me Tonight;* and five others. CAPITOL ST-11927 \$7.98, © 8XT-11927 \$7.98, © 4XT-11927 \$7.98.

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

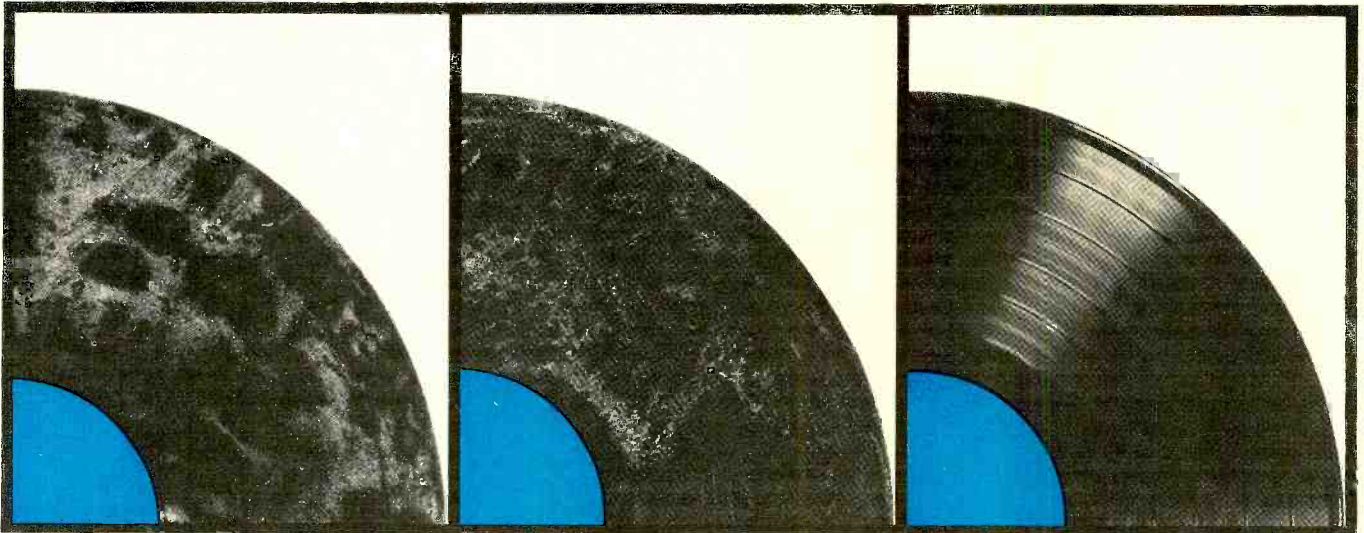
Cheryl Ladd of *Charlie's Angels* fame, decked out in a stripped-down version of a cowboy outfit complete with leather boots
(Continued on page 86)

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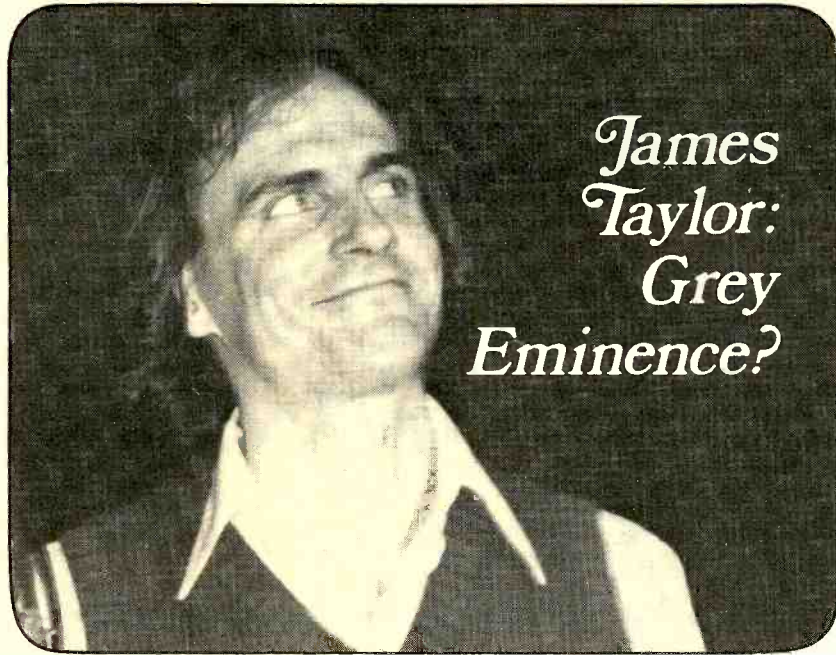


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Sheri Lynn Behr

James Taylor: Grey Eminence?

Is it class or is it gall? And whichever it is, who'd have enough of it to let the whole front of his album jacket be the international distress "Oscar" flag for "man overboard"? James Taylor, that's who; he can get an album identified with nothing more than a little lettering on the spine. This seems to fit with the almost reverential deference he's shown in such pop-culture showplaces as *Saturday Night Live*. If you get the feeling he's a contender for grey-eminence status as soon as the Baby Boom generation qualifies to have one of those, you're not alone.

Taylor not only survived the Seventies but kept himself in reasonable demand, tending to write well in spurts and to slouch along between spurts. Now, in "Flag," he takes some more large strides beyond "JT"; as a writer he gets outside himself and into some characters he has cast in interesting situations, and as a performer he manages a mix of tunes and vocals and instrumentals that is as natural sounding as it is instantly recognizable. The old crowd—Sklar, Kortchmar, *et al.*—is back, and welcome. If Taylor's style is to become an idiom of Americana, this is the band for the job. The album finds Taylor further refining the style and, in spite of those large strides, sliding back a bit here and there.

First the good news. Taylor doesn't sound like a man overboard but like a man who's been at work writing songs, and he has four or five here that will grab you. The narrator of *Johnnie Comes Back* (Johnnie is a girl) could be a pimp or a pusher: "Me, I'm just an evil demon/I'm playing on her weakness." The hero of *I Will Not Lie for You* is agonizing over cuckolding his best friend. The hero of *Sleep Come Free Me* is in jail. And *Millworker* has a female protagonist who says, "Millwork ain't easy/Millwork ain't hard/Millwork ain't nothing/But an awful boring job." There's probably nothing here that is autobiographical (aside from the indirect way that all writing is autobiographical), and not too many people besides Randy Newman and Tom T. Hall try

this imaginative-writing stuff in the pop field. "Flag" works extremely well when Taylor is able to show empathy, as in *Millworker*.

The backsliding comes when he doesn't find either the empathy (*Brother Trucker*) or a rational new way to sing an old song (*Day Tripper*). And Carole King's *Up on the Roof* is of marginal use to most of us. The only thing that really bottoms out, though, is *Brother Trucker*, which has that fatal secondhand sound about the way it uses trucker clichés. *Is That the Way You Look* is a weird little number, too, although not necessarily unpleasant. It almost works as a *satire* of a type of song, but the lyrics are so monotonous they get in the way. Its sound almost bails it out; there is no lead instrument in the backing, just bass and drums and overdubbed vocals.

WHETHER you're holding out for Neil Young to be the first grey eminence of the Baby Boom or you're trying, like Taylor, to make your own individual adjustment to the Seventies, it's hard to resist a lot of "Flag" because of its stories. It understands, as did the TV program *Mary Hartman Mary Hartman* before it, that you never outgrow your basic need for soap. The difference between the average soap opera and this is that Taylor tries to offer some insight *beyond* the stories. Thus do we uncover the sly ways in which he keeps in touch with the times (which gobble up *fancy* soap in *Roots*-type presentations), and thus do we see why he's such a good candidate for G. E. status. —Noel Coppage

JAMES TAYLOR: *Flag*. James Taylor (vocals, guitar); Danny Kortchmar (guitar); Leland Sklar (bass); Russ Kunkel (drums); other musicians. *Company Man*; *Johnnie Comes Back*; *Day Tripper*; *I Will Not Lie for You*; *Brother Trucker*; *Is That the Way You Look?*; *B. S. U. R.*; *Rainy Day Man*; *Millworker*; *Up on the Roof*; *Chanson Française*; *Sleep Come Free Me*. COLUMBIA FC 36058 \$8.98, © FCA 36058 \$8.98, © FCT 36058 \$8.98.

and Stetson, smiles sexily at you from the album cover of "Dance Forever." On the record, her candy-coated voice sings, in a vaguely country style with disco overtones, of life, love, and insomnia. Cheryl's act slips by, richly adorned with lush arrangements, each song in turn fading out until it's all over, leaving the faintest of tastes—like the memory of a box of Crackerjack. P.K.

LAKE: *Paradise Island*. Lake (vocals and instrumentals). *Into the Night*; *Glad to Be Here*; *Crystal Eyes*; *Paradise Way*; *Hopeless Love*; and four others. COLUMBIA JC 35817 \$7.98, © JCA 35817 \$7.98, © JCT 35817 \$7.98.

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

This comes from Hamburg, West Germany, although James Hopkins Harrison, the Scottish lead singer and lyricist, sounds no more German than most of us boys over here. And the group is good—if you make allowances for lack of depth in Harrison's lyrics. But hell, you have to make allowances for that with most lyrics nowadays. Lake sounds a little like an unpretentious Yes, if you can imagine that, and a little like Southern U.S. guitar-based rock in that its electric guitars sound clean and lyrical rather than distorted or rife with feedback or "heavy." There's a little too much "arrangement" at times, putting the band into the what's-wrong-with-rock-today category—technique gone mechanical—but there's also some music, real tunes, decent vocals, and energy. *Achtung, y'all*. N.C.

NILS LOFGREN: *Nils*. Nils Lofgren (vocals and guitar); other musicians. *No Mercy*; *I'll Cry Tomorrow*; *Baltimore*; *Shine Silently*; and five others. A&M SP-4756 \$7.98, © 8T-4756 \$7.98, © CS-4756 \$7.98.

Performance: **Over-reaching**
Recording: **Very good**

Nils Lofgren was a punk before there were Punks, and he was also purveying Power Pop before anyone had even coined the term. If you doubt me, check out his first solo album, from 1975, which is fully as energetic, melodically winsome, and tough-as-nails as anything from the post-Costello era. You'd be hard pressed to discern those qualities in his new set, however, although it has its moments: the sound is that of a gifted pop craftsman working well over his head, desperately attempting to get serious for reasons that remain unfathomable. Yes, there are some attractive things here. *I'll Cry Tomorrow* is a minor classic, punk Springsteen with Beatles overtones and an immortal lyric ("I thought you were being ironic when you ripped your jeans"), and *Shine Silently* is one of the more appealing road songs in a long while. But there's also a lot of dirge-like disco-fusion stuff that doesn't work, and both *Baltimore* (which aims for the urban despair of the Stones' *Heartbreaker* and misses) and *No Mercy* (which uses boxing as a metaphor for life and will have you cringing) include lyrical gaucheries so bad they make it hard to concentrate on the album's small-scale successes. The Kid isn't aging nearly as gracefully as I hoped he would. S.S.

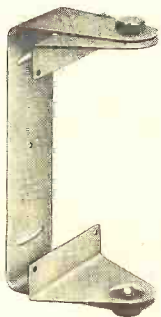
RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

NICK LOWE: *Labour of Lust*. Nick Lowe (vocals, bass); Dave Edmunds (guitar, vo-
(Continued on page 88)

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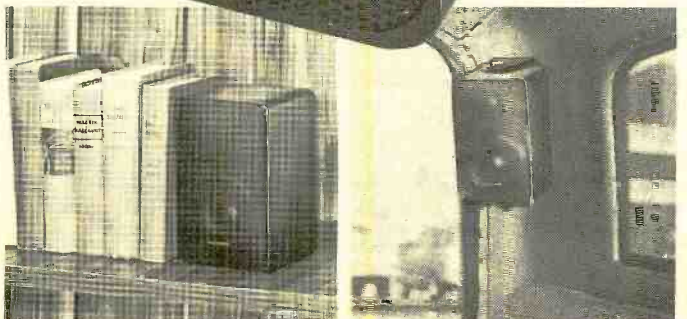
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als); Billy Bremer (guitar, vocals); Terry Williams (drums). *Cruel to Be Kind*; *Cracking Up*; *Big Kick*, *Plain Scrap*; *American Squirm*; *You Make Me*; *Skin Deep*; and five others. COLUMBIA JCT 36087 \$7.98, © JCA 36087 \$7.98, © JCT 36087 \$7.98.

Performance: **Pop heaven**
Recording: **Good**

Imagine the scene. Nick Lowe, emaciated Limey poseur, bon vivant, and general wise guy, spends his first night at the Nashville home of his sweetheart, Carlene Carter. The next morning they're having coffee in the kitchen, both of them a little bleary-eyed, when suddenly the door swings open and in walks an imposing figure dressed in black. Nick rubs his eyes, and the figure extends a hand in his direction. "Hi," he intones, "I'm Johnny Cash."

That's a true story, by the way. I bring it up because of the sense of dislocation and culture shock it invokes, since Nick Lowe's music, at its best, has about the same effect: he's a master of the incongruous and the slightly warped. Last year's "Pure Pop for Now People" pretty much established him as the Champ in that regard, and some even saw in its unlikely merger of adorable melodies and lyrics about castrating Castro the beginnings of a whole new genre: Non Sequitur Rock.

Those people will probably be a tad disappointed with this year's model, since it is in no way a mere reprise of the last. The reason for that is simple: it's not really a Lowe solo album at all, but the second installment of the collaboration with Dave Edmunds and Rock-

pile begun on Edmunds' "Tracks on Wax 4," and Edmunds has slightly more conventional musical concerns, such as reworking genre clichés and searching for the ultimate Chuck Berry riff. None of this bothers me in the slightest, however, because the overall sound of the thing is reminiscent of what both men were doing in their pub days—whipping blues, rock, and pop into a heady confection—and because Edmunds' guitar is nicely up front throughout and as always quite brilliant: just listen to the way he opens up Mickey Jupp's otherwise unremarkable *Switch Board Susan*. Further, there are some songs here that will make you swoon the way all those old Hollies and Searchers 45s did in the Summer of Your Teenage; *American Squirm*, in fact, may be the best British Invasion tune written in 1979, and *Cruel to Be Kind* isn't far off the mark, either.

Let us not mince words. "Labour of Lust" is everything fluff should be and rarely is: artless, silly, and quite sublime. Rarely has so little been said so exquisitely. S.S.

MANFRED MANN'S EARTH BAND: *Angel Station*. Manfred Mann's Earth Band (vocals and instrumentals). *Don't Kill It Carol*; *You Angel You*; *Hollywood Town*; "Belle" of the *Earth*; *Platform End*; and four others. WARNER BROS. BSK 3302 \$7.98, © M8 3302 \$7.98, © M5 3302 \$7.98.

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

Something has been bothering me about Manfred Mann for quite a while: how is it that a

talented fellow with fifteen years of experience in the music business has had only three real hits (*Do Wah Diddy*, *The Mighty Quinn*, *Blinded by the Light*), two near hits (*Pretty Flamingo*, *Living Without You*), and never a follow-up single? Since he formed the Earth Band some seven years ago, Mann has put out several albums that are mostly rococo binges on the synthesizer in support of meandering tunes with opaque lyrics. But he is capable of succeeding commercially without compromising his artistic integrity—both Dylan's *The Mighty Quinn* and Springsteen's *Blinded by the Light* had mediocre melodies, but Mann's arrangements and performances of them were great. So why doesn't he do it more often?

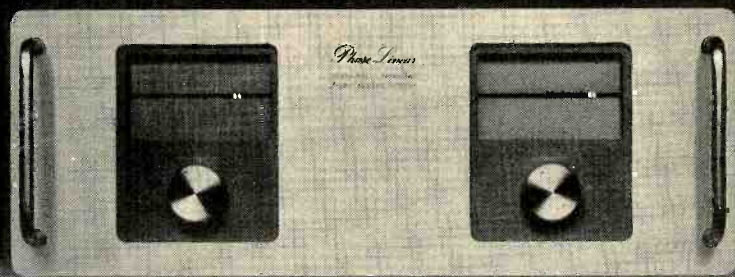
Mann's new album is a barrage of flapdoodle that attempts to compromise between commerciality and his personal musical preferences, but it is a weak compromise. The Dylan item this time out (it is traditional for Mann to include a Dylan piece on each album) is *You Angel You*, a cutesie-poo ditty from Our Bob's later period. The only other cut on which Mann sounds serious is *Resurrection*, an attack on the commercialization of Christ. No hit here. Is Manfred Mann running away from success? Judging from "Angel Station," I'd say yes. J.V.

FRANK MARINO & MAHOGANY RUSH: *Tales of the Unexpected*. Frank Marino (vocals, guitar, synthesizers); Paul Harwood (bass); Jim Ayoub (drums). *Sister Change*; *All Along the Watchtower*; *Norwegian Wood*; *Tales of the Unexpected*; *Down, Down, Down*; and three others. COLUMBIA JC 35753

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Performance: **Dry competence squared**
Recording: **Good**

This half-live, half-studio effort seems mostly Frank Marino's trip. He produced it, wrote everything but the Dylan song and the Beatles song, sings lead, plays lead, runs the synthesizers, and appears alone in the cover painting with a heavenly light shining down on him. The painting is a blue monochrome, and let that tip you off, blue being a cold color. Marino reminds me of Jimi Hendrix if Hendrix had had an on-off button and a volume knob on him. Forty minutes—or forty hours—into the title song you realize there ain't gonna be anything unexpected, just more speed for the sake of speed and practically no heed paid to such elements of music as texture, contrast, and dynamics. Marino's "writing" is mostly quick-sketch, elemental frameworks for instrumental breaks, although *Woman* wouldn't be bad if you took his wah-wah pedal away from him and gave him some kind of pill that would enable his ears to keep up with his hands. Mahogany Rush is kind of a nice, quaint name, a throwback to the psychedelic era. Too bad they had to take it so literally.

N.C.

MICKEY NEWBURY: *The Sailor*. Mickey Newbury (vocals); orchestra. *Blue Sky Shinin'*; *Long Gone*; *The Night You Wrote That Song*; *Let It Go*; *A Weed Is a Weed*; and four others. ABC HB44017 \$7.98.

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

As good as he often is as a writer and performer, Mickey Newbury has an odd habit of refusing to deliver the follow-through, knock-out punch. *A Weed Is a Weed* is a case in point. It's outright c-&-w, and very good c-&-w; he sets up a strong and interesting situation in which the protagonist-narrator tells of growing up ashamed of his father, deliberately creating trouble for the sheer hell of it, being angry and lazy, and meeting a girl in a bar who is drawn to him because "she likes misfits." (Novels have been built on less; at least one very good one, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, deals with the same theme as Newbury's song.) But after all of the careful, concise exposition, Newbury is content to drop it there with a pulpy thud. His conclusion that "Earth and water can create most anything/ But a weed is a weed" doesn't exactly take one's breath away, nor does it satisfy any of the interest he's aroused. In the straight-on commercial stuff, such as *Let It Go* or *Let's Have a Party*, he remains the MOR pro he's always been. But he *could* be a lot more than MOR.

P.R.

NO DICE: *2 Faced*. No Dice (vocals and instrumentals). *Momma Do Stop Your Children Watching What Your Momma Do*; *Angel with a Dirty Face*; *Shooting in the Dark*; *I Keep It to Myself*; *No Stone Unturned*; and four others. CAPITOL ST-11925 \$7.98, © 8XT-11925 \$7.98, © 4XT-11925 \$7.98.

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

No Dice is a British group, and the British younger generation seems forever obsessed with American rhythm-and-blues. Well, why
(Continued on page 92)

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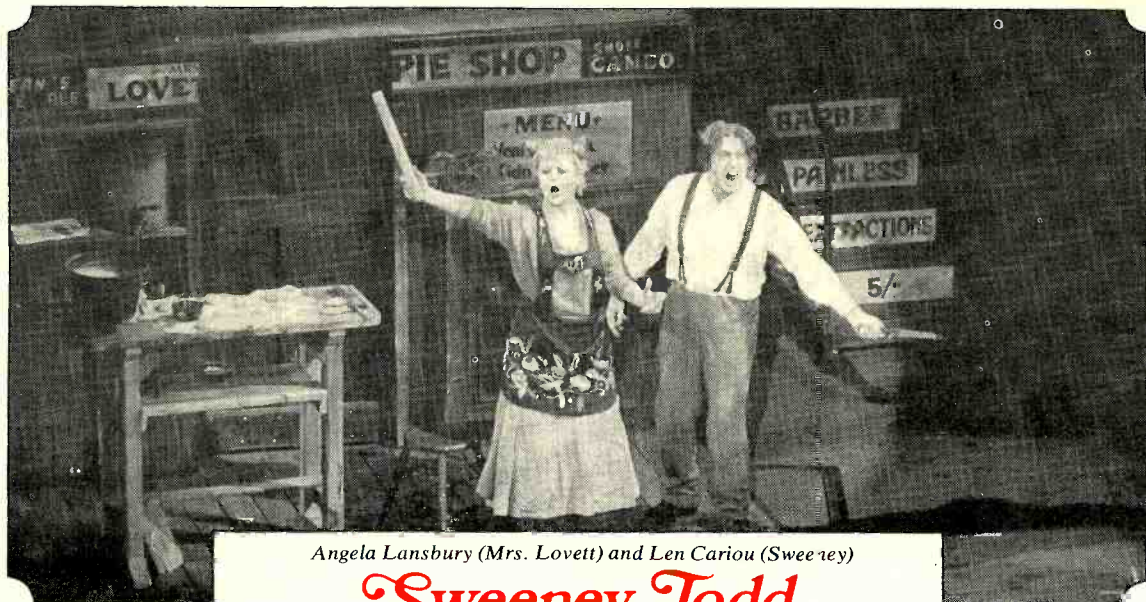
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CIRCLE NO. 15 ON READER SERVICE CARD



Angela Lansbury (Mrs. Lovett) and Len Cariou (Sweeney)

Sweeney Todd

THE story of Sweeney Todd, the “demon barber” of London’s Fleet Street who cut the throats of his customers and delivered their corpses to his accomplice, Mrs. Lovett, for processing in her meat-pie manufactory below his shop, may be rooted in historical reality or it may be little more than a legend. In any case, the “musical thriller” based on it, with a book by Hugh Wheeler (drawn from a play by Christopher Bond) and music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, has become something of a show-business legend since it opened on Broadway in March.

The show, which won the Drama Critics Circle award as best musical of 1979 and eight Tony awards, offers Sondheim’s most complex score to date, brilliantly orchestrated by Jonathan Tunick. *Sweeney Todd* also boasts two superb, justifiably extolled performances: one by Len Cariou as Sweeney, the other by Angela Lansbury, a living cartoon as Nellie Lovett the pie maker, who displays on stage an expression at once droll and incorrigibly amoral.

LANSBURY supplies a leavening of outrageous comedy to a production otherwise relying more on the Grand Guignol gruesomeness of Harold Prince’s elaborate staging than on the sort of dark political humor that distinguishes the Brecht/Weill *Three-penny Opera*, with which it has been compared. Sondheim’s score, containing some twenty-five songs, seems at first, despite the Gilbertian rhymes that pile up in those ingenious cat’s cradles of lyrics we have come to expect of him, closer to opera than to the Broadway musical (there are rumors that Beverly Sills has her eye on it for the New York City Opera). Yet one wonders how it would fare in that category, grand opera in general being judged by humanistic standards more severe than those applied to Grand Guignol. The terrifyingly talented Sondheim may be a giant among pygmies in today’s musical theater, but, as John Lahr pointed out in a recent article in *Harper’s*, even his “appetite for blood is bloodless.”

But what if *Sweeney Todd* is only heard, not seen? I got a chance to discuss just this question when I spoke with Miss Lansbury herself during a pause in last March’s recording session at the RCA studios. “What,” I asked, “is the difference between preparing *Sweeney Todd* for discs and doing the show on stage?”

“You have to assimilate the character that you’re playing with your voice,” Miss Lansbury explained. “You no longer can depend on visual appearance. It’s simply a matter of bringing all those qualities that you have on stage through the voice. Yet we’re working on a stage here too, as you can see. It’s almost the same position in relation to the orchestra except that they’re spread out. We’re able to project because the mikes are high enough, just as we do on stage—the same technique.”

This works, I think, insofar as the characters played by Lansbury and Cariou are concerned, but it does not serve to communicate anything of the show’s overwhelming visual elements, and they are sorely missed. Originally, producer Tom Shepard wanted to record the entire production, dialogue and all, but that would have run over the two-record limit, and some of the dialogue was cut. As Miss Lansbury pointed out, though, “seventy to eighty per cent of the show is actually sung” and there would be little difficulty in retaining the continuity of the story with brief bridges of dialogue.

On records, stripped of the pricey “production values” of iron girders, Victorian machinery, and trap doors in and around the little meat-pie-and-barber-shop building where most of the action takes place, and minus the eerie lighting, the choreographed movements, the human fingernails turning up in Mrs. Lovett’s dreadful pies, and the glitter of fine-honed razors, how does the much-heralded *Sweeney Todd* hold up for the ear alone? One might say that it is one of the most intelligent original-cast recordings ever put together. A complete libretto of the recorded version (which even includes one song, *Johanna*, cut from the show during try-outs) is sup-

plied, fleshed out (so to speak) with brief descriptions of the omitted portions of talk, making the whole thing as easy to follow and as effective as it is on stage, if not more so.

Never for an instant does the action drag, and without the Guignol effects to distract, it is possible to appreciate more readily the impressive structure of the score, framed by the mournful, rather haunting *Ballad of Sweeney Todd*, the hilarity of Mrs. Lovett’s *The Worst Pies in London*, and the fleeting sweetness of *Sweet Finch and Linnet Bird*, sung by Sarah Rice as Johanna, one of a pair of young lovers in the somewhat slighted subplot. Then there is the circusy *elan* of *Miracle Elixir* (in which Joaquin Romaguera, complete with comic Italian accent, portrays the montebank Pirelli whom Sweeney is to supplant as the “king of the barbers” on Fleet Street), the jaunty music-hall airiness of Lansbury’s big number *By the Sea* in the second act, the expertly crafted cantata-like passages for chorus, the atmosphere of murky mystery and melodrama generated through Tunick’s tingling orchestrations, and the exceptionally alive, spacious recorded sound.

THE album is, in short, a meticulously wrought tribute to Sondheim’s almost incredible skill—he does so many things so well, so conscientiously, and with such style, taste, and elegance. Nonetheless, I found myself wondering more than once whether he might not be willing to trade all his sophisticated skills, even the whole complex, hair-raising contraption that is *Sweeney Todd*, for one singable, simple, warmhearted song from the pen of, say, Irving Berlin. —Paul Kresh

SWEENEY TODD (Stephen Sondheim—Hugh Wheeler). Original-cast recording. Angela Lansbury, Len Cariou, Victor Garber, Ken Jennings, Merle Louise, Edmund Lyndeck, Sarah Rice, Joaquin Romaguera, Jack Eric Williams (vocals); chorus and orchestra, Paul Gemignani cond. RCA CBL2-3379 two discs \$15.98, © CBK2-3379 \$15.98.

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ORLEANS: wiry tautness and utterly alive arrangements

not? The Rolling Stones started as a white blues band and became an institution, Paul McCartney could scream a neo-Little Richard vocal better than anybody, Eric Burden declared himself a worshiper of black American music, Van Morrison sang jazz and blues and cut tunes like *Don't Start Cryin' Now*, the obscure B-side of Slim Harpo's regional American blues hit *Rainin' in My Heart*, and the Moody Blues took their name from a tune cut by Slim Harpo.

So the wheel of rock history turns in tighter and tighter concentric circles. It is unlikely that any British blues band will ever break as big as the Stones did, but, Lordy, they do keep trying. No Dice are impressive for their verve and dedication, but listening to more than a few cuts is anticlimactic. J.V.

ORLEANS: Forever. Orleans (vocals and instrumentals). *Love Takes Time; Don't Throw Our Love Away; Keep On Rollin'*; and six others. INFINITY INF 9006 \$7.98, © INFT 9006 \$7.98, © INFC 9006 \$7.98.

Performance: **Vital**
Recording: **Excellent**

Orleans has been moving onward and upward at a great rate since it started as a group called Boffalongo in Ithaca, New York, ten years ago. The band won national fame in 1975 with the big hit *Dance with Me* on Asylum. In 1977 lead singer John Hall and drummer/percussionist Jerry Marotta left, but Orleans seems to have recovered from these losses nicely. Everybody in the group is a singer, but it is energetic Bob Leinbach who dominates the vocals on this latest release, mostly written by group members. None of these numbers are especially distinguished in the lyrics department, although the title song ("Forever, good friends are forever") has a certain heart-warming quality and *Don't Throw Our Love Away* is a rather touching plea for peace in interpersonal relations. What makes Orleans worth hearing is the vitality of the group, the wiry tautness of the whole ensemble, and the musicianly craft reflected in every utterly alive arrangement. P.K.

MINNIE RIPERTON: Minnie (see *Best of the Month*, page 79)

ROOMFUL OF BLUES: Let's Have a Party. Roomful of Blues (vocals and instrumentals).

Later Than You Think; Okie Dokie Stomp; Travelin' Mood; Let's Have a Party; Jambalaya; Look Out; and five others. ANTILLES AN 7071 \$5.98.

Performance: **Swell, but . . .**
Recording: **Very good**

Roomful of Blues takes as models the late-Forties recordings—usually made on a local or regional basis—of black rhythm-and-blues combos. The most famous and successful of these combos was the one captained by Dave Bartholomew in New Orleans with Fats Domino on piano and vocals, but there were many others, among them the stable of musicians and singers Johnny Otis arranged for and produced in Los Angeles. These early rhythm-and-blues combos were almost interchangeable in style and instrumentation, but they had a lot of entertainment value—boy, what fun they were! Roomful of Blues' emulation of them is well-nigh perfect, and this album has a clean sound and aggressive bite thanks to producer Joel Dorn (he produced Roberta Flack's *The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face*). But, while "Let's Have a Party" is eminently enjoyable, Roomful of Blues is really a museum band. Their sound is not so much captured in vinyl as it is preserved in amber; it has a captivating past but, alas, no future. J.V.

BIFF ROSE: The Messiah Album Live at Gatsby's. Biff Rose (vocals, piano). *He Had His Fling; Take a Stand; Japanese Transistor; Leviathan;* and four others. PACIFIC ARTS PAC7-127 \$7.98.

Performance: **Funny once or twice**
Recording: **Good**

This is the first I've heard of Biff Rose since about 1969, but he seems to be having a good time singing "I don't want to be a star" but doing a good enough comic monologue to become one, maybe, here in the comedy-crazy Seventies (while they last). Rose, who spends most of the first side of "The Messiah Album" on monologues, is more cerebral than the average comic, and most of this is based on the vicissitudes of language—and the renderings of it; he has a good ear and easily slips from one of this country's dialects to another. The second side is mostly his own songs, which are mostly comic in the making-you-think way—in the tradition of Mort Sahl,

Mark Russell, Russell Baker, *et al.*—that Americans seem to find structurally comfortable, even though the evidence suggests that they mostly *think* about thinking and don't actually go through with it. The problem with the record is the problem with spoken-word records: they just don't bear repeated playing the way music does. Rose has a good live act. N.C.

THE RUBINOOS: Back to the Drawing Board! The Rubinoos (vocals and instrumentals). *Fallin' in Love; I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend; Promise Me; Hold Me; Ronnie;* and six others. BERSERKLEY JBZ-0061 \$6.98, © 8380-0080 \$7.95, © 5380-0080 \$7.95.

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

JONATHAN RICHMAN & THE MODERN LOVERS: Back in Your Life. Jonathan Richman (vocals, guitar); instrumental and vocal accompaniment. *Abdul and Cleopatra; (She's Gonna) Respect Me; Lover Please; Affection; Buzz Buzz Buzz; Back in Your Life;* and six others. BERSERKLEY JBZ-0060 \$6.98, © 8380-0060H \$7.95, © 5380-0060H \$7.95.

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

Berserkley, a label located in Berkeley, California (did'ja get the neat-o play on words, gang?), specializes in recording groups that play traditional pop-rock styles of the late Fifties and the early to middle Sixties. Contemporary groups playing pastiches of everyone from Fabian to Herman's Hermits induce nostalgia for a time when, it is supposed, things were simpler, the world was better, and rock was young. In other words—Brigadoon.

Near-clone groups like the Rubinoos are fun to listen to for a while, just as a good new Dixieland jazz band is entertaining until you get to the point where you'd rather go home and play records by the masters. The Rubinoos are in the Beatles/Herman's Hermits style, with catchy riffs and cute lyrics, and they do a good job of re-creating the sounds of the early 1960s. Jonathan Richman, however, is as much a puzzle as ever. He sings off-key and in a quavering baritone. I still can't figure out whether he *knows* he can't sing, as I suspect, in which case the performances are deliberately funny, or he thinks he *can* sing and he's just embarrassingly funny. Either album is worth a couple of spins, but not much beyond that. J.V.

SQUEEZE: Cool for Cats. Squeeze (vocals and instrumentals). *Slap & Tickle; Revue; Touching Me, Touching You; It's Not Cricket; It's So Dirty; The Knack; Hop Skip & Jump;* and five others. A&M SP-4759 \$8.98.

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

Squeeze used to be known as "U.K. Squeeze" but dropped the prefix when confusion resulted in their being mistaken for a group called "U.K." In any event, the two groups are quite different: U.K. wallows in "university" type stews and gloom-and-doom lyrics, but Squeeze, rather than searching for spiritual values, takes it for granted that the human race is a pack of contemptible damned fools. The outer limits of British humor sometimes come as a shock to Americans, who are not used to the explicit sexual frankness com-

(Continued on page 94)

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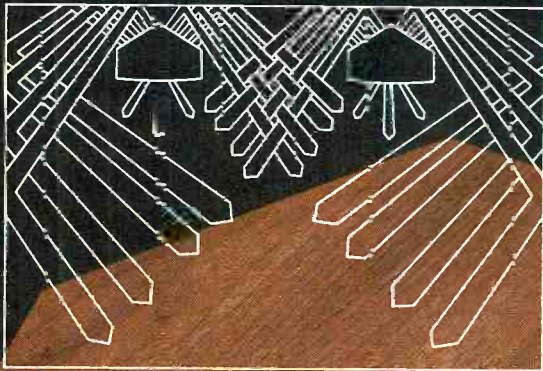
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Reviewing the Revues

CARLETON CARPENTER:
the *Abba-Dabba*
Honeymooner returns



IN the late Forties, after the grim days of the Second World War, U.S. audiences developed a seemingly insatiable appetite for the "frothy little British comedy" at the movies and the "witty little satirical revue" in the theater. Clever skits and insouciant ballads, with lyrics featuring multiple internal rhymes and aimed at such vulnerable targets as the hostesses at Schrafft's and noisy garbage cans, were the order of the day both on Broadway and off. Sometime in the middle of the Fifties, however, the witty revue as a form retreated to the basements of night clubs and later more or less died. As smugly arch and knowing as their humor was, at their best such shows provided delightfully lighthearted entertainment, and their virtues are still evident in "Make Mine Manhattan and Great Revues Revisited," the latest revival record from that intrepid archeologist of the American musical theater, Ben Bagley.

Side one is almost entirely devoted to ten numbers from Richard Lewine and Arnold Horwitt's *Make Mine Manhattan*, arranged, as are all the selections on the disc, by Dennis Deal and Judd Woldin. This popular hit of the 1948 season starred a newly discovered comedian named Sid Caesar, and producer Max Liebman eventually converted it into NBC's celebrated TV series, *Your Show of Shows*. Just about every song here is a winner, and especially winning is Arthur Siegel as the garbage man in *Noises in the Street*, which includes sound effects reproducing such early-morning banes of big-city life as rattling trash cans, jackhammers, and slow-starting cars. Siegel also does well by *The Subway Song*, originally a solo by Caesar; it details the woes of a boy in the Bronx who has to take the IRT to visit his girl in Brooklyn.

Helen Gallagher makes the most of *Schrafft's* ("You can eat all you might/It won't affect your appetite"), and Estelle Parsons is simply splendid in *My Brudder and Me*, which is complete with tap-dancing sounds. The whole company joins in for *Saturday Night in Central Park*, whose lyrics re-

call a time before the park became, as Bagley points out in his notes, "a place of peril, pith and Papp." The best track on the first side, though, is the last, *Civilization* ("take it away"), in which Elaine Stritch repeats her performance as the Bongo Bongo girl from the 1947 musical *Angel in the Wings*.

Side two offers a generous portion of vintage revue material with a medley from *Lend an Ear* and selections from *Touch and Go*, *After the Show*, *Small Wonder*, *Tickets Please*, *Girls Against the Boys*, *Bless You All*, and the 1941 version of *Meet the People*. Outstanding are Lynn Redgrave's treatments of *When Someone You Love Loves You* and *Mr. Henderson*, the latter the saga of a blighted love affair that begins at a late-night bistro; Carleton Carpenter's jaunty delivery of *The Show-off*, with its shrewd insights into the drawbacks of exhibitionism; Nancy Andrews' singing of *Miss Platt Selects Mate*, with witty lyrics by Walter and Jean Kerr; and Dolores Gray as *Saturday's Child*, with equally witty lyrics by Phyllis McGinley. The whole record makes one almost wish that the "witty little satirical revue" could stage a comeback, archness and all. —Paul Kresh

BEN BAGLEY'S MAKE MINE MANHATTAN AND GREAT REVUES REVISITED. Nancy Andrews, Carleton Carpenter, Helen Gallagher, Dolores Gray, Estelle Parsons, Lynn Redgrave, Arthur Siegel, Elaine Stritch (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Anything Can Happen in New York/Manhattan in the Spring; Gentleman Friend; Noises in the Street; My Brudder and Me; I Fell in Love with You; The Subway Song; Phil the Fiddler; Schrafft's; Saturday Night in Central Park; Civilization; After Hours/When Someone You Love Loves You/Molly O'Reilly; This Had Better Be Love; Mr. Henderson; The Show-off; Take Off the Coat; Miss Platt Selects Mate; Darn It, Baby, That's Love; Saturday's Child; I Gotta Have You; Love in a Changing World.* PAINTED SMILES PS 1329 \$7.98.

mon to BBC TV productions, nor to the violent and almost psychotic cynicism of English satirists, from Jonathan Swift to Monty Python, from the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band to Squeeze.

Among the subjects treated in this album are assault and battery, masturbation, scandal-mongering, alcoholism, murder, and other raw-meat enterprises. The melodies are non-existent, the lyrics are hilarious and bitter, and the performances are eerie and deliberately mechanical. Squeeze is very funny, and a bit scary. J.V.

SUSAN: *Falling in Love Again.* Susan (vocals and instrumentals). *Takin' It Over; I Was Wrong; Marlene; A Little Time; Power; Too Bad;* and five others. RCA BXL1-3372 \$7.98, Ⓟ BXS1-3372 \$7.98, © BXX1-3372 \$7.98.

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

A wise veteran of the contemporary music-publishing business said recently that rock *sounds* change but that the construction and attitude of rock *songs* do not, pointing out that teen-pop items like *I Think We're Alone Now*, cut in 1967 by Tommy James and the Shondells, could easily be done today by a new group if their vocals were harsher and their guitars mixed louder. A look at the printed lyrics of Susan's material—all original—and a listen to "Falling in Love Again" confirm this. Susan's sound and energy are reminiscent of the early Beatles when the Fab Four were recording material they'd been howling for years in bars and at Saturday night dances. It's clear that Susan is another group of small-club veterans with combat experience and commendable ambition. This sturdy effort is their first major recording (they appeared on "Live at the Rat," Rat 528, a sampler of Boston New Wave bands, about two years ago), and it'll be interesting to see how they develop. Any group that sings a love song to Marlene Dietrich shows promise. J.V.

SWEET: *A Cut Above the Rest.* Sweet (vocals and instrumentals). *Call Me; Play All Night; Big Apple Waltz; Dorian Grey; Discophony;* and four others. CAPITOL SO-11929 \$7.98, Ⓟ 8XO-11929 \$7.98, © 4XO-11929 \$7.98.

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

Lead singer Brian Connolly has left Sweet but in doing so he seems to have freed the group to try various styles and become a more well-rounded band. There's an appealing diversity in these performances; some are hard-rock, to keep Sweet's loyal audience in line, while others are tinted with jazz and softer rock.

Mother Earth is a big ballad that doesn't quite come off, although there are some nice ideas in it. *Discophony* is an attack on disco music and a defense of rock-and-roll. *Big Apple Waltz* is more successful as a ballad, and *Play All Night* is the usual quasi-hymn to the spiritual bond between band and audience. This last song seems to be begging the question; Sweet has been in business for ten years and ought to know by now that the so-called "spiritual bond" can—and often is—broken by a once-loyal audience. Let's hope the audience gives the new Sweet a fair hearing. J.V.

THE TARNEY/SPENCER BAND: *Run for Your Life.* Alan Tarney (guitar, bass, key-
(Continued on page 96)

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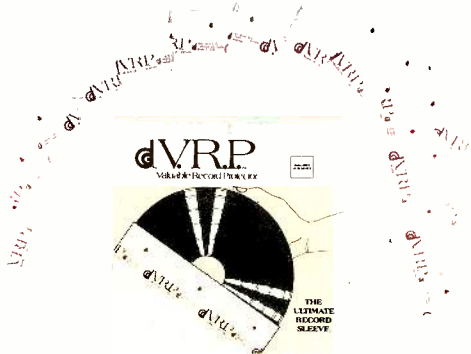
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New Lost City Ramblers: 20 Years

WHEN I first saw the new two-disc "20 Years/Concert Performances" by the New Lost City Ramblers on my review list, I looked forward to hearing it with all the anticipatory thrill of, say, getting a free ticket to "Billy Carter Live! At the New School!" For I am a variety of snob, you see. It is the innocent result of a semi-heavy to light classical education at a school where (as a schoolmate of mine recently described it) "our generation was the last gasp of tweed" and where "folk music" was something only precociously political grinds listened to. Then, too, there are my carefully tended sartorial prejudices: space shoes, tie-die, altered blue jeans, worn-to-death western hats, spoon-handle rings, and seed-bead necklaces all turn me off. If you have to be a phony, I reason, at least you can be a *presentable* one in a Brooks Brothers suit or a Chanel dress.

So why have the New Lost City Ramblers and their new album been able to warm me up when so many others have for so many years left me cold? Well, for one thing, since their inception twenty years ago their performance dress has duplicated the kind of clothing real country people wear when they gather to make and listen to their own music. Twenty years ago it was a Sunday-go-to-meetin' suit with tie and vest. Today they appear in what passes for country "sportswear"—trousers, vests, long-sleeved shirts, and ties—another sign of the respect the Ramblers consistently show their material throughout. In the thirty-four tracks here there isn't anything that isn't faithfully, lovingly adapted from a genuine country source, there isn't one moment in which they've staged, hyped, goosed, or trashed anything for cheap commercial effect.

The New Lost City Ramblers were formed in 1958. At that time the group was composed of Tom Paley, John Cohen, and Mike Seeger. In 1963 Tom Paley dropped out to be replaced by Tracy Schwarz. The cohesiveness of the

unit over the years—in their overall approach and in their individual performances—can be gauged by the fact that the replacement in no way changed the group's basic character. In those late Eisenhower years they must have seemed an esoteric, academic kind of entertainment indeed, what with their authentic country instruments, their wry sense of what real country people find funny about the world, and their unabashed sincerity in trying to reveal to modern urban audiences the sentiments and feelings of those descendants of early Americans whom later arrivals only half-jokingly referred to as "hillbillies." (The suddenly fashionable term now is "red-neck"; thanks, Billy.)

These people from the hills and the countryside spreading out from Appalachia are, historically, a taciturn lot, and their clearest and most potent form of expression is probably their music, a generous sampling of which is offered by the Ramblers here. There is *No Bugs on Me*, a long, low-comedy humph of country one-upmanship; *She Tickles Me*, about a horny adolescent who almost gets trapped into matrimony on one of his first dates; and *Wildwood Weeds*, a round-up of opinions, biases, and prejudices you'll never hear on the seven o'clock news. Then there are such songs as *Soldier's Joy*, *The Democratic Donkey*, and the remarkable *The Battleship of Maine* (the story of a country boy forced into the idiocies of the Spanish American War) that eerily echo events that have taken place more recently in our history.

BUT most of all there are the deeply felt, urgently expressed songs about life and death that tower effortlessly above anything we have in today's pop culture. Songs such as the old Carter Family gem *Worried Man Blues*, the haunting, solo-voice *The Unquiet Grave*, and *Daniel in the Den of Lions*, with its scripture-rooted message of everyday courage, are accurate reflections of a people, a time, and a way of life that future historians can legitimately use as a basis for understanding the kind of society that made them. Who knows what they'll ever be able to puzzle out from the fun-house mirror of contemporary urban pop—have you ever met anyone in real life even *remotely* like any character in a Kiss or even a Stones song? —Peter Reilly

THE NEW LOST CITY RAMBLERS: 20 Years/Concert Performances. Tom Paley, John Cohen, Mike Seeger, Tracy Schwarz (vocals and instrumentals). *Soldier's Joy*; *Down in the Willow Garden*; *Brown's Ferry Blues*; *Too Tight Rag*; *Little Birdie*; *Darling Corey*; *The Democratic Donkey*; *Poor Ellen Smith*; *On Some Foggy Mountain Top*; *Cackling Hen*; *The Battleship of Maine*; *Worried Man Blues*; *The Unquiet Grave*; *Lady of Carlisle*; *Daniel in the Den of Lions*; *The Arkansas Traveller*; *Ain't No Bugs on Me*; *Sally Goodin*; *Country Blues*; *Little Maggie*; *The Little Girl and the Dreadful Snake*; *Keep Moving*; *Turkey in the Straw*; *She Tickles Me*; *Black Bottom Strut*; *Saddle Up the Grey*; *Groundhog*; *The Old Bell Cow*; *It's Hard to Leave You*, *Sweet Love*; *Dark Holler Blues*; *Locks and Bolts*; *Wildwood Weeds*; *Milk 'Em in the Evening Blues*; *Madeleine*. FLYING FISH 102 two discs \$14.98.

boards, vocals); Trevor Spencer (drums). *Live Again*; *Run for Your Life*; *Lies*; *No Time to Lose*; *The Race Is Almost Run*; *I'm Alive*; *A Heart Will Break Tonight*; *Far Better Man*; and two others. A&M SP-4757 \$8.98, © CS-4757 \$8.98.

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

This "band" is actually a duo. Guitarist-bassist-keyboardist-vocalist Alan Tarney and drummer Trevor Spencer are also responsible for all but one of the songs, which are okay but not much better than that. The theme of the album is "It Is Important to Live" (now *that's* news), and the opening cut actually contains the slogan "go with the flow," which conjures up visions of aging hippies reading well-thumbed copies of Alan Watts' books on Zen.

Poor programming compounds my problem with this disc. Side one of any album should be the zinger side that hooks the listener, but nothing happens on side one here until the fourth and fifth cuts, *Live Again* and *Run for Your Life*. Both of these are well arranged, and Tarney and Spencer sound like they mean business, like they're going for a hit. It's also interesting to hear them doing *Lies*, a two-fisted pop item written and cut by the Knickerbockers in 1966 and one of the minor masterpieces of the past decade. Not that Tarney and Spencer do the tune justice with their rather limp version, but they do deserve some credit for picking it up. J.V.

JENNIFER WARNES: Shot Through the Heart (see *Best of the Month*, page 78)

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

DIONNE WARWICK: Dionne. Dionne Warwick (vocals); orchestra. *After You*; *In Your Eyes*; *All the Time*; *The Letter*; *Feeling Old Feelings*; *I'll Never Love This Way Again*; *Out of My Hands*; and three others. ARISTA AB 4230 \$7.98.

Performance: **Snappy**
Recording: **Excellent**

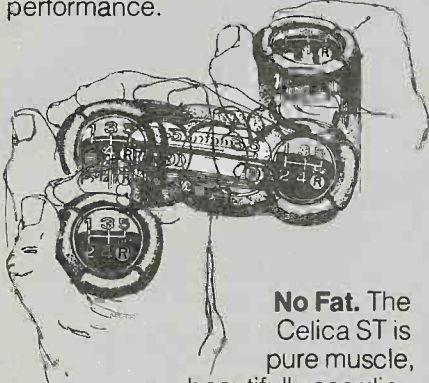
This is a fine comeback for Dionne Warwick. She never seemed to recover all her recording aplomb after her artistic split with Burt Bacharach, and her later albums grew steadily more unsure and unfocused. Even during her lean years, though, no one ever quite replaced her in giving that garter-belt snap to a lyric.

In this spanking new production by Barry Manilow, which includes a couple of his songs (*In Your Eyes* and *All the Time*) and to which he generously contributed background vocals for several tracks, not only is Dionne Warwick's snap definitely back, but so are her familiar sleek, sexy, and feline ways with a song. She's easily as good as you remember her. It's no discredit to Warwick to say that Manilow makes the crucial difference in her performances, just as Bacharach did years ago. Sometimes even the brightest flame needs a pilot light to ignite it. Now that she's found another one she shines uninhibitedly here, toying with *After You*, undulating with her familiar intensity all through *Feeling Old Feelings*, and, finally, letting it all hang out in an emotion-drenched performance of Manilow's *All the Time*. Welcome back, Dionne. P.R.

(Continued on page 98)

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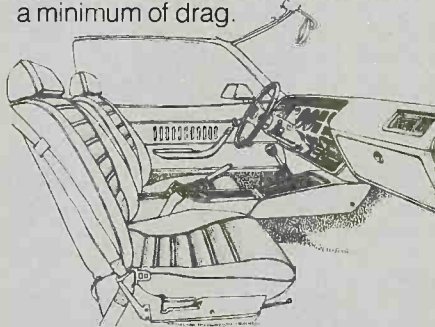
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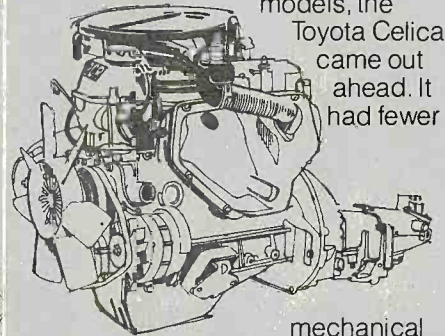
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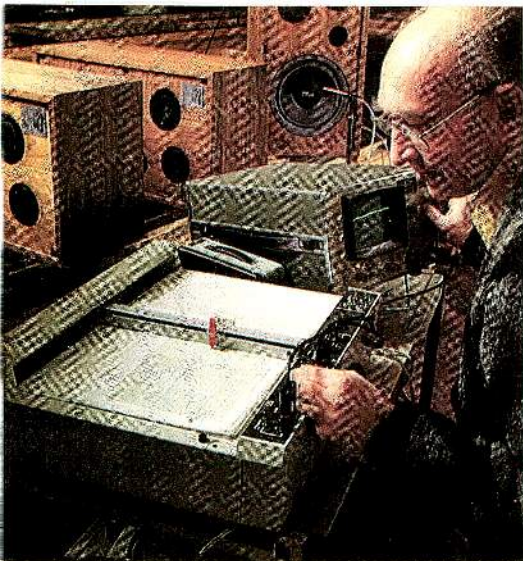
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DISCO



RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

LINDA CLIFFORD: *Let Me Be Your Woman*. Linda Clifford (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Hold Me Close*; *Sweet Melodies*; *Bridge over Troubled Water*; *Don't Give It Up*; *One of Those Songs*; and three others. RSO RS-2-3902 two discs \$11.98, © 8T-2-4003 \$11.98, © CT-2-3902 \$11.98.

Performance: **Promise fulfilled**
Recording: **Sparkling**

The "most promising" female r-&b vocalist of 1978 fully deserves the attention that has been lavished on her in this two-record set: Scavullo cover photo, Kamali clothes, Tiffany jewelry, Jim Burgess and Jimmy Simpson mixes, and topflight sound. Linda Clifford has a solid voice—strong, interesting, and fully controlled through an impressive range—and she uses it with uncommon skill in an unusually varied set of songs. Just compare the disco-arranged opener, *Hold Me Close*, with the soul-belted title song, *Let Me Be Your Woman*, that follows it.

For those fans who came to Clifford through disco (her knockout version of Cy Coleman's *If My Friends Could See Me Now* remains one of the best disco translations of a pop standard ever released), the album's second record is *the one*. It contains all ten minutes and twenty-two seconds of her sensational dance version of Paul Simon's *Bridge over Troubled Water*, backed up with nearly twelve minutes of Will Holt's sing-along standard *One of Those Songs*. Both of these are big numbers heavily orchestrated with major horn sections, climbing strings, and chorus back-ups. But Linda Clifford is a big singer. She soars through, around, and above these arrangements, with every word audible and every note perfectly balanced with the music. *Bridge* is my favorite of the two. The arrangement is considerably richer (the long introduction, for example, skillfully builds tension either on the dance floor or off), and the song itself is better. Clifford sings it with wonderful freedom as a straight gospel number. I can't say that disco adds anything to *Bridge over Troubled Water*, but in her very capable hands the song has certainly added something to disco. *E.B.*

HAIR. Evelyn "Champagne" King, the Brothers, Vicki Sue Robinson, New York Community Choir, Revelation (vocals and instrumentals). *Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In*; *Where Do I Go?*; and two others. RCA AFL1-3356 \$7.98, © AFS1-3356 \$7.98, © AFK1-3356 \$7.98.

Performance: **Big-band disco**
Recording: **Very good**

The good news is that this is more than merely a recycling of *Hair*, opportunistically pulled

together to cash in on the movie. It's actually fun. The arrangements are on the conservative side, veering a bit close—for this day and age—to Harry James, but they are solid dance setups if you like big-band disco. Having different artists take turns singing lead adds variety, though it's maddeningly hard to tell, from liner or label, just who is singing what.

Easy to Be Hard is easily the album's best track. Vicki Sue Robinson's vocal work is very, very good, the lush strings have bite and work well against the doubled beat, and there's engineering magic aplenty. Almost as good is *Where Do I Go?*, with an extended instrumental midsection just right for dreamy dancing. On the debit side, *Good Morning, Starshine* isn't disco at all but straight cha-cha-cha. This album is not the "Disco Spectacular" the jacket says it is, but the novel idea is well developed. It's a good record for um . . . Sunday afternoon dancing. *E.B.*

MADLEEN KANE: *Cheri*. Madleen Kane (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Forbidden Love/Fire in Your Heart*; *Secret Love Affair*; *Don't Leave Me Now*; and four others. WARNER BROS. BSK 3315 \$7.98, © M8 3315 \$7.98, © M5 3315 \$7.98.

Performance: **Half hit, half miss**
Recording: **Terrific**

The front cover of this album spells out "Madleen Kane" in great big letters, and the back sports no fewer than five affectionate snapshots of this dynamite blonde who looks like a combination of Cheryl Ladd and Britt Ekland. But the real star of this half wonderful dance record is the production team, which includes engineers, arrangers, and mixers who have been instrumental in the phenomenal development of disco. With all the expertise of Thor Baldursson, Jurgens Koppers, Jim Burgess, and others supporting Ms. Kane's vocalism, you'd think there'd be no way she could miss.

On side one she doesn't. The unbroken medley begins with Kane's very successful *Forbidden Love/Fire in Your Heart* pairing and ends with a smile-filled, arm-flailing delight called *Secret Love Affair*. It's recorded in a seamless style that calls for close back-up vocal harmonies and dramatic musical shifts that continually refresh the mood without breaking it. The ride-out picks up the opening theme, which returns like an old friend and makes for a satisfying dance trip indeed. As always with European engineering, the sound is bright, clear, and spacious.

I wish I could be as enthusiastic about the rest of the album, which spotlights Kane in a series of sappy ballads over-arranged for a back-up chorus worthy of Diana Ross and shot through with typical Europop electronic effects. There's one exception, a charming soft-shoe number, *Retro (I Long for Long Ago)*, all about Garbo, Chaplin, Monroe, and the good old days. The mood, the arrangement, and the voice match beautifully. But the rest is uninspired songs sung in an uninspired little-girl voice. As a plain singer of songs, Madleen Kane doesn't rise to anywhere near the heights she hits as a doer of disco. *E.B.*

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

EVERLYN "CHAMPAGNE" KING: *Music Box*. Evelyn "Champagne" King (vocals);

(Continued on page 102)

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Russell Elton Peir

Richard Tee: New Kind of Fusion

DURING his 1959 tour of England, Buddy Holly was asked by reporters what he thought of jazz, which they took for granted was America's national music. Holly grinned and said, "Oh, jazz is for the stay-at-homes."

He was right, of course. For thirty years jazz and jazz musicians have had the same problem: having lost a mass audience, how to regain it? In recent years, one attempt to solve the problem has been so-called "fusion" music, with jazz performers playing pop and rock tunes in search of a happy compromise. But most fusion has been unsuccessful, for a variety of reasons, the most common of which is that the musicians *weren't* happy compromising their styles. Established, bona-fide wall-bangers may feel their souls are being peddled like pizzas when they are called on to render a Barry Manilow hit in twelve tones (I think they've got a case).

Now, however, there is a new generation of musicians that is primarily interested in and committed to jazz but has grown up with pop and rock; its members are more amenable to compromise than their elders, provided the results have some integrity. At this point what's needed to make fusion really work is a *simpatico* record producer who understands both the demands of the marketplace and also, for lack of a better word, funk. By chance, two fusion albums featuring keyboardist Richard Tee have recently been released, both boasting knowledgeable producers. Listening to Tee's own "Strokin'" (Columbia/Tappan Zee) and Stuff's "Stuff It!" (Warner Bros.) gives a good idea of what happy compromises jazz *can* make to survive outside the realm of purists and, not so incidentally, bring the musicians some bread for their efforts.

When I first heard the Stuff album I was struck by how much it reminded me of Booker T. and the MGs circa 1968. There was the same laid-back, comfortable playing, the same kind of exchanges between keyboards and lead guitar, even a Stuff version of *Baby, Baby, Sweet Baby*, a cut on the MGs' "Soul Limbo" album (originally on Stax and reissued on the Fantasy label after it acquired the old Stax catalog). A quick look at the credits explained all: "Stuff It!" was produced by Steve Cropper, who was lead guitarist for the MGs. Richard Tee is cast here in the role of Booker T. Jones, and guitarists Cornell Dupree and Eric Gale are Cropper's stand-ins. Despite the now *de rigueur* horn section and FBC (Foxy Black Chicks) background vocals, "Stuff It!" fondly recalls the days when the MGs invented chamber rock.

"Strokin'," Tee's solo album (again with Gale and drummer Steve Gadd among the back-up musicians), was produced by Bob James. Unlike Cropper, James is an established jazz producer and himself a keyboardist; since his sympathies are with Tee he gives him his head. James has a more resolute approach to fusion than Cropper (he even includes disco boom-boom elements on this disc), but he is just as concerned with providing enough jazz to keep the players happy as with trying to please a wide pop audience. Not that Cropper doesn't keep *his* musicians happy too; the difference is that James aims for the feet and the head, whereas Cropper goes straight for the gut. James' approach is more clinical and intense, Cropper's more sensual.

Both albums have many satisfying moments. You'll find your own if you listen to them—and you should—but my preferences

on the Stuff LP are *Gordon's Theme*, which has the same opening as *Love Nest*, and *Do It Again*, with an infectious umpty-umph shuffle rhythm. On Tee's solo album the standouts are *Every Day*, by Tee and Bill Withers, *I Wanted It Too*, with a harmonica solo by ace session guitarist Hugh McCracken, and Tee's Arabian Nights version of Ellington's *Take the "A" Train*.

THESE are important albums, not only because they contain first-rate performances but also because their "club-date" style may help overcome the "stay-at-home" syndrome that has plagued jazz for too long. The fusion they represent may be able to return jazz to the mass audience it has so long missed and needed. Here's hoping.

—Joel Vance

STUFF: *Stuff It!* Richard Tee (keyboards); Cornell Dupree, Eric Gale (guitars); Steve Gadd, Chris Parker (drums); Gordon Edwards (bass); other musicians. *Mighty Love; Dance with Me; Since You've Been Gone (Baby, Baby, Sweet Baby); Always; Stuff It; Love Having You Around; Rainbows; Gordon's Theme; Talkin' About My Love for You; Do It Again.* WARNER BROS. BSK 3262 \$7.98, ® M8 3262 \$7.98, © M5 3262 \$7.98.

RICHARD TEE: *Strokin'*. Richard Tee (keyboards); Eric Gale (guitar); Steve Gadd (drums); Chuck Rainey (bass); Hugh McCracken (harmonica); Mike Brecker (saxophone); Tom Scott (lyricon); other musicians. *First Love; Every Day; Strokin'; I Wanted It Too; Virginia Sunday; Jesus Children of America; Take the "A" Train.* COLUMBIA/TAPPAN ZEE JC 35695 \$7.98, ® JCA 35695 \$7.98, © JCT 35695 \$7.98.

vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Step-pin' Out; I Think My Heart Is Telling; Music Box*; and five others. RCA AFL1-3033 \$7.98, © AFS1-3033 \$7.98, © AFK1-3033 \$7.98.

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

I like what Evelyn "Champagne" King does with a song, but I cannot imagine why she latched onto such an incongruous nickname. Instead of tickling the nose and creeping into one's sensibilities the way champagne does, she comes on with the heat-generating power of a double bourbon straight up. What she sings is quality disco in which the beat never covers up the content of the songs. And in this case, they happen to be better than aver-

age songs, conveying a sense of goodhearted night-time fun rather than the frantic pursuit of illusion so common to this genre. The title track sets the pace and tone for a set that will please even disco detractors. P.G.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

SYLVESTER: Stars. Sylvester (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *Stars; I (Who Have Nothing)*; and two others. FANTASY F-9579 \$7.98.

Performance: **Star-trip**
Recording: **Sensational**

First of all, I want to elevate a female trio called Hodges, James, and Smith to co-star

billing on this dynamite LP. (The group's own solo career seems to have become secondary to their excellent back-up work for other artists.) Sylvester has sense enough to use them brilliantly in both songs on side one, alternately pushing them front and center and taking the background for himself, then pulling them 'way, 'way back to harmonize with his own remarkable high tenor voice.

But that's only one of the good things about this record. The title song is a compendium of disco effects: crystal-clear sound, constant shifts in dynamics, soaring arrangements, and a driving, stomping finale to the repetition of "You are a star, you are a star." You feel like a star too, out there on the dance floor, and it feels wonderful.

Body Strong is shorter—too short, in fact—but it too is special. For example, there's a startling set of string chords suddenly introduced in the middle that sounds like something from the soundtrack of an epic Western. It's different, and it works. *I Need Somebody to Love Tonight* is a lesson in disco diversity. The lyric is delivered in a measured, ballad style, almost crooned; behind it the beat challenges, teases, and sweeps the dancer away as the arrangement gets more complex.

Not everything here is so successful, but you can still chalk up a big, big hit for an innovative and welcome new disco voice. E.B.

VILLAGE PEOPLE: Go West. Village People (vocals and instrumentals). *In the Navy; Get Away Holiday; Manhattan Woman*; and three others. CASABLANCA NBLP 7144 \$8.98, © NBL8 7144 \$8.98, © NBL5 7144 \$8.98.

Performance: **Awful**
Recording: **Okay**

Here are some more noisy, driving, unrelievedly monotonous arrangements from the Village People. And more monster hits. Some things you don't even try to explain.

Actually, once you wade through the familiar formula songs—such as *In the Navy, I Wanna Shake Your Hand*, and *Go West*, which has the People intoning more than usually dreadful lyrics—there is a pleasant surprise in this third Village People album. On *Citizens of the World* lead vocalist Victor Willis shows that he can do more than yell, and Jacques Morali shows that he can write real melodies for the group to sing. But it's the only bright spot in a simply awful album that shows no growth, no subtlety, no daring, and precious little of the gay good humor that made the People's debut at least a novelty. It's wearing off, boys. E.B.

RECOMMENDED DISCO HITS

● **CANDIDO: Dancin' & Prancin'.** SALSOL SA 8520 \$7.98, © S8 8520 \$7.98, © SC 8520 \$7.98.

● **VENUS DODSON: Night Rider.** RFC RCSD 8824 disco disc \$3.98.

● **AL HUDSON: Happy Feet.** MCA MCA-1136 \$7.98, © MCAT-1136 \$7.98, © MCAC-1136 \$7.98.

● **THE PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: Turn the Music Up.** VANGUARD VSD-79421 \$7.98, © 8V-79421 \$7.98, © CV-79421 \$7.98.

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(List compiled by John Harrison.)

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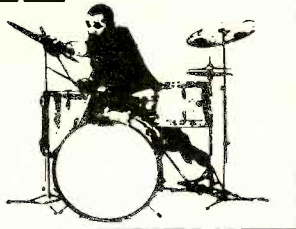
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JAZZ



CLIFFORD BROWN/MAX ROACH: *Live at the Bee Hive*. Clifford Brown (trumpet); Sonny Rollins, Nicky Hill (tenor saxophones); Billy Wallace (piano); Leo Blevins (guitar); George Morrow (bass); Max Roach (drums). *I'll Remember April; Cherokee; Woody'n' You*; and two others. COLUMBIA ® JG 35965 two discs \$9.98.

Performance: **Beggars can't be choosers, but . . .**

Recording: **For callous ears**

In this album we have one and a half hours of nonprofessionally recorded professional music made on the night of November 7, 1955, when Clifford Brown, Max Roach, and bassist George Morrow jammed at Chicago's Bee Hive club with saxophonist Sonny Rollins and three local musicians. The album contains some very fine music, but the sound is hard to take and I wish the material had been trimmed somewhat. Roach is credited with producing the album, and the trimming could have started with his own solos, the drums being particularly distorted by what sounds like a case of an excessively high recording level. A good example of a bad spot is the last nine minutes of *Cherokee*: it is one long, grating rumble of broken sounds through which one discerns (at times, barely) a guitar and drum solo capped by a fragmented ensemble close. If they issue recordings of this quality, the record companies should print a warning on the cover.

To sum it up, Clifford Brown devotees will not be disappointed by what he does here, but this album is only for the very dedicated jazz fan who has heard enough to know what these recordings would have sounded like if properly made. C.A.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

DON BYAS/BUD POWELL: *A Tribute to Cannonball*. Don Byas (tenor saxophone); Bud Powell (piano); Idrees Sulieman (trumpet); Pierre Michelot (bass); Kenny Clark (drums). *Just One of Those Things; Cherokee; Jackie My Little Cat; Good Bait*; and five others. COLUMBIA JC 35755 \$7.98, ® JCA 35755 \$7.98, © JCT 35755 \$7.98.

Performance: **Treasureable**

Recording: **Very good**

In 1946, Don Redman's band gave European audiences their first postwar taste of live American jazz. One of the stars of that orchestra was tenor saxophonist Don Byas, and I still remember the thrill of hearing him play *How High the Moon* on a September night in Copenhagen's KB Hall. He could not have had a more receptive audience, which may be why he chose to remain in Europe rather than return with Redman.

This album was recorded in Paris in December 1961 under the supervision of Cannonball

Adderley, who would have thought the title quite inappropriate. Cannonball was very much aware of his roots; this album was his tribute to Byas and Powell, and a fine tribute it is.

Though pianist Bud Powell's mental illness often devastatingly affected his playing, he was, happily, in good form for these recordings. But it is Byas who really shines. A veteran of the Andy Kirk, Lucky Millinder, and Count Basie bands, he was steeped in the swing tradition, but he had an open mind and a keen interest in bop, which had led him to an association with Dizzy Gillespie before joining Redman for the European tour. Here, against a solidly swinging background and with boppish support from Sulieman, Byas' smooth, full-bodied horn runs effortlessly through a varied repertoire. A fine balladeer, he sails through Hampton Hawes' *Jackie* and Benny Golson's *I Remember Clifford*. Of the faster numbers, the most outstanding is *Cherokee*, the old Ray Noble tune that became a major vehicle for bebop exhibitionists; Byas' *Cherokee* is a tour de force that reminds us how versatile a musician this swing veteran was. C.A.

LORRAINE FEATHER: *Sweet Lorraine*. Lorraine Feather (vocals); Scott Hamilton (tenor saxophone); Ted Nash (saxophone, flute); other musicians. *Skylark; Wave; Four; All Blues; Moondance*; and five others. CONCORD JAZZ CJ-78 \$7.98.

Performance: **Expert**

Recording: **Good**

Here is Lorraine Feather, daughter of famed jazz critic and writer Leonard Feather, in an expert, stylish recital. It's all sharp, snappy, glossy stuff, and Ms. Feather is on her toes throughout. She sings with a clear-voiced musicianship in that almost letter/note-perfect international style that has inevitably developed since American jazz roots were so successfully transplanted after World War II. Although Lorraine Feather can boast Billie Holiday as her godmother, the influences she seems to reflect most are Annie Ross and Cleo Laine—two not bad influences when you come to think of it. Her most glittering work here is on *Skylark*, but perhaps her best is *Deep in the Night*, in which she lets fly with a broadside emotional performance that's uncharacteristically compelling. There's still something very much of the jazz debutante about her, but I think that once she peels the white gloves off and gets down to it she'll be a very interesting singer indeed. P.R.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

CHICO FREEMAN: *Beyond the Rain*. Chico Freeman (flute, tenor saxophone); Hilton Ruiz (piano); Junieeh Booth (bass); Elvin Jones (drums); Jumma Santos (percussion). *Two over One; Excerpts; My One and Only Love*; and two others. CONTEMPORARY S7640 \$7.98.

Performance: **Excellent**

Recording: **Very good**

Chicago-born saxophonist Chico Freeman has worked with such vocal groups as the Isley Brothers and the Chi-lites, and with fellow members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), a musicians' cooperative based in his home town. Such wide-ranging experience has given Free-



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man scope, but that would have little meaning to him as a musician if he did not also have good command of his instruments. He has. His style can be funky, florid, or free-form; it doesn't seem to matter to him.

"Beyond the Rain" was recorded two summers ago for the Contemporary label, the future of which was in doubt following the death of owner Lester Koenig (who co-produced this album with his son). It is artistically a very successful set and most appropriate for inclusion in the première release by this born-again jazz label. Let's hope Contemporary will be able to continue and to thrive under its new leadership.

Two of the tracks—*Two over One* and *Excerpts*—are compositions by pianist Muhal

Richard Abrams, a co-founder of AACM whose teaching profoundly influenced Freeman's musical thinking and, one supposes, direction. Freeman plays them both with ominous sonority, injecting Coltrane-ish curlicues here and there but staying on his own path. *Beyond the Rain* and *Pepe's Samba* are Freeman's own compositions, quite different from each other in both mood and texture. *Rain* is a delicate, gentle excursion for flute; *Pepe's* brings back the tenor in yet another role that develops from hard bop to something that borders on hard-to-take, but what in lesser hands could become a tonal wilderness makes perfect sense when Freeman is in charge. And if you don't think this man knows the ground rules, listen to *My One and*

Only Love; Freeman's ballad style can make you blush.

Except for pianist Hilton Ruiz, whose Tyn-erish tinkles leave me cold, the rhythm section is hot. Bassist Juieneh Booth is delightfully prominent throughout; Elvin Jones is, well, Elvin Jones, thank goodness; and percussionist Jumma Santos keeps up with Jones, which is no mean feat. C.A.

HUBERT LAWS: *Land of Passion* (see Best of the Month, page 78)

ABBEY LINCOLN: *People in Me*. Abbey Lincoln (vocals); David Liebman (flute, soprano and tenor saxophones); Hiromasa Suzuki (piano); Kunimitsu Inaba (bass); Al Foster (drums); James Mtume (conga). *Living Room; You and Me Love; Africa; Kohjoh-No-Tsuki*; and four others. INNER CITY IC 6040 \$7.98.

Performance: **Honest, overdue Abbey**
Recording: **Very good**

This is the closest we have come to having a new Abbey Lincoln album since the very early Sixties, when she went from the Riverside label to Candid, but "People in Me" is not really new—it was recorded during a trip to Japan in the summer of 1973. She appears regularly in Los Angeles and San Francisco clubs, but she remains unrecorded in this country. Perhaps that is to be expected in a society that often treats mediocrity as art and art as something prestigious but boring and unmarketable. "People in Me" is neither mediocre nor boring.

Ms. Lincoln either wrote or had a hand in writing all eight songs in this album. Her lyrics, which are printed on the inside cover, speak of such things as love, national/racial heritage, and woman's vanity. Some are humorous, some naive, and others are enigmatic—not your run-of-the-mill you-are-the-pastry-of-my-life variety, but not near-poetry either. Very much on the plus side are *You and Me, Love and Living Room* (the latter a collaboration with former husband Max Roach), and, for its whimsy, *Naturally* also gets a few merits. I don't know what *Natas* is all about (the clue might be in the reverse spelling), and I care least for it because the double-tracked vocal is so much out of sync. I would have liked John Coltrane's *Africa* better if the lyrics hadn't been so naive and if there had been less screaming at the end. But I am really nit-picking now. This is a good album by a singer who rises above her material but could go even higher. C.A.

THELONIOUS MONK: *Always Know*. Thelonious Monk (piano); Thad Jones (trumpet); Charlie Rouse (tenor saxophone); Phil Woods (alto saxophone); Steve Lacy (soprano saxophone); others. *East Street; Monk's Dream; Epistrophy; Bye-Ya; Honeysuckle Rose; Played Twice; Criss Cross; Introspection*; and five others. COLUMBIA JG 35720 two discs \$9.98, ® JGA 35720 \$9.98, © JGT 35720 \$9.98.

Performance: **Scavenger hunt**
Recording: **Very good**

Columbia's recently launched Contemporary Masters Series sounds like a great idea whose time actually came long before the first releases hit the country's record bins, but, unfortunately, not everything on the first releases sounds as good as the concept that fostered them. We can't expect every record to



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ABBEY LINCOLN
Humorous, naive, enigmatic

be a winner, but, in their zeal to fill the series with the household names of jazz, the reissue producers have scraped the vaults to bring us what the original producer (Teo Macero) and, presumably, the artist(s), themselves thought we should *not* hear.

In this Monk release, as in the Mingus set, edited parts have been restored to previously issued selections, but reissue producer Terry Adams (pianist with the group NRBQ) has also included some material that was originally rejected in its entirety. *Shuffle Boil* falls into the latter category and also all but falls apart as it offers the album's strongest case for destroying poor performances on the spot; Adams admits, in his notes, that *Shuffle* is "slightly out of control" and suggests that we "in all fairness" check out the version released on "It's Monk's Time." Isn't it a bit late to be talking about fairness? *Honeysuckle Rose* fades in on Charlie Rouse's tenor solo and fizzles out to Ben Riley's drums; it was recorded at two o'clock on a November morning in 1964—a throwaway that should have been. The opening track, *This Is My Story, This Is My Song*, is actually *Blessed Assurance*, an old hymn which Monk plays unaccompanied and in such a fumbling, faltering way that had it been anyone else at that keyboard, it would never have been preserved, much less issued.

I don't want to sound *too* negative, for "Always Know" also has some good and interesting tracks, such as *Criss Cross* from the 1963 Newport Jazz Festival. But this is not an album of which Monk can be proud, nor should we hold it against him. This is not the first time an artist has become the victim of record-company insensitivity, and the only way such practices can be stopped is for artists to demand that unissued material be destroyed or, better, turned over to them. C.A.

CARRIE SMITH. Carrie Smith (vocals); Budd Johnson (tenor saxophone); Art Farmer (flugelhorn); other musicians. *Memories of You; Lush Life; Just Friends; If It's Magic;* and three others. WEST 54 WLW 8002 \$7.98.

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

One of the best and unfortunately one of the least-known jazz singers in the business, Carrie Smith trades in her usual broad and bluesy

style in this album for a much more introspective, intimate approach, and the results are impressive. The lady obviously knows her craft, and she practices it with the nonchalance of a shoplifter at a charity bazaar for the blind. The problem is that the style she's chosen to lift is twenty-five to thirty years old, an amalgam of Sarah Vaughan, Dinah Washington, and Someone Else. The Someone Else is probably Ms. Smith herself, since she's been in the business too for quite a while. Excellence abounds here in such things as a really wonderful reading of Eubie Blake's *Memories of You*, a slippery and slightly caustic *Lush Life*, and a virtuoso *What a Little Moonlight Can Do*. It's all enormously entertaining. P.R.

JOE TURNER: *Everyday I Have the Blues.* Joe Turner (vocals); Sonny Stitt (alto and tenor saxophones); Pee Wee Crayton (guitar); rhythm section. *Lucille; Stormy Monday; Shake, Rattle and Roll;* and three others. PABLO 2310 818 \$8.98.

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

How Sonny Stitt ever got railroaded into participating in this blues session is something I will never understand. I hope he isn't that desperate for work. Now, I know Joe Turner has a healthy following and that critics have been known to treat his singing as art, but I'm going to tell it like it is: Turner sounds like someone who has had one too many. The band? Lethargy is its name. The drummer? Plays like a critic. The repertoire? Something Turner has on the tape loop of his mind. The record? I don't like it. C.A.

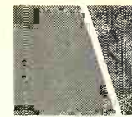
WARREN VACHÉ: *Jillian.* Warren Vaché (coronet, flugelhorn); Marshal Royal (alto saxophone); Nat Pierce (piano); Cal Collins (guitar); Phil Flanigan (bass); Jake Hanna (drums). *Love Locked Out; Too Close for Comfort; 'S Wonderful; It's You or No One; More Than You Know;* and five others. CONCORD JAZZ CJ-87 \$7.98.

Performance: **Dessert**
Recording: **Excellent**

If you are aware of the purity and general excellence that has become the hallmark of the no-longer-so-little Concord Jazz label, and if the music of any two of these six men has nudged your ears on other occasions, you already know that "Jillian" is a generous serving of smooth, easy conversation on a feathery swing bed.

Warren Vaché—who has played on more than one occasion with tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton—does not have an instantly recognizable style, but he's still in his twenties, so give him time for that. But he *does* have a well-oiled imagination and what it takes to translate that into well-constructed, fluent trumpet playing. Marshal Royal (who spelled his first name with two l's when he was with the bands of Louis Armstrong, Lionel Hampton, and Count Basie years ago) is heard only on *I Only Have Eyes for You* and *Little White Lies*, but both appearances are to everybody's advantage. The rhythm section, with Nat Pierce leading it on all but one selection, is appropriately bouncy. This is middle-of-the-road jazz (some would call it mainstream) of the highest, if not the most original, order. C.A.

(Continued overleaf)



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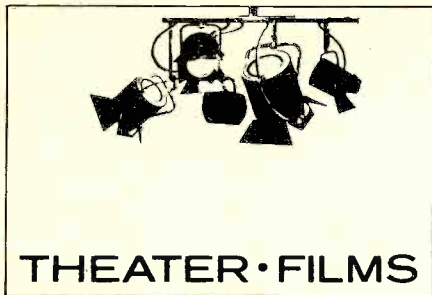
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ALIEN. Original-soundtrack recording. National Philharmonic Orchestra, Lionel Newman cond. 20TH CENTURY-FOX T-593 \$7.98, © 8-593 \$7.98, © C-593 \$7.98.

Performance: **Shuddery**
Recording: **Excellent**

One's reaction to *Alien* may well depend on one's tolerance for pornography. Ostensibly a big-budget, sophisticated update of the Bug Eyed Monster school of Fifties sci-fi flicks, in reality *Alien* is an all-out sensory assault that has no other purpose than to send you trembling out of the theater. It succeeds in this light years beyond anything else in the history of film: *Night of the Living Dead* seems like *You Light Up My Life* in comparison. The question, of course, is at what point being scared to death stops being fun.

Jerry Goldsmith's score wisely does not attempt to compete with the visuals for the audience's attention, but it is nevertheless a better-than-average bit of mood mongering in a vaguely modernist (*à la* the Stravinsky of *Le Sacre*) idiom, unobtrusive but creepy. It's not the kind of thing you'll want to play all the way through while you're knitting, but when I heard it alone in my living room one night, it conjured up enough of the film's unspeakable Lovecraftian horrors to make me queasy all over again. Some souvenir! S.S.

BALLROOM (Billy Goldenberg–Alan Bergman–Marilyn Bergman). Original-cast recording. Dorothy Loudon, Vincent Gardenia, others (vocals); orchestra, Don Jennings cond. COLUMBIA JS 35762 \$8.98, © JSA 35762 \$8.98, © JST 35762 \$8.98.

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

Ballroom was a musical that came to Broadway by way of television. A screenwriter named Jerome Kass had gone home to the Bronx to attend his mother's funeral, where he learned that for years she had been a regular customer at a dance hall in the Bronx, had been carrying on a secret love affair, and was once elected queen-for-a-year at the hall where she did her dancing. This led him to write *Queen of the Stardust Ballroom*, starring Maureen Stapleton and Charles Durning on CBS-TV, which was expanded and produced as *Ballroom* by Michael (A Chorus Line) Bennett at the Majestic on Broadway. But *Ballroom* turned out not to be another A Chorus Line. Critic Brendan Gill found it "dreary," and, judging from the original-cast recording, he had the right adjective.

The story of Bronx widow Bea Asher, who seeks escape at the Stardust Ballroom from the pain of bereavement, is enveloped in pseudo-Twenties fox-trots, waltzes, and tangos that are not only pastiches but particularly pallid ones. As Bea, the tremendously talent-

ed Dorothy Loudon finds small outlet for her comic prowess in numbers like *A Terrific Band* and *a Real Nice Crowd*, or even *Fifty Percent*, in which she rhapsodizes on the merits of compromise in affairs of the heart, or *I Wish You a Waltz*, the shamelessly sentimental finale. Vincent Gardenia plays the mailman Al Rossi, whom Bea meets at the Ballroom. A fine actor but no singer, he is heard in only one duet—which is just as well. The major part of the singing is left to Lynn Roberts and Bernie Knee as the ballroom vocalists, whose mediocrity they matchlessly embody. A tepid bath of musical nostalgia. P.K.

WHOOPEE. (Gus Kahn–Walter Donaldson). Archival reconstruction of the 1928 Ziegfeld production. Eddie Cantor, Ruth Etting (vocals); the Victor Light Opera Company; various orchestras and instrumental groups. SMITHSONIAN COLLECTION © DRM1-0349 \$6.99 (plus \$1.49 postage and handling from Smithsonian Recordings, P.O. Box 10230, Des Moines, Iowa 50336).

Performance: **Fun**
Recording: **Ingenious**

Half a century after its legendary success on the Broadway stage, *Whoopie* returned to Broadway in February 1979. The production at the ANTA, with Charles Repole as the comic hypochondriac once played by Eddie Cantor, has not yielded up an original-cast recording as of this writing, but the Smithsonian Institution has put together "an archival reconstruction" with notes by Stanley Green that are detailed enough to make it possible for the listener to restage his own.

Whoopie, with songs mostly by composer Gus Kahn and lyricist Walter Donaldson, was based on a play called *The Nervous Wreck* and was brought to Broadway in grand style in 1928 by Florenz Ziegfeld, who worried himself sick that the show would fail and kept making last-minute cast changes. But when the show opened, there was Eddie Cantor leaping about and rolling his banjo eyes in the role of the illness-prone Easterner Henry Williams who has come out to the Mission Rest in Southern California for his health; Ruth Etting as a movie star who sings torch songs between scenes; a complex plot about an Indian named Wanenis in love with a white girl named Sally, to the consternation of her wealthy father; gypsies making a movie on location; a suspicious sheriff, and . . . never mind. All that really matters about *Whoopie* is the songs, and you can hear those on the record to your heart's content: Cantor singing *Makin' Whoopie*, all six thousand stanzas of it, and the *Automobile Horn Song*, and *Hungry Women*, and *I Faw Down and Go Boom*; Etting, in her brokenhearted alto, ready to break yours with *Love Me or Leave*, *My Blackbirds Are Bluebirds Now*, and *I'm Bringing a Red, Red Rose*; George Olsen and his vocal quartet (they were on stage in the original) cranking out *Until You Get Somebody Else and Come West*, *Little Girl, Come West*; the Victor Light Opera Company offering the *Gypsy Song*; Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra (they played in the pit for a while during the original run) reprising Cantor's showstopper, plus a couple of other odds and ends, a few dull, some repetitious, but all deftly pieced together from old masters by intrepid engineers. Musicals in those days didn't make much sense at all, but they were fun, and so is this record. P.K.



BOYS OF THE LOUGH: Wish You Were Here. Boys of the Lough (vocals and instrumentals). *The Barmaid; The Larks March; The Red Haired Man's Wife; On Board of the Victory; The Resting Chair/Leaving Glenurquhart/The Fairy Dance; The Glasgow Police Pipers/The Curlew*; and six others. FLYING FISH FF-070 \$7.98, © FLF 8359-070 (H) \$7.98, © FLF 5359-070 (H) \$7.98.

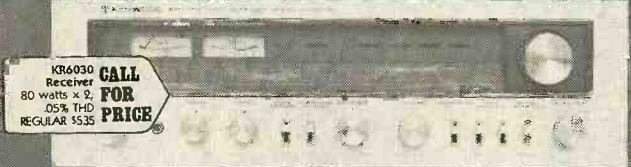
Performance: **Sprightly**
Recording: **Very good**

The media claim that the Scottish people demand a musical diet of schmaltz, the Boys of the Lough say in their liner notes here, adding that 'taint so. This was recorded during the highlands and islands tour of Scotland they make every August, and it contains more Irish than Scottish music, probably because the former is livelier. The Boy of the Lough who is best known in America, Aly Bain the fiddler, propels much of the album, and his solo spot is the focal point here, as it is of the Boys' concerts. The music, as usual, is traditional Scottish-Irish, precursor to bluegrass, acoustic-raspy, and all that, but this particular band plays it without dogmatic stiffness and yet without much compromising. The selections include some originals and some reworking of traditionals, and, while it is a little heavy on jigs, there's real music in it, in addition to the folk process in action. N.C.

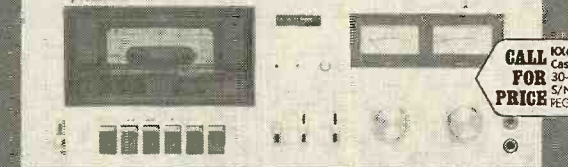
THE CHIEFTAINS: 8. The Chieftains (instrumentals). *The Session; Dr. John Hart; Sean Sa Chio; The Fairies' Hornpipe; Sea Image; If I Had Maggie in the Wood*; and five others. COLUMBIA JC 35726 \$7.98, © JCA 35726 \$7.98, © JCT 35726 \$7.98.

Performance: **Endearing**
Recording: **Excellent**

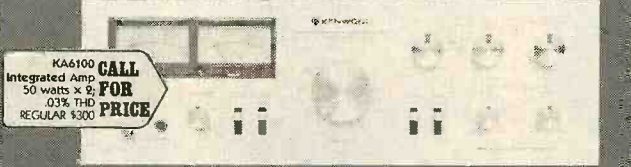
The Chieftains have made so many albums that they finally ran out of titles; they called their last record "7" and this one is "8." But who's counting? As always these players, as indomitable a group of middle-aged instrumentalists as you're likely to find in the whole of Eire, are irresistible as they toot on their uilleann pipes and flutes and tin whistles, pluck their "neo-Irish" and medieval harps, and scrape their fiddles to the tunes of jigs, reels, strathspeys, hornpipes, and polkas—with some slow airs so you can catch your breath between the energetic outbursts. There's also a tone poem this time, called *Sea Image*, in which the pipes and fiddles evoke "the vast expanses of water surrounding the Gaels," Kevin Conneff's bodhrán suggests a "giant breaker," and the music moves out on a voyage to "new fishing pastures." Then a storm builds and something unspeakable happens to one of the boats. All ends happily, though, with a double jig called *The Rolling Wave*. P.K.



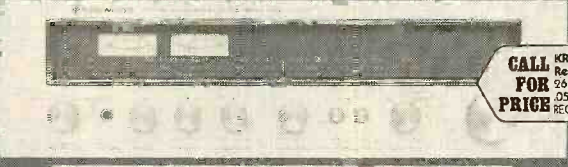
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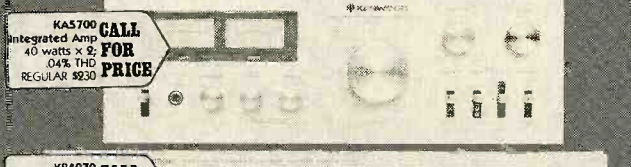
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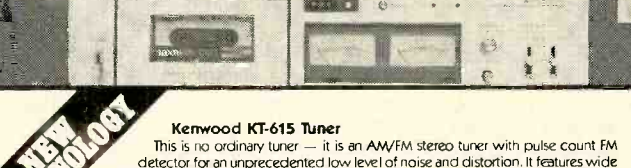
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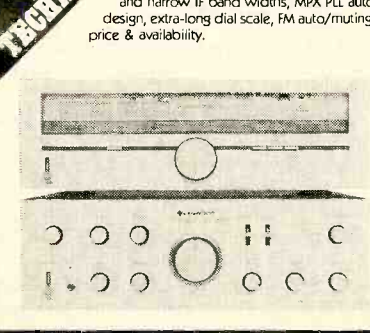
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RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BEETHOVEN: *Piano Concerto No. 5, in E-flat Major, Op. 73.* Alicia de Larrocha (piano); Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Zubin Mehta cond. LONDON CS 7121 \$8.98.

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

As might be expected, Alicia de Larrocha's interpretation of the Beethoven *Emperor* is no routine affair. Together with Zubin Mehta and the Los Angeles players, she achieves here a remarkable balance between the proto-Lisztian elements in the concerto and its more essentially Beethovenian qualities. The very opening provides a striking case in point: instead of overwhelming the listener with cascades of piano sound, Larrocha gives the opening cadenza a feeling of inspired improvisation. Throughout the first movement, her phrasing is extraordinarily free, yet wholly within the bounds of the musical notation and its grand architectural framework. In short, this is a remarkable exhibition of classical rubato at its finest, and the result is altogether persuasive. The adagio becomes a reverie of touching serenity, marked by the most subtle of dynamic gradations. To the finale Larrocha brings a marvelously light touch, great zest, and a dazzling command of the tricky figurative that dominates the middle and later episodes of the movement.

Explanation of symbols:

- Ⓜ = open-reel stereo tape
- Ⓢ = eight-track stereo cartridge
- Ⓒ = stereo cassette
- Ⓛ = quadraphonic disc
- Ⓛ = digital-master recording
- Ⓛ = direct-to-disc recording

Monophonic recordings are indicated by the symbol Ⓜ

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

Mehta provides an orchestral backing that is rich in detail and full in texture, and the London engineering staff has captured it admirably with a fairly close microphone setup. Of the two dozen or so *Emperor* Concerto performances currently in Schwann, this one ranks among the top five. *D.H.*

BOULEZ: *Second Sonata for Piano.* WEBER: *Variations for Piano, Op. 27.* Maurizio Pollini (piano). DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530 803 \$8.98.

Performance: **Grand style**
Recording: **Warm**

BOULEZ: *Second Sonata for Piano.* KRENEK: *Piano Sonata No. 4.* David Burge (piano). MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY MHS 3874 \$5.20 (plus \$1.25 postage and handling from the Musical Heritage Society, Inc., 14 Park Road, Tinton Falls, N.J. 07724).

Performance: **Strong, modern**
Recording: **Artificial-sounding**

Pierre Boulez wrote his *Second Sonata* in 1948 at the age of twenty-three. It is a big forty-minute twelve-tone piece which is at once an homage to and an attack on his forebears. Schoenberg is everywhere—the same Schoenberg whom Boulez was to attack in a famous/infamous article entitled “Schoenberg Is Dead” (later, of course, Boulez became one of Schoenberg's leading interpreters). The *Second Sonata* is one of the last works Boulez wrote in which he showed respect for traditional form, though it is most often a very disrespectful kind of respect. There is the requisite slow-movement/scherzo/finale sonata arrangement, but actually Boulez is busy blowing these forms up from the inside.

These are rather contrasting performances. Maurizio Pollini plays in a big traditional style that has the curious effect of making the sonata sound like crazy, exploding, iconoclastic music. David Burge plays it without any encumbrance from tradition at all, and it emerges quite clearly and expressively—abstract-expressively, to be sure.

The choice between Pollini and Burge may

depend on the companion pieces. Pollini effectively plays the Webern, brief, pure, intense, as a short introduction to the Boulez. The more unusual Krenek (more music for the money) is a rather gentle lyric work, fresh and appealing in an attractive modernistic style and very well played here. If the deciding factor is piano sound, however, Pollini wins out: the DG sound is rich and clear; the MHS sound is acceptable but somewhat artificial in quality. *E.S.*

BRAHMS: *Alto Rhapsody, Op. 53; Tragic Overture, Op. 81; Variations on a Theme by Haydn, Op. 56a.* Shirley Verrett (alto, in Rhapsody); men of the Temple University Choirs (in Rhapsody); Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy cond. RCA ARL-3001 \$7.98, © ARK1-3001 \$7.98.

Performance: **Heavy**
Recording: **Okay**

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BRAHMS: *Variations on a Theme of Haydn, Op. 56a; Tragic Overture, Op. 81; Alto Rhapsody, Op. 53.* Christa Ludwig (alto, in Rhapsody); Vienna Singverein (in Rhapsody); Vienna Philharmonic, Karl Böhm cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2536 396 \$8.98, © 3336 396 \$8.98.

Performance: **Affecting**
Recording: **Excellent**

Here is the same trio of Brahms works in two different recordings, of which I am going to recommend the second. I love Shirley Verrett's singing in the *Alto Rhapsody*, but I found Ormandy's accompaniment heavy in both the *Rhapsody* and the *Tragic Overture*. The Haydn *Variations* (should we call them the “Pleyel *Variations*” if the theme is not by Haydn?) are nicer, though I was going to complain about the non-*vivace* qualities of Ormandy's Sixth Variation until I heard Böhm's *moderato molto* in the same music. Nevertheless, Böhm's Haydn *Variations* are much the more interesting, and the Vienna Philharmonic's performances of all three works are richer, more inflected, more thoughtful, and more

dramatic. Ormandy sets the stage for his Brahmsian tragedy as though the characters were all dead before the performance started; Böhm involves us in the nobility and the humanity of the events. Böhm does the same for the Rhapsody, which Christa Ludwig sings in a most personal and affecting way—the only way to sing it. Moreover, DG has done a beautiful recording and production job. E.S.

BRITTEN: *Nocturnal, Op. 70* (see Collections—Kazuhito Yamashita)

BRITTEN: *Peter Grimes* (see Best of the Month, page 76)

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

BRUCKNER: *Symphony No. 6, in A Major*. Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Daniel Barenboim cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2531 043 \$8.98.

Performance: **Very fine**
Recording: **First-rate**

The Sixth remains the least popular of the mature Bruckner symphonies, perhaps because it is somewhat atypical in style compared with the grandiose tonal vistas of Nos. 4, 5, 7, and 9. But if one has experienced the essential geniality and zest of Nos. "0," 1, and 2, it is not difficult to cherish No. 6, at least after hearing it in a first-rate performance. Daniel Barenboim and the Chicago Symphony have come closest on records to giving us such a first-rate performance. There is a fine fierceness and tension in the opening movement, a most effective contrast in the slow movement between the bleakness of the opening and the serenity of the close, and a scherzo that has great dash in the end sections and is totally beguiling in the trio episodes. If the finale lacks the cohesiveness that Otto Klemperer gave it in his now-deleted Angel recording, that is a minor blemish on an interpretive achievement that does much to help us experience Bruckner whole. D.H.

BUSONI: *Six Sonatinas for Piano*. Paul Jacobs (piano). NONESUCH H-71359 \$4.96.

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

Ferruccio Busoni's six sonatinas, written between 1910 and 1920, are no small-scale student works; they are substantial and fascinating creations. Everything about Busoni is difficult to pigeonhole, and the sonatinas are no exceptions. He was so much the intellectual champion of modernism that it is always a shock to discover that most of his music is so squarely in the late-Romantic tradition. This is true of the sonatinas, but, more than most of Busoni's work, they also incorporate a great deal of the new century—from Impressionism to Expressionism to neo-Classicism.

The quality of Paul Jacobs' playing is most obvious in the Sixth Sonatina, which is a fantasy on *Carmen*—a kind of semi-serious and wonderfully dramatic capstone to the grand old tradition of virtuoso arrangements. Jacobs, far better known as a modern-music pianist than for old-fashioned virtuosity, does very well in making this sonatina extraordinarily persuasive. In the more "serious" works, his playing, although less obviously flashy, is just as impressive. E.S.

(Continued overleaf)



Something A Bit Odd About Berners

GERALD TYRWHITT-WILSON (1883-1950), the fourteenth Baron Berners, was a diplomat, a collector, a writer, a painter, and, most important, a composer (Stravinsky called him "the best twentieth-century English composer"). He was also, not incidentally, one of the great eccentrics of his time. Eccentrics take root in the social soil of England, where they provide living examples of the rights of the individual. There's also, of course, a deep national suspicion that there's something just a bit odd about any sort of creative work. As Lord Berners shrewdly commented in one of his novels, "... in Anglo-Saxon countries, art is more highly appreciated if accompanied by a certain measure of eccentric publicity."

In Berners' case, the publicity came by the barrel full. Between the wars, Berners' bizarre lifestyle became as familiar to readers of the British popular press as that of any movie star then or rock singer today. At his country house, Faringdon, he built Faringdon Folly, a hundred-and-forty-foot tower capped by an enormous octagonal lantern, and at the entrance posted this notice: "Members of the Public Committing Suicide from This Tower Do So at Their Own Risk." Pigeons dyed in several colors flew over the estate, and whippets with diamond collars darted across the grounds. Berners' Rolls-Royce had a spinet piano in it, and he had an idiot mask, designed for him by Oliver Messel, through which he peered at passers-by. And virtual parades of famous guests did pass by at Faringdon and Berners' other houses in London and Rome, where all that went on was avidly reported to a public that had probably never heard a note of his music.

Berners' music, however, is now ours to hear on a new Unicorn release, "A Portrait of Lord Berners," that includes wonderful performances of thirteen of his songs and piano pieces. These are often teasing comments on the drearily conventional, cliché-strewn "se-

rious" music produced during the first half of this century, German and French particularly, and it is the kind of spontaneous, truthful satire that carries a weight well beyond that of its objects. For instance, Berners takes a whack at Germanic sentimentality in three songs "in the German manner" on texts by Heine. The first of these, *Du Bist Wie eine Blume*, exploits Berners' discovery that its inspiration was not, as previous composers who set it had assumed, that blue-eyed, golden-haired maiden who slogs through the lieder repertoire like an invincible bill collector, but rather a pig—a white pig. "Thou art like a flower" indeed! Berners' use of dissonant, staccato chords in the accompaniment adds just that tinge of swinish grunting I've often been tempted to provide at lieder recitals myself. In three songs on texts by Georges Jean-Aubry, on the other hand, Berners emphasizes the glacial elegance and bitter sophistication that characterize so much of French intellectual life.

The three-part *Valses Bourgeoises* is a Franco-German mélange that seems intended to destroy the waltz as a musical form. The opening *Valse Brillante* is a devastating swipe at the brilliant French manner that Ravel brought to its apotheosis in his suavely glamorous (and safely decadent) *La Valse*. *Valse Caprice* is a perverse little gem that in the end seems to cannibalize itself right before your ears. And *Strauss, Strauss et Straus* is a dubious tribute to Johann, Richard, and Oscar that reminds me of Margot Asquith's remark to H. G. Wells, "I expect that you go to *The Mikado* a lot."

LORD BERNERS' unique music is just as delightful when he turns away from foreign sources, as in the music-hall rowdiness of *Come On Algernon*, so English you can almost smell the chips; the funny, poignant *Le Poisson d'Or*, a piano piece prefaced by his own poem about a lonely goldfish; and the utterly hilarious *A Long Time Ago*, the last of his three sea chantes. There can be little doubt that Berners was a composer of great talent, though how an individual reacts to his strange mixture of art and parody is a personal matter. Perhaps his work, and his attitude toward it and life in general, is best summed up in the epitaph he wrote for himself:

Here lies Lord Berners,
One of the learners.
His great love of learning
May earn him a burning.
But praise to the Lord
He never was bored!

Nor will you be by this lovely, funny album.

—Peter Reilly

BERNERS: *Songs and Piano Music*. Polka; *Lieder Album—Three Songs in the German Manner; Fragments Psychologiques; Dialogue Between Tom Filuter and His Man, by Ned the Dog Stealer; Three Songs; Le Poisson d'Or; Red Roses and Red Noses; Trois Petites Marches Funèbres; Trois Chansons; Valses Bourgeoises; Dispute Entre le Papillon et le Crapaud; Three Sea Shanties; Come On Algernon*. Meriel Dickinson (mezzo-soprano); Bernard Dickerson (tenor); Peter Dickinson, Susan Bradshaw, Richard Rodney Bennett (pianos). UNICORN UNI-75029 \$8.98.

LISTENERS accustomed to a virtuosic, richly characterized brand of Beethoven symphony performance—be it Karajan's or Solti's or even Toscanini's—may be disappointed in Lorin Maazel's new cycle with the Cleveland Orchestra on Columbia. The reason is not, I hasten to explain, that the Cleveland Orchestra is today anything less than a first-class ensemble; it's every bit as disciplined and precise as it was in the Szell era. It's just that Maazel's view of Beethoven is relatively neutral and uncolored, and his readings are not exactly brimming with the big, resonant, emotional climaxes many of us have come to expect in the Third, Fifth, Seventh, and Ninth, or with the good humor one might associate with the other five. Maazel isn't inclined toward potent dramatic emphases; throughout the set things proceed in an efficient, evenhanded manner. Perhaps as a result, the orchestra sounds somewhat attenuated. The violins and violas have a lean, fluid sound, but there's little generosity in their tone. The lower strings haven't much body or spatial focus, merely lurking as a sort of presence in the right channel. The winds generally seem thin, seldom being allowed really to blossom, and the brass sections play quite alertly but have none of the splendor of, say, their Chicago or Berlin counterparts.

Nonetheless, at its best, Maazel's Beethoven is very refreshing indeed. The Fifth Symphony and the *Pastoral* are the set's triumphs—insightful, original performances that should go close to the top in any Beethoven discography. Both shine like newly buffed silver, and I'd even venture to say that in terms of clearing away preconceptions Maazel's Fifth is the most important since Carlos Kleiber's. Just as the ferocity of Kleiber's recording caused many people to reassess this overly familiar symphony (a function of music-making not to be overlooked), Maazel's rational temper and sense of classical proportion place it in another new perspective. For example, Maazel lends an untypical character of restraint to the first movement, but, remarkably, with no loss of dramatic tension or muscularity; his circumspection actually seems to reveal hitherto unexplored aspects of Beethoven's music. It's an ideally Apollonian Fifth, aristocratic and thoughtful.

Similarly, Maazel's Sixth is substantially less outgoing than the norm. There's a kind of transparent sensuousness to it, though the



Cleveland Orchestra

Maazel's Beethoven

view is an essentially unsentimental one. The first movement isn't a stroll but a brisk, bracing walk, rhythmically alert and lithe. The violins in the second movement sound as bright as sunlight, and when the storm breaks it isn't needlessly wild; Maazel's thunderbolts shed more light than heat. This is the most clear-headed, finely articulated *Pastoral* I've ever heard—a treasure breath of clean country air.

THE first three movements of the Ninth here are quite splendid, with a display of orchestral virtuosity on a par with Chicago or Berlin. But things go wrong in the finale, which is vocally rather top-heavy. Lucia Popp, Elena Obraztsova, Jon Vickers, and Martti Talvela are, of course, marvelous singers with an abundance of vocal horsepower, but here they seem too much of a good thing. When all four are going full blast, they just about cover the orchestra and swallow Schiller's text whole. It seems to me poor judgment to highlight the vocal quartet so vividly; a more realistic balance would have made the finale as

musically satisfying as the other movements.

Though noticeably short on wit and vivaciousness, the performances of the Second and Eighth Symphonies are still both excellent. The Second gets big, topflight orchestral playing that achieves great articulation and agility while sacrificing nothing in weight of sound. The Eighth is likewise trim and quick, with just enough presence to make an appropriate impression (such as in the taut first-movement development).

The *Eroica* and the Seventh are severe disappointments. The former is a "heroic" symphony with little passion, power, or color, an emasculated, sanitized reading. Try to imagine the funeral march as being detached and cerebral and you'll have its measure; even George Szell's own drumhead-tight recording of the *Eroica* seems almost Furtwänglerian in comparison with Maazel's. The trouble with the Seventh is failure to achieve a consistent character: it isn't dancery, it isn't lyrical, it isn't particular jovial. In the first and third movements what it is is musclebound and overblown—Schwarzenegger imitating Barshnikov. The second movement is altogether too glum, and the finale is slack and indifferent, hardly the "triumph of Bacchic fury" Sir Donald Tovey called it. The First and Fourth Symphonies and the three overtures included as fillers also have little to recommend them. The symphonies are overdriven, with an unflattering, sibilant sound, and the overtures evidence no real potency.

NOWADAYS a Beethoven symphony cycle on a full-price label is a considerable investment, and even at Columbia's special price for Maazel's integral set it doesn't offer serious competition for those by Karajan and Solti, whose recordings are better sounding and more consistently effective. But when Maazel's Fifth and Sixth are issued separately here (as they have been already in Europe), they should be included in any comprehensive record library. They, at least, are classics.

—D. R. Martin

BEETHOVEN: Symphonies Nos. 1-9; Fidelio Overture; Egmont Overture; Leonore Overture No. 3. Lucia Popp (soprano); Elena Obraztsova (mezzo-soprano); Jon Vickers (tenor); Martti Talvela (bass); Cleveland Orchestra Chorus; Cleveland Orchestra, Lorin Maazel cond. COLUMBIA M8X 35191 \$47.98.

CHABRAN: Violin Sonata in G Major, Op. 1, No. 5 (see TARTINI)

CHOPIN: Piano Concerto No. 2, in F Minor, Op. 21 (see SCHUMANN)

CRUMB: Lux Aeterna. Jan DeGaetani (soprano); Penn Contemporary Players, Richard Wernick cond. **Four Nocturnes (Night Music II).** Eric Rosenblith (violin); David Hagan (piano). **Dream Sequence (Images II).** Aeolian Chamber Players. ODYSSEY Y 35201 \$3.98.

Performance: **In the spirit**
Recording: **Off-beat sounds**

George Crumb is the master of the mystery of life as expressed in music. Every sound is

bathed in the light of mystery and mysticism. *Lux Aeterna*, for soprano, bass flute and soprano recorder, sitar, and two percussionists, is to be performed in black masks and robes with light provided by a single candle! Its repeated refrain for sitar is a "Masked Dance: Elegy for a Dead Prince." Wisps and fragments of floating, luminescent sound are to be played and sung slowly, "very slowly, with a sense of meditative time; pregnant with mystery." The *Dream Sequence*, for violin, cello, piano, percussion, and seven tuned glass goblets, is to be played "poised, timeless, 'breathing,' as an afternoon in late summer." The goblets play a sustained chord ("quasi subliminal") throughout the entire work while fragments of instrumental music, often un-

conventionally produced (bowed piano clusters, sheets of paper on the piano strings), flit about evocatively.

There are in effect two kinds of minimalism holding center stage in modern music today: pulsed and unpulsed. Both are concerned with timelessness, mysticism, and inner purity; together they have turned the avant-garde away from experimentation, ferment, and reaching out and toward a very conservative, inward-looking art. Crumb is a leader of the unpulsed school and the most evocative of them all, but, for all the strangeness and surrealism of this music, it is a very static, quiet, and conservative art. The performances and recordings are as evocative as the music.

E.S.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

DEBUSSY: *String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10.*
RAVEL: *String Quartet in F Major.* Tokyo String Quartet. COLUMBIA M 35147 \$7.98.

Performance: **Emphatic**
 Recording: **Fine**

The Tokyo Quartet has been doing a good deal of label-hopping of late—from Deutsche Grammophon to RCA to Vanguard, and now to Columbia for one of the most popular pairings in the chamber-music discography (the fourth or fifth such pairing on this label alone). I was disappointed a few months ago by this group's live performance of the Ravel quartet, which struck me as rather aloof and uncommunicative, but such an impression is hardly possible from this disc, both sides of which glow with the most fervent commitment and gorgeous playing on the part of all four musicians. Interpretively, the performances might be described as emphatic rather than particularly subtle. Each of the respective moods is thrown into high relief without damage to continuity, generally by means of tempos a little brisker than usual to offset the undercurrent of tension, rather than lingering on phrases. This is especially effective in the slow movement of the Ravel, in which the white-heat intensity might have been unbearable at a slower pace. Nothing is understated, certainly, and this unrestrainedly voluptuous and sensuous approach to these voluptuous and sensuous works may not be to everyone's taste. I can only report that I found both performances extremely compelling. **R.F.**

FALLA: *Seven Popular Spanish Songs* (see Collections—Montserrat Caballé)

GRANADOS: *Songs* (see Collections—Montserrat Caballé)

GRIEG: *Peer Gynt* (see Best of the Month, page 79)

KRENEK: *Piano Sonata No. 4* (see BOULEZ)

MOZART: *Lieder.* Elly Ameling (soprano); Dalton Baldwin (piano). PHILIPS 6747 483 two discs \$17.96.

Performance: **Exquisite singing**
 Recording: **Excellent**

The German lied in Mozart's day was a distinctly minor popular art in which sentimental, pastoral, and cheerful satiric verse was set in a kind of pseudo-folk manner. Mozart knew the style well and used it in his German operas to sketch popular character types: Papageno, Pedrillo, Blondchen. Most of his songs are in a similar vein. The scope is small, the musical invention limited (for Mozart), but everything is always perfectly and wittily expressed. There are also a few Italian and French songs, and these adopt the appropriate operatic and *opéra-comique* styles.

Beyond these, however, are a handful of songs that transcend the genre piece and give us a glimpse of what Mozart might have done if he had lived on into the golden age of the lied. The best-known of these is a setting of Goethe's *Das Veilchen*, but there are a few others, notably the *Abendempfindung* and a couple of minor-key songs about unhappy love. Curiously, these songs, along with a few other charmers, were all composed within a very short period in May and June 1787.

Something—someone? a singer perhaps?—seems to have inspired Mozart to a lyrical outburst of a kind never repeated in his work.

In spite of my ardent admiration for Elly Ameling—and these songs are sung to perfection in all matters of pitch, phrasing, clarity and beauty of tone, character, and meaning—I have some reservations about this set. Put bluntly, Dalton Baldwin's playing lacks backbone. The Am-I-Too-Loud school of song accompaniment reaches its apogee when a forte introduction of almost orchestral dimensions is reduced to a limp mezzo-forte. When Ameling is singing, Baldwin is a model accompanist, of course, but in many important places he lacks the strength that she everywhere provides.

The recording is fine, but I would suggest to Philips that they make available the best of these songs in a single-album format. For most listeners the better half of these songs would be quite enough. **E.S.**

RECORDINGS OF SPECIAL MERIT

MOZART: *Piano Concerto No. 17, in G Major (K. 453); Piano Concerto No. 21, in C Major (K. 467).* Vladimir Ashkenazy (piano); Philharmonia Orchestra, Vladimir Ashkenazy cond. LONDON CS 7104 \$8.98, © CS5 7104 \$8.98.

Performance: **Marvelous**
 Recording: **Excellent**

MOZART: *Piano Concerto No. 20, in D Minor (K. 466); Piano Concerto No. 23, in A Major (K. 488).* Stephen Bishop Kovacevich (piano); London Symphony Orchestra, Colin Davis cond. PHILIPS 9500 570 \$8.98, © 7300 703 \$8.98.

Performance: **Dramatic**
 Recording: **First-rate**

After establishing himself as the outstanding pianist of his generation, Vladimir Ashkenazy has shown impressive credentials as a conductor in several recent recordings. This new Mozart disc is the second on which he appears in the dual role of soloist and conductor, and it is a much more successful effort than the performance of the Schumann *Konzertstück* on London CS 7082. Indeed, except for an occasional hint of self-consciousness in orchestral entries, these are, as one might expect, among the most persuasive recordings of either concerto issued in recent years, performances of such style and spirit that any attempt at evaluation must be a matter of personal response to interpretive details.

In the popular K. 467, Ashkenazy's cadenza for the first movement strikes me as a little heavy in its allusions to the G Minor Symphony, and I might not always wish to hear the slow movement at the pace he favors—rather drawn-out for a Mozart andante, with heavy, "soulful" emphases and extended notes in the string passages. But this extremely romantic-expressive version is a stimulating alternative for my favorites of the moment, Haebler/Rowicki (Philips Festivo 6570 077) and Lupu/Segal (London CS 6894). In the G Major Concerto the orchestral playing seems reticent compared with the very alert playing Alexander Schneider gets from the Columbia Symphony in his recording with Rudolf Serkin (Columbia MS 6844), but I know some listeners find Schneider's string phrasing a little too pointed in the finale, and for them Ashkenazy's more restrained version may be just

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the thing. In any case, these are both marvelous performances, fully up to the standard Ashkenazy's very name certifies, and excellently recorded as well.

The collaboration between Stephen Bishop Kovacevich and Colin Davis is, of course, a well-established phenomenon now, and their second Mozart disc is perhaps the finest thing to come of it so far. Their approach in both works is fresh, assertive, extremely dramatic, and exceptionally convincing. The D Minor Concerto is often cited as a pre-echo of *Don Giovanni*, and it would seem that this interpretation was conceived from the vantage point of the opera. It is very much of that world in its vigor, drive, and contrasts of mood, as the A Major here is very much of the Countess' world in the contemporaneous *Figaro*. Every note is made to tell, and yet none stands apart from the sweeping spontaneity of the compelling whole. In terms of detail, beauty of tone, natural flow, and utter unity of thought between soloist and conductor, these performances are second to none. Bishop's cadenzas for K. 466 have the virtue of brevity, and Philips' recording is first-rate. In short, a knockout. R.F.

NARDINI: Violin Sonata No. 1, in B-flat Major
(see TARTINI)

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

PROKOFIEV: Scythian Suite, Op. 20; Lieutenant Kijé Suite, Op. 60. Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Claudio Abbado cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2530 967 \$8.98, © 3300 967 \$8.98.

Performance: **Sizzling Scythian!**
Recording: **Topnotch**

The *Scythian Suite* was, in a sense, the young Prokofiev's answer to Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*, and if it is something less than a match for the older master's score, it is still a handsome orchestral tour de force. For all the ferocity of the two opening movements, it is the atmospherics of the "Night" movement and the final "Sun Cortège" that have the most striking and original musical substance.

Claudio Abbado, the orchestra players, and the Deutsche Grammophon production staff achieve virtuosic performance and sonic wonders in the *Scythian Suite*. This magnificently detailed realization sizzles and coruscates in the opening movements, conjures up a sinister phantasmagoria in the third movement, and reaches an apogee of tonal glory at the end. The *Kijé* music I find slightly less satisfying; I am not happy with Abbado's failure to maintain a steady pulse in the *tutti* fanfare crescendo of the first movement, nor do I sense a full appreciation of the more broadly humorous parts of the score. But sonically—in terms of stereo localization, dynamic range, and overall ambiance—this disc represents some of the best DG work to come out of Chicago. D.H.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

PUCINI: Tosca. Mirella Freni (soprano), Floria Tosca; Luciano Pavarotti (tenor), Mario Cavaradossi; Sherrill Milnes (baritone), Baron Scarpia; Richard Van Allan (bass), Angelotti; Italo Tajo (bass), Sacristan; Michel Sénéchal (tenor), Spoletta; Paul Hudson (baritone), Sciarrone; Walter Barätti (boy soprano), Shepherd Boy. National Philhar-

monic Orchestra, Nicola Rescigno cond. LONDON OSAD 12113 two discs \$17.96.

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

We are accustomed to getting a new recorded edition of *Tosca* every year, and 1979 seems to be London's turn. Luciano Pavarotti's name in the cast list established the new set on the best-selling charts even before I received my review copy, so what further justification is needed for its release? But enough grumbling: this is a good *Tosca*, definitely superior to both the 1978 (Philips/Davis) and 1977 (DG/Rostropovich) models. In overall merit it matches the 1975 one (RCA/Mehta) and scores a few points over the 1963 (London/Karajan), so it ranks very high among the stereo entries in the catalog—though that 1953 mono Model C (Callas) Angel/De Sabata is still the classic one.

The new performance is conducted with warmth and transparent clarity by Nicola Rescigno, who judiciously interrelates tempos to sustain a flow of continuity that eludes some of his colleagues. *Tosca* is paced more deliberately nowadays than it was in the past, and Rescigno's version is no exception, but his approach seems considerably accommodative rather than draggy.

Mirella Freni, an enchanting lyric soprano, here takes the fashionable upward step toward the dramatic repertoire. Hers is not a natural voice for *Tosca*, but Rescigno's fastidious leadership helps her turn in a convincing account of the role: passionate, intensely feminine, and immensely affecting in the lyrical moments. I have similar reservations about Luciano Pavarotti's admirable Cavaradossi: the tones are beautiful, the style persuasive, but his, too, is essentially a lyric voice. In some of his early roles Pavarotti is unique; as Cavaradossi he is certainly above reproach, but not really memorable.

Sherrill Milnes offers a solid, intelligently drawn Scarpia. This is his second go at the role, and his pointed, biting enunciation and insinuating use of mezza-voce indicate that this time he is more deeply involved in the character. There is, as always, a generous tonal vigor in his singing, but the top notes are neither pure nor effortless, and "*Se la giurata fede*," with its high tessitura, is roughly vocalized. Italo Tajo manages a vivid Sacristan despite his faded tones; all the other comprimarios are satisfactory, and the engineering is truly outstanding. G.J.

RAVEL: String Quartet in F Major (see DEBUSSY)

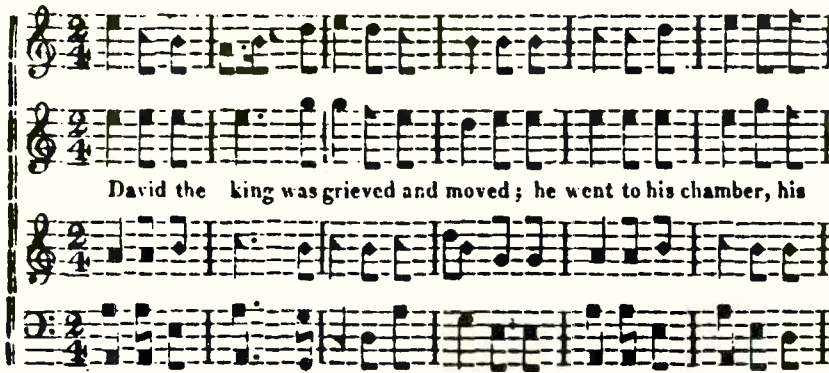
ROREM: A Quaker Reader. Leonard Raver (organ). COMPOSERS RECORDINGS, INC. CRI SD 396 \$7.95.

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

In his notes for *A Quaker Reader*, Ned Rorem points out that music is specifically excluded from Quaker worship. "Myself, raised in Quaker silence," he writes, "I craved Catholic sound. . . . Yet, though I have set to music all manner of profane and sacred texts, . . . never in any professional way have I linked Quakerism to music, partly . . . because there is no singable Quaker literature. But if there exists no Quaker music, there can be music by a Quaker. . . .

(Continued on page 115)

DAVID'S LAMENTATION.



William Billings' David's Lamentation in "shape-note" notation

Sacred Harp Alive

A FEW years ago—as a result of circumstances too complicated to detail here—I found myself in a Vermont pine grove with a bunch of young 'uns lustily bawling out (no other expression will do) a collection of wonderful old American "shape-note" hymns—traditional sacred music printed in curious square, diamond, and triangle as well as round-note shapes. These bawlers were the Word of Mouth Chorus, and they were reviving an ancient New England tradition which, although it had long since disappeared from the land of its origin, had in fact survived an amazing century and a half by "migrating" to the rural South.

The New England singing masters of the eighteenth century—William Billings, Daniel Read, and many others—created an authentic body of music, largely for the singing schools they founded, which were as much community social institutions as they were religious ones. Their hymns traveled with itinerant preachers and musicians to what was then the West (Kentucky and Ohio) as well as to the rural South, where a whole new body of freshly composed and folk-derived hymns was added on. As New England became more sophisticated, the "crude" old hymns were reworked or discarded in favor of the cleaned up, starched-Sunday-collar Congregational hymn-tunes with which we are so familiar.

But the older ones, with their modal melodies, parallel fifths and octaves, surprising dissonances, and imitations ("fuguing tunes"), survived in the deep South. A *solfege* system (in which syllables represent the different pitches to facilitate sight-reading) like that used in the old singing schools was developed using variously shaped notes as an aid to the musically illiterate. The old collections were printed, reprinted, and updated, with new works constantly being added to the traditional ones. These volumes—the most famous was and is *The Sacred Harp*—became the basis for a rich heritage of communal singing, not only in rural churches but also at meeting halls, camp meetings, public sings, and even regional conventions.

The durability and authenticity of all this music-making is little short of astonishing.

When the Vermont singers wanted to get in touch with the tradition, all they had to do was travel south to a Georgia Singing Convention, where they were warmly received into this venerable musical fellowship—one of the most ancient and authentic surviving in the West. A new Nonesuch album drawn from this tradition includes music composed between 1785 and 1950 (!), and while there are obvious differences between, say, a fuguing tune of 1785 or 1804, a folk hymn of the Civil War period, and a revivalist, gospel-influenced one of the 1930s, they are all clearly members of the same family.

THERE are, of course, many Southern groups active today, and some might argue that Nonesuch would have been better advised to go to the source. Perhaps. But the virtue of the performances here is simply their own integrity. First of all, there is the vocal ensemble: a wonderfully real, earthy, harmonizing sound. Something about those open, flat vowels and pure intervals makes a resonance that at once suggests head in the clouds and mud between the toes. Whether the group sings the fa-sol-las of *solfege* or the old, evocative revivalist poems that form the basis of most of these songs, the sound is vigorous, rhythmic, boisterous, and crude, yet really almost cosmically together. Some of these hymns and performances are like gnarled old trees: sprawling, rough, and strangers to symmetry, but nonetheless alive, perfectly coherent, and naturally beautiful.

—Eric Salzman

WORD OF MOUTH CHORUS: Rivers of Delight—American Folk Hymns from the Sacred Harp Tradition. Ingals: Northfield; New Jerusalem. Cagle: Soar Away. Holden: Cowper. Read: Windham; Greenwich. Dumas: White. Reese: Eternal Day. Walker: Sweet Prospect. Osborne: North Port. Denson: Peace and Joy. Stephenson: Milford. Parris: The Better Land. Dare: Kedron. Davison: Idumea. Oliver: Morning. McCurry (arr.): Parting Friends; Weeping Mary. Anon.: Evening Shade; Wondrous Love; Alabama. Word of Mouth Chorus. NONESUCH H-71360 \$4.96.



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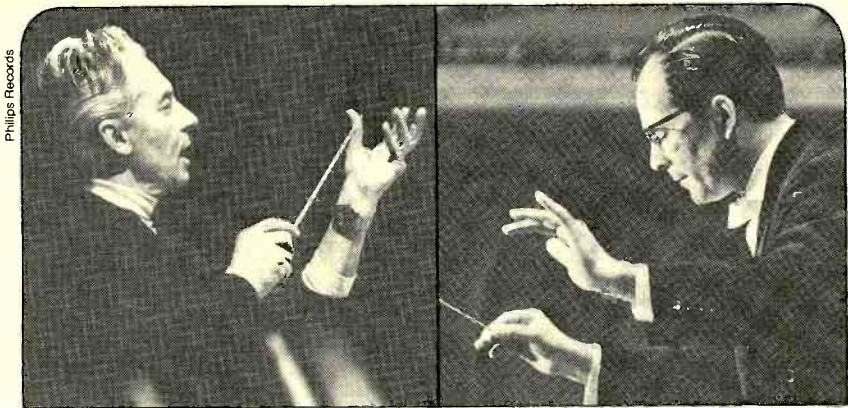
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HERBERT VON KARAJAN

WOLFGANG SAWALLISCH

Schubert's Eight—Times Two

THE release of a single complete, integral recording of the eight extant symphonies of Franz Schubert by the same orchestra and conductor would be a sufficiently historic event to make the still-continuing observance of the sesquicentennial of the composer's death in 1828 phonographically memorable. The release of two such sets, though—one from Angel, with Herbert von Karajan conducting the Berlin Philharmonic, the other from Philips, with Wolfgang Sawallisch leading the Dresden State Orchestra—not only provokes the competition and comparison that inevitably accompany duplication but also the dissatisfaction that is a not infrequent result of unexpected richness.

Neither Karajan nor Sawallisch seems to have approached his recording project with a specifically musicological purpose. True, both of them observe nearly all the repeats (Sawallisch even takes the first-movement repeat in the "Unfinished," which is like a suitor repeating his marriage proposal after the girl has consented), but they seem uninterested in presenting the symphonies—particularly the first five, which Schubert wrote between the ages of sixteen and nineteen—in anything like a historical perspective. Both conduct all the symphonies as if they were intended for the modern concert hall, even though the First was written essentially as *Hausmusik* and the next four were designed for the student orchestra of which Schubert was a member.

I am not petitioning for recordings by an amateur ensemble trying to re-create the original circumstances of these works; Schubert's *spirit* was in the empyrean wherever his mind happened to be focused. But to perform the D Major Symphony of 1813 (No. 1) on a scale of sonority suitable for the C Major of 1828 (No. 9) is to imply that Schubert learned little and grew not at all between them. The opposite is the case, of course, but that could not be proved by either of the new sets.

Since both conductors share basically the same approach to the symphonies, one must look elsewhere for distinctions between their offerings—and they are not long in making themselves apparent. My procedure was to listen to each symphony, starting with the First, in both recorded performances (alter-

nating precedence between Dresden and Berlin) before going on to the next. Even before I finished hearing both Firsts it was unmistakably clear that as a set the Karajan would be superior overall. The Berlin Philharmonic is, to my taste, the greatest chamber-music ensemble among major orchestras. The players interact with each other to a degree almost unknown elsewhere (though the Cleveland Orchestra came close in its last years under the late George Szell). Consequently, even though the overly prominent timpani (with their tight, tight drum heads) are pumping out cannon shots in Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2, under Karajan's impassively impersonal direction the interplay of strings and woodwinds is pure delight. Measured by any other standard, the performance of the Dresden soloists in the andante of the First would call for high compliments, but flute for flute, oboe for oboe, bassoon for bassoon, the stars shine brighter over Berlin.

Throughout the sequence, Karajan plays his cards with more finesse than Sawallisch does his, but the latter nevertheless takes game No. 4 hands down. By way of explanation, let me recall Arthur Rubinstein's answer to my questioning why, having recorded the complete mazurkas, polonaises, waltzes, and preludes of Chopin, he bypassed the etudes: "There were eighteen I always played and six that I didn't, and I never got around to learning the other six." In this case, my feeling is that Schubert's Fourth is a work that Sawallisch has "always played" but Karajan has not. Sawallisch's greater familiarity with the music shows up in details of shaping and styling (such as the long-breathed woodwind phrases in the andante), the kind of affectionate touches here and there that suggest the conductor is doing far more than merely giving the work a run-through.

Karajan's and Sawallisch's Fifth and Sixth are of about equal merit, though neither reaches the level of quality achieved by others in these works. Both pairs receive well-turned-out performances from conductors who were apparently not turned on.

There is, of course, no Seventh in either set, since the score has never been found, and the theory that the work is no more than an

orchestration of the Grand Duo for piano is not universally accepted. Both Eighthths, I'm very glad to say, do great credit to conductors and orchestras alike. Karajan is a little *mis-terioso* about the low-string opening, and thereafter he leans toward a "my Schubert" treatment that is not all that convincing—but it is marvelously played. Sawallisch, for his part, achieves one of the best recordings ever made of the B Minor Symphony: straightforward, strongly lyrical, with no excessive lingering as if to make points in a musical debate. The *Andante con moto* is played with real conviction, recalling for me the pleasure (still "unfinished") I have derived from the pre-electronic recording of this music under the direction of the great Eduard Mörike.

The Symphony No. 9 (Schubert's "Great" C Major, as opposed to his Symphony No. 6, the "Little" C Major) is notoriously a wrestling match for titans, to be attempted by anyone else only on an exceptional day. Neither Karajan nor Sawallisch shows himself to be a musical "titan" here, for one of the first qualifications for that title is being able to wrestle down one's temptation to exaggerate in music like this while still getting everything out of it that it has to give. Sawallisch's reading is solid, but it is also stolid. Karajan clearly seems to have gone into training for this match, but he is overcome by his apparent ambition to conquer Schubert's exuberant score when all that is required is to measure up to it.

A SINGLE conductor performing all eight Schubert symphonies is like a Shakespearean actor playing Petruchio, Romeo, Richard III, a Henry or two, Macbeth, and Hamlet on the way to Prospero. Since we have no musical Olivier at the moment, my recommendation for the collector interested in acquiring an ideal set of the symphonies is to select among the various individual recordings. In terms of both quality and availability, my own choices would be as follows: Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2—István Kertész and the Vienna Philharmonic (London STS 15473); Symphonies Nos. 3 and 5—Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic (London CS 7020); Symphony No. 4 ("Tragic")—Wolfgang Sawallisch and the Dresden State Orchestra (when released by Philips as a single LP); Symphony No. 6 ("Little C Major")—Karl Böhm and the Berlin Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon 2530 422, with the *Rosamunde* music); Symphony No. 8 ("Unfinished")—Benjamin Britten with the English Chamber Orchestra (London CS 6741, with Mozart's Symphony No. 38); Symphony No. 9 ("Great C Major")—Wilhelm Furtwängler and the Berlin Philharmonic (DG Privilege 2535 808).

—Irving Kolodin

SCHUBERT: Symphonies (complete); Overtures in the Italian Style in D Major (D. 590) and C Major (D. 591). Dresden State Orchestra, Wolfgang Sawallisch cond. PHILIPS 6770 015 five discs \$44.90, © 7650 014 three cassettes \$26.94.

SCHUBERT: Symphonies (complete); Die Zauberharfe, Overture (D. 644); Rosamunde Ballet Music (D. 797, Nos. 2 and 9). Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Herbert von Karajan cond. ANGEL □ SE-3862 \$39.90.

With the present suite my intention has been to meld, finally and practically, my nominal religion with my craft. Since no Song is used . . . each piece is headed with an epigraph from Friends' writings, many of which, in their urge toward pacifism as solution, extol absolute quiet and absolute light. The music represents a blaze of silence."

There are eleven sections, their subject matter ranging from abstract concepts ("The World of Silence," "Evidence of Things Not Seen") to historical events ("Mary Dyer did hang as a flag," alluding to the martyrdom of a Quaker woman hanged in Boston in 1660), and the superscriptions are taken from such writers as Whittier, William Penn, Rufus Jones, George Fox, and James Naylor ("who perished in London the same year as Mary Dyer in Boston"). I doubt that specific images will be evoked in the minds of many listeners, but the music does convey an unmistakable sense of mystic commitment and, in "The World of Silence," dazzling exaltation. The eleven sections might have been called "meditations," but I suspect that Rorem may have considered that designation and rejected it because it can imply a static quality, which, happily, has no part in this music. Vitality and momentum are its dominant characteristics, and they contribute to an impression of urgency that should command attention even from listeners who may not be especially oriented toward organ music. Leonard Raver's performance may probably be regarded as definitive; it is certainly a splendid one, and the sound of the Kuhn organ in Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall is very successfully captured in the recording. **R.F.**

SCHOENBERG: Wind Quintet, Op. 26. Danzi Quintet. HNH 4026 \$7.98.

Performance: **Exceptional**
Recording: **Attractive**

The Schoenberg Wind Quintet is one of the most historically important, controversial, and ugly pieces of music ever written. Dating from 1924, it is one of the earliest twelve-tone pieces and the very first to apply the new technique to a large-scale symphonic chamber-music work in the grand tradition. In fact, it is actually Schoenberg's first mature work to use the Classical four-movement allegro/scherzo/slow-movement/finale form. It is typical of Schoenberg that, in spite of his reputation as a fearsome iconoclast, he actually turned back to Classicism at the very moment of consolidating his supposedly revolutionary twelve-tone thesis. No contradiction here. The twelve-tone method was a way of retrenching, pulling back from the free expressionism of his early style and trying to regroup, re-unify, re-synthesize.

In spite of all this, this music hardly sounds Classical, and it is no easy chore to keep track of the thematic interplay or to "hear" the sonata forms, let alone the twelve-tone row. The choice of wind instruments for a first essay in this direction was not felicitous. The wind sound is harsh and quirky, and player and listener alike tire of the endless interweaving of atonal contrapuntal lines. Furthermore, Schoenberg, never one to worry about mundane matters, was not terribly sensitive to the coloristic instrumentation of this ensemble, and, with regard to the practicalities of the instruments, he just asked for a continuous series of prodigies. Part of the ugliness, therefore, is simply the difficulty.

Over the years, new generations of wind players have tackled the work as a rare and important contribution to their limited repertoire, and gradually this music has been battered down into some kind of recognizable musical shape. Each new version of the work has improved the situation to the point now that this Dutch ensemble is actually able to play the music in the piece and not just the notes. The signs of struggle are not entirely erased (they are, in part, the composer's own obvious creative sweat), but they have been rather passed on to the listener. Grasp it, enjoy it, struggle with it, emote with it, luxuriate in it . . . if you can. This is as good a chance as you're ever likely to get. **E.S.**

SCHUBERT: Andantino Varié in B Minor, Op. 84, No. 1 (D. 823, No. 2); Grand Rondeau in A Major, Op. 107 (D. 951); Fantasy in F Minor, Op. 103 (D. 940); Six Écossaises from Op. 18a (D. 145). Emil and Elena Gilels (piano). DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2531 079 \$8.98.

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

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

SCHUBERT: Fantasy in F Minor, Op. 103 (D. 940); Allegro in A Minor, Op. 144 ("Lebensstürme," D. 947); Grand Rondeau in A Major, Op. 107 (D. 951); Two Marches Caractéristiques, Op. 121 (D. 886). Imre Rohmann, András Schiff (piano). HUNGAROTON SLPX 11941 \$8.98 (from Qualiton Records, Ltd., 39-28 Crescent Street, Long Island City, N.Y. 11101).

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

Paul Badura-Skoda and Jörg Demus once recorded virtually all of Schubert's four-hand music for Westminster, then remade a good deal of it for Harmonia Mundi and Deutsche Grammophon; their collaboration yielded what might well be regarded as "definitive" results, but all those records are now long gone, and there has been little to fill the gaps left by their disappearance. Emil Gilels and his daughter Elena—who gave us a fine version of the Mozart Two-piano Concerto a few years ago (DG 2530 456, with Böhm and the Vienna Philharmonic)—must have played these works frequently in the same sort of intimate setting in which Schubert himself first presented them, and they must have enjoyed polishing them up for public presentation. Their playing is elegant, poised, and without a trace of the condescension or casualness so often allowed to pass in the name of *Gemütlichkeit*; they show their affection for Schubert's music by respecting its integrity, and DG has recorded their Bösendorfer piano with great clarity.

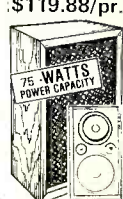
There is less clarity, perhaps, but surely greater warmth in the Hungarian recording, in which the two twenty-five-year-old pianists seem to me to approximate still more closely the spirit of these works by a composer hardly older than themselves. There is no condescension or casualness in these performances, either, but they are indeed *gemütlich*, both more enlivening and more outreaching. In a sense, the Gilels might be said to be playing for their own pleasure, while the young Hungarians seek to share their delight with their unseen listeners. Their program is a rather more substantial one, too. The famous *Lebensstürme* is a more interesting piece than

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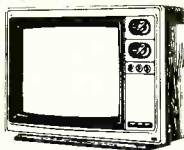
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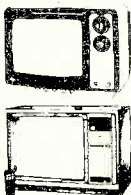


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the *Andantino Varié* (a movement from the *Divertissement à la Française*), and the *Marches Caractéristiques* are far more consequential, as well as nearly nine times longer, than the six *Écossaises* (from a set of nine originally for piano solo). This program, in fact, duplicates the last one Badura-Skoda and Demus gave us, on DG 139107, except that that well remembered disc (which should be revived on Privilege) also included the celebrated *Marche Militaire* in D Major. It was a very nice touch on Hungaroton's part, by the way, to get Demus to annotate this attractive record, a gesture that might be interpreted as a sentimental passing of the torch.

R.F.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

SCHUMANN: *Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54*. CHOPIN: *Piano Concerto No. 2, in F Minor, Op. 21*. Martha Argerich (piano); National Symphony Orchestra, Mstislav Rostropovich cond. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 2531 042 \$8.98, © 3301 042 \$8.98.

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

One can sense almost instantly from the expressive weight and intensity that conductor Mstislav Rostropovich brings to the usually perfunctorily played orchestral introduction to the Chopin concerto that this will be no ordinary run-through. Martha Argerich's high-strung style of pianism has on occasion been too strong for the music at hand, but not so in this case, and we have here an artistic collaboration that is decidedly more than the sum of its parts. Only in the very sharply contrasted phrasing of the initial solo-piano entry did I sense the possibility of the soloist's taking the bit in her teeth, but from there on the performance remains beautifully proportioned: intense, but without bursting through the music's modest frame. Argerich's technique is elegant and precise, and, as always, her playing here shows great rhythmic alertness. Rostropovich keeps his orchestra on its toes, giving the lovely horn-call episode in the finale a special aura of bucolic magic.

I was even more surprised by the performance of the Schumann concerto, since this is the first reading of the work stressing its fiery and nervous aspects that I have found satisfactory. Most interpretively similar performances I have heard in the past have wound up seeming merely hard and brilliant, with the tenderness all but lost. Argerich and Rostropovich seem to have caught both the brilliance and the lyricism in the music, and the result is exciting and revelatory. The first-movement development is wonderfully impetuous in spirit, the slow-movement piano-orchestra dialogue is wholly captivating, and the finale is played with dazzlingly clean articulation and rhythmic vitality.

The recording is excellent, with the piano slightly on the bright side but not obtrusively so. All in all, this is a most stimulating pair of performances.

D.H.

SIBELIUS: *Four Legends, Op. 22*. Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy cond. ANGEL S-37537 \$7.98.

Performance: **Philadelphian finesse**
Recording: **Handsome**

After more than forty years with RCA and Columbia, Eugene Ormandy and the Phila-

delphia players here make a highly successful debut on Angel. Recorded in the one-time Philadelphia Opera House, this reading of Sibelius' *Legends*, inspired by the *Kalevala*, has the pieces in the order of the 1954 publication, with the famous *Swan of Tuonela* coming second. Ormandy very effectively evokes the amorous Lemminkäinen's cavorting with and flattering of the island maidens. Tuonela's swan emerges from the mists of the Finnish underworld as darkly lovely as ever, the portrayal of Lemminkäinen in Tuonela is powerful, and the hero's homeward journey is a fine showpiece for this virtuoso orchestra. In short, the Philadelphians' playing is up to their usual standard in every respect. What I find lacking at times is the kind of fierce cutting edge the more brilliant and dramatic passages have in Okko Kamu's version on Deutsche Grammophon.

Sonically, this recording appears to have been miked at a moderate distance, though without any undue loss of body. The woodwind sound is in a natural perspective, and the low register, especially the bass drum, is amply rich.

D.H.

SOR: *Introduction and Allegro, Op. 14; Andante, Op. 31, No. 4* (see Collections—Kazuhito Yamashita)

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

TARTINI: *Sonata in G Minor ("Devil's Trill")*. CHABRAN: *Sonata in G Major, Op. 1, No. 5*. NARDINI: *Sonata No. 1, in B-flat Major*. Sergiu Luca (violin); Barbara Bogatin (cello); James Richman (harpsichord). Nonesuch H-71361 \$4.96.

Performance: **Stylish**
Recording: **Fine**

The first side of this disc is devoted to Tartini's celebrated *Devil's Trill*, which, to my mind, has acquired a mystique far beyond its musical worth, even when it receives an excellent reading, as it does here. Side two presents far less familiar but perhaps more interesting music. The Chabran work is in a pre-Classical style which is the violinist's answer to Scarlatti, and the Nardini is a real charmer, full of grace and spirit.

Sergiu Luca, who plays a beautiful 1669 Nicola Amati violin, is an excellent technician with a far-reaching knowledge of Baroque violin performance practice and a sense of style and projection which translates his scholarship into admirable, enjoyable performance. His elegant, rich ornamentation is best heard in the first movement of the Nardini, and his lightness and charm are apparent in the quick movements of the Chabran and the Nardini. Both the Chabran and the Tartini employ fiercely difficult double stops which Luca turns out beautifully when he is playing lightly. When he is loud, however, the pitch of the double stops tends to sag a bit.

The continuo accompaniments offer good harmonic support. One could wish for more sound and livelier realizations from harpsichordist James Richman, but the subdued approach is undoubtedly intended to highlight Luca—who is well worth highlighting.

S.L.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Ballet Music from Eugene Onegin, The Maid of Orleans, The Oprichnik, Tchernivitchki, and The Sorceress*. Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, (Continued on page 119)

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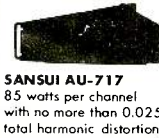
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7300 704 \$8.98.

Performance: **Sprightly and spirited**
Recording: **Very good**

None of Tchaikovsky's operas could be described as lighthearted, but the ballet music he composed for them is hardly gloomy. *The Oprichnik*, for example, is a tragic tale about Ivan the Terrible, but the heroine Natalya, whose father has treated her unspeakably, finds consolation as her maids dance for her. It's a similar situation with the other dance interludes on this record: any of the music could be lifted out of its particular operatic context and slipped into any of the others, or even into *Sleeping Beauty* or *Swan Lake*. But it is charming music, every note of it, and it is all played here to jeweled perfection. P.K.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

TELEMANN: Sonatas for Two Flutes, Op. 2, Nos. 1-6. Michel Debost, James Galway (flutes). SERAPHIM S-60321 \$3.98.

Performance: **Brilliant**
Recording: **Smooth**

Considering the limitations of the idiom and the almost stubborn use of the *sonata da chiesa* format for each work, Telemann achieved a remarkable variety of moods and textures in these six packed little pieces. They are unabashedly lightweight but engagingly clever and charming. The performances by Messrs. Debost and Galway are perfection itself. The sound is silvery, the technique virtuosic. A fine record. S.L.

TURINA: Songs (see Collections—Montserrat Caballé)

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

VERDI: Rigoletto. Richard Tucker (tenor), Duke of Mantua; Renato Capecchi (baritone), Rigoletto; Gianna d'Angelo (soprano), Gilda; Ivan Sardi (bass), Sparafucile; Miriam Pirazzini (mezzo-soprano), Maddalena; Vito Susca (baritone), Monterone; Giorgio Giorgetti (baritone), Marullo; Vittorio Pandano (tenor), Borsa; others. Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro di San Carlo di Napoli, Francesco Molinari-Pradelli cond. FESTIVO 6770 016 two discs \$13.98, © 7650 016 \$13.98.

Performance: **Very good**
Recording: **Early and uneven**

This is a most welcome reissue on Philips' mid-price label of a twenty-year-old recording once briefly available on Columbia. I remember liking it then, and, having observed a parade of routine *Rigolettos* marching in and out of the catalog in the intervening years, I like it even more now.

It is true that Francesco Molinari-Pradelli's leadership was neither particularly insightful nor really exacting, but he was knowledgeable, reasonably vital, and always considerate of his singers. And this particular group deserved his consideration. The Duke of Mantua is one of Richard Tucker's most successful recorded achievements: lighthearted, elegant, and splendidly vocalized. The duet "E il sol dell'anima," in which he is joined by the lovely Gilda of Gianna d'Angelo, displays rare inspiration. Elsewhere, too, the soprano's singing is unaffectedly girlish-sound-

(Continued on page 122)

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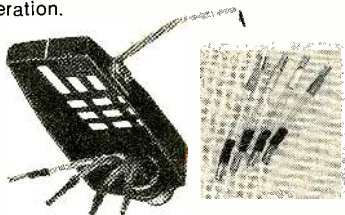
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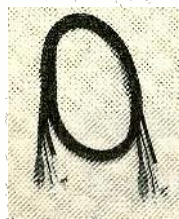
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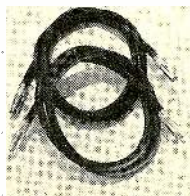


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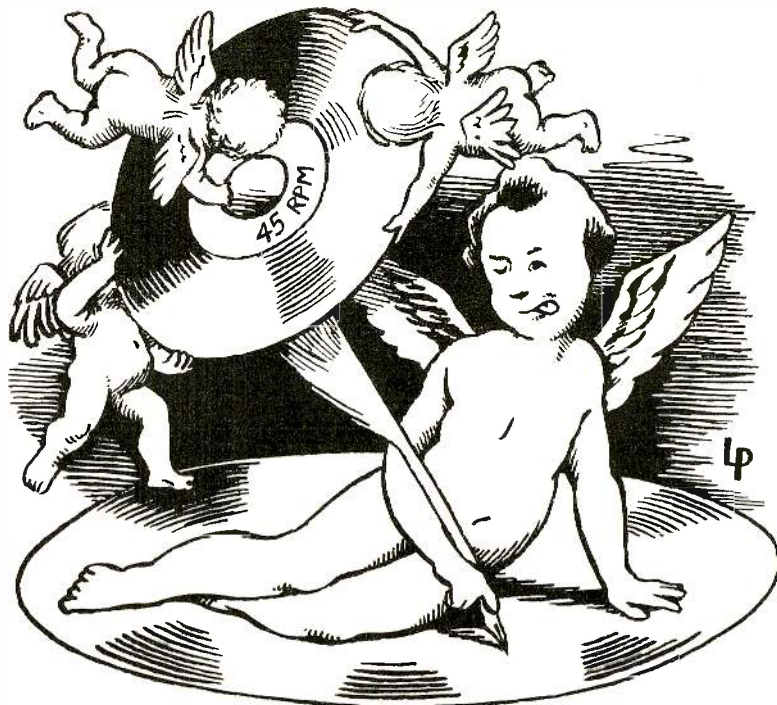
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Angel's 45s

TWELVE-INCH 45-rpm discs are not exactly new on the market. Concert Hall Society marketed a short-lived series in the 1950's, Connoisseur Society employed the format for its first releases in 1962, and one of Walter Toscanini's private issues of his illustrious father conducting the NBC Symphony (in Bach and Bach/Respighi) was also at the 45-rpm speed. The technical virtues of the 45-rpm format are well known—and so are its commercial drawbacks. Now, in 1979, it seems to be the turn of Angel Records to try to make a go of it.

I can say straight off that the *best* items in Angel's initial ten-disc release fully live up to the manufacturer's claims of extended frequency and dynamic range, improved definition of sonic texture, and so on. Certainly, the difference between Angel's standard LP product and these 45-rpm discs is clearly audible. How much of this difference is due to the faster playing speed and shorter playing time (16 minutes per side) and how much simply to greater care in the tape-to-disc mastering and subsequent pressing may be open to some argument, but the best of these records, all made from conventional analog tapes, do come close in quality to some of the direct-to-disc and digital items recently put on the market. I would recommend the Boult march album and (if you can stand the kitschy musical substance) the Ketèlbey disc as the best demonstration items, with the Karajan Wagner, the Respighi *Pines*, the four-sevenths of Holst's *Planets*, and the Janáček *Sinfonietta* not far behind in terms of sonic excitement.

For the most part, the performances are musically good or better than good. One may take exception to Previn's Europeanized Gershwin, to Karajan's mannered moments

in *The Blue Danube*, and to the less than flawless orchestral execution in the finale of *The Pines of Rome*. But one can take pleasure in the color and precision Previn brings to the excerpts from *The Planets*, to the fact that Karajan does play *Boléro* at the proper tempo and not only avoids the vulgar Humperdinck ending to the *Lohengrin* Act III Prelude, but gives us a splendid *Meistersinger* Prelude and a deeply moving Prelude to Act III of *Parsifal*. Likewise, one can marvel at the polish and precision of the Chicago Symphony under Giulini in the *Firebird* Suite.

HOLST: *The Planets: Mars, Venus, Mercury, Jupiter.* London Symphony Orchestra, André Previn cond. ANGEL 45-rpm □ SS-45000 \$8.98.

GERSHWIN: *Rhapsody in Blue.* RAVEL: *La Valse.* André Previn (piano); London Symphony Orchestra, André Previn cond. ANGEL 45-rpm SS-45001 \$8.98.

RAVEL: *Boléro.* J. STRAUSS JR.: *On the Beautiful Blue Danube.* Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Herbert von Karajan cond. ANGEL 45-rpm □ SS-45002 \$8.98.

STRAVINSKY: *The Firebird, Suite.* Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Carlo Maria Giulini cond. ANGEL 45-rpm SS-45003 \$8.98.

RESPIGHI: *The Pines of Rome.* London Symphony Orchestra, Lamberto Gardelli cond. ANGEL 45-rpm □ SS-45005 \$8.98.

JANÁČEK: *Sinfonietta.* Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Seiji Ozawa cond. ANGEL 45-rpm SS-45007 \$8.98.

The original recordings for these discs were made from 1970 onwards, and in listening to the discs in close succession one becomes aware not only of the differences wrought by time and development but also of the differences in recording style favored by the various producers involved. For me, for example, the splendidly vital Rostropovich readings, especially of the *Capriccio Espagnol*, are marred by what seems like a forest of microphones being brought into play. An excessively reverberant recording ambiance occasionally becomes annoying in Karajan's Wagner disc (four-channel playback definitely helps here). And in the instance of the two Chicago Symphony recordings, one notices how flat the stereo depth perspective seems in comparison with that of most of the London and Berlin productions.

Interestingly, I found the single most annoying defect to be obtrusive tape hiss, obviously a consequence of the extended frequency range and dynamics employed in the tape-to-disc mastering. This was minimal in the Respighi, Gershwin, Janáček, Wagner, Elgar/Walton, Rostropovich, and Ketèlbey, but it was distinctly audible and annoying in the Holst, the Ravel *Boléro*, and the *Firebird*. The very heavy hiss I encountered in *La Valse* I am inclined to ascribe to faulty processing of the disc itself—probably in the plating step. Indeed, the quality of the pressings was variable in terms of swish and scattered ticks and pops, though it was definitely an improvement over the general run of Angel product. If these problems could be brought more consistently under control, the series as a whole (rather than just selections from it) would doubtless be well worth the \$8.98 per disc price tag.

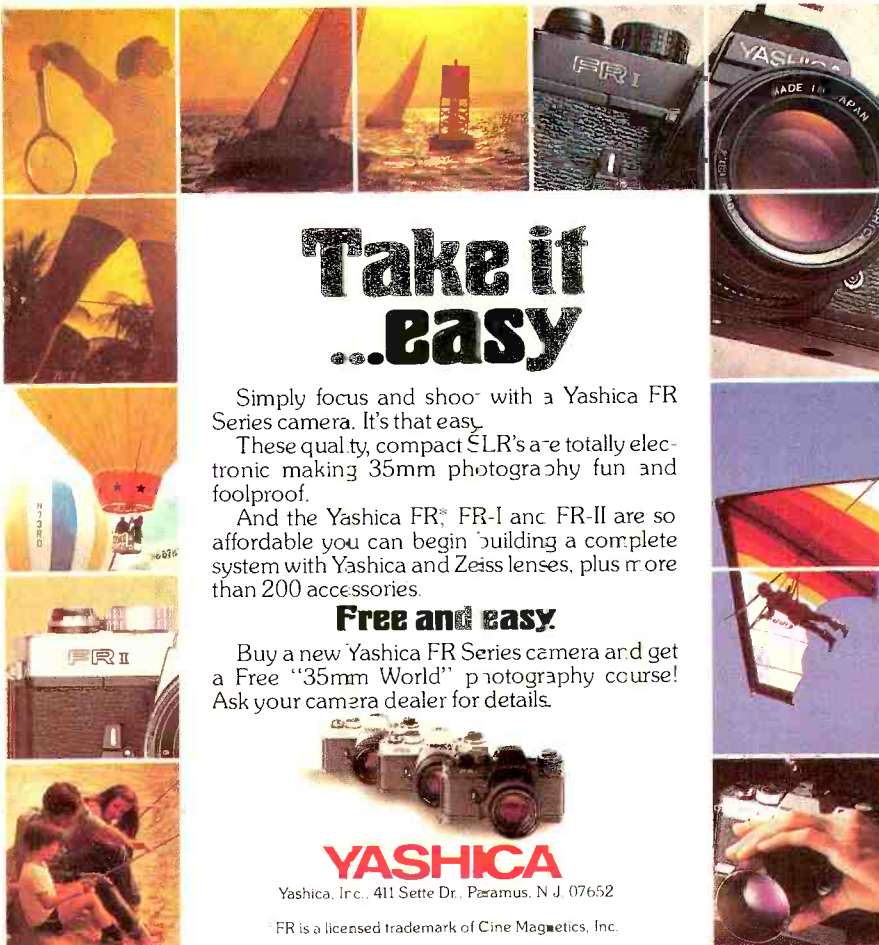
In conclusion, it is worth noting the average price-per-minute of sound (very roughly estimated) of current records: standard product is 15 to 20 cents; Angel 45-rpm Sonic Series, 30 cents; direct-to-disc and digital records, 40 cents. You pay your money and you take your choice. —David Hall

WAGNER: *Lohengrin: Prelude to Act III. The Flying Dutchman: Overture. Die Meistersinger: Prelude. Parsifal: Prelude to Act III.* Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Herbert von Karajan cond. ANGEL 45-rpm □ SS-45008 \$8.98.

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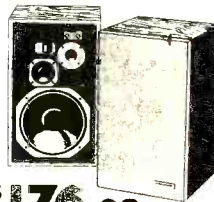
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ing, secure, and true to pitch right up to her unwritten but beautifully executed high E at the end of "Caro nome."

But the real surprise is Renato Capecchi. He is a somewhat raspy-sounding "singing actor" nowadays, but on this vintage recording he is a Verdi baritone of real stature. Though even twenty years ago Capecchi's tone lacked the sensuous appeal of Merrill and MacNeil in their prime, as a dramatic interpreter here he is on the Gobbi level. His singing is enriched by a wide range of colors, his inflections are full of telling nuance, and his handling of the recitative passages (in Act III, particularly) is masterly.

There are no standouts among the supporting singers, but there are no weak links either: they back up the admirable principals with well-distributed strength. The sound is not particularly distinguished, but it does nothing to damage the singing. *G.J.*

WEBERN: Variations for Piano, Op. 27 (see **BOULEZ**)

COLLECTIONS

ROGER BOBO: Botuba. Stevens: Encore: Böz. Spillman: Two Songs. Kraft: Encounters II. Wilder: Tuba Encore Piece (A Tubist's Showcase). Lazarof: Cadence VI for Tuba and Tape. Reynolds: Signals, for Trumpet, Tuba, and Brass Choir. Roger Bobo (tuba); Ralph Grierson (piano); Thomas Stevens (trumpet); brass ensemble, Robert Henderson cond. CRYSTAL 5392 \$7.98.

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

What a curious record this is! With a remarkable boldness, Roger Bobo has mixed the far-out and the far-in in a wildly eclectic sampler of new music for his instrument. Bobo is not only a superior tuba player but also one of those musicians who have helped call a whole new repertoire of works into being. The composers are as disparate as William Kraft (multiphonics—playing and singing chords for one player—are used in his work) and Alec Wilder. Well, diversity is the spice of a tuba player's life, and even a Roger Bobo cannot afford to be too snobbish or exclusivist. It is, in any case, the quality of the playing—the man is, no doubt, the Heifetz of the tuba—that commands our attention. *E.S.*

MONTERRAT CABALLÉ: Spanish Songs. Falla: Seven Popular Spanish Songs. Turina: Anhelos; Farruca; Cantares; Si con Mis Deseos. Granados: Elegia Eterna; La Maja y el Ruiseñor; Cancó d'Amor; L'Ocell Profeta. Montserrat Caballé (soprano); Miguel Zanetti (piano). LONDON OS 26575 \$8.98.

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

Montserrat Caballé's exceptional vocal gifts are attractively displayed in this album of very congenial material. Except for the beautifully evocative *La Maja y el Ruiseñor* (from *Goyescas*), the Granados and Turina items are quite unfamiliar and interesting in their different probings of the Iberian soul: folkloric and rhapsodic in Turina, poetic and sentimental in Granados. Three of the Granados songs, incidentally, are settings of Catalan texts.

Some of the Turina songs, with their unusually high tessitura, are not (and perhaps cannot be) negotiated effortlessly, but Caballé

offers generous compensation for this with several exquisitely turned pianissimo phrases. The Granados songs leave no room for criticism—the rendition of *Elegia Eterna* is quite breathtaking. Aside from a few marginal international lapses, the singing is consistently beautiful. This applies to the more familiar Falla cycle as well, but here I miss the flavor—some individual touches and greater verbal clarity of Victoria de los Angeles and Teresa Berganza. The challenge of the frequently virtuosic piano writing is impressively met by Miguel Zanetti, but the recorded sound is only average. *G.J.*

THE KING'S SINGERS (see *Going on Record*, page 54)

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

RUGGIERO RICCI: Opera Paraphrases for Violin and Orchestra. Wieniawski: Fantasy on Themes from Gounod's "Faust," Op. 20. Sarasate: Carmen Fantasy, Op. 25. Ernst: Fantasy on Themes from Rossini's "Otello," Op. 11. Paganini: Variations on "Di tanti palpiti" from Rossini's "Tancredi," Op. 13. Ruggiero Ricci (violin); Orchestra of Radio Luxembourg, Louis de Froment cond. TURNABOUT □ QTV 34720 \$4.98, © CT 2214 \$4.98.

Performance: **Wow!**
 Recording: **Good**

DIANA STEINER: Operatic Fantasies. Wieniawski: Fantasy on Themes from Gounod's "Faust," Op. 20. Sarasate: Carmen Fantasy, Op. 25. Ernst: Fantasy on Themes from Rossini's "Otello," Op. 11. Castelnuovo-Tedesco: Fantasy on "Largo al factotum" from Rossini's "Barber of Seville." Diana Steiner (violin); David Berfield (piano). ORION ORS 78313 \$7.98.

Performance: **Competent**
 Recording: **Okay**

Ruggiero Ricci is in absolutely dazzling form all through the violinistic hurdles, minefields, and thickets thrown up by these operatic-fantasy fireworks displays, with the celebrated Paganini piece serving as a fitting climax. And, unlike some of his recent European-originated recordings, this one finds Ricci with first-rate orchestral backing and solid recorded sound. The Sarasate piece is the only warhorse on the disc; the Ernst and Wieniawski fantasies appear to be new to the American catalog, and the latter is a really substantial piece of music comparable to Liszt's better operatic paraphrases for piano. A fine record, and top value at the price.

Unhappily, the same cannot be said for Diana Steiner's Orion record, which offers competent but hardly inspired virtuoso fiddling. What's more, the Wieniawski, Ernst, and Sarasate pieces definitely suffer from the lack of their original orchestral accompaniment. The sound is reasonably good. *D.H.*

ELISABETH SCHUMANN: The Art of Elisabeth Schumann. J. S. Bach: Bist Du bei Mir (BWV 508). Handel: Joshua: O hätt' ich Jubals Harf. Mozart: Exsultate Jubilate (K. 165): Alleluia. Il Re Pastore: L'amero, sarò costante. Mendelssohn: Auf Flügeln des Gesanges, Op. 34. No. 2. Smetana: The Kiss: Cradle Song. Reger: Mariä Wiegenlied, Op. 76, No. 52. Offenbach: Tales of Hoffmann: Barcarolle (Night of Stars). Johann Strauss II: (Continued on page 125)

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BACK ISSUES HI FI/STEREO — December 1959 to January 1974 — Two issues missing, 167 copies total. Sell as unit or separately. K. Root, 10 McInroy St., Wellsboro, PA 16901.

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Die Fledermaus: Mein Herr Marquis. Heuberger: Der Opernball: Im chambre séparée. Zeller: Wie Mein Ahn'l Zwanzig Jahr (Night-ingale Song). Der Obersteiger: Sei nicht bö. Elisabeth Schumann (soprano); various orchestras, Karl Alwin, Walter Goehr, Lawrence Collingwood cond. **Schubert: Der Hirt auf dem Felsen (D. 965). Mahler: Wer Hat dies Liedlein Erdacht? Brahms: Nachtigall, Op. 97, No. 1.** Elisabeth Schumann (soprano); Reginald Kell (clarinet, in Schubert); George Reeves (piano). SERAPHIM (M) 60320 \$3.98.

Performance: **Enchanting**
Recording: **1926-1938 vintage**

This is a generous program of mementos of a beloved artist. Collectors should be delighted with it, for many of the selections were rare enough in the 78-rpm days and have not been part of previous LP reissues. The varied fare presents the soprano in her fields of strength: Bach, Mozart, Schubert, and operetta. The tone quality has all the freshness and purity to justify the critical praise bestowed upon it during her long career, and even the top notes (A to B-natural) have a characteristic sweetness. There is an exceptional lightness and charm in the Mahler and Mendelssohn songs, and the operetta selections are irresistible.

The Mozart excerpts are less successful. The aria from *Il Re Pastore* is neatly sung but suffers from the unavoidable cuts to accommodate a 78-rpm record side, and the florid line in the *Alleluia* is not accurate enough. Nor is the rendition of Schubert's *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen* on the technical level of the best modern versions. But what is exceptional is the enduring charm Elisabeth Schumann communicates, and that quality makes the disc treasurable. *G.J.*

KAZUHIITO YAMASHITA: Romance de Amor. Trad.: Romance de Amor. Sor: Introduction and Allegro, Op. 14; Andante, Op. 31, No. 4. Britten: Nocturnal, Op. 70. Kazuhiro Yamashita (guitar). RCA JAPAN (D) RDCE-8 \$15.95 (from Audio-Technica, 23 Shiawassee Avenue, Fairlawn, Ohio 44313).

Performance: **Sensitive**
Recording: **Superb**

One's back is bound to go up a bit even in these inflationary times at the news of a record that costs \$15.95 and plays for hardly half an hour. Yet, listening to the Japanese guitarist Kazuhiro Yamashita in this direct-to-disc recording made at the Ginza Yamaha Hall in Tokyo is an arresting experience. Yamashita, a third-year high-school student born in Nagasaki, has taken many prizes at international contests and plays with marked sensitivity and insight. The program consists of the traditional *Romance de Amor* and two time-honored works by Fernando Sor, with side two holding only Benjamin Britten's twelve-minute *Nocturnal, Op. 70*, his sole work for guitar and one of the most exquisite ever composed for that instrument. But the big thing here is the crystalline sound of Yamashita's Ramirez guitar, which is captured with truly startling clarity. At sixteen, Yamashita is a most promising player, and he couldn't have asked for a more carefully prepared debut on records. Ironically, though, after all that care in the recording, the sound on my copy was marred by some distracting surface noise, which the direct-to-disc method is just as susceptible to as others. *P.K.*

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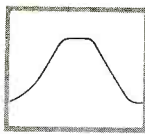
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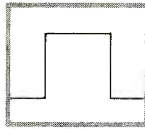
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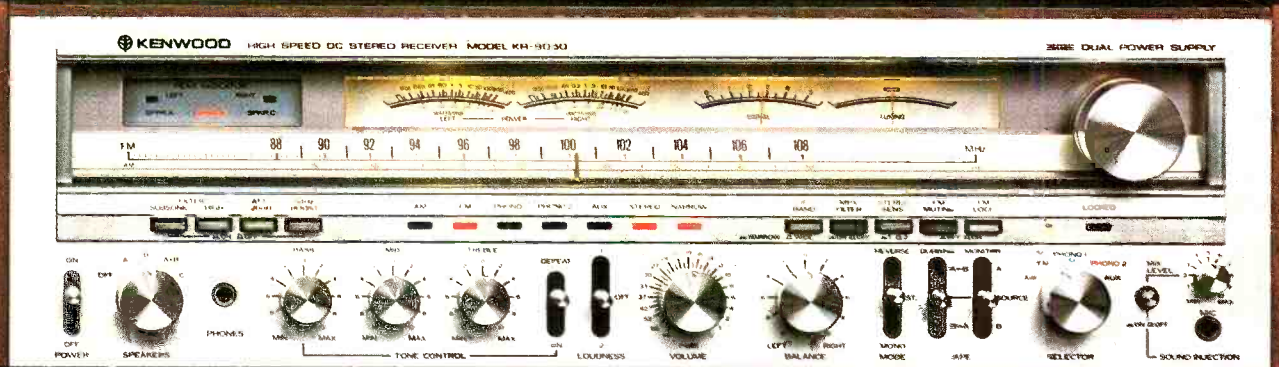
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