

HIFI NEWS

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RECORD REVIEW

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T H E M A S T E R S O F S O U N D

HI-FI NEWS

NOVEMBER 1989 & VOL 34 No 11

RECORD REVIEW

COVER

Unique design, visual appeal and convenience are, for once, combined with good sound quality in Meridian's new 206 compact disc player, photographed by Tony Petch. (Special thanks to former *HFN/RR* Art Editor John Gash for the headline pun – we used it at last!) Review by Martin Colloms: page 58. Inset shot is of Jethro Tull frontman Ian Anderson, interviewed in this month's *Rock/Pop/Jazz on CD* special supplement

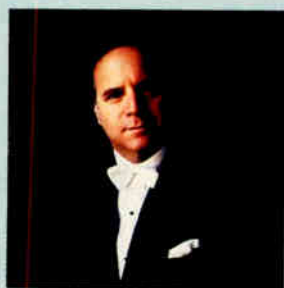
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ROCK/POP/JAZZ ON CD

This special 24-page supplement offers a round-up of the year's best recordings on CD, complete with ratings, plus a special corner for 'Hits We Missed!' There's also an exclusive interview with Jethro Tull's flautist and frontman Ian Anderson, and a run-down on recently-reviewed CD players. But above all, don't miss your chance to win 100 compact discs of your choice from CBS/Epic, plus the feature-packed Sony CDP-970 player in our free-entry competition – total prize value over £1000.

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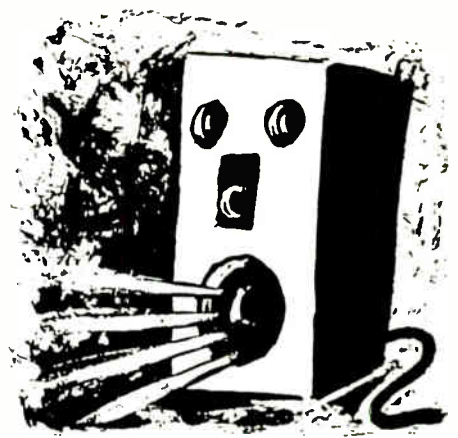
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Sighs of relief all round... The Hi-Fi Show over for another year! But this time, a very good feeling too, because nearly everything went well. Attendance was clearly up on last year, and there were so many new products on sale at the show that they will have to wait until next month's full report.

Although *HFN/RR*'s staff and contributors were more or less all on hand and involved for at least part of the four days at Penta, the most significant manifestation of the magazine's involvement was in the public demonstrations which were organised under the *HFN/RR* banner. The demonstrations were packed to capacity and the feedback (metaphorical, not acoustic) which we received indicates that all three series of demonstration sessions had been more than worthwhile.

We were fortunate in having a largish room for Trevor Butler's Ambisonics demonstrations. Trevor used a set of four ATC Active Monitors, fed from a Sony CDP-338ESD compact disc player via an Audio & Design professional Ambisonics decoder: having briefly introduced the concept, he played selections from *Nimbus* classical discs (including excerpts of Jeremiah Clarke, Vivaldi, and a Haydn trumpet concerto) and one of the relatively few rock discs to have been recorded ambisonically in recent years, Tina Turner's *Break Every Rule*. We were pleased by the very high level of enthusiasm for Ambisonics, a system of recording and replay which has never had the commercial success and public acceptance which it arguably deserves.

In one of the standard-size hotel rooms on the first floor, Martin Colloms (with the assistance of Chris Bryant and lunchtime relief from Ken Kessler) was demonstrating just what could be achieved with a quite modestly-priced, but very carefully selected and set-up compact disc system. In fact, two systems were played: the first, at a retail cost of somewhat less than £600 including all accessories, consisted of a Rotel RCD-855 compact disc player (see review in this issue), Mission Cyrus One II amplifier, and Tannoy M15 loudspeakers. Listeners were also asked to listen to a comparison, in this system, between Masterlink interconnect and standard 'throwaway' phono-to-phono leads between amplifier and CD player. A more expensive system, which would retail at something under £1600 all-in, comprised Arcam Delta CD transport plus Black Box II converter, Creek 5050 amplifier and Rogers LS7t loudspeakers. Here, a cable comparison involved listening to the system with single-strand the cable comparison was between single-strand twisted data, data link and optical connector for the transport and converter. Almost everybody heard the differences between the cables; and almost everybody agreed that the more expensive system was a great improvement. There was slightly less



STEVE HARRIS

agreement on whether this difference was worth another £1000!

Possibly the most popular, and certainly the most controversial, demonstrations to be held under the auspices of *HFN/RR*, were the half-hour 'Bit Stream versus 15-bit' sessions conducted by Paul Miller. Here, after a talk in which he introduced the concept of Philips' Bit Stream PDM 'one-bit' decoding, Paul first played compact disc excerpts on a 'conventional' high-quality CD playing system, including an Arcam transport and Musical Fidelity Digilog decoder; he then switched to his own prototype PDM decoder, which he had built around the Philips 7321 DAC, using battery power supplies and a special, very high-specification optical interconnect. These listening sessions were not 'blind' (the listeners had first heard an explanation of the technology, and always knew which machine they were hearing), and that the comparison was between a reasonably-priced commercial 16-bit system and a strictly 'one-off' no-holds-barred PDM set-up: but in any case the listeners who attended were practically unanimous in their clear preference for the latter. This result can in no way be said to have finally proved the intrinsic superiority of PDM decoding, but it could be taken as a mandate to confirm the great potential of this exciting development.

Next month

With the December issue there will be a bumper review section including coverage of the long-awaited Cambridge CD3 compact disc player and the new range of Mordaunt Short loudspeakers; there will be another edition of *The High End*, including technical reviews on the Wadia D/A processors, the Apogee Caliper Signature speakers, the Gryphon pre-amplifier and more. Next month's music section will be headed by an interview with Nigel Kennedy, and there will also be a competition - don't miss your chance to win the complete Beatles compact discs, plus a player to listen to them on! The December issue goes on sale on Friday, 17th November. ♪

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'I have the simplest of tastes...
I am always satisfied with the best'
Oscar Wilde

Quad wrangles

Dear Sir, That your readers should clamour for a review of the Quad 606 is hardly surprising since a great many of them are Quad owners, but by the same token they would probably have preferred to read our reply in the same issue rather than wait a couple of months.

Over the last fifty years or so we at Quad have tried to design amplifiers so that the music signal which they present to the loudspeakers is audibly indistinguishable from the signal fed to their inputs except that it is larger, which is what good amplifiers should do.

We confidently claim that the Quad 606 meets this design goal. We do not claim that all amplifiers sound the same. It is only too easy to design bad ones. Neither do we claim that we alone can design good ones. There are many good designs on the market. Nor do we claim that steady state measurements are an indication of an amplifier's performance. It is quite possible to design an amplifier which measures well, but when fed with a music signal produces a rude noise.

We believe that the reviewer's task is to evaluate whether or not we have been successful in meeting our design goals. There are several ways, of different complexity, in which the reviewer can go about this. Martin Colloms chooses instead to make accurate and detailed steady state measurements coupled with a system of scoring, based upon subjective observation, which in scientific terms has very doubtful validity.

This is the essence of our disagreement and explains why we choose not to submit product for review. Martin essentially believes that there is no such thing as a perfect amplifier and that amplifiers will go on getting better and better while we believe that amplifiers will become more economical and reliable. Martin's view is certainly the more romantic, but it must be said that many of the differences reported in the pages of this journal are so infinitesimally small that they can only be observed if the normal precautions necessary to give validity to a scientific experiment are abandoned. When subjected to the scrutiny of double blind listening tests the differences mysteriously vanish.

It is worth reflecting that if all the improvements which have been written about in all the hi-fi magazines over the last thirty years were real, there could be no comparison between systems made then and now, whereas everybody who has listened to a thirty year old system, say a Quad 22/11 and original electrostatic loudspeakers, will confirm that the differences are relatively small. Clearly many of the reported improvements were simply illusions.

We are absolutely certain that the Quad 606 will pass any test of input versus output with flying colours and equally certain that Martin would be quite unable

to substantiate his numerical scoring method under properly controlled conditions. We would offer to set up suitable tests and arrange for some independent body to run them, but it is most unlikely that Martin would accept such a challenge. There is too much to lose. Just imagine the shock if it turned out that there was no detectable difference between the Quad and the Krell or whatever. What would there be to write about each month?

Martin believes that many of the buying public, presumably *HFN/RR* readers, are well aware of subtleties in amplifier sound quality. We believe that many more are aware of the realities of good engineering and the sophistry of hi-fi reviews.

Ross Walker, Quad Electroacoustics

Dear Sir, A few days before I received the September 1989 issue of *HFN/RR* I had been re-reading Peter Baxandall's excellent articles in *Wireless World*, on the subject of Audio Power Amplifier design, the first of which was published in November 1977 entitled 'Audible Amplifier distortion is not a mystery'. This article was very much in response to reviews of power amplifiers conducted and published by *Hi-Fi For Pleasure* during March 1976. In response to these articles Peter Baxandall was shot to pieces by pundits, since he had the temerity to suggest that subjectively perfect amplifiers already existed.

On reading the *HFN/RR* review of the Quad 606 power amplifier, I found myself suffering from *déjà vu*. Thirteen years on and we still have the same arguments raging. Had the article been written by one of the many technically incompetent hacks currently around, masquerading as a reviewer, the conclusions drawn should have been entirely expected, and dismissed as such by the more discerning. However, Martin Colloms is not a technical incompetent out to make a name for himself, and one gets the impression that he really would have liked to have steeped praise upon the product. Having met Quad's chief engineer, Mike Albinson during an AES visit to the Quad factory, I can confirm that he too, is definitely no fool, nor does he look or act like an ostrich. What we have are two people with sincerely held but different views on how to assess amplifier quality.

The Quad assertion that its amplifiers are good, primarily rests with their well-known nulling technique, which shows that the distortion content of the amplifiers, operating within their power ratings in a dynamic state on music programme and with real speaker loads, is below audibility and with a large margin to spare. Martin Colloms' methodology is to listen to the amplifier under test and compare its subjective performance against other 'reference' amplifiers to arrive at a percentage audiophile rating.

It is about time that this situation was



resolved and I should therefore like to suggest that *HFN/RR* undertake to rebuild the 606 amplifier using these 'sonically superior' components. The amplifier should then be retested by Martin, to establish that the objective results are the same as before the modification. The amplifier should be sent to Quad so that they too may confirm that the objective performance is identical to a standard version, using their own test methods.

Also a small sample of amplifiers found by Martin to be subjectively far in advance of the 606 should be sent to Quad for them to determine by objective methods the reasons for the subjective discrepancies.

Nigel G Moody, Worcs

Dear Sir, I have been a regular non-subscribing reader of *HFN/RR* for 5 years now and have followed certain aspects of its development with particular interest throughout that time. I refer specifically to the procedure adopted by Martin Colloms with regard to amplifier reviews and, having agreed with most of what he has written on the subject, I must say that last month's review of the Quad 606 came as something of a disappointment.

I would like to state at this point that I, like Martin, am a subjectivist and the standing of Ross Walker on the issue of amplifier sound quality seems frivolous. Mr Walker is quoted as saying that he would like proof that amplifiers sound different before he will allow a Quad model to be reviewed in *HFN/RR* again. Would it not be more appropriate for Mr Walker to prove to us all that they sound the same, even similar? We are in the majority, after all.

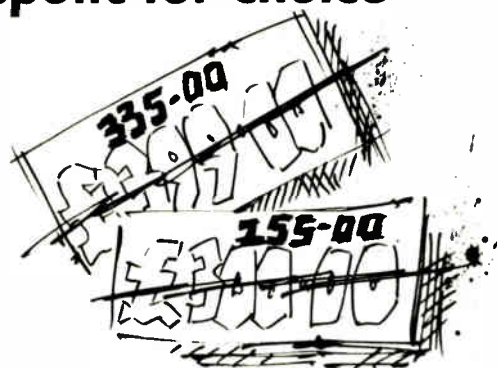
To get back to the main subject of my letter, I feel that Martin Colloms is getting a bit carried away with subjectivist ideals and is in great danger of losing all sense of proportion. In his 606 review he states and I quote '... boom, hardness and treble splash have been avoided. In this respect Quad may claim neutrality and accuracy,' and yet earlier in the review he states, the 606 scored 37% ... with models such as the MFA100 far away at 72%. When we actually analyse that statement we are being told that according to Martin's scale

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World Radio History

the MFA100 is approximately twice as accurate as the 606 presuming that his scale has accuracy as its main criterion, and yet in the same breath he says, and I again quote, '... Quad may claim neutrality and accuracy.' Surely there must be at least a small flaw in Martin's argument here and it would seem to me that his scale requires some considerable modification to be of any real value.

Having had considerable experience of both products mentioned I must disagree with Martin on the scale of the sound quality difference between them, and can only suggest that Martin is either trying to be controversial for its own sake or he has allowed his disagreement with Ross Walker to influence the review.

I sincerely hope that last month's review of the 606 does not prove to be the beginning of a new chapter in the subjectivist vs objectivist saga as exemplified recently by the Hafler/Colloms correspondence on the subject of the SWDT.

It is unfortunate that I find myself being critical as I still think that *HFN/RR* is the best in Britain.

James Creran, Scotland

Dear Sir, The beauty of subjective reviewing is that we can all do it, if nature and not 500 amplifiers be the benchmark. Now, when the review subject is equipment owned by perhaps 50 people, few cross-checks are possible: but with Quad and Mission, things are otherwise. Let's compare notes.

I wouldn't recognize the 606 from MC's description of its sound quality. Mine has depth, wide-openness and special coherence. Through ESL-63's it produces solid, life-size images whose presence can startle. Of course results vary from LP to LP, CD to CD, and between radio programmes. If they all sounded the same, I would know that results were dominated by the equipment and not the input signal.

I am also familiar with the Cyrus One (improved) having commended it to non-hi-fi friends as a bargain. I find it strikingly well-defined, refined, airy and transparent, with a vivid stereo picture. But let's not be silly – alongside the majestic and sweeping 606 [Wildebeeste? – **News Ed**], sound sources heard through the Cyrus One seem (to me) small, remote and insubstantial. Verisimilitude is what I expect of my machine. I do not wish it to impress with abstract qualities which, however fascinating, seem to surpass nature. I know tastes are not the same and that the 'audiophile' may want equipment primarily for surrealistic sonic excitement (if not snob-appeal) both approaches are legitimate, but let's not get confused!

And, speaking of confusion, let's not have the opinions of reviewers and friends and relations touted as facts. Nor does precision become accuracy when opinions are given numerical values, however, finely-graded. (Was that 37% precisely, or 36.95%?)

What about accuracy? MC thinks that

the newer Quad amplifiers and the 405.2 in its Mark 1 form – sound 'not very different'. I find the improved extension, smoothness, definition and focus of the 606 and 306 at the ends of the music range, and the larger amplifier's rendition of room ambience, to be marked. Furthermore, a friend of mine describes the difference between a 306 and a 405.2 in this system as 'staggering'. [Shouldn't that be 'infinitesimal'? – Ed] Given these discrepancies, how can we accept MC's judgement on equipment we have no acquaintance with?

Of course MC has opinions and he's paid to reveal them: but he also has a duty to the innocent reader and conscientious manufacturer to make clear that his perception of sound quality is purely personal and may not be universally valid or absolute. After all, your prestigious magazine has enough difficulty with mere facts, such as whether an amplifier operates in Class 'A' – remember?
Bill Holt, Warrington

Dear Sir, The subjective part of the Quad 606 review starts by saying 'First impressions of the 606 were of a sweet, pleasant sounding amplifier with no obvious vices and with low listening fatigue, and at completion of the test these observations remained unaltered'.

With this said, it does not seem very logical to continue with a description of various vices, such as 'excessive dryness and a loss of acoustic dimension, veiling sufficient to curtail apparent depth on some material by as much as a half, bass lacking sufficient agility, slam and rhythm, and some loss of apparent speed and attack'. At least these descriptions display a vivid imagination!

I would like to ask Martin to give a direct answer to one specific question – how can the above strong criticisms be justified in the light of the demonstrable subjective fact that if, using a carefully carried out nulling test, the sound imperfections of any first-rate amplifier such as the 606 are reproduced in a living room at full level, without the masking effect of the music itself to distract one from hearing them, then nothing is heard? It is not a valid criticism of this test to point out that small phase corrections have to be incorporated to obtain good enough nulling, since it can readily be demonstrated that the effect of such tiny corrections is nowhere near audible.

Peter Baxandall, Malvern

The reviewer replies:

Some backlash is inevitable following a Quad amplifier review, though I must admit that I was surprised that Ross Walker has seen fit to repeat the old arguments about subjective results being pure opinion, and demanding that once again I prove either personally or by panel testing that technically 'good' amplifiers do sound qualitatively and quantitatively different. It is a matter of record that results for cable, passive components and complete amplifier do show audible

differences which are not directly attributable to their characteristics, as defined by classic technical measurement. The amended statistical analysis for the mass listening test carried out at a London AES meeting ultimately confirmed my work on amplifier sound quality.

Knowing that dissent over the 606 opinion was inevitable, the listening test panel comprised my associate Chris Bryant, and also an independent consultant with a considerable professional experience of sound quality judgement as well as having a solid classical music background. I also enlisted the help of my editor, Steve Harris, who can vouch for the method and results of the 606-Cyrus One II pairing: unprompted he came to very similar conclusions as the panel.

As regards the scoring queries by Mr Holt, the numeric figure was an average 8.8 out of a maximum of 24, rounded up to 37%. For the record, the tolerance on such a score averages 0.33, or in percentage terms, approximately $\pm 4\%$. Mr Holt should also note that 'friends and relations' were not responsible for the judgments, though I would not hesitate to use same where available, if they can supply the necessary skill.

Martin Colloms, London

Musical morons

Dear Sir, Ken Kessler expressed what I know and feel in 'Headroom' June 1989 issue of this magazine. Hallelujah! Thank you Ken for stating what has needed to be said for a long time. I have worked in the specialist audio field in Sydney for approximately two years and have learned enough about the hi-fi industry to be quite disheartened with it.

The hi-fi industry (like most) suffers from a disease called *Homo sapiens* (or is it *Homo stupidus*) and if one wants specifics, greed and ignorance (hence the sonically compromised lightshow called a hi-fi. I'm lucky enough to have escaped with my love for music intact.

I will still upgrade and listen to music till the day I die but would gladly join the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers in smoking dope, rather than sell specialist hi-fi to the masses of morons again.

Kyle Crick, Australia

Mounting anguish

Dear Sir, I am disturbed and a little puzzled at a theory apparently being held by some of hi-fi cognescenti, whereby the effective life of a cartridge is not so much limited by the wear on the stylus as on the age of the mounting/damping material at the pivot. On this basis a cartridge may not be up to its original spec after only a year or so.

This opens two considerations: (i) how does one ensure, on buying a new cartridge, that it has not already lain for several months on a dealer's shelves and (ii) how can one justify spending as much as several hundred pounds on a top-quality cartridge if its life is so transient?
H Owen, Warrington



STOP

and listen

naim audio

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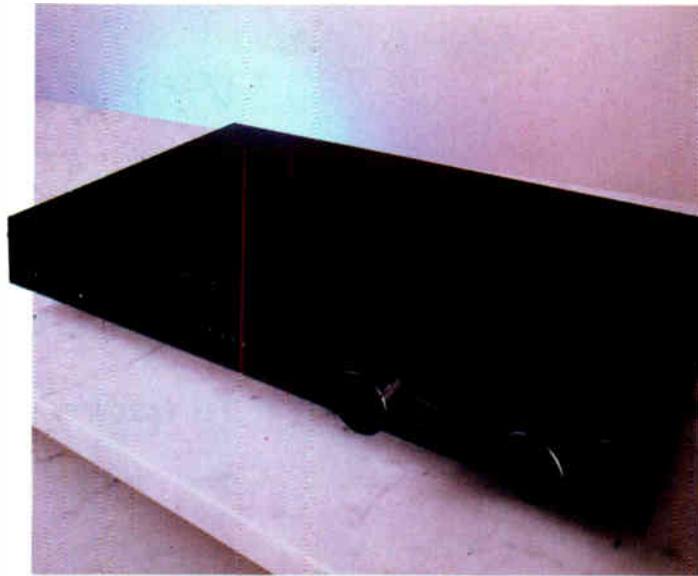
World Radio History

NICAM ON WITH A WHIMPER

September 11th saw the launch of NICAM stereo TV sound in England – but the introduction was a low-key affair. Although the television-set manufacturers have products ready and waiting in the shops, and the TV companies and IBA have worked hard on the engineering requirements for this PCM system, the programme makers have been slow off the mark.

The launch covers London and the Yorkshire area but the four commercial TV suppliers concerned: Thames, IWT, Yorkshire TV and Channel 4, are doing little to promote the new service because they are just not ready. The opening day saw precious few stereo programmes, and the situation is unlikely to improve for several months.

A spokesman at the IBA said that its transmitter at Crystal Palace and Emley Moor (together with associated relays) provide some 30 per cent of the population with stereo TV, but what use the ITV companies made of the facility was not the IBA's responsibility, but he hoped that it would represent a substantial proportion of output hours. Engineering work involves replacing existing separate mono sound and vision circuits.



B&W AURA

B&W has announced the formation of a new company to design and manufacture a range of British-made electronics. The first Aura-badged product is the VA-40 integrated amplifier, based on the ITL MA80, it is a MOSFET design delivering a conservatively-rated 40W/channel. Retail price is £189. A matching tuner is due for autumn release. For further information on the Aura product range, please contact B&W Loudspeakers Ltd, Marlborough Road, Lancing, West Sussex BN15 8TR Tel: 750750.

MARANTZ MUSIC LINK

A special range of new audiophile products under the 'Music Link' banner has been unveiled by Marantz. First in the series is the LS95 floor-standing loudspeaker.

A four-way full-range design with maximum 300W high-power handling, the LS95 has been the personal project of Marantz's Ken Ishiwata and UK Product Manager Eric Kingdon. Early proto-types were given a public airing at the Bristol Show, which resulted in further work on the crossovers.

Today this exciting new product has seen fruition and will sell for £3000 per pair. The speaker cabinet is divided into two independent compartments ensuring an ideal air load for the two bass

drivers, while 22mm MDF is employed with a double thickness 30mm baffle to reduce mechanical interaction between the drivers. The cone material is a newly developed mix of polypropylene and chopped carbon fibres produced in a unique injection moulding process.

The voice coil in the LS95 is a two layer construction for high power handling, while the crossover used to integrate the drivers incorporates the highest quality components while allowing for bi-wired and bi-amped operation. The tweeter and super-tweeter are Isophase ribbon designs with the current carrying element acting as the sound-radiating surface itself to give the most efficient energy transfer and fast transient response.

DAYS NUMBERED FOR CD PIRATES

A concerted effort is being made by the world music industry to annihilate pirates and bootleggers who produce illicit compact discs. Combined action was agreed after a meeting of UK, US and European investigators who decided they had to combat the growing menace of unlicensed CDs.

A new CD anti-piracy task force has been created by the IFPI which will encourage pressing plants to detect suspicious orders. The international initiative is being backed by both the BPI and the RIAA who are determined to reduce illicit CDs.

ARISTON GOES DIGITAL

Breaking with tradition, Prestwick-based Ariston Acoustics has announced the availability of a CD player which it says combines state-of-the-art digital technology with the company's considerable analogue sound expertise to produce a smooth sound with musicality to the fore. Headphone socket, comprehensive display and a full remote control are provided at the introductory price of £310. The steel cabinet (320x280x95mm hwd) houses a swinging arm laser scanning assembly. Ariston Acoustics Limited, Freeport, Prestwick, Ayrshire KA9 2TA Tel: (0292) 76933.

SAY IT WITH MUSIC

It had to happen – armchair shopping can now bring music to your door under a new hand-delivery service offered by Rave On, the King's Road's newest record shop. Its gift-giving personal delivery service involves a hassle-free, no-cost delivery to addresses in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, while a small surcharge ensures dispatch to addresses further afield overnight. Entrepreneur Peter Barnett says that it is an ideal way to solve last minute present problems: 'if hand-delivery works so well for flowers, why can't it work for other gifts?'. Rave On, 122 King's Road, London SW3 4PL Tel: 01-584 6225.



A Rave On gift-wrapped CD

CD COST CUT URGED

Record shops have come under fire from the music industry for failing to reduce the cost of CDs. The trade body the BPI is highly critical of retailers who it says could do more to bring down the price.

The BPI survey claims that while over the past year the average dealer charge for full-price CDs has been reduced from £7.30 to £7 (brought about by a reduction in manufacturing costs), this has not been reflected in the shops.

Independent record shops have criticized the attack, calling on the record companies to put their own house in order first.

CD OVERTAKES VINYL

Vinyl junkies are a dying breed – that's official. Latest record industry figures released by the BPI show that since the onslaught of CD, vinyl album sales have finally fallen victim to the digital revolution.

In the second quarter of the year, CDs outsold vinyl for the first time, news which comes hard on the heels of the revelation that the little silver discs had become a bigger revenue-earner for the industry than its vinyl counterpart. Almost 35 million CD units were shipped in the year to June; their value £193m, accounted for 30 per cent of the total market.



Virgin Classics

CD sampler 1990

1

SHOSTAKOVICH
Festival Overture
LPO/Andrew Litton

2

RAVEL Pavane pour une
Infante défunte
SCO/Jukka-Pekka Saraste

3

J S BACH
Jauchzet, frohlocket, auf,
preiset die Tage' from
Christmas Oratorio
Collegium Vocale
Philippe Herreweghe

4

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
'Scherzo' from *Symphony No.5*
RPO/Sir Yehudi Menuhin

5

ELGAR 'Adagio' from
Cello Concerto
Steven Isserlis/LSO
Richard Hickox

6

BRITTEN 'Nocturne' from
Serenade for tenor, horn and strings
Martyn Hill/Frank Lloyd/CLS
Richard Hickox

7

MICHEL LAMBERT 'Iod' from
Leçons de Ténèbres
Charles Brett

8

FILIPPO AZZALOLO
'Chi passa per sta strada' from
'In the Streets and Theatres of
London'
The Musicians of Swanne Alley

9

J S BACH 'Quia respexit
....Omnes generationes' from
Magnificat/La Petite Bande
Sigiswald Kuijken

10

J S BACH 'Gavotte en rondeau'
from *Lute Suite BWV1006a*
Sharon Isbin

11

MOZART 'Menuetto and Trio
Allegretto' from *Symphony No.39*
Sinfonia Varsovia
Sir Yehudi Menuhin

12

SCHUBERT 'Scherzo: Presto'
from 'The Trout Quintet'
Domus with Chi-chi Nwanoku

13

SCHUMANN 'Und wüssten's die
Blumen' from *Dichterliebe*
Thomas Allen/Roger Vignoles

14

DVORAK 'Allegretto grazioso'
from *Symphony No.8*
RLPD/Libor Pešek

15

SATIE Trois Gymnopédies
Anne Queffélec

16

KHACHATURIAN Sabre Dance
Dmitry Sitkovetsky/Pavel Gililov

16 tracks

T.T. 74:49

DDD



available from
all good record shops
at a special low price



VCb 790848-2

Virgin Classics Ltd, London, England
Distributed by PolyGram Record Operations in the UK



ARCAM DELTA 90.2 AND ALPHA CD

Arcam has introduced its new top-of-the-line integrated amplifier: the Delta 90.2. An improved version of the popular Delta 90, the improvements include enhanced styling using a new extrusion for the front panel with improved graphics and new top and bottom covers; a more powerful toroidal mains transformer which is physically isolated from the PCB with a massive extruded aluminium mounting bar; improved phono section (switchable between m-m and m-c) with greater immunity to hum; revised line amp stages; revised and less intrusive power output protection for more sustained peak power delivery and greater reliability. Retail price is £399. The Alpha CD player, designed to match the Alpha 2 and tuner, features the Philips CDM4 single laser beam transport, 4-times oversampling and twin 16-bit D/A converters, twin power transformers, 1 per cent metal film resistors, polypropylene and polystyrene capacitors, coaxial digital output and compatibility with 3in CDs. Price of the Alpha is £349.90; the CR10 remote is £20 extra. Further details are available from A&R Cambridge Ltd, Pembroke Avenue, Denny Industrial Centre, Waterbeach, Cambridge CB5 0PB Tel: (0223) 861550.

WAR ISSUE

BBC Enterprises marked the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II with two additions to its taped Radio Collection and an LP of favourite wartime songs. 'White Cliffs of Dover', 'We'll Meet Again', 'Knees Up Mother Brown' and other hit songs of WW2 are on the *Keep Smiling Through* album. Designed to bring back some lighter moments of the War, it is a collection featuring the music which helped to keep the Home Front in good heart during a period of conscription, separation, rationing and bombing. The Midlands duo of Dave and Al Sealey, otherwise known as Cosmothea, interpret the songs made famous by the original artists.

Two BBC Radio Collection com-

pilation tapes vividly document the War years: *The Second World War* and *D-Day Dispatches/Victory in Europe* cover Neville Chamberlain's declaration of war in 1939 and historic recordings of the era from the Sound Archives. These include the moments from BBC Radio broadcasts which were to many throughout the World, the main source of information. Rare and memorable recordings are captured in this unique chronicle seen through the eyes of pioneering BBC reporters like Frank Gillard and Ed Murrow, as well as through the words of the leaders who shaped the destiny of the world. BBC Enterprises, Woodlands, 80 Wood Lane, London W12 0TT. Tel: 01-743 5588.

PEDESTAL STANDS OUT

The Pedestal is a new speaker stand carved in solid hamstone. The Dinnington version is 18in tall with a choice of 6in or 8in top-plate. Weight is 13kg and the price range is £249-299. The Barrington stands 22in tall and features a 9in top plate and 11in square base. Weight is 22kg each and price is £349-399. Spikes can be fitted to either model for £12 per set. Available from: 4 The Bartons, Yeabridge, South Petherton, Somerset TA13 5LW Tel: (0460) 42332.



BRIEFING

ANALOGUE EXPERIENCE LTD

is a new Blackburn-based company manufacturing a range of high-quality power supplies under the ANEX banner, for all mains-operated hi-fi equipment, beginning with a turntable power supply. Price is approximately £100. Analogue Experience Ltd, 114 Manxman Road, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 3EP Tel: (0254) 676538.

AUDIO RESEARCH has launched its first-ever line-level-only pre-amp: the LS1. The Direct Gain Path stage bypasses all the controls including balance, mode and input and delivers the signal directly to the gain control for maximum sonic purity and dynamics. Internally, the phono inputs are replaced with the Direct Gain Path inputs; other inputs include CD, tuner, video, tape and two 'spares'. Price of the LS1 is £1525. Absolute Sounds, 318 Worple Road, London SW20 8QU Tel: 01-947 5047.

AUDIO SYNERGY has been appointed sole UK sales agents for JE Sugden electronics and loudspeakers and Stemfoort Audio Products' range of pure Class A electronics. Audio Synergy Ltd, Valley Works, Station Lane, Heckmondwike, West Yorkshire

WF16 0NF Tel: (0924) 406016.

The BSI has published BS 6840: Part 16: 189: Sound system equipment. Part 16 guide to the 'RASTI' method for the objective rating of speech intelligibility in auditoria. Copies are available for £21.40 (£10.70 to BSI subscribing members) from BSI Sales, Linford Wood, Milton Keynes MK14 6LE. GOODMAN'S has introduced the SW 895 Radiotwin Cassette Recorder with CD player. Price is £229.99. The company's latest remote control midi systems are the System 5000 (£179.99) and the System 5500 (£319.99). Goodmans, 1-3 Ridgway, Havant, Hants PO9 1JS Tel: (0705) 492777.

HARBETH ACOUSTICS' telephone number was given incorrectly in *The Hi-Fi Show Guide*. Harbeth can be reached on (04447) 4371. Our sincere apologies for any inconvenience this error may have caused.

HAROLD J LEAK, whose company was best known for tuner and amplifier designs, has died at his Jersey home aged 82. This world-famous British name in audio was responsible for models such as Point One, and Vari-Slope.

MAPLIN has introduced a range of

low-cost cassette tapes: YG25C ferric C60 (45p), YG26D ferric C90 (60p), YT41U chrome C60 (75p) and YT42V chrome C90 (95p). Maplin Electronics, PO Box 3, Rayleigh, Essex SS6 8LR Tel: (0702) 554161.

TEAM DIAMOND is distributing a new concept in CD storage. The Rolydisc units from Holland are made from high-grade plastic and are available in three sizes, for 10, 15 or 20 discs. Each unit features a roller-shutter front to ensure dust-proof storage and allow for modular storage system building. Team Diamond, Mochdre Industrial Estate, Colwyn Bay, Clwyd LL28 5HD Tel: (0492) 49272.

THE MAGIC OF GLENN MILLER is a boxed set of unforgettable favourites bringing together 112 original recordings

made between 1938 and 1944 in a five-and-a-half hour celebration of Miller magic. Old favourites 'In The Mood', 'Chattanooga Choo Choo', 'Tuxedo Junction', and 'Moonlight Serenade' are all included along with 'Kalamazoo', and 'Pennsylvania 6-5000'. The LP version costs £36.95, while the CD set sells for £39.95 direct from Readers Digest, 7-10 Old Bailey, London EC99 1AA.

WILMSLOW AUDIO's latest kit to build the Volt Home Studio Monitor contains all the necessary components including the Volt BM220-2 bass unit, a Scanspeak tweeter and flat-packed cabinets machined from 18mm MDF sells for £329 per pair; carriage is £15. Wilmslow Audio, Wellington Close, Parkgate Trading Estate, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 8DX Tel: (0565) 50605.



JOIN THE CROWD

Join the crowd now going to Doug Brady Hi-Fi. An increasing number of people are discovering that at Doug Brady Hi-Fi you can listen in comfort to a very wide range of products from the inexpensive to the esoteric. The staff are as pleasant as they are knowledgeable and will help you select what is right for your system and your budget. Since opening the London shop last year

there have been so many customers listening and buying we have had to double the number of staff. We have also quadrupled our stock and to fit it all in we've almost doubled our size by taking over the shop next door.

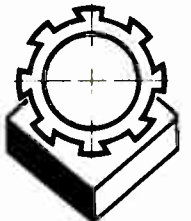
If you are looking for the best in hi-fi, and the best place to buy it, phone us to book a demonstration.



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Kingsway Studios, Kingsway North, Warrington, Cheshire. (0925) 828009. Open six days.
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DELTA 60

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THE NAIM
NAIT II

The new Naim Audio range including ARO Arm is awaiting audition along with the best from:- Linn, Exposure, and Quad. Ring 318 5755 for an appointment.

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A&R, CAMBS

If you are interested in C/D what do you think of the new Alpha? We think it's rather good. We have it on dem along with the new much improved Delta 90/2 amplifier. If you are interested come and listen. Our interest as ever is over 6, 9 or 12 months.

MARANTZ

How do you get the best from your C/D 85. First you have a dem then if you buy one we will advise you and

give you a rather special set of interconnects and a C/D cleaner free of charge to keep your discs perfect. Here are some digits to get you started. 318 5755

N.A.D.

How does the new NAD 6325 cassette deck get the best from any tape? The answer is a trim control — come and have a dem it's a steal at only £159? (top left) is the new 5320 C/D that good for only £169? Gramophone think so, come in and have a listen.

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EVENTS

21-22 OCTOBER 1989

Dublin Hi-Fi Show, sponsored by Cloney Audio. Jurys Hotel, Dublin, 10am to 8pm Saturday and 10am to 6pm Sunday.

25 OCTOBER 1989 Quad Evening, Aston Audio, Cheshire. Tel (0625) 582704 for tickets.

28 OCTOBER 1989 DNM Musical Evening, Brentwood Music Centre. For details please phone (0277) 221210.

2-5 NOVEMBER 1989 Reproduced Sound Conference, Hydro Hotel, Windermere. Tel (0703) 595000.

3-5 NOVEMBER 1989 Zeus Hi-Fi Show, Stormont Hotel, Belfast. Tel (0232) 332522.

3 NOVEMBER 1989: Institute of Acoustics CD performance of Britten's War Requiem in aid of OXFAM at 8pm; Hydro Hotel, Windermere. Tel: (0727) 39655.

6-7 NOVEMBER 1989: Spaldings hi-fi of Croydon Quad Musical evenings. Tel: 01-654 1231 for tickets.

7-9 NOVEMBER 1989 Digital Information Exchange, Private Members Suite, London Zoo. 01-491 9484.

12 NOVEMBER 1989 Leicester hi-fi show: Post House Hotel, 10am-7pm. Tel: (0455) 846977.

14 NOVEMBER 1989 Yamaha Musical Evening, The Cornflake Shop, 37 Windmill Street, London W1P 1HH. Tel 01-631 0472.

RDS POSTER PUSH

The Radio Data System is the subject of a massive poster campaign from electronic giant Philips. A thousand sites across Britain are being used by the company to promote its in-car RDS receivers as part of a £1 million campaign. A new poster will appear every six weeks until the end of the year to highlight the company's commitment to the technology.

Overall sales of RDS receivers have been 'sluggish' said an industry spokesman. 'Despite the initial hullabaloo things have quietened down, although the BBC and IBA have fulfilled their promise of equipping their transmitter sites with the necessary hardware,' we were told.

WIRELESS PIONEER DIES

Well known in the radio and electronics fields for 60 years, Marcus Graham Scroggie has died at 87. He contributed a wide range of articles and books, under his own name and, for many years, under the pseudonym 'Cathode Ray'.

Following graduation and some early articles in the '20s, he joined Burndept Wireless Ltd as Chief Engineer from 1928-31. Prior to WW2 - in which he was a squadron leader in the RAF Technical Branch - he became established as a leading writer, particularly in the field of fundamentals. These included *Television* in 1935, *Radio and Electronics Laboratory Handbook*, 1938 and *Foundations of Wireless and Electronics*, 1943, the latter two being reprinted for over 40 years.

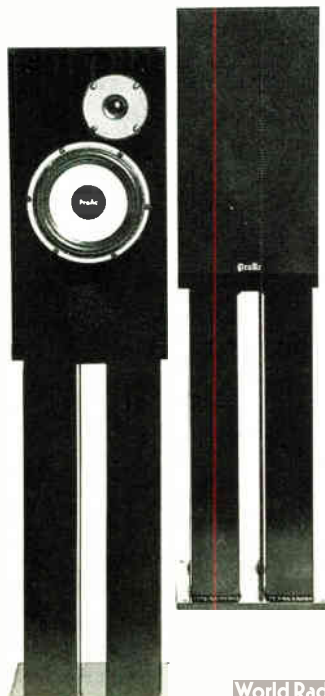
Post war saw numerous articles and further books, notably *Second Thoughts on Radio Theory*, 1955, *Fundamentals of Semiconductors*, 1960, *Principles of Semiconductors*, 1961, *The Electron in Electronics*, 1965, *Phaser Diagrams*, 1966, and *Essays in Electronics*, 1963. His work on phaser diagrams arose from dissatisfaction with conventional vector diagrams, although he feared it was too late to convert the electrical industry to his ideas.

On the construction side, in 1956 he evolved VHF/FM receiver with pulse counter discriminator. However, Marcus Scroggie will surely be remembered for his words of technical wisdom, touched with wry humour, which helped so many into a better understanding of radio and electronics. DWA/RMB

PROAC'S RESPONSE

ProAc has launched a new series of loudspeakers dubbed the Response range. The Response One (£899) is only slightly larger than the familiar ProAc Super Tablette, measuring

11x6.5x9.75in (hwd). The cabinet is made from a thicker, more rigid material than is used in the Super Tablette, while the bass driver is a refined polypropylene version of the Super Tablette's doped driver. The crossover is housed in a separate black enamelled box due to the large size of many of the components; both the cabinets and crossover boxes are fitted with special rhodium terminals. The Response Two (£1599) measures 18x9x10.5in (hwd), its cabinet fashioned from 25mm thick high density material. The proprietary mid/bass driver is made from polypropylene and features unique cone termination and motor assembly; the tweeter is the same 3/4in unit employed in the ProAc Studio Tower. Currently in the design stage is top-of-the-line Response Three. ProAc, 130-132 Thirsk Road, Borehamwood, Hertfordshire WD6 5BA Tel: 01-953 8933 for further details.



World Radio History



EEC EMC

Tough new European directives are to be introduced in a bid to control EMC, or electromagnetic radiation, by January 1992. These will allow a common European standard of immunity to be applied to all electrical equipment, enabling easier trading.

British manufacturers have already felt the impact of the directive as they now prepare to verify that their products conform to the proposed standards. Some large companies have in-house test facilities, but the majority of smaller manufacturers will have to use independent test houses to ensure their products are within the RFI levels enforced.

Japan-based JVC began testing its products three years ago when it established a radiation and immunity laboratory at its plant. The RF output (25Hz-1GHz) radiated from amplifiers and CD players is measured at a three metre distance in a thorough 30 minute test with horizontal and vertical polarization using a 20 element

log periodic antenna (pictured) at varying heights above ground.

To comply with the European directive, equipment must be constructed so that the electromagnetic disturbance it generates does not exceed a level where it will affect other electrical apparatus and so it is adequately immune to RF.

SHOPTALK

CHANTRY AUDIO is a new shop situated at Chantry Walk, 18a Eldon Street, Tuxford, Newark, Notts NG22 0LH. Lines include Space Acoustics, JPW, Thorens, Proton, Gale, Kelvin Labs, Infinity, Goldring and other fine brands. The telephone number is (0777) 870372.

THE LISTENING ROOM LTD is a new specialist shop situated at 161 Old Brompton Road, London SW5. Agencies include Linn, Arcam, Quad, Musical Fidelity, Specialists in multi-room, remote control installations. Tel 01-244 7750.

RADLETT AUDIO CONSULTANTS has been appointed as a dealer for the Jeff Rowland Design Group range of high-end products. Radlett Audio, 141 Watling Street, Radlett, Herts WD7 7NQ. Tel (0923) 856497.

AUDIOLAB

8 0 0 0 P P O W E R A M P L I F I E R

Accurate, powerful and load tolerant. The Audiolab 8000P is everything you'd expect from a sophisticated modern design and a perfect match for the new generation of bi-wired and bi-amped speakers. Play it gently and you'll appreciate the natural, detailed sound. Turn up the volume, and with over 100 watts per channel of real power, you'll notice how the 8000P always remains totally in command with exceptional dynamics and a superb stereo image.

8 0 0 0 C P R E - A M P L I F I E R

Sometimes it is fashionable to boast about amplifiers with minimal facilities, but that can be rather awkward when you're faced with a real Hi-Fi system! That's why the Audiolab 8000C pre-amplifier includes correctly matched inputs for your CD player, MC and MM phono cartridges, tuner and tape decks. With the 8000C you have flexibility plus outstanding sound quality. There are even two sets of pre-amp outputs in case you decide to connect more than one power amplifier.

Call or write for information and details of your Audiolab dealer:
Cambridge Systems Technology Limited,
26 Roman Way Industrial Estate, Godmanchester,
Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 8LN. Tel. 0480 52521.



TECHNOLOGY

On the first day of August, British copyright law got its biggest shakeup for over thirty years; the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 replaced the Copyright Act 1956.

The main aim was to let authors, artists and performers protect their work against copying in a society where new technology continually makes copying easier and more efficient.

In March 1977, the first committee to look at copyright law, chaired by Mr Justice Whitford, compared the 1956 Act with German law: 'A man of reasonable intelligence faced for the first time with the German Copyright Act would in the space of a few hours be able at least to understand it, even if he did not agree with it. The same can scarcely be said of the 1956 act.'

A team of twelve DTI legislators, many seconded from the Patent Office, worked for five years to hone the new laws into shape. With over 300 clauses, and 8 appended schedules, it covers so much ground in so many different fields that few people understand more than a few sections which directly touch them. And virtually everyone touched by the Act has some complaint, often that the legislators' attempts at coping with technology not yet invented has left the wording so unclear that lawyers will have a field day arguing its meaning and intent.

A week before the Act became law, the DTI was still preparing explanatory notes to guide people through the jungle of words. Even after the law came into force, I was still waiting for a copy.

There is so much of relevance to the audio industry that we shall need to look at the new law over two months.

Although the Copyright Act 1956 now disappears from the statute book, its major provision, that artistic copyright extends for 50 years after the death of the creator, remains enshrined in law.

The new Act seeks to tie down, once and for all, the extraordinarily muddled situation which arose under the 1956 Act when manufacturers claimed artistic copyright in mechanical products, such as spare parts for electrical equipment. It also introduces a concept, called moral rights, which is new to British law; this gives the rightful owner of copyright material greater freedom to control its use.

Under the 1956 Act, inventors and manufacturers were initially resigned to the fact that they could only claim a monopoly on something new if it was patentable (under the Patents Act 1949 and later the Patents Act 1977) or registrable as an industrial design under the Registered Designs Act 1949. Many products fell outside both these boundaries. A patent protects novel working features, eg a new circuit, and a registered design could only protect the physical shape of an object if its appearance has been chosen for artistic and not functional

reasons – say, an amplifier housing.

To avoid overlap with design registration, artistic copyright was denied on anything which had been replicated more than 50 times by a production process. Then the Design Copyright Act 1968 changed the law by saying that artistic work did not lose its copyright in the industrial field until 15 years had lapsed.

Three-dimensional copies of the two-dimensional drawings were held to be copyright infringements. Very soon car firms and the makers of electrical goods were using it to corner the market on spares, for example, a pickup maker could claim rights on all spare styli.

Then a court case exempted spares. Manufacturers condemned the ruling as a 'pirate's charter' and the government looked at ways of clarifying the law.

The new law gives no monopoly to manufacturers if a spare part must be shaped in a special way to fit or match the original. A stylus must of necessity be a copy of the original or it will not fit and match. So spare part manufacturers should now be free to copy the original. But where a product looks original, and there is no 'must-fit' constraint, the manufacturer automatically, and without cost, gets copyright protection through the new 'unregistered design right' provision.

This new right lasts for 10 years, but 'licences of right' are available for the last 5 years. This means that anyone who wants to copy the design can demand a licence, with royalty payments if necessary arbitrated by the Patent Office. It should no longer be necessary to prove that an infringer has copied a copyright drawing, such as a blueprint. The new act protects the design in its own right. The Government admits that the provision is 'relatively weak' but says this befits a free and automatic grant of monopoly.

Where *part* of an object has its shape dictated by a function, so that it must physically fit a matching part, then that part of the design is not protected. The DTI instances a bolt, where the thread must fit, and is not legally protected, but a fancy head to the bolt is a matter of designer choice, and thus protected. The same consideration applies to audio cleaners or styli or tape heads or drive belts.

The key question says the DTI, is whether there is any design freedom. If there is not, there is no copyright protection, although the designer may be able to apply for a patent. The same argument applies where there is a need for aesthetic matching, for instance a matching control knob. Here again the designer may have no choice, so there is no protection and anyone can sell spares.

The old provision for registering an industrial design, by paying a fee, remains in the new Act. But the life span of a registered design has increased from 15 to 25 years. The law has been tightened, however. Where there is no design freedom, because the design of a part is



B A R R Y F O X

determined by the design of the whole, there can be no registration, even if the design looks novel to the eye. The idea is to make registered design protection available only for truly aesthetic, decorative designs. It follows that no design registration is available for parts which are hidden away inside an amplifier, however pretty they may look.

Patent agents are very worried about the Act's deregulation of the patent profession. Currently only a registered patent agent (or, by a quirk of law, a solicitor) can represent an inventor in proceedings before the Patent Office. The only way to register as a patent agent is to pass stiff qualifying examinations and serve a period of supervised apprenticeship. Most solicitors play safe and refer or subcontract work to registered patent agents. Another anomaly currently exists; anyone can set up in business as a trademark agent.

The new law extends rather than plugs these loopholes. It abolishes the exclusive right of registered patent agents to act for inventors. Quite literally anyone will be able to set up in business to do the job. Inventors will usually not find out until it is too late, that lack of knowledge or experience has resulted in a bodged patent application, and loss of legal rights.

The DTI's logic is that some inventors currently try DIY patenting because they cannot afford the £100 an hour or so it costs to employ a patent agent. They would be better served, says the DTI, by employing someone who charges less and 'knows a fair bit about it'.

Needless to say, patent agents, seeing their lucrative monopoly ending, are worried. But their concern is not born only of self interest. Most patent agents can tell horror stories about inventors who have taken advice from a friend, or out of depth solicitor, and ended up with a patent which is not worth the paper on which it is written.

Smelling trouble, the Government has not yet brought the new provisions on patent agency into force. ✓

Barry Fox looks at other aspects next month



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1 T P E S C E R I B E S 天 L O O K

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三井一書一 一書 天 J A P A N E S E T E A



Shibui. It is a maple leaf growing through a plain bamboo fence; some small rusty rivets on a simple wooden door; an unmelted patch of snow upon a dark, thatched roof.

It is a bare, elegant beauty that the Japanese appreciate; a long-held belief that less really is more.

This is one reason why you'll find no surplus dials or LEDs on the Aiwa XA-007 amplifier.

It makes for a pleasant, uncluttered appearance, but the purpose is more than aesthetic.

Here's the logic: the simpler you can make an amplifier's circuits, the purer the signal, the cleaner the sound.

Not only does the XA-007 have a minimum of buttons and dials, but Aiwa have gone one stage further. A 'Direct' switch allows you to eliminate the Balance, Bass and Treble controls, when appropriate.

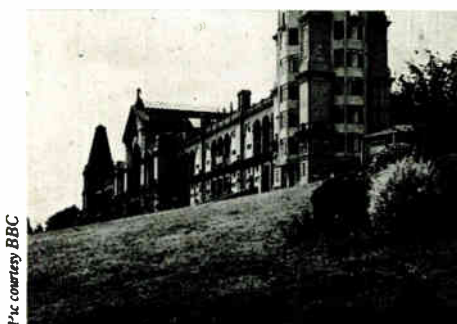
And the XA-007 features twin power supplies, which reduce interference between the pre- and power-amplifier stages and bring a greater sense of 'precision' to your music.

But, predictably, you won't find these mentioned on the outside of the unit.

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Ally Pally: TV museum or storehouse?

boring, providing him with a marvellous opportunity to show that radio is able to be alive and contemporary.

The old Palace: act!

Worrying news has reached the Radio desk concerning the future of London's Alexandra Palace – a location synonymous with the early history of broadcasting. It was from Studio A in the south-east wing that the world's first regular TV service was transmitted to some 400 homes in early November 1936.

the popular pirate station of the '80s, this new service is funded by Ireland's state broadcasting service, RTE, and CLT; the parent company of Radio Luxembourg. The stipulated frequency is allocated by the ITU for Irish domestic use, although the received signal on the UK mainlands make pirates here look like whimps: probably something to do with Atlantic's 800-ft mast and maximum power of 500-kilowatts. If the service takes-off it will be competition for the proposed three independent national channels in Britain. †

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HEADROOM

Fertile imaginations dominate the hi-fi industry. They must do, or we wouldn't have the flood of left-field accessories which continues unabated into the age of digital.

Admittedly, turntable and LP accessories are no longer proliferating, while the range of CD accessories will never match the turntable/LP accessories available during analogue's heyday. Once the storage units and cleaners are accounted for, all that's left specifically for CD tweaking are the various mats and damping rings. Any other items which can be attached to a CD player in the hope of extracting even more information fall into the 'general' category, for they also apply to amps, speakers, cassette decks, tuners and anything else that might wiggle, move, hum, resonate or vibrate when it shouldn't.

The past quarter of the 20th Century might one day be known as the Age of Wonder Materials, and new ones continue to emerge. We've had Blu-tack, Black-tack, Sorbothane, Sicomin, Medite, Aerolam and umpteen others, the majority designed to either absorb or re-route unwanted energy. The applications for these materials include serving as platter mats, lining speaker cabinets, damping out cartridge body resonances, lining amp or pre-amp chassis, clamping on to valves and any other task which can be conceived by the inventive audiophile.

The latest trend, judging by what I've seen in Japan, involves hard materials such as ceramics. Since my Japanese is limited to words like Toshiba and Koetsu, I don't know quite what the ceramic feet made by Kyocera are supposed to do. The Italians, on the other hand, have come up with a bunch of graphite goodies and whatever the *spiel*, they work.

There are three products in the Q Dampener series from Art Accessori. They include a beautifully-made record puck, some cubist feet and a device to slip between cartridge and headshell. The puck is record-label-sized, with a machined metal top and a thick graphite base, the 'feet' are solid graphite rectangles for placing under components and the cartridge spacer is a slotted slab about the size of the top surface of Denon 103 m-c. The blurb which accompanies these pieces describes the material as 'a special graphite compound, an inert material which is particularly efficient in reducing the vibrations which cut across its chemical structure'.

Trying out this range of accessories, I've spent most of my energies on the blocks, because my turntable has a dedicated clamp and I'm not yet ready to go through the rigmarole of changing cartridges, having just settled in nicely (again) with the Tsurugi. I placed the Q Dampener blocks below the CAL Tempest II SE CD player and was amused to find an instant and discernible improvement in two areas. Immediately apparent was a reduction in whatever miniscule traces of smearing

exist in CAL playback, especially noteworthy on strings and 'tinkly' piano. The other gain was in bass solidity, akin to moving from a good speaker stand to a great one. But the real kicker came when I combined the Q Dampeners with spikes.

In the top surface of each block is a machined brass disc with a dimple in it. This dimple is for locating spikes, because Art Accessori recommend using these below spiked speaker stands. At the same time that these arrived, I received a set of the Goldmund cones and figured it would be worth trying the two accessories together. The Goldmund cones look like black TipToes, but are in fact relatively complex structures. The tip is a separate item, a point machined from tungsten so it will never lose its sharpness, while the body of the cone is filled with a rubbery substance to damp out the cone's own resonances. Used on their own, the Goldmund cones had an effect similar in degree to the Q Dampeners, but working in different areas. Combined, it was nothing short of miraculous.

The Goldmund cones, operating alone, had the same effect on smearing as the graphite blocks, but their clean-up campaign worked mostly in the upper bass and lower midrange. Combining the two should therefore result in extra gains rather than mere overlap. With both accessories in place, the bass of the CAL tightened up to near-Marantz CD-12 levels, and the CD-12 produces some of the finest lower registers I've heard from CD. Normally, I'd suggest that trying to make a CAL sound like a CD-12 begs the question: why not buy a CD-12 in the first place? But the CD-12 does not have the same mid-band or upper register 'flavour' as the CAL, so there are things which the latter does that the former cannot.

Unfortunately, these accessories are ludicrously expensive, even though they do what they should, and their cost is small compared to, say, a new high-end pre-amp or a better CD player. The Goldmund cones – which most assuredly 'sound' better than any of the one-piece cones in my possession – are something like £125 for a packet of three. I don't have the UK price for the Art Accessori blocks, but I think that a set of four retails for 80,000 lira in the Mamaland, and that's enough to suggest a UK price of £60 if the



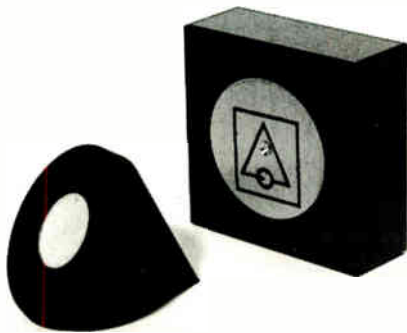
K E N K E S S L E R

importer's got any sense. These luxury goodies may seem like nothing more than Christmas stocking stuffers for rich audiophiles, but take my word for it: they deliver the goods.

Closer to home is another damping material which is called the 'Q' Damping Pad and has nothing to do with the similarly-named Italian offerings. This material comes in self-adhesive sheets coloured a fetching military green and sounds like advanced Sorbothane according to the accompanying notes. 'The "Q" Damping Pad consists of a viscoelastic material which absorbs energy into heat.' Very Sorbothane-like you'll agree, but this stuff doesn't turn into a sticky mess, because the exposed surface is hard and dry and textured like a golf ball. As with Sorbothane sheets, it should be cut into the correct shapes for damping out surfaces like Decca cartridge bodies, the insides of speaker cabinets, turntable platters and the like. You're looking at around £15 for four 200x100mm sheets, which is enough to deal with a whole system because you use the stuff sparingly.

I tried the Q Pads on a tonearm and combined it with the Goldmund cones and Art Accessori blocks for a super-duper, overkill damping device. Yes, the smearing was reduced a shade further but I had to strain to hear it. More interesting for the real world is its use on the underside of speaker stand top plates and on the stands' uprights (this stuff is ugly, so stick it to the back surfaces). It did as much to quell ringing as filling the stand with a couple of kilos of sand would do. And it's nowhere near as messy.

If the above doesn't keep the hobbyists busy through the coming winter months, then I think I'll devote next month's Headroom to building Pocher 1/8 scale car models. ↙



An Accessori's Q dampener (right), with Goldmund cone

Suppliers: Art Accessori, c/o CBA Audio, Via Pier Capponi 65, 50p132 Florence, Italy. Tel 055/578124; Goldmund is distributed by Absolute Sounds, 318 Worple Road, London SW20 8QU. Tel 01-947 5047; Q Damping Pads are distributed by Quantum Audio Ltd, PO Box 26, Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, Scotland KA3 7BN. Tel (0563) 71122.



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spread the rumour that he was really just a talented midget.

It's probably how our rivals will feel when they hear the new Technics RS-B755 cassette deck.

The radical new design offers a degree of technical excellence seldom heard in a cassette deck before.

Take the tape transport for example.

To achieve the sort of speed stability necessary for use with today's digital equipment, we've incorporated two features.

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So the only time you'll hear Don Giovanni slurring is at the end of the Champagne Aria.

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And because two heads are better than





one you'll find separate heads for record and playback. It's called "three-head" technology and has the advantage that you can monitor recordings as you make them.

And one other refinement you won't find in many decks is Dolby* HX-PRO, or "extended headroom".

Not a sign in Figaro's barber shop, but a clever piece of circuitry designed to reduce high frequency distortion.

And don't worry if you're bewildered by the variety of tapes available nowadays. Just pop in a cassette and built-in sensors decide whether it's chrome, metal or ferri-chrome.

We've also taken the guesswork out of

recording with a unique system called APRS. First it measures the musical peaks, then tells you the optimum recording levels to set.

So no matter what heights the sopranos reach, you still won't hear any distortion.

One other sound you won't be hearing is the infuriating click of the tape running out mid-way through a recording. The "elapsed-time" tape counter tells you exactly how much time you've got left.

Mozart, who didn't get a chance to finish his last work, would have loved it.

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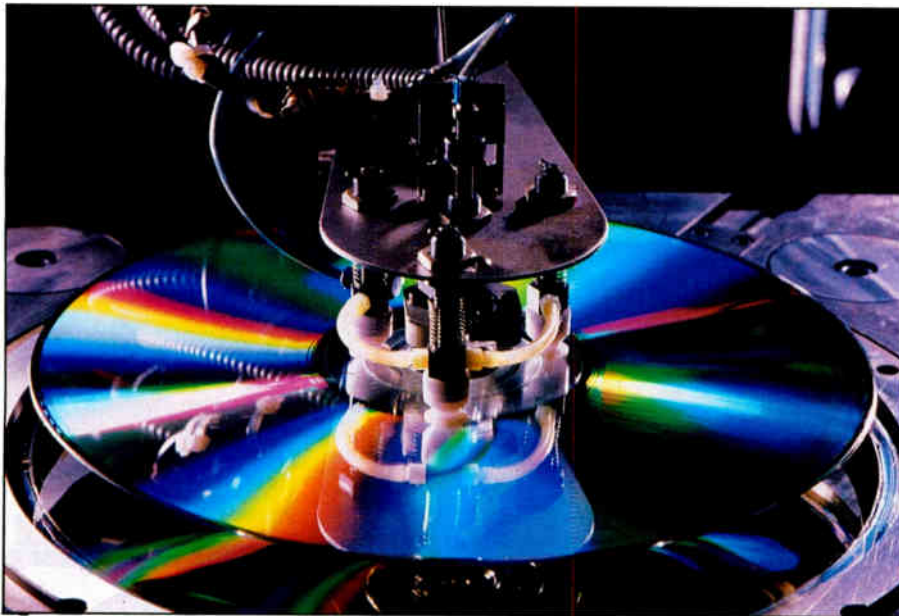
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THE ERASABLE DREAM



Recordable CD is now a technical reality although several competing systems are in development

by Barry Fox

Philips and other major electronics companies are now technically capable of launching a recorder that uses blank CDs and produces discs that can be replayed on a conventional domestic CD player.

For instance, although political paranoia over DAT guarantees a 'no comment' answer from Philips to any formal question on recordable disc, the Dutch correspondent of *Billboard* magazine recently quoted Piet Kramer, just retired from running Philips Research Laboratories, as saying that Philips is technically ready to launch erasable compact disc.

Sony has now struck a deal with Japanese tape and chemical company Taiyo Yuden, to use Taiyo's 'That's' disc recording system. Sony nervously stresses that the disc will not be sold to the public; Sony and Taiyo will set up a small production facility to make short runs of CDs for commercial clients. The US space shuttle programme already has a Sony recordable disc system on board its craft.

Although Pioneer has been very quiet, the company has been working on record-

able discs since 1982.

And while the round table talks continue, the electronics companies are busy ironing out practical considerations.

For instance, all CDs have a 'table of contents' at the beginning. This TOC contains digital code which lists the number of music tracks on the disc and their length. The player uses the code to search out selected tracks and musical passages. So far there is no agreement on how a CD recorder will add a TOC to the blank disc. Some prototypes require that a full CD-R recording be made in one go, with a space left at the start of the disc for adding the TOC as soon as the rest of the disc is full, or the user presses a switch to finish all recording on that blank.

Another idea is that CD recorders will store the TOC information in a temporary memory while recordings are made, and then add the TOC to the disc only when the disc is full. In this way one disc can be used to make several short length recordings, for instance to make a compilation of music selected from different sources at different times. Provided that the TOC

matches the Red Book standard it does not matter which option is chosen.

Write-once recorders will also need a 'rehearse' function, which lets the user make a dummy-run through at least part of the music before recording it, to avoid wasting space on the disc with false starts. But most of the companies making CD players and analogue tape recorders already offer these facilities to make dubbing from disc to tape as easy as possible.

In a CD player, the laser tracks under the control of servo control signals derived from pits. A blank disc has no pits, so some system is needed to guide the laser used to make the recording. Two techniques are already used by the computer industry and are being adapted for domestic use.

The blank can be pre-formed with a spiral groove which the laser tracks during recording. The pit shaped deformations are then formed inside, or alongside, the groove. The technique is called Continuous Composite Recording.

Alternatively, a skeleton of pits is pressed into the blank disc at the time of manufacture. These pits provide servo control signals for the recording laser. This technique is called Sampled Servo and it is still at an early stage of development. Hence most CD-R systems so far proposed have used a Continuous Composite groove.

Provided that the final track pattern matches the pattern on a pressed disc, it does not matter what control system is used for recording.

With the benefit of hindsight, CD-R was an inevitable consequence of the success of CD audio.

When the compact disc format was launched six years ago, music lovers soon discovered the attraction of a 12cm disc that holds over an hour of digitally coded stereo sound on a single side and is largely immune to the dirt, dust and scratches which cause nasty clicks and pops on conventional vinyl LP recordings. People also like the convenience of using compact disc, with no need to clean and replace a pick-up stylus or adjust its tracking weight, and the freedom to program the running order of tracks played.

In a year's time from now it is predicted that sales of CDs will have matched, or even overtaken, sales of vinyl LPs. The world is now ready to add a collection of home-recorded CDs that play back on the same domestic, portable and in-car players as factory-pressed discs, rather than build a collection of DAT tapes that work only on new players.

The record companies could not make money out of DAT, by releasing long musical performances such as operas and full concert performances, on a single cassette. They stand to make nothing out of CD-R. The music on a recordable CD will by definition have been copied either from another CD, or radio. The technology can be adapted to record video as well as sound, so the film and TV industry will eventually face a similar problem.

A big fight between the software and

Royal Opera House RECORDS

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This month's first releases are *The Essential Highlights* from Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker* conducted by The Royal Ballet's Principal Guest Conductor, Mark Ermler. The complete ballets will follow later this year.



The Essential Highlights
Swan Lake: ROH 001 (CD),
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The Nutcracker: ROH 002 (CD),
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I very much welcome our partnership with Conifer, which I know will bring the Royal Opera House orchestra, together with many of the fine conductors and singers associated with the House, to a new and wider public.

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hardware industries is inevitable. But whereas with DAT record companies were able to stifle sales by refusing to release pre-recorded music on digital tape format, they have no such sanctions to enforce against recordable disc. As the vinyl LP dies, there is no going back from the standard practice of releasing all new records on digital laser-read disc.

In the search for a recordable disc system which can be sold as cheaply as tape, electronics companies in Japan, the US and Europe have come up with a wide range of different technical solutions. Although all work differently, they need only have one thing in common – the ability to play back on a conventional CD player. This makes recordable disc quite different from tape. To offer the public a tape system, all manufacturers must rigidly adhere to the same standard for recorder, blank tape and playback unit. Provided that all types of recordable disc sold to the public match the Red Book standard for compact discs and players laid down by CD system developers Philips and Sony, so that the recording on any CD-R disc looks the same to the laser optics in player as the recording on a pressed disc, it does not matter how the recording was made.

Pressed discs have a spiral of pits in the surface, which are read from the underside as bumps. A CD-R disc can have pits or bumps or spots of different optical density or colour. For the first time in the history of consumer electronics there is no need for a single standard for the recording system.

Also, until the DAT debacle, the electronics industry had worked on the assumption that any new home recording medium must be capable of erasure and re-use, like tape. But in practice most people who buy blank audio and video tape seldom re-use it. They make a recording, and keep it. So, reasoned the electronics companies, with some clever lateral thinking, there is no need to make recordable discs erasable; or at least there can be two types of recordable disc, with write-once discs cheaper than erasable discs.

Although the range of technologies under development is wide, clear patterns have already emerged. The first generation of recordable discs, already on sale to the computer industry, rely on permanent deformation of a thin layer of heat sensitive metal, such as tellurium, deposited on a blank disc. The cost of this write-once technology is still far too high for domestic music recording at around £100 a disc.

Yamaha of Japan is now ready to sell a CD recorder, which uses metal-coated write-once discs made by Fuji. Costing £10,000 it is aimed at computer users and musicians working with electronic instruments who need to store large quantities of digital data. However, when Yamaha and Fuji showed the system recently at a computer exhibition show in Hannover, they were demonstrating its ability to record music onto discs which were compatible with a domestic CD player.

The first erasable discs rely on mag-

neto-optical technology.

A MO disc is coated with an alloy of cobalt and rare earth metal, such as gadolinium. For recording, the disc is spun under a modulated laser beam while bathed in a constant magnetic field. Alternatively, but more difficult to arrange, the laser beam remains at constant strength and the magnetic field is modulated. Either way, where the beam strikes the disc spots of the alloy material is heated beyond its curie point. The spot then switches magnetic state in the field as it cools.

To replay the recording, a polarized beam of laser light is focused on the surface. The magnetic pattern on the disc changes the direction of polarization of the light reflected off the disc surface. When this light passes through a polarizing filter, like sun glasses, there is a change in intensity. The fluctuating changes caused by the magnetized spots are read by a photo cell, as in a conventional video or digital audio disc player. The disc may also have a multi-layer coating so that the light bounces back and forth a few times to exaggerate the polarization shift. The signal is erased by a beam of constant power.

The technology has been under development for at least ten years, and always expected 'next year'. Early discs were unstable because the rare earths oxidized easily in air. The breakthrough came 18 months ago when both Sony in Japan, and 3M in the US, found proprietary ways of passivating the coating. These protective films all rely on a thin layer of silicon or aluminium, or both, deposited by sputtering on top of the magneto optical layer (usually a mix of terbium, iron and cobalt).

Philips has demonstrated digital audio and analogue video recordings made on a magneto optical disc. Olympus and Sony make magneto-optical disk recorders for computer data. 3M, Sony and PdO makes blank discs. But they cost nearly £200 each.

The new 'Next' computer developed by Steve Jobs, previously with Apple, uses a magneto-optical disc drive instead of a conventional Winchester 'hard' magnetic disc. The Next disc system, made by Canon, uses a clever trick to overcome a cleft stick problem which has so far bedevilled designers working with magneto-optical technology. Rare earth materials which give a large change of polarization, and are thus easily read, are unstable. Their switched magnetic state changes too easily. More stable materials switch the polarization angle by only 0.1 degrees, making the recording hard to read.

The Canon disc has two rare earth layers, one with low coercivity, but high curie point, on top of another layer with high coercivity and low curie point. The top layer gives a strong polarization shift, and its short-life magnetic state is continually backed up by the long-life layer underneath: Canon claims 10 years.

Canon says it aims to offer an optical system for computers which beats hard

disk for price and performance within two years. Canon quotes the lowest prices yet; the company says it will supply other manufacturers with raw product at \$1,500 for the drive and \$50 per disk. Shop prices would, of course, be much higher and thus far too high to attract domestic users who will use the disc to store an hour of music.

The price of MO discs will always be high because several layers of different material must be deposited by vacuum techniques such as sputtering. Discs for a system called 'phase change' are potentially much cheaper to make because only one layer of material need be deposited, and this may be achieved by applying a drop and dispersing it by spinning the disc at high speed.

Japanese company Matsushita favours phase change technology for erasable recording. The idea of phase change technology is not new. Stanford Ovshinsky, and Energy Conversion Devices in Troy, Michigan, hold master patents, some covering work done twenty years ago. All the major electronics companies, including Matsushita, have been obliged to buy licences from ECD.

The disc is coated with tellurium alloy (eg with germanium) and the laser beam made just strong enough to alter the chemical structure but not so strong that it melts the metal. By juggling with the heating and cooling rates, it is possible to change pit-shaped areas of the coating between amorphous and crystalline state, and back again. The different states have different reflection characteristics, so the pits can be read by a lower power laser beam. Because the effect is reversible, the recording is erasable.

Whereas magneto-optical recordings must so far be erased before the disc is re-used, phase change systems allow the recorder to directly over-write one recording with another. This makes the recording process twice as fast. In theory at least, phase change discs can be made to sell for a few pounds each. Unfortunately, although laboratory samples of phase change discs have long been available, no-one has yet succeeded with mass production of discs which are stable in use over a period of years.

Both erasable systems suffer from practical disadvantages, too. The change in reflective characteristic is slight compared to the change in reflection caused by the pits and bumps on a pressed CD. So far neither type of disc can be replayed in a domestic CD player.

Also, the coatings on magneto-optical and phase change discs are easily damaged by handling, so the disc must be protected in a caddy from which it emerges only when loaded into a player. None of the domestic players sold over the last six years has been designed to cope with a caddy. Hence the electronics industry has been looking at alternative technologies for domestic CD-R. Current favourites are discs with a coating of polymer which changes colour, or physically deforms, when struck with a laser.

DYNAMIC RESPONSE. DYNAUDIO



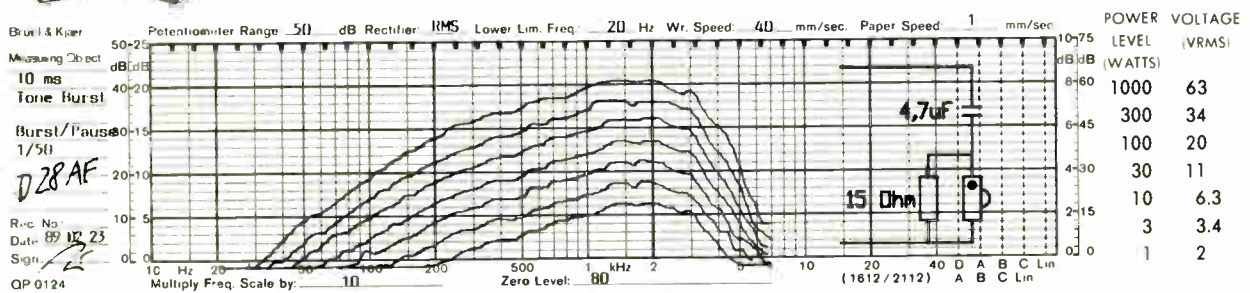
Today most of the known loudspeakers have no problems with power handling when operated under normal conditions. Yet little attention has been paid to the dynamic response of speaker drivers.

Even if the stated power handling of a driver is several hundred watts peak, the acoustic power is not increasing at the same rate as the increased input power. Many tweeters, for example, can convert only about 50 watts into their maximum SPL. When they receive higher levels, more and more of the power is converted into heat, and more distortion is produced. The tweeter is now COMPRESSING. Midranges and woofers start compressing at a later stage. The frequency response now is dependent on input power level.

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Shown curves are measured with TONE BURSTS, signal/break ratio is 1/100.

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By Roksan

The change can be permanent, for write-once discs, or reversible, for erasable discs. The trick is to find a material which will respond to the small temperature variations created when a low power laser tracks a rapidly rotating disc, but does not lose the recording if the disc is left in a hot, or brightly lit, room. Any dyes used must undergo a sufficiently radical colour change to make the recording unambiguous to the readout laser in the CD player. The coating must also change colour only in the area struck by the laser, with sharp edges and no tendency for the colour change to spread or fade over a period of years.

Hitachi has tried using an alloy of silver and zinc which turns pink after heating to above 300°C. When heated again it returns to its original silver colour. Philips has experimented with a wide range of organic dyes.

In April 1988 the Tandy Corporation of Texas announced Thor, which it described as 'major breakthrough in optical media – the first CD-compatible record and erase technology'. Tandy said it would market a consumer disc recorder, costing under \$500, within 18 months. This later stretched to two years. Tandy refused to say how Thor would work but later admitted that it had taken a licence from Optical Data Inc of Beaverton, Oregon to use ODI's patents on novel dye polymer technology.

The ODI patents explain how a blank disc is coated with polymer into which two differently coloured dyes are diffused. The recorder has two lasers, of different wavelength. For recording, a first beam passes through the top layer of the disc coating and is absorbed by the lower layer. This heats and melts, causing tiny bumps to form on the disc surface. These bumps represent the digital data signal to be recorded.

To erase the recording, the other laser is used. It is blocked by the top layer and thus heats it. This causes the bumps to melt into a flat layer. The polymer is soft and rubbery at ambient temperature, so it deforms easily. ODI likens the effect to pushing up a group of pencils from below to create a bump in the array. The company claims that discs which will hold a recording for between ten and a hundred years and can be erased and re-used up to 500 times before the material permanently deforms or degrades.

Tandy was only one of several firms to take a licence from ODI. The Philips and du Pont joint venture, pdO, took one to test the ODI dye material and see if it would reflect light like a pressed CD and thus work in a CD player.

PdO found that performance was satisfactory for the first recording. But the signal available from the disc deteriorated significantly after the first erasure because, once deformed, the surface could never be returned to its virgin flat state. After the first deterioration the disc performance stayed constant for a few hundred record/erase cycles.

PA Technology of Cambridge has also

been working on write-once discs. The PA disc is coated with a dyed polymer which bleaches in laser light. PA claims its dye will never regain its colour after bleaching: so the recording is permanent.

ICI has developed similar chemistry, but uses it to coat flexible sheets instead of rigid discs. A polyester substrate is coated with an infra-red absorbing dye polymer which melts when struck with the beam from a solid state laser. ICI calls its material 'digital paper'. Although an attractive idea for computers, the system is unlikely to interest the consumer electronics industry because the 'paper' discs are not compatible with existing CD players.

Tandy had always, until the Thor announcement, worked on the principle of putting products in its shops for sale before talking about them. It was thus out of character for Tandy to promise something that was years away.

Tandy has since gone quiet. 'Now they are behaving like Tandy', said an engineer from a hi-fi company as puzzled as everyone else over whether Tandy can deliver. Later this promise stretched to 2 years.

Whether or not Tandy delivers Thor as promised, the company's announcement caused such a stir in the world's financial press that it convinced the Japanese electronics companies that they must work harder on their own CD-R systems.

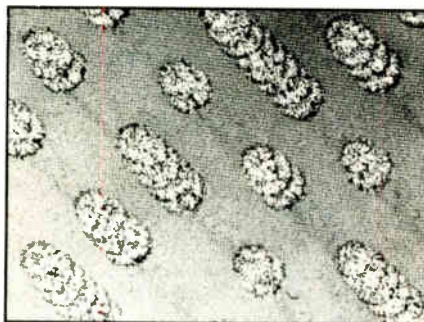
All the major Japanese companies have been working on low cost rivals to Thor. But they have been too worried about the reaction of the record industry and the politics of DAT to reveal their plans.

Japanese chemical company Taiyo Yuden was the first to go public. Taiyo launched its first audio tape product, under the curious brand name 'That's', in 1983. Because the company was new to the audio industry, it adopted an aggressive stance, later pushing DAT while other tape companies were running scared of the record industry.

In November 1988, flushed with its market success with That's tape, Taiyo announced 'That's CD-R'.

'Since the recorded CD satisfies the (Philips/Sony) Red Book, which is the international standard for CDs', said Taiyo, 'it can be directly reproduced without special accessories'.

Whereas Thor is erasable, Taiyo's disc is not. It makes a recording which is then permanent, like a pressed CD. This keeps the price down.



Philips WORM disc: domains from a write laser form the equivalent of CD 'pits'

The Taiyo disc is bright green and there is doubt over how it works, Taiyo has said that a polycarbonate disc blank is coated with an organic material which gets hot when struck with the beam from a solid state laser running at around four times the power of the laser used in a CD player (8mW instead of 2mW). The organic material decomposes to form a gas bubble which deforms the polycarbonate substrate to create a pit similar in dimensions to the pits formed by moulding molten polycarbonate in a CD pressing factory. Tests carried out by Philips, however, suggest that the pits are more likely bleached dye spots.

Taiyo claims that shelf life of a blank disc, before recording, is at least ten years, and archival life after recording is at least another ten years. The only proviso is that the discs should not be left in direct sunlight for long periods.

Taiyo said it planned to start sample shipments from December 1988 and full style production during the first half of 1989. Taiyo also said reassuringly that the 'management of copyright is easy' and suggested that copyright royalties could be built into the price of blank discs. Because they can be used only once, the royalty is easily assessed.

Not surprisingly this did not appease the record companies. On hearing about Taiyo's disc, the industry body IFPI announced that its Board 'reacted vigorously to the reported development of CD-R (write once) and CD-E (erasable) compact disc systems... (which) represent an even greater potential threat to copyright owners than digital audio tape'.

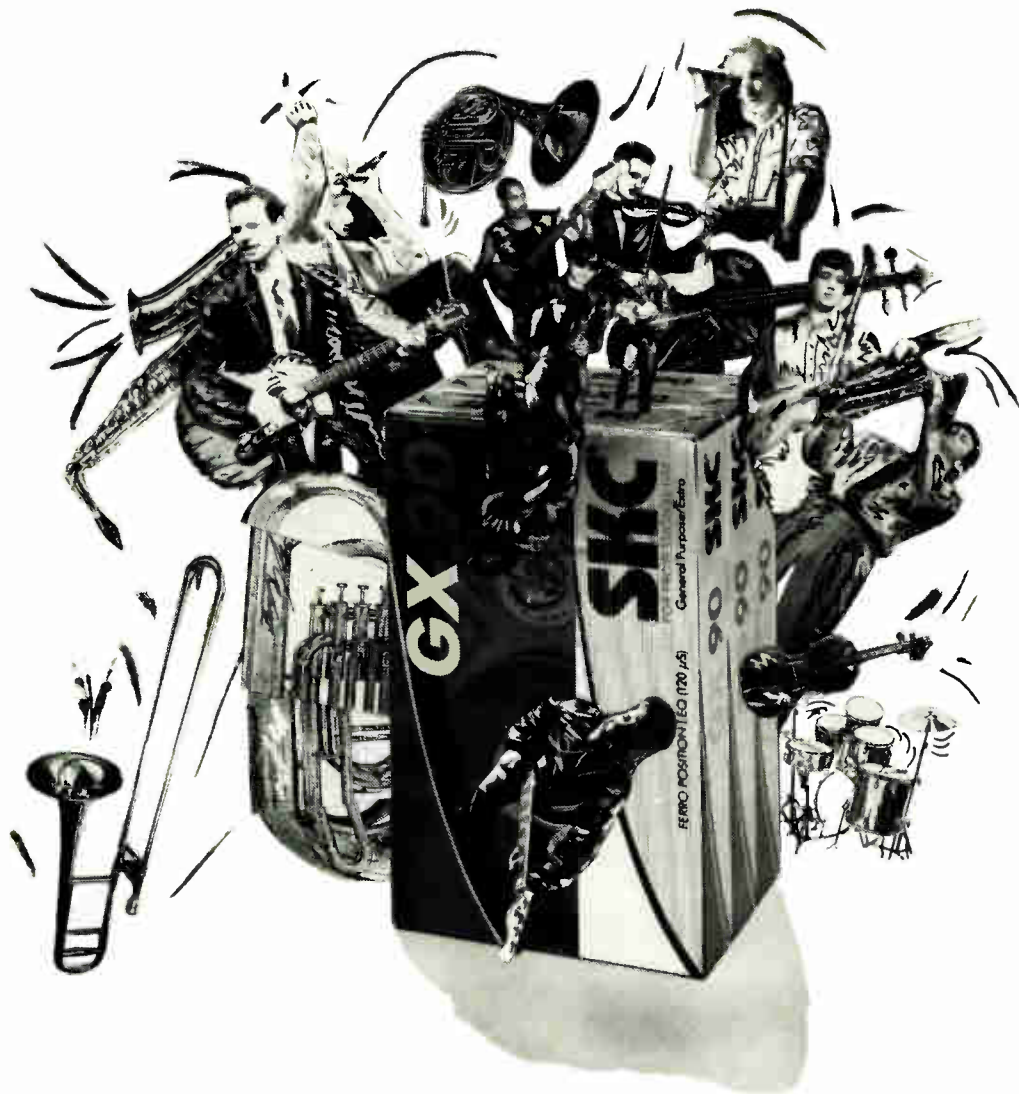
'The price of a twin deck CD-R copier-player is estimated to be slightly higher than normal CD players', went on the IFPI, 'CD-R blank discs are expected to cost a third of the price of pre-recorded CDs. The consequent economic loss to the industry would be incalculable'.

In an internal memorandum, written for the IFPI when Taiyo announced its write-once disc, Philips predicted that mass production of CD-R could start in 1990 and estimates the likely cost of a twin-deck CD-R recorder, between £80 and £100 more than a CD audio player. The blank discs, says Philips, will cost £3-£5.

The IFPI's reaction convinced the electronics industry that it must now keep quiet about CD-R as a domestic product. Like Tandy, Taiyo has found it politic to lie low. All companies with an interest in DC-R will only talk about their use as an industrial tool. In addition to the well established use for computer data storage, recordable discs can hold TV pictures, either for editing programmes or storing a library of still photographs. They can also be used to produce short runs of music, or CD-ROM data discs, without the expense of a factory production process.

But whatever the record industry says or does, no-one can uninvent digital recordings. It is now inevitable that the public will get digital recorders one day. The only questions now are, when and how much they will cost? ↯

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BERLIN FUNK AUSSTELLUNG



Easily the largest and most important consumer electronics show in Europe, the Berlin Funkausstellung provided a first sighting of many new products – but not much of DAT!

by Ken Kessler

Dateline: Berlin on the eve of the 50th Anniversary of WWII. Editor Harris's instructions were simple. 'Find out all you can about DAT... and don't mention the War.'

Persevering at the 1989 Internationale Funkausstellung was a task for the hardest, because this show is huge, with nearly 400 exhibitors, Grundig and Philips taking over entire halls... and each is enormous.

I had 48 hours in which to stalk the wild DAT recorder and was rewarded with a mere three models on which to report. The Grundig Fine Arts DAT recorder completes the company's range of true high-end components but looked conventional for all that, while Toshiba showed a Casio-like portable. Then I saw the Aiwa 'personal'.

If I understood the exploded diagram, then the little Aiwa is going to be the DAT machine which converts even KK, who – up until now – has had no interest whatsoever in the format. For starters, it measures only 114.8×94×36.8mm and weighs only 610g in playback-only form,

no larger than any normal personal cassette player. You want to record or play it through your hi-fi? Plug on a small, match-box-sized module with the A/D converter and mic inputs. The unit was shown with a small stand which doubles as a battery charger, and the whole package, with every module in place, never grows much larger than a Sony Walkman Pro. Price? No-one would say, but a wee birdie tells me that in basic form (player, recording module and battery recharger) the UK price could be under £700.

With DAT out of the way, I was free to do what I've done at every German hi-fi show I've attended: revel in the oddball speakers which only the Germans can produce.

ELAC (not to be confused with the UK driver maker) showed a Bakker/van den Hul-designed 'omni-directional' add-on ribbon tweeter, the 4π Plus. The design uses a ribbon-strip wrapped horizontally around the base of the dome, in effect a ribbon 'loop' which radiates sound in a full 360 degrees. The ELAC 4π Plus connects directly to the amplifiers; it features an on-board electronic filter (and protection circuitry) so the rest of the music below its 4.5kHz-35kHz operating range is fed to the existing speaker system. Nominal impedance is 4ohms and recommended power is 80-400W, so this is one add-on which shouldn't prove difficult to employ.

R.R Raumklang is a manufacturer which seems intent on offering every oddball combination of drivers and cabinets likely to appeal to a Bauhaus-made German yuppie. The Strathearn logo appeared on its ribbon/cone hybrid systems which resembled Daleks, Inca pyramids or 1930s American skyscrapers. The Germans have this thing for see-through products so they can stare at the innards; R.R made certain that even the internal wiring was picturesque by using coiled telephone-style cables.

Similar to the R.R cylinder was ES Sinfonic's LS 1200, with all-acrylic enclosure containing two 10in bass drivers (one firing up at the top, the other firing down and mounted at the bottom). On the front panel of this six-sided 1250mm tall tower are a mid-driver, tweeter and super-tweeter, and all internal connec-

tions employ – you've guessed it – coiled telephone cable. Available in clear, grey or brown Perspex (with other colours to order), the LS 1200 has a retail price of DM5000 per pair.

But it wasn't all clear plastic. I saw six-foot-tall pyramids with a 'footprint' of only 8x8in and sporting a 4in cone and tiny ribbon, four-way systems made up of enclosures which looked like stacked oyster shells and a range of speakers finished in any colour or pattern enclosure you could desire. The latter, from ATL, included fairly conventional box systems in red, blue, purple, yellow, baby blue, lime green and others.

The rather wild multi-way system from H+P Consequence, best described as stacked oyster shells, featured a ribbon tweeter, a Rogers midrange unit and a massive subwoofer; I heard them in active form making fine sounds in a room I wouldn't have imagined suitable for demonstrating the lowliest ghetto blaster. Despite severe room-derived bass problems, the speakers yielded supremely natural female vocals and ultra-quick transients. Price in Germany? DM22,500, or roughly £7500.

Phonar showed a fine two-way system with an enclosure and stand made entirely of white marble, while a company called Delec offered a pair of made-to-order-only towers (at DM10,000) with a deeply-curved baffle, the side view not unlike a crescent of near-lunar aspect. The curved baffle houses the mid and treble drivers, while each side features an outward-firing woofer. These flanked the slickest pre-amp I've ever seen. Delec's back-lit Perspex, full-remote control unit features twin toroidal power supplies, vertical circuit



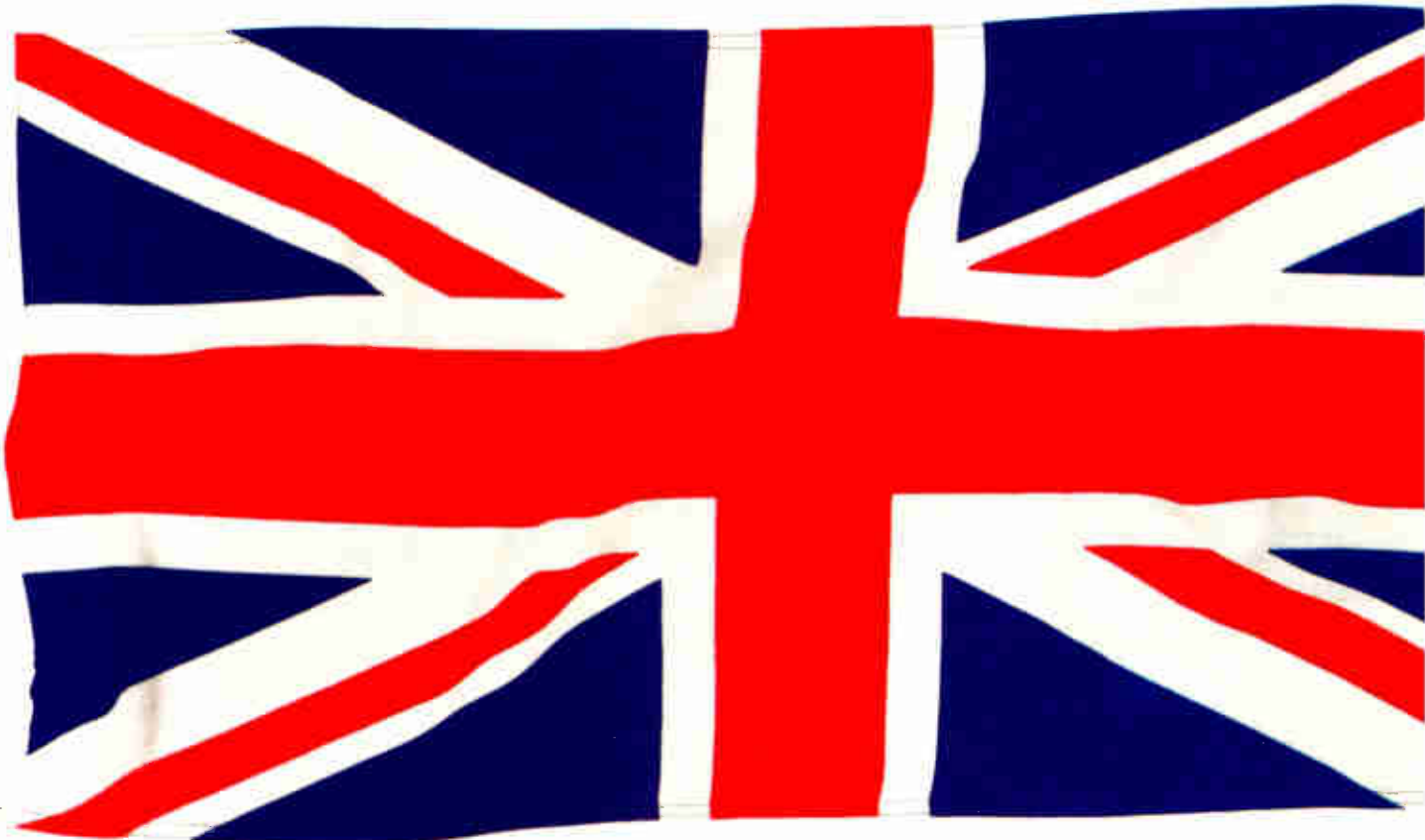
Aiwa's true portable DAT player (top-left), and Backes & Muller novel pre-amp design, above

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If you ask most people interested in Hi-Fi what they know about NAD, they'll probably tell you about the 3020 and 3120 amplifiers which are the biggest selling amplifiers in the world. They'll also tell you about the frequent awards we get for our innovative design. They might even tell you about our exhaustive press coverage. And if they are in any way concerned with the construction and design of Hi-Fi equipment, they'll tell you about our reputation for producing low cost, high performance audio components.



However, when you ask people our country of origin, you'll get some very strange answers indeed. Some will tell you we're Japanese or Far Eastern, others will simply say they don't know. But few will give you an accurate answer.

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NAD, standing for New Acoustic Dimension, was founded in the UK in 1972. Its Head Offices are not as many might guess in Tokyo, but in Finchley, North London. It is there that all of our research and development programmes are carried out and where our highly prestigious design team, design and refine audio equipment.



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The Music Room

Vol. 5, No. 6

NEWSLETTER

November 1989

The London Hi-Fi Show provides our annual barometer and showcase, each September, usually at the end (we all hope) of a long quiet summer. How can we tempt the customers to spend with us, in competition with many other well-heeled industries? The ideal answer would be to demonstrate well-constructed equipment making music so vivid and natural that people would be convinced of the excellent value and investment of even the most expensive high-end exotica.

As usual, few exhibitors managed to convince the public with what would be achieved, and one could be forgiven for suspecting that the industry is receding to mass consumerism rather than proceedings towards excellence. Those few exhibitors who can see, or hear, what it is all about proved that hotel rooms *can* sound good, and that even in commercial terms, excellence is one way (surely the best) to succeed in the Hi-Fi Business.

We were delighted that our major allies were, again, making the best sounds and the best news (or are we biased? I think not). Absolute Sounds can be depended upon, and the faithful in great numbers now beat an annual pilgrimage to their room; perhaps those attractive young ladies also pull the crowds? Equally attractive were the amazing baby Apogee Stage Ones: at £2,300 they are more room/amplifier/budget practical than ever before, and represent the most democratic step in Apogee's distinguished career.

This room also highlighted the **KRELL**, **DIGITAL** CD Player and Processor. The new power amplifier, **KSA-80b** (denoting balanced input) is also a stunning revelation: far better than any previous "entry-level" high-end power amp. at £3,890 it has to be! it is!



ANALOGUE IS DEAD?

The record industry is doing its best to kill its golden goose in order to make a clearer path for its silver substitutes – but as the price of "the perfect sound" now soars to **KRELL** and **WADIA** levels, the humbler Philips hype receded into the grander scheme of consumer confusion.

Sanity prevailed in several rooms, and we learned of many exciting plans to launch and extend some exciting titles on audiophile vinyl. On the hardware side, there are many new and exciting designs from companies who not only believe in the superiority of analogue but who are creating it.

Foremost among these is **Rokan Engineering**, and their budget tonearm and cartridge amplifier located within the turntable, not only enhances the sonic quality, but logically makes a record player become a standard line output source component. There were several other announcements including a superior and upgradable power supply which must be heard to be fully understood: so **Roksan** and the **Music Room** have arranged to let you see and hear these developments. Dates are November 21st and

23rd for Manchester and Glasgow, respectively. Write, call or telephone for details.

Mr Kesser can take some pleasure in the number of valve amplifiers, now as elegant, economic and reliable as anything solid-state, and much more sonically melodious and distinctively designed. The **Audio by Design** integrated amplifiers are now well-proven and affordable, so what can be the excuse for delay? Ask for a dem! For the more ambitious, the **BEARD CA.35/P35**, **EAR 509** and **549** and the world standard by **AUDIO RESEARCH**. As Porsche put it, building upon success, the new **SP-9 II** has devastated those who hear it, and we can really claim that the new model at the new price of £1,880 is underpriced! No, we haven't lost our bearings – it is a lot of money, but it puts more music into your loudspeakers than you probably can imagine. Talk to us about the current range of power amplifiers, one for each budget, as they say; and don't forget that the affordable cables and interconnects from **Audio Research** fully justify this company's expertise and reputation.

We must emphasise that

while high-end is our privilege and pleasure, we do specialise in all that is best in audio: the best CD Players and the best in budget and Japanese Hi-Fi, although these may not be the *absolute* reference. One company who increasingly bridge that gap is **MUSICAL (BRITISH) FIDELITY** and much as we hate to compliment the man most feared by dealers since IT, their hotel room proved that one could produce fine music from a £200 amplifier and a small pair of well-designed loudspeakers. Had we not already marvelled at the **B1** amplifier a few days before the show, we would probably have suspected some sort of tweak.

Dealers, manufacturers and public alike must learn not to throw together systems on the basis of convenience. We meet an increasing number of bargain hunters buying mail order in order to "afford" excellent. Dealers are justified by our ability to advise and demonstrate, substitute, plan and build Hi-Fi systems. If you are not prepared to trust your dealer, then change to another until you find satisfaction. A good understanding and relationship is the best way forward. We must make a living from you, the customer, but we must only expect to do so by proving to be cost-effective. Second opinions are valid, but would any other professional people tolerate the degree of shopping around and messing about which sometimes occurs in this business?

As often, we draw your attention to some of our second-hand and ex-dem bargains. If you fancy a pair of **Martin-Logan** Statements (and who doesn't) we can offer you a pair of **AUDIOSTATIC** Monolith 2's for £1,200 and if required, a pair of **JBL-370** sub-woofers with crossover box for £500: allow for £100 carriage if outwith our areas. First come first served, so be quick!

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"TENTH ANNIVERSARY"

boards, inputs to spare and a price tag of only DM3500 – a snip when you see the construction and facilities. A power amp should follow shortly, with a tuner and CD player in 1990.

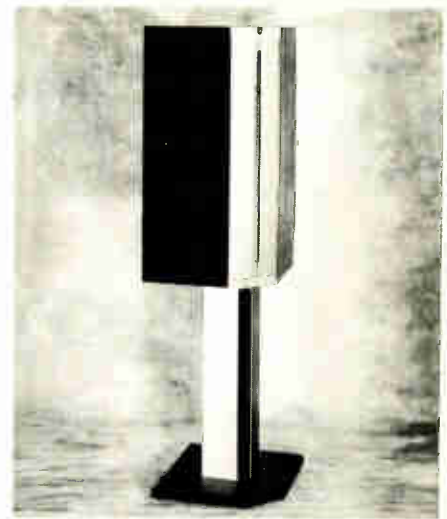
One of the strangest speakers of all came not from a German maker but from our own **B&W**, with its massive Matrix 800 tower systems. Described by one wag as looking like what you'd get if you took the four weirdest German speakers at the show and glued them together, each Matrix 800 features a pair of massive woofers in their own ported enclosures, one mounted at the bottom and one at the top. Sandwiched in between is a third enclosure housing two mid-drivers, above and below what one well-known UK manufacturer described as 'Oh, no, not another bloody gold dome!', which signified his own loss of exclusivity in that arena. Lots of angles, black and white surfaces, imposing presence, a German tag of DM30,000 – the Matrix 800 did not go unnoticed and the queues at the dem room were among the longest at the show.

With all due respect, though, these are not 'real world' speakers if price is a factor, and there's a strong case for emphasizing the products that large numbers of audiophiles will actually purchase. In which case, the hottest products at the show (for me, anyway) were **Celestion's** new ribbon loudspeakers. Celestion's design team, led by Graham Bank, has produced ribbon/cone hybrids in box enclosures which combine the following attributes: sensible impedances of 4ohms; sensitivity of 86dB for 1W; a seamless transition from cone to ribbon; and price tags within the realms of sanity. The 3000 model incorporates the ribbon plus an 8in

bass driver in an enclosure measuring only 650×330×300mm (hwd). The speakers cross over 900Hz, can be bi-wired or bi-amped and will sell in the UK for only £699 per pair in black (the 3000) or £799 per pair in walnut (the 5000). The 7000 is a floor-standing version with two 8in drivers, one operating up to 300Hz and the other to 900Hz where the 500mm ribbon takes over. The 7000 stands 1200mm tall, with virtually the same cross section as the smaller model.

German electronics reflect the nation's apparent infatuation with bomb-proof build quality and superlative finishes. The aforementioned Delec pre-amp was but one of a host of over-engineered beauties, among the standouts being a whole new line from **Einstein**. Beyond doubt, the Einstein pre-amp and tuner present the cleanest facias ever seen; the only way to go more 'minimalist' would be to remove the knobs and legends. Both the pre-amp (DM2500) and the analogue tuner (DM1800) feature gloss-black faceplates machined from 25mm slabs of aluminium, done up to perfection. The pre-amp offers passive RIAA phono stages, m-m and m-c capability, dual-mono construction on two separate boards placed one above the other and a whole lot more which I couldn't translate. 'Abgestimmter CD-Eingang'? You tell me.

Grundig's Fine Arts range of high-end components, in addition to the DAT player, has been increased with the appearance of a black version of the gorgeous gold tube pre-amp. A special version of the Michell-like Transrotor turntable (in black and gold like the rest of the range) and a three-way speaker with ribbon tweeter. Grundig in the UK seems to be 'reactivating'; here's hoping



Celestion launched its new series of speakers incorporating ribbon technology

that they bring over the Fine Arts products and not just portables and midis.

Linear Acoustic showed an intriguing range of pre- and power amps, the former available in yellow Perspex [Do you have shares in ICI? – News Ed] for DM5,150 – no doubt to match the various acrylic loudspeakers. **Klimo** unveiled the most unusual valve power amp I've seen in years, dubbed the Linnet and able to drive loads of 1ohm with 100W. This monoblock features a valve complement of six EL34s, and ECC83 and an ECC82.

I got a close look at **Backes & Muller's** gorgeous three-box/single chassis pre-amp, a novel approach to isolation without requiring lots of sloppy interconnects. The Phase II's architecture consists of three chassis connected by thick channels. The front, sloped, portion contains only the controls, the finned middle section is the power supply, and the rear – a mirror-image of the front – houses the inputs and outputs. Features of this unit, which costs DM7860, include balanced XLR outputs, m-m and m-c phono sections, two tape loops and a choice of finishes (white, black or black-and-red).

On the turntable front, **Symphonic Line** showed a marvellous high-mass machine painted a fetching shade of blue. Selling for DM18,000, this plays sports a 22kg platter, fine speed adjust on all three speeds, outboard power supply, Papst motor and a 700g puck. **Dual** launched the Golden 1 with real gold finish and 78rpm as well; but the hot news must be the appearance of a pre-production sample of the **Linn** Basik, the long-awaited budget deck from the revered Scottish maker. Your £250 buys you, not an Axis sans suspension and speed control, but a two-speed Rotel-lookalike with a cast, machined plastic inner platter fitted to the Axis/LP12 bearing, speed change via stepped pulley and a featherweight plinth made from a folded Mediate sheet. The price will include the Akito tonercarm (Linn's replacement for the Basik-Plus), but will not include a cartridge.

Space precludes any more, but take my advice if you like to mix hi-fi with your holidays: start saving for 1991. ♣

Philips and DAT

In a paper discussing its position *vis a vis* 'copyright and new technologies', Philips has stated that it intends only to market machines featuring the Serial Copy Management System (SCMS, the name given to the once-only copying circuitry) – as a 1990 product. Philips has recognized that CD-R and CD-E (CD-Recordable and CD-Erasable) will present similar problems, so plans are already underway to form another joint working group representing the various parts of the industry; this is the only way that the new CD formats will be spared the debacle of the DAT launch. Philips has also stated that it will not market CD-E or CD-R until the copyright issue for those formats is solved.

The key to the DAT agreement is the SCMS copy-prevention system which actually throws away one of the major sops to the record industry provided by current domestic machines. SCMS-equipped players can copy CDs digitally at 44.1kHz, but the resultant copy onto digital tape cannot be copied digitally. Thus, the new system allows high quality first-generation copying but eliminates the possibility of second-genera-

tion or more copying. The wisdom behind this is that users who copy their CDs for in-car use will be allowed to, while the pirates will have a tedious chore of making copies one by one.

SCMS works by accessing the copyright status (the 'copy bit') and the source identification (the category code) which is supplied on every CD in parallel with the music. When the DAT recorder checks on the various conditions before it can record (eg 'Is there a tape in the recorder?'), the SCMS will ask 'Can this source be copied?' If the source is another DAT which happens to be an SCMS copy of a CD, the circuitry will prevent digital copying because of a subcode added during the original copying stage.

DAT copies of analogue sources, eg LPs, can be used to produce second-generation and beyond copies, but it seems that Philips is banking on some non-existent faith in the superiority of digital. Such banter is supposed to plant in the consumer's mind the notion that anything other than a digital-to-digital transfer is not worth hearing, and that gratitude should be expressed for the allowance of at least one digital copy.

Pinewood Music

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APOGEE's incredible new miniature loudspeaker, the STAGE, caused a sensation when it was launched at the Chicago CES in the summer. More recently it was voted Best Sound of Show in Germany, beating its nearest rival by an amazing 42 per cent.

If you thought the Caliper Signature was a baby, then the STAGE is a midget. Standing no more than waist high, it is a shining example of Apogee Acoustics' dedication to making high end excellence more accessible in terms of price and domestic acceptability.

How can such a baby take on, and beat, its rivals?

- The sound is sensational for a speaker of any size, combining a seamless, open and dynamic presentation with a remarkable and accurate bass.
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- The Stage has a 90db sensitivity and can be driven by a variety of amplification commensurate with its price.
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You may have asked yourself in the past whether you could afford an Apogee: with the introduction of this tiny giant, you cannot afford not to.

Pinewood Music always has the full range of Apogee loudspeakers, and the fantastic DAX active crossover, on demonstration. Brian Rivas will be delighted to give you a demonstration. Please telephone for an appointment.

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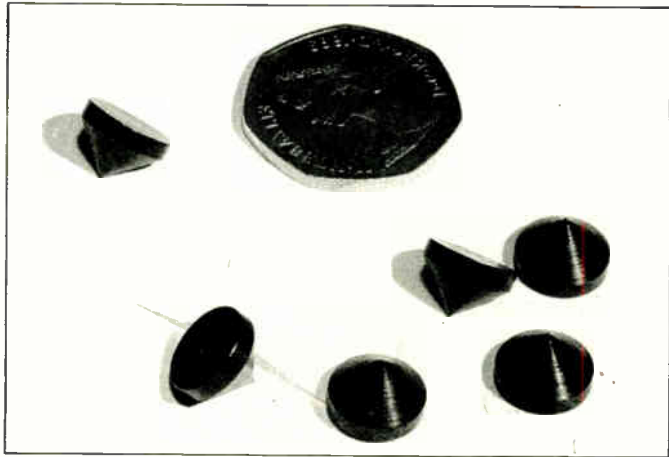
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A C C E S S O R I E S C L U B



TOPPERS

An accidental discovery by Partington resulted in stick-on speaker supports. Ken Kessler enthuses

Peter Partington smiled and told me in his best 'Aw, shucks' manner that he'd discovered an alternative to top-mounted spikes for his new range of speaker stands. His findings over the years suggest that Blu-tack between stand and speaker is just as popular as upward facing spikes and that a number of customers not using spikes don't like those ugly holes in the top plate – especially because they're usually situated where the Blu-tack would go.

The new stands had to provide facilities for either Blu-tack or the small rubber feet supplied with the stands, which meant producing a top plate without holes. Peter didn't mind, because drilling those threaded holes takes time and adds to the cost, and he wanted the stands to be as reasonably priced as possible. But enough people insist on upward firing spikes, so allowances had to be made. It was decided instead to produce a 'stick-on' spike, and so the Partington Toppers were born.

The Toppers kit consists of either six cones (for £5.95) for people who prefer three-point contact between speaker and stand, or eight cones (for £7.95) for four-point contact. Each Topper measures 13mm in diameter and 8.5mm tall, and the kit includes a strip of double-sided adhesive pads. Stick a pad to each Topper and you have the option of attaching the Topper to either the speaker facing downward or on the stand's top plate facing upward. Needless to say, the addition of Toppers to a spike-less stand improved focus and bass control, especially noticeable on mini monitors like Roksan Hotcakes and Celestion 3s, which all too often are asked to do more than they should.

Having tested the benefits of cones under the electronics (namely, the hideously expensive Goldmund cones) I wanted to try the Toppers under CD players, pre-amps and so on, but their delightfully tiny size means that most rubber feet are taller than Toppers and have to be removed. Fortunately, the Radford CD player doesn't use rubber feet but Sorbothane pads, so I was able to try the Toppers under the WSCD1 and found them to be almost as effective as the Goldmund cones were under the CAL Tempest II SE. And at £5.95 for six – or just under a quid each – that compares favourably to the Goldmunds at over £40 apiece.

The Toppers are simply perfect accessories. They improve performance, they're discreet and they cost mere pocket money. They even look expensive with their semi-matt black finish. And those adhesive pads mean that siting them in a point-down manner doesn't require three hands. I'm using 'em everywhere I can.

Welcome to the Accessory of the Year, but order now. I reckon that once word gets out, Partington will be flooded with orders from other stand makers too honest to rip off the design. ↵

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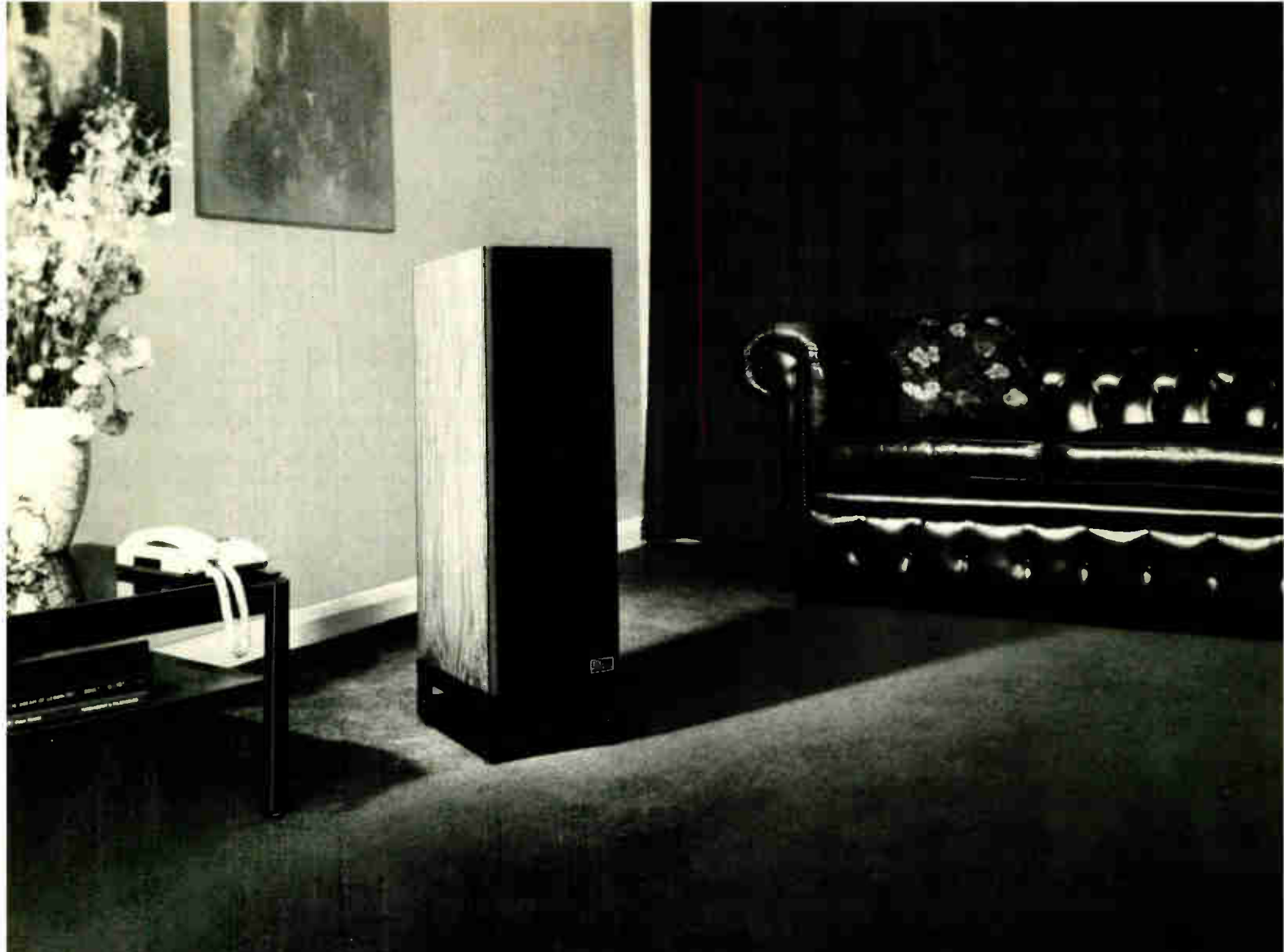
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FRANKFURT HIGH END



The Hotel Gravenbruch-Kempinski in Gravenbruch, is now home to probably the most prestigious European high end hi-fi show which saw some significant new products, and one or two world premieres. I was privileged to audition a new Hungarian combination: the RES, rumoured to sell for a cool £20,000! Superbly constructed, it sounded very promising.

The first showing of the Einstein range from importer/distributor Tubaphon Components of Bochum, represented a significant launch, with integrated amplifier, tuner, compact disc player and loudspeakers. They were impressively presented and finished and, more importantly, sounded refreshingly competent. The amplifier, a 70W per channel integrated, reportedly produces around 70A of peak current (Krell territory) and has the ability to drive down to 2ohms. Tubaphon was using it to drive the Einstein loudspeakers, a 2-way design, in passive mode, with good if not startling results. The speakers are a tower configuration, finished in the obligatory piano lacquer black, standing about 5ft high spaced directly to the floor. The integrated amplifier is a minimalist design with just volume and input controls either side of a centrally mounted on/off switch. The CD player starts life as a relatively inexpensive Goldstar unit and is subsequently modified with new analogue stages and power supplies. Tubaphon also showed the new Orange power amplifier a 35 Watt tube design, built in Germany, that can be switched to Class A mode and triode mode by the user.

The Orange pre-amplifier was in use in a second Tubaphon room with the new small Bartolomeo power amplifier (DM3500) driving the Roksan Darius loudspeakers; the source was the Roksan Xerxes with Artemiz and Shiraz. Ariston showed its new CD player, together with tuner and a seemingly improved amplifier all in black Perspex.

Mission showed the new 767 speaker,

Extraordinary new products from around the world made their debut in Germany

by John Watson

which debuted in Chicago earlier in the year, with active drive for the low frequencies using modified versions of the Cyrus 2 amplifier with PSX power supplies. The sound here was very promising, given the limitations of a small room.

Audio Components, a German equivalent to Absolute Sounds of the UK, demonstrated the new Krell goodies but a busy schedule of timed demonstrations did not permit me to listen. However, I managed to listen to the Spectral CD player, a magnificently constructed piece with a refreshing appearance, still some way short of a good analogue source but more acceptable than most for CD. In use were the recently announced JPW Sonata speakers (DM600!) powered by a McLaren integrated amplifier from NZ. Burmester showed a new tuner, a magnificently presented and constructed unit finished in chrome and also a novel suspension system for their pre-amps – four coil springs fixed to the corners of the underside of an extended top plate such that the pre-amp hung below.

Phonosophie, the Naim distributor from Hamburg, showed 2 modified versions of a newly launched DM1000 Thorens record player, the 2001. Ingo Hansen was conducting comparisons between a Phonosophie 3 (née Thorens 2001, with new bearing, pulley and chip-board in place of MDF plinth) with Naim ARO/Linn Troika and P12/Ekos/Troika. The Phonosophie 3 record player, with standard Thorens arm (DM2500) was being used in a second room with the new Royd speakers, an elegant small floor standing speaker rather nicely finished.

Teledyne AR was showing two new Rowen ('powered by AR') models from its Swiss distributor; a large floor-standing tower, the R-S and a compact bookshelf model. The recently announced Musical Fidelity B1 integrated amplifier was in evidence in the ATR (Audio Trade) room. On static display in the ATR room was a most interesting integrated 35W tube



Postl & Schmid modular pre-amp (above), Audio Exclusive room (left), and Swiss Bolero blue marble speakers (below)

amplifier from Copland of Denmark with a projected price of around DM3000.

SAM, the DNM distributor, surprised me with a collection of Crimson Elektrik 600 series amplifier, long since gone from the UK scene since the demise of the company but in evidence here in a variety of colours! Audio Physic showed a quite magnificently finished tower speaker using SEAS drivers. The cabinet was finished on the panel sides in veneer from the root of a walnut tree with edge trimming in solid walnut. A Roksan Xerxes/Artemiz/Shiraz was employed here with a DNM 6-pack pre and PA-2 power amplifier – one of the better sounds.

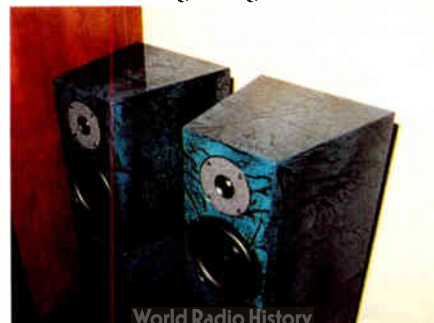
Clearaudio showed a new range of cartridges – the Insider, Accurate and Signature with resonance free gold and rhodium coated bodies. Omtec launched the Jubilee power amplifier celebrating 10 years in business. One unique feature of the Jubilee is that it can connect it to any mains voltage without adjustment. 120W per channel with the first 20 – 25 true Class A.

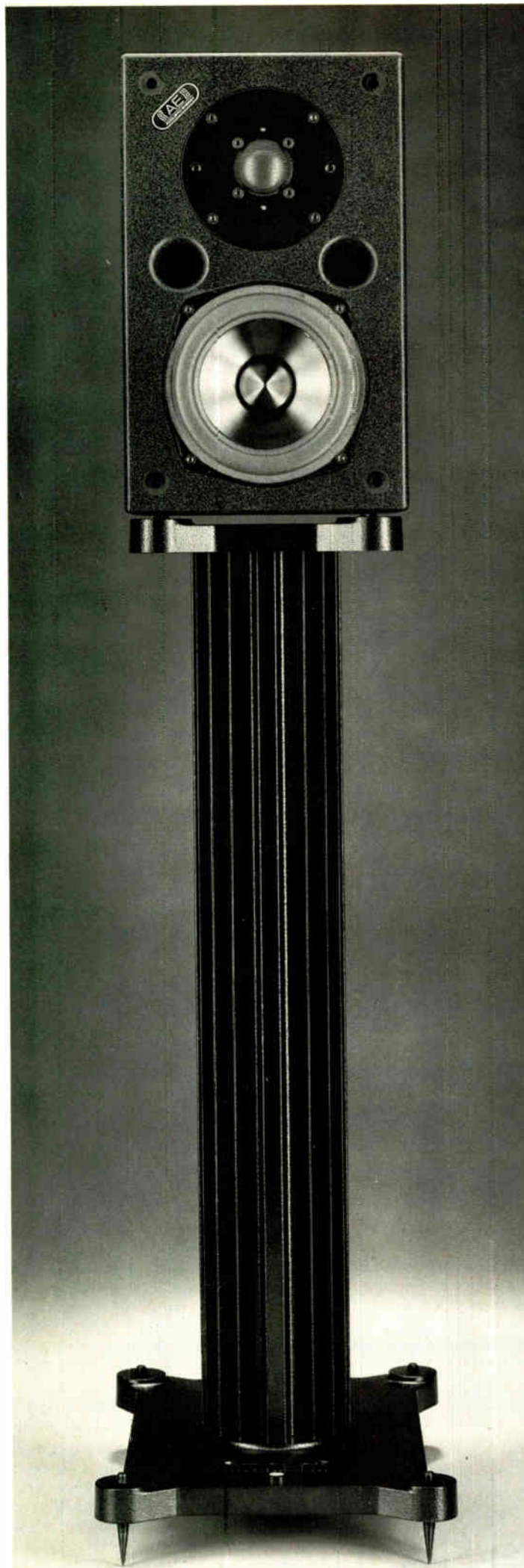
Cables and connectors abounded as usual in Germany with new products from WBT, Monitor pc and Isoda: now with European distribution by Kurt Hecker, Isoda showed some new hybrid interconnects and an all copper series of speaker and interconnects. Tubaphon were showing the Espace cables from France, apparently designed for use by the European Space Agency for Ariana.

On the big amplifier front BR Elektroakustik showed the Nachtigall (Nightingale) amplifiers – massive construction and stunning appearance. Audiosky displayed the NRG amplifiers from Walled Lake, Michigan – 200W per channel class A stereo unit for DM20,000 (£6,500) and a 400W mono pair, again class A for DM40,000 (£13,000). The demonstration of the mono's was through the Mirage M-1 speakers from Canada with a Luxman D105u tube CD player.

An encouraging show, with great interest from the hi-fi buying public considering the DM15 (£5) entrance fee and DM10 for the show guide! ✚

[John Watson is export sales manager at Roksan]





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A STATE-OF-THE-ART PRE-AMPLIFIER: AMP 02

For moving-magnet cartridges, ADEQ's normal (unbalanced) configuration is easy to achieve. The desired (or recommended) loading resistance (eg 47k) is simply soldered into RL1 position on the DIL header. Any resistors previously fitted in R1 and RL2 positions should be omitted as they appear in shunt with RL1. Fixed biasing isn't needed for unbalanced operation, as the cartridge maintains the bias path when the DIL header is unplugged. RL3 and R2 aren't needed but, if present, can be left in situ, as LK1 (which sets unbalanced operation) shorts them. RG is normally omitted. IC1's gain is then defined at +20dB by R7, to broadly suit the majority of high quality m-ms with sensitivities between 2mV and 3.5mV per 5cm.s⁻¹. Resistor changes needed to normalize virtually any cartridge sensitivity across the range of PA sensitivities are tabulated in the builder's literature. If any aspect of setting-up is unclear, Audio Synthesis can assist.

With the much smaller values of loading capacitor required by m-m cartridges, the input RF filtration doesn't bite until low MHz frequencies, where it's nevertheless useful. If you're beset by RF breakthrough, R3 can be increased: 221R is a good starting point. R4 is left at 24R3. The DC resistance of m-m cartridges is enough to translate IC1's input bias current into an appreciable extra offset voltage. Nulling IC1's output to below $\pm 50\text{mV}$ is achieved by staggering PR1's range by adjusting the stopper resistors. Standard values for m-ms are R5=6k8, R6=39k. If more 'stagger' is needed to get PR1 into range, increase R6 to 47k. Both resistors are now mounted on the DIL header for convenience. The disc thermistor, Th1, remains unchanged. Sleeve the leads and position it to lie on top of IC1, then glue.

The balanced loading of m-m cartridges is open to experimentation. In essence, RL2 and RL3 are each set at half the loading value, eg 24k3 gives a 48.6k cartridge load. However, the provision of fixed biasing is recommended in R1,2 position, so there are no DC upsets if the header is unplugged without muting the system. So R1,2 are made 100k each. Since these appear in parallel with RL2,3, the table in figure 1 lists the amended values for RL2,3 needed to arrive at five common m-m loading values. RL1 and LK1 are omitted. If extra RF filtration is desired, be sure to increase R4 in line with R3. Last, in case you were wondering, high output m-cs ($>800\mu\text{V}$ up to 2mV) are treated like m-c cartridges, except RG is left open or otherwise set commensurate with the lower gain that's required.

IC3 is normally configured to provide 20dB of gain, enough for ADEQ to drive power amplifiers directly, if desired. If your PA's sensitivity is unusually low or high, the literature available for Audio Synthesis explains how R21's value can be adjusted to suit. As usual, R25 buffers IC3 from cable capacitance and provides a useful measure of protection against RF breakthrough, if long cables are hung on ADEQ's output. Finally, as the 0V traces in fig 3 (last month) showed, the 0V paths are subjected to the full star treatment.

To bias or not to bias?

Moving-magnets, (unlike m-cs, including high output models) are susceptible to reverse coupling, ie a small current through the coil will shift the cantilever minutely. The average m-m's DC resistance is also about one fiftieth of the load resistance, meaning they pass 95 per cent of any direct-coupled input's bias (or offset) current. The 2016's bias and offset currents flow through the cartridge in the unbalanced and balanced configuration respectively. Either way, they're of the same order, or more, than an average NE5534 specimen (a pure coincidence), and high enough *in theory* to slightly off-centre a m-m cartridge's cantilever. So why not return to using an op-amp with bias-current cancellation, like LT1037. Well, while optimized for low noise with m-cs, the 2016's sonic qualities are streets ahead of op-amps strictly 'matched' to operate at m-m impedances, like NE5534, OP37 and even LT1037. The 2016's remarkably low noise performance is slightly degraded by the noise resistance

Part 2 concludes the analogue disc board, investigates the sonic anomalies connected with AC power supplies and describes a low-noise remote power supply

by Ben Duncan

mismatch. However, in being at least 10dB quieter in the audio band than the listed devices, it can afford to lose a dB or two, leaving the m-m cartridge's own thermal noise to dominate.

Returning to DC biasing (or 'arming', to put it in a positive light), listening tests haven't revealed any degradation. Cynics can verify that the bias current passed by the 2016 is innocuous by connecting a polypropylene capacitor in series with each hot (+) input. Values between 2.2 and 10 μF are optimal. If the sonic results of installing input DC blocking are to your liking, the capacitors can be fitted in AMP-02's frame, between the input sockets and edge-connector, or else mounted at the tag-strip inside your turntable. Glueing to a non-resonant surface eg thick rubber foam, is recommended.

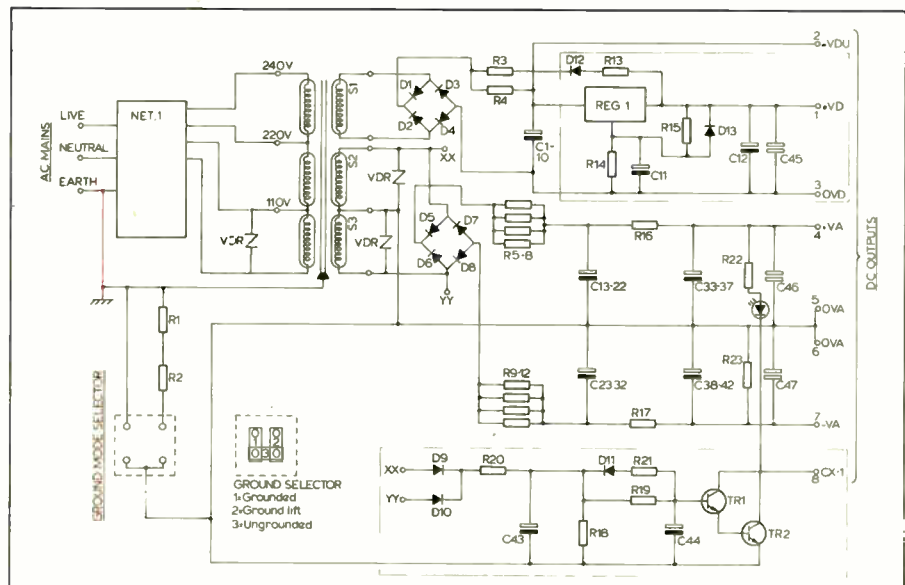


Fig 1. APS-02 schematic (see page 49)

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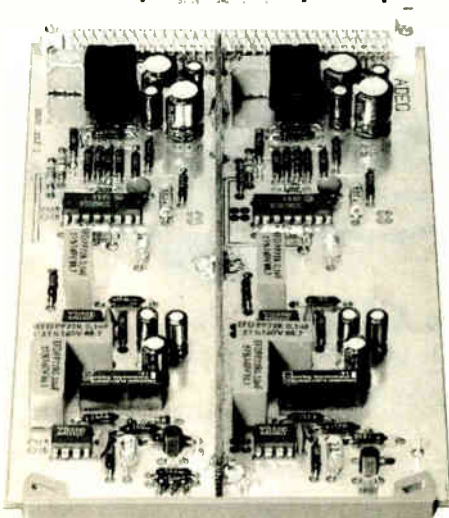
Devolution

ADEQ's plug-in powering arrangements are shown in the upper half of fig 3. Following the CD upgrade series⁹, each IC has been given its very own regulator. By placing the regulators on a separate PCB, overcrowding has been avoided while each regulator's output pin is less than 2in/50mm from the chip it's feeding. Incoming power is first regulated down to $\pm 18V$, for IC3. Considering the gain structure, ICs 1 and 2 aren't disadvantaged by a slightly lower rail voltage, and are thus able to benefit (in view of the low levels they're handling) from a second tier of voltage regulation, derived off IC3's supply, down to $\pm 15V$. As with DEQ, the left and right channel regulator arrays are derived from individual connector pins, so isolated power distribution needed for 'dual mono' construction is readily arranged.

The purpose of R23,24 is threefold: first, they provide fusible protection in the event of a short circuit or constructional error. Next, they take the *edge* off the inrush current ... rather than off the connector pins' plating – if you insert the card with power present. Third, in conjunction with C10-13, they offer up-front filtration. This is important, for while regulators are good at cancelling periodic large signal variations (normally 100/120Hz ripple and its harmonics), the feedback they employ is increasingly powerless to reduce HF garbage and noise. R31,32,39 and 40 repeat the noise filtration for the regulators 3,4,5 and 6.

The regulator circuitry follows the pattern established in 1984¹, but using Linear Technology's LT317/337, which are the original designer's upgrade of National Semiconductor's LM317/337. Since then, one further refinement has emerged. Diodes between input and output are desirable in any equipment that's engineered with an awareness of real world circumstances – as they protect the IC from damage in the event of a short circuit. At the same time, their capacitance effectively links input to output at MHz frequencies, which is precisely where the attendant input and output source impedances to ground are highest. The potential upshot is an open door to

ADEQ, with twin DIL headers at rear



RF. Diode junction size (hence capacitance) is high, in order to survive several tens of amps of instantaneous current sourced from the rail capacitance. Except ... (drum roll, stage left) the usual 1N4002s have been replaced by signal diodes. With an order of magnitude less capacitance, they offer dependable protection with the aid of current limiting resistors, eg R28.

A fresh look at AC power

When AMP-01's power source, APS-1043¹ was designed in 1983, the influence of power supply components on sonic quality had but limited recognition. Most readers are today aware of the sporadic harmonic distortion in the public mains supply, as well as the noise and voltage

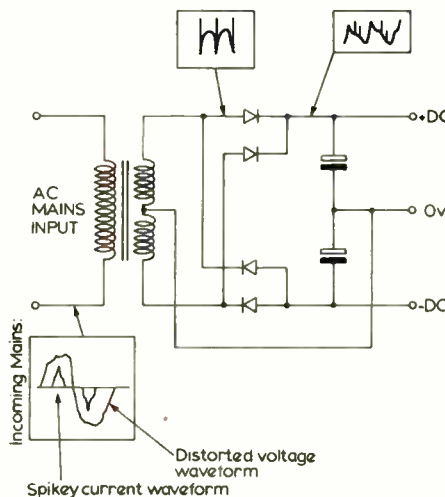


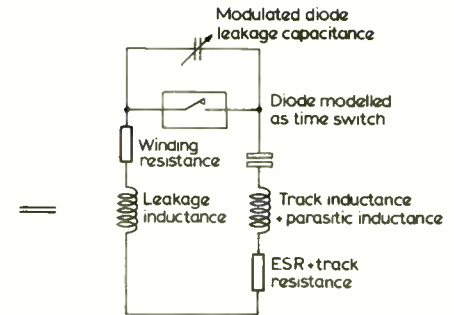
Fig 2. Bi-phase Capacitor smoothed supply

spikes propagated by it. For once, much of the pollution isn't the fault of the supplier. Rather it's caused by historical accident and technological myopia. On the one hand, most AC powered equipment beyond cookers and light bulbs disturbs the purity of its own supply in one way or another. On the other, mains power, unlike mains water, is readily cross-polluted: every appliance adds to the residual garbage in the neighbourhood. Mains pollution is most acute in large houses replete with gadgets and, more globally, in urban areas, where thousands of homes and offices share the same phase at the local substation transformer².

In Class A/B transistor power amplifiers, the supply rails are nearly always unregulated, so reports of sonic differences or improvements after changing the transformer model, over-specifying the VA rating or increasing the reservoir capacitance are plausible enough, particularly with musically-modulated currents of 1 to 50 amperes charging about. But what if the supply rails are regulated and draw a small and substantially constant current – as in most pre-amps? With regulators in place, it's a routine assumption that the values of the primary PSU components aren't very important so long as they go on working. APS-1043 sets standards for cleansing the incoming supply that have yet to be equalled by commercial makers. The AC

input was RF filtered, clipped and damped, while impulsive capacitive feedthrough was defeated with an interwinding shield.

Altogether, with multi-level AC and DC filtration, AMP-01 was designed to be sealed off from the mysteries of PSU sonics. In time though, a number of builders wrote to say how much further sound quality improved when extra reservoir capacitors were added (as recommended in builders's literature in 1985), after fitting plastic film capacitors circa 1 to 10 μ F in shunt with the reservoirs, and also after the transformer's VA rating was increased, to an outrageous 100VA. In 1987, the PCB was redesigned to permit fast (but soft) recovery diodes to be fitted, after a number of builders asserted that



Glossary

ESR: apparent resistance of a capacitor. Baseline impedance appearing at the frequency where self-resonance causes cardinal reactances to mutually annihilate each other.
PRF: pulse repetition frequency. The 'shell' frequency of a complex periodic waveform.

they improved 'inter-transient silence' and reduced residual noise. If true, these were awkward facts to face. It was past midnight, and the country inn's curtains had been drawn to exclude prying eyes. Softened by food and port, the Professor's eyes alighted on a portable chess board of great antiquity. It had two dimensions, bipolar operation (one black, one slightly yellowed), 144 nodes and thirty-two wooden components. It seemed simple, yet interactive rules made the ramifications of the next move on the tenth subsequent move utterly incalculable.

The secret life of rectified sinusoids

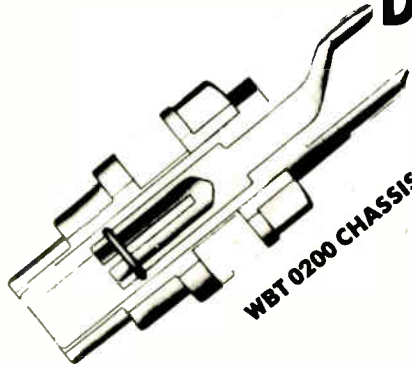
'And if you look – you will discover ...'

(Johnny 'Guitar' Watson)

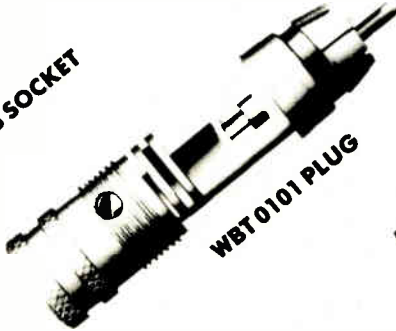
The *bi-phase capacitor smoothed supply* (just one of its official titles) in fig 2 is the provider of raw DC power inside perhaps 99 per cent of all audio equipment, including APS-1043. Analysis in standard textbooks is way too rudimentary to explain what audiophiles hear. Orthodox PSU design techniques were originated half a century ago³, and are concerned with achieving high efficiency and good regulation of the raw DC, almost to the exclusion of everything else. For today's high resolution audio, the raw DC regulation is the least of our worries with the PSU being followed by IC regulators, not

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to mention the steady, substantially Class A current draw of most pre-amplifier stages. The reason for the dearth of in-depth analysis of kindergarten rectifier circuits like the bi-phase is because they're deceptively and fiendishly complex, once real-world parasitics are included. A detailed transient analysis of a simple bi-phase supply model containing just 5 components in the first second after powering up, paints patterns with the beauty of fractal images'. The resolution that's needed to capture the fine detail of parasitic effects uses upwards of 10MB of computer disc space, equivalent to thousands of pages of sums.

In Harold's eyes, the standard PSU circuit is a devil. It pollutes the supply by drawing current in swift packets as the voltage peaks. A sideways look reveals a multi-resonant network, snapped on and off by switches (disguised as rectifier diodes) and damped by a load which happens to be an audio circuit in series with a pair of regulators. Each diode commutates (switches) current at least twice in every cycle, producing a pattern of back-EMF spikes with a PRF of (say) 200Hz. Sags and surges in the mains voltage only add to the poly-rhythm. If the spike's own (oscillatory) frequency is high enough, there's no guarantee it'll be spotted with anything short of a VHF lab's sampling oscilloscope. Still, it won't have any trouble making itself manifest once it's intermodulated with another signal containing components harmonically related to 200Hz – such as music. If this is so, the most likely symptom is *modulation noise*, noise which follows legitimate audio signals.

The bi-phase capacitor 'smoothed' supply's output ripple has high harmonic content. Thanks to brute-force filtering, AC filtration is typically zero at 100Hz, becomes slightly effective (eg -5 to -10dB) in the audio midband (fig 3), only to return to nil above the reservoir capacitor's resonant frequency, between

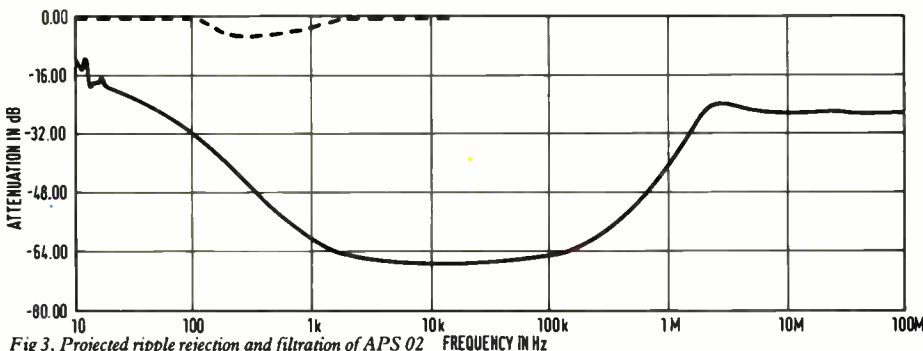


Fig 3. Projected ripple rejection and filtration of APS 02 (dotted line is for standard PSU)

1 and 10kHz. Small wonder dedicated audiophiles have taken to the hills, powering their pre-amplifiers and CD players from NiCad and lead batteries. Fine. Alas the peak-performance lifespan of rechargeable cells is short and it seems an unwise move in 1989 to schedule any kind of product which needlessly introduces toxic metals (eg cadmium, mercury and lead) into the home and onto the refuse site, especially on the grounds of

fashion, or just because it's an easy way out.

The mundane approach to building audio supplies crumbles further once we acknowledge that all conventional voltage regulators (whether discrete or IC) rely on NFB. It makes them rugged, predictable workers at low frequencies, but their ability to 'filter out' incoming garbage is progressively impaired with ascending frequency and decreasing periodicity. Conventional regulators (whether IC or custom) are especially hapless in the face of VHF voltage spikes. They need protection as much as the op-amps they serve. Summing up, it seems likely that if universal AC/DC power conversion techniques influence sonic quality, then they do so by offering cross-rhythms of their own making, as well as introducing others from down the line. Up to now, most 'good sounding' PSU's have relied on empirical turning. That small changes to values, in component makes, or mere layout has led to dramatic sonic differences is neatly explained by the exaggerated sensitivity of multi-resonant networks. It's small wonder high resolution sound systems often sound radically different from day to day. By now, the Professor had been summoned to the operating table. After poking about for a moment and studying the surrounding instruments, he turned and addressed the nurse cheerily 'Ah, fibrillation in the anterior ventricular circuits. Patiently in need of anti-resonance, dosage *one arrr obbb* four times every twenty milliseconds'. Handing her a box of stripy brown and black prophylactics, he strode out.

Green power: the taming of the juice

APS-02 ('Analogue Power Source') is a direct development of APS-1043. Glancing at the circuit in figure 1, the successful elements have been broadly retained and pushed further. A conjuring trick perhaps ... for the circuit hardly seems to have

changed, yet it's anti-resonant and kinder to the environment. Inter-transient silence is enhanced in just two chess moves. There are no expensive components or exotic active rectification schemes, which have complexities of their own. AC is applied to an IEC inlet network which contains all the routine 'housekeeping equipment', including a wideband RF filter and international voltage selection. Only a VDR (selected to

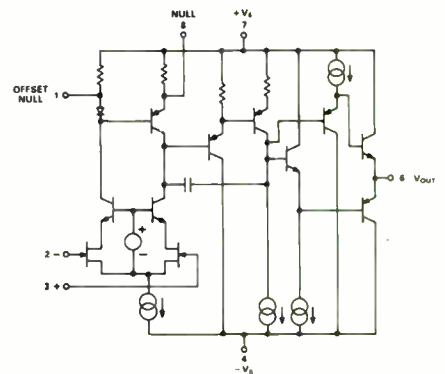


Fig 4. AD845 simplified schematic

suit the mains voltage) needs to be connected externally (VDR1). The transformer's primary is connected directly to NET. It has an additional secondary which provides a fully floating, isolated +5V supply, for AMP-02's logical control.

The analogue supply winding has been uprated to 60VA without significantly increasing overall size and without incurring acoustic buzzes, common with crudely constructed toroids. The secret is in a new generation of magnetic materials prescribed by Holden & Fisher, foremost practitioners in the world of toroidal health. As the maximum current draw on AMP-02's analogue rails is about half that of AMP-01, 60VA is equivalent to fitting about 120VA to the original APS.

Looking now at the analogue supply coming off the winding serving D5-8, secondary VDR's 2+3 directly clamp local back-EMFs. The net reservoir capacitance (for the positive rail, that's C13-22 and C33-37) is again about double that of APS-1043 – except that such figures are meaningless on their own. By employing a suitable number of carefully chosen capacitors in an array, ESR and parasitic inductance approach the depths of a bulky and costly 4-terminal RF capacitor. Figure 3 charts APS-02's bid to reduce chaos and cyclic patterns to zero. Notice how the principal HF resonance (F_{res}) is damped and completely displaced from the audio band, while useful noise rejection extends beyond 100MHz. Compared to a conventional bi-phase PSU with exactly the same output capacitance (dashed line Fig 3), APS-02's filtration is typically a *thousand* times better between 1kHz and 100kHz. Even with full load current, the usual spikey ripple waveform is reduced to below 60mV and converted into a smooth, almost sinusoidal shape. Without high-order harmonics to choke on, 'ripple' rejection in the subsequent regulators is ten to a hundred times more effective. Fig 5 plots the noise spectra between 10Hz and 200kHz, measured at the DC outputs of APS-1043 and APS-02. On the same scale, the noise of a conventional power supply (with a pair of 4700µF reservoirs) would lie several inches off the top of the graph. Notice how APS-02's noise averages around -120dBu (as quiet as the best line stages!), as well as being some 50dB quieter than APS-1043 below 1kHz. With these measures, the benefits of soft recovery rectifier diodes should be less pro- ▶ 53

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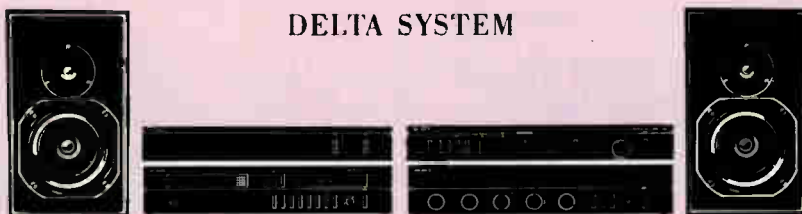
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49 **n**ounced, but suitable types can be tried if desired. Focusing on the supply's positive half (+VA), R5-8 also limit the cyclic inrush current, increase the peak-performance lifespan of the primary reservoir capacitors (C13-22), as well as improving the PSU's nett efficiency, by limiting secondary current. R5-8 and R16 then work together to provide primitive but highly dependable short-circuit protection, with R16 'blowing' open circuit. You can think of it as a solderable fuse with a negligible temperature coefficient.

The uppermost supply, beginning D1-4 provides a tightly regulated and damped +5.6V for AMP-02's digital contents (+VD). Reg.1's configuration follows the pattern established in Part 1. The lower circuit beginning D9,10 is the familiar CX1, providing logic control for delayed un-muting at power up, and rapid muting at switch off. As the control line emerging at pin 7 runs alongside the analogue supplies, R20,21 have been added to enhance CX1's own VHF filtration. At the grounding mode selector on the left, R1+2 have been increased to boost signal ground-to-earth isolation when groundlift is chosen to defeat hum loops. So as not to forsake hard-earned RF immunity, DC power is fed to AMP-02 down shielded multicore cable with specially designated pairs. Isolated 'dual monoblock' operation is readily achieved by constructing two power supplies and simply re-wiring AMP-02's power inlet accordingly. Looking at the tinted boxes (fig 1), a second CX1 isn't required (don't stuff it) and for the digital (+VD) supply in the second unit, the regulator and its ensemble are omitted, leaving a clean unregulated supply for something special (+V_{D1}).

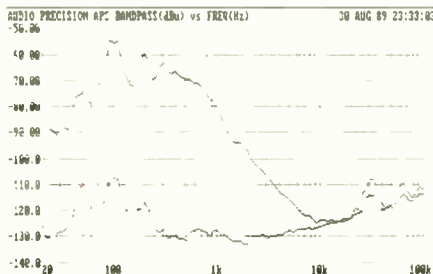


Fig 5. APS output noise against frequency

An information transformation

A badly dog-eared corner of Audio Wonderland's jigsaw puzzle (entitled 'how do I disentangle what I hear from unlogic?') has begun to fit together. Shall we finish the game? Together, APS-02 and AMP-02 provide at least -220dB ($\times 10^{-11}$) of rejection across and beyond the audio band. Such a phenomenal figure is tempered by the observation that noise produced by the semiconductors in the regulators is many orders of magnitude higher. We can be sure it dominates. Next time you're feeling curious, try listening to regulators. Make sure you're AC coupled and turn the volume up slowly. You might be surprised by the sounds they make, ranging from course splutterings to surging howling sounds. Fortunately, the LT-317's bandgap reference produced purest *anti-rhythm* in the form of all-dithering white-noise, slightly 'pinkened' by the 'top cut' of the final output capacitance.

As a timely reminder of how good the human mind is at picking patterns out of chaos, a trans-atlantic conversation with *Stereophile's* John Atkinson triggered thoughts about a new direction for research and the importance of Faraday

shields to high resolution audio. The planet we live on doesn't just circle the sun. Our whole solar system is spiralling through the galaxy at breakneck speed, assaulted on all sides by highly charged electro-magnetic waves, particles and 'winds'. Closer to ground, nature produces her own 100Hz EMI spikes, as an average hundred or so bolts of lightning arc between clouds *every second*, somewhere in our planet's atmosphere. Wherever you listen, there's no escape from nature's own poly-rhythms, punctuated and accented by what physicists call SUEs (Single Upset Events).

A new bit for analogue

AMP-01 demonstrated how IC op-amps, previously regarded with deep suspicion by audiophiles, could give a good account of themselves. To a circuit modeller, op-amps are just higher-level members of the amplifying family that includes bipolar (BJTs) and 'unipolar' or field-effect transistors (FETs), tubes and tunnel diodes. They're higher level devices because they're composed of the more basic elements they're compared to. With NFB being implicit to normal operation, modern high performance op-amps are far more predictable and consistent than discrete circuits, for a comparable parts budget. Just a little care is needed to be sure they're not hit by signals which try to swing the output more quickly than the servo loop can respond. The ideal op-amp's property of unit-to-unit consistency means that the 20 or so parameters that are needed to define an audio amplifying device don't need to be checked by distributors or builders, until or unless a problem is perceived (whether by listen-

Balanced loading values for m-m cartridges (R1,2 = 100K)

Cartridge load	RL2,3 (each)
11.7k	6k2
13.9k	7k5
18.2k	10k
23k	13k
36k	22k1
48k	31k6
56k	39k2
64k	47k5
56k	39k2
48k	31k6
36k	22k1
23k	13k
18.2k	10k
13.9k	7k5
11.7k	6k2

For load resistances below 12k, the effect of R1+R2 is increasingly negligible, so the load is simply the sum of RL2+RL3, ie each is *half* the desired loading value. Standard E96 values are listed. If fitting 1% resistors, simply pick the nearest standard (E24 series) value.

The new superchip library - Part 2

Parameter	Figure	Unit
Analog Devices AD845.		
Date of 1988AD introduction		
Input voltage noise at 10 & 100Hz, 1 & 10kHz	80,60, 25,18	nV/√Hz
Vios, max input referred DC offset, untrimmed	±1.5	mV
Ib, max input bias current at 25°C	2	nA
Ios, max input offset current	300	pA
CMR, at 100kHz	>-85	dB

PSR, at 100kHz	≥-45	dB
Minimum gain bandwidth	13	MHz
Slew rate	≥100	V/μS
Settling time to 0.01%	310	nS
Load driving specification	100+500	pFohms
Maximum output current	50	mA
Maximum supply voltage	±18	V
Short circuit protection	Yes	
Unity gain stable	Yes	

APS-02 - Specification

Operable voltage range* at 240V nominal	210-260V AC
Nominal ±VA, unloaded, when mains input is within 5% of primary voltage setting	±29 to 31V
As above, but with full load current, ie with all modules fitted to frame	±26 to 27V
Ripple voltage on ±VA at full load current	<60mV p-pk

*Pro-rata for 220 & 115V settings.

APS-02 parts list

Part	Qty	Type, description, notes
Note: H=Holco 0.5% S=1/4W, 1, 2 or 5% MF or CF MKT=Polyester P=1W, 5% CF or MF When two power supplies are built, items marked '\$' are required twice.		
R1,2	2	§ 2k2, P
R3-12	10	§ 1R, P
R13,21	2	22R, S
R14	1	432R H
R15	1	121R, H
R16,17	2	§ 1R, P

R18	1	2k2, P
R19	1	680k, S
R20	1	100R, S
R22,23	2	§ 2k2, P
C1-10	10	§ 1000μF 35V rad
C11	1	100μF 25V rad
C12-42	31	§ 1000μF 35V rad
C143		10μF 35V rad
C44	1	330μF 25V rad
C45,46,47	3	§ 220nF, 63V, MKT
D1-4	4	§ 1N 5402
D5-8	4	§ 1N 5402 (see text)
D9,10,13	3	1N 4002
D11,12	2	1N 4148
REG.1	1	LT-317 AT (+ve)
TR1,2	2	BC 337
VDR.1	1	§ 240V (or 120V)
VDR.2,3	2	§ 25V
SEL.1	1	4 pin, 4-position header c/w pluggable receptacle
NET	1	§ Combined IEC inlet, fuse, RFI filter, voltage selection, switch & indicator
Conn.1	1	§ 10 way
Heatsink	1	10°C/W
Toroid (*)	1	§ Primary: 0-110-220-240V Secondary: 21V-0-21V/60VA, 9V, 1.5VA 12 § PCB pins 1 § APS-02 PCB
Mains lead(s) with IEC connector(s), DC power cable(s), Enclosure(s) X (*)		

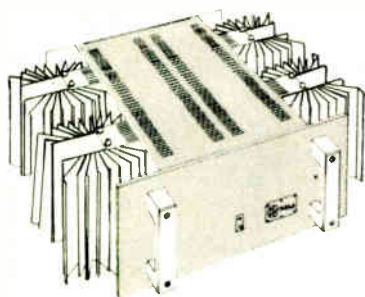
Items marked (*) are specially designed for APS-02 and are available from Audio Synthesis.

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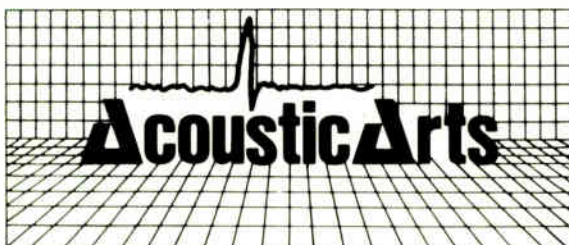
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New Demonstration Room



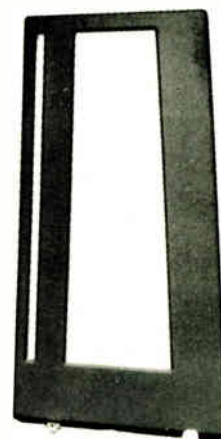
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The most significant loudspeaker development must surely be the new Apogee Duetta Signature. We are all Apogee enthusiasts here but the improvement in sound quality with this model has amazed us. A true 'state of the art' product. Lower down the price range we must mention the new Magneplanar 1.4 which is a huge improvement in standards but amazingly costs no more than its predecessor at £1098. The P.S. Audio 4.6 with a new power supply is also a big improvement and at under a £1000 is probably the best pre-amp around at the price.



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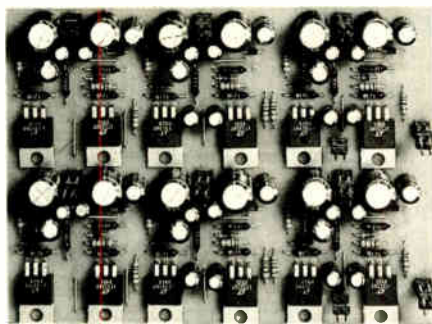
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ing or measurement). This is true of op-amps shipped from QA-conscious blue-chip (!) makers whose wares have been specified in the past, namely AD, Harris, Linear Technology and PMI.

The same can't always be said of the high volume makers who churn out everyday parts like '071', '351', '5534', '833' and their respective clones. Variations in transistors, both unit-to-unit and in different batches are just as notorious. When a circuit is constructed with discrete devices and low feedback, the chances of attaining sonic consistency across two (let alone thousands of) units is slim. Listening to pink-noise demonstrates the point. That's without testing the devices, rejecting the odd rogue (if not entire batches), then grouping or matching them to the requirements of individual sub circuits. For a pre-amp employing 20 transistors per channel, hundreds of detailed measurements are required to do the job properly. A degree of automation is a must, always assuming you have the equipment. The on-going discovery of good sounding op-amps for DIY construction speaks for itself.

Improved models appear every year. Analog Device's AD845 is one of these. Until now, op-amp designers have had to work with one hand tied behind their back. The fabrication of PNP transistors on the same substrate as NPNs has mostly been limited to 'lateral' kinds. Their beta (gain) and ft (bandwidth) parameters are truly pitiful, similar to discrete transistors pre-1960. As a result, op-amp design has, for the past 20 years, involved complicated manoeuvres and immense ingenuity, to create quasi-symmetrical circuits with NPN devices alone; or else put lateral PNPs in places where they couldn't do much harm. In 1985, and not before time, AD (Analog Devices) began to develop a new process called 'CB' (Complementary Bipolar). The AD845 is believed to be the first op-amp to contain matched NPN and PNP transistors with high FT (600MHz) and decent beta



ADEQ's devolved regulation PCB

(>200). The upshot is a truly symmetrical output stage (figure 2), as well as a much simplified circuit, without level shifts, bootstraps and other tricks.

The input stage comprises precision J-FETs, so the AD845 had all of the (best) qualities of classic Bi-FET op-amps, notably high slew-limit (100V/μS) and immunity to RF detection and intermodulation. On paper, the J-FETs make the 845 appear a little noisy, more so below 1kHz. At line levels, the increase is hardly discernible and is outweighed by other factors. Input stage linearity and PSR is enhanced by cascoding. The 845 was designed by Wyn Palmer, an expatriate Welshman who has worked for Analog Devices in the USA for the past decade. It seems a good omen that he's an audiophile and reads *TAS* [No comment - Ed]. Thermal modulation has certainly received attention. All the 845's critical parts have been laid across the chip's thermal axis. The input FETs and current mirror transistors are 'Cross Quadded' to minimize thermal and stress related gradient effects. Also, the designer cites a lack of 'memory' inherent in op-amps made with AD's 'CB process', compared to DI (dielectrically isolated) op-amps, which exhibit dielectric absorption. As a result, CB amps settle much faster.

Like any other op-amp, the AD845 has a Class A-B output. More to the point is the output stage's quiescent (*ie* 'Class A')

current. In passing four, or five times more than most, at between 8 to 10mA, the chip runs hot to the touch. Short of outright abuse, namely driving the output into less than 600ohms at high peak levels (>2½V or +10dBu), Class A operation is the norm. By comparison, previous op-amps were liable to go beyond their Class A limits, when driven moderately hard. The AD845's sonics have been verified in listening tests. It turned out to be such a good all-round performer that it's specified throughout AMP-02 as the standard fare, as well as an alternative to OP42 in the CD upgrade project.†

Next month: The line processor matrix and the auxiliary output module.

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PCBs, components, complete kits and comprehensive background and assembly literature on APS-02, and last month's ADEQ, are available from Audio Synthesis, 30 Grove Ave, Chillwell, Nottingham NG9 4DZ. Tel. (0602) 224138. Please send an SAE for details, or, if overseas, International Reply Coupons.

LISZT by Bryce Morrison. 111pp incl index and bibliography; illustrated. Hardback £12.95. Published by Omnibus Press, 8/9 Frith Street, London W1

Bryce Morrison's study (in the 'Illustrated Lives of Great Composers' series) sets off at a hell of a lick. We've only got to Op. 1, when a diversion to look at the development of the Etudes suddenly takes in Humphrey Searle, a Thomas Rajna/CRD recording, and Liapunov, before we gallop off to London, glance at Moscheles then, over the page, reach a few of the composer's thoughts on his father's sudden death.

Liszt, it seemed, was barely faithful to his own genius - let alone the women he seduced (two of whom took revenge in their 'memoirs'). The early musical influences, piano contests, honours bestowed, Liszt's patriotism, the religious retreats, the critical attitudes of Mendelssohn, Chopin, and the fatal consequence of the adulation of Wagner are told with interspersed contemporary

writings; hardly anyone is mentioned without the incorporation of a portrait (indexed in bold type), and the author's dizzying side references. I read the book at a sitting and wanted, straightaway, to hear for myself some of the music. That's the effect. One or two proofing errors occur and more careful sub-editing would have prevented repetition: twice we are told Liszt's 'glanz', or glitter years were 1839-47, and that Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein completed her 24th volume of *Causes* a few days before her death in 1887. There is an approving foreword by Jorge Bolet, and Bryce Morrison proffers a previously unpublished photograph of his subject - Liszt's gradual ageing from the young man in the Ingres portrait to the sage of the 1880s is a pleasing aspect. You might say that, within limited space, Bryce Morrison sets forth his own 'Etude' to match the brilliance of *La Campanella*.

Christopher Breunig

BOOKS

ROCK GAZETTEER OF GREAT BRITAIN

by Peter Frame. 168pp pages, b&w photos. Soft covers. Price £7.95. Published by Banyan Books Ltd, 50 Margaret Street, London W1N 7FD.

The compiler of those marvellous 'family tree' books has created a geographical breakdown of rock music in the UK. Frame lists every city, town, village and hamlet with a rock connection, telling the reader who was born where, what bands formed in each site, what festival occurred where, and so on, with seemingly no stone unturned. Typical entry: 'Morden, Surrey: The Yardbirds made their first recordings at R G Jones Studio in February 1964.' As ever, Frame has produced goldmine of info, but this one has a tragic flaw. As there is no index, you have to know where someone was born before you can look up to find out... where they were born. It's like a dictionary which was not compiled alphabetically. Still, it made for great reading in the loo. *Ken Kessler*

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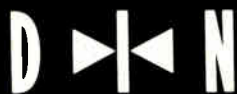
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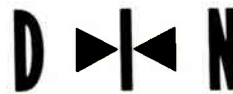


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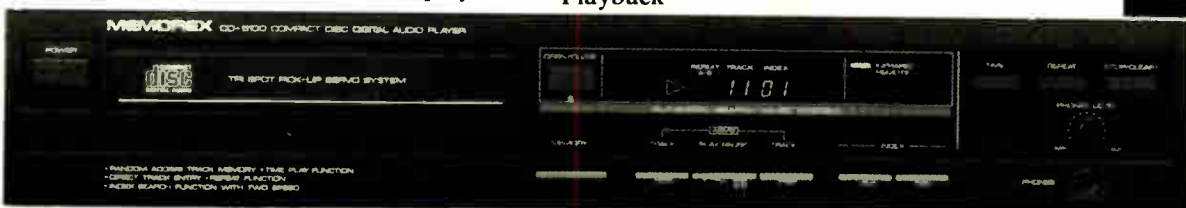


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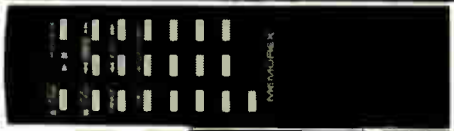
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- ▶ A-B Repeat Facility For Full Or Part Disc Playback
- ▶ 15 Track Programmable Memory



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- ▶ Features Infrared Remote Control Operation
- ▶ Fluorescent Display Of Disc/Track Number And Time Elapsed

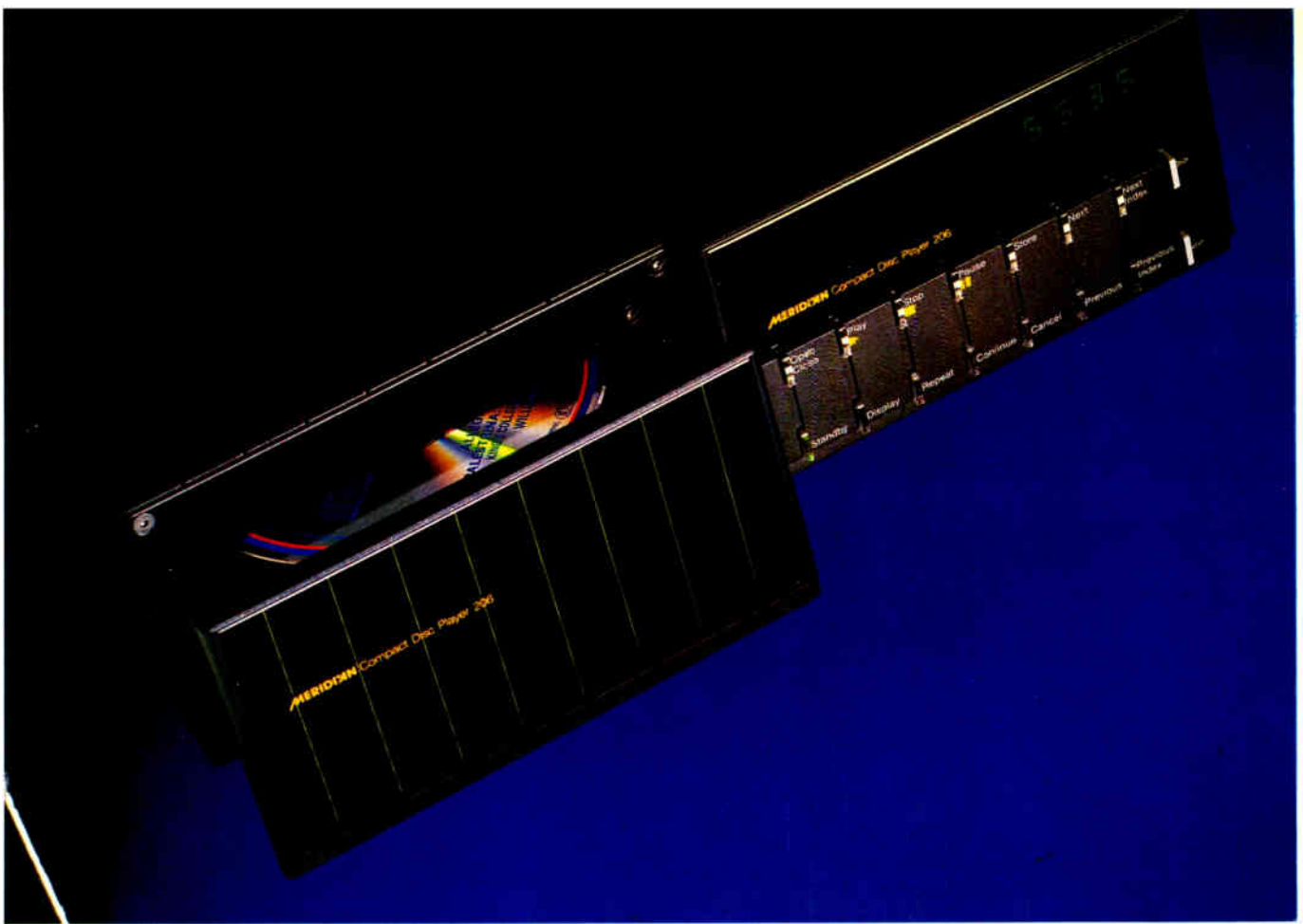


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MERIDIAN 206 CD PLAYER

With the new 206 player, Meridian aims to offer the styling and performance of the well-known 207 PRO, but in a simpler, single-box format

by Martin Colloms

Meridian is one of the few UK CD player manufacturers carrying out original research into player technology, including the transport servo-systems. Its existing 207 PRO has been with us for several years, and remains a unique product – a two-box player of refined styling which incorporates a decent fully remote-controlled pre-amplifier. The latter includes an optional moving-coil/moving-magnet analogue cartridge input. Current 16-bit versions of the 207 sound better than ever, and must be included in the top performance grouping in their price range.

The 206 aims to continue the format and styling of the 207 but, while the two-box look has been retained, the player is now actually built as one box. The pre-amp section has been omitted, giving a major reduction in cost, but the player's audio section is said to have been tuned for an even better sound. The remote control is still present, although the refinements of absolute-phase invert,

disc-error indication, and one time-code (remaining-time of a specific track) have been left off.

Although looking very much like a 207, the 206 shows some detail changes, notably by the use of new satin-black mouldings for the front panels, into which glass windows are fitted. Previously, thicker glass panels were used on their own which gave rise to some quality-control problems. The controls are revised to take account of the new system micro-processor. The audio output is a nominal 2V, direct-coupled and fixed, while two digital outputs are now provided, one for optical and one for phono coaxial connection. It is intended that this player be regarded both as an effective digital transport and as a worthy complete CD player, and both aspects were investigated.

The typically clear, pale-green display may be read from a good distance, and can also show track-number (or index), elapsed-time for the present track, and elapsed or remaining time for the whole disc. At the end of a disc, total time or the total number of tracks are displayed, according to the display mode selected. The tidy remote handset has a convenient 10-key entry for track selection and programming. The playability of some troublesome CDs – for example with bubbles or dimples – has also been improved. Mains

connection is via an IEC socket on the rear panel,

Technology

Paralleling the 207, at the heart of the 206 is a Philips CDM-4 laser transport fitted with the Hall-effect drive-spindle motor and interfaced with Meridian's own 4th-generation servo-board, which has superior transient behaviour. The CDM-4 chassis is of reinforced plastic, augmented in the 206 by a diecast top-plate. The whole assembly is then decoupled by a compliant three-point, high-absorption Sorbothane suspension. The transport section also forms an acoustically isolated enclosure when shut.

Current-to-voltage conversion is achieved using a unique Meridian non-feedback circuit, with emitter-coupling to a wideband amplifier based on a current mirror technology. A DC-coupled servo-controlled buffer follows, while filtering and de-emphasis are entirely passive. System improvements include a separated crystal oscillator which also drives the system microprocessor, thus avoiding beats from digital frequencies and their harmonics. Good power-supply practice is apparent throughout.

Sound quality

Our first sample (prior to production

distribution) sounded 'iffy', and Meridian subsequently confirmed a minor production error in case-vs-track grounding points. A replacement sample from the first production with the ground-error corrected was more promising, and we are assured that all 206 models sold will be to this correct standard.

Obvious comparisons were with the 207. It was apparent that the 206 demonstrated improvements in stereo focus, depth and clarity, as well as in bass firmness and timing – plus that vital impression of inner confidence. These comparisons were made using the fixed-level output of the 207. In tonal balance, the 206 was desirably sweeter and richer, and though the differences were not great the 206 did manage to sound more relaxed.

The Meridian 206 has already jumped the 'barrier' with a score that lies some 3% above the Accuphase reference, and by definition it thus gains the crown.

A strong clue to the 206's fine performance lies in the inherent quality of its internal digital data-stream, as well as that provided at the digital output terminal. It could easily be acquired for transport purposes only. A 25% lift above the crowd was assured by its purer mid and treble, as well as by its stronger dynamics, more spacious soundstages, and faster – as well as tighter and more rhythmic – bass.

Moving on to the analogue outputs setting aside its performance with a decoder selling for five times the cost of this entire player, many of the benefits of the 206's superior digital performance were still evident in its analogue sound – to the detriment of the current 207, well rated as that undoubtedly is. In percentage terms the 206 was a substantial 18% better than the 207 (short the 206's digital output and you can have 20%!). Compared with the current 207, it showed benefits in bass definition and speed, stage depth and clarity, as well as

ambience retrieval, sweetness and tonal balance. Stereo focus was also improved, all these qualities hovering in the critical area between 'very good' and 'excellent'.

It was a real pleasure to find a finely styled UK player at this price level which could so effortlessly deliver an 'Accuphase-plus' performance, and in a manner suggesting very little listener fatigue.

Lab report

One surprise was the polarity inversion of the analogue output – unusual in up-market machines.

The general phase characteristic was linear, with negligible ringing, and channel separation was fine – decently symmetric compared with the 207. Negligible phase difference exists between channels, and left/right balance was very accurate. The frequency response is intentionally tailored to produce a mild 0.35dB roll-off by 20kHz (only -0.1dB at 10kHz), with improved rejection of out-of-band spurious. The latter are rated at -107dB under normal modulation conditions, while no single up-band artefact reads higher than -114dB when playing a 1kHz tone at -70dB (Fig 1).

Track-access times are now pretty rapid, though it was still possible to enter the data faster than the system controller could accommodate. The results for distortion at full-level were fine, if not to the very highest standard. This is not a reflection on DAC linearity but is connected with the zero-feedback analogue circuitry. With 1kHz at -10dB modulation the measured -85dB harmonic distortion (0.005%) was at the code limit, while the in-band distortion with a 20kHz single tone at 0dB level was excellent at -91dB. The two-tone HF intermodulation at a -10dB level was also very good at -93dB (0.0022%), and at full modulation the IM results were still satisfactory at -77dB. The 1kHz difference-tone representing the latter is seen as a 'bump' on the

left-hand side of the graph in Fig 2.

At the -70dB modulation level, around -37dB of distortion was generated, 3rd- and 5th-harmonic only and with negligible hum or noise, while at -90dB the level-error was typically -3dB. A decent sine-wave could be obtained on this measurement (Fig 3), while the associated spectrogram shows a decently low distortion even at this threshold level. A wide dynamic range of 106dB is given by these results, with a 15.6-bit linearity. In agreement with the above, the fade-to-noise test for linearity (Fig 4) shows straight transfer-characteristic down to about -77dB, then a small shift of slope which stabilizes by -90dB, beyond which the mild analogue noise doesn't detract from the linear trend, this extending right down towards the -120dB measurement limit. In practical terms, this is a very high resolution system.

Conclusion

With improvements to build quality as well as operation of the drawer mechanism and disc playability, this well designed and finished player is a serious contender. The technical test results also showed improvement, achieved using a consistent and well established technology. Although I still have minor reservations concerning the operating system behind the controls (which are not as slick as the imported competition), as well as the as-yet unspecified absolute-phase inversion at the analogue output I cannot argue with the high quality of the digital data outputs or with the first-rate analogue sound quality achieved for a single box player, one which has usurped the position of the historic Accuphase.

This player is one of the few upmarket models which is worth the money, both as a transport and as a complete machine. It is still playing as I complete this review – definitely a good sign! Needless to say, the 206 carries my firm recommendation.✚

MERIDIAN 206 CD PLAYER

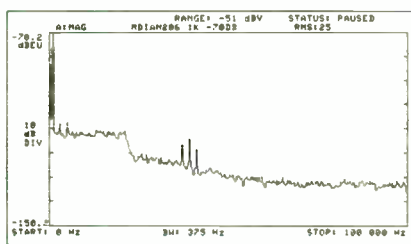


Fig 1. Meridian 206: spurs up to 100kHz associated with 1kHz tone at -70dB

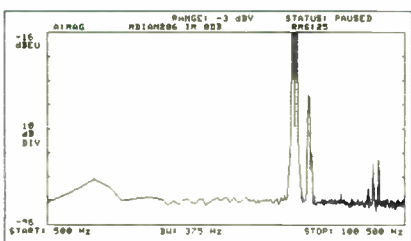


Fig 2. Meridian 206: intermodulation spurs from 19/20kHz tones at 0dB, log scale 500Hz-100.5kHz

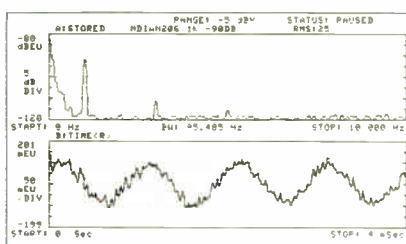


Fig 3. Meridian 206: dihered 1kHz sine wave at -90dB, waveform below distortion spectrum above

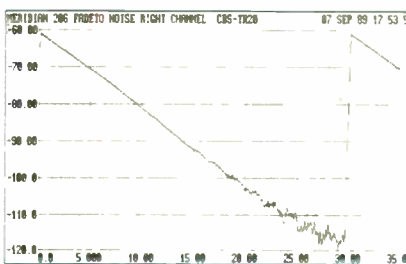


Fig 4. Meridian 206. linearity plot below -60dB

Test results

	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz
Channel balance	0.05dB	0.05dB	0.06dB
Stereo separation	115dB	98dB	72dB
Channel phase difference	0°	0°	0°
THD 0dB	-74dB	-82dB	-91dB
THD -10dB	—	-85dB	—
THD -70dB	—	-37dB	—
Intermod 19kHz/20kHz, 0dB	—	-77dB	—
Intermod 19kHz/20kHz, -10dB	—	-93dB	—
Frequency response, left	+0dB		-0.01dB
Frequency response, right	+0dB		-0.35dB
S/N 20Hz-20kHz unweighted		106dB	
S/N CCIR/ARM, 1kHz ref		103dB	
Output level, 0dB		2.36V	
Output impedance		100ohms	
De-emphasis (error in dB)	+0.07	+0.45	+0.33
Track access time (Tr 15)		3secs	
Error correction capability		gap > 1.5mm	
Mechanical noise		low	
Spuriae up to 100kHz		-107dB	
Resolution at -90dB, left/right		-2.9dB/-3.3dB	
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The three amplifiers under test comprise two from the UK and one from Japan. Musical Fidelity's new B1 comes in at the bottom of the range at under £200; in the A270, QED has a larger, more powerful version of its budget models, priced at £349; and finally Akai furnishes its chunky-looking AM52 at £230. System components used included Linn LP12/Rega RB300/van den Hul MC10 and a Rega 3 with AR P77 cartridge; Celestion SL700 and SL6S speakers and Marantz CD85 and Philips 582 CD players. Reference was made to Mission Cyrus One and Musical Fidelity B200 amplifiers while comparisons were also made with a Krell KSA50.

AKAI AM52



From the outside the AM52 resembles the majority of modern black Japanese-sourced amplifiers. Gold lettering boasts 'DC Amplifier Dual Pole Servo FET Direct Coupling Source Direct'. An oversize volume knob demands attention at the right, and next to it are the main bank of selector switches. These are inlaid into a section of front panel with a Perspex styling section to the side, and immediately beneath these are the tape monitor facilities. 'Source-direct' bypasses the tone controls, which are positioned with the balance control along the bottom. Other button-controlled facilities cover m-m/m-c gain select, muting loudness, mono/stereo, subsonic filter, and speaker A/B selectio. The headphone socket has gold trim, and the steel case sits on the all-conquering large round feet.

The front panel itself is alloy-over-plastic, likewise the knobs, and it has a perceived high quality of finish. The case is made from steel panels, and on the back there are two sets of speaker binding-posts which just about take 4mm plugs –

but are obviously not designed to. The input phono-sockets are in two banks on the left when viewed from the rear.

Internally, the layout is fairly typical of modern Japanese construction techniques. Several separate PCBs are joined by ribbon cable, while internal panels and the heatsink divide the space into sections which screen the low-level circuitry from the high. The sizeable transformer feeds two power-supply sections via separate secondaries. The power amplifier section has two 8200µF 'For Audio' electrolytics allocated to it on its own board, and the low-voltage stages have discrete regulators which decouple the sensitive circuit regions. The PU cartridge input stage uses low-noise multiple packaged transistors followed by an op-amp, gain-switched for m-m or m-c setting. The tone control and switching are board-located on the front panel. Internal mains connections are left unshrouded.

Sound quality

On CD the bass is firm and fairly tight, with quite good differentiation of transients and good articulation of pitch changes in the lower octaves. Bass 'timing' too is quite good and the whole integrates reasonably well. In the mid-range, voice can sound a little hard and strained, tending to nasality at times. It's a mite too crisp and fast, with an over-emphasis of transient edges. On rock material this may endear it to some, but on classical it can be a little aggressive. However, I am being ultra-critical here, and in comparison with its peers it is actually well above average. The treble is also a little hard and up-front, with a measure of grain and tizz, but although it's a trifle brash it has plenty of life and interest, far more in fact than the majority of the competition.

Depth and space were recreated with very good perspectives, and focus was fairly strong. Width was a straight 'good' and transparency is present in reasonable measure. The tone controls take much of the impact, ambience and pace away from the performance – it becomes only a shadow of its former self. Springing to mind are terms such as grainy treble, lack of bass control, with a loss of transparency, focus, and virtually all the qual-

ities which make it a likeable product on 'direct'. Properly designed, such controls should have no such effects.

The disc input was first tried on the moving-magnet setting and was found to be open and lively. The bass could sound a little wooden at times and transients very slightly muted; it was a bit soft and sounded just a little 'slow', but it remained quite coherent. Although the treble has some grain, the stage created had good width and depth, with fair focus and image placement. This m-m setting was preferred, for with the moving-coil option the bass lost some control and the whole sound thickened up. Using my VDH MC10, the m-m setting actually provided enough gain for perfectly respectable levels, and indeed this was my favourite vinyl playing combination.

Lab report

The power output of this model was very healthy, easily exceeding 100W into an 8-ohm load (20dBW) across the audio band; at 1kHz nearly 140W was seen for 1% distortion. Into 4 ohms with both channels driven the available output fell a little to 19dBW in the mid-band and to slightly less still at the frequency extremes, but the peak current capability of ±16A is ample for the specified power. Total harmonic distortion at rated power was vanishingly low, and even at 20kHz it rose only to -75dB (0.018%). Likewise, IM distortion was very well suppressed at -95dB! DC-offset was negligible, while the output impedance was a low 0.08ohms at LF and mid-band, rising to an innocuous 0.16 ohms at 20kHz.

The noise performance of the line inputs was also rather good, with the weighted figure a low -87dB and the unweighted residual better than -90dB. The impedance of the CD input was a sensible 34kohms/450pF and the sensitivity 16.7mV. But the overload margin is fairly low here, with just 12.5dB headroom available over the specified 0.5V input level on source-direct, which improved only slightly with the tone controls in circuit. This really is cutting it too fine, as some CD players with an output a decibel or so greater than the standard 2V could cause clipping on peaks. However,

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Three promising new amplifiers of high output: Akai AM52, Musical Fidelity B1 and QED A270

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206

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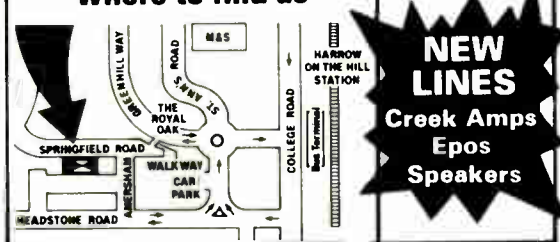
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the tape output managed an unclipped 11V from a 600-ohm source impedance, and the volume/balance tracking only strayed at low volume settings, and even here the error is small for a budget amplifier. Stereo separation was a fine 80dB at 1kHz on the Aux input, falling to a reasonable 55dB at 20kHz, and the frequency response deviated from a straight line only above 10kHz, and even then was a mere 0.2dB down at 20kHz.

With appropriate adjustment of input levels, IM distortion via the pickup stage was unaffected by the m-c/m-m gain setting, the 1kHz product of the 19/20kHz tones being an excellent 77dB down. The noise performance on the m-m setting was good enough at -70dB, and that of the m-c just about acceptable, but input overload margins here were about 10dB down on the expected figures. However, unless a very-high-output cartridge is used there should be no problems. Stereo separation was pretty good, if a little behind that of the Aux input, and channel balance of the disc stage was fine at only 0.27dB deviation. The input sensitivities and loadings of the LP stage were all intelligently engineered, and the frequency response at both gain settings was within 0.25dB of the required line from 50Hz to 20kHz, and sensibly rolled off in the treble. The m-m curve shows a small rise at extreme LF (Fig 2), but in contrast the m-c response has a bass rolloff from 30Hz, with the -3dB point at 12Hz.

Conclusion

This Akai is somewhat of a surprise. It's the best Japanese amplifier in its price category I have yet heard. It has plenty of gadgets to play with, but these sap sound

quality to an unacceptable extent. With the direct setting, on both LP and CD it takes on and beats several 'rated' British rivals as well as everything I have come across from Japan.

The technical tests revealed some problems in the area of input overload margins, but elsewhere it measured generally very well, with an excellent power delivery which will drive even fairly insensitive speakers to high levels. I'm impressed.

MUSICAL FIDELITY B1



At the time of this review a full production model wasn't available, so for this report I started with an early sample; a full production sample arrived just in time for the listening tests.

The B1's case is finished in black with the usual Musical Fidelity blue script. The front extrusion slopes in from the top and bottom to a fairly narrow vertical front panel; the end panels are made from plastic and form a close fit with the front and bottom panels. A lid slides into grooves set into the sides and is secured by one screw.

Inside, the layout is rather unusual. The whole amplifier is constructed on a single board, the four high-current TO3 (metal can) power transistors per channel being board-mounted and allocated their own fairly small fingered heatsinks. This has been made possible by running the quasi-complementary outputs at a low quiescent

current, which means that (unusually for MF) the amplifier runs cool. The power amp gain-stage sits immediately behind and is formed entirely from discrete components, being buffered from inputs and the disc pre-stages by a TL072 dual BIFET op-amp. The LP input stage is based on low-noise transistors, with the RIAA section using another TL072. There is separate power-supply regulation for each section. The design uses a toroidal transformer to supply two reservoir capacitors for both the positive and negative rails, with 0.47-ohm resistors between them to create an RC low-pass filter.

The switches and volume control are placed at the rear of the amplifier next to the inputs in order to keep the track lengths as short as possible, with mineral-loaded plastic extension shafts coupling them to the front-panel knobs, while the input facilities themselves are numerous. All use RCA phono-sockets. Inputs are also provided for two tape-decks, tuner and CDV, while full record routing is available for all sources. Alongside the 4mm speaker socket/binding posts on the back panel is a headphone socket; when this is in use the speaker outputs are disconnected.

Sound quality

Musical Fidelity's established A series (and the B series integrated amplifiers for that matter) have always had a sweet, open mid and treble, while the bass performance has lagged a little behind. This affects slam, subjective timing, and also the dynamic and harmonic integrity of the lower octaves and their relationship with the mid-range. In the B1, MF has set out to correct these failings. However, when put to the test the bass timing and power were found to be only adequate. When feeding insensitive speakers (82dB/W) it moved the bass cones with an air of authority, and when playing discs with a heavy, complex beat such as that on New Order *Techniques* (FACD275), it struggles to maintain its composure. Here it is not in the top class, but it tries to remain fairly coherent even under these aggravated conditions, acceptably so at the price. It may not have quite the integration of the Naim Nait, but it doesn't have the slight boxiness of that amplifier.

In building down to this price level MF has apparently had to sacrifice a little of the mid-range clarity, detail and texture which was the hallmark of previous designs. The balance is neutral but there are perceived colorations in the upper mid and lower treble, where it is a bit hard, and when provoked has a tendency to glare. Rock and pop tracks are reproduced with fair speed, but difficult classical recordings such as Benjamin Britten's *Works for string orchestra* (NIM5205) are just a little edgy.

The treble is reasonably good, for it achieves above average detail and a degree of transparency. It has some grain and tizz, and could sound a little mechanical and processed. At times I detected a slight glaze, and there is also a touch of

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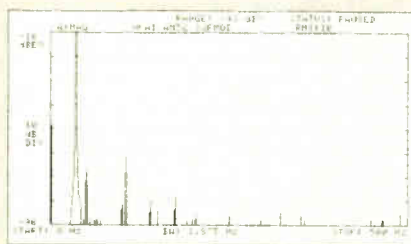


Fig 1. Akai AMS2: power-supply modulation spurs from 35Hz test-tone

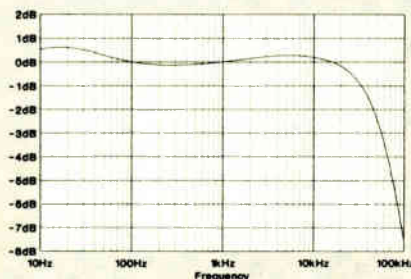


Fig 2. Akai AMS2: frequency response on moving-magnet input

Test results

Power output		100W (20dBW)		
Rated power into 8ohms (spec)		20Hz	1kHz	20kHz
One channel 8ohm (dBW)		21.1	21.3	20.9
Both channels 16ohm (dBW)		18.2	19.0	18.6
Instantaneous peak current		+16A -16A		
Distortion		20Hz	1kHz	20kHz
THD		-86	-86	-75
at rated power, aux/CD				
Intermod 19/20kHz				
rated power, aux			-95dB	
at 0dBW, m-m			-77dB	
at 0dBW, m-c			-77dB	
Noise				
Disc (m-m) input (IHF, CCIR w'ted)				-70dB
Disc (m-c) input (IHF, CCIR w'ted)				-63dB
Aux/CD input (IHF, CCIR w'ted)				-87dB
Residual, unw'ted (min vol)				-93dB
DC output offset		L: 0mV; R: 4mV		
Input overload		20Hz	1kHz	20kHz
Disc (m-m) input (IHF) dB		21.0	21.0	20.7
Disc (m-c) input (IHF) dB		24.6	24.6	24.8
Aux/CD input (IHF) dB		12.5	12.5	12.5
Stereo Separation				
Disc input (m-m) dB		66	66	50
Aux/CD input dB		85	80	55
Output impedance (damping)		0.08ohm 0.08ohm 0.16ohm		
Channel balance disc at 1kHz (bal centred)		0.27		
Volume/balance tracking		0dB	-20dB	-60dB
Aux/CD input		0.12	0.29	1.30
Input data		sensitivity	loading	
Disc (m-m) input		0.22mV	47k-ohms 260pF	
Disc (m-c) input		0.022mV	100ohms -nF	
Aux/CD input		16.7mV	34k-ohms 450pF	
Output, pre-amp (tape)		11V max 600ohms		
Disc eq error 30Hz-15kHz		+0.5dB -0.1dB		
Typical price, including VAT		£230		

Supplier:

Akai UK Ltd, Unit 12, Haslemere Heathrow Estate, Silver Jubilee Way, Hounslow, Middx. Tel: 01-897 6388



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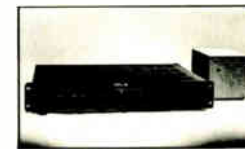
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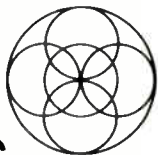


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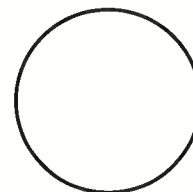
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GOLDRING

THE EXCEL

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The first sentence in the Excel leaflet states that it is 'designed to compete with the very best moving coil models but at a surprisingly modest cost.' For once you can believe it: it's nothing less than the truth.

WHAT HI FI, March 1989

The Goldring Cartridge Range comprises the Excel, Eroica, 1042, 1022, 1012, Epic II and Elan. If you would like more technical information, or details of stockists, please telephone JOHN RUDMAN on 0284-701101 — he will be pleased to hear from you.



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sibilance and hardness – although this was never excessive. Depth and width are strong, with reasonable staging and hints at subtle layering effects constructed in a way not normally associated with budget systems.

The LP stage was tried with both moving-magnet and moving-coil cartridges and found to be more than acceptable at this price level. In sonic terms there is little to choose between the two gain settings, and when using the van den Hul MC10, hiss was never really a problem. It is transparent enough to various sources to reveal their nature in true perspective, while also preserving the identity of the power amplifier, so the performance here is competitive.

Lab report

The frequency response of the LP disc input was quite restricted in its bandwidth (Fig 4), with -3dB points occurring at 18Hz and 26kHz (-1dB at 27Hz/12kHz), and while the CD input showed good extension in the bass, it also rolled off at HF to -1dB at 15kHz and -3dB at 30kHz. Into an 8-ohm load with one channel driven the B1 easily exceeded its specified output of 35W, with 17.3dBW (54W) available in the bass and mid-range and falling only slightly to 47W (16.7dBW) at 20kHz. With both channels driven into 4 ohms the output fell quite sharply, which indicates a fairly small power-supply capacity, while with a 2-ohm load and pulsed signal only 12dBW was available, and into such loads some asymmetric clipping was observed. This limited the peak current for a negative-going pulse to 8A, while the positive one recorded 13.5A, which is enough for the

power specified. Some confusion may arise from MC's 'Pot Pourri' item in September (p67, based on a different, earlier pre-production sample), which mentioned a peak current capability of 20A, the manufacturer actually meaning a total peak-to-peak swing on load equivalent to that current. However, I believe the correct figure to be ±8A peak, with the lesser negative-going waveform deciding the power delivery into a 2-ohm load.

Total harmonic distortion at rated power was an unexceptional -60B (0.1%), but the IM products of the twin HF tones were quite well suppressed. The output impedance was fairly high at 0.25 ohms, which varied little with frequency. The volume/balance tracking strayed a little at low volume settings, but on LP the channel balance for 1W output suffered a mere 0.21dB aberration. DC-offset was acceptable on this pre-production sample, with 46mV appearing on the left channel. Input overload margins on both gain settings of the LP disc stage were fine, while the Aux input could not be clipped with the 13V RMS available from the signal generator. Stereo separation was perfectly satisfactory.

The noise performance of the moving-magnet input was respectable at -70dB, but on moving-coil serious users would like to see a figure better than the recorded -56dB, which means that very-low-output m-c cartridges should be avoided. The Aux/CD input noise figure was -72dB CCIR-weighted, and with the volume control reduced to zero the unweighted figure fell to -75dB, which is good enough. The input sensitivities on both LP input settings are well chosen to match a range of cartridges, with the

input impedance very close to the standard 47kohm – although the capacitance loading is exceptionally small. The supply modulation tests (Fig 4) reveal only harmonics of the 35Hz test-tone, with no supply artefacts whatsoever.

Conclusion

At £199 the B1 has succeeded in delivering a level of performance which is fairly competitive in its price range. It offers attractive styling and is well put together. Its weak areas are not poor enough to get too upset about, but it is not really the amp to choose if bass extension and timing are the primary considerations.

On technical grounds there are one or two foibles, notably the asymmetric power delivery into difficult loads and the higher-than-ideal noise on the moving-coil gain setting. The approach is slightly different from that of its direct competitors, and it should be compared with them to see which formulation suits you.

QED A270



With a reputation already established in the accessories market, QED made its first amplifier in 1983. QED's products have always been value-for-money 'no nonsense' designs and the amplifiers were well received as such. Since then, the product line-up has grown and this A270 is the latest in the range.

Styling is typically QED: all black with muted gold lettering and an indent line running along the front panel. Facilities are few, and this is definitely a purist's product. From right to left there is on/off switch, headphone socket, volume control, listen selector and listen selector. The volume control is of the dual (but concentric) variety and the other controls are also rotary in action. These cover disc, CD, tuner, video tape, and DAT.

The case is made from alloy panels. The front panel and heatsink are extrusions, with other metalwork fabricated from sheet. Inside, the layout is decidedly logical. A separate plug-in disc module sits immediately in front of the phono inputs at the left end of the chassis, the small board using discrete transistor circuitry with its own generous 4700µF power-supply reservoir capacitors. The cartridge gain stage can be selected between two buffers by internally mounted switches – one stage for moving-coil and the other for moving-magnet.

A large Holden and Fisher (200VA) toroidal transformer provides the power, and the main 4700µF supply capacitors are LCR sourced. The power amplifier uses high-current Darlington output transistors and good quality selected components throughout. The front-mounted headphone socket can be used

MUSICAL FIDELITY B1

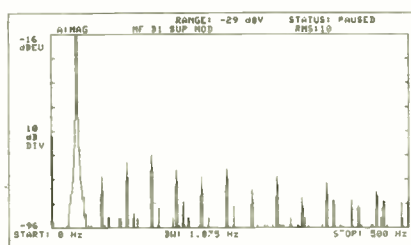


Fig 3. Musical Fidelity B1: frequency response on LP input (m-m and m-c identical)

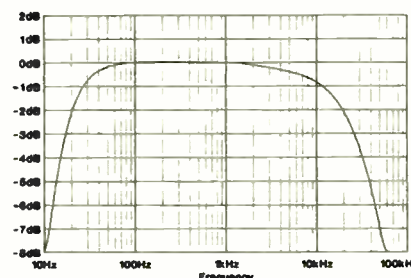


Fig 4. Musical Fidelity B1: power-supply modulation spuriae from 35Hz test-tone

Test results

Power output			
Rated power into 8ohms (spec)	35W (15.5dBW)		
One channel 8ohm (dBW)	17.3	17.3	16.7
Both channels 4ohm (dBW)	12.7	13.5	13.3
Both channels 4ohm (dBW)	12.0		
Instantaneous peak current (sec text)	+8A -8A		
Distortion			
THD	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz
at rated power, aux/CD (dB)	-61	-60	-55
Intermod 19/20kHz			
rated power, aux	-75dB		
at 0dBW, m-m	-52dB		
at 0dBW, m-c	-52dB		
Noise			
Disc (m-m) input (IHF, CCIR w'ted)	-70dB		
Disc (m-c) input (IHF, CCIR w'ted)	-56dB		
Aux/CD input (IHF, CCIR w'ted)	-72dB		
Residual, unweighted (min vol)	-75dB		
DC output offset	L: 46mV; R: 28mV		
Input overload			
Disc (m-m) input (IHF) dB	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz
Disc (m-c) input (IHF) dB	31.4	29.5	29.0
Aux/CD input (IHF) dB	34.0	32.0	31.7
	>28	>28	>28
Stereo Separation			
Disc input (m-m) dB	-2	-68	-51
Aux/CD input dB	-74	-64	-54
Output impedance (damping)	0.25ohm 0.25ohm 0.26ohm		
Channel balance disc at 1kHz (bal centred)	0.21dB		
Volume/balance tracking	0dB	-20dB	-60dB
Aux/CD input dB	0.12	0.56	3.26
Input data			
Disc (m-m) input	0.475mV	48k-ohms	10pF
Disc (m-c) input	0.065mV	-ohms	50nF
Aux/CD input	30mV	47k-ohms	20pF
Disc eq error 30Hz-15kHz	-15dB		
Typical price, including VAT	£200		

Supplier:

Musical Fidelity Ltd, Unit 16, Olympic Trading Estate, Fulton Road, Wembley HA9 0ND. Tel: 01-900 2999

Uxbridge Audio

Wembley Park
Middlesex

Dear Sir

The EXCELLENT service, personal attention and professionalism I found with your staff, compels me to write this letter.

Having embarked on the daunting task of looking for the right music system I visited many Stores and purchased a lot of literature. I was attracted by your advertisement in What Hi-fi magazine. First class sound quality was my top priority and from another article in the same magazine I had made up my mind to purchase a system recommended therein.

A quick phone call to your Shop to find out whether you had them in stock and I was lectured on how a Music System should be purchased . . . "Have you listened to it? How do you know you will like it's sound? It isn't the same as buying a washing machine, when it has to be taken on faith that it will do the job as you want it. It is more like buying a musical instrument, where personal preference dictates. You do not need to be an expert, you only need to listen to it and decide for yourself . . ."

Not too keen on the lecture, I was, none the less, taken up by what he said, and decided to pay you a visit. This turned out to be QUITE AN EXPERIENCE! After listening to a few systems I had already decided I would be buying my own combination and not the one recommended in the magazine. A music system should, indeed, be listened to, before purchasing. In addition, the personal attention, friendly, untiring and "non pushy" attitude of your sales assistant, Jas, turned the daunting prospect of choosing the right hi-fi into a most pleasant experience.

When I first read the letter from a satisfied customer in your advert I didn't think it genuine. But after my experience I know just what he meant. I echo him in commanding you and your staff and I will not hesitate to recommend you. I, once again, thank you for the help in choosing my system and the excellent service and attention I have received at and since it's installation.

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ROKSAN · RUARK · STAX · TANNOY · THORENS · WHARFEDAILE · YAMAHA



in conjunction with a set of switched loudspeaker outputs on the rear. However, for better performance QED have also provided two pairs of unswitched 4mm outlet sockets which make bi-wiring easy.

Sound quality

The amp arrived ready-adjusted for m-c sensitivity, so it fitted into my normal review system without problems. Starting with CD, the QED established itself as a consistent performer which – while reasonably proficient in most areas – did not shine like the best of the competition. The bass lacks drive; the A270's quotient of 'boogie factor' is not up with the Akai, for example. While it is capable of portraying the harmonic differences between various bass instruments, it is slightly 'detached'. In a way it sounded too civilised: as if the sound had been contoured to reconstruct a musical experience of a particular type. Unfortunately, this cultured approach seems to curtail some of the life and immediacy available from the better alternative amps.

The treble is fairly pure, but in achieving this it appears too rounded and slightly bland, despite a few rough edges. The mid is somewhat veiled – it sheds some of the detail provided by the best, and is just not sufficiently articulate. Soundstaging is only good; it doesn't produce enough depth and transparency and it hasn't the best focus. It seems dynamically 'stilted' and doesn't create

the interest that will keep you listening – but then, in its defence, it doesn't have any aggressive tendencies either, never sounding hard or harsh, over-sibilant or strident.

On LP the story is much the same. The treble is smooth and fairly detailed but a bit laid-back. The bass lacks some dynamic impact and slam, and it becomes slightly muddled on complex material. Like the treble, the mid-range is smooth, but ultimately lacking in inner detail. The whole presentation is very relaxed, and stage width and depth are unexceptional. If compared with a Cyrus Two (which is accused by some of being a little forward) the QED is too rounded and recessed. Preferences will be determined by the equipment with which it is used; a bright speaker or cartridge may well benefit from the QED's perceived balance.

Lab report

The continuous sinewave output of this model is specified at 50W per channel into 8 ohms, and while it managed this at 20Hz and 1kHz, at 20kHz it reached only 16dBW (40W). Into 4 ohms with both channels driven, the available power fell by about 2dB, but this is perfectly acceptable. Into a 2-ohm load driven with a burst signal having a 20% duty-cycle, 16.8dBW was recorded (which reveals good instantaneous peak capacity), while the peak current was assessed at $\pm 10A$.

Total harmonic distortion at rated power was under 0.1% (-60dB) in the

mid-band, but this rose at the frequency extremes. At lower output levels the picture was much improved, and at 0dBW the THD improved to -80dB at 1kHz and -60dB at 20kHz – totally acceptable. Full-power intermodulation distortion was fairly prominent, with the in-band 1kHz product of the twin HF tones only +40dB down (1%), while the supply modulation test reveals some breakthrough of hum harmonics – most seriously at 100Hz, 61dB down on the fundamental (Fig 5).

DC-offset at both the speaker terminals was negligible, the output impedance was a low 0.02 ohms across the frequency band, and the tape feed managed 10.6V from a 4.7kohm source impedance. Stereo separation measured via the Aux/CD input was pretty good, but the volume/balance tracking drifted at low settings (-4.6dB at -60dB). Input overload margins were excellent.

IM distortion via the m-c input was a little on the high side at -37dB at an equivalent 0dBW level, and can clearly be seen on the spectrogram (Fig 6). The signal-to-noise ratio on m-c was 63dB and the sensitivity on this gain setting is 0.025mV at an input impedance of 450 ohms. On m-m the sensitivity fell to 0.21mV (52kohms/180pF), with IM acceptable at -50dB and overload margins beyond reproach. Stereo separation here was good enough and S/N measured 70dB.

The RIAA responses show some slight anomalies. On the m-m setting (Fig 7) there is a boost below 200Hz which peaks to +1.4dB at 25Hz, while in the treble the response shows a sensible rolloff above 20kHz. On the higher gain m-c input the bass boost is less pronounced, but a slightly greater treble rise (+0.4dB) is apparent in the 2–10kHz region.

Conclusion

The technical performance of the A270 is in many respects very good. The amplifier sounded very smooth and rounded, and in certain systems this may well be preferred; but if the ancillary equipment is well balanced the QED may seem a bit lack-lustre.

OVERALL CONCLUSION

These three different amplifiers have provided a very interesting comparison, with a somewhat unexpected outcome. The QED A270 is a very slick performer, but with the equipment used it was a little too smooth and 'shut-in', although other systems with a different balance may benefit from these attributes. The Akai AM52 delivers a lot of watts for the money and sounded interesting and lively. I have some reservations about the overload margins, but it offers good value for money and deserves a recommendation. The Musical Fidelity B1 is competent, but, on the evidence of this final production version, not exceptional. Ultimately, the choice among these three depends on taste and the system context, but overall the Akai seems to have the edge. ↕

Q E D A 2 7 0

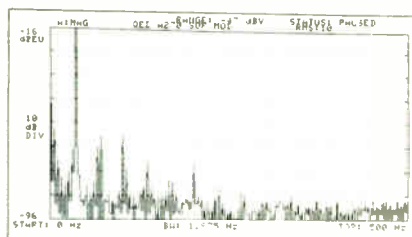


Fig 5. QED A270: power-supply modulation spurs from 35Hz test-tone

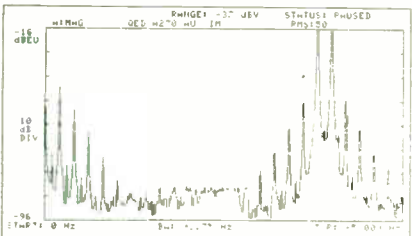


Fig 6. QED A270: intermodulation spurs from 19/20kHz tones at 0dBW via moving-coil input

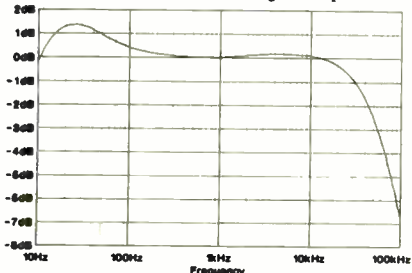


Fig 7. QED A270: frequency response on moving-magnet

Test results

Power output			
Rated power into 8ohms (spec)			
	50W (17dBW)		
	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz
One channel 8ohm (dBW)	17.0	17.6	16.0
Both channels 4ohm (dBW)	14.4	15.8	14.5
One chnl 2ohm pulsed (dBW)	16.8		
Instantaneous peak current	+10A -10A		
Distortion			
THD	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz
at rated power, aux/CD (dB)	-60	-62	-38
Intermod 19/20kHz			
rated power, aux	-40dB		
at 0dBW, m-m	-50dB		
at 0dBW, m-c	-37dB		
Noise			
Disc (m-m) input (IHF, CCIR w'ted)	-70dB		
Disc (m-c) input (IHF, CCIR w'ted)	-63dB		
Aux/CD input (IHF, CCIR w'ted)	-79dB		
Residual, unw'ted (min vol)	-74dB		
DC output offset	1.1mV; R: 9mV		
Input overload			
Disc (m-m) input (IHF) dB	33.2	35.3	29.6
Disc (m-c) input (IHF) dB	30.2	31.5	24.5
Aux/CD input (IHF) dB	>28	>28	>28
Stereo Separation			
Disc input (m-m) dB	65	65	55
Aux/CD input dB	66	-1	-8
Output impedance (damping)	0.02ohm	0.02ohm	0.02ohm
Channel balance disc at 1kHz (bal. centred)	0.60		
Volume/balance tracking			
Aux/CD input	0dB	-20dB	-60dB
	0	0.5	+6
Input data			
Disc (m-m) input	0.21mV	52k-ohms	180pF
Disc (m-c) input	0.025mV	450ohms	-nF
Aux/CD input	38mV	1.4k-ohms	30pF
Output, pre-amp (tape)	10.6V max 4.7kohms		
Disc eq error 30Hz-15kHz	+1.3dB -0.1dB		
Typical price, including VAT	£350		

Supplier:

QED Audio Products, Unit 12, Ashford Industrial Estate, Shield Road, Ashford, Middx TW15 1AU. Tel: (07842) 46236



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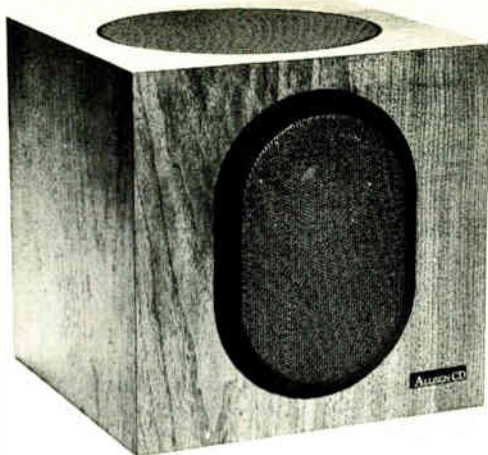
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The loudspeaker review series continues with a group of six models, drawn as before from our large comparative test run. All had the benefit of controlled unsighted and unprejudiced auditioning by a skilled panel.

Spanning a £250 to £400 price range, the variety encompassed is considerable, from the pure wall-mount Allison CD-6 (£290) to the classical monitor type of Spendor Prelude II (£385) and Harbeth Compact (£499), both of which are optimized for stand-mounting well clear of adjacent walls. The Royd Eden (£235) is pretty compact and requires a defined small spacing from the rear wall, subject to slight variation to take account of differing room conditions. The Linn Helix (£279) is provided with a matching designer stand for final assembly by the customer, and its spacing from the rear wall can be adjusted according to system, taste and room acoustics. This leaves the Heybrook HB100 (£249), a high quality model logically best used on its own stand positioned nearer rather than farther from the rear wall.

All these systems fall into the compact category, approximately 15 to 30 litres internal volume apart from the 7 litre Royd, and fit reasonably well into most room settings. Obviously the two wall-mount designs offer the most scope for self effacement. Where bi-wiring facilities were easy to use, this connection mode was employed and should be noted when comparing the listening-test results.

ALLISON CD-6

Some years ago, the designer and company founder Roy Allison defined the relationship between room boundaries and listening area response. Instead of fighting the effects, he sought to exploit them. Several speaker ranges later we have the compact wall-mounted CD-6, a neat cube-shaped speaker finished in real veneer and with a visually interesting but functional grille.

This two-way sealed-box system has the bass-mid unit on its top surface, as close to the wall as possible, while the tweeter acts more or less in free space. Lab measurements can therefore give only a rough indication of the real-world performance of this imported speaker design which originates from the USA.

sounding rounded at the extreme. The mid was mildly boxy and not particularly transparent, but quite good levels of musical detail were available.

The speaker's strength lay in its tight, coherent, integrated sound, well balanced and musical, consistent and imbued with a decent level of drama and drive. Soundstages were wide, quite well focused, and were presented with some depth and ambience coupled with reasonable perspectives. Classical and rock programme were handled equally well.

Design and technology

The rear-wall 'boundary' design has been noted above. Physically, this solidly built chipboard box encloses a volume of around 18 litres, with walls 15mm thick (30mm for the front panel) and the

Sound quality

Wall-mounted on a rigid stand, the CD-6 gave a good account of itself on the test programme, both rock and classical, with an above-average rating of 54%. With an 'old fashioned' but still likeable US flavour, the bass was not particularly extended but was articulate and powerful, a bit heavy-handed at times but punchy and detailed nonetheless. It handled power well, and produced a genuinely big sound. The mid and treble were of average quality, with the treble showing mild grain and also

ALLISON CD-6

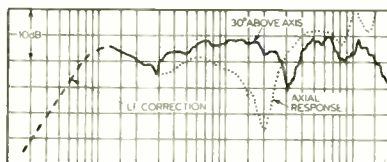


Fig 1a. Allison CD-6: on-axis response at 1m

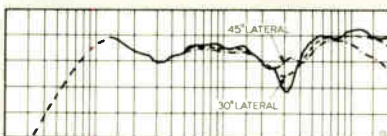


Fig 1b. Allison CD-6: one-third octave response family at 2m (ref 30° above axis as norm)

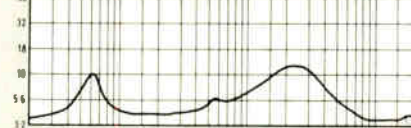


Fig 1c. Allison CD-6: modulus of impedance, ohms

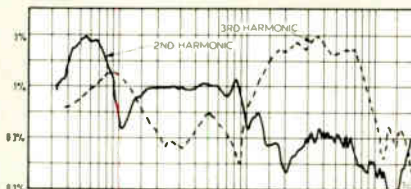


Fig 1d. Allison CD-6: distortion at 86dB SPL

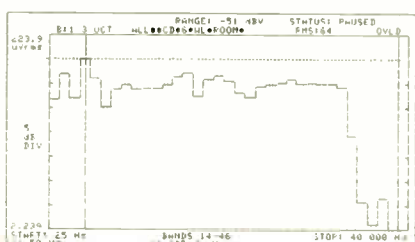


Fig 1e. Allison CD-6: room-averaged response (RAR), where dashed line indicates response with speaker away from wall

Test results Allison CD-6

Size (height x width x depth, cm) 28.5 x 28.5 x 27.5
 Recommended amplifier power 20-100W per channel
 Recommended placement Back to wall on shelf or stand
 See text
 Frequency response within ±3dB (2m)
 LF roll-off (-6dB) at 1m 60Hz
 Bass frequency extension (typical in-room) 35Hz
 Voltage sensitivity (ref 2.83V) 90dB/W at 1m
 Approximate maximum sound level (pair at 2m) 105dB
 Impedance characteristics (case Below average of drive)
 Forward response uniformity Very good (with compensation)
 Typical price per pair (inc VAT) £290

Supplier:
 Allison Acoustics Ltd, 20 Cleveland Way,
 Shelley, Huddersfield, West York HD8 8NQ.
 Tel: (0484) 603965

internal space damped by fireproof glass fibre. Built on a 210mm steel frame, the 175mm diameter bass-mid unit has a straight-sided pulp-cone with heavy damping, suspended on a roll-surround of damped foam. An Allison special, the 25mm paper-diaphragm tweeter is an unusual device with a flat surround and a centre, conical radiator – dubbed a 'nipple' by one colleague.

The drivers are protected by Positors, which precluded our usual distortion measurements on continuous tone at 96dB. A 3rd-order crossover network of good quality divides the frequency range between the two drivers at 3kHz or so.

Lab report

Note that with this boundary speaker the anechoic graphs are misleading, and the normal axial result (seen as a dotted line on the 1m reference response in Fig 1a) comes as a bit of a shock. The main trace shown was taken 30° above axis, and suggests quite a good frequency balance, an average sensitivity approaching 90dB/W (with wall gain), and a comfortable bass extension of 60Hz for –6dB. In-room (Fig 1c) this translated to an effective 35Hz, and the domestic response was very good overall, proving Allison's case. Note the poor response obtained when the CD-6 was measured free-space mounted (dashed line in Fig 1c).

Making allowance for the free-space error, the off-axis outputs (Fig 1b) were well maintained relative to the main response (taken at 30° vertical). The loading impedance (Fig 1c) was below average, a straight US 4-ohm rating, and a notable feature was the rise in 3rd-harmonic distortion above 1kHz, seen to be approaching 3% in the 3–4kHz region at 86dB (Fig 1d). This was much poorer than usual and might have been responsible for a hint of brittleness which was heard on audition.

Conclusion

Technically, this speaker worked well on the wall and delivered a scale and power of soundstage out of all proportion to its size and price. 'Fit and forget', this speaker was equally at home on rock and classical material and was considered generally relaxed and well balanced. It also preserved a good measure of the drive and rhythm present in the better recordings.

Capable of up to 105dBA per pair in a typical room, the Allison CD-6 requires up to 100W of solid 4-ohm-compatible amplifier power, with 15W as the absolute minimum.

It offered a wide and extended frequency response once properly sited, while the major technical performance aspects gave no cause for concern, apart from the 3rd-harmonic distortion results.

I think it is worth giving this system a try, and it should be high on the list for those purchasers seeking a middle-priced wall-compatible speaker with a neutral, classically balanced performance. Therefore, in its special class, the CD-6 warrants a recommendation.



HARBETH COMPACT

The Compact is excellently finished in real wood, and comprises a two-way bass-reflex with a low-diffraction open-cell foam grille. It is intended for free-space mounting on good quality stands, 40–50cm high, and is equipped for bi-wiring. It presents an easy load and suits 20–100W amplifiers.

Sound quality

Used bi-wired, the Compact scored 57% on the panel tests, which was just into the 'good' territory and more or less commensurate with the price. Panel comments were consistent, indicating a good uniformity of forward radiated sound, one which was essentially neutral and well balanced – if a little mid-range dominant. This was not presented as a direct criticism, but emerged in the light of the thinnish bass and slightly dull treble. The bass was definitely dry, and although quite good extension was audible when driven hard, at normal listening levels more bass would have been welcome. Some mild nasality and boxiness was noted in the mid-range, but was not sufficient to upset the speaker's monitor status.

Smooth and well integrated, the Compact's coherent output generate stereo images with good stage width and focus, plus fairly good depth. Detail was more than satisfactory, but a little more transparency and transient 'speed' would not have come amiss. Likewise, the bass was not very agile, and needed more slam and dynamic power.

Design and technology

Carefully designed to provide a highly controlled performance, the enclosures are built to BBC standards. Marine birch plywood is used, 12mm thick, with bitu-

HARBETH COMPACT

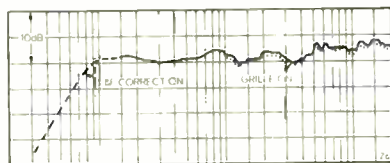


Fig 2a. Harbeth Compact: on-axis response at 1m

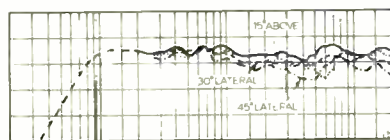


Fig 2b. Harbeth Compact: one-third octave response family at 2m

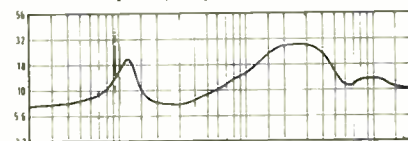


Fig 2c. Harbeth Compact: modulus of impedance, ohms

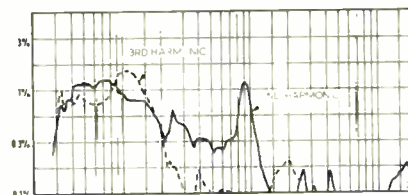


Fig 2d. Harbeth Compact: distortion at 86dB spl

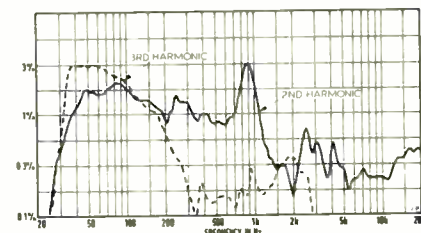


Fig 2e. Harbeth Compact: distortion at 96dB spl



Fig 2f. Harbeth Compact: room-averaged response (RAR)

Test results

Harbeth Compact

Size (height × width × depth, cm)	52 × 27.5 × 28.5
Recommended amplifier power per channel	15–100W
Recommended placement	Free-space on 45cm stand
Frequency response within ±3dB (2m)	67Hz–20kHz
LF rolloff (–6dB) at 1m	65Hz
Bass frequency extension (typical in-room)	50Hz
Voltage sensitivity (ref 2.83V) at 86, 5dB/W 1m)	
Approximate maximum sound level (pair at 2m)	102dBA
Impedance characteristics (ease of drive)	Easy
Forward response uniformity	Very good
Typical price per pair (inc VAT) £	499

Supplier:

Harbeth Acoustics, 3 Enterprise Park, Lewes Road, Lindfield, West Sussex RH16 2LX. Tel: (04447) 4371

men laminate internal cladding and an acoustic foam lining. Further internal absorption is provided by a roll of polyester fibre. The 30 litre volume is reflex-tuned by a 46mm-diameter 126mm-long port, which is fitted to the front panel.

Bass and mid-range are covered by a custom-design TPX-coned Audax driver using a steel chassis, and properly flush-mounted. Treble is allocated to the established SEAS 25mm aluminium alloy dome, with the outputs of the two units blended by a complex, good quality crossover equalizer.

Lab report

With an average reference sensitivity of 86.5dB/W the speaker required a 15W minimum input power, rising to a maximum of 100W. Some 102dBA should be possible from a stereo pair. The easy load impedance (Fig 2c) makes this design compatible with a wide variety of amplifiers, including valve models.

The reference response (Fig 2a) is respectably uniform, if anything a little emphasized in the upper treble, while at 2 metres the 3rd octave smoothing (Fig 2b) confirms a mild loss of energy in the presence range due to the higher-than-usual crossover point. The off-axis response set nevertheless rates well. The bass is somewhat overdamped, with the -6dB point at 65Hz, but extending realistically to 50Hz in-room (30Hz fell well below the mid-band). The room response (Fig 2f) confirms the mild mid dominance, somewhat emphasised by a deeper than usual room interface suckout in the upper bass.

The Compact performed well at the high sound levels used for distortion tests (Figs 2 d e), with particularly low 3rd-harmonic. At 86dB the 3rd-harmonic is negligible and the 2nd-harmonic peak of 1% at 900Hz considered harmless.

Conclusion

The Harbeth Compact comes from a British company devoted to the design and manufacture of monitor grade models.

This is a tidy, competent design of generally good neutrality, but it did not 'breathe' freely. It needs to open up in the bass and have the confidence to take some risks. Performing well in the laboratory, its responses were well ordered – nicely integrated and notably consistent, although when averaged for forward energy the mid-range did show up as slightly dominant. Distortion was low and the speaker easy to drive, taking high powers well.

Coloration was moderate, while both build quality and finish were excellent. The provision for bi-wiring helped improve definition and clarity, but while the compact worked well on classical programme, rock enthusiasts are likely to demand more energy and slam from their speakers. However, the overall quality level attained was sufficient to justify a cautious recommendation, with the usual advice to audition it thoroughly.



HEYBROOK HB100

With bass and mid units specifically designed to operate without a crossover network, the HB100 joins that increasingly fashionable group of designs with 'direct-coupled' bass units, *ie* directly connected to the amplifier terminals. Equipped for bi-wiring, this Heybrook

is a sealed-box two-way speaker with the same small metal-dome tweeter as used in the HB0.7. The finish comprises a vinyl print, and the system is designed for use on solid stands, *eg* the Heybrook HBS1, back to the listening room wall and not angled inwards. The grille has some rebating to reduce diffraction. Terminals are 4mm socket/binders.

Sound quality

Exhibiting a good sensitivity, the HB 100 handled the higher powers well and could deliver considerable sound levels without audible distortion or compression. Scoring above average at 53% this speaker elicited good agreement from the panel, who described a mildly forward sound, open and crisp, a touch 'acidic' and 'sibilant' in the treble, slightly ringing and hard on piano, and lean in the mid-range. Fairly good bass extension was present, though it was necessary to drive the speaker pretty hard to hear it, probably due to the mid forwardness.

Overall tonal balance was considered satisfactory – neither too dull or too bright – and the speaker was capable of a presentable degree of depth and ambience. Sounding clear and punchy, its dynamics were rated 'good', while the bass was quite fast and tuneful. The very adequate level of detail available held the listeners' attention. Images had good

HEYBROOK HB100

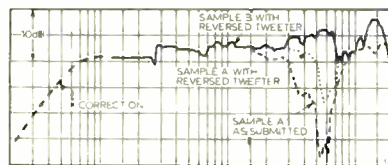


Fig 3a. Heybrook HB100: on-axis response at 1m

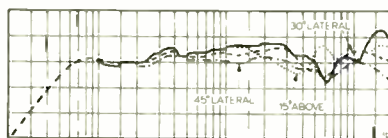


Fig 3b. Heybrook HB100: one-third octave response family at 2m

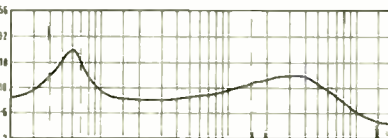


Fig 3c. Heybrook HB100: modulus of impedance, ohms

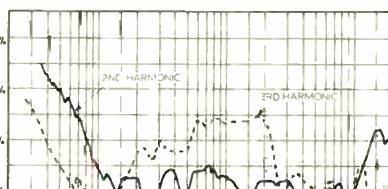


Fig 3d. Heybrook HB100: distortion at 86dB spl

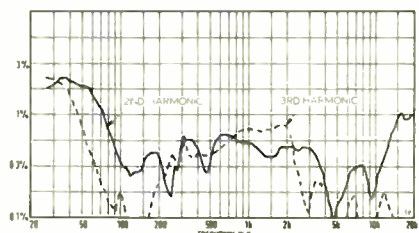


Fig 3e. Heybrook HB100: distortion at 96dB spl

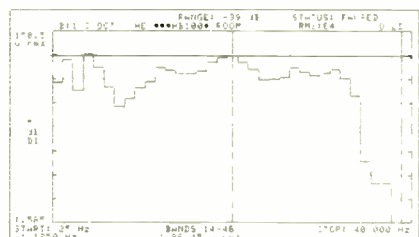


Fig 3f. Heybrook HB100: room-averaged response (RAR)

Test results

Heybrook HB100

Size (height x width x depth, cm)	17 x 26 x 28
Recommended amplifier power	15-100W per channel
Recommended placement	Back to wall, on 45cm stand
Frequency response: within ±3dB (2m)	55Hz-5.5kHz
LF rolloff (-6dB) at 1m	53Hz
Bass frequency extension (typical in-room)	35Hz
Voltage sensitivity (ref 2.83V) at 1m)	88dB W
Approximate maximum sound level (pair at 2m)	103dBA
Impedance characteristics (ease of drive)	Very good
Forward response uniformity	Below average
Typical price per pair (inc VAT)	£249

Supplier:

Heybrook Hi-Fi Ltd, Estover Close, Estover Industrial Estate, Plymouth PL6 7PL. Tel: (0752) 780311

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width and were spacious, but gave rise to mixed feelings regarding focus, and to comments concerning a less well integrated treble range – showing some grain and phasiness. Focus was not this model's strong point.

Design and technology

A compact speaker enclosing a 25 litre volume, its cabinet shows above-average constructional quality, with a 15mm chip-board carcass, a 19mm thick driver panel, a circumferential cross-brace, and bituminous pads applied to the panels. Internal acoustic absorption is achieved by polyester fill and animal wool.

Using a 210mm pressed-steel frame, the bass unit has a flared coated paper-pulp cone fitted with a moving integral phase-plug of Cobex. This is claimed to provide a controlled upper frequency range. Above 4kHz a 19mm aluminium dome-tweeter by SEAS continues the response the whole 'crossover' comprising simply a pair of paralleled polypropylene film capacitors. Internal wiring is hard-soldered with single-strand cable.

Lab report

On-axis at 1 metre, this speaker was confusing. One sample delivered the severely notched dashed response shown in Fig 3a, with the dotted line improvement achieved by reversing the tweeter phase. In this condition the other sample also gave the 'better' solid response shown, but both speakers were used untouched, as submitted, for the listening tests. A sensitivity of 88dBW was estimated, the bass was quite well extended to 53Hz for -6dB, and the overall response characteristic was of a wall boundary type.

At 2 metres (fig 3b) the output can be seen to vary more than usual with measuring axis, particularly in the vertical plane. The high treble peak was also a constant factor. In the listening room (Fig 3f) there appears to be some improvement, though the mid is certainly still dominant in the 1kHz region and the upper bass (around 100 Hz) is not quite powerful enough – the 'thin' effect noted on audition. Rated at 9 ohms (Fig 3c), the HB100 was easy to drive, making the most of its sensitivity and allowing up to 103dBA maximum levels with 100W programme. The 2nd- and 3rd-harmonic distortion was commendably low at both measured sound levels (Figs 3 d/e).

Conclusion

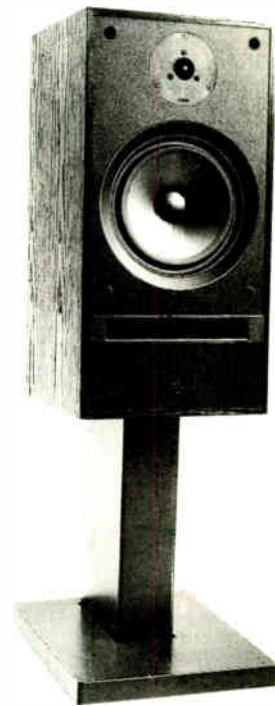
The listening-test result was promising, and some aspects of this design were certainly appealing – for example, the good dynamics, pleasing clarity, forceful vocal articulation, and fine sense of pace. On the minus side there was the treble phasiness and upper-range 'grain' and 'edge', while 'hardness' and brittleness was apparent lower in the treble, and a lean, thin tonal balance was apparent through the mid-range. Stereo focus and depth appeared to suffer somewhat, though the speaker could produce big soundstages at generous distortion-free

volume levels. In the lab it showed some variability in the upper range frequency response, and also demonstrated that phase integration at the crossover point was below par. Easy to drive, its measured distortion was low and the rated 100W power-handling was perfectly realistic.

There were certain elements of a good loudspeaker trying to emerge from this design, and further development could help to sort out the anomalies noted during our tests. As it stands the HB100 is well worth auditioning, but it can be recommended only with a degree of caution.

LINN HELIX

Helix and Nexus are partners from Linn, and in my view are surprisingly un-Linn like in their tidy, conservative design. In fact they look more like something B&W or KEF might produce. These speakers have a matching stand which assembles onto the speaker base, while electrical connection is bi-wireable, via two pairs of plain 4mm sockets. A two-way bass reflex model, the Helix design is 'classical' in that the speaker is intended to serve a wide market driven by a wide range of source equipment. This is in marked contrast to Linn's existing product line-up which need careful handling.



Sound quality

The price for this speaker is average, as was its scoring at 49%, and indeed the

LINN HELIX

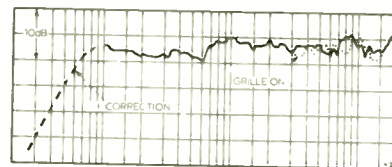


Fig 4a. Linn Helix: on-axis response at 1m

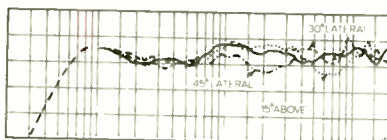


Fig 4b. Linn Helix: one-third octave response family at 2m

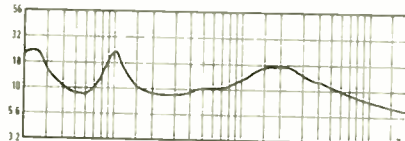


Fig 4c. Linn Helix: modulus of impedance, ohms

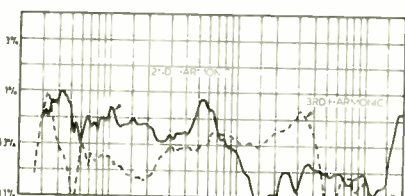


Fig 4d. Linn Helix: distortion at 86dB spl

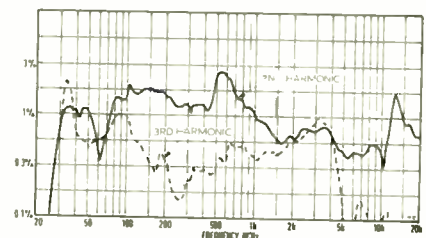


Fig 4e. Linn Helix: distortion at 96dB spl

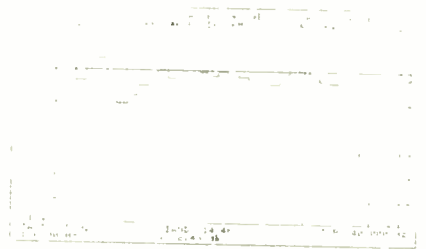


Fig 4f. Linn Helix: room-averaged response (RAR)

Test results

Linn Helix

Size (height x width x depth, cm) 51 x 25.5 x 27.5
Recommended amplifier power 15-100W per channel

Recommended placement Intermediate, free-space/wall on stand
Frequency response within ±3dB (2m) 55Hz-20kHz

LF rolloff (-6dB) at 1m 58Hz
Bass frequency extension (typical in-room) 51Hz

Voltage sensitivity (ref 2.83V) at 1m 88.5dB/W

Approximate maximum sound level (pair at 2m) 103.5dBA

Impedance characteristics (ease of drive)

Forward response uniformity Good
Typical price per pair (inc VAT) £279

Supplier:

Linn Products Ltd, Floors Road, Waterfoot, Eaglesham, Glasgow G76 0EP. Tel: 041-644 5111

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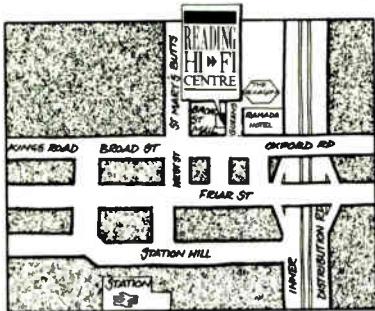
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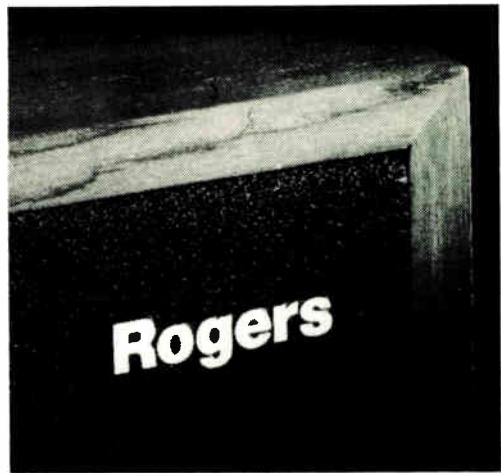
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word 'average' gives a fair summation of the Helix's attainment. But panel reactions were mixed, which indicates a need to check this one out for yourself.

The tweeter was not the cleanest heard, tending to expose ticks and clicks on vinyl sources, while some sibilant and tizzy prominence was also apparent. Emphasizing percussive transients, the mid-range seemed thinly balanced, 'nasal' on cello and viola, 'clangy' on piano, and over-projected on vocals. For a Linn product, the bass was also distinctly ordinary. I did avoid the usual excesses, eg boom or softness, but it also lacked the degree of tuncful articulation and rhythmic drive that we have come to expect at this price.

At times there was some drama and a feeling of dynamic realism in the mid-range, but otherwise the sound lacked real clarity or transparency. Ambience was not recovered well, and the low bass appeared rather muted. Stereo images were well focused, but with only average stage width and disappointing depth, the image sounding rather 'posterish'.

Design and technology

The Helix is a two-way bass-reflex system using an exposed rectangular vent, 2.2mm by 135mm deep, to tune its 26 litre volume. A light filling of polyester wadding offers some internal absorption, and the enclosure is built of vinyl-printed 15mm thick chipboard, with a thicker 19mm MDF front baffle.

The grille baffle is made of 10mm stock, rebated to reduce diffraction, and panel resonances are controlled by an effective circumferential brace located between the two drivers and enhanced by a central spar. Bass-mid is provided by a 210mm steel-frame unit (Tonegen) with a mineral-loaded polypropylene cone of 165mm diameter, and treble is handled by a 19mm soft-polyamide dome to Linn's design. The good quality crossover is a complex affair, equalized and computer-designed to achieve a 4th-octave Linkwitz Riley acoustic alignment.

Lab report

The impedance curve (Fig 4c) is quite uniform, averaging 11ohms which offers an easy amplifier load. The sensitivity was a little above average at 88.5dB/W, allowing for maximum sound levels of 103.5dBA in a normal room, while the good distortion results (Figs 4 d/e) also help to fill out a picture of substantial sound levels and decent power-handling. Pair-match was fine at ± 0.5 dB, and bass extension typically reaching 58Hz for -6 dB, with $+5$ Hz practical in-room limit.

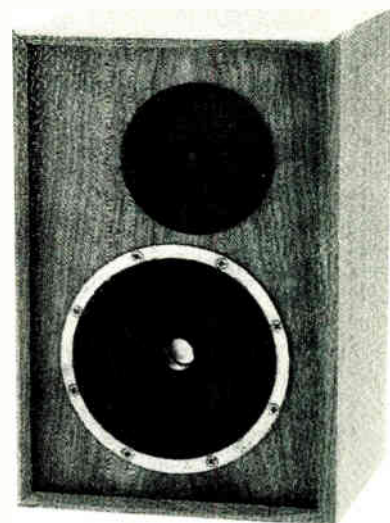
The reference frequency response (Fig 4A) shows a distinct level-step of 3dB at 600Hz – which is rather high in frequency for wall-boundary compensation. Despite some amplitude ripples induced by the grille frame, the response above 600Hz is fine except for the extreme HF peak – apparently audible to the panel. With 3rd-octave smoothing (Fig 4b) the result is tidy enough, with the off-axis result at 45° helping to offset the forward mid-

range. Nevertheless, the room curve (Fig 4f) does show some prominence in the 1kHz region, plus a mildly rising treble which is unusual in a room plot.

Conclusion

This Linn design would appear to be neither fish nor fowl. Characteristics sought and expected in a 'classic' Linn speaker include a fast, articulate bass, often with good extension for the size, plus a forward, detailed and 'immediate' mid-range allied to a transparent and airy high-class treble. A traditional monitor, on the other hand, may have a softer and slower bass, but also offers a neutral and well balanced mid-range, and good stereo transparency and depth.

Unfortunately the Helix falls somewhere in between, and does neither job well. A Linn fan would find it dull and lacking in dynamics, while a 'monitor' enthusiast would find it thin, more coloured than usual, lacking in transparency and offering a merely average treble quality. Technically it performed well enough, though modest indications of some of its subjective weaknesses were evident from the lab results. It offers an easy load, and can be driven hard to decent levels at low distortion. For a non-enthusiast the Helix probably works well enough, but for committed buyers it will probably not satisfy.



ROYD EDEN

At first sight this miniature looks too expensive. However, scepticism is somewhat dispelled when you pick up a packed pair and stagger under their combined weight! What can be in the enclosures,

ROYD EDEN

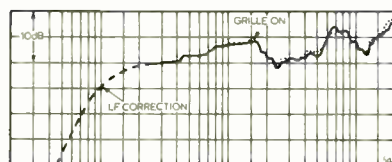


Fig 5a. Royd Eden: on-axis response at 1m

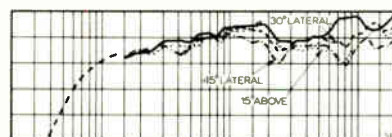


Fig 5b. Royd Eden: one-third octave response family at 2m

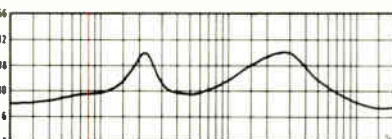


Fig 5c. Royd Eden: modulus of impedance, ohms

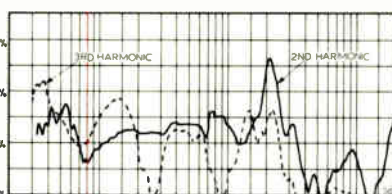


Fig 5d. Royd Eden: distortion at 86dB spl

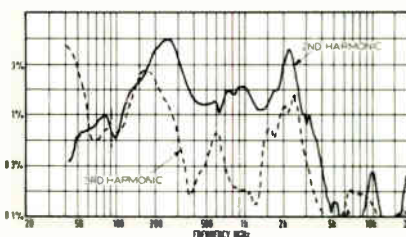


Fig 5e. Royd Eden: distortion at 96dB spl

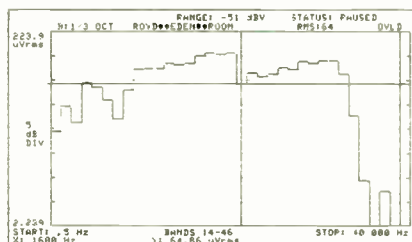


Fig 5f. Royd Eden: room-averaged response (RAR)

Test results

Royd Eden

Size (height x width x depth, cm)	30.5 x 20.5 x 18.5
Recommended amplifier power	20-175W per channel
Recommended placement	4-4cm (1 1/2 in) from back wall, on stand
Frequency response within ± 3 dB (2m)	See text
LF rolloff (-6 dB) at 1m	150Hz
Bass frequency extension (typical in-room)	50Hz
Voltage sensitivity (ref 2.83V) at 86dB/W 1m	
Approximate maximum sound level (pair at 2m)	102dBA
Impedance characteristics (ease of drive)	Average
Forward response uniformity	Average
Typical price per pair (inc VAT)	£235

Supplier:

Royd Eden, Unit B2 Stafford Park 15, Telford, Salop TS3 3BB. Tel: (0952) 290700

iron bars? Sure enough, the panels are loaded and stiffened by thick plates of steel scrap, and it certainly hurts if you rap your knuckles on this inert carcass.

A reflex-loaded two-way design, specific instructions are provided for mounting the Eden with its back to the wall, spaced away from it by 1¼in. An active version is also available, for use with amplifiers of your choice, and a 60W power rating is given. A traditionally styled model, it is finished in a vinyl print wrap, with the advice to use good spiked stands.

Sound quality

It would be no exaggeration to say that the performance of this speaker divided the listening panel. For what it may be worth, the marks ranged from 33% to 53%, with an average of 43%. From the results, I can describe what is wrong with it – and what is right – but only you can decide whether or not to buy it!

Taking the good points first, this speaker had no boom in the bass, and showed a very fast, lively and detailed sound, vaguely resembling the Wilson Watt. High clarity and exceptional, if exaggerated, pace in the percussion areas was also demonstrated, and in this respect it had foot-tapping Rock potential. On the minus side, it didn't appear to have any bass. The tonal quality was severely tipped-up, with a 'tin can' nasality on drums and a bright 'breathy' treble. No attempt was made to reveal perspectives on classical programme. At times it could sound positively caustic, while on other occasions it got away with murder!

'Fast', with excessively lifelike (or exaggerated) transients – the panel's reactions were not all that helpful in producing an overall assessment. Stereo images were well focused and the sound was certainly very dynamic, but reproduction of depth and ambience was marginal.

Design and technology

This 7 litre miniature is weakly reflex-tuned by a rear-mounted duct narrowed by a pierced disc placed at the exit, with a 'Q' so low as to barely disturb the impedance curve (Fig 5c). With a 105mm active diameter, the pulp-cone bass-mid unit is built on a 145mm cast-alloy frame, fixed to the cabinet by eight screws and a cured-silicone rubber seal. The driver magnet is weakly glued to an internal reinforcement. High frequencies are produced by a 19mm soft-polymide VIFA dome unit, with a rear chamber. The speaker is not bi-wired and the crossover is of standard commercial quality, 2nd-order for the bass and 3rd-order for the treble, hard-wired. The cabinet treatment certainly results in a non-resonant enclosure, while the interior air space has been damped using polyester fibre.

Lab report

Claimed at 90dB, our estimate for the sensitivity was 88dB/W, while some explanation for the 'fast' sound can be seen in the overdamped bass and strongly rising response about 200Hz (Fig 5a).

This gives a 5dB lift, whereas in theory only 2-3dB is required for wall-mounting. A presence-range dip is followed by a peaky, elevated treble, and even with 3rd-octave smoothing at a 2m measuring distance (Fig 5b) the response does not fit the usual limits. But the driver output integration isn't bad. Anechoically, the 1F -6dB point is at a high 150Hz, with a room response providing some output down to 50Hz only if the system is driven really hard to bring it up to audibility! In-room, the axial response 'characteristic' remains in evidence (Fig 5f), the result being singularly irregular in terms of tonal balance, with a seriously depressed bass band. Channel-matching was good, with the impedance characteristic representing an easy amplifier load; but the speaker did not fare too well in respect of distortion at the higher 96dB test level (Fig 5a), where 2nd-harmonic is poorer than average and 3rd peaking to 2.6% at 160Hz. But results were considered satisfactory at 86dB (Fig 5d).

Conclusion

Testing this speaker was an interesting experience. It was worthwhile in the sense that good correlation was achieved between its unusual and unbalanced frequency response and the unsighted listener comments. The effect of the thin, forward mid-range was also noted in terms of subjective 'speed' and pace, an aspect where this design excelled. The lack of bass also helped in this respect. Conversely, the natural tonal balance and perspective of an orchestra was quite beyond the Eden, and in my view it would only really be suitable for rock material; even then, it would be very much of an acquired taste.

The lab performance was weak, with the wall-mounted response needing more equalization plus a flattening of the mid-treble output. In addition, the distortion was rated poorer than average for the price category. Worth hearing if you like this sort of thing, but the Eden was too off-beat for serious consideration.

SPENDOR PRELUDE 2/2

Spendor has a high-power Bextrene coned bass-mid unit in its driver range which dates back to the BC2, and has been used in various Spendor models. It achieved perhaps its greatest success in the popular and enduring Prelude, which is now presented in Mk II form. Some detail improvements have been carried out, plus provision for immediate bi-wiring connection if so desired. A high quality veneer covers the exterior, while the grille might well be detached for critical listening in view of its lack of anti-reflection rebate.

The Prelude II is a compact two-way designed for free-space mounting on high-quality 45cm stands. It may be sensibly regarded as a budget version of the SP2-2, which it resembles in size and specification, while the price difference makes the Prelude II an interesting option.



Sound quality

Achieving a 'good' score of 59%, with solid agreement between the panellists, the new Prelude justifies its price and illustrates its relationship with the SP2. The latter model was clearly smoother and less coloured than the Prelude, but a high proportion of the essential tonal balance and clarity of the SP2 has been retained in the Prelude.

Criticisms were moderate, and related to a heavy bass which lacked some speed and articulation as well as demonstrating a reduced rhythmic drive. The mid still presents a good standard of clarity and neutrality, though with some loss of detail in its upper reaches. The tweeter has always sounded at its best in the Prelude, and the standard is still respectable, even if the slightly careless top-end did emphasize clicks and pops on vinyl replay – more so than the best modern designs in the same price range.

Stereo images showed good depth, and were well focused and presented on a respectable scale – combined with a good presentation of recorded ambience and perspective. The SP2 scored higher in the area of dynamics and pace, and by comparison the Prelude II sounded 'lazier' and more suited to classical than to pop programme.

Design and technology

With an internal volume of 27 litres, this system is strongly tuned by a 70mm-diameter, 120mm-deep duct. The particle-board carcass is damped by a heavy bituminous cladding, with a 15mm thick baffle made from ply, to which the bass driver is rigidly fixed by mounting bolts. Anechoic foam is used to line the enclosure interior for standing-wave absorption. Hand-doped with a visco-elastic layer, the 160mm flared Bextrene cone has a 40mm motor coil, a massive magnet, and is built on a rigid diecast aluminium chassis. The classic 25mm Audax soft-

dome tweeter remains a fixture in this design and still sounds sweet, with good crossover characteristics. The crossover itself is 2nd-order for the bass and 3rd-order for the treble, using good quality parts. Spade connections are used internally.

Lab report

Checking out at an average sensitivity of 87dB/W, the Prelude presented a standard 8-ohm impedance rating and thus offers a 'good' amplifier load (Fig 6c). With a substantial power rating of 150W peak-programme, the Prelude is capable of a decent 104dBA in a typical room using a stereo pair. Pair-matching was generally good, to ± 0.5 dB except in the crossover range, where ± 1.3 dB differences were noted. From the reference response (Fig 6a) the output is seen to be very tidy, if fractionally 'bright' and with a small dip centred on 2.7kHz. The grille did affect the results and should be detached for critical listening. The anechoic bass extended to 55Hz for -6dB, with a practical in-room descent to 35Hz. The room bass is prominent at 50Hz (Fig 6f), but otherwise the frequency balance is nicely judged. At 2 metres with 3rd-octave smoothing, the off-axis responses (Fig 6b) are tidy and well integrated, with a smooth and slightly rising trend on axis. Distortion rates as 'average' at the 96dB level (Fig 6e), but shows considerable improvement at 86dB (Fig 6d), being typically 0.3% above 200Hz for both 2nd- and 3rd-harmonic.

Conclusion

While it was easier to criticize the Prelude II than the SP2/2, the fact remains that enough essential sound quality was present to generate a worthwhile rating for the Prelude. I believe it might be improved by a similar port liner to that fitted to the SP2, since both the lab and listening results suggested that the bass tuning was a bit strong for modern tastes. I am sure Spendor could oblige and it could be fitted in seconds! Incidentally, bi-wiring did help improve the clarity and definition for this model.

The main cone may be old-fashioned Bextrene, but when built to a high standard and hand-tweaked, fine results are still possible, as the Prelude continues to demonstrate. The long-established Audax tweeter is wearing well, but it sounds better suited to clean, classical CD sources than to rock when fed from middle priced analogue players. Essentially neutral, all the Spendor hallmarks of a natural balance, trustworthy perspectives and even frequency response were present. In fact, this class of speaker rarely springs nasty surprises, no matter how varied the programme material.

The lab reports confirmed that it was a well-engineered product with a good performance and high consistency, while the finish was first-class. It may not be quite as strong a performer as the Spendor SP2/2, but the Prelude 2/2 nonetheless comes recommended.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

In some ways the most exciting speaker of the group was the highly idiosyncratic Royd Eden. It would be easy to dismiss this simply on the basis of its frequency response, which reflects a quite primitive design – a lack of tonal balance and a disappointing level of driver output integration. Conversely, it felt as if it was built like a steel brick, and this, plus other aspects of its engineering, have resulted in a sound which defies its tonal and associated coloration errors and achieves a high standard of pace, involvement and both dynamic power and 'speed'. Unsuitable to classical programme, what it achieves on rock material is important.

The wall-mount Allison CD-s fooled many panellists into believing that this was a much larger and more costly design. It did most things well, and I particularly like it for its ability to deliver pace and extension in the bass, while at the same time preserving an essentially neutral tonal balance on the wall. It suited both rock and classical programme well, and is my recommendation in this price sector for this particular application.

Linn's Helix was a disappointment in that it aspired to neutrality, but in our panel's view reached only an ordinary standard. Traditional Linn virtues of bass speed, rhythmic line and lively transients

were damped down in this bland but essentially pleasant speaker, whose inoffensiveness will cause a salesman no problems at the demonstration level.

The Harbeth Compact has recently won 'Component of the Year' award in Japan, and with its craftsman-like build quality, real-veneer finish and all-round studio monitor standard of competence, it is easy to understand why. The 'ex-BBC' pedigree of this company is also appreciated overseas. Well worth hearing, we nevertheless felt that a bit more drive and pace would not have done this design any harm.

Heybrook is now into metal-dome tweeters with a vengeance, and the HB 100 sought to exploit the maximum clarity possible from the available technology. This was verified by the listening tests, where the speaker showed some strong points. But perceived focus was not too good in the upper frequency range, nor were the results consistently good over the spectrum of tests, so only a guarded recommendation is given here.

Last but by no means least, we have the evergreen Spendor Prelude in Mk II form. With its classically neutral tonal balance and lively bass (which may need a bit of damping from an SP2 II foam port-liner in some rooms), the informative Spendor hallmark was clearly present, and a continuing recommendation is thus achieved for this model under its 2/2 labelling. ✦

SPENDOR PRELUDE 2/2

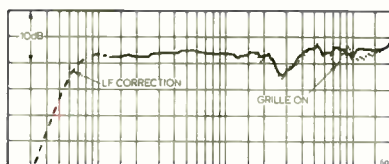


Fig 6a. Spendor Prelude 11: on-axis response at 1m

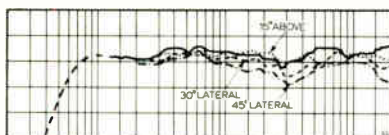


Fig 6b. Spendor Prelude 11: one-third octave response family at 2m

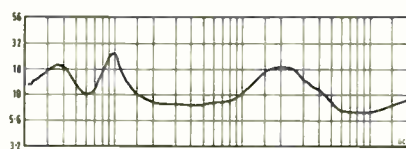


Fig 6c. Spendor Prelude 11: modulus of impedance, ohms

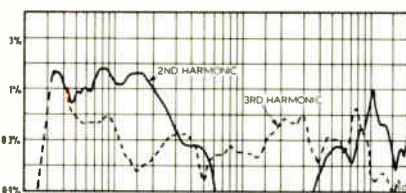


Fig 6d. Spendor Prelude 11: distortion at 86dB spl

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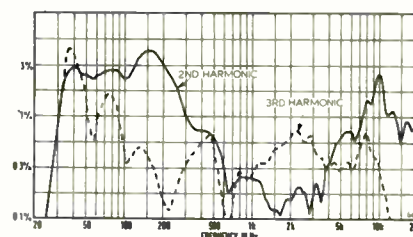


Fig 6e. Spendor Prelude 11: distortion at 96dB spl

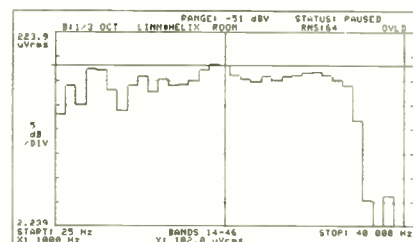


Fig 6f. Spendor Prelude 11: room-averaged response (RAR)

Test results

Spendor Prelude 2/2

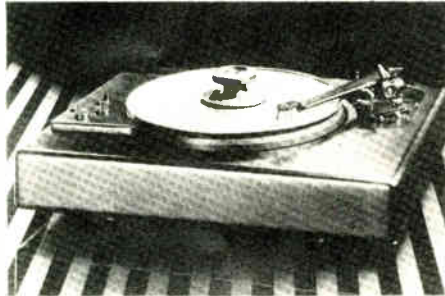
Size (height x width x depth, cm) 50.5 x 26.2 x 28.5
Recommended amplifier power 15-150W per channel
Recommended placement Free-space on 45cm stand
Frequency response within ± 3 dB (2m) 64Hz-20kHz
LF rolloff (-6dB) at 1m 55Hz
Bass frequency extension (typical in-room) 35Hz
Voltage sensitivity (ref 2.83V) at 87dB/W 1m)
Approximate maximum sound level (pair at 2m) 104dBA
Impedance characteristics (ease of drive) Good
Forward response uniformity Very good
Typical price per pair (inc VAT) £385

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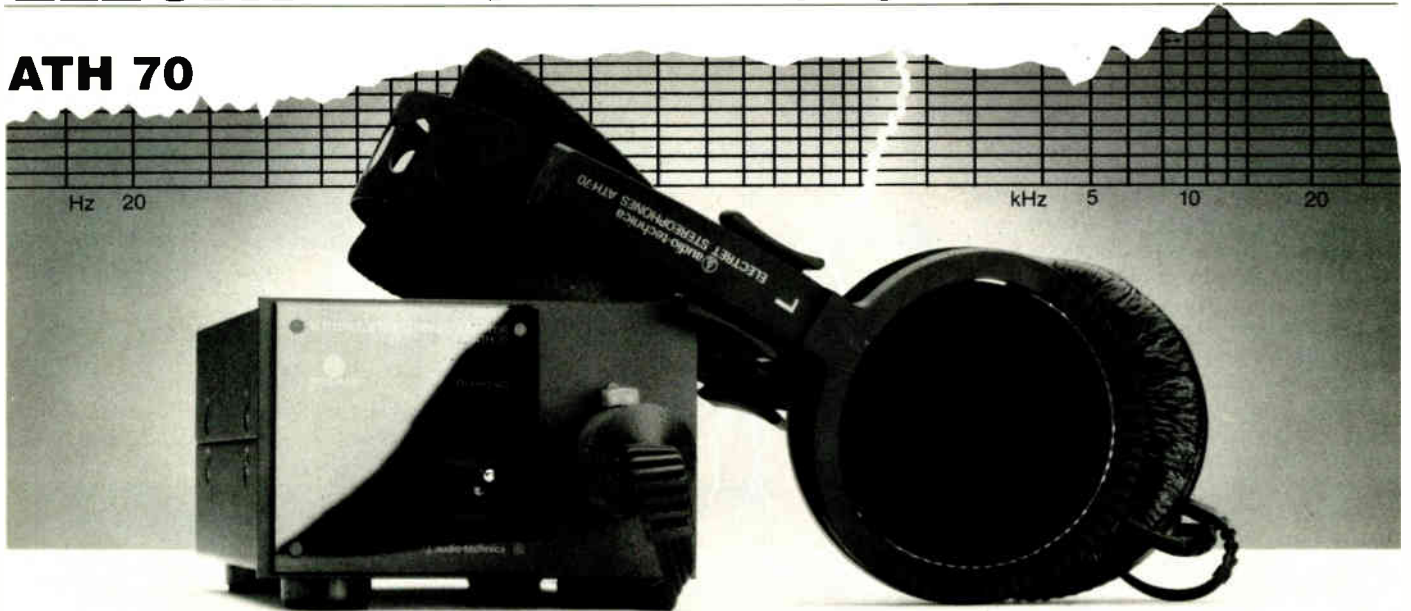
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Audio sales are a seasonal phenomenon. Traditionally, they go quiet in the summer then pick up during the autumn, at which time many new designs are released to coincide with the upturn in business. When this review reaches the stands the new season should be in full swing (interest rates permitting), and all those involved in the audio business will have made their best efforts to bring newer and hopefully better models onto the market. However, the present situation is complicated by the imminent imposition of an EEC import levy on some Japanese-made CD players. Which models will be affected and to what degree will depend on their previous sales history, and even then the matter will be subject to further appeal and negotiation. In the future, machines produced in Taiwan and Korea may also enter the equation, which makes the pricing and value ratings of such players hard to determine. All the following review ratings are based on the prices applicable at the time of going to press (in this case late September), and interested purchasers should keep an eye on any subsequent changes.

We have included three significant designs in this month's group review. The new RCD 855 (£250) is the latest and most promising model from Rotel, largely the outcome of the company's UK design team efforts; the Sony CDP 770 comprises an amazingly well equipped model, at least at face value, retailing at a highly competitive £200; and the Technics SL-P222A offers an impressive overall package at the same price. Distinct from these budget players, and given a separate review in this issue, is the Meridian 206, derived from the well established 207 and looking set to establish a new reference in its £800 price region.

The usual full range of lab measurements were applied, and for the listening tests we set up a system comprising a pair of Musical Fidelity P140s passively bi-amped to SL700 speakers, with the CD drive via an MF MVX pre-amplifier. Spondor SP2/2s were also used in conjunction with a couple of reference CD players: Marantz CD85 and Meridian CD207 Pro.

ROTEL RCD 855



Rotel has a broad range of products, but is perhaps best known for their successful integrated amplifiers, most notably the BX Series and the RA 820BX-2. Added to the range rather late in the day, Rotel's CD players were initially a little too expensive to attract much attention and have subsequently not been especially distinguished. However, it is Rotel's intention that any negative view of the company's CD performance should be dramatically altered with the introduction of the RCD 855. The earlier models were essentially Philips clones with some minor upgrades, but the new 855 is built in the Rotel factory and carries much technical input from the UK division at Milton Keynes. Yes, it is still based on established Philips technology, but much work has been done to advance the standard, rather as Ken Ishiwata's work at Marantz has given us the successful SE versions of otherwise conventional designs.

Like a BX Series amplifier, the 855 is supplied in 'racing' trim, and extra indulgences such as volume controls and headphone sockets have been omitted. The features list includes the usual 20-track programming plus luxuries such as shuffle or random-play. Several repeat modes are possible, while the simple display presents track numbers and timings. The supplied remote control matches the front-panel buttons, and adds the convenience of a 10-key numeric array for rapid track-entry. The audio output is from fixed-level, gold-plated phono-sockets, while the player may also be used as an above-average digital transport via the single coaxial, digital data output.

Sound quality

No point in beating about the bush: this player delivered a highly competitive 82% sonic merit rating, which was well above its class and also superior to the

score of many noted references, including my final version of the old Cambridge Audio CD1. Replicating much of the performance of the top-rated Marantz CD65SE, but with a price reduction of 17%, it also offers an arguably superior build quality and finish. A key aspect was its ability to deliver 'BX' style bass tuning and punch, the low frequencies proving to be articulate and having good subjective extension. Where slam was required it was delivered with considerable authority.

In tonal balance the sound was a shade lean and forward, but not sufficiently so to justify notions of 'glare' or undue brightness. The mid-range was essentially well balanced, with a decent level of clarity maintained from soft to loud volume, and on simple as well as complex musical textures. The treble was cleaner than usual — low in grain — while vocal sibilance was well controlled. A revealing aspect concerned the good control of treble harmonics. Stereo soundstages were spacious, showing fine width and depth with an openness and transparency up with many of the top-rated players. Stereo focus was consistently good over the entire frequency range, sounding tight and stable.

As if this were not enough, musical dynamics were also portrayed well, this player's output sounding lively and communicative, thus helping to maintain listener interest. Clearly the 855 is a fitting partner for the BX series of amplifiers, and would not disgrace a number of more costly systems.

Design and technology

The technology is mainly Philips, from the CDM-4 swing-arm laser transport to the control chips and the familiar digital-to-audio chain. This is a dual, 16-bit DAC, 4-times resampled, digitally filtered system with low-order linear-phase output filtering. The latest chip types are used, for example the SAA 7220B filter and TDA 1541A DAC.

The main PCB and layout are entirely Rotel's design, and here the BX philosophy comes into play, including the choice

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New-season CD players offering different blends of features and performance: Rotel RCD855, Sony CDP770, Technics SL-P222A

by Martin Colloms



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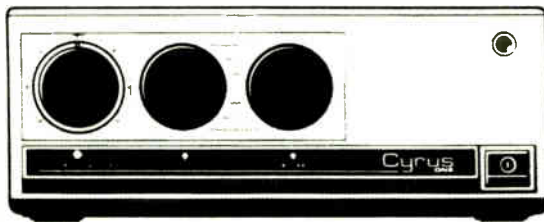
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of selected audio components encompassing Black Gate audio capacitors, generous power-supplies, and selected NE5532 op-amps for current-to-voltage conversion and output buffering. Plastic-film instead of SM ceramic capacitors are fitted for the multiple DAC decoupling positions. But at this price level it has remained necessary to use FETs and transistor switches for the de-emphasis and output mute functions. The coaxial digital output is transformer-coupled and has its own logic buffer amplifier.

Lab report

Frequency response was very good, with excellent channel balance, while high levels of channel separation were achieved. It goes almost without saying that the audio output was linear-phase, polarity-correct, and phase matched between channels. In addition, the source impedance was decently low at 200ohms, with a precise 2V output. De-emphasis was accurate, noise-levels under all measurement regimes were typically -109dB, and spurious responses at moderate signal levels were at a low -105dB. However, at higher levels and with higher frequency modulation this picture changed, as the IM spectrogram demonstrates (Fig 1). But the full-level two-tone IM products were a very fine -102dB, with a noticeable absence of spurious in the audible band, while at -10dB modulation the -91dB 1kHz difference component was also a good result.

Total harmonic distortion was low throughout the measurement series, with the -70dB dithered encode delivering -35dB of distortion to give an effective dynamic range of 105dB down to the low-order 'odd' harmonic products. Fig 2 confirms the tidy down-band delivery.

At -90dB the level-error averaged 3dB in the negative direction - a 15.6 bit linearity - while the linearity curves for

the two channels were well matched and to a high standard. That for the right channel is shown in Fig 3. At -90dB the distortion was mainly 3rd-harmonic, but low enough to give a respectable looking recovered sinewave (Fig 4). Track-access was fine at 3.5 seconds, while error-correction was remarkable at a 4mm gap - although above 2.5mm a small single click was heard before full correction.

Conclusion

Skill, experience, and high production capability have paid-off with this CD player: a budget audiophile design, it clearly delivered the best CD sound for the money. The lab performance was fine, the sound quality exemplary, and indeed players costing £800 get recommended if they show a performance like this one! The build quality was also above average, and as a result the RCD 855 comes strongly recommended - a Best Buy particularly where sheer performance is valued above bells and whistles.

SONY CDP 770



In terms of value-for-money in relation to features, first impressions were most encouraging. Even the technology claims looked promising: '8-times oversampled by 18-bit' proclaims the label - but more of that later. This is a Japanese-made player, a full-width design which takes both sizes of CD, founded on an integral plastic tray/case/chassis. As such it is strong, well finished, and both economical and effective, with the slide-on top cover secured by a single screw at the back.

High-value features include the remote

power volume control, achieved by a motorized potentiometer, with the headphone socket linked to the same remote control. This is a fully featured handset in the traditional Sony format. Digital audio output comes via the optically coupled mode, while one pair of audio outputs is provided, with the signal under the control of the remote volume setting.

The generous fluorescent display is most informative and includes track number, index number, timings, and a 0-20 programming track calendar. Various operating modes are flagged, while a single track-number button accesses that track for immediate replay. Play modes include a programmed option with up to 20 selections, plus shuffle or random-play, and both normal and single-track play. Numeric keypads up to 20 are provided on both the player and the remote control panels, augmented by a >20 button. The time button accesses play and total play times, while other facilities include digital auto-fade for a fade-in and fade-out when dubbing to cassette tape. Included among the recording aids are a time-edit feature to obtain the best fit for CD tracks.

Sound quality

By our standard Accuphase 80/81 sonic rating system, the 770 scored a competent 56%, compared with the established Philips CD582 score of 68%. One could accuse Sony of treading water with respect to CD player sound quality; the season's new range has brought more features and competitive pricing, but little or no improvement in sound.

Whether or not the result of the permanently engaged volume control, the output sounds rather bland, with a noticeable rounding and dulling of transients. Detail resolution was rated a little below average, while on more complex passages additional treble detail was lost in a mushy effect. Interestingly, the modest

ROTEL RCD - 855

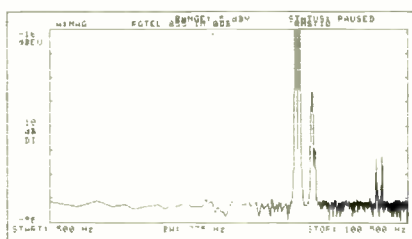


Fig 1. Rotel RCD 855: intermodulation spurs from 19/20kHz tones at 0dB, log scale 500Hz-100.5kHz

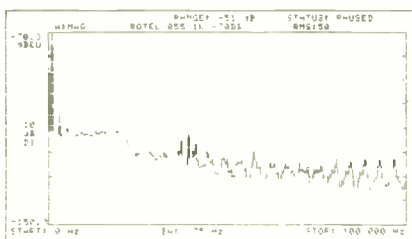


Fig 2. Rotel RCD 855: spurs up to 100kHz associated with 1kHz dithered tone at -70dB

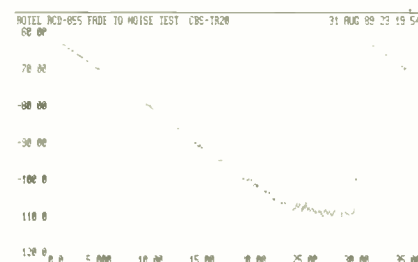


Fig 3. Rotel RCD 855: linearity plot below -60dB

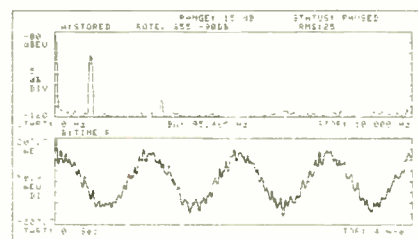


Fig 4. Rotel RCD 855: dithered 1kHz sinewave at -90dB, with distortion spectrum above

Test results

	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz
Channel balance	0.01dB	0.03dB	0.04dB
Stereo separation	117dB	110dB	95dB
Channel phase difference	0°	0°	0°
THD 0dB	-92.5dB	-86dB	-91dB
THD -10dB	-	-82dB	-
THD -70dB	-	-45dB	-
Intermod 19kHz 20kHz, 0dB	-	-102dB	-
Intermod 19kHz 20kHz, -10dB	-	-91dB	-
Frequency response, left	0dB	-	-0.01dB
Frequency response, right	-0.15dB	-	-0.01dB
S/N 20Hz-20kHz unweighted	-	109dB	-
S/N CCR ARM, 1kHz ref	-	109dB	-
Output level, 0dB	-	2.01V	-
Output impedance	-	200ohms	-
De-emphasis (error in dB)	0.0	-0.10	-0.08
Track access time (Tr 15)	-	3.5secs	-
Error correction capability	-	gap > 4mm	-
Mechanical noise	-	low	-
Spuriae up to 100kHz	-	-105dB	-
Resolution at -90dB, left right	-92.4dB	-93.7dB	-
Dimensions (wdh)	-	11.5 x 42.0 x 8.9cm	-
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DESIGN INTEGRITY

presentation of detail and the lack of openness were not paralleled in impressions of depth and ambience, which were definitely above average.

In terms of tonal balance the general effect was satisfactorily neutral. There were promising first impressions of a sweet treble and a firm bass, but these were offset by a partial failure to establish a solid rhythm, while the long-term exposure tended to hint at listening fatigue. One panellist felt that there was a contributory and underlying compressive quality to the mid-range. Soundstage width and focus were modest, but the good ambience and depth were maintained. Musical dynamics appeared to suffer from some restraint, the sound not seeming as open or as free as on the Philips group, while at volume level settings below maximum some moderate additional loss of definition was noted.

Design and technology

The plastic tray/case contains a CD transport also of plastic, with the exception of the thick steel-plate subchassis of the transport proper. A free-floating magnetic clamp is used, while the disc hub has a spring-loaded self-centring core. The transport uses a rack-and-pinion laser traverse on linear rails, while the chassis plate is well suspended on four damped springs.

Aside from subsidiary functions such as the display and controls, the entire player is built on one PCB. Predictably, most of the IC chips are from Sony, now a specialist in this area. A key component is the CXD2550 8-times re-sampling digital filter, which has an internal accuracy of 18-bits, only 16 of which are used by the Burr Brown PCM56p serial input DACs, one for each channel. A neat trick is the programmable function of the digital filter: the de-emphasis requirement can be switched in the digital domain and does

not need analogue components or switches for its implementation. This helps to simplify the analogue path, and in any case not much filtering is required with 8-times re-sampling.

An IC dual op-amp chip buffers the output, after which it is led to the volume control, a satisfactory procedure at this price level. Power-supplies are modest, and no special use of selected audio quality components is evident – again not unexpected given the player's price.

Lab report

While Sony's top-line digital filters have barely any measurable ripple, the version fitted to the 770 has mild but essentially inaudible undulations similar to those encountered with the Philips chip (Fig 5). Both channels match and balance very well, while separation was fine, falling to a still decent 78dB by 20kHz. Polarity-correct, the outputs were in close phase agreement. At full level the distortion was about average, poorest in the mid-range as on the Rotel. By -70dB, with dither, a similarly average result of -30dB distortion was obtained, indicating a working dynamic range of 100dB despite signal-to-noise ratios of the same order.

Good results were achieved for IIF intermod, especially the -100dB measurement at -10dB modulation, though the related spectrogram did show rather more spurious and noise than usual above 20kHz. Looking at the linearity graphs, the transfer-function of disc modulation-levels versus output is noticeably superior on the left channel (Fig 6), with the right plot (Fig 7) bent away from the ideal line (dotted) from as early as -80dB, leading to a 10dB error by -90dB. The recovered sinewave (Fig 8) is unexceptional, and the player's moderate price would seem to be reflected in this poor DAC performance.

An audio output level very close to the

nominal 2V was obtained from a highish source impedance of 895ohms (full-level). Mechanical noise was low, and resistance to shock and vibration average. RF spurious were better than 1mV RMS in a 150MHz bandwidth, a negligible level, while error-correction was unexceptional, meeting a 1mm standard – with anything bigger producing clicks.

Conclusion

Sound quality was thought a bit below the current average, but this was fair enough considering the moderate cost. It was obvious that Sony has spent much of its engineering budget on features and facilities, including the full-function remote control and the power volume.

In the lab, the results were generally fine, though error-correction could have been better and a more accurate linearity balance at -90dB is to be expected from a modern player. Summing up, the CDP 770 offers sufficient value for recommendation, with the caveat that this package is balanced more towards facilities and build quality and less towards technical and subjective performance.

TECHNICS SL-P222A



This brand-new player is a relative of the SL-P202, and like that machine is manufactured at 'Technics' new European factory in Hamburg. As a result there should be no problems concerning its future pricing if EEC tariffs are imposed. Technics has not given up the mislabelling of its conversion technology, described as '4 DAC linear 18-bit'. By linear they mean that range-changing or bit-shifting is not used

SONY CDP 770

Fig 5. Sony CDP 770: frequency responses (each vertical division represents 0.5dB)

Fig 7. Sony CDP 770: linearity plot below -60dB (right channel)

Fig 6. Sony CDP 770: linearity plot below -60dB (left channel)

Fig 8. Sony CDP 770: dithered 1kHz sinewave at -90dB, with distortion spectrum above

Test results

	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz
Channel balance	0.03dB	0.03dB	0.05dB
Stereo separation	100dB	97dB	78dB
Channel phase difference	0°	0°	0°
THD 0dB	-91dB	-86dB	-92dB
THD -10dB	—	-38dB	—
THD -70dB	—	-30dB	—
Intermod 19kHz 20kHz, 0dB	—	-88dB	—
Intermod 19kHz 20kHz, -10dB	—	-100dB	—
Frequency response, left	0dB	-0.45dB	—
Frequency response, right	0dB	-0.46dB	—
S/N 20Hz-20kHz unweighted	—	103dB	—
S/N CCIR ARM, 1kHz ref	—	97dB	—
Output level, 0dB	—	1.9V	—
Output impedance	—	985ohms	—
De-emphasis (error in dB)	0	-0.03	+0.07
Track access time (Tr 15)	—	3secs	—
Error correction capability	—	gap > 1mm	—
Mechanical noise	—	low	—
Spurious up to 100kHz	—	-105dB	—
Resolution at -90dB, left/right	—	-89.0dB/-99.0dB	—
Dimensions (wdh)	—	43.0x28.0x9.8cm	—
Typical price (inc VAT)	—	£200	—

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to achieve 18-bits; conversely, it isn't 18-bit in any case, since the machine uses MASH technology – a pseudo 4-bit system with a high resampling rate and noise shaping. (See 'Bit Wars' feature, *HFN/RR* September p.35.)

Although the SL-P202 lacks remote control, the unit supplied with this 222 is substantial, the literature proudly proclaiming 31 keys, including the limited-range volume control with 0 to -12dB accomplished in the digital domain. The player also has a digital output signal in optical format.

Specific features concern dubbing to cassette, where the edit modes include 'Disc-Link' to give the timings of CDs.

Sound quality

The sound quality of this player strongly resembles that of the SL-P202, and in truth I found it hard to tell them apart! With a merit score of 60%, the performance was respectable for the price, even if it was clearly a notch below the Marantz and Philips competition. Characteristic of the new technology is a sweet unstrained sound quality whose main virtue is consistency. The rendition remained unaltered over loud and soft passages, complex or simple orchestrations. Stereo focus was a strong point, sounding stable and precise, stage-width the same. Quite good ambience was noted, aided by fine resolution of low-level information.

Neutral sounding, the tonal quality was also consistent from bass through to the treble ranges, the latter noticeable lacking the grainy distortion present on some older budget designs. With these good qualities, the counterbalance which helped determine the final score concerned dynamics and drive. Musical dynamics sounded muted and lacking excitement; the drive and pace in some programme material was clearly depressed, though not enough to detract too much.

Design and technology

Like the 202, this player has a significant European manufacturing content, including a version of the popular Philips CDM-4 laser mechanism. Technics' literature does not mention the low-bit MASH decoder system used, but is getting more ambiguous. Close reading shows that the only specific claims are for 18-bit digital filtering and a four DAC system 'operating with linear 18-bit resolution'. Both these are technically correct, but still avoid naming MASH with its approximately 4-bit 32-times resampled conversion system, which in practice delivers better than 18-bit linearity, with a high degree of consistency. The MASH chip set comprises two surface-mount devices, a 64-pin MN6625 for signal processing, extraction and error-correction, driving the MASH chip proper, a 48-leg MN6471 which includes the digital filter, noise-shaper conversion, four low-bit D/As, two per channel, plus output buffers.

The paired outputs are summed in differential mode by an IC op-amp to improve dynamic range. De-emphasis is passive, and the output filter is an active one based on a further op-amp. Power-supplies are modest, and no specially selected audiophile components are evident. Technics has improved upon Philips' servo and produced the best access time yet for a radial tracker, particularly for track-changes during play.

Lab report

Channel balance was good and channel separation very good, but inter-channel phase correlation showed a minor imbalance of 2.5° at 20kHz due to the high oversampling time-shared DA converter, effectively at 32-times per channel. MASH performance was imposing, this model showing superior linearity at both high- and low-signal levels. Mid-band peak-level distortion at 1kHz reached a low of

-93dB (0.002%), with a superb HF performance on both single tone and on the two-tone intermodulation test. The graph for the latter (Fig 9) is remarkable for the low degree of unwanted products in and outside the audio range. At the -70dB modulation level distortion was very low at typically -40dB (1%), giving a subjectively weighted dynamic range of 110dB, at whose baseline no spurious signals were evident within a 100kHz spectrum-analysis. By -90dB a quota of 2nd-harmonic distortion is present (Fig 10); but not enough to upset the recovered sinewave significantly.

The fade-to-noise linearity graphs registered perfect agreement between channels and near-perfect linearity down to -110dB, close to the noise-floor (Fig 11), while precision measurement revealed only 0.5dB of error at -90dB. De-emphasis was satisfactory, with the frequency response sensibly flat (Fig 12) and the output close to the 2V standard. Signal-to-noise ratio averaged a fine 98dB.

The peak white-noise signal was passed, correctly unclipped, while resistance to vibration and shock was rated as very good. The output was linear-phase and polarity-correct, while error-correction was more than satisfactory, passing a 1.5mm gap. Track-access was a very reasonable 3 seconds. The output impedance was higher than average at 770ohms.

Conclusion

£199 is not a large sum to pay for a well-made remote-controlled CD player with a good range of features, and few users would have any need for more facilities. The lab performance was generally very good and the sound essentially pleasant as well as natural. Value was well above average, and the SL-P222A has amassed sufficient points to win a strong recommendation. ✓

TECHNICS SL-P222A

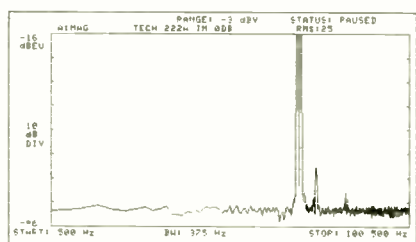


Fig 9. Technics SL-P222A: intermodulation spurs from 19/20kHz tones at 0dB, log scale 500Hz-100.5kHz

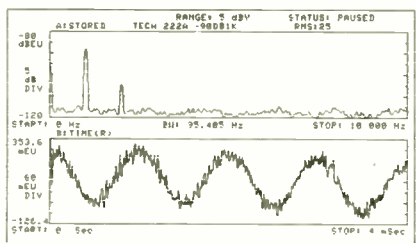


Fig 10. Technics SL-P222A: diathered 1kHz sinewave at -90dB, with distortion spectrum above

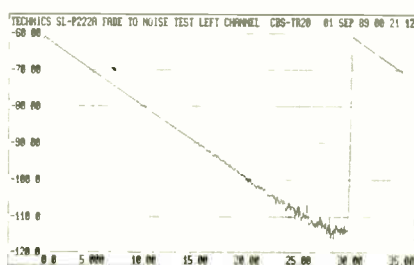


Fig 11. Technics SL-P222A: linearity plot below -60dB

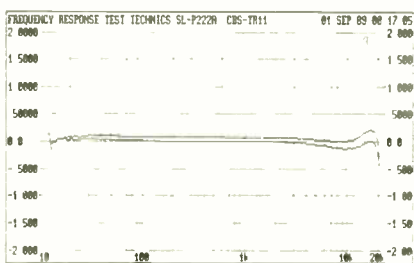


Fig 12. Technics SL-P222A: frequency responses (each vertical division represents 0.5dB)

Test results

	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz
Channel balance	0.09dB	0.08dB	0.17dB
Stereo separation	11.2dB	10.8dB	8.5dB
Channel phase difference	0°	0°	2.5°
THD 0dB	-85dB	-93dB	-92dB
THD -10dB	-	-85dB	-
THD -70dB	-	-40dB	-
Intermod 19kHz/20kHz, 0dB	-	-	-
Intermod 19kHz/20kHz, -10dB	-	-	-
Frequency response, left	0.04dB	-	-0.17dB
Frequency response, right	-0.3dB	-	-0.09dB
S/N 20Hz/20kHz unweighted	-	99dB	-
S/N CCIR ARM, 1kHz ref	-	96dB	-
Output level, 0dB	-	2.1V	-
Output impedance	-	770ohms	-
De-emphasis (error in dB)	1kHz	5kHz	16kHz
Track access time (Tr 15)	0.15	0.29	-0.04
Error correction capability	gap > 1.5mm		
Mechanical noise	low		
Spuriae up to 100kHz	-105dB		
Resolution at -90dB, left/right	-89.5dB/-89.5dB		
Dimensions (wdh)	4.5x28x9.2cm		
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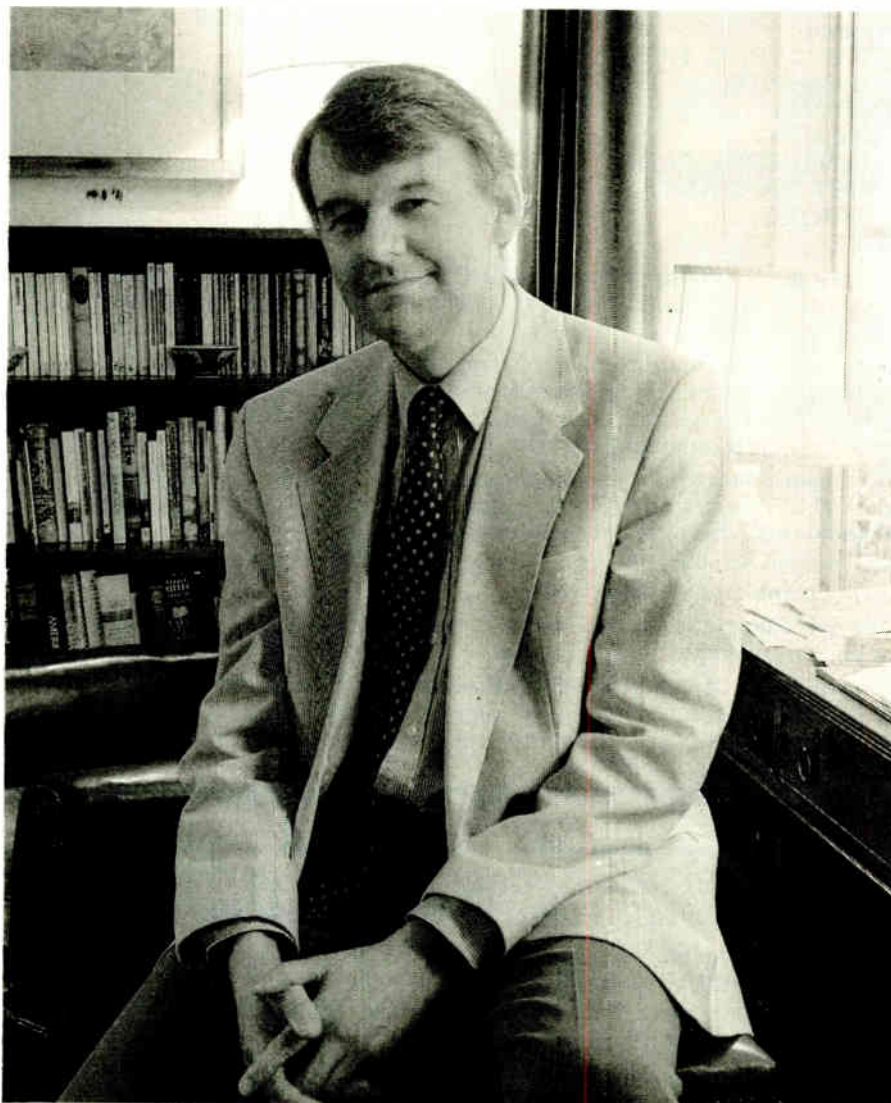
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audio eXcellence

PETER HILL



In a world where financial considerations are frequently placed above artistic ones, and where big names playing familiar works count for almost everything, Unicorn-Kanchana's commitment to the music of octogenarian Olivier Messiaen remains exemplary. Following on from their highly successful series of recordings of the composer's organ music with Jennifer Bate, what promises to be an equally revelatory survey of the piano music is now just past the mid-point. Pianist Peter Hill, whose task it is to attempt this astonishing feat, is no stranger to modern music. As far back as 1974 he won the first prize at Darmstadt for performances of Cage and Stockhausen, and more recently he co-founded the ensemble Dreamtiger (with composer Douglas Young and Arditi cellist Rohan de Saram) which has played such an important part in bringing the neglected music of Colin McPhee to public attention.

The Messiaen project is on an altogether larger scale. How did it begin? 'They asked me partly because I had just played on one of their records – a recording of music by Nigel Osborne. It was a bit of a lucky accident. There were four pieces on this record, and the cellist and I knew our piece backwards. We turned up last, after they'd

had two days of endlessly stopping and starting, and we just sat down and played it through once. And Nigel [Osborne], who was there, declared the thing to be totally perfect, so we all went home! Unicorn were so stunned by this achievement that they asked me back to talk about solo ideas, and during our conversation Messiaen's name surfaced.'

The corpus of piano music is a large one; but central to it is the massive *Catalogue d'Oiseau*, written in a sustained burst of activity between 1956 and '58. It claims to be nothing less than a response to the birds and environment of various parts of France, with each of its seven books presenting a scenario of the changing activity of the animal and bird life, supposedly over the course of several hours. On the surface the cycle appears the last word in programme music, and certainly an impossibly naive undertaking for a composer in the latter half of the 20th-century.

'With the *Catalogue d'Oiseau* pieces it seems generally accepted that their structure is dictated entirely by their programmatic content, that they are "anecdotal" – which is a word a lot of people use about them. I think this is nonsense; indeed I think the amazing thing about the *Catalogue*

Studying with Messiaen,
recording his piano music.
Editing, and future plans

by Simon Cargill

d'Oiseau is that, for each of the thirteen pieces, Messiaen finds a unique structural idea – there is no formula. At the bottom, the structural idea of each piece is in some way a metaphor for a feeling about a place Messiaen has been in.'

So there is an intertwining of musical considerations and his personal experience?

'Yes. When you talk to Messiaen he still has very vividly in mind the *place*.'

But surely the title of the cycle implies a sort of objective survey?

'The title, *Catalogue*, is a misnomer in two ways. First, it is not a catalogue in the sense of being at all scientific – Messiaen's approach to nature is anthropomorphic. And secondly, it is not in my view primarily about birds – they are but a part, an ingredient of the particular place. This is what is fascinating to me, that he takes these many experiences and makes *music* of them. I would compare it to the process of translating a poem from one language to another. Great freedom is necessarily involved in order to render it effectively.'

A process of recreation rather than translation?

'That puts it well. He's recreating often his visual responses to nature in purely musical terms. An extraordinary example of this is found in "Le Merle de roche" which is the last piece on my most recent CD, where he describes the rocky terrain of the particular place by comparing the rocks to a procession of monsters.'

This response to the environment is often revealed in his prefaces to his scores and in the many detailed annotations above the music itself. To what extent, then, do you feel the audience need to be aware of this verbal element? Can the *Catalogue* be listened to as a piece of absolute music?

'It's a good question, and there are all sorts of observations I'd like to make at a tangent. But to confront it head on, then yes, of course you can hear these as pieces of absolute music; but your experience of them will be greatly enriched the more you are aware of the parallel resonances.'

Messiaen says at one point that, if possible, you should go into the wild and hear these birds for yourself.

'Yes, when I studied the pieces with him he was always trotting off and getting a bird book out of his library to show me what a particular bird looks like. And he will even do very passable birdsong impressions.'

Are Messiaen's notes private, then? Is he communicating with the performer rather than the audience? 'In a sense this leads into another interesting characteristic of the *Catalogue d'Oiseau*, because there is in the music an objective and subjective side. Within the terms he creates in each piece, you can see moves from one to the other. For example, at the end of the piece about the Tawny Owl there is a coda tacked on in which two things happen: first there is a final, enormous version of the call of the Tawny Owl, which one feels breaks through the frame of reality; then there is a dying-

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away call which Messiaen actually marks in the score "like a voice from another world". And you can see you have suddenly entered surreal territory.'

How do you cope with the fact that most of the piano works were written for Messiaen's wife, Yvonne Loriod, who has also recorded them?

'In a way there is a mad folly about it. In the case of the organ music, although there are recordings of Messiaen, it is generally agreed there are certain short-comings in his playing. But you would find that difficult to say that about Yvonne Loriod – except that everyone has their personality, their strengths and weaknesses. But with music that is worthwhile there *must* be more than one way of playing it. So I had to decide from the outset how I was going to approach this – given that all the music I was doing had received performances from someone who is clearly closer to the composer than anyone else.'

It is something the whole issue of recording brings up – the notion of the definitive interpretation. Did you feel the need to hear the Loriod recordings?

'I felt from the word go that the answer was not to consult them. This may sound arrogant – it's not meant to be – but I didn't see any point in giving a pale imitation of, or a performance heavily influenced by Yvonne Loriod. It seemed to me that the whole point of the exercise was to look absolutely freshly at the music, and play it as well as I could after, really, the most searching study. And I know – people have told me – that I have come out with something totally different from her performances. In the case of the two most recent records (and this will be of interest to people who believe in definitive performances and "authenticity") part of the process of study was many, many hours spent going through them in minute detail with the composer himself.'

What is his response to someone coming in totally fresh?

'Absolutely delighted. He couldn't have been more helpful and encouraging, and his wife as well was enthusiastic and helpful. There is no sense of "Hands off! This is my personal property".'

Then did you study all the music with the composer?

'No. With the *Preludes* I didn't consult Messiaen – and in a way I'm rather glad I didn't, because he wrote them 60 or more years ago. And I had developed very strong views about them, which I know from what people tell me, are crazily different from Yvonne Loriod's. But I don't mind; I'm completely unrepentant about that!'

Does knowing Messiaen's later piano music make you approach the 1929 *Preludes* differently? Do you sense in them foretastes of the future?

'Amazingly so. I think the *Preludes* reveal something that nobody has given Messiaen credit for – that he is one of the most precocious composers in musical history. After all, he was writing music at 18 or 20 scarcely a phrase of which could be confused with that of anyone else. Of how many composers in musical history could one say that? There are certainly some rough edges and moments of lesser inspiration in the *Preludes*; but at their best they are absolutely marvellous. And I think they have the kind of tenderness that tends to lessen in Messiaen's music – though it has probably revived in the last twenty years.'

What of the other works on that record?

'The *Quatre Études de Rythme* and *Can-*

téyodjayâ – again I didn't study these with Messiaen; but I feel in a way this was a good thing, because I think they are some of the music he is *least* committed to any more. And I think it's very interesting that these pieces contain very few specific instructions as to performance. You only get a "Vif" or "Modéré" and no indication of just what that tempo is. And I know that, compared with, say, Loriod, my tempo for *Mode de Valeur* is steadier; but it is very much a matter of swings and roundabouts.'

With so much fuss being made about the historical importance of that piece to the post-war avant-garde, how does one approach it as simply a piece of music?

'Well you get the tension between the dancing phrases in quicker notes at the top of the piano and those marvellous trombone or gong strokes at the bottom – particularly the last page is a wonderfully *grand* one. And I do feel that a lot of it has this rather dancelike phrasing to it, so I don't play it as a sort of pseudo-Boulez *Structure IA* – which is looking at it with hindsight. "Nœmes Rythmiques" is, I think, the most uncompromising and granitic of the set. And I think in these pieces you get the tension between the abstract and instinctively musical person. *Cantéyodjayâ* is the classic instance, because you get, almost side by side throughout, these machine-like episodes with grand cadenzas in between them. I think this piece is one of the most stunning that Messiaen has written. It has the sense of something that is almost improvised – I suspect he wrote it in two or three days! – and that he was grabbing whatever was lying to hand to fill in what he needed. That is probably why there is so much *Turangalila* in it – albeit very differently.'

Studying with the composer is something most players would long to do when playing the classics. Clearly it confers great advantages on a performer, and many of the arguments surrounding the authenticity movement would dissolve if we could still consult, say, Handel or Mozart. How do you find Messiaen in his attitudes towards his own music? And what form does the study take – is it a case of playing a section to the composer, who will interrupt to comment?

'I play through them, and you're right – every so often he stops to make a comment. And this may then involve a lengthy discussion of something, or it may be quite small, such as "Make sure the left hand is clear". It was very interesting what he actually stressed. One curious thing is that he almost never criticized either the accuracy of my rhythms or indeed my choice of tempo. If anything, he was always concerned to get a sense of phrasing into the music – to free rhythms and not be too absurdly literal about them. I have, on a number of occasions, said I would like to play this slower because... and he was very happy to accept these divergencies. And like all composers, if he sees you are creatively involved in the music and have a good reason for something, he will not on the whole interfere. There have been one or two pianistic things where I suggested re-fingering a passage, and he has said that this was a great improvement. But whether these will appear in the second edition, I don't know!'

Recording such complex music clearly presents a different series of problems. Hill remains unwilling to rely on editing to solve them, however. Is he, then, a 'single-take' player? It is very difficult. There are a lot of pieces, particularly in the *Catalogue*, which are totally exposed and either work one

hundred per cent or collapse. On the other hand, as everybody knows, if you record music bit by bit, that is exactly what you get – a series of bits. My technique is to give three performances as a starter, and only then do any shorter takes – and even then these shorter bits will be quite a long segment.'

In block-structured music such as Messiaen's this must be particularly important. A sense of underlying continuity is at stake.

'The architectural flow is tremendously subtle. The more you get to know these pieces, the more you realize they are a series of levels woven together. On all the recordings we have spared no effort to make them as good as we possibly can; and that has meant that I do all the editing work – with the necessary and valuable assistance of the producer Anthony Pople and Bob Auger, the engineer. But I am, I suppose basically, the person who makes the decisions.'

But doesn't being so close to these pieces mean that it is sometimes difficult to see the wood for the trees, to put yourself in the position of someone listening at home?

'One of the things I look for in the post-production is that sense of having moved into inspirational territory. And you do get – everyone who has recorded knows this – marvellous takes where the Almighty is on your side. What I think is so easy nowadays, with all this digital machinery which allows you to edit practically anything, is to produce a product which is perfect, but totally lifeless. The challenge is to get the utmost of the imagination and inspiration that was going on at the time.'

Then, do you mind working without an audience? 'No, because I find the producer and engineer *are* an audience, and a superb one at that.'

Peter Hill's commitment to new music is clear; but it is not his sole interest.

Isn't there a danger that you might be type-cast as an avant-garde specialist when you would really like to play more of the classics? 'Well, in the last few years I have been moving towards this – a lot of my broadcast work has been "classical". I have a strong yearning to tackle the Haydn sonatas on disc – and that is a bit more than a twinkle in the eye. There is, though, one 20th-century project which is very dear to my heart, and that is the piano music of Schoenberg, which I have very positive views about.'

In a sense this is even more difficult aesthetically than Messiaen, and it has already been tackled by some formidable names. 'Yes. The two best recordings are the one by Gould, which of course is very idiosyncratic, and the Pollini one, which I must confess to personally disliking. I do, candidly, find it wooden – I don't feel he has any feeling for the sonority or the temper of the music. I feel that compared with these two, I have got something different to say – though I don't know whether people will think it any better or not.'

With plans for a book on Messiaen gradually taking shape, the seventh and final book of the *Catalogue d'Oiseau* already in his repertoire, and the massively impressive *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus* planned for the immediate future, Peter Hill is clearly far from idle. His exploration of the music of the Second Viennese School looks set to continue and there are further commissioned works from Nigel Osborne and Douglas Young. 'Obviously there has got to be life after Messiaen, though the project will go on for another couple of years.' ♪

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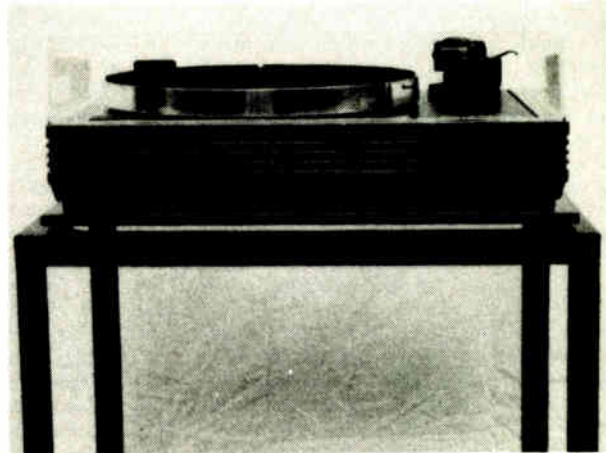
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NOTES

There's a chance to hear Christa Ludwig singing Schubert's Winterreise on November 23. She appears in a QF Hall Lieder recital series, organized jointly by Ibbs & Tillet and the South Bank Centre, running to April 8. Other soloists are Peter Schreier (in Die Schöne Müllerin), Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (3 recitals), Emma Kirkby (17th-century Arie Antiche). Ibbs & Tillet are currently presenting 'Soviet Master Pianists' at the Wigmore Hall. Pletnev plays his Sleeping Beauty transcription on Nov 26; Otcchinikov appears Dec 1 (Prokofiev 8/Rachmaninov Etudes Tableaux). Evgen Kissin appears on Feb 23, 1990.

Van Cliburn's RCA recording of the Tchaikovsky First Piano Concerto has sold over one million copies; he received RCA's first Platinum Album for a 'classical piano recording'. Bryce Morrison is preparing a feature article on Van Cliburn.



Erik Smith (photo: Clive Banda)

Erik Smith has retired as Philips' A&R Vice President; his place at Philips was taken by Costa Pila-vachi, formerly Artistic Administrator with the Boston SO. Happily, Erik Smith will continue to produce recordings. At the Salzburg festival, he announced the company's plans for a comprehensive (180-disc) Mozart Edition on CD. Forty-four volumes will appear between 1990-91, the series including reconstructions of incomplete compositions in first recordings. Just time to set up the requisite 2.5m of shelving!

ABO's tenth anniversary London concerts also includes the four Bach orchestral suites (March 30, 1990).

The valuable Pye/Nixa recordings by Halle/Barbirolli, Scherchen, Boult which sadly disappeared with the collapse of PRT, mid-summer, are to be reissued by AVM. The astute Robert Matthew Walker quickly acquired the catalogue rights. And CRD (also distributed by PRT) are now under the distribution wing of Chandos.

Philips have signed Valery Gergiev, recently appointed Music Director of the Kirov Opera and Ballet Theatre. Gergiev won the 1976 Karajan Competition, at 23; he then assisted Temirkanov. He has made guest appearances with four UK and several major European orchestras. Conducting The London Philharmonic he has recorded Mussorgsky's Pictures, Tchaikovsky's Francesca da Rimini.

Jeffrey Tate has accepted the post of Chief Conductor and Music Director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra. Next May he makes his first (EMI) recording at 'de Doelen', the city's concert hall - Bruckner's Symphony 9. Tate recently completed Humperdinck's Hänsel und Gretel in Munich with von Otter, Bonney, and Baltsa. ECO recordings to come: R Strauss horn concertos with Vlatkovic, Beethoven's Missa Solemnis, Bach violin concertos with Zimmermann. He conducts the ROH Orchestra for a Te Kanawa programme of French opera arias.

As part of a Hungarian arts celebration at the Barbican there will be a Nov 17 Liszt recital by Bolet (75 this year) and - intriguing - a talk by Sir Georg Solti, 'The Hungarian Factor' (Oct 23).

DG announce that the International Record Critics Award went to Krystian Zimerman's Chopin recital [423 090-2], including the four Ballades. Zimerman has extended his DG contract. He will record the Beethoven concertos live, with VPO/Bernstein, and the Lutoslawski Concerto (played at the Proms). Composers Szymanowski, Schubert, Schumann and Liszt will figure in his solo projects, and - with Kyung Wha Chung - there will be another new version of the Strauss Violin Sonata.

DG's recent Sofia Gubaidulina CD (see Sept p87) has won the 1989 Koussevitzky Award.

Following their Tallis concert (Oct 14), The Sixteen are recording the 40-part motet Spem in Alium for Chandos. In December, they give four performances of Handel's Messiah at St John's.

Technics have sponsored the Conifer recording of three works by Panufnik, in honour of his 75th birthday. The Bassoon Concerto (world premiere recording), Violin Concerto, and Hommage à Chopin were done at The Maltings, in September, following a Technics-sponsored celebratory concert by London Musici/Stephenson. The Bassoon Concerto was composed (1985) as a memorial to the martyrdom of Father Jerzy Popieluszko.

Pioneer sponsor two London Philharmonic concerts at the end of the year. Jansons conducts on Dec 5; on January 28 George Benjamin premieres a new work. Tennstedt conducts Mahler 1.

Ton Koopman appears with the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra on Oct 27 (Mozart Requiem/Symphony 40), and Nov 17 (Haydn/Mozart). He gives a QEH harpsichord recital January 26. The



Salonen (photo: Terry Lott/CBS)

In 1992 Esa-Pekka Salonen is to become Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. As 'Director Designate', he begins his active role reorganising his present schedule to give more time to the orchestra. Meanwhile Salonen (who will record with the LAPO for Sony Classical/CBS Masterworks), remains with the Swedish RSO. In a statement, Salonen expressed confidence in achieving 'really high artistic ideals' at LA, under the managing directorship of Ernest Fleischmann.

PolyGram look set to monopolize the Vienna Philharmonic: for Philips, Sir Colin Davis will make his third Berlioz Symphonie Fantastique, Haitink will record further Bruckner symphonies, Muti will commence a Mozart symphony cycle, and Previn will undertake Dvorak's Slavonic Dances, Die Fledermaus, and more R Strauss. DG will record Webern, Dvorak symphonies, Elektra, Khovanschina (Abbado); Bernstein will do more Sibelius and Haydn, and Schoenberg's Verklärte Nacht. Decca's operatic projects include Tristan, Zauberflöte, Frau ohne Schatten (Solti); Fidelio, Rosenkavalier and a new 'Ring' (Dobnanyi). Zubin Mehta will also record with the VPO.

Carmen in Paris

It was not so very far from the studios of Radio France, where Philips assembled the forces for its new Carmen [see review], that Peter Brook first unveiled a controversial 'performing version' of Bizet's opera to the world. That may not have been the Carmen we know and love but it certainly had a thing or two to say about the piece as music-theatre, and, as an all-star cast assembled for the new recording, few of its principal members with any stage experience of their roles, the question of an authentic drama existing under such circumstances naturally arose.

Certainly the first stage of the showcase session to which the European press had been granted access offered little enlightenment. For all the rich security of his top Es, was this really the narrative of a bullfight we were hearing from Simon Estes? And, though Jessye Norman might gather all her dark resources for the significance of Carmen's first response to Escamillo (different with each new take), would we really be able to bear on the recording what was visibly so absent - any flirtatiousness in the exchanges of 'l'amour' between the hero of the moment and his three compliant ladies? The real work on the Toreador Song was Seiji Ozawa's with the French National Orchestra, focusing the snap of the brass, the bite of the strings in the verses, and drawing out the expressive counter-melody of the horns in the refrain (gone are their worrying wobbles these days, that least endearing characteristic of the French sound, though its better side is still there in bright strings and characterful woodwind). Ozawa's careful colourings emphasize the melancholy cast of the third act finale, too.

Enter Neil Shicoff as Don José, however, and an absent director's task is done by sheer force of personality. He stands - or rather moves - centre stage, firm of voice but still dramatically electrifying for José's two lacerating refusals to leave. The response of his fellow singers catches fire at last. That's certainly true of Mirella Freni's unusually passionate Micaela, showing little sign of vocal strain as she braces for the high notes. Only Jessye Norman's Carmen rises above the general conflagration. This gipsy girl is aloof, assured of her ground, and the manic determination of José is food only for heavy scorn.

Her motivations are plausibly posited by Miss Norman in her only manifestation to the press. Shades of university lecture-hall days arise as we take our places in the Radio France conference room and she finally sweeps in, eyes rolling. What does she think of Paris, ask a few of our continental brethren. Has she been up the Eiffel Tower yet? Could she give us any idea of a project up her sleeve? Does the role begin with an I... an S...? She handles this equably enough. But, tackled on the character of Carmen, she has enough to say. She has been preparing for the role over four years; she has her own views on Carmen, but of course it's difficult to get the ideas of other interpretations out of her mind...

How does she see Carmen's development? Does she gain nobility as the relationship with José goes sour? Not nobility, that's not the word... dignity. She has a certain dignity. But it's there right from the start. Everything Carmen is, she is in the Habanera. She is earthy, but not vulgar. The cards put a different perspective on things. Even then, as far as José goes, he's like the other lovers - she thinks she can play for time. But of course he goes further.

David Nice

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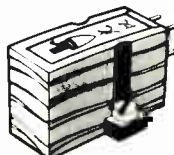
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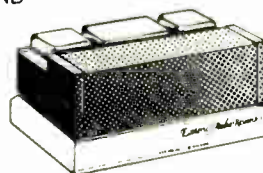
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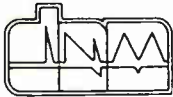
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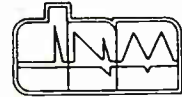
Recording: Performance

A	1	Very Good
B	2	Good
C	3	Moderate
D	4	Poor
H	H	Historical

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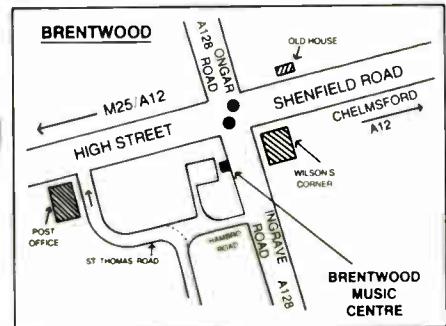


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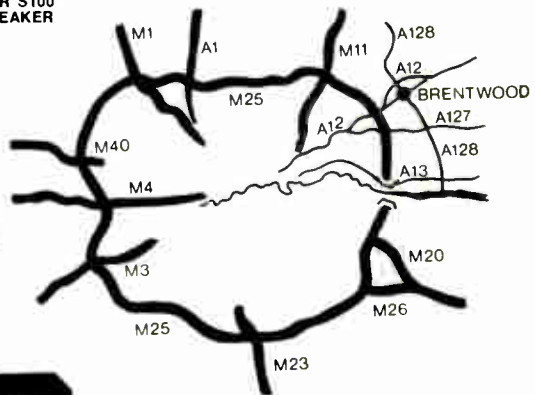
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JS BACH: Brandenburg Concertos

OAE various

Virgin Classics VCD 790 7472 (2CDs, 93m 13s) also 2LP 2MC

The OAE boasts proudly of its unique self-governing status and organization, but there is much here to make one question how policies are made musically, especially when there is no one named conductor or director. [Performances are variously credited to lead-violinists Huggett, Bury, Wallfisch and Mackintosh.] This is partly because the performances themselves sound curiously uncohesive and inconsistent, both between and within the actual works. One is also forced to question why the basic ensemble plays Bach in so many ways – rather as it does even Weber and Schubert, who must surely be worlds apart in expressive manner.

Potentially, this group is so good that it is alarming to hear really poor coordination in 5 (which has much curious phrasing in the solo harpsichord line, played by Malcolm Proud), worrying breathing and articulation problems unresolved in the recorders (both Concerto 4 and 2), really stylish solo string playing only in 3 (led by Alison Bury in the

best whole performance here) and an untidy, apparently uncaring and inconsequential account of the magnificent first movement of 6. These are a few of many detailed worries. But more worrying still is the lack of purpose and stature about all of the interpretations; these concertos were not written as enlightenment entertainment music, but to delight, enthral and impress aristocratic connoisseurs.

Warts and all, the recording generally maintains the high standards we are coming to expect of Virgin Classics; only a little of the blame for the off-hand impression can be laid at the door of a slightly distant focus. [A:2/3] *Stephen Dav*

JS BACH: Mass in b, BWV 232

Ch & Orb Collegium Vocale Ghent Herreweghe

Virgin Classics VCD 790 7572 (2CDs, 81m 26s)

Bach's great Latin – and probably, in intention, Catholic – masterpiece remains a test for the highest-aspiring choirs, soloists and instrumentalists active in the field of religious music. Herreweghe's approach – expressivity of line, attention to word and

colour and a fresh approach to tempi – is among the most convincing, partly because all is integrated to give an impression that is calculated to help one to feel part of a genuine celebration of faith. The listener becomes involved, and the experience is heightened when that was one original purpose of the composition.

The impression is also considerably helped by the gentle beauty of the sounds throughout, and the faithfulness of their reproduction. There's nothing too distracting about the combined effect, yet it is apparent that much care has gone into the production to recreate the effect of a nicely-distanced, well-balanced live performance. The instrumentalists are so disposed and utilised as ideally to support the voices; they sing with the chorus and the excellent soloists so effectively that, for once, it actually sounds as though each of them has considered the words and their significance – in fact, what it is all about. Altogether an exercise in fidelity, and one of the highest kind. [A*:1] *Stephen Dav*

BARBER: Overture to The School For Scandal □ **Adagio** □ **3 Essays** □ **Medea's Dance of Vengeance**

St Louis SO/Slatkin

EMI CDC 749 4632 (61m 11s)

BARBER: Cello Concerto □ **Cello Sonata** □ **Adagio**

Ralph Kirshbaum (v/c)/Roger Vignoles (pno)/SCO/Saraste

Virgin Classics VC 791 0832 (55m 08s)

BARBER: 4 Excursions □ **Nocturne (Homage to John Field)** □ **Ballade** □ **Piano Sonata**

Angela Brownridge (pno)

Hyperion CDH 88016 (40m 09s) © 1980

This batch of CDs wholly devoted to the music of Samuel Barber is headed by Slatkin's because it gives us a good cross-section of his music in excellent performances, and offers good value for money as well. The Overture, one of Barber's earliest orchestral works, is an urbane piece irradiated by a sparkle that catches the spirit of Sheridan's comedy perfectly, but in a language more romantic than classical. Slatkin is right not to press it too hard – it is not to be considered a rival to Bernstein's *Candide* and does not fizz so obviously – and he allows its elegant humours plenty of room to make their points. The *Adagio*, from whose popularity Barber could never escape even had he wished to, makes three appearances this month. This is the most intensely realised of the three, a sustained threnody rising to a climax of controlled passion which neither Saraste nor Hickox quite equal. The three *Essays* mark the near-beginning and end of Barber's career. The first two, composed in 1938 and 1942, pursue similar paths, speaking a language of quiet intensity, whereas the Third (of which this appears to be the first CD recording) uses an idiom in which the accents are broader and the tone a little more strident. It was written in 1978 and is almost the last work Barber composed. Its tone of heightened drama was presaged in *Medea's Dance of Vengeance*, the third revision of music drawn from the ballet 'The Cave of the Heart' (originally 'The Serpent Heart') written for Martha Graham in 1946.

SCHNITTKE: Ritual □ **(K) ein Sommernachtstraum** □ **Passacaglia** □ **Seid Nüchtern und Wachet (Faust Cantata)**
Soloist/Malmö SO & Ch/De Priest
BIS CD-437 (74m 33s)

Schnittke's star is in the ascendent at the moment. Indeed, if recordings are anything to go by, he must rank as Russia's most exportable modern composer – no mean feat given the country's traditional antipathy towards anything that smacks of radicalism. This is the fifth CD of his music to appear on BIS and the standard of the preceding releases has been high. All the more reason, then, to look forward to the company's first extended foray into his larger scale choral and orchestral music. And what astonishing music it is! Whether it be the result of Soviet artistic constraints or an extended meditation on the haunting and eclectic work of someone like Bernd Alois Zimmermann, the musical consequences, with their constant references to earlier idioms and popular culture, have been astonishing.

Schnittke, as this disc amply demonstrates, is a dedicated student of pluralism. His nearest Western equivalent is perhaps Henze; but even he has never employed parody and pastiche quite so consistently, or to such a powerful yet ambiguous effect. For anyone seeking to get to grips with the Russian, perhaps the best and most striking starting point is his astonishing 'Faust' cantata, *Seid nüchtern und wachet*, here given a performance that is unlikely to be equalled either sonically or interpretatively for a long time. Although unmentioned by the composer, one of the most powerful influences on the work must surely have been Thomas Mann's famous novel. Again and again in Schnittke's music one finds exactly that mixture of grand rhetoric and inverted musical

logic so graphically described by the writer. Here it is the concords rather than the discords that are shocking and corrupted. References to the sound-worlds of Wagner and Berg drift past; the devil consoles Faust with a distorted Puccini-like duet and eventually takes his soul to the sounds of a brutal and apocalyptic tango, complete with amplified, gutsy contralto and shouting choir. It all adds up to a profoundly ambivalent and ambiguous experience and serves to throw into relief the earlier works on the disc. *Ritual* and *Passacaglia* are more abstract and self-contained; yet both ultimately rely on the same network of stylistic symbolism that pervaded the cantata. Most extreme of all in this respect is his *(K) ein Sommernachtstraum*, essentially a set of variations and commentaries on a Mozartian pastiche. But (a little vocal strain aside) given the commitment of the performances and a recording which can cope with anything from delicate Ligetian clouds to heavy Mahlerian tuttis, it all adds up to as compelling a piece of modern music-making as you are likely to hear in a long time. [A*:1] *Simon Cargill*



RECORD OF THE MONTH

Schenck's ASV recording of this with the LSO offers a powerful challenge; Slatkin's is equally perceptive but has rather mellower sound. [A:1/1*]

A new recording of Barber's Cello Concerto from Yo-Yo Ma recently reminded us that despite a slight woolliness in the first movement it is a work of genuine substance, and a very challenging vehicle for the soloist. His was a somewhat contemplative interpretation; this new one from Ralph Kirschbaum is more aggressive – in a similar mould to Raphael Wallfisch's. Indeed, the approach of both soloists and the two conductors (Geoffrey Simon for Wallfisch) is not dissimilar. Saraste and Kirschbaum, unhampered by preconceptions about Barber's romanticism, square up to the music and find it unexpectedly muscular. This is a very persuasive experience, and reawakens one's respect for a concerto that has been neglected for quite a long time. The Sonata, Barber's Op.6, dates from 1932, and was written from the fullness of youthful impressions of Europe where he was travelling with Menotti when he wrote it. It is a passionate work – ardent is perhaps a more appropriate description – and very well written for the two instruments. Surprisingly, it seems not to be otherwise represented in the domestic catalogues; but this committed performance can be warmly recommended. Saraste's account of the *Adagio* which rounds off this collection is less intense than Slatkin's; here is perhaps an instance where the Scottish CO might have benefited from more subjective direction. The sound quality throughout is bright, a shade hard here and there, notably in the sonata, but acceptably focused in the orchestral pieces. [A/B:1]

Angela Brownridge's recital originally appeared on Hyperion [as A66016]. It contains all Barber's music for piano solo, a small but contrasted quartet of works. The *Excursions*, four essays in popular idioms, make a light-hearted introduction to the impressive Nocturne and the compressed drama of the *Ballade* (a competition piece for the 1977 Van Cliburn competition). This is its only recording so far and Miss Brownridge encompasses its wide expressive range most skilfully. She is rather more exercised by the virtuosic demands of the Sonata, which was written originally for Horowitz, but her performance commands respect, and the sound, resonant on LP, is more acceptable in its new 'Helios' mid-price CD format. [A/B:1] *Kenneth Dommett*

BARBER: Knoxville: Summer of 1915 □
Adagio/COPLAND: Appalachian Spring
□ **Quiet City/GERSHWIN: Rhapsody in Blue**

*Jill Gomez (sop)/Wayne Marshall (pno)/
City of London Sinfonia/Hickox
Virgin Classics VC 790 7662 (75m 01s)
also LP/MC*

Most of this programme treads familiar ground, but does it in unaccustomed footwear. Both *Appalachian Spring* and the *Rhapsody* return to their origins, the first in Copland's original theatre version for chamber orchestra, and the latter in Grofé's version for the original Paul Whiteman performance of 1924: a more racketty but arguably more exciting one than the later, more polished orchestral score. Barber's lyrical panegyric (the contents are listed above in the order they appear on the record, not that on the cover) is one of his loveliest and most sustained lyric composi-



Leonard Slatkin (photo: Sophie Barber)

tions, but it needs a singer totally in sympathy with its warmly nostalgic text (by James Agee). Admirable though Jill Gomez is, she does not sound comfortable with it. The words, very important, are delivered in a Wardour Street American that sounds awfully phoney and are often unclear. Hickox also appears to have reservations about delivering himself over completely to the implications of the music. He keeps it at arm's length and tries to crystallise an imagery that depends on evanescence for its effect. The two Copland pieces seem more to his taste. The rhythmic stuff is delivered with energy but the more reflective passages lack response. From this it may be deduced that Gershwin fares best of all. And so he does. Wayne Marshall gallops away on his piano, at times a bit like a bronco rider, but the performance has colour and brio. Apart from the Barber (neither Leontyne Price's nor Molly McGurk's recording is now listed) there are more acceptable recordings of the others, though they are not all together on one disc. Sound quality is not as good as one might expect: Barber/Copland are inclined to be *mushy* and Gershwin rather brittle. [B:2] *Kenneth Dommett*

BAX: Symphony 5 □ **Russian Suite**

LPO/Thomson

Chandos CHAN 8669 (61m 46s) also LP/MC

This completes Chandos's series of Bax symphonies. Finished in 1932, premiered by Beecham in '34, and dedicated to Sibelius, the Fifth is among his greatest works. At the start it briefly suggests the slow movement of Sibelius's own Symphony 5, yet this is a richly inventive score, the seemingly spontaneous proliferation of its ideas strictly ordered, unity being a prime characteristic. In fact a lot of Bax's thematic material is derived from that opening figure on clarinets in thirds, with a repeated five-note rhythm with the accent usually on the fourth. Another characteristic of the themes of this and the other movements is that their compass is more restricted than usual with this composer. Yet the canvas is a very broad one, the music surging on with great power and sombre beauty, the latter especially in the slow movement. And the orchestration is distinctly original, the *Poco lento* again providing fine examples. Bryden Thomson's clearly focused interpretation and the London Philharmonic's playing make this yet another memorable experience.

The *Russian Suite* consists of three piano pieces orchestrated for use as interludes in Diaghilev's 1919 London season. Of these the first and last, 'Gopak' and 'In a Vodka Shop', were indeed heard at the Alhambra Theatre, conducted by Ansermet. But the

central movement, 'May Night in the Ukraine', was announced yet never used (perhaps not orchestrated by Bax). So Graham Parlett has done it instead, in a very Baxian manner though with a smaller orchestra. A further highly coloured yet sensitive performance. [A:1] *Max Harrison*

BEETHOVEN: Symphony 2 in D/
MOZART: Symphony 39 in E^b

Orch of the 18th Century/Brüggen

Philips 422 389-2 (63m 15s)

Delectable performances of two of the symphonic masterworks that nowadays we have every chance to take too much for granted. Strongly rhythmical, lean playing like this, with a zestful edge to the instrumental timbre, must surely win ever more converts to the period instrument cause. Frans Brüggen certainly does not eschew expressive warmth – witness his spacious and eloquent exposition of the Mozart first movement, or shaping and colouring of the Beethoven *Larghetto*. The fast movements are sparkingly fresh, unforced. The slight disappointment concerns the recorded balance, which cushions the rather backward winds from the vibrant exposure they require and indeed deserve. In all other respects this is a delightful issue. [B:1] *Peter Branscombe*

BEETHOVEN: Symphony 6, 'Pastoral' □
Overture Leonora 3

Chicago SO/Solti

Decca 421 773-2 (57m 03s) also LP/MC

BEETHOVEN: Symphony 6, 'Pastoral' □
Egmont Overture

LPO/Loughran

Collins EC 1026-2 (53m 54s)

These two versions of Beethoven's trip to the country have little in common except a coincidence of issue dates. James Loughran is happy to wander gently, enjoy the fresh air, pause in admiration of a view, smile at dancing country folk, and hover in serene thankfulness as dusk falls after the storm. Sir Georg Solti is much more assertive, anxious to move on, to clamber up hills swiftly and get his pulse throbbing, while showing minimal interest in scenic brooks and lacking Loughran's inclination to linger over evening hymns. Always a man for challenge and drama, Solti tends to emphasize dynamics and *sforzandi*, thus matching an important aspect of Beethoven. But when it comes to the more intimate of pastoral scenes, the affectionate Scot scores over the thrusting Hungarian, with Loughran and his LPO principals pointing up the vital woodwind parts in (ii) very touchingly. Solti's merry-making peasants in (iii) seem rather heavy-footed, but this could be partly a matter of recording, as the CSO's double-bass players are given more prominence by Decca than is granted to their opposite numbers by Collins. The Storm (iv) receives Sir Georg's full dynamic treatment, although Solti actually adopts a slower pace than Loughran in this movement and exhibits less rhythmic fluidity; but those Chicago basses make more of the receding storm's last rumbles.

Solti's orchestra is very slick, but I'm not convinced that everything is quite so secure under Loughran. There are a few oddly shaped phrases in (i) and (iii), while the brief repeated horn motif that introduces the Thanksgiving theme at the start of (v) goes momentarily awry with an intrusive *forte* note. But these are tiny points, and

given the laid-back mood needed to appreciate Loughran's very slow-moving Finale, I find his *Pastoral* more enjoyable than Solti's. Beethoven's sheer *love* of the countryside simply comes across with greater conviction, while anyone preferring a brisker approach should try Goodman's enthusiastic and open-textured 'authentic' version (Nimbus) before turning to Solti. As for the overtures, each is treated as high drama, from Solti as one would expect, from Loughran in striking contrast to his leisurely symphony.

Regarding sonics, the Collins recording is very much a studio production, with the orchestra firmly positioned in an anonymous acoustic, woodwinds highlighted but sounding delightful, violins tending to spikiness on sustained fortissimos, and a somewhat shallow bass. The Decca is more obviously in a proper hall, players further back, dynamics wider (though this may be Solti), and bass more full-bodied. Decca [A:2], Collins [B/A:1].
John Crabbe

BEETHOVEN: Diabelli Variations, Op.120

Bernard Roberts (pno)
Nimbus NI 5193 (52m 10s)

There is much experience behind this performance of the ultimate variation set, for Roberts has recorded the complete piano sonatas twice, always seems to be giving Beethoven recitals in London, and no doubt elsewhere. Op.120 is more than a set of variations, of course, for behind the extreme foreground diversity lies a long-range structure, and it is this that provides the more elusive problems of interpretation. Roberts does very well, producing the sort of tough-minded playing most of the variations need, reflecting the extraordinary energy with which the work as a whole is charged (like the *Grosse Fuge*). Small-scale or local nuances are rarely the point, although variations such as 20 embody the extreme inwardness that is obviously the reverse image of the furious outbursts that occur elsewhere. In another, and quite different relationship to the work's overall forward thrust is the elaborated eloquence of the *Largo molto espressivo*. There are more searching accounts on disc of Beethoven's variations on Diabelli's despised yet amazingly fertile little theme, but this has many satisfying aspects. And it is recorded with a good, natural piano sound – unlike some Nimbus issues that I have heard. [A:1]

Max Harrison

BIZET: Carmen

Norman/Shicoff/Freni/Estes/Raphanael/Rigby/Radio France Ch/French National Orch/Ozawa

Philips 422 366-2 (3CDs, 159m 18s) also 3LP/3MC

If you are inclined to outlaw Jessye Norman's Carmen on the strength of the Habanera, have patience. It's certainly true that the pulse of the drama, only intermittently beating so far in what is plainly a studio handling of the opening numbers (too many hold-ups in a deliciously played Changing of the Guard), virtually comes to a standstill, or so it seems, to allow the fabulous Norman breath control its sinuous way with those teasing lines. But there is dramatic truth here already, which can only be assimilated in the light of this Carmen's subsequent behaviour. You might indeed be advised to take care as the wolf shows its fangs behind the innocent facade. And I mean innocent, since whatever sensuousness there is rests purely in the voice, and on Norman's elegant way with French melodies; and that gives us a Seguidille of rare beauty, the phrases floating on a cushion of air. So you can certainly forget about a raw-sex Carmen – that is better left to others. But the tension between the light surface and the fire-breathing freedom-fighter certainly reasserts itself in the Act 2 Carmen-José scene, from a rather girlish dance-scene to cruel irony (thank heavens for the mimicry of the Oeser score), back to a rather sweet picture of mountain life, and back again to blazing anger. Norman really uses her chest-voice tellingly both here and later – far more effectively, to be sure, than either Callas or Baltsa.

As Carmen faces fate, she becomes rather grand. The delivery of the Card Scene (very slow again – too slow this time) comes from an oracle of fate, not a resigned recipient of it. And there is almost too much cool beauty, perhaps, a little even of *Les Nuits d'Été*, in the final scene. Once again flashing pride and fury redeem it. The same could be said of Neil Shicoff's José here; he, too, rises to the dramatic occasion – this is a desparate man indeed – but there could be more contained menace earlier in what should surely be a quiet pleading. His Flower Song is surprisingly scrupulous: no pianissimo top B-flat, it almost goes without saying, but there are more shades than the emotional overkill of the duet with Micaela promises (a mother's kiss to be received with the same sob in the voice as a mother's illness later?). That

certainly isn't helped by Freni's coarse-grained singing – an unpleasant surprise after the superb vocal control of her recent Tatyana; though her involvement with this role, to judge from an early '60s Italian version of Micaela's aria complete with cadenza, has never been exactly idiomatic. Her French here is marginally better than that of Simon Estes, who takes the Golden Turkey award for his post-Toreador Song dialogue. Estes lets the high notes ring out nobly, but nowhere does his Escamillo have the requisite vocal spring.

After these two, it's a relief to turn back to the polish of the supporting gypsies – French with the exception of our Jean Rigby, who makes her mark without stepping out of line. Their Quintet is a delight, with Norman admirably part of the ensemble (I wish the same could be said of Shicoff at the beginning of Act 3). No less sprightly is the French woodwind playing. Ozawa has certainly taken every care over Bizet's dynamics – you only need to hear Micaela's orchestral flight in the first number to take a measure of his distinction. If the performance rarely gathers theatrical momentum, that's hardly his or his players' fault. It has plenty of dry presence, but a few more stage noises would have been a help, especially *chez* Lillas Pastia, where Decca engineers on the Solti set catch the atmosphere without too much distraction. I still feel Solti's judicious, and lucidly argued blend of the Choudens and Oeser editions makes for better theatre; Ozawa rests content with Oeser for the most part, thereby losing a few more points in the final duct. [A:2/1*]

David Nice

BOULEZ: Le marteau sans maître □ Notations □ Structures, Livre II

Elizabeth Laurence (m-sop)/Bernard Wambach, Pi-Hsien Chen (pnos)/L'Ensemble InterContemporain/Boulez
CBS CD 42619 (67m 56s)

For an avant-garde work to be recorded is quite unusual; to receive three recordings is almost unheard of. But such is the case with Boulez's *Le marteau sans maître*. That said, the piece is now some 35 years old and its composer remains one of the most formidable interpreters of recent music, so perhaps it is not so surprising. Yet, for all that, *Le marteau* is hardly cosy listening, and indeed is hardly representative of the composer's later work. All the more interesting, then, that – given its requirements for astonishing virtuosity (not least from the singer) – Boulez should have elected to record the work live. Inevitably there are pros and cons.

On the credit side is a tangible sense of excitement and involvement – something absolutely vital for a work as challenging as this. And even more impressive in this context is the players' accuracy. Even the most avid follower of this ferociously complex score will be hard put to find performance errors. But what is most delightful is that it is all done with a sense of commitment and sheer musicality which leaves other contemporary specialists standing. Drama and (dare one say it?) eloquence are the order of the day – and full marks here must go to mezzo Elizabeth Laurence who wonderfully contrives to combine elegance and passion with daunting accuracy. It is a performance that grows more impressive with each hearing.

Such problems as there are lie in the recording, which is not perhaps as colourful as it might be. True, the audience is quiet

Jessye Norman (photo: Annie Leibovitz/Philips)



and the balance mostly good; but there is a dryness which perhaps works against the sort of glittering sensuality that Boulez seems to strive for. The two pianos in *Structures* Book II are better catered for, though in an ideal world they could have benefited from a greater richness. Messrs Chen and Wambach do their best to compensate, however; and while it would be going too far to term the results charming, they do have an austere grandeur.

Most listeners will probably warm more to Boulez's early *Notations* – presented here not in their recent, hugely expanded orchestral form but in the delicate piano original. It's a pity the separate sections are not individually indexed. Still, this is but a small blemish. [B:1] *Simon Cargill*

BORODIN: String Quartet 2/SMETANA: String Quartet 1
Cleveland Qt
Telarc CD-80178 (56m 46s)

There is an attractive sparkle and muscularity about these performances; there is finesse too, but no obvious attempt to emotionalise. Smetana's autobiographical quartet is treated perhaps too objectively, and those looking for a harrowing are likely to be disappointed. The vitality of youth and the ardour of romance are clearly and effectively stated – the Polka is delightfully fresh sounding – so is the solemnity of maturity, but the composer's collapse of hearing in the finale is not dwelt on as it has been by some other performers, nor are the torments arising from the calamity spelled out as graphically. A little more sense of involvement might not have come amiss here. Borodin's quartet, less introverted, receives a wholly commendable reading. The recording is full and resonant, with rich cello tone, full mid-range sound and warmly vibrant upper strings. Those who relish a more intimate performance should consider either the Medici or Talich recordings of the Smetana, though neither of these *sounds* as good. [A:1] *Kenneth Dommett*

CHOPIN: Piano Concertos 1 & 2
Yevgeny Kissin (pno)/Moscow Academic SO/Kitaenko
Olympia OCD 149 (65m 13s)

These performances are scarcely credible. Yevgeny Kissin was 13 when in 1984 he recorded both Chopin Concertos 'live' in Moscow. Pianistically they are among the most brilliant in existence, though Kissin's prodigious talent also suggests a hardly less remarkable musical poise and command, a born temperamental affinity. You may quibble over the odd detail (the start of the Second Concerto's *Larghetto* is momentarily callow and unyielding) or, overall, find Rubinstein more subtly affecting, Argerich more volatile, or Emanuel Ax more inwardly poetic; but you will surely be overwhelmed by Kissin's consistency of style, tonal range, and a maturity that belies his age at virtually every turn. The dangers of such early quality and success are considerable (they seem to me sadly demonstrated by EMI's Dmitri Sgouros) and so I hope, and indeed pray, that Kissin is guarded from the worst excesses of an increasingly crass and commercial market-place. The recordings are more than adequate for such an occasion, the applause gratifying rather than irritating.

This could easily become a collector's item: a unique example of what is possible at an early age. Readers should perhaps also be

reminded that Kissin has recorded for RCA (at the venerable age of 17) a Rachmaninov recital where his performances of a selection of *Etudes* invite comparison with the greatest living pianists. [B:1] *Bryce Morrison*

CHOPIN: Sonata 3 □ Fantasy Op.49/
SCRIABIN: Sonata 2 □ Fantasy Op.28
Elisabeth Leonskaja (pno)
Teldec 8.44253 (66m 20s) also LP/MC

Past recordings indicate that Elisabeth Leonskaja is usually best in large-boned Germanic sonata structures, not in more picturesque music, and this seems to be confirmed here by the F-minor and B-minor Fantasies of Chopin and Scriabin respectively. The march-like first two pages of the former promise well, but almost as soon as the triplet figuration is reached there is an irrational speeding up, and thereafter, despite some fine moments, the various tempos are in arbitrary relationships with one another and the piece as a whole fails to make sense.

The sonatas fare better, especially the two-movement Fantasy-Sonata by Scriabin, who, on existing evidence, one would have assumed to be well outside Miss Leonskaja's range. But in fact the *Andante's* three themes are sharply characterized, their interaction in the development section unfolded to excellent dramatic effect. The *Presto* is hardly less impressive, though she does not make quite enough of the second theme's rather late appearance, in bar 41. At least the outer movements of Chopin's sonata receive completely idiomatic performances, masterfully executed and responding to the music's many aspects, even if the finale is occasionally driven too hard. The trio of the Scherzo is a bit pedestrian and the *Largo*, though of considerable beauty, just misses the sweet expressiveness of the truest interpretations. [A:2] *Max Harrison*

COPLAND: Appalachian Spring □ Cortège Macabre □ Letter From Home □
John Henry
St Louis SO/Slatkin
EMI CDC 749 7662 (60m 57s)

The permutations on the score of *Appalachian Spring* threaten to become confusing. There was the original 'pit orchestra' version for 13 instruments, an orchestral transcription which omitted about eight minutes of music, and a second orchestral version (the one recorded here) made for Eugene Ormandy at the conductor's request that restored the 'lost' passages. This lasts over 36m. The *Cortège macabre* is a chunk of music rescued by Copland from his unperformed first ballet 'Grogg' composed in 1923. The *Cortège* became the composer's first fully orchestrated score and was premiered by Howard Hanson in 1925. The present performance is of an edited version which takes note of casual criticisms of its 'bassi ostinati' made by Prokofiev, who happened to be present when Copland played the piece to Koussevitsky on the piano in 1924. The other two pieces are miniatures, the first a nostalgic wartime piece written for a Paul Whiteman radio show, the second an orchestral inflation of a ballad made popular here by Leadbelly among others. There have recently been several new recordings of *Appalachian Spring* in its chamber and truncated orchestral versions, but Slatkin's is special. Always conscious of the dance origins of the work,

he keeps firm hold on the pulse of the lyrical passages and makes the rhythmic ones really strut. The musical value of the rest of the programme may not be as high, but the inclusion of the *Cortège* is of genuine interest, and the performances maintain the same excellence. The sound quality throughout is brilliant and exciting. Altogether this is one of the best of the new crop of Copland collections. [A:1*]

Kenneth Dommett

CORELLI: Concerto in D, Op.6:7 □ in F, Op.6:9 □ in c, Op.6:3 □ in D, Op.6:1 □ in B^b, Op.6:9 □ in g, Op.6:8 'Pastorale'
Tafelmusik Baroque Orch/Lamon
BMG/DHM RD 77908 (65m 57s)

The Tafelmusik boasts of being Canada's best, and longest-established, period-instrument baroque band; of their type, so they seem to be. The sound of the ripieno is crisp, the continuo is well-stylized and the approach is creatively intelligent (with cadenzas played by Jean Lamon himself, as leader/director). Speeds are appropriately contrasted and the *affect* (ie characteristic mood) of each section is clearly projected.

The recording accurately reflects the compact scale of operations, and the integrated discipline of it all. For my taste, the solo sounds are too thin and rather too deeply played into the strings, given at times an unnecessary modern quality of tension – but this is a fine point. There is an excellent rival from EMI featuring Sigiswald Kuijken, Lucy van Dael and La Petite Bande in the complete Op.6. The new set of six Concertos was recorded in a much drier acoustic, whilst the earlier one was taped in a really resonant setting; I still just prefer that more 17th-century-sounding Kuijken set, but the Tafelmusik selection is certainly a supportable alternative. [A/B:1*/1] *Stephen Daw*

DEBUSSY: 12 Etudes □ Suite bergamasque
Garrick Ohlsson (pno)
Arabesque Z 6601 (70m 24s) (Harmonia Mundi)

If Liszt's *Etudes* are often studies in drama and rhetoric, Debussy's are *Etudes* in transcendental fantasy. Once thought forbiddingly dry and abstract, they are increasingly performed by intrepid and enterprising pianists – their difficulties, from every angle, are immense. For them Debussy's *Etudes* are the most dazzling and profoundly exploratory of all; a tribute to Chopin, they excel even that master's classic *oeuvre*. Here, Debussy crystallizes the impossible, the very essence of gaiety and introspection, gliding effortlessly from manic, hyper-active life to the ultimate still centre, with an evocative power that can haunt and unsettle even the most sanguine nature.

Gieseking's iridescent if fallible recording from the '50s has never been surpassed – until now. Garrick Ohlsson, clearly bored by the standardized diction associated with first prizes at colleges and competitions, has allowed his playing to blossom and evolve into something deeply personal, rapturous, and engaging. For years a respectable pianist he is now a consummate artist. Above all he realizes that a scrupulous attention to the text is the truest key to success. The music may be lyrical or acerbic, delirious or precise, yet for Ohlsson – with a rare capacity to read between the lines – the score always comes first. In 1 (*Cinq doigts*) his response to Debussy's wicked tilt at early

pedagogy is brilliantly exact, and in 2 (*Tierces*) his rubato is magically insinuating, *Octaves* (5) is wildly uninhibited (*librement rythmé*) and in 6 (*Huits doigts*), close relation to Fauré's F-sharp Impromptu, his *glissandi* flash like summer lightning. The list is endless, and clearly it would be impossible to detail in a short review Ohlsson's Merlin-like capacity for magic and revelation.

His *Suite bergamasque*, too, is a far cry from the sort of stiffness that passes for authenticity (Cécile Ousset's recent EMI album!) and his playing is, again, of a rare expressive freedom and potency. Listen to the section, *tempo rubato*, in 'Clair de lune' and you may well wonder when you have heard its familiar bars caressed with a comparable tonal ease or inflected with such emotional life.

The Arabesque recording, when you stop to notice it, is good rather than outstanding. New CDs of the *Etudes* are to come from Nimbus (Martin Jones), ASV (Gordon Ferguson-Thompson), and Philips (Mitsuko Uchida). [B:1*] *Bryce Morrison*

DVORAK: Legends Op.59/JANACEK: Sinfonietta

Bamberg SO/Järvi
BIS CD-436 (66m 22s)

The ten *Legends*, like the *Slavonic Dances*, first appeared as piano duets and were orchestrated later; but they have never found as much favour in either form, possibly because their mood is more consistently reflective. This seems to be their first appearance on CD, and the performance is typical of Järvi's other Dvorak recordings, a combination of the cool and sensuous, an affectionate attention to detail and balance. The *Sinfonietta* is just a little disappointing in contrast, especially when set beside Mackerarras's supercharged Decca version, or even Nazareth's more rustic but vital Opus recording, which afforded me tremendous pleasure. It is hard to find fault with details in Järvi's performance; it is in the overall effect that the uncertainty lies. It is not quite as thrilling as one expects this work to be. The opening and closing fanfares sound careful – in fact, carefulness is perhaps the source of the doubt. In spite of the obvious thought that had gone into it and some compelling moments – the menace of (iii) is especially well characterized – the playing lacks spontaneity. The recording is not quite as brilliant as we have come to expect from BIS at its best either. Rounded and slightly boomy, it is somewhat distanced and lacking in sparkle. [B:1/2] *Kenneth Dommert*

DVORAK: String Quartet Op.96/MENDELSSOHN: String Quartet Op.13

Vermeer Qt
Teldec 8.44145 (57m 10s) also LP/MC

Obviously there are many other recordings of the 'American' Quartet (composed in Iowa) but this one by the Vermeer team can perfectly well hold its own. It is among the most attractive works for string quartet, and Dvorak's lyricism, which prevails in all four movements, is here given its head while never becoming too lush. The vivid recording benefits this piece more directly than it does Mendelssohn's Op.13.

This is the first entirely satisfactory quartet the latter wrote, being composed when he was 18, in the year of Beethoven's death (Op.12 dates from 1829). He was evidently most conscious of classical precedents, in



Garrick Ohlsson

terms both of form and of actual scoring for quartet, and in place of Dvorak's rhapsodic relaxation and mosaic-like additive technique he offers passages of impressive polyphonic compression. By all except Beethovenian standards all four instruments are, for that period, driven hard and the Vermeer Quartet respond well to this. Their performance is aptly energetic yet beautifully full-toned. One's final impression of Op.13, however, is of something quite different – of a maturity that is almost disconcerting, like the tone of some of Mendelssohn's teenage letters. [A:1] *Max Harrison*

HAYDN: Symphonies 22 in E^b, 'The Philosopher' □ 63 in C, 'La Roxelane' □ 80 in d

Orpheus CO
DG 427 337-2 (62m 57s)

A delightful issue, presenting as it does three well-contrasted symphonies from a span of twenty years, played with warmth and great skill, and sympathetically recorded. The slow pace of the Adagio of 22 is well sustained, the following Presto is witty, the Menuetto proud and pompous, the finale intoxicating with its chuckling French and English horns. 'La Roxelane', less familiar, and here given in its revised version, is by turns fiery and elegant. And 80 contrasts effectively the public and the private sides of the composer's personality. Throughout, the players convey full appreciation of Haydn's achievements, revealing an equally happy hand in tiny points of detail and balance, and in the broad sweep of each movement and work. The acoustic has keen presence, with just balance between winds and strings; one feels one is sitting in a very good seat at an uncommonly rewarding concert. [A*:1] *Peter Branscombe*

HAYDN: Symphonies 31 in D, 'Hornsignal' □ 45 in f[♯], 'Farewell'

Orch of St Luke's/Mackerarras
Telarc CD-80156 (68m 26s)

Whether it be Mozart with the Prague CO on Telarc, or Haydn with the Australian CO on Conifer, or now with the Orchestra of St Luke's, Sir Charles's recordings give great delight. Generous and alertly responsive with repeats, these are extended performances (the Adagio of 45 plays for nearly 14½m), yet the impetus is finely maintained – only in the double-bass variation just before the Presto of 31's finale did the pulse feel ponderous. The playing is very accomplished, with fine detail as well as a bold

sweep in the fast movements, and warm lyricism in the slow movements. The minuets are beautifully judged, and Haydn's numerous unexpected touches are enjoyed but not exaggerated. The recording is warm, sonorous, easy on the ear – apart from a tiny squeak about 11m 50s into 45(ii). Strongly recommended. [A:1] *Peter Branscombe*

Garrick Ohlsson

HAYDN: Symphony 99 in E^b □ 101 in D, 'Clock'

ECO/Tate
EMI CDC 749 6342 (57m 02s)

With this sterling disc Jeffrey Tate and the ECO complete their set of the six symphonies written for Haydn's second London visit. Not having heard the two earlier CDs (May 1987) I can only confirm that on this evidence the high praise lavished on them is thoroughly deserved. These are broad, unhurried performances, yet they are so clearly articulated, so persuasively phrased, that one never doubts for a moment that a true Haydn conductor is at the helm. The ECO play beautifully for him, with lovely detail and an invigorating sweep. The orchestra is set well back in a suitably resonant acoustic (Abbey Road No.1 Studio), and every strand tells. A keen response to Haydn's dynamic and phrase marks is always in evidence; and below the surface a sure feel for the wit and profundity, the high spirits, drama and poignancy, of these incomparable works. [A:1*] *Peter Branscombe*

HAYDN: Keyboard Concerto 11 in D □ Overture Il Mondo della Luna □ Concertante

Soloists/Concentus Musicus/Harnoncourt
Teldec 8.43674 (46m 47s)

It seems a long time since the last period-instrument recording by Harnoncourt came my way, as opposed to his modern symphony orchestra performances. The Concentus Musicus were in fine form when the sessions were held in spring 1987 and 1988, though the Casino Zögernitz seems less than an ideal venue: the sound is distinctly boxy, and there is an ambient hiss. Close microphone-placement catches key-mechanism as well as the reap of bow on gut – there is plenty of vitality, and keen, idiomatic playing. The famous concerto with the Hungarian rondo is freshly, imaginatively played on a fortepiano by that versatile keyboardist Herbert Tachezi, and a responsive, distinguished quartet give great delight in the *Concertante*: David Reichenberg, Milan Turković, Erich Höbarth and Christophe Coin. A somewhat unpolished account of the *Mondo della luna* overture separates the concertos on a distinctly ungenerous CD. [B/C:1] *Peter Branscombe*

HAYDN: Horn Concerto 1 in D □ Symphony 31 in D/M HAYDN: Horn Concerto in D

Anthony Halstead (brn)/Hanover Band/Goodman
Nimbus NI 5190 (60m 47s)

The sensible thing is not to play the disc straight through, for there is really rather an excess of D major. On the other hand, so lively and attractive are music and performances that one is reluctant to press the 'stop' button. Anthony Halstead plays the concertos with considerable panache and deft control on a natural horn, equally at home when scaling the heights and plumbing the

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depths. For the final item, the 'Horn Signal' Symphony, he hands over to the persuasively fluent horn quartet of The Hanover Band, who are finely backed up by the string soloists, and indeed by the whole orchestra, in what is an invigorating yet affectionate account under Roy Goodman's incisive leadership. The recording though clean and well balanced is quite close, and for my taste over-resonant – it suggests too large a scale for music of the 1760s and '70s. Good notes and attractive presentation add to the pleasure of a very nice issue. [B:1]

Peter Branscombe

HAYDN: Piano Trios in D, G & F#, Hob XV24-26

London Fortepiano Trio
Hyperion CDA 66297 (50m 07s)

The set was published by Longman & Broderip in October 1795 as 'Trois Sonates'; certainly the keyboard is the dominant partner, but the strings are no longer mere accompaniment. The London Fortepiano Trio play these delightful works with style and panache; they use period instruments, and reveal fine insight and realistic balance. The opening 'ping' of the first Trio may startle, but the ear soon accustoms itself to the keen, light timbre and relishes the players' skilful exploration of Haydn's bold yet subtle new style. All three works are in three movements, but their interrelationship in respect of form, tempo, proportion and tonality is anything but expected. None of them figures in current CD lists. This very welcome issue is made yet more attractive by the felicitously natural recording and the inclusion on the cover of a previously unknown portrait miniature of Haydn, dating from around 1790. [A:1]

Peter Branscombe

IVES: Songs (Vol.2)

Roberta Alexander (sop)/Tan Crone (pno)
Etcetera KTC 1068 (54m 50s)

The majority of the 28 songs in this present instalment of Ives are of the sentimental type. Whether they are of the kind that their composer said had 'little or no musical value' is a matter of opinion, but that they are indebted to the Horatio Parker-ish vein of 19th-century German romanticism is evident. There are some of those quirkily individualistic items which are distinctly Ivesian – 'The Circus Band', 'The Camp Fire', 'At the River', 'Ann Street' and 'They Are There' (the piccolo in the last is played by Rien de Reede) chief among them. With the exception of 'Rosamunde' (1898) they are arranged in the chronology devised by Ralph Kirkpatrick, and range from 1894 to 1921, with 'They Are There' last (in its final 1942 version – although it was written in 1917). The performances live up to the high standard of this duo's earlier recitals of American song (I have not heard Vol.1 of the Ives), but I suggest that it would take a more than usually devoted admirer of the composer to derive unalloyed pleasure from unbroken exposure to this particular collection. [A:1]

Kenneth Dommett

JANACEK: Kata Kabanova

Soloists/VPO/Mackerras
Decca 421 852-2 (2CDs, 139m 52s) © 1977

The re-emergence of Mackerras's prestigious Janacek opera series on CD has been much more protracted than might have been

expected, considering their universally acknowledged excellence. So far this is only the third – *Jenufa* and *The Vixen* have already appeared. It is a characterful performance dominated vocally by Elisabeth Söderström in the title role, ably supported by Petr Dvorský and Nedezda Kniplova in the major secondary roles. Sir Charles's command of the nuances of Janacek's musical language, and the VPO's responses are well-nigh faultless. The original fine analogue recording has been polished to great effect for the new format. [A/A*:1*]

Kenneth Dommett

KERN: Overtures □ Music from 'Swing Time'

National PO/Ambrosian Cb/McGlenn
EMI CDC 749 6302 (67m 09s)

How refreshing to have a seriously presented collection of Jerome Kern's show overtures. Gershwin's have been done and re-done, but Kern can claim as great a fund of memorable tunes, and now we are able to listen to some of them interwoven into the preludes that gave audiences a taste of what was to come. In their original orchestrations we are all the more able to relish Kern's inventiveness with many of the tunes that have become standards: 'She Didn't Say Yes', 'They Didn't Believe Me' and the bevy of hits in *Swing Time* (in which we are given the choruses). The *Swing Time* score is especially interesting in having been the original film score recorded from parts found in RKO's archives. But there are many others here less well known. John McGlenn, who compiled the programme, whets our appetites further by his brief comments on some of the shows from which these tunes come. 'Oh, Lady! Lady!' (1918), written by Guy Bolton and PG Wodehouse (as were several of Kern's shows), is said to have 'a falling down funny libretto'. *Show Boat* has been recorded, and two Gershwin shows, so could not someone pluck up courage to record one of these complete? Especially if it has 'a falling down funny libretto' as well as good tunes... [A:1]

Kenneth Dommett

[EMI now have a 75m highlights CD from *Showboat*: CDC 749 8472 – Mus Ed]



John McGlenn (photo: Clive Barda/EMI)

KODALY: Solo Cello Sonata □ Duo Op.7

□ Cello Sonata Op.4
Janos Starker (vlc)/Arnold Eidus (vln)/Otto Herz (pno)
Philips 422 302-2 (72m 36s) © 1950

Dubbed from LPs (an occasional click is audible) emanating from Everest, these are genuinely classic accounts of all three pieces, but the masterpiece without question is the performance of the Solo Sonata, a dazzling technical display combined with strong emotional feeling for the music. The sound is certainly not of the best. In their efforts to modernise it the engineers have accentuated what was obviously a none too

amiable original, and have almost dumped the players in one's lap. The ear is an accommodating organ though, and it makes allowances very quickly. A later Starker recording from Delos of the first two pieces is easier to listen to but is rather less electric. [H:1/1*]

Kenneth Dommett

KODALY: Missa brevis □ Pange lingua □ Laudes organi

Regent Chamber Cb/John Scott (org)/Cole Regent REGCD 103 (61m 36s) (Target)

Kodaly's church music has little about it that could be called specifically Hungarian, and these performances would make it feel quite at home in any church in England. There is something delightfully fresh and indefinitely English about the singing of this little choir, which numbers only six: three sopranos, a contralto, tenor and bass. At the hands of their conductor, Gary Cole, currently director of music at a church in Regent's Park, they make a brave noise and a sweet one. Their diction is wonderfully clear, helped no doubt by recording of unusual clarity. The venue, All Hallows, Gospel Oak, imparts a warm resonance without echoes, and the singers are sensibly distanced to give a natural impression of space. The organ is perhaps closer than it should be – startlingly so at the beginning of the Mass – but is sensitively stopped by John Scott so that we are spared the usual heavy cross-resonances associated with church organs. I approached the record with some reservation having no knowledge of choir, conductor or recording company. I left it uncommonly refreshed. [A:1/1*]

Kenneth Dommett

LAMBERT: Leçons de Ténèbres (1689)

Naoëme Rime (sop)/Nathalie Stutzmann (alto)/Charles Brett (c-ten)/Howard Crook (ten)/Philippe Foulon (gmba)/Mauricio Buraglia (theorbo)/Ivette Piveteau (bpd/org pos)

Virgin Classics VCD 790 8212 (2CDs, 141m 33s) also 2LP/2MC

Michel Lambert (1610-1696) was the first composer to set the Passiontide *Tenebrae Lessons* as vocal sonatas, or even concertos for the virtuoso singer. This is the first recording of his second set, issued on its tercentenary. Later, the genre, which exploited the heightening of aural sensitivity in near-darkness – associated with the Office of Matins in Holy Week, which is celebrated last on the evening preceding each day – was further developed by other French Catholic composers.

These accounts are very well sung indeed, with only the normally dependable Howard Crook sounding inhibited in the style. The instrumental accompaniments are all very good, with Philippe Foulon especially effective on the gamba, so that his playing is midway between the vocal style of the Renaissance and the much more flamboyant later French style of Marais and Forqueray – which was apparently more off-the-string. The whole enterprise is helped by some of the best recording of vocal ensemble music I have yet heard (a slightly shallow harpsichord tone seems to be a fault in the instrument itself); in the passages where the higher voices soar upwards in glorious and poignant prayer, the effect is quite ravishingly beautiful.

Incidentally, these are not 'jolly' pieces, so for most people, one *Leçon* at a time is the way to hear them; they each last between about 24/15m. [A*:1*/1]

Stephen Daw



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LISZT: 12 Études d'exécution transcendante

Vladimir Ovchinnikov (pno)
EMI CDC 749 8212 (64m 01s)

Liszt's 12 *Études d'exécution transcendante* remain as formidable as their title. Their alpine demands may create a less ferociously concentrated or elegantly poetic challenge than Chopin's *Études*, but the transformation of much potential bathos and hysteria into genuine and noble poetry is only achieved by the finest pianists.

Vladimir Ovchinnikov, fresh from triumphs in both Moscow and Leeds, plays with great vividness and immediacy and he has been impressively recorded. At the same time his poetic and, more particularly, his tonal range will hardly erase memories of Richter's truly classic accounts of 5 and 11 (or Norjima's scarcely less brilliant performances), Bolet's musical regality (seriously ruffled, however, by *Feux Follets'* double-note demands), Cziffra's dazzling idiosyncrasies, or Berman's Russian bear-hug. In *Feux Follets'* Ovchinnikov confuses whimsy with fantasy, and his high-wire tension combines with a gaunt and insufficiently varied tone to make both *Vision* and *Eroica* much less grand, rich or scintillating than from Bolet. On the other hand youthful flair and reflexes combine with true inwardness to make *Chasse Neige* a menacing experience, with tremolandi that really vibrate, and chromatic gusts that sing and swirl with brilliant bravura. Overall, Ovchinnikov's tempi are considerably faster and more frantic than Bolet's, and while this is not always an advantage many listeners will feel that his intensity and athleticism win the day. This is a striking and individual debut; further recordings will be awaited with keen interest. [A:1/2] *Bryce Morrison*

MENDELSSOHN: Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso Op.14 □ **Prelude and Fugue Op.35:5** □ **Variations serieuses Op.54** □ **Lieder ohne Worte – Op.19:5, Op.30:6, Op.38:5, Op.62:1, 3 & 6, Op.67:2, 4, Op.85:4** □ **3 Etudes Op.104** □ **Sonata Op.106**

Nikita Magaloff (pno)
Denon CO 73535 (72m 33s)

The *Études* and Sonata apart, this was recorded at the Montreux-Vevy Festival last year and some of it is better than the rather awful Chopin series that Magaloff had out on Philips several years ago. A fair cross-section is presented by the nine *Songs without Words*, the playing often being noisy (in both senses) and uningratiating, as in *Opp.19:5* or *38:5*, yet elsewhere quite charming, as in *Op.30:6* or *62:1*. Magaloff generally makes heavy weather of the *Variations serieuses*, although these too have their moments, instances occurring in variations 1, 11 and 15. The *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso* are dry and rather stiff, and probably the *Op.104 Études* receive the most satisfactory performances. This pianist is far from his best, however, in the Sonata, which despite its late opus number is an early work, dating from 1827 and published 21 years after Mendelssohn's death. A splendid performance of it (and of *Op.14*) was recorded for Chandos by Lydia Artymiw. [A:2/3] *Max Harrison*

MOZART: Symphonies 32, 35 'Haffner' & 36 'Linz'

Eng Bar Soloists/Gardiner
Philips 422 419-2 (73m 05s)

Authenticity is not what it used to be. Gone are the days of squealing cornetti, braying sackbuts and bleating baroque oboes played by practitioners generally regarded as musical cranks; in the 1980s Early Music is very much big business. The hardline nonsense approach which characterized Hogwood's Mozart cycle has given way to something altogether more seductive. So much so that one is now in the curious position of finding the likes of Mackerras on Telarc, with modern instruments, far more radical in matters of tempo, texture and phrasing than John Eliot Gardiner with his English Baroque Soloists. True, Gardiner is hardly a man given to Klemperer-like gravity in this music, but there is a sense in which his air of smooth, well-upholstered refinement owes more to the late, lamented Karajan than to any ideas about classical clarity of tone. Indeed, such is the finely-calculated blend of the wind playing, and the variety of colour and phrasing in the string articulation that one could be forgiven for mistaking Gardiner's band for perhaps the English Chamber Orchestra or the London Mozart Players.

The question is, does such a fusion of old and new work in practice? And the answer is: yes it does. There is a real sense of operatic excitement in the opening movement of the *Haffner* combined with a pleasantly long-breathed approach to lyricism in the slow movements. Whereas other conductors have recently fallen into the trap of having to sacrifice grace for increased vigour, Gardiner keeps the tone light and fluffy to magical effect in the final, jubilant yet heartfelt, movement of the *Linz*. The complex yet subtle moulding of the string lines makes up for any slight lack of speed compared with some of his rivals. Only occasionally, as in the *Linz's* bucolic minuet, does one feel that the suave sophistication becomes mannered. But this is a minor worry. With excellent, airy recording this is surely for anyone who wants the gentlest of introductions to 'authentic' Mozart. [A:1]

Simon Cargill

PANUFNIK: Sinfonia Votiva/SESSIONS: Concerto for Orchestra

Boston SO/Ozawa
Hyperion CDA 66050 (38m 08s) © 1982

Record promotion being what it is, it is hardly surprising to find the quote 'Absolutely the finest orchestral recording ever made in any format' displayed prominently on the cover. A pretty big claim to say the least. [This was Tony Faulkner's first big American project – *Mus Ed.*]

Both works were written for the Boston Orchestra's centenary, and while neither perhaps matches Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* written for its 50th anniversary, they are fine scores which effectively demonstrate two differing approaches to the problem of writing contemporary orchestral music. Sessions takes a middle-of-the-road serialist line, derived from Schoenberg's *Variations for Orchestra*, and seems to revel in an Elliot Carter-like density of texture – as indeed does Ozawa who rattles through it in fine style with all guns blazing.

The Panufnik is an altogether different story; but here too Ozawa manages to hold the slow, sparse unwinding of the symphony's first movement together. He is clearly more at ease in the more urgent second section, however; and the gloriously dissonant brass climaxes are rammed home with a real sense of grandeur. Excellent.



Andrzej Panufnik (left), with Mark Stebbenson – see 'Notes' p97.

clear but weighty recording completes an impressive, if not exactly generously filled disc. [A:1] *Simon Cargill*

PROKOFIEV: Violin Sonatas 1 & 2 □ **5 Melodies, Op.35**

Mayumi Fujikawa (vln)/Craig Sheppard (pno)
ASV CD DCA 667 (70m 11s) also LP/MC

This is a sensible programme, bringing together all the violin and piano works from Prokofiev's small output of chamber music. Perhaps these readings of the sonatas do not have quite the perception of the old (1970) RCA coupling by Perlman and Ashkenazy, but this playing has great vitality, the recording is of course much better, and we get the *Melodies*. These charmingly piquant items date from 1925, were adapted by the composer from songs, and deserve to be more widely known. I just wonder if Miss Fujikawa is using a mute, as indicated in the Moscow edition of 1960, in the *poco più mosso* section of No.2, or in No.4.

The two four-movement sonatas, belonging to 1938-46 and 1943 respectively, are about equally good yet quite different one from another. If the *Melodies* began life as songs, Sonata 2 started as a work for flute and piano, Prokofiev adapting it for violin in 1944. I have always found it more effective in this revised form. It is more relaxed and graceful than Sonata 1, which latter is a particularly fine achievement, sometimes generating much intensity. Recorded in March of this year, the two players are excellent in both works and make a well-matched team. [A:1] *Max Harrison*

POULENC: Sinfonietta □ **Aubade/HAHN: Le Bal de Béatrice d'Este**

New London Orch/Corp
Hyperion CDA 66347 (63m 19s)

I have always found Poulenc's music entirely delightful, and this disc does nothing to decrease my admiration. The way he could balance the light and the heavy, the frothy and the serious in music brings to mind Mozart. His songs are pretty well known, but in other areas he is arguably under-represented. This recording is thus a very welcome addition to the catalogue, not least



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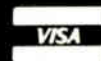
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because the performances have so much of the vibrancy suggested by the music and essential to its success.

If there is a criticism to be made of the performances, it is that just occasionally one feels the dynamic has been constant for a fraction too long, especially when that dynamic is high – but this is really a minor complaint. In the *Aubade* (a 'choreographic concerto' for piano and eighteen instruments) the (uncredited) pianist sometimes does less than full justice to Poulenc's carefully notated inner melodies, which become submerged in the overall flow. In general, though, there is much good playing in evidence with excellent ensemble.

The same goes for the *Hahn*, a rarity in the form of a suite of olden-style dances in turn-of-the-century Parisian fancy dress. Very likeable music, perhaps not very deep but none the worse for that; I for one will return to it often.

Hyperion have produced a sympathetic recording, with good perspectives appropriate to the musical style. Piano sound could be better but does not offend. Track information is wrong as printed; somehow the *Aubade* got divided up by mistake. [B:1]

Richard Black

RACHMANINOV: Symphony 3 □ The Rock

Stockholm – PO/Berglund
RCA RD 87902 (55m 11s)

Having heard two instalments of Andrew Litton's Rachmaninov cycle with the RPO – the finest concert-hall work of his I've yet experienced – I'd instantly say, wait for his recording of the Third due soon enough on Virgin. Tautness and clarity are Berglund's chief virtues in this repertoire (surely an unlikely choice for him), qualities impressed by the rather tense, bony profile of the Stockholm orchestra. Whatever illusions of opulence there are – violins unburdening themselves in impressive anguish at the height of the first-movement development – turn out to be tricks of the recording. Too often Rachmaninov's lush counter-themes tend to be too taut, too lacking in that rubato writ large which was so admirable (and, I must say, surprising) a feature of Litton's live performance, or in any crucial sense of forward movement. The woodwind characterize well, and there is fire where one least expects it – in the fugal section of the finale – but the overall impression does too little justice to Rachmaninov's wonderful sense of fantasy in this symphony, and the close balances only aggravate disappointment. *The Rock* makes a good companion, hardly generous by the side of Kitaenko's bizarre coupling on Olympia (*Also sprach Zarathustra*, a collector's item in terms of sheer perverse curiosity, although the performance of the symphony is remarkably supple), or the mid-price EMI reissue of Previn's luxuriant account with his Shostakovich 6. [C:2/3]

David Nice

RAMEAU: Pièces de Clavecin en Concerts

Trio Sonnerie
Virgin Classics VC 790 7492 (67m 39s)

I find Trio Sonnerie's Rameau much less convincing than their Leclair. Rameau is more subtle and sensuous, less predictable in form and sentence-structure, and far more demanding of variety of articulation. He reminds us – and not only in the titles of these works – of his musical debt to the

French violists. Leclair, who had studied in Amsterdam with Somis and Locatelli, has much more of the Italian spirit about his use of the violin.

Rameau is not easy, though, and in his day he too was counted a virtuoso. Monica Huggett seems to miss the point of many of his patterns and shapes; she ends too many phrases by holding on too long; she treats the lines more in the manner of a romantic work than a baroque one, failing to work rhetorically towards its main point; and, in the more repetitive patterns, she displays little sign of the relish then expected in such passages. She so obviously dominates the ensemble stylistically (which, for these works, may not be appropriate) that these shortcomings adversely effect the whole interpretation.

The sound is clearly conveyed, well-proportioned, and quite well distanced. It might have helped, however, if the rather scratchy – too much at the point? – style of the bowing had been softened somewhat. [B:2]

Stephen Dav

SATIE: Trois Gymnopédies □ Six Gnossiennes □ Embryons Desséchés □ Croque Agaceries d'un Gros Bonhomme en bois □ Sports et Divertissements □ Heures Séculaires et Instantanés □ Trois Valses distinguées du précieux dégoûté □ Sonatine Bureaucratique □ Cinq Nocturnes

Yitkin Scow (pno)

Hyperion CDA 66344 (65m 46s)

The avalanche of new Satie records continues unabated, his fringe lunacy and singularity an eternal source of fascination. Yitkin Scow, making his debut on Hyperion, is for the most part a sensitive and expert guide, though even he cannot convince me that Satie's dig at Chabrier (*Espana*) is other than rudimentary, or that brevity is necessarily the soul of wit in the complete *Sports et Divertissements* ('the culmination of Satie's art' according to the sleeve). The five Nocturnes are grave, remote oddities (a tilt at 'late' Fauré?), transparent in both thought and texture. Yitkin Scow sounds desiccated rather than seductive in *Tango* (from *Sports et Divertissements*) and his *rubato* in the *Gnossiennes* may be fitful and unidiomatic. Elsewhere his playing is pianistically refined and accomplished, the recordings beautifully natural and the front illustration of Dufy's *Le Paddock* apt and attractive. Nonetheless, there are more delectable selections, most notably from Anne Quetfelec on Virgin. [A:2/1]

Bryce Morrison

SCHUBERT: Piano Sonatas in A, D959 □ in B^b, D960

Melvyn Tan (f-pno)

EMI CDC 749 6312 (66m 38s)

This issue has already given me much pleasure. Playing a fine fortepiano by Derek Adlam after a Nanette Streicher instrument of Schubert's day, Melvyn Tan recreates Schubert's last two sonatas (the only CD to do so) with a delightful mixture of bravura and poetic phrasing. Throughout its range the instrument is sweet-toned, clean and responsive. Tan shapes melodies and wide spans with engaging directness, not afraid to use a touch of rubato, or hurry onward. He is equally successful with the rhapsodic complexities – of the Andantino of D959, for instance – and the urgent forward momentum that is so often briefly, tellingly, interrupted. The recording is very good, the

piano firmly placed at a sensible distance from the listener; from quietest murmur to startling outbursts the tone is lifelike and clear. The first-movement repeats are not observed (sadly, with the B-flat work), but that is a small price to pay for these grand works on one disc. [A:1]

Peter Branscombe

SCHUBERT: Der Liedler, D209 □ Sängers Morgenlied, D163 9 165 □ Das war ich, D174 □ Liebeständelei, D206 □ Liebesrausch, D179 □ Sehnsucht der Lieber, D180 □ Das gestörte Glück, D309 □ Auf der Riesenkoppe, D611 □ Am See, D124 □ Alte Liebe rostet nie, D477 □ Am Strome, D539 □ Nachtstück, D672 □ Liebeslauschen, D698 □ An Herrn Josef von Spaun, D749

Philip Langridge (ten)/Graham Johnson (pno)

Hyperion CDJ 33004 (69m 02s)

The welcome appearance of 'Vol.4' prompts the hope that Vol.3 will soon be forthcoming: this is a series that already has every Schubert-lover impatient for more. This time the songs are settings of poets from Schubert's circle of friends, and eight by the greatly influential Theodor Körner. As before, ordering is thematic, and/or based on musical rather than chronological considerations. Very few of the songs here collected are otherwise available on CD in this country, though not many are unknown, thanks to the pioneering efforts of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau/Gerald Moore. To be able to compare the two settings of Körner's 'Sängers Morgenlied', written two days apart early in 1815, is probably the rarest of many pleasures – fascinating to see quite different approaches to the poem (the strophes have been skilfully selected by Langridge and Johnson to match the mood of the music). The alert, responsive partnership of singer and pianist is a constant joy. Langridge's voice may be somewhat dry-toned, yet it is used with great artistry and insight; rarely did I sense any lack of warmth, and his commitment and powers of concentration are proof even against the passing banalities of the long and taxing 'Der Liedler'. As for Graham Johnson, he plays throughout as a true Schubertian, and also provides the scholarly, and at times brilliantly funny, notes. The recording is fully worthy of this splendid recital. [A:1]

Peter Branscombe

SCHUBERT: 22 Lieder

Gerard Souzay (bar)/Dalton Baldwin (pno)

Philips 422 418-2 (72m 38s) © 1961, '67

A notable addition to the 'Legendary Classics' series, especially the 14 bands from 1961. Souzay's poised, beautifully understated – never under-sung – performance of lieder so directly, cleanly remastered (using the NoNOISE system) will renew old joys and delight a new generation of connoisseurs. Most of the songs on this generously filled CD will be familiar, yet the spontaneity of singer and accompanist ensures that the listener (aided by full German texts and English translations) takes nothing for granted. [A/B:1/2]

Peter Branscombe

SCHUBERT: 21 Lieder

Robert White (ten)/Graham Johnson (pno)

Virgin Classics VC 790 7302 (65m 19s)

Almost all of these songs are familiar, some of them – 'Horch, horch, die Lerch', 'An Silvia', 'Die Frolle', 'Du bist die Ruh' – are

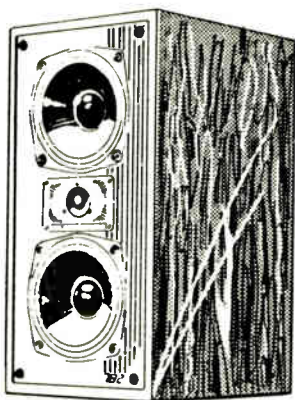
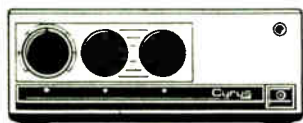
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among the best-loved and most often recorded of all. Inevitably, even with comparatively unknown songs like 'Auf der Bruck' (its meaning for once correctly conveyed in the useful booklet of texts and translations), comparisons are going to be made. I think they will rather seldom be to Robert White's advantage; he is a musicianly singer, expertly supported here by Graham Johnson, and the recording is open, clear and well balanced. What I miss is a sense of uplift, of lively commitment. The voice tends to the monochromatic, the response to be generalized. Poignancy, fun, emotional range are all rather restricted. This disc will make a pleasing introduction to Schubert's songs, with a welcome absence of mannerism, though for deep insights one must look elsewhere. [A/B:2] *Peter Branscombe*

SCHUMANN: Sonata 3 in f □ Fantasie in C, Op.17

Alan Marks (pno)
Nimbus NI 5181 (55m 52s)

The virtues of an unusual coupling are, alas, clouded by an inadequate performance and recording. Alan Marks may forge ahead through the opening pages of the Sonata in true Knight Errant style, yet admiration for his thrust and impetuosity is countered by an increasing sense of loss and unease. There is more ardour than finesse in his approach and, like the White Queen, he often runs to stay in the same place. His *Scherzo* is sturdy rather than fanciful and the steady chug of his rhythm obscures much sense of Schumann's romantic felicity, of music that positively cries out for greater freedom, flexibility and textural subtlety. Variation 3 (in *Quasi Variations*) is skittish rather than passionate, as prescribed, and the finale is heavy and unstable.

In the *Fantasie* Marks is at his most literal when Schumann is at his most magical or self-communing. He takes a very unplayful attitude to the *Scherzando* in the central march and in the wide leaps of the closing pages – that *locus classicus* of the 'wrong note' – he is strenuous and ungainly. The finale, that ultimate romantic reverie, is again prosaic; and the recording throughout is disturbingly over-resonant, almost as if each note was surrounded by a lunar haze. Admirers of the Sonata (sometimes known as *Concerto without orchestra*, on account of its massive range and size) will turn to Horowitz on RCA (very much at his most incandescent and demonic) and to many another record of the *Fantasie*; Pollini (DG), Argerich (CBS) and Perahia (CBS) are all, in their different ways, incomparable. Also, Virgin have a new release from Stephen Hough. [CD:4] *Bryce Morrison*

SHOSTAKOVICH: Ballet Suites 1, 2 and 3 SNO/Järvi

Chandos CHAN 8730 (+9m 10s) also LP/MC

Even among the large body of work assembled by Shostakovich the entertainer – 30 film scores, ballet music and theatre scores including the smash-hit 'Midnight in Moscow', as immortalised by Kenny Ball – it's possible to draw up a distinct hierarchy of quality. The Ballet Suites, it has to be said, fall fairly low on the list of priorities. Hastily cobbled together from earlier works (commentators still squabble over details, though *The Limpid Stream* is the major source) in the wake of the notorious 1948 Zhdanov conference, they certainly don't touch the

ribaldry of the earlier ballets – even though a tame little number from *The Bolt* finds its way in – or for that matter the harmonic piquancy of the Prokofiev Waltz Suite Järvi has already relished to the full on Chandos. Rather like the so-called satire of those Soviet circuses we used to hear so much about, they purport to be outspoken by making a few naughty noises; whether Shostakovich or his colleague Levon Atovmian, who had a second shot at the suites, is responsible, conflicting accounts don't make clear, but all that matters is that the SNO brass, and above all that reckless trumpeter John Gracie, thoroughly enjoy themselves. For all the galops and waltzes, which Järvi slyly pulls around whenever he can, the reflective moments come nearest to the real Shostakovich; at least a special pleading in the Romance from the First Suite, and Timothy Walden's eloquent cello solo (richly proving that Järvi could have relied on him as Don Quixote after all) make it seem that way. Even so, there's nothing here as ambitious as the big, bold tune that builds its way through the first movement of the Fourth Suite, coupled with the Tenth Symphony on an earlier release. But that was in the Caird Hall; all I can say, from what I hear (and others don't necessarily agree), is 'welcome back' to the Glasgow venues. Since the music doesn't have to be rated, [A:1*] – on condition that this team takes a look at some of the film scores. *David Nice*

SHOSTAKOVICH: Symphony 15 □ October □ Overture on Russian and Kirghiz Folk Themes

Gothenburg SO/Järvi
DG 427 616-2 (65m 57s)

Pared down as it is to grim essentials, Shostakovich's Fifteenth Symphony can end up sounding like a skeleton rattling hollow reminiscences of its most personal predecessors. Yet as David Fanning points out in his note, it was as much encroaching paralysis of the right hand as imaginative impulse which prevented Shostakovich from putting more flesh on his subject, and the more rounded and finely honed the players' realization of their many solo lines, the less relentless Shostakovich's death-watch becomes. Not that such an approach spares us any of the terrors when they do strike. Järvi makes quite sure that his Gothenburg woodwind extract every ounce of character, full focus, and accent as they pass the thread from one to another in the pell-mell first movement. The brass, too, deliver the opening summons of the Adagio not as a message from the other side; my own subjective response to their pawky playing inclines me to think of absurd officials trying out solemnity at a state funeral. Even the central trombone solo plumbs the depths of blackest humour, not frozen morbidity. But then the crack-shot timpani hurls us into the holocaust, and it is in the wake of that, Järvi seems to be saying, that despair is fitting. After that disastrous climax, for the first time, we are allowed to feel the spareness, the gaping holes in the thin ice so far trodden.

Something of the first movement's macabre comedy is somehow reassembled, with added horror, in the scherzo; then the brass return, this time with death's face behind that human mask clearly visible. Järvi takes a rather brisk, if winsome view of the Allegretto proper to give the passacaglia development its terrible head (he has to pull back slightly obtrusively for the climax – I wonder if Rostropovich's sudden change of

tempo, in the concert-hall, at the glacial passage for horn, celesta and strings, might not be the best solution). He makes a few unmarked *rits* (celesta, piccolo) as we finally cross over into the unknown region – I wonder why, although perhaps they do heighten the uncanniness of it all. As usual with this conductor, the fillers broaden our horizons, in this instance showing how Shostakovich could still fulfil public engagements with more than hollow skill at that late stage. *October* harks back, though with considerably more restraint, to the world of the Eleventh Symphony; it's passionately argued.

Balances can be uncomfortably close, though no-one would deny that the feeling of a live performance has been carried over with admirable presence. [A*/B:1*1]

David Nice

SIMPSON: String Quartets 7 & 8

Delmé Qt
Hyperion CDA 66117 (51m 03s) ® 1984

Here is some of the finest music by a composer whose neglect has been almost criminal. Robert Simpson's sequence of quartets, like his symphonies, will surely survive long after those of many of his more junior colleagues have passed away. Here is a man who has learnt from the techniques of Sibelius and Nielsen and gone on to forge for himself a completely coherent and concentrated musical language which brilliantly combines elements of the old and the new. The two quartets here must surely number among his most profound works, and indeed could hold their own against virtually any written in a century which has witnessed so many masterly contributions to the genre. The Delmé (who premiered No.8 back in 1980) play like men committed to the validity of every note. Paragraph blends into paragraph; ideas meet and fuse. And it is all done with such a profound sense of inwardness and inevitability that at the end one can only marvel at the almost unique integration of music and musicians. Climaxes become revelatory, pianissimos visionary; and the recording handles it all with an unassuming effectiveness so appropriate to the music. [A*:1*] *Simon Cargill*

R STRAUSS: Aus Italien □ Four Songs – Winterweih □ Mein Auge □ Das Rosenband □ Befreit

Felicity Lott (sop)/SNO/Järvi
Chandos CHAN 8744 (56m 39s)

Surprisingly, for one who has so much of the later orchestral Strauss at his command, Järvi seems less concerned with just how much *Aus Italien* already holds in embryonic form and is readier to show morning promise in its brightest light. As master of atmosphere (and not least of the mountainscape by night in *An Alpine Symphony*) he could no doubt have found the right degree of hushed magic in the pianissimo chords of the opening Campagna movement; instead he floods those mysterious and – in Kempe's hands – misty modulations with a dewy freshness certainly maintained in the unison melody of violins and cellos, above all in the sensible pace for the memorable clarinet tune taken up in the finale (prefiguring, surely, Elgar's *In the South*). The movement he takes most seriously – and rightly so, for, as Debussy observed, it's a free-flowing beauty – is (iii). Clemens Krauss's Vienna strings may have brought a greater warmth to the first in its chain of themes, but SNO woodwinds take

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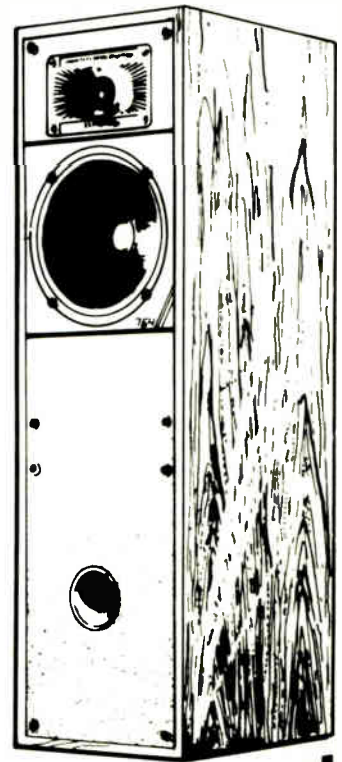
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over to win the day, and the necessity of modern engineering has already been made obvious in the watery chromatic cascades of wind and strings, where even the underpinning harmonics of violas and cellos shine through (at noisier moments, the recording can sound distinctly overblown, with trumpets oddly disembodied).

It's obvious from this breeze through the Ruins of Rome that Strauss's mind was heavily pondering Brahms at the time, though Järvi does relax for the *Rhinogold* touch (or is it Mendelssohn's *Fair Melusine*?) before a roughly played but exciting coda. And his handling of the 'folk-tune' (Funiculi, funicula) in the Neapolitan finale is deliberately heavier than Krauss's – you wonder why, with all that padding to contend with, but it does make it possible for him to double the tempo for the whirlwind Presto.

Felicity Lott is less than her usual fair-blooming self in three of the four love-songs; I'm not sure I would have known for certain had it not been for uncharacteristic constriction at the ends of the first and third verses of 'Winterweiche'. She remains, even so, the right singer to endorse the queasy heightened-state harmonies of 'Mein Auge', and she certainly rises, freer this time, to the greater heights of 'Befreit' (recorded six months after the others). [A/B:1/1*] *David Nice*

TCHAIKOVSKY: Piano Trio, Op.50
Beaux Arts Trio
Philips 422 400-2 (46m 35s)

Set down at the Snape Maltings last year, this is the Beaux Arts Trio's first recording with Peter Wiley, their new cellist, who had only recently joined. He had been a member of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, had led the cellos of the Cincinnati and, of course, replaces Bernard Greenhouse, who has retired.

As the years pass, one becomes ever more conscious of the length of this Tchaikovsky work of 1881-2, even if there are only two movements. The first is a *Pezzo elegiaco* in sonata form with three themes and lasting nearly 20 minutes, this being followed by an enormous set of variations. Perhaps I am merely growing impatient ... Wiley has integrated perfectly well and this interpretation fully realizes the music's plangent expressiveness. It was written in memory of Nicholas Rubinstein, a great pianist, and the keyboard part is supposed to be rather prominent. But I feel that this has been taken a little too far and that the strings should be at any rate a degree more forward. [A/B:1]

Max Harrison

WEBER: Symphonies 1 & 2 □ **Horn Concertino**
Anthony Halstead (brn)/Hanover Band/Goodman
Nimbus NI 5180 (55m 33s)

My pleasure in this issue is greatly diminished by what strikes me as the absurdly extended reverberation period of the Great Hall, Birmingham University, where the sessions took place in December 1986. Chords take an age to die away; and though the woodwind come through with great clarity, brass and lower strings can take on an indeterminate growl. In other respects there is much to commend in the stylish, fresh performances of the two youthful Symphonies (1806-07), played for what they are worth. The Horn *Concertino*, here placed between them, but written a few months

earlier, comes over as a little winner. Anthony Halstead, though placed rather too far forward for my taste, conjures wonderful (and, in the case of the four-note chord Weber required in the cadenza, weird!) sounds from his natural horn, making the most of Weber's lyricism, and showing unostentatious mastery of the piece's considerable difficulties. Roy Goodman secures characterful playing from The Hanover Band throughout. A pity about the recording. [C/D:1] *Peter Branscombe*

VILLA-LOBOS: Music for Flute
Ens/William Bennett (fl)
Hyperion CDA 66295 (61m 05s)

Perhaps this is music which is more fun to play than listen to. Certainly few will want to take this disc complete in one sitting. But then that is almost a tribute to the composer's highly individual, not to say quirky, genius. For those brought up on classical wind serenades, Villa-Lobos's approach to matters of harmony, texture and basic ordering of material can at times appear wantonly perverse; and this can, in the wrong hands, turn some of his music into something of an endurance test for the first-time listener. His Janacek-like fascination with widespread textures and often angular lines in much of his determinedly idiosyncratic wind repertoire often seems to stretch his medium to the limit. Nine minutes of unaccompanied flute and bassoon in his *Bachianas Brasileiras* No.6 flirts dangerously near disaster. Even the modicum of harmonic stability derived from his beloved Bach is barely enough to guide us through the extraordinary landscape of melodic profusion and cavernous textures. Yet in the hands of William Bennett and (in this case) Robin O'Neill, the piece becomes an astonishing *tour-de-force* of musical trapeze artistry. Just as you think they are about to fall into rambling incoherence, up pops a clever bit of phrasing or some passagework deftly handled to save the day.

Sometimes, of course, the composer's over-fertile imagination proves too much, and the results simply collapse under the weight of their perpetual novelty – as in the 1921 Trio which rounds off the programme or in the 1928 Quintet which begins it. But often the music has a quirky charm, a daftness that prompts one to forget the annoying stops-and-starts. And if nothing else, the virtuosity of the playing (including some nifty clarinet and oboe work from Thea King and Neil Black respectively) is almost enough to hold the attention on its own. The only disappointment in an otherwise excellent recording is the curiously dead sound given to the guitar – a pity because the three flute and guitar pieces are the most charming in the programme. A challenging disc. [A/C:1] *Simon Cargill*

COLLECTIONS

HOROWITZ AT HOME
MOZART: Sonata K281 □ **Rondo K485** □ **Adagio K540/SCHUBERT: Moment Musical D.780/3/SCHUBERT-LISZT: Serenade** □ **Soirées de Vienne 6, 7**
Vladimir Horowitz (pno)
DG 427 772-2 (53m 35s) also LP/MC

In the Mozart sonata Horowitz inflects the tempos quite a lot and puts forward his own ideas on dynamics, a wide range of them. Despite the incomparable fleetness and delicacy of such playing it can scarcely be



Horowitz (photo: Henry John Corral/DG)

acceptable in these days of fortepianos, although this is how I like early Mozart to sound – with, for example, Alberti basses delivered with such absolute evenness that they sound as changing harmonic shading rather than as repetitive figuration. The *Adagio* is obviously a much later piece, with more subjectivity in it, and what he does here could, I suppose, be argued about.

The F-minor *Moment Musical* is performed with a slightly knowing elegance and grace, but Horowitz's reading of the *Serenade* in Liszt's transcription is something quite different, this being played with a highly impressive variety of touch, the texture being maintained at several distinct levels throughout. And how welcome are the pieces from *Soirées Musicales*! A couple of generations and more ago many pianists used to play these nine brilliantly effective settings of Schubert waltz melodies, yet now they seem virtually unknown. Occasionally, as in the Mozart sonata, Horowitz's quietest playing is a little *too* quiet, but in general he performs them in a deliciously wayward manner. Neither the inlay card nor the accompanying booklet breathes a word on the subject, but Liszt made two versions of No.6 and Horowitz plays the first, adding a few bars of his own at the end. [A:1]

Max Harrison

MUSIC FROM ESTONIA (Vol.2)
LEMBA: Symphony in c #/TOBIAS: Julius Caesar Overture/ELLER: Videvik (Twilight)/TORMIS: Overture 2 PÄRT: Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten
SNO/Järvi
Chandos CHAN 8656 (73m 50s) also LP/MC

The notes accompanying this second instalment of unknown Estonian music alerts us to a wealth of further works awaiting Järvi's attention. Volume 1 was devoted to music by Eller and Raid; this one goes back farther into Estonia's past and its earlier involvement with Czarist Russia. Artur Lemba (1885-1963) was, on the evidence of his symphony, a confirmed romantic, composing rather in the vein of Glazunov with a touch here and there of Tchaikovsky and Brahms. Not fashionable music nowadays perhaps, but very well written and dramatic. The short lived Rudolf Tobias (1873-1918) came out of the same mould, and his overture to Shakespeare's tragedy has a moody eloquence. Eller, we learned from Vol.1, was among the first Estonian composers to seek inspiration in Estonian folk

music, and was a great influence on both Tubin and Pärt. He also happened to be in a position to celebrate the birth of the republic in 1918. His tone poem 'Dawn' is in the first volume. 'Twilight' (1917) is less obvious in its message – assuming it has one. The music, romantic and sensuous, conveys no particular sense of occasion. It is appropriate that Järvi, having explored Tubin's music in depth, should include the work of a composer strongly influenced by him. Tormis has not written much orchestral music, but his Overture No.2 (1959), written under the shadow of Tubin's Fifth Symphony, conveys a powerful sense of atmosphere and foreboding. The last composer represented here, Arvo Pärt, has already become, like Järvi himself, an internationally recognized representative of his country, though his later music sublimates much of his background in a language that owes a great deal to Central European models. The *Cantus* is a familiar example of his later style, clear, slow-moving, almost minimalist and a long, long way from Lemba. It is to be hoped that this is not the last of what could well become an instructive as well as fascinating series. [A:1]

Kenneth Dommett

THE ROMANTIC CLARINET

WEBER: Clarinet Concerto 2 in E^b/
SPOHR: Clarinet Concerto 1 in c/
CRUSELL: Clarinet Concerto 3 in B^b
Emma Johnson (clt)/ECO/Schwarz
ASV CD DCA 659 (69m 53s) also LP/MC

'Romantic' is a slight misnomer, since these works were all composed before 1812 and are generally more classical than romantic in style. Yet Emma Johnson's playing is so gloriously expressive that the music acquires at least a proto-romantic aura. Technically, she packs the notes in so tightly and neatly that one could almost believe her clarinet to be a special polyphonic instrument, while her feel for pulse and dynamics is so absolutely right that one never wants the playing to stop. Indeed, in the Weber concerto the soloist has very little respite after the introduction, and at every point, from languorous melody to virtuosic chatter, from high fortissimo shrieks to pianissimo of amazingly sustained quietness, Miss

Johnson excels. But after this Weberian brilliance she is equally fine in the more reflective Spohr and in the expansive Crusell.

The ECO's playing is never less than good, although I did feel slightly uneasy where Gerard Schwarz accelerates the pace disproportionately during some orchestral allegros. More importantly, the recording rather underplays the orchestra's contribution, with the soloist not only very much up-front, but set in a more flattering reverberance than the relatively distanced yet drier sounding ECO. This acoustical anomaly seems a touch more evident in the Weber than elsewhere, but so splendid is Emma Johnson's playing that I found the music-lover in me overruling the hi-fi purist. I would still have preferred a wider and warmer orchestral image, but this CD does finally justify its title by making the clarinet sound *very* romantic. [A/B:1*/1]

John Crabbe

AMERICAN 20th CENTURY PIANO MUSIC – BARBER: Sonata/CORIGLIANO: Fantasia on an Ostinato/PERSICHELLI: Sonata 3/POZDRO: Four Preludes/COPLAND: Variations

David Allen Wehr (pno)

Chandos CHAN 8761 (63m 23s) also LP/MC

There is not a great deal of repose to be found here, and what there is in the Adagio of Samuel Barber's Sonata. Whether the relentless hammering insistence of the rest of the programme is wholly attributable to the American condition may be arguable, for there are American composers not represented here who are capable of charm, and who ameliorate the violence of their society with a little reflective calm. Thoreau's is, after all, as representative a view of the American experience as Thomas Wolff's. Even so, though only the Barber and Copland pieces may stay long in memory, there are moments in the others – Persichelli's sonata particularly – that hold the ear and catch the imagination sufficiently to make one wish to return. It must be admitted that David Wehr (whose debut on British labels this appears to be), having chosen his programme, acquits himself with distinction.

He is a pianist of considerable keyboard dexterity, and since all the pieces are designed to show off technique as much as musical sensibility this is an important consideration. The recording, rather too close for complete comfort, magnifies the metallic overtones of the extreme ranges of the instrument and emphasises the pianist's attacking style. [B:1] Kenneth Dommett

EASTMAN WINDS

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: Toccata marziale
□ Variations for Wind Band/HINDEMITH: Konzertmusik Op.14/COPLAND: Quiet City/HUSA: Music for Prague
Wynton Marsalis (tpt) /Phillip Koch (c-ang) /Eastman Wind Ens/Hunsberger
CBS CD 44916 (67m 16s) also MC

This unusual programme is rich in novelty. Apart from the first item there are no alternative recordings of any of the pieces to detain us. The Variations, written in 1957 for the National Brass Band Championships, were orchestrated by Gordon Jacob, but the present version is by Hunsberger who has re-scored the work for his own ensemble, as he has Copland's. This – *Quiet City* – has been done with the composer's approval, and though it has a flavour of its own it undoubtedly loses something of the crepuscular quality of the original. Hindemith's robust *Konzertmusik*, originally composed for a German Army student band in 1926 and played at Donaueschingen, is one of those compositions condemned by its 'Gebrauchsmusik' label – which may be why it has been neglected for so long. Scored for a large band with exotic optional alternatives (soprano saxophones, Wagner tubas etc) it deploys its forces with characteristic skill and rich sonority. Karel Husa (b.1921) is presently unknown to British catalogues though his music is available on Czech labels. *Music for Prague* (composed in 1968) is freely serial, partly aleatoric, culminating in a passionate declamation of the Hussite Song. Its amalgam of bell sounds, bird song, and patriotic fervour make for an unusual and effective composition, imaginatively set out for concert band with added percussion. The recording is brightly pungent, with good spread and depth of sound. [A:1] Kenneth Dommett

THE ORGAN

Of all instruments, the organ, with its massive dynamic and frequency range, may well be the most difficult to record. Good instruments are built in poor acoustic locations and *vice versa*. As a generalization, classic and neo-classic organs are usually compact in design, whereas romantic instruments tend to sprawl across a building making the balance difficult to achieve. Reflecting most accurately the listener's perception of an instrument is not a straightforward task: the clarity of an organ changes radically from place to place in large buildings, and may be at its best at soundboard level, high in the building where no listener can ever sit. Some of the considerations in recording this instrument might be summarised as avoiding noise from the instrument's mechanism (particularly difficult with older, noisier instruments) and deciding how much of the ambient acoustic to include.

Ton Koopman's third volume of JS Bach's organ music, recorded on the 1727 Christian Müller organ at the Grote Keerk, Leeuwarden and issued on Novalis 150036-

2 (70m 07s), has solved the problems of a noisy instrument quite acceptably. This disc is a real treat: unusual, fascinating, truly musical and containing a wide-ranging selection of compositions by The Master. These include the Partita *Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig* (BWV768), which shows off many of the organ's colours and contains much convincing ornamentation by Koopman – betraying a strong influence of the 18th-century French harpsichordists – and a fabulous performance of the Sixth Trio Sonata. I was less happy with the fugues of the 'Dorian' Toccata and Fugue BWV688 and the A-minor Prelude and Fugue BWV 543, both of which are played *in organo pleno*. Despite some interesting phrasing, the large Dutch mixtures obscure the progress of the counterpoint, and the inner voices are difficult to perceive. The whole disc is executed in a vigorous, robust and *detaché* style which suits the nature of the music well and aids clarity in this spacious church. [A:1]

More Bach is to be found on a recording by Jean Guillou for Dorian, DOR-90110

(53m 56s). Like Guillou's other two CDs for Dorian, this recording of the *Goldberg Variations* is 'exclusively digital' – avoiding sonic degradation by eschewing low-frequency roll-off filters. Jean Guillou has no equivalent personality in any other sphere of music. His astonishing technique knows no bounds and is exemplified in the manically-fast fifth variation. In the sixth (and other places), Guillou chooses to play the left-hand part in the pedals. The *aria* is a little too deliberate for me, but at whatever tempo it is played, it never ceases to astonish when it appears laconically *da capo* at the end of this magnificent work. If you collect 'Goldbergs', don't miss this! [A*:1]

In contrast to the 1727 Müller organ used by Koopman, Guillou performs on an instrument he designed himself. Built by Kleuker in the church of Our Lady of the Snows, Alpe d'Heuz in France, the casework is designed in the shape of a hand. This extraordinary organ is one of the finest I have heard, and the incredible variety obtained from just 24 speaking stops (including the *Hautbois en*

chamade) must be heard to be believed.

This instrument is used for another recording by Guillou for Dorian entitled 'Organ Encores' [DOR-90112] (70m 04s). This CD has 23 tracks and features a wide range of composers: Bach, Stanley, Purcell, Jacinto, Seixas, Handel, Clérambault, Haydn, Schumann, Liszt, Prokofiev, two works by Guillou and an improvisation on 'Greensleeves'. Some of the many highlights are Guillou's transcriptions of the Sinfonia to Bach's Cantata BWV 29, with its use of the bright but not strident *Trompette en chamade*, the *Badinerie* from Bach's second Orchestral Suite, and the 'Hornpipe' from Handel's *Water Music*. The harmony in this latter 'transcription' moves from the baroque through Franck, before returning to a more recognizable Handelian style. It is extraordinary indeed: some will be appalled by Guillou's audacity, but I find him tremendously exciting. [A*:1*]

More transcriptions by Guillou, of Mussorgsky's *Pictures* and three dances from Stravinsky's *Petrouchka*, can be found on Dorian DOR-90117 (53m 26s). This is performed at the Tonhalle, Zurich, the same organ as Keith John's top-rated recording of *Pictures* for Priory, reviewed in *HFN/RR*, May '89. The performances by John and Guillou are identifiably from the same mould, and both are tremendously exciting and radically different. If I had to choose I might go for Keith John's, although I enjoy the lunatic quality of Guillou's recording. Each note of the melody of the 'Promenade' before 'The Market Place at Limoges' is splintered across different manuals and registrations, resulting in a kaleidoscopic, organistic *klangfarbenmelodie*. The 'Great Gate at Kiev' is a mixture of Mussorgsky, the *Final* to Vierne's *Sixième Symphonie* and Guillou's fanciful imagination... The Technicolor transcriptions of three dances from *Petrouchka* are revolutionary stuff – on the instrument which the composer least liked. I have never known anything like it! [A*:1*/1]

One of several artists who have attracted Messiaen's critical acclaim is Jennifer Bate, whose performance of his *Méditations sur le Mystère de la Sainte Trinité*, written in 1969, has been reissued by Unicorn-Kanchana [DKP(CD) 9024/25 (2CDs, 133m 44s) © 1982-83]. This is my favourite of Messiaen's large-scale organ works, juxtaposing moments of serene beauty (*Méditation VIII*) and wild joy (*Méditation V*). I was surprised to hear traffic noise in *Communion* from *Messe de la pentecôte* (1951), and what sounds like soundboard 'running' or some sort of quiet cypher – something I first noticed on one of Bate's Franck recordings. This organ at Beauvais cathedral has great innate clarity, although there are several moments where the balance of the *Grand-Orgue* flute stops is not good, as at the end of *Alléluias sereins* from *L'Ascension* (1934) and *Les Mains de l'abîme* from *Livre d'Orgue* which also appears on Unicorn-Kanchana [DKP(CD) 9028 (67m 55s) © 1982-3]. This latter work is the least accessible of Messiaen's organ pieces, with its austere textures and self-indulgent rhythmic, dynamic and semi-serial melodic processes.

I don't enjoy this 1979 Danion-Gonzarlez organ at Beauvais: some stops quarrel with each other, noticeable in some of Messiaen's prescribed, and odd, stop-combinations. Although I like Bate's excellent performances, the shrill upperwork and brash reeds are a barrier to complete enjoyment of these recordings. Jennifer Bate's recording of Vierne on the same instrument [on

Unicorn-Kanchana DKP(CD) 9064 (44m 15s)] reveals some tuning problems – as on some of the Messiaen recordings. Particularly bad is a low pedal D-flat in *Claire de lune*, where the balance of the pedals in the central section is also poor. There are too many odd manual changes and over-fussy registration shifts for comfort: the addition of a 2' stop in the *Berceuse* is a rather English solution, where the French might use a *fonds* registration. There are exciting moments on this CD: the *Carillon de Longpont*, the B-flat-minor *Toccata* and the *Impromptu* are all skilfully played. Although I can see the attraction of the Beauvais organ I wish Jennifer Bate would record on other instruments. She is a musician of considerable skill and artistry and I feel that this instrument lets her down; so for 'recorded sound' here, please read also 'instrument quality and related problems'. [B/C:1]

Amongst other recordings of French organ music is Priory's of Kimberly Marshall, PRCD261 (58m 20s). There are powerful performances of Dupré's B-major *Prélude et Fugue* Op.7:1, Duruflé's *Prélude et fugue sur le nom d'Alain* and Messiaen's mighty *Combat* from *Les Corps Glorieux* (1939). The 1889 Cavallé-Coll organ at St Sernin's Toulouse is mechanically very noisy; there is much hissing of escaping air, and this interferes with the quieter moments. Recording here must have been a major problem: the organ is slightly 'out of focus' and the crackle of these *chamade* reeds is missing. [B:1]

Another Cavallé-Coll organ, this time the 102-stop instrument at St Sulpice in Paris, features in Motette's series of Widor's organ symphonies. The ever-popular Fifth is coupled with *Symphonie Romane* (No.10) and is played by Daniel Roth [CD 11141 (71m 17s)] who is now *titulaire* at St Sulpice in the footsteps of Grunewald. As at St Sernin in Toulouse, the organ here is really very noisy indeed (it is now under restoration). This noise interferes with the recording, particularly where the tempo is quick and the dynamic level low. The same problems are manifest on Roth's recording of selected organ works by Marcel Dupré, again at St Sulpice [CD 10981 (66m)]. This recording makes for an interesting comparison with Dupré's own recording of some of these works on the same instrument. Roth's control of rubato is both fascinating and masterly; it is thrilling to hear the works of Dupré and Widor on an instrument that they both knew intimately: Widor was organist there for 63 years and Dupré was his assistant from 1906. [A/B:1/1*]

Cavallé-Coll's 'Michaelangelo of an organ' (as Widor described it) at St Ouen, Rouen, completed by 1890, is used for Widor's *Symphonie Gothique* (No.9) – a work written with this instrument in mind. It is coupled with Vierne's less-well-known, six-movement *Messe Basse* Op.30, with its fine *Sortie*. Marie Andrée Morisset-Balier performs here on Motette CD 14011 (59m 51s). I was disappointed with this disc, particularly the last movement of the *Gothique*, which I found rather slow and dull, even in the final *Allegro* [A:2/3]. All these recordings of the Cavallé-Coll organs suffer from noise problems, although I didn't find this too distracting. There is certainly much to enjoy from these wonderful symphonic instruments.

A relatively new instrument which caught my attention is the 1975 Kern organ at Masevaux, which has been used to record Schumann's organ works (intended, like

Alkan's, for performance on a pedal-piano) and played by Thierry Mechler on Motette CD 11041 (59m 40s). The works by Schumann represented are the four *Sketches* Op.56, *Six Studies* Op.58 and the *Six Fugues on the name BACH* Op.60. The exotic sounds of this four-manual, mechanical organ (with, according to the liner notes, its short-compass, 42-note echo organ), are demonstrated in the central section of the second sketch. I found the performance of the *Six Studies* (in canon) rather strait-laced, particularly the delightful fifth study. This is not characteristic of Mechler's playing, as the second and sixth fugues are given much freer performances. The performance of the four *Sketches* I found particularly enjoyable. [A:1/2]

Among Priory's wide range of organ recordings is a compilation made by Jonathan Bielby at Huddersfield Town Hall, entitled 'Romantic Music of Yesteryear' [PRCD 904 (73m 36s) © 1982-84]. There is a lot of background hiss here which may well be the organ. The composers represented are mostly those whose popularity has waned in the second half of this century: Best, Hopkins, Nevin, Smart, Lemare, Hollins, Brewer and so on. If you can stand some of these sugary compositions, the disc will appeal greatly. Some of the tracks are great fun, including Cocker's *Tuba Tune*, Nevin's *Will o' the Wisp* (featuring the percussion celesta-stop), and Lefébure-Wély's *Sortie* in E-flat. [B:1/2]

The fifth of Priory's series of 'Great European Organs' (of which Kimberly Marshall's is number eleven) is of James Lancelot playing one of Harrison & Harrison's masterpieces at Durham Cathedral on PRCD 228 (60m 03s). Of all the CDs reviewed here, perhaps this best illustrates the problems of obtaining balance and clarity – which may account for the lack of recordings made on the instrument. The result is acceptable: but the detail of quicker passages is occasionally swamped by the massive acoustic of the cathedral, and the Bombarde division is, perhaps, rather too strong. The works recorded are all romantic or modern and include William Mathias's *Berceuse* and Frank Martin's only organ work, the *Passacaille*. Other composers featured here include Reger, Rheinberger, Alain and Langlais. Lancelot plays with tremendous verve and trenchancy, particularly in the Martin. [A/B:1/1*]

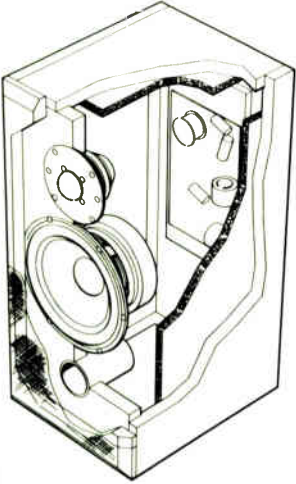
Finally, a word about the standard of some of the translations in the liner notes, which are variable to say the least, and at their worst in Motette's Widor series: 'at very young age he [Widor] supplies his father at the keyboard of his instrument', with what we are not told. Further on 'Widor touched all genres', 'he passionate himself, and 'he signed there one of his greatest works'. Vierne had an operation which 'improved his eyes light'. Mendelssohn was 'one of the few musiciens [sic] who played organ' at a time when 'people passed more and more to concert halls'. Choosing the right instrument is also a problem: a mechanical organ apparently affords 'a sensible play'. The front cover of Koopman's recording for Novalis advertises the 'Dorische Toccata & Fugue BWV 538' and below, the 'Dorische Toccata BWV 538'. Is it too much to ask that CD liner notes contain information on the music (of Arahamian quality), artist and full details of the organ, with, if possible, a photograph for those interested in the instruments?

William McVicker

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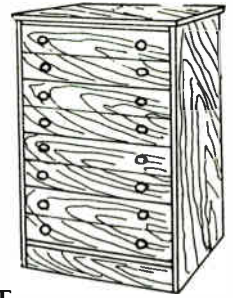
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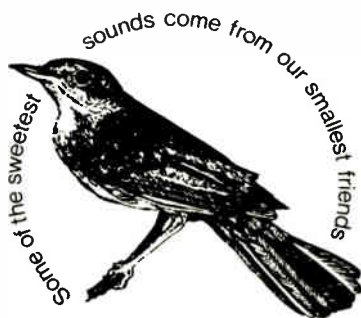
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MEANINGLESS WORLD
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TRAGIC MULATTO:
ITALIANS FALL DOWN
AND LOOK UP YOUR
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 Alternative Tentacles Virus
 74 CD (68m 48s)

Klaus Flouride



Three bids for the dizzy heights of the charts from Alternative Tentacles, brain-child of ex-Dead Kennedy Jello Biafra. First of the bunch is by another ex-Kennedy Klaus Flouride and a strangely wonderful affair it proves to be. The main part of the CD (these are all CD-only releases) is taken up with Flouride's atmospheric soundscapes – and that does *not* mean New Age – wherein the ears and internal visuals are stimulated by some hilariously low-tech synthesizer. 'Feeding Time In Hell', 'Born Again Dentistry' and 'The Drowning Cowboy' are particular

favourites. There're other oddities including a cover of Norman 'Spirit In The Sky' Greenbaum's 'Dominating Baby', but the standout is the stunning sixties pastiche 'Keep On Walking' which should be huge now. [B:1*]
 Alice Donut do not have a particularly rosy view of the modern world and they have a mean sound to match. Guitar and voice spill a rather wonderful kind of bile of everything here, but standouts include 'Lydia's Black Lung', 'My Life Is A Mediocre Piece Of Shit' and the shuddering

tale of child abuse called 'Lisa's Father'. [B:1]
 Apart from having one of the great album titles of the twentieth century, Tragic Mulatto also make use of what sounds like a tuba from hell to turn their raging rock noise into something special. This is a 'Best Of' with material from their previous shots *Hot Man Pussy* and *Locos Por El Sexo*, and the best ofs include 'She's A Ho', 'Fist Of The Fleet', the chilling 'My Name Is Not O'Neill' and a surprisingly tender version of Zep's 'Whole Lotta Love'. [B:2] *Pete Clark*

THE BLUE NILE: HATS
 Linn Records (distributed by Virgin) LKH5

It's taken five years for the smoke to clear in Castle Sound Studios outside Edinburgh; five years for The Blue Nile to offer a follow up to what may be the finest album of the eighties. The first record has become *the* reference disc for many of the world's producers and artists, including Tears For Fears and Peter Gabriel. *Hats* confirms that the Niles are one of the finest recording bands in the world and that Calum Malcolm is one of the great unsung heroes of record production. It is a beautiful album, occasionally quite funky, '7am', occasionally it sounds like straightforward pop, 'Saturday Night'. But it doesn't lose that wonderful ethereal quality which makes The Blue Nile stand out. The drums sound a little cheap and mechanical, but the eerie depth of each arrangement is stunning. Lyrically it is less consistent, sometimes inspired sometimes insipid, but still above the levels to which most aspire. Overall *Hats* is probably more commercial than *The Blue Nile* was, perhaps it will convert a few more people to the even greater brilliance of the first album. [A:1*]
Neville Farmer

AVERAGE WHITE BAND:
AFTERSHOCK
 Polydor 839 466-1

AWB were always ace at laying down a groove. Whatever they may have lacked in any other department, they could cook up a rhythm track so tasty it made you forget the optical reference in their blue-eyed soul tag. In short, they were black at the back – down in the powerhouse where it really mattered. Though the years have passed, nothing's really changed. Alan Gorrie (guitar and vocals), Onnie McIntyre (guitar) and Roger Ball (horns and keyboards) are still around and those they've roped in from the nearest branch of the American MU appear to have been well schooled in the way tartan funk should operate. A couple of possibly chart-bound honey-hush soul ballads have been included, one, 'Love At First Sight', featuring the lead vocal of one-time Santana man Alex Lingertwood, but, in the main, it's an immaculately recorded, feet-first affair that boasts added extras from Chaka Khan, Ohio Players and Ronnie Laws. Those who cottoned on the first time around will not be disappointed. And those tuning in for the first time, may well be persuaded to glance through the back-catalogue. The pieces have picked up considerable expertise. [A*:1] *Fred Dellar*

Cindy Lee Berryhill



CINDY LEE BERRYHILL:
NAKED MOVIE STAR
 Awareness AWL 1016
 Awareness AWCD 1016 (49m 44s) CD

Most of us (myself included) missed this marvel's debut LP, *Who's Gonna Save The World?*, but we're being given a second chance. At a time when we're overrun with classy female vocalists, it's nice to find a stand-out who doesn't fall into either of the two camps which claim the rest. Neither a pure popper (Carlisle) nor a hypersensitive bore (Tikaram), Berryhill comes across like a smart-ass deliberately fighting classification. She has vocal abilities of Eddi Reader, the rock smarts of early Patti Smith (Lenny Kaye's at the controls, which might account for that) and the lyrical impact of

Loudon Wainwright or even Randy Newman. Michelle Shocked by electricity? Mitch Ryder in drag? A tonic for the 1990s. [A:1*] *Ken Kesler*

ED BICKERT TRIO:
THIRD FLOOR RICHARD
 Concord CCD 4380 (53m 10s) CD

It's one of those records that smile from the first guitar bars, a swinging blues riff, Duke's 'Band Call' – and in keeping with the quiet and tasteful Bickert solos are the drum passages by Terry Clarke, another Canadian. The mood even improves with the next track as guest pianist Dave McKenna joins in for 'I Got A Right To Sing The Blues', one of Arlen's greatest. Nine following tracks bring another Ellington, a ballad by Duke and Mercer, plus Harry Warren and Rodgers standards and, taken fast as a samba, Harry Barris's 'I Surrender, Dear'. But there are also more modern ventures: Brubeck, Bernie Scbensky (the plaintive ballad 'Together') and Charles Richards' boppish title track. It's all inventive and melodious, with nothing for the addicts of electronic music. Ed's guitar may be plugged in, but Neil Swainson's bass is gloriously acoustic – and rare, soft piano from McKenna, all typically well-recorded on Concord. [A:1] *Denis Argent*

MICHAEL BOLTON:
SOUL PROVIDER
 CBS Records 465 343-1

In Britain Bolton is known only for a rather so-so remake of Otis Redding's classic 'Dock Of The Bay', but in the good old US of A he has had several self-penned hits and is one of the best known radio jingle voices. Here he sounds like a gravelly, warbling cross between Michael McDonald and Ray Charles – he even covers the Charles standard, 'Georgia', to prove the point. His own songs also have that slick hit quality that the American market can't resist – strong ballads, soaring melodies about not-being-able-to-live-without-you, gut-twisting guitar and sax solos; the stuff on which stars from Whitney Houston to Joe Cocker thrive. But Britain can only swallow so much of this before it gets bored and I think Bolton's selection of instant classics will leave most cold. [B:2] *Neville Farmer*

CANTE GITANO:
GYPSY FLAMENCO FROM
ANDALUCIA
 Nimbus NI 5168 (75m 12s) CD

This album is direct and relatively straightforward. Although the sleeve notes make great play of the informal, private party aspect of the performance, it was of course arranged

and not entirely spontaneous. Nevertheless it's miles away from the posing showbiz of commercialized flamenco. The artists' sense of being among aficionados perhaps led to the relaxed atmosphere which comes across in the recording. There is an abundance of exuberance and a sense of sharing that you get when performers have the opportunity to enjoy their own performance. Maybe not the best flamenco ever recorded, but at least it's got integrity and guts. [A:2]

Ken Hyder

GEORGE CLINTON:
THE CINDERELLA THEORY
Paisley Park 925994-2 (54m 53s) CD

Whatever you need in black music, you'll surely find amid the magnificent mish-mash that comprises George Clinton's way of things. Rap, funk, soul, jazz, gospel and plain ol' slap-your-shoes-on-the-sidewalk dance are all in there somewhere, often all in the course of one track. And if a certain Princely touch is evident on this particular communiqué from the man who married you off to the Brides of Funkenstein, then it's hardly surprising considering that he's now signed to Paisley Park after various liaisons with Capitol, Invictus, ABC, Casablanca, Westbound, 20th Century, Warner Bros and a few more I've long since forgotten. Sometimes his sense of humour gets the uppermost and 'How Much Is That Doggie In The Window' is allowed to be the pee-up-against-the-tree in 'Why Should I Dog U Out', while a crunch-funk rendition is probably only rivalled in its daftness by that of Stan Freberg. But, give or take a slice of over-the-top lunacy, *The Cinderella Theory* is another welcome handshake from Clinton that hand also containing a memo stating 'this man has always stayed ahead of the game'. Oh, I almost forgot. Bootsy Collins is in their somewhere. True believers will be relieved to hear that! [A:1*]

Fred Dellar

ALICE COOPER: TRASH
Epic 465130-1

So he's come out of his roomful of snakes and spiders and come back to threaten the world yet again. This time, with producer-songwriter Desmond Child acting as Svengali, he's been edged into all-American rock 'n' roll, metal-clad and labelled 'primarily for MTV consumption'. Career-wise, it's an ace move. One track, 'Poison', has already achieved world-domination and there are others, such as the Cooper-Child-Joan Jett penned 'House Of Fire' and the run-for-the-border final fling that's 'I'm



Alice Cooper

Your Gun', which could prove to be monster singles if let loose. On the other hand, if the Beeb ever got to hear the lyrics of the latter, it'll never get past the Jobsworth at Broadcasting House. 'I'm your gun/Rub my barrel/Straight and narrow/Dress up like a nun/I'm your gun'. Well, I mean. He's a naughty lad is Alice. And his chosen playmates on this record - Jon Bon Jovi, members of Aerosmith, Stiv Bators, etc - obviously haven't helped him disposition-wise. If only he'd been brought up on Pat Boone things could have been so different. [B:2]

Fred Dellar

CUTTING CREW:
THE SCATTERING
SRN CD 25 (52m 46s) CD

Cutting Crew return to the rock/pop rat race with *The Scattering* - quite a different product. Polished, zappy production, gritty, souped-up guitar and much more confident drumming all add up to a sophisticated second album. But I couldn't help wondering, whether Cutting Crew had been short-changed when they traded the raw sensitivity of their 1986 Top Five single '(I Just) Died In Your Arms' and the unaffected hon-

esty of 'I've Been In Love Before' for the catchy 1989 Top of The Pops-style anthem '(Between A) Rock And A Hard Place' (shades of Def Leppard) and the tear-jerking ballad 'Everything But My Pride' - this complete with intrusive 'Bee Gee' backing. 'The Scattering' track bemoans the break-up of the family and the 'disappearance of ethnic cultures'. Other 'big issues' on the album's hit list include the British press coverage of Goldman's Lennon biography in 'Big Noise' and, 'Handcuffs For Houdini', a satire on American politics. *The Scattering* has no real shortcomings in itself, so [A:1], but it suffers from production overkill compared with *Broadcast*.

Karen Douthwaite



Cutting Crew

GLORIA ESTEFAN:
CUTS BOTH WAYS
Epic 465145-1

Epic/CBS must love her. I bet the company president has a photo of Gloria E on his desk just to remind him exactly who brings the pesetas in these days. Come to think of it, Glo's picture isn't a bad one to have on anyone's desk. Maybe I'll order a dozen for the Link House lizard lounge. But in the meantime, I'd better discuss the music. Not that it matters. You all went out and bought the album straight away. It was at No.1 before you could say 'Don-Johnson-owns-no-socks'. And 'Don't Wanna Lose You' the first selected outcut, was keeping it company at the top of the singles division. Deservedly so. For Gloria E has become the queen of the dance, the lady who's completely taken over while Madonna has been mucking around with the play-Penn. She can handle a ballad like Karen Carpenter reincarnated. And, with the aid of the never-better Miami Sound Machine (yes, they're still there though their name comes a little further down the cast list these days) she can strut her way through the brassiest of sambas ('Say' and 'Oye Mi Canto') taking the crowd in a conga-chain behind her. My favourite cut? Undoubtedly 'Nothing New' a jumping-bean of a ballad that refuses to stay pinned down. Your favourite cut? I bet you've got one. It's that sort of album. Made in Miami. A trademark you can trust. [A:1] Fred Dellar

THE EURYTHMICS:
WE TOO ARE ONE
RCA PL 74251

The thing about the Eurythmics is that they've always been terrifically boring. Anyone who saw the Tourists could have foretold that a great boredom was about to be visited upon the world if ever Dave 'n' Annie made it. Well, they did, and *Sweet Dreams* apart, the story since then has been one of ever more clenched teeth. This latest shot from the sparkling duo has a remote highspot in the single 'Revival', but for the rest, seems to turn the attention of the listener to tomorrow's washing up. [A:3] Pete Clark

FUZZBOX: BIG BANG
WEA WX282

At their best, Fuzzbox make fine, dispensable pop. 'Pink Sunshine', for instance. It's candyfloss, but then so was 'Louie Louie'. There's a place for great silliness in pop. Which is where Fuzzbox fit in. Not that they're destined to ultimately end up among the great silly songstresses of our time. But, on the evidence of this

album, they're halfway there. Even then, I'm not sure I've got everything right. For, at the very close of the record, they toss in 'Do You Know?', a Beach Boys' influenced flufferonic that The Bangles would be pleased to offer as an opening cut, followed by 'Beauty' a shimmering accapella nod at Green issues that's so good you wonder if Clannad had edged onto the album by mistake. One more tin of spinach and Fuzzbox might have us taking them very seriously indeed. In the meantime [A:1/2]. *Fred Dellar*

**JIMMY DALE GILMORE:
JIMMY DALE GILMORE
Demon FIEND 145**

The Lubbock mafia ride again. This time, Gilmore, the mournful but charismatic voiced leader of the age-old Flatlanders, has gathered up his usually tally of originals and borrowed items from Butch Hancock and made off, in the company of premier steelie Lloyd Maines, in the direction of Nashville. There, with the aid of such stellar sidemen as guitarist Dale Sellers, keyboardist David Briggs and other worthies, he's slotted together his most accomplished album to date, a release so full of telling licks and high-tone honky tonk riffs, that the Texas touring board should adopt it as an inducement to fly. Buy it if only to hear Gilmore's interpretation of Hancock's gorgeous 'When Nights Are Cold' (which will one day provide someone with a major hit). Buy it merely to marvel at Maines utter mastery of the pedal steel guitar. Buy it to hear the reprise of 'Dallas', a song which has become a classic on the strength of its opening line alone. Buy it because ... Oh hell, just BUY IT! [A:1] *Fred Dellar*

**THE HOODOO GURUS:
MAGNUM CUM LOUDER
RCA Records PL90362
RCA Records PD90362 (40m
15s) CD**

'RCA's greatest rock and roll combo' is how the press release describes them, but the Hoodoo Gurus have much broader influences from pop, to rockabilly, to blues. Add to this a truly great songwriter (Dave Faulkner) and you have a stomping album that will spend a lot of time on my turntable. Heavy on the guitars and powerful drum-beat this is not after dinner music but the melodies, arrangements and lyrics are clever, catchy and different. 'Where's That Hit' and 'Death In The Afternoon' particularly stand out for me but such is the variety of songs that each one is bound to become a gem with further listening. The self-production is

strong, too, without resorting to unnecessary tricks. This is a great rock album that deserves a better sleeve design. [A:1] *Neville Farmer*

**KATRINA & THE WAVES:
BREAK OF HEARTS
SBK/EMI SBK LP2**

After too long a gap, during which other retro-pop wizards like the Bangles, Transvision Vamp and Adult Net have strengthened their claims, Katrina & the Waves are back with an LP which will require a new audience. The remaining vestiges of the sounds of classics like 'Walking On Sunshine' and 'Goin' Down To Liverpool' are scintillating harmonies and melodies, but the sound is less homogeneous. The reason is simple: instead of recording material consisting solely of Kimberley Rew's compositions, the band now operates as a democracy. The results are less consistent, or – more precisely – less predictable, with the band veering from hard rock to shattering pop to something as anthemic as the Slade-like 'Rock Myself To Sleep'. Old fans may find this too much to take, but those with catholic tastes will find *Break Of Hearts* nothing less than four LPs in one. [A:1] *Ken Kessler*

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Can it be true? Is Patti LaBelle singing better than ever? Certainly some of her performances



Katrina & The Waves

on *Be Yourself* are extraordinary. On 'Love 89' she's incredible, giving her all for the sinners who need it most, testifying in a manner that's electrifying, her controlled stratospheric screams causing the hair on the nape of the neck to rise and palms to sweat. She repeats the performance on 'Be Yourself' and links with Prince to deliver a telling 'Yo Mister', the tale of a girl who takes to the streets at 17. The highs on this record are so exhilarating that Whitney Houston-styled show-closers such as 'Need A Little Faith' and 'I Can Fly' come almost as a relief – a chance to wind down and get to grips with the world again. If there's any justice, this record – which includes input from Narada, Burt Bacharach, Carole Bayer Sager, Full Force, Lisa Lisa, George Duke, Thelma Houston, Kenny G and others – will do for LaBelle what *Private Dancer* did for Tina Turner. And deservedly so. [B:1*] *Fred Dellar*

**LAOS: LAM SARAVANE/
MUSIC FOR KHEN
Ocora HM83 (70m 05s) CD
Distributed by Harmonia Mundi**

The khen is an extraordinary mouth organ. The reeds are housed in pipes five foot or more long. They are bound together and the player blows and sucks into a central chamber. This solo khen is the most exciting and complete slice of ethnic folk music I've heard for quite some time. If it were a little less exotic, some producers would be adding the funk rhythm section and the synthesizer dressing to promote it as sanitized world music for Westerners. The first 45 minutes are taken up with lam – a kind of improvised song form, singer with khen, flute and drum. It's interesting enough – but not 45 minutes interesting enough. Nevertheless, the khen solo playing is such a knockout, you ought to treat yourself. [A:1*] *Ken Hyder*



Patti LaBelle

**PHILIP LEWIS/RHYTHM
MANIACS SESSIONS:
VOLUME 2, 1929
Retrieval FG 412**

More from the Decca archives, with Nick Dellow blowing off the dust and re-creating the world of the session men of 60 years ago. They were mostly drawn from the world of the Savoy Orpheans, but there were also men who became stars of the Ambrose band – including an incredibly young-sounding Elsie Carlisle. Hot trumpet styles here show touches of Red Nichols, and there is clarinet playing in 'Tiger Rag' which is so like Bigard that someone must have been listening to Duke's 1929 two-sided version, the equivalent then of an LP. It's interesting to assess all those influences, but surely only dedicated followers of the old-fashioned will need the second takes of those old studio sessions – which is the case for five of the tunes here. [H] *Denis Argent*

**LOS VAN VAN:
SANDUNGUERA
Messidor 15989 (45m 20s) CD
Distributed by New Note**

Los Van Van is one of those Afro-Cuban bands with an ear for studio techniques and the influences of popular songs. While the purists may not altogether approve, there is still plenty of rich rhythm here to get most people hot under the collar. The typically laid-back bass figure anchors the music, while the bright, urgent percussion kicks the whole proceedings forwards. It's this rhythmic tension which makes much Latin music so captivating. And it's the occasional sugary strings passage which detracts from the excitement. But if you like your salsa sweet, you might find this release to your liking. [A:2]

Ken Hyder

**JOE LOVANO QUINTET:
VILLAGE RHYTHM
Soul Note 121 182-2 (56m 38s)
CD**

Joe Lovano is a bustling New York tenor player whose work has been heard in the bands of Paul Motian and Charlie Haden's Liberation Orchestra. But here, his music is much more mainstream than in those other bands. He has chosen Motian for the drummer's chair, and it's a good choice. Motian and Lovano provide most of the interest. And it's clear that they have spent some time playing together. Motian continues to draw the ear with new subtleties and his way of working with a tune. Lovano seems to have distilled the best aspects of post-bop saxophone. He's bright and fluid both in his tone and in his line.

There's an exuberant warmth to his playing which comes across in these grooves. On trumpet, there's Tom Harrell, Kenny Werner, piano, and Marc Johnson, bass. This is modern mainstream jazz played with love and enthusiasm, and as such it can be heartily recommended. [A*:1]

Ken Hyder



Love And Rockets

**LOVE AND ROCKETS:
LOVE AND ROCKETS
Beggars Banquet BEGA 99 CD
(41m 56s) CD**

Put on your 'alternative' black jeans, your black, cap-sleeve T-shirt and the studded, suede pixie boots; crimp and back-comb your hair and blank out any healthy glow with the palest shade of foundation. Now you're ready to listen to Love And Rockets' fourth album; it's already a Gold disc in the US and Canada. Love And Rockets are the three ex-Bauhaus musicians who became disenchanted with the 'goth' image. They certainly find greater freedom in *Love And Rockets*, which demonstrates more musical versatility than any Bauhaus material I've heard. The album contains some superb tracks: catchy, 'No Big Deal'; whimsical saxophone from Daniel Ash in 'The Purest Blue'; roaring 'Motorcycle'; slamdancing 'Bound For Hell'; 'The Teardrop Collector' (laid-back slide guitar) and much more. The production is good and weird. A must for all *crucial* students. [A/B:1]

Karen Douthwaite

**MARTIKA: MARTIKA
CBS Records 463 355-1**

The naughty sex-kitten photos I can live without. This attractive teenager doesn't really need to sell herself on sex. She can sing powerfully for her age – more so than Madonna could – and the songwriter she has been partnered with writes hits that are just sufficiently out of the ordinary to make kids notice. There's nothing too stunning here, though 'Toy Soldiers' is a superb pop melody and deserved its huge success and Carole King's 'I Feel The Earth Move' is effectively adapted into a dance hit. The arrangements all sound rather thin and it is quite clear that someone is pitching for the Madonna market before the old girl slips over the hill. Martika may not be for the serious music lover but I think she is a vast improvement over a certain

Australian chart princess and is a much less irritating present to buy your offspring for Christmas. [B:2]

Neville Farmer

**GIL MELLE:
PRIMITIVE MODERN
Original Jazz Classics
OJC1712
GIL MELLE: QUADRAMA
Prestige 0902115**

Melle is a fascinating figure from the 1950s. He played baritone saxophone excellently but his strong point is composing – jazz in the fullest sense, yet very individual in its method and in the atmospheres it generates. Besides bass and drums, Melle's pianoless quartet includes the guitarist Joe Cinderella. He is a superb player whose obscurity is as regrettable as Melle's because he is a highly melodious improviser and remains so even when meeting the most unusual demands of his leader's compositions. Apart from two fairly drastic reworkings of Ellington pieces on *Quadrama*, everything here was written by Melle and it is impressive that every one of his frequently contrapuntal, sometimes bitonal, pieces, while leaving plenty of room for solos, attempts and achieves something significantly new in jazz composition. [A:1]

Max Harrison

**MÖTLEY CRÛE:
DR FEELGOOD
Elektra 59 960829-1**

Producer, Bob Rock did wonders for the Cult, now he does it for Mötley Crüe; he's captured their live sound and put it on album. The result is really lively, polished, and enthusiastic. Up to now they've had a sex, drugs, drink and rock 'n' roll image. But with this album they've cleaned up. Crüe promise they're off the drinks and drugs, but that still leaves the sex and the rock 'n' roll! If the lyrics in 'She Goes Down', 'Sticky Sweet' and 'Slice Of Your Pie' are offensive, best just to laugh at them, seeing the fun side that I'm sure Vince Neil *et al* intend. And what of the rock 'n' roll? Plenty of raunchy rapping, with backing from all kinds of stars (Cheap Trick, Aerosmith, Skid Row, Bryan Adams), bass guitar and drum breaks and strike-a-match anthems ('Time For A Change'). Even the cat was boogieing to 'Rattlesnake Shake'. The band sounds much more alert for this album, with no bum notes to be heard, earth-shattering axe, and Tommy Lee once again showing why he's one of the world's best rock drummers. If the technical brilliance and entertainment power of *Dr Feelgood* doesn't convince you that Mötley Crüe



Martika

can still rock the house down, singer Vince Neil has an announcement: 'Hey man, lemme tell you... we're still burnin', we're chompin' at the bit... And I'd say we're still kickin' ass!' [A+:1**]

Karen Douthwaite

**NEW YORK VOICES:
NEW YORK VOICES**
GRP 9589-1
from New Note Distribution

The first track, 'National Amnesia' starts: 'On Wall Street it's been sheer pandemonium', and soon moves on to 'They're starving, but they're so very far away'. The album is not all like that; there is a long and clever vocalese version of Tizol's 'Caravan', and the sleeve fortunately offers a full libretto, because most of the songs are so heavily harmonized, stopping only just short of sheer discord, that the words often get lost. These eight long tracks mostly have jazz accompaniments, with emphasis on electronics – and surely Thelonious himself would have been satisfied with New York Voices' version of 'Round Midnight'. Most of the songs are the performers' own compositions, but perhaps too clever for their own good. [A:1/2] Denis Argent

Trevor Rabin



**NUSRAT FATEH ALI KHAN
AND PARTY: SHAHEN-SHAH**
Real World Records RWCD3
(71m 07s) CD

When spiritual music hits the spot, regardless of the form, it can be magic indeed. In Pakistan they have a religious devotional music called Qawwali. It involves a lot of repetition and handclaps seem essential. The Qawwali music I've heard before has been impressive, but Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan is more than just an impressive singer. Over the rhythmic structure – think Asian acoustic funk – Khan takes leaps into flights of fancy involving the kind of dexterous vocal gymnastics associated with improvising jazz singers. The harmonium players keep the interest with some 'out' notes, and the chorus stokes up the emotional fire with boundless enthusiasm. [A:1*]

Ken Hyder



**TREVOR RABIN:
CAN'T LOOK AWAY**
Elektra EKT 58 960781-1

I've been waiting for this album for years. Rabin's the man who took Yes to No1 in 1983 with his composition 'Owner Of A Lonely Heart'. He recorded two albums as Yes guitarist, co-producing *Big Generator*, but the best examples of his many talents are found on his solo albums. *Can't Look Away* is his fourth, with a sound and production that are ready to take him into the 1990s. Apart from drums by Lou Moulino and Alan White (on two tracks), all instruments were played by Trevor Rabin who had classical training as a conductor. His lead vocals are distinctive but are more comfortable when guitar and keyboards take the limelight. All tracks are Rabin compositions. The album's final – but nonetheless vital – ingredient is its clean, un gimmicky production. Rabin collaborated with Bob Ezrin, for this. [A:1]

Karen Douthwaite

**THE RIPPINGTONS: TOURIST
IN PARADISE**
GRP Records FRP-9588-2
(44m 30s) CD

I usually hate most of the ingredients which make up this music. But every now and again, I just fall for the unashamed high of contrived good-time music. It's like the Martini TV ad. I love its music. I love the way they change it round every few months, and it still sounds as attractive as ever. This CD featuring guitarist/technician Russ Freeman is like one long Martini ad. It's got a whiff of jazz in it, with a hint of latin spice, and loads of West Coast LA soft sophisticfunk. There are credits and thanks to everyone... 'and Suzanne – you are my inspiration'. There's even thanks for the 'JBL Modex 7110 Limiter', and to Lucia Castaneda who did Mr Freeman's hair and makeup. The production and recording are more than first class. CD audiophiles and Martini-ad lovers will drool over this. [A***:Ahhh] Ken Hyder

**SHAKESPEAR'S SISTER:
SACRED HEART**
FFRR London 828 131-1

Siobhan Fahey's talents have been sharply exposed by the striking single, 'You're History', which is currently rocketing skywards. *Sacred Heart* doesn't throw up any other great gems, however, and one gets the feeling that the real stars of the show are producer/hubbie Dave Stewart and partner Marcella Detroit. Detroit's voice is the shocker that makes the single stand out from the crowd and while Fahey apparently runs the writing side she is always co-credited with Detroit. *Sacred Heart* is no great album but it is pretty good and Siobhan Fahey's dark smouldering voice works well with Detroit's more versatile one. The one cover version, Marley's 'Could You Be Loved', is an interesting rendition. [A/B:2] Neville Farmer

**TEN YEARS AFTER:
ABOUT TIME**
Chrysalis CHR 1722

As an impressionable youth, I was besotted with this group. The joyous news is that the original line-up is back together for a new album. Yes, that includes Chick Churchill, non-playing, hand-clapping

keyboards player extraordinaire, Alvin Lee, guitar strangler and scales-player, and er... Leo Lyons, bass player and contortionist and, of course, the other one on drums. The bad news is that the new LP is a rather crappy bunch of recycled riffs that could have been better put across by a baboon with droopy. But they used to be good, honest. [B:4] Pete Clark

VARIOUS: WOODSTOCK
Cotillion/Atlantic ATL 60 001
VARIOUS: WOODSTOCK TWO
Cotillion/Atlantic ATL 60 002

Ashamed as I am to admit that I remember Woodstock and turning down a free ride because I thought it was going to be a waste of time, I'm pleased to report that these 20th Anniversary reissues aren't as lame as I thought they'd be. True, the between-song chit-chat is embarrassing as hell (though the remarks about bad acid are as timely as ever), but the music and the messages are (dare I say it?) back in fashion. As artefacts, the historical importance of these releases cannot be undervalued, serving as they do two functions. As a record of the most famous and important rock festival of all time, they do as much to convey the spirit of the event as any non-visual product ever could. As examples of the cream of late 1960s rock talent, they cannot be faulted. It would have been nice if the track allocation had been more egalitarian, but one must remember that, 20 years back, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young were deemed more important than the Who. I recommend that readers under the age of 35 play them before watching *thirtysomething*, so they'll know why Michael and Hope and the rest act the way that they do. [A/B:1] Ken Kessler [Note: These are also on CD, but WEA will not supply CDs to reviewers.]

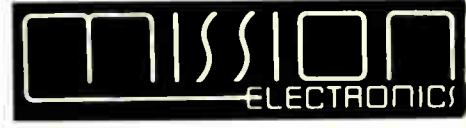
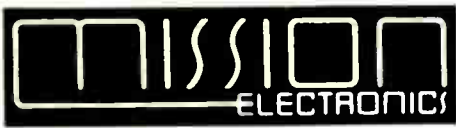
METAL PLAYMATES

**STEVE STEVENS:
ATOMIC PLAYBOY**
Warner Bros WX261
925920-1
AEROSMITH: PUMP
Warner Bros WX304

Hey ho, here we go. Metal playboys at large with bulging trousers make brand new albums. We'll keep this first one simple: The Steve Stevens is not very good at all, which is most surprising for the man who has kept the career of Billy Idol afloat for the last few years. Apart from a loving cover of the immortal Sweet's 'Action', there's nothing here to cause the remotest commo-

tion in anyone's trousers. [A:3]

Aerosmith, on the other hand, are an unimpeachable branch of the cock-rock brigade. Messrs Tyler and Perry have cleaned up their act, hoovered their nostrils, added a few more items of choice veg to their cod-pieces and come up with a stonker. The single 'Elevator' (with its lewd intro only available to those who buy the LP) gives a very fair taste of the rest. If you heard *Toys In The Attic*, *Rocks* or even *Permanent Vacation*, then you'll know just what to expect and you'll be just as happy. [A:1] Pete Clark



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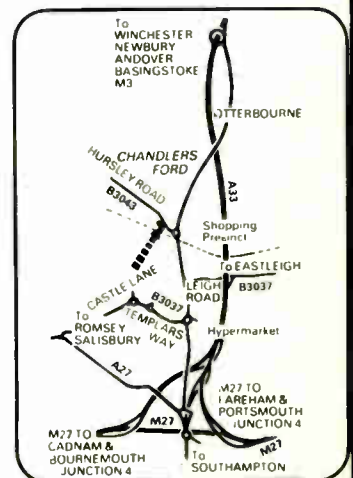
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**THE BLOW MONKEYS:
CHOICES**

RCA PD 74191 (66m 01s) CD
All their singles right up to the current 'Choice?', and something of an indictment of current tastes. But the Blow Monkeys aren't quite as big as they should be, due to over-hyping, the abrasive personality of arch poseur Dr Robert, and other causes; a shame, because they do produce remarkably original, hard-edged 'quality' rock. [A:1]

**BOBCAT:
CAT GOT YA TONGUE**

Arista ARCD-8596 (59m 33s) CD
Hard rap from the self-contained Bobby 'Bobcat' Ervin, previously known for penning LL Cool J's, 'I Need Love' and producing K-9 Posse's debut LP. With this pedigree and an attitude less menacing than NWA, Bobcat is safe but slick [A:2]

**MARC BOLAN:
THE MARC SHOWS**

Marc On Wax/Castle Communications MARCI 513
From Marc On Wax, this superlative 15 track set culled from performances for Bolan's ITV series. Stunning alternate takes of familiar classics, along with takes of material he never got to commit to vinyl in the studio. An artefact of great musical and historic worth. [B/C:1]

**CIRCUS OF POWER:
STILL ALIVE...**

Metal Blade/RCA PD90377 (21m 52s) CD
Six-track mini-CD from a loud and scrappy outfit floating in between metal, thrash and conventional guitar-led hard rock. Less frenetic than prime Motorhead, for example, but mercifully free of the prettiness which taints US stadium fillers. Great cover of Rick Derringer's 'Still Alive & Well'. [A/B:2]

**CLUB DE ROME:
CLUB DE ROME**

Lively Art/New Rose ARTY 10 CD (34m 39s) CD
French name for a pair of Swiss/Italian-monickered electro-samplers suggests Euro-disco of a sort. Which it is, with more than a passing nod to Yello, the dominant kings of the genre. Please note that Club De Rome also employ some 'real' instruments, too. More tuneful than you have any right to expect. [A:1]

**MARSHALL CRENSHAW:
GOOD EVENING**

Warner Bros 925 908-1
Another year, another LP. Crenshaw, yet again, has produced a perfect release for those enamoured with melody and hooks worthy of Holly or the Everlys. Choice original material and covers from John Hiatt and the late, great Bobby Fuller – so why

doesn't Crenshaw reap the rewards of his female counterparts: Katrina, Belinda and the Bangles? [A:1]

**BRENDAN CROKER & THE 5
O'CLOCK SHADOWS:
BRENDAN CROKER & THE 5
O'CLOCK SHADOWS**

Silvertone ORE CD 505 (46m 28s) CD
A potential monster this, what with Croker's pedigree (work with Clapton, Knopfler etc) and a sound perfectly tailored to the mellower elements of the CD crowd. It's a melange of New Country, 1970s pub rock, various ethnic flavourings and good old rock. [A:1]

**DROWNING POOL: APHONIA
Fundamental SAVE 72CD**

(45m 54s) CD
Anti-pop statement which comes on like Kraftwerk with a case of the downers. For all its Euro-ness, Drowning Pool are Californian, which tells you just what the Sunshine State is experiencing in the late 1980s. Bleak? This is the infected underbelly of New Age, recommended only to the terminally maladjusted. [A:2]

kc FLIGHTT: IN FLIGHT

Popular/RCA PD90390 (61m 30s) CD
Exceptional dance/funk effort that doesn't lose itself with too much dependence on machinery. Rhythms still dominate and the sound is oh-so current, hook-laden melody and controlled usage of studio gimmickry. Style? The man did sample Talking Heads' 'Once In A Lifetime', so you've gotta admire his taste. [A:1]

KOOL & THE GANG: SWEAT

Mercury/Phonogram 838 233-1
Mercury/Phonogram 838 233-2 (54m 20s)
Frightening: this is the band's 23rd studio album in 20 years. Thank goodness, though, it shows not in tiredness but in quality. Resisting the temptation to go overboard with funk/rap fillips in this latest incarnation, Kool & The Gang have managed to hit hard but with a steel fist in a well-padded glove. Yes, there is a fair bit of edgy high-tech to the sound, but the modernization programme hasn't obscured the human element. [A:1]

**DINO LEE & THE LUV
JOHNSON: MESSIN' WITH MY
THANG**

New Rose ROSE 172 CD (37m 06s) CD
Off the wall? Dino Lee's shtick is the oddest amalgam of styles since Kinky Friedman and the Texas Jewboys, a bastard cross between early 1970s glitter and Funkadelic. Dubbed 'The King Of White Trash', Lee has his heart in the right place – the soul netherworld – this, his first live

set, shows him to be a crowd inciter of the highest order. The man's an absolutely charming sleazeball, so go for it if you thought that Wayne Cochran had class. [A:1] [Also still available are *The King Of White Trash* (ROSE 68) and *The New Las Vegas* (ROSE 127).]

**JOE LONGTHORNE:
ESPECIALLY FOR YOU**

Telstar STAR 2365
A dozen love songs from a hosuewives' TV fave, Al Jarreau-like delivery but Eurovision karna. Muzak for people who want something slightly more racy than, say, Roger Whittaker. [A:2]

**THE ONLY ONES: LIVE
Mau Mau/Dream MAU 603**

Posthumous in-concert release from Peter Perrett's long-departed outfit, a champion New Wave act which deserved to be bigger than the Clash at the very least. Punk energy with lyrical and melodic content unmatched by the band's contemporaries. [B:1*]

OST: THE ENDLESS GAME

Virgin CDV 2602 (44m 14s) CD
Suitably eerie and tense soundtrack by the great Ennio Morricone to accompany the almost successful TV spy thriller of the same name. If heard without the benefit of the TV presentation, it's a bit like New Age for the terminally paranoid, but it worked beautifully in a way that the script didn't. Then again, Morricone is probably the only man alive in Bernard Herrman's league. [A:1]

OST: KILLING DAD

Virgin CDV 2603 (44m 06s) CD
Soundtrack to what is described as a 'backy comedy', and it must be a wacky one as well, if Chaz Jankel and David Storr's soundtrack is any indication. More styles than the latest issue of *Arena*, with rockabilly, Spanish guitar, jazz and a host of others suggesting psychological slapstick at the very least. [A:1]

SCRAWL: HE'S DRUNK

Rough Trade ROUGH 138
What a find! All retro-poppers in love with the likes of Adult Net and the Bangles are in for a shock, because this all-girl trio takes the formula and throws in dirt, sweat and street smarts. Scrawl is exactly what you'd expect if the others lost their chaperones. Yes, it's a bit Velvety, but Scrawl weave in real melody and some hard rocking; it's like Belinda Carlisle with zits. Ignore at your peril. [B:1*] [Note: The CD version (ROUGH CDR138) also includes the band's debut LP, *Plus, Also, Too* and its just as tasty.]

TOO NICE: COLD FACTS

Arista 259 843 (44m 34s) CD
What is now standard fare is a rap package: more verbiage than you could shake a first at, reprinted in the booklet in toto as if rap really is some form of radical, modern poetry. Perhaps, but how many ways can you use the word 'chillin'? Regardless, the rest is the usual mire of hardware trickery, VU needles in the red, throbbing lower registers and posing which makes 17th century fops seem like wallflowers. When is this humourless joke going to end? [A:3]

VARIOUS: JALI HOUSE ROCK

Rogue Records BFMSD 5019 (74m 21s) CD
(Rogue Records Ltd, PO Box 337, London N4 1YW.)
Fascinating budget-priced 21/track sampler from a premier 'roots music' label. The cuts range from heavy ethnic to revivalist folk to Tex-Mex to sheer buskerness, and from Flaco Jimenez to Tiger Moth to the English Country Blues Band. But don't ask us what 'Jali' means. [A/B:1]

**VARIOUS: SOME MUSIC IS
PRIVATE MUSIC**

Private Music/BMG 209 646
New Age sampler, though full marks to BMG for coming up with the euphemism 'Private Music', which is a bit snappier than 'contemporary instrumental', Masterminded by Tangerine Dream's Peter Baumann, the label plays host to wizard guitarist Leo Kottke, sitar-hero Ravi Shankar and ex-Polceman Andy Summers among others; if you're going to be put to sleep, it's better to be knocked out by the famous. [A:2]

**BARRY WHITE:
THE MAN IS BACK!**

A&M AMA 5256
Forget all that 'Walrus Of Love' stuff and cracks about the 'world's biggest soul singer'. The man's voice is still the sexiest yet to penetrate a microphone – the deepest, richest set of pipes at work today – and he's kept them in top form. Masterful soul seduction of the old sort, spiced up with modernisms. [A:1]

**WRECKLESS ERIC:
LE BEAT**

GROUP ELECTRIQUE
New Rose ROSE 179 CD (41m 25s) CD
Or, if he's that hung up on French, *Plus ca change ...*. Wreckless still thinks it's 1977 and his own variety of pubness remains a weird and wonderful mix of vintage rock, tacky production values, sloppy performing and shaky vocals. Yes, it's still endearing; polish would, after all, mean that he's no longer Wreckless. [B:1]

THE MUSIC SHOP

Chandos NOVEMBER RELEASES

Prokofiev: *The Prodigal Son/Symphonic Song/Divertimento/Andante from Piano Sonata No. 4*
SNO/Jarvi
CHAN 8728 · CD, ABRD/ABTD 1368 · LP & Cassette

Mendelssohn: *Elijah*
Arthur Davies/Linda Finnie/Rosalind Plowright/
Willard White/LSO & Chorus/Richard Hickox
CHAN 8774/5 · CD, DBRD/DBTD 2016 · LP & Cassette

Mendelssohn: *Octet - Raff: Octet*
ASMF Chamber Ensemble
CHAN 8790 · CD, ABTD 1423 · Cassette · No LP

Handel: *Chandos Anthems Vol. III (Nos. 7, 8 & 9)*
James Bowman/Michael George/Patrizia Kwella/
Ian Partridge/The Sixteen Choir & Orch./Harry Christophers
CHAN 0505 · CD, EBRD/EBTD 0505 · LP & Cassette

Walton: *Belshazzar's Feast/Gloria/Te Deum*
Aneral Gunson/Gwynne Howell/Neil Mackie/
Stephen Roberts/Philharmonia/Bach Choir/David Wilcocks
CHAN 8760 · CD, ABRD/ABTD 1398 · LP & Cassette

'My Kind of Music' (Film/TV Music)
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra/Ron Goodwin
CHAN 8797 · CD, LBRD/LBTD 025 · LP & Cassette

Treasures of Operetta Vol. III
Marilyn Hill Smith/Peter Morrison/
Chandos Concert Orchestra & Singers/Stuart Barry
CHAN 8759 · CD, LBRD/LBTD 023 LP & Cassette

Reger: *Hiller Variations/Böklün Suite*
Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra/Jarvi
CHAN 8794 · CD, ABRD/ABTD 1426 · LP & Cassette

Schmidt: *Symphony No. 2*
Chicago Symphony Orchestra/Jarvi
CHAN 8779 · CD, ABRD/ABTD 1415 · LP & Cassette

Drake *400 Concert Suite & Film Theme Music*
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra/Ron Goodwin
CHAN 8811 · CD

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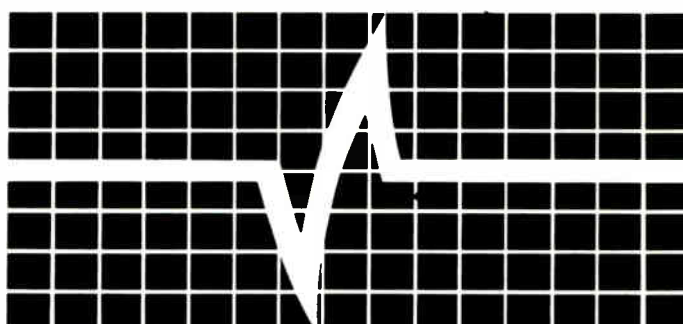
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 **A LINK HOUSE MAGAZINE**

AMERICAN SPRING: SPRING ... PLUS

See for Miles SEE 269
A long-lost treasure, Brian Wilson producing his wife and sister-in-law in an effort to stand with the best West Coast pop of the 1960s. Carpenters-like in places, but full of deft touches to keep you listening. Gorgeous material, eye-moistening performances. Not just for Beach Boys completists. [A:1/1*]

ARTHUR ALEXANDER: THE GREATEST

Ace CDCHD 922 (54m 09s) CD
Best ever Alexander collection, 21 tracks covering 1962-65 and including all of his milestones (no less than four covered by the Beatles). Unique blend of R&B and primordial soul. [A:1*]

DAVE BERRY: BERRY'S BEST
Deram 820 633-2 (54m 39s) CD

Better-than-you'd-expect 20-track selection from one of the more distinctive Beat Boom Era also-rans. Worthy covers for the most part, especially a sensational rarity in the form of Ray Davies' 'This Strange Effect' and Arthur Alexander's 'You Better Move On'. [A:1]

RUTH BROWN: THE HITS
Official/Charly 6053

16 song survey of a career which helped to put Atlantic Records on the map. Early 1950s urban R&B with a high pop content, delivered by a voice in the Dinah/Sarah/Etta league. [A/M:1]

SOLOMON BURKE: THIS IS HIS SONG

Savoy/Charly SL 14738
Hard to believe that this hot and funky stuff from 1984 carries a religious message, but that's the way Burke preaches best. Perfect crossover for those interested in gospel but afraid it might take a leap of faith. [A/B:1]

CANNED HEAT: FUTURE BLUES

BGO BGOLP 49
The white blues band's finest effort, with the definitive line-up and the immortal 'Let's Work Together'. Possibly the most successful-ever modernization of the blues. [B:1*]

CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL: THE CONCERT

Fantasy/Ace CDFE 511 (49m 44s) CD
Live, in top form, one of the finest singles machines America ever produced. 'Proud Mary', 'Fortunate Son', 'Bad Moon Rising' - get the picture? [B:1/1*]

DION & THE BELMONT: PRESENTING

Ace CDCHM 107 (35m 09s) CD
A classic example of street-corner harmonizing, replete with monumental tracks like 'A

Teenager In Love'. Contains two bonus cuts not on the earlier vinyl reissue. [A/A*:1]

THE FOURMOST: FIRST AND FOURMOST
BGO BGOLP 51

Absolutely average Liverpool also-rans lacking the talent to rank with the Searchers, let alone the Fabs. An historic curio for fanatical collectors of Merseyside. [A:2/3]

GERRY AND THE PACEMAKERS: HOW DO YOU LIKE IT?

BGO BGOLP 57
GERRY AND THE PACEMAKERS: THE EP COLLECTION
See For Miles SEE CD 95 (53m 20s) CD
Two from which to choose: BGO's straight reissue of the band's first LP and a stunning 22-track CD dripping with hits. Perfect second-string Liverpool rock, notable for Marsden's cheeky chappiness. [A:2], [A:1*]

PEPPERMINT HARRIS: HOUSTON CAN'T BE HEAVEN

Ace CHD 267
Wonderful 16 track set from the too-rarely-honoured blues guitar master. No less than 11 are previously unissued, and all are prime examples of sassy Texas blues. An opportunity to hear a young guest named Albert Collins. [A/H:1]

BUDDY HOLLY AND THE CRICKETS: THE 'CHIRPING' CRICKETS

MCA DMCL 1753 (25m 58s) CD
THE CRICKETS: THE BEST OF THE CRICKETS
Liberty/EMI EMS 1318
Liberty/EMI CDP 7 91757 2 (44m 42s) CD
The 1958 classic - 12 perfect pop performances - and a 20-track set covering the early post-Holly period. The Holly stuff you already know, sublime teen anthems that defy time, while the Buddy-less line-up works through worthy originals and well-chosen covers. Mandatory purchases. [A/M:1*]; [A/B:1/2]

JOHN LEE HOOKER: BOOGIE CHILLEN

Official/Charly 86 029 (48m 06s) CD
16 early tracks recorded for the Modern label, most with Eddie Kirkland, one of Hooker's most sympathetic sidemen. Chilling version of the title track, and the rest is brooding enough to make you sad to be alive. [H:1*]

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JONI JAMES: MORE JONI JAMES HITS

Official/Charly 12012
Second-string 1950s white pop chanteuse lacking the salacity of Julie London or the jazzy suss of

Peggy Lee, but a bit less twee than the image suggests. This is exactly what rock 'n' roll killed forever; sweet, but digestible. [B:2]

JOHN KLEMMER: TOUCH

Mobile Fidelity UDCD 522 (48m 45s) CD
Gold 'ultradisc' reissue of a perennial audiophile fave, pre-New Age mood music with the usual guests: Grusin, Carlton, Duke etc. Relaxing. [A*:1/2]

LITTLE RICHARD: VOLUME 2

Ace CDCHM 131 (25m 55s) CD
Second in Ace's series of straight LP-to-CD transfers. Another unbelievable package of primal rock 'n' roll. Imagine a regular release - not a 'Best of' - which came with 'Keep A Knockin'', 'Lucille' and 'Good Golly, Miss Molly'. Frightening. [A:1***]

OST: BRIDESHEAD REVISITED

Mobile Fidelity MFCD 790 (44m 49s) CD
It says a lot that an American specialist label issued an 'audiophile' CD of this most British of television scores. Evocative reminder for those who loved this tale of aristo angst. [A:1]

THE RAY-O-VACS: BESAME MUCHO

Official/Charly 6047
Curious yet enticing 1950s vocal group exercise of the jive school, but with plenty of appeal for the generically limited. A link between the smoothness of the 1940s acts and the punch of the rock era groups, with touches of blues, jazz and doo-wop to broaden the sound. [H:1]

TODD RUNDGREN: SOMETHING/ANYTHING

Essential/Castle Communications ESDCD 007 (43m 29s; 46m 10s) CD
Undiminished by the passage of time. Two classics nestle among the never-self-indulgent displays of eclecticism. A feast of perfectly-crafted songs. [A:1/1*]

THE SOUL STIRRERS: SHE'S GONE ON HOME

Savoy/Charly SL14530
Sam Cooke's former colleagues, caught in 1979 with their own brand of soulful gospel. Less 'modern' than Al Green and more up-front with the reverence, but the group never fails to live up to its name. [A:1]

THE SWAN SILVERTONES: I SEE THE SIGN OF JUDGMENT

Savoy/Charly SL14604
1981 set from what many consider to be the finest gospel act of all time. More traditional than modern, but not so much so that you'd think it was outtakes from *Green Pastures*. [A:1*]

SONNY TERRY AND BROWNIE MCGHEE: SONNY & BROWNIE

A&M CDA 0829 (44m 42s) CD
Early 1970s effort finding the legendary blues duo backed by 'youngsters' like John Mayall, Michael Franks and Sugar cane Harris. Still the most modern sounding blues release yet, with material from Randy Newman, Sam Cooke and Curtis Mayfield sounding like you've never heard it before. A genuine masterpiece. [A:1*]

VARIOUS: THE BEST OF THE ROCK MACHINE TURNS YOU ON

Castle Communications CCSCD 224 (77m 53s) CD
A flashback to the days when compilations offered more than the previous month's Top 20. Adventurous gathering from the CBS catalogue of the late 1960s/early 1970s, including Moby Grape, Spirit, Tim Rose, Taj Mahal and others who'd never make it to *Now That's What I Call Music*. [A/B:1]

THE YARDBIRDS: THE STUDIO SESSIONS 1964-1967

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Charly CD CHARLY 187 (62m 46s) CD
Introduction to the Yardbirds at their peak, 22 studio tracks including both versions of 'Heartful Of Soul' and 'Stroll On/Train Kept A' Rolling'. Superb liner notes by John Platt. [A/B:1/1*]

ALSO RECEIVED: VARIOUS: GOOD TIMES

Kent/Ace 094
16 Atlantic soul treasures. Aretha, Wilson ... whew! [A/B:1*]

TRANSFERS:

The following, recently reviewed as LPs, have been issued as CDs (date of review issue in brackets):

SAM COOKE AND THE SOUL STIRRERS: HEAVEN IS MY HOME

C5 CD523 (31m 29s) CD [12/88]

HONEYBUS: AT THEIR BEST

See For Miles SEE CD 264 (79m 38s) CD [10/89]
Contains five bonus tracks.

HOOKE'R'N'HEAT: THE BEST OF ... PLUS

See For Miles SEE CD 234 (76m 26s) CD [12/88]
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See For Miles SEE CD 256 (72m 12s) CD [8/89]
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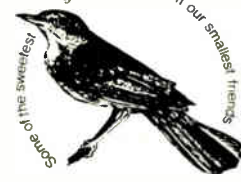
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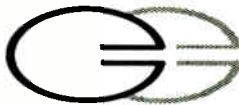
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BACK DOOR



KEN KESSLER

Just as the dearth of CD manufacturing facilities caused EMI to hold back on releasing the Beatles CDs, so did it mean that the record companies would have an easy time of tracing manufacturers of bootleg CDs, the illegal releases of unissued material. With so few plants in existence – all well-known – the new format should have been spared the attention of the pirates. Wrong.

By 1987, the world was overrun with CDs, and over-capacity even led to a price war, with CDs costing less to produce than LPs. Because of this fierce competition, not all CD plants care about what they're stamping, and any enterprising bootleggers with a cheque book can probably find a manufacturing facility willing to run off as few as 500 copies.

The argument against the record companies' claims of lost revenue due to bootlegging goes something like this: with pirate and counterfeit releases which purport to be the genuine article, (eg fakes or copies of a new Madonna LP) – yes, the record companies have lost the sale of the legitimate item to a pirate. With bootlegs, which don't purport to be copies of commercially available product, the companies can't claim to have lost a sale because they don't have that material in the marketplace. Furthermore, it's doubtful that any collector (and only collectors buy bootlegs) ever chose not to buy an official release because of the purchase of a bootleg. Bootlegs and commercial releases, therefore, are not mutually exclusive, unlike pirated counterfeits and the official releases. What the record companies and artists lose are not the sales of actual 'units' but the songwriting and performance royalties and – possibly – the potential earnings had they any plans to release the material issued by the bootleggers.

But there's a new twist to all of this, one which must be driving lawyers up walls all around the globe. Different territories have different copyright laws, some as short as 20 years. When the material goes into the public domain, especially live recordings, it's quite legal for it to be sold in that country by virtually anybody. And

when the country is in the EEC, it means that – theoretically – the stuff can be sold in the other European markets. [Future EC legislation is very likely to change this – Ed] What you have, then, is a flood of professionally produced and openly retailed Beatles CDs which contain material 'over 20 years old'. This phrase appears on a number of discs, which seems like a way for bootleggers to proclaim, 'Nyaah, nyaah, can't touch us'.

The Beatles' lawyers and EMI, along with a number of industry bodies, are doing whatever they can to stamp out the bootleggers. They've been successful in finding (LP) pressing plants and warehouses; they've even located some bold thieves with top-quality copies of EMI tapes. But the situation is not unlike booze during America's Prohibition Era or pot smoking in the 1960s, and it's hard to look upon bootleggers as you would upon axe-murderers. To hard-core fans, they're all Robin Hoods. The only solution seems to be the official release of this archive material, which seems unlikely at present.

Beatles bootlegs fall into three major categories, with the concert recordings being the most common and least clearly illicit of the various types. More specifically, the categories are:

Broadcasts.

The Beatles made numerous appearances on BBC radio, TV specials, appearances on the *Ed Sullivan Show* in the USA, Swedish radio and so on. Most seem to have survived and have found their way onto bootlegs, including many hours' worth of the BBC sessions. Sound quality is often excellent.

Live Concerts.

Despite occurring before the advent of the discreet portable tape recorder, a large number of Beatles concerts have been preserved on tape. The quality indicates the source, with some truly awful-sounding performances having been recorded from the audience on a portable recorder of the day; it speaks volumes for the nascent bootlegger of 1964-1966, who schlepped a small open-reel tape recorder into a stadium full of screaming fans. Some concerts, however,

Beatles bootleggers – serving the music industry or stifling it?



were taped 'off the board', from the actual mixing desk for the public address system or from sanctioned recordists such as the NHK (the official Japanese broadcasting network). Such recordings are of commercially worthwhile sound quality, as would be any concerts which the Beatles had recorded for posterity.

Studio Recordings.

The Beatles were prolific and exploited the facilities of Abbey Road Studios to the extent that there are thousands of hours of alternate takes, practice takes and other commercially unavailable tracks in the studio's vaults. Among these are dozens of takes of individual songs, especially the more experimental material such as 'Strawberry Fields Forever', as well as a few songs which haven't been released in any legitimate form (eg 'That Means A Lot'). As is well known, the Beatles rambled on for hours at a time when producing *Let It Be*; these sessions have produced enough material to create a mini-industry in the field of bootlegging.

Just how the tapes were copied from the Abbey Road masters remains a mystery; with the exception of tracks taken from acetates and test pressings, these recordings have never left Abbey Road in any portable form. Even so, enough material has been copied to yield a huge body of illegal releases. Because of the sneaky nature of the bootleggers, misleading information is supplied on the discs to obliterate the trail back to Abbey Road.

The country and date information on the discs are suspect because the bootleggers don't want to identify themselves that easily. This is taken a stage further with other red herrings including the deliberate mis-identification of studio takes (as confirmed by staff at Abbey Road), the inclusion of bogus logos which imply the paying of rights and royalties, and other little details which obscure the sources. As a result, you can believe few of the track details supplied with the CDs unless the tracks themselves offer verbal confirmation (eg, a voice saying 'Take 2'). Even then the tracks cannot be taken at face value, because such phrasings can be edited in to create confusion.

There are now over 100 bootleg Beatles CDs, most of which overlap with others. Rightly or wrongly, they are now among the most sought-after Beatles releases of all, because – for the most part – they are the high-quality versions of material which the insatiable fans cannot purchase legally. The tragedy is that the parties who could release this material in legitimate form cannot find it within themselves to make it available over the counter. †

[This article is adapted from the book *The Silver Beatles: The Fab Four On CD* by Ken Kessler. Copies are available for £7.95 plus £1.00 postage from Village Books, Rock Hall, Chillies Lane, High Hurst, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 4AD.]

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