

Schubert Symphonies

Abbado's Wozzeck

Sinopoli's Butterfly

Frans Brüggen profile

Back Door: Roy Orbison

## IN THE GROOVE

The Aragon pre-amplifier

**LAS VEGAS** 

Show report

**COMPACT DISC** 

Pioneer CD and CD-V, budget Sony

**LOUDSPEAKER** 

Cyrus, Celef, Tannoy

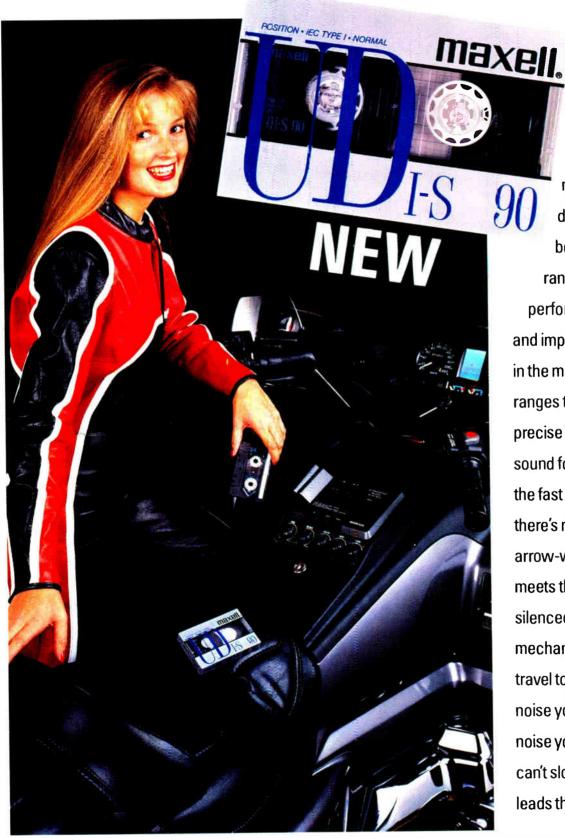
32-PAGE SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Krell's new range • Rowland Model 7 CAL Tempest 11 CD player Sonus Faber Gryphon

Buying British: home grown high-end survey



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#### COVER

Aragon turns the styling groove to a new angle for the model 24K pre-amplifier, long-awaited follow-up to the 4004 power amplifier, introduced to this country last year. Is this another 'audiophile bargain' at £1395? Review starts page 51. Cover photography by Tony Petch, art direction John Gash

#### REGULARS

5 COMMENT by Christopher Breunig

7 VIEWS letters to the Editor

13 NEWS products, people, events

21 TECHNOLOGY by Barry Fox

23 HEADROOM by Ken Kessler

73 ACCESSORIES CLUB

116 REGIONAL DEALER GUIDE

119 CLASSIFIED ADS

121 ADVERTISERS' INDEX

#### FEATURES

25 THE HI-FI NEWS AWARDS For Achievement In Audio. We give the background and report on the presentation of the 1988 awards to two major industry figures

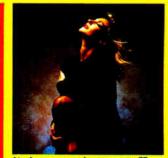
27 LOST VEGAS: the Winter Consumer Electronics Show. Ken Kessler leads us through a labyrinth of new products and (as always) finds the gems that others missed . . . .

35 THE SUBJECTIVE STORY or the history of the controlled listening test, which starts, believe it or not, in 1931. Paul Chaplin describes the earliest attempts at scientific analysis

37 SUPERTUNING CD: A REFRESHER in lieu of more 'Live Issues', Ben Duncan offers further thoughts and advice on the subject of upgrading 'cooking' compact disc players

THE HIGH END No 2 is a special supplement free with this issue

### MUSIC



Ute Lemper reveals more: page 77

75 FRANS BRUGGEN talks to Robert Cowan

77 UTE LEMPER talks to David Nice

83
RECORD REVIEW INDEX

85 RECORD OF THE MONTH Abbado's live VPO 'Wozzeck'

CLASSICAL REVIEWS
the COE/Abbado Schubert cycles;
Sinopoli's controversial Elgar 2
and 'Butterfly'; LSO/Previn
classics on RCA; and the new
Archiv 'Galleria' label

ROCK/POP/JAZZ REVIEWS
kick off with a lively Line from TM
records spanning blues to pub rock;
Hoagy Carmichael special, A&M
jazz, and even Rick Astley

CAPSULES

115 REISSUES

122 BACK DOOR the late Roy Orbison

#### EQUIPMENT

43 THREE NEW TWO-WAYS or three distinctive new loudspeakers of similar size but differing design: Martin Colloms tests the Celef Nimbus CD2, first of a new series, the promising Cyrus 781 and the dual-concentric Tannoy DC1(XX)

51 ARAGON OF VIRTUE punningly sums up Mondial Designs' Aragon 24K pre-amplifier, Ken Kessler looks further into this exciting import

55 MICHELL GYRODEC turntable is a new, much-improved version of an old favourite, which for many people is still the best-looking British deck. Test by Paul Miller

59 MORE CD AND CD-V: PIONEER Chris Bryant looks at (and listens to) Pioneer's CLD-1200 CD-V player and the audio-only Pioneer PD-6100



Pioneer's CD-V option: page 59

63 DOUBLE CONVERSION is offered by 'digital amplifiers' such as the upmarket Technics SU-A60/SE-A50 pre-/power amp combination. Paul Miller takes a critical look

67 PHILIPS FT-880 tuner is part of the Dutch-based giant's assault on the 'quality' hi-fi market. Made in Europe, it aims to match the Japanese. Review by Chris Bryant

69 SONY CDP-M75: a sensibly-priced mid-sized compact disc player that promises much. But does it deliver? Test report by Chris Bryant

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## **AUDIO RESEARCH BLENDING PAST& FUTURE**



The world of high-end hi-fi equipment is crowded with questionable components. However, within this realm there exists a valid sonic hierarchy. It is difficult, without expert assistance, for the music lover to make selections from this electronic jungle: Absolute Sounds was created for the purpose of making your choice a wise one. To provide equipment worthy of the connoisseur, Absolute Sounds has searched the world for components without equal and tested them for their total excellence. We would like to introduce to you the range of Audio Research electronics from the United States.

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Hi-Fi answers September 1987.

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Hi-Fi News & Record Review October 1987.

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Hi-Fi News & Record Review, July 1987.

#### Write or phone for perceptive advice and details of nearest dealer.



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## COMMENT•

ITHIN THE SPACE of a few weeks, London audiences have rocked in mirth at the antics of the Swiss virtuosi, I Salonisti, in a programme at the normally conservative Wigmore Hall ranging from Kreisler to Miklos Rozsa; then been moved perhaps to tears at the Barbican Armenian charity concert, when Rostropovich crept away on tiptoe from the platform, his face ashen with concern for those stricken people, his compassion concentrated in the music of a Britten Cello Suite. It was a pity the atmosphere had to be broken by John Tusa's platform announcement for the purposes of world transmission live in sound and television media - though, as David Nice commented afterwards, the Soviet people, too, would be watching (via satellite) R. and Vishnevskaya: persons whom the state had consigned to oblivion. The concert will be perpetuated on compact disc, by RCA. Then, within hours of Andras Schiff's Bach concert early in January, the use of Steinway grand a throwback to the days of Serkin and the Busch players. Roger Norrington was illustrating authentic practice in Mozart, culminating in a concert performance of the Magic Flute. Or, one could have chosen between Boulez and Pli selon pli, and Die Fledermaus in John Mortimer's new translation.

These disparate items illustrate something of the range of approaches to music today, which contrast with the formal attitudes to 'classical' concerts of a decade or so ago. Of course, conventional programmes and styles are still the norm: just as Beethoven and Schubert recordings with the Vienna Philharmonic - 'designer Italians' conducting or not (to quote, with some surprise, from a recent Gramophone review!) - outnumber those by period instrument ensembles,

I see that, recently, Pierre Boulez has hit out at the authenticists, describing their work as 'paralysing' rather than revitalizing classical works. Not having seen his full argument, I cannot guess at motivation. Could there have been an element of Klemperer's complaint, that today mediocrities are proclaimed as emperors? Those unsympathetic to Boulez would argue that in the areas of interest to musicians like Brüggen, Gardiner, Norrington, or Hogwood, Boulez hardly excelled as interpreter – remember his disastrous Beethoven Fifth, with the NPO? (In fairness, he was under par with 'flu.)

Or could it be that preoccupations with 18th-century authenticity could lead to a

REE WITH THE APRIL ISSUE OF

Hi-Fi News & Record Review \* will be a very special full-length classical

compact disc. It has a playing time of

over 72 minutes and every one of the 14

(all DDD) are from the superb new label

tracks is a complete work or movement from

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which has already established a major stake

The HFN/RR Virgin Classics Collection is a

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will not be available in the shops, or from any

source other than this magazine. It includes

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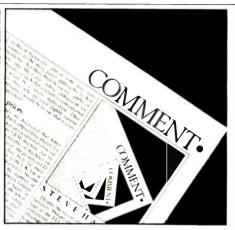
diminution, rather than widening of receptivity? What worries me, from time to time, is the possible undermining effect of much of what we hear, bolstered as it is by critical acclaim, which might in the long run be restricting our tastes as to what is acceptable. Now, Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic can hardly be likened to 'junk food', although, apropos of his Beethoven symphony recordings, as Robert Matthew-Wal-ker once asked, 'How can a man of his intelligence ignore all the repeats?'. But will that kind of recorded Beethoven seem increasingly fatty, over-sugared? Recently I heard Norrington's orchestra playing a Weber overture. The timps, the horns, the aggregate period timbres gave quite a different effect from big, standard performances. And I felt that, thereafter, whenever I encountered the 'standard' approach (which isn't that often: the last time I heard a live performance of a Weber overture was at the ill-fated Kleiber RFH concert with the LSO!), in my mind's ear was translating the sonorities back to the Norrington aesthetic.

Now, someone like Jeffrey Tate would say that was all nonsense: that the two divergent approaches are set to coexist. And to some extent this is obviously so. An example would be Mikhail Pletnev's new Virgin Classics coupling of three Beethoven sonatas: the involvement you get with his Appassionata slow movement is largely to do with his control of articulation and dynamics only possible with the characteristics of the modern grand. The fortepiano brings its own distinct disciplines and demands another artistic approach to the score: but, if you concede that fully, then the inference must be that, since the fortepiano was the instrument known to the composer himself, the Pletnev approach is wholly ill-founded.

It is too easy to rationalize in favour of the Norrington dogma. Music performance comes down to artistic worth, not historical correctness. Many period-instrument performances are blueprints for what is possible. rather than achievements of real stature.

#### Denis Matthews

Many readers will have been saddened to have learned of the death, by his own hand, of Professor Denis Matthews last Christmas Eve. His Cheltenham pianoforte recitals in the '50s, and concerto performances with the CBSO were an influential part of my own musical education. In later years he became an academic: Newcastle University, then



#### CHRISTOPHER BREUNIG

working at Birmingham (where he became a colleague of SD). His many broadcasts placed him firmly in the 'Schnabel - Toscanini' camp of Beethoven interpreters, and indeed he wrote the appreciative note with EMI's packaging of pre-war Toscanini recordings with the BBC SO, issued in 1986; he also wrote the foreword to the WRC transfers of Schnabel's pre-war Concertos set. His Muster Musicians study of the composer (Dent Paperback, £4.95) is both exemplary and enjoyable. Some years ago he recorded for Discourses various illustrated lectures on Beethoven's working methods, based on the sketch books. His recordings of Viennese classics hardly survived the transitional period from 78s to LP, but the famous 1944 version of the Beethoven Horn Sonata, with Dennis Brain, had a long and justified life (it last appeared in EMI's Brain set, RLS 7701).

#### Uchida on TV

Who would have thought that, at peak time on a Sunday evening, a soloist could analyse the simplest (?) of Mozart's piano sonatas, using terms such as 'retrograde inversion', or 'sub-dominant', and hold the attention? Well, when the presenter is Mitsuko Uchida, one of the most remarkable musicians around, then anything becomes possible. People with only a modicum of technical knowledge apparently have shared my delight and entrancement at this seemingly spontaneous flow of information, keyboard illustration, and challenges to our more lazy attitudes. More please - or at least another showing, for those who missed out.

with the April issue: the exclusive HFN/RR Virgin Classics Collection CD, playing time of 72 minutes-plus

Herreweghe, Sitkovetsky, Hough and Cole. Inside the April magazine, there'll be more vital reading than ever. Equipment reviews will be headed by a massive comparative test of key CD player models, including the latest from Denon. Marantz, JVC, Pioneer and others, a full test on Sony's astonishing R1 combination, plus a further major test on a group of personal CD players. Further reviews will cover equipment ranging from top cassette decks (including new Revox and Akai models) to the new Celestion 3 budget loudspeaker. Music features will include interviews with Richard Stoltzman and Howard Blake, and, as usual, far more CD and LP reviews than you'll find elsewhere. This extra-special April issue goes on sale on Friday, March 17th. You'll have to get there early to catch it!

HI-FI NEWS & RECORD REVIEW

MARCH 1989

## Can any other hi-fi store shape up to Unilet?



### VIEWS.

#### Know the score

From: Scott W Montague, Devon Dear Sir, I'll try not to type this too loud, in case anyone in the office has a hangover. I hope you all had a Merry and Musical Christmas, and that Father Christmas brought you all what you have always wanted! Meanwhile, back to some form of sanity, the January 1989 issue contains a letter from J K Bodley Scott from Axminster which contains, as your sub-title rightly says, a tedious, well-worn argument on the infamous anti/pro-digital debtate.

I am an amateur conductor and composer, and as such, do an awful lot of score preparation with the aid of recorded music, and can say without any fear of contradiction, that the digital software medium of CD is near-as-dammit perfect. Vinyl and analogue tape most certainly are not, and anybody who deludes themselves into thinking otherwise, needs to do two things.

Firstly, get yourself along to a good classical concert in a church and/or a cathedral – Britain's concert halls all have appalling tonal and acoustical characteristics, even RAH, where nothing ever sounds louder than mf! The Barbican should be demolished and forgotten about – bloody architects know nothing about acoustics.

Churches and cathedrals were built for the performance of music, therefore have the acoustics in sympathy with the performers and the music. Not against them and it.

Secondly, teach yourself how to read a score. It's not that difficult, it doesn't matter what piece you choose, anything will do, you can borrow the score from your local music library, and for next to nothing as well. I suppose a string quartet by Haydn or Mozart would be a good place to start, but stick to the earlier pieces please, sit back, be patient, and everything will slot into place like a large jig-saw puzzle. The enjoyment value is colossal. Take the score to a concert (that must be worth a billion Brownie-points in itself) and follow the performance - doesn't matter if you get confused and/or lost, it happens to the best of us! Of course, the next logical step is, go out and buy yourself an instrument, and learn to play it, or have lessons from one of the countless thousands of tutors nation-wide. It's the music you make yourself that's the best in the world. Forget the Pro/Anti debate; don't know what music exists for, do they!

My next letter will contain guide lines for score reading, meanwhile, get down to your library, and enjoy. Yours in G major,

#### Alternate takes

From: Richard Gordon, Roxburghshire Dear Sir, I do not share Ken Kessler's enthusiasm for the use of U.S. versions of Rolling Stones LPs when they are issued on CD. I may find, as he says, 'different mixes or alternate takes'. I may also find that the track listing is changed, or even that some tracks are missed altogether.

This is certainly the case with Out of Our Heads, Aftermath and Between the Buttons where the CD varies greatly from the original British LP issue. Surely with a British group and on a British label it is the British release that should be regarded as 'standard'.

How would Mr. Kessler have felt if EMI had taken the same attitude with the Beatles releases on CD? None too pleased, I would

venture to suggest. What is even more annoying is that, in the case of both the Beatles and the Stones, the LP and cassette issues are soon brought in line with the CD. In the Beatles' case this means that the first four albums are now in glorious mono and that Help and Rubber Soul are in 'doctored' form. Have EMI now deleted the originals? Why not investigate, Ken? It would seem odd that if I'd walked into a record store in 1964 to buy A Hard Days Night I could have chosen between a mono and stereo copy but a quarter of a century later it is a case of mono or lump it! Such is progress.

My basic argument is that, whether it is the Beatles, Stones, Searchers, Kinks, Val Doonican or Kathy Kirby, when CDs are issued the original mixes should be used; where stereo versions exist they should be utilised (PRT please note re the Searchers) and that the sleeve, notes and track listings should be that of the original issue in the country of the artists origin. Fiddling about, remixing etc. should be banned. It might only be our pop heritage, but it counts for something or, at least, it should. Yours faithfully

#### DC in real life

From: Alan A Tomkins, West Midlands Dear Sir, I am pleased to have Mr Lockyear's support (HFN/RR, Jan, '89 'Views') for my concern regarding the preponderance of 'puffs' in the generation of vocal and wind instrument sounds as against the balanced puffs and sucks from reproduced sound - and (bowed) strings. The influence of the lost DC' was demonstrated to me during a Christmas shopping expedition in a partlycovered shopping precinct where a trombone and a tuba were playing duets - there, no doubt to gain a few extra dB from reflected sound. Passing within a metre of the instruments I thought 'No, I couldn't reproduce this', but moving a few metres away I began to think that the sound could have come from loudspeakers. And I wondered about the closest approach to the original sound. With my inertia-less candle flame handy I have not much doubt that it would have shown 'DC' present near the bell-mouths of the instruments but absent further away.

I am now too old to climb around organ pipes with my candle flame, but would be pretty sure to find 'DC' present with the sound - but from where in 'stopped' pipes? And I should no doubt find the eddies that torment organ builders. Yet a distance away from the organ I imagine that no 'DC' would be found. One would not mistake an 'electronic' organ for the real thing, yet as records are bought of 'real' organ music to reproduce at home via loudspeakers can we assume that it bears a tolerable likeness to the real thing in a church? In a few examples I have, it fools me. In these cases the microphone(s) will have been far enough away from the organ to have 'lost' the DC, as when I walked away from the brass duet. Is mere distance responsible for making us less aware of the loss of the DC?

There is still a long way to go. I suppose that organ pipes could be easier to reproduce than transient noises like cymbals, struck or plucked strings, etc. which start as 'all-DC'. Can we please get back to fundamentals, away from the vagueness of 'velvety bass', 'breathy treble', etc, towards realistic measurement? This will not be easy, but I



believe more useful to good sound reproduction that finding excuses for using loudspeaker cables with exotic conductors and costly insulation of negligible resistance in series with voice coils of several ohms of probably common-or-garden metal and via junctions of mixed alloys (my letter, May '88).

Yours faithfully,

#### **Exploring with ICs**

From: Paul Reaney, Derby

Dear Sir, I read Mr Babrauskas's letter
('Views', Dec.'88) on substitution of the

('Views', Dec '88) on substitution of the ICs in a Sony CD player with great interest, as I have been exploring the same area for some time. My experience runs parallel to his, in that I too have purchased a model receiving excellent reviews (Sony CPD337ESD) and found that in spite of many fine qualities, the player failed to provide musical enjoyment. Investigation revealed our old friends, 5532 op-amps with essentially the same analogue stage that is employed in almost any player based on Philips DACs (Cambridge players excepted), seemingly regardless of price. My old player, a 14 bit Marantz with a highly tuned analogue stage, ran rings round this £550 wonder when it came to involvement, in spite of the higher colorations and inferior nimbleness etc of the old technology. The 'tuning' referred to in this case, was somewhat more fundamental than the modifications mentioned by Mr Babrauskas, although the concept was the same

When these techniques were applied to the Sony, it became a different story as it now fulfilled the promise hinted at by its superb mechanical construction and ergonomics.

Of course the unsubstantiated claims of an enthusiast like myself may not cut much ice, but I can state from personal experience that choice of op-amp and other components, is absolutely critical if high end sound is the aim. It has proved to me that so called 'digital hardness' simply does not exist. In these circumstances it is a manifestation of totally inadequate analogue engineering. I imagine that while this failing is perpetuated, it presents a soft target to the anti-digital lobby in the sterile analogue-v-digital debate.

I can heartily recommend that anyone with an enthusiastic and enquiring nature, should read Walt Jung's articles in *Audio Amateur* particularly issue One/88 and Two/88, and Ben Duncan's 'Modifying CD' articles in *HFN/RR*.

Yours faithfully,

[See Ben's follow up this month - Ed]

#### Preferring the 'inferior' product

From: R G Leadbeater, Herts.

Dear Sir, I read with considerable interest the review of the Sony 337 ESD since this was a model I had been able to audition in my own home. It is interesting that the 337 should score a substantial 78%, compared to the 557's 69% or the 555's 63%. My own evaluation of the 555 and the 337, which to judge from the marking should be significantly different, does not agree with that of Mr Colloms; I preferred the ostensibly inferior product.

The conclusion to be drawn, I think, is not that one or other of us is wrong but rather to stress the importance of being able to evaluate competing equipment properly before making a purchase. This emphasises what has been said many times: the value of a knowledgeable and helpful dealer. In this area Darby's of St. Albans and Studio 99 in Harpenden are clearly in that category.

Yours faithfully

#### Also Ram

From: F P Gardner, Lancashire

Dear Sir, I very much enjoyed your article 'A Little Legend' concerning the LS3/5A in January's HFN/RR. However, your comment: 'RAM never got any units out on the streets' must be incorrect. As I write this letter, I am listening to my pair of RAM LS3/5As numbered 16897 and 16898! These were purchased approximately 6 years ago from Norman Audio in Preston and have given excellent service.

I write not to find fault with your article, but I think it only fair that the record be put straight.

Yours faithfully

[Having received Mr Gardner's letter we contacted the BBC. They informed us that although RAM requested and received drawings for the speaker and commissioned cabinets, and some crossovers from Falcon, a reference speaker was never produced nor was the Licence granted. Further, the BBC tell us that they have no record of having received any royalties from RAM. Although what Mr Gardner is listening to may resemble an LS3/5A, it will be by coincidence, and not traceable to a BBC reference – Ed].

#### A breath of humid air

From: Mathew Wenham, Leics.

Dear Sir, Remember when Ken Kessler said that he'd rather buy more records than a cleaning machine? Well I reckon to take this a stage further: I'd rather buy more records than upgrade to semi-decent equipment. Here I am with a sub £300 system thrown together with a bit of DIY 'knowledge' (Self bi-wired speakers etc) and a record collection worth at least double what the system is. Oh yeah, I am only 16 and still at school.

Like KK, I buy second/third-hand records by the dozen (I also, like him, hate classical). The problem does therefore arise of records that are really in a bad state. What do you do? Try cleaning them. If that doesn't work, then what? If the record still sounds like it was recorded in a chip shop, try this: put the record on the turntable and begin playing; now comes the weird bit – and I'm totally serious about this working, on my system at least – lean over the record and breathe on it. Your breath should condense on the surface,

leaving a very thin layer of moisture on the record. Now wait for the damp patch to pass under the stylus, and listen for the loss of hiss/clicks. Listen for the reappearance of the same as the moisture evaporates.

I've no idea what the addition of the moisture layer does to musical transients and/or detail on the disc as it is reproduced, but I can honestly say that it cleans up dirty records a great deal. Now all we need is a machine to put a stream of warm, humid air onto the disc, just behind the stylus. Leaning over and puffing onto a disc really does wreck your enjoyment of the music! Yours faithfully

[Perhaps a rubber tube from a nearby kettle. Alternatively a heating element woven into the turntable mat? – Mus Ed]

#### Last words

From: Jack Lawson, The Music Room, Glasgow

Dear Sir, The Music Room is the sole appointed importer responsible for the marketing of Last Products in the UK and we have appointed Moth Marketing as our sole distributor to the trade.

An advertisement in your January issue placed by Aston Audio has given the impression that 'Last prices have fallen' and, together with the other recent statements from Aston Audio, that they are official distributors. They claim that the products advertised are original Last products (unlike many copies), and this statement is true — but in a way which your readers ought to know.

According to the Last factory, Aston Audio were distributors until about five years ago and have never received any of the current 'System Formula' range. Moth Marketing, who continue UK distribution, but now with the involvement of The Music Room, believe that the stock advertised by Aston Audio is about eight years old.

The old kits are, if properly stored, likely to be perfectly effective, but their advertised prices cannot be validly compared to the current kits which are different and much superior. Buyers can identify these by the silver and rainbow colour boxes and the term System Formula which expresses the heightened results when more than one product is used, notably the record preservative (System Formula 2) along with Stylast (System Formula 5). Yours faithfully

Derek Aston Darker (Aston Audio) replies: Dear Sir, I refer to the letter from The Music Room concerning Last products. Aston Audio has not given the impression that we are the official distributors to the trade of Last products since we ceased to be official distributors. All offers for sale have been on a retailer basis only and made direct to retail customers.

Our Last stock is four years old and was purchased from the Last factory. It is properly stored and judging by the comments made by The Music Room will be perfectly effective for many years to come.

In correspondence from Last we

In correspondence from Last we understood that the revised name 'System Formula' was applied to new packaging only for improved marketing. Certainly no mention was ever made by Last that the 'System Formula' kits were different and

much superior as now claimed by The Music Room. We have advertised our Last stock for sale quite properly as original Last products under the original names of Preservative, Power Cleaner and Stylast, for example. We have not made any comparisons to the new 'System Formula' range, and we deny that our advertisement is in any way misleading.

Your sophisticated readers are very astute when purchasing specialist products. They will judge whether the claims made by The Music Room of superiority for 'System Formula' are just mere hype. They are the people who ultimately will decide whether a trader is considered respectable and not be misguided by insinuations from Mr Lawson.

#### Ear, brain and pitch

From: Dr Malcolm Hawksford, University of Essex

Dear Sir, On reading Richard Black's HFN/RR article (p33, December 1988), I too feel it unlikely that because the ear/brain can apparently discriminate between 10kHz and 10.01 kHz, zero-crossing detectors with 100 ns resolution are required, implying a system bandwidth greater than 10 MHz. Such a scheme would seem to imply that we can estimate a frequency in as little as one cycle using, effectively, an accurate clock and fast comparator to detect zero crossing and hence deduce the period.

Nonetheless, I suspect that, in the process of human frequency acquisition, several cycles are required, so that statements of pitch discrimination should also be qualified with a statement of tone duration. For example, if we optimistically choose the Nyquist time interval commensurate with a bandwidth of 20 kHz as a minimum time discrimination window (ie, 25 $\mu$ s) then, for the problem of 10 kHz/10.01 kHz discrimination:

Number of cycles for detection to 0.1% at 10 kHz with 25  $\mu$ s minimum detection window

However, within the ear, the ear acts as a delay line along which an acoustically induced wave travels. As the wave propagates, it triggers minute hair-like nerves that are distributed along the length of the cochlea and connected to the organ of corti, where these, in turn, transmit a multitude of signals to the brain. It would appear, therefore, that the delay line and associated nerve sensors form a temporal-to-spatial transformer which enables the brain to receive an effective image of the sound. It is probable, therefore, that much of our aural discrimination is based upon a process of pattern recognition, where a myriad of connections within the ear tap into many points distributed along the delay line and enable the brain to produce aural images. The system would appear comparable to the processes surrounding our optic sensors and their association with the visual cortex, except here the sensors are spatially distributed on the retina and receive information in parallel, whereas the ear uses the cochlea as a form of analogue, serial to parallel converter.

I could also envisage that some pattern recognition is *hard wired* through nerve interconnections (initial processing and data reduction), again similar to our optic system, while other composite patterns are

VIEWS•

recognised at higher-level brain functions. Hence, when a 10kHz tone is compared with a 10.01 kHz tone for a given duration, a slightly different temporal-spatial pattern is produced, resulting in subtle changes in aural image which is interpreted as a small change in pitch. However, the enabling factor that allows tone recognition is a result of the response of many time-distributed, nerve signals, not just a single response compared against a fast clock. As pure speculation, for example. I could envisage that pitch discrimination is closely associated with the primary nerve interconnections, which could well vary between individuals endowing some with more acute pitch detection.

In practice, relatively narrow-band filters can pass steady-state tones spanning 10 kHz to 10.01 kHz, where the main artifact of the filter response is in the transition region when tones are abruptly switched. In this sense the duration of the filter impulse response can affect the tone quality. It would be an interesting experiment to see whether the presence of a well-designed, linear-phase, anti-aliaising filter could produce perceptual differences when a tone is abruptly switched from, say, 10 kHz to 10.01 kHz as compared against the case with no filters. It is important to note that, in discriminating between two tones that are closely spaced, the transition region will signal the changes. Hence, if the experimenter is aware of the frequencies involved and the instant of the transition 'glitch', then this could be interpreted as the basis of detection. I am not, in this argument, suggesting that 10 kHz/10.01 kHz tone differences cannot be detected, but just making a cautionary statement regarding the basis of an experiment where the experimenter has a knowledge of what to expect, where ideally the tones should be muted and randomised at the moment of change. After all, this is the major area of criticism of the objectivist on subjective methods. Surely, all we ask is for the subjective appraisal to be beyond reasonable criticism so that it is a meaningful tool in the process of evaluation that enables objective measure to be targeted rather than just chasing ghosts.

To conclude, I would like to say that we should all be wary of simple assessment models, particularly where equipment is measured in isolation, without due attention to interface and overall system response. For example, an amplifier with a perfect voltage transfer characteristic but non-linear input impedance could pass the Hafler test with flying colours yet, in the context of an overall system, exhibit imperfection. Likewise, although the appraisal of the subjectivist can be highly valued as their comments do reflect an overall system performance, without due care to experimental method and the collective opinion of several sensitive listeners, their conclusions can be equally personalised, misleading or systemdependent. Maybe we should all stick to treacle

Yours faithfully,

#### Hunt response

From: Keith Hunt, Hunt Steele & Partners Dear Sir, I would like to answer Mr Michael Wilcox's letter 'Views', Dec '88. First, may I

reassure *HFN/RR* readers that 'P2' has not ruined Mr Wilcox's two records.

We recognised, and took very seriously, our responsibilities towards audiophiles and record collectors when developing and marketing Hunt EDA Formula 'P2'. Our research work took many years to complete and included wear/abrasion tests, and extended soak tests. We even played LPs wet! We failed to affect the vinyl, and our destructive efforts only served to confirm that which we already knew, that the solvents in 'P2' are inert on records. 'P2' is safe to use, repeatedly.

I think we are the only company to run a record care 'hot-line', (0602) 420246; and that takes a lot of bold confidence. Invariably problems can be identified and resolved. Phone me, Michael!

I too would welcome a detailed series of reports on record cleaners, as long as manufacturers were guaranteed the right to reply. We do know the answers.

If Mr Wilcox doesn't understand how record cleaning machines work, then he probably doesn't understand how 'P2' works either. 'P2' must be used correctly, because it is, in part, a mechanical system. A call to our hotline can serve to correct faulty cleaning techniques. There are subtle features incorporated in the kit, that ensure maximum efficiency and performance from the inert solvents in the bottle. And that's why 'P2' works so well, not because the solvents are aggressive.

And what's in the bottle? A very pure form of dry-cleaning fluid, a drop of IPA, and that universal solvent H<sub>2</sub>0; not the snake-oil, mouse-milk and bullshit so often put about by yours truly.

Finally, we too liked the 'jellys'; if you can't get them try ordinary PVA woodworking adhesive. Record care is a serious subject, maybe I get the 'humour' wrong. Yours faithfully,

### CD-V: more questions than answers

From: Gordon H Fraser, Swindon

Dear Sir, I don't know that I can answer the question posed by Ian Leslie in 'Views'. December: 'Is (the launch of CD-V) a useful one?' Some further comments may, however, help him to make up his own mind.

CD-V must be viewed on a world basis and full technical details were revealed by John Watkinson (*IIFN/RR* Sept '88, p28). He makes the point that the NTSC (basically North American) version of CD-V is fully compatible with previous optical video disc systems (LaserVision [LV] and LaserDisc [LD]) in that any NTSC 8 or 12in disc will play on any NTSC player and give sound and vision; although, with analogue audio only if

a LV or LD or player is used.

For PAL CD-V (basically Europe) the above compatibility was impossible and the decision to upgrade video disc audio by the launch of CD-V effectively makes existing PAL LV and LD players obsolete as new material will only have digital audio. (Present CD-V players will also play LV or LD discs with analogue audio.) Both NTSC and PAL versions offer the new 120mm disc of 5 minutes audio and video plus 20 minutes audio only.

I understand that CD-V is being launched in this country as an audio system, though I can only try to guess why – perhaps the picture doesn't really matter, perhaps to encourage the public to build an expensive joint stack of audio visual equipment. Or perhaps the real video disc system is yet to be launched.

Much has been written recently about high definition TV (HDTV). It is however not promised for 1989; though 1989 should see the availability in the UK of programmes with multiplexed analogue component (MAC) video and stereo digital audio from a direct broadcasting satellite. Whilst MAC improves the picture, it is not considered HDTV. For further information on current thoughts on HDTV and PAL/NTSC compatibility, see for example references below. It is clearly quite possible that, eg satellite-delivered HDTV will come and that there might be a requirement for HDTV on video disc. But when? A year? A decade? A century? Whilst the present NTSC and PAL countries might agree on a common HDTV system, they also might choose different ones and at significantly different dates.

I can answer one question directly. It is possible to put teletext data on video disc and thus, in conjunction with a teletext equipped monitor, provide optional subtitles. I can see no reason why this is not used for multilingual subtitles for opera, films etc. LV disc BBC V1005L has English subtitles and other information on teletext which I can view very satisfactorily – there are only a few trivial errors from minor pressing faults.

The launch of Super VHS may well have some commercial impact on CD-V; technically. I think it is inferior to CD-V in both video and audio performance. Something strange would have happened if pre-recorded Super VHS tapes were cheaper or more durable than CD-V discs.

I don't think the use of 8in discs for audio would be a good idea – auto changing of standard single sided CDs at, eg movement breaks, seems best for compatibility etc.

I hope the above will, with the help of a crystal ball, answer the twin questions is the launch of NTSC CD-V useful? and is the launch of PAL CD-V useful?

The only comment I can make on the choice of name CD-V is that I winced every time I wrote it.

Yours faithfully,

HDTV references (AU Electronics and Wireless World) 1. 'IBC 1988', Richard Lambley, Dec 88 p1175.

2. 'Eureka 95 – a world standard. Tom Ivall. Sep 88 p845.

3. 'High definition television: The HDTV studio', M.D. Windram, G.J. Tonge, July 88 p710, 'Prospects and policy', Peter Wilson, July 88 p711.

#### Compact Disc tweets

From: G Teece, Manchester

Dear Sir, With regard to the dynamic range of compact disc: can anybody identify the species of bird chirping up in the rafters at the end of the solo drum track on the HFN/RR CD Test Disc?

Yours faithfully,

READERS' LETTERS Letters for publication should be addressed to the Editor and must contain no other material or enquiries. Letters seeking advice on technical matters will be answered, resources permitting, at our discretion but we regret that we are unable to answer questions on buying specific items of Hi-fi equipment. MICROFILMS & INDEXING Microfilm and microfiche copies of HFN/RR or articles therefrom are available commercially from University Microfilms International. North American applications to: 300 N. Zeeb Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, USA; UK and rest of world 30/32 Mortimer Street, London W1N 7RA. Technical articles of full page length or over appearing in Hi-Fi News & Record Review are detailed in the Current Technology Index. BINDERS Loose-leaf binders for annual volumes of HFN/RR are available from BINDERS, 78 Whalley Road, Wilpshire, Blackburn, Lancs. BB1 2LF, 1971 to 1982 are covered by two binders (Jan-June/July-Dec); subsequent years require one binder each. Price £4,50 each (post paid). For earlier years, please ask for a quotation.

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in the World (the British), is cheating you might say.

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Covent Garden Records, 84 Charing Cross

Harrods Ltd. Knightsbridge Brompton Road

Massey Radio 117 Chiswick High Road

Nicholls Hi Er 430 434 Lee High Road

PNR AudioVision 28 Tottenham Court Road

H L Smith 287 Edgware Road

Sound Sense 350 Edgware Road

Welbeck Video Plc 26 foltenham Court Road

Southern England: Absolute Sound & Video Ltd., 4 Feather Lane, Basingstoke Hants

Basildon Sony Centre Unil 46 Eastgate Int Shop Ctr Basildon Essex

Bexleyheath Sony Centre, 118 Broadway Bexleyheath Kent

Bournemouth Sony Centre, Westover Road

Bowers & Wilkins Ltd. 1 Beckett Buildings Littlehampton Road Worthing Sussex

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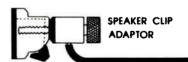
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#### PLUGAROUND WITH CAUTION

Heavy publicity for a new cordless | radiation of electromagnetic sound-distribution system mar-keted under the MGM banner has sparked concern over possible interference to the domestic mains supply. The £199 'Plugaround Sound' system distributed by IMC plc, London W1, comprises an encoder and two londs. prises an encoder and two loudspeakers, one with a built-in decoder, stereo amp and volume control. The Central Electricity Generating Board advised HFN/ RR not to install these units in domestic premises without the added protection of a filter on the mains distribution board as there was a risk that mains-borne interference would render the user liable to prosecution by the local electricity supply Board. While the Plugaround system was based on tried and tested devices like baby alarms and industrial security alarms, the CEGB spokesman said that sending sig-nals along transmission lines could cause intereference to a number of sources.

The British Standards Institution told HFN/RR that any such equipment should comply with the advisory BS 6839 although a mandatory Euronorm version of the Standard was to be introduced. According to the packaging, the MGM system meets only BS 414 which concerns itself not with interference but electrical safety. However, we have been able to establish that the Plugaround system is outside the scope of the Wireless Telegraphy Act and does not therefore require a licence. The Department of Trade and Industry did say though that interference problems could be dealt with by Regulations under Section 10 of the WT Act which

energy etc'.

The test sample of the Plugaround sent to HFN/RR was cautiously tested. Initial indications were of a presence of 100Hz mains-generated hum in the 'active' speaker and of problems in correctly adjusting the input level to the energizer without incurring distortion on peak signals or revealing noice on low-level passages. The concept of level passages. The concept of taking the mains intercom and developing it into an audio product is intriguing and incorporates



technology developed by Schotz. The principle is that a signal from a pre-amp or individual source is converted to two carrier frequencies of 345kHz left, and 485kHz right, to be sent along mains cable. A decoder built into a pair of small speakers then allows the reproduction of the signal source where there is a suitable mains outlet. In fact because of the nature of three-phase mains in the UK, it is possible to intercept the signal three buildings away as well. The small driver speakers are of limited quality but impressively the rated specification is of a S/N of 80dB, a 90dB dynamic range and 0.5% distortion.

Before operating these units, HFN/RR suggests that the local deals with 'Regulations as to Electricity Board is contacted. TB

#### CELESTION AT UNDER A TON

Celestion has launched a new loudspeaker to retail for £99.99 per pair, believed to be the least expensive system featuring a metal dome tweeter. The Celestion 3 is a two-way design using a two-piece 25mm titanium dome tweeter mounted in a moulded polycarbonate fascia. Lower frequencies are covered by a 130mm felted fibre cone bass/mid driver with an optimal hysteresis moulded surround to reduce coloration and provide articulate bass reproduction. The bass unit is mounted in an advanced engineering polycarbonate chassis and fascia which is strong, light and rigid. The crossover is a simple four element design with iron-dust-cored bass inductors on the first-order low pass and aircored inductors on the secondorder high pass, crossing over at 5kHz. The crossover is hardwired to the terminal pod; con-nections are via 4mm socket/bind-ing posts which accept plugs or bare wires. The 8 litre enclosure is (0473) 723131



made from 12mm high density particle board. Sensitivity of the system is 86dB/1W/1m and power handling is stated as 60W programme. The Celestion 3 is designed to operate either on

#### **DUAL'S NEW BUDGET DECK**

Dual has introduced a new low-price turntable in response to the minium arm tube, micro ball-race continuing drop in the cost of CD players. The company believes that this will change attitudes towards the price of entry-level analogue players. The CS 430 will retail for just £89.95, including an Ortofon-sourced cartridge. The Ortofon-sourced cartridge. The primary feature of the CS 430 is its two-part, high-density fibre board, computer cut plinth finished in a black veneer coating. The plinth is described as acoustically 'lossy' and rigid, and features a low profile lid with removable hinges. The CS 430's tonearm

bearings, balance weight, adjustable anti-skating, damped cueing, and auto-return. Drive is via a DC servo motor and flat belt to the aluminium platter; an anti-resonant mat is supplied. The CS 430 also features an outboard power supply to eliminate hum problems. The suspension con-sists of a steel subchassis resting on four absorbent rubber mounts. Hayden Laboratories Ltd, Chiltern Hill, Chalfon: St Peter, Bucks SL9 9UG Tel (0753) 888447

#### **NEW SPENDOR SPEAKER** The \$100, a 3-way reflex system. | ropylene coned unit to cover the

is the first of a number of new mid-range and a 19mm high grade speakers from Spendor planned for 1989. Matching the SP1 in neutrality and low coloration, the new model has extended bass response and increased power handling. The drivers are 12in beytrene-coned units with an advalance of the speakers from Spendor planned soft-domed tweeter. Tri-wiring is available on this £1100 product (price per pair) while the dimensions are 700x370×430 mm (hwd). Spendor Audio Systems Ltd, Station Road Industrial beytrene-coned units with an advalance of the speakers from Spendor planned soft-domed tweeter. Tri-wiring is available on this £1100 product (price per pair) while the dimensions are 700x370×430 mm (hwd). Spendor Audio Systems Ltd, Station Road Industrial beytrene-coned units with an advalance of the speakers from Spendor planned soft-domed tweeter. Tri-wiring is available on this £1100 product (price per pair) while the dimensions are 700x370×430 mm (hwd). Spendor Audio Systems Ltd, Station Road Industrial beytrene-coned units with an advalance of the spendor from the spendor f bextrene-coned units with an adv-anced 6in homopolymer polyp-BN27 2ER Tel (0323) 843474.

#### SURROUND SOUND COMES TO LIFE

sub-bass of surround sound systems. He says that it is locked in, has purpose-designed 8in and 10in dual-voice coil drivers plus a soph-

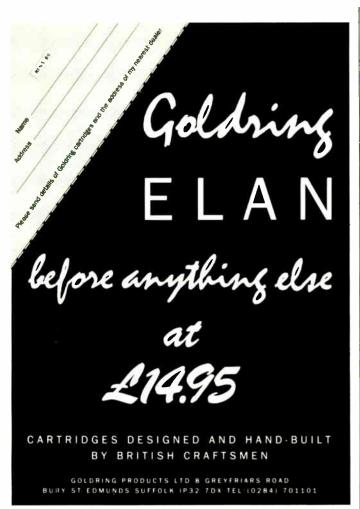
David Lyth of Volt Loudspeakers | below 120Hz is lost. With dual claims to have solved the problem rear suspension and a dual voice of unlocking the gut-thumping coil to give an accurate sum of left and right signals and improve linearity and stability (obviating and waiting to get out - until now it hasn't been able to. David Lyth drivers) the crossover is not merely a low-pass filter but a two-way network. In flatpack isticated crossover assembly to form the unit is available at £170 decipher and reproduce sub-bass for the 8in and £215 for the 10in form the unit is available at £170 by connecting a single speaker unit to existing wires. Just one additional speaker is necessary since much of the stereo signal 1AS Tel (0625) 529599



#### NEW FROM VAN DEN HUL

Viper has reduced the price of existing models. The MC10 m-c is reduced by £100 to £449, while the MC One will now sell for foot me with a price of £899 is the first existing models. The MC10 m-c is reduced by £100 to £449, while the MC One will now sell for said that early samples of the new £699. The new cartridges are now the MC One Super and the MC performances. Viper, PO Box 13, Two. The first is an improved London E18 1EG.

Announcing two new models in version of the MC One and is to



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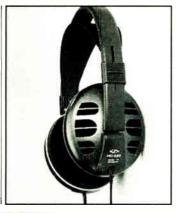


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#### SENNHEISER ADDS TWO 'PHONES

Two new models have been added to the Sennheiser range of headphones to replace the existing HD 420/430 models. The HD 520 (£59.95) features a copper voice coil tuned for the deepest bass performance, while the HD 530 contains an aluminium voice coil tuned for maximum clarity. Both models feature over-sized diaphragms, neodymium-iron magnets, unbreakable headbands, fully modular construc-tion, 600ohm impedance and high sensitivity. Hayden Laboratories Ltd, Chiltern Hill, Chalfont St Peter, Bucks SL9 9UG Tel (0753) 888447



#### TECHNICS PORTABLE CD PLAYER

availability of a remote-controlled portable CD player - the SL-XP6. Supplied with rechargeable batteries to give a claimed two hours of playback, the new player can be recharged in just three hours. Higher voltage, dry disposable cells will give up to three and a half hours of playing. A novel feature to be included in the SL-XP6 is Resume Play whereby the player is able to start at the beginning of a temporarily inter-

Technics has announced the rupted track, thus negating the need for skip keys. Random play is also incorporated together with a multi-function LCD. This new machine measures just 126x28x128mm and costs around £230. Panasonic Consumer Electronics, 300 Bath Road, Slough, Berkshire Tel (0753) 345222. [Among the first owners of an SL-XP6 is the Second Prize winner in our Technics/Telarc competition: see 'Competition Winners' - Ed]

#### **BADA OPEN HOUSE**

The British Audio Dealers' Asso- | most manufacturers will in due ciation (BADA) has now opened its doors to manufacturers, importers, distributors and publishers in what it says is an endeavour to provide a central channel of communication for the entire industry. The Association plans to hold ish Audio (who at present repreregular liaison meetings in order to discuss matters of concern to all sides. A number of companies has already been signed up, these include: Acoustic Research, A&R Cambridge, KEF, Linn, Musical best use of BADA's effective Fidelity, Rotel, Sony and function as a voice and forum for Yamaha. BADA expects that the industry.

course seek affiliation to the organization whose original concept was to enlist the support of dedicated specialist dealers to provide a standard of service to the end user. What the Federation of Britsent the interests of British hi-fi manufacturers) will make of this, remains to be seen. BADA told HFN/RR that it thought companies would join to make the best use of BADA's effective

#### **CELLO SWITCH BOX**

Aston Audio is distributing, under the Cello banner, a new switch box - the Etude. Capable of handling four line-level inputs via phono sockets, the device includes a 59 position attenuator control. This was designed by Cello when the company could not find a conventional control to meet their needs. All the settings are calibrated in precise 1dB steps while the bushing and shaft are stainless steel with a milled brass index plate. The Etude costs £795 and is available from specialist Alderley Edge, Cheshire SK9 retailers. Aston Audio Limited, 7EG Tel (0625) 582704



Lightbrook House, 4 West Street,

#### **BRIEFING**

A&R CAMBRIDGE (ARCAM) has been awarded the Absolute Sound and Video Supplier of the Year Award for 1988 by a majority of nearly two to one. The presentation was made by Jerry Lewin after the 1988 Absolute Screem – a company and suppliers visit to Alton Towers theme park. AUDIO INNOVATIONS of Brighton has ceased trading after a meeting of creditors to decide the future of the company. Haines Watts Insolvancy Services has been appointed to investigate on behalf of creditors.

BMG CLASSICS has announced ambitious recording plans involving Soviet artists, and Sir Colin Davis. Sir Colin will record the Brahms Symphonies, and German Requiem, Beethoven's Missa Solemnis and Fidelio; the Marriage of Figaro, Wagner's Meistersinger and Dutchman; Bach's Bminor Mass, and Weill's Seven Deadly Sins - all with the Bavarian RSO. In Dresden he will

record Debussy's *Pelleas*.

Eurodisc will become BMG's principal opera/vocal/choral label Slatkin will undertake Rosenkavalier and Salome; Flor will record Haydn's Seasons and Creation, Mendelssohn oratorios, Strauss, and Verdi. BMG has assumed distribution of the Deutsche harmonia Mundi catalogue: new recordings will supplement the existing 700 titles, a 'Günter Wand Collection' will appear on RCA. There will be speakers available from Good-

more Broadway original cast recordings, and crossover releases on RCA Victor.

Soviet signings include Yuri Termirkanov, who will record with the RPO (Stravinsky ballets, Tchaikovsky symphonies, Mussorgsky's Pictures), Philadelphia (Sibellius 2, French/Russian orchestral), and Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestras. Vladimir Spivakov will record with the Moscow Virtuosi: a Shostakovich coupling will feature the young pianist Evgeny Kissin, whose Red Seal debut is in Rachmaninov's Concerto 2, with the LSO. Cellist Natalia Gutman starts a long-term contract with the two Shostakovich Concertos; Yuri Bashmet will record Schnittke's Viola Concerto, and a recital album.

AUDIOFREAKS has acquired the UK distribution rights for the American-manufactured Sound-Lab range of electrostatic loudspeakers. As we go to print, the price details are not available. Audiofreaks Ltd, 15 Link Way, Ham, Surrey Tel 01-948 4153.

MAXELL is to start manufacturing audio tape at its Telford factory following the announcement that trade regulations will be relaxed from 1992 with increased sales of the product throughout Europe. At present the plant makes the company's video product.

GOODMANS has moved to 1 and

rated at 100W, the D260 (£200) is Street, Slough. Berkshire Tel capable of 180W and the D360 (0753) 20244 version at £300 is rated at 200 STS, the French hi-fi sound spewatts. The D260 and D360 are supplied with castors.

LINEARITY. Graphs in last sound quality in a large auditormonth's reviews of the Marantz CD85 and Technics SL-P200 CD is seated. Called STS Omniplayers were erroneously marked directional, the system delivers an be ignored, as both axes of these cover an entire room with true graphs are scaled in dB.

NATIONAL SOUND ARCHIVE has announced some new titles relating to recorded sound and the history of recording. The World Music Series boasts two additions: Sidiki Diabate & Ensemble, Ba
Togoma (Mading music from
Mali) and Music of the Tukano
and Cuna Peoples of Colombia,
Nine, Penta Hotel Heathrow. For 1960s recordings among the details contact Sound And Com-indigenous peoples of Colombia munications Industries Federaand the Amazon. Under the Poption, 4b High Street, Burnham, and Jazz banner, *Popular Music* Slough SL1 7JH Tel (0628 6) Periodicals Index is published and 67633 embraces musical styles from folk to funk, old-time to new-wave. An interesting title also just released is Vertical-cut Cylinders and Discs, a catalogue of all Hill & Dale recordings made and issued between 1897 and 1932. National Sound Archive, 29 Exhibition Road, London SW7 2AS Tel 01-589 6603 SPACEMADE as its name sug-

gests is a flat-pack, self-assembly furniture range catering for TV, video and audio applications. Imported exclusively from 3 APRIL Absolute Sounds

mans. The D160 model (£150) is | Australia, details from 4 Park

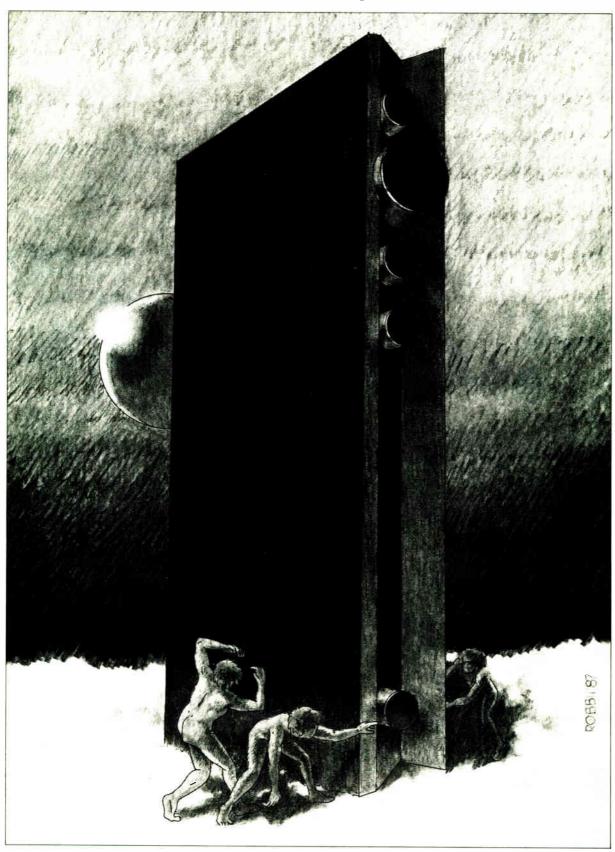
cialist, has introduced a high definition sound system designed to dramatically improve the stereo ium no matter where the listener with a frequency scale: this should even 'sound blanket' needed to stereo sound and eliminate annoying mono pockets. Dolby Stereo, Dolby SR, digital sound like CD and DAT, can all be accommodated with the threedirectional speaker units arranged in a fan-shape over 120 degrees.

27 FEBRUARY Quad Musical Evening sponsored by Aston Audio. Stanneylands Hotel. Wilmslow, Cheshire. Call (0625) 582704 for tickets

7-10 MARCH 86th AES Convention, Hamburg, West Germany. 29 For details contact Norman W7 Bolewski, Malvenstrasse 12, D-1000 Berlin 45, W Germany Tel +30/8 31 28 10

12-18 MARCH Leipzig Spring Fair. Postfash 720, Leipzig DDR-7010

## PREHISTORIC PRE



When the impossible becomes reality, history is made. The Aragon 24K preamplifier........... don't take our word for it - try it for yourself.



#### DIESIS LAUNCHES AMPLIFIER

The DA 310 is the new amplifier m-m phono input, CD, tuner, from Diesis and incorporates MOSFET technology to produce 40watts/channel. It features an internally-switched bridged mode function to enable it to be uprated to 80W when combined with the DA 300 power amplifier. Both direct and switched speaker terdirect and switched speaker ter-minals are available to allow for headphones. The DA 310 has Beacon Hill, Hindhead, Surrey.

tape and aux, while the 300 model can be used directly with a high output CD player or similar line-level source. When used in bridged mono mode, the volume control is by-passed. The DA 310 costs £169 while the DA 300 is

#### LAZARUS EXPANDS PRE-AMP LINE-UP

Basic valve pre-amplifier, has released two new models as a direct response to greater flexibility requirements. Both the Cascade Classice (US \$950) and Cascade Deluxe (US \$1150) feature six inputs with full switching flexibility. Housed in slim-line black anodized cases, the units offer source-select and recordselect, master volume control with 6477

Lazarus Electronics, the Amer-I duel balance attenuators, standby ican firm best known for its mode switch, and auto-muting affordable (US \$650) Cascade facility. High quality parts are mode switch, and auto-muting used throughout, including Tif-fany input/output sockets. The fany input/output sockets. Cascade Deluxe also incorporates a FET input stage to allow the use of low-output moving-coil cartridges. Lazarus Electronics, 8130 Coldwater Canyon, North Hollywood, California 91605, USA. For further information, contact Brent Kay on (010-1) (818) 982-



#### REVOX LAUNCHES BUDGET SYSTEM

As previewed at The Hi-Fi Show Revox now offers its new Series 100 components, a 'budget' range offering Revox quality at a lower price. The savings result from the inclusion of fewer features than provided with the existing Series 200 components. Even so, the Series 100 still feature full infrared remote control and multiroom capability. The system consists of the B150 integrated amplifier (£875); B160 tuner (£667); B160 tuner with RDS (£789); and the B126 CD player (£649). The system is completed by the B215 cassette deck (£1354). WO Bauch, 49 Theobald



Street, Boreham Wood, Herts WD6 4RZ Tel 01-953 0091

#### **COMPETITION WINNERS**

Results of two HFN/RR competitions are now to hand. In our November '88 Technics/Telarc competition, First Prize of a Technics SL-P1200 CD player plus six Telarc discs goes to Alan Gillies of Preston; Second Prize, an SL-P350 plus four discs to J Willis of Dorset; and Third Prize, an SL-XP6 portable plus two discs, to Gordon Welford of Cleveland. Ten runners-up receive HFN/RR subscriptions: they are K Cooke, P Davey, S Flynn, S Garnett, M Hardy, R Harry, Mrs B Hawkins, G Newton-Wade and N Long

Goh. First Prize winner in our December '88 Hi-Fi Experience competition is Mr A MacRae of Midlothian. He will be auditioning equipment of his choice at the new Hi-Fi Experience store in Bath Street, Glasgow, and will be able to take £1000 worth home with him. Ten runners-up receive HFN/RR Test Compact Discs: they are G Baker, J Beale, P Bowden, K Fifield, N de Fonseka, C Humphries, Mrs A McCafferty, P Mumford, L Taylor and J Westbourne. Congratulations to all these winners!

Musical Evening sponsored by A council member of the trade Aston Audio. Stanneylands association BREMA, Brian was Hotel, Wilmslow, Cheshire. Call (0625) 582704 for tickets

13-18 APRIL Satis 89 European Trade Fair for audio/visual techniques. Parc des Expositions de la Porte de Versailles, Paris, France 18-21 APRIL Fiarex 89 International Trade Fair, Rai Centre, Amsterdam, Holland. For details, contact RAI Gebouw BV, Europaplein, 1078 GZ Amsterdam, Holland Tel (0) 20-549 12 12, Fax 020-46 10 06

5 JULY 18th Annual International Trombone Workshop, Eton College, Windsor 8-17 SEPTEMBER Montreal

International Music Festival, Montreal, Ouebec, Canada

14-17 SEPTEMBER The Hi-Fi Show, sponsored by HFN/RR, Penta Hotel Heathrow. Trade only 14-15 Sept. Tel 01-686 2599 18-21 SEPTEMBER MediaVisie, audio-visual media trade fair. RAI International Exhibition Centre, Amsterdam, Holland. For information, phone YJ Joustra on (0) 20-549 12 12

25-28 OCTOBER Broadcast '89 Frankfurt Fairground, Frankfurt, W Germany. For details contact Wilhelm P Hosenseidl on (069) 7575-6452

#### **OBITUARY**

BRIAN REILLY, nine years chairman of Panasonic UK and a highly respected figure in the con-

involved in a number of charitable works. He is leaves his wife Jeannie to whom he was married for 38 years, a son, four daughters and six grandchildren. He will be greatly missed by all at Panasonic and those in the Industry.

#### PEOPLE

DAVID McDOWELL is now handling Spendor products as well as Quad and SME in his capacity as freelance sales agent.

**GAVIN MORRIS and GORDON** TAYLOR have joined Linx Audio (UK) Ltd to work on design and production. Gavin is known for his design of the Nebula and Quasar models while Gordon has designed the Theta tuner and the larger Linx model amplifiers. PETER CRAWFORD becomes Linx's worldwide sales director while IAN BOLT will concentrate on the company's policy and structure as promotional and

marketing director.

NIGEL KINNIBURGH, and not Philip Hunsley as we reported, is the proprietor of In Hi-Fi of Edinburgh, a nominee for the Scotland and Northern Ireland category of the Sony/HFN Dealer Awards 1988

WALFREDRO TOSCANINI has joined Artec Consultants Incorporated and will specialize in acoustic design. With many years experience in architectural pracsumer electronics world has died. Itice, Mr Toscanini will work on long-term planning and feasibility | studies for a company which has already worked on auditoriums around the world such as the Birmingham International Centre, Pennsylvania Symphony Hall and the Toronto Ballet Opera House.

#### SHOP TALK

ACTIVE AUDIO of Osmaston Road, The Spot, Derby, has joined BADA and opened new premises at Market Street, Tamworth, Staffs, a 200-year-old listed building with two demonstration rooms - one for comparisons and one for single speaker demos

COMPACT MUSIC is a new specialist shop stocking a number of lines including Albarry, Alexander, QED, Audio-Technica and SD Acoustics. Services offered include: two-year guarantee, home demonstrations/installation, and seven-day return facility. Compact Music, 27 Market Parade, Havant, Hants PO9 1PY Tel (0705) 473952

HI FI EXPERIENCE has opened its first shop in Scotland, Under Hi-Fi Corner's Colin McKenzie, the new outlet can be found at 145 Bath Street, Glasgow. It's managed by Bob Lamont with the help of colleagues Barry and Gordon. Three demo rooms are planned and the shop will cater for 'up market' brands.

MOORGATE ACOUSTICS has joined BADA and added to its stration room.

existing shop at Westgate, Rotherham with new premises at Fitzwilliam Street in Sheffield run by Paul Hobson, son of the company's owner Keith Hobson. NEWCASTLE HI-FI at 153 Ken-

ton Road, Gosforth is run by Allan Williams and Guy Suttle previously of Cam Audio. The new north-east specialist shop will stock Linn. A&R and Mission. OXFORD AUDIO CONSUL-TANTS can be found at Cantay House, Park End Place, Oxford Tel (0865) 790897. This information was omitted from our report

of their musical evening.

PRACTICAL HI-FI (Lancaster and Blackpool), THE HI-FI PEOPLE of Peterborough and KJ LEISURESOUND of London W1 have all announced their recent resignation from the trade association BADA

STEREO STEREO in Glasgow has joined BADA. The shop, run by Lyric Hi-Fi, opened a year ago with two demonstration rooms and is managed by Peter Nowicki. DAWSONS RADIO, a nominee for the Sony National ES Dealer of the Year, is located in Westbourne, Bournemouth, not Birmingham as Sony advised us and as we reported.

QUEENS HI-FI of Barnstaple has changed its name to 'Q for Hi-fi' and moved to new premises at 16 Silver Street. Two complete floors allow proprietor Jim Straker to have a totally separate demon-



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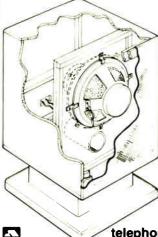


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This is its actual size.

Quite simply, it makes a small loudspeaker sound like a big one.

As an integral part of the system, it doesn't cost any more.

Model 102, as you can gather, is quite small (a mere 11 litres to be precise).

Everyone knows that small boxes aren't very sensitive and don't have much bass.

Until now.

Model 102 has high sensitivity (92db/2.83v/IM. for the technical), with bass extension to 40 Hz (-6db).

If that sounds impressive, there is more.

KUBE also allows you much greater freedom in loudspeaker positioning by using the Contour control to achieve a natural

balance, compensating for room boundary reinforcement effects.

KEF hybrid technology makes it possible. Here part of the crossover is active minimising sensitivity losses. Dedicated low frequency equalisation extends the bass cut-off frequency lower than it would be with a conventional speaker.

So you don't necessarily need a big amplifier or acres of space.

But then, of course, some people simply prefer small loudspeakers.

For them, there is none capable of out performing the 102.

The proof is waiting at your KEF Reference dealer now.

Ask him for a demonstration and you'll be in for a surprise.

In fact, a much bigger surprise than you'd have thought possible.



For further information on the KEF Reference Series and KUBE, write to: KEF ELECTRONICS LTD., Tovil, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6QP. Telephone: (0622) 672261. Fax (0622) 50653.

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How do we convince you and your wallet to part company with more than a hundred pounds for a set of headphones?

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Do we tell you that the Beyer DT 990 and DT 770 are compatible with compact disc players? Yes, but who doesn't?

Or, do we mention that you can listen to anyone from Mozart to McCartney, while someone else in the room is playing the organ? (an unlikely event, we admit, but you never know what turns people on).

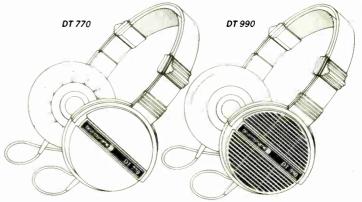
Perhaps we could persuade you that it will go nicely with other status symbols, like your Porsche.

Wait a minute, though, we haven't mentioned the most important thing, yet. The sound.

If we can blind you with science for a moment, here are just a few outstanding features that should help to convince you.

The DT 990 is an open headphone with an unbelievable frequency response of 5-35,000 Hz. The

unique technology used to achieve the very low mass of the diaphragm and moving coil assembly (only 20% of that found on a typical competitor's headphone), results in an exceptionally transient response and a reduction in the non-linear distortion, qualities normally found only in the best electrostatic headphone.



The DT 770 closed headphone combines the latest transducer technology with a unique bass reflex system. This achieves a superb bass response with well defined sound image, plus excellent pulse characteristics.

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You just can't compare them to anything else, simply because there's

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## TECHNOLOGY•

HE BBC's Radio Data System, RDS, is now in operation, although there are only a few car receivers able to make use of the coded signals now being transmitted by the BBC's FM radio stations. But give it time. The BBC has invested heavily in converting its transmitters to lead the market with software. The hardware revolution is bound to follow.

Within a few years most car radios should have RDS, to keep them tuned to a chosen programme as the driver moves between the areas covered by different transmitters using different frequencies, and to switch temporarily to Local Radio stations when there is traffic news affecting the area.

The coded signals are on an AM modulated sub-carrier at 57kHz, with a data rate of 1187.5 bits/second. This is a European standard, set by the EBU, and it looks likely to be adopted worldwide.

There are a few technical details still to be worked through but the main snag is logistical. The BBC will have to rely on its Local Radio stations to broadcast every item of traffic news for the area, which means even more traffic news on Local Radio than at present. This will be fine for motorists who are listening to a cassette or to network BBC Radio 1, 2, 3 or 4 and are automatically switched to the local station just for the traffic flash; but it will be a lot less fun for people who are listening to BBC Local Radio in their bath and don't want or need traffic news.

Only time will tell what this does to the BBC's Local Radio ratings.

Ironically, although the British Government now welcomes RDS with open arms, it was the Government's lack of interest in similar technology ten years ago that has condemned bathers to a diet of traffic news.

In the late seventies the BBC developed a system called Carfax, which used cellular radio techniques on the medium wave. The plan was for a network of transmitters around the country to share the same frequency, and use it only to broadcast traffic news. By carefully juggling transmitter strengths and ensuring that adjacent transmitters weren't switched on at the same time, drivers would only hear the traffic news applicable to the area through which they were moving. As with RDS traffic flashes, the Carfax transmissions would temporarily over-ride whatever else the car radio was playing. But the Government was not able to allocate even one MF frequency for Carfax, so the idea died.

I am now watching with interest to see whether the BBC ever picks up on an idea which I proposed back in August 1987. I had bought a short wave radio to take on holiday abroad for listening to the BBC World Service, and found it well nigh impossible to track down the right frequencies because they keep changing.

So I suggested to the BBC at Bush House that they should look at the possibility of using RDS technology to let a short wave radio tune automatically to the strongest World Service broadcast in the area. Clearly it is impossible to put a 57kHz carrier on the short and medium wave frequencies used for World Service. But there is an alternative technique, which the BBC already uses on the long wave band to help the electricity boards remotely switch meters from one tariff to another. This teleswitching system relies on moving the phase of the broadcast carrier wave backwards and forwards by 20 degrees to convey 25 bits of digital data per second.

Although this data rate is far slower than RDS on VHF FM, it should be adequate to carry a simple This is World Service automatic identification code. Because short wave broadcasts are often distorted by reflection, it might take a receiver a few seconds to decode an identification code and self-tune. but that would be a small price to pay.

When I put up the idea, Bush House engineers said they were interested, would do some tests and get back to me. As previously reported, I never heard back. And when I chased things up a year later, all I got was a garbled explanation of how RDS worked. So I gave up chasing and will see how long it takes before the BBC proudly announces a clever plan to use RDS on World Service.

This incident made me feel great sympathy for any inventor who tries to sell an idea to an organization like the BBC. I wasn't trying to sell the BBC anything, I was just making a helpful suggestion. And I got passed round in circles.

It's called the NIH syndrome, Not Invented Here. Some people who work for large organizations feel it their duty to get rid of suggestions coming from outside, in case their bosses ask why no-one inside the organization was bright enough to come up with the same idea.

#### Finial questions

The New Year began with the news that Finial has decided not to market the laser turntable after all (Feb 'Comment'; this month's Vegas show report). So it's tough luck on the investors who have sunk around \$5 million in the project. Perhaps they will ask more questions next time someone comes up with a similarly dubious plan. The sadness is that the Finial fiasco will make it difficult for inventors with more worthwhile ideas to raise money.

Jacques Robinson's reasoning is dubious. 'We have decided not to market the laser turntable.' says Robinson, Finial's Chairman, 'this decision was made after we completed the initial production run and concluded that the unit is too expensive to produce'. Radio station libraries, especially in Europe, have been falling over themselves to get hold of a turntable which plays old records without causing any further wear to the groove. It is more likely that Finial found it could not produce a turntable that worked reliably, at any price.

Others have tried and failed. The big question now is whether any other company, probably Japanese, will re-engineer the design. If this happens then Finial will doubtless try and enforce the patent applications which it filed. Their value is, however, uncertain.

After my last report on the patent application filed by Finial, many readers put forward the view that Finial technology was not anywhere near as novel as the company claims. They too worry that Finial's antics will spoil things for future innovators.

In 1975 Plessey hawked the idea of an optical turntable round the hi-fi industry. A string of manufacturers were offered the chance to buy a licence for a turntable designed by Peter Waterworth and Douglas Reid. The patent they filed with Plessey, (BP 1,479,659) is still on library shelves.

The Plessey patent was filed in 1974 and it describes how a record groove can be read by two photo sensors, one each side of the groove. When a light beam is shone down on



#### BARRYFOX

the disc surface, more light reflects off the smooth, flat land between the grooves, than it does off the angled and roughened groove walls. Comparing the amount of light sensed at each side of the groove gives an electrical analogue of the way in which the groove walls differ and this represents the audio signal recorded in the groove.

It remains to be seen whether the European Patent Office judge Finial's patent application (247,810) novel over the Plessey design (which was published 10 years before Finial's filing). This will be of vital importance to Finial, if the Japanese take up the challenge.

Why did Garrard not make an optical turntable; and why did other electronics companies turn down the chance of making the turntable under licence from Plessey?

Quite simply engineers doubted that the idea could be made to work reliably. One concern was that the read-out system could not cope with records cut with deliberate pre-distortion. In the mid seventies several record companies were using techniques for distorting the audio signal before it is cut on disc, to compensate for tracing distortion, especially in the inner grooves.

Some tracing distortion is inevitable, because LP records are cut with a chisel-shaped stylus which parallel-tracks across the disc blank – but records are played with a spherical or elliptical tip which is usually mounted on a pivotal arm.

RCA had most success with pre-distortion, and their Dynagroove system was used to cut many discs. Obviously an optical read-out mechanism will not produce the same tracing-distortion as a stylus, so an optical system will reproduce the Dynagroove pre-distortion as if it were part of the music signal. This worried at least one manufacturer enough to turn the Plessey idea down flat.

If Finial was to sell turntables to the libraries which were waving blank cheques for a no-wear system, it would immediately hit problems with RCA discs. And that is in addition to the even bigger problem of tracking warped, eccentric, scratched and dirty discs.

No wonder that while Finial was still telling investors that the turntable was nearly ready for sale, the only demonstrations given were under closely controlled conditions, with records chosen by the demonstrator. No wonder no turntables were allowed out to reviewers who might do something as antisocial as trying to play imperfect discs or Dynagroove recordings.

# Pinewood Music

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## HEADROOM.

HOSE WHO LIVE ALONE have only their own tastes to consider when placing speaker stands in the living space. For the rest there are spouses or parents or flatmates to appease, and I find it amazing that so many truly hideous speaker supports are sold at a time when this nation has never been more house-proud or style-conscious. Aside from some dedicated stands (eg the Celestion SL700 support) and some nicely-finished stands which can look 'of a piece' (the Foundation Designer), most have the visual appeal of scaffolding. It rather diminishes the performance gains when you spend the rest of your other half. (As an anniversary gesture to Mrs K, I'm removing the RATA Torlytes from her line of vision.)

The Slate Audio alternative is an immaculately-finished support made from Welsh slate (I haven't seen the white marble version). The edges are cut perfectly, the grey/black matt finish is discreet and tasteful, and it blends visually with any small, black-grilled speaker. Sonically, the performance is in between the Partington Dreadnought and the Designer, but I'm at a loss to describe the modus operandi of slate. As you'd expect, it's an acoustically dead material, so it acts as a sublimely rigid support. Smearing was minimized with great effectiveness and the bass performance elicited from wooden cabinet speakers was on a par with the best stands I've used. (Contrary to Slate Audio's findings, I wasn't happy with the results when using the aerolam'd SL600s or SL700s, which worked better to my ears with the SL700 stands.) Fitted with three sharp spikes below, it's self-levelling, with small ball-type contacts on the top plate which will not damage speaker cabinets.

The latter proved a perfect and safe coupling method. When I tried Blu-Tack with the slates, the result was the opposite of that with the Foundations, which *must* be used with the gummy substance. To learn if these non-piercing ball-points gave up anything to sharp cones, I tried small TipToe types in their place and harvested no gains. This discovery by Slate Audio will prove to be a major comfort to those of you who wish to improve your speaker-to-stand contact without damaging the cabinetry.

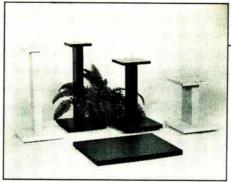
The stands are available in 12, 18 and 24in heights, £295 for slate and £345 for white marble, and the company will also undertake custom work. (I heard that they made a pair for an LS3/5A fanatic with the pillar to the same cross-section as the speaker. Apparently, the cost – and weight – was heart-stopping.) Slate Audio reside at 47 Gemini Close, Leighton Buzzard, Beds LU7 8UD, tel (0525) 384174.

Despite the logo in the corner, this column isn't exclusively about valve products. Still, the tubes keep on comin' and I have yet to deal with the new Concordant Excelsior and Audion pre-amplifiers, an integrated amplifier from Audio Innovations and the Valfet monoblock power amplifier, all of which arrived within days of each other. And then there's the Verna pre-amp, which has elicited an enthusiastic letter from Mr Greenhalgh ('Views', January).

There are a couple of reasons concerning the delay of my comments on the Verna, one being that I had a row with Verna's David Peart. This had no bearing at all on the worth of the product and involved nothing more than a breakdown in communication about the timing of the collection of the review sample, but I was not certain that I could keep the clash from tainting my remarks. So, doing my best to prevent non-related influences from affecting my response to this product, here goes.

Readers with long-ish memories will recall the Glassic all-valve head-amp, also referred to by Mr Greenhalgh. He seems to think that I 'seriously underestimated the Glassic', so for the record – I will state that it's one of the better-sounding step-ups I've used. Given that the Glassic is such a success, the prospect of a pre-amp from the same source couldn't help but interest Glassic fans.

You can tell that Peart adheres to the same philosophy in the all-valve Verna because it's also a two-box affair with the power supply isolated from the pre-amp proper. And he has managed to cram a lot into these quite small containers, the recipe reading like a course in how to do it. In addition to the hum-reducing two-box geography, the Verna incorporates single-point earthing, no overall feedback, three 'double' valves per channel (that's six triode sections per side), gold-plated phono sockets, double-sided PCBs, silver-plated contacts on the selector switch. and on and on. Even the brand names are inspiring, with the Verna sporting Holco 1% metal film resistors, Roederstein capacitors the company even uses Tweek on the valves before assembly. Despite the almost agricultural exterior, this pre-amplifier is about as up-to-date an all-valve design as has been



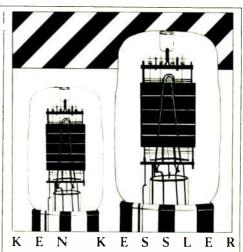
Domestic harmony: the Slate Audio stands

made in the UK.

One particularly neat feature is a twosetting phono stage. Although this pre-amp has only a moving-magnet stage (you add the Glassic for m-c), it's internally switchable for 47 or 12k-ohm impedance, thus making it a Decca owner's delight.

All of this contributes to the Verna's wonderfully quiet, hash-free performance despite a high valve count. Microphony was never a problem, it handled all sources with confidence (especially CD) and did what a good, near-high-end pre-amp should do. Operation was delightful, again belying its appearance, while the sound quality was on a par with amplifiers selling for over four figures. But I have reservations which concern matters other than performances, and they're paramount issues if you accept that a reviewer's first obligation is to his readers.

A never-ending debate in criticism of the Press involves the reviewing of hard-to-find products from small companies. I cannot even begin to count the number of times that established manufacturers have asked why magazines publish so much about new, unproven companies; they argue that it's a disservice to lead readers toward purchases from one-, two- or even ten-man operations



which lack a track record. Yes, it's chickenand-egg, but you can end the argument by pointing out that KEF started in a Nissen hut, Audio Research by modifying Dynaco gear at the back of a shop and so on, eventually reminding them that every company had to start somewhere. They counter with a list of companies which went belly-up in the first year or two, but that's not the point. A product from a tiny concern has as much right to column-inches as one from Sony or Linn. Besides, I don't think that any reader can be unaware of the risks of purchasing gear from new companies; you're hardly likely to mistake the stability of a cottage industry manufacturer with that of Matsushita.

Still, this remains a concern which affects every review that anyone writes about products from new or small manufacturers. With Verna, matters are compounded by the marketing arrangements, which changed during the period in which I had the review sample. Initially, Peart intended to set up a retail network; this would have placed the Verna in the £1300-£1400 bracket, which I felt was pushing it a little bit. Peart has since decided to sell directly to the customer, which means a near-halving of the price to a sensible £750. But it does affect the way in which you must go about purchasing the product, which is basically on trust. With satisfied customers like Mr Greenhalgh, Verna can attest to more valid recommendations than endorsement-via-review, so any success will be a result of that most confidence-inspiring of testimonials: word of mouth. But it does make mention of the Verna as much of a wind-up as a review of something which isn't imported into the UK. Simply stated, you can't pop down to your local dealer for a comparative demonstration. And I don't want to see the look on the faces of readers in, say, Dover when they find out that they have to contact Peart in Chester.

But I'd love to be proven wrong. Some enthusiasts probably are capable of putting absolute performance above all other concerns, and may find that the deliciously musical and warm qualities of the Verna outweigh the inconvenience of direct purchasing instead of local dealer support and the lacklustre industrial styling. David Peart can be contacted at 29 Greenway Street, Handbridge, Chester CH4 7JS, or on (0244) 675185. Mr Greenhalgh points out that Peart provides the kind of personal service which we'd like to see available from everybody in the industry, so direct purchasing may prove to be a joy rather than a hindrance.

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development of every design detail, coupled with the use of the  $highest\,grade\,components.\,All\,discrete, Class\,A\,circuitry\,uses\,l\,\%$ metal film resistors and metallized polypropylene capacitors with oxygen free copper leads. Components are mounted on a military grade glass epoxy printed circuit board, and external connections are made via gold-plated sockets. A muting circuit prevents switch-on 'thumps'.

 $SUMO's \ of fered sound \ which approaches the upper level, easily justifying a total \ price$ of £1190 — power aplenty, excellent recovery of detail  $\ldots$  politeness coupled with real energy . . . I'm hard pressed to name a UK-made pre/power combo at the same price point which inspires the same confidence'.

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THE NINE PLUS Class A power

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Prices are suggested retail including VAT.

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## HI-FINEWS AWARD FOR ACHIEVEMENTS IN AUDIO

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N A TRADITION THAT extends back to the days of the old Audio Awards, presented for the last time in 1982 to Vernon Handley and Peter Walker, the annual *Hi-Fi News* Lifetime Achievement Awards are presented to mark outstanding contributions to the world of hi-fi.

Whereas the Audio Awards progressed from a mainly musical basis to include the 'behind the scenes' boffins, the *Hi-Fi News* Awards were, from the outset, intended to celebrate the achievements of hi-fi engineers, journalists, artists and performers.

In the first year of the revised award, 1985, six people were honoured: three from the UK and three from America, all of whom had, in their own ways, exerted a profound influence on music. There were four engineers: David Hafler, Stanley Kelly, Edgar Villchur and Peter Walker, and two audio journalists: Donald Aldous and J Gordon Holt.

The 1986 recipients also split the home-based with the Americans; from home shores John Gilbert and Arthur Radford, and from the States, Saul Marantz and Harry Peterson. A year later, 1987, saw four more distinguished figures in the audio world gaining further recognition of their endeavours. Two industry figures and two audio writers were honoured when Harold J Leak, Angus McKenzie, Akio Morita and Jean Hirage were awarded.

The awards ceremony for the 1988 title took place on 16th December in London, and here the recipients are introduced, and their achievements outlined....

#### Alastair Robertson-Aikman

Alastair Robertson-Aikman or AR-A as he is known, pioneer of SME, was one of the two recipients of the 1988 *Hi-Fi News* Awards.

His original company was set up in 1946, as The Scale Model Equipment Company Ltd producing many large-scale engineering models as well as small scale car models and kits. AR-A has always been a music lover and since the '50s has produced his own audio accessories. In 1959 he needed a superior pick-up arm and soon an experimental model was produced. SME went into production, 25 arms per week at first, and gradually moved over from producing car models to audio equipment; today they make almost everything in-house. As the world's leading tonearm manufacturer, SME stands firm in its resistance to the digital invasion.

Besides producing tonearms AR-A was responsible for considerable research and development in amplifiers, pre-amplifiers, cartridges and turntables. His contribution to progress and innovations within this area of hi-fi has been monumental.

We were honoured and delighted to welcome Alastair Robertson-Aikman, along with his colleague Reg Eadey (who was responsible for the major design work on the Series V arm) to our awards ceremony. Accepting the award, AR-A spoke warmly of

the contribution which all the staff at SME had made to the company's success, but paid particular tribute to the efforts of Jack Watkinson (now retired) and of course to Reg Eadey, who had, he said, worked for some three and a half years on the development of the Series V arm. AR-A also made a gracious allusion to the work on bias compensation carried out in the 1960s by the then Editor of HFN/RR, John Crabbe, by noting that one of JC's articles on tonearm improvements had sent several arm manufacturers back to the drawing board!

#### Sidney Harman

Sidney Harman, has been involved in the audio industry for 40 years. He is Chairman and Chief Executive of the Harman Group,



Alastair Robertson-Aikman: founder and prime mover of tonearm specialist SME

which embraces Harman/Kardon, Infinity, JBL, Audax and Soundcraft.

Sidney Harman started out as an engineer building PA systems for Bogen, and then moved to management-level administration, becoming friends with the Chief Engineer, Bernard Kardon. Together they built turntables and giant speakers for their own use and persuaded David Bogen to develop the first amp. In 1953, once both men had left Bogen, Harman/Kardon was set up.

In 1977 Harman International had to take a back seat, as Mr Harman was appointed Under-Secretary of Commerce to the Jimmy Carter administration. A few years later when he left the Government, Harman was able to buy the company back from its 'minder' Beatrice Foods, and Harman/Kardon was one of the few survivors of the American 'Golden Age' of audio still controlled by its founder.

The secret of Harman International's success is embraced by two simple marketing strategies: selling to a world-wide market; and manufacturing in highly integrated, advanced facilities with a well motivated, skilled workforce. Harman summed up the importance of nurturing the product from start to finish in a recent *HFN/RR* interview with Laura Dearborn; 'Design and manufacture are stamen and pistil. They must be integrated from start to finish, or the product will soon lose its character and become like

everyone else's'. In addition to catering for special customer needs, Harman has always had a policy of adapting designs to suit the particular requirements and taste of the market which can vary from country to country.

Towards the 60's Harman and Kardon were among the first to realize that hi-fi was becoming a living-room accessory, no longer to be hidden away in the basement. The next natural step was to make the product look attractive. Harman also instigated new methods of demonstration and display. While other hi-fi companies set out their products in long corridors and played Strauss, H/K set up demonstration living-rooms with graceful equipment displayed on smart coffee tables and played Frank Sinatra.



Receiving the Award on behalf of Sidney Harman: Walter Goodman

Harman and Kardon were among the first supporters of separate components in hi-fi. From these separated components they developed an integrated receiver – such a step forward that it was initially mocked by dealers although it overcame many of the problems of separate components. This revolutionary receiver went on to become the industry's most successful hi-fi product.

Accepting the Award on behalf of Sidney Harman, who was unable to cross the Atlantic for the occasion, was one of his closest associates and a man who himself has a formidable reputation throughout the audio industry: the President of Harman Interna-tional, Walter Goodman. Receiving the Award for Mr Harman, Mr Goodman spoke of their early days together in the Audio Industry, when Sidney Harman introduced what could be called the first ever highfidelity amplifier, by taking the Bogen company's public-address amplifier and upgrading its performance. He went on to refer to Mr Harman's public life when he served in the Carter administration, and his subsequent extraordinary success in buying back the hi-fi and audio interests which he had built up, but which had languished somewhat. Mr Harman's policy of returning manufacture to the US has now paid off to the extent that the group's sales have now reached \$500,000 per annum and through his successes H/K has become one of the Industry leaders.

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PEN TOO



## LOST VEGAS

#### It's CES time again; Ken Kessler crosses the Nevada desert in search of hidden (audio) treasures

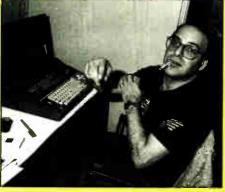
T WAS A GOOD SHOW. For me, this year was the fourth (or fifth?) time lucky at Las Vegas, a hi-fi show so rich in newsworthy items that I had an article's worth of material the day before the show even opened. Yet despite the pleasant 'vibes', the 1989 Winter Consumer Electronics Show will probably not go down in the books as an overwhelming success. Unless I just happened to be in the wrong places at the right time, it looked like the crowds were down in size; you could actually walk around the Riviera Hotel, where the specialist-makes exhibit, without suffering claustrophobia. True, some rooms were packed to the rafters, but this was not a cattle call or a facsimile of a sardine tin. And for me that's a blessing, because it makes the task of trying to see everything that much easier.

It started out at full tilt on the Friday before the opening with a cluster of press functions of major importance. And although my first official act – covering the Finial conference – might have set a negative tone for the next four days, I didn't let the most depressing news of all dampen my spirits.

#### Finial Finale

What was going to be the official launch for the now-legendary Finial Laser Turntable (shown above) turned out to be a wake. The corpse was the most exciting development in LP playback since the arrival of the Linn Sondek, a turntable which read the grooves with a beam of light. The cause of death? Major corporation mentality. The verdict? Murder.

Yes, the four year quest has ended. From humble beginnings in the form of a vague photocopy pinned to a hotel room door, to the production of a working unit capable of high-end sound quality, the Finial saga is



Hard bitten: KK prepares to send back dispatches

over, the parent company deciding that (a) it would be too difficult and too expensive to manufacture to make it worthwhile, and (b) it wouldn't sell in the kind of numbers which would please the bean counters. Those owners of precious LP collections who were saving their pounds and pence for an absolutely danger-free playback system can take their savings and invest in a bottle of their favourite sorrow-reduction potion. In short, the parent company just didn't want to bother with a tweaky product.

with a tweaky product.

We did our best, the assembled scribes pointing out that the public would embrace the Finial even at a price of \$10,000 - less than you'd pay for either of the world's two most expensive 'conventional' decks. The distributors rattled off advanced orders in the hundreds, and that was just to satisfy the radio stations and record libraries. Finial would not be moved, one source revealing to me that the company wanted annual unit sales so high that they couldn't be achieved

**World Radio History** 

even if the turntable could sell for a tenth of the price.

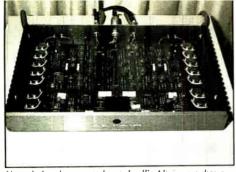
What we're left with is an unfulfilled dream, an achievement that came so close to fruition that anyone with even a remote love for the premier analogue playback format has to ask 'Why?'. The above excuses are not the answer to the question, because my machiavellan tendencies suggest that the motives are far more cold-hearted and corporate. Barry Fox should have been there, because these guys deserved to squirm. [see 'Technology' this month – Ed] Instead, they fielded our questions with a detachment which insulted everyone who was in that room because of a love of music and the reproduction thereof. It was a case of a genius product in the hands of Philistines.

The company made 30 or 35 working examples which, we were told, will forever remain in the company's possession, like Indiana Jones' Lost Ark being buried beneath the streets of Washington DC. The only optimistic note was the statement that the parent company is open to offers from others who would either enter into a joint venture or license the technology. Unfortunately, the companies which could afford the costs or provide the technical skills and production facilities are of the same size and therefore of the same mentality as those who terminated the project in the first place.

Am I surprised? Not really. I always thought that it was too good to be true.

#### Stand up and be counted

Not all major manufacturers are spineless/ heartless megaliths interested only in fast profits. After nearly two years of playing footsie with the record industry, DAT has found a champion in the form of Nakamichi, the first company to show two fingers to the



Named after the parent planet, Krell's Altair amp shows that even Dan D' can downsize



Platinum in name, platinum in styling: a new contender for the solid-state crown



Nearly all-digital at last: Meridian's D600 speakers



Well-Tempered for the well-healed; Bill Firehaugh's new top player



The latest slant on plinths: Denholt's boomerang-shaped turntable

RIAA by announcing a DAT recorder which will record at 44.1kHz and will be sold openly in the USA – the most paranoid of all the anti-DAT territories.

Nakamichi is challenging the RIAA in grand style, and with a machine which – if embargoed – will show the record industry to be even more petty than we could have imagined. By pegging the 1000 Digital Audio Recorder and its matching processor, the 1000p, at \$10,000, Nakamichi has offered a machine which will sell in such small numbers that any objections to its presence by the industry can only be regarded as protectionism of the most selfish sort.

The 1000 is intended to serve as the state of the art, a gorgeous two-chassis unit which looks more like a product from Cello than one from a Japanese tape-deck builder. It offers, in addition to the naughty directdigital recording capability, the first commercial implementation of FAST (Fast Access Stationary Tape Guide Transport) which delivers transport operation not possible with transports developed from VCR technology. Tape loading time is claimed to be 1.9sec (compare that with your sluggish VHS VCR) and fast winding is twice the speed of conventional DAT mechanisms. The 1000 features a four head drum assembly allowing true off-tape monitoring, while the 1000p processor employs an 8-times, 20-bit D/A converter. Additionally, the 1000p is said to be the first digital audio product to use the newly developed sequential charge comparison A/D converter which eliminates the need for conventional sample-and-hold circuitry because of the absence of current sources and resistors, no longer needed for quantization. Nakamichi will also be offering the 1000 in professional form.

No matter how good the Nakamichi may be in performance terms, its real importance – or rather how it will be perceived by future audio historians – is its role in breaking the embargo on DAT. It can only go so far in bringing DAT to the public, because its price and the dearth of pre-recorded software still make it a special interest item, but it does show that at least one company has the stones to stand up to the self-interest of the industry which is foolishly preventing the appearance of what could be a healthy source of revenue. The rest of the DAT machine manufacturers should be ashamed of themselves.

While DAT remains a sore point, CD is now Establishment. I couldn't even begin to

count the number of new players on display, but it was obvious that a trend is emerging. While the majors are driving each other nuts with goal-post movements in the form of increased bit numbers and higher oversampling figures, the more musically motivated elements are pushing instead for the spread of the component approach. The Wadia and Theta outboard D/A converters launched at the June CES have emerged as America's equivalent to our own popular Musical Fidelity and Arcam units, and they were seen all over the Show, usually with Philips, Sony or Marantz front ends. Theta showed two new units (one in very early prototype form) which will make Mike Moffatt's technology even more accessible because they offer the D/A conversion without pre-amp facilities for those who are content with their present control units. The DSPro will sell for \$3200, or just over half the price of the DSPre. The other prototype will be even more cost-

Latest to join the outboard D/A fold is Krell Digital, which showed a shop-ready version of the two-box CD player seen in Chicago. While Krell is more than happy to sell you the complete player, they're more interested in the greater universality and potential of the stand-alone DSP-1 Signal Processor. This unit employs 64-times oversampling, true 18-bit DACs, true dual-mono circuitry (after the feed from the laser is decoded) including the power supply, balanced analogue output and upgrade capability via plug-in chips to account for just about any future developments in digital playback technology.

The partnering transport, the MD-1, is a real eye-catcher, because it's almost impossibly compact. Krell accomplished the slimline profile by doing away with the loading tray; the CD hub sticks out of the top and you simply place the disc over it with a puck adding further security. It adds a sense of nostalgia, because for all intents and purposes it looks like a turntable without an arm. The CD-ROM transport is protected by a dust-cover when not in use. One other nice detail is the non-metallic fascia, chosen because Krell learned that metal faceplates can interfere with the control circuitry.

Another interesting new CD player was shown by California Audio Labs who released the Tempest Special Edition. This will run alongside the Tempest II, which can be upgraded to Special Edition status by the

factory or a qualified engineer. Details include all-new boards, 18-bit, 8-times oversampling and separate, hand-trimmed D/A converters. I know the Tempest II intimately and I can assure you that a 10 minute listening session revealed the SE to be a major advance worth the \$1000-plus extra fee.

Sansui added to their credibility with the launch of the world's first CD player to employ 1-bit LCDS D/A converter technology, utilizing the MASH technology developed by the Nippon Telephone and Telegram Company. Sansui then engineered a simple 1-bit system which does away with a number of the precision devices required by conventional converters. This circuitry will also appear as an onboard unit in Sansui's top amplifiers. Other CD players of interest to the hardcore include the latest version of the unanimously praised Accuphase, now dubbed the DP-80L/DC-81L, with 20-bit, 8-times oversampling and Kinergetics' KCD-20B, an uprated version of the popular KCD-20 featuring 16-bit quantization and high output for direct driving of power amplifiers in CD-only installations.

#### Liquorice pizzas

It is with great delight, bordering on the smug, that I report on the LP's health despite the shock-horror reports of the CD's takeover of the record shops. Even if vinyl sales are dwindling, interest in LP playback remains high, and there were enough new turntables, arms and cartridges to make you think that analogue is safe.

Keep in mind that I'm writing as one who thinks that the CES revolves around the specialist displays; in the Convention Center it was downmarket, all-digital crud and cellular telephones as you'd expect. I gave the zoo about 30 minutes before I high-tailed it back to the Riviera, feeling not unlike a man who had a view of hell but stood back from the precipice in the nick of time. Looking down into that teeming mass of slimeball reps and 400W in-car systems and day-glo ripstop nylon CD carryalls and haggling Hassidim and Identikit Japanese industrial spies and cigar-chewing chain-store purchasers and sub-Kylie bimbettes and special Walkman cassette cleaners and plug-in-the ear head-phones designed by Lucrezia Borgia and FAX machines that do everything but deliver clean copies and horrible NTSC television screens the size of a Bedford van with the colour resolution of a circa '69 light show and



Krell's CD player - a nod to turntables of yore?



Dennesen's massive deck: you can do this while it's playing!

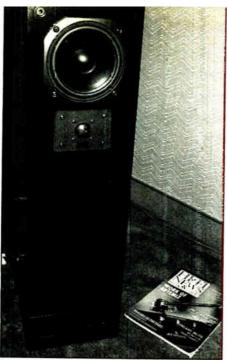
fudpuckers looking for 24in subwoofers to fit in their customers' Chevy pick-ups was like looking through the eyes of Bosch. And I don't mean the people who make sparkplugs.

Yes, it was a relief to walk into the SOTA room, where Robert Becker and David Fletcher were showing the latest version of the Cosmos turntable alongside a phalanx of new Sumiko cartridges and SME tonearms. It was heartwarming to learn that the Well-Tempered Turntable and Tonearm have been joined by new models, and that the Basis was everywhere and the Versa Dynamics was on official display. But before detailing those launches, I must tell you of the most OTT demonstration I have ever seen, a milestone in PT Barnumism.

The Dennesen tonearm is one of the first truly successful air-bearing linear trackers. Despite showing its age, it's still good enough to be the subject of a near copy called the Forsell from Sweden and it works well despite its funky constuction. I popped in to see it mounted on a massive hybrid turntable consisting of bits from the Micro-Seiki and FART thread-drives, a real DIY effort which could have only been produced by a true audio casualty. Demonstrating this was Al Thanhauser, who placed a priceless Julie London original on Capitol on the gigantic platter, which was topped with a layer of four different materials, including rice-paper linings to fill in the air gaps. He slid a puck over the disc and let it play. Then he did the impossible.

Making a fist, he smacked the rotating LP, a really solid rap which should have knocked the stylus out of the groove. It played through without skipping a beat and without a single extra sound emanating from the speakers. Back up a few lines. I said he smacked the LP, not the turntable. Now, I know that Las Vegas water has something odd floating around in it, surely it couldn't be hallucinogenic. Had I been influenced by the spirit of Hunter S Thompson? No. Editor Harris independently witnessed a similar miracle. It was not imagined.

But back to the less flamboyant displays. The new Well-Tempered goodies include both a basic player coming in below the existing model and a killer Signature model selling for \$5000. The budget model, The Well-Tempered Record Player, sells for just over half the price of the original and comes fitted with a simplified version of the Well-Tempered Arm, while the dearer model



Transmission lines for the short-of-space: TDL's newly launched Studio 1

features a plinth made from 'Fountainhead', an epoxy-resin powdered-stone dust stew which has nothing whatsoever to do with Ayn Rand. The Signature arm is a beautifully finished version adding creature comforts to the string-driven thing, including VTA and damping adjustment. I reckon Chris Breunig will go nuts over this one.

I'm torn between two stellar examples of the turntable art. The Basis has now emerged as a true champion, easily the most popular deck at the show. Now even better finished than before, it seemed happiest with the latest version of the AirTangent Tonearm, the latter with even better VTA adjustment facility. Also vieing for my earnings is the new Versa Dynamics Model 1.0, a half-price version of the air-bearing Model 2.0. This turntable retains the air-bearing tonearm and vacuum platter of the costlier model but it replaces the air-bearing below the platter with a conventional thrust bearing. But what is going to plague designer John Bicht is the Model 1's superior aesthetics which render it the most attractive turntable since the Oracle.

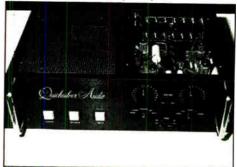
But that's not all. In a room showing only German-made hardware, I saw the strangest deck since the Gold Aero, a suspensionless design with a chassis shaped like a boomerang. Mounted on the Denholt was a distinctly non-German product, the missing-in-action Syrinx PU4. I was then informed that Scott Strachan gave the rights to a German company, so the Syrinx is back but with a change of nationality. Now you know where to send the pieces from your PU2 and PU3.

Jeff Rowland surprised me by showing the anticipated Complement tonearm well before I thought it would be ready, fitted with a half-price, simplified version of the Complement eartridge dubbed the LH Complement. It differs by virtue of smaller magnets and an alternative suspension. Other items included the latest from Monster Cable, the Alpha Genesis 2000 (\$1200), the US launch of a bunch of new Dual turntables, more cartridges from Audio Quest and the news that the tasty and functional Morch tonearm from Denmark is now associated with Ariston.

Back in Tweak City, I slipped into the Wilson room to hear the Mk VI version of the WAMM loudspeaker. The visit was a joy because Dave Wilson had one of the best sounds at the show. What he's done to the WAMM includes retrofittable changes ranging from revising the crossovers (now in sealed boxes) to aesthetic tune-ups producing a finish worthy of Sorus Faber. But it was his



Flutterman Redux: a change of manufacturer



Slow in arriving, Quicksilver should be worth the wan. Construction looks impeccable

source which captivated me, a naked cartridge driving his \$85,000 babies.

The cartridge turned out to be a heavily modified Koetsu sourced from Hong Kong. Known as the Koetsu Ken Chan Version Series II, it features replacement of the stylus and cantilever, new damper material, rewinding of the existing coils and removal of the body. Ordinarily, I wouldn't countenance tampering with such near-perfect devices as Koetsus, especially as they're so costly, but my respect for Dave Wilson is such that I figured it must be on the level. And what I heard in that room suggests that the Koetsu Ken Chan could go down in history as one of the all-time greats.

[What happens to the original bits? Sounds something like the way vintage Bugattis multiply - Ed]

#### Power to the people

CES is usually overloaded with loudspeakers; while this one was no exception, it was the variety of new amplifiers which made the greatest impression upon me. Prolificity abounded [and abundance proliferated? – Ed], and companies which typically offer only one or two new items per show were doubling their output.

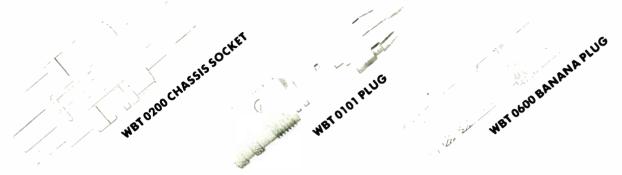
Audio Research is one of my favourite companies because it always kept the faith in valves, even during the dark days of the late 1970s. Now well into a modernization programme that has turned most of its products into hybrids, ARC still uses valves in specific areas, most notably in pre-amps which are solid-state save for a tube or two in the phono sections. Following only months after the launch of the exceptional SP-15 flagship is a new pre-amp to fill the gap between the '15 and my favourite budget beauty the SP-9. The SP-14 incorporates one 6DJ8 in the phono stage and offers separate gain and attenuation, a bypass switch and two main outputs, the circuit and the facilities being precisely what you'd expect as a mid-point offering. This one could do at its price point – some 40% more than the '9 – what the '9 did for the under L2000 sector, and I'm already nagging Absolute Sounds for a review sample. Meanwhile, the SP-9 has undergone an aesthetics-only change to bring its fascia in

line with the new styling seen on the '15.

If that's not enough, ARC also showed two new power amplifiers in the range started with the very expensive Classic 150. The Classic 60 is a 2x60W amplifier with automatic DC balance control, tube bias adjusted



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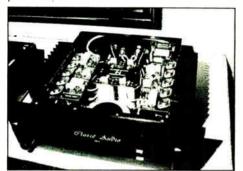
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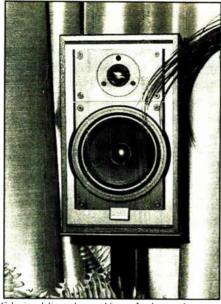
Classy Classé: the combination lives up to its name

with line voltage, fan cooling triode operation and a tube roster consisting of two 6FQ7s and four 6550s per channel. Word on the street is that this baby is the amp to own if your speakers aren't too vicious (eg, Apogees) and that any electrostatic owner subjected to its performance will succumb like Tom Ewell to Marilyn Monroe. But the best news is that there's also a half-power version, the Classic 30, which differs mainly through a halving of the valve complement. The price, if I can guesstimate what an ocean crossing will do to it, should be under £2900.

The other hybrid gang, the Californians known as Counterpoint, showed a slew of new pre-amps with 'over 50 design innovations' (and I've never known the occasionally laid back Rick Ricchio to exaggerate) and the finished version of the over-the-top SA-9 phono equilizer. The latter is the natural partner to the high end SA-II, but the more economy minded might find it the ultimate mate for a passive pre-amp

Ex-patriate British firm VTL, now firmly ensconced on the Left Coast, is on the crest of a wave (they do, after all, make their gear in the land of the Beach Boys) which has resulted in unanimous praise from the American high end community. The main weakness of the VTL line is that it's so ugly that the more sensitive among us have been known to reach for the Pepto-Bismol after simply looking at the products' shadows. We are talking the kind of ugly which would have had people burned for witchcraft in the 17th century. Anyway, VTL proprietor David Manley decided to kill two birds with one stone when he launched a new eponymous series. Lo and behold, they actually look terrific. The line-up is staggering, including monoblocks 150, 350, 500 and 1000W output, and the matching pre-amp is as pretty as anything I've seen. Constructional quality is up there with the best, the facilities are the opposite of spartan and I think that the Japanese will probably take everything he can make.

Whizz-kid David Berning revealed a new power amplifier, the 2x100W EA2101, an all-tube, all differential push-pull unit with Teflon PCBs and true triode output, while Quicksilver showed the finished version of their long-awaited pre-amp. Audio Freaks will be overjoyed to learn that the latest from Conrad-Johnson is an entry-level all-valve unit, the PV10 pre-amplifier. But the craziest tube launch of all has to be the Prodigy Audio



Celestion delivers the metal for under the ton: the new Model 3

Laboratories Mono 150. Big and plain, like the She-Devil, it's a Harvey Rosenberg-less OTL based on Futterman concepts. Which goes to prove that good can occasionally win out, no matter what Finial may do.

Those allergic to glowing glass had a field day in Las Vegas, with the King of the Hill, Dan D'Agostino, producing two amplifiers nobody would ever have expected from Krell: a small one and an affordable one. The small unit is the delightful Altair, a compact until rated at 2x120W. Although it's only Class-A up to the output stages, it offers Krell performance in a package no bigger than most 40W budget amps. The build quality and parts are of the highest order, and it sounded just magnificent. Of greater interest, though, is the KDI-200 from Krell Digital, a Class-AB design wearing KSA-80 clothing. Knocking out 200W per side, it drops the admission fee to the Krell Klub to approachable levels. Krell also showed a new pre-amp, the KSP-76 as well as announcing a new modular system providing a number of combinations to allow the tailoring of the pre-amp to the customer's needs. Variants include high-level only, balanced or single-ended operation, phono stages, multiple inputs and combinations of all of the above. The phono stages are particularly noteworthy because the flexibility should allow for perfect matching of just about any cartridge you can name.

One line I'd love to see imported here is Classé, who makes sensibly priced, nicely attired amplifiers of prodigious capability. This company's launch included a new preamp/power-amp combination consisting of the DR-5 pre-amplifier (which features exactly what I deem to be the perfect compromise between minimalism and excess) and the DR-8 power amplifier, with balanced operation linking the two. Pre-amp designers take note: the DR-5 offers switchable muting, polarity inversion switch, bypass and full stereo/mono/R/L/reverse capability, all of which combine to make installation a joy instead of a guessing game.

In the affordable sector, Mission released uprated Cyrus units which had the sales crew sounding like some vaudeville tailors – never mind the quality, feel the weight. These little suckers are now built like mini-Krells, with massive cast chassis and bomb-proof construction. The circuits have been refined, Mission's John Watson describing them as having greater testicular worth, and they look set to retain their supremacy in the budget



Non hi-fi exhibits were to be found here in the main Convention Centre, known to attendees as The Zeo



Halfway hybrid: Audio Research's new middle model, the SPI4 pre-amplifier

sector for at least another couple of years. Head honcho Farad Azima was all smiles with the opening of Mission North America, so we could be witnessing the beginnings of a new empire. Judging by Mission's successes in the field of computers, too, we've got another company from over here doing rather well over there. (The promised caviar didn't appear, but Mission's caterers make dynamite stuffed cabbage.)

Tandberg showed new models to augment the 3030 series, including a fully loaded receiver, a remote controllable, 100W/ch integrated amplifier and a pair of 18-bit 8-times oversampling CD players, while Pioneer showed their fabulous Elite products, deemed a bit too rich for the UK. I couldn't really judge them in show conditions, but I got a gut feeling that the Japanese are learning more tricks about high-end design than we'd care to credit. The M-5a hand-built monoblock amplifier dumps IkW into 20hms (300 into 80hms), has Class-A drive stages, 72 hour run-in with 'actual music signal', balanced inputs, special film-caps and a bunch of other details that you'd be more likely to attribute to a British or American firm. I'm not trying to predict the future, but a cautious 'look behind you' is wise advice for the Western high-end bloc.

One brand-new line which sounded fine through Celestion SL700s was Platinum - this company who showed a stunning pre-amp, a stereo amp and a monoblock with impeccable construction and fresh, tasteful styling. The pricing puts Platinum up in the tough Krell/ Levinson sector, so it will have to prove itself. but the hand-outs suggest the designers are of the audiophile persuasion. One to watch.

Mark Levinson (the company) is on a really hot streak with the products introduced since the change of ownership. At this show, they filled gaps in the catalogue with the No 27 Dual Mono power amp, a 100W/ch unit selling for \$3495, and the No 25 Dual Mono pre-amp for \$1800-41875 depending on the choice of gain card. They also showed the uprated No 20, tagged the No 20.5, selling for a heady \$11,500 per pair.

Because I'm such a nosy, crawling little sleaze, I have a tendency to look under tables, eavesdrop and 'accidentally' drift into rooms where I shouldn't go. Whatever you might think of this, I rationalize it as a journalist's duty. I was able to discover that Mark Levinson (the Man) had a new Cello amplifier set to bring Cello ownership to a

## reviewing the reviews....

The uncoloured bass extension is probably the first feature that one notices. Organ, piano, full orchestra or electronic bass are immediately characterized by a new depth and fullness, with the whole room apparently coupled in as an extension to the speakers themselves. I would rate it as one of the most impressive loudspeakers now being made in the UK.

John Borwick, Gramophone

Briefly the TDL Reference Standard is a bass reproducer which in frequency range can compare to the most advanced and most expensive subwoofer constructions, and in respect of the quality of the bass reproduction these loudspeakers are equal to any commercial design we know of, or have tested. The bass reproduction in other words is complete, precise and accurate.

Steen Michaelsen and Michael Madsen, High Fidelity (Denmark)

To summarise, it is a distinctive but altogether fascinating speaker, a must for lovers of the type of bass that strikes you to the marrow; very absorbing and very accurate. There is no doubt that this is a speaker for lovers of full-flavoured best quality Barolo, rather than delicate Sauvignon.

Bebo Moroni, Audio Review (Italy)

Gainsaying its large size, the Monitor sounded agile throughout the frequency range, the main treble register being rated as exceptional. The midrange ran the treble a close second. The bass remained clean at full power, and well differentiated from the mid and treble. Cathedral organ could be reproduced at impressive levels, with fine weight accorded to the pedal registration; but by contrast, its reggae performance was not to be sneezed at. In particular, if extended bass is important to you, then you owe it to yourself to hear this speaker.

Martin Colloms, Hi-Fi News

The extreme bass of course has a unique feel with large transmission-line enclosures like this. The bass end is unusually extended, as I soon confirmed by picking out deep organ pedal notes, timpani, etc. The bass had a tightness which added definition all the way up the scale, and this loudspeaker seems to have less 'hangover' than most.

John Borwick, Gramophone

You don't have to possess Midas'd ears to know instantly that the big TDLs are Something Special. They stretch down through the bottom octaves with such authority that those who think British designers can't deal with bass will be eating their words, sans salt and pepper. Deep? You are going to feel the music, not simply hear it. Not only is the bass deep and exceptionally well-controlled, it has scale. The quantity and 'size' of the bass is perfectly proportional to the upper registers, rarely swamping it and yet possessing a dimensional presence which can only be described as majestic.

Ken Kessler, Hi-Fi News

copies of these reviews, together with product literature are available on request.



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wider number of audiophiles. His new Encore is a true dual-mono design right down to separate mains leads, the channels linked only by the faceplate. Output is 'greater than 60W per channel' and the dimensions show another company conceding to the themands for sensibly sized products. Price of this 'entry level' unit is \$4500, and it will be joined by a matching preamp costing \$5000.

by a matching preamp costing \$5000.

Mention of Cello leads me into Speaker Land, because Cello Performance amplifiers were driving the speakers in the room which I feel offered the best sound at the show. Groan if you want to, but both Steve Harris and John Atkinson will agree that the Basis/ Air Tangent/Sony R1/Cello set-up, chosen by Jason Bloom to power his Apogee Duetta Signatures, blended to create what was undeniably a memorable performance. The news in the Apogee room was the DAX electronic crossover which transforms the Diva, Duetta and Caliper, already excellent even in bi-wired form. Bi-amped with this all-digital black box in between, they're unassailable. Martin Colloms (Duetta) and yours truly (Diva) will be reviewing the DAX for the next edition of The High End and I must admit that I haven't been this excited about a new product since I learned about the Stax valve energizer.

I already mentioned the new Wilson WAMM, but I haven't told you that DW also uprated the WATT to Mk II status. He was displaying the WATT in a new finish, a speckled granite look that could only have been conceived by a Californian. I wonder if he conferred with SOTA for their plinth's aesthetics.

Back on earth, Celestion wreaked havoc with the new Celestion 3, the £99 per pair speaker with metal dome tweeter. The Americans were stunned to learn that it would sell for \$250 per pair, and more than one was heard to ask 'Where'd you site the subwoofer?' MD Gordon Provan was so pleased with it that he spent the show in a blissed-out state, referred to me as 'Dear Boy' and not taking offence when I registered horror at his tassled white slip-on shoes. (He 'went American' for the week or so I'm told. Then again, golfers do have strange taste in attire . . .)

Anyway, across the hall Mo Iqbal was waxing lyrical about his new Monitor Audio high end speaker, a forthcoming design which will feature a new gold dome tweeter with a break-up mode above 28kHz, a non-magnetic phosphorus bronze mesh cover to eliminate interaction between the dome and its protection, and a host of other features to justify the Reference 1800 Gold's \$1400 price tag. Sadly, his pleasure was dimmed when he learned of the Celestion 3, which led him to tell Celestion's Richard Allan that he's delaying the launch of his £99 speaker. Knowing Mo, he'll probably upstage Celestion by bringing out a platinum dome tweeter and sell the speakers for £98,99.

Goodmans, like Gordon Provan, succumbed to bad taste by bringing out the Maxim in white, calling it 'Snow White' – no doubt because such a mini must appeal to dwarves. I don't know how snow-coloured speakers sell in the UK, but I'll bet that the Germans and the Americans will order these by the container load.

Tannoy, represented at Las Vegas by the other Steve Harris, was showing the new J95, a two-way three-driver system with metal tweeter (here we go again . . .) and tandem bass drive with the two woofers sharing the work load. Price here around £500 per pair.

The biggest kick for me was TDL's newest model, what the company describes as the smallest-ever true transmission-line speaker. A self-confessed fan of transmission-line systems, I was genuinely amazed by the performance of a system measuring only 270x376x850mm. At around £500, the Studio I offers genuine high-end bass, power and 'size', but I'll wait until I try them in my own system before commenting on the top-end performance, hindered at the show by the use of an undistinguished amplifier. If this one doesn't fill TDL's coffers there's no justice.

The sleeper of the show was the Hales Audio System Two, a magnificent performer that came out of nowhere to score highly with those 'in the know'. A colleague told me that I just had to hear them, so I wandered around to find a couple of members of the European High End Mafia discussing their merits with undisguised praise. What they were admiring was a floor-standing two-way (double bassdriver) system offering high-integrity refinement rather than radical technology. A cutaway revealed overkill bracing, dense cabinet material and attention to detail that signify a company which cares. Classy enough not to hype this product, Hales Audio came across as a serious company which knows what it's doing. It could turn out to be the surprise launch of 1989, because the sound was enough to keep me in that room for an half-hour that I couldn't spare.

Sorry gang, but we're suffering a repeat of last year and the Federal Express stand is about to close. But I just have to tell you:

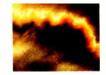
The ModSquad did what I secretly hoped they would: put the Line and Phono Drive into one box to create a pre-amp with both passive and active operation.

The Cheskys (who now play the penny slots) launched their own jazz label and new CD technology along with a fetching array of T-shirts. I don't want to blow the whistle on a real treat, but I will say that HFN/RR will be collaborating with the Cheskys for a future venture. Soundpipes showed speakers made from plumbing. ProAc released the Response Two, a small speaker not bearing the traditional ProAc 'skinny' frontal aspect. CBS is still hyping FMX. Wait until I tell Barry Fox.

AR was launching something but I'm not sure just what; I was too busy marvelling at the way they turned their room into a set from a Western movie. Cruel Mike Bartlett made the employees dress up like cowboys, including designer Dave Berriman, and they have no right to expect us not to make jokes about 'cowboy outfits' and 'lynchings'.

It was a great show, but somehow I can't argue with Roy Hall, an expatriate Scot who distributes Creek, Revolver and Epos in the USA. He describes Las Vegas as 'a waste of good desert'. But for four days a year, I don't mind a little sand in my shoes . . .





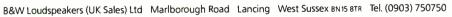
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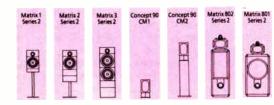
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## THE SUBJECTIVE STOR

Paul Chaplin introduces the long history of objectively-documented listening tests

trust that dusty images evoked by the word 'history' are blown away by its proximity to the phrase 'subjective audio evaluation', always a topic to stir up the usually slothful audiophile into an unusual fervour. There appear to have been around six significant stages of development, of subjective evaluation, which are, briefly summarised thus:

Can you hear any differences?

- \* Scope of hearing acuity (Frequency range, henceforth FR)
- Which do you prefer?
- \* Which is more accurate?
- Describe what you're hearing
- \* Objective vs subjective.

#### Early explorers

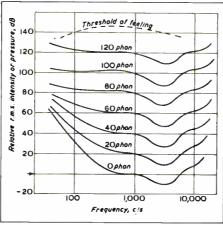
In this article, any experiments which involved a person or group of persons listening to sounds and making some form of individual response, are deemed 'subjective'.

W B Snow's experiment is the earliest published research paper (1931) I found, and proceeds to ruin any neat chronological study of the evolution of the subjective technique, since it makes the regressive steps of subsequent experimenters difficult to explain. Snow attempted to monitor the impact that varying levels of electronic bandwidth restriction had upon perceived sound quality of a signal relayed from a live orchestra to a remote listening room. The task of the nine-member listening panel was to identify a filtered condition from one which was not. A variety of different filter conditions were tested, some low-pass and others high-pass. Different instruments were played (apparently solo) plus the odd sound effect. (Because stereo had not yet been invented, there was no need to coax a steam train through the studios.) The conclusions were unsurprising in that the accuracy of listener responses depended on the tonal characteristics of the instruments being played as to the impact of the filters - indirectly emphasising the importance of programme material in making valid judgments about audio components. The 5kHz filter had the most consistent impact on 'sound quality', a point studied later by Olson (1947). I feel that this experiment is particularly significant because it recognised that audio systems have to reproduce an envelope of sound, not just a series of discrete tones. Therefore, any attempt to assess the quality of audio components should not rely solely upon objective measurements for a series of test tones.

Essentially, whenever we are involved in a comparative-evaluation position, as these listeners were, there are two questions to

- i. what can I hear in one condition that I cannot hear in the other?
- ii. does this mean that the condition which enables me to hear 'more' is a more 'accurate

In Snow's experiment, listeners were also directed to listen out for 'noises produced by instruments' eg, key clicks, hissing of air, buzzing of reeds etc. In this case, hearing 'more' means 'better', but this is not always the case. Over-emphasis of high-frequencies



Fletcher-Munson curves of equal loudness, and the threshold of feeling as established by Wegel

can adversely affect the tonal balance of the music whilst at the same time magnifying more subtle sounds' which would not otherwise be audible, in which case hearing more does not necessarily mean 'better'.

In this very early experiment there were also adjective descriptions (eg, 'harsh', 'reedy', 'unmusical' etc.), subjectivecomparative ratings, listener panels - all techniques with which we are familiar today.

Some of the experiments which followed, although interesting, represented something of a retrograde step for advancing the understanding of subjective techniques, especially because they moved away from the adjectival response. The experiments by Steinberg, Montgomery and Gardner (1940) sought to map the hearing acuity of 550,000 people who attended the 'World's Fair' in New York and San Francisco. A series of recorded instructions and test tones were played down a telephone line at various frequencies and diminishing levels. The respondent marked a card until they could no longer hear the tones. Because the experimenters correlated an input (test tone) with the response of a set of human perceptions, this was essentially an effective 'objective' measurement of a subjective capability. This principle had been used by Fletcher and Munson (1933) to produce the famous 'equal loudness contours' of hearing acuity (later improved by others).

What do we mean by 'objective' anyway, does it not contradict the fundamental characteristics of the subjective approach? I think not. Okay, so subjective means some sort of individual/personal emotional response, but if the subjective report is to mean anything to anyone else who hasn't taken part in a particular event, there must be certain objective criteria. From the experiments I have examined, these criteria should be validity ('are we measuring what we think we're measuring?') and reliability (repeatability) confirmed in Andrew Ehrenberg's excellent 'Primer in Data Reduction'. Steinberg et al's experiments appear to have both these elements; they were measuring 'hearing capability' in bandwidth terms, not preferences or adjective descriptions of their experience and they certainly score highly in terms of reliability.

Preferences are, perhaps, the most controversial component of the subjective evaluation approach. Chinn and Eisenberg (1945) were the dynamic duo after Snow to examine these, with one of a spate of research papers on hearing capability, providing vital information to the fledgling national telephone and radio networks in terms of listener requirements. But this particular paper is fascinating for another reason: different groups of listeners (total 500) were tested for FR and sound intensity preferences according to their listening experience (FM radio listeners, professional musicians and 'average' listeners). Chinn views preferences (quite reasonably) as '... the method of reproduction which is most pleasant ...'. On balance, there were no significant differences between the test-groups but, remarkably, the preference was not for the widest bandwidth presentation but for the narrow or medium ranges. Even when the listeners were informed that one of the presentations was actually 'better' than the other, the responses were unchanged (with the exception of the FM listeners in one condition). Peak sound intensity preferences were around 60-70dB. Some variance in preferences depended on programme material, a factor which frequently occurs in subsequent research.

Up until now, many of the experiments used transcripted or relayed sound signals (eg, by AM transmission down cables) as the source. Webster and McPeak felt that they had been called by their science to build a system which would provide a significantly higher quality source for listener preference tests. This 'super-system' was so jolly super that comparisons between live music being fed through it and live music unimpeded convinced 46% of the listeners that the sound via the system was actually 'superior' and a further 50% felt it of 'equivalent' calibre. The 'live' signal was also transmitted to Fresno, 175 miles from the studio in Sacramento, by high quality telephone lines and '... had little or no effect' on sound quality (even though listeners in this remote location apparently had no 'live' reference). How can the reproduction surpass the quality of the original – a suggestion which has been made by some contemporary audiophiles? Webster and McPeak suggest that the position of the spaced pair of microphones in the orchestra's room allow the listener to hear a more nearly 'ideal' position which may not have been possible in the original recital, but surely this is equally the case when a group of people are listening to a stereo system?

The outcome of these experiments surprised me, particularly in terms of preferences for narrower bandwidth systems. Harry Olson's experiments in 1947 examined listener preferences for a restricted frequency bandwidth a little further. Referring to earlier experiments (eg. Chinn), Olson suggests that there may be three reasons for preferring a restricted frequency bandwidth: (i) listening experience conditions expectations; (ii) musical instruments are not properly designed - overtones in the high frequencies should be suppressed (?); and/or (iii) distortions and deviations from the original sound | \ 41

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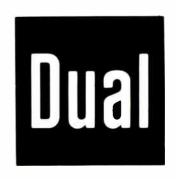
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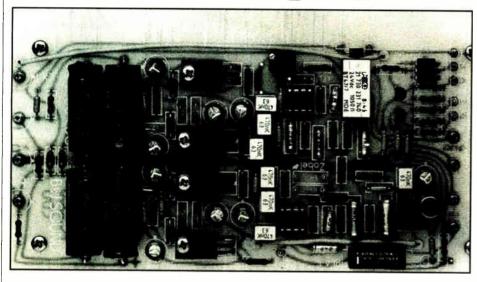




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## SUPERTUNING CD A REFRESHER



## One year after 'Supertuning CD', Ben Duncan returns to the subject of DIY improvements to the electronics of CD players

In Supertuning CD, I described a thorough re-design of the output stage, a generic circuit that's found (with cosmetic variations) in nearly every Philips and Marantz machine, and also suits any other 2 or 4-times oversampling, 14- or 16- bit player. Even up-market players like Sony's 337-ESD can benefit. In the reconstruction, the fundamental circuit topology remained the same, but just about everthing else changed. Dizzied in the wake of the detailed description of the upgrade process, Captain Hurd (along with many readers) has been left uncertain about the project's scope and significance. How deep does it go? How much skill is needed to accomplish it successfully? And what (if any) are the risks?

#### Upgrade levels

When goods are manufactured in large quantities and sold with moderate profit margins, they have to be 'produce-able' within a tightly defined costing. Add competition to the formula, and the sum of parts-cost-times-assembly-time has to be pruned to the utmost minimum.

This in mind, it should come as no surprise that the sonic quality of most CD players can be improved by 'un-cutting' a few corners, namely by fitting notionally higher quality components, usually capacitors, sockets, and even op-amps. Some readers might imagine that after every part in the CD player's output stage had been replaced with a premium grade part, sonic quality must be very close to its most refined level.

At best, this viewpoint is superficial. Though the straightforward upgrading of component parts is a step in the right direction<sup>1</sup>, it is nevertheless no more than scratching the surface – compared to what is

possible . . . In a nutshell, the intrinsic quality of electronic component parts is irrelevant stuff, and risks developing into a fetish for 'designer labels' and pretty packaging, until and unless the circuit topology and component values have been fully optimised. The word itself indicates a question of balance, which is true of all sustainable, real-world pursuits. For refinement at every level, the analogue circuit designer has to juggle tens of mutually interactive (and often conflicting or tangential) parameters, concerning the attributes of the component parts, their topological position and physical location.

When the best set of operating conditions has been established, higher quality parts can be installed. But not before the circuit has been re-checked and re-tuned, to accommodate a long list of amendments to key parameters, not to mention parasitic elements! All told, supertuning just the analogue portion of CD players is no trivial endeavour.

#### Overcoming technofear

The successful DIY builder has to negotiate rather fewer hurdles. Provided you have reasonable soldering skills, and a methodical approach, correctly stuffing the PCBs produced for the project is easy. One PCB is devoted to each channel. This time, the PCBs are single-sided (sans the dreaded double-sided pins.) with printed legend, backed up by 4 pages of assembly literature.

Next comes the decision on whether to mount the PCB's inside the player, or in an external enclosure. On the one hand, an exterior box positively ensures that the minimum amount of RF energy is picked up by the CDU, assuming the input is thoughtfully placed and kept short. On the other, most of

the modern (17in wide) front-loading Philips and Marantz players have ample space, and there's no need to drill mounting holes if the idea doesn't immediately appeal to you. 'Flying' output cables of suitable length can be laid through the ventilation holes on the rear panel, while the PCBs can be insulated and supported by wrapping in plastic foam. If desired, RF shielding can be accomplished using screen plates, also available from Audio Synthesis.

The final hurdle is connecting up the CDU PCBs' inputs, and disabling the player's output stage. It begins in the mind: as soon as vou remove the lid from a CD player, the contents seem awesomely complex at first sight, while the warranty is potentially void. Then again, if you've had the player over a year, the warranty probably isn't worth much. And after you've removed the lid a few more times, and spent some time looking around, maybe unscrewing a few PCBs and hinging them back, and located the TDA 1541 (or 1540) DAC, and the LM833 (or NE5532) op-amps, what was at first an incomprehensible territory begins to look vaguely familiar. At this point it's helpful to have a copy of the player's service manual. Audio Synthesis can help in providing circuits and PCB patterns for most players. Thereafter, the essential requirement for stripping down electronic assemblies with confidence is to proceed methodically, making notes on the sequence of de-assembly, and which screw or plug came from where, before racing ahead.

Beyond this, the main issues are clearly 'What happens if I subsequently want to sell my player?' and 'What happens if it breaks down'. These needn't be a problem provided the necessary modifications are (i) minimal, (ii) tidy and (iii) reversible. To begin with, Audio Synthesis is able to assist builders in identifying the DAC outputs. Inside most 16-bit players, the DAC outputs pass to the analogue stage via jumpers (link wires). These can be simply cut in half, or desoldered, to provide a connection point for the CDU's live input wires, while disconnecting the existing output stage circuitry. On players without the links, notably older 14-bit models, a clean cut needs to be made in the two output tracks as they leave the DAC's immediate vicinity. For each channel, a 5mm length of the (green) etch-resist ink on the track that's adjacent to the cut on the DAC's side should be neatly scraped away, to expose the copper. After tinning this, connect the CDU's 2 live input wires.

The ground connection comes next. In all cases after the DAC's analogue ground pin has been located, the adjacent etch-resist can be scraped away in a neat circle, then tinned, ready for the connection of the two ground wires, one for each channel. The essential point is to derive the ground for each CDU input from a point that's as close as possible to the DAC's analogue ground (pin 6 on TDA1540; pin 5 on TDA1541). Then trim the CDU input wires to be as direct (hence short) as possible, consistent with accessibility. To keep RF radiation and pick-up at bay, each channel's wires may be paired (live and 0v) and just loosely twisted.

If the player is subsequently to be serviced or sold, the original output stage is simply reinstated by removing the CDU boards and input wires, then replacing the links; or by scraping away the etch-resist on the other side of the cut, then soldering link wires across the two track cuts, on the underside. If the player's output op-amps have been removed

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(this is optional) to avoid unnecessary power consumption, it's best to fit a pair of turned-pin (high quality) 8 pin DIL sockets. The original op-amps can subsequently be unplugged/reinstalled many times, without further risk to the delicate tracks around the IC position.

#### Relay evolution

One upgrade to the CD upgrade (CDU) circuit was prompted immediately after publication, and prior to the PCB design. The Type 47 telecom relay originally specified is less than ideal for de-emphasis switching, in part because it's unlikely to be energized very frequently. Being un-sealed against the atmosphere, there's a risk of 'crud' building up on the contacts; whereas the mute relay's contacts are likely to be kept wiped clean, assuming the player is regularly switched on and off. If not, it hardly matters, because the mute relay's shunt configuration precludes any direct effect on sonic quality; at worst, a build-up of 'crud' can only reduce the degree of attenuation when the output is muted.

The potential for an eventual bad contact in the de-emphasis switching isn't solved merely by installing more expensive reedrelay contacts, sealed in a vacuum. Precious metals (like gold) which are commonly regarded as being un-tarnishable 'adsorb' (sic) organic contaminants, building up a complex, semi-insulating film in time. In effect, the initially low contact resistance degrades in time. Sealing the contacts in a vacuum is self defeating – given that modern vaccum sealed assemblies involve plastic components, which release organic substances as the plastic matures! Contacts can also be poisoned by the residual chemicals left over from electro-plating. Mercury wetted contacts certainly offer the lowest long term contact resistance, but aren't so clever from an environmental viewpoint. Mercury leakage is unlikely, but if it occurred, you might not know about it until it's too late. Besides, in view of the circuit impedances involved, the lowest possible contact resistance isn't called for. Instead, the relay specified features contacts made from a rare earth metal. Although the initial contact resistance is moderately high, around 100milliohms, the metal chosen is immune to contamination, and remains rock stable with time.

#### Op-amps

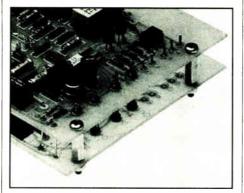
Readers may have been left confused over the eventual choice of op-amps, since the opening paragraph of part 3 was inadvertently omitted:

In part 1, the choice of op-amp was left open. After an extensive evaluation, HA 2525 emerged as the best choice for both IC.1 & IC.2. Its secret is not just a high slew-rate, and fast settling, but also a high  $V_{\rm th}$  specification. But if  $V_{\rm th}$  were all important, the LT1028 would sound awful in the front line.

What does this mean? As Walt Jung<sup>2</sup> explained, V<sub>th</sub> is a figure (in volts or millivolts) which expresses the ratio between an op-amp's slew limit and its gain-bandwidth product. Op-Amps combining a small gain-bandwidth with a high slew limit (like HA2525) return high V<sub>th</sub> figures, circa IV. Devices like LT-1028, with a high GBW and more moderate slew limit return smaller figures, circa 10mV. These figures point to differences in the front-end transconductance and internal overload margins, hence the

FIGURE 1							
]	MORE OF	P-AMP PA	RAMETE	RS COMP	PARED	Originals	: Upgrades
Parameter	NE5534/2	HA2525	LT1568/7	AD744	OP42	OP44	Unit
Туре	S/D	S	S/D	S	S	S	
GBW product (typical)	10	20	5	13	10	15	MHz
Loop gain at x 1 at 100kHz	45	45	35	42	42	55	dB
CMR at 100kHz	NS	60	68	58	97	97	-dB
PSR at 100kHz (+/-ve)	NS	60	67/38	74/41	85/42	75/50	-dB
Noise, 30Hz maximum	12	70	18	26	25	25	$nV/H^2z$
Noise, IkHz maximum	<4.5	22	13	18	13	13	$nV/H^2z$
Slew Limit, $\pm 1/-30\%$	9	120	14	75	50	100	v/µS
Rated capacitative load	NS	NS	>100	NS	>100	>50	pF
Max peak output current	>30	>20	>20	25	>20	>20	mA pk
Unity Gain Stable?	No/Yes	No	Yes/Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
Original manufacturer	Signetics	Harris	Linear Tech- nology	Analog Devices	Precision (PMI)	Monolithics	
S=Single, D=Dual NS=No	t Specified	by maker	NUGS=N	ot Unity (	Gain Stable		

ability of the op-amp to follow the steep waveforms coming off the DAC, while maintaining error-correction. We might therefore expect op-amps selected for high  $V_{\rm th}$  to return better sonic results. The point being made is that experience and a common sense assessment doesn't fully bear this out.  $V_{\rm th}$  is undoubtedly an important factor, but not the only one. After all, a high  $V_{\rm th}$  can be synonymous with a small gain-bandwidth product. If the GBW isn't big enough to provide appreciable open-loop gain (hence error-correction) at and above  $100 {\rm kHz}$ , the attainment of high  $V_{\rm th}$  is somewhat self-



defeating. Figure 1 summarizes many equally important parameters.

Since the original text was published, additional op-amps have been evaluated. These include Analog Devices AD711 and the recently introduced AD744. These work fine, but then CDU researchers Graham Lust and Paul Reaney tried PMI's OP42, a new device specifically designed for current-to-voltage conversion at DAC outputs. At the time of writing, this device is recommended as the best choice for the IC.1 position. It's inexpensive and no circuit changes are required. It can be simply plugged in. The NUGS version, OP44 can also be tried, given suitable adjustment of the input Zobel network (R105, C104).

Being unity-gain stable (UGS), OP42 can also be used to sonic advantage in IC.2 position. If required, DC nulling follows the connections illustrated for HA2525 (Fig. 6, P.59, Pt.2), but a 1M resistor is inserted in line with the preset's wiper. The CDU PCB has provision for this, and Audio Synthesis can advise on installation. In lieu of this, immediate listening can be carried out after disabling the nulling connections, by removing PR2. In fact, with OP42 fitted, PR2 can be dispensed with altogether in most inst-

ances, because the DC offset contribution of IC.2 is then so small. This leaves the DAC as the dominant cause of DC offset at the output. Although nulling instructions are given in the original assembly guide, an easier way has emerged. If PR1 is adjusted for +50mV (+0.05V) at the CDU output when the player and CDU are first switched on, then after the DAC has reached thermal equilibrium, some 45 minutes later, the CDU's output will be close to 0V ( $\pm$ 15mV).

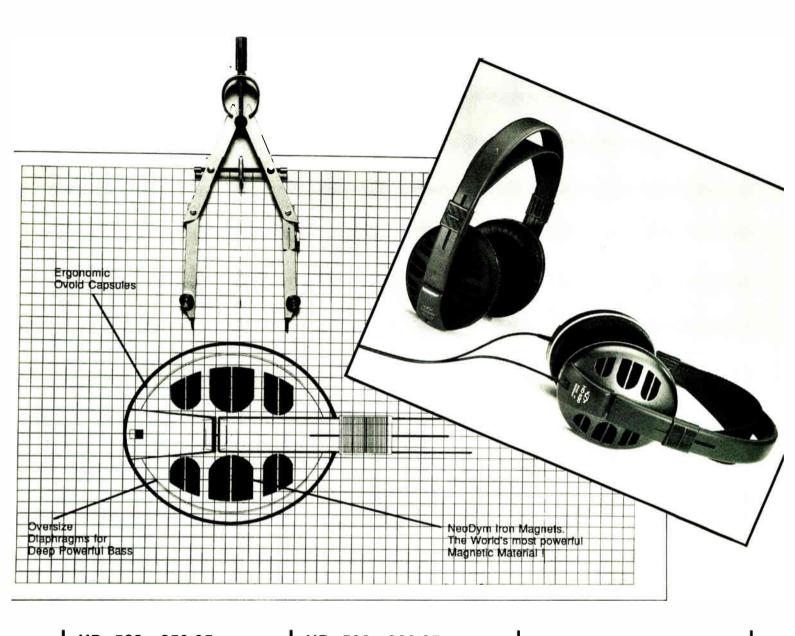
All the op-amps discussed so far are single. The scope for plug-in upgrades to the original output stage is restircted because few high performance devices are available in dual, 8-pin packages. In the past year, one dual device that's worth trying has surfaced, namely Linear Technology's LT1057. Its AC characteristics are similar to, but an upgrade on, the LF353 (TL072). The internal circuitry is very different though, and unlike any other dual device, it's been designed from scratch for minimum crosstalk between channels. Beyond this, it's possible to install high performance single op-amps by constructing a DIP header which splits out to two 8-pin DIL sockets.

Returning to the CDU diagram, the input Zobel (named after Dr Zobel at the Bell Labs!) network, R105+C104 isn't limited to compensating NUGS op-amps for stability. The values chosen also influence the settling time of IC.1 and the DAC, hence sonic accuracy. Typical values with HA2525 or OP42 in IC.1 position are R105=100R, C104=100pF. But the optimum value will depend on the length and nature of the input wires, and the op-amp installed in IC.1 position. Figure 4 (p.57, Pt.2) gives a range of likely values to experiment with. A convenient way to do this is to begin with C5= 100pF. Then fit a 470R preset (for R4), and adjust it progressively over a series of listening sessions. If the effects are slight or inconclusive after trying the preset at 5 or more equidistant positions, make C5=220pF and try again.

#### Is it worthwhile?

Engineers are rarely good publicists. Here are some unanimous comments gleaned from independent listeners, leading different lives in different parts of the cosmos, one year after fitting CDU to their player. All commented that the hardness associated with CD (and wrongly blamed on digital processes per se) had gone. And that the sound was 'more open', or 'less compressed' (both describe the same thing). Equally, the stereo stage was

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held to be wider and deeper, ambience was more audible, and reverberation could be heard dying away seamlessly into the noise floor, instead of somehow disappearing abruptly.

Altogether, the CDU dissolves the feeling amongst experienced listeners that 'there's something not quite right with CD' and makes Compact Disc into a realistic medium for future record purchases.

#### Digital trimmings

After successfully installing the CDU, you may become interested in upgrading the performance of your player's digital circuitry. Since most of the circuitry is within the Philips chip set, wholesale upgrading isn't possible. Besides, there's scant evidence that there's much wrong with the design of the chip set. Rather more likely, its potential performance is prejudiced by penny-pinching implementation – even in the most up-market players.

Accordingly, the original text cited some modifications carried out by Graham Lust, to improve the digital ICs' powering and supply decoupling. Such modifications are best restricted to 16-bit machines, as the digital contents of 14-bit players comprise many more components spread over several densely packed PCBs. The following section summarises Graham's more recent work in this area.

Today, 16-bit players can benefit from a DAC upgrade. In older machines, you can start by replacing the original (and now obsolete) TDA1541 16-bit DAC with the improved version, TDA1514A. A further upgrade you may like to try is fitting versions of the 1541A which have been selected for

low level linearity, suffixed 'S'. Some upmarket players may already contain this version. Look carefully, as the 'S' is stamped rather haphazardly, somewhere on the package. At this stage, the first step shows a worthwhile sonic improvement, but the benefits of fitting the selected version are presently less clear cut. These parts should be available via the service departments of helpful Philips/ Marantz dealers. If you're concerned about soldering such an expensive chip, you could fit a low profile, low capacitance, turned-pin DIL socket after desoldering the original DAC. If replacing an original TDA1541, note that the 1541A is different. First, it no longer requires a clock signal on pin 4, so on Philips/Marantz players, the link from pin 2 to pin 4 should be cut. The oscillator frequency also needs adjustment, by reducing the capacitor between pins 16 & 17 to 470pF.

DAC improvements can be taken further by experienced constructors by remounting the DAC either on Veroboard, or a custom PCB, with the independent powering described in part 3 (see also the first part of reference 2). The 3 signal inputs to the DAC on pins 1,2 & 3 should be no longer than 3in. The 14 current averaging capacitors can then be replaced by plastic film (polypropylene) or class 1 (low-k) ceramic types rated for low inductance. These require more space than the original PCB allows, because their dielectric 'gain' is lower. Their absolute value isn't critical (100nF to 330nF is fine) but the opportunity to tighten up their tolerance to 1% shouldn't be missed. Finally, how great are the benefits of upgrading? Set against a scale of 100, if the CDU scores around 60%. then the digital trimmings take the total close to 100%.

#### References and further reading

- 1. Chris Bryant, Pot Pourri, HFN/RR, July '88.
- 2. See 'Views', p.7, *HFN/RR* March '88. Decoding ICs for CD players, Elektor, Jan '89

Walt Jung & Hampton Childress, POOGE 4: Philips/Magnavox CD player mods, The Audio Amateur, 1 & 2/88.

Tomomi Umentoto and Tokuo Takeuchi, Performance up for reed switch contacts, 3rd international relay conference, Oklahoma University, May '75.

#### Corrigenda

In the original text, De-emphasis (DEEMP) was erroneously referred to throughout as de-multiplexing (DMPX). The device pictured on the right of figure 4 is the LT-1031-D voltage reference. The analogue ground on the TDA1540 is pin 6, not pin 5 as stated.

#### Acknowledgements

Thanks to Graham Lust for providing details of his research in the digital domain, to Paul Reaney for continued analogue feedback, and to Analog Devices, Linear Technology and PMI for their assistance with op-amp evaluation.

'Supertuning CD' was originally published in the issues spanning November '87 to January '88. For readers who missed the series, photocopies are available both from HFN/RR and from Audio Synthesis, £3.50 inc postage, UK or overseas. PCBs, op-amps, parts, CD player circuits and complete CDU kits are available from Audio Synthesis, 196 Wollaton Rd., Beeston, Nottingham NG9 2PH. Tel. (0602) 224138.

#### THE SUBJECTIVE STORY

are 'less objectionable' with a' restricted frequency range. Olson's listening room used a small live orchestra, trapped in a 'cage' in one corner of the room. The bars of this cage consisted of vertical wooden slats running from floor to ceiling, overlapping when closed - effectively a 5kHz 'woodenwall' filter. The cage was hidden from the listener panel by an acoustically transparent curtain and a light indicated conditions A and B; the filtered/unfiltered conditions. The 1000 listeners (of various backgrounds and subdivided into smaller panels) were asked to make preference-statements for either of the conditions. Conclusions? Around 70% preferred the full bandwidth presentation for popular music and a slightly lower figure for semi-classical (whatever that is), but the latter was with a much smaller sample. A number of descriptive responses were made during experiments using speech and the woodenwall filter - a technique with which we are all familiar today. The restricted FR condition was described 'muffled', 'muddy', 'mushy', 'lacking in intimacy', 'pushed back', 'not as intelligible' in comparison to the unrestricted presentations.

The subjective approach (using listener panels) worried some of the classically trained engineers – and not entirely without justification. LeBel (1947) rounded on his predecessors with a paper which outlined the important experimental conditions to document before an experimentor makes any deductions – audience experience, architectural influences, comparing like with like, listener fatigue, etc. However, a concept I

found most interesting was that of psychoacoustic masking; a phenomenon in which the ambient level of noise can affect the perception of sound quality. I sometimes wonder if this might go some way to explain the preferences for LP  $\nu$  CD, but I don't have the technical expertise to explore it – perhaps 'there is scope for further research'.

Sommerville (1954) brought respectability to the subjective approach - he was from the BBC. The paper arises from the listening tests carried out for the development of a new BBC loudspeaker monitor. The use of live music is considered vital for the judgment of musical accuracy but a couple of other interesting techniques are used - one of which involved recording speech in an acoustically 'dead' environment, replaying the recording over the test-speakers and recording their output and replaying that, recording that output and so on essentially 'magnifying' the distortions introduced by the loudspeaker. Another technique was to use white noise to judge the levels of coloration, but I feel that this can be criticized on the basis that there is no measure of accuracy (in subjective terms) and it is a known cause of disorientation with no definable spatial location; the brain appears to get a bit upset if denied such information.

Sommerville's experiments prompted others to compare live and reproduced music. Becoming more interested in wide FR comparisons, Vermulen (1955) makes an interesting statement about the impact of a decent stereo system, one which enables the listener to '... concentrate effortlessly from a certain

direction and detach one's attention from unwanted sounds'. Perhaps 'unwanted' is a bit strong, but whenever I've sat down with a high resolution system, listening is completely effortless, my attention can wander from instrumental or vocal groups without losing 'sight' of the acoustical whole. But Vermulen's experiments are significant for another reason; they were the first listening tests to use the A/B/X technique, popularised by Mr David Clarke in double-blind format (although Vermulen is not credited in Clarke's 1982 paper). Back to 1955 ... the object of the experiment was for listeners (total 300) to articulate preferences for live or recorded music. The technique was ingenius (no switching was involved); an orchestra recorded excerpts on a tape, leaving appropriately timed gaps which they would 'fill' when cued to do so, thereby providing the 'live' music reference. Listeners were played condition A, B then X, which they had to identify as A or B. This approach appears rather less confusing than asking listeners to identify a series of A/B switched presentations - if a listener loses track of switches, the labels are subsequently 'wrong'. Anyway, the outcome on 75% decisions on X (25% weren't sure) was a 75% preference for the live music. So it would seem that a respondent's preference for wide FR presentations depends upon the opportunity to compare it with a high quality reference, in this case live music.

[Next month: Paul Chaplin continues the story into the stereo era and up to date]

## CAREFUL LISTENERS ONLY PLEASE



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# THREE NEW TWO-WAYS



Promising new designs from three established names: Martin Colloms tests the Celef Nimbus CF2, Cyrus 781, Tannoy DC1000

RICED SIGNIFICANTLY above budget level in the popular £250 band, the three new speakers selected for this month's group review are of compact size and clearly intended to be used on good quality stands. With these models there were also sufficient funds for the designer to include some special features and/or take certain technical aspects more seriously than is possible at a lower price. For example, Tannoy has delivered a new design of dual-concentric, featuring a pure-piston HF driver working in conjunction with a revised throat coupler, to achieve a dramatically smoother treble. This is fitted to the present DC1000 system as well as to the larger DC2000, the latter to be reviewed in a month or two.

Mission has supplied the final offering in their new speaker line. Billed as a Cyrus rather than a Mission, it is called the 781, while a larger system called the 782 is also available, employing two bass units. Mission's inverted driver layout is used in the case of the 781, to reduce the time delay between tweeter and woofer, and the system may also be bi-wired. Bi-wiring is clearly catching on, and many new designs in addition to those covered here are now incorporating this feature. Finally, after lying dormant for a number of years. Stewart Tyler's Celef brand (ProAc is his up-market line) has resurfaced with the introduction of the Nimbus, nicely built and using tried-and-tested technoogy.

#### **Testing**

Backed by comprehensive anechoic testing, as well as the established room-averaged measurement or RAR, these three speakers were assessed in the light of the performance of recent references, including the Tannoy Mercury S. (For some reason I have been calling the

second-generation Mercury a 'Mk II', but my recent articles refer to the latest 'S' version.) The performances at wall and free-space tocations were investigated, and bi-wiring was also tried where applicable. Decent stands were used for support, including the Heybrook HBS1, and programme sources included a Meridian 207 CD used with a Musical Fidelity P140 power amp, plus Musical Fidelity speaker cable. For LP, an Alphason Sonata turntable was used.

#### **CELEF NIMBUS CF2**

The new Nimbus speaker is larger brother of the £180 Celef Cirrus, but aithough both models employ the same tweeter, the Nimbus uses an 8in (200mm) bass-mid driver while the smaller Cirrus is fitted with a 6in (160mm) unit. The Nimbus is conventionally styled and built, intended for free-space mounting on good quality stands, some 40-50cm high. Electrical connection is normal, via a pair of gold-plated 5-way Michell binding-posts, and the review samples came finished in black-ash vinyl, looking smartly turned out. The specification promises good sensitivity backed by an easy-to-drive amplifier loading.

#### Sound quality

On first hearing, the Nimbus sounded lively and open, with a full and exuberant character; but as auditioning proceeded it became clear that it was just *too* 'open' and suffered from some exaggeration in the presence range. Side-drum transients, and at the extreme, rim shots, were reproduced with an almost painfully vivid attack. Acoustic guitar also showed an exaggeration of the plucked initial edges of notes, producing a false close-miked effect. This ultimately betrayed the

speaker in areas such as orchestral string-tone, which sounded pinched, wiry and nasal. The sound was not well integrated: bass seemed separated from the thin, forward mid-range, while the otherwise unexceptional treble drew too much attention to itself.

Looking at specifics, the bass sounded lumpy and weighty, with below-average tune-playing and articulation, and poor extension to lower frequencies. Through the mid-range, the tonal balance was tipped up or thinned, with some boxy coloration noted in the lower mid. The upper mid could show a tendency to 'shout', and piano was 'cluttered' and forward in this range. No better in the treble, the lower part of the range showed a noticeable degree of hardness and 'glare', while vocal lines also suffered from exaggerated sibilance. Further up the range the treble possessed significant grit and grain – clearly below average in this period of increasing treble purity – while a loss of air and sparkle was also apparent in the extreme HF.

At times the Nimbus gave an impression of fairly good clarity, but this was found to be inconsistent, and was seemingly related to the dynamic emphasis given to particular parts of the frequency range. Better suited to simple rock than to more demanding classical programme material, at times this speaker was too untidy even for a neutral performance on rock. But no problems were encountered with power-handling, and it could be driven hard to deliver decently high sound levels.

Stereo focus was rated average, but stage depth and width were distinctly poorer than the norm. Perspectives were flattened, with the image thrown forward, and the whole presentation was rather up-front. On overall frequency balance the speaker was considered satisfactory at locations near free-space, from 0.8m from the back wall to as close as 0.4m. Moving it closer to try and fill out the lower mid-range tended to emphasise the upper bass further, reducing its accuracy.

#### Technical design

Bass-reflex loaded, this 17litre enclosure is mildly tuned to around 40Hz by a 45mm diameter 130mm long ducted port, located on the rear panel. A decent thickness of 19mm chipboard is used for the carcase, lined with acoustic foam but unbraced in any way. Care has been taken with the grille baffle, which is machined from 15mm MDF and sensibly rebated to minimize diffraction.

Bass and mid frequencies are handled by a Peerless unit featuring a 220mm pressed-steel frame and fitted with a 165mm diameter diaphragm. This is a straight-sided polypropylene cone with a foam surround – in design much like earlier pulp-cone units from the same company. The magnet is relatively small, and so likely to result in an underdamped resonance in the upper bass. The treble above 2.8kHz is handled by a 25mm soft-dome tweeter, a doped fabric unit (also Peerless) which is designed for surface mounting and featuring an integral shoft-horn phase coupler. No gaskets are present on either drive-unit, such as are normally fitted to guard against buzzes or rattles, and to seal the driver to the panel properly.

Hardwired, the crossover is of inexpensive commercial quality components, with small electrolytic capacitors and ferrite-cored inductors. A 3rd-order network is used for the treble, with 2nd-order for the bass-mid range, five elements in all.

#### Lab report

Measured on the reference axis at 1 metre, the speaker demonstrated an average sensitivity of 88.5dB/W, with a 75W peak-programme capacity. This will allow for maximum sound levels of 103dBA, while 15W per channel would represent a sensible minimum power rating. Above 2.5kHz the response is exceptionally smooth (Graph 1a), while at lower frequencies the speaker has an old-fashioned bass peak at 100Hz, nearly 4dB above the upper bass. From a 200Hz reference point, the mid climbs 3dB to 1.2kHz, beyond which a 4dB dip appears at 2.2kHz, near the crossover frequency.

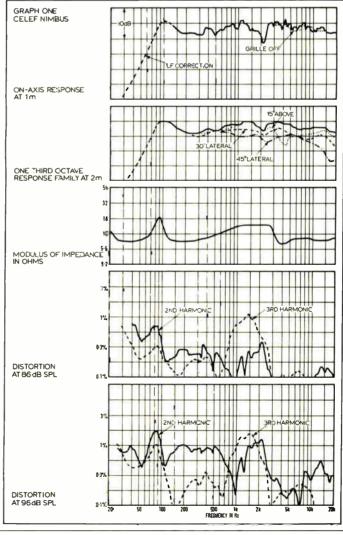
Pair-matching was good for the bass-mid, but on our sample one tweeter was 1dB less sensitive than the other – an audible difference. System resonance (closed box) was high at 92Hz, while the reflex resonance at 42Hz (ported box) could not rescue the low end. Thus –6dB brings in the bass rolloff at a higher-than-average 68Hz. In-room, 50Hz was the practical limit, but even here it was overshadowed by the upper-bass excess. The impedance curve (Graph 1c) is nicely uniform, never falling below 70hms and averaging 10, an easy amplifier load. The grille was found to have little effect on the frequency response – just a very mild dulling in the upper treble.

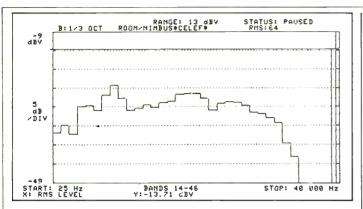
With the microphone shifted out to 2metres the overall response trend becomes clearer (Graph 1b), with a double hump representing bass and mid-range. Furthermore, on axis the 1-3kHz presence range dominates the whole response, a plateau of 'forwardness' if described subjectively. The output near crossover drops at 15° above axis, so a decent stand height is obligatory. The lateral off-axis curves

demonstrate good behaviour, and a straight-ahead position for the stero pair would help ameliorate the mid 'glare' at the expense of a duller upper treble. At this anechoic 2metre distance, ±3dB limits are possible over a 7GHz-20kHz range. However, in the listening room (Graph 2) the Nimbus broadly measured as it sounded: deficient in the lower bass, excessive of upper bass, a thin mid-range, leading finally to a dominant upper-mid and low treble, this latter being the 'glare' factor. The upper treble range remains tidy on this graph.

At 96dB spl the distortion is quite good (Graph le), holding under







Graph 2. Celef Nimbus: Room-averaged response (RAR)

1% over nearly the whole range down to 100Hz for both 2nd and 3rd-harmonic. At 86dB, a moderate programme level, the 2nd-harmonic was considered very tidy, but the 3rd remains at the 1% distortion level, which could also contribute to increased apparent power in the presence range. But LF distortion is well controlled at this sound level.

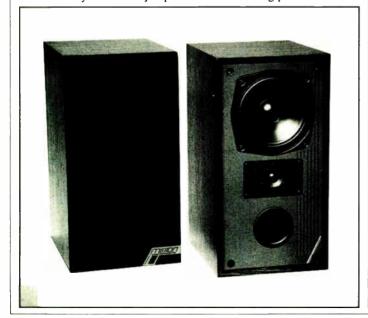
#### Conclusion

In a price range where one can buy speakers with a neutral, accurately balanced mid-range, as well as a reasonably extended, well damped bass and sweet, low-grain treble, the Celef looks out of place. Real wood finish and internal cabinet bracing are also common at this price. This model's bass is poorly extended, while the upper bass verges on boom, and the mid is tipped up in tonal balance. Furthermore, the presence range is too forward, and glares. Box coloration is also poorer than average. In other respects the performance was satisfactory, but the Nimbus was thought rather expensive for what is on offer and failed to reach the required standard for recommendation.

#### CYRUS 781

As this review got under way I was increasingly impressed by the 781, which in my view is a true successor to the top-rated Mission 700 of several years ago. It shows all the hallmarks of good engineering design backed by a high standard of finish and appearance. A type of rosewood veneer clothed the review samples, which were finely built. The moulded grille has a subtle 'colour flash' badge, while the appearance with the grille removed is also above average. Finished in high quality grey Nextel, the driver panel has additional screen-printing and the colour flash is repeated here.

The drivers are both properly flush-mounted and the whole looks very neat. Bass-mid is provided by a 175mm unit and the treble is handled by a special 19mm soft-fabric dome. A large port-reflex tunes the bass to extend the LF output. Four binding-posts are provided for bi-wiring, these being supplied on delivery strapped for normal connection by removable jumper wires. The binding-posts are of the



so-called three-way variety, ie: to take 4mm plugs, spade terminals, or bare wires. Strong matching Cyrus stands are available, designed to be used backed onto or near a wall, facing forward into the room.

#### Sound quality

Some likeable qualities were immediately evident on first hearing. The sound was distinctly homogeneous, with the whole frequency range well blended and neither of the two drivers drawing undue attention to itself. The sound was dry (as opposed to boomy or resonant), with crisp, clear bass definition plus good articulation and tune-playing. The mid was most promising, smooth and self-effacing, with fairly good transparency and resolution, as well as a respectably accurate tonal balance which was only mildly thin on bowed string-tone. The treble showed a mild sibilant excess – not too serious – plus a touch of grit in the upper range; but basically it was pretty good, if not quite to the best metal-dome standards. Suiting a position near the back wall, a 0.3m gap in our case, the 781s produced a well focused stereo soundstage with moderately good depth and decent stage width.

The results indicated an above-average rating, though not one to associate immediately with the high performance of a Cyrus One or Two amplifier. However, this speaker was found to thrive on the bi-wired connection. The crisp bass was then enhanced, while the dynamic quality was consistently better. The stereo soundstage was now wider and deeper, with significantly better focus and transparency – a lively, open and articulate performance. Thus 'Cyrus' performance can be achieved with this speaker after all, provided one goes to the trouble of bi-wiring.

#### Technical design

This is a compact 17litre enclosure, reflex-tuned to 43Hz by a large front-mounted ducted-port, 155mm long by 55mm in diameter. The bass-mid driver comprises a 175mm steel-frame Mission unit with a 130mm diaphragm fabricated in a decent thickness of nicely flared polypropylene polymer. A generous magnet is fitted. The tweeter is also a Mission exclusive. a 19mm soft-fabric dome with minimal spurious radiation from the surround and a well integrated short-horn phase-matching plate. The motor coil is ferrofluid loaded for both damping and cooling. Set at around 3.5kHz, the crossover is well engineered and uses resistively damped 2nd-order networks for both low- and high-pass sections, with good quality parts including film capacitors for the treble.

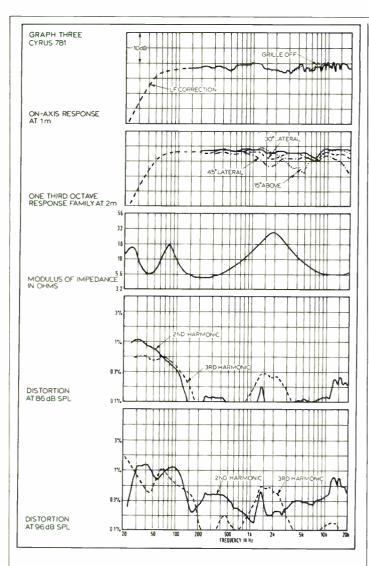
Built from 18mm double-veneered chipboard with an 18mm MDF front, the cabinet is damped by bituminous anti-resonance cladding. The interior is also foam lined, with the air volume additionally damped by polyester fibre filling. The tweeter is placed below the woofer to improve time alignment of the two units as 'seen' at the listening position.

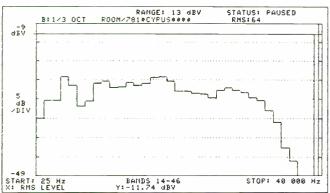
#### Lab report

A slightly above-average sensitivity of 89dB/W was measured, mildly compromised by the lowish-impedance of typically 60hms (Graph 3c). As such it rated as an average amplifier load with a minimum value of 4.80hms. Measured on its anechoic home territory (Graph 3a), the frequency response is very flat at  $\pm 2\text{dB}$ , 100Hz-20kHz (and  $\pm 3\text{dB}$  to 50Hz); showing just the slightest degree of mid lift (2dB or so), correctly judged for wall compensation. The bass is well tuned, with decent extension to 42Hz for -6dB, with good in-room power at least down to this point. The grille has little effect on the response, and the treble range is smooth if very slightly raised above the upper-mid. Pair-matching was excellent at  $\pm 0.3\text{dB}$ .

At 2metres (Graph 3b), the vertical off-axis response reveals the commonly encountered crossover dip, and the listener should not be placed too far above the mid driver axis. Good lateral off-axis responses are shown, corresponding nicely with the 'straight ahead' recommendation for listening. Close  $\pm 1.5$ dB limits obtain on axis over a 60Hz-20kHz range in this smoothed,  $\frac{1}{3}$ -octave representation, but some mild contradiction is shown by the RAR curve (Graph 4), which reveals a good balance of mid and treble but also some loss of energy in the presence range – more than the auditioning suggested. The bass is also a touch lumpy here at 50Hz, though it does not actually rise above the mid reference level. A 75W maximum power-handling was indicated, with 15W as a sensible minimum amplifier rating, and maximum sound levels of 103dB were possible.

Very good results for the size of enclosure were obtained for distortion, a strong point in many Mission designs. At 96dB, 0.3% is the norm for the 2nd and 3rd-harmonic (Graph 3e), only rising to a moderate 1% below 140Hz and above 10kHz, with the latter comprising only 2nd-harmonic. By 86dB the results are even better (Graph 3d), at typically 0.1% except for a rise to 0.3% of 3rd-harmonic around 1.5kHz. These are fine results indeed.





Graph 4. Cyrus 781: Room-averaged response (RAR)

#### **Conclusions**

Excellently complementing the fine range of Cyrus amplifiers, this speaker performed well in the listening tests, especially when bi-wired. Environmentally attractive in view of its good appearance and solid wall-position performance, this speaker also had a decent sensitivity, good bandwidth, a neutral character and low distortion. The load should present no problems to 4-80hm rated amplifiers, and decent sound levels were possible from this tidy, compact design. A fine all-rounder, this well-engineered speaker carries a firm recommendation.

#### TANNOY DC1000

This is the first of a new series of Tannoy dual-concentrics to be reviewed in these pages. In a sense they are the company's reply to KEF's 'Uni Q' systems, although Tannoy quite rightly claims a far longer pedigree for their own dual-concentric principle, even if none



of these new models are time-delay adjusted like the new KEF direct radiating driver. The old concentrics did well over the years, and are still widely used in a whole range of larger systems including certain professional monitors. This fresh series incorporates a new design of tweeter horn with an aluminium dome driver, mounted on the back of the main woofer magnet and driving forward via a large hollowed-out pole-piece. The DC 1000 uses an 8in (200mm) concentric driver, while the larger DC2000 is fitted with an additional bass unit and sells for £300 a pair.

The DC1000 system is intended for use on stands around 45cm high, placed near the back wall according to taste. Finish is in black-ash vinyl and the speaker can be bi-wired via its double set of gold-plated 5-way binding-posts. It was single-wired on delivery, by means of gold-plated jumper pairs.

#### Sound quality

Recalling past experiences with the original Tannoy dual-concentrics, this new version sounded commendably smooth, the treble range proving to be very well controlled in contrast to the previous mildly untidy exuberance. However, as auditioning progressed it seemed that this design was almost *too* smooth and laid-back, and that a proportion of the necessary life and energy had gone missing. In addition, given that the concentric principle should help to produce good stereo images, those for the DC1000 were rated poorer than average. A lack of transparency was notable, which did not allow for much ambience or hall acoustic to be reproduced, thus curtailing the impression of space and depth.

Stereo soundstages appeared less broad (possibly as a consequence of the narrower treble radiation and associated reduction in side image strength), while impressions of specific focus were also rated as below par. The speaker appeared to lack 'get up and go', and only came to life when driven to high sound levels. Musical dynamics were restrained, the sound appearing too bland and uninvolving to score highly

In free-space the bass was considered anaemic, and a location as near to the rear wall as possible was necessary – say within 0.2metre. The bass was rather dry, but while this characteristic is normally associated with a sharper, firmer upper bass, in the case of the Tannoy this region remained on the soft side. The mid-range was more coloured than usual, with a boxy overhang in the lower mid and a soft dullness in the upper mid. A loss of definition and transient attack was evident here. String-tone was a trifle syrupy, while vocals lacked presence and projection. In the listening room, the treble sounded a little dull – nicely sweet on sibilants and only showing a soft grain in the upper treble. No edge or grit was present. A slight trombone-like emphasis was noted on orchestral brass.

To summarize, the CD1000 was easy on the ears, free of aggression or fatigue- inducing properties, but failing to stir the blood. It was not a bad speaker by any means, and all one can do is politely give it a below-average ranking, since it was itself so very 'polite'. The bi-wired connection, incidentally, only provided small gains in clarity and focus – insuficient to shift the position materially.

#### Technical design

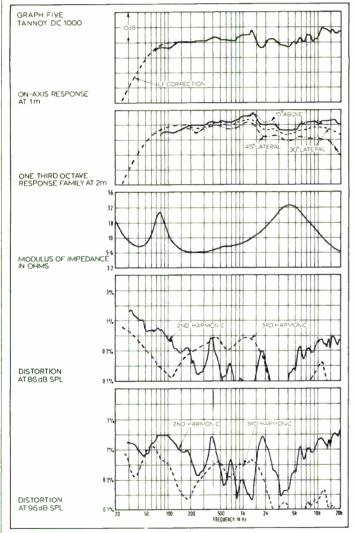
The pressed-steel frame bass unit has a flared polypropylene cone of 160mm active diameter, fitted with a high-power 42mm voice-coil. A

new design of throat and phase-plug accurately matches the treble horn output to the expanding cone flare at the neck of the diaphragm. The 16litre box is reflex-tuned to 43Hz by a normal ducted-port, 48mm in diameter by 125mm deep. The enclosure is built of 15mm chipboard, strongly reinforced by a vertical 'H' brace locking sides, top and bottom together, while the back of the concentric driver bears down on the cross-brace via a mastic pad. Internal absorption is accomplished via a light wad of low-density polyester fibre. The grille baffle is 15mm thick. It is not rebated, for with the narrower directivity of this driver design there is no need for rebating to reduce diffraction.

The crossover is to 2nd-order 12dB/octave slopes, and is wired with push-on terminals. Of above-average commercial quality, the treble section includes some passive equalization to correct the response, and employs film capacitors.

#### Lab report

Pair-matching was very good up to 12kHz, although at higher frequencies a 1dB difference in level was measured – but not considered too serious in this frequency region. From the reference response taken at one metre the sensitivity came out at the high level

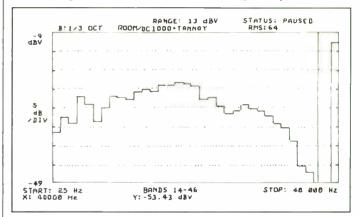


of 91dB/W, requiring very little amplifier power for normal sound levels. With a practical input maximum of 75W on music, the DC1000 could deliver up to 105dBA to a typical listening room on stereo programme, a substantial level. Removal of the grille had negligible effect and it can be safely left in place if so desired. The output rises smoothly and gently from 100 to 800Hz (Graph 5a), is then a little irregular up to 2kHz or so, when after a short while the axial output then rises again up to an average of 4dB by 20kHz. Even on a high-resolution trace no narrow-band spikes are present through the treble – a commendable result for this horn-loaded upper range.

Using equivalent 1/3-octave averaging and a 2metre microphone distance (Graph 5b), the axial response does not change very much up to 5kHz, while the upper treble settles down a bit. The overall trend remains imperfectly balanced, but despite this the desirably uniform array of off-axis responses is plain to see. No notches appear on any axis, the curves simply stepping nicely away from the axial trend. The bass response is not very extended, reaching -6dB by 50Hz and -9dB by 42Hz.

In-room (Graph 6), the bass is depressed relative to the mid and could only be rated as sufficiently powerful down to 50Hz. Bass-reflex tuned to 42Hz, this speaker just dips below the 6.4ohm minimum value for an 8-ohm specification (Graph 5c), but gives no trouble elsewhere. It can be rated as a good amplifier load, particularly in view of its sensitivity which implies high efficiency.

Good efficiency is usually associated with moderate distortion, and at 86dB spl the DC1000 did well (Graph 5d). Through the mid-band the 2nd-harmonic averages 0.2%, and 3rd-harmonic 0.35%. Well controlled at low frequencies, neither 2nd nor 3rd-harmonics exceed 1% down to 50Hz – a fine result. At the higher 96dB test level (Graph 5e), 3rd-harmonic is poorer, but in proportion to the increase in level; it still averages 0.8 to 1%, and is considered subjectively harmless.



Graph 6. Tannoy DC1000: Room-averaged response (RAR)

The RAR (Graph 6) shows that the DC1000 possesses too strong a rise into the mid-range, measuring some 6dB from 100Hz to 800Hz, leaving the low end deficient and the mid raised in the form of a broad plateau. With the subjective response hinging on this mid reference level, the output is seen to fall too quickly through the crossover range, confirming the 'dulled' and over-sweet effect noted on audition. The main treble range is smooth, but level-deficient compared with the mid-range. Near-to-wall mounting helps restore the weight in the lower mid, albeit unevenly.

#### Conclusion

At first sight, this speaker looked as if it would be a promising new experiment involving the concentric principle. However, the listening results were disappointing, the speaker sounding somewhat lifeless and lacking in immediacy. The anechoic tests provided some confirmation of these findings, but the real correlation came with the RAR curve, which showed the speaker to be broadly mid-

		KAR curve, which sh	lowed the speaker to be
TEST RESULTS	CELEF NIMBUS CF2	MISSION CYRUS 781	TANNOYDC1000
Size (height×width×depth, cm) Recommended amplifier power per channel	45×25.5×25 15-75W	43×22.5×28.3 15-75W	50×24.5×23 10-75W
Recommended placement	Free-space on rigid stands	On good stand, 0.2-0.3m from wall, facing forward	On stand, 0.3m from rear wall
Frequency response within $\pm 3 dB (2m)$	70Hz-20kHz	50Hz-20kHz	70Hz-20kHz
LFrolloff (-6dB) at 1m	68Hz	42Hz	50Hz
Bass frequency extension (typical in-room)	50Hz	40Hz	50Hz
Voltage sensitivity (ref 2.83V, ie: 1W into 80hms) at 1m	88.5dB/W	89dB/W	91dB/W
Approximate maximum sound level (pair at 2m)	103dBA	103dBA	105dBA
Impedance characteristics (ease of drive)	Easy	Average	Good
Forward response uniformity	Good	Good+	Very good
Typical price per pair (inc VAT)	£230	£240	£200

dominant, presence-dull, and deficient in both treble and bass level. On the plus side, it was an easy load, sensitive, and moderate in distortion, capable of high sound levels. Its smaller Tannoy brother, the cheaper Mercury 3, rather shows it up, and I fear that the DC1000 is only 'worth considering'.

As you know CD players shine a laser beam onto the disc to pick up the musical information.

This takes the form of extremely rapid pulses of light, a bit like morse code.

These digital messages are passed on to a clever little fellow we shall call DAC.

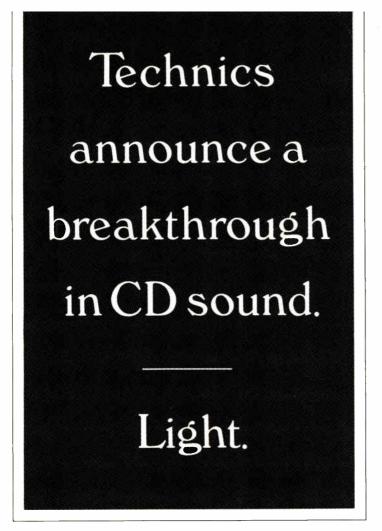
DAC's job is to turn dot, dot, dashes into

Vivaldi. Which as you'll appreciate is very demanding.

DAC isn't happy in a CD player because the electric motor, servo and laser generate an awful lot of digital noise while he's trying to work.

Ideally DAC would prefer somewhere with 3 more like him to share the work. Then he would





have the time to bring out subtle details of the original recording that nobody knew existed.

Somewhere quiet, like the inside of the Technics SU-A60 control amp, which has 4 DAC 18 bit converters built-in.

It accepts pure digital signals from CD players like the Technics SL-P990 via fibre optic cable. Anything else and the sound quality would go down the tube.

Because unlike normal coaxial, fibre optic cable is totally unaffected by interference from car starter motors, sunbeds etc. (we kid you not).

And when satellite dishes start popping up like mushrooms you can congratulate yourself on having the foresight to buy a pre-amp with automatic sampling rates. So it can handle direct digital signals from Broadcast Satellite tuners, DAT, CD of course, or whatever else comes along.

However if the SU-A60 control amp is the brains then the SE-A50 is surely the brawn.

A 160 wpc, Class AA power amp of twinmono construction, with enough instantaneous current delivery to drive the 9:15 from Euston as well as any loudspeaker you care to name.

Even the price is no impedence for a muscle amp of this quality. It features newly developed EX capacitors made from a material so pure that it needs no additives to resist the oxidization and 'pitting' that normally occurs on aluminium electrolyte surfaces.

While you'd need an electron microscope to see the difference (ordinary stuff looks like crisp-bread, EX like white sliced), you should detect a more lucid midrange and treble.

The same attention to detail shows in the gold-plated terminals.

The metres of oxygen-free copper we've used in the power transformers and of course the revolutionary fibre optic cable.

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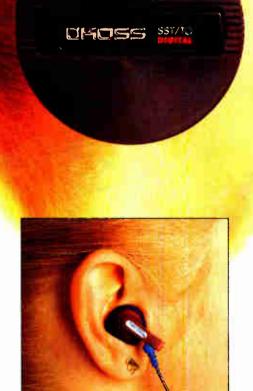
#### Koss Porta Lite

A range of four headphones designed to meet the needs of the contemporary music lover whatever their budget. These models offer great portable sound with features like extra cushions, volume balance controls, even 1/4 inch adapter plugs for home use.



#### Koss Fun 'N' Fashion

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World Radio History



## **ARAGON OF VIRTUE**

The Aragon 4004 power amplifier was acclaimed as the high-end bargain of '88; is the 24K pre-amp the bargain of '89? Ken Kessler asks

'M OFTEN ACCUSED of big bucks fetishism, but that's life. Experience has shown me that you don't get something for nothing, so I don't expect the state-of-the-art in hi-fi to cost the same as a toaster. Regular readers will note, however, that I do champion those rare components which defy their price tags and get no greater pleasure than I do from learning that you don't have to take out a mortgage for a taste of the best.

Last year, I went a bit goofy over the Aragon 4004 power amplifier from Mondial in the USA. Feedback from my moles in the retail industry reveals that my unbridled adoration of that product was not misplaced, and that its performance withstands the shocks of an unavoidable price increase due to importation costs. To the credit of Path, who distributes Mondial in the UK, they kept the price within reason, the 4004 suffering far less than other products imported into this country.

The question prompted by the 4004 was: could Mondial do it again? Would the company be able to produce a pre-amplifier worthy of the 4004, a pre-amp which does at its price-point what the amplifier did for entry-level high-end?

I'd seen protypes of the 24K pre-amp on numerous occasions in the USA, the initial and still dominant reaction being amazement at the distinctive styling. Carrying on the V-groove theme which made the 4004 stand out from the pack. Mondial took it a stage further by running the groove across the fascia instead of cutting through the top-plate. When you look head-on at the 24K at eye level, it almost looks like any other pre-amp. Take a three-quarter or profile glance and you see just what a clever styling fillip graces this unit. Stylist Robbii Wesson has managed yet again to add a fresh look without resorting to the bizarre, although I'm certain that some customers will find it too *outré* after years of flat-panel conditioning.

There is one unfortunate by-product of the styling which soon makes its presence known, and I don't mean the way that the lower slope catches dust. Because the central point of each knob is at the point of the groove, the legends for source and record-select have

been printed on the lower section. Unfortunately, they don't line up with the dots on the two selector knobs, so you have to spend quite some time with the product before familiarity takes over from the visual gaffe. I was given some feeble excuse about the knobs on the review sample being drilled/marked/positioned incorrectly, which is a load of utter cobblers because that's not the issue. The problem is that the legends are below rather than surrounding the knobs. When you turn the knobs to the 4-8 o'clock positions, it becomes guesswork unless the sources are in play or you count the number of clicks. A minor point, perhaps, but it is the only truly inconvenient feature of the 24K. Other pre-amps and integrated amps I've seen with the legends arranged below instead of around the knobs use lines drawn from the click-stop positions to the labels to indicate status, so I'm not asking for the impossible.

The controls across the front include the barest essentials without quite resorting to fakir masochism. At the extreme left is a three-position rotary control for off/on/mate, the 'off' position actually being a standby mode because the 24K is powered as long as the unit is plugged into a live wall socket. Turning the knob to the middle position provides full power on, while the mute position deactivates the output to the power amplifier: handy when changing records or sources. Above this is an LED which glows green when the unit is in the 'on' position, but it also stays on when in the mute position; I'd prefer to see it either dim to half-power in the latter mode or possibly change colour. Next is the source selector, labelled 'listen', and an identical record' selector to choose sources for recording; this arrangement allows you to record one source while listening to another. Next in line is an oversized knob for volume, as it should be because it's the most used control, followed by a balance control with centre detent. That's it, the only missing items which I'd like to see being a mono button (I'm convinced that mono recordings sound better with units offering this facility) and polarity inversion facility.

The 24K handles six sources, including phono, CD, tuner, auxiliary and two tape decks, both of the latter operating for record or

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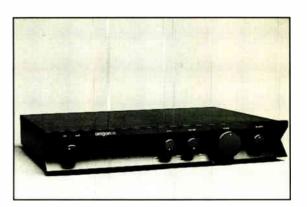
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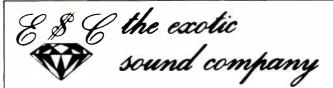
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playback. At the back of the unit, Mondial yet again shows its ability for including luxury touches in affordable hardware by offering two rows of gold-plated Tiffany connectors for every input and output, including two sets of main outputs for bi-amplification or multi-system applications. As with the 4004, the legends are printed both right-side-up and upside-down to assist those who lean over their equipment when making connections. Also on the back are an earthing post and an XLR-type input for mains supply from the outboard power supply. The latter is an unusually styled unit carrying on the wedge motif; its frontal aspect is triangular, making it look like a big Toblerone bar without the slots.

A look inside reveals how Mondial managed yet again to keep the costs down without affecting the quality. Instead of drilling the front (or rear) panel to make space for another control, moving-coil and moving-magnet selection are accessed internally, via three sets of DIP switches. The first selects m-c or m-m. A pair of rockets just to the right of the centre of the large, single PCB which contains all of the circuitry. At the extreme right are two sets of 8-rocker DIPs to choose the loading, one for each channel. So extensive are the possibilities that Mondial had to provide a mathematical formula to help you set intermediate positions varying from the individual settings of 10, 25, 47, 100, 249, 475, 825 and 1k-ohms. By combining the rockers you can create values to suit just about any cartridge you can name. Best of all is the news that this pre-amp had enough gain in m-m mode to deal with most moving-coil without too much sacrifice. The internal selections, Mondial argues, will be made only once in a while for most people, so the inconvenience will only be noted by inveterate

cartridge changers and reviewers.

As with the 4004, internal construction is excellent and the unit is bristling with designer label components. Most pleasing of all is the inclusion of Noble pots instead of cheap 'n' cheerful alternatives, the Nobles offering both good performance and long-term reliability. What few bits of wire you do find under the lid are carefully routed, kept short and soldered perfectly. What it shows is that specialist manufacturers can offer professional build quality in products which don't break the bank. British cottage industry firms, take note.

The 24K needs a hefty run-in period, but this is something I don't care to argue about anymore when you consider that simply leaving it on for three days will do it. (This doesn't apply to running in cartridges, which is a pain unless you're still using a record changer or own an LP with a locked groove.) It's sensible to leave the unit plugged in to a live outlet at all times, because warm-up from cold (after the initial burn-in) is a good hour.

I slipped the 24K into a system consisting of the Alphason Sonata turntable and arm, cartridges from Krell, Grado, Rowland, Tsurugi, Spectral and a host of others, Marantz CD12, Sony R1 and California Audio Labs Tempest II CD players and Rowland Model 7, Beard P100 monoblock and Aragon 4004 power amplifiers. I used the Apogee Divas for most of the listening, but also enjoyed spells with the Celestion SL600s and SL700s, the Wharfedale 505.2 and Microphase SATs. For cables, I used Mandrake for CD and Lieder for everything else.

The 24K behaves just beautifully, no bangs, pops, clicks, buzzes, hums or other unwanted sounds which can make hi-fi less than a blissful pursuit. Nothing, no headaches whatsoever: the 24K just did what it should. Score 1 for Mondial, to add to the other points for superior construction, adequate facilities and almost perfect ergonomics. (That source selector still bugs me.)

The sound is clean and clear without being either overly hygienic or too lean. If anything, the 24K is warmer than I expected, but hardly one which will woo consumers away from all-valve designs or even ARC's hybrids. This endows the 24K with exceptional power for revealing fine details, especially the sonic clues which help to create a soundstage. This aspect of the 24K's performance is its strongest feature, the £1395 unit almost approaching the Audio Research SP-9

for realistic three-dimensionality. Within the stage are correctly proportioned players and instruments, but the 24K is not the ultimate in transparency, so a slight haze occupies the space between the sounds. It's not quite noise – the 24K is quiet enough to better most valve designs and challenge a few solid-state champions; rather it's a form of texturing that I don't notice in units like the Rowland Coherence One or the latest generation from Audio Research. Curiously, this didn't seem as noticeable with the 4004 as it did with the Rowland Model 7, but that could just be the latter showing its greater transparency over the former.

If anything upsets the 24K's top-to-bottom consistency, it's a slightly 'light' bass register. This also sounds like tailoring the pre-amp to the sound of the 4004, because the lightness is balanced out by the 4004's overly rich bottom end. Again, this was more noticeable when using the Rowland power amplifier, which has such accurate bass that any changes in this region are easily identifiable.

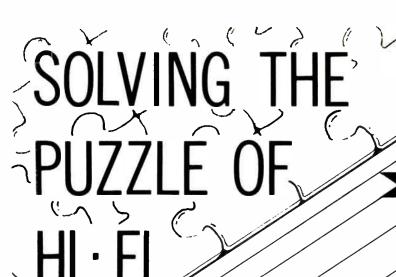
The midband is the 24k's crowning glory, reason enough to purchase one if the layout and physical specification haven't already won your heart. In spite of the slight texturing of the 'silences', the 24k' is sweet and liquid throughout the midband and the freedom from harshness even when the signals stretch the pre-amp to its limits makes the 24k' one easy piece with which to live. The punchy brass on the Nimbus Sousa CD is a fine test for this characteristic, the Aragon hanging on to the transients without losing control or revealing any compression of the signal. More to the point is the way that the 24k' copes with powerful vocals, especially deep male voices like Jimmy Witherspoon's and half of the Persuasions. The chest sounds come through along with the primary vocals, never turning them into 20-a-day-men unless the hoarseness is in the groove. With female vocals, the benefits are freedom from sibilance (Juice Newton again) and retention of warmth (Elfa).

While the 4004 scores mightily in the UK because it has few serious rivals, the 24K has to contend with a type of product which UK manufacturers pump out with ease. We are in the midst of a pre-amp revolution in this country, with the £500-£1500 sector crammed with goodies. Musical Fidelity, Deltec, DNM and others can all offer the performance, with ergonomics and styling rivalling the 24K in different degrees. The DNM, for example, is probably the main choice for those who have only performance as a concern and no interest whatsoever in perceived value or aesthetics. Musical Fidelity offers sound quality and styling, while Deltec provides sound quality and structural excellence.

What makes the 24K so competitive is that it offers three-out-of-three, assuming that you don't object to the radical styling. But it's moot, because the 24K works best and looks best with the Aragon power amplifiers, and I reckon that it's the perfect choice for owners of Mondial's powerhouses. As a stand-alone to mate with other products, its supremacy in the under £1500 sector is not quite so absolute and the customer who's not stretching his or her budget to the limit might also want to consider the dearer Audio Research SP-9, which betters the 24K in a number of areas. Still, the Aragon pre-amp is now my choice for under £1500, and for the following reasons.

Mondial has put together a beautifully constructed performer with totally flexible moving-coil capabilities, top-flight ingredients, refreshing styling, adequate facilities and detailed, non-fatiguing, wholly musical sonic delivery. As configured in the UK, it has the deluxe power supply as standard, thus compensating for the UK v US price differential, and its deep grey/black, 19in wide aspect gives it a stylistic universality despite its unusual geography. The 24K doesn't quite rewrite the rules the way the 4004 does, but it's close enough. And with so few trade-offs to consider when investing what is still way below the silly money amounts commanded by the real high end, the 24K can only be described as a winner.

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#### MISSION CYRUS

In the 1989 'WHAT HIFI' awards, the Cyrus One received first prize for the best amplifier under £300, a highly commendable achievement since it carries a price tag of £180. Also available for auditioning its stable mate the more powerful Cyrus Two and PSX. We regard the Cyrus PCMII as one of the very best sounding CD players available and the new price of £500 makes it more attractive still. To complete the line up we now have the exciting new Cyrus speakers 781 and 782 which thoroughly compliment this excellent range of products. PINK TRIANGLE

We have on demonstration two PT TOO'S fitted with the Moth RB250 and the SME Series IV with a selection of cartridges to choose from. You have read the reviews on the PIP, we have it on demonstration with variety of power amps. Also, new products on the way are the Pacesetter - a battery power supply for the PT TOO and the Pacemaker, the same for all turntables using A.C synchronous motors ie. Linn etc.

ROKSAN

To compliment the Xerses Roksan have introduced two exciting new products: The Artemiz tone arm has an intelligent counterweight which dramatically optimises the tracking weight of the cartridge while the record plays, leaving the cantilever to control the system, not the arm. The Shiraz cartridge uses a broadcast standard generator clamped exactly in position by three precision spikes, eliminating arbitrary compliance and mechanical impedance incurred in adhesives. A superb sounding trio.

#### MUSICAL FIDELITY

Amongst the power houses the P270 and P370 are quite a delightful duo called MA50's, which are 50W class A mono blocks and use bipolar output devices instead of the mosfets found in their larger brothers - highly recommended with any good loudspeaker, MA100 also recommended. All this company's products are available for demonstration from us.

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## MICHEL GYRODEL

#### Paul Miller reviews the latest and much-improved version of this elegant favourite

HE CONSIDERED blend of art and engineering that is John Michell's GyroDec turntable has seen a number of very important revisions since its inception some 8 years ago. More importantly perhaps, in all that time the product has remained at a fixed retail price of £595 which, by today's high-end standards, seems positively reasonable. One of the principal upgrades now available is the £93 'GyroPower', an outboard power supply that connects to the deck using the same 3-pin plug as before but offering the convenience of on/off control without having to reach inside the deck itself. For just an extra £10 the GyroDec may be supplied with a tobacco-tinted Perspex lid and plinth which soften the stark gold and dull silver colour of the main deck very effectively. By contrast, if classic JPS styling is the order of the day then Michell can supply a black and gold anodised GyroDec for an extra £55.

For many the appeal of the GyroDec will always fall to its space-age aesthetics though it is still gratifying to learn that the reasons for this deck's skeletal appearance are more than skin deep. The Gyro is

aptly named, for the entire structure has been machined and loaded to place the overall centre of gravity in line with the bearing assembly and as near to the plane of the pivot point as is possible. This is the purpose behind the Gryo's huge sand-cast LM5 alloy subchassis which, besides lending the deck its distinctive appearance, is loaded on the underside with strategically-placed blocks of lead that counterbalance the arm and armmounting assembly that lie to the far right of the structure. The whole arrangement has been standardized by maintaining the total mass of tonearm and HE30 alloy mounting

plate at 1kg, a feat achieved by machining individual plates for individual arms: an 800g tonearm will require a 200g mounting plate and so on.

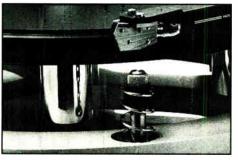
Cast in the form of a large 3-spoked 'wheel' this C-section subchassis is extremely rigid despite there being a plane of symmetry running fore and aft through the casting. One of the original design features of the GyroDec concerned its ability to cope with more than one tonearm and so two circular appendages were included, either side of the main subchassis. One supports the alloy arm plate on three chunky columns (there being no compliant armboard as such) while the other appendage surrounds the over-sized Papst motor. However, because the notion of two-arm mounting has now been discarded this motor is now permanently bolted on the topside of the thick Perspex 'plinth' together with a considerably more resiliant alloy baseplate. In the past, the position of this motor could be changed and a second tonearm mounted across the left-hand boss.

Moreover, the new baseplate has certainly curtailed the slight vibration suffered by this motor in the past while improved filtering of the 50Hz supply via Michell's latest 'GyroPower' can only be of further benefit. Built to the standards we have come to expect from Michell Engineering, the GyroPower features a black lacquered PCB and tinted perspex case which complements the main deck very effectively. Nevertheless the GyroPower is not a sophisticated synthesized PSU; instead it employs two laminated C-core transformers for stepping-down (19.8V AC) and filtering the two-phase 50Hz output in conjunction with a staggered RC network. Two (suppressor) diodes are also fitted which either help to remove momentary spikes or are used to feed the on/off LED.

Consequently, though speed selection is still manual it is easily effected by shifting the two rubber drive cords onto either of the 33/45rpm motor pulleys. These belts run in grooves machined out of the periphery of the platter, a technique that improves the start-up time of the deck but will inevitably dull its reaction to sudden load

changes. However, this aspect has also been improved by Michell's use of a lighter acrylic platter in place of the alloy casting used before. By retaining the six gold-plated brass cylinders that are distributed about the underside edge of the platter the overall inertia of the rotating system has been increased while lowering its centre of gravity, thereby improving its stability. Of course, the new platter does enjoy a more favourable acoustic impedance match with record vinyl, a degree of mis-termination being achieved by loading the acrylic with a very fine carbon powder/vinyl mix – hence the black finish.

Clearly no mat is required but Michell has sought to optimize the impedance gradient by machining a 0.9mm concave relief into its surface, mild warps are then accommodated by gently stressing the record into position with a lightweight alloy clamp.



#### Lab report

Clearly there have been some secondary benefits as a result of the more recent modifications. Take the platter for example: not only does this furnish a more appropriate impedance match with the record vinyl but its reduced loading on the main bearing may well have contributed to the excellent DIN B-wtd rumble figure of -81.2dB; this is very close to the theoretical minimum value for rumble. Graph 1, the total rumble spectrum (with equalization), is remarkably free of electrical noise with only a 50Hz spike (-57dBV) to mar an otherwise hum-free spectrum. Various other mechanical components are visible

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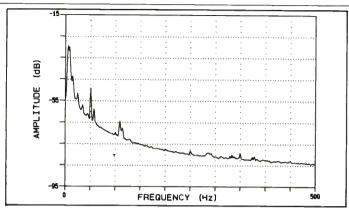
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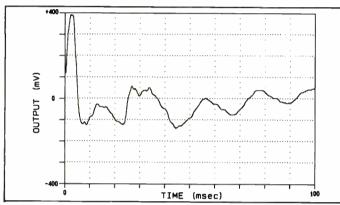
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Graph 1. Michell GyroDec: total rumble



Graph 2. Michell GyroDec: disc impulse test (unclamped)

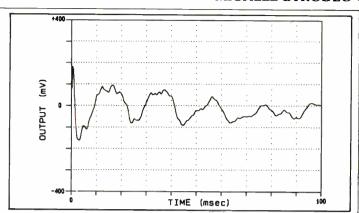
in addition to the arm/cartridge resonance. These include peaks at 13.6Hz (at -53dB rel to 10cm/sec), 25Hz (-61dB), 33.8Hz (-65dB) and 43.8Hz (-69dB) which were also linked to modulation frequencies in the flutter spectrum – particularly the 25Hz component which is equal to the cyclical frequency of the 1500rpm motor. Peak wow was slightly high for a GyroDec at 0.12% (though flutter was extremely low), this comprising mod frequencies of 5Hz and 7.5Hz.

The rumble spectrum also picks out two other frequency 'groups' that occur on both the disc impulse test (Graph 3) and mechanical resonance spectrum (Graph 2). These are 56-57Hz and 108-115Hz respectively; the former appears to be the main lateral suspension resonance (time period on Graph 3 = 19msecs) which is also highlighted at -57.5dB on the structural resonance plot. The second harmonic cluster around 110Hz is also visible (-55dB) which, in addition, appears to be related to a bending mode in the main chassis. This could turn out to be an unfortunate coincidence for the GyroDec because the bands at 50 and 100Hz are also harmonics of the pulley's rotational frequency and any instability here is likely to degrade low bass resolution. This may also help to explain why some ultra-rigid tonearms (particularly the SME IV/V and Helius Cyallene) tend to sound 'lean' on this deck if sub-100Hz resonances are passing through the baseplate. An element of decoupling here (with reducing compliance at higher frequencies) might yield some subjective benefits if only because the arm would be 'isolated' from the massive subchassis at very low frequencies.

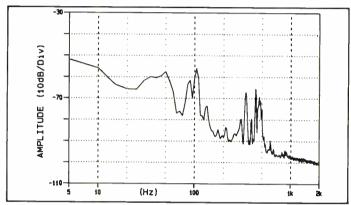
The remaining structural breaks are fairly sharply defined and are limited to fairly low frequencies as a result of the sheer stature of the deck. Parts of the motor housing sound off at 430Hz (-65dB) and 480Hz (-73dB) while the springs and – more importantly – the spring covers resonate at 305Hz (-80dB) and 340Hz (-67dB). Removing the cylindrical covers does seem to improve the sound of the deck and so I must assume these sympathetic resonances are influencing the performance of the suspension to some degree. Graphs 3 and 4 demonstrate the effectiveness of clamping the disc, for though both precipitate the same subchassis shudder at 53Hz, the initial shock is very much better controlled with the clamp in position (Graph 3).

#### Sound quality

In common with the vast majority of decks now employing some sort of polymeric mat or platter, the revised GyroDec enjoyed a new-found transparency and cohesiveness. In contrast to the older deck with its heavy rubber mat and alloy platter this new formulation successfully avoided any sense of 'heaviness' or 'thickening'



Graph 3. Michell GyroDec: disc impulse test (clamped)



Graph 4. Michell GyroDec: turntable resonances

throughout the lower octaves. In many respects it was slightly too lean, though this balance was achieved without it sounding unnecessarily forward or bright; long-term listening fatigue was certainly not a problem. With the suspension caps removed the Gyro sounded 'fast' and articulate.

Most vocal material also benefited from this new level of resolution though I did detect a hint of graininess or sibilance with some of the more 'immediate' female vocalists, T'Pau's Carol Decker being one such example. Large-scale orchestral works could sound a little restrained, however the sense of ease and freedom enjoyed with the simplicity of a string quartet was traded for a tighter though faintly colder and harder sound in these circumstances.

Nevertheless the Gyro still maintained a realistic sense of pitch and timing while there was little instrument modulation to compromise the freshness of a lively and detailed piece of music. Spinning the quick-paced Desert Moonlight from Lee Morgan's Rump-roller, the Gyro captured his command of the trumpet with only the slightest tinge of brightness. The rich timbral rasp was not brash or discomforting but correctly proportioned in the soundstage so as not to overshadow the funky piano or rhythm bass and drums. In all, a very good result for a deck that can now almost be classified as mid-priced.

#### Conclusion

Value for money is always a touchy subject wherever specialist hi-fi is concerned, but if any product deserves recognition in this area then it is the GyroDec. As a result few purchasers could fail to be impressed by the engineering, aesthetic and subjective prowess of this very flexible turntable.

TEST RESULTS:	MICHELL GYRODEC
Type:	Suspended-subchassis
Platter Mass:	3.75kg
Absolute Speed:	33.34rpm (+0.05%)
Drift over 1hr:	-0.01%
Peak Wow (1-10Hz):	0.12%
Peak Flutter (10-100Hz):	0.031%
Electrical and Mechanical rumble (unwtd):	-54.0dB
Electrical noise:	-72.7dB
Rumble (DIN B-wtd):	-81.2dB
Shock/vibration sensitivity:	Good
Typical price, inc VAT:	£595 + £97



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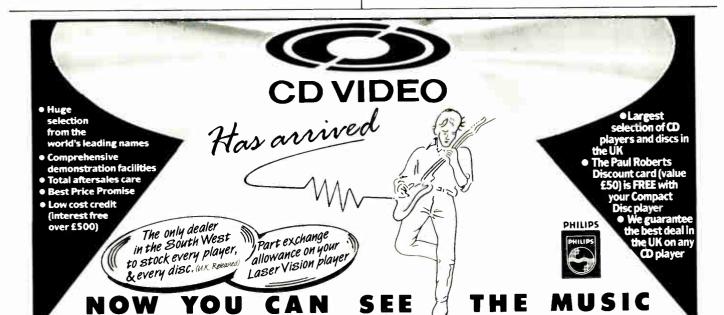
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## MORE CD AND CD-V PIONEER

Will a CD-V player give you the best of both worlds? Chris Bryant tests Pioneer's CLD-1200 and the audio-only PD-6100

OW THERE IS CD-V to consider as well, the choice for the CD buyer has expanded into another dimension. Sales of the vision players are already picking up, so, with software gradually coming on stream, this medium too could firmly establish itself in the market place. With this in mind we examine both varieties of digital disc player here. Over the years Pioneer has produced a large number of desirable products aimed at the hi-fi separates market. Along with Philips Pioneer has also been active in the field of producing pictures along with sound from digital disc. This review takes in both ends of their current digital production with a £250 CD-only player and a £579 CD, CD-Video and Laser Disc player.

#### PIONEER PD-6100

With the 6100, Pioneer have developed a player with many features which will appeal to the gadget-minded. At first inspection it has all that you could desire from a CD player at any price in terms of facilities. On top of this, its technical specifications are respectable although not fully up to the latest Japanese technical hype. This player uses only a 4-times oversampling digital filter and twin 16-bit digital to analogue converters (DACs); but then it's not a top of the range model and makes no pretence at being so. (front panel facilities aside). Pioneer has been able to produce a top sound quality (remembering that currently some of the best players don't seem to need all the extra digits) while including all those user-orientated indulgences, then the package indeed looks exciting.

There is nothing new about the layout of the front panel, it retains the CD player characteristic of drawer on the left, display in the middle and controls beneath the latter and to its right. The manual runs to 32 pages and most of its user instructions but, in essence,

operation is simple enough.

Running from left to right along the bottom of the front panel, we find the open/close key. time, which changes the display indication from time of track played to time remaining, or total time, and auto space and auto fader in-out keys. Auto space inserts three-second spaces between tracks and the auto fader will, as the name indicates, fade the output in or out – after fade-out the unit immediately enters pause mode. Between these and the variable headphone output are a random play and repeat key selector with a choice of single track repeat, all tracks repeat, and repeat cancel, depending on the number of key presses. The large block of buttons at the right end consists of key-pad track select (any number from 1 to 99), track search, index search plus manual music fast forward, and reverse search. Play, pause, and stop are grouped together, full program facilities are available for sequence of up to 20 steps, and the player can be programmed so that it will play tracks within a specified time-period starting at the first track. Programmes can be implemented in play mode and instigated by pressing play. The remote controller fits neatly into the hand, contains all the facilities of the front panel and includes a useful volume control, although this is limited to a 25dB range in IdB steps.

The large fluorescent display includes function flags, track, 20 track calendar, index, and time displays. Added to these are displays of volume level and fade-in, fade-out, flags along with the volume level of fade in/out displayed as a –dB level.

#### Technical details

Built on Pioneer's vibration-absorbing, honeycomb-stamped steel chassis with an undamped but ribbed for stiffness steel lid, the box forms a rigid enough structure. The front panel is plastic but has a very

high quality finish, predominantly black but with the occasional gold highlight. The internal layout is orderly, with the main circuitry housed on one board. Control and digital chips are from Sony and Pioneer's own supply. The Sony digital filter drives a pair of Burr Brown PCM56P DACs which are followed by dual operational amplifiers to perform the analogue filtering and output function. The power supply isn't overlarge in terms of transformer size or reservoir capacitance but there are half a dozen 3-terminal regulators. The transport has the customary linear worm-drive laser mechanism which is rubber decoupled on its own sub-chassis and there is a larger than average disc clamping system (restricted in diameter to the size of an 8cm CD single). For those planning on an upgrade to an external digital processor there is a digital output provided.

#### Sound quality

To set this player in context I compared it directly with several relevant competitors and others which I use on a continuing basis to provide a reference of known quality. In this case I reinstated the Toshiba XR-9218 (reviewed in January), a Philips CD460, and a Marantz CD85. The rest of the system included primarily Celestion SL700, Rogers Studio 1, Cyrus 2, Rotel 820BX, Musical Fidelity A100 and an assortment of exotic cables.

I always use a great diversity of material on listening tests, some of which I especially enjoy and other discs which I find useful in revealing just how good a particular product is. In any case, it ranges from classical chamber music, solo instruments, choral, full orchestra, through jazz to rock.

The DP-6100 sounded like an averagely competent mid price CD player, nothing more nothing less. The bass lacked slam and articulation, and was slow and ill-defined; while it had good weight, it didn't show the desired control. This produced a sound where pace, timing and rhythm suffered, so it lacked the magic 'boogie' factor. Up into the mid-range it was short on the elusive quality of dynamic impetus which allows a free flow of musical enjoyment; it sounded pedestrian and confused.

Both male and female voice showed little hardness and sibilance but male voice didn't fill-out as desired into its lower octaves. So the midband was pleasant enough but the general lack of information and/or the masking of fine detail detracted from its overall capability and ultimate enjoyment potential it. This caused an all too one-dimensional sound stage – well, not really one-dimensional, but not '3D' enough, other similarly priced players doing rather better here. Focus was also unexceptional – with a, grainy treble which needed more air and sparkle. Cymbals, for instance, were too gritty and grainy and were rather smeared in location. The player didn't create space and separate out images, and this got worse the higher the level. There was a general loss of ambience making for a slightly bland, slightly sterile sound.

#### Lab report

Channel separation was respectable throughout, if falling a little at high frequency, and channel balance was good. The lack of channel phase difference denotes twin DACs, with the slight difference at 20kHz probably caused by analogue filter tolerance. Total harmonic and intermodulation distortion figures were respectable but not to be regarded as brilliant.

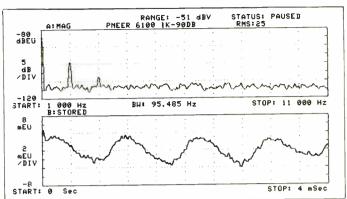
Output level was on the high side, de-emphasis strayed slightly but I don't consider 0.12dB error at 5kHz worthy of any more than a passing comment. Error correction was unexceptional with the signal to noise ratio pretty much as expected and spuriae well suppressed. The frequency response was practically flat. The fade-to-noise test showed up some problems in the low level linearities of the DACs used. The left channel had a slight kink below -70dB which caused errors of some 2.5dB, but the right channel performance was far worse with the output produced too weak below -80dB, as shown by the graph.

#### Conclusion

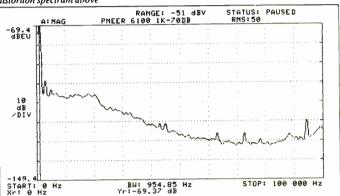
This machine is loaded with facilities befitting a far more expensive player, but I am afraid that I didn't think the sound measured up when judged against the market leaders. If you buy one you will get a very competently engineered package, but I believe that other like-priced players offer a more complete sonic parcel with nearly as many facilities.

#### **PIONEER CLD-1200**

Although this is a CD-Video/Laser Vision/CD player, my primary task was to review only the CD portion of the player. However, I can't resist including a brief impression of my own experience with the video discs I have viewed to date; and thus far, I must admit to having some reservations about the inclusion of pictures in the environment



Graph 1. Pioneer PD-6100: Dithered 1kHz sinewave at -90dB, waveform below, distortion spectrum above



Graph 2: Pioneer PD-6100: Spuriae up to 100kHz associated with 1kHz tone at -70dB showing lack of ultrasonic spuriae

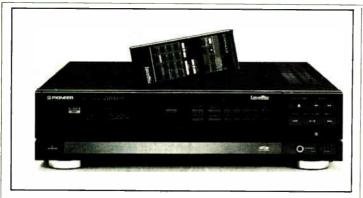
of a high-quality audio system. With present editing techniques I find that the picture distracts from the performance provided by the sound-system – it's confusing to have a sound stage which has good width, depth, and imaging which doesn't coincide with the small-scale pictures which appear on even a large television screen. On the other hand, I can happily watch the television with its sound turned up and hi-fi turned off even if the sound quality is then reduced to that of the TV. Best of all, however, is to turn off the TV and listen to the same material on the hi-fi leaving the pictures to the imagination – maybe a super large screen (2m wide!) would solve the problem, or perhaps I should just move the speakers closer together and nearer the picture source.

If you have decided that you want the picture facility then, importantly for the purchaser, all current disc sizes can be accommodated – ie, 30cm, 20cm, 12cm and 8cm; even the CX noise reduction is catered for. One of the problems with universal machines is that compromises often have to be made, so the question is: does the CD section deliver the performance of an ordinary player;

therefore is the device a prescription for all?

Viewed from the front, the player looks fairly normal, but with the need to accommodate 30cm discs the depth has to be increased to 43cm, which requires a deep shelf. Turn it on and the display sits where the drawer is normally; press the eject button and the larger part of the front panel, which contains the display and several of the control buttons, folds down and the drawer fairly noisily whirrs out. Insert a CD, close the drawer and more internal whirring sounds follow. The player then informs you that it is indeed a CD which you have just loaded (it automatically senses disc size and type) and immediately starts playing.

The back panel looks rather like that of a video cassette recorder and has the latest SCART socket and Pioneer's own control in/out terminals which 'mate' with other likewise-equipped Pioneer equipment. In comparison with many CD players the front panel looks uncluttered, but all you need is there, and the controls are fully backed by a comprehensive and helpful display and remote control. The manual for this Pioneer player stretches to 39 pages and includes a well-illustrated user guide for the less technically minded. Mounted on the drawer cover flap are the display and key-pad select buttons, plus search/memory, random play, auto programme editing and program, plus time display buttons. Adjacent to these, at the right-and end of the front panel proper, are the stop/open close, track skip, play/pause, and manual search controls. The remote is comprehensive, so unless you want to change a disc you do not have to move from the comfort of your armchair.



#### Technical details

Internally the construction appears massive when compared to a CD player. The drawer is so large that a standard 12cm disc looks almost out of place, loose in the middle, while an 8cm disc seems lost. The disc clamp is located in a bar which is made from one of Pioneer's steel honeycomb pressings (lighter-indentation pressing than normal) and the transport moves up to meet it. All electronic parts are of standard commercial quality. The inside is obviously complicated by the video circuits and all mechanisms are on a far larger scale. The audio circuits are formed from a time-shared Burr Brown PCM56P single DAC running at a twice oversampled rate followed by the normal analogue filtering based around operational amplifiers. The case is basically an open plastic box with ribbing and has internal struts for strength. It is finished with steel top and bottom covers. The bottom cover is lightly honeyconibed (like the disc-clamp bar) and the top cover has a foam damping-pad attached. The front panel is plastic, but of good finish and easily mistaken for brushed alloy unless it's paid more than a cursory glance. The front feet are rigid plastic, gold trimmed with a soft pad stuck to the bottom, whereas the back two are hard foam pads attached directly to the base panel.

#### Sound quality

Surprisingly, I didn't find it that easy to separate the two Pioneers in terms of sound quality. There were differences, but these were small, and the general character of the sound was very similar.

With the CD-V model, bass and dynamics were not fully articulated. Fast percussive sounds following each other in quick succession were not fully separated which resulted in a slightly muddy, thickened rendering. The mid did have a hint of sibilance on voice and wiriness on violin but this can be easily ignored on the majority of rock material, although it did become more noticeable on classical pieces which majored in this frequency band. The treble sounded a little uneven and grainy. There was a lack of detail, focus and ambience. This level of performance is beaten by many a sub-£250 player and indeed I can think of several under £200 which I have found more lively, communicative, balanced, and ultimately rewarding.

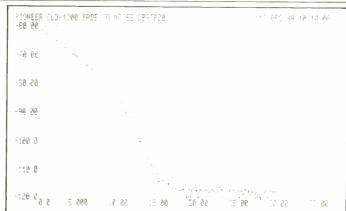
On lesser systems, which reveal less transparency and detail, these faults would be harder to find; so far the majority of mid-priced hi-fi systems the performance is good enough. However, if you are chasing better fidelity, you're likely to be continually upgrading your system in search of better performance, so you would soon want something better. This player wasn't meant to offer the best CD sound and as a multi-purpose device it's undoubtedly good enough, but do not expect miracles when you combine it with your Krell/Apogee system

TEST RESULTS

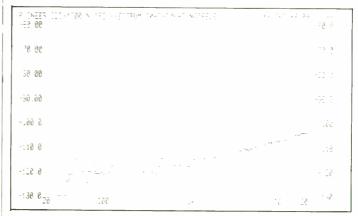
Channel balance Sterco separation Channel phase differ Total harmonic distor Total harmonic distor Total harmonic distor Intermodulation, 19k Intermodulation, 19k Intermodulation, 19k

#### Lab report

Channel balance was a little worse than that from CD players (probably a sample problem) but 0.25dB error in the midrange isn't too bad. Channel separation was little affected by frequency, and was maintained close to 100dB; the inter channel difference is typical of a time-shared DAC. Intermodulation and total harmonic distortion figures were fine and results for output level and output impedance close to standard. De-emphasis accuracy waned a little at high frequency, signal-to-noise ratio was good enough (down slightly on the normal CD average) and the frequency response was a little uneven above 1kHz albeit very minor. Linearity



Graph 3: Pioneer CLD-1200: Noise spectrum 30Hz-20kHz



Graph 4: Pioneer CLD-1200: Fade-to-noise test (CBS CD1, track 20), right channel

was fine down to  $-70 \, \mathrm{dB}$ , but the graphs showed errors creeping in thereafter on both channels. In fact, in our standard linearity tests, by  $-90 \, \mathrm{dB}$  recorded level the player registered a signal of less than  $-100 \, \mathrm{dB}$ , almost falling into noise: it proved impossible to record a  $-90 \, \mathrm{dB}$  sinewave. Error correction just passed the  $800 \, \mu \mathrm{m}$  test which is mediocre by today's standards.

#### Conclusion

If you want the CD-V and laser vision facility along with CD then you don't really have a lot of choice. Philips and Pioneer are the only players I have encountered and from the point of view of sound quality, the Philips is better. Both work competently and lose out little to £250 CD players from the two manufacturers' own stables. Is an extra £330 to get pictures worth it? Only you can decide that.

TEST RESULTS	PIO	NEER PD-	6100	PION	EER CLD	-1200
	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz
Channel balance	0.01dB	0.03dB	0.08dB	0.27dB	0.28dB	0.41dE
Stereo separation	111dB	107dB	88dB	97dB	97dB	100dE
Channel phase difference	()°	$0.3^{\circ}$	2.4°	0°	2.3°	4.2°
Total harmonic distortion, 0dB	-88dB	-87dB	-89dB	-87dB	-88dB	-95dI
Total harmonic distortion, -10dB		-78dB		_	-85dB	_
Total harmonic distortion, -70dB	_	-34dB	_		-85dB	
Total harmonic distortion, -80dB	_	-16dB	_	-	-24dB	_
Intermodulation, 19kHz/20kHz, 0dB		-86/-95dB			-100/-87dE	ł
Intermodulation, 19kHz/20kHz, -10dB		-100/-92dE			~90dB	,
Frequency response, left channel		04dB, -0.4		0.0	2dB, -0.50	dВ
Frequency response, right channel		04dB, -0.4			2dB, -0.35	
Signal/noise, 20Hz-20kHz unweighted		103dB		.,	96dB	41)
Signal/noise, CClR/ARM, 1kHz ref		99dB			90dB	
Output level, OdB		2.42V			1.95V	
Output impedance		260ohms			260ohms	
•	tkHz	5kHz	16kHz	lkHz	5kHz	16kHz
De-emphasis error (dB)	0.01	0.12	0.08	0.02	0.08	0.7
Track access time (Tr 15)		3.5secs			3secs	0.7
Error correction capability (µm)	g	ap >1.25mn	1		ap >800μm	
Mechanical noise	-	low	•		erage on CI	
Spuriae up to 100kHz		-106dB			-62dB	,
Resolution at -90dB, left/right	-85	53dB/-99.8	5dB	1	06dB/-106d	IB.
Headphone socket		variable ou			variable out	
Dimensions (wdh)		2x33x9.6cm			12x43x11cm	pur
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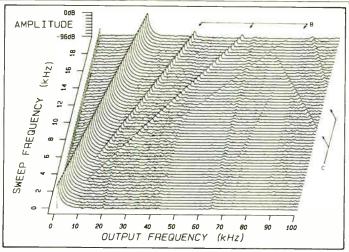
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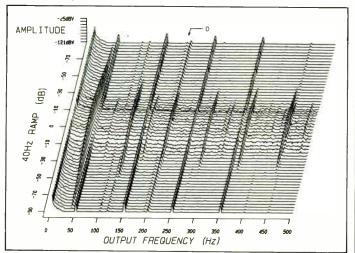
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Graph 1. Technics SU-A60: Spuriae up to 100kHz arising in digital section in response to 0-20kHz sweep



Graph 2. Technics SE-A50 Power-supply modulation test using 40Hz ramp

	Aux/CD	m-m	m-c
Stereo separation (20Hz)	74.1dB	71.1dB	68.7dB
(1kHz)	70.7dB	70.2dB	69.8dB
(20kHz)	49.1dB	50.2dB	49.9dB
Channel balance (1kHz, 0dBV)	0.06dB	0.1dB	0.27dB
(-20dBV)	0.34dB	0.39dB	0.06dB
(-60dBV)	0.14dB	0.07dB	0.12dB
Total harmonic distortion (0dBV)	-117.2dB	-95.8dB	-91.6dB
Total LF IMD (16:1)	-95.8dB	-96.8dB	-98.8dB
(1000:1)		-98.2dB	-99.1dB
Total HF IMD (16:1)	-98.1dB	-102.0dB	-105.9dB
(1000;1)	-103.4dB	-104.3dB	-107.8dB
Total ultrasonic IMD, (16:1)	-90.3dB	-96.7dB	-101.6dB
(1000:1)	-93.7dB	-98.5dB	-106.2dB
CCIR intermodulation distortion $(1:1)$	-103.5dB	-88.8dB	-83.2dB
Phase shift (100Hz)	0°	12°58'	21°36'
(1kHz)	0°	6°50'	15°50'
(20kHz)	3°58'	3'14'	6°50'
Rise-Time (at 10kHz)	2.5µsecs		
Settling Time (at 10kHz)	2µsecs		
Squarewave linearity	better than	-99.4dB	
Noise (A-wtd, 20Hz-20kHz)	-106.75dB	-84.1dB	-69.8dB
Hum residual	-108.95dB	-90.5dB	-91.2dB
Input sensitivity (for 0dBV)	157.9mV	2.801mV	190.3µV
CD/aux overload	>7V		•
Disc overload (500Hz)		144mV	9.68mV
(1kHz)		195mV	13.2mV
(20kHz)		1554mV	114.6mV
Disc eq. aceuracy (50-15kHz)		+0.3dB/-	-0.15dB
Pre-amplifier output (max)/Impedance	9	.65V/10ohms	S
DC offset, l/r	-15	$5.9\mu V / -12.3$	μV
Digital input:			
De-emphasis accuracy	1kHz:+0.3 5	kHz·+0.39.1	6kHz-40 24
S/N ratio, 20Hz-20kHz (A-wtd):	A 11 0 . J . J	107.3dB	URI 12. TU. 34
Fotal harmonic distortion (at 1kHz)	0-	IB: 0.00204%	,
lotal narmonic distortion (at 18142)			

IMD at two-thirds power), and load-tolerance could have been improved. Though the *negative* IHF toneburst result does indicate some oddity in the regulated supply, the 1.76dB and 1.05dB power increments into 4 and 2-ohm loads were hardly inspiring.

#### Sound quality

A worrying degree of inconsistency was observed between inputs, the digital and analogue CD sections proving to be quite different not only compared with each other but also with respect to the sound of Technics' own SL-P770 CD player, which utilizes a common set of electronics. Remarkably, the smooth and generally more comfortable sound of the m-c input was actually preferred to the sharper, coarser balance of the line inputs. It provided a better insight into stage depth, allowing vocals to breathe more realistically than via CD.

Via line inputs, the combination afforded a powerful and fairly weighty sound, but one that exhibited a faint loss of control at the frequency extremes. Bass notes were a little soft, lacking in taut definition, while the top end was notably sharper if also mildly splashy.

Any trace of acid sibilance was entirely quashed once the digital inputs were tried, the optical linkage affording a further gain in sound quality over the standard coaxial input. Treble detail was better integrated than before, but this was traded for a softer and rather more subdued overall character, there being some loss of 'air' and lucidity at the very top of the range. This relaxed effect was quite different from the tightly toned and tremendously articulate presentation offered by the SL-P770 CD player in isolation, indicating that perhaps the SU-A60's on-board digital circuitry was influencing the sound incorrectly. Stereo images were accurately painted and the entire sound-stage appeared that much more stable, even though there was still some loss of resolution when judged against the CD player as heard when connected directly to the SE-A50.

#### Conclusion

Though it was not entirely free of technical blemishes, I felt that this pre/power combination should have auditioned rather more favourably. Mildly surprising on the one hand, it may turn out to be more than unfortunate coincidence that the SU-A60 is yet another sonically flawed device containing outboard D/A conversion circuitry. I am present investigating subjective consequences of circulating RF currents, but while such mechanisms may help to explain the HF colorations which permeate this pre-amp, the fact remains that Technics' SU-A60 is a little too unbalanced for recommendation. The partnering SE-A50 power amp represents a better buy, being entirely suitable for consumers who require a rugged, high-value product, but who are less interested in the last degree of sound quality.

POWER AMPLIFIER: TECHNICS SI	E-A50 		
	20Hz	lkHz	20kHz
Maximum continuous power			
(one/both channels); 8 ohms (W)			123.2/119.0
4 ohms (W)	167.8/164.2	185.9/178.3	184.6/175.7
Dynamic headroom (IHF)		-0.26dB	
Output impedance/damping factor			
(ohms) 1/1 (kf: 80hms)	0.105/76.2	0.101/79.1	0.127/62.9
Total harmonic distortion (0dBW)	-102.3dB	-96.5dB	-95.4dB
(⅔ power)	-102.9 dB		-85.1dB
Stereo separation (0dBW)	-98.7dB		-96.7dB
(²⁄3 power)	-97.6dB	-97.9dB	-94.9dB
	2nd Order	3rd Order	4th Order
LF IMD (1:1)	-96.4dB	-98.9dB	
(16:1)	-126,4dB		
HF IMD (1:1)	-91.3dB	-99.1dB	
(16:1)	-105.9dB	-107.6dB	
(1000:1)	<-110dB	<-115dB	
Ultrasonic IMD (1-1)	-88.4dB	-85.0dB	~97.7dB
	-109.4dB	~106.9dB	
	<-115dB	<-120dB	
CCIR IMD (0dBW)		-91.3dB	
CCIR IM distortion (3) power)	~84.5dB	-79.9dB	-94.7dB
Rise-time (at 10kHz)	01.502	2.5µsecs	74.7GD
Settling time (at 10kHz)		3µsecs	
Power bandwidth (<1% THD)	4.	4.6Hz-37kHz	,
Squarewave linearity	•	-93.8dB	•
Supply modulation linearity		-95.8dB	
Phase-shift,	20Hz: 7°34';		0kH++14°74
Absolute Phase		Positive	OR112,17 24
Noise (A-wtd, 20Hz-20kHz) 0dBW		-83.7dB	
(A-wtd, 20Hz-20kHz) 33 power		-96.8dB	
Input sensitivity (for 0dBW)		32.12mV	
(for full output)		990.3mV	
Input loading		47kohm	
DC-offset, left/right	+94	41μV/+763μ	V
Typical price inc VAT	1 2-	£400	•





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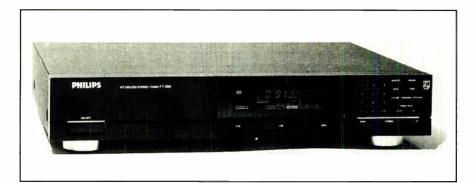
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## PHILPS FT-880 TUNER

#### A Portuguese-built tuner for the UK: Chris Bryant assesses the new Philips FT-880

HILIPS headquarters are in The Netherlands with production facilities based in many countries throughout the world. While the Philips tie-up with Marantz means that some of the products are sourced in the Far East, the FT880 tuner is made in Portugal. As Portugal is a 'low cost' production area within the EEC, it may be that we will see more electronics sourced in the same way to avoid import tariffs. Unlike many of the home-grown variety, this is a full feature 3-band tuner which could easily have been produced by any of the major hi-fi companies, which means that its image is more 'corporate' than individualistic.

Over the years tuners have become a little unfashionable and reviewed less in hi-fi magazines, as they have, for many, taken a subsidiary role in systems. CD players, amplifiers, and loudspeakers may currently be taking all the limelight but equip yourself with a good tuner and virtually free entertainment is transported into your home – music, news, chat, etc. Even live concerts are transmitted fairly often and are well worth looking out for.

This tuner costs £150, so you need to be serious about listening to radio before paying out this sort of money when reasonable tuners are available at below £100. With these more advanced models you get more facilities, which spells ease of use and also, hopefully, better sound quality and signal reception.

The FT880 is a digital tuner covering the FM, LF and MF bands. Styling has been designed to match the current Philips range of amplifiers - a customary black finish. Like the amplifiers, 'on' is signified by thin strips of inset plastic, back-lit with turquoise lightone above the on/off button, and the other above the tuning buttons. The unit is both well constructed and finished. The box is made from undamped steel panels and the front is a high-class alloy extrusion with white decals. It sits on 4 large, round, silver-finished plastic feet with foam inserts. There are twenty-nine programmable preset stations which can be assigned as desired, and accessed via an 11-button selection key-pad. The memory for these requires battery back-up when the tuner is switched off and the cells must be inserted in the rear of the unit. Returning to the front panel, there are also stereo/mono, mute, memory, and timer switches; the latter require an external timer. Up to 3 separate events can be stored; however, if when switched on there is no transmitter signal assigned to that preset, then it will be omitted when called up.

Tuning can be either automatic or manual. In auto mode pressing either the tuning up or down button briefly sets the auto circuits in motion and the tuner will seek out the next station which is being received with sufficient strength. In between stations, inter-channel noise is automatically suppressed. If you tune to weaker signals the 'SCAN/SENS' function increases the sensitivity. Manual tuning is accomplished by holding down the tuning buttons until the desired station is found; inter-channel noise is not suppressed in this mode unless the muting facility is used. Manual tuning is helped by the tuning indicator which has seven steps. Alternatively frequencies can be entered directly via a button marked 'F/D' followed by entering the desired frequency into the numeric key-pad. Preset scan allows you to scan through all the presets in either direction and, finally, the wave-band selector buttons, which are somewhat larger than those assigned to the other functions, rest beneath the large blue/white fluorescent display which is comprehensive to say the least. It has flags

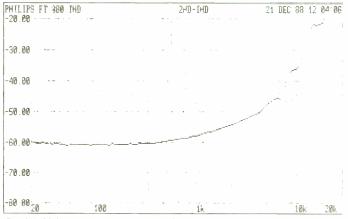
for mono/stereo operation, wave-band selected, muting, local/distant operation, auto/manual tuning, scan sensitivity during auto tune, and memory. The number of the preset station is displayed next to the 'tuned' frequency (MHz for FM and kHz for AM). Signal strength is presented within the display window with a histogram-type format, numbered from one to seven. This is accompanied by the word 'tuned' when a station is being received.

Switching the local and distant sensitivities also switches between two rear-mounted aerial sockets. This means that should you wish to tune into weaker stations the aerial must be switched between sockets as well as on the front panel. unless of course you install two aerials: perhaps an omni-directional and one high-gain directional beam for particularly weak stations. Also present on the back panel are remote 'bus' sockets which means that if the tuner is part of a remote-equipped Philips system then pre-programmed preset stations can be called up via the remote handset.

Internally the unit is well organized with a minimum of internal wiring – which is all ribbon cable. The power supplies are located on a separate board and the active circuitry is placed physically well away from the fluorescent display. The front end is well screened in its own box and features discrete transistor stages. From there on chips from Sanyo are used and all other parts are of standard commercial quality.

#### Lab report

Although not the most sensitive of tuners we've seen, the results were respectable on the 'distant' setting, while the required drop in sensitivity can be seen when in 'local' mode. Signal-to-noise ratio was at -66dB for stereo, just a little disappointing, whereas the muting threshold was sensibly set. Alternate channel sensitivity was very good but capture ratio suffers slightly as a result. Both the AM and pilot tone rejection were fine and total harmonic distortion was low for both mono and stereo. Output level, at close to IV, was higher than expected, but no matching problems should result and channel balance was exceptionally good. Stereo separation (see graph 1) is good, and the frequency response shows some mild fall-off at the band



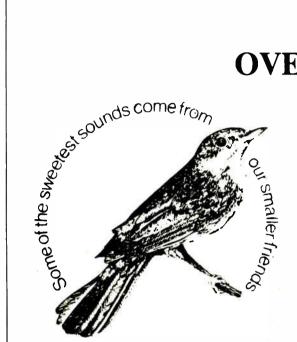
Graph 1. Philips FT-880: Total harmonic distortion v. frequency

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## SONY CDP-M75

With a host of facilities, this player makes it to Chris Bryant's short list

HE SONY CDP-M75 is a midi player with a host of facilities, including a remote control which would do justice to machines at several times the price. The only thing missing is a line-output volume control. An initial perusal of the player was made before the price was known, and judging from the facilities and build quality I expected it to cost more than the £230 actually asked. Sony's pricing policy appears very competitive this year.

asked. Sony's pricing policy appears very competitive this year.

Technically, the player uses Sony chips up to and including the digital filter, from whence it relies on the Philips TDA1541 dual 16-bit DAC. This is run at a 4-times oversampling rate, which allows a fairly simple output filter arrangement – although Sony do filter more thoroughly than Philips to keep ultrasonic noise to a minimum. As one would expect at this price, construction is basically plastic, with the top and bottom panels of steel. Internal design is very clean, and although the majority of components used are of normal commercial grade, some extra attention has been paid to important areas, where top-quality electrolytics have been used. The transport mechanism is a light-weight plastic design, but it performs exceptionally smoothly.

The front panel layout is easy to follow despite the presence of

many facilities. The minor controls – display-select, auto-space and repeat – are sited under the loading drawer. The display lies above the open/close, play, pause and stop, and beneath these are track-skip, manual search, program shuffle, play, and the continue/single

selector. All controls are accessible via the remote commander, and there are the added features of A-B repeat and slow search.

First press of display-select gives the remaining time of current track, 2nd press the remaining time of the whole disc, and 3rd press the elapsed time of current track. A calendar track type display is also present. There are full program facilities for up to 20 tracks, including repeat, pause, and auto-space which inserts 3-second spaces between selected tracks. For track selections greater than 20 there is an over-20 selection track number via the key-pad select.

#### Lab report

Frequency response was almost perfectly flat apart from a minute 0.1dB rise just before 20kHz, and identical on both channels (in fact not really worth plotting here), while de-emphasis was likewise almost perfectly engineered. Channel balance was perfect, and channel separation excellent through to midband frequencies but slightly less impressive at 20kHz. However, I am not going to complain too much about 73dB. Dual DAC machines provide zero phase-shift at all frequencies if they are set up correctly, and this one was.

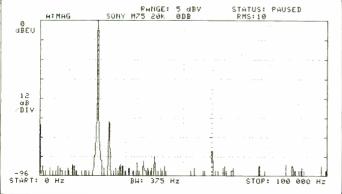
At full output the third-harmonic distortion was quite reasonable, and this performance was maintained to low level as in Graph 1, where a -60dB 1kHz tone generates its 3kHz overtone at -107dB. Nothing special, just competent. The 20kHz 0dB plot



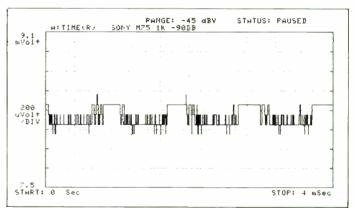
RANGE: -47 dBV STATUS: PAUSED

REPUTATION OF THE PAUSE BRANCE: -47 dBV STATUS: PAUSE BRANCE: -48 dBV RESTATUS: PAUSE BRANCE: -47 dBV RESTATUS: PAUSE BRANCE: -

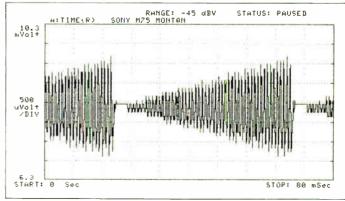
 $Graph \ I. \ Sony \ CDP-M75: Spuriae \ up \ to \ 10kHz \ associated \ with \ 1kHz \ tone \ at -60dB$ 



Graph 2. Sony CDP-M75: Spuriae associated with 20kHz tone at 0dB



Graph 3. Sony CDP-M75: Waveform from 1kHz sinewave at -90dB



Graph 4. Sony CDP-M75: Monotonicity performance at ten levels

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(Graph 2) shows the low level of in-band spuriae, but there was some clipping of a full-level white-noise signal. However, the last majority of CDs aren't recorded to produce anywhere near this level, so it is not too serious, just worthy of note. Output level was 0.8dB below standard at 1.83V, but this is relatively unimportant and only just detectable on A/B comparisons. The output impedance was relatively high at 1.95k-ohms – fine in the vast majority of installations but not suitable for very long cable runs. Even so it would need a capacitance of 4nF to induce a -3dB rolloff at 20kHz.

Error-correction functions passed all standard tests, and the signal-to-noise ratios under all measurement regimes were very good. Spuriae were generally well suppressed, but were worse by 6dB on the right-hand channel. Low-level resolution was excellent (only 1.4dB error at -90dB), which is unusual for a TDA1541 DAC, although the -90dB sinewave (Graph 3) shows strong signs of rectification. However, the monotonicity test (Graph 4) revealed the bottom ten levels near perfectly. Many machines using the TDA1541 have poor linearity at these -90dB levels, even when partnered with the Sony digital filter, so this particular machine, along with the Sony 333 tested a few months ago, proved the exception to the rule. But other samples of this player may not be so good in this respect. For instance, one sample of a CDP-555esd had good -90dB linearity, whereas another I tested had a 6dB error.

Returning to the 'M75, track access time was a quick three seconds, mechanical noise was low, and resistance to shock and vibration was excellent.

#### Sound quality

I ran this player on and off for four weeks, so there was plenty of time to assess its strengths. In a top-quality system, and indeed on more reasonably priced ones (it's just more obvious on the former), the Sony CDP-M75 portrayed a wealth of information and produced considerable depth and space, with a very wide sound-stage. The mid-range showed very good low-level detail and ambience, with exceedingly good mid treble balance. The treble itself showed plenty of air and sparkle, with fine detail and precision, devoid of the brashness of the majority of Philips players and their clones. But the player did sound rather polite overall, lacking bass slam, dynamics, and some of the excitement delivered by the best of the competition. It became congested on high-level passages, blocking depth and

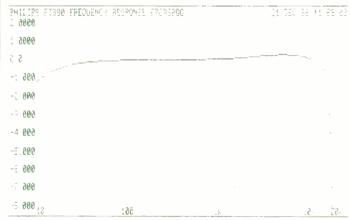
detail. There was some slight slurring on stringed instruments, but generally perception of low-level signals was excellent. Focus lacked that lock-in quality heard on top-rated players, but it was still quite respectable in this area. On my normal scale this Sony scored close to 59% of the performance attained by the best player, only about 7% behind the highly rated Marantz CD65 – which is a few pounds more expensive and lacks some facilities. Once again, a digital shorting-plug was tried and some small improvement was noted.

#### Conclusion

This latest midi model is well made, works exceedingly well and is bedecked with plenty of features to satisfy the gadget-minded. Sound quality is rather better than that from similarly priced machines of last year, and this sample is very competitive with this year's crop. Another highly rated player destined for the short-list.

TEST RESULTS		SONY	CDP-M75
	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz
Channel balance	0.0dB	0.0dB	0.2dB
Stereo separation	118dB	101dB	73dB
Channel phase difference	0°	()°	()°
Total harmonic distortion, 0dB	-88dB	-84dB	-85dB
Total harmonic distortion 10dB		-82dB	8
Total harmonic distortion, -60dB		-42dB	
Total harmonic distortion, -80dB		-19dB	_
Intermodulation, 19kHz/20kHz, 0dB		-96dB	
Intermodulation, 19/20kHz, = 10dB		-86dB	
Frequency response, left channel	-0,	01dB, -0.1	3dB
Frequency response, right channel	-0.	$01dB_{*} - 0.1$	0dB
Signal noise, 20Hz-20kHz unweighted		I08dB	
Signal noise, CCIR ARM, 4kHz ref	1	108dB	
Output level, 0dB		1-83V	
Output impedance		1.95kohms	
	1kHz	5kHz	16kHz
De-emphasis	0.35	4.42	8.77
Track access time (Tr15)		3secs	
Error correction (μm) to:	gan	>900 dot >	800
Mechanical noise		low	
Spuriae up to 100kHz (ref 0dB)		-96dB	
Resolution at -0dB, left/right	-88	.59dB/-89.	25dB
Headphone socket		variable ou	
Dimensions (wdh)		5×30.5×9.2	
Typical price (incl VAT)		£230	

#### PHILIPS FT-880



Graph 2: Philips FT-880; frequency response

extremes (graph 2). The signal strength meter is a little too sensitive. ranging from  $5\mu V$  to ImV with a 'local' setting and  $4\mu V$  to  $500\mu V$  on the 'distant' setting.

#### Sound quality

Not many companies seem to bother too much about the AM sound quality of their tuners and in this respect Philips haven't excelled either. With this quality of AM, I doubt that many will use the facility at all. During listening tests on AM, an ever-present whistle was detected at around 6kHz and there was too much hiss even with strong signals present. Bass wasn't too bad, the midrange had a reasonable tonal quality; it was generally perceived as if listening through a fog. The hiss masked detail and the treble was all but non-existent.

On FM things improved rather but there was a noticeably higher hiss level than is found on the best tuners. Bass was considered average for a tuner, therefore somewhat lacking in dynamic impact, slam and extension. The midrange is good, although more suited to rock than classical due to some accentuation in the upper mid band which detracted from the performance of female voice in particular. The good midrange pace and articulation was rather reminiscent of the Philips CD sound which extended into the treble register. This was fairly lively and well defined. Stage width, along with the ability to separate various strands of music, was good but depth wasn't a strong point.

#### Conclusion

In overall merit, the FT880 ranked a little behind the best, not as good as the £300 Technics or Denon reviewed in the February '89 issue, but it's better than the majority of mid-priced tuners.

At £150 Philips seem to have managed to provide a tuner with a performance which just about justifies its price. Facilities and technical performance are worthwhile. Targeted at 'better-thanaverage' but not in the top class, the design must be rated a success without managing to be exceptional in any one area.

TEST RESULTS	PHILIPS FT880
Sensitivity for 50dB signal-to-noise ratio	
Mono/stereo	$2.5\mu V/25\mu V$
Ultimate signal-to-noise	
(CCIR/ARM/1kHz ref) Mono/stereo	72dB/66dB
Muting threshold, RF level	13µV
Alternate channel selectivity	90dB
Pilot tone rejection, 19kHz/38kHz	-61dB/91dB
AM rejection	70dB
Capture ratio	3,25dB
Total harmonic distortion	
At 100% mod, IkHz, mono/stereo	-55dB/-57dB
Stereo separation, 1kHz/5kHz/10kHz	42dB/45dB/43dB
Output level, 100% modulation	1030mV
Channel balance, stereo	0.03dB
Dimensions (whd)	42×8.7×34cm
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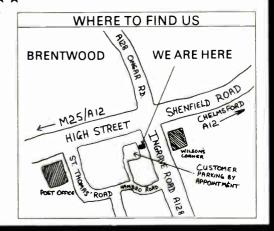
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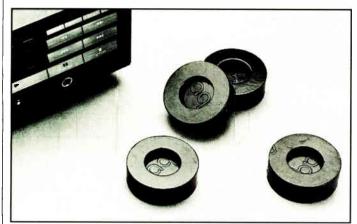
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## THE ACCESSORIES DUB

Ken Kessler finds more squishy things – Audioquest's Sorbothane CD Feet – with which to play

## FEET FETISH



D PLAYERS have come a long way since we kicked off the Accessories Club. One of our earliest – and still most successful – offers was the Mission Isoplat, and we reckon that more of them were used for CD player isolation than for any other purpose.

I still use Isoplats because I find them to be the best general purpose isolation platforms yet devised although they're large-ish and can wreak havoc with your siting arrangements if space is a problem.

We've also had one or two remarks about aesthetics, especially when using Isoplats under components which are much smaller than the surface of the board. With this in mind, we've been looking around for what is basically an Isoplat without the platform. In other words, Sorbothane feet.

Audioquest has had large Sorbothane feet in the catalogue for some time, but the ones which caught our attention are the small, 50mm diameter 'CD Feet'. Sold in packs of four, the CD Feet are Sorbothane round, cup-section blocks. You simply place them under the components with the flat side facing the component and the cup side facing downward. There are only three details to which you must attend for correct, safe usage.

First of all, these feet are the sticky so you *must* slip plastic thin sheets beneath each CD Foot the surface below if is veneered or painted. Second, you should place the feet under the component's flat underside and not below the existing feet for maximum effectiveness. And thirdly, you shouldn't use these below or between components which grow scalding hot, like some valve products and certain Class A amplifiers. We've had one or two customers who put Sorbothane Tube Dampers on output valves and the result was Sorbothane Soup.

Once in place, the results are similar to that of the Isoplat. Microphony is audibly reduced and overall control is enhanced. But don't assume that these feet are necessary for every application. While I have yet to find a valve pre-amp which didn't benefit (and I've tried a dozen), some CD players are now so well constructed that damping and isolation are built-in. The heavyweight Sony R1 and Marantz CD12 benefited not at all, while the California Audio Labs Tempest II needed the feet under the CD player section but not under the power supply box. A couple of fairly standard £250-ish CD players which I tried benefited enormously; then again some budget players have on-board isolation tweaks which render them less susceptible to the improvements. How do you know before ordering the feet whether or not you'll need them? Simply examine your components with an eye to build integrity and you'll be half-way there.

We're offering both the small and large Sorbothane feet, but the latter only seem necessary for massive components. If you fall in love with the smaller ones, you'll find that they make great spacers if you need to stack your components. Just remember the warning about heat. (Money saving hint: use three feet per piece of equipment, two at the front and one at the back.)

At this rate, 'Purveyor of Rubber Goods to the Gentry' may be on my next business card.

## ACCESSORIES DUE

### Use this form to order any of the current HFN/RR accessories

Please indicate quantity required. All prices include post & packing.  HFN/RR 001 Fluxdumper: black-ash box £22.00 □  HFN/RR 003 Test CD: left, right, sweep, even music! £11.95 □  HFN/RR 004 Blackhead: m-c step-up transformer; £59.95 □  HFN/RR 005 spikes: timber □ steel □, inc fixing kit, set of 8, £10.00 □  HFN/RR 006 Flutterbuster: 33.3/45rpm. 220/240 only, OK for most synchronous t/t (specify type); black ash case £79.95 □  HFN/RR 006 Toolkit: cutters/pliers/knife/tweezers/screw, nut and hex drivers/alignment protractor, in a black zip case £32.50 □  HFN/RR 009 Headcase: headphone amplifier. 40mw Class A unit allows use of headphones; black-ash case; 220/240V-only £79.95 □  HFN/RR 010 News Stand: 19in/430mm housing, 36in high, complete with 5 shelves (3 adjustable) black finish £139.95 □  HFN/RR 011 Mushcrusher: 220/240V mains filter. 5A rating £24.95 □  HFN/RR 012 Software Storage System: satin black timber (Medite), stackable, supplied in kit form. LP unit (120 capacity) £37.50 □  CD/cassette unit (40/25) £19.50 □ singles unit (200) £29.50. □  HFN/RR 013 Wallnut: wall mounting two-level turntable support complete with two shelves; finish, black £49.95 □  Mission Isoplat: 17in×13in Medite isolation platform; £19.95 □  Tweek: contact enhancer; clean all signal connections £15.95 □  Michell Banana Plugs: gold plated 4mm connectors; set of 4 £9.50 □  Nagaoka LP inner sleeves: pack of 50 £6.95 □  High Performance Loudspeakers: Martin Colloms' book on the theory of speaker design £18.00 □  Allsop Carbonoptic record cleaning brush: £5.00 □  Audioquest damping sheet: sorbothane, 6in×6in self-adhesive £11.95
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HFN/RR (004 Blackhead: m-c step-up transformer; £59.95 ☐ HFN/RR (005 spikes: timber ☐ steel ☐, inc fixing kit, set of 8, £10.00 ☐ HFN/RR (006 Flutterbuster: 33.3/45rpm. 220/240 only, OK for most synchronous t/t (specify type); black ash case £79.95 ☐ HFN/RR (007 Carrydise: 14 CD's in a 40mm travel pack! £11.95 ☐ HFN/RR (008 Toolkit: cutters/pliers/knife/tweezers/screw, nut and hex drivers/alignment protractor, in a black zip case £32.50 ☐ HFN/RR (009 Headcase: headphone amplifier. 40mw Class A unit allows use of headphones; black-ash case; 220/240V-only £79.95 ☐ HFN/RR (010 News Stand: 19in/430mm housing, 36in high, complete with 5 shelves (3 adjustable) black finish £139.95 ☐ HFN/RR 011 Mushcrusher: 220/240V mains filter. 5A rating £24.95 ☐ HFN/RR 012 Software Storage System: satin black timber (Medite), stackable, supplied in kit form. LP unit (120 capacity) £37.50 ☐ CD/cassette unit (40/25) £19.50 ☐ singles unit (200) £29.50. ☐ HFN/RR 013 Wallnut: wall mounting two-level turntable support complete with two shelves; finish, black £49.95 ☐ Goldring Stylus Cleaner: ultrasonic cleaner; £14.95 ☐ Mission Isoplat: 17in×13in Medite isolation platform; £19.95 ☐ Tweek: contact enhancer; clean all signal connections £15.95 ☐ Nagaoka LP inner sleeves; pack of 50 £6.95 ☐ Michell Banana Plugs: gold plated 4mm connectors; set of 4 £9.50 ☐ Nagaoka LP inner sleeves: pack of 50 £6.95 ☐ Allsop CD cleaner: hand-held cleaner; includes fluid £12.95 ☐ Tape head de-magnetizer: electronic cassette de-magnetizer £12.95 ☐ Authenticity mini-vac: mini vacuum cleaner £8.95 ☐ Michell Tenderfeet: aluminium cones for isolation, set of 3. Small £5.45 ☐ Large £8.45 ☐ Cobra Indoor FM antenna: indoor aerial, built-in amplifier £39.95 ☐ Authenticity mini-vac: mini vacuum cleaner £8.95 ☐ Cobra Indoor FM antenna: indoor aerial, built-in amplifier £39.95 ☐ Authenticity mini-vac: mini vacuum cleaner £8.95 ☐ Cosomin, pack of 20. £2.50 ☐ Audioquest damping sheet: sorbothane, 6in×6in self-adhesive £11.95 ☐ Cobra Indoor FM antenna: indoor aerial, built
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allows use of headphones; black-ash case; 220/240V-only £79.95 □ HFN/RR 010 News Stand: 19in/430mm housing, 36in high, complete with 5 shelves (3 adjustable) black finish £139.95 □ HFN/RR 011 Mushcrusher: 220/240V mains filter. 5A rating £24.95 □ HFN/RR 012 Software Storage System: satin black timber (Medite), stackable, supplied in kit form. LP unit (120 capacity) £37.50 □ CD/cassette unit (40/25) £19.50 □ singles unit (200) £29.50. □ HFN/RR 013 Wallnut: wall mounting two-level turntable support complete with two shelves; finish, black £49.95 □ Goldring Stylus Cleaner: ultrasonic cleaner; £14.95 □ Mission Isoplat: 17in×13in Medite isolation platform; £19.95 □ Tweek: contact enhancer; clean all signal connections £15.95 □ Michell Banana Plugs: gold plated 4mm connectors; set of 4 £9.50 □ Nagaoka LP inner sleeves: pack of 50 £6.95 □ High Performance Loudspeakers: Martin Colloms' book on the theory of speaker design £18.00 □ Allsop Carbonoptic record cleaning brush: £5.00 □ Allsop Carbonoptic record cleaning brush: £5.00 □ Allsop Carbonoptic record cleaning brush: £5.00 □ Authenticity mini-vac: mini vacuum cleaner £8.95 □ Michell Tenderfeet: aluminium cones for isolation, set of 3.Small £5.45 □ Large £8.45 □ Cobra Indoor FM antenna: indoor aerial, built-in amplifier £39.95 □ Record interface mat: vinyl, self adhesive fixing £28.50 □ Extra rings for Sicomin, pack of 20. £2.50 □ Audioquest damping sheet: sorbothane, 6in×6in self-adhesive £11.95 □ HFN/RR self-build loudspeakers: details available for DC1 & Bassett kits, please indicate Audiophile records: Cantate Domino £6.95 □ Jazz at the Pawnshop £13.95 □ Saint-Saëns £6.95 □ Close-ups; Kabi Laretci, piano. £6.95 □ Dāfos (45rpm) £12.95 □ Chesky Scheherazade £11.95 □ Marin Nixon/Gershwin £13.50 □ Appalachican Spring £13.50 □ Bectohven Appassionata (RDCE4) £7.50
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RANS BRÜGGEN HAS an aura of relaxed professionalism wholly consistent with his view of the ideal musician. It might seem paradoxical that one of the most dynamic of 'authentic instrument' conductors is fundamentally hostile to the concept of pre-performance 'nerves' Brüggen would not subscribe to the view that nerves motivate, or 'charge' the performer. He draws an analogy with the jazz musician: 'I have personally never met a nervous jazz musician. You see, he studies and prepares in a way that is very different from the average classical performer. For him, there's no written literature, so the only thing he does is spend a day at home busying himself by repeating a hundred thousand jazz formulas. designed specifically for his own instrument a saxophone, a guitar, or whatever. And then when the evening comes, he simply jumps onto the platform and plays. He and his colleagues speak exactly the same language. Everything is wholly natural.

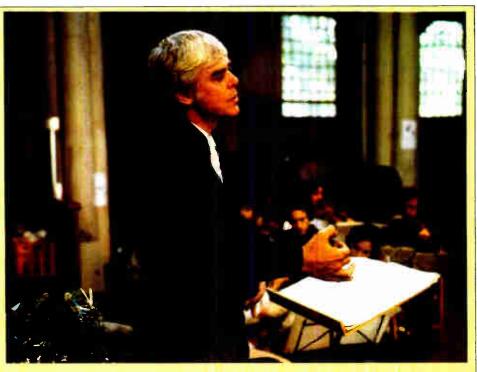
Brüggen had raised this point in response to a question about musical education. I wondered whether the musical public really understands original instrument conventions, or whether authentic performances merely present yet another marketable 'new sound'.

'Yes, I certainly think that's true. Novelty is part of its appeal. You know, the public that attends my concerts is very often the same public that patronizes modern music evenings. They come for the adventure: and that, I believe, gives a definite meaning to what we do. And of course it was like that in the old days, too – when the music we play was first performed. What counted then was an element of shock, of surprise.'

It seems that we've now reached a watershed period with baroque music performance: although Brüggen. Harnoncourt, Norrington and Goebel are still very much concerned with correct instrumental timbres. their most recent performances quite often seem to admit abstract, even emotional interpretative ideas that would previously have been labelled 'romantic'. Berio had described Brüggen as 'not an archeologist, but a great artist' - perhaps musical archeology has for too long undermined the concept of 'the great performer"? Brüggen agreed. 'Every "movement" needs time to widen, to develop. One might wish to interpret texts on the solid basis of one's own private musicianship, but people were for too long naive or ignorant about important stylistic refinements. It's a question of balance - that's where the answer lies. But, ves, in the end it all rests on the instinctive good taste of the performer.

Furtwängler has proved a qualified influence on Brüggen, who also greatly admires the work of Carlos Kleiber. But time and again we'd come back to those authentic elements of shock and surprise that go for virtually nothing in so many standardized symphonic performances. What has gone wrong with the way we listen? And, even more significantly, precisely where are the inadequacies in our teaching methods? In the end, the answers lie with style and, more specifically, our imperfect knowledge of stylistic performing conventions. You can't be spontaneous if you're bogged down by questions of technique and textual ambiguity.

Our studying habits have for too long centered around the ready product, the finished composition. Nowadays, conservatory students study pieces, compositions; when they master one, then they "progress" to a piece that is a little more difficult, and so



# FRANS BRUGGEN

talks to Robert Cowan. The authentic viewpoint . . .

on. That's their musical upbringing. Now, in the past - certainly up to Beethoven's time the works themselves were never studied. The student musician concerned himself with formulas. Baroque music provides us with a good example: it consists of a hundred-thousand small formulas (most of which are no more than five notes), these being knitted both horizontally and vertically to the surprising, inspired ideas of a true master - Bach. pre-eminently. But these formulae (the basic material for Bach, Handel, Telemann) are exactly the same for lesser composers. You know what I said about the jazz musician. Master these formulae – and you're on his plane; you can cope with (and enjoy) the most sophisticated surprises, without giving as much as a single thought to how they should be dealt with. You see something for the first time; you recognize all these formulae and when reading through a piece you can fully enjoy the subtle effect of some unexpected idea. But nerves ... they take away the joy, the liberty, the surprise element.

The romantic paradox, the Paganini ideal, is to make the easy seem difficult, and to create the illusion that real difficulties pose no problems at all; not telling anybody that you have been studying those formulae for years (so that everything becomes easy), yet making out that everything has become very easy, and the easy formulae are in fact deep and very difficult - a complete reversal of speech. Take, for instance, the intense vibrato that modern performers apply to the final note of a composition. A final note is just that: a final note. Everyone knows it, it's invariably the longest note in the whole piece. it's a definite end. But apparently even this is simply not enough: there has to be an element of interpretation even for this final note. So what happens? An unnatural vibrato a gesture that belongs to the is employed ....

romantic tradition. For Mozart, this would have gone completely against the spirit of the music.

The crux of what I'm saying is liberty. The player who has completely mastered period-technique can experience the intense liberty and joy one encounters in, say, a first-class train compartment; you know everything will go well, you sit back and enjoy yourself. Perhaps the landscape is a little surprising sometimes, there are occasional visual shocks; you experience all sorts of reactions

... pleasure, sombreness, even disgust. Technical confusion ruins this element of surprise. There's a sense in which lovers of the visual arts are still responsive to the unexpected; they take it as part of their artistic experience. I find that, for many people, this element is missing in musical performance and appreciation.

I suggested that the gramophone might be responsible for this muting effect: listeners play and re-play pieces so many times that even the most crushing dissonance becomes ordinary. 'Yes, but at least there's the opportunity to repeat a particular bar, or a favoured passage. I suppose that discs are useful as sources of reference.' More than that, I think. You can include a particular movement almost to excess, reliving its impact at will. Brüggen shrugged 'In that respect, records are a sort of a drug.'

One area that still retains its shock value is contemporary music. Does Brüggen take an active interest in music of our own time? I do perform new music on my recorder, but usually not with the Orchestra. We will probably do Berio's restoration of Schubert's 'Tenth' Symphony (a Concertgebouw commission) in the summer of this year. What he has done – and he is, so far as I know, still busy doing it – is utilize sketches from various unfinished Schubert piano works. One of

HILFENEWS & RECORD REVIEW MARCH 1989 75



### **NEWSLETTER**

Vol. 4, No. 10 March 1989.

This year, Mission Electronics launches its prestige CYRUS brand as a completely separate entity. Its value for money should not blind us to the remarkable performance, reliability and appearance because of the low prices at home. Those privileged enough to work with Mission or visit their factory soon appreciate the amazing dedication of a team inspired by the uncompromising vision of their unique founder and Chief: Farad Azima. To meet this man is to understand the achievements and awards which his company has won in the Hi-Fi and Computer world in such a short few years.

The Music Room was one of their first dealers; as ever we did not merely join a bandwagon, we saw it coming! Maybe we even helped to create it a little, and there are hundreds of our customers who are still enjoying their old Mission 700's and the astonishing 774 "Classic" tonearms. Today, the Cyrus Amplifiers offer the same integrity and investment; for either £180 or £299 a close approach to high-end is yours (if you are prepared to wait a little) and for an additional £199 the PSX will take you much closer still!

The cost of the Mission Cyrus CD Player is £499. This is a very reasonable price to pay for a CD Player which is musical. When we say musical, we have to ask you to book an appointment to hear your own compact discs and we will make you an offer: leave us your old CD Player and a payment or Credit Agreement for the balance and we shall give you a week of home use to confirm your decision and win

domestic approval.

All you can do next to improve the sound is consider the stylish and acoustical sorbothane platforms (£19.90) and Cyrus solid-core high-purity copper (£2.50 per metre). Many people are aware of the above facts, but here is the News: now there are Cyrus loudspeakers. These are world-class products. The 781 and 782 cost £239.95 and £339.95 respectively. How do they sound? Amazing!

### THE HIGH -END CD

Compact Disc takes its place in our shops with three machines which transform the silver disc into musical truth unimagined only a year or two ago. All three are based upon Philips technology, as is the Mission PCM II. But with a greater budget at their disposal the most gifted designers can substantially improve upon the compromises of lots of integrated circuit-based products.

The KINERGETICS KCD-30 is the least expensive at £1,697: remember that all imported CD Players suffer the punitive European Community importation duty. If your commitment to music is serious, then you must now accept CD alongside the LP. Also imported from USA by Absolute Sounds is the world's ultimate: the CAL TEMPEST II which features valve analogue stage. If you believe that this is a gimmick, an inspection of the inners will indicate that the design and build speak of serious intentions. The result speaks for itself, and certainly defines the art beyond our wildest expectations. We hear transparency, solidity, liquidity, mid-range accuracy never before transcribed from a CD. Hot on the heels of this

machine, we have taken delivery of two of the MARANTZ CD-12 the Limited Edition by designer Ken Ishiwata. The price is £2,500.

The demand for KRELL outstrips supply, and we constantly find ourselves without any demonstration stock. We apologise, and henceforth we undertake to have at least one KSA-80 per store to demonstrate the incredible non-speaker loudspeaker which the latest generation of APOGEE has accomplished. This "East Coast" sound is worth aspiring to and we await with interest the KRELL DIGITAL CD Player. The Apogee Digital crossover is now available: it permits effective bi-amping and is the next upgrade for all owners of Apogees: if you think your Apogees sound good now, you ain't heard nothing yet!

The MidWest sound is, of course, AUDIO RESEARCH and MAGNEPLANAR and the news is of the former company's interconnects and loudspeaker cables reaching these shores, at present through The Music Room only. The interconnect ("Litzlink") and the speaker wire ("Litzline") achieve the audio research hallmarks of natural, liquid sound presented in an open and detailed soundstage. As we write, we are amazed by the sonic qualities of these cables which contrasts with a very

reasonable price!

The Music Room are also first with the upgrade stands for the SMGa and 2.5R Magneplanars. These stands add mass and rigidity, made from steel chassis clad with a classic-moulding hand carved American lightoak, brass badge and spiked for

floor-stability. The cost is £159 and £189 for the 2.5R's, but £20 is required for UK carriage because they are Heavy! This is a very cheap way to achieve much of the power and clarity of the much more expensive ribbon bipolar designs.

### **LAST NEWS**

At Last, you can thoroughly clean your LP's without a Record Cleaning Machine; and you can make them last for ever. Vinyl is a stable material, and Last Preservative arrests record wear for 200 plays or ten vears under the sort of careful use most of our readers will exercise. Last attracts great loyalty and enthusiasm from users. The term "System Formula" indicates the heightened effect when more than one kit is used: for example, Formula Two (Preservative) with Formula Five (Stylast). Last is available from The Music Room and all good Hi-Fi Retailers worldwide.

### **SECOND-HAND NEWS**

In Manchester we have a pair of Magneplanar SMGa, as new, £495 and hardly-used QUAD 44/ 606 for £695. In Glasgow we have in the High-End sale, if still available, the Goldmund ST-4 turntable and tonearm for £2,500, the SP-11 II £3,450 (less £1200 for your SP-9 if you wish to upgrade). Still with Audio Research, we may have a D-115 at £2,250 and a pair of M-300 at £6,500. Also on offer is the top Threshold FET Ten/SA1 monoblock Class A 100 Watts, hardly used, sale price £4,500, and we have special Sale prices for the Nakamichi Stasis amplifiers which are, of course, Threshold designs.

The Music Room, 50 Bridge Street Manchester M3 3BN, 061-835 1366 SONY/HI-FI NEWS REGIONAL WINNER The Music Room, 221 St. Vincent Street Glasgow G2 5QY, 041-248 7221 "TENTH ANNIVERSARY"

CROSS THE ATLANTIC, and on the continent, everyone seems to know her name. Ute Lemper arrives on the doorstep of the redoubtable Kurt Weill Foundation - now backing what will hopefully be a complete cycle of the composer's stage works from Decca - with selective credentials: a background in jazz singing, a theatrical education at Vienna's Max Reinhardt Seminar, and two phenomenal successes on the musical stage as Sally Bowles in Jerome Savary's hardhitting production of Cabaret and an exhausting 300 performances singing and dancing her way through Cats in Vienna. For the majority of us in Britain who have never seen Lemper in high-octane action, the marketing machine set into gear for her first Weill album has been hard at work with a series of images that emphasize the high cheek bones, the brow, those endless legs.

The trouble with that, of course, is that she ends up looking like a composite of Garbo and Dietrich. Lemper in person is far too individual, too mercurial to model herself on somebody else. The voice, despite obvious inflections of a standard popular style, remains entirely at the service of the characters she happens to be playing. There's no danger of her being labelled a second Lenya. Of course I've taken elements of her performing style into account. She was a wonderful singer of the Weill music, even if she didn't always absolutely respect the musical directions, and not always the right notes. But the feeling she has, the tenderness, that's something fantastic. When I listened to her singing The Seven Deadly Sins, and then I heard Gisela May, I felt that I preferred Lenva's manner – her so-called romanticism and, nevertheless, enormous strength, I really like that. But of course it was stylized, with the rolling rrrs, and I'm trying to forget about all the other interpreters. I want to take it in my own manner, and I love the German language - which otherwise I find unmusical, it's a thinking language and not a singing one - for that. Brecht and Weill both give you so much opportunity to use details.

She believes it was that very difference between her approach and Lenya's which first alerted the Weill Foundation. 'Four years ago when I first put together a programme of Weill's songs in Stuttgart, I made a record with a private company – just to sell at the performances – and somehow it came to the attention of a journalist, who gave it to someone at the Foundation, and they said, "Well, maybe that's a new generation of Weill interpretation". So they invited me to the Kurt Weill Festival two years ago, and a concert I gave in New York went well. They stayed in touch, and gave me plenty of artistic advice so that I didn't drift away in another direction. Then Decca, who had been in touch with the Foundation, offered me the contract.

The mission entrusted was a serious one and required hours of earnest musical preparation (it shows). 'Because Lys Simonette, who's involved with the Weill Foundation – she emigrated to the States and worked as assistant to Weill on his last musicals there, Street Scene and Lost in the Stars – remembered what Lotte Lenya said to her just before her death in 1982. She said, "Please take care that Weill's music will be better sung than it was by me, because I don't think he was ever really satisfied with the musical aspect of it. Make sure that it's taken from another angle." And that's why they sit so



# **UTE LEMPER**

### in conversation with David Nice. From Cabaret to Kurt Weill

hard on the performing rights – because Weill must be absolutely right musically as well as dramatically.'

That meant a certain change of approach on Lemper's part. When she first performed the songs, she was working on the Musicals at the same time. As a teenager, she had taken singing lessons, but acting took over, and then she had to learn the popular-musical style, which isn't taught in central Europe this keeping the chest voice very high, and I had to take it mostly from listening to records. Working with John Mauceri on the album made a great difference. 'He's one of the few conductors who has this connection between popular music and the classical tradition. He has the right humour and energy for the Weill music, and at the same time there's the legato and classical continuity about it. I learned from him to strike a right balance between musical precision and an individual interpretation. Before, I would leave things out, slip the tempo. Now I learned to listen to the music - not just the singer's line. That helped with the ironic aspect, because the music is often written in contradiction to the lyrics, and that often doesn't come out if you listen to the words the absurdity of the text going against the romantic setting. I've grown to love The Seven Deadly Sins - the orchestral parts, the violins' music, often against Anna I's hardness: it's unbelievably beautiful.

Seven Deadly Sins is next on the agenda (Threepenny Opera has just been completed), though Lemper is still battling with the Foundation to record it in Weill's (authorized) transposed version, since she feels that at the lower pitch she can bring out more of the emotion which a conscious bel canto style for the higher edition might banish. Again, the ghost of Lenya hovers over the controversy. The lower pitches are for when she

was older, and her voice was really down on the first floor. When she was young, of course, it was up on the tenth. If you hear her recordings from the '30s, they're so absolutely different from the later manner. For Threepenny Opera, the Foundation insisted I sing all of Polly's music in the original key, which is so very high, all up to the G and the A. I pleaded to sing the 'Barbarasong' two or three tones down, but it couldn't be done. It will sound strange as it is, I think!'

The challenges of the first album she finds altogether more to her taste. I remark on her extraordinary ability to change guises between songs - the kind of range which a Lieder singer would envy. 'Well, I don't want to show off, but for me it's a game to click your fingers and there you are in another time and another musical feeling and another character; I like that very much. That's why Weill fascinated me in the first place because I couldn't understand, and I really had this desire to understand, how one composer could change his style of music 180 degrees around and still be the same composer. That was fascinating, and also very shocking and strange. In my show, of course, it's still more of a challenge - two hours with 20 songs, and changing 20 times the personality. It's very exciting. And also, of course, to sing in three languages.

The music of Weill's Paris period will not be neglected in the project. There's Marie galante, which he wrote after The Seven Deadly Sins failed at the Theatre du Champs Elysées, and all those beautiful chansons. And how does she feel about the American Weill? Does she think he sold his soul to show business after his emigration in 1935? 'No, that music's rich in a different way. Of course, I wouldn't sing the September Song, partly because the Americans wouldn't like to hear it sung by a German singer, and also



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UTE LEMPER

because it's so often done it's become a standard. But most of the other material from Street Scene and One Touch of Venus is terribly neglected – even the Americans aren't one hundred per cent OK with what he did. Sometimes the music is commercial and swingy and light entertainment; at others it's wonderful and related to the European style. it's much more complex. I'm not sure he always knew why he wrote it. Maybe he was so hurt by the Nazis and the way they treated him, maybe it was just to survive. And maybe it was a musical development - it had to go in another direction after all the expressionism. Who can say where all the music, the painting and the literature of Berlin would have gone if there hadn't been a Third Reich?

Clearly the atmosphere of Berlin in the twenties and thirties fascinates her, 'that extreme intensity of collaboration between the different arts. Everybody was in revolution, full of emotion and against everything that was old. I think it was even more extreme because they needed to fight against the misery, the unemployment, the inflation. I love the paintings of Otto Dix, the way he worked against the terrible experiences of the First World War: the breaking-out of the nightlife after the war, all that crazy living and dancing the night through. I cannot say it was a wonderful period because it was a terrible period, but there were a lot of emotions which are dead today, which don't exist any more.

Does Cabaret - the musical she knows so well since touring in what was, by all accounts, a sensational production - capture that? I think so, at least the way Jerome



Savary staged it. I loved the role of Sally Bowles - even though of course she's an English girl! - and the story-line is incredibly strong, strong enough to exist as a play without music. I'm very critical about most musicals today, and I think Cabaret is one of the few that tells a powerful, European tale. Of course, it's written by Americans and it's rather idealised and a little kitch-ised, so it depends a lot on the staging. Savary was extremely aggressive and courageous, with big swastikas around the theatre and a very

strong visual emphasis on the violence, the menace. In France, where the older people still blame the Germans, there was tension, and occasionally whistling. But it was even stranger in Germany. Fifty people who walked out couldn't bear it because for a moment it all seemed true - you thought "is this propaganda?" with the visual aspect, the flags, the music, people raising their arms: it was only for a few minutes, and then it broke, but women were crying, people were shouting "Scheiss Hitler", or whatever - I was quite frightened. And when I saw the production on Broadway, I felt it was nothing because they didn't dare anything, they didn't take a risk, and this American optimism

really gets on my nerves sometimes.'
And what of Cats? 'That wasn't fun, that was pure hard work. I started with Bombalurina, and then I took over Grizabella, which wasn't quite so bad because didn't have to dance as well as sing. But it's such a hard thing to do a show nine times a week. After 300 performances, you could have thrown my bones into the garbage. For us, it was a killer; for the audience, just good fun. I'm not against Lloyd Webber, I just don't find the way he gives you song after song and nothing to develop, very rewarding. Maybe the new musical he's writing is something special, not so commercial. But I would like to do more Sondheim – an evening of his songs. Because at the moment I'm very keen on a good role which actually says something: where the character doesn't just sing, but has all the expressiveness of the words as well. And that's why I'm so happy working on the Weill.

### FRANS BRUGGEN

these is a very childish study in counterpoint. It appears that towards the very end of his life, Schubert was advised to take lessons in counterpoint ... and at least one simple lesson does in fact date from his death year. You look in the manuscript's margin and you see a note referring to his next appointment; next Saturday, perhaps ... by which time Schubert was already dead.

The idea of preparing early Schubert symphonies fits nicely into the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century's performing scope. The group itself has a dedicated, permanent team of personnel. 'Yes, our orchestral musicians remain the same. If we find that someone is a little weak technically, then we don't just dispense with him - we arrange for him to have extra training and give him the necessary attention. That works very well. Everyone earns the same, too - no matter whether he plays back-tutti second violin or first flute. Of course some people do more work than others, but we rotate the seating arrangements of personnel. In other words musicians will take turns in sitting next to a specific group leader.' Orchestral positioning is sometimes influenced by the spatial and acoustical properties of a particular performing venue. but Brüggen generally separates his violins, and his cellos from his basses - with cellos next to the second violins. All this can of course be noted on Philips's CDV of the Eroica Symphony (which, incidentally, is not the same performance as that issued on standard CD).

We know that CDV splits one's attention between the visual and the aural, but 'are people who are interested in the visual image also interested in music? You have, on the one hand, image connoisseurs who like to savour pictures, whereas on the other hand you have those who are primarily interested in classical music. Still, I was fascinated to observe that in Japanese CD shops, threequarters of available space is filled with compact disc videos. CDV can be very instructive: what we see on our own recordings is that each musician is constantly watching what his colleagues are doing - even the tiniest, most subtle movements. I find this very touching. Of course I'm already aware of this trend, being the orchestra's conductor, but seeing it all from a distance is remarkable.

Brüggen favours 'live' recording with his orchestra, but not in chamber music and certainly not in earlier repertoire. 'But when an orchestra plays well on the evening, that's great. The ideal is to have the one programme performed on two consecutive even-



ings, so that you can "fill in" from one or the other when something is imperfect.' As to possible recording wish-fulfilments, Bach cantatas are a high priority. The ideal would be to perform a separate Cantata every Sunday, over a period of, say, three years. We could use musicians who are local to selected church venues, booking (with the help of a computer) a particular player for this or that Sunday.

Musicians could therefore decide when to participate. We would share the enterprise between a number of conductors - after all, no one conductor could spare 52 Sundays a year! And each performance would be prefaced by a 15-minute lecture by some expert. who would relate the music to the relevant Biblical text.' Well, Philips, how about it? There are probably many less viable projects already afoot, and with Brüggen at the helm. we'd at least be assured that a fine blend of stylistic authenticity and performing spontaneity would give some unfamiliar music supremely effective advocacy.

### BRÜGGEN ON CD

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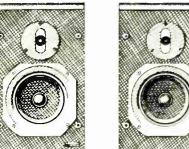
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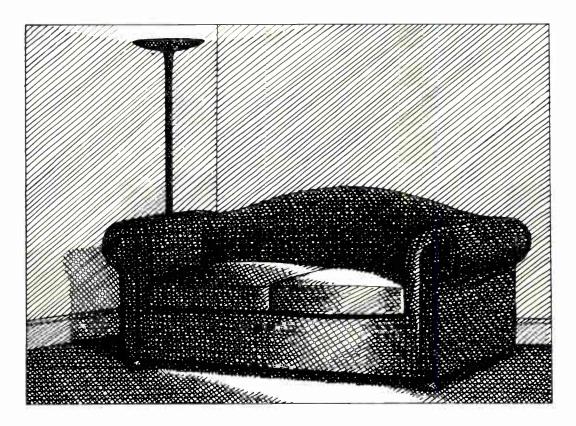
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- SCHUMANN
- Julius Caesar Overture (Järvi) Overture, Scherzo & Finale (Järvi)
- Davidsbundlertanze, ete (Perahia)
- Piano works (Wild) 95
- SHOSTAKOVICH
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Hogwood's Bach Orchestral Suites	85
Tallis Scholars' Cornysh sacred music	87
Kathryn Stott's second Fauré disc	
Simon Preston's Handel Dixit Dominus	
Argerich & Abbado – Ravel Concerto remake	.93
Joshua Bell's Tchaikovsky Concerto	96
Jean Blanchard's Musiques Pour Cornemouses	105
Le Mystere des Voix Bulgares' A Cathedral Concert	109
Donal Lunny's Donal Lunny	111

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R

Recording: Performance

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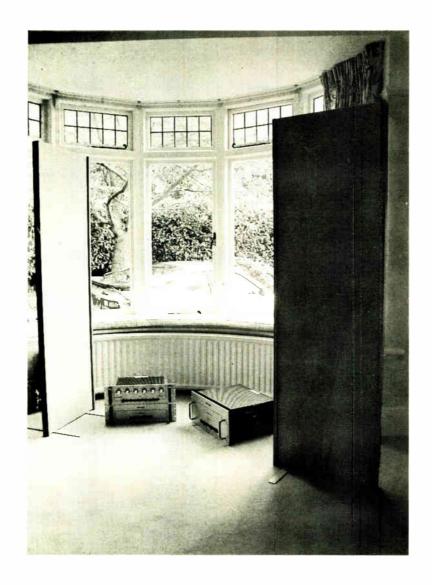
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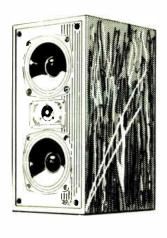
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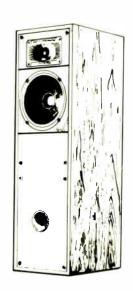
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# CLASSICAL >

BERG: Wozzeck

Grundheber/Behrens/Haugand/Zednik/ Langridge/Vienna State Opera Ch/VPO/ Abbado

**DG 423 587-2** (2CDs, 88m 49s) (2MCs: 423 587-4)

Wozzeck as late romatic opera or expression-ist nightmare; Wozzeck as intricate labyrinth where form directs drama – we have had all those views in the past 20 years. Never, I think have those aspects so combined, so vividly jostled and screamed for attention, to effect the kind of terrible beauty rife in Abbado's Vienna performance. It's a vivid and on the whole faithful performance of the and, on the whole, faithful realisation of the score which embodies Berg's wishes for the formal rigour of his schemes to be entirely at the expressive service of Buchner's theme. Abbado, of course, had long been a master of the kind of extremes encapsulated in the two earth-shattering crescendos sealing the mur-der: one would have thought his Mahler 9, recorded in Vienna a couple of months before this, had taken the listener as close to the abyss as it was possible to go. Yet here we plunge into it, albeit with ferocious clearsightedness, and not even in the final interlude, with its climax merely another terse twist of the knife, does Abbado let us look on the human inferno from a distance. Love and death, lust and madness, share the same language. The looming phantoms Wozzeck sees in the field are nothing more than



premonitions of the focused chaos which breaks out at the end of the First Act, as Marie crumples into the arms of the Drum-Major; violas and cellos insist on the vocabulary and phrasing of the romantic manner at the most unlikely moments, not least (with a typically perverse blend of voluptuousness and anguish) before Wozzeck's 'Tot!'. I doubt if Vienna audiences ever registered Abbado's meticulously balanced orchestral eruptions as having quite the impact the recording gives them: the orchestra is disturbingly close, but with a good deal more space around the instruments than on the shallowperspectived Mahler 9 - except in the Act 2 tavern scene, where the stage orchestra sounds aptly claustrophobic.

The singers never have to fight for their rights, and I suspect they were no less audible in the theatre. Abbado favours Wagnerian experience, which doesn't always go hand in glove with sensitivity to the nuances Berg marks in the score. Haugland's Doctor and Walter Raffeiner's Drum Major seem intent on the notes, and consequently never very close to whispered insanity or bestial cruelty (we ought to hear, for example, a 'mysterious' glissando from the Doctor at Fig.230 of Act 2, Scene 2; the viola's mimicry hardly makes sense without it). Grundheber rarely strikes the weird pathological middle ground between beautiful phrasing of the more overtly romantic lines - his high register is admirably warm, the handling of the molto cantabile 'love-song' by the pool haunting indeed – and barking out Wozzeck's outbursts. The real subtlety comes from Zednik, fantastical even in his whistling, the everprecise Langridge, and Behrens, who remains exemplary in balancing expression-ism and sheer warmth of tone. When she departs unbidden from the pitches, the drama always needs it ('es schauert mich' is the unforgettable cry of a wounded animal); and the effect of the sprechgesang in Marie's darkest hour (Act 3 Scene 1) strikes like broken sobbing from deep within. Here indeed is the intelligent and feeling match for Abbado's unsparing view of the human condition. [A/B:1\*/1] David Nice

JS BACH: Orchestral Suites, BWV 1066-1069 AAM/Christopher Hogwood Oiseau-Lyre 417 834-2 (2CDs, 94m 22s) (2LPs: 417 834-1, 2MCs: 417 834-4)

This seems to me to be Christopher Hogwood's best Bach recording to date, and is set to become my favourite among what is now a strongly competitive field of period-instrument recordings of the *Ouvertüren* (Suites); the dance-element here is so exactly right.

A particularly significant point is the consistency of the sound, which enables us to revel in the point and quality, both of Bach's imaginative instrumentation and in those of Hogwood's performers, throughout the whole enterprise. Although the players are actually not identical throughout, there is an excellent sense of continuity through the four suites. In the second, Lisa Beznosiuk plays with better tone and phrasing than she did in the John Eliot Gardiner London Baroque Players recording (Erato); but the most significant difference is that here she is much more sensitively accompanied. Wonderful music to usher in 1989 as I prepared this review for publication. [A\*:1\*] Stephen Daw

JS BACH: Chromatic Fantasia & Fugue, BWV903 | Partita No.1 in B b, BVW825 | Toccata, Adagio & Fugue in G, BWV916 | Prelude, Fugue & Allegro in E b, BWV998 | Italian Concerto in F, BWV971

Maggie Cole (hpd) Virgin VC790 7122 (62m 09s) (LP: VC 790 7121, MC: VC 790 7124)

Maggie Cole has a fluent technique and an agreeable interpretative sensitivity. Not everybody who tries to play Bach in public (and, alas, on disc) is even remotely up to it, but she is one of an elite few to whom basic problems and an appropriate approach present no challenge. This rich programme is

delivered with great poise: I especially like her performance of the tricky Toccata in G, and her 'Italian' Concerto where, as I see it, the articulation and the tempi are just right but there's nothing disappointing here, and Virgin Classics are to be congratulated on having engaged such a talented harpsichordist for their authentic 'Veritas' series.

The instrument used is the property of the Queen, being an 18th-century-modernised Ruckers two-manual instrument strongly associated with Handel. Be that as it may, I personally find its tone restricted in quality (probably because the case is too heavy to be adequately resonant), especially for some of the music here, which, to my mind, sounds preferable on lighter instruments – like those which Miss Cole so eloquently used in her Goble harpsichords recital of a few years ago. The recording itself, made in Fenton House, seems to me to be very good, though close – probably through domestic necessity. [A:1\*]

Stephen Daw

JS BACH: Six Motets, BWV 225-230 The Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge Richard Markow Conifer CDCF 158 (65m 38s)

These motet performances are pleasant in sound, indeed the tonal quality is at times quite breathtakingly beautiful. This in itself adds to the sense of elevation associated with the church motet throughout its history, and would be entirely appropriate to its probable original purpose – which was almost certainly performance at memorial services. Less satisfactory, however, is the stressing of words in the texts set by Bach – accentuation and stress are not always the same thing, as Purcell and Byrd proved in England, and Schütz in Saxony; and the Trinity singers, well though they *pronounce* their German, have not got right the essentially motettish

style of which Bach was undoubtedly well aware. (This is extremely well demonstrated on the Collegium Vocale recording for Harmonia Mundi, made about two years ago.)

I shall keep and treasure this disc, though, partly because it gives such a clear reading, and partly because the actual recording seems to me to have caught the acoustical character of Trinity Chapel – one I very much like – extremely well. The recording would have earned a star had it sounded just a little clearer in relative spacing of the singers. [A:2]

Stephen Daw

Stephen Daw

BEETHOVEN: Symphony 9 in d 'Choral' Harper/Hodgson/Tear/Howell/Northern Sinfonia & Ch with LSO Ch/Hickox ASV CD CDA 628 (70m 15s) digital

This landmark in musical history has an impressive line-up of soloists here. It is a work with no predecessor or immediate successor and, although it had a great effect on later 19th-century composers, its influence upon Beethoven's contemporaries was minimal. The Ninth Symphony presents a problem in that it is often seen through late 19th-century spectacles – in terms of massive orchestral and vocal forces – and this can result in a certain heaviness in performance which Hickox is careful to avoid.

The recording completes Hickox's Beethoven Symphonies project with the Northern Sinfonia for ASV. [On 2LPs/2MCs with Symphony 5: DCD 455/ZC DCD 455.] No period instruments are used here, but the symphony is played by an orchestra of similar size to that available to Beethoven. There is some astonishingly luminous string playing from the Northern Sinfonia, and the principal flautist makes a truly wonderful, wide sound. The bassoon and brass are well balanced in the orchestral ensemble, but I found it difficult to pick out the oboes and clarinets

even though the inner strings are quite clear. This was a little disappointing as the rest of the texture is almost transparent.

the texture is almost transparent.

In the first movement, Hickox carefully reserves the big orchestral sound for the majestic recapitulation in D major. The second movement, misplaced by early 19th-century standards, is the scherzo: it is both lyrical and powerful and is given a suitably dynamic treatment. The Northern Sinfonia never lose their clarity in the scherzo and this precision is also manifest in the slow movement, even though the outset is spoilt by two rather bumpy edits.

Hickox uses the spacious acoustic of All Saints' Church. Newcastle to great effect, allowing the theme for the Ode to grow out of the reverberation. This also avoids a sectional treatment of the last movement, and sustains the musical argument. The soloists maintain their ensemble (rarely the case in this piece, I find) and complement the chorus rather than standing apart from the texture by virtue of sheer volume of tone. Robert Tear is particularly good in this respect during the alla marcia. The chorus gives a tight performance, and avoids sounding like a choral society which appears just in time to wreck the work. [A\*:1] William McVicker

BEETHOVEN: Cello Sonatas & Variations Vol.1 – Sonatas Op.5:1 & 2 

Variations in G, Wo0.45, Judas Maccabaeus 

in F, Op.66, 'Ein Mächen oder Weibchen' Vol.2 – Sonatas Opp.69, 105:1 & 2 

Variations Wo0.46 'Bei Männern'

Melvyn Tan (f-pno)/Anthony Pleeth (vlc) Hyperion CDA 66281 (73m) CDA 66282 (69m 40s)

The first recommendable 'authentic' set of Beethoven's music for piano and cello (neither JC nor I cared for the Cohen/Coin Harmonia Mundi recordings) were completed, if the documentation is accurate, at two distinct periods. Pleeth uses a period instrument for Vol.2, a Rubin after Guadagnini for the early sonatas. The perspectives are quite different for the two programmes: Vol.1 has the instruments set quite some way back in a reverberant acoustic which, if it does not harm clarity, seems to give a dry harshness to the cello as the dynamics rise. On the second CD the 1770 Hill cello sounds far sweeter, and, whilst the relative balances are perfectly maintained, both instruments more forward, without the wash of ambience, yet still with some hall bloom to the sound. I am sure the second disc will outsell the first, if only because the music itself is so much more interesting for the listener: the Op.5 Sonatas, with repeats, are very long given their musical content. (Which makes me think: no CD manufacturer ever offers the purchaser the programming option of deleting repeats, yet this would be perfectly feasible for many works.) But, even though it turns out that the technical quality is less favourable, one could hardly have better artistic advocacy for the Handel and Mozart variations than here, whilst the two Op.5 brim with joyous enthusiasm. Melvyn Tan is the opposite of pedantic: precise in reasoning for the fortepiano copy in this repertoire, he is the most lively and imaginative of today's authenticists. In Op.69 he observes the 'Bebung' effects – rare in Beethoven – which call for an echo repeat on tied notes (also, eg, Piano Sonata Op.110 Adagio; Grosse fuge theme). Tan brings enormous engagement to these mature works, and he is matched by Pleeth, who conveys perfectly the ambivalent role of the instrument, sometimes subservient, elsewhere providing the cantilena

denied the keyboard mechanisms (eg, Andante Op.102:1).

The UK is noticeably absent from the booklet cover artwork collections of 24 Beethoven portrait postage stamps (not an original, but an attractive idea). Most of the stamp designs are abysmal! [B:1\*] [A:1\*]

**Christopher Breunig** 

BEETHOVEN: Lieder to texts by Goethe, Gellert, Matthison, Reissig, and 9 others − Opp.46/48/83/128 (complete) □ Opp.52/75/84 (excerpts) □ WoO.74/109/111/123/126/135-7/143/149

Peter Schreier (ten)/Walter Olbertz (pno) Teldec 8.44061 (71m 49s) ® 1976-78

Beethoven's lieder can come as a very pleasant surprise to the initiate. Although ranging widely in subject matter, they mostly have a fresh simplicity of musical manner which is instantly accessible. Half the 30 songs gathered here concern the joys and sorrows of love, seven have a religious slant, and seven more span divers topics ranging from global circumnavigation to the drinking of punch. The shortest lasts a mere 44s, the longest (*Adelaide*) 6½m, in a collection deriving mainly from Vols.1 and 3 of Schreier's LP recitals.

I have greatly enjoyed re-hearing Peter Schreier's athletically expressive singing, though it must be said that his light tenor voice lacks the solemnity needed ideally for the two or three most hymn-like of the religious songs. But he brings a touching pianissimo intensity to *Resignation*, while the taxing *Adelaide*, perhaps the most renowned item here, comes over very well. Indeed, unless one were determined to encompass the great *An die ferne Geliebte* cycle, it would be difficult to match this mid-price CD's generous cross-section of the Beethoven lied. Walter Olbertz's grand-piano accompaniments are suitably lively, if at times a little overpowering, and the voice is given an up-front presentation – although a touch of reverberant depth may be sensed behind the performers. [A:1\*/2]

BRAHMS: Symphony 1 Boston SO/Munch RCA VD 87812 (45m 13s) (R) 1957

For collectors interested in orchestral character of this vintage, or in the art of a conductor underrated here, during his Boston tenure. As a reading it is less than generally recommendable: clipped, lurching too obviously from rallentandi to accelerandi, romanticised, and with over-saturated textures (perhaps these are more attributable to the engineered sound). No repeat in (i). But in its overall sweep, and for the quality of playing, it is certainly engaging; of course, the Boston Orchestra then had greater individuality than now, especially in the wind voices. Sound is thick, occasionally grainy, by modern stan-dards, with some 'splotchy' noises on the tapes. [B/C:H(2)] **Christopher Breunig** 

BRAHMS: Symphony 2/SCHUMANN: Julius Caesar Overture LSO/Järvi

Chandos CHAN 8649 (55m 07s) (LP: ABRD 1335, MC: ABTD 1335)

Järvi's Brahms 2 is very much in the Furtwängler manner – a more modern example would be the Mehta/NYP version. That is, flexible in pacing, lingering or moving on according to the expressive potential of the line. The reading (which is exactly as in his Barbican LSO concert performance last season – so it's not so much a spontaneous, as a deliberate free approach) is full of interesting ideas: merely the distinctive and purposeful way he lets the timpani cut through at the beginning of the exposition is enough to illustrate that. (The repeat is observed.) I wished that he hadn't been tempted to make such an accelerando at the end of the symphony. Barbirolli and Horenstein number among the few who don't on records – even Toscanini surged forward, to the delight of his Philharmonia concert audience! [1952 cycle on Fonit Cetra.]

cycle on Fonit Cetra.]

So what is missing? Well, to be fair, Järvi's Brahms 2 is to the standard of the better studio recordings. But I am reminded of the story of Stokowski, who was said to have walked out of a TV studio having asked his interviewer 'what percentage are you giving me?', at the reply 'I guess about 95%'. Whilst it is remarkable that Järvi could come down to St Jude's NW11 for sessions with a comparatively unfamiliar orchestra and have the players so magnetically held to his stick, I feel that something is held back here. If you want to hear an orchestra giving 105% (Stokowski's stipulation), then hear the VPO in this work with Barbirolli.

On the other hand if you hear the VPO with Solti in the Schumann overture, you'll hear a conductor beating dutifully, vacantly through a score no-one seems to know. Järvi can't hide the impoverishment of this concertpiece after Shakespeare's play, but he makes a vigorous argument for it, seems to enjoy much of it, and encourages some splendid brass playing. [A:1] Christopher Breunig

BRAHMS: Symphony 3 □ Tragic Overture Cleveland Orchestra/Dohnányi Teldec 8·44134 (50m 29s) (LP: 6·44134 MC: 4·44134)

The Tragic Overture, and especially its central slow part, sometimes fails to come off in performance, and can sound dull. But this account by Christoph von Dohnányi is as persuasive as any I have heard, and finds all departments of the Cleveland Orchestra in great form. So they are again in the symphony, and such few complaints as I have are mostly incidental. For example, in the Andante the solo clarinettist often does not articulate the semiquavers in dotted figures quite distinctly enough. More serious is that in the finale the second-subject lacks sufficient thrust and body when it first trium-phantly sweeps in, in C major, (Järvi handles it better in his new Chandos version.) This is surprising because, otherwise, Dohnányi's is a wonderfully spacious performance, of great warmth and colour, in which every detail is given its full value. Notice, for example, the shaping of the cello theme at the start of the Poco allegretto, or the exact gradation of the diminuendo and rallentando at the end of this movement's central section. Overall these are two exceptionally sympathetic interpreta-tions, their ardour caught by a recording of great immediacy. [A:1] Max Harrison

BRAHMS: Symphony 3/SCHUMANN: Overture, Scherzo & Finale LSO/Järvi

Chandos CHAN 8646 (56m 15s) (LP: ABRD 1332, MC: ABTD 1332)

This is the first to come my way of Järvi's series comprising Brahms's symphonies coupled with miscellaneous orchestral works by Schumann, and it seems to me that his

account of Symphony 3 just edges ahead of the concurrent one by Dohnányi. It is very much a case of the recording collaborating with the music, which latter has exceptional warmth and spaciousness here. The richness of Brahms's orchestral thinking is conveyed without the loss of clarity often found elsewhere, and the LSO's playing has an apt delicacy in the right places, such as the *Poco allegretto*.

Schumann said that he wrote the *Overture*, Scherzo & Finale 'in a most joyous mood', although the sombre introduction suggests otherwise. However this soon yields to an allegro of almost Mendelssohnian lightness and gaiety, although the development is episodic and hence characteristic of Schumann, as are the numerous key-changes of the Scherzo. This modulatory tendency has a less happy effect in the Finale, for here the development, though strictly thematic as usual with this composer, wanders from one key to another without much sense of purpose. Järvi does all he can to compensate for this, and draws from the LSO another performance which combines intensity with refinement. [A:1] **Max Harrison** 

BRIDGE: Phantasie Trio □ Phantasy Quartet □ Piano Trio 2

Patrick Ireland (vla)/Dartington Piano Trio Hyperion CDA 66279 (64m 54s) digital (MC: KA 66279)

Combining these three works on one disc falls very much into the category of 'a good idea', so well do they display the range of Bridge's invention in the chamber music medium over a 22-year period. Hyperion have also chosen a fine set of players to bring the pieces to life, and even though this issue presents such a convenient package, the individual performances stand up well to competition in both the vinyl and CD catalogues. The Phantasie Trio of 1907 and the Quartet of 1911 both owe much to William Cobbett, who commissioned the latter and provided an incentive and forum for the former, through his chamber music Competition. The Fantasy form music Competition. The Fantasy form prompted and allowed Bridge to give vent to some of his most lyrical and long-breathed ideas, whilst his keen sense of structure kept the working of those ideas from going over the top. The comparative asperity of his post-war style imposed its own strictures, exemplified by the original yet clear form of the Second Piano Trio of 1929. The Dartington Piano Trio (with Patrick Ireland) pick up on the lyricism in all three works and give it eloquent expression, all the while keeping a tight rein on the pacing and shaping of the larger musical units. This produces most satisfying results and gives a clear idea of the music's worth. The recording overblends the ensemble for my taste, reducing the effect of Bridge's characteristic way of throwing phrases around between parts. Otherwise, the sound is well balanced and appropriate to the works, resonant without flooding the textures, clear without being cold. As with so many Hyperion issues, this makes a major contribution to the cause of some, as yet, insufficiently-known music. [A/B:1

Doug Hammond

CHOPIN: Piano Sonatas 2 & 3

Murray Perahia (pno)

CBS CD 76242 (48m 98s) ® 1974

No welcome could be enthusiastic enough for the reissue on CD of Murray Perahia's Chopin Sonatas. The recordings are considerably warmer than in their original form and, while hardly of the front rank, do nothing to cloud one's enjoyment of a supreme lucidity and magical eloquence. Rarely will you hear a Funeral March more precisely measured or sustained; and if Chopin's alarmingly enigmatic finale is less sotto voce than some (Martha Argerich on DG, for example), it is superbly articulate and sensitive to every melodic strand and poetic implications.

But it is in Sonata 3 most of all that

Perania's princely qualities as a Chopin pianist stand out. What breadth he finds in the opening Allegro maestoso; how minutely he grades and considers even the finest details of a score alive with some of Chopin's most bejewelled writing. A moderate tempo for the Scherzo allows every zig-zag, twist and turn to make its mercurial point, and the Adagio is a wonder of the most 'contained' poetry. There is a breathtakingly steep decrescendo just before the final return of the Rondo finale's theme and a jeu perlé brilliance that may well be the envy of even the finest technician. It is playing like this that has made Murray Perahia the most celebrated young pianist of our time. [B:1/1\*]

Bryce Morrison

CHOPIN: The 4 Scherzi  $\square$  Polonaise in A  $^{\rm h}$ , Op.53  $\square$  Ballade in A  $^{\rm h}$ , Op.47  $\square$  Berceuse, Op.57  $\square$  Prelude in c  $\sharp$ , Op.45  $\square$  3 Ecossaises, Op.72

Nelson Freire (pno) Teldec 8.44075 (60m 21s) ® 1978

Splendid, high-voltage playing, on the whole, conceived on an epic scale. One marvels afresh that anyone could ever have described Chopin as 'a sickroom talent'. For some, doubtless, the electricity generated by Freire in the *Scherzi* will seem a trifle overwrought, but to those approaching Chopin without preconceptions, and to many seasoned devotees too, this recital can be warmly recommended. If Freire has any pianistic problems, he keeps them wonderfully well hidden, and his commanding musicianship is evident at every turn. A deeply impressive reissue, marred only by an occasional stridency for which pianist and engineer may be jointly to blame. [A:1] Jeremy Siepmann

CORNYSH: Stabat Mater Tallis Scholars/Peter Phillips Gimell CDGIM 014 (65m 03s) (LP: 1585-14, MC: 1585T-14)

The Tallis Scholars and Peter Phillips can always be relied upon to give us performances which are not only dazzling in terms of vocal quality and technique, but also perfectly adapted to the idioms of their highly unusual programmes of the captivating in our musical heritage. This latest release did not disappoint me.

appoint me.
William Cornysh was an early English example of the Renaissance Artist and, predictably, employed an extensive range of musical styles. Since this recording includes all his accessible sacred music as well as a selection of secular compositions, it affords a most informative view of his work and current trends. Consequently, though, a great variety of moods are demanded. These are duly created with the same supreme confidence that sails through the typical juicy false relations, giving them complete harmonic credibility, and sustains glittering top notes with a purity that makes it hard to believe that the upper parts are sung by sopranos, not trebles.

A lovely clarity is created in 'Adieu, courage' by the separation of each crystal-

clear part, still superbly blended, of course, within the unusually wide range which Cornysh often favoured. More generally characteristic are the long rambling melismas in the Stabat Mater, interwoven with care and intricacy, the 'Boppy' rhythms, and the exciting metrical changes. In contrast with this rhythmic vitality (negotiated with precision and fluidity), pieces like 'Ah, Robin' and 'Adieu, Adieu, my hearte's lust' are completely simple and direct. Nevertheless, they are quite hypnotic, and are spun out in beautiful, shining lines.

Since the recorded quality of this release is as sparkling as its performance, and its programme introduces more fascinating treasures from our sadly underexplored musical past, it is definitely one not to be missed, either by enthusiasts or, indeed, anyone seeking an approachable introduction to the riches of English choral history. [A\*:1\*]

Helena Stoward

**DEBUSSY: Preludes, Book 2** *Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli (pno)* **DG 427 391-2** (39m 09s) digital (LP: 427 391-1, MC: 427 391-4)

Here, at last, is the long-awaited second book of Debussy *Préludes* from Michelangeli. He remains the ultimate of aristocrats, intent as ever on a remote, chilly perfection; and his insistent fear of sentimentality, of a reduction



to picture-postcard impressionism, compels him to take a very firm hand to the more fragile or mysterious Preludes. 'Ondine' emerges as an *imperatrice*, full of fierce commands rather than coaxing seduction or entreaty, and many of Debussy's most interior meditations are perversely daylit, shorn of their essential nocturnal secrets. Time and again *pp* becomes *f* and the composer's precise indications, hinting at every possible delicacy or minute shifting of nuance and sonority, are modified into something more abstract and aggressive. Of course, Michelangeli's legendary mastery can produce its own hypnotic appeal, and in an intricate abstraction like 'Les Tierces alternées', taken more slowly than usual, his unique control is undeniable. He makes something very special, too, out of 'La Puerta del Vino', relishing Debussy's indication avec de brusques oppositions d'extrême violence et de passionnée douceur. All the same, lovers of Gieseking's classic subtlety and iridescence are in for a rude awakening. They may also object that 39m is short measure - even if it is Michelangeli. Compensation is, however, provided by an exemplary recording and two excellent photographs, one a charming study of Debussy with his daughter Chouchou, the other a portrait [somewhat overused! Mus Ed] of a ferociously unsmiling Michelangeli.
[A:2/1] Bryce Morrison

**DOWLAND: Lachrimae** *Hesperion XX*Astrée E 8701 (70m 43s) (Pinnacle)

Unlike the excellent recording made in the '70s for Decca's 'Florilegium' label by the Consort of Musicke, this new recording equally excellent – shuffles the pieces contained in Dowland's collection *Lachrimae or* Seven Teares figured in seaven passionate pauans to make two distinct sequences. First the seven passionate pavanes are alternated with contrasting, rather less passionate Galliards, preserving the time-honoured relationship between the two dance-forms; then we hear what is left over, pieces like 'Semper Dowland semper Dolens', 'Sir Henry Umpton's Funerall', and, in a distinctly hap-pier fame of mind, 'M. George Whitehead his Almand'. The manipulation works well enough, and effects a neat corrective to the assumption that the Lachrimae Pavanes form a single entity (though nobody could object to hearing the entire collection as one piece, as it were, in a single sitting).

The playing of the viol ensemble Hesperion

The playing of the viol ensemble Hesperion XX is full-blooded, their rhythms as flexible as the emotions of this wonderful music require, their sense of what is happening in each other's, as well as their own, parts as uncanny as that possessed by any modern string quartet worth its salt. In all, this is an issue that tells vividly of just how gifted – and internationally appealing, since this group includes no English person – a composer Dowland really was. [A:1\*], no mistake

Stephen Pettitt

DVORAK: Piano Trio in f, Op.65 ☐ Piano Trio in e, Op.90

Emmanuel Ax (pno)/Yong Uk Kim (vln)/Yo-Yo Ma (vlc)

CBS CD 44527 (72m 27s) digital

The only other CD coupling of these two trios is that by the Suk Trio on a high quality Supraphon-Denon release. The Ax-Kim-Ma Trio may not perhaps enjoy such a permanent relationship as the Czech one, but these performances suggest empathy of the closest kind. The Brahmsian overlay of the F-minor Trio, which is contemporary with the Seventh Symphony, is perhaps more emphatic than in the Czech version, but the performance is a persuasive one all the same. Again the Czechs, who have separately recorded the two earlier trios as well, are arguably more attuned to the implications of Dvorak's treatment of the Dumka, though the alternating slow-quick contrasts of the 'Dumky' trio are most sensitively handled in this new version. Interested collectors will probably have invested either in CRD's set by the Cohen Trio, or possibly those by the Suks. If not, this Ax-Kim-Ma Trio recording has much to recommend it, including realistic sound.

[A:1]

ELGAR: Symphony 1  $\square$  Pomp and Circumstance March 5

Philharmonia/Haitink
EMI CDC 747 6732 (59m 21s) ® 1983, '88

After a triumphant Prom performance of Elgar I with the BBC Symphony, Haitink turned to the Philharmonia and seemed unable to inspire the players in the same way. That tells in the recording, which hangs fire through a heavily-phrased first movement (motto portentously handled, dream interludes for strings oddly effortful). By the second a sense of performance seeps into detail and balance; Elgar's passing back and

forth of the melodic line between instruments begins to feel more natural – the trio music is brisk but full of fantasy, as airborne as its first movement counterparts are earthbound. The Adagio, if you've adjusted to the dry recording for strings, is as moving as any by virtue of its very restraint, the sensitive highlighting of details in the inner string parts: one registers, without the head being called to rule over the heart, subtle differences in the treatment of returning themes, and the clarinet's cadenzalike musings are delicate beyond belief. That, for me, is enough to keep Haitink beside Boult and Barbirolli. The March, dashed off, presumably, in spare time between more recent projects, boasts a freer sound [A] which rather puts the laconic recording of the Symphony to shame. But, as I've suggested, David Nice one can adapt to that. [B:2/1\*]

ELGAR: Symphony 2 Philharmonia/Sinopoli DG 423 085-2 (65m 23s)

You may be tempted to leave Sinopoli's Elgar well alone on the evidence of the first four bars, where he observes the *nobilmente* but nothing else – not the *vivace*, nor the accelerando in the second bar, the *con ardore* of the third, the decisive 'in gear' of the fourth. Yet Boult, who back in 1944 hurled us



into the fray with miraculous flexibility, with his last thoughts settled for a similar placid grandeur — if nowhere near as slow as Sinopoli's — which gained validity over the span of the movement. And it has to be said that Sinopoli makes sense on his own, utterly consistent, terms. The conflict, and its attendent nerviness of pulse, has flared to life by the climax of the exposition; the pervasive languor behind this spirit of delight proves singularly prone to the summer-garden malaise which tramples it (all the more phantasmagorical for looming details at the heart of the central 'episode'); the return to life is absolutely firm, trumpets invincibly to the fore, and the final giddying leap into space brilliantly etched.

The slow movement, predictably enough, becomes a studied Largo, with every turn of phrase in Elgar's painstaking string writing given room to manoeuvre, especially on the nine-part road to the great nobilmente e semplice where Sinopoli manages to maintain tension over long spans. I'm not at all sure that such measured probing makes any kind of case for the return of all this subject-matter: despite careful registering of every variation, too much appears to have been said first time around and the interest becomes purely cerebral. The same might be said of the finale, with Sinopoli unfolding the generous parade of themes compellingly, yet

hardly disposing the listener to want to hear them again: I found myself impatient for the epilogue. Detail, of course, is legion throughout (one wonders afresh at the way Eigar hurls the demons of his Rondo around the orchestra), illuminating in conjunction with the score – and without, there remains a good deal of insight. If DG had remained at Watford (where Sinopoli's Butterfly was recorded), the sound might have been more warmly sympathetic to offset a certain calculation in the interpretation. In the cold light of Walthamstow, I'm afraid, that calculation remains. [A/B:3/1]

David Nice

FAURE: Requiem □ Pelléas et Mélisande - Suite □ Pavane

Te Kanawa/Milnes/Montréal SO & Ch/Dutoit Decca 421 440-2 (63m 11s) digital (LP: 421 440-1, MC: 421 440-2)

I found this performance of the *Requiem* rather turgid and uninspiring, particularly in the *Kyrie*. I suspect that Dutoit has tried for a gentle, relaxed sound, but the chorus sounds a little too woolly, and the performance seems to express nothing of the joy which the composer found in the *Requiem* texts. Fauré asked for a bright soprano chorus sound, avoiding 'old goats who have never known love', and it sounds as if there may be more mutton than lamb in the Montréal Symphony Chorus. Kiri Te Kanawa gives a serene performance of the *Pie Jesu* and Sherrill Milnes provides the baritone solo at the stately tempi set by Dutoit.

The fill-ups are more interesting. Pelléas et Mélisande, Op.80, arose from a request by Mrs Patrick Campbell for incidental music to Maeterlinck's play. It was put into the form of a suite three years later in 1901, the Sicilienne which forms the third movement taken from his music for Le Bourgeois genilhomme. The suite is charmingly performed although the harp at the outset of the Sicilienne is considerably louder than the pizzicato string opening of the Pavane.

Sicilienne is considerably louder than the pizzicato string opening of the Pavane.

The Pavane Op.50 is performed in a version for orchestra and choir in which the chorus was originally used as 'an off-stage accompaniment to a performance with dancing and elaborate costumes' – as Roger Nichols's excellent insert notes explain. It is effective, although I prefer the 1887 orchestral version without text. It is certainly worth hearing in this less common form. [A/B:1/2]

William McVicker

FAURÉ: Barcarolle 2 in G, Op.41  $\square$  7 in d, Op.90  $\square$  Nocturne 9 in b/B, Op. 97  $\square$  Nocturne 10 in e, Op.99  $\square$  Impromptu 6 in D  $^{\flat}$ , Op.86  $\square$  Barcarolle 12 in E  $^{\flat}$ , Op.106  $\square$  Barcarolle 11 in g, Op.105  $\square$  Mazurka in B  $^{\flat}$ , Op.32  $\square$  Nocturne 11 in  $^{\circ}$ , Op.104:1  $\square$  Nocturne 8 in D  $^{\flat}$ , Op.84:5  $\square$  Valse-caprice 4 in A  $^{\flat}$ , Op.62

Kathryn Stott (pno)
Conifer CDCF 161 (67m 02s) digital

These are superlative performances by a young artist of intrepid vision and magisterial pianistic resource. Miss Stott's first disc of Fauré's piano music for Conifer concentrated primarily, though not exclusively, on the composer's delicately florid early style, whereas Volume 2 is devoted for the most part to a cross-section of later works – music which is often lost in bitter, rather than sweet, reflection. It is to Kathryn Stott's supreme credit that her playing – gloriously vehement and liberated from the text – will surely prompt a reappraisal among even the French themselves of one of their greatest but least

understood composers. Her reading of the eleventh Nocturne, for example (En souvenir de Naomi Lalo) conveys a grief almost too powerful for articulation, and Fauré's disturbingly rapid shifts from violent clamour to brooding introspection are achieved with rare eloquence, force and coherence. Time and again she sees beneath classic contours to a bleak and intense, rather than still centre. And since she is not less successful in the relative insouciance of the Mazurka, I have no hesitation in saying that this is among the most outstanding of all recent piano records. Conifer's sound captures the pianist's immense range of colour and sonority ideally. Miss Stott's next records are of Chopin, Ireland, and Walton, but the continuation of her Fauré series is, quite simply, a necessity.

[A:1\*] Bryce Morrison

HANDEL: Alcina

Augér/Harrhy/Kuhlmann/Kwella/Jones/Davies/Tomlinson/Opera Stage Ch/City of Lond Baroque Sinf/Hickox
EMI CDS 749 7712 (3CDs, 216m 46s) digital

It is a splendid feat to have accommodated the four LPs on three CDs of very generous lengths. About the performance and recording I find little cause to alter what I said in my February 1987 review. The performance overall is a very good one, with some beautiful (if at times uneven) singing, and lovely, clear orchestral detail. Richard Hickox has a tendency to choose tempi that strike me as marginally fast or marginally slow for the pulse of a number, and the recitatives are often over-deliberate. The recording, clear and nicely balanced in other respects, has some less than convincing sound-effects and a curiously varying acoustic: now intimate, now over-resonant. The booklet, now including the second appendix that was omitted from the LP printing, has a very good long essay (by Anthony Hicks); I wish it also had a table of contents with track-numbers and timings. [B:1/2]

Peter Branscombe

HANDEL: Dixit Dominus □ Nisi Dominus □ Sslve Regina

Auger/Dawson/Montague/Nixon/Ainsley/Birchall/Westminter Abbey Ch & Orch/Preston Archiv 423 594-2 (52m 22s)

Dixit Dominus, dating from 1707, is one of Handel's earliest manuscripts; it is as good as anything that he wrote and despite the fact that he was only 22 years of age at the time, he emerges as a fully-fledged composer. Nisi Dominus and Salve Regina also date from the same year and in all these works there are recognisable Handelian musical gestures. Dixit Dominus and Nisi Dominus are scored for soloists, chorus, strings and continuo, whereas Salve Regina is for soprano soloist (Arléen Auger), strings and continuo.

The bright, energetic sound of the choir and orchestra of Westminster Abbey permeates this recording; the clarity, aided by the use of original instruments, is most enjoyable and the contrapuntal lines are crystal clear. Archiv's balance of all the elements is laudable and all this combines to make the recording outstanding. There is some marvel-lous chorus singing, from the exact diction of the opening of *Dixit Dominus* through the powerful accuracy at 'conquassabit' to the control of boys' tone in the fugue subject 'et in secula seculorum'. The solo performances are exemplary. The complementary quality of the sopranos Arléen Auger and Lynne

Dawson is a joy to listen to in 'De torrente in via bibet' from Dixit Dominus. In Nisi Dominus, Diana Montague gives a controlled performance of 'Cum dederit'; John Mark Ainsley gives several excellent performances, and Simon Birchall is the perfect roast-beef bass for 'Sicut sagittae'

Preston excells whether performing as a solo organist or as conductor: there can be few musicians who are as talented or as versatile. This recording comes with a substantial 32-page insert and the packaging coupled with outstanding performances from everybody rates as [A\*:1\*].

William McVicker

HANDEL: Water Music & Royal Fireworks -

RCA Victor SO/Stokowski RCA VD 87817 (44m 53s) recordings from 1961

Hardly more outrageous than Harnoncourt's (?), Stokowski's grand-scaled performances have enormous largesse. Harpsichord tinkles away, like lights atop a spreading conifer; bass-weighted, with batteries of side-drums, colourful and broad in manner, this coupling is beautifully played, full of ideas, rich in excesses. Apparently one Stokowskiism has been edited out: for in the earlier releases a soundtrack of crowd noises and exploding fireworks was fused into the final Menuet. Excellent sound. To be heard. [A:H\*(!)]

Christopher Breunig

HAYDN: Symphony 26 in d, 'Lamentation' □ 52 in C □ 53 in D, 'Imperial'

La Petite Bande/Kuijken

Virgin VC 790 7432 (62m 24s) (LP: VC 790 7431, MC: VC 790 7434)

None of these symphonies figures in the current CD catalogue. They are all three splendid works from that explosive period around 1770 when Haydn was doing things hitherto hardly dreamed of. All the same, the fierceness of the opening movement of 26 as performed here will strike many hearers as too harsh, particularly as the recording presents a rather gruff tutti sound. Even in the slow myoements there is little that is mellow. The most obvious positive features are the care taken with corporate orchestral timbre, the winds now colouring, now standing out from the textures; the harpsichord continuo, which is pleasingly prominent, and the high horns (in 52) and kettledrums (in 53) making an exciting sound. The dryness of the strings and plangency of the oboes are exaggerated at the rather dogged tempo chosen for 26 (ii); in the more richly scored works, particularly in fast movements, there is a pleasing touch of warmth as well as sparkle. An interesting issue rather than an obvious recommendation. [A/B:1/2] Peter Branscombe

HAYDN: Symphonies 80 & 81 Australian CO/Mackerras Conifer CDCF 165 (58m 38s) digital

This excellent issue reminds us again what a gifted interpreter Sir Charles Mackerras is of the Viennese classics. Regular readers may recall my enthusiasm for his recordings with the Prague CO of middle-period and late Mozart symphonies (Nov '88 and June '87 respectively). Now, with the very talented Australian CO making its European recording debut, he presents sterling performances of two major achievements of Haydn in the early 1780s. Neither 80 in D-minor nor 81 in G is at all familiar to the average music-lover it is many years since either was recorded, and they are otherwise absent from the CD catalogue. These spirited and perceptive readings deserve wide circulation. Mackerras takes due care of detail (precise integration of the often startling elements that make up the minor-key work, for instance), yet one always feels a confident grasp of overall shape and direction. Textures are delicately enriched by the continuo harpsichord, winds emerge with apt clarity yet are otherwise properly encouraged to colour the always distinctive timbre. Both works are well placed, with space and time for the lengthy slow movements to unfold, yet productive tension is always there in the background. The Sydney Opera House Concert Hall provides a warm, spacious acoustic in which clarity is never obtained at the cost of natural-sounding balance. [A:1/1\*]

Peter Branscombe

MAHLER: Symphony 1 LSO/Horenstein Unicorn-Kanchana UKCD 2012 (56m 51s) ®

Horenstein's Mahler 1 is utterly unique, and this mid-priced CD is a valuable document. The turbulent sections in (iv) have a harsh, unyielding quality, and generally this is a rather austere, tense, but distinctly authoritative account. Not that it is without flexibility: Horenstein allows himself a quirky rallentando at the climax of (i) (five before 30 – Mahler writes espressivo), and an unmarked rit. over the last two beats. The music also 'melts' at (i)16, at the 'Wayfarer' theme. Note the attention to details such as Mahler's rubato and 'grossem ton' markings at (iv)8, and the unreserved observance of glissandi in various instrumental voices.

The Barking Assembly Hall recording has never sounded better: yet this is one of the lowest-level CD transfers I have encountered. It must be played well up – no longer problems of LP surface noise! – not just for the sound to spring to life, but for the violins to register properly at the beginning of the Scherzo. As with the old LP, a normal setting will make them seem far too recessed, and the right channel balanced awry. I still think the fader wasn't set properly for violins there, and again at Fig. 12 (compare their pp with that at the start of the trio – note also the prominence given first flute at Fig.17!). Yet the balancing gives a rare transparency in (iii): you even hear harps doubling horns, six before 5. Mostly, though, the LSO violins are made to seem unrealistically thin-toned.

It is good to reread the notes by Deryck Cooke, who was Adviser at the sessions.
[B/C:1(H)] Christopher Breunig

MONTEVERDI: Second Vespers for the Feast of Santa Barbara The Sixteen/Christophers Hyperion CDA 66311/2 (2CDs, 109m)

Perhaps only aficionados of the period will know that the Second Vespers for the Feast of Santa Barbara turns out to be Monteverdi's celebrated Vespers of 1610. Graham Dixon, BBC Producer and specialist in the period, has done his research (see Early Music, August '87) and concluded that the Vespers were originally written for the Gonzagas at Mantua, where Santa Barbara was pre-eminent among saints, before being packaged as a Marian setting for more general use. This, then, is a reconstruction of the Vespers as they were likely to have been first heard.

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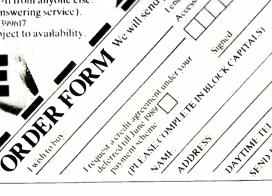






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The differences in Monteverdi's own music are cosmetic; mostly a matter of re-ordering and (in the case of the Sonata sopra Sancta Maria – or rather Sancta Barbara) adaptation. Ave maris stella is a problem – it is included here as an appendix – but the Song of Songs texts Pulchra es and Nigra sum are, as Dixon points out, appropriate for any female saint's feast-day. There are also interpolated antiphonal substitutes, including two short instrumental sonatas possibly by Giovanni Amigone, and Palestrina's motet Gaude Barbara, which sounds conspicuously archiac in these surroundings; and there is a certain amount of chant, of course.

Both performance and recording however, strike me as a little short of my personal ideal. The solo singing, by members of the choir of The Sixteen, sounds a little tame now and again, and Harry Christophers does not always encourage the most positive rhythmic response or the most Italianate open vowel sounds. Furthermore, the image seems at times rather distant. For sheer stature and atmosphere the old Regensburg/Pro Cantione Antiqua recording still sounds well, while John Eliot Gardiner's mid-70s account also bears an impressively atmospheric mark about it, despite its lack of period-style instruments. Andrew Parrott's account for EMI Reflexe, another liturgical reconstruction, though this time thoroughly Marian, is another front-runner on a more intimate scale. All the same, Hyperion's enterprise and Dixon's scholarship deserve praise, and what this account might lack in theatrical swagger it makes up for in sincerity. It does not, by the way, go along with Parrott's contention that a couple of the movements, the great Magnificat included, require downward transposition. [A/B:1/2] Stephen Pettit

MOZART: Divertimento K287 □ Eine kleine Nachtmusik\*

BPO/Karajan

DG 423 610-2 (55m 46s) \*® 1982

Karajan recorded the same coupling back in the 1960s, long since deleted. Then as now he relied on the absolute discipline of his orchestral strings to bring off a highly polished, not to say glossy, performance, and he remains justified in his faith in their unanimity. The Divertimento, the second of two Mozart wrote for Countess Lodron, is a ravishing confection incorporating in its six movements a concertante Andante with variations for violin, which is often played nowadays by more than one fiddler - though there is a strong argument for regarding the entire piece as chamber rather than orchestral music. It makes good sense to play it that way. It is one of the very few works in which Mozart resorted to genuine folk tunes, and it responds to the more relaxed approach of small ensembles, especially to the finely balanced mix of sophistication and rusticity captured by the Academy Chamber Ensemble in their Philips version. Admirers of Karajan's Mozart will not be disappointed though, and nobody will be likely to cavil at the quality of the sound which is clear and bright. [A:1] Kenneth Dommett

MOZART: Horn Concertos K447 & K417 □ Oboe Concerto K314 □ Bassoon Concerto K191

William Purvis (hrn)/Randall Wolfgang (ob)/ Frank Morelli (bsn)/Orpheus CO DG 423 623-2 (68m 41s)

The other two horn concertos, together with the Clarinet Concerto appeared on an earlier

release reviewed in June '88 (p88). They were played by a different soloist, David Jolley. William Purvis is equally exciting. He preserves the instrument's brassy character by employing a broad tone and incisive attack similar to that of this colleague. The fact that the orchestra can draw from its ranks such excellent soloists as the three here is a testimony, if one be needed, of the overall excellence of this American ensemble. Wolfgang's reedy tone, following the Continental with Morelli's smooth and comparatively unemphatic bassoon playing. His is the least exciting performance, but everything is in place and highly polished with an absence of circumsters. gimmickry. The orchestral playing is lively and of unqualified excellence throughout in matters of tone and precision. The cadenzas, supplied by the soloists, are sensible, musical and eminently stylish. Recording quality leaves little to be desired. [A:1]

Kenneth Dommett

MOZART: Le Nozze di Figaro

Bonney/Auger/Argenta/Nafe/Jons/Gimenez/ Egerton/Salomaa/Hagegard/Feller/Florimo/ Drottningholm Court Theatre Orch & Ch/ Östman

Oiseau-Lyre 421 333-2 (3CDs, 186m 28s) (3LPs: 421 333-1, 3MCs: 421 333-4)

Östman's Figaro is a must for the specialist, since it is the first on period instruments and, better still, includes all of the alternative music known to have been written for alternative stagings, in Prague and the 1789 Vienna revival, during Mozart's lifetime. Like the previous Cosi it presents a cast of singers not usually associated with Drottningholm's annual summer performances. On the whole, though, each has been carefully chosen to emulate the strong ensemble qualities which are such an appealing feature of the live performances.

It helps, of course, to have so obviously youthful a pair as Barbara Bonney's Susanna and Petteri Salomaa's Figaro, and aptly more mature Almavivas in Hakan Hagegard and Arleen Auger. Bonney is an unmitigated delight, nimble in recitative, always wearing a smile in her voice, scrupulously musical yet always in character. Her sculptured 'Deh vieni' breathes sensuality in the garden scene, and her encounter with her master in 'Crudel, perche finora' is a masterpiece of sexual teasing.

Salomaa, a newish voice on record, has the lyric weight of a high baritone – fearless and agile in the rising fanfares of 'delle belle turbando il riposo' in 'Non piu andrai' – with the dark colouring of a bass. He may lack that indefinable quality of 'face' which so distinguishes an Italian Figaro such as Taddei or Bruscantini (EMI) and, however articulately he sings the words, he doesn't relish or colour them ideally, but this is a fine performance, perfectly suited to the scale of the ensemble.

Hagegard sounds appropriately aristocratic, at least until his stratagems begin to fall apart, when a hint of Fischer-Dieskau-style hectoring disrupts his well-moulded line (he smudges the flourish at the close of 'Vedro, mentr' io sospiro', but the higher alternative in the CD appendix causes fewer problems).

Of all the principals, Auger's Countess will divide opinion. It goes without saying that the American soprano vocalises the part with supreme confidence and musical insight, and the timbre itself falls comfortably on the ear. But to me she emerges as a cipher, fragile and delicate as a Dresden China figure, ultimately too passive and pallid to engage much sympathy or interest. There may be some histor-

ical justification for such an approach: it was originally conceived as the *prima donna* part but Mozart transferred his affections to Susanna, and allotted the Countess to the *seconda donna*.

Auger's cool perfection will delight some listeners, as will Alicia Nafe's beautifully sung Cherubino. The Argentenian mezzo sounds uncannily like Berganza, though with less of a twinkle in the voice. For me, though, she is too womanly and mature in this company, and I couldn't help wondering whether she might not profitably have swapped parts with Della Jones's sprightly and youthful Marcelina.

The comprimarii have been well chosen, Carlos Feller repeating his success in the Östman Cosi with a characterful Bartolo, and Nancy Argenta delighting the ear with her teasing Barbarina. I would have swapped Francis Egerton's keenly observed Don Curzio with Eduardo Gimenez' bland Basilio, yet this is one of the best balanced casts ever for this much recorded opera.

Which brings me to the conductor and orchestra. In the past Östman has divided opinion over his commitment to historically accurate tempo; here he is highly convincing with his fast, properly walking-paced andantes, and lively allegros. Compare 'Dovo sono' with Haitink's lugubrious tempo and hear which sounds the more natural.

Unfortunately, though, I miss much sense of character in the playing. The natural balance in the orchestra is fine - though the upper strings occasionally sound feeble and scrawny – but he seems afraid of allowing the winds too much prominence and of emphasizing dynamic contrasts. The performance rarely smiles, let alone chuckles. You only have to turn to the great recordings of Figaro

- Kleiber, Gui and Davis - to experience the folle journée in all its humanity and lifeenhancing laughter. Still, of the sets available on CD, this has undoubtedly the freshest cast and there are plenty of other compelling reasons for acquiring it, not least Peter Wadland's admirable production. The voices may be a little forward in relation to the band, but there is a strong flavour of the Drottningholm style here. [A:1\*/2]

**Hugh Canning** 

MOZART: Die Zauberflöte

Bonney/GruberovalSchmid/Coburn/Ziegler/ Lipovsek/Blochwitz/Keller/Scharinger/ Hampson/Salminen/Zurich Mozart Orch & Ch/Harnoncourt

Teldec 8.35766 (2CDs, 143m 43s) (2LPs: 6.35766, 2MCs: 4.35766)

Seefried/Lipp/Loose/Jurinac/Riegler/ Schurhoff/Dermota/Klein/Kunz/London/ Weber/Vienna PO & Singverein/Karajan EMI CHS 769 6312 (2CDs, 129m 18s) (M) (R) 1952

These sets are not the first to squeeze *The Magic Flute* onto 2 CDs but they contrive the feat by dispensing with acres of dialogue. Harnoncourt, predictably, has plenty of surprises up his sleeve in his continuing series of the Mozart operas for Teldec. It is beautifully recorded and boasts a cast of fresh young singers who will doubtless be doing the rounds of the record companies as members of an international Mozart ensemble. Gruberova is the guest artist here, singing her third recorded Queen of Night with that steely, imperious tone which has ensured her domination of the stratospheric staccati in the theatre for the last decade. She has the odd hitch with the rising arpeggio to F in her first aria, but she has sheathed the cutting edge of

her blade-like soprano in the coloratura runs. Wilma Lipp, for Karajan, is neater but not nearly so fierce.

Instrumental detail is Harnoncourt's great strength, making Karajan, even in this, one of his more amiable Mozart recordings, sound very Viennese in the anachronistic sugar-and-whipped-cream manner we are all (well, some of us) reacting against in the

Gardiner-Norrington-Brüggen era.

Karajan/I had a classic Viennese cast, reflecting the strength of the ensemble immediately after the war. Jurinac is a delight as the first Lady, so lovely that I would exchange her for Seefried's note-pecking Pamina: this is not one of the recordings I will want to remember this lovely artist by. But where are her successors today?

In fact, Bonney is the star of the Teldec set It is a beautiful, clean-limbed voice capable of both charming and moving the ear. The voice itself does not quite have the personality of Seefried's, but Bonney creates a rounded and vibrant character, in tune with

Harnoncourt's vivid reading.

She is partnered by Blochwitz's mellifluous Tamino, the best German Mozart tenor since Wunderlich (Böhm/DG), even if as yet he does not colour the words as poetically as the glorious Dermota - a Tamino in the Tauber tradition. Kunz is more characterful a Papageno than young Anton Sharinger; Weber and London are darker, more authorative senior Priests than Salminen and Hampson. Harnoncourt has a better-blending trio of ladies – though Coburn is no Jurinac – and real boys in place of Karajan's female trio of Genii (a superannuated shower who

sound like Papagena as the Old Woman).
So why, ultimately, do I prefer Karajan?
Obviously not for the sound quality, which must needs be described as historic - expect distortion and emaciated strings - and the Master is a little on the humourless side. No, it is Harnoncourt's catastrophic decision to engage a narrator who tells the story between the musical numbers in a horribly patronising 'listen-with-motherish' tone with snatches of dialogue. If you have CD, of course, you can enlist the aid of a programming device. But there are still irritations, such as the omission of the first woodwind entry in 'Bei Mannern' to make way for Papageno's last line in the dialogue. This duet is taken very deliberately, incidentally, as is the Pamina/Papageno duet 'Schnelle Fusse' in the first finale. Harnoncourt is a clod-hopper here. Teldec [A:1/2], **Hugh Canning** EMI [H:1/2].

PHILIPS: Consort Music Parley of Instruments Hyperion CDA66240 (50m 14s)

This disc claims to be of consort music by Peter Philips, the late Elizabethan-comeearly Jacobean composer who emigrated to what is now Belgium in 1590, and whose catholicism – both religious and philosophical - mitigated against an appreciation of his gifts in his native land. Actually, however, the issue includes more by way of testament to Philips's eclecticism; there are arrangements, definitely or possibly by Philips, of music by Cavalieri, by Thomas Morley (perhaps England's most outward-looking composer of the age), by Bassano, and by the Cornish Catholic and landowner Francis Tregian. There is also an enormous set of Divisions for bass viol and virginals by Nicolaus a Kempis on Philips's own Dolorosa Pavan, written while the composer was languishing in prison, suspected of being a Catholic agent.

The music is varied, adventurously inventive, characterful and eloquent, and the Parley of Instruments, who base their per-

formances on a sweet and light-sounding consort of renaissance-style violins rather than one of viols, play it with unerringly stylish expressivity. They ring the changes in instrumentation deftly, using a mix of various species of lute, organ, virginals or, in one Bassano arrangement, simply drums in the continuo department, and giving one work, a Pavan of 1580, with two lutes alone. The recording is intimate and warm, as befits the music's nature; it constitutes nothing less than an essential addition to the early 17thcentury instrumental repertoire on disc. [A:1] Stephen Pettitt

PROKOFIEV: Violin Sonatas 1 & 2 Shlomo Mintz (vln)/Yefim Bronfman (pno) DG 423 575-2 (55m 23s)

Two very fine works are represented here, works which are perhaps less well known than some of Prokofiev's music, by reason of their 'toughness'. But that can be a misleading comment; they also have the magic quality which makes one very reluctant to take the record off. Mintz gives full rein to the wide stylistic scope of both sonatas, from the rapid, hushed scale passages in the first movement of the First Sonata, to the brusque attack of the second movement of the same. Just once or twice I caught myself feeling that Mintz's assurance is not absolute; the sense of the music just happening is occasionally strained. But this does not intrude, and in general he rises admirably to the considerable technical challenges of the music. Slightly more disconcerting is a certain unevenness in the partnership between piano and violin. Bronfman is a very able partner but does not always quite pull his weight, sounding a touch uninvolved. Nevertheless, the musicians clearly empathise, and the result is most

satisfying.

What is basically a quite natural recording, albeit a little harsh but with good ambience, is spoiled by a persistent 17-18kHz whistle of varying level, noticeable on loudspeakers and seriously irritating on headphones, which seems to have been generated at the recording stage; its level changes abruptly at edits, thus showing up exactly where all the edits are. Careless! [B/D:1] Richard Black

**PUCCINI: Madama Butterfly** Freni/Carreras/Berganza/Pons/Laciura/Rydl/ Ambrosian Op Ch/Philharmonia/Sinopoli DG 423 567-2 (3CDs, 154m 14s) (3LPs: 423 567-1, 3MCs: 423 567-4)

One premature glance at the timings prompted scepticism: if Karajan's second Butterfly had so often grounded the drama, what chance would Puccini have with Sinopoli, slower still in Acts 1 and 2 (1), an astonishing five minutes behind his self-indulgent predecessor for the crisis? I was surprised and profoundly disturbed by the results. The outward action is brisk and pungent, with Puccini's vivid scene-setting thundered out in a vigorous, unstinting assault on the fugato; the absurdities of the wedding-guests are rudely caricatured, and the punctuating visits to Cio-Cio San's casa Americana in Act 2 leaven, or vary, the tension of the wait. As for the inner drama, Sinopoli confronts us with a deep and painful consciousness of the wrong inflicted by the unthinking westerner even before it properly begins. Right from Sharpless's directly-voiced warnings, all the great lyric outbursts are underlined with moral and emotional rhetoric, registering Butterfly's total faith with a tragic intensity that is entirely focused, never lush or indiscri-

minately pathtic. 'Vogliateme bene' may feel completely static, but it has an inward glow which plumbs the very depths of the pro-tagonist's devotion, carrying with it a painful prophecy of the outcome. There are plenty of danger-signals, few luxuriant indulgences in the course of the love-duet.

Freni's second recorded Butterfly mirrors her conductor's earnestness by dispensing with girlish traits in the bride-to-be: she arrives on the scene with a full-rounded consciousness. Perhaps the charm has gone which graced the Karajan set, but none of the tonal beauty: still that heroic radiance which makes 'Un bel di' so much part of the characterisation, a high radiance to receive the ridiculous Yamadori. The sense of desolation has deepened to give a terrifying bleakness as she tells Sharpless what her two 'options' might be in the face of desertion. And just before the final scene, where Butterfly is all but crushed, the Philharmonia players take up her misery with appalling aptness. Carreras makes little effort to give Pinkerton the sympathetic touch (Pavarotti's concern with Puccinian nuance made 'Bimba, dagli occhi' so much more interesting); that certainly emanates from Pons in Sharpless's Act 2 interview with Butterfly, taxed though he may be by the peaks of phrases. No-one seems unduly strained by Sinopoli's speeds, unless it be at the very climax of the trio; which is surely because he possesses on a grand scale the true Italianate instinct for rubato. Without the singers, in the intermezzo, the manner begins to solidify, but at no other point in the opera was I aware of any artifice. We shall be lucky if we see a Butterfly in the theatre as brutally theatrical as this.

[A\*:1\*] David Nice

PURCELL: Songs and Dialogues
Emma Kirkby (sop)/David Thomas (bass)/
Anthony Rooley (lute)
Hyperion CDA 66056 (52m 20s) ® 1982

This reissue is extremely welcome. Emma Kirkby and David Thomas are, of course, the perfect pairing for this repertoire, alive to all nuances, be they the naughty ones of 'As Amoret and Thyrsis lay' (from the incidental music for *The Old Batchelour*) or the deliciously sad ones of 'Lost is my quiet for ever'. Just about every emotion and every musical device in Purcell's ample drawer can found in this selection: the obsessive groundbass line of that exercise in self-indulgence, the solo song 'What a sad fate is mine' (sung by Thomas), for instance; the word-painting of the text's musical allusions in the beautiful poem 'In some kind dream'; and the fast ostinato of the bass in 'Why Daphne, why complaining?' at the words 'Oh! how quick my heart is beating'.

To all of these features this team bring their gently understated, immaculately shaped brand of understanding, with Anthony Rooley providing as eloquent a lute continuo as one could wish for. Unhesita-Stephen Pettitt tingly [A:1].

**RACHMANINOV: Complete works for two** pianos, and piano four and six hands Thorson & Thurber/David Gardiner (pnos) Paula PACD 46 (2CDs, 126m 09s)

For anyone who knows and loves Rachmaninov's music, this fine, complete collection for two pianos etc will be indispensable. There are constant reminders of his symphonic works; the 2nd Piano Concerto in the Romance written for the three Skalon sisters to play on one piano; the 1st Symphony in the

Peter Branscombe

two-piano version of the Symphonic Dances that preceded the orchestral version by some two-and-a-half months, and was played by Rachmaninov and Horowitz in 1942. The two-piano version of the famous Prelude in C-sharp-minor, also thought to have been transcribed for a recital with Horowitz, is here too. But more than all this, these pieces offer an insight into the various physical and mental states Rachmaninov found himself in as a result of the straitened circumstances that dictated the course of much of his life. Everywhere the sounds that most immediately influenced him are used to the most colourful effect: the clangour of bells and haunting liturgical chants in the Fantaisie-Tableaux Op.5, the Six Morceaux Op.11, and the Symphonic Dances; Russian themes, particularly in the virtuosic set of variations, Russian Rhapsody, written when Rachmaninov was only 18; impressions of Italy, formulated during his stay there with the Chaliapins, in the Tarantelle of Suite 2 and the tiny Polka Italienne for piano duet.

Thorson and Thurber have captured the essence of Rachmaninov's sound perfectly here, despite the fact that some of the Six Morceaux are more like Poulenc and Grieg in their wit and simplicity, and the Polka Italienne could easily be mistaken for a Liszt Rhapsody. But it is the Suite 2 that best conveys the richness of texture, the ebb and flow of dynamics, and the pendulum swing of emotions so typical of this composer's style. Although the treble of the two Steinway

Although the treble of the two Steinway pianos is rather brittle, it is never tiring on the ear, thanks to the careful positioning of the instruments. There is good ambient space around these, heightening presence and giving moments of thicker texture and dynamics room to expand. [A/B:1\*]

Barbara Jahn

RAVEL: Piano Concerto in G □ Concerto for the Left Hand\* □ Fanfare □ Menuet antique □ Le Tombeau de Couperin

Martha Argerich, \*Michel Béroff (pno)/LSO/Abbado

DG 423 665-2 (64m 32s)

My pulse certainly quickened when I saw that Argerich had made a new recording of the G major Concerto. Whilst I always thought her old one maintained its second place (after Michelangeli's on EMI) I never quite felt that the Berlin Philharmonic was best cast for the work. Recently, Uchida and the ECO under Tate gave a compelling Barbican account very different - and I hope that she too will record it (though I believe EMI have ECO/ Tate with Cécile Ousset). With the LSO in brilliant form under Abbado, this does surpass the older DG, and the finale especially crackles with electricity. The superb recording (St John's) gives rich, deep hues to the orchestral colouring, and to the mid-lower keyboard registers; the syncopations and allure, the glitter of Argerich's solo work – punctuated by bold timpani, and those fabulous shimmering harp insets - conjure a circus of variety in (i), whilst in (ii) Argerich demonstrates that, if anything, her reading of the long opening solo has widened in scope without losing sight of the original simplicity of mood of the 1968 recording. The toccata finale, with its twaddling wind and trumpet interjections, prances and flirts to the credit

of all – leaves the listener agape!

Apparently, because she had heard of damage to Béroff's right hand, Argerich asked that he should make the *Left Hand* coupling. Again the DG team – now in Abbey Road, which makes for less specificity of imaging – do full justice to the sinister palette (pun subliminal!) and the playing is



outstanding. This is, if you like, the dark obverse of the Concerto in G. The true expression rather than play-acting? You can never be sure with Ravel.

A further venue, All Saints Tooting, is used for the purely orchestral scores. A massive tam-tam crash concludes the 1m 42s Fanfure, the march marked 'Wagneramente'. This recently appeared in two piano-duet recordings. Charles Munch said the Tombeau de Couperin was unplayable. And Abbado's elegantly turned account doesn't quite focus the work (at any rate, as I see it) as securely as. say, Dutoit on Decca. He eschews the charm and essential intimacy. There's a tendency for the string sound to get 'screamy' too, which just doesn't fit this music. But extraordinary music-making elsewhere here. [A\*/A:1\*/1/2] Christopher Breunig

SCHUBERT: 8 Symphonies ☐ 'Grand Duo' ☐ Rosamunde Overture COE/Abbado DG 423 651-2 (5CDs, 320m 04s)

Here is a very rewarding set, one that challenges preconceptions and offers rich insights. In number of CDs this issue comes between Marriner (6, including the Newbould orchestration of fascinating sketches), and Böhm and Stein (4, with the normal canon of eight symphonies); 5 CDs is also the size of the Wand set, which includes some of the Rosamunde music. Abbado has had the interesting idea of including in this generously full set Joachim's orchestration of the 'Grand Duo', D812, and the so-called Rosamunde Overture. Agreeable, even intriguing as it is to hear the 'Grand Duo' in this form, the decision is in almost comic contrast to the search for authenticity elsewhere. The first three symphonies are based on the New Schubert Edition scores; for 4-6, 8 and 9 Abbado has conducted from a new text laboriously and lovingly edited from autograph scores and authentic parts by Stefano Mollo, a member of the orchestra. The most obvious corrections – and shocks to the careful listener's system! – come in the middle movements of the 'Great' C major: *the* oboe melody (at bar 25) is startlingly altered from opening quaver to rising semiquavers; and four bars (after 112) in the Scherzo (celeted by Schumann?) are replaced.

These textual details, in themselves important, point towards the care that lies behind the entire project. The orchestral playing is throughout vibrantly fresh and clean-toned,

yet with plenty of warmth and heart. The recordings, made in four halls over an eighteen month period, are all of top quality, with breadth and resonance as well as clarity; textures sound natural, with just the right prominence to the winds. In the early symphonies there is abundantly spirited, alert music-making, with well-chosen tempos, though the occasional rallentando seems to me over-marked. No.5, a particular favourite of mine, is here hard-driven, short on charm (a corrective to Beecham's geniality, some may say). The two major masterpieces are strongly characterized, powerful readings, with no lack of expression, their stature fully conveyed. Overall this is probably the most desirable basic set of Schubert's symphonies, though I would myself opt for Marriner's 6-CD box both for the bonus of the realizations of the sketched works and the unfailingly stylish performances. [A:1]

SCHUBERT: Octet in F, D803 Chilingirian Qt/Andrew Marriner (clt)/Thomas Martin (d-bas)/Felix Warnock (bsn)/ Jonathan Williams (hrn)

EMI CDM 769 8222 (64m 20s) digital

If anything, the excellent transfer to CD has only increased the enthusiasm I expressed in my review of the original LP. The sound is beautifully suited to the performance: clear, full-bodied, smooth, never strident. Indeed I think this goes to the top of the list where CD versions of this wonderful piece are concerned. Terrific value from all points of view. [A:1\*]

Jeremy Siepmann

SCHUBERT: Sonata in a, D385 
Sonata in A, D574 
Fantasie in C, D934

Joseph Swenson (vln)/Jeffrey Kahane (pno)
RCA RD 87823 (71m 37s) (MC: RK 87823)

'Vol.1', it states prominently, and very good news this will be for lovers of Schubert's sadly neglected instrumental music. This first coupling gives very good measure, containing as it does the second of the three sonatas of spring 1816, the A-major Sonata of seventeen months later (published in 1851 as 'Duo'), and the late, great Fantasie, written in December 1827 and first performed in the following month at the violinist Josef Slawjk's concert. This last is a real virtuoso piece, very finely performed here, with poise, brilliance and feeling. Indeed, all three works are finely realized, their contrasting qualities well brought out, with lyricism and also passion. This is a fine partnership, with the two players each eager to give the other the limelight when appropriate, yet direct and unaffected in the more straightforward passages. The recording is well balanced, natural sounding and resonant. We can look forward confidently to Volume 2 with the other three works - and hope it will not be too long in coming. [A:1] Peter Branscombe

SCHUBERT: Piano Sonata in A, D959 ☐ Hungarian Melody in b, D817 ☐ 16 German Dances, D783 ☐ Allegretto in c, D915

Alfred Brendel (pno)

Philips 422 229-2 (56m 15s) (LP: 422 229-1, MC: 422 229-4)

Though Philips brought out a CD of Brendel playing this magnificent sonata less than four years ago, that was a digital remastering of a 1973 LP. Now we have a brand-new version, with graceful, witty and beautifully poised accounts of slighter works, two of them well















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known, the German Dances neglected (though not by Brendel, who included them in his LP set). In the Sonata there is nothing straight-laced, yet the freer touches do not draw attention to themselves: tempi and phrasing alike are felicitous, integral to the structure. The first movement is urgent, compact, by comparison with Berkowitz's recent recording (the latter observes the repeat; Brendel does not); in the Andantino Brendel brings out the poignancy as well as the poetry, and finds an icy terror in the acerbities of the central section. The Scherzo sparkles, its Trio is taken with just the right degree of relaxation. And the final Allegretto is a true consummation. Philips have done Brendel proud, the piano sounding totally natural from ghostly ppp to violent ff, with warm resonance never impeding clarity. [A\*:1\*/1]Peter Branscombe

SCHUMANN: Davidsbündlertänze, Op.6 ☐ Fantasiestücke, Op.12
Murray Perahia (pno)
CBS CD 76202 (58m 23s) ® 1973

SCHUMANN: Etudes Symphoniques, Op.13

Papillons, Op.2

Murray Perahia (pno)

CBS CD 76635 (43m 16s) ® 1976

These two CD transfers of Murray Perahia's Schumann recitals have been beautifully managed and are a necessary reminder of Perahia's quality in such music. His reading of the Davidshündlertänze is of a superfine clarity and elegance; few other young pianists achieve this degree of tonal subtlety and translucence. A truly transcendental though unobtrusive technique erases even the most awkward and mercurial problems, and time and again criticism falls silent in the face of such artistry, such concentrated poetry and wit. Again, in the Fantasiestücke every detail or passing fancy is meticulously observed and, if Perahia can just occasionally seem a little too 'contained' to rise to a really inclusive sense of Schumann's whimsicality, the gentleness and acuteness of his style and idiosyncrasy are beyond reproach. The grave serenity in the Symphonic Études' opening pages or the delicate, ultra-precise entwining of melody and countermelody in the central section of 'In der Nacht' are things to haunt the imagination. Papillons are no less magically lucid and refined; the addition of the five posthumous Studies (placed after the main work) make a further bonus and, all in all, it is as if the spirit of Cortot lived again, albeit in scrupulously modern dress. [A:1]

Bryce Morrison

SCHUMANN: Papillons Op.2 ☐ Sonata Op.11 ☐ Aufschwung Op.12:2 ☐ Romance Op.28:2 ☐ Vogel als Prophet Op.82:7

Earl Wild (pno)
dell'Arte CDDBS 7005 (55m 10s) ® 1985

As no major company seems interested in having Wild, one of the great pianists of our time, under contract, it is as well that there are small firms like dell'Arte to preserve his glorious playing. His acute perception of Schumann's highly subjective music is evident from the Sonata's opening *Poco adagio* bars onwards, though one regrets his omission of the exposition repeat. The 10-minute movement would never seem too long in a performance like this. However, the main point is the exact appropriateness of Wild's nuances of tempo and touch, one consequence of which is that in the outer movements one is seldom aware of the repetitive nature

of the composer's pattern-making. Another consequence is the dreamlike beauty of the Aria

Rather than in sonata form, Schumann expressed himself most poignantly in the mosaic-like structure of works like Papillons, where the pianist shows the keenest poetic insight. Often his interpretations are extremely individual, but departures from convention are usually justified by several playings – and this is a record that one wants to hear repeatedly. Further aspects of Schumannesque Romanticism are just as tellingly demonstrated by Wild in Aufschwung, the F-sharp major Romance, and perhaps above all by the fey, insubstantial Vogel als Prophet.

[A:1\*]

Max Harrison

SHOSTAKOVICH: Symphony 7 'Leningrad' Leningrad PO/Jansons EMI CDC 749 4942 (68m 45s) (LP: EL 749 4941, MC: EL 749 4944)

Jansons and the Leningraders put up a tough, athletic resistance, unequivocal and refreshingly objective by the side of heated predecessors (not necessarily preferable). This is still recognisably the Mravinskynurtured sound, and it helps to make better sense of Shostakovich's string-writing (though this symphony was not among the many Leningrad premieres of the composer's works). It can easily be inflated in the opening pages, so trenchant and firm of purpose here; it can easily sound undernourished or hollow in the framing recitatives of the Adagio, which glow with an almost religious fervour under Jansons. Nor are these strings ever overwhelmed by the brass enemy at combative climaxes - it is surely no recording artifice which lets them be heard against the hordes at Fig.48 of the first movement. The notorious juggernaut progress of the invader (or home-grown tyrant supply your own image if it worries you) needs exactly this even hand from Jansons, unusually free from fussy point-making. Järvi, hoping to make the terror palpable, sped towards the height of battle, a bold way of seeing it, but this is altogether more successful. Control over the usually discursive last movement is most impressive, from an expectant hush that looks forward to the icy Palace Square scene of the Eleventh through a muscular assault to the final disturbing panoply.

Despite the opportunity of better instruments, the Leningrad woodwind sound has not improved since Mravinsky days. The neurasthenic oboist is still with us; Jansons indulges too many bulging phrases in the second movement, and there has been no satisfactory solution to those long lines (the breath-control of Jarvi's SNO players, who also manage a real whispering in the dying embers of the movement, shows how it's done). Engineering might help more to give body in this department; occasional glassiness apart, EMI are learning to master their Oslo venue. It isn't the Chandos sound, but it will serve. [B:1/2]

**SHOSTAKOVICH: Symphony 10** *LPO/Haitink* **Decca 421 353-2** (54m 44s) **®** 1977

SHOSTAKOVICH: Symphony 10 

Ballet Suite 4

SNO/Järvi

Chandos CHAN 8630 (66m 02s) (LP: ABRD 1319, MC: ABTD 1319)

Haitink and the LPO catch very well the

brooding qualities of the opening movement. and there is plenty of energy in the following Allegro. But it is a pity that a marked increase in presence rather destroys the unity of the experience (it was just the same on the analogue LP); and then the tempo for the Allegretto is a little slow for this particular context. Rozhdestevensky (Olympia) takes a very similar pulse, yet the music sounds less dirge-inclined, more optimistic in outlook. In the Andante linked to the final Allegro, Haitink tends to make too obvious that, of the desolate wind solo voices the flute's will resolve as that of the Allegro: which may seem an odd criticism but - again - Rozhdestvensky lays out the barren landscape with such supreme imaginative control that the eruption into clarinet/upper strings comes as a dramatic frisson. (Of course, Haitink's whole approach is more clearly based on the Austro-German symphonic precepts: his Andante is so *orderly* – albeit with one dark low-register surge.) Although it doesn't bowl along with the incredible fire and so-idiomatic Russian spice of the new SNO/Järvi, the finale is very well played; but the reservations make this a little hard to recommend at full price, given the competition. A pity, when there is so much to value. The Decca sound is impressive - I have little doubt that the innocent listener would pick instead the blurry-textured Caird Hall Chandos sound as the ADD. [A/B:2]

Looking at the Chandos timings, I was surprised to see Järvi takes 13m 15s vs Haitink's 12m 23s for the Allegretto (Karajan/II, Ormandy, Mitropoulos took between 10½-11½m). After the rampagings of the 'Stalin' (?) movement, (iii) work well enough. But these inner movements do not have the customary SNO 'charge' until the third section (with tambourine entry) of the Allegretto. Then it becomes very gripping, with beautiful solo violin playing from Andrew Martin, and affecting wind solos (first oboe especially) in the Andante (iv). Comparing the concentration of the two outer movements, I don't feel that (ii) displays their rhythmic, or interpretative focus. Still, the contemporary *Ballet Suite*, ie 1953, compensates with its delicious grand (and silly!) Waltz for slight disappointments in the symphony (judged by the standards of expectation established so often by this team on disc - Shostakovich 7, for instance). **Christopher Breunig** [A/B:1]

SHOSTAKOVICH: Piano Concertos 1 & 2 
The Assault on Beautiful Gorky
Dmitri Alexeev (pno)/Philip Jones (tpt)/ECO/
Maksymiuk

CFP CD-CFP 4547 (47m 58s) ® 1983 (LP: CFP 4547, MC: TC-CFP 4547)

The First Concerto works the better of the two. Somehow the Second seems heavy, especially the first movement. This is not just a question of tempo, which is scarcely slower than in other interpretations I know, but must be related to dynamics too. (The possibility that it is a function of the recording cannot be ruled out either.) Alexeev's solo playing is generally well judged, although occasionally rather louder than the score implies and for no apparent reason, particularly in the quieter, lyrical passages. Maksymiuk integrates the orchestra well and the ECO strings maintain admirable unison in the many fast passages.

many fast passages.

Recorded in St John's, Smith Square (which improves with an audience in), the disc sounds fine when played back quietly, but is phasey at realistic levels – classic 'early digital'.

The addition of the wonderfully silly Assault makes this recording worth having, and at budget price it is a good introduction to the music. [B/C:2] Richard Black

SHOSTAKOVICH: Piano Trio 2 

Cello Sonata, Op.40 Isaac Stern (vln)/Yo-Yo Ma (vlc)/Emmanuel

Ax (pno) CBS CD 44664 (58m 31s)

At every quiet opportunity I have been playing the Largo from the Sonata (1934) which seems to me to exemplify one of those very rare instances where a studio recording (New England Conservatory) has the immediacy and 'timelessness' of a great live performance without the 'real-life' interference of other persons interposed, ie audience members, between you and the platform. Yo-Yo Ma's bowing control is quite phenomenal, as the dynamics sink to softer than a whisper. He is wonderfully supported by the pianoforte (a contrasting, clinically cold instrumental sound) and, if the recording in this fragile introspective movement where wholly typical, there would be a star, too, for technical quality. In louder passages the tendency of the piano to spread around the cello, for the cello to shift leftwards, and for the brain to be thus confused trying to pin down source locations, reduces it to a plain [A]. The Trio was recorded in New York, and the drier Boston acoustic is replaced by a more resonant, but tight-knit staging, with closer mics on Ma and Stern.



Ax writes the programme note, and defines the Sonata finale as 'a sarcastic commentary on the "usual" last movement'. The abrupt ending I don't think quite comes off - I suggest because Ax signposts it with the force of his sforzando – but the Allegro is otherwise admirable. (Incidentally, one of the motifs there is reminiscent of a cello variation in the finale of Prokofiev's Symphonie Concertante.) In (i) Ma is quite magical in the recurrent phrase which floats up to, and away from the highest registers. But do these artists fully master the exposition, I wonder? Either the structure could be tighter, or the composer rambles - I don't know the alternative recordings. Later, there is more 'charge' to the playing, and the vigorous scherzo is exemplary – this music will cause no-one any difficulties

The 1944 Trio is a much more sombre work, bitter in its Largo, and with the finale clearly based on Jewish themes. Ax points out that the full details of the 'final solution' would not have been known to Shostakovich at the time of composition. Be that as it may, Stern, Ma, and Ax build magnificently towards the climax, skilfully avoiding unmusical overstressing, yet gripping in their commitment. Both content and intensity of performance, especially with Stern present, make this an important release. Those who normally shy away from Shostakovich's chamber music must hear it. [A:1\*/1]

Christopher Breunig

TCHAIKOVSKY BALLETS - Act 2 🗆 Swan Lake - 8 Nutcracker movements SNO/Järvi

Chandos CHAN 8556 (74m 57s) (LP: ABRD 1257, MC: ABTD 1257)

Nutcracker – Suite Op.71a □ Swan Lake – excerpts □ Sleeping Beauty – excerpts LSO Dorati/Monteux/Fistoulari Philips 422 265-2 (59m 42s) ® 1963

Rather than the popular Nutcracker Suite. Järvi conducts the complete Act 2 (14 CD parvi conducts the complete Act 2 (14 CD entry points), which includes the Divertissement, 'Waltz of the Flowers', and 'Sugar-Plum Fairy's Dance'. The Swan Lake excerpts include the Act 3 national dances, 'Dance of the Swans' and the Waltz (Acts 2, and 1). Once more, Noel Goodwin puts used that with his healthst pages. into debt with his booklet notes. The performances suggest the rich tradition of, say, the Bolshoi - notwithstanding generally broader tempi, *Nutcracker* is not unlike Rozhdestvensky's (notably in the Arabian Dance). Järvi doesn't go for virtuoso display even the Trepak hasn't the expected brilliant accelerando – but concentrates soberly on rhythmic evenness and clarity. 'Mother on rhythmic evenness and clarity. Gigogne' is high-spirited, but I think generally he misses the Tchaikovskian element of what might be called 'tears at the moment of joy'. There's no doubt that the old Bolshoi set offered a fuller dimension (the Spanish Dance would nicely illustrate the difference). However, the Swan Lake pieces have sharper characterization, with the SNO brass splendid in the resonant Caird Hall acoustic at the end of the first Scene (where Siegfried sees the Swans). And Edwin Paling is outstanding in this very fine account of the Act 2 *Grand* Adagio; not surprisingly, he and the principal cello are in perfect accord.

The Nutcracker, recorded in Henry Wood Hall Glasgow, offers the more analytical sound. An interesting release, perhaps suggesting a certain element of coldness in this conductor's makeup? [A:2/1]

Philips have introduced a £4.99 CD series. 'Miniatures' (look for distinctive covers of Plasticine modelling). Philips are much more inclined to 'favourite moments' compilations than Decca, in their 'Weekend Classics' equivalent; these classic Mercury/Philips Tchaikovsky selections strike me as the pick of the first batch of CDs.

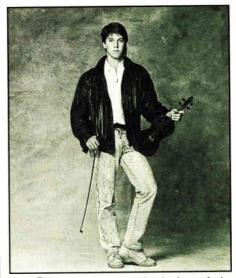
Op.71a is taken from the finest of Dorati's three complete recordings, whilst the Swan Lake comprises one-third of a superb 54m LSO/Monteux selection last on 'Sequenza' Similarly, the Fistoulari items are excerpted from a full LP. Sound quality, in order: tight, small-scale, typical Mercury image and timbres [C]; wide spread, great depth, still [A]; similar to the Monteux, but less bloom, timbres a little strained, winds occasionally ugly, and tuttis thicker [B]. Performances all **Christopher Breunig** 

TCHAIKOVSKY: Violin Concerto/ WIENIAWSKI: Violin Concerto 2 Joshua Bell (vln), Cleveland Orch/Ashkenazy Decca 421 716-2 (58m 39s) (LP: 421 716-1, MC: 421 716-4)

TCHAIKOVSKY: Violin Concerto/PRO-KOFIEV: Violin Concerto 1 Frank Peter Zimmermann (vln)/Berlin PO/ Maazel **EMI CDC 749 7582** (57m 16s) (LP: EL 749 7581, MC: EL 749 7584)

When Joshua Bell made his London debut in the Tchaikovsky concerto, the press stayed

away. Critics were out in force for his Bruch at the Barbican several months later, claws sharpened in the wake of a publicity which sketched a lavish portrait of a Porsche-loving all-American whizz-kid - doubly unfortunate in the light of a performance which Bell himself felt had found him at less than his best. Yet whatever direction his high-pressure, teen-idol career might now take, it will be hard to forget the inspired youthful brilliance of that debut. Even in the six months between the performance and this Cleveland recording, some spontaneity has been lost (how many times must he have played it since then?) – but not too much. This is still how an adolescent might feel the extremes of Tchaikovsky's emotional barometer, given the technique which one can now take for granted with Bell. Listen to the wonderfully improvisatory quality of the opening flourishes in the outer movements – teasing our expectations of the main event, slyly nudging up to the B-flat before careering off into the finale proper. There's the right degree of fantasy and freedom, too, in the rhapsodic presentation of the Allegro moderato's subject matter; the embroideries at the heart of the development have a suave, mulling-over ease which masks the sheer virtuosity of the double-stopping, and emphasizes an old-masterish delight in the sheer



invention of it all. The beginning of the cadenza maintains Ashkenazy's raised temperature, with harmonics nonetheless beautifully clean.
All this, I fear, makes Frank Peter Zim-

merman sound dull indeed, in what comparison is 'yet another recording of the Tchaikovsky'. This is cool, poised musicmaking (the nagging vibrato not much to my taste) which takes best to the muted melancholy of the Canzonetta. Elsewhere there is nothing like Bell's sense of adventure and rediscovery. The second subject of (i) drags indulgently, second time around, and although Zimmermann and Maazel open up the cuts in the last movement observed on the Decca recording, who really wants to hear them when the cleanly-despatched notes lack a sense of fun or sheer animal high spirits? There are no special insights, either, from Maazel, whereas with Ashkenazy you have lugubrious wind colouring, orthodox fashion, at the start of (ii) and delicious elaboration from flute and clarinet later in the movement. Both Berlin and Cleveland violins have a field-day aping the antics of their soloists towards the end of the concerto. The couplings are diverse. Where Bell

continues his vein of old-mastery, exploiting

dark and bright on his Strad in the insubstantial Wieniawski Second Concerto – with splendid gypsy antics in the finale – Zimmermann opts for another Russian D major. His Prokofiev hardly captures the refined luxuriance of the shot-silk opening (no dropping back here to pp at Fig.2), and the passagework sometimes losses steadiness, though the Jewish feel at 13 shows a sudden individuality. The coda of (i) has an ear-tickling feathery, open magic about it – the engineer manages wonderful relations between strings, harp and soloist. Decca find a better soloist/orchestra balance here than in Bell's Bruch/Mendelssohn coupling. [A:1\*/1], Zimmermann [A:2/3].

David Nice

TELEMANN: 12 Sonatas for recorder and basso continuo (1734) – Nos.2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 12 Marijke Miessen (rec)/Bob Van Asperen (positive org)/Glen Wilson (hpd)/Wouter Möller (vlc)

Etcetera KTC 2004-1 (52m 21s) digital

It is highly probable that Telemann would have been perfectly happy for these well-documented sonatas, intended for violin or transverse flute, to have been played on the treble recorder, as here. Marijke Miessen's style of playing has neither the gloriously idiosyncratic, expressive excesses of middleperiod Frans Brüggen nor the awesome, immaculate control and dexterity of Michala Petri, yet in charting a middle ground between these two extremes she produces convincing and affecting performances of these works that establish them all as sound territory for the modern recorder player. Her approach to added ornamentation is not particularly inventive, and the limited dynamic range suggests that she does not shade holes to any great extent. However, the instrument she uses seems (there are no details supplied in the liner notes) to be an old one, that no-one dares to revoice speculating from its low pitch and sometimes explosive upper register - and it has a particularly fine, rounded lower register that allows for fluent, expressive playing. In slower movements, the production of a flat, vibrato-less tone occasionally results in under-pitch intonation, but this is characteristic of this mode of interpretation. The basso continuo is excellently handled throughout and the detailed, closely-recorded sound is generally agreeable, apart from some unnecessary losses of ambience between movements (the beginning of the second movement of Sonata 12 is only just caught in time). Recommended. [B:1/2]

Doug Hammond

THOMSON: The Plow that broke the Plains

☐ Autumn ☐ The River

Ann Mason (hrp)/Los Angeles CO/Marriner

EMI CDS 747 7152 (45m 41s) ® 1976

These scores are typical of Virgil Thomson's eclecticism, and their strong hints of pastiche may explain why he has never won great favour here even though the music falls easily on the ear. The first and last are suites drawn from film scores spawned by the New Deal in 1936 and 1937. Autumn – this is its first recording – is a concertino for harp written for Zabaleta in 1964. For its last three movements Thomson drew on his Frenchified Piano Sonata 2. We may persuade ourselves that there are more significant Thomson scores awaiting introduction to the UK, The Feast of Love, the Blake Songs, the two quartets and the Second Symphony for inst-

ance, but these are attractive, cleverly scored and contain many a tune made familiar by Copland and others. Immaculate under Marriner's incisive direction, they sound as rich as butter. [A:1] Kenneth Dommett

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: Symphony 5 □ Concerto for 2 Pianos Richard Markham, Kenneth Broadway (pnos)/RPO/Menuhin Virgin VC 790 7332 (68m 37s) (LP: VC 790 7331, MC: VC 790 7334)

Menuhin makes the Symphony's first-movement curiously static, especially the central Allegro section; and this emerges very clearly from comparison with another recent recording – by Bryden Thomson with the LSO (Chandos) – where every note tingles with life, even when the music is at its slowest and most quiet. There is good playing here from the RPO, and this is a respectable performance, but it is not shaped with Thomson's degree of understanding. Parts of the Romanza, from Fig.8 onwards, are best, and the ending is most beautiful. Again, the finale suffers from comparison with Thomson (or older recordings by Boult), its diverse yet closely-knit events simply not being characterised with enough decision.

Due to an unfortunate choice of soloist for its 1933 première, the original form of Vaughan Williams's Piano Concerto was deemed unplayable. Several superior performers have since proved otherwise. But in 1946, with the help of Joseph Cooper, he turned it into a work for two pianos, at the same time substantially recomposing the finale. In general the second piano adds nothing essential, even if it makes it easier for the keyboard contributions to the Concerto's dialogue to come through. In either version, this is a surprising work for Vaughan Wilits piano writing influenced by the Bach-Busoni transcriptions, its astringent outer movements sometimes looking forward to Symphony 4. The performance is a vigorous one, though not always shaped firmly Max Harrison enough. [A:2]

VIVALDI: Concertos for cello in d, RV405 □ in c, RV401 □ in B b, RV423 □ in C, RV399 □ Largo in d, RV538 □ Concerto for cello and bassoon in e, RV409

Ofra Harnoy (vlc)/James McKay (bsn)/ Toronto CO/Paul Robinson RCA RD 87774 (53m 53s)

Ofra Harnoy is an Israeli cellist who studied with her father and with William Pleeth in London, then later with the Soviet émigré Vladimir Orloff in Toronto. She has a very strong musical personality, if of a rather traditional kind, which emerges with particular clarity in the Concerto with bassoon. Her tone is rich, with well-varied rubato, and her response to Vivaldi's music is extremely warm and free.

In these performances, the supporting chamber orchestra is very much reduced to the role of subsidiary accompanist. The recording considerably develops this; soloist(s) and orchestra almost sound as though they have been recorded in different acoustic settings (separate rooms, even). This disturbs me as a listener, although in one sense it is all consistent. But with such a committed soloist, a less artificial combination would have worked just as well, and such prominent sounding of the solo lines cannot have been a part of the composer's conception. James McKay, incidentally, proves to be a highly sensitive duettist, who should,

perhaps, begin to record the wonderful concertos which Vivaldi composed for solo bassoon. [B:2] Stephen Daw

VIVALDI: The Four Seasons □ Concerto for three violins in F, RV551 □ Concerto for four violins in b, RV580
Salvatore Accardo (vln)/Solisti di Napoli
Philips 442 065-2 (63m 57s)

This disc has the subtitle 'Homage to Stradivarius', and was made in connection with special concerts in Cremona in September 1987 in which Accardo played a different Stradivarius violin in each concerto; these are usefully described and one well illustrated in the documentation.

Unfortunately, the recording has been allowed to acquire such a warm acoustical 'halo' that it is quite difficult to distinguish the differences in sound between the violins, even in the hands of the expressive Accardo. I do not recall having heard this Naples group before, and they sound just a little less able than their usual Roman and Venetian rivals today. Some of the treatment accorded to Vivaldi strikes me as nothing short of sentimental (especially in *l'estate*). [B:2/1]

Stephen Daw

**WEILL: Songs** *Ute Lemper/RIAS Berlin Cham Ens/Mauceri* **Decca 425 204-2** (50m 17s) (LP: 425 204-1, MC: 425 204-4)

Phenomenal the Lemper vocal equipment may not be, but governed by a shining intelligence and a strong sense of musical line it wears well through this selective appraisal of the German, French, and American Weill. In one sense an appetizer for Decca's collaboration with the Weill Foundation – they hope to record all the stage works over the next few years – it also provides in miniature the kind of showcase which brought Lemper to the attention of the composer's watchful trustees in the first place. I can well imagine her holding audiences captive through those two-hour Leider-abends, so beguilingly does she slip from one vocal characterisation to another. The Dreigroschenoper threesome is a good case in point - a poignant Salomon-Song, hauntingly varied down to the whisper of the last verse, falls between a leering, guttural Moritat and the unforgettable Ballade von der Sexuellen Horigkeit, with Lemper managing to invest a serpentine legato with grins, grimaces, disgust, indifference. Nannas Lied has the kind of point any classical singer might envy, rising to great heights in the third refrain. Generally, Lemper uses the cutting high chest-voice of her Musicals training discriminately and to dramatic ends, though I do find the song from One Touch of Venus too shrill: with a lack of words to point, one misses the full operatic apparatus, of, say, Teresa Stratas in this

John Mauceri – a shaping influence, Lemper maintains, in her approach, and one can believe it – prefers slow tempi to bring out with total clarity the variety of Weill's original scoring, with a superb tension between the controlled vocal line of 'Denn wie man sich bettet' and the hard-hitting accompaniment. Let's hope, too, that the sepia touch of the recording persists for *The Threepenny Opera* (next in the series). As for Lemper, her combination of skilful phrasing and interpretative detail will doubtless bear constant re-playing, which is more than can be said for the majority of Weill's exponents in the past. [A:1]







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### COLLECTIONS

PREVIN AND THE LSO

SHOSTAKOVICH: Symphony 5/RACH-MANINOV: The Rock RCA GD 86801 ® 1966-7

WALTON: Symphony 1/VAUGHAN WIL-LIAMS: The Wasps – overture RCA GD 87830 ® 1967, '71

RCA have been slow to transfer these fine recordings to CD. They exceed technical expectations, I think. Previn made later versions of the symphonies, neither surpassing these mid-priced reissues (though his superb EMI Wasps overture was superior: less suggestive of the Sorcerer's Apprentice). Indeed, the Walton and Shostakovich might well be cited as Previn's finest recorded work with the LSO. In the second movement of the Shostakovich 5 the approach is rather balletic (the Chicago remake was weightier, more isymphonic'), and the leader's solo arguably is allowed too much prominence (though he – Georgiadis? – is cleaner than his Chicago counterpart). But the finale is brilliantly executed here, and the atmospheric slow music scores consistently over the Chicago performance.

In the Walton (which surprised critics when it so obviously excelled over the contemporary Sargent/New Philharmonia reading on EMI), the closer balances, the cutting edge of the LSO's horn section, the attack of the timpanist, all combine to create a scherzo even more 'electric' than in the more modern-sounding Slatkin/LPO rival, on Virgin Classics. The coda is dizzying! There is greater depth in Slatkin's Andante, and his more solid overall reading better masks the schism between (i)-(iii) and (iv). But I cannot imagine any Waltonian able to forgo either of these recordings. The RCAs were engineered at Kingsway Hall – in its way the Walton almost merits the 'star' of its analogue original. [A:1/1\*]

Christopher Breunig

MY SPIRIT HATH REJOICED Canticles by Noble, Howells, Murrill, Harwood, Darke, Sumsion & Dyson Christopher Dearnley (org)/St Paul's CathCh/ Scott Hyperion CDA 66305 (60m 52s)

This is a collection of well-known Anglican Evening Services. Each set comprises a Magnificat and a Nunc Dimittis and each of these canticles has a Gloria. Howell's 'Gloucester' service was written for Gloucester Cathedral Choir in 1946. It was written with large spaces in mind and to compensate the harmonies are relatively slow-moving. The opening melodic lines are written to dovetail into each other in the most wonderful manner and the long reverberation-time emphasises this to glo-rious effect. Murrill's Evening Service in E fares less well. Scott has rightly chosen to slow the music to avoid the ugly overlap of harmonies, although this is at the expense of the rhythmic interest, particularly in the Gloria of the Nunc Dimittis. One or two of the pieces I found to be pedestrian compositions, but there are some beautiful works recorded here. The choir produce some strong vocal sounds and well-shaped phrases which are demanded by the acoustic. Scott's control of the music is first-class.

There can be few recording engineers who relish working in the vast acoustic of St Paul's Cathedral. With layer upon layer of sound swimming around in the dome the listener's

attention can soon become distracted. The tempi have to be carefully judged to avoid harmonic mishaps and the microphone positions close enough to pick up detail without leaving the organ sounding too distant. Hyperion and Scott have succeeded in getting these things right. The results are not quite perfect, but then I suppose that realistically they couldn't be. The end of Harwood's A-flat Canticles coincides with the striking of the bells at St Paul's. Some quick thinking by the engineers has provided the most evoca-tive, entrancing effect, with the sound of the bells mingling with the reverberation; these background sounds have been run into Darke's Magnificat in the most tasteful man-William McVicker ner. [A:1]

GREENSLEEVES - 22 Works for recorder by various composers

Michala Petri (recs)/David Petri (vlc)/Hanne Petri (hpd)

Philips 420 897-2 (71m 38s) (R) 1981, '82

This amalgam of 2 LPs offers both good value and an extremely exhilarating account of Michala Petri's amazing virtuosity and artis-try. As a compilation of encore-type pieces (with which this artist does not like primarily to be associated), it is very much a disc to be dipped into rather than taken at one sitting: Henriques's Dance of the Midges, Schubert's Bee, and Rimsky-Korakov's Flight of the Bumble-bee are a veritable hive of activity, but they set the brain buzzing as they fly past with alarming urgency. Corelli's La Folia, at 9½m, is this disc's most substantial piece, and it is only here that we have time to catch a glimpse of the true musicality and elegance behind the Petri Trio's performances. Yet this 'Silverline' CD would be an excellent introduction to anyone new to Michala Petri's skills, and it is mostly very well recorded in crisp, sharply focused sound. [A:1'

Barbara Jahn

THE QUIRISTERS OF WINCHESTER COLLEGE Music by Mozart, Schubert, Mendelssohn & Brahms Robert Bottone (pno)/Winchester College

Quiristers/Smith

Meridian CDE 84162 (59m 45s)

I was surprised by the high quality of the sound from the Winchester Ouiristers. There is some excellent control of tone and dynamics, and in general their intonation and German pronunciation are very good. It is refreshing to hear boys making a properly-produced sound (in a dry acoustic) rather than the contorted vocal sounds and hoots one generally associates with school choirs. Julian Smith is to be complimented on the professionalism of his Quiristers.

The music is mostly a collection of Vienna Boys' Choir-type miniatures totalling 21 tracks, the most substantial being an excerpt from The Magic Flute. Schubert's The Lord is my shepherd Op.132 and Gott in dem Natur Op.133 are also included, although the singing sounds a little tired in this latter piece. There are some clipped phrases in Brahms's attractive 'Mein Mädel hat einen Rosenmund' whilst the intonation is rock-steady in his highly chromatic 'Märzenacht' Op. 14:12. There are five works in all on this disc by Brahms, of which 'Vergebliches Ständchen' Op. 49/4 is treated to a vigorous performance.

There are three operatic extracts: two from

The Magic Flute and 'You spotted snakes' from Mendelssohn's A Midsummer-Night's Dream. The first extract from The Magic

Flute is the quintet beginning where Papageno (sung by Julian Smith) sings with sealed lips 'Hm, hm, hm' and the Queen sends her pardon to unseal them. Tamino is sung by the sixteen-year-old tenor Aaron Nouban who, despite sounding a trifle immature vocally, gives a good account of himself and promises great things in the future. This extract is sung in English, although the welcome to Sarastro's kingdom 'Seid uns zum zweitenmal willkommen' is sung in German. The insert gives the text in German and English translations for all the songs, but contains no information about the music. Robert Bottone accompanies sensitively on the piano which occasionally sounds over-William McVicker rich. [A/B:1/2]

FRENCH CHORAL MUSIC Music by Fauré, Duruflé, Villette, Poulenc, Debussy, Saint-Saëns, Ravel Elizabeth Lane (sop)/Richard Egarr, Nicholas White (org)/Clare College Cambridge Ch/

Meridian CDE 84153 (61m 01s)

This is a collection of short French choral pieces; most are about two minutes in length and the longest track is Fauré's Cantique de Jean Racine. Other works include Messe Basse by the same composer, Durufle's Quatre Motets sur des thèmes Grégoriens, Poulenc's Quatre Motets pour le temps de Noël and a set of Trois Chansons by both Debussy and Ravel.

Several of the pieces are for combinations of higher voices: these include Fauré's Messe Basse, Ave verum, Tantum ergo, Maria, mater gratiæ and Durusse's Tota pulchra es. Pierre Villette is represented by his Hymne à la Vierge. This piece is full of those rich chromatic harmonies that all Gallic enthu-siasts relish. Poulenc's Christmas pieces are harmonically rather sober by that composer's standards, although there are the unmistakable harmonic shifts which characterize his

compositions. Although all these works are sung by the choir of Clare College Cambridge the recordings were made in 1984 and 1988, and hence there are effectively two choirs at work here. Of the two I prefer the 1984 choir, as there are some high vowels which sound rather pinched in the 1988 group. There are also some sopranos in this latter choir who spoil the ensemble with late attacks on the notes, and the 1984 tenors are discernibly better than their 1988 counterparts. The sound of the choirs is quite attractive however, although none of the soloists is outstanding. The performances are rather polite and I feel that this music requires a more flamboyant approach, especially in the second of the three pieces by Debussy. Having said that, Ravel's *Trois Chansons* are executed with some panache, and it is clear that Timothy Brown has these performers well disciplined. I would have preferred something more substantial on this recording, such as the Poulenc *Messe*, and found the shorter pieces by Fauré uninteresting. [A/B:1]

VIRTUOSO ITALIAN VOCAL MUSIC Catherine Bott (sop)/New Lond Consort/ Oiseau-Lyre 417 260-2 (69m 16s)

Catherine Bott is just about perfect for the late 16th and early 17th-century Italian vocal repertoire. Her voice, though boyish in its tone and in its lack of vibrato, is also highly expressive, and in several of these pieces the strength of her ardour is made all the more

William McVicker

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effective by the intimacy of the scale of these readings. She has, too, a deceptively easy way with the lavish ornaments of the style, and one consequence of that is that however elaborate the *cascate* or *passagi* may be they always seem to fit in with the expressive intent of the piece.

Needless to say, the composers represented here include Monteverdi, though he is represented by only two pieces, Exulta filia Sion and Laudate Dominum. Slightly more prominent are the names of Giulio Caccini and Frescobaldi, with three pieces each. Francesco Rasi and Biagio Marini are both also represented by a pair, while the comprehensiveness of the survey means that Cavalieri, Antonio Archilei, Luzzaschi, Marco da Gagliano, Steffano Bernardi, Luigi Rossi, Francesca Caccini (Giulio's elder daughter) and Giacomo Carissimi (an impassioned Lament on the death of Mary Stuart which survives in a manuscript source in the Bodleian Library) all get a look in, as do Cipriano da Rore and Girolamo dalla Casa, by virtue of the latter's arrangement of the former's Petrarch setting Beato me direi.

The names are varied, and so are the songs, though they all reflect the new preoccupation of the era with the inflexions of speech. Indeed every piece here is a product of a musical revolution no less significant than, say, the one which Schoenberg and others wrought at the beginning of our own century. Such music demands the kind of freshness Bott brings to it, while the changes which are rung from song to song in the continuo and obbligato departments by the five players of the New London Consort are always effective. [A:1]

Stephen Pettitt

FREDERICA VON STADE - ARIAS HAYDN: La Fedelta Premiata | 11 Mondo della Luna/MOZART: Figaro | Don Giovanni | La Clemenza di Tito/ROSSINI: The Barber of Seville | Otello | La Cenerentola

Frederica von Stade (sop)/Lausanne CO/ Dorati/Rotterdam PO/de Waart Philips 420 084-2 (69m 12s) ® 1975, '77

There is no more intensely personal manifestation of music than the human voice. My own preference is for those which sound most like a natural extension of the speaking voice: clear, direct, not too evidently trained (Emma Kirkby, Elly Ameling, Margaret Ritchie). What stands between me and von Stade's high degree of musicianship in the Haydn extracts here is the sheer audibility of technique in her singing. The vibrato, while excellently controlled and sensitively varied, seems to me too often to be applied from without. And the overall quality of tone, like that of many tenors, has me sympathetically constricting my throat. My awareness of 'the voice' keeps me at a distance from the music, which is of high quality but falls considerably short of Haydn at his greatest. My reactions to the Figaro extracts are altogether different. Here, of course, the music, due partly to its inseparability from the character being portrayed, is of a greatness whose apparent ease only enhances its immediacy. This is the art which conceals art. And here, accordingly, the barriers which I felt in the Haydn vanish. The phrasing, the subtlety of inflection, the expressive uses of silence and breath-taking are so impeccably musical, and the effect so natural, that one is drawn straight into the music itself. The excerpt from La Clemenza di Tito is less convincing to me, both as music and as a performance, and the almost impossible range takes von Stade uncomfortably close to the limits of her

tessitura. In the Rossini, however, I capitulate to her altogether. The singer and the song become one. [A:1/2] Jeremy Seipmann

# ARCHIV GALLERIA Johann Sebastian Bash Violinkonzerte • Violin Concertos Carcertos pour violon EW V 1011 - 1013 Intonin Vivaldi: Concerto per viola d'amore Eduard Melkus • Spiros fautos • Koarnil Ragossnig Capella Academica Wien

Archiv's splendid new 'Galleria' series introduces to the CD catalogue a number of recent recordings that have provided – and in many instances still provide – signposts along the road to mastery of the musical baroque.

The quiet virtues of Albinoni's Oboe concertos find an ideal interpreter in Heinz Holliger, whose princely playing is comfortably backed by the modern-instrument Camerata Bern (427 111-2, 57m 15s, ® 1979). Not the very last word in authentic timbre, perhaps, but a beautifully crafted sound nonetheless. [A/B:1] More concertos with Holliger, this time by Lebrun (1752-1790), Dittersdorf, and the much-maligned Salieri (a triple concerto for violin, oboe, cello and strings) are all given superb performances, each work boasting a certain degree of thematic distinctiveness. The Camerata Bern is directed by Thomas Furi and the digital sourd is excellent (427 125-2, 59m 59s, ® 1980-8). [A:1]

The first of a J S Bach batch couples the Second and Third Orchestral Suites with the Triple Concerto (flute, violin & harpsichord), all played by the English Concert under Pinnock (427 112-2, 59m 51s, 

R 1979-84). Here forces and instruments fit modern conceptions of authenticity, the Triple providing a particularly good example of Pinnock's keenly rhythmic style. I'd half hoped that DG would re-instate Karl Richter's trenchant 1962 readings (of the Suites), but most readers would probably opt for the performances under review. [A/B:1]

Richter does in fact perform on three of the Bach discs, including a typically magisterial organ recital (427-127-2, 50m 18s, ® 1980 [A/B:1], and a disc of Flute sonatas with Aurèle Nicole (427 113-2, 64m 16s, ® 1975) that adds the solo Partita BWV 1013 to BWV 1030-2 and 1020. Utter consistency and fluent technique combine for what is in my view the best available recording of these works. [A:1]

Richter also directs three sacred Cantatas (427 115-2, 63m 48s, ® 1972-5): an uptempo, celebratory Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen, BWV 51, with Mathis (again, my preferred CD of the piece), plus strongly etched versions of Wer nur den lieben Gott lasst walten, BWV 95, and Gelobet sei der Herr, mein Gott. BWV 129. Singers in addition to Mathis are Reynolds, Schreier and Fischer-Dieskau, and Richter's Munich Bach players and choir offer resilient, clean-limbed support. [A/B:1]

I couldn't, in all honesty, raise much enthusiasm for Eduard Melkus's worthy but musically rather off-hand accounts of the Violin Concertos – plus Vivaldi RV540 (427 114-2, 56m 58s, ® 1971/7) – in spite of the Capella Academica Wien's rigorous support of the soloist and good sound. The Harnon-courts on mid-price Teldec are far more characterful. [B:2/3]

One might offer a like recommendation in the case of the Coffee and Peasant Cantatas under Schreier (427 116-2, 60m 41s, ® 1976) which although well sung – Mathis, Schreier and Adam – and securely played, is frequently dogged by sluggish tempi and foursquare rhythms; although a grumpy, emphatic tread sounds appropriate for the sourly admonishing father in the Coffee's opening number. Again, Harnoncourt (Teldec, midprice) certainly offers more fun. [A/B:2]

Harnoncourt, this time at full price, is light and ethereal in the Motets BWV225-9 (I'm thinking of Singet dem Herrn in particular), although Hanns-Martin Schneidt's musicianly Archiv performances – Regensburger Domspätzen/Capella Academica – are well worth owning (427 117-2, 66m 04s, ® 1974). The sound here is cleanly defined. [A/B:1/2]

It's back to the future with the Musica Antiqua Köln, as animated a bunch of original instrumentalists as you'll find anywhere. 1980 (ADD) performances of instrumental works by **Buxtehude** and **Pachelbel** are deft, linear and speedily despatched. Anyone with an ear for the inevitable *Canon and Gigue* can safely expect more of the same: there's a canon, two chaconnes and a set of variations; and it all sounds splendid (427 118-2, 63m 09s, R) 1981). [A:1]

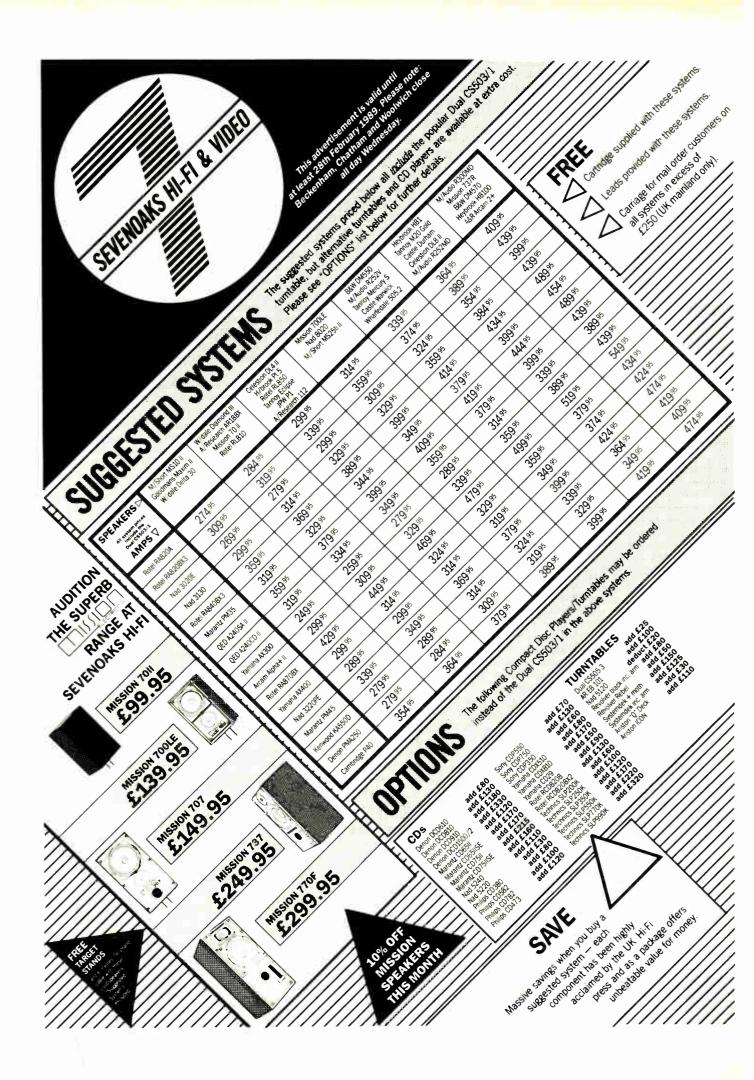
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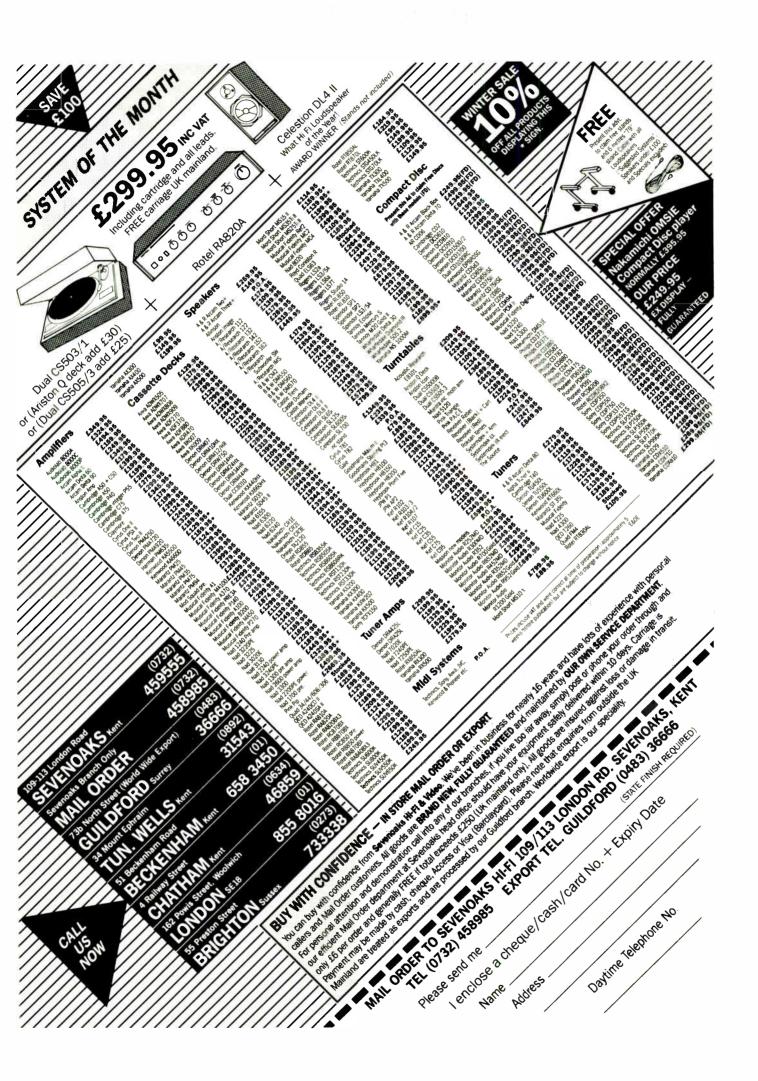
So does François Couperin's Concerts Royaux (Brandis, Holliger, Andre & Christiane Nicolet, Ulsamer, Sax, Jaccottet on 427 119-2, 55m 05s, ® 1976), a decorative evocation of Louis XIV elegance and a pleasing juxtaposition of 25 dance movements in four concertos. [A:1] By way of a contrast, Karl Richter directs the English Chamber Orchestra in a ceremonious, crisply pointed version of Handel's Royal Firework's Music, coupled with the Concerti a due core 2 and 3 (427 121-2, 52m 05s, ® 1973). This won't please followers of Messrs Hogwood, Pinnock et al, but I love it . . . [A/B:1/2]

followers of Messrs Hogwood, . . . . . but I love it . . . [A/B:1/2] Neighing horses, yelping hounds and the crunch of carriage wheels on gravel greet sections of Leopold Mozart's spirited but rather monotonous Musical Sleigh-ride. Eduard Melkus's own ensemble brings a great sense of fun to this music, as they also do the Peasant Wedding (with sundry vocal interjections) and Sinfonia burlesca. This disc (427 122-2, 65m 17s, ® 1975-6) additionally includes a group of ten pleasant dances by Josef Starzer (1726-1787). [A:1]

Pergolesi's affecting Stabat Mater has achieved comparative popularity, largely due to its beautiful opening duet ('Stabat Mater dolorosa'). Freni and Berganza grace this attractive score with some exceptionally fine singing, and Ettore Gracis directs the Solisti dell'orchestra 'Scarlatti' Naples, in this and three Alessandro Scarlatti Concerti grossi (1, 3 and 5) with much sensitivity. The sound is good, if a little on the thin side. (427 123-2, 69m 02s, ® 1967-1972). [B:1]

Purcell is represented by his *Te Deum* and *Jubilate* in D, and four Anthems – memorable music that rests on and around the rhythm of the verbal texts. Because of this, pace and metre change quite regularly; yet such are the skills of the Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, the English Concert, Trevor Pinnock and Simon Preston that one soon gains an appreciation of these entrancing sequences. The sound could hardly be improved on (427 124-2, 67m 30s, (§) 1981). [A:1]





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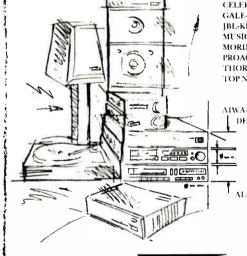
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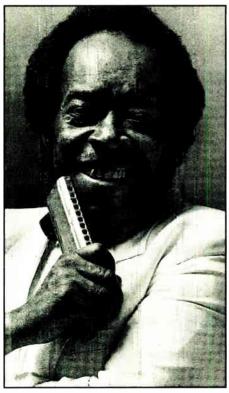
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JERRY JEFF WALKER: GYPSY SONGMAN Line/TM Records/PRT SDCD 9.00419 71m 49s) CD

Alongside Rhino Records from the USA and our own Demon/Edsel empire, Line Records of Germany has been supplying some of the tastiest special-interest material a Goldmine or Record Collector reader could crave. Like Rhino and Demon, Line releases both brandnew material and choice reissues, and their 300-plus catalogue is finally available in the UK. Imported by TM Records and distributed by PRT, these can now be ordered by any shop in the land without the lazy staff having to resort to anything more than an inland phonecall. The selection covers everything from pub rock to blues, and TM reckons that they'll cut through the catalogue with a half-dozen titles every month.



James Cotton

The new titles show just what a delightfully mixed bag is on offer. For those who pray for a Dafos Vol 2, Gramophone is a CD's worth of unearthly sounds on custom-made instruments with the kind of sound quality you wish would be applied to more accessible works. The material sounds ethnic without any clear indication of the roots, but Trivial Pursuers

should note the participation of an ex-member of Van de Graaf Generator. [A\*:1/2] Live From Antone's - What a way to celebrate a birthday!: Snooky Prior, James Cotton, Sunnyland Slim, Albert Collins, Buddy Guy, Otis Rush and others make this homage to Austin, Texas' premier blues venue a one-disc Who's Who of current practitioners. The ambience let's you know it's live, and if you've ever been to a US blues club, you'll even smell the beer. [A:I] Jerry Jeff Walker is the cult composer of the modern classic 'Mr Bojangles'; Gypsy Songman looks back on his career with his first release since 1982's Cowjazz. It's a tidying-up process, committing to CD a host of new songs and rerecordings of many favourites, not unlike Chris Rea, Marillion and Carly Simon offering remakes of their hits or live versions instead of traditional 'Best Of' packages. Walker is a prime example of the traditional singer-songwriter, less off-the-wall than Townes Van Zandt and more country-ish than early James Taylor. One to cherish.

On the reissue/archive side, Line spreads its net just as wide. The second Elvin Bishop release in four months, this party-down barband session is dated '81, but it was exclusive to Germany so it's new to us. The title track is an absolute delight, but watch our for 'Drunk' and 'Good Good Rockin'', too. [A/B:1] Former pub rocker Ian Gomm's 1979 solo is dripping with the kind of melodies and hooks which made Brinsley Schwartz so irresistible. From the least successful/famous of that band's alumni but worthy of reassessment. [A:1] Discreet Repeat offers 21 songs spanning Ian Matthews' career, a delicious selection including some unexpected covers like the Youngbloods' 'Darkness, Darkness' and the Crystals' Da Doo Ron Ron'. Gentle easy listening – a joy and a display of the best, most catholic taste in material. [A:1]

Ken Kessler

### RICK ASTLEY: HOLD ME IN YOUR ARMS PWL PD 71932 (39m 00s) CD

Everybody has said it, he's got a good voice but the material sucks. Well who am I to disagree? The songs on this album are uninspired, cheaply produced twaddle, barring the old Holland-Whitfield classic 'Ain't Too Proud to Beg'. The Stock Aitken and Waterman sound has flogged itself to death and on track after track it grates terribly. Rick wrote about half the album himself, which is no mean achievement, but his songs sound like their songs. Unlike so many of SAW's flock, Rick Astley actually sells records because of his voice, not because of looks, material, charisma or scandalous lifestyle. If his songs sounded as mature as his voice, he would be an artist to reckon with. This, however, is appalling. [C:3]

CARLOS BARBOSA-LIMA AND SHARON ISBIN, GUITARS: RHAPSODY IN BLUE/WEST SIDE STORY

Concord Concerto CC 2012 from New Note Distribution

This is a long way from the recording scene of 1935 when, in the full UK Columbia catalogue, there were only two versions of 'Rhapsody in Blue': one on cinema organ and the other by Eddie Peabody on banjo! Even Gershwin, who must often have played it solo as his party piece, might have felt that a banjo scarcely did justice to his major work. Yet he would surely have applauded this two-guitar version, so cleverly do the arrangement and

the players' tone colours 'suggest' the full orchestration. It is far better than Gershwin purists would expect, and in a full version (18m 14s) there is no skipping of the Rhapsody's tricky bits. Similarly, Bernstein should be tolerant of the eight West Side Story themes; the galvanic rhythms of 'America' come off particularly well. For good measure, the album also has three Gershwin lollipops, including the seldom-heard 'Jasbo Brown' item from the opening of Porgy and Bess. Needless to say, the technique of the guitarists, whoever is taking the lead, is superb, and the recording of an instrument that causes problems (those sliding fingers!) has the benefit of Mitsubishi X-80 digital equipment, and it all sounds good to me.[A:1]

**Denis Argent** 

JEAN BLANCHARD: MUSIQUES POUR CORNEMOUSES
Ocora CD C 559044 (74m 30s) (distributed by Harmonia Mundi)

Ocora continue to be one of the best of the ethnic music labels, and on this CD, over 70 minutes of music can't be a bad deal for starters. This is part of their French series, and features bagpipe music from the Berry, Bourbonnais, Nivernais, Morvan and Basse-Auvergne regions. The bagpipe may be best known to people of these isles as an instrument of Scotland or Ireland, but the instrument crops up all over the place, and in this case, throughout France. A few of the pieces have a North African flavour to them, while the bulk naturally have a particularly French

line to them, although the rendition on bagpipe conjures up still more association than if it were on flute, or fiddle, say. The bagpipes are of various levels of sophistication, and what is interesting about this CD is the way in which some of the bagpipes achieve the level of expression offered by the complex Irish uilleann pipes. Of course there are those who just cannot stand the sound of the pipes, and no matter how well this music is recorded and presented it will make no impact on them. However if, like me, the drone and reedy wail are in your soul, this will bring you great pleasure. [A\*:1]

Ken Hyder

### CARLA BLEY/STEVE SWALLOW: DUETS Watt/20 837 345-1

Carla Bley is an infuriating artist. Some of her records can be exquisite jewels of bright exuberance, while others can be the epitome of naffness. This record however, is a winner. This is stripped-down simplicity, just piano and bass guitar. No pretentiousness this time. She shows just how much of a pianist she can be by playing less, less, less. One of the tracks conjures up eerie reminiscences of Thelonious Monk. Swallow is one of the few jazz bassists to cut it on the electric instrument. His touch is that of a string bassist and the bass guitar has the feel of the acoustic instrument in his hands. But he uses its guitaristic capabilities, ringing out harmonics with effortless ease and consummate taste.

This is a reflective album, the kind you thought went out of style. It's the sort of



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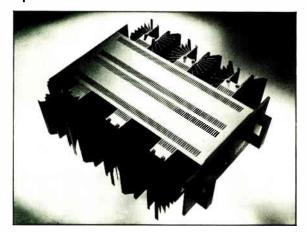
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music you want to put on after a hard day. In the relaxation stakes, it does the business. [A\*:1] Ken Hyder

PAUL BLEY/PAUL MOTIAN: NOTES Soul Note CD 121 190-2 (55m 33s) (distributed by Harmonia Mundi)

This is certainly one of the most interesting jazz releases to come my way for some time. What is refreshing is the way it is set up. Paul Bley is a pianist who works with form, with the shapes and architecture of pieces, but he does so to the extent that he reorganizes structures as he goes along. More than that, he creates new structures quite spontaneously from the off. Paul Motian, who was in the classic Bill Evans trio knows all about that side of playing too. His openness of approach is informed by years of structured playing. So what you have here, on this CD is a collection of pieces, most of which are simple spring-boards for spontaneous development. The players use their imagination to vitalise the pieces, none of which ever slips into pianojazz cliché. Because they are working on a level of equal inter-action where stereotyped roles are abandoned, there is no feeling that a bass is missing. There is a rare new freshness here that's absent on so many current jazz releases. While too many younger generation players are still struggling to replicate the jazz of the 60s, these two survivors of the 60s are working on the jazz of tomorrow. If you are looking for creativity in jazz, this CD is a must. [A\*:1] Ken Hyder

KARLA BONOFF: NEW WORLD Gold Castle VGC6 Gold Castle CDVGC6 (43m 10s) CD (distributed by Virgin)

A slow grower this, one of those items you initially write off as just another singersongwriter offering. Then, almost imperceptibly, the songs sneak up on you, until you find yourself frequently reprising various tracks, discovering more and more facets. Bonoff, in case you've forgotten, is the LA lady who initially won fame as Linda Ronstadt's songprovider, another part of her CV relating to membership of Bryndle, the group that also included Wendy Waldman and Andrew Gold. Between 1977 and 1982, she released three albums on CBS, all of which were warm and willing enough but failed to make any lasting impression on the sales charts. Now she's vending her wares again and they're worthy of an earbend. Songs such as 'Tell Me Why', 'Oh Mary' and 'All Walk Alone', an act-closer that shouldn't leave a dry eye in the house, all practically sitting up and begging to be covered. Now don't write in and tell me

that every item on the album has already been recorded by a fellow artist. Because frankly, I wouldn't be surprised at all. [A:1] Fred Dellar

THE BOYS: MESSAGES FROM THE BOYS Motown ZL 72648

Motown haven't done too badly by signing kids in the past. Little Stevie Wonder and The Jackson 5 made it into the superstar bracket hardly before they'd grown out of short pants. Not that the four Abdul Samad brothers (whose ages range from nine to fourteen) signed for Motown in the first place. Given the choice between Solar, MCA and Motown, they opted for MCA only to find that label boss Jheryl Busby had become president of Berry Gordy's one-time empire at which point they made a switch! It's easy to suss why anyone would want to sign The Boys. A great stage act – they dance like a miniature set of James Browns - they have their fill of cutesy appeal and can fashion a fine harmony or two. The problem is that, at present, those too precious leads can prove tiring over an album's length. But it's hard to fathom why the opening, totally infectious, 'Dial My Heart' failed to provide the group with their first smash single. Expect to hear Fred Dellar more. [A:2/3]

### **A&M'S OLD HORIZONS**

CHET BAKER: YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN

A&M CDA 0805 (41m 54s) CD

GEORGE BENSON: SHAPE OF THINGS TO

A&M CDA 0803 (33m 36s) CD

DAVE BRUBECK QUARTET: 25th ANNIVERSARY REUNION A&M CDA 0806 (46m 28s) CD

DON CHERRY: BROWN RICE A&M CDA 0809 (39m 17s) CD

ORNETTE COLEMAN: DANCING IN YOUR HEAD

A&M CDA 0807 (31m 15s) CD

CHARLIE HADEN: CLOSENESS A&M CDA 0808 (39m 10s)

QUINCY JONES: WALKING IN SPACE A&M CDA 0801 (35m 00s)

WES MONTGOMERY: DOWN HERE ON THE GROUND
A&M CDA 0802 (31m 50s)

GERRY MULLIGAN: THE AGE OF STEAM A&M CDA 0804 (38m 33s)

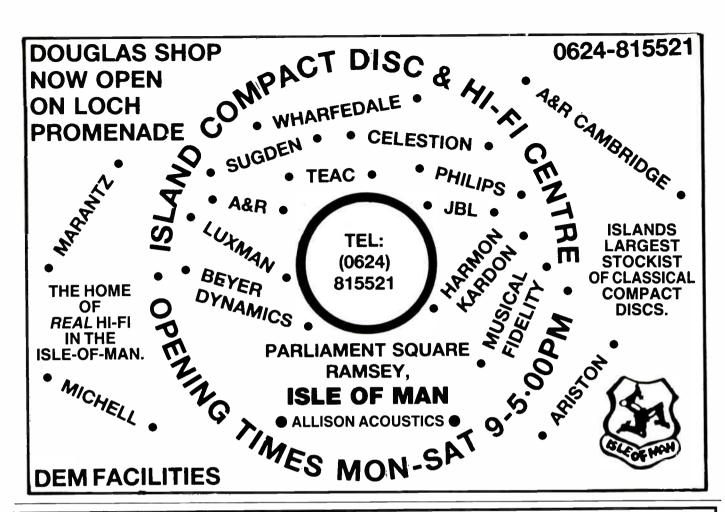
You might tend to associate A&M with a kind of jazz that's so middle-of-the road you could fall asleep driving to it; hardly any of the A&M, CTI and Horizon titles chosen to launch this 'Jazz Heritage' reissue series come completely into that category, but the elements are often there. Recorded in 1977 on the Horizon label, You Can't Go Home Again places Chet Baker's trumpet alternately in front of a very strong jazz-rock line-up (Michael Brecker, John Scofield, Alphonso Johnson, Tony Williams) and Sebesky strings, with intriguing rather than expressive results. [A:2] More uniformly typical of the Creed Taylor/Don Sebesky approach is Montgomery's Down Here On

The Ground, pleasant but unexciting. For CTI, Benson was Montgomery's inevitable successor and, in 1968 clearly not yet in a position to dictate his own musical surroundings, he is overwhelmed at times by Taylor's strings and absurdly echoing flutes; the title track 'Shape Of Things To Come' uses speeded-up trickery and Varitone electronic octave runs and is ironically enough the most dated sound on the disc, but with a funky harmonica-led 'Chattanooga Choo Choo' and a Tijuana-tinged 'Last Train To Clarksville', that's not saying much. [B:2] Quincy Jones's echo-drenched Walking In Space is another poppy sonic period piece, but with soloists including Ray Brown, Eric Gale, Freddie Hubbard, Jimmy Cleveland, Hubert Laws, Jerome Richardson and Roland Kirk it is too talent-laden to be ignored. [B:2]

No attempt at modernisation marred the 25th Anniversary Reunion, and you don't have to be a huge Brubeck fan to enjoy this very happy-sounding concert recording from

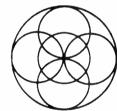
March 1976. Everything sounds warm and relaxed, the devoted audience recognises the numbers and encourages the group's sly humour. [A\*:1] From the same year but a different world comes the trumpeter Don Cherry's powerful eastern-influenced Brown Rice, full of chants and bells and rhythms that are genuinely hypnotic, not funky for fashion's sake. [A/B:2] It's still a big jump from this to where Cherry's former free-jazz mentor and colleague Ornette Coleman had got to a year later with the unrelenting Dancing In Your Head, which is not for the fainthearted and for me is still just [B:3]. Bassist on those two Horizon albums was Charlie Haden, whose own Closeness album of four duets (with Coleman, Keith Jarrett, Alice Coltrane and Paul Motian) surely rates at least [A/B:1]. Finally, Mulligan's 1971 The Age of Steam, clearly rooted in the age of jazz rock, has hidden depths and amazing sonics. Steve Harris







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LE MYSTERE DES VOIX BULGARES: *A CATHEDRAL CONCERT*JARO CD (3138) (40m 20s) (distributed by Pinnacle)

I imagine by now most people have heard the astounding singing of the women in Le Mystere Des Voix Bulgares troup. Certainly once heard, it's never forgotten, for it's unique. Whether it's got something to do with the clash of cultures in Bulgaria which came first under the control of Christianity. then Islam, is a matter for the academics. For the listener, the pleasure of this direct and intensely human music is obvious. The group singing is rich and colourful. The use of parallel seconds creates a thick jangling vibrancy you could spend a lot of money trying to achieve in the studio with expensive equipment. The solo singing is appealing and soulful, and is matched by the instrumentalists who lay out the tunes open and clearly as if they were unfurling a carpet for a guest to sit down on for tea in glass cups. The performance is superbly captured and there is a warm atmosphere you can't help but enjoy. [A\*:1\*] Ken Hyder

### RAY CHARLES: JUST BETWEEN US CBS 461183 1

If you happen to believe that any record that opens with a BB King blues lick has to have something going for it, then this one's for you. Come to think of it. it's for me too. because Just Between Us heralds a switch from Nashville back to bluesville for Mr C. Not that his recent country offerings have been poor - on the contrary. But the Charles voice poured out over something choosey, bluesy and not without a touch of gospel, is something I could never resist. Here he moves blueswise with the aid of such guitarists as King, Kenny Carr and Jim Johnson, swings more than a little, in humourous fashion, on the age-old 'Save The Bones For Henry Jones', trading licks with (vocally) Lou Rawls and (instrumentally) vibesman Milt Jackson; and chips in a duet with Gladys Knight that shouldn't harm the album's sales one little pip. Check the line-up of arrangers (Quincy Jones, Ralph Burns and Marty Paich), then pan over a list of songwriters that includes the names of Dave Loggins, Percy Mayfield, Doc Pomus and Tony Colton and you'll realise that this is not just a contract-filler but something that aims far higher. And that voice is one of the wonders of the R&B world. [A:1] Fred Dellar

### GLORIA ESTEFAN & MIAMI SOUND MACHINE: ANYTHING FOR YOU Epic 463125-1

If you feel the track listing is a familiar one, you could be right. For this is a revamp of last year's *Turn It Loose* album replete with new title, new sleeve and the ability to boast hits such as 'Anything For You' and '1,2,3', something that its 1987 lookalike was unable to do. As most people missed it first time around – I admit I did – discussion of its assets are worth a line or two, even though such praise might seem a little belated. But Ms Estefan and MSM offer an amalgam of eminently danceable, full-of-latin-fire hot shots, plus an array of ballads that, in the case of the title track at least, edges very near the sound of Streisand. The synths get a mite tinkle-bop at times, a smidgen too sweet.

Otherwise there's little to carp about. And, by the way, Clarence Clemons is there to boot 'Let It Loose' along. Which helps. [B:1]

Fred Dellar

### MICHAEL FRANKS: THE CAMERA NEVER LIES Warner Brothers 925 570-1

It's sixteen years since Franks' album first gained a release. In the interim he's frequently topped the US jazz charts but stirred nary a modicum of interest in Britain, where many of his albums haven't even been favoured with a place in the catalogue. So is this the one to make the breakthrough? The answer, sadly, is no. The songs, as always, come light and wispy, borne on the backs of arrangements that feature the best of instrumental and vocal sidemen – how does a roster that features the names of Patti Austin, Art Garfunkel, Cornell Dupree, Earl Klugh, The Breckers, Steve Khan, Michael Urbaniak, Bill Evans and Hiram Bullock grab you? And Franks delivers vocally in his knowing, frequently humour-filled, jazz-tinged style. Which means that you'd have to be a nerd to actually dislike the final sound that emerges from the speakers. But, as a long-term Franksophile. I feel that I've heard it all before and, in some cases (check out such earlier Franks releases as 'Sleeping Gypsy' or the appealing 'Tiger In The Rain') heard it better. Mildly disappointing. But his name stays on my list alongside those of Ben Sidran and Kenny Rankin. [A:2] Fred Dellar

### TOOTS HIBBERT: TOOTS IN MEMPHIS Island ILPS 9906

The idea of carting Toots, Sly Dunbar, Robbie Shakespeare and Mikey Chung off to Memphis wasn't such a wild one. After all, ska ripped off all the best R&B licks in the first place – so it made sense to re-acquaint reggae's most soulful singer and one of the world's finest rhythm sections with their roots and, in the course of things, perhaps even remind black America of the way things were before Whitney and the others began their bleaching process. Toots, backed by the Memphis Horns and given the opportunity to really come on tough, is in his element here. Though his stab at 'Knock On Wood' hardly gets the pulses racing, a version of Al Green's 'Love And Happiness' is good 'n' gritty, as are reggae-fied re-runs of Otis' 'Hard To Handle' and Ann Peebles' 'Love The Rain' (actually 'l Can't Stand The Rain' with slightly altered lyrics) as does a version of Redding's 'I've Got Dreams To Remember',

### CARMICHAEL CLASSICS

THE CLASSIC HOAGY CARMICHAEL BBC CD3007 (3CDs), BBC 4000 (4LPs), BBC 2CJ400 (3MCs)

It's surprising how often, despite 'Stardust', 'The Nearness of You' and about three dozen others, Carmichael is omitted from discussions of the great songwriters. When Ella Fitzgerald was recording her Songbook LPs some friends of mine tried to persuade Norman Granz to include Carmichael, but were told 'He didn't write enough songs'. The above boxed set, assembled by John Hasse of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, and now issued by BBC Records, ought to put an end to such nonsensical beliefs.

It consists of 55 recordings of Carmichael songs done between the 1920s and the '80s, ten of them by the composer himself, and three of these never before published. This anthological approach suits him well because, apart from 'I Walk with Music' in 1940, he wrote no complete shows, only individual songs. And though certain of those songs were used in films, in some of which he acted, he never composed a complete film score. The sound has been excellently cleaned up on most of the older recordings and the set is accompanied by a splendid booklet (64 9inx12in pages) which, along with much information and comment, reproduced many

rare photographs.

Because Carmichael at first had more explicit links with jazz than any of the other great between-the-wars songwriters, several major figures from that music are here, and the collection begins, as it had to, with Bix Beiderbecke's 1927 version of 'Riverboat Shuffle'. Other jazzmen, ancient and modern, represented include Stan Getz, Eddie South, Coleman Hawkins, Benny Goodman, Bob Brookmeyer, Wynton Marsalis and Art Pepper – the last with a glorious 'Winter Moon' during which Bill Holman's string writing sketches an icy landscape. Louis Armstrong had a particular affinity with Carmichael's songs, and recorded more than a dozen, of which four are here. Too bad we couldn't have had him and Jack Teagarden in 'Rocking Chair'.



Obviously no two knowledgeable people would completely agree as to what the contents of such a collection should be, and when Carmichael moved away from jazz into the mainstream of American popular entertainment the number and diversity of his interpreters vastly increased. I would rather have had a version of 'My Resistance is Low' – any version – than Betty Hutton being strident in 'Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief'. But much of the space is taken by top names of pre-rock popular music, such as Bing Crosby, Margaret Whiting, Jo Stafford, Mel Tormé plus, some, like Susannah McCorkle and Lucy Ann Polk, who ought to have larger reputations than they do.

There has to be a special word also for the obscure Marlene VerPlanck, who sings two little-known songs, 'Old Man Moon' and 'I Walk with Music', quite superbly. In fact even for long-term Carmichael buffs there are some very agreeable surprises here, the names of a few of them being 'Moon Country', 'Ballad in Blue', 'Kinda Lonesome'. And now that the BBC has issued this perhaps they would like to consider some of the Smithsonian Institution's other remarkable compilations. [H:H] Max Harrison

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which, though handled in pure reggae tradition, manages to sound like something that crept out of Nashville when no-one was looking. Not all is perfect. It would be almost impossible to re-make such a collection of classics and avoid unfavourable comparisons. Even so, Toots In Memphis is hugely enjoyable and shouldn't be missed. [A\*:1]

Fred Dellar

# DONAL LUNNY: DONAL LUNNY Gael-Linn CD CEFCD 133 (27m 03s)

This CD comes with a very specific recommendation. I actually bought it, or rather The Arts Council bought it for me. A couple of months ago the Arts Council gave me and my band a grant to travel to Ireland to check out aspects of Irish traditional music and techniques. And part of the pre-trip research was looking for examples of highly developed traditional music on record. Donal Lunny has been the catalyst for many Irish bands like Planxty, The Bothy Band, and Moving Hearts. If we were to decide on the most exciting new music to come from Irish traditional music in the past few years, the whole band would agree on this record. The music comes from a concert and was never really intended for release. The band, as such, no longer exists, and that's a pity because the music is so powerful you don't really resent the fact that you're paying for less than half an hour of it (not Lunny's fault incidentally). Lunny says that the key to Irish music is the rhythm, and the 'lift', and he's fascinated with percussion. As well as the Irish drum, the bodhran, there's congas on this performance, and two bouzoukis and guitar fill out the rhythm as well. On top there's flute, fiddle and uilleann pipes. The faster, jigs 'n' reels pieces bop along with vibrant enthusiasm, but for me, it's the sad, mournful side of Celtic music which appeals the most. I'm a sucker for a slow air, and there are a couple of pieces here to tug at your heart. Lunny puts the music together with a masterly touch. It is at the same time, Irish traditional music with a pure feel to it, but it's also exploring new avenues of more sophisticated expression, primarily through cross-rhythms, but also through the arrangements of mixed instru-ments. This is very special stuff... the most absorbing and completely satisfying folk record of the past five years or so. I can't imagine anyone who could fail to be touched and warmed by it. [A\*:1\*] Ken Hyder

# CARMEN McRAE: LIVE AT BIRDLAND WEST

Concord CJ 342 from New Note Distribution

She is of course in the major league, one of the singers most worthy to carry on the great black tradition stemming from Ethel Waters; perhaps even from Bessie herself. In the longest track, Billie Holiday's 'Fine and Mellow', Carmen lives dangerously, diving into a deeper register than Lady ever could, and with star accompanists there is much to enjoy as well as the rich voice. Red Holloway's rather strangulated sax tone makes an interesting contrast with the warmth of the organ as played by Jack McDuff. Phil Upchurch is yet another of the never-ending succession of super modern guitarists; he takes 'What Can I Say After I've Said I'm Sorry' into areas that Walter Donaldson surely never dreamed of. In this live club performance there is deserved applause (and delighted laughter) after a most musical bowed bass solo in the long blues by John Clayton. There is also nice Ben Websterish tenor playing in 'Just One More Chance', which is taken at that easy ambling tempo that suits relaxed jazz-men so well, and Red has the Webster ballad feeling in 'Until the Real Thing Comes Along'. It's strange that such a Mayfair-styled song as 'These Foolish Things' crossed the Atlantic so successfully (on the *Ile de France*?) and it gets a lovely extended treatment from Carmen here—cabaret singing at its most relaxed and intimate. [A/B:1]

Denis Argent

DAVID MURRAY TRIO: THE HILL Black Saint CD 120 110-2 (49m 00s) (distributed by Harmonia Mundi)

When David Murray first appeared on the scene as a disciple of Albert Ayler, he was lauded as the saxophonist most likely to take jazz into a new era of discovery. But the prodigy's development followed the pattern of some older players in an accelerated fashion – while they are often fell back on earlier, more comfortable styles in middle age, Murray began the process before he was 30. He recorded albums every five minutes – or so it seemed – and unsurprisingly the results were mixed. This is one of his better releases. With Richard Davis, he has one of the most adventurous of the bassists to emerge in the 1960s. Similarly Joe Chambers on drums, is the kind of player who was in the thick of things in the same era. Together they provide a rhythm section that's tight and right. But while Murray plays well enough, there's a sense of the whole session being too easy and cosy. Nobody is being really stretched and the excitement quotient is low. [A\*:2]

HARRY NILSSON: A LITTLE TOUCH OF SCHMILSSON IN THE NIGHT RCA NL 83761

### HARRY NILSSON: A TOUCH MORE SCHMILSSON IN THE NIGHT RCA PL 90251

A warm welcome for an old friend - the first of these albums was recorded 15 years ago in the dog days of 1973 and anyone who didn't curl up to this record with a mug of cocoa and a favourite pet then, has got the chance to put that right now. Produced by Derek Taylor, arranged by Gordon Jenkins, the record features a choice selection of standards from 'Lazy Moon' to 'As Time Goes By', all given distinctive Nilsson treatment which involves deep immersion in that effortless, smoky larynx. A Touch More... features out-takes from those same sessions and the quality is such that the original release could easily have been a double. Most of the material is previously unreleased - 'Over The Rainbow', 'Make Believe' - with some alternate takes from the first LP - 'You Made Me Love You', 'Lullaby In Ragtime' - and a couple of original Nilsson compositions from the Knnillssonn LP - 'All I Think About Is You', 'Perfect Day'. You'd have to be a hard-hearted critter not to get a glow from this. [Both A:1]

Pete Clark

MARY MARGART O'HARA: MISS AMERICA Virgin V2559 Virgin CDV2559 (45m 05s) CD

Not to be confused with her namesake, the harp-playing ex-nun, Mary Margaret O'Hara is a Canuck singer-songwriter with a voice

that seems ever-yearning, as if she's spent her 33 years edging her way through a world wracked with more pain as pleasure. It's a voice that has invited countless comparisons – Holiday, Cline, you name it. Not that O'Hara actually sounds like any other singer with which she's been compared. The only point they all have in common is that their voices could be described as 'lived-in'. Which, I guess, is fair enough. On voice alone then, O'Hara has what it takes. Unfortunately, her songs are hardly in the same category. Part folksy, part cool and torchy, they all initially sound inviting but, somehow, end up lacking any true definition. It's sad in a way, because O'Hara obviously has something to offer. Maybe someone should remind her that the singers with which she has been compared became legends because they were content to remain mainly interpreters of other people's songs and didn't attempt to stretch their talents beyond their strengths. If however you still demand some kind of yearstick on which to assess O'Hara, try 'this year's Rickie Lee Jones'. That's as close as I can get. [A:2]

TOOTS THIELEMANS: ONLY TRUST YOUR HEART

Concord CJ 355 from New Note Distribution

The man who modernised the harmonica is on top form here. Curious about the origins of the non-Mozartean harmonica, I looked in my Oxford Concise Dictionary of Music. Percy Scholes seemed to put my thoughts into words: 'It is, to a point, easily played, but feats of virtuosity are possible to the gifted and persevering. Quite! What worries me here, however, is the lack of co-ordination with Toots shown by his accompanists – strange, because three have toured with him for years. The title track is upset, for me, by Fred Hersch's jagged 'contrary' piano behind the harmonica. The piano is less obtrusive in Hello, Young Lovers', which offers a good instance of a creative and imaginative soloist improving on a song kept simple by its composer. In his autobiography Rodgers, aware of Gertrude Lawrence's shortcomings, wrote: 'I was careful to write songs for her that were of limited range', and Toots here takes the tune into areas of great range and subtlety. Hersch does not sound like a jazzman at heart in his Debussyesque composition 'Sarabande'; elsewhere he shows the influence of Bill Evans. But he, Toots, and competent bassist and drummer get it all together nicely for a modern swinger, Monk's Little Rootie Tootie'. In the immortal words of Eddie Cantor: Okay Toots! [A:1/2]

Denis Argent

Fred Dellar

### YELLO: FLAG MERCURY 836 778-1

Interesting couple Dieter Meier and Boris Blank. Both are rather old to be making electronic dance music but few have earned more respect in the field - especially from Switzerland. This music is clever, rhtythmic, varied, very polished, brilliantly produced and works on a number of levels. Unlike most current dance music it does bear serious listening. It is also quite hypnotic. As the single 'The Race' has shown, Yello are very commercial but they are in no way shallow. Most of the credit lands at the feet of Boris Blank, who composes and arranges the music while the singing, lyrics and wacky videos are created by Meier. This is one of the few dance records to be really worth listening to this year. [A:2] Neville Farmer

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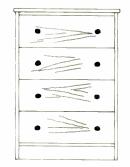
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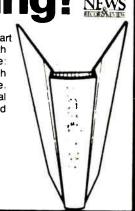
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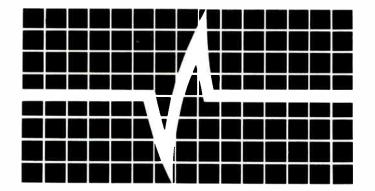
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# JUDY COLLINS: TRUST YOUR HEART Gold Castle/Virgin CDVGC 7 (71m 49s) CD

Now that Peter, Paul and Mary, Karla Bonoff and Joan Baez are back, why not JC? Her voice is in reasonably good form, but it sounds like she's found religion; Cliff Richard could cover this release intact without any difficulty. Judy's 'The Rose' doesn't quite match the Amanda McBroom original, but there's a sweet 'When You Wish Upon A Star' and a sonic masterpiece in 'Amazing Grace'. [A/A\*:2]

# BRENDAN CROKER/GUY FLETCHER: ON THE BIG HILL (OST) Silvertone Records ORE LP 501

The music to Granada's TV series about the 1988 Everest expedition and it's a goodie. Cooder fans who haven't already discovered Croker are in for a treat, while Dire Straits completists will note that Fletcher has been a member of DS since Brothers In Arms. What twangy acoustic blues has to do with moun-

tain climbing is not a question you need ask, because this is one soundtrack which doesn't need the visuals. [A:1]

ETON CROP: THE PEEL SESSIONS Strange Fruit SFPS063

This Dutch outfit, caught live at the Beeb in 1985, makes 'social comments in English'. That may be so, but they also have a handle on pop that would do justice to the Smithereens or Alex Chiltern. Don't let the indie status worry you; this bunch does not sound like it wants to be the house band for some Street-Porter fiasco. [A:1/1\*]

# FAMILY: THE PEEL SESSIONS Strange Fruit SFPS061

Three songs from a May 1973 Radio I session, 'Boom Bang', 'Buffet Tea' and 'Checkout', with the band sounding better than we remembered their live sets. One to augment last year's reissues and a reminder of just what we lost when punk wiped out the hippies. [A/B:1/1\*]

# FRANK CHICKENS: CLUB MONKEY Flying Lecords STIR2 (distributed by Revolver/Cartel)

Flying Lecords? That should give you a clue as to a Japanese element and a sense of humour. Who else would name a band Frank Chickens? Zappa fans working for Colonel Sanders? The Chickens make very strange dance music, sort of like Yello meets Yoko, with lyrics like 'Eating dogs can get you high'. Approach this only if you cherish weirdness.

# FRONT 242: FRONT BY FRONT

Red Rhino Europe RRELP7
Heavy on the technology but retaining a human, if sinister element, Front 242 sounds almost like Dead Or Alive (remember them?) but without concessions to teen/chart acceptability. The band runs a generic gamut with modernism an over-riding concern; even the cover art and inner sleeve suggest computer programs rather than music. But it is catchy, in a silicone sort of way. [A:1]

# ROY HARPER: LOONY ON THE BUS Awareness AWL1011 (distributed by Revolver/Cartel)

Left-field elder statesman back with another grab-bag designed to torment those who would love to find a category for him.

Eclectic? Harper seems to go out of his way to shake up the mix. Gut-crunching rock to gorgeous melody, acid-casualty (1960s variety) liner notes but lyrics full of 1980s anguish ... the title says it all. And God bless'im for it, too. [A:1]

### VAUGHAN HAWTHORNE: THE PATH Intouch CDISC 2 (52m 03s) CD (PO Box 538, London W5 1TY)

This young sax player is being held up as proof that Courtney Pine wasn't just a fluke, but it takes more than two British jazz musicians to herald a movement. With The Path, his second LP, it would appear that he's capable of withstanding the hype, and he's doing his best to carve out a style of his own. There's still an awful lot of the Prestige/Blue Note scholar in him, but that's fine with us. [A:1]

### JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE: THE PEEL SESSIONS

Strange Fruit SFPS065

At last, legal copies of five of the tracks Hendrix recorded for the Beeb, previously only available on bootlegs. This mini-LP includes his wild version of the Radio 1 Theme and the sloppy-but-legendary 'Day Tripper'. Best news of all is that this is a taster for a forthcoming full-length release. [B:1/1\*]

# THE HORSEFLIES: HUMAN FLY

Cooking Vinyl COOK 013

Modern electric folk music, an unbelievably fluid blend of the studiously traditional with the shockingly contemporary. No, that doesn't mean the Dubliners with electricity; would they credit a song as 'Inspired by the Cramps'? Certainly not. This is a record for the kind of folkie who wears woolly jumpers but would like to don the odd scrap of leather as well. [A:1]

# MARILLION: THE THIEVING MAGPIE

(LA GAZZA LADRA) EMI CDS 7914632(69m 49s; 42m 42s) CD A fitting closing to the Fish era, this live double – culled from tours in 1984 and 1987 – covers their career with an effectiveness to rival any straight compilation. As ever, the band explores every nook and cranny of pomp rock, reminding the listener of everyone from Queen to the more musical Goths. Pretentious? What else would you expect from a band that named itself after Tolkien this late in the century? [A/B:1]

# NAPALM DEATH: FROM ENSLAVEMENT TO OBLITERATION

Earache MOSH8 (distributed by Revolver/

The label says it all. Despite sporting 22 cuts, it's possible to drop your stylus anywhere and not detect any variation whatsoever. Throbbing bass and drums so bereft of form that it makes Reed's Metal Machine Music sound makes Reed's Metal Machine Music sound like 60s segue'd hits. The sleeve photos will not endear you to ND either, unless you happen to be a lager lout or the casting director of a 1969 biker exploitation flick. A waste of precious pvc. [A\*:4] because the bass is something to behold.

# NICO: THE PEEL SESSIONS Strange Fruit SFPS064

Four songs recorded for the BBC from the recently-deceased, former Velvets vocalist. Haunting material, as Germanic as you'd expect; a role model for today's black-clad legions. [A:1]

# THE ROOM: THE PEEL SESSIONS

Strange Fruit SFPS062 Circa 1985 BBC sessions from a band containing two members of the current indie cult faves, the Wild Swans. Exceptional guitar-led outfit not afraid to jeopardise their street cred with melodies. [A:1]

# SOMETHING HAPPENS: BEEN THERE, SEEN THAT, DONE THAT Virgin CV2561 (58m 10s) CD

Irish band not to be compared to the overbearing U2. A studio package beefed up with a fistful of live tracks, **BTSTDT** is the perfect antidote to both sterile pop and indie grunge. Guitar-led, but not in the wall-of-sound manner, Something Happens delivers lush melody after lush melody. If you have to make comparisons, this band inhabits that ethereal stage occupies by Icicle Works and (sharp intake of breath) REM. A brilliant release. [A/B:1/1\*]

# VARIOUS: GUITAR SPEAK Illegal ILP 033

A godsend for air guitarists, one fresh track each from 12 of the best axe-wielders in the business. Randy California, Alvin Lee, Leslie West, Steve Howe, Hank Marvin – you get the picture. This is a textbook lesson to all of those instrumental-only labels as to how you can dispense with vocals without dispensing with energy, feeling or imagination. Wouldbe heroes will be grateful that the inner sleeve identifies the guitar in use. [A:1/1\*]

### VARIOUS: NORTH – THE SOUND OF THE DANCE UNDERGROUND

De-Construction-RCA PD71939 (43m 16s)

Brain death, utter brain death. This eight-song [Song? Is that what they're called? KK] sampler of so-called acid-house is so mindnumbing in its monotony and artificiality that Northerners should take great offence that it's labelled with a regional connotation. If this is what constitutes the music of the 'Northern Soul Scene', we'd suggest staying south of Watford. [A:3]

# VARIOUS: RORSCHACH BLOT TEST Jim Crow JCNGL 01 (7 Beulah Mount, Woodhouse, Leeds LS6 2JZ)

Auspicious launch from a new label, four tracks each from AC Temple, Kilgore Trout and Dust Devils - guitar marauders one and all. Recorded live at various times and places, Rorschach contains the essence of the latest thrash sub-genre, an introduction to juggernaut noise best not auditioned over a delicate hi-fi system. [B/C:1/2]

### OST: LIGHT OF DAY Blackheart/Epic EPC 450501 1

The film is about a rock band – imaginary version - which just happens to include Joan Jett, so this is very much an extension of her musical as well as thespian career. The bulk of the material comes from the Jett-powered Barbusters, with other material supplied by Dave Edmunds. The Fabulous Thunderbirds, Bon Jovi, Ian Hunter and others. Good despite the Hollywood glitter. [A:1/2]

# OST: PASCALI'S ISLAND Virgin CDV 2557 (43m 41s) CD

Moody mediterranean sounds for the latest Ben Kingsley flick. Yet another one for Barry Norman fans. [A/A\*:1]

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LONG JOHN BALDRY: LET THE HEAR-TACHES BEGIN PRT PYL4008

15 track 'best of' from a key player in the early British R&B scene. Baldry, like Mayall, seems more of a talent scout than a star, but some of this stands up with the best of the genre. [B:1/2]

# SCRAPPER BLACKWELL: MR SCRAP-PER'S BLUES Ace CH255

Straight reissue of the 1962 Bluesville LP, his first since the death of partner Leroy Carr in 1935. Blues, stripped down to the bare essentials, another for those who've worn out the two Robert Johnson LPs. [A:1]

### KC DOUGLAS: BIG ROAD BLUES Ace CH254

Another superlative reissue from the Bluesville catalogue, acoustic folk-blues devoid of urbanisation. Originals plus standards, including a fabulous 'Key To The Highway'. [A/B:1]

### CHAMPION JACK DUPREE: FROM NEW ORLEANS TO CHICAGO

London 820 568-2 (48m 15s) CD 14 tracks from 1966 with UK bluesmen for back-up. The legendary pianist sounded like he was having a good time surrounded by young worshippers, who play with just the right amount of eagerness and respect. Clapton completists note: he's on two tracks.

# BERN ELLIOT AND THE FENMEN: THE BEAT YEARS

See For Miles SEE 239

23 tracks from the Decca vaults charting the career of yet another hardworking (the Hamburg run) early-1960s British band which never quite made it. The usual run of standard cover material designed to keep drunken club habituees happy, punctuated with glimpses of originality which should have made a difference. [B/C:2]

# PETER HAMMILL: THE FUTURE NOW Virgin CASCD 1137 (45m 11s) CD

Continuing the programme of transferring Hamill to CD, his 1978 release which is just as eccentric as everything else he's done. Slightly bizarre but wholly accessible, it still sounds experimental a decade on. The lyrics, though, are worrying. [A/B:2]

### JOHN LEE HOOKER: ORIGINAL BLUES-WAY SESSIONS Charly CDX33

Another Charly stunner, four sides of sinister, murky blues. Spine-tingling takes of 'Boom, Boom, Boom', 'Want Ad Blues' and the dated but still worrying 'I Don't Want To Go To Vietnam'. [A/B:1]

### H P LOVECRAFT: AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS Edsel DED 256

Late 1960s band best noted for the inclusion of a former member of the Shadows of Knight. There the resemblance ends, because HPL was not inspired by the Stones; rather it was Early Gothic, moody and melodic. This double will save a lot of collectors some serious money. [A/B:1]

## STEVE HOWE: THE EARLY YEARS WITH BODAST

C5 Records C5-528

10 rare tracks from Howe in a circa 1969, pre-Yes configuration. Good rocking recordings rather than the twee canoodling that its vintage would suggest, with lashings of flash guitar work foreshadowing Howe's later career. [B:1]

### **BRYAN HYLAND: GOLDEN DECADE 1960-**1970

Charly CR 30267

14 selections reminding us that Hyland released more than 'Sealed With A Kiss' and 'Itsy Bitsy Teeny Weeny Yellow Polka Dot Bikini' – the latter once costing the Editor a £1 bet. Biggest surprise is a creditable 'Lonely Teardrops', showing that he had the stones to follow Jackie Wilson. [A/B:1/1\*]

ALBERT KING: ALBERT LIVE

Charly CDX 35
Charly CD CHARLY 136 (67m 01s) CD
ALBERT KING: BLUES AT SUNRISE –
LIVE AT MONTREAUX Stax/Ace SX017

Albert Liv<sup>a</sup> is the last of Charly's Tomato label releases, and probably the best. The CD loses one whole side of this double LP, a shame as bluesman King was in good form in 1977. Guests include Lowell Fulson and Rory Gallagher. The Ace set from 1973 shows a bit more fire but suffers from a couple of too-long tracks. [A/B:1/2]; [A:1]

### BB KING: HIS BEST - THE ELECTRIC BB KING

### **BGO BGOLP37** BB KING: IN LONDON **BGO BGOLP42**

Two straight reissues from 1969-71, which many deem as a sort of peak: post-obscurity and pre-Vegas. *His Best* is a marvellous set of 'classic' King, with punchy arrangements and plenty of grit, while In London teams him up with everyone from Ringo Starr to Dr John. The former LP is musically superior, but In London stands out for covers of two Howard Tate favourites. [A:1\*], [A/B:1]

# SAUNDERS KING: THE FIRST KING OF THE BLUES

Ace CHD 248

BB and Albert might have something to say about the title, but SK made boogie/swing recordings more in line with Louis Jordan than his namesakes; forget rivalries. A postwar ambience adds to the character. (Includes previously unreleased material.)

### KISS: SMASHES, THRASHES & HITS Vertigo/Phonogram 836 759-1

Hits package made mandatory for the hardcore by two new tracks and a re-recording of 'Beth'. Kiss transcended the Grand Guignol make-up; maybe it's time the rest of us did, too. Acceptable metal, despite the showbiz. [A/B:1/2]

# FURRY LEWIS: DONE CHANGED MY MIND

Ace CH 260

Classic acoustic folk-blues from a genuine legend, heard here in the early 1960s. Traditional as all get-out, almost a parody it's so earthy. The sound quality puts FL right in the room. [A\*:1]

# JERRY LEE LEWIS: DON'T DROP IT ZuZazz/Charly Z2004

More rare sessions from 1960-62. Lewis lets you forget that by this time his life was a mess (he's Jimmy Swaggart's cousin, after all), and there's no shortage of clues as to why many consider him the greatest rocker of them all. The mellow 'Waiting For A Train' shows JL's country side in all its glory. [B:1]

# NICO+THE FACTION: CAMERA OBSCURA

Beggars Banquet BBL 63CD (44m 27s) CD The late Nico in 1985, stretching the Teutonic shtick to the Nth degree. If it weren't for the presence of her eerie vocals, this could almost be classified as a percussion LP; as it stands, it's what Marlene Dietrich would be doing is she'd been born after 1940. [A/A\*:1/2]

### THE SHADOWS: THE EP COLLECTION See For Miles SEE 246

22 tracks from 13 of their hard-to-find EPs, 1959-67. Great liner notes and magnificent sound turn this one into a fine retrospective.

# STATUS QUO: FROM THE BEGINNING PRT PYX 4007

15 heads-down tracks, amusingly split into 'Hard Side' and 'Soft Side', from their pre-1971 output. As picture discs go, this one is playable, but even the Quo levels can't mask the inevitable crackles. Collectable, but you're better off with black vinyl. [B/C:1/2]

### THE TRAMMPS: THE LEGENDARY ZING **ALBUM**

Kent/Ace KENT 088

The pinnacle of mid-1970s non-disco disco music, Trammps' 1975 LP reissued intact. Great covers, including the hit version of 'Zing Went The Strings Of My Heart' and 'Sixty Minute Man'. [A/B:1]

## JOE TURNER: BOOGIE WOOGIE AND MORE

Official/Charly 6028

Swinging sides from 1938-49, the King of Boogie Woogie strutting his stuff with giants such as Meade Lux Lewis and Coleman Hawkins. You want to witness the real birth of rock 'n' roll? They could have called this one Rocks [14:1\*] one Roots. [H:1\*]

# VARIOUS: IF IT AIN'T A HIT I'LL EAT MY BABY

Zu-Zazz/Charly Z2009

A dozen absolutely hilarious-but-filthy soul numbers from artists you probably wouldn't expect to hear this way (eg Jackie Wilson), all too raw even to be dubbed 'bawdy'. Listen: the cleanest title on the disc is 'Big Ten Inch', and he ain't singin' about 78s. [X]-rating and for adults only. for adults only.

Warning: Zu-Zazz is planning to bring out a vol.2 if there's enough dirt left in the

archives.

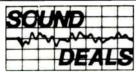
# MUDDY WATERS: THEY CALL ME MUDDY WATERS

Chess/Charly GCH 8109

Odd package combining early 1950s sessions with mid-1960s tracks, a catch-all of MW rarities. The time span turns up some inevitable differences, but the intensity was maintained across the decades. Like the sleeve says: File Under Blues. [H:1/2]

### JOHNNY WINTER BAND: LIVE **BGO Records BGOLP29**

Winter's 1971 live sessions with the hottest, most sympathetic band he's ever employed. More rock than blues – a surprise if you only know him for his Muddy Waters period – and a real scorcher from start to finish. [B:1/1\*]



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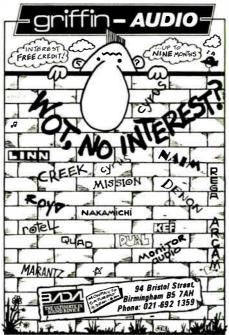
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Rolfe Johnson / Thompson / Lott / SNO / Thomson CHAN 8657 - CD; ABRD / ABTD 1343 - LP & Cassette

Brahms: Serenade No. 1 in D Variations on a Theme by Haydn (St. Anthony)

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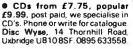
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# BACK DOOL



# KEN KESSLER LOOKS BACK ON THE LEGACY OF THE LATE ROY ORBISON

NE EVENING IN early December, I was discussing Roy Orbison's magnificent recent concert video with a close friend, occasional HFN/RR photographer Patrick Singmin. The next morning. Patrick phoned to tell me Orbison had died of a heart attack.

We had been musing about how easily the old veteran had led a band of relative youngsters; young admirers who, with a bit of assistance from Hollywood, had helped with

his re-emergence.

Orbison never really 'disappeared' after his early-1960s heyday, but the myriad LPs which he released between the hit-making era and the re-emergence in 1987 sold only to the hardcore. Yet there were two clues in the late 1970s which hinted that the Big O still had a lot more to offer than gigs on the revival circuit. Both Regeneration (1977) and Laminar Flow (1979) were too good to be mere flukes, but the timing wasn't right for a full-scale return to 'contemporary' status. We simply had to wait for a trigger.

The trigger was a motion picture, Blue Velvet, which featured the Orbison classic 'In Dreams'. This was enough to remind the world of his abilities. It was followed swiftly by what usually turns out to be a total fiasco: an LP consisting of re-recordings of his hits.

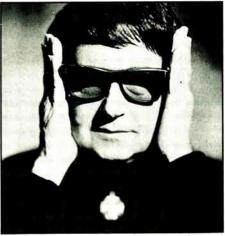
The LP In Dreams (Virgin CGD 3514) broke all the rules. With the exception of Rick Nelson's posthumously issued re-recordings on All The Best, no artist had managed to do remakes to compare with the originals. Of course, much critical slamming is based on nostalgia, purism or - worse - on the attitude that such an act can only be one of desperation; In Dreams turned everyone around, with some arguing that Orbison actually bettered the originals. The 19 tracks, including every major song from his canon, were uniformly superb, the new readings of 'Crying' and 'It's Over' benefiting from the maturity which Orbison couldn't possibly have possessed 20-plus years earlier. It was as if he had channelled all of the tragedy he'd experienced in the interim into these new recordings, his already-heartbreaking delivery enhanced by even greater pain.

The tragedies which must have shaped

Orbison's later life were of a degree which would have caused permanent psychological damage and withdrawal in most of us. It began with the death of his wife Claudette, for whom he wrote 'Oh, Pretty Woman' and 'Claudette' (a hit for the Everly Brothers), in a motorcycle accident in 1966. In 1968, two of his children died in a fire which destroyed his home. Yet Orbison continued to perform, the anguish in his songs intensifying

But Orbison never depressed the listener, and the rockers on In Dreams swing with the spirit of someone who still enjoyed life. By the time that his musical progeny rallied around him in last year's live performances, Orbison was on a roll, the kind of career renewal that could partially offset his great losses. With the likes of Bruce Springsteen, Elvis Costello, T-Bone Burnett and Bonnie Raitt as his backing band, Orbison produced one of the most enjoyable concert videos of its type, right up there with Carl Perkins' and the Everly Brothers' 1980s reappearances.

Throughout his career, Orbison enjoyed the admiration of his peers, which is the only way one can explain the frequency with which his songs were covered. Invariably, they resulted in hits, Linda Ronstadt scoring with 'Blue Bayou', Don McLean with 'Crying' and rockers Van Halen kicking in with 'Oh, Pretty Woman'. I even have a bootleg of the Beatles covering 'Dream Baby' in their circa-



1962 Pete Best period, with Paul McCartney on vocals. The following year, Orbison would headline a UK tour supported by the Beatles.

Still, the best was yet to come. In the autumn of 1988, Orbison appeared as part of the Traveling Wilburys, a superstar line-up including Bob Dylan, Tom Petty, Jeff Lynne and George Harrison - the 1962/3 Beatles connection coming full-circle. With massive promotion from the record label, a terrific video and two sides worth of some of the catchiest material released last year, the Wilbury venture had plastered Orbison's face all over the media. The principals got equal space on the LP, and the performances were notable for the juxtaposition of Orbison's undiminished falsettos alongside Dylan's deeper gruffness. A film and further recordings were in the planning stages when Orbison succumbed to a heart attack. He was 52.

I suppose we must be grateful that he didn't die in obscurity, unappreciated or ignored. If anything, the recognition was flooding in, with the critical acclaim of In Dreams running alongside his induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in January of 1987. On a lesser note, Orbison was also making waves in the audiophile community as it belatedly discovered the sonic excellence of his classic Monument LPs.

The movement started in the USA: ironic because Orbison always enjoyed greater popularity in Europe, especially in the UK. The LPs he recorded with producer Fred Foster (with whom he reunited for Regeneration) and engineer Bill Porter were recognised for their natural, warm sound; this sent collectors scampering for LPs which previously lingered in the second-hand shops with deliriously low prices. Values shot up and Orbison became collectable for all the wrong reasons . . . just as his death will have a similar but necrophilial effect. Luckily Telstar had the good sense to release a magnificent 20-track collection in November 1988 of the original Monument takes, The Legendary Roy Orbison (STAR 2330). Still, I'm sure we won't have to wait too long before the vultures peck through the archives.

Forgetting the sonics, the Orbison catalogue is remarkable for variety as well as sheer musical excellence. A true original (nobody can mimic Orbison the way they do Elvis), his singing was noted for its threeoctave range and his ability to make it climb higher than you imagined possible. Orbison could wrap his voice around rockers as well as ballads, punctuating his delivery with growls which you just wouldn't expect to arrive from the same source as those sweet falsettos.

Yes, Orbison could rock and could sound as nasty as the song required, but it's his way with ballads and tear-jerkers which will be best remembered. The rundown is a litany of great love songs, with 'Only The Lonely', 'It's Over', 'Blue Bayou' and 'Crying' figuring as highly as his more energetic 'Dream Baby' and 'Oh, Pretty Woman'. Eschewing the lounge lizard look of most late 1950s/early 1960s love song crooners, Orbison seemed too down to earth and ordinary; even the adoption of black attire and sunglasses didn't render him sinister in appearance. The man conveyed emotion without resorting to anything other than what he could summon from within and cut through right to your heart. If Orbison had been black, he'd probably have rated with Otis Redding or Howard Tate.

One of Orbison's more vocal fans Bruce Springsteen, speaking in January 1987, has the last word:

'He had the ability, like all great rock 'n' rollers, to sound like he'd dropped in from another planet and yet get the stuff that was right to the heart of what you were livin' in today, and that was how he opened your vision. He made a little town in New Jersey feel as big as the sound of his records'.

Roy Orbison discography

In Dreams (Virgin VGD 3514)
The Legendary Roy Orbison (Telstar STAR 2330)

The Traveling Wilburys Vol I (Wilbury/WEA WX 224)

Most of the Orbison catalogue is out of print, but a number of compilations are available.

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