

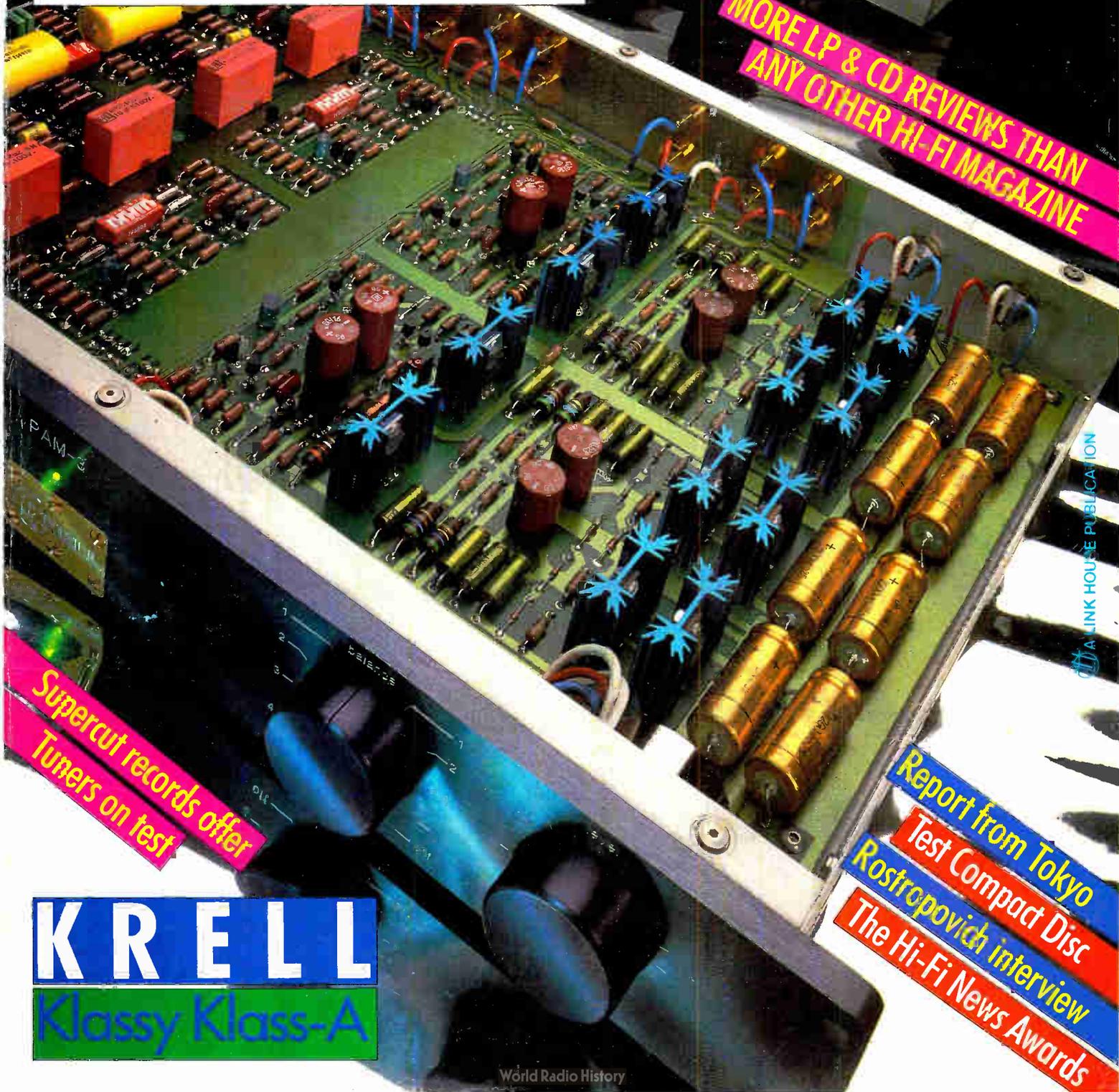
HI-FI NEWS

JANUARY 1986

£1.10

RECORD & REVIEW

MORE LP & CD REVIEWS THAN ANY OTHER HI-FI MAGAZINE



Supercut records offer Tuners on test

Report from Tokyo
Test Compact Disc
Rostropovich interview
The Hi-Fi News Awards

KRELL

Klassy Klass-A

On the face of it, you'd be forgiven for thinking there's not an awful lot of difference, until that is, you listen.

In an instant, the result of endless painstaking research becomes startlingly clear.

Nothing less would do. After all, the SL6 was an extraordinary loudspeaker – a landmark. Only a significant improvement in performance could justify its replacement.

The "significant improvement" is the culmination of several different research projects coming to fruition together and enabling us to take this step forward.

First, the cabinet itself.

If we could improve its rigidity, then colouration would be even further

reduced. The solution finally arrived in the shape of a figure-of-eight bracing panel in the centre. This effectively braced the side, top and bottom panels, raising, whilst at the same time substantially reducing the strength of, their resonant frequencies.

Next, the tweeter.

Look more closely. The SL6S uses a new aluminium dome, which is lighter, and therefore more efficient.

To the more technical, this not only improves sensitivity but, as a result of the better stiffness/weight ratio, the first bending mode is moved outside the audible band – enabling us to use less components in the signal path.

Finally, the bass.

Carefully examine the roll surround

of the driver and you'll notice something unique. Two materials of different flexibility have been bonded together to provide a faster bass with more articulation and attack, revealing greater punch and vitality from many recordings.

Now, perhaps, you see there's more to the new SL6S than meets the eye.

But then, of course, looks are often deceptive.

Celestion International, Ditton Works, Foxhall Road, Ipswich, Suffolk.
Tel: (0473) 73131.

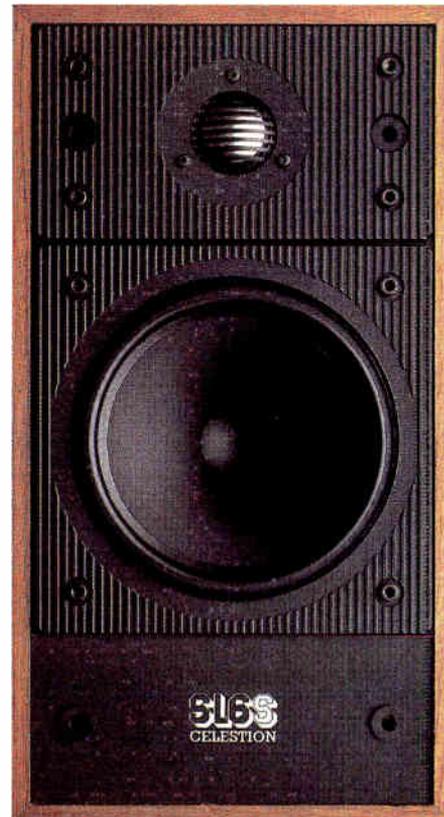
CELESTION
SL

Improving such a widely acclaimed loudspeaker was not quite so simple as it looks.

THE SL6



THE NEW SL6S



HI-FI NEWS

JANUARY 1986

VOLUME 31 NUMBER 1

SUPERCUT RECORDS OFFER
SEE PAGES 98 & 99

COVER

Art Editor John Gash and photographer Tony Petch reflect the US origin of the Krell PAM-3 preamplifier, reviewed by John Atkinson with the class-A KSA-100 power amplifier in this issue. The interior shot reveals the 'Manhattan' layout of its printed circuit board. Can a solid-state preamp compare with the best valve designs? Turn to p57 to find out.

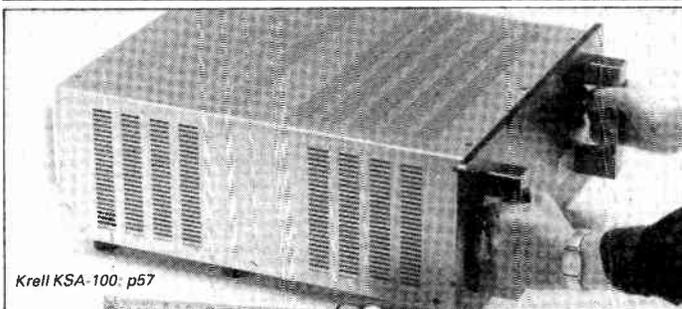
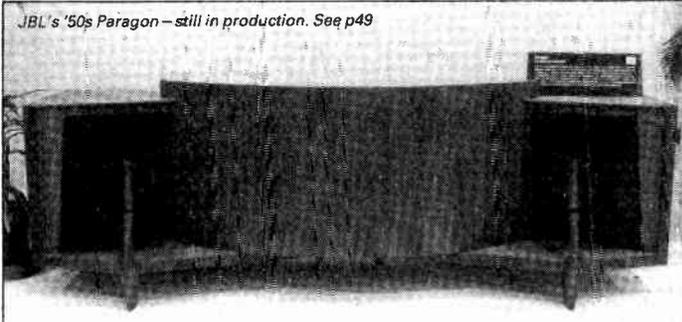
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JBL's '50s Paragon - still in production. See p49



Krell KSA-100: p57

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Ken Kessler celebrates the reunion of the archetypal '80s UK rock band

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cellist and conductor, interviewed by Edward Seckerson

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Music news compiled by Edward Seckerson

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Doug Hammond looks at his music on record

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Peter Herring looks at the *Hi-Fi Today* catalogue of Nimbus-pressed LPs which *HFN/RR* is offering to its readers at just £6.50 plus p&p per title.

103 COMPACT DISC MONITOR

The latest classical silver discs reviewed

138 BACK DOOR

Ken Kessler reviews 1985's best rock releases

EQUIPMENT

TWO KONNEKTIKUT YANKEES AT THE COURT OF ST JAMES

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WHAT'S IN A NAIM? Christopher Breunig offers a preliminary listen to the new Naim preamplifier

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STARTING POINT Martin Collops looks at system optimisation at the £1000 level

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NEXT MONTH

The February issue is going to be packed with equipment reviews! Angus McKenzie starts a two-part in-depth investigation into the latest blank tapes; Martin Collops reviews loudspeakers from Gale, Rogers, KEF, B&O, Morel and Yamaha; Ken Kessler reviews pickup cartridges from Audio Technica, Ortofon, Grado, and Shure; while Philips' new full 16-bit CD player is contrasted with the awesome Meridian MCD-Pro.

Place an order with your news-agent now.

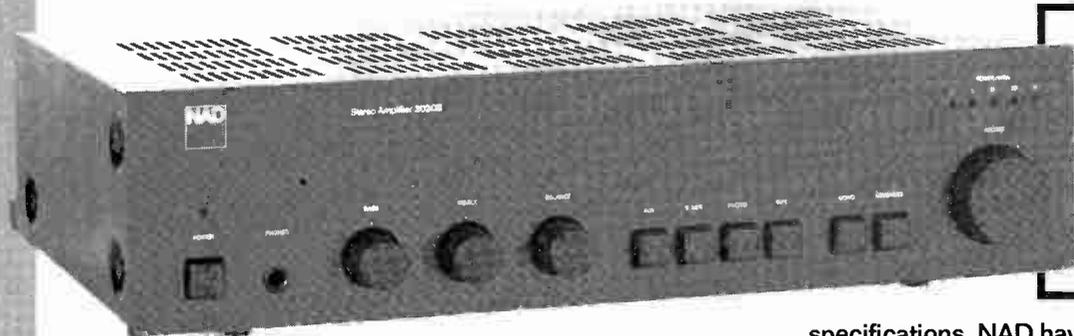
**HFN/RR
TEST COMPACT DISC
SEE P53**



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HI-FI MARKETS

NAD 3020B — Latest of the world acclaimed NAD Amplifiers



- * Heavy-duty binding posts ensure optimum power transfer to the speaker cables
- * Impedance selector increases the amplifier's output by approximately one-third for 8-ohm speakers.
- * Separable pre amplifier and power amplifier

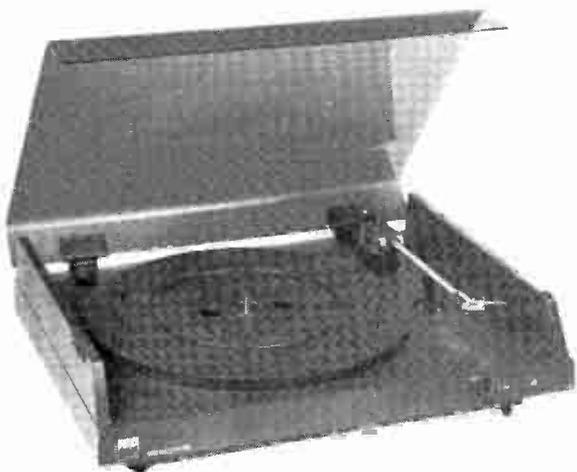
At every stage in its development the NAD 3020 series has been far ahead of all other budget amplifiers — in sound quality and in features. And with the new 3020B, NAD continue to leave the competition standing. In line with NAD philosophy, mere cosmetic changes have been rejected. Only when truly important features were ready for incorporation did NAD produce the 3020B. In their published

specifications, NAD have rated the 3020B very conservatively at 20 watts per channel. In fact, our own laboratory tests show the power output to be 40 watts per channel! And new features such as binding posts, separable pre amplifier and power amplifier, and impedance selector are all of real value to the true audiophile. Come to Hi-Fi Markets and audition the NAD 3020B. It continues the NAD tradition of unbeatable price/performance value.

Hi-Fi Markets Price £139.00

"Sonically the 5120 is in a class of its own"

POPULAR HI-FI September 1983



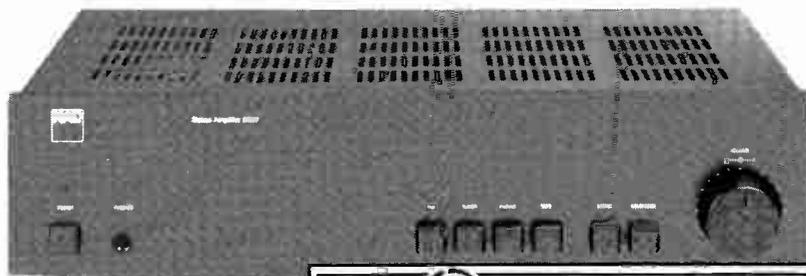
NAD 5120 Turntable

The NAD 5120 combines unique styling, superb record-playing performance and exceptional freedom from resonant colouration and feedback at an amazingly modest price. Complete with tubular tonearm and cartridge.

Hi-Fi Markets Price £109.00



NAD 3120 — minus tone controls



Many audiophiles prefer not to have tone controls on their amplifier and indeed several reviewers have suggested that a version of the NAD 3020 without tone controls would provide an excellent alternative. NAD have

responded by producing the NAD 3120 which is the same as the 3020B but without tone controls. At just £119 it's another world beater.



"Best Buy"
HI-FI CHOICE
FEBRUARY
1985

Hi-Fi Markets Price £119.00

Introducing NAD's fabulous NEW 6130 Cassette Deck

The new NAD 6130 embodies the well-known NAD philosophy of equipment design: in a budget priced product the cost saving must be on the outside — eliminating cosmetic frills and seldom used features in order that the highest performance parts and circuits can be used inside. The quality of the circuitry, the precision of the low-flutter tape transport, the low distortion and wide dynamic range of the MX permalloy head add up to a level of performance, in both recording and playback, that normally is found only on more costly tape decks. Other features of the NAD 6130 include Dolby B and Dolby C noise reduction systems, reliable peak reading LED metres, instant release pause control and microphone input. At Hi-Fi Markets we believe the new 6130 Cassette Deck offers outstanding value for money.

HI-FI MARKETS

NAD 4020B — a great matching Tuner

This superb AM/FM Tuner is the latest version of the highly acclaimed NAD 4020 series tuners incorporating the finest in analogue tuner circuitry. Features include a dual-gate MOSFET front end system for an excellent combination of sensitivity and resistance to overload. The NAD 4020B is the best sounding tuner in its class — we recommend that you audition it at your nearest Hi-Fi Markets store today.



Hi-Fi Markets Price **£139.00**

NEW — A truly "dynamic" power amp from NAD



NAD 1155 Pre Amp

This brand new top specification pre amplifier from NAD incorporates extremely low noise and high headroom for total dynamic range exceeding 102dB in every stage. Independent listen and record input selectors for maximum flexibility. Super low noise MC head pre amp, yielding moving coil playback that actually sounds quieter than high output moving magnet cartridges. Bass EQ and infrasonic filtering for solid powerful deep bass without boomy mid bass.

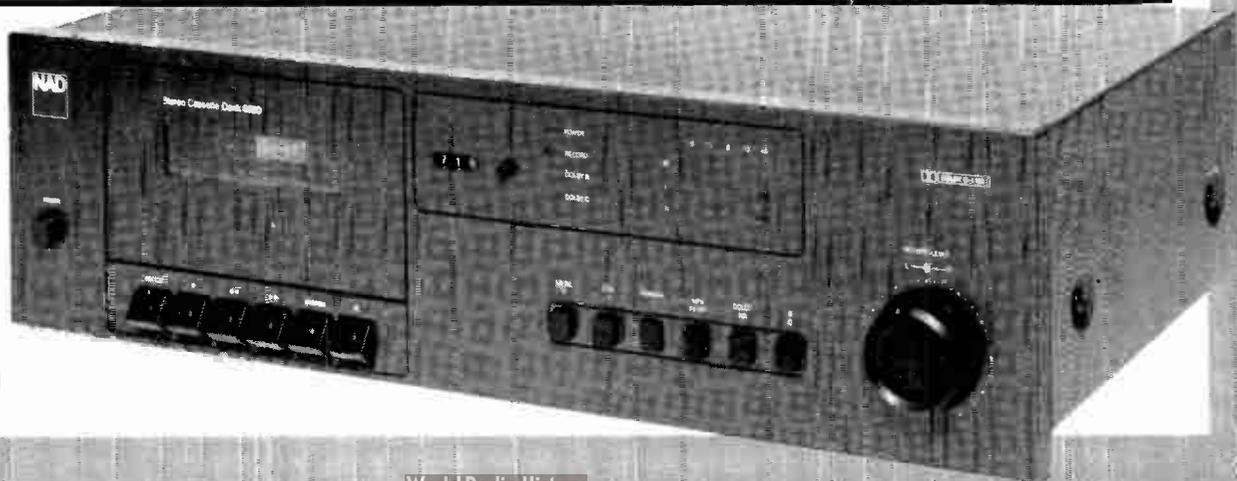
Hi-Fi Markets Price **£179.00**

NAD 2200 Power Amp

rated at only 100 Watts per channel. The NAD 2200 is a truly 'dynamic' power amplifier. Its heart is the unique Power Tracker control circuit, which automatically adjusts the amplifier's maximum power output according to the dynamic character of the signal that is being amplified. The NAD 2200 really has to be heard to be believed. Available at your nearest Hi-Fi Markets store now!

Hi-Fi Markets Price **£339.00**

Hi-Fi Markets are proud to introduce the NAD 2200 Power Tracker. The most powerful amplifier NAD has ever built, the 2200 is specifically designed to give the best reproduction of today's digitally mastered recordings. Reproducing musical signals, the 2200 will routinely deliver 500 Watts per channel into typical loudspeaker impedances, but in size, heat dissipation and cost, it is similar to other amplifiers



Hi-Fi Markets Price **£119.00**

HI-FI MARKETS

2 Fabulous NAD Digital AM/FM Receivers



"In its design and performance NAD's 7140 is an exceptional value ... so outstanding in so many respects ... at its price, its overall performance is unmatched".
STEREO REVIEW
September 1984

NAD 7140 Receiver

Features exclusive NAD impedance selector which delivers maximum power into any speaker impedance. Bass EQ circuit augments the deep-bass response of speakers while infrasonic filter preserves maximum power

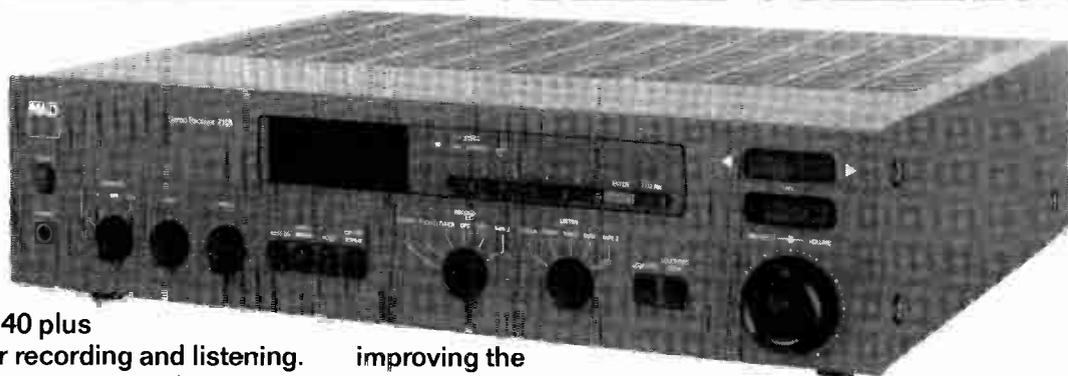
for music. The NAD 7140 is nearly twice as sensitive in FM stereo as other receivers. Power output conservatively rated at 40 W/ch with +3dB IHF Dynamic Headroom (80 W/ch) for peaks.

Hi-Fi Markets Price **£339.00**

"An audiophile best buy ... an outstanding receiver".
HIGH FIDELITY
May 1985

NAD 7155 Receiver

Offers all the features of the 7140 plus independent input selectors for recording and listening. 50dB stereo quieting sensitivity is typically only 22µV and maximum stereo quieting 80dB. A dynamic separation circuit maintains full subjective stereo separation while



improving the quieting of weak stereo signals. Power output conservatively rated at 55 W/ch with +3dB IHF Dynamic Headroom (110 W/ch) for peaks.

Hi-Fi Markets Price **£389.00**

Top Value NAD Amp/Tuner Combo

NAD 3155 Amplifier

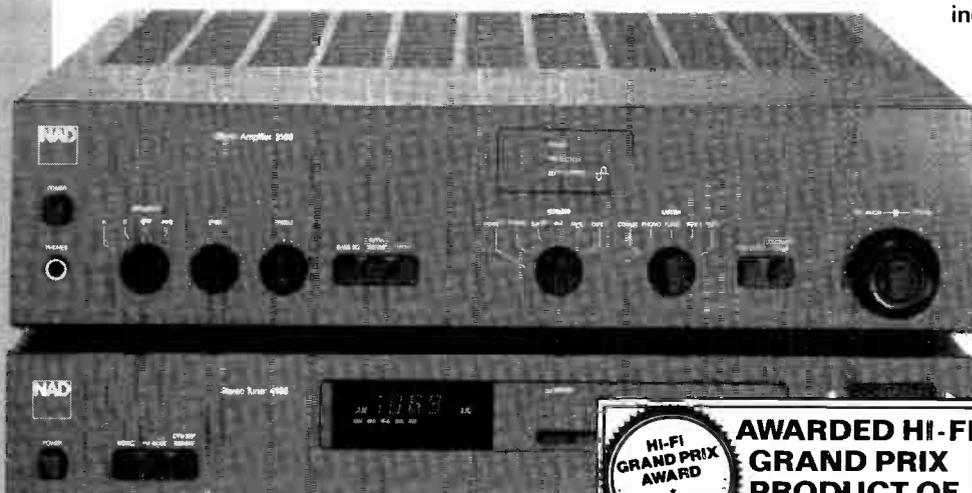
The 3155 is two products in one. As a preamplifier it matches most separate audiophile preamps in sonic performance and surpasses them in operating flexibility. As a high-current high-headroom power amplifier it drives loudspeakers to surprisingly high volume levels with clean, solid, full-bodied musical sound. With flexible and musically useful controls including CD input, very low noise and wide dynamic range, the 3155 represents the kind of value that has made NAD world famous.

Hi-Fi Markets Price **£249.00**

NAD 4155 Digital AM/FM Tuner

Through numerous refinements in front end and I.F. circuits, and NAD's new Dynamic Separation circuit, the NAD 4155 is nearly twice as sensitive as other FM stereo tuners. High AM rejection and low capture ratio suppress multipath interference in both strong and weak signals and there's exceptional immunity to strong-signal overload. Other features include convenient high-precision digital tuning with 5 FM and 5 AM presets.

Hi-Fi Markets Price **£229.00**



AWARDED HI-FI GRAND PRIX PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
AudioMedia

HI-FI MARKETS

Hi-Fi Markets Fantastic Speaker Ranges



New KEF C-Series

With the new C-Series, KEF have held prices constant yet performance and aesthetic improvements abound. The introduction of polypropylene as the new cone material in particular has brought major benefits of reduced colouration and substantially improved efficiency. Many of the C-Series drive units are very similar to those used in the computer matched Reference Series. Consequently they benefit from the same fine engineering.

Hi-Fi Markets Price

KEF C20	£119.00
KEF C30	£149.00
KEF C40	£199.00

AR Speakers

AR have once again broken new ground. Seldom has new speaker technology pleased the eye as beautifully as the ear. The softly curving edges of AR's new Preference series is an important advance in acoustic design, reducing diffraction distortion to a minimum. And new high performance drivers give the Preference series wide dynamic range, adequate power handling and low colouration.

Hi-Fi Markets Price

AR18BX	£99.90
AR19B	£119.90
AR20B	£149.90



Yamaha Speakers as used by Leading Recording Studios

NS-10M Studio Monitors

This speaker known throughout the recording industry for its amazing clarity and deep base penetration, has become a firm favourite with engineers and musicians alike. Its performance in the home has proved just as exciting. With the soft dome tweeters for the highs and a fully sealed enclosure to promote a solid bass, the NS-10's deliver a wide dynamic range particularly effective for today's modern recordings and especially CD's. Finished in Yamaha's sleek black.

Hi-Fi Markets Price
£205.00



Boston Acoustics A40

Hi-Fi Markets are pleased to bring you the Boston Acoustics A40, a compact 2-way bookshelf speaker which has won much critical acclaim. We can strongly recommend this speaker as one of the most cost-effective designs available anywhere. The A40 which features a 6 1/2in acoustic-suspension woofer and 3/4in dome tweeter, delivers exceptional performance at a very low price.

Hi-Fi Markets Price
£109.00



HI-FI MARKETS

Fantastic Yamaha Performance from under £90

Yamaha A-320 Amplifier

Realising that the high current amplifier has been recognised by UK reviewers as being the most musical, Yamaha not only used this concept to produce the A-320 but did so at a price which is absolutely unbeatable. Power output is a powerful 30 watts per channel (8 ohms, 20-20,000Hz) with 0.05% total harmonic distortion, and the A-320 boasts an impressive list of features. Low noise phono equalizer, pure current servo amp, built-in subsonic filter, gold plated phono terminal and CD input. "The cheapest truly worthwhile amplifier on the market... self-evidently the best amp at its price". HI-FI ANSWERS May 1985.

Hi-Fi Markets Price **£89.50**

Yamaha T-320 AM/FM Tuner

Matching tuner to the A-320, the Yamaha T-320 ensures extremely high broadcast reception quality with the use of exclusive Yamaha tuning technologies. It offers an attractive choice to those tuner enthusiasts who prefer the manual control and "feel" of analogue tuning with a large, heavy tuning knob. Yamaha's Pilot Tone Multiplex tuning system provides extremely high broadcast reception quality, and tuning is aided with a 3-segment signal quality meter. No automated functions, just high quality with pure and simple operation.

Hi-Fi Markets Price **£89.50**



Yamaha K-220 Cassette Deck

The K-220 is an attractive combination of high reproduction quality, automated convenience features, and real affordability. Features not normally found on cassette decks at this price are standard on the K-220 — the high performance of Dolby C noise reduction and full logic controls are just two examples. Then there's 2 motor microcomputer transport control for smooth, positive switching and fast action with all transport operations.

Hi-Fi Markets Price **£119.00**

Yamaha A-420 Amplifier

Low impedance drive capability enables the A-420 to drive two sets of speakers simultaneously or use low impedance speaker systems without the worry of amplifier shut-off or system damage. And the A-420 features very high dynamic power, enabling it to deliver large volumes of power in response to transient peaks and to reproduce the full dynamic range of high quality music sources such as digital audio discs. The Yamaha A-420 delivers levels of performance that can only be found on much more expensive units. Without doubt another Yamaha winner.

Hi-Fi Markets Price **£139.50**

Yamaha T-520 AM/FM Tuner

Matching tuner to the A-420, the T-520 offers new front panel design giving greater readability of frequency and signal quality displays. A total of 8 AM and 8 FM stations can be preset for instant, one-touch tuning. The FM stereo/mono mode is also memorized along with the station's frequency. And the new IF count PLL synthesizer tuning system used in the T-520 ensures easy, one touch tuning with a highly accurate stop detection circuit that minimizes error in the reception process and provides consistently precise tuning.

Hi-Fi Markets Price **£139.50**



"It turned in superior sound to the ... at less than a quarter of the price".
THE FLAT RESPONSE October 1985

Yamaha K-320 Cassette Deck

Outstanding sound reproduction quality and sophisticated features make the K-320 the highest performing cassette deck in its class. There's a high sensitivity hard permalloy head and Yamaha's original 2 motor transport with micro computer controls. The K-320 also offers Dolby B and C, 7 segment LED peak meter, intro scan forward and reverse, music search facility, record return, auto record mute and auto source change.

Hi-Fi Markets Price **£155.00**

HI-FI MARKETS

FREE OFFER with Yamaha 'Best Buy' Compact Disc Players



Yamaha CD-3 Compact Disc Player

The CD-3 continues the Yamaha tradition of excellence in compact disc player performance, with refinements in circuit design and functions that offer simple straightforward operation. And it comes with a remarkably low price tag, making the high reproduction quality of a top-grade CD player more affordable than ever before. A 12 mode remote control unit is supplied with the CD-3, for total control over all player functions.

Hi-Fi Markets
Price **£349.00**



"Best Buy"
HI-FI CHOICE
SUMMER
1985

FREE

Offer available while stocks last



Buy either of these Yamaha Compact Disc Players at Hi-Fi Markets and we will include FREE a Yamaha YCL-1 compact disc cleaner plus a digitally recorded compact disc featuring 50 minutes of contemporary music recorded specially at Yamaha's R&D studio.



Yamaha CD-X2 Compact Disc Player

With the new CD-X2, Yamaha have managed to produce a compact disc player which amazingly surpasses its predecessor, the critically acclaimed CD-X1. The Yamaha CD-X2 features music search (track, index and normal), repeat (full track programme), random memory and play (9 selection). The Yamaha CD-X2 is a real thoroughbred unit, offering value that simply cannot be beaten.

Hi-Fi Markets Price £249.00

2 Superb Yamaha Audiophile Units

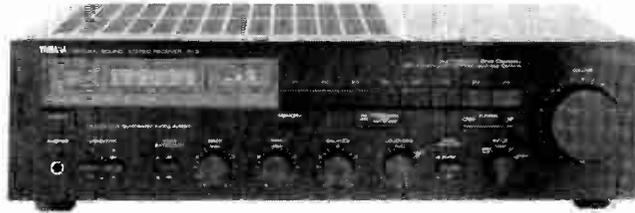
Yamaha A-520 Amplifier



The A-520 is equipped with Zero Distortion Rule circuitry which eliminates amplifier induced distortion by comparing the shape of the signal as it enters and leaves the amplifier section. Power output is 75 Watts per channel and with low impedance drive capability the A-520 lets you drive two sets of speakers simultaneously. Switchable-gain amplifier design permits direct input of MC cartridges plus MM types. Continuously variable loudness control provides precise subjective tonal response at any listening level and 6 switchable inputs offer extended system flexibility.

Hi-Fi Markets Price £189.00

Yamaha R-3 AM/FM Receiver



The R-3 is a 35 W/ch receiver offering outstanding value for money. Designed for high dynamic power and low-impedance drive capability, the R-3 is ideally suited for high fidelity reproduction of today's digital audio sources and a wide range of low-impedance speaker systems. The tuner section features the new IF Count PLL Synthesizer tuning system, for maximum tuning accuracy with preset and Auto Search tuning, and 8 AM/FM preset station tuning provides one-touch tuning convenience. Auto Search and manual Up/Down tuning and independent speaker A/B selectors are also provided.

Hi-Fi Markets Price £179.00

HI-FI MARKETS

Hi-Fi Markets Best Value Cartridges & Accessories

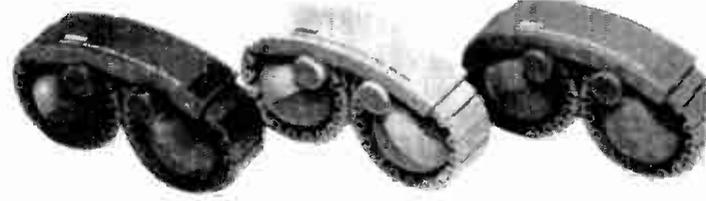
New Goldring G1000 Cartridges

The G1000 series has a strong one-piece body construction and incorporates ultra rigid glass reinforced polyester pocan — the latest development in material technology. The result is a range of advanced, high quality magnetic cartridges which offer outstanding performance, consistency and reliability for the audiophile and budget hi-fi owner alike.



- Goldring G1010** with Elliptical stylus **£29.95**
- Goldring G1020** with van den Hul Type 2 stylus **£44.95**
- Goldring G1040** with van den Hul Type 1 stylus **£69.95**

Yamaha YHL-006 Headphones



Available in black, red or grey, the YHL-006 offer a new dimension in headphone performance — and fashion. Designed by Porsche, they feature unique wrap-around styling that's contemporary, yet functional. Extremely lightweight and compact, their form-fitting headband and earpiece design provides optimum pressure for maximum listening comfort. And they roll up tightly to fit easily into pocket or purse.

Hi-Fi Markets Price £29.50

Goldring EPIC Cartridges

A new magnetic cartridge of advanced design which delivers the performance and quality of much more expensive models. The diamond tip bonded to a sapphire shank yields a lower tip mass for accurate high frequency tracking.



"The EPIC is a winner"
WHAT HI-FI July 1984

Hi-Fi Markets Price £16.50

NAD Mat

The NAD Mat is a full 5 millimetres thick, has a smooth lower surface which makes uniform contact with the entire platter area, and is made of carefully selected soft-rubber compound with optimum density and pliancy for efficient absorption of most audio-frequency vibrations.



Hi-Fi Markets Price £9.95

NAD Cartridges

NAD 9100
The NAD 9100 cartridge has been awarded a 'Best Buy' by HI-FI CHOICE.

Hi-Fi Markets Price £11.50

NAD 9200
This highly acclaimed cartridge has taken its place amongst our foremost budget cartridges due to its excellent performance and value for money.

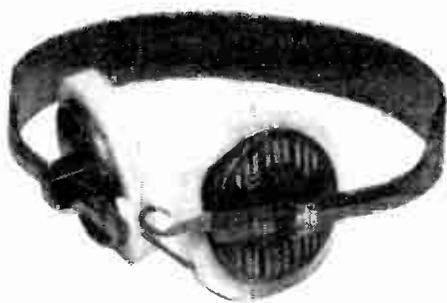
Hi-Fi Markets Price £25.00



"Ahead of any of the cartridges discussed so far"
WHAT HI-FI October 1983

Sennheiser HD410 Headphones

The HD410 is a prime example of why Sennheiser headphones are so popular with Hi-Fi Markets customers. They offer high quality and balanced, natural sound and are also very light and comfortable. Like all Sennheiser headphones the HD410 is fitted with well-proven, extremely durable steel connecting cable.



Hi-Fi Markets Price £19.99

Dual Turntables



The Dual CS 505 turntables have always been very popular with Hi-Fi Markets customers. The new Mark 2 models offer an improved head shell mounting to give an even better performance. Hi-Fi Answers wrote "You can't buy better at the price" in April 1985.

Dual CS 505-II CS 505-II Deluxe
Phone for latest prices

HI-FI MARKETS

Hi-Fi Markets - the largest specialist hi-fi retailer in the country

AVON

Bath
C. Milsons
11/12 Northgate St. Tel: 0225 65975

Bristol
Hi-Fi Markets
36 Union Street. Tel: 0272 294183

Radford Hi-Fi
52-54 Gloucester Rd. Tel: 0272 428248

Weston Super Mare
Paul Roberts Hi-Fi
203 Milton Road. Tel: 0934 414423

BEDFORDSHIRE

Bedford
Bedford Audio-Comm
76 Bedford Road, Kempston. Tel: 0234 854133

DUNSTABLE

Ashtons
6 High Street South. Tel: 0582 608003

BERKSHIRE

Bracknell
B & B Hi-Fi
The Pavilion, Princess Square.
Tel: 0344 424556

MALDENHEAD

Hi-Fi Markets
18 King Street. Tel: 0628 73420

NEWBURY

B & B Hi-Fi
62 Northbrook Street. Tel: 0635 32474

READING

B & B Hi-Fi
36 Minster Street. Tel: 0734 583730

WINDSOR

Radford Hi-Fi
43 King Edward Court. Tel: 95 56931

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Aylesbury

Aylesbury Hi Fidelity
98 Cambridge Street. Tel: 0296 28790

High Wycombe

B & B Hi-Fi
4 Priory Road. Tel: 0494 35910

Milton Keynes

JCV Hi-Fi & Video Superstore
1 Viscount Way, Dukes Drive,
Bletchley. Tel: 0908 367341

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Cambridge

Hi-Fi Markets
19-20 Market Street. Tel: 0223 312240

Peterborough

The Hi-Fi People
42 Cowgate. Tel: 0733 41755

CHESHIRE

Chester

Peters Hi-Fi
4 St Michaels Square
Grosvenor Precinct. Tel: 0244 21568

Warrington

Doug Brady Hi-Fi
Kingsway Studios, Kingsway North.
Tel: 0925 828009

Wilmslow

Swift of Wilmslow
4/8 St. Annes Parade. Tel: 0625 526213

CLEVELAND

Middlesbrough

Gilson Audio
172 Borough Road. Tel: 0642 248793

CORNWALL

Truro

E.T.S. Electriccentres
25 King Street. Tel: 0872 79809

CUMBRIA

Barrow In Furness

Searle Audio
223-225 Rawlinson St. Tel: 0229 21233

DERBYSHIRE

Chesterfield

Audioscene
132 Chatsworth Road, Brampton.
Tel: 0246 204005

Derby

Active Audio
12 Osmaston Road, The Spot.
Tel: 0332 360385

DEVON

Exeter

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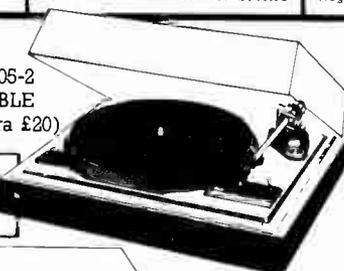
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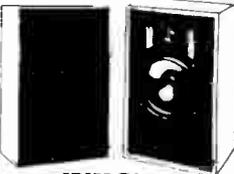
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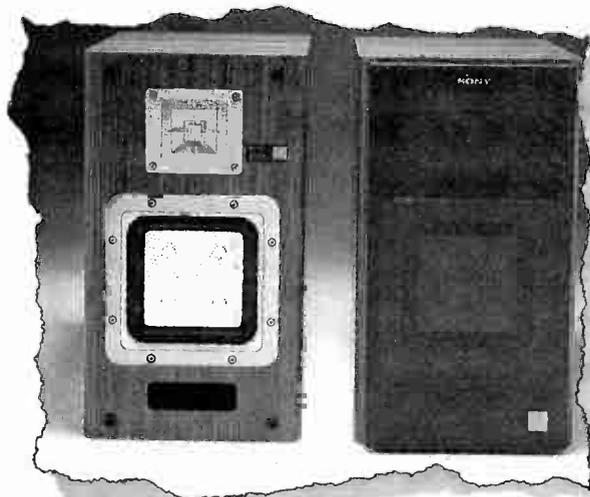
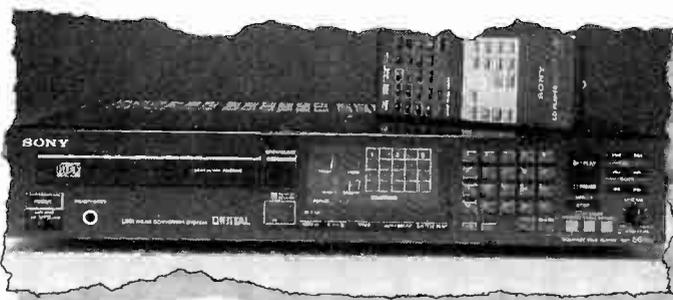
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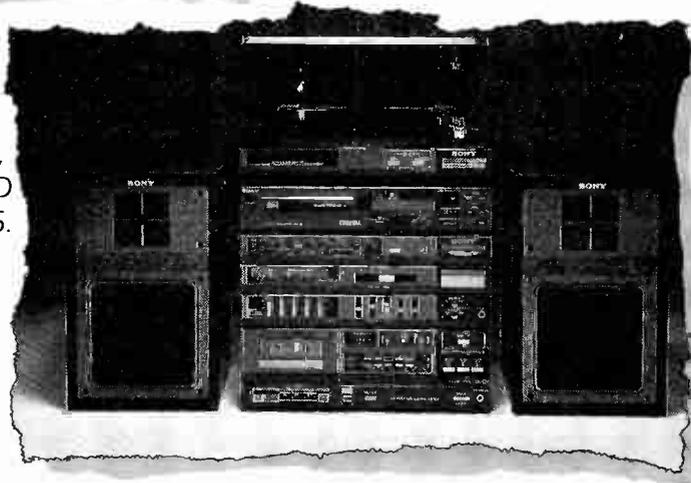
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Editorial and Advertising offices:
LINK HOUSE, DINGWALL AVENUE
CROYDON, CR9 2TA.
Telephone: 01-686 2599
Telex: 947709

EDITOR
JOHN ATKINSON

DEPUTY EDITOR
IVOR HUMPHREYS

ASSISTANT EDITOR
KEN KESSLER

ART EDITOR
JOHN GASH

PRODUCTION EDITOR
LINDA FIELDHOUSE

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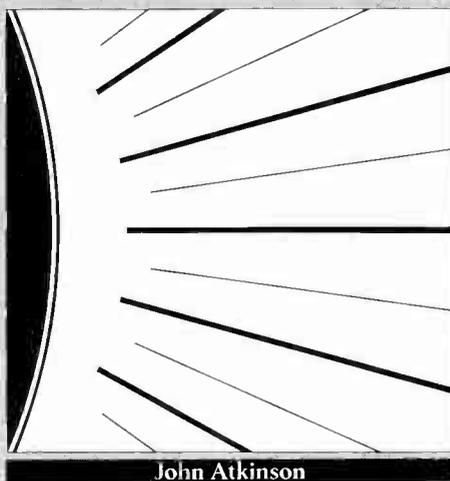


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IF YOU WERE NOT aware of the existence of the specialist hi-fi press, then you would be forgiven for thinking that the British hi-fi industry had long since gone the way of the British motorbike industry, smothered under a flood of imports from the Far East. Such media shakers and movers as Derek Jameson and Sir Peter Parker (now Chairman of Mitsubishi UK) reinforced this opinion recently, on TV-AM and Radio 4



John Atkinson

respectively, the latter even adding a gratuitous joke to the effect that you could hardly expect the British to export hi-fi to Japan. But if you turn to my report from the Tokyo Audio Fair on p49 you will see that, indeed, the British *do* export hi-fi equipment to Japan – it is a shame that Sir Peter Parker, who was in Japan at the same time as I, didn't walk around a few shops in the Akihabara district before forming his opinions and disseminating them.

However, perhaps I am being a bit harsh on the former Chairman of British Rail, as if he had only visited British High Street stores – Dixons, Rumbelows etc, and had managed to avoid one of the many branches of Laskys – he would not have seen one piece of British hi-fi kit. (Well, yes, he would have seen Amstrad, but you don't refer to something that sounds worse than a portable cassette/radio as hi-fi, do you?)

From Korea to the USA, Finland to Italy, New Guinea to Canada, British hi-fi can be found in specialist shops: Quad, B&W, KEF, Decca, Celestion, Mission, Linn, Rogers, Naim, A&R, Meridian, Exposure... there is hardly a British company that doesn't earn a good deal of its income from foreign sales. Many British products even have an enviable reputation, as mentioned by Harry Pearson in this issue in his essay on transparency on p37 (as fine a piece of writing as I've had the pleasure to read). The Linn Sondek, for example, has become an *ipso facto* world standard turntable. Yet the mass media informs the British public that there is no British hi-fi industry!

Part of the reason for this, of course, is that opinions reflect to a large extent the amount of money spent on promulgating those opinions. Each year the Far Eastern companies spend several times the annual turnover of all the British companies combined on convincing the public to buy Japanese – a far cry from the theoretical free market situation where it is assumed that consumers have equal access to information on all the competing products. (It mustn't be forgotten, either, that the UK subsidiary companies of the Japanese headhunted the cream of the senior salesman and managers who trained in the UK radio and television industry in the '50s and '60s.)

Aware of this domestic credibility problem, the two UK hi-fi trade organisations – the Federation of British Audio (FBA) and the British Audio Dealers Association (BADA) – started an advertising campaign to run in the mass media in December, aimed at the non-enthusiast public. It publicises what is hoped to be an efficient 'helpline' service so that those attracted by the idea of buying British can easily find their way to a BADA dealer and once there, can buy the equipment best suited to their needs. It aims to inform them

that British hi-fi equipment will provide music in the home over a long period of time without deteriorating or needing service. It aims to inform them that UK equipment may not be the cheapest around, but offers something that too many of the Far Eastern products do not, namely the reproduction of music. The Japanese, it implies, have concentrated over-much on flashing lights at the expense of sound quality, resulting in

widespread dissatisfaction amongst British consumers.

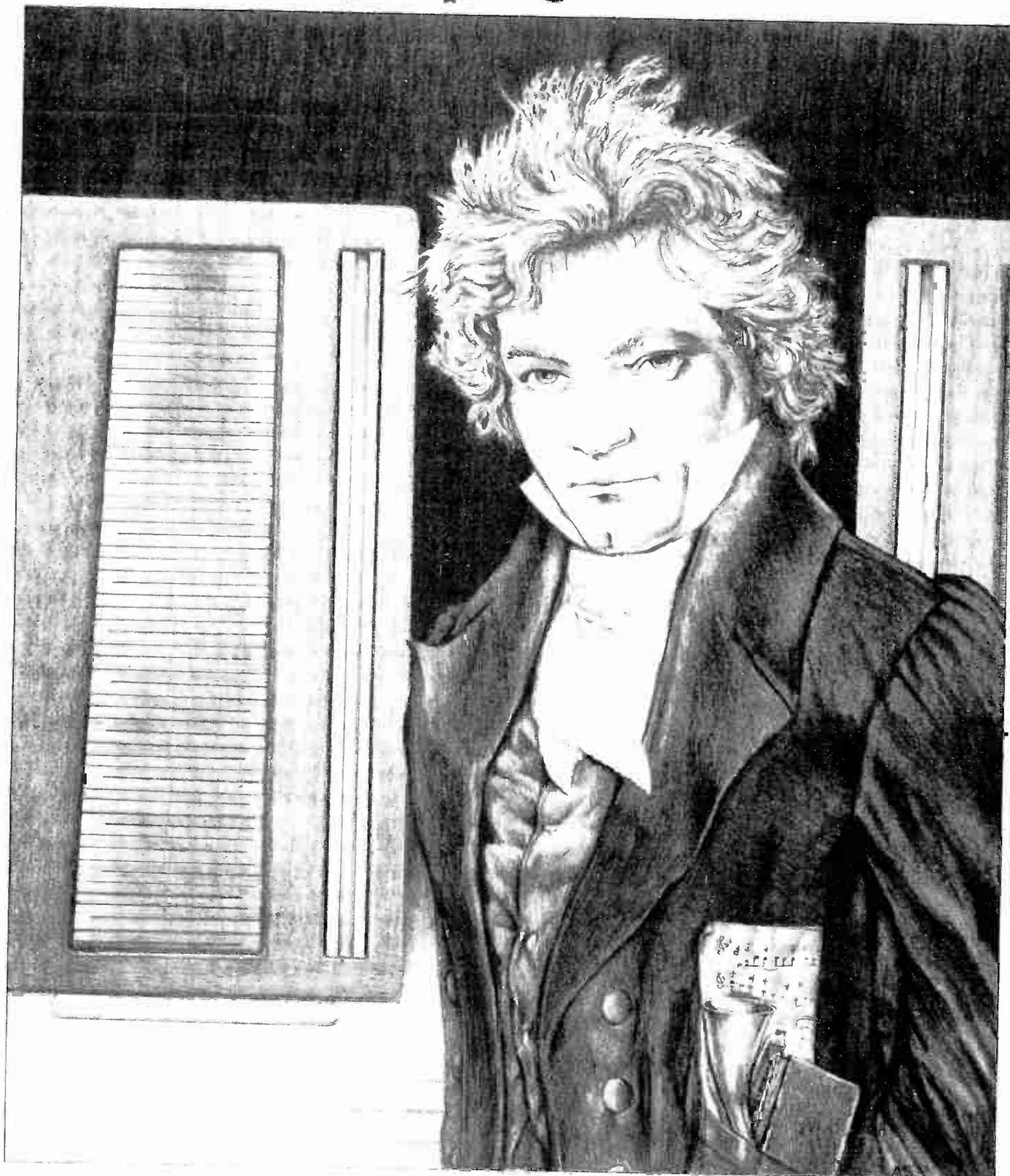
To be honest, while wishing the UK manufacturers success in their campaign – tempering that with an expressed belief that patriotism should not be the *main* reason for choosing a specific piece of equipment – I am not sure that this quoted dissatisfaction exists. Although most households have sound reproducing equipment and the majority of that equipment performs to a very low standard – particularly the analogue turntable – are those households unhappy?

I think not. You may be able to demonstrate to them the benefits of buying British, but I am sure that too often the entry level price for 'real' hi-fi in their homes will be seen as too high. To a consumer who regards a hi-fi system as a durable akin to a refrigerator or washing machine, the subtleties of performance come a poor second to price. (And why not? Unless an audio system is truly execrable, the listener's brain puts back the missing information. Even an AM broadcast will give enough clues for the music to be reconstructed.) Only when British products are able to compete on price and facilities – people want more than one source with the appropriate flashing lights – will they start to displace the Japanese from the mass market. Successful marketing not only means being able to make the world aware of your better mousetrap; it means making the mousetrap the world desires and then making it available at a price the world will pay.

By all means make the British public aware of the existence of the British hi-fi industry. I am sure that any Brit would share my pride in seeing the Tannoy speakers welcoming the Japanese to the Tokyo Audio Fair. But I don't think that he or she would then rush out and buy a UK LP-only system for £1000. It has taken 15 years for the Oriental companies to achieve their domination of the UK market. If the UK hi-fi industry is to stand a chance of reversing that situation, it must walk before it can run. In the near future, at least, that means relying on that fraction of the mass market who desire intrinsic 'quality' – you only buy a hi-fi once every 10 years, you might as well buy something good. But to promote relatively expensive British hi-fi to a mass market which prefers the *Sun* to *The Guardian* by a factor of 10 to 1: forgive me but I think the FBA and BADA are on to a hiding to nothing with the campaign as presently constituted, particularly with an advertisement which resembled a particularly intimidating income tax return. The sights should be set a little – or a lot – lower, and the target audience more clearly defined. Then and only then, after a period of one, two, three or more years can the FBA attack the world. ♪

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 *HFNR* 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 *HFNR* are available from *Modern Bookbinders* Chadwick Street, Blackburn, Lancs. 1971 to 1982 are covered by two binders (Jan-June/July-Dec); subsequent years require one binder each. Price £3.50 each (post paid). For earlier years, please ask for a quotation.

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... about dropping to the bottom

From: Raymond G Wood, Aberdeen, Scotland

Dear Sir, *HFN/RR* over the past year or so has, I feel, dropped to the bottom of the league in hi-fi reading. Your attempts to promote debate in the Editorial column are churlish at times, particularly on your current issue of 'objective vs subjective'.

In the November issue you even 'twist' the Coke story to fit your argument. Coca-Cola, in my opinion, did not commit a 'scientific' error but a marketing one. I feel they wrongly came to the conclusion that the shortfall in the marketplace was due to a product deficiency when in fact they were just not strong enough in promotion and sales. In fact, I feel, they were only temporarily out of touch with the marketplace, a point I think you are guilty of as of now.

Your obsession with up-market products that cost too much and your insistence on devoting so much space to them at the expense of the rest is but one example of how you are out of touch with the majority of your readers. Your attempt to correct this state of affairs with Kessler's (and your) destructive review of the Pioneer (*HFN/RR* Nov) system is pathetic. Kessler's effort only confirms my view that he writes for his, and your, amusement.

While on the subject of the November issue, I feel this one smells of a rush job, perhaps because of the more important, to you, Penta show. Why else do we have to read such irrelevant guff as *The Loud, The Fast & The Subtle, Things... Pot Pourri* extended to four pages and, apart from the many subtle mentions elsewhere in the issue, two reviews of the Well-Tempered Arm. Yet again you bore me (and how many others?) with a review of a Yankee £9000 tone control. I feel it is high time you and Colloms came back down to earth among the mere mortals who buy the magazine. I don't object to any of you passing your time playing around with the likes of Pallettes, Apogees etc, but do not expect this reader to pay for the 'pleasure' of reading about it.

I have never succumbed to buying any of your items offered through the Accessories Club as the majority border on the ludicrous. The latest idea, sticking something on the reverse of CDs, is laughable.
Yours faithfully

... about misguided idiots

From: Scott W Montague, Hurstpierpoint, Sussex

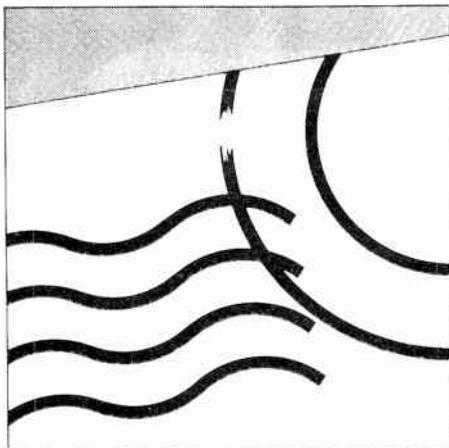
Dear Sir, You poor misguided idiots! How on earth could you have allowed Sue Hudson's ill-advised and badly researched tirade ('Back Door', September) to appear in what used to be a reputable journal. In case it had escaped your attention, the DG recording of Bernstein's *West Side Story* was cast and conducted by the composer!! Similarly, Gershwin composed *Porgy & Bess* as a serious attempt at full-scale opera, not grand or folk opera.

Meanwhile, Peter Herring's thesis on a sadly neglected George Butterworth was a masterpiece of journalistic writing. Butterworth was a sad loss to British music. What a hellish place to die, just to protect the idle rich.
Yours faithfully

... about the future of surround-sound

From: John Crabbe, London SE25

Dear Sir, I'd like to respond to some of the



points made by Ormand Henderson in his delightful November 'Pot Pourri' essay. He clearly expected to make us all angry, but although I am puzzled that after a lifetime of listening to music anyone can still believe JS Bach to be mathematically unapproachable, I do agree with many of Mr Henderson's judgements, and in particular wholeheartedly share his enthusiasm for Richard Strauss' sadly underrated *Alpine Symphony*. I also agree that tone controls are an essential part of hi-fi hygiene – unless one simply refuses to notice that recordings and broadcasts sometimes cry out for tonal adjustment.

However, my main wish is to take up Mr Henderson's dismissal of surround-sound. While accepting the failure of yesteryear's highly compromised Quadraphonic systems, it is worth noting that some of the spare capacity available on CD could easily be used to accommodate additional ambient information. Ambisonic recording can provide the means for realistically capturing the sound of the studio in which music is performed, and if this extra information were freed from the present two-channel 'stereo compatible' constraints by means of digital encoding on CD, a new world of possibilities could be opened.

It is quite easy even with much ordinary stereo to add a worthwhile extra sense of space by means of variations on the Hafler rear-speaker trick, and, echoing Mr CH Cater ('Views' November), it must be emphasized that the cramped listening rooms to which Mr Henderson refers are the very ones which can benefit most from recreated ambience, whether pseudo or genuine.

Small loudspeakers of low coloration are now easy to come by, and for most types of signal the relatively limited bass response is no obstacle to their use for reproducing indirect sounds. The extra clutter and expense can in fact be minimal, while the gain in musical involvement is potentially enormous. Reproduction of the recording venue's acoustic can provide a quite shattering sense of being present at an actual performance, and has remained embedded in my mind as an ideal to strive for ever since I first heard it done properly some 20 years ago – on four-track tapes made in Boston Symphony Hall. Now at last we have the technical means (via Ambisonics, compact amp modules, small speakers, and CD) to achieve it domestically without enormous bulk or expense.

Regarding expense, it's very annoying, of course, that CD prices are going up ('Comment', December) but I surely don't need to remind Mr Henderson that way back in 1950 the 12in. LP cost nearly £2, which was the equivalent of rather more than the price of present-day CDs. The truth is that the

cost of recorded music has steadily declined in real terms for many years, to the point where the classical LP has tended to become an uneconomic albatross. In my heretical (elitist?) view, the record companies should if anything raise the price of LPs in order to keep CD prices steady – at least for the time-being – so that the market is tipped more rapidly towards the new medium. I know they've got to amortize those CD pressing plants (built to meet the demand which Mr Henderson can't believe exists), but it is surely short-sighted to respond to high sales with the knee-jerk commercial reaction of a price increase so soon after the launch of a pioneering new product.

Well now, perhaps Mr Henderson and I are in limited agreement after all – although I've tried without success to discover the amorous orgy which he finds so explicit in the Sibelius Violin Concerto. Ed Seckerson keeps finding sensuality and sex in the music of Prokofiev and Scriabin, and one friend of mine regards Wagner's *Tristan* as the apotheosis of the erotic. But Sibelius? I love his music, but find his settings too gaunt and icy for sexual passion. But it would be interesting to know how other people react on this topic. Would readers care to send the Editor their shortlists of the sexiest music, with brief notes on how or why?
Yours faithfully

... about the 1985 Heathrow Show

From: David F Garrard, Hampton Hill, Middlesex

Dear Sir, I feel that John Borwick's condemnation (*Gramophone* November 1985) of the Link House Penta Hotel Hi-Fi Show as 'the most disappointing UK Hi-Fi exhibition of all time' is both untrue and premature.

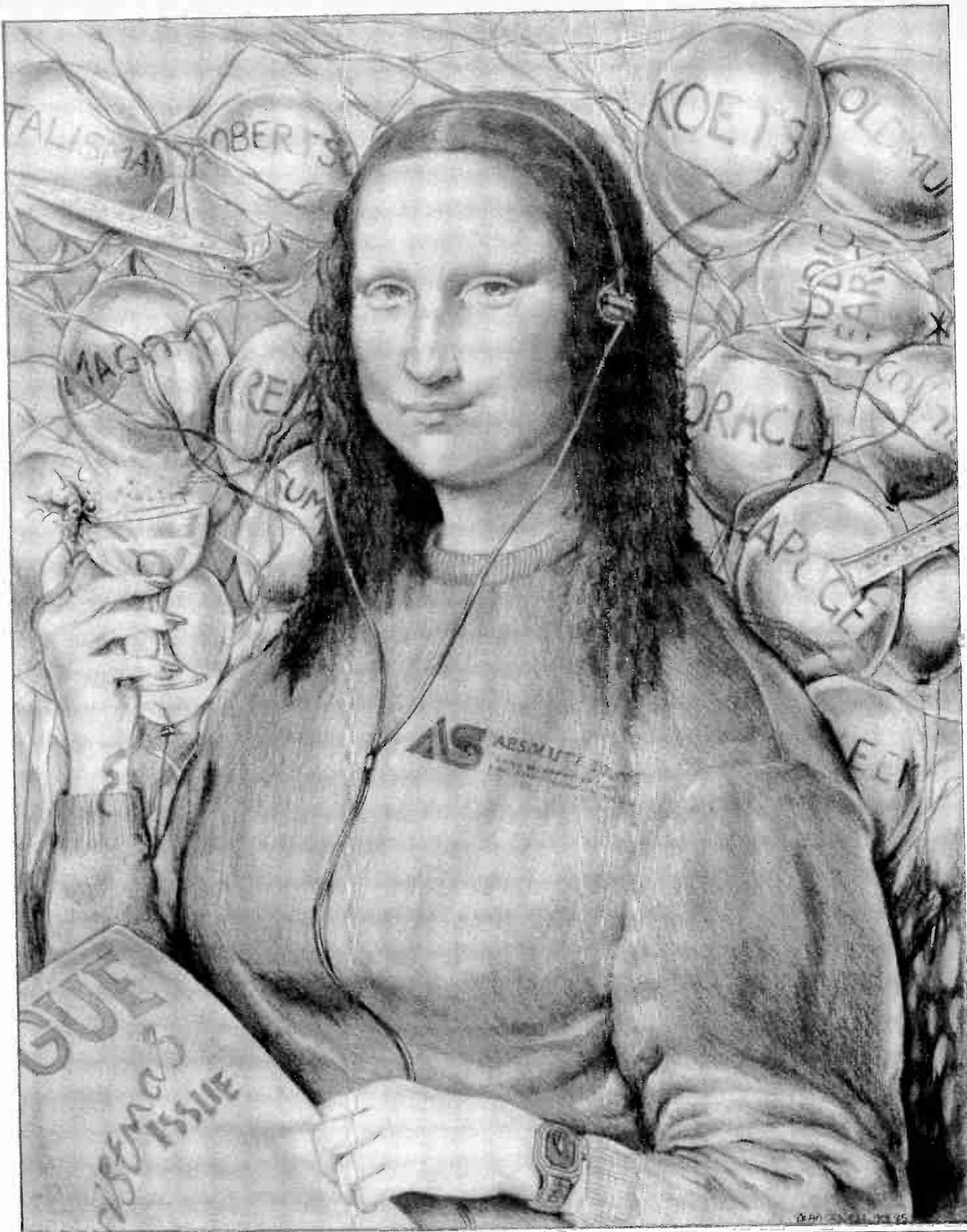
My first reaction on the Friday evening, after a quick tour round the various rooms, was that it was a much inferior show to the one in 1984. However, I returned on the Sunday and booked into the Absolute Sound and Burmester demonstrations, and the *HFN/RR* listening test sessions [results p45 – Ed]. I also spent a considerable time listening to the continuous demonstrations being run with Beard/Audiostatic, Perreux/Gale equipment, and other equipment of this standard. The result was that I spent an enjoyable and worthwhile day at the Penta show.

A few weeks later, I took the Friday afternoon off work to attend the FBA-backed Sound and Vision 85 show at the Westmoreland Hotel. This time my first reaction, after a quick tour round the various rooms, was that it was an appalling show that had little to do with Hi-Fi. However, I retraced my steps more slowly; but this time it merely confirmed my first reaction. There was virtually no equipment worthy of serious auditioning, and very little that was any better than my current system (that is to say Quad, not exotical!). Needless to say I did not return to this show (in fact I spent only two hours there, one hour of which was hanging around waiting for the latest issue of *HFN/RR* hot from the press).

Given the choice (which I doubt there will be next year), I will certainly visit a (free entry) non-FBA-backed Link House show, and will not even consider wasting the tube fare on a (£1.50 entry) FBA-backed 'Sound and Vision' show.
Yours faithfully

... about squarewaves & filters

From: Professor MB Priestley, Dept of Mathematics, The University of Manchester



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'We would like to extend our thanks to all our customers in 1985 and wish them all a happy and prosperous New Year.'

Institute of Science and Technology, PO Box 88, Manchester.

Dear Sir, In your October issue you published a letter from Mr SC Churchill together with a reply from the Editor. Mr Churchill maintained that an amplifier which had an ideal flat response from 20Hz to 20kHz would pass a 1Hz squarewave in an undistorted form, arguing that a Fourier analysis of such a wave contains no components with frequencies lower than 20Hz. In your reply you disputed Mr Churchill's arguments and commented that Fourier analysis tells us only about 'the amplitudes of in-phase harmonics' but does not indicate the required bandwidth.

I am unclear as to what is meant by the phrase 'amplitudes of in-phase harmonics' (it should be recalled that a Fourier series contains both sine and cosine terms), but the essential point which needs to be emphasized is that a given waveform and its Fourier representation are *completely equivalent*, both mathematically and physically. The situation which you cited in order to refute Mr Churchill's argument was the case where the low frequency end of the amplifier response is attenuated by a capacitor in series with the input signal. It is certainly true that in this case a squarewave would be distorted, but the simple explanation for this is that such a crude high-pass filter not only affects frequency components below 20Hz, but also affects frequency components *above* 20Hz. This is quite different from the 'ideal' case quoted by Mr Churchill in which the amplifier has a completely flat response over the range 20Hz to 20kHz. Mr Churchill's assertion is therefore completely correct.

You may, of course, argue that in real life it is impossible to construct an ideal band-pass filter with a rectangular-shaped frequency response function, and that consequently, in order to ensure that the response is reasonably flat down to 20Hz, it is necessary for the response to extend well below this frequency. However, it is certainly possible to construct high-pass filters which have a much sharper response than the very simple series capacitor referred to in your example, and although the 'transients' of such a filter would take some time to decay, the steady-state response would be much closer to Mr Churchill's example.

I make these remarks about Fourier representations not only in relation to the Editor's reply to Mr Churchill's letter, but also in response to comments which have appeared in previous issues of *HFN/RR*. It has often been asserted that Fourier analysis may give misleading implications when applied to amplifier circuitry and the suggestion is that such devices behave differently when presented with the original waveform than when presented with its Fourier representation. This is totally incorrect, and as noted above, the two are completely equivalent. The confusion arises, I believe, from a failure to note that with non-linear devices the *principle of superposition* no longer holds – as it would in the case of an ideal linear system. This means that in studying non-linear systems we cannot simply evaluate the system's response to individual sinewave inputs and then sum these responses. (If this were so, there would be no such thing as 'inter-modulation distortion' or generation of harmonics). However, a non-linear system will behave in exactly the same way whether presented with the original waveform or with the *complete* Fourier representation.

Yours faithfully

The Editor comments: Well, Mr Churchill did use the word 'ideal' in his letter in October, but as the writer whose ideas on amplifier design he was criticising ('Views' August) was quite definitely discussing *real* circuitry and amplifiers, I didn't think it valid for him to use an argument dependent on something which doesn't exist, the 'perfect' high-pass filter. While in theory one *can* specify perfect brickwall filters, with a flat in-band response and infinite attenuation outside their passband (and thus a rectangular frequency response characteristic) and an absolutely linear phase response in the passband, it is impracticable (apart from in the digital domain) to construct such a filter. As far as I know, all high-pass filters of the kind that appear in amplifiers such as you and I use will have some effect on the shape of a squarewave with a frequency just above the filter's nominal pole frequency. With respect to Professor Priestley, who has probably forgotten more than I know on the subject of filters, I would also point out that if a filter with a much sharper characteristic than my simple series capacitor were used, even if the steady-state response were closer to Mr Churchill's filter, the fact that "transients" would take some time to decay' would add spurious ringing and again the squarewave would not be passed with its shape intact.

Perhaps I did come down too heavily on Mr Churchill (who has also written to point out that he was using the example of a theoretical 'perfect' filter), but I remain unabashed: my practical advice that the low frequency roll-off of an amplifier be arranged to be around one decade than the lowest frequency of interest in the signal remains valid for *real* amplifiers. This would also seem to be supported by published research carried out by KEF's Laurie Fincham (*JAES* June 1985 p436) which would indicate that the group delay associated with real high-pass filters (the same phenomenon as discussed here but looked at from a different direction) can cause audible degradation on music signals much higher in frequency than the nominal -3dB point of the filter.

... about improvements to the CD100

From: JM Lubulwa, Nairobi, Kenya

Dear Sir, The Philips CD100 player can be improved by doing the following modifications. Some of them need a bit of skill, but should be fairly easy to carry out by anybody with some electronics background.

1: Replace the 22µF audio output coupling capacitor (p/ns 2573 & 2608) with a better quality one such as RS solid aluminium (RS 104-231). There is plenty of space, due to the long track run from the ICs to the soldered pcb output connection. Easiest way is to strap out the original capacitor positions and put the replacements in place of the other jumper straps on the track-run to the edge of the board. Polarity of the capacitors should be observed because the output ICs are biased to give some DC offset voltage at the output in the region of 3V.

At the same time replace the audio output cable with a better quality one. Type according to one's convictions and taste!

2: Construct on Veroboard or otherwise separate ±12V supplies (I actually used ±15V) using ICs. I used 723s but other types could be used. This tiny board can be mounted next to the other regulator ICs: I fixed mine parallel to the bottom supply/servo pcb using a small back-gummed pcb guide (RS again) mounted against the main PSU housing, with a similar angled type fixed

on the supply/servo pcb to hold the opposite end. Extreme care is required here to avoid components touching and causing short circuits but there appears to be ample space. Mine has given no trouble for nearly six months since I did the modification.

This separate PSU is then used to power the two output NE5532 ICs. You have to cut the track at some suitable point to isolate the ICs from the main supply on the board before connecting yours. This extra PSU is fed from the main PSU capacitors. (Judicious use of decoupling capacitors recommended.)

3: Choose one earth point on the decoder board and effectively earth all the sections of the decoder/audio circuitry at this one point. Then run a fresh connection (solid core cable!) back to the main PSU earth point. I used the earthing pin no.2 on connector A55. Remember to disconnect the original earth wire on this pin which would now be redundant. In my case, I also disconnected the earth lead via the HF connection, earthing that part of the circuitry, also on the decoder board, to my central earth point – pin 2 of A55.

4: Lastly, I found that this player sounds much better after 1 to 2 hours of use. I leave mine on most of the time but with the door open to cut off laser current. You can check on this with Philips Service to make sure.

This modification will certainly give you improvements reminiscent of second generation machines.

Yours faithfully

... about LaserVision

From: Bert Hamilton, Sales Manager, S Gold & Sons (Records) Ltd, London

Dear Sir, I read with interest the comments on video discs in October's 'News' pages. In reply, I have to tell you that LaserVision and video discs are alive, well and developing nicely within the UK marketplace. This company, together with one other, has taken over the selection and release of all software on this format and can promise an exciting autumn of over 100 new titles which will be added to the extensive range already available. These titles will be of major releases from the film industry together with a selection of opera and ballet available from other sources. Prices have been rationalised, and are not expensive, and the availability to the trade and public improved by this reorganization. Sleeves have been redesigned and a new consumer catalogue is available listing most of the new product plus all existing titles. Technically, the software is superb, especially the product with a stereo soundtrack, but it must be borne in mind that it can only be as good as the original supplied by the manufacturer/distributor.

New developments in hardware are in the pipeline and indeed these were hinted at by Barry Fox ('Technology', *HFN/RR* September '85) but these will not be in any marketing plans for some time.

Certainly we see an exciting and profitable future for LaserVision and Laserdiscs and we would like to assure your readers of our renewed commitment to this format for the foreseeable future.

Yours faithfully

... about Flat Earthers

From: MJ Quinlan, Surbiton, Surrey

Dear Sir, I recently purchased an SP-10/KSA-50 combination to replace the previous MF 'The Preamp'/Naim 160 amplification in my otherwise unchanged black disc playing system. Considering the views of so-called experts such as Baxandall, Walker *et al*, I was

pleasantly surprised (not to say relieved in view of the expense) to find a performance improvement of fundamental proportions. Perhaps this is because the MF/Naim designs are not 'good' or maybe I was perpetually running that system into overload. But neither I nor my wife and friends feel the need to adopt double-blind testing or to use esoteric test equipment to demonstrate beyond any doubt whatsoever that there is a flaw somewhere in the Baxandall/Walker hypothesis.

I must admit to being rather fed up with the seemingly interminable letters in your pages relating to the merits and demerits of subjective listening vs electrical tests and scientific experiment. As one interested merely in listening to recorded music, I would like to propose the possibility of reconciliation between the two camps, which seem to be separated by an ever-widening gulf.

Firstly, there is no reason whatever why anyone should not experiment to discover by his own experience what he considers to be an interesting result and then publicise it. All scientists have done this since we first became interested in the extension of knowledge. It matters not at the initial stage if the result cannot be explained scientifically (whether satisfactorily or otherwise). Historically, the great majority of useful extensions to knowledge occurred by such discovery and prior to the ascertainment of any scientific explanation. Importantly, it does not require a scientist or a technician to carry out such work, merely one who is interested in the subject. Of course it would help if such persons in publicising their results were not too categorical where there is as yet no scientific explanation.

In the second place, the role of the scientist (where properly harnessed) is of great value here. Instead of blindly refusing even to accept that results might be valid, as appears to happen at present in the hi-fi field, the responsible scientist should, if interested in the subject under analysis, use his professional skill and experience to devise experiments satisfying the rules of scientific method designed positively to prove or disprove the validity of the results obtained. If not so interested, then the responsible scientists should not enter into the discussion at all. By doing so without any scientific results, they are guilty of just the same errors of assumption of which he accuses the initial experimenter.

I would welcome the re-opening of the minds of many of our best hi-fi engineers so that the present controversies relating to design and usage can be settled. Amplifier design and sound is just one of these areas.

If the 'scientific' lobby can do nothing more than deny, without evidence, the existence of particular effects, they are doing nothing for science or for your magazine. They are the flat-earthers now.

Yours faithfully

... about capacitor sound

From: Otto R Snel, London SW5

Dear Sir, Dr van den Bloustoene and I read Jeff Perkins' letter about capacitor sound ('Views' October) with much interest.

We have conducted a considerable amount of research into the behaviour of polycarbonate capacitors and it was only our inability to obtain sufficient supplies of stock item 113-572 from RS Components in August, no doubt after Jeff Perkins' purchases of same, that led us to investigate the effects of negative capacitance on amplifier response and sound audibility.

The result of our research will, I almost hesitate to write, revolutionise amplifier design. We have devised a capacitor of a new material, poly-asinate, which produces a totally distortion-free positive or negative frequency response. This is of obvious benefit to valve amplifiers, especially those employing valves operating at sub-zero temperatures.

At present, however, we have only been able to produce values down to $-0.01 \mu\text{F}$, fortunately at extremely low cost. I have already started on the monumental task of replacing the existing capacitors in my valve amplifiers and I have calculated that it will take the entire lounge of my flat to house the new poly-asinate devices.

Yours faithfully

... about an eternal debate

From: Mark Naim, Randwick, New South Wales, Australia

Dear Sir, There can be no place in a journal committed to excellence for cigarette advertising. Cleaning up sound and delighting in artistic subtlety can't live with lung and air pollution. I don't believe you need the revenue that badly, but I would rather pay more for the magazine if necessary. As the late Bert Webb said in one of his speaker construction articles, 'Don't spoil the ship for a ha'penny worth of tar'.

Yours faithfully

... about amplifiers & cables

From: Richard Goulden, Leeds, Yorkshire

Dear Sir, 'Interconnects' are the most popular 'in-things' at the moment and appear to have dominated the hi-fi journals for rather a long time. I don't want to go into a history of such devices, it would be too tedious, but it is worthwhile examining some of the observations. I also don't want to go into the published theories of these observations; although they are of interest and there may be some truth in them, I have always thought that they tended to be too complex and do not account for the magnitude of the observations. My hypothesis - The Goulden Hypothesis of the speaker/power amplifier system - is astonishing because of its simplicity.

Observations:

- 1) Different cables sound different.
- 2) Amplifiers with identical specs sound different.
- 3) Amplifiers with reduced negative feedback sound better.
- 4) There is a certain lack of correlation between observed quality of sound with certain speaker/amplifier combinations. Not all 'good' speakers sound good with 'good' amplifiers.
- 5) Conflicting ideas go in and out of fashion; one guru says one thing and another the opposite.

Experiments:

- 1) Reduce the negative feedback on the power amplifier by increasing the feedback divider ratio.
- 2) Place a resistor in the speaker lead.

Results:

Both experiments gave a significant improvement in the sound quality. Most work was carried out with resistive networks as it was felt that this approach was the easiest. A pi attenuator (fig.1) was built and optimised by trial and error. It should be noted that the amplifier 'sees' a nearly resistive load of about 8 ohms plus or minus a small percentage, but this is not important for the hypothesis.

There appeared to be no areas or

deterioration of sound quality, and such obvious questions associated with 'damping factor' were not a problem. Bass in fact was much cleaner and the sound had other qualities which were quite unexpected. One listener commented on a reduction of high frequencies: the only adverse criticism.

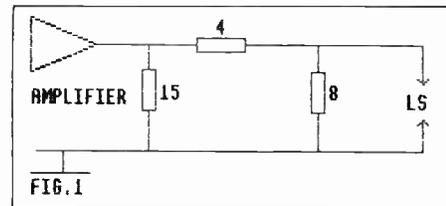


FIG. 1

Explanation:

The Goulden Hypothesis is based around the concept that the loudspeaker is a generator of reverse voltage which is not related to the signal to be reproduced. This signal appears across the power amplifier output terminals and is fed back to the input of the power amp via the negative feedback loop. Examination of the circuit of the power amplifier shows the first stage to be a simple differential amplifier which compares the signal input with the suitably attenuated signal at the output terminals. The reverse voltage from the loudspeaker is an INVALID COMPARISON from the systems approach and a new type of distortion is introduced.

The fact that the loudspeaker generates somewhat randomised reverse signals is well established and the concept of 'damping factor' acknowledges this. The speaker is a motor/generator with gross mechanical as well as electrical properties. It is not difficult to envisage all sorts of error signals being generated as a result of resonances both mechanical and electrical and as a result of the huge inertial properties of the speaker cone system.

Discussion:

The improvement in the reproduced sound was so dramatic that I have to question the need for overall negative feedback in the design of the amplifier. There is considerable doubt cast on the role of the damping factor as there was a significant improvement in the sound where 'damping factor' is attributed to be appropriate. Using a pi network of high power resistors glued to a conventional heat sink gave an adequate interim improvement, but a high power amplifier was needed (150watt). The scope for further research would appear to be quite good, and could involve the complete redesigning of the power amplifier.

The Goulden Hypothesis may not be the breakthrough in Hi-Fi Science that I think it is, but the only way to find out is to test it. The simplest way to test is to publish and for others to do experiments and to apply their expertise and theories. Assuming that my hypothesis is in principle correct, it would be very nice to relieve my relative poverty. However, I don't see any way of achieving that end. Information is very difficult to sell, the only thing to do is to give it away and hope for some sort of recognition.

Yours faithfully

The effect of the loudspeaker's back EMF on the amplifier is well-known, and was first described in full by Matti Otala in 1980 as 'Interface Intermodulation Distortion'. A succinct description by Manuel Huber of FM Acoustics appears in the November 1985 issue of *Studio Sound*. As far as I can find, however, Richard Goulden is the first to suggest alleviating the effect with a potential divider. Perhaps this is the reason some opt for very thin speaker cables - Ed.

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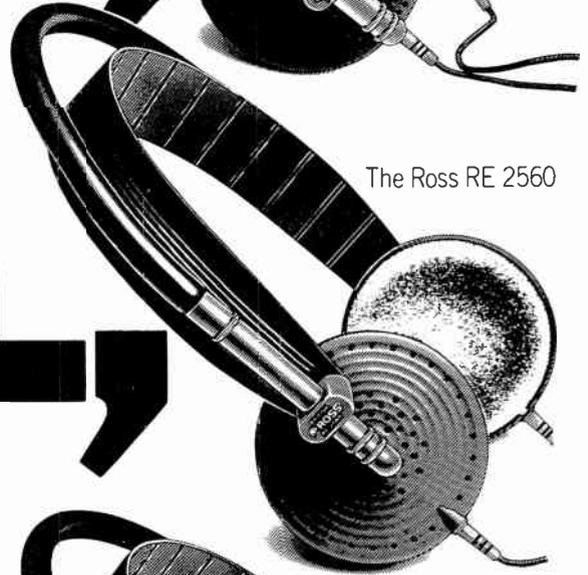
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Frequency Response	20 to 20,000 Hz	20 to 22,000 Hz	15 to 22,000 Hz
Sensitivity (db /mW SPL @ 1000 Hz)	96	100	100
Weight (less cable)	115	135	135

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Lewis O. Johnson Esq.,
conrad johnson design inc.,
1474 Pathfinder Lane,
McLean, Virginia 22101,
United States of America.

1st December, 1985

Dear Lew

Thank you for your recent letter and your kind wishes for my success in returning to audio retailing. It was a privilege to meet you and discuss plans regarding the formation of a conrad johnson centre. I am, indeed, flattered that you have offered to make a further visit for the opening. However, I'm sure you won't be too disappointed to be told that I have commenced and I have some sales of your equipment on the books to prove it!

I am very excited by the prospect of working closely with Automation Sciences and your fine products. Thankyou, I have now received the Premier 5 power amplifiers and the Premier 3 preamplifier, which are already doing a good job in the studio. I was intrigued to hear of your own interest in the Infinity Reference Standard Loudspeakers, but having just installed a pair of RS1b's, I can understand your enthusiasm for them, and I can only hope that as many music lovers as possible take the opportunity of listening to the complete system.

The new 50 watt power amplifier is a winner. For not only does it work extremely well, it's price and availability means that I can offer a complete C.J. amplifier system [PV4 preamplifier + M50 power amplifier] for £2,225, including U.K. taxes.

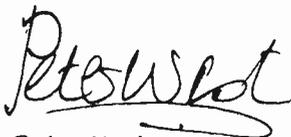
I am in the process of writing to all of my ex customers who own QUAD ESL63's, suggesting they audition this very affordable combination.

The Premier 3 preamplifier is now my reference. When I hear product of this calibre, I feel sure we have not yet fully exploited the 'black disc', and all the while I can be persuaded to take into stock such items as, for example, the new SME Series 5 pick up arm [recent audition enjoyed] I shall leave compact disc players for the time being to those establishments that believe in their value!

You know of my reputation in this trade, and we have discussed in detail how I shall run 'Pinewood'. When ever possible I shall arrange for auditions of c.j. to take place in the client's home, because experience has shown this method to be more meaningful, particularly for the client.

I take pleasure in sending you a copy of our new brochure. Relax, Lew, the UK market is in good hands. The only people who need fear are your opposition.

Kind regards,
Yours sincerely,

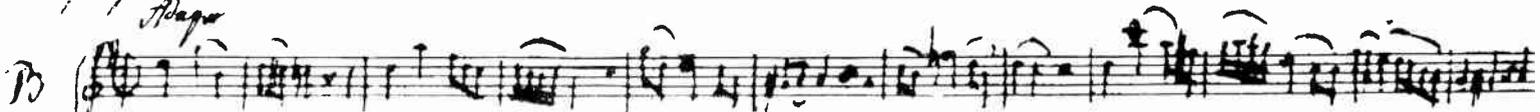


Peter West

By air mail
Par avion

2 days away around
Africa

Conrad Jangley. Conrad IIW2



NEWS

FRONT END

NAKAMICHI PRO

Nakamichi's superb BX300 is now available in a revised format for studio use. The fascia has been extended to fit standard 19-inch racks, and the rear socketry has been modified to contain XLR balanced inputs and outputs or 1/4in. socketry for unbalanced.

Additionally, the pro version, called the MR-1, has an external processor loop for the inclusion of alternatives to the fitted Dolby-B and -C noise reduction, the domestic's fader has been replaced with front-panel 1/4-in. line inputs, and details are provided for user adjustment of head azimuth.

MERIDIAN M20

... is a completely revised active loudspeaker based on the M2. Basic shape is the same, with two KEF B110s above and below the tweeter, but the latter is now a version of the T33 used in KEF's own R104/2. The amplifiers have been extensively reworked, now being related to the pseudo Class-A design used in the MPA. Signal-operated switch-on and a

new stand complete the picture and our initial impressions were of superbly stable stereo imagery and a sonic signature free from the slight muddiness that characterised the M20's predecessor. Bass extension and overall loudness capability are also improved, and price will be £975. A similar improvement programme for the smaller M3 will result in the appearance of the M30 early this year.

THE CORNFLAKE

... Shop is the name of a new store joining Hi-Fi Experience in trying to return hi-fi to London's Tottenham Court Road. Products sold will be in the main British - Naim, Roksan, Wharfedale Diamonds - and mostly guaranteed for life, and CD will be noticeably absent. The people behind The Cornflake Shop were previously involved in selling

records and tapes and 'wanted to open a shop that sold music systems to music lovers'. People who buy a system will get free membership at the legendary Ronnie Scott's jazz club, so it could be worth popping in to see if The Cornflake Shop can put an analogue system together for you. Opening hours are 10am-7pm, address is 37 Windmill Street London W1. Tel: 01-631 0472.

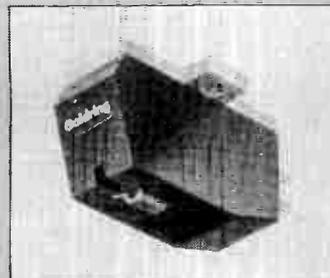
HEYBROOK AMPS

The Sound & Vision Show in Brighton last November saw the launch of the long-awaited Heybrook C2 pre- and P2 power amplifier. Designed by Tim de Paravicini, they cost £795 inc.

VAT together or £345 pre/£450 power. P2 power output is 90W/channel (8ohms), 140W/channel (4ohms), with a claimed 30amp peak current capability. The C2 features disc inputs for m-m and m-c cartridges, and the CD input is said to be overload-proof.

GOLDRING'S 80TH

To celebrate 80 years in the industry, Goldring have launched a high-end moving-coil cartridge incorporating the latest developments in material, technological, and design criteria. Called the Gerard Louis - which should make it a hit in France - the new model incorporates a boron cantilever, linear crystal silver wiring, and van den Hul tip. The cartridge body is hand-carved from African Blackwood, and the sub-chassis is precision machined from solid. All internal parts are gold-plated. A low-output design, the Gerard Louis produces 0.25mV into a



100ohm load, weighs 9.5gm, and operates at a tracking force of 1.8gm. Contact Goldring Products, Anglian Lane, Bury St Edmunds for details.

DIGITAL AUDIO CASSETTES

One of the highlights of the 1985 Tokyo Audio Fair last October (full report p49) was the first public demonstration of a consumer digital cassette recorder. Not a PCM processor hooked up to a video recorder, this autonomous Sony machine was about the size of the Walkman Professional (with the prototype ancillary electronics in the usual place - under the table) and used a rotating head mechanism to reproduce digital audio from a slow-moving tape cassette not much bigger than a credit card. The demonstration ended when an enthusiastic member of the audience bumped into the table and the recorder muted in protest against this uncivilised behaviour. Whatever, R-DAT - Rotary (Head) Digital Audio Tape - had made its public debut, ahead of S-DAT - Stationary (Head) Digital Audio Tape - and both are expected to appear as products at the 1986 Tokyo Show.

What's this? you cry. Two new digital audio cassette standards? The answer is, unfortunately, yes. Unfortunately because with 8mm video/audio just launched, what the world's confused consumers need like holes in their heads is another incompatible format, let alone two. This was apparently also the general feeling at a meeting of the Japanese equivalent of BADA, the dealers' association. If you consider the number of sound and video media available for purchase - compact cassette (ferric, chrome, pseudochrome, metal with Dolby-B, Dolby-C, dbx, or none of these), open-reel tape, LP (33 1/3rpm and 45rpm), singles, Compact Discs, three videodisc formats, three 1/2in. domestic VCR formats with stereo or mono sound (two with

the option of hi-fi quality stereo FM sound and one, VHS, with an additional form for portable recording), domestic VCRs used with adaptors for 14- or 16-bit digital audio, and 8mm video (which can also be used for a different standard of stereo digital audio) - you can see why there is resistance to what on the face of things is a good idea: the introduction of low cost digital audio.

But why two incompatible standards? The answer is due to the fact that there are two equally valid ways of writing digital data on a tape. If you consider that for two channels of 16-bit digital audio sampled at around 44,000 times per second, the bandwidth required to store this data is at least 2MHz, it becomes apparent why a rotary head tape format, as with video which has a similar data rate, is necessary, hence R-DAT. A stationary head can be used, however, with all the mechanical advantages that con-

fers, if the data rate can be drastically reduced so that a normal audio bandwidth is sufficient. This is achieved in S-DAT by recording 20 data tracks simultaneously across the width of the tape: each needs only to be of limited bandwidth compared with R-DAT but the total data recording rate is equivalent.

Table 1 lists all the necessary information about the two formats; you can see that the digital data recording rate for CD quality audio is almost identical. R-DAT advantages are that the rotary head technology already exists so hardware prices could be, well, not expensive, and the cassette can be smaller than the S-DAT one, due to the lower tape speed, which means lower tape running costs. S-DAT may have simpler and therefore even less expensive mechanics but the head itself, a thin-film type manufactured using semiconductor production technology, will not initially be cheap. Its tape utiliza-

tion is also less efficient than R-DAT, leading to a bigger cassette (but still smaller than an analogue one) and more expensive tape running costs. (Some commentators feel that this relative greed for tape will prevent S-DAT from reaching the starting grid.) Both cassettes are similar to video cassettes in having a shutter mechanism to protect the tape when the cassette is outside the recorder.

Table 2 shows the proposed alternative formats for both S-DAT and R-DAT. By varying the tape speed, sampling frequency and quantisation, sound quality can be sacrificed - but not to the same degree as with 8mm digital audio - to give increased playing time or reduced tape costs. Note, that with one exception, proposed sampling rates are not the same as CD. This is to preclude easy digital copying from CD to DAT, though no doubt serious pirates as opposed to home tappers will invest in a standards converter.

The battle lines have been drawn up in Japan, with Sony and Pioneer supporting R-DAT and Sharp (who have the necessary thin-film head technology) and Sanyo supporting S-DAT. October 1986 will see the launch of the respective products, but it will remain to be seen whether either or neither replaces good old analogue tape. Don't forget that a read/write CD (of some kind) is also due to appear in the next two years or so. And wouldn't it have been convenient for tape retailers if both R-DAT and S-DAT had somehow been able to use an existing convenient tape product, an 8mm or compact cassette, so that their product inventories would remain manageable? That also might have made consumers less resistant to the new technology.

TABLE 1: AUDIO CASSETTE FORMATS

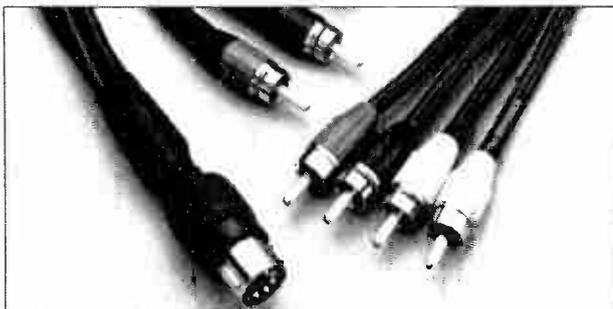
Format	Cassette Size (mm)	Tape Speed (cm/s)	Writing Speed (cm/s)	Sample Rate (kHz)	Sample Word Length (bits)	Linear recording density (kb/in.)	Transmission rate (Mb/s)
Analogue	100.4x63.8x12	4.76	4.76	N/A	N/A	50*	0.1*
S-DAT I	86x55.5x9.5	4.76	4.76	48	16	64	2.4
S-DAT II	86x55.5x9.5	4.37	4.37	44.1	16	64	2.2
R-DAT I	73x54x10.5	0.72	313.4	48	16	61	2.46
R-DAT II	73x54x10.5	0.90	313.3	48	16	61	2.46

*For two channels, information (bit/s) = 2xBandwidth x LOG₂ (S/N Ratio + 1)
(Cassette bandwidth = 10kHz, S/N Ratio = 45dB)

TABLE 2: ALTERNATIVE DAT FORMATS

Format	Number of Channels	Sample Rate (kHz)	Word Length (Bits)	Transmission Rate (Mb/s)	Tape Speed (cm/s)
S-DAT I	2	48	16	2.4	4.76
S-DAT II	2	44.1	16	2.205	4.37
S-DAT III	2	32	16	1.6	3.17
S-DAT IV	2	32	12	1.2	2.38
S-DAT V	2	32	12	1.2	4.76 (10 tracks only)
R-DAT I	2	48	16	2.46	
R-DAT II	2	32	16	2.46	
R-DAT III	2	32	12 Non-Lin	1.23	(Half-speed)
R-DAT IV	4	32	12 Non-Lin	2.46	

Proven Accessories from QED!

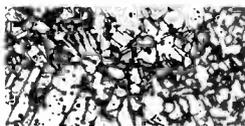


INCON Interconnect Cables

New technology cables using OXYGEN FREE HIGH CONDUCTIVITY copper conductors.

Take a look at the micro photographs and you will see for yourself why it's no surprise the QED INCON sounds better than other cables — the secret's in the copper!

HI-FI Answers (May 84) commenting on INCON "With INCON the sound was sweet, open, transparent, tuneful and very easy to follow. Both sonically and musically the QED cable transformed the sound." Prices from as little as £7.95 for a half metre pair of phono to phono cables or cable off the reel at £1.10 per metre.



Normal high purity copper



O.F.H.C. INCON

INCON P.A.G.

Replacement pick-up arm cable using graphite screened INCON.

This plug-in replacement cable fits all LINN, MISSION, AR, and A.D.C. arms

PRICE
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INCON as Speaker Cable

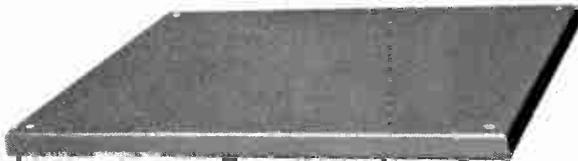
Used as speaker cable, it is important to keep cable lengths to less than 5 metres per channel.

The same sonic improvements apply as for INCON interconnect, particularly the "mid" and high frequency reproduction.

Note: INCON can be paralleled up with thicker cables such as QED 79 strand or C38 for extra "bass weight" and for longer cable runs.

PRICE
£1.10
per metre

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Improve the sound quality of your turntable (or amplifier) by placing it on a QED TORLYTE Isolating Platform.

HI-FI News (Aug 84) concluded that, "the TORLYTE platform is the clear FIRST CHOICE, offering the most relaxed and encouraging listening."

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QED

HMV'S 'NIPPER'

Francis Barraud's famous 'Dog' painting, together with the words 'His Master's Voice' was registered as a trade mark on July 22, 1910. As is now well-known, the purchase of the original was conditional on Barraud painting out the cylinder phonograph, and adding the current model of the

gramophone fitted with a bright horn. A superb reproduction of this painting, completed in 1899, is now available on high grade canvas texture art paper, measuring 19 x 24 1/4 in. Price: £4.99, plus 30p p&p from: Nipper Print Offer, EMI Records Ltd, 20 Manchester Square, London W1A 1ES, or good classical record stores.

Donald Aldous

AHD AND VHD 3D

When JVC followed parent company Matsushita and adopted the Compact Disc system for digital audio it looked as if AHD, the digital audio version of JVC's VHD video disc system, was dead. Not so. VHD has survived, albeit mainly as an industrial video disc system, and AHD has just surfaced again. VHD has been modified to store 3D TV pictures and there is a new disc which combines features of both VHD and AHD.

LaserVision videodisc, like Compact Disc, works purely optically. VHD, which stands for Video High Density, uses a grooveless disc which is tracked by a skate stylus electrode. This reads capacitance changes in a spiral track of pits formed in the surface of the conductive disc material. A servo system, controlled by the track pits, keeps the stylus aligned.

The disc is 26cm in diameter and holds up to an hour of TV pictures and FM analogue stereo sound per side. The track pitch is 1.35microns. The audio version of VHD, called AHD for Audio High Density, stores an hour of digital audio/side, in addition to a series of 1500 high quality still pictures for display on a TV screen.

The technology which lets VHD store so much on a relatively small disc is a two-edged sword. Whereas LaserVision records one TV picture per revolution, VHD records two full TV pictures per revolution. This extends playing time, but makes freeze frame more difficult. The stylus reads two pictures, over and over again, so the image on screen may jitter. To get round the problem, the pictures can be recorded twice. A digital code on the servo track tells the player when to skip a frame by kicking the stylus across onto the next picture track before finishing a full revolution of the disc.

Never ones to miss a trick, the JVC engineers have now come up with a clever way of exploiting the two frame format to give the option of three-dimensional pictures with stereo sound. The left and right eye images are alternated on the disc. For 3D replay the stylus reads alternate left and right eye images, while the viewer wears LCD spectacles. These are kept in sync with the pictures by an infra-red link. While the left eye image is on screen, the left eye LCD clears and the right darkens. The system is compatible; an ordinary player simply displays only the left eye images.

The AHD format was originally offered by JVC as an alternative to Compact Disc. Instead of FM analogue sound and pictures, it stores digital audio and digitised

pictures. After some format changes, the audio is now of CD standard; 44.1kHz sampling and 16 bit linear coding. As the AHD disc plays, the digital audio is reproduced in real time and the digital picture information is loaded into a solid-state frame store memory. When enough data for a full picture has been loaded, it is displayed on screen. Whereas CD graphics and text are of crude teletext quality, AHD offers full video still quality.

Each one hour side can store 1500 colour pictures, or one every 2.4s. The memory capacity needed is a little under 0.5Mbytes or 4Mbits/frame. If there is to be a rapid switch between images, two memories are needed so that one can load while the other displays.

Now JVC have shown a modified system which combines the two formats, AHD and VHD. Sound is recorded in PCM along with either moving video analogue pictures or digitised still pictures. In this way the picture on screen changes from live action video to digital still frame. A digitised still frame sourced from solid-state memory offers far better picture quality than a still frame frozen from a moving analogue video sequence. The sound remains PCM all the time.

At the recent Tokyo Audio Fair, JVC showed yet another development which allows AHD to store digitally-encoded high definition TV pictures. These follow the Japanese format (generally supported by American broadcasters) which uses 1125 lines/picture. The still picture to be recorded is digitally sampled at 51.8MHz to give a luma or black and white detail bandwidth of around 26MHz. At the same time, the colour information is sampled at 25.8MHz to give two colour difference signals of half bandwidth. The sampled signals are coded into 8-bit words and recorded on disc. On replay, the data comes off the disc at the standard VHD/AHD rate of 5.733Mbit/s. While PCM stereo reproduces in real time, the picture information is fed into a 1.8Mbyte memory, with one full high definition picture assembled every 15s. So each one hour side can store 240 high definition still pictures as well as CD quality sound. As before, two memories are needed if there is to be a switch on screen rather than a wipe. The picture displayed is wide screen format.

Both on a 40in. widescreen tube, and on a large screen after projection, the quality is staggering. Although both VHD and AHD suffer from the inherent defect that they rely on readout by physical contact between the disc and stylus, the flexibility now built into the system has to be admired.

Barry Fox

HIGH END ICE

While expensive in-car equipment isn't in short supply, units with the right sort of audiophile appeal have only just started to appear. Importers Absolute Sounds wanted a line of automotive products in keeping with the standards associated with their domestic ranges, something that Krell owners could 'identify with', and it looks like Soundstream's new line-up has just the right pedigree.

Though the company was known for its work with digital PCM recorders, having sold its digital to CBS and its optical 'card' technology to BSR, Soundstream have resurfaced in the in-car field, using Threshold's Nelson Pass as designer. He's created a range comprising of three power amplifiers, an electronic crossover network, and an advanced radio/cassette unit to help audiophiles make a smoother transition from their favourite listening chairs to the driver's seat. The D100 (£399) and

D200 (£645) power amps offer, respectively, a genuine 50W/channel and 100W/channel into 4ohms, and both can be bridged to double the power. Besides actually living up to their specifications, these units also ape their domestic counterparts by offering build quality more often associated with 10 stone indoor behemoths. But the real tweak appeal lies with the world's first true Class-A in-car amplifier, the Class A 40 (£495). Yielding 16W/channel into 4ohms, this unit has been designed to work in the hostile environment of a car.

Soundstream's crossover, the DX1, will sell for £285. Using a PCM low-pass filter, it means that owners will be able to use a varied mix of speakers, compensating for tonal and sensitivity differences with ease. The front end - which offers Dolby-B and -C, auto-reverse, azimuth trim, and a host of other facilities - will follow in the coming months. Contact Absolute Sounds, 42 Parkside, Wimbledon, London SW19.

ORTOFON

Danish cartridge giant Ortofon has looked to Holland for styli to fit to two new models. The latest addition to the Optimum Match series, the OM 40 low-mass m-m design, and the revised MC 20, now in 'Super' guise, both sport van den Hul Type II tips. Ortofon felt that its less critical set-up demands were a viable compromise for mass-market needs

over the far-tougher-to-install Type I. The OM 40 (£69) will be familiar to readers, for it retains the truncated-Concorde look and differs primarily in the choice of styli.

The MC 20 Super (£125), however, differs from its predecessor by virtue of increased output - now 0.2mV - to enable its use with most m-c inputs, and its new aluminium body to satisfy the torque wrench brigade.

GENIUS WANTED

After a sojourn of eight years, *HFN/RR's* Deputy Editor, Ivor Humphreys, is leaving for greener pastures (*Gramophone*, to be precise). We wish him well in his move, but it has left us with a small problem - how do you replace someone who is irreplaceable? [Eh? - Dep Ed]

We are looking, therefore, for someone with the following qual-

ities/interests: he/she must care passionately and knowledgeable about classical music whilst being open-minded when it comes to other forms; he/she should have at least a healthy interest in recorded sound; and he/she should both be able to write fluent, concise English and be critical of writing which fails to make the grade.

Apply in writing to The Editor.

CHEAP LEADS

Many people accept that interconnect cables can make a difference but are unprepared to fork out for the likes of Randall, van den Hul, Vecteur or Monster until they have improved their systems somewhat. Presence Audio have introduced a value-for-money interconnect which should satisfy such people: MDM cable comes in red or blue and is

supplied as a 1m stereo pair for £8.95, terminated with reasonable quality gold-plated phonos, or a 1.5m pair for £9.95. They also supply a useful four-core, send-and-return cable terminated with moulded gold-plated phonos, for use with cassette recorders. This costs just £6.95 for 1m terminated. Presence Audio, Eastland House, Plummers Plain, Horsham, West Sussex. Tel: 044485 333.

B&O'S WINTER SELECTION

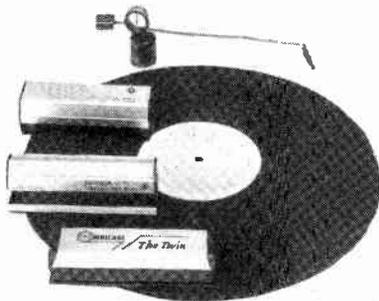
Danish *stylemeisters* B&O have widened their selection to include a second CD player, new headphones, an addition to the slimline 'Redline' speakers, and new music centre. The CD player is the long-awaited CD50, designed to accompany their top-of-the-range Beosystem 5000. A front-loader of shockingly clean appearance, the CD50 can be adapted for use with systems other than the B&O flagship. Price is under £500. B&O's RL140 loudspeakers (£379) - the model

number just happening to be the power handling in watts - offers the same moulded thermoplastic cabinet and anorexic side view as its kin in a floor-standing version, probably to do justice to the 5000 system, with its greater power. The headphones, called Form 2 (£24), are just as unconventional as everything else B&O produce, and they look comfortable enough to justify their use with personals and portables as well as domestic hardware. B&O's new system, the Beocentre 2100, is designed as a spacesaver, and consists of only tape and radio sources, with facilities to add CD or LP. Price is to be announced.

ASK YOUR DEALER about

HUNT EDA MK.6 BRUSH

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Conductive fibres. Specially formulated and patented packing. Excellent reviews in Germany.

Clicks and Pops on records are usually caused by minute particles of grit, impacted into the vinyl by the stylus itself. These grit particles invariably have a minimum dimension of between 5 and 15 microns, and are invisible to the naked eye.

Cleaners that fail to reach below the stylus tip profile in the groove do more harm than good by brushing these harmful particles back into the grooves.

Carbon fibre was the only material we found that was fine enough to reach below the tip profile.



For further information send SAE to: Fanmont-Omnicare, 442, Straines Road, Hounslow, Middlesex, TW4 5AB. Tel: 01-570-9451. Telex: 246671MPEMPG.

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If we are satisfied that your equipment can do justice to the GARROTT masterpiece, we will give you a 10 day money back guarantee against purchase price of £325.

For the rest of you, the Garrott's can work absolute wonders on your existing/old much loved cartridge of yester year. A recent client says: *"what a revelation! The improvement was about equal to that between a Metro & Porsche. What more can I say? Fantastic!"* (Copy available).

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SD Acoustics
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Yamaha

EVENTS

RADIO CITY, Liverpool's commercial radio station, are running a three-hour CD special on Boxing Day.

UK CES is taking place in April '86 after all, at Olympia 2, despite the announcement last month that they were moving it to September to coincide with the Heathrow Penta Show. A typing error in the press release is blamed for the disinformation.

US CES takes place this month from January 9th-12th in Las Vegas.

BRIEFING

NAD 3020/4020 are not to be replaced by the new '30 series after all (*HFN/RR* December). The classic 3020 amp and 4020 tuner will continue due to public demand.

CD PLAYER RENTAL hits British high streets as Radio Rentals, hit by the droop in the TV and VCR market, try a new tack. For £15.95 per month, the renter gets a choice of two players and four free discs.

PINK TRIANGLE return as Pink Triangle Projects. New address is 4 Brunswick Villas, Camberwell, London SE5 7RR. An update of the turntable is planned for early '86.

ROKSAN XERXES is not a 'suspended subchassis design', we are told by the press release, but 'a record player'. It looks like a high quality suspended subchassis turntable to us, with a separate power supply, offering 33 and 45rpm and selling for £455 inc.VAT. Roksan Engineering Ltd, 414a Edgware Road, London W2 1ED.

GALE have moved their factory to DW Labs Ltd, Stonehill, Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 6ED. Tel: 0480 413277. Consumer enquiries should be made to PO Box 43, Dunstable, Beds LU6 2NZ. Tel: 0582 872138.

BLAUPUNKT have introduced a three-speaker stereo system for cars, a central speaker filling in the stereo image.

JVC calculate that they lead the UK separates market with 11.5% — they don't say whether this is value or units, however.

GARY GIORGI, one of the original forces behind Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab and interviewed in *HFN/RR* November 1980, has died. Only in his 40s, he had latterly been heading up Fidelity Research in the USA.

MOBILE FIDELITY themselves have moved to Northern California. New releases announced include the Doobies' *Takin' it to the Streets* (LP/cassette), and the Grateful Dead's *Mars Hotel* (CD/LP).

SHURE seem to be aware of the way the wind is blowing, as they have announced their first CD player, the \$499 D5000. Looking like a Sony product, it features 99-track programming, remote control, 16-bit D/A converter and digital filtering. UK availability is still to be announced.

A&R CAMBRIDGE manufactured their 25,000th A60 amplifier last November, the model having remained in production continuously since 1976.

APOGEE have had their US patent application for their ribbon

tweeter approved.

VIRGIN have opened two more audio 'superstores', one in the centre of Birmingham at 98 Corporation Street, the other as part of the ever-growing Oxford Street store in London. Brands stocked include Sony, Sansui, Heybrook, Michell.

A number of **IBA** FM radio stations are having to change their frequencies following the 1984 Band 2 Conference. Generally, ILR stations will be located in two regions, 96.0-97.6MHz and 102.0-103.5MHz. MW frequencies will not be affected.

ROBINSON'S RECORDS, the Manchester record shop, have gone into liquidation.

PHILIPS & MARANTZ 16-bit CD players with full oversampling and digital filtration will be reaching shops this month. The Philips CD450 and CD650 use the new version of the single-beam scanning mechanism first seen in the £229 CD150, while the established CD104B continues at a lower price of £249.

CYCLE-AUDIO is the name of the world's first dedicated cassette player for a push bike. Made by Japan's Kyowa Shokai Corporation, it is designed to be clipped to the handlebars.

SONY's attempt to set up a CD manufacturing plant in Czechoslovakia is being delayed by Japan's Foreign Trade Ministry who object to the export of the necessary high technology.

BINATONE, the Wembley-based consumer electronics company, have put their Milton Keynes factory/warehouse complex up for sale, due to significant financial losses. They have already transferred their assembly operation to India, and plan to launch a CD midi system in 1986, complete with twin cassette deck, record deck, tuner and amplifier for £200.

DENON have appointed Harmonia Mundi UK Ltd as the British distributor for their CDs. CD production at the new Denon plant has reached 1m pa.

AMSTRAD have lost their appeal against the High Court decision that to market and advertise their twin-cassette decks was unlawful. However, although the Court of Appeal did not say that Amstrad were responsible for copyright infringement by their customers, it would not give Amstrad an assurance that they could continue to market the decks without hindrance from copyright owners. Amstrad now intend to sue the BPI, who had instigated the case, while the BPI will increase their campaign to have such machines banned. The Japanese companies, who also market such machines in the UK, must be pleased that it was a British company that had to bear the costs of the action.

CASIO have introduced a credit card-sized mono FM radio. Price is just £22.95.

PHILIPS & DU PONT are joining forces to develop, manufacture and market optical media. The new company, Philips/Du Pont Optical (PDO), will become operational early this year and will be the world's largest supplier of CDs. The tempting data storage market obviously beckons entrancingly with 12in. optical discs planned as well as CD-

ROM. The assets of the venture include the Philips videodisc plant in Blackburn, and 50% of the PolyGram CD plant in Hanover.

HOME COMPUTERS will reside in 44% of British homes by 1989, while 48% will have a VCR, a recent study predicts. The same Mintel report predicts that sales of CD players will be worth £190m pa in 1989, and around 950,000 players will be bought in 1990 compared with 30,000 in 1984.

CASTLE's new £150 two-way loudspeaker, the 325, features a similar bass unit to their best-selling Clyde, but with a longer coil and larger magnet to give very low distortion. The real wood finish is immaculate, and matching spiked stands are available for £55 (black) and £60 (wood).

SONY's current adverts, catalogue and brochures for 8mm video quote Barry Fox by name hyping the product. The sentences used were taken out of context from a number of articles and were used without Sony or their advertising agency asking Barry's permission. Barry does not allow his name to be used in such advertising and never will.

BLAUPUNKT have designed special fitting kits for their in-car systems to foil thieves. The systems can be removed for times when the car is left unattended, and circuitry is built-in to retain the station presets for up to 20 hours after the unit has been removed.

AUDIO-TECHNICA's latest semi-open back lightweight headphones include the ATH-L2 (£27.95) and ATH-L4 (£34.95). Both offer 91dB/mW sensitivity and come with 3m of cable. Audio-Technica describe them as ideal for direct listening from CD.

CLARION will be marketing the Allsop cassette deck cleaner in their own packaging through 300 specialist in-car audio dealers. **AKAI** have added a new direct-drive turntable and quartz synthesiser tuner to their range of separates. The AP-A201C turntable comes complete with a T4P cartridge and auto-return, with front panel operation, for £89.90. The AT-A301L tuner offers FM/MW/LW bands and 16 presets for the same price as the turntable.

JOHN DEACON, director of the

BPI, reckons that the LP will disappear within six years. This is the same source, of course, which claims that six times more music is copied than purchased — rather odd in light of the fact that blank tape sales do not exceed those of LPs, singles, CDs, and prerecorded tapes combined.

CBS SONGS are hiring 30 employees just to handle the administration of the Lennon-McCartney song rights acquired by Michael Jackson.

QUICKSILVER, the highly regarded range of US-made valve amplifiers, will be distributed in the UK by Vital Systems, 38A The Meadow Way, Harrow Weald, Middlesex HA3 7BW. The initial product is the company's 60W mono unit, to sell for £1550/pair. 01-863 8988 for details.

RECORD INDUSTRY worries this year include not just a shortage of CDs but a potential shortage of LPs as well. Insiders fear that there are too many new titles announced for the Christmas/January record token cash-in period and too little pressing capacity. See 'John Deacon' item above.

PANASONIC have introduced a new model in-the-ear headphone, the EAH Z18 (£7.95). Available in three colours, it comes in a cassette-shaped holder with cable winder.

QED, to broaden the appeal of its component line-up for use with other makes, have added black as a colour option.

LUX have announced the availability of a tuner and CD player to match the valve/MOSFET hybrid 'Brid' Series amplifiers. The Brid T-105 AM/FM Digital Tuner (£195) offers 16 presets and memory scan; the D-105 CD player (£455) is a 16-bit linear system with track location and indexing for music scanning.

TRIO have a new CD player, the DP-770, which manages to retain all the 'luxury' features of dearer models despite a retail price of only £229. Facilities include 10-key input for easy programming, memory read-out, and headphone output. Also new is Trio's M-3S midi-system, at £399 (less speakers) for a digital tuner with 10 presets per each of three wave bands, a fully auto-direct drive turntable, twin cassette deck, and amplifier. The system matches the DP-770 dimensionally.

BATR CONTEST

The Prizewinners' Reception for this year's BATRC was hosted again by Mullards on November 15th, the main part of the evening being the playback of the winning entries. Tape of the Year was an original play produced by Cardiff and District Tape Club entitled 'The Hunter and the Hunted'; this won the Emitape Challenge Cup as well as the 3M Cup for the Speech and Drama Class and the FBTRC Shield for the best Club entry. Peter Wright from Benfleet won the Philips Trophy for best Documentary, while a fine recording of Japanese handbell ringers playing *Claire de Lune* by Debussy won the BASF Shield for David Holland from Diss, this being the winner of the music class. Alexei Knuaffer from West London took the new Revox Trophy with his original composition

King Leopold March in the electronic music class. Enfield Microphone won the TDK Trophy for the best reportage entry and the John Bradley Trophy for the best entry by a Talking Newspaper, as well as the Agfa-Gevaert Cup for the tape most suited for radio. The Sounds from Nature Prize went to a recording of the Pied Flycatcher by Philip Radford of Taunton; he received the Tandberg Trophy. The new Video Class was won by Paul Boyle from Londonderry for his playlet entitled *Next of Kin*, this was the new Memorex Trophy.

The judges this year were John Atkinson (*HFN/RR*), Gerald Ramshaw (Polytechnic of Central London), Dennis Rookard (Freeland Radio Journalist), Richard Margoschis (Wildlife Recordist), Eric Granshaw (IAC) and John Willett (Chairman of the FBTR).†

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Surround-sound ethics

THE RECENT FLUSH OF INTEREST IN surround-sound video raises some curious legal – and ethical – issues.

Most people who care about sound, and cinema, reckon that Dolby Labs deserve a medal for spending 10 years and millions of dollars on convincing the hidebound film industry that there was room for improvement on the audio practices of the '30s. Some Japanese firms are now unashamedly riding on the back of Dolby's work. In order to avoid paying the very small royalty involved (less than 50 US cents) they are willing to confuse the public. Their domestic video surround-sound decoders skirt Dolby's patents (which is not too difficult) but to skirt the trademark (much more difficult) they must fudge the issue of how they should be used.

Dolby Labs began trying to sell the idea of better sound to the film industry in the early '70s. The breakthrough came in 1977 when youngbloods George Lucas and Steven Spielberg used the Dolby stereo system for *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Dolby SVA (Stereo Variable Area) splits the mono optical track in two to create two-channel stereo and then encodes mono surround and mono centre front information in the stereo pair.

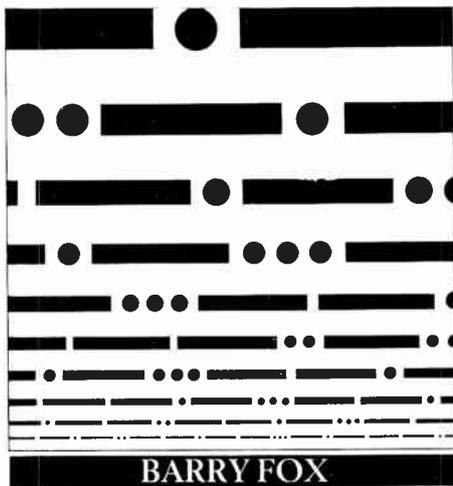
The SVA stereo pair is noise reduction-encoded using the professional Dolby-A format (as standard for studio multitrack tape) and the mono surround is additionally B-encoded like an audio cassette.

The film industry took to the system because it is compatible. One optical print can be distributed to all types of cinema. A budget cinema, even if still using a '30s sound system, just reads both halves of the SVA track to give mono – like a mono cassette deck reading a stereo tape. A more modern cinema, but without Dolby-A decoding and the acoustic equalisation which is part of the Dolby cinema conversion package, also reads the mono sum. A cinema with stereo system plays the print in stereo with centre front, and a cinema with full surround capability decodes the mono rear information as well.

The stereo and surround systems rely on several essential integers. Because most people in a large cinema will be sitting in less than ideal positions for stereo listening (*ie*, to the sides), there can be no reliance on a phantom image at centre front between two speaker stacks. This is why all cinemas have a central speaker stack behind the screen and for stereo this is used to create a hard centre front image from the mono sum signal. The mono surround track has to be B-decoded, after A-decoding of the stereo pair and derivation of the surround information. The surround channel also has to be delayed so that even when people are sitting close to a rear channel speaker, they hear dialogue sound from the front. This is, of course, thanks to the precedence, or Haas, effect.

The cinema system also has logic steering to accentuate the directionality of sound. This can produce some nasty side effects if the film print weaves or the projector soundhead is out of alignment. The image can waffle between the front and sides of the screen, just like the old Quadraphonic systems which used logic steering and gain-riding to enhance directionality.

Dolby Labs have patents on the -A and -B noise reduction systems (*eg*, BP 1 120 541). They also have patents (*eg*, BPs 1 522 135 and 1 522 599) on the main features of the SVA surround system. The patents cover the



delay, logic steering and centre front derivation. Essentially, the centre front is a sum channel with gain control to keep it hard enough to locate dialogue at screen centre but not so hard as to destroy the stereo effect. The mono surround is derived from antiphase signals mixed into the left and right stereo pair. The gain-riding logic used by Dolby cinema systems – at least so far – has been the Tate decoder (US patent 3 944 735) originally devised to disguise the deficiencies of the old Quadraphonic systems.

The Dolby MP (Motion Picture) matrix, with the diamond shape layout of speakers at left front, centre front, right front and centre rear, is actually a refinement of some simple systems which were patented early on in the '70s fad for Quadraphonics. It is not widely remembered that the first surround-sound disc and tape systems used a speaker layout very similar to that now used by Dolby for the cinema.

Matrixing technology began with Alan Blumlein in the '30s, but the idea of mixing four information channels into two dates back only to 1969, when New York musician, Peter Scheiber, filed two patents (BPs 1 328 141 and 1 328 142). CBS later did a deal with Scheiber when SQ was developed. He had patented the basic idea of deriving extra front centre and rear centre channels by adding the sum and the difference of the front and rear signals to the left and right channels.

The front centre sound is added in phase and at reduced level to each of the left and right stereo channels; the rear signal is added to each channel in antiphase, and also at reduced level. Adding and subtracting on replay recreates the front and rear signals, albeit with loss of separation between adjacent speaker channels.

In his patent, Scheiber suggested that the four speakers could alternatively be arranged at the left front, right front, right back and left back. This, of course, became the standard arrangement for the domestic surround systems. So the Dolby cinema layout is a return to pre-Quadraphonic days.

In 1971, David Hafler filed an application which issued as British patent 1 356 843. This described a very similar phase and antiphase coding system for producing a four-channel output, at left front, centre front, right front and centre rear. In an article published in *HFN/RR* in 1970, Hafler suggested that the system could be used to derive front and rear channels from existing stereo material. The idea became known as the 'Hafler system' of pseudo surround-sound. Another Hafler patent, 1 367 705, concentrated on the LF, RF, RB, LB speaker set-up.

Although Hafler's ideas were picked up and used by many electronics firms, the patents were virtually worthless because they had been filed *after* his article appeared in *HFN/RR*. Under British law, a patent is invalid if it claims information which has already been made available to the public.

Under all these circumstances it is unlikely that Dolby Labs would be able to rely too heavily on patents to protect its cinema sound system. The diamond-shaped matrix is an old idea. So is the use of delays to compensate for precedence. Logic steering is well known and patented by others. In any case, it is not necessary in a domestic system and may cause unnatural effects. The environment of a large, awkwardly shaped cinema calls for extreme measures, and compromises are acceptable.

The Dolby licence for domestic video surround-sound is tied to the use of a Dolby-B decoder chip in the mono rear channel. It is on this that the royalty is payable, at a sliding scale rate which depends on the number of units made. Each mono decoder rates as half a stereo cassette deck, and for most firms the royalty is less than half a US dollar. Around half the Japanese companies selling video surround decoders have signed to pay. The other half have fringed a compander circuit which does more or less the same job of decoding the rear mono channel. Because it is only an effects channel, decoding anomalies are unlikely to matter. The question of A-format decoding does not arise because this is done by the film or video company when the optical track is transferred to a home video format.

On the face of things, then, there is no legal or technical reason why the Japanese should pay. Obviously, those who don't pay have no feelings of guilt about riding on the back of someone else's investment in getting the film industry to change tack after 50 years and renounce low-fi sound.

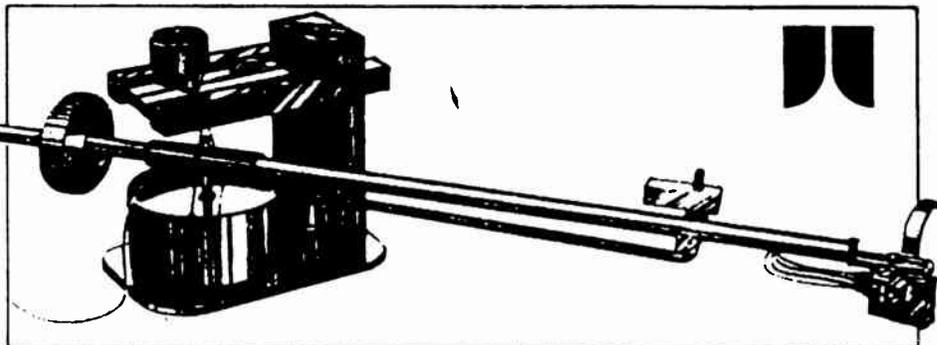
In reality, there is a good reason why the Japanese may have to pay. It has nothing to do with ethics or playing the game. Exactly the same thing happened in the early days of cassette audio. When the Dolby-B noise reduction system first hit the market, several Japanese firms designed non-Dolby circuits which did the same job. Sony had one. So did JVC with ANRS. What they found to their horror was that they could not sell machines without the magical word 'Dolby'. Musicassettes carried the Doby logo, not ANRS or Sony. The most valuable part of the Dolby licence was the right to use the Dolby logo. One by one all the Japanese came grudgingly to heel.

All the video surround-sound decoders are designed first and foremost for one purpose. That is, to decode film soundtracks recorded in Dolby surround format. The films only sound right when decoded into LF, CF, RF and mono surround with delay and B-format (or similar) noise reduction. When video companies release these films the packaging puffs the Dolby surround format. Firms which have taken a licence for their decoder are puffing the Dolby surround facility in similar fashion.

The hold-outs have an interesting problem on their hands. They have to advertise the fact that their decoders are designed and intended to decode Dolby surround video tracks, but they have to do so without using the Dolby trade mark in either their advertising or their instruction books. This performance should be as much fun to watch as many of the thousand or so cinema films now released in you-know-what surround-sound. ♪



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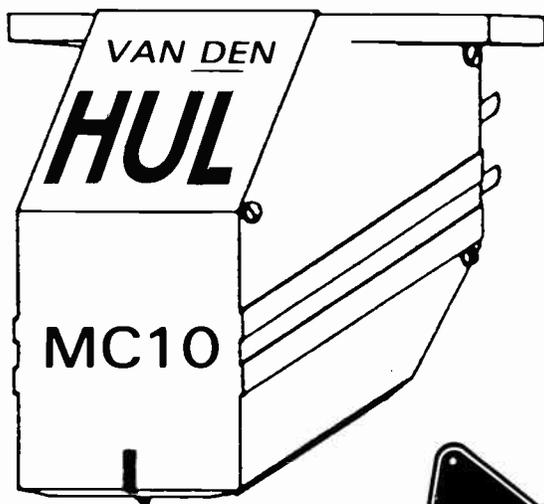
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THE BBC HAVE AT LAST commissioned their new mobile control room, fitted with the Neve digital control desk, for use on outside broadcasts and recordings. My colleague and I had an opportunity to look over the complete installation in considerable detail during October, and I was very impressed with it indeed.

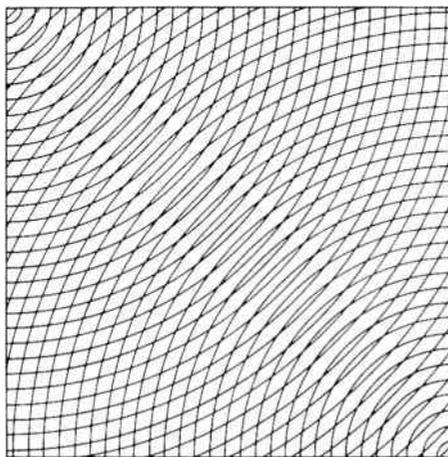
The control room is part of an articulated lorry; the sides can be expanded, when in use, but have to be contracted for transit. The interior is very well acoustically treated, and surprisingly comfortable, and the acoustic environment is acceptable for even quite complex balances. Great care has been taken with LF absorption to eliminate any awkward standing waves, and I was surprised at the excellent reproduced quality of various CDs played through the desk and from the LS5/8 loudspeakers.

The digital control desk has 48 main inputs which are analogue at mic or line level, and the signals are processed at the input direct to digital at a 48kHz sampling rate. There are also 32 dedicated digital inputs for mixing down or play-in purposes. The desk has 30 analogue and 32 digital outputs, which allows for stunning flexibility.

The entire concept of this desk is so utterly different from that of a normal analogue desk, that considerable training will be necessary to allow balancers to get the best out of it. Perhaps the most radical difference is the provision of just two assignable control sections which can be assigned to any required combination of channels. These can allow all the normal types of equalisation, including parametric and high or low-pass filtering, to be inserted as required, and once the equalisation parameters have been selected, they are remembered by the microprocessor controllers, after which the assignable panel can be used to modify the sound of another channel or combination of channels. The module also includes limiter and compression adjustments, delay in steps from a few μ s up to 70ms in any channel, and gain controls to optimise thresholds at any required point in the desk, eg, microphone input, channel fader and group output thresholds. The complex desk VDU indicates to the balancer the state of the assigned equalisation, together with the gain states and delays selected on the particular channel. Normal metering is provided with the usual BBC PPM displays, but these are complemented by various types of optical level display equipment, eg, bargraphs etc.

A massive row of faders at the front of the console can be manually operated to alter the gain of any channel, but they can also move up and down by computer control in a multi-channel mixing down configuration. An operator can alter the fader position during the multi-channel playback, thus allowing a balance change from that which has been previously established.

The computer disc drive software allows an operator to store a complete desk configuration, ie, the positions of all faders and equalisation, routing, limiting, delay settings, so that a session can be continued the next day. This allows the desk to be used for other purposes in the meantime. There are four basic desk software configurations. The first is normal stereo output to feed an analogue outside broadcast landline, or alternatively a stereo digital link. The second allows multitrack mixdown and over-dub, whilst the third allows for simultaneous multitracking on record, and stereo output for live transmission. The final configuration



ANGUS MCKENZIE

is for general studio applications, which allows for very complex set-ups. Each can be selected almost immediately. All the control circuits throughout the desk operate in the digital domain on the digitised signals, the only analogue controlling being that of microphone sensitivity and D/A converters for special insert points, which can allow the desk to be used with external analogue processing equipment, such as third-octave equalisers and sound effects boxes. The digital control of equalisation and other parameters allows much more flexibility in operation, and very precise response variations can be preset. Filter characteristics can be changed at will, and if one is not immediately available, then a modification of the firmware will allow new and unusual curves to be developed. One example of the astonishing flexibility is that the operator can not only alter a boost or cut frequency, but he can also vary the Q (sharpness) of the response variation. The response can be made to look like the Alps if several equalisers are put in tandem, and there should be no build-up of distortion.

The vehicle is divided into discrete parts. Behind the main control room is a large room in which are kept many of the interfaces, tape recorders and monitoring control equipment. One section includes all the power control gear, and it was here that I received rather an unwelcome surprise, for not only does the entire installation require a three phase external supply, but it draws up to 60A from each phase, thus representing what is equivalent to a peak demand of 180A at mains voltage! A typical analogue installation might take only 25A maximum. I feel that digital electronics has got a long way to go yet, not so much in terms of facilities, but in power consumption. 40% of this is required to run the control desk and its ancillary equipment, including the processors, but a massive 60% is used for keeping everything cool, the control equipment normally running at 15°C in the more delicate areas. This means the provision of healthy ventilation equipment and ducts, and I was quite surprised that the control room itself was reasonably quiet, showing excellent noise isolation.

Although inputs and outputs are basically 16-bit resolution, the desk itself operates with a vast surplus of bits, which keeps down any possible onset of distortion *en route*, some desk areas in fact having up to 32-bit capability, with use of ranging bits etc. We had the opportunity of playing with mix-downs of multitrack light and classical music, and what was particularly interesting was that with the pressing of a button or two, one could compare two completely different

balances, including different equalisations etc, applied to the various channels. We carried out many experiments with the individual channel delay facility, but as we did not have a plan of microphone positions and distances of each from the main stereo mic, we could not attempt a precise time correction to delay the panned-in closer mics. However, a few reasonable guesses whilst working on the sound, with just a few panned mics inserted, was sufficient to show that adding delay to the spot mics could materially alter the sound, but in a fairly subtle way. In comparing balances with and without delay, we all felt that the panned mics seemed to contribute less presence to the balance, and yet provide the positioning clarity that one requires.

We had very lengthy discussions about the philosophy of the desk, and it seems clear that caution will have to be taken when one is approaching a delay on a spot mic, which is very close to theoretical, for any movement of the performer could actually cause a form of phasing effect akin to that of a pop flanger. It will probably be found beneficial in the end to delay the spot mics by slightly more than the theoretical amount, putting them 5ft or so further back from the coincidental point to avoid phasing problems at middle frequencies. One fascinating thought came to me, which was that a balancer might well try advancing spot mics in time, rather than retarding them, in some pop music balances, in order to increase the apparent presence of spot mics without making their contributions louder in terms of actual measured levels. This could help in spreading transients which can otherwise cause difficulties in analogue circuits, the problem being that of sending too high a crest factor down the line which causes problems to limiters which have to be used to control peak modulation deviation. As the desk has no direct facility to advance the time of any channel before mixing, the engineer would have to achieve the same result by delaying all other channels, which could be done quite easily by special programming. This may well not be practical for broadcasting, but the idea has clear applications in pop and light music recording for the music market.

The new installation should already have been used for the first time on air on Wednesday, November 6th for the relay of Evensong from Kings College Chapel, Cambridge. The BBC intend to use the facility for all conceivable purposes for very many months yet before placing it into regular service. I was told that it might well be used for the 1986 Royal Albert Hall Prom season, and it is to be hoped that this will all be a prelude to much more extensive use of digital audio in broadcasting.

In discussion, we all realised that it was virtually essential for the BBC to obtain a multitrack digital machine to enable engineers to spend days of experimental time mixing down digital recordings of various events. The phase and positioning smudging of analogue tape would clearly confuse any delay experimentation, and so it was felt that the cost involved could be justified. The facility is obviously going to be hard at work for much of the time, and probably it will be used at least as much for training as for actual live recording and mixing down for programmes, certainly for the first year or two. Only time will tell whether the enormous cost will be fully justified. I would like to thank the BBC OB department for letting me loose on their installation.

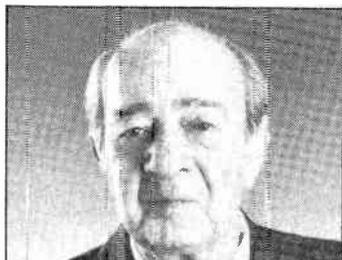
THE HI-FI NEWS AWARDS

FOR ACHIEVEMENTS IN AUDIO

Ken Kessler and Ivor Humphreys on the backgrounds to this year's recipients



John Gilbert



Saul Marantz



Arthur Radford



Harry Pearson

A YEAR AGO WE PRESENTED THE first of our *Hi-Fi News Awards for Achievements in Audio*, a new award scheme which replaces the earlier, long-lived and highly successful *Audio Awards*, which were last given in 1982 to the conductor Vernon Handley and Peter Walker of Quad. Whereas the *Audio Awards* celebrated the achievements first of individual recordings and then personalities who were felt to have given long and valuable service to music in Britain via their connexions with recorded music, either as performers of technicians, the new arrangement is more overtly geared to the technical, hi-fi side of our business, honouring seminal designers and audio writers (although in future years the intention is once again to include musicians and recording personnel).

Also different about *The Hi-Fi News Awards* is the worldwide net it casts when considering recipients. Last year we honoured no fewer than six famous audio personalities: Donald Aldous, Stanley Kelly and Peter Walker from the UK, and David Hafler, J Gordon Holt and Edgar Villchur from across the Atlantic. This year also splits the home-based with the American; from our own shores we have John Gilbert, perhaps best known to our trade as a writer for *Gramophone*, and Arthur Radford (whose name tells all); and from the US, Saul Marantz (again needing no further introduction) and Harry Pearson, editor/publisher of the famous 'underground' magazine *The Absolute Sound*. Two journalists and two designers and each of very special merit. The presentations themselves were made at the *HFN/RR Annual Reviewers' Dinner* in London on December 13th.

John Gilbert

Multifarious is the word that comes to mind initially regarding the achievements of this most widely disciplined of men, for he has packed an astonishing variety and amount of work into his (by the time this appears in print) 78 years. We think of John Gilbert as an audio writer of remarkable consistency, who has had connexions with *Gramophone* more or less since its instigation over 60 years ago, but one could equally well offer him accolades for his work in teaching or technical development and research. And then there are his distinguished, if less dominating, activities in music, motor racing and photography.

John was born in January 1908 and educated at Westminster City School and Trinity College of Music; in 1925 he gave piano

recitals for the BBC. He joined the 'Engineering' department of the Phoenix Assurance Co in that year too and after a while during his seven-year stay with them was allowed two days per week leave to take mechanical and electrical/electronics courses at Regent Street Polytechnic. In 1933 John started writing for *Wireless World* magazine and joined the development labs of Partridge & Mee (Parmeko), helping in the development of disc recording equipment. A year later he took charge of the sound and lighting set-up at Regent's Park Open-Air Theatre. In 1934 he was invited by Merz & McLellan to help develop an electronic calculator which would be capable of vector analysis via a CRT display; this was demonstrated to the Royal Society two years later.

In 1935 John left Parmeko to set up the first full-time course in Radio Servicing at the Music Trades Department of the Northern Polytechnic and was appointed Technical Consultant & Reviewer to *Music Trades Review*, a post he retained for no less than 30 years. His contacts with *Gramophone* (as a reader initially, since 1925, and subsequently as a writer through personal acquaintance with Christopher Stone, Compton McKenzie and Percy Wilson) culminated in his being appointed Audio Consultant & Technical Reviewer with regular monthly articles and reviews, an association he maintains, albeit a little less intensively in the last few years.

During World War 2 John was seconded to the Ministry of Aircraft Production to work particularly on centimetric radar for the Fleet Air Arm. In 1947 he returned to the Polytechnic as Senior Lecturer in the Department of Communications and Electronic Engineering and from 1951 until his retirement in 1972 was Head of the Department; his staff included *HFN/RR* contributor Ralph West and much later Roger Driscoll. Also in 1951 he joined the BBC's 'Inventors Club' and contributed to more than 150 TV programmes over 14 years. In 1948 he came up with a 3in. TV monitor with a 25kV tube which was used regularly at Alexandra Palace in studio and 'field' work, and in 1955 developed a TV slave viewing screen for Cossor. As a technical consultant to Siebe Gorman, and in conjunction with Marconi, he produced an underwater TV camera (which was used to locate the sunken submarine 'Affray' and two crashed Comet aircraft), and around 1960 developed communication and gas detecting systems for use in mines. In 1965 he appeared in the first transmitted programme from the then new ITA network's Associated TV studio, and subsequently contributed for three years. In

his own HRG-Maserati racing car he *drove* at Goodwood, Silverstone etc, etc in the '50s and still retains (and exercises) his qualification as a Grand Prix/RAC scrutineer.

From 1933-39 he was organist at the Lutheran Churches at Aldgate and Forest Hill. Since 1960 John has been: on the panel of several IEE Committees; President/Chairman of the British Sound Recording Association; involved with the setting-up of the UK branch of the AES (first Chairman); founder of the Union Internationale de la Presse Radio et Electronique (currently he is its Vice President); member and sometime Chairman of BSI committees. He is a Chartered Engineer and Associate of Trinity College of Music. He is a Fellow of: the AES; IERE; BKSTS; Royal Television Society; Royal Society of the Arts.

Saul Marantz

There may not be a Mr Technics or a Mr Pioneer, but there *is* a Mr Marantz whose name has graced top-flight audio components for over 30 years. While most of the *Hi-Fi News Awards* recipients have come from the specialist sector, it may surprise readers to find us honouring a name associated now with the mass-market. What these readers should know is that Marantz Co Inc, founded in 1955, *defined* what we now call the high-end, and it took 'Audiophile' hi-fi out of the DIY sector and into the shops.

Saul Marantz is one of those rare individuals in hi-fi who combines more than one primary skill, and the results of his efforts have always been products that evidence much more than those issuing from contemporaries who are either pure designers or pure marketing men. Saul Marantz' gift is the ability to blend all aspects of a product into a uniformly desirable whole, having paid attention to circuit design details, component and constructional quality, value for money and ergonomics, in addition to the all-important matter of sound quality. With this recipe, he raised the 1950s hi-fi consciousness to a level far beyond what contemporary standards could have inspired.

After 20 years as a commercial artist, photo engraver, and partner in a graphic arts studio, Saul began designing audio components during those electronic 'boom years' following WW2. Following his discharge as 2nd Officer, USS Katoorah (stationed in the South Pacific 1943-45), Saul ran the SB Marantz Studio for Graphic Arts, while pursuing his activities as an audio hobbyist. In 1953 he produced his first preamplifier, the SB Marantz Audio Console, followed by

the first Marantz power amplifier, the Model 2. By 1955, demand for these precursors of today's exotica was high enough for Saul to form the company which bears his name.

The products he manufactured are now regarded as true classics, and their ability to perform admirably in today's best systems can only hint at the impact they must have had 30 years ago, when consumers otherwise had to build their own equipment if they wanted that kind of performance and quality. The Model 7 preamp, arguably the most famous piece of 1950s American hi-fi hardware, emerged during this period, a product which has come to represent the heights attainable in those early days.

Saul's role in the creation of the Model 7, and other classics like the sought-after 10B tuner, comprised much more than design input. With an eye for talent, in addition to his skills as entrepreneur, stylist, and marketing wizard, Saul inspired top electronics experts like Dick Sequerra and Sid Smith to help in producing shop-ready components which suffered no compromises. In addition to proving to consumers and retailers that there needn't be fixed horizons or limitations, these components spurred on other manufacturers to greater things, much in the way that Quad has (twice) inspired other speaker manufacturers. For at least a decade, Marantz preamplifiers, power amps and tuners were the audiophile's choice.

In the mid-1960s, Marantz was acquired by Superscope, and Saul stayed on as President and Member of the Board of Directors until 1967. He then went on to Ferrodyne as Vice President and to Bozak, again as Vice-President, before co-founding Dahlquist Inc, where he remained as President until 1978. Since that time Saul has been operating as a consultant, but the Marantz story does not stop there. In 1985, rather than announce his well-deserved retirement, Saul formed a new company, MCW Inc, with top designer John Curl and marketing expert Ed Woodard. The aim is to do for today's audiophiles what Marantz did for those in the 1950s.

Saul Marantz is a Charter Member and Fellow of the Audio Engineering Society, was a Member of the Board of Directors, Institute of High Fidelity, 1956-64, and has been elected to the International Audio Hall of Fame.

Arthur Radford

Along with Saul Marantz and a number of last year's *Hi-Fi News Awards* recipients, Arthur Radford helped to usher in the era of hi-fi. His career in electronics began in the early 1930s, after completing his education at Merchant Venturers Technical College and Bristol University. Working for a Bristol-based company, Arthur was involved in the manufacture of amplifiers, microphones, and loudspeakers for high-quality public address systems, including a portable unit for dance band vocalists.

His all-consuming interest in things electronic led him to amateur radio, and Arthur received his transmitting licence in 1932; the call letters were G6YA, which he assures us stood for 'Young Arthur'. His involvement with ham radio led to enrolment in a course on electrical engineering, where most of the study was devoted to valve amplifier design and acoustics. It was during this time that he began his lifelong involvement with transformer design.

In 1936, Arthur's interest was piqued – in yet another field – by a paper on rear-loaded acoustical labyrinth loudspeakers, written by

Benjamin Olney and published by the *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*. The interest stayed with Arthur until after the war, when serious work began, resulting in a patent for a transmission line loudspeaker design in 1964. This patent has served as the basis for the speakers that Arthur still manufactures.

As is consistent with other great designers from hi-fi's early days, Arthur spent the war years working on communications devices, including radar and sound reproduction equipment for the Admiralty. Midway through the War, after three months at the Army Radio School, he was commissioned and posted to command the radar and wireless workshop in the Orkneys, followed by work for the War Office to administer the distribution of electronic test and measuring instruments for REME workshops worldwide. This work led in due course to Arthur's involvement in the manufacture of top-quality measuring equipment. But while the loudspeaker designs and measuring instruments are a major part of the Radford contribution, it is his work with amplifiers and transformers that stands out.

Demobilised in 1946, Arthur decided to start in business selling ex-government equipment and components to radio hams and experimenters. As the business grew, Arthur was able to indulge in the manufacture of products of his own design. Initially, Radford produced Williamson-based amplifiers, but the range soon developed to encompass transformer manufacture for kit-builders and OEM users like Daystrom (Heathkit) and Rank. This led to the range of classic amps in the MA and STA series.

Documented in *HFN/RR's* June-August 1962 issues by Arthur and AR Bailey, the MA/STA Series amplifiers set new standards, the novel application of negative feedback demonstrating that even during the dawn of the transistor era valves still had a lot to offer. The Radford design offered wide bandwidth, incredible stability, and robust build quality, along with a sound quality that's still acceptable, over 20 years after it first appeared. Over 12,000 were produced, and they remain among the most cherished of 'anachrophile' acquisitions.

At the age of 71, Arthur Radford continues to manufacture a full range of loudspeakers, solid-state amplifiers, and test equipment from his Weston-super-Mare base. Though export-oriented for the last decade, Radford products are again part of the British hi-fi scene, for Arthur Radford has succumbed to public demand and reintroduced the STA25 valve amplifier in Mk IV form.

Harry Pearson

Our second award to a foreign journalist again finds us turning to America's alternative, rather than mainstream, hi-fi press. It was as a direct result of the major magazines showing more concern for their advertisers than their readers that last year's recipient, J Gordon Holt, founded *The Stereophile*. Harry Pearson founded *The Absolute Sound* for similar reasons, nudged along by the erratic appearance of Holt's journal and the need to satisfy like-minded music lovers after more information than was afforded by the newsstand offerings.

Harry left a successful career in mainstream journalism to enter the then-new field of what used to be called the underground press. After receiving a BA in English from Duke University, Harry served an apprenticeship on a variety of small southern US newspapers, eventually being hired

by *Newsday* in 1970 as an environmental writer – the first to appear in a daily newspaper. Between 1963 and 1974, Harry's skills as an investigative reporter earned him a vast collection of major awards. Among them are the American Political Science Association Award for the Distinguished Reporting of Public Affairs (1964), the National Council on the Arts Creative Writing Grant (1966), The Scripps-Howard Foundation Conservation Writing Award (1965), appointment by the Governor of Arkansas to the Arkansas Wild Rivers Commission (1966-1970), the National Business Journalism Award (1969), and – in 1974 alone – the Sigma Chi Delta Award, the Society of Silurians Award, and the American Society of Planning Officials Award. A number of those were earned for Harry's concern for ecology, which has enabled him to state that he 'saved a river from a federal reservoir project'.

By 1972, Harry was ready to make the transition from writer to editor/publisher, choosing audio journalism as the field to pursue in light of his consuming passion for music. His goal was to produce a magazine which – while as professionally written and packaged as any mainstream hi-fi journal – would act as a watchdog and critic of the hi-fi and music industries. Harry's feelings were that the commercial press treated all hi-fi as sounding 'good', so much so that writers insisted that there were few, if any, audible differences among many components. As Harry's ears told him otherwise, he was compelled to write about hi-fi in no-holds-barred subjective terms.

Pearson's achievements, beyond taking *The Absolute Sound* from 135 subscriptions early on to over 15,000 in 1985, focus on his success in getting manufacturers and consumers to assess hi-fi equipment for its audible, rather than statistical, performance. To accomplish this, he has spent the past 13 years creating a language for the subjective evaluation of components, this ongoing project evolving from issue to issue in *The Absolute Sound*. If this 'language' were confined to *TAS* readers, the efforts would be wasted. Because of the combination of lucid prose and controversial attitude, Harry's definitions have entered the general hi-fi lexicon. While the Old Guard rail against the use of adjectives to describe sound, beyond the usual 'bright' or 'distorted' into the more poetic 'transparent' or 'silken', audiophiles do now have a way of describing sound; while it may seem like arcane lingo to some, those who understand Pearson's methods have been freed from the constraints of mere specsman'ship. [We reproduce a recent essay of Harry's, on p37 – Ed.]

Harry Pearson, through *The Absolute Sound*, has shown that hi-fi journalism can provide entertaining reading, at the same time serving a purpose in the task of evaluating components. His writing has been directly responsible for the reassessment of older recordings, it has prevented many from embracing new developments simply because they're new, it has influenced audio journalists who may once have opted for the lab-report-only approach, and it has forced manufacturers to realise that Harry Pearson's reference, the absolute sound of real music, should be the only target at which to aim. Additionally, he has given American audiophiles a magazine not pressured by its advertisers. While hard science has its place, Harry reminds us that the purpose of hi-fi is to reproduce music rather than test tones or squarewaves, and his tenacious approach has benefited all who would listen. ←

THE SECOND AMERICAN AUDIO REVOLUTION

Harry Pearson, Editor of *The Absolute Sound*, discusses the Achievement of Transparency

Reprinted with permission from the Autumn 1985 Edition of *The Absolute Sound*

THE LAST MAJOR TASK I ASSIGNED myself prior to an enforced sabbatical was an essay on the nature and sound of basic amplifiers. During that sabbatical, I spent some time discussing one aspect of that amplifier report with a number of audio designers whose theoretical brilliance I respect. That aspect centered upon the question of transparency.

Those conversations and my subsequent experience with the revised Music Room 3 [HP's revised main listening room, rebuilt after a fire - Ed], itself now an order of magnitude (and I *mean* an order of magnitude) more transparent, have led me to believe that the distinguishing characteristic of the components we have called 'great' and 'classic' has been none other than transparency.

It is, therefore, my intention to redefine the art in terms of that most elusive of characteristics and to rank, according to that criterion, the present-day classic components. The last time I ranked components in this respect was at *The Absolute Sound's* tenth birthday, when I attempted to assess which components had been the most influential during the first decade of the High End (roughly 1973 to 1983, although the seeds for the High End were sown earlier).

I am indebted, in part, to J Gordon Holt of *Stereophile*, who was the first, as far as I know, to use the term *transparency* in the modern sense. I also owe him an apology. In one of my oh-so-smartass moments, I pooh-poohed the concept of transparency, saying it was not a quality I heard in the concert hall. And, indeed, it isn't. But it is a quality that audio components must have if we are to re-create the illusion of a concert hall. In other words, any audio components should be like a glassless window on the original event. And that is what we mean by transparency.

As it happens, in the amplifier essay (*TAS* 35) I stumbled into a definition of transparency that seems (to me, anyway) even more germane to my thinking now than it was on the day it was written. And with a few changes, this is what transparency is:

With most components, if you can hear into the sonic soundstage at all, you won't hear much past the front row of players. Imagine, if you will, sitting in the concert hall of your choice and seeing a spotlight illuminating the front row of players. Imagine that the remainder of the players are behind a gauzy curtain and in the dark. I strike the visual analogy with cause. With most components, you simply cannot see very far into the stage. You cannot see the difference between the players. You may get no sense of the instruments' size, dimensions, or 'body'. You won't hear the back or side walls, much less the overhead canopy. Vary the material and texture of the curtain, and you have either 'grain' or 'liquidity'.

The word *transparency* has been used, in the past, to describe all sorts of phenomena, including high-frequency extension and 'airiness', 'snap', and tonal neutrality. But true transparency can exist without these attributes. The Quicksilver mono amplifiers have none

of these attributes yet transparency is their forte. It means, though, being able to hear into the soundstage and mentally 'see' the players, the distance between the players, the individual instruments in the string section, the shape of the stage, the sound of the first waves bouncing off the stage walls, the back walls of the hall, the volume of the hall. It's being able to hear and 'see' the air, being able to tell whether that air is humid or dry.

I found myself intrigued by the topic of transparency while I was working on the criteria by which I could order my findings on the qualities of basic amplifiers. And much of my thinking on the point was inspired by the low-priced but astonishingly transparent Quicksilver mono amplifiers. While I ranked two very transparent amplifiers highly in the tests - the superb Jadis from France and the Ray Lumley monoblocks from England - I did not finally give the weight to transparency that I now would. (If I did, it would result in a demotion in standing for the Krell KMA-100 and a revision upward for the Audio Research D-250 Mk II.)

The component that pushed me over the edge was the \$12,000 Goldmund Reference turntable, which, upon first listening, sounded the antithesis of transparent, and far inferior to the much less expensive Goldmund Studio. But, as the Goldmund Reference broke in over its first 100 hours of operation, its gritty, grainy, and grayish colorations vanished and I began to perceive, for the first time from disc, some of the same characteristics I hear when I listen to first or second generation master tapes. At this point, the enforced sabbatical.

I had had enough experience with the Goldmund by this time to realize what it was I liked about the Studio, and, ultimately, what it was I hadn't liked about the early iterations of the Sota turntable. They, the Goldmunds, were transparent over much of the musical spectrum, while the Sota was opaque and textured, reminiscent of early transistor design. From this thought, it was but one step to the recognition that the poor old battered Linn-Sondek LP12 was indeed more transparent than the Sota, although its problems had struck me (prior to this) as being the less forgivable.

During my sabbatical, I did some serious thinking about digital recording. And, thanks to J Tamblyn Henderson [of Reference Recordings and *Däfos* fame], I was able to hear digital tapes played back on a superior system, one which included an experimental electrostatic speaker that is among the most neutral and transparent speakers I have ever heard. (It's still in the development stage.)

Thought I to myself, there must be some reason, some thing or characteristic, that people find of potential in digital recording, despite its drawbacks. And that thing, ladies and gentlemen, is transparency. In part of the spectrum, digital is, quite simply, more transparent than analogue sound on tape*. JTH, for my interest and amusement, played me a digital recording transferred to standard tape. Comparing the original digital

* But not necessarily direct-to-disc.

with its analogue taped version, I found the tape version smeared (ie, the images were bloated and blurry) and much the less transparent. (I am ignoring, for purposes of this discussion, the headache-inducing sounds, the sterility, and those alien distortions.) There is, with the best digital sound to be had (that from a master tape), considerably less glass in the window on the orchestra in the lower half of the frequency range, and hardly any dirt on that glass. I did not, however, say that digital was listenable. Nor have I forgiven the Linn Sondek its shortcomings. In fact, the imperfections of both are entirely germane to this discussion.

At this point, we must take note of a dichotomous contradiction within transparent components. First, there is no component that is, top to bottom, totally transparent. The great, or classic, components have been only partly transparent. That is, they have possessed the characteristic we call transparency in some small portion of their range. The remainder of the music did not exhibit this magic, and, in many cases, was much less than magical.

The original electrostatic provides a lovely example. The first Quad had a transparent quality in its midrange reproduction. That see-through quality did not extend into the mid-bass, nor up past the upper midrange, not even very far *into* the upper midrange. But, with the midband transparency it possessed, the Quad assured its place in history.**

The catch? The more transparent a component is over part of its range, the more maddening its lack of transparency elsewhere in the spectrum. And the more apparent its other flaws, whatever they may be. All other shortcomings stand out when a bit of transparency has been achieved. A little transparency can be a dangerous thing.

During the early days of component high fidelity, it seemed that transparency was achieved at a high cost, namely, at the price of poor playback loudness levels, shortcomings at the frequency extremes, soundstaging failings, and textural and other distortion products that dropped an audible cloud over most of the frequency range. This disparity - between the transparent and the ordinary - within a single component created, I believe, too much of a discontinuity, too much of a contrast, for most listeners to handle. Meaning: the discontinuity called attention to the fact that one was listening to the electronics, rather than the music. It made it harder to get lost in the music.

Unless the region of the component's transparency corresponded well with the listener's musical tastes, there had to be a restless detachment. This may explain why admirers of chamber music, music of the Baroque era, and certain kinds of vocal music found the Quads, on the whole, easy to live with. There was, in a phrase, a

**The British have, traditionally, produced some of the most transparent components, although with what is said to be their typical reserve, they haven't made a point of it per se. Nor have, for that matter, British reviewers. But the list of transparent British and Scottish audio products is impressive, from the Decca cartridges and ribbon tweeter to the Sendor BC-1s, from the Ariston table to the SME arm.



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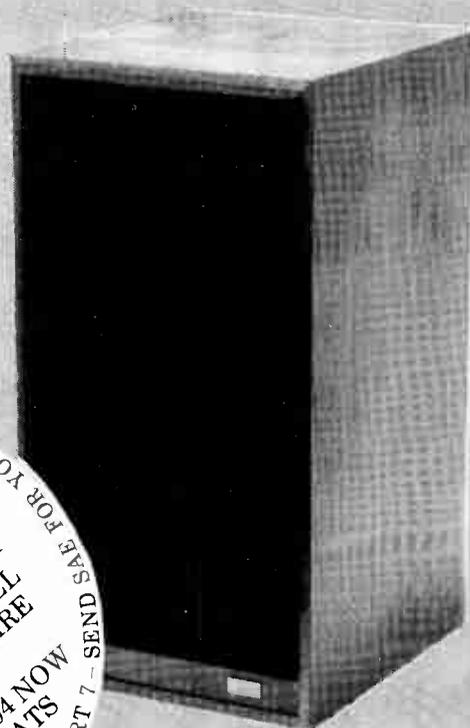
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consonance between the music played and the component's transparency. But if one were interested in what we shall call power music (heavy-duty classical) or intense contemporary (say, rock or the new music), then the Quads were too problematic for real long-term musical enjoyment, regardless of their merits and their transparency. With the Quads, and other highly regarded but frail components, this is where the tweaking began. Double Quads, for instance. What was Mark Levinson's HQD system other than an attempt to extend the Quad's transparency and to minimize its most obvious failings?

Those of us who did not have either the patience or the skill for tweaking had to settle for a more coherent sounding component, simply for the sake of our musical enjoyment, while acknowledging and admiring (from afar) the transparency of certain fabled components. Even until fairly recent days, there has been a schism among those who prize transparency *uber alles*, no matter the cost, and those who opt for overall coherency and what might once have been called a musical sound.

Something has happened in the past few years and it has happened in silence. And that is: as the High End has evolved, especially in the US of A, so has the transparency of audio components. Now the most transparent components are so over a great portion of their range, so much so that the gap between the transparency and coherency can comfortably be bridged. Furthermore, there is not only greater transparency in the best modern components, but there are, overall, fewer audible flaws in those components. One can, so to speak, have his transparency and get lost in it too.

There are components whose development produces an instructive parallel. Consider the Infinity Reference System: it began with transparency in the midband. Its designers have, throughout its updatings, now extended that transparency upward until the EMIT tweeters in the latest version (call it the III.V Series) sound like the wonderful RTR electrostatics used in several speaker systems of yesteryore. Even the mid-bass is getting transparent (although the bottom end remains somewhat opaque). The Quads themselves, in the new ESL-63 model, have become more transparent and nearly acceptable over a wider range of music. You might want to consider a progression from the Linn to the Goldmund Studio to the Goldmund Reference, each more of a window on the sound than its predecessor. The advantage of moving-coils over all the moving-magnets (or variable reluctance/moving-iron designs) is, and has been, transparency. The progress of Sugano's work from Supex SD-900 to the Koetsu Rosewood Signature is, in microcosm, a history of the evolution of transparency in home audio equipment during the past decade.

One of the things that makes digital so very irritating, aside from its anti-musical distortions, transient and ambient characteristics, is, I submit, the contrast between its transparency in the bottom octaves of the range and its imperfections elsewhere, its discontinuity, its lack of coherency. In this regard, the Compact Disc is a throw-back in terms of the evolution of a truly transparent reproducing chain; but, for the masses of mid-fi listeners, it is a first affordable sampling of the wonders of transparency, however limited we at the High End may find the pleasures. Transparency, you will note, is

not achieved without considerable cost (financially). And when you get below the most costly plateau of componentry, transparency becomes like the Yeti, much discussed but seldom seen. Like the audio cassette, the Compact Disc can be, in time, expected to evolve.* Still, it is small wonder that those most enthusiastic about CDs (newspaper critics and the mainstream audio reviewers) are those ignorant of the development of the High End and its evolution toward a musical sound, in the past decade. Small wonder, then, that audiophiles with systems of the greatest transparency find the present state of digital disorienting, ugly, and amusical.

I have recited those experiences with basic amplifiers and the Goldmund Reference table as contributory factors in enhancing my apperception of that quality we've designated *transparency*. But only after a third experience did I come to understand just how much audio components have evolved since 1973 and why that evolution has gone largely unreported.

The third experience, to my surprise, came with the restoration of Music Room 3.

In the physical reconstruction of the room itself, there were unwitting improvements. The one witting one, I might note, was the rewiring of this room, and the newly created Room 1/2, for line voltage as close to the state-of-the-art as practicable. However, the foundations were sagging under the bay window area in Room 3 and they had to be reinforced. The floors themselves were reinforced. The plaster walls, which manifested cracks and small fault lines (oh those IRS woofers), were completely restored, along with the cedar beams bracing those walls. In effect, these moves re-sealed the room. Thicker carpet was installed and adjustable draperies were put in (and used at their minimum position).

Since the room was completed a month later than projected (about the first of August), we rushed to install the IRS reference system in order that I might return to work. But things were different in this regard as well. We had a new set-up man (Jeff Goggin). The IRS, when returned from the factory where it had been refurbished, had new amps for the woofer towers, new wiring harnesses (with better wire), and there were other changes about which A Nudell has been rather coy (he will not divulge what they are). The Syrinx arm has been updated. The Koetsu Rosewood Signature was an entirely new design, one Sugano thinks his masterwork. The interconnects, from Spectral, are new, although their speaker cables, at the time, had not yet been changed. The latest Audio Research SP-10 Mk II *Revised*, which sounded magnificent, incorporated all of its designer's latest adjustments; and we had an amplifier from England, a tube monoblock from Roy Grant that was a new experience for us.

And the first listening session said it all. Unbelievable, thought I, jaw ajar.

What had been created was a system of the greatest transparency, in excess of any-

*A point worth the noting: Since the earliest days of high fidelity (the early '50'), most audio companies, large and small, applied the 'trickle down' theory of audio design. This is, these firms would make an assault on the state-of-the-art, and then incorporate key features from the 'high end' product to less expensive products. Beginning with the cassette, and continuing along into the Compact Disc, we find today's mega-corporations introducing new technologies at the mass-market level - thus, in effect, allowing the average Joe to subsidise future research and development, from which improved and more expensive versions of the product eventually derive. Let's call this the new trickle up theory. At least in the old days the people who could afford it subsidised the new technologies. In the aggregate, of course, the Joe Consumers have more wealth than the wealthy because there are more Joes than Jodhpurs.

thing I, or the serious listeners invited in afterward, had ever heard. Why?

The most obvious answer is also the germane one to the tale. The system can only be as transparent as its weakest link (as we discovered when we substituted the conrad-johnson Premier Vs for the Grants). So the answer. Everything contributes to the spectacular transparency.

Now, if we back up just a bit, we will see why the eminent and august British reviewers, especially those at *Hi-Fi News & Record Review*, have been so intrigued by the American High End scene since the beginning of this decade. Thanks to the pioneering work of many writers (not just ours), and the breakdown of the mainstream press' hegemony over audio interpretation, every component, and every part in every component, of the audio chain has come under scrutiny. From the wall socket to the listening environment. We have Enid Lumley to thank for reminding us what the researchers of the '30s first noted - the effect of power lines on the sound and the effect of line cord orientation. We have Walter Jung and, later, J Peter Moncrieff to thank for showing the world that capacitors do, indeed, have a sound of their own. Bob Fulton for showing us that speaker cables, and, by extension, electronic interconnects, can cause serious changes in the sounds we hear. We have Harry Weisfeld to thank for the VPI blocks and for the first practically priced record cleaning machine for the masses. We have Tweek, Stylast, electronic stylus cleaners, Last. We thank Peter Aczel for rediscovering the importance of VTA. We have Sheffield, Reference Recordings, and Wilson Audio (among others) to thank for demonstrating that modern technology can deedy-do produce better recordings than those of 25 years ago.

In other words, we have gone through an intellectual explosion consisting of the most intensive examination of the most minute parts of the music playback system. Each of these contributions has, I am certain, put us where we now stand - at the threshold of a realistic and lifelike sound. At the threshold of true transparency.

The mainstream American press has steadfastly denied that any of these incremental improvements are 'real' or 'audible', because they can't be measured using their current measuring techniques (which are primitive, at best, save for those devised by Richard Heyser). And because these men can't measure well, they don't hear well. The equivalent of a 17th Century astronomer saying there could be no planets beyond Saturn in the Solar System because none could be seen. Or then measured.

The British reviewers, on the other hand, have, as I suggested, had a long-time admiration for that quality we call transparency, and they realize that the Americans have exported another audio revolution, the second.** This was done because individual Americans (and not the major corporations of Europe or Japan or, for that matter, of the USA), working alone, in the true scientific tradition sceptical experimentation, trusted both their wit and long-term perceptions.

Each of the little improvements (noted above), when put together in one system, combines to allow us, the listeners, to hear 'into', to see into, the soundfield in a way unimaginable a decade ago. And, because designers can hear what they are doing in constructing a system, they have devised yet more transparent components. †

**Component high fidelity was the first and original one.

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THE REAL STEREO STORY

Barry Fox talks to two young Californians who believe they have uncovered the origins of stereo

EARLY STEREO

HANDS UP ALL THOSE WHO thought that Alan Blumlein was the first to record music in stereo, with the test discs he made with Sir Thomas Beecham at Abbey Road for EMI on January 19, 1934. Wrong. You are years out. And I'm not forgetting that bandleader Ray Noble made some tests on January 11, and three pianos were cut into two channels the next day. The answer is still wrong.

Hands up all those who thought Bell Labs were first, when they recorded Leopold Stokowski at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia, on March 12, 1932. Wrong again. Duke Ellington had made a long playing record in stereo the previous month. And even he was by no means the first.

What you are about to read is probably the oddest story you will ever read about early stereo. It is not a hoax. The evidence is already available on tapes, and more is coming. This evidence all points to the fact that, without realising it, studios in Britain and America were recording music in stereo as early as 1929.

It is possible that the story is a red herring; that the facts are not as they seem and that the wrong conclusions have been drawn. One thing is certain, you are likely to hear and read a great deal about pre-stereo in the months to come. The matter needs a public airing. With the help of readers, especially those who work close to the record industry and have either long memories or access to archives, we can help establish the truth.

First the background. We now take tape recording for granted. But until the Allies pinched the idea from Germany at the end of the war, all recordings were made direct onto disc. The signal was cut into a master wax or lacquer blank running at 78rpm. If the blank was faulty, or the stylus jumped, the take was lost. Obviously this was expensive in studio and musicians' time.

The risks were even higher when, in late 1931, RCA-Victor launched its long playing record. This ran at 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm, instead of 78, and more than doubled the playing time for a 10in. or 12in. disc. The 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm speed had been previously used by Bell Labs, for the Vitaphone film sound system. The speed was chosen to match the playing time of a reel of film.

There is less margin for error at low cutting speed. Also, it is statistically more likely that there will be a fault during the cutting of a long side than a short side. The RCA LP was a disaster on the open market, because the discs were pressed from soft vinyl plastic which disintegrated under the weight of contemporary pick-up arms. But before the format disappeared, many famous names recorded LPs.

Given all these circumstances it is hardly surprising that studios routinely played safe when cutting direct onto disc – especially LP discs. They used two turntables instead of one, to make two master discs at the same time. If the musical performance was acceptable, there was twice the chance of securing a usable cut. In some cases both cuts were usable. This was a bonus, because it was then possible to make two masters and

eventually produce twice the number of pressings. There is, of course, a finite limit on the number of electro-plated stampers which can be made from a single master. This is why many of the most popular Sheffield Lab direct-cut discs are now out of print in their original direct-cut format. With two good masters available, one can be sent abroad for foreign release on a sister label.

Although the difficulties of cutting discs, and the RCA-Victor LP fiasco, are well documented, there is no mention in the history books of the studios' policy of making two discs at the same time. But why should there be? In the early days of cylinder recording, it was common practice for the artist to perform in front of banks of machines, each making a master from which saleable cylinders would be mass-produced by one-to-one dubbing. Remember that the biggest disadvantage of the cylinder was the difficulty of replication by moulding. To engineers in the '30s it must have seemed wholly logical to make two disc masters instead of one – just as many modern studios routinely make two tapes of a performance.

The only puzzle is why – as the recently discovered evidence suggests – some engineers used a separate microphone for each disc cutting machine, rather than using a single mic with split feed. Perhaps it was to provide a safety back-up on every link of the chain, from microphone to master disc. Perhaps it was to capture two different sound perspectives of the same performance, and so give the record company the chance to choose the best for release. Perhaps, just perhaps, it was because engineers were thinking about stereo before Blumlein and Bell. This is unlikely, but it's equally unlikely that we'll ever know for sure. And it doesn't really matter.

What does matter is that if some engineers were recording the same performance through two microphones and onto two discs, then they were preserving that performance in stereo. Two young Californians, and a growing group of historic music and audio enthusiasts, believe they have found audible proof that stereo pairs were being recorded and that the original stereo image can be recreated from carefully matched disc pairs. On the first evidence available I am inclined to believe they are right.

Here's how it happened. Brad Kay plays piano, records sound, deals in old records and loves Duke Ellington's music. He lives in Venice, California, which I can assure you is nothing like Venice, Italy. In fact to quote Brad Kay 'There's nowhere like it in the world'. Imagine Southend playing host to Petticoat Lane and the World Disco Roller Skating Championships and you have the picture. In 1981 Lasker called on Kay with a 'find'. It was a test pressing of a long playing record made for RCA-Victor in 1932.

Although the Ellington band had by then left the Cotton Club, the Duke used the then new 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ format to play a medley of Cotton Club hits. A few days later the same band went into the same studios and recorded another medley. No-one at that time was

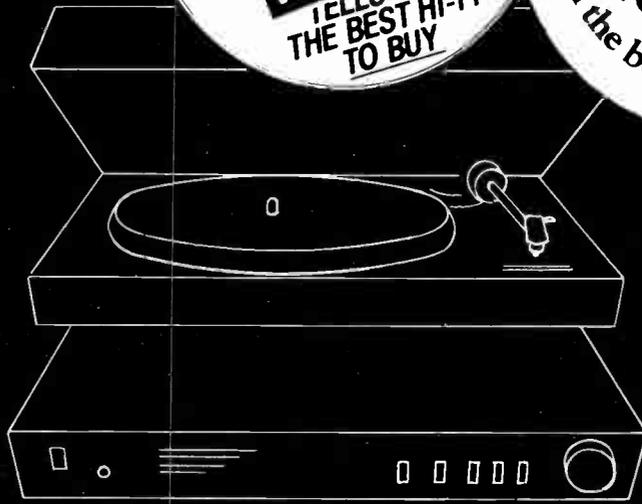
thinking of the LP as a vehicle for longer orchestral works, even though it was Duke who pioneered the concept of the extended jazz suite. The Ellington band at that time had a rhythm section of Freddy Guy, guitar, Wellman Braud, bass, Sonny Greer, drums and Ellington, of course, on piano. Otto Hardwicke, Harry Carney, Barney Bigard and Johnny Hodges played saxes; Arthur Whetsol, Cootie Williams and Freddie Jenkins played trumpets with Tricky Sam Nanton and Juan Tizol on trombones.

The band played well-known titles, like 'Moon Indigo', 'Black and Tan Fantasy' and 'Hot and Bothered', together with an extraordinary piano solo by Ellington in the style of Fats Waller. Steve Lasker bought a test pressing of this record at a European auction, from a Belgian collector. Three years later, in 1984, Brad Kay went to an archivists' record swapping session at Pasadena, and got hold of a second copy of what appeared to be the same disc. But the master number scratched on the land at the centre of the disc did not exactly match the number on the other disc. The music almost matched, but not quite. It was clearly the same session and the same take, but not the same recording. There were subtle differences. When Sonny Greer hit his chime bells, one recording made it sound like two and the other sound like three. Actually there were four. 'What we have here,' said Kay, suddenly realising what was happening, 'is the left and right channels of a stereo recording.'

Kay then recorded one disc onto tape and patched the outputs from tape and disc players through a mixer. He then put the other disc on the turntable. This way he could use the two discs to create left and right channels. When the two sources were run together, after careful cueing and with even more careful speed control, there were brief snatches when the stereo image fell into place.

Fired with the thrill of the chase, Kay set about blending the two discs into a cohesive, eight minute stereo mix. He used a Revox A-77 half-track running at 15ips for the left channel and a 25 year old Bogen variable speed turntable for the right channel. The Bogen is a flywheel-driven war horse, which will cope with any disc size between five inches and 16 inches, and any speed between 9rpm and 95rpm, with continuous adjustment. It has a 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb platter and so holds its speed very tight. Synchronisation is by ear. After many rehearsals the two pieces are started together and the two channel output recorded on a second tape deck. This was done over and over again, with the best sections cut out and spliced to make up the final mix. The master tape for the first Ellington medley had 42 splices in it. Kay is now getting better and better at performing the trick. More recent attempts at recreating other recordings are down to a few splices per disc side.

Once Kay and Lasker had realised the full significance of what they had found, they immediately started hunting for other



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matched pairs of recordings. This is how they found the second Ellington medley session. A Californian collector already owned both. Recognition is fairly easy. The alternate take master was usually labelled with an 'A'; so the plain master has a number of 123456 and the alternate master is numbered 123456A. Once you start looking for 'A' takes, discovered Kay, it is surprising what you find.

'RCA-Victor in America and HMV in England were routinely using two turntables and often two mics from the late '20s right through the '30s,' says Kay. 'If you find a record with an 'A' matrix number, then you can be almost sure there will be a plain take version as well. As many as one in 20 discs made by HMV and Victor at that time are showing up as 'A' takes. If we can do what we've done with a few private collections, think what could be done on a world scale.'

'I am urging people to scour their collections for 'A' takes. The 'A' is the signpost for plain takes. If anyone finds a matched pair, they should send them to me because I am the only person who can put them together.'

Kay isn't in this for financial reward. He makes his living as a pianist, and out of buying and selling old records. The stereo recreation project is a hobby that costs, rather than makes, money. When Kay phoned RCA-Victor in the States, asking for permission to release some previously unissued material in stereo, the top brass gave him a short answer: 'Don't do it. We have a building full of lawyers to deal with people like you'.

But America is a big country where small record companies can get away with a lot as long as they stay small and don't wake the sleeping dragon. Marlor Productions (PO Box 156, Hicksville, NY 11802) has recently released the two Ellington stereo recreations on an LP. It is the second of these which contains the extraordinary Ellington piano solo. This is close-miked, making it sound, to quote Kay 'like one of those big piano effects that was so popular in '50s stereo recordings'. Kay is not entirely happy about the disc issue. 'It was hurried through, and there is better quality now available off a later tape.'

I have heard the tape. It is impressive. Nothing like the awful sound of pseudo stereo which the record companies create on stereo 'recreations'.

Although the chase began with Duke Ellington, it hasn't stopped there. A Californian collector of classical records found a plain and an 'A' take pair of discs made in 1929 by Leopold Stokowski, conducting Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. The 1931 commercial release, an 8-side set, lists one side as sourced from Part 1, Take 4. A later release lists the same side as sourced from Part 1, Take 4A. When put together the two produce what seems to be 1929 stereo.

The same search produced a plain and an 'A' take pair of Sir Edward Elgar and the BBC Symphony Orchestra playing the Cockaigne Overture at EMI's Abbey Road studio in 1933. The plain take was issued by American Victor. The 'A' take was issued by HMV in England. Almost certainly, EMI kept one take for home release and sent the other to America. 'It's the best stereo separation in the history of music,' says Kay. 'Four thousand miles and fifty years.' Put together the two produce an impressive stereo spread.

When I spoke with Kay recently he was just finishing work on a 1930 recording of Ravel's

Bolero, by the Boston Symphony under Serge Koussevitsky. So far he has only found Part 1 in mono, but Parts 2 and 3 are in double-take stereo. Editing has been especially difficult because each side is a separate entity, with the rhythm section starting solo.

In the meantime, matching pairs of Parts 4 and 8 of the *Rite of Spring* have turned up. The earliest example so far is a recently discovered pair of discs, which capture Stokowski in a 1927 recording of *The Damnation of Faust* by Berlioz.

There are some tantalizing half-discoveries from the EMI catalogue.

Parts 1 and 2 have turned up of a recording of *Private Lives* by Gertrude Lawrence and Noel Coward. Part 1 is the 'A' take and part 2 the plain take. On Part 1, Noel Coward is much closer to the microphone than Gertrude Lawrence. On Part 2 exactly the opposite is true. If the missing halves of the pairs can be found, the result should be very pronounced stereo. The RCA Victor files show that Mezz Mezzrow, Jelly Roll Morton, Fats Waller and Benny Goodman all made recordings that were issued on both plain and 'A' takes.

If the theory is sound, and the archives are bulging with disguised genuine stereo pairs, the sky's the limit. There is a wealth of stereo riches just waiting for someone to find.

I put an embarrassing question to Kay. How can we be sure that this isn't one big hoax? With modern technology it is possible to spread a mono sound quite wide to left and right. Usually these circuits work by comb-filtering the mono into as many as 20 narrow bands, and sending one half of the comb to left and the other half to right. The digital reissues of old recordings by Australian engineer Robert Parker achieve a fair degree of spread by stereo synthesis. Personally, having heard the Kay tapes, I don't believe there is any question of their being a hoax. But I had to ask.

'Barnum I am not,' replied Kay. 'I hate artificial stereo. I have tried it. The results are awful. My heart is in jazz and pop music. Some people claim that you can get a similar effect by playing two identical records, slightly out of sync. It creates a phase shift which generates some kind of stereo effect. But try it, and then flip to mono. You get terrible phasing effects. Then try the same thing with a plain and an 'A' take. Flip to mono and the same thing with a plain and an 'A' take. Flip to mono and if the syncing was correct, there is no phasing. In fact, the more accurately you get the two records in sync, the better it sounds in stereo. But bear in mind that some plain and 'A' takes are the same. On some occasions they used the same mic to feed both turntables.'

'Do tell people to watch out for 'A' takes in the HMV catalogue. There is a ton of stuff there. I haven't found any vocal material yet. US editions of Gilbert & Sullivan sets are lousy with 'A' takes. We need to match them with HMV plain takes.'

If not a hoax, could the whole thing be a wild goose chase? There seems no doubt that Kay and Lasker are genuine. They believe in what they are doing and the results sound like genuine stereo. But could they have been deluded?

Kay has found a picture in Jerrold Northrop Moore's book, *Elgar, a Life in Photographs*, which shows the conductor in front of two microphones. I have checked the book and see no clear visible proof. But even if the book did show Elgar in front of more than one microphone, it would mean little.

Before 1925 all recording was acoustic. A single microphone with a diaphragm moved a stylus which cut the groove. In 1925 the record companies started switching to electrical recording, with the microphone generating an electric current which ran through coils in the cutter head to move the stylus electromagnetically. The influence of radio, where crooners sang close into a microphone, spread to the recording studio. Some engineers set up several microphones around the orchestra and singer, and mixed their electrical output before feeding it to the cutter. Others stuck with the single microphone technique, believing it gave a more realistic or natural sound balance. In the '30s there was heated controversy over which was the best approach.

Where a number of microphone feeds were mixed, it is likely that the same output signal would have been recorded on both discs, plain take and safety 'A' take. So the disc pair will be identical mono. Where the sound was to come from a single point natural pickup, there was more likelihood that two microphones would be used, each feeding its own disc cutter. But it would still be easy to split a single feed. This would account for the non-stereo effect heard by Kay when trying to match some apparently different plain and 'A' takes. They are identical mono twins, either from one split feed or a multi-mic mix to mono.

If, just supposing, the whole theory is wrong and there were no stereo pairs, then what are we hearing? One suggestion is that the stereo produced by Kay could perhaps be the result of mismatch between the cutters used to make the disc pair. Early cutter heads had resonances in the mid band. It is likely that different cutters peaked at different frequencies. This might create an image spread. If it does, then the results are so good that the record companies and modern studios should throw away their fancy stereo synthesisers and buy a couple of old disc cutters instead.

So there you have it. Thanks to the keen ear and enthusiasm of a couple of young Californians, there is at least a good chance that the record industry will now be able to re-release 50 year old material in genuine spaced mic stereo. Whether the industry will take the trouble to do so is, of course, another matter. It takes hours of patient work to match and sync up the left and right takes. It would probably make more sense for the record companies to search out their original master pair and commission Brad Kay to do the recreation work.

A final thought. When Kay first tried matching that original pair of Ellington discs, and realised what he had got, he turned to Steve Lasker and joked: 'For my next trick I will play the long-lost Buddy Bolden cylinder.' Lasker replied: 'I won't listen unless it's in stereo.'

That might not be a joke. As already explained, cylinders were recorded in large batches, by banks of machines around the singer or musicians. Any matching pair of cylinders recorded by spaced machines could equally well represent a stereo recording of the original sound. Syncing cylinders may be more difficult than syncing discs, but it certainly won't be impossible. ♪

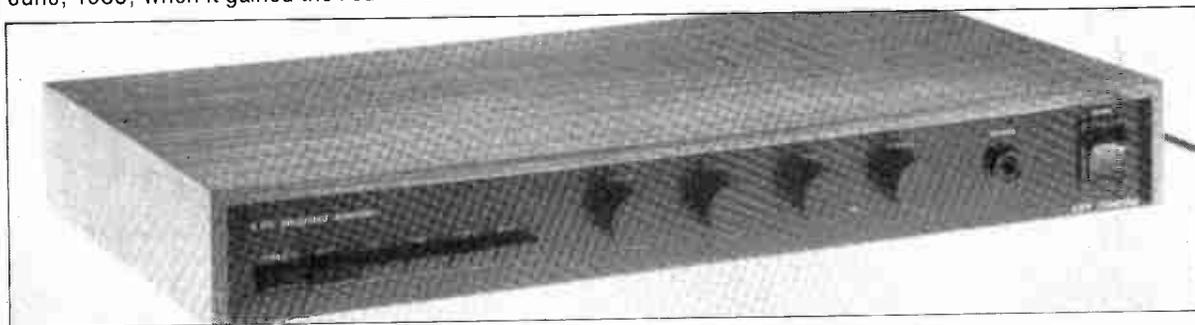
Footnote

Anyone finding a matched pair of recordings can get in touch with Brad Kay at 732 Ruperba Avenue, Venice, California 90291. And, by the way, Mr Kay would also like to hear from anyone who could provide spare parts for his 1961 Bogen turntable.

Your chance to own a slice of British Hi Fi History

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QUESTIONS

- In what year was the first "Long Playing Microgroove record" publicly demonstrated?
 - 1948
 - 1938
 - 1958
- Who said "Music with dinner is an insult both to the cook and violinist"?
 - Lawrence Durrell
 - Henry Pleasants
 - G. K. Chesterton
- In what decade was the age of stereophonic sound reproduction launched with the help of "Oscar"?
 - 1930's
 - 1940's
 - 1920's
- Who invented the

Alternative Audio of Solihull, West Midlands, study the seven questions below – and decide which of the three alternative answers is the correct one in each case. Then, mark your answers in the Entry Form alongside, complete the tie-break sentence in not more than 20 words, fill in your address and post your entry to arrive no later than first post on February 5, 1986.

The winner's name will be published in the March issue of HFN/RR.

gramophone?

- Emile Berliner
 - Thomas A. Edison
 - Valdemar Poulsen
- Within the human ear are the hammer, anvil and stirrup; what are they collectively known as?
 - Ossicles
 - Middle Ear
 - Fulcrum
 - When were radio waves from space first detected?
 - 1924
 - 1912
 - 1932
 - Which was the first film to have a synchronised musical score?
 - The Jazz Singer
 - Don Juan
 - The Flying Scotsman

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1: 2: 3: 4: 5: 6: 7:

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- The decision of the judges will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.

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LISTENING & HEARING

John Atkinson finds out whether Absolute Phase and capacitors are audible

NINETEEN EIGHTY FIVE WAS AN interesting year when it came to the more arcane aspects of high fidelity. New products appeared at their accustomed rate, and received due coverage in the magazine, but there was also considerable debate in the pages of *HFN/RR* about the influence of cables, Flux Dumpers, capacitors and Absolute Phase on ultimate sound quality. If you are a regular reader, you will be aware that despite the widespread acceptance of the sonic importance of these things when considered on an informal basis, there is a well-informed body of thought that such matters should not be admitted to received opinion until their existence has been proved beyond doubt by rigorously-controlled scientific double-blind testing.^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16.}

As I discussed a couple of months back¹⁷, the organisation of such tests is no trivial affair. In fact, the fact that many such tests have given null results^{18,19} in the past has left me deeply sceptical of their resolving power—too often they act with the discrimination of a cudgel when a surgical scalpel would be more appropriate. One particular team of researchers, however, led by David Clark in the USA, has refined what is termed an ABX double-blind test²⁰. The basis of the double-blind technique is the philosophy that neither the tester nor the subjects know what is being listened to at any time during the test. In this way, it is guaranteed that there can be no cheating, conscious or unconscious, neither can preconceived notions of what ought to be good or bad interfere with critical judgement. The ABX nomenclature comes in because the strategy of the test is always to present the listener with an unknown sound, X, and ask him or her to identify it as one of two known sounds, A and B, to which he or she always has access for comparison purposes. In this way the listener has aural references available and is less easily confused.

I decided that the Heathrow Penta Show last September offered an opportunity to carry out such ABX tests with a large number of listeners—visitors to the show—in order to see whether in fact such phenomena can be shown to be audible, a challenge recently issued by Dr Amar Bose regarding Absolute Phase²¹, for example. To explore all the controversial phenomena would have taken rather more time than even the most dedicated enthusiast would have been prepared to give, so the number of variables to come under the spotlight was limited to three: two stereo pairs of capacitors^{22,23}—one pair 2.2µF electrolytics without a DC bias voltage, the DC offset on the preamp's tape output

being negligible, the other 'audiophile grade' 2.2µF polypropylenes—and Absolute Phase^{24,25} (more correctly, absolute signal polarity), resulting in a total test duration of around 45 minutes.

Test Procedures & System

It was decided to forestall criticisms of insufficient system resolving power by assembling as high a quality system as was practicable. With the help of Absolute Sounds, Presence Audio, Monster Cable and Sony UK, the following components were used: Sony CD-P302es CD player; Krell PAM-3 preamp and KSA-100 power amplifier; Magneplanar MGIII loudspeakers; Vecteur interconnect; and Monster Powerline 2 speaker cable.

The room could comfortably accommodate around 25 seated listeners. The height of the dipole speakers and their rough approximation to a line source meant that listeners at the front did not block high frequencies from reaching those seated further back to anything like the same extent as with a box speaker.

It didn't prove practicable to run the tests completely blind; instead, the operator, Martin Colloms' associate Paul Crook, operated the switching. Although he therefore knew, for example, when X represented a capacitor in circuit and when it didn't, he was seated behind the listeners (who couldn't see the preamp or switch positions in any case) and

introductory talk and the listeners then heard 8 ABX presentations with one of the capacitors and 8 presentations on Absolute Phase, several pieces of music being used for the 16 presentations (Table 1). A and B remained the same for each set of 8 and the identity of X each time was determined by a set of random numbers. The listeners were presented with A, with B and then with X; after 30s or so of X, listeners could call out for an instantaneous comparison of X with A or B.

The listeners marked a scoresheet which followed the Mark Davis model²⁰ for each set of 8 presentations, and these could be later correlated not only with the identity of X but also with the music used. The listeners also wrote down their age (Table 2), but there proved to be no correlation here between age and ability to identify X. (I also originally wanted to include listening position on the score card, but this proved impracticable with so many subjects taking part in each test.)

The test conditions proved less than ideal due to that old hi-fi show bug-bear, competing noise from the adjacent room which we could do nothing about. There were also some problems due to the fact that a number of listeners wouldn't or couldn't put down an identification for every presentation. When confused or not sure, despite having A or B for instantaneous comparison and knowing that X had to be either A or B, they still resented having to make a forced choice.

TABLE 1 MUSIC PROGRAM USED FOR TESTS (all CD)

Work	Disc	Type of sound
'Columba Aspexit', Hildegard of Bingen	HFN003	Distantly-miked female voices with rich ambience
'Roumanian Dances', Bartok	HFN003	Solo piano, relatively closely miked
'Zamponas'	Opus 3 CD7900	Large panpipes and percussion
'Gone Buttlefishin'/L'Daddy', James Newton Howard	Sheffield Lab CD23	Power synthesiser rock with acoustic drums
'Nice Work/Fascinating Rhythm', Ella Fitzgerald	Verve 823 445-2	Close-miked female voice with 'live' jazz orchestra backing
'A New Ground', Purcell	Opus 3 CD7900	Closely-miked harpsichord

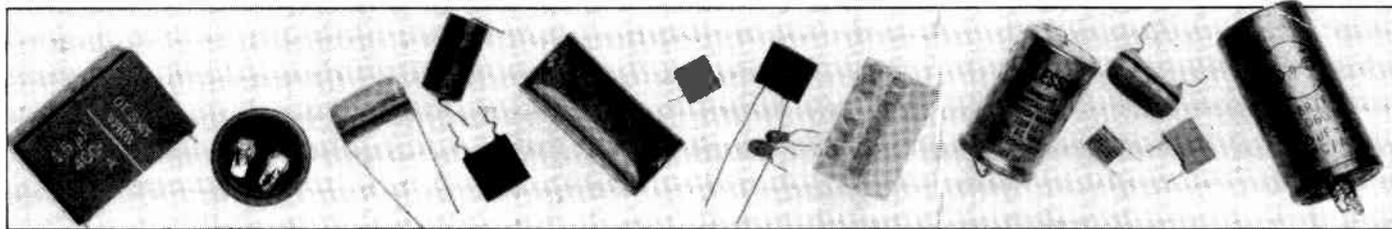
took great care not to give any clues. The capacitors, of course, were in a sealed box connected in the Krell's tape loop, and no-one organising the test had any idea as to their identity. For the Absolute Phase tests, the *HFN/RR* Phase Shunter^{26,27} was employed in the PAM-3's tape monitor loop. (Designed by Ivor Humphreys, the Phase Shunter has as near an identical signal path and performance as possible in both modes and the difference in gain between the two on the unit used is less than 0.02dB.) Red and green LEDs on the unit's front panel indicate inverting or non-inverting mode, but again no-one involved in the test knew which LED represented which condition, and the listeners couldn't see the LEDs in any case. Switching was silent.

Each 45minute session started with a brief

TABLE 2 AGE OF LISTENERS

Age group	Percentage
14-20	5.8%
21-25	23.2%
26-30	20%
31-35	13.2%
36-40	13.5%
41-50	11.2%
51-60	7.4%
>60	5.7%

Some listeners refused to make an identification when the music was not classical, feeling that it was only valid (or justifiable) to make an identification with classical program. In actual fact, the music type is completely irrelevant with this sort of listening test, as all that is required is that the listener be able to identify a difference. A more serious complaint was that not enough time was allowed for comparisons. Unfortunately



André Previn



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this was unavoidable with the 45minute time limit (and even then, it was obvious that a significant proportion of listeners were getting bored well before the end).
So, on to the results...

Absolute Phase

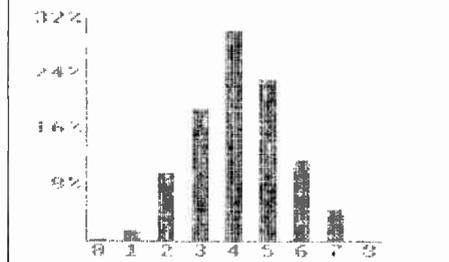
There has been work published showing that absolute signal polarity can be audible on special test signals^{28,29}; but what is still in contention is whether it is important with music. We used in the main conventionally recorded program for these tests. It could be argued that we would stand a higher chance of proving the audibility if we had used known phase-coherent recordings, but I wanted to find out if Absolute Phase was relevant to normal listening.

Fig.1 shows the histograms for correct identifications out of 8 (those who only attempted 6 or 7 identifications for the reasons listed earlier had their guesses made for them by the randomise function of the computer in order to avoid fractional identifications when normalised).

If the scoring were truly random *ie*, only due to chance owing to the inability of the listeners to hear a difference, the barchart would be symmetrical about the 4/8 bar. It can be seen, however, that the distribution is skewed towards the higher scoring end, suggesting that there was a slight identification.

This was borne out by applying the Chi-squared test for significance^{30,31} (with a

Fig.1 Absolute Phase: Listening test result. Correct scores out of eight (304 subjects)



Capacitors

The Krell preamplifier's tape output has an output impedance of 1k-ohm, which, in conjunction with the tape input impedance of >10k, gives a -3dB point of 7.5Hz (-0.2dB

TABLE 3 MINIMAL SCORE FOR 95% CONFIDENCE

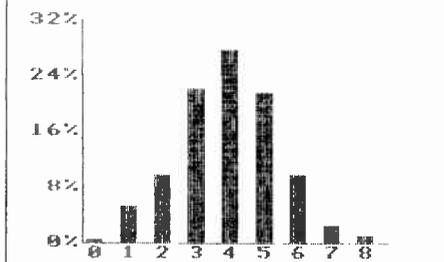
(*ie*, 1 chance in 20 that the identification was due to luck)

Number of attempts	Number of identifications
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	7
9	8
10	9
11	9
12	10
13	10
14	11
15	12
16	12

at 30Hz) with the 2.2µF test capacitors. Fig.2 shows the scoring barchart for C1, which later unveiling revealed to be the pair of 2.2µF polypropylenes (actual values 2.04/2.06µF). Beautifully symmetrical, it agrees almost perfectly with the results that would be obtained by the 205 listeners tossing a coin 8 times. There were 751 correct identifications out of 1530 attempts, which the Chi-squared test indicates is what would be obtained by the working of chance.

Is it safe to conclude, then, that C1, at least in the circumstances of the Heathrow test, sounded identical to the straight bit of wire in the PAM-3's tape monitor switch? I would have said yes, but for the fact that when the

Fig.2 Capacitor 1: Listening test result. Correct scores out of eight (205 subjects)



path. The Hildegard results are odd as there is a negative identification that could only have happened by chance less than 1 time out of a hundred *ie*, the listeners perversely wrote down the opposite of what they felt the identity of X to be. Again, more tests are necessary here.

I must also report my own experience as a listener. Although I had organised the test, I was not running it, nor did I have any knowledge as to which pair of disguised capacitors was which, so I was free to take part myself. In two consecutive sessions on C2-I was the only listener to take part in more than one session-my own scores were 7/8 correct identifications followed by 6/8 correct, giving 13/16 correct overall. As Table 3 shows, the possibility that this could have been due to chance alone is very low, between 1 and 5 chances in a hundred, meaning that it was likely that I *did* hear the insertion of the capacitor. For those who think I am promoting my own golden ears, rest assured that my scoring was random for C1 and Absolute Phase. (Incidentally, my inability to identify C2 but not C1 shows that it was neither the fraction-of-a-dB droop in the extreme bass nor the associated group delay-see 'Views' p21-that was the cause of the capacitor's audibility. These would have been effectively identical for C1 and C2; in fact C1 should have been *more* audible.) I assume that it was my familiarity with the 'sonic signature' of that C2, having done previous sighted tests on the pair under test.

Fig.3 Capacitor 2: Listening test result. Correct scores out of eight (136 subjects)

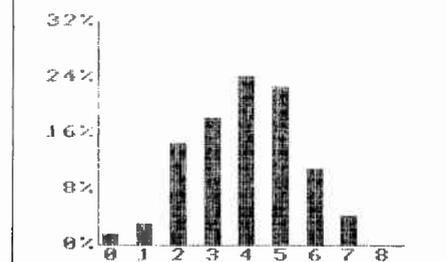


TABLE 4 C1: IDENTIFICATION BY MUSIC TYPE

Music	Attempts	Identifications	Chi squared	Confidence
Hildegard	52	34	4.3	95-99%
Bartok	283	157	3.2	95%
Purcell	97	47		
Howard	485	232		
Ella	339	162		
Zamponas	274	119		
Total	1530	751		

TABLE 5 C2: IDENTIFICATION BY MUSIC TYPE

Music	Attempts	Identifications	Chi squared	Confidence
Hildegard	37	10	6.9	99%
Howard	252	143	4.3	95-99%
Zamponas	214	114		
Bartok	212	101		
Purcell	37	17		
Ella	264	120		
Total	1016	505		

correction for the discontinuous nature of the data) to the actual results. 304 people took part in the Absolute Phase tests, and there were 1216 correct identifications out of a total of 2345. The possibility of this occurring by chance alone is less than one in 10. If not quite overwhelming proof that Absolute Phase is audible on music program, this is nevertheless strong evidence and supports work by other researchers^{20,32,33}.

The results don't mean, though, that it is a matter of life and death to get the signal polarity correct, at least on the music used for these tests and under the adverse conditions. The score averages out at between 4 and 5 identifications out of 8 per listener, which suggests that if it is audible, it is not that important. (Those confused by statistics should note that one person scoring 5/8 is *not* significant. What makes such a result significant is when so many listeners average out at 5/8. Table 3 gives the number of correct identifications for a number of trials to give 19 chances out 20 confidence that the difference is audible.)

results are examined on the basis of music type (Table 4), the Chi-squared test throws up two incidences of slight identification, the Bartok and Hildegard tracks, where there is a better than 19 chances out of 20 possibility that this wasn't due to chance. Obviously, a further set of listening tests is called for here.

Turning to C2, the pair of 2.2µF electrolytics (actual values 2.61/2.59µF), 136 people took part and it looks from the normalised scoring barchart (fig.3), that there was a slight identification, as with Absolute Phase. However, looking at the overall results, 505 identifications out of 1016 attempts, this is what would be expected from chance alone. The same proviso as with C1 applies here, though, as looking for significant identifications of X amongst the results for each music type (Table 5) reveals that with the James Newton Howard track there was only between 1% and 5% possibility that this result would have been obtained by chance alone, strong if not overwhelming evidence that on this music at least, the listeners could hear the effect of inserting C2 in the signal

Conclusion

It would be unjustified to take the results of these tests as absolute proof that the capacitors auditioned sounded different from a straight piece of wire, even despite my own confidence in the results on C2. It is generally felt that the Chi-squared test applied to the data must throw up only 1 chance in a hundred or less that the result could be due to chance for proof of a detectable difference to be incontrovertible. Certainly none of the results from the Heathrow Penta are that positive, apart from the peculiar negative identification of C1 with the Hildegard of Bingen track (and there is always the possibility that that occasion *did* represent the 1/100 chance).

However, the results do tend to suggest that even under the adverse conditions described in the introduction, Absolute Phase polarity was heard on nearly all the types of music used; the pair of electrolytic capacitors could be detected with some reliability on some musical types, the deli-

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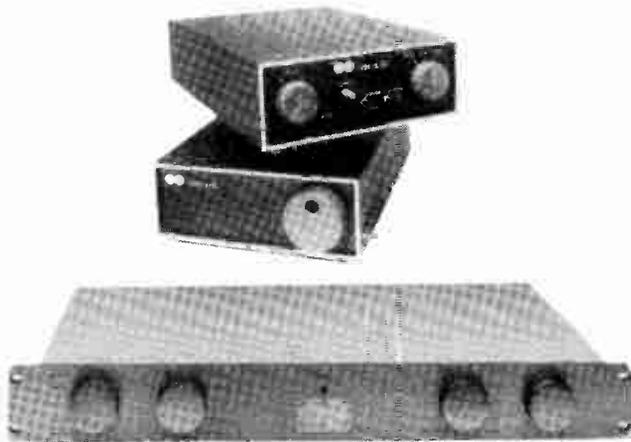
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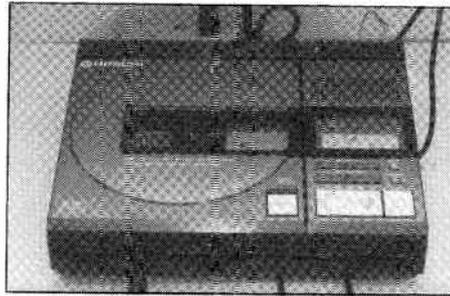
John Atkinson undergoes culture shock at the 1985 Tokyo Audio Fair

TOKYO SHOW REPORT

IMAGINE THE SCENE: AN EXHIBITION site at 3pm on a weekday packed with members of the public, flocking to see and hear new products from every company involved in making hi-fi in that country. Outside the main hall, a Marc Bolan video played on a giant Toshiba screen with the sound played back on four stacks of Tannoy 'Wildcat' loudspeakers attracted the crowds. Inside the halls, the latest in applied high technology and CD hardware mingles with an electronic player piano, over 3000 CD titles for sale and the occasional '50s horn speaker. Yes, it could only be Japan, where a basically audio show can still draw the crowds, crowds who then visit their local dealer and spend, spend, spend, giving Japan the biggest home electronics market in the world after the US.

The bus takes an hour to crawl through the two miles or so of rock-solid traffic from the Ginza to the dockland exhibition site—wouldn't it be convenient for someone to build a similar site in London's derelict docklands?—the visitor pays his or her 500yen (£1.50) entrance, enters one of the two halls, and then has all senses apart from taste assaulted.

Apart from DAT, described on p25, the big attraction in October was the marriage between audio and video, either in the form of Dolby surround sound for film soundtracks, or as high quality video and audio reproduction from videodisc. The honours for the latter seemed equally split between LaserVision—Yamaha are producing their

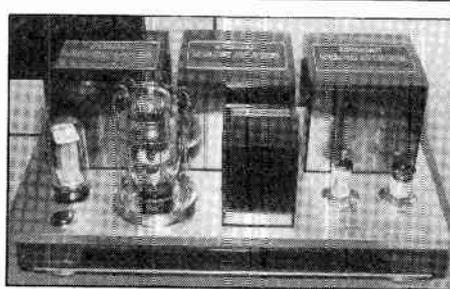
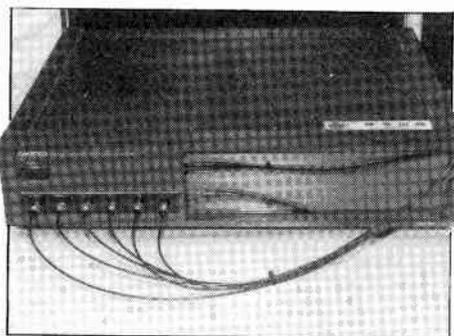


own integrated circuits for their player—and a system I had thought defunct, JVC's VHD—I spent a happy 20 minutes enjoying the live Prince concert on stereo headphones, courtesy of Panasonic's DiscLord player. VHD in its AHD form was producing superb wide-screen, high definition graphics to accompany the music (it was even better than Barry Fox describes on p27), while the video highlight for me was High Definition, 1125line television, played back from 1in. open-reel tape. This was stunning, with an image sharpness to match 35mm film: true hi-fi video. (However, I doubt very much if the BBC will be financially or politically willing to offer UK consumers high definition TV until the next century.)

One peculiar aspect of Japanese culture for which I wasn't prepared was the use of English in slogans. Whereas the French resent the infiltration into their language of such Anglicisations as 'Le weekend', the Japanese positively grab them by the throat.

Some examples are relatively innocuous: Accuphase 'enrich life through technology', Akai are 'creative at heart', Sansui's amplifiers feature 'This massive power transformer generates enormous power for excellent sound reproduction', while Sony's workforce set as their goal 'Let's follow the basics and Quality-Up'.

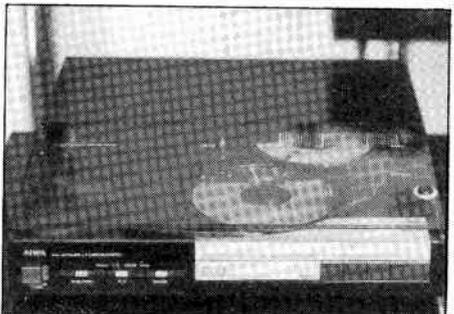
Others wreak more violence on the language. NEC, for example, were proudly inviting visitors to the Audio Fair to 'Let's CD' (complete with a picture of a dancing cat, a poster referring to their CD-500 player as the 'Cat's Dance'), Technics' SL-XP7 CD Walkman is called the 'CDeR', Hitachi have christened their CD Walkman 'With Me', Grace do a CD mat called 'CD-Up', Aiwa are happy to call a new midi system the 'CD-Kissing 1000', while TDK sweatshirts, emblazoned with the intriguing legend 'We are the Staff', were selling like hotcakes. The 'staff' connection is apparently due to the fact that the dream of every Japanese teenager is to be in the road crew for Stevie Wonder or Bruce Springsteen. It featured in the best example of 'Japlais' that I saw in October: 'Melting staff becomes active mind' read the back of a motorcyclist's windcheater. Anyone know what it means? In any case, even that gem pales when compared with the legend featured on a carrier bag I bought at Osaka Airport: "'If' What a good Sound and possibility the word has! Even if it is assumptive. . . By patronising 'If' your fantasy never be impossible to become true some day in the future.' Inscrutable, huh? ↯



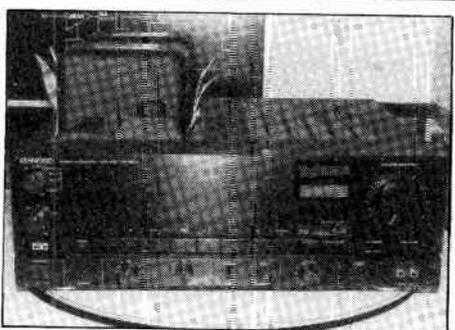
Lux's Brid range looked like it would revitalise the Alpine-owned company's fortunes. My heart, however, went out to their 'Ultimate Fidelity' mono valve amplifier.



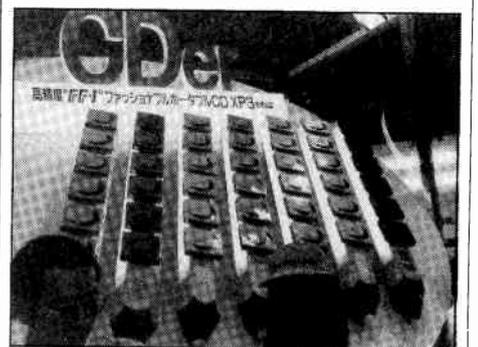
JBL are only rivalled by Tannoy when it comes to exporting big loudspeakers to Japan. One of the hits of the show was their 'Everest' DD55000 controlled directivity monitor, which uses the biradial horn technology pioneered by JBL for the HF unit.



Japan is the home of gimmickry, and they are already applying all their talent to the tarting-up of Compact Disc. Onkyo showed a two-box player with the data transferred between the two via optical fibres; Marantz showed software to control the CD player (and the rest of the hi-fi system) with an MSX computer; and—someone had to do it—Aiwa astonished us all by producing the world's first combined CD and LP player. A little more sensible was Pioneer's 6-pack for their PD-M6 player. The thickness of two jewel cases, the dustproof caddy holds 6 CDs—all the tracks can be accessed in any order. Sounds like a good idea for in-car CD, but Pioneer weren't making any promises other than to say that other manufacturers were showing interest in the idea.



Amplifier technology seemed static, apart from a superb-sounding class-A design from Stax, the Japanese mainly looking at new power supply technology, as in this graphic representation by Trio (Kenwood) as to the effective size of their new mains transformers. I was initially unimpressed, though, with Marantz' digital processor—tone and reverb—which operates in the digital domain: it seems a bit daft to convert an analogue signal to digital just in order to manipulate it digitally. Common sense struck, however, as I then realised that some Marantz CD players have a digital data output. The final D/A conversion could then be put off until after the tonal shaping



Three years after its launch, CD was the only audio source of significance at the show, the visitor having to look very hard indeed to find an analogue turntable. Technics launched a less-expensive version of their Walkman, which followed the Japanese fashion for designer-coloured hi-fi.

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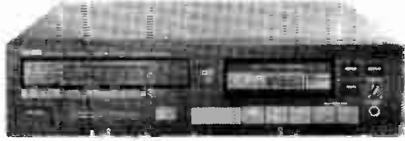
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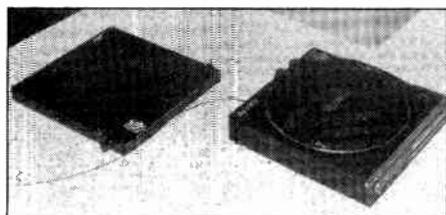
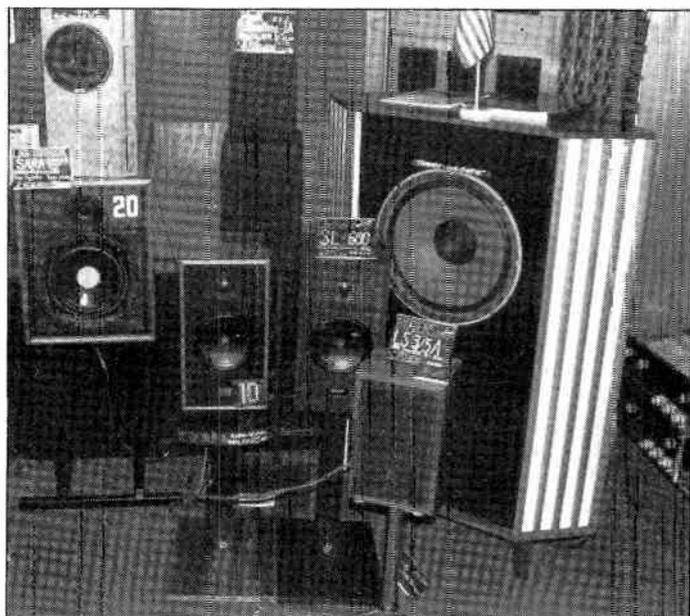



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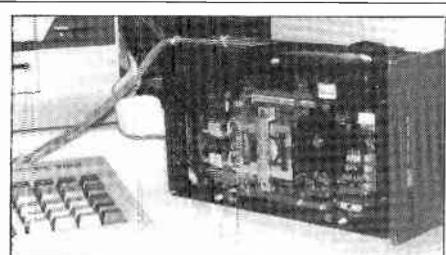




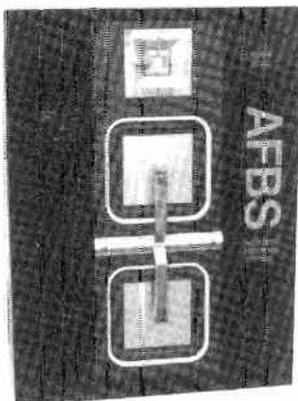
The Akihabara is the equivalent to London's Tottenham Court Road, but with the emphasis on quality rather than tat (Hi-Fi Experience excepted). Six and seven-storey stores feature just about every consumer electronics item known to man. It is impossible to give more than a hint of the flavour in this space, but it was gratifying to see a strong British presence in a number of showrooms, with Quad, EAR and Meridian having the highest UK amplifier profile. (Krell, New York Audio Labs and Mark Levinson took the US electronics honours.) The right-hand picture is typical of an Akihabara high-end speaker salon—no prizes for spotting the UK models—but the one above is one of a number of photos I took on the 7th floor of a store which, at street level, looked innocuous enough—until you spotted the shrink-wrapped vintage Quad and McIntosh valve gear amongst the microwave ovens, robot toy bears and humidifiers. Truly an Anachrophilic Valhalla.



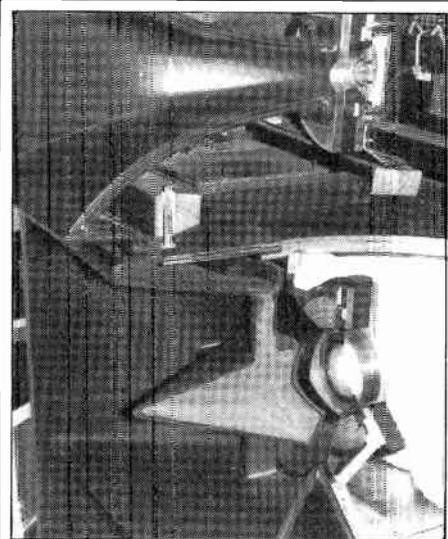
A year after they launched the D50, Sony took the rug away from under their rivals in the CD Walkman stakes by producing a half-height replacement. The rechargeable battery pack on the left attaches to the player's base to give a complete unit the size of the original sans batteries.



Main thrust of the Denon exhibit was naturally on CD, with their production CD-ROM computer data drive above taking pride of place. The mechanics of this high quality device should appear in future Denon music CD players.



It seems mandatory for Japanese loudspeakers to feature flat diaphragms, but this offering from Aiwa combined them with motion feedback for the woofer. By using mics, however, to provide the error signal, isn't there a phase error introduced due to the time taken for the sound to travel between the diaphragm and the mic? (I suppose that, below the crossover point to the woofers, the time delay is equivalent to just a fraction of the wavelength and can therefore be ignored.) Trio were pushing diamond-evaporated diaphragms as the new wonder tweeter material, while JVC preferred to use ceramic materials. Everyone else seemed heavily into LC-OFC.



Horns have always been popular in Japan, as witnessed by this latest from Onkyo. I must point out, however, that their novel idea of using a cone-shaped plug in front of the woofer dust-cap has in fact been used for many years by the British company Turbosound, who feature it in their high quality rock PA systems (Joni Mitchell at Wembley in 1983, for example).

cate vocal tracteries of the Hildegard of Bingen and the powerful rock with extended bass of the Sheffield CD; and the polypropylene dielectric capacitors were harder to hear than the electrolytics, but perhaps were still detected to a very small extent. (Incidentally, if you feel that picking and choosing amongst the results according to music type is cheating, Martin Colloms' measurements on capacitors last month²³, particularly with respect to electrolytics, did predict that some defects will be more audible with some types of music than with others.)

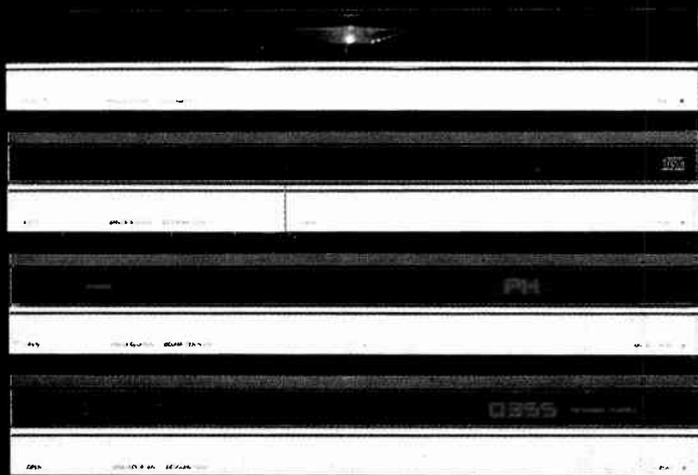
I hope to report further on the results of ABX tests performed with the same capacitors on an individual listener basis, including subjecting myself to C2 again. In the meantime, if anyone is sceptical about these results, it is open for them to repeat the test work for themselves (the Phase Shunter is available from the Accessories Club, p110, for £51.45 inc. p&p). Please let me know what you come up with. I do hope, however, that if you stop to think that this time-consuming and complicated series of tests was carried out to investigate just three variables, and that a typical amplifier has

many, many, many more variables than three, such testing is impractical for reviewing. A shortcut has to be found, and simply listening to the equipment in its intended role would seem to be the most obvious—wouldn't it? ↯

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John Crabbe describes how, with the aid of a cassette deck, the HFN/RR Text CD can be used as a test set-up

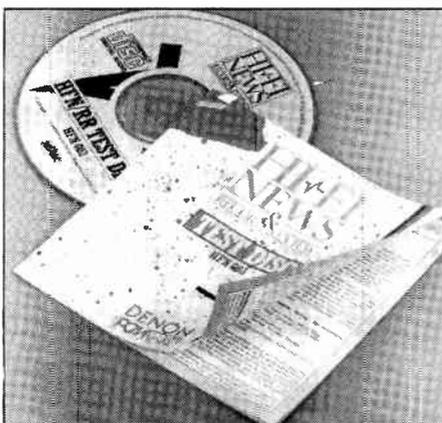
IN MY OCTOBER PIECE ON THE HFN/RR Test CD I referred to the measured dynamic range of Mike Skeet's notorious garage-door track, but omitted to mention that the measurements in question were made possible by the CD itself. Possible, that is, if you possess a cassette deck employing columns of LEDs as signal-level indicators. The latter have considerable potential as fast-acting audio measuring devices, and a tape-recorder fitted with them can be co-opted for the task of plotting signal dynamics by the simple expedient of calibrating its input gain control by means of HFN003.

I have to confess that the garage-door measurements cited in my review were rather hastily contrived, and should really have been called 'estimates'. But that episode led me to investigate what could be achieved in the way of more accurate calibrations, and on to a look at the dynamics of some musical signals – which, incidentally, are much easier to assess from CD than from LP due to the latter's frequent excess of background noise. It has been a fascinating exercise, but since it involves no test gear, any reader who would like to explore the intriguing realm of *ppp* to *fff* can set about the task for himself – provided he has the necessary LED-equipped recorder and a modicum of patience.

But there are a number of peripheral requirements. First, headphones should be available for use during calibration, since the signals to be employed (from tracks 18-24 on the CD) are steady sinewave tones whose loudness will fluctuate with head position if heard via loudspeakers – and it will probably be necessary to use subjective loudness judgements when calibrating the lowest signal levels. Second, either the recorder should have its own headphone socket on which the incoming signal can be monitored after its adjustment by the record-level control, or that same adjusted signal must be available at the recorder's line-output so that it may be monitored by actuating the main amplifier's tape monitor switch. Third, the recorder's LED display should, ideally, have a flat frequency response, which will not be the case if it monitors the signal after any recording pre-emphasis. This last point is easily checked by playing CD tracks 27-34 and noting (hopefully) an approximately constant reading on the record-level indicator. If there is a deviation, it may vary with choice of tape options, and one should switch for the flattest overall response. Finally on the recorder, check that the Dolby circuitry has no effect on the signal, either as monitored on the LEDs or when heard via the headphones. If it does, switch it off.

All these requirements were met by my Aiwa 3500, which I suspect is fairly representative of comparably priced models. Some machines may require that the recording circuitry be activated before signal-level indication becomes possible, but this should present no problem if one inserts a cassette and switches to the record/pause mode.

Regarding the CD player, it is essential that this has the customary high output of around 2V at 0dB modulation, otherwise it simply



Precision signal generator tracks

Balance & phasing	
[16] 1001Hz, L+R, -15dB	[17] 1001Hz, L-R, -15dB
Calibrated levels	
[19] 1001Hz, L+R, -15dB	[20] 1001Hz, L+R, -16dB
[21] 1001Hz, L+R, -18dB	[22] 1001Hz, L+R, -20dB
[23] 1001Hz, L+R, -40dB	[24] 1001Hz, L+R, -60dB
[25] 20Hz, L, 0dB	
Spot frequency response	
[27] 40Hz, L+R, 0dB	[28] 100Hz, L+R, 0dB
[29] 315Hz, L+R, 0dB	[30] 1001Hz, L+R, 0dB
[31] 3150Hz, L+R, 0dB	[32] 6300Hz, L+R, 0dB
[33] 10kHz, L+R, 0dB	[34] 16kHz, L+R, 0dB
[35] 18kHz, L+R, 0dB	[36] 20kHz, L+R, 0dB
Swept frequency response	
[37] 20Hz-20kHz sweep, L, -20dB	
[38] 20Hz-20kHz sweep, R, -20dB	
Wide frequency sweep	
[39] 5Hz-22.05kHz sweep, L+R, -15dB	
Noise signals	
[40] Pink, L+R, -20dB Average RMS	
[41] White, L+R, -20dB Peak Value	
[42-51] 1/3-octave 25Hz-16kHz R, octave 31.5Hz-16kHz R, -20dB	
[52] Pulse, L+R	
S/N Ratio test	
[53] 1001Hz, L+R, 0dB	
[54] Zero modulation, emphasis-on, L+R	
[55] Zero modulation, emphasis-off, L+R	
Tape recorder test signals	
[56] 315Hz, L+R, 0dB	
[57] 10kHz, L+R, 0dB	[58] 3150Hz, L+R, 0dB
HF Intermod test	
[59] 11+12kHz, L, 0, -10dB	
[60] 11+12kHz, R, 0, -10dB	
[61] 11+12kHz, L+R, 0, -10dB	
Miscellaneous tests	
[62] 1kHz Toneburst, L+R	
[63] 100Hz Squarewave, L+R, -15dB	
[64] Definition test, 22.05kHz, FFFF/0000	

isn't possible to get sufficient signal into the cassette recorder for useful activation of its LEDs when calibrating at the lower levels – especially if the recorder's line-input requirement exceeds about 50mV and/or the associated main amplifier provides no gain between its CD input and recording output sockets. Also, the CD player's output must be adjustable downwards from the 2V maximum, while it is useful (but not essential) to have a machine which can be programmed to play specific tracks in any desired order. Again, my Toshiba XR-Z70 satisfies all these criteria – but so would many others.

Now to the nitty gritty of calibration: (i) turn the cassette recorder's input control knob or slider to maximum, (ii) play track 23 from the CD and adjust the player's output level until the recorder's LED indicators just light at their nominal 0dB level, (iii) play track 22 and turn down the recorder's control knob until the LEDs again just light at 0dB, (iv) note the input control reading as accurately as possible. This gives the first calibration plot, representing a setting 20dB below maximum.

Next, find the -40dB point as follows: (i) recheck that when playing track 23 with the recorder control at maximum, the LEDs are still just lighting at 0dB, (ii) play track 18 and turn down the input control to keep the LEDs at 0dB, (iii) accurately note the knob reading. This is its -40dB point.

Now comes a difficult one, the -60dB plot, for which the recorder's gain control has to be turned so far down that there is no hope of driving the LEDs up to their 0dB points – possibly not even to illumination of the very lowest digit. This is where a subjective comparison comes into play, and where the headphones need to go on (although they would have been useful, if not essential, during all of the above). If possible, program the CD machine to play tracks 18 and 24 in continuing succession, or achieve this manually, setting the recorder input control at maximum during each playing of track 24 and at whatever position gives the same loudness during track 18, and if possible get a companion to do likewise. You should find that the position soon becomes repeatable, at which point mark it on the panel against the knob's pointer line – unless it conveniently coincides with an existing calibration mark. This represents -60dB.

We now have plots at 0dB (input control at maximum) and at -20, -40 and -60dB, at which point one curses JA & Co for not including a 10dB step anywhere in the CD's test-tone scheme! However, there is a 15dB step between tracks 18 and 19, and a 5dB step between tracks 19 and 22, and careful use of these enables one to plot all nine intermediate 5dB and 10dB intervals. The suggested procedure is as follows:

(1) Set tape recorder control at -20dB (as calibrated above) to give deflection to 0dB on LEDs when playing track 22, then play track 19 and lower input control setting to retain 0dB/LED. This gives -25dB point.

(2) Leave input control set at -25dB, play track 18 and reduce CD player output (the first time this has been altered since its initial setting) to give 0dB/LED. Then play track 19 and reset input control for 0dB/LED. This gives -10dB point.

(3) Play track 19 with input control at maximum and adjust CD output for 0dB/LED. Then play track 18 and re-set input control for 0dB/LED. This gives -15dB point.

(4) Leave input control set at -15dB, play track 19 and adjust CD player output for 0dB/LED. Then play track 18 and reset input control for 0dB/LED. This gives -30dB point.

(5) Play track 22 with input control at maximum and adjust CD player output for 0dB/LED. Then play track 19 and reset input control for 0dB/LED. This gives -5dB point.

(6) Set input control at -20dB (as for step 1), play track 19 and set CD player output to give 0dB/LED. Then play track 18 and reset input control for 0dB/LED. This gives -35dB point.

(7) Set input control at -30dB (as achieved in step 4), play track 19 and adjust CD player output for convenient headphone listening level. Then play track 18 and reset input control for same subjective loudness. This gives -45dB point. (But also see later for

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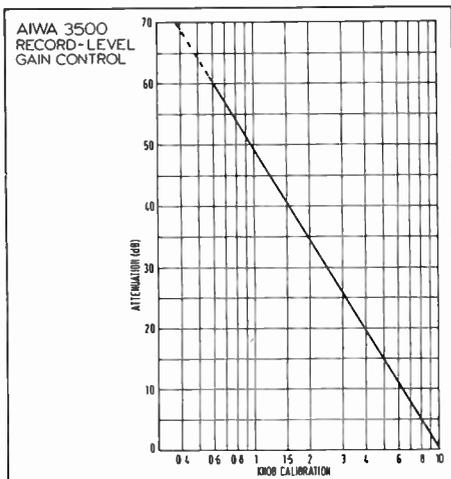
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possible use of LEDs in plotting these last three points.)

(8) Again set input control at -30dB, play track 22 and adjust CD player output for convenient headphone level. Then play track 18 and reset input control for same loudness. This gives -50dB point.

(9) Set input control at -40dB (as previously calibrated), play track 19 and adjust CD player output for convenient headphone level. Then play track 18 and reset input control for same loudness. This gives -55dB point.

As with the -60dB calibration, the last three steps here require patience and repetition (and preferably more than one listener) to arrive at repeatable settings. Also, some positions on the tape recorder's input control and/or the CD player's output control may exhibit a degree of L/R tracking error, so that one LED column reaches its 0dB digit before the other. The precise setting chosen then becomes a matter of personal judgement, although I always plotted according to the first LED digit to light in each case. In any event, the reader will now have a set of 13 figures representing the recorder's input control readings covering a range of 0dB to -60dB in 5dB steps, and the next stage is to plot these on graph paper, with knob settings on one co-ordinate and decibels on the other. Initially, the likelihood is that while the points will mostly be close to a smooth overall line, there will be some troubling oddities which suggest reading errors. The eventual plot for my particular recorder produced a straight line (as shown) when drawn on logarithmic graph paper - a line



which I have extrapolated out to an unmeasured -70dB. But I still had to go back and re-measure several times before all points came reasonably close to the drawn line.

However, having been through all the above, one soon gets the feel of how to handle the task. For instance, although I have stuck to a nominal 0dB LED reading during calibration, it can be helpful to check the LED indicator's own markings, above and below its 0dB reference, by means of tracks 18-22. Having done this, it then becomes possible to authenticate various readings using this further measuring tool, perhaps also using the lowest LED digits (marked -20dB in my case) to circumvent the subjective method of arriving at the -45, -50 and -55dB plots in steps 7-9. Indeed, in cases where the recorder's input sensitivity is particularly high, it may be possible to light the lowest digit by means of track 24, which would release even the -60dB plot from dependence on listening assessments. But whatever method is adopted, you will have in the end the means to produce a definitive graph (or a radial

template to fix around the knob) which can be used to plot the dynamics of some actual music - and Mike Skeet's garage-door.

Regarding that door, careful re-measurement now reveals that the gap between Mike's 'outside' voice and his subsequent banging is nearer to 50dB than 40dB. But it all depends on which parts of his speech one takes for reference, and whether the isolated extra-high peak at his ninth bang gets included in the measurement. However, the overall figure of 60dB down to the disappearing LF shimmer after the door is closed still seems to hold.

That figure of 60dB, or a little more, also seems to hold for orchestral music of wide dynamic range, as measured on a number of CDs. Unfortunately, within the constraints of the method described here, it isn't possible to follow to its lowest recorded levels the dying ambience captured in such recordings. But it is feasible to measure the span between the loudest climaxes and all pianissimos except those rarities which descend by more than 60dB. In other words, the actual dynamic range of the music itself can generally be assessed, if not the extension of that range provided by its reverberant aftermath.

The technique is to listen to a CD with both the recorder's input control and the CD player's output control turned right up. The latter might be inconvenient in normal use, but is necessary here in order to provide sufficient signal level on *ppp* passages in music of wide dynamics. Sufficient, that is, to actuate the LEDs at least on their lowest digits. Precisely how things work out will depend both on the recorder's input sensitivity and on whether your intervening preamplifier circuit offers any gain. In any event, search for what you think may be the very quietest passages in a piece of music and see whether they descend to a level which illuminates only the lowest LED digit - or perhaps even just fail to do so. Then turn down the recorder's input control while searching for the loudest climaxes, in order to find the control setting which, likewise, causes the *same* lowest LED to glow. Note the control's position and consult your graph to check off the dynamic range.

You'll find that many CDs peak similarly, to within a decibel or two of the various '0dB' tracks on HFN003, because this is the system's upper limit which it makes sense to approach during recording - for all the well-known reasons. This being so, the best reading accuracy will be obtained with music of more limited dynamics by reducing the CD player's output so that the quietest passages still just actuate a specific LED digit when the recorder's input control is set to maximum (0dB). Then, with the latter reset to give the same LED indication at the highest peaks, the dynamic range can again be read off directly.

An example of this more limited type of range may be found in Beethoven, where in Symphony No.7 the span between the loudest climaxes in (iv) and the very quietest notes during the string introduction to (ii) measures 45dB on my Kegel recording (Capriccio 10 005). On the other hand, in no fewer than three CD versions of Berlioz' *Fantastic Symphony* I found spans exceeding 60dB between the brass/percussion peaks in (iv) and (v) and various hushed pianissimos in (iii): tremolo strings from Maazel (Telarc/CD-80076), a couple of oboe notes from Abbado (DG 410 895-2), and pizzicato strings from Barenboim (CBS MK

39859). In all three versions the passages in question went a little *below* the level needed to light the bottom LED digit when the recorder's input control was set to 0dB, while in each case the loudest peaks lit that same LED at a -60dB setting.

Perhaps these figures are not especially surprising, but it did amaze me to discover in Muti's recording of Mahler's first symphony (EMI CDC 7470322) that the subjectively overwhelming effect as the last movement explodes into life represents a leap of less than 30dB above the hushed plucked double-bass and drum notes which end the preceding funeral march. That's referring to the initial transients of those notes, and one can register a faint shimmer as the instrumental resonances decay into the surrounding ambience. This increases the range to some 48dB, while a couple of later orchestral crashes bring the figure up to 52dB. But that still doesn't look very impressive because it fails to allow for the subjective effect of the immediate leap from *pp* to *fff*. A sudden crash following prolonged near-silence seems much louder than the same objective level approached via a slow crescendo or when surrounded by other instrumental sounds of rapidly fluctuating loudness. For instance, that subjectively impressive 30dB leap in the Mahler is actually the same as the dynamic extremes found within the texture of my recording of Bach's first *Brandenburg Concerto* (I Musici, Philips 412 790-2), although in comparison the latter seems to have practically no dynamic range at all.

Anyway, it's all very interesting if not especially accurate. Regarding accuracy, I've made an assumption throughout that those LEDs really *are* instantaneous - that there is no inhibiting time-constant built into the associated circuitry. One way of checking this is to play tracks 18 or 30, set the system for a given LED reading, then play the corresponding tone-burst track 62. Ideally, the latter should give the same reading on its bursts as the other tracks give on their steady tones. In my case there is a 1½dB discrepancy, which may mean that the above readings are slightly erroneous when depending on sharp peaks such as cymbal crashes.

But the main source of error is likely to be inaccuracies of calibration in the -45 to -60dB region, where everything is crammed into some 6% of the potentiometer's total movement - a fact masked by the log scale on my graph.

But even if one can't guarantee overall readings to within better than 3dB, the exercise still provides an intriguing link between technology and music. I find it very satisfying that subjective dynamics can be expressed as objective decibels just by playing a disc, looking at some flashing lights, and turning a knob. ↵

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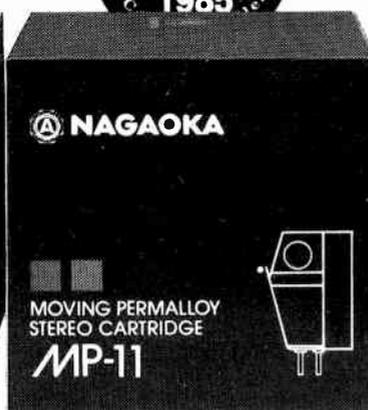
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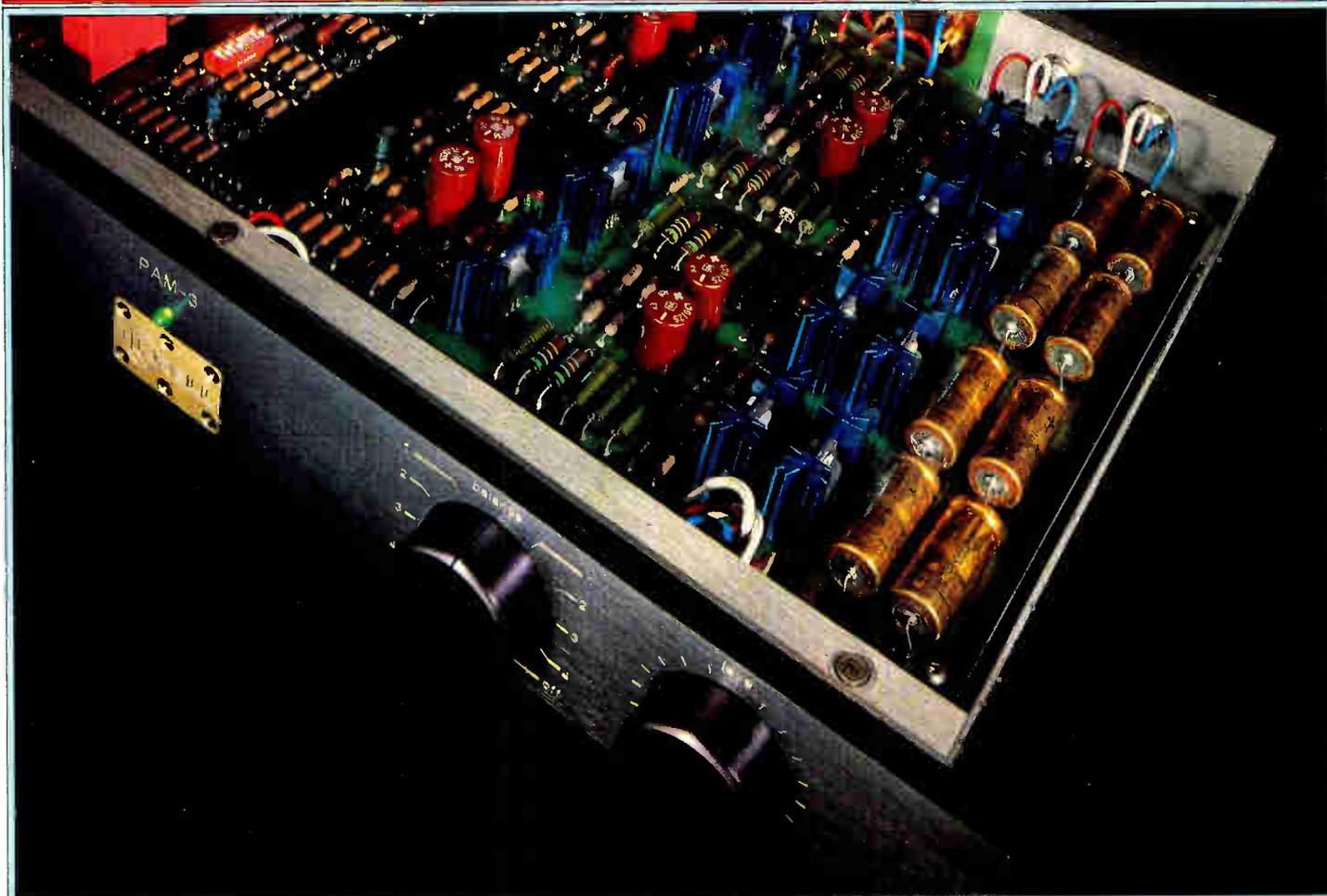


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TWO KONNEKTIKUT YANKEES AT THE KOURT OF ST JAMES

John Atkinson lives with Krell pre- and power amplification



STREETWISE. NOW THERE'S A WORD. I SUPPOSE YOU could say that in a hi-fi context it means being aware of the unwritten myths, such as 'Image depth is due to microphony in valve amplifiers' or 'Class-A amplifiers sound better than ones operating in class-B' or 'The only truly great preamplifiers use valves'. Such myths don't necessarily have to reflect reality to be credible, but I became sufficiently convinced of the truth in the last two that I spent a lot of money putting together a system based on a class-A transistor amplifier—a Krell KSA-50—and a valve preamplifier—an Audio Research SP-10. The result was literally music to my ears, so I looked forward to living happily ever after, apart from the ever-present problem of coming to terms with CD.

Then one day Absolute Sounds' Ricardo Fransavici rang: did I want to listen to the Krell PAM-3 preamplifier? I explained that it was solid-state. He countered by suggesting I also try the latest version of the Krell KSA-100 power amplifier. Checkmate! I had to agree.

The PAM-3 is a low 19in. wide preamp, with its thick front panel blue-anodised to match the rest of the Krell range. Each channel has its own remote power supply, these rather plain rectangular aluminium boxes with a red LED on the front. Each houses an Avel Lindberg 30VA toroidal transformer and delivers unregulated but well-smoothed (4x4700µF caps) ±28V voltage rails via a lead fitted with a 3-pin Lemo connector. Each channel then has the supply for each gain stage individually regulated to ±16V within the preamp proper, with hefty decoupling (8x2200µF caps) and dual mono layout

on the military spec double-sided board.

Circuitry is fully complementary, using discrete transistors, and the output runs in class-A, the transistors being mounted on the same individual blue-coloured heatsinks that support the regulator transistors. Construction is to a breathtakingly high standard: metal film resistors and polystyrene and polypropylene dielectric capacitors are used throughout; all the signal sockets are Goldilocks (Tiffany) gold-plated phonos, and the volume control is a rotary Penny & Giles conductive plastic stereo fader, the channel matching on this being to within an astonishing 0.06dB over nearly all its range, and still being just 1.29dB adrift 60dB down.

The only front panel controls apart from volume are a switched attenuator for balance (the far left and right positions turning off the other channel), and separate selectors for listen and record. (Two tape recorders are catered for.) The disc input is used for both m-m and m-c cartridges, internal DIL switches being used to change gain and also to vary the m-c loading from 47k to 50hms in nine steps. Internal switches also provide full double mono operation as well as stereo with reduced width. Tuner and tape inputs go straight to the high level section of the circuitry but the CD input is interesting in that it provides adjustable high frequency group delay equalisation. Again this is set with internal DIL switches.

The KSA-100 is a twice-the-power version of the KSA-50 in the same case as the mono KMA-200. Internal layout is similar, apart from the use of two heatsink/fan assemblies rather than one.

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Thanks chaps.

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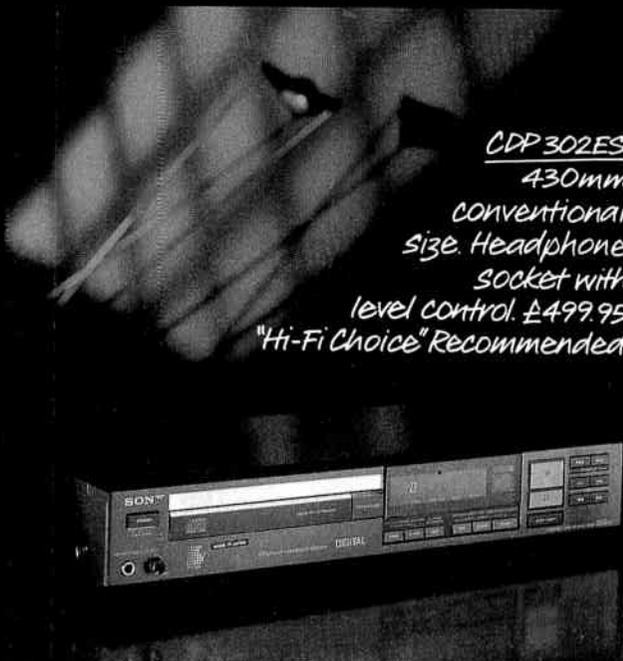
Suffice to say, if you want to hear how you can improve the sound of your Hi-Fi - visit a Sony Showroom.

If you want to see how you can improve the looks of your Hi-Fi - these two pages should cover it.

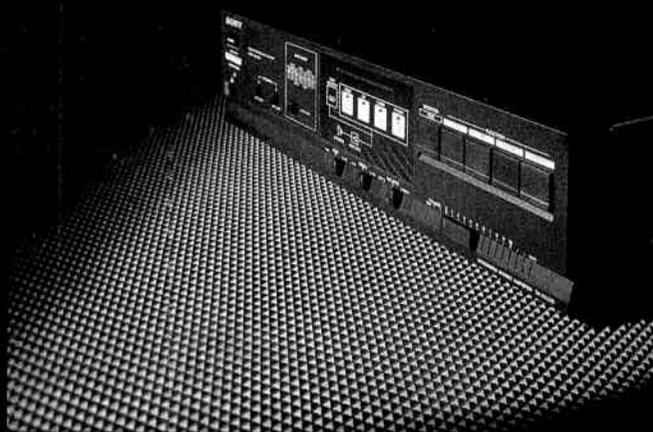
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Separate Avel Lindberg toroidal transformers are used for each channel, each feeding a high power bridge and 2x40,000µF reservoir with a plated brass busbar across the top of the pair of the capacitors forming the ground reference point. The output stage has sufficient standing current to run in class-A up to 100W output into 8ohms; into lower loads, the first 100W will be in class-A but then the upper or lower pairs of bipolar output transistors will cut off, giving super-enriched class-A/B operation. Input sockets are gold-plated Tiffany while speaker outputs are gold-plated 5-way binding posts.

The circuitry has been revised since the first Krell generation. Although still fully complementary, FETs are now used in the front-end and the fuses in the outputs have been replaced with high current, hard silver-plated relays. These turn on after a short delay and provide DC and/or RF protection.

I first used the KSA-100 with SP-10/LP12/Ittok/Asak or Koetsu Red front-end, later substituting the PAM-3 for the Audio Research. Speakers were in the main Apogee Scintillas in 1ohm mode, with considerable listening also done with Celestion SL600s. The PAM-3 and KSA-100 were also used to drive Magneplanar MG11s in our Penta Show listening tests.

Compared with KSA-50, there are two noticeable improvements with the KSA-100. The bass is much drier, more 'tuneful' even; the '50, though very tight, nonetheless sounded warmer. If you take the 12in. of Tina Turner's 'We Don't Need Another Hero', this ends with a totally OTT bass note that mightily stresses the amplifier concerned. Even when delivering the same measured power as the '50 on this note, the '100 stays more in charge of what is going on. Couple this aspect with the greater dynamic range and the ability to deliver shocking currents into awkward loads and you have an amplifier for all seasons, a fact confirmed by Paul Crook's measurements.

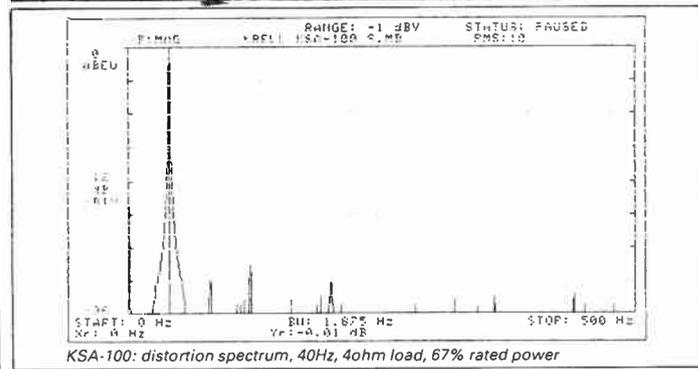
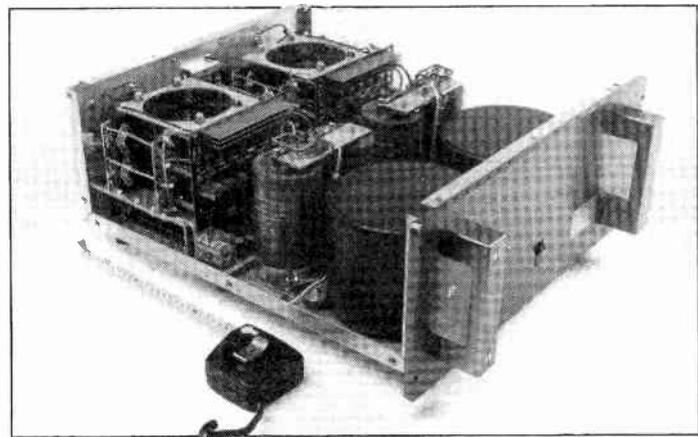
The second aspect concerns the depth of image. Again, although the KSA-50 is excellent in this respect, the '100 is that little bit more transparent without pushing information forward at the listener. I found this surprising, generally having found that bigger amplifiers seem to trade-off this aspect of reproduction against greater power delivery. But if you take my Chopin piano recording on the HFN/RR Test CD, the character of the hall ambience surrounding the piano is very subtly encoded, and is easily obscured/destroyed. The '100

at the time, the case getting very slightly warm to the touch. I found that it took around 24 hours after switch-on for the sound quality to reach optimum, presumably due to the need for the electrolytics in the power supply to reach operating temperature. Be aware of this when you audition the PAM-3 at a dealer. (Actually, nearly all transistor preamplifiers benefit from a warm-up period, in my experience.)

Ergonomically, the preamp was a delight to use, the separate source and record selectors proving useful, as did the mute position which is next to phono on the switch. Disc listening was done with a 100ohm input impedance, the higher values giving a slight EHF edge to the sound, and taking the cover off to change internal switch settings took only a minute or so. The primary characteristic of the sound via LP is a 'coolness'. It does not sound 'transistorish', neither does it sound unmusical or brash in the manner of, say, the original Musical Fidelity preamp. Rather, it is like a tidier Naim 32/5 with greater extension at frequency extremes (the measured RIAA response shows a -0.5dB shelf above 5kHz). If you take the *Hi-Fi Today* Nimbus recut of Vaughan Williams' *Tallis Fantasia*, the lower strings in this close-ish (Kingsway Hall?) recording are given their due weight, without either confusion in the midrange or over-emphasis at high frequencies. Compared with the similarly-priced SP-10, the valve preamp is more transparent. The PAM-3, however, has even more low bass authority than the SP-10 and is very much quieter on its disc input; the latter may well be a deciding factor for some audiophiles.

Using my venerable Marantz CD-63, isoplated and Flux Dumpered, into the Aux inputs, the sound was nothing to write home about - although substituting a passive pot for the PAM-3 significantly degraded the sound quality. Taking the CD player into the PAM-3's CD input and setting up the DIL switches for a Philips-type player gave a sound very much more what would be expected from an audiophile system. There was now a slight HF rolloff - I still feel that a flat frequency response on CD is not what is needed when so many engineers seem to balance rock recordings to sound too bright - while the HF group delay added to the sense of 'space'. (Paul Crook's measurements show a phase change of -155° (Sony) and -119° (Philips) at 20kHz, with associated amplitude changes of -5dB and -3dB.)

I must point out that value-for-money considerations are not relevant with this kind of product. The Law of Diminishing Returns applies as strongly in hi-fi as anywhere else and only the customer can decide if the real improvements offered are worth the asking price. However, I have no doubts about recommending the KSA-100 to anyone who wants a power amplifier approaching the best valve designs when it comes to imagery and presentation of musical detail but with the transistor amplifier's ability to drive vicious loads such as the Scintilla. (Current production KSA-50s also feature the revised circuitry.) The PAM-3, however, is more problematic. Pricewise, it is up against strong competition from the SP-10, which costs another £500, and I am told that the latest conrad-johnson Premier Three is also a strong contender. If you feel that valves are not the way to go, though, then the PAM-3 will give a less incisive but still musical performance. CD advocates, however, should check out Krell's less expensive but similarly-styled PAM-5, which has a mono power supply and simpler tape arrangements, but still features the useful phase equalisation on the CD input. ♪



allows you to hear all the more clearly the 'walls' of the hall. It doesn't quite have the midrange resolving power of the Audio Research D-115, but on the other hand it can drive loudspeakers with more authority. The 'slam' with which it drove the Maggies at the Heathrow Penta, while still holding on to the midrange detail, had to be heard to be believed.

Hooking up the PAM-3 didn't give any problems, it being possible to connect the earths on both pre- and power amplifier leads to the mains earth without hum. (The preamp is effectively double-insulated and its case has a 10ohm ground-lift resistor: main system earth is thus at the power amplifier where the most current flows to ground.) There is no mains on/off, the preamplifier being left on all

TEST RESULTS (courtesy of Paul Crook)

KRELL PAM-3 PREAMP			
	20kHz	1kHz	20kHz
THD, aux input	-87.8dB	-85.1dB	-86.2dB
Intermodulation, 1920Hz, CD input	-79.2dB	-79.2dB	-500mV w/d
disc (m-c)	-79.7dB	-81.5dB	
disc (m-c)			
Input overload, disc (m-c) HF	31.8dB	31.4dB	31.2dB
Input overload, disc (m-c) HF	25.1dB	24.5dB	24.7dB
Input overload, CD, HF	>20dB	>20dB	>20dB
Stereo separation (m-c) aux	76.5dB	76.5dB	84.2dB
ICD (pp)	103.6dB	70.8dB	44.8dB
Noise, disc (m-c), HF/CD	-75.3dB	-69.4dB	-69.4dB
disc (m-c), HF/CD	-69.4dB	-69.4dB	-69.4dB
CD (m-c), HF/CD	-69.4dB	-69.4dB	-69.4dB
unweighted, vol. control at min	94.0dB	94.0dB	94.0dB
RAA response	+0.15dB	+0.82dB (m-c)	
Input data			
Disc (m-c)	2.2mV	45k/10pF	
Disc (m-c)	706µV	330mV/11nF	
CD	180mV	26k/470pF	
Output data			
Size	9.1W max from 100mms	40 x 7 x 35cm	
Typical price (inc.VAT)	£345		
KRELL KSA-100 POWER AMP			
Rated power into 8ohms	20kHz	100W (10dBW)	20kHz
Power output (1% distortion)	1kHz	22.1	21.8
One channel, 8ohm load (dBW)	21.3	21.4	21.3
Both channels, 4ohm load (dBW)	21.3	21.4	21.3
One channel, 2ohm (pushed) (dBW)	22.5	22.5	22.5
Instantaneous peak current		-37A, -37A	
THD at rated power			
at 0dBW	81.0dB	-83dB	-86dB
at 0dBW	75.0dB	-85dB	-81dB
Intermodulation, 1920Hz, at rated power			
at 0dBW	102.7dB	102.7dB	104.4dB
Stereo separation at 0dBW	112.7dB	82.7dB	58.3dB
Output impedance (ohms)	0.02	0.02	0.04
Noise (HF/CD) (unweighted)		-92.7dB (-30.0dB)	
DC offset (L/R)		7mV (8mV)	
Input sensitivity		115mV into 48k/710pF	
Size		48 x 23 x 61cm	
Typical price (inc.VAT)		£340	

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F O U R TUNERS

Angus McKenzie reviews Hitachi FT5500 II, Magnum Dynalab, Trio KT-990 & Rotel RT 850 FM tuners

I LOOKED AGAIN RECENTLY AT SOME TUNER REVIEWS I wrote on and more years ago, noting my enthusiasm for such products as the Yamaha CT7000, which was fitted with a special narrow filter, and for various other famous models. My favourite was the Trio KT917 which had the most outstanding performance of any tuner that I had measured. In general service it had one snag, however, at least in North London: that of picking up some form of medium-wave interference which came through as a very low level whistle behind stereo programmes, and which I could never eliminate.

Those older tuners always seemed to be well up to specification on RF input sensitivity, usually around $1\mu\text{V}$ for 30dB IHF. Looking through figures on at least two dozen tuners tested in the last two or so years, though, it struck me that hardly any of them met their specified sensitivity. I began to wonder if the test equipment itself could be incorrect at very low levels, but when I used a muTek Band 2 preamplifier in the aerial feed to the tuner under scrutiny I almost invariably got figures that were even better than those of the old tuners. Obviously tuner manufacturers have abandoned sensitivity in favour of front-end intermodulation performance and selectivity.

In general this is not a bad thing, as long as manufacturers are honest about it. It is true that most households with a reasonable aerial system can pick up several FM stations at signal strengths far higher than 1mV , but the problem is that each transmitter generates noise off-channel. If you are receiving a typical BBC transmission at a signal strength of, say, 10mV , then it will undoubtedly be introducing noise at the $1\mu\text{V}$ level (*ie*, -80dB) quite a way off channel, thus introducing noise below weak stations. Considering the number of strong stations getting into the tuner, one can see that accumulated off-channel transmitter noise can increase the noise floor of the tuner by many dBs, but, of course, in these circumstances ultimate sensitivity is not so important. However, if you are in an area where (a) the station strengths are well below 1mV , (b) there are no very strong signals just outside the band, and (c) the tuner's RF selectivity is also very good, you can use as much sensitivity as you can get, to improve the subjective dynamic range of stereo transmissions. It is in these circumstances that modern tuners are not good enough, and one can gain tremendously by the addition of an external preamplifier such as the muTek* which has a low 9dB of gain, a very low input noise, and extremely low RF distortion.

Tuner front-ends have most certainly improved in intermodulation performance, and models such as the Hitachi 5500 Mk II reviewed here appear to be almost bombproof! As more and more stations come on to Band 2, front-end performance and IF selectivity have to improve, and the best tuners allow the option of narrow or wide IF selectivity. Wide selectivity gives much less distortion and frequently improved crosstalk, whereas narrow allows the capturing of a weaker station even if it is close in frequency to a strong one. If a tuner cannot offer switchable selectivity, then its setting should be a good compromise, as is offered on the Revox B261, which remains my favourite modern tuner.

After the FM signal has been converted to audio by the discriminator, the signal has to be decoded to give a stereophonic output. Many stereo decoders seem to be rather noisy and some are driven so hard to avoid that noise that the output itself is distorted. Whilst the Hitachi 5500 Mk II offers both low distortion and a very wide dynamic range, the Dynalab, also reviewed here, has much too much noise. Sometimes, the multiplex tones are inadequately filtered, with the result that younger listeners can be disturbed by high pitched whistles. Many tuners supplied in music centres or rack systems have these limitations. A few Japanese tuners have used a pilot tone cancellation circuit instead of a proper low-pass multiplex filter. These circuits may well give excellent rejection of the 19kHz pilot tone, but all too often there are nasty noises remaining on the output as a result of partial demodulation of signals such as radio-data information transmitted on extremely high frequency subcarriers.

Very few modern tuners have retained an analogue tuning knob, favouring instead up and down pushbuttons. Two tuning modes are

* muTek, Bradworthy, Holsworthy, Devon, EX22 7TU Tel: 040 924 543. These are made to special order only, using BNC professional connectors. Price approx. £50. Dep Ed.

normally available, apart from direct access to memory. The first is to peck and hunt one synthesised channel at a time. Some tuners take a second or two to unmute after the frequency has been changed (which is infuriating if you are trying to scan the band for unusual stations). The other mode, usually called auto, scans in the required direction and then opens up when the tuner has found an acceptable signal. The problem here is that models such as the Rotel will accept incredibly weak signals, so that it takes an age to look for usable stations.

Many tuners include AM of such abominable quality as to remove any entertainment value whatsoever, distortion at low frequencies reaching way over 10%. There are very few decent AM receivers around these days, which is a great pity.

Returning to front-end sensitivity, the latest solid-state device, which offers an exceptionally fine low-noise performance, is the Gallium Arsenide Field Effect Transistor (GaAs-FET). This device was specifically designed for use at microwave frequencies above 1000MHz. At normal VHF, the device only offers a slight advantage if the circuitry surrounding it is very esoteric. But there is a very serious *disadvantage* in using it, too, since its RF intermodulation performance is far worse than that of a normal low-noise VHF transistor, unless it is combined in-circuit with a normal transistor with feedback. However, the GaAs-FET is one of the latest devices to hit the market, and many hi-fi enthusiasts, hearing that it is being used for preamplifiers in satellite TV reception, might imagine that it would offer a vastly superior performance on Band 2. In the most carefully thought out circuits a GaAs-FET might show, perhaps, a 0.4dB improvement in sensitivity. (Theoretically one might be able to reach around $0.08\mu\text{V}$ IHF if all other parts of the circuitry are well-high perfect.) Unfortunately, very few designers know how to use them properly, and having measured many GaAs-FET preamps, I have been alarmed to find that the typical intermodulation performance can actually be 20dB worse than that of a good NPN device. Is a 0.4dB sensitivity improvement worthwhile for such a degradation in RF intermodulation on today's crowded bands? I suggest that the use of GaAs-FET in tuners is little more than a marketing ploy!

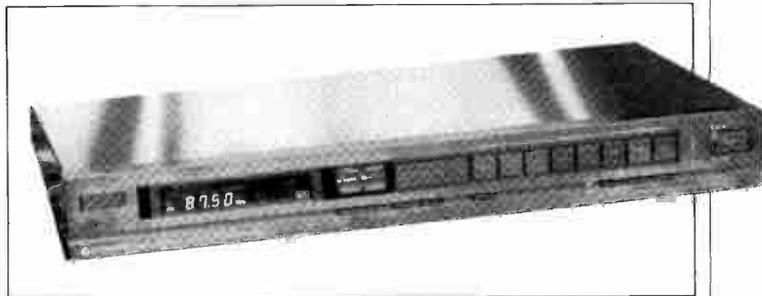
Hitachi FT5500 Mk II

£199

This model was introduced early in 1985 and although it is very similar to the Mk I version, the normal input RF stage has been replaced by a GaAs-FET.

Other minor changes in the circuitry have been incorporated to improve the performance. When stereo signals are weaker than $50\mu\text{V}$ HF blending occurs, which degrades HF crosstalk but greatly improves the subjective signal/noise ratio.

The RF preamplifier is a 3SK114, which is probably also a GaAs-FET, but this wasn't confirmed. The mixer, a 3SK113, is claimed in the manual to be a GaAs-FET and to have superior overload properties. As I've said, this is where I feel that the



marketing boys have had an influence. If a tuner manufacturer wanted to design a really good front-end, he would use a low-noise NPN circuit into a ring diode mixer having a high local oscillator injection level. This would give a fantastic performance for a marginal increase in production cost. Many British-made and designed VHF communication front-ends employ this type of circuit to great effect, and it seems that Japan is far behind in this respect.

The tuner is supplied in an attractive, black finished metal case. It is quite wide at 435mm but surprisingly slim at 26mm, with a depth of

267mm. The front panel carries a fluorescent digital frequency display having a resolution of 50kHz; the up/down frequency stepping buttons operate in 50kHz steps. Various other functions are displayed on the readout: frequency lock, memory channel number and FCCS selected (see later). There is also a stereo indicator. Separate LEDs indicate RF attenuation on/off (labelled RF double or single), IF narrow/wide and auto/manual tuning engaged. Finally, an LED indicates whether you have selected memories 1-8 or 9-16.

The front panel controls are all pushbutton types. With auto tuning selected, the up/down buttons initiate searching, with the tuner stopping at the first reasonably receivable station; in the manual position it will go up one channel at a time in 50kHz steps, or around 1MHz in 1.5 seconds if the button is held down. 'RF band' seems to be just a switchable RF attenuator, and when 'double' is selected, the attenuation is approximately 6dB.

Regarding the wide or narrow IF bandwidth options, our tests showed the selectivity to be excellent, but as I was already rather enthusiastic about this tuner, we decided to run a complete plot of front-end bandwidth and bandwidth of the wide and narrow filtering. For the RF bandwidth we took the output from the mixer, bridging it with a high impedance RF probe, and plotted the response with the new Marconi 2382 tracking system, using an external remixing technique. Plot 1 shows the combination of RF and mixer output bandwidth, from which it can be seen that the -3dB width is around 500kHz and the -10dB width around 1.3MHz. The RF bandwidth characteristics are thus quite good at rejecting strong signals at least 1MHz off channel. The next plot shows the bandwidth immediately prior to the main IF filters, although some IF roofing filtering has already been applied. The -3dB width here is about 250kHz, and the skirts are rather steeper, with -10dB bandwidth at around 400kHz. This shows that by this point in the circuit, there is a good rejection of alternate channel signals. The third plot includes the response of both the narrow and wide filters. The narrow plot shows a -3dB bandwidth of only 120kHz or so, and this will contribute to increased distortion, but the adjacent channel selectivity is very good, the bandwidth at -50dB being around 400kHz, a result one sometimes finds at only 3dB down in the wide positions of a few esoteric tuners!

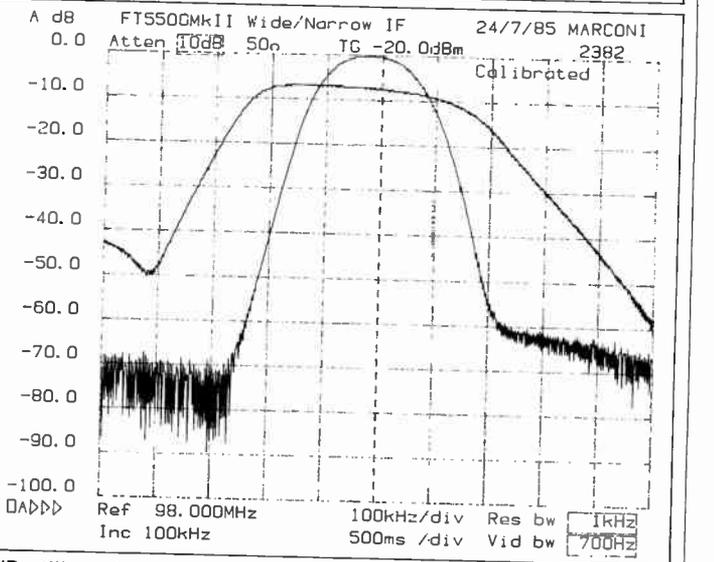
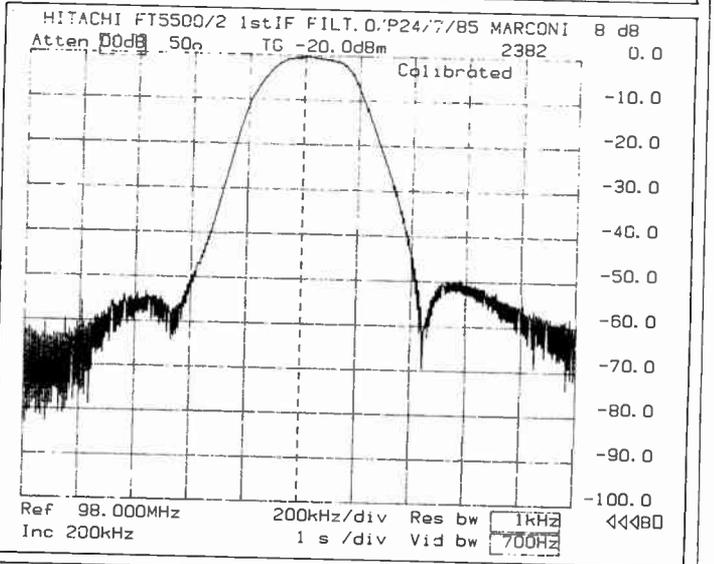
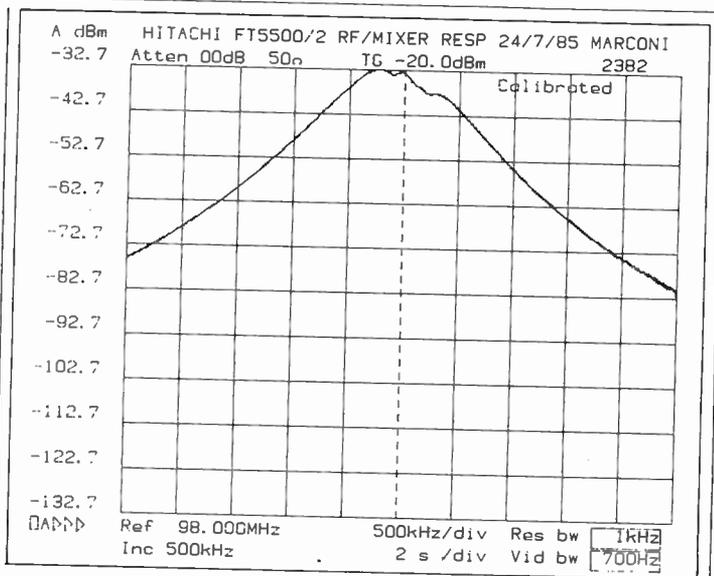
The wider plot shows a -3dB bandwidth of around 360kHz, which is a little excessive! The -50dB bandwidth, however, is extremely wide at 840kHz. If one bears in mind the bandwidth/energy plot which I included recently in my 'Radio' column (October p33), a 300kHz bandwidth would be more than enough for extremely low distortion at all frequencies.

Hitachi have again included their 'Field Condition Computer System', or FCCS for short. This gadget operates under microprocessor control, and when it is engaged the tuner scans the band to look for signals reasonably close-in to the tuned frequency, and for any very strong signals on the band; it then automatically selects the most appropriate IF filter for optimum reception. Theoretically it should switch in the RF attenuator, but I was unable to find a condition that caused this. This optimum setting can be stored in memory for future use, together with the frequency and stereo/mono setting. Additionally, after you have accessed a memory you can change any of the parameters at will. We experimented with this facility by receiving Chiltern Radio on 97.6MHz with a high gain beam on Wrotham. The Chiltern signal was quite weak yet was well received with narrow IF selectivity; but when switched to wide, the tuner muted in the stereo mode. Switched to mono and wide, there was bad interference from LBC on 97.3MHz. The wide selectivity gave just 15dB reduction in IF gain at LBC's frequency, whereas the narrow filter rejected it by more than 70dB. This shows the tremendous improvement in reception to be had with switchable selectivity.

Although there are only eight memory pushbuttons, a shift button introduces eight more positions. Either medium-wave or VHF frequencies can be stored in each memory. Use of the memory has been made very simple: one presses the memory button followed by the memory channel required. The auto button gives two functions at the same time: the on position allows the tuner to switch to stereo automatically for a stereo broadcast, at the same time selecting the auto tuning function; in the manual position, manual tuning is selected with mono reception, whether the signal is in stereo or not.

A record 'cal' button mutes the tuner, and supplies a rather distorted 330Hz at 12dB below 75kHz mono deviation, which in practice will be around 9dB below normal peak stereo modulation. In the instruction book, Hitachi suggest that a cassette deck meter should read around -1VU, and a reel-to-reel deck around +1VU. This level might be about right for the latter, but will likely blast the living daylight out of an average cassette tape on program! Perhaps Hitachi assume the user will have a three-head Nakamichi cassette deck with a very high quality metal cassette.

Another front panel option gives a readout of signal strength in dBs above 1µV, and this proved quite accurate. Weak signals tended to under-read by 2dB or so, but signals above 100µV over-read by



1dB, still a quite remarkable performance.

The mains lead is a two-core captive type, and phono sockets are provided for the audio outputs. An FM antenna can be connected either via a male Belling Lee type socket (RMA), or on two small terminals which are also 75ohms. Two AM terminals are fitted for connection to a circular loop antenna which has screw holes to allow fixing to a wall etc. This loop is 165mm in diameter, and connects via some twisted flex.

Technical Measurements

At 1.3µV EMF/2 the front-end sensitivity is good, but 3dB poorer than many tuners of 10 years ago. With narrow selectivity the sensitivity would degrade slightly because of the decreased distortion at full

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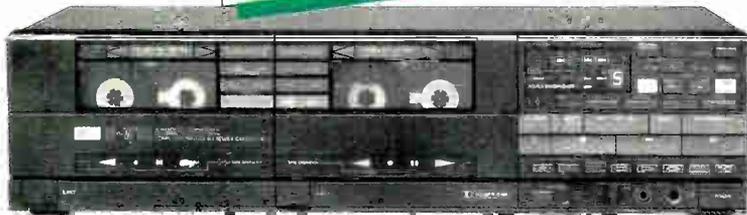
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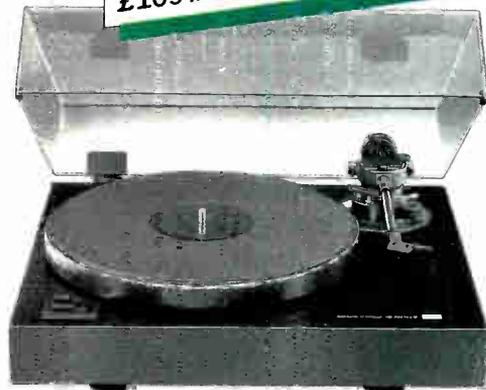
"It'll record forwards, backwards, one tape, two tapes, one track or two tracks at a time, at normal speed or double speed. It's got 34 knobs on the front panel and a computer which sequences and records tracks in your chosen order.

On the ergonomic front I was very impressed with the build quality of the Sansui DW-10, its finish being first rate with a nice feel to the main control buttons.

The Sansui DW-10, enigmatic as it may be, works out being a rather good machine and fills a useful niche in the marketplace of twin cassette decks. It is well-designed, beautifully constructed, sounds good overall in relation to other machines of this type and is actually a lot of deck for the money. Definitely a front-runner in the class.

Ian Kuah, *Which Compact Disc?* September 1985

SR-222 MKV BELT DRIVE TURNTABLE £109 inc. vat



"I was very impressed with the sound from this MKV version of the SR-222. It was consistently smooth and even toned, with only a slight lack of subtlety giving away its market position compared to more expensive units. On the whole it gave a consistently revealing sense of atmosphere and plenty of detail, but above all it got the feet tapping and really invited you to participate. For just over £100 that's got to be good value."

Jonathan Kettle, *New Hi-Fi Sound*, July 1985.

PCV-100 COMPACT DISC PLAYER £259 inc. vat



"This player offers a good sound quality for the money, together with a competent transport, claiming fast access times. In common with other related models, the new PCV-100 has no difficulty in gaining a recommendation in this issue and in view of the latest pricing wins a 'Best Buy' rating."

Hi-Fi Choice, June 1985.

"Welcome back Sansui! Your PCV-100 player is an excellent product and is warmly recommended. For: Good looks. Ease of operation. Very quiet running. Against: The third screw along the back was the wrong shade of black!" Stan Curtis, *Which Compact Disc?* June 1985.

**PCV-750 COMPACT DISC PLAYER
£299 inc. vat**



SOUND QUALITY. Given the standard technology, and generally satisfactory lab performance, one might be forgiven for anticipating a similar 'just satisfactory' sonic performance. However, the Sansui surprised us here, with something rather special for the price sector.

It scored well, approaching the best respected decks costing some 25% more. It demonstrated a precise, well focused stereo image, with substantial depth and ambience. Mid tonal balance was quite good, with a natural perspective, while both bass and treble extremes were reproduced with good clarity and authority. The sound was judged slightly 'clinical' but this did not detract from its good ratings.

CONCLUSION. Good as the '100 is, the '750 is better still, and is strongly recommended as a basic machine offering a competitive sound quality."

Hi-Fi News, October 1985.

AU-G 33X STEREO AMP. £169 inc. vat



"Sansui AU-G 33X is pretty damn good. In fact it's a cracker."

"I have the distinct impression that here, at last is one main stream manufacturer making a concerted stab at closing the gap with the best of the audiophile orientated competition."

"The Sansui does go louder - much louder - than the £100 to £120 models, and it has that rare and precious facility of staying in perfect control of the loudspeakers to which it's presented."

"Recommended".

Alvin Gold, New Hi-Fi Sound, February 1985.

TU-D 33XL TUNER £109 inc. vat



"A couple of plays revealed that the TU-D 33XL's ability to prise decent sound stage, with ample depth to convey 3-D presence and bass, from musical instruments or sound effects was, at times, near awesome."

"The Sansui is a devilish successful solution for those of you who can no longer bear to part with a fiver whenever you crave something new."
"And it's pretty to boot."

Ken Kessler, Hi-Fi News, May 1985.

TU-D 99X TUNER £229 inc. vat



SANSUI TU-D 99X. Best Buy, Hi-Fi Choice. March 1985.

"With a front rank sound quality and a very strong RF performance, this is clearly a fine tuner design. Suited, with the 'local' switch, to both fringe and high strength locations, a versatile performance is offered".

Conclusion. "The TU-D 99X represents very good value in its price sector, and qualifies for a Best Buy rating."

Hi-Fi Choice.

The TU-D 99X incorporates a super linear digital decoder which eliminates beat interference. It does so effectively and without creating its own audible beat since no harmonics are generated.

AU-G 55X STEREO AMP. £249 inc. vat



"Altogether a very satisfying stereo amplifier which I could live with for a long time. Well recommended."

John Gilbert, Gramophone, April 1985.

"To most people, names such as Sansui enjoy street credibility while other more esoteric names simply cannot match up."

"The Sansui easily won out in the specific area of maximum loudness, which was achieved in a seamless and unstrained manner."

"I like the Sansui. In addition to its superb build, finish and flexibility, it was capable of real quality music making."

Alvin Gold, What Hi-Fi? February 1985.

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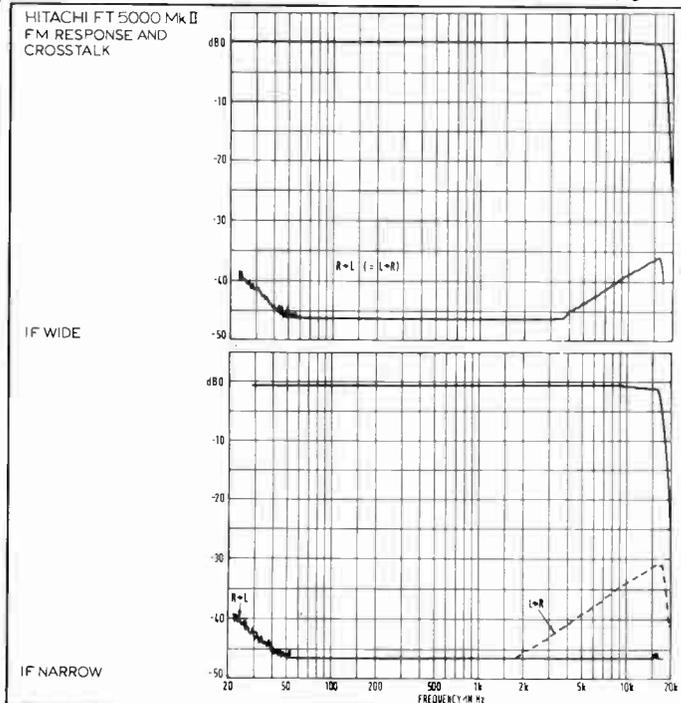
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deviation on a very weak signal, although on average the subjective sensitivity would be slightly improved most of the time. More crackle would be heard in the noise at peak modulation, which would of course affect measurement. Two signals spaced at 1 and 2MHz off-channel at around 1mV created a just audible intermodulation product on-channel, and as far as I can remember this is not as good as one of the earlier Hitachi models. The intermodulation performance at 400/800kHz is around 8dB worse, whilst for 2/4MHz spacings it is around 8dB better. This performance should be good enough for most users.

We plotted the overall frequency responses and crosstalk on both wide and narrow selectivity positions. The responses were virtually ruler flat from 20Hz to 16kHz, with an extremely rapid attenuation above 16kHz. With wide selectivity the crosstalk plot shows a superb performance to above 10kHz, with -45dB from around 60Hz to 4.5kHz. Somewhat surprisingly, the crosstalk is also extremely good



for a fairly low-level tone. A full deviation signal of 1kHz gave an excellent crosstalk result, even including all the noise and distortion components. We checked the 26dB signal/noise sensitivity, basic stereo sensitivity and limiting threshold, and these were all very good. The image response at RF was quite remarkable, requiring almost the full output of my signal generator to measure it. Our reading was -118dB, which should cut out interference from aircraft flying at 200ft over the house quite satisfactorily! AM rejection was -66dB, again one of the best figures that we have measured.

The tuner was capable of switching to stereo on a signal of around 3µV. The capture ratio measured particularly well at 1dB. In the wide position the IF selectivity was indeed extremely wide (again too wide) but the narrow position gave superb results, a 200kHz off-channel station being rejected by an average of 28dB. The alternate channel selectivity at 400kHz was very poor on the upper side, but the narrow selectivity was again excellent and about as good as I have measured.

The signal/noise ratios in mono and in stereo are phenomenally good. An antenna signal of 1mV gave a signal/noise ratio approaching 79dB, CCIR/ARM weighted, reference absolute maximum deviation, so the typical performance in practice would be around 76dB. We checked the stereo signal/noise on very weak signals and must particularly commend the 50dB CCIR/ARM ratio for stereo at 17µV, this allowing weak stereo stations to be far more acceptable than usual.

The distortion of a 1kHz signal sent on the sum channel at full deviation is remarkably low at 0.05% on the wide filter. I was somewhat surprised, however, at the good figure of 0.12% with narrow selectivity; this shows the extremely good group time delay characteristics of the IF filters, combined with superb limiting. I would have expected a much worse figure than this having examined the IF passband plots. These excellent characteristics also explain the very good crosstalk plots on narrow selectivity, which are a lesson to many other manufacturers.

Checking distortion on wide selectivity, by sending left or right only at 30%, and even 100% deviation, we were astonished to see virtually identical figures, averaging 0.05%, which had been previously noted for L=R. Figures of below 0.1% were noted even at

100% modulation with narrow selectivity, which again confirms the unusually good IF group time delay characteristics. The typical maximum audio output for full modulation at 1kHz is around 0.775V, or -2.2dBV. (This level is conventionally referred to as 0dBm, although it is not strictly correct.) The 19/38kHz filtering is excellent. Note the steep roll-off above 16kHz.

Subjective Tests

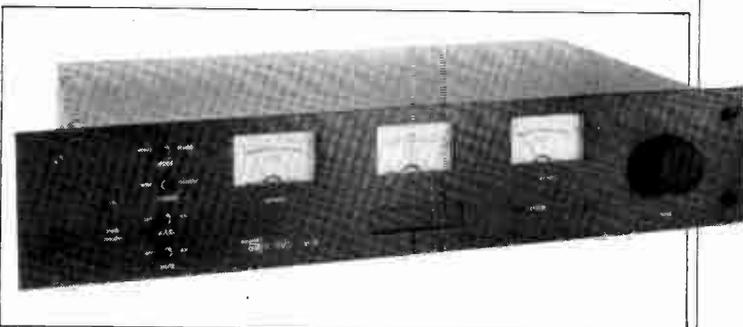
I used this tuner for all my normal listening over quite a long period, and during one session tuned around the band listening carefully for weak stations very close to strong ones. I have a fixed Fuba antenna pointing ESE to Wrotham, and it picks up a rather poor signal from Chiltern radio off the back. The Hitachi picked it up superbly well with narrow selectivity, and also captured quite a few Continental stations clearly which had been most unsatisfactory on wide. The atmospheric conditions were average. The only other tuners that I had around at the time which were as good were the latest Revox, which costs around 3½ times more, and the Trio.

I have always been keen on previous incarnations of this tuner, but this version is really excellent. Classical music on Radio 3 was so clean, and the high frequency performance was particularly fine, confirming the measurements we made in the lab. The presets were extremely easy to use, and the FCCS system worked very well, although I have to admit that I personally prefer to choose such parameters manually.

The AM quality was a little better than usual, but nowhere near what it could be. As usual, detector distortion, AGC characteristics and IF distortion are still not good enough for today's crowded bands. At least the audio response was tolerable, although rather limited. I can recommend this tuner very strongly, but would point out that it was subject to a severe supply shortage at the time of writing (late August).

Dynalab FT101

This FM tuner is made in Brampton, Ontario, Canada and has an analogue tuning system. Although it uses digital frequency readout with only 100kHz resolution, it is possible to tune continuously to any frequency. The front panel includes lever switches to select mono/stereo, IF narrow/wide, automatic frequency control on/off and mute on/off. The mains on/off switch is also a lever and the European model is nominally 220V AC, although it works perfectly satisfactorily on 240VAC. The display includes a stereo indicator and meters for signal strength, multipath indication and centre tuning. The tuning knob (rather stiff and appearing to have a slightly variable tension) provides an average of 1.5MHz per rotation. The tuner is quite large, and is fitted with a rack-mountable front panel, the main body being 420mm wide, 92mm high and 257mm deep excluding projections. Audio outputs are on phono sockets on the rear panel, which also includes a captive two-core mains lead and an infuriating



special threaded 75ohm coaxial connector for the FM antenna. A 300ohm balun is supplied with the tuner for use with balanced ribbon cable.

The editor was keen for me to review this highly-recommended model to see how it would compare with modern designs from the UK and Japan. I have to be frank and express my disappointment with several areas of its audio section. The RF front-end is actually very good, but the IF and discriminator distortion levels are not really good enough to compete with the best alternative products.

The front-end is extremely sensitive, and uses three separate MOSFETs before the mixer, with voltage-controlled tuning circuits. I suggest that there is much too much front-end gain, and the RFIM performance could have been significantly better with a complete re-think in the RF front-end design.

The tuner is referred to as analogue-digital, and many a potential purchaser might think that the use of the word digital implies modern magic. The only digital part of this tuner, however, is a very basic frequency counter which measures the local oscillator frequency and displays the equivalent RF input channel.

There is much to be said in favour of the lever switches, which I much prefer to touch-sensitive pushbuttons. You can see or feel

exactly what state a control is in, and the facilities provided are just what one normally needs in an analogue tuner.

Technical Measurements

The RF sensitivity was indeed excellent, achieving nearly $1\mu\text{V}$ sensitivity for 30dB IHF. The 26dB signal/noise sensitivity was superb at around $0.6\mu\text{V}$, but the RFIM performance was a few dB worse than that of the Hitachi. Since the sensitivity was quite a lot better, however, intermodulation products would be discernible from considerably weaker high-level signals that are off-channel. For this reason, the tuner would be far more appropriate for use in a fringe reception area where there are no really strong signals around; it would not be very suitable in the average US or Canadian city.

The reciprocal mixing performance seemed quite good, and whilst IF selectivity on 'narrow' measured very well indeed for the rejection of adjacent channel modulation, the alternate channel rejection was no more than fairly good, which is surprising. The 'wide' selectivity was about right, as a compromise, but the alignment was none too good, and although distortion was within specification, the results were not particularly good.

The signal strength meter was extremely sensitive, and weak stereo signals were displayed as stronger than they really were in practice. A $10\mu\text{V}$ signal only produced a reading of 3.5 out of a full scale 5, however. This seems a bit ridiculous, unless one accepts that the tuner is designed primarily for fringe area reception.

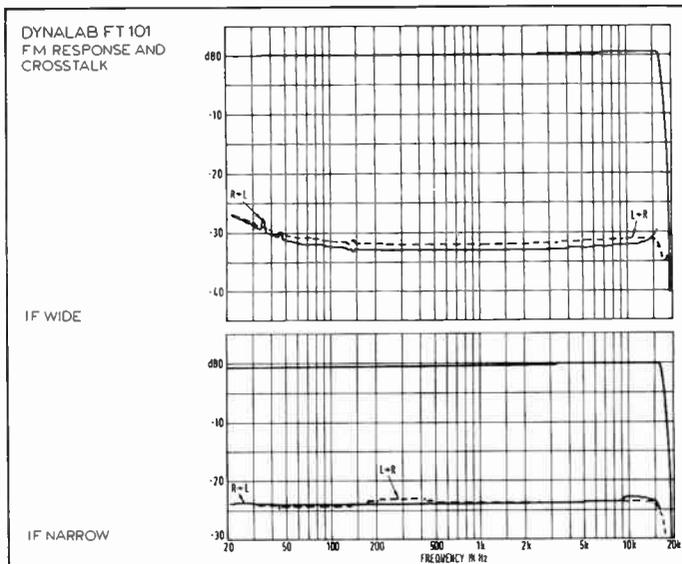
Limiting was excellent, and the capture ratio at 1.6 on 'wide' was also good. AM rejection, though, was not too good at 53dB. The tuner accepted extremely weak stereo signals, hence the lack of the normal automatic stereo/mono switching threshold. The muting threshold was set at around $1.4\mu\text{V}$ which is perhaps a little bit too sensitive. The digital readout was very accurate.

The review sample was supplied with $50\mu\text{s}$ de-emphasis for Europe, but of course the US/Canadian models are set at $75\mu\text{s}$. The frequency responses were extremely flat from 20Hz to 15kHz on both channels and on both selectivities. The pen chart shows the excellent low-pass filter action above 15kHz, with a very fine rejection of 19kHz pilot tone etc. On wide selectivity, the crosstalk can be seen to be very flat indeed from 50Hz to 15kHz, but it is not good enough on a modern tuner. On narrow selectivity the result was quite poor at -24dB and this is inadequate, especially if compared with the Hitachi or Trio.

It is in the area of signal/noise ratio that this tuner fails miserably: 65dB, CCIR/ARM weighted, ref absolute maximum deviation is nowhere near good enough. The BBC are able to transmit at least 70dB S/N, and even a tuner with a similar performance to that would show a 3dB degradation in S/N because the tuner's noise floor would add to that of the transmission. On a 1mV signal, the typical S/N of the Dynalab was only around 63dB on stereo, which is appalling; almost as poor as a metal cassette tape without any Dolby processing! However, a 50dB S/N ratio is achieved at around $27\mu\text{V}$, which is useful. It seems, therefore, that there is much too much noise introduced after the FM discriminator.

I am not at all happy with the distortion measurements. When switched to narrow selectivity, L+R distortion at full deviation was moderately acceptable, but left or right only reached 1%, which is not good enough. At lower modulation levels the THD readings were limited by the very poor background noise. Switching in the wide IF

As this is an analogue tuning model, we applied our 'tuning criticality' computerised program to show distortion, crosstalk, and audio output level as the transmitted signal varied from -300 to +300kHz ref a nominal tuned frequency. The plot taken with AFC switched off shows very clearly that the discriminator/decoder alignment is somewhat poor; the crosstalk improves dramatically at $\pm 75\text{kHz}$ from centre tuning. However, distortion is at its minimum on centre tuning $\pm 50\text{kHz}$ with wide filter. The plot of the narrow filter characteristics again shows the best crosstalk figure at well off centre tuning, but distortion in turn at its lowest on tune.



Subjective Tests

The RF sensitivity was extremely good, and we could pick up many weak Continental stations satisfactorily. I liked the ergonomics, generally, apart from the rather stiff tuning knob and the awkward antenna socket. However, there seems little point in giving a lengthy discourse about received audio quality on a tuner which has a signal/noise ratio that is poor compared with almost all its competition. I tuned in the Revox B261 and the Dynalab on separate antennas to a Radio 3 Prom, and system gains were set identically. In the quietest passages, the hiss from the Dynalab was very pronounced, compared with negligible noise from the Revox, and I was aware of the poor background noise much of the time. Continuity speech and stereo drama were even more seriously affected. For this reason I cannot recommend this model even for weakish signal strength areas, but it could be useful for extreme fringe area reception where background noise is limited by a sheer lack of RF signal strength.

Incidentally, this tuner is supplied with an extraordinary antenna contraption which vaguely resembles a coathanger or a warped three-leaf clover. The various elements pull in and out in the same way as a metal tape measure. This antenna would be fine for reducing very strong signals to allow the tuner to become a truly fringe area model in strong signal areas. This so-called 'silver ribbon' antenna is also claimed to be effective, and even best suited, for VHF (as opposed to UHF) TV reception.

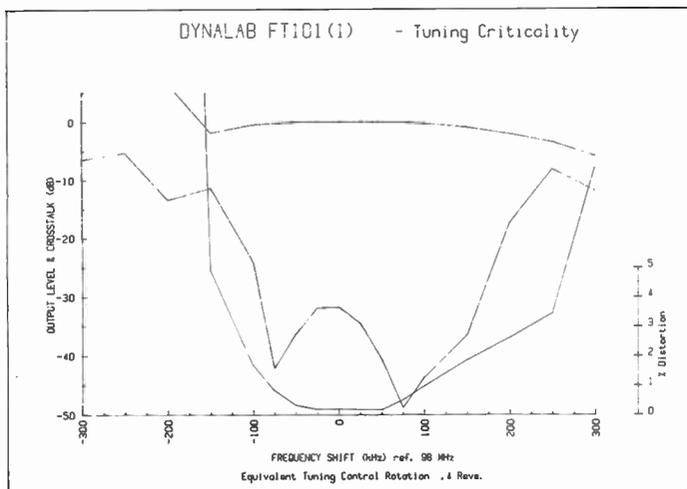
[Note: This tuner is not presently available in the UK, but we wanted to include it because of its much talked about 'audiophile' status in other reviews worldwide - Dep Ed.]

Trio KT-990-SDL

£329

Trio have introduced some very fine tuners over the years, but this new one is particularly interesting because it offers the most stunning selectivity in its 'narrow' position. Even on wide selectivity it is very good, preserving very low distortion. As usual, the unit is metal cased and finished in black. Measurements are 440mm wide by 88mm high and 300mm deep, excluding protrusions. Although it is synthesiser controlled, a tuning knob is retained, albeit with a difference. Two tuning modes are selectable, and on auto, the frequency increments or decrements by 1MHz in every 3.5s to the next receivable station. In manual mode it carries on going up or down, provided you continue turning, but the tuning speed is not affected by the rate at which you turn the knob.

There are two sets of eight memories, each being able to store FM, LW or MW channels. Other front panel controls include a programming button, A, B or off. A and B memories can each store eight stations, but there is a restriction if you want to use the remote start function program facility available on setting A, which selects the last-used frequency when first switched on. Switched off again and then on later, it then selects memory 8. This could be a quite



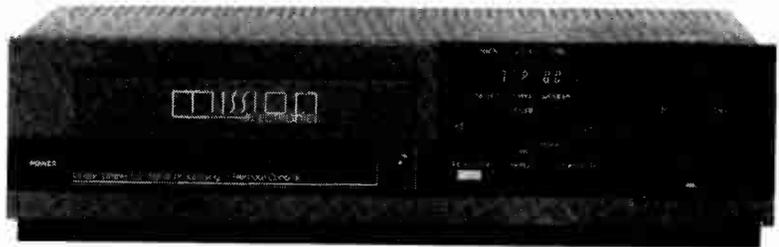
filter, distortion at full deviation of 1kHz on left, right or L+R was around 0.2%, which is fairly good but no more than that. At 30% modulation the distortion readings were limited by noise.

The tuner will give peaks on average program of around 0.6V, with full deviation reaching 0.775V. The image rejection was fairly good at -78dB, but not in the same class as the Hitachi.

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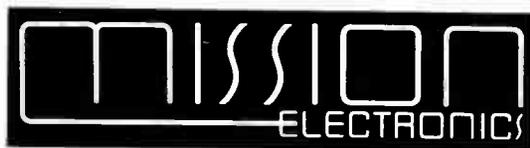
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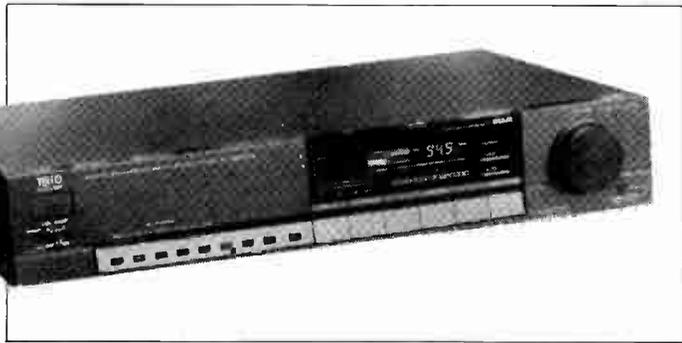
Even the least expensive speaker in the range, the modest 70 MK II, at £99.95 sets standards other manufactures fail to match at double the price.



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useful facility used with an appropriately set external timer.

Above the memory preset buttons is a horizontal slider which alters the AM pass-band from fairly muffled to extremely muffled! Trio seem to have missed an excellent opportunity here to provide IF bandwidths from 10kHz down to around 6kHz, which would have given audio responses flat to 5 or 3kHz. (Perhaps, too, someone could tell them that the European response standard is extended between 4.5 and 5kHz at HF on AM.)



A further button selects record cal. (When pressed this puts out a tone on left and right channels approximately 4.5dB below peak deviation, which in practice will be around 2dB below peak program levels.) If set to around 4dB above Dolby level on a cassette deck, this should not be too far out. (The instruction book is incorrect here, suggesting the level be set for 6dB below 0VU on the cassette deck, which would lead to severely under-recorded tapes.) The oscillator tone seems reasonably clean at around 400Hz.

Another button selects wide/narrow IF bandwidths for FM. Additional controls select LW, MW or VHF, auto/manual tuning and tuning lock. There is a digital frequency display with 50kHz resolution on FM, 9kHz on LW, these all representing the relevant frequency steps. A combined signal strength and tuning matrix indicator is fitted, which is most useful. This is arranged in nine vertical columns, each with seven fluorescent points. As you tune in to a station, the vertical bar comes in from one side or the other; when it is central you are correctly tuned. The vertical height is an indication of signal strength, and signals above 1mV light up all seven indicators, 100µV lighting up six, 10µV lighting up three and a signal around the 30dB IHF sensitivity lighting up one. This performance is very good within its limits, and the display is most helpful. A horizontal bargraph indicates program levels using 12 segments. This is calibrated in percent with 50, 100 and even 200% modulation depths marked. Other indicators include stereo and basic status functions. When you switch the tuner on, a sign comes up saying 'distance'; I presume that on another version there might have been a sign for 'local', with provision for an antenna attenuator, which is omitted from this model. The back panel carries phono sockets for the audio outputs, two terminals for interconnecting a flex-fed frame antenna for AM (there is a pivot socket for this, allowing horizontal movement only), and a male Belling Lee type coax socket for 75ohm FM antenna connection. The two-core mains lead is captive.

No circuit diagram is supplied, so it was not possible to ascertain details about what must be quite fascinating circuitry. This is a pity, because I feel that Trio should be sharing their technical know-how much more with technical enthusiasts. In the past they have introduced many circuit innovations.

Technical Tests

Although the RF sensitivity is only reasonably good, at 1.6µV for 30dB IHF, the RFIM performance is outstanding, showing a very well optimised RF preamp and mixer design. This tuner should be virtually 'indestructible' under normal conditions, and the RFIM performance is several dB better than that of the Hitachi 5500. The IF selectivity is stunning on narrow, but of course distortion is sacrificed when left- or right-only tests are carried out.

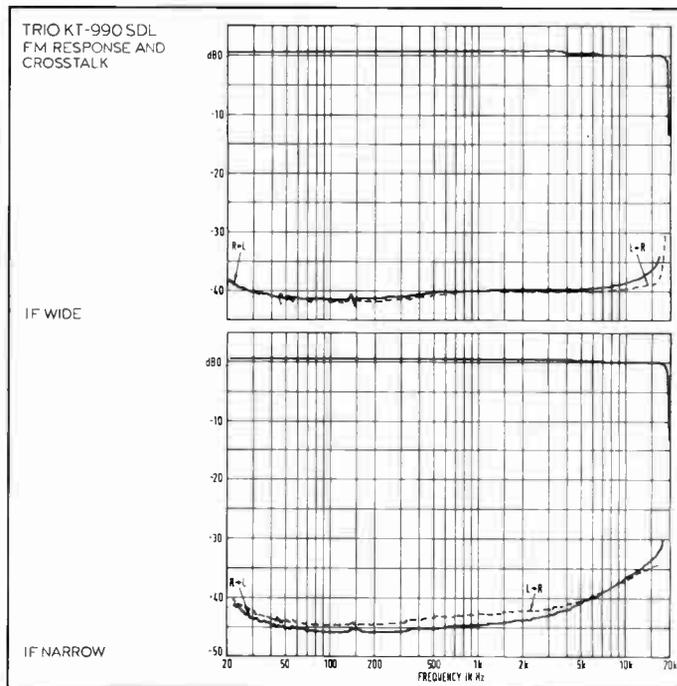
The alternate channel selectivities are both excellent. The wide filter has a very reasonable selectivity for 200kHz offset, approaching that of the Revox, yet this is achieved with a surprising freedom from distortion in all modes. Limiting characteristics are excellent, but the image response is unfortunately only fair. AM rejection is excellent, showing that the discriminator itself must be somewhat unusual. The stereo and muting thresholds are at around 2.5µV, which is just slightly more sensitive than optimum, in my opinion. The capture ratio was no more than fairly good, and was just below specification, although it should prove reasonably adequate provided the weaker station is appreciably weaker than the required one on the same channel.

The frequency responses on left and right channels were very flat from 20Hz to around 17kHz, but it seems once again that pilot tone rejection is done with an automatic cancellation circuit rather than

the strongly advisable low-pass filter. When we checked for various breakthroughs above the audio range, there were quite a few pimples at around 38kHz, although these were admittedly at fairly low levels. There could be a problem with radio-data breakthrough.

Crosstalk on the first sample tested was around -27dB, even with wide IF selected, so I requested a second sample which was far better. The average figure on wide was now around -40dB, with narrow, somewhat surprisingly, at around -45dB, deteriorating above 5kHz to -37dB at 15kHz, which is still a good figure.

Distortion tests on the sum channel, with the wide filter, showed



that the tuner was virtually testing my own test equipment: the figure of 0.03% for 1kHz at full deviation is truly remarkable. When left- or right-only was transmitted, the distortion was still only around 0.065%, even at full deviation. At lower deviations distortions were all incredibly low. When we switched to the narrow IF filter, the sum channel distortion at 1kHz for full deviation was still down around 0.07%, but when left- or right-only were transmitted at full deviation, it collapsed to 1%, which is still tolerable in the context of an otherwise almost unreceivable station. Once again, distortion reduced rapidly at lower deviation levels in all modes.

The stereo weighted signal/noise ratio measured extremely well at around 75dB, certainly good enough for use in the UK. The signal required to give 50dB S/N in stereo was around 30µV. The output levels unfortunately showed an imbalance of 0.5dB, which is a little careless in quality control. The maximum level normally put out on program is around 0.5V, which is just a little low, though not seriously so. The tuning criticality test showed exactly what we would have expected, with no problems noted.

Subjective Tests

This tuner performed extremely well in all the listening tests, although it was not quite as sensitive as I would have liked for use in fringe areas. However, in my own area, in which there are many very strong signals on the band, the reception of weak Continentals was first class, with almost no interference noted other than that which I would attribute to signal strength fading. At its best, with wide selectivity on the best BBC broadcasts, the sound quality was superb. The reproduced dynamic range was no different to that of the Revox, and was not audibly inferior to that of the Hitachi in practice, so in this area it is certainly good enough.

Throughout the time I used this set I did not notice any breakthrough problems attributable to transmitted subcarrier information, so it may well give sufficient rejection, in practice, in all circumstances. The AM sound quality was fairly acceptable on average stations, and sensitivity with a Heloop antenna was quite good on LW and MW, provided this was placed in an optimum pick-up position. Bass distortion on very local AM stations, though, was chronically bad, but it should be just acceptable if you are at least 25 miles away from a powerful transmitter.

At a typical price of around £325 this is a quite expensive tuner, but one should note that many previous top-end models cost over twice this amount, and their performances are not appreciably better, apart from in RF sensitivity. This model's distortion levels are significantly better at high deviations than those of the Revox, but the latter is still

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my personal favourite, despite its extremely high price.

I am slightly disturbed that the first sample tested had a poor crosstalk performance, so there may be some sample variations. I can safely recommend purchase, however, since the user would be able to tell if there was a crosstalk problem if he tried monitoring the BBC test tone transmissions late at night. (Schedule available from the BBC's Engineering Information Department.) The BBC transmit perhaps -40dB crosstalk, or even better, so if you listen first on the modulated channel and then on the theoretically quiet one, you should hear only a very slight signal.

I quite liked the ergonomics of this tuner, preferring the slightly strange tuning knob system to up and down buttons. Indeed, users who are familiar with a conventional tuning knob may well also prefer Trio's system. It is a fascinating tuner, but I wish I could have known more about its technical background.

Rotel RT-850L

£150

Another metal encased tuner with a black finish! It has synthesiser controlled tuning on FM, LW and MW. Although there are only eight memory buttons, each memory can store both an FM and an AM frequency, AM combining the LW and MW ranges. Putting a frequency into memory is very simple: press the memory button followed by the required channel. On FM, the tuner operates in the usual 50kHz steps with up and down buttons. On AM, the medium-wave increments are set at 9kHz, but on long-wave 1kHz is used, which is unfortunately necessary at the moment whilst new frequencies are being sorted out in Europe. This makes LW tuning incredibly laborious, but at least you can use presets for those stations that you require regularly.

Two basic tuning modes are available when using the up and down tuning buttons. When the selector is set to auto, and one of the tuning buttons is pressed, the receiver finds the next fairly strong signal, stops on it and then unmutes (if muting is switched on). If muting is off, you can hear it chugging across the band, but still reasonably muted while scanning. It was not possible to find Chiltern radio on 97.6MHz in auto mode as it was too weak for the automatic tuning sensor. This is not a bad thing, for it will enable the next



station giving a reasonable signal to be found fairly quickly. In the manual mode, the buttons either change channel in 50kHz steps, or, if held down, increment at around 3s per MHz. Each time the button is depressed, the tuner takes around 0.5s to change channel and then unmutate, which is somewhat tiresome.

Other facilities include access buttons for LW, MW and FM, AW wide/narrow (this seems to switch in bass and treble cut on AM rather than altering selectivity), muting on/off (unfortunately switches to mono when muting is off), and auto-manual tuning. The frequency display also incorporates five LEDs to indicate signal strength, 1mV and above lighting up all five, 100µV lighting up three, and 10µV lighting up just one. This seems fairly sensible for a simple indicator. There are also stereo indicator and memory LEDs.

A captive two-core mains lead is fitted and the back panel also includes phono sockets for left and right outputs, a male Belling Lee type coaxial socket for a 75ohm downlead, and terminals for interconnecting an oblong loop-type antenna for AM reception which is provided with a rather short flex. There is a retaining clip on the back panel for the loop but this only provides horizontal movement.

Technical Tests

The input RF sensitivity measured 1.4µV for 30dB IHF, but this improved when we offset the signal generator by 20kHz, becoming 1.2µV. The limiting threshold was at a very low level, which is excellent. The 26dB signal/noise point was also at a very low level, showing that the 30dB IHF measurement was mainly distortion. The RFIM performance was none too good, though, and on average it was about 10dB worse than that of the Hitachi. Thus, strong local signals could create intermodulation products at various points which might cause interference to wanted weak stations.

Adjacent channel selectivity was very poor, showing hardly any rejection of stations 200kHz off-channel, and alternate channel

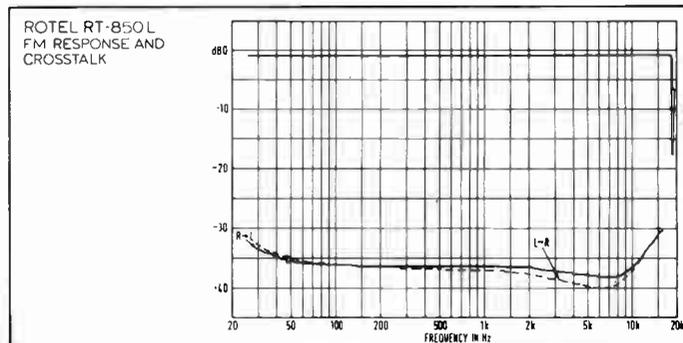
selectivity at 400kHz was only good on one side. Image rejection was acceptable at 83dB, but was again beaten hollow by the Hitachi. AM rejection was very poor at -44dB, so be aware of ignition problems or thermostat interference on weaker signals.

The muting and stereo switching thresholds were at the same point, opening up at just above 5µV, which is quite sensible. The capture ratio was no more than fairly good at 2.2dB, and I would have expected rather better, considering the wide IF bandwidth.

The frequency responses on left and right channels were extremely flat from 20Hz to at least 17kHz, and the response charts show the use of an automatic pilot tone rejection circuit, for the response comes up again at 20kHz. As I've said, in my experience such circuits tend to produce supersonic subcarrier breakthrough problems, including radio-data interference. I cannot understand how the message about steep low-pass filters for Europe has failed to reach Rotel's design team. The crosstalk charts show an acceptable performance, averaging at -34dB across the board, but once again I would have expected better.

The signal/noise ratio in stereo is quite reasonable at just over 70dB ref full modulation, but is easily bettered by the Hitachi and Trio models. One might notice just a few dB more noise than is possible on the best broadcasts, although this result is very many dB better than that of the Dynalab. 50dB S/N is reached in stereo for an input signal of around 27µV. The sum channel distortion at 1kHz for full deviation was 0.11%, which is good. When the modulation is transmitted on left- or right-only, however, it deteriorates to around 0.32%, which is a little disappointing. At lower modulation levels distortion is no problem at all.

Typically the tuner will give peak output levels of around 0.5V on full modulation, and this is around 4dB lower than I like to see, although probably satisfactory for most purposes.

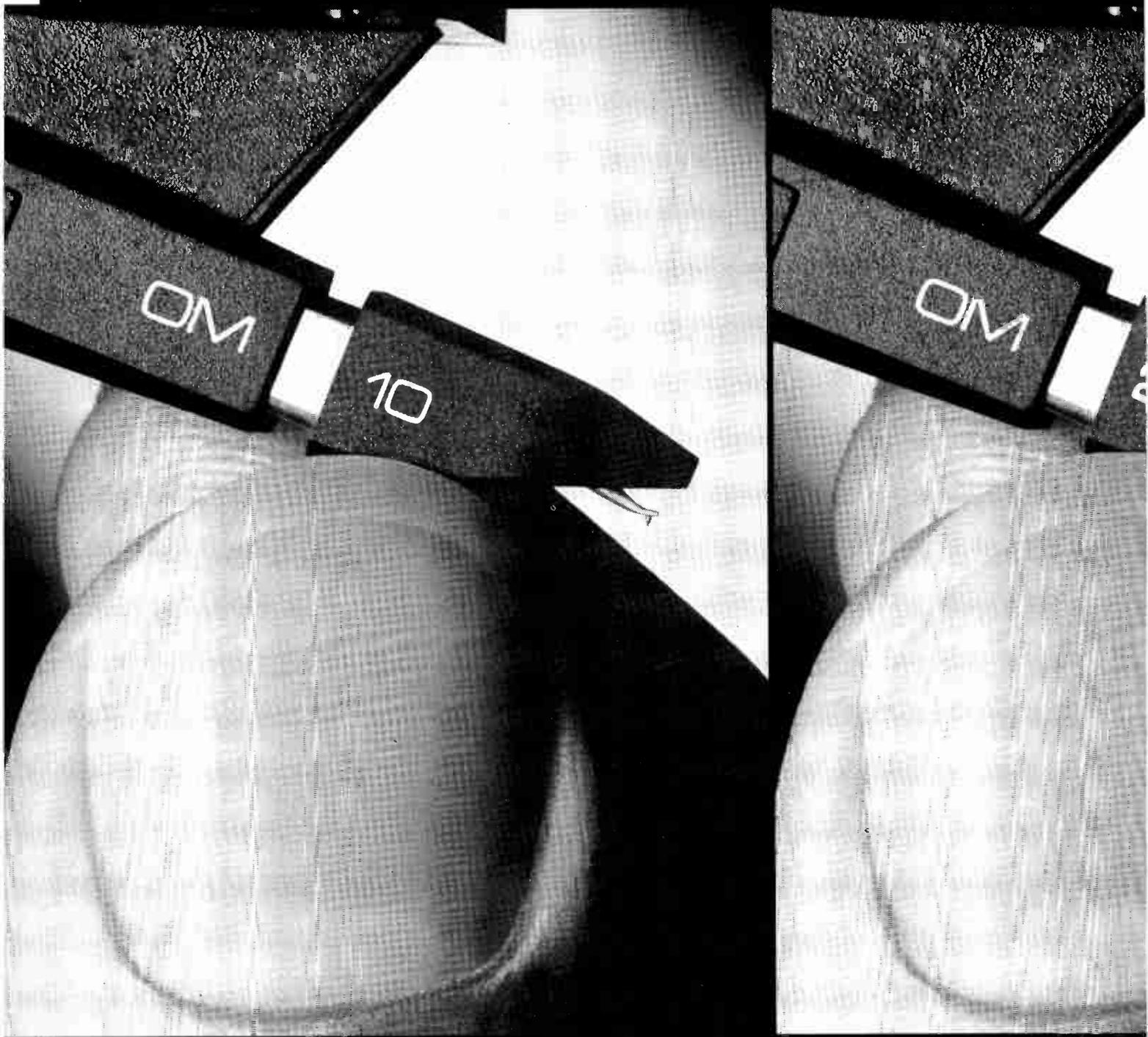


Subjective Tests

This unit was sensitive enough, but it did not pull in weak stations at all well if they were only fairly close in frequency to stronger ones. Its price, typically at around £150 inc VAT, is reasonable enough, but I don't think it offers a sufficiently good performance to be rated good value for money. It is certainly better than quite a few tuners on the market, but is not in the same league as the Hitachi and Trio. ↯

MODEL	HITACHI FT 5500/H	DYNALAB FT101	ROTEL RT-850L	TRIO KT-990SDL
Mono RF sensitivity IHF (µV)	1.3	1.0	1.4	1.6
Mono RF sensitivity for 26dB S/N (µV)	1.1	0.6	0.65	0.9
Average RF intercept point (dBm)	+8	+1	-6	+13
RFIM ratio for 30dB IHF product (dB)	75	72	66	79
Adjacent channel selectivity Wide IF (dB)	4	13	4	21
Adjacent channel selectivity Narrow IF (dB)	28	35	-	43
Alternate channel selectivity Wide IF Low/High (dB)	53/38	57/57	75/47	78/79
Alternate channel selectivity Narrow IF Low/High (dB)	77/79	56/60	-	80/80
Image rejection ratio (ref 26dB S/N) (dB)	118	78	83	77
Capture ratio (wide)	1	1.6	2.2	3.2
AM rejection (30% mod) (dB)	<67	<53	-44	<73
Muting threshold (µV)	3	1.3	5.5	2.2
RF level for 50dB S/N (CCIR/ARM weighted) (µV)	17	27	27	30
1kHz distortion R=L 100% wide IF (%)	0.05	0.22	0.11	0.03
1kHz distortion R=L 100% narrow IF (%)	0.12	0.25	-	0.07
1kHz distortion single channel Av wide IF (%)	0.05	0.21	0.32	0.06
1kHz distortion single channel Av narrow IF (%)	0.1	1.0	-	1.0
Stereo S/N CCIR/ARM weighted ref 75kHz deviation (dB)	76	63	70	75
Max output level 75kHz deviation (V)	0.77	0.77	0.6	0.55

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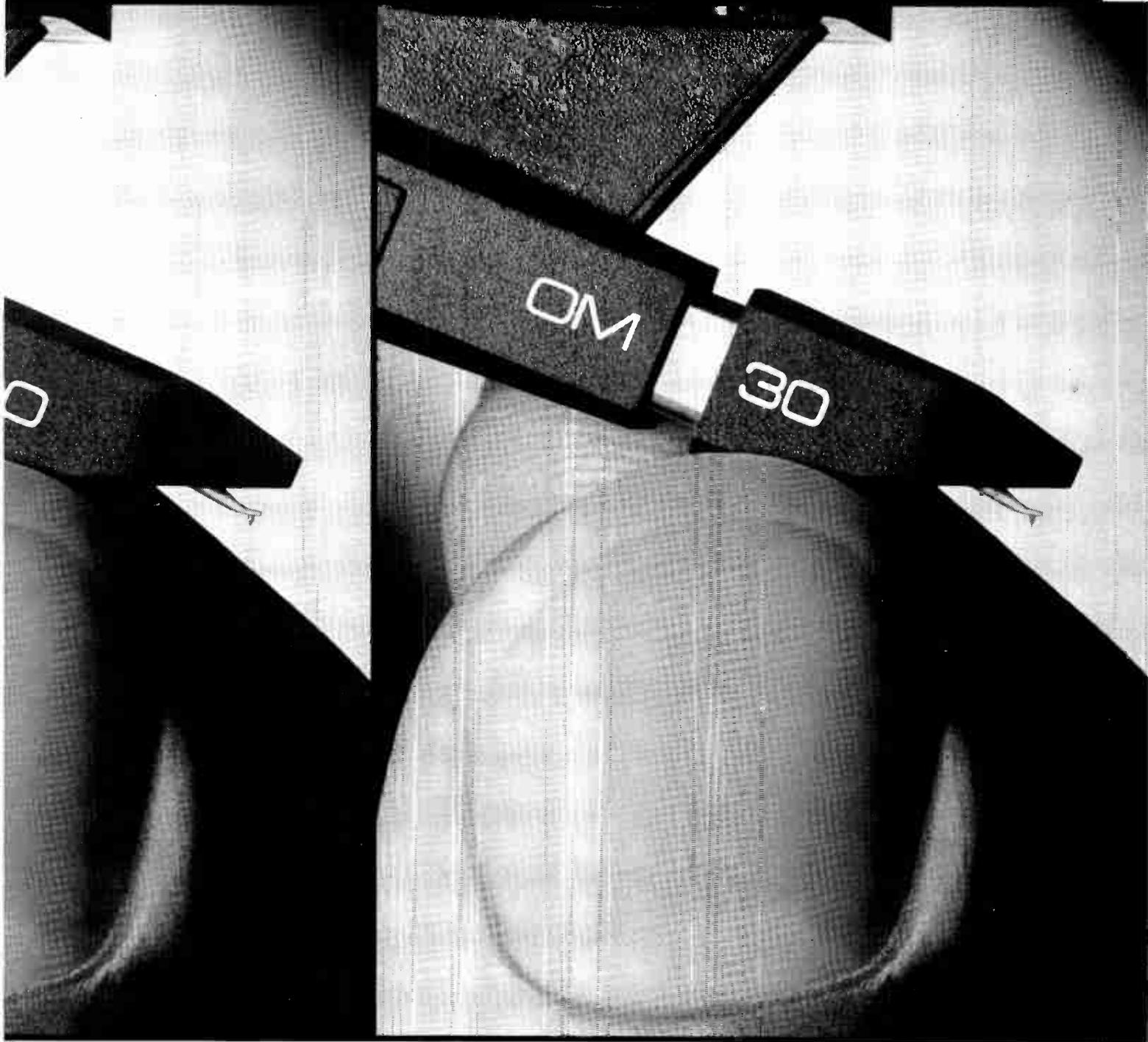
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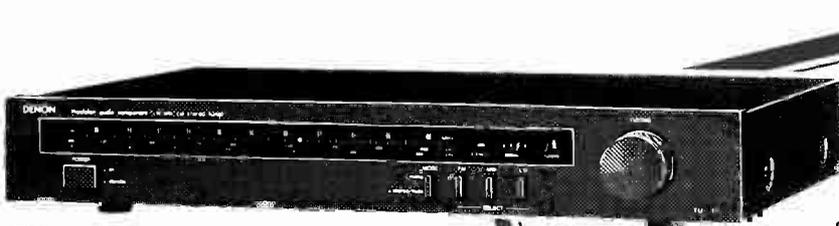
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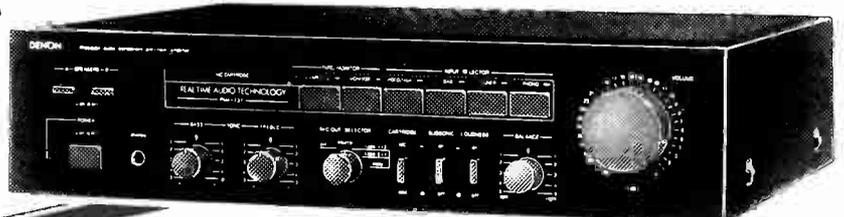
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POTPOURRI

Ken Kessler lives with Sansui's DS-77 surround-sound processor
and continues his Merril AR modifications

THE VARIOUS SURROUND-SOUND DEVICES POURING out of Japan are not mere trifles placed on the shelves to revitalise flagging hi-fi sales. Journalists such as Alvin Gold and Barry Fox have been discussing video surround-sound in other publications with the same respect afforded more conventional products, so try to dismiss any feelings you may have of 'Oh, no, here we go again'. JA, just back from the Tokyo Show (see Report p49), cited rear-channel processors as some of the most highly visible products on display, and I've yet to detect any signs of the compatibility muddles which helped to seal the coffin on Quadraphonics.

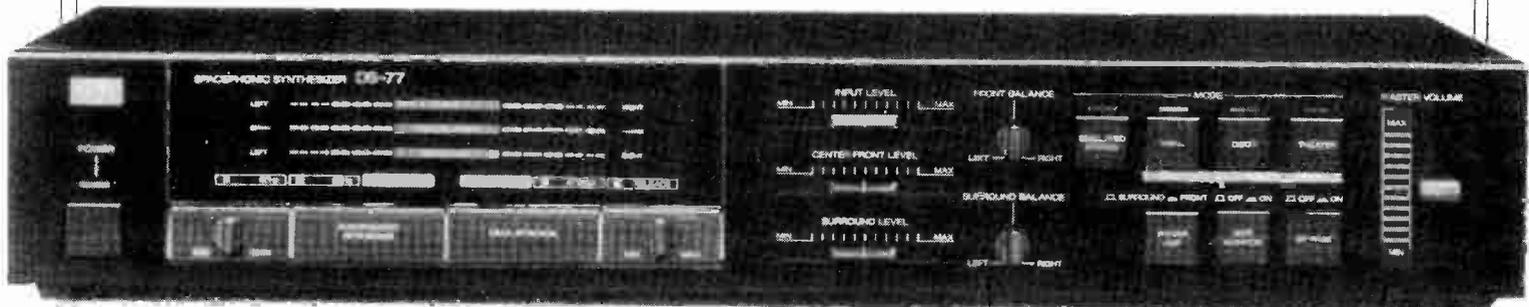
What has emerged, though, is concern about the treatment of the Dolby decoding aspects of said devices, with only Marantz (or the makes available so far in the UK) bothering to go all the way by making it official (see 'Technology' p31). Yamaha's offering doesn't even address the difference between normal stereo and Dolby Stereo, excusing itself from that fracas by treating all two-channel material in the same manner, but Sansui's decoder seems to be slipping around the issue with deft use of alternative circuitry. (See *HFN/RR* December 1985 for a discussion of the Marantz and Yamaha units.)

Briefly, the necessary ingredients for decoding the ambient material in Dolby Stereo recordings are (1) a L+R front centre channel, to reinforce the middle image and pull in conversations

adequate for most living rooms; the user can fine-tune this by deft aiming of the rear speakers. As for the logic steering, it would appear that most families would be clustered in some TV-equivalent of a hi-fi 'hot seat'; all of the domestic decoders offer some type of balance control should one viewer be stuck on the ottoman near the left front speaker.

The rest of the formula has been dealt with in a similar manner, with Sansui countering Dolby's own noise reduction for the rear channel with the aforementioned compander to reduce the spurious-low-level signals which could cause confusion. It offers a front centre mono signal as required with Dolby Stereo. Its rear channel information is a mono L-R difference signal. For all intents and purposes, it's a near clone of the official system.

Which brings us to an upsetting point, ethical rather than technical. As you'll soon read, I found the Sansui to be a near-perfect processor; as I'm reviewing the product on performance only, maybe that should be enough. However, it's been pointed out to me by Industry Watcher Barry Fox that the failure of manufacturers to label their processors with the Dolby Stereo logo, not paying whatever trivial royalty this might incur, could lead to exactly the kind of confusion which killed quadraphony. Confuse the lay consumer, and the odds are he'll buy nothing rather than make the (unnecessary) effort to find out what's what. It's sad that this is happening, because these products are worthwhile additions to



from an otherwise discrete left/right positioning, (2) matrix decoding of the rear channel to provide out-of-phase mono information (a modification of the matrix from which Sansui's QS was derived, with directionality enhanced by the Tate chips for pro installations), (3) delay to the rear channel, which retains front-centre emphasis for dialogue, and (4) noise reduction of the encoded material to fight the hiss. While this tightly specified arrangement seems impossible to skirt, Sansui have closely approximated it because they have installed Variomatrix QS, a bucket-brigade delay system, and their own form of compander to deal with the hiss levels. A true mono centre channel is available via a phono socket on the rear panel, with adjustable level control.

As Sansui don't label their unit for Dolby, it's up to the user to decipher the instruction manual, determining that the 'Cinema Surround' setting, with its centre channel, is the one which best approximates Dolby. Where the Marantz is quite openly designed for Dolby, even going so far as to adhere to Dolby's speaker layout of three across the front and only one speaker at the rear, the Sansui opts, if tacitly, for a pair of speakers at the back. My own findings with the 'proper' Dolby of the Marantz were in favour of two speakers at the back, and both demonstrations of the Marantz which I've attended used this layout, so purists opting for the 'diamond' pattern seem slightly masochistic.

Sansui's approximation of the Dolby set-up, including the use of two speakers at the back, is feasible because of the differences, which even Dolby recognise, between cinema and domestic use of the method*. While the professional application uses logic steering via the Tate chip to account for large audiences with segments bound to be seated near a specific speaker, and uses 30ms to 100ms delay to deal with the vast size of a cinema, the domestic versions need neither. Marantz has seen fit to offer the domestic user a 15ms to 30ms delay (as suggested by Dolby Laboratories), variable depending upon the room, while Sansui fixes its own delay at 20ms,

video and hi-fi systems, and we all know that the industry needs whatever interest-revitalisers it can muster. We'll have to see if the public has had enough of this absurd behaviour.

Sansui offer a pair of surround-sound processors, the DS-77 reviewed here and the AV-C10, a less sophisticated unit, but one which also contains a five-band graphic equaliser and minor VCR switching facilities. The DS-77, on the other hand, is like the Yamaha and the Marantz - strictly a processor, and far more comprehensive in this area than the AV-C10 alternative. The Sansui, like the two units I tried last month, contains a built-in amplifier (10W/channel RMS) for powering the rear speakers, circuitry to derive pseudo stereo from mono sources, and three types of surround processing in comparison with the two options from Marantz and the single type in the Yamaha. This unit has a bass boost circuit like the Yamaha's, adding level adjust which the Yamaha lacks, as well as a setting called 'Peak Attacker', a level-adjustable expander designed to restore peaks which may have been squashed during the recording process.

The three Sansui settings for deriving surround-sound from stereo sources are labelled 'Cinema Surround' (for Dolby Stereo sources requiring a centre from L+R channel), 'QS Surround' (for non-Dolby Stereo tracks, producing a L-0.5R/R-0.5L pair of signals at the back), and 'Stereo Hall' (for audio-only material or concert-type videos, providing a delayed signal at the rear of 20ms via a bucket brigade delay). The delay is also used in the 'Cinema Surround' mode, taking the matrix-derived L-R differential signal and delaying it by 20ms for the rear channels; a linear compander is also in use here. (The pseudo-stereo-from-mono is derived by the BBD as well, Sansui eschewing the use of a simple phase shifter.)

Not wishing to dismiss the non-surround aspects of the Sansui - the bass booster and 'Peak Attacker' worked just as described - I'd like to concentrate on the ambience capabilities. Using a superb film (in terms of sound and content), *The Right Stuff*, I put the Sansui

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through its paces using Sony TV, Marantz PM4 amplifier, and Sony Beta Hi-Fi VCR, through LS3/5As (front) and Radford Tristar 90s (rear). This film is a classic example of all that is wonderful about Dolby Stereo in the cinema, and there's enough magnificent music to reveal more than a device's capabilities with mere sound effects.

True Dolby Stereo replay *needs* a centre channel to take care of mono central images like conversation even in smaller-than-the-Odeon locations; the Sansui provides a centre mono output which can be used via the in-built television speakers or through a separate amp and speaker. I use the TV – as I did with the others – and the results were as good as I've ever heard. Lateral spread was as wide as from LP-derived sources, though injudicious use of the centre channel will turn the whole thing into 'wide mono'. Preferred level for the centre channel was slightly lower than that of the main speakers. Specificity was top-notch, especially the sounds of switches from the control panels in the astronauts' capsules, hospital sounds during their pre-flight examinations, and cameras clicking when members of the press were hounding the main characters. But the rear channel – you *must* 'hear' this film! One nice thing about the Sansui is that its level meters give you a visual indication of the amounts of signal being sent to each speaker. When the rear channels do kick in, you can set the output levels accurately because the meters show *input* level. If the surround-sound bargraphs read higher than the front channels' graph, then the rear speakers *should* dominate the front. And with a film like this saga of America's space programme, you'd be surprised how often the noises should come from the rear. Scenes on windswept plains surrounding the testing sites, echoes in the giant hangars, the 'sound' of the arena where the astronauts were fêted, the sound of passing Mach 1 – the Sansui fed the right stuff to the correct speakers.

And it was just as 'right' with the surround-sound derived from straight two-channel material. But instead of mirroring remarks made last month, I'd rather give you a table listing which machine or machines works/work best for each type of operation; you'll see why the Sansui is now my favourite – despite its higher price tag of £179: (In order of preference within each category)
Dolby Stereo decoding: Marantz, Sansui

Surround from non-Dolby Stereo: Sansui, Marantz
Pseudo stereo from mono: Sansui, Yamaha
Ease of use: Yamaha
Fine-tuning capability: Marantz, Sansui
In-built amp quality: Yamaha
Construction quality: Sansui, Yamaha
Versatility: Sansui
Value for money: Marantz
Peace of mind: Sansui

The last category is wholly subjective, but I created it for the simple reason that I found myself setting the Sansui *once*, and enjoying the performance, rather than jumping up all the time to fine-tune. The array of level and balance adjusters, actually outnumbering the Marantz', means that you can get it adjusted just so (with the aid of its meters), and the options – both the more numerous circuit choices and the Yamaha-like array of installation alternatives – make the Sansui so good an all-rounder that its one demerit, no adjustable delay circuit, isn't too sorely missed. Luckily for the Yamaha and the Marantz, this unit costs proportionately *møre*, so each will probably find its own niche.

The quest continues, though, for I do want that adjustable delay for the sake of completeness . . . ↵

Manufacturer's specifications: Sansui DS-77

Amplifier stage	
Output	10W/Channel RMS, 8ohms
THD	0.09%
Frequency range	20Hz-20kHz
Rec. impedance	8-16ohms
Processor stage	
Delay time	20ms ('Cinema Surround', 'Stereo Hall')
Output level/impedance	1V/2.2k-ohms (5V max) front, centre and rear
Input level and impedance	150mV/47k-ohms (audio input)
S/N ratio	90dB front channel 70dB centre channel 75dB surround channel
Frequency responses	20-100kHz±3dB (front) 20-70kHz±3dB (centre) 20-10kHz±3dB (rear)
Dimensions	430 x 75 x 250mm (WHD)

Merrill AR turntable modification

FURTHER TO MY ARTICLE IN THE JUNE 1985 ISSUE, regarding the Merrill replacement subchassis for AR turntables, I've since taken delivery of both the subchassis for modifying the current AR and Merrill's high-grade replacement spindle. Readers will recall that modifying the old ARs (XA and XB) to take the acrylic substitute involved tricky surgery, cutting out an L-shaped opening in the top-plate to make room for the armboard, which is integral with the Merrill unit; upgrading the current version is another – simpler – story.

Merrill – who refer to the 1980s incarnation as the AR XE – have taken the same acrylic subchassis and re-formed the integral armboard to fit the U-shaped opening in the current ARs. As with the model for the XA and XB, the Merrill can be ordered pre-drilled for the arm of your choice; mine was ordered with Linn-type mounting facilities to take the Mission 774LC. The shape of the armboard is the only difference, the rest of the replacement part consisting of the same black chassis, flat braided earth cable, and Merrill's oil-well type bearing housing the ball-bearing, said to be capable of handling hundreds of pounds of weight. The kit comes with full instructions, Merrill's new (black) oil, and three bolts to replace the ones which hold the springs.

Installation is an absolute breeze; I was particularly lucky in that my own set-up didn't require the use of the Merrill-supplied bolts. The total work involved removal of the baseboard, removal of the springs and retaining nuts, and removal of the subchassis. The only tough part is separating the (glued-in) standard bolts for the slightly longer replacements, which I found necessary only if the standard springs are used and the subchassis/arm combination is lighter than the weight needed to compress the springs to the level where the armboard is flush with the top plate. I assembled the package with the Mission arm, gave it a rough set-up using an LP and my preferred record clamp to provide the dynamic operating conditions, and was pleased to find that the combination was *perfect* – armboard flush, belt riding in the middle of the pulley – with space to spare on the standard bolts for fine-tuning. As removing the standard bolts is such a hassle, I'd suggest that Merrill-modders do a dry run with the standard bolts before attempting their removal for the longer substitutes; you'll probably find it unnecessary to fit the replacement.

Total time elapsed, for removal of the old bits and fitting the new, was 20 minutes. I first tried it with the old inner platter with standard spindle and detected an amount of play similar to that of the unmodified unit. The sound with only the subchassis replaced was

slightly drier than before, the improvements being virtually identical to those found when modifying an XA/XB. Bass was much tighter, and image specificity improved, as did isolation. But the real wallop came when I replaced the standard inner platter with one sporting Merrill's replacement spindle.

Merrill take the old inner platter and fit a spindle made from ultra high grade stainless steel, machined to tougher tolerances than the factory-supplied steel original. While the original will work with the Merrill subchassis, it will not withstand the extra weight of Merrill's lead-coated platter or a record weight/clamp. As for the better fit, the standard inner platter would slip down into the housing with no effort; the Merrill alternative took about an hour to settle. I couldn't detect *any* free play, and the sonic improvement confirmed the sense of superiority the new combination promised.

The gains made by installing the new spindle/thrust bearing are actually greater than going from the old subchassis to the new. (Note: The new spindle assembly should not be used in the standard subplatter/bearing housing.) While the new subchassis offered a general tidying of the sound, the new spindle added more detail and a drastic lowering of background noise levels – grain, hash, call it what you will. If you think of a Linn or similar as being a 9.5 on a scale of 10, and the standard AR as a 5, the subchassis takes the AR up to 6.5 and the spindle takes it up to 8.5. Totally arbitrary, I know, but then quantifying differences which are subject to the laws of diminishing returns is a dangerous, vague business. I suppose the best way to describe the transformation (subchassis and new spindle) is the addition of stability to the whole AR experience. While the standard model is musical and pleasurable and beautifully styled, especially at its price, it does lack the sonic tidiness that one pays for when looking at the high end. The modified XE, however, truly earns the accolade of 'entry level audiophilia'.

As the Merrill subchassis sells for \$95 and the spindle \$25, a rough estimate of the total cost (including pre-drilling the armboard, shipping, and the various other tariffs) would be about £150-£160. Considering that an AR XE-less-arm-plus-the mods is still below Linn/Pink prices, I'd have to call it an absolute bargain; the difference made is that good. And when you also consider that the XEs are plentiful and have been around long enough for second-hand units to be available*, a wise shopper could put the whole thing together for under £250. As the installation procedure is painless to boot, I've just got to congratulate Merrill on another job well done. (For details, write to Underground Sound, 2125 Central Ave, Memphis, Tennessee 38104, USA. Enclose a few IRCs, too.) ↵

*The XE has recently been updated and renamed The Legend. This latest version has the new bearing assembly found in the AR EB101, and may not require the Merrill updates. I'll be looking at the Legend soon and will report on its performance *vis à vis* the Merrill.

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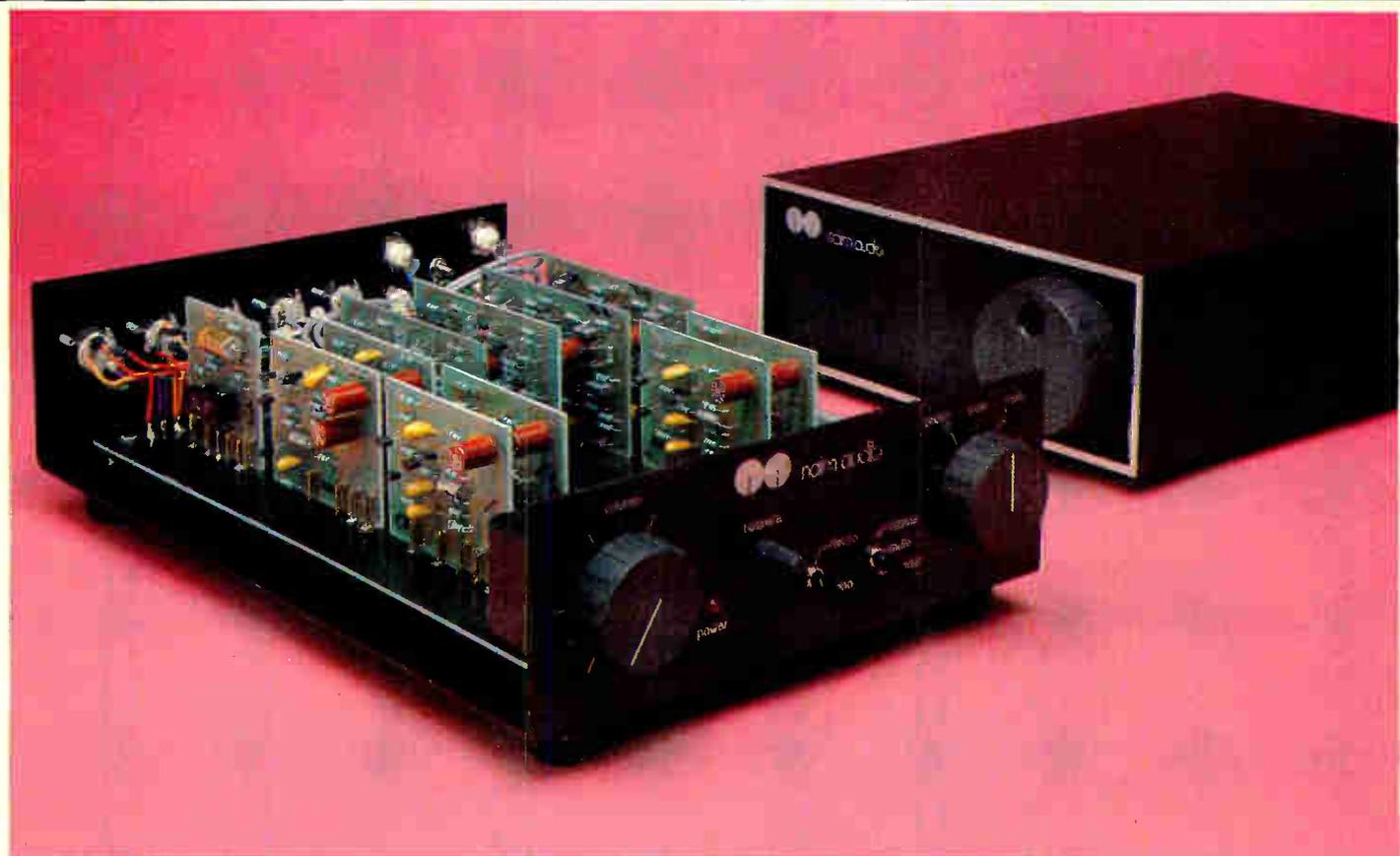
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WHAT'S IN A NAIM?

Christopher Breunig listens to their 32.5 preamplifier



I FULLY INTENDED TO START BY SAYING HOW *ARRIÈRE-garde* it was to have a Naim nowadays since now that 'hi-fi Paul' has made his own quantum leap, I think I'm the only *HFN/RR* reviewer, apart from Peter ('the divine Emma') Turner, still using Naim amplification. But experience with a product determines the tenor of a review, so my pre-rehearsed joke about Ken Kessler not even considering Salisbury solid-state as a flux-dumper will have to go too. For I cannot long conceal some disappointment with the 32.5, though admittedly I was predisposed to liking it.

The 32.5 is the full-facilities preamplifier redesign, superseding the 32 (as 42.5 does 42). It uses the until-recently dormant 5-pin socket outlet on the HICAP power unit, which via a 5-core SNAIC cable allows a separate 24V regulated supply to feed the first stages. (The back of the 32.5 still retains one four-pin socket, and although this would compromise performance, it can be energised by a SNAPS, with an additional linking plug.) I had not looked inside a Naim unit for some years: with its entirely new mother board, arranged to give star earthing, the 32.5 looks very 'hi-tech', especially with a sophisticated mechanical linkage from input selector to a row of alternative switch connections at the rear of the board. There are nine daughter cards, with a new CD option: either the moving-coil or moving-magnet cartridge boards can be replaced by a pair of simple CD boards, to give better results than the alternative line inputs. Naim have, of course, replaced phono sockets with high quality BNC connectors (PU1 and 2 only) – one wonders how many users will compromise with adaptors, rather than fitting the requisite locking connectors to tonearm cable and Compact Disc player leads.

With its substantial 2mm chassis pressing, and 4mm aluminium sleeve casing (216 x 76 x 300mm overall), the £368 32.5 offers volume control, a rather spindly balance adjustment, tape monitor and stereo/mono switching, with a choice of tuner, two tape machines, and two turntable inputs; the front panel has an indicator LED, and there is a muting facility. The £327.75 HICAP power supply (electrically sited between pre and power amp) can feed one or more power amplifiers, eg, the excellent 135 mono-blocks. The single-ended HL-CAP features a huge Holden & Fisher toroidal transformer, identical to that used in the NAP160 power amplifier and selected

low-noise LM317 type regulators. The 5-core SNAIC comes with all new units. Existing owners may have their preamplifiers upgraded at the factory: costs are £112.70 (32), £74.75 (42), with price concessions for recent purchasers. CD boards are only £8.40/pair. All prices include VAT.

Naim Audio strongly advise against the use of other makers' preamps with their power amplifiers, but not *vice versa*. Regular readers will know that I have transgressed in this respect, advocating the original Musical Fidelity preamp (The Preamp), and now enjoy a love-dislike relationship with a Denis Morecroft DNM/2a with twin mains supplies; my contention is that monocrystal cables give a more focused and spacious soundstage, with no 'negative' qualities. (Again, Naim disagree.) I don't think the Naim power amps match the dimensionality of the more-expensive valve designs – eg, Conrad-Johnson, whose MV50, based on Premier Four circuitry, should be exciting – but it could be argued that the *scale* of reproduction is more apt for the average English listening room. Many readers would, I am sure, be surprised at the detail resolution, and depth imaging perfectly possible with, say, the NAP250, given careful mounting of turntable and speakers. My limited experience of it suggests that The Source will present a considerable extension in these areas, as compared with the current Linn LP12. Using a new Linn-Sondek, with Well Tempered Arm and Garrott-Decca cartridge, I heard both the Naim 32/HICAP and the replacement designs within the space of four weeks. My feelings were that, on LP, the 32 was tuneful, enjoyable over a wide range of material, but that the sound was nevertheless veiled, with a lack of focus. These reservations were reduced when 135s were substituted for the 250 power amp.

The 32.5 (into HICAP and then 250, with Naim leads pre- to power) remains tuneful and well detailed. It is good to use, *ie*, the preamp panel layout is logical, though – small details these – the quality of the knobs could be improved and, as so often, the selector switch-clicks do not correspond precisely with facia indicator lines. The ALPs volume control was not mechanically silent, tending to 'grate', but perhaps this 'runs in', with time. The selector was pleasant to operate, whereas balance was stiff and off-putting. (Personally, I favour separate channel gains.) [!!!? – Ed.]

Though I have enormous respect for Julian Vereker, I cannot feel

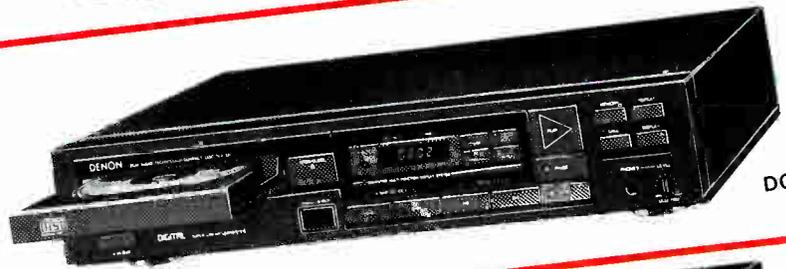
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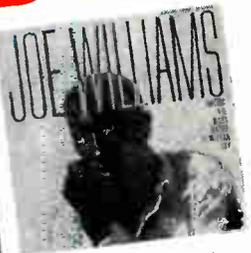


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that he has grasped the nettle of Compact Disc reproduction here. I have heard him say digital recording *per se* does not unduly disturb him, but he regards CD as essentially a mid-fi medium, albeit with user convenience. Even so, I was very unhappy with the 32.5 performance on CD: generally the sound was coloured, and there was a lack of focus. Specifically, on the Teldec Concertgebouw/Harnoncourt Mozart Symphony 39 there were indistinct parts in the string figurations in the slow introduction, which can be followed with my DNM; well regarded CDs such as the Pollini/Böhm Mozart concerto coupling (DG), or the Solti Mahler 8 set (Decca), I would certainly have downgraded had I reviewed them using a 32.5. The DNM gives a 'roundness' to individual musical strands, and a sweetness to the whole – it preserves the 'reasonableness' of interpretative decisions. For instance, Harnoncourt's tempo for Mozart 39 (i) *Allegro* has affability, but on the 32.5 it just registers as strange, far too slow. (The relatively coarse-sounding original Musical Fidelity also made this musical decision over tempo disconcerting.)

The very first time I heard CD, I was determined not to be swayed by the prevalent 'anti' attitudes, but I nevertheless found the music hard to follow, in the sense that although each sonic step was impressive (I still recall the tymps' impact in the Mehta Berlioz *Symphonie Fantastique*, the sense of hall space, and 'silence' in Elly Ameling's Schubert recital, on Philips) there was a kind of memory-rejection of the musical argument: everything slipped into oblivion. In the concert hall the overall experience is the accumulation of many stimuli – some of them visual. A great Klemperer performance probably could not even be dissected into such constituents, but we can all recollect past experiences; the Pogorelich recital, the Bernstein visit – each has its own separate 'resonance'.

So far as the Naim 32.5 was concerned, each time I 'switched on' – and I put this in quotes, since I actually ran the preamp continuously during the review period – I was impressed by its fidelity, initially: the *reality* of Mike Skeet's hammerings on his garage door (*HFN/RR* Test CD), the detail on LP, such as the eaves birdsong on the Preston/AAM Vivaldi Op. 10 (L'Oiseau-Lyre) recording. But with

Compact Disc, performances had to be exceptional to hold interest: there was this 'oblivion syndrome' again. And although the improvements with the redesign, over the older 32, were perfectly clear, I thought performance on LP, too, was deficient. (By the way, Naim make a special m-c board for the Linn Karma.) The Vivaldi disc was unclear concerning the *number* of players: in fact it uses single strings, yet it could have been the normal sized ensemble. The lateral separation was good, but the soundstage generally tended to flatness, and the scale was kept small, even with increases in volume. With the DNM as a reference there were losses in 'incident' in the performances, the aggregation of which build in the mind to make a recording 'star worthy'; the DNM was also preferred in giving a sharply resolved canvas, whereas I found with the Naim one's attention was arbitrarily fixed on this or that immediate voice. The Naim m-m boards are not correctly loaded for Deccas, but I was not worried by the anticipated over-brightness. Certain difficult recordings, however, did lack sweetness in timbre, and I observed a dry, husky, distanced strings quality on some well-known discs, together with a loss of openness, or sense of space between instrumentalists. This would appear to be quite contrary to Peter Turner's findings, enthusiastically reported in the September 1985 issue of *Hi-Fi Answers*.

In conclusion, I suspect that if my musical interests were in rock, or pop material, or if my system was the symbiotic all-Linn/Naim combination, this would have emerged as a wholly favourable assessment. As it is, if I was looking for a high definition preamplifier, in the £625-£825 region, primarily to play classical music, then I would seek first-hand knowledge of models like the Conrad-Johnson PV4, Counterpoint SA-7/II, Deltec, Musical Fidelity MVT, or the DNM/2a with its unratable psu complement – not to mention Ben Duncan's AMP-01M, which he will assemble in basic form for under £450. My own view of CD is evidently at variance with some other *HFN/RR* critics' (ES, or SD, for example); to be candid, my machine is usually disconnected unless I need it for reviewing. Still, the CD cuckoo in the nest is not going to fly away, and it *can* sound pretty good, even with the lower-priced players. ↯

BEETHOVEN: THE SONATAS FOR PIANO AND VIOLIN.

Thoughts on their interpretation by Max Rostal. 219pp. Illustrated. Hard covers. Price £12.95. Published by Toccata Press, 3 Langley Court, London WC2E 9JY.

The flyleaf claim, that this is a 'must' for all lovers of Beethoven (culled from the Amadeus Quartet's foreword), is rather dubious. *Essentially* this is for the practising performer – rather in the manner of Tovey's prefaces to the 32 Piano Sonatas. It's a nicely produced volume, with a generous type face and smooth paper surfaces. Each of the Violin Sonatas is given a chapter, with title page reproductions, and contemporary portraits with annotations of all the dedicatees. Max Rostal, the great teacher (who studied under Flesch and Rosé), gives a readable introduction to each work, but the main aim is to steer the interpreter clear of pitfalls. At random: 'the violinist should play a proper *cresc* with subsequent *p sub*, and the pianist should play bars 115, 436 not too quickly, and the arpeggio in the next bar . . . ' 'I see the last sixteenth note in bar 4 almost as an upbeat to the continuation of the remaining four bars'. I have visions of *HFN/RR* readers struggling with pickup arm, score, and this book, wondering whether the record they have ought to be disqualified! You've really got to go to your bookseller's and assess the accessibility of this study. To be fair, there is plenty for the non-violinist to absorb which *will* stimulate thought on these works.

Christopher Breunig

to get a grasp of the art of Pablo Casals, the great Spanish cellist, long exiled from his country, a determined campaigner for peace. Casals, who played at the request of both Queen Victoria and John F Kennedy, was an idealist: this compilation of quotations by and about him reflects a man who above all believed that respect was due (he hated Ravel's indifference to performers, any hint of arrogance – from Franco to a conceited pupil). Every child should be taught 'I am a miracle – he is a miracle. Therefore I cannot kill him', he said. Stubbornly opposed to modern music (he called Berg 'a master who moves in a world that is not mine'), he nevertheless had a sense of humour about himself. Advised by his doctor against marrying at 81, Casals observed 'I look at it this way: if she dies, she dies!'

As you can see, this is all compulsive anecdotal stuff, and I read it all at one sitting. Lloyd Webber is not exactly a sparkling narrator, but it hardly matters when the sources are so enormously varied.

Christopher Breunig

THE BARBIROLLIS – A MUSICAL MARRIAGE

by Harold Atkins and Peter Cotes. Foreword by Dame Janet Baker. Authors' preface. 238pp. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. Hard covers. Price £9.95. Published by Robson Books Ltd, Bolsover House, 5-6 Clipstone Street, London W1P 7EB.

Together, John Barbirolli and his second wife, Evelyn Rothwell, made a couple whose individual characters and interaction must be of interest to many. Certainly, a book which could throw light on this musical partnership and give a clear view of the less written-about member of that famous marriage would be well appreciated.

Unfortunately, the balance of this present volume does not measure up to its title. Sir John dominates the text and although an early chapter is devoted to Lady Barbirolli's early life and a late chapter concentrates on her life after his death, for the most part the authors limit their comments on this

outstanding oboist and much loved and respected personality to those of the 'and Evelyn was there too' type. I understand that Lady Barbirolli herself may prefer the balance to be weighted in favour of her late husband, as a side of her character that does emerge is her selfless dedication to causes other than her own, but it is that very modesty, combined with such ability, that is most intriguing to a reader. That said, the short biography of Sir John Barbirolli that is the main subject of the book is well done. The narrative is kept cracking on in a lively manner and although a few journalistic traits seem not quite in keeping with the subject matter on occasions, the pace is well varied so that the reader's attention is maintained. The authors do seem concerned to include in the text all the incidents that have been thrown up by their research. This might seem indiscriminating but there is a case to be made for true impressions only emerging from the myriad of details that make up reality. Those impressions are certainly aided by the numerous photographs and overall I think that, after coming to terms with its limitations, most will find the book a good read.

Doug Hammond

AFRICAN POP by Billy Bergman. 144pp. Soft covers. Price £4.95. Published by Blandford Press, Link House, West Street, Poole, Dorset.

Excellent companion to Blandford's *Reggae and Latin Pop*, this is a thorough introduction to a growing, vital musical force. Includes basic discographies to get you started.

Ken Kessler

ELVIS: A KING FOREVER by Robert Gibson with Sid Shaw. 184pp. Hard covers. Price £12.95. Published by Blandford Press, Link House, West Street, Poole, Dorset.

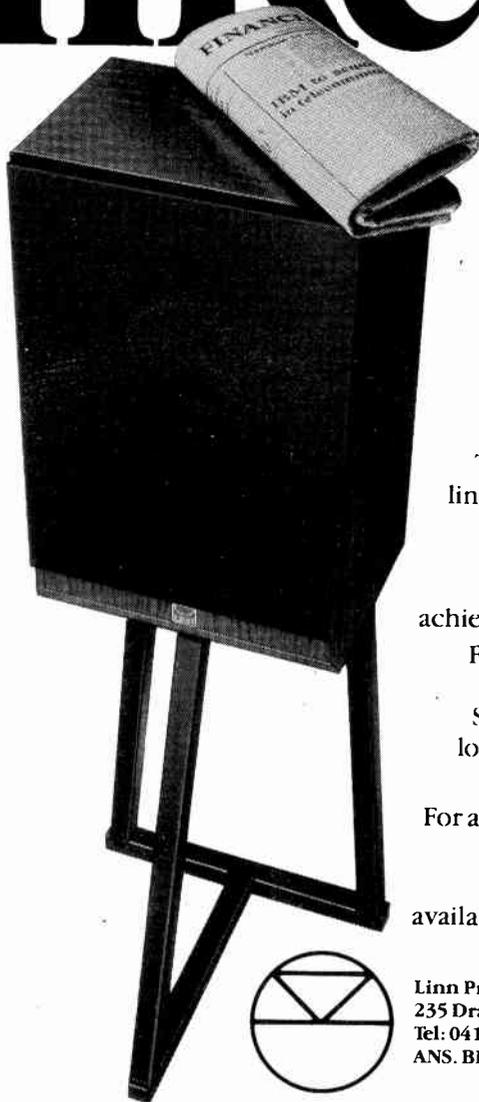
A biography-cum-encyclopaedia, this avoids the salacity and arms you with enough Presleyana to win a bout of Trivial Pursuit. Like Halliwell's film guides, you'll keep dipping into this one. Nice.

Ken Kessler

SONG OF THE BIRDS. Stories and impressions of Pablo Casals, compiled by Julian Lloyd Webber. 120pp. Hard covers. Price £6.95. Published by Robson Books, Bolsover House, 5-6 Clipstone Street, London W1P 7EB.

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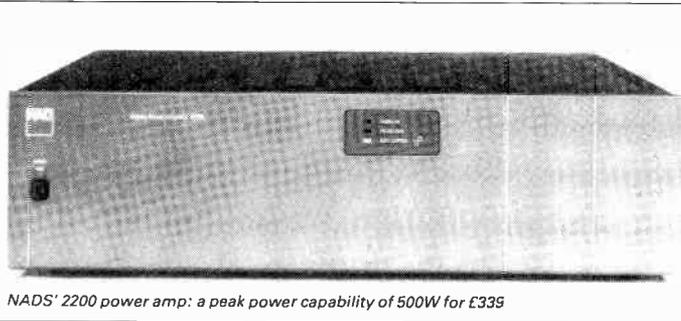
Martin Colloms puts together systems at the £1000 level

LAST SEPTEMBER WE PUBLISHED A RESUMÉ OF OUR occasional 'Starting Point' series, looking at recommended systems at the £300, £350, £450, £550 and £750 price levels. This month's feature assumes a system price of £1000, which enables vinyl and CD to be accorded equal treatment; the aim is, with some minor adjustments, to put together a system which will deal equally well with either source.

£1000 is a tidy sum of money, and at this level, the existence of the Linn Sondek LP12 becomes increasingly hard to ignore, although I feel it is still a bit pricey in this context, fitting more comfortably into the next upgrade at £1500. However, I will follow my preferred system proposal with an LP12-based alternative.

At this price level a genuinely good audio performance, with the major aspects of hi-fi performance more than adequately dealt with, should be mandatory. If the system is well-arranged and sited, good frontal stereo imagery will be produced, with solid focusing, unambiguous central positioning and good stage width combined with convincing 'space' and depth. While ultimate low frequency extension will be absent, the system will faithfully reproduce the vast majority of bass information on recordings down to about 35Hz: in truth little program has any content below this frequency. Treble performance will also be to a decent, modern standard, the response comfortably extending beyond audibility. Subjectively, the loudspeaker's response should be wide and uniform.

There is another important subjective factor which should be considered, which I call tonal balance or 'tonality' for short. Take the



NADS' 2200 power amp: a peak power capability of 500W for £335

sound of a piano as an example: almost everyone has some idea as to how a piano should sound, although it must be conceded that all pianos will sound different to one another, sometimes subtly, sometimes not so subtly. A single piano note, resulting from two or three stretched strings struck so as to produce a harmonic rather than a fundamental tone, is an extraordinary complex sound, consisting of an interplay of harmonics which continues to unfold as the note decays. The tonal quality of the note will depend on how the player strikes the key, with an infinite variety between a forceful but moderately-paced touch and a light but fast attack.

A loudspeaker with good tonality will make an attempt to convey these qualities in piano reproduction without emphasising any particular range of frequencies. The oft-encountered 'clang' or hard emphasis should be absent, and the speaker should give equal weight to the pianist's left and right hand registers. Fast passagework will be equally explicitly delineated, while the dynamics and weight of the sound of a concert grand should be conveyed.

One area where any system is bound to fail, however, is loudness. Peak sound levels from a real piano in a medium-sized living room typically reach 110dB, a level which very few systems are capable of reaching. On the same loudness basis, a 65W/channel amplifier driving a pair of sensitive 90dB/W loudspeakers will give 103dBa; run flat out, and ignoring the hi-fi system's inability to deliver power at the frequency extremes where the real instrument has no limitations, this set-up will sound subjectively about half as loud as a real piano. In practice, this will probably not be a serious discrepancy, but a piano recording enthusiast could buy an amplifier

like the new NAD 2200, which has a peak power capability of 500W (but a continuous one of 100W). With this further 9dB of headroom, the level in the room could reach 112dBa, sufficient for realistic playback. Such is the transient nature of real piano sound, however, that even at these levels, the average power which could be represented as work or heat is only a few watts.

Interestingly, the peak/average power capability of the NAD 2200 amplifier is well-suited to the demands of music program, especially piano. Allowing £500 to include a modest-priced preamplifier, this powerhouse amplifier could be the basis of a valid £1000 system.

When I looked at putting together a £750 system, it became apparent that each increase in budget gave a commensurate widening of choice. This trend continues at the £1000 level and possible components have been set in three categories. (Wide price bands have been adopted to give the maximum system flexibility.)

The Source: black or silver disc

With a notional price range of £200-£450, it is hard to know where to start. Looking at vinyl replay, at the lower level we could choose the well-regarded Rega Planar 3 with the RB300 arm and a suitable cartridge such as the Linn Basik or Ortofon OM10. Alternatives are the AR EB101 with its own arm, the latest C&J Walker CJ58 — this has a wooden subchassis, not a composite one as stated in my review in November — or the Dunlop Systemdek IIX, both the latter with the Linn LVX Plus and Basik cartridge.

Suited to more delicate cartridges, we have another good subchassis turntable in the shape of the Thorens TD316. This has



'The trusty Heybrook TT2'

electrical speed switching and plinth-activated cueing. There is also the more advanced TD318 model, which has a somewhat superior tonearm.

Moving up in price, there is the AR 'Legend' turntable, fitted with a Linn LVX Plus turntable and their new K9 m-m cartridge, but the classic choice undoubtedly is the trusty £235 Heybrook HB2 which complements the Rega RB300 tonearm well. This is my mainline recommendation, making up a fine package at £450 with the Linn Trak m-c cartridge. The Linn LP12 alternative would be LP12/LVX Plus/K9 at £600.

A similar price span can be encompassed with CD. For example, earlier but good-sounding players such as the CD-101 and '104B

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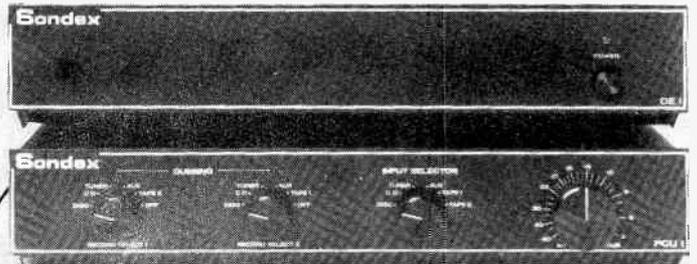
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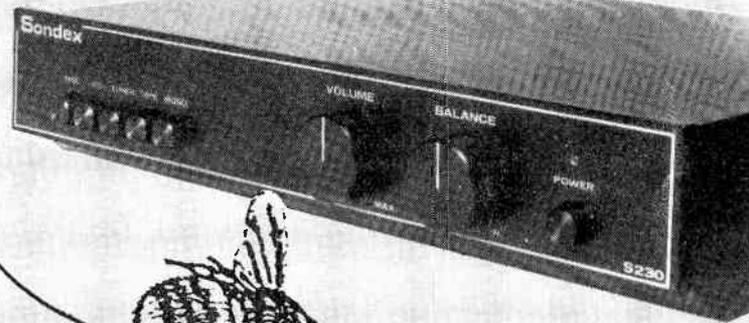
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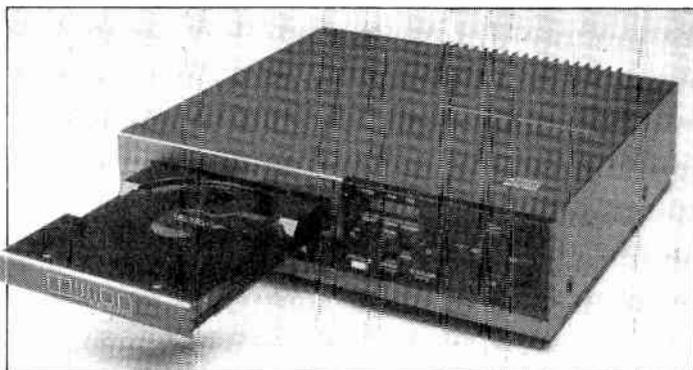
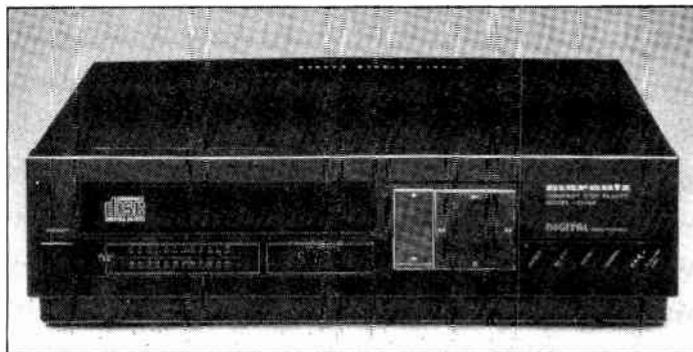
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from Philips and the CD-63B and CD-54 from Marantz can be found at competitive prices between £230 and £300, while the new Philips CD-150 is the cheapest yet with a typical selling price of £230. Of these, the Marantz '54 is probably the best value. Between £300 and £400, there is an even bigger choice, my current favourite here being the Sansui PC-V750 (£330), with close competition from Philips, Marantz and Yamaha. An increase in price to £450 brings remote-controlled players within reach, and the Akai CD-M88 and Yamaha

for a more exuberant performance there is Sony's APM22es (£200). [Martin's modesty precludes him from recommending the £179 Celestion DL8, which he helped design, so I will recommend it — Ed.] Well finished, the new Rogers LS6 (£206) is also skilfully balanced while Spendor's Prelude still puts together a fine musical performance (£260). The current Tannoy Venus (£270) has done well in reviews and can also be recommended. The leader of the pack, however, albeit at a higher price, £350, must be the neat Spendor



CD3 have both done well in tests. However, my favourite remote-control model is the Mission DAD7000R at £450. Another £50 will buy the Sony CD-P302es, which will add a touch of luxury, but it does not make sense to go higher than this within the context of a £1000 system.

The amplifier

The choice is between integrated amplifiers from £140 to £350, two favourites setting the pace, despite fierce competition, at the lower level. These are the Rotel RA820BX and the Mission Cyrus One, the latter including a modest m-c input, and at £140 are still hard to beat.

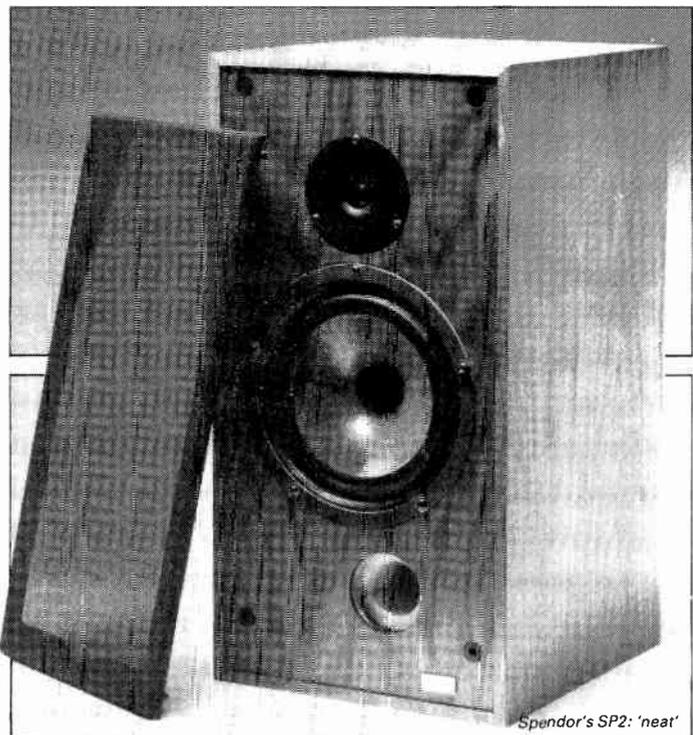
There are a number of models worth considering at higher price levels, such as the £175 AR P35, which has a fine dynamic range capability owing to its typically 80W/channel output power. I recently auditioned the Rotel RA840BX, again £175, which I felt to be a strong performer, not quite as 'fast' as the '820BX but comfortably making up for this in power — 65W/channel — and control. Slightly more expensive is the Musical Fidelity A-1, worth considering despite its modest power output. At over £200, there are several worthy models, such as the Rotel RA870BX (£285), a genuinely 'big' amplifier derived from the respected '870 separates, the elegantly simple Myst tma3 (£250) and the well-built Audiolab 8000A (£275), the latter distinguished by effective tone controls.

However, my final vote must go to the £260 Mission Cyrus Two. Dynamic and lively, its audio reproduction is full of interest and pace while its presentation of stereo depth is exceptional for the price. It is more than a mere upgrade of the Cyrus One, while for those who want to extract the maximum performance, the add-on PSX power supply is available for an extra £120. (See your dealer about upgrading as the Cyrus Two needs a minor internal adjustment to accept the PSX.) Typically, the Cyrus Two produces 50W/channel, upgraded to 65W by the PSX.

The Loudspeaker

Here, personal taste in tonal quality, music, the effect of one's listening room and the allowable location for the speakers, the maximum level required and the available amplifier power, all play a part in the choice of loudspeaker. Initially, for convenience sake, let us make a general assumption of neutrality. Neutral program, neutral speaker tonal balance, a well-balanced room and good taste (?) on this matter on the part of the purchaser will allow for some obvious loudspeaker suggestions.

Sensibly allowing £50 for stands, our £1000 budget will result in a £150-£350 range for loudspeakers. Classically balanced, with a sweet civilised and clean treble, we have the Wharfedale 708 (£350) while



SP2 which sets a delightful standard in terms of transparency, stereo staging, tonal balance and dynamics. It also offers a respectably wide frequency range (*HFN/RR* April 1985).

Putting the system together

We've covered the individual components; how can they be put together?

My first choice for a vinyl disc player is the Heybrook TT2 fitted with a Rega RB300 tonearm and Linn Trak cartridge, feeding a Mission Cyrus Two and Spendor SP2s. For a CD-oriented system, I would substitute the Mission '7000R. I admit that stands will overshoot the target price by some 15%, but in my view the extra cost will be well worth it.

If savings do have to be made, I would make them in two areas. In the case of the LP system, a drop from Cyrus Two to Cyrus One would save around £120, while for CD, the best compromise would be to substitute the Sansui PC-V750, giving about the same saving.

The Linn alternative would consist of the £600 LP12/LVX Plus/K9 player combined with Cyrus One or Rotel '820BX, leaving some £210 for the loudspeakers and £50 for stands. With a budget stretch of £50, the Spendor Preludes can be accommodated, but a nice alternative — and one which is nearly within reach — is the Rogers LS6.

If moderate peak sound levels are sufficient and the size of the loudspeaker must be very compact, then the BBC LS3/5A (Rogers, Spendor, Goodmans) should not be ruled out. The other speakers mentioned are comparatively neutrally balanced and appear to give of their best on good frame stands around 45cm high, placed 1m or so clear of side and rear walls.

Regarding overall performance, the prime recommended system — Heybrook/Rega/Cyrus Two/Spendor — gives a sound with the following attributes. Good bass should be available down to about 35Hz in-room with a good power level. With a maximum anechoic level at 1m of 106dB possible from a single speaker, a pair in a room will peak at around 102dBA, a generous if not deafening sound level, in a typical listening room. Background noise levels will be low, especially from CD, while the system will also be capable of high definition stereo imagery with good width, strong positional focus, and realistic ambience and depth. Life and 'sparkle' will be present in good measure, with a feeling of dynamic 'drive', the latter free from 'forced' or aggressive effects.

Carefully set-up, this system fulfilled its promise, giving true hi-fi reproduction. More money will bring further improvements, but it has to be said that we will then be descending the slippery slopes of diminishing returns. ↵

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NICE 'N' SQUEEZY

Ken Kessler waxes lyrical with Squeeze's lyricist

GROVEL, GROVEL, PANT, GROVEL... the 15 minutes leading up to the arrival of the man who has penned possibly the greatest lyrics of the last decade were filled with all the manifestations of groupie-ism at its worst. Will I put the micro-cassette in upside-down? Will I ask too many personal questions? Will his aura blind me? No.

Chris Difford is all that's right and wrong with Squeeze. Wrong? Sure – Difford embodies the epithet spat at Squeeze: he's 'normal'. No hairstyle courtesy of Ridley Scott, clothes with colours not measured in lumens, ego able to fit in a regulation skull. This isn't to suggest that all artists have to be eccentric, egotistical, or both, but the tendency – especially in pop music – seems to be 'odd is best'. Squeeze, unlike most of their contemporaries, have avoided adopting any poses or attitudes superfluous to their music.

It's the music by which the band is rated, almost a privilege when you realise that Squeeze first appeared during the cusp between pub rock (mellow, laid-back, earthy) and punk (antsy, angry, anarchic). Style became the barometer, and the New Wave were just as guilty of putting pose before performance as those they were usurping. Squeeze appeared with music as a weapon, performing live with a vengeance and on vinyl with wit and grace; there must have been some mistake lumping them into the new wave.

Difford recalls their odd origins, with tours supporting bands as unlike Squeeze as could possibly be imagined. Curved Air, Caravan – these bands played six or seven numbers in a set to Squeeze's 30, self-indulgence of the old wave contrasted with the one real link Squeeze had with the new: short, sharp and to the point. It's arguable that writing tight pieces lasting under three minutes is far tougher than free-forming for half-hour stretches, and Squeeze's writing team of lyricist Difford and tunesmith Glenn Tilbrook rose to the occasion.

Squeeze have a strange history, the mislabelling of – or impossibility to label – the band being but part of a decade-long identity crisis. The crisis is not within the band, but how it's perceived. They're a 'critic's band', yet they never suffered the kiss of death associated with that tag. They're a cult band, yet so popular they can sell enough records and produce enough Top Ten hits to keep Squeeze from ever being anonymous. They're as British a band as you're likely to find, a 1980s version of the Kinks at their most poetic, yet Squeeze have a following in the USA that has justified over 15 American tours.

The audiences are young and older, American teens wanting to hear some great

live rock n roll and vinyl collectors still bemoaning the loss of *Crawdaddy*, 19-year-old English girls more likely to cherish Depeche Mode alongside 30-year-old-plus music lovers weaned on Pink Floyd. What this tells me is that quality wins, despite the packaging, and why Squeeze are still with us, while X-Ray Spex and Subway Sect aren't.

After a productive near-decade which contained a dozen or more perfect singles and five LPs, a period in which Difford and Tilbrook revealed skills as a songwriting team with few peers, Squeeze split and the constituents went their separate ways. Difford and Tilbrook stayed together for a number of projects, including an LP and a

each other's role. The lyrics come first, but Tilbrook's input at that stage is of primary importance. If he's to sing a song with high emotional content, it helps to understand why Difford is writing about a broken romance or a hooker or whatever the subject of a given vignette.

Sleeve readers know that Difford has a penchant for writing songs around familiar phrases or titles. 'Up The Junction' comes from a 1960s movie, 'Cool For Cats' a TV show, 'Annie Get Your Gun' a Broadway Show. 'I'm useless at coming up with titles. If you steal someone else's, half the work is done.' The tendency to pluck titles from various points in the media serves as 'instant inspiration', and Difford has an uncanny skill at weaving songs around familiar phrases.

The sense of 'craft' pervades everything the band has done, especially *Cosi Fan Tutti Frutti*, the latest LP. Regarding the whole art and science of recording, 'There was a lot of interest shown by the band because [producer] Laurie Latham is a craftsman. Jools has his own studio and I should imagine that Glenn will be building one. They in particular were taking in everything'.

But perfectionism isn't allowed to get in the way of emotion. Concerning the so-so sound quality of 'Tempted', Squeeze's best bid yet for a 'standard', 'That song was virtually "live". Once you've captured that kind of emotion, it's difficult to say "We'll have to do that again because the mic wasn't on the snare properly".'

'Squeeze manage to rehearse, then record, then go out on the road and perform. And now, after being on the road for three months, most of the new album's material sounds 20 times better than it does on the record. If we went in now and recorded *Cosi*...'

Squeeze lost nothing during the three-year break, everything 'clicking' during their first session back together. 'I think we've got the bull by the horns now, and if we're smart enough, we can really make good of what we've done; you've really got to think ahead. Squeeze have a tendency of not getting their act together very well because it's five very individual people. If we don't all agree something, people will go off and do other things. You've just got to get them all together in a room, agree, and do it.'

Having accepted that Squeeze work well as a unit, and that enough people out there appreciate what they're doing, Squeeze have a game plan worked out in detail for at least the next two years: tours and LPs, a new bout of songwriting, Holland's TV interests – all accounted for and promising more sublime material. Difford worries that he's not yet ready to write a novel, feeling he's not 'matured enough'. You wouldn't know it listening to Squeeze LPs. ✓



tour, while keyboard player Jools Holland carved out a career as a TV host on Channel 4's *The Tube*. The legacy they left behind was untarnished, despite out-of-character marketing ploys on the part of their record label, and it appeared that they retired the band for the same reason they reformed in 1985: they simply felt the time was right.

But Difford without Tilbrook, or Difford and Tilbrook without a sympathetic band is inconceivable, and the band knew it as much as did the fans. Squeeze were – and are again – a team of like-minded individuals capable of blending Holland's boogie-woogie fetish with Difford's Noel Coward bent and Tilbrook's melodies, the latter a distillation of everything from Glenn Miller to Jimi Hendrix. Gilson Lavis' drumming and Keith Wilkinson's bass are to those perfect songs what Watts and Wyman are to the Glimmer Twins.

The Squeeze creations are collaborations, though Difford and Tilbrook rarely adopt

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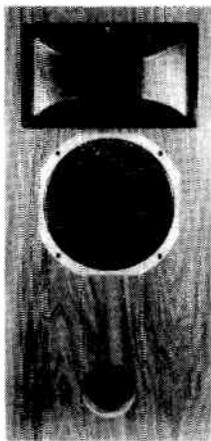
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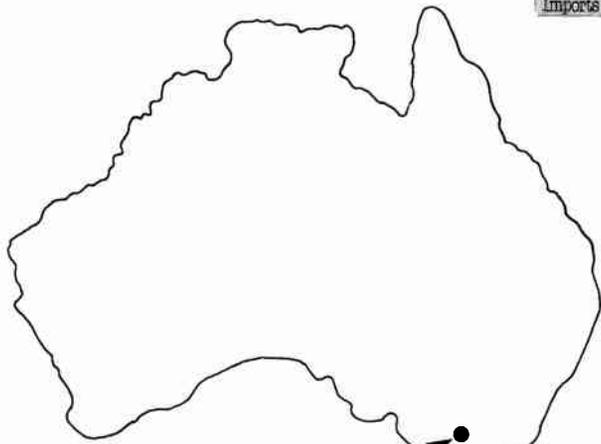
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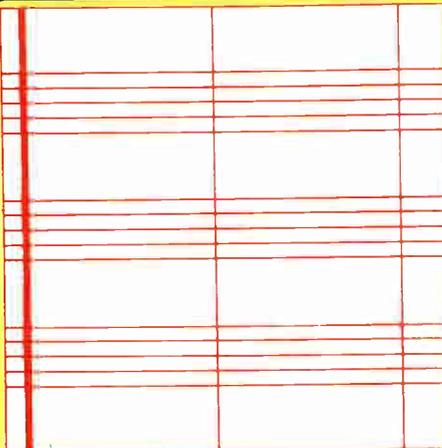
WE MET ON THE 25TH September – Dmitri Shostakovich's birthday', so Slava ('not maestro, please my friend: "Slava"') reminded me *en route* to his London hotel room. 'Every year we would be together on this day; every year on this day Shostakovich would spend time with friends at home or in a restaurant. Every year, that is, until 1974 when Galina and I were given permission to work in the West for two years.' Shostakovich, it seems, knew precisely what that meant.

'Yes, of course he knew of my dilemma. But you know, when I came to him on the day I had received the letter from the authorities giving me and Galina permission to go, I did not have the strength to tell him. I simply gave him the letter. And immediately he began to cry like a child . . . we talked, but he knew that we might never see each other again. "In whose arms shall I die now?" Those, apparently, were his parting words to Slava. A year later he was dead.

Painful memories; my tape bears a long, pensive, pause at this point. And it speaks volumes, for, as anyone who has ever met him will tell you, few are Slava's moments of repose. He talks on an incoming tide of high-pitched energy and enthusiasm, underlining every other word like an excitable juvenile, rising to moments of shared recognition with almost audible cries of *Eureka!* He never walks but bounds on to a concert platform, and if you should venture backstage to share in his post-performance euphoria, be prepared for the obligatory bear-hugs.

Slava was in London for just four days with the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington DC – his orchestra – and during our conversation, to say nothing of time spent watching him in action on the rostrum, I must confess to having fallen hopelessly under his spell once more. This lovable, unaffected, dynamo of a man, likes nothing better than to compare musical notes. And to sit with him and talk of Shostakovich or Prokofiev is to gain privileged access to the very souls that gave birth to that music. He knew and loved both composers. In London, Slava was performing the First, Eighth and Tenth Symphonies of Shostakovich, and he wasn't about to await my questions.

'Genius music, my dear; *great power*. You know, when I left Shostakovich for the last time, I told him that I would one day like to make records of all his symphonies, and *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. And he said, "Slava, if you make records of *Lady Macbeth*, please use only the first version [which he did, of course – thrillingly] . . . and the symphonies – start with the Fourth". He was never happy with Two and Three. Of course he liked the First, and every year – all his life – on the 12th May, he would invite friends to celebrate its first performance.



Compiled by
Edward Seckerson

Remember, this symphony opened a big door to the world for him. He was only 19 years old, full of ideas, *great* imagination. And, you know, in the first Symphony we can see the beginnings of all of Shostakovich's music. He is not so sarcastic here, he is not so *angry*, but life would make corrections to his personality – life would make him tougher, life would show him how to express these deep emotions, this great suffering. Of course, whenever Shostakovich truly tried to express himself freely, then came *SCANDAL - CRASH* from the government . . .

The rest, of course, is musical history: the Stalin/*Lady Macbeth* outrage; the withdrawal of his massive Fourth Symphony – a world, agrees Slava, of fantastic imaginings, the raw consummation of his early development – unperformed for 25 years after its composition; and the eagerly awaited Fifth, subtitled 'A Soviet artist's creative reply to just criticism'. Slava was just a boy at the time of the first performance, but friends have told him of that momentous night.

'This was one of the greatest successes of our time. *One hour*, the ovation. Over 100 times Shostakovich is recalled to the platform. And you know, this was the time of the "white nights" in Leningrad – you could read a paper by night in the street. And the people were not going home. They were

meeting in the streets and talking about this work. They were affected. There was great excitement everywhere. So, government have two possibilities after such a success: either they say no, we have taught him and *still* he has much to learn – which would have been stupid after such a success – or they acknowledge this work as a great masterpiece and take the credit for its success, which is what they did. "We taught him how he must compose, and now he composes very well," they said.'

Little knowing, of course, that Shostakovich had in fact played the most ingenious double-deception of his career. 'A Soviet artist's creative reply to just criticism'? Perish the thought. Slava, of course, soon grew to see and understand the deception – the hollow victory lying immediately beneath the surface of the symphony's block-busting peroration. Play it, as he does, at the slower metronome marking, and all those repeated *As* take on a singularly aimless, dispiriting ring. 'A triumph for idiots', says Slava, not putting too fine a point on it.

Two years ago he recorded the Fifth Symphony for DG. Not the happiest of achievements, technically, as he is the first to acknowledge, but a performance of disquieting intensity with no punches pulled. Recordings of the other symphonies will follow in time, he says, but not all of them for DG. That much looks certain. He speaks of the Eighth ('monumental') as being next on the agenda, followed possibly by the Ninth – a dramatic contrast – and then perhaps the Tenth, another of the symphonies very close to his heart, as was so eloquently borne out two nights after our conversation, at the Festival Hall. On the night of our meeting, he was to give the First. 'I hope that what I try to do will give you joy. I try to make this piece less *sharp* than it sometimes sounds . . . it is so romantic, so dramatic, this young man's music.'

We talk on for a while of the other symphonies. Of the 14th ('a great example of the power and emotional range that is possible from so few players; miraculous') and the elusive 15th, where all the forbidden fruits of so-called 'formalism' seem to pass before us as if deliberately to tease the authorities. '*Exactly*; that is *exactly* the word. Tease – good choice.'

But more about Shostakovich, the man. Was he really the private and mysterious introvert we have been led to believe? 'Oh yes, very private, very deep, very sensitive. He would only ever say to your face what he felt would bring you joy, even if those words were a complete lie. He said to me once, "You know, Slava, everything that I feel and think is in my music, not my words". And this was true. His troubles, his suffering, his heartaches – he could not bring himself to speak openly of them. He knew it was too dangerous. Only his closest friends really



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knew him. Now, Prokofiev – my other very dear friend and colleague – had troubles too, but he was the complete opposite to Shostakovich as a personality; very open. In my experience he would always speak the truth to your eyes – even if that truth was not very pleasant for you. Prokofiev could never understand *why* he had troubles in life. Shostakovich understood perfectly – complete contrast.'

Slava's words, a certain something in his voice, betray a profound empathy with Prokofiev's 'innocence'. He remembers pleading on Prokofiev's behalf when his friend had no money for food. He remembers well the Arts Minister's office, with its two telephones: one with a high-pitched bell, an outside line; one with an ominous low growl, a direct line to the Kremlin. Above all, he remembers Prokofiev's 'pink' and 'blue' books. In the pink, his cheap ideas (ideal for those tawdry, money-making commissions); in the blue, higher inspirations.

Is it true that there existed a degree of animosity between Prokofiev and Shostakovich? I was thinking now of certain implications in Volkov's controversial book, *Testimony*. 'You know, in my opinion, there is nothing that is completely without truth in Volkov's book, but some things are a little out of proportion. It is true that sometimes Shostakovich and Prokofiev criticised each other a little; but only in friendship. Both had very great admiration for each other – especially Shostakovich for Prokofiev. Now, Volkov does not give that impression. Nor does he give the impression that Shostakovich had incredible admiration for Stravinsky, which he did. I was Shostakovich's pupil in the Conservatory from 1943 to 1948, and in his composition classes, he was always using examples from Stravinsky and Mahler. We played four-hand arrangements of Stravinsky works many, many, times in class. I *know* how he admired him. The little anecdotes, the jokes, the criticisms, that Volkov uses in his book, were made in fun and good faith.'

So what of the future of music in Russia? How fare composers today? Are improvements imminent in the present climate? 'Gorbachev is a young, intelligent man; he speaks good Russian, you know. But we must see over the next few years how he develops. If, after two or three years, he thinks he understands music and the arts better than the musicians and other creative artists themselves, then there will come again the same catastrophe – because he has unlimited power. You see, I consider myself well educated, musically, but if I go to a concert and I do not share the performers' ideas about the music, I never say "that is wrong". It may not be *my* interpretation but every interpretation is a valid possibility; even works that have been written for me on cello, works that I know from first-hand. There are *other ways*. The trouble with certain members of the government in the Soviet Union – in my experience – is that they are just obnoxious. If they don't understand or appreciate something, it must be bad. It doesn't occur to them that something they do not yet understand may be good or even great. That was Stalin's sickness. And it has continued because people are content to repeat the doctrine, to ...'

... Toe the line. Well, perhaps Mr Gorbachev *will* prove an enlightened influence. Heaven knows there is no dearth of home-grown musical talent for him to

encourage and promote. Slava reels off a series of names. Among them, Alfred Schnittke, of course, Silvestrov, Shchedrin (though as a 'Head of the Union' composer, Slava sees him as constricted), and one Sofia Gubaidulina – a middle-generation woman whose praises I also remember Gidon Kremer once singing, and whose work has yet to make it to the West.

Slava believes wholeheartedly that the future of music lies in continual replenishment. The composers of today are the immortals of tomorrow. 'As I get older, I feel more and more appreciation for the great composers who have written for me. More and more I love to play Prokofiev's *Sinfonia Concertante*, Ben Britten's *Cello Symphony*, and more recently Lutoslawski's *Concerto* and Penderecki's *Concerto*, which I think is a really great composition. Now each year, I hope for something new. Next year, for example, I will premiere a new work written for me by Cristobel Halffner of Spain

FLUTTER

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Wynton Marsalis never stops. The latest I hear is that John Corigliano is all set to write him a Concerto. Meanwhile it's the cornet, and music of Herbert L Clarke, Herman Bellstedt, Jules Levy, JB Arban, Rimsky-Korsakov and Paganini, as arranged by Donald Hunsberger. That's with the Eastman Wind Ensemble for CBS.

In Berlin, Witold Lutoslawski directs the Berlin Philharmonic in the World Première recording of his highly-acclaimed Third Symphony. Philips have the privilege, and I shall be at both concert and sessions to talk with the man himself.

CBS are wasting no time or opportunity with their Pekka Salonen contract. Messiaen's *Turangalila Symphony* was committed to tape within days of his London performance in November. Paul Crossley was the piano soloist, the orchestra our own Philharmonia.

In my comments last month on Peter Maag, I inadvertently referred to his Decca recording of Mozart's 'Jupiter' Symphony. It should, of course, have read Mozart's 'Prague' Symphony – an old favourite of mine, making the error all the more inexplicable.

– genius composer. Then, I have a very high opinion of the Swiss composer, Norbert Møré, and he has just submitted to me the manuscript of his First Cello Concerto.'

And so it goes on. Slava's time is divided fairly evenly now between the cello and the baton (approximately 70 concerts of each a year) and, if he has one single ambition in life, it is to leave behind him a whole new catalogue of cello works – his legacy to future generations. The 18th and 19th centuries left cellists 'a little poor. Beethoven wrote his 9th Symphony, but no cello concerto. And look at Mozart – many great compositions, but *not one* for cello.'

So far, he's doing pretty well: around 70 Concertos and Sonatas first performed by him, and the commissions, as we hear, are still flowing. Not all is gold, of course. Many's the time that Slava has persevered with a complex and demanding new piece only to realise that, sadly, it has no future.

But if 'only one in seven compositions is outstanding, then we can be satisfied'.

Besides, he says, composers learn from the mistakes of others. He cites the 2nd Cello Sonata of Myaskovsky – an old friend and patron of his (and no mean composer, I say, thinking at once of the 21st Symphony, which is a great favourite of mine). Prokofiev, it seems, was present at the première of that particular work. At the opening of the Finale, Myaskovsky had written rapid passagework on the low G-string and, at that speed, says Slava, the effect was not so much a series of notes as a kind of continuous low buzz. Afterwards Prokofiev came up to Rostropovich: 'Slava, I am so happy for you. But you know, I was not very far from you and I could not hear one note at the start of the finale.' 'Well you can imagine how I felt', says Slava. 'I was very young, and *such a compliment* coming from Prokofiev! He saw my face.' 'But Slava, when you come to the A-string, then I can hear each of your notes like a diamond!'

'Well, I forgot about this episode until he finished *Sinfonia Concertante*. And it was then that I recognised, at the beginning of the second movement, which is also very fast and also in the low strings, that the cello was playing *without* orchestra. It is only when the cello comes up to the A-string that the orchestra comes into the picture. So he learned something, I am sure, from Myaskovsky. There are many different examples. Ben Britten heard the 1st Shostakovich Cello Concerto and some of those sound ideas found expression through his imagination in his Cello Symphony just as Prokofiev's *Sinfonia Concertante* made an impression on Shostakovich's 1st Concerto. Shostakovich was crazy for that Prokofiev *Sinfonia Concertante*, you know. To him, this, together with the Eighth Piano Sonata and *War and Peace* were genius compositions.'

Which brought us to some exciting news. For *War and Peace*, it just so happens, is firmly on the cards as part of an extensive new recording project with Erato – an ambitious and enterprising series which began so auspiciously last September with Slava's eloquent account of Tchaikovsky's opera *Yolantha*. Praise be for companies like this who are both willing and able to put themselves out on a commercial limb, to give great artists like Rostropovich an opportunity temporarily to shelve the endlessly re-cycled major classics, to air a few neglected, if not yet crowd-pulling, gems and render a genuine service to the serious record-buying public.

'For the first time ever, I am doing what I *want to do*', says Slava passionately. And that includes the Seven Prokofiev Symphonies (Orchestre Nationale de France) – a lifelong ambition – and Cello Concertos by Milhaud and Honegger, with longer term plans not yet revealed. In return, Slava has promised Erato his last – *positively* his last – recording of the Dvorak Concerto, with Ozawa and the Boston Symphony.

He likes recording 'live'. He enjoys the tensions, the 'input' of an audience, the heightened sense of communication. 'Music must speak – many times I have heard records, note-perfect, perfect for ensemble, everything – that *say nothing*.' For Slava it's the spirit that speaks every time; give him modest practitioners or the world's greatest musicians, it makes no odds. I cherish the memory of an Aldeburgh *Onegin* some years back. Young, relatively inexperienced, soloists (Marie McLaughlin was *Tatiana*, and

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EDGARD VARÈSE

Doug Hammond on the composer of 'Organised Sound'

ONE OF THE GREAT ENIGMAS OF 20th century music is why the works of Edgard Varèse are not more widely known and loved. Even 20 years after his death he remains one of the least-heard great composers of this century. He completed 12 major works, few of them lasting even as long as an LP side, yet his representation in the record catalogue is meagre and his music appears all too infrequently in concert programmes. All this despite the fact that the list of his close admirers reads like a *Who's Who* of the arts since 1900, and that he is generally recognised by composers and critics of today as one of the most able and important of modern composers.

His importance arises from his approach to composition – he was the first front-rank composer to analyse and isolate for use each of the components of musical sound. In his music 'themes' may consist of melody, but will more often be formed from a rhythmic idea, an exchange of dynamic contrasts, a timbral effect, or a set of graded attacks. Constant and thoroughgoing development is, especially in his later works, an integral part of the whole of the structure, which is itself never imposed but results naturally from the nature of the musical ideas. Thus form is organic in Varèse. Such a thorough approach was not attempted by other composers until after 1950 (notably in serial works by Messiaen, Boulez, and Stockhausen). Yet his music is not serial – the sounds it contains link the Paris of the early 1900s, where he was a student, and the modern world.

It has to be acknowledged that Varèse was a composer born out of his era. To enter this world in 1883 was a major error for a man with a 20th century ear and a truly 20th century approach to music. If he had been born just 50 years later his chief creative period would have begun in the 1970s when, given an electronics studio along the lines of the BBC's Radiophonic Workshop or Boulez' Beaubourg annexe, he could not have failed to have made a major impact upon the world. As it was, his lifelong struggle was not so much against the incomprehension of reactionary audiences as against the technical limitations of the electrical sound engineering of his time. The sounds of his aural imagination demanded for realisation the facilities available to the composer of today. Even in 1965, the year of his death, such facilities were not advanced enough for his needs. Nevertheless, his extant works, which for the most part use acoustic instruments to render a facsimile of his intentions, are still fine enough for his stature to be appreciated.

A potted biography might show his apprenticeship years, spent in Paris and Berlin, to have ended in 1915 when he set sail for the United States. His first New York period, from 1920 to 1934, saw the completion of the first eight major works that have survived, but the next part of his life was comparatively fallow, characterised by depression and the continual search for a means by which to express himself. He made many trips to the south-west of the US during this period and learnt to equate the misery he felt over his own condition and the

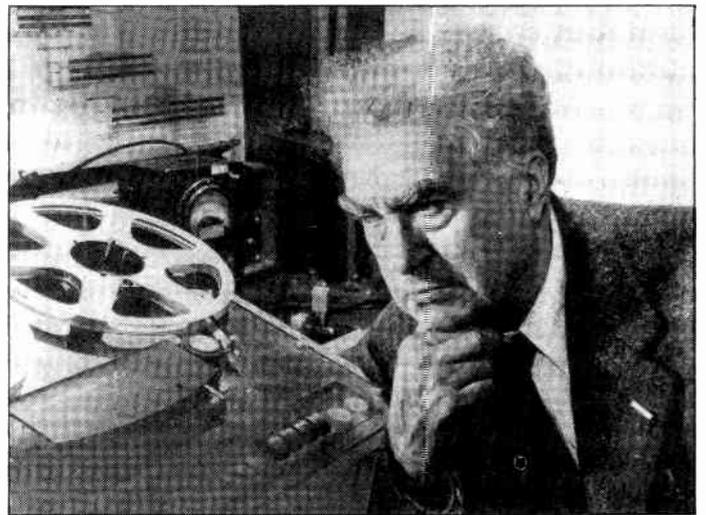
state of the world (this was the period of the Spanish Civil War, World War 2 and the Korean War) with the vast tracts of desert he found in that part of the New World. A return to New York and developments in sound engineering, including an offer from Pierre Schaeffer to use the RTF research facilities to complete his first great work to use electronic means, *Déserts* (1954), marked the beginning of the final, fruitful period of his life. Ironically, it was the one in which his music began to be disseminated through the medium of the gramophone, and in which the techniques of sound production that he had so desired throughout his career began to develop.

Most of Varèse's earliest works have been destroyed, either in war or by the composer himself, and his earliest major surviving work dates from 1921. *Amériques* uses a large orchestra in a very un-traditional way. The enlarged percussion section is used independently, rather than for coloration effects, and orchestration in the work is structural in implication rather than decorative. It was first performed in 1926 under Stokowski, and although the composer subsequently revised the work, reducing the number of instruments to produce the version used today (in the score corrected by his pupil, the composer Chou Wen-Chung), he was sufficiently encouraged to complete in the following year another piece for huge forces, *Arcana*. The works have many similarities, though the latter is both more extensive and concise in its means of expression – a refining process had obviously occurred during the intervening years. The four important chamber works completed in this interim were *Offrandes*, *Hyperprism*, *Octandre*, and *Intégrales*.

Offrandes for soprano and chamber orchestra dates from 1921. Its first part, 'Chanson de Là-haut', sets words by the Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro and is dedicated to Varèse's second wife Louise. The second part, 'La croix du sud', is to words by the Mexican José Juan Tablada and dedicated to Carlos Salzedo, the French-born harpist and composer who, with Varèse, founded the International Composers' Guild at around this time to perform contemporary music. Its first performance met with Varèse's approval and was warmly received. With *Hyperprism*, for winds and percussion, completed in 1923, the composer seemed to depart so radically from the conventional norms of musical composition that at its first performance the audience reacted in part with laughter, hissing, and jeers. Order was only restored when half the audience left and the work was repeated. The tingling originality of Varèse's approach can still be felt in the

pages of this score, even though much music that is more radical has been heard since. His ideas were not revolutionary for the sake of being revolutionary, but were an essential part of his musical make-up. *Octandre*, (1923) for seven winds and double-bass, is, unusually for Varèse, in three sections and explores the sheer variety of textures that can be obtained from a seemingly limited chamber ensemble. This work and the following *Intégrales* (1925), for 11 winds and 17 percussion instruments (divided between four players), were both much better received by early audiences, with encores demanded, even though some of the critics were less enthusiastic.

In the autumn of 1928 Varèse returned to live in Paris for a few years and it was there



pic: The Bettmann Archive, Inc

that he completed one of his most startlingly original and much discussed works, the piece scored for percussion alone, *Ionisation*. Finished in 1931, this work illustrates perhaps more than any other the depth of Varèse's genius. Only three of the 37 instruments used have predetermined pitch yet the music has no sense of limitation or monotony of timbre – in fact, just the opposite. It is fascinatingly thought-provoking, one of the great masterpieces of our century. *Equatorial* was written after the composer's return to New York in 1933. Asturias had brought to his notice the Mayan Popol-Vuh texts and Varèse decided to set one prayer for bass, four trumpets, four trombones, piano, organ, two Ondes Martenot, and five percussionists, dedicating the work to his wife. This powerful, incantatory music marked the end of a marvellously fecund period of creation for Varèse. Only the famous *Densité 21.5* for solo flute (1936) and the abortive *Espace*, represented by *Étude for Espace* (1947), emerged from the years preceding *Déserts*.

Although only three of Varèse's works used 'organised sounds on tape' their importance to the world of electronic music is enormous, for they are amongst only a handful of pieces for the medium that could be rated works of genius. *Déserts*, a brooding *cri de cœur*, has four sections for orchestra interspersed with three for two-track (stereo) tape; the taped contributions, derived from ordinary and industrial sounds, were progressively improved between 1954

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look where she is now) and an entirely student orchestra and chorus picked up on his commitment and worked miracles.

That, he says, is why he took up the baton in the first place. 'To communicate your feelings for a piece to other musicians, and for them to translate those feelings into sounds for an audience. It's such a unique sharing experience. And there is so much music out there waiting for our attention. In the second week of October, for instance, I perform in Washington the recent 5th Symphony of a great Finnish composer, Aulis (*The Red Line*) Sallinen.' And once more he is in full cry, demonstrably excited by the prospect of Sallinen's Symphony; pleased, as always, that another should share his enthusiasm.

That, I decide, is Slava's secret, that's what really endears him to his audiences everywhere: his generosity. He wants to share, he *needs* to share, and share he does.

Edward Seckerson

Nelson Riddle 1921-1985

Reviewing Nelson Riddle's *Romance, Fire and Fancy* in the November issue, I assumed that this great arranger had years of creative development ahead of him. Now, dead at 64, his eminence can be judged by the fruitful careers of others who must surely admit their debt to him. Although his work was so influential, it was never revolutionary. Having lived into the age of the synth, he could even be called conservative. Schooled in the world of the 1940s' big bands (trombone with Tommy Dorsey), he soon showed his mastery of the full orchestral potential, with rich writing for strings and conventional woodwind complementing his use of brass and saxes to reinforce the rhythm. He was happy recording with jazz greats – never forget his share of the credit for Ella's five records of the Gershwin songbook, that masterwork of the LP era. But it must be his seven-year partnership with Sinatra at Capitol, where he was MD, that made Riddle's name more famous than orchestrators' normally are. He was six years younger than Francis Albert – but one wonders who, in the studio, was truly the

senior partner. Each, in any case, must have respected the other as a perfectionist. As an album proving that perfection, I would pick that peak of Sinatra's golden middle period, *Songs for Swingin' Lovers*. And, as his recent recording with Dame Kiri proved, Riddle could move confidently within the inner circle of music's meritocracy.

Denis Argent

Emil Gilels 1916-1985

The great Soviet artist, Emil Gilels, died of a heart attack in October. His first piano lessons began at six, with Jacob Tkatch, and with other pupils he made his public debut at 12 (with Beethoven's *Sonata Pathétique*), going on to study at the Odessa Conservatoire under Bertha Reingbald. Gilels had vivid recollections of Prokofiev's visit to Odessa in 1927 and 1935; later he was to meet the composer, to prepare Sonatas 6 and 7, under his watchful eye, then to première the 8th (in 1944). In 1935 he attended Heinrich Neuhaus' master-classes at Moscow, where he was encouraged to meet visiting pianists Cortot, Schnabel, Casadesu. Gilels made his name as a virtuoso, winning prizes at Moscow (first All-Union Competition), Vienna (1936 – 'playing of utter magnificence' *NY Times*) and Brussels (1938 Ysaye). His performance of Liszt's *Spanish Rhapsody* excited praise from the Liszt-Rubinstein pupil von Sauer, and of course Arthur Rubinstein heard the 15-year old Gilels: 'By God, there was a boy – I remember as if it happened yesterday – short, with a mass of red hair, and freckles, who played. . . I can't describe it. If he ever comes to America, I might as well pack my bags and go', he concluded.

Post-war Gilels did go to America (1955, with Philadelphia/Ormandy, in Tchaikovsky's First Concerto). He was the first major Soviet artist to appear in New York since Prokofiev's 1921 tour. Gilels also made records for Capitol, preserved in the indispensable EMI anthology SLS 2900113. With Reiner he recorded the Tchaikovsky, and Brahms 2 – a wonderfully lyrical and free account, arguably finer than the less spontaneous Berlin DG.

His first London recital was in 1953, after which an international concert and recording career blossomed. In a Berlin interview in 1972 he explained how he disliked the idea of recording cycles of works, or having to pre-plan his programmes well in advance. He liked to study single pieces in depth, and latterly he was devoted to the classical repertoire. However, for DG he was slowly working through the Beethoven Sonatas and 1986 will bring Nos. 5, 10, 11 and 20. Next October Sonatas 30 and 31, his last recordings, made in September '85, will form an 'in memoriam' tribute. Shostakovich said of Gilels, 'His performances are notable for original and fresh interpretation, combined with deep penetration into the author's meaning, and though he always treats the text with reverence, it does not restrain his creative fancy'. That summary fits perfectly the Beethoven readings reviewed on p???. Gilels' great seriousness as an interpreter could yield performances that seemed marmoreal in character – his readings were shaped by pianistic solutions to the problems and by an 'abstract' response to the score. In Beethoven he stood in sharp contrast with Schnabel, who sacrificed everything, if necessary, to preserve a realisation of what he saw as the 'character' of the music.

Of Gilels' many recordings, most memorable were the Beethoven 'Waldstein' and 'Hammerklavier' Sonatas (DG); the 'Archduke' Trio with Kogan and Rostropovich (Monitor); the G-major Concerto of 1959, Leningrad/Sanderling (Chant du Monde); Chopin Sonatas 2 (EMI) and 3 (DG); the Chopin E-minor Concerto with Philadelphia/Ormandy (CBS); a scintillating 1947 Saint-Saëns No.2 with Kondrashin (Eurodisc); Liszt's Sonata and Shostakovich's Sonata 2 (RCA); Brahms' Op. 10 Ballades. One encore piece he loved always, Siloti's arrangement of Bach's Prelude in E-minor, appears in live performances on both EMI and CBS. The sheer consistency of Gilels' playing may be gauged from the 1973 live recordings on Supraphon 1111 2550G, comprising Debussy, Brahms' Op.116 (5 and 6 only) and Mozart. Christopher Breunig

and 1962. At its first performances the work provoked violently opposed reactions, with composers like Stravinsky and Dallapiccola being enormously impressed by it, as were a great many others of a younger generation. Varèse quickly followed it up with taped sound for a sequence in Thomas Bouchard's film, *Around and About Joan Miró*, and rounded off the sequence with *Le Poème électronique* for Le Corbusier's Philips Pavillion at the Brussels Exhibition of 1958. The architect had to threaten the sponsors with resignation in order to have his friend produce the music for the Pavillion, but those who attended the Exhibition found Varèse's work effective and appropriate to the building.

After these works Varèse returned to more conventional instruments, spending the last years of his life working on two pieces that he failed to complete to his satisfaction, *Nocturnal* and *Nuit*, both based on Anaïs Nin's *The House of Incest*. Chou Wen-Chung completed the former work after his teacher's death, enabling it to be published and heard.

Of the 14 completed works that are discussed above, only eight are represented in the present record catalogue, that is, all the works from *Amériques* to *Ionisation*, plus *Densité 21.5*, *Ecuatorial*, *Offrandes*, *Octan-*

dre, and *Intégrales* used to be available in a fine collection from Nonesuch (G-71269), but this is now deleted and only the last three are available together from the Vienna Die Reihe Ensemble, on TV331028, in recordings that are beginning to show their age. *Intégrales* also appears in a much more spruce recording by members of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, directed by Zubin Mehta, on SXL6550 on the Decca London Enterprise label, along with performances of *Arcana* and *Ionisation* to rival those of the NY Phil under Boulez on CBS Masterworks 76520. I prefer Mehta in *Arcana* and Boulez in *Ionisation*, but for a really idiomatic performance of *Arcana* I still return to the deleted RCA Victor disc with Jean Martinon conducting the Chicago SO, SB-6710; even the 1966 recording conveys more of the electricity of Varèse's music than do the more modern productions. *Amériques* does get full measure from Boulez, though, and he brings out its connections with *Arcana* in a perceptive yet natural way. However, to bring out its qualities, *Hyperprism* now needs a new recording which can take advantage of more modern techniques. *Étude for Espace* and *Nocturnal* are less likely candidates for recording, but surely *Déserts* and *Le Poème électronique* (at least in its concert version) should be available in the lists. CD is capable of coping with the

extremes of these works and I should think that it would be something of a coup for the company that manages to capture them in new recordings for this medium.

Whilst Varèse is important to music lovers simply for his musical genius, he has a special significance for those interested in electronic recording and the manipulation of sound. His music has gradually become more widely known and his true stature appreciated primarily through the medium of disc; works which were not financially viable in the concert hall have been recorded and acquaintance has increased their popularity. Now they are a much more tenable part of the concert programme. Varèse himself, with his desire to eliminate the musical middle-men (the performers) from the composer/listener relationship, would, I think, have appreciated the repeatability of a recorded performance, once it had been honed to a perfect realisation of his intentions. Even more, I think he would have been grateful for the impetus given to the electronic production of music by the knowledge gained through developments in recording techniques and technology. He was an apostle of the electronic age, and it would therefore be a fitting homage for the record companies to make all his music available on disc. †

SUPERCUT RECORDS

WHEN THE RECORD PROMOTION business dictates its list of priorities, technical quality of the product often assumes a pretty lowly position. You can be sure if marketing departments believed it influenced sales to any notable extent, the persistent complaints about poor pressing quality would have been acknowledged and acted upon with a great deal more alacrity than we have witnessed these past few years.

In 1981, publicity and promotion for the Arista label was – unusually – in the hands of someone who had a wide experience of the hi-fi industry, and a rare enthusiasm for the subject, too. Phil Bergmann recognised that a quality-conscious and consequently much-frustrated record-buying market existed. It may have been small by industry standards, but it was no 'loony fringe', as many undoubtedly imagined, and what's more, Phil knew only too well that its complaints were well justified. Record buyers were often asked to accept a product that was demonstrably second-rate, yet pay full whack for it. Yet if you bought, say, a book and some pages were torn, no-one would expect to be told what amounted to: 'well, you can still read it'. The attitude seemed to be that poor disc surfaces were an inevitable fact of life and, anyway, who really cared as long as the thing was more-or-less playable?

Arista handed Phil the job of promoting a range of five jazz titles – quite esoteric stuff, too – in what were pretty dire American pressings. He deduced that not only was he going to have problems reaching a viably wide audience with this music, but from hearing the masters, that the existing pressings did scant justice to their inherent quality. There was no special insight to it – you could clearly hear how poor mastering had degraded the output of some very fine musicians.

At this point, yours truly, as Editor of the now defunct *Practical Hi-Fi* magazine, entered the story. Phil Bergmann wanted to remaster the five titles, but knew there was no way he could sell fresh pressings alongside the 'standard' versions. It needed a different approach to selling records, and a different kind of record buyer. But first it needed someone who could master them properly.

Although the content of the Nimbus Records' catalogue had received its fair share of plaudits and brickbats, one thing went undisputed and that was the consistently excellent quality of their

disc-cutting and pressing. A number of us working on *Practical Hi-Fi* had built up an instructive and useful relationship with Nimbus over the previous six years: we had come to know them soon after the company was established in the now-famous Wye Valley country house, uniquely able in one location to record, master and press their (and others') records.

Phil Bergmann reasoned that if anyone was going to be able to persuade Nimbus to undertake this unusual and relatively small-scale project, it was us. The magazine, of course, also provided an ideal vehicle for marketing the records to an audience that we were constantly encouraging to be quality-conscious.

Master tapes duly went to Nimbus' technical director, Gerald Reynolds, for re-cutting, and the results were predictably outstanding, and in many respects revelatory. As we listened to the test pressings, I asked Gerald where the secret lay: was it the lathe, the cutting heads, the

Arista success was the only encouragement we needed to approach, first, Decca, and then A&M, WEA, CBS and EMI to obtain the release of, ultimately, 30 fine and famous masters for recutting at Nimbus. It would have been tempting to opt for the predictable 'best-sellers' those labels could offer, but instead we elected, wherever

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MILES DAVIS *Kind of Blue*

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JOAN ARMATRADING

FEATS DON'T FAIL ME NOW
LITTLE FEAT

possible, to select what ex-

perience and intuition suggested would benefit from the Nimbus treatment.

Not all 30 'Supercuts' are still available, as the accompanying coupon shows: it's particularly disappointing to me that the Decca Benjamin Britten and Mahler One are out-of-catalogue, not to mention the remarkable album by jazz guitarist, Charlie Byrd – one of the most natural and 'alive' recordings of a jazz trio I've ever heard.

However, from the highly attractive list which does remain, John Atkinson has asked me to nominate a few personal favourites for you to consider. And there's no question that the four classic issues of English music from EMI are pre-eminent. There are some incomparable performances here: Beecham's classic Delius concert, *Brigg Fair*, *First Cuckoo* and all; Boult's magnificent Elgar Two from the mid-'70s and his 1967 VW Sixth, with a spellbinding performance of *The Lark Ascending* from that very great violinist, Hugh Bean (as one wag put it after hearing the Nimbus pressing, 'How wonderful to wake up with the lark, but without the Rice-Krispies!'); and finally the Barbirolli's infinitely treasurable 'English String Music'. Marvellous readings of Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* and E-minor *Serenade* and, above all, the most moving and awesomely spiritual performance I have ever heard of VW's *Tallis Fantasia*.

Looking at the rock and jazz titles, you'll note a distinct bias towards female singer/songwriters and I can truthfully say I haven't tired of Joan Armatrading, even though the album has had to endure being a hi-fi dem

lac- quers, the vinyl?

All, to some degree, he replied, and described the system used, but added: 'Most of all, though, you know, it's simply a matter of taking care'.

Perhaps he should have said, a lot of care, for the finished discs were everything we and Phil B had hoped for. They were launched through the magazine, and at the Harrogate hi-fi show of that year, and it was immediately obvious we had a success on our hands. The response in subsequent months convinced us we had identified a widespread need among what I suppose could be described 'discerning record buyers'. Some titles – *Mountain Dance* by composer/arranger, Dave Grusin was one, the album by guitarist Larry Coryell another – sold better than the rest, but it surprised us just how willing people were to try new, unheard music at our recommendation.

What if we offered music that they were much more familiar with? The



favourite: how could you tire of as appealing and as honest a song as 'Save Me'? Similarly with Joni Mitchell, although the Rickie Lee Jones suffers a little in comparison (fine production though). But if I have to pick one of the ladies, it would have to be Janis Ian and *Between the Lines*: there simply isn't a song on the album that isn't written from the heart, often with all-too-apparent pain, yet there is a wry humour in the sadness, a disarm-

ing emotional frankness. What's more, each one is beautifully crafted, none outstay their welcome, and all reward committed and frequent listening.

And I believe you'll find Randy Newman elicits a similar response with *Little Criminals* - it's the album with 'Baltimore', 'Short People', and the haunting and disturbing 'In Germany Before The War'.

But enough of this serious stuff: I'm sure, like me, you'll have great fun listening to *Feats Don't Fail Me Now* from Little Feat, and Jackson Browne's exhilarating *Running on Empty*, a largely unadulterated and 'back to basics' live album that is remarkable for including tracks recorded in the band's hotel room and in the back of a touring bus! Don't let that put you off - it's great spontaneous music-making.

It may be terribly un-hip, but I have to admit to enjoying The Eagles' *Desperado*, too, and Floyd's indictment of the rock business, *Wish You Were Here* - when I'm in the right frame of mind, if you get my drift.

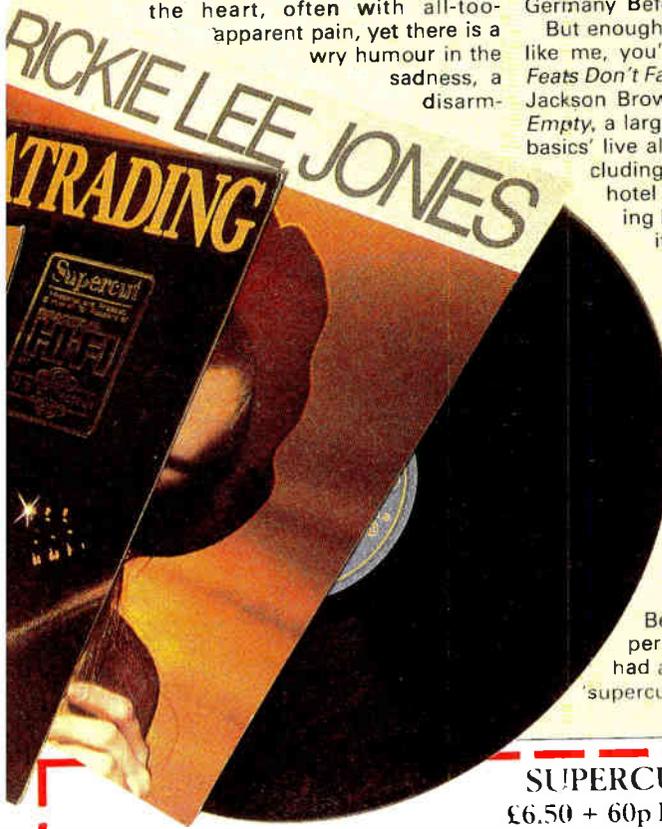
When we raided the EMI vaults for the second time, as well as Floyd, and the captivating brilliance of Earl Klugh, not to mention Wings (it has to be their best album), a Beatles title was mandatory. My personal favourite, *Abbey Road* had already appeared in at least two 'supercut' guises so a third seemed

overkill. That left *Rubber Soul*, *Revolver*, and *Pepper* and, after much deliberation, we opted for the latter. Eighteen years on, it's still a remarkable album. I'd have liked to have obtained the release for the original, un-Spectored, Glyn Johns' tapes for *Let It Be*, but problems encountered with the official releases, not least in obtaining Mr McCartney's approval, led me to conclude that would be a fruitless pursuit.

Finally, you may have noticed a lack of recommendations for the jazz titles in the list of 'Supercuts'. Don't let that dissuade you from trying them - it's just that the ones I have mentioned have been a personal indulgence. However, one jazz title I wouldn't be parted from is that quintessential 'cool' album, *Kind of Blue*: Miles at his pre-fusion best, with some classic tracks ('All Blues', 'Flamenco Sketches') and a fabulous line-up Coltrane, Adderley, Chambers, Bill Evans and James Cobb.

As you listen to this remarkable music and playing, it's worth recalling that Miles Davis conceived the settings just hours before the recording and arrived with the barest sketches to show what he wanted the group to play. They'd never played the pieces before the recording, so what you hear is pretty close to pure spontaneity - and pure genius. And when great musicians put something of that quality on record, anything that comes between you, the listener, and them is a disservice to all involved.

I'm delighted to see the whole range of surviving 'Supercuts' being made available once again: if there's one regret I have, it's that we didn't do more!
Peter Herring



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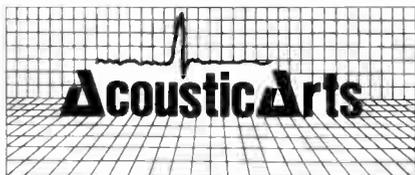
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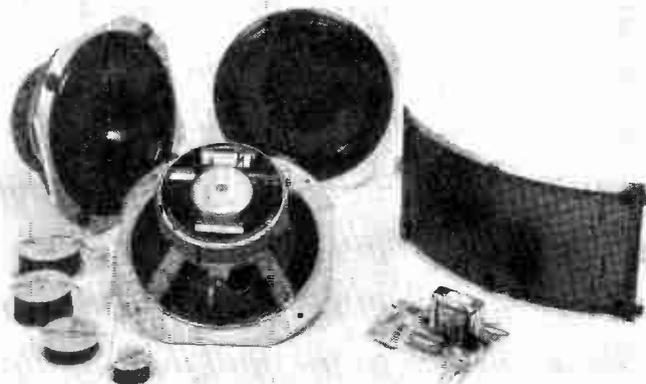
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GARY US BONDS
129 Standing in the Line of Fire
GREEN ON RED
133 No Free Lunch
GUADALCANAL DIARY
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ROY HARPER
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INFORMATION

RECORD RATINGS

Recording	Performance	
A	Very Good	1
B	Good	2
C	Moderate	3
D	Poor	4
H	Historical	H (or 1, 2, 3, 4 (pre-LP) as appropriate)

RECORD RATINGS Record ratings are designed to summarise our critics' findings, but should be noted in conjunction with the full reports - and taken as a guide only. Occasionally a record may be worthy of special mention, taking it beyond the 'very good' bracket. In such superlative cases a star is added to the letter or figure as appropriate: eg, B:1*, A*:2 or (exceptionally) A*:1*. © *Hi-Fi News & Record Review*. Any record reviewed in this magazine may be assumed to be stereophonic unless its number is accompanied by: (M) (monophonic) or (S) (stereo transcription). (R) against an item in the index above indicates a UK reissue. dmm = direct metal mastering. **RECORD FAULTS** 'Recording' ratings should be taken to refer to recorded quality, but do not take account of individual pressing faults encountered with our test samples. Readers may assume that a certain proportion of such variable faults will occur among commercial pressings. **CASSETTE NUMBERS** For cassette users, we incorporate equivalent cassette numbers, where we can locate them, in the heading blurbs of our LP reviews. These numbers are shown in brackets in ordinary (non bold) type after the LP number. (NC) indicates that no cassette is available.



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COMPACT DISC MONITOR

ARGO

Haydn: Nelson Mass, Bonny/Howells/Rolfe-Johnson/Roberts/LSO Chorus/City of London Sinfonia/Hickox (414 464-2) (40m 43s) This is an excellent performance of a sound edition of a work that is famous, but seldom performed so neatly and so warmly. The difficult task of recording large festive choral movements and more intimate aria- and ensemble-movements in juxtaposition has been minimised, distancing is good, and if the scale is grander than Handel would have expected of the work's first performers, it is at least well-proportioned. The acoustical setting struck me as a little dry and absorbent; it sounds rather like an empty concert-hall (say the Barbican). These, however, are tiny quibbles; the overall effect is extremely musical and enjoyable. **A**

Stephen Daw

CHANDOS

Alwyn: Fantasy-Waltzes, 12 Preludes, John Ogdon (CHAN 8399) (58m 00s) I find myself in complete agreement with PH's enthusiasm in his review of the black disc in November's *HFN/RR* (p115) for the *Fantasy-Waltzes* and the demanding *Preludes* of 1959. The DDD technique captures the warm Malting's reverberance whilst allowing one to hear what's going on even in the busiest of textures. A very attractive piano sound. **A**

Roger Bowen

Britten: Cello Symphony, Suite from Death in Venice (arr Bedford), Wallfisch/ECO/Bedford (CHAN 8363) (60m 55s) DH was a little disappointed by these recordings in his review of the LP (October p113). That of Stuart Bedford's cleverly culled Suite from *Death in Venice* 'fills out the texture too much', he wrote, and in the *Cello Symphony* 'the clarity of the cello sound seems artificial compared with that of the orchestra, and its integrated role is in no way reflected by the recording'. This latter point is particularly salient. Britten's scheme for the work is very much to blend the solo cello into the orchestral canvas and to retain its autonomy by the use of novel instrumental groupings (as the sleeve notes elucidate). Chandos have erred here by balancing the cellist as they would a conventional soloist, although the basic sound is grateful enough. As for the *Death in Venice* Suite, I find few problems at all - there's a spacious image with good, realistic balances. The loud music does 'crowd' a bit in the generous resonance of the church employed (Snape has the prototype acoustic!) but there's much to enjoy here. Performances are first-rate. I'd upgrade DH's B/C to A/B[:1*].

Ivor Humphreys

Poulenc: La Voix humaine, Farley/Adelaide SO/Serebrier (CHAN 8331) (42m 48s) For comment on the musical side of this issue, see p121 of the November issue. The sound on silver disc is highly impressive; it is immediate and very clean with a tone quality at once bright and warm. Carol Farley is set fairly close to the listener, and the overall acoustic is on the dry side - very appropriate, I suggest. The recording was made by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, who have licensed it to Chandos for CD manufacture, and to RCA for LP and cassette; an unusual arrangement. **A***

Andrew Keener

DECCA

Bach: Two- and Three-Part Inventions, Andras Schiff (pno) (411 974-2) (47m 04s) As I mentioned in my LP review (Oct p111) I am constitutionally disinclined to JSB on concert grand, but the delicacy and thoughtful approach of Andras Schiff to these two- and three-part inventions did win my admiration - if not overrule all my reservations. The CD adds that customary edge to the close, well-centred piano, without detracting from the warm, tonally delightful timbres of the big instrument. **A**

Roger Bowen

John Atkinson

Roger Bowen

Christopher Breunig

John Crabbe

Stephen Daw

Kenneth Dommett

John Freestone

Doug Hammond

Sue Hudson

Ivor Humphreys

Andrew Keener

Edward Seckerson

Bach: Violoncello Suites BWV 1007-1012, Lynn Harrell (414 163-2) (2 CDs) (127m 42s)

This is a review over which I take a deep breath before I commit myself to print, for I am unnerved that I find it difficult to externalise the sense of unease which I feel over these performances of some of my most favoured music of the solo repertoire. If I mentioned that the Sarabande of the G-major lacked for me a sense of impulsion or that the Preludes of the C-major and E^b failed to achieve that spontaneous, intense joyousness in the gesture which I feel they must have, or that the Bourées of the Suite in C were by turns too gruff and over-sweet, I would seem to damn performances which obviously have many points to commend them highly. But Lynn Harrell's view, when all's said and done, is not mine; if pressed to pinpoint it, it is that he makes too much of the surface of the music, and just misses (for me) its essential tension and the continuous flow of the musical argument; and I do not think I would be alone in denigrating the variety of tones he uses, particularly the 'glassy' smooth-veiled one in some passagework. Spanning sessions over two years, the recordings certainly make one feel in touch with the soloist, who is full centre and set close enough for his breathing to become an unwelcome distraction. This sharp focusing does not make for a sound with much depth to it and there was a sharp fading-off. **B**

Roger Bowen

Brahms: Violin Concerto, Boris Belkin/LSO/Ivan Fischer (411 677-2) (43s 24s) Suspicions are aroused when new recordings appear unexpectedly at mid-price (as did the LP here). Bowing does indeed become scratchy in (iii), and whilst this version does not reflect such eccentricities as Kremer's, the expression tends to be laboured in effect. Dig out older discs, such as Milstein's with the Philharmonia under Fistoulari, and there is a satisfying 'rightness', not to mention truer intonation. Fischer, I think, has paid careful attention to Brahms' orchestration, but Belkin's is very far from a momentous achievement. The Kingsway Hall sound is good but somehow lightweight, as if 'floating', ungrounded. **A/B[:2/3]**

Christopher Breunig

Chopin: Piano Concerto 2/Schumann: Piano Concerto in a, Schiff/Concertgebouw/Dorati (411 942-2) (65m 10s) Unlike DH, I welcomed the sensitive shaping in the first movement of the Schumann and elsewhere, so refreshing after the jog-trot of many others. At times some may feel Schiff's light, dry treatment of arpeggio writing a touch self-conscious, and I would see their point. But I detect no 'variable' commitment and concentration, only a lack of bombast which does, admittedly, border sometimes on the small-scale. Large tone is rarely employed, and I did find such literal placing of the writing around bar 300 of the Schumann first movement too pussy-footing to convey the generosity of the music. But elegance is a hallmark of these performances; if only the heavyweight orchestral style were more competition, not to mention the Concertgebouw acoustic, which has added lustre to countless records over the decades. Here the celebrated reverberation seems intrusive,

and I have to agree with DH in finding it occasionally thin and edgy. There is some very odd, breathy reed noise (?) at the close of the Schumann first movement. Balance is, however, exemplary. **B/C** Andrew Keener

Holst: The Planets, LPO/Solti (414 567-2) (49m 31s) By useful coincidence I had just invested in EMI's CD reissue of the LSO/Previn *Planets* of 1974, the memorable Bishop/Parker production on ASD3002, when Solti's arrived for review. Both versions gained 'demonstration disc' status in their time, and both digital transfers reveal more than ever why that was so. The sound given Solti is very typical of that Decca period - impressive, vivid to match the performance, with a measure of spotlighting to heighten the dramatic impact. It does, however, retain a tangible sense of acoustic and believable scale, which is more than can be said of many a recent, grotesquely overcooked Solti recording. If I prefer the Previn, it is for its rather more natural distancing and perspectives, the fact that where the LPO's brass plays loud and sounds bright, the LSO's plays loud and sounds pleasantly burnished. It has a warmth the Decca lacks.

I don't believe those who have enjoyed ASD3002 this past decade will be disappointed by the gains made on the CD transfer: a weightier, more 'impactful' LF, and greater brilliance in the middle frequencies. The HMV was always slightly finer-grained than the Solti, and that remains apparent.

There are five contenders now in the CD *Planets* stakes, and a quick personal assessment would find Rattle (EMI) wanting on the mastering; Gibson (Chandos) wanting on performance; Karajan (DG) wanting on recorded balance; and Solti, although preferable to those three, edged out by Previn with both a superior recording and a more sympathetic, better contrasted view of the score. **B**, therefore, for Sir Georg. Peter Herring

Mozart: Symphonies 40 & 41, CO of Europe/Solti (414 334-2) (54m 45s) The differences between the LP and CD versions are not as pronounced as one might expect. The latter reveals a little more depth and detail, but the spatial aspects are not much enhanced nor, in this instance, is there a distinctive improvement in the general quality of the sound. As with some other CD/LP comparisons, the sense of being carried forward into the orbit of the players is increased by CD. However, this is not always an advantage since it threatens the expected natural relationship between listener and orchestra. No revision of the quality of the performances, referred to in my review of the LP, seems to be called for. **A** Kenneth Dommett

Monteverdi: Vespers of 1610, Monteverdi Ch & Orch/Soloists etc/Gardiner (414 572-2) (2 CDs) (100m 4s) An analogue recording made by the Mallinson/Wilkinson/Morfoot team in St Jude-on-the-Hill Hampstead in 1974, the LP version of this John Eliot Gardiner *Vespers* was rated **A:2** in May '75, when slight unease was expressed over its tendency to fall between the stools of small-scale authenticity and over-romantic lushness. I find the performance and scale very acceptable, but am not so sure about the sound. It's most beautifully balanced, with excellent and imaginative use of near, middle-distant and far placings in an acoustic which nevertheless benefits from (and in my view actually needs) some out-of-phase quasi-ambient enhancement. But my main reservation concerns a certain slight 'grittiness', a suspicion of analogue tape overload, at several of the choral climaxes involving female voices. It may be just an aspect of clashing reflections in a church not really quite big enough for the forces involved, but whatever the reason it does sound a little uncomfortable at such points - albeit briefly. However, for the most part the sound is very good - sometimes almost magical - and of course that wonderful opening always thrills



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MUSIC

as one of the great splendours of European music. A/C:[1] John Crabbe

Rossini: Overtures – Volume 2, NPO/Chailly (414 407-2) (56m 28s) With the orchestra set at an agreeable distance in this recording, it would be unreasonable to expect all the separate threads of the texture to be clearly heard, and indeed the realistic blending of the sound here does not allow for this; nor do the works demand it, for to capture the theatrical nature of these vigorous, atmospheric performances there needs to be some approximation to the sound from a theatre pit. I cannot say that I liked the rather hard edge to the sound at *fortissimo* but this would not prevent me from buying this recommendable issue. A/B Doug Hammond.

DENON

JS Bach: Inventions & Sinfonias, Huguette Dreyfus (33C37-7566) (49m 49s) Although the 15 2-part Inventions and the 15 3-part Sinfonias are presented on this CD in numerical order, the booklet lists three other ways of ordering them. The advantage of CD, of course, for such a collection as this, is that the tracks can be arranged in any order, so the listener can choose between the various permutations tried by JSB. The digital recording dates from 1978 and the harpsichord, a warm-toned Hensch, is less close than on Huguette Dreyfus' earlier *Italian Concerto* recording for Denon (38C37 7233) which was also engineered by Peter Willemoes. Recommended for Ms Dreyfus' cool approach; the C-minor Sinfonia I feel to be particularly fine. A:[1] John Atkinson

Beethoven: Symphony 9, Soloists/Prague Chorus/Czech PO/Neumann (C37-7574) (69m 55s) Scarcely a flutter of truth lights this 1976 'live' Beethoven Ninth, where the Czech Philharmonic veers from sighing to ranting as if providing accompaniment for some awful melodrama. The arbitrarily paced Adagio suffers too from erratic wind intonation, and the abruptly cut Tokyo hall ambience. Oddly, the rests also suggest digital editing, decaying so rapidly to silence, but – with the hard-pressed solo quartet well to the fore (exactly as shown in the booklet photo) – this is a well engineered production, with enough fidelity to the timps that the attack can be felt in one's own ribcage! Unlistenable... A/B:[4] Christopher Breunig

Liszt: Dante Sonata, Mephisto Waltz, Sonata in b, Dezsó Ranki (32C27-7547) (55m 30s) This is Liszt playing of the very finest calibre – the most arm-breaking forests of notes are dispensed with scarcely a backward glance, and the forward direction of the music is tenaciously kept in the sights through all the occasionally wayward byways. Ranki's tone-palette is ravishing, his melody playing quite exquisite; and additionally he can generate such a torrent of excitement – the Sonata is hair-raising – whilst not overdoing any of the 'effects' too early. The Ishibashi Memorial Hall, Tokyo was used for the sessions in 1975 and the recording can certainly cope with the vast dynamic range of these pieces (Denon do warn, though, about some extraneous technical noises in pianissimo passages); tonally, however, the sound is less true, for the midrange is over-rich and 'plummy', with a corresponding loss in the upper frequencies, particularly at high dynamic levels. A/B:[1] Roger Bowen

Mahler: Symphony 2, Donath/Soffel/Chorus of Norddeutscher Rundfunk/Dale Warland Singers/Frankfurt RSO/Inbal (60C37-7603-4) (2 CDs) (85m 15s) This extraordinary work, with its undertones of Beethoven's 9th, was arguably the single most responsible for breaking the symphony away from the hegemony of sonata and other repetitive forms. It was not just that it had five movements, but the way in which Mahler created dynamic undercurrents of tension between move-

ments to shape and colour each part, and the organic nature of the music itself. In Mahler, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. To bring this symphony off successfully, careful linear interpretation is not enough: there has to be an overall vision. Specifically, the intense, dramatic outer movements need the contrast and lilting repose of the inner ones, and where this performance fails is in not letting go, especially in the second, which is taken ponderously.

The rest, however, is good, bordering on magnificent at times, with plenty of well sustained tension in those outer movements and some very fine orchestral playing, and with just a touch of the rough-cut quality noted in the Mahler 1 that began this cycle. The sound is very clear but close, with a rapid falling away from the front desks, as though viewed through a wide-angle lens. The soloists are too forward, but the balance of orchestra and chorus is uncommonly well handled, and what's missing in natural perspectives is amply repaid in clarity, consistency and vividly realistic dynamics. A/B:[2] Alvin Gold

Mendelssohn: A Midsummer Night's Dream, TMSO/Maag (33C37-7564) (44m 42s) An attempt has been made here with these rather mannered performances of Mendelssohn's incidental music to recreate something of the aura of a theatrical performance, but it does not seem totally to have succeeded. Although the orchestral sound has the boxed-in feel of a pit, it is also chunky and congested at full force. The acoustic is too dry to support the Nocturne fully and the upper strings and woodwinds are allowed much better focus than the basses. The vocalists have their own resonant acoustic set behind the orchestra (front-to-back information is excellent) but their clarity is thereby restricted. B/C Doug Hammond

Schumann: Papillons, Arabeske, Humoreske, Schiff (32C37-7573) (51m 53s) The problems of the sound on this issue stem equally from the piano used and the recording. The instrument has mediocre sustaining properties and brittle transients in *forte* chords. The dryness of the recording emphasises this and robs the music of some of its richness. Strangely for CD, presence is diminished in *pp* passages, affecting the Arabesque particularly badly. Clarity is the chief good quality and although the total sound is acceptable it is not a recording to which I would often return. C Doug Hammond

Strauss: Ein Heldenleben, Dresden Staatskapelle/Blomstedt (33C37-7561) (45m 56s) This is gorgeous. Don't be thrown by initial impressions of a somewhat portly (though nonetheless magnificent) hero, rather staid in his airs and graces. Dignity and amplitude (remember Barbirolli's HMV account?) are key factors in the approach of Blomstedt and his cultured old orchestra, and the benefits of their deep mahogany sound are immeasurable as Strauss takes his long nostalgic look back on a lifetime's living and loving. Technically, we are talking here of top-class demo quality: lifelike instrumental timbres, a string sound of magnificent depth and breadth (warm and refulgent from top to bottom), fat, contented brass pulled-in to thrilling effect (low, rasping trombones superbly caught) in the central battle sequence. I'll be taking this journey regularly. A* Edward Seckerson

Vivaldi: Il Pastor Fido (6 recorder sonatas), Maxence Larrieu/Robert Veyron-Lacroix (32C37-7572) (43m 03s) Once I became accustomed to hearing Vivaldi's shepherd-music played on the transverse flute, I enjoyed this recording, for all its rather dated approach to the music (heavy harpsichord plus modern flute, both playing rather stodgily); the main reason for this is the extremely agreeable warmth of Larrieu's

tone on the flute, which has been extremely faithfully reproduced on silver disc.

The recording comes from the early 1970s, and is said to contain certain minor technical imperfections, but I hardly noticed these. The balance is realistic, but I should have preferred a warmer acoustical setting, especially for this kind of performance. The flute playing – at times reminiscent of the legendary Marcel Moyse – remains for me the high point of this issue. B:[1] Stephen Daw

DG

Haydn: Symphonies 44 & 77, Orpheus CO (415 365-2) (43m 38s) The NY based chamber orchestra plays without a conductor, interpretative decisions democratically made by section leaders, with even a system of rotation there. With the deletion of Leppard's fine version, there is only the Dorati box-set alternative for the delectable Symphony 77, with its richly ornamented slow movement: the work is contrasted by the stark and contrapuntal 'Trauer-Symphonie' (its minuet, placed second, is in strict canon). The Adagio of this *Sturm und Drang* piece nicely illustrates the corporate sensitivity of Orpheus; they are sweeter, yet more delicate, than in the indulgently slow ECO/Barenboim, more tersely dramatic in the finale. If you have Leppard's No.77 I think you will be surprised by the differences, but must conclude that speeds chosen by Orpheus for (i) (iii) sound more natural. Recorded sound is beautifully clear, resonably resonant, though the acoustic of the State University hall is 'modern'. A/A*:[1*] Christopher Breunig

EMI

Beethoven: Symphonies 2 & 4/Philharmonia/Klemperer (CDC 7 47185-2) (72m 36s) **Symphonies 5 & 8/Philharmonia Klemperer (CDC 7 47187-2)** (67m 06s) Unquestionably an instance where the CD buyer scores handsomely: the coupling of the Second and Fourth, which together with the 'Eroica' and 'Pastoral' constitute the most desirable interpretations in Klemperer's Beethoven cycle, is unavailable on black disc. There, the splendid second is linked to the highly idiosyncratic Fifth, with its damp squib of a first movement. The equally excellent Fourth, on the other hand, shares a record with a rather heavy-footed, unsmiling First. With their sprightly good-humoured allegros and well-shaped, frequently very beautiful slow movements, these versions, age notwithstanding, I would adjudge the best thus far available in the comparatively limited Beethoven CD symphonic repertoire. And, of course, the 'minutes-for-money' value is extremely high, too. Toshiba-EMI have done a remarkable job in putting the 72 minutes of music on this disc.

Whatever its virtues of structural grasp and clarity of texture (I heard details I'd never noticed before), this Fifth cannot overcome the abidingly disappointing impression left by the first movement. The Eighth is better, but nevertheless a bit po-faced for what even the composer viewed affectionately as his 'little' symphony. There is surely more humour in it than Klemperer finds.

Sound of 20-plus years vintage once again comes up well in these CD transfers. If anything, it's a little better than that of the 'Eroica', reviewed November (p109). Well-defined, if lacking in extreme LF, the lucidity of the presentation is notable. Only the occasional *tutti* fails to open out and acquires a rough edge; otherwise all four recordings benefit from good width and depth within the stereo image, and I have always enjoyed the unforced quality of the HMV mixes of this vintage. Refined, if not dramatically impressive by today's standards.

B:[1*] and a firm recommendation, therefore, for Nos 2 and 4; but Nos 5 & 8 are a specialised taste that should be sampled first and, for me, one that can only warrant B:[2].

Peter Herring

COMPACT DISC MONITOR

Ravel: L'Enfant et les Sortilèges, Wyner, Taillon etc/Ambrosian Opera Ch/LSO/Previn (CDC 7471692) (41m 38s) This strongly reinforces my enthusiasm for the black disc, reviewed in August '82. Its musical excellence – Auger performing light fantastic miracles as the Fire, Princess and Nightingale, Previn's exquisite shaping of the instrumental interludes and the pure-voiced animals' chorus of forgiveness (so divorced from the crooning lachrymose sounds of Ansermet's Swiss singers – all remain undimmed. The production and engineering, however, are now revealed in their true glory for the first time. Instrumental timbres are wonderfully fresh, voices vivid but never edgy. Once or twice I detected a shift in level: studio atmosphere drops several decibels at the beginning of the Child's 'Toi, le coeur de la rose', though I suspect that this is the result, not of engineering but of necessary manipulation at the editing stage to ensure a successful musical join. Even so, some of the editing is uncharacteristically suspect: there is an ungainly example at the beginning of the 'Round Dance of the Bats', where the reverberation of the previous chord is cut dead. Nevertheless, an emphatic A*.

Andrew Keener

Sibelius: Violin Concerto/Sinding: Suite Op.10, Itzhak Perlman/Pittsburgh SO/Previn (CDC7 47167 2) (44m 34s) To tell the truth, I have always turned to Perlman's incredible *moto perpetuo* bowing in the first movement of the Sinding, preferring better integration of violin/orchestra in the Sibelius than Perlman seems happy to accept on records. The LP was always difficult to reproduce well, the 1979 Heinz Hall production tending to dense, thick orchestral sound. Even using the costly vdH MC10 cartridge I find the CD suggests a marginally cleaner, more open quality, digital mastering helping for once. The big finale climax in the Sibelius still 'crowds' but, for those who don't find Perlman too light-

weight in manner for this D-minor concerto, a recommendation. A/C Christopher Breunig

HARMONIA MUNDI

Offenbach: Suites pour deux violoncelles, Etienne Peclard/Roland Pidoux (HMC901043) (42m 24s) It is good to have such winning performances of these delightful works available on CD. The late 1979 recordings have transferred well, retaining all the warmth of the original and the excellent blend of the distinctly placed instruments. The acoustic has been well chosen to provide just the right degree of fullness for what might otherwise have been a rather thin, unvaried texture, and although there is a hint of meshing resonances at times, this is to my mind preferable to a Spartan alternative. If you don't know these works already, don't be put off by either the composer or the seemingly meagre instrumental resources. A Doug Hammond

Ravel: Sheherazade, Daphnis et Chloé – Suite 2, Pavane etc, Denize Lille PO/Casadesus (HMC 90064) (48m 21s) I described these analogue tapings as 'of good average quality' when the black disc appeared in June 1980. They seem better on silver; nothing is larger than life, and the overall quality is smooth and naturally balanced. The performances, however, while perfectly acceptable, are neither as imaginative nor as well played as the best. Nadine Denize produces some attractively hushed tone (her 'Je voudrais m'attarder au palais enchanté' is meltingly beautiful), but there is neither the strength of characterisation nor of word projection and clarity to rank with Baker or the deleted Marilyn Horne with Bernstein. When will CBS reissue this wonderfully sensuous account? *Daphnis* is all rather slow. Buy Slatkin (Suite 2, also without chorus) or preferably Dutoit (complete ballet) as alternative CD versions. Abbado's DG account of the second suite (with chorus)

– one of the great performances of this music – still awaits transfer to silver disc. B Andrew Keener

Poulenc: Stabat mater, Litanies à la vierge noire, Salve Regina, Lagrange/Ch & O National de Lyon/Baudo (HMC 905149) (42m 51s) This gives the illusion of mopping up a good deal of the reverberation I noted on LP (September p97). While the perspective continues to sound a little recessed, the ambience is fully credible, the quality smooth timpani firm; this is far better than some of the tingling nerve-end productions which continue occasionally to assail us from certain larger concerns. The masters are analogue, and there is some just-discernible tape hiss; it does no significant damage. The odd failing in the performance (flat sopranos in the opening setting of the *Stabat mater*) also matters little beside much that is so elegant and well-paced. A/B

Andrew Keener

The Singing Club, The Hilliard Ensemble (901153) (54m 33s) This is a stunning collection of so-called English 'convivial' rounds, ballads and 'catches' such as would have been heard in 17th century (onwards) coffee-houses and taverns. Items by Thomas Ravenscroft, William Lawes, Purcell, Thomas Arne and that multi-talented fellow Anonymous, have been collected into a winning recital, a mixture of the elegant, elegaic, witty and downright bawdy (read vulgar) and performed to such an elevated standard by The Hilliard Ensemble as could scarcely have been envisaged by their authors.

The recording would be well-nigh perfect if it didn't audibly 'clip' occasionally as though the mic gains or mixing desk output levels were set just too high. Most of the record is unblemished, however, so the top end of the necessarily split A*/D rating would apply, as would an unequivocal 1* for the performances. Ivor Humphreys

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MUSIC

NIMBUS

Vaughan Williams: Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis, Oboe Concerto, Five Variants on Dives and Lazarus, Concerto Grosso, Greensleeves, English String Orchestra/Boughton (NIM 5019) (61m 46s) The oboe is a little close in the concerto, and the UHJ Ambisonics encoding pulls the image to one side on headphones – an effect particularly noticeable with the soloists in *Dives and Lazarus* – but the balance is otherwise unexaggerated in this third of Nimbus' excellent string recordings from the Great Hall of the University of Birmingham. The surrounding ambience doesn't obscure, but adds a rich bloom to the cellos and basses – as in those splendid '70s EMI Fremaux recordings made in the same hall. I have to admit that comparing this with the Barbirolli Tallis *Fantasia* on a *Hi-Fi Today* Supercut LP (see p98) reveals the edge, both regarding performance and sound, to be with the 22-year-old recording. On CD, however, this Nimbus set is yet to be rivalled, and the generous programme of 'hits', including the relatively unfamiliar Concerto Grosso from 1950, makes recommendation mandatory. **A[:1]**

John Atkinson

PHILIPS

Brahms: Piano Quintet, André Previn/Musikerein Quartet (412 608-2) (41m 06s) The new LP offers the best sound of all current versions, with detailed, rock-steady imaging. The engineers have moved in close to the performers, and consequently with the CD I find the strings' fortissim edgy, and the piano not free of clanginess. I rather feel the LP offers a more controlled sound, but that is pitting my current £1015 tonearm/cartridge against a superseded CD player. **A/B**

Christopher Breunig

Dvorak: Piano Quintets in A, Op.5 and Op.81, Richter/Borodin Qt (412 429-2) (68m 32s) Better value than the LP set (see p111). Recorded live at the Rudolfinum during the 1982 Prague Festival, the LP distances the players. The CD brings them into the foreground and opens up the space around them. Neither sounds wholly natural but the CD puts the piano in a better perspective and gives a stronger impression of ensemble than the comparatively warmer but less well focused LPs. **A**

Kenneth Dommett

Dvorak: Symphonies 7, 8 & 9, Minnesota Orchestra/Marriner (412 542-2) (2 CDs) (116m 41s) What looks at first sight to be a handy package of Dvorak's last three symphonies turns out to be less so, with Symphony 8 split between two discs. This reduces cost but at the price of illogicality and inconvenience. Symphony 8 was recorded in 1981 and receives the more idiomatic performance and more distinguished recording, but all these readings share similar characteristics and have a consistent sonic personality. Although the Minnesota Orchestra does not create a body of string tone that is of the first order, the recording itself diminishes the depth and solidarity of the sound, dulling the brilliance of the orchestra at full tilt and adding some edge. Placing and definition are not outstanding but detail is sufficiently conveyed to allow deficiencies of ensemble and technique to be clearly heard. The spaciousness of the acoustic allows these essentially anecdotal accounts to have a relaxed charm, but I would not recommend this set as a first choice. **B/C**

Doug Hammond

Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue, An American in Paris, Piano Concerto, Pittsburgh SO/Previn (412 611-2) (63m 41s) 'Not enough bite to the strings' said KD in his review of the black disc last month (p 123), but on CD the strings are suitably realistic for this not to be a criticism. The staging is also in the main natural, with wind set back in the image without exaggeration of the soloists, apart from some occasional anomalies in the

piano position. And Previn, too, directing from the piano is on fine form; the *Rhapsody* sounds oddly unfamiliar after the plethora of 'authentic' versions, but the Piano Concerto, with its joyously bluesy adagio (an excellent solo trumpet), must take pride of place on CD. The transplanted *American* also sparkles, with an even more idiomatic reading than the Cincinnati Orchestra under Kunzel on Telarc, my previous recommendation. Excellent value for money, also. **A[:1]**

John Atkinson

Handel: The Four Coronation Anthems/Excerpts from Judas Maccabeus, Rodgers/Denley/Rolfe-Johnson/Dean/ASM Chorus and Orchestra/Marriner (412 733-2) (43m 04s) The original occasions for which all of this festival music was written were grand state affairs, and both the sense of excitement and the involving feeling of spectacle at a close but proper distance come across well on this CD. Laszlo Heltay's splendidly accurate choir may be a shade too aggressive, but balance is good and they need to have this kind of attack to fit the modern instruments.

The CD editing has tamed the over-exciting signal which has spoiled an otherwise excellent LP, so that this is a clear first choice of the two. Some splendid moments, and very good throughout – a real musical achievement. **A***

Stephen Daw

Handel Solomon (cpte), Watkinson/Argenta/Hendricks/Rodgers/Jones/Rolfe-Johnson/Varcoe/MonteVerdi Choir/English Baroque Soloists/Gardiner (412 612-2) (2 CDs) (128m 19s) The recording of this work has been so very well managed that it will not only continue to impress on repeated hearings: it will promote them. The performance is also extremely beautiful – JEG's best Handel to date (even), so that repeated hearings will be *de rigueur* in my household, at least. From the tender aria 'Beneath the vine or fig-tree's shade' to the dramatic contrasts of Act III, all sounds continuous and fluent, yet careful listening will reveal the subtly judicious editing that has been positively employed to improve what must be for many a delightfully musical experience on disc. Demonstration material. **A***

Stephen Daw

Haydn: Cello Concertos 1 in C & 4 in D Julian Lloyd Webber/ECO (412 793-2) (52m 35s) The LP review (p113) mentions aspects of the performance that may have caused problems in preparing the recording, but I find the CD slightly preferable; perhaps this is because here the ECO really do sound more like a chamber orchestra than they have on LP – in real life they certainly do. However, the soloist is still very much to the forefront; I find his image too wide for that of the orchestra, but his tone seems to have been accurately captured. There are beautiful moments – chiefly in the slow movements – but I must confess to having only partly enjoyed much of this. **B**

Stephen Daw

Haydn: Symphonies 93, 94 and 96, Concertgebouw/Davis (412 871-2) (67m 23s) This represents excellent value. In his July 1982 review of the LP set of all the Salomon symphonies, PB extolled the sound quality of these three, the only digitally recorded items in the album, and he was full of praise for Colin Davis' outstanding performances. The CD enhances all these qualities – the surprise of the 'Surprise' is sufficiently electrifying to make anyone sit up – and the warm, naturalistic sound helps the listener appreciate afresh the eloquent playing of the Concertgebouw and the exquisite detail. **A/A***

Kenneth Dommett

Reinecke: Flute Concerto/Busoni: Diver-timento/Nielsen: Flute Concerto, Aurèle Nicolet LGO/Masur (412 728-2) (50m 14s) A first-rate CD version here of a fine black-disc issue. The resonant acoustic is not quite as

transparent as on vinyl but there is adequate compensation in the vibrant orchestral timbres and the clearly focused placings. Front to back setting is particularly good, though the dynamic range does not seem outstanding for a CD production. The breathiness of the flute is well caught, though, and there is a tangible sense of presence. Well recommended. **A**

Doug Hammond

Schubert: Lieder, Jessye Norman/Phillip Moll (412 623-2) (41m 55s) Jessye Norman has the weight of voice to make the dramatic songs really impressive. Thus 'Die Allmacht' and 'Gretchen am Spinnrade' present no problems to the artist. 'Erlkönig' is a disappointment. She certainly differentiates between the characters by changing the colour of her voice, but there is no sense of building up to a climax. She starts far too dramatically and thus lessens the impact of 'Erlkönig hat mir ein Leids getan!'. She is inclined, too, to snatch at certain phrases. She floats her voice beautifully in the less dramatic songs and thus 'Auf dem See' sounds really lovely. Phillip Moll is the excellent accompanist and the recording is vivid with excellent piano tone and good balance between the two artists. The whole recital lasts just under 42 minutes, which is rather short measure. **A[:2]**

John Freestone

Vivaldi (arr) Guitar Concertos after RV 580 for 4 guitars in b/after RV 532 for 2 guitars in G/after RV 356 for solo guitar in a/after RV 425 for 2 guitars in C/after RV 93 in D for solo guitar, Los Romeros/ASM/Iona Brown (412 624-2) (47m 37s) These arrangements have been made with some degree of amplification or editorial readjustment in mind, surely; so to report that the sound strikes me as unnatural is possibly not altogether relevant. But there is point in such a comment, because music doesn't merely work in terms of pure volume: there are other aspects of sound such as scale (breadth, height, depth); as Peter Holman and Roy Goodman have recently shown on a Hyperion record (imminent on CD, I understand), Vivaldi's mandolin and lute-ensemble concertos were written with these very considerations in mind. For me, the energetically expressive, but boxed-in, sound of ASM simply cannot sound right with the eloquent drawing-room manner of the ever-musical Romeros family; it almost becomes an acoustic concerto. Interesting, but not to this reviewer's taste. **C**

Stephen Daw

RCA

Mendelssohn: A Midsummer Night's Dream, Judith Blegen/Frederica von Stade/PO/Ormandy (RD82084) (51m 42s) Ormandy's 1976 recording of the incidental music to *MND* presents a fairly complete version of the music available, without being laboriously tied to the text. It is certainly worth issuing on CD, for the playing of the Philadelphia is generally excellent and although the recording balance seems artificial and the sound takes a little time to warm up and acquire its later expansiveness and detail, it is nonetheless genial and worthy of repeated listening. The vocal items do not have much of a theatrical feel to them but they are captured with precision and do not mar the generally affable impression. **B**

Doug Hammond

TELDEC

Brahms: String Quartets in a & c, Op.51, Alban Berg Quartet (8.43115 ZK) (59m 50s) Recorded by the original members of the Alban Berg Quartet in 1978, this coupling comes in a 3-LP set with Op.67, and the three Piano Trios (Teldec 6.35646 dmm). The CD transfers are at a high level, but with care edginess can be minimised. A successful translation from analogue LP sound quality which, superficially bright and forward, suffers from some inner constriction, this takes on a more hollow, unreal character 'in silver'. **A/B**

Christopher Breunig

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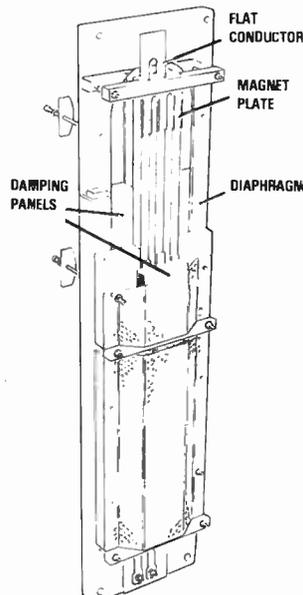
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JS BACH: Clavier Concertos in d (BWV 1052) & in f (1056) □ 'Italian Concerto' (971) for Clavier solo
Mindru Katz (pno)/Pro Arte Orch/Newstone
PRT 'Collector' GSGC 7061 (ZCGC 7061)
 Reissue from 1965

Mindru Katz played this 20-year-old Bach programme with a pleasant blend of energy and lyricism. The lines are lovingly but vigorously shaped and the whole effect is extremely agreeable, while Harry Newstone managed the accompaniments with a great deal of care and sympathy. I was reminded of the best sections of those old Saga *Brandenburgs*.

I didn't hear the original Pye version of this recording, but it appears to have been extremely well resuscitated for this reissue: the sound is good and warm, the balance very sensible, and the ensemble has a well-judged width if not much depth. The new pressing is very professionally done, too, with silences which show how well produced modern records can be – on my copy anyway. [B:1] **Stephen Daw**

JS BACH: The Six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello (BWV 1007-1012)
Heinrich Schiff (vlc)
EMI EX 27 00773 (2 recs) digital (EX 27 00775)

At last we have a recording of Bach that is really worthy of his tercentenary. It is excellent, with a real individuality of performance that may change future interpretations – and it feels right in spirit. Heinrich Schiff seems to me to have the same visionary quality as did Casals in this music. He has as much of a sense of the dance as Anner Bylisma, yet an even better idea of the prelude; he seems to me to see far more deeply into the music than Tortelier and other younger cellists. In short, it's all here.

The performances are helped by a really sensitive recording that is so natural that I could easily picture the movements of the bow on the strings in front of me, as though I were the sole listener in a warmly responsive acoustic. The sound has just the right scale and presence, and I came away from this performance feeling that I had witnessed a real musical event. I shall use Schiff's interpretations again and again as I try – in the light of them – to understand these wonderful Suites better; and I shall hurry to hear the performer live in Bach at the first opportunity.

The documentation – by the brilliant German Bach-scholar Georg von Dadelsen, who must have been tempted out of his professorial retirement to write the informative notes – is also of especial excellence. My most enthusiastic Bach review yet for *HFN/RR*. [A+:1*] **Stephen Daw**

JS BACH: Sonatas for Flute (BWV 1020-6, 1030-1035) □ Partita in a for Unaccompanied Flute
Jean-Pierre Rampal (flt)/Trevor Pinnock (hpd)
Roland Pidoux (vlc)
CBS 12M 39746 (2 recs) digital (12 T 39746)

Sometimes the placing in ensemble of an international virtuoso who has not hitherto collaborated much with artists of equal calibre, results in glorious musical achievements, and this is a good example of such mutual enhancement. Jean-Pierre Rampal must have been playing Bach's flute music for decades – always tastefully, often with dependable accompanists like the cellist Roland Pidoux, featured here – but seldom with such internationally established harpsichordists as Trevor Pinnock. On the other hand, Pinnock recorded Bach's flute music with Stephen Preston quite early in his career, and he too has no doubt played it frequently since, probably usually with soloists using period instruments. Well, the association has resulted in a very good performance, in which Pinnock's sense of poetry-within-a-texture enriches Rampal's beautiful sense of shape within a horizontal line of melody.

The recording is very well balanced and proportioned and the attractive tonal shades of all three instruments have come through very well. Some of the music itself may not be by Bach, but that which isn't certainly comes from his immediate circle, so that he probably knew it where he didn't write it. Very enjoyable. The recording just lost its star because I found that it sounded a shade too weak in the outer frequencies to be realistic. After extended listening, it began to lose my attention despite the good performances throughout. [A:1*] **Stephen Daw**

JS BACH: Cantata 208 'Was mir behagt'
Emma Kirkby (sop: Pales)/Jennifer Smith (sop: Diana)/Simon Davies (ten: Endymion)/Michael George (bass: Pan)/Parley of Instruments/Goodman
Hyperion A66169 (NC)

Roy Goodman and his excellent ensemble of singers and players give us the best recording yet of Bach's relatively well-known *Hunting Cantata*. The aim has been to recreate the original 1713 Weisselfels performance, which took place in the 'Jägerhof' – a building that will have had rooms no larger than any ordinary Georgian townhouse. Therefore all is small-scaled, but luxurious, to suit the style of a Lordling's birthday in the winter.

The recording is clear and open in quality, with immediate, realistic sounds and a slightly 'outdoor' aspect; this may suit the subject-matter of the cantata, but I should marginally have preferred a rather more absorbent (ie, a less ecclesiastical) setting. Extremely effective is the continuo realisation: the only instrument of double-bass pitch is the archlute, here most effectively recorded and played by Nigel North. We even know that there were lutenists and harpists employed at this period in Weisselfels.

The cantata has a bonus in the form of a sinfonia and a postlude-minuet incorporated from an early version of the first *Brandenburg Concerto*. The late Professor Thurston Dart and others had suggested a joint origin for the Concerto and the Cantata, and despite the somewhat tenuous nature of this theory the combination certainly sounds well here; the concerto movements are both very well played indeed. Another bouquet for Hyperion. [A:1*] **Stephen Daw**

JC BACH: Concerti
Concerto in F for Oboe & Orchestra (Terry rev 287/4) □ Concerto in D for Flute & Orchestra (T286/7) □ Concerto in c for Harpsichord & Orchestra (attrib JCB by C de Nys, 1970)
Mario Loschi (ob)/Gastone Tassinari (flt)/Luigi-Fernando Tagliavini (hpd)/Orch of the Milan Angelicum/Umberto Cattini
Harmonia Mundi (France) HMA 55349 (HMA 40349)

This 1971 recording has not previously been available in the UK. Elsewhere it constitutes a reissue in the low-price *Musique d'Abord* series, and it is modestly priced here, too. However, modest pricing is no excuse for unsatisfactory musicianship, such as we hear from the flute soloist (whose breathing and technique are inadequate) and the oboist, who is safer, but hardly of real solo calibre. In contrast, the orchestra and the solo harpsichordist play this interesting programme attractively; the Italianate grace and suavity of the Milanese musicians seems to suit the style of the cosmopolitan young Bach – for these are youthful works. The most interesting piece is the Concerto in C-minor for harpsichord, which was apparently ascribed to JC Bach when the record was made, but sounds much more like a work by an older Berlin composer (WF Bach, perhaps, or Kirnberger?). It is well-written, and the performance is stylish.

All three concertos sound as though they were taped in the same hall or studio at the same sessions. The sound is quite rich and

lively, but although we can easily hear the distinctive Italian styles of the woodwind soloists, the overall picture is rather broad and opaque, so that to a modern listener the sound may be a little shallow and uninviting. But it's an interesting recording despite the various shortcomings. [B/C:2/3]

Stephen Daw

BEETHOVEN: Piano Sonatas No.2 in A □ No.4 in E^b
Emil Gilels (pno)
DG 415 481-1 digital (415 481-4)

Gilels' masterly technique gives a very spacious feel to these readings – tempi seem broader than they are, when Gilels suggests time for every detail to register. He draws upon a very wide dynamic range: the triplets flow easefully in Op.7 (i) when the first fortissimo comes as a 'wham' (perfectly counterbalanced by the delicacy of pianissimi in the next bar). The slow movement from Op.2, where Gilels discounts two second-half repeats observed by Brendel and Arrau, perhaps alludes to Haydn's 'Clock' here; certainly the first dozen bars deserve the closest study with both score, and with other recordings. Note, for instance, the graded trills, Gilels making no attempt at identical 'echoing' as Schnabel did. Nor does he impose characterisation on the music in the Schnabel manner; rather, such details as the phrases matching two exquisite acrobats in Op.2 (i) emerge as solutions to the pianistic demands.

You may miss Kempff's wayward lightness of touch, Michelangeli's sophisticated play with rhythmic patterns in Op.7 (iv), but Gilels' powerful approach has, as another reviewer says, 'a cumulative eloquence' taking one 'by stealth'. Jesus Christus Kirche recordings from 1984, close balanced, catch the luminosity of the soft playing, the crystalline purity in allegretti. [A:1*]

Christopher Breunig

BEETHOVEN: Cello Sonatas, in A, Op.69 □ in D, Op.102.2
Jacqueline Du Pré (vlc)/Stephen Bishop-Kovacevich (pno)
CFP 41 44941 (41 44944)
 Reissue from 1966

Those who missed the long-deleted original (HQS1029) must have wondered why it remained such a touchstone for critics. An Abbey Road production, it could be used to illustrate the playing of Jacqueline Du Pré at its most subtle and eloquent, eg. the short Adagio from Op.69, and the delightful easing into the final Vivace; or the raptness of the conclusion to the later slow movement, with pianissimi of such control and intimate beauty that you scarcely dare breathe. But this disc offers far more: a special rapport between the two young artists, the selfless support from Stephen Bishop – selflessness though in the work of both performers. Their dedicated recording has been remastered to improve apparent separation and presence. Piano-tone is clearer, the only unwelcome addition is a husky, buzzy edge to the cello. [A/B:1*] **Christopher Breunig**

BRAHMS: Piano Quintet in f
André Previn (pno)/Musikverein Qt
Philips 412 608-1 (412 608-4)

The success of Previn's 1973 South Bank Festival collaboration with the Yale Quartet led to a spontaneously scheduled EMI recording. An interesting account, one not entirely superseded here, although the advantages of having Vienna-based string players in Brahms could scarcely be denied. This is the more concentrated performance – broader, less lightweight in the scherzo. Some of Previn's exchanges in (i) remain gently affable, less 'authoritative' than one might wish, but for those preferring the most serious view of the Quintet there is the

Pollini/Quartetto Italiano, gruffly engineered, and pressed on both Philips and DG labels. (See CD pages for sonic evaluation.) [A:1]

Christopher Breunig

BRUCKNER: Symphony No.3
Bavarian RSO/Kubelik
CBS IM 39033 digital (IMT 39033)

The most recent version of the Bruckner Third was Inbal's of the 1873 first completion; Kubelik goes for the excellent 1878 score, as edited by Fritz Oeser. A disadvantage – hard to overcome, but not impossible, as Karajan's engineers showed – is the side-break in the *Adagio*, here at letter K. Kubelik gives an impressive, warm reading; he is inclined to speed up and slow down more than necessary, but he secures a euphonious and at times thrilling performance. Balance tends to favour the brass, though much of the quieter detail emerges clearly (if perhaps aided by the producer's controls). The recording lacks something in dynamic range, and the impression is of a rather narrow orchestral layout. Despite the digital recording there is quite a bit of hiss, and the surfaces on my copy are popply at times. Kubelik's affection for the symphony is evident in the care with which he gauges colour and detail, and the rhythmic articulation is firm. I do feel some lack of appreciation of the overall design, but there is much to enjoy here. [B:2]

Peter Branscombe

CAVALLI: Xerse

Judith Nelson (sop)/Agnès Mellon (sop)/Jill Feldman (sop)/René Jacobs (c-ten)/John Elwes (ten)/Richard Wistreich (bass)/Concerto Vocale/Jacobs Harmoni Mundi HMC 1175-78 (4 recs) (HMC 401175-78)

The musical career of Cavalli coincides almost exactly with the progress and development of operatic style through the 17th century. In keeping with the genre, the action of *Xerse* centres around the comic situations provided by two sets of mismatched lovers, an old nurse, the trusted eunuch, the frivolous page, etc, and René Jacobs' realisation has some lovely light touches, pointing the humour. The weight of the drama is carried in recitatives and brief arias, but Cavalli has benefited from Monteverdi and uses instrumental interludes, such as the trumpet flourishes in Act 2, to good ends. The singing is uniformly good, the instrumental support superb and the pace judged to gain maximum effect. A very extensive booklet provides notes and libretto.

A judicious amount of 'staging' adds some vitality to the recording, which has a very appealing poise and verve. The balance between the voices and between soloists and instruments is natural and the forward image is not out of place. [A:1*]

Roger Bowen

CHOPIN: The Four Scherzos □ *Polonaise-Fantaisie*
Claudio Arrau (pno)
Philips 412 610-1 digital (412 610-4)

Once again, the sound of Arrau's Chopin strikes me as immeasurably more alluring than his sense. No-one makes the *Molto piu lento* of the first Scherzo gleam more seductively, yet the melodic notes leave a vertical, rather than a horizontal, impression: the curve of the melody is expressed haltingly, or so it seems beside Richter or Ashkenazy (the latter in particular floats the line with a smooth sense of forward movement, yet his tempo is scarcely faster than Arrau's). For 'leggiero' in the RH quavers of the middle section of No.2, Arrau reads 'staccato', and the resultant pitter-patter sounds fussy beside Richter's sudden flight of fancy. Nevertheless, Arrau's refusal to dally throughout this episode makes a welcome change from some of the brown studies to be found elsewhere.

His reading of the C-sharp-minor is likely

to arouse the strongest controversy. Here, the striding circle of fifths from bar 91 takes on a Brahmsian warmth and seriousness, and some will find the quaver *leggiero* bars oddly static, for all the ravishing sound of the chords between. The whole thing is very measured indeed – hardly *Presto con fuoco* – though such an approach brings considerable grandeur to the bars before the coda. In short, what I miss most in these dignified, thoughtful readings is any real response to the anger behind much of the music and its heroic challenges. The wisdom of years is all very well, but a bit of youthful impulsiveness wouldn't come amiss in these pieces. Fine recording, immediate yet unaggressive. [A:3]

Andrew Keener

CHOPIN: Four Ballades □ *Four Scherzos* □ *Sonata No.2 in b, Op 35* □ *Sonata No.3 in b, Op 58*
Artur Schnabel (pno)
RCA RL 85460(3) (3 recs) (RK 85460(3))
Reissues from 1951-61

As an owner of a very deteriorated but very revered 1961 copy of the *Sonatas*, I joyously welcome these digitally remastered recordings. Whatever one's views on the acceptability or not of some of Schnabel's practices in some of the works, one cannot but be bowled over by the power and drive behind these performances of some of the war-horses of the piano repertoire. The *Ballades* and *Scherzos* date from 1959 and 1956 respectively and the sonatas from 1959 and 1961. The remastering has been successful, and although some of the blemishes of the originals could not be altered, the overall quality is more than acceptable. Many thanks to RCA! [B:1*]

Roger Bowen

CHOPIN: The Waltzes
Dimitri Alexeev (pno)
EMI EL 27 02891 digital dmm (EL 27 02894)

Alexeev here rearranges the Waltzes out of their opus numbers into a satisfyingly coherent key-scheme, as he does at his recitals. He has a pleasingly fresh interpretative approach to the Waltzes, too, not hesitating to re-align the relationship between melody and accompaniment for each piece – sometimes letting the finely-wrought upper line float on a sustaining web of pulsating harmony (Op.64, C-sharp-minor), other times rhythmically articulating the left hand quite sharply (*Grande Valse brillante*). The melody playing is a joy too, moving between a heavy legato and a sparkingly percussive attack, as in the G-flat of Op.70. The contentious issue of rubato at the end of bars is equally subservient to the context.

The subtleties of Alexeev's playing comes through well on the digital recording, which has sufficient depth and body whilst not masking the finer points with over-reverberance – and the centre-forward placing gives a good presence. [A:1*]

Roger Bowen

DVORAK: Symphony No.7
CSO/Levine
RCA RL 85427 digital (RK 85427)

This is one of the most enjoyable performances of this symphony I have heard in a long time. Levine draws the lines strongly and keeps the rhythms taut, while never letting go of the essential Czech element in Dvorak's music. In fact this is a remarkably 'nationalistic' sounding performance to hear from non-Czech forces; no hint of the Brahms syndrome here. As for the sound, this is also excellent, spacious with a good sense of depth and the broad perspective one would expect from concert-hall acoustics. Details are clear but not analytically so, and the balance between wind and strings much as one might expect to hear in the flesh. The strings might possibly have enjoyed a touch more sparkle, and on my copy there is an unfortunate crackle in the slow movement that one could well do

without; but on balance this is one of the most successful Dvorak LPs for quite a while. [A:1]

Kenneth Dommett

DVORAK: Piano Quintets in A, Opp.5 & 81
Sviatoslav Richter (pno)/Borodin Qt
Philips 412 429-1 (2 recs) digital (412 429-4)

The early Piano Quintet is something of a collector's item, though it is by no means typical of its composer. Dvorak wrote it c1872 and revised it extensively in 1887 with a view to publication. Not surprisingly, its overtly Wagnerian tone failed to please him and he rejected it, composing the familiar masterpiece instead. The idea of performing both in one concert is interesting if somewhat indulgent, and on record turns out to be rather a pricey luxury when spread over four sides, none of which runs to more than a few seconds over 19 minutes. In fact, the 13 minute first movement of Op.81 is given an entire side to itself.

As to the performances, one will either enthuse over Richter's vigorous concertante style or be rebuffed by its apparent aggressiveness. I happen to find it exhilarating, and the Borodin Quartet's empathy with the pianist an added bonus. The recording was made at a public concert in Prague, but there is not much in the way of extraneous noise. The current alternatives – Curzon/VPO Quartet on a 1963 Decca reissue, and Bishop-Kovacevich with BPO Octet members on Philips – offer totally different interpretations, and sizeable fillers too. Curzon sounds elderly, but the Philips is most attractive and is perhaps the safer (and cheaper) choice. See CD review p107 for an assessment of sound quality. [B:1]

Kenneth Dommett

GERSHWIN: Fascinating Rhythm – I got rhythm □ Someone to watch □ Nice work □ The Man I Love □ Porgy & Bess – 3 excerpts □ Liza □ Preludes for piano □ A Foggy Day □ American in Paris
Jean-Pierre Rampal (flut)/John Steele-Ritter (pno)/Randy Kerber (synth)/LAPO/Colombier
CBS FM 39700 (FMT 39700)

The success of this splendid disc of Gershwin flute arrangements must be attributed as much to the arranger, Michel Colombier, as to Jean-Pierre Rampal himself. Some beautifully imaginative sounds have been created as a result of a fine ear for the correct medium, be it piano, guitar, drums, synthesiser or orchestra, to accompany the flute, and by the careful manipulation of a warm, rounded, plummy acoustic. The latter's reverberation, for example, is used to create just the right degree of murkiness in *A Foggy Day in London Town*. It also lends the flute enough body to create a pleasing, dream-like quality which is particularly in tune with the ethereal tones of the synthesiser.

All the accompanists, whether John Steele-Ritter on piano, Randy Kerber on synthesiser, or various members of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, are as sensitive to these fine arrangements as is Rampal. James Walker on alto flute in 'Bess, you is my woman now', also performs effectively in a clever dialogue with Rampal, but although the two are well separated across the soundstage the former merges too easily with the orchestra and sadly becomes inaudible at times. But don't be put off by this minor blemish – this is a fascinating disc. [A:1*]

Barbara Jahn

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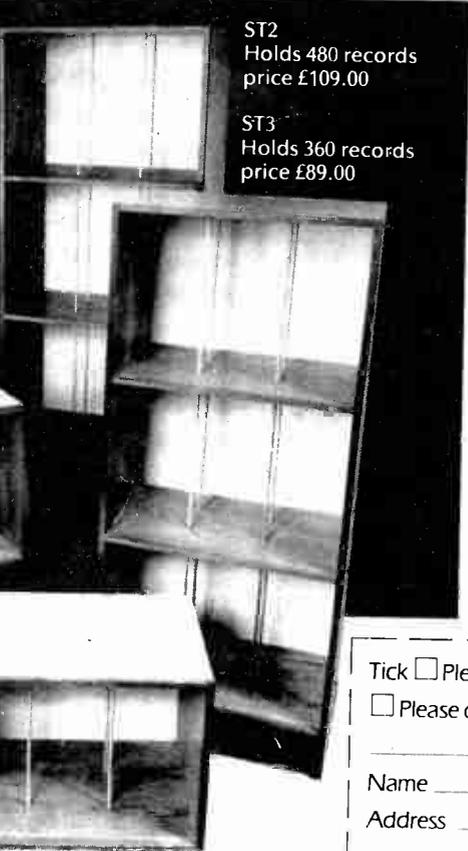
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series is proving to be an enduring pleasure, and it seems a terrible pity that L'École d'Orphée are not much more famous both nationally and internationally. It worries me little that the clarinet suite (*Overture*) sounds slightly insecure, or that not all of the solo playing is exactly as I should wish it to be: I am not directing the operation. What does matter is that throughout the series there is a sense of real dedication and care, as well as consistent interpretative skill and good taste. In this last pair of records, special credit must go to the founder of the group, John Holloway, who gives one of the very best accounts of the Violin Sonatas that I have ever heard – particularly of the marvellous D-major one, which is notoriously tricky both simply to play and to interpret convincingly.

CRD have yet again produced a very clean acoustical background and a positive, if intimate scale and balance. Although there has been a change of venue, it could hardly have been more sympathetically done. A fitting climax to an exciting series; any decent record library should include this series, which is enhanced by excellent documentation from Anthony Hick. [A*:1*]

Stephen Daw

HANDEL: Julius Caesar

Baker/Masterson/Walker/Jones/Bowman/Tomlinson/ENO Orch/Mackerras
EMI EX 27 02323 (3 recs) digital dmm (EX 27 02325)

A distinctive part of Janet Baker's career, perhaps not much known to her wider following, has been her stage interpretation of Handel's male heroic roles, designated originally for castrato voices. Although she has now given up opera, the making of a video version of the English National Opera's *Julius Caesar* provided the opportunity for this recording – sponsored, as were the company's previous recordings, by the Peter Moores Foundation.

The recordings made in the Coliseum (the company's home), including those of Wagner's *Ring*, have seemed to me to fight against the acoustic. *Julius Caesar*, however, had a studio recording, and the vocal sound and the words of Brian Trowell's English translation come over with exemplary quality. The only trouble is that the voices are forward and detached, while the orchestra is damped down and seems to come from another location. The result may suit a video presentation, but is not ideal for a purely aural one.

I suspect, nevertheless, that a considerable public will not permit that to lessen their welcome. Not only Dame Janet, but Valerie Masterson (as Cleopatra), Della Jones, Sarah Walker and John Tomlinson show their gifts for characterisation as well as singing. Mackerras, a skilled Handel conductor, catches the depths and contrasts of one of the composer's finest operas, and I regret only his rewriting of some of the *da capo* sections at higher pitch – occasionally forcing both Baker's and Masterson's voices uncomfortably. The orchestra plays excellently: bravo the solo horn! [B:1]

Arthur Jacobs

HANDEL: Solomon

Watkinson/Argenta/Hendricks/Rodgers/Jones Rolfe-Johnson/Varvov/MonteVerdi Ch/English Bar Soloists/Gardiner
Philips 412 612-1 (3 recs) digital (412 612-4)

Here is a glorious, pageant-like English oratorio, superbly performed and magnificently recorded. If I shall not discard the old Handel Society of New York recording under Stephen Simon, it is mainly because it includes music that Eliot Gardiner omits (there is not the space here to discuss the complicated history of the score and its revisions). The new performance is in every way excellent. A recording of such precision, naturalness and breadth gives full play to Handel's exuberant and delicate inspiration – the work is superbly scored, with brass and

drums held back until bar 11 of the opening chorus of Part II, with the most magical evocation of the world of nature in the 'nightingale' chorus at the end of Part 1, and with the contrasting timbres of oboe solo and tutti flutes in the Queen of Sheba's 'Will the sun forget to streak' (an effect that here does not make its full impact).

An excellent group of soloists has been assembled, distinctive yet homogeneous. Carolyn Watkinson is poised, suitably regal as Solomon (Simon used Shirley Quirk, which upsets Handel's carefully graded registers); his Queen, the First Harlot and the Queen of Sheba, each of them crucially important in one act, are strikingly assumed by Nancy Argenta, Joan Rodgers and Barbara Hendricks respectively, with Della Jones suitably malicious as the Second Harlot; and Anthony Rolfe-Johnson and Stephen Varcoe are both strong and expressive in their limited opportunities as Zadok and a Levite. The MonteVerdi Choir is full-toned yet delicate, and with clear diction, in the very important and richly contrasted choruses. And the English Baroque Soloists play with warmth, precision and sprightly articulation. Tempi are happy, with detail never blurred. The singers decorate the reprises with discrimination. The guiding hand of John Eliot Gardiner is everywhere unobtrusively present in a truly delightful production. Full libretto with interesting notes is included. [A*:1/1*] Peter Branscombe

HAYDN: Symphonies Nos.100 & 104 (arr. Salomon)

Salomon Qt/AAM
L'Oiseau-Lyre 414 434-1 digital (414 434-4)

Christopher Hogwood had both hands in the earlier venture, 'Haydn's Music for England', which included the *Surprise* Symphony in Salomon's arrangement for flute, string quartet and continuo keyboard. He is again the fortepianist here, along with Lisa Beznoziuk and the Salomon Quartet. Thanks in part to a very resonant recording – the hall actually sounds too large for the music in this form – there is little sense of impoverishment even in these originally richly-scored symphonies, though it must be admitted that the absence of the 'Turkish' instruments from the 'Military' deprives us of much of the work's unique flavour. The arrangements are so skilful, however, that flute, strings and modest keyboard realisation convey the essence. The performances are alert, crisp, tonally very attractive; and the recording is of high quality – spacious, well balanced, with admirably clean surfaces. The Folio Society is the instigator of this issue, as it was of 'Haydn's Music for England', and its initiative should be saluted. [A:1]

Peter Branscombe

HAYDN: Cello Concertos Nos.1 in C & (attrib. Haydn) 4 in D

Julian Lloyd Webber/ECO
Philips 412 793-1 digital (412 793-4)

Julian Lloyd Webber is listed as director as well as soloist here, so it is on him that we should depend for the control of tempo throughout these concertos. Unfortunately, this is far from good. Both in solo and in tutti sections, there are serious fluctuations (usually with the solos slowing down and the tuttis trying to catch up again). Everybody knows that in deeply-felt interpretations there will be variations from metronomic strictness, but here whole themes and sections that are designed so carefully by Haydn to balance and equal one another are completely disparate in speed. Even if one does not quickly notice such things, their effect – a very strong sense of weariness developing with the progress of each movement – will not be missed by most discerning hearers. This is a major fault, and, together with various other shortcomings in the solo playing (inexact rhythms, weak tone and technique in the high register) it renders each

performance unacceptable for me.

It would be nice to be able to report that the recording is well up to Philips' usually very high standards, but I'm not particularly thrilled with that either. The ECO sound less like a chamber orchestra (characteristics: unity and concentration of sound) than a soundtrack ensemble from film or television – with the soloist centred amid a surrounding set of very positive string players, but harpsichord and winds well in the background. The sounds are beautiful, but not in the proportion that we associate with the ECO live. [B/C:2/3]

Stephen Daw

JOSQUIN DESPREZ: Complete 3-part Secular Music

Medieval Ens of London/Peter & Timothy Davies
L'Oiseau Lyre 411 938-1 digital (411 938-4)

Much attention has been directed to the work of this 15th century master of recent years, and it is only necessary to play part of this issue to find out why. The more I become imbued with early music, the smaller seems the gap between then and now. With some composers that gap seems less than with others; one is Ockeghem, another is Josquin Desprez.

This was, of course, an era of immense and splendid cultural advance (look what was happening in the South transept of Gloucester Cathedral about the same time) and the music appears now with an enchanting innocence and force of inner life, the first of which has doubtless gone for ever, and the second by no means always apparent.

This collection contains many items not otherwise readily available – not all, to be sure, of monumental quality, but all made with such meticulous craftsmanship and patent love that one is carried forward irresistibly. Performances help; and here we have six singers and seven instrumentalists (including sackbut and shawm) all splendidly equipped to convey with passion the results of current research into texts and performance-techniques. Ideas will doubtless change; but for the present let us enjoy this admirable recital, by courtesy of the Florilegium Series, which should long ago have received some accolade of gratitude. The recording does not disappoint: one can hear all that is going on, and very beautifully. [A:1*]

Peter Turner

LISZT: Piano Works Vol.6

Jorge Bolet (pno)
Decca 411 803-1 digital (411 803-4)

I marvelled in my review of the CD of this sixth volume of Bolet's Liszt at the intellectual and emotional power of his playing, penetrating through the virtuosity needed just to play the notes (no mean feat!) to reach the sense of the music. I singled out the performance of the *Benediction* in particular, but my remarks hold equally for the others. The digital clarity and firm foundation to the piano sound of the CD version is here too, and the richness of the tonal range is only a little curtailed. [A*/A:1*] Roger Bowen

MAHLER: Symphony No.5 □ Six Early Songs

Weikl/Philharmonia/Sinopoli
DG 415 476-1 (2 recs) digital (415 476-4)

John Wallace's ringing first trumpet augers well at the outset, and Mahler's weighty orchestral response thunders through Tooting's All Saints Church to impressive effect. So far so good. This isn't, however, an easy acoustic to control, and by giving us – as DG have – considerable depth of field (a thoroughly three-dimensional image which seems to take us to the very farthest reaches of the building) they have created for themselves a difficult reverberation-delay problem between the front and back of the orchestra, making for an illusion of tentative ensemble even where the reverse is true. Three or four minutes into the scherzo, for

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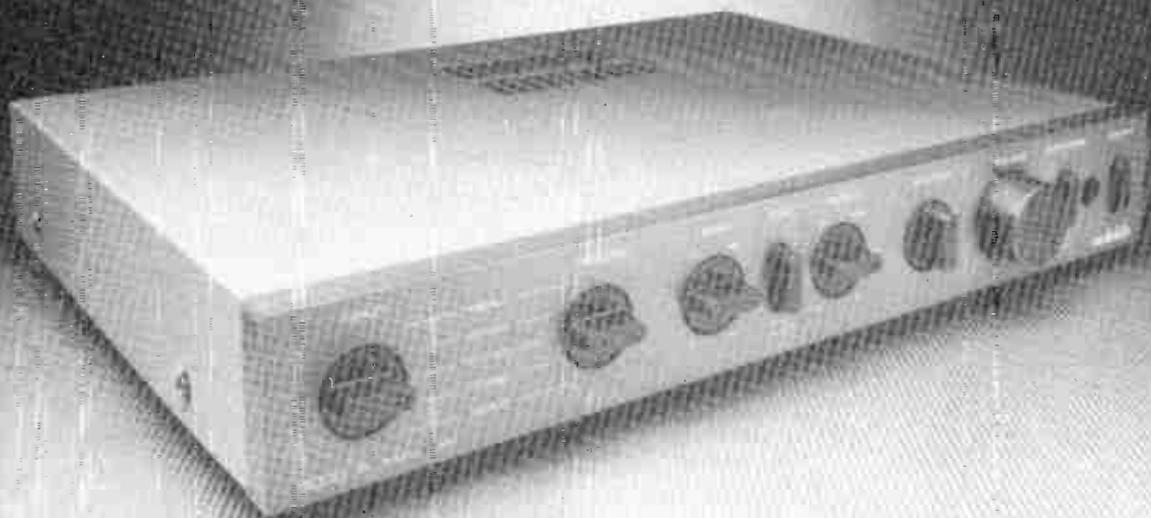
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example, Sinopoli attempts a dramatic *subito accelerando*; the horns anticipate slightly (or so it sounds), and the reverb does the rest, magnifying a small co-ordination problem into a few moments of total confusion. It's also a rather chill sound, none too ingratiating tonally.

Sinopoli's best work is confined to the score's darker pages. In (i) and (ii) he unleashes the winds of passion in climaxes of black, concentrated power, making much of Mahler's starkest scoring and bold rhetoric at the big release points. But this is a Jeckyll-and-Hyde symphony if ever there was one, and when Mahler's abrupt change of heart does bring light to the scene in Part 2, I miss in Sinopoli the inner-warmth, the *gemütlich*, if you like, of a truly spontaneous Mahlerian manner. It's all so earnest, so effortful – the charm, when we glimpse it, for the expressive rubato, so studied. I cannot, for instance, take his protracted and mannered way with the latter half of the *Adagiato*, and there's precious little consolation, still less jocularity (*giocoso*?) to be found in his vigorous but unsmiling account of the finale. But others have felt differently.

The *Six Early Songs*, as orchestrated (for Fischer-Dieskau) by Harold Byrns and keenly characterised here by Bernd Weikl, make for a novel fourth side. [B:2/3] Edward Seckerson

MAHLER: Symphony No.9 □ **Symphony No.10**
Adagio
VPO/Maazel
CBS I2M 39721 (2 recs) digital (I2T 39721)

The aspiring first subject of the 9th Symphony tells you that this is the Vienna Philharmonic: the phrasing and tonal quality of the strings, for a start – truthfully and warmly captured by CBS in sound here that is full and immediate in effect, sharply responsive to nightmarish detail in the multi-layered first movement (worm-like bass clarinet and bassoons, stopped horns, thudding timpani), and wide in dynamic range, assisting Maazel to some breathtaking stillnesses. He has, I think, the full measure of this first movement: its neuroticism, its obsessive restlessness, its wholly other-worldly sonorities. The sudden seizures of anguish make a tremendous impression; the intervening calms are deeply unsettling.

I've slight misgivings – only slight – about the middle movements, if only because I honestly expected Maazel (Maazel of all people) to communicate a more acute sense of their malicious parody. Lumpy and unrefined though his second movement is, he could, I think, have taken the characterisation a little further, while the pandemonious *Rondo burlesque* takes time to gather momentum, saving most of its venom (and how) for the very last measures. But these are minor reservations when weighed against the conceptual strength and vision of Maazel's outer movements. He might perhaps have allowed the long, life-enhancing hymn which opens the finale to breathe still more deeply; with a string section such as this one wants only to *prolong* Mahler's 'heavenly lengths'. But the ecstatic horn-led paean at the climax is quite magnificent, and the fragile closing pages fade to eternal peace with unparalleled sensitivity. Roll on the CD.

I see that Maazel has decided to eschew Deryck Cooke's performing version of the unfinished 10th and content himself with the one more or less completed movement. That's a pity. Suffice it to say, though, that he has grasped and realised its aching solitudes and impassioned outcries with conviction, leaving one grappling, as ever, with thoughts of what might have been. [A:1] Edward Seckerson

MASCAGNI: Cavalleria Rusticana
Obraztsova/Gall/Barbieri/Domingo/Bruson/Ch & Orch of La Scala/Prêtre
Philips 416 137-1 (2 recs) digital (416 137-4)

This is taken from the soundtrack of the film

produced by Franco Zeffirelli and shown recently on TV, so it may appeal to those who saw it and would like a souvenir of the occasion. It would be difficult to recommend it otherwise, in view of the competition offered by alternative recorded versions. To begin with, it is spread over four sides, whereas most other sets occupy three and the really excellent Victor recording, which also features Domingo, is fitted quite comfortably onto two sides (RCA RL 13091).

On the set under review, Domingo, who is in fine voice and sings with great dramatic intensity, is partnered by Obraztsova who certainly wrings every possible drop of drama out of her role, but achieves this by coarsening her tone excessively. Bruson is an excellent Alfio and the smaller parts are well taken, while the chorus and orchestra of La Scala are in fine form under Georges Prêtre. The sound is reasonably good – much better than most film soundtracks – but lacks definition in the big climaxes. My first recommendation must remain the Victor set, which is well recorded and in addition to Domingo includes Scotto at her best as Santuzza. [B:2] John Freestone

MAXWELL DAVIES: Into the Labyrinth* □ **Sinfonietta Accademica**
Neil Mackie (ten)*/SCO/Maxwell Davies
Unicorn-Kanchana DKP 9038 digital (DKP(C)9038)

Two of Maxwell Davies' three major works for chamber orchestra of 1983, in excellent performances and recordings from Unicorn-Kanchana, make a happy coupling for this disc subsidised by the Scottish Arts Council. The *Sinfonietta Accademica* was written for the quatercentenary celebrations of Edinburgh University, and although it begins in wild style it soon settles to a familiar Orca-dian atmosphere, albeit a carefully structured one. Within its three-movement form there is a manipulation of traditional symphonic structures that makes it appropriate for its academic purpose. The Scottish Chamber Orchestra gave its first performance and their knowledge of the work and their dedication to it shows clearly.

Into the Labyrinth sets a selection of words made by Davies from George Mackay Brown's play *The Well*, and uses some of the composer's own incidental music to that play. Davies employs tenor, double woodwind, horns and strings in a five-movement work that he has called a cantata but which has a more symphonic structure than that word might suggest. The performance here captures well the ritualistic inexorability of the verse and music, and is sensitive to the work's spiritual depth. Neil Mackie has, I think, just the right tonal quality for the piece and the sensibility to express the nuances without over-emphasis. With a recording that sparkles and a venue that is full of character without being dominant, this all adds up to a prime issue. [A*/A:1*] Doug Hammond

MENDELSSOHN: Symphony No.3 in a, Op56 'Scottish' □ **Symphony No.4 in A, Op90 'Italian'**
Philharmonia/Klemperer
EMI ED 29 05791 dmm (ED 29 05794)
Reissues from 1961

Unexpectedly, it's the jaunty, smiling *Italian* which fares better here, not the darker countenance of the *Scottish*. The latter, here fatefully devoid of drama, exudes a quite inappropriate degree of Viennese delicacy and restraint: very little suggestion of the Celtic flame here. Despite great attention to detail and a well-conceived slow movement, tempi elsewhere are just too deliberate, although the scherzo is finely pointed. Any suspicion that the interpretation may not be quite as miscalculated as it appears is finally removed by the famous coda to (iv), which assumes a ridiculously ponderous quasi-dignity. However, the impetus and contrast so lacking in the *Scottish* are to be found in abundance in its companion, one of

Klemperer's most surprising successes. This is radiant and spirited throughout, beautifully phrased and shaped, beginning in spring-heeled fashion and concluding with as lively and happy a *saltarello* as you could wish for. The sound is smooth, cleanly-textured and noise-free. [A:1/3] Peter Herring

MOZART: Symphonies Nos.40 & 41
CO of Europe/Solti
Decca 414 334-1 digital (414 334-4)

This must be the first time that Solti has recorded these symphonies with anything less than a full orchestra, yet there is nothing small-scale about either performance. From his first Mozart recordings back in the 1950s his readings have been strong, not to say forceful, and at times hard driven. The years have seen some mellowing in this respect, though these performances remain pretty emphatic and make no concessions to the authentic school. The results, possibly still weighty enough to deter the purists, are nevertheless crisp and alert. The Chamber Orchestra of Europe has already demonstrated its talents in several recordings, and plays here with commendable verve and accuracy. The recording itself is clean and positive. [A:1] Kenneth Dommett

MOZART: Piano Concertos K453 & K456
Andras Schiff (pno)/Camerata Academica of Salzburg Mozarteum/Vegh
Decca 412 289-1 digital (412 289-4)

The G-major concerto (K453) is enjoying something of a revival on record. This is its third appearance in the last six months, with attractive performances from Previn and Ax. Actually, Ax' recording with Zuckerman duplicates the present coupling exactly, but despite the participation of chamber orchestras the effect is quite different, Ax' keyboard style being heavier and more in the 'big' concert tradition. Andras Schiff's precise articulation and crisp phrasing are closer to the chamber-music concept of Mozart piano concerto performance, without actually aspiring to Bilson/Gardiner's purism.

The Camerata Academica, presumably an offshoot of the Mozarteum orchestra, has a bright open sound with well focused winds. Vegh's tempi seem a bit staid compared with Zuckerman's – the first movement of the B-flat is certainly on the slow side – but being consistent they work quite well, and the lovely slow movement of this rather neglected concerto is particularly successful. [A:1] Kenneth Dommett

MOZART: 'Posthorn' Serenade □ **Marches K335/1-2**
ASM/Marriner
Philips 412 725-1 digital (412 725-4)

Typically alert, stylish ASM Mozart, drier than Boskovsky's Viennese warmth, less solid than Levine's weighty VPO performance, more shapely than Collegium Aureum's, and better recorded than any of them. The concertante wind soloists sit comfortably in the ensemble, and even the posthornist behaves quite demurely in his Trio. One expects him to dominate, but his restraint is actually an improvement on the artificial prominence normally accorded to the instrument. As usual, Marriner's tempi are on the fast side, though one never gets the impression that the music is being pushed beyond its natural pace and the marches which enclose the serenade are neatly contrasted as befits a 'hail and farewell' salute. [A:1] Kenneth Dommett

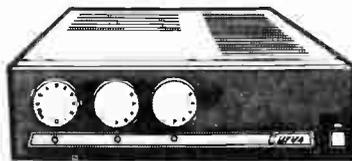
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orchestras dedicated to the authentic manner of performance, which means that they pay close attention to details of style, play on period instruments, and eschew any hint of vibrato. One has got used to this last in orchestral performances, but in chamber-music the thin, reedy quality of the sound of solo strings is not quite so endearing, particularly when emphasised by a close recording which, noticeably in the D-minor quartet here, makes the leader's highest notes unattractively strident. However, the quality of the performances is very fine, sturdy yet sensitive, and one is left with the impression of scholarship placed firmly at the service of the music rather than the other way round. [B:1] **Kenneth Dommett**

MOZART: The Great Sonatas for Piano & Violin
Walter Klien (pno)/Arthur Grumiaux (vln)
Philips 412 141-1 (5 recs) digital (412 141-4)

This album has been carefully described even to the relative placement of the two artists, for these are sonatas for piano with violin and not violin sonatas – hence the pianist claims top billing. As far as the performances are concerned he does not always get it, for Grumiaux' powerful fiddle-playing frequently threatens to change the balance in his, rather than Klien's, favour. The recordings, made between 1981 and 1983, vary in this respect, but in general the violin is too dominant. Yet compared with the Shumsky-Balsam issue released this month, Philips' brighter quality is preferable to the softer focused ASV sound.

Klien's playing throughout is a nicely judged balance between the delicacy of Mozart's keyboard writing, the weightiness of the modern piano, and the powerful sound of the Grumiaux violin, and his phrasing is invariably clean whereas Grumiaux resorts to an unacceptable portamento too often to make his playing sufficiently stylish for total acceptance. The album contains all the sonatas from K296 on, but only one of the two sets of variations (K360).

The only other complete set now available is by Haebler and Szeryng in the Complete Mozart Edition, the selection by Lupu and Goldberg having gone. Szeryng's playing is preferable to Grumiaux', but Klien is more positive than Haebler, and the sound of the new set is vastly better. [A:2] **Kenneth Dommett**

MOZART: Violin Sonatas Vol.5
Oscar Shumsky (vln)/Artur Balsam (pno)
ASV ALH 964 (ZC ALH 964)

This instalment of the Shumsky-Balsam series contains just two sonatas, the B-flat (K454) and the A-major (K526). The virtues of this duo are now well established and need little comment; Shumsky has been hailed as one of the great violinists, which he is, but I do not feel that he is always entirely at home with Mozart. His playing occasionally reflects an opulence more consonant with the 19th century repertoire than the 18th. The quick movements are generally crisp, but there is a tendency to fulsome in the slow ones. These particular sonatas do, however, hint at the romantic; but while Balsam tries to hold on to a notion of period sensibility, he too is persuaded to indulge a touch of Biedermeier which threatens to prettify them.

The balance between the two players is good, the violinist being set back a little to take his place beside, rather than in front of, the pianist. The A-major is in better general focus than the B-flat which, on my copy at least, has a high level of surface noise. [A/B:1/2] **Kenneth Dommett**

PROKOFIEV: Cinderella – excerpts
Saint Louis SO/Slatkin
RCA RL 85321 digital (RK 85321)

Slatkin and his orchestra ride effortlessly through the colourful narrative of these

comprehensive (and, I gather, handpicked) selections, touching the heart, magic and wit of Prokofiev's lovely score and somehow too, conveying a satisfying sense of completeness. I don't know how many mics were in play here, but the illusion is one of pleasing naturalness, of inviting open spaces and superb orchestral integration: a big, smooth, sound with all the requisite brightness for dealing with Prokofiev's quirkier instrumental effects.

The playing is a delight, alive in every department, responsive always to the mood and atmosphere of a scene. It's full of wonder, with shifting, other-worldly, dream-come-true colours, for instance, as Cinderella arrives at the Ball; opulent to a treat in the grand *Pas de Deux*; and suitably garish when that grotesquely ticking clock and rasping trombone glissandos rudely announce, at *Midnight*, that the dream is over. [A:1] **Edward Seckerson**

RAVEL: Daphnis et Chloé – Suite No.2 □ Pavane pour une infante défunte □ Rapsodie Espagnole □ Alborada del gracioso
Philharmonia/New Philharmonia/Giulini
EMI EMX 41 20761 (41 20764)
Reissues from 1960, 66

Look elsewhere for uninhibited revelry – and a chorus – in *Danse générale*; likewise for inebriation in the concluding *fiesta of Rapsodie Espagnole*. You will have lost little, for if such is the limit of your appreciation of this music, then Giulini's wonderful subtlety and suggestion will escape you. Not for him any gulping voluptuousness in the strings where Chloé is momentarily lost to Daphnis' view – simply a soft sigh which perfectly conveys the boy's wistful mood as he carves his flute. The stillness at the opening of *Rapsodie Espagnole* has rarely been more potently caught.

Throughout, detail is unobtrusively revealed by steady but flowing tempos and the flawlessly balanced recordings. Nowadays we can shake floorboards with lower percussion, reproduce strings more warmly; and we have eliminated tape hiss. But good production and engineering value do not change, and the sound from these tapings made on either side of the Philharmonia's identity crisis is remarkably consistent. [B:1/1*] **Andrew Keener**

RESPIGHI: Belkis, Queen of Sheba □ Metamorphoseon
Philharmonia/Simon
Chandos ABRD 1142 digital dmm (ABTD 1142)

If I say simply 'Respighi' – and then go on to speak of an epic ballet based on the biblical Solomon and Sheba legend, you'll get the picture. It's all here – the curvaceous Oriental lyrics, the languorous woodwinds, the pulsating drums of war, the Dionysian orgy; and I would never have forgiven Chandos if they hadn't made a technological meal of it. They have. The deepest recesses of All Saints Church, Tooting, have been beautifully utilised, whether lending startling resonance to Respighi's specially prescribed 'big drums' of war, or creating moments of quiet spatial magic, most notably a short-lived lull in the final *Orgiastic Dance* which brings the evocative sound of a lone trumpeter wafting from afar. The frenzied final measures of this movement find Geoffrey Simon and the Philharmonia every inch the equal of Respighi's extravagance. Prepare the neighbours.

On the reverse it's another 'first' for the gramophone – an effective contrast, too, since *Metamorphoseon* belongs to the more abstract confections of Respighi's later years. As Edward Johnson puts it in his comprehensive sleeve-note: 'not a pine or a fountain in sight!' Instead, a splendidly resourceful set of variations whose virtuosic character was originally dictated by the brilliance of the Boston Symphony who commissioned the piece. Respighi did them

proud with this bagful of lovely ideas, from which *Modus VII*, made up entirely of solo instrumental cadenzas, is here as much a tribute to the Philharmonia section principals as it ever was to the Bostonians. [A*:1] **Edward Seckerson**

ROSSINI: Overtures – Vol.2
Nat PO/Chailly
Decca 414 407-1 digital (414 407-4)

Riccardo Chailly's first volume of Rossini Overtures, released in 1981, was greeted with great acclaim, so this long-awaited second volume has much to live up to – and so far as the performances are concerned it manages that with ease. The spontaneity and presence that Chailly and the NPO exude carry the listener straight into the opera house. Backed up by brilliantly witty tripping rhythms, especially in the *Barber*, an immediate response to tempo and dynamic change as exemplified in *Semiramide* and *La cambiale di matrimonio*, and some excellent solos, particularly in the last mentioned work and *Otello*, the occasional lapses into less than perfect coordination can be excused. The recording faithfully preserves the individual timbres of the instruments and sets them clearly from front to back on the soundstage, but the resonant acoustic and some instances of pressing pre-echo are guilty of filling in those silences that Rossini makes such witty use of, in his music. For this reason alone, a split sonic rating is necessary. [A/B:1*/1] **Barbara Jahn**

D SCARLATTI: 33 Sonatas
K39 in A, 87 in b, 96 in D, 118 in D, 124 in G, 162 in E, 183 in f, 193 in E^b, 208 & 209 in A, 247 in c[#], 296 in F, 318 & 319 in F[#], 322 in A, 380 & 381 in E, 386 in f, 434 in E^b, 436 in D, 454 & 455 in G, 460 in C, 466 & 467 in f, 475 in E^b, 481 in f, 516 & 517 in d, 531 in E, 533 in A, 544 in B^b & 551 in B^b
Christian Zacharias (pno)
EMI EX 29 03493 (3 recs) digital dmm (NC)

These recordings have been assembled over several years, and for some this is a second British appearance. I have found that as a Scarlatti interpreter, Christian Zacharias, appeals more to me now than he did a couple of years ago; his playing has the requisite blend of poetry and fire, and listening to his Scarlatti playing in larger quantities, I have come to notice the care with which he has prepared his material. Considering the fact that I am writing this review on Domenico Scarlatti's actual 300th birthday, I am surprised at how little fuss has been made over his tercentenary. The number of performances of his marvellous Sonatas in the present catalogue is unrepresentatively low; especially, these days, there is a shortage of piano readings.

Zacharias is well recorded in an orthodox way; the piano sounds as though it is about 15 feet away in a warm drawing-room acoustic; the scale and quality of the sound strike me as realistic, although I don't find the instrument used (or its tuning) particularly outstanding. [A:1] **Stephen Daw**

SCHUBERT: String Quartets – E^b, D 87 □ g, D 173
Brandis Qt
Orfeo S 113 851 A digital dmm (M 113 851 A)

Schubert would have been amazed – and delighted too, no doubt – at such grand performances of these quartets, and also at the grandeur of the sound. The recording suggests that the Siemens-Villa at Berlin-Lankwitz, the venue for the sessions in November 1982, contains a large, resonant hall. Personally, I prefer smaller-scale readings of these works, a touch of relaxation, and occasionally of fun – Schubert was 16½ when he wrote the Quartet in E-flat, and a few weeks over 18 when he wrote the one in G-minor (no fewer than three further quartets intervened). The latter is a strong, even fierce piece, very much better balanced than

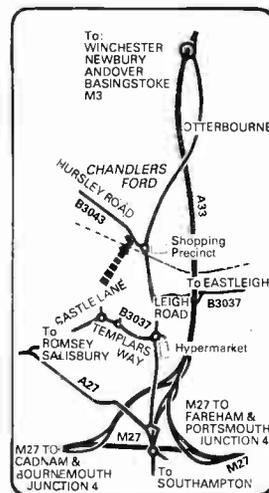
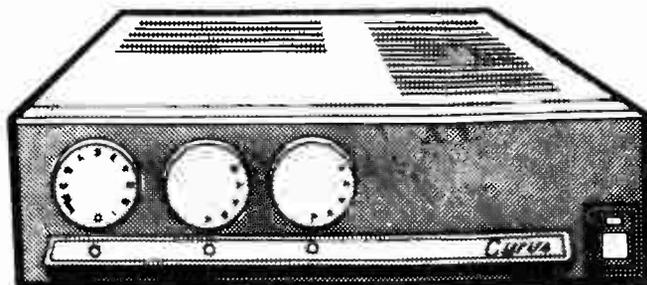
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the fascinating but uneven D87; they complement each other well.

The Brandis Quartet is a fine team, urgent in attack, spirited, rich in tone. The recording is very clean, despite the resonance, and allows the four voices to emerge from the ensemble where appropriate. If you like your early Schubert to ring out proudly, then you are likely to enjoy this issue, especially as this coupling is otherwise only to be had in the eight-disc Melos box. [A:1/2]

Peter Branscombe

SCHUMANN: Four Symphonies □ **Manfred & Genoveva Overtures**
Concertgebouw/Haitink
 Philips 412 852-1 (3 recs) digital (412 852-4)

I found this boxed set something of a trial, mainly because of problems with the recording, but also to some extent because of Haitink's ability to summon up presentable performances, with excellent control of the orchestra, without necessarily sounding especially involved with the music. First to the recording: although the sound does vary from symphony to symphony, with No.4 emerging with less scars than the others, in general the miking emphasises the violins by making them sound brighter than the rest of the orchestra and giving them a distinct ambience of their own. In Symphonies 1 and 2 the cumulative effect was such that I found myself waiting for the violins to be 'turned' on or off. In No.1, transient rasp, with an associated colouring of higher frequencies, emphasises the sound's lack of body and definition from the waist down. In general, the cellos and basses tend to make their presence *felt* rather than solidly *heard* in tutti passages, and whilst this is partly attributable to the acoustic of the venue (the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam) the recording philosophy must take some of the responsibility.

Turning to the performances shows Haitink not to be wholly in tune with the idiom of Schumann's symphonies, producing here more convincing, heartfelt readings of the overtures *Manfred* and *Genoveva*. That said, there are particular moments and even whole movements that are finely done in this set – the Scherzo of No.2, with its excellent ensemble, and the pacing of the first movement of No.4 stand out in my mind – but the opening movement of the *Rhenish* lacks the sheer joy of Tennstedt, and the whole of the *Spring* Symphony seems rhythmically devitalised. The last recorded symphony, No.4, is the one that is most consistently interesting in its interpretation, and here Haitink seems to have a clearer idea of the work as a whole, rather than just as a collection of movements. Overall, then, a set that I find disappointing despite its brighter moments. [B/C:2/3]

Doug Hammond

TCHAIKOVSKY: Symphony No.1 'Winter Day-dreams'
Oslo PO/Jansons
 Chandos ABRD 1139 digital dmm (ABTD 1139)

Only three records in this series released so far, yet already we have come to expect so much of Jansons and his splendid orchestra. Rest assured, the rejuvenation continues. Listen to their first clarinet in the lyrical second subject of the opening movement: such a wholesome, uninhibited sound, the melody truly sung out like the popular song it would like to be. I love Jansons' spontaneity in these matters. He reappraises constantly and his instincts, his musical sensitivities, are invariably spot-on.

A couple of examples must suffice: the preparation for Tchaikovsky's first movement recapitulation with its overlapping horn harmonies materialising, as with so much in this piece, from mysterious seasonal mists. Exquisitely handled, this, as is the opening of (ii) from a barely discernible bass chord. Oboe, flute and bassoon here

touch-in their counterpoints to perfection, and the shimmering violin arpeggios accompanying cellos in the principal subject take on a keen, frosty glint.

Horns, incidentally, burgeon splendidly at the climax, while skilfully avoiding excessive vulgarity. Even that brashest of finales (emerging most evocatively, here, in shadow) retains a certain lightness of texture. Indeed, this is a refreshingly lean, buoyant account of the symphony, and with characteristic Chandos sound lending its customary bloom and healthy reverberation, it definitely belongs right up there with the pick. [A:1]

Edward Seckerson

TIPPETT: The Four Piano Sonatas
Paul Crossley (pno)
 CRD 11301 (2 recs) digital dmm (CRDC 41301)

New recordings from Paul Crossley of Tippett's first three piano sonatas and a first recording of No.4 are coupled to produce an essential new addition to the catalogue. The same pianist's earlier recordings of the first three sonatas for Philips are also essential, as they give a more immediate, less consistent view of the works than is found here; but they have been absent from the catalogue for some time. I find both views necessary for an understanding of this marvellous music.

In this CRD set Sonata 1 is more controlled, less fanciful than in Crossley's earlier reading, and loses some of its other-worldliness thereby. However, its relationship with the other sonatas can be more clearly perceived here. Sonata 2 is rather gauntly done, not without body and power at its opening, but with its subsequent episodes starkly characterised and isolated – again a rather retrospective view of the work. No.3 now has more direction and clarity, having its ethereal qualities held in reserve, but Sonata 4 triumphs as an apotheosis of what has gone before, not just in the piano sonatas themselves, but in a welter of Tippett's works from other genres. There are quotes and gentler references to preceding works within the sonata, but although an intimate knowledge of Tippett's other music can open up some lines of emotional reaction for the listener, it is by no means essential for the work to have a powerful effect. Crossley captures all of this, sometimes sacrificing detail for line, but never losing sight of the direction. Altogether absorbing performances of absorbing works.

The recording is generally good, but is let down by small details. The sense of presence is undistinguished and the resonance of the instrument is rather uncontrolled. An occasional, slight, high-pitched whistle was present on my test copies, and as the residual noise level was fairly high I suspect that this may have been induced at the pressing stage. Sonata 4 exhibits a more solid piano sound, and I would have preferred this quality for the rest of the set. Nevertheless, I would not want to be without these discs. [A/B/C:1*/1]

Doug Hammond

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: The Lark Ascending □ **Five Mystical Songs** □ **Prelude '49th Parallel'** □ **Sea Songs – Quick March** □ **The Running Set** □ **Two Hymn Tune Preludes** □ **Prelude on an Old Carol Tune**
Creswick/Roberts/Northern Sinf & Ch/Hickox
 EMI EL 27 03051 digital dmm (EL 27 03054)

A pleasing enough record if you don't look too closely at the alternatives. This 'lark', as portrayed by Bradley Creswick, is, for my ears, set too close, with inevitable losses in atmosphere and mystique (too much rosin-on-bow audible). Solo bassoon, too, seems to get more than his fair share of the limelight (assisted or just over-assertive?), and whilst Mr Creswick's bow might soar, does his spirit? The *Five Mystical Songs* are in good hands: Stephen Roberts' open, well-focused delivery, his evident affection

for and sensitivity to these settings, comes through ardently against the Sinfonia's enthusiastic chorus. But it's a pity the orchestra isn't more of a 'presence' here, drawn more vividly into the overall image.

In general, let's just say that I've heard riper, warmer, more grateful tonal responses than this. Those lovely *Hymn-Tune Preludes* probably fare best, and the luscious 49th *Parallel* tune makes a decently full-blown impression in this particular environment (Trinity Hall, Newcastle). But don't expect vintage EMI. That it isn't. [B/C:2/1]

Edward Seckerson

VERDI: La Traviata
De Los Angeles/Del Monte/Sereni/Rome Op Ch & Orch/Serafin
 CFP 41 44503 (2 recs) digitally remastered (41 44505)
 Reissue from 1960

If you haven't already a recording of *La Traviata* and are not an out-and-out hi-fi enthusiast, you would do well to consider this reissue in the CFP bargain price range. The recording is more than adequate, only showing its age in a rather restricted sound in the big ensembles. De Los Angeles is a little taxed in the big aria at the close of Act 1, but elsewhere she gives a most moving performance. Del Monte is possibly a little over-dramatic as Alfredo, while Sereni as Germont Père uses his fine voice very well but could be more involved. Serafin conducts the whole performance with the authority one would expect in view of his great experience. [B:1]

John Freeston

VIVALDI: Music for Lute & Mandolin
Concerto for 2 Mandolins & Strings in G (RV 532) □ **Trio in g for Soprano Lute, Violin, Cello & Organ (85)** □ **Concerto in C for Mandolin, 2 Violins & Lower Strings (425)** □ **Concerto in D for Soprano Lute & Strings (93)** □ **Trio in C for Soprano Lute, Violin, Cello & Organ (82)** □ **Concerto in d for Viola d'Amore, Baroque Lute & Strings (540)**
Paul O'Dette (mand/te)/Robin Jeffrey (mand)/Parley of Instruments/Roy Goodman
 Hyperion A66160 digital (NC)

This is easily the most thoroughly produced Vivaldi lute-record yet to come my way. Roy Goodman argues persuasively in the cover-notes that Vivaldi required a soprano lute (sounding at pitch rather than an octave lower) for those works where they are used here, and Paul O'Dette proves to be a very sensitive advocate. The Parley play with their customary style, wit and grace. The digital recording is warmly sympathetic, too: the ensembles are all small (which suits the intimate character of the baroque lutes and mandolins), and the proportion and depth of the chamber-music have been very well captured.

The Parley and Hyperion are producing some very attractive records of Baroque music these days. For those who have not yet bought one, this would make a first-class introduction either to their collaboration or to Vivaldi's Concertos apart from the ubiquitous *Four Seasons*. [A*:1*]

Stephen Daw

COLLECTIONS

CAROLS FROM NEW COLLEGE
Ch of New College, Oxford/Edward Higginbottom
 CRD 1143 digital dmm (CRDC 4143)

This is a collection made up of a judicious mixture of traditional carols (here meaning what we hear most often) and lesser-known, but often musically more interesting ones. The latter include, as composer or arranger, figures like Herbert Howells, Richard Rodney Bennett, William Mathias and John Joubert, as well as the present Master of the College.

In this college they adhere to the all-male fashion, using boys for the upper voices; and very nice it is. If one cannot say that this choir is the equal of the finest, it is neverthe-

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less an extremely good one, and it is not easy to pick holes in the renderings here; nor does one feel disposed to do so. There are, heaven knows, numerous carol recordings available, and I suppose that choice will turn upon the reputation of the choir or on personal associations with it. Either way, this is a good choice for those wishing for some suitable music to accompany their festivities. The recording is pleasingly atmospheric and intelligible. Bob Auger has done a good job here, and the sound is much as I remember it many years ago. [A:1/2] **Peter Turner**

CHERKASSKY RECITAL

STRAVINSKY: Three Movements from 'Petrushka'/BALAKIREV: Islamey/BENNETT: Five Etudes/BARTOK: Sonata
Shura Cherkassky (pno)
ASV ALH 965 (ZL ALH 965)
Reissue from 1968

An interesting recital, this, originally released in the Philips Forefront series on 4FM 10002. The Balakirev and Stravinsky items are apparently favourites of Cherkassky's and show off his considerable technique splendidly. He has recorded them for Nimbus more recently. Richard Rodney Bennett's *Five Etudes* (1962-64) were also in the pianist's repertory for some time, but though they wear reasonably well and are a severe test of virtuosity, they lack the quality of permanence that imbues the rest of the programme. Bartok's Sonata re-establishes its claim to attention with an insistently percussive performance which is expressive notwithstanding. The sound appears to have been cleaned up since the original issue and is now most acceptable. [A/B:1]

Kenneth Dommett

FRENCH HARPSICHORD MUSIC

Works by Louis Couperin & d'Anglebert
Louis van der Paal (hpd)
Pavane ADW 7172 (NC)

Both d'Anglebert and Louis Couperin were pupils of the founder of the French clavecinist school, Chambonnières, and both the Suites in E-minor and C-minor by Couperin and d'Anglebert's Third Suite in D-minor follow the conventional form of a succession of dance forms related by key. Louis van der Paal shapes the movements expressively with an eye to their position within the suite, ornamenting most stylishly. The harpsichord, a modern instrument, has a bright, light sound with a range of stops which are used to good effect.

The sharp, forward placing of the instrument picks up these registral changes, and with the resonant acoustic makes for an attractive sound. But the instrument is very definitely set to the left, which is initially disconcerting and it is a little difficult to appreciate the reasoning behind it. [A:1]

Roger Bowen

LYRITA REISSUES

PARRY: Overture to an Unwritten Tragedy □ An English Suite □ Lady Radnor's Suite □ Symphonic Variations
LSO/Boult
SRCS 48
Reissue from 1971

ELGAR: Falstaff □ Enigma Variations
New Philharmonia/Davis
SRCS 77
Reissue from 1975

HOLST: Double Concerto □ Capriccio □ Ballet Music from The Golden Goose □ 2 Songs without Words
Emanuel Hurwitz, Kenneth Sillito (vlns)/CO/Holst
SRCS 44
Reissue from 1970

BRIDGE: Overture 'Rebus' □ Dance Poem □ Dance Rhapsody
LPO/Braithwaite

SRCS 114
Reissue from 1979

IRELAND: A London Overture □ Epic March □ Concertino Pastorale □ Minuet & Elegy from A Downland Suite
LPO/Boult
SRCS 31
Reissue from 1966

IRELAND: Violin Sonata No.1 in d □ Violin Sonata No.2 in a
Yfrah Neaman (vln)/Eric Parkin (pno)
SRCS 64
Reissue from 1972

IRELAND: Sextet* □ Cello Sonata □ Fantasy-Sonata
*André Navarra (vlc)/Gervase de Peyer (clt)/Eric Parkin (pno)/Melos Ensemble**
SRCS 59
Reissue from 1972

BAX: Symphonies 1, 2, 5* & 7*
*LPO/Friedman/Leppard**
SRCS 53, 54, 58*, 83* (respectively)
Reissues from 1971, 72, 75

BAX: The Garden of Fand □ Tintagel □ Northern Ballad No.1 □ Mediterranean
LPO/Boult
SRCS 62
Reissue from 1972

COATES: The Merrymakers □ Summer Days Suite □ In the Country □ Evening in Town □ The Three Bears □ March 'Queen Elizabeth'
New Philharmonia/Boult
SRCS 107
Reissue from 1979

MOERAN: Cello Sonata in a □ Prelude for Cello and Piano □ Stalham River □ The White Mountain □ Toccata □ Prelude □ Berceuse □ Bank Holiday □ A Folk Story □ Rune
Peers Coetmore (vlc)/Eric Parkin (pno)
SRCS 42
Reissue from 1972

HOLST: Fugal Overture/MOERAN: Sinfonietta/BAX: November Woods
LPO/Boult
Reissue from 1968

The orchestral music of Sir Hubert Parry would be worth a hearing if only for its influence on Elgar, but it has much more to it than that, as Boult and the LSO skilfully show in the ripe performances that make up the first disc of this group of reissues. The orchestra play with affection and insight, whilst the recording, despite showing signs of its age, is easy to live with. There is a pleasing spaciousness to the sound and the narrow orchestral spread is compatible with the distance at which it is set. [B:1]

The New Philharmonia are given a more detailed scrutiny by the engineers in recordings (made four years later) of Elgar's *Falstaff* and *Enigma Variations*. The fine sense of presence here is just about right for these solid, warmly felt readings from Andrew Davis, and the adroit, enthusiastic playing from the orchestra is conveyed with body and vividness. There could have been a touch more characterisation in *Falstaff* and a more supple approach to speed in *Enigma*, but overall these are performances to which few, I think, would take exception. [A:1]

Holst's *Double Concerto* is given a very persuasive performance by Emanuel Hurwitz and Kenneth Sillito in an attractive coupling that includes other, not so well-known orchestral works by the same composer. The soloists are set forward in this close, immediate recording, yet their relationship with the accompanying ECO is easy and effective. The recording makes some background noise evident, and reducing the volume only reduces the sense of a tangible presence. The brightness of the recording suits the ballet music from the *Golden Goose* well, but over-emphasises the slight fluffs and insecure tuning in Op.22. [A/B:1*/1/2]
It's good to see that the music of Frank

Bridge is less in the wilderness than it used to be, but his later works are still undervalued. The coupling of the early *Dance Rhapsody* (1908) and *Dance Poem* (1913) with the later *Rebus* overture (1940), all in very committed performances from the LPO under Nicholas Braithwaite, allows the changes that took place in his musical personality to be clearly heard and identified. Despite a hollow acoustic, the recording sparkles and has a fine dynamic range, easily accommodating the extremes that these pieces offer. Braithwaite paces the works brilliantly and the orchestra give of their best for him. [A*/A:1*]

An earlier LPO were not quite so forthcoming for Boult in 1966, in a concert of music by John Ireland, but even at red- rather than white-hot intensity the results are still very fine. The recording has also held up well, with an extended treble response, fair dynamic range, precise placing, and a good sense of orchestral clout. Hiss and edginess point to its era, as does the loss of ambience between movements from the *Downland Suite*, but these well thought-out performances are conveyed with a good degree of presence and should still impress even nearly 20 years after they were first recorded. [A*/B:1]

Ireland's Violin Sonatas contain some of his finest music and receive rather special performances from Yfrah Neaman and Eric Parkin. Neaman's playing is rich in empathy and well proportioned throughout both works, but is particularly heartfelt in the slow movement of the first sonata. Parkin goes with him in this and the result is an exceptional flight of performing imagination, with the mood sustained and compounded throughout the movement. The recording has depth and power, with an excellent dynamic spread, and is only let down by a general overlay of woolliness and some muddiness in the bass. [A/B:1*]

Readings of similar depth can be found on the coupling of Ireland's early Sextet, Cello Sonata, and Fantasy-Sonata, but the recordings could not be considered of the same high standard. The Sextet, based on Brahms' Clarinet Quintet, but having more in common with the easy charm of the Rheinberger Nonet, is given an excellent performance that has its textures muddled by the recording balance. The Cello Sonata is similarly confused and the cello itself is rather coloured. Navarra's wiry tone and moments of unsure intonation are less winning than Gervase de Peyer's secure performance of the *Fantasy-Sonata*. [B/C:1*/1/2]

Reissues of four of Arnold Bax' symphonies are especially welcome in recordings that I should hope would never long be absent from the catalogue. Symphonies 1 and 2 are particularly well done here in performances by the LPO under Myer Friedman, and both receive recordings to equal Lyrita's best. The orchestral playing is exceptionally skilful and committed, full of guts and enthusiasm. Friedman seizes the quicksilver, shifting textures and tempi with joy and moulds them into exciting, coherent arguments that fix the attention. He does not neglect the passing beauties and draws fine chording and satisfying textural balance from the orchestra. Symphony 2 contains some of the most remarkable orchestral ideas to come from the pen of a British composer in the first half of this century, ideas that demand playing of virtuosic expertise. The LPO (1971 vintage) easily fulfilled those demands. Full dynamic impact and startling transient realisation characterise both recordings, bringing the orchestral sound to the listener with moving vividness. Both [A*:1*].

Symphony 5 is also well performed by the LPO, but some of that sparkle is missing under Leppard. Technically, the playing is still first-rate, but the players seem less absorbed in the music, less convinced of its value. The recording, made only a year later than 1 and 2, is very different, with edge and harshness at *ff*, though generally a mite warmer, and having a more compartmental-

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NEWSLETTER JANUARY 1986
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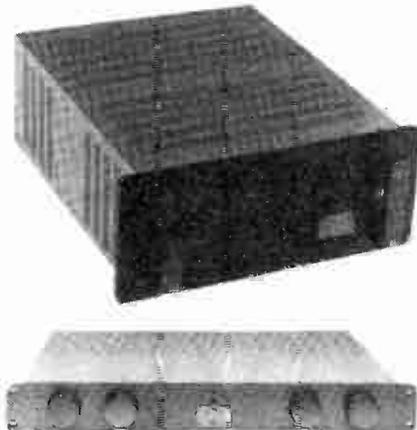
The other "newish" British amp manufacturer's destined as a Quad of the future is Audio Lab whose Pre/Power combination costs £695 and whose integrated Amplifier, the 8000A costs £295. Both are inspiring products carefully designed and solidly constructed for many years of listening pleasure.

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ised feel to the orchestral spread: [B:1] The edge persists for Symphony 7 and the sound becomes overpacked, though the reading is very fine in places, capturing all the nuances of this wonderfully atmospheric score, so redolent of the place of its orchestration, the west coast of Scotland. Textural balance is always well done, as in 1 and 2, and the production is well worth having. [B:1*/1]

Boult's disc of symphonic poems by Bax seems tame in terms of its orchestral recording when set alongside the above symphonies, or more recent recordings, but the performances give nothing to present-day interpretations. Boult was a master at bringing out the depths of a work, suggesting other meanings that underlie the music whilst the main musical argument is going on. You may prefer a recording in which the full body of the string sound is realised and the top and bottom are less diminished, but this disc should still be taken into account. [B/C:1]

Boult in lighter mood (and in a later recording) produces a genial collection of works by Eric Coates that is well worth having in the catalogue. Admirers of this composer might have wished for a touch more sweep and warmth in these performances from the NPO, but the playing is adroit and not without feeling, aided by a detailed yet cosy recording. The review pressing was marred a little by post-echo, but was nevertheless very enjoyable. [A:1]

Stronger meat in Moeran's Cello Sonata and Prelude for cello and piano is not so easily digested in performances by the composer's wife which, whilst having force and persuasive, idiomatic playing, also have less than tight intonation. The venue sounds like a very small studio with limited ambience – the cello is closely set with its podgy tone in strong contrast to the firm, clean sound of the piano. Eric Parkin tackles the piano pieces on Side 2 in a straightforward manner, yet with wit and understanding. [B/C:1/2]

This Lyrita batch ends with a winner – splendid works by Holst, Bax and Moeran all given clear-sighted, purposeful readings by Boult and the LPO, and all allowed bright, lively recordings that, despite some touches of congestion hinting at their age, still capture the energy and vitality of the originals. Boult captures with aplomb the long lines emerging from a flurry of detail in *November Woods* and generates great rhythmic force in the *Fugal Overture*. For Moeran's *Sinfonietta*, one of the composer's most effective pieces, he allows the natural shape of the music to emerge without interference and sets a standard for its performance. As with so many of these Lyrita reissues, warmly recommended. [A:1*/1] Doug Hammond

PHILIPS MID-PRICE CLASSICS

A zig-zag in the maroon ribbon-line distinguishes this new range, a launch of 25 LPs, with one exception first reissues from top-priced analogue material. Indeed, the original matrix numbers can be seen – which is not to say that the Dutch pressings will not bring improvements over older English copies. (In all cases, the final '1' becomes a '4' for chrome cassette version.) Incidentally, in Philips' October *Gramophone* advert, more than half the series carried plaudits from *HFN/RR* reviews!

ASM/Marriner

'An extension of my right arm' was Brendel's description of working with Marriner on the Mozart concertos. The two in B-flat, K456 & 595 (412 931-1), illustrate this time and again, in subtle matched shadings of expression. With K595 a disappointment in Perahia's ECO cycle, this reissue is especially welcome (though Kempff's should not be forgotten). Breath-takingly silent surfaces sway me to give [A*:1*]. The 'effortless' and quite lovely coupling of the four horn concertos (412 930-1), with the soloist Alan Civil's completion of the Rondo K371 – chords in his cadenza there – is preferable to the Tuckwell/ASM 'Greensleeve' alternative, which does

have the additional fragment K494a. Though strings are recessed, a shade dim, the Philips recording is superior to EMI's; Civil's performances are subtler, deeper [A/B:1*]. The *Mass* in C-minor (K427) is dimly recorded, performance cautious [B:1/1], failing to soar into sublime registers. I'll keep my copy (412 932-1), but it does pale in comparison with the older LSO/Davis. Davis brings more character than Marriner to Haydn, too, in the *Drumroll & Military Symphonies* (412 925-1) [A:2] – the dark textures of the Concertgebouw's playing, or Dorati's robustness (Decca), are nearer the mark. The acoustic is reverberant, but there is improved stereo integration to be had from the re-pressing. The 1980 remake of Handel's *Water Music* (412 924-1) brought even more refinement, yet the charm and warmth of the older Argo disc were diminished, notably in the Menuetto of the Suite in G. But [A:1*] nonetheless. Marriner's second set of Rossini overtures – *Tell/Corinth/Cinderella/Semiramide/Reims/Thieving Magpie* (412 935-1) – was not quite as demonstration-worthy as his first. But, if tuttis are slightly 'muffled', strings are beautifully silky, and the playing is impeccable [A/B:1*]. With a solo instrument taking the first violins' part, the Air from the Suite No.3, tediously slow in pacing, really adds nothing of value to Szeryng's Bach concertos remake – Hasson in the Double, side-turn for BWV1041 (iii) (412 915-1). Modern instruments, with continuo. Recommended for Szeryng's playing *per se*: he tends to be too rhythmically emphatic, and the 'reverential' approach gets less near to the spirit than La Petite Bande. The solo balances are close, and imaging lacks explicitness, but [A:1].

Beethoven

I can't recall another recording of the Ninth including children's voices, which are just discernible in the East German, Leipzig, production under Masur. A lucid, rather than heaven-storming account, in a recessed, spaciouly (or swimmy) resonant setting. A clean but low-level cut (412 916-1). Interesting in its way, I cannot help feeling there's a streak of puritanical reaction to mega-star Berlin Ninths! (A/B:1/2) (But Masur comes no closer to Beethoven's inspirations.) Brendel's *Emperor*, with LPO/Haitink, has not quite the electricity of responses of the 1983 live Chicago version, but that is marred by a coarse edginess of sound, as well as Levine's unwelcome underlinings of the obvious. The reissue here (412 917-1) is not free of woolliness in the sound [A/B:1]. *Les Adieux* and the *Hammerklavier* were taped at opposite ends of Brendel's sonata cycle. Op.106 is worth hearing for the raptness of the Adagio; however, it is the relative freedom from self-consciousness that places Gilels' DG at the pinnacle. Some pre-echoes on my copy (412 918-1) [A:1].

Concertgebouw/Haitink

The requirements of objectivity, sensitivity to the underlying emotions, and technical control, are unerringly balanced in a 1979 Tchaikovsky *Pathétique* (412 937-1). The overall feeling is one of spaciousness and order – go to VPO/Karajan for a more theatrically charged performance – and recording quality, too, has a corresponding sense of space and detail. One might still criticise the brass, which tends to spittiness, but this is one of the most fulfilling readings [A:1*]. Much as I enjoyed *Alborada* (on 'Sequenza') I never feel that Haitink is the ideal Ravel interpreter. Perhaps there's a too generous warmth, too little sharpness or fantasy. The acoustic tends to blur, as well, in a collection on (412 934-1): *La Valse/Bolero/Le Tombeau/Pavane* [A:1]. More surprisingly, after its initial impact *Das Lied von der Erde* became, for me, unremembered – not so the Klemperer, which on CD recently held me riveted in a London shop. James King sings in a near-strained monochromatic way, and even Janet Baker is not at her most deeply affecting in a Mahler recording, which is very well detailed, technically, but

where solo voices are just over-scaled in relation to the orchestral picture. The acoustic reflects an empty hall effect, still, an improvement over first UK copies (412 927-1) [A:1]. Szeryng's third version of the Brahms Concerto (412 919-1) similarly remains unplayed, in my collection, since 1974. But then his LSO/Monteux original was so good. The slow movement almost plods, dutifully, the soloist indulging artful tenuti and near-portamenti, all too premeditated. A sad contrast to the flow, and heartfelt response to the music in Krebbers' Brahms, also with Haitink. (412 919-1) [A/B:3]. A Turnerish sky-scape photo replaces the mundane original sleeve for Haitink's lovely Debussy recording of *L'Après-midi/La Mer*, with the *Marche Ecossaise* and 1st Rhapsody (now 412 920-1). *Faun* is fastidiously balanced, and the scale of the acoustic is just about ideal. However, I don't think it is a sensuous, or erotic account, such as Monteux' or Cantelli's. The reverse side brings one of the few indispensable *La Mer* recordings, where Philips' engineers have caught the subtlest details of orchestration marvelously well. The Dutch pressings have greater dimensionality and bass presence than the UK ones [A/A*:1/1*].

Sir Colin Davis

The 1976 Concertgebouw *New World* was admired for its faithfulness to Dvorak's score, yet one transatlantic reviewer described it as 'cold English porridge!' There's a pleasing sweetness to the sound, which is nevertheless veiled (412 921-1) [B:1/2]. It is good to have a freshened transfer of the Bishop-Kovacevich/BBC SO Grieg and Schumann concertos (412 923-1). Tape-hiss betrays the 1971 dating, but how well the piano sounds. There's a charming naive painting for the sleeve of this most recommendable pairing [A/B:1/1*]. In the two Liszt concertos (412 926-1) Claudio Arrau is set too forward of the LSO; the image is spread wide across the stage. With its grim opening tutti this expansive E-flat collaboration has never struck me as very happy. Certainly there's nothing to test allegiance to Richter/Kondrashin, on Philips [A/B:2]. I had remembered as even finer than his Sibelius series, Davis' Boston coupling of Mendelssohn's *Italian* and *Misummer Night's Dream* excerpts (412 928-1). That said, in the *MND* scherzo Davis lets phrase-ending become lost; the Bostonians fail to give the music either rhythmic buoyancy or character, abounding in the old (EMI) RPO/Kempe Suite. The engineers have given the transfers a forward boost: I am not convinced this was advisable, as there is a loss of Symphony Hall ambience. I couldn't now rate standards of playing above, say, those of the Israel PO, in Bernstein's live *Italian* on DG, but Davis' toughness is the thing here [A:1].

Miscellaneous

In the 1971 Vivaldi *Four Seasons* by I Musici, with Michelucci as soloist, tuttis are bold, and the enjoyable harpsichord continuo part well separated; the sound is reasonably airy, but somewhat suspect in its balances – it tends to the overblown and fatty. As a modern-instrument choice it is preferable, on grounds on style, to the Schwalbé/BPO 'Signature', but certainly not to Loveday/ASM on Argo. (412 939-1) [B/C:1]. If you like Accardo's interpretations you will probably already have the Mendelssohn E-minor and Bruch G-minor, LPO/Dutoit and Leipzig/Masur (412 929-1), in the more valuable original couplings. His cool concentration in the Mendelssohn is impressive; a swimmy Leipzig acoustic, with solo violin too forward, and the essentially self-preoccupied, not to say narcissistic approach, lead to a divided rating [A:1] [B/C:3]. Opinion was also split concerning ECO/Leppard in two Suites from *Peer Gynt*, Grieg's four *Norwegian Dances* (412 922-1). The sound is fairly refined, if with a forward edge to upper strings; the resonant acoustic causes some blurring at high levels. The question is: are the readings as *dull* as some say, or 'deeply

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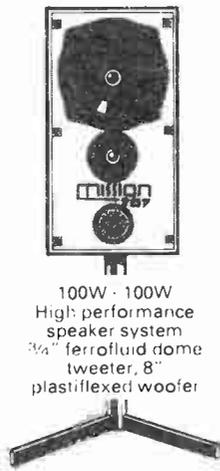
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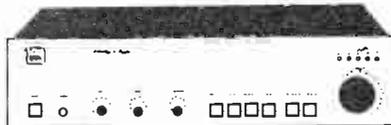
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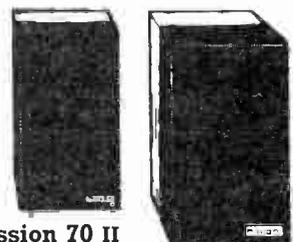
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sympathetic, full of vitality... played as if they were a new discovery? I am inclined to Hugh Ottaway's perceptive view [A:1/1*]. There were no dissenting voices when the Dorati Concertgebouw *Nutcracker* appeared in 1976; two Suites are excerpted from Tchaikovsky's ballet (412 938-1). The nice spacious recording, with the Haarlem boys' voices well balanced in 'Scene/Waltz with Snowflakes', is what I call end-of-old-generation Concertgebouw productions, the 'new generation' coming with Haitink's pre-digital Tchaikovsky symphony cycle. Only 41m playing time, but [A*:1*].

Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* is the 1980 Quartetto Italiano version, not the earlier one on 'Musica da Camera' (a series apparently due to be phased out). It is superbly engineered, balanced at close quarters, though the 1966 SAL pressing is strikingly good too. Both discs couple the *Quartettsatz* in C-minor. The lilt and form in the scherzo are better conveyed here (412 936-1), though I am less convinced by a slower tempo for the *Andante con moto*, which before had a deeper feeling for Schubert's 'hopelessly journeying' theme. One of a handful of discs with the replacement viola Asciola [A:1/2]. Nor should Kegel's Leipzig RSO *Carmina Burana* be confused with his old, less satisfactory DG Orff recording. 412 933-1 is a 1975 VEB co-production. With the Jochum LP deleted, this is the best example of the authentic German style: strict in metres, serious, brilliant in attack. The precision is matched in a dry, accurately scaled recording, interestingly layered in depth. Some will not like the contralto-ish Hiestermann in 'Roast Swan', but if the timbres leave you uncomfortable, it is singularly idiomatic. [A*:1*]

Christopher Breunig

SCOTTISH & IRISH FOLKSONGS

Isobel Buchanan (sop)/Ronald Maconaghie (bar)/
Sharolyn Kimmorley (pno)
CFP 41 49971 (41 49974)

It is a pleasure to find a record where the recording of the voices sounds to me completely natural, as if the artists were singing in a large room or possibly a small village hall – surely the right setting for folksongs. These selections were actually recorded in 1977 and 1978 in the Sydney Music Studios of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, and altogether they make a fascinating recital.

Purists might well argue that folksongs arranged as duets introduce a degree of sophistication which is foreign to the very nature of the genre, but they certainly sound very well. I am glad that some of the solos are unaccompanied, but beautifully as Isobel Buchanan sings it, I feel that *She moved thro' the fair* must be sung by a man to make any sense of the words. Both the artists have fine voices, while their diction is faultless. Sharolyn Kimmorley accompanies well and the balance between piano and soloists is just about ideal. Despite my reservations as to the authenticity of the arrangements, I can recommend this record to all those who enjoy simple songs beautifully sung. [A:1]

John Freestone

SIMON ESTES: Spirituals

Simon Estes (bass-bar)/Howard Roberts Chorale/
Howard A. Roberts
Philips 412 631-1 digital (412 631-4)

Paul Robeson junior who writes in the sleeve note states 'Not since listening to my father sing these songs at the peak of his career have I been so completely captured by the splendour and personality of a voice'. Listening to these recordings, one is left in no doubt as to the outstanding talents of Simon Estes, whose operatic work is well-known; but I am not so happy about these arrangements. I heard Paul Robeson when he was in his prime giving a recital of negro spirituals, and apart from the great beauty of his voice

it was the simplicity and utter sincerity with which he sang which were so moving.

Here the excellent Howard Roberts Chorale form a most impressive accompaniment to the soloist, but the arrangements introduce a degree of sophistication which is foreign to the very nature of the songs. The recording of the choir is spacious and airy, with the voice of the soloist well focused in the centre, and the overall sound is clean and well balanced. Full marks then for recording quality and performance, but some reservations as to the overall presentation. [A:1/2]

John Freestone

SUZANNE DANCO: Con Amore

Songs by Bach, Bononcini, Brahms, Caccini, Debussy, Fauré, Gounod, Mozart, Schubert, Schutz, Schumann, R Strauss

Suzanne Danco (sop)/Various accompanying artists

Decca 414 635-1 (3 recs) (M) (NC)

Reissues from 1947-56

Suzanne Danco was one of the most stylish and versatile artists of the period immediately following World War II. All these recordings reveal her as a most accomplished soprano typical of the best French school, although she is actually a Belgian. Her voice has a bright clear quality and her diction is always exemplary. She is at her best in the music of the early composers and in the songs of Gounod, Debussy and Fauré. Her German is very good, but she seems less at home stylistically in the lieder of Schubert, Schumann and Brahms. Her approach is intellectual rather than emotional, and despite the fine technique and lovely vocal quality she occasionally seems a little cold.

The transfers have been well done, although there is considerable surface noise on the two Mozart operatic arias which were

originally 78s. This three-record album gives us a fine portrait of a deeply musical and highly fastidious artist. [H:1/2] John Freestone

TREASURES OF THE SPANISH RENAISSANCE:

Guerrero/Lobo/De Vivanco
Ch of Westminster Cath/David Hill
Hyperion A66168 (NC)

If only one could know what was the sound of the cathedral choir in Seville, at the height of the Tridentine liturgical revival! But Poulsen had not been born then, so this rendering has to be judged on its merits. These are very great, though my personal taste does not enjoy the boys' tone, which tends towards the strident and shouting, and often obscures the other voices by its sheer noise. One does not expect a 1930s Anglican tone; but I should, frankly, prefer that to this. But many will not agree with me; and if you're one of those, you will revel in the issue, which is excellently done, with occasional, discreet use of instrumental accompaniment. The music itself is superb: a sustained march of magnificence, devotion and glorious musical invention. The period from the 16th to 17th centuries was one of the greatest in the history of music, and these are fine examples of what was done in the most Catholic of countries.

The sound as recorded in the Cathedral is typical of that place, and the expected Hyperion skill and taste have been lavished upon it. Aside from internal balance in the choir, which is not the responsibility of the engineer, the result is revelatory of the music, though I did feel in places that the accompaniment from organ, double-harp and bass dulciana might have been brought out a shade – just a shade – more. From every point of view, this is a splendid issue, commemorating a period we are unlikely to see again. [A:1]

Peter Turner

RCA LEGENDARY PERFORMERS

Outstanding in this second batch of digitally remastered reissues – German dmm pressed – from a golden period in RCA's history, 1946-61, is **Toscanini's** second NBC recording of Schubert's *Great C-major* Symphony (GL85246 (M) – cassette prefix GK in each case). It hardly counts that the tempi for scherzo/trio sit uneasily – though there's a sweetness in both, missing in his more publicised Philadelphia account. Paradoxically, Toscanini is more uncompromising still here, yet the conducting never veers to the rigidity of the 1941 document, and for sheer ardour and astounding felicitous inner detail, this glorious Ninth is without rival. The constraints of a tubby, cramped, mono Carnegie Hall recording (though, to be fair, the sound is far from wholly unenjoyable) are quickly forgotten in the sweep of the whole [H:1*].

A bonus with these transfers is Robert Walker's series of notes. Walker argues that William Kapell, killed in an air crash at 31, was the greatest of postwar American pianists. GL85266 (M) couples his debut in Khachaturian's Concerto (Boston/Koussevitsky) with a stunning Prokofiev 3 (Dallas SO/Dorati). Though tending to blur the diamond brilliance of Kapell's fingerwork, the 1949 Prokofiev recording catches many orchestral sonorities that pass unnoticed in modern stereo productions. It's a striking collaboration, and the sensitivity about which one has often read – I don't think Kapell's records were ever released here – is manifest. The compelling whiplash pianism at the end of Khachaturian (i) demolishes the barriers of a tonally thin, harsh, and distant 1946 Boston production (wrongly dated in the sleeve heading) [H:1*].

Fritz Reiner's persuasions brought about the Bartok *Concerto for Orchestra*: one of four recordings here by the autocratic Hungarian master of the Chicago SO. You will note that this 1955 stereo (GL85220) has the quick tempo for Play of the Couples

'discovered' 25 years later by Solti! Remastering impairs the unexpected translucency of the analogue taping, so [B:1*]. The 1958 Mahler Fourth, with Lisa della Casa (GL85256) still sounds calculated, unspontaneous, even ruthless in feeling [B:3].

Though he loved the later intimate pieces, and recorded the two concertos at various times, Artur Schnabel never seemed the ideal Brahms interpreter. In the earliest of three stereo recordings of the D-minor, Chicago 1954, line is expressed at the expense of depth of feeling; what technical interest the recording had is lost in digital processing – it embrittles the piano tone (GL85253) [B:2]. Rubinstein's insistence on close balances brings an out-of-scale piano image to the recoupling of Mozart concertos in A (K488), and C (K467), RCA Victor/Wallenstein (GL85243), with a kind of 'damped' orchestral sound in K488. But the elegance, polish, and vivacity of the solo playing – recorded at 75 – never lapse under the engineering scrutiny [B:1].

Alexander Brailowsky's disappointing 1952 set of Chopin *Preludes* suffers from an aggressively forward balance, though the hiss levels are satisfactorily reduced here (GL85268 (M)). Much of the playing is cumbersome: the absence of distancing rules this out, except for study purposes [C/D:2].

In 1961, three years before his death, Monteux outshone his San Francisco version of Franck's Symphony with a Chicago SO remake, cogent and gripping. A superb recording, later subject of a dubious half-speed mastering, but the original presence translates to some loss of inner focus and climactic edginess here (GL85261) [B/C:1*].

It would be difficult to resist Heifetz in the Mendelssohn Concerto, Boston/Munch, despatched with aplomb at great speed; the Tchaikovsky coupling under Reiner (GL85264), if persuasive in the canzonetta, is tricky in the finale – not the distinction one has the right to expect. The 1957 Chicago recording has lost some credibility in remastering [C:1/3].

Christopher Breunig

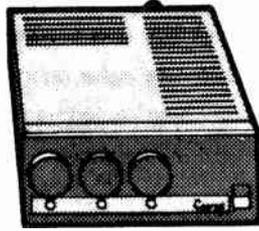
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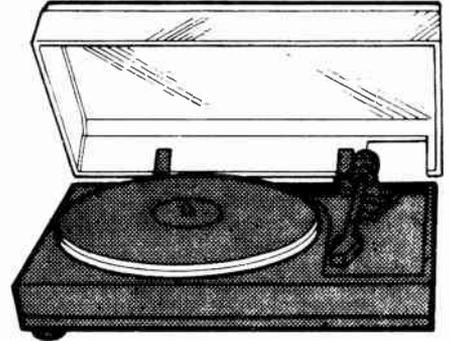
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BLANCMANGE: BELIEVE YOU ME
London LONLP 10

I felt, at first, that Blancmange might soon prove boring. The way I had it figured, the twosome that is Neil Arthur (vocals) and Stephen Luscombe (keyboards), having come up with a successful formula, would get stuck in a self-made rut and grind rapidly to an artistic halt. Happily, this hasn't happened. The duo have pushed and prodded into other areas; Luscombe's venture into indo-rock proved a worthy one. Now on this, the third Blancmange album, there are other forays into unexpected climes, other trails to be followed. 'No Wonder They Never Make It Back' proves to be a string-backed instrumental on which trumpeter Dick Cutnell makes like Alpert at his most Miles-influenced; 'John' is keyboard-created chamber music that may or may not be a tribute to Lennon; 'Other Animals' scoots from under Arthur to provide a basis for a Ronnie Ross tenor outing; 'Lorraine's My Nurse' is a minuet; while Hugh Maskela horn jerks 'Don't You Love It All' into added vitality, Katie Kissoon providing an assist vocally. Nothing dull then. Nothing to set you snoozing. Blancmange, like the dessert from which they take their name, come in many flavours. Most of them tasty. [A:1/2]

Fred Dellar

MICHAEL BROOK: HYBRID, WITH BRIAN ENO & DANIEL LANOIS
Editions EG EGED 41

ROGER ENO: VOICES
Editions EG EGED 42

Presented as twin albums – though not identical twins – both LPs offer hypnotic 'ambient' music of insidious depth. *Voices* (Roger is Brian's younger brother) is heavily influenced by Satie's *Gymnopédies*. Almost classical in content, the poised, minimalist piano notes ripple the electronic harmonies like a leaf falling onto still water. *Hybrid* is less formal, and here the influences are Indian and African. The largely synthesised sounds are complex, subtle and soothingly sensual. The atmosphere is of a hot Oriental night, where jungle beasts gather at the water hole and crickets sing. The seemingly aimless simplicity of this unstructured, rhythmic music is deceptive. It's really very sophisticated, and beautifully crafted. A CD of this would be bliss – just press repeat and drift for hours! Sound quality on *Hybrid* is soft (not real treble) and warm (glowing bass). [B:1] My first copy of *Voices* was eccentric (pun half intended) – *caveat emptor*. [C:1]

Sue Hudson

MARSHALL CRENSHAW: DOWNTOWN
WB 925319-1

The clean cut boy emerges with his third album, getting on for two years after the second, a fact which seems to prove ol' Marshall has not given up his day job. In fact, *Downtown* represents a further synthesis of the bespectacled one's muse, as he burrows down ever further into the roots of timeless rock 'n' roll. Verse, chorus and bridge are a seamless entity, a flick of the wrist and a snap of the fingers is twice the sum of the effort on display. Crenshaw would sooner introduce a centipede to his trouser leg than let a guitar solo run riot over his cherished compositions. So what price do you pay for this kind of perfection? Well, for starters, this is not the kind of record to make you howl with undiluted pleasure: more hum pleasurable. None of the songs make with the smash and grab introductions: rather, they insinuate. Apart from that, it's an undisguised slice of pop *nouvelle cuisine*. Roll over Dave Edmunds. [B:2]

Pete Clark

VIC DAMONE: CLOSER THAN A KISS/VIC

DAMONE SINGS
CBS 22183

DORIS DAY: GREAT MOVIE HITS/SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY
CBS 22181

FRANK SINATRA: ADVENTURES OF THE HEART/ THE BROADWAY KICK
CBS 22182

These reissues in the Diamond Memories series span 18 years from 1949, and the interest is in how well the performances stand up now. For me, it's Vic Damone. Then, as now, he must have had trouble in finding enough good songs to suit his style – but what a style! On this double album, and at the age of 30, he was already mature enough to make a strong performance out of

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Just what the doctor ordered; a uniform set of rock 'n' roll classics, beautifully compiled, packaged, annotated and specially priced. Four of the five here show that EMI know the worth of their acquisition, Liberty, while the fifth – on Capitol – has been theirs all along. The value of such packages, since the faithful already own everything by their heroes, has to be gauged by the intelligence with which the selection and the accompanying notes have been assembled, because these LPs will, more than likely, appeal to those needing an introduction to each artist. As all five are well-represented in the bargain-bin, cash-in category of reissue madness, the EMI packages stand out because all bear biographies and track data compiled by experts on each singer. The LPs live up to the 'Best of' appellation, though they only contain material relevant to the label; you'll have to look elsewhere for, say, Ricky Nelson's post-Imperial (Liberty) hits. EMI have called this series 'Rock 'n' Roll Masters'; wouldn't it be nice if they had access to other catalogues to complete the set? Fabulous. [A/B/H:1/1*2], overall; there's a lot of mono in them thar discs...

Ken Kessler

weak material, a resonant voice free from lazy slurs and sloppy diction. About half the songs seem mere makeweights, but the set is worth buying (budget price) for such performances as 'Close As Pages In A Book' and 'Spring Is Here'. [B:2]

For me, Doris Day was never a favourite film star – probably because her arrival in the big time coincided with my disillusioned departure from regular film-going. She missed out on the great musicals, which weren't her style, and her lightweight comedies weren't my style. So the tunes collected here as movie memories aren't my nostalgia corner, though several are familiar from radio, including that clever vocal version of 'Canadian Capers' as revised by Harry Warren and Ralph Blane. Doris had, of course, learned her trade in the big band era, and that side of her career is represented on the other record, titled after her most famous recording with Les Brown. The other songs are a top-class selection – four by Harry Warren, including that pair of lovely ballads

from Miller's *Orchestra Wives*, 'At Last' and 'Serenade In Blue', plus standards by Ellington and Jimmy Van Heusen. They are sung with taste and restraint, and the backings don't sound at all dated. What is missing is the excitement of star quality. Still, it's unfair to criticise Doris Day for not being Judy Garland. [B:1/2]

Sinatra, in his Columbia days, 1949-52, with his film Oscar still ahead, had barely shaken off his crooner image, but some of the tracks here suggest the potential that developed in his Capitol years. Compared with the later strong-voiced Sinatra (I date that from 'Granada', 1961) these tracks include some incredibly weak versions of 'big' show tunes, and in those days he really shouldn't have tackled a song from *Porgy and Bess*. A pleasant surprise is 'If Only She'd Looked My Way', a seldom-heard Ivor Novello song which suggests that he could have had an equally rewarding composing career if he had kept away from Ruritania, lilacs and the rest. It suited the lightweight Sinatra of the Columbia period perfectly. Of course, his best was yet to come. More than the other two albums (digitally remastered stereo, sometimes erratic) it sounds dated and almost in our [H] category. Denis Argent

DAVE HOLLAND QUINTET: SEEDS OF TIME
ECM 1292

One of the most original non-US jazz trumpeters is Kenny Wheeler, a Canadian who has made London his base for many years. This album is worth getting hold of for Wheeler alone, whose performance encapsulates the spirit of adventure which symbolised the British contemporary jazz scene in the '60s and '70s. That exuberance and vitality is alive and well today on this album. Wheeler and Holland go back a long time, in fact to the days before the bassist was plucked from these shores by another trumpeter, Miles Davis. The quintet – with Julian Priestler (trombone), Steve Coleman (reeds) and Marvin Smith (drums) – is lively and bright. Many of the themes have the edgy high-speed energy of bebop, and their collective playing is tight and impressive. As individuals they also play with intelligence and imagination. The album stands out as one of the most stimulating to come from the ECM stable for some time. [A*:1]

Ken Hyder

MORRIS DAY: COLOR OF SUCCESS
Warner Bros 925 320

Day, as you probably know, was lead vocalist with The Time. And maybe things would have stayed that way had not Prince decided to make a film called *Purple Rain* and allowed Day to steal virtually every scene from him. Since which time Day has joined Jesse Johnson in the list of pretenders to the princely crown. This, his debut album, doesn't depart too drastically from the synth and guitar funk stance adopted by his original band. With five synth players and four guitarists aboard, how could it? So whatcha get is whatcha expect – ever-wheeling synth riffs that are stretched out till there's nothing left to be wrung from them; rhythms that come so strong on the backbeat that you'd imagine the drummer was using baseball bats instead of sticks, and vocals that echo the princely plead with no little accuracy. The formula's simple but effective. And if it catches on, which it probably will, then maybe we'll all become Morris dancers. End of bad joke. [A:1/2]

Fred Dellar

DIRE STRAITS: BROTHERS IN ARMS
Vertigo VERH 25

'It's the same old story with a different ending', Mark Knopfler sings on soporific 'Ride Across The River'. But, in fact, it's really the same old story with no difference at all –



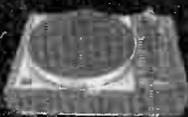
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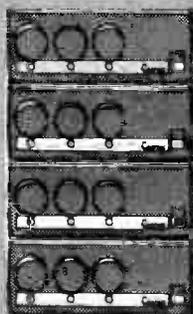
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lots of the sort of guitar chords that hit the button marked 'tranquility', and vocal impressions of Dylan that Mike Yarwood would be proud to call his own. It's all very likeable. If you could knock it down with your fist it would probably rise, smile and shake you by the hand. But likeability isn't enough. Where Knopfler has formerly provided above-average scores for above-average movies, he's now creating backdrops for not-very-exciting films that do not yet exist. Perhaps six months with Hammer, down at Bray, could buck things up a mite or two. Meantime it's just dreamtime in dobro land. [A:2] Fred Dellar

FRASER MACPHERSON QUINTET: JAZZ PROSE
Concord CJ 269 from Import Music Service

Having, in September 1984, hailed Ed Bickert, who plays here, as yet another in the seemingly endless succession of jazz guitar stars (Concord CJ 232), I need not repeat a rave now. Instead, it's welcome to another Canadian, the tenor player who leads this quintet in a live 1984 concert at the Concord Pavilion in California. He's another in the neo-mainstream style of Scott Hamilton, and there's no honking and screeching. He is at his best with the tricky changes of that languid standard 'Darn That Dream'. Faster tunes, good ones from the Porter and Berlin songbooks, and a full-steam-ahead 'Slow Boat To China', show Bickert's agility, and there's Dave McKenna's stomping piano. The group is completed by Jake Hanna on drums and another Canadian, Steve Wallace, on bass. Recording is sharp, and the producer includes just enough applause to give atmosphere without depriving us of essential music. Elegant small group jazz lives! Even those who (like me) have an affinity with the swing era must admit that today's soloists aim higher and achieve more than Charlie Christian, Georgie Auld and Johnny Guarneri did in those seminal Goodman sextet records of 45 years ago. [A:1*] Denis Argent

GARY US BONDS: STANDING IN THE LINE OF FIRE
Making Waves Spray 103

The Little Steven involvement on this one has been overplayed. The record company has used it as a selling point while critics have latched onto the man of Miami's helping hand as a means of linking the whole deal to Springsteen and a Brucian rip-off theory. In fact, unlike *Dedication*, Bonds' 1981 owe-it-all to The Boss best-seller - recently reissued on EMI ED26-06951 - there's been little outside involvement on *Standing*, Little Steven being responsible for producing the title track only. It's true the music generally comes hard and streetwise - some may say a few were E-streetwise - but then the comparison isn't as relevant as, say, with John Cafferty. Forget all the is-he-or-isn't-he? theories, then, and at least provide a listening opportunity for such cuts as the brass-belching 'Working Man' or the pineapple-flavoured 'City Lights' and remember it was Springsteen who first latched onto Bonds and not the other way around. [B:2] Fred Dellar

GUADALCANAL DIARY: WALKING IN THE SHADOW OF THE BIG MAN
Elektra 9604291

For some reason which is impenetrable to the normal thought processes, Guadalcanal Diary have walked slap into a critical storm of abuse. The only theory which presents itself is that they are just one American band too many for the more xenophobic of our pop pundits. Certainly, their music of its own accord should call forth no such vitriol: good, honest, decent, motherloving rock of a faintly dated stripe. Even that is not surprising, since *Walking In The . . .* was recorded

well over a year ago for an indie label and only belatedly picked up (and re-recorded) by a major. 'Watusi Rodeo' got radio play because of its pleasant stomp, the rest is quite as palatable. [B:2] Pete Clark

KAHONDO STYLE: MY HEART'S IN MOTION
Nato 469

NIELS-HENNING ORSTED PEDERSEN: THE ETERNAL TRAVELLER
Pablo 2310 910

These two albums have little in common, other than the musicians being involved in some way with folk music. It's what they are doing with folk music that's interesting. Padersen is perhaps best known for his work with Oscar Peterson. He is a virtuoso bass player, but virtuosity on an instrument does not necessarily lead to an overall good sense of musical organisation. His album - with piano and drums - takes Danish folk tunes and turns them into jazz vehicles. In doing so he comes up with something that's a bit nothing-like. The folksiness is gone and the jazziness is uninspired. It ends up as well-played music with no purpose or depth or meaning. [A:3]

Kahondo Style are made up of players who are not virtuosos. They come from a variety of backgrounds, having drifted towards the sharp end of improvised music. There's a large dose of humour at work and a sense of performance art. Not all of the pieces end up as having an identity, but those which do hang together as numbers which owe their fabrication to a variety of elements from folk musics to contemporary jazz. And where they score over Pedersen is in the quality of which jazz used to boast. The sound of surprise is absent in the Pedersen album, but it's there throughout on the Kahondo Style set. [A:2] Ken Hyder

LESTER BOWIE'S BRASS FANTASY: I ONLY HAVE EYES FOR YOU
ECM 1296

Lester Bowie, trumpeter in that madcap Art Ensemble of Chicago, has a soft spot for Platters-style triple feel ballads and the title track carries on that Bowie fascination with some extraordinary sounds in an extraordinary arrangement. The only non-brass player in the nine-piece band is the drummer, Philip Wilson. The sound is rich and lush, but well punctuated by irreverent flatulences. Bowie, with his sense of tradition, shapes the overall sound from Ellingtonian references to aboriginal growls and drones. Sometimes he takes the listener along a path which seems clearly defined, then he slips round a corner and suddenly the scenery is transformed. In that respect, he's a bit like Monk, although more obvious. Although it is an unusual project, the brass fantasy's music is tremendously accessible, and the tender should not be frightened off. [A*:2] Ken Hyder

MACHITO: MACHITO AND HIS SALSA BIG BAND 1982
Timeless SJP 161

Bandleader Machito's death a few months ago marked the end of the first wave of Latin jazz pioneers. In the 1940s, Charlie Parker, fascinated with Afro-Cuban music, recorded with Machito. The fusion is a comfortable one and has lasted the distance. Machito's bands have tended to be more jazzy than most salsa bands, and this album will stand out as something special. The great identifying feature about Machito's music is the trumpet section. The four trumpets on this album create the fireworks and the bravura which take the breath away, while the four saxophones beef out the sound. Stylistically, the sound can often be a bit 1940s still, but the sparkling sunbursts put the dated sections in the shade. If you like modern salsa

music and you are curious as to its origins, a dip into this album will open up your ears. [A:1/2] Ken Hyder

MAX ROACH QUARTET: SCOTT FREE
Soul Note SN 1103

In the midst of a plethora of reissues, here is a new album from someone who first made his mark on the jazz scene in the 1940s and who is still making lively, fresh music today. In fact, this album is less avant garde than some of Roach's recent projects. It's as if the quartet is Roach's touchstone, the living core of his music. Cecil Bridgewater (trumpet) and Odean Pope (tenor), have been with Roach for some time; the electric bass player - Tyrone Brown - is new. The band cooks and sizzles through an extended piece by Bridgewater, a piece which gives everyone a solo space between strong group playing. To listen to Roach's playing is to observe the roots of many, many younger drummers. He swings compulsively, and his energy resonates in his sidemen. This quartet carries on the tradition of small group playing which emerged with bebop, and the excitement is still there today. [A:1] Ken Hyder

BUD POWELL: ALTERNATE TAKES
Blue Note BST 84430

Perhaps because of his bouts of illness, or the spotlight being turned on other players at the time, Bud Powell did not achieve the full recognition his contribution to post war jazz deserves. But his influence persists today because so many pianists who came on the scene later used Powell's work as a jumping off point. This album strings together alternate takes from 1949 to 1963. There are different reasons for rejecting particular takes at the time of recording. The piece may just fall apart because of a mistake, or it can be down to a matter of taste between two or more equally acceptable takes. The way it works out, this is one of the better alternate takes formula albums. From the early tracks, Powell establishes his sparkle, not just through the speed he has at his disposal but with his fluence and imagination. [H:1/2] Ken Hyder

DIANA ROSS: EATEN ALIVE
Capitol ROSS 2

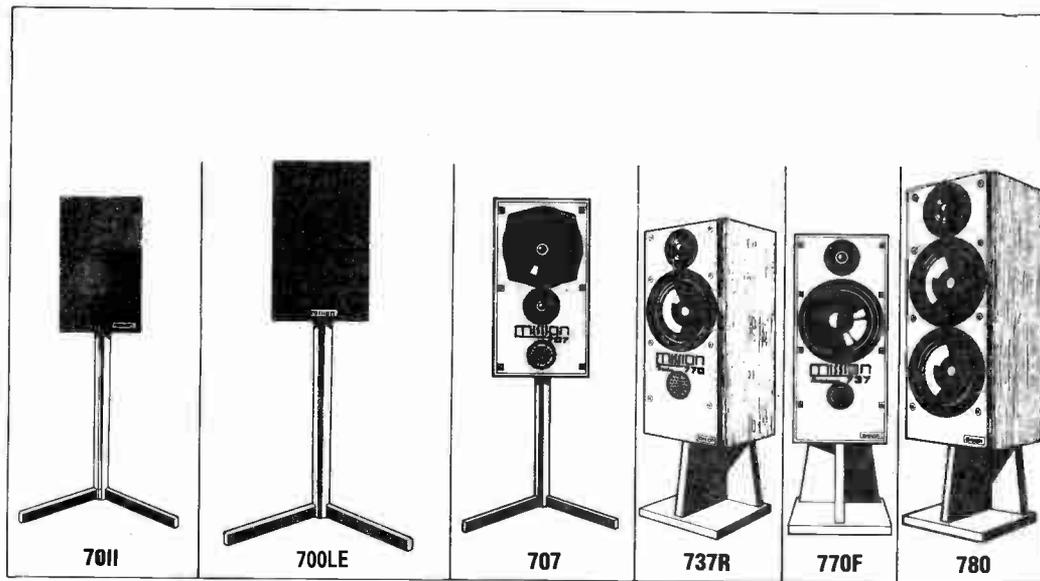
Though the BeeGees may have found it difficult stayin' alive in the personal hit-making stakes during the '80s, they've done their duty by various soul princesses, first shaping songs for Dionne Warwick and now writing or co-writing all the *Eaten Alive* material for the delectable Di. And Di - who knows a good thing when she's able to bank it - remembering that Michael Jackson gave her a considerable leg-up with 'Muscles', has induced the lad to come on down once more and contribute his co-writing and vocal talents to the title track, which should do sales no harm whatsoever. All great stuff then? Well, no, not really. There's a little bit of this (the all-so-pretty 'I'm Watching You' and the Saturday night feverish 'Being In Love With You') and a little bit of that (the electro-plated 'Crime Of Passion') all in aid of that eternal search for the single that shows the way to go. But using a map marked BeeGee rather than AA sometimes means that finding the exact location of that particular yellow brick road is often difficult. [A:2] Fred Dellar

TODD RUNDGREN: A CAPPELLA
Warner Bros 925 128-1

No, TR hasn't gone on a Persuaders kick. I think it refers to the fact that he's playing with himself here. If only we all had such skills! *A Cappella* is like Roy Wood's *Boul-*

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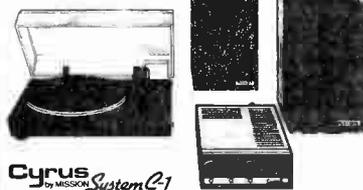
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ders, Todd's way of saying that John Donne was a jerk, and his one-man impersonations of Godley and Creme, Hall and Oates, the aforementioned Wood, and just about every other smooth operator *prove* that he deserves much more of a following than the 127 people who buy everything he releases. As Todd cannot be categorised – this LP doesn't help matters any by dipping into more styles than an issue of *The Face* – it may mean that *A Cappella* will follow its predecessors and only shift in numbers via Our Price's bargain bins. Todd is a genius, even if he's the only one who'll admit it. [A+:1*] **Ken Kessler**

SADE: PROMISE
Epic EPC86318

This studied cool of hers is starting to wear thin; not even Tom Waits was that jaded, that young. If Barbi Benton and other clothes (or un-clothes) horses couldn't crack it, why should Sade? Well... for one thing, she can really sing. That, of course, can be disputed, as some wags describe her method as simply inhaling and exhaling. But she *does* recall so many great, departed black female jazz vocalists of the past that you have to give her credit for not looking to the more likely sources of inspiration for someone of her tender years. This LP, her second, shows a certain wisdom – don't deviate from a proven formula – so her fans will lap it up; it could have been recorded at the same sessions as her first. Predictably, *Promise* is just as seductive and slick as her previous long player, and truly deserves [A+:1*]. But it does beg the question: did Sade ever have a childhood? **Ken Kessler**

DINAH SHORE: DINAH SINGS SOME BLUES WITH RED
EMI/Capitol EG 260609 1 (EG 260609 4)

Red is Red Norvo, veteran vibraphonist, and the producer or publicist must have had the inspiration of calling these tracks blues because of the red/blue colour idea. Blues they aren't, though Norvo would have given us something worth hearing – his *Blue Mood* with Harry James and Teddy Wilson was a classic of 1940. Dinah Shore gives her expected smooth treatment to 12 tunes; mostly standards – Ellington (twice), Kern, Arlen, Porter, Rube Bloom. One track, Jimmy McHugh's 'I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me' starts in ballad style, then she ups the tempo and finishes with some discreet scatting. For me, the most successful track is 'Skylark', sung with grace and airiness that Hoagy must have approved. Most tracks feature a Norvo quintet, with a notably musical bass player, John Mosher, and they suit the songs better than those that are additionally backed by a trumpet quartet, usually playing muted. There is also a guest alto, Jerry Dodgion, who ably simulates Hodges on one Ellington track. Presented in its original Capitol sleeve ('Full dimensional stereo') this 1960 recording is no masterpiece, but it's well worth its reissue in a French pressing. [B:1/2] **Denis Argent**

CARLY SIMON: SPOILED GIRL
Epic EPC 26376

It's 21 years now since The Simon Sisters first made the grade via 'Winkin', 'Blinkin' And Nod', but Carly knows enough to stay ahead of the game. She's seen Madonna make all the running by means of disco for dots and realises that dance equates with main chance on today's charts. Equally, she has enough grey matter to realise that she must hold on to that which is already hers. She must continue to write songs that provide mind-filippo to her existing fans while setting out the dance-patterns for possible new Simonphiles to follow. And on

Spoiled Girl she achieves this balancing act with no little success, harnessing the talents of such dancemasters as producer Arthur Baker and writers Don Was and Larry Raspberry in order to span the gap between hip and Hippodrome. Not all is perfect, it's not that sort of world. But songs such as 'The Wives Are In Connecticut', a tuneful tale of marital infidelity, and 'Interview', which should make all hacks think twice before ever again chatting to Carly over a hot cassette-recorder, should ensure extended life on vinyl for the delectable one. [A+:1] **Fred Dellar**

SIMPLY RED: PICTURE BOOK
Elektra EKT 27

When I first heard that Simply Red were to tour with James Brown, I winced. The thought of Brit-funk newcomers even appearing on the same stage as such soul royalty made me fear for their very existence. But after tuning into the band's initial brace of singles and this debut album, it seems I feared in vain. For the Mancunians probably represent the UK's best bet in the blue-eyed soul stakes since the Average White Band showed that they were rather better than their moniker suggested. Vocalist Mick Hucknall is both sinful and soulful, the rhythm section hit it crisp and clean, while the (augmented) brass team sounds as if it knows the quickest way back to Willie Mitchell's studio. If 'Come To My Aid' is any indication, the band have few problems in supplying their own material, and should they ever get stuck then, as their versions of The Valentine Brothers' 'Money's Too Tight' and Talking Heads' 'Heaven' clearly demonstrate, they can hide under the covers better than most. I'm sold. Just one playing of the bluesy 'Sad Old Red' and I'm anybody's. Well, Simply Red's, at least. [A+:1] **Fred Dellar**

MAXINE SULLIVAN WITH THE KEITH INGHAM QUINTET: GREAT SONGS FROM THE COTTON CLUB
Milan A270 (C 270)

VARIOUS: COTTON CLUB STARS
Milan A252/3 (LC 8126)
Both from Import Music Service

The archive photo on the sleeve is of a Cotton Club floor show as it was, not as recreated for the film. But turn the sleeve over: who is this little white-haired old lady at the mike? Can it be that same Maxine who delighted us in 1937 with that jazz-tinged *Loch Lomond*? Indeed it is, and at the time of this 1984 recording she was 74! Here's a veteran of jazz, phrasing classic Arlen and Koehler songs with due respect. Classics? Yes, of course – 'Stormy Weather', 'Devil And The Deep' (with super verse), 'As Long As I Live', 'World On A String'. But unfamiliar Arlen songs too; out of 15 tracks, nine get no mention by Wilder in the 38 pages on Arlen in *American Popular Song*. Three have not been recorded before; one, 'In The Silence Of The Night', is a gem which shines from a bossanova styled setting by our own Keith Ingham. Some songs are cabaret stuff rather than jazz, but it's sheer pleasure to hear Maxine showing today's video viragos how to sing. [A+:1]

The double album of rare performances spans the years 1927 to 1945 (well after the Cotton Club closed) and from Ethel Waters to Lena Horne, taking in Maxine (1938) and Ella (1939) on the way. As well as Ellington and Armstrong, there's the star-studded 1939 Cab Calloway band sounding so like Fletcher Henderson that it surely must be a Smack arrangement. 'Liza', one of Gershwin's own favourites, has the rarely-heard Gus Kahn lyric sung by the unknown (to me) Avon Long, and Harold Arlen sings his 'Happy As The Day Is Long'. The 30 tracks offer many unfamiliar delights, and only the first side

has unacceptable sound quality. [H] **Denis Argent**

TOM WAITS: RAIN DOGS
Island ILPS 9803

There's been much praise heaped upon this album by those who've belatedly cottoned on to what Waits has been selling since '73 and those who consistently check to ascertain exactly what they should be into in order to impress friends and influence no-one. In truth, it's not the best Waits offering, though it's easily the most diverse, he-who-will-never-do-commercials-for-Gillette hitching rides on the time machine back to hell of Brel for 'Cemetery Polka' and reviving memories of – would you believe? – Ernie Ford's '16 Tons' via 'Gun Street Girl', while on '9th And Hennepin' he embarks on a poetic ramble downtown, which, on a not too dark night, could be easily mistaken for one of Ken Nordine's grainy jazz tales of yesteryear. Sometimes the Waits musical cap slides off the creations it bedecks, but there are others when, replacing a stetson ('Blind Love'), a jazz beret ('Walking Spanish') or merely a party hat bearing the inscription 'I love Chuck Berry' ('Union Square') it fits so immaculately you'd imagine it came with head attached. And, oh yes, the lyric sheet is as marvellous as ever. Place the contents between a couple of hard covers and next year's Booker prize could well be in doubt. Despite all faults [B:1*]. **Fred Dellar**

STEVIE WONDER: IN SQUARE CIRCLE
Motown ZL72005

So Soul College's brightest boy has at last returned to show what he's been doing during his five year holiday. Trouble is that we've been led to expect so much and what would be deemed a pretty good album by anybody else's standards only gets the so-so nod when delivered by Steveland, or Songlife, as he's dubbed himself here. Even so, there's only one real classic aboard, a lass-latched-onto-loser tale called 'Go Home' that comes equipped with the sort of simple riff that should cause much hair-tearing among those who didn't think of it first. 'Spiritual Walkers' ranks among the best of the near-misses, funky and right but annoying in its admiration of religious door-to-door salespeople. Elsewhere there are songs about apartheid ('It's Wrong'); LA (the decidedly ikky 'Land Of La La'); long lost love ('Whereabouts') and other Songlife subjects. But, while *In Square Circle*, bless its surfeit of lyrics and hippy-dippy fairytale insert tale, is worth its asking price, it's not the record for which we've been waiting all these many years. Which is what you might expect of an album that supplied the mediocre 'Part-Time Lover' as its opening single shot. [A+:1] **Fred Dellar**

ZZ TOP: AFTERBURNER
Warner Bros WX27

Or Zed Zed Top, as Chooch would say. Back with what has been the most eagerly awaited LP of the season, we find the three Texans delivering the goods with just enough new twists to keep critics from screaming 'Formula! Formula!' The boys are still the heaviest of metals, but the synths keep creeping in, as if to eradicate any lingering association with the pre-punk past. What these electronic fillips do to the sound is add an incredibly clean edge to the otherwise fuzzy feel of ZZ Top's traditional attack, and the effects are frightening. This 'clean-up' is to previous efforts what *Mad Max III* is to *Mad Max II*, so only the purists will object. I loved the whole package – right down to the clever cover – and I must commend the band on the best Paul Young impersonation I've ever heard. Why, oh why, did I shave off the beard? [A+:1] **Ken Kessler**

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CAPSULES

MUSIC

ANSON AND THE ROCKETS: KNOCK YOU OUT
Spindrift SPIN202

More white Texas R&B, sounding so much like the Fabulous Thunderbirds that you'll think the wrong LP made it into the sleeve. As we can't get enough of this stuff, the cloning doesn't offend, it's an even better impersonation than America did of Neil Young. Hot and rocking and proof that there's hope yet in these days of Madonna. [A:1]

BEAU BRUMMELS: AUTUMN IN SAN FRANCISCO
Edsel ED 141

This marvellous 17-track retrospective provides a crash course in one of America's most under-appreciated 1960s pop bands. A careful mix of their hits and rarities, the package betters all others because of its brilliant liner notes. Though easy to label as 'West Coast Roots', the Beau Brummels were *not* responsible for the Bay City's later excesses. Approach with confidence if you like melodies that soar. [B:1*/2]

THE CARS: THE CARS' GREATEST HITS
Elektra EKT 25

Having always avoided plays-on-words *vis à vis* their name, the Cars didn't name this something like *Motor Show* or *A Garage Full of Dollars*. What the heck – the oh-so-standard name of this collection detracts not a whit from the sheer pop brilliance of what's inside. Probably the smartest band in America, the Cars only really stamped their imprint on the UK consciousness with 'Drive', via Live Aid; this will show new fans what went on before. [A/A*:1/1*]

CLANNAD: MACALLA
RCA PL70894

Clannad is an act cursed by its own success. This aetherial 'folk' group, because it will forever be associated with the theme music for ITV's *Robin Hood*, will have to pull some sort of musical about-face lest it seem that all of its efforts are the, uh, same. The music is pleasant despite the guest appearance on this year's *Fiery Young Thing*, U2's Bono, and fans will lap it up. Great for muzak and Arthurian fancy dress parties. [A:1]

FATS DOMINO: BOOGIE WOOGIE BABY
Ace CHD140

Early Fats, pre-'Blueberry Hill' and rousing in a way that his later material would make you forget. Included is the magnificent 'Don't Lie To Me', and the disc is in glorious mono. [H:1]

FAIRPORT CONVENTION: GLADYS' LEAP
Woodworm WR007 (Distributed by Making Waves)

Following successful reunion gigs and renewed interest in the British Folk genre, the Fairports are back with their first studio LP since 1977. Only Messrs Pegg, Mattacks and Nicol are present for true continuity, but the ubiquitous Richard Thompson does rear his once-shaggy head as honoured guest. Safe as houses, it's as if punk had never happened. [A:1]

DR FEELGOOD: DOWN BY THE JETTY
Edsel ED 160

Originally released in 1974, this LP still bursts with the energy that made the Feelgoods such a hit on the pub circuit. Anglicised R&B, it was notable then for the manic guitar work of Wilko Johnson – the stuff hasn't lost its fire 11 years on. It could be that we still don't realise just how good they were. [A:1], despite the band's insistence that

it was released only in mono. Bloody purists.

GREEN ON RED: NO FREE LUNCH
Mercury MERM78

Seven-track mini-LP from one of the leading forces in the Reincarnate Gram Parsons Campaign. Much hokier than the Long Ryders, with traces of Jason and the Scorchers at their hillbilliest, but captivating in the way a lasso ropes a steer. Sadly, they've been given the kiss of death, having earned the approval of Andy Kershaw. Don't let that put you off. [B:1]

ROY HARPER: STORMCOCK
Awareness AWL2001 (Distributed by Making Waves)

Originally released in 1971, this is part of Awareness programme for reissuing the whole Harper canon. Stunning in places, this sparse display of guitar pyrotechnics identifies Harper as a tragically flawed genius. The talent is there, but where's the direction? Fascinating, but disturbing. [A:1/2]

THE HOLLIES: THE HOLLIES
MFP 41 5727 1

Though Hollies compilations aren't exactly rare, you can't but welcome another which (1) is bargain-priced, and (2) contains three unreleased tracks. Instead of the usual 'Greatest Hits' packaging, *The Hollies* contains enough of both the common and the rare (17 tracks in all) to satisfy all manner of fans. Quality overall is exceptional; will the UK ever truly appreciate this national treasure? [A/H:1/2]

HOODOO GURUS: MARS NEEDS GUITARS!
Chrysalis CHR 1520

If the Shadows of Knight hadn't split up and avoided any external influences, they'd be the Hoodoo Gurus. No jokes, please, about arrested development in Australia; the Hoodoos (or is it Gurus?) rock out in the best primitive garage band fashion. Subtle it ain't, but then Australians... [A/B:2]

THE KINKS: THE KINKS COLLECTION
Castle Communications CESLP 113

Yes, *another* Kinks compilation culled from PRT's vaults, but this time we get 24 tracks consisting of rarities as well as the obvious. Particularly welcome is the hard-to-find 'Creeping Jean'; curious is the inclusion of 'Village Green' when the sleeve lists the entirely different 'Village Green Preservation Society'. (That's Ray's fault for writing two songs with near-identical titles.) The package gives you glorious photographs in place of liner notes, so look here for a musical, rather than factual, education. [C/D:1*]

LEVEL 42: WORLD MACHINE
Polydor POLH 25

'Pulsating' applies here, *World Machine* being a wonderful blend of dominating rhythms supporting some captivating (dare I say it) pop flourishes. So finely crafted an effort, you can tell that Level 42 is bucking for some tag like 'New Professionalism'. It's rare to find such a listenable, funkish package with both intellectual content and danceability, but then who's complaining? [A:1]

RAY PARKER JR: SEX AND THE SINGLE MAN
Arista 207252

You can't help but think of 'Ghostbusters' when you hear this LP, and that's not just because Parker's voice is so distinctive. This uptown-funk, what-a-small-tush-I've-got

package is just full of the little flourishes that made the song so infectious. In the originality stakes, this is no great shakes, but women will love it. [A:2]

ELVIS PRESLEY: BALLADS
Telstar STAR 2264

Eighteen tracks from 1958 to the very end, all love songs that deny the sweaty, leather-clad side of the King's persona. What these gems prove (among them are 'Wooden Heart' and 'Can't Help Falling in Love') is that Elvis was so much more than what his detractors would have called a 'mere rock and roller'. Here we find a voice in the Nat King Cole class, and the ballads are perfect showcases. Don't let the passage of time allow you to forget. [A/B:1/1*]

LOU RAWLS: SOUL SERENADE
Stateside EMI EG 26 0668 1

Jazzy soul performed by one of the masters. This compilation of Rawls covering classics is so sophisticated that it would make Sinatra blush. Magic, especially his hip reworking of the Buffalo Springfield's 'For What It's Worth' (yup...). [A/B:1*]

DUSTY SPRINGFIELD: IN MEMPHIS ... PLUS
Philips PRICE83

What a welcome reissue: Dusty's best, c. 1968, with four extra tracks culled from later singles. Proof yet again that Ms Lennox, Sade and Moyet have a long way to go to knock her off the throne. Included is the awe-inspiring 'Son Of A Preacher Man'. [A:1*]

STEELY DAN: THE VERY BEST OF (REELIN' IN THE YEARS)
MCA DANTV1

Another smart double 'Best of' (Steely Dan now having had this treatment at least four times) timed for Christmas. Curiously, it differs from the CD compilation which preceded it by a month, and it contains 18 tracks instead of the CD's 14. *Ergo*, it's great value and a sensible way to get some of this ultra-tasteful band's material on your shelves. This particular package sounds like someone put in a really steep HF filter, so we get a curious [B/C:1/1*] rating.

JETHRO TULL: ORIGINAL MASTERS
Chrysalis JTTV1

How easy we forget – this band, despite its hairy image, could rock out with the best. This 12-track compilation (the sleeve only lists 11) serves as a fine reminder, the performances standing up both musically and sonically. Note particularly 'Locomotive Breath', as powerful as its title. [A:1/2]

MIDGE URE: THE GIFT
Chrysalis CHR1508

If nothing else, this wins 'Posh Sleeve of the Year'; thank goodness the contents live up to some of the packaging's promise. Cursed with such a distinctive voice, Ure's efforts make one instantly recall 'Vienna', but this is probably far more adventurous than his group efforts. Notable is his cover version of Jethro Tull's 'Living In The Past'. Polished and pleasurable. [A:2]

PAUL YOUNG AND THE Q-TIPS: LIVE
Pickwick SHM3175

When a record company reissues the pre-fame material of a current star, the results are usually embarrassing. Not so with these c. 1982 Paul Young sessions. The Q-Tips are revealed as a band before their time, while Young has just enough rough edges to let you know he hadn't quite gone through the air-brushing routine. Slick white soul, homage paid with total respect. [B:1/2]

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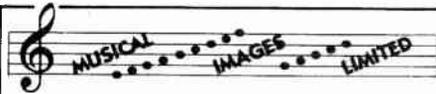
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THEY USED TO CALL THEM 'vintage years', but it's been so long since one occurred that most music lovers have forgotten what it's like to overdose on great material. 1985 contained the ascendancy and consolidation of Sade, Paul Young and Alison Moyet; it offered us Live Aid and the reformation of Squeeze; Mink de Ville, Tom Petty and Neil Young gave us new LPs, and only the success of Madonna serves as a noticeable stain. Yes, 1985 was a vintage year, if not of the same *cru* as 1967.

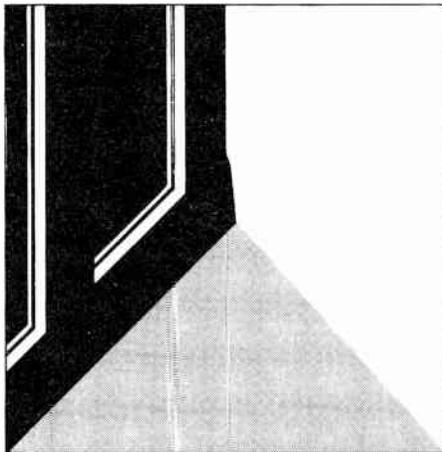
Think about it: ZZ Top put the brains back into heavy metal years ago, but the world (or the UK) proved ready only in '85. John Fogerty came out of retirement. The Who got back together for 20 minutes, as did Led Zeppelin. Springsteen proved to be at least half as good as his hype and Prince turned out to be less than half as good as *his*. [The Editor agrees with the first half of this sentence but disagrees with the second.] Michael Jackson spared us the follow-up to *Thriller*, Frankie must have finally gone to wherever and Boy George seemed to have disappeared. Huey Lewis made great rock n'roll and the Persuasions released a perfect LP. In fact, it was such a terrific twelve months that I almost forgot about the existence of such ill-informed political *naifs* as the Smiths and Style Council.

JA's definition of 'The Year's Best' is 'the LPs which spent the most time on your turntable'. With so many goodies about, I didn't have the time to let one or two discs hog the system, though I did inflict noticeable wear on Juice Newton's *Greatest Hits*. Of the flood, the following droplets stand out:

The Persuasions' *No Frills* (Demon FIEND 46) was one of those records that gave me chills (or 'frissons' as others might say), revealing for all that a *capella* is no obsolete art form. Beyond the obvious merits, like superb recording quality and an excellent choice of material, *No Frills* stands as a shining example of how little we need the excesses of studio trickery in the pop world, and I've derived more pleasure from this voice-only recording than I've ever gotten from computer-generated sounds. 'Gorgeous' is the only adjective that suits this achievement, and it hurts to see it receive less than double-platinum sales.

More successful, sales-wise, and just as deserving, is Katrina and the Waves' eponymous debut LP (Capitol/EMI EJ 24 0315 1), culled from two Canada-only releases. Innocent pop has been a mainstay of the non-classical music industry ever since Buddy Holly proved that the songs needn't come from jaded writers working in a music factory, going in and out of fashion depending on how agonisingly hip the critics are at the time. Even in these days of Smithness, nobody could stop the effervescence of 'Walkin' On Sunshine', and Katrina's presence more than made up for the absence of Cyndi Lauper.

Staying with pure pop, we come to a most pleasant of surprises, *Valotte* (Charisma JLLP 1), Julian Lennon's two-fingered salute to those who had written him off as a Famous Son/Stardom Casualty. Whether or not musical ability is in the genes isn't an issue here. What Julian Lennon did was come up with an LP so pleasurable that it worked *despite* the hype ('Will Julian Be The Fourth Beatle?' etc, courtesy of the newspaper with the red logo). There aren't enough Beatles fans of the 'I'll-buy-anything-no-matter-how-remote-the-connection-variety-to-have-made-this-the-commercial-success-it-was, so you can safely assume



KK reviews the year in pop

that the public voted with its ears rather than its memories.

Another genre in force is 'West Coast Rock', the players collectively referred to as 'Eaglets'. Spearheading the new wave of bands who don't fear melodies, country associations, and suede with fringes, are the Long Ryders, whose *Native Sons* (Zippo ZONG 003) may prove (in retrospect) to be the seminal release for this Gram Parsons resurrection. Assuming that the other bands in the Long Ryders' wake, like Rain Parade, the Beat Farmers, and Green On Red, don't turn out to be mere reactions against the inhumanity of many current acts, we may be able to liken this to, say, the return of the valve in hi-fi. I'd almost forgotten how good guitars can sound.

Which reminds me: Adrian Legg's 1985 release, *Fretmelt* (Spindrift SPIN115),

Some More of 1985's Best

- J Geils Band: *You're Getting Even While I'm Getting Odd*
EMI/America EJ24 0240 1
- Shoes: *Silhouette*
Demon FIEND 19
- The Bangles: *All Over The Place*
CBS 26015
- Chaka Khan: *I Feel For You*
Warner 9 25162-2
- Dana Gillespie: *Below The Belt*
Ace CH126
- Clive Gregson: *Strange Persuasions*
Demon FIEND 45
- Suzanne Vega: *Suzanne Vega*
A&M AMA 5072

showed that his previous offering wasn't a fluke. There were worries that a guitarist of his intensity was too good to be true – he does leave listeners positively drained – but this follow-up to *Technopicker*, with a band behind him, shows Legg as actually transcending his reputation. Besides its obvious appeal as a hi-fi systems demonstrator – everybody *loves* heart-stopping transients – the sheer skill in Legg's fingers (I know that sounds odd . . .) will inspire awe in even the least instrumentally adept among you.

Another guitarist who's provided more than his fair share of mind-boggling licks is Jeff Beck, who – after a lo-o-ng silence – restored the faith with *Flash* (Epic EPC 26112). Reunited for one track with erstwhile partner Rod Stewart, Beck took today's hottest producers, cleared his head of jazz pretensions, and whipped up a *tour de force* that rivals the best of his earlier output. Just as Live Aid showed that there's no substitute for experience (Dylan and CSN excepted), so does *Flash* prove that old dogs *can* learn new licks.

Regular readers might note that this is starting to look like pure self-indulgence, but then it's impossible to reply to the question, 'What are your fave releases of the past year?', without relying on personal taste. A Talking Heads fan will cite *Little Creatures* and Tom Waits lovers will opt for *Rain Dogs* etc, etc, but I am naturally predisposed toward my favourite artists. The test is: will I tell you that certain LPs qualify as among the year's best when the only justification I can provide is who made the record?

The answer is 'No'. I've had my let-downs, and enough reminders from friends that I've been too soft on some releases simply because I love the performer. A case in point is Big Daddy, whose *Big Daddy* LP (Making Waves SPRAY 101) gets my thumbs-up on intellectual, rather than musical grounds. That LP was – to me – the most inventive show of wit and humour seen in rock since the Bonzos at their peak, but others with less of an academic interest in pop music found it too much of an in-joke to give it more than one or two plays. I still love it, but I must admit that it doesn't offer the general appeal (a quality which helps to make something worthwhile) of a Sade release or whatever is shipping platinum.

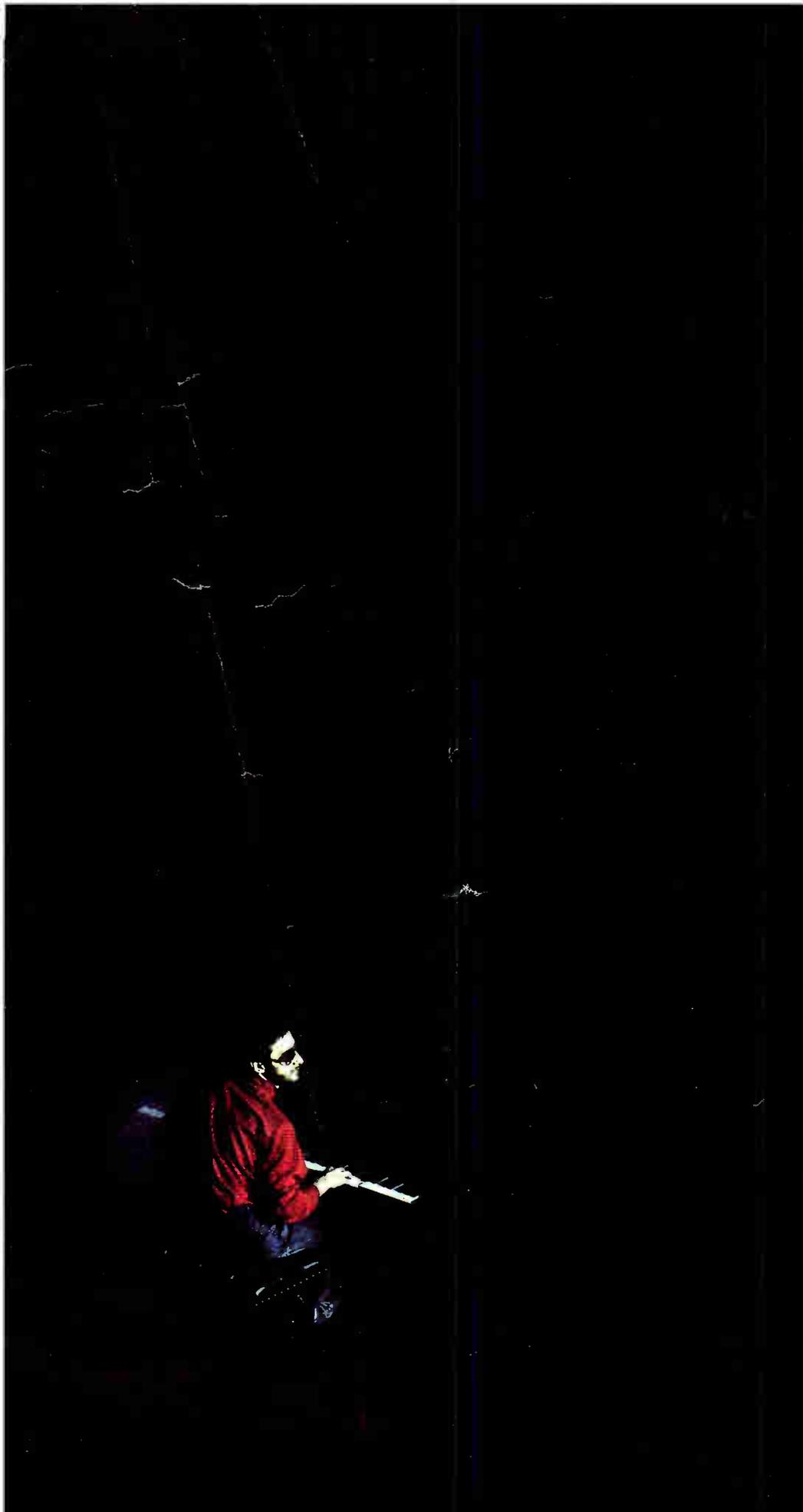
What *does* seem to get the nod from greater numbers is The Reissue, a marketing concept that grows stronger every year. Previous 'Back Door' columns have lauded the efforts of labels like Edsel, Ace and Charly – all of whom excelled in 1985 – but the past year saw the major labels giving more than nodding acquiescence. 1985 was, after all, the 50th anniversary of Elvis Presley's birth, the 25th anniversary of Eddie Cochran's death, and Frank Sinatra's 70th birthday; each was honoured with a magnificent commemorative release, respectively by RCA, Liberty and Capitol, while Elvis was also the subject of a major reissue programme. All were welcomed with open arms because all avoided the mindless, undocumented approach the budget labels use when milking old material.

The specialists weren't about to be overshadowed, and Ace went to town with pristine reissues of Little Richard's first three releases in their original sleeves. Making Waves imported the marvellous *Nuggets* compilations from America's Rhino Records, which gave lovers of the obscure an affordable way of acquiring rare 1960s pop songs without the pain of scouring the second-hand stalls. But 1985 was the year of Demon/Edsel.

Talk about ambitious! Brave, even. Not only did this label dig deep into the vaults, conjuring up names to baffle the most ardent of trivial pursuers, they did it with such panache and prolificity that collectors throughout the land could be seen talking to bank managers about buying the lot in one fell swoop. The Beau Brummels, Mad River, Shadows of Knight, Lord Buckley, enough Al Green to give you religion, the Kursaal Flyers, Dan Hicks . . . it's like Charlie Chaplin's giant cog-wheeled factory, churning it out. But the secret is: the quality *never* slips.

Yes, 1985 was a vintage year. No 'New Beatles' or 'New Dylans' appeared, thank goodness, and con artistry was confined to the few. Lots of old rockers reappeared in new guises, others turned to their roots. Tina Turner finally got the recognition she deserved, and BB King made his 50th LP. Simon Le Bon learned that he's not invincible, and Sting learned that he probably is.

Or as the Birthday Boy might have sung it, 'When I was 33, it was a very good year'. ♪



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